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Rose van der Zwaard

Patterns of (negotiated) interaction during task-based telecollaboration between native and advanced non-native speakers

The digital platforms that are now available within most educational contexts in many parts of the world facilitate communication and collaboration beyond institutional constraints and national boundaries and provide educators with the possibility to create digital communication environments and forums. Linking up students from different parts of the globe, which used to be an expensive and time-consuming effort involving plane trips and youth hostels has, technically speaking, become a matter of acquiring the right equipment and downloading the appropriate software: interactive computer-mediated communication technologies in the second language classroom give language learners the opportunity to collaborate with native speakers of the target language without leaving their classrooms.

This thesis investigates emerging patterns of digital interaction between dyads of native and non-native speakers during synchronous computer-mediated communication with a particular focus on negotiation of meaning (or lack thereof). The aims of this study were to examine the relationship between negotiation configurations and the type of synchronous mode of computer-mediated communication, i.e. to investigate if and how the digital mode of real-life communication affects the ongoing interaction in a language learning environment; whether any consistent patterns can be observed for each mode of communication, and what causes these occurring patterns.

This study contributes to an understanding of processes related to second language acquisition in a telecollaboration environment.

Rose van der Zwaard

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Patterns of (negotiated) interaction during telecollaboration between native and advanced non-native speakers

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When I started this PhD project in January 2012, I thought it would be my only real challenge for the next four years. Two years into my PhD, however, I was forced to take on another challenge as I was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer. From one day to the next, I had to put my dissertation on hold and focus full time on the barbaric treatments. Although the PhD project was always there in my mind, it was not until more than one year later that I was well enough to go back to where I had left off.

I have so many people to thank, for taking me by the scruff of the neck and pulling me through. First of all, I am eternally grateful to my supervisors prof. dr. Folkert Kuiken, prof. dr. Olga Fischer, and dr. Anne Bannink, for their unrelenting support, their encouragement, their valuable feedback, and for slowing me down, especially when I was in a frenzied hurry to finish the PhD out of fear the cancer might overtake me.

I am so proud that Anne Bannink, my colleague, dear friend and mentor, agreed to co-author a number of chapters from this book. Her expertise, her eye for detail and her fierce determination to holding me to her high standards has made all the difference. Whenever I fell, on countless occasions throughout these past five years, she picked me up, dusted me off and inspired me to get back on track. At the risk of sounding like a cliché, I could not, never ever, have done this without her.

My dear colleague, fellow PhD-student and cancer patient, friend and best office mate ever Imogen Cohen once compared writing our dissertations to building the *Sagrada Familia* in Barcelona: a meticulous task that may take more than one hundred years to finish, if at all. To remind us of the grand task ahead, we had postcards of the *Sagrada* on our notice boards. It has been such an honour and invaluable experience to be sitting at my desk opposite such a wise, erudite, (ask her anything intelligent and she'll know the answer - anything from Aristotle to Steven Pinker, and beyond) loving and inspirational person.

I am so lucky to be part of a close-knit team of colleagues at the English Department of the University of Amsterdam that have always been there for me (they would even spend all their slush fund money on sending me a

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state-of-the-art but it was an absolute nightmare for the technicians at both ends. A huge thank you to all of them for not walking out on us and wanting to be part of it.

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I embarked on the telecollaboration projects reported on in this book with Yoni Prior, my oldest and dearest friend. We met during Hebrew class in Tel Aviv in the mid-1980s and, sadly, have lived on opposite sides of the world for the past three decades. It has been such a privilege to work with Yoni during the multiple telecollaboration projects between our students. Her sense of humour, her perfectionism, her professionalism and her determination to creating something different and *new* are at the heart of all our projects.

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Both paragraphs were written by Van der Zwaard.

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Introduction¹

The beginning

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) can take place within the context of an enclosed classroom, the so-called ‘monastery’ setting, and/or within the context of the ‘real world’, the ‘market place’ setting (Arnold et al. 2015). If it only takes place within the confines of the ‘monastery’, English as a Foreign Language has been claimed to run the risk of becoming ‘English as a Forgotten Language’ (EFL, Bernard Mohan, key note speech at TBLT Conference, Lancaster University, 2009), simply because learners are not challenged (enough) to mobilise and practice their language skills in the authentic setting of the ‘real world’.

For a number of years, the monastery and market place dilemma had been a topic of discussion between my colleague and friend Yoni Prior, senior lecturer at the Drama Department of Deakin University in Melbourne Australia, and myself. Although we taught in different disciplines and in vastly different settings on either side of the world – the drama department of a suburban Australian university versus the English department of an urban Dutch university – we were both struggling with what we had dubbed ‘the limits of location’. We discussed how we could open the doors of our relatively insular academic classrooms and offer our students an authentic experience that would enrich, augment and intensify the subject of their studies. In what way could we send our students from the monastery down to the market place and, more importantly, to what type of market did we want to send them?

Although the English proficiency modules at the University of Amsterdam are all aimed at broadening students’ active vocabulary, delivering improvised presentations in English and producing grammatically and idiomatically correct sentences, practicing these skills by communicating with native speakers is not part of the curriculum due to logistic and financial reasons. Instead, our students are encouraged to spend a year as an exchange student at a university in one of the English speaking

¹ Two paragraphs from this chapter have been previously published as Prior, Johnson & Van der Zwaard (2011), e-learning through digital theatre: breaking down the tyranny of distance and limits of location, *Ubiquitous Learning*, 3, 1-14.

countries. Similarly, within the module 'Devised Theatre' at Deakin University, the main aim of which is to jointly devise a theatre performance from scratch, the Australian drama students (particularly at a suburban university in remote Australia) do not have immediate access to performance ideas and genres beyond their immediate (and sometimes limited) experience. Having taught the course for years, it was the experience of my Australian counterpart that the literal insularity of Australia as a remote, albeit colossal, island together with the confines of the drama department of a suburban university tended to inhibit making adventurous choices in relation to concept, form and/or content.

Because of the reciprocal needs of our student groups and because we were looking for a new, meaningful and authentic interdisciplinary context for our courses, Yoni Prior and I embarked on what would become a pioneering and innovative series of telecollaboration projects. Because both language acquisition and training in performance and performance-making require learners to speak, write and perform in order to develop their skills, and because both disciplines require an audience or interlocutor, we expected that our students would profit from working together: the Dutch students would benefit from connecting with interlocutors from the target language while the Australian students would profit from input and feedback from peers outside of their community, their country and even their continent.²

In 2009, not quite knowing what was ahead, we decided to take our students to the kind of market place that turned out to be unparalleled, unpredictable and unprecedented, a market place that was both a dream and a nightmare, where unfamiliar forces would be at work that would make us long for the safety of our monastery but where all participants, teachers included, would also thrive and be inspired by the opportunities it offered.

An indispensable part of this market place was the ever-expanding digital technology that proffered and facilitated the type of real-time communication that we needed in order to connect our students. We had access to unique platforms of computer-mediated communication that enabled the Dutch

² Before this collaboration, the Australian students would perform their work to an Australian-only audience, mainly consisting of family and friends, at the on-campus Deakin University Theatre.

and Australian students to break out of their single-discipline classrooms. They joined a virtual market place where interesting questions about communicating through language and communicating through art would be raised with a different intellectual and linguistic scope across cultural and geographical boundaries.

For five consecutive years – between 2009 and 2013 – five cohorts of students (consisting of an average of about 40 students) telecollaborated within a similar framework (for a detailed description, see Chapter 2). Our ultimate aim was something that, to our knowledge, had never been done before: casting our students as writers and actors and putting them on the same real-time digital stage at opposite ends of the world. Each successive project taught us something more about the affordances and the constraints of the digital and pedagogic framework, about the relationship between Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and training in performance-making, and about the capacity of ubiquitous learning methods to defy the limits of domain-specific outcomes as well as physical and conceptual locations. The projects were designed to enrich the learning experience of these two apparently disparate groups of students located at opposite ends of the globe.

Immersion in this performance-making process offered the Dutch students an opportunity to collaborate with native speakers of English on an authentic task which made considerable and real demands on their developing vocabulary and fluency. For the Australian students, the telecollaboration project was aimed at prompting students:

... to deal with more complex and unfamiliar ideas in relation to content and form [and to see] if the use of videoconference technology could bring them into an encounter with collaborators in 'another place'. Connecting the two groups was an attempt to counter the sometimes parochial culture of their own location by providing them with a set of alternative perspectives, both literally and metaphorically, that might allow them to view their location – culturally, historically, aesthetically – through other eyes and from another place. (Prior 2016: 189-190)

The telecollaboration projects

All five telecollaboration projects focused on narratives of shared history (see Chapter 2). These topics allowed the students to examine:

... perspectives of commonality and difference between the two student cohorts in projects where the distance between them, and the digital framework of their making and presentation could be incorporated as stage metaphor (in the history projects), or literal context (in the technology projects). (Prior 2016: 196)

During our first project, *Unsettled Dust* (2009), which centred on whether and, if so, how we are affected by our cultural history and background, the students mostly worked together via asynchronous computer-mediated communication forums, such as email and discussion boards. They would do research on their cultural histories and how these shaped their identities, and would present these results to each other during group-to-group video call hook-ups. During the next stage, the Australian students would act out their scenes-in-progress, after which the Dutch students would interpret and react from a Dutch perspective, giving the Deakin University students a cross-cultural reaction to their work. At the end of the project, Australian students performed their play in front of a live audience in Australia; the Dutch students were projected onto a screen as digital audience (see Figures 1 and 2 below). As a final assessment, the Dutch students all wrote reviews of the play, which were sent to the Australian students, who would respond to the Dutch reactions and give feedback on the linguistic and a communicative level of their work. Cross-cultural elements would also be addressed here, such as the etiquette of feedback and directness.

The Dutch students had to articulate their oral and written feedback both during (see Example 1) and after the performance (see Examples 1 and 2).

Table 1: Transcript of live discussion during group-to-group video call, after Australian students had performed their work-in-progress

| | |
|---|---|
| Dutch student | <i>First of all I would like to compliment you on the way you incorporated the whole aboriginal story without neglecting how civilization was built up in the desert. I didn't quite get the last part about all the sheep.</i> |
| | [Australian students laugh] |
| Australian teacher (addressing her students) | <i>Ok – so why are we doing sheep?</i> |
| Australian student | <i>Herding the women off the boats from the different fleets in the colonial era. Sheep and women were herded in the same way.</i> |
| Australian student | <i>Yeah – metaphor – It's symbolism</i> |

The collaboration framework encouraged the Australian students to extend their performance-making vocabulary to incorporate consideration of both collaborators and audience beyond the set of cultural assumptions encoded in their location at a suburban Australian university. The transcript in Table 1 above is an example of the type of cultural issues and communicative effectiveness the Australian students were challenged into addressing when confronted with an international audience. For an Australian audience, the metaphoric association of herding sheep and herding women would probably have been evident; for a Dutch audience, however, this scene had to be spelled out because they did not have the cultural framework to correlate herding sheep and women in the colonial era.



Figure 1 and Figure 2: Unsettled Dust. Left: Australian stage as viewed from Australia; right: Australian stage as viewed from Amsterdam

At the end of the first telecollaboration project, after having watched the Australian performance in real time through videoconferencing (see Figures 1 and 2 above), the Dutch students each wrote an extensive review of the play, in which they also had to reflect on their own contributions to the project and the performance, as illustrated in the excerpts below (Examples 1 and 2).

Example 1: Excerpt from the review written by a Dutch student

Blazing white lights, countered by large red lamps. The crackling sun. An imposing layer of red sand, surrounded by bottles. It's not a description you will find in any travel guide, but there's no way anyone will miss the point: this is Australia. We're looking at the stage of a Melbourne theatre, where the students of the performance arts school will stage an Australian history. Not any old Australian history mind you, the students will tackle Australian identity and anything or everything that has helped form that very identity.

These Australian students have called in help to study their national identity. A group of Amsterdam-based students has addressed their concern by writing papers on identity and collaborating via an online forum. I happen to be one of those Dutch students, and was smitten with some of the ideas put forward.

Example 2: Excerpt from the review written by a Dutch student

The distinctive and exceptional quality of the project lies in the fact that the students have been able – also through discussing the script with their classmates, Dutch counterparts and history lecturers – to transform these one-dimensional concepts into an intelligent, challenging and compelling play on Australia’s identity. Alex³ sums up the lessons learned at the end in an unsettling way: “Don’t expect to have all the answers. Ask questions.” That is exactly what the actors urge all of us to do when we think about national identity: ask questions.

During the evaluation of our first telecollaboration project, a number of Dutch students indicated that they wanted to be more involved, not just in the research and critical viewing, but also in the writing process and the performance. Consequently, we stepped up the framework for the following telecollaboration projects to involve script writing and rehearsal sessions between (dyads of) Dutch and Australian students. Although it would mean expanding the range of digital technology needed, we decided that it would intensify and enrich the collaboration framework between our students as we envisaged that the performance would consist of scenes as devised and performed by both the Dutch and the Australian students. Working with a technologically-mediated Australian stage and using the state-of-art live digital media available at the media studios of Deakin University (see Figures 3 and 4), the Dutch students were ‘beamed onto’ the Australian stage where they became an integral and interactional part of the performance. The scenes were directly interactive, in that the Dutch actors would be projected onto the screen on the Australian stage and the two actors spoke to each other (Figure 3 below). In turn, the Australian part of the performance was projected onto the Dutch stage, where a live audience was also present.

³ One of the Australian student-actors.



Figure 3: Dutch student on screen of Australian stage

Figure 3 is a still from the 2013 performance *Are You There?* about how contemporary relationships are shaped and disrupted by the technology that mediates them. The view is from the stage as seen from Australia: the actor on the right is on the 'physical stage', communicating live with a Dutch student, his digital interlocutor as projected onto the back drop.

Figure 4 is at the end of the performance as seen from Australia, where all actors, both live and virtual, are taking their bows together.



Figure 4: Seen from Australia: live and digital students taking their bows together

The telecollaboration projects: challenges

Attractive and spectacular as the telecollaboration projects may have been, there were multiple challenges to be negotiated. First, logistical issues managing time and semester synchronisation had a major impact on project planning. While certain aspects of the collaboration, such as online discussions and file-posting, could be managed in an asynchronous mode, critical aspects of the process such as group-to-group live discussion, rehearsals and, of course, performances, necessarily had to be synchronous. This meant that the Australian staff and students were required to work outside scheduled class hours to manage the eight to ten-hour time difference between The Netherlands and Australia.

A second major and virtually insurmountable challenge was the digital technology, particularly at the Amsterdam side of the project. Finding the funding for the appropriate equipment and, just as important, the right staff to support that equipment, turned out to be one of the biggest hurdles. We learned the hard way that having the right equipment is not nearly enough: networks would be down or overloaded, firewalls got in the

way, or technical staff were unavailable due to reorganization and relocation.



Figure 5 and Figure 6: Australian technical support

Thirdly, it was a major challenge to involve *all* of our students to participate equally, particularly in the asynchronous part of the telecollaboration. Students were asked to post questions, topics for discussion or research results on the university digital learning environments, but many would complain that feedback was late or not posted at all.

Within a very short time it became evident that students were spending very little time on the university sites, generally only when directed to in order to complete some specific task. They were, however, ‘friending’ each other on Facebook and, from the second project when Dutch participants were given the option of performing in the work, they began setting up private Facebook groups for the project. From 2012, we virtually dispensed with the university websites, reverting to the use of Facebook groups [...] for sharing ‘inert’ materials, as well as video-recordings of scenes in development, but also live and interactive options such as text and video-chat. If the shift involved a loss of a certain, sometimes-useful reminder of the formal learning-based purpose of the projects, it nonetheless provided the best available interstitial space for the complex range of formal/informal encounters that generate and support collaborative relationships. (Prior 2016: 192).

The telecollaboration projects: affordances

Both the Australian and the Dutch students developed important collaboration skills, such as the capacity to articulate ideas and problems in language and performance, and to give and receive criticism. Working within a digital learning environment allowed for a more immersive learning process, giving students the option to work both synchronously and asynchronously on multiple platforms and unfettered by geographic boundaries, the walls of the classroom and class schedules.

In their reflections and evaluations of the projects the students expressed considerable pride in the fact that they had succeeded in creating a conceptually complex performance which worked in both real and virtual space and which communicated meaning effectively to a cross-cultural audience. The international technologically mediated performance project led to a range of enhanced learning experiences for both performance and English language students. Each group had their view of their own geographical and social location challenged and their disciplinary boundaries breached as Australian students successfully engaged with the many questions of cross-cultural communication and the Dutch extended the depth of their English and cultural language competencies.

The research projects

The telecollaboration projects as outlined above culminated in two separate PhD projects in two different disciplines: Theatre Studies and Second Language Acquisition Studies. Yoni Prior investigated the dramatic dramaturgy of the performance making practice,⁴ while I studied dyadic communication between the Australian and Dutch participants during a digital task that was designed especially for and as part of the telecollaboration project.

Although the performance was the spectacular grand finale of the telecollaboration projects, for our research projects, both as teachers and researchers, we were particularly interested in the dynamics and forces at

⁴ This resulted in Y. Prior (2016). *Pragmatic Dramaturgy: The Creative Management of Limits in Performance-Making Processes* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.

work during the collaboration process. The major questions asked within the Australian research project were:

- How do the affordance and constraints of digital actors impact on the live theatre performance?
- To what extent does a double audience (live Australian, virtual European) influence the creative process and end product?
- To what extent does European participation influence the shaping and artistic expression of Australian cultural awareness/identity?

At the Dutch research end of the project, I looked into the kinds of communication strategies and strategies of negotiation of meaning both native and non-native speakers employed during the very first one-to-one digital hook-up that launched the telecollaboration project. As such, I set out to collect and analyse interactional data to compare them to theoretical assumptions and claims made about negotiation of meaning and task-based L2-learning. The research project reported on in this book, in other words, focuses on the occurrence of negotiation of meaning (or absence thereof) during one-to-one interaction via two forms of synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC): video call (or video call) and instant chat-messaging (written chat).

The telecollaboration projects under discussion in this research project took place between February and May of 2012 (pilot project – see Chapter 3) and 2013 (main study, see Chapters 4, 5 and 6). Chapters 4, 5 and 6 examine different aspects from the same data set.

Research questions

The following research questions have been investigated in the four studies of this dissertation (Chapters 3 to 6):

- RQ 1 Are there significant differences in patterns of negotiation of meaning in online chat and video-call during one-to-one interaction between native and non-native speakers?
- RQ 2 Do social constraints, such as L2-communication apprehension due to issues of (loss of) face, influence negotiation of meaning episodes in online chat and video-call during one-to-one

interaction between native and non-native speakers? And if so, how?

- RQ 3 To what extent does *non*-occurrence of negotiation of meaning occur in and influence dyadic task-based communication between native and non-native speakers during synchronous computer-mediated communication in cases where negotiation of meaning is expected to occur, and how can it be explained?
- RQ 4 Do non-native speaker interactants *consistently* initiate repair in case of non-understanding during dyadic task-based synchronous-computer-mediated communication? If not, why not?
- RQ 5 Does a reversal of expert and learner participant roles during dyadic telecollaboration – the native speaker becomes the novice cultural non-native, and the non-native speaker the expert cultural native – involve a reversal of native and non-native participant roles?

The studies in this book, then, aim to combine two of the most significant trends in L2-education: digital technology and task-based language teaching (TBLT). Research into the efficacy of communication through different digital tools within L2-learning environments is still underdeveloped, although the 21st-century networked society is entering the language classroom and educators are urged to include digital communication in (academic) language acquisition curricula. Negotiation of meaning studies have proven to be a prolific research area, although different claims have been made concerning occurrence and effect and only recently have investigations started to explore the implications of negotiation of meaning during synchronous computer-mediated communication. The studies in this book attempt to contribute to this budding area of research.

Organization of the book

Chapters 1 and 2 are introductory chapters. In the first chapter the theoretical perspectives are presented that informed the research questions and guided the selection, description and analysis of the data. The second chapter outlines the design and scope of the telecollaboration projects and the organizational and procedural details of the research project.

Chapter 3 addresses the first and second research questions (RQ 1 and RQ2) through a cross-media comparative analysis (dyadic video call and

chat) of telecollaboration between native and non-native speakers in order to assess the effect of the digital medium of communication on the ongoing discourse and task performance. Chapter 4 (RQ3) reports on data, usually disregarded in negotiation of meaning studies, which show that participants do not respond according to the models in SLA negotiation of meaning studies. Chapter 5 (RQ4) examines the interactional effects of a task that confronts the learner with multiple and cumulative instances of non-understanding. Chapter 6 (RQ5) compares participant behaviour and responses when expert and learner roles are reversed: when the non-native speaker becomes the expert and the native speaker the apprentice. Together, these four studies aim to give a comprehensive overview of the affordances and constraints of task-based dyadic telecollaboration through synchronous computer-mediated communication.

The studies in Chapters 3 to 6 have been written as four separate articles that were published or are still under review in different academic journals. This means that there will be a certain overlap in the chapters, particularly in the presentation of theoretical background and methodology.

Finally, Chapter 7 proposes a revised, more fine-grained model for possible discourse trajectories in task-based L2 interactions, and presents tentative implications and recommendations for telecollaboration research and practice.

Chapter 1

Theoretical perspectives

1.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical perspectives of this thesis. It addresses the SLA paradigms that informed the selection, description and interpretation of the data presented in the studies in Chapters 3 to 6, and introduces the pedagogical and technological frameworks of the research project that generated these data. First we focus on the theory of two major approaches to L2-learning: the interactionist approach and the socio-cultural approach. Then we reflect on the parameters of task-based language teaching, which occupies a central position in current SLA research. Finally, we briefly trace the development and scope of digital communication media within a language learning environment.

1.2 Cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives on SLA

1.2.1 *The interactionist approach to learning*

In her seminal studies into second language acquisition (SLA), Hatch (1978) recommends an approach to language acquisition that takes learner interaction and communication as a point of departure rather than as a final goal. In other words, rather than focusing on how language acquisition can lead to communication – the mainstream assumption in SLA research at the time – she proposes analysing how communication can lead to language acquisition: “language evolves out of learning how to carry on conversations, out of learning how to communicate” (63).

A few years later, Long (1981b) made a major contribution to the interactionist approach by introducing the Interaction Hypothesis, which claims learners acquire language by interacting with others – in particular with native speakers – and by engaging in conversational modifications during breakdowns in the communication. The latter process has been labelled ‘negotiation of meaning’ (Long 1980, 1982), or ‘repair construction’ (Hatch 1978) and is widely considered a crucial part of the L2-learning process today since it forces learners to check, clarify and adjust their utterances and often leads to modified input (usually from the speaker of

the trigger) when participants attempt to solve the misunderstanding or non-understanding.

Another major influence on the development of the interactionist approach has been Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985).⁵ The Input Hypothesis claims that "humans acquire language in only one way – by understanding messages, or by receiving 'comprehensible input' (2),⁶ which should be on a language level that is slightly higher than the level of competence of the learner, or $i + 1$. As such, Krashen sees input as the "essential environmental ingredient" (440) for language acquisition. In addition to the Input Hypothesis, Swain (1985) proposed the Output Hypothesis, which builds not on reception, but on learners' production. Learners may fake comprehension, Swain argues, but they cannot fake production, which is why it is important that they are pushed to produce correct output, both in writing and speaking; for instance, by forcing them to reformulate a problematic utterance. As Swain (2000) proposes, "output may stimulate learners to move from the semantic, open-ended, strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production" (99).

Although Swain emphasized the need for *accurate* production, the interactionist approach in general generated a shift from accuracy oriented activities – with departures from the norm of accuracy regarded as errors (cf. Housen & Kuiken 2009) – to fluency oriented activities with a focus on unprompted oral L2-production. Focus on form, a term coined by Long in 1988, however, remained important. Long defined focus on form as a cognitive process where learners are meant to focus on particular elements (i.e. the form, which could be grammatical, lexical, phonological, etc.) of language while in the process of comprehending or producing messages (Long 1988, 2015). A focus on form may be triggered by a teacher's or native speaker's recast, or by an explanation of a grammar rule after a grammatical inaccuracy. With the focus on form approach,⁷ then, it is seen as acceptable – and even desirable – to explicitly and deliberately focus on a particular grammar rule in order to solve the trouble source. Focus on

⁵ Krashen did not invent the hypothesis as such but rather developed and named similar versions as previously proposed by Macnamara (1973) and Wagner-Gough and Hatch (1975).

⁶ Ellis (2003) later observes that neither Krashen nor Long address the key question of which degree of comprehension would be needed in order for acquisition to occur.

⁷ Although in a recent article Ellis (2016) proposes they are activities or procedures rather than approaches.

meaning, on the other hand, emphasizes incidental learning and starts from the premise that to learn a language, learners should use whatever communication tools they have available (Howatt 1984). Still, Long insists that focus on meaning, although it may result in communicative competence, is inefficient in terms of accuracy and will eventually slow down the L2-learning process (see Ellis, 2016 for a comprehensive overview of Long's take on language teaching).

A major pedagogical operationalisation of the interactionist approach is the notion of negotiation of meaning (Ellis 2003; Gass & Mackey 2007; Long 1981, 1982; Nakahama, Tyler & van Lier 2001; Oliver 2002; Pica 1991, 1992, 1994; Pica, Young & Doughty 1987; Varonis & Gass 1985a,b).⁸ Negotiation of meaning takes place in a series of conversational turns in which one of the interactants, usually the learner, stops the conversational flow due to difficulties in comprehension and attempts to solve the breakdown in communication. It is seen as a crucial part of the L2-learning process and is widely claimed to promote L2-acquisition. The substantial body of research that has emerged since Long's Interaction Hypothesis seems to confirm the claim that negotiation of meaning in the L2-classroom does in fact enhance comprehension and internalization of linguistic features (Ellis 2003; Long 1980, 1982; Pica et al. 1987; Pica 1991, 1992, 1994; Varonis & Gass 1985a, 1985b; Nakahama, et al. 2001; Oliver 2002; Gass & Mackey 2007). Indeed, Mackey, Abbuhl & Gass (2012) observe that it is now commonly accepted that "the interactional 'work' that occurs when a learner and his/her interlocutor encounter some kind of communication breakdown ... is beneficial for L2 development" (9).

The most widely used model to describe and analyse episodes of negotiation of meaning is the Varonis and Gass model of non-understandings (1985). This model claims that episodes can be divided into two main parts:

⁸Although the term negotiation of meaning (Rulon & McCreary 1986) is widely used and will also be used in this study, it should be pointed out that, in negotiation studies, various labels have been applied to refer to the same phenomenon of listener utterance: Language-related episode (Kenning 2010; Swain 1998; Swain & Lapkin 1995; Williams 1999); repair construction (Hatch 1978a); conversation modifications (Long 1980); tactics for repairing trouble (Long 1982), or signals (Pica et al. 1994). However, all refer to the same process of a negotiation routine: a series of conversational turns between interactants to solve a non-understanding.

A TRIGGER and a RESOLUTION:

| | |
|---------|------------|
| TRIGGER | RESOLUTION |
| T → | I → R → RR |

A TRIGGER (T) uttered by the speaker during interaction, is considered to be any part of the discourse that prompts the non-understanding on the part of the hearer. During the RESOLUTION, the non-understanding episode is 'dealt with': the INDICATOR (I) is the episode in which the hearer signifies the non-understanding, arresting the progression of the conversation. This leads to a RESPONSE (R) of the speaker to the non-understanding episode. The final prime is the REACTION TO RESPONSE (RR) uttered by the hearer (and initiator of the negotiated routine), which usually marks the end of the negotiated routine, i.e. the non-understanding has been solved and the flow of the discourse can continue. Examples of RR-utterances are <Okay>, <I see>, <Alright>, or <I understand>. An example of the model at work is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Varonis and Gass model with data and observations from study under discussion.

| Turn | Participant | Transcript | Coding |
|------|-------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. | NS ⁹ | <i>Did you get a Christmas hamper this year?</i> | TRIGGER (T) |
| 2. | NNS ¹⁰ | <i>What's a hamper?</i> | INDICATOR (I) |
| 3. | NS | <i>It's a basket ... full of goodies.</i> | RESPONSE (R) |
| 4. | NNS | <i>Ah! Yes. I got one this year.</i> | REACTION TO RESPONSE (RR) |
| 5. | NS | <i>I didn't get one [...]</i> | Interaction has popped back up |

In Table 2, the word <hamper> as expressed by the native speaker during the interaction serves as the TRIGGER of the negotiation episode. The non-native speaker's subsequent explicit reply of <What's a hamper?> serves to indicate that the meaningful interaction, i.e. the horizontal flow of the communication (see Table 3), has ground to a halt. The native speaker

⁹ In this and other tables: NS = native speaker

¹⁰ In this and other tables: NNS = non-native speaker

responds to the indicator by elaborating on the TRIGGER in order to solve the non-understanding. With the non-native speaker’s utterance of <Ah, yes. I got one this year>(RR), the native speaker presumes that the negotiation episode has come to an end and kick-starts the meaningful interaction back into motion with the utterance <The next item on the list is ...>

Table 3: Schematic rendition of the Varonis and Gass pushdown and pop-up routine, with examples.

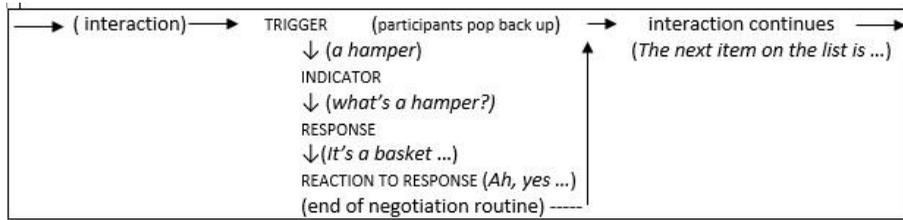


Table 3 shows a schematic rendition of the same example as in Table 2, illustrating the beginning and the end of the negotiation of meaning routine as *pushdown* and *popup* (Varonis & Gass 1985). The negotiated routine is seen as temporarily holding up the horizontal flow of the meaningful exchange: there is a brief focus on, in this case lexical, form materializing in a ‘vertical’ interruption and a pushing down into the deeper, underlying level where meaning needs to be negotiated and where the interactants need to get to the bottom of the TRIGGER. When the problem or trouble source has been solved, the participants pop back up to the surface of the meaningful conversation and continue where they left off.

Between the steps, from TRIGGER to REACTION TO RESPONSE, the negotiation routine can be pushed down further if one of the interactants verifies or tests whether they have understood correctly. This additional prime is referred to as a COMPREHENSION CHECK (CC) and can occur anywhere in the negotiation process. Added to the example from Table 2, the participant (non-native speaker) in Table 4 below, seems to test his hypothesis of <do you mean ...?> to make sure s/he has understood correctly. When the native speaker has confirmed the non-native speaker’s comprehension check the discourse pops back up and continues.

Table 4: Comprehension check during negotiation routine.

| Turn | Participant | Transcript | Coding |
|------|-------------|--|----------------------|
| 1. | NS | <i>Did you get a Christmas hamper this year?</i> | TRIGGER |
| 2. | NNS | <i>What's a Christmas hamper?</i> | INDICATOR |
| 3. | NS | <i>A basket ... with goodies.</i> | RESPONSE |
| 4. | NNS | <i>Do you mean what employers sometimes give to their employees?</i> | COMPREHENSION CHECK |
| 5. | NS | <i>Yeah, that's correct.</i> | RESPONSE |
| 6. | NNS | <i>Yes, I got one this year.</i> | REACTION TO RESPONSE |

As we have seen, the final prime of the Varonis and Gass model is the reaction to response – utterances such as *<okay, I see, alright>* or *<I understand>* as expressed by the initiator of the negotiated routine – which is regarded as marking the end of the negotiated routine, i.e. the non-understanding has been solved and the flow of the discourse can continue.

1.2.2 The socio-cultural approach to L-2 learning

In their seminal article *On discourse, communication, and (some) fundamental concept in SLA research*, published in *The Modern Language Journal* in 1997, Firth and Wagner call for a 'reconceptualization' of SLA research in order to remedy the, in their view, 'imbalanced' practices of mainstream SLA research. Firth and Wagner argue that the predominant notion within SLA research is too cognitive and mechanistic, specifically because it fails to take interactional and sociolinguistic dimensions into account, and because the non-native speaker is chiefly stereotypicalised as a "defective communicator, limited by an underdeveloped communicative competence" (1997: 285). Although (pre-1997) multiple researchers had contended with the cognitive versus social debate in SLA (see Lafford 2007), with their article, Firth and Wagner seemed to have dropped a bomb on mainstream cognitive SLA research.

Firth and Wagner observe, for instance, that the prevailing Chomskyan cognitive research approach towards language learning is 'imbalanced' and 'biased'. They argue that in this approach the individual learner is reduced to a subject, and communication to "a process of information transfer from one individual's head to another's" (Firth & Wagner 1997: 288), and object to how the non-native speaker is regarded in this approach, as a 'resource'

rather than a 'topic', as an institutionally constructed 'defective communicator' with 'linguistic deficiencies' with a standard identity – that of a learner – who acts accordingly (and, mostly, predictably). They also challenge the analyst-relevant (etic) precedence this approach gives over participant-relevant (emic) issues. Instead, Firth and Wagner suggest that, rather than describing native speakers and non-native speakers with "blanket terms, implying homogeneity throughout each group" (291), learners should be extracted from the bland community labelled as non-native speakers and should be regarded and treated as individuals who all possess separate social identities (they are brothers, sisters, husbands, somebody's child, etc.) that need to be taken into account. They argue that these socio-anthropological aspects of interaction – largely ignored by the cognitive approach – should no longer be flouted. Language learning should be regarded as a socially constructed practice and, as such, research should not focus on isolated sets of data but should take the nonlinguistic context into consideration as well. Firth and Wagner conclude by suggesting a more holistic approach to SLA research that focuses on the 'dynamics' and uniqueness of the language learner and that is emically embedded.

A heated debate ensued. In his response in the same journal, Long (1997) calls the Firth and Wagner article an 'attack' based on "strawman arguments, arguments by assertion, rather than sweeping claims" (322). He concludes by expressing his skepticism as to "whether greater insights into SL *use* will *necessarily* have much to say about SL *acquisition*" (322). Conversely, however, Liddicoat (1997) supported Firth and Wagner and envisaged a promising payoff in future research studies following Firth and Wagner's suggested methodology.

The debate ultimately culminated in a special focus issue of *The Modern Language Journal* in 2007 to gauge the impact of the issues Firth and Wagner had put forward. A number of authors were invited to investigate the impact of the paper on SLA research and theory, and on teacher training and language pedagogy. For instance, Gass, Lee and Roots (2007), in an overview of research projects in the field between 1997 and 2007, claimed that Firth and Wagner had not launched a new direction, and that their call for reconceptualization had only widened the gap between cognitive and social SLA frameworks. However, in her introductory note to the special issue, Lafford (2007) articulated the difficulty of measuring the impact of the Firth and Wagner article because of a lack of studies that worked with classroom data. This had also been noted by Skehan and

Foster (2001), who contended that there was a lack of empirical evidence which causally linked negotiation of meaning with language development because of the descriptive¹¹ character of most publications. Lafford, therefore, concluded that Firth and Wagner made a major contribution to the cognitivist-social debate amongst researchers but had not had a significant impact on language pedagogy, simply because classroom practice had embraced the so-called communicative approach to L2-learning (Hymes 1971; Widdowson 1978), even as early as the 1970s. In other words, Firth and Wagner postulated arguments that teachers (and classroom researchers) had long been familiar with: learners are not just language-processing beings but also social beings with social identities. The *Special Issue* concludes by calling for a dialectical approach to SLA that should combine insights from both cognitively and socially informed SLA research paradigms (cf. Block 2003, Reinhardt 2008).

1.2.3 Negotiation of meaning and the concept of 'face'

The Varonis and Gass model of non-understandings starts from the premise that in case of a conversational problem participants in an interaction will start up a negotiated sequence of correction and repair by indicating non-understanding. Moreover, negotiations will continue until the original trouble source, or trigger, has been resolved and mutual understanding has been reached.

However, as Firth and Wagner (1997) observed, L2-learners can and should not be regarded solely as language processing beings but also as human beings with social identities in relation to their environment. Indeed, as early as 1986 Aston criticized the idea that L2-learners should engage in as many negotiations of meaning procedures as possible by pointing out that if "these procedures are very frequent, interactions may be frustrating and hence pedagogically undesirable for learners" (128). In her research study into negotiation of meaning amongst L2 college students at an intermediate level, Foster (1998) concludes that, in her study, protracted non-understanding routines as proposed by Varonis and Gass did not occur at all. The reason, Foster argues, is that learners are hesitant in indicating a problem during task performance because it slows down the interaction and makes them look and feel inept and unsuccessful. Often enough, Foster finds in her study, learners will not indicate non-understanding in the hope

¹¹ Alison Mackey's study (1999) is regarded as an exception as it is one of the few empirical studies that corroborates a relationship between interaction and language acquisition.

of a future utterance by their counterpart that will shed light on and possibly repair the non-understanding retrospectively. In a replication of Foster's study, performed more than ten years later, Eckerth (2009) found a similar low frequency of negotiation of meaning per student. Seedhouse (2004) attributes students' general reluctance to negotiate for meaning to the 'interactional architecture' of the language learning classroom: the interactional activity of language learning is an institutional activity but it will always be influenced by elements of social interaction, even if it is at the cost of the actual learning process (Slimani-Rolls 2008). As such, real-world, social roles and obligation are inevitably inherited in the institutional setting. Although negotiating for meaning may be in the interest of the L2-learning process, it is not always in the interest of the social process.

So what are the social issues inherent to the communicative situation that influence any real-time L2-communication environment? Sometimes they are identified as individual learner variables, such as communication apprehension or foreign language anxiety (Arnold 2007; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986; Jung, Yoon & McCroskey 2004;) or vulnerable self-esteem (Freiermuth & Jarrell 2006; Horwitz et al. 1986) that learners may experience when they interact with someone in (or from) the target language. Indeed, real-time communication in the target language has been described as the most threatening aspect of foreign language learning (Arnold 2007; Horwitz et al 1986). However, by mainly attributing problems to the individual learners the complexity of the interactional situation is not taken into account: repeated negotiations for meaning puts the L2-learner in a position of inferiority and draws attention to their identity of "defective communicators" with "linguistic deficiencies" (Horwitz et al 1986: 132) (cf. Firth & Wagner 1997) in their interactions with others.

In the context of any type of interaction, participants have to negotiate what Goffman (1955) refers to as face-work: a range of face-saving practices consisting of a defensive orientation in order to guard and save one's own face, and a protective orientation toward saving the faces of others. Goffman (1955) defines the concept of face as: "an image of self, delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (213) and describes it as a social code and ritual element that is inherent to all human-to-human interaction. Once a person has effectively claimed his face, he will be expected to stand by it during interaction. In other words, depending on the interactional context, it is in the interest of the participant to guard the (face) role he has assigned himself, by engaging in face-saving acts (FSA).

For instance, for an L2-speaker that is considered advanced, having to confess to non-understanding during interaction could be deemed a face-threatening act (FTA), which is usually the kind of embarrassment interactants would want to avoid. Apart from guarding their own face, participants are also expected to be considerate towards their interlocutors and to prevent the *defacement* of others. The interactional situation where participants accept and guard each other's face is what Goffman (1967) calls the "structural feature of [face-to-face] interaction" (11). Participants, then, when placing themselves vis-à-vis in any type of interface, always bring their face wants, or "social presence and stance" (Vandergriff 2013: 385) into the interactional arena, which will have an unequivocal effect on the communication. "There is no occasion so trivial", Goffman (1967) observes, "as not to require each participant to show serious concern with the way he handles himself and the others present" (239). This face work, i.e. acts taken by a person that are consistent with his face, is what Goffman (1955) calls the "traffic rules of social interaction" (12).

Referring indirectly to 'face', a number of researchers (Aston 1986; Foster 1998; Skehan 2001) conclude that task-performance in an educational L2-learning environment is influenced simply by the fact that participants are generally disinclined to admit non-understanding, particularly if they have to do so multiple times. Consequently, although negotiating for meaning may be regarded as beneficial to the ongoing interaction, from a social point of view this 'trouble shooting' (Aston 1986) undermines the interaction. In an attempt to find a solution for this dilemma, Varonis and Gass (1985), therefore, emphasize the importance of interaction between non-native speakers, rather than between native speakers and non-native speakers: non-native speaker interaction, they claim, creates more opportunities for negotiation of meaning simply because the interactants are less embarrassed to indicate non-understanding due to their "shared incompetence" (71). In native speaker/non-native speaker interaction, they conclude:

The inequality in the status of the participants (with regard to the language medium) actually discourages negotiation because it amplifies the position of the non-native speaker as faulty communicator rather than masks the differences between them. As a result, there is a greater tendency for conversation to proceed without negotiation. (Varonis & Gass 1985: 86).

1.3 L2-teaching methodology: task-based language teaching

The approach to L2-teaching now known as ‘task-based’ (task-based language teaching, TBLT) was introduced in the early 1980s and arises from the communicative approach to language learning. As such, it is generally thought of as a substitute for or an addition to more traditional forms of language learning in educational settings. In 1987, Prabhu first reported on what is commonly known as his Bangalore Project, a communicational teaching project conducted in primary and secondary schools in India that centered on in-class meaning-focused activities. Prabhu (1987) had set up the project out of what he described as a “strongly-felt pedagogic intuition” (2) that learning a language does not require formalized grammatical input but rather “the creation of conditions in which learners engage in an effort to cope with communication” (1). Over a period of five years, a number of different task-types were developed and implemented, not to corroborate an empirical methodology, but as a classroom experiment for developing and gaining insight in a new methodology. Language teaching, Prabhu proposed, should focus on procedural knowledge *through* communication instead of declarative knowledge *for* communication. Task-based language teaching centres around procedural knowledge.

The concept of ‘task’ has become central in both syllabus design and in L2 research agendas, and task-design has been of considerable significance in educational language learning policy-making (Nunan 2004). But what defines and constitutes a ‘task’ in an educational language learning environment, i.e. what exactly is a pedagogical task, remains largely unresolved. Twenty-five years after the Bangalore Project there are almost as many definitions of the notion of task in L2-teaching and learning as there are researchers. Indeed, there are several overviews in which definitions have been compiled, compared and contrasted (see e.g. Bygate et al. 2001; Ellis 2003, 2009; Samuda & Bygate 2008; Nunan 2004;).

All definitions offered in these overviews are rather generic – Widdowson (2003) even argues that definitions of task are so “loosely formulated that they do not distinguish tasks from other more traditional classroom activities” (126) – but a number of core elements can be distilled which help identify the properties of a pedagogical L2-learning task. Skehan (1998) e.g. suggests four criteria a task should meet:

1. meaning is primary;
2. there is a goal which needs to be worked towards;
3. the activity is outcome-evaluated;
4. there is a real-world relationship

These criteria apply to the 'task-as workplan'. This, however, should be distinguished from the 'task-in-process' (Breen 1989): task-designers and researchers in the field emphasize that the pedagogical intentions of a task do not always correspond to what happens when learners carry out the task; task outcomes are hard to predict, because, as Foster (2009) contends, learners are individuals, not "task-transacting language machines" (251). Therefore, Samuda and Bygate (2008) stress that a task should be seen as "a *holistic* activity which engages language users in order to achieve some non-linguistic outcome while meeting a linguistic challenge with the overall aim of promoting language learning, through process or product or both" (69, my emphasis).

Because Samuda and Bygate stress the holistic purpose of a task and suggest including the relationship between task type, task implementation, and social context, the tasks developed for the studies in this dissertation are grounded in Samuda and Bygate's definition of a task.

1.4 L2-learning and technology

In their overview of the use of the computer during L2-learning, Warschauer and Healy (1998) propose three chronological time frames for the use of digital technology in the classroom, ranging from the 1970s when the first personal computer systems appeared, into the 21st century. In the 1970s and early 1980s, when L2-methodology was mainly based on behaviourist theories – i.e. mastery of language was represented as "acquiring a set of appropriate language stimulus-response chains" (Richards & Rodgers 2001: 56) – the principle use of computers in the classroom was to provide mechanical stimuli in the form of repetitive drill exercises focused on form and meant to increase accuracy. With the introduction of the communicative language teaching paradigm, computer language learning programs became more focused on providing communicative contexts during practice skills; rather than practicing language skills for the sake of them, a meaningful communicative context was offered. Still, although the exercises had changed from drill exercises to

more communicative exercises – the kind of exercises that a learner could use in the ‘real world’ of the target language – the so-called ‘CALL¹² communication’ – took place largely between the learner and the computer. This configuration changed fundamentally with the technological revolution that occurred at the turn of the century, which offered new and unforeseen possibilities for the use of computers in the classroom: students were now given the opportunity to work in networked classrooms and engage in (synchronous) computer-communicated communication with native speakers from the target language.

These developments have led Kern (2006) to the conclusion that the term computer-assisted language learning no longer covers the sense and meaning of the phenomenon since it overtly refers to computers as an outside tool. He was preceded in this view by Warschauer (1999), who argued that the integration of computers and language learning should be so self-evident that it automatically renders the term computer-assisted language just as obsolete and outlandish as fictional terms such as book-assisted language learning or pen-assisted language learning (Bax 2003; Kern 2006). Bax, (2003) in his turn, proposed a so-called normalization of computer-assisted language learning, “serving the needs of learners and integrated into every teacher’s everyday practice” (27). According to Bax (2003), the ideal approach would be what he calls integrated computer-assisted language learning, or normalisation, consisting of computer-mediated communication, with frequent interaction between students, taking place “in every classroom, on every desk, in every bag” (21) rather than in the lab, and with a teacher that has evolved from fearful into ‘normalised’. In this approach, the technology is invisible and has become an integrated part of everyday practice. According to Bax, this third stage will (only) have been reached if the term computer-assisted language learning is no longer being used.

In their article *Language students and their technologies: Charting the evolution 2006–2011*, Steel and Levy (2013) conclude that, in computer-assisted language learning or computer-mediated communication research, there is still too much of a divide between the research agenda and what goes on in the actual classroom. Although they concede that there is an inevitable lag between the pedagogical implementation and implications of digital technologies and the corresponding research agenda around it, they

¹² Computer-Assisted Language Learning

strongly recommend that “current research needs to reflect current practice” (319).

At the beginning of the digital era (in the early 1990s), researchers were mainly concerned with exploring the effect of non-digital versus digital communication. Different claims have been made in studies comparing face-to-face communication with real-time chat communication in L2-learning environments. Kelm (1993) claimed that communicating through chat is a “great equalizer” (443) because students do not feel the pressure of keeping up with the pace of oral comments. Beauvois (1992) narrowed down this concept of equalization by pointing out that real-time chat obliterates accent, gender or skin colour. Higher learner participation and more equal footing, presumed to be due to the non-threatening environment of real-time chat, were also found by other researchers (Abrams 2003; Beauvois 1992; Chun 1994, 1998; Kern et al. 2008; Warschauer 1997). Condon and Cech, (1996), who compared decision-making in face-to-face communication and chat, found that chat participants tended to omit “unnecessary linguistic material”, which made the interaction more efficient and the discussions “less-linguistically encoded” (78). Beauvois (1997) found that participants communicating through chat generally showed more motivation, a result that has been corroborated by other researchers (Freiermuth 1998, 2001; Freiermuth & Huang 2012; Freiermuth & Jarrell 2006; Kern 1995; Meunier 1998). Freiermuth (2006), for example, found that online chatting provided a “more comfortable environment” than traditional face-to-face settings, making it “a fruitful tool” (190) for interaction in a foreign language because it “reduced social constraints” (207).

Conversely, more recent studies comparing digital and non-digital real-time communication report that the availability of the counterpart’s image during communication – for instance, with video call – creates an awareness of social presence, and enhances a more active communication in an L2-environment (Ko 2012; Yamaha 2009; Yamaha and Akahori 2007). The type of communication media, then, (asynchronous or synchronous; chat or video call) could play a pivotal role in how communicators interact (Lowenthal 2010). Hampel (2006) concludes that users of synchronous computer-mediated communication suffer from techno-stress as the live-element constitutes a certain pressure to respond and to control dialogue, while Reeder et al. (2004) claim that chat fits “poorly into traditional

parameters of communication” because it “lacks important features of orality” and is “largely founded in literacy” (100).

1.4.1 Synchronous computer-mediated communication: chat and video call

The two types of one-to-one synchronous computer-mediated communication – real-time chat and video call – differ in various ways (see Table 5). Chat sessions are text-based, meaning that a message needs to be typed and can be modified and reviewed before it is sent off, which makes turn-taking slower and more deliberate than video. Video calling is audio/visually based – the interactants see each other’s image and hear each other’s voices. During video calling a webcam registers and immediately transmits intentional and unintentional prosodic, paralinguistic and nonverbal information (e.g. intonation, facial expressions, body language, mimicry, gestures). This is different with chat. Emotions in chat messages are added to the message intentionally through iconic emoticons (expressing happiness, sadness, surprise, disgust, confusion, etc). Additionally, because the live audio/visual images are registered and transmitted by a webcam, interacting through video call suggests more physical proximity and less anonymity than chat-messaging. What’s more, chat interactants can reread the messages of former turns (Simpson 2005), either during the live interaction or at a later time as chat logs are saved automatically in most chat programs. Video call-interactants have to rely on their working memories: they have no log of former turns to go back to, neither during the live interaction nor at a later time. The final difference can be found in turn taking and sequencing: interaction through video calling is sequential, whereas during chat non-sequential discourse patterns (Black et al. 1983) or multiple conversational floors (Simpson 2005) can occur due to lack of strict turn adjacency: both interactants can type and press the send-key simultaneously, crossing messages and jumbling up the discourse sequence.

Both communication modes have a significant common denominator, however: the communicative event is live, which means that messages are encoded and decoded during interaction in real time. Therefore, even though chatting is text-based, it is still regarded as a speech-like modality because messages are sent back and forth during real-time communication. However, as Stockwell (2010) points out, chatting is ‘less synchronous’ than video call, because the message can be modified before it is sent off (i.e. more time to focus on form and monitor the output).

1.4.2 Telecollaboration and L2-learning

The digital modalities and platforms that are now available within educational contexts facilitate real-life communication and collaboration beyond institutional constraints and national boundaries, and provide educators with the opportunity to create virtual language classrooms (Belz 2004; Kramsch 2001; Prior et al. 2009, 2011; Thorne 2008; Warschauer 1997). One way to organise these digital exchanges is through telecollaboration. Telecollaboration projects create the affordances for digital interactions between cohorts of language-learning students in online geographically distant locations (Helm & Guth 2016).¹³ The communication can be monolingual, when the target language is spoken by both (or more) cohorts of collaborating participants,¹⁴ or bilingual, for instance during eTandem projects based on reciprocal dependence (Cziko 2004) that connect language learners who study each other's languages.¹⁵ The collaboration can be asynchronous (if the communication takes place through non-real time technologies (such as email), or synchronous, if the communication takes place in real time, such as (desk-top) video call or written chat.¹⁶

The motivation to organise international or intercontinental telecollaboration projects is “to provide the members of each parallel class with cost-effective access to an engagement with peers who are expert speakers of the language under study in an effort to increase intercultural awareness as well as linguistic proficiency, to increase the authentication of foreign language use [...] and to broaden the range of discourse options and subjects positions available to classroom learners of language” (Belz 2004: 1), or, to provide “authentic communication with expert speakers” (Helm & Guth 2016: 241).

¹³ The first documented exchange took place in 1992, between English and German learners studying each other's languages.

¹⁴ As in the present studies.

¹⁵ Although telecollaboration mostly takes place between language-learners, a recent overview of European telecollaboration projects reports that digital collaboration projects also occur between groups of students that are not language-learners (Guth, Helm & O'Dowd 2012).

¹⁶ However, it should be noted that through the development of modern digital technologies the boundaries between asynchronous and synchronous communication are blurring, particularly for written exchanges. For instance, if a participant is notified (e.g. on their smart phone) of an incoming email or facebook message while their counterpart is still online, the communication can be said to take place more synchronously than asynchronously. It will be interesting to see how long this distinction between real time and non-real time will hold.

Table 5: Multiple dimension of telecollaboration 2.0: Framework for goals of telecollaboration proposed by Helm and Guth (2010).

| | New online literacies | ICC savoir | Language learning (CEFR)¹⁷ |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Operational 'technical stuff' | computer literacy information literacy participation literacy new media literacies code-switching | apprendre/ faire comprendre | Spoken production Spoken interaction Written production Aural comprehension Written comprehension |
| Operational 'ethos stuff' | willingness to explore, learn from, participate in, create, and collaborate and share in online communities | être | Autonomy Motivation Willingness to communicate |
| Cultural | knowledge of literacy practices and appropriate ways of communicating in online contexts | savoirs | Linguistic competence Sociolinguistic competence Pragmatic competence |
| Critical | how and why new information and communication technologies are used | s'engager | Critical discourse Analysis |

As Table 5 shows, telecollaboration may offer a framework for the acquisition of online literacies (Helm & Guth 2010; Guth & Helm 2016); it may create opportunities for the enhancement of participants' Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC, Byram 1997), through the creation of critical cultural awareness; and it may promote L2-learning when the participants have to collaborate and communicate in the target language.

The methodological approach in most telecollaboration projects is task-based (Guth & Helm 2012). As opposed to classroom tasks that mainly occur in monolingual settings where non-native speakers are expected to communicate with each other in the target language, telecollaborative tasks, due to their unlimited reach of international communities of native speakers, can provide what O'Dowd and Waire (2009) define as "a strong possibility of producing negotiation of meaning and providing opportunities

¹⁷ Common European Framework of References for Languages

for the exploration of different cultural perspectives” (175). This, then, makes telecollaboration highly suitable as a task-based learning environment.

1.4.3 Negotiation of meaning in task-based synchronous computer-mediated communication

It was not until the mid-1990s, following the rapid development of network-based language classrooms and digital platforms, that the first studies emerged that focused on communication and negotiation in interactive digital environments (Chun 1994; Kötter 2001; Lee 2001; Smith 2003a; 2003b; 2005; Sotillo 2005; Tudini 2003, 2007; Wang 2006; Warschauer 1996; Yanguas 2010).

The use and effectiveness of digital technologies within task-based learning environments has only recently attracted widespread attention (Collentine 2010; Hauck 2010; Lamy & Goodfellow 2010; O’Dowd & Waire 2009; Panichi et al. 2010; Peterson 2010; Thomas & Reinders 2010). The few studies focusing on computer-mediated communication in task-based L2-learning environments examine learner uptake (Smith 2005), face-to-face communication and chatting (Smith 2003a; Smith 2003b; Warschauer 1997), conversational floors in synchronous computer-mediated communication (Simpson 2005); the influence of open and closed tasks (Nakahama, Tyler & van Lier 2001), linguistic complexity (Collentine 2010), the difference between face-to-face and cyber face-to-face communication (Chen & Wang 2008), the effect of computer-mediated communication on oral performance (Abrams 2003), and the use of new vocabulary and learner preferences in asynchronous and synchronous computer-mediated communication (Pérez 2003). But, as Stockwell (2010) notes, hardly any research has been done comparing more than one form of computer-mediated communication. Due to the rapidly expanding digital landscape, and the changing dynamics of digital communication, studies in SLA will be expected to focus increasingly on ubiquitous usage of language through technology.

The Varonis and Gass model has been used in multiple research studies in technology enhanced environments, for instance in interaction through video call (Lee 2007; Monteiro 2014; Wang 2006; Yanguas 2010), or through text-based chat (Blake, 2000; Fernández-García & Martínez-Arbeláiz 2002; Kost 2008 O’Rourke 2005; Lee 2001, 2006). In a study into patterns of written chat, Smith (2003) proposes to expand and adapt the

model to accommodate a number of features that are distinctive of the written chat medium (see Figure 7 below.)

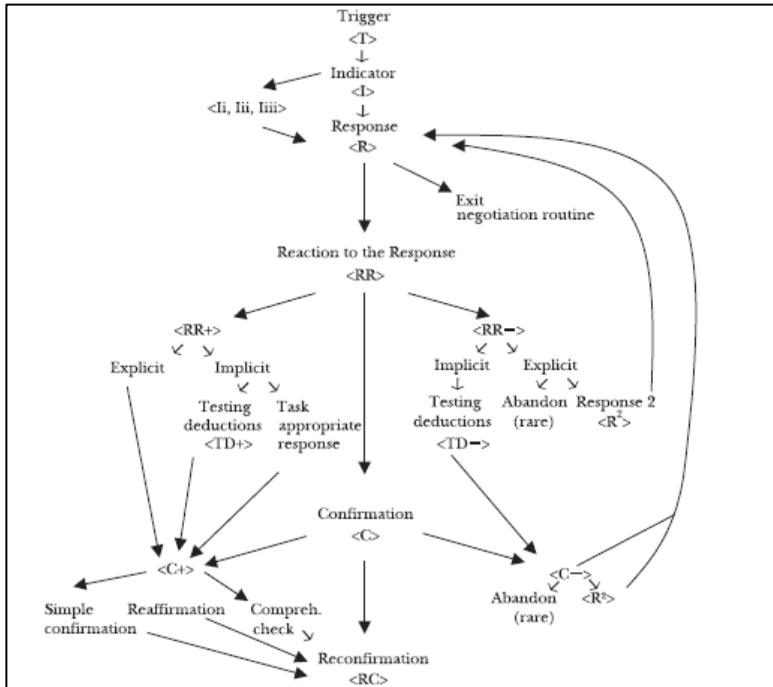


Figure 7: Smith's (2003) model of computer-mediated negotiated interaction, adapted and expanded from Varonis and Gass (1985)

Smith (2003) found, for instance, that occasionally there is a delay between the trigger and indicator in written chat, creating non-adjacent discourse patterns and leading to “split negotiation routines” (48). More importantly, his data showed that the reaction to response phase was more dynamic than had been reported on previously, and that negotiation of meaning episodes continued *after* the reaction to response. Therefore, he added three components to the original model: 1) learner responses such as testing deductions to check understanding; 2) a confirmation phase, where the non-native speaker participant either confirms or refutes the extent of understanding; and 3) the reconfirmation phase, usually consisting of

single-word markers such as <Oh> or <OK>, communicated after the reaction to response. The adaptations Smith proposes only represent patterns in written chat, and concern the response and reaction to response stages of the Varonis and Gass model, leaving the trigger and indicator dimensions of the negotiation of meaning sequence unchanged.

1.5. Relevance to the study

In order to gain insight into patterns of digital communication between native and non-native speakers, in the analysis of our data we will employ a combination of the theoretical perspectives as discussed above. We will use the Varonis and Gass model to classify sequences of negotiation of meaning in both video call and written chat. However, as discussed above, since participant identities always have an institutional and a social component – i.e. whether native or non-native speakers, each participant has an institutional and social identity to negotiate in an educational setting – we also draw on socio-cultural theories to analyse and explain participant responses that are not represented by the Varonis and Gass model.

Chapter 2

The telecollaboration project¹⁸

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline the framework and scope of the digital telecollaboration project that took place between Dutch and Australian cohorts of students and from which the current chapter has drawn its data. First we will describe the different stages and the aim of the telecollaboration project as a whole. Then we define the collaboration framework – including and participants and task design – that served as the basis of the current research project.

2.2 Telecollaboration projects

For five consecutive years, cross-cultural digital collaboration projects took place between two cohorts of undergraduate students: Australian drama students and Dutch students studying English as a second language at the Department of English at the University of Amsterdam. Each year, two groups of approximately 20 students would telecollaborate for a period of about six weeks with the objective to write and perform a joint theatre play on the following topics: Australian versus Dutch cultural identity (2009), living in a Dutch or Australian suburb (2010), Dutch versus Australian reality television (2011), Dutch immigration into Australia throughout the ages (2012), and the social effects of digital communication (2013). Sensitive issues such as troubled national histories and volatile cultural identities were discussed on a variety of digital platforms, both asynchronous (email, facebook) and synchronous (live chat, one-to-one video calling and group-to-group video call). These exchanges were followed by an intense creative period of research into the topics, by presentations of the students' findings on Facebook and through live-stream media, by brainstorming about possible scenes and giving each other feedback on script drafts and improvised live-streamed scenes.

¹⁸ Three paragraphs of this chapter have been previously published as Prior, Van der Laaken & Van der Zwaard (2009). Artspeak: articulating artistic process across cultural boundaries through digital theatre, *The International Journal of the Arts in Society*, 4 (3), 433-446, and Prior, Johnson & Van der Zwaard (2011), e-learning through digital theatre: breaking down the tyranny of distance and limits of location, *Ubiquitous Learning*, 3, 1-14.

At the end of the six-week period, the resulting 50-minute digital play was performed live for audiences on either side of the world. Dutch and Australian students would play out scenes together and engage in dialogue as the Dutch students were projected onto the Australian stage, and vice versa.

2.2.1 Collaboration framework

As we can see in Figure 8 below, the telecollaboration project was multi-layered, each component slotting into the next. The research study that is the subject of this book was based on a tele-task as performed by dyads of Dutch and Australian students. This tele-task launched the start of the play writing process that the students would be involved in for the duration of the telecollaboration project. In its turn, the play writing culminated in the digital play that was performed live by both cohorts of students as the grand finale of the telecollaboration project. The tele-task, the play writing process and the performance formed integral parts of two separate undergraduate university courses: Australian participants were third year undergraduates taking a course in Devised Theatre as part of their Bachelor of Creative Arts. The Dutch students were first year undergraduate students studying English Language and Culture (pilot project), and students taking a Minor in Academic English as part of their Bachelor in European Studies (main project).

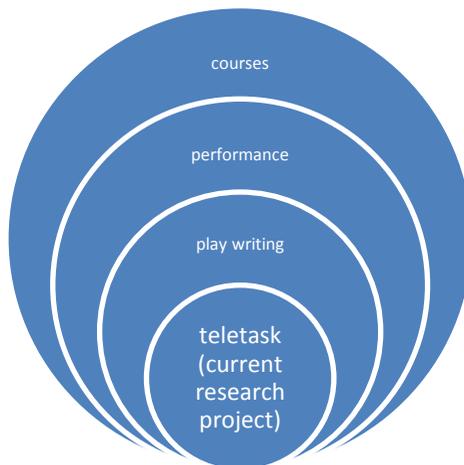


Figure 8: Contextual dimensions of the tele-task

2.2.2 Aims

The Dutch teacher decided to embark on these telecollaboration projects because teaching English at an academic level to Dutch students that are highly advanced L2-learners is a daunting task. Extending the already extensive range of communicative strategies of Dutch first-year students (a range any native speaker of English is easily impressed with) and challenging students to move from the advanced learner discourse level that is typical of non-native speakers to the expert or near-native discourse that is expected of them when they graduate, is complicated. The online task-based framework of the project allowed the Dutch language students to collaborate closely with native speakers of the language they were studying. The authentic task of the exchange gave them a “professionally relevant, strong purpose” activity (Thorne & Black, 2007: 137), and provided an opportunity for them to adopt the roles of L2-apprentices participating in a community of practice with native speakers (cf. Herrington & Oliver 2003). The exchange project provided a learning environment based on highly contextualized meaning (Ellis 2005). As the students extensively researched the topic of the exchange, presented their findings to their Australian counterparts through live media (video call) and discussed their views on the discussion forums of the digital learning environment, they were immersed in an acquisition-rich environment in which meaning prevailed over form. As such, the collaboration was on communication in L2, rather than on accurate linguistic structures, i.e. the activities were fluency-oriented, rather than accuracy-oriented (Brumfit 1984). The non-native speakers, then, became fully-fledged members of the communicative platform: a context that exposed them to all aspects of the language and challenged them into encoding and decoding messages (Ellis 2005). In this way, a ‘Copernican shift’ was brought about in which English became something they did, rather than something they learned about (Harris 1991).

The telecollaboration provided the Dutch students with an opportunity to break out of the actuality of the single-discipline L2-classroom and to join a virtual community of learners within a different discipline. It offered a unique platform of computer-mediated L2-communication that was inherently intercultural (Belz 2005). The interactive arts and performance environment they were part of challenged them in a context with a different intellectual and linguistic scope. Within this rich virtual world of discussion, negotiation and performance, language and culture were inextricably connected, and language was conceptualized as part of a

creative process, an artistic practice and as a social practice (Belz 2004), or languaculture (Agar 1994, cited in Belz 2004), rather than an L2 that needed to be practiced. As the development of the script writing progressed in Australia, and various drafts versions were sent back and forth, the Dutch students were challenged to brainstorm about how their own backgrounds, national histories and cultural humour would fit into the play. Having attended academic L2-classes with an emphasis on grammatical correctness and lexical accuracy, the students were now asked to enter the realm of the imaginative register of the L2 and to develop a greater alertness and sensitivity in their use of language (Everett 2005). During the assignments, the students had to explore the expressive and performative possibilities of, and create a reality with, the English language. Since acting in the target language has been found to be an invaluable immersion experience that motivates the L2-students to express themselves creatively and competently (Ryan-Scheutz & Colango 2004) most Dutch students also performed scenes during the performances.

The exchange project drew on recent trends towards virtual and distributed performance in which mediatised performance is embedded within live, proximate performance. Here, the liveness of the experience for performer and audience is no longer contingent upon physical proximity, but upon entering the virtual space in temporal proximity to one another. Working with a technologically mediated Australian stage, live digital media was used to create opportunities to 'beam in' the Dutch students, who became an integral and interactional part of the performance. From the outset, it was envisaged that the work would consist of scenes as devised and performed by both the Dutch and the Australian students.

2.2.3 Procedures

For the duration of the telecollaboration projects, the students worked within a number of modes of computer-mediated communication (CMC), both asynchronous and synchronous.

Asynchronous group to group communication: Facebook page

In the first week of the telecollaboration project, a closed group Facebook page was set up for announcements, general logistics, exchange of research materials, discussions, information sharing and review of scripts

Synchronous communication

To launch the telecollaboration project, a group-to-group video call session was organised where the teachers introduced the framework and topic of the project and where each student, at both ends, would briefly introduce themselves. After that, weekly group-to-group sessions were organised for live discussions, progress showings, rehearsals and, finally, the performances of the play (three in total) with live audiences in both Amsterdam and Melbourne.

Synchronous one-to-one video call and written chat sessions were held for the introductory task, where dyads consisting of one Australian and one Dutch students would get acquainted and carry either of the two set tasks that are subject of this study: a task on cultural humour, where the students would exchange cultural jokes and discuss the cultural humour of their respective countries, or a task on lexical items. After the participants had carried out this introductory task they were expected to organise one-to-one video call sessions after class for script writing sessions or to rehearse their scenes. Some students added each other to their personal Facebook accounts so they could communicate through personal messages.

2.3 The research project: pilot and main project

We started our research project with an exploratory pilot project (as discussed below and in chapter 3), in order to get insight into whether the tasks would prove to be robust enough to yield (sufficient) negotiated interaction, to explore the general dimensions of dyadic digital communication, and to gauge the 'digital chemistry' between the Dutch and Australian students. Particularly, the pilot project was expected to provide answers to questions such as: how long does it take the participants to finish the task, are the instructions clear enough, or does the instructor need to be present during task performance? Also, the digital communication equipment, such as recording devices, needed to be tested and assessed.

2.3.1 The pilot project: task design

In the design process we adhered to Chapelle's (2001) criteria for successful computer-mediated communication tasks. According to Chapelle, tasks should be *authentic*, i.e. there should be a correlation between the content of the task and the interest of the participants outside the language learning environment. They should be *learner fit*, i.e. there has to be a

correlation between the level of the task and the participants' willingness to communicate. They ought to be *meaning focused*, i.e. the learners' attention should be directed towards meaning rather than form of the language, and, finally, they should be CALL practical (computer-assisted language learning that is suitable to be performed through (synchronous) computer-mediated communication).

A complicating factor in the design process was the high level of L2 proficiency of the Dutch students. The majority of negotiation-of-meaning studies, both face-to-face and digital, focus on elementary and intermediate level L2-learners. This is not surprising since studies involving these learners will most certainly provide researchers with an abundance of data for analysis. Proficient learners are simply less likely to come across episodes of non-understanding. This means that designing a task that will generate a satisfactory amount of data consisting of negotiated routines from advanced learners is challenging.

Any (highly) advanced, or even near-native language learner would admit, however, that jokes and puns in a foreign language are a potential source of non-understanding and frustration. Many foreign language learners will remember an instance of interaction with a native speaker during which they did not understand a joke or pun, or miserably attempted to deliver one themselves. The jokes task, then, was designed to draw on differences in jokes and cultural humour that would warrant non-native speaker non-understanding, even at an advanced proficiency level. Indeed, in her study into humour in the L2 classroom, Bell (2009) confirms that "humour has been touted as an excellent way for students to learn the vocabulary, syntax, semantics, and discourse conventions of the target language" (241), but adds that "humorous communication is extremely complex in both its forms and functions" (242). In her recent study on advanced language proficiency, Byrnes (2012) observes that advanced L2-learners need to be "highly aware language users, with regard to the language as a culturally embedded system for making meanings" (515). Similarly, in her study on the feasibility of translating humour, Raphaelson-West (1989) concludes that linguistic and cultural jokes are amongst the hardest aspects of the language to transmit and translate. Bates (1999) observes that, because puns play with meaning, they may cause confusion and hinder the communication flow. Because and in spite of all these findings, L2 humour and play have been shown to promote language development in many ways (cf. Vandergriff 2016).

The decision was made to select a number of jokes that were so culturally specific that even a native speaker of English of non-Australian origin would have to engage in negotiation of meaning in order to understand. In other words, there was a near certainty that the non-native speaker would have to engage in negotiation of meaning in order to reach mutual understanding. To counterbalance the influence of task-design on task-performance, a control task of a different category was developed. Whereas the jokes-task would most likely elicit triggers of a more general coherence-type – e.g. not understanding the punch line or even the entire content of a joke – the control task was expected to draw triggers at a lexical level.

The control task leaned heavily on a well-known task on lexical items that is suitable for any level of language learning: the Things-in-Pocket task (Riggenbach & Samuda 2000; Samuda & Bygate 2008). Students are given a bag, or a list, of objects allegedly found in the pockets of someone's overcoat from Lost and Found. The decision to use this task was based on the experience of many language teachers at an advanced level that students are good at expressing 'the sublime', but often lack the lexical tools to articulate 'the ridiculous'. In other words, a Dutch undergraduate student of English is more likely to be able to discuss, say, the metaphorical elements in *Moby Dick* quite eloquently than to name the items inside a sewing-kit in English. This fairly common lexical asymmetry is, of course, due to the input of the language learning environment the student is in: this environment requires the student to tap abstract lexical sources rather than day-to-day objects that they may or may not have come across as elementary L2-learners, but will have long forgotten.

Below both tasks will be discussed in detail.

2.3.1.1 Task 1: Jokes

In keeping with the theme of the pilot study – Dutch immigration into Australia in the 1950s – the task on humour required the participants to devise a dramatic scene in which a Dutch immigrant, who has just arrived in Australia, is initiated into typically Australian humour and jokes. The ideas generated for this scene would be included in the final script of the digital theatre performance the groups were in the process of creating. To help the students on their way, each participant was given a task sheet with five jokes: Australian jokes for the Australian students (see example in Table 6 below); Dutch jokes for the Dutch ones (which the Dutch students had to

translate during task performance).¹⁹ The students were instructed to start the task by exchanging their jokes and by comparing and contrasting Dutch and Australian humour.

Table 6: Native speaker task sheet for jokes task (pilot project)²⁰

The theme of today's session is: initiation of a Dutch immigrant into Australian humour.

For instance, a scene between an Australian and a Dutchman who has just arrived (i.e. today): the Australian tries to initiate the new immigrant by describing/defining the Australian sense of humour, and introducing him/her to Australian jokes.

You will communicate the first half of the task through Skype video call, the second through written chat.

1. Below are a number of typically Australian jokes (your Dutch counterpart has been given Dutch jokes). Take a few minutes to read them.
2. Exchange your jokes with your counterpart (+ any jokes you may know yourself).

Exchange ideas about Australian and Dutch humour in general.

- What makes it typically Australian/Dutch?
- Start brainstorming about ideas for a scene: who, what, where, why, how? Take notes.
- Decide which jokes/expressions you want to incorporate in the scene.
- Say goodbye to your counterpart and sign off.

¹⁹ See Appendix 5

²⁰ Abridged version – see Appendix 6 for the full version

Table 7: Jokes on NS task sheet²¹ (pilot project and main project)

Joke 1

Two Aussie cattle drovers standing in an Outback bar.

One asked, "What are you up to, Mate?"

Ahh, I'm takin' a mob of 6000 from Goondiwindi to Gympie."

"Oh yeah ... and what route are you takin'?"

"Ah, probably the Missus; after all, she stuck by me durin' the drought."

Joke 2

A Pom, fresh off the plane at Sydney airport, is trying to negotiate Australian customs. Finally, when it's his turn to get his passport stamped, the customs officer starts rattling off the usual questions:

C.O.: How long do you intend to stay?

POM: 1 week.

C.O.: What is the nature of this trip?

POM: Business.

C.O.: Do you have any past criminal convictions?

POM: I didn't think we still needed to!

Joke 3

Q: How do you know if you're a bogan?

A: You let your 15 year old daughter smoke at the dinner table ...
in front of her kids.

Joke 4

You know your Australian when:

- You believe that stubbies can be either drunk or worn.
- You believe the "l" in the word "Australia" is optional.
- You can translate: "Dazza and Shazza played Acca Dacca on the way to Maccas."
- You know, whatever the tourist books say, that no one says "cobber"

²¹ See Appendix 5 for the Dutch jokes

Of the four jokes that native-speakers had to communicate to their Dutch counterparts, two jokes (Jokes 1 and 2 above) were fairly similar in that they ended with a clear punchline. Joke 3 held several potential triggers, also depending on how the joke is communicated. Joke 4 was a typical question and answer-type joke, where, hypothetically, the interlocutor is given the floor after the question part of the joke. In a number of instances, the native-speaker communicated a joke that was not on the task sheet. This was included in the data as well. The non-native speaker participants, in their turn, were given four culturally specific jokes in Dutch that had to be translated and communicated to their Australian counterparts. These data will be discussed in Chapter 6.

2.3.1.2 Task 2: Things-in-Pocket

Like the task on humour, the Things-in-Pocket task was an integral part of the larger, thematic context of the digital theatre play the participants were collaborating on. Each student received twelve photographs of items found in the coat pockets of fictional Dutch immigrants on their way to Australia in the 1950s. Based on the objects, the students were asked to come up with character profiles that could be used in the play. For the main study the Things in Pocket task was framed to fit the theme of the telecollaboration project (see appendices 3 and 4).

Table 8: Native speaker task sheet for the Things-in-Pocket task²²

In today's session you are going to telecollaborate with your counterpart from overseas. Together, you are going to create a number of character profiles that may be incorporated in the (digital) theatre performance "*Boat People*" (working title).

You will communicate the first half of the task through written chat, the second half through Skype video call.

Four overcoats of four Dutch immigrants to Australia have been brought in at "Lost and Found", during the first immigration wave after WWII (1950s). The coat pockets contain a number of personal objects and things such as photographs.

You have the information on the objects found in coats 1 and 3.

Your counterpart has information on the objects found in coats 2 and 4.

²² See Appendices 3 and 4 for the Things-in-Pocket task sheets of the main project.

*Objects from coat 1*²³:



Note: It is entirely up to you and your counterpart how and in what order you are going to exchange the information, **as long as you do NOT SHOW your counterpart the objects – you are only allowed to name or describe them.**

- Discuss with your counterpart what the objects tell you about the owner/emigrant of each of the coats, i.e.:
- Discuss what objects/information you base your profiling on.

The tasks both consisted of three communicative stages (cf. O’Dowd and Ware 2009):

- *Information exchange*: the participants exchange information (cultural jokes or pocket items), as instructed on their task sheets.
- *Comparison and analysis*: the participants compare and contrast their cultural jokes (jokes task) or discuss the characters of their coat owners (things in pocket), and debate if and how they could include their findings into the larger telecollaboration project of script writing.
- *Production*: the participants co-write the script and co-perform in the digital theatre play²⁴

2.3.2 Procedures

The telecollaboration project was launched with a group-to-group video call session between the cohorts of students, where both the Australian and Dutch teachers charted the outline and scope of the telecollaboration

²³ NOTE: For reasons of space, only 2 out of 12 coat pocket items have been included here. For the complete assignment, see Appendices 1 and 2.

²⁴ These data are not part of the current study, but the subject of my partner teacher Dr. Yoni Prior’s PhD thesis entitled: *Pragmatic Dramaturgy: The Creative Management of Limits in Performance-Making Processes*. (2016)

project and the students briefly introduced themselves. After this session, the students were randomly divided into dyads consisting of one Australian and one Dutch student, who would be telecollaborating together throughout the duration of the group-to-group project. In the week following the first group-to-group video call session, all dyads performed the tasks that are subject of this study. By introducing themselves, and exchanging and discussing task items (as discussed below) they laid the groundwork for the remainder of the project.

The dyads each received a separate time slot to carry out the tasks, which were all performed in the same week. Although the participants were told that the video call sessions would be recorded and that the data would be part of a study, they were not informed of the subject or focus of the research project. Since the recording programs were installed on a university computer, the Dutch students were asked to perform the task from the Dutch university computer lab. Due to the time difference, the Australian participants mostly carried out the tasks from their home devices. In order to monitor time-on-task and in case of any technical mishaps, the researcher was present in the computer lab during task performance, but was deliberately out of hearing range. The participants were given the task sheets and instructions without preparation time shortly before the beginning of the digital session, and were explicitly instructed not to share any information about the task with their peers until the end of the week when everyone would have performed their tasks.

The participants were not given any specific instructions other than those provided on the tasks themselves. Although the task for this study took place within a language-learning framework, in the instructions, interaction and task completion were emphasized rather than language-learning. The participants were asked to exchange jokes (the Dutch participants had to translate their jokes on the spot), but there was nothing in the instructions about focus on form. The native speakers were not instructed to initiate repair, comment on non-native speaker-errors, to recast, give feedback or scaffold.²⁵ In other words, the interaction did not have the explicit context of language learning. The instructions, then, addressed task performance and task completion through telecollaboration without any references to language learning.

²⁵ Nor were they instructed not to.

The Skype® video call sessions were recorded with Vodburner®, a licensed program which allows clear split-screen visual recordings of both participants, for transcriptions and analysis of non-linguistic features (e.g. gestures, body language, facial expressions). The Skype® chat sessions were conducted through Skype accounts created especially for the research study; Skype automatically saves the chat scripts (including intervals of time between turn-taking),²⁶ which can be accessed for analysis.

2.3.2.1 Counterbalanced design

In the exploration (pre-pilot) stage of the project, four dyads had been asked to perform the task either through video call or through written chat (see Table 9 below). However, this set-up led to problems with the analysis of the data: it was difficult to compare and contrast participant behaviours because different dyads had performed through different media. It was difficult to determine, for instance, whether the medium or participant variables (e.g. face issues), or a combination of both, were the reason why a non-native speaker would not initiate repair during task performance.

Table 9: Pre-pilot research design

| | | | | |
|--------------|---|--------|---|-----------------|
| Jokes task | – | dyad 1 | – | video call only |
| Jokes task | – | dyad 2 | – | chat only |
| Control task | – | dyad 3 | – | video call only |
| Control task | – | dyad 4 | – | chat only |

To avoid these potential problems, it was decided to implement a counterbalanced design for the pilot and main studies: the tasks were split into two parts, the first half to be performed through video call, and the second half through chat (or vice versa). Half of the dyads used chat for the first half of the task, and video call for the second half, the other half of the dyads worked vice versa. All dyads performed the task through both video call and chat. As such, the data were expected to become more balanced and comparable.

²⁶ This feature is important when conducting research into negotiated routines, since a lengthy interval between turn-taking could be noted as an indication of non-understanding, or an indication of the unwillingness to initiate negotiation of meaning, as will be presented in the data below.

Table 10: Pilot and main research study design

| |
|--|
| TASK 1 – dyad 1 – both video call and chat |
| TASK 2 – dyad 2 – both video call and chat |

2.4. Main project (as discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6)

The general scope, research design and logistics of the main project were very similar to the pilot project: the native speakers and non-native speakers would first see each other at a group-to-group live streaming session where each individual student introduced themselves and where the lecturers announced the theme and configuration of the project. The theme of this main project and the final theatre performance was *the impact of digital communication on human interaction*. Part of the activity of the telecollaboration, then, i.e. having to brainstorm about the impact of digital communication on human interaction, simultaneously represented and echoed the theme of the telecollaboration itself. As such, while digitally communicating, the participants had to reflect on the implications of the phenomenon of digital communication itself.

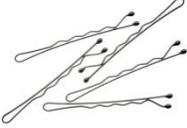
The research framework of the main study was also similar to that of the pilot study: again, two cohorts of students telecollaborated for a period of approximately six weeks in writing a digital theatre play together that would be performed simultaneously through live group-to-group interactive media at both ends of the globe.

2.4.1 Tasks

The data from the pilot study showed that the type of task – both the jokes task and the control task – would yield enough useful and interesting data for analysis in both types of computer-mediated communication modes. The jokes task remained unchanged. The Things-in-Pocket task, however, was tweaked by adding the target words for the items on the native speaker task sheets. The reason for this was that during the pilot project the pictures on the native speaker task sheet were not always clear – e.g. a pearl earring would be labelled as a fish hook (see Table 8 above). Also, the native speaker did not always come up with the target word as intended by the researcher, e.g. a low frequency item such as *crochet hook* was referred to as the higher frequency item *knitting needle*. In order to avoid confusion and to make sure that the target items would be recognized and

communicated with the right word, the target word was added to the picture on the task sheet of the native speaker.

Table 11: Example of items on native speaker task sheet – target words have been added to the pictures.

| | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
| Bobby pins | Tassle |

2.4.2 Loss of data

Unfortunately, failing technology and the overall absence of support from technical staff due to faculty reorganisations resulted in loss of some video call data. Although all participants had performed the tasks, not all video call sessions turned out to have been recorded. For the sake of reliability of the data, however, we could not ask the participants to do the same task again. For the main project, therefore, the video call recorder programme Vodburner© was replaced by Skype Call©, which, as no more data were lost, turned out to be more reliable.

Some data were excluded from analysis because of communication problems with the Australian students. Some native speakers had not found the task in their inbox but did not indicate this as such, so the researcher would not discover this until the recordings were analysed.²⁷ Other native speakers had not read the instructions carefully enough and would, for instance, avoid naming the item during the Things-in-Pocket task because they assumed they were not allowed to.

Nevertheless, because this research project does not rely on quantitative methods but focuses on detailed, qualitative analysis of relatively small groups of participant interactions, the loss of data has not influenced the outcomes of the research studies.

²⁷ This occurred twice and only during the jokes task.

Chapter 3

Video call or chat? Negotiation of meaning and issues of face in telecollaboration²⁸

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of a study into second language (L2) learner initiation of negotiation of meaning during two modes of one-to-one synchronous computer-mediated communication: video call and real-time chat. The aims of this study were to examine the relationship between negotiation configurations and the type of synchronous mode of computer-mediated communication, i.e. to investigate if and how the digital mode of real-life communication affects the ongoing interaction in a language learning environment; whether any consistent patterns can be observed for each mode of communication, and what causes these occurring patterns. Dyads consisting of undergraduate native and non-native speakers of English carried out an L2-learning task using both video call and real-time text chat. The data – transcripts of the video call sessions and chat-scripts – were coded for negotiation of meaning episodes, and analysed for learner-initiated signals of non-understanding.

It is important to consider and investigate the possible effect of both these synchronous computer-mediated communication modes on the dynamics of interaction, as real-time, one-to-one digital interaction is implemented more and more in educational language learning environments. The digital platforms that are now available within most educational contexts in many parts of the world facilitate communication and collaboration beyond institutional constraints and national boundaries and provide educators with the possibility to create digital communication environments and forums (Belz 2004; Kramsch 1987; Prior & Johnson 2011; Prior & van der Laaken 2009; Thorne 2008; Warschauer 1996, 1997). Linking up students from different parts of the globe, which used to be an expensive and time-consuming effort involving plane trips and youth hostels has, technically speaking, become a matter of acquiring the right equipment and

²⁸ This chapter in adapted form was published earlier as van der Zwaard, R., & Bannink, A. (2014). Video call or chat? Negotiation of meaning and issues of face in telecollaboration *System*, 44, 137-148.

downloading the appropriate software: interactive computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies in the L2 classroom give language learners the opportunity to collaborate with native speakers of the target language without leaving their classrooms (Guth & Helm 2010; Guth & Marini-Maio 2010; Lamy & Goodfellow 2010; Thorne & Reinhardt 2008).

3.2 Issues in Computer-Mediated Communication

Research studies have claimed a number of benefits of computer-mediated communication, especially in studies comparing written digital interaction, such as text chat, and traditional face-to-face interaction. Beauvois (1992) indicated that participants communicating through text-chat generally showed more motivation and produced a richer lexicon due to the non-threatening and comparatively anonymous mode of chat communication. Other studies comparing written computer-mediated communication and non-digital face-to-face interaction confirmed that text chat generally yielded higher learner participation and more equal footing; particularly because the participants felt less communication pressure (Abrams 2003; Chun 1994, 1998; Condon & Cech 1996; Freiermuth 1998, 2001; Freiermuth & Huang 2012; Freiermuth & Jarrell 2006; Kelm 1992; Kern 1995; Kern et al. 2008; Meunier 1998; Warschauer 1997). More recent studies, however, have found contradictory results. In a study comparing the effectiveness of different types of digital and non-digital real-time communication, including video call as the digital equivalent of face-to-face communication, Yamaha and Akahori (2007) report that communication and comprehension through video call was the most successful because the participants felt reassured by the presence of their partners' image. Similarly, Yamaha (2009) and Ko (2012) found that the availability of the counterpart's image during communication creates an awareness of social presence and enhances a more active and effective communication in an L2-environment.

3.2.1 Chat and video call: differences and similarities

The two types of one-to-one synchronous computer-mediated communication – real-time chat and video call – differ in various ways (see Table 12). Naturally, chat sessions are based on written texts, meaning that a message needs to be typed and can be modified and reviewed before it is sent off. This makes turn-taking slower and more deliberate than in a video call, which resembles face-to-face conversation in that it involves both audio and visual information exchange: the interactants see each other's image and hear each other's voices. It therefore includes prosodic, paralinguistic

and nonverbal features of communication and can be said to suffer from ‘tyranny of succession’ (Leech & Short 2007), indicating that words or sentences that have been uttered can be modified but never erased.

Table 12: Comparing interaction through one-to-one chat and video calling

| One-to-one written chat | Video calling |
|--|---|
| Text-based: activity of typing and reading | Audio-visual: activity of speaking and listening |
| Intentional emotions through emoticons | (Un)intentional emotions |
| Non-adjacent discourse patterns | Sequential/adjacent discourse patterns |
| No image of counterpart | Image of counterpart (cyber face-to-face) |
| Slow turn-taking: time to encode and decode messages | Turn-taking ‘suffers’ from tyranny of succession (Leech & Short 2007): words or sentences that have been uttered can be modified but never erased, and call for immediate reaction. |
| Saved messages | No log of saved messages |

There are also similarities. Both modes of synchronous computer-mediated communication have a significant common denominator: the communicative event is live, which means that messages are encoded and decoded during interaction in real time. Even though chatting is based on written text, it is still regarded as a speech-like modality because messages are sent back and forth during real-time communication: a “conversation in slow motion” (Beauvois 1998: 198) as it were, or “a quiet phone call”, as Carlson from *The Simpsons* explains the phenomenon of written digital communication to Homer (cited in Pasfield-Neofitou 2012: 5).

3.3 Computer-mediated communication and L2 learning

3.3.1 Negotiation of meaning in computer-mediated communication

Negotiation of meaning can be defined as a series of conversational turns usually initiated by the learner. Due to non-understanding, the conversational flow is interrupted and an interactional repair sequence is started, aimed at reaching shared understanding and solving the breakdown in communication. It is claimed to promote L2 acquisition, mainly because it forces learners to check and clarify utterances before the flow of meaningful interaction can continue. Since the early 1980s

negotiation of meaning benefits for L2-learning in the non-digital classroom have been widely investigated (Ellis 2003; Gass & Mackey 2007; Mackey, Abbuhl & Gass 2012; Long 1980, 1982; Mackey, Varonis & Gass 1985a, 1985b; Nakahama, Tyler & van Lier 2001; Oliver 2002; Pica 1991, 1992, 1994; Pica, Young & Doughty 1987). More recently, the development of network-based language classrooms and digital platforms has opened up a new arena of negotiation of meaning research.

Studies in this field generally investigate one type of digital communication, such as real-live chat (Bower & Kawaguchi 2011; Fernández-García & Martínez-Arbelaiz 2002; Kitade 2000; Kötter 2003; Lee 2001, 2009; Shekary & Theririan 2006; Tudini 2003, 2007), or voice chat (Kenning 2010; Kitajima 2013). Other studies compare non-digital or traditional face-to-face interaction to chat (Chen & Wang 2008; Freiermuth 2001; Freiermuth & Jarrell 2006; Smith 2003a; Smith 2003b; Warschauer 1997; Yanguas 2010), or asynchronous (e.g. email) to synchronous computer-mediated interaction (Abrams 2003; Perez 2003; Sotillo 2000; Stockwell 2010). To our knowledge, no extensive research has been done into one-to-one video calling, or into comparing negotiated interaction in one-to-one chat and video calling in a language learning environment. We may therefore conclude that, although Stockwell (2010) claims that different modes of computer-mediated communication directly influence how learners express and communicate their ideas, research on the effect of different modes of computer-mediated communication on the interaction between native speakers and non-native speakers, and ultimately on the L2-learning process, is still in its infancy and remains, as yet, largely unexplored.

3.3.1.1 *The Varonis and Gass model*

The Varonis and Gass model of non-understandings (1985) is widely used to assess episodes of negotiation of meaning and has also been applied to digital L2-learning (Smith 2003b; Wang 2006; Yanguas 2010). The model claims that negotiation of meaning episodes can be divided into two main parts: a trigger and a resolution:

| | |
|---------|------------|
| TRIGGER | RESOLUTION |
| T → | I → R → RR |

A TRIGGER (T) during interaction, is considered to be any part of the discourse that prompts non-understanding on the part of the hearer. During the RESOLUTION, the non-understanding episode is 'dealt with': the

INDICATOR (I) is the episode in which the hearer signifies the non-understanding, arresting the progression of the conversation. This leads to a RESPONSE (R) of the speaker to the indication of non-understanding. The final prime is the REACTION TO RESPONSE (RR) uttered by the hearer (and initiator of the negotiated routine), which usually marks the end of the negotiated routine, i.e. the non-understanding has been resolved and the flow of the discourse can continue. Examples of RR-utterances are 'Okay', 'I see', 'alright', or 'I understand'. They act as markers that signal a pop back to the dominant interaction. An example of the model at work is given in Table 13

Table 13: Varonis and Gass model with data and observation from study under discussion.

| Turn | Participant | | Coding |
|------|-------------|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. | NS | <i>There's a figure as well.</i> | TRIGGER (T) |
| 2. | NNS | <i>A what?</i> | INDICATOR (I) |
| 3. | NS | <i>A figure ... like a little statue.</i> | RESPONSE (R) |
| 4. | NNS | <i>Alright.</i> | REACTION TO RESPONSE (RR) |
| 5. | NS | <i>The figure is British</i> | Interaction has popped back up. |

In Table 13, the word *figure* as expressed by the native speaker during the interaction serves as the trigger of the negotiation episode. The non-native speaker's subsequent explicit reply of *<a what?>* serves to indicate that the meaningful interaction, i.e. the horizontal flow of the communication is temporarily suspended. The native speaker responds to the indicator by elaborating on the trigger in order to solve the non-understanding. With the non-native speaker's utterance of *<Alright>* (RR), the native speaker presumes that the negotiation episode has come to an end and proceeds the interaction.

3.3.2 Negotiation of meaning and issues of (loss of) face

As discussed above, L2 acquisition research claims that negotiation of meaning is beneficial for the language acquisition process. In other words, the more language-learners engage in negotiated episodes, the better; or, the more they indicate non-understanding, the better. As the Varonis and Gass model illustrates, negotiated interaction relies on one of the interactants starting up the negotiation for meaning by indicating non-

understanding, resulting in a sequence of correction, repair or abandonment.

From a socio-interactive perspective, however, initiating negotiation of meaning is a dispreferred repair sequence: in most situations people, whether they are language learners or not, prefer to wait for their interlocutor to resolve the trouble source rather than to explicitly ask for clarification or explanation (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977; Schegloff 2000). This systematic preference for self-correction is closely related to the concept of 'face' (Brown & Levinson 1978, 1987; Goffman 1967). Following Wagner-Gough & Hatch (1975), who criticized language research paradigms that isolated use of language from meaning, and Block (2003), who stresses that SLA-research would benefit from a socially-informed paradigm, Reinhardt (2008) calls for a synthesis of both the transactional-interactionist approach and the socio-cognitive approach to the analysis of negotiation of meaning, including issues such as face and solidarity.

In studies into interaction between native and non-native speakers, then, we will need to concede that in negotiation of meaning episodes there are two forces at work: the social force of not wanting to admit to non-understanding due to issues of face, or what Erving Goffman (1959) qualifies as "impression management" (123),²⁹ and a task-oriented-force of having to negotiate for meaning in order to finish a learning task successfully (Bannink, 2002).

Hence, the questions addressed in this study are if and how these issues are manifest in a digital setting when studying online interaction and how these forces are negotiated in different digital settings.

3.4. The research project: design and methodology

This study is part of a larger digital task-based group-to-group collaboration project between two cohorts of Dutch and Australian students working together via a variety of digital platforms, both asynchronous (email, Facebook, wiki) and synchronous (live chat, one-to-one video calling and group-to-group video call). This intensive, intercultural collaboration took place for the duration of one academic semester and resulted in a 50-minute group-devised, digital theatre play that was performed to audiences

²⁹ Goffman (1959) compares the human self to a theatre: when we interact we are on stage where we have to put on a performance; when we do not interact we are off-stage, in the wings where we do not have to worry about impression management.

on both sides through live interactive video call media. Specifically, the data derive from the one-to-one task that formed an intrinsic part of the group-to-group collaboration project.³⁰ In other words, the task was embedded in an authentic group-to-group task-learning situation with a real contextualized collaborative outcome of the digital performance. The goal of this study was not revealed to the participants.

3.4.1 Research questions

The following research questions will be addressed:

1. How does the nature of the synchronous digital medium influence negotiated interaction? Are there significant differences in patterns of negotiation of meaning in online chat and video call during one-to-one interaction between native and non-native speakers?
2. Do social constraints, such as second language communication apprehension due to issues of (loss of) face, influence negotiation of meaning episodes in online chat and video call during one-to-one native speaker-non-native speaker interaction? And if so, how?

3.4.2 Participants

The participants in this study were 16 undergraduate students: eight non-native and eight native speakers of English. The non-native speakers were Dutch first-year undergraduate students between 18 and 20 years of age. All had Dutch as a first language and a similar background in English-language education at secondary school (comparable to an International Baccalaureate Program Diploma); their proficiency level in English can be considered as advanced. The native-speaking participants were third-year Australian undergraduate students of Drama and Education. None of the participants had ever telecollaborated on a one-to-one level in an educational context before.

3.4.3 Task design: choices and considerations

A task on cultural humour was developed that would warrant non-understanding by the non-native speaker, even at an advanced proficiency

³⁰ Most L2-research projects are classified as either classroom-based or experimental laboratory-based, the settings of which may influence research findings (Gass et al 2005). Although the participants of this research study carried out the tasks in a computer lab after regular class time, due to its embedding into the larger ongoing group-to-group project it should still be considered as classroom-based research.

level. In order to recognize potentially different negotiation patterns in both modes of interaction, a number of jokes was selected that were so culturally specific that even a native speaker of English of non-Australian origin would have to engage in negotiation of meaning in order to understand. In other words, there was a near certainty that the non-native speaker would have to initiate negotiation of meaning in order to reach mutual understanding.

The task required the participants to devise a dramatic scene in which a Dutch immigrant, who had just arrived in Australia, is initiated into typically Australian humour and jokes. The ideas generated for this scene would be included in the final script of the digital theatre performance the groups were in the process of creating. Each participant was given four jokes on their task sheets: Australian jokes for the Australian students (see example in Table 14 below); Dutch jokes for the Dutch ones. The students were instructed to start the task by exchanging their jokes and by comparing and contrasting Dutch and Australian humour.

Table 14: Examples of Australian jokes that Australian native speakers had to communicate to Dutch non-native speakers.

Joke 1:

A Pom, fresh off the plane at Sydney airport, is trying to negotiate Australian customs. Finally, when it's his turn to get his passport stamped, the customs officer (C.O.) starts rattling off the usual questions:

C.O.: How long do you intend to stay?

POM: 1 week.

C.O.: What is the nature of this trip?

POM: Business.

C.O.: Do you have any past criminal convictions?

POM: I didn't think we still needed to!

Joke 2:

Q: How do you know if you're a bogan?

*A: You let your 15 year old daughter smoke at the dinner table ...
...in front of her kids.*

3.4.4 Procedures

Over a period of several weeks a total of eight dyads of native and non-native speakers ($n = 16$) carried out the task. Participants were unknown to their overseas counterparts, apart from the occasional glimpse of each other on the screen during the plenary sessions. The non-native speakers conducted the task from the university computer lab (the researchers were present in case of technical calamities and to monitor time-on-task, but were not within hearing distance). Due to the time difference between Australia and The Netherlands, the native speakers participated from their home computers. Both the native speakers and the non-native speakers were given the task without preparation time and without specific instructions other than those provided on the task sheet itself. The participants were not given a specific time limit beforehand, although some dyads were told by the researchers to finish the task after an hour.

The task each dyad performed was divided into two: the first half of the task was performed through live-chat, the second half through video call, or vice versa. In other words, each dyad needed to communicate through both modes of synchronous computer-mediated communication in a counterbalanced design. The Skype® video call sessions were recorded with Vodburner®, a licensed program which allows clear split-screen visual recordings of both participants, for transcriptions and analysis of non-linguistic features (e.g. gestures, body language, facial expressions). The Skype® chat sessions were conducted through Skype accounts created especially for the research study; Skype automatically saves the chat scripts (including intervals of time between turn-taking),³¹ which can be accessed for analysis.

3.5 Data analysis

The data collected for this study consists of approximately eight hours of transcripts of recorded audio-video communication sessions, and print-outs of one-to-one chat scripts from eight chat sessions. They offer examples of negotiated interaction in video call and in chat from two different jokes as communicated by different dyads. The negotiated routines have been coded for negotiation of meaning according to the Varonis and Gass model of non-understandings (1985), and the turns, including pauses in video call, have been numbered. Expressions of non-verbal, prosodic and

³¹ This feature is important when conducting research into negotiated routines, since a lengthy interval between turns could be noted as an indication of non-understanding.

paralinguistic communication have been added in the observations-column.³²

The data comprised of transcripts and chat scripts of the interactions of the following four task activities:

1. getting to know each other;
2. exchanging jokes;
3. general discussion;
4. brainstorming for scenes for the digital theatre project, based on activities 2 and 3.

For this study only the learner-initiated negotiated interaction from activity 2 (exchanging jokes) was selected, mainly because this was the stage of the task where the core information had to be exchanged, and where the stakes of (not) starting up negotiation of meaning were high, especially for the non-native speakers; if the joke was not understood, the course and outcome of the entire task could be affected.

3.5.1. Data 1 and 2

In examples 1 and 2 below, the Australian native speaker communicates two different jokes to the Dutch L2 learner. Both jokes have similar lexical triggers – *bogan* and *pom*³³ – and are negotiated by the same dyad during the same task-session: example 1 through video call; example 2 through chat.

Example 1: Dyad 1; video call; bogan joke

| Turn | Speaker | Video transcript and observations |
|------|---------|---|
| 1. | NS | <i>Ok. Question: how do you know if you're a bogan?</i> |
| 2. | NNS | <i>What? Say it again. I couldn't hear you [clutches headphones].</i> |
| 3. | NS | <i>How do you know if you're a bogan?</i> |
| 4. | NNS | <i>What's a bogan?</i> |
| 5. | NS | <i>Someone that really has no manners, or class ... or anything</i> |

³² For the sake of simplicity, all participants are referred to as 'he', regardless of gender.

³³ Although most non-Australian native speakers of English do not know the word *bogan* either because of its cultural specificity, to a non-native speaker of English *bogan* is 'just' another word they are unfamiliar with, like the word *pom* in the succeeding joke.

| | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| | | <i>like that ...</i> |
| 6. | NNS | [laughs] |
| 7. | NS | <i>... and the answer is ...</i> [pause] |
| 8. | NS | <i>... you let your 15-year-old smoke at the dinner table ...</i> [pause] |
| 9. | NNS | [laughs] |
| 10. | NS | <i>... in front of her kids</i> [emphasizes her] |
| 11. | NNS | <i>Wow ...</i> [NNS fidgets and bites on his finger – laughs out loud again] |
| 12. | NNS | <i>Alright ... I've got a really long joke</i> |
| 13. | NS | <i>OK</i> |

In Example 1, the negotiation routine is started up by the non-native speaker in Turn 2. He indicates, both verbally and non-verbally, that he encounters channel trouble, which results in non-understanding <(clutching headphones with both hands and leaning towards the screen) *What? Say it again. I couldn't hear you*>. Because the non-native speaker appears to be blaming technology for his non-understanding, the native speaker responds by repeating the trigger without providing any new input. This is an adequate response to the non-native speaker's turn: he is neither more nor less informative than necessary ('maxim of quantity'; Grice 1975). In Turn 4, however, the non-native speaker indicates non-understanding for a second time, this time with an explicit, unambiguous indicator that he encounters lexical trouble: <*what's a bogan*>. The native speaker reacts with a definition of the trouble source in Turn 5, and leaves a short pause (Turn 6), presumably to give the non-native speaker a chance to respond. When this does not happen, the native speaker pops back up to the dominant interaction and continues with the joke in Turn 7. At the end of Turn 8 the native speaker inserts another pause. This can be regarded as the drum roll before the punch line, as indicated paralinguistically on the task sheet with three dots (see Table 14). The non-native speaker, however, thinks the silence marks the end of the joke, or punch line, and starts to laugh (Turn 9).

This laughter can be interpreted as a strategy to save his own face (in case of non-understanding), or alternatively, as a strategy to save the face of the native speaker (in case of understanding). However, whether the non-native speaker pretends to understand or genuinely thinks this is the end of the joke, the short silence in Turn 8, immediately followed by his laughter in Turn 9 seems to be an expression of negotiation of face – socially desirable

or appropriate behaviour in order to avoid loss of face – rather than negotiation of meaning, or task-appropriate response. The alternative would have been for the non-native speaker to *not* laugh and either to wait for the real punch line, or to indicate non-understanding for a third time in a very short stretch of discourse. However, despite the fact that negotiating for meaning would be in the interest of the ongoing interaction, the task and the telecollaboration project, it is significantly absent. In his turn, the native speaker seems to guard the non-native speaker's face by not explicitly stating it was not the punch line; instead, he proceeds to deliver the real punch line in Turn 10.

In Turn 11 the non-native speaker laughs for a second time, once again indicating that he has understood and appreciated the joke. But the non-native speaker's non-linguistic squirminess – fidgeting and biting his finger – could well be interpreted as an expression of discomfort as he probably realizes all too well that his premature laughter gave away that he was avoiding loss of face (i.e. covering up his non-understanding by laughter) rather than negotiating for meaning in the interest of the interaction. Similarly, the native speaker does not comment on the non-native speaker's untimely laughter nor does he attempt to explicitly check whether mutual understanding has been reached, i.e. whether the non-native speaker has understood the joke. Instead, he shows solidarity with the non-native speaker by concurring (in Turn 13) with his counterpart's rather hurried suggestion to move on to the next task element in Turns 11 and 12: *<Wow ... alright ... I've got a really long joke >*.

When we compare example 1 to example 2 – same dyad, different mode – we see a similar lexical trigger – the word *pom* – but a markedly different negotiation pattern.

Example 2: Dyad 1; chat³⁴; pom joke

| Turn | Messenger | Written chat script |
|-------|-----------|---|
| 1. | NS | [10:18:13] A pom fresh off the plane at Sydney airport, is trying to negotiate Australian customs. Finally, when its his turn to get his passport stamped, the customs officer starts rattling off the usual questions: |
| 2. | NS | [10:18:30] C.O.: How long do you intend to stay? |
| 3. | NS | [10:18:40] Pom: 1 week |
| 4. | NS | [10:18:57] C.O.: What is the nature of this trip? |
| 5. | NS | [10:19:06] Pom: Business |
| 6. | NS | [10:19:28] C.O.: Do you have any past criminal convictions? |
| 7. | NS | [10:19:45] Pom: I didn't think I still needed to! |
| 8. | NNS | [no reponse] |
| 9. | NS | [10:20:11] It was so long and not very funny |
| 10. | NNS | [10:20:17] It made me laugh |
| 11. | NNS | [10:20:21] Well, laugh |
| 12. | NNS | [10:20:30] I justed ³⁵ pushed some air through my nose hahaahah |
| 13. | NS | [10:20:40] Really I only liked the end part |
| 14. | NNS | [10:20:45] Yeah, me too |
| 15. | NNS | [10:20:50] But what's a pom exactly? |
| 16. | NS | [10:21:04] A british person |
| 17. | NNS | [10:21:07] Ahaa |
| 18. | NNS | [10:21:11] And why is it called a pom? |
| [...] | | |
| 25. | NNS | Do they only use the word in Australia? |
| 27. | NNS | Interesting, 'cause I've never heard the word before. |

In turns 1 to 7, the native speaker feeds the non-native speaker short chunks of the joke, ultimately taking seven turns to get to the final punch line and giving the non-native speaker time to process and digest each line. A socially appropriate response to the joke by the non-native speaker, however, remains significantly absent: what follows is a pause of 26 seconds. The next turn (9) is taken by the native speaker, who ends the uncomfortable silence with a meta-comment. Possibly in an attempt to save both his own face and that of his counterpart he makes a disparaging

³⁴ Spelling and grammatical errors in the chat transcripts have not been corrected for errors.

³⁵ None of the chat scripts have been corrected for spelling or grammatical errors.

remark *<long and not very funny>* about the joke itself. This is followed by a response on the part of the non-native speaker, stretched out over three turns. The first turn *<it made me laugh >* (Turn 10) is followed by a qualifying *<well, laugh >* (Turn 11). The use of the discourse marker 'well' in the second turn suggests additional information about the laughter is about to follow (Jucker 1993), which is what happens in the third turn *<I justed pushed some air through my nose hahaha >* (Turn 12). This sequence of turns seems to imply agreement with the native speaker's assessment of the joke as not being very funny. The next two turns of the exchange yield even more evidence for this interpretation. When, in Turn 13, the native speaker modifies his response from *<not very funny >* (Turn 9) to the more detailed *<really I only like the end part >* the non-native speaker responds with an affirmative *<yeah, me too >* (Turn 14).

Still, the non-native speaker could be in over his head here; he has joined his counterpart in an evaluation of the joke and has therefore claimed understanding. In view of example 1 above, it is safe to say that, had this interaction taken place through video call, this may well have rounded off the interaction about the *pom*-joke. From a negotiation of face point of view, non-native speaker has passed the point of no return here since it would be inappropriate to start up negotiation of meaning after having already communicated understanding. However, in the next number of turns, the non-native speaker does suddenly start up a negotiation routine about the word *pom*; implicitly revealing that, in the previous turns, he only pretended to have understood and appreciated the joke, since without understanding the word *pom* the joke is perplexing. As opposed to the video call session, where the non-native speaker explicitly indicated not to know what a *bogan* was, but left the native speaker's brief explanation for what it was, during the chat session he pushes down more: *<why is it called a pom? >* (Turn 18) and *<do they only use the word in Australia? >* (Turn 25). As an ultimate reaction to response, in Turn 27, the non-native speaker admits never to have heard the word before.

So there are marked differences in the way non-understanding and the subsequent negotiation of meaning trajectories evolve in these data. Since we hypothesize that the specific mode of communication plays an important role here, we need to bring in different dyads to find out if the differences corroborate our hypothesis and are genuinely systematic.

3.5.2 Data 3 and 4

In examples 3 and 4 below, the *bogan*-joke is negotiated by two different NS-NNS dyads. In example 3 through video call; in example 4 through chat.

Example 3: Dyad 2; video call; *bogan* joke

| Turn | Speaker | Video transcript and observations |
|------|---------|--|
| 1. | NS | <i>I don't think ... I don't know if you'll understand it, but ...</i> |
| 2. | NNS | <i>OK</i> [nods] |
| 3. | NS | <i>How do you know if you're a bogan?</i> |
| 4. | NNS | <i>If you're a ..?</i> [leans towards the camera] |
| 5. | NS | <i>A bogan</i> |
| 6. | NNS | [frowns – does not utter a response] |
| 7. | NS | <i>It's a very lower class Australian</i> |
| 8. | NNS | <i>Oh, ok</i> <i>I'm not ...</i> [smiles – shakes head] |
| 9. | NS | <i>You let your 15-year-old smoke at the dinner table in front of her kids.</i> |
| 10. | NNS | <i>Yeah. Ok. Yeah</i> [laughs, nods and smiles] |
| 11. | NS | <i>So yeah, we make fun of ourselves a lot ... and our language is a huge part of our jokes as well. And if you don't understand the language, it makes it hard to get the joke.</i> |
| 12. | NNS | <i>Yeah ... Yeah</i> [looks away from the camera; fidgets with scarf] |

The native speaker opens with a pre-sequence (Levinson 1983) in Turn 1, *<I don't think ... I don't know if you'll understand>*, which makes non-understanding less face-threatening for his non-native speaker counterpart. The non-native speaker responds affirmatively with a continuer (Schegloff 1982) *<OK>* (Turn 2), encouraging his interlocutor to proceed. The native speaker then poses the question of the first part of the joke to the non-native speaker without giving away the answer, as would be expected in the context of the type of joke during face-to-face discourse: *<how do you know if you're a bogan?>*. The non-native speaker reacts by echoing part of the trigger-sentence, without the trigger itself: *<If you're a ...?>*. This is an ambiguous indicator of non-understanding that could either mean channel trouble (as in: *I haven't heard*) or lexical trouble (as in: *<I haven't understood>*). The native speaker's response (Turn 5) shows that he interprets the echo as – the less face threatening – channel trouble: rather

than rephrasing or expanding³⁶ on the word *bogan*, the native speaker merely repeats the word and leaves it at that. The non-native speaker's frowning in Turn 6 can be interpreted as a non-verbal indicator of non-understanding and an invitation to repair, which shows that this response has not solved the problem. The native speaker now understands that the problem source is lexical, and what follows (Turn 7) is an effectual response ('modified input'; Long 1981) – *<it's a very lower class Australian>* – that resolves the initial trouble source. Now mutual understanding, or 'equal footing' (Varonis & Gass 1985) has been achieved, the conversational flow pops back up to the dominant interaction of the task-at-hand: the telling of the joke. The non-native speaker plays by the rules of the Q&A-joke genre by indicating in Turn 8 both verbally *<I'm not ...>* and non-verbally (shaking head) that he does not know the answer. When in Turn 9, the native speaker communicates the punch line in one go, the non-native speaker laughs and nods (Turn 10) and utters a reaction to response *<Yeah. Ok. Yeah>* but does not push down any further. In Turn 11 the native speaker seems to wonder whether or not the non-native speaker has actually understood the joke, and utters a meta-comment as an implicit invitation to indicate non-understanding in addressing the relationship between understanding language and understanding a joke. The non-native speaker's verbal and non-verbal response – his evasive *<yeah ... yeah ...>* while looking away from the camera and fidgeting with hair and scarf in Turn 11 – is more difficult to mark as task-appropriate than as face-appropriate response. Despite the native speaker's implicit invitations – the pre-sequence in Turn 1 and the meta-comment in Turn 11, the non-native speaker does not continue to negotiate for meaning. In short, after two task-appropriate non-native speaker-indicators of non-understanding (Turns 4 and 6), face concerns seem to have taken over, which has a direct effect on the interaction.

In Example 4, a different dyad negotiates the same joke through chat.

³⁶ Varonis and Gass (1985) list a number of responses ranging from least helpful (repeating the trigger) to most helpful (rephrasing/elaborating).

Example 4: Dyad 3; chat; bogan joke

| Turn | Messenger | Written chat script |
|------|-----------|--|
| 1. | NS | (11:46:05) Q: How do you know if you're a bogan? A: You let your 15 year-old daughter smoke at the dinner table ... in front of her kids. Awful joke |
| 2. | NNS | (11:46:25) What's a bogan? |
| 3. | NS | (11:46:48) This is hard to describe but a bogan is essentially an Australian slob |
| 4. | NS | (11:47:08) If you get that |
| 5. | NNS | (11:47:21) Is a slob a poor white trash person? |
| 6. | NS | (11:47:27) Yep |
| 7. | NNS | (11:47:50) Well, that was hilarious |

As opposed to the native speaker in Example 2, who sent the long *pom*-joke in manageable chunks, the native speaker in example 4 sends both the Q&A part of the bogan-joke and an evaluation (<*awful joke*>) in one conversational turn, rather than posing the question-part and awaiting response.³⁷ This could very well be due to the nature of the task itself, which focuses on exchanging cultural jokes in a task-oriented environment rather than a social environment. But it may also be due to the modality of the chat medium itself: the student simply copied and pasted the entire joke from the digital task sheet and sent it off. By unequivocally stating the trouble source <*what's a bogan?*> in Turn 2, the non-native speaker pushes the native speaker into the most helpful of responses: a definition of the trigger (<... *a bogan is essentially an Australian slob*>) in Turn 3. Instead of waiting for the non-native speaker's response, the native speaker adds an implicit invitation to negotiate for meaning 20 seconds later: <*if you get that*> (Turn 4). The non-native speaker takes up the invitation by extending the negotiation routine with a task-appropriate verification of the word <*slob*> in Turn 6, thus adding an extra layer to the routine.

Like in chat Example 2, the non-native speaker clearly sets out to get to the bottom of this joke, which makes the ultimate reaction to response more convincing as an indication of understanding than the reaction to responses after the punch line in Example 4. In Turn 7, the non-native speaker comments on the humour of the joke <*well, that was hilarious*> but does so after a convincingly resolved negotiation routine.

³⁷ On the task-sheet there were no specific instructions on how to communicate the jokes.

3.6 Discussion and conclusions

The negotiated interactions in our data seem to be shaped and influenced by the mode of communication. Since all participants communicated through both video call and chat during task-performance, the unique, distinctive features of the specific mode of synchronous computer-mediated communication seem to model the pattern of negotiation of meaning episodes.

In our data, none of the chat participants pretended to understand a potential trigger during the chat sessions. As opposed to the video call sessions, negotiation of meaning was more to the point and ultimately resolved the trouble source. Additionally, the non-native speaker would push down more by asking more detailed questions about the trouble source. This pattern was consistent even though half of the participants involved started the task through video call and carried out the second half of the task through chat, meaning that they had met and seen each other. The chat-medium seemed to offer what social anthropologist Kate Fox (2004) calls “the illusion of anonymity” (153). Fox illustrates this idea with the partition between priest and confessor in a Catholic confessional box, with the psychoanalyst’s couch facing the other way, or the rearview mirror in a taxi; all create the illusion of relative anonymity, which makes for less communication apprehension and more uninhibited communication. This is reflected in the different and ultimately more task-appropriate pattern of negotiated interaction of the chat sessions.

As opposed to the video call the chat participants were not confronted with the ambiguity of what Goffman (1959) calls the “expressiveness of the individual” (14), which consists of two fundamentally different kinds of sign activity: conscious intentional expression that the individual *gives*, and non-verbal, unintentional expression that he *gives off*. During the video call sessions, both the native speaker and the non-native speaker had to negotiate these complex, often contradictory sign activities in which the L2-learner would give verbal signs of understanding, but give off non-verbal signs of confusion or non-understanding. Interaction through chat, on the other hand, focuses “the entire burden of communication on written characters” (Smith 2003: 47), which allows for more explicit and unambiguous statements of (non)-understanding.

Although, in video call, the non-native speakers indicated non-understanding several times, the negotiation of meaning sequence was

aborted after an average of two indicators of non-understanding of the same trigger. This resulted in unsuccessful task-completion. What's more, in a number of instances negotiation of meaning was not started at all although it was obvious that the non-native speaker could not have understood the culturally specific joke. During video call the non-native speaker tended to pretend understanding by uttering a reaction to response that should be qualified as a covert reaction of non-understanding, rather than as an overt reaction of understanding. This pattern was discursively constructed: by guarding their non-native counterpart's face and not confronting them with their non-understanding the native speaker also acted in the interest of politeness and solidarity rather than in the interest of the task.

Furthermore, in video call, the non-native speakers have no time to get their bearings, do not see the trouble source in writing, and must respond instantly. This concurs with the findings of earlier studies into non-digital face-to-face communication and chat messaging (Abrams 2003; Beauvois 1992; Condon & Cech 1996; Chun 1994, 1998; Freiermuth 1998, 2001; Freiermuth & Huang 2012; Freiermuth & Jarrell 2006; Kelm 1992; Kern 1995; Kern, Ware & Warchauer 2008; Meunier 1998; Warschauer 1997), but does not corroborate with the social presence theory of online communication to assess human communication in a telecommunication environment, originally developed as early as 1976 by Short, Williams and Christie. They conceptualized social presence as the degree and awareness of a state of *being there* between two interlocutors during communication: the higher the social presence during communication the more efficient the interaction (cf. Ko 2012; Yamaha & Akahori 2007; Yamaha 2009). In contrast, in our study it was found that the task performance through video call tended to be more face-appropriate than task-appropriate; trouble sources and potential triggers tended to remain fuzzy and unresolved. The intrusive webcam, registering and transmitting image as well as sound, seemed to pose a threatening and daunting communication environment, where issues such as politeness and potential loss of face thwarted successful task completion.

If we consider human interaction in an L2 learning environment as a social situation in which two forces operate simultaneously – negotiating for meaning is beneficial for language learning, but dispreferred in a 'real world' social environment due to issues of loss of face – then we may draw the conclusion that the participants in our data made different discourse

decisions during chat and video call (cf. Freiermuth 2011). They tended to orient to the task-appropriate force during chat, and to the face-appropriate, social force during video call. Due to the relative anonymity of the chat-medium – particularly because of the absence of audio-visual registration – L2-learners communicated more freely and were not so much concerned with loss of face-issues, which would have prompted them to pretend to understand. This resulted in all tasks being completed efficiently and successfully. During video call, however, in almost half of the negotiated episodes, the non-native speaker's fear of loss of face and the native speaker's subsequent politeness and solidarity turned out to be stronger than the desire to finish the task successfully, leaving nearly half the tasks unresolved or inconclusive.

In studies critical of negotiation of meaning it is claimed that negotiation of meaning is frowned upon as “pedagogically undesirable for learners” (Aston 1986: 128); learners are hesitant in indicating a problem utterance during task performance because it slows down the interaction and makes them look and feel inept and unsuccessful (Foster 1998). Similarly, Pellettieri (2000) and Tudini (2007) note that it is important to acknowledge that language learners do not always indicate problems simply because it would disrupt the ongoing conversation. However, the findings of this study suggest that the trajectory and outcome of the interaction – and whether or not L2-learners will indeed engage in negotiated interaction – also depend on the constraints and affordances of the specific mode of communication. It seems as though issues of (loss of) face, then, could be taken quite literally: if the interactants do not *see* or *hear* each other during live interaction, the non-native speakers seem less inhibited to indicate non-understanding, and hence start up negotiation of meaning more often and more successfully.

Chapter 4

Non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning in task-based synchronous computer-mediated communication³⁸

4.1 Introduction

In the early 1980s, Long (1981) introduced the 'Interaction Hypothesis', which claims that L2 learning occurs by interacting with others and by engaging in conversation modifications during a breakdown in communication, particularly in interactions between native speakers and non-native speakers. More than three decades later, Mackey et al. (2012) observe in their overview of L2-learning and the interactionist approach, that it is commonly accepted that "the interactional 'work' that occurs when learners and their interlocutors encounter some kind of communication breakdown is beneficial for L2 development" (9), and that this input is more valuable for the language learning process than input from textbooks (Hatch 1978; Long 1983; Mackey 1999).

4.2 Negotiation of meaning

One of the operationalisations of the interaction hypothesis is the negotiation of meaning episode, which is defined as a series of conversational turns in which one of the interactants, usually the learner, stops the conversational flow due to non-understanding and negotiates for meaning in order to solve the breakdown in communication (Long 1983; Varonis & Gass, 1985). "Negotiation of meaning" Wagner (1996) argues, "is a metaphor for the sense making activity of both partners" (222).

Over the years, various proposals have been developed to assess episodes of negotiation of meaning. Perhaps the most influential of these has been the model of non-understandings for face-to-face interaction by Varonis and Gass (1985). This model presupposes a two-part structure of negotiation of meaning: a trigger – the source of the non-understanding –

³⁸ This chapter in adapted form was published earlier as Van der Zwaard, R. & Bannink, A. (2016). Non-occurrence of Negotiation of Meaning in Task-Based Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication. *The Modern Language Journal*, 100 (3), 625-640.

and a RESOLUTION – an indicator of non-understanding by the hearer, followed by a clarification of the trouble source by the speaker. Long (1981, 1983) names different types of indicators of non-understanding, usually performed in the turn after the trouble source, such as clarification requests, where the hearer requests assistance (see Table 15), or comprehension checks, where the hearer checks or seeks confirmation of understanding (see Table 16).

Table 15: Example of non-native speaker clarification request

| Turn | Speaker | Transcript |
|------|---------|---|
| 1. | NS | Did you get a Christmas hamper this year? |
| 2. | NNS | What's a hamper? |

Table 16: Example of a non-native speaker comprehension check

| Turn | Speaker | Transcript |
|------|---------|---|
| 1. | NS | Did you get a Christmas hamper this year? |
| 2. | NNS | Do you mean a basket with goodies? |

The concept of negotiation of meaning became prominent in L2-learning paradigms in the pre-digital era and has since been applied to task-based technology enhanced learning environments, both through video call (Lee 2007; Monteiro 2014; Wang 2006; Yanguas 2010), and text-based chat (Blake 2000; Fernández-García & Martínez-Arbelaiz 2002; Kost 2008; Lee 2001, 2007; O'Rourke 2005; Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014). Smith (2003) 48), however, has proposed some changes in the original Varonis and Gass model to accommodate the specific constraints and affordances of written chat, such as non-adjacent discourse patterns that lead to “split negotiation routines” (48).

Still, there is a substantial body of research into negotiation of meaning claiming contradictory findings. There are studies reporting a high incidence of negotiation of meaning, and confirming that the negotiation episodes enhance comprehension and internalization of linguistic features, which are claimed to be beneficial for the language-learning process (Long 1981; Long 1985; Nakahama, Tyler & van Lier 2001; Pica 1991, 1992, 1994; Pica, Young & Doughty 1987; Varonis & Gass 1985). Conversely, there are studies claiming a low incidence of negotiation of meaning in the L2-classroom, criticizing negotiation of meaning as merely a research template that may work in laboratory research conditions but not in the real-world setting of

the L2-classroom (Eckerth 2009; Foster 1998; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Slimani-Rolls 2005), and asserting that it is “too fragile to bear the weight of SLA theory” (Foster 1998: 19). Foster (1998) found that most interactants adopt a strategy of “pretend and hope”, i.e. they pretend to understand and hope for clues later in the interaction that will clarify the problem, rather than that they “check and clarify” (19), i.e. put the discourse on hold by declaring non-understanding. In his replication of Foster’s study, Eckerth (2005) draws a similar conclusion. The main reason given for the paucity of instances of negotiation of meaning is that having to own up to non-understanding during interaction emphasizes lack of success, which can be face-threatening and frustrating (Aston 1986; Foster & Ohta 2005). Slimani-Rolls (2005) found that learners tend to behave on the basis of social rather than pedagogical motives mainly because having to display ignorance during classroom interaction can jeopardize personal and social relationships.

In addition, there are studies citing ideal and less ideal environments and conditions for negotiation of meaning to take place. It has been argued that negotiation of meaning is more likely to happen between non-native speakers rather than between native speakers and non-native speakers (Varonis & Gass 1985), during required information exchange tasks rather than optional information exchange tasks (Foster 1998; Smith 2003), with lexical items rather than grammatical morphology (Pica et al. 1993; Foster 1998); in small groups rather than dyads (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Rulon & McCreary 1986; Foster 1998; Eckerth 2005), and during written chat rather than face-to-face video call (Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014).

Finally, as Foster and Ohta point out (2005), the concept of negotiation of meaning in SLA research seems to have shifted from communication breakdown between learners, to recasting in classroom situations where repair is often initiated by the teacher or expert speaker. In this chapter, following Foster and Ohta (2005), we return the focus of negotiation of meaning to (in our case, digital) dyadic interaction between participants.

4.3 Task-based language teaching in digital settings

A major pedagogical paradigm within the Interaction Hypothesis is ‘Task Based Language Teaching’ (TBLT), (Ellis 2003; Long 2015; Nunan 2004). The processes and techniques involved in teaching a foreign language within a task-based learning environment have been reported on extensively over the past few years (Adams 2009; Ellis 2003, 2009; Foster 2009; Gass et al

2005; Hampel 2006; Nunan 2004; Samuda & Bygate 2008; Seedhouse & Almutairi 2009; Skehan 2001). The main tenet of task-based language teaching is that language should be thought of as a “tool for communication rather than as sets of phonological, grammatical and lexical items to be memorized” (Nunan 2004: 7). The tasks that serve as the basic units of the learning curriculum should therefore focus on meaning and communication rather than formalized use of language, i.e. the language involved should be “similar to what goes on in unmonitored day-to-day social intercourse” (Block 2003: 61).³⁹ Nunan (2004) defines a task as “a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form” (4). Ideally, then, while working on a task, language learners should be so focused on the outcome that they are hardly aware of the fact that they are practicing a foreign language in an institutional environment.

Over the past ten to fifteen years the development of task-based language teaching has run parallel with the emergence of digital communication (Lai & Li 2011; Motteram & Thomas 2010). Technology-enhanced learning environments that are now available within the L2-classroom link up language learners and native speakers of the target language, and provide the opportunity to digitally collaborate on tasks. In his article on new technologies and new literacies in education, Kellner (2000) calls the technological development in education “the most significant ... revolution for education since the transition from oral to print and book based teaching” (246). The importance of technology-mediated communication in the classroom, and the digital aptitude and expectations learners bring to class, make it “no longer possible to see how the future of task-based language teaching can proceed without greater consideration of technology-mediated tasks” (Motteram & Thomas, 2010: 235). The rise of synchronous computer-mediated communication modes could very well be a new incentive for the task-based language teaching paradigm.

³⁹ Although task-based language teaching (TBLT) is generally regarded as inherent to a rejection of more traditional approaches of language teaching (Long, 1985; Skehan, 1998), Ellis (2003, 2009) contends that they are not mutually exclusive and that a language learning environment could be both meaning-focused and form-focused.

In our study we argue that we must investigate data where negotiation routines do *not* occur where it is expected, in order to give us a deeper and more comprehensive insight into (digital) task-based native speaker-non-native speaker interaction. Remarkably, although there are multiple studies on non-occurrence of face-to-face learner-learner negotiation of meaning in L2-classroom settings, as previously discussed, only very few research studies into synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) include these data (see Pellettieri 2000). This chapter attempts to contribute to fill this gap.

4.4 Hypothesis and research questions

The basic premise of the negotiation of meaning paradigm is that a trouble source is followed by an indicator of non-understanding as a first move in (and initiation of) a repair sequence and that there is a change of speaker after the trouble source. We therefore propose that in the paradigm trouble source and indicator are basically presented as an adjacency pair (Sacks 1972): they are uttered by different speakers, in two separate turns and the occurrence of the first (trouble source) part establishes a set of expectations for the second (indicator) part, making this move conditionally relevant (cf. Schegloff 1968). So, if non-occurrence does happen, i.e. if the second turn of the adjacency pair is not realized, this absence is significant and begs to be assessed.

In task-based language teaching the main criterion is that “language is used pragmatically to achieve some non-linguistic outcome” (Ellis 2003: 16). *Authentic* communication seems to be the key word: ideally, L2-learners are so involved in task performance that they “forget where they are and why they are there” (Ellis 2003: 252). If this goal is achieved, however, the learners will move away from the context of the institutional setting, where it is quite ‘normal’ for the language learner to respond task-appropriately (cf. Smith 2003) by acknowledging non-understanding and negotiating for meaning. The formal institutional language learning framework will shift to a more informal conversational framework, where a tolerance for uncertainty is quite typical (cf. Bannink 2002; Firth & Wagner, 1996). In these settings self-correction is the norm and other-initiation of repair – as assumed in the negotiation of meaning model is dispreferred (Schegloff et al. 1977).

Therefore, we hypothesize that in some cases, and under some circumstances, the major parameters of task-based language teaching

(language is used for meaning; tasks should be authentic; students should forget they are in a L2-learning setting) paradoxically hinder rather than promote negotiation of meaning.

This leads us to the following research questions:

1. To what extent does non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning occur in and influence task-based synchronous computer-mediated communication between dyads of native and non-native speakers, in cases where negotiation of meaning is expected to occur?
2. How can non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning in synchronous computer-mediated communication be explained?

4.5 The study

4.5.1 Design and methodology

The study we report on here was anchored in a digital task-based group-to-group collaboration project between two cohorts of Dutch and Australian students working together on writing and creating a digital theatre performance on Dutch immigration into Australia. A variety of digital platforms was used, both asynchronous (email, Facebook, wiki) and synchronous (live chat, one-to-one video calling and group-to-group video call) for a period of six weeks. The current study focuses on the introductory task (see (b) in Table 17) that was performed by native speaker and non-native speaker dyads as a first introduction to and part of the ensuing telecollaboration project. The non-native students performed the task from the university computer lab, each individual student in their own time slot; due to the time difference the Australian participants performed the task from their home computers. Time on task was approximately one hour.

Table 17: Outline of telecollaboration project

| |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) 60-minute group-to-group video call session (teachers on both ends report on the nature and scope of the telecollaboration project; the participants briefly introduce themselves). b) Dyadic video call and chat task performance: exchanging cultural jokes and discussing cultural humour as a basis for script writing (focus of this study) c) Multiple group to-group and dyadic video call sessions (script writing, rehearsals) d) Digital theatre performance |
|--|

4.5.2 Participants

The participants (N=32) consisted of two groups of undergraduate students: sixteen Dutch Humanities students taking a minor in advanced English language acquisition, and sixteen Australian Drama and Education students. The students were randomly paired to form native-speaker/non-native speaker dyads. The L2-level of all non-native speaker participants was advanced, comparable to B2/C1 level according to the CEFR:⁴⁰ they were able to “interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party” [Council of Europe 2001]

4.5.3 Data

The data consist of approximately twelve hours of video call recordings, and print-outs of the written chat sessions. The video call sessions were split screen recorded with video call recorder for Skype®, transcribed and coded⁴¹ for both non-native speaker-initiated negotiation of meaning and non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning. Observations of prosodic, paralinguistic and non-verbal features of the interactions, such as body language, facial expressions, intonation and pauses, were added to the transcript wherever deemed relevant. The chat script logs (as saved automatically on Skype), include time between turns and the emoticons that were used by the participants.

⁴⁰ Common European Framework of References for Languages

⁴¹ Independently by two researchers

4.5.4 Task design

Designing tasks for advanced L2-learners that will provoke instances of negotiation of meaning is a challenging enterprise. For this study, we decided on a task involving humour, due to its potentially high density of triggers. Ludic language, or language play, is argued to be an essential part of advanced L2 proficiency (Cook 2000; Vandergriff & Fuchs 2009). In a study on advanced L2-learning, Byrnes (2012) observes that learners at this level need to be “highly aware language users, with regard to the language as a culturally embedded system for making meanings” (515). Following Cook (2000), Broner and Tarone (2001) argue that the more advanced, proficient and mature the SLA learner, the more skilled they are in participating in playful, or ludic, language talk. In her study into humour in the L2 classroom, Bell (2009) proposes that “humour has been touted as an excellent way for students to learn the vocabulary, syntax, semantics, and discourse conventions of the target language” (241), but adds that “humorous communication is extremely complex in both its forms and functions” (242). Not surprisingly then, research into responses to humour has indicated that failure to understand jokes has a greater impact on hearers than not understanding other forms of discourse or speech acts (Sacks 1974; Bell 2013; Bell & Attardo 1993) since the hearer is afraid to be exposed as humourless and culturally incompetent. If a joke falls flat for any reason, the face of both speaker and hearer is severely threatened. Therefore, to counterbalance the influence of task-design on task-performance (cf. Breen 1987), we decided on a control group consisting of six native speaker/non-native speaker dyads that performed a two-way task of an entirely different category (and not involving jokes or humour). This task leaned heavily on the consensus-building Things-in-Pocket task as developed by Samuda (2001), in which the participants have to exchange the wish lists of fictitious characters and reach a consensus on one present for each of their characters (cf. Smith 2003).

4.5.4.1 Jokes task

Each of the ten⁴² native speaker participants was instructed to communicate four jokes or riddles given on their task sheets: two through Skype video call and two through Skype text-based chat (with the webcam turned off). It was left up to the participants to decide who would start or in what order the jokes would be exchanged. The non-native speaker

⁴² As indicated above, the other six native speakers would perform the control task.

participants were also given four culturally specific jokes to be communicated to their Australian counterparts. The jokes were given in Dutch so the non-native speakers had to translate them during the live interaction. Since we focus on non-native speaker-initiated negotiation of meaning only, the data from this part of the exchange have been disregarded for this study.

In the instructions for the participants the task was presented as an exchange of jokes in order to compare and contrast cultural humour.

The participants were instructed to:

- (a) introduce themselves and get to know each other (approximately 5 to 10 minutes);
- (b) exchange jokes as an illustration of each other's cultural humour (approximately 20 minutes);
- (c) discuss (Australian/Dutch) humour in general (approximately 10 minutes);
- (d) discuss if and how cultural humour could be used in their collaborative script writing for the digital play (approximately 10-15 minutes).

Since the task was embedded in the institutional context of the telecollaboration project, the joke telling part of the exchange clearly differed from the 'normal' informal, conversational setting where jokes or humorous comments are dropped unannounced. In our task, the jokes were contextually announced (Attardo, 1993), i.e. the participants were aware of the fact that they would be exchanging jokes. Additionally, the participants were instructed that the task was to serve as a stepping stone to the next stage of the telecollaboration project (see (c) in Table 18). The data in Table 17, a snapshot from the discussion part of the task of one of the dyads (after the jokes have been exchanged), illustrate this point. They show that the jokes did indeed serve as relevant prompts for discussion: both the native speaker and the non-native speaker comment on how they can incorporate the jokes they have just exchanged into the script and the performance.

Table 18: Example of how the jokes task is embedded in the script writing telecollaboration project.

| | |
|-----|---|
| NS | [11:06:39] I also think, based even upon our conversation now, that there is heaps of stuff about miscommunication on skype that we can work with in our performances and especially with barriers between different cultural colloquialisms |
| NS | [11:07:15] there are certain things about each of our jokes that the other didnt quite understand, and we could play on that :D |
| NNS | [11:07:41] haha yes, it was quite difficult at times |
| NNS | [11:08:13] and Dutch people tend to make fun of others and Aussies make fun of themselves, so that could be used as well |

4.5.4.2 Control task

In order to rule out the influence of task type and task features on the results, a control task was created that was carried out by six dyads (N=12). This task consisted of a Things-in-Pocket type task (Samuda 2001) during which each participant had to exchange 24 lexical items that were on the birthday wish lists of potential host families. Both the native speakers and the non-native speakers communicated 24 items each, but since this study focuses on non-native speaker-initiated negotiation of meaning, only the items communicated by the native speaker have been included in our data. Also, since the sole purpose of the control task is to determine whether the results corroborate those of the jokes task, only quantitative data will be included in this chapter (see Table 19).

In order to substantiate the near-certainty of non-native speaker non-understanding of the target items, a control group of 77 non-native speaker-students that were not part of the study – but that belonged to a similar cohort of students: same age, same module, same backgrounds, same advanced level of English – were asked in an anonymous written test to indicate their (non-)understanding.

4.5.5 Procedures

As Varonis and Gass (1985) point out, it is difficult for the investigator to determine whether (non-)understanding has occurred if negotiation of

meaning is not initiated. This holds particularly for a task that focuses on jokes, since there is a ritual, formulaic – and therefore inherently ambiguous – response to humour and jokes: laughter (or one of its text-based or emoticon-based alternatives in chat) after the punchline. Although, as Bell (2005) observes, laughter can also indicate nervousness, embarrassment or surprise, laughter in response to a joke still makes it easy for the participants to claim understanding (cf. Koole 2010). This presents the researcher with an analytical challenge: how can we distinguish true from feigned understanding? We propose that only fine-grained analysis based on interactional detail and the use of learner meta-data for triangulation (Flick 2004; Green & Wallat 1981) will enable us to establish (non-)understanding.

We therefore designed the following analytical procedure:

Data:

- *Inclusion of multimodal data.* Since non-understanding is not always – or rather preferably not (Schegloff et al. 1977) – expressed verbally, covert non-verbal signals by the non-native speakers after a planted trouble source, such as long intra-turn pauses, knitting or raising of eyebrows, and prosodic features, such as distinct intonation, were transcribed and analysed as well. When the researchers were in doubt about (non-)understanding, episodes of understanding and non-understanding by the same non-native speaker were compared and contrasted.
- *Inclusion of larger units of analysis.* Longer interactional sequences, stretching over multiple turns and beyond the boundaries of the particular negotiation of meaning sequence were considered in order to find evidence of (non-)understanding. For example, a non-native speaker utterance such as “I hope I get it this time” before a new joke is communicated makes the fuzzy non-native speaker claim of understanding after the previous joke less convincing.

Meta-data:

- *Control group:* 77 non-native speaker-students anonymously filled out a questionnaire to indicate their (non)-understanding of the Australian jokes.
- *Post-task questionnaire:* All non-native speaker participants in the study anonymously filled out a post-task questionnaire, in which they were asked questions such as: *Did you understand all the Australian jokes your Australian counterpart told you? If not, what did you do?*
- *Stimulated recall:* When in doubt about whether mutual understanding had been reached, the researchers queried the non-native speaker participant through stimulated recall (Gass & Mackey 2000).

4.6 Results

Ten native speakers participating in the jokes task were instructed to communicate four jokes to their non-native speaker counterpart, two through chat and two through video call. Out of these 40 jokes, 34 were in fact communicated during task performance; 15 through chat and 19 through video call; 6 jokes were not communicated due to time constraints.

The analytical procedure outlined previously revealed 11 instances of non-native speaker-initiated next-turn negotiation of meaning. We identified 13 instances of non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning, during which the non-native speaker feigned understanding instead of starting up negotiation of meaning. This means that, during video call, in more than half of the cases, mutual understanding was not established because non-native speaker-initiated negotiation of meaning was not initiated; during chat this happened in 20% of the cases.

Interestingly, despite the markedly different designs and complexities of the two tasks, we found non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning in *both* tasks in nearly 35% of instances of non-understanding, as is shown in Table 19.

Table 19: Quantitative data on (non-occurrence of) negotiation of meaning

| Jokes task | Video-conferencing | Written chat | Total |
|---|--------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Instances of NNS-initiated NoM | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| Instances of non-occurrence of NoM (where it was expected to occur) | 10 | 3 | 13 |
| Other ⁴³ | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| Total of jokes communicated | 19 | 15 | 34 |

| Control task | Video-conferencing | Written chat | Total |
|---|--------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Instances of NNS-initiated NoM | 10 | 13 | 23 |
| Instances of non-occurrence of NoM (where it was expected to occur) | 15 | 10 | 25 |
| Other ⁴⁴ | 11 | 13 | 24 |
| Total number of items communicated | 36 | 36 | 72 |

4.6.1 Data analysis

In this section we present a qualitative analysis of a selection of examples of video call and written chat jokes task data. We zoom in on details of non-native speaker and native speaker behaviour before, during and after

⁴³ Instances of native speaker modified input (comprehensible input; Long 1981), mainly in an attempt to prevent non-native speaker non-understanding.

⁴⁴ Instances of native speaker modified input (comprehensible input; Long, 1981), mainly in their attempt to prevent non-native speaker non-understanding (these instances will be discussed in chapter 5 of this book), and non-native speaker claims of understanding (as verified by the post-task).

instances of non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning, and focus on the influence of this behaviour on (successful) task completion.

Example 1

In this example the Australian native speaker communicates a joke to his Dutch non-native speaker counterpart through video call. The questionnaire filled out by the non-participant peer group indicates that there is just a 1.3% chance that the non-native speaker will understand the joke without initiating repair, as only one of the 77 students of the control group indicated recognizing the pun that ultimately determines the sexual content of the joke. In other words, although it could be argued that the sexual connotation of the joke could influence negotiation behaviour, the non-native speaker is not expected to recognize or identify this inference as such.

Example 1: Dyad 1 – video call

| Turn | Speaker | Video transcript and observations |
|------|---------|--|
| 1. | NS | <i>Yeah, it's just kinda about Australian culture and there's a lot of slang so if you don't understand just let me know.</i> |
| 2. | NNS | [NNS leans towards screen, nods head in affirmation and smiles] |
| 3. | NS | <i>Two Aussie cattle drovers are standing in an outback bar. One asked, "What are you up to, Mate"? Ahh, I'm takin' a mob of 6000 from Goondiwindi to Gympie" [NNS leans towards screen, raises eyebrows, squints eyes] Oh yeah ... and what route are you takin'?" "Ah probably the Misses; after all, she stuck by me durin' the drought."</i> |
| 4. | NNS | [3-second silence, giggles briefly, fidgets with scarf, takes scarf off, tosses hair] |
| 5. | NNS | <i>OK, yeah.</i> [flat intonation – no laughter] |
| 6. | | [silence] |
| 7. | NS | <i>Do you get that?</i> [rising intonation] |
| 8. | NNS | [while fidgeting with scarf] <i>Yeah well, I'm not sure if I got all the words correctly but ...</i> |
| 9. | NS | <i>OK</i> |
| 10. | NNS | <i>That's probably because of the slang so ...</i> [shakes head] <i>I'm not that familiar with Aussie slang so ...</i> [looking down on her task sheet] <i>Yeah, I think it's typically Dutch to make fun of other European countries, especially the Germans and the Belgian.</i> |

| | | |
|---------------------|-----|--|
| 11. | NS | <i>Yeah, why do you do that?</i> |
| [...] ⁴⁵ | | [NNS proceeds by communicating one of her Dutch jokes] |
| 39. | NNS | <i>The basics of Dutch jokes is to make fun of others, preferably Belgian or German ...</i> |
| 40. | NS | <i>Ok, well, the other joke that I told you before was uhm ... a lot of our jokes are very sexist and uhm, he was sort of asking one guy like 'what route are you going to take' ... it's really bad ...</i> |
| 41. | NNS | <i>So you're saying Australian jokes are all to make fun of Australian people?</i> |
| 42. | NS | <i>Yeah</i> |
| 43. | NNS | <i>Ok. I get it. I think the Dutch don't do that.</i> |

The native speaker starts the exchange with a presequence (Schegloff 1988) indicating to the non-native speaker that she expects trouble (Turn 1). By adding an overt invitation to negotiate for meaning (<*if you don't understand just let me know*>) the native speaker shows task-appropriate behaviour: it is important for task performance that repair is initiated if non-understanding occurs. At the same time the presequence acts as a politeness strategy that guards the non-native speaker's face, as well as her own, by suggesting that it is perfectly normal to negotiate for meaning. In Turn 2, the non-native speaker acknowledges the native-speaker's invitation to repair with paralinguistic continuation signals such as smiling and nodding in affirmation. While the joke unfolds and after the punchline has been delivered, the non-native speaker transmits contradicting messages. On the one hand, she gives the ritually appropriate paralinguistic response of laughter, or rather, a short giggle, and she also verbally claims understanding (albeit not very convincingly: her <*ok, yeah*> (Turn 5) is pronounced with a flat intonation), but the non-verbal signals that she gives off (raising eyebrows, squinting eyes, leaning towards the screen) could be interpreted as covert indicators of non-understanding. The native speaker's comprehension check in Turn 7 (<*do you get that?*>), is an explicit invitation to negotiate for meaning, which is reinforced prosodically (intonation expressing disbelief). Again, the non-native speaker's response is ambiguous: she does not reply directly to the native speaker's question, but instead admits that she probably did not get all the words correctly. When the native speaker simply acknowledges this statement, she continues along these lines and then (rather abruptly) moves away from the Australian joke to Dutch humour.

⁴⁵ In the turns between turn 11 and turn 40, the NNS communicates one of her Dutch jokes to the NS.

Although the interaction in Example 1 potentially holds all the primes of a non-understanding sequence, negotiation of meaning does not occur.⁴⁶ This may well be the reason that, approximately thirty conversational turns later, during the same session (Turn 40),⁴⁷ the native speaker initiates a delayed attempt to finish the task successfully by returning to the joke. But again, the non-native speaker does not respond. Instead, she moves away from the face-threatening incomprehensible details of the joke towards the broader, and safer, topic of Australian humour in general: <So you're saying Australian jokes are all to make fun of Australian people?> (Turn 41). And again, the native speaker prioritizes face over task, by not badgering the non-native speaker about not negotiating the joke (Turn 42).

So although Example 1 concerns interactions that took place in an institutional task-based language learning context, with, as we have established, non-understanding by the non-native speakers intentionally planted in the discourse, they do not initiate repair. Looking at the data from a social perspective, we find striking resemblances to Goffman's description of features of the interaction ritual. Although Goffman's (1967) examination of face-to-face interaction targets informal, conversational settings, our data suggest that his observations also apply to (digital) interaction processes in task-based institutional settings. For instance, the non-native speaker in our example resorts to a type of communication strategy that Goffman identified as the avoidance process:

As defensive measures, [the interactant] keeps off topics and away from activities that would lead to the expression of information that is inconsistent with the line he is maintaining. At opportune moments he will change the topic of conversation or the direction of activity. (Goffman, 1967: 16)

As we have observed, the non-native speaker is maintaining the line that she has understood the joke. Once she has forfeited understanding, there is no turning back, despite her counterpart's initial (and delayed) task-appropriate efforts to challenge her claims of understanding (cf. Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014).

⁴⁶ During stimulated recall, the non-native speaker admitted to not having had a clue about what the joke was about.

⁴⁷ In the turns between Turn 11 and Turn 40, the non-native speaker communicates one of her Dutch jokes to the native speaker.

Meanwhile, the native speaker behaves according to what Goffman has labeled protective maneuvers:

The person shows respect and politeness, making sure to extend to others any ceremonial treatment that might be their due. He employs discretion; he leaves unstated facts that might implicitly or explicitly contradict and embarrass the positive claims made by others [...] so that the others' face is preserved even if their welfare is not. (Goffman 1967: 16)

In the context of our data, welfare in the last sentence could be substituted by 'task', since acting in the interest of face tends to disagree with acting in the interest of the task. Although the native speaker does initially act in the interest of the task, by attempting to explain the joke despite his counterpart's claims of understanding, she does not explicitly confront the non-native speaker with the fact that it is not feasible she will have grasped the punchline. In other words, the native speaker initially acts in the interest of the task but in the interest of protecting her counterpart's face she does not do so insistently enough and ultimately accepts the non-native speaker's change in direction of the activity when the joke is abandoned.

Example 2

As opposed to Example 1, where the native speaker makes two (failed) attempts to act in the interest of the task (Turns 7 and 40), in Example 2 the native speaker fully credits the non-native speaker's claims of understanding and does not question them at all.

Example 2: Dyad 2 – video call

| Turn | Speaker | Video transcript and observations |
|------|---------|---|
| 1. | NS | [reads from task sheet] : <i>You know that you're Australian when: [list intonation] you know that stubbies can be either drunk or worn ...</i> |
| 2. | NNS | <i>Yeah</i> |
| 3. | NS | <i>You can translate: "Dazza and Shazza played Acca Dacca on the way to Maccas." You know, whatever the tourist books say, that no one says "cobber".</i> |
| 4. | NNS | [laughs] ... <i>That's actually funny</i> |
| 5. | NS | [laughs] <i>They are funny, aren't they?</i> |
| 6. | NNS | [looking down] <i>Do you already know that joke, or ...?</i> |
| 7. | NS | <i>No, I've never heard any of these.</i> |

| | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| 8. | NNS | <i>Me neither</i> [looking down] <i>How is the Australian humour in general?</i> |
| 9. | NS | <i>Derogatory</i> [laughs] |
| 10. | NNS | [Laughs] |
| 11. | NS | <i>We like to make fun of people</i> [laughs] ... <i>as you can tell.</i> |
| 12. | NNS | [laughs] <i>We like to make fun about German people ... and about Belgian people ...</i> |
| 13. | | [NNS elaborates on Dutch jokes about Belgians] |
| 14. | NNS | <i>Let's see</i> [looking down on task sheet] ... <i>yeah ... can we use it in our play?</i> |

None of the 77 students in the control group understood the joke in these data and, when questioned about it later, the non-native speaker in this example also readily admitted that he did not have a clue what the joke was about or what the word 'derogatory' in Turn 9 meant. Nevertheless, the backchannel he produces in Turn 2 and his appreciative laughter right after the punchline in Turn 4 claim understanding of the joke. His strategy to cover up for his non-understanding resembles the non-native speaker's in Example 1: he simply quickly changes the topic of the interaction, first by asking (in Turn 6) whether his Australian counterpart has heard the joke before, and then by enquiring about the Australian sense of humour (Turn 8), the answer to which turns out to contain another trouble source: the word *derogatory*. Again the non-native speaker does not initiate repair; instead, as a response he echoes his counterpart's laughter (Turns 9 and 10), once again claiming understanding. His conversational strategy (not creating disfluency and waiting for the speaker to self-correct) pays off: in his next turn the native speaker paraphrases the trouble source: <*We like to make fun of people* [laughs] ... *as you can tell*>. The non-native speaker is now able to give a coherent response to the non-native speaker's observation. He keeps the floor and initiates a topic change: he directs the conversation to the next part of the task, away from the territory of Australian humour that had turned out to be fraught with danger.

Example 3

In Example 3, a written chat sequence, the same joke from Example 2 (with a 1.3% chance of non-native speaker understanding) is communicated by the native speaker. As can be seen from this example, the native speaker's solidarity with the non-native speaker during the interaction becomes an impediment to task-completion.

*Example 3: Dyad 3 - written chat*⁴⁸

| Turn | Messenger | Written chat script |
|------|-----------|---|
| 1. | NS | [11:36:45] [...] One asked, "what are you up to mate?" Ahh, I'm takin' a mob of 6000 from Goondiwindi to Gympie" "Oh yeah...and what route are you takin'?" "Ah, probably the Missus; after all, she stuck by me durin' the drought." |
| 2. | | Pause (1 minute) |
| 3. | NNS | [11:37:43] Lol, i toke me i minute before i understand the joke ☺ |
| 4. | NS | [11:37:55] Me too haha |
| 5. | NNS | [11:38:07] also because of my English |
| 6. | NS | [11:38:32] I wish I could use that excuse, I'm just slow with jokes lol |
| 7. | NNS | [11:39:05] i think we should start the video chat now, otherwise i'm rudding out of time |

When the native speaker has sent the joke in Turn 1, there is a one-minute pause before the non-native speaker responds. When she finally does so, in Turn 3, she gives an account (Pomerantz 1988) for her delayed answer: *</toke me a minute before I understand the joke>*, which is sandwiched between two paralinguistic signs of understanding (*LOL*⁴⁹ and ☺). By claiming to identify with the non-native speaker *<Me too haha>* (Turn 4), the native speaker resorts to a "strategy of involvement" (Scollon & Scollon 1995: 37), or "negotiation for solidarity" (Aston 1993: 231), a type of 'I

⁴⁸ None of the chat scripts have been corrected for spelling or grammatical errors.

⁴⁹ LOL = Laughing out loud

know what you mean, I feel the same way' comment as a signal that "the speaker is asserting that he or she is closely connected to the hearer" (Scollon & Scollon 1995: 37): he protects his counterpart's face by implying that a delayed response is perfectly normal because he had a similar experience. In Turn 5, the non-native speaker elaborates on her original account adding that her 'English' also slowed her down, which can be seen as an oblique, hedged indicator of non-understanding. The native speaker does not respond however, and, again, emphasizes his solidarity with the non-native speaker: <*I wish I could use that excuse, I'm just slow with jokes lol*>, suggesting that taking your time to understand a joke because of 'your English' is less face-threatening than being 'just slow with jokes'. The entire sequence, then, can be said to be face-work – negotiation of face – performed by both participants: the non-native speaker is saving her face, and the native speaker is preserving his counterpart's face – both ultimately at the expense of the task. Like the non-native speaker dyads in the previous example, the non-native speaker makes a "gracious withdrawal" (Goffman 1967: 15) from the joke, by urging the native speaker to move on to the video call task because she is 'running out of time'.

Examples 4 and 5

Examples 4 and 5 are instances of *delayed* declarations of non-understanding by the non-native speakers. In both cases, they essentially admit at a later stage of the interaction – after the joke exchange episode – to not having started repair at the point in the interaction where it was sequentially due. None of the native speakers, however, read this as a possibly deferred attempt at completing the task successfully. Instead, they either simply accept or even ignore their counterparts' confessions without retracing that particular part of the task.

Example 4: Dyad 4 – video call

| Turn | Speaker | Video transcript and observations |
|------|---------|---|
| 1. | NS | <i>I think Australian jokes are just really ... just like every other joke, but with that bit of ...</i> |
| 2. | NNS | [laughs] <i>Australia</i> |
| 3. | NS | <i>Exactly ... exactly</i> |
| 4. | NNS | <i>Yeah, just with Australian terms in it ... and they are really hard [laughs] ... yeah ... [embarrassed tone] I didn't quite get them all⁵⁰ uhmmm ... [fiddles; looks down] yeah ...</i> |
| 5. | NS | <i>Those jokes were a bit peculiar ... like they're a bit ... how can I say it ...</i> |
| 6. | NNS | <i>Over the top?</i> |
| 7. | NS | <i>no, it's really ... specific ... specific I would say</i> |
| 8. | NNS | <i>OK, specific ...</i> |

In Example 4, it is not until the discussion of Australian humour in general that the non-native speaker declares he did not quite get all the Australian jokes from the second part of the task (Turn 4). In other words, at the time the Australian jokes were communicated, the non-native speaker failed to negotiate for meaning, but during Part 3 of the task he admits to having pretended understanding in Part 2: <[...] *they were really hard [laughs] ... yeah ... [embarrassed tone] I didn't quite get them all uhmmm ... [looking down, fiddling] yeah ...*>. If at this point the native speaker were to act in the interest of the task, he would retrace the task and explain the jokes. Instead, the native speaker behaves according to what Goffman (1967) refers to as “the rule of considerateness” (11): he implies that non-understanding was understandable since the jokes were ‘a bit peculiar’ and ‘specific’.

Example 5: Dyad 5 – video call

| Turn | Speaker | Video transcript |
|------|---------|---|
| 1. | NNS | (about turning to chat) <i>You have to type your jokes so then I can read slowly and maybe I get the jokes better then, you know?⁵¹</i> |
| 2. | NS | <i>Yeah ... [laughs]</i> |

⁵⁰ Our emphasis

⁵¹ Our emphasis

Just before the transition of the video call part of the task to the chat part the non-native speaker in Example 5 alludes to her previous non-understanding by asking her counterpart to type the jokes <so I can read slowly and maybe I get the jokes better then, you know?>. As in Example 4, the non-native speaker claimed understanding when the first jokes were conveyed. However, the native speaker does not react, nor does he attempt to go back to that part of the task; he only laughs in confirmation and leaves it at that.

Example 6

Example 6 – an example of written chat – is perhaps the most convincing and interesting testimony of the influence of reflexive face-work during task-based language learning.

Example 6: Dyad 6 – written chat

| Turn | Messenger | Written chat script |
|------|-----------|--|
| 1. | NS | [10:46:04] Two Aussie cattle drovers ... durin' the drought." [The joke is sent in one turn] |
| 2. | NNS | [10:46:35] okay... :P |
| 3. | | [...] (NNS communicates joke to NS) |
| 4. | NS | [10:52:08] haha i didnt really get that at all (worry) haha |
| 5. | NNS | [10:54:19] [sends off a long Dutch joke] |
| 6. | NNS | [10:54:35] no tbh ⁵² i didn't het yours either ⁵³ haha |
| 7. | NNS | [10:55:02] but basically we like to make fun of other people, other countries |
| 8. | NS | [10:55:03] hahaha i got the second joke!!! yaaay!!! |
| 9. | NNS | [10:55:11] yaay! |

In Turn 2, the non-native speaker sends a verbal and paralinguistic <:P>⁵⁴ claim of understanding (cf. Koole, 2010) as the only response to the joke. Interestingly, it is not until the native speaker admits to not understanding the (translated) Dutch joke, which the non-native speaker subsequently relates (Turn 3), that the non-native speaker admits to not having understood the previous Australian joke <tbh I didn't het yours either haha> (Turn 6). In other words, it is not until the relationship between the

⁵² tbh = to be honest

⁵³ Our emphasis

interactants changes from asymmetrical – the non-native speaker is alone in her non-understanding – to egalitarian (Scollon & Scollon 1995) – *both* native speaker and non-native speaker fail to understand a joke – that the non-native speaker feels confident enough to utter an overdue confession of non-understanding. However, as in Examples 4 and 5, this indicator of non-understanding does not lead to a resolution sequence. Part 2 of the task, then, remains unresolved despite the delayed disclosures of non-understanding by the non-native speaker. As such, the non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning seems to be discursively constructed.

4.7 Discussion

Since the data set we draw on in this study is limited, our conclusions are only tentative. In our study we focused on the next-turn behaviour of the non-native speaker, right after the trigger had been communicated by the native speaker, and examined whether their response was mainly in the interest of the task, or more in the interest of face. We found that, in many cases, the non-native speakers did not initiate negotiation of meaning despite the fact that they knew that the task was an important component of the discussion that would follow and would feed into the script-writing part of the telecollaboration project. As a result, some parts of the task were not completed successfully.

When asked during the written post-task questionnaire “Did you at any time during the telecollaboration with your Australian counterpart just *pretend* to understand what s/he said?” If so, why?”, many non-native speakers that replied in the affirmative all implicitly referred to issues of face in their answers:⁵⁵

Comment 1: *“Yes. I don’t know why. I think I just tried to be polite. I didn’t know my counterpart. And I thought my counterpart would think I were stupid.”*

Comment 2: *“Yes, I did that a lot, only to be nice.”*

Comment 3: *“I laughed to make him feel comfortable.”*

⁵⁵ Ironically, even though the post-task questionnaire was anonymous, not all students admitted to having pretended understanding, possibly for the very reason of face.

We therefore propose that in many cases the non-native speakers would not admit to non-understanding (usually by claiming understanding). According to Goffman (1967), a person has two points of view: “a defensive orientation toward saving his own face” (10), (see Comment 1), “and a protective orientation toward saving the others’ face” (14), (see Comments 2 and 3). During native speaker/non-native speaker interaction, then, non-native speakers are often too embarrassed and self-conscious to indicate potentially face-threatening instances of non-understanding; in their turn, the native speakers are reluctant to confront their counterparts with their absence of repair, possible because they are “disinclined to witness the defacement of others” (10).

In order to hypothesize why our data shows such a high percentage of non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning, we have to assess aspects of both the task itself and the context in which it was performed. We argue that the reasons⁵⁶ why the non-native speakers did not negotiate for meaning despite non-understanding could be the following:

1. *L2 pedagogy-related*: Although the task-based language teaching (TBLT) paradigm adheres to the premise that negotiation of meaning is beneficial to L2-learning, the learning context is specifically designed to resemble everyday conversational communication, where symmetrical speaker and hearer roles alternate and self-correction is preferred. When confronted with gaps in understanding, learners will therefore often pretend to understand, which concurs with the tolerance for uncertainty that is part of informal conversation (cf. Bannink 2002; Eckerth 2005; Foster 1998). Computer-mediated communication complicates the social context even further: students executing tasks in telecollaboration projects often literally move away from the classroom associated with institutional L2-learning due to time-zone difference and location-related issues. This physical distance from the traditional environment of school learning is likely to reinforce the paradox.
2. *Task-related*: Telling a joke equals telling a story in the sense that it inhibits normal conversational turn-taking (cf. Polanyi 1982). It

⁵⁶ These could simultaneously be regarded as the limitations of this study.

entails that the speaker embarks on an extended unit of talk: in principle there is no speaker change until the punchline has been delivered. The only contribution joke recipients are allowed to make are minimal responses, indicating that they track the joke and are lodged firmly in the listener role. In case of non-understanding, this constraint on interruption of the joke-telling turn creates a tension (cf. Schegloff 2000), since in conversation, trouble – if indicated at all – should be reported as closely to the trouble spot as possible, i.e. contingent to the trouble source. So the joke task – and with it all other tasks that produce story-type units of talk – gives rise to a second, closely related, paradox: reporting trouble – and therefore initiating negotiation of meaning – is dispreferred both within and after the joke/story-telling unit. The fact that we found almost equal percentages of non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning in the control task indicates, however, that the relation between task design and (non-)occurrence of negotiation of meaning needs to be investigated more closely (see Chapter 5 in this book).

3. *Medium-related*: The constraints on (the initiation of) repair described in Examples 1 and 2 have been identified for face-to-face interactions. This study is a cross-media comparative analysis with a counterbalanced design that used two types of technology-enhanced communication: face-to-face (video call) and written (chat). As indicated in Table 19, we found more instances of non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning during the video call sessions than during the chat sessions in both tasks. This suggests that participants find the initiation of negotiation of meaning easier in chat (cf. Freiermuth 2011; Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014), possibly due to the relative anonymity of the medium (the participants do not see or hear each other). Some non-native speakers indicated post-task that they experienced the video call part of the task as ‘scarier’ than the chat part of the task.
4. *Participant-related*: Most negotiation of meaning-studies tend to focus on dyads consisting of non-native speakers because there is not always a native speaker at hand, or because non-native speaker dyads are deemed to be less concerned with issues of face (Varonis & Gass 1985). Although this needs further investigation, advanced L2-speakers may be more embarrassed to admit non-understanding

than elementary or intermediate learners, possibly because the relationship between native and non-native speakers during the interaction is more egalitarian or symmetrical rather than that of the hierarchical expert (the native speaker) versus apprentice (the non-native speaker)-type relationship as is expected in elementary or intermediate L2-learning environments. Advanced adult L2-learners of English, such as the non-native speaker participants in this study tend to see themselves as being in a relatively equal linguistic position with native speakers of the target language. What's more, during the interaction, the Dutch students were repeatedly complimented on the level of their English by their native speaking counterparts ("*Your English is better than mine!*"), which may have warranted their non-understanding as more disconcerting and face-threatening.

4.8 Conclusion

We conclude that L2-learners in the context of synchronous computer-mediated communication environments are as hesitant in initiating negotiation of meaning as has been reported in non-digital learner-learner face-to-face L2-environments. Subsequently, disregarding instances of (suspected) non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning – rather than taking *all* data as a starting point (including non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning) – gives us too limited a view of L2-behaviour in a task-based environment, simply because face-appropriate responses during task-performance are left out. As Block (2003) concludes in his much-cited critique of SLA-research: "SLA researchers systematically marginalise the social side of communication in their work", which leads to a "mechanistic and instrumental view of conversational interaction" (89).

As shown in Table 20 studies reporting high instances of negotiation of meaning suggest that the absence of indicators of non-understanding (-) is synonymous with understanding (+); conversely, it assumes that negotiation of meaning is initiated (+) in case of non-understanding (-). Both options would result in successful task completion. In other words, if there is *no* understanding, negotiation of meaning will be started, conducted and finished, ultimately leading to successful task completion. And if there *is* understanding, negotiation of meaning is not required for successful task completion.

Table 20: Negotiation of meaning research paradigm

| Understanding | Negotiation of meaning | Successful task completion |
|---------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| + | – | + |
| – | + | + |

However, as we have established in this study, our digital data also show multiple instances that contradict the correlations in Table 20, confirming findings from a number of earlier non-digital face-to-face learner-learner classroom interaction studies (Eckerth 2005; Foster 1998). It could be that despite (a near certainty of) non-understanding (-), negotiation of meaning is *not* initiated (-), which means that successful task completion is not guaranteed (-) (see Table 21).

Table 21: Negotiation of meaning 'real world' or pragmatic paradigm

| Understanding | Negotiation of meaning | Successful task completion |
|---------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| – | – | – |

We propose that, if we accept the assumption that language learners could benefit from negotiation of meaning sequences in their L2-learning process, we should – paradoxically – also include in our investigations interactions where negotiation of meaning does *not* occur. As Van der Zwaard & Bannink (2014) note, if native speakers and non-native speakers involved in task-based interaction go through a negotiation routine, this is no guarantee that common ground and understanding have in fact been reached. In the same way does *not* negotiating for meaning where and when it is called for and expected, automatically mean that mutual understanding has in fact been reached as has been reported in L2-classroom studies that did not involve synchronous computer-mediated communication (cf. e.g. Eckerth 2005; Foster 1998; Willis 1996). These non-occurrences can therefore have a significantly negative effect on task-completion – and ultimately on L2-learning.

As this study has illustrated, teachers and researchers alike must appreciate the notion that, even in the most authentic of situations such as genuine telecollaboration projects between non-native speakers and native speakers of the target language, socio-cultural factors like fear of losing face may hinder and jeopardize task performance. Paradoxically, then, the authenticity of the task environment, one of the key issues of task-based language teaching, may hamper rather than encourage negotiation of meaning.

Chapter 5

Non-native speaker/native speaker interaction in dyadic task-based SCMC: task-appropriate versus face-appropriate behaviour⁵⁷

5.1 Introduction

The affordances digital technology offers to both educators and researchers in task-based teaching environments have generally been hailed as excellent gateways for L2-learning as they enable us to surpass the traditional (and usually monocultural) L2-classroom (Hampshire and Agualeles Anoro, 2004; O'Dowd & Waire, 2009). Telecollaboration tasks, especially those performed by non-native speakers and native speakers, particularly fit the 'real-world activity'-part of task-based language learning (Skehan, 1998; Ellis, 2003), as the participants need to collaborate and negotiate in a context that could be considered 'authentic': the focus is on the communication, on how non-native speakers manage genuine communicative events, rather than on acquiring specific linguistic features (Kern, 2006). But although technologically-enhanced task-based language teaching has been reported to be more complex than language learning in a face-to-face environment – it involves other specific critical skills such as collaboration skills, identity construction and digital literacy (Chapelle, 2001; Lai and Li, 2011) – using digital technology and testing the effectiveness of digital communication within task-based L2-learning have only recently attracted widespread academic attention (e.g. Hauck, 2010; Peterson, 2010; Thomas, 2015; Thomas & Reinders, 2010). This chapter aims to contribute to this small but growing body of research through an investigation of negotiation of meaning in dyadic digital native speaker/non-native speaker interactions.

5.1.1 *Negotiation of meaning*

The act and process of negotiating for meaning, e.g. asking for elucidation, modifying speech acts, improving message comprehensibility or co-operating to solve a communicative breakdown as may take place in real-

⁵⁷ This chapter in adapted form is under review as Van der Zwaard, R. & Bannink, A. NNS/NS interaction in dyadic task-based SCMC: task-appropriate versus face-appropriate behaviour.

world communication, is claimed to be beneficial for language learners, in non-digital (Long, 1983; Pica, 1994; Poulisse, 1990; Rost and Ross, 1991; Spada & Lightbrown, 1993; Varonis & Gass, 1985) as well as digital language learning environments (Chun, 1994; Kitade, 2000; Lee, 2001, 2009; Warschauer, 1996). A recurrent model to assess negotiation of meaning has been developed by Varonis and Gass (1985). In this model negotiation of meaning occurs when a trigger causes one of the participants in an interaction to interrupt the ongoing discourse through an indicator of non-understanding. Ideally, only if and when the problem has been resolved and mutual understanding has been achieved, will the key discourse continue.

Over the years, multiple studies have reported on the conditions hindering or promoting negotiation for meaning as proposed by Varonis and Gass. It has been claimed, for instance, that dyads consisting of non-native speakers initiate repair more frequently than non-native speaker/native speaker dyads (Varonis & Gass 1985), mainly for social reasons: participants in interactions with symmetrical speaker roles feel less embarrassed to indicate non-understanding than those in apprentice roles in an expert-apprentice interaction. It has also been proposed that interlocutor and topic familiarity are conducive to negotiation of meaning (Ellis, 2003). Other variables that have been hypothesized to encourage negotiated interaction are task-related: project-focused and carefully designed tasks seeded with linguistic prompts generate high rates of negotiated interaction (Kötter, 2003; Pellettieri, 2000; Smith, 2003a) and closed tasks with a set outcome promote more negotiation of meaning than, for instance, opinion gap tasks or open tasks with no set outcome (Long, 1989; Ellis, 2003).⁵⁸ In addition, studies within technologically-enhanced task-based language teaching have reported that negotiation of meaning occurs more often during written computer-mediated communication compared to non-digital face-to-face interaction (Warschauer, 1998) or compared to video call (Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014).

Researchers critical of negotiation of meaning, however, have pointed out that relying on learners to negotiate for meaning is a theoretical

⁵⁸ In his overview of conducted research studies into negotiation of meaning during computer-mediated communication, however, Peterson (2010) shows contradictory results. Some studies (e.g. Blake 2000) report the highest incidence of negotiated interaction during closed tasks, others during open tasks (Smith 2003a, 2003b). In other words, the jury is not out yet on which task-type generates the most negotiation of meaning in a computer-mediated communication environment.

expectation rather than an empirical fact based on actual participant performance in the classroom. They argue that in L2-learning settings participants, instead of initiating negotiation of meaning, would often simply gloss over triggers or abandon the topic under discussion for social reasons (Foster, 1998; Eckerth, 2009; Slimano-Rolls, 2005; Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2016).

5.1.2 Task as work plan versus task in process

It is clear, then, that tasks do not always deliver what designers envisage when they develop a task. As early as 1989 Breen proposed a distinction between ‘task-as-work plan’ and ‘task-in-process’ (Breen, 1989): task-as-work plan constitutes the task as planned, developed and intended by the researcher or educator – the task on paper – whereas task-in-process refers to the task as the operationalized activity by the learners. Task-as-work plan is the context-free model as designed on the drawing table, with the task-in-process as its activated version in a context-sensitive environment (Seedhouse, 2005). Breen’s distinction is corroborated by other studies that report that the pedagogical intention of a task does not always correspond to what happens once learners carry out the task (cf. Foster, 1998; Ohta, 2001; Seedhouse, 2005; Ross & Kasper, 2013). In other words, there is not always a one-to-one relationship between what is intended or expected to happen, and what actually happens (Seedhouse, 2010).

This is in line with recent insights in human communication. In their book-length study into complex system theory in applied linguistics, Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008) draw on complexity or chaos theory to explain the intermittence of human interaction. They define interactivity as a complex, adaptive system (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Seedhouse, 2010). Interaction, even in institutionalized, task-based L2-learning settings, is inherently non-linear and unpredictable, which makes it challenging to enhance or prompt intended patterns of discourse, such as negotiation of meaning. Seedhouse (2010) concludes that the interactional dynamics that participants bring into the discourse can drastically change the nature and focus of the exchange: “Participants are involved in organizing the interaction and adapting themselves to others’ contributions on a turn-by-turn basis” (15). This means that, in order to really make sense of L2-learner behaviours, researchers are challenged to conduct more classroom-based studies, and to investigate the correlation between task design on the one hand and the discourse that language learners produce during task performance on the other (Collentine, 2010; Samuda & Bygate, 2008;

Seedhouse, 2005; Seedhouse & Almutairi, 2009). Instead of imposing possible task-as-work plan concepts on task-in-process interactional data, we should use the task-in-process data as a starting point to search for possible interactional concepts or patterns (Seedhouse, 2005; Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2016), as we will do in this chapter.

5.2 The study

5.2.1 Participants

The data for this study derive from dyadic digital sessions that were embedded in a larger group-to- group telecollaboration project between two cohorts of undergraduate university students on either side of the world: one group in The Netherlands, and one group in Australia. For a period of six weeks, six non-native speaker/native speaker dyads (N=12) collaborated through dyadic and group-to-group video call, email, Facebook and written chat. The project was set up as an interdisciplinary cultural exchange between two groups of undergraduate students: Dutch European Studies students taking a Minor in English language, and Australian students of Theatre and Education. The native speakers were all native speakers of English; the L2-level of the non-native speaker participants was level B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). According to this framework, a learner at B2-level is able to “interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party” (Council of Europe, 2001: 23).

5.2.2 Task design

For the task investigated in this study, we drew on a well-known unfocused⁵⁹ information-gap⁶⁰ task – the Things-in-Pocket task – that can be used for a wide range of L2 levels and that is referred to in multiple studies (e.g. Adams, 2009; Batstone & Ellis, 2009; Ellis, 2009; Ellis, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2015; Sadlier et al. 2000; Samuda & Bygate, 2008; Smith, 2003a, 2003b).

⁵⁹ Tasks that are meant to produce general communication without a focus on a particular linguistic form (Ellis 2009).

⁶⁰ Tasks that require the exchange of pieces of information between the participants in order to finish the task successfully.

In the first week of the telecollaboration project the participants performed the task in a single session. Each dyad was given a different time slot, depending on the availability of the participants and taking the considerable time difference between both countries into account. Both native speaker and non-native speaker participants were given two different wish lists as compiled by fictional characters; the first six items were to be exchanged through dyadic video call, and the second through written chat, or vice versa. The task consisted of three parts: the participants had to exchange their items, reach a consensus on one item for each character, and come up with a characterization of their fictional persons based on the wish list. The non-native speakers were only given a visual representation of the items on their wish lists; the native speakers received both the images and the target words. It was entirely up to the participants how and in which order they would exchange the items, as long as they did not show their counterparts the item pictures. Only the data from the first part of the task – the exchange of items – have been considered for this study. To make the exchange more symmetrical, the non-native speakers were also given items to exchange with the native speakers. However, since this is a study into non-native speaker responses after potential non-understanding, these data have not been included in this chapter.

The native speakers were not informed that there was a fair chance that the non-native speakers would not be familiar with the task items, nor were they instructed to act as expert speakers of the target language. The non-native speakers in their turn were not explicitly instructed to initiate repair if they did not know a task item. The duration of each session was approximately one hour. The Dutch students performed the task from a university computer; the Australians from their home computers. The researcher was not present during task performance. The video call sessions were recorded with a recorder program,⁶¹ an application that would record sound and split-screen images of both participants.⁶² The written chat logs were saved automatically by the software program⁶³.

The items that were selected for the task were all common, everyday objects familiar to the native speaker, but the non-native speaker students, although all advanced and confident L2-speakers, were not expected to

⁶¹ Skypecall© recorder program

⁶² All participants had agreed to the recording of their sessions.

⁶³ Skype©

know the exact terms in English, which was confirmed by a control test given to 77 Dutch students with the same level of English. The items were: *braces; laurel wreath; wrench; tongs; turtleneck sweater with honeycomb stitch; hamper; whisk; tassel; tweezers; javelin; pruning shears; bobby pin.*

5.2.3 Research questions

In this study, we will attempt to find answers to the following research questions:

- RQ1: Do non-native speaker interactants consistently initiate repair in case of non-understanding during dyadic task-based synchronous-computer-mediated communication? If not, why not?
- RQ2: How can we characterize the interactional behaviour of the native speaker participants during dyadic task-based synchronous computer-mediated communication?
- RQ3: Does the type of digital medium (video conferencing or written chat) (partly) shape participants' behaviour?

5.2.4 Procedures

To address our first two research questions, both native speaker and non-native speaker responses have been classified into three categories:

Non-native speaker responses

- i. Explicit display (Koole, 2010; cf. emphatic assertion of understanding, Markee and Seo, 2009) of understanding or claim of understanding: the non-native speaker shows he has understood or claims to understand so there is no apparent need to negotiate for meaning. There is no trouble source, so there is no indicator (of non-understanding).
- ii. Explicit indicator: usually a direct verbal appeal for assistance, e.g. *<What do you mean?>*, *<I don't understand>*, *<Please explain.>*, *<I've never heard of that word>*, etc. (cf. Varonis & Gass, 1985).
- iii. Covert signal of non-understanding without direct appeal for assistance, not resulting in speaker change, e.g. minimal response, paralinguistic cues (e.g. laughter), nonverbal moves (e.g. shaking

head, raising eyebrows, blank face).⁶⁴ This type of response cannot be marked as an indicator since it does not prompt speaker change (cf. Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2016). If it was unclear to the researchers whether the participants had in fact (not) understood, the participants were asked specific questions later in a stimulated recall session.

If non-native speakers started up a negotiation of meaning sequence and exerted every effort to reach mutual understanding (ii), their interactive behaviour was marked as a *task appropriate response* (TAR; cf Smith, 2003a): they participated actively in the interest of the task by unambiguously indicating non-understanding, if need be several times, and by inviting their native speaker interlocutor to respond and explain in order to reach common ground. A task-appropriate response, then, is an explicit statement of non-understanding, uttered in the interest of mutual understanding and usually resulting in successful completion of the task. If, however, during task performance the non-native speakers gave off covert signals of non-understanding (iii), these would be marked as *face-appropriate response* (FAR; Van der Zwaard and Bannink 2016).

Native speaker responses

After an explicit display of understanding (i), or an explicit indicator of non-understanding (ii) by the non-native speaker, the native speaker response was usually straightforward: in case of the former, the native speaker moved on to the next object, in case of the latter, the native speaker generally reacted by explaining, elaborating, etc. After a covert signal of non-understanding (iii), where the non-native speaker neither explicitly negotiated for meaning, nor expressed a display of understanding, the native speaker essentially had three choices:

- i. To ignore covert signals of non-understanding (for instance, by moving on to the next task item).
- ii. To check comprehension (cf. Long, 1983) to see if the hearer has indeed understood, e.g. <do you know what a javelin is?>
- iii. To provide comprehensible input (cf. Long, 1983): to present the hearer with extra information so that s/he can figure out the

⁶⁴ Similar to what Drew labels as 'open class repair initiators' (1997).

meaning, e.g. <a tassel ... it's like a string you hang around your curtains to hold them back>.

In order to address research question 3 – does the digital medium influence participant behaviour – this study used a counterbalanced design, dividing the task session for each dyad into two parts to be performed by either video call or written chat. The first three dyads (dyads A, B, C) performed the first half of the task through chat, and the second half of the task through video call; the last three dyads (dyads D, E, F) vice versa.

5.3 Results

In this section, data from all six dyads in the study will be investigated, and the (in)consistencies of non-native speaker responses to the string of twelve task items will be analysed. The data for each dyad are presented schematically in a table displaying the initial non-native speaker response to the 12 triggers, and the native speaker response in the following turn. We will discuss all data for Dyad A; for reasons of space we will only present a representative selection of the data for the other dyads.

Dyad A

Example 1: Dyad 1

| Item | Speaker | Written chat script ⁶⁵ |
|------|---------|---|
| I | NS | [10:32:44] Xmas basket of assorted red and white wines. With olive oil (love it with balsamic) and biscuits |
| | NNS | [<i>claim of understanding</i>] |
| II | NS | [10:33:47] secondly on his wish list is a whisk... making this list a whisk list (see what I did there) |
| | NNS | [<i>Claim of understanding</i>] |
| III | NS | Javelin |
| | NNS | [<i>negotiates for meaning</i>] |
| IV | NS | [10:36:44] Tongs |
| | | [10:36:53] do you know what that is? |
| | | [10:37:07] for picking up meat and salad |
| | NNS | [10:37:12] uhmmmm no <i>sorry</i> ⁶⁶ |
| V | NS | [10:38:08] next is a pair of secateurs |
| | NNS | [10:38:11] What's that? [<i>negotiates for meaning</i>] |
| | NS | [10:38:17] For trimming roses |

⁶⁵ Chat scripts have not been corrected for errors in this study

⁶⁶ Authors' emphasis

| | | |
|------|-----|--|
| | NNS | [10:38:19] ohh <i>Sorry</i> ⁶⁷ |
| VI | NS | [10:39:03] and finally on his list of hard things to get is black sweater with |
| | NS | [10:39:17] turtle neck and a honey come patter |
| | NS | [10:39:23] pattern* |
| | NNS | [<i>claim of understanding</i>] |
| | | Video transcripts |
| VII | NS | <i>Alright ... the first item is ... a tassel!</i> |
| | NNS | [no response – blank face] |
| | NS | <i>Do you know what a tassel is?</i> |
| | NNS | [shakes head] |
| VIII | NS | <i>Uhh ... her next item is uhhh ... bobby pin.</i> |
| | NNS | <i>Yeah ... I do know what that is ... hold on ... bobby pin. Yes. For your hair</i> [<i>claim of understanding</i>] |
| IX | NS | <i>Then she has a wrench.</i> |
| | NNS | [silence – blank face] |
| | NS | <i>You know wrench?</i> |
| X | NS | <i>And then her next item is ... a pair of like Suspenders</i> [moves both hands up and down his shoulder] |
| | NNS | [<i>claim of understanding</i>] |
| XI | NS | <i>And then she's got a laurel wreath.</i> |
| | NNS | [silence – then bursts out laughing] |
| | NS | <i>You know what that is?</i> |
| XII | NS | <i>A pair of tweezers</i> |
| | NNS | [silence – then laughs] |
| | NS | <i>What do you think her character is like?</i> |

Interestingly, the native speaker in Dyad A begins the task not by using the target item as written on his task sheet (*hamper*) but by paraphrasing the word. The reason could be he anticipates a potential breakdown of the discourse – and rightly so it turns out: during post-task stimulated recall the non-native speaker indicated not knowing the word *hamper*. This native speaker move is a typical example of what Long (1983) has coined *modified input*, or *simplification* as an interactional move by the native speaker to avoid conversational trouble. So effectively the task starts with item II (*whisk*), which the non-native speaker nonverbally claims to understand, although he does not respond to the native speaker's pun (<*making this list a whisk list*>). With the next item (III – *javelin*), the non-native speaker explicitly negotiates for meaning by appealing for assistance. What follows

⁶⁷ Authors' emphasis

is a 'classic' case of negotiation of meaning (not included in the example) where the native speaker explains and elucidates, and ending with the non-native speaker indicating to have understood. When the native speaker sends item IV (*tongs*), he immediately follows up with a comprehension check <*do you know what that is?*> in his next message. And before the non-native speaker has had the chance to react to this message, he hurriedly sends off a description of *tongs*. Due to the non-adjacent discourse pattern that is inherent in written chat – the participants can type simultaneously so messages can cross – the non-native speaker's answer to the comprehension check is sent after the native speaker has explained the item. She writes: <*Uhm mmm no sorry*>, with which she not only admits to, but also apologizes for her non-understanding. With the next item (*pruning shears*) the native speaker, again, modifies his input: this time he does not provide a definition of the target item but replaces the word on his task sheet with a synonym: *secateurs* (item V), which can be regarded as another attempt at avoiding conversational trouble (Long 1983). This time there are no noticeable consequences for the interaction that follows: the non-native speaker does not know the synonym either and initiates repair, albeit disconcertingly by apologizing again for not understanding <*what's that? Sorry*>.

The explicit apologies of the non-native speaker to her native speaker counterpart for not knowing items IV and V could be marked as an illustration of the paradox of an authentic task-based interaction environment: the interaction takes place in the context of an institutional L2 course, where, according to negotiation of meaning theories, it is perfectly natural for a non-native speaker apprentice to be unfamiliar with certain words of the target language and, therefore, to task-appropriately ask for assistance from the native speaker expert. At the same time, however, social dimensions, such as embarrassment about not knowing certain target items, appear to be in force, possibly enhanced by the very authenticity of the interaction environment (cf. Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2016).

In the second (video call) part of the task (items VII to XII), the non-native speaker no longer explicitly negotiates for meaning. Instead, she either claims understanding (VIII and X) or gives off implicit messages of non-understanding. For these items (VII, IX, and XI), successful task completion now firmly lies in the hands of the native speaker: he needs to step in to boost the interaction with comprehensible input or a comprehension check. He delivers in all but one instance: he follows the non-native speaker's fuzzy

response to item XII with a rather abrupt change of subject and continues with the next part of the task. See Table 22⁶⁸ for a schematic representation of the data as discussed above.

Table 22^{69, 70}: *Dyad A*

| Item | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII | IX | X | XI | XII |
|------|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|------|----|-----|----|-----|
| V/C | C | C | C | C | C | C | V | V | V | V | V | V |
| NNS | clm | clm | NoM | | NoM | clm | 0 | clm | 0 | clm | 0 | 0 |
| NS | | | | CC | | | CC | | CC | | CC | |

Dyad B

As we can see in Table 23 below, the interactions of Dyad B resemble the pattern found in Dyad A: during the first eight items, the non-native speaker negotiates for meaning five times (items I, II, V, VII, VIII). After item VIII the non-native speaker ceases to initiate negotiate for meaning; instead, she only transmits covert signals of non-understanding.

⁶⁸ In this and other tables:

C written chat;
V videoconferencing;
NS native speaker;
NNS non-native speaker;
clm non-native speaker claim or display of understanding;

⁶⁹ In this and in other tables:

0 non-native speaker covert signal of non-understanding;
CC native speaker comprehension check;
Ci native speaker comprehensible input.
NoM negotiation of meaning

⁷⁰ Task items on NS task sheet: I Christmas hampers; II whisk; III javelin; IV tongs; V pruning shears; VI turtleneck sweater with honeycomb stitch; VII tassel; VIII Kirby grips/bobby pins; IX wrench; X braces; XI laurel wreath; XII tweezers.

Table 23: Dyad B

| Items | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII | IX | X | XI | XII |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|-----|
| V/C | C | C | C | C | C | C | V | V | V | V | V | V |
| NNS | NoM | NoM | 0 | clm | NoM | clm | NoM | NoM | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| NS | | | | | | | | | Ci | Ci | Ci | Ci |

In our analysis, we will focus on the interaction during the final four items (Example 2).

Example 2: Dyad B

| Item | Speaker | Video transcript and observations |
|------|---------|--|
| IX | NS | <i>Alright. Next one is a wrench.</i> |
| | NNS | [Raises eyebrows and smiles but does not say anything] |
| | NS | <i>So uhhh, when you're trying to fix stuff around your house, like screwing in bolts and that kind of stuff?</i> |
| | NNS | <i>Yeah?</i> |
| | NS | <i>Yeah. It's that one. It's like this long thing that's used, also in murder mysteries to kill people ...</i> |
| X | NS | <i>The next one is suspenders</i> |
| | NNS | [Silence – moves head backwards] |
| | NNS | <i>Huh?</i> |
| | NS | <i>You know when you're trying to keep your pants up, like older people do?</i> [gestures] |
| XI | NS | <i>Next one is a laurel wreath.</i> |
| | NNS | [Silence – looks down and away from the camera] |
| | NS | <i>So, you know when people win at the Olympics and [points to her head with both hands] and they get that weird kind of crown [draws the image of a crown with her hands around her forehead] around their head with the laurel leaves?</i> |
| XII | NS | <i>The last one is tweezers</i> |
| | NNS | [Hesitates, then points at her eyebrow with one hand] |
| | NS | <i>Yeah, when you have a splinter or something ...</i> |
| | NNS | <i>Yeah</i> |
| | NS | <i>And you get that little thing</i> |

By the time this dyad has reached item IX the non-native speaker no longer explicitly indicates non-understanding, nor does she explicitly ask for assistance. Rather, her responses are ambiguous: protracted silence followed by raising eyebrows (item IX), and protracted silence followed by <huh?> (item X). When item XI is communicated, there is only protracted silence, combined with a shift in gaze, away from the webcam. After the last item – *tweezers* – the non-native speaker hesitantly points towards her eyebrows. The native speaker acknowledges this gesture, but still provides extra input even after the non-native speaker has tentatively indicated to have understood (as will be explained below).

In sum, as in Dyad A, the non-native speaker responses of non-understanding become increasingly implicit, while the native speaker counterpart in his turn displays more task-appropriate behaviour by providing unsolicited comprehensible input so that mutual understanding is still reached.

Dyad C

The non-native speaker from Dyad C only explicitly initiates negotiation of meaning three times (items I, III and VI); during the other nine items, the native speaker seems to be doing all the work.

Table 24: Dyad C

| Item | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII | IX | X | XI | XII |
|------|-----|----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|-----|
| V/C | C | C | C | C | C | C | V | V | V | V | V | V |
| NNS | NoM | 0 | NoM | 0 | 0 | NoM | 0 | | | | | |
| NS | | Ci | | Ci | Ci | | Ci | Ci | Ci | Ci | Ci | Ci |

The analysis below will concentrate on the discourse concerning items VII to XII (Example 3).

Example 3: Dyad C

| Item | Speaker | Video transcript and observations |
|------|---------|--|
| VII | NS | <i>Tassel</i> |
| | NNS | [no response- blank face] |
| | NS | <i>It's like a string you hang around your curtains to hold them back, and it's got like ... stringy bits on it.</i> |
| VIII | NS | <i>Kirby grips ... like bobby pins. You know like pins that little girls put in their hair [gestures putting a pin in her hair] ... these little</i> |
| IX | | <i>a wrench</i> |
| | NNS | [no response – blank face] |
| | NS | <i>Like the things you use to ... [makes a tightening with wrench-type movement with her hand] to screw bolts in</i> |
| X | NS | <i>Braces. You know the... [clutches her shoulders with both hands] things that guys use to keep their pants up that go over their shoulders.</i> |
| XI | NS | <i>A laurel wreath, which ... how do I even begin to describe this. You know like the Greek, the ancient Greek pictures you see and they've got the thing [makes circular gestures around her head] , like with the golden leaves in their hair?</i> |
| XII | NS | <i>Tweezers. You know, the things that you pluck your eyebrows with.</i> |

It is striking that after item VII, the native speaker exerts himself by giving comprehensible input for each of the items without having been asked for it, sparing the non-native speaker the effort of overt negotiation while simultaneously ensuring successful task completion. After items VII and IX, the native speaker still leaves a short pause which gives the non-native speaker the opportunity to react, but when he fails to do so, the native speaker no longer waits for a non-native speaker indication of non-understanding; instead, he instantly adds an explanation (items X, XI and XII). In fact, even if the non-native speaker had wanted to initiate repair, or to signal understanding, he would not have had the chance to do so. Again, in the final stage of the task, the native speaker is doing all the work, while the non-native speaker seems to have retreated into unresponsiveness.

Dyad D

The non-native speaker responses to the first four items are an exemplary illustration of task-appropriate behaviour: the non-native speaker negotiates for meaning by explicitly asking for assistance. However, for the following eight items she negotiates for meaning only twice (items VII and

IX), although she claims understanding only once (item VI). Again, this behaviour prompts her native speaker counterpart into ensuring successful task completion by providing unsolicited comprehensible input.

Table 25: Dyad D

| Item | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII | IX | X | XI | XII |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|------|----|----|-----|-----|
| V/C | V | V | V | V | V | V | C | C | C | C | C | C |
| NNS | NoM | NoM | NoM | NoM | 0 | clm | NoM | 0 | 0 | | NoM | |
| NS | | | | | Ci | | Ci | Ci | Ci | Ci | | Ci |

The non-native speaker initiates negotiation of meaning five times during the first seven items, but stops doing so after item VII.

Example 4: Dyad D; written chat (Items VII–XII)

| Item | Messenger | Written chat script |
|------|-----------|---|
| VII | NS | [12:07:05] a tassle |
| | NNS | [12:07:19] Ohhh noooo! I don't know what that is! |
| VIII | NS | [12:09:37] kirby gripps |
| | NNS | [12:08:41] |
| | NS | [12:08:42] or bobby pins |
| IX | NS | [12:09:41] Wrench |
| | | [12:09:56] so it looks like a spanner but is on both ends |
| X | NS | [12:12:03] okay so braces |
| | | [12:12:13] they thing guys put over their pants |
| | | [12:12:18] when they are trying to be fancy |
| | | [12:12:24] mostly on a tuxedo |
| | | [12:12:38] lots of women wore them in the 80s |
| XI | NS | [12:14:19] now this ones really hard: laurel wreath |
| | NNS | [negotiates for meaning] |
| XII | NS | [12:20:25] tweezers |
| | | [12:20:37] you can use them to pluck eyebrows with |

For item VIII she sends a paralinguistic response (a series of dots), as an covert rather than explicit signal of non-understanding.⁷¹ Interestingly, the

⁷¹ In the absence of non-verbal information, paralinguistic typography such as the series of dots in this example are meant to represent the facial expression or mood of the sender.

only other item the non-native speaker actively negotiates is item XI, possibly because the native speaker has introduced the item with the pre-sequence (Levinson 1983): *<now this ones really hard>*, making it less disconcerting to admit non-understanding (cf. Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014). For the other three items (IX, X and XII) the native speaker's expectations of (non-)understanding by the non-native speaker seem have been shaped by her previous responses: he decides to provide so much comprehensible input that the non-native speaker no longer needs to negotiate. As in Dyad C the native speaker ends up doing all the interactional work.

Dyad E

The non-native speaker in this dyad explicitly negotiates for meaning four times (items III, IV, VI and VII); for the other items (save item I), the native speaker is more proactive than her non-native speaker counterpart: he seems to take over the interaction entirely during the last four items, turning the task performance into a native speaker performance, rather than co-constructed native speaker/non-native speaker communication.

Table 26: Dyad E

| Item | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII | IX | X | XI | XII |
|------------|---|----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|------|----|----|----|-----|
| V/C | V | V | V | V | V | V | C | C | C | C | C | C |
| NNS | 0 | 0 | NoM | NoM | | NoM | | NoM | | | | |
| NS | | Ci | | | Ci | | Ci | | Ci | Ci | Ci | Ci |

In our analysis of Dyad E, we will consider the beginning and the end of the interchange.

Example 5: Dyad E ; video call (Items I-III); written chat (Items IX-XII)

| Item | Speaker/ messenger | Video transcript and observations |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--|
| I ⁷² | NS | <i>There's a whisk</i> |
| | NNS | [echoes] <i>a whisk</i> ⁷³ |
| II | NS | <i>Tongs</i> |
| | NNS | [echoes] <i>Tongs</i> |
| | NS | <i>Like cooking tongs ... to turn meat</i> |
| III | NS | <i>Hedge clippers</i> |
| | NNS | [negotiates for meaning] |
| | | Written chat |
| IX | NS | Pant suspenders – like straps that clip to your pants to hold them up with |
| X | NS | Then there's a symbol that looks like a wreath – like Xmas wreaths that go on the door, they're made of leaves |
| XI. | NS | Next we have a snapper or a wrench, it's a tool to fix the car |
| XII. | NS | And lastly we have ... a tassel – it's a rope that you can use to tie up curtains and make them look nice when they're open. |

When the native speaker has communicated *whisk* in turn 1, the non-native speaker echoes the word while looking down at her task sheet without an explicit appeal for assistance, which may be why the native speaker proceeds to the next item [item II; *tongs*]. However, when the non-native speaker echoes the second target item as well, the native speaker seems to sense the non-native speaker's possible non-understanding and provides comprehensible input without having been asked for it <*Like cooking tongs ... to turn meat*>. Having now firmly caught on that his non-native speaker counterpart might not understand the items, the native speaker changes tactics: he replaces the word *pruning shears* (on his task sheet) with the easier and more common *hedge clippers* – without, however, any noticeable effect since it still prompts an explicit indicator of non-understanding. The native speaker now takes a more drastic step: convinced that his non-native speaker counterpart is not familiar with most of his items and to avoid any more conversational trouble (and loss of face) for the last four items (items IX

⁷² For unknown reasons the native speaker decided to change the order of the items on the worksheet.

⁷³ Stimulated recall: non-native speaker does not know what *whisk* is.

– XII) he takes the lead by modifying and elaborating on his items without waiting for a non-native speaker response, in a sense pushing the non-native speaker out of the interaction.

Dyad F

Table 27: *Dyad F*

| Item | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII | IX | X | XI | XII |
|------|-----|----|-----|-----|----|----|-----|------|----|----|----|-----|
| V/C | V | V | V | V | V | V | C | C | C | C | C | C |
| NNS | NoM | 0 | 0 | NoM | 0 | 0 | | | | | | |
| NS | | CC | | | Ci | Ci | Ci | Ci | Ci | Ci | Ci | Ci |

The non-native speaker in this dyad only explicitly negotiates for meaning twice (items I and IV). And again, the more the non-native speaker withdraws, the more task-appropriately the native speaker responds.

Example 6a: Dyad F; video call (Items I-VI)

| Item | Speaker | Video transcript and observations |
|------|---------|---|
| I | NS | <i>Christmas hampers</i> |
| | NNS | [negotiates for meaning] |
| II. | NS | <i>A whisk</i> |
| | NNS | <i>Whisk</i> [echoes the word while looking down at the task sheet] |
| | NS | <i>Do you know what a whisk is?</i> |
| III. | NS | <i>A javelin. Surely you guys know what a javelin is.</i> |
| | NNS | [silence – frowns] |
| IV. | NS | <i>Tongs</i> |
| | NNS | [negotiates for meaning] |
| V | NS | <i>Pruning shears</i> |
| | NNS | [shakes head] <i>No.</i> |
| VI. | Ns | <i>Turtleneck sweater with honeycomb stitch</i> |
| | NNS | [silence – blank face] |

The non-native speaker starts out by negotiating for meaning (item I). With the next item (*whisk*), however, she does not explicitly appeal for assistance again; instead, she echoes the word while looking down at her task sheet. The native speaker interprets this fuzzy response as an indicator of non-

understanding and follows up with a comprehension check *<do you know what a whisk is?>*, leading to a negotiation of meaning sequence (not included in the example). Now that it has become clear that the non-native speaker was not familiar with his first two items, the native speaker seems to express a certain expectation (or hope) about the non-native speaker's understanding of item III, *<Surely you guys know what a javelin is>*, a comment that makes it all the more uncomfortable for his counterpart to explicitly admit non-understanding. Instead, she frowns and does not say anything, again leaving the floor for the native speaker to step in and explain. With the next item, the non-native speaker explicitly initiates repair for the second and, as it turns out, last time during their session. After item V, she shakes her head and utters *<No>*; after item VI she only draws a blank face. Again, in both cases the native speaker needs to act task-appropriately and pro-actively to ensure successful task completion.

Example 6b: Dyad F; written chat (Items VII-VIII)

| | | |
|------|----|--|
| VII | NS | [11:17:37] Ok so the first thing is kind of hard. |
| | NS | [11:17:49] but you know like, old fashioned cushions and curtains? |
| | NS | [11:17:59] how they have the pieces of material that hangs off the corners? |
| | NS | [11:18:14] like, it comes together in a clump and it has a fringed end usually. |
| | NS | [11:18:21] ugh I'm so bad at explaining this! |
| VIII | NS | [11:20:56] ok these are small brown clips |
| | NS | [11:21:02] well, not clips. |
| | NS | [11:21:12] they are used when you're putting your hair up |
| | NS | [11:21:24] they're small and brown and have one rigged side, and they slide into your hair and stop it from falling out. |

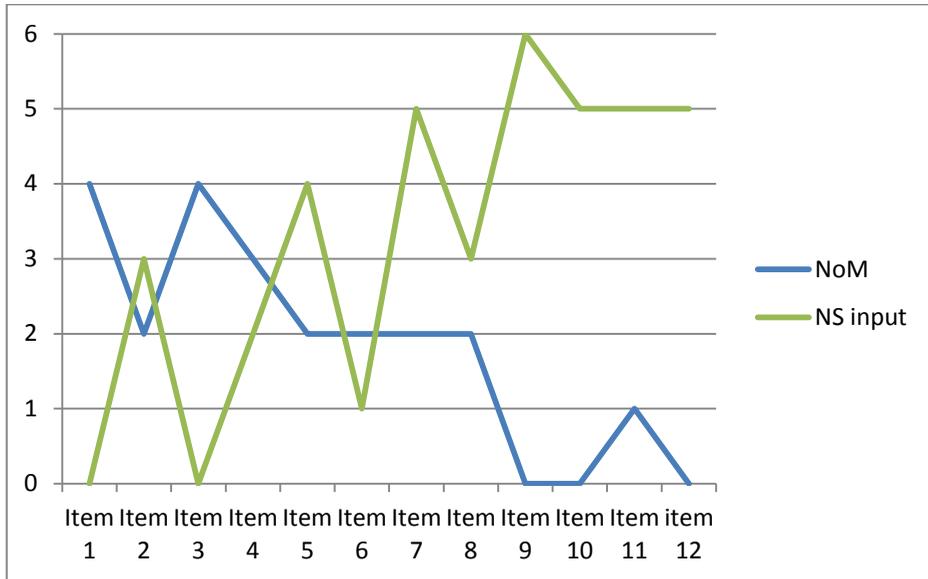
When they switch to written chat after item VI (example 6b), the native speaker seems to have appropriated the discourse based on the expectations of his counterpart's non-understanding in the video call part of the task, by bombarding his counterpart with so much comprehensible input for items VII to XII, that she is no longer even given the chance to indicate understanding or to initiate negotiation. As a matter of fact, possibly to accommodate his counterpart and spare her the potential discomposure of not recognizing the target word, the native speaker has even ceased to name the target items; instead, he just sends multiple messages with elaborate descriptions of each item.

5.4 Discussion and Conclusions

The data set we draw on in this chapter is far too small to warrant more than tentative conclusions. Given these limitations, however, micro-analysis of the data still yields valuable insights into the behaviour of the non-native speaker and native speaker participants during the dyadic telecollaboration task. As such, our data show a certain negotiation trend or pattern that needs further investigation, particularly for a task type with a string of triggers, such as the Things-in-Pocket task.

The task-based L2-learning paradigm starts from the premise that in the enactment of the task participation roles will be divided between speaker (native speaker) and hearer (non-native speaker) according to the demand-and-supply or equal footing type sequences modelled for negotiation of meaning (Varonis & Gass 1985). Both participants are expected to consistently act in the interest of the task. The data in this chapter, however, confirm the findings from a number of previous studies that have shown that non-native speaker participants do not always act in the interest of the task, but also in the interest of face (Aston 1986; Block 2003; Foster 1998; Long & Porter 1985; Pellettierri 2000; Tudini 2007; Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014). During post-task stimulated recall, the non-native speaker participants reported feeling 'uneasy' at having to admit failure to understand multiple times. For the same reasons, the native speakers, in their turn, did their utmost to avoid conversational trouble. Our data show a surprisingly consistent pattern: the non-native speakers mainly initiated repair during the first six items, and gradually moved towards covert, *face-appropriate responses* (Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014) as the task session progressed. Rather than overtly and directly appealing for assistance in the interest of the task, the non-native speakers would only give off covert signals of possible non-understanding. As can be seen in table 28 there is a fairly steep decline in negotiating for meaning sequences between items I and items XII. It seems, then, that, in case of a series of triggers, social dimensions gradually gain more prominence.

Table 28: Patterns of negotiation of meaning (NNS) and unsolicited input (NS) during the exchange of 12 items



NoM = NNS-initiated negotiation of meaning; NS input = unsolicited NS input

The native speaker in our study played a crucial role in the interactional configuration described above. They tended to counterbalance face-appropriate behaviour of the non-native speakers with task-appropriate behaviour by providing unsolicited (comprehensible) input. As can be seen in Table 28 above, the decrease in non-native speaker initiated negotiation of meaning is compensated for by an increase of spontaneous native speaker input (input that has not been solicited), i.e. the native speaker opted for explaining before being asked to explain. In line with Seedhouse's proposals (2010), the interactional pattern during the task-in-process was indeed discursively constructed.

To find an answer to our third research question – does the digital medium influence participant behaviour? – we implemented a counterbalanced task design. Some studies have shown that text-based synchronous computer-mediated communication, such as written chat, generally provides a less discouraging environment to negotiate for meaning due to its relative anonymity (Kern, 1995; Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014; Warschauer, 1996). As can be gleaned from Examples 1-6 above, however, there is a

decline in non-native speaker repair initiation during the second half of the task (items VII – XII), regardless of the medium.⁷⁴

Our Things-in-Pocket task was seeded with a string of consecutive triggers that had to be task-appropriately negotiated by the non-native speakers in order to finish the task successfully. After a number of triggers, however, the task tended to get completed in spite of, rather than thanks to, non-native speaker responses. As Breen (1989) observes, “learners are capable of playing havoc with even the most carefully designed and much-used task” (23). Researcher should therefore regard participants as task interpreters, rather than task executioners who predictably react to stimuli (Eckerth, 2009; Firth & Wagner, 1996; Slimani-Rolls, 2005). L2-learners will only admit to task-appropriate non-understanding so many times before face-appropriate social issues take over. L2- learners are not just “task-transacting language machines” (Foster, 2009: 251); they are human beings who bring their social needs and identities to the situation (cf. Firth & Wagner, 1996). We conclude, therefore, that designing a successful task does not only involve deciding which type of task (e.g. open versus closed tasks or information gap versus opinion gap; cf. Duff, 1986) is best for the L2-learning of a particular learner group. In digital as well as face-to-face communication the linear pattern of negotiation of meaning fits the notion of task-as-work plan, but it does not necessarily comply with the unpredictability and local, turn-by-turn organization of emerging discourse. The relationship between task-as-work plan and task-in-process, is, indeed, non-linear.

Both researchers and teachers should heed the interrelatedness of L2-learning systems and social systems in task design. Although negotiation of meaning is regarded as a significant component of language learning (Cazden, 2001; Long, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978), our data suggest that having to negotiate again and again will trigger face rather than task-appropriate behaviour, regardless of the participants’ motivation to finish the task successfully. Indeed, in technology-enhanced task design, as elsewhere, less is sometimes more.

⁷⁴ During stimulated recall, none of the participants responded with ‘boredom’ (with the task or their counterparts) as the reason for withdrawing into face-appropriate behaviour. Instead, they indicated having felt ‘embarrassed’ at having to indicate non-understanding multiple times.

Chapter 6

Reversal of native speaker and non-native speaker participation roles in synchronous telecollaboration⁷⁵

6.1 Introduction

Firth and Wagner (1997) were among the first to challenge the categories of 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' in SLA-research. They argued that this binary distinction, based on the cognitive perspective on language learning, does not do justice to the socio-cultural complexities involved in communicative competence as defined by Hymes (1961). Non-native speakers are not by definition 'defective communicators', nor are native speakers always the idealized language users that feature in much SLA research. Rather than approaching expert and apprentice language users as different species, defined solely by their (lack of) language competency, Firth and Wagner claimed, the *situated* social identities of both groups should be factored in (cf. Kasper, 2004).

The introduction and development of digital synchronous communication technologies have impacted on and added to the complexities of social identities in the L2-classroom. The use of synchronous computer-mediated communication technologies, such as written chat and video call, have been found to come with specific affordances and constraints. Van der Zwaard and Bannink (2014, 2016) report that communication between native speakers and non-native speakers through written chat in an L2-environment tends to be less face⁷⁶ threatening than communication through video call. When confronted with an instance of non-understanding, the non-native speakers indicated non-understanding more often during chat than during video call, and they tended to experience the proximity, immediacy and intimacy of the webcam as 'scary' (see also Kern 2014). These findings corroborated results from earlier studies that

⁷⁵ This chapter in adapted form is under review as Van der Zwaard, R. & Bannink, A. Reversal of participation roles in native speaker-non-native speaker telecollaboration.

⁷⁶ Face can be defined as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself [...] during a particular contact" (Goffman 1955: 213). During interaction, participants choose what to show of themselves and what to hide, much like an actor on the stage. This has been referred to as impression management (Goffman, 1959).

compared (non-digital) face-to-face communication with written chat (e.g. Warschauer 1997). Written chat was found to be more 'egalitarian' (Pasfield-Neofitou 2013) and 'unconstrained' (Liddicoat & Tudini 2013). In chat, so it is argued, each participant 'voice' is equal, which renders the distinction between native speaker and non-native speaker irrelevant. As such, although more research is needed, digital mediations seem to affect participant identities, including the 'Old Era' boundaries (Woodin 2013) between native speaker and non-native speaker.

To date, research projects on interaction between non-native speakers report mixed outcomes. Liddicoat and Tudini (2013) conclude that in chat communication the expert status of the native speakers in the target language still casts them in a teacher role as they stepped up "their role as social interactant" (182) despite the fact that the exchange took place in a more social, out-of-class setting. They argue that "the didactic voice of the native speaker, and the non-native speaker's orientations to it, can [therefore] be understood as interactional expressions at the microlevel of the power of the native speaker" (182). Although the interaction was (meant to be) informal and authentic, native speaker institutional identity remained salient due to the embedding framework of the language education activity. Conversely, it was also found that *social* identity was dominant in an *institutional* setting (Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2016). While working on a L2-learning task the non-native speakers, in their institutional roles as novices, were reluctant to admit non-understanding during dyadic digital interaction between non-native speakers, due to issues of face, i.e. they were often too embarrassed to admit 'failure'. The native speakers, in their turn, would use politeness strategies, such as unsolicited comprehensible input, pre-sequences and acts of solidarity to prevent communication breakdowns or to mitigate their counterparts' non-understanding.

As far as we know, no research has been done into *reversed* native speaker and non-native speaker discursive participatory roles during digital interaction. This exploratory study attempts to fill this gap. It investigates the interaction between dyads of native speakers and non-native speakers of English in synchronous computer-mediated communication in a task design where the conventional participant roles of expert and apprentice roles were reversed: the native speakers, as language experts, became the cultural apprentices, whereas the non-native speakers – the language apprentices – were the cultural experts. The aim was to observe the

influence of reversed participant categories on participant behaviour and task performance, i.e. to investigate how the non-native speaker and native speaker construe and interpret their own reversed roles and identities, and those of their counterparts, and what type of communicative behaviour is prompted by this role reversal.

6.2 Theoretical framework

In order to investigate native speaker and non-native speaker responses in their reversed participant roles, we focus on the sequential responses of native speaker participants after an instance of non-understanding, as well as non-native speaker response when the native speaker is hesitant to indicate non-understanding. This chapter builds on, and complements, earlier studies which reported on differences of non-native speaker behaviour in video call and chat and absence of negotiation of meaning by non-native speakers after non-understanding (Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014, 2016). Together, these studies aim to contribute to a better understanding of the complexity and versatility of participant roles in (digital) native speaker-non-native speaker interaction in L2-environments.

For the analysis of our data we draw on two widely used SLA interaction paradigms: the Varonis and Gass model for non-native speaker negotiation of meaning (1985) and Long's classification of native speaker modified output (1983).

The Varonis & Gass model of non-understandings (1985) claims that negotiation of meaning episodes can be divided into two main parts: a trigger and a resolution (see Table 29)

Table 29: Varonis and Gass model for non-understandings

| Trigger | Resolution |
|---------|------------|
| T | I → R → RR |

The trigger [T] is a word or sentence part, usually uttered by the expert, that the learner does not know or understand, consequently putting the meaningful discourse on hold [I]. During the RESOLUTION [R] the trouble source is solved: the learner initiates repair by appealing for help, and the expert rephrases or clarifies [RR], as illustrated in Table 29.

Table 30: Example dialogue illustrating the Varonis and Gass model for non-understandings

| | | |
|---------|--|--|
| Expert | <i>Don't you think he is very phlegmatic?</i> | Trigger (T) |
| Learner | <i>What is phlegmatic?</i> | Indicator (I) |
| Expert | <i>It means very cool and composed</i> | Response (R) |
| Learner | <i>Ah, I see.</i> <i>Yes, I think he is</i> | Reaction to Response (RR) Discourse pops up again |

In the example dialogue of the Varonis and Gass model (Table 30), the word *phlegmatic* appears to be a trigger, a word the hearer is not familiar with. For the interaction to continue, this trouble source needs to be resolved. Indeed, without knowing the meaning of the word *phlegmatic*, the learner will not be able to truthfully answer the expert's question. As such, the hearer is expected to settle this break-down in communication by starting up negotiation of meaning, usually by explicitly appealing for assistance with an indicator of non-understanding. The speaker will then attempt to resolve the problem by explaining or modifying the trigger with a response. As a final turn, the hearer ties up the routine with a reaction to response, explicitly confirming and demonstrating understanding, after which the discourse can continue. When applied to expert-learner interaction, the pivotal prime in this model is the second-turn initiation of repair (I) instigated by the learner after a trigger: if the learner does not initiate negotiation of the trigger and ask for clarification, the communication break-down will be in danger of remaining unresolved.

Varonis and Gass emphasize that the highest incidence of initiation of negotiation of meaning is to be found between members with equal participation status, such as between dyads consisting of non-native speakers. This is, they argue, because participants in these interactions feel they can indicate non-understanding without embarrassment: the interlocutors are equally (in)competent. Asymmetry of participants, such as between native speaker/non-native speaker dyads, in this reasoning hinders negotiation of meaning because the non-native speakers tend to feel embarrassed at having to explicitly acknowledge failure of understanding. Other authors argue that non-native speaker response during native speaker/non-native speaker interaction is not always as predictable as the Varonis and Gass model suggests, however. In their roles as apprentices, they do not always engage in negotiation of meaning

despite non-understanding (Aston 1986; Foster 1998). The non-native speakers, or apprentices, are generally expected to be primarily concerned with their own pedagogical improvement during native speaker/non-native speaker interaction. However, having to communicate a pedagogically sound signal of non-understanding can be experienced by participants as an embarrassing and face-threatening indication of 'having failed' to understand (Eckerth 2009; Foster 1998; Foster & Ohta 2005; Slimani-Rolls 2005; Skehan 2001; Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014, 2016;).

These findings reconfirm the outcomes of Long's study into native speaker-non-native speaker conversation (1983). Long describes how native speakers tend to use strategies for avoiding conversational trouble (such as checking non-native speaker comprehension, using a slower pace and pausing before key words) and tactics for repairing trouble (such as accepting unintentional topic-switches, tolerating ambiguity, or the repetition of utterances). Long argues that without these native speaker initiated modifications, communication runs the risk of breaking down. Native speakers, then, employ face-saving strategies since conversational trouble threatens both the face of the speaker (who apparently has not succeeded in getting his message across) and the hearer (who has not understood and has to initiate repair). So it seems that native speaker behaviour during native speaker/non-native speaker interaction can be *both task-appropriate* (Task-Appropriate Response: TAR; Smith 2003), i.e. in the interest of the task (for instance, by checking non-native speaker comprehension) and *face-appropriate* (Face-Appropriate Response: FAR; authors, 2014, 2016), i.e. in the interest of guarding both their own and the non-native speaker's face, sometimes at the cost of the task (for instance, where native speakers tolerate non-native speaker ambiguity or topic changes).

By placing native speaker participants outside their comfort zone of being the expert and giving them the role of apprentice, and, conversely, by awarding the non-native speaker the role of non-linguistic expert while L2 is still the language of interaction, we aim to contribute to studies into participant roles and identities during native speaker/non-native speaker interaction in a telecollaborative L2-environment.

6.3 The study

6.3.1 The telecollaboration project

Over a period of six weeks, two groups of undergraduate students telecollaborated on a range of online platforms, both asynchronous (group Facebook page, email exchanges) and synchronous (group-to-group video call, dyadic video call and dyadic written chat). The motivation for the exchange was both intercultural and L2-learning: both cohorts of students had the opportunity to work with peers from another culture; the non-native speaker students experienced immersion into a meaningful context in the target language. The data consisted of transcripts of 11 hours of recorded video call sessions, and logs of written chat.

6.3.2 Participants

The Australian participants consisted of a group of undergraduate students in their third year of Drama and Education (all native speakers of Australian English); the Dutch participants consisted of a group of first year undergraduate students doing a Minor in English Language Proficiency as part of their European Studies Major. The Dutch students were all advanced speakers of English who had completed the same level of English in Dutch secondary education, comparable to level B2/C1 on the proficiency scales of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). The native speaker/non-native speaker dyads consisted of randomly selected participants from the cohorts (N=22; age 18-22; male and female; the students did not know each other; none of the students had extensive intercultural or living-abroad experience).

6.3.3 Task design

According to the CEFR, advanced language learners “can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes”, and should “have no difficulty understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed” (Council of Europe 2001: 23). Therefore, we decided on a telecollaboration task based on a number of ‘canned’ jokes (Fry 2011). The Dutch students were given four Dutch jokes they had to translate into English and subsequently relate to their Australian counterparts. The jokes that were selected belong to a category that Hay (2001) has labelled “boundary humor” (77): jokes grounded in ethnic humour and self-deprecation with both a comic and a serious component. As such, they contained potential

referential problems that were expected to foster native speaker negotiation of meaning. Ultimately, the jokes were expected to function as prompts for discussion on how representative they are of Dutch culture.

6.3.4 Procedures

During a single exchange, each dyad performed the task using both desktop video call and written chat. Time on task for each dyad was approximately one hour. The Dutch student performed the task from the university computer lab; due to the time difference the Australian students performed the task from their home computers. The Skype sessions were recorded, transcribed and coded by two researchers; the chat logs (including emoticons) were automatically saved by the program. No instructions were given with respect to the initiation of repair in case of non-understanding.

As can be seen in Table 31, native speaker and non-native speaker participants assume both expert and learner participant roles during task performance, each with regard to different types of expertise.

Table 31: Participation roles during the humour task

| | NNS | NS |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| <i>Dutch cultural jokes</i> | + (expert) | – (learner) |
| <i>Communication in English</i> | – (user/learner) | + (expert) |

Since the interactions are conducted in English the native speaker is the expert in the language domain throughout the task while the non-native speaker fulfils the role of (advanced) apprentice. In the institutional context of task performance, the L2 roles of the non-native speakers collapse: they are both language learners and language users (cf. Kern & Liddicoat 2008). With the culturally specific Dutch jokes, however, the non-native speaker is the expert in the cultural domain while the native speaker is the apprentice; linguistically the native speaker remains the expert and the non-native speaker the apprentice.

All participants performed the first half of the task using video call, and the second half using written chat (or vice versa) in a counterbalanced design.

6.4 Findings

A total of 41 Dutch jokes were conveyed to the native speakers by the non-native speakers: 22 jokes during video conferencing, and 19 jokes during written chat.⁷⁷ Below we have selected some examples of the digital interactions for qualitative analysis. They have been selected to illustrate: native speaker negotiation of meaning during role reversal (excerpts 1a and 1b), issues of solidarity during role reversal (examples 2a and 2b), and instances where ‘facework’ gets in the way of ‘taskwork’ despite role reversal (examples 3a, b and 4).

6.4.1 Native speaker negotiation of meaning

The first two examples illustrate a discourse trajectory (‘task-in-process’) that adheres closely to the ‘task-as-workplan’ (cf. Breen 1987; Seedhouse & Almutairi 2009): in both instances there is a problem of non-understanding and the hearer initiates next-turn negotiation of meaning.

Example 1a: Next-turn negotiation of meaning – dyad 1 – video

| Turn | Participant | Video transcript |
|------|-------------|--|
| 1. | NNS | <i>How does a German open mussels? [does not look up or wait for the answer] He knocks very hard on the shell and says: [raises voice] AUFMACHEN</i> |
| 2. | NS | <i>What does that mean?</i> |
| 3. | NNS | <i>I have to explain ... aufmachen means ‘open up’, that’s what they shouted in the second World War, at each door they would knock on, to take people away to ... well, eventually concentration camps.</i> |
| 4. | NS | <i>[knits brows, looks shocked] Ohhh, god [laughs]</i> |
| 5. | NNS | <i>So I suppose that’s Dutch humour [looks away, scratches nose – seems embarrassed]</i> |
| 6. | NS | <i>Ok, uhmmmm ...</i> |
| 7. | NNS | <i>[looks up] Was that rude? Do you think that’s rude? To Australian standards?</i> |
| 8. | NS | <i>No ... Uhmm ... I’m pretty open to that kind of humour. In don’t really mind. It doesn’t bother me. A lot of people would probably take offense to it but I don’t mind [laughs].</i> |
| 9. | NNS | <i>Alright [smiles]</i> |
| 10. | NS | <i>Ok, so tell me another one of your jokes.</i> |

⁷⁷ Three jokes were not exchanged due to time constraints.

It is impossible to understand the joke in this example without knowledge of German, since the lexical item *aufmachen* constitutes the punchline. This means that the linguistic competence involved in this interaction pertains not only to Dutch and English but also to a third language, German, which is taught in Dutch secondary schools. The next-turn clarification request from the native speaker (line 2) is therefore ambiguous: it is not clear if the native speaker negotiates for meaning because of a language problem or of an intercultural problem (i.e. because he does not understand why the Dutch would consider this a joke). This provides the non-native speaker with the opportunity to claim his expert role in the language as well as the cultural domain: he gives a translation of the lexical item in English and elaborates on the cultural implications of the use of this German word in the context of the situation (Turn 3). This seems to solve the communication problem, as can be seen in native speaker's reaction to response (Turn 4): he laughs awkwardly (the ritual response that was still due) and also verbally and nonverbally expresses his shock at the point of the joke. This response prompts non-native speaker to check the intercultural acceptability of the joke and its significance for Australian norms and values, which launches them into a short discussion at meta level, the projected third part of the task (line 5-9).

Example 1b also shows native speaker initiation of negotiation of meaning, although in this instance the initiation of repair is delayed.

Example 1b: Delayed negotiation of meaning – dyad 2 – written chat

| Turn | Participant | Written chat script |
|------|-------------|--|
| 1. | NNS | [11:46:41] Question: What do you do when a Belgian throws a handgrenade at you? |
| 2. | NNS | [11:46:54] Answer: you take out the pint, and throw it back. |
| 3. | NNS | [11:46:59] *The pin |
| 4. | NS | [11:46:59] LOL!! |
| 5. | NS | [11:47:41] as in a sewing pin? |
| 6. | NS | [11:48:18] do the dutch get on with the Belgian? |
| 7. | NNS | [11:48:30] Well, I don't know if it's the correct word. If you throw a handgrenade at someone, you have to unlock it first |
| 8. | NNS | [11:48:34] if you want it to explode |
| 9. | NNS | [11:48:54] Dutch people have this stereotype of Belgians |
| 10. | NNS | [11:48:58] of them being dumb |

| | | |
|-----|----|----------------------|
| 11. | NS | [11:49:00] ahh i see |
|-----|----|----------------------|

In example 1b, the non-native speaker misspells a crucial word in his chat message – *pint* rather than *pin* – making the joke largely incomprehensible. He repairs his error almost immediately (Turn 3), but the correction cross-messages with the native speaker paralinguistic response to the punchline <LOL!!> (line 4), which suggests appreciation or at least understanding.⁷⁸ It is not until 40 seconds later (Turn 5) that the native speaker sends a delayed comprehension check <*as in sewing pin?*> (split negotiation routine; cf. Smith 2003), revealing that she has not understood the joke, and showing that her previous LOL-response should not be interpreted as a possible appreciation of the joke proper but rather as a ritual, face-appropriate discourse marker. She immediately follows her question with a switch to the meta-discussion on cultural humour (l.6), which cross-messages with the non-native speaker's explanation who follows this with a reaction to the native speaker's inquiry on the intercultural level.

6.4.2 Symmetrical participation roles: solidarity

The data below show how problems in the L2 domain may interfere with the role reversal in the cultural domain. Both the non-native speaker and native speaker participants in their expert roles appear to strive for reciprocal symmetrical participation: they mitigate face threats with an act of positive politeness (Brown & Levinson 1987). Similarly, they use comparable solidarity strategies (cf. Scollon & Scollon 2001): trying to establish common ground in order to reduce the effect of their counterpart's potential loss of face.

⁷⁸It should be noted that responses such as the acronym 'LOL', originally representing laughter, have evolved into discourse markers to signal participant involvement or as phatic fillers, rather than what they literally stand to represent (Tagliamonte & Dennis, 2008; Uygur-Distexhe, 2012).

Example 2a: Solidarity in the language domain – dyad 3 – written chat

| Turn | Participant | Written chat script |
|------|-------------|--|
| 1. | NNS | [10:54:19] he gets out of the car, gets a (okay i'm sorry i don't know this word, it's the tool with which you raise your car so you can change the tire, does this make sense?) he breaks the window of the car with it and opens the door. |
| 2. | | [...] |
| 3. | NNS | [10:55:36] ~did you know what i meant with that word i didn't know? |
| 4. | NNS | [10:55:48] i feel stupid about it :P |
| 5. | NS | [10:56:01] ohh umm its.... a car jack i think |
| 6. | NS | [10:56:04] :/ |
| 7. | NNS | [10:56:13] okay.. |
| 8. | NS | [10:56:19] haha dont feel stupid i had to think what it was aswell!! Haha |
| 9. | NNS | [10:56:28] oh okay haha |

In these data the non-native speaker encounters a problem in the translation of the joke on her worksheet since it contains a word she is not familiar with. She conveys her problem to the native speaker through an apology followed by a request for help (self-initiated other-correction; Schegloff et al. 1977): *<okay i'm sorry i don't know this word, it's the tool with which you raise your car so you can change the tire, does this make sense?>*. Although her paraphrase is correct and adequate, the native speaker does not reply immediately, which prompts the non-native speaker into adding that she feels stupid about not having known the word (Turn 4). Both her initial apology (Turn 1), her comprehension check (Turn 3) and her self-assessment (Turn 4) show that her apprentice role in the L2 domain interferes with her role of expert in the cultural domain. When he does respond (Turns 5 and 6), the native speaker – momentarily launched back in his expert role – immediately shows awareness of the threat to his non-native speaker counterpart's face: he uses positive politeness strategies, employs paralinguistic and verbal hesitation markers *<ohh umm its... a car jack i think>* (turn 5) and goes out of his way to establish common ground: *<haha don't feel stupid i had to think what it was as well!! haha>* (Turn 8). As such, he discursively constructs symmetrical participant roles.

In example 2b, we see that the non-native speaker, in a cultural expert role, shows the same type of behaviour.

Example 2b: Solidarity in the cultural domain – dyad 4 – video

| Turn | Participant | Video transcript |
|------|-------------|--|
| 1. | NNS | <i>So ... my first joke is [laughs] ... it's really stupid ... how does a German eat a mussel?</i> |
| 2. | NS | <i>How ?[laughs]</i> |
| 3. | NNS | <i>Yeah. And it's a German. And he's eating a mussel.</i> |
| 4. | NS | <i>[silence]</i> |
| 5. | NNS | <i>You don't know the answer? I also wouldn't know it.</i> |

The non-native speaker starts with a pre-sequence (Levinson, 1983), as a sign that she anticipates 'trouble'. She then relates the first part of a question-answer type riddle joke, but when the native speaker responds in the ritually expected way with the counter-question (Turn 2), the non-native speaker treats this as if her counterpart reports a language problem and repeats the elements of the original question: *<It's a German. And he's eating a mussel>* (Turn 3). When the native speaker does not respond to this she tries to find common ground by stating that it is perfectly natural that the native speaker does not know the answer to the question, since she *<also wouldn't know it>*. Mirroring the native speaker conduct as L2 expert peer in example 2a, it is the non-native speaker in these data who co-constructs symmetrical expert-learner roles.

6.4.3 Face-appropriate and task-appropriate responses

Examples 3a and 3b illustrate how face-appropriate communicative behaviour of the native speaker in her role of cultural novice is counterbalanced by the non-native speaker with task-appropriate behaviour.

Example 3a: TAR and FAR – Dyad 5 – written chat

| Turn | Participant | Written chat script |
|------|-------------|---|
| 1. | NNS | [10:59:29] Q: Who is at the same time the perfect Finance Minister as well as your perfect father-in-law? |
| 2. | NNS | [10:59:53] A: Jorge Zorreguieta, he let the public debt as well as your mother-in-law disappear! |
| 3. | NS | [11:00:33] aha I don't know who that is but I'm sure if I did it would be funnier |
| 4. | NS | [11:00:39] still pretty funny though |
| 5. | NNS | [11:01:00] he is the father of Maxima (who will become Queen in a few weeks) |
| 6. | NS | [11:01:08] ahh |

| | | |
|----|-----|--|
| 7. | NNS | [11:01:25] and he was one of the Ministers in Argentina during the Videla regime |
| 8. | NS | [11:01:45] oh ok |
| 9. | NS | [11:01:49] well the next part... |

The non-native speaker launches the question part of the riddle joke and sends off the answer-part without waiting for a native speaker response. The native speaker responds with contradictory messages. On the one hand she conveys non-understanding <*I don't know who that is*>; on the other hand she adds two consecutive appreciations of the joke <*but I'm sure if I did it would be funnier*> and <*still pretty funny though*> (Turns 4 and 5). This response can only be interpreted as face work, since the joke does not make sense to those who do not know who Jorge Zorreguieta in fact is. So, although the native speaker has conveyed her appreciation of the joke (Turn 4) – albeit only verbally (<*pretty funny*> without any para-linguistic signs (such as *hahahaha* or a smiley emoticon), the non-native speaker acts in the interest of the task: he continues by pro-actively backtracking and filling in who Zorreguieta is, even though the native speaker does not overtly appeal for assistance. In other words, the non-native speaker proceeds to provide comprehensible input to ensure successful task completion. The native speaker promptly sends a message indicating she wants to move on, away from the joke (see Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014, 2016).

In example 3b – same joke as in data 3a, different dyad – the non-native speaker is extremely active (she is responsible for 18 out of the 23 messages sent), while the native speaker only sends five messages, none of which explicit initiations of repair, such as questions or requests for clarifications.

Example 3b: TAR and FAR – Dyad 6 – written chat

| Turn | Participant | Written chat script |
|------|-------------|---|
| 1. | NNS | [10:34:07] Q: Who is a perfect minister of finance and also a perfect father in law? |
| 2. | NNS | [10:35:09] A: Jorge Zorreguieta, he is able to make your mother in law and the debt of the state dissappear |
| 3. | NNS | [10:35:11] – – – |
| 4. | NNS | [10:35:27] this is so bad |
| 5. | NS | [10:35:58] I kind of understand it. (I think) |
| 6. | NNS | [10:36:17] Do you know who Jorge Zorreguieta is? |
| 7. | NS | [10:36:22] No |

| | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| 8. | NNS | [10:36:30] I know some of it ... |
| 9. | NNS | [10:36:46] But he was a political person in ... |
| 10. | NNS | [10:36:50] what's the name of the country |
| 11. | NNS | [10:36:52] Argentina |
| 12. | NNS | [10:36:55] Argentina? |
| 13. | NS | [10:37:09] First one |
| 14. | NNS | [10:37:11] And he was very corrupt and killed many people etc. |
| 15. | NNS | [10:37:37] But he is also the father of our princess |
| 16. | NS | [10:38:03] Oh that is bad i don't think this is funny at all. :(|
| 17. | NNS | [10:38:08] No it isn't aha |
| 18. | NNS | [10:38:17] But i think they're referring to the fact that he killed al these people |
| 19. | NNS | [10:38:25] So he can make your mother in law disappear |
| 20. | NNS | [10:38:30] and i don't know what he did with the money |
| 21. | NNS | [10:38:34] but it's a cruel joke |
| 22. | NS | [10:38:57] I get it, and I think it is cruel to. |
| 23. | NNS | [10:39:10] Go to the next page? |

In this example we see that the non-native speaker sends off the question part of the riddle and waits nearly a minute for a response from her counterpart before sending off the answer-part. Although, as we observed above, the task is a cultural exchange embedded in an institutional telecollaborative setting where the students were instructed to use the jokes as stimuli for discussion – as opposed to the exchange of jokes in non-institutional, ‘authentic’ settings, which requires the full humour support of recognition, understanding and appreciation (Hay 2001) – face work already seems to start right after the joke has been sent. Immediately when she has related the joke, before the native speaker has had a chance to respond, the non-native speaker sends two messages of negative appreciation: a paralinguistic ‘meh’-emoticon, used to express a straight-faced lack of emotion (Turn 3) and a verbal appreciation <*this is so bad*> (Turn 4). The native speaker response to this is an ambiguous claim of understanding in Turn 5: although she states she understands the joke, she mitigates her words with <*kind of*> and <*I think*>. So instead of sending a task-appropriate appeal for assistance, the native speaker messages a rather face-appropriate, tentative claim of understanding (Koole 2010). As noted above, the joke is perplexing for someone who does not know who

Zorreguita is, so the native speaker's claims of understanding are not very convincing. It is only after the non-native speaker has acted in the interest of the task by sending a direct comprehension check (Turn 6) that the native speaker reveals that she has not understood the joke at all (Turn 7). Although there is a brief participant role reversal in the L2 domain between Turns 10 and 13 – where the non-native speaker explicitly asks for assistance from the expert (native speaker) by checking the correct English name for Argentina – it is the non-native speaker in her role of cultural expert who is the proactive participant throughout, whereas, the native speaker in her role as learner, mostly acknowledges her counterpart's messages and sends off appreciative remarks about the joke (Turns 16 and 22), rather than actively finding out more about its cultural context. In other words, the information the non-native speaker sends is mostly unsolicited, sent off on her own account rather than at her counterpart's request.

In example 4, the non-native speaker routinely adopts an expert participant role with the same joke, but here we see multiple role reversals.

Example 4: Change of footing - Dyad 7 – video

| Turn | Participant | Video transcript and observations |
|------|-------------|--|
| 1. | NNS | [looks at his task sheet – starts laughing] <i>It's a funny one.</i> |
| 2. | NS | [smiles] |
| 3. | NNS | <i>We in Holland always have the competition jokes with Germany. Or a next country, you know?</i> |
| 4. | NS | [smiles and nods] <i>Yes</i> |
| 5. | NNS | <i>And the jokes are like: There was a German guy who ... and then the joke starts</i> |
| 6. | NS | [smiles] <i>OK</i> |
| 7. | NNS | <i>Then you already know it's a joke. When a sentence like that starts.</i> |
| 8. | NS | [smiles] |
| 9. | NNS | <i>I'll translate it. Uhhmm. How does a German person eat ... uhhh ... I don't know the translation of that word. You know ... in the sea [cups his hands]. A shell?</i> |
| 10. | NS | [nods] <i>Yeah. A clam.</i> |
| 11. | NNS | <i>OK. A clam. With a little animal in it. You know?</i> |
| 12. | NS | <i>Yes.</i> |
| 13. | NNS | <i>Who keeps the two shells together. You know what I mean?</i> |
| 14. | NS | <i>Yes. It's like a clam. And it opens up [cups hands].</i> |
| 15. | NNS | <i>Yeah. But when you try to open it, it won't.</i> |

| | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| 16. | NS | <i>No</i> |
| 17. | NNS | <i>OK. You know what I mean. How does a German person eat that?</i> |
| 18. | NS | <i>I don't know.</i> |
| 19. | NNS | <i>You don't know [smiles and pauses]. OK. [laughs] Here comes the clue. He knocks very hard on the shell [makes knocking movement with his hands], and screams: <i>Aufmachen</i>.</i> |
| 20. | NS | <i>[Laughs]</i> |
| 21. | NNS | <i>And <i>aufmachen</i> means in German like ... to open it, you know.</i> |
| 22. | NS | <i>Yeah</i> |
| 23. | NNS | <i>[laughs] but it won't work that way. Actually, it's a stupid joke. We always make bad jokes about German people like they're stupid, or not very intelligent or something.</i> |
| 24. | NS | <i>Yeah [then silence – then looks at his task sheet]</i> |

The non-native speaker in these data seems to adopt what can be seen as a teacher role (cf. Liddicoat & Tudini 2013): he contextualizes the joke, frames it as belonging to a particular category and feeds his native speaker counterpart snippets of comprehensible input (Long 1983). First, he qualifies the joke as funny (Turn 1); explains that the Dutch tend to joke about their neighbouring countries (Turn 3), and finally comments on the particular type of joke he is about to tell (Turns 5 and 7). In between the non-native speaker utterances, the native speaker transmits verbal (*Yes; Okay*) and non-verbal (smiling and nodding) discourse markers (Schiffrin 1987), minimal response signals that are to be expected in dyadic oral interaction, both in informal and institutional settings. It can be argued that in Turns 1-8, the non-native speaker draws on the strategies native speakers resort to during native speaker/non-native speaker conversation to avoid conversational trouble, as observed by Long (1983); in his role of cultural expert, the non-native speaker provides comprehensible input before the joke in an attempt to minimize the risk of conversational trouble (cf. Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014, 2016).

When, in turn 9, the non-native speaker reports trouble in the L2 domain (he does not know the translation of one of the key-words in the punchline of his joke) the participant roles are reversed: the non-native speaker is temporarily cast back in the role of apprentice, whereas the native speaker slips back into his role of the expert. Once the native speaker has provided

the target word (*clam*), the roles are reversed yet again. The non-native speaker proceeds with four consecutive comprehension checks (Turns 11, 13, 15 and 17) as another strategy for avoiding conversational trouble (Long 1983). In short, rather than simply translating and relaying the joke, as the instruction on the task sheet says, the non-native speaker takes the native speaker by the hand and guides him through the potential hurdles of cracking a canned joke originating in a, to the native speaker, unknown culture. Once the question part of the riddle joke has finally been posed (Turn 17), and the native speaker gives the ritual response, the non-native speaker, again, uses native-speaker tactics as described by Long, by repeating his counterpart's utterance (<*You don't know*>), and slowing down the pace of the discourse. Additionally, he inserts a contextualization cue (*formulation*, cf Dorr-Bremme 1990), by announcing <*Here comes the clue*> (Turn 19). The native-speaker response is laughter (Turn 20), the default and, socially, most appropriate response after a joke in non-institutional settings, suggesting understanding and appreciation. However, judging from his response, the non-native speaker is not convinced the native speaker has in fact understood and hypothesizes that he may be feigning to understand: in an attempt to save his own face by not being exposed as someone who does not understand or appreciate humour, and guard the face of his counterpart, by preventing the joke from falling flat. In Turn 21, the non-native speaker continues by providing unsolicited assistance yet again, by explaining the German word <*aufmachen*> despite the absence of native speaker-initiated negotiation of meaning, as such claiming the expert role in the third language domain. The NS response in Turn 22 is <*Yeah*>, which in this case seems to be more what Long (1983 calls "polite backchanneling noises rather than expressions of agreement or understanding" (135). This interpretation is reinforced by his nonverbal behaviour: he looks at his tasks sheet as a nonverbal sign he wishes to move on.

6.5 Discussion

This study aims to shed light on participant response to interactional problems during a culturally-embedded telecollaboration task where learner and expert participant roles are reversed, and has focused on whether those roles correspond to interactional behaviours as described in the Long and Varonis and Gass-paradigms. Our data show that the non-native speaker tends to use the very same strategies described by Long when adopting an expert member participation role. They try to avoid conversational breakdown by employing communicative devices such as

starting with comprehensible input or comprehension checks. In their dominant role as cultural expert, the non-native speaker seems to use the same task-appropriate communicative strategies as native speakers in an expert role, despite L2 serving as the language of interaction.

The native speakers, in their turn, are reluctant to explicitly start up repair even if it is clear they cannot have understood the joke (but see example 1a and b). As such, they tend to respond face-appropriately – i.e. acting in the interest of face – rather than task-appropriately – i.e. acting in the interest of successful task completion. As opposed to multiple negotiation of meaning studies where the recipient (in most studies the non-native speaker) is described as the next-turn initiator of repair after an instance of non-understanding, the native speaker behaviour in our data concurs with studies *critical* of negotiation of meaning, claiming that negotiation of meaning is a dispreferred repair sequence (Schegloff et al. 1977) because having to initiate the repair of a trouble source is experienced to be embarrassing and face-threatening. Moreover, in their role of cultural natives, the non-native speaker in our data take on the responsibility of successful task completion when the native speaker does not initiate negotiation of meaning. As such, the non-native speaker tend to compensate native speaker face-appropriate by task-appropriate behaviour. Here, competence in the cultural domain seems to overrule L2 competence.

As Samuda and Bygate (2008) note, we cannot ignore the link between pragmatics, language and task. Interpersonal pragmatic issues, such as facework and social presence (Arundale 2006; Kehrwald 2008, 2010; Vandergriff 2013) are also part of telecollaboration and may get in the way of successful task completion (Van der Zwaard & Bannink 2014,2016). Participants seem to cope with breakdowns in communication through social ‘facework’ rather than institutional ‘taskwork’, even when expert-learner participants’ roles have been reversed. Participant identities, then, are clearly not defined by language competence alone.

6.6 Conclusions

Since this study is exploratory, it is difficult to generalize the findings beyond the scope of the data. We concentrated on responses of both non-native and native speakers during a telecollaboration task involving a reversal of participant roles. Our data show that, due to the nature of the task, the participants discursively aligned themselves in hybrid roles

(Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Gebhard 2005) of both expert and learner through changes of footing and tended to cope with breakdowns in communication in a similar manner.

We concur with those researchers who argue that the dichotomy between native and non-native speakers does not do justice to the complex, emerging participant roles and identities that become interactionally salient in educational encounters – as elsewhere (cf. e.g. Firth & Wagner 1996; Kasper 2004). Both groups are not just language processing beings. During interaction, native speakers and non-native speakers do not only draw on their “linguistic capital” (Bourdieu 1982, cited in Liddicoat & Tudini 2013: 174); membership of other social categories co-shape their participant voices. Our data show that a task that casts L2-learners in a non-linguistic expert role creates the affordances for them to sidestep the subordinate non-native speaker position and to find a new, more symmetrical participant voice. Such a configuration of identities opens up opportunities for L2- practice (and learning) and should therefore inform task and telecollaboration project design.

Chapter 7

Summary of findings

7.1 Introduction

The main goal of this research project was to explore and identify emerging patterns of digital interaction between dyads of native and non-native speakers, with a particular focus on negotiated interaction as outlined by Varonis and Gass in their model of non-understandings (1985). In the process, we assessed the robustness of the model by investigating whether, how and to what extent it represents and can be applied to interactive task performance in a digital L2-learning environment. Additionally, we considered the effect of social constraints on negotiation of meaning during digital interaction, and we looked at the effect of reversing expert and learner participant roles. Below we will summarize the main findings as discussed in Chapters 3 to 6, and trace a number of theoretical and practical implications.

Collectively, the studies in Chapters 3 to 6 investigate how the principle of negotiation of meaning-theory, which assumes that L2-learners will initiate negotiation of meaning after a communication breakdown, holds up and works in an interactive telecollaboration L2-environment. The studies have found that social value systems, such as fear of losing face, tend to override participants' drive to act task appropriately, even if it is detrimental to their L2 learning goals (Block 2003; O'Rourke 2005; Slimani Rolls 2005). In other words, participants, whether non-native or native speakers, simply do not always signal non-understanding after a trouble source. Hence, the assumption underlying the negotiation of meaning paradigm – that participants will negotiate for meaning when there is a communication breakdown, and that *not* negotiating for meaning usually infers understanding – may need to be interpreted with caution.

Chapter 3 – the pilot study – presents a cross-media comparative analysis (dyadic video call and chat) of native speaker/non-native speaker telecollaboration. The results show relatively distinct patterns of negotiation of meaning with a clear relation to the mode of digital communication. It was found that task performance through video call was more hampered by social constraints than during written chat sessions; the

proximity of the webcam, which streams image and sound in real time, seemed to launch the participants in a more socially embedded context, which ultimately resulted in more episodes of negotiation of *face* than negotiation of *meaning*. In a number of instances negotiation of meaning was significantly absent, despite the fact that it was obvious that non-native speaker had not understood the trigger. Also, negotiation of meaning sequences were abandoned after an average of two indicators of non-understanding, even in cases where the problem had clearly not been resolved: participants simply wrapped up the task without having reached mutual understanding. During the chat sessions, on the other hand, participants were spared the webcam registration of an immediate audio/visual response, had time to read and reread messages before responding, and had the advantage of relative anonymity, which may account for the higher incidence of negotiation of meaning episodes found in the study.

Chapter 4 reports on the main study and particularly focuses on those instances where no negotiation of meaning occurs; these data are mostly disregarded in negotiation of meaning studies. It was found that, with respect to negotiation of meaning, L2-learners in synchronous computer-mediated environments show behavioural patterns that are similar to L2-learners' behaviours in non-digital L2-classroom environments. Also, the main study confirmed the outcome of the pilot study: the incidence of negotiation of meaning during written chat was higher than during video call. It is concluded that analyses that disregard instances of (suspected) non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning – rather than considering all data – not only give too limited a view of L2 behaviour in task-based digital environments but also run the risk of drawing misleading conclusions regarding learners' negotiation of meaning behaviour. We propose that, if we accept the assumption that language learners could benefit from negotiation of meaning sequences in their L2-learning process, we should, paradoxically, also include in our investigations interactions where negotiation of meaning does *not* occur.

Chapter 5 investigates the effect of a type of task that involves the exchange of multiple items between native and non-native speakers with multiple triggers of potential non-understanding. It was found that: i) response by non-native speakers runs the risk of gradually regressing from task appropriate to face appropriate, even in the less face-threatening written chat messages; ii) the native speaker tends to counterbalance the

non-native speaker's face-appropriate behaviour with task-appropriate responses in order to ensure successful task completion. Furthermore, non-understanding of previous target items on the part of the non-native speaker seems to shape the expectations of both native and non-native speaker concerning following items.

The behaviours of the native speakers in interactions between native and non-native speakers is the focus of Chapter 6, which sets out to analyse and discuss the interactive dynamics of a digital task environment that requires a change in footing (Goffman 1981) between expert and learner participation roles. We found that the non-native speakers tended to use the same strategies and tactics to avoid and repair conversational trouble as described as native speaker interactional conduct by Long (1983) during native speaker/non-native speaker conversation. In their turn, in their learner participant roles, the native speakers were reluctant to initiate negotiation of meaning, most likely due to issues of face. The non-native speakers, in their expert member roles, tended to compensate their counterpart's face-appropriate behaviour with task-appropriate responses: they felt responsible for successful task completion and actively provided unsolicited input. Additionally, we found multiple examples of instances where both native speakers and non-native speakers attempted to save their counterpart's face with an act of solidarity, by emphasizing the symmetry of their mutual participation roles.

7.2 Discussion of results and theoretical implications

7.2.1 Task-appropriate response versus face-appropriate response

As opposed to the seminal and much-cited Varonis and Gass model, which presupposes that hearers overtly indicate non-understanding after a communication breakdown, we found that their responses, in both video call and written chat, could be categorized into two major types: *task-appropriate* (cf. Smith 2003) and *face-appropriate* responses (see Chapter 3). Whereas the Varonis and Gass model covers task-appropriate responses only – indeed, the model expects the hearer to *act* by acknowledging and signalling non-understanding, and the speaker to *react* to the appeal for assistance by explaining and clarifying – the studies presented in this book have yielded a more complex trajectory of task-performance, involving a combination of both task-appropriate and face-appropriate responses.

If non-native speakers started up a negotiation of meaning sequence during an interactional task, and exerted every effort to reach mutual understanding, their interactive behaviour was marked as a task appropriate response (TAR): they participated actively in the interest of the task by indicating non-understanding, if need be several times, and by inviting their native speaker interlocutor to respond and explain in order to reach mutual understanding. A task-appropriate response, then, is a response that is uttered in the interest of mutual understanding and usually results in successful completion of the task.

However, when the data suggested that the participant acted in the interest of face rather than in the interest of the task, this was marked as *face-appropriate response* (FAR). A face-appropriate response can consist of *no* (overt) hearer reaction at all (i.e. absence of negotiation of meaning), or a type of *formal understanding* (Garfinkel 1967), or claim of understanding (Sacks 1992) where hearers may feign understanding, usually to save their face, e.g. by uttering a pragmatic marker, <oh>, <OK> (Nakahama & van Lier. 2001) after a minimal negotiation sequence, or by abandoning the negotiation sequence when mutual understanding has not been reached, despite several indicators of non-understanding.

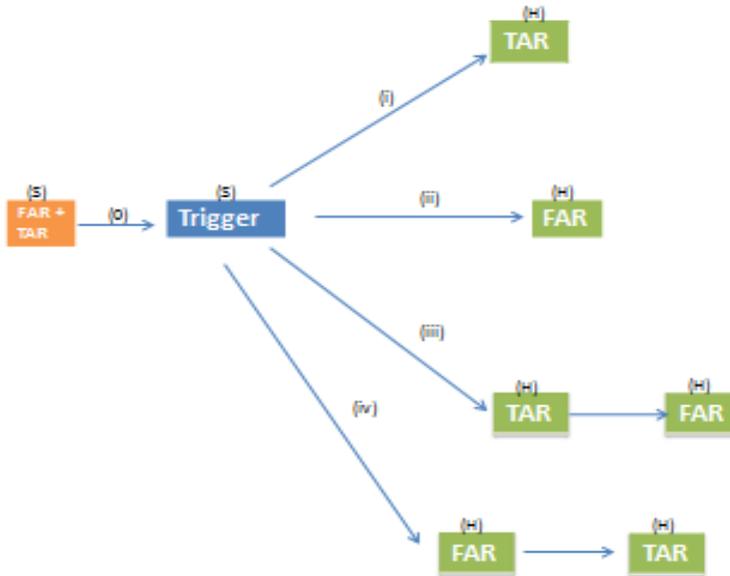


Figure 9: Model of TAR (task-appropriate response) and FAR (face-appropriate response) communication trajectories during digital task-based interaction⁷⁹

The model above is a schematic representation of these two major types of hearer response after a trigger – TAR and FAR - and outlines four different trajectories, indicating that a hearer’s response may be task-appropriate, face-appropriate, regress from a task-appropriate into a face-appropriate response or, conversely, progress from a face-appropriate into a task-appropriate response. Only trajectory (i) represents the type of response that follows the Varonis and Gass model of non-understandings: here, the hearer initiates negotiation of meaning after the trigger by indicating non-

⁷⁹ (s) = speaker
 (h) = hearer
 FAR = face-appropriate response
 TAR = task-appropriate response
 (0) – (iv) = number of trajectory

understanding; the speaker explains and/or elaborates, followed by the hearer indicating understanding. Trajectory (ii) represents a face-appropriate response, for instance when the hearer does not respond, or claims understanding without having understood; trajectory (iii) marks a regression from task-appropriate response into face-appropriate response, e.g. when the hearer has to negotiate multiple triggers or the same trigger multiple times. Lastly, trajectory (iv) illustrates a progression from face-appropriate response to task-appropriate response, for instance after an expression of solidarity by the speaker.

As interaction is co-constructed, we found that both hearers *and* speakers respond task-appropriately as well as face-appropriately, i.e. speakers, too, can act in the interest of the task and/or in the interest of guarding or saving their counterparts' face after a trigger. Although the core of negotiation of meaning research regards the hearer as an *actor* who initiates the repair, and the speaker as the *reactor* in response to the hearer's stimulus, we found that speakers sometimes accepted their counterpart's FAR or, conversely, challenged the hearer's absence of negotiation of meaning or claim of understanding by pushing down.

Trajectory (0) shows that, even before a trigger pops up, speakers anticipate a potential breakdown in communication by communicating prompts – such as comprehensible input or a pre-sequence – to avoid non-understanding or to explicitly invite the hearer to initiate repair. In trajectories (ii, iii and iv), the speakers either respond face-appropriately by not challenging their counterpart's FARs, or task-appropriately, for instance by providing unsolicited comprehensible input or comprehension checks. Below, each of the trajectories will be illustrated with examples.

7.2.1.1 Trajectory (0): Pre-trigger task-appropriate and face-appropriate speaker input

To avoid possible non-understanding of a projected trouble source, speakers may utter (during video call) or send (during written chat) comprehensible input (Long 1983); i.e. modifications of interaction that may avoid communication breakdown. This communication strategy is both in the interest of the task and in the interest of face: the extra information increases the chance that the hearer will understand the trigger and decreases the risk that the hearer is forced to admit non-understanding.

Example 1: Comprehensible input (video call)

| | |
|---------|--|
| Speaker | <i>So it begins by saying uhmm ... two Australian cattle drovers – [looks up] they're cattle farmers</i> |
| Hearer | <i>Yeah</i> |
| Speaker | <i>Are standing at a bar</i> |

In Turn 1, the speaker adds comprehensible input to the culturally specific joke he is communicating to his counterpart. As he starts reading out the joke from his task sheet <... *two Australian cattle drovers*> he inserts a definition of 'drovers' <*they're cattle farmers*> on his own accord, because he suspects that his counterpart will not be familiar with the word. In other words, to avoid conversational trouble and to save his counterpart from having to initiate negotiating for meaning, the native speaker momentarily puts the discourse on hold by explaining what cattle drovers are. The non-native speaker is explicitly addressed during this utterance (the native speaker looks up from his task sheet towards the camera), and briefly takes the floor to acknowledge the native speaker's explanation.

Example 2 is a similar example from the chat data. Anticipating that the word *Pom* in this joke might be the trigger for non-understanding, the speaker adds <*(englishman)*> in order to avoid non-understanding.

Example 2: Comprehensible input (written chat)

| | |
|---------|--|
| Speaker | A Pom (englishman), fresh off the plane at Sydney... |
|---------|--|

Another pre-trigger speaker strategy representing trajectory (0) is the use of a pre-sequence (Schegloff 1978). Pre-sequences are utterances that are used as precursors to the discourse that is to follow and are used to ease the speaker and their counterpart into the conversation. Like comprehensible input, pre-sequences can be both task-appropriate and face-appropriate. As illustrated in Example 3 below, the native speaker forestalls a trouble source and attempts to facilitate negotiation of meaning by explicitly inviting the non-native speaker to initiate repair. This is both task-appropriate – indeed, it is in the interest of the task that the non-native speaker negotiates the communication breakdown – and face-appropriate: the native speaker in a sense saves the non-native speaker's face by letting him know it is perfectly natural to start up negotiation of meaning.

Example 3: Pre-sequence

| | |
|-----|--|
| NS | <i>This joke it's just kinda about Australian culture and there's a lot of slang so if you don't understand just let me know [looks up].</i> |
| NNS | [nods and smiles] |

Rather than presenting the joke without a prelude, the speaker in Example 3 explains that what is about to follow is part of Australian culture and has a lot of slang in it. In other words, he is preparing the hearer for the subsequent trouble source, at the same time communicating that non-understanding is to be expected and would be perfectly normal. In the second part of the utterance <... *so if you don't understand just let me know*> the speaker explicitly invites his counterpart to start up negotiation of meaning. By nodding and smiling the hearer seems to concur. A pre-sequence is what Conlan (2005) has labelled a signalling act, where the speaker indicates to the hearer that a face-threatening act is imminent.

As we can see in the model in Figure 9 however, pre-trigger speaker input does not always ensure negotiation of meaning as hearers can still respond task or face-appropriately.

7.2.1.2 Trajectory (i): Task-appropriate speaker and hearer response according to the Varonis and Gass model

As observed above, trajectory (i) follows the model of non-understandings as proposed by Varonis and Gass (1985).

Example 4: Negotiation of meaning according to the Varonis and Gass model

| Turn | Participant | Video Transcript |
|------|-------------|--|
| 1. | NS | <i>I got a Christmas hamper this year.</i> |
| 2. | NNS | <i>A what?</i> |
| 3. | NS | <i>A Christmas hamper. Like a basket full of goodies that employers give to their employees around Christmas time.</i> |
| 4. | NNS | <i>Oh. OK. Yes, I know what you mean. My dad got one too. It had lots of goodies in in.</i> |

Example 4 illustrates trajectory (i) of the model. After the trigger, in Turn 2, the non-native speaker indicates non-understanding, to which the native speaker reacts with a helpful response (Turn 3). In Turn 4, the reaction to response, the non-native speaker emphatically claims understanding <OK.

Yes, I know what you mean>, and then adds a more convincing display of understanding by adding “*My dad got one too. It had lots of goodies in it.*” This added ‘demonstration of understanding’ (Garfinkel 1967) or ‘substantive understanding’ (Koole 2010; cf. Sacks 1972) can be glossed as ‘I have understood what you mean and referring to my dad having received a hamper and what was in it is how I demonstrate or prove it’, and is usually in the interest of successfully completing the task.

7.2.1.3 Trajectory (ii): Face-appropriate hearer response

In Trajectory (ii) the hearer’s face-appropriate response, e.g. no response or a wrongful claim of understanding, can also provoke both a face-appropriate or a task-appropriate speaker response, as illustrated in Examples 5 and 6 below. It is up to the speaker to save the task – the ball is in the speaker’s court.

Example 5: Speaker accepts FAR

| Turn | Participant | Video Transcript |
|------|-------------|--|
| 1. | NS | <i>You know you’re Australian when you can translate: “Dazza and Shazza played Acca Dacca on the way to Maccas.”</i> |
| 2. | NNS | [laughs] ... that’s actually funny |
| 3. | NS | <i>It is, isn’t it?</i> |

In Example 5 we see that, although the non-native speaker is presented with a mindboggling string of words that only native speakers of Australian English would understand, he pretends to understand. However, rather than confronting the non-native speaker and challenging his claim of understanding (as in example 6 below), the native speaker accepts this claim and does not push down.

Alternatively, speakers sometimes momentarily push down by explicitly checking whether their counterparts have understood. This happens when there is no hearer response at all, or if the speaker does not altogether trust the type of hearer response. These confirmation checks are in the interest of both task and face although they may be relatively face-threatening for the hearer. Indeed, being addressed directly, especially after claimed (or feigned) understanding (as was the case several times in our studies) puts the hearer in a rather awkward position, as illustrated in example 6.

Example 6: Comprehension check (native speaker)

| Turn | Participant | Video transcript |
|------|-------------|--|
| 1. | NS | "[...] <i>Ah, probably the Missus; after all, she stuck by me durin' the drought.</i> " |
| 2. | NNS | [After a brief lull] <i>Ok, yeah [giggles and fidgets with scarf]</i> |
| 3. | NS | <i>Do you get that?</i> [intonation of disbelief] |
| 4. | NNS | <i>Yeah, well, I'm not sure if I got all the words correctly but</i> |

In this example, the native speaker expresses her surprise at the non-native speaker's absence of negotiation of meaning, because the joke she has just communicated is so culturally specific that only Australian native speakers would understand. With a comprehension check (uttered with an intonation of disbelief), the native speaker seems to challenge the non-native speaker's claim of understanding. As such, the non-native speaker is granted another opportunity to initiate repair, or can persist in their claim of understanding.

7.2.1.4 Trajectory (iii): hearer regression from TAR into FAR

Trajectory (iii), where the hearer lapses from task appropriate into face-appropriate response, occurred when hearers had to indicate non-understanding of the same trigger multiple times or, similarly, had to negotiate multiple consecutive triggers during the same interactive session. In our data, most hearers ceased to indicate non-understanding after an average of two overt indicators of non-understanding, even if mutual comprehension had not been reached, and would regress into face-appropriate behaviour. As a response, the speakers could either accept the hearer's face-appropriate response by not pushing down (as illustrated in Example 5 above), or push down (as illustrated in Example 6 above).

Example 7: Regression from TAR into FAR (both hearer and speaker)

| Turn | Participant | Video transcript |
|------|-------------|---|
| 1. | NS | [picks up her cat and holds her in front of the webcam] |
| 2. | NNS | <i>Ahhhh [cooing].... What's his name?</i> |
| 3. | NS | <i>His name's Vincent</i> |
| 4. | NNS | <i>Binten?</i> |
| 5. | NS | <i>Vincent</i> |
| 6. | NNS | [silence] |

| | | |
|-----|-----|-----------------------------------|
| 7. | NS | <i>Like... uhmmm the painter?</i> |
| 8. | NNS | [silence] |
| 9. | NS | [giggles] |
| 10. | NNS | <i>Ahhhh</i> [cooing] |

In Example 7, another illustration of Trajectory (iii), we see that the non-native speaker does not quite catch the name of the cat (*Vincent*) the native speaker has picked up and is holding in front of the camera during the introductory part of the task. Having negotiated for meaning once (Turn 4) with a comprehension check, the non-native speaker withdraws into face-appropriate behaviour, by not explicitly confessing he still has not caught the name. To offset her counterpart's face-appropriate behaviour, the native speaker task-appropriately expands on the trouble source by referring to Vincent 'like the painter' (Turn 7). However, when there is no response from the non-native speaker, the native speaker, too, seems to lapse into face-appropriate behaviour by not pressing on and giggling nervously rather than by repeating the cat's name yet again. In other words, although initially acting in the interest of the task, the speaker regresses from task appropriate into face-appropriate responses as well. The non-native speaker, in his turn, starts cooing again (Turn 10) and seems to have given up on ever catching the cat's name.

In Chapter 6 we have seen that, with a string of multiple triggers during a task session, hearers also run the risk of regressing into face-appropriate behaviour. They may start off task-appropriately with the initial triggers but will gradually withdraw into face-appropriate behaviour. In our data we see that in this case, the speaker often becomes increasingly active by providing comprehensible input, in both video call and chat, as illustrated in Example 8 below.

Example 8: Native speaker doing all the interactional work.

| Item no. | Participant | Written chat script |
|----------|-------------|---|
| X | NS | <i>Then there's a symbol that looks like a wreath – like Xmas wreaths that go on the door, they're made of leaves</i> |
| XI | NS | <i>Next we have a snapper or a wrench, it's a tool to fix the car</i> |

In Example 8, the speaker has arrived at item number 10 (out of 12 items) on his task sheet, and his non-native counterpart has already initiated multiple sequences of negotiation of meaning. These started out as explicit

indicators of understanding but regressed into covert signals such as shaking head or raising eyebrows. By the time they have reached Item 10, the native speaker presents so much comprehensible input that the non-native speaker can sit back and enjoy the ride. Although this may ultimately lead to successful pedagogical task completion, it has been the native rather than the non-native speaker who has done most of the interactional work.

7.2.1.5 Trajectory (iv): from FAR to TAR hearer response

When, after a trigger, the hearer does not initiate negotiation of meaning or feigns understanding there is the risk of unsuccessful task completion, unless the speaker interferes, as is illustrated below.

Example 9: Solidarity (native speaker)

| Turn | Participant | Written chat script |
|------|-------------|--|
| 1. | NS | [10:54:14] Two Aussie cattle drovers [... sends off joke in one message] |
| 2. | NNS | [No immediate reaction] |
| 3. | NS | [10:54:33] Now, this isn't funny at all. And really, really hard to understand if you don't know a lot of Australian slang language. |
| 4. | NNS | [10:54:49] I am not getting it haha |

In Example 9 we see that the native speaker sends off his joke and, rather than waiting for his counterpart's response or negotiation, he sends off a message of solidarity, which can be interpreted as both face-appropriate and task-appropriate. When the joke has been sent, we could argue that there are only two responses by the non-native speakers: appreciation of the joke as a stock response (see discussion in Chapter 6), or an indication of non-understanding. In Turn 3, it seems the native speaker responds to the absence of both possible responses, by face-appropriately indicating that the joke *<isn't funny at all>*, hence justifying the absence of non-native speaker (paralinguistic) laughter, and by indicating that the joke is *<really, really hard to understand if you don't know a lot of Australian slang language>*. With this, the native speaker acts both in the interest of the task and face as he communicates that it is perfectly normal not to understand, implicitly inviting his counterpart to initiate repair. When, in Turn 4, the non-native speaker does indeed start up negotiation of meaning, the discourse is back on the Varonis and Gass-track.

Summing up, although in negotiation of meaning research, the focus is on task-appropriate responses of both the hearer and the speaker after a communication breakdown, our data showed more complex interaction patterns. Mainly due to inherent social constraints of communication, neither hearers nor speakers consistently act in the interest of the task. Of the four trajectories as discussed above, only one trajectory would lead to successful task completion; during the other three trajectories, the task at hand would be in constant danger of being abandoned, by the hearer, the speaker, or both.

7.2.2 What constitutes (un) successful task completion?

In view of the above, we argue that only one of the four trajectories as presented in figure 9 unequivocally leads to resolving the trouble source and successful task completion without active interference of the speaker. However, much depends on what constitutes successful task completion. Ellis (2003), for instance, distinguishes between *outcome* and *aim* of a task: the outcome is what a task requires the learners to do, e.g. exchange jokes on cultural humour or Things-in-Pocket items such as in our study; the aim of a task, on the other hand, is its pedagogic purpose, such as interacting and collaborating with a native speaker in the L2. The outcome of a task, then, can be successful, without the aim having been reached. Going back to Example 8 above, for instance, where the speaker takes over the discourse and sends so much comprehensible input for each item that the hearer can sit back and watch the native speaker do all the work, the outcome of the task is successful – indeed, all the items have been communicated – but the aim has not been reached.

Conversely, going back to our trajectories in figure 9, it could be argued that face-appropriate responses may be detrimental for the outcome of the task, but the task may still prove to be successful when looking at the aim of the interaction from a sociocultural rather than cognitive point of view. Although, for instance, in Example 7 the hearer never learns the cat's name, he could be said to be successful from a 'strategic competence' (Canale & Swain 1980) point of view as he uses avoidance strategies to compensate for the communication breakdown. Similarly, if the practicing of communication skills, which has been defined as linguistic survival while communicating with foreign speakers (Van Ek & Trim 1991), is the aim of the task, then all trajectories we have described could, up to a certain extent, be regarded as successful. Indeed, guarding your face or that of your counterpart's while still maintaining meaningful interaction can be

said to require highly advanced communication and social skills. Therefore, when Canale and Swain (1980) suggested that “the second language learner must have the opportunity to take part in meaningful communicative interaction with highly competent speakers of the language, i.e. to respond to genuine communicative needs in a realistic setting” (27), it could be argued that face-appropriate responses and behaviour are an inherent part of these ‘genuine communicative needs’ during task performance.

7.3 Implications and recommendations: Theoretical and practical

In the previous sections we have presented and illustrated alternative discourse trajectories that provide us with useful insights into the complexities of (digital) interaction in an L2-learning environment. Throughout this chapter we have argued that participants, both native and non-native speakers, tend to respond task-appropriately as well as face-appropriately during interactive task-performance. Below, we will consider the implications of our findings, and we will formulate a number of challenges and recommendations, both theoretical and practical.

7.3.1 Implications: The Varonis and Gass model revisited

The studies in this book have indicated that the major parameters of task-based language teaching – language is used for meaning; tasks should be authentic; students should forget they are in a L2-learning setting – may paradoxically hinder rather than promote negotiation of meaning in digital L2 settings. The task-based language teaching key target of enhancing *authentic* communication that should be “similar to what goes on in unmonitored day-to-day social intercourse” (Block 2003: 61-62) because participants are so involved in task performance that they “forget where they are and why they are there” (Ellis 2003: 252), ironically moves the learners away from the institutional communication context towards the inherent complexities of informal social communication. In other words, ‘day-to-day social intercourse’, which implies a conversational framework where a tolerance for uncertainty is quite normal (cf. Bannink 2002; Firth & Wagner 1996) and where recurrent and explicit negotiation of meaning is dispreferred (Schegloff et al. 1977), is at odds with formal institutional discourse, where it is seen to be quite ‘normal’ for the participant to acknowledge non-understanding and initiate negotiation of meaning.

Therefore, we argue that researchers should not adhere to the constraints of a single paradigm, which tends to separate and isolate use of language from (social) issues of interaction. Synchronous computer communication,

then, should not be solely considered as a means to ‘simply’ connect non-native speakers with speakers of the target language for L2-practice, but should be approached with more complex socially informed and socio-cognitive paradigms to include issues such as face and solidarity that occur *beyond* the computer interface (Kern 2014; Reinhardt 2008).

This brings us to the following propositions:

Revisiting the Varonis and Gass model

| Speaker | Hearer | Speaker | Hearer |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| TRIGGER | INDICATOR (<i>ACTING</i>) | RESPONSE (<i>REACTING</i>) | REACTION TO RESPONSE |

- Going back to the Varonis and Gass model, which is still widely used in (digital) task-based L2-research, our data suggest that the majority of negotiation of meaning sequences, if instigated at all, are more complex⁸⁰ than the model suggests. The model proposes that the hearer *acts* (i.e. instigates negotiation of meaning), whereas the speaker (usually the native speaker) mostly *reacts*, by responding to the appeal for assistance. However, we found that what happens during task performance is discursively constructed: the speaker takes on a much more active role than the model suggests, particularly if the hearer fails to perform task-appropriately.
- We propose that the reaction to response – when the hearer confirms understanding, which Varonis and Gass suggest is an optional prime – is not an optional but a vital indicator of claimed (feigned) or displayed understanding.
- The model does not cater for absence of negotiation of meaning despite non-understanding, or more complex face-appropriate sequences of negotiation.

⁸⁰ Although Smith (2003) expanded the model to fit synchronous written computer-mediated communication, the primes that he added were all *after* the REACTION TO RESPONSE .

7.3.2 Recommendations: Beyond the Varonis and Gass model

- Using a single paradigm (such as the Varonis and Gass-model) to assess the occurrence of negotiation of meaning and relate it to (task-based) L2-learning gives us too limited a view of participant behaviour in task-based digital language learning environments. We suggest combining different paradigms and to strive for a comprehensive rather than partial view of L2-behaviour, by not only taking task-appropriate responses into account, but also addressing social context issues by including face-appropriate responses.
- Due to the complexity of the communication strands, as observed in this study, L2-telecollaboration research is in need of descriptive research that will minutely register participant behaviour, using fine-grained observation and detailed analysis in order to understand what happens during task performance.
- Despite the fact that most native speaker and non-native speaker participants indicated in post-task questionnaires that they preferred collaboration through video call, telecollaboration through written chat tends to be more successful in a task-based learning environment than through video call, for reasons as discussed in Chapter 3.
- Since absence of negotiation of meaning does not always mean that mutual understanding has in fact been achieved, it is essential to address larger units of analysis – for instance, data beyond negotiation of meaning sequences such as delayed indicators of non-understanding – and to confirm participant (non)-understanding with post-task questionnaires and/or stimulated recall. Our studies found that, in apprentice roles, both native and non-native speakers alike sometimes claim (i.e. feign) understanding to save their own, or their counterpart's face. Since, in the evaluative criteria of task-based language teaching, communicative effectiveness is linked to successful task completion, excluding these data will misrepresent task performance, task outcome and task evaluation – and so possibly L2-learning outcomes, as discussed in Chapter 4.

- Telecollaboration research, particularly research into information gap tasks, where the participants have to exchange complementary pieces of information, should take into account that participants will only indicate failure of understanding a limited number of times (in the data of this project not more than twice, three times at the most) before lapsing into face-appropriate responses such as absence of negotiation of meaning and/or feigned understanding. Following the Interaction Hypothesis (Long 1985) of 'the more negotiation of meaning, the more beneficial the SLA process', we set out to design our tasks – both the jokes task and the Things-in-Pocket type task – aiming at the highest number of negotiation of meaning instances, for instance by including jokes and items that the participants were not expected to be familiar with. We did not, however, anticipate the cumulative effect of multiple consecutive instances of non-understanding that would ultimately result in unsuccessful task completion (as discussed in Chapters 3-6).
- The primary focus of SLA still seems to be on negotiation of meaning. However, although it may be tempting for researchers to disregard data that do not fit the model, we suggest that L2-telecollaboration research should include what we have now labelled as face-appropriate responses – or what Block (2003) calls 'negotiation of face', and Cummins (2001) 'negotiation of identity' – rather task-appropriate responses only. If we disregard non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning in (digital) task-based language teaching, we run the risk of misrepresenting task performance, task outcome, and task evaluation, and, beyond that, of disregarding evidence that has both empirical and theoretical consequences for the Interaction Hypothesis and, by implication, for SLA.
- SLA studies tend to classify participants into two major groups: native speakers and non-native speakers. Native speakers are seen as the experts of the target language and are expected to respond accordingly while interacting with non-native speakers in a task-based learning environment. Non-native speakers, in their turn, are expected to respond task-appropriately for the sake of the advancement of their own language-learning. Our data show that this is a false dichotomy (cf. also Leather & Van Dam 2003). Following Firth and Wagner (1997) and Block (2003), we suggest

that participants cannot be divided into a type of native or non-native species that communicate according to their corresponding institutional identities. Being a native speaker or a non-native speaker is only one of a many social identities that each participant brings along to the institutional environment, all of which can hypothetically affect the ongoing interaction. As such, when engaged in the contextual complexities of real-time interaction, participants seem to act according to their social rather than institutional identity.

- Researchers need to be aware of the changing digital landscape. As Steel and Levy (2013) argue in their overview of L2-learning and technology between 2006 and 2011, “research needs to reflect current practice” (14). This is not an easy task. Clear boundaries – for instance between synchronous and asynchronous, between formal/institutional and informal/social communication, or between different modalities such as oral and written communication – are blurring. Studies into synchronous and asynchronous communication (e.g. Abrams 2003; Perez 2003; Sotillo 2005) may soon need to be reconsidered, since what was deemed asynchronous (e.g. email, Facebook messenger, or even Whatsapp), becomes ‘less asynchronous’ when the receiver is promptly notified of an incoming message (usually on their smartphones). When they respond, the communication thread can transform from asynchronous to synchronous since the sender may still be online. Similarly, the boundaries between formal and informal digital communication are disappearing, particularly if educational institutions use the same digital technologies for telecollaboration as the students do in their private lives; for instance, Skype/FaceTime or institutional Facebook group pages. Or, as in our case, if the time difference between the telecollaborating countries is so considerable that one of the participants has to perform the task from their home computers/laptops (some conveniently sprawled out on their beds, some showing their cat as was the case in our study), which will inherently make task performance less formal and institutional. And lastly, the boundaries between speaking and writing also seem to be evaporating, as written chat is a type of ‘speech in slow-motion’ (Beauvois 1998) due to its speech-like modality, since short messages are sent back and forth during real-time communication.

7.3.3 Practical implications and recommendations

7.3.3.1 Telecollaboration

In the introduction to their recently published *Handbook of Language Learning and Technology* (2016), Farr & Murray observe that:

... the rate and extent of technological development over the past ten to fifteen years have been making it increasingly difficult for students, teachers and teacher educators to know what technologies to employ and how best to employ them in a global society of ever new and enhanced modes of communication. (Farr & Murray 2016: 1).

Digital communication technology is here to stay and will occupy an increasingly important role as it will continue to offer unique opportunities for language learners to telecollaborate with native speakers of the target language. It has even been claimed that telecollaborative exchanges and communication technologies should be one of the pillars of L2-learning (O'Dowd & Ritter 2006). Still, as Helm and Guth (2016) note, in many educational institutions telecollaboration is the exception rather than the norm and tends to suffer from lack of sustainability as many tele-exchange projects seem to be one-off add-ons to the curriculum, usually without any (extra) student credits. But even when implemented many educators are not informed about which tasks are suitable for telecollaboration, or about the pedagogical effects and specific features of the digital medium of the exchange. Apart from all the logistic efforts that need to be undertaken – finding a tele-partner, integrating the exchange into the curriculum, designing tasks, organizing the right equipment, motivating the students – educators must be (made) aware of the complexity of telecollaboration – that it is not just about exchanging information – before implementing a project.

Despite these complexities, or rather because of them, following Helm and Guth's recommendation (2016) we suggest that telecollaboration become an inherent part of the second or foreign language learning experience. Digital collaboration offers a unique chance to connect language students with peers from the target language and culture, and should be recognized as a type of 'internationalization at home' experience that could yield student credits. Therefore, teacher training colleges should invest into the theory and practice of telecollaboration, or the "normalization of telecollaboration" (Helm and Guth 2016: 249)

7.3.3.2 Type of medium

Since the early 2000s, the traditional medium for telecollaboration between educational institutions seems to have shifted from email to video call; since it is the nearest to actual face-to-face communication (Kern 2014). However, educators should note that video call triggers more communication apprehension and has more social constraints than, for instance, the more anonymous written chat. Hence, when Helm and Guth (2016) urge teachers to create a *safe* environment for dialogue between participants during telecollaboration, based on *trust*, educators must realize that the type of medium and task type can contribute to a safe communication environment.

7.3.3.3 Task type

The type of task in telecollaboration projects should be adapted to the medium (or vice versa). For instance, to avoid a concentration of face-appropriate responses usually followed by unsuccessful task completion, tasks to be performed through video call should have fewer (planted) triggers than tasks to be performed through written chat. In order to spare the participants from having to negotiate for meaning again and again, information exchange tasks, particularly during video conferencing, would benefit from alternating (planted) triggers with task elements that do not need repair.

7.4 Finally

The data of the present book challenge the negotiation of meaning theory as an absolute framework for investigating (digital) interaction in a language learning environment. We suggest that task-based language learning and negotiation of meaning form a contradiction in terms: in a task-based language learning environment, participants are expected to engage in 'real-world' communication activities during which, ideally, they are so focused on meaning (rather than form) that they forget they are in or part of an institutional language learning environment. Ironically, however, with the institutional context fading into the background, the social context of the communication is automatically foregrounded, including issues such as fear of loss of face, which may ultimately get in the way of starting up negotiation of meaning sequences.

7.4.1 Limitations and suggestions for further research

A number of limitations to this study need to be considered. Since this research project focused on *what* occurred during the dyadic telecollaboration tasks, and *why*, and not necessarily in *how often*, we decided on a qualitative research approach with a relatively small number of participants and limited data set. This makes it difficult to generalize the findings beyond the scope of our data. Nevertheless, qualitative research is increasingly gaining momentum in the field of SLA (Mackey and Gass, 2008), particularly because it constitutes a more holistic approach that allows detailed observation and fine-grained analysis of individual student behaviours and responses during the L2-learning process.

Another limitation is related to the type of task. Despite the fact that telling jokes has been pointed out to be “a ‘parasitic’ form of communication where ‘normal’ input/output conditions do not hold” (Searle 1969: 57, quoted in Attardo 1993: 541), we did not find strikingly different discourse patterns between the jokes task and the Things-in-Pocket task. Still, we realize that discussing humour and exchanging jokes may involve specific issues of face that impact on the ongoing discourse. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 4, the set ritual response of laughter after a joke as a standard and socially expected interactional turn made it complicated to precisely determine the occurrence of (non)understanding. In other words, cultural jokes have their own affordances and constraints for the investigation of patterns of negotiation of meaning with advanced L2-learners: their complexity guarantee near-certainty of participant non-understanding, but they may also inherently be more burdened with issues of (loss of) face.

“Language education in the 21st century”, Kern (2014) argues, “must [...] acknowledge that language use is often transformed by the mediums in which it is used” (343). For a thorough understanding of the effect and impact of digital media on discourse patterns between native and non-native speakers during synchronous computer-mediated communication, further and more extensive research is necessary. Due to the changes in the traditional communication structures of L2 teaching practice, which will continue to evolve, aspects of digital interaction need to be investigated in order to shed light on the promises and the challenges of digital communication technologies in L2-teaching and learning environments.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Pilot Project: Things-in-Pocket (Dutch version)

In today's session you are going to telecollaborate with your counterpart from Australia.

Together, you are going to create a number of character profiles that may be incorporated in the (digital) theatre performance of "*Boat People*" (working title).

- Please read the instructions carefully.
- The first half of the assignment will take place through Skype written chat, the second half through Skype video call.
- Make sure your webcam and microphone are working.
- The Skype video call session will be recorded and anonymised for research purposes.

Beginning:

Open a Skype window for written chat and contact your Australian counterpart.

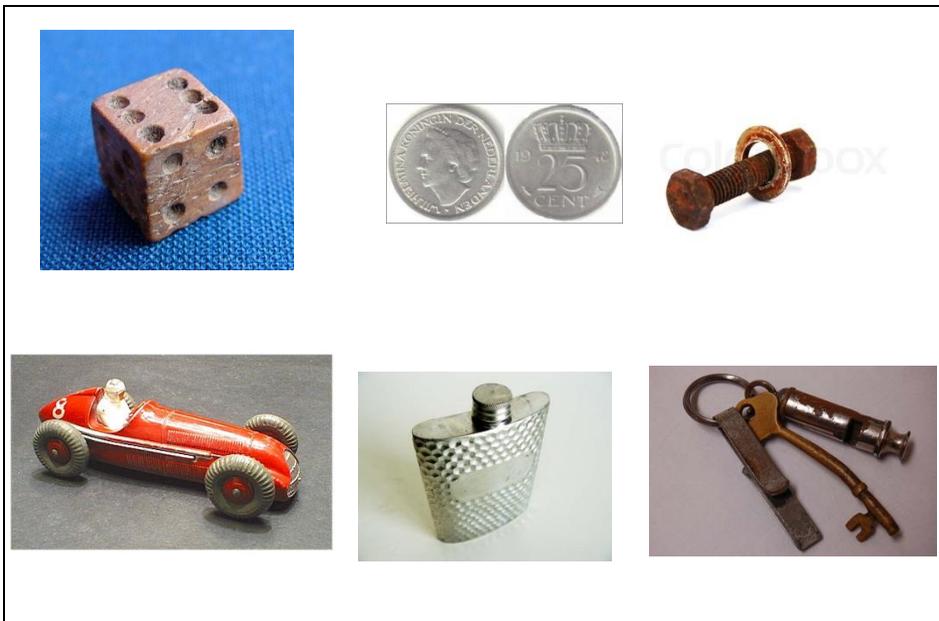
Take approximately five minutes to introduce yourselves and get acquainted.

The Task:

Four overcoats of Four Dutch immigrants to Australia have been brought in at “Lost and Found”, during the first immigration wave after WWII (1950s). The coat pockets contain a number of (personal) objects. You have the information on the objects found in coats 1 and 3 – your counterpart on the objects found in coats 2 and 4.

You need to tell your counterpart what is in the pockets of your coats, and find out what is in the pockets of your counterpart’s coats.

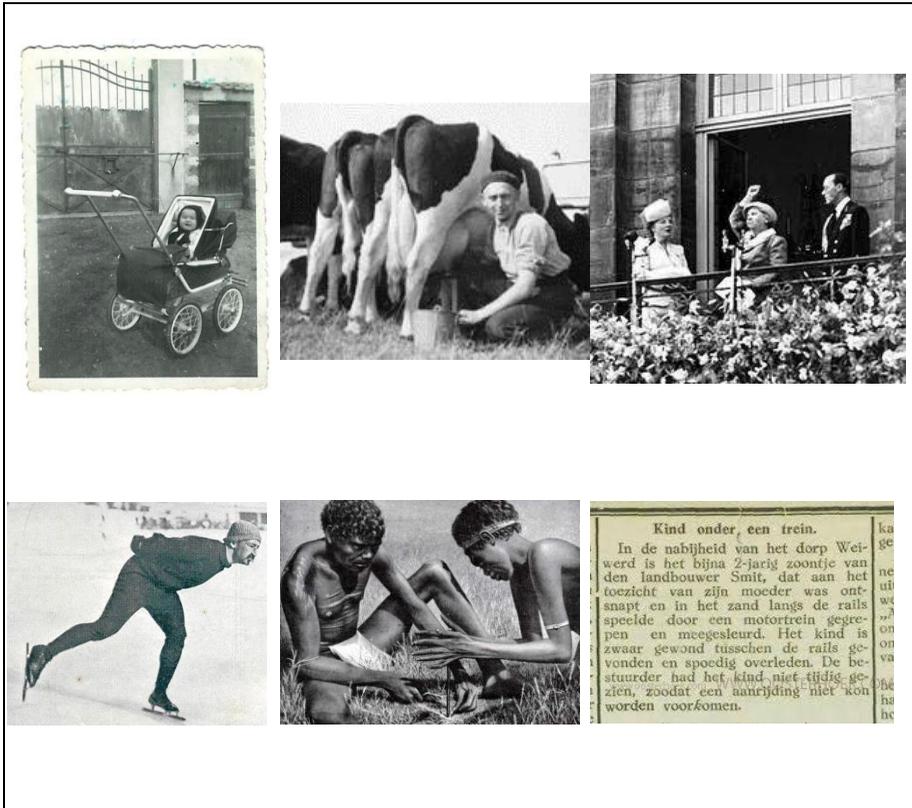
Note: It is entirely up to you and your counterpart how and in what order you are going to exchange the information, as long as you do not show your counterpart the objects – you are only allowed to name or describe them.

Coat 1

- Discuss with your counterpart what the objects tell you about the owner/emigrant of the coat, i.e.:
 - gender?
 - age?
 - background?
 - reasons for emigration?
- Discuss what objects/information you base your profiling on.
- Discuss if and how your characters could be written into the digital play.

- You have just completed Part 1 of the assignment.
- End the written chat session, but do not go offline: the collaboration with your counterpart will continue via Skype video call.
- Video call your counterpart and continue the task as instructed below.
- Repeat the task with the items on the next page.

Coat 3



- Discuss with your counterpart what the objects tell you about the owner/emigrant of the coat, i.e.:
 - gender?
 - age?
 - background?
 - reasons for emigration?
- Discuss what objects/information you base your profiling on.
- Discuss if and how your characters could be written into the digital play.

- This is the end of the assignment.
- Do you have any questions at this point?
- Wrap up and say goodbye to your counterpart.
- End the call.

Appendix 2: Pilot Project: Things-in-Pocket (Australian version)

In today's session you are going to telecollaborate with your counterpart from The Netherlands.

Together, you are going to create a number of character profiles that may be incorporated in the (digital) theatre performance of "*Boat People*" (working title).

- Please read the instructions carefully.
- The first half of the assignment will take place through Skype written chat, the second half through Skype video call.
- Make sure your webcam and microphone are working.
- The Skype video call session will be recorded and anonymised for research purposes.

Beginning:

Open a Skype window for written chat. Your Dutch counterpart will contact you.

Take approximately 5 minutes to introduce yourselves and get acquainted.

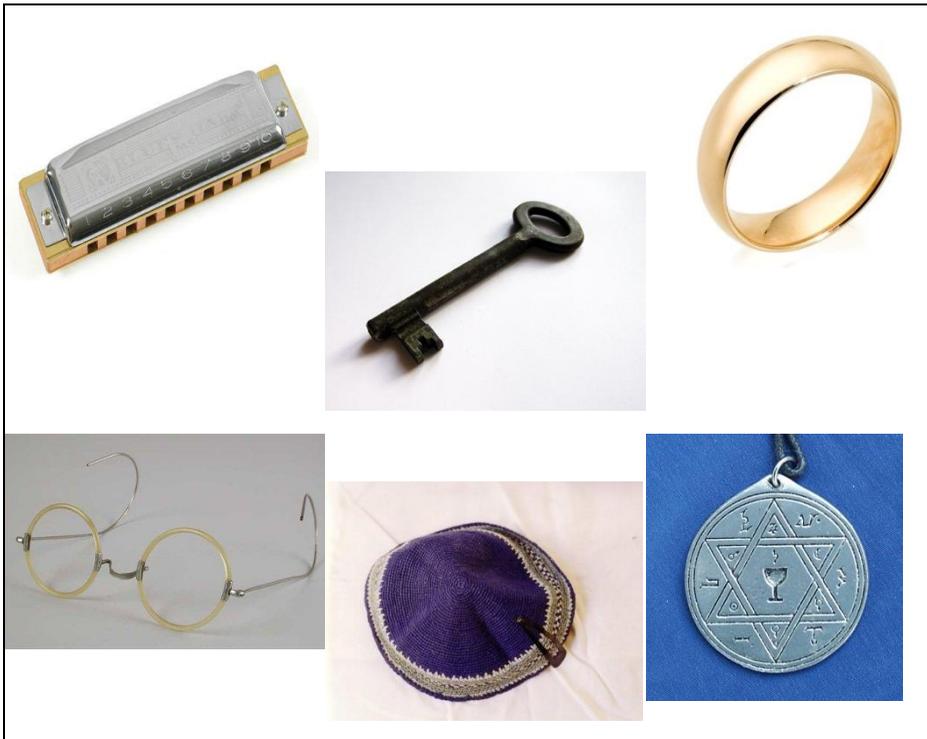
The Task:

Four overcoats of four Dutch immigrants to Australia have been brought in at "Lost and Found", during the first immigration wave after WWII (1950s). The coat pockets contain a number of (personal) objects. You have the information on the objects found in coats 2 and 4 – your counterpart on the objects found in coats 1 and 3.

You need to tell your counterpart what is in the pockets of your coats, and find out what is in the pockets of your counterpart's coats.

Note: It is entirely up to you and your counterpart how and in what order you are going to exchange the information, as long as you **do not show** your counterpart the objects – you are only allowed to name or describe them.

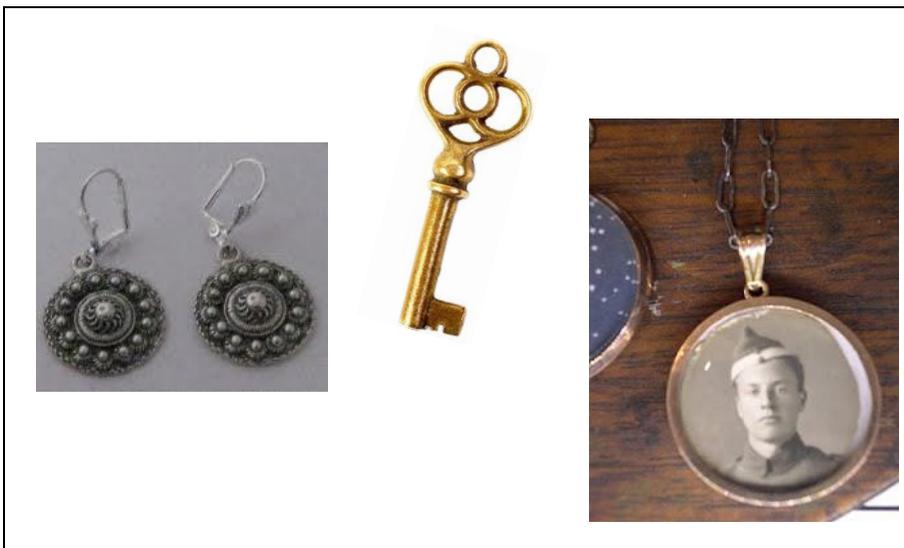
Coat 2

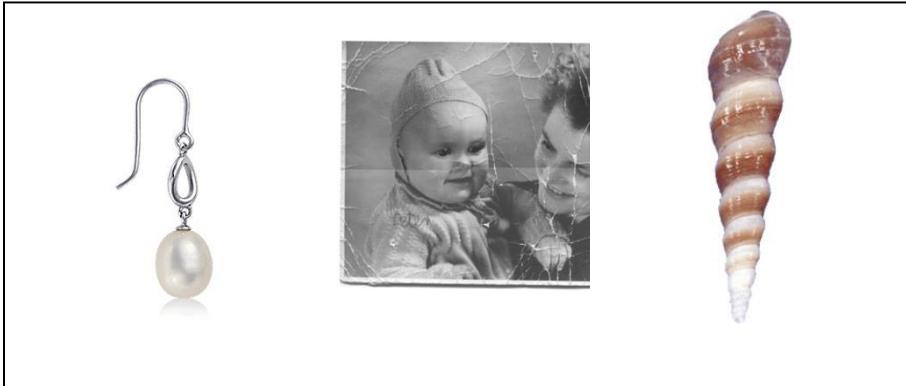


- Discuss with your counterpart what the objects tell you about the owner/emigrant of the coat, i.e.:
 - gender?
 - age?
 - background?

- reasons for emigration?
 - Discuss what objects/information you base your profiling on.
 - Discuss if and how your characters could be written into the digital play.
-
- You have just completed PART 1 of the assignment.
 - END the Skype video call call, but do not go offline: the collaboration with your counterpart will continue via Skype chat.
 - Open a Skype Chat Window and continue the task as instructed below.
 - Repeat the task with the items below.

Coat 4





- Discuss with your counterpart what the objects tell you about the owner/emigrant of the coat, i.e.:
 - gender?
 - age?
 - background?
 - reasons for emigration?
- Discuss what objects/information you base your profiling on.
- Discuss if and how your characters could be written into the digital play.

- This is the end of the assignment.
- Do you have any questions at this point?
- Wrap up and say goodbye to your counterpart.
- End the call

Appendix 3: Main Project: Things-in-Pocket (Dutch version)

- In today's session you are going to telecollaborate with your Australian counterpart.
- Together you exchange and discuss a number of items on the wish lists of four fictional characters.
- Based on these wish lists you will create character profiles and discuss if and how they could be incorporated in the play.
- The first half of the task will be done through Skype written chat, the second half through Skype video call. The Skype video call session will be recorded and anonymised for research purposes.

Beginning:

- Contact your Australian counterpart through Skype written chat.

Part 1:

- On the next page are the wish lists of two fictional characters, each with 6 items. Your Australian counterpart has the wish lists of two Australian fictional characters, also including 6 items each (Mr and Mrs Adams). Exchange the items of Mr de Vries (you) and Mr Adams (your counterpart).
- NOTE: it is entirely up to you to decide in which order or who goes first as long as you **do not show** your counterpart the pictures.
- Briefly discuss Mr Adams' and Mr de Vries' characters/life styles, based on his wish list.
- Decide if and how Mr Adams and Mr de Vries could be characters in the play.

Mr de Vries' wish list:Part 2:

- Sign off on chat and make sure your webcam and microphone are turned on. Video call your Australian counterpart for the second half of the assignment.
- Repeat the assignment with the wish lists of Mrs de Vries and Mrs Adams.

Mrs. de Vries' wish list:



Part 3:

- Decide if and how Mrs Adams and Mrs de Vries could be a characters in the play.
- Briefly discuss Mrs Adams' and Mrs de Vries' characters/life styles, based on his wish list.
- Decide if and how Mrs Adams and Mrs de Vries could be characters in the play.
- Say goodbye and sign off.

Appendix 4: Main Project: Things-in-Pocket (Australian version)

- In today's session you are going to telecollaborate with your Dutch counterpart.
- Together you exchange and discuss a number of items on the wish lists of four fictional characters each.
- Based on these wish lists you will create character profiles and discuss if and how they could be incorporated in the play.
- The first half of the task will be done through Skype written chat, the second half through Skype video call. The Skype video call session will be recorded and anonymised for research purposes.

Beginning:

- Your Dutch counterpart will contact you through Skype written chat.

Part 1:

- Below are the wish lists of two fictional characters, each with 6 items. Your Dutch counterpart has the wish lists of two Dutch fictional characters, also including 6 items each (Mr and Mrs de Vries). Exchange the items of Mr Adams (you) and Mr de Vries (your counterpart).
- NOTE: it is entirely up to you to decide in which order or who goes first as long as you **do not show** your counterpart the pictures.
- Briefly discuss Mr Adams' and Mr de Vries' characters/life styles, based on his wish list.
- Decide if and how Mr Adams and Mr de Vries could be characters in the play.

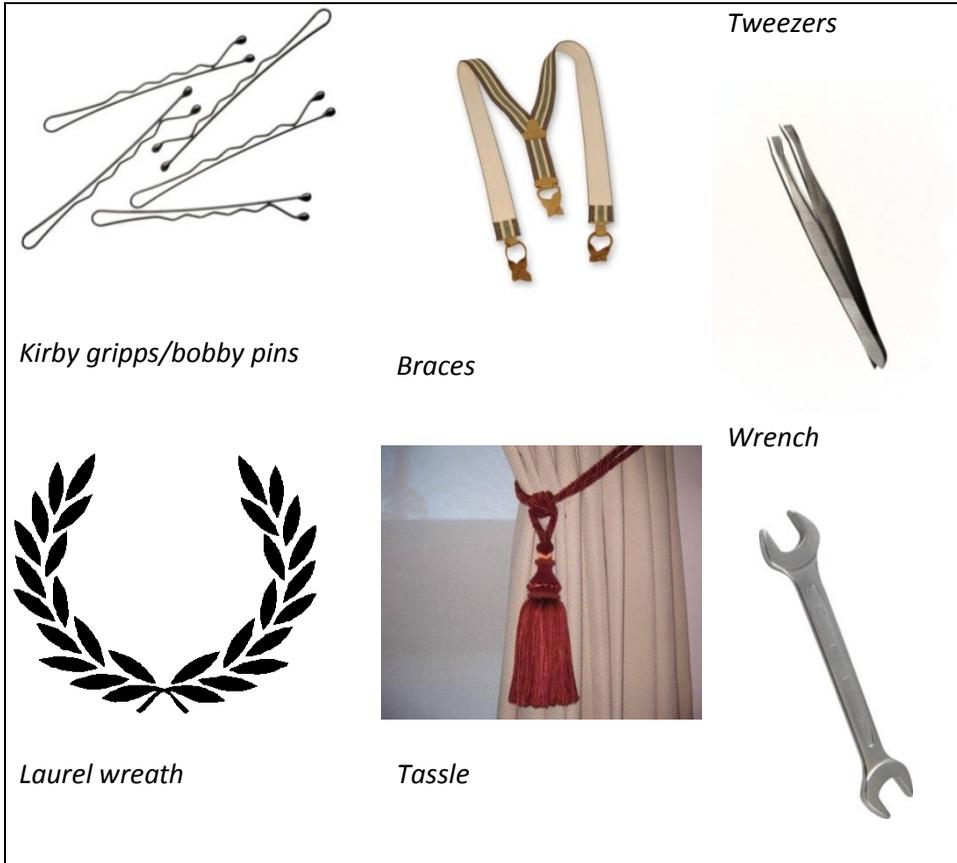
Mr Adams' wish list:

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p><i>Turtleneck sweater with honeycomb stitch</i></p>  |  <p><i>pliers</i></p> | <p><i>Tongs</i></p>  |
|  <p><i>Christmas hampers</i></p> |  <p><i>Whisk</i></p> | <p><i>Javelin</i></p>  |

Part 2:

- Sign off on chat and make sure your webcam and microphone are turned on. Your Dutch counterpart will call you for the second half of the assignment.
- Repeat the assignment with the wish lists of Mrs de Vries and Mrs Adams.

Mrs. Adams' wish list:



Part 3:

- Decide if and how Mrs Adams and Mrs de Vries could be a characters in the play.
- Briefly discuss Mrs Adams' and Mrs de Vries' characters/life styles, based on his wish list.
- Decide if and how Mrs Adams and Mrs de Vries could be characters in the play.
- Say goodbye and sign off.

Appendix 5: Main Project: Jokes Task (Dutch version)

- In today's session you are going to telecollaborate with your Australian counterpart.
- The theme of today's session is cultural humour. To get acquainted with each other's type of cultural humour you will exchange culturally specific jokes.
- When you have exchanged your jokes, you will discuss ideas about the cultural humour of both The Netherlands and Australia.
- Finally, you will discuss if and how the theme of cultural humour could be incorporated in the play.
- The first half of the task will be done through Skype written chat, the second half through Skype video call. The Skype video call session will be recorded and anonymised for research purposes.

Beginning:

- Contact your Australian counterpart by opening a chat window on Skype

Part 1:

- Introduce yourselves and get acquainted
- Below are 2 Dutch jokes (your Australian counterpart has been given Australian jokes).
- Take a few minutes to read them.
- Exchange your jokes with your counterpart.
- It is entirely up to you who goes first, or in what order you exchange the jokes.

Mop 1:

Vraag: Hoe eet een Duitser mosselen?

Antwoord: Hij klopt hard op de schelp en brult: Aufmachen!

Mop 2:

Een rijke Turk koopt een Mercedes 500 SL en rijdt ermee door de stad. Op een gegeven moment krijgt hij een lekke band. Hij zet de auto aan de kant en begint de band te verwisselen. Ineens remt er met gierende banden een oude Opel Kadet en stopt voor de Mercedes. Een Marokkaan stapt uit, pakt een krik uit zijn koffer, slaat de ruit van de Mercedes in en opent de deur.

"Wat doe jij nou?" vraagt de Turk.

Antwoordt de Marokkaan: "pakt jij de banden nu maar, dan pak ik de radio."

Mop 3:

Vraag: Wat moet je doen als een Belg een handgranaat naar je toe gooit?

Antwoord: Haal het pinnetje eruit en terug gooien.

Mop 4:

Vraag: Wat is de zowel perfecte minister van financiën als je perfecte schoonvader?

Antwoord: Jorge Zorreguieta, hij laat zowel de staatsschuld, als je schoonmoeder verdwijnen!

Part 2:

- Sign off on written chat, and video call your counterpart to continue the task.
- Take a few minutes to read the next jokes below.
- Exchange them with your counterpart.

Part 3:

- Exchange ideas about Australian and Dutch humour in general.
- What makes it typically Australian/Dutch?
- Discuss if you can incorporate cultural humour in the play.
- Any other ideas for the play you would like to discuss at this point?
- Say goodbye and sign off.

A final request:

For research purposes, please do not discuss (details of) this task on Facebook or with your peers until the end of this week, when all one-to-one sessions have finished.

Appendix 6: Main Project: Jokes Task (Australian version)

- In today's session you are going to telecollaborate with your Dutch counterpart.
- The theme of today's session is cultural humour. To get acquainted with each other's type of cultural humour you will exchange culturally specific jokes.
- When you have exchanged your jokes, you will discuss ideas about the cultural humour of both The Netherlands and Australia.
- Finally, you will discuss if and how the theme of cultural humour could be incorporated in the play.
- The first half of the task will be done through Skype video call, the second half through Skype chat. The Skype video call session will be recorded and anonymised for research purposes.

Beginning:

- Your Dutch counterpart will contact you on Skype video call.

Part 1:

- Introduce yourselves and get acquainted
- Below are 2 Australian jokes (your Dutch counterpart has been given Dutch jokes).
- Take a few minutes to read them.
- Exchange your jokes with your counterpart.
- It is entirely up to you who goes first, or in what order you exchange the jokes.

Joke 1:

Two Aussie cattle drovers standing in an Outback bar.

One asked, "What are you up to, Mate?"

"Ahh, I'm takin' a mob of 6000 from Goondiwindi to Gympie."

"Oh yeah ... and what route are you takin'?"

"Ah, probably the Missus; after all, she stuck by me durin' the drought."

Joke 2:

Question: How do you know if you're a bogan?

Answer: You let your 15-year-old daughter smoke at the dinner table ... in front of her kids.

Part 2:

- Sign off on video call, and open a chat window to continue the task.
- Take a few minutes to read the next jokes below.
- Exchange them with your counterpart.

Joke 3:

A Pom, fresh off the plane at Sydney airport, is trying to negotiate Australian customs. Finally, when it's his turn to get his passport stamped, the customs officer starts rattling off the usual questions:

C.O. – "How long do you intend to stay?"

POM - "1 week. "

C.O. - "What is the nature of this trip?"

POM - "Business."

C.O. - "Do you have any past criminal convictions?"

POM - "I didn't think we still needed to!"

Joke 4:

You know you're Australian when:

You believe that stubbies can be either drunk or worn.

You can translate: "Dazza and Shazza played Acca Dacca on the way to Maccas."

You know, whatever the tourist books say, that no one says "cobber".

Part 3:

- Exchange ideas about Australian and Dutch humour in general.
- What makes it typically Australian/Dutch?
- Discuss if you can incorporate cultural humour in the play.
- Any other ideas for the play you would like to discuss at this point?
- Say goodbye and sign off.

A final request:

For research purposes, please do not discuss (details of) this task on Facebook or with your peers until the end of this week, when all one-to-one sessions have finished.

English summary

Patterns of (negotiated) interaction during telecollaboration between native and advanced non-native speakers

This thesis investigates emerging patterns of digital interaction between dyads of native and non-native speakers during synchronous computer-mediated communication with a particular focus on negotiation of meaning (or lack thereof). In a technology-enhanced language learning environment, participants performed tasks using both video call and written chat. The data discussed in this book stem from one-to-one sessions that were an inherent part of a group-to-group telecollaboration theatre project between a Dutch and an Australian university. Dyads consisting of Dutch and Australian students performed two different tasks: a task on cultural humour and a task on exchanging items (and creating character profiles based on these items). Transcriptions of the recorded video call sessions were made (by two different researchers), and logs of written chat were saved for coding and analysis. The data set from this study has formed the basis of four different research studies (chapters 3 – 6) that have been published or are still under review in academic journals.

The Introduction presents the metaphorical concept of teaching a language in a metaphorical monastery (i.e. the classroom) and a market place (i.e. interacting with other learners or native speakers outside the classroom) (Arnold et al. 2015). It recounts how my colleague and friend, Dr Yoni Prior, senior lecturer at the Theatre Department of Deakin University, and myself would get together (usually online) to find ways around what we had started calling the ‘limits of location’, i.e. the limits of our single-discipline and mono-cultural classrooms. Convinced as we were that our students would benefit from each other’s backgrounds, expertise and input, our discussions resulted in unprecedented and cutting-edge telecollaboration projects between our students, who went on to work together on several asynchronous and synchronous digital communication platforms to ultimately create and perform digital theatre plays. As researchers we were interested in watching and assessing the process of co-construction of a work of art from our own disciplines: Yoni Prior, working from a Theatre

Studies point of view, started a PhD research project to investigate the influence of European participation on the creative process;⁸¹ the current study was conducted from an second language (L2) learning perspective and investigates the types of communication and negotiation of meaning both native and non-native speakers would employ during interaction in an institutional language learning environment. The introduction ends by posing the research questions that will be addressed in the following chapters.

Chapter 1 outlines the theoretical perspectives of the thesis. It discusses the interactionist hypothesis to L2-learning as proposed by Long (1980, 1982), which claims that language learners benefit from interacting with other learners or native speakers. The two major assertions of the interactions hypothesis are that comprehensible input and negotiation of meaning, when (usually) the learner initiates repair to resolve a communicative breakdown, are essential for L2 acquisition. A recurrent taxonomy to assess instances of negotiation of meaning during L2-interaction is the Varonis and Gass model of non-understandings (1985). The model consists of four primes, each describing a conversational step in the interaction: the trigger (an utterance by the speaker, which is not understood by the hearer); an indicator (where the hearer actively seeks assistance to resolve the non-understanding); a response (the speaker repeats, clarifies or modifies the trigger or trouble source in an attempt to resolve the communication breakdown), and a reaction to the response (where the hearer confirms understanding). However, as proposed by the socio-cultural approach to L2-learning, there are social issues inherent to communicative situations that have also been found to influence L2 interaction. Due to social factors such as fear of losing face, for instance, L2-learners' responses do not always corroborate the expectations of, for instance, learner-initiated negotiated interaction. When analysing digital communication between native and non-native speakers of the target language, therefore, we propose that both these approaches to L2 learning need to be taken into consideration.

Chapter 2 presents the framework, scope and aims of the digital telecollaboration projects (pilot and main project) that took place between Dutch and Australian students and from which the current study has drawn

⁸¹ See Yoni Prior (2016). *Pragmatic Dramaturgy: The Creative Management of Limits in Performance-Making Processes* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.

its data. Two cohorts of undergraduate students worked together in a task-based technology-enhanced language learning environment: for the pilot project a group of first year Dutch students majoring in English Language and Culture collaborated with Australian students of Theatre and Education; for the main project a group of Dutch European Studies students taking a Minor in English language proficiency worked together with Australian students of Theatre and Education. The pilot and main projects had the same task design, both for the group-to-group larger task at hand and for the one-to-one tasks. For a period of approximately six weeks the students would work together to devise, i.e. write and rehearse, a theatre play that would be performed in real time in front of live audiences by the Dutch and the Australian students together at the end of the project. Dutch students played out scenes with Australian students as they were projected onto the stage of the Australian university theatre stage.

In an attempt to evaluate the influence of the type of digital medium on language learner communication Chapter 3 compares and contrasts two modes of dyadic digital telecollaboration: Skype video call and written chat. It examines negotiation of meaning during interaction between native speakers and non-native speakers of English in a task-based advanced L2 classroom via two forms of real-time one-to-one computer-mediated communication: video calling and instant chat-messaging. It investigates the nature, scope and possible patterns of negotiated interaction in both types of digital communication modes. Dyadic groups consisting of non-native speakers and native speakers collaborated in a series of one-to-one digital real-time interchanges. The digital discourse produced during the telecollaboration sessions was analysed within the framework of the negotiation of meaning theory, following the Varonis and Gass model of non-understandings (1985). It was found that negotiation of meaning episodes occurred in both types of real-time interaction but that they yielded their own distinct patterns of negotiated interaction. The data suggest that communication through video calling triggers more potential loss of face issues for the L2 learner than communication through chat, which has a direct effect on the trajectory and outcome of the interactions.

Chapter 4 investigates instances where non-native speakers do not initiate negotiation of meaning despite non-understanding. Sixteen dyads (N=32) consisting of non-native speakers and native speakers of English performed two different tasks using video call and written chat. The data were analysed and coded for instances of negotiation of meaning, with a

particular focus on instances where the non-native speaker did *not* initiate repair despite non-understanding. These absences of negotiation of meaning are generally excluded from detailed analyses primarily because it is difficult to establish non-understanding unless the participant overtly indicates as such. In order to assess the effect of the non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning on task performance and task completion, a culturally specific task was developed for this study that would ensure (a near certainty of) non-native speaker non-understanding. To counterbalance the influence of task design on task performance and rule out the variable of the nature of the task, a control task of an entirely different type was added to the study for comparison. It was found that participants frequently did not initiate negotiation of meaning despite non-understanding, or feigned understanding instead of initiating repair during both tasks. We conclude that excluding non-occurrence of negotiation of meaning in(digital) task-based language teaching will misrepresent task performance, task outcome and task evaluation.

Chapter 5 reports on a study that investigates the correlation between task design on the one hand and the discourse that language learners produce during task performance on the other. The task that was created for this study consisted of twelve consecutive possible instances of non-understanding that would have to be negotiated by the non-native speaker in a single session in order to reach mutual understanding and to complete the entire task successfully. In a multimodal counterbalanced design, six native speaker/non-native speaker dyads (N=12) carried out the task, each using both video call (Skype) and text-based real-time chat during the same session. It was found that (a) when a task consists of multiple items to be exchanged between native speakers and non-native speakers, with multiple triggers of potential non-understanding, the non-native speaker response will run the risk of gradually regressing from task-appropriate response - overtly indicating non-understanding and starting up negotiation of meaning - into face-appropriate response - covert, usually non-verbal indicators of non-understanding - during the course of the ongoing task session, regardless of the particular digital medium; (b) the native speaker tends to counterbalance face-appropriate behaviour by the non-native speaker with task-appropriate responses in order to ensure successful task completion, and (c) non-understanding of previous target items on the part of the non-native speaker seems to shape the expectations of both native speakers and non-native speakers concerning the next task items.

In Chapter 6 we focus on the role of the native speaker during a task that casts them in the role of apprentice, and the non-native speaker in the role of expert in the domain of culture. In particular, we analyse the sequential responses of native speaker participants after an instance of non-understanding, as well as unsolicited assistance provided by the non-native speakers after absence of negotiation of meaning. First, we explore if and how these interactional behaviours influence task performance. Additionally, we examine whether the type of digital medium, dyadic video call or written chat, has any influence on task performance. Our data reveal that, both in video call and in written chat, native speakers, in their role as cultural novices, are reluctant to initiate negotiation of meaning; the non-native speakers, in their role as cultural experts tend to avoid conversational breakdowns (as has been described as native speaker behaviour in previous studies). We conclude that participants seem to cope with break-downs in communication through social 'facework' rather than institutional 'taskwork', even when expert-learner participants' roles have been reversed.

The conclusion (Chapter 7) presents a summary of findings and theoretical and practical implications based on the conducted studies. It concludes that, based on our data, participant responses during dyadic telecollaboration in a synchronous computer-mediated environment (in both video call and written chat) can be categorized into two major types: *task-appropriate* and *face-appropriate* responses. As a schematic representation, we present a model that proposes four different trajectories, indicating that a hearer's response may be task-appropriate, face-appropriate, regress from a task-appropriate into a face-appropriate response or, conversely, progress from a face-appropriate into a task-appropriate response. Additionally, based on our findings, we put forward a number of challenges and recommendations. For instance, when assessing discourse within a technology enhanced task-based learning environment, researchers and teachers should heed the interrelatedness of L2-learning systems and social systems in task design. Rather than assessing participant responses solely within cognitive frameworks such as the negotiation of meaning paradigm, other more complex issues, such as face and strategies that occur beyond the computer interface, should be considered as well. For a more holistic and reliable assessment of digital discourse in an institutional language learning environment we suggest that, within negotiation of meaning studies, data where participants do *not* negotiate for meaning despite an instance of non-understanding should be included

in the investigation as well. The conclusion also includes a number of recommendations as regards future telecollaboration projects. For instance, according to our data, the type of medium and task design affect task performance. Finally, we address the limitations of our studies and present suggestions for further research.

Nederlandse samenvatting

Dit proefschrift onderzoekt communicatiepatronen in de digitale interactie tussen *native* en *non-native speakers* van het Engels. Het onderzoek richt zich met name op het al dan niet geschieden van het 'onderhandelen over betekenis' (*negotiation of meaning*).

De data in dit boek komen voort uit een interdisciplinair digitaal samenwerkingsverband tussen een Nederlandse en een Australische universiteit. Voor het researchgedeelte van deze samenwerking werden de deelnemende studenten verdeeld in tweetallen, bestaande uit een *native* en een *non-native speaker*. De tweetallen voerden samen een opdracht uit waarbij zij gebruik maakten van twee verschillende digitale media: *videoconferencing* (communiceren via een webcam) en geschreven *chat* (waarbij beide deelnemers tegelijkertijd online waren maar elkaar niet konden zien of horen).

Voor de analyse en de codering van de data zijn de webcam-opnames getranscribeerd (door twee verschillende onderzoekers); de geschreven chatsessies werden automatisch bewaard door het digitale programma. De data vormen de basis van de vier verschillende studies in dit boek (hoofdstuk 3 tot en met 6). Hoofdstuk 3 en 4 zijn reeds verschenen in wetenschappelijke tijdschriften. Hoofdstuk 5 en 6 zijn nog *under review*.

De inleiding (*Introduction*) introduceert het idee dat tweedetaalverwervingsonderwijs kan plaatsvinden in een figuurlijk klooster (het klaslokaal), of op een markplein (de 'echte wereld' waar *native* en *non-native speakers* elkaar ontmoeten buiten het klaslokaal) (Arnold et al. 2015). Dit hoofdstuk beschrijft de (veelal online) gesprekken met mijn collega en goede vriendin Dr. Yoni Prior, universitair docent Theaterwetenschappen aan de Deakin University. Hierin spraken wij over hoe wij de relatieve monocultuur en monodiscipline binnen de vier muren van ons klaslokaal soms als beperkend ervoeren. Omdat wij ervan overtuigd waren dat onze studenten veel zouden kunnen leren van elkaar en elkaars achtergrond, expertise en input besloten wij een intensief en vernieuwend digitaal samenwerkingsverband tussen onze studenten op te zetten. Voor de duur van een semester werkten groepen studenten samen via verschillende asynchrone (niet *live*) en synchrone (*live*) digitale media, met als uitkomst van het project het gezamenlijk schrijven en digitaal opvoeren

van een theatervoorstelling. Als onderzoekers waren wij vanuit onze eigen disciplines met name geïnteresseerd in de verschillende manieren van samenwerken en communiceren. Vanuit een Theaterwetenschappelijk oogpunt begon Yoni Prior een promotietraject dat de inbreng en invloed van de Europese studenten op het creatieve proces onderzocht.⁸² Vanuit het perspectief van tweedetaalverwerving onderzoekt mijn proefschrift communicatiepatronen tijdens digitale communicatie tussen *native* en *non-native speakers* in een onderwijssituatie. Het inleidende hoofdstuk eindigt met de onderzoeksvragen die zullen worden beantwoord in de volgende hoofdstukken.

Hoofdstuk 1 schetst het theoretische kader van dit proefschrift. Het behandelt de Interactiehypothese over tweedetaalverwerving zoals geformuleerd door Long (1980, 1982). Deze hypothese stelt dat tweedetaalverwerfers baat hebben bij interactie met andere tweedetaalverwerfers of met *native speakers*. De twee belangrijkste veronderstellingen van de Interactiehypothese zijn dat het expliciet verduidelijken van een boodschap (*comprehensible input*) door de spreker en het onderhandelen over betekenis (*negotiation of meaning*) door de taalverwerfer essentieel zijn tijdens het proces van de tweedetaalverwerving. Een veelgebruikt model om deze onderhandelingen over betekenis te onderzoeken is het zogenaamde *model of non-understandings* dat is ontwikkeld door Varonis en Gass (1985). Het model bestaat uit 4 communicatiestadia: i) een reactie-initiator (*trigger*) – meestal een woord of een zinsdeel uitgesproken door de spreker dat niet wordt verstaan of begrepen door de hoorder); ii) de *indicator* – hiermee geeft de hoorder duidelijk aan dat hij/zij de *trigger* niet heeft verstaan of begrepen; iii) de *response* – hiermee reageert de spreker op de *indicator*, en hij/zij tracht de *trigger* te verduidelijken, om hiermee het communicatieprobleem op te lossen en het gesprek weer vlot te trekken, en iv) de reactie op deze response, waarbij de hoorder bijvoorbeeld duidelijk aangeeft het te hebben begrepen. Dit model lijkt echter geen oog te hebben voor de sociale factoren die inherent zijn aan intermenselijke communicatie. De sociaal-culturele benadering van tweedetaalverwerving benadrukt dat deze sociale factoren ook van invloed kunnen zijn op het tweedetaalverwervingsproces. Een voorbeeld hiervan is angst voor gezichtsverlies, dat haaks kan staan op de Interactiehypothese. Immers, volgens de Interactiehypothese zal de

⁸²Yoni Prior (2016). *Pragmatic Dramaturgy: The Creative Management of Limits of Performance-Making Processes* (Ongepubliceerd proefschrift). Deakin University, Melbourne, Australië.

hoorder altijd duidelijk aangeven als hij/zij iets niet heeft begrepen, terwijl sociale factoren zoals angst voor het lijden van gezichtsverlies – dommig gevonden worden omdat je iets niet hebt begrepen – de hoorder er juist van kan weerhouden om aan te geven dat hij/zij iets niet begrepen heeft. Om een zo volledig mogelijk beeld te krijgen van digitale communicatie tussen *native* en *non-native speakers* in een taalverwervingsomgeving betrekken wij daarom zowel de Interactiehypothese alsook de sociaal-culturele benadering in onze analyse.

Hoofdstuk 2 beschrijft het kader, de omvang, de doelen en de ambities van de digitale samenwerkingsprojecten (een pilotproject en een hoofdproject) die plaats hebben gevonden tussen Nederlandse en Australische studenten. De gegenereerde data uit deze projecten vormen de basis van dit proefschrift. Het pilotproject bestond uit de samenwerking tussen een groep Nederlandse eerstejaarsstudenten *Engelse Taal en Communicatie* aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam. Zij werkten samen met een groep Australische derdejaarsstudenten *Theaterwetenschappen (Drama and Education)* aan Deakin University in Melbourne. De hoofdstudie (een jaar later) vond plaats tussen een groep eerstejaarsstudenten *Europese Studies* die als onderdeel van hun studie een *Minor Engelse taalvaardigheid* volgden. Ook zij werkten samen met een Australische groep derdejaarsstudenten *Theaterwetenschappen* van Deakin University. De twee samenwerkingsprojecten volgden dezelfde procedure, zowel wat betreft het uitvoerende onderdeel (de digitale theatervoorstelling) als het research project (de opdrachten die de studenten uitvoerden en waarvan de data de basis vormen van dit proefschrift). De groepen werkten gedurende ongeveer zeven weken nauw samen via digitale media. Ze deden onderzoek en wisselden hun bevindingen uit, schreven samen scènes, repeteerden samen en voerden aan het einde van het semester een voorstelling op van ongeveer 50 minuten die rechtstreeks werd vertoond voor publiek in zowel Melbourne als Amsterdam. Tijdens de voorstelling werden de Nederlandse acteurs/studenten geprojecteerd op het Australische toneel; tegelijkertijd werd het Australische toneel geprojecteerd in een zaal van de Universiteit van Amsterdam.

Hoofdstuk 3 doet verslag van het pilotproject. Het onderzoekt of en hoe het digitale medium – Skype met een webcam of geschreven chat – de communicatie, en daarmee het taalverwervingsproces, mogelijk beïnvloedt. De focus ligt op het al dan niet voorkomen van *negotiation of meaning* tussen *native speakers* en *non-native speakers* tijdens de digitale interactie

waarbij de studenten verschillende taken moesten uitvoeren. Er wordt gekeken wat de overeenkomsten en verschillen waren in de interactie en de mogelijke communicatiepatronen tijdens de webcamsessies en de geschreven chatsessies. De data werd geanalyseerd en gecodeerd aan de hand van het *model of non-understandings* van Varonis en Gass (1985). Hieruit bleek dat *negotiation of meaning* voorkomt tijdens zowel de webcamsessies als de geschreven chat, maar dat elk van de digitale media een duidelijk eigen communicatiepatroon genereert. Het hoofdstuk concludeert dat communicatie via de webcam in een tweedetaalverwervingsomgeving moeizamer verloopt omdat de angst voor gezichtsverlies de *non-native speaker* veelal weerhoudt om aan te geven dat hij/zij iets niet heeft begrepen. Het uitvoeren van een opdracht tijdens geschreven chat blijkt effectiever en succesvoller omdat de *non-native speakers* door de relatieve anonimiteit van het medium minder moeite hebben om aan te geven dat ze iets niet (goed) hebben begrepen en te onderhandelen over betekenis.

Hoofdstuk 4 rapporteert over de data waar de *non-native speakers* geen *negotiation of meaning* starten ondanks een duidelijke trigger. Dit type data wordt in de meeste studies buiten beschouwing gelaten omdat het voor de onderzoeker moeilijk is in te schatten of de *non-native speaker* iets daadwerkelijk niet heeft begrepen. Zestien tweetallen bestaande uit een *native* en een *non-native speaker* voerden een opdracht uit via de webcam en geschreven chat. Om inzage te verkrijgen in het effect van het uitblijven van onderhandelen voor betekenis hebben wij een opdracht ontwikkeld over culturele humor waarvan wij verwachtten dat de *non-native speaker* bij elk taakelement zou moeten onderhandelen over betekenis. Om de invloed van het type opdracht uit te sluiten (sociale factoren zijn mogelijk immers meer van invloed tijdens communicatie over humor en moppen) heeft een groep deelnemende studenten ter vergelijking een ander soort taak, ofwel controletaak, uitgevoerd. Tijdens beide opdrachten bleek dat de *non-native speakers* herhaaldelijk nalieten aan te geven iets niet begrepen te hebben. Dit uitblijven van onderhandelen over betekenis was van grote (veelal negatieve) invloed op de uitvoering en afronding van de opdracht. We concluderen dat het uitsluiten van deze data, zoals in de meeste *negotiation of meaning* onderzoeksprojecten gebeurt, een vertekend beeld geeft van de taakuitvoering en de resultaten.

In hoofdstuk 5 kijken we naar of en hoe het ontwerp van een opdracht van invloed kan zijn op de manier waarop de *non-native speakers*

communiceren tijdens de uitvoering van die opdracht. De taak die werd ontworpen voor dit onderzoek bestond uit twaalf mogelijke *triggers*. Om de opdracht tot een succesvol einde te brengen moesten alle twaalf items worden begrepen door de *non-native speaker*. Zes tweetallen bestaande uit *native* en *non-native speakers* voerden de taak uit gebruik makend van zowel webcam *videoconferencing* als geschreven chat. De bevindingen die worden besproken in dit hoofdstuk zijn dat (a) voor de communicatie via beide media gold dat, als een opdracht bestaat uit een opeenvolgende reeks van *triggers*, er een communicatiepatroon ontstaat waarbij de *non-native speakers* in eerste instantie in het belang van de opdracht handelen (door te onderhandelen voor betekenis) maar zich gaandeweg de opdracht steeds meer richten op hun eigenbelang (gezichtsbehoud) en minder op de opdracht; (b) hoe minder de *non-native speaker* communiceert in het belang van de opdracht hoe harder de *native speaker* gaat werken in het belang van de taak om zo het communicatiegedrag van zijn/haar gesprekspartner te compenseren; (c) het al dan niet hebben begrepen van, in dit geval, verschillende items van de opdracht (over het algemeen negatieve) verwachtingen schept over nog te volgen items van de opdracht bij zowel de *native* als de *non-native speaker*.

Het vierde en laatste onderzoek van dit project wordt beschreven in hoofdstuk 6. Veruit de meeste onderzoeksprojecten naar tweedetaalverwerving richten zich op de *non-native speaker* in hun rol als leerling, en de *native speaker* in hun rol als expert. Dit hoofdstuk doet verslag van de studie waarbij de rollen zijn omgedraaid: de *non-native speaker* is de culturele expert, en de *native speaker* is de leerling. Daarbij vergelijken we de communicatiepatronen van de *native speaker* als leerling met die van de *non-native speaker* als leerling, beschreven in de voorgaande hoofdstukken. Omgekeerd onderzoeken we of de *non-native speaker* als expert dezelfde communicatiepatronen volgt zoals beschreven voor de *native speaker* in de voorgaande hoofdstukken. We concluderen dat, zowel tijdens de webcamsessies als tijdens geschreven chat, de *native speakers* als leerling net zo terughoudend zijn om herhaaldelijk en expliciet aan te geven iets niet begrepen te hebben als *non-native speakers* in een leerlingrol. Evenzo doen *non-native speakers* er als experts alles aan om ervoor te zorgen dat de opdracht succesvol kan worden afgerond, met in acht neming van gezichtsbehoud van hun gesprekspartner. We concluderen dat, zelfs als de rollen zijn omgedraaid, *native* en *non-native speakers* veelal hetzelfde gedrag vertonen dat veelal in het belang is van gezichtsbehoud en minder in het belang van de uit te voeren opdracht,.

Hoofdstuk 7, de conclusie, inventariseert een aantal belangrijke theoretische en praktische inzichten en implicaties die voortkomen uit de vier studies. Op grond van onze data concluderen we dat er tijdens digitale communicatie tussen *native* en *non-native speakers* in een tweedetaalverwervingsomgeving twee duidelijk te onderscheiden vormen van reacties plaatsvinden: reacties in het belang van de uit te voeren opdracht, en reacties in het belang van gezichtsbehoud. We presenteren een model bestaande uit een schematische weergave van vier verschillende responsetrajecten: i) response in het belang van de opdracht; ii) in het belang van gezichtsbehoud; iii) in eerste instantie in het belang van de opdracht maar gaandeweg culminerend in het belang van gezichtsbehoud; iv) in eerste instantie in het belang van gezichtsbehoud maar, meestal door interventie van de *native speaker*, uiteindelijk toch in het belang van de opdracht. Voorts constateren wij in dit hoofdstuk een aantal uitdagingen wat betreft digitale communicatie en samenwerking en doen wij een aantal aanbevelingen. Zo wijzen wij docenten en onderzoekers op de interrelatie, of de spagaat, tussen cognitieve tweedetaalverwervingstheorieën en socio-culturele invloeden waar o.i. rekening mee moet worden gehouden bij het ontwerpen van een opdracht. Ook geeft het gebruik van alleen theoretische cognitieve kaders tijdens tweedetaalverwervingsonderzoek, zoals bijvoorbeeld het model van Varonis & Gass, een te eenzijdig en beperkt beeld. Wat betreft de participanten stellen wij vast dat de indeling in de categorie *native speakers* of *non-native speakers* te beperkt is: verwachten dat participanten altijd in het belang van de opdracht zullen handelen door *negotiation of meaning* op te starten (bijvoorbeeld zoals beschreven in de Interactiehypothese) gaat voorbij aan voor de communicatie belangrijke socio-culturele invloeden die ertoe kunnen leiden dat ze niet in het belang van de opdracht handelen. Om een zo holistisch en betrouwbaar mogelijk beeld te verkrijgen van digitale communicatiepatronen tussen *native* en *non-native speakers* in een educatieve context adviseren wij daarom ook om tijdens onderzoek naar *negotiation of meaning* óók de data te betrekken waar de hoorder niet actief of expliciet aangeeft het niet begrepen te hebben. In de conclusie wordt een aantal praktische aanbevelingen gedaan wat betreft toekomstige digitale samenwerkingsverbanden of -projecten. Als laatste geven wij aan ons ten volle bewust te zijn van de beperkingen van ons onderzoek, en geven wij suggesties voor nader onderzoek.

Curriculum vitae

Rose van der Zwaard was born in 1962 in Aalsmeer. After graduating from High School, she moved to Tel Aviv, Israel to live and work, and to study English Literature at Tel Aviv University. She received a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature (magna cum Laude) in 1988. After moving back to Amsterdam, The Netherlands she earned a Doctoraal Degree at the English Department of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) in 1991. Her thesis was on literature of the American South, with a focus on the novels by Carson McCullers. From 1991 until 2004 Rose taught English at a Dutch Grammar School in Amsterdam. In that period she also taught English Proficiency and Teaching Methodology at the UvA. In 2004 Rose left her grammar school teaching job to work full time at the UvA, teaching English Literature and Culture, English Proficiency and Teaching Methodology.

In 2009, as part of the language acquisition courses, she embarked on a series of telecollaboration projects (see Introduction) with her friend and colleague Dr Yoni Prior from Deakin University, Melbourne. During these technology-enhanced projects, groups of Dutch and Australian students would work together on devising and performing a digital theatre production. Due to the complexities of communicating through digital interface, Rose became interested in the affordances and constraints of telecollaboration and technology-enhanced task-based language teaching in an institutional language learning environment.

In 2009 and 2011 she co-wrote two articles on telecollaborative practice and presented the findings at international conferences in Venice, Italy (2009, *The Arts in Society*) and in Vancouver, Canada (2010, *Ubiquitous Learning Conference*).

In 2012 Rose's PhD proposal to investigate and micro-analyse dyadic telecollaboration was accepted within the UvA's 'Promoveren voor Docenten'-programme.⁸³ She presented the findings of her research at international conferences in Gothenborg, Sweden (2012, *EuroCall: The European Association for Computer-Assisted Language Learning*), Hawaii, USA (2013, *CALICO: The Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium*); Padua, Italy (2015, *EuroCall: The European Association for*

⁸³ A Programme facilitating (tenured) staff to start a PhD project.

Computer-Assisted Language Learning), Leuven, Belgium (2015, *TBLT: Task-Based Language Teaching*), and Dublin, Ireland (2016, *Unicollaboration: New Directions in Telecollaborative Research and Practice*).

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