Turn Initiators in Professional Encounters: Teacher Education Discourse in an Irish University Setting

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Abstract

This paper investigates some of the pragmatic considerations behind the use of turn initiators within one specific Irish-English setting, that of teacher education. During the course of their studies, student teachers have reason, and are often obliged, to engage with professionals and peers as they are initiated into their new community of practice (CoP) (Lave and Wenger 1991). Under models of social constructivism (Vygotsky 1978) and progressive education, this engagement has been increasingly conducted through the mode of spoken language: face-to-face, and more recently, computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Hanson-Smith 2006). This chapter examines pragmatic turn initiators in a Teacher Education Discourse (TED) Corpus, consisting of spoken and online language data from MA in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) students in an Irish university context. The variables of speaker relationship, mode of

communication and task orientation are explored to determine their influence on the pragmatic functions at the beginning of speaker turns.

1. Introduction

A volume such as this could very easily be called ‘Pragmatic Markers in Irish English**es**’ because although the geographical location certainly has a strong influence on the language found here, so too does the specific context of use in terms of its communicative function, the participants and the mode of interaction. In some ways, it is the interplay between these variables which is most interesting, especially when examining spoken language and online communication in real time. The role of genre, or register, has long been recognised as a strong determining factor in language use and this has been borne out statistically in extensive corpus-based volumes such as Biber et al. (1999) and Carter and McCarthy (2006), among other smaller scale studies (for example, Conor-Linton and Shohamy 2001; Oii 2001; Reppen 2001). The present research situates itself broadly in the context of Irish English pragmatics by comparing Irish and British English spoken data before drawing more specifically on context by investigating corpus data

from formal institutionalised teacher education contexts in an Irish university setting.

Initial teacher education is a complex activity that places great demands on those engaging with it, particularly at the early stages. Student teachers typically interact with a range of professionals who operate as lecturers, tutors, supervisors, mentors, advisors, with each other (again, typically a diverse group), and with their learners as they are initiated into their new community of practice (CoP) (Lave and Wenger 1991). Under models of social constructivism (Vygotsky 1978) and progressive education, this engagement has been increasingly conducted through the mode of spoken language in various contexts: face-to-face, and more recently, computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Arnold and Ducate 2006; Hanson-Smith 2006). It takes place during numerous interactional encounters, within different participation frameworks (Goffman 1981), all of which have high politeness requirements. In this chapter, we specifically examine and compare the ways in which participants initiate turns (using tokens which could be categorised as 'classical' pragmatic markers, such as *well, so, and, right, hi,* and *ok,*) in a Teacher Education Discourse (TED) Corpus. The corpus consists of spoken and online language data from MA in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) students interacting with each other, with a peer tutor, and with lecturers/teaching practice tutors. This paper therefore examines two sub-contexts, namely, the

nature of turn initiators in Teaching Practice (TP) feedback, which "is a highly sensitive encounter with greatly inherent potential for face threatening acts during its complex negotiations" (Farr 2011: 111), and the nature of turn initiators in discussions student teachers have with a peer tutor, where the student teachers are having informal pedagogically-oriented discussions. The variables of speaker relationship, mode of communication (face-to-face vs. online) and task orientation will be compared and contrasted to determine their influence on the use of pragmatic markers at the beginning of speaker turns. In so doing, it necessarily comments on what are conventionally accepted to be pragmatic markers, but also on other ways in which speakers open turns when taking the floor. The nature and effect of these interactions have been of interest to us over the past number of years and through our analysis of the language of teacher education discourse (TED), we have been gaining insights into a context which is localised to our practices. In many ways, this is a type of reflective practice activity of our own and it has and will continue to impact on the ways we personally conduct ourselves verbally in our own teacher education processes, primarily as teacher educators involved in on-going professional development.

2. Background and Context

2.1 Pragmatics and LTE

This chapter situates itself in the realm of pragmatics, which has been defined as "the study of understanding intentional human action. [...] it involves the interpretation of acts assumed to be undertaken in order to accomplish some purpose. The central notions in pragmatics must then include belief, intention (or goal), plan, and act" (Green 1996: 2). In other words, it involves speaker intention within context, while offering "a functional, multi-layered, socially-contextualized, reciprocal and emergent view of meaning-making in text and talk" (Blum-Kulka and Hamo 2006: 160). Thomas (1995: 22) defines pragmatics as "meaning in interaction" and she notes that "making meaning is a dynamic process, involving the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social and linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance". It is an area which therefore deals with "how language can be used to do things and mean things in real-world situations" (Cameron 2001: 68). To this end, our aim is to examine the pragmatic functions of some linguistic features present in the discourse of teacher education talk, and propose turn initiators in terms of their pragmatically oriented functions, through the

ways in which these functions are enacted, as pragmatic markers (see also McCarthy, this volume). The field of teacher education has undergone many changes in the past years, which has resulted in a stronger focus on teacher identities and experiences (Clarke 2008; Vásquez 2009, 2011), reflective practices (Farr 2011; Farrell 2012), social and situated learning and cognition (Johnson 2006; 2009), socio-constructivist approaches to learning (Putman and Borko 2000; Johnson 2006), and professional development (Mann 2005; Mann and Talandis 2012). Combined, these orientations aim to link theory to practice for a well-rounded teacher education experience. Various modes of communication (online and face-to-face) are being increasingly employed in language teacher education (LTE) programmes, and our current interest lies in an examination of student teacher discussions with a peer tutor and TP tutors (also lecturers on the programme), in order to shed light on the interpersonal relationships and pragmatic features these types of interactions can afford. As one way to uncover the nuances of these relationships and roles we examine the linguistic choices made by the various parties to initiate their turns in spoken encounters.

2.2 Turn Initiators

By means of brief introduction, Tao (2003: 189) defines a turn initiator as "the very first form with which a speaker starts a new turn in conversation". However, we take a slightly narrower perspective as we classify a turn initiator only when a full turn ensues (i.e. listenership tokens resulting in an extended turn are included, but when they stand alone they are not). So, while Tao would include minimal and non-minimal responses standing alone as turn initiators, we only include them if they result in a complete turn. Tao examined turn initiators in the Switchboard Corpus (SW) which consists of telephone conversations between strangers in a US context, and the Cambridge University Press/Cornell University Corpus (CUP/CU), comprising North American informal interactions between family and friends. His findings (2003: 196) support notions put forward by Schegloff (1996) who observes that initiators often connect to prior utterances, however, Tao (2003: 196) also identifies some sub-functions, which include:

a. Tying (*oh, well, but, and*): to link the previous turn to the current one.

b. Assessing *(yeah, no, right*): to make an evaluation or mark agreement, affirmation or disagreement in relation to prior discourse.

c. Explaining (*so*): to introduce an explanation for something in the context.

d. Acknowledging (*mmhm, mm, okay*): to show listenership and acknowledgement.

These categories can overlap, for example, *so*, which has an explaining function, may also be used to connect a turn to the previous one (tying), or *yeah* (an assessing function) may also function to acknowledge a speaker's turn. In another study, Iyeiri et al. (2011) examined turn initiators in the Corpus of Spoken Professional American English (CSPAE). As this corpus was tagged for male and female speakers, and as it contains four discourse types (press conferences, faculty meetings at a US university, national meetings on mathematics, and national meetings on reading), they examined gender differences, and various circumstances within the discourse in terms of turn initiators. Using Principal Component Analysis[1] on the datasets, they found that the tendencies of initiators in the more formal White House press conferences are at the other extreme of the reading and maths meetings, while the faculty meetings lie in between, thus suggesting that contextual formality has an impact on usage, something we also anticipated in our

[1] PCA is a multivariate method, which "summarizes the original variables [turn initiators] by using their mutual correlation and by extracting a new set of variables called principal components […] One of the key aspects of PCA is the fact that the first few of the newly-obtained variables, i.e. principal components, retain most of the variation present in the original variables. In other words, the first few of the newly-obtained variables are significantly more important than the rest. As a result, one can concentrate on the discussion of the important principal components only and ignore the remaining ones without losing much of the information contained in the original data" (Iyeiri et al. 2011: 142).

study. They note that gender differences are rare in the more formal press conferences and faculty meetings, and slightly more defined in the meetings on readings and maths. Some of their findings are revisited at relevant points throughout the analyses sections.

As was noted, ours is a corpus-based examination of turn-initiators in LTE discourse to examine pragmatic variables in the conversations, firstly differentiating between speaker roles (student teacher with TP tutor, and student teacher with peer tutor), secondly between different types of interaction (evaluative feedback sessions and informal pedagogical discussions), and thirdly via mode of communication (face-to-face and online). Language is viewed as a powerful mediating tool, whereby people appropriate various discourses depending on the roles they see themselves playing (Clarke 2008), and indeed we examine this through the analyses that follow. Before moving on to the analyses, the next section details the data and the methodology we employ in the present study.

3. The Corpus Data and Methodology

3.1 Context and data

The part of the TED corpus used for the present study was gathered at the University of Limerick from a one-year MA in TESOL programme, and consists of students engaging in tasks where there is a level of interactivity with others. It specifically involves students carrying out various tasks which were designed to promote reflection and improve practice. It comes from four different cohorts of student teachers and was gathered over a ten year period in total. The two broad contexts within which the data were collected are TP feedback, and student teachers informally interacting with a peer tutor. In the TP feedback sessions, the discourse was collected from one cohort of student teachers and their TP tutors in dyadic conversations carried out up to three days after the individual student teacher had taught a TP lesson. In total seven student teachers participated, and all but one were Irish nationals. The sessions lasted between twenty five to forty five minutes, and were structured in such a way to facilitate reflection and consideration of classroom actions. The student teachers received a grade based on their teaching, which is a continuous activity throughout the year-long programme (See Farr 2011 for further details). Secondly, the discussions between the student teachers and the peer tutor consist of three cohorts of student teachers on the same MA programme having informal discussions about TESOL, language pedagogy, their course and other relevant issues important to their MA programme. In total sixteen student teachers participated, and all but four were Irish. The student teachers discussed topics through the University's Virtual Learning Environment

(VLE) using chat (for discussions on general language pedagogy) and discussion forums (for discussions on learning theories and methodologies), and two face-to-face group discussions were also held with each cohort. This was a voluntary process, with no grading attached to it, and the peer tutor was not in a position of authority. Her role was mainly to facilitate discussion and reflection, and allow the student teachers space to communicate with one another. When analysing this data, the TED corpus is compared against the Limerick Corpus of Irish-English (LCIE), a one-million-word corpus of spoken, casual conversation (Farr et al. 2004), and against the spoken component of the British National Corpus (BNC sampler corpus (1999); one million words).

3.2 Corpus details and methodology

The TED corpus contains approximately 146,700 words. As was noted, it is made up of a spoken component of face-to-face interactions which includes TP Feedback and Group Discussion sub-corpora. TP Feedback comprises 82,000 words, and the Group Discussion corpus consists of 51,000 words. The second part of the interactive corpus consists of online interactions in the form of Chat (7,500 words) and Discussion Forums (6,200 words), with

the same peer tutor in each case. Table 1 summarises the data for the analysis that follows.

Table 1: Overview of TED corpus data for this study

Teacher Education Discourse Corpus (146,700 words)			
Face-to-Face		**Online**	
TP Feedback	***Group Discussion***	***Chat***	***Discussion Forum***
82,000 words	51,000 words	7,500 words	6,200 words
One cohort of students	Three cohorts of students	Three cohorts of students	Three cohorts of students
MA TESOL Tutor-Student Teacher Discussions	MA TESOL Peer Tutor – Student Teacher Discussions	MA TESOL Peer Tutor – Student Teacher Chats	MA TESOL Peer Tutor – Student Teacher Discussions

Our interest for this chapter lies in the means by which the participants begin their turns in ways that are pragmatically sensitive to the needs of the

context. In order to isolate the required data from the corpus at large we employed the following procedures using Wordsmith Tools (Scott 2008) where appropriate:

a. TED, LCIE and the BNC were searched by speaker tags to extract turn initiators.

b. Response tokens (minimal and non-minimal) were excluded and only turns where the speaker took the floor were analysed (for an analysis of all response tokens in TP feedback see Farr 2003).

c. Overlaps in the spoken data were excluded.

d. In the spoken data, items which occurred 10 times or more were included in the results and analysis.

e. In the online data, items occurring 4 times or more were included (because of the smaller size of these datasets).

f. All results were normalised within modes (not across modes) to take account of overall participant contribution to the discourse so the results in the tables and charts below are more directly comparable.

4. Responses versus Extended Turns

Part of the procedures outlined above involved differentiating between turns simply used to respond in some way and those where the participant moved into extended talk, in other words, took the floor. As we mentioned, our interest here lies in the latter, but the contrast between both is worth briefly considering and discussing before moving on. Table 2 presents the overall findings for response only and extended turns in each of the data-sets and per speaker role, both of which are clearly impacting factors.

Table 2: Responses and extended turns by mode and speaker in TED

	Response Only		**Extended Turn**	
	ST	**(Peer) Tutor**	**ST**	**(Peer)Tutor**
TP Feedback	2,200	1,500	1,200	1,900
Group Discussion	1,078	918	1,302	332
Chat	19	9	335	112
Discussion Forum	0	0	40	29

Looking at the results in Table 2, speaker role is obviously an influencing variable. The tutors in feedback encounters take more rights to have extended turns and the student teachers (ST) are operating in more passive responsive ways, relatively speaking. This suggests that institutional power

dynamics are observed by both parties regardless of the fact that, in theory, both parties have a right to the floor. In fact, many of the teacher education approaches now advocated suggest that the student teachers' narratives are more important in feedback as they lead them to more conscious awareness of actions, and potential areas for development in a way that is less threatening. In all contexts where the interactions take place with a peer tutor the student teachers have relatively more extended turns and fewer response turns, indicating the more equal power dynamics and the more facilitative role of the peer tutor in supporting the dialogues. Looking at speaker behaviour within modes, an obvious pattern emerges when comparing the face-to-face talk with online interactions. Quite simply, face-to-face demands more responses and online modes are more conducive to extended turns with little need for acknowledgement of those contributions (even emoticon responses are quite rare). The more asynchronous Discussion Forum in particular would seem to have no requirement for short responses, and indeed previous research has found heightened student participation in asynchronous forums (Kahmi-Stein 2000; Pawan et al. 2003). In the Group Discussions, the peer tutor has approximately four times fewer extended turns than responses indicating a more supportive role. Yet the student teachers in this mode have a fairly even spread of responses and extended turns. This may be attributed to two factors. Firstly, this is a multi-party setting and therefore the turns are spread more evenly with

possibly more than one participant responding to another. Secondly, the discussion is not as task-oriented as TP feedback is, and the more open nature of the discussion may not demand so much speaker direction/narration followed by acknowledgements and agreements/disagreements. Whatever the reason, the student teachers seem to be relatively more willing to take the floor to express their viewpoints when interacting with a peer tutor as opposed to a tutor from the TP context.

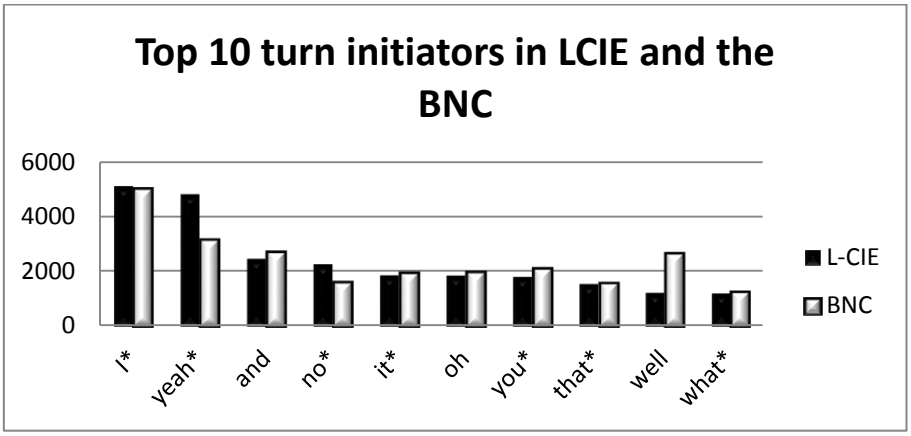
5. Range and Frequency of Turn Initiators

5.1 Turn initiators in Irish English and British English

In order to examine the use of turn initiators relatively in varieties of English, we begin by drawing on two larger corpora of spoken English and classify the top ten turn initiators in each. Chart 1 presents the results for LCIE and the BNC. [2]

[2] The asterisk signals that all variants of that particular word have been counted.

Chart 1: Turn initiators in LCIE and the BNC



What is interesting here is that all the top ten items in LCIE and the BNC are the same, and the majority of those have similar frequencies, thus suggesting a range of generic turn initiators. The only difference lies in the tokens *yeah* and *no* which are somewhat higher in LCIE than the BNC, while *well* is higher in the BNC. While this offers a little insight into the peculiarities of Irish English, it demonstrates that the turn initiators used across the varieties are alike within similar genres, whereas there may be more differences in a specific context such as teacher education, as is discussed in the latter part of the following section.

5.2 Turn initiators by speaker in TED

The exclusion of response only turns produced a concordance of a range of turn initiators for extended turns used across the TED corpus. Table 3 gives the quantitative range by speaker and mode (with no minimal cut-off point used). Looking at this we can see that the feedback tutors avail of a relatively wider range of initiators (37 compared with 24 from student teachers) but in the Group Discussions and Chat the student teachers use more variety than the tutor. This must be in part because the speaker who takes relatively more extended turns has more opportunity to be more diverse but it could also be a signal of the speakers' perceived liberty to be more (or less) authoritative in their language choices. And individual style becomes apparent when looking at multi-party talk represented in the Group Discussions, something also found by Iyeiri et al. (2011). Similar to the patterns identified in the previous section, the mode also plays a part here. Remembering that the peer tutor is the same person in the Group Discussions, Chat and Discussion Forum, it is interesting to see that only in the online Discussion Forum does she employ a wider variety of initiators than the student teachers. Reading the data more qualitatively shows that the student teachers in this mode are often answering questions posed by the tutor and therefore seem to be more restricted in their choices by this

convention. This modus operandi is not as apparent in the other modes where the peer tutor is present.

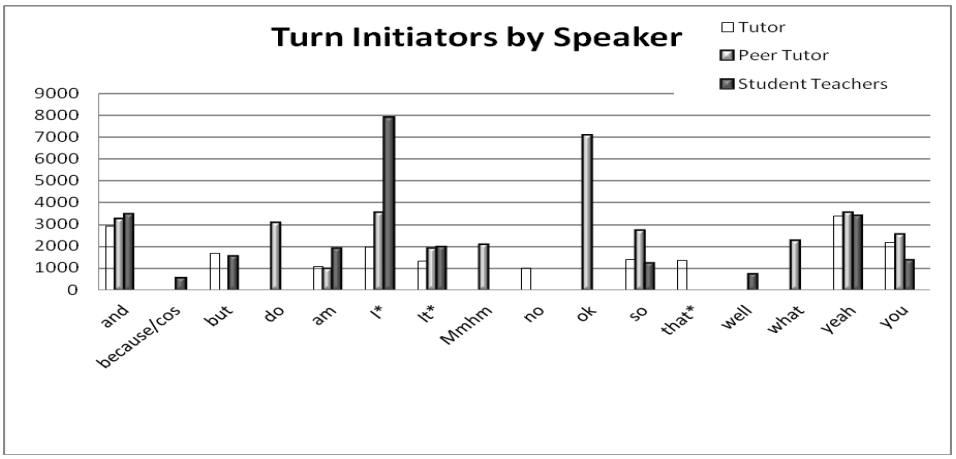
Table 3: Numerical range of turn initiators by mode and speaker in TED

	Turn Initiators	
	ST	**(Peer) Tutor**
TP Feedback	24	37
Group Discussion	91	37
Chat	19	14
Discussion Forum	2	11

Having looked quantitatively and commented briefly on the range of initiators, let us now explore which items precisely the speakers choose to start their turns. Chart 2 illustrates the range of items used by speakers across all modes (using the minimal cut-off points outlined in Section 3 above). [3] The results have been normalised to words per million.

[3] The asterisk signals that all variants of that particular word have been counted.

Chart 2: Turn initiators by speaker in TED (wpm)



Firstly, we see that the majority of the turn initiators in TED are lexical in nature, which mirrors the findings of Tao (2003), and Evison and McCarthy (2014) who examine the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE). A number of items on Chart 2 seem to have a similar attraction for all three types of speaker. These are the continuer *and*, the pronoun *it*, and the agreement token/continuer *yeah*, the latter of which was found to be the most frequent acknowledgement device in Tao's (2003) corpus. The continuers show a level of co-operation and engagement with the discourse and the pronoun reference is most probably used as a deictic marker to refer to a range of nouns relevant to the teaching context that is being explored (a lesson, a book, a learning experience etc.). The tutors and peer tutor have many items in common but, with the exception of *you*, not with similar levels of frequency, or not without student teacher usage of the

same items. The peer tutor does show an exclusive preference for question markers *do* and *what,* and continuer/agreement markers *mhmm* and *ok*. This could be an individual speaker preference or it could be role related, whereby she is supporting the discussions through elicitation, and encouraging on-going contribution with acknowledgement tokens at the beginning of her turns. It is interesting to note that explicit question markers do not come in the top ten items used by the tutors in the feedback context. Either the discourse is of a different nature or the elicitation is being achieved through other means (see Farr 2011 for a fuller account). The student teachers show strong preferences for *I* (personal narrative), and *because* (rationalising). They fulfil their assumed role by recounting experiences and events and by explaining their actions and the circumstances around such accounts. The student teachers also employ *well* while the tutors do not, and Iyeiri et al. (2011) found that this initiator can function to avoid answering a question or dealing with a topic, which could also be the reason here due to the novice position in which they find themselves. As Vásquez and Urzúa (2009) and Le and Vásquez (2012) note, student teachers in the TP feedback context are caught in the complex task of having to display themselves as learning professionals with some insights into their own practices but also as individuals in need of direction and advice from those more experienced and knowledgeable than themselves. And finally, the student teachers, peer tutor and tutors share their use of the

hesitation device *am*, perhaps an indicator of lack of full agreement or of the beginning of a counter account of events. This is probably high in the feedback context where such critical and considered engagement is demanded by the task at hand.

If we compare the findings from LCIE and the BNC (Chart 1) to those presented across TED by speaker (Chart 2), we see similarities in the occurrences of *and, it, you, that* and *what,* which point to them being more general turn initiators rather than associating strongly with a specific context. In terms of differences, we see that the frequency of *I* in TED by the student teachers is much higher than LCIE and the BNC, which again demonstrates its general facilitative role allowing a personal narrative to emerge. *Well* is higher in LCIE and the BNC than TED (with higher frequencies overall in the BNC), and *yeah* and *no* are higher in LCIE than TED and the BNC which could indicate a more relaxed environment in casual settings, where agreements and disagreements are more frequent, and this may be less likely in teacher education contexts with tutors where the student teachers may be playing a deferential role. In fact, the only speaker in TED who employs the initiator *no* is the tutor because of the position they hold in the conversations. Furthermore, *oh* is unique to the top ten in LCIE and the BNC, where overt markers of surprise or shock are more acceptable in more casual encounters. From this brief comparison, we can propose that the specific turn initiators in the TED are heavily influenced by the speaker relationships, and the mode of communication. Already, we can see the

influence of the interactional context in speaker choice of turn initiators and this brings us to the next sections which present more detailed analyses by mode of interaction.

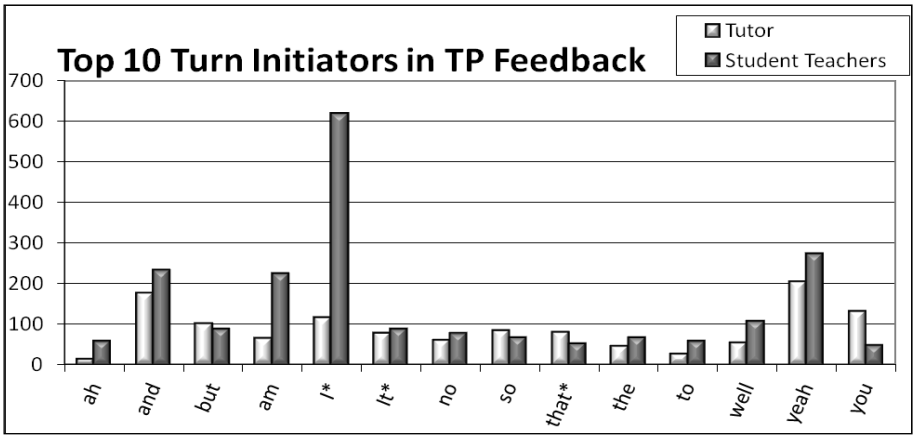
6. Interactional Context

6.1 TP Feedback

The first context under examination in this analysis is that of one-to-one TP Feedback between a tutor and student teacher. Chart 3 illustrates the turn initiators differentiated and normalised by participant.[4]

[4] The asterisk signals that all variants of that particular word have been counted.

Chart 3: Turn initiators in TP Feedback



Looking at these results we see a relatively even spread of use for most items for both parties in the interactions. *You* is the only item used significantly more frequently by the tutor, corresponding with the direct focus on the student teachers' teaching practice experiences and directly related to the student teachers' elevated use of *I* in the discourse also. In addition, the student teachers show a relatively strong preference for *ah*, *and*, *am*, and *yeah. Am* is the initiator that differentiates them most from the tutors, and could be performing a number of overlapping functions as a response to the previous utterance and a beginning to the new turn (note that the vocalisation of *am* in Irish English is similar in function to *em* as often represented in transcription for other varieties of English, although these items were not represented in the top ten initiators in LCIE and the BNC). It can be used to show hesitation or hedging, either because they don't know exactly how to respond, or feel that they should display some cognitive and

interpersonal deference towards the tutor. It may also be a hesitation device used to gain some thinking time while they consider how they are going to respond. These meanings have been acknowledged in previous studies on other types of spoken discourse as well as those focussing on feedback talk (see Farr 2003). An example of the uses of the tutor (T) *you*, and student teacher (ST) *I* and hesitation *am* can be seen in Extract 1.

Extract 1

<T> … the definition of wholemeal.

<ST> Mmhm.

<T> **You** looked that up in a dictionary did you?

<ST> **I** did yeah.

<T> And were you happy with it as a?

<ST> **Am** no not really I just th= I presumed that they'd know what flour was and I tried to describe it as the powder you use+

<T> Yeah.

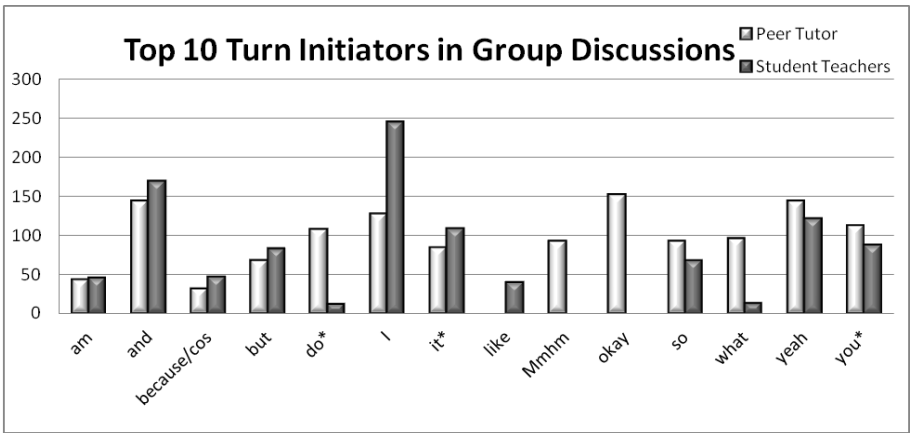
<ST> +to make bread and just I don't know if they understood the word grain.

Given the substantial difference in the use of *I* between the student teachers and tutors, we will examine the associated patterns in more detail in the latter part of the next section on face-to-face discussions between student teachers and the peer tutor where it shows similar levels of relative frequency.

6.2 Group Discussions

The top ten turn initiators found in Group Discussions between the peer tutor and the student teachers are depicted in Chart 4. [5]

Chart 4: Turn initiators in Group Discussions



Here, the peer tutor has exclusive uses of *mmhm*, and *okay*, which could be indicative of listenership, with turn control by the peer tutor. This is exemplified in Extract 2, where the previous discussion related to the student teachers' prior experiences of learning grammar, and then the peer tutor refocuses the discussion, while concurrently showing her engagement and listenership.

[5] The asterisk signals that all variants of that particular word have been counted.

Extract 2

> <Peer Tutor> **Mmhm** okay what about am observing am some of you have observed other teachers+ </Peer tutor>

Interestingly, the student teachers' use of *yeah* is similar to the peer tutor's, but while the peer tutor's use is often for listenership and turn/topic control, the student teachers employ it to show listenership, agreement and the co-construction of knowledge, thus defining their positions as equals, the latter of which can be seen in Extract 3.

Extract 3

> <Guessgold> **Yeah** what if you just kinda blank like?
>
> <Kimwho> **Yeah**.
>
> <Guessgold> +just like you know freak out you don't know what to do or whatever? what happens then?
>
> <Amandahuginkiss> You just be flexible and.
>
> <Eileen> You just keeping talking.
>
> <Leon> Ask the student to say something <$E> laughing </$E>.
>
> <Amandahuginkiss> **Yeah** or just say sit quietly amongst yourselves until you figure you're going to say.
>
> <Homersimpson> You know like have kinda exercises or something to fall back on cos that actually does happen when you're just going on+
>
> <Peer Tutor> Mm.
>
> <Homersimpson> +sometimes like you can't speak you know cos like I can't continue speaking all the time so I need them to do something I mean just to have something there for back up.

<Leon> **Yeah** have something up your sleeve.

<Thecoolness> Bag of tricks <$E> laughing </$E>.

<Eileen> Big bag of tricks absolutely.

As well as this, the peer tutor uses question words *do* and *what* more frequently, and this is because the peer tutor is facilitating the discussion, with a semi-structured set of questions employed to initiate conversation and reflection. This can clearly be seen in Extract 4 where the peer tutor is eliciting information that would possibly not be divulged in the presence of the TP tutor.

Extract 4

<Dyne> You actually come to know which supervisor likes what and <ODyne> what you've to do to suit them </ODyne>. </Dyne>

<Osaru> <ODyne> And and the real problem with that is </ODyne> that you end up writing a plan based not on what the students need+ </Osaru>

<Dyne> Yeah. </Dyne>

<Osaru> +but what you think you're observer <OOsaru> wants to see which is really wrong. </OOsaru> </Osaru>

<Dyne> <OOsaru> Or what the supervis= yeah that is exactly what happens </OOsaru> <$E> students in agreement </$E>. </Dyne>

<Peer Tutor> **Do** you think that's to do with a a grade? </Peer Tutor>

<Osaru> Of course absolutely. </Osaru>

<Claraellen> Yeah. </Claraellen>

<Roadrunner> Yeah you're worried about it you're worried about it <ORoadrunner> you want to do your best </ORoadrunner>. </Roadrunner

The student teachers show higher frequencies of *like*, and this quite possibly carries a discourse marker or filler function, used by the student teachers to fill gaps in the conversation giving them time to think about or plan their utterances, as can be seen in Extract 5. It may also function as a hedge which could reflect their tentative positions as novices.

Extract 5

<Peer Tutor> And what would you do Jackiechan? </Peer Tutor>

<Jackiechan> **Like** you it depends on the situation the very first time I did team teaching it happened me and I was like ‘oh no' so I just used like I used a practical example like with my arm that's how I did that+ </Jackiechan>

<Peer Tutor> Mmhm. </Peer Tutor>

There is also a higher frequency of *I* by the student teachers in the Group Discussions, as was also found in TP Feedback mentioned previously, thus reflecting the personal narrative nature of the discussions. This is further supported by their preferences for the conjunction *and*, and the rationalising tokens *but* and *because/cos.* In relation to narrative features, as far back as 1991, Freeman, in the context of pre-service teacher education, was

examining the role played by a shared professional discourse developed between novice and slightly more experienced teachers on an in-service programme over an 18 month period (Freeman 1991). He stresses the importance of prior learning and experiences, and notes that the discourse the student teachers were involved in had two important functions, a social-referential one, "which helps them make reference to, identify with, and participate in the professional community", and a cognitive function, enabling "them to perceive and articulate their own feelings and thoughts about teaching in new ways" (ibid: 446). Therefore the combination of narration with the personal pronoun *I* in Chart 4 suggests a personal narrative whereby identity and understanding of the practice seem to be emerging. The significance of narratives in indexing identities has further been highlighted by De Fina (2006) and Johnstone (2008), with the former noting that "they afford tellers an occasion to present themselves as actors in social worlds while at the same time negotiating their present self with other interactants" (De Fina 2006: 275). This is of utmost importance for the student teachers in this context, who are at the early stages of their careers, and therefore defining and re-defining their identities.

If we investigate *I* more closely in Group Discussion and TP Feedback, Table 4 shows the patterns, mainly verbal, one place to the right of *I* in the student teacher talk.

Table 4: *I* patterns in turn-initial position in ST talk in Group Discussion and TP Feedback (more than 5 occs)

Group Discussion			**TP Feedback**	
Shared Patterns				
I	think (61)		think (42)	
	don't (23)	know (11) think (5)	don't (23)	know (13) think (6)
	mean (14)		mean (23)	
	just (10)		just (9)	
	was (7)		was (18)	
Non-shared Patterns				
	I (16)		know (18)	
	have (11)		didn't (10)	
	've (10)		did (9)	
	find (6)		thought (8)	
	would (5)		suppose (8)	
			had (7)	

Urzúa and Vásquez state that "[c]onsistent with current conceptualizations of identity in the relevant literature, we define a teacher's professional identity as constituted in any utterances which include first person reference to one's activities, knowledge, beliefs and attitudes related to teaching" (2008: 1937), and the above table shows the student teachers positioning themselves in two ways. Firstly, the patterns in Table 4 highlight some of the ways in which the student teachers position themselves as being aware

and critical of their actions in teaching through their descriptive narrative of the event as evidenced in the uses *I know, I did, I had, I thought, I didn't, I was, I would* and *I find*. These are interesting findings, and when compared by context, support our assertions that the speaker relationships play a role in the discussions. While a lot of the patterns in Group Discussions are similar to those in TP Feedback, the exclusivity of *I find* and *I would* could demonstrate more open sharing of personal opinions in the discourse within the Group Discussions. This can be compared to the evaluative context of TP Feedback where the student teachers may feel the need to justify in more unequivocal ways through patterns such as *I know, I did(n't), I had, I thought*, and *I suppose*.

Secondly, we see the student teachers positioning themselves as being somewhat novice with room for improvement, at least relative to the tutor. This stance can be seen through their choices of *I think, I mean, I don't think, I thought* and *I don't know* and also in their use of the hedges *just* and *suppose*. They construct their teacher identity in a way that they feel the context demands, as a knowledgeable novice. In no small way, they achieve this apparent incongruity through a careful balancing act of their linguistic choices around the pronoun *I*. A good example of how this happens in extended discourse in TP Feedback can be seen in Extract 6, where we see the student teacher moving from a position of knowledgeable insider in the face of interrogation to being completely unsure, and possibly intimidated by the on-going questions posed by the tutor. Interestingly, this

may be a genuine memory lapse or it may be a strategy used by student teachers when they want to lure the tutor in a more overtly directive role. This in turn potentially allows the student teacher to become more passive and simply 'receive' the solution/advice rather than having to work in collaborative mode to achieve this outcome.

Extract 6

<T> Did you ask?

<ST> **I** think I did+

<T> What did you ask?

<ST> **I** said did anyone know what PC is.

<T> Yeah and somebody did didn't they?

<ST> **I** don't think they did actually

<T> Yeah but one guy was nodding at you that you didn't see I don't think.

<ST> **I** think I got two answers.

<T> Yeah you got somebody to define political correctness didn't you?

<ST> Yes I am but I am not sure that they defined it correctly.

<T> What did they say can you remember?

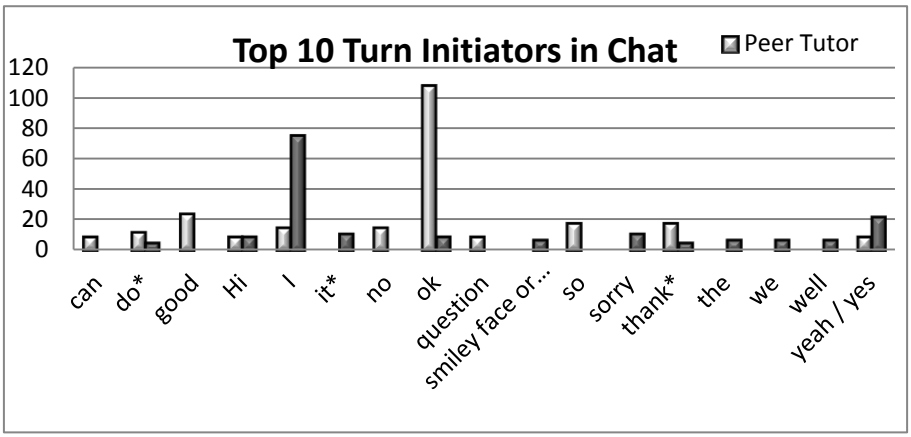
<ST> **I'm** lost I have no idea.

Having looked at the face-to-face interactions, the following section now moves to an examination of the online modes of communication.

6.3 Chat

This section deals with the top ten turn initiators within the synchronous online Chat mode.

Chart 5: Turn initiators in Chat



In Chart 5,[6] we see that the frequency of *I* by the student teachers once more emerges, as with the face-to-face modes. The student teachers also use emoticons, in particular smiley faces in turn initial position, possibly to show social presence (Rourke, Anderson et al. 2001), to demonstrate their mood/personality or indeed for reasons of positive politeness (see Brown and Levinson 1987), and in turn group cohesion. Others have argued that CMC contains a lot of emotional content (Chenault 1998, see also Millar,

[6] The asterisk signals that all variants of that particular word have been counted.

this volume), and that emoticons can carry illocutionary force (the speaker's intention) (Park 2008; Dresner and Herring 2012), emotional behaviour and affect (Derks et al. 2008). Somewhat related to this is a higher use of *sorry* by the student teachers, which could be indicative of maintaining harmony or for reasons of politeness, resulting from a lack of visual cues, where further strategies are required in online environments to repair misunderstandings or loss of meaning (Negretti 1999; Castro 2006). This item does not occur in the face-to-face sub-corpora, because meaning making can be more explicit with visual cues. This can be seen in Extract 7 where *sorry* is being used as a politeness strategy to lessen the force of the disagreement, and maintain equilibrium within the CoP.

Extract 7

> <Peer Tutor> Ok very good , you all seem to be somewhat agreeing </Peer Tutor>
>
> <Monroe> yea i agree with Fatjack </Monroe>
>
> <Peer Tutor> So you agree that the approaches should be differnt[7] bacause of the subjects? </Peer Tutor>
>
> <Butterfly> ***sorry. i disagree*** </Butterfly>

The fact that direct expression of emotion and conventional politeness cues are utilised by the student teachers is indicative of the mode of communication, where visual cues are absent, and therefore other strategies

[7] Due to the nature of online modes, participants often made spelling errors or used abbreviations. To keep the data as authentic as possible, these were maintained, and therefore the extracts offered may have spelling mistakes therein.

are required for harmonious communication, and this is also supported by the student teachers' and peer tutor's use of *hi* at the beginning of their turns (which does not occur in the face-to-face conversations). A further observation is the exclusivity of *we* in turn initial position by the student teachers, which could be evidence of their sense of community (Lave and Wenger 1991) with the group, because *we* "can both refer to and establish an interactional group" (Wortham 1996: 332). Again, this item does not occur in the top ten turn initiators of the spoken sub-corpora, possibly because a sense of community needs to be more overt when visual cues are absent.

Moving on to the peer tutor, we see evidence once again of the facilitative role she plays in the discussions via the exclusivity of *can, good, no* and *so,* and higher frequencies of *do* and *thank.* Again the online mode may require more direct facilitation than a face-to-face setting, therefore in order to maintain relationships and meaning, explicitness is necessary. Also, we note that the tutor in TP feedback employed the token *no,* while the peer tutor in Group Discussions did not. We suggested this was because of reduced power differentials between the peer tutor and the student teachers, or at least her aim to reduce power differentials. The fact that the peer tutor does use this token in the online Chat mode may initially look as though it is because she is not in the visual presence of the student teachers and therefore feels more at ease disagreeing with them; however, as can be seen in Extract 8, all of the occurrences of this item are part of the chunk *no*

worries, which is being used to maintain harmony and balance, and comply with politeness conventions.

Extract 8

> <Batman> Sorry about my tardiness, bloody computer problems </Mynameisbatman>
>
> <Peer Tutor> **No** worries, welcome Mynameisbatman </Peer Tutor>

The peer tutor also has a very high use of *ok* (as was also the case in the Group Discussions), and while this could be used as a listenership device, it could also point to the facilitative role she plays by employing this token as a device for taking over the turn, or possibly shifting to another topic. To investigate this further, the following concordances (Figure 1) exemplify some of the functions of *ok* by the peer tutor in the Chat sessions.

Figure 1: Concordances of peer tutor used of *Ok* in turn initial position in Chat

N	Concordance
1	have the knowledge but on the other hand we best learn on mistakes <PeerTutor> Ok good point Witch, amanda what do you think yourself.
2	up in levels they can learn more exceptions to the ruls <PeerTutor> Ok, thanks Leon. Thanks Kimwho and Guessgold. For
3	surprises I have to go PeerTutor! <PeerTutor> Ok good do the rest of you agree? Postman pat?
4	e descriptive grammar and students might know more ab perscriptive <PeerTutor> Ok with what Leon are Witch are saying as teachers then
5	d involve more indepth analysis of grammar leon <PeerTutor> Ok Witch, do you think then maybe there are certain ways
6	ginners with too many grammar stuff, they'll get lost and confused <PeerTutor> Ok do the rest agree? Also as Eileen said can the
7	aking, Reading, listening, comprehension much more important <PeerTutor> Ok so you seem to agree that having the in depth module
8	Yes, I agree. very true <PeerTutor> Ok so, this brings me nicely into my third question. Do
9	out verbs, nouns etc, not tenses or clauses, or word classes, etc <PeerTutor> Ok so do you feel that native speakers don't learn the
10	my mouth Hopefully easier... ha ha! <PeerTutor> Ok, that's goo to hear. Right I'll move onto my secind
11	Yeah, I agree.. the theory will eventually fall into place. <PeerTutor> Ok so it seems like you feel it is worthwhile. Maybe its
12	are in front of a class. Sometimes it's easy to forget the theory <PeerTutor> Ok good Amanda, do you agree with the idea that theory
13	so far finding the theory very different from the practice <PeerTutor> Ok Eileen, do you feel that any of your guessing was right
14	I hate the computers at UL...they are sooooo slow! <PeerTutor> Ok Amanda, what do you think about studying the theory
15	o log in and I will post my first question in a few minutes.... <PeerTutor> Ok let's start, the others can join in when they log in. First

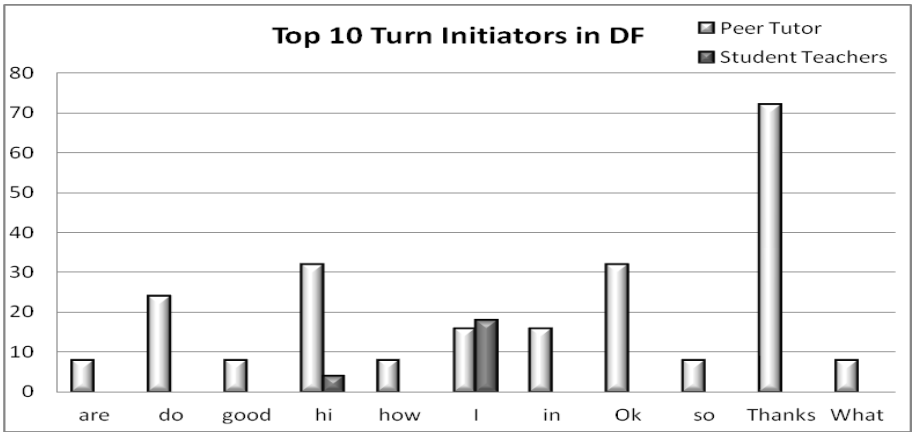
Here we have examples of the peer tutor encouraging and expanding the discussion (lines 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, and 14), and navigating the discussion (lines 8, 10, and 15). Further to this, the fact that *ok* in concordances 5, 13 and 14 is followed by vocatives supports findings by Iyeiri et al. (2011), in terms of it being personal and often followed by direct personal address. The pragmatics of conversation thus change in this mode, because other strategies are required to maintain balance and cooperative interactions, and from the brief analysis we see the student teachers and the peer tutor are keen to do this. The final mode to investigate is the online forum, which is attended to in the following section.

6.4 Discussion Forum

This section outlines the top ten turn initiators within the asynchronous online discussion forum, the results of which are presented in Chart 6.[8]

[8] The asterisk signals that all variants of that particular word have been counted.

Chart 6: Turn initiators in Discussion Forum



Here we note a higher use of distinct items from the peer tutor, and indeed previous research has shown that more distinct words (tokens) are used in asynchronous modes than synchronous (Fitze 2006; Riordan and Murray 2010). The overall higher use from the peer tutor is because she is leading the discussion, and eliciting viewpoints and opinions from the student teachers. As they are merely answering her questions, there is obvious repetition of turn initiators in their discourse. Once again *I* occurs frequently by the students, therefore across all modes evidence of the student teachers' personal narratives (through the use of the first person pronoun) emerges, which was indeed the aim of the discussions, and important for reflective practice.

The mode clearly plays a role with the presence of *hi* and *thanks*. The use of *hi* demonstrates the participants' need to feel attached to the others in the discussion by addressing them before responding. These items, along with *hi* and *sorry* in Chat are distinct to the online modes of communication, and strongly suggest that meaning making online differs in some ways to spoken conversations. The initiator *thanks* is solely employed by the peer tutor, and again without visual cues normally available in face-to-face communication, she needs to engage with the student teachers and work harder to maintain harmonious discussion (similar to the Chat data presented earlier, where both the student teachers and peer tutor use this token). An example of this can be seen in Extract 9.

Extract 9

> <McKenna> I believe that different methods of teaching and learning are socially and culturally constructed and accepted across the globe […] </McKenna>
>
> <Peer Tutor> **Thanks** McKenna. Do the others agree? Does anyone have any experiences they would like to share? </Peer Tutor>

This resonates with other findings, where the use of *thanks* is higher in CANELC (The Cambridge and Nottingham E-language Corpus) than the BNC (Knight and Adolphs 2012). On another note, Carlo and Yoo (2007) also found an increase of *please* and *thanks* online compared to face-to-face, and relate it to the fact that the meanings of these tokens are clear and not

usually misinterpreted which helps meaning negotiation and understanding in online environments, and could also be at play here. The facilitative role the peer tutor plays is also evidenced in the use of the tokens *are, do, how*, and *what,* which enable her to lead the discussion and sustain dialogue. When compared to the spoken sub-corpora, *do* and *what* also emerge as higher by the peer tutor in the Group Discussions, and not at all in the TP feedback context, again suggesting the differing elicitation techniques used by the peer tutor and the TP tutors. Moreover, we see the peer tutor using the token *good,* which does not appear in the spoken sub-corpora. While this might seem to suggest evaluation, Extract 10 illustrates that she is using this as a way of maintaining dialogue, and showing listenership within the online environment.

Extract 10

> <Lostdog> I've read that some cultures look to the teacher as master and expert, and students don't understand the communicative approach, or any methodology where students learn from each other. Teachers have to gradually acquaint these students to other ideas ... I wonder if it's wrong for a teacher to impose these methodologies on students whose cultural backgrounds go against it? </Lostdog>
>
> <Peer Tutor> **Good** point Lostdog! What do the others think? </Peer Tutor>

The pragmatic functions of the initiators within this mode appear once again for reasons of cooperative dialogue, with the peer tutor in particular working

hard to elicit and facilitate interactions. The following section draws some conclusions, and further insights.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

In terms of variety, we see no significant differences between turn initiators in Irish English and British English, and while some turn initiators are generic, there are more overt differences within the TED corpus compared to LCIE and the BNC thus suggesting that genre is crucial in the choice of tokens used to initiate turns. While there are some similarities across the TED modes, and indeed evidence of co-operation and engagement from the range of turns across speakers (for example, *yeah* for agreement and acknowledgement, and *it* for shared meaning across all speakers), the differences emerge either as a result of power (between the student teachers and their tutor or the peer tutor), as a result of the student teachers' own perceptions of themselves as novices, while attempting to concurrently demonstrate sufficient knowledge to show their learning progression, or as a result of the modes of communication. For example, power differentials are evidenced by the fact that the tutor takes more extended turns, and assumes more rights for turn-taking, while the peer tutor shows more balance and employs a wider range of facilitative tokens (for example, *what* and *can)*. In

terms of how the student teachers perceive themselves as novices (using hesitation devices such as *well* and *am,* and *like* with a hedging function) and knowledgeable (fulfilling their narratives with *I),* we once again realise the tension of power and their indirect acknowledgement of those more experienced. This also could be affected by the formal assessment of TP pushing the student teachers to defer more to their tutors, compared to the informal, non-assessed nature of the discussions with the peer tutor. The modes of communication demonstrate that meaning making is often different online, and that discourse connected to affective engagement and politeness (for example, *hi, thanks,* and *sorry)* needs to be more overt and explicit when without the visual cues afforded by face-to-face interactions.

The implications are that although the power differentials may be difficult to eradicate (if that is the desire), online modes may help in this respect. Power is seemingly less overt when not in the visual presence of one's interlocutor. Furthermore, allowing meaning making, and in turn, playing with pragmatic conventions, via a number of modes should offer discourse participants multiple ways of connecting with each other, and assuming rights, positions, and ways of footing in their talk (Hanks 1990), which could be especially useful for student teachers whose identities may be in a state of flux.

7.1 Mode similarities

We now begin to conclude by drawing connections between the findings presented in terms of the mode of communication in TED. In all four modes, *I* and *so* are present. Iyeiri et al. (2011) note that *I* was found in the press conferences section of CSPAE, so that speakers could state their opinions from the outset of the turn often because they are expected to offer their opinions, and this is exactly what the student teachers are doing in this data. *I* is used more frequently by the student teachers except in the asynchronous forum, where it has a more even distribution between the student teachers and peer tutor. This is a result of the type of focussed task (based on learning theories and methodologies), and did not ask for personal experiences. Therefore, while we can conclude that the mode plays a role in determining the types of turn initiators used the in the TED corpus, the type of task employed within the specific mode also has an impact. If we turn our attention to the face-to-face modes only (TP Feedback and Group Discussion), we see the presence of *and, but* and *you* in both modes. *And,* as well as *but,* show co-construction, uptake, and argument and counter argument, thus pointing to the means of meaning negotiation in the spoken modes. Moreover, these two tokens fall into Tao's (2003) category of tying utterances to previous discourse, and in relation to this, McCarthy (2010: 7) notes that "[i]n conversation involving two or more parties, the imperative

to create and maintain flow ceases to be the sole responsibility of the single speaker within the single speaking turn and becomes a joint responsibility for all participants". We do not assume that this joint construction of knowledge is not salient within the online modes; however, it appears to be more marked in the face-to-face discussions, possibly due to the physical presence of an interlocutor. *You* (used mainly by the tutors) refers to the student teachers' behaviour, or at least their perception of it, which is part of the job at hand, and again indicative of the type of interactions at play.

If we examine the online modes only (Chat and Discussion Forum), we see that *good, hi,* and *thank* appear in both. *Hi* and *thank* are used to show politeness in the absence of face-to-face cues, as was mentioned earlier. Moreover, Iyeiri (2011), also found *thank* in the CSPAE White House press conferences and faculty meetings, and they suggest that within these contexts *thanks* is often used as a response to a lengthy utterance (thus demonstrating the expository nature of the discussions) and they note that "one can feel a clear space between speakers" (2011: 142), compared to the overlapping of turns in meetings on reading and maths. This could also be at play in our data where due to the textual nature of online discourse, more lengthy and expository utterances are offered and then responded to. Another interesting point to note is that all the instances of *good* from the peer tutor consist of praise in Chat and Discussion Forum, however this is not the case in TP Feedback, where one might expect such evaluative

comments (previous research has shown that relatively more of the evaluation is found in written versus spoken feedback on TP, see Farr 2011). The peer tutor is not in a formal evaluative role and hence her employment of *good* may be more for reasons of positive politeness and encouraging open communication, as was seen in Extract 10 above.

7.2 Mode Differences

If we now take the modes individually, we see that vocalisation *ah*, which can be considered a change of state token, is only present in TP Feedback, and is used mainly by the student teachers. It is interesting that it is not present in the Group Discussions with the peer tutor, but this could be indicative of the casual nature of this mode compared to the more formal nature of TP Feedback. However, *am* is used in both TP Feedback and Group Discussions, but much more so by the student teachers, therefore supporting points made in terms of the student teachers being unsure or hesitant in their utterances. The online modes are textual, which itself theoretically results in no need for conventional hesitations because the student teachers have time to think before they write, albeit much more time in the asynchronous than the synchronous mode. As well as this, when we investigate what is missing in one mode only compared to the other modes, we see that *it* and *yeah* are present in all modes except the Discussion

Forum. The fact that *yeah* is lacking in the Discussion Forum could be that the discussions within this mode were more a series of monologues than dialogues and indeed previous research shows a lack of interactivity in the same sets of data compared to the synchronous modes (Riordan and Murray 2010; Farr and Riordan 2012), which could mean that the student teachers were not commenting on each others' posts, and therefore anaphoric referencing or listenership were not as prevalent. Lastly, *do* and *ok* are used in all modes and more by the peer tutor except in the TP Feedback sessions. *Do* could be a result of the way the TP tutors elicit information from the student teachers in this process, compared to direct questioning used by the peer tutor, while the use of *okay* may relate to the perceived personal stance the peer tutor holds in the discourse, as Iyeiri et al. (2011) state that turns beginning with *okay* are more personal than *yeah*. They note that the "first topic in the turn initiated by *okay* has a stronger tendency to conceptually include the previous speaker or the audience" (2011: 148) which the peer tutor in this context was possibly conscious of, thus supporting the notions put forward earlier in relation to affective relationships and the intention of the peer tutor to encourage cooperative conversation.

7.3 Closing comments

To conclude, while there are no significant differences between turn initiators in Irish English and British English, there are differences emerging in the TED corpus. We note that the speaker relationships have an impact on the use of discourse within TED. Based on the analyses, the student teachers seem to be more passive in TP Feedback than in the other modes, possibly due to the existence of hierarchical relationships in these interactions. There are differences between the expert tutor and the peer tutor, with the expert tutor being more at ease interrupting and initiating a turn. In the turn-initial language behaviours, the student teachers show deference to the tutor, whereas there is a less hierarchical relationship with the peer tutor. This results in the peer tutor role being facilitative while the TP tutor role is more directive and authoritative. In line with our earlier comments, it is our evidence-based belief~~We believe~~ that these turn openers act as pragmatic markers in terms of signalling the interpersonal relationships ~~the~~ betweeen tutors and peer tutors ~~have~~.

The task also plays a role in that the student teachers are more aware of power differentials when in an evaluative context, such as TP with a grade being attached to their work, and because of this the student teachers emit both a novice and knowledgeable identity. In terms of the mode, the face-to-face contexts are interactive, and cooperative, and the online modes

require explicit references and social cues to maintain harmony, politeness and social presence. Once again, the turn openers in the online and face to face modes work ~~as pragmatic markers~~with pragmatic effect in different ways in order to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships between all parties. From the results presented here, we can note that the pragmatic functions differ according to speaker relationships, and speaker identities, but also what the context of the discourse is (formal and assessed versus informal and non-assessed), and according to how one is communicating, be it face-to-face or online. In terms of implications for a well-rounded teacher education, it is probably best to offer student teachers a variety of modes and contexts of interaction for reflection, development and learning, as each offers unique opportunities and advantages. In terms of pragmatics, we hope to have demonstrated that turn initiators do indeed carry much pragmatic ~~functions~~ weight in terms of the student teachers and tutors negotiating meaning and maintaining and portraying interpersonal relationships and intentions.

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