

ELF INTERACTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS

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S4582845

Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment

of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts, English Language and Linguistics

Radboud University

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AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like thank my supervisor, Dr. Jarret G. Geenen, for being so helpful with this project, especially in guiding me through the tough moments and for his encouragement during the process of writing my thesis.

Secondly, I would like to thank my family for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of writing this thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank myself for being so strong through one of the hardest periods during my years of studying, this has shown me that I need to believe more in myself.

Abstract

This thesis empirically researched the nature of English lingua franca interactions among study abroad students who had not met before from recordings of naturalistic conversations. The paper looked at three characteristics of these conversations, turn taking sequences, transitions from small talk to more personal talk and politeness phenomena, in order to investigate salient features of these kind of conversations. This study, thus, investigates ELF interactions and what is special about them. Four different conversations in naturalistic settings were recorded and later analysed by looking at three salient characteristics of these interactions separately. The study argues that a) ELF interlocutors are not making predictions about what others are about to say due to longer time sequences found between turns, b) interlocutors quickly go from small talk to more personal talk even though they just met, and c) participants start the conversation using independent strategies but through conversation they rapidly change into involvement strategies suggesting that it is possible to switch politeness strategies during conversation.

Keywords: *ELF, interactions, turn taking, topics, politeness, study abroad.*

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CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

Humans are social beings and this means that we naturally seek companionship, as part of our needs (Cohen, 2010). This human social characteristic includes the building and maintaining intimate or close social relationships (Yang, 2016). One area of life where these close relationships are developed is in social networks and thus, the role that social connections play in people's lives is essential (Young, 2008). Leadsome (2012) argues that having an early bonding from childhood can become the difference between an individual that grows up a secure, emotionally capable adult, and an individual that will become a depressive, anxious person, who will not cope well with life's ups and downs, hence having social bonds can influence our lives for better or for worse. Social bonds have been found to be beneficial in various aspects: in a person's life, longevity, helping to boost happiness and reducing stress, improving self-confidence, helping cope with traumas, and it has even been correlated with academic success (Fletcher & Tienda, 2010; Yang, 2016).

In some cases, people confront life changes where their social networks, such as family, friends or colleagues, are not present, in a physical way. For instance, in a situation where a person moves to a different country or city, for work, family or other purposes. These changes, might alter a person's life, however, human's need for contact and companionship take people towards social bonding, helping them cope with these new changes (Yang, 2016). Having strong social connections providing psychological and emotional support have been linked with academic success for a long time (Summers and Wolfe 1977; Ammermueller and Pischke 2006; Ding and Lehrer, 2007). Fletcher and Tienda (2010) suggest that students who enter an undergraduate program as a part of a larger high-school group have a greater academic success than those students who lack those high-school connections, when entering an undergraduate program. This Suggests that a having a close-knit peer group of friends may indeed be important for.

In an increasingly globalizing world where international student mobility is on the rise, this creates a potentially problematic situation for students who decide to go overseas, far away from their adolescence peer group. This means that with travelling abroad students' social needs for communication will take them towards building new relationships with people they meet overseas. A target group which faces the above mentioned situation are those students who go study abroad as part of their educational program. In a more than ever globalized world where

student mobility is constantly increasing (Rodríguez, Bustillo & Mariel, 2011) students may leave their previous social networks back in their countries or cities of origin and face new challenges.

Previous research suggests that the academic performance of a student is determined by the characteristics and behavior of his/her surrounding social network, also known as the peer effect (Rothschild and White, 1995). This way, we assume that students who participate in study abroad programs normally enter situation where the establishment of a peer group is important for their academic success, given that they are in a situation where they are away from families and friends.

In many international situations where students travel abroad to follow study abroad programs English is the main code for communication, even if students don't share the same native language (Llanes, Anós, Mancho-Bares, 2016). This means that English may be used as a *lingua franca* between individuals who do not share a mother tongue. Firth explains that in situations such as these, English is used as “a contact language between individuals who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (Firth, 1996, 240). ELF is used in both academic and institutional settings, such as classrooms, conferences; and often even in simple daily casual, interactions with friends or strangers (depending on the particular country).

Typically, one of the first steps in any interaction between people whether they be complete strangers or very close friends is small talk. Small talk is defined by Coupland (2000: 1) as “conversation about things that are not important, often between people who do not know each other well”. Coupland (2000) argues, small talk can be understood as having specific social functions, this means that small talk has the potential for initiating the creation of social bonds and new relationships. Moreover, Beinstein (1975) argues that once the ability is learned, small talk can become a resource to facilitate a confident entrance into novel social encounters because interlocutors could already predict how the exchanges will develop. According to Schneider (1988) small talk are those initial exchanges that are typically less threatening. Laver (1975, 1981) has argued that small talk is usually not transactional, or in other words that interlocutors are not trying to accomplish something specific. However, given that small talk does indeed serve a phatic function, one could conceive of it as serving the goal of building and maintaining social relationships and thus being somewhat transactional. Previous descriptions of small talk (Schneider, 1988) were characterized as not being transactional, because it was thought as there was no goal in these interactions. There can be aspects of small talk in transactional discourse, especially in a context like studying abroad

where students are willing to make social connections.

During any social interaction, typically what is going to manifest first is small talk (Melanowski, 1923). When individuals interact for the first time, the first opportunity they have to interact will thus, also involve small talk. It is in these situations that small talk can function as a boundary or border to more meaningful social relationships. In this context described here participants come from different backgrounds. These different language backgrounds may also result in variation in the pragmatic norms with which small talk functions. This means that in this situation there is a potential for conflict, potential incongruence from their cultural norms participants have associated with their L1s.

As it has been mentioned above, small talk has potential to contribute to social bonding, we can thus consider that small talk may play an important role for students trying to create social bonds in a study abroad context. Two main research perspectives have approached small talk, one perspective has focused on the function of this talk and the other perspective has concentrated on describing its structure and rituals but they are not mutually exclusive. This means that when interlocutors engage in small talk there is a function that it fulfils, it can either be a mere unimportant talk or interesting talk, both ways it has the function of potentially creating social bonds, and with these purposes they use specific structures and rituals. And finally, depending on the function, structures and rituals these people' use is strictly connected with turn taking used in conversation, as well as with politeness strategies.

Given the increase of globalization, and the increase of English being used as a lingua franca throughout the world and given the diversity of first language backgrounds of the individuals using ELF there is the potential that various norms related with politeness phenomena interfere in small talk interactions. This way, the research project reported upon here in sought to investigate three primary research question:

- What is the temporal sequence between turns? And what does the time indicate about the individuals engaged in this particular activity?
- How does the transition from general small talk to more personal topics function in interactions were interlocutors have a possible orientation towards building relationships, more specifically in studying abroad context?
- What are the politeness formula that are used within these interactions?

To sum up, the project sought to analyze ELF interactions in a study abroad context by looking at the turn organization and its characteristics, then moving on to their choices of topics for small talk and how they move into more personal topics which might go from basic

introductions to personal topics. Finally, what these findings on their choice of topic and turn-taking sequences might tell us about the politeness strategies they use is analyzed and discussed.

1.2 Outline of study

This thesis analyzes small talk spoken by study abroad students using ELF in a context where they do not know each other. It contributes to fill the gap in the field of small talk, as well as in ELF studies that have not looked at this particular context where study abroad students interact with social bonding goals. This field is of special interest due to the reality we face nowadays, where the use of English as a lingua franca is in increase. It is for this reason that there is a need for understanding the nature of these exchanges, where the cultural forms of language derive, and in which language usage happens.

Chapter 1 provides a theoretical background for this study where the importance of social networks for academic success is highlighted and the relationship of this with small talk for creating social bonds in study abroad context where students use ELF as a communicative code is discussed.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review to give the reader a theoretical background in which this thesis is based, where a description of previous work of social bonds is provided, highlighting the importance of social connection for academic success. It is followed by a theoretical background on turn taking phenomena occurring in conversation by Levison and Torreira (2015), where very recent finding and implications on the nature of nativelike turn taking phenomena are summarized. Furthermore, the relevance of small talk towards relationship building is described and previous work on ELF small talk is illustrated. The chapter ends with a background in politeness theory, highlighting Scollon and Scollon's (1995) politeness theory, which is applied in the present study

The third chapter is concerned with the methodology used for this study. First of all, I describe how participants were recruited via social and then a detailed characterization of the participants is given, where I describe that they were all international students doing a study abroad students and had not met each other before. Secondly, I illustrate how a camera and a questionnaire were the materials used in the data collection. And thirdly, the design of this thesis is explained by giving a theoretical background of ethnomethodology and highlighting the relevance of Conversation Analysis for analysing naturalistic data collected in this study.

The fourth chapter presents the findings and discussion of this research. Results include a qualitative and quantitative analysis of turn taking phenomena alongside the selection of

topics and politeness strategies employed in conversation. Findings regarding turn taking phenomena show the distinct features of turn taking spoken by non-native speakers of English, where it is found that between turns gaps appear with a consistent order. Participants started conversations using general impersonal topics to avoid face-threatening acts towards other speaker, however, this trend changed rapidly and participants began to share personal topics as they found themselves having things in common with the rest of the students. Participants started using independence politeness strategies as was expected, nevertheless, as they started conversing about more personal topics independence strategies were left behind and involvement strategies are used throughout most of the conversation, still there are individual variations. The discussion section interprets these results in depth.

Finally, in the last chapter, a summary of the study is given as well as the implications of these findings, with a particular emphasis on the different nature of ELF interactions compared to L1 conversations regarding the turn taking phenomena, as well as the characteristics of conversations between study abroad students and the implications that small talk has in this context which facilitates the social bonding between participants who have just met, which may contribute toward further academic success.

CHAPTER II

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will cover the theoretical background of this thesis. To start with, the importance of social bonding will be described giving empirical evidence. Followed by ELF studies and the correlation with study abroad studies. Later, I will provide recent findings on turn taking phenomena and the implications with this thesis. The most relevant politeness theory regarding this thesis will be described in the next section. And last but not least I will provide previous literature which combined politeness, small talk and ELF studies.

2.1 Social bonds

It is empirically proven that human beings need to be social (Yang, 2016). In psychology, Freud (1930) already asserted the need for interpersonal contact, although he stated that it was related from the sex drive and filial bond. There has been extensive research in this field since Freud, and new perspectives on the power of social bonding have aroused. A study by Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggest that humans have a need to belong and to form and maintain a minimum quantity of interpersonal relationships, which is innately prepared among human beings. This way, unlike the Freudian view which used sexuality and aggression as the major force for human bonding, their view depicts human beings as driven naturally towards establishing social relationships. According to the Harvard Health Publications (2010), social connections do not only give people pleasure, they also influence people's long-term health. These benefits of satisfying relationships with family, friends and their community are associated with having less health problems and a longer life expectancy. They have even been found to be more powerful for our health than having an adequate sleep, having a good diet and not smoking (Harvard Health Publications, 2010).

But the benefits of social bonding are not only linked with people's health, the network significance in education has been recognized for decades, specifically through the notion of "peer effects". Rothschild and White (1995) state that the academic performance of a student directly influenced by characteristics and behavior of their social networks environment (Rothschild & White, 1995). A research by Einsenkopf (2007) confirmed that through cooperation among students in a learning process would lead to positive outcome in their results. Similarly, Babcock (2007), demonstrated how social networks was related to the level of schooling attained by the student, with a higher likelihood of enrollment in a higher institution for those peers with greater social relationships. Recent research by Fletcher and Tienda (2008) proved that students who enter an undergraduate program with a group of high

schoolers, perform remarkably better academically than those students who are deprived of their high school connections.

In the same way, Stuart (2008), suggest that these social contacts are not always beneficial, as being part of a peer group which is composed by students who are normally alienated, is related to low academic performance. However, this is a proof which stills backs up the claim that not being isolated and having social bonds is more than healthy for human beings, as students can benefit and have greater academic success than those with smaller social connections. Furthermore, student who are poorly connected with a lower density of ties and who study alone, represent a group which have higher risks for abandonment of studies (Stuart, 2008). This means that social connections are clearly significant and those who possess them can benefit from it, while those who are in shortage of them might be drawn to low performing in academic domains.

Scholars have clearly shown how socializing is beneficial for students based on the aforementioned literature (Rothschild & White, 1995; Fletcher and Tienda, 2008). Thus, it is important if students want to achieve academic success, that they have healthy social relationships. However, these social connections cannot be maintained, at least physically, due to students' mobility. It is suggested that a particular group which suffers an immediate connection isolation are the study abroad students who all of a sudden lose their support connections when moving to a different country to study. Students who join study abroad programs travel to different universities to complete their education. For this reason, many youngsters who go abroad instantly connect with students in the same situation as them, creating an international environment where the language chosen for communication is English. According to Jenkins (2007), the majority of these students receive the education in English, no matter the language spoken in the country of destination. This means that they use English for academic purposes, but they also use English to communicate among peers when they are not at university (Jenkins, 2007).

In this thesis, I will be looking at interactions between students who have joined a study abroad program and are studying in a university in the Netherlands. These students have just arrived in the target country and are looking for social connections. As I have mentioned, the language used in this context is English as Lingua Franca. ELF is used in academic and institutional settings, such as classrooms, conferences; or even in simple daily casual conversations, interactions with friends or strangers. The very first interactions, students have are mere casual conversations. These casual conversations are called small talk. This is extended upon in the following section.

2.2 Small talk

When communicating with a person, stranger or known person, we normally first interact with them through small talk. Small talk can be a conversation opener which does not cover any functional topic and it is designed to create networks among people, since it draws them into conversation creating a comfort zone for people and thus relationships are built (Furukawa, 2014). Taking into account this definition of small talk, it can be said that it has a key and important role for human communication and social bonding. However, this view about the relevance of small talk for human communication has not been always perceived.

It was Melawnoski (1923) who first introduced the concept of small talk as a communicative mode with the term ‘phatic communion’. He defined it as purposeless and at the same time as type of speech used to create ties of union just by exchange of words, I suggest, then that small talk is not really purposeless, as it actually “create ties of union”. This way, Melawnoski (1923) did point out the communicative functions of small talk, however he did not emphasize the importance of this talk for human communication and bonding. He stated “the function of this speech is more sociabilities, purposeless expressions of preference or aversions, account of irrelevant happenings, comments on what is perfectly obvious” (Melanowski 1923: 150). His interest in small talk was not because it was a purposive activity, however he did emphasize how small talk served “to establish bonds of personal union between people brought together by mere need of companionship” (Melanowski 1923: 151) even if it would not serve any purpose in communicating ideas. Overall, first views on small talk were rather negative and claimed that it was seen as aimless, dull and irrelevant; nonetheless the social value for social bonding was remarked. There are a number of scholars such as Wolfson (1981), Leech (1974), and Turner (1973) who again underlined the trivial nature of this talk by referring to it as “phoney”, “dull and pedestrian” or “semantically empty”. One of the first scholars to have a more positive and remarkable view to small talk was Beinstein (1975).

Beinstein (1975) stated that small talk is highly ritualized and predictable, arguing that once small talk is learned, it can become a resource to facilitate a confident entrance into novel social encounters because there is great certainty associated with its cycle of exchanges. She takes the perspective of small talk as metacommunication, in other words, it is a situational and social comment. This way, communicators are aware of each other and show neutral to mutual regard. Through small talk interlocutors can control disagreement and even prevent conflict just by performing small talk. Beinstein (1975) overall argues that small talk is a ‘gesture that protects the personal space of communicators’ and hence, it can satisfy human contact with little effort of self-disclosure. The boundary from small talk to a deeper conversation, thus is

when mutual trust is achieved. Communicators move from mere exchanges to deeper discussion only when they open themselves to each other's potential disapproval (Beinstein, 1975). This means that to go from small talk to more personal topics interlocutors might require to have a minimal level of mutual trust between them, thus from being strangers to having some kind of social bond. This characteristic will be analyzed in the present thesis, as small talk is taken as talk with great potential, and there has been little research which looked at the use of small talk in study abroad contexts.

Having said this, small talk can be regarded as the very first conversation between individuals who have the potential of developing a closer bond between each other. This argument, shows the importance of small talk for human contact and bond creation between them. In her study, Beinstein (1975) showed how public conversations may "metacommunicate" important information about the social cohesiveness of a community. This characterization gives a completely different perspective on small talk and emphasizes the importance not only for its social values but about its content as well.

Having seen these perspectives on small talk, it can be argued that there has been an attempt to define small talk, however, it has not been well defined. Schneider (1988:4) says, "If the term has been used in linguistics at all, it is not strictly defined, relying on the intuitive notion of language users instead". Researchers, however, discuss the characteristics of small talk. Coupland (2000:1) refers to Robinsons' definitions of small talk "supposedly minor, informal, unimportant and non-serious modes of talk," meaning that small talk is a conversation about insignificant matters, not as important or essential as practical talk like that between doctors and patients or professors and students. Similarly, Robinson characterizes small talk as a "peripheral mode of talk" (Coupland, 2003 :1), and provides examples of it such as 'gossip,' 'chit chat,' and 'time-out talk.' A first glance at the characteristics of 'small talk' may imply that small talk is unimportant and trivial. However, small talk lubricates social interaction.

Coupland (2003: 2) states 'The importance of small talk to social life seems incontestable'. Hence, small talk can be understood as having specific social functions, that's what makes this talk significant, and Melawnoski and some other scholars' (Wolfson , 1981; Leech, 1974; Turner; 1973) view that small talk is unimportant falls back to a previous opinion, where the social functions of this talk are mentioned but not appreciated as they should be, this is what Coupland (2003) remarks in the functions of small talk, its social potentials. Taking this perspective on small talk, sociality is not marginalized as previous scholars did, it is true that the topics for small talking are not as rich in meaning, however the social characteristics of this

phatic communion are outstanding, and there have been various research which show so.

There are two perspectives in small talk research. On the one hand, scholars such as Schneider have offered perspective in which he focuses on socio-pragmatic competence in the language learning context. This way, he focuses mainly in the description of forms, structures and topics, while he doesn't focus on the social function of small talk. On the other hand, scholars like Eggins and Slade (1997) offered a more functional perspective by looking at the social achievements of casual conversations between friends, workmates and family members.

Small talk in the working place has had more attention, Pullin (2010: 456) states that of all forms of interpersonal communication, so-called "small talk" is one of the best at promoting rapport and good relationships between workers. Small talk can help build solidarity and rapport. Rapport is one of the most important elements in the building and maintenance of strong working relations (Pullin, 2010). Pullin (2010) also mentions that "the value of small talk derived from such common ground can be not only in creating solidarity, but also in creating bonds between different others" (p.465). Small talk is a valuable activity in the business world as well as in personal life.

Having given a review on previous literature on small talk, I come up with my own definition, which will be the one referred to throughout this project:

Small talk is a linguistic term referring to informal talk where the main function is to socialize with or without a practical purpose. It can happen in everyday life as well as in business encounters, between friends, family members or strangers. It has communicative functions and potentials for creating social bonds, thus it is transactionally focused on the accomplishment of some task.

Scholars have distinguished non-institutional talk from institutional talk. There is a large amount of research in the field of small talk in business encounters, while non-institutional talk has had smaller. Previous research, such as BlumKulka's (2000) study of family members having dinner, and Drew and Chilton's (2000) with their friends talking on the phone, have examined small talk in everyday conversation. Their participants are familiar with one another and native speakers of English. Thus, there is a research gap when it comes to analyzing small talk in a non-institutional setting where speakers are strangers to one another. Small talk conversations are very frequent in situations where people do not know each other, but are interested in building a relationship with the other person. This is the case of study abroad students, who have moved to a new place without knowing anyone (Gemelch, 1997). This study

attempts to answer the question of how study abroad students engage themselves in small talk in a non-institutional setting. When communicating, peers use English, with this purpose the term English Lingua Franca has been adopted (Firth, 1996). In the following section I will go deeper in the concept of ELF and its connection with study abroad context.

2.3 English lingua franca and study abroad

English as lingua franca (ELF) has been defined in the last decades by several scholars in different ways (Firth, 1996; Jenkins, 2006; Mauranen, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2005), however, the most common definition is the following:

It is a ‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (Firth, 1996 :240).

The role that the English language has taken over the years is key for human communication, since it has become the common language for those who do not share the same first language. Thus, one of the responsibilities that English has gained is to act as a common language for communication among study abroad students.

Study abroad research, dates back to 1960s and 1970s decades, when works from Carroll (1967) and Schuman and Schuman (1977) were published about language development in study abroad students. More recent work in this field has focused on the influence of study abroad experiences in student’s English speaking fluency, reading and writing proficiency (Kinging, 2008).

Lately, due to the popularity of the ELF notion, there has been a great number of research looking at ELF contexts. A study undertaken by Baker (2009) examined the language–culture relationship for a group of English language users in a Thai university as a good illustration of this interest. Baker (2009), collected recordings of intercultural communication and the participants’ interpretations and attitudes toward them. The aim was to produce a holistic, dynamic, and multidimensional characterisation of how culture, language, and intercultural communication were perceived and experienced by the participants in the study. The results showed that the participants needed the ability to negotiate, mediate, and be creative in their use and interpretation of English rather than focusing on the knowledge of the target language cultures (e.g., British and/or American). The study concludes that language can never be culturally neutral, since each participant brings with them their own unique cultural

history resulting in particular communicative behaviours and expectations. This study shows how distinct ELF is, however participants were all from Thailand, and were recorded in an academic setting, and thus these results cannot be generalized.

Moreover, interest into study abroad in ELF contexts has also gained popularity due to the emergence of student mobility programs in Europe such as Erasmus+ (European Union combining all the EU's current schemes for education, training, youth and sport). Kalocsai (2009), examined how 70 Erasmus exchange students studying in Hungary and the Czech Republic, whose common language was only English, socialized in their new communities of practice. By collecting data via personal interviews it was revealed that in these ELF communities, exchange students developed a new repertoire of shared ways of speaking, in other words, students did not need adjust their language on the basis of some external norm but instead they made up new forms, borrowed from other languages, and maintained their own accents to effectively negotiate meaning and to establish interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, the study concludes that the socialization between these Erasmus students in an ELF community was smooth and successful. This study focused mainly in students' personal experiences, and lack a more ethnographic approach which analyzes the speech of interlocutors.

Research in ELF contexts indicate that ELF communities have their own unique characteristics and features in terms of the use of English, and the range of users across different social groups (Berns, 2009). Furthermore, speakers in ELF contexts are more tolerant to pronunciation variation, vocabulary and grammar (Jenkins, 2006) since their goal is to use the language as a tool for interpersonal communication without relying on shared sociocultural values and linguistic norms (Berns, 2009). As I have mentioned, ELF interactions have their own characteristics, and one of those characteristics that makes it different is turn taking (Meiekord, 1996). In the following section I will discuss some literature on turn taking.

2.4 Turn-Taking

When we talk, we take turns, where interactants exchange turns back and forth between partners in order to carry out a conversation (Levinson & Torreira, 2015). This conversational characteristic is so familiar to us that we rarely remark on it. It has been found that on average, each turn lasts for around 2 seconds, and the typical gap between them is just 200 milliseconds, which according to Levinson (2015) is the minimum human response time to any utterance. This is considered a universal feature, which extends across cultures with some slight variation.

According to Goodwin (1981: 2) turn-taking in linguistics can be defined as "the process through which the party doing the talk at the moment is changed". It was Sacks, Schegloff and

Jeffersons (1974) who dealt with turn-taking in spoken interaction most influentially. Their approach to turn-taking, assumes a space of interaction which is accessible to all participants in the conversation, they refer to this space as the 'floor'. The state that participants in the interaction alternate in occupying this floor when uttering their contributions to the conversation, which are called 'turns'. As soon as the current speaker has moved from speaker to hearer, the now vacant position of speaker is taken up by the former listener and a new turn by a new speaker is begun. Sacks et al. (1974) argue, if the turn is constructed as to involve "current speaker selects next" technique, then the speaker selected takes the right of the turn and thus is obliged to speak. The interests of this research lies in the temporal sequence between and within turns and what this might tell us about the assumptions interactants have about the type of conversation and about the participants themselves.

Levinson and Torreira (2015) in their review of the existing literature about the system of turn taking, after going through the different approaches and results, were able to observe the features of turn taking time precision: turns have a mean of 1680ms and consist of one or more interjections, phrases or clauses, and it ends normally with syntactic and prosodic completion; gaps that happen intra-speaker are 150ms longer than those inter-speaker, which suggest ordered rules; inter-speaker gaps are normally short, falling between 100 and 200ms; those longer gaps (over 700ms) may carry semiotic meaning which contribute to fast timing; and overlaps are brief, 275ms, and are more common at turn transitions than within turn and simultaneous first starts. Moreover, participants seem to use turn-final cues to recognize that a turn is coming to an end, which are usually prosodic cues such as, phrase final syllable lengthening or specific melodic patterns characteristic of a language. It should be noted however that these are features of turn-taking between individuals who share the same first language, thus they are proficient in the languages.

Now, these findings on the nature of turn taking are not applicable to ELF, non-native conversations between strangers. Since these interlocutors are not proficient in the language it is expected that the interpretation and production time is longer. This will be analysed in the findings part of this research. Moreover, time sequences between and within the turn might be characteristic of this specific context, where participants might need more than prosodic cues to know that the turn has ended.

Previous literature in turn-taking in ELF interaction has mostly focused in the nature of conversation and features like overlaps, gaps, misunderstandings. On the one hand, Firth (1996) in his research on 'let-it-pass' behaviour in dyadic telephone conversations in a Danish company found that participants performed very few sentence completions and overwhelmingly applied

a turn-taking distribution of 'one party talks at a time'. On the other hand, Gramkow-Andersen (2001), used similar data and methodology, however observed a lot of overlapping speech in his data, which he argues served primarily collaborative functions. His findings were supported by Cogo (2007), who also found a great amount of cooperative overlap in casual ELF conversations.

House (2008), carried out a three case study to analyse ELF interactions, and each case study analysed different data: the first one is taken from a larger corpus of ELF elicited during an international students' meeting in the Netherlands, in which a simulation was enacted inside the conference program; the second one comes from an ongoing study of ELF talk with four students at the University of Hamburg who were asked to interact on the basis of a trigger in the form of a text; and the third case study is an examination of the behaviour of the gambit you know in ELF interaction. Opposing the previous results (Gramkow-Andersen, 2001), House found that turn-taking management in ELF is not smooth and lacks in recipient design. According to House, speakers of ELF "just start talking instead of waiting for the best point at which to 'jump in'" and "appear not to be able to wait for and/or to project a suitable point of transitional relevance" (House 2008: 359). Moreover, she claims that participants fail to take account of their interlocutors' utterances, "the result being an under-attuning of individual turns that leads to, or is the outcome of, a lack of mutual responsibility for the ongoing talk as a collective undertaking" (House 2008: 355). Overall, the data examined in the three case studies showed that ELF speakers' interactional behaviour proceeds within the framework of politeness behaviour, with no adverse effect being noticed by participants.

However, House's conclusions are contradicted by Meierkord (1998), who finds that "[c]onversations are built up collaboratively and speakers used a comparatively high amount of sentence completions and restatements" (Meierkord 1998), which supports previous ideas that interactants have an ability to project possible transition. Nikko (2009) found similar results in his study on collaborative turn-completions in workplace meetings. These are summary of the findings on turn-taking in lingua franca interactions, which shows that there has not been unanimous tendencies. The reason for this might lie in the rather small-scale and exploratory nature of all them, as well as in the variabilities in exchanges and so context dependent. In the next section the concept of politeness will be introduced.

2.5 Politeness

Human beings exchange opinions, feelings and similar issues through utterances, and these utterances formulate turns throughout conversation. What these utterances show us is the

face of interlocutors, which are managed upon relationships, these concepts are core in the field of politeness. And this way, interactants apply politeness while interacting and conversing with interlocutors. Turns and utterances can be polite or not based on the speaker's positioning towards the addressee, which is usually exemplified in the particular grammatical and lexico-grammar of any utterance which manifests in any social interaction. Nevertheless, the structures of these utterances not only position the speaker towards the addressee, at the same time the content of their discourse is simultaneously addressed. Moreover, these utterances are not only addressed to one specific hearer, it can be one or multiple, and also make reference to third parties.

Lakoff (1990) stressed that politeness is an approach to make interactions easier and flow, which is reached by minimizing the potential for confrontation inherent in interpersonal relations. Several studies have applied politeness theories when analysing specific data when wanting to have a critical and analytical approach towards interpersonal communication (e.g. Brown and Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983).

This way, based on our social circumstances, Song (2012) remarks that we are obliged to tailor our communication because our words or phrases need to meet social expectations so as to be understood as polite. Brown (2005) defines politeness formulas as modifying one's language in a particular way to explicitly consider the feelings of the addressee. Linguistic politeness is also defined in a similar way as Brown (2005), which states that politeness is the linguistic strategies employed to express communicative meaning while embedding, at the same time, in the structure of the discourse itself, an explicit consideration of the interlocutors' feelings and face (i.e. self-image). In the field of linguistics there have been several theorists who have contributed to the development of a theory of politeness and its role in discourse. Brown and Levinson are one of the very first linguists to study politeness, but not the only ones (e.g. Lakoff, 1990; Leech, 1983). Later on, some other linguists also developed theories on politeness with a more social interactional perspective, such as Scollon & Scollon (1995). In the following section I give an overview of the most relevant linguists in the field of politeness, starting with Brown and Levinson's Politeness theory and followed by Scollon & Scollon's theory of Politeness strategies.

Scollon and Scollon

In their theory of Politeness Scollon and Scollon (1995) see politeness as a model for social interaction, focusing on how interlocutors negotiate in conversation their face relations, and how participants make assumptions about face even before starting communicating

(Scollon & Scollon, 1995). This way, participants in interaction make assumptions about their relationships and the face they want to show themselves and are willing to give to the rest or the participants in a communicative situation. Moreover, interactants also take a “certain amount of their relationships a natural process of change in human relationship” (Scollon & Scollon, 1995:45). What Brown and Levinson (1986) called positive and negative face Scollon & Scollon refer to as involvement and independence strategies, which will be explained in the following section.

Involvement and Independence strategies

Scollon and Scollon (1983) stated “Brown and Levinson’s insights have provided a theoretical framework within which discussions of face relations between speakers as a matter of deep assumptions about the relationship that are encoded in the politeness strategies of deference and solidarity” (p.170). Scollon and Scollon (1995) propose replacing the terms positive politeness strategies and negative politeness strategies with ‘involvement strategies’ and ‘independence strategies’ to avoid traditional semantics which the terms of positive and negative carry. They state that positive and negative terms may determine the value judgement of the politeness system, implying that positive politeness is more desirable than negative politeness.

The term involvement is a discourse strategy of showing that the speaker is closely connected to the hearer. This aspect is closely concerned with “The person’s right to be treated as ‘a normal, contributing or supporting member of society’ constitutes the basis of the involvement strategy (Scollon & Scollon, 1995: 46). For instance, sharing and reinforcing the views of other interlocutors show involvement strategies. Involvement strategies can be indicated by means of linguistic forms: to notice or to attend to the hearer; exaggerate (to show interest, approval, sympathy with the hearer); claim in-group membership with the hearer; claim a common point of view (to share opinions, attitudes, knowledge, be emphatic); be optimistic; indicate that a speaker knows the hearer’s wants and is taking them into account; assume or assert reciprocity; use given names; be talkative and use the hearer’s language or dialect (Scollon and Scollon, 1995).

Independence strategies, also referred to as solidarity politeness, on the other hand, emphasize the individuality of the participants. Independence is shown by such discourse strategies as making minimal assumptions, or giving options to the interlocutor (Scollon & Scollon, 1995). Individuality, the right not to be dominated, and freedom from the impositions of others are peculiar aspects of the independence feature of face. An individual acting independently will display his/her freedom of movement and respect the right of the participants

to their independence (Witczak-Plisiecka, 2010). Independence strategies can be shown by employing the following methods: make minimal assumptions about the hearer's wants, give the hearer the option not to perform the act, minimize the threat, apologize, be pessimistic, dissociate the speaker/hearer from the discourse, state a general rule, use family names and titles, be taciturn and finally use one's own language or dialect (Scollon and Scollon, 1995).

With involvement strategies, the speaker appears to be friendly and helpful, however, independence strategies do not mean that the speaker is impolite. Rather it reflects a greater degree of social distance between speaker and addressee, signalling the intended meaning that the speaker wishes to disturb the addressee as little as possible (LoCastro, 2012). LoCastro (2012) points out that the speaker's choice of which face-saving strategy to use is constrained by contextual factors, involving perceptions of degrees of social distance or intimacy, power, or weight of the problematic behaviour. The speaker's assessment of possible politeness strategies, cultural practices, and even personal characteristics enter into the decision-making process. Overall, what Scollon and Scollon (1995) claim is that the concept of face is paradoxical, meaning that involvement and independence must be projected simultaneously in any communication., as the concept of face is built into both aspects.

One of the most important things about face according to Scollon and Scollon (1995) are the two elements that form it: unmarked set of previous assumptions and series of negotiations where those previous assumptions are confirmed or altered in some way. They describe that there are different face relationships as politeness systems, and mention three different factors which come into play when determining the politeness system: power, distance and weight of imposition. These concepts will be described in the following section.

Power, Distance, and Weight of imposition

According to Scollon and Scollon (1995), speaker and hearer in the politeness system would use a definite, relatively regular set of face strategies in speaking to each other. Power, distance, and the weight of the imposition are three main factors involved which determine such a politeness (or face) system.

1. Power

Power refers to the vertical distinction between the participants in a hierarchical structure (Scollon and Scollon, 1995). Languages used between participants in the relationship reflecting +P (plus power) such as in most business and governmental structures is relatively predictable. On the other hand, a situation in which egalitarian system or -P exist between participants, this type of relationship is demonstrated in close friends, or two people having

equivalent ranks in a company, such as company presidents talking to other company presidents.

2. Distance

Distance is not the same as Power. Distance can be seen mostly in egalitarian relationships. For example, two close friends would be categorized as -D because of the intimacy of their relationship. Nevertheless, two officers from different nations are likely to be of equal power within their systems but distant, +D because they rarely have contact with each other.

3. Weight of Imposition

The last factor that contributes to face strategies is the weight of the imposition. Scollon and Scollon (1995) mention that the face strategies used will vary depending on how important the topic of discussion is for the participants although they have a very fixed relationship between them. There will be an increased use of independence strategies when the weight of imposition increases; and there will be an increased use of involvement strategies when the weight of imposition decreases (Scollon and Scollon, 1995).

Having described the three factors involved in politeness systems, Scollon and Scollon (1995) state that in those interpersonal relationships which are relatively fixed, like those in business and organizations, power and distance do not change normally, on the other hand, weight of imposition is more likely to change. In their discussion of politeness systems they focus mainly on those systems where there are variation in power and distance, which will be described in the following subsection.

Politeness systems

Scollon and Scollon, as it has been mentioned, perceive politeness as a model of social interaction focusing on how interlocutors negotiate face relations during a conversation (Felix-Brasdefer, 2007). Scollon and Scollon (1995) recommend a face systems model for analysing the negotiation of face and propose that relationships are categorized under one of the three face systems which are: deference, solidarity and hierarchy. These three systems are influenced by two social factors: power [P] and distance [D]. (Scollon and Scollon, 1995).

In a deference face system, the interlocutors conceive themselves at the same social level with no interlocutor wielding power over the other (-P), but with a distant relationship (+D) (Scollon and Scollon, 1995). In this system, consequently, the interlocutors use independence strategies to minimize the possibility of threatening or losing face. In a solidarity

face system, interlocutors see themselves as being of equal social position (-P) and with a close relationship (-D); in this system, the interlocutors employ involvement strategies to assume or denote reciprocity or to affirm a mutual point of view and to provide a sense of friendliness and closeness (Scollon and Scollon, 1995). Ultimately, in a hierarchical face system, one participant is placed in a superordinate position (+P) and the other is in subordinate position (-P). In this asymmetrical system, the interactants apprehend and respect the social difference where the speaker and the hearer may be close (+D) or distant (-D) (Scollon and Scollon, 1995). Involvement strategy is employed by the dominant interlocutor in a hierarchy face system; nevertheless, the subordinate interlocutor uses

2.6 Previous literature on politeness strategies in small talk and ELF

For a long time linguists have tried to come to an agreement regarding the concept of politeness and its definition. As I have indicated above, Brown and Levinson's (1987) definition of politeness is linked with the notion of face, which they define as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (1987: 61). Moreover, they mention positive and negative politeness which they argue are concerned with avoiding face threatening acts (FTAs). From this literature review one is able to notice that for most approaches to politeness and in spite of some of the different terminology and definitions, politeness is concerned with the avoidance of trespassing the self-image or face that others claim for themselves, and for the need of showing concern for the face needs and wants of others.

Small talk and politeness complement each other to allow interlocutors create a more harmonious and friendly atmosphere. When meeting someone, interactants might rely on various linguistic politeness devices and strategies to create a friendly reciprocal communication channel between interlocutors with the objective of creating social bonds or mere conversation. There is not much research which looks at politeness strategies in small talk interactions between speakers of English as lingua Franca. Ferenčík (2012) examined politeness aspects in ELF interactions using the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE), which is composed by 1250 mainly European speakers from 50 different L1 backgrounds and covering different speech events ranging from professional to private settings. He concluded that conversations between non-native speakers of English were cooperative, consensus-oriented and jointly supportive (Grzega, 2005). Moreover, he suggest that it might be the case that politeness in ELF encounters is not "stable and homogeneous but rather an amalgam of strategies and procedures which emerges with every instance of ELF interaction anew and which results from speakers ELF identities as well as from their respective L1 identities"

(Ferenčík, 2012:128). This means that ELF speakers might use different politeness strategies compared with native speakers of English.

CHAPTER III

3. METHODOLOGY

In this section the methodology followed to carry out this study will be described. First of all, I provide a brief description of recruitment procedures to find participants who met the criteria of being study abroad students who had not met each other before. Later, I explain the materials used in this research, illustrating the use of a camera and a questionnaire to collect personal information about participants. And last but not least, the design of study is illustrated where I highlight the relevance of Conversation Analysis for analyzing naturalistic data. The present research project on small talk in English lingua franca in study abroad situation is based on four conversations recorded in an informal setting between students.

3.1 Design of study

This research was undertaken using a naturalistic setting where by participants had a general conversation about unimportant topics towards more personal topics. The general conversation was reported with an audio/video camera. This audio/video camera was later used to capture the data which was later transcribed and analyzed using Conversation Analysis.

3.1.1 Participants

This study is based on small talk conversations among ELF speakers, and this is the criteria followed: participants had to be international students, studying or doing an internship in the country where the research was taking place, the Netherlands. They had to have at least B1 English level according with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). In order to recruit participants, a public post was shared through social media site, Facebook's international student group of Radboud University.

The recruitment of the participants was conducted in the beginning of September to coincide with the arrival of brand new students to the university at the beginning of the first semester. Participants organized in and four groups were formed with different time slots divided in two consecutive days. The first group was formed by 6 participants, the second group by 4, and the third and fourth groups by 3 people. The researcher was also present for all the interactions.

The nationalities of the 16 participants varied between 13 different countries: Thailand, Germany, Ukraine, Finland, Poland, Bulgaria, China, Indonesia, Slovakia, Russia, Spain, Hungary and Belgium. Students' self-assessment of their English level revealed that their level varied from B2 (advantage or upper intermediate) until C2 (Mastery or proficiency), with the

great majority (over 60%) having a C1 (effective operational proficiency or advanced) level. Their educational level and expected time abroad varied between Bachelor's degree student, Master's degree student and only one PHD student. While some students were only studying with an exchange program for a year or a semester, some others were studying their full Bachelor's or Master's degree, and there was only one student who was at this university to do an internship. 12 of the participants had recently arrived in Nijmegen, while the other 4 had already been at there for at least 6 months. However, none of the participants knew each other before data collection meeting.

Data collection session took place at university, in a classroom booked by the researcher. To keep the situation as natural as possible the researcher prepared a table with some snacks and chairs around it and a camera was placed in a corner of the room to record the conversation. Participants arrived at different times, some earlier some later than the time set, but the door was kept open so they could come in and join the conversation at any time. The length of the conversations varied, from one lasting 1 hour and 16 minutes, to one lasting about 17 minutes.

3.1.2 Materials

The materials used for the collection of the data were a recording camera and a questionnaire. In order to ensure that the conversations were as natural as possible, participants did not receive a large amount of information before the data collection. However, when participants received the questionnaire from the researcher, they were given all the information about the purpose of the study and the context of the questionnaire was explained, but this was only done after the recording of the conversations were finished. The questionnaire was formed with questions regarding students' educational level, nationality, age, and English level in order to control for any possible individual differences. After the data was collected, all the four conversations were transcribed, thus the transcriptions and recordings were the data analyzed for this study.

3.1.3 Empirical protocol

Participants were invited in different groups to a university classroom at a specific time where the meeting was held. Participants arrived at different time, however they were invited in the classroom whenever they showed up to keep the conversations as natural as possible. As participants arrived they introduced themselves and conversed naturally with the rest of the participants present in the room. The camera was placed in a corner of the classroom in order to get an overview of the people interacting and record specially the conversation.

Participants conversed naturally for around 30 minutes without knowing what the purpose of the study was. Afterwards, a questionnaire was handed to each participant where they had to fill in personal information. The questionnaire was used to obtain participants' nationality, English level, length of stay, educational level and native language, in order to control for potential variation. After the data was collected each conversation was transcribed, which was later used for analyzing the conversations, the main source for the investigation.

3.2 Analytical methodology

This study has been designed to record small talk conversations in English spoken by non-natives among students in study abroad programs where they speak to strangers. In this case, this research is interested in the turn taking phenomena taking place, the topics participants talk about and politeness strategies used in this specific context. Previous research on ELF interactions (e.g. Schneider, 1988) has collected data through Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT), or other strategic methods, however these conversations do not provide natural and *in situ* data, instead it provides more what it is expected in conversation. This way, in order to collect as naturalistic data as possible, interactions between non-native speakers of English have been recorded in a non-academic setting, in casual conversation.

With the aim of studying social action in naturalistic context there have been two major approaches: ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis (CA). Ethnomethodology has focussed on the production of situated and ordered social action of all kinds, while Conversation Analysis has had more specific focus on the production and organisation of talk-in-interaction (Carlin & Jenkins, 2017).

According to Heritage (2013), ethnomethodology refers to the study of particular subject matter: the body of common-sense knowledge and the range of procedures and considerations by means of which ordinary members of society make sense of, find their way about in, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves. This means that ethnomethodology explores how people account for their behaviours, which is related to the present study where the behaviour of ELF interactants in study abroad context is analysed.

According to Firth (1996) one of the most powerful and influential methodologies which has been developed to analyse talk and, in a wider sense, social action, is Conversation Analysis. Based on ethnomethodological foundations, CA works have shown that every day, interactive conversations should be viewed as a locally and cautiously accomplished achievement, and that the 'normal' and 'routine' appearances of conversation are the result of the participants' ceaseless and contingent application of complex and methodical practices

(Firth, 1996). By using transcripts, conversation analysts have described both the explication of those methodical practices and the detailed description of how talk is sequentially structured and interactively managed (Kasper & Wagner, 2014).

Even though CA is based on natural conversations since they provide better insight of what is actually occurring in conversation, the specific demographic background of participants do not lend to the collection of natural data for the present study. The need to control for the background of participants (nationality, being studying abroad, need to be strangers) is key for this study, and thus it would be impossible to collect natural data. Nevertheless, CA has been employed to benefit from the tools of CA which are valuable for the analysing social interaction, by using these tools in a semi-constructive empirical design to study social interaction among ELF speaker's small talk. First a recording of natural occurring data will be done and secondly in order to look at the conversations of these interactants, transcripts of the conversations will be produced. With these transcriptions I will be able to look at the real conversations of participants and, thus analyse real the data.

De Guyter (2013), explains that CA has its roots in the work of Sacks (1960) on the description of interactional behaviour in recordings from a suicide hotline in Los Angeles, and later extended to provide an extensive methodological framework for the analysis of all kinds of conversational interactions. For this thesis, I have selected key aspects of CA methodology which are applicable for this project (De Guyter, 2013):

- The descriptive, non-judgmental reporting of conversational interactions, avoiding reference to “correct” language use.
- The use of natural conversations instead of specially designed experimental materials, such as DPTs or DCTs.
- The approach towards finding not only what people are saying (the form) but why they are saying it (the function).
- The detailed transcriptions, including information about gaps, length of pauses, or anything else that may help to explain what is going on in conversation.

These aspects are the reason why CA is the most appropriate method to use in this project, and will guide the researcher to find answers to the research questions. The central interest of CA, according to Kasper & Wagner (2014), is to describe and explain how interlocutors reach the organization of social action in real time. As Heritage (1998: 3) remarks, “CA is distinctive in developing this focus by linking both meaning and context to the idea of sequence”. Influential first-generation work focussed on the practices used for turn taking and

turn design (e.g. Lerner, 2004), this feature will be one of the main focus areas of this thesis.

Sacks et al. (1974), state that in ordinary or everyday conversations, turn taking is managed in situ and individually managed, this means that interlocutors assume and assign speaker and hearer identities contingently as the talk evolves. Moreover, Schegloff (1999), remarks that the turn taking system gives equal opportunities to all the speakers in conversation. What we say is constrained by the internal interaction context, and not by the external social structural factors (Kasper & Wagner, 2014). Hence, when conversing, people can address a wide range of unpredictable topics. However, these topics selected in conversation, might be determined by cultural, religious, political, educational or any other kind of considerations that interlocutors take in choosing appropriate topics (Kasper & Wagner, 2014). And finally, but importantly, everyday conversation, even though participants use registers associated with different topics or other interlocutors identities, it is important to remark that “the talk is incidental to conversation as such” (Kasper & Wagner, 2014: 21).

In the present thesis, small talk is the focus. Small talk is considered every day or ordinary conversations, which we can have with people we know or new to us. No matter the relationship between individuals, these aforementioned characteristics will be taken into account when analysing the topics chosen by participants in our study and determine why they chose these topics.

To sum up, even though CA is conventionally used to analyse natural conversations that have happened in situ, the pre-fabricated situation in the present study was an empirical necessity to make sure the participants fulfilled the requirements to collect the needed data.

CHAPTER IV

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, main findings regarding turn taking sequences, transitions from small talk to more personal talk and politeness phenomena occurring between ELF interlocutors are analyzed in depth. A discussion section is provided where main findings are interpreted and the implications of these findings are given.

4.1 Findings

In this section, excerpts from the conversations of the data collected will be analyzed in detail and to look for answers to the three research questions proposed for this research. With this purpose, this section has been divided in three subsections: turn taking, topics and politeness strategies.

4.1.1 Turn taking

In this subsection of the findings, the following research questions will be answered: What is the temporal sequence between turns? And what does the time indicate about the individuals engaged in this particular activity? The goal is to understand how ELF speakers from study abroad programs interact and see if there is any salient feature which distinguishes their turn taking transition from any other kind of talk.

Levinson and Torreira (2015) argue that language use involves rapid switching between comprehension and production rapidly where these processes also sometimes overlap. While language production system has latencies of around 600 ms for encoding new words, gaps between turns have been found to be around 200 ms (Levinson and Torreira, 2015). Their findings would imply that native speakers often must predict the rest of the sentential structure in order to generate a response within the time sequence in which they provide. Thus, participants in conversation are already encoding the response while the other speaker has still not finished a turn.

However, the present data exemplifies something different from what Levinson and Torreira (2015) stated. What we observe is that on average these gaps between turns are longer, ranging from 200 ms to 700 ms long. Table 1 shows the mean average gap results from the four conversation groups. Against Levinson and Torreira's (2015) prediction, the present data does not come into agreement with those findings, however the reasons for this findings must be examined. First, the data collected in this study belongs to conversations between speakers of English as a second (or third) language with English levels ranging from B2 to C1, and would

suggest that ELF interactants do not make predictions about the end of the turn of the other participant, or at least not at the same speed.

<i>Group</i>	<i>Mean time between turns (ms)</i>
<i>Group 1</i>	420
<i>Group 2</i>	350
<i>Group 3</i>	480
<i>Group 4</i>	380

Table1. Average gap between turns by group.

In the following excerpt, we can observe two participants interacting about the length of their stay in the Netherlands:

(1) CHIN: so: how em how long have you been here? (0.3)
 SPAN: ahm: so: only since last year 'n now im starting my second year (0.4)
 CHIN: so:(0.2) is it a two year master?
 SPAN: it's a one year program.

It can be observed that this extract does not contain face-threatening topics nor complicated constructions, which might be difficult for ELF speakers to talk about, however, participants, take gaps longer than the average stated by Levinson and Torreira (2015) to take turns. One of the longer gaps is located right after a question, this gap might indicate that the other interlocutor is processing the answer, as the cognitive processes might take more effort to understand what the hearer is saying, and then take time to generate the talk. However, the context has to be taken into account, participants here are strangers, and thus, these gaps might also indicate a politeness strategy where the interlocutor wants to make sure that the speaker has finished the turn. In the following extract, we see a similar pattern, this time participants from Slovenia and Spain are introducing each other:

(2) Slov: Nice to meet you (0.5)
 Span: Where ar'yu from,?
 Slov: Em:: yeah: em: it's a long story, I come from Slovakia but I also lived in Spain.
 Span: That's interesting (0.3)
 Slov: So: f-f-from where are you?

Span: Im from Bilbao.

It can be observed that in two of the turns participants take a longer gap between the turns. In this case, participants seem to be requesting information about each other. Moreover, the gaps between turns are located after the interlocutors have already asked and answered the questions proposed by one of the participants. In this case, the gaps found cannot be related to the fact that interlocutors might be thinking about what they are going to answer, instead, the fact that they are strangers can be associated with there being a longer gap. More specifically, in a situation where participants do not know each other can influence the conversation in a way that participants are just waiting for someone to lead the conversation. In the following transcription extract, the feature which has been observed above also occurs, where interlocutors are exchanging information about their country of origin:

(3) Hun: °Sorry: where are you from?

Span: Spain.

Hung: °Spain. (0.5)

Span: Bu:t I really enjoy it here (.) 'n what about the educational system? (0.7)

Ger: Em: in Germany?

Span: Yeah.

As in example (2), the gaps between turns, which are long, are located after the question has been asked. One of the gaps, found after the question has been answered already indicates again that the social situation might drive interlocutors to encounter gaps between turns, as they might not know what to say next. The second gap of 700 ms long, however, is a consequence of a misunderstanding, where the interlocutor appears to be not aware that the Spanish participant is asking a question to the German interlocutor.

(4) FIN It's awesome I like it here.

SPAN ↑oh: I love it here as ↑well. (0.5)

CHIN so you come from London right?

FIN oh no Finland.

CHIN oh ok. (0.5)

SPAN and you?

Example (4) shows some participants talking about their stay here. The two gaps found in the conversation extract suggest that these pauses appear frequently in conversation. While two participants exchange that they like it being in the Netherlands, after the 5ms gap, another participant takes the next turn to talk about a different topic. The fact that a long pause is present can be related to politeness phenomena employed by interlocutors, where interrupting someone is trying to be avoided, probably because they do not know each other.

As it was observed in examples (1), (2), (3) and (4), it has been found that these gaps between turns are usually located after questions, after a question has been answered or after a topic has already been discussed. On the one hand, those gaps which appear right after a question, suggest that participants in conversation are not able to make predictions about what the speaker is about to say, as Levinson and Torreira (2015) predicted. This can be explained as participants having to wait until the entire sentential structure of the speaker is finished to be able to articulate the next turn. Potentially, participants' cognitive processes are focused on trying to understand what interlocutors are saying, leaving less importance to the predicting cognitive process, and thus a longer gap than native speakers is needed in order to generate an answer. This finding suggests that ELF speakers might not be making predictions about what other speakers are going to say at the same speed as native speakers in conversation, possibly related with the English proficiency.

On the other hand, it has also been found gaps after the question and answer, as in example (2), where there is a pause right after the interlocutor has answered a question by a different participant. This can be explained from the social situation participants are in, where they are interacting with strangers. This way, interactants, perhaps, facing the situation among strangers do not want to overlap turns, or talking at the same time than other participant interrupting them. This finding might have to be related with politeness phenomena occurring *in situ* which is further explained in section 4.1 "Politeness strategies employed by participants". However, these gaps can also be interpreted as a failure in prediction again. If participants do not feel comfortable in their ability to predict what is going to come at the end of the turn, they are going to ensure that the other interlocutor has indeed finished speaking, before continuing the conversation. Because they want to additionally make sure that the other interlocutor has finished speaking, this might again increase the length time between turns, because not only they have to comprehend the entire utterance, they also have to ensure that the interlocutor has finished speaking and then generate a response.

The gap in example (3) can be explained differently, even though the gap is found between a question and an answer, it can be interpreted as a misunderstanding, as the turn followed to the question is also a question. This suggests that the participant, in this case from Germany, was not aware that the question was being forwarded to him, or it can also be interpreted as the very first example, where participants are not making predictions about what the speakers is going to say, and thus needs to reinforce what has been asked.

4.1.2 Transition from Small Talk to personal talk

In this section I present the analysis of topics which were discussed throughout the conversations in the four different groups to explain specifically how the transition from general small talk to more personal topics function in this specific context with study abroad students.

While it has been observed that individuals start with small talk, throughout the conversation, they go from less relevant topics to more deep and personal topics. As explained above, there seems to be a common ground for most of the conversation topics, and this way most all the conversations share almost the same topics. Results gathered from four conversations show that small talking typically only lasts about 5.8 turns on average, and quickly turns to personal topics. It has been observed that personal talk takes the majority of these conversations, even though participants are strangers. Moreover, it has also been found that students use small talk as a tool to bond with people and thus build relationships. This finding would suggest that SM might actually be transactional.

In the following example, participants in group 3, after the exchanging of greetings in turn nine of the conversation already start asking personal questions:

(5)

- (9) Ger: So: where are you from?
 (10) Rus: Im from Russia.
 (11) Ger: °Rusi:a (.) and what do you study?
 (12) Rus: Biology (0.5)
 (13) Ger: So:? In the science building:?
 (14) Rus: <Yup.
 (15) Ger: That's a nice building.
 (16) Rus: Hhhhh: yeah: is more or less more u-
 understandable de: to: find the way euh(0.5): maybe in two
 weeks I get used to: the identification of the building=

The German participant seems to be interested in what the Russian participant does. The first exchanges from the Russian participant are short in nature, however, after the 15th exchange, the Russian interlocutor seems to feel more comfortable and starts producing longer turns. In the following example, personal topics start even on the 5th turn:

(6)

(5) Chin: So what d'you study?
(6) Ger: Erm: psychology(0.5)
(7) Chin: Psychology? So (0.3)
(8) Ger: N you?
(9) Chin: Euhm: linguistics:..
(10) Ger: Ah:: alright.
(11) Chin: So: ar'you doin' your bachelors o:r.
(12) Ger: [ya:: I just]
started.
(13) Chin: Ah: oh the who:le dregree?
(14) Ger: yep.
(15) Chin: ↓oka:y nice:: So:?, ar'you doin'it in English?
(16) Ger: Ye:z:..
(17) Chin: 'N how ar'you likin'it?
(18) Ger: I like it.=

In this extract, we can observe that both of the interactants continuously exchange personal questions about each other as a way to get to know each other. Even though they never met before, getting to know each other seems to be primary in order to be able to create a social bond, and perhaps look for things they have in common, like it can be seen in the following example:

(7)

(24) Thai: Uhum:: (.) where are you from,? Is it spain?
(25) Span: Im from spain yeah.
(26) Thai: Yeah you'd-d your studies in LANCASTER?
(27) Span: ↑YEAH you did too?
(28) Thai: [yeah: yeah: yeah:
]
(29) Span: You did your whole bachelors,?
(30) Thai: No: j-ust one year.
(31) Span: Oh: like me then (.) I did my Erasmus or like
year abroad. (0.3)
(32) Thai: [Oh:: yeah::] I really liked it (.) it's it's
like a really good memory.

This part of the conversation was found in the 24th turn in one of the transcriptions. It is a clear example that shows how participants try to look for common things, as in this case they find out they studied at the same place before coming to the Netherlands. The fact of finding this characteristic in common makes these participants open up and share more information, as the Spanish participant does talking about the Erasmus experience. It can be observed that participants attempt to make social distance lower by generating talk about things they find in common, even though they are strangers, it seems like they are trying to break a boundary in

order to create a social bond. This finding, where it can be seen that participants try to look for things in common to create social bondings can also be seen in the next example

(8)

- (48) Span: Where ar'yu from,?
 (49) Slov: Em:: yeah: em: it's a long story, I come from Slovakia but I also lived in Spain.
 (50) Span: That's interesting (0.3)
 (51) Slov: So: f-f-from where are you?
 (52) Span: Im from Bilbao.
 (53) Slov: °Bilba(.) I thought that you you'd come from Bilbao when I saw yout name: hhh.
 (54) Span: Hhhhh yeah: with my name: yeah: hhh.
 (55) Slov: So: I thought maybe Pais Vasco.
 (56) Span: So where did you live?

In this case, two participants find out that, even though they come from different countries, one of them also lived in the same place. This common characteristic leads them towards asking information about the reason for moving there. This finding supports the idea that interlocutors in conversation, continuously try to look for common ground in order to create a friendship even though they just met each other.

Another example of people finding things in common, can be seen in example (8) where participants appear to be more engaged in the conversation and interested in other peoples experiences, as they find common ground, this time talking about Thailand:

(9)

- (98) Belg: Yeah:: b-ut but where are you from exactly?
 (99) Thai: Am: Thailand.
 (100) Belg: ↑Oh Thailand OK nice: (0.5) I was in Thailand 2 years ago.
 (101) Thai: oh:? Really,?
 (102) Belg: Yes:: it was really nice (.) I really really liked it.
 (103) Thai: Did'yu go into Bangkok? But like only Bangkok?
 (104) Belg: [Yeah:]
 No-no-no I was in Bangkok and then we went to the north to Chian Mai area and then we went to am: Ao Nang.

These findings suggest that even though the participants are strangers, they still know something about the rest of the participants, and that is that they are study abroad students as well and they come from a different country. This way, interactants use SM as a mere protocol

and jump into personal topics in a very short time of period, as they are interested in getting to know the other person.

Overall, what we see in these examples is that participants attempt to breach social distance by virtue of generating talk, which is about shared communalities in the social group even though they have never met before. Over many decades, small talk has been claimed to be unimportant and not transactional (Melawnosky, 1923; Coupland, 2003), however we see different in these results. SM might just not be goal oriented, but relationship oriented as these findings suggest. Participants through SM jump into more personal topics which allows them to know more about each other, find things they share, such as nationality or places they travelled, and this allows them to create a social bond which potentially creates friendships.

4.1.3 Politeness strategies employed by participants

In this section, I explain what kind politeness strategies speakers of ELF use in conversation when conversing in a study abroad situation. As I have mentioned in the literature review, power and weight of imposition will be essentially non-existent. Power, in this scenario, will not be different between participants as they have equivalent ranks, however, social distance will be high, as participants do not know each other and do not have any previous relationship. Based on these characteristics, it is expected from participants to use independence strategies throughout the conversation. Given this specific situation where interlocutors have no power difference but do have high social difference, the expectation would be that a deference politeness system (Scollon and Scollon, 1995) would manifest. A deference politeness system is one in which participants are considered to be equals or near equals but treat each other with distance, and would use a relatively high concentration of independence politeness strategies just out of respect for each other (Scollon & Scollon, 1995). In this section I present the analysis of politeness strategies used by participants to explain what happens between ELF interactants.

It has been found that interlocutors in conversation appeal to the other interlocutors' positive face, continually appealing to positive face. In example (9) a participant is interested in the other's nationality. After asking this question, the participant finds out they have something in common, they lived in the same country. This appeals to the interlocutor to use positive face immediately, and so they both continue using involvement strategies:

(10)

1. Slo: So: f-f-from where are you?
2. Span: Im from Bilbao.

3. Slov: °Bilba(.) I thought that you you'd come from Bilbao
when I saw you name: hhh.
4. Span: Hhhhh yeah: with my name: yeah: hhh.
5. Slov: So: I thought maybe Pais Vasco.
6. Span: So where did you live?
7. Slov: Em: I lived in Cuenca.
8. Span: ↑Cuenca:.
9. Slov: Hhhhh:=
10. Span: =It's not the >most popular city hhh
11. Slov: Hhhh not exactly hhh=

This finding would suggest that participants have the perception that the social distance is decreased immediately. Even though they are strangers, they do know somethings about each other, and that is that they are all students coming from different countries to the Netherlands. This fact can drive participants towards the use of positive face and thus, the rest of the participants appeal to this characteristic as well. Furthermore, findings show that involvement strategies can be distinguished from independence strategies by looking at the turn length. When involvement strategies are employed, participants are more likely to produce longer turn sequences. This can be seen in example (10) extract from one of the groups, where participants are conversing about their experience in the Netherlands. One of the participants appeals to positive face by asking directly if they like it here. What we see following to that is how participants continue using involvement strategies, and at the same time how turns become longer:

(11)

1. Chin: =Y'like it?=
2. Ger: Yeah: it's really cool (0.7)
3. Chin: Uhu:.
4. Ger: Bt it's jst the second week zo: I: never had a test
zo: I don't know ↑YEAH.
5. Chin: [oh: yeah.]
6. Ger: Buta: think (0.5) t's (0.5) a little bit stressful
butta=.
7. Chin: =Yu'mean like: work,? Assignenments,?
8. Ger: a lot of reading. I-I think it's not that difficult but
it's just a lot (0.3) a lot of information (.) so when you
start and write something down (.) and you are like OK Im gonna
write that whole page down then you have four hundred pages
↓to: (.) zo: you habe to really like this is not that important
i-t's ye-ah.

In the beginning of this exchange, it can be observed that the Chinese participant uses involvement strategy by asking if the other participant likes it here. The German participant, following the other participant's involvement strategy continues employing involvement strategies, and turn by turn sequences becoming longer. This finding can be attributed to the fact that participants social distance is decreasing as the conversation among them gets further and they know more about each other.

The use of involvement strategies has also been found to be linked with interlocutors' nationality, as they are used sooner or later in the conversation. The reason why this happens could be attributed to the fact that they know more about each other, they not only have in common the situation they are in, but they also share their country of origin, and thus, many more characteristics. This feature would decrease their social distance, and thus employ involvement strategies in conversation. This would appeal their positive face and take them towards using involvement strategies. But at the same time, the use of independence strategies can be related to the politeness strategies used in participants L1. In example (11) we can see how one of the participants uses her negative face in a turn when asking a personal question. The hearer responds positively. This fact encourages the speaker to start using involvement strategies, and turns start to become longer. This example also exemplifies how distance between participants changed throughout the conversation.

- (1) Thai: Where you, perhaps here in July:?
- (2) Span: No: I was home.
- (3) Thai: Ah: becoze the city was (.) CRAZY
- (4) Span:
[Oh:] yeah becoze of the four day march?
- (5) Thai:
[Yeah: the] four day marching something and then ↑wow (.)
it's like my house near (.) OK my house is in the city
center (.) and then people just went back and ford all night
long even at three AM in the morning and they just shouted
and screams.

The factors of politeness regarding power, distance and weight of imposition actually might change during conversation, as we find in the present data. This would mean that there is no social situation where only involvement or only independent strategies are going to be used. This would mean that Scollon and Scollon's politeness strategies have a fatal flaw, they conceptualize interlocutors as maintaining the degree of power differentiation in social distance through the course of interaction, but this is not found in the present data.

In the following example, participants start again using independent strategies, giving participants choices and allowing them to maintain the freedom with the question about where they are from, they are not imposing. However, as soon as they find out they come from the same place, their social distance decreases and they start to use their positive face:

- (1) Span: So: you? are? From? =
- (2) Span2: =Spain.
- (3) Span: But: you also > speak?
- (4) Span2: Yeah: Im half Irish.
- (5) Slov: Oh:: okay hhh.(0.7)
- (6) Span: But you lived in spain?
- (7) Span2: I've always lived in Spain.
- (8) Span: She lived in Cuenca as well.
- (9) Span2: ↑Oh? Really?
- (10) Slov: Yeah yeah hhhh so you are also from, ? =
- (11) Span2: No-no I'm from Mallorca.
- (12) Slov: Ah okay hhh oh Mallorca you are so lucky.

It has been observed that participants start up using independence strategies, as their social distance is high. They know something about each other even though they are strangers, and that's that they are study abroad students and that they come from different countries. As soon as they start to share more information between them they know more about each other, this leads them towards using involvement strategies as they start to find things they have in common. One of those common characteristics is nationality, which has been found to be a trigger towards using involvement strategies sooner in the conversation. Participants who share nationality seem to use their positive face faster as they have more things to talk about. And as involvement strategies begin to replace the first independent strategies turns become longer as participants decrease the social distance in conversation.

The overall explanation to participants decreasing social distance seems to be that the more they know more about each other the more comfortable they find themselves in the conversation. And this leads them towards decreasing social distance, employing involvement strategies and at the same time making their turns longer as they are willing to share their experiences and compare it to others.

4.2 Discussion

In this section, the findings of the turn taking phenomena, transitions from small talk to personal talk and politeness strategies used by interlocutors in conversation are summarized. Levinson and Torreira (2015) argued that language use involves rapid switching between comprehension and production, where these processes also sometimes overlap. While language production system has latencies of around 600 ms for encoding new words, they claimed that gaps between turns have been found to be around 200 ms (Levinson and Torreira, 2015). They, thus, explain that native speakers must make predictions about the rest of the sentential structure in order to generate a response within the time sequence that is observed in their data.

However, the present findings from this study reveal that ELF speakers in study abroad situation, there are considerably longer gaps between turns, which suggest that they don't behave like native speakers. Unlike native speakers, these second language speakers may have to wait until the very end of the turn before they can finish the process of understanding the utterance to generate a response. And thus, their generation of the response often let to the appearance of long gaps, of an average of 407.5 ms. Results have shown two main reasons for the explanation of this characteristic: cognition time and politeness phenomena.

Results have shown that on average these gaps between turns are longer, ranging from 2ms to 7ms long. These findings do not agree with those of Levinson and Torreira (2015), and would suggest that ELF interactants do not make predictions about the end of the turn of the other participant, or at least not at the same speed. Moreover, these gaps between turns are found in three different places in conversation. Gaps found after an interlocutor's question suggest that participants in conversation are not able to predict what the speaker is about to say and thus need to wait until the interlocutor has finished the turn to be able to answer. However, this finding can also be explained as a politeness strategy, where interlocutors do not want to interrupt other interlocutors, and this way, wait until participants have finished their turns to start a new turn:

CHIN: so: how em how long have you been here? (0.3)

SPAN: ahm: so: only since last year 'n now im starting my second
year (0.4)

However, those gaps found after an answer has been given to an interlocutors' question can be explained from the social situation participants are in, where they are interacting with strangers. This way, interactants, perhaps, facing the situation among strangers do not want to overlap turns, or talk at the same time than other participant interrupting them.

According to Sacks (1974), when a turn is finished, we leave the “ground” to someone else to use it. In a group conversation, utterances such as questions can be addressed not to a particular individual but to all the members. Now, who takes the turn is just the first person to claim that ground, in other words, the person who starts an utterance, and thus takes the turn. The findings in the data suggest that in this specific context, these kind of situation in taking the “ground” takes more time:

Slov: Em:: yeah: em: it's a long story, I come from Slovakia
but I also lived in Spain.
Span: That's interesting (0.3)
Slov: So: f-f-from where are you?

Results suggest that it can be related to the relationship between individuals in conversation, since they are still strangers to one another, and the politeness strategies they are using. This finding can also be explained as that interlocutors are thinking about the answer, again they might just take longer to generate a response, since they need more time to understand any utterance. The present data comes from speakers of English as lingua franca, and none of them have English as their native language. The fact that they are not proficient in English may mean that the pauses are related with the prediction from the part of individuals, who are just not able to predict what the interlocutors will say.

Overall, findings from the turn taking phenomena shows that the proposition from Levinson and Torreira (2015) is different when it comes to non-native speakers of English in this situation. The ways that they are making predictions, or not making predictions, about what the speaker is going to say, is different to the predictions of native speakers. This can be explained through the English level participants in this study have, which ranged from B2 to C1 (CEFR), and thus they may not process their L2 as fast as their L1, and also or as native speakers. This, implies that through conversation, participants are using the cognitive processes to understand what others are saying, which takes time from production and generation of speech. Thus, through spending time on understanding, they are not able to predict and produce simultaneously.

These findings might have great implications for the field of ELF. It is thus predicted that time sequences between turns might be contingent upon the proficiency of speakers. Speakers with high proficiency, such as C2, would potentially follow Levinson and Torreira's findings where interlocutors take 2ms to take turns, and those speakers with lower proficiency would take longer gaps, like we found in the present sample. As this data suggests, if there is a correlation between proficiency level and turn sequence time, some predictions could be made

which could be tested empirically in a controlled situation.

Regarding turn transition from SM to more personal talk, it has been found that participants in this specific context, even if they do not know each other at all, quickly go from introducing themselves into topics that are more personal. However, even though these participants are stranger, they have something in common which they know they share, they are study abroad students. Results showed that all conversations use SM as a mere protocol to greet and introduce each other, and jump fast into more personal topics with the goal of building a relationship with the rest of the participants.

While previous research claimed that SM was purposeless (Melawnoski, 1923; Coupland, 2003), results show that SM is used as a tool towards relationship building. This finding makes SM an important aspect in conversation since brings interlocutors towards talking about more personal topics, and to get to know each other. Overall, results show that participants attempt to breach social distance by virtue of generating talk, which is about shared communalities in the social group even though they never met before.

This finding shows how interactions between individuals in a study abroad context are different in the sense that participants are more involved in trying to create social bonds. Small talk serves students to exchange these information (background of education, experiences in the current country, travelling experiences, etc.) to try and look for common characteristics with the rest of participants in the conversation. In other words, participants try to interact between them to see if they have things in common with other participants, such as places they have already been, hobbies they share, etc. This means that students use small talk as a tool to bond with people and thus building of relationships. Students use non-threatening topics, this means that they must be using politeness strategies which are suitable for this context. This was analysed in the third section in the findings.

Regarding politeness strategies used by participants, it was expected that they would use independence strategies throughout the conversation. In this contexts, participants have the same power, however there is a high social distance between them. According to this politeness strategy, according to Scollon and Scollon (1995), participants would use a deference face system, where interlocutors conceive themselves at the same social level with no interlocutor wielding power over the other (-P), but with a distant relationship (+D). Scollon and Scollon (1995) claim that with this politeness strategy interlocutors use independence strategies to minimize the possibility of threatening or losing face. Given this specific situation where interlocutors have no power difference but do have high social difference, the expectation would be that a deference politeness system (Scollon and Scollon, 1995) would manifest.

Findings regarding politeness strategies used by ELF speakers in study abroad situation show that conversations start with participants using independence strategies, as expected, however, participants quickly change their strategy towards using involvement strategies. It has been found that interlocutors in conversation appeal to the other interlocutors' positive face, continually appealing through involvement strategies:

Chin: =Y' like it?=
Ger: Yeah: it's really cool (0.7)

Moreover, findings suggest that when a participant changes from independence towards involvement strategies in conversation, the rest of the participants follow this pattern towards the use of their positive face. Results also showed that as involvement strategies are used, turns become longer, which shows how participants feel like the social distance has decreased and takes them towards sharing their experiences. These features demonstrate that interactions between students in study abroad programs behave in a different way when meeting with strangers in the same situation as them. They are characterized by mutual cooperation, interest and joint support. These findings support Grzega's (2005) statement which states that ELF interactions were cooperative, consensus-oriented and jointly supportive.

These changes from using independent to involvement strategies suggest that it is possible in conversation to switch politeness strategies, this finding differs from Scollon and Scollon's politeness theory, who conceptualize interlocutors as maintaining the degree of social distance through the course of interaction, but results show how it is possible to change. These findings would implicate that, indeed it is possible to switch politeness strategies, as interlocutors get to know each other and decrease their social distance. Future research should look at factors such as power or weight of imposition can also change throughout conversation, and bring new perspectives to the field of politeness.

Furthermore, future research should focus on the individual differences related with the L1 background, and see if there is any connection with the use of the positive or negative face. Those findings could help interlocutors "act" in a different way when interacting with people from different countries. Moreover, it would be interesting to compare if study abroad students behave the same way when conversing with individuals in different situations, such as in an academic setting with professors. This information could complete the actual findings on the field of ELF which as many researchers have observed until the present date is constantly changing and is context dependent.

Overall, these findings have analyzed the characteristics of ELF conversations among students in study abroad programs when conversing between strangers. Findings have suggested that the fact that they use their positive face makes conversation cooperative in every aspect, involved in the conversation and what's more important they are willing to make social connections in order to create social relationships by looking for things in common with the rest of the interactants.

CHAPTER V

5. CONCLUSION

The main goal of this study was to analyze ELF interactions in study abroad context, starting by looking at the sequences between turns, then moving on to the transitions from small talk and how they move into more personal topics which might go from basic introductions to personal topics, and finally, what these findings on their choice of topic and turn-taking sequences might tell us about the politeness strategies they use. Thus, three aspects of the conversation were analysed: turn taking phenomena, the transition from small talk to personal talk and politeness strategies used in conversation.

The main findings suggest that between native speakers and non-native speakers, processing, production and prediction times might be different. Future research should be undertaken to compare natural data collected from conversations from native and non-native speakers with different language proficiencies And those differences might be correlated with language proficiency. This research has found that turn taking phenomena in this context differs significantly from nativelike conversations, in order to see if language proficiency plays a role in the time sequences between turns.

Findings regarding the topics selected in conversation revealed that individuals start small talk conversations with mere exchange of information, but most relevantly, small talk conversations between these strangers quickly go towards more personal conversations where participants try to get to know each other while talking about different topics. These findings implicate that small talking is not only transactional, actually small talking has a purpose in this context, which is social bonding. Indeed, small talk cannot be seen anymore as purposeless, since it can actually led towards the creation of new relationships, and more importantly in this context towards academic success.

Regarding politeness strategies encountered in conversation, it was predicted following Scollon and Scollon's (1995) deference politeness strategy that where social distance is high, individuals in conversation use independence strategies. However, interestingly, even though participants start up using independence strategies, it was found that they rapidly change to involvement strategies, where social distance is completely reduced. These findings implicate that in these type of contexts where participants share the same situations, where they have just arrived in a new country to study, they seem to cooperate and be interested in people's lives

and personal experiences. These findings have a great relevance for the field of politeness, since they suggest that it is possible in conversation to switch politeness strategies, which show different to Scollon and Scollon's politeness theory, who conceptualize interlocutors as maintaining the degree of social distance through the course of interaction. These findings would implicate that, indeed it is possible to switch politeness strategies, as interlocutors get to know each other and decrease their social distance.

By analysing these three features separately, this project has given a detailed overview of how individuals in study abroad programs converse while using ELF, and has extended the knowledge of the nature of these interactions. The results show how cooperative conversations are and not only have great implications for the field of small talk but also for ELF interactions. On the one hand, findings regarding turn transitions have important implications of turn taking. After seeing the results from this study, it can be concluded that turn sequences between ELF on a study abroad context are longer in nature compared with native speakers, and thus, they might not predict what interlocutors are saying in conversation. Regarding small talk, these findings implicate how this talk can be characterize as being important for human communication and social bonding, it is a step towards relationship building. And supporting Beinstein (1975), it showed how public conversations may "metacommunicate" important information about the social cohesiveness of a community, in this case the community of study abroad students.

Lastly, this study supports previous ELF research, indicating that ELF communities have their own unique characteristics and features in terms of the use of English and the range of users across different social groups (Berns, 2009). There is also a need for more research in turn taking phenomena in ELF communities since this study has shown that it does not resemble the characteristics mentioned by Levinson and Torreira (2015) who described turn taking by native speakers. Understanding how ELF conversations work can reveal how people interact, people's social and personal values in conversation, and most importantly, this type of communication can be the key not only for academic success but also for personal success.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Transcription 1

SPAN: Hi:.

POL: Hi.

CHIN: Hi:.

SPAN: Welcome.

FIN: Thank you.

SPAN: Im Ira by the way.

FIN: Im Niko, nice to meet you.

SPAN: Nice to meet you too.

POL: so: is this your final year?

SPAN: yea:h I erm hope so.

POL: [right?]

SPAN: hhhm.

CHIN: so: how em how long have you been here? (0.3)

SPAN: ahm: so: only since last year 'n now im starting my second year (0.4)

CHIN: so:(0.2) is it a] two year master?

SPAN: it's a one year program.

POL: oh: I ↓see:.

SPAN: ↑so im finishing me thesis now hhh. (0.5) So how do you like it here?

POL: em: hhh is pretty different hhh. I mean

CHIN: [so where do you come from?]

POL: im from Poland.

SPAN: oh: yeah probably (0.3) is different from spain as well

FIN [pretty different] from
finland as well=

SPAN =yeah?

FIN It's awesome I like it here.(0.5)

SPAN ↑oh: I love it here as ↑well.=

CHIN =so you come from London right?

FIN oh no Finland.

CHIN oh ok.

POL [oh ok]. (0.5)

SPAN and you?

CHIN I: come from China (0.2) and I like it very much becauz: (0.2)
china is like where I come from is a very big city which is about 20
millions 0.2 peoples so

POL ↑[oh::]

SPAN ↑[oh::]

CHIN Sohh yeah (0.30) is too crowded.

SPAN Ye:ah I can imagine (0.3)

CHIN Yep.

SPAN This summer I was in Vietnam (0.5) 'n just like the society is so
much different compared to: western society just like (0.3) everything
everywhere you go is so crowded.

CHIN Yep.

SPAN 'N we never think about that (0.2) is just like for us is just a
↑given thing
just going anywhere and is gonna be (0.3) I dunno be normal people
hhh
decent amount of people y'know (0.5) but anywhere you go is just
gonna be so many people and that people don't realize (0.5) stuff that they
do everyday (0.5) to the market or anything.

POL Hmm:.

CHIN [Yep]'n 'n those markets are closed to very early afternoon (0.2)I
think, right? It's closed like five or six:?

SPAN Ye:s (0.5)

CHIN So yeap.

SPAN But it happens here as well (0.3)for example eum:hh (0.2) clothing
shops close maybe ↓five five thirty.

FIN Yeah it's really annoying. I'm used to them being open 'till eight
in the evening=

SPAN =I oh I know that's something I don't really get used to for
example in Spain all the shops are open 'till nine (0.2)or like ↑even
supermarkets. 'N I used to go out maybe around sep six or seven. 'N here
you go out at like (0.2) six or seven and its like (0.2) everything is
↓dead. ↑Right?

CHIN [yea:hhhh].

POL ↑[ye:s:]

But it is still better than in Switzerland. I was there like three weeks ago to visit my friend e:m 'n we were thinking we wanted to go for a beer e:m or for any drink. But seven eight PM bars are closed ↑even in Zurich.

CHIN Hhh.

FIN [that's early].

SPAN Okay:.

<laughter>

POL Y'know is summer and you want to jst'go out and hang out with friends and

There are like er: two streets like main streets that you can find something (0.5)

SPAN Yeah.

POL But the rest is just closed (0.5) so:: yeah. I talked to my Spanish friends and there were ↑oh god I couldn't.=

SPAN =Like a social (party like socially) socializing is really important which you do maybe after school or after anything, but here is like (0.3) I don't know they do it at different times (0.2)I guess.

CHIN [yep]

SPAN like just hanging out at university and having a beer that's: not normal in Spain ↑like you do that outside university.=

POL =I was also surprised by that.

SPAN Yeah.

FIN I had dinner at the refter yesterday and they actually had beer in the university.

<laughter>

CHIN Yeah I see that.

FIN [It's so weird].

SPAN [Yeah I know I know].That's weird for me as well.

POL But I guess the weirdest thing for me it was that erh: well here not but erh: im from the faculty of science, and for lunch they only eat sandwiches, salad hhh.

SPAN Yes::,

POL Hhhh that's not lunch for me but okay? (0.5)

SPAN Yeah:for example in Spain our main like dish of the day is lunch.

CHIN Yep.

SPAN And here is just like (0.5) they just eat the sandwich and ↑that's it.

POL Yeah::. (0.5)

SPAN So what are you studying here?

POL Erm: it's medical biology but I take more erm: into neuroscience specialization.

SPAN They have a lot of neuroscience stuff 'n the donders center.

POL Yeah: it's more about psychology actually.

SPAN Uhu.

POL Like cognitive not biology, but I'd rather do biology stuff.

SPAN So do you have many courses that you can choose from?

POL YEAH: they have a lot of them in medical biology (0.2)ah:: but actually in my masters? Erm: there are not so many courses because everything is focused on an internship.

SPAN Uhu.

POL But in the other hand it is hard to find one (cause like people are on holidays and I can't arrange it)erm: so im still looking for one (0.3)but we will see

SPAN 'N what about you?

FIN Im studying linguistics.

SPAN ↑Oh yeah? Me too.

CHIN Hhhh.

FIN Yeah it is mostly like I am taking mostly literature courses here cause there weren't that many courses which were available to me. In my university I have very strict restrictions on what I can actually take. Hhhh it was really annoying.

SPAN yea:h (0.5) like here is like (0.5) juts do what you ↑want. (0.5) You have this many courses and you can choose what you want.

GER Hey.

SPAN Hi:.

GER Sorry I was at the wrong room, I was at the ↑minus one.

<A LOT OF BACKGROUD NOISE>

SPAN ↑Oh Im Ira by the way.

GER Hi nice to meet you.

SPAN Nice to meet you too. What'dg you study?

GER I study physics.

SPAN 'N you here for your ↓bachelor? Masters?

GER I'm doing my bachelors.

SPAN nice:: (0.5)'n how long have you been here?

GER I've been here three years but last year I did an erm: exchange in Normway.

SPAN Oh nice:: are you doing your masters or bachelors?

FIN Bachelors.

SPAN Ah:: that's why.

 Only Erasmus?

FIN Yeap.

SPAN 'N you sai:d?

CHIN Erm: I study neuroscience its very similar to her (0.3) but im only in the cognitive part.

SPAN Ah::.

CHIN (Am: am: the) im just come from the donders hhh:.=

SPAN =So you do researcg there? Or classes there?

CHIN [yeah::] hhh I don't know cause this is my second day of the year hhh.=

POL =You're just for the master?

CHIN Eh:: Im a PHD student ↑yeap.

POL Ah: OK.

SPAN Oh:: PHD.

CHIN ↓Yeap? So? ↑Whats wrong?

SPAN Nonono I mean that hhh you are just more advanved that us hhh.

SPAN So: (0.2) how do you like it here? You probably know a lot about Nijmegen

 I guess?

GER Actually I come from Cleve so in Germany right on the other side.

SPAN ↑Oh there is a lot of people from Germany here.

GER So for me this was the closest university to go to ermm from my place

SPAN oh really?

GER Yeah.=

SPAN =Even closer than Dusseldorf?

GER Is erm is it's I think like 10 kilometers.

SPAN Oh so (0.5) right in the border I guess?=

CHIN =so you can come home everyday?

GER Of course.

SPAN Nice::

GER At the moment I I leave at home, I am looking for a room in town, But because I haven't found one yet I have to live with my parents back at home and I come to university by car (0.5) it's a bit annoying but it's so close that it's possible so: yea:(0.2)h its really close'n when I grew up as a child I 've been to Nijmegen a lot 'n yeah so I have really have known it since forever.

SPAN Nice:: so do you speak Dutch?

GER I do speak Dutch?

SPAN But what is easy to learn?

GER Ye:s but because I speak German.

SPAN Yeah yeah.

BULG Is it here?

SPAN Hello.

BULG Oh hello.

SPAN Im ira.

BULG Sveta.

SPAN Nice to meet you.

BULG Nice to meet you too:.

SPAN So where do you come from?

BULG Bulgaria.

SPAN 'N what do you study?

BULG Economics.

SPAN Are you here for Erasmus?, masters?...

BULG [Bachelors] im doing the normal program.

SPAN And how do you like it here?

BULG It's fine

SPAN But is it like your country?

BULG Ahm:: ↓I don't know how to answer to that one.

SPAN But you said you are from Bulgaria?

BULG Yah except that I didn't really lived there?

CHIN ↑Oh nice tell us about that.

BULG We:ll oka:y I left the country when I was 10 years old erm (0.3) then I lived in emirates (0.5)'n then at the age of 14 I moved to Bahreim (0.5) 'n now Im here doing my bachelors.

SPAN That's pretty interesting so: (0.5) you have now lived in 4 different countries?=
BULG =Yeah this is my forth.

APPENDIX 2: Transcription 2

SPAN: Hi:.

POL: Hi.

CHIN: Hi:.

SPAN: Welcome.

FIN: Thank you.

SPAN: Im Ira by the way.

FIN: Im Niko, nice to meet you.

SPAN: Nice to meet you too.

POL: so: is this your final year?

SPAN: yea:h I erm hope so.

POL: [right?]

SPAN: hhhm.

CHIN: so: how em how long have you been here? (0.3)

SPAN: ahm: so: only since last year 'n now im starting my second year (0.4)

CHIN: so:(0.2) is it a] two year master?

SPAN: it's a one year program.

POL: oh: I ↓see:.

SPAN: ↑so im finishing me thesis now hhh. (0.5) So how do you like it here?

POL: em: hhh is pretty different hhh. I mean

CHIN: [so where do you come from?]

POL: im from Poland.

SPAN: oh: yeah probably (0.3) is different from spain as well

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finland as well=

SPAN =yeah?

FIN It's awesome I like it here.(0.5)

SPAN ↑oh: I love it here as ↑well.=

CHIN =so you come from London right?

FIN oh no Finland.

CHIN oh ok.

POL [oh ok]. (0.5)

SPAN and you?

CHIN I: come from China (0.2) and I like it very much becauz: (0.2)
china is like where I come from is a very big city which is about 20
millions 0.2 peoples so

POL ↑[oh::]

SPAN ↑[oh::]

CHIN Soh h yeah (0.30) is too crowded.

SPAN Ye:ah I can imagine (0.3)

CHIN Yep.

SPAN This summer I was in Vietnam (0.5) 'n just like the society is so
much different compared to: western society just like (0.3) everything
everywhere you go is so crowded.

CHIN Yep.

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CHIN [Yep]'n 'n those markets are closed to very early afternoon (0.2) I
think, right? It's closed like five or six:?

SPAN Ye:s (0.5)

CHIN So yeap.

SPAN But it happens here as well (0.3) for example eum:hh (0.2) clothing
shops close maybe ↓five five thirty.

FIN Yeah it's really annoying. I'm used to them being open 'till eight
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SPAN =I oh I know that's something I don't really get used to for
example in Spain all the shops are open 'till nine (0.2) or like ↑even
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CHIN [yea:hhhh].

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But it is still better than in Switzerland. I was there like three weeks ago to visit my friend e:m 'n we were thinking we wanted to go for a beer e:m or for any drink. But seven eight PM bars are closed ↑even in Zurich.

CHIN Hhh.

FIN [that's early].

SPAN Okay:.

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POL Y'know is summer and you want to jst'go out and hang out with friends and

There are like er: two streets like main streets that you can find something (0.5)

SPAN Yeah.

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SPAN Yeah.

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SPAN [Yeah I know I know].That's weird for me as well.

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SPAN Yes::,

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SPAN Yeah:for example in Spain our main like dish of the day is lunch.

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SPAN They have a lot of neuroscience stuff 'n the donders center.

POL Yeah: it's more about psychology actually.

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POL Like cognitive not biology, but I'd rather do biology stuff.

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APPENDIX 3: Transcription 3

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CHIN: Hi:.

SPAN: Welcome.

FIN: Thank you.

SPAN: Im Ira by the way.

FIN: Im Niko, nice to meet you.

SPAN: Nice to meet you too.

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SPAN: yea:h I erm hope so.

POL: [right?]

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CHIN: so:(0.2) is it a] two year master?

SPAN: it's a one year program.

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SPAN: ↑so im finishing me thesis now hhh. (0.5) So how do you like it here?

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CHIN oh ok.

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CHIN I: come from China (0.2) and I like it very much becauz: (0.2)
china is like where I come from is a very big city which is about 20
millions 0.2 peoples so

POL ↑[oh::]

SPAN ↑[oh::]

CHIN Soh h yeah (0.30) is too crowded.

SPAN Ye:ah I can imagine (0.3)

CHIN Yep.

SPAN This summer I was in Vietnam (0.5) 'n just like the society is so
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CHIN Hhh.

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SPAN Okay:.

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SPAN =Like a social (party like socially) socializing is really important which you do maybe after school or after anything, but here is like (0.3) I don't know they do it at different times (0.2)I guess.

CHIN [yep]

SPAN like just hanging out at university and having a beer that's: not normal in Spain ↑like you do that outside university.=

POL =I was also surprised by that.

SPAN Yeah.

FIN I had dinner at the refter yesterday and they actually had beer in the university.

<laughter>

CHIN Yeah I see that.

FIN [It's so weird].

SPAN [Yeah I know I know].That's weird for me as well.

POL But I guess the weirdest thing for me it was that erh: well here not but erh: im from the faculty of science, and for lunch they only eat sandwiches, salad hhh.

SPAN Yes::,

POL Hhhh that's not lunch for me but okay? (0.5)

SPAN Yeah:for example in Spain our main like dish of the day is lunch.

CHIN Yep.

SPAN And here is just like (0.5) they just eat the sandwich and ↑that's it.

POL Yeah:.. (0.5)

SPAN So what are you studying here?

POL Erm: it's medical biology but I take more erm: into neuroscience specialization.

SPAN They have a lot of neuroscience stuff 'n the donders center.

POL Yeah: it's more about psychology actually.

SPAN Uhu.

POL Like cognitive not biology, but I'd rather do biology stuff.

SPAN So do you have many courses that you can choose from?

POL YEAH: they have a lot of them in medical biology (0.2)ah:: but actually in my masters? Erm: there are not so many courses because everything is focused on an internship.

SPAN Uhu.

POL But in the other hand it is hard to find one (cause like people are on holidays and I can't arrange it)erm: so im still looking for one (0.3)but we will see

SPAN 'N what about you?

FIN Im studying linguistics.

SPAN ↑Oh yeah? Me too.

CHIN Hhhh.

FIN Yeah it is mostly like I am taking mostly literature courses here cause there weren't that many courses which were available to me. In my university I have very strict restrictions on what I can actually take. Hhhh it was really annoying.

SPAN yea:h (0.5) like here is like (0.5) juts do what you ↑want. (0.5) You have this many courses and you can choose what you want.

GER Hey.

SPAN Hi:..

GER Sorry I was at the wrong room, I was at the ↑minus one.

<A LOT OF BACKGROUD NOISE>

SPAN ↑Oh Im Ira by the way.

GER Hi nice to meet you.

SPAN Nice to meet you too. What'dg you study?

GER I study physics.

SPAN 'N you here for your ↓bachelor? Masters?

GER I'm doing my bachelors.

SPAN nice:: (0.5)'n how long have you been here?

GER I've been here three years but last year I did an erm: exchange in
Normway.

SPAN Oh nice:: are you doing your masters or bachelors?

FIN Bachelors.

SPAN Ah:: that's why.

 Only Erasmus?

FIN Yeap.

SPAN 'N you sai:d?

CHIN Erm: I study neuroscience its very similar to her (0.3) but im
only in the cognitive part.

SPAN Ah::.

CHIN (Am: am: the) im just come from the donders hhh:.=

SPAN =So you do researcg there? Or classes there?

CHIN [yeah::] hhh I don't know cause this
is my second day of the year hhh.=

POL =You're just for the master?

CHIN Eh:: Im a PHD student ↑yeap.

POL Ah: OK.

SPAN Oh:: PHD.

CHIN ↓Yeap? So? ↑Whats wrong?

SPAN Nonono I mean that hhh you are just more advanved that us hhh.

SPAN So: (0.2) how do you like it here? You probably know a lot about
Nijmegen

 I guess?

GER Actually I come from Cleve so in Germany right on the other side.

SPAN ↑Oh there is a lot of people from Germany here.

GER So for me this was the closest university to go to ermm from my place

SPAN oh really?

GER Yeah.=

SPAN =Even closer than Dusseldorf?

GER Is erm is it's I think like 10 kilometers.

SPAN Oh so (0.5) right in the border I guess?=

CHIN =so you can come home everyday?

GER Of course.

SPAN Nice::

GER At the moment I I leave at home, I am looking for a room in town, But because I haven't found one yet I have to live with my parents back at home and I come to university by car (0.5) it's a bit annoying but it's so close that it's possible so: yea:(0.2)h its really close'n when I grew up as a child I 've been to Nijmegen a lot 'n yeah so I have really have known it since forever.

SPAN Nice:: so do you speak Dutch?

GER I do speak Dutch?

SPAN But what is easy to learn?

GER Ye:s but because I speak German.

SPAN Yeah yeah.

BULG Is it here?

SPAN Hello.

BULG Oh hello.

SPAN Im ira.

BULG Sveta.

SPAN Nice to meet you.

BULG Nice to meet you too:.

SPAN So where do you come from?

BULG Bulgaria.

SPAN 'N what do you study?

BULG Economics.

SPAN Are you here for Erasmus?, masters?...

BULG [Bachelors] im doing the normal program.

SPAN And how do you like it here?

BULG It's fine

SPAN But is it like your country?

BULG Ahm:: ↓I don't know how to answer to that one.

SPAN But you said you are from Bulgaria?

BULG Yah except that I didn't really lived there?

CHIN ↑Oh nice tell us about that.

BULG We:ll oka:y I left the country when I was 10 years old erm (0.3) then I lived in emirates (0.5)'n then at the age of 14 I moved to Bahreim (0.5) 'n now Im here doing my bachelors.

SPAN That's pretty interesting so: (0.5) you have now lived in 4 different countries?=
BULG =Yeah this is my forth.

APPENDIX 4: Transcription 4

SPAN: Hi:.

POL: Hi.

CHIN: Hi:.

SPAN: Welcome.

FIN: Thank you.

SPAN: Im Ira by the way.

FIN: Im Niko, nice to meet you.

SPAN: Nice to meet you too.

POL: so: is this your final year?

SPAN: yea:h I erm hope so.

POL: [right?]

SPAN: hhhm.

CHIN: so: how em how long have you been here? (0.3)

SPAN: ahm: so: only since last year 'n now im starting my second year (0.4)

CHIN: so:(0.2) is it a] two year master?

SPAN: it's a one year program.

POL: oh: I ↓see:.

SPAN: ↑so im finishing me thesis now hhh. (0.5) So how do you like it here?

POL: em: hhh is pretty different hhh. I mean

CHIN: [so where do you come from?]

POL: im from Poland.

SPAN: oh: yeah probably (0.3) is different from spain as well

FIN [pretty different] from
finland as well=

SPAN =yeah?

FIN It's awesome I like it here.(0.5)

SPAN ↑oh: I love it here as ↑well.=

CHIN =so you come from London right?

FIN oh no Finland.

CHIN oh ok.

POL [oh ok]. (0.5)

SPAN and you?

CHIN I: come from China (0.2) and I like it very much becauz: (0.2)
china is like where I come from is a very big city which is about 20
millions 0.2 peoples so

POL ↑[oh::]

SPAN ↑[oh::]

CHIN Soh h yeah (0.30) is too crowded.

SPAN Ye:ah I can imagine (0.3)

CHIN Yep.

SPAN This summer I was in Vietnam (0.5) 'n just like the society is so
much different compared to: western society just like (0.3) everything
everywhere you go is so crowded.

CHIN Yep.

SPAN 'N we never think about that (0.2) is just like for us is just a
↑given thing
just going anywhere and is gonna be (0.3) I dunno be normal people
hhh
decent amount of people y'know (0.5) but anywhere you go is just
gonna be so many people and that people don't realize (0.5) stuff that they
do everyday (0.5) to the market or anything.

POL Hmm:.

CHIN [Yep]'n 'n those markets are closed to very early afternoon (0.2) I
think, right? It's closed like five or six:?

SPAN Ye:s (0.5)

CHIN So yeap.

SPAN But it happens here as well (0.3) for example eum:hh (0.2) clothing
shops close maybe ↓five five thirty.

FIN Yeah it's really annoying. I'm used to them being open 'till eight
in the evening=

SPAN =I oh I know that's something I don't really get used to for
example in Spain all the shops are open 'till nine (0.2) or like ↑even
supermarkets. 'N I used to go out maybe around sep six or seven. 'N here
you go out at like (0.2) six or seven and its like (0.2) everything is
↓dead. ↑Right?

CHIN [yea:hhhh].

POL ↑[ye:s:]

But it is still better than in Switzerland. I was there like three weeks ago to visit my friend e:m 'n we were thinking we wanted to go for a beer e:m or for any drink. But seven eight PM bars are closed ↑even in Zurich.

CHIN Hhh.

FIN [that's early].

SPAN Okay:.

<laughter>

POL Y'know is summer and you want to jst'go out and hang out with friends and

There are like er: two streets like main streets that you can find something (0.5)

SPAN Yeah.

POL But the rest is just closed (0.5) so:: yeah. I talked to my Spanish friends and there were ↑oh god I couldn't.=

SPAN =Like a social (party like socially) socializing is really important which you do maybe after school or after anything, but here is like (0.3) I don't know they do it at different times (0.2)I guess.

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BULG =Yeah this is my forth.

APPENDIX 5: Background questionnaire

Please, fill in the following about yourself.

Age:

Nationality:

Mother tongue (s):

Can you please assess your English proficiency, choose one of the followings.

LEVEL	LEVEL NAME	DESCRIPTION
A1	Breakthrough or beginner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type.• Can introduce themselves and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people they know and things they have.• Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
A2	Way stage or elementary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment).• Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.• Can describe in simple terms aspects of their background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
B1	Threshold or intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.• Can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken.• Can produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
B2	Vantage or upper intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in their field of specialization. • Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. • Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
C1	Effective operational proficiency or advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer clauses, and recognize implicit meaning. • Can express ideas fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. • Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. • Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
C2	Mastery or proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. • Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. • Can express themselves spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in the most complex situations.

Write your answer here: