VIEW[Z]

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

♫ Hot town summer in the city ♪ – but not without our new Views issue! This June's refreshing issue includes three inspiring articles on such cool topics as the position, prosody and scope of English comment clauses, the use of repetition in ELF conversations, as well as verbal duelling through the ages.

The first contribution by Gunther Kaltenböck deals with the use of comment clauses in Present Day English. Using the British component of the *International Corpus of English* as the basis of his analysis, Kaltenböck discusses the link between the parameters position, prosody and scope. More specifically, he tries to show how the scope of comment clauses is influenced

by prosody and position and how the interaction of these factors points to the increasing grammaticalisation of comment clauses.

The second contribution by Julia Lichtkoppler approaches the role of repetition in English as a Lingua Franca conversations. In her analysis of data recorded at the accommodation office of an Austrian student exchange organisation, she accounts for both the formal as well as functional aspects of repetition and discusses its particular significance in ELF conversations.

Finally, Christopher Moik tackles the common denominator of Beowulf, the Old Norse god Þórr, an Arthurian knight, an urban black American youth and Internet users – verbal duelling. Approaching the topic of ritualised verbal exchanges from a diachronic perspective, Moik compares various types of verbal duelling, pointing out similarities but also showing how the form and function of verbal duels may change over time.

We hope that you will enjoy the inspiring contributions of this year's summer issue and would be happy to include your comments in form of a reply to one of the articles in our next issue.

THE EDITORS

Position, prosody, and scope: the case of English comment clauses[1]

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1. Introduction

This paper investigates the use of English comment clauses in a corpus of modern British English, viz. the spoken section of ICE-GB, the British component of the *International Corpus of English* (cf. Nelson *et al.* 2002). This 600.000 word corpus comprises various different text types and yields a total of 830 instances of comment clauses (henceforth CCs), some illustrative examples of which are given in (1).

(1) a. You've got to *I suppose* have something very special to offer (s1a-033-154)

    b. She's the first English girl I've spoken to for about three or four years *I think* (s1a-020 -28)

    c. His problem *it seems* is insoluble (s2b-039-31)

CCs are defined here as main clause-like supplements to another construction, the Host Construction (HC), to which they are related by linear adjacency but not syntactically, i.e. they are not constituents of the host (cf. Section 2 for details).

The aim of the paper is to highlight the close link between the parameters position, scope and prosody, which so far has not received any attention in the literature. More specifically, I will show that the (semantic-pragmatic) scope of a CC may not only be clausal, i.e. covering the entire host clause, but also phrasal, e.g. over parts of the HC. These two scopes also differ in their communicative functions with clausal scope CCs functioning as "shields" (Prince *et al.* 1982) and phrasal scope CCs being similar to "approximators" (in Prince *et al.*'s 1982 terms). One of the factors contributing to such a narrowing of scope is that of the position of the CC in the HC. Another factor is that of the prosodic realisation of the CC. Moreover, it is possible to detect preferred prosodic patterns for certain positions as well as for certain lexical

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items, with high-frequency CCs being more prone to prosodic integration. This, in turn, can be taken as an indication of increasing grammaticalisation (or pragmaticalisation) of CCs away from epistemic comments to discourse markers with predominantly structural function.

The paper consists of two main parts. After a delimitation of the class in question (Section 2) and a brief discussion of data retrieval and frequencies of occurrence (Section 3), Section 4 explores the link between scope and position. Taking into account various factors influencing the scope of a CC (Section 4.2), it focuses on attested and preferred insertion points in the HC as well as links between position and phrasal or clausal scope (section 4.3). The second part, Section 5, takes a closer look at the other important conditioning factor of scope, the prosodic realisation of the CC. It identifies four different prosodic patterns (Section 5.2) and investigates possible correlations with position and lexical types (5.3). The conclusion in Section 6 offers a brief conspectus.

2. Defining the class

The term comment clause is used by Quirk *et al.* (1972: 778-780) to denote a parenthetical clause which "may occur initially, finally, or medially, and have a separate tone unit" (op.cit. 778) and can take the form of a main clause (e.g. *I believe*) amongst others (cf. also Leech & Svartvik 1975: 216-217, Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1112-1118). The term comment clause also figures in other studies, but often with different definitions (e.g. Petola 1983, Biber *et al.* 1999: 197). Various other terms have also been used, such as parenthetical (e.g. Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 895) or parenthetical verbs (e.g. Urmson 1952).[2] For the purpose of the present study I have adopted the term comment clause but with a narrow definition which includes only asyndetic clauses (i.e. without formal link) linked to the host in that they contain a syntactic gap (typically the complement of the verb) which is filled conceptually by the host clause. This restrictive definition corresponds roughly to Quirk *et al.*'s (1985) class I comment clauses, Peterson's (1999) gap-containing parenthetical clause, or Schneider's (2007) reduced parenthetical clauses and is illustrated by the examples in (1) above.

CCs are closely related to other categories, especially reporting clauses, matrix clauses and discourse markers. For an operational definition, which is

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[2] cf. Kaltenböck 2005, 2007 for an overview of pertinent definitions.

needed for corpus retrieval, it is necessary to delimit CCs from these with clear, i.e. formal, criteria.

Let us, first of all, distinguish them from **reporting clauses**. While both types contain assertive predicates (Hooper 1975), CCs typically make use of some verbs of thinking, as illustrated in example (1) above, and reporting clauses make use of message conveying verbs (reporting verbs, *verba dicendi*), as illustrated in example (2).[3]

> (2)   Britain *he said* could compete and win (s2b-005-129)

CCs usually involve transitive verbs (e.g. *I believe, I guess*) without the object but may also consist of an adjective which elsewhere requires a *that*-clause object (e.g. *I'm afraid, I'm sorry to say*). They are typically in the present rather than the past tense and often do not have a corresponding progressive form (cf. Urmson 1952: 481). Unlike reporting clauses, their subject is usually in the first or second person rather than the third, although impersonal third person subjects are possible, too (e.g. *it's true, there's no doubt, one would have thought*).

Reporting clauses, on the other hand, are not limited to present tense and typically take a third person subject, as a result of their reporting function. More specifically, their function consists in identifying the speaker's source of information. Reporting clauses differ from CCs also in allowing a certain amount of flexibility in their word order, provided the subject is non-pronominal: cf. *The flight will be delayed, John says/says John, by two hours.*

Despite the formal and semantic differences between the two categories, there is considerable room for overlap. In the present study I have therefore adopted a restrictive view of reporting clauses. It includes only cases of explicit third person source identification of the type 'source = X' (X ≠ 1st or 2nd person), allocating all references to some unspecific source, such as the hearsay evidentials *they say* or *it is reported*, to the class of commenting clauses. Accordingly, the expressions *John said, I was told by John, it is pointed out by John* are classified as reporting clauses, while *I was told, it is pointed out* together with *it appears/transpires* and *I/you said* are taken to be CCs, owing to their lack of a specific source of information.

A particular problem for delimitation are CCs in clause-initial position, as in (3), where they are difficult to distinguish from **matrix clauses**, especially if the *that*-complementizer has been omitted.

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[3] For a detailed discussion of the lexical predicates and semantic patterns of the CCs found in the corpus cf. Kaltenböck (2006b).

(3)   *I suppose* (that) John has come back from London

Various different views have been expressed on the status of such initial clauses with and without *that* complementizer. They are either taken to be parenthetical (e.g. Kärkkäinen 2003, Kruisinga 1932: 486, Ross 1973, Thompson 2002, Thompson & Mulac 1991), matrix clauses (e.g. Peterson 1999: 236, Stenström 1995: e.g. 293, 296, Svensson 1976: 375), or ambiguous, i.e. allowing interpretation as both matrix clause and parenthetical clause depending on context and type of 'matrix' predicate (e.g. Aijmer 1972: 46, Biber *et al.* 1999: 197, Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 896, Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1113, Urmson 1952: 481).[4]

In the absence of hard and fast evidence for any of the different positions the present study takes a cautious approach and excludes all instances of initial clauses with a *that*-complementizer from the class of CCs. Initial clauses without *that* are only taken into account if they are clearly separated from the complement/host clause by means of a pause or some intervening material such as hesitation sounds (*uh, uhm*) or other fillers (*you know, I mean*).

CCs also need to be distinguished from clausal **discourse markers**. This concerns a small set of clausal (i.e. verbal) elements such as *I mean, I see, I think, you know, (you) see, mind you, look, listen*. All of these have previously been discussed under the heading of discourse marker (e.g. inter alia Erman 1987, Schiffrin 1987, Schourup 1985) as well as under the heading of CC (e.g. Petola 1983, Quirk *et al.* 1985, Biber *et al.* 1999). In the present study I include only *I think* in the class of CCs for the following reasons. First, *I think* – despite its relatively fixed character as independent epistemic fragment – still permits considerable variation in form, as is evidenced by the following attested variants: *I don't think, I thought, I certainly/just think, we think, I would/should think*. Such variations are excluded from typical discourse markers such as *I mean*, *you know*; only in their uses as matrix clause is some variation possible (but still less than with *I think*; cf. *I don't mean, I meant, ?I certainly/just mean, ?we mean, *I would/should mean*). Second, *I think* differs from typical discourse markers in terms of distribution and possible syntactic functions. As pointed out by Stenström (1995: 293, 296), *I think* occurs substantially more often in interpolated position than *I mean, you know, you see* and is also exceptional in its greater likelihood to act as a matrix clause.

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[4] For a discussion of the function of *that*-omission in a specific type of matrix clause cf. Kaltenböck (2006a).

3. Corpus retrieval and results

Delimiting the class of CCs as in Section 2 provides us with an operational definition for corpus retrieval. Extracting data from ICE-GB is greatly facilitated by the syntactic annotation of the texts (cf. Nelson *et al.* 2002 for details) and was effected in three steps. First, a nodal search for detached function (Defunc), clausal category and feature 'comment' was carried out. In a second step these results had to be filtered manually to exclude other types of parenthetical clauses, such as reporting clauses, self-contained parenthetical clauses, and semantic-gap-fill or placeholder parenthetical clauses (for a description of each of these cf. Kaltenböck 2005, 2007). This yielded a total of 626 instances of CCs. Corpus annotation, however, turned out to be inconsistent (owing in part to classification as separate text units and therefore as independent main clauses rather than CCs), which made it necessary to double-check the corpus by running separate searches for each of the tokens found (e.g. *I think, I would have thought*) and analyse them manually. This yielded another 204 instances and increased the total number of CCs in the spoken part of ICE-GB to 830.

The distribution of these 830 instances in the four spoken text categories of ICE-GB shows that there is a clear preference for the dialogic text types, as illustrated in Table 1 (cf. figures in bold). This can be taken as an indication of a strong interactive character of CCs (cf. Kaltenböck 2006b: 77-78 for further details).

Table 1: Distribution of comment clauses in the ICE-GB text categories (normalised per 10,000 words)

	n	10,000 W
Private dialogue (s1a)	327	**16.35**
Public dialogue (s1b)	281	**17.56**
Unscripted monologue (s2a)	157	11.21
Scripted monologue (s2b)	65	6.50
TOTAL	830	13.83

4. Position and scope

4.1 General observations

One of the characteristics of CCs, and parenthetical clauses in general, is that of their positional flexibility (cf. Section 2 and Kaltenböck 2007 for a more detailed discussion). The view generally expressed in the literature is that they

may take clause-initial, clause-medial, and clause-final position.[5] The aim of this section is to investigate this distribution in more detail and highlight possible insertion points (niches) as well as positional preferences. It goes without saying that for such an investigation a simple tripartite division of initial-medial-final will not be sufficient.

Despite the positional flexibility generally attributed to CCs, some studies, mainly within generative frameworks, have stipulated some constraints on what position within the host can serve as a 'niche'. It has been claimed, for instance, that CCs do not occur between verb and direct object, between a preposition and its complement or between determiner and noun (cf. e.g. Emonds 1973: 335-336, Jackendoff 1972: 98, McCawley 1998: 751). More recent approaches have moved away from purely syntactic constraints (operating at DS level) and have suggested loosely phrased constraints which operate purely on the performance output (cf. Peterson 1999: 239) and are therefore subject to processing constraints (cf. Espinal 1991: 753). This approach, however, also acknowledges a certain amount of syntactic conditioning: Peterson (ibid.), for instance, by pointing out that parentheticals "cannot (usually) intervene between a verb and its object" and Espinal by referring to restrictions of Universal Grammar, such as the "strong tendency across languages to avoid interrupting the linearization between a preposition and its nominal". These alleged constraints have, however, not been tested against larger corpus data so far. As the corpus results (in Section 4.3) will show, neither of these syntactic restrictions holds. Nonetheless, there are clear positional preferences.

Identification of position is generally much less straight forward than some more theoretical discussions of parentheticals make it appear. Spoken language, by its very nature, is highly fragmentary (cf. e.g. Chafe 1982), with sentences being shaped and re-formed in the process of their utterance (cf. e.g. Goodwin 1979), resulting in incomplete and elliptical structures, sentence fragments and anacolutha. All of this may make it difficult to locate the exact position of the CC in relation to its HC. A case in point is example (4).

> (4)   [radio commentary] and those doors <,> are immediately before me in my high triforium position but far away *it seems* beyond the high altar which is immediately beneath me then the sacrarium the choir and after that the nave (s2a-020-10)

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[5] Some scholars use the term 'parenthetical' exclusively for interpolated juxtaposition, while end-to-end sequencing is referred to, for instance, as "peripheral juxtaposition" (Peterson 1999) or "appendage" (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1355) – a practice that is not adopted in the present study.

Example (4) illustrates a number of important points. First, identification of position is closely linked to the question of scope, in other words the elements over which the CC operates (here either *far away* or *beyond the high altar*). Second, the scope of a CC cannot be determined by its position alone. For proper analysis we need to take into account other factors such as prosody, which in the present example clearly identifies *far away* as being within the scope of the CC. Third, contrary to the generally held view, not all CCs have clausal scope, i.e. over a host clause. Phrasal scope is also possible (hence the term 'host construction' rather than 'host clause').

I will discuss these issues in more detail in the following. Section 4.2 identifies factors influencing scope (with prosody given special attention in Section 5). Section 4.3 takes up the question of phrasal vs. clausal scope and how it correlates with position.

4.2 Factors influencing scope

The scope of a CC is of course not to be understood as syntactic scope (in terms of c-command) but in semantic-pragmatic terms, i.e. the 'topic' to which the 'comment' of the CC applies. To distinguish between the syntactic level of linear insertion in another construction and the semantic-pragmatic level of elements within the scope of a CC I use the term HC for the former and Anchor for the latter. Note that these two may, but need not coincide, such as when a CC is inserted in a clausal HC but has scope only over one of its constituents, e.g. a NP.

As a semantic-pragmatic concept the exact scope of a CC results from the interaction of several factors (cf. also Schneider 2007: 195). These are (a) the prosodic realisation of the CC, (b) the information structure of the HC, (c) the semantic-pragmatic interaction of host and CC, (d) the syntactic position of the CC in relation to the HC, and are dealt with in turn below.

(a) Prosodic features may be crucial in determining the scope of a CC. More precisely, what matters is whether the CC is intonationally linked to the previous or following material, i.e. whether it is integrated into the intonation domain (tone unit) on the left or right. The terminology employed here is right-bound and left-bound (other possible realisations are left-right bound and independent; cf. Section 5 for a detailed discussion). Left- or right-binding may be crucial in deciding whether the CC is, in fact, in initial or in final position, as illustrated by the examples in (5) (brackets indicate type of binding)

(5) a. Uhm <,> yeah I wasn't doing very much *I remember*) I wasn't there (s1a-002-165)

b. but these features and they'll be familiar to you (*I think* they include such things as uh a certain distrust of fact (s2a-021-99)

In their written form attachment of the CCs in these examples is unclear. It is only their prosodic realisation that indicates their scope: (5a) is left-bound and therefore clause-final, whereas (5b) is right-bound and therefore in initial position.

Prosodic realisation may also decide whether the scope is clausal or phrasal, as in the examples in (6), which are right-bound and therefore phrasal, viz. over the NP *an interesting document which…* and the PP *at Brave* respectively. Note that left-binding would change the scope to clausal in both.

(6) a. Nine is report too (*I think* an interesting document which uhm Professor Greenbaum initiated and which I hope everybody uh will have had a chance to digest (s1b-075-128)

b. We're going to have a very small set (*I think* at Brave for Edward <,> (s1b-045-110)

Prosodic binding may also indicate to which of the two possible (phrasal) constituents the CC is attached, as in (7), where the scope is over *handbag* rather than the attribute *dark blue*.

(7) She is wearing <,> a lime green suit carrying <,> a dark blue (*I think* handbag <,> white gloves <,> and a pale hat <,> with a <,> rather pretty lime green bobble in it Not a good word but bobble (s2a-019-63/4)

(b) The scope of the CC may also be shaped to a certain extent by the information structure of the HC in the sense that the comment of the CC will be 'attracted' by the informationally most salient information. Thus even if a CC operates over the entire HC it may be that in the process of utterance interpretation the link between CC and Host is construed in such a way that the epistemic qualification of the CC applies mainly to the constituent that is communicatively most salient, i.e. has a high degree of Communicative Dynamism or represents new information. Compare for instance (8).

(8) [careers interview]
A: Uhm <,,> Writing uh apart from uhm <,> you know the book's there and academic writing uhm any other writing I mean can you generate articles
B: Mmm Yeah I mean I'm interested in I can do <,> *I think* feature articles (s1a-066-161)

In B's answer only the postverbal constituent, *feature articles*, constitutes new information and therefore is likely to attract the epistemic comment of the CC more than the given information, viz. *I can do*. This form of attachment is, however, difficult to verify (because of its gradient nature and focus on hearer consciousness) and has therefore been disregarded in the analysis. Ultimately, what matters here too is the prosodic realisation of HC and CC, with prosody (notably tonicity) being to some extent a reflection of information status.

(c) A further, albeit minor, factor for the delimitation of scope may be the semantic-pragmatic interaction, or more precisely compatibility, of the CC and its Host, as in (9).

> (9)   Uh in the subsequent peaceful settlement of the problems of the area the
>   problem *we hope* of Saddam and his military machine will really be removed
>   (s1b-027-82)

Here the scope of the CC is clausal, i.e. over the entire HC. The possibility of phrasal scope, viz. over the NP into which the CC is embedded, is excluded for semantic-pragmatic reasons: the mismatch of 'hoping' with 'problem'. The semantic make-up of 'hope' is such that it requires the association with a desirable state of affairs, i.e. 'removing a problem'.

(d) Finally there is the factor of position in the HC, which is illustrated with an example from the corpus, (10a), and the adapted versions (10b), (10c), (10d).

> (10) a.   And Mr Greenbaum was *I'd say* a lucky recipient or unlucky as as as uh as
>   the case may be (s1a-10017)
>
>   b.   And Mr Greenbaum *I'd say* was a lucky recipient
>
>   c.   And Mr Greenbaum was a lucky recipient *I'd say*
>
>   d.   And Mr Greenbaum was a lucky *I'd say* recipient

If we compare the meanings of these four versions, we notice that they are not necessarily identical. In (10a) and (10b) the scope of the CC may be over the entire clause or, depending on prosodic realisation, over the following NP in (10a) or the preceding NP in (10b). In (10c) it will most likely be over the entire host clause, whereas in (10d) it will be narrowed down to either the adjective *lucky* or the noun *recipient*, depending on prosodic realisation. The next section investigates the link between scope and position in more detail on the basis of the corpus data.

4.3 Corpus results

After this brief overview of factors influencing the scope of a CC, let us now turn to the analysis of the corpus data. The aim of this analysis is, first of all, a stocktaking of attested and preferred positions of CCs in the HC as well as an exploration of the link between scope and position.

As outlined above, for the identification of scope the corpus data had to be analysed prosodically especially with regard to left- or right-binding (cf. Section 5 for details). Apart from prosodic binding, a useful tool for establishing the scope of a CC is the movement test, i.e. moving the CC to a different position in the Host and checking whether its scope changes (cf. also Schneider 2007: 195).[6] It is thus possible to distinguish two types of CCs. Those which have scope over an entire host clause, i.e. clausal scope, and those which have scope over a non-clausal construction, i.e. phrasal scope. For the latter we can distinguish two possibilities: either the scope is only over part of an otherwise clausal HC, singling out, as it were, a particular constituent of this clause, the so-called anchor, or the HC itself is non-clausal, i.e. an incomplete or elliptical clause. The different types of phrasal scope are illustrated by the examples in (11), where the CC in (11a) has scope over part of a clausal HC, viz. *garages*, and in (11b) it has scope over an elliptical HC (scope indicated by square brackets).

> (11) a. and uhm you know a a flat space it's got tents and well not tents but [just garages] *I suppose* (s1a-056-175)
>
>   b. Well *I suppose* uhm [the <,> the standard kind of physiotherapy] <,> when you asked for it <,> uhm <,> and well sports I guess (s1a-003-3)

As already pointed out in Section 4.2, there are cases where the scope of a CC is not entirely clear but to a certain extent ambiguous between phrasal and clausal scope. Take, for instance, example (12), where the scope of *I think*, which is prosodically a separate intonation unit, is ambiguous between covering the entire clause or simply the NP *schizophrenia*.

> (12) Uh or <,,> you could have depressive illness <,> or schizophrenia *I think* <,> (s1b-016-18)

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6 As a semantic-pragmatic concept scope is inherently not verifiable by means of independent evidence. It can, however, be identified with reasonable accuracy, I would argue, by the formal signs that are used to indicate it, position and prosody, and pragmatic plausibility.

The general practice for such cases of ambiguity has been to classify them as clausal. Phrasal scope is reserved for cases which are beyond doubt, either for prosodic reasons or because of the results of the movement test or both.

In the analysis of the corpus data a clear picture emerges regarding the correlation between scope and position. Phrasal scope predominates for CCs occurring within a NP and is the only possibility if the CC comes in pre-head position in a NP or between a preposition and its NP complement. It is also, not surprisingly, the only scope possible with elliptical (i.e. non-verbal) HCs. Table 2 and Table 3 provide an overview which takes this basic distinction into account by separating the syntactic environments with predominantly phrasal scope (Table 3) from those with predominantly clausal scope (Table 2). There is however a certain amount of overlap, which is indicated by the figures in square brackets. For each of the positions identified in Table 2 and 3 illustrative examples are given in (13) and (15) respectively.

Table 2: Syntactic position of CCs with predominantly clausal scope (# = point of insertion, MV = main verb)

A.	PRENUCLEAR POSITION[7]	(83)			
(i)	Initial		(69)	69	
(ii)	Adjunct # Subject:		(14)		
	- Clausal Adjunct			3	[of which 1 phrasal]
	- Non-clausal Adjunct			11	[of which 1 phrasal]
B.	MIDDLE POSITION	(327)			
(i)	Subject # Verb:[8]		(87)		
	- Subject # MV			14	[of which 1 phrasal]
	- Subject # Copula			41	[of which 1 phrasal]
	- Subject # Aux + MV			32	
(ii)	Aux # MV		(29)	29	[of which 2 phrasal]
(iii)	MV # Non-clausal complementation:		(61)		
	- MV # Object			20	[of which 6 phrasal]
	- MV # Subject complement			34	[of which 9 phrasal]
	- MV # Other complements			7	[of which 3 phrasal]
(iv)	MV # Finite clausal complementation:		(20)		
	- MV # Object clause			9	
	- MV # Subject complement clause			6	
	- MV # Complement clause			5	
(v)	MV # Non-finite clausal complementation:		(16)		
	- MV # Subject complement clause			1	
	- MV # Extraposed complement clause			10	
	- MV # Complement clause			5	
(vi)	Subordinate clauses:		(93)		
	- Subordinator # Adverbial clause[9]			9	
	- Subordinator # Noun clause			4	
	- Relative element # Relative clause			69	
	- Zero relative elem. # Relative clause			2	
	- Noun # Relative element			9	
(vii)	Coordination (various), after coordinator[10]		(15)	15	[of which 9 phrasal]
(viii)	Other		(6)	6	
C.	POSTNUCLEAR POSITION	(286)			
(i)	MV / Clause # Adjunct (non-clausal)			62	[of which 26 phrasal]
(ii)	MV / Clause # Adjunct (clausal):				
	- MV / Clause # Finite Adjunct			16	
	- MV / Clause # Non-finite Adjunct			7	
(iii)	Final			201	[of which 7 phrasal]
	TOTAL			696	[of which 66 phrasal]

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[7] The categories 'pre-nuclear' and 'post-nuclear' position (A and C) refer to positions before or after the obligatory syntactic functions subject-verb-object/complement.

[8] Subjects realised as relative pronouns are grouped separately under (Biv).

[9] This category captures only CCs following the subordinator in adverbial clauses. Those preceding it are grouped under (Cii).

[10] This category subsumes various types of coordination, all with the CC immediately following the coordinator. Cases of clausal coordination where the CC comes before the coordinator have been classified as final, i.e. (Ciii).

(13) (Ai) *I think* <,> I'd like to answer that in a slightly different way (s1a-001-117)

(Aii) So sometimes *I suppose* it happens to everybody (s1b-023-117)

(Bi) And the Labour Party *I believe* want sanctions to work (s1b-035-28)

(Bii) Uh Mr Sigrani <,> had *i it would appear* employed the debtor to do extensive uh electrical work (s2a-069-14)

(Biii) The LSE would be doing that principally and you need *I argue* an a rule-based knowledge system before you can articulate what a text grammar should be (s1a-024-87)

(Biv) So I think from today's session you've realised *I hope* that you shouldn't start somebody on lifelong anti-hypertensive therapy based upon one single blood pressure measurement (s1b-004-273)

(Bv) Uhm <,> the other thing is *I guess* <,,> to ask whether you've also considered the sort of occupational psychology areas <,> as well as the clinical (s1a-035-144)

(Bvi) Yeah but there's another trilogy <,> which *I believe* is <,> supposed to be very good (s1a-016-206)

(Bvii) He's called Basil in the stables <,> and *I'm told* likes a pint of MacEwan's with his feed (s2a-011-64)

(Bviii) Now if you open it up <,> where you are very familiar <,> uh <,> page a hundred and uh <,,> eight <,> *I think* it is in mine… (s2a-061-97)

(Ci) I've got to go *I'm afraid* in an hour <,> (s1a-045-216)

(Cii) and she uhm <,> uh was quite high up *I think* cos she had a degree (s1a-019-248)

(Ciii) and that's one of the main p the main things <,> that that prevents that <,> *I'm sure* (s1a-002-72)

Cases such as (Biii) with a direct object (cf. also clausal objects in (Biv)) are particularly interesting in view of Jackendoff's (1972: 98) claim that "[o]ne totally aberrant position for … parenthesis is between the verb and the direct object". Similarly, Peterson's (1999: 239) constraint II posits that a "parenthetical cannot (usually) intervene between a verb and its object". With a total of 29 CCs followed by (clausal and non-clausal) objects, this position is rare but clearly attested. Moreover, it is interesting to note that this position (Biii) is, apart from postnuclear position (Ci), the only environment where phrasal scope represents a genuine alternative. It is triggered either by a special CC predicate (*I don't know, I'd say, let's say, I'm tempted to say, I quote*), as in (14a), or by prosodic binding to the right (i.e. the phrasal complement), as in (14b) (phrasal scope is indicated by square brackets).

(14) a.   It wouldn't have mattered if I was sort of studying *I I don't know* [mathematics] (s1a-060-197)

     b.   The the s the Scots were besieging <,> *I think* uh uh [Berwick] and Edward whoever it was at the time came out to relieve it (s1a-065-342)

Relative clauses (Bvi) also deserve special mention as they constitute, with a total of 80 occurrences, a preferred environment for CCs, accounting for almost 10 percent of the corpus data. The preferred point of insertion is (with 69 occurrences) immediately after the relative element, as in (13Bvi), rather than immediately preceding it (9 occurrences; 2 have a zero relative element). The difference between the two positions is one of scope: in pre-relative element position the CC has the entire matrix clause in its scope, while in post-relative element position its scope is only over the relative clause.

Table 3: Syntactic position of CCs with predominantly phrasal scope (# = point of insertion)

|			
(a)	Initial (elliptical/non-clausal Host)	14	
(b)	Within PP: P # NP	25	
(c)	Within NP		
	(i) Prehead position	10	
	(ii) Posthead position	20	[of which 10 clausal]
(d)	Between adjuncts: A # A	5	
(e)	Final (elliptical/non-clausal Host)	52	
(f)	Other (elliptical Host Clause, phrase internal)	8	
	TOTAL	134	[of which 10 clausal]

(15) (a)   I mean most pagan marriages like *I think* ninety per cent that's what happens (s1a-071-243)

     (b)   Father McDade d'you remember in *I think* lecture three uh Rabbi Sacks said at one point faith is not measured by acts of worship alone (s1b-028-88)

     (ci) Uh in the uhm <,> *I think* October issue of Computational uh Linguistics there's an attempt to do something of this type (s1a-024-105)

     (cii) W w we can only accomplish a cut in intrates rates interest rates however against the background *I believe* of a genuine a general realignment of European currencies (s2b-002-58)

     (d)   but uh sort of in my teens and twenties (*I suppose* every Saturday one of my pleasures was to go to the local bookshop and buy another volume in the Everyman Library <,> or whatever (s1a-013-107)

     (e)   Very good that *I'm sure* (s1a-003-40)

    (f)   And Greg Lemond *I would think* having to now reconstruct himself after that terrible bashing her took yesterday in the mountains (s2a-016-40)

The above overview of the different insertion points shows that there are certain preferred positions for CCs. To bring out the distribution pattern more clearly, a schematic and somewhat simplified version of Table 1 is provided in Figure 1, which gives the distribution of a total of 582 predominantly clausal CCs.

Figure 1: Schematic and simplified representation of CC positions of 582 mainly clausal CCs
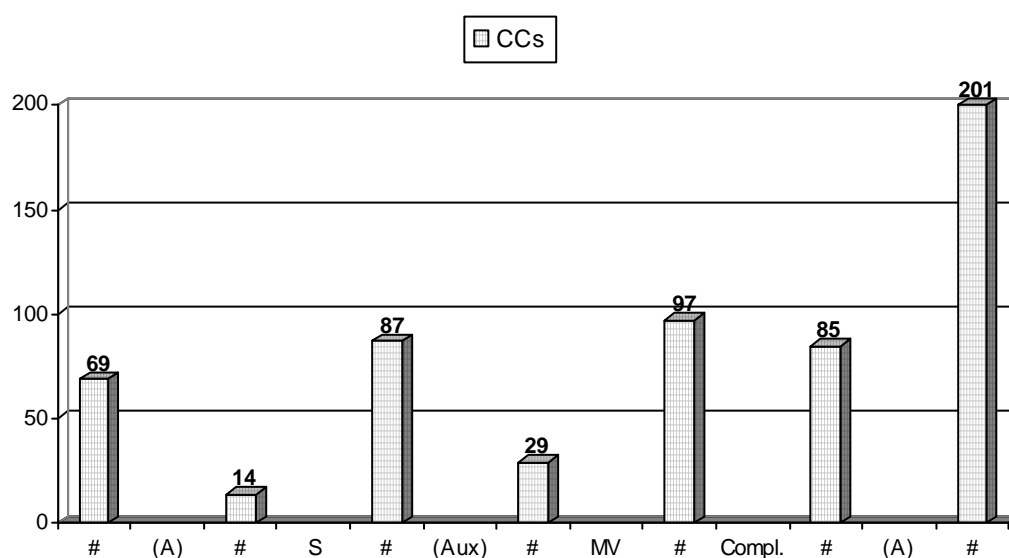
We can see that CCs occur at all major constituent boundaries. This confirms Peterson's (1999: 239) constraint I (based on Emonds 1973), which stipulates that what follows a medial parenthetical must be a constituent of the Host. In terms of frequency we can distinguish roughly three categories: the most frequent place of insertion is final position, accounting for about one third of all clausal CCs (34.7%, 202 instances). Somewhat less frequent but still in the range of 11 to 17 percent are the following: initial position,[11] post-subject position, between main verb and complementation, between verb complementation and final adjunct. The least frequent patterns are between clause-initial adjunct and subject and between auxiliary and main verb.

    A further point that emerges from the figures in Table 2 and 3 is that clausal scope is clearly the most frequent and therefore unmarked option. As

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[11] It needs to be recalled that initial position has been defined very restrictively (cf. Section 2). In a wider definition the figures for this category would be comparable to those of final position.

indicated in Table 4, phrasal scope accounts for 22.9 percent of all CCs and is therefore the marked variant.

Table 4: Clausal and phrasal scope of CCs

	n.	%
Clausal scope	640	77.1%
Phrasal scope	190	22.9%
TOTAL	830	100%

The investigation of phrasal scope reveals that, contrary to Schneider (2007: 195), there is a clear link to position. Thus, there are certain positions that are exclusively linked to phrasal scope, viz. between a preposition and its NP complement, between a NP head and its prehead dependent (determiner or adjective), as well as between two non-clausal adjuncts. The position between a preposition and its NP complement is not usually referred to in the literature but with 25 instances clearly attested in the corpus. There is a noticeable preference with this position to occur in clause final/post-verbal PPs rather than in pre-verbal PPs, as in (15b) – with a ratio of 21:4 – in accordance with the general weight distribution pattern of light before heavy (end-weight principle). Moreover, this position attracts a certain type of CC. Almost half of the occurrences (10 out of 25) are made up by *I don't know*. The remainder are *I think, I suppose, I reckon* or involve the predicate *say*, e.g. *I say, let's say*. As for NP-internal position, insertion between the determiner and nondeterminer constituent of a NP is mentioned by Espinal (1991: 752, note 17) as a rare possibility. According to Taglicht (1998: 205), however, insertion of parentheticals between head and specifier is not possible in English. Again, this position is clearly attested in the corpus, as is insertion in post-head position in a NP. With both NP-internal positions there is again a clear preference for insertion in post-verbal NPs, i.e. towards the end of the host clause (the ratio for pre-head insertion being 1 : 4 and for post-head insertion 1 : 2.3).

There are also other positions in clausal HCs where phrasal scope may occur. Thus it is attested as a genuine alternative to clausal scope for the positions (Biii) between main verb and non-clausal complementation, (Bvii) in coordinate structures, (Ciii) in clause-final position, and especially (Ci) preceding a clause-final non-clausal adjunct. Phrasal scope is also possible but less likely in (Aii) between an initial adjunct and the subject, (Bi) between subject and verb, and (Bii) between auxiliary and main verb. In all these positions phrasal scope is triggered by prosodic binding to the left or the right

or by certain CC predicates (esp. *I don't know, I'd say, let's say, I quote*). It is also noticeable that there is a certain propensity for non-clausal adjuncts (especially in clause-final position (Ci) but also initially and VP-internally) to attract the scope of a CC.

Phrasal scope is also attested with non-clausal (i.e. incomplete or elliptical) HCs with the CC occurring mainly in final position but also initially and, rarely, internally (cf. Table 3: (a), (e), (f)).

Finally, there are also positions where phrasal scope is not attested. These are (Ai) initial position, (Bvi) both initially in matrix clauses and initially in subordinate clauses (typically following the subordinator), as well as (Biv, Bv) between main verb and clausal complementation. In the latter case phrasal scope seems to be ruled out simply by the lack of a non-clausal complement that could act as 'scope attractor' (unlike (Biii), where phrasal scope is relatively frequent).

The different scopes are also indicative of different communicative functions of the CCs. From the examples given above it can be seen that CCs with clausal scope express a degree of speaker commitment with regard to the proposition expressed. As such they represent a particular type of hedge referred to by Prince *et al.* (1982) as 'shield', which in the terminology of Hare (1970) mitigates the 'neustic' (cf. also Schneider 2007). Most cases of phrasal CC, on the other hand, have a different function.[12] As can be seen from examples (15a), (15b), (15c) above, for instance, the phrasal CC operates proposition-internally, i.e. on the 'phrastic' (Hare 1970). In this function they qualify for classification as 'approximators' (Prince *et al.* 1982) or what Caffi (1999) calls 'bushes'. They still reduce speaker commitment but more indirectly by indicating that certain terms (e.g. *90%, lecture three, October issue*) lack in precision. Approximative uses of CCs differ somewhat from prototypical approximators (e.g. *sort of*) since examples such as (15a), (15b), (15c) cannot be judged semantically false in a context where the factual content lies clearly outside a plausible categorical range, say *10 per cent, lecture 51, February issue*.[13] However, in such a context examples (15a), (15b) and (15c) would be regarded as infelicitous or at least uncooperative. The approximative function thus derives via conversational implicature in

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[12] These are typically CCs within PPs, within NPs (in pre-head position), and between Adjuncts and less typically CCs with elliptical/incomplete HCs, whose missing parts are generally recoverable from the co(n)text and thus allow reconstruction of a complete host clause.

[13] Cf. however Sadock (1977), who argues that even ordinary approximations have to be treated as almost unfalsifiable.

accordance with conversational maxims. As such they still reduce speaker commitment but more indirectly than epistemic shields.

Apart from the functions of shield and approximator it is possible to identify a further pragmatic use of CCs, which can be linked to their prosodic realisation and will be discussed in Section 5.3. Section 5.3 will also provide a possible explanation for the approximative uses of CCs in terms of grammaticalisation and concomitant semantic bleaching of high-frequency CCs, which results in increased diffusion of their scope so that they can operate also over non-clausal Anchors (i.e. have phrasal scope).

5. Position and prosody

5.1 General observations

Prosody is not a defining feature of CCs or parenthetical clauses in general (cf. Kaltenböck 2005, 2007). Unlike non-clausal parentheticals, whose identification to a large extent *does* depend on prosodic separation from the HC, clausal parentheticals do not require separation on the prosodic level: the fact that a clausal (non-subordinate) structure, such as *I believe*, is inserted in another is already enough to make it extraneous to the other.

Previous studies, in fact, have found considerable variation in the prosodic realisation of parentheticals. Among the prosodic features identified for parentheticals are usually the following: separate tone unit[14], delimiting pauses ('comma intonation'), lowered pitch,[15] terminal rise (rising contour), narrower pitch range, reduction in loudness, increased tempo (cf. e.g. Armstrong & Ward 1931: 27, Bolinger 1989: 186, Burton-Roberts 2006: 180, Cruttenden 1997: 71, 123, 173, Crystal 1969: 160, 174, Dehé 2007, Espinal 1991: 759, Hartvigson 1969, Kutik *et al.* 1983, Nespor & Vogel 1986: 188, Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1112, Rouchota 1998: 101, Selkirk 1984: 382, Stenström 1995: 292, Wichmann 2000: 100, Ziv 1985: 181-182; Fagyal 2002, Schneider 2007: 210-221, Wunderli 1983, for Romance languages; Auer 1996: 307-319, D'Avis 2005: 259, Schönherr 1993, Winkler 1969, for German). Although parentheticals tend to be separated from the HC by various prosodic features, any of these may be suspended, as emphasised, for instance, by Bolinger (1989: 186).

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[14] Beckman and Edwards (1990), for instance, show that syllable-final lengthening is greater in words followed by an interpolated parenthetical and that this lengthening signals a tone unit boundary.

[15] Bolinger (1989: 188) and Wichmann (2001: 188) also note the opposite possibility, viz. higher pitch.

The prosodic analyses of most previous studies are, however, problematic for at least one of the following three reasons. First, they are typically not based on large samples of naturally occurring data, but rely on introspection, small sets of data, or contrived sample sentences read by an informant (a notable exception to this is Schneider 2007 for Romance languages). Second, they often lack a clear definition of parentheticals, which may result in methodological problems, such as circularity (cf. Kaltenböck 2005, 2007). Third, parentheticals are often treated as an undifferentiated, uniform class, which subsumes a range of different syntactic forms from adverbials to vocatives and discourse markers, which are unlikely to behave alike prosodically. Only Bolinger (1989: 190ff) and later Wichmann (2001: 185ff) have adopted a somewhat differentiated approach, which distinguishes between different types of parentheticals. Detailed accounts of the prosody of CCs, however, are conspicuously absent.[16]

The aim of the present section is not to provide a detailed analysis of all prosodic aspects of CCs, but only those where prosody impinges on questions of scope and position of the CC. Although prosody is not necessary for identifying a CC, it may be necessary for classifying it as initial or final, or with regard to its scope (cf. Section 4). Take, for instance, the examples in (5) above, which are repeated in (16) and (17) with their respective pitch contours (analysed by PRAAT 4.4.33).

(16)   yeah I wasn't doing very much *I remember*) I wasn't there (s1a-002-165)

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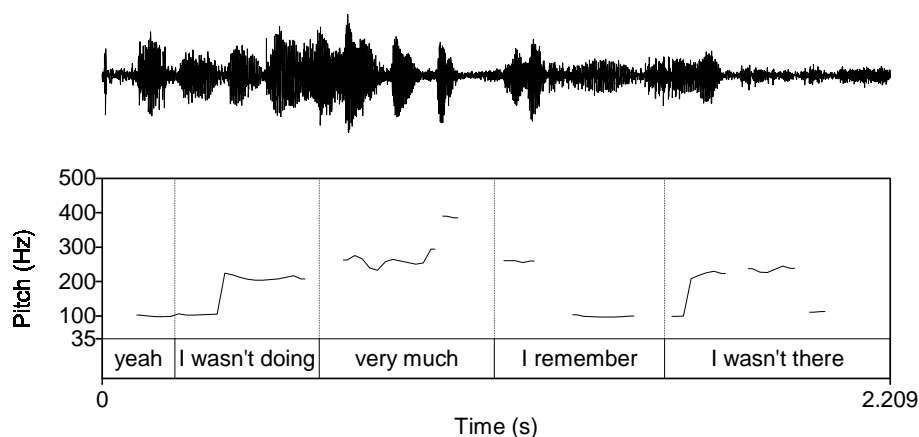
[16] A rare exception is Stenström (1995), who investigates the tonicity and tonality of *you see, you know, I think*, *I mean* and, more recently, Dehé (2007).

(17)   but these features and they'll be familiar to you (*I think* they include such things as uh a certain distrust of fact (s2a-021-99)
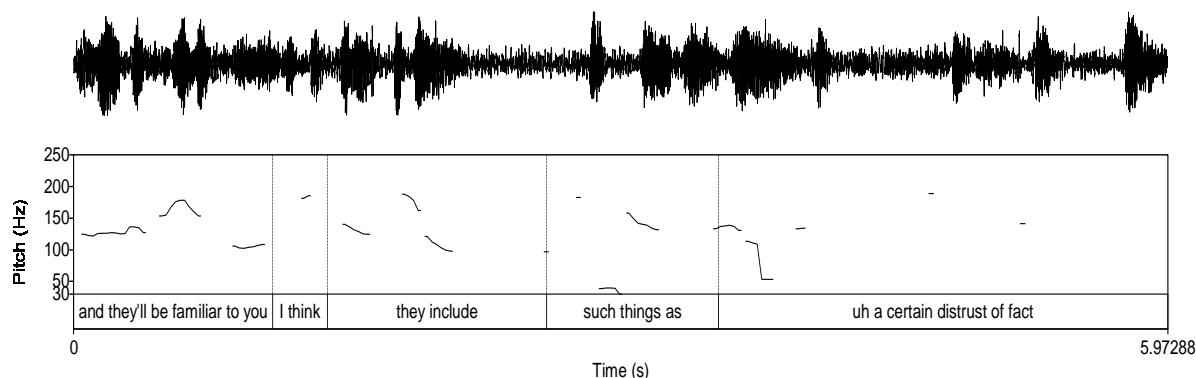
In example (16) prosody enables classification of the CC as final: *I remember* is part of the previous intonation domain since it completes the pitch contour starting on *I wasn't doing...* by bringing it back down to its original level. The following string *I wasn't there* clearly forms its own contour. In (17), on the other hand, the CC *I think* has to be classified as initial as it is part of the following tone unit.[17] This is indicated by the considerable step up in pitch (from around 100 Hz on *you* to around 180 Hz on *think*) as well as the anacrustic nature, i.e. greater speed, of the CC.

What these examples illustrate is that prosody may play an important role for securing correct processing of the CC together with the intended Anchor (the HC or parts of it). As syntactically unattached, essentially 'free-floating' units, they have to rely on other cues to ensure attachment to the intended anchor unit. Their insertion point alone often provides only insufficient information in that respect.

5.2 Types of prosodic patterns

It is possible to distinguish four different prosodic patterns of CCs, viz. left-binding, right-binding, left-right binding, and prosodic independence, which will be discussed in turn below.

What matters for the correct classification of position and scope of a CC is its prosodic link or 'binding' to the left or right, as illustrated by the examples in (16) and (17) above. In the case of **left-binding** the CC is integrated into

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17 Potentially ambiguous examples such as this one have been included as initial CCs despite the lack of intervening material between CC and HC (as specified in Section 2).

the overall pitch contour of the preceding tone unit, i.e. completes it as (part of) its tail. This form of prosodic integration was observed already by Armstrong and Ward (1931: 27f), Crystal (1969: 268) and Schubiger (1958: 98), who point out that parentheticals often continue a preceding tonal contour. In the case of **right-binding** the CC is integrated into the overall pitch contour of the following tone unit, forming (part of) its head (or pre-head).[18]

For left-binding some additional specification is necessary at this point. As noted above, integration into the pitch contour of the preceding tone unit implies that the CC itself does not carry pitch accent (i.e. a nuclear tone). This is true for the overwhelming majority of all left-bound CCs. There is, however, one particular subtype of left-binding where the CC is prosodically linked to material on its immediate left but carries itself pitch accent. An example of this type is given in (18).

(18)   And and also apt to take you know very completely irrational hates against people for what *I think*) were probably sexual reasons (s1a-031-101)
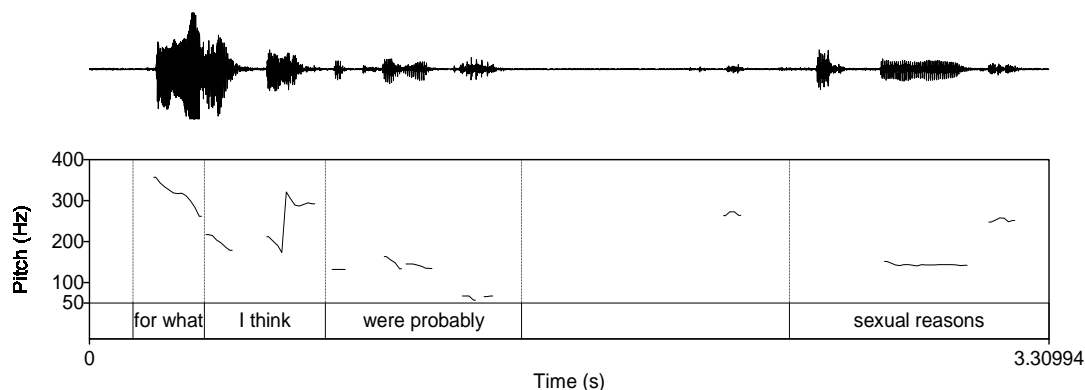
In (18), despite a high-falling pitch contour on *for what*, these syllables are unstressed as well as anacrustic, which generally indicates the beginning of a tone unit (cf. Cruttenden 1997: 21, 32 on anacrusis). The sequence *for what I think* was therefore analysed as one tone unit. This prosodic pattern is very much restricted to CCs in clause-second position, typically following a subordinator of some sort. The overall number of CCs with such a form of left-binding is very small (17 instances), which did not warrant setting up a

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[18] The terminology of head, pre-head, tone unit, nucleus (or tonic), and tail referred to here is that of the British tradition of intonational analysis as discussed e.g. in Cruttenden (1997), Crystal (1969), Wichmann (2000).

separate category. Instead they are subsumed as a subcategory under left-bound.

From the above characterisations of left-binding and right-binding it follows that for left-bound CCs there is a tone unit boundary immediately following the CC and for right-bound CCs a boundary immediately preceding the CC. What exactly constitutes a tone unit boundary is, of course, not always easy to determine (cf. e.g. Cruttenden 1997: 29-37). Phonetic cues such as pauses, anacrusis, final syllable lengthening or change of pitch level/direction of unaccented syllables may provide some 'external' indication for a prosodic boundary but they are by no means conclusive. They may just as well be simply markers of hesitation. As noted by Cruttenden (1997: 32), for instance, "pause does not always mark intonation boundaries, nor are intonation boundaries always marked by pause" (cf. also Fagyal 2002: 94). These 'external' phonetic criteria therefore have to be complemented by 'internal' ones, i.e. whether the suspected tone unit in fact has the internal structure of one. By definition a tone unit must contain a pitch accent or nucleus (tonic). Analysis of the phonetic cues was carried out with the help of an acoustical analysis programme (PRAAT 4.4.33) and by listening to the stimuli, i.e. impressionistic listener perception (as suggested for instance by Wichmann 2001: 187, cf. also Peters 2006). Impressionistic analysis is not at all undesirable here since this is precisely what a speaker has to rely on in actual verbal interaction: correct processing of the prosodic signals by the listener. It lies in the nature of the speech material, however, that there are many indeterminate cases where a boundary cannot be unambiguously identified as such. These cases were generally classified as lacking an extra prosodic boundary.

CCs may also take the form of left-right binding or they may represent an independent tone unit. In the case of **left-right binding** the CC is integrated in the middle of a larger pitch contour. This form corresponds roughly with Wichmann's (2001: 185) strategy of "prosodic integration".[19] Like left-bound or right-bound CCs, left-right bound CCs are integrated in a larger pitch contour, in other words they do not contain an accented syllable, i.e. one that

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[19] Unlike Wichmann (2001: 186) I do not distinguish a separate category of CCs that are integrated in a hesitant, word-searching phase, i.e. surrounded by hesitation sounds, e.g. *uh I think uh*. This is because hesitation sounds, which typically have level pitch, are not considered as carriers of nuclear tone. The present framework does not include the possibility of level nuclear tones. I do however take into account coocurrence with discourse markers, which may or may not be prosodically integrated with CCs (cf. discussion in 5.3 below).

initiates a new pitch trend. Unlike left-bound or right-bound CCs, however, they are not in the immediate vicinity of a tone unit boundary. It is possible for a left-right bound CC to be separated off from the HC by pauses (or some filler) since pauses are not necessarily boundary markers (as noted above). A typical example of a L-R bound CC is given in (19).

(19)   blinkered *I think* is a nice word if you're describing someone that you don't like (s1a-037-217)
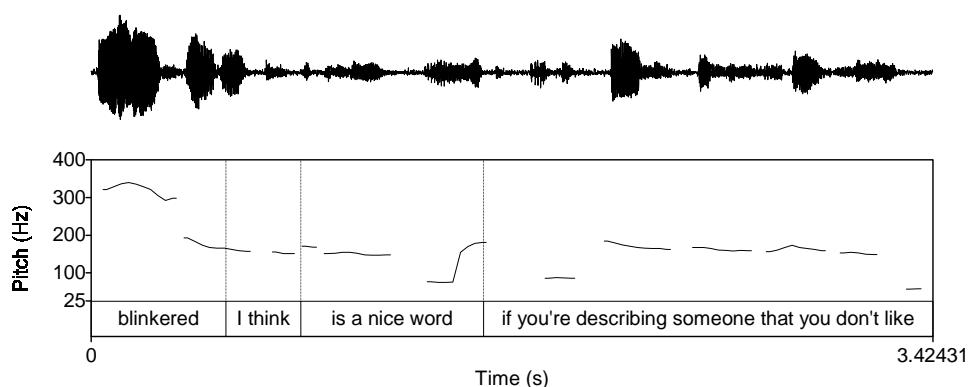

Unlike left-right bound CCs, **independent** CCs are prosodically unintegrated in the sense that they form a tone unit of their own. This implies that they contain at least one accented syllable and are marked off from the HC by prosodic boundaries.[20] These boundaries may be indicated by pauses, but not necessarily so. Other boundary markers are, as noted above, anacrusis, final syllable lengthening, change of pitch level/direction of unaccented syllables (cf. Cruttenden 1997: 35). A typical example of a prosodically independent CC is given in (20).

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[20] The present framework does not take into account what are sometimes called 'compound tones' (cf. e.g. Crystal & Davy 1975: 26), i.e. fall+rise (as opposed to a fall-rising tone), which according to Stenström (1995: 292) are frequently found with *I think*, as in (i) (=Stenström's example (7)).

(i)   A: I've \ALSO **I TH/INK** # managed to {G\ET them} at L\AST

Examples as these have been analysed as two tone units, one with a falling tone and one, i.e. *I think*, with a rising tone. Since the CC has its own pitch accent it is classified in the present framework as prosodically independent. In cases, however, where the rise on the CC has to be interpreted as Tail or completion of a preceding Fall-Rise, and as such is less pronounced (i.e. has a lower terminal point) the CC is classified as prosodically left-bound.

(20)   The LSE would be doing that principally and you need (*I argue*) an a rule-
        based knowledge system before you can articulate what a text grammar
   should be (s1a-024-87)
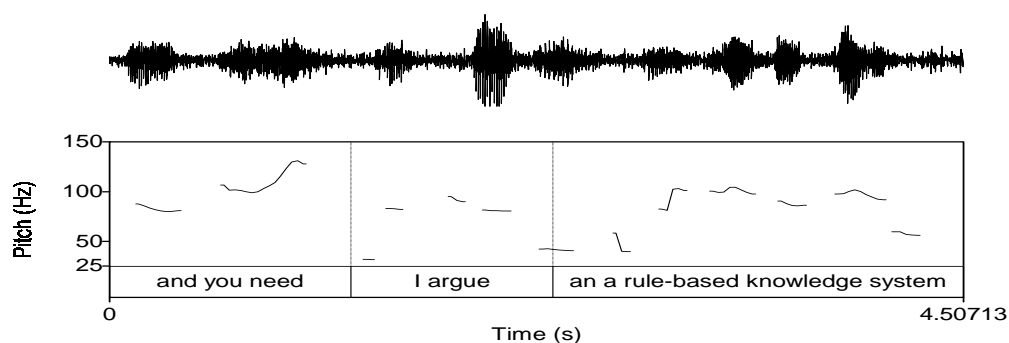
As can be seen from the example, prosodically independent CCs have their own distinct intonation contour with at least one pitch prominence, i.e. accented syllable. Although prosodic independence may be found with shorter and more formulaic CCs, it is more likely to occur with longer CCs, such as *I would have thought*. More specifically, for prosodic independence the ratio of two-word CCs to CCs consisting of three or more words is 60% to 40%. For all other prosodic patterns the percentage of CCs with three or more words is almost half (viz. 22.6% for left-right, 22.6% for right-bound, 26.3% for left-bound).[21]

A particular problem for identification of prosodic independence are CCs in final position (cf. also Cruttenden 1997: 36-37 for final reporting clauses). The difficulty lies in establishing whether the final CC has its own nuclear tone, i.e. its own tone unit, or whether it is the continuation (Tail) of a nuclear tone preceding the CC and as such is part of that tone unit. The situation is clear in cases with a distinct pitch movement on the CC as in example (21), where the CC is prosodically independent (note also the different pitch level on the unaccented syllable *I*) and in cases where the pitch contour continues without interruption and major fluctuation on the CC, as in example (22), where the CC is left-bound.

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[21] This corresponds with Peters' (2006) findings for a dialect of German, which suggest that shorter parentheticals are more likely to be prosodically integrated than longer ones.

(21)   I had no <,> capacity to make friends (*I think*) (s1b-046-118)
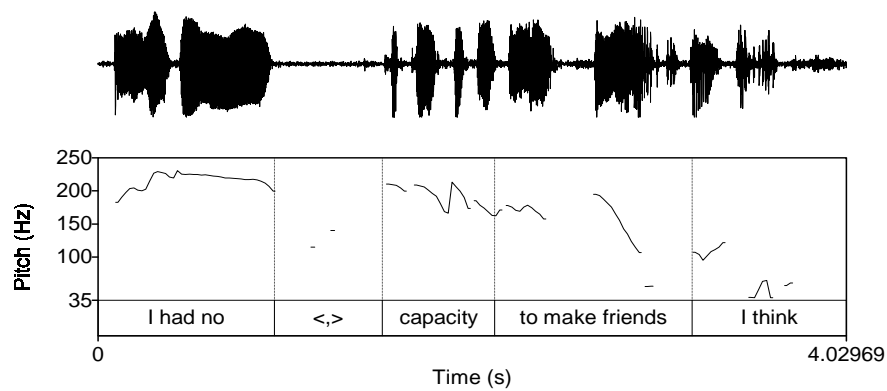
(22)   It didn't last forever *I hope*) (s1b-009-110)
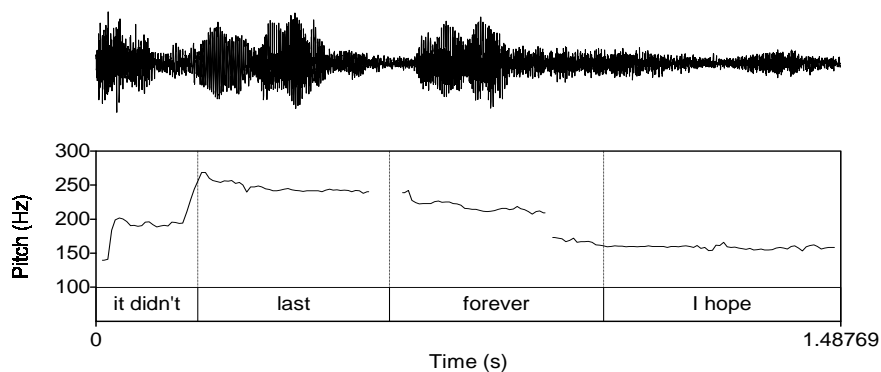
The situation is less clear when there is only a slight rise in pitch after an immediately preceding nuclear fall, as in (23). In such cases the CC is taken as a continuation (Tail) of a preceding fall-rising tone and therefore coded as left-bound. Only where there is a distinct pitch change in the CC has it been classified as prosodically independent.

(23)   They'd have to sell one *I think*) (s1a-017-142)
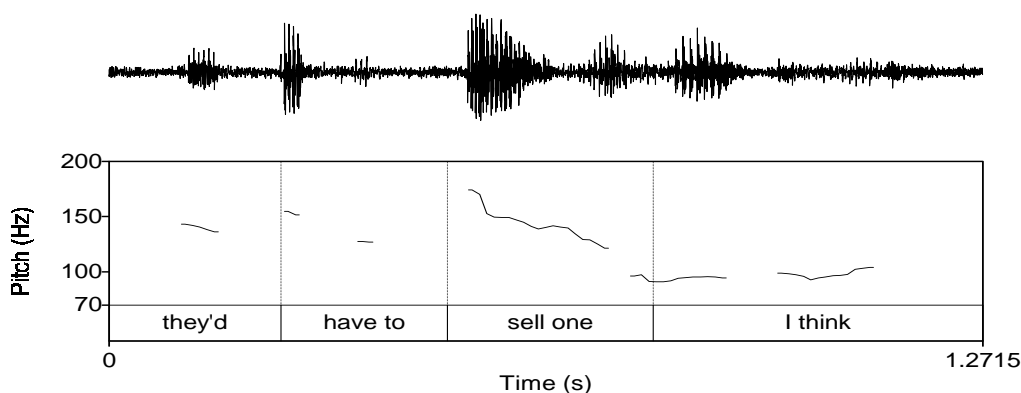
A further problem for classification are instances of pitch continuation preceded by a pause, such as in example (24).

(24)   I was programming in Pascal which really wasn't very exciting <,> *I'm afraid*) (s1a-008-1)
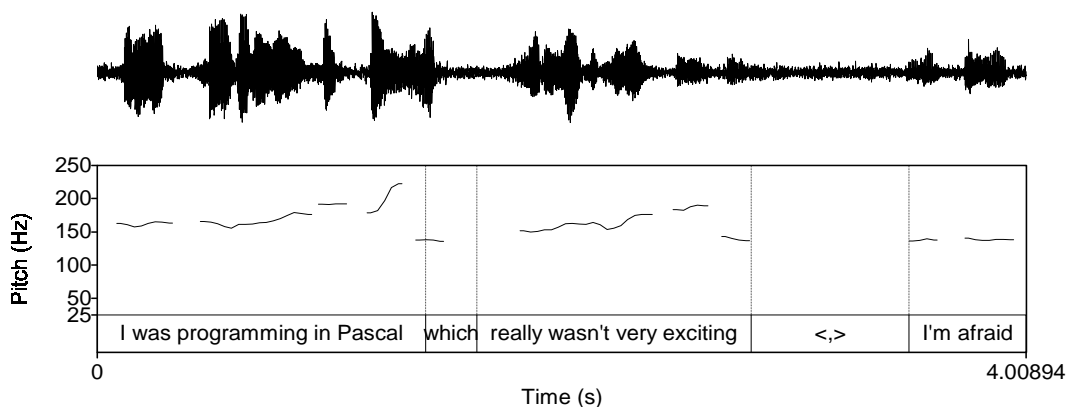
This particular example of a CC, in principle, allows two different analyses, depending on one's recognition of level tones and on how much weight is given to pauses as boundary markers. It could either be classified as prosodically independent with a level tone on *afraid* or as left-bound CC functioning as Tail of the preceding nuclear tone on *exciting*. In the present framework I follow Cruttenden (1997: e.g. 35; cf. also Fagyal 2002: 94) in taking the presence of pitch accent on the CC to be crucial and have therefore opted for the latter analysis. As pointed out above, pauses are ambiguous between boundary and hesitation markers. The same procedure applies, *mutatis mutandis*, for initial CCs.

5.3 Corpus results

Let us now look at the frequencies of the four different prosodic types in the corpus and investigate possible correlations of prosody with position and lexical items. Table 5 gives the distribution of the four prosodic patterns according to text types.

Table 5: Frequency of CCs according to prosodic binding and text types

	Private dialogue s1a		Public dialogue s1b		Unscripted monologue s2a		Scripted monologue s2b		Total	
L-bound	117	36.0%	73	26.1%	48	30.6%	25	38.5%	263	31.8%
R-bound	55	16.9%	56	19.9%	26	16.6%	8	12.3%	145	17.6%
L-R bound	41	12.6%	92	32.7%	52	33.1%	13	20.0%	198	24.0%
Independent	112	34.5%	59	21.0%	30	19.1%	19	29.2%	220	26.6%
Total[22]	325	100%	280	100%	156	100%	65	100%	826	100%

The figures show that all four prosodic types are substantially represented in the corpus, with left-binding being most frequent, followed by prosodic independence, left-right binding, and right-binding. The high frequency of left-bound CCs provides some support for Taglicht's (1998: 196-197) principle of 'Leftward Grouping of parentheticals' based on introspective data. At the same time, however, the high frequencies of the other types demonstrate that 'Leftward Grouping of parentheticals' is no more than a general tendency when it comes to naturally occurring data. In fact, in two text types, Public dialogue and Unscripted monologue, the predominant prosodic pattern is that of complete integration, viz. L-R binding. Moreover, the results contradict Quirk *et al.*'s (1985: 1112) claim that comment clauses "generally have a separate tone unit". Only 26.6 percent of all CCs were prosodically independent, i.e. had a separate tone unit. These figures correspond roughly with Kärkkäinen's (2003: 56) analysis of epistemic phrases in American conversation, where about one third (30.6%) have a separate tone unit.[23]

To investigate possible correlations between prosody and position, Tables 6 and 7 break down the figures according to the position of CCs identified in Section 4.

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[22] Four soundfiles are missing in ICE-GB, viz. s1a-095-11, s1a-090-220, s1ab-063-192, s2a-058-53.

[23] Her database is the *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English*, which includes mainly informal conversation (but also some monologues, e.g. lectures, sermons) and is therefore closer to the text type Private dialogue in ICE-GB, where the results are slightly higher, viz. 34.5 percent

Table 6: Prosodic patterns of CCs with predominantly clausal scope according to position (# = point of insertion, MV = main verb)

		Left-bound	Right-bound	L-R bound	Indep.	Total
A.	PRENUCLEAR POSITION					
(i)	Initial	0	28	0	40	68
(ii)	Adjunct # Subject:	6	5	2	1	14
B.	MIDDLE POSITION					
(i)	Subject # Verb (MV, copula, aux.)	12	18	38	19	87
(ii)	Aux # MV	2	5	11	11	29
(iii)	MV # Non-clausal complementation (O, SC, other)	11	18	18	14	61
(iv)	MV # Finite clausal complementation	8	0	7	4	19
(v)	MV # Non-finite clausal complementation	6	0	3	7	16
(vi)	Subordinate clauses					
	- Subordinator # Adverbial/N-cl.	5	2	5	1	13
	- Relative el./zero # Rel. clause	13	4	51	3	71
	- Noun # Relative element	3	0	4	2	9
(vii)	Coordinator # Clause/Phrase	2	1	9	3	15
(viii)	Other	0	0	6	0	6
C.	POSTNUCLEAR POSITION					
(i)	MV/Clause # non-clausal Adjunct	11	20	18	13	62
(ii)	MV/Clause # clausal Adjunct	9	6	3	5	23
(iii)	Final	132	0	0	67	199
	TOTAL[24]	220	107	175	190	692

Table 7: Prosodic patterns of CCs with predominantly phrasal scope according to position

		Left-bound	Right-bound	L-R bound	Indep.	Total
(a)	Initial (elliptical/non-clausal Host)	0	11	0	3	14
(b)	Within PP: P # NP	2	12	5	6	25
(c)	Within NP	5	11	11	3	30
(d)	Between adjuncts: A # A	1	4	0	0	5
(e)	Final (elliptical/non-clausal Host)	34	0	0	18	52
(f)	Other (elliptical HC, phrase internal)	1	0	7	0	8
	TOTAL	43	38	23	30	134

The prosodic realisation of CCs in different positions shows no clear overall pattern. It is possible, however, to note the following trends:

(a) For most positions there is a clear preference for one prosodic type with the exception of (Biii) MV # Non-clausal complement, (Ci) MV/Clause # Non-clausal Adjunct, and (c) Within NP. These positions stand out in that they have a much more balanced distribution of the four prosodic types than the rest. In the case of CCs inserted between MV and complement the choice between L-bound and R-bound prosody is even in statistical terms highly

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[24] 4 soundfiles are missing in ICE-GB.

significantly affected by the independent variables clausal and non-clausal complements (χ^2 = 18.01 > 6.64, df = 1).

(b) Non-clausal constituents seem to attract prosodic scope more than clausal ones. This is particularly obvious when we compare (Biii), MV # Non-clausal complementation, with (Biv) and (Bv), MV # Clausal complementation. In the former there is a clear preference for R-bound over L-bound, whereas in the latter two the reverse is true, with R-binding not occurring at all. The same pattern is noticeable when comparing (Ci), MV/Clause # Non-clausal Adjunct, with (Cii), Clausal Adjunct. The reason for this strong attractive force of non-clausal (phrasal) constituents seems to lie in their greater compactness and hence ability to function cognitively as 'figure' against the 'ground' provided by the clause as a whole.

(c) The results confirm Wichmann's (2001: 185) assumption that medial CCs tend to be prosodically integrated, provided that we interpret "prosodically integrated" as including not only L-R bound, but also L-bound and R-bound: of a total of 493 CCs in non-peripheral position (i.e. excluding initial and final), only 18.7 percent (92 instances) are prosodically independent, the rest are either L-bound (19.7%, 97), R-bound (21.5%, 106), or, with a clear majority, L-R bound (40.1%, 198).

(d) For the peripheral positions it is noticeable that initial CCs with clausal scope show a clear preference for prosodic independence over prosodic right-binding, whereas final CCs prefer left-binding to independence. This can be explained by a stronger need to set off initial CCs from the host in order to ensure clausal scope over the entire HC. Prosodically integrated (i.e. R-bound) CCs in initial position may be more at risk of being associated merely with the subject NP. As noted above, non-clausal constituents have considerable 'pulling power', in the sense that they tend to attract scope.

It is also possible to detect a certain correlation between prosodic realisation and lexical type of CC with most CC types clearly preferring one particular prosodic pattern. Table 8 gives an overview of preferred prosodic realisation for the 18 most frequent lexical types (accounting for a total of 81% of all CCs in the corpus).

Table 8: Preferred prosodic realisations of most frequent CCs

Left-bound	*I suppose, I don't think, I'm afraid, I may/might say, I should say*
Right-bound	*I don't know, let's say*
Left-right bound	*I think, do you think, I suspect*
Independent	*I believe, I'm sure, I guess, I would say, It seems to me, I know, I was going to say*

Prosodic independence is typically preferred by longer CCs (e.g. *It seems to me, I was going to say*; as noted in 5.2) and those expressing certainty, rather than lack of commitment (e.g. *I'm sure, I know, I was going to say, I would say*). Right-binding is linked to lexical predicates that typically have phrasal scope and function as approximators (as discussed in 4.3). Left-right binding is the preferred prosodic pattern for the most frequent lexical type, viz. *I think*: of a total of 379 (2 of which had no soundfile) 117 were L-R bound, 105 L-bound, 83 R-bound, and 72 independent.

Overall, the overwhelming majority of CCs is prosodically integrated in some form, i.e. either L-R bound, L-bound, or R-bound. This is especially true for CCs with high frequency such as *I think, I suppose*, which together account for 56 per cent of all CCs in the corpus. The strong preference of short and high frequency CCs for prosodic integration lends support to the view that CCs are being grammaticalised (or pragmaticalised) into discourse markers (cf. e.g. Traugott 1995: 38-39, Aijmer 1997: 3-10, Thompson & Mulac 1991), which are often fully integrated prosodically (e.g. Erman 1987: 57 for *I mean*, He & Lindsay 1998: 139 for *you know*). This grammaticalisation process seems to involve bleaching of the epistemic meaning of the CC and increased use of the CC as a mainly textual device for linking purposes and the structuring of information flow (cf. e.g. Taglicht 1984: 22-28, Ziv 2002). The narrowing of scope from clausal to phrasal, discussed in Section 4, can be taken as an intermediary step in this development away from an epistemic comment to a pleonastic structuring device. Although far from being purely structural devices, phrasal scope CCs have already moved away from a purely epistemic function (Prince *et al.*'s shield) acting more like approximators (as discussed in Section 4.3).

Evidence for a structural or filler function of CCs also comes from cooccurrence facts. Thus, a substantial number of CCs occurs together with disfluency phenomena such as fillers (e.g. *you know, I mean*), hesitation sounds (*uhm, uh*), word repetitions, pauses (<,> short, <,,> long), and backtracking/restarts, as in (25).

> (25)   I mean *I think* really uhm <,,> it's very difficult to to to produce any form of art unless you are driven <,> (s1a-015-145)

Disfluency features as these in the immediate environment of CCs are by no means rare, as illustrated in Table 9, and suggest a similar function for CCs.

Table 9: Disfluencies in the immediate cotext of CCs

	Preceding CC	Following CC
Filler (*you know, I mean, like, oh*)	54	51
Hesitation sound (*uh, uhm*), repetition	64	87
Pause	59	116
Backtracking/restarts	-	28

If we analyse the data according to the number of disfluency features irrespective of exact position (i.e. preceding or following the CC), we get the following overall results (Table 10).

Table 10: Number of disfluency features immediately preceding or following CC

1 disfluency feature	198
2 disfluency features	78
3 disfluency features	25
4 disfluency features	5
Total	309

Thus, in 309 cases (of a total of 830 CCs) we find at least one disfluency feature in its immediate cotext (with a maximum of four, as in example 25). This seems to suggest that the use of CCs is often linked to online production difficulties with the CC playing more of a structural/filling role rather than a commenting one.

6. Conclusion

This paper has focussed on the complex interaction of the parameters of scope, position, and prosody in the case of naturally occurring instances of spoken CCs. It could be shown that the (semantic-pragmatic) scope of a CC is influenced by two main factors, position and prosody. This interaction results in two types of scope: clausal, covering the entire host clause, or phrasal, i.e. singling out individual constituents (anchors) or covering elliptical HCs. These two types of scope also differ in their communicative functions. While CCs with clausal scope represent epistemic 'shields' (Prince *et al.* 1982) and as such express degree of speaker commitment with regard to the proposition expressed and mitigate the 'neustic', CCs with phrasal scope qualify for classification as 'approximators' (in Prince *et al.*'s 1982 terms) and as such operate proposition-internally, mitigating the 'phrastic' (Hare 1970).

The prosodic analysis, which has identified four main patterns, has shown that the prosodic realisation of CCs in terms of left- or right-binding has an impact on their scope, but is also influenced by position and lexical type of

CC. Generally speaking, there is a strong preference of CCs, especially high-frequency ones, for prosodic integration in some form. This can be seen as part of a grammaticalisation (or pragmaticalisation) process of CCs into prosodically more integrated discourse markers. A concomitant feature of this pragmaticalisation process is the bleaching of their epistemic meaning and the development into pleonastic structuring devices for textual organisation. Evidence for such a development can also be found in phrasal scope CCs, which have already lost some of their epistemic commenting function and operate not so much as epistemic shields but as approximators. Further investigation of the grammaticalisation of CCs along these lines will, however, also have to look at historical data.

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'*Male. Male.*' – '*Male?*' – '*The sex is male.*' – *The role of repetition in English as a lingua franca conversations*

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1. Introduction

Repetition does not have the best reputation in our society. 'You're repeating yourself' can hardly be interpreted as anything other than criticism (Tannen 1989: 53). Similarly, the best joke- or storyteller can easily be silenced with the words 'you've already told us that one'. And when we think back to our school days, it might be a familiar memory that teachers usually regard it as flawed expression when the same terms are used too often in a student's essay (Johnstone 1987: 206). It seems that – unless it is used in a rhetorical way – repetition is not favoured very much, and, if possible, avoided (ibid.; Aitchison 1994: 18).

And yet repetition is fundamental. In school we repeat when we try to memorise something or to learn something by heart. In church we perform religious rituals and say prayers that have been the same for years. And even our daily habits are to some degree a constant repetition:

> *The ubiquity of repetition in all aspects of human existence is obvious: daily life largely consists of routines in which we do things in the same way day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, and time itself is measured by means of identical, repeated units. […] Life without repetition would be a life without tradition, memory, history and cultural practices. (Fischer 1994: 9)*

The ubiquity of repetition in 'human existence' also becomes obvious in our language. As Norrick puts it,

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> *[e]veryday face-to-face conversation thrives, in particular, on repetition. Conversationalists routinely repeat their own words and phrases within moves, moves within turns, and whole turns within speech events; in addition, they echo the wording, rhythm, and entire utterances of their interlocutors. (Norrick 1987: 245-246)*

This view is shared by Deborah Tannen (1987a, 1987b, 1989). For her, repetition is pervasive: everything we say and do is shaped by the things said and done in the past. During a conversation, speakers echo and rephrase other people's words in order to interact and participate in the conversation. The combination of repetition and variation, or, in her own words, of "fixity and novelty", is what "makes possible the creation of meaning" (Tannen 1989: 37)[1]; for this reason, repetition in her opinion contributes to the "poetics" of talk.

Despite these positive words about repetition, it still seems to be a highly underestimated phenomenon. Although there are some researchers who investigated into repetition (among them Jefferson 1972, Norrick 1987, Johnstone 1987, and Tannen 1987a, 1987b, 1989), there is still a tendency to ignore this linguistic element. As Wong (2000: 408) observes, the notion of 'economy' seems to be an important feature of the writing of linguistic rules, while the repetition of words or phrases tends to be regarded as inefficient and redundant. Many people would not believe how much power and potential lies in this phenomenon and how significant it is for successful communication.

This last sentence could also be used to refer to another phenomenon: English as a lingua franca (ELF). Although the (temporary) predominance of English is indisputable and well documented (e.g. Brutt-Griffler 2002, Crystal 1997, Graddol 2006, Jenkins 2003, McKay 2003, Rajagopalan 2004, and Widdowson 1994 and 1997), and although there has been a heated debate going on about whether this predominance is a blessing or a curse (with e.g. Phillipson 1992 as an ardent advocate of the latter opinion), the essence of the phenomenon has consistently been neglected:

> *[C]uriously little thought has so far gone into what surely must be the very heart of the matter: the nature of the language itself as an international means of communication, and in what respects English as a lingua franca (ELF) differs from 'English as a native language' (ENL). (Seidlhofer 2002: 271)*

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1 The relationship between fixity and novelty as an important element of language use has also been analysed in a study on formulaic sequences conducted by Wray (2002).

Seidlhofer regards ELF as a "use in its own right" (2001: 137) and demands recognition and acceptance of this new language use. Similarly, Widdowson (1994 and 2003) questions the native speakers' widely accepted "ownership of English" (Widdowson 1994: 377) and promotes English as an international language that is free of native speaker 'guardians'. Furthermore, Ammon (2000) claims a non-native speaker's right to "linguistic peculiarities" and argues for "more fairness in International English" (Ammon 2000: 111).

Nevertheless, only few attempts have been made to explore these 'linguistic peculiarities' of English as a lingua franca and to describe its salient features (among them Firth 1996, Jenkins 2000, Meierkord 1996, and Seidlhofer 2004). It seems that – as it is the case with repetition – the power and potential of this phenomenon that up to a billion speakers (Jenkins 2003: 4) successfully use in their everyday lives is still underestimated.

Major efforts, however, have been made by Seidlhofer and her VOICE project. VOICE, the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English, is the "first computer-readable corpus capturing spoken ELF interactions" (*VOICE Website)* that is currently being compiled at the English Department of the University of Vienna[2]. First analyses of ELF interactions have already been presented (e.g. Breiteneder 2005a and 2005b, Klimpfinger 2005, Kordon 2003, Pitzl 2004 and 2005), more are to follow.

It is the aim of this paper to contribute to the description of English as a lingua franca by exploring a feature of it that has been facing similar prejudices as ELF itself – repetition. To show the potential of these two phenomena, I analysed the impact of repetition on dyadic ELF conversations between speakers of a range of first languages[3]. My objective was to find out for which purposes repetitions were used, which forms they had, and how significant they were for the achievement of successful ELF conversations. The results of this study will be presented in section 4, after a brief definition of ELF (section 2.1), a theoretical description of repetition and its forms and functions (sections 2.2 to 2.4) and a clarification of my data and method (section 3). In section 5, I will provide a conclusion of my analysis and state its implications for further research on repetition in ELF conversations.

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[2] For more information on VOICE see the *VOICE Website*: http://www.univie.ac.at/voice

[3] This study is based on my M.A. thesis (Lichtkoppler 2006), which was written at the Department of English at the University of Vienna under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Barbara Seidlhofer.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Defining ELF

In its narrowest sense, English as a lingua franca can be described as

> 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; emphasis in original)

Or, as House (1999: 74) puts it, ELF interactions occur between conversationalists of different language backgrounds, "for none of whom English is the mother tongue" [4]. While my own research deals with ELF interactions as described by Firth and House above, namely with data in which only non-native speakers of English are involved, it should be noted that many ELF conversations inevitably include native speakers of English (cf. Seidlhofer 2004: 211). At almost every international conference there are likely to be participants from English-speaking countries, whose presence might not inhibit the occurrence of ELF interactions. For this reason, the compilers of VOICE *do* include conversations in their database in which native speakers are involved as long as the non-native speaking conversationalists provide the major input for the interactions (Breiteneder *et al*. 2006: 164). In these cases, as well as when ELF is used in its narrowest sense (as in my analysis), ELF is the "linguistic phenomenon in its own right" (Seidlhofer 2004: 213) that has been referred to in section one – a phenomenon that has to be analysed and described in order to see its full potential.

2.2. Approaching repetition

If we follow Tannen's argumentation mentioned in section 1, claiming that everybody's language is influenced by what was said at some point in the past (e.g. Tannen 1987b: 601), it must be concluded that virtually everything we say could actually be a repetition. As Bolinger puts it:

> At present we have no way of telling the extent to which a sentence like I went
> home is a result of invention, and the extent to which it is a result of repetition,
> countless speakers before us having already said it and transmitted it to us in toto.
> (Bolinger 1961: 381, emphasis in original)

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[4] For a more comprehensive survey of the different definitions of global English see Seidlhofer (2005) and Jenkins (in press).

One major challenge is thus to find a definition of this phenomenon, which allows us to distinguish between repetition and what we consider "something else" (Johnstone *et al.* 1994: 3).

For my analysis, three preconditions for the detection of repetitions need to be formulated: first of all, there must be an identifiable 'original' or 'prior text' of the repetition, i.e. the repeated element must have occurred before and must be identifiable as the repetition's 'model'. This prior text can either be a formal unit, or a semantic one, i.e. an idea that was uttered before.

Second, the prior text has to occur *within* the same conversation. Although Johnstone *et al.* (1994) have convincingly argued that there are many repetitions that draw on prior texts outside the current situations, the identification of these 'originals' would in most cases be impossible. Luckily, the participants of my data do not share any significant background (except the use of ELF) so that originals from outside the conversations might not play an important role for them.

The third precondition concerns the unit of analysis. As is the case with every utterance, repetitions can occur on various levels. Phonemes, morphemes, lexical items, and syntactic constructions can all be arranged in a repetitive way. Even rhythm and intonation can have a cyclic pattern (Tannen 1987b: 575-596). For the present analysis, only lexical and syntactic constructions that are not fixed expressions (such as proverbs and greetings) are considered. The targets of my analysis are thus words, phrases, or whole sentences which are identifiably repeated in a semantic or formal way within one conversation. I am aware that these preconditions exclude many occurrences of repetition, but they leave those that are feasible for an analysis.

As far as terms are concerned, I do not limit myself to any specific names and labels. All terms that describe this phenomenon in a neutral way, such as 'repetition', 'reiteration', 'recurrence' and 'replication', will be used interchangeably.

2.3. Forms of repetition

Instances of repetition as defined in the last section can vary according to a number of variables, some of which overlap and interact. Rather obvious differences occur along a *scale of fixity*. In this sense, repetitions can either be totally fixed in form and meaning, or vary in one of these aspects. This leads to the distinction of three different types of repetition. First of all, there is an "exact repetition" (Tannen 1989: 54), also called "verbatim" (Barbaresi 1996: 105) or "full repetition" (Brody 1994: 5), when the original form and meaning

is not changed at all. Second, there is "repetition with variation" (Tannen 1989: 54), also referred to as "non-exact repetition" (Johnstone *et al*. 1994: 14), or "partial repetition" (Barbaresi 1996: 105). In my definition, repetition with variation begins as soon as the slightest change is made to the original appearance (distinguishing it from exact repetition) and ends when the variation covers every word of the original, which would lead to the third type of repetition, namely the paraphrase, where only the idea or concept is reiterated (Tannen 1989: 54). This tripartite distinction is, however, not as straightforward as one would expect, as the following example from my data illustrates:

Extract 1:[5]
> S2 [German]: […] by the way may i ask you for er what's your first language in china? because we need it for this survey?
> S1 [Chinese]: mhm
> S2: what's your first language?
> S1: the first language.
> S2: yah. your your mother your mother tongue. (1)

The repetitions in this extract can be mapped as follows:

Table 1:

MODEL (in first line)	S2: what's your first language in china?
NO REPETITION	S1: mhm
REPETITION WITH VARIATION	S2: what's your first language?
REPETITION WITH VARIATION	S1: the first language?
REPETITION WITH VARIATION	S2: your mother tongue

If "what's your first language in china?" is taken as the model, all the repetitions of this utterance must be labelled as repetitions with variation, since at least one word of the original sentence is changed and at least one stays the same. However, if only the sequence "first language" is taken as the model, the mapping would have to be different:

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[5] My data were transcribed according to the VOICE Transcription Conventions, cf. http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/voice.php?page=transcription_general_information. Minor changes to these conventions [e.g. the introduction of a speaker's first language in square brackets, the deletion of some text, the non-use of blue font for overlaps] were made in order to keep the extracts short and intelligible to the reader.

Table 2:

MODEL (in first line)	S2: first language?
NO REPETITION	S1: mhm
EXACT REPETITION	S2: first language?
EXACT REPETITION	S1: first language?
PARAPHRASE	S2: mother tongue

In the last utterance of S2 two more repetitions can be found:
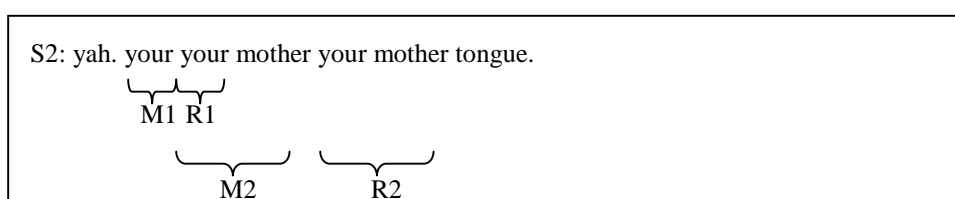
Figure 1:

S2: yah. your your mother your mother tongue.
M1 R1
M2 R2

Table 3:

MODEL 1 (M1)	S2: your
EXACT REPETITION 1 (R1)	S2: your
MODEL 2 (M2)	S2: your mother
EXACT REPETITION 2 (R2)	S2: your mother

What is noticeable here is that the exact repetition of "your" is at the same time part of the model for the reiteration of "your mother". Furthermore, it can be observed that repetitions (and the models they refer to) vary considerably in length and can be from one word only ("your") to a fully constructed sentence ("what's your first language in china?"). These two aspects of the forms of repetition have an undesirable effect: they make it impossible to grasp specific instances of repetition with a clear beginning and end. For this reason, it was not possible to give a reliable number of the occurrences of repetition, nor to calculate the ratio between non-repetitive and repetitive language use in my data.

A repetition can also be described along a *temporal scale*. Depending on when it occurs, a repetition can thus be either "immediate", i.e. occurring immediately after the original, or "delayed", i.e. occuring at any time later in

the text (Tannen 1989: 54). Due to the restrictions made above, however, any replication must occur within the same conversation in order to be counted for my analysis. In this sense, the repetition of "your mother" in Figure 1 is an immediate repetition, while the reiteration of "what's your first language?" in Table 1 is delayed after getting feedback from S1 ("mhm").

Two more forms of repetition can be identified, namely concerning the *participant* who utters it: a "self-repetition" (Johnstone *et al.* 1994: 15-16, Murata 1994: 198 and 1995: 345, Tannen 1989: 54), also referred to as "same-speaker" (Norrick 1987: 246), "auto-" and "monological" (Bazzanella 1996: ix) repetition, occurs when the speaker repeats him- or herself (again, S2's "your mother" in Figure 1 would be an example of this). "Other-repetition" (Johnstone *et al.* 1994: 15), also called "allo-repetition" (Tannen 1989: 198), "diaphonic" (Perrin *et al.* 2003: 1844), or "dialogic" (Barbaresi 1996: 105) repetition, is produced in cooperation between the interactants, that is to say when one of the conversationalists repeats what his/her co-conversationalist uttered earlier (as S1 does in Table 1 when answering S2's question with "the first language").

The three levels of my analysis can be illustrated in the following table:

Table 4: Variables of form for the analysis

VARIABLES	POSSIBLE MANIFESTATIONS
scale of fixity	exact repetition, repetition with variation or paraphrase
temporal scale	immediate or delayed repetition
participants	self-repetition or other-repetition

2.4. Functions of repetition in ELF talk

Repetition in ELF talk is so far an almost completely unexplored phenomenon. In one very recent paper on ELF conversations, repetition is explicitly mentioned as an accommodation strategy that achieves efficiency and expresses cooperation (Cogo & Dewey 2006: 70). Another allusion to the fact that ELF speakers use repetition for specific purposes has been made by House (2002, 2003), when she identifies the so-called "represent" (House 2003: 568) in her own ELF data. Although she does not mention the term 'repetition' when describing this phenomenon, her examples show that House's represents usually have the form of – in my definition – immediate, exact other-repetitions.

> *Brit: And if erm things like Nigerian English, Indian English which is a sort of variety in itself it **should be respected***
>
> *Mauri:**Should be respected***

The functions of a represent are described as follows:

> *It is used, as its name suggests, to 're-present' the previous speaker's move in order to aid the present speaker's working memory in both his/her comprehension and production processes, to provide textual coherence, to signal uptake, to request confirmation, or to indicate to the previous speaker that there is no intention to 'steal' his/her turn. (House 2003: 568)*

A variety of functions is mentioned in the above passage; a few of them aim at facilitating the comprehension process, namely by signalling uptake, requesting confirmation and providing textual coherence. Another function provides interactive information beyond the one needed for comprehension by indicating to the previous speaker that there is no intention to take away his/her turn. Also, the importance of represents for production processes is mentioned.

While House herself does not distinguish between functions of repetitions that influence the 'production' and 'comprehension' of language as well as the 'interaction' between conversationalists, other researchers use these descriptors. Norrick (1987), for example, who provides a comprehensive account of the functions of repetition in (native speaker[6]) conversations, describes the "production-based", "comprehension-based" and "interaction-based" classes as important macro-functions of self-repetition (Norrick 1987: 254-264). Furthermore, Tannen, who has probably conducted the largest number of studies on repetition in native speaker talk (1987a, 1987b, 1989), also names the levels of "production", "comprehension", and "interaction" as major acting grounds of repetition. However, there are no commonly shared definitions of the sub- and macro-functions of repetition (Bazzanella 1993, for example, provides a totally different taxonomy). This encourages me to provide my own definitions of the macro-functions of repetition, which are probably most in line with Norrick's view:

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[6] Norrick does not mention the first languages of the interactants in his data. It would seem that his data consist of native speaker conversations.

Table 5: Macro-functions of repetition

MACRO-FUNCTIONS	DESCRIPTION
production-oriented repetitions	facilitate the accomplishment of utterances
comprehension-oriented repetitions	help to achieve mutual understanding
interaction-oriented repetitions	assist with showing participation, solidarity, or attitude

These macro-functions of repetition can be supplemented with an infinite number of sub-functions, many of which are described in the works of Norrick (1987), Tannen (1989) and Bazzanella (1993). It would go beyond the scope of this paper to give a full account of their works here[7], and since all of these studies were conducted in a native speaker context, their findings might not even apply to ELF situations. Still, their results will be borne in mind while analysing my own data, as will the studies of Murata (1994, 1995), Sawir (2004) and Knox (1994). These three researchers investigated the impact of repetition in native speaker – non-native speaker (NS-NNS) contexts, which can – again – not be fully equated with ELF conversations. Still, their research led to interesting insights regarding the functions of repetition for NNSs of English, which were also important in my own empirical analysis. Knox (1994: 200), for example, argues that non-native speakers repeat words or utterances to show their listeners that these words have an important meaning that cannot be expressed otherwise. They give 'prominence' to information that they regard as significant. Murata (1994) and Sawir (2004) distinguish between several functions of repetition that were important for the NNSs in their data. Both describe "silence-avoiding repetition" (Murata 1994: 204) or "stalling" (Sawir 2004: 19) as a repetition that allows (non-native) speakers to keep talking fluently while thinking of the next words. Furthermore, Murata's (1994: 200) "solidarity repetition" can be compared to what Sawir identifies as a repetition that indicates "participatory listenership" (Sawir 2004: 9), i.e. that signals that the conversationalists are still listening to each other. Murata moreover deals with "reformulation repetitions" (ibid.: 206-207), which, in her opinion, NNSs mainly use to formulate a correct sentence.[8]

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[7] A comprehensive description of their works can, however, be found in Lichtkoppler (2006: 21-31).

[8] More functions of repetition were identified in Murata's (1994) and Sawir's (2004) work, which can, for the sake of brevity, not be described in this paper.

One of Sawir's conclusions was that

> *[c]ontrary to the old view that repetition is an indication of lack of speaking skills, repetition is indeed a resource that language learners can utilise to enable them to engage in conversation despite their language constraints (Sawir 2004: 3).*

Laurie Knox elaborates on this view:

> *The effect of repetition is to shift the work of constructing coherent and meaningful text from a codification process to an interpretive process. When, as in nonnative/native speaker conversations, the lack of shared code makes linguistic codification an unreliable and ineffective source of meaning in itself, the effect of repetition may become crucial to communicative success. […] [T]he nonnative/native speaker conversation represents an extreme case of a universal phenomenon: When language becomes insufficient as a bridge between individuals, either because of the complexity of thoughts to be communicated, or the poverty of words, then we are able to compensate failure of language with heightened interpretative efforts, motivated by sensitivity to the pragmatic potentialities of linguistic expressions, and by trust in the integrity of each other's informative intentions. (Knox 1994: 205)*

Even though words like 'language learners' and 'failure' are inappropriate ones for ELF researchers, who do not measure ELF competence vis-à-vis the native speaker and who would therefore rather talk of 'linguistic peculiarities' of 'language users' than of 'failures' of 'language learners' (cf. e.g. Ammon 2000, House 2003, Seidlhofer 2001), the content of these statements might still hold true for ELF users – a question that will now be tackled.

3. Data and method

The data for the present study were recorded at the accommodation office of an Austrian student exchange organisation. The main task of the office staff is to provide appropriate accommodation for foreign students in Austria and to support them in any problem arising with this issue. The interactions occurring during their office hours usually follow the general scheme of service encounters: a student in front of a counter asks one of four advisers for help and as soon as his/her problem is solved, it is the next student's turn. In linguistic terms, this leads to rather short, dyadic[9] and highly interactive conversations between a student and an adviser, which, despite the routine, occur without preparation or prior planning as such. For this reason, it is justified to say that my data consist of 'unplanned' talk as Ochs (1979: 55)

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[9] Only in a few cases there is a third speaker involved.

describes it: "[u]nplanned discourse is talk that has not been thought out prior to its expression. In this sense it is spontaneous." Furthermore, my data can be characterised as "transactional" conversations, the major purpose of which is to exchange information, as opposed to "interactional" conversations, in which the establishment of a social relationship stands in the foreground (Brown & Yule 1983: 1-3). Moreover, the relationship between the participants of my data, who are not familiar to each other, can be described as "positional" and "complementary" (Aston 1988: 214ff.).[10]

According to the office staff, about half of the students making enquiries usually talk to them in the main official language of the country, namely German, while the other half resort to English as the language of communication. I myself shared this impression, having spent forty hours of recording in the office and not having noticed any attempt of using any other linguistic code than German or English, which confirms the special status of English as a lingua franca even in this small-scale empirical research. In some cases, the students even explicitly stated that they wanted to use English as the lingua franca in the respective conversations, as Extracts 2 and 3 illustrate:

Extract 2:
S1 [German]: […] <L1de> ich haette hier einen fragebogen (.) wenn sie mir den noch <4> ausfuellen </4> {here is a questionnaire, if you/dis could fill it in} </L1de>
S2 [Polish]: <4> in english </4> please.
S1: sorry @ sorry i always switch the languages […]

Extract 3:
S1 [German]: <L1de> gruess gott {hello/dis} </L1de>
S2 [Norwegian]: hello (.) excuse me i speak only english. […]

On the whole, about five hours of data were recorded, a substantial part of which, however, had to be discarded due to long gaps[11] or low intelligibility. The fact that the recordings were taken in an open-plan office, with several advisers and students talking simultaneously and with a constant level of

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10 Aston (1988: 214ff.) distinguishes between "symmetrical" versus "complementary" and "personal" versus "positional" relationships. According to his definition, "complementary" relationships occur when participants do not act on an equal basis but have different levels of knowledge and information (such as the students and advisers in my data). "Positional" relationships occur when the participants do not act as personal characters but primarily perform a specific role (again, such as the students and advisers in my data).

11 These gaps were mostly caused by the advisers working on the computer or printing something out for the students.

office-noise (e.g. radio, printer, etc.), led to the undesired effect that some very promising dialogues could not be sufficiently transcribed. This confirms Kordon's (2003: 39) observation that "a great deal of spoken interaction happens in circumstances where good-quality recording is inconvenient". Still, 21 dialogues were successfully transcribed, which equalled more than one hour of 'pure' ELF speech (i.e. when longer speaking gaps were substracted), and which formed the basis of my empirical research.

The approach chosen for my investigation is conversation analysis (CA). In this sense I deal with "naturally occurring" (Ten Have 1999: 5) conversations and am "open to discovering new phenomena rather than searching the data with preconceptions of hypotheses" (Seedhouse 2004: 38) since I believe that these aspects are vital for empirical work on English as a lingua franca: as ELF is a language use "in its own right" (Seidlhofer 2001: 137), the analysis of it must also occur in its own right, i.e. without trying to fit it into existing language norms and without taking English as a native language as the starting point of comparison. Trying to explain ELF through the eyes of a native speaker would most probably lead to serious shortcomings. For this reason, the research question of the present analysis had not been defined before intensive occupation with the gathered data. The frequent occurrence of repetitions in the material then suggested a further and deeper analysis of their forms and functions. This analysis, though conducted with as little preconception as possible, was nevertheless based on the theoretical background mentioned in section 2. While trying to independently identify patterns and regularities of the repetitions occurring in my data, this process was naturally influenced by the approaches and explanations that I had already encountered. These concepts helped me to find and describe my own categorisations, some of which were congruent with the functions of repetition described in earlier NS-NS or NS-NNS studies, while others were not. This congruence does not contradict the strong case I have just made for the independent description of ELF conversations, since it was not attempted to fit specific repetitions into existing categories but to analyse the repetitions first and then investigate whether the categories *can* be compared (or not) to existing ones. The crucial point at this stage of ELF research is to do things bottom-up, i.e. to find patterns and regularities before trying to categorise them in an interplay between existing descriptions and new interpretations.

Presumptions were not made on the basis of the participants' cultural backgrounds either. Even though I am aware that a speaker's cultural background influences his or her L2 use, Meierkord (2002) has pointed out that there are many other factors that influence a speaker's performance (such

as his/her linguistic competence, his/her personality, the communicative goal) and that the speaker's behaviour to a large extent "depends on what culture a speaker wants to construct in a particular conversation" (Meierkord 2002: 129). ELF speakers might thus even refrain from using their own cultural habits since they know that their co-conversationalists would probably have difficulties with them. As Meierkord (2002: 128) states:

> *Individual speakers have usually acquired or – more often – learned a second language, which they use for interaction, and they are aware of the fact that their interlocutors do also use a language that is not their mother tongue. As a result, they will alter their speech in a way they consider adequate in the light of their interlocutors' perceived competence, i.e. they may choose to use more frequent vocabulary items and grammatical structures, which they assume to be known by the other participants in the conversations. (Meierkord 2002: 128)*

4. The analysis

So far, some rather radical statements have been repeated (ELF is a "use in its own right" (Seidlhofer 2001: 137)), claims have been put forward ('an independent description of ELF *for its own sake* is necessary') and a hypothesis has been formulated ('repetition might be a vital constituent of ELF conversations'). Now it is time to support these claims and to evaluate the hypothesis with empirical data.

As was mentioned in the last section, the number of repetitions occurring in my data was conspicuous. Even though it was not possible to give an exact number of repetitions in the recorded conversations (for the reasons given in section 2.3.), the frequent use of them – in the various forms described in section 2.3. – could be clearly observed.

* Time-gaining repetition

One of the most striking repetitions in my data[12] had the form of an (almost) exact and (mostly) immediate self-repetition and served the function of gaining time. This time-gaining repetition can be seen as a production-oriented function of repetition since it is used to produce fluent speech while thinking about what to say next (cf. Tannen 1989: 48). This function has also

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12 For a full account of the study cf. Lichtkoppler (2006); in this paper only a selection of repetitions can be dealt with.

been described by Tannen (1989) and Norrick (1987), and it can be compared to Sawir's (2003: 19) notion of "stalling" as well as Murata's (1994: 204) "silence-avoidance repetition":

Extract 4:
> S1 [Chinese]: okay. (.) and e:r i've got a question (4) because erm we er stay here **for m- for my**[13] doctor degree for <1> several </1> years. […]
> S2 [German]: <1> mhm </1>

In this extract, the words "for my" are probably repeated while searching for a specific word, namely "doctor degree". Time-gaining repetition can thus be used to avoid silence and to keep the conversation going while coping with some perceived linguistic difficulties. Similar difficulties tend to occur at the beginning of new topics (which leads to the assumption that repetition also supports ELF speakers in topic management):

Extract 5:
> S1 [Thai]: **i i** now **i** stay in er a room <2> <un> x </un> </2> i make reservation to: erm (1)
> S2 [German]: <2> mhm </2>
> S1: july.

Extract 6:
> S1 [Catalan]: =okay. <soft> so **good an:d** (.) **good** </soft> (.) **and** then another thing (1) {searching in her bag (1)} is that i received this […]

No matter which kind of difficulty occurs, be it a missing word, or a problem with the expression of a new idea – whenever it arises, time-gaining repetition can be a simple and efficient means of overcoming it without losing face.

* Utterance-developing repetition

In some cases, time-gaining repetition is closely intertwined with another type of repetition, which can be compared to what Murata called "reformulation repetition" (Murata 1994: 206-207). Utterance-developing repetitions occur when words and phrases are reformulated until a (for the speaker) satisfactory utterance is reached. In an ELF context, these reformulations serve two functions: they are production-oriented in that they help a speaker to find an expression that he or she is satisfied with, and they are comprehension-

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[13] From now on, the respective repetitions will be marked in bold.

oriented in that they can be used to make an utterance more intelligible. These two functions are not mutually exclusive, but they naturally overlap and interact (i.e. even when I reformulate an utterance for my own, production-oriented, sake, the utterance might also become more intelligible for my co-conversationalist and vice versa). Furthermore, since the speaker's (often subconscious) aims can never be completely understood, only tendencies in orientation can be stated. A tendency to a rather production-oriented utterance-developing repetition can be observed in the following extract:

Extract 7:
> S2 [German]: **so you will be**: (.) no. (1) **so you:** (.) **you booked** now until the end of june
> S1 [Chinese]: yah

In this example, the original "so you will be" is reformulated into "you booked", which provides insight into the nature and form of utterance-developing repetitions: while also being a self-repetition and occurring close to the original, it differs from time-gaining repetition in that it is never exact, but always a repetition with variation, or even a paraphrase. For this reason, the two words "so you:" in the middle of S2's utterance could either be the start of an utterance-developing repetition (which was stopped before the variation could occur) or a time-gaining repetition that helps to avoid silence while thinking about a satisfactory expression.

A more comprehension-oriented utterance-developing repetition is the following:

Extract 8:
> S1 [Greek]: okay. (1) (AND) i: don't want my room for june.
> S2 [German]: mhm (.) i see. but then **you** <1> **have to** </1> **move** er **you have to move out** (.)
> S1: <1> yeah </1>
> S1: m<2>hm </2>
> S2: <2> **to**</2>**tally you have to** (.)
> S1: yeah
> S2: **take** <3> **your** </3> **things out of your room**.
> S1: <3> yo- </3>

In this extract, S2 utters the same information three times in a row, even though it might have been satisfactorily expressed in the first attempt ("you have to move"). Thus, S2 might have reformulated the information in order to make it more understandable to her listener – and she might have wanted to make it unmistakably clear that he (S1) would have to move out, i.e. she wants to give prominence to this fact, which can also be seen by the climax that she produces:

"you have to move out"
"you have to move out totally"
"you have to take your things out of the room"

* Prominence-providing repetition

Giving "prominence" is probably one of the best-known functions of repetition – for a reason: not only does a repetition of this kind facilitate the production of value-laden, emphasised utterances and thus serves the interaction-oriented function of showing attitude, but it can also be used in a comprehension-oriented way, in order to make the listener think about words or phrases that the speaker cannot reformulate in a more intelligible way (cf. Knox 1994). An example, in which prominence-providing repetition is used in this way, is the following:

Extract 9:[14]
    S1 [Japanese]: […] can you **print** er **the new address for me**? (.) **PRINT**.
    S2 [German]: sorry. hh you need a confirmation or (.) just a second. <2> i just think. </2>
    […]
    S2: thank you s- so: (.) you're now living in: (1) <L1de> [place1] </L1de>=
    S1: yeah yeah yeah.
    S2: and then move in <L1de> [place2] </L1de>=
    S1: yeah yeah yeah yeah.
    S2: and you need?
    S1: can you **print**=
    S2: =y<3>ah </3>
    S1: <3> **PRINT** </3> {drawing a paper in the air}
    S2: =m<4>hm </4>
    S1: <4> **the** </4> **address for me**. (1)
    S2: <u>the: confirmation for your vi<5>sa?</u> </5>
    S1: <5> yeah </5> yeah yeah yeah.

S1's constant repetition of "print" and "the address for me" not only facilitates the production of his utterance (he seems to have difficulties with reformulating his ideas) but it also makes S2 think about the deeper sense of these words – with success, as the underlined utterance shows.
    In my definition, prominence-providing repetition is very flexible in form. Although it is usually a self-repetition, there is no limit as to its temporal

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[14] As can be seen, this extract contains more repetitions than the highlighted ones. This gives some idea as to how frequently repetitions occur in my data.

occurrence or its degree of fixity. Prominence can therefore be achieved in several different ways, one more example of which can be seen below:

Extract 10:
> S1 [Greek]: er (.) what about june is there a problem? that i have to move while my contract anyway's till the end of june
> S2 [German]: but then **you have to pay** <u>the rent</u> **for june**.
> S1: <u>the rent</u> (.) the whole or:=
> S2: =because we have cancellation period of two months. (1) er at the moment it's end of april so: the earliest possibility would be the end of <@> june </@>. (2) you can cancel but it might be that **you** also **have to pay the rent** (.) **for june**. (1)

* Ensuring accuracy of understanding

Extract 10 contains another interesting kind of recurrence (underlined), namely S2's repetition of S1's "the rent". This kind of repetition most likely serves the purpose of ensuring accuracy of understanding, i.e. to make sure that the listener has understood what his/her interlocutor has said by repeating the ideas in an exact or non-exact way.[15] In this way, it can be assured that every conversationalist is keeping pace with the information flow. Usually, repetition that ensures accuracy has the form of an other-repetition that occurs either immediately (as in Extract 10) or delayed. The degree of fixity is also flexible, ranging from exact repetitions (cf. Extract 10) to paraphrases, as in the example below:

Extract 11:
> S1 [Japanese]: erm (.) <4> is </4> it possible (.)
> S2 [German]: <4> mhm </4>
> S1: to move **before** one or or two da:ys becau:se=
> S2: =**earlier**.
> S1: yeah.=

This specific example illustrates very well the potential of repetition and of ELF talk itself. While "moving before one or two days" would be considered as a mistake in ENL, it does not lead to a communication breakdown in ELF since any ambiguities can be immediately ruled out after ensuring accuracy

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[15] This definition differs considerably from Sawir's notion of "ensuring correctness" (2004), which in her definition occurs when a speaker that was corrected by his/her co-conversationalist repeats this corrected version; a phenomenon that might be more important in NS-NNS conversations (which was the field of Sawir's investigation).

with the help of repetition. Of course, repetition is not the only strategy that helps to facilitate understanding, and misunderstandings can also arise in ELF conversations[16]. Nevertheless, this extract illustrates that many 'ELF-ish' peculiarities (like the use of "before" in this abstract, for more peculiarities cf. Seidlhofer 2004: 220) do not pose problems for mutual understanding and that there are some strategies (like the use of repetition) that are particularly important in ELF conversations since they help ELF users to overcome linguistic and cultural differences.[17]

* Showing listenership

Once again, the function of ensuring accuracy tends to overlap with another, in this case interaction-oriented function: showing listenership, also referred to as "participatory listenership" (Sawir 2004: 9) and "solidarity repetition" (Murata 1994: 200). The main effect of this function is that it conveys involvement and participation in the conversation, or, in other words, it signals that one is still listening (ibid.). Repetitions that fulfil this function tend to be (almost) exact and immediate other-repetitions – a form that also repetitions that ensure accuracy can take. In such cases, the "exact" function of a repetition cannot be identified – "the rent" in Extract 10, for example, which has just been said to ensure accuracy, could therefore just as well have been a repetition that shows listenership. The same holds true for the following example:

Extract 12:
> S2 [German]: erm no this is impossible because usually you have to pay the administration fee for the whole booking period. so in case you book for one year hh you have to pay the administration fee for one year hh and you **can't get it back**. (.)
> S1 [Chinese]: **cannot get it back**. (2)

Again, S1 might repeat "cannot get it back" in order to ensure accuracy of understanding and to leave room for S2 to protest in case he got it wrong, or he might do so in order to show a reaction (it is his turn now) and thus to signal that he has listened to what S2 has said. Or it could be both, which would be very efficient since it kills two birds with one stone.

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[16] Cf. e.g. House (1999).

[17] Other strategies are dealt with in Hübner (2003), Keitsch (2004) and Rischner (2006).

* Cohesion & borrowing

Two more functions of repetition should be presented here, and once more they overlap and interact. These are the functions of 'cohesion'[18] and what I called – for want of a better term[19] – 'borrowing'.

Extract 13:
> S2 [German]: erm you mean **for visa** or-
> S1 [Chinese]: yes for m- **for visa**.
> […]
> S2: you can **prolong** your visa until the end of two thousand five (.) or you book **longer** (.) then i can also- you can also apply **for visa** for a **longer** period. (1)
> […]
> S2: because it's- (.) it's it's not **useful** (.) to use our bookings only **for** getting **visa**. […]
> […]
> S2: this is the **confirmation** for the payment (1) and then the **confirmation for visa** (19) {prepares confirmations (19)} then you have to sign this (1) and the **confirmation** for the new booking (.) from november until the end of march. (1)
> […]
> S1: so (.) er (i take) this one (.) this one for er for my<3>: extension </3>
> S2: <3> this is **for visa**. </3>
> S1: **for visa**. okay. this is e:r okay.
> S2: everyone applies with this one **for visa** so it's (.) it's **useful**.

This extract consists of passages taken from the beginning, middle and end of a thirteen-minute dialogue and it shows that throughout one conversation, the same words tend to be used. The most conspicuous element in this example is probably that of "for visa",[20] which is exactly repeated several times by S1 and S2 likewise. The purpose of this repetition might be better intelligibility by the establishment of cohesion: by referring back to "old" words that are known and understood by both speakers the text "sticks" together and is easily intelligible.[21]

The repetition of "for visa" could also be explained in a more production-oriented direction. The 'borrowing' of words has the advantage that no new term has to be searched for. For this reason, S1 and S2 might recycle and re-use words not only to achieve mutual understanding, but also to facilitate the

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[18] This function has also been identified by Tannen (1989) and Norrick (1987).

[19] The term 'borrowing' seems very wide to me – every repeated word is in some way 'borrowed' from a 'model'.

[20] The missing article or demonstrative pronoun in "for visa" can also be regarded as a specific feature of ELF, in which the use of articles differs from that in ENL (cf. Seidlhofer 2004: 220).

[21] The importance of repetition for the establishment of cohesion has been observed and analysed by Halliday & Hasan (1985: 81).

production of their utterance (why use another term when "for visa" is already so well approved?). "Borrowing" and "cohesion" could also have been the backdrop for the repeated use of "long" (and its derivatives), "confirmation" and "useful" in Extract 13 – and no matter what the speakers' intentions were, the result stays the same: easily produced utterances and mutual understanding.

5. Conclusion: the need for a more complex model to visualise the functions of repetition

As my analysis has shown, there are various different kinds of repetition (time-gaining and utterance-developing repetition, repetition that gives prominence, ensures accuracy, signals listenership and establishes cohesion, as well as borrowing) that generally serve three macro-functions: they facilitate the production of language, they support in the achievement of mutual understanding, and they help to show attitude and opinion. These insights, together with the frequency of repetitions occurring in my data, lead to the following thesis: in my data, repetition is a vital constituent of ELF talk that helps to overcome linguistic and cultural differences and to make conversations successful. This suggests that repetition might be an intrinsic element of all ELF conversations – a hypothesis which has to be checked on the basis of a large-scale database, for which the VOICE-corpus will be ideal.

Apart from this general insight, one major characteristic of repetitions in ELF conversations can be stated. Not only can one form of repetition have various different (macro-)functions at the same time, it even seems that overlapping and interacting functions of repetition are the norm rather than the exception. As has been shown, time-gaining repetition can sometimes be linked to utterance-developing repetition, which in itself tends to be production- *and* comprehension-oriented. Repetition that ensures accuracy can at the same time signal listenership while one and the same repetition can be used to establish cohesion *and* to facilitate the production of an utterance (borrowing). This list could be expanded further.

For this reason it would not be reasonable to assign instances of repetition to one specific function of a fixed taxonomy. This would in most cases unavoidably lead to a biased analysis since it does not take into account other functions that are served by these specific repetitions as well. Furthermore, a fixed taxonomy in the form of a grid with the macro-functions of repetition as headings and the sub-functions enumerated below them should itself be questioned. While such a table shows very well the variety of functions of

repetition, it does not sufficiently illustrate how they overlap and interact, and how complex their relationship to the three macro-functions of repetition is. The different categories are not as clear-cut as a table would suggest. In order to visualise the blurred boundaries between the various functions of repetition, and to illustrate their interactive nature, I found it necessary to create a three-dimensional visualisation, which could be designed as follows:

Figure 2: A 3D-visualisation of the relationship between the functions of repetition – utterance-developing repetition
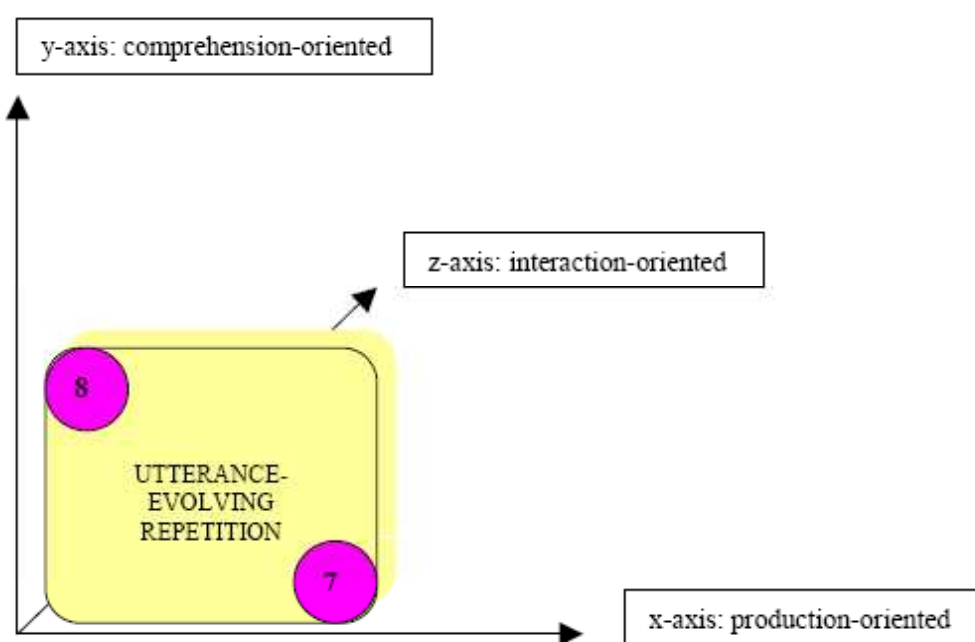
In this figure, the three macro-functions of repetition are represented as the three axes of a graph, generating a cube in which endless possible relations among the three axes (and thus macro-functions) can be represented. Of course, it is not possible to exactly place the sub-functions of repetition in this graph, but it is very well possible to illustrate how they overlap and interact with other sub-functions or how they themselves possess more than one macro-function of repetition. In this sense, utterance-developing repetition could thus, for example, in a very simplified way, be illustrated as a cuboid that occupies much of the x- and y-axes (i.e. the production-oriented and comprehension-oriented macrofunctions), as well as parts of the z-axes, as there may be instances of utterance-developing repetition in which also the interaction-oriented macro-function becomes important. In this cuboid, the specific utterance-developing repetitions with their varying orientations can

be placed. The more production-oriented utterance-developing repetition of Extract 7 would thus be placed at the bottom right corner of the cuboid, illustrating that the main function of this repetition is probably to facilitate the production of the utterance while it also, to a lesser degree, facilitates comprehension. The repetition of Extract 8, on the other hand, would more likely find its place in the top left corner, in which the comprehension-oriented function stands in the foreground. Similar visualisations could be made for all functions of repetition.

With a visualisation of this kind it is by no means intended to provide exact measurements of the different functions of repetition, nor should statements about the degrees of orientation be made (e.g. "A is more comprehension-oriented than B."). In my view, such statements could never be accurately made. It is the interactive nature of repetitions that should be illustrated, and the high potential that lies in every single instance of repetition which mostly has more than one macro-function at the same time. One single – repeated – word has the power to facilitate the production and comprehension of language, and to provide interaction-oriented information. This characteristic is what makes repetition so powerful. And strategies like repetition are what help make ELF so powerful.

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Verbal duelling: a battle of words from **Beowulf** *to cyberspace*

Christopher Moik*

1. Introduction

What is the common denominator of Beowulf, the Old Norse god Þórr, an Arthurian knight, an urban black American youth and Internet users? Unusual as this mixture might seem, they all participate in the deliberate and conventionalised usage of language as a means of engaging in verbal combat. The ritual nature of language in society is a widely recognised phenomenon and represents a vast field for theoretical and empirical studies. There are several relevant disciplines for the analysis of speech conventions in any given language and culture, such as pragmatics and sociolinguistics, which can also be employed on a historical level if combined with historical linguistics. Indeed, in order to reconcile the characters initially mentioned, who come from different time periods and cultures, it is necessary to extend the scope of analysis from a merely synchronic to a diachronic point of view. Only then will it become apparent that certain speech act structures related to verbal and also physical exchanges are extant in ancient times as well as today. Fixed speech act patterns employed in a verbal exchange are a phenomenon found in historical and modern texts alike. They can be taken to represent a long-standing convention of ritualised dialogue which sometimes avoids physical fights and sometimes provokes them. Conventions change over time and from one culture to the other. However, ritualised exchanges seem to be part of the basic inventory of language usage, and so it is not surprising that one may find striking similarities between the way Beowulf and a black American youth engage in a verbal duel. One may furthermore realize how Þórr's attempts at establishing his identity in witty dialogue are mirrored by the efforts of Internet users to excel among their peers.

This paper aims to examine speech act conventions related to ritualised verbal exchanges at several points in time. The following types of verbal

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duelling will be analysed and compared: *flyting*, *senna*, *mannjafnaðr*, *knightly challenges*, *sounding* and *flaming*.

2. Historical speech acts

The analysis of speech acts is a powerful and well-established tool in modern linguistics. The aim of historical pragmatics, then, is to enhance the scope of this discipline by adding a historical dimension. This brings in a host of new factors to consider: social and cultural changes across time and their impact on conventions and the use of speech acts.

Schlieben-Lange has published an article about the historicity of speech acts and, in a nutshell, argues that speech acts are not universal: "Es gibt keine universellen sprachlichen Handlungen, sondern nur je historisch bestimmte, unterschiedene, konventionalisierte sprachliche Handlungen" (Schlieben-Lange 1976: 114). Speech acts are therefore subject to conventions. And conventions change over time and differ between cultures. In terms of historical speech acts, this implies that while the methodology of analysis might be identical for both present-day and historical research, the speech conventions, social background, setting and very meaning of the speech acts uttered are not. This naturally calls for a thorough examination of the language conventions of the given time period in order to understand what intentions were actually encoded within the speech acts in question, and if and how their forms and functions may have changed over time. Jucker neatly drives home the point with a short comparison: "However, declaring one's love is not the same for Sir Gawain and for a hip-hop character of the 1990s" (Jacobs & Jucker 1995: 19). Looking at historical pragmatics, then, it can be said that the relationship between speech acts in the same language at two different points in time can be compared to the way speech acts in two different languages are related to each other in a synchronic dimension.[1] This is an important insight, since it reinforces the assumption that modern-day methodologies can be applied to historical data as well, if one considers, for instance, Middle English and modern English as two separate languages. It follows that the theoretical problems are of the same nature, too, which means that present-day studies and historical ones can greatly benefit from each other's research progress and solutions. The focus of this paper will lie on a diachronic examination of one speech act type, namely verbal duelling.

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[1] "When we compare two, or more, languages we cannot expect to find identical networks of relationships. We can, nonetheless, expect to find certain correspondences." (Wierzbicka 1991: 10)

3. Verbal duelling

3.1. Description

In this paper, verbal duelling is understood as any kind of oral dispute or fight, whether ritualised or not. It can occur under friendly, competitive or outright inimical conditions. It may result in a physical fight or prevent one; or it may simply be an alternative way of venting aggression. Verbal duels are a specialised form of dialogue which consists of potentially recurring speech act sequences, conventionalised to varying degrees. Non-verbal interaction is not automatically excluded and can also play an important role. In short, verbal duelling is used as a blanket term for numerous and varied manifestations of verbal combat, usually involving two interlocutors.

Ritual insults found in verbal duels are a dialogue form that seems to have existed for a very long time, since they are already evident in Old Germanic poetry such as Beowulf or the Old Norse sagas. To this day, people engage in such verbal duels, as Labov (1977: 297-353) has shown in his study concerning the Black English vernacular. Ritual duels are a way of insulting each other without having to engage in an actual fight. They are a conventionalised dialogue, which allows the speaker to vent aggression. The speech act sequences used in these dialogues are, of course, highly ritualised and change with time and place; a black American boy talks about his opponent's mother's brick teeth, whereas Odin calls Þórr a common man. In both cases, these speech acts are understood as being ritualised and do not actually encourage a real fight. However, in pre-medieval and medieval times, there seems to have been an older form of this relatively harmless, conventionalised dialogue; a form that also consisted of various potentially insulting speech acts, but that actually initiated or promoted a fight rather than substituted for one. If the non-violent form has indeed developed from this original one, it is an example of a change of application, which does not necessarily mean that the speech act sequences themselves have changed but rather that they function in a different way. Verbal duels that show a high degree of ritualisation can also be referred to as ritual duels.

Rituals are often stylised and formal actions carried out by a group that shares a mutual context. Therefore, the important feature that all the different forms of ritual duels have in common is convention, i.e. the adherence to certain discourse rules which are governed by context-dependent principles. Bax remarks that rituals are "[…] ultimately dependent on the knowledge and the attitude, or 'psychological state,' of the participants" (Bax 2003: 160).

Most important, though, is the fact that verbal rituals show a discrepancy between what is actually said (or performed) and what is in reality conveyed, i.e. form and meaning do not correspond on a literal level. Thus it can be said that ritual duels employ what is usually referred to as linguistic indirectness.

Historical texts show a considerable number of ritualised dialogues which, for the most part, are apparently fashioned after authentic traditions of that time (Bax 2003: 162). This does not mean that fictional historical texts can be taken at face value. Strictly speaking, any analysis of fictional dialogue would only be valid for the fictional world it is situated in.[2] However, looking at modern types of ritual duels and verbal duelling, such as *sounding* among urban black Americans as studied by Labov or a new form of verbal combat on the Internet called *flaming*, examined later in this paper, it is not too far-fetched to conclude that a fact-based tradition of ritual duels also existed in the past and was perhaps more realistically represented in fiction than it would be nowadays. Of course, the arguments are to a certain extent hypothetical, and in truth, none of them can ever be proven. However, in light of the assumption that the basic principles of communication, i.e. how humanity verbally interacts and behaves, have apparently not significantly changed over the last few millennia, the remainder of this paper will analyse ritual duels in ancient literature from the premise that they are indeed written, albeit fictional, manifestations of real-life ritualised dialogue.
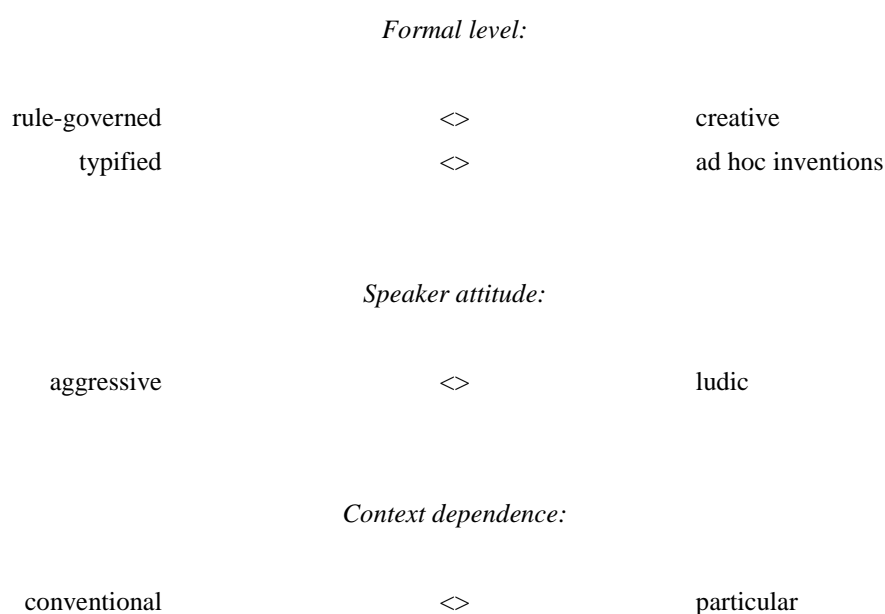
3.2. The nature of insults

Ritual duels usually consist of a number of insults. These insults may have a highly formulaic character and therefore may exhibit a strong discrepancy between form and function. A ritual insult is normally perceived as untrue by the addressee, at which point a verbal duel might ensue. Within the space of ritualised duels, it is important that both interlocutors share the same knowledge about the conventions that are employed, or, in other words, how to properly behave in a ritual duel. If a black American youth says that the teeth of his opponent's mother are like bricks, it is not perceived at face value,

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[2] Nevertheless, it has been argued by Jacobs and Jucker (1995: 7) that in particular medieval fictional literature "tend[s] to be more realistic than today's fictional works" and furthermore that "if a specific type of verbal interaction appears in historical texts and is also easily understood, the text may be taken to reflect a real life situation." It is possible to compare fictional ritual duels to those in a judicial context. Bax argues that "both historical and literary research have made clear there is a strong analogy between factual judicial combats and the representation of such 'ordeals' in literature" (Bax 1981: 425). For a more elaborate discussion, refer to Moik (2005: 12ff.).

since both parties know it is blatantly untrue; it is rather seen as a formulaic invective directed against the opponent, who is thus challenged to respond in a similar way, but always within the bounds of the ritual. Violation of the rules may have severe consequences.

Jucker and Taavitsainen (2000: 74) distinguish between ritual and personal insults. These can be further described by features belonging to the following dimensions: level of formality, speaker attitude and context dependence.

Formal level:

rule-governed   <>   creative

typified   <>   ad hoc inventions

Speaker attitude:

aggressive   <>   ludic

Context dependence:

conventional   <>   particular

Figure1: Features of ritual and personal insults

Ritual insults are rule-governed and typified. Personal insults allow for creativity and include ad hoc inventions. Both ritual and personal insults can also be differentiated by speaker attitude, i.e. ludic versus aggressive. Ludic insults are a means to show off one's verbal skills and thus vent aggression in a playful way; aggressive insults, on the other hand, may lead to an actual fight. Regarding context dependence, one can distinguish between conventionalised insults and particularised ones. Conventionalised insults include slanderous utterances, swearing, coarse language, etc. that are perceived as insulting by the general public or by one certain social community, such as courtly knights. In contrast, particularised insults are very addressee-specific and are consequently perceived as demeaning only by the

addressee. Be that as it may, the key point here is that personal insults will usually result in a denial or an excuse, whereas ritual insults call for a similarly ritualised or formulaic response.

4. Types of verbal duelling

It has been shown by linguists that verbal duels have a long tradition in Germanic languages (cf. Bax 1981: 442, 1983: 4; Swenson 1991: 28-29). Naturally, there are different types of verbal duels, which are either specific to culture, language or time, or a combination of any of these. It goes without saying that the forms of verbal duels extant today do not necessarily work in the same way, or are even identified by the same term, as those from a thousand years ago, which are viewed through written data. The present section therefore seeks to trace the main types of verbal duelling across time, and includes discussions of their respective features and traditions. The following types will be examined in chronological order: *flyting*, *senna*, *mannjafnaðr*, *knightly challenges*, *sounding* and *flaming*. It must be noted that it is not always possible to draw distinct boundaries between these genres; *flyting*, for instance, is understood more as a blanket term for all verbal arguments derived from the Germanic tradition (Swenson 1991: 40; Jucker and Taavitsainen 2000: 77). This includes the Old Norse *senna* and *mannjafnaðr*. However, in this study, *flyting* will only be used to refer to verbal exchanges in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. The term verbal duel, on the other hand, is meant to cover all the other aforementioned types. In short, *flyting*, *senna*, *mannjafnaðr*, *knightly challenges*, *sounding* and *flaming* are types of verbal duelling, and in turn can have sub-types as well.

4.1. Flyting

Flyting derives from the Anglo-Saxon word *flītan* which means 'to argue', 'to dispute', 'to verbally contend'. As has already been mentioned, *flyting* is a Germanic tradition and is therefore not restricted to English-speaking areas. The Old High German *Hildebrandslied* is a frequently cited and analysed example. Nevertheless, Anglo-Saxon literature proves to be an especially rich source, with its epics *The Battle of Maldon, Beowulf* and the *Finnsburh Fragment* (cf. Arnovick 1999, Jucker & Taavitsainen 2000, Bax 1983, 1991, 2001).

 Flyting can be described as a verbal engagement between two parties who exchange boasts and insults alike. The setting can be outdoors or, as is the case in *Beowulf*, a mead hall. Heroic *flyting* is characterised by commonplace

insults which deal with subjects such as honour, weakness, cowardice, etc. The exchange is highly stylised and presupposes the active participation of the two parties involved who, as members of a certain social group, have to be aware of the ritualised character of their argument. Therefore, *flyting* is rule-governed, aggressive in nature and conventionalised in form. The following speech act structure has been observed as being particular to heroic *flytings*: claim, defence, counter-claim (cf. Jucker & Taavitsainen 2000: 77). One party makes a claim about the other party, thus questioning their honour in some way; the addressee responds with a defence and includes counter-claims to attack the attacker. Claims and counter-claims are usually comprised of insults and boasts involving past deeds of the contenders. Additionally, curses, vows and threats concerning the future are uttered. At some point, the argument will either result in physical combat or in the withdrawal of one party involved. To illustrate the way *flytings* work, it will be useful to take a look at the aforementioned *Beowulf* and also briefly at *The Battle of Maldon*.

The most prominent example of *flyting* in *Beowulf* is the famous Unferþ episode in which the Geatish hero Beowulf engages in a verbal duel in Hroþgars mead hall. His prowess, honour and past feats are challenged by Unferþ:

(1) Unferð maþelode,   Ecglafes bearn,
     þe æt fotum sæt   frean Scyldinga,
     onband beadurune   (wæs him Beowulfes sið,
     modges merefaran,   micel æfþunca,
     forþon þe he ne uþe   þæt ænig oðer man
     æfre mærða þon ma   middangeardes
505 gehedde under heofenum   þonne he sylfa):
     "Eart þu se Beowulf,   se þe wið Brecan wunne,   ⟵————
     on sidne sæ   ymb sund flite,
     ðær git for wlence   wada cunnedon   claim 1
     ond for dolgilpe   on deop wæter
510 aldrum neþdon?   Ne inc ænig mon,   ⟵————
     ne leof ne lað,   belean mihte
     sorhfullne sið,   þa git on sund reon.
     Þær git eagorstream   earmum þehton,
     mæton merestræta,   mundum brugdon,
515 glidon ofer garsecg;   geofon yþum weol,
     wintrys wylmum.   Git on wæteres æht   ⟵————
     seofon niht swuncon;   he þe æt sunde oferflat,

hæfde mare mægen.   Þa hine on morgentid

on Heaþoræmas   holm up ætbær;

520 ðonon he gesohte   swæsne eðel,   claim 2

leof his leodum,   lond Brondinga,

freoðoburh fægere,   þær he folc ahte,

burh ond beagas.   Beot eal wið þe

sunu Beanstanes   soðe gelæste.   ←———————

525 Ðonne wene ic to þe   wyrsan geþingea,

ðeah þu heaðoræsa   gehwær dohte,   claim 3

grimre guðe,   gif þu Grendles dearst

nihtlongne fyrst   nean bidan."   ←———————

(*Beowulf* 499-528; see appendix for translation)[3]

Unferþ's motive is his apparent envy of Beowulf, who has achieved more in Middle-Earth than he has (503-5). He brings into play a contest from Beowulf's past which involved swimming and fighting monsters: he questions the value and point of the contest per se and accuses Beowulf of foolishly risking his life out of wanton pride (506-510). And, above all, he says Beowulf lost the contest to his competitor Breca (517-524) and therefore would most certainly fare ill against Grendel as well (524-28). Unferþ thus degrades Beowulf by making two untrue claims: one about his motives and another about his actual performance. He also prophesies his failure against Grendel, which is another unwarranted claim. Taken together, these claims add up to a gross insult to Beowulf, whose honour as a heroic warrior is threatened, so he responds with a sly defence and a counter-attack.

He starts his defence by accusing Unferþ of being intoxicated from his excessive consumption of beer, which naturally sheds an unfavourable light on him and his undue attack on the Geatish hero (530-33). Beowulf then makes a counter-claim, saying that he showed more skill at sea than any other man (532-34). He goes on to recount the incident in his own version, which is full of proud words typical of a Germanic hero: Breca was, of course, not better (541-43), and the sea creatures were no real match for his strength (555-58). After defending himself and setting the record straight, Beowulf launches a counter-attack on Unferþ: were Unferþ half the man Beowulf is, Grendel would never be able to wreak havoc on Heorot. Indeed, Unferþ's

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[3] Swanton, Michael (ed.). 1997. *Beowulf. Edited with an introduction, notes and a new translation by Michael Swanton*. (rev. edition). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

loud boasts are not matched by his actual boldness in battle (581-594). Finally, to counter Unferþ's doomsaying regarding his impending fight with Grendel, Beowulf leaves no doubt that he shall be victorious (601-603). Unferþ is thus finally silenced and the verbal duel ends with his withdrawal.

The *flyting* illustrated here is of a ritual character in that boasting and challenging of the opponent's honour and prowess are commonplace insults in the Germanic tradition. Unferþ's questioning of Beowulf's past deeds and his skills as a warrior in general acts as an initiating move and prompts the hero to enter into a verbal contest with his opponent.

The Battle of Maldon contains a verbal exchange between the Viking and Anglo-Saxon forces, an instance of *flyting* that can easily be considered a dramatic highlight in the story. A Viking messenger demands gold from Byrhtnoð as a tribute to the invaders in order to avert the impending battle:

> (2)   Me sendon to þe   sæmen snelle,
>   heton ðe secgan   þæt þu most sendan raðe
>   beagas wið gebeorge,   and eow betere is
>   þæt ge þisne garræs   mid gafole forgyldon,
>   þon[ne] we swa hearde   [hi]lde dælon.

(*The Battle of Maldon* 29-31; see appendix for translation)[4]

In fact, this is an insult which impugns the bravery and courage of the Englishmen who would rather die fighting than buy their way out of battle with gold. Byrhtnoð responds by making clear beyond doubt that the English will pay tribute with their swords and spears. He attacks the Vikings further by pointing out how shameful it would be for them to sail away with gold instead of engaging in battle, especially after having come all the way to England:

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[4] Scragg, Donald (ed.). 1991. *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*. Oxford: Blackwell.

(3)   Hi willað eow to gafole   garas syllan,
                ættrynne ord   and ealde swurd,
                þa heregeatu   þe eow æt hilde ne deah

                […]

                            To heanlic me þinceð
                þæt ge mid urum sceattum   to scype gangon
                unbefohtene,   nu ge þus feor hider
                on urne eard   in becomon.

           (*The Battle of Maldon* 46-48; 55-58; see appendix for translation)

This *flyting* does not actually avert a fight, nor does it lead to one. Both parties know all too well that a battle is about to ensue. The Vikings seek to discourage the Englishmen by their apparently peaceful and generous offer. But Byrhtnoð engages in the verbal exchange and actually gets the better of his opponent by employing a couple of stylistic devices in his responses, such as ironic verbal echoes, among other things (Anderson 1970: 199). Arnovick (1999: 32) points out that "the Anglo-Saxon flyter does things with words…" through which "power and status are negotiated on a verbal battlefield".

So far, two Anglo-Saxon instances of *flyting* with different endings have been observed. Naturally, the phenomenon of ritual verbal exchange has survived the Old English period and surfaces again in Middle English writings, albeit with some functional changes, as will be explained later on.

4.2. Senna and mannjafnaðr

Sharing the same Germanic background as *flyting*, the *senna* and *mannjafnaðr* of the Old Norse sagas exhibit a certain set of features that are particular to these types of verbal duelling.

The word *senna* means 'high words, gibing' and is related to the Old Norse adjective *sannr*, which means 'true' (Swenson 1991: 28; 34). Generally, s*enna* denotes a 'dispute, quarrel' but Swenson argues that it is not unlikely that the Skaldic poets were aware of earlier connotations and used the word for a "[…] verbal struggle towards definition of self and the world" (ibid.: 36).

A *senna* denotes a verbal argument with derogatory statements, threats, denials and outright insults that are of a ritual character in that they are

blatantly untrue; they are used to outwit the opponent and to show one's own slyness and mastery of verbal combat. Furthermore, a *senna* establishes the heroic self. Important to note is the fact that a *senna* allows for the withdrawal of one opponent in the same way that *flyting* does (as illustrated with the Unferþ episode) and therefore does not usually lead to a fight.

One example of a *senna* is the encounter of the god Þhórr with Óðinn in the Old Icelandic *Hárbarðsljoð*, part of the poetic *Edda*. Through his assumed authority and verbal intimidation, Þhórr tries to make the ferryman Hárbarðr, who is Óðinn in disguise, take him across a fjord. The *senna* is initiated by a short, insulting exchange:

> (4)   Þórr: Hverr er sá sveinn sveinna, er stendr fyr sundit handan?
> Hárbarðr: Hverr er sá karl karla, er kallar um váginn?
>
> (*Hárbarðsljoð* 1-2)[5]

> Þórr: Who is that lad of lads on yonder shore?
> Hárbarðr: Who is that lout of louts yelping across the fjord?
>
> (transl. by Bax 2001: 82)

Þórr challenges Hárbarðr and tries to assume a dominating position by placing himself above his opponent whom he calls *sveinn* ("lad"), which, of course, is insulting for Óðinn. Naturally, the latter accepts the verbal challenge, hurls an insult back at Þórr, and the *senna* commences. What follows is a series of apparently untrue statements, the purpose of which is to outdo the opponent with verbal skill and to prove one's higher social status:

> (5)   Hárbarðr: Þeygi er, sem þú þriú góð eigir;
> Berbeinn þú stendr, oc hefir brautinga gervi,
> Þatki, at þú hafir brœcr þínar.

> Three good dwellings, methinks, thou hast not;
> Barefoot thou standest and wearest a beggar's dress;
> Not even hose dost thou have.

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5 Kuhn, Hans; Neckel, Gustav (eds.). 1983. *Edda. Die Lieder des Codex Regio nebst verwandten Denkmälern. Volume 1.* (5th edition). Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag.

Þórr: Stýrðu hingat eikionni! Ec mun þér stoðna kenna,
               Eða hverr á scipit, er þú heldr við landit?

(Hárbarðsljoð 6)

Steer thou hither the boat; the landing here shall I show thee;
But whose the craft that thou keepest on the shore?

(transl. by Bellows 1969: 124)

Óðinn ridicules Þórr by saying he has no farm of his own, thus implying his status is lower than that of a peasant. He then goes on to support and intensify that claim by saying Þórr lacks even the most basic articles of proper clothing. Again, this is obviously untrue but part of the ritual to gain a dominant position in the verbal engagement. Þórr counters by asking for the real owner of the ferry ship, thus implying that Hárbarðr himself is only a servant. In the end, the *senna* ends unsettled and Hárbarðr initiates a *mannjafnaðr*.[6]

Mannjafnaðr means 'comparison of men' and denotes a more specialised and complex verbal duel with a relatively fixed dialogue structure (cf. Swenson 1991: 28-30). Swenson defines it as follows:

> *The* mannjafnaðr *is, in fact, a comparison of two men's "manliness" according to societal definitions which revolve around the expected role of a noble hero.*
>
> *[...]*
>
> *[The* mannjafnaðr*] is between two similar men (dead or alive) and aims to assert the hierarchical dominance of one over the other within an agreed upon social structure and according to agreed upon standards of worth. (Swenson 1991: 33)*

The observation that the *mannjafnaðr* only works if both parties act within the same societal structure with the same standards and views is significant, as it once again shows the ritual character of this type of verbal duelling. As is the case with the other verbal duels mentioned so far, it can only work if the opponents are competent members of the same society, aware of its rules and boundaries. The core of a *mannjafnaðr* typically contains a pattern of assertion and counter-assertion. The participants enumerate past deeds to show how much better they are than their opponent, e.g. A asserts that he did X better than B; B responds by downplaying X and saying that he did Y better than A, etc. It is obvious that B does not necessarily deny the achievement X, but in his response he must wittily try to make it seem insignificant compared

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6 For a more detailed discussion of this *senna*, refer to Bax (2001: 82).

to his deed Y and thus top A's assertion (cf. Swenson 1991: 50ff.; Bax 1983: 9-12, 1991: 205ff.). The fact that assertions are not denied but answered with another comparison until one of the contestants runs out of witty comebacks proves the relatively fixed form in which this kind of verbal duel has to take place. Quite interestingly, the same mechanism of constantly shifting the basis of comparison and not actually responding with a denial to an assertion (whether true or blatantly untrue) comes up again in Labov's study of *sounding*, which will be discussed later. The *mannjafnaðr* ensuing from Þórr's and Óðinn's unsettled *senna* serves well as a short illustration:

(6)   Þórr qvað:

Hins viltu nú geta er við Hrungir deildom,   ⟵

sá inn stórúðgi iotunn, er ór steini var hofuðit á;   assertion

þó lét ec hann falla oc fyrir hníga.   ⟵

Hvat vanntu þá meðan, Hárbarðr?   formulaic phrase

(*Hárbarðsljoð* 15)

Fain art thou to tell how with Hrungir I fought,

The haughty giant whose head of stone was made;

And yet I felled him, and stretched him before me,

What, Harbarth, didst thou the while?

(transl. by Bellows 1969: 126)

Þórr claims his right to be a competent part of the heroic society by recounting how he vanquished the giant Hrungir. He thus makes an assertion which is also intended to show how much better he is than his opponent. Þórr ends his turn by tauntingly prompting Hárbarðr to top that if he can. This is achieved by the formulaic phrase "What were you doing in the meantime?", which both participants employ. Now it is Hárbarðr's turn to respond. He does not attack or deny Þórr's claim regarding the giant; he rather answers Þórr's question and tells of his adventures with women on the island Algroen:

(7)   Hárbarðr qvað:

Sparcar átto vér konor, ef oss at spocom yrði,   ⟵——————

horscar átto vér konor, ef oss hollar vaeri;

[...]   assertion

varð ec þeim ein ollom efri at ráðom,

    hvílda ec hiá peim systrom siau,

    oc hafðda ec geð þeira alt oc gaman.   ⟵——————

Hvað vanntu þá meðan, Þórr?   formulaic phrase

(*Hárbarðsljoð* 18)

Lovely women we had, if they wise for us were;

Wise were the women we, if they kind for us were;

[…]

Wise than all in counsel I was,

    And there I slept by the sisters seven,

    And joy full great did I get from each.

What, Thor, didst thou the while?

(transl. by Bellows 1969: 127)

After this second stanza it has become clear that the sequential structure of a *mannjafnaðr* is fixed and the turn-taking is regulated by formulaic phrases. Hárbarðr boasts of his erotic adventures, emphasising his wit and in the end challenging Þórr to top that. The two then talk about their other feats, and both try to reach a dominant position. As mentioned above, the basis of comparison is constantly shifted until one of the interlocutors gives in. Here it is Þórr who backs down and consequently has to go around the fjord instead of crossing it. Coming back to the *senna* and the different function it fulfils in Old Norse poetry, Swenson (1991: 56) neatly summarises: "A senna functions to establish and reaffirm a society by defining its boundaries; a mannjafnaðr functions to define a man's position within that society."

    Summing up, the *senna* and the *mannjafnaðr* are types of Old Nordic verbal duels which are, of course, closely related to Anglo-Saxon *flyting*. All three explicitly exhibit a ritual character in that the dialogue structure is governed by certain speech act sequences which typically contain threats or insults, boasts, blatantly untrue claims, assertions of manliness through past deeds and generally a condescending, dominating and potentially intimidating behaviour towards the opponent. Important, however, is the fact that all three types allow for the withdrawal of one participant, and therefore do not necessarily lead to a fight, although physical violence per se is not

automatically excluded. Each of these verbal duels operates within a social system with clearly defined rules and values. The participants are usually competent members of the same society and thus know exactly how to act within the bounds of a ritual exchange, i.e. they employ certain conventionalised discourse strategies (as enumerated above), which can only work if everyone involved in the ritual shares the same set of values. In fact, these rituals are rather eclectic in that, most of the time, they are reserved for a small elite group of heroes who, through witty verbal combat, try to establish their place within their society. Dominance over the opponent is an important part of the game along with retaining one's honour and the glory of past deeds. In challenges between medieval knights a significant change occurs, not so much in structure, but in function and also in the actual intention of the participants.

4.3. Knightly challenges in Middle English literature

4.3.1. General considerations

Knightly challenging rituals are rooted in the Germanic *flyting* but are certainly not a direct continuation of that genre. In fact, every type of verbal duelling mentioned so far is deeply rooted within a certain cultural context. Hence, the term *flyting* has been avoided for everything except the exchanges observed in Anglo-Saxon literature. Bax (1991: 202) even goes so far as to say that the verbal exchange between medieval knights is a speech event that is specific to culture rather than language. This view is reinforced by the fact that diverse genres of verbal duelling stemming from different backgrounds can exist in one language (*flyting* and *sounding*, for instance). In light of this, an analysis of this specialised speech event should, according to Bax, ideally show

- the constitutive elements of the ritual, and how these elements relate to the overall interactional structure;
- that the convention of this ritual is adhered to only by members of a specific social group, that of chivalrous knights. (Bax 1981: 424)

4.3.2. The setting

The most frequent setting for an encounter and subsequent verbal duel between two knights is somewhere in the woods, on a field, on a ford or in the vicinity of a castle. Typically, the two knights do not know or do not

recognise each other and consequently make enquiries about their vis-à-vis. This is indeed a classic medieval situation, and it would seem that the ritualised verbal exchange that ensues from the encounter is a linguistic strategy shared by all members of that society. The verbal duel, then, precedes an actual fight most of the time. In fact, the verbal exchange functions as an initiating manoeuvre and can even supply the reason for physical violence. This naturally implies that one or both knights have the intention of fighting in the first place but need to employ a ritualised dialogue with conventionalised speech act sequences in order to stay within the bounds of their chivalrous society. A knight who starts a fight without a good reason would be without honour. Thus, the verbal exchange preceding the fight can be seen as a linguistic device to reach a goal that could not have been reached otherwise without violating chivalrous ideals. Of course, one could pose the justified question as to where the actual honour lies in such linguistic indirectness used to achieve the ulterior intention of fighting and potentially killing the enemy. However, one must be aware of the fact that it would be catastrophic for a knight to be expelled from the court and subsequently the chivalrous society. Numerous literary examples of this exist, a good one being the Middle High German epic *Parzival*. Be that as it may, the most important defining characteristic of medieval ritual duels is that they lead to an actual fight instead of avoiding one. This is in contrast to the Old Norse *senna* and *mannjafnaðr* and also to the Anglo-Saxon *flyting*, which at least allow for the peaceful withdrawal of one party. In the knightly challenge ritual, however, the original function of determining and proving the superiority in rank and status and possibly verbal acumen of one of the participants has been turned into a mechanism that does not avoid physical violence but rather encourages it. Preserving knightly honour has now become culturally more important than preserving one's life.

4.3.3. Speech act sequences

A verbal duel usually starts with a request. This can mean that Knight A asks Knight B about his name or demands some other kind of information or wants a certain action to be performed. Most of the time, a threat or description of possible consequences is added to the request. This shows that these speech acts are in fact hidden orders, since by uttering a request with a strong commanding undertone Knight A assumes he has authority over Knight B who, adhering to the chivalrous code, will naturally not comply; a fight is likely to ensue. The ritualised nature of such an exchange lies in the fact that

Knight A knows very well that his request delivered with a dominating stance will not be fulfilled and that it will most certainly prompt Knight B to take up arms. In other words, the propositional content of the request is unlikely to be taken seriously by Knight B (in the same way that the propositional content of "Your mother so old she can stretch her head and lick out her ass" will not be taken at face value) and is therefore a means to trigger physical violence. Knights employing this strategic tool will generally understand such a request by another (inimical or unknown) knight as a challenge. Hence, it is a convention that is common practice and agreed upon in chivalrous society. Bax (1991: 208) has shown in an impressive way that the knightly challenging ritual derives its absolutely symmetrical structure from the fact that it does not permit the withdrawal or submission of one opponent: Knight A's request for information, which is a hidden command, pragmatically functions as a challenge to fight. This indirect challenge is mirrored by Knight B's direct challenge, whose explicit refusal to comply with Knight A's request can be seen as an indirect acceptance of his indirect challenge. That in turn is the mirrored equivalent of Knight A's explicit (or non-verbally realised) act of acceptance. This ritual is therefore well-balanced; however, the fact that this sort of verbal interaction between the opponents does not result in a truly dominant position of either, clearly demonstrates why a physical fight is necessary to establish the winner, as the following figure devised by Bax (ibid.) demonstrates:
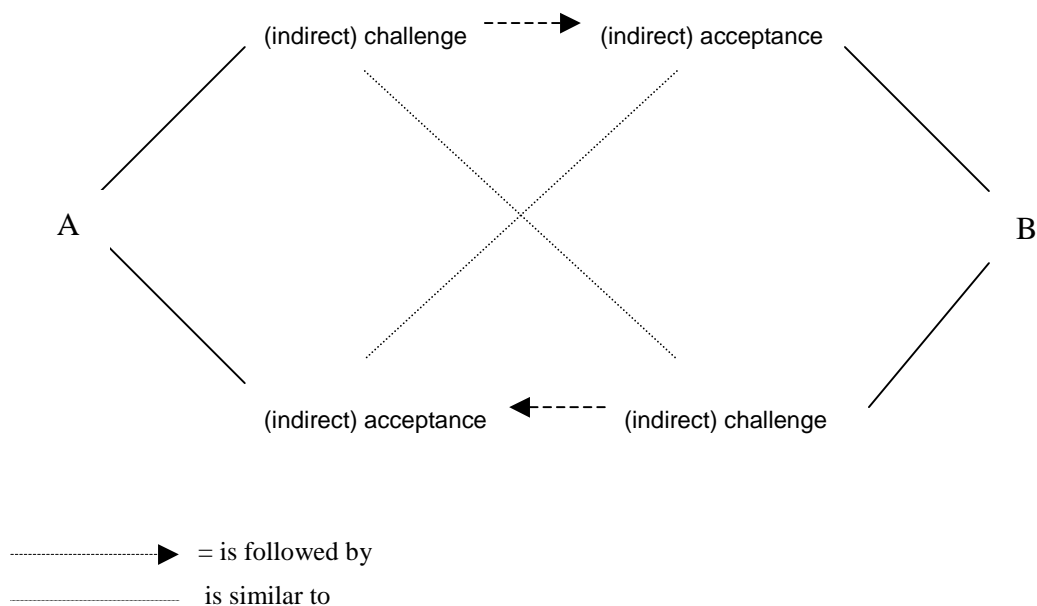

Figure 2: Ritual framework

This ritual framework can be realised in a number of speech act sequences which show a considerable degree of fixedness as regards overall structure and turn-taking: Bax (1981: 426, 430, 434) has named them *request-for-information*, *request-for-action* and *accusation sequence* respectively, according to the way the ritual exchange is initiated. Due to the extensive nature of this subject matter, a short illustration of a request-for-information sequence taken from Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* has to suffice.[7]

This following passage describes a rather stereotypical encounter between Sir Gawayne and a Tuscan knight, who is accompanied by a boy carrying a spear. It is perfectly normal within the courtly rules of behaviour to approach an unknown knight and request his name and origin. Reinforcing the ritualised nature of this encounter, the narration makes it clear that Gawayne expects a fight right from the start, since he readies his spear before approaching the Tuscan knight:

> *Whan sir Gawayne was ware of that gay knyght, then he gryped a grete spere and rode streyght towarde hym on a stronge horse for to mete with that sterne knyght where he hoved. Whan sir Gawayne com hym nyghe, in Englyshe he asked hym what he was. And that other knyght answered in his langage of Tuskayne and sayde, 'Whother pryckyst thou, pylloure, that profers the so large? Thou getest no pray, prove whan the lykys, for my presoner thou shalt be for all thy proude lokys.' 'Thou spekest proudly,' seyde sir Gawayne, 'but I counseyle the for all thy grimme wordis that thou grype to thy gere or gretter gramme falle.' (Malory 136-37)[8]*

The actual request is narrated in reported speech. In contrast, the Tuscan knight's refusal is in direct speech: he calls Gawayne a robber, suspects that he is after riches and then threatens to take him prisoner. Thus, the Tuscan knight's responding move contains an insult and his subsequent initiating move a threat. It is understandable why the Tuscan feels threatened in the beginning, since Gawayne approaches him with a readied spear and also attacks his pride in that he asks for his name, which in the Tuscan's eyes certainly would indicate that Gawayne assumes an undue position of authority. On the other hand, the Tuscan knows very well that Gawayne will engage him in a fight if he questions his honourable intentions and degrades him by calling him *pylloure* ("plunderer, robber"). It is clear that both parties

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[7] For a detailed synchronic study of ritualised speech act sequences in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* with ample textual analysis and statistical information, refer to Moik (2005: 53ff.). It has been shown that in *Le Morte Darthur* the request sequences described by Bax (1981: 426ff.) constitute general tendencies rather than fixed and predictable structures and consequently need to be modified and expanded.

[8] Vinaver, Eugène (ed.). 1971. *Malory. Works.* (2nd edition reprint). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

opt for a fight and employ ritual insults during the verbal duel phase to achieve their goal.

First turn	1. Initiating move	Request for information
Second turn	1. Responding move	Refusal with threat and insult
	2. Initiating move	Challenge
Third turn	1. Responding move	Verbal acceptance

Figure 3: Request-for-information sequence

4.4. Sounding

Sounding is rooted in the African-American tradition of *signifying*, which denotes a potentially playful verbal exchange and most probably goes back to African origins.[9] Thus, *sounding* is a genre of verbal duelling that does not derive from the Germanic tradition of *flyting*, even though it is carried out in English today and shares certain features.

William Labov's study of the Black English vernacular gives detailed insight into the verbal behaviour of black American adolescents, who are in fact the main users of sounds. A comparison of the most important features clearly shows striking similarities to the aforementioned Germanic genres of verbal duelling. *Sounding* mostly occurs in rhymed couplets, which reinforces the ritual character of the utterances and makes it easier to memorise the fixed expressions that are used in sounds (Labov 1977: 307). Everything occurs within a sub-culture that tries to define itself through a game of verbal exchange. Detailed knowledge of the ritual involved and the expected behaviour is naturally paramount. The dialogue structure in *sounding* is relatively fixed, usually employing an assertion / counter-assertion pattern involving topping strategies not unlike those observed in the Nordic *senna* and *mannjafnaðr*. The nature of the insults used in the assertions is ludic in that they are blatantly untrue. However, they very rarely attack the opponents directly (as was the case in the Germanic genres), but rather their relatives, most often their mothers. Generally, one can distinguish between conventionalised and particularised or personal insults. Of course, the latter

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[9] "An African origin for sounding seems likely, evidence for its immediate African source having been widely recognized." (Arnovick 1999: 26). It has been suggested that among African-American slaves ritual insults served as a kind of training to keep calm when faced with real insults from their masters (cf. ibid.).

are more effective but also more dangerous, as they steer the exchange dangerously close to the edge of seriousness. Commonplace or ritual insults, on the other hand, are relatively safe and serve to avoid any physical violence, which reinforces the ludic nature of *sounding*.

Sounding outside the respective in-group is often a means to start an actual fight. Usually, only members of the in-group will be able to discern the difference between a ritual insult and an actual personal insult. Since the insults are mostly ritualised and also obviously untrue, they do not call for a denial but a response in kind. Labov concludes that "[t]his is an invariant rule: sounds are not denied" (Labov 1977: 335) and later on states that as a rule, "the response to a sound is a sound" (ibid.: 342). An interesting component of *sounding* is the fact that it occurs in larger groups. The two contestants are surrounded by their peers, who will judge every move that is made with their approval (i.e. laughter) or their disapproval. After all, *sounding* serves to define one's place among one's peers and to establish one's identity via the display of verbal skills, which shows a noteworthy analogy to the *senna* and the *mannjafnaðr*. Another function of the peer component is to make it possible for another person from the group to take over if one contestant fails. Labov (ibid.: 308) defines the circumstances under which one contestant wins as follows: "The winner in a contest of this sort is the man with the largest store of couplets on hand, the best memory, and perhaps the best delivery".

There exists a stock of basic sounds which are mostly used to initiate a verbal exchange along conventional lines but leave room for spontaneous invention, which is allowed and actually proof of a person's verbal mastery in *sounding*. On a basic level, the exchanges in *sounding* take place quite quickly, since for every well-known sound, there is a well-known reply. It is only when more elaborate sounds are employed that one contestant is prone to falter, if he is not witty enough to think up a fitting retort. If someone says "Your mother drink pee", then the standard replying sound would be "Your father eat shit" (ibid.: 308). The simplest sounds are typically unfavourable comparisons involving the mother in the shape of "Your mother is like…X". Usually, X is something old and ugly, e.g. "Your mother is a butcher / a rubber dick / a diesel etc.". Somewhat more complex comparisons take the shape of "Your mother is so X she Y" as in the following exchange:

> David: Your mother so old she got spider webs under her arms.
> Boot: Your mother so old she can stretch her head and lick out her ass.
> (Labov 1977: 312)

The more complex a sound gets, the more likely it is to impress the group and baffle the opponent. Sounds do not necessarily have to rhyme and can come

in anecdotal form, which is reminiscent of the heroic topping strategies found in Germanic texts that involve relating past deeds, the difference being that the sound is not supposed to be taken as the truth:

> Boot*: Hey! I went up Money house and I walked in Money house, I say, I wanted to sit down, and then, you know a roach jumped up and said, "Sorry, this seat is taken." (ibid.: 316)*

In a nutshell, *sounding* is a highly specialised, sub-cultural ritual exchange which involves three parties: two contestants who sound on each other and an audience that evaluates. The uttered speech events are either conventionalised and thus learnable or, depending on the verbal skill of the interlocutors, inventive and spontaneous. Either way, there exists a set of fixed procedures according to which all participants act. The insults are usually ludic and untrue; however, personal insults are not excluded but potentially dangerous. In-group knowledge is required to distinguish between ritual and personal insults. The exchange pattern of the dialogue and the turn-taking exhibit a quick succession following a relatively fixed A-B-A-B structure. Sounds are not to be denied but to be played upon and transformed into a witty response. A good topping skill is the key to winning the exchange. Failure to abide by the rules will result in either defeat or in a physical fight. Generally speaking, *sounding* is a way to vent aggression and establish status among peers through verbal duelling.

4.5. Flaming

Flaming is a mode of verbal exchange that occurs on the Internet and is therefore relatively new; thus, it has not yet been exhaustively analysed or even considered relevant at all. The subsequent observations have been made by the author of this paper based on authentic instances of *flaming* found on the Internet and may offer a starting point for more elaborate examinations of this type of verbal duelling.

   Flaming usually takes place in Internet forums or other online places that permit people to interact with each other. Usually, serious forums state in their guidelines that *flaming* is forbidden and will result in banning. However, there are numerous forums that do not have strict rules of conduct. It is there that *flaming* occurs most frequently. Nevertheless, *flaming* can also occur in forums where it is technically prohibited, if the rules are not enforced; this usually depends on the forum moderators.

   In contrast to the verbal duels mentioned so far, *flaming* does not seem to have any fixed rules governing the exchange. Everything is allowed, from rather

intelligent utterances to the lowest level of outright verbal abuse, to silence, i.e. the refusal to respond to the flamer. It all depends on the context and the people involved. But per se, *flaming* is not restricted to any particular group of users.

The most important difference between *flaming* and the verbal duels mentioned so far is that it only occurs in written form. *Flaming* is usually triggered by some bone of contention, e.g. differing opinions on a certain topic that one or both persons involved have strong feelings about, and can take place between two people with on-lookers commenting and evaluating or taking sides. The Internet is a public place after all, so there will always be an audience. If more than two people are involved or if a group of like-minded people start *flaming* one person, a flame-war ensues. At this point, the exchanges are likely to get nastier, since more people are involved, and sometimes one side is forced to leave the respective forum altogether if faced with too strong an opposition. This would then be a case of Internet mobbing. So, in-groups do exist on the Internet just as they exist in the real world, and they will always strive to define and protect themselves against others. If one group member gets involved in a flame with an outsider, then naturally his or her group will join the fight, even though they might not have been personally involved in the argument that sparked the *flaming*.

On a linguistic level, not much can be said about the structuring of flames yet, since there has not been any exhaustive study to date. Additionally, as has been pointed out, there are virtually no limits with regard to style, vocabulary or structure. Within a more intellectual setting, the party with the better verbal skills will generally dominate; within a less intellectual setting, it will be the one who has the most original or vile insults at hand. However, it should be noted that in some intellectually-oriented forums, when *flaming* breaks out, the discourse of posters can degenerate into obscenity-laden attacks just as quickly. It has furthermore been observed that after a few flares of temper and exchanges of profane insults, posters can be eager for peace, offer virtual handshakes, and there is an implied stalemate.

Given the nature of the Internet with its relative anonymity, it is understandable how tempting *flaming* is, since it is easy and there are virtually no consequences to be feared, except expulsion from one particular forum. *Flaming* does not require any special kind of social background and can occur in virtually every language available. In this respect, it is perhaps the most universal kind of verbal duelling today with a limitless number of prospective participants and an almost infinite array of particularised insults at hand.

The quotes below stem from a discussion that was found on an Internet site for artists called DeviantArt, which also has a message board.[10] One of the site administrators put forth the question as to why and how people flame. So, in fact, this discussion is not a flame per se but shows people's feelings as to the nature of flames and therefore provides interesting insight into how people who are not linguistically trained perceive the phenomenon of abusive verbal exchanges on the Internet.[11]

> *elewyn*
> **Subject:** *Re: Why do you flame?*
> **Date:** *Feb 27, 2004, 6:01:40 PM*
>
> *Sometimes a sensible argument works. I usually stop it before it actually turns into a flame, but sometimes I don't. It depends on how annoyed I am. Usually I don't flame, unless it's so.. yeah. I'm human. I just can't be perfect ALL the time. […]*

> *~HildeKnight*
> **Subject:** *Re: Why do you flame?*
> **Date:** *Feb 27, 2004, 6:08:34 PM*
> **Rating:** *2.00 / 1*
>
> *I guess its because the person needs to realize how big of a dumbass they are and I can't physically give them a swift kick in the ass. […]*

> *BaaingTree*
> **Subject:** *Re: Why do you flame?*
> **Date:** *Feb 27, 2004, 6:08:52 PM*
> **Rating:** *4.00 / 1*
>
> *I guess flaming back is a natural eye-for-an-eye response: you feel attacked so you retaliate.*

> *dear-jb*
> **Subject:** *Re: Why do you flame?*
> **Date:** *Feb 28, 2004, 3:07:04 AM*

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[10] http://www.deviantart.com

[11] Space limitations do not allow the full citation of the user thread within this paper. Please refer to Moik (2005: 42ff.) for more textual evidence or find the thread online at http://forum.deviantart.com/devart/general/171657/.

I think it might have something to do with the way the community often react to post which flame stupid threads; often congratulating the flamer for their acute sense of humour or just agreeing with them. […]

Another possible factor in the reason why people flame is that they wish to pin their 'colours to the mast' so to speak. By flaming a person who is supporting bush* they are showing their peers that they support the democrats* without actually having to put forward a cohesive arguement for their position, nor do they actually have to deconstruct and answer the arguement of there opponent.

On a side note i mentioned that most people flame for accpetence by their peers.[…]

The following noteworthy observations can be drawn from this particular forum thread and are relatively representative of what many of the involved posters contributed to the discussion:

- People think it is okay to flame others, if they behave in a seemingly provocative or stupid way. Of course, this means that they actually see themselves in a position to judge what is acceptable and what is not.
- Flaming is seen as a way to make someone stop posting allegedly stupid messages. In other words, it is the "harsh way" of asking them to stop (as opposed to using gentle and polite words). It follows that the targets of flames are thought of as having brought it upon themselves.
- If someone is the target of a flame, they consider it a logical reaction to flame back. This is the eye-for-an-eye principle.
- Quite a few people think that flaming is a knee-jerk reaction to objectionable opinions. So they excuse their verbal abuse with keywords such as "quick temper" or "harmless way to vent aggression or frustration".

The most interesting remark was made by the poster called *dear-jb* who mentions the importance of gaining the approval and acceptance of one's peers. Not only that, but he also suggests that people flame for sport and not for the cause. The more flames they participate in and ideally dominate, the more acceptance they will gain. This shows, of course, a striking similarity to *sounding*, for which peer approval is one of the essential elements. This same poster goes on to explain how *flaming* substitutes for reason and good arguments. It is rather a simple and effective way of showing affiliation or opposition without the need for elaborate and meaningful arguments.

As observed in the forum discussion, *flaming* is evaluated badly if carried out by others and mildly if carried out by oneself. Most people admit that they have flamed but are quick to find excuses and justifications. Only a minority explicitly speak out against any kind of verbal abuse on the Internet. *Flaming* is generally seen as a forgivable peccadillo which the targets have brought upon themselves through their unfavourable remarks in the first place.

Certainly, *flaming* on the Internet is a phenomenon that will have to be observed and thoroughly examined in the future, as communication over the Internet is becoming more and more important.

4.6. Summary

In the previous chapters, light was shed on the development, feasibility and application of historical pragmatics. This was followed by a detailed examination of ritualised interaction patterns found in ancient and modern cultures alike. A set of distinctive features was established in order to be able to compare the ritual exchanges of different times and cultures with each other. The following table seeks to summarise the findings in a concise form:

	ritual insults (conventionalised)	personal insults (particularised)	ludic	aggressive	leads to a fight	avoids a fight	allows withdrawal
flyting	✓			✓	✓		✓
senna / mannjafnaðr	✓					✓	✓
knightly challenges	✓			✓	✓		
sounding	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
flaming		✓	✓	✓			✓

N.B. One feature does not automatically exclude another. Therefore, some of the verbal exchange types leave more options than others.

Figure 4: Summary of features in verbal duels

It is immediately possible to see the development from one era and culture to the next, thus tracing the various stages of the verbal ritual exchange from being used to avoid a fight, to being used to provoke a fight, to again being used to avoid a fight and vent aggression. This shows that cultural

background largely influences the seriousness of the verbal exchange. Judging from the observed historical development of verbal duels, it could be suggested that they undergo phases of being used to avoid a fight versus being used to prompt a fight.

5. Conclusion

Verbal duelling undoubtedly is a time-spanning phenomenon that is not restricted to any particular place or culture. The fact that Beowulf engages in a verbal contest with fellow warriors in a way that is very similar to how a black American youth of today tries to prevail among his peers demonstrates the long-standing tradition of the deliberate use of a ritualised speech act framework in order to prove one's mastery of verbal skills and consequently one's honour. An interesting development in the application of conventionalised speech patterns can be observed in medieval times when a verbal duel was a means to instigate an actual fight. In all instances, verbal combat is associated with venting aggression. However, Beowulf and the black American youth will successfully avoid a physical exchange, while an Arthurian knight seeks to initiate one.

Historical pragmatics is a useful tool for reconciling instances of verbal duelling from different time periods. Furthermore, a diachronic view has allowed for fruitful comparison between ancient and modern forms of verbal exchange. While the principles underlying verbal exchanges have been shown to be similar in all instances, the execution of them differs according to criteria such as time, place and culture. In other words, form and function of verbal duels are variable factors. In light of this insight it follows that each occurrence of verbal duelling, whether in ancient or modern times, whether in English or any other language, necessitates a modification and an adaptation of the underlying theory of speech acts. This is the task of pragmatics in general. It has been shown that this insight holds true for historical as well as modern discourse.

Beowulf, Þórr, an Arthurian knight, the speech behaviour of urban black American youths and the online fights of Internet users are just the tip of the iceberg. Ancient and modern literature offer a multitude of relevant instances of verbal duelling – a vast area for research, which can be explored bit by bit with historical pragmatics as a guiding light.

Appendix

(1) Unferth spoke, Ecglaf's son who sat at the feet of the Scyldings' lords, let loose hostile thoughts; the bold seafarer Beowulf's venture caused him great vexation, for he did not wish that any other man in the world should ever achieve more glorious deeds beneath the heavens than himself: 'Are you the Beowulf who contended against Breca, competed in swimming on the open sea, where in your pride you two explored the flood, and risked your lives in deep water for the sake of a foolish boast? Nor could any man, neither friend nor foe, dissuade the both of you from that disastrous venture when you swam out to sea. There you both embraced the tides with your arms, measured the seaways, struck out with your hands, glided across the ocean; the sea surged with waves, with winter's swell. For seven days you two toiled in the power of the water. He beat you at swimming, had the greater strength; then in the morning the water carried him to the coast of the Heatho-Ræmas. From there, beloved of his people, he sought out his dear country, the land of the Brondings, the fair peaceful stronghold where he ruled over a nation, fortress and treasures. The son of Beanstan in fact accomplished all he had boasted against you. So although you have been successful everywhere in the onslaught of battle, in grim warfare, I imagine the outcome will be the worse for you if you dare wait all night long near at hand for Grendel.'

(*Beowulf* 499-528; transl. by Swanton 1997: 59)

(2) Brave seamen   sent me
      told me to say   you should send quickly
      silver for safety   and it'd be more sensible of you
      to buy off trouble   with tribute
      than have us, so harsh,   deal out havoc.
      (transl. by Griffiths 1992: 31)

(3) Indeed we've something to send you   - spears,
      deadly dart   and durable swords,
      these make the war-tax   you are welcome to collect!
      [...]
                              It would be humiliating for you
      to be off with our shillings   to your ships
      without a fight   now so far
      you've found your way into   our country!
      (transl. by ibid.: 53f.)

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