

PRONOUNS, DIALECT AND DISCOURSE: A SOCIO-
PRAGMATIC ACCOUNT OF CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE IN
TEESSIDE

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit
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Abstract

This thesis reports the results from an ethnographic study of the language practices of 9-10-year-old children in two socially differentiated primary schools in Teesside, in the north-east of England. The analysis focuses on three salient pronominal features: possessive 'me'; singular 'us'; and right dislocated pronoun tags.

Children in *both* schools use *all* of these variants (though with different frequencies) in concert with other variants (such as 'standard' 'my' for the possessive singular and 'standard' 'me' for the objective singular). The central question of this thesis is therefore: *why does a speaker who has a range of alternatives choose one particular alternative in a particular context of use, and what effects might this choice have?* In order to answer this question, I explore the processes of meaning-making and identity construction within each school as a distinct community of practice. I show that speaker choice is socially meaningful by examining the contexts within which individuals choose between the different linguistic forms available to them.

Speakers are constrained and influenced by social structures, forces and hierarchies. The social background of the children in this study influences their school as a community of practice, which in turn influences the children's linguistic practices. Speakers are creative in their language use, however, and they make choices in interaction which orient more to their immediate communicative needs than to membership in abstract social categories (such as social class). An ethnographically sensitive study of how the children use talk-in-action reveals the complex ways in which speakers manipulate their linguistic resources to create

stances, styles and identities in interaction and thus position themselves within a community of practice. At the same time, local stances, styles and identities are (at least partly) constitutive of macro-level social identity categories (such as 'working-class'). At the heart of this study, then, is the notion that there is a dynamic, bi-directional link between language and society.

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Transcription conventions

[shoe	Brackets signal the start of overlapping speech
[(Pass us it)	
(.)	A pause less than 0.5 seconds
(# of seconds)	Timed pause (to nearest 0.1 of a second)
(text)	Speech which is unclear or in doubt
(xxxxxxx)	Indistinguishable speech
((laughs))	Annotation of other verbal/non-verbal activity
. ?	Minimal punctuation is used to aid the reader.

Chapter 1 – Situating the Research

1.1 Research goals and objectives

This thesis reports the results of an ethnographic study of the language practices of 9-10-year-old children in two socially differentiated primary schools in Teesside, in the north-east of England. The data presented are taken from 50 hours of radio-microphone recordings collected during fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork. The linguistic analysis of this data highlights points of contrast between the two schools as communities of practice. This analysis focuses on three salient pronominal features:

- possessive ‘me’ (i.e. the use of [mi] for the first person possessive singular e.g. *Me pencil’s up me jumper*);
- singular ‘us’ (i.e. the use of ‘us’ for the first person objective singular e.g. *Give us my shoe back*); and
- the use of right dislocated pronoun tags (e.g. ‘me’ in *I’m a magician, me*).

Children in *both* schools used *all* of these variants (though with different frequencies) in concert with other variants (such as ‘my’ for the possessive singular and ‘me’ for the objective singular). The central question of this thesis is therefore: *why does a speaker who has a range of alternatives choose one particular alternative in a particular context of use, and what effects might this choice have?* In order to answer this question I explore the processes of meaning-making and identity construction within the two communities of practice in a bid to understand how linguistic forms and their associated linguistic styles become invested with social and pragmatic meaning.

1.2 Style and sociolinguistic variation: the origin and nature of social meaning

A central theoretical and methodological concern in sociolinguistics is the place of social meaning. Current thinking suggests that the study of social meaning is really the study of style: ‘the meaning of variation lies in its role in the construction of styles’ (Eckert 2005). So what constitutes a linguistic ‘style’ and how has this concept been used within sociolinguistics? Further, how can an analysis of style bring us closer to the ‘origin and nature’ (Brown and Levinson 1987:280) of social meaning?

In this section I identify the main elements in sociolinguistic work that are relevant to my study. Eckert (e.g. 2002; 2005) refers to three waves of studies within sociolinguistic variation, but (as she acknowledges) these waves are not entirely chronological. Some of those working in the 1950s and 1960s prefigure concepts that would not be widely used until the twenty first century.

1.2.1 Social structure

Labov’s (1966) ground-breaking New York City study established that linguistic variation correlates with social factors (such as age, gender and social class). Labov demonstrated, for example, that members of a speech community are differentiated such that higher and lower scores for the use of linguistic variables correlate with higher and lower positions on socioeconomic indices. It was in these correlations that the social meaning of the linguistic variable was generally felt to reside (i.e. language was a reflection of existing social structure). And it was the frequency of occurrence of particular variants which were judged to have social significance:

The use of a single variant – even a highly stigmatized one such as a centralized diphthong in *bird* and *shirt* – does not usually produce a strong social reaction; it may only set up an expectation that such forms might recur, so that the listener does begin to perceive a socially significant pattern.

(Labov 1966:85)

Labov further found that each social group displayed the same general behaviour with regard to stylistic variation. According to Labov, linguistic styles can be arranged on a single continuum according to the amount of attention paid to speech. This, in turn, is related to the speaker's perception of the level of formality of the situation. Interviews incorporated techniques that were designed to elicit speech styles situated at various points along this continuum, from careful to casual speech. Labov found that scores for the use of linguistic variables correlated with positions on the scale of formality. Although the absolute values of the variable scores in each style were different for each social group, the *pattern* of stylistic variation was essentially the same. Intra-speaker stylistic variation was theorised as being linked to inter-group variation such that each group modelled its formal style on the speech behaviour of the group who ranked slightly higher in the social scale. In their most formal style, for example, working-class speakers would move systematically towards the casual speech of the lower middle classes, making it difficult to distinguish, 'a casual salesman from a careful pipefitter' (Labov 1972a:240). The same sociolinguistic variable could thus signal both social and stylistic stratification. This finding led Labov to make a general statement about the social stratification of language in New York City: 'New York City is a speech community, united by a common evaluation of the same variables which serve to differentiate the speakers' (Labov 1972a:106). These patterns of variation were linked to linguistic change: as

Milroy (1987a) points out, Labov's main concern was to obtain insights into processes of linguistic change and to document structured heterogeneity.

Other researchers working within urban dialect areas (e.g. Trudgill 1974) adopted the Labovian model. These studies, known collectively as 'Labovian' or 'Variationist' or 'Quantitative' sociolinguistics, marked a profound shift in the study of language, demonstrating that language is not homogenous and that variation is not 'free' – language use possesses structured variability. This work has had a lasting influence on the study of language, and more particularly for this thesis, on the study of linguistic style.

The variationist approach to style has been criticised for being 'uni-dimensional' in that stylistic contexts are ordered according to a single linear scale of formality which corresponds to a single scale of prestige (vernacular to standard). Style-shifts are explained in terms of the degree of attention a speaker pays to his or her speech – another linear scale. Labov made clear, however, that the styles he constructed were not 'natural units of stylistic variation' (Labov 1972a:97). His aim was to define and control the styles of speech so that the performance of any two individuals or groups could be compared thus making it possible to test his hypothesis of regular variation. A simple linear analysis of style was appropriate for this purpose.

Some early post-Labovian developments moved away from the notion of a single linguistic scale. Newbrook (1986), for example, demonstrated that speakers in West Wirral organised their talk relative to three target varieties: RP/standard English; very 'broad' Cheshire; and very 'broad' Scouse. Milroy (1987b:105-106) commented on the difficulty of identifying a single linear scale (most to least vernacular) in the Belfast communities that she investigated, due to the absence of a

clear set of prestige norms. And in his analysis of a Cardiff DJ – Frank Hennessy (FH) – Coupland (1988) demonstrated multidimensional style-shifting within a single speaker’s repertoire. In certain situations, FH marked personal competence by shifting to *more* standardised forms of general social dialect features (i.e. those which are found in non-standard varieties of English through Britain) such as ‘aitch-dropping’, ‘G-dropping’ and ‘T-dropping’, but he was able to simultaneously mark in-group solidarity by shifting to *less* standardised variants of regional dialect features (i.e. those specific to Cardiff) such as Cardiff (a:). In such contexts, FH was clearly not responding to a single linear scale (status-solidarity), and his style-shifts could not be theorised in terms of a single dimension of ‘accent standardness/non-standardness’ (Coupland 1988:157).

Other criticisms of the Labovian model (e.g. Coupland 1988; Cameron 1990) highlighted the inadequacy of the explanations given (or presupposed) in the quantitative paradigm for the social meaning of variation. The correlations that variationist sociolinguists describe between linguistic and non-linguistic (i.e. demographic and contextual) factors are just that, descriptions, and an account which confuses such descriptions with explanations for the social meaning of the patterns noted falls into what Cameron (1990) describes as the ‘correlational fallacy’. Mendoza-Denton (2008:216) similarly criticises what she calls the ‘correlational imperative’, ‘where groups are pre-emptively divided into sociodemographic categories and their linguistic behaviour explained by appeal to these same categories’. Variationist accounts do sometimes go one step further in explaining correlations, for example, by invoking the notion that speakers are expressing their identity (e.g. as a working-class female). While this is a neat, and perhaps tempting,

explanation, Cameron points out that a social theorist might ask of it the following ‘awkward questions’:

do people really ‘have’ such fixed and monolithic social identities which their behaviour consistently expresses? Furthermore, is it correct to see language use as expressing an identity which is separate from and prior to language ... is it not the case that the way I use language is partly *constitutive* of my social identity?

(Cameron 1990:60)

These are precisely the issues I will address in Section 1.3.

Studies which adopted the survey-style, quantitative approach to language variation have been described collectively by Eckert (e.g. 2002; 2005) as the ‘first wave’ of variation studies. Not all of Labov’s early work adopted this approach, however. In his research on Martha’s Vineyard (1963), for example, Labov highlighted the importance of local identity categories. He explored the relationship between the centralisation of the diphthongs in words such as *try* and *how* (i.e. the PRICE and MOUTH lexical sets) and speakers’ orientations to the island. The economic independence of the native ‘Vineyarders’ was under threat from the incursion of mainland tourists. The greatest resistance to ‘the summer people’ came from the Chilmark fishermen; the summer tourist trade represented an opposition to the locally run fishing trade. The increase in centralisation began with the Chilmark fishermen and this group then became a reference point for some young Vineyarders (those who chose to stay and earn their living on Martha’s Vineyard) who used this feature to project their identities as islanders. The social meaning of centralisation was ‘positive orientation towards Martha’s Vineyard’ (Labov 1963:306). Eckert (2008) notes, however, that this early suggestion that variation could be a resource for the local construction of social meaning was lost in the large-scale survey studies that followed. Labov’s Martha’s Vineyard Study presaged studies that were to come

20-30 years later. Eckert (2005) actually identifies this very early study by Labov as part of the ‘second wave’: ‘the landmark study that established that the second wave could happen’.

1.2.2 Social relations

The relevance of social relations in style-shifting was already implicit in Labov’s (1966) New York City Study. In the Lower East Side survey, interview techniques were designed to minimise the impact of the presence of the interviewer on an informant’s speech (to tackle the ‘Observer’s Paradox’ (Labov 1972a:209)), and in these interviews, speech to family members and friends was categorised as ‘casual’ speech in contrast to the ‘careful’ speech used to answer the interviewer’s questions. As already discussed, though, Labov explained style-shifts according to a single scale related to the amount of attention the speaker paid to his or her speech. Bell (1984) calls this explanation for stylistic variation a ‘nonstarter’. In his seminal paper, ‘Language style as audience design’, Bell (1984) proposed that style is essentially a speaker’s response to an audience. Bell’s framework of ‘audience design’ was established as an explanation for his research on broadcast news in Auckland, New Zealand. Bell analysed the same newscasters’ reading style on two stations: YA (national radio with higher status audience) and ZB (community radio with lower status audience). In relation to one variable, intervocalic ‘t’, Bell found that the newscasters systematically shifted from more standard variants (voiceless stop) on station YA to less standard variants (alveolar voiced flap or voiced stop) on ZB. Bell interpreted this shift in terms of the newscasters’ response to the different audiences for these stations. All other variables that might be suggested as possible influences on style-shift, such as speaker, topic and setting, remained constant: the newscasters were the same for each station; they read similar news stories and

sometimes even the same script; and both stations were broadcast from the same suite of studios. The change in audience appeared to be the only explanation. In his bolder hypotheses, Bell even stated that style-shift associated with these other 'non-personal' factors (i.e. topic and setting) are derived from audience-designed shift. He suggested that speakers associate topics/settings with certain addressees; when speakers then shift their style because of a change of topic/setting, it is a reflection of the kind of shift that would occur in response to those associated addressee(s). Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) found some supporting evidence for this assertion.

At the centre of audience design is the Style Axiom:

Variation on the style dimension within the speech of a single speaker derives from and echoes the variation which exists between speakers on the 'social' dimension.

(Bell 1984:151)

We can thus 'expect that, qualitatively, some linguistic variables will have both social and style variation, some only social variation, but none style variation only' (Bell 1984:151). This is why some variables are what Labov (1972a) has termed 'markers' (variation on both dimensions) while others are 'indicators' (social differentiation only). Bell claimed that quantitative evidence for the style axiom could be found in a variety of studies in which the degree of style variation never exceeded the degree of social variation. Bell's style axiom builds upon Labov's interpretation of his New York City data (and the variationist studies that followed), but at the same time, Bell also proposed an explanation of how styles become socially meaningful. In arguing that style derives from social variation, Bell is claiming that it is the social meanings attached to linguistic variants through their association with particular social groups that make them available for stylistic

meaning (Coupland 2001a). From this perspective, social and stylistic variation are viewed as separate (but related) phenomena and ‘social variation comes first’ (Bell 1984:151).

Bell states that there is also an ‘initiative’ dimension to audience design. Here, style-shift is not merely a passive response by the speaker to a change in the situation; it actually initiates a change. Such a distinction was originally drawn by Blom and Gumperz (1972), who coined the terms ‘situational’ and ‘metaphorical’ switching. In situational/responsive style-shift, the speaker responds to the social situation by considering norms of appropriateness which have developed in relation to certain audiences. Metaphorical/initiative style-shift trades upon such associations, ‘injecting the flavour of one setting into another’ (Bell 1984:182). So, for example, a speaker could inject a sense of informality or intimacy into a social situation by switching into the local dialect, a style usually reserved for intimates.

According to Bell (1984:186), initiative style-shifts are in essence ‘referee design’. The speaker makes a style-shift as if talking to an absent referee rather than the actual addressee. This is, to some extent, based on elements of Le Page’s ‘acts of identity’ framework (Le Page 1968; Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985), though Bell (1984) did not fully explore issues of identity management. The comparison becomes more obvious in Bell’s later work where he writes that speakers use initiative style-shifts ‘to represent their identity or to lay claim to other identities’ (Bell 2001:163). Originally, referee design was simply an ‘add-on’ to the core concept of audience design. In this later work, though, Bell acknowledges that referee design is not the exceptional or ‘marked’ case that it was represented as in his 1984 paper. Rather, audience and referee design are ‘two complementary and coexistent dimensions of style, which operate simultaneously in all speech events’

(Bell 2001:165). Researchers might best access these two dimensions using different tools, however. Bell believes that quantitative methods are likely to be most suited to the analysis of audience design style-shift while referee design style-shift 'will often deal in the qualitative, the one-off, the single salient token which represents an identity' (Bell 2001:167).

The regularity of Bell's approach is tempting, but by focusing only on audience-related concerns I believe that it misses some of the wider issues related to the study of style, such as the *nature* of the relationship between individual stylistic variation and variation at the level of macro-social categories such as social class. I would take issue, for example, with the notion that individual stylistic variation is merely derivative of the variation noted between social groups, preferring instead to leave open the possibility that language is (at least partly) constitutive of the social identities speakers 'lay claim to'. Further, the standardised research techniques (e.g. interviews with set topics) that Bell (2001) advocates seem to limit the kinds of stylistic resources that can be accessed by the researcher. And, in fact, the resources that *are* investigated are still theorised in terms of a single dimension (i.e. audience). This kind of analysis does not fully account for the creativity speakers invest in their active use of stylistic resources.

The idea behind Bell's framework was not new. Bell was influenced not only by work in sociolinguistics (e.g. Le Page 1968) but also by advances in social psychology. Howard Giles and his colleagues (e.g. Giles and Powesland 1975) developed a model of social relations, speech accommodation theory (later communication accommodation theory), which theorized style-shifting as a social psychological process. By taking into account speakers' motivations, accommodation theory has always placed more emphasis on speaker agency than on speaker

response to external stimuli. The essence of the theory is that speakers can encourage interlocutors to view the speaker in a positive light by reducing dissimilarities between speaker and interlocutor. In relation to speech accommodation, this would involve the speaker converging towards the speech style of his/her interlocutor by, for example, reducing the use of marked dialect features (though accommodation is by no means restricted to features of dialect). A speaker could accentuate social distance with the opposite process, linguistic divergence. In addition to linguistic convergence/divergence, Brown and Levinson (1987) discuss various politeness strategies which speakers might adopt in order to negotiate social distance and manage social relations in interaction. Brown and Levinson's model of politeness will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

1.2.3 Social networks

The linguistic styles that were investigated as part of the sociolinguistic interview were not 'natural units of stylistic variation' (Labov 1972a:97). Some studies (e.g. Labov 1972b; Cheshire 1982a; Milroy 1987b (first published 1980)) built upon the early variationist paradigm but aimed to capture a broader picture of the linguistic repertoires of individuals and communities. These studies were concerned with the investigation of language in its social context. They often adopted ethnographic fieldwork techniques in order to carry out more detailed investigations of smaller communities (ethnography as a methodological and analytical tool will be explored in Chapter 2). These studies found that speakers did not necessarily aspire to the speech style of groups immediately above them in the social hierarchy (as was suggested by early quantitative studies). While this might be true at a relatively abstract level, it was demonstrated that, on a more local level, speakers manipulated

all of the linguistic resources that were available to them (which included low prestige and stigmatised varieties) (Milroy 1987b:19).

In Labov's (1966) New York City study, individual speakers acted as representatives of abstract social categories such as social class. In his (1972b) studies of African American Vernacular English in Harlem, however, pre-existing social groups became the unit of study; this is an important feature of 'social network' analysis (Milroy 1987a). Labov collected data from three gang-affiliated adolescent peer groups (Jets, Cobras and Thunderbirds). Labov found a connection between a speaker's language and his place in the peer-group structure. For example, 'lames', who occupied a position on the periphery of the peer-group, used the zero form of the copula (an important stereotype of AAVE) much less often than core members. Cheshire (1982a) corroborated Labov's findings in her study of adolescent peer groups in Reading. Cheshire made informal recordings of adolescent boys and girls as they interacted together in adventure playgrounds. She found that the participants' use of non-standard morphological and syntactic features correlated with the extent to which they adhered to the norms of the vernacular culture. Adherence to vernacular culture was measured via a 'vernacular culture index' which took into account factors such as 'skill at fighting', 'participation in minor criminal activities', and 'swearing'. Cheshire's study included both boys and girls and she noted sex differences in relation to the features that could function as markers of vernacular loyalty. Cheshire also made recordings of some of the participants in the school setting to enable a stylistic comparison to be made. She found the Labovian approach to style (as outlined in Section 1.2.1) to be overly simplistic, particularly when the speech of individuals (rather than aggregated group scores) was considered. One boy, Barney, actually increased his use of non-standard

present tense verb forms in the more formal school situation (group recording made in the presence of a teacher) compared to his speech at the adventure playground. Cheshire's explanation is that Barney (who hated school and had only recently returned after an extended absence) was exploiting his linguistic resources in order to assert independence from the school culture.

A number of other studies have shown that close-knit group structures/networks are common amongst adolescents (e.g. Kerswill 1996; Eckert 2000). Milroy (1987b; 2002) showed that close-knit networks are also characteristic of low-status communities. Milroy used the concept of social network as an analytic tool in her study of three working-class Belfast communities (Ballymacarrett, the Clonard, and the Hammer). An individual's social network can be described as 'the aggregate of relationships with others' (Milroy 2002:549). Social network structure can be evaluated according to two dimensions: density and multiplexity. The density of a network relates to the connections between network contacts. A person's network structure is said to be relatively dense if a large number of their personal contacts also interact with each other. Multiplexity relates to the nature of a person's network ties (e.g. kin, friend, neighbour, co-employee). A person's network is said to be relatively multiplex if their network ties are of more than one kind (e.g. if a person's co-worker is also a neighbour and a personal friend or family member).

Milroy assigned a network strength score to each of the participants in the Belfast study according to five indicators of multiplexity and density (Milroy 1987b:141-142). Statistically significant correlations were found between a speaker's use of phonological variables and their network scores. The closer a speaker's network ties (as measured by the network strength scale), the closer their language approximated to localised vernacular norms (i.e. the strongest vernacular speakers were generally

those whose neighbourhood network ties were the strongest). In order to explain this correlation, Milroy argues that close-knit networks function as norm enforcement mechanisms. She draws upon a number of studies within social anthropology and sociolinguistics, as well as her own data, in order to make this claim.

In the Belfast study, social network structure was used to interpret linguistic behaviour which could not straightforwardly be explained in terms of a speaker's age, sex, regional origin or social class, and it often interacted with these macro-social categories in complex ways. For example, in light of the overall differences observed between the male and female informants, the young Clonard women were found to have unexpectedly high linguistic scores (i.e. high use of vernacular variants) in line with their unexpectedly high network scores. This was explained by features of the social situation in the Clonard. This area was experiencing high male unemployment but the women were not affected to the same extent. The young Clonard women worked together as mill hands or shop assistants. They also socialised together and, as a result, came to contract the kind of solidary relationships usually associated with working-class men (e.g. those in Ballymacarrett, where more traditional working patterns and gender roles were maintained).

In line with the first wave of variationist research, social network studies explain linguistic variation in terms of correlations between language and group structure. Milroy (1987b:214) herself makes the point that it is important to interpret the network measure as one of social structure. The groups that were the focus of these studies, however, were pre-existing local groups (rather than group categories imposed by the analyst) that, particularly in the case of Milroy's Belfast study, were available for analysis only after prolonged ethnographic fieldwork. This kind of

approach (what Eckert refers to as the ‘second wave’ of variation studies) reduced the level of abstraction in the correlations made between individuals’ language use and their membership in social groupings. Nevertheless, the social meaning of linguistic variation was still theorised as existing at the level of social structure.

1.2.4 Social practice

In what Eckert terms the ‘third wave’ of variation studies, there is a movement away from the notion that language variation is a reflection of social structure towards the idea that variation (linguistic as well as non-linguistic) is a resource for the dynamic construction of social meaning. This kind of thinking was first put forward by Le Page (Le Page 1968; Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985) at the time that the first wave of Labovian sociolinguistics was the dominant mode. Le Page’s central notion is that speakers constantly perform ‘Acts of Identity’ through which they do their best to give the impression to their hearers that they are the sort of person they want the hearers to see them as. Le Page’s concepts were taken on board more by creolists and those working in multilingualism than they were by sociolinguists coming from the variationist tradition. What has been influential in recent years is the notion that processes of meaning-making take place in ‘communities of practice’.

The concept of the ‘community of practice’ originated in learning theory (Lave and Wenger 1991), but it was introduced to sociolinguistics in 1992 by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet who describe it as ‘an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor’ (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992:464). This ‘aggregate of people’ might be a friendship group, a sports team, a reading group, a family, a school class, a project team, a musical band; it is any collective who come together to engage in a shared enterprise, and, united by this common

enterprise, ‘come to develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values – in short, practices’ (Eckert 2000). In the introduction to her ethnographic study of a Detroit high school, Belten High, Eckert (2000:3) clearly sets out the differences between research set within the community of practice framework and that set within the first (and to some extent second) wave of variationist research. While traditional variationist research views speakers as representatives of broad social categories and considers linguistic variation to be a reflection of (or even determined by) membership in these categories, a ‘theory of variation as social practice’ sees speakers as *constituting* social categories and as actively *constructing* the social meaning of variation.

Eckert (2000) examined 6 phonological variables (5 of which were involved in the Northern Cities Chain Shift) and a syntactic variable (negative concord). She found that adolescents at Belten High were using the resources offered by these linguistic variables to construct distinct styles which were associated with different communities of practice: the school-oriented ‘jocks’ and the urban-oriented ‘burnouts’. In examining these categories, Eckert was able to get at the local meaning of social class for adolescents at this school. Jocks engaged with the corporate life of the school by taking part in extra-curricular activities such as sports teams and school government. These forms of participation prepared them for college and for their place in adult middle-class culture. The burnouts, on the other hand, were alienated from the school culture. They maintained strong neighbourhood ties and oriented their practices to the urban area. As a result, their social trajectory was geared towards gaining employment post-high school in the local urban area and participating in adult working-class culture. These two oppositional groups accounted for only half of the student population, however. The ‘in-betweens’, while

not a homogenous group, positioned themselves in relation to the jock-burnout distinction. The jocks and burnouts represent class-based communities of practice, but class distinctions were only part of the picture in Eckert's investigation. Only one of the variables, negative concord, showed significant correlation with the socioeconomic characteristics of the speakers' parents. In relation to the vocalic variables, Eckert looked to peer-based categories and the practices which constituted those categories.

The jocks, the burnouts and the in-betweens created different meanings for the variables that Eckert studied by virtue of the distinct practices that they participated in, and in combining these variables with other semiotic resources, they created a complete group identity. The burnouts, for example, demonstrated their anti-school, urban-oriented stance in their clothing (dark colours, rock concert t-shirts, leather jackets and wrist bands), in the spaces they occupied in the school (e.g. congregating in the smoking area, and refusing to use the cafeteria and other institutionally sanctioned areas such as 'homeroom' and the hallways where lockers were located) and in their use of urban variants of the late stages of the Northern Cities Shift (the backing of (e) and (ʌ), and the raising of the nucleus of (ay)). Eckert (2000) demonstrated that the burnouts led the jocks in the use of the advanced variants of these changes. In the wider student population, Eckert also showed that all students in the study (including in-betweens and jocks) differed in the extent to which they participated in the urban vowel shifts according to the extent to which they participated in urban-oriented practices such as 'cruising'. My summary, of course, does not represent the full complexity of Eckert's analysis.

The identity of the community of practice emerges through its participants' joint negotiation in these processes of meaning-making, and so too, the identity of an

individual emerges through their participation in different communities of practice (Eckert 2000:36). Individual and group identities are thus interrelated. Furthermore, the processes at work at this local level can be seen to reinforce, maintain, renegotiate or even challenge existing social structure:

it is the collection of types of communities of practice at different places in society that ultimately constitutes the assemblage of practice that is viewed as class culture, ethnic culture, gender practice, etc..

(Eckert 2000:39)

This process is not entirely unconstrained, however. People's access to and interest in different communities of practice will be mediated according to their place in society as embodied in categories such as class, age, gender and ethnicity: '[t]he individual, thus, is not a lone ranger wobbling out there in the social matrix, but is tied into the social matrix through structured forms of engagement' (Eckert 2005:17). The community of practice is therefore a useful construct within sociolinguistics because it provides a dynamic, bi-directional link between macro-level categories (such as social class) and micro-level practices.

To investigate processes of identity construction and meaning-making within a community of practice, the researcher must adopt a 'bottom-up' approach that begins by exploring the social practices in the community. A participant-driven, ethnographic approach is therefore most suited to this type of study. In addition to Eckert's (2000) investigation of jocks and burnouts in Detroit, a number of other school-based ethnographies have demonstrated the success of this approach and the significance of the community of practice as a factor in sociolinguistic variation: Bucholtz's (1999) study of nerd girls in California; Moore's (2003) study of

adolescent girls in Bolton, Greater Manchester; and Mendoza-Denton's (2008) study of Chicana/Mexicana girl gangs in California.

1.2.5 Social action

Eckert's (2000) high-school ethnography was a ground-breaking study which moved the investigation of linguistic variation into new theoretical and methodological ground. Eckert stopped short of analysing language in its discursive context, however. The importance of discursive context *is* highlighted in Eckert's later work (e.g. Eckert 2008) where she argues that variables are associated with a range of potential meanings (an 'indexical field'), and that specific meanings are activated in the situated use of a variable. The heart of Eckert's (2000) analysis of the Belten High data, though, was still quantitative: Eckert demonstrated the social meaning of variation through statistical correlations between the use of linguistic variables and participation in group practices. In comparison, Rampton (1995; 2006) used *qualitative* ethnographic analysis of language practices in order to understand ethnic- and class-based identities as 'lived realities' (Hymes 1996) in the lives of his adolescent informants.

Approaches to style which focus on aggregated data may miss important aspects of individual stylistic achievement. Coupland's early work (e.g. Coupland 1985; 1988) examined style from an alternative perspective. His analysis of a Cardiff local-radio presenter, Frank Hennessy (FH), for example, demonstrated that a speaker can call on dialect resources to navigate their way through complex social space. On occasions where it was particularly important to mark in-group solidarity with the local Cardiff community, Coupland showed that FH's use of the phonological variables under study was 'maximally non-standard' (according to index-scales established for each variable). One phonological variable in particular, stereotypical

Cardiff (a:), became the ‘focus for the symbolic expression of solidarity’ (Coupland 1988:141). This feature was given prominence in the show’s title *Hark, Hark the Lark!*, and in FH’s catch-phrases (‘it’s remarkable’, ‘well there we are’, ‘that’s half tidy’). In addition to mediating group affiliations and issues of solidarity, FH also drew on dialect resources to project different facets of his own identity. In fact, these two aspects of identity work (personal and group) are intimately connected, as Coupland emphasises in later work (e.g. Coupland 2001a). FH produced maximally non-standard variants when using self-deprecatory humour to project humility and unpretentiousness – important characteristics of his presenter’s persona – but in situations which required a display of media expertise (e.g. when publicising the show or making announcements), he produced more prestigious forms to project a competent persona.

Coupland builds upon this early research on ‘dialect in use’ in his later work (e.g. Coupland 2001a; 2006; 2007), which considers dialect style as person variation or persona management. From this perspective, stylistic variation reflects a dynamic presentation of the self. Speakers select from a repertoire of stylistic resources and ‘deploy’ these resources in ‘strategic sociolinguistic action’ (Coupland 2006). In opposition to one of the basic tenets of quantitative sociolinguistics, Coupland (2007:41) argues that ‘[a] single use of a single sociolinguistic variant *can* be socially meaningful’. He further argues that such variants acquire salience in discourse in relation to the particular social and discursive frames (‘socio-cultural’, ‘genre’, and ‘interpersonal’) that are in play at any given moment (cf. Ochs (1996:418), Podesva (2007, 2008), and Eckert’s (2008) notion of ‘indexical field’). Coupland (2006; 2007) reanalyses his Cardiff travel agency data from this ‘active contextualisation’ perspective. Coupland (1980; 1988) had earlier analysed the

speech of a Cardiff travel agent, Sue, in terms of speech accommodation theory. He had found that Sue consistently converged towards the speech of her clients for the four phonological variables analysed, such that her speech was almost as good an indicator of the clients' socioeconomic status as the clients' own speech (see also Bell's (1984) reanalysis). In his later reanalysis, Coupland (2006, 2007) reiterates the importance of social class within the 'socio-cultural frame' that is activated during Sue's client transactions. In Sue's conversations with her co-workers, however, Coupland (2006, 2007) states that social class is not relevant because it is a shared identity within this group of women. In the extract that Coupland (2006, 2007) analyses, the conversation between these women focuses on eating and dieting. Coupland suggests that it is Sue's personal powerlessness in relation to her dieting that becomes relevant in this context, and her linguistic choices are considered from this (participant driven) perspective. The same linguistic resources (e.g. h-dropping, flapped 't', consonant cluster reduction) are thus shown to have different meanings in the interpersonal frame (e.g. 'low personal competence and control') compared to the socio-cultural frame (e.g. 'working class').

Critics would argue that the weakness of this approach lies in its inability to generalise to wider sections of the population. Coupland (2007:28) suggests, however, that there '*is* the possibility of generalising from single-case analyses, but it involves generalising to what is stylistically possible, rather than to "what people typically do"'. I would emphasise that the former is no less of a valid theoretical concern than the latter. Podesva (2007; 2008) analyses the speech of a single individual across several speaking situations. He points out that '[f]iner-grained analyses delving deep into an individual's linguistic performances, though they lack generalizability, may offer more insight into *why* speakers make the linguistic

choices they do' [my emphasis] (Podesva 2007:482). And more than this, an analysis of style as strategic social action makes claims about the 'non-arbitrary' nature of linguistic styling (Brown and Levinson 1987:282). This is an important point which resonates throughout the analysis in the forthcoming chapters: the individual linguistic choices a speaker makes are purposeful and meaningful. Eckert makes a similar point in relation to Labov's (2002, as cited in Eckert 2008:453) comment that '[t]he great chain shifts sweeping across North America are more like ocean currents than local games':

To seek explanations for chain shifts in the day-to-day construction of meaning would certainly be futile and ridiculous. But to ignore what people do with the elements of these chain shifts to construct social meaning is to turn a blind eye to an aspect of human competence that is at least as mind-blowing as the ability to maintain distance between one's vowels.

(Eckert 2008:454)

Further, a style as persona management approach offers theoretical benefits. In particular, it provides a link between the 'social' and 'situational' dimensions of sociolinguistic variation:

Dialect style as persona management captures how individuals, within and across speaking situations, manipulate the conventionalized social meanings of dialect varieties – the individual through the social. But it is the same process of dialectal self-projection that explains the effect of dialect stratification when the speech of social groups is aggregated in sociolinguistic surveys. Individuals within what we conventionally recognize to be meaningful social categories enact dialect personas with sufficient uniformity for survey researchers to detect numerical patterns of stratification ... It is in relation to group norms that stylistic variation becomes meaningful; it is through individual stylistic choices that group norms are produced and reproduced.

(Coupland 2001a:198)

This quotation encapsulates the back and forth movement between individual and group, practice and structure, micro- and macro-levels of analysis which sociolinguists continually grapple with. The construct of the community of practice adds a meso-layer which can help to mediate between these extremes. Podesva (2007), for example, shows that a medical student, Heath, takes on a specific persona (that of a 'flamboyant diva') in his interactions in one particular community of practice (a close-knit group of friends). Heath displays this diva persona on a phonetic level through the use of falsetto. Podesva goes on to show, via processes of indexicality, how Heath's use of falsetto in his diva performances within this community of practice might be linked to gay identity.

1.3 A theoretical framework for identity

In line with Bucholtz and Hall (2005), this thesis will engage with multiple levels/dimensions of identity: (1) interactionally constructed stances; (2) local ethnographically specific positions within a community of practice; (3) macro-level identity categories such as social class. Crucially, the framework which links all three levels together rests upon Ochs' (1992) theory of indexicality. Ochs argues that there is no direct link between linguistic forms and macro-social categories such as class or gender. Rather, language indexes stances, speech acts and activities in interaction which, in turn, help to constitute social identities. So identity is not separate from or prior to language. Ochs illustrates this process with reference to the identity category of gender but states that it 'can be taken as exemplary of how language conveys social identities more generally' (Ochs 1992:343). For example, tag questions in English have been associated with a feminine linguistic style. But the link between tag questions and the social category of gender is not direct; it occurs only through a series of ideological conventions which associate a stance of

hesitancy with female identity. So we can say that tag questions directly index a stance of hesitancy and only indirectly index a female identity: '[i]t is in this sense that the relation between language and gender is mediated and constituted through a web of socially organized pragmatic meanings' (Ochs 1992:341-342). There is no one-to-one correspondence between linguistic form and social or pragmatic meaning, however:

It is important to distinguish the range of situational dimensions [particular stances, acts, statuses etc.] that a form (set of forms) *potentially* indexes from the range of situational dimensions that a form (set of forms) *actually* indexes in a particular instance of use.

(Ochs 1996:418)

This act of differentiation occurs during the processes of 'active contextualisation' referred to in Section 1.2.5 above. A number of current theorists of style have drawn on the concept of indexicality to show how interactional stances constitute more enduring styles, personas and identity categories (Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Eckert 2005, 2008; Johnstone 2007; Podesva 2007; Eberhardt and Kiesling 2008; Bucholtz forthcoming).

Bucholtz and Hall acknowledge the crucial role that social action plays in the construction of identity, but they reject an extreme social constructivist position which locates agency within 'an individual rational subject who consciously authors his identity without structural constraints' (Bucholtz and Hall 2005:606; cf. Coupland 2006). The notion that identity emerges in interaction does not preclude the possibility that it may also draw on existing structures and ideologies:

On the one hand, the interactional positions that social actors briefly occupy and then abandon as they respond to the contingencies of unfolding discourse may accumulate ideological associations with both large-scale and local categories of identity. On the other, these ideological associations, once forged, may shape who does what and how in interaction, though never in a deterministic fashion.

(Bucholtz and Hall 2005:591)

This quotation makes explicit the important point that structure and agency are inextricably linked. For Bucholtz and Hall (2005:606), agency is ‘the accomplishment of social action’, and importantly, there is no requirement that social action be intentional: ‘habitual actions accomplished below the level of conscious awareness act upon the world no less than those carried out deliberately’.

1.4 Children and adolescents in sociolinguistic research

Labov (1964) suggested that it is in adolescence that the kinds of sociolinguistic patterns found in adult speech communities are acquired. It is now well established, however, that children develop sociolinguistic competence at a much earlier age (e.g. Romaine 1984a; Andersen 1990; Youssef 1991; Gupta 1994), in the case of politeness markers, even before the second birthday (Ainsworth-Vaughn 1990). Nevertheless, there have been few studies of sociolinguistic variation in the speech of pre-adolescent children. Reid’s (1978) study of the speech of sixteen eleven-year-old boys from three socially differentiated schools in Edinburgh was an early exception. He recorded the boys in a variety of different contexts: reading aloud; a one-to-one interview; group recording; and playground interaction recorded with radio-microphones. Reid found the same patterns of social and stylistic variation that had already been established in the adult speech community (e.g. by Labov 1966 and Trudgill 1974) with regard to two phonological variables: variation between alveolar and glottal stops for (t); and variation between velar and alveolar nasals for (ng).

Reid noted an anomaly in the playground data for (t), however; there was actually a decrease in the group index (i.e. greater use of more 'standard' realisations of (t)) rather than the increase that would have been expected in this most informal and 'natural' situation. Reid explains this to be a consequence of a technique that was used to encourage the flow of talk. The child wearing the radio-microphone was encouraged to act as a commentator while the other children fought boxing matches, ran races and so on. This did produce ample speech, but some of the children imitated a 'TV commentator style' which involved the appropriation of Scottish, English and American voices. While this development was not in line with the goals of Reid's research, it did provide early evidence that stylistic variation could be found outside of the organised speech contexts contained within the sociolinguistic interview. The children also expressed awareness of social and stylistic variation in language, making comments like the following: 'if I talk to them with a sort of clean accent ... they'll think ... a bit of a bore ... if you talk with the same accent as they do they'll just think ... you're one of us in a way ... ' (Reid 1978:170).

While there is evidence to show that patterns of variation are acquired early in a child's development, there is little evidence for the kinds of social meaning such variation has for children, particularly pre-adolescent children. One reason for this may be the 'middle-aged perspective' that pervades social research (Eckert 1997; see also Eckert 2000). Middle-age is seen as the only life stage that is engaging in 'mature use' of language rather than 'learning' or 'losing' it. Roberts similarly makes the point that while adults are thought to control language varieties, children are 'seen primarily as "acquirers" of the vernacular of a speech community' (2002:333). Yet there is no reason to suppose that processes of meaning-making and identity construction among children are any less complex or worthy of study than

those among adults: ‘there is plenty of opportunity for variation to develop social meaning among children that is quite specific to their own social practices, and it is in these practices that we must seek explanations’ (Eckert 1997:162).

Fischer (1958) studied different realisations of the present participle ending (i.e. alveolar or velar nasal) in 24 children aged between 3 and 10. By the time recordings were made, Fischer had observed the children for around 8 months and therefore knew them (and they him) quite well. Fischer found that girls used ‘-ing’ (i.e. [ŋ]) more frequently than the boys, which led him to suggest that ‘-ing is regarded as symbolizing female speakers and -in as symbolizing males’ (Fischer 1958:49). But he then moved beyond macro-level categories when he examined what he termed ‘differences in personality’ in the boys to explain disparate linguistic behaviour. The ‘model’ boy used ‘-ing’ (i.e. [ŋ]) for the present participle ending more often than the ‘typical’ boy. While the difference between the boys was described in terms of personality traits such as ‘thoughtful and considerate’ on the one hand and ‘dominating, full of mischief’ on the other, it is a small step to view this variation in terms of social practice. The model boy was school-oriented and popular amongst his peers, a prototypical ‘jock’ in Eckert’s (2000) terms. Fischer’s work was in fact ahead of its time in a number of important respects (the full extent of which I cannot do justice to here). He recognised, for example, the importance of style and demonstrated systematic style-shifts several years before Labov’s (1966) New York City study. He also drew a question mark over a simple definition of ‘prestige’:

the grounds of prestige clearly vary according to individuals and societies. A variant which one man uses because he wants to seem dignified another man would reject because he did not want to seem stiff.

(Fischer 1958:56)

Fischer further seemed to be advocating the kinds of studies of style that were discussed in Sections 1.2.3 – 1.2.5:

The study of social factors in linguistic drift is in the field of the sociology of language rather than linguistics proper. However, this study can not reach ultimate fruition without certain linguistic studies by competent linguists. I refer here to studies of individual variations in linguistic forms in small, face-to-face speech communities, and of variations in these forms in the speech of single individuals in a range of social situations. Studies of this sort constitute tasks of respectable magnitude which have, in the main, been neglected.

(Fischer 1958:53)

A number of sociolinguistic studies have emphasised the importance of the peer-group in relation to a child's language use (e.g. Labov 1972b; Reid 1978; Cheshire 1982a; Romaine 1984a; Kerswill and Williams 2000). The strict age-grading in institutions such as the school plays an important role in the development of peer culture (Eckert 1994). The significance of peer-group culture has no doubt influenced the number of studies which have employed the community of practice framework within adolescent groups in the school setting (e.g. Bucholtz 1999; Eckert 2000; Moore 2003). Bergvall (1999) raises the possibility that the community of practice might be more suited to the analysis of variation among teenagers than any other age group. Adolescence is certainly an important life stage in the study of variation but it does not signal a sudden awareness of the social function of variation: 'the adolescent does not emerge, dialect intact, from a vacuum' (Roberts 2002:334). Roberts (2002:345) is emphatic in her assertion that more work is

required to explore the social meaning of child variation. This life-stage is remote from the researcher's own, and hence difficulties may arise in accessing information which might shed light on the social meaning of their linguistic variation (e.g. the children's interests, practices, relationships etc.). Nevertheless, the community of practice framework together with linguistic ethnography are likely to provide useful tools in the pursuit of these social meanings.

1.5 Outline of the study

This chapter has situated my study in relation to past and current research on style and sociolinguistic variation. Chapter 2 provides more specific background information in relation to the study. I begin by situating the two schools in their social and geographical context and then turn to a more nuanced description of these schools as distinct communities of practice. In the second part of the chapter, I outline the fieldwork procedures used in my data collection, and consider the benefits of an ethnographic approach.

Chapter 3 begins by reviewing the place of 'non-standard' or 'colloquial' forms, such as possessive 'me' and singular 'us', within traditional pronoun paradigms. I review the distribution of possessive 'me' and singular 'us' in the data, and then situate both variants in their wider social, geographical and historical contexts. The second part of the chapter focuses on the children's use of possessive 'me', which I suggest is influenced by factors such as stylisation, performance and identity work in addition to linguistic factors (e.g. stress and phonological environment).

Chapter 4 develops the analysis of singular 'us' by exploring its social and pragmatic functions in interaction. This chapter investigates the possibility that singular 'us' has been adopted by the children as a mitigating factor in imperatives,

and situates the use of this strategy in relation to other directives. I use the insights gained from ethnography to interpret the differences between the two communities of practice that are highlighted by this analysis.

Chapter 5 begins by consolidating (and clarifying) existing research on right dislocation, before examining the ways in which this construction was used to organise discourse and create interactional stances and identities. This Chapter highlights the difficulties associated with a variationist analysis of discourse, and further suggests that social class holds a somewhat uncomfortable position within sociolinguistic accounts of the different ‘ways of speaking’ adopted by socially differentiated groups.

Finally, the concluding chapter, Chapter 6, summarises the main findings of this study and highlights the implications of these findings for future sociolinguistic research.

Chapter 2 – Background to the Study

2.1. Schools in context

The two schools that form the basis of this study are Murrayfield Primary School in Fairfield, Stockton-on-Tees (highlighted to the left in Figure 2.1) and Ironstone Primary School in Grangetown, Middlesbrough (highlighted to the right in Figure 2.1). The names of the schools, as well as the names of all the participants in the study, are pseudonyms.

Figure 2.1: Location of the schools



(Multimap.com 2006)

Both schools were accessed via personal contacts who were involved in education in the Teesside area. My contacts made the initial opening to the head teachers and I followed up by visiting the schools to discuss my planned fieldwork and to offer my services as a classroom assistant. I felt that it was important to give something to the school (by volunteering to help out in class) before expecting anything in return (i.e. access to the children to make recordings). Although I used personal contacts to gain entry to the schools, I had no pre-existing ties to these institutions or to the

communities surrounding them. I began visits to the schools in October 2005 and initially spent half a day per week helping out in the Year 4 (i.e. 8-9 year olds) classrooms. I began making recordings in June 2006, at which point I extended my visits to one full day per week. I stayed with the same groups of students as they progressed from Year 4 to Year 5 (9-10 year olds) and continued making weekly visits to both schools until February 2007.

2.1.1 Comparison between schools

Murrayfield Roman Catholic Primary School is a Co-educational Voluntary Aided School in Bishopsgarth ward in the Stockton-on-Tees Local Education Authority (LEA). Murrayfield is larger than most primary schools in the area, with 287 pupils in the school between the ages of 3 and 11. Ironstone Roman Catholic Primary School is a Co-educational Voluntary Aided school in the Grangetown ward in Redcar and Cleveland LEA. The school is of average size for the area with 240 pupils. Unlike Murrayfield Primary, which has a 42-year history, Ironstone Primary is a recent addition to the LEA. The school was established in September 2000 following the amalgamation of Ironstone Infant and Junior Schools.

The report from a 2003 inspection of Murrayfield cites the following salient characteristics of the school:

The school has a stable community and pupil mobility is low. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The school community is made up of children from a predominantly white European heritage...The overall attainment of pupils when they enter the school [at age three] is about what is expected in children who are three.

(OFSTED 2003a:3)

This description of Murrayfield Primary School can be compared with an equivalent paragraph taken from Ironstone Primary School's 2003 OFSTED report:

The school serves an area facing significant social and economic challenges and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is over three times the national average. Attainment on entry to the nursery is well below expectations.

(OFSTED 2003b:7)

These quotations clearly highlight the contrast between the 'stable community' of Murrayfield Primary's catchment area and the 'social and economic challenges' of the area where Ironstone Primary is situated. In particular, the marked difference between the two schools in the percentage of children entitled to free school meals (eligibility is based on parental income) gives an indication of the different social backgrounds from which these two sets of pupils come. It should not be thought that the absence of the expressions 'stable' and 'white European heritage' from the report on Ironstone Primary signal that Ironstone's children are more racially mixed or transient than Murrayfields: the Ironstone children are predominantly white Europeans and, as we will see later, come from a cohesive community.

The difference between the two areas is further illuminated by a comparison using 2001 Census data. Output areas were introduced as the smallest units of output for the 2001 Census. They were combined to form two layers of 'Super Output Areas' known as 'Lower Layer Super Output Areas' (LSOAs) and 'Middle Layer Super Output Areas' (MSOAs). Murrayfield Primary is captured within LSOA Stockton-on-Tees 015B, and Ironstone Primary is situated in LSOA Redcar and Cleveland 009C. Table 2.1 summarises some of the key census statistics for these

areas. Census data has been sourced from the Neighbourhood Statistics Service¹ (2001).

Table 2.1: 2001 Census Data (Neighbourhood Statistics 2001)

	Super Output Area Lower Layer			
	Stockton-on-Tees 015B		Redcar & Cleveland 009C	
	N	%	N	%
Total Number of Residents	1,673	-	1,422	-
Economically Active People Aged 16-74	1,156	-	931	-
Number of Households	713	-	486	-
Ethnic Minority Population	22	1.3%	14	1.0%
Unemployment Rate	39	3.4%	96	10.3%
Employed in managerial/professional occupations	139	23.1%	39	9.1%
16-74 year olds having no qualifications	389	33.7%	463	49.7%
Households owner occupied	532	74.6%	191	39.3%
Houses rented from Council	109	15.3%	226	46.5%
Households with 2 or more cars/vans	175	24.5%	48	9.9%
Households with > 0.5 persons per room	167	23.4%	262	53.9%
Households living in overcrowded conditions	14	2%	68	14%
Average size of household (people)	2.2	-	2.9	-
Position in Index of multiple deprivation (1 = most deprived, 32,482 = least deprived)	15,626		1,475	

An obvious measure of the status and character of an area is a breakdown of the population in terms of occupation. In Stockton-on-Tees 015B, 23.1% of workers are employed in managerial or professional occupations. This figure drops to 9.9% in Redcar & Cleveland 009C. This disparity is mirrored by levels of unemployment (3.4% in Stockton-on-Tees 015B compared to 10.3% in Redcar & Cleveland 009C). A further guide to the standing of an area can be found through its housing. In

¹ This service was launched in February 2001 by the Office for National Statistics in partnership with central and local Government.

general, an owner-occupied house affords more status than a rented one, and a privately rented one more status than one rented from the council. Table 2.1 shows that the majority of the population in Redcar & Cleveland 009C are living in rented accommodation and most of these homes are provided by the local authority. The higher rate of home-ownership in Stockton-on-Tees 015B correlates with the lower figures for occupancy per room and average size of household. All these factors are indicative of higher socio-economic status; the differences between these areas do not appear to be random.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) produces the housing datasets that are published (along with the census data) by the Neighbourhood Statistics Service. This information includes data on average house prices at ward level for 2001 (this data is not available at LSOA level). The average price of a semi-detached property in Grangetown in 2001 was only £23,379 while the same type of house in Bishopsgarth ward, Stockton-on-Tees, was worth almost three times as much (£62,479). To put these figures in context, the equivalent figure for the north-east region as a whole was £72,002. Unfortunately, the pace of change in the property market means that these figures are already obsolete. But commercial web-based information services (such as www.upmystreet.com) indicate a continuing divide between these two areas in terms of property value in the expected direction. I also gained interesting anecdotal evidence about property in the Grangetown area. One of the teaching assistants at Ironstone Primary, who was local to Grangetown (as were a number of the teaching assistants), was in the process of trying to sell her house during the fieldwork. She noted one day in the staffroom that it had been up for sale for a significant period of time but had received no offers. She remarked

that, despite the fact her house was in a ‘nice little close’, it was not selling because ‘Grangetown still has a stigma attached to it’.

The Indices of Deprivation 2004 are measures of deprivation provided for every Super Output Area in England. Separate Indices at SOA level are given for each of the seven domains of deprivation: Income, Employment, Health Deprivation and Disability, Education Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Services, Crime and the Living Environment. This allows all 32,482 SOAs to be ranked according to how deprived they are relative to each other. This information is then brought together into one overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (English Indices of Deprivation 2004). LSOA Stockton-on-Tees 015B was ranked 15,626 out of 32,482 (where 1 was the most deprived LSOA and 32,482 the least deprived). In stark contrast, LSOA Redcar & Cleveland 009C was ranked 1,475. So, while Murrayfield and Ironstone Primary do not constitute the opposite extremes of the socioeconomic continuum, there is clearly some social distance between them.

Despite the social challenges faced by Ironstone Primary (which contribute to the children’s level of performance upon entry being ‘well below expectations’ (OFSTED 2003b:7)), the school is extremely effective. Table 2.2 show a comparison between the schools based on the scores achieved in National Curriculum tests by pupils at the end of Year 6 (OFSTED 2003a; 2003b). When compared with similar schools, Ironstone Primary is rated ‘very high’ for mathematics and English and ‘well above average’ for science.

Table 2.2: Standards achieved at Ironstone and Murrayfield Primary

	Ironstone			Murrayfield		
	Compared with			Compared with		
	All schools	All schools	Similar schools	All schools	All schools	Similar schools
Performance in:	2001	2002	2002	2001	2002	2002
English	A	C	A*	A	A	A
Mathematics	A	B	A*	B	A	D
Science	A	C	A	A	A	D

Key: A* - very high; A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E well below average. Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of year 2.

The schools selected for data collection are therefore very similar in many respects: both are Roman Catholic Primary schools; neither has significant ethnic minority or migrant population; and both schools are well led by the head teacher and senior staff and as a result provide a learning environment in which all pupils can, and do, make good progress. The difference between the schools lies in the social and demographic characteristics of the areas which they serve, and by implication, in the social background of the pupils.

2.1.2 The schools as communities of practice

I had set out to compare and contrast the language practices of children from different social groups. The two schools were therefore not randomly selected; they were chosen deliberately to highlight a social contrast. This is the kind of judgement sampling that Reid (1978) adopted in his study of school children from three socially differentiated schools in Edinburgh. Based upon the census statistics and the knowledge I now have of the local communities, it would seem reasonable to suggest that Ironstone Primary is situated in a lower-working-class area, while

Murrayfield Primary is situated in a predominantly lower-middle-class area. The precise classifications are not important, however, because in this study I resist the temptation to label the children according to rigid social class categorisations. Milroy (1987b) points out that labels such as 'working-class' represent abstract social categories that do not necessarily figure, in any significant way, in individuals' definitions of their own identity. There may be smaller scale categories to which these individuals feel they belong. When variationists use social class in survey studies it is merely a 'proxy variable' (Milroy 1987a:101) which covers distinctions in life-style, behaviour, values and attitudes as well as more measurable factors such as wealth, education and prestige. In this study, I attempt to 'unpack' some of the practices for which labels such as 'working-class' stand proxy. To do this, I focus on each school as a discrete community of practice. Of course, the socioeconomic background of the students has a significant influence on the primary school as a community of practice; each school-based community of practice is a product of the compromise reached between staff and students of how the school can adapt to the social situation within which it exists. Ironstone Primary and Murrayfield Primary therefore constitute quite distinct communities of practice due to the different social setting of the local community, even though they share elements as a result of being schools in the same wider urban area.

The school as a whole can be said to constitute a community of practice. The members of this community come together on a regular basis to engage in the shared enterprise of learning and progressing through the educational system. Within the school, each class/year group constitutes an embedded community of practice. Members of these communities come to share certain practices, modes of behaviour and values. The shared repertoire includes wearing the same uniform, reacting in

appropriate ways to symbols such as whistles and bells, sitting in a certain way in assembly, keeping to legitimate areas of the school grounds, and using particular techniques in class to get the teacher's attention (e.g. raising of hands), as well as a variety of shared linguistic practices, some of which will be investigated in this thesis. As the children participate in these communities, local identities such as attentive pupil, naughty student, class clown, friend, peer-group leader, dance partner, gossip, tell tale, and so on, become relevant at different times. Details about the Ironstone and Murrayfield Primary communities of practice, and the children who participated in them, will be highlighted at key points during the analysis. For now, I will present a brief sketch of each.

Both schools were proud of their association with the local church and, through it, the local community (a high proportion of Teesside's population are Roman Catholics -- something going back to the 19th century (Chase 1993)). Within Ironstone Primary, in particular, there was a strong sense that the school was an integral part of the local community. There was a definite feeling of belonging within the Ironstone Primary community of practice, which seemed to influence, and be influenced by, the wider Grangetown community. The annual school musical, for example, is a community affair that is held on two consecutive nights at the local community centre and is attended by the pupils' parents, siblings, neighbours and friends. There was also a definite consciousness within Ironstone Primary of events and situations occurring in the surrounding area. Unfortunately, these events and situations were sometimes of a negative nature. For example, I led a number of group discussions² with the children at Ironstone Primary and one of these was based on the children's journey from home to school. Most of the children lived within

² I recorded these discussions with a camcorder but this data was not analysed as part of the thesis.

walking distance of the school and made this journey by foot. In 3 of the 5 group discussions, the children mentioned a 'burned-out park'; this was clearly a salient feature of the local landscape, which many of them passed on their way to school. There was lots of speculation about who had been responsible for the fire and many of the children were greatly concerned about it. Discussion of spaces and events in the local area was regularly brought into the school sphere, and there were often significant events to discuss. For example, there were two murders in the Grangetown area of Middlesbrough during the period of the fieldwork. The second happened over the Christmas break (December 2006) when a young father of 2 Ironstone pupils was stabbed outside of the Ironstone Primary gates. When the children returned to school after Christmas, there was a lot of talk about this murder and how it was related to the earlier attack. One of the children, Rachel, even claimed to know where the knife for the second attack had been found. Members of the community talked to each other about these events. They swapped facts and opinions, but they also provided help and support to those who needed it. Post-fieldwork, the school itself became the victim of an arson attack. There was an overwhelming response from members of the Grangetown community, who worked together with the Ironstone Primary teachers to ensure that lessons could continue in the local church hall. Individuals approached local businesses, for instance, in order to secure vital materials for the pupils such as paper and pencils. This description of the issues faced by Ironstone Primary and by members of the local community has painted a rather bleak picture of the Grangetown area. There were also, of course, many positive events and activities to talk about. The children discussed events that were taking place in the area such as discos, parties and firework displays.

I am unable to give a similar account of the relationship between Murrayfield Primary and its surrounding community. This is not an analytic weakness, however, but rather a telling indication of the differences between these two communities of practice. The children at Murrayfield Primary did not talk to me about people, places and activities related to the local community, and there were certainly no events as significant as murder or arson to discuss. These children did occasionally tell me about some of the out-of-school activities they participated in, such as dance classes, but these were generally held outside of the immediate area and were attended by children from a number of different schools/areas. While Ironstone Primary is embedded in a cohesive community, Murrayfield Primary is part of a geographically (and probably socially) much wider community.

Returning to events *inside* the school, it quickly became clear to me that the children at Murrayfield Primary complied with the school's expectations of 'good' behaviour more than those at Ironstone Primary. After my first visit to Ironstone Primary, the entry in my fieldwork diary read: 'This class has a very different feel to Murrayfield; the kids are more boisterous and lively'. I was being rather euphemistic. After my second visit I noted: 'the class was again in complete disarray as the children did their DT [design technology] work'. Initially, I was struck by what I perceived as chaos (though later my perception changed). The classroom at Ironstone Primary was very different from the classroom schema that I held (a schema that Murrayfield Primary had reinforced). At Murrayfield, the teacher could generally hold the children's attention for extended periods. The children would raise their hands if they had a point to make and generally only spoke when acknowledged by the teacher. In contrast, the children at Ironstone Primary would often shout out in class and talk over the top of the teacher's voice. Ironstone

children would get up and wander around the classroom during lessons such as art or design-technology, inevitably ending up somewhere that they were not meant to be. They gave excuses for these transgressions (e.g. 'I'm just getting a ruler' or 'Billy stole my pen') but it seemed that they were simply grabbing opportunities in the classroom for informal social interaction. There were differences, then, between the two communities of practice in terms of the children's perception of their role within the classroom and in their attitudes to teacher/school authority. My experiences of the differences between Murrayfield and Ironstone Primary chime with Rampton's (2006:43) description of the conventional classroom discourse observed at Westpark, a secondary school in the prosperous suburbs, compared to the 'decentring of pedagogic authority' apparent at inner-city Central High.

The teachers at Ironstone Primary associated the children's 'bad' behaviour with their 'lack of maturity'. Perhaps we could say that these children were immature in that they had not yet developed a sense of what constitutes 'appropriate' social behaviour in the classroom. Or maybe these children were *more* mature than the children at Murrayfield Primary because they had a sense of their rights as individuals to express themselves, and did not feel restricted by the constraints that the school sought to place on them. Evans (2006) suggests that schools require children to learn middle-class practices, and that working class children are likely to resist the forces of legitimation that education represents.

When I began my visits to Ironstone Primary, I felt extremely uncomfortable in the classroom. The patterns of interaction I found there broke with my own generic expectations (Rampton 2006) and I was not sure how I could, or should, fit into this environment. This is where ethnography became key in 'making the strange familiar' (Roberts 2008). After several visits to Ironstone Primary, I began to tune

into the organisation of this community of practice and, as the weeks and months progressed, I earned my place within it. At Murrayfield Primary, in contrast, I had to work to ‘make the familiar strange’ (Roberts 2008). By this I mean that, even though the structure of this school was closer to my own experiences and expectations, I had to ensure that I did not take anything for granted and therefore miss important features of this community of practice. Ethnography overall was crucial in enabling me to gain some understanding of both communities of practice. It was only with this understanding that I became able to explain, with any degree of sensitivity, the differences in the children’s linguistic practices.

2.2. Fieldwork and methodology

2.2.1 Linguistic ethnography

Ethnography provides an alternative to the analyst-driven approach of the survey-style ‘first wave’ of variation studies. In ethnography, participant observation has a central role. Rather than testing hypotheses against predetermined categories, the researcher seeks to discover the social practices and processes of meaning-making that exist in a particular community: ‘while survey fieldwork focuses on filling in a sample, ethnographic fieldwork focuses on finding out what is worth sampling’ (Eckert 2000:69). My journey as an ethnographic researcher began several months before data collection. I entered the classroom in the first instance as a ‘helper’, someone who interacts with the children and assists them in classroom activities (e.g. arts and crafts, reading, and spelling). This initial step was important for a number of reasons. It enabled me to build bridges with the schools that would become my research sites. It gave me the chance to adjust to the environment of the school before data collection began. Perhaps most importantly, it gave me the

opportunity to form relationships with the children outside of the constraints of the research situation. I was able to interact with the children as a helper and a friend rather than as a researcher who was under pressure to make recordings. I tried to spend as much time as possible with the children during my weekly visits to school. I spent time with them in the playground, for example, chatting and playing games. I was therefore able to get to know the children's personalities, abilities, interests, relationships and friendship groups, and engage with their activities both inside and outside of the classroom. In short, I was able to observe informally 'the flow of social practice' (Maybin 2006:4) in the school. Ethnography, then, is not simply a method of data collection; it is a methodological stance that pervades the whole project. The accumulated experiences gained from participating in school activities combined to construct the 'ethnographically informed lens' (Maybin 2006:13) through which my analysis and interpretation of the linguistic data is presented.

One of the critical aspects of ethnographic research is the building of relationships with the people involved in the research process. For me this included children, teachers, head teachers and parents. Maintaining a positive relationship with these different groups can be a difficult balancing act. My research relied upon the good will of the head teacher and teaching staff; therefore, I had to be seen to be cooperating with them. I was conscious, however, that the children might distance themselves from me if I aligned myself too closely with the teachers and, in particular, with their authority. I wanted the children to feel that they could relax in my presence and talk to me in confidence. Eckert (2000) chose not to go into classrooms or use teachers as intermediaries in her research because she did not want to get caught up in the power hierarchies associated with being an adult in the school setting. In this context, the age gap between researcher and informant

represents a status difference which Eckert argues is potentially exaggerated if the researcher becomes an ally for the teacher and an authority-figure for the children. It is difficult, however, for a researcher in a primary school to adopt the same techniques that Eckert used in her study. Primary-age children are generally escorted to and from school by their parents and their movements in school are restricted. Primary schools have stringent policies regarding visitors; any participation in school life must be done with the full cooperation of the teaching staff. Forming a relationship with primary school children therefore inevitably involves spending some time in the classroom. I do not think that my role as an adult helper/classroom assistant was detrimental to my relationship with the children or to the research. There was little point in trying to become an honorary in-group member, as other researchers have done (e.g. Cheshire 1982a), because I am quite obviously in a different life stage³ to the children. My relationships with the children were set against the relationships that they had with other adults in the school. I was not a teacher, nor did I have any other fixed social role; I was just an adult who the children could chat to, include in their games if they wished, and go to for help with certain classroom tasks. There were a number of other individuals in the school who filled these 'friendly adult' roles (e.g. volunteers who help out in the library, on school trips, and in after-school clubs). I was struck by the children's willingness (particularly in Ironstone Primary) to accept me almost immediately into their community of practice. My presence in the classroom became part of the children's weekly routine. The children were glad of my help in the classroom and they also sought me out in the playground at break-time for gossip and games.

³ Although this might not be apparent to the children. One of the Murrayfield participants told me that her brother was about my age; he was 15.

Outside of the teacher-pupil dichotomy, forming relationships with children can be problematic if you allow yourself to be drawn into certain social allegiances to the exclusion of others. In Murrayfield, in particular, there was a group of outgoing girls who constantly demanded my attention. While this led to a good relationship with the girls in question, there was always the possibility that less gregarious children might be discouraged from approaching me. This is where my role as classroom assistant was extremely useful. I often took reading groups or led selected children in arts and crafts type activities in the classroom. I therefore gained exposure to all of the children in the class and was able to draw on these shared experiences when interacting with them in the playground.

2.2.2. Technology and fieldwork design

Choice of recording equipment is a crucial part of the data collection process. In this study, audio data was collected using radio-microphones. Year 4/5 children from both schools participated in the study by wearing the radio-microphone for half a day. The transmitter and lapel microphone were given to the child either first thing in the morning or at lunch time, and their interactions were recorded for a period of between 2 to 3 hours. The children were very excited about the radio-microphone; I tried to give each of them the opportunity to wear it, provided that they had a consent form signed by their parents (Section 2.2.3). In the end, I collected over 75 hours of data and analysed 50 hours of this data for the thesis. The sound files that were used for the analysis were selected before I had listened to any of the recordings. The selection was based on an assessment of the likelihood that the microphone would have picked up a wide range of interactions. For example, if a recording was made when there were lots of tests in the classroom, and hence not much talk, it was not included. I transcribed 25 hours of the data in full using the

transcription software *Transcriber* (Boudahmane et al.). With the remaining 25 hours, only those sections that were relevant to the analysis (i.e. that included examples of the linguistic features under investigation) were transcribed. The sound files used for analysis were created by 6 boys and 6 girls from each school who wore the radio-microphone. The voices of other children were captured as they interacted with the person wearing the radio-microphone, but only those children who had a signed consent form were included in the analysis. Overall, the analysis includes contributions from 15 Ironstone Primary pupils and 13 Murrayfield Primary pupils.

Maybin (2006) used radio-microphones in her study of the talk of 10-12 year old school children. She discusses her experience of researching children's talk across the school day in detail. In a note to Chapter 1, for example, she describes the advantages of using radio microphones: '[t]he use of a radio microphone was vital for capturing spontaneous talk, and for getting around what the sociolinguist William Labov calls the observer's paradox' (Maybin 2006:190). There has been a longstanding anxiety within sociolinguistics about the 'Observer's Paradox': 'the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain these data by systematic observation' (Labov 1972a:209). At the heart of the Observer's Paradox is the notion of the 'vernacular'. In Labovian sociolinguistics, the vernacular is the style in which minimum attention is paid to speech. Labov regards the vernacular as the most systematic speech style and hence the one which is of greatest interest to the linguist. Various techniques have been devised to reach past the Observer's Paradox 'to the structure that exists independently of the analyst' (Labov 1972a:62). From this positivist perspective, interaction between researcher

and researched is viewed as a source of potential contamination (Cameron et al. 1993:86). If we accept the legitimacy of this claim, data collected via ethnographic practices becomes problematic because, by its very nature, this data is *not* independent of the analyst. In line with Cameron et al., however, I would challenge the anxiety associated with the observer's paradox on the following basis:

If all human behaviour is social behaviour, then interaction between researcher and researched does not produce some anomalous form of communication peculiar to the research situation and misleading as to the nature of 'reality'. Rather such interaction instantiates *normal* communication in one of its forms.

(Cameron et al. 1993:87)

The goal of this study is to examine how language interacts with social factors in a dynamic two-way process. Interaction between researcher and researched is one particular instance of a constructed social reality, and hence it is as valid as any other form of speech. In Chapter 4, for example, I examine the types of directives that the children used with me (i.e. the researcher) in comparison with other adults in the school setting. This analysis reveals something interesting about the way that the children viewed my role in the community of practice and enhances our understanding of how they use language generally to construct their own and others' identities in interaction. Interaction between researcher and researched reflects only a small part of an informant's linguistic repertoire, however (as Rickford (1993) points out). Such data in my study, for example, could not be used to investigate how children behave linguistically when they are not in the presence of adults, nor how they behave within their own families. The benefit of the radio-microphone, then, is that it can capture a wide range of different interactions and hence a bigger picture of the participants' stylistic repertoire. Rampton (2004:6), who has made extensive use of radio-microphones for recording adolescents in the school setting, comments

that this technique ‘produces a very vivid picture of the very different experiences that individuals draw from a single event like a lesson’. In my data, for example, the radio-microphone was able to record the official teacher-pupil dialogue of whole-class teaching, while simultaneously capturing the hushed side-comments that the child wearing the microphone might make in response to this official dialogue.

The radio-microphone enabled the children to move around freely in recording sessions. I had to be nearby (at a distance where the receiver was still picking up the transmission) but did not have to be involved in the children’s conversations and could be out of sight (e.g. in a classroom while the children were in the playground). There were moments when the children were very clearly conscious of the radio-microphone, as for example, when they acted out the role of an ‘undercover cop’ reporting their movements ‘back to base’, burped the alphabet directly into the microphone, or used it to get my attention when I was not in the immediate vicinity. Such activities usually occurred in the first few minutes after a child had been given the radio-microphone or when a student from another year-group noticed the microphone and asked questions about it. Both situations occurred less frequently as the fieldwork progressed. A number of researchers (e.g. Milroy 1987a:89) have commented how participants tend to forget about the microphone. Overall, the children simply got on with their daily business.

A further advantage of data collected with radio-microphones is that it facilitates the study of ‘non-traditional’ linguistic variables. Labov (1972a:8) writes that the most useful variables for linguistic investigation are those which occur frequently. Phonological variables certainly occur with greater frequency than morphological and syntactic ones, particularly in a limited context such as the sociolinguistic interview, and hence tend to be the focus of attention in studies of linguistic

variation. Using radio-microphones to record participants yields an abundance of data for analysis and, therefore, makes the investigation of less frequently occurring linguistic features more feasible. Moreover, recordings made by radio-microphones can cover a wide range of speaking contexts, which further extends the range of features that can be studied. It would be practically impossible, for example, to study directives using conventional interview data because an interviewee is unlikely to issue requests or commands to their interviewer. If there were others present in the interview (e.g. in a group recording session), there would perhaps be an increased chance of occurrence, but it is unlikely that such data would yield sufficient examples for a meaningful analysis. Sociolinguists such as Eckert (2000; 2002; 2008) have emphasised the need to explore a range of linguistic features in the investigation of style. Radio-microphones can assist in this endeavour because they record a wide range of interactions.

The abundance of data produced by radio-microphone recordings requires of the researcher considerable time and effort in transcription and analysis. Such a method could be considered wasteful and extravagant. From a more optimistic perspective, however, the ‘extensive listening’ that is involved in transcription and analysis may be seen as ‘a process of ‘mediated’, repeated and repeatable, ethnographic observation’ which has the potential to yield ‘contrastive insights’ (Rampton 2006:32):

‘Contrastive insights’ [Hymes 1996] involve the apprehension of a disparity between the claims that prevailing discourses make about social life, and what you can see, hear and experience in social life as it actually seems to happen, and simply because it is not done as often as it might be in social and educational research, ‘trawling’ with radio-microphones can be an abundant source of such insights.

(Rampton 2006:32)

Rampton (2006:33) writes that the gap between official representations of classroom interaction and what he actually heard in his radio-microphone recordings was one of the 'contrastive insights' that motivated his analysis. Similarly, one of the 'contrastive insights' that influences this thesis is the difference between prevailing stereotypes about working-class children (as being less articulate or less mature than their middle-class counterparts or as having limited linguistic repertoires) and the creative use of language that was in evidence in the radio-microphone recordings of the Ironstone Primary participants.

The obvious disadvantage of using radio-microphones is that visual information is lost and this can make identification of the speaker difficult. This problem is compounded by the fact that recordings were unplanned (and therefore participants in the interaction were not known in advance). It was usually clear when the recorded voice was that of the child who was wearing the microphone, but when several other voices joined into a conversation, transcription became difficult. Voices that I was unable to identify were marked as 'Anon' in transcriptions and were not included in the analysis. A second disadvantage is that important contextual information that might be required for a full understanding of an utterance could be lost in spontaneous radio-microphone recordings. I was present in school during the recordings, however, and had the opportunity to make observations and take notes on speakers and relevant contextual factors.

There were also unforeseen (and unforeseeable) hazards to using a radio-microphone. A problem arose when I first used the radio-microphone at Murrayfield Primary, for example. Most of the children were in a school assembly but the teacher had allowed me to keep a group of girls back from the assembly to video-record a group discussion. When we had finished the discussion, I showed the girls

the radio-microphone and we began to experiment with it. Each of the girls took turns to wear the microphone. We made recordings as they moved around the classroom and then listened back to them. Unbeknown to us, however, the frequency that my radio-microphone was set to was the same as the frequency for the hand-held radio-microphone that the head teacher was using in assembly. The recordings that we were making with the radio-microphone were therefore broadcast through the speakers in the school hall to the assembled teachers and pupils. I was obviously extremely embarrassed about this and went to apologise to the head teacher at the first available opportunity. He did not seem to mind at all, however, telling me that the incident had enabled him to give the children a lesson on the workings of radio-microphones. He may not have been so charitable to a researcher who had been present in his school for only a few days/weeks and who was there for research purposes only – another reason why my role as classroom assistant was invaluable.

2.2.3. Ethical issues

This project was reviewed and cleared by the office of the Dean for Research in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Leeds. Before I began making any visits to school, I was CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checked; this is standard procedure for anyone fulfilling a role within a school which involves unsupervised access to children. The fieldwork itself was undertaken in line with the recommendations for good practice provided by BAAL (British Association for Applied Linguistics) (Rampton et al. 1994). Pupil and teacher participation in recordings was entirely voluntary. The nature and purpose of the project was explained to participants orally and on an information sheet that was given to the children's parents. Teachers and pupils alike expressed a positive attitude towards the project, and the children were keen to be involved. This enthusiasm accords with widespread experience that, in

many cultures, people like participating in linguistic research. Because the children were under sixteen, it was necessary to obtain the consent of parents or other adults acting in loco parentis. A consent form was sent to the parents or guardians of all potential participants (Appendix 1). The form gave an overview of the study and provided my contact details so that parents could get in touch with me to voice any concerns or queries they might have (though none did). Parents, teachers and pupils did, of course, have the opportunity to speak to me directly about the project during my weekly visits to school. The children were generally happy for the full range of their interactions to be recorded. The radio-microphone transmitters had a mute button, though, that the children controlled. Children wearing the transmitters therefore had the option to stop the recording at any time. I was visible in the vicinity and on hand to address any issues or concerns that might arise.

Research typically 'produces or intensifies an unequal relationship between investigator and informants' (Cameron et al. 1993:81). The ethical implications of this were intensified in my study because of the very asymmetrical relationship that already exists between children and adults. A number of measures were taken to ensure that any adverse effects of the uneven power relationship were mitigated (most of which have already been described): participation in the study was entirely voluntary and children were not under any pressure to take part; the children had the option to withdraw from the study at any time; the nature of the project was explained to the children and their parents; informed consent was obtained. Further, my research was conducted entirely in the school, a context that was very familiar to all of the informants. The participants were likely to feel more confident and in control in this situation than, for example, in an interview context in unfamiliar surroundings. It is not enough to simply follow standard procedures, however;

ethical considerations must be borne in mind throughout every stage of the fieldwork. The children who participated in the study viewed me primarily as a classroom helper, someone whom they knew and trusted. Such trust can have the effect of blurring the boundaries between overt and covert observation (Milroy 1987a:89-90). I therefore treated the information I received with a great deal of care (and will continue to do to so). The identity of all participants will remain confidential and the raw data will be kept securely and be available only to me.

Becker (1993:96) agrees that it is wise to be concerned about power differentials between researchers and subjects, but argues that it is unwise to assume that the differential is always in favour of the researcher: '[t]he part of the process the researcher controls is typically of little importance to the subject, whereas the part the subject controls may be of great importance to the researcher'. Cameron et al. (1993:89) agree that 'researchers are not always powerful in an unqualified way'. In my study, for example, I was heavily reliant on both teachers and pupils. The most obvious realisation of this is that without their full cooperation I would have been unable to conduct any research at all in this context. On a more subtle level, whenever I entered the staffroom, a classroom or the playground, I relied on teachers or pupils to include me in their groups. On the rare occasions that they did not, I remained an outsider in a socially precarious position.

As well as adhering to the ethical model outlined above, many social researchers feel a desire to help their informants. This places the researcher in the position of an advocate (Cameron et al. 1993). Researchers who work within the advocacy framework use the findings of their research to benefit the community in some way. This may involve validating the speech patterns of the community and providing research findings to informants and community members. Picking up on Cameron et

al.'s discussion of advocacy, Rickford (1993:130) states that we have to accept that the community might not care about the linguists' research findings but that 'THEY might be willing to empower or allow US to carry out our research in return for services which THEY need'. By volunteering as a helper at Murrayfield and Ironstone Primary, I was able to give these schools a service which was useful to them. In this way, I could give something back to the communities that acted as my research sites. My research can also be seen as validating the language of the children who took part in this study. In particular, the analysis of the speech of the Ironstone Primary participants counters some of the claims made about impoverished language use in working-class children.

Chapter 3 – Pronouns in Teesside

3.1 Introduction

In their treatment of personal pronouns, grammars usually present a table which differentiates the pronouns of English according to person and case. Table 3.1 represents a prototypical example.

Table 3.1: Prototypical pronoun paradigm (standard English) adapted from Wales (1996:13)

	Personal Pronouns		Possessive Pronouns	
	Subjective	Objective	Determiner	Nominal
1sg	I	me	my	mine
1pl	we	us	our	ours
2sg	you	you	your	yours
2pl	you	you	your	yours
3sg m	he	him	his	his
3sg f	she	her	her	hers
3sg n	it	it	its	its
3pl	they	them	their	theirs

According to such tables, for instance, the standard form for the first person possessive singular, determiner function (hereafter ‘possessive singular’), is ‘my’. As Wales (1996:19) points out, however, such tables belie the diversity that exists throughout the pronoun systems in use across the English speaking world. Following calls from Wales (1996:197-198) that further research on pronouns should take into account non-standard varieties, this thesis aims to explore the diverse range of pronominal choices made by children in Teesside. This chapter will examine two salient pronominal variants: possessive ‘me’ (i.e. the use of ‘me’ for the first person possessive singular) and singular ‘us’ (i.e. the use of ‘us’ for the first person objective singular).

Trudgill and Chambers (1991:7) comment that ‘English dialects demonstrate a considerable amount of variation in their pronominal systems, in form, function and usage’. They consider the ‘standard’ English paradigm and then discuss 8 significant differences between this system and ‘non-standard’ varieties. Possessive ‘me’ and singular ‘us’ emerge in first and second place on this list. Trudgill and Chambers (1991:7) write that possessive ‘me’ (as in *I’ve lost me bike*) is ‘very common in many parts of Britain, and occurs even in colloquial Standard English speech’. Singular ‘us’ (as in *Give us a kiss*) is also felt to be ‘common in colloquial Standard English speech in certain locations’, but ‘in certain regions ... notably the north-east of England, *us* has a much wider function as singular object pronoun (e.g. *He hit us in the face*)’ (Trudgill and Chambers 1991:7).

This brief overview raises a number of questions. The lack of clarity in references like ‘many parts’ and ‘certain regions’ reflects the fact that there has been a lack of empirical work on pronouns in English dialects, and hence accounts such as this one are frustratingly vague (which parts? how widespread? which regions?). Further, Trudgill and Chambers state that both possessive ‘me’ and singular ‘us’ occur in ‘colloquial Standard English speech’, but they do not explain what they mean by ‘colloquial Standard English’, nor do they specify how it is different from ‘non-standard’ English. Hughes et al. (2005:24) also use the term ‘colloquial’ and write that it can sometimes be difficult to distinguish between features of ‘colloquial style’ and features of ‘non-standard dialect’. One of the examples they give is the use of ‘us’ for the first person singular object pronoun (e.g. *Give us a kiss*).

For Beal (1993), the general pattern of pronouns used in the north-east varieties of Tyneside and Northumbria is so unique that it is necessary to set it out in a table of its own (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Tyneside pronominal system (Beal 1993:205)

	Subject		Object		Possessive	
	Standard	Tyneside	Standard	Tyneside	Standard	Tyneside
1sg	I	I	me	us	my	me
1pl	we	us	us	we	our	wor
2sg	you	ye	you	you	your	you
2pl	you	yous	you	yous/yees	your	your
3sg m	he	he	him	him	his	his
3sg f	she	she	her	her	her	her
3sg n	it	it	it	it	its	its
3pl	they	they	them	them	their	their

In Beal's table, 'us' appears as the paradigmatic Tyneside alternative to standard 'me' for the first person objective singular, and 'me' seems to be the form used in Tyneside for the first person possessive singular in opposition to standard 'my'. Beal does, however, caution the reader that this representation is an idealisation: 'the reader is unlikely to encounter anybody who uses all of these features all of the time' (Beal 1993:191). This is a crucial point, and one that helps us to make sense of the ambiguities and uncertainties surrounding Trudgill and Chambers' (1991) and Hughes et al.'s (2005) use of terms such as 'colloquial'. Descriptions of non-standard grammars may maintain a spurious paradigmatic distinction between 'standard' and 'non-standard' pronominal systems. 'Colloquial' is a term which falls awkwardly between the two paradigms: how do we account for the speaker who occasionally uses phrases such as *Give us a kiss?* I adopt a different approach. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that speakers in Teesside make choices within a *single* paradigm that incorporates standard as well as non-standard community-specific pronouns. What we find in Teesside is that all of the standard options described in Table 3.1 exist, but additional options are available. Forms such as

singular ‘us’ and possessive ‘me’ supplement, rather than replace, those that exist in the standard pronoun paradigm. Further, variation within the Teesside system does not simply reflect regional and social distinctions; different pronominal choices index social and pragmatic meanings. My data happens to be from Teesside, but it is, of course, possible that the pattern I describe for Teesside is found more widely. This would account for the difficulties faced by those attempting to discuss the pronouns of regional dialects within a ‘standard’ versus ‘non-standard’ paradigmatic model.

3.2 Objective forms

Table 3.3 shows the variants used by speakers in both schools for the first person objective singular. Unlike the prototypical tables presented in English grammars, this analysis gives the pronunciation variants.

Table 3.3: First person objective singular

	Ironstone				Murrayfield			
	N		%		N		%	
mi	285	0	83.1%		300	0	96.2%	
us/z	10	0	2.9%	} 16.9%	1	0	0.3%	} 3.8%
əs/z	24	(2)	7.0%		5	(4)	1.6%	
(u)'s*	24	(1)	7.0%		6	(1)	1.9%	
	343				312			

* Represents contracted forms of ‘us’ realised as /s/ in utterances such as *Let’s have a look*
 NB: numbers in parentheses indicate forms in which there was some doubt as to the classification.

As we might expect, standard ‘me’ ([mi]) is the most common variant of the objective singular for speakers in both schools. The alternative to standard ‘me’ is singular ‘us’ (I here include all realisations of ‘us’: [ʊs], [ʊz], [əs], [əz], [s], [z]).

Singular 'us' was used in only 3.8% of all cases of the variable at Murrayfield Primary but was used much more frequently at Ironstone Primary, accounting for 16.9% of all tokens of the objective singular. Section 3.2.1 considers the ways in which singular 'us' patterned in the Teesside data and situates its usage in a wider historical and geographical context.

3.2.1 Singular 'us'

I noted earlier that Hughes et al. (2005:24) identified singular 'us' as one of those features that can be variably identified either as part of 'colloquial style' or else as a feature of 'non-standard dialect'. Hughes et al. go on to write in more detail about this feature:

A number of interesting regional and social differences concerning the personal pronouns can be noted. These include the use in north-eastern England and in Scotland of *us* as a first person singular object pronoun, as in *He deliberately tripped us as I was walking down the corridor*. This phenomenon is also commonly found in the colloquial speech of many other parts of Britain, but in these places it is confined to a limited number of locutions, such as *Do us a favour* and *Give us a kiss*. Outside Scotland and north-eastern England, *us* (= *me*) is otherwise confined to indirect object status.

(Hughes et al. 2005:30)

Like Hughes et al., Beal (2004:117) also singles out the north-east region in her discussion of how this linguistic feature patterns in varieties of northern English. She notes that singular 'us' is used as both direct and indirect object in the north-east but that 'examples from Bolton and West Yorkshire show it only as indirect object'. Within *my* north-east data, however, singular 'us' only occurs as indirect object, perhaps reflecting the more southerly location of Teesside within the north-east. Moreover, all 70 examples of singular 'us' in the data are part of imperative clauses (e.g. *Pass us that book*, *Give us it*). Type of grammatical construction therefore

appears to be a linguistic constraint on this variant of the objective singular. Further work is required to ascertain whether or not this constraint operates outside of the two communities of practice which form the focus of this study. My data cannot claim to be representative of the north-east as a whole or even of Teesside; I have not collected data from adults in the target communities, for example. Joan Beal (personal communication) found singular 'us' in non-imperative contexts in the Newcastle Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English (NECTE) and noted that this feature was particularly common in narratives. This raises the question: is the difference between the two data sets regional, related to genre, or due perhaps to change in progress or, even, age-grading? It is not possible to answer these questions within the current study, but this is certainly an interesting avenue for further research. Even if there is no strict linguistic constraint, an imperative might *predispose* the occurrence of singular 'us'. This idea will be explored further in Chapter 4.

The use of 'us' for the first person objective singular is not restricted to the north of England and Scotland. It is found elsewhere in the British Isles (e.g. in the south-east of England (Anderwald 2004)) and, indeed, elsewhere in the English speaking world (e.g. Australia (Pawley 2004)). This particular usage is so pervasive that it is referred to within the *Cambridge Grammar of English*, which states that 'Us is sometimes used very informally to mean *me*' (Carter and McCarthy 2006:382). This variant of the objective singular has also been noted historically: the *Survey of English Dialects* shows extensive use of "me" expressed by us' (Upton et al. 1994:486); Wright's *The English Dialect Grammar* states that '[i]n most dialects of Sc.[otland] Irel.[and] and Eng.[land] us is used for the indirect object *me*, as *give us a few; send us some of them*' (Wright 1905b:271); *The English Dialect Dictionary*

further states that ‘us’ could be used as an ‘[u]nemph.[atic] form of the *acc.[usative] sing.[ular] me*’ (Wright 1905a:332). This idea that *us* represents an ‘unemphatic’ form of the objective singular is echoed in *The Concise Scots Dictionary* which states that ‘us’ is used ‘as non-emphatic substitute for *me*’ (Robinson 1985:755).

Overall, the use of ‘us’ for the objective singular tends to be associated with colloquial or dialectal usage, and as such, it sits outside of the mainstream standard English pronoun paradigm. As with many non-standard (or very informal) features, we might expect the frequency of use of singular ‘us’ to pattern with social variables such as socioeconomic class. This expectation is indeed borne out by the data in my study (Table 3.3). But neither social group uses this form categorically or even with a particularly high frequency: 83.0% of the time, the students at Ironstone Primary use ‘me’ in objective singular position. I noted earlier that singular ‘us’ may be subject to internal linguistic constraints. Such constraints, if they exist, would restrict the use of this feature. We might also hypothesise that this particular variant of the objective singular fulfils a particular social and/or pragmatic function and is therefore used discriminately by speakers (i.e. the occasions where ‘us’ *is* used represent a choice on the part of the speaker). Chapter 4 examines the meaning and use of singular ‘us’ in detail and compares its role within imperatives to other forms of directives. The remainder of this chapter will concentrate on an analysis of the forms used by the children for the first person possessive singular.

3.3 Possessive forms

Table 3.4 shows the variants used by speakers in both schools for the possessive singular. Again, this analysis gives the pronunciation variants.

Table 3.4: First person possessive singular

	Ironstone			Murrayfield		
	N		%	N		%
maɪ	98	(1)	22.9%	60	0	24.4%
ma	265	(1)	61.9%	168	(1)	68.3%
mi	30	0	7.0%	3	0	1.2%
mə	29	0	6.8%	15	0	6.1%
auə	6	0	1.4%	0	0	0.0%
	428			246		

NB: numbers in parentheses indicate forms in which there was some doubt as to the classification.

There is one form that I have included in Table 3.4 which should perhaps be dealt with separately. In the Ironstone Primary data there were 6 occurrences of ‘our’ [auə] where standard English would have ‘my’. The *English Dialect Grammar* (Wright 1905b:275) cites this form as occurring throughout England ‘to denote that the person spoken of belongs respectively to the family of the speaker’. It was used in this way in Ironstone Primary: *I know, our mam is as well* (Joanne); *Our Emma’s [Clare’s sister] got some but they’re too small for her so she’s give¹ them to me* (Clare); *My mam throws it in the bin. (1.7 seconds) Our mam just goes like that* (Aaron). While ‘our’ is used with singular reference within the immediate speaking context, there is a sense in which it could refer collectively to siblings who are not present and, therefore, is in some sense plural. This ‘familial’ possessive seems to be a special case, distinct both from the singular and plural forms of the possessive. The plural possessive ‘our’ is variously pronounced by the children in this study as [ɑ:]

¹ This is a non-standard form of the past participle that is common in Teesside.

or [aʊə], but the familial possessive only occurs as [aʊə].² Although this form is ‘common throughout the North’ (Beal 2004:130), there is no evidence of its usage in Murrayfield Primary. Within the Ironstone Primary community of practice, the familial possessive is not restricted to the children. One of the teaching assistants, Mrs Moon, for example, is recorded saying *She’s dead funny, our Cindy*, when referring to her two-year-old niece. Mrs Moon also uses a non-standard intensifier ‘dead’ and her utterance displays right dislocation (see Chapter 5). This example shows that it is not safe to assume that teachers and other adults within the school-based community of practice always provide a ‘standard model’. Examples like this one perhaps go some way to ‘demythologizing’ (Cameron 1990) the perception of teachers as being guardians and enforcers of standard English. Because it is not clear whether the familial possessive is singular or plural, [aʊə] will be excluded from the remainder of the analysis.

The most popular variant of the possessive singular in each school is the phonologically reduced form [ma]. Grammatical words are usually pronounced in a reduced form in conversational speech (Wales 1996:13; Ladefoged 2005:70). The majority of the data in this study consists of the children’s casual conversation; it is therefore unsurprising that [ma] is the preferred form. The full form of the pronoun [maɪ] is the second most frequently occurring variant in both schools, being used around 20% of the time. This figure seems high given the point just made about

² Although in a recent spoof of ‘reality’ TV shows such as *Pop Idol* and *X-Factor* written by British comedian Peter Kay, one of the contestants was a teenager from Newcastle whose stage name was ‘R [ɑ:] Wayne’. His name was both an allusion to popstar ‘R Kelly’ and a parody of the way Wayne’s family consistently referred to him as ‘our [ɑ:] Wayne’. The use of the familial possessive is apparently associated in public consciousness with the north-east region, where the pronunciation is not restricted to [aʊə], though as I will show in Section 3.4, folk-linguistic beliefs are not necessarily grounded in sociolinguistic reality.

phonological reduction of grammatical words in conversation. Table 3.5, which differentiates the children's pronoun choice according to phonological environment, provides a partial explanation for the higher than expected frequency of [maɪ].

Table 3.5: Pronoun choice according to following phonological context

	Ironstone Primary			Murrayfield Primary		
	V	C	Total	V	C	Total
maɪ	37	56	93	12	48	60
ma	3	254	257	4	160	164
mi	19	8	27	2	1	3
mə	0	29	29	0	15	15
auə	3	3	6	0	0	0
Total	62	350	412*	18	224	242*

* These totals are different from Table 3.4 because examples which could not be categorised as preceding either a vowel (V) or a consonant (C) (e.g. because the utterance was incomplete: *Where's my-*) were excluded from the analysis. This accounted for 16 tokens in Ironstone Primary (5 [maɪ], 8 [ma], 3 [mi]) and 5 tokens in Murrayfield Primary (1 [maɪ], 4 [ma]).

Table 3.5 shows that where the initial segment of the following noun was a consonant (C), the preferred variant in both schools was [ma]; where the initial segment of the following noun was a vowel (V), the preferred variant was [maɪ]. Overwhelmingly it seems that [ma] was only a valid option for the children before a consonant. There were 7 exceptions, however. In Ironstone Primary, 2 of these exceptions occurred because there was a pause between the pronoun and the following noun: *My: [ma:] (.) elastic band; My [ma] (.) uncle*. In these examples, the phonological environment was effectively neutralised by the pause. In the third Ironstone Primary example, and in all four exceptions in the Murrayfield data, the speaker used a glottal stop as a link between the pronoun and the initial vowel of the following noun. Apart from these special circumstances, the use of [ma] was

restricted to pre-consonantal position. In pre-vocalic position, the speaker had two choices: [maɪ] and [mi]. The use of [mi] will be dealt with separately below.

The phonological tendency which establishes a preference for [maɪ] over [ma] before a vowel helps to explain why the full form occurred relatively frequently in the data despite the competing preference for phonological reduction of grammatical words in connected speech. But [maɪ] also occurred in pre-consonantal position. When these examples were investigated in isolation, it became clear that other factors, in addition to phonological conditioning, were involved. Overall, it seems that the children's use of [maɪ] before a consonant was motivated by three main factors. The pronoun was either:

- 1) uttered as part of a formal activity like reading or answering the teacher's questions;
- 2) uttered as part of a performance (e.g. singing or imitation);
- 3) stressed.

I will take each of these factors in turn.

The radio-microphone recorded reading groups in which the children read aloud to each other and/or to their teacher, as well as elements of whole-class teaching in which the children responded out loud to the teacher's questions. There were also examples in which the children read to themselves from a textbook or from their own work. In each of these situations, the children produced slow, careful, considered utterances in which the full form of the possessive singular [maɪ] was used. This pattern correlates with the classic variationist finding that speakers tend to produce forms that are less vernacular and colloquial when articulating written texts or when paying close attention to speech. 23 (out of 48) occurrences of [maɪ] before

a consonant at Murrayfield Primary and 11 (out of 56) at Ironstone Primary can be accounted for in this way.

A further 13 examples from Ironstone Primary and 9 from Murrayfield Primary fall under the heading of ‘performance’. For instance, the children sometimes sang their utterances into the microphone in the manner of a musical: *Hi Miss Julia Snell. Hi Miss Julia Snell. I can change my voice* (Harry, Ironstone Primary); *I was ali:ve when my dog was ali:ve. He die::d because of someone else. He die:d. Help me. He died. He died. He: die:::d. Help me. He died when I was (.) only nine mo:nths o:::ld.* (Charlotte, Ironstone Primary); *I’m having my dinner, my dinner, my dinner, my dinner* (Tara, Murrayfield Primary). Such examples were slightly more common (and often more elaborate) in Ironstone Primary than in Murrayfield Primary. The children in the upper juniors at Ironstone Primary are involved in a musical production every year. At the end of Year 4 (July 2007), the production was *My Fair Lady*, and songs and melodies from this musical often spilled over into the children’s interactions both inside and outside of the classroom. Perhaps the children’s experience of this kind of performance encouraged their use of a musical style within their own utterances. The full form of the possessive singular was also evident in another kind of performance, one in which the children imitated a stereotypical persona. The two key points of reference in this respect were ‘posh’ and ‘American’. These ‘performances’ will be discussed in detail in Section 3.6 under the category of ‘stylisation’ (Rampton 1995, 2006; Coupland 2001b).

In the majority of the remaining examples of pre-consonantal [maɪ], the pronoun was stressed. Ladefoged (2006:243) writes that ‘[a] stressed syllable is pronounced with a greater amount of energy than an unstressed syllable and is more prominent in the flow of speech’. We might, therefore, expect the full form [maɪ] to be used in

preference to any of the other variants when the pronoun was stressed. This was not always the case, however. A full and detailed analysis of stress was outside of the scope of this thesis, but it was clear from the data that [ma] as well as [maɪ] could be used when stressed. This is demonstrated in Examples (1) to (4) below.

(1) [maɪ] stressed

(a) *Oh my God.* (Aaron, Ironstone Primary)

(b) *Kiss my butt.* (Ben, Murrayfield Primary)

(2) [maɪ] stressed, tonic stress

(a) Anonymous: *My wrists- my arms can fit round her wrists.*

Clare: *My hand'll fit.*

(Ironstone Primary)

(b) *My name's not William you see, it's Henry.* (Henry, Murrayfield Primary)

(3) [ma] stressed

(a) *Can I borrow my rubber?* (Gemma, Ironstone Primary)

(b) *My sister can write Emma and Jim.* (Laura, Murrayfield Primary)

(4) [ma] stressed, tonic stress

(a) *It's not my rubber (.) it's yours hah'* (Danielle, Ironstone Primary-

(b) *It's my go at writing.* (Daniel, Murrayfield Primary)

In Examples (2) and (4), the pronouns are not only stressed, they have tonic stress. Syllables with tonic stress are especially prominent because the stress accompanies a peak in intonation (Ladefoged 2006:113). What Ladefoged refers to as the 'tonic' stress/syllable has also been called 'nuclear' stress (e.g. by Quirk et al. 1985) or

'accented' stress (e.g. by Kreidler 2004). The tonic syllable is the most prominent stressed syllable in the tone unit. Tonic stress generally falls on the last stressed syllable of the last content word. When it falls on an earlier content word or on any function word, we have a marked occurrence of tonic stress (or 'accent') (Kreidler 2004). Often this use of tonic stress is contrastive, as in Examples (2a), (4a) and (4b). Notice that in Example (4a) the contrast is evident in the grammar of the utterance as well as in the prosody: *my rubber* is explicitly contrasted with *yours*. In Example (4b), on the other hand, the contrast is implied. The emphasis on 'my' makes this pronoun stand out in contrast to some other noun or pronoun that could have filled the same slot. In this case, the possibilities that have been excluded depend on the context. Daniel makes this statement to his partner Ben when they are working together on an IT project. Ben has been doing all of the typing but Daniel thinks that it is *his* turn to have a go. The stressed 'my' in Daniel's utterance therefore contrasts with an implied 'your' (i.e. 'It's my go, not yours').

While [maɪ] and [ma] could occur in stressed or unstressed position in the data, [mə] and [mi] were always unstressed. [mə] represents the most reduced form of the pronoun and, in line with [ma], occurred only before consonants. This variant occurred relatively infrequently in the data and the difference in the use of this form between the two schools was minimal (Ironstone 6.8%; Murrayfield 6.1%). The difference between the two schools in terms of their use of [mi], however, was much greater (Ironstone 7.0%; Murrayfield 1.2%). [mi] was used in both pre-vocalic and pre-consonantal position, but as Table 3.5 shows, it occurred more often before a vowel than would be predicted given the total ratio of vowels to consonants in the data. Table 3.5 shows that in the Ironstone Primary data 62 of the 412 tokens of the possessive singular were prevocalic, that is, 15.0% of the tokens occurred before a

vowel. In relation to the [mi] variant, however, 19 of the 27 tokens (i.e. 70.3%) occurred before a vowel. There does, therefore, seem to be a phonological tendency for this variant to be used in pre-vocalic position. We could also note, however, that in 17 of the 19 occurrences of prevocalic [mi] at Ironstone Primary, the accompanying noun referred either to body parts (e.g. *arm*, *hands* [ands]) or kinship terms (e.g. *aunty*, *uncle*). Taking their cue from the typological literature on (in)alienability effects,³ Hollmann and Siewierska (2007) demonstrate that phonological reduction is more frequent in the realisation of the possessive singular in the Lancashire dialect in constructions where the noun is a kinship or body-part term than where it is not. If [mi] is considered to be a phonologically reduced form of [mai] (this moot point will be discussed in Section 3.3.1), then (in)alienability effects, rather than (or in combination with) phonological conditioning, could account for the children's use of [mi]. It should be noted, though, that kinship terms and body parts also occurred regularly in the data with other reduced forms of the possessive singular as well as with the full form [mai]. For example, in the Ironstone Primary data, there were 26 occurrences of kinship terms/body parts with [mai], 79 with [ma], and 14 with [mə]. With decontextualised quantitative analysis, the data can be cut in a number of different ways en route to quite different interpretations. And, of course, this is particularly dangerous in situations like this one, where there are so few examples of possessive 'me' to work with. In Section 3.5, therefore, the children's use of [mi] for the possessive singular will be examined qualitatively in order to shed greater light on the factors that influence the speaker's choice of this

³ This literature shows that there is a crosslinguistic tendency for person forms in inalienable possession to be phonologically reduced relative to those found in alienable possession (Hollman & Siewierska 2007:412). Inalienable possession is said to involve a stable relation, over which possessors have little or no control. Inalienable nouns include body parts, kinship terms, and part-whole relations (Hollman & Siewierska 2007:410).

variant. I will argue that phonological tendencies, such as the preference for [mi] to be used (rather than [ma]) before a vowel, link up with other factors such as stylisation, performance and identity work.

The use of [mi] for the possessive singular will be the main focus of this chapter. The status and distribution of this variant will be discussed in Section 3.3.1 and its social and pragmatic functions will be explored in Section 3.5.

3.3.1 Possessive ‘me’

Possessive ‘me’ is widespread throughout the British Isles. *A Handbook of Varieties of English* (Kortmann et al. 2004), which attempts to provide a comprehensive account of the salient phonological and grammatical features of varieties of English around the world, finds possessive ‘me’ in all varieties of British English except Scottish English and Orkney/Shetland. Possessive ‘me’ is also found outside of the British Isles, being noted in around 20 of the 46 varieties of World English surveyed for this study (Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi 2004:1153).

Anderwald (2004) states that the use of ‘me’ for the first person possessive singular is well-attested in the south-east of England. A pilot study conducted by Anderwald using the *Freiburg Corpus of English Dialects* (FRED) suggests that possessive ‘me’ is, in fact, a very frequent feature, with 30% of possessive pronouns being realised as ‘me’ rather than ‘my’. Possessive ‘me’ occurs much less frequently in my recordings (7.0% at Ironstone, 1.2% at Murrayfied), though, clearly, no real comparison can be made between the two sets of data. The data in FRED consists of orthographically (re-)transcribed interviews collected during oral history projects. The speakers, who were born between 1890 and 1920, were recorded in the 1970s and 1980s (Kortmann 2003). Anderwald’s analysis is therefore based on evidence

from a different regional and age group to my own and was collected during an earlier period in time. Hollman and Siewierska (2007) re-examine interviews from the North West Sound Archive (NWSA) in their analysis of possessive constructions in the Lancashire dialect. Their results show that 42% of the 919 possessive pronouns in the corpus were realised as [mi]. Again, possessive 'me' is used much more frequently by the Lancashire speakers than by the children in my study. And, again, there is a difference in the age and regional group to which the informants belong. We might hypothesise, though, that there is something about the nature of the data in FRED and NWSA that is conducive to the use of [mi]. While my data includes long stretches of informal social interaction, both FRED and NWSA are based on interviews. Moreover, these interviews are of a very specific type. Most of the material included in FRED stems from oral history projects where informants have been interviewed to record their life memories. Similarly, the purpose of NWSA is to collect sound recordings relevant to life in the north-west of England. If possessive 'me' is felt to be a salient feature of local dialect and local identity, participants might be primed to use this particular variant in contexts which invite them to talk about the nature of life in that particular locality.

There are different ways to view the use of [mi] for the possessive singular. It could be seen as an extension of the objective form with 'me', as Anderwald (2004) puts it, 'doing double service both as the object form of the personal pronoun and as a possessive form'. I think it is unlikely, however, that the children in this study regard possessive [mi] and objective [mi] as the same word ('me'). The teacher at Ironstone Primary could not recall ever seeing 'my' represented in the children's writing as 'me'; this just is not an error that the children make. A project which investigated the accuracy of pupils' writing in GCSE English examinations found

that '[o]ver two-thirds of all scripts ... offered no examples of non-standard English constructions' (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 1999:19). It seems that users of English are able to separate salient features of their spoken dialect from the variety of English they use in writing (cf. Gupta 1989:36). There is little evidence to suggest, then, that those speakers who use [mi] for the possessive equate this form with objective 'me'.

Hollmann and Siewierska (2007:407) write that it is not clear whether 'the [possessive] form *me* is essentially the same form as the objective personal pronoun' in the speakers' grammars. They note that there would be some evidence for this hypothesis if 'us' was used as the plural form of the possessive, but this is the case for only one speaker in their corpus. In my data 'us' is never used as a possessive, although it *is* used as a possessive in parts of Yorkshire and the West Midlands (Wales 1996:167-168). As Wales (1996:167) suggests, then, the use of 'me' for the possessive could be grouped with this (and other) variants as further evidence of the objective/possessive neutralisation found in many varieties of English (including standard English where there is a formal overlap between the objective and possessive case in the third person feminine 'slot', *her*). From this point of view, [mi] is a non-standard variant of the possessive singular. From an alternative perspective, Anderwald (referring to work by Manfred Krug) suggests that:

it is plausible to regard *me* as a remnant of the Middle English *mi/my* which, as a very frequent and unstressed form, may not have undergone the Great Vowel Shift. Unstressed *mi* would thus have fallen together with a weakened form of the object pronoun *me* /mi/ < ME /me:/, resulting synchronically in this apparently merged form.

(Anderwald 2004:177)

Seen as a phonologically reduced form that just happens to have fallen together with the objective singular, [mi] is no different from other reduced forms such as [ma] or [mə], and therefore, what we have is an instance of informal standard speech, rather than non-standard usage (a feature of accent rather than morphology). But [mi] *is* treated differently from alternative realisations of the possessive singular. As Wales (1996:14) points out, the pronunciations [mə] and [ma] for ‘my’ are ‘widely used and tolerated in informal standard English’ but [mi] ‘is associated with dialect speech and even stigmatised’. The perception of possessive ‘me’ as a non-standard, stigmatised form might explain why this variant occurs so infrequently in Murrayfield Primary – the school set within a more privileged, affluent area – than Ironstone Primary. The distribution between the two schools mirrors the classic sociolinguistic finding that frequency of use of non-standard variants correlates with level of socioeconomic class. Regardless of its origin, then, I would suggest that [mi] is felt to be a special form of the possessive singular by linguists who represent it as part of non-standard pronoun paradigms, by teachers and others who proscribe its use, and by individuals who use, hear and comment on it on a daily basis.

3.4 Folk linguistic representations

As a native speaker of the Teesside dialect, possessive ‘me’ feels to me like a salient feature of the local dialect, but its status within this thesis as a significant form of the possessive singular is not based on my intuitions alone. Other Teessiders engage in metalinguistic discussions about it. For example, there was an interesting discussion between the teachers in the Ironstone Primary school staffroom about the use of both ‘our’ and ‘me’ for the first person possessive singular. One teacher commented that she disapproved of the children’s use of phrases like ‘our mam’. In fact, whenever a child used this form in conversation with her, her stock reply would

be: 'No, she's not *my* mam'. This teacher was clearly sensitive to the singular/plural distinction which is muddled by the use of 'our'. Another teacher, one of the younger, less established women, noted that she would not say 'our mam', she'd say 'me [mi] mam'. She later backtracks, however, stating that actually she would not say 'me' [mi], she'd say 'my' [maɪ]. This turnaround came after a more senior teacher expressed quite strong views about the use of 'me' for the possessive singular. This teacher clearly felt that possessive 'me' was a non-standard form of the possessive singular which should be avoided. Garrett et al. (1999:345) discuss the influence that teachers' judgements can have on their students:

With their gatekeeping function, teachers are a significant professional group of adults in the lives of young people. The formal and informal judgments they make about students include the social evaluation of linguistic style, even to the point where this can influence formal school assessment outcomes.

It is perhaps significant, then, that none of the occurrences of possessive 'me' (or singular 'us') were part of utterances addressed to teachers, though, as noted in Section 3.3, adults in the school environment do not necessarily always avoid non-standard forms in their conversations with the children. The fact that possessive 'me' was being discussed at all in the staffroom suggests that it was perceived as a salient feature of the local dialect, despite being a geographically widespread linguistic feature.

Features such as possessive 'me' and singular 'us' can also be found in literature produced by Teesside writers. Local poets include Andy Willoughby and John Miles Longden. Andy Willoughby comes from the Grangetown and Eston area of Middlesbrough where Ironstone Primary is located. In his collection, *Tough*, Willoughby (2005) uses possessive 'me' with kinship terms (e.g. *me mam, me*

sister) as well as with other nouns (e.g. *me music, me gift*). John Miles Longden was not a native of Teesside; he was born in London and moved to Middlesbrough as a child of 10. He spent much of his life there, however, and was ‘one of Teesside’s best-loved eccentrics’ (Croft 1995:7). A collection of his poems, *LPs & Singles*, was published posthumously by Mudfog, a publisher set up to support Teesside writers. Longden preferred to write in a ‘Northern English style’ (Longden 1995:13). Since he was heavily involved in the Teesside literary scene from the late 1960s to his death in 1993, we might expect this Northern style to be influenced by Teesside English. Longden used possessive ‘me’ categorically in his poetry: *me voice, me life, me eyes, me back, me enemy, me pension book, me mother, me life’s work* (Longden 1995). He also used the familial possessive ‘our’ in phrases such as *our lass, our brother*. Singular ‘us’ is more difficult to identify in poetry, since it is not always possible to decide whether the reference of the pronoun is singular or plural. The following examples, however, also from *LPs & Singles*, appear to qualify: *looks at me sketches, wants us to draw im some time; all me life this top specialist treats us free, e’s the authority, I’m is patient like, sorts us out, regler e’s the best, keeps us well; The firm giz us day release to regrind me previous degree, Giz five quid*. These examples also demonstrate another feature of Longden’s ‘Northern English style’: it is ‘free of the redundant letter H’ (Longden 1995:14). H-dropping is characteristic of the Teesside accent (and is evident in the data from this study). Like possessive ‘me’ and singular ‘us’, though, h-dropping is a geographically diffuse feature. It is perhaps worth noting, however, that h-dropping distinguishes the Teesside accent from its Tyneside neighbour (Beal 2008a:137-138).

Novels and other prose fiction set in Teesside make use of salient features of the Teesside dialect in their representation of character. Pat Barker’s (1982) *Union*

Street is set in 1970s Middlesbrough. Possessive ‘me’ is used almost categorically in the speech of the fictional characters throughout this novel, occurring before both vowels and consonants and with a variety of noun phrases: kinship terms (*me mam, me dad, me sister, me aunty, me granddad, me husband*); body parts (*me back, me stomach, me belly*); and generic noun phrases (*me jumper, me proper food, me bait, me scissors, me own money, me doubts, me life*). The full form of the pronoun ‘my’ is used sparingly and for stylistic effect. For example, when it is suggested to pregnant Joanne Wilson that her mother has a right to know the name of the baby’s father, Joanne replies: *She’s no right at all. Good God, she hasn’t told me who my father was yet* (Barker 1982:76). Elsewhere in the novel Joanna uses possessive ‘me’, but here, her use of ‘my’ suggests emphatic stress for contrast. In the following example, the matriarch of the street, Iris King, is involved in a heated argument with her pregnant teenage daughter. Iris, who elsewhere uses possessive ‘me’, uses ‘my’ for emphasis:

What about when it starts yelling and you’re up all night and you still have to turn out to work in the morning? Because don’t think your father’s going to keep it, my girl, he isn’t. And don’t run away with the idea I’m giving up my job to look after it because I’m bloody not. I’ve done my share.

(Barker 1982:203)

I noticed only one example of singular ‘us’ in the novel: *Give us time to get me stitches out and I’ll join you.*

Richard Milward is a young writer from Teesside whose debut novel, *Apples*, is set in Middlesbrough. The novel’s teenage characters use singular ‘us’ in a variety of contexts: *Can you pass us a mint, love? Can you pass us the Bella?; he used to babysit us; He pulled out a pack of MedusaHeads and passed us one; Abi just phoned us up; Can you pass us that?* (Milward 2007). In these examples, singular

'us' occurs as both direct and indirect object and is part of declarative as well as interrogative clauses. In my data, however, singular 'us' is used only as indirect object and is restricted to imperative clauses (Section 3.2.1). As Agha (2003:255) points out, literary depictions of speech do not necessarily 'represent the realities of social life'. Features such as singular 'us' and possessive 'me' appear in a wider range of grammatical contexts in literature than in actual usage, and are often depicted as being used far more frequently (even categorically) than in reality.

An interview with Richard Milward appeared in *The Times* in April 2007 (Betts 2007). The journalist represents Milward's speech in a relatively standard fashion. Despite commenting on the 'emphatic' nature of Milward's accent, there is no attempt to represent it using non-standard orthography. The journalist does, however, consistently represent the first person possessive singular pronoun as 'me': *All me writing in a way...; It was crazy when me Mam read it, That's what I love about me life*. The only other dialectal feature represented in Milward's speech is the second person plural 'yous': *I know something that yous don't*. This is another shibboleth of the Teesside dialect, which Milward uses frequently in the speech of his characters: *What youse up to?; See youse later, So youse going out tonight?* (Milward 2007). I have not examined the children's use of 'yous' for the second person plural as part of this study but it may be a feature that is worth investigating in the future. My data shows that the children use this form frequently (though not categorically), and it appears in a number of the examples presented in this thesis. A teacher from Murrayfield Primary, Mrs Young (who was originally from West Yorkshire), commented that 'yous' was a 'Teesside thing' and told the children that it was okay to use it in their speech but that they should not use it in their writing. Again, though, this form is not unique to Teesside; it occurs in a number of urban dialects

of British English (e.g. Liverpool, Newcastle) and in Irish English, where speakers are making a grammatical distinction (singular vs. plural) that they are currently unable to make in standard English. Varieties of US English have also developed a number of strategies to mark this difference: *y'all*,⁴ *youse*, *yinz*. Pittsburghers, for example, use *yinz* [jinz] (derived from *you'uns*) for the second person plural (Johnstone et al. 2006). Johnstone et al. report that while some Pittsburghers might suggest that theirs is the only USA community that uses [jinz], the form is probably more widespread. It seems that alternative pronominal forms are particularly significant features for dialect users, and locals may claim ownership of such forms despite them having a potentially widespread geographical distribution.

Speakers are perhaps more likely to identify pan-dialectal forms as being significant to their locale if their own dialect lacks a definite identity. Teesside is situated in between two regions, Yorkshire and Tyneside, which have strong local identities and easily identifiable dialects. As a result, there is a sense in which Teesside, and the variety of English spoken there, lacks a strong identity of its own. Llamas (e.g. 2001; 2007) has studied the connection between language and place identity in Middlesbrough. Beal (1993) writes that Tynesiders' pride in their local dialect is evident from the number of popular publications on and in 'Geordie' available in Newcastle bookshops. Beal (2000) surveys one such publication, *Larn Yersel Geordie*, along with a variety of local songs and newspaper cartoons, and identifies a repertoire of 'Geordie' features that have changed little since the 19th century. One such feature is the <oo> spelling to represent Geordie /u:/ (for RP /aʊ/) in words such as 'town' and 'brown'. This feature is now relatively rare in the speech of present-day Tynesiders, but it has become lexicalised in a small set of

⁴ Crystal (2004:449) notes that *y'all* can also be used when addressing a single person.

words which have important symbolic status (especially ‘Toon’ to refer to Newcastle or Newcastle United FC, and ‘Broom’ to refer to the local beer). Beal (2000; 2008b) also talks about the commodification of the Geordie dialect in mugs, postcards and other novelty items, as well as in Geordie phrase books and related literature. Unlike its Tyneside neighbour, however, Teesside does not have a dialect with the same kind of well defined identity or marketability. Bookshops in the region stock books on Geordie English and Yorkshire English, but there are no guides on how to speak ‘Teesside’ and no novelty items featuring the Teesside equivalent to the Geordie /u:/ (whatever that might be).

Linguistic variants such as possessive ‘me’ and singular ‘us’ are therefore not specific to Teesside, but it seems reasonable to suggest that, in the absence of more specifically local features, speakers in this region may come to associate such forms with the local dialect. Moreover, as I will demonstrate in Section 3.5, it is the locally specific meanings that are important to speakers: stylistic practice ‘involves adapting linguistic variables available out in the larger world to the construction of social meaning on a local level’ (Eckert 2004:44).

3.5 Possessive ‘me’, dialect style and stylisation

Traditional variationist accounts of style and style-shifting work with high frequency variables and assess stylistic levels according to aggregated frequency data. On this basis, low frequency variants (such as possessive ‘me’ in this data) tend to remain hidden and may even be excluded from analysis. Such an account ignores the contribution these features can make to individual stylistic practice, however. I will argue here that an understanding of the children’s use of possessive ‘me’ lies in an analysis of their linguistic styling, an area within which ‘it has

become increasingly unsafe to read social meaning on the basis of distributional facts alone' (Coupland 2007:176). The following account therefore moves beyond an analysis of the distribution of possessive 'me' across speakers to an examination of the use of this linguistic form in interaction.

3.5.1 Stylisation: examples in context

A common thread among all 33 examples of possessive 'me' in the data is the sense that this linguistic feature marks a departure from the norm: 'a partial and momentary disengagement from the routine flow of unexceptional business' (Rampton 2006:225). In this respect, the use of possessive 'me' has elements of what Rampton (1995; 2006) and Coupland (2001b) have termed 'stylisation', a concept originally associated with the work of Bakhtin (1981).

In Coupland's (2001b:345) terms, stylisation is 'the knowing deployment of culturally familiar styles and identities that are marked as deviating from those predictably associated with the current speaking context'. In his analysis of extracts from *The Roy Noble Show*, broadcast on BBC Radio Wales, Coupland (2001b) examines a range of phonological variables, along with other non-dialectal features of talk, in order to demonstrate how the show's presenters constructed stylised (and knowingly inauthentic) images of Welshness. In doing so, they held up traditional ways of speaking for 'scrutiny' and potentially for 'reevaluation'. While we might expect dialect stylisation to occur within media entertainment genres, such as broadcast radio, where presenters regularly subvert 'reality' and project personae other than their 'true' selves, stylisation can also occur in non-media, non-scripted, face-to-face interaction. In his most recent work with Year 9 pupils at a London comprehensive, Rampton investigates instances of stylised 'posh' and Cockney – varieties at the extremities of his speakers' linguistic repertoire – in order to explore

the ways in which these children experienced social class as a 'lived reality'. The moments of stylisation, Rampton argues, were moments in which the high-low cultural semantic which structured his participants' experience at school was foregrounded, offered for public consumption, sometimes resisted but at other times reinforced. In his earlier work on linguistic 'crossing', Rampton (1995) describes how speakers in a multi-ethnic school in the south-midlands of England crossed into 'stylised Asian English', a marked social style, on 'occasions when the hold of routine assumptions about the conduct of social life became less certain' (Rampton 1995:200).

There are sequences involving possessive 'me' in my data which echo the stylised performances analysed by Rampton and Coupland. In the first example, the break with reality is obvious.

Extract 3.1

Harry and David are in the playground about 10 minutes after Harry has been given the radio-microphone.

- 1 Harry: Can you get me some Budweiser (0.6 seconds) f- they're only
- 2 uh tr- uh one pound fifty a pack (.) so get me: ten packs (0.5
- 3 seconds) because I've got a Budweiser thing here (.) ((with
- 4 increased volume for the declaration)) I lo::ve my [mi] (.)
- 5 **Budweiser** (1 second) ((makes whooping noise into mic)).
- 6 David: I love my [ma] thingies ((laughs)).
- 7 Harry: Stop being- (0.5 seconds) Stop being stupid David.

In Extract 3.1 Harry is being deliberately silly and his use of possessive 'me' is part of an exaggerated performance which was perhaps for the benefit of the newly acquired radio-microphone, as well as for his friend David. The fact that Harry has stepped outside of 'business-as-usual' is indicated on one level by the subject matter of the utterance. Budweiser is a beer and as such would not usually feature in the

conversation of a 9-year-old child. Budweiser has a tradition of creating humorous television advertisements, however, which have been successful in the UK as well as other English speaking cultures around the world. It is possible (and indeed likely) that Harry would be familiar with this brand via the media and would have come to associate it with joking and with word- or sound-play. During the period of my fieldwork, it was evident that Harry was very much in-touch with popular culture, perhaps owing to the fact that he had an older brother. He sported a trendy hair-cut (which would not have seemed out of place on the lead singer of an indie-rock band) and repeatedly sang bursts from Green Day's⁵ 'American Idiot' into the microphone. In addition to the subject-matter, further clues to the stylised nature of this performance include the increased volume of Harry's declaration, the lengthened vowel sound in *love* and the brief but dramatic pause in between *my* and *Budweiser*. In his analysis of stylised 'posh' and 'Cockney', Rampton (2006:262) notes that stylised utterances were often marked by 'abrupt shifts in some combination of loudness, pitch level, voice quality or speed of delivery'. He goes on to state that '[i]f the audience (or indeed the speaker) subsequently responded by laughing, repeating the utterance, by commenting on it, or by switching into a different kind of non-normal dialect or voice, this could be a final clue'. Harry's 'side-kick', David, does just that. Having clearly appreciated Harry's performance, David laughs and repeats the formulation with slight modification: *I love my thingies*. David does not use possessive 'me' here; he realises the pronoun with the reduced form [ma]. But then, David's performance generally is a rather poor imitation. Being less in-tune with adult popular culture, David substitutes *Budweiser* for the vague *thingies*, and is told by Harry to *Stop being silly*.

⁵ Green Day is an American punk rock band.

In other examples, possessive 'me' occurs within a play frame but is part of a less exaggerated performance. In such situations, 'the stylised utterance constitutes a small, fleeting but foregrounded analysis' which is 'offered for public consumption' (Rampton 2006:225). In Extract 3.2, the girls are involved in a game which involves stealing each other's shoes. An extended extract from this activity will be discussed at length in Chapter 4.4. In this extract, Hannah's shoe has been taken by her friend Gemma.

Extract 3.2

- 1 Hannah: ((Shouting across the playground)) Gemma: my [mi] shoe:
- 2 Anon: Gemma give us the shoe. Get Gemma's shoe.
- 3 ((Background noise and inaudible talk -- 57.5 seconds))
- 4 Hannah: Miss tell Gemma. She's got my [mi] shoe (1.3 seconds).
- 5 Gemma.
- 6 ((Background noise -- 3.2 seconds))
- 7 Tina: Howay
- 8 Anon: We got Gemma's shoe::

Hannah's utterance in line 1 is a spontaneous reaction to the theft of her shoe. Although it lacks the exuberance of Harry's fictional declaration of love for Budweiser in Extract 3.1, it is clearly set within the frame of playful performance. The term of address indicates that the utterance is directed towards Gemma, but Hannah's speech is audible to all bystanders in the playground and is as much an announcement to them of the missing shoe as a bid to get it back. In line 4, Hannah's use of the vocative *Miss* implies that she is appealing to a teacher or dinner lady for help. It is not clear whether or not there are any adults in the immediate vicinity to hear this appeal, but none answer it. After a brief pause, Hannah again takes matters into her own hands, shouting out Gemma's name. We might suggest that Hannah's utterance was not meant for an adult at all but was

intended as a playful warning to Gemma that this kind of behaviour would warrant disciplining from an authority figure. In addition to possessive ‘me’, notice also the use of singular ‘us’ on line 2 and ‘howay’ on line 7. ‘Howay’ is a dialect feature specific to the north-east of England which means something like ‘come on’. The children’s use of singular ‘us’ and ‘howay’ will be discussed in depth in Chapter 4 (though these particular examples are excluded from the analysis since they come from speakers who were not part of the study). For now it is sufficient to note the clustering of non-standard, community-specific features in a situation where issues of group membership, identity and belonging are of paramount importance: Who is aligned with whom in this game? How strong are existing friendship ties? Where do the group boundaries lie?

Extract 3.3 also takes place in the Ironstone Primary School playground. Andrew is wearing the radio-microphone and is play-fighting with some of the girls, in particular, Gemma and Hannah.

Extract 3.3

- 1 Andrew: ((Laughing)) It hurt all my [mi] hand, all the way down there.
- 2 ((Play-fight continues -- 7.5 seconds))
- 3 Andrew: A::h she hurt all my [mi] hand down there.
- 4 ((Play-fight continues -- 30.7 seconds))
- 5 Andrew: Hannah’s not normally ready
- 6 ((Play-fight continues -- 8.5 seconds))
- 7 Andrew: ((Laughing)) (hhhh) My [mi] arm.
- 8 ((Play-fight continues -- 13.6 seconds))
- 9 Andrew: No:::
- 10 ((Background noise -- 6.9 seconds))
- 11 Andrew: A::h my [mi] arm’s all red.

In each occurrence of possessive ‘me’ (on lines 1, 3, 7 and 11), Andrew is pointing out something negative, that his hand and arm have been injured, but he does so in a

mock-serious fashion. Andrew seems not only to be able to laugh through the pain (lines 1 and 7) but also to continue with the play-fight. We might suggest that he is overacting here, hamming up his injuries for the benefit of his exclusively female audience. We can compare Andrew's use of possessive 'me' with a similar example from Murrayfield Primary: *Ah a hundred (bullets)- a hundred bolts going through my [mi] finger. Pain, agony electrical current. O::w.* The speaker, Neil, is referring here to the radio-microphone that he is wearing as he runs around the playground with his friends Daniel, Ben and Tim. Neil's utterance is hyperbolic – the radio-microphone did not give out agonising electric shocks – and is meant as an entertaining performance for his friends. As Coupland (2001b:349) points out, in stylising 'we speak "as if this is me," or "as if I owned this voice," or "as if I endorsed what this voice says"' but the speaker leaves their audience to consider 'whether this utterance is "really mine" rather than "me playing" or "me subverting"'.

The potential for stylisation to 'dislocate a speaker from the persona he or she voices' (Coupland 2001b:366) is even more apparent in Extract 3.4 where Helen uses possessive 'me' when she mimics Nathan's utterance.

Extract 3.4

- 1 Mrs Moon: Nathan sit on your bottom please and get on.
- 2 Nathan: I'll just get my [ma] pencil. It's up my [ma] jumper.
- 3 Helen: ((Laughing)) My [mi] pencil's up my [mi] jumper.

Helen clearly finds Nathan's comment amusing. Amid laughter, she repeats *My pencil's up my jumper* in such a way as to suggest that this was an unusual comment for Nathan to make. Even though Nathan realises 'my' both times as [ma], Helen uses [mi] in her reformulation. As well as calling attention to the strangeness of

Nathan's utterance, the use of possessive 'me' creates distance between Helen and the utterance she is voicing: these are not her words; she is 'performing' Nathan.

The fact that possessive 'me' occurs in situations where the speaker is being deliberately silly and/or is performing an 'other' identity alerts us to its potential for stylisation. The children also used this feature in less obvious performances, however. In Extracts 3.5 and 3.6, possessive 'me' occurs during instances of 'self-talk', when the speaker is, in effect, performing themselves.

Extract 3.5

The children are discussing the school photographs that were taken earlier that day.

- 1 Caroline: I seen you on the f- on the camera.
2 Clare: Did you? (.) [I looked a mess, didn't I?
3 Caroline: [(xxxxxxxxx)
4 Mrs Trotter: (xxxxxxxxxxx)
5 Clare: No I never.
6 Caroline: You had your hair all like that (.) You (shook it off).
7 Clare: Well I- I know- I went-
8 ((Background noise -- 6.6 seconds))
9 Clare: Ugh you minger.
10 ((Background noise -- 3.7 seconds))
11 Clare: The reason I brought a brush to school is because (.hhh) (0.6
12 seconds) ((emphatic stress on 'every' and an increasing
13 speed of delivery)) every time I have [av] my [mi] hair [eə]
14 down it gets really cottery.⁶

In line 13 Clare uses possessive 'me' to highlight something negative, specifically something unsatisfactory about her own appearance. It is not clear from the recording whether or not this utterance is addressed to anyone in particular; it appears to be an instance of 'self-talk'. But as Goffman (1981:97-98) notes, self-talk is often designed to be overheard, in this case perhaps by Caroline or perhaps by the

⁶ A 'cotter' is a tangle in the hair. The term 'cottery' is a local dialect word to refer to tangled hair.

radio-microphone (and, therefore, by Miss Snell). Following the school photographs, it seems that Clare was already feeling self-conscious about her appearance: *I looked a mess, didn't I?* (line 2). Caroline's comment about Clare's hair on line 6 compounds these feelings and focuses them on one particular aspect of Clare's identity, her hair. Clare publicly acknowledges that her hair is 'cottery', but, by voicing this comment apparently to herself, she downplays the significance of the assertion and therefore the importance she attaches to her own appearance. Clare wants to avoid negative comments from others about her hair by demonstrating an element of self-awareness, but she does not want to appear vain. Clare also justifies the act of bringing a hair brush to school: a hair brush is not an extravagance but a necessity for someone like Clare, whose hair is prone to tangling. Altogether, in her utterance on lines 11-14, Clare styles herself as someone who is aware of the flaws in her own appearance but who, crucially, is not overly concerned with them. The use of possessive 'me', in addition to the intake of breath and pause before stressing *every* and the increase in speed of the latter part of the utterance, lifts this speech outside of the flow of routine activity.

In Extract 3.6, Harry and David are in the Ironstone Primary school playground at lunch time. David had been wearing the radio-microphone but has just passed it on to Harry.

Extract 3.6

- 1 David: My [ma] dad nearly shaved my [mi] hair (.) yesterday.
2 Harry: ((Laughs))
3 David: Well actually he never.
4 ((Background noise 1.6 seconds))
5 David: ((Half to himself. Not clear if he is addressing Harry or
6 whether Harry is still listening)) I should've combed my [mi]
7 hair this morning.

The final part of David's utterance on line 1 highlights something exceptional (that he nearly had his hair shaved), and this is marked with the use of possessive 'me'. We sense that David is not really telling the whole truth here; the use of possessive 'me' indicates that he is not fully committed to the content of this utterance. Rather than being a statement of fact, his utterance is designed to make Harry laugh, and the use of possessive 'me' marks out the frivolous nature of the comment. On line 3, David admits that his Dad did not shave his hair, but hair still clearly remains a central concern: *I should've combed my [mi] hair this morning* (lines 6-7). As in Extract 3.5, it looks as though we have another instance of 'self-talk'. Like Clare, David feels self-conscious about his hair. He publicly acknowledges its unkempt state while simultaneously giving a reason for this anomaly in his appearance. In both of these examples, possessive 'me' is involved in overt commentary about the speaker's appearance, where it serves to temper the self-criticism with light-heartedness and a sense of disengagement from the surrounding talk.

In the examples analysed so far, the use of possessive 'me' has indicated a break from the routine flow of interaction. As well as *creating* this sense of dislocation, possessive 'me' may also be used *in response to* some disruption to the social order. In Extract 3.7, it is Miss Snell who subverts the normal order of things and Andrew responds using possessive 'me'.

Extract 3.7

- | | | |
|---|-------------|--|
| 1 | Andrew: | Miss this is getting a bit hot, this (0.8 seconds) at the top. |
| 2 | Miss Snell: | Is it? |
| 3 | Andrew: | Yeah it keeps [going like that. |
| 4 | Miss Snell: | [It's because it's been on all day. |
| 5 | Miss Snell: | It's just like- you know if you have |
| 6 | Andrew: | When I touch it with my [ma] hand it's cold but (when I-) |
| 7 | | when I touch it with my arm [ma harm] it's hot but when |

- 8 I touch it with my [ma] hand it's cold.
 9 Miss Snell: Your arm? Maybe your arm's [warm].
 10 Andrew: [There].
 11 Andrew: Me [mi] arm's co::ld.
 12 Miss Snell: That's bizarre.

Ben makes consistent use of [ma] for the first person possessive singular in his utterance on lines 6-8, even pronouncing [arm] as [harm] to avoid the use of [ma] before a vowel. There is a marked change on line 11, however, following Miss Snell's indirect challenge to Ben's assertion that the microphone is hot. Miss Snell suggests (jokingly) that perhaps it is Ben's arm that is warm. Miss Snell's remark is meant as a playful tease, but it appears not to have been received as such. Drew investigates 'po-faced' responses to verbal teasing. In his data,

[t]he overwhelming pattern is ... that recipients treat something about the tease, despite its humour, as requiring a serious response: even when they plainly exhibit their understanding that the teasing remark is not mean to be taken seriously (as when they laugh at, or possibly ignore, it), recipients still almost always PUT THE RECORD STRAIGHT.

(Drew 1987:230)

Ben does indeed 'put the record straight' with an emphatic correction, and in doing so, he uses possessive 'me' accompanied by a lengthened vowel sound and fall-rise intonation on *cold* (which highlights the contrast with Miss Snell's *warm* in line 9). The distinct fall-rise intonation on the tonic syllable in *cold* also indicates Ben's surprise at Miss Snell's suggestion that his arm, rather than the radio-microphone, might be warm (Ladefoged 2006:123).

The children in this study are not 'crossing' into an out-group code, nor are they projecting a more than usually 'really Teesside' persona when they use possessive 'me'. Johnstone (1999:514) writes, however, that "language crossing' and 'styling'

are more complex than is suggested by studies dealing with people's use of languages or varieties that are clearly felt to 'belong' to others'. In relation to the Texan women in her study, Johnstone refers to 'strategic use of an ingroup variety', and perhaps this is a more fitting description of the children's use of possessive 'me' in my study. Possessive 'me' was generally not used as part of a self-conscious, 'knowing' dialect performance (in the manner of DJs Roy Noble and John Dee (Coupland 2001b)), but that is not to suggest that its occurrence was without meaning or motivation. In my data, possessive 'me' is used to index a particular kind of affective stance: one that displays negative affect but is tempered by a lack of seriousness and a degree of jocularity. Possessive 'me' is also used to index a kind of epistemic stance, where it serves to 'dislocate' the speaker not only from the 'immediate speaking context' (Coupland 2001b:350) but also from full commitment to the truth of, or belief in, their proposition. There is a symbiotic relationship between these two kinds of stance. The way in which possessive 'me' (in addition to other semiotic resources) is able to facilitate a break with 'business-as-usual' and distance the speaker from the content of their utterance (epistemic stance) serves to mitigate the stance of negative affect. In my data this happened in a situation where the speaker was down on their own appearance (e.g. Extracts 3.5, 3.6), was apparently feeling physical discomfort (e.g. Extracts 3.3), was making fun of another child (e.g. Extract 3.4) or became the subject of a joke themselves (e.g. Extracts 3.2, 3.7). A similar interpretation could be applied to Coupland's (1985; 1988; 2001a) earlier analysis of a Cardiff local-radio presenter, Frank Hennessy (FH) (Section 1.2.1 and 1.2.5). Coupland found that FH used salient features of the Cardiff dialect to project a humorous and 'strongly dialectized admission of personal incompetence (*I'll have to get me right arm in training*)' (Coupland 2001a:209). Coupland's (1985,

1988, 2001a) analysis focused on phonological variables, but the example to which he draws the reader's attention here also includes possessive 'me'. Of course, I do not have access to the original data and could not possibly make judgements about the frequency with which FH used possessive 'me' in relation to other variants or about the kinds of contexts within which it generally occurred. The fact remains, however, that FH used a 'strongly dialectized' (we might say 'stylised') performance in order to mitigate a show of personal incompetence (i.e. to moderate a stance of negative affect). From a methodological perspective, it is interesting to note how close analysis of one data set can help to interpret or reinterpret analyses performed on other sets of data. This is particularly significant when the two sets of data are so different: the naturally occurring spontaneous speech of children compared to self-conscious broadcast data. As Labov's (1972c:102, 118f) 'principle of convergence' states, 'the value of new data for confirming old data is directly proportional to the differences in the methods used to gather it'. He ends the same paper by pointing out that '[d]ata from a variety of distinct sources and methods, properly interpreted, can be used to converge on the right answers to hard questions' (Labov 1972c:119). The perspective adopted in this thesis is that style should be viewed as social action and, as such, needs to be analysed in its local discursive and ethnographically specific context. This approach calls for detailed case studies of individuals and small groups, but this does not mean that we cannot use such analyses to theorise about language use on a much wider scale. It is important, however, that such theories are built as part of a research community open to a wide range of data, methodologies and interpretations.

In addition to the extracts already examined, I could add the following examples from my data in which possessive ‘me’ occurred in very similar circumstances and served to encode the same kinds of affective and epistemic stance:

- (5) (a) ((Said in a very dramatic and exaggerated manner)) *No:w look. You made me fall and my [mi]- my [mi] microphone fell off.* (Clare, Ironstone Primary)
- (b) *Watch you don't touch it I've got it on my [mi] arm.* (Clare, Ironstone Primary)
- (c) *It's going cold on my [mi] arm now.* (Andrew, Ironstone Primary)
- (d) *I've still got stuff on my [mi] hands* (Helen, Ironstone Primary)
- (e) *I split all the (jug of water) on my [mi] skirt.* (Helen, Ironstone Primary)
- (f) *Ah that knacks ['hurts']. Ah my [mi] arm.* (Danielle, Ironstone Primary)
- (g) *A:h my [mi] arm agghrrrr* (Ben, Murrayfield Primary)
- (h) *Because my [mi] uncle (xxxxxxxxxx) went over on his ankle so the- and he couldn't walk.* (Beth, Murrayfield Primary)

Ochs (1996:419-420) proposes that affective and epistemic stances ‘are central meaning components of social acts and social identities’ and further that ‘linguistic structures that index epistemic and affective stances are the basic linguistic resources for constructing/realizing social acts and social identities’. This is an important point and one that will be developed throughout this thesis. The way in which a particular discourse feature, right dislocation, is implicated in the encoding of stance and identity will be explored in Chapter 5.

3.5.2 Frequency, salience and stereotypes

The children in both schools avoided the use of possessive 'me' in formal, school-oriented tasks such as reading aloud or answering the teacher's questions. In fact, the children did not use possessive 'me' at all in their interactions with adults in the school environment. There is therefore evidence in the data to suggest that possessive 'me' functions as a Labovian 'marker' in Teesside; frequency of use of this feature patterns not only with the level of socioeconomic class of the speaker (it is used more by the children in Ironstone Primary) but also with the level of formality of the speaking context. But even in the more informal interactions captured by the radio-microphone, possessive 'me' was not a frequently occurring variant, particularly in Murrayfield Primary. One possible explanation for the low frequency of this variant overall is that it has become a Labovian stereotype:

under extreme stigmatization, a form may become the overt object of social comment, and may eventually disappear. It is thus a *stereotype*, which may become increasingly divorced from the forms which are actually used in speech

(Labov 1972a:180).

Possessive 'me' may qualify as a stereotype: it is a non-standard linguistic form that is avoided by speakers in formal contexts; it has been the subject of overt social comment (e.g. by the teachers at Ironstone Primary); and it appears to be salient in local consciousness despite a relatively low frequency of actual usage (at least by the children in this study).

Non-standard pronominal forms, such as possessive 'me', are prime candidates for the transition from Labovian marker to stereotype. Wales (1996:88) writes that in the 'context of a prescriptive inheritance of grammars based on formal educated usage, pronoun case forms have come exaggeratedly to be the emotive symbols of

social stigmatisation and acceptability'. While the use of [ma] and [mə], in addition to [maɪ], maintain the contrast between the possessive and objective case, the use of [mi] blurs this distinction and hence is open to the kinds of criticism and stigmatisation that Wales refers to. The issue becomes one of morphology, rather than phonology, and this perspective is reflected in the way in which the [mi] variant of the possessive singular has become lexicalised in written representations of dialect speech with a standard spelling 'me'. Referring to Trudgill's (1986) model of salience, Kerswill and Williams (2002:100) state that morphological variables are likely to be salient 'because they involve different lexical realizations of underlying grammatical categories'.

As a salient and potentially stereotypical non-standard form, possessive 'me' was largely avoided by the Murrayfield participants (in the school context at least). In Ironstone Primary, on the other hand, rather than being avoided completely, possessive 'me' has gained currency in the performance of local identity. Jocular and the ability to break with the norm and use humour to temper negative evaluation are important within the Ironstone Primary community of practice, and in these culturally salient contexts, speakers are resisting the diffusion of standard English forms. In fact, as Newbrook (1986:36) points out, 'some speakers do not recognise the national prestige standard as an infallible source of norms ... such speakers are found amongst people who take more seriously the vernacular culture and traditions of their local area'. In this case, then, the stereotyping of possessive 'me' may lead to the preservation of this feature in the Teesside dialect, albeit in restricted social contexts (like the lexicalisation of Geordie /u:/ in words such as 'Toon'). This of course is merely speculative at this stage. Further work would be required to assess whether possessive 'me' is used in similar ways by the speakers included in this

study when they are outside of school and by other speakers in Teesside. I have no systematic data, for example, on how this form is used by adults in the community – is it used more frequently, and if so, does the low frequency amongst the children in this study represent a change in progress? The answers to these questions are outside of the scope of this study, but this analysis perhaps indicates how detailed ethnography and the study of ‘dialect in discourse’ (Coupland 2007:9) has the potential to contribute to an understanding of language variation and change on a much wider scale.

3.6 Stylised ‘posh’ and ‘American’

Section 3.5 argues that the children’s use of possessive ‘me’ is motivated by social and pragmatic considerations; this variant of the possessive singular encodes particular kinds of affective and epistemic stance that can be utilised as part of stylised performances. Possessive ‘me’ was available for stylistic effect because of its associations with the local area and local experience; in other words, because it represented the ‘in-group’. Conversely, standard ‘my’ [maɪ] was sometimes used by the children in their representations of out-group voices: ‘posh’ and ‘American’. The source for ‘American’ is certainly the media and this is probably true for ‘posh’ too. ‘Posh’ would also be salient to the Ironstone Primary children from their performance of *My Fair Lady*.

- (6) (a) *Let’s go [gəʊ] in my [maɪ] hotel [həʊtəl]* (Jane, Ironstone Primary)
- (b) *My [ma] picture. My [maɪ] creative work and everything is ruined.* (Mary, Murrayfield Primary)
- (c) *I repeat I’m near [niə] a teacher [ti:tʃə]. I repeat I’m near [niə] a teacher [ti:tʃə]. I repeat I’m near [niə] a teacher [ti:tʃə]. (2.2 seconds) Now she’s watching [wa:tʃən] me. She’s*

watching [wa:tʃən] *me* > *with that big thing in my* [maɪ] *pocket* <. (Harry, Ironstone Primary)

- (d) *My* [maɪ] *girls don't have ginger* [dʒɪndʒər] *hair. She got* *blo::nde* [bla:nd] *hair.* (Rachel, Murrayfield Primary)

Examples (6a) and (6b) appear to be attempts by the speaker to represent a 'posh' persona. In Example (6a), Jane is in the playground trying to organise a group of girls into pairs to practice dances. Her 'hotel' is a particular area of the playground that she has ring-fenced as belonging to her and her dance partner. As she moves over to this area, she beckons her partner with *Let's go* [gəʊ] *in my* [maɪ] *hotel* [həʊtəl]. As well as using the full form for the possessive singular, Jane also modifies the vowel sounds in 'go' and 'hotel', using the diphthong [əʊ] in line with the RP pronunciation rather than the long monophthongal [o:] common to Teesside English and other northern English varieties. Jane also articulates the [h] of hotel, which can be interpreted against her otherwise frequent 'h-dropping'. I would suggest that Jane styles her utterance in this way in order to bestow her directive with a sense of mock authority. RP is not part of the children's normal stylistic repertoire, but utterances such as this one demonstrate that they have an awareness of a particularly prestigious accent which exists somewhere outside of the community. Stylised 'posh' did not always rely on features of accent, however. In Example (6b), for instance, Mary is being deliberately dramatic and adopts a theatrical, aristocratic persona when she proclaims *My creative work and everything is ruined*. The full form of the possessive is used with the phrase *creative work* which replaces the less grandiose *picture*. Notice that the reduced form of the pronoun [ma] is used with *picture*.

Examples (6c) and (6d) may be categorised as stylised American. In Example (6c), Harry is talking directly into the radio-microphone as if it were a walkie-talkie

and he were reporting 'back to base'. Harry may have seen (American) movies in which police-officers on surveillance would report their movements in this way. In his pronunciation of post-vocalic /r/ in *near* and *teacher*, Harry displays sensitivity to the fact that the rhotic/non-rhotic distinction is one of the salient differences between British and American English (though there are varieties on both sides of the Atlantic which do not fit this pattern). Rachel also emulates the rhotic American accent in her pronunciation of *ginger*. The children also appear to have noticed something different about American vowel sounds, replacing [ɒ] with [ɑ] in *watching* and *blonde*. As with the examples analysed in Section 3.5.1, the stylised nature of these utterances is reinforced by suprasegmental features such as shifts in the speed of delivery of the utterance (6c) and lengthened vowel sounds (6d).

As well as being implicated in stylised 'posh' and 'American', [maɪ] was used in other kinds of performance such as the sing-song style discussed in Section 3.3. In the following example, however, the speaker is neither singing nor is he obviously performing a stylised 'posh' or 'American' persona. Further, the utterance refers to something negative but in a mock-serious fashion in a manner similar to examples such as (5f), (5g) and Extract 3.3. So, why does Ben use [maɪ] rather than [mi]?

Extract 3.8

- 1 Ben: O:::w my [maɪ] bollocks.
- 2 ((Laughing and background noise))
- 3 Lee: Did she hear?
- 4 Ben: Probably

One explanation is that possessive 'me' is generally avoided within the Murrayfield Primary community of practice. Further, while the utterance is not strictly an example of stylised 'posh', Ben is being quite dramatic here. He appears to use a

theatrical voice in order to provide a contrast with the taboo nature of the utterance's content. By doing so, Ben creates a humorous effect via the incongruity between a refined speaking style and rather more coarse vocabulary. Ben often demonstrates this kind of sophistication in his use of language (compare the way he uses right dislocation in Chapter 5, Extract 5.4 in order to make a barbed comment about my appearance). In this situation, possessive 'me' would not have contributed to the desired effect.

3.7 Conclusion

I have shown in this chapter that possessive 'me' and singular 'us' are salient features of the Teesside dialect, despite the fact that they have a widespread geographical distribution. Although there is some disagreement as to whether these forms are non-standard or simply part of informal, colloquial speech, there is evidence to suggest that they are not only salient in local consciousness but also stigmatised. Both forms involve different lexical realizations of the underlying grammatical categories they represent (Kerswill and Williams 2002:100), and both may be seen to transgress traditional grammatical boundaries (that of case with possessive 'me' and of number with singular 'us').

Possessive 'me' and singular 'us' were used more frequently by the children at Ironstone Primary than by those at Murrayfield Primary. This finding accords with sociolinguistic studies which have examined the distribution of non-standard/stigmatised linguistic variants in speakers belonging to different social classes. Neither variant was used particularly frequently, however, even within the Ironstone Primary community of practice. I have suggested that possessive 'me' and singular 'us' represent choices within a single pronoun paradigm, and that the

children use these forms sparingly but for stylistic effect. The precise social and pragmatic functions attributed to singular 'us' will be discussed in Chapter 4. In this Chapter, I examined the use of possessive 'me' in context in order to get closer to the meanings indexed by this form.

The frequency of use of possessive 'me' was low, but socially significant dialect variation cannot be understood solely in relation to aggregated frequency data and the analysis of the distribution of linguistic forms. The children in this study were not using possessive 'me' because they are from Teesside or because they are working class, as traditional correlation approaches would suggest, nor were they using possessive 'me' to directly index a regional or class identity; they were using this feature to do social work that was much more important for them: constructing interactional stances in their daily communication with each other. Stance provides a local explanation of variation in use: it is what speakers actually do with language in real interaction (Eberhardt and Kiesling 2008). Ochs (1996:419-420) states that 'linguistic structures that index epistemic and affective stances are the basic linguistic resources for constructing/realizing social acts and social identities'. Surely, then, features such as possessive 'me' are worthy of study despite their low frequency, and we can only do justice to such features through an analysis of dialect in discourse.

Chapter 4 – Singular ‘us’ and Other Directives

4.1 Introduction

The analysis in Chapter 3 provided a full account of the distribution of singular ‘us’, but it did not explain the meaning of this variant. Tentative statements about the usage and meaning of singular ‘us’ have been made by other researchers. In writing about Australian Vernacular English, for example, Pawley (2004:635) notes that singular ‘us’ is used ‘when the speaker makes a request for something to be given to or obtained for him/her, e.g. *Give us a light for me pipe.*’ Carter and McCarthy (2006:382) also suggest that singular ‘us’ ‘is commonly used when making requests, perhaps to soften the force of a request’. Anderwald goes further:

this phenomenon seems to be specific to the first person, and to imperatives. Whether the use of *us* for *me* has its origin in being a mitigating factor in requests has not been investigated yet.

(Anderwald 2004:178)

My aim in this chapter is to conduct such an investigation.

4.2 Plural pronouns and politeness

In my data, all 66 occurrences of ‘us’ with singular reference are part of imperative clauses in which the speaker is urging the addressee to do something: *let us see; give us it; pass us that book; show us yours; turn it off for us.* An imperative is an example of what Brown and Levinson (1987) would refer to as a ‘face-threatening act’. A face-threatening act comprises any action that impinges upon a person’s face, where ‘face’ (a term Brown and Levinson borrowed from Goffman (1967)) refers to an individual’s self-esteem, something that ‘must be constantly attended to in interaction’ (Brown and Levinson 1987:61). Face embodies two specific kinds of desires: ‘the desire to be unimpeded in one’s actions (negative

face), and the desire (in some respects) to be approved of (positive face)' (Brown and Levinson 1987:13). An imperative is 'the direct expression of one of the most intrinsically face-threatening speech acts – commanding' (Brown and Levinson 1987:191). Depending upon the situation, then, the speaker might feel that it is necessary to try to mitigate the face-threatening act, and the use of the plural pronoun could be one of the politeness strategies they adopt.

There is extensive evidence for the idea that plural forms can be used with singular reference to express something like politeness in many languages. Head (1978) examines data from more than one hundred languages in order to explore the social meaning of variation of pronominal categories and types of pronouns. He looks at first, second and third person reference, and notes for all that the use of the non-singular in pronominal reference to show greater respect or social distance than the singular appears to be a universal tendency (Head 1978:163). The widespread European development of two second person pronouns for singular addressees appears to have begun in Latin and is still found in languages such as French, German, Spanish and Italian. In Latin, the plural as a form of address to one person is first attested in address to the Roman emperor in the fourth century CE (Brown and Gilman 1960:255). The plural was eventually extended from the emperor to other figures of power, and a set of norms formed around what Brown and Gilman (1960:255) refer to as the 'nonreciprocal power semantic'. According to the 'nonreciprocal power semantic', superiors would use the original singular form to their inferiors and receive the polite plural form in return. A further distinction later developed around what Brown and Gilman (1960:257) refer to as the 'solidarity dimension'. The solidarity dimension provided a means of differentiating address

among equals: the singular form of address signalled a high degree of solidarity or ‘intimacy’ among equals; the plural form signalled low solidarity or ‘formality’.

These dimensions of solidarity and nonreciprocal power were expressed by English with the distinction between THOU and YOU, the direct descendants of the Old English second person singular and plural. In the Middle English period, English used THOU for ‘familiar address to a single person’ and YOU as ‘the singular of reverence and polite distance’, as well as the invariable plural (Brown and Gilman 1960:253). In modern standard English the use of the form YOU now obscures distinctions both of number and power/solidarity, though such distinctions continue to be expressed in a number of varieties outside standard English. Wales (1996:76) notes that ‘in those dialects of English outside the British Isles where singular/plural distinction has been introduced into the 2PP [second person pronoun], there are already signs of a semiotic of “distance” or politeness for singular address becoming formalised in the plural. e.g. *oonu* in Jamaican English’.

4.2.1 Beyond the ‘standard’/‘non-standard’ dichotomy

As noted in Chapter 3, the use of ‘us’ for the objective singular is associated with informal or dialectal usage; it is a ‘non-standard’ form of the objective singular. It is unsurprising, therefore, that singular ‘us’ occurs more frequently in Ironstone Primary, the school whose participants rank lower on a scale of socioeconomic prestige. However, if the use of singular ‘us’ in imperatives is part of a wider (even universal) phenomenon which links plurality to degrees of respect or social distance, the difference in the frequency of occurrence of this variant between the two schools is significant for reasons beyond the ‘standard’/‘non-standard’ dichotomy. As Coupland (2007:45) points out, the ‘use of “standard” features of speech is *not* limited to marking the speaker’s alignment with the establishment, and “non-

standard” speech can be used and voiced with very different pragmatic goals and effects’. Taking this into account, the difference in frequency of occurrence of singular ‘us’ between the two communities of practice raises further questions. For example, if singular ‘us’ can be used as a strategy to soften imperatives, why does it occur so infrequently at Murrayfield Primary, and what other strategies do the children use in its place? The remainder of this chapter will explore the strategies adopted at both schools for formulating imperatives and other directives, addressing the following questions:

- Is there evidence in the data to suggest that singular ‘us’ is being used as a mitigating factor in imperatives? If so, what kind of social factors motivate the speakers’ choice of singular ‘us’? What meanings does this feature have for the speakers who use it?
- How can we account for the difference between the two schools in terms of frequency of use of singular ‘us’?
- What other strategies do the children adopt to formulate ‘polite’ directives and what kind of social factors influence their choice of one form over another? Are there differences between the two schools in terms of the children’s use of these strategies?

In the first half of the chapter, quantitative methods will be used to investigate the different kinds of strategies that the children in each school adopt when formulating directives. This analysis does not encompass all of the possible forms that a directive could take (such an investigation is beyond the scope of this thesis), but will examine grammatical forms that are strongly associated with the directive function. The quantitative analysis will enable an overall comparison to be made between the

two schools, revealing patterning in the data and highlighting areas of potential interest. Qualitative understandings gained from the ethnography will then be used to illuminate the linguistic patterns which emerge from the quantitative analysis. In the second half of the chapter, I will aim to show that speaker choice is socially meaningful by examining the contexts within which speakers use imperatives with singular 'us' and other directives.

4.3 Directives: form and function

The term 'directive' refers to speech acts (such as requests, orders, commands, instructions) which are issued by the speaker in order to attempt to get the hearer to do something, 'to direct the hearer toward the speaker's goal(s), to ask the hearer to make things happen according to the speaker's wishes' (He 2000:120). The children in this study have a range of resources at their disposal for formulating directives. Directives can be realised by any one of the three main clause types: imperative, declarative, and interrogative. The following analysis will deal only with a selection of grammatical forms which are generally recognised as likely to be used in directive function (e.g. Ervin-Tripp 1977; Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan 1977; Gordon and Ervin-Tripp 1984). The data was examined for all occurrences of these forms, and the findings of this analysis are summarised in Table 4.1. On some occasions, the children would repeat a directive several times within one utterance, for example, *Put it in, put it in, put it in* (Holly, Murrayfield Primary). This kind of example was counted as just one directive in the quantitative analysis. If, though, there was some variation in the repetition (e.g. *Look at us. Miss look at us*), each directive was counted separately. The numbers in parentheses in Table 4.1 represent examples which were deemed 'uncertain'. Examples were classified as uncertain if: i) speech was obscured due to a lack of clarity in the recording; ii) it was not clear

that the utterance was functioning unequivocally as a directive; or iii) in the case of imperatives with singular ‘us’, there was some doubt as to whether the reference of the pronoun was singular or plural.

Table 4.1: Directives: a comparison across schools

	Ironstone			Murrayfield		
	N	?	%	N	?	%
Imperative (exc. singular ‘us’ & plural ‘let’s’) e.g. <i>Get off my shoe</i>	461	(12)	60.2%	463	(4)	59.3%
Imperative singular ‘us’ e.g. <i>Give us it</i>	58	(3)	7.6%	8*	(4)	1.0%
Imperative plural ‘Let’s’ e.g. <i>Let’s have a look at yours</i>	25	0	3.3%	10	(2)	1.3%
‘Howay’ ** e.g. <i>Mark howay over here</i>	41	0	5.4%	7	(2)	0.9%
2nd person expression of obligation e.g. <i>You have to sit somewhere else</i>	28	0	3.7%	29	0	3.7%
1st person expression of obligation. e.g. <i>We have to go</i>	6	0	0.8%	4	(2)	0.5%
2nd person expression of need/want e.g. <i>You need to write it in your book</i>	10	0	1.3%	18	(5)	2.3%
1st person expression of need/want e.g. <i>Miss we need some felt tips</i>	42	(3)	5.5%	42	(11)	5.4%
3rd person expression of need/want e.g. <i>Miss, Harry wants you</i>	5	0	0.7%	12	0	1.5%
2nd person modal interrogatives e.g. <i>Will you pass me my plan</i>	30	0	3.9%	51	0	6.5%
1st person modal interrogatives e.g. <i>Can I have your rubber</i>	55	0	7.2%	134	(1)	17.2%
3rd person modal interrogatives e.g. <i>Miss, can he have it</i>	5	0	0.7%	3	0	0.4%
TOTAL	766	(18)	100%	781	(31)	100%

* This figure does not agree with Table 3.3, which shows 12 instances of singular ‘us’ in the Murrayfield Primary data. This is because 4 examples of singular ‘us’ occurred as part of direct repetitions within a single utterance (e.g. *Let’s have a look. Let’s have a look. Let’s have a look*). Examples such as these were counted as one directive.

** Dialect feature specific to north-east England which means something like ‘come on’.

4.3.1 Categories of directive

4.3.1.1 Imperatives

Directives ‘embody an effort on the part of the speaker to get the hearer to do something’, and, ‘at the extreme end of this category, we have the classical imperatives’ (Mey 1993:164). Formally, imperatives are characterized by the lack of a subject¹ and use of the base form of the verb (e.g. *Get off my shoe; Put it in your pocket*). Imperatives represent a direct strategy since they convey only one meaning or ‘illocutionary’ force (Searle 1969; 1975), thus making the speaker’s intention explicit. Several subcategories of imperative were included in the analysis. Imperatives with singular ‘us’ made up a single category because this directive is the focus of the analysis. There is also a separate category for examples of the form ‘Let’s...’, which represent a special type of imperative used to express a suggestion involving both the speaker and their addressee in collaborative action (e.g. *Let’s have a look at this one*).

4.3.1.2 Expressions of obligation and want/need

Unlike imperatives, in which the function is encoded grammatically, the function of expressions of obligation or want/need relies on the context and semantic content of the utterance. Second person expressions of obligation include utterances of the form ‘you have to...’/‘you can’t...’/‘you should...’ etc. which state the addressee’s obligation to carry out (or not) a particular action (e.g. *You have to go and sit somewhere else; Clare you’ve got to learn her a dance as well; You can’t keep your pack lunches on that*). Closely related are second person expressions of want/need (e.g. *You need to write it in your book; You want to d- put it smaller*).

¹ It is possible to identify the addressee of an imperative with a subject noun phrase functioning as a vocative, e.g. *You put this in your pocket*.

First person expressions of want/need represent a change in perspective; they embody the speaker's own personal desire, which the addressee is expected to fulfil (e.g. *Miss we need some felt tips, I want to talk in it*). Such utterances do not always fulfil a directive function, however. They may occur, for example, as support or justification for a directive (e.g. *Excusez-moi. I need to wash my hands; Come here a sec. I want to tell you something*). Such examples are not included under this category in Table 4.1. For an expression of need/want to function as a directive, it must be addressed to someone who the speaker believes can fulfil that directive. On some occasions, these expressions might simply be used by the speaker to state their own desires. For example, when Helen from Ironstone Primary tells the dinner lady *Miss I need a new skirt. (0.8 seconds) I s-pour- I had wat- I had a water fight with the jug*, it is clear that her utterance does not constitute a directive because the dinner lady is not able to provide Helen with a new skirt, and Helen is aware of that fact. Third person expressions of want/need include utterances such as, *Miss, Harry wants you*, where the speaker (usually the person wearing the radio-microphone), tries to get an adult's attention on behalf of someone else.

There are a number of first person plural utterances which belong to the category of first person expressions of need/want because of their form but which perform a different function. For example, when Beth from Murrayfield Primary says to the children on her table, *So we need to knock it down five each time*, she is not expressing a personal need, but rather is giving an instruction to the children on her table who were working together to grade the performance of a geography presentation given by another group of students. Beth could have issued such an instruction through a variety of other forms, including a second person expression of need (e.g. 'you need to knock it down five each time'). She could even have

reinforced the fact that her utterance was directed to the whole group, rather than a singular addressee, by using the dialect form ‘yous’ to express the second person plural, a form she uses on other occasions (Chapter 3.4). The reasons speakers such as Beth might choose to use inclusive ‘we’ will be discussed in Section 4.4.2. First person expressions of obligation occur only in the plural form and function in a similar manner (e.g. *Right we have to- we have to learn our dance*).

4.3.1.3 Modal interrogatives

Second person modal interrogatives include utterances of the form ‘can/could you...?’/‘will/would you...?’. Such utterances make clear the addressee of the directive and the desired object/action (e.g. *Can you bring it in so we can have a look? Robert please will you pass me my plan?*). First person modal interrogatives differ in terms of perspective, placing more emphasis on the speaker rather than the addressee. For example, both *Can I have your rubber?* (Michelle, Murrayfield Primary) and *Holly can you pass me over the glue?* (Tara, Murrayfield Primary) require action on the part of the addressee, but the former focuses emphasis on the speaker and so avoids the appearance of trying to impose on the addressee. First person modal interrogatives often have the function of permission requests (e.g. *Miss please can I get a drink?*). Third person modal interrogatives can be directives issued on behalf of another person (e.g. *Can Sean Chedsby have this in a minute?*). Modal interrogatives are conventional means of expressing directives in English. The illocutionary force is thus signalled by conventional usage.

4.3.1.4 ‘Howay’

There is one final category that I have included in the analysis, despite the fact that it is not discussed elsewhere in the literature as a directive; in fact, this form is not used by speakers outside of the north-east of England. ‘Howay’, which means

something like ‘come on’, is a dialect feature specific to the north-east of England, and, as such, it is relevant to a study of children’s language in Teesside. The kinds of semantic, pragmatic and social meanings this feature has for the children in this study will be discussed in Section 4.4.3.

4.3.2 Comparison between the schools

Using an imperative (such as *put it in your pocket*) is inherently face-threatening since it implies the speaker’s belief that their addressee will perform the action: the use of the imperative does not allow that the addressee has any choice in the matter (Leech 1983:109). Imperatives are still the most frequently used directive for speakers in both schools, however (Table 4.1). This high frequency may be due to the nature of the data, which includes long stretches of informal social interaction. As Biber et al. (1999:221) point out, imperatives occur frequently in conversation since participants are often engaged in some sort of non-linguistic activity at the moment of speaking. In such situations, language is used to monitor the actions of the addressee. Gordon and Ervin-Tripp (1984:299) note that ‘imperative forms are quite normal in adult speech in situations where speaker and hearer are engaged in a cooperative activity, or where the action desired is routine, easy to carry out, or consistent with the listener’s present focus of attention’. In their study of T, a 4-year-old boy, Gordon and Ervin-Tripp also found that ‘imperatives occurred more often than any other request form, and most of these imperative forms occurred during shared or routine activities’ (1984:314-315). The high incidence of imperatives in my data is also in line with other studies of children’s directives (e.g. Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan 1977; Achiba 2003). It seems, then, that imperatives are a popular and relatively low risk strategy when used between intimates involved in cooperative activity. Further, in all types of interaction, there are benefits to be

gained by using imperatives: this type of directive is clear, concise and unambiguous. When formulating a directive, a tension exists between the speaker's desire to make their needs clear to the hearer and their desire to avoid imposing upon the hearer. In situations where the risk attached to the face-threat implicit in an imperative is too high (i.e. where the cost to the hearer is significant or where there is an unequal relationship between speaker and hearer), a compromise can be found in the use of 'conventionalized indirectness' (Brown and Levinson 1987:70). Searle states in relation to conventional indirectness:

there can be conventions of usage ... I am suggesting that *can you, could you, I want you to*, and numerous other forms are conventional ways of making requests ... but at the same time they do not have an imperative meaning.

(Searle 1975:76)

There are four basic types of structural clause (declarative, interrogative, imperative and the very rare exclamative), which generally correspond directly to four basic speech act functions (statement, question, directive, exclamation). Modal interrogatives are indirect speech acts when they function as directives rather than questions. A directive such as *Can I have my book back?*, which uses interrogative syntax, has the appearance of a yes-no question, thereby giving the addressee (at least in theory) the option to say either 'yes' or 'no'. Going one step further, a directive such as *Can you turn it on?* gives the addressee the option to decline on the perfectly reasonable grounds that they are just not *able* to fulfil the request. Such forms are fully conventionalised in English and are unlikely to be interpreted as anything other than directives. By using an indirect speech act, however, the speaker has signalled their desire to minimise the imposition of the directive and by doing so attends to the hearer's negative face wants.

Children in both schools used all three categories of modal interrogatives, but the children at Murrayfield Primary used modal interrogatives to a greater extent than those at Ironstone Primary (25.3% compared to 11.8%). A second major difference between the two schools is in the children's use of imperatives with singular 'us'. While the Ironstone Primary participants used this strategy in 7.6% of directives, it occurred only 1.0% of the time at Murrayfield Primary. We might hypothesise, then, that while the children at Murrayfield Primary prefer to reduce the imposition of a directive by using conventionally indirect speech acts such as modal interrogatives, the children at Ironstone Primary are more likely to soften the imperative form, and use of the 'plural' pronoun is one of the strategies they adopt. Before investigating these differences further, Section 4.3.3 examines the impact that addressee has on the children's choice of directive.

4.3.3 Impact of Addressee

We might expect there to be a difference between directives issued to adults in the school environment and those directed towards other children. In order to investigate this assumption, Table 4.2 shows the data stratified according to whether the recipient of a directive was an adult or a child. When the addressee was another child, the preferred strategy, by far, was 'imperative (excluding singular 'us' and plural 'let's')'. This particular strategy accounts for around two thirds of all directives issued to other children (65.7% at Ironstone, 67.4% at Murrayfield). While imperatives were not used with adults to the same extent that they were with children, they were still the most popular strategy for issuing child-adult directives at Ironstone Primary, and the second most popular at Murrayfield Primary (after first person modal interrogatives). On closer inspection, however, the data behind these figures reveal some interesting patterns. Of the 30 imperatives that were issued to

adults at Ironstone Primary, 23 were directed towards me, and 5 were addressed to a dinner lady. Only 2 imperatives were addressed to a member of the teaching staff, Mrs Trotter, the class teaching assistant. The situation is remarkably similar at Murrayfield Primary, where 33 of the 36 imperatives were directed to me, 2 to a dinner lady, and only 1 to the class teacher, Miss Flyn. The children at both schools clearly vary their choice of directive according to addressee, but the decision making process involves more than a simple distinction according to age (i.e. adult or child). It would appear that the children rank the adults in each community of practice according to relative power or status. Towards the top of this hierarchy is the class teacher. There is only 1 imperative in the data directed towards a teacher. It occurs in Murrayfield Primary when a group of students are giving a presentation using PowerPoint. A problem arises with the computer, and Beth, who is in the audience, offers some advice: *Hit space bar Miss*. Beth's imperative is intended to reach the children at the computer, but she appeals to the teacher's authority in order to gain validation for her suggestion. We might argue, then, that the true addressee in this example is not the teacher at all but the group presenting, since it is their behaviour that Beth wants to influence. Either way, we can be quite confident that this imperative falls much further towards the 'benefit to hearer' as opposed to 'cost to hearer' end of the pragmatic scale (Leech 1983:123) and is hence not significantly face-threatening.

Classroom teaching assistants fall slightly below the teachers in the children's hierarchy: Mrs Trotter at Ironstone Primary is the recipient of 2 imperatives. Further down the hierarchy are the dinner ladies who received 7 imperatives. This tallies with my own observations regarding the children's interactions with the dinner ladies in the playground. It was evident that the women in this environment are

Table 4.2: Directives by addressee

	Ironstone Primary						Murrayfield Primary					
	Adult		Child		Not known	Total	Adult		Child		Not known	Total
	N	%	N	%			N	%	N	%		
Imperative (exc. singular 'us' & plural 'let's')	30	27.8%	430	65.7%	1	461	36	24.7%	426	67.4%	1	463
Imperative singular 'us'	0	0.0%	58	8.9%	0	58	0	0.0%	8	1.1%	0	8
Imperative plural 'let's'	0	0.0%	25	3.8%	0	25	0	0.0%	10	1.6%	0	10
'Howay'	0	0.0%	41	6.3%	0	41	0	0.0%	7	1.1%	0	7
2nd person expression of obligation	2	1.9%	26	4.0%	0	28	4	2.7%	25	4.0%	0	29
1st person expression of obligation	0	0.0%	6	0.9%	0	6	0	0.0%	4	0.6%	0	4
2nd person expression of need/want	1	0.9%	9	1.4%	0	10	0	0.0%	18	2.8%	0	18
1st person expression of need/want	28	25.9%	14	2.1%	0	42	7	4.8%	35	5.5%	0	42
3rd person expression of need/want	3	2.8%	2	0.3%	0	5	11	7.5%	1	0.2%	0	12
2nd person modal interrogatives	19	17.6%	10	1.5%	1	30	21	14.4%	29	4.6%	1	51
1st person modal interrogatives	20	18.5%	33	5.0%	2	55	65	44.5%	69	10.9%	0	134
3rd person modal interrogatives	5	4.6%	0	0.0%	0	5	2	1.4%	1	0.2%	0	3
TOTAL	108	100%	654	100%	4	766	146	100%	633	100%	2	781
	14%		85%		1%		19%		81%		0%	

treated with less deference than the teachers by the children. This was specifically commented on, in fact, by one of the teachers in the staffroom at Murrayfield Primary, who felt strongly that the children's attitude towards the dinner ladies was inappropriate.

At the bottom of the adult hierarchy is me. Does this mean that the children had very little respect for me? I believe that the situation is in fact much more complex, and reveals something interesting about the way in which the children viewed me. In Chapter 2, I reflected on the ambiguity of my role within these schools during the period of the ethnography. Not only was I both researcher and friend (see Milroy 1987a:66), I was also teacher or helper. The children called me 'Miss' or 'Miss Snell' and came to me for help with their work in the classroom. There were also occasions in the classroom when I was given responsibility for monitoring the children's behaviour (e.g. if the teacher was temporarily absent) and in such situations I often had to reprimand the children to maintain order. In this respect, I was much like a teacher, or a teaching assistant. But the children also came to me in the playground to chat, tell me the latest gossip, or ask me to join in with their games. While the children's relationships with the teachers were generally stable, their behaviour to me could be variable. On some days I was particularly popular, especially with groups of girls, but there were other occasions when I fell out of favour. I am reminded here of one particular girl at Murrayfield Primary who was annoyed with me because I had not given her the radio-microphone that morning. She proceeded to openly ignore me and exclude me from her group – would she have behaved this way towards a teacher or other member of staff? Further, my presence in the playground did not prevent behaviour such as swearing or fighting, for which the children would have been punished by a teacher. The ambiguity of my

role meant that I was in a good position to see a wide range of behaviour from the children. From their perspective, this ambiguity is reflected in their use of directives. Although the children do use more polite, indirect forms with me (such as modal interrogatives), the most frequently occurring strategy in both schools was the imperative (see Table 4.3). Although I was an adult, and a researcher, the children's linguistic behaviour here gives a clear indication that the power differential was not completely in my favour. The children were aware that they were helping me and so I was obliged to them.

Table 4.3: Directives addressed to Miss Snell

	Ironstone		Murrayfield	
	N	%	N	%
Imperative (exc. singular 'us' & plural 'let's')	22	34.4%	33	35.9%
2nd person expression of obligation	0	0.0%	2	2.2%
1st person expression of need/want	18	28.1%	4	4.3%
3rd person expression of need/want	3	4.7%	11	12.0%
2nd person modal interrogatives	14	21.9%	17	18.5%
1st person modal interrogatives	4	6.3%	24	26.1%
3rd person modal interrogatives	3	4.7%	1	1.1%
TOTAL	64		92	

Second person expressions of obligation and second person expressions of need/want were very rarely directed to adults. In children's play it may be normal to control 'the addressee's action by invoking prescribed procedures or conventions' (Achiba 2003:58), but this would be considered inappropriate when interacting with an adult. As with the use of imperatives, however, the adults in these two communities of practice were ranked according to relative power/status. In Ironstone Primary, second person expressions of obligation and need/want were addressed to the class teaching assistant, Mrs Trotter, but never to the class teacher. Of the 4

second person expressions of obligation uttered at Murrayfield Primary, 2 were to me and 1 was to the class teaching assistant, Mrs Miller. Only 1 of these examples was addressed to the class teacher, Miss Flynn: *Space bar. Miss you've got to hit space bar. Aw no.* It occurred as part of the same interaction as the imperative discussed above, and as such, the same conditions apply.

Ervin-Tripp (1977) and Gordon and Ervin-Tripp (1984) report that first person expressions of need/want are used early by children when addressing adults. We can see this strategy being adopted at Ironstone Primary where, after imperatives, first person expressions of need/want were the preferred form of directive with adult interlocutors. This was a strategy used often with adults but relatively rarely with other children; an unsurprising result since children are used to having their needs fulfilled by adults rather than peers. In Achiba's (2003) study of the acquisition of requests in English by a seven-year-old Japanese girl, she found that want statements were addressed to adult addressees much more frequently than to other interlocutors. In contrast, at Murrayfield Primary, expressions of need/want occurred only seven times with adult addressees. It seems that the children at Murrayfield Primary had found other strategies for formulating directives to adults, perhaps ones that were more effective. Or perhaps this difference in usage highlights a socio-cultural distinction between the two schools. Do the children at Ironstone Primary rely on the help and support of adults at school more than their counterparts at Murrayfield? Five of the examples in Ironstone Primary were simply of the form 'I need help/helping'. From my own observations of both classrooms this seems like a plausible explanation. At Murrayfield Primary, the children attended to tasks set by the teacher with relatively little fuss. At Ironstone Primary, on the other hand, the children often made repeated requests for help. This is not necessarily the same as

saying that the children at Ironstone Primary *required* more help with their work or with fulfilling basic needs in the classroom, just that the culture of the classroom was such that they felt comfortable in expressing their needs and were confident that the adults in the classroom would meet those needs. During my time at Ironstone Primary, a number of teachers and teaching assistants commented to me that the children in this class were 'immature'. Any actual immaturity, if present, may have resulted in the children expressing their needs to the teacher/teaching assistant rather than actively attempting to help themselves. Or, the adults' *perception* of the students' immaturity may have translated into their responding more readily to the children's expressions of want/need, thus reinforcing the children's notion that these adults were there to support them unreservedly. In their study of the use of directives among a group of black American children aged 7 to 12 years, Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan note: '[a]ll situations in our study in which directives took the form of Statements of Desire are characterised by *a clear expectancy on the part of the speaker of compliance by the addressee*' [my emphasis] (Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan 1977:194). A further possible explanation is simply that the activities that the recordings picked up at Ironstone Primary encouraged expressions of want/need. 10 of the examples, for instance, occurred when the children were drawing pictures that were to be entered into a competition. After seeing that I had some (small) skill at drawing, many of the children wanted my help with this. There is no reason why they could not have used other forms of directive on this occasion, but they may have felt that emphasising their lack of skill and subsequent need would make it more likely that I would respond positively. This is, however, speculative; it would make an interesting future study to investigate these kinds of differences more rigorously. Is there any correlation between preferred strategy and the rate of success

that directives have? Do children learn at school what are considered ‘appropriate’ requests to be directed at teachers and other adults in the classroom? Is this related to the kinds of mentality that classrooms foster with regard to self-help as opposed to reliance on the teacher? How does the way that children address adults at school compare to their behaviour at home? How far does activity type affect the choice of directive? In future work, quantitative analysis could certainly be extended to code for factors such as activity type, outcome (i.e. success/failure of directive), and speaker goal. While this work is beyond the scope of this thesis, some of these factors will be discussed as part of the qualitative analysis of paired extracts from each school in Section 4.4.6.

Although Murrayfield Primary participants tended not to use expressions of need/want with adults, they did use them with each other. Table 4.2 shows that in relation to child addressees, this strategy was used twice as frequently at Murrayfield Primary as it was at Ironstone Primary. It is important to look at the examples behind these figures, though. Of the 35 examples included in this category, 17 are of the type discussed in Section 4.3.1.2 as instructions which use inclusive ‘we’. For example, when Michelle is trying to organise a game in the playground, she tells her friends *no we a- we need in a circle* and it is clear to her playmates that she is giving them an instruction that they need to follow. This is made even clearer when she later reformulates this instruction as an imperative: *go over there in a circle*. This kind of directive will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.4.2. There is only one example of this sort at Ironstone Primary. If these examples are taken out of this category, the two schools have a reasonably similar relative frequency for directives expressed as first person statements of need/want (Ironstone: 2.0%; Murrayfield: 2.8%).

First person modal interrogatives were the most popular strategy for directives addressed to adults in Murrayfield Primary, where they were used 44.5% of the time. These generally took the form of requests for permission: *Miss can I go and put a tissue on my foot because it's all bleeding?*, *Miss now can I colour it in quickly?*, *Oh can I do it please?*, *Miss can I go and sit on the carpet because I can't see?*, *Miss can I sit on this chair for bingo?* This kind of directive was used less frequently to adults in Ironstone primary (18.5% of total directives). We might hypothesise that this represents a difference in the ethos of the classroom community of practice at Murrayfield Primary compared to Ironstone Primary. As discussed in Chapter 2, it quickly became clear to me that the children at Murrayfield Primary conformed to the school's (and my own) expectations of 'good' behaviour to a much greater degree than those at Ironstone Primary. The classroom at Murrayfield was governed by the teacher's authority; this community of practice was regulated by strict rules set down by the teachers and adhered to by the children. Within this environment, the children made frequent requests for permission as they attempted to successfully negotiate their way through the structure of the school day. The children at Ironstone Primary, on the other hand, responded differently to the structure of the classroom and to the teacher's authority; they often omitted to seek permission in advance for actions unrelated to the task at hand.

There were a number of strategies that were used exclusively with other children: imperatives with singular 'us'; imperatives with plural 'let's'; and 'howay'. Focusing only on directives addressed to children helps us see more clearly the differences that exist between the two schools. The difference in the usage of singular 'us', for example, now appears more marked: Ironstone 8.9%; Murrayfield 1.1%. Imperatives with singular 'us' are in fact the second most frequently used strategy in child-child

directives at Ironstone Primary. Second place at Murrayfield Primary, on the other hand, goes to first person modal interrogatives (10.9%). So, we can refine the hypothesis stated earlier: when addressing other children, the students at Murrayfield Primary prefer to reduce the imposition of a directive by using indirect speech acts such as modal interrogatives, while the children at Ironstone Primary are more likely to soften the imperative form using singular 'us'. But in what situations might it be necessary to reduce the imposition of a directive? Within the child peer group, power hierarchies and relative status are constantly renegotiated. Relationships between the children in both communities of practice were unstable, and the boundaries between friendship groups were in constant flux. In this volatile environment, directives were inherently risky. The children therefore chose from a diverse range of strategic forms when issuing directives to each other, and often entered into complex negotiations. Since friendships could change dramatically in a short space of time, it was impossible to code individual directives with such information (cf. Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan 1977:197). The only way to take account of the complexities of peer-group relations is therefore through close qualitative analysis, to which we will turn in the following sections.

4.4 Directives in context

The preceding analysis has shown that directives can be realised by numerous grammatical structures. We might ask, as Ervin-Tripp et al. (1990:310) did, why do directives take so many forms? Their answer: 'politeness or, more generally, social meaning'. In the following analysis, I will aim to discover what kinds of social meaning the children in this study encoded into the different linguistic features that made up their directives. Is there more at stake than simple politeness?

4.4.1 Imperatives with singular 'us'

Section 4.2 established that the widespread use of plural pronouns to singular addressees is understood as indicating deference or distance. Brown and Levinson (1987) analyse this usage as an aspect of negative politeness. They suggest a number of possible motives for this phenomenon, including the following:

in all societies where a person's social status is fundamentally linked to membership in a group, to treat persons as representatives of a group rather than as relatively powerless individuals would be to refer to their social standing and the backing that they derive from their group.

(Brown and Levinson 1987:199)

Moving the perspective from second person to first person reference, this explanation can be applied to the use of imperatives with singular 'us'. In using the plural pronoun when issuing an imperative, speakers distance themselves from the force of the imperative by implying group support, such that the agent of the face-threatening act is 'other than [the] S[peaker], or at least possibly not [the] S[peaker] or not the S[peaker] alone' (Brown and Levinson 1987:190). Used as an impersonalising mechanism to distance the speaker from the force of the imperative, then, we can infer that singular 'us' expresses negative politeness. But do Brown and Levinson have anything specific to say about the use of singular 'us' itself? In an earlier work, they invite their readers to contrast the following request strategies:

- (1) You'll lend us a fiver, won't you mate.
- (2) You wouldn't by any chance be able to lend me five pounds, would you?

(Brown and Levinson 1979:320)

In their analysis of the differences between these two directives, they state that the 'first intuitively involves interactional *optimism*, the second interactional *pessimism*,

and the particular constellation of negative, subjunctive and remote possibility features in the second can be seen to derive rationally from the corresponding strategy' (Brown and Levinson 1979:320). They do not, however, explicitly comment on the change from 'us' in the first example (where it is presumably being used with singular reference) to 'me' in the second. In their later model of politeness, they include the example 'Give us a break. (i.e. *me*)' under the positive politeness strategy 'Include both S[peaker] and H[earer] in the activity' (Brown and Levinson 1987:127). Brown and Levinson argue that this strategy mitigates the force of a directive because it implies that both speaker and hearer will benefit equally from the directive. Brown and Levinson's example here is ambiguous, though, because 'Give us/me a break' is a fixed expression in English which means something like 'stop nagging/shouting (etc.) at me'. The 'us' in this utterance could be seen as a form of inclusive 'we' in that both speaker and hearer are locked in some kind of disagreement, and ending that disagreement would arguably benefit both. But this is not how singular 'us' functions in my data in utterances such as 'give us it'. Here 'us' does not appear to include the hearer; it is an example of exclusive 'we': 'a reminder that I do not stand alone' (Brown and Levinson 1987:202). Singular 'us' does, however, have the potential to allude to an in-group to which both speaker and hearer belong. While negative politeness is generally restricted to addressing the particular face want being affected by the face-threatening act, the sphere of positive politeness is widened to include the kinds of linguistic behaviour which are generally exchanged between intimates (e.g. indicating shared wants and shared knowledge). Perceived as a salient feature of the local dialect, singular 'us' may have a role to play as a marker of shared experience and in-group identity, and as such, perhaps sits within Brown and Levinson's

positive-politeness strategy of ‘claim in-group membership’: ‘by using any of the innumerable ways to convey in-group membership, [the] S[peaker] can implicitly claim the common ground with [the] H[earer] that is carried by that definition of the group’ (Brown and Levinson 1987:107). In using imperatives with singular ‘us’, the speakers in this study are thus perhaps trying to imply closeness with their addressee by virtue of their shared membership in some friendship, school, or local community group. Groups in this sense are not necessarily concrete structures but abstractions which exist in the minds of individuals (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985:4-5)

The above discussion suggests that singular ‘us’ expresses both positive *and* negative politeness. This appears to be a contradiction since negative politeness strategies are generally used for social distancing, while positive politeness is generally used to minimise social distance. At this point, it is perhaps wise to attach a note of caution to Brown and Levinson’s model which, by their own admission, takes a ‘pan-cultural perspective’ and so, while extremely useful at a certain level of generalisation, does not (and could not possibly) account for the complexities of what actually happens on the ground. For this, we must explore the practice of the communities under consideration. As Eckert argues, linguistic features

come to be associated with fairly abstract meanings, derived from large-scale patterns in layered and overlapping communities (imagined or otherwise). They then take on more local and precise meanings as they are vivified in locally-recognized styles which are, in turn, built on recognizable combinations of shared resources.

(Eckert 2002:5)

Having established that plural pronouns are linked, at an abstract level, to notions of politeness and social distance, what are the ‘local and precise meanings’ that singular ‘us’ takes on in the two communities of practice under investigation?

In order to make a case for the special social and pragmatic functions ascribed by the children in my study to imperatives with singular 'us', I will address extended examples from the data in detail because, as Podesva (2008) points out, '[p]articlar variants are unlikely to be randomly distributed over discourse; rather, if they have social meanings, they occur where their meanings are indexed in interaction'.

4.4.1.1 *Ironstone Primary*

One of the Ironstone Primary students, Clare, uses 'us' with singular reference on 22 occasions, the majority of which cluster in 2 key interactions. The first takes place in the Ironstone Primary school playground where a group of girls are messing around and stealing each other's shoes. Clare has approached this group of girls and wants to join in the fun. The girls then steal Clare's shoe, however, and she has to make a series of requests to get it back.

Extract 4.1

- 1 Clare: Gemma give us it. (1 second) Quick Gemma give us it.
2 Gemma: No
3 Clare: What we going to do, hide it?
4 ((Background noise and sound of laughing – 23 seconds))
5 Jane: (My feet was freezing.)
6 Clare: My shoe
7 Jane: (My feet were freezing.) Let me take your boots off (young
8 lady).
9 Clare: Why don't we take yours off? (.) By the way Jane has already
10 tried. (1.5 seconds) Jane has already tried but my shoes don't
11 come off.
12 Joanne: (I've stopped)
13 Anon: ((Screams))
14 Jane: (xxxx) get Clare's off. Get Clare's off.
15 ((Inaudible background noise and laughing – 7.1 seconds))
16 Rosie: Clare I promise I won't get you. (I won't be able to) get you.
17 Clare: I'm not (going on anyone's back) No::!

18 Danielle: (I don't think she should) I just want to try see how far (I can
19 go with Clare. Oh please Clare.)

20 Joanne: (xxxxxxx Clare) you haven't had a proper piggy back yet
21 from there.

22 Danielle: [I know yeah.

23 Clare: [And Tina.

24 Joanne: Howay.

25 Danielle: Go on. Let me take you up on (xxx).

26 Clare: Oh f(hhhhh)fine I know what you're going to do. I don't care
27 (1.5 seconds) I know, I don't care.

28 Anon: Get them now.

29 Tina: I can't get them off.

.

. (2 minutes 49 seconds)

.

30 Jane: We got a boot we got a boot we got a boot we got a boot.

31 Clare: She's got my shoe. ((laughs))
32 ((Background noise – 10 seconds)

33 Clare: Give us it.

34 Anon: ((chanting)) Clare's shoe Clare's [shoe Clare's shoe
35 Anon: [(Pass us it.)
36 ((Background noise)) (3 seconds)

37 Clare: Give us it.

38 Anon: (I know I haven't got it.)

39 Clare: Rosie (2 seconds) Rosie give us it.
40 ((Inaudible background noise)) (12 seconds)

41 Anon: Get Clare's [feet.
42 Clare: [(Give us back) my shoe.

43 Jane: Get Clare's feet.
44 ((Inaudible background noise – 2 seconds))

45 Anon: Get it get it.

46 Joanne: Danielle Danielle get it ((laughing))

47 Anon: We've got one.

48 Anon: Alright you may as well give (her) the other one.

49 Gemma: Can I get that one?

50 Jane: Yeah lay down on the floor.

51 Anon: Yeah lay down (xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.)
52 ((Background noise)) (3 seconds)

- 53 Tina: Because Clare's got one shoe on.
- 54 Anon: Give me the shoe (lee) now.
- 55 ((Background noise; children running around – 16 seconds))
- 56 Clare: He::lp
- 57 ((Sound of Clare running – 12 seconds))
- 58 Clare: **Give us my shoe back.**
- 59 Tina: She hasn't got her shoe (xxxxxxxxxxxxx she's a) lucky woman.
- 60 Clare: Jane you- (2.5 seconds) **Give us my shoe back.** (1.5 seconds)
- 61 **Give us my back.** (1 second) **Give us my shoe back.**

Clare is quite outspoken and often falls out with the other children. I witnessed a number of arguments involving Clare during my visits to Ironstone Primary. The class teaching assistant commented on Clare's propensity to court disagreement, and a number of the children singled her out to me as a bully or a troublemaker. On this occasion, however, Clare wants to be able to join in with the play, which is why she has approached the girls in the first place. Notice the way that Clare uses inclusive 'we' in her question to Gemma on line 3: *What we going to do, hide it?*

The group of girls with whom Clare is trying to engage in this extract has no official power over her, but Clare is not a fully integrated member of this group, and therefore the interaction ranks low on a scale of solidarity. Moreover, Clare becomes the target of the girls' joke and so is further excluded from the group. Mitchell-Kernan and Kernan (1977) found that politeness to peer group members increased when the speaker was temporarily estranged from the peer group. Clare found herself in this position more often than the other girls due to her forthright manner. Under normal circumstances, this generally did not seem to bother Clare, but faced with bare feet on a wet November day, things were slightly different. I would suggest that Clare is here aware of her position and acknowledges her marginal place within this social group through the use of singular 'us' (lines 1, 33, 37, 39, 58, 60, 61). Her goal is to get her shoe back, but, as already noted, imperatives such

as 'give me it' constitute face-threatening acts. In this context, it makes sense that Clare would choose to mitigate the face-threatening act; she does not want to provoke an argument that would cause a delay in the return of her shoe. There are, of course, other strategies that Clare could have chosen for formulating a 'polite' directive, but the use of an imperative with singular 'us' has added significance. In a situation where Clare lacks status, she attempts to augment her own social standing (and hence her chances of getting the shoe back) by implying group support. Moreover, the group to which Clare alludes also has the potential to include her addressees, thus implying shared membership for speaker and hearer in an in-group. Further, incorporating what is regarded as a dialectal feature into the directive implies a degree of shared knowledge or common ground. The use of singular 'us' therefore enhances solidarity by capitalising on the associations of intimacy that come with membership of an in-group. The social meanings attached to the use of imperatives with singular 'us' have been cultivated by the Ironstone Primary community of practice. Clare, as a member of this community, understands this special application of 'us' and is, I would argue, using it here in a socially meaningful way. Although Clare's use of singular 'us' may be less than fully conscious (in that the use of 'us' in this type of context may have become automated through habitual use), Clare is clearly making a linguistic choice which orients to her immediate interactional goals. Clare is the most prolific user of imperatives with singular 'us', but it is important to note that she does use a number of *other* strategies for formulating directives. The recordings capture 72 directives from Clare in total, including 42 from the category of imperatives excluding singular 'us' and plural 'let's', and 8 of these are imperatives with 'me' (e.g. *Now let me paint this*

one again). The motivations behind her choice of these different strategies will be examined in Section 4.4.6.

Linguistic choice can embody temporary interactional identities and relations as in Extract 4.1, or more permanent identities as in the following extract:

Extract 4.2

Helen and Caroline are in the playground. Helen is wearing the radio-microphone.

- 1 Helen: Aw she's laughing at me because she can still hear me.
2 Caroline: Let us say thanks for the sweets.
3 Helen: No:: (.) I've already said that. ((Stress on 'I'))
. .
. (1 minute 7 seconds)
. .
4 Caroline: Ere let us have [(a go at the jack).
5 Helen: [No::
6 Helen: No she's- she's got- she isn't listening.
. .
. (12 seconds)
. .
7 Helen: Miss Snell (0.7 seconds) Miss Snell (1.2 seconds) Miss Snell
8 Caroline said she goes out with Mark. It's been recorded now.
9 It's inside the machine and then she can listen to it.
10 Caroline: Let me sa:y-
11 ((Background noise – 2.8 seconds))
12 Helen: Caroline said she fancies me (1 second) Oo ((laughs)) I said
13 Caroline said she fancies me by an accident ((laughs))
14 Caroline: Let us say it properly plea:se.

Helen was the first girl that I asked to wear the radio-microphone when I was testing it out because it was clear to me that she was extremely talkative and would relish the opportunity to be recorded. I tried to give all of the children who had brought in signed consent forms the chance to wear the microphone, and many of the children put themselves forward for the task with great gusto. In the same way that Caroline

does not gain permission to talk into the microphone in this extract, however, she missed out on being able to wear the microphone herself due to lack of time. Listening back to recordings, I realised that Caroline was actually very keen to have the microphone, but I was not aware of this fact during fieldwork because she lacked the confidence to push herself forward. The way that these aspects of Caroline's personality are encoded in her linguistic practices will be discussed further in Chapter 5, where I examine her use of right dislocation. In this extract, Caroline makes several bids for permission to talk into the microphone. In terms of relative power and status, Caroline ranks firmly below the confident Helen. The two girls have a relationship in which Helen clearly has the upper-hand (notice how Helen teases Caroline on lines 8 and 12). The fact that Helen has the coveted microphone gives her further power in this interaction. Caroline's directives are therefore inherently risky so she adopts the strategy of imperative with singular 'us' in lines 2 and 4. Caroline could perhaps have used a modal interrogative in order to formulate a polite, indirect request (e.g. 'Can I say thanks for the sweets?') but this would have lacked the force of an imperative, and moreover, would not have encoded the same sense of shared experience and in-group membership as singular 'us'. Brown and Levinson point out that positive politeness techniques are not just used to mitigate a face-threatening act; they are also used 'in general as a kind of social accelerator, where [the] S[peaker], in using them, indicates that he [sic] wants to "come closer" to [the] H[earer]' (Brown and Levinson 1987:103). Caroline's use of singular 'us' in this extract functions not only to soften her imperatives, but also to align her with Helen, establishing her as part of a friendship group. Both of Caroline's requests are met with a staunch refusal. Helen's elongated *no::* in line 5 is particularly aggressive as it comes before Caroline has finished her utterance. In the face of this refusal,

Caroline momentarily adopts standard ‘me’ in line 10 (*Let me sa:y-*), but does not complete this directive. Instead, she reverts back to an imperative with singular ‘us’ in line 14, adding the politeness marker ‘please’ as a sign that she accepts her position in this social dyad.

In the extracts analysed so far, directives were risky largely due to the state of the relationship between interlocutors. In the following extract, I would suggest that the directives are risky because of the nature of the imposition. The interaction begins just after the school secretary has handed out the annual photographs that the children had had taken by an official photographer earlier that day. There is a ripple of excitement in the room as the children look at their own photographs, then vie to catch a glimpse of the portraits of others.

Extract 4.3

- | | | |
|----|-----------|--|
| 1 | Clare: | O::ff (.) Let’s have a look at yours (1.2 seconds) please. (2.1 |
| 2 | | seconds) Where? |
| 3 | | ((Classroom noise and inaudible speech – 5 seconds)) |
| 4 | Clare: | Let’s have a look at yours. (1.1 seconds) I’ll show you mine. |
| 5 | | (1.4 seconds) Show us yours. (0.8 seconds) ha ha (0.7 |
| 6 | | seconds) (nope). |
| 7 | | ((Classroom noise and inaudible talk – 5.8 seconds)) |
| 8 | Clare: | Let’s have a look at yours (.) no please Nathan |
| 9 | Danielle: | Look, I’ll show you mine. Let’s see yours. |
| 10 | Aaron: | Let’s see yours. |
| 11 | Clare: | No show us yours² first. |
| 12 | Aaron: | No:: |
| 13 | | ((Classroom noise – 12 seconds)) |
| 14 | Clare: | I know (0.6 seconds) so let’s have a look. |

² Given that this usage patterns with Clare’s earlier utterances, it is likely that ‘us’ in this example is still singular, but now that Danielle has become involved in the conversation, ‘us’ could be plural, referring to both of them. This example is therefore classed as ‘uncertain’ in the quantitative analysis in Table 4.1.

- 15 ((Classroom noise – 4.1 seconds))
- 16 Clare: (Let’s have a look). (1.9 seconds) Not funny.
.
. (10 minutes 18 seconds)
.
- 17 Robert: Let’s have a look at yours.
- 18 ((Classroom noise – 28 seconds))
- 19 Danielle: Do you know what I did right? I’ve just slipped on Robert’s
20 bag he was going like this-
21 ((Classroom noise – 19.9 seconds))
- 22 Tina: Clare I’ll give you a look. (1.2 seconds) Clare a::w my: go:d
23 (1.5 seconds) (Me and xxxxx) didn’t smile (.) Seen how many
24 m- have you seen-
- 25: Sam: I look stupid me (and my head’s sticking out).
- 26 Jane: Ere let’s have a look Clare.
- 27 Clare: No:::
- 28 Tina: Clare (doesn’t that-)
- 29 Jane: I showed you mine.
- 30 Clare: No you haven’t.
- 31 Jane: Yeah I did.
- 32 Clare: No you never.
- 33 Jane: I’ll show you mine.
- 34 Clare: No:::
- 35 Jane: Please (only me).
36 ((Classroom noise – 4.7 seconds))
- 37 Jane: (Babe) you look nice.
.
. (1 minute 33 seconds)
.
- 38 Danielle: Let’s see yours. (1.4 seconds) You’ve spoilt yours.
- 39 Clare: So::

Clare uses ‘us’ with singular reference 8 times in this extract, but she is not alone. Aaron, Danielle, Jane and Robert also use imperatives with singular ‘us’. The imposition involved in obeying the directives highlighted above is great because, not only do they threaten the hearer’s negative face, as do all directives in that they

require action on the part of the hearer and thus threaten the hearer's basic want to be unimpeded in their actions, but they also threaten the hearer's positive face. The positive self-image that the hearer claims for themselves may be threatened if the (often unforgiving) presentation of their features in the school photograph provokes ridicule or insults from classmates. Many of the children were extremely guarded about letting anyone see their photograph, and therefore subtle means of persuasion were required. Again, imperatives with singular 'us' are a suitable strategy because they appeal to that sense of in-group solidarity – 'we all had to have our photographs taken and we're all similarly embarrassed by them'.

This extract includes a number of directives of the form 'let's X' (e.g. *let's have a look at yours*). These utterances were categorised as instances of imperatives with singular 'us', rather than plural 'let's', because they do not suggest collaborative action between speaker and addressee (compare the examples in Section 4.4.2). I argue that they are actually contracted forms of 'let us X'. So when Clare says *Let's have a look at yours* on line 4, her utterance is a contracted form of 'Let us have a look at yours'. Clare wants the speaker to give her their photograph so that she can have a look; there is no suggestion that Clare wants them to view the photograph together. This interpretation is supported by Clare's reformulation on line 5 to *Show us yours*. Notice also that a number of the imperatives occur with the statement *I'll show you mine* (lines 4, 9 and 33), and *I showed you mine* (line 29): the implication, 'I'll show you mine if you let me see yours'. Admittedly, the distinction between utterances such as *let's have a look at yours*, which are categorised as examples of singular 'us', and *let's have a look for the register* which are discussed in Section 4.4.2, is not clear cut. As already noted, there is an ambiguity between inclusive and exclusive 'we' forms in the usage of singular 'us'. 'Us' can be exclusive and refer

hypothetically to the speaker and some other person or group, or it can be inclusive and refer metaphorically (and potentially, actually) to the speaker and hearer together (as members of an in-group). This sense of ambiguity is heightened when the contracted form ‘let’s’ is used. Speakers can capitalise on this ambiguity by using ‘let’s’ to make an imperative sound less authoritative, thus minimising the strength of the imposition. Contraction itself serves positive-politeness ends, being a marker of ‘in-group membership and casual informality’ (Brown and Levinson 1987:270). There are 12 examples of the type ‘let’s X’ categorised as imperatives with singular ‘us’ in the Ironstone data and 4 in the Murrayfield data. At Ironstone Primary there is a second contracted form included within the category of imperatives with singular ‘us’, ‘gis’ [gɪz] (e.g. *gis it*, *gis one*, *gis the camera*). This occurs 9 times in the data and I argue that it is a phonetically reduced form of ‘give us’: [gɪv ʊz] → [gɪvəz] → [gɪz]. As with singular ‘us’ generally, this form is not unique to Teesside. For ‘advanced pupils’ of ‘Sheffieldish’, for example, *giuzit*³ is cited as a useful phrase, translated as ‘Give it to me (please)’ (Whomersley 1981). Notice the inclusion of the politeness marker ‘please’ in the gloss, which demonstrates an implicit acknowledgement that singular ‘us’ has a role to play in mitigating the strength of an imperative. As with the form ‘give us X’, ‘gis X’ is a variant which encodes solidarity and in-group identity.

Clare’s use of singular ‘us’ is greater than any of the other children at Ironstone Primary, and perhaps influences the linguistic behaviour of others (as in Extract 4.3 where Jane, Robert, Aaron and Danielle appear to mimic Clare’s utterances). We might therefore call Clare an ‘iconic speaker’ (Eckert 2000; Zhang 2005; Mendoza-Denton 2008). Iconic speakers are:

³ Thanks to Professor Joan Beal, University of Sheffield, for bringing this example to my attention.

socially salient individuals toward whom others orient, and who become salient and imitated as a result of their extreme behaviour, centrality within their group, and broad social ties. These factors give them greater weight in the definition of styles.

(Mendoza-Denton 2008:210)

Clare was not a popular member of the class – she was outspoken and got into lots of arguments with her classmates – but she was a larger-than-life character in the class who demonstrated ‘extreme behaviour’ and about whom everyone seemed to have an opinion. After a literacy lesson at Ironstone Primary, I made the following note in my fieldwork diary:

The kids were working on a short comprehension exercise. The comprehension was about a girl who started a new school and was bullied and excluded by the ‘super-popular’ girls; these were the girls that no one really liked but who had a position of authority in the school and therefore could do as they pleased. Mrs Monk said that she didn’t think that there were any ‘super-popular’ kids in that class (by which I think she meant that there was no one who would behave like a bully). Aaron Masterson commented, though, that Clare is ‘super-popular’.

A later entry gives another opinion about Clare expressed by a different boy in the class:

I had an interesting conversation with Harry Lipton who said that I shouldn’t have given the mic to Helen⁴. He said that she should be the last one to have it. He then changed his mind and said that Clare should be the last one and Helen second to last. When I asked which girls I should’ve given the microphone to he said Danielle.

While not necessarily liked, then, Clare was certainly ‘salient, identifiable, and indeed recognisable’ and therefore potentially ‘prone to imitation by others’

⁴ The analysis of Extracts 3.4, 4.2 and 5.7, which highlight Helen’s role as class gossip or trouble-maker, provide some explanation as to why Harry objected to Helen being granted the privilege of wearing the radio-microphone.

(Mendoza-Denton 2008:212). Along with Robert, Clare was also the most frequent user of ‘howay’ (see Section 4.4.3). Both children were heard using this dialect term 7 times each (18% of total occurrences) in the recordings.

4.4.1.2 Murrayfield Primary

The option to use imperatives with singular ‘us’ exists in the Murrayfield Primary community of practice, but is exercised infrequently and by only by a small number of participants: Daniel, Craig, Holly, and Tara. The most frequent user of singular ‘us’ is Holly, who accounts for 4 of the 8 examples. Three of these examples occur when Holly is working on a group art project, and this interaction as a whole will be discussed in Section 4.4.6. For now, let’s look at the following example in which Daniel and Ben are working together on an IT project. Ben has been doing most of the work and Daniel is keen to have a go:

Extract 4.4a

- 1 Daniel: Can I do this o:ne? (.) Can I do this page? (2 seconds) Ben let
- 2 *us do this pa::ge.* ((Said with exasperation))
- 3 Ben: Let *me* just do something.

Notice that Daniel begins with the favoured Murrayfield strategy of modal interrogative. This strategy is twice unsuccessful, however, so Daniel follows up with *Ben, let us do this page*. In doing so, he increases the force of his directive from indirect permission request to direct imperative. At the same time, the use of singular ‘us’ appeals to Ben on the grounds that he and Daniel are not only part of the same wider social group, but also part of the smaller project group – ‘we’re meant to be working on this project together’. Daniel’s choice of imperative with singular ‘us’ also reflects an awareness of his relative status in this interaction; singular ‘us’ is here working along dimensions of power as well as solidarity. Notice

that Ben replies: *Let me just do something*. Daniel and Ben are classmates, and friends, so there is no reason why either should wield any power over the other. The activity that the boys are engaged in here, however, is part of the academic domain, within which Daniel generally has little power. Daniel has special educational needs which are met in the classroom by a teaching assistant employed on a part-time basis purely to support Daniel. Ben, on the other hand, is of average academic attainment. In fact, the teacher noted that he could do much better than average if only he applied himself. At this point in the interaction, Ben has been doing most of the work and has control of the computer keyboard. It is Ben who therefore holds the power, and the resulting non-reciprocal relationship appears to be mirrored in the contrast between ‘us’ and ‘me’. In this particular situation, Daniel is aware that he must relinquish power to Ben, and Ben is similarly aware of his superior position. Daniel does not always use the polite ‘us’ form however. Later in the same recording, as the IT lesson is coming to an end, there is the following exchange.

Extract 4.4b

- 1 Daniel: Where’s my tissues?
- 2 ((Classroom noise)) (3 seconds)
- 3 Ben: Your tissues are under there. (2 seconds) Jackson [Daniel’s
- 4 surname] where did you put your tissues?
- 5 Daniel: Give me my tissues.
- 6 Ben: I don’t have them.
- 7 Daniel: Yeah you do.
- 8 Ben: No I don’t.

Daniel is much more forceful here and addresses Ben with *Give me my tissues*, using ‘me’ rather than ‘us’ for the objective singular. This interaction occurs when the children are shutting down their computers and preparing to leave the IT room. The lesson is over and Daniel appears to hold more power in this non-academic

frame. Although Daniel had to yield to Ben's superior IT skills in the previous interaction, he will not passively accept his friend's prank outside of the formal lesson.

4.4.1.3 Summary

Imperatives are the most direct, and hence riskiest, strategy for formulating directives, which is why they tend only to be used with intimates or low-status addressees. Singular 'us' has the potential to distance the speaker from the force of the imperative by implying that the agent of the directive is not the speaker, or at least not solely the speaker. The plural pronoun implies that the speaker does not stand alone; they have the backing of a group. This distancing functions as a negative politeness strategy and mitigates the risk inherent in the imperative. But the group to which the plural pronoun refers (whether it is a circle of friends, the class or school as a whole, or the wider local community) also has the potential to include the addressee. In this way, singular 'us' minimises social distance, emphasising that speaker and addressee are in many respects the same; they are part of the same in-group. Further, as a feature of the local dialect, singular 'us' encodes shared knowledge and common ground between speaker and addressee. Through its association with intimate in-group language, singular 'us' acquires the redressive force of positive politeness.

Several layers of meaning were established in relation to singular 'us'. At the highest level, there is a general (and perhaps universal) tendency for plural pronouns to signify something like politeness or degrees of social distance. At a more local level, social meanings related to shared experience and in-group identity are negotiated within a community of practice. Ultimately though, social meanings are 'constructed in and through their contextualisation in acts of speaking' (Coupland

2007:45). At this micro-level of analysis, it is evident that the same linguistic feature does not have *exactly* the same meaning in every context of use. A range of potential meanings – an ‘indexical field’ (Eckert 2008) – are associated with singular ‘us’ (e.g. politeness, powerlessness, solidarity, camaraderie). The children’s use of singular ‘us’ can only be interpreted in relation to the specific situation, the goals of the interaction, and the social relationships between interlocutors, and ethnographic information is crucial to an understanding of how all of these factors work together.

4.4.2 Collaborative ‘Let’s’ and inclusive ‘we’

The imperatives discussed in the last section were second person imperatives: the implied subject in each case was ‘you’. The directives included in my analysis under plural ‘let’s’, however, are of a different kind. Here, ‘let’s’ functions as

an invariant pragmatic particle introducing independent clauses in which the speaker makes a proposal for action by the speaker and hearer. In this special sense, it may be described as a marker of a first person plural imperative, in which ‘we’ that is the implied subject of the main verb is interpreted as including the hearer.

(Biber et al. 1999:1117)

In this special kind of imperative, ‘Let’s’ is used to invite the addressee to join in an activity with the speaker. The utterance is thus functioning as a kind of proposal or suggestion. Given that ‘Let’s’ implies that both speaker and hearer are equal partners in the task, it is no surprise that this kind of directive is not used by the children with adults; it is a strategy reserved for use within the peer group. At Ironstone Primary, when Caroline says to Clare, *Let’s have a look for the register*, for example, she means for them to search for it together. Clare had just stated that she needed the register and Caroline wants to help her look for it. Similarly, at Murrayfield Primary when Daniel says to Ben, *Yeah let’s do that*, after the pair had reached agreement

about what to do next in their shared task, it is evident that ‘let’s’ includes both speaker and hearer: ‘we’ll do it together’.

There are a number of examples in this category, however, where it seems that an imperative involving ‘let’s’ is functioning as a ‘crypto-directive’, a term Biber et al. give to an authoritative speech act disguised as a collaborative one:

Although typically used to propose a joint action by speaker and hearer(s), it [‘let’s’] sometimes veers towards second person quasi-imperative meaning, in proposing action which is clearly intended to be carried out by the hearer.

(Biber et al. 1999:1117).

At Ironstone Primary, for example, when a group of girls are making up dances in the playground, Jane says to the other girls: *Right let’s start again. (1 second) Start again (0.6 seconds) Let’s start again::n*. The two imperatives with ‘let’s’ do function as ‘a proposal for action by the speaker and hearer’ (Biber et al. 1999:1117); Jane is involved in the dance routine and so would accompany her addressees in ‘starting again’. Notice though that Jane’s utterance also includes the second person imperative, *Start again*. This mixture of strategies perhaps suggests that Jane’s *Let’s start again* is closer to the authoritative (rather than collaborative) end of the scale. Later, the dance team split up into pairs, and Danielle says to her partner, Joanne, *Aw quick let’s do our dance. Right do our dance quick*. As with the previous example, Danielle’s utterance includes a mixture of strategies. The use of ‘let’s’ might indicate that the girls in these extracts are engaged in collaborative tasks, but individuals like Jane and Danielle certainly seem to be in charge of those tasks.

Jane and Danielle are also responsible for all six occurrences in the Ironstone data of first person expressions of obligation such as *we have to learn our dance*. These, along with a certain type of plural first person expression of want/need (e.g. *We*

need to get into that one), were discussed briefly in Sections 4.3.1.2 and 4.3.3. Again, in examples such as these, the ‘I’ and ‘you’ of speaker and hearer are merged into inclusive ‘we’ in order convey a sense of equity. But these utterances are not entirely collaborative; they seem designed to make the hearer take note and comply with the speaker’s instructions.

4.4.3 ‘Howay’ and in-group identity

There were only 7 occurrences of ‘howay’⁵ in the Murrayfield data, 3 of which were attributable to a single speaker, Craig. There were 41 occurrences of ‘howay’ in Ironstone primary, however, from 10 different speakers. As with the use of singular ‘us’, this is perhaps unsurprising: we would expect dialect features to occur with greater frequency in the school whose participants are drawn from an area with lower socioeconomic status. Again, however, my interest lies in how and why the children chose to use this feature. In the earlier discussion of positive politeness (Section 4.4.1), it was noted that the use of an in-group code (which can include dialect and local terminology) can imply intimacy because it assumes that the hearer understands and shares the associations of that code. ‘Howay’ is a dialect term (of obscure origin and etymology) specific to the north-east of England and therefore the use of this term encodes a certain sense of solidarity and in-group identity. Moreover, the meaning and function of this term is not transparent to those outside of the group. In fact, the meaning of ‘howay’ is flexible, context dependent and very much open to negotiation within an interaction. Consider the following utterances, all from Ironstone Primary:

- (1) (a) *Howay then.* (Jane)

⁵ There are various phonetic realisations of this term: [hauwe:], [auwe:], [auwi:].

- (b) *Mark howay over here.* (Aaron)
- (c) *What you eating now then (.) howay.* (Clare)
- (d) *Howay because (1.2 seconds) No: because there's- (.) no way we can. Why don't we use this one (1.4 seconds) and then we can f-* (Clare)
- (e) *Howay you need to let u::s..* (Robert)
- (f) *Aw howay Andrew, you're going to hit me.* (Danielle)

In the first 2 examples, the meaning of *howay* seems to be something like 'come on'. In the remaining examples, this sense is still at the core of the referential meaning, but there are additional layers of meaning. Example (1c), for instance, is part of a dispute at the lunch table about whether or not another girl, Tina, has taken one of Clare's chocolates. The meaning of *howay* here is something like 'come on then, tell me, prove it's not chocolate'. Sometimes there are clues in the surrounding interaction as to the speaker's intended meaning. Example (1f), for instance, is immediately followed up by Joanne who says *Andrew behave*, to which Danielle adds, *Go away Andrew*. So in this situation, *howay* seems to mean something like 'stop it'/'behave'/'leave us alone'/'go away'. The utility of 'howay' lies precisely in the fact that it can mean any one, or all, of these things. As Podesva and Chun (2007) argue, indeterminacy in meaning can sometimes constitute an effective social strategy.

The meaning may fluctuate, but ultimately the pragmatic force of the utterance remains the same. In each of the examples in (1), 'howay' is functioning as a directive. On a number of occasions, 'howay' functions as a directive on its own, but in some examples (13 out of 38, 34% of total), it occurs with another directive. In

such situations it seems to soften the force of the other directive. In Example (1e), for instance, the boys are in the playground playing a game they call ‘bulldog’. This involves running from one side of the playground to the other without getting caught by the person who is ‘on’. Robert’s utterance is addressed to this person because he is standing right in front of Robert and one of the other boys, not even giving them the opportunity to run. So the combined utterance means something like ‘come on, you need to move out of the way and at least let us try to run’. Robert follows this utterance up with *Howay, you can’t guard* (i.e. ‘come on, don’t stand guard over us; it’s not fair’). In both of these examples, and as with Examples (1c), (1d) and (1f) above, the children are appealing to a sense of what is right, fair, and acceptable within this community of practice, and ‘howay’ encapsulates this appeal. So the meaning of *Howay, you can’t guard* can be extended to ‘come on, don’t stand guard over us; it’s not fair, and you know it’. As with singular ‘us’, ‘howay’ marks in-group identity within the Ironstone Primary community of practice. The solidary stance indexed by ‘howay’ mitigates the face-threat inherent in *you can’t guard*, and thus retains the spirit of friendliness and camaraderie in the playground game (cf. Bucholtz’s (forthcoming) analysis of the Mexican American youth slang term ‘güey’). The precise referential, pragmatic and social meanings carried by ‘howay’ are continually renegotiated by members of this community as they interact together.

While relatively infrequent, ‘howay’ does occur in the Murrayfield data. All seven examples are set out below:

- (2) (a) *Howay this one this one.* (Craig)
- (b) *Howay they’re on darts. I want to do darts. ((Putting on funny voice))* (Craig)
- (c) *Right. Howay, everyone done, number one.* (Craig)

- (d) *Howay I haven't put any bit in.* (Holly)
- (e) *Howay, where's Matty man? He supposed to be going in goal.*
(Daniel)
- (f) *Howay (0.5 seconds) I went like that and I got the ball (and it went through his legs and Tim xxxxx)* (Daniel)
- (g) *Howay Fiona* (Tim)

In Examples (2d) to (2g), 'howay' seems to be functioning in a manner similar to that described above. The children in these examples are using 'howay' as part of an appeal to their addressee to recognise some kind of behaviour as being inappropriate or unacceptable. Example (2g) takes place when the children are working in pairs to come up with adjectives to describe a character from a story. It seems that Tim feels his partner, Fiona, is not fully cooperating in the task, which prompts his use of *howay*, meaning 'come on Fiona, join in/do some work'. Examples (2e) and (2f) arise during a playground football game and both are probably addressed to the referee, Neil. In Example (2f), *howay* seems to encapsulate the classic appeal to the referee to take action for the transgression of another player, in this case Tim. Example (2e) is slightly more complex. It may be that, in the preceding interaction, something had happened to prompt Daniel's utterance. The recording is not clear, however, and of course lacks visual information. My best guess is that *howay* here means something like, 'Come on. Stop the game referee. It's not fair – we can't play until we have a goal keeper', but it is impossible to know for certain. This reinforces the point that the precise meaning of 'howay' depends upon the surrounding co-text and context, and its interpretation relies on the shared understandings of group members. Elements of the referential and pragmatic meaning of this term are shared by members of the wider community and, to some extent, the north-east region as a

whole. Certain aspects of social meaning, however, are more limited. Meanings are negotiated, not only within the primary school community of practice, but also within much smaller embedded communities (e.g. boys who congregate every break-time to play football together).

Craig's use of 'howay' is slightly different. All 3 examples occur when Craig is involved in different types of group work. Craig is an outgoing and confident member of the class and naturally takes the lead in shared tasks. In Example (2a), the children have just moved into the ICT room and Craig is calling his co-workers, Freddy and Jeff, over to the computer that he wants to work on. Example (2b) is part of the same interaction. Craig has noticed that some other groups have finished their work and have moved onto something more fun (playing darts on the computer). His use of *howay* in this example means 'hurry up so we can play games'. In Example (2c), Craig is part of a group of children who are working together to score presentations given by other students. Craig is trying to get everyone to tell him their scores quickly so that he can take the results up to the teacher. These examples demonstrate that Craig's use of 'howay' comes at moments when he is asserting his leadership, and in particular, when he wants to use his role as self-elected group leader to get his own way: to choose which computer to work on; to play a computer game he likes; to be the one to deliver the group out-put to the teacher. Craig's use of 'howay', then, seems to be a self-conscious attempt to make his directives appear less authoritative and more solidary in a bid to make them more successful. That this is a strategy he is unable to sustain becomes clear in Extract 4.5, which contextualises Example (2c):

Extract 4.5

- 1 Craig: Right. Howay, everyone done, number one.
2 Sarah: No, no you're not taking it- Rachel you're not taking it up
3 because-
4 Rachel: I am.
5 Sarah: [Is (xxxxxxxxxx)?
6 Craig: [I'm working it out.
7 Rachel: Daniel's already took it.
8 Craig: Right, right, number one ((bangs on table)) Number one.
9 Sarah: Right I've put-
10 Craig: Two
11 ((Background noise – 2.4 seconds))
12 Sarah: Two (0.9 seconds) two::
13 Anon: [One-
14 Craig: [((Shouting)) Just read out (.) ((Quieter)) please.

When the children on Craig's table do not comply with his directive on line 1, he uses more forceful means to bring the group into line, including banging on the table (line 8), and issuing an imperative (line 14). The use of *just* in Craig's utterance on line 14 functions to strengthen the imperative. Although 'just' can be used as a minimiser (in a manner similar to 'a bit', 'a little' etc.), it can also be used for emphasis. The politeness marker, *please*, is added to the end of Craig's utterance as an afterthought; it is as though he has remembered, at this point, the kinds of strategies that are valued in effective group work (see Section 4.4.6). Craig wants to assert his status within the group but realises, to a certain extent, that getting things his own way involves gaining buy-in from his peers. The use of 'howay' is one of the strategies he adopts to achieve this secondary goal. Another strategy is the use of singular 'us'. Craig issues 2 imperatives with singular 'us' in the data. The first example (*Let us see*) comes earlier in the interaction represented in Extract 4.5, when Craig mistrusts the ability of another member of the group to add up the

presentation scores and wants to check the sheet. The second example (*Let us see the end bit*) occurs during the group work in the ICT room from which examples (2a) and (2b) were taken. But how far are the meanings Craig invests in ‘howay’ and singular ‘us’ grounded in a negotiation between speakers in this community of practice? For the group of boys who regularly play football together, there seems to be a shared understanding of what ‘howay’ means to them. We might hypothesise, though, that within the larger community of practice which encompasses the whole year group, ‘howay’ would be less successful as a marker of in-group identity (and hence as a directive) if the social meanings related to in-group solidarity, equity and acceptability were not shared by all members.

4.4.4 Conventionally indirect strategies

In Murrayfield Primary, participants preferred to use conventionally indirect forms such as modal interrogatives over imperatives with singular ‘us’ and ‘howay’. The forms ‘can I...?’ and ‘can you...?’ were the most popular way of formulating modal interrogatives, but there were also other forms present in the data, from both schools, as Tables 4.4 and 4.5 show.

Table 4.4: First person modal interrogatives by addressee

	Ironstone				Murrayfield			
	Adult		Child		Adult		Child	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Can I (we)...?	18	90%	29	88%	52	80%	65	94%
Could I (we)...?	0	0%	0	0%	3	5%	0	0%
Shall I (we)...?	1	5%	2	6%	7	11%	4	6%
Should I (we)...?	1	5%	2	6%	3	5%	0	0%
TOTAL	20		33		65		69	

Table 4.5: Second person modal interrogatives by addressee

	Ironstone				Murrayfield			
	Adult		Child		Adult		Child	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Can you...?	10	56%	2	20%	21	100%	22	79%
Could you...?	0	0%	1	10%	0	0%	0	0%
Will you...?	8	44%	7	70%	0	0%	2	7%
Would you...?	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4	14%
TOTAL	18		10		21		28	

The forms ‘could I...?’/‘could you...?’ are modified forms of ‘can I...?’/‘can you...?’. The past tense modal ‘distances’ the request by shifting the focus away from reality. Directives phrased in this way are less imposing because they make it easier for the addressee not to comply. The past-tense modals signify a hypothetical action by the addressee, and so the addressee can, in theory, give a positive reply without committing themselves to anything in the real world (Leech 1983:121). Directives formed using past tense modals were rare in the data.

There is a difference between the two schools in their use of ‘shall/should I...?’ and ‘will/would you...?’. The numbers are too small to be able to draw significant conclusions or make generalisations, but I will briefly discuss the way in which these forms were used using some extracts from the data. The form ‘will you...?’ is used on only two occasions in Murrayfield Primary but occurred fifteen times in the Ironstone data. Fraser and Nolen (1981) report on English native speakers’ judgements of the relative degree of deference associated with linguistic request forms. According to them, the ‘will you...?’ form was fairly high on the scale of deference. There is some evidence for this in the data. For instance, in the examples that follow, the use of first name, the politeness marker ‘please’ and the conditional element ‘if you...’ signal a high degree of politeness: *Robert please will you pass*

me my plan? (Joanne, Ironstone Primary); *Please (1 second) if you finish yours right, will you help me?* (Sam, Ironstone Primary). The use of ‘will’ does not always signal deference though. On a number of occasions, ‘will...you?’ was said with emphasis and exasperation and was meant to regulate another child’s behaviour: *Aw Danny will you (xxxxx) have it!* (Clare, Ironstone Primary); *Clare will you (pack it in)?* (Andrew, Ironstone Primary); *Miss will you tell Andrew?* (Clare, Ironstone Primary); *Miss will you tell Andrew to get a life and get lost?* (Clare, Ironstone Primary).⁶ At Murrayfield Primary, all of the examples involving ‘will’ or ‘would’ were of this type (e.g. *Will you pack it in Michelle; Gavin would you stop i:t?*). In such examples, the speakers may feel that the additional formality or deference associated with ‘will/would you...?’ adds gravitas to their directive. In the following extract from Ironstone Primary, the association of ‘will you...?’ with deference and the addition of ‘please’ certainly appear to add to the sarcasm:

Extract 4.6

The children are in the middle of a test. Mrs Trotter is helping the low ability table but is unhappy with their responses. Katie is Mrs Trotter’s daughter, who is in the reception class of Ironstone Primary.

- 1 Mrs Trotter: And if I go and get Katie she could tell you.
- 2 Billy: Could she?
- 3 Mrs Trotter: Yes.
- 4 Billy: Please will you go and get her then?

In the Murrayfield data, a single speaker, Michelle, accounts for 7 of the 11 occurrences of ‘shall I...?’. A number of these examples are related to Michelle’s desire to gain permission to go to the ICT room to pick up some bingo sheets from the printer: *Miss shall I go and get the bingo sheets?*; *Miss shall I go and get the bingo tickets now because they’ve been prin-*. This was a hot July day, the last day

⁶ The last two examples may perhaps be seen as encoding politeness and deference to ‘Miss’.

of term, and Michelle was bored and irritable in the classroom. She was therefore eager to perform tasks for the teacher, particularly those that involved her leaving the classroom (the ICT room is in a different building to the Year 4 classroom). The use of 'shall I', rather than 'can I', makes Michelle's directives appear more like conventional offers or suggestions than permission requests, and hence closer to the 'benefit to hearer' end of the pragmatic scale.

The following extract from Ironstone Primary accounts for all but two of the instances of 'shall/should I...?'. The children are watching a DVD, *Skrek*⁷, and Aaron has been trying to get the girls' attention so that he can tell them about his birthday party. The girls are not particularly interested, though. Aaron is rude and badly behaved in class and as a result does not have a lot of friends; on the rare occasions when he wants to engage other children in conversation, he has to work hard to win their interest. His initial attempts to provoke curiosity in his story (e.g. *Do you know what, right*) have failed, so he asks for permission to tell his story using a modal interrogative.

Extract 4.7

- 1 Aaron: Ere right (0.7 seconds) Can I tell you something? (0.7
2 seconds) It's my birthday on Monday but on Sunday I'm
having a party right and I've got a-
3 ((Inaudible – 1.85 seconds))
4 Aaron: Looker.
5 Anon: I hate the cat.
6 Charlotte: I- I like- I like it-
7 Hannah: Do you like (xxxxxxx)?
8 Charlotte: I like donkey when he turns into a-
9 Aaron: It's my birthday on Monday so I'm having a party on

⁷ This is a popular children's animation. It is the last week of term so the children have been given some breaks from normal curriculum activity.

10 [Sunday and I'm having a bouncy castle in the front garden.
11 Charlotte: [I like donkey when he turns into a white horse.
12 Anon: Thanks.
13 Aaron: And I'm having a trampoline in the back garden.
14 Kelly: Uh huh
15 Charlotte: How does he do it? How does he do it? He goes something
16 like-
17 Kelly: I've got it- I've got it- I've got it-
18 Aaron: **Shall I tell you? Shall I tell you it?**
19 ((Background noise – 1.7 seconds))
20 Aaron: I showed them that.
21 Anon: Oops
22 Kelly: Then let go.
23 Charlotte: No (xxxxxxxxxxx)
24 ((Background noise and inaudible talk – 7.3 seconds))
25 Anon: Stop messing about.
26 Aaron: **Should I tell you? (1 second) Should I tell you now?**
27 Anon: Yeah.
28 Aaron: Right, my birthday's on Monday and on Sunday I'm having a
29 bounc- bouncy castle in the front garden, right and I'm having
30 the-
31 Charlotte: Trampoline [in the back.
32 Aaron: [tramp in the back.
33 Aaron Trampoline in the back garden.
34 Charlotte: (.hhhh) Isn't that so goo::d ((with emphasis on the final [d]))
35 Aaron: Isn't that so cheeky.

Aaron's request for permission has no effect on his desired conversational partners; they continue to comment on the film. On line 8, Charlotte's utterance is temporarily cut short by Aaron's attempt to talk about his party, but she picks-up (and completes) this topic on line 11. Aaron is at first undeterred and continues to talk about his birthday plans (*And I'm having a trampoline in the back garden*), but he becomes increasingly frustrated and so makes another formal bid for Charlotte and Kelly's attention: *Should I tell you? (1 second) Should I tell you now?* (line 26). Not

only has Aaron moved into the hypothetical past tense to increase the politeness of his utterance, he has also chosen the form ‘should I...?’ to make his utterance appear more like an offer, and hence less of an imposition to Charlotte and Kelly.

Modal interrogatives are not the only means of using conventionalised indirectness. When expressions of need/want are directed towards persons able to fulfil that need or want, they also fall under the category of conventionalised indirectness since such utterances are ‘contextually unambiguous’ (Brown and Levinson 1987:132). When a child says *I need help* (Harry, Ironstone Primary) to a teacher in the classroom, for example, it is clear that the child’s utterance is functioning as a directive, rather than a statement. The use of vocatives and the politeness marker please make the directive function even clearer: *Miss I need that bottle (0.6 seconds) please* (Harry, Ironstone Primary).

4.4.5 Self-repair and reformulation

In Andersen’s (1990:167) study of children aged 4 to 7, the participants were given role-specific puppets for which they had to ‘do the voices’. Andersen notes that the ‘spontaneous repairs’ that the children made to their own speech as they role-played in different settings provided evidence of their awareness of how particular forms mark particular registers. In my study, the occasions where participants redesigned their directives mid-utterance, changing to a different strategy, gives us an insight into the decisions that speakers make when formulating directives. Consider the following examples (all from Murrayfield Primary):

- (3) (a) *Sarah ta- can you take them hair brushes out?* (Tara)
(b) *Right cut- we have to cut it into little bits.* (Sarah)
(c) *Go and read. You have to go and read.* (Holly)

- (d) *Miss should I- Miss- (0.7 seconds) could- should I watch- Miss (.) Miss should I wash the- should I wash the cups with the paint out? (Sarah)*
- (e) *Can I give- shall I give them out? (Michelle)*

Examples (3a) to (3b) involve a transition from the classic imperative to a less direct form. In Example (3a), it appears that Tara was about to use the imperative form ‘take them hair brushes out’ but she quickly rethinks her strategy and instead uses a modal interrogative. As we shall see in Section 4.4.6, Tara often adopts a less direct, more facilitative style to achieve her goals, which makes her very effective when working as part of a team. Example (3b) is part of the same interaction. Sarah reformulates the initial imperative into an expression of obligation involving inclusive ‘we’. The beginning of her utterance gives us a clue that inclusive ‘we’ here means ‘you’ and is more authoritative than collaborative. Both of these girls are displaying their understanding that success in a group-based task involves careful management of delicately balanced power relations, and in this situation, less direct, more collaborative forms of directive may be more effective.

Example (3c) takes place when Holly has just come back into the classroom after reading to the teaching assistant in the corridor. She has been told to ask the next child on the list to go and read. Initially, Holly uses an imperative, *Go and read*, but quickly realises that she does not have the authority to command one of her peers when it comes to structured classroom activity; such commands generally come from the teacher. Her reformulation to an expression of obligation conveys the same message but also implicitly encodes the teacher’s authority. Holly distances herself from the force of the directive; she is no longer commanding her classmate but simply making them aware of their obligation. Examples (3d) and (3e) reinforce the argument made in Section 4.4.4 for the utility of the ‘shall/should’ forms over

'can/could'. In Example (3d) Sarah wants to be granted permission to take up a post in the art area while the other children begin their French lesson. These sorts of jobs are much sought after (especially when they involve missing out on curriculum activity) and are given out sparingly. Sarah makes a slip-of-the-tongue mid-utterance when she says *could* but quickly corrects her error and goes back to *should*. Example (3e) comes from Michelle, whose use of 'shall' was discussed in Section 4.4.4. Michelle is competing with Mary to get a job from the teacher (giving out the bingo sheets). The true nature of Michelle's utterance (i.e. that it is a request for permission rather than a genuine offer) is revealed by the original *can I give-*. The reformulation also reveals Michelle's awareness that the different forms that are used for the directive function have different pragmatic and social meanings which can be manipulated by the speaker.

4.4.6 Comparison of paired extracts

In Section 4.3.3, I considered the possibility that activity type may influence choice of directive, but ruled out a quantitative analysis that systematically coded for this factor. In this section, an analysis of paired extracts from Ironstone and Murrayfield Primary presents the opportunity to compare the ways in which children from these schools formulate directives during the same kind of activity type: a collaborative art project. Both extracts are taken from approximately one hour of shared activity. Constraints of time and space mean that it would not be possible to analyse a transcript representing the full hour of talk. Instead, short examples have been selected from throughout the course of the activity. Extract 4.8 (Appendix 2) depicts Clare and Hannah's attempt to make a torch at Ironstone Primary, and Extract 4.9 (Appendix 2) shows Tara, Sarah and Holly working together on a three-dimensional model of a bedroom.

In Extract 4.8 we find Clare involved in a (semi-)structured group task, an activity different to the playground games of Extract 4.1 or the classroom conversations of Extract 4.3. As such, we have the opportunity to compare Clare's use of directives in these different settings. Clare is working with Hannah, a quiet and fairly studious member of the class. Lines 1 to 9 establish rather nicely the roles assumed by the two girls within this group: Hannah has the ideas and does the majority of the work; Clare procrastinates and (occasionally) follows basic instructions (e.g. *Ask Miss Snell to get us a bulb holder*). In Extracts 4.1 and 4.3 we examined Clare's use of imperatives with singular 'us'. In this extract, Clare uses standard 'me' in imperatives such as: *Oh just let me (paint a sparkly one)* (lines 27-28); *Just give me a little bit of glue* (line 30); *Now let me paint this one again* (lines 84-85). In terms of peer-group relations, Clare has the power: Clare is confident, outgoing and outspoken, while Hannah is shy and quiet.⁸ Clare feels that she is in a dominant position in the group and is able to issue imperatives without employing very much additional face work. Further, the weight of the imposition in these directives is small and therefore not overly face-threatening: asking your partner for glue in a shared art project is entirely reasonable and does not require a great deal of politeness. From Clare's point of view, she also has very little invested in these directives. When Clare was hopping around the playground with a wet foot in Extract 4.1, it was of extreme importance to her that her directives were successful. In this extract, it matters very little whether or not Hannah gives Clare the glue. Clare could, after all, probably get the glue herself, and in all likelihood, would not

⁸ A couple of weeks later when I gave the radio-microphone to Hannah, Clare commented that there was 'no point Hannah having the microphone because she doesn't speak'. That in fact proved to be true; Hannah spoke very little when she had the microphone.

have been too concerned if she had failed to get access to the materials required for the task.

While Clare might rank higher than Hannah in the peer-group hierarchy, we must be careful not to assume that Hannah is completely powerless in this interaction. In this extract it is Hannah who has knowledge of the task at hand and this augments her status. She is therefore able to give Clare instructions using imperatives such as *Ask Miss Snell to get us a bulb holder* (line 8) and *Wait there* (line 62). Hannah issues a further 8 imperatives of this type to Clare during the task, which are not represented in the transcript. Hannah was also able to tell Clare 'no' (e.g. lines 10, 35, 65, 67) because not only was she the one who properly understood the task, but the girls were also working with Hannah's materials (see e.g. lines 35, 67). Notice that when Clare is told 'no' on line 10 she responds with *No howay* appealing again to that sense of in-group solidarity as well as to an idea of what is acceptable in this task (see also line 84). The two girls proceed in this way, jostling backwards and forwards with assertions, challenges and counter challenges (e.g. lines 16-17, 33-36, 64-68), giving their interaction the characteristics of 'disputational talk' (Mercer 2004).

Hannah uses direct forms such as imperatives in this interaction, but she also uses a variety of other less direct (and more subtle) means of simultaneously managing the task and the group dynamics. On line 62, for example, having captured Clare's attention with an imperative, Hannah makes a request to Clare using the conventionally indirect form: *Can- (.) you just take (0.7 seconds) this off a minute?* Notice also that Hannah hedges her directive with the minimisers *just* and *a minute* (compare Sarah's directive in Extract 4.9, line 124). On line 23, Hannah uses an interrogative form which has the appearance of a *wh*-question: *Clare why don't you*

just use that bit where there isn't any glue on it? Hannah is echoing Gemma's directive on line 20 but phrases her utterance indirectly. The inference is: 'there seems to be no good reason why you can't use the bit that hasn't got any glue on; so either modify your actions, or explain them to me'. Tara uses a similar technique in Extract 4.9: *Why don't you get some cardboard to make the wardrobe?* (line 77). The inference here: 'there seems to be no good reason why you can't get the cardboard; so if you want to be a cooperative member of this group, you'll go and get it'. There are other directives of this type in the data, though they were not included in the quantitative analysis. Many different types of interrogative can function as directives, and extending the analysis to include close inspection of all interrogative forms in the data was outside of the scope of this thesis.

Hannah's directives on lines 76 to 82 are particularly interesting. On line 76, Hannah uses a third person expression of want that refers, not to another person, but to an inanimate object (i.e. the box/torch): *Clare it just wants leaving now (0.7 seconds) to dry*. Hannah distances herself completely from the force of this directive by transferring agency to the box. Clare continues painting, however, so Hannah has to increase the level of directness: *Clare you need to leave it to dry* (line 79). Clare still does not comply so Hannah tells her: *Clare you're wasting the paint now* (line 82). Here we have a declarative clause functioning as a directive. This kind of utterance is classed as a non-conventionally indirect strategy or 'hint'. Unlike conventionally indirect forms, such as modal interrogatives, hints have more than one possible (and plausible) interpretation and the addressee must make an inference to recover the illocutionary meaning. Hints are called an 'off-record' strategy by Brown and Levinson (1987). Because there is more than one possible interpretation of the utterance, the speaker 'cannot be held to have committed himself to just one

particular interpretation of his act' (Brown and Levinson 1987:211). The intended force of Hannah's utterance, however, is here contextually unambiguous in the light of her previous utterances. Further, Hannah is alluding to the shared rules of the classroom which state that wasting resources such as paint is severely frowned upon. By doing so, she calls upon the authority of the teacher and the school to give her directive greater impact.

Extract 4.8 also gives us a window onto another group interaction, that between Gemma and Joanne. Gemma is a friend of Hannah's and as such has offered advice to Hannah and Clare (e.g. line 20). Within her own pairing, Gemma directs the progress of the task using collaborative forms such as: *No we don't cut around that because we need one bigger than that remember* (lines 40-41). Here Gemma uses inclusive 'we' when she actually means 'you' in order to soften the force of her directive, making it appear more collaborative and less authoritative. Gemma's utterance also shows a concern with establishing a joint understanding of what the group needs to do.

Both extracts involve brief exchanges with the teacher or teaching assistant. In Extract 4.8, Clare uses first person modal interrogatives to address Mrs Trotter (lines 52-54, 96 and 99), a strategy used frequently by the children with adults. In Extract 4.9, Sarah uses a second person modal interrogative with Mrs Norman (line 101) but it functions differently from the majority of second person modal interrogatives in the data. Here 'you' is impersonal and means 'one' or 'people in general'; it is an example of 'generic you' (Quirk et al. 1985:353-4). This impersonal perspective functions as a means of distancing the speaker from the directive force of their utterance. So when Sarah says to Mrs Norman, *Miss Mi::s (2 seconds) can you uhm mix the paint?* (line 101), what she wants to know is if it is okay for *her* to mix some

paint to create the *gorgeous orangey creamy colour* she feels she needs. In formulating the directive in this way, she draws attention away from her own needs, suggesting that her classmates will be fellow beneficiaries should the teacher grant this request. Within the second person modal interrogatives issued at Murrayfield Primary, there were four examples of this type. On lines 105-107, Sarah makes her utterance even less direct: *Miss uhm w- like there's only a few colours and then- there's- we want something like lighter than a certain colour but there's no more white left*. Notice that in addition to the increased level of indirectness, there are several false starts and reformulations in Sarah's utterance and she hedges with the discourse marker *like*; she is clearly aware of the risk inherent in her directive. Sarah here demonstrates sensitivity to the role that addressee plays in formulating directives (compare her much more direct style with her peers in the rest of the interaction), but also perhaps shows her awareness that directives which interrupt another speaker's talk or activity are more intrusive. Sarah is, after all, interrupting the teacher who had been in the middle of a whole class announcement about a missing jumper. Gordon and Ervin-Tripp (1984) report that school-age children are sensitive to interruptions when formulating requests.

The participants in Extract 4.9 are all fully engaged with the task and appear to be more equal partners in the activity than Hannah and Clare were in Extract 4.8. Some members of the group may be more equal than others, however. We get a sense that Holly is less powerful than either Tara or Sarah. Holly is the recipient of a number of imperatives: *Go: and get-* (line 3); *Stop, stop* (line 10); *Do Sarah's idea (1.7 seconds) then put-* (line 42); *Go and ask Miss if we can go next at putting our picture (getting our picture)* (lines 83-84); *Go and get one. Get a yellow one.* (line 115). The imperative on line 83 actually cuts Holly's own utterance short. Holly

issues only 1 traditional imperative herself (line 40), but hedges it with the discourse marker *like*. On other occasions she adopts the less direct first person modal interrogatives such as *Can I just have that please* (line 60) and *Can I have a paint brush as well* (line 113). On line 6, Holly tells her group: *We need some pink felt*. This could function as a directive, that is, an indirect request for either Sarah or Tara to get some pink felt. It could also have been intended to function merely as a statement: 'this is one of the things we might need to finish the bedroom'. Holly's intention is irrelevant though, because Tara does not accept the potential directive function, replying with the dismissive *Go and get some then* (line 7).

In group activities, the interaction is influenced not just by the way in which relationships are negotiated (and renegotiated) within that activity, but also by past experiences:

Speakers' relationships also have histories. Things that are said may invoke knowledge from the joint past experience of those interacting (e.g. their recall of previous activities they have pursued together).

(Mercer 2004:140).

It seems that Sarah and Tara may have past experience of working with Holly (see lines 23-25) which influences their behaviour towards her in this interaction. Tara remains diplomatically silent on the issue but we can assume that both girls have a shared understanding of what Sarah means by *She's being Holly* (line 25). It is within this environment that Holly uses the strategy of imperative with singular 'us' (lines 5 and 48, and 1 example not included in the transcript). Both examples in Extract 4.9 seem to be said out of frustration, but Holly lacks power in this interaction and therefore softens the imperative form by distancing herself from the force of the directive – the agent of the directive is not Holly alone. Further, Holly

may feel marginalised within the group and be aware that the other girls often tire of her *being Holly*. She therefore uses singular 'us' to appeal to group solidarity; she wants the other girls to recognise that she is part of the group as well.

Although Tara and Sarah adopt a very direct style for much of the interaction, they both also use indirect forms. In lines 32 and 34, Sarah uses the form 'Do you want....?'. Such utterances are very similar in form to a conventional offer. This kind of directive 'appears to leave matters to the hearer's volition, and avoids the appearance of control' (Gordon and Ervin-Tripp 1984:308). As with the *wh*-interrogatives discussed above, this type of directive was not included in the quantitative analysis. On lines 50-51, Sarah uses a location question as a directive: *where's the scissors?* Here Sarah's *Thank you* indicates that someone has given her the scissors, and hence that the interrogative was interpreted as a directive. In other contexts, however, the same utterance could simply function as an information seeking question. Compare line 118, for example, where there is no way that we can know whether or not Holly intended her utterance to be a question or an indirect request for someone to pass her a paint brush. Again, Holly's intention is unimportant because her utterance is denied directive status by Tara who (perhaps deliberately) (mis)interprets it as a question.

Tara is particularly skilled at formulating directives in such a way as to gain group buy-in. On line 52, for instance, she uses a tag question to elicit the support of her group members. On line 63, Tara uses the negative interrogative *Don't we need to put that on first?*, which presumes 'yes' as an answer. On line 70, she uses the form 'shall we...?' which has the appearance of a conventional offer (*Right, shall we get another mirror?*). That Tara intended this utterance to have a directive function is evident from her follow-up on lines 73-74 after Sarah has shown

disagreement: *No that one's too small. We're getting another one.* The issue of whether or not the group should get another mirror was clearly never actually up for debate. In addition to modifying the linguistic form of her utterances, Tara also occasionally employs paralinguistic features to mitigate the force of her directives. On line 86, for example, Tara's sing-song style as she issues the imperative encodes a sense of fun, informality and friendliness, which makes the speech act appear less authoritative.

As with Extract 4.8, parts of the Murrayfield interaction have a disputational quality (e.g. lines 6-10, and 63-69, though this does eventually end in agreement). There is also evidence of 'cumulative talk', however, 'in which speakers build positively but uncritically on what the others have said' (Mercer 2004:146) (e.g. lines 30-33). There are also perhaps instances of what Mercer (2004:146) refers to as 'exploratory talk' where group members 'engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas' (e.g. lines 76-79). Not all attempts at exploratory talk are successful however. The negotiation that occurs in lines 86-96, for example, ends with an uncompromising imperative: *Sarah just do it.* Notice the use of *just* that seems to give the directive a strong, combative force (in a manner similar to Craig's imperative in Extract 4.5). Throughout this interaction the power relations between Tara and Sarah have been delicately balanced. Both have strong opinions and both believe generally that their way is the right way. The activity ends with the two girls at the sink trading imperatives as they vie for power (lines 120-128).

This analysis has given only a brief snap-shot of the kinds of interaction that characterise group-based tasks within these two schools. Further work could usefully extend this analysis to incorporate a wider range of extracts from both schools, including, for example, tasks related to other curriculum subjects and shared

computer-based tasks (Mercer 1994; 2004). The current corpus of radio-microphone recordings has the data to enable such an analysis. Both extracts involved all-female groups. Examining similar interactions from all-male collaborations and mixed-sex groupings would provide the opportunity to consider gendered differences (if indeed there are differences between the boys and girls in these two schools). In addition to the radio-microphone data, there is a smaller (approximately 10 hours) corpus of video recordings which would be invaluable for such an analysis. Participants in both schools were asked to take part in a series of group tasks/discussions which were video recorded. All participants took part in at least one single-sex and one mixed-sex group discussion in which the topic was controlled by me.

4.5 Conclusion

Most studies of sociolinguistic variation focus on phonological variables and, to a lesser degree, morpho-syntactic variables. An analysis of the realisation of directives is therefore not prototypical within a variationist paradigm. But for researchers interested in the ways in which speakers invest their linguistic practices with social meaning, there is no reason to restrict the investigation to traditional linguistic variables. In fact, if we are to gain a complete picture of sociolinguistic style, it is crucial not to do so.

There is much more that could be said about the use of directives in these two schools. The quantitative analysis included a limited number of predefined categories of directive, but, as noted in Section 4.4.6, there are a number of other forms which can fulfil the directive function. In particular, indirect strategies and 'hints' other than those that are conventionally associated with directives were excluded from the quantitative analysis. And it is not just the directive itself that is

important, but the surrounding interaction that frames it. The children often provided justification for their directive or offered some kind of explanation which minimised the strength of the imposition. Further, discourse markers such as 'right' and 'like' occurred frequently with the children's directives. Future analysis could usefully analyse this kind of linguistic support.

My focus in this analysis was on the main forms of directive used by the children in these two schools. What I have shown is that when it comes to encoding notions of politeness, power and social distance into the structure of a request, that is, into the grammar, the children in Murrayfield Primary were more likely to use one of the well-known formulae of English to form indirect speech acts, while the children at Ironstone Primary preferred to exploit features of non-standard grammar and the local dialect. The different linguistic choices that the children made carry subtle but significant social and cultural information about the two communities of practice.

The children at Ironstone Primary used singular 'us' to soften imperatives because this particular linguistic feature indexes solidarity and aspects of in-group identity that are important to them. These meanings are valued at Ironstone Primary because it represents a close-knit community of practice. Most of the children (and a good number of the teaching assistants) live very near to each other and within close proximity to the school. Many of the children socialise together in friendship groups outside of school, and a number of them also have familial ties. The children therefore know each other, not only as classmates, but as friends, neighbours, and kin. For some of the children, then, this school-based community of practice overlaps with their participation in other communities of practice (e.g. family, neighbourhood groups). Or, using terminology from social network theory, this community of practice includes 'multiplex' as well as a 'dense' network ties. Such

networks are thought to be characteristic of working-class areas (Milroy 1987b). Milroy states that a close-knit network functions as a norm enforcement mechanism which resists social and linguistic pressure from outside of the group (e.g. to conform to a 'standard' variety). There is little evidence at Ironstone of a salient 'outside' group to be resisted. I would suggest that the utility of the close-knit nature of the Ironstone Primary community of practice is not in its ability to resist pressure from outside but in its ability to negotiate, propagate and reinforce salient local meanings. The social meanings attached to variants like singular 'us' and 'howay' are firmly implanted within this community of practice.

The sense of closeness and solidarity felt within Ironstone Primary is no doubt reinforced by the social problems in the wider community and the trauma this brings to many of the students and their families (see discussion in Chapter 2). Clearly, events in the local community (such as murder and arson) are influenced by wider social forces to which I cannot do justice here. It is evident, though, that the children's social background shaped the close-knit nature of the Ironstone Primary community of practice, which, in turn, affected the children's linguistic practices. In a similar manner, within the more diffuse Murrayfield Primary community of practice, speakers preferred the distance and deference associated with the well-known indirect forms. Variants such as singular 'us' and 'howay' were used occasionally, but this relatively loose-knit network was less able to negotiate and enforce a set of locally agreed meanings for these forms, or less motivated to do so.

The construct of the community of practice can therefore be seen to provide a link between individuals' use of language on the ground and the wider social categories (e.g. social class) to which they belong. It is important not to lose sight of individual agency in such explanations though. As Eckert (2006:125) points out,

‘[w]hile the basic features of our dialect are set in place by the environment in which we grow up, the actual deployment of those dialect features – as well as of many linguistic features that are not part of regional dialect – is left to individual agency’. By examining the use of language in context, this analysis has shown that individual speakers were able to use a range of stylistic options in response to a variety of contextual factors. From this perspective, Ironstone Primary participants, such as Clare, are not to be seen as working-class speakers who use non-standard linguistic features purely by virtue of their working-class background, but rather as savvy sociolinguistic players who are able to utilise the linguistic options available to them in order to negotiate social relationships and construct a range of personal identities in interaction.

Chapter 5 – Right Dislocation and Interactional Stance

5.1 Introduction

The English Dialect Grammar states:

In all the dialects of Sc[otland] and Eng[land] there is a tendency to introduce a redundant personal pronoun after a noun when emphasis is required; this is especially frequent after a proper name, as *Mr. Smith, he came to my house*.

In the northern dialects the personal pronoun is often repeated in recriminatory talk, as *thou great lout thou*.

(Wright 1905b:270).

The phrase ‘redundant personal pronoun’ is unfortunate, having rather negative connotations (‘useless’, ‘unnecessary’), and is not an expression a modern linguist would use. The linguistic feature to which it refers, however, occurs in different guises in several dialects of British English, as well as ‘New Varieties’ of English. In fact, Lambrecht (2001:1051) states that this kind of construction ‘can be identified in most, if not all, languages of the world, independently of language type and genetic affiliation’. This linguistic feature has been discussed in the literature under various headings: ‘left/right-dislocation’ (Greenbaum 1996; Lambrecht 2001; Huddleston and Pullum 2002); ‘anticipated’/‘postponed identification’ (Quirk et al. 1985); ‘pronoun copying’ (Platt et al. 1984:120). I have chosen to refer to this phenomenon as ‘left/right dislocation’. Both types of dislocation involve ‘a definite noun phrase occurring in a peripheral position, with a co-referent pronoun in the core of the clause’ (Biber et al. 1999:956). With left dislocation, the noun phrase occurs in initial position (e.g. *Well Ashley’s sister, she saw him.*), and in right dislocation the noun phrase occurs in final position (e.g. *It’s tiny, the mic.*). I accept Carter and McCarthy’s (1995:149) point that the term ‘dislocation’ may be slightly misleading in that ‘it suggests that something has been pushed out of place to a somewhat

aberrant position' when, in fact, both left and right dislocation are 'perfectly normal in conversational language', but I feel that creating new terms would further splinter the already diverse range of vocabulary on this topic. For now, the terms left and right dislocation are useful in that they make direct reference to the form of the linguistic feature without making assumptions about its function (cf. 'anticipated'/'postponed identification'). A variety of names have also been applied to the dislocated constituents in left and right dislocation. The right dislocated constituent, for example, has been referred to as a 'tail' (Carter and McCarthy 1995; 1997; Carter et al. 2000), 'tag' (Biber et al. 1999), 'amplificatory tag' (Quirk et al. 1985), and 'explanatory noun phrase' (Greenbaum 1996). In line with Biber et al. (1999), I will adopt the term 'tag'. When referring to the discussion of this feature by other linguists, I will use my own terms to prevent confusion.

5.2 Dislocation: terminology, distribution and form

The proliferation of terminology, combined with a lack of empirical work in this area, has led to a rather confusing picture of left and right dislocation. Table 5.1 aims to unravel part of the puzzle with a summary of the types of English in which different grammars and empirical studies have identified left and right dislocation. Taking left and right dislocation in turn, I will then consider the different forms that this linguistic feature can take and the terminology associated with those forms.

Table 5.1: Summary of previous findings on left and right dislocation

	Left Dislocation	Right Dislocation
Pronoun		<p>Informal speech (Greenbaum 1996).</p> <p>General Northern (Wright 1905b); Tyneside (Beal 1993; 2004); Bolton (Moore 2003; Shorrocks 1999). Manchester (Edwards and Weltens 1985).</p> <p>(Demonstrative pronoun: conversation and written representations of speech (Biber et al. 1999)).</p>
Noun Phrase	<p>Informal speech, conversation etc. (Biber et al. 1999; Carter and McCarthy 1997; Carter et al. 2000, Greenbaum 1996; Quirk et al. 1985; Wales 1996).</p> <p>Especially narrative genre (Carter & McCarthy 1995).</p> <p>Oral personal narratives and informal writing (Huddleston and Pullum 2002).</p> <p>General dialectal speech (Wales 1996). All the dialects of Scotland and England (Wright 1905). Bolton (Shorrocks 1999). Various 'New Englishes' (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984).</p>	<p>Informal speech, conversation etc. (Biber et al. 1999; Carter and McCarthy 1995; Carter et al. 2000; Greenbaum 1996; Quirk et al. 1985; Wales 1996).</p> <p>Oral personal narratives and informal writing (Huddleston and Pullum 2002).</p> <p>General dialectal speech (Wales 1996). Bolton (Shorrocks 1999; Moore 2003).</p>

5.2.1 Left dislocation

There are only 2¹ examples of left dislocation in my data, both of which are presented in (1) below:

- (1) (a) *Off peak (.) what's it mean?* (Harry, Ironstone Primary)
- (b) *Well Ashley's sister, she saw him.* (Mary, Murrayfield Primary)

Example (1a) is slightly ambiguous. In his previous turn, Harry had asked: *Miss what's off peak mean? (1.6 seconds) Miss what's off peak mean?* Miss Snell replies *Hey?* and Harry asks his question again. In this utterance, *Off peak* could be a left dislocated noun phrase which serves as a link to the prior discourse. Alternatively, the noun phrase could be a stand-alone item, with Harry believing that Miss Snell had heard enough of his previous questions to be able to provide the answer with only a minimal prompt; realising that this was not the case, Harry then repeats *what's it mean?* Example (1b), however, is a clear case of left dislocation, the function of which is to avoid having a discourse-new element in subject position. This is one of the main pragmatic functions of left dislocation (Huddleston and Pullum 2002:1410). The same function can be performed by other means, however, such as introducing the new entity in a separate clause: 'You know those letters we did this morning? They have to go off in today's mail' (Huddleston and Pullum 2002:1410; also Biber et al. 1999:958). The children in this study do not generally use left dislocation but they do have other means to express the same kind of discourse function. Examples are given in (2) below:

¹ A summary of the total occurrences of left and right dislocation in the data can be found in Appendix 3.

- (2) (a) *Ere Adam, do you know Joanne Bracken's car? She sold it to me. My Dad.* (Sean, Ironstone Primary)
- (b) *Know one of my friends? (0.8 seconds) Glasses (2.2 seconds)*
One of my friends at home has got glasses. (Andrew, Ironstone Primary)
- (c) *Do you know Becca? She had sausages, chips and banana-bananas and milk ((laughs)) for her tea.* (Danielle, Ironstone Primary)
- (d) *Tara you know Miss Lee? She wrote in my book (.) in my work book (.) look.* (Holly, Murrayfield Primary)

In fact, constructions of the sort 'Do you know X?' function not only to avoid having a discourse-new element in subject position but also to grab the attention of the intended addressee and arouse interest in the subsequent utterance. These kinds of constructions thus serve a dual purpose for the speaker. Given that there are only 2 examples of left dislocation in my data, the remainder of the chapter will concentrate on right dislocation.

5.2.2 Right dislocation

Unlike Wright, later sources do not imply that right dislocation is a specifically northern English feature. It has been suggested, for example, that it is simply part of 'informal spoken English' (e.g. Quirk et al. 1985:1310). As with possessive 'me' and singular 'us' (see discussion in Chapter 3.1), there is no real agreement as to whether right dislocation is dialectal, and hence region specific and to some extent non-standard, or is simply a feature of informal, colloquial usage.

Table 5.1 makes a distinction between whether the dislocated constituent (i.e the tag) is a full noun phrase or a pronoun. When the tag is a pronoun, it is always in its objective form (e.g. *I hate this book bag, me*). Quirk et al. (1985:1310, 1417), Huddleston and Pullum (2002:1411) and Wales (1996:43) only give examples with full noun phrase (as distinct from pronoun) tags in their discussions of right dislocation. Greenbaum (1996:230) does allow for the possibility that the tag may itself be a pronoun, though he does not provide examples. While pronoun tags are largely absent from descriptive accounts of right dislocation, they are evident in empirical research. Moore (2003), for example, found examples of pronoun tags in her investigation of right dislocation in the speech of Bolton teenagers, and Beal (1993; 2004) comments on this usage in Tyneside English. Perhaps, then, it is the pronoun variant which is dialectal (and potentially more prevalent in northern Englishes), while right dislocation with full noun phrase tags is more widespread and essentially part of any informal spoken English. Beal (1993; 2004) also makes the point that the type of construction favoured in right dislocation varies from one dialect to another: ‘[i]n the North-east, typically only the noun phrase or pronoun is repeated, sometimes reinforced with *like*² [*I’m a Geordie, me, like*] ... whilst in Yorkshire, an auxiliary verb precedes it [*He’s got his head screwed on, has Dave*]’ (Beal 2004:135-136). Durham (2007) finds this latter form of right dislocation (which she refers to as ‘reverse right dislocation’) to be the most frequently occurring variant in the York data she analyses. In my data, there are no examples in which the tag includes a verb, and intuitively, as a native speaker of Teesside English, I would suggest that this variant is not an option in Teesside. So while right

² I will return to the issue of how dislocation works together with other discourse features in Section 5.7.

dislocation in its widest sense may be shared by spoken varieties throughout England (and possibly further afield), the specific forms of right dislocation that are available for use in a particular locality may depend on the dialect spoken in that area.

The pronoun in the core of the clause in right (as well as left) dislocation can have a wide range of syntactic functions: subject; direct object; indirect object; object of a preposition; subject determiner; and a subject in an embedded clause (Huddleston and Pullum 2002:1411). Biber et al. (1999:957) state that while the relationship between the left dislocated constituent and the clause it is attached to may vary, the right dislocated constituent 'is normally co-referent with the subject of the preceding clause'. In his study of the dialect of the Bolton area, Shorrocks (1999:87) finds right dislocation in the syntax of the object as well as the subject (e.g. 'I never saw nothing like it, that shop window'). Moore (2003) also found right dislocated tags which were co-referential with the object of the clause in her Bolton data, though such occurrences were relatively rare compared to subject tags (3.4% versus 96.6%). In my data, there are just 3 (out of 64) examples of right dislocation in which the tag is co-referential with the object in the preceding clause (e.g. *Do you want it, that card?*) (Appendix 3). These represent just 4.7% of the total occurrences of right dislocation in the data.

All 64 examples of right dislocation are listed below, arranged according to type of tag.

(3) Noun phrase

- (a) *Is it brown or blonde, your hair?* (Ben, Murrayfield Primary)
- (b) *Yeah that is a sound, birds.* (Daniel, Murrayfield Primary)
- (c) *It's tiny, the mic.* (Michelle, Murrayfield Primary)

- (d) *Michelle, it's pulling my trousers down, this thing, you know.*
(Beth, Murrayfield Primary)
- (e) *Shall we get it (1 second) that picture?* (Tara, Murrayfield Primary)
- (f) *Miss (0.8 seconds) Can you turn that up, volume?* (Ben, Murrayfield Primary)
- (g) *They do have guns, police.* (Harry, Ironstone Primary)
- (h) *They just don't go, bananas and milk and sausages and chips.*
(Danielle, Ironstone Primary)
- (i) *It's class, Clare's [picture], isn't it?* (Harry, Ironstone Primary)
- (j) *We're just going to visit the boys now, me and Courtney.*
(Charlotte, Ironstone Primary)
- (k) *Do you want it, that card?* (Andrew, Ironstone Primary)
- (4) First person singular personal pronoun
- (a) *I want that one, me.* (Ben, Murrayfield Primary)
- (b) *I'm being first in line, me.* (Ben, Murrayfield Primary)
- (c) *I'm not playing, me.* (Neil, Murrayfield Primary)
- (d) *I've never been on it, me.* (Caroline, Ironstone Primary)
- (e) *I'm- I'm-I'm a magician, me.* (Clare, Ironstone Primary)
- (f) *I look stupid, me.* (Sam, Ironstone Primary)
- (g) *I hate this book bag, me.* (1.4 seconds) Proper gay. (Robert, Ironstone Primary)

- (h) *I'm off, me.* (Robert, Ironstone Primary)
- (i) *Howay I'm going, me.* (Robert, Ironstone Primary)
- (j) *I like the old ones, me.* (Andrew, Ironstone Primary)
- (k) *I don't get this one, me.* (Charlotte, Ironstone Primary)
- (l) *I hate everyone, me.* (Harry, Ironstone Primary)
- (m) *I have a bad voice, me.* (Danielle, Ironstone Primary)
- (n) *I think Clare is, me.* (Harry, Ironstone Primary)
- (o) *I can't, me. Look.* (Joanne, Ironstone Primary)
- (p) *I like jam doughnuts, me.* (Danielle, Ironstone Primary)
- (q) *I'll stand up, me.* (Andrew, Ironstone Primary)
- (r) *I want to get through, me.* (Andrew, Ironstone Primary)
- (s) *I did it, me.* (Billy, Ironstone Primary)
- (5) Second person singular personal pronoun
- (a) *Nathan you're (xxxxxx spoiling it), you.* (Andrew, Ironstone Primary)
- (b) *You are a copy-cat, you.* (Sam, Ironstone Primary)
- (c) *You're dead nasty, you, now.* (Aaron, Ironstone Primary)
- (d) *God, you're gay, you.* (David, Ironstone Primary)
- (e) *I think you're going to get (0.7 seconds) uh second, you.*
(Harry, Ironstone Primary)
- (f) *God, you're gay, you.* (Harry, Ironstone Primary)

- (g) *You love doing that, you.* (Joanne, Ironstone Primary)
- (h) *Give us that lid, you.* (Harry, Ironstone Primary)
- (i) *Get off, you.* (Billy, Ironstone Primary)
- (6) Third person singular personal pronoun
- (a) *She's horrible, her.* (Michelle, Murrayfield Primary)
- (b) *He's shit, him.* (Aaron, Ironstone Primary)
- (c) *She's a liar, her.* I hate her. (Danielle, Ironstone Primary)
- (d) *She's like Jamie Oliver now, her.* (Danielle, Ironstone Primary)
- (e) *He's mad, him.* (Robert, Ironstone Primary)
- (7) Third person plural personal pronoun
- (a) *They're our colours, them.* (Danielle, Ironstone Primary)
- (b) *Aw they're rubbed out (0.7 seconds) them.* (Harry, Ironstone Primary)
- (8) Demonstrative singular pronoun (That...that)
- (a) *I think that looked good, that.* (Ben, Murrayfield Primary)
- (b) *That's cool, that.* (Tara, Murrayfield Primary)
- (c) *That's just weird, that.* (Beth, Murrayfield Primary)
- (d) *No this isn't funny, this.* (Rachel, Murrayfield Primary)

- (e) *That sounded manky³, that.* (Neil, Murrayfield Primary)
- (f) *That's Miss Kavanagh's niece, that, you know.* (Danielle, Ironstone Primary)
- (g) *That aches your arms, that.* (Robert, Ironstone Primary)
- (h) *That wasn't my finger, that, you know.* (Robert, Ironstone Primary)
- (i) *That's just stupid, that.* (Helen, Ironstone Primary)
- (j) *Aw yeah that is nice, that.* (David, Ironstone Primary)
- (k) *Aw that's nice, that.* (David, Ironstone Primary)
- (l) *That nearly hit your head, that.* (David Ironstone Primary)
- (m) *That is cute, that.* (Hannah, Ironstone Primary)
- (n) *Miss this is getting a bit hot, this.* (Andrew, Ironstone Primary)
- (9) Demonstrative singular pronoun (It...that)
- (a) *It's good, that, isn't it.* (Ben, Murrayfield Primary)
- (b) *It was good, that.* (Tara, Murrayfield Primary)
- (c) *It's much better, that.* (Danielle, Ironstone Primary)
- (10) Demonstrative plural pronoun
- (a) *These hurt your back, these.* (Caroline, Ironstone Primary)

Full noun phrase tags occur in 11 of the 64 examples (i.e. 20.8%) (Appendix 3). In the remaining examples, the dislocated constituent consists either of a personal

³ British colloquial word for dirty, unpleasant etc.

pronoun in its objective form or a demonstrative pronoun. The examples represented in (9) are treated separately because, while the dislocated constituent is a demonstrative pronoun, these utterances are of the form *It...that*, that is, PERSONAL PRONOUN...DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN. Biber et al. (1999:139, 958) give a couple of examples which follow this pattern (e.g. *It was a good book this*) and state that such examples serve to ‘emphasize the proposition’. This particular construction is also commented on specifically by Shorrocks (1999:87) who describes the pattern PRONOUN...DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN as being particularly emphatic. Moore (2003:188-189) points out, however, that there is no clear reason why these tags should be any more or less emphatic than other types of tag, or why they should be treated any differently to examples such as those in (2) to (6) given that *it* is commonly replaced by *this* or *that* when a stressed nonpersonal pronoun is needed (Quirk et al. 1985:348) (see Section 5.4 for further discussion of the ‘emphatic’ function of right dislocation).

Examples (3e) and (7b) are unusual in that there is a short pause between the main clause and the tag. With Example (7b) it is not clear whether Harry’s *them* is functioning as a right-dislocated tag or whether he uses it to point to something (either to the same referent as the antecedent *they* or to another referent), perhaps in response to a facial expression, gesture or comment from one of the other children which occurs during the pause but which is not picked up by the microphone. In 3(e), there is no doubt that *that picture* and *it* refer to the same object, but the delayed ‘tag’ makes this example stand apart from the other examples in (3). This point will be discussed further in Section 5.4.1 in relation to the notion of ‘afterthought’. Examples (5h) and (5i) are also unique, this time because the pronoun tag does not have an overt antecedent in the main clause. These clauses are

imperatives and as such the subject is omitted. The implied ‘you’ is explicitly articulated, however, in the right dislocated pronoun tag (see Section 5.4.2 for further discussion).

5.3 Right dislocation: a comparison between schools

In Section 5.2.2 I suggested that it may be the pronoun tag that is dialectal while noun phrase tags are simply part of colloquial usage. This point was based on previous descriptions of right dislocation, but it gains further significance when the distribution of right dislocation between the two schools in this study is considered. Table 5.2 shows that there was no difference between the two schools in the children’s use of right dislocation with noun phrase tags. There is a clear difference, however, in their use of pronoun tags: the participants from Murrayfield Primary used this form (which might be dialectal) much less frequently than the children at Ironstone Primary.

Table 5.2: Right dislocation – distribution between schools

	Ironstone	Murrayfield	
NP	5	6	11
Pronoun	42	11	53
TOTAL	47	17	64

5.3.1 Pronoun tags

Table 5.3 focuses specifically on the 53 examples of right dislocation with pronoun tags. The examples are organised according to the type of pronoun involved in right dislocation. The data in this table can be compared with Table 5.4, which shows the general distribution of personal and demonstrative pronouns in the corpus of conversational speech used in the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al. 1999).

Table 5.3: Type of pronoun used in right dislocation

	Ironstone		Murrayfield	
	#	%	#	%
1P sg. (<i>I...me</i>)	16	38.1%	3	27.3%
2P (<i>You...you</i>)	9	21.4%	0	0.0%
3P sg. (<i>S/he...her/him</i>)	4	9.5%	1	9.1%
3P pl. (<i>They...them</i>)	2	4.8%	0	0.0%
3P/Dem. sg. (<i>It...that</i>)	1	2.4%	2	18.2%
Dem. sg. (<i>That...that</i>)	8	19.0%	4	36.4%
Dem. sg. (<i>This...this</i>)	1	2.4%	1	9.1%
Dem. pl. (<i>These...these</i>)	1	2.4%	0	0.0%
	42		11	

Table 5.4: Distribution of pronouns in conversation (occurrence per million words)
(adapted from Biber et al 1999: 334, 249)

1P sg. <i>I/me</i>	42,000
2P <i>you</i>	30,000
3P sg.f. <i>she/her</i>	9,000
3P sg. m. <i>he/him</i>	13,000
3P sg. n <i>it</i>	28,000
3P pl. <i>they/them</i>	14,000
Dem sg. <i>this</i>	1,500
Dem sg. <i>that</i>	11,000
Dem pl. <i>these</i>	500

Ironstone Primary participants made greatest use of right dislocation with the first person personal pronoun (e.g. *I look stupid, me*). This is as we would expect given that the first person pronoun is the most frequently occurring pronoun in conversation (Table 5.4). Right dislocation with the second person pronoun (e.g.

You are a copy-cat, you) was the next most frequently used variant at Ironstone Primary. Again, this finding tallies with the distribution represented in Table 5.4. The first and second person pronouns are frequent in conversation; therefore, we would expect them to be used frequently in right dislocation, a feature of informal spoken discourse.

In Murrayfield Primary, there were no examples of right dislocation with the second person pronoun, and only 3 with the first person pronoun. In fact, personal pronoun tags generally were rare in the Murrayfield Primary community of practice. In the Murrayfield data, another type of pronoun was preferred in pronoun tags: 7 of the 11 (63.6%) examples involved the demonstrative singular pronoun. This is significant given the finding in Biber et al. (1999:333) that personal pronouns were ‘many times more common than the other pronoun types’ (including demonstratives) in the Longman Spoken and Written English (LSWE) Corpus. Even within Ironstone Primary, there were more examples of right dislocation with the demonstrative singular than we might expect given the frequency with which this type of pronoun occurs generally in speech (Table 5.4). There is evidence in the data, then, that the demonstrative singular pronoun favours right dislocation. This type of right dislocation is also acknowledged by grammars (e.g. Biber et al. 1999:958) in a way that right dislocation with other types of pronoun tag is not. So, we might refine the hypothesis stated earlier and suggest that tags using a full noun phrase or demonstrative pronoun are part of general colloquial usage while personal pronoun tags are more socially marked. We might hypothesise further that personal pronoun tags will therefore be particularly useful resources in the construction of social meaning. This will be explored in Section 5.5.

5.4 The pragmatic functions of right dislocation

5.4.1 Noun phrase tags

Right-dislocation is common in informal spoken discourse. Indeed, this linguistic feature is well suited to the needs of conversation. Right dislocation can be used, for example, to ensure that an utterance adheres to the principle of end-weight, in which the favoured position for long and complex elements is the end of the clause (Biber et al. 1999:898, 958; also Quirk et al. 1985:1362). This is illustrated in Example (3h), where the weight of *bananas and milk and sausages and chips* makes the preferred position for this noun phrase the end, rather than the beginning, of the clause. Another function of right dislocation identified by grammars is that of ‘clarification’, ‘establishing beyond doubt the reference of the preceding pronoun’ (Biber et al. 1999:957). This is one of the main functions of right dislocation and is important given ‘the evolving nature of conversation’ (Biber et al. 1999:958). Huddleston and Pullum (2002:1411) similarly cite ‘clarification of reference’ as one of the pragmatic functions of right dislocation: the speaker utters the pronoun but then realises that the reference may not be clear and so adds the additional noun phrase in clause-final position, as an ‘afterthought’.

Ziv (1994:639) uses the term ‘afterthought’ to refer to a different kind of phenomenon:

Intonationally, RDs [right dislocations] constitute a single contour with no pause preceding NP₁ [the NP tag]. Afterthoughts, by comparison, are characterized by a distinct pause preceding the final coreferential NP. They clearly display two different intonational units ... [I]n RD, NP₁ must necessarily occur in clause-final position, whereas the corresponding entity in Afterthoughts may be added as a parenthetical in other positions in the sentence as well ... [e.g. I met him, your brother, I mean, two weeks ago].

Following this definition, Example (3e) might better be categorised as an ‘afterthought’: *Shall we get it (1 second) that picture?* The discourse function of afterthoughts is corrective: ‘[t]he speaker assesses in mid utterance that s/he has made some error of judgement with respect to some aspect of that which s/he wants to communicate ... [such as] the relative ease of retrievability of the discourse referent in question’ (Ziv 1994:640). In Example (3e), Tara perhaps realises that her interlocutors are not able to retrieve the referent of *it* and hence adds *that picture* as an ‘afterthought’.

Right dislocation is different from afterthought in that it *recovers* entities that are either ‘textually evoked’ (i.e. recoverable from the preceding discourse) or ‘situationally evoked’ (i.e. recoverable from the immediate speaking context) (Ziv 1994:640). In relation to the former, the pronoun in the main clause refers anaphorically to an entity that has been mentioned in the preceding discourse. There may be significant distance between the pronoun and its antecedent, however, and in this situation, the noun phrase tag functions to recover the distal referent and reintroduce it as a potential topic. Consider Examples (3b) and (3g) which are given in context in Extracts 5.1 and 5.2 below.

Extract 5.1

(The children have been asked to write a description of somewhere they have been on holiday. Mrs Miller has asked Daniel to think of some adjectives to describe the sounds he heard at his holiday destination)

- | | | |
|---|-------------|--|
| 1 | Mrs Miller: | Go on Daniel. |
| 2 | Daniel: | Bi::rds:: (2.2 seconds) Birds |
| 3 | | ((Classroom noise and inaudible talk – 8.1 seconds)) |
| 4 | Mrs Miller: | No bird isn’t an adjective. |
| 5 | Daniel: | What do you mean? |
| 6 | Mrs Miller: | It’s a noun. |
| 7 | Daniel: | No bu- |

- 8 Mrs Miller: No (0.9 seconds) you need a sound.
 9 Daniel: Mi- yeah that is a sound, **birds**.
 10 Mrs Miller: No bird isn't a sound. Bird is the name of something.

Extract 5.2

- 1 Joanne: Miss (1 second) Miss (.) have police got guns?
 2 Anon: Yeah.
 3 Mrs Herrington: No not in this country.
 4 ((Classroom noise – 2 seconds))
 5 Harry: Yeah they do.
 6 ((Classroom noise – 3 seconds))
 7 Harry: They do have guns, **police**.

In Extract 5.1, Daniel's utterance on line 9 (*yeah that is a sound, birds*) comes 9 seconds after the last previous mention of 'bird' (Mrs Miller's *No bird isn't an adjective* on line 4) and 17 seconds after Daniel first introduces this topic on line 2. Further, in the intervening period, the discussion has moved onto the difference between nouns and adjectives. It makes sense, therefore, that Daniel should add the noun phrase tag in order to reintroduce 'birds' as a topic and clarify the reference of the demonstrative pronoun. Similarly, in Extract 5.2, Harry's *They do have guns, police* occurs 10 seconds, and 4 turns, after the antecedent *police* in Joanne's question on line 1. Harry therefore makes use of right dislocation to clarify the reference of the pronoun in line 7.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) also require that the noun phrase tag in right dislocation represent 'discourse-old' information; that is, it must refer to entities that can be recovered from the foregoing discourse. It seems, then, that they were not using the term 'afterthought' in the same way as Ziv (i.e. to refer to a linguistic construction which corrects an error in judgement). In the examples that Huddleston and Pullum (2002) give, the noun phrase tag is necessary, not because of the distance between the pronoun and its antecedent, but because there is more than one

potential antecedent in the preceding discourse. Example (3i), which is given in Extract 5.3 below, illustrates this point:

Extract 5.3

- 1 Harry: Clare's [picture](.) is going to be first. You know why? Look.
2 (1.5 seconds) Look at her person. Her person's (.) class. (1.2
3 seconds) It's class, Clare's, isn't it?

In this example, Harry is discussing whose picture he thinks will win the art competition that the children at Ironstone Primary are about to enter. The referent of *It* on line 3 may be unclear in light of the presence of two potential antecedents: *Clare's* (i.e. Clare's picture) on line 1 and *her person* on line 2. The noun phrase tag, *Clare's*, provides the necessary clarification.

In each of these examples, the speaker could simply have used the full noun phrase in subject position in the main clause. Example (3i), for instance, might have been formulated as *Clare's is class, isn't it?* This formulation would suggest, however, that the entity in question, Clare's picture, had not occurred in the context at all. As we can see from Extract 5.3, this was not the case; Clare's picture is not only present in the physical surroundings of the interlocutors but has also been explicitly referred to in the preceding discourse (*Clare's (.) is going to be first*). The noun phrase tag in right dislocation is therefore not merely an 'afterthought', a way of correcting an error in judgement that occurred when the pronoun in the main clause was selected; it arises as part of carefully planned discourse (Ziv 1994:641).

The 'discourse-old' condition does not apply to Example (3a), which is represented in Extract 5.4 below:

Extract 5.4

(Ben is working on a computer in the ICT suite)

- 1 Ben: Start
- 2 ((Background noise – 6.2 seconds))
- 3 Ben: Aw damn.
- 4 ((Background noise – 14.2 seconds))
- 5 Ben Mi::ss
- 6 ((Background noise – 3.6 seconds))
- 7 Ben: Is it brown or blonde, **your hair**?

The pronoun *it* on line 7 appears to introduce ‘discourse new’ information; it refers forward (i.e. cataphorically) to the noun phrase *your hair*. As it is uttered, the reference of the pronoun is unclear (and hence requires clarification), not because the distance between the pronoun and its antecedent is too great, or because there is more than one potential antecedent, but because there is *no* potential antecedent in the preceding discourse. Perhaps in this case what we have is outward or ‘exophoric’ reference (Wales 1996:41), whereby both *it* and *your hair* are referring outward to something in the immediate context (in this case, my hair). In Ziv’s terms, the use of right dislocation here could be interpreted as an instruction to the addressee to search their surroundings for the appropriate situationally evoked entity and attend to it (Ziv 1994:640). In this example, the use of the adjective ‘blonde’ gives Ben’s addressee(s) a clue as to what he is referring to. But why doesn’t Ben use the alternative construction ‘Is your hair brown or blonde?’ given that the topic of ‘hair’ had not arisen in the previous discourse (or indeed in any previous conversations) and has no particular prominence in the non-linguistic context? In this situation, we might hypothesise that Ben uses the construction to build up anticipation so that greater weight falls on the noun phrase following the principle of ‘end-focus’ (Quirk et al. 1985:1356). After all, his question is not entirely innocent (and perhaps is not a

question at all). Being careful to avoid rebuke for being ‘cheeky’, Ben uses an indirect speech act to point out that the roots of my hair were giving away the fact that I was not a natural blonde. This interpretation certainly fits with my knowledge of Ben as an individual. His behaviour at school was generally good, but he was playful and enjoyed pushing the boundaries in his relationships with other children as well as with the teaching staff. He was particularly creative with language (compare Extract 3.8 in Chapter 3.6) and was the most prolific user of right dislocation in the Murrayfield Primary data. He uses this linguistic feature 6 times in the data, twice as many as the next most frequent user at Murrayfield, Tara.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) acknowledge that there are examples where the function of the dislocated phrase cannot be one of clarification but they do not discuss other possible functions. Biber et al. (1999:958) concede that, in contrast to left dislocation, ‘[t]he discourse functions of noun phrase tags [i.e. in right dislocation] are more difficult to pin down’. Ben’s use of right dislocation in Extract 5.4 highlights the point that, while we can make generalisations regarding the use of right dislocation with noun phrase tags (e.g. it is used to reintroduce textually or situationally evoked entities into the discourse), speakers still retain the freedom to be creative with this feature as they negotiate social relationships and style themselves linguistically. As Moore (2003:85) makes clear in her discussion of right dislocation, evidence for the saliency of a given discourse function ‘must be found in the data itself and not imposed as a consequence of standardised notions of how language functions’.

5.4.2 Pronoun tags

Pronoun tags (e.g. *me* in *I’m- I’m- I’m a magician, me*) do not add anything to the referential content of the main clause. Such tags do not function to clarify the

reference of the pronoun in the main clause or reintroduce a previously evoked topic, as was the case for the noun phrase tags analysed in Section 5.4.1. Some grammars suggest an emphatic reading of pronoun tags, but these explanations tend to be vague; others are silent on this issue. In fact, there appears to be no comprehensive description of this type of right dislocation. What, then, is the function of right dislocation with pronoun tags? To answer this question, we must move away from the ‘information management component of language’ (Cheshire 2007:158), which was foregrounded in Section 5.4.1, to the interpersonal domain.

All of the examples in (3) to (10) have a pronoun as the subject of the clause. As Quirk et al. (1985:1363) note, the subject of a clause, in particular a pronominal subject, ‘is likely to be contextually ‘given’ information and hence to carry least communicative dynamism’. By ‘communicative dynamism’, Quirk et al. are referring to the communicative value each part of an utterance has, which corresponds to the level of prosodic stress. This can range from high to low, with high communicative value usually falling at the end of the message. This is the principle of ‘end focus’. It is possible to change the focus of an utterance by moving the tonic (Quirk et al. use the term ‘nuclear’) intonation/stress from the expected end position to another position in the sentence (see also discussion of stress in Chapter 3.3). Quirk et al. refer to this as ‘marked focus’. Marked focus frequently arises when special emphasis is required ‘for the purposes of contrast or correction’ (Quirk et al. 1985:1365). For example, during an art lesson in Ironstone Primary, Harry issues the following directive to Gemma: *Pass us it. I need it.* Gemma’s response is *I [a:] need it*, with tonic stress on ‘I’. In this example, Gemma uses stress to place emphatic focus on ‘I’ in order to encode contrast with Harry’s ‘I’. The force of Gemma’s utterance is ‘you might need it, but you can’t have it because I need it’. In

Example (4e), *I'm- I'm- I'm a magician, me*, Clare's use of the pronoun tag *me* seems to suggest that she wishes to draw special attention to the subject of the clause. She could have done this prosodically by placing tonic stress on the pronoun, but she actually uses the unstressed and reduced form [ə] on each repetition of 'I'. In this example⁴, Clare uses the pronoun tag to emphasise the subject. Emphasis can occur in a number of different forms, however, and is a complex issue that is difficult to separate from related phenomena such as evaluation.

In Example (4g), Robert's use of the pronoun tag *me* seems to suggest, again, that he wants to emphasise the subject of his utterance, and again, he could have done this prosodically with tonic stress on 'I'. This would have conveyed a different meaning to that intended, however, suggesting that Robert's utterance had come in response to another child's declaration that it is not Robert but he/she who hates the book bag. Robert's utterance comes in response to him nearly falling off his chair (from which the book bag is hanging), and is said to no one in particular; so this contrastive/corrective interpretation does not work (none of Robert's classmates have mentioned their book bags). The meaning of Robert's utterance seems to be more along the lines of 'I *really* hate this book bag'; such an interpretation is backed up by his add-on *Proper gay*. The function of the dislocated element in this case therefore seems to be to emphasise Robert's evaluation of the book bag. Ochs notes that 'in addition to indexing particular kinds of affect (e.g. positive affect, negative affect), languages also index degrees of affective intensity' (Ochs 1996:411).

In Example (5g) Joanne addresses her utterance to Danielle who is busy singing and making up dances in the playground. Joanne could have drawn attention to the subject of her utterance with a stressed /ju:/, but again, this could have led to an

⁴ I will return to this example, and to the motivations for Clare's utterance in Section 5.5.

unintended contrastive meaning along the lines of ‘It’s not me but you who loves doing that’. Such an utterance would be appropriate as a corrective if, for example, Danielle had first suggested that Joanne loved making up dances; but this is not the case. As with the last example, the pronoun tag appears to emphasise Joanne’s evaluation of Danielle. This evaluation carries more risk than Robert’s evaluation in Example (4g) given that the speaker is directly evaluating her addressee. Joanne is able to do this because she has a close relationship with Danielle (the two girls are best friends), and in fact Danielle accepts Joanne’s evaluation by laughing and replying *I know*. The use of right dislocation in this way might not be appropriate, though, where the relationship between speaker and addressee is low in solidarity and intimacy. Offering an evaluation of an interlocutor for public consumption is inherently face-threatening for the target of the evaluation, and hence risky for the speaker. This threat/risk increases when right dislocation is used to give greater weight to the proposition. Perhaps because of this, second person pronoun tags were often used to emphasise unequivocally negative propositions in which the speaker had little regard for maintaining social relations with their interlocutor: (5a) *Nathan you’re (xxxxxx spoiling it), you*, (5b) *You are a copy-cat, you*, (5c) *You’re dead nasty, you, now*, (5d) *God, you’re gay, you*.

Carter et al. (2000:148) write that right dislocation often occurs ‘in statements in which the speaker is evaluating things and saying positive or negative things’. Many of the examples of right dislocation in my data express an evaluative stance. Stance meanings can be conveyed through lexical choice alone (Biber et al. 1999:966): *hate* (4l); *love* (5g); *stupid* (4f, 8i); *nasty* (5c); *horrible* (6a); *shit* (6b); *cool* (8b); *manky* (8e); *good* (9a,b); *gay* (4d). But evaluation can be grammaticalised, that is, integrated into the structure of the clause. Biber et al. (1999:969-970) review different ways in

which the grammatical marking of stance may be encoded. The clearest cases, for them, are stance adverbials (e.g. ‘Unfortunately, we cannot do anything about it.’) and complement clause constructions (‘I’m very happy that we’re going to Sarah’s’). In both cases ‘there are two distinct structural components: one expressing the stance, while the other is a clause that presents the proposition framed by the stance expression’ (Biber et al. 1999:969-970). Right dislocated utterances, which have two distinct structural components (i.e. the main clause and the tag), appear to fit this criterion and may be one way in which the speakers in this study encode stance grammatically.

In Example (8c) Beth (from Murrayfield Primary) is expressing her evaluation of something she has encountered in the class library. This utterance is placed in context in Extract 5.5.

Extract 5.5

(The children have just come back to the classroom after the lunch break and they start the class, as usual, with a period of ‘silent reading’. At this point, Beth and some other girls are in the library section of the classroom where the children can go to choose new books.)

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 1 | Beth: | Aw there’s two family stuffs |
| 2 | Anon: | I was looking for family stuff |
| 3 | Beth: | Oh <i>that’s</i> just weird, <i>that</i> . |
| 4 | Anon: | What? |
| 5 | Beth: | That (0.8 seconds) and that. |
| 6 | Anon: | (Doesn’t work). |
| 7 | Beth: | That’s just weird. |
| 8 | Anon: | Why? |
| 9 | Beth: | Family stuff’s there (0.5 seconds) and then Horrid Henry’s |
| 10 | | next to there (1.2 seconds) (hhhh) That is just so weird. |

Beth’s evaluation on line 3 is encoded to a certain extent in the lexical item *weird*.

Beth uses right dislocation to emphasise this evaluation. An emphatic reading is

supported by her reformulation three turns later to *That is just so weird*. In its grammatical role as intensifier, *so* emphasises the evaluation inherent in the adjective *weird*. Biber et al. (1999:970) point out, however, that adverb premodifiers of this type are less clear representations of the grammatical marking of stance since they ‘are incorporated into a phrase and have local scope only within that phrase, rather than reporting stance towards an entire proposition’. So perhaps Beth’s use of right dislocation in line 3 serves not only to emphasise the evaluation conveyed by the adjective *weird* but also to express Beth’s stance in relation to the proposition as a whole. Following Beth’s utterance on line 3, the listener is aware that Beth feels that the situation she is highlighting is *weird*, but further, that she is uneasy with this state-of-affairs. Beth is intent on rectifying the problem she has encountered in the library corner. This is not out-of-character for Beth, a girl who the class teacher described as always wanting ‘to do the right thing’. Beth’s stance is one of concern, and her further comments on the subject (in lines 7 and 10) are framed by this stance.

The evaluative stance encoded by right dislocation does not always co-occur with items of evaluative lexis. There are 2 examples in the data in which second person pronoun tags are used to encode evaluation into an imperative: *Give us that lid, you* (5h); *Get off, you* (5i). In both examples, the speakers’ tone of voice would suggest that the purpose of the tag is to reinforce and intensify the command. This interpretation of Example (5h) is problematic, however, given that this utterance incorporates singular ‘us’, a feature which is often used by the children to *mitigate* the force of an imperative (Chapter 4). The utterance is set in context in Extract 5.6 below:

Extract 5.6

- 1 Harry: (Gosh a chain) (0.8 seconds) David pass us that (.)
2 [lid
2 Danielle: [(Give us that book too)
3 Harry: Give us that lid, you.

My interpretation of this interaction is that David, who is sitting diagonally opposite Harry, does attempt to pass Harry the lid, but the lid is mischievously intercepted by Danielle (who is sitting next to Harry and opposite David). Harry's utterance on line 3 is then addressed to Danielle, rather than David. It is not possible to know for certain whether this interpretation accords with what actually happened due to a lack of visual information – this is one of the disadvantages of audio radio-microphone recordings – but it does seem sensible. Harry's use of singular 'us' may simply be an echo of his initial directive to David, with the right dislocated *you* serving to pick out/clarify the target of the directive (i.e. Danielle rather than David) while also intensifying the force of the directive. There may be further significance to Harry's use of singular 'us', however. I noted in Chapter 4 that features of the local dialect, like singular 'us' and 'howay', can signal in-group identity and a sense of what is right/fair/acceptable within that group. It could be, then, that Harry's use of singular 'us' in line 3 is not merely a mirror image of his directive in line 1 but an example of 'inclusive 'we'', and as such, a reminder to Danielle that her actions are not part of acceptable in-group practice. Or, singular 'us' could be functioning as an example of 'exclusive 'we'', a way for Harry to gain group support by aligning himself with David (and against Danielle). Indeed, these interpretations are not mutually exclusive; any one (or some combination) of these meanings may be indexed by Harry's use of singular 'us'. The functions associated with singular 'us' work in tandem with the right dislocated pronoun tag. As noted in Chapter 4,

imperatives are very common between intimates in casual conversation and are not necessarily face-threatening. In Examples (5h) and (5i), the ‘you’ that is merely inferred in most imperatives is explicitly articulated and given added emphasis at the end of the utterance (end focus). The right dislocated tag therefore intensifies the command, enhancing the face-threatening potential of the imperative form. This tag also encodes the speakers’ feelings (e.g. of anger, annoyance, frustration) towards their addressee. The resulting imperative, then, probably has dual function both as command and reprimand.

Example (8i), which is repeated in Extract 5.7 below, provides an interesting example of the way in which right dislocation can be used, seemingly deliberately, to emphasise a negative evaluation, this time one which the speaker attributes to another person.

Extract 5.7

(The children are coming back into the classroom after break and are putting away the outdoor toys)

- | | | |
|---|-----------|---|
| 1 | Jane: | They’re all stupid according to you aren’t they? |
| 2 | Helen: | Oo don’t because that might get recorded. It might have heard |
| 3 | | you. |
| 4 | Caroline: | Heard what? |
| 5 | | ((Background noise – 1.7 seconds)) |
| 6 | Helen: | Her when she said ‘that’s just stupid that’. ((Emphatic stress on ‘that’, ‘stupid’ and ‘that’)) |

Helen is known to be a bit of ‘a stirrer’, that is, someone who likes to tell tales and encourage gossip and conflict. There are several points in the recording where Helen can be heard complaining to the teacher that one of her fellow pupils has done or said something that warrants disciplining, though the recording clearly shows that

they have done no such thing.⁵ She seems to be playing this role here when she deliberately misrepresents Jane and exaggerates the force with which Jane's comment was made. It is interesting that to do this she uses the right dislocated demonstrative pronoun, which was not actually present in the initial utterance (compare Helen's revoicing of Nathan in Chapter 3.5.1). Helen uses right dislocation to reinforce the negative evaluation of the adjective *stupid* and, therefore, to mark the quoted speaker's (i.e. Jane's) stance of disdain. In doing so, Helen 'recontextualises' (Ochs 1992) the past speech event in order to suit her present aims. This use of right dislocation, along with paralinguistic features such as stress and tone of voice, indexes Helen's orientation towards the proposition as a whole and also to Jane, the speaker to whom Helen attributes the utterance: 'this was an inappropriate comment to make and Jane was wrong to make it'. Drawing on the theoretical perspective of Bakhtin (1981), Ochs (1992:338) notes that the voice of the speaker, the voice of the someone referred to in the utterance and the voice of the person for whom the utterance is conveyed may blend and become part of the social meanings indexed within the utterance. In this interaction, the multiple voices include those of Helen, Jane and Helen's interlocutor, Caroline. Helen uses the right dislocated utterance to negotiate her relationship with Caroline. She draws Caroline into alliance with her in mutual distaste for Jane. As Thompson and Hunston (2000:8) point out, evaluation can be used to manipulate your interlocutor, 'to persuade him or her to see things in a particular way'. Evaluation is an interpersonal phenomenon; the speaker hopes that their addressee will share their opinions, thus

⁵ For example, Helen can be heard making the following complaint to the teaching assistant, Mrs Moon: *He called me a saucy little- (1.1 seconds) little twit- (0.9 seconds) twat. (1.5 seconds) Called me a saucy little twat (0.6 seconds) and twit.* It is clear from the recording however that the boy in question did not use any of this language.

creating a bond of solidarity. Of course, the opposite effect (i.e. alienation) is possible if the addressee does not share the speaker's point-of-view (Martin 2000). There was little risk of alienation for Helen in this exchange, however, given her status in relation to Caroline (see analysis of Extract 4.2 in Chapter 4.4.1.1). Examples such as this one demonstrate that different kinds of stance can (and often do) occur simultaneously in a single interaction (Bucholtz and Hall 2005:593).

Right dislocation can encode a number of other affective stances in addition to positive/negative evaluation. In Example (4n), for example, Harry is expressing his opinion that Clare is going to win an art competition that the children have entered. In (4p) and (4j) the speakers are stating a preference. When Andrew says *I like the old ones me*, he's referring to a style of sports shoe and is emphasising his preference in relation to the other boys, specifically in relation to his direct addressee Robert. As well as affective stance, we might also say that the pronoun tag here encodes epistemic stance in that Andrew is reinforcing the subjectivity of his utterance: this is his opinion, no one else's. Ochs (1996:412) points out that affective and epistemic stance are grammaticalized more often than other 'situational dimensions' across language communities.

All of the examples discussed in this chapter so far make clear that right dislocation is an important part of what Carter and McCarthy (1995:151) term 'interpersonal grammar'. Interpersonal grammar refers to 'speaker choices which signal the relationships between participants and position the speaker in terms of his/her stance or attitude'. This notion of positioning is one that will be explored further in Section 5.5.

5.5 The social meaning of pronoun tags

Section 5.4.2 considered the pragmatic functions of pronoun tags, that is, the ways in which this linguistic feature was used for emphasis and/or the grammatical marking of stance. The utility of right dislocation extends further, however. In evaluating something or expressing an attitude or opinion, the speaker ‘position[s] themselves and others as particular kinds of people’ (Bucholtz and Hall 2005:595). Even in these small interactional moves, then, the children are doing social identity work. This kind of meaning-making was apparent in the analysis of Extract 5.7. In this section I will explore further how pronoun tags are involved in the negotiation of social relationships and the construction of individual and group identity.

I have made an analytical distinction between the pragmatic and social functions of pronoun tags, but in practice, these two dimensions work together. Recall Example (4g), which is represented in Extract 5.8:

Extract 5.8

- 1 Mrs Johnson: Aw homework. I’m going to do- Get your homework books
- 2 out first.
- 3 Robert: I nearly fell off a chair then (1.4 seconds) I hate this book bag,
- 4 me. Proper gay.

Robert has just turned around to get his homework book out of his book bag (which is hanging from the back of his chair) and this action has caused his chair to rock back and almost made Robert fall. In order to save face, Robert demonstrates self awareness by first publicly admitting what has happened and then attributing blame to the book bag. As discussed in Section 5.4.2, the pronoun tag in this example serves to emphasise the negative evaluation of the book bag. The pronoun tag also marks epistemic stance by making the perspective from which this evaluation comes

very clear: other children in the class might like their book bag, but Robert hates it. The standard blue book bag, complete with school logo, is a compulsory part of the school uniform. Robert uses right dislocation to assert his dislike for this shared practice; in doing so, he positions himself against school authority. This represents an important part of Robert's identity. Despite the fact that Robert did well in class and his behaviour was rated as 'above average' by the teacher, he often aligned himself with an anti-school stance in the presence of his peers. This anti-school stance is evident in the side comments that Robert made in response to the teachers' utterances (see Extract 5.9 and 5.10):

Extract 5.9

- 1 Mrs Trotter: Right get your reading books back out.
2 Robert: Back out, we never even got it out.

Extract 5.10

(Mrs Johnson has asked the class what 'the holy Catholic church' means)

- 1 Robert: School
2 Anon: Heaven.
3 Mrs Johnson: Kelly (0.8 seconds) No it's not heaven. It's something on
4 earth. Kelly I don't know what you're doing but I don't like it.
5 ((Classroom noise – 3.9 seconds))
6 Mrs Johnson: It's not a cathedral. It's not a building.
7 Various: Us. People.
8 Mrs Johnson: It's people, yes. The church is people because what good is a
9 building if people don't go into it? So-
10 Robert: It's not *made* out of people.

In class, Robert appeared quiet and conscientious. This was certainly the view I initially had of him, and this view was reinforced by the teachers' judgements. Outside of formal classroom activity, though, Robert was a clear leader and very popular amongst his peers. He appeared to be able to achieve the difficult balance between being studious and well thought of by teachers whilst also maintaining

kudos within the peer group. Notice that in Extract 5.10 he positively contributes to the lesson by trying to answer the teacher's question (line 1) but then later makes a sarcastic comment at the teacher's expense (line 10). Similarly, in Extract 5.8, Robert has done his homework and is complying with the teacher's directive by getting his homework book out of his bag, but he subsequently asserts an anti-school stance in lines 3-4. While the projection of an anti-school stance in interaction may be momentary, individuals who repeatedly take such stances (like Robert) may be viewed as having a cool, anti-school identity within the community of practice.

Robert uses right dislocation 6 times in the data, and all of these examples include pronoun tags. The most prolific users of right dislocation with pronoun tags were generally the outgoing, confident children. Robert used pronoun tags to assert his individuality and high status within the peer group. Examples (4h) and (4i) both occurred while Robert was taking part in a game of 'Bull dog' in the playground. Example (4i) is set in context in Extract 5.11:

Extract 5.11

- 1 Robert: Howay, I'm going, me.
- 2 Billy: I'm going with you.
- 3 Robert: Without Sam seeing us.

In Chapter 4.4.3, I argued that 'howay' functions as a directive but that it also marks in-group identity within the Ironstone Primary community of practice. In Extract 5.11, the meanings associated with 'howay' work in concert with the right dislocated pronoun tag. Robert wants to take his chance and run over to the other side of the playground without being caught by Sam (the person who is 'on'), and he wants Billy to come with him (perhaps to distract Sam's attention away from himself). Robert announces his intention to run and uses right dislocation to set himself apart

from Billy and style himself as a confident leader: ‘I’m going with or without you, but you can join me if you want to’. The use of right dislocation also implicitly contrasts Robert’s intended future action with Billy’s – if Billy does not run he will be left behind, and this may not be desirable for him. Together, the use of ‘howay’ and the right dislocated pronoun tag combine to form a cloaked directive which appeals to Billy on the grounds of solidarity and in-group/team membership. Billy buys into this appeal: *I’m going with you*.

Parallels can be drawn between Robert’s linguistic behaviour and that of one of the Murrayfield Primary participants, Ben. I noted earlier (Section 5.4.2) that Ben used right dislocation more than any of the other Murrayfield pupils. Of the 6 examples of right dislocation used by Ben, 4 involved pronoun tags. Like Robert, Ben was well-behaved in class but was more mischievous outside of the formal lesson and was a leader amongst his peers. Ben used pronoun tags on several occasions to assert his own opinion (*I think that looked good that* (68a); *I want that one me* (4a) or simply to assert himself (*I’m being first in line me* (4b)).

Robert’s counterpart amongst the *girls* at Ironstone Primary was Danielle. Danielle was a favourite with the teachers, being described by Mrs Johnson as ‘a shining star’. She was also very popular with her peers (boys as well as girls). There were some children in the class, though, who felt that the methods Danielle used to maintain her popularity were underhand. Charlotte, for example, confided in me that Danielle could be a bully and appeared to have some of the other girls (Jane, Gemma, Hannah and Clare) ‘hypnotised’. Danielle was the most frequent user of right dislocation at Ironstone Primary. She used this linguistic feature 8 times in the data, and 7 of these examples included pronoun tags. In Example (8f), *That’s Miss Kavanagh’s niece, that, you know*, Danielle uses right dislocation in a statement

which introduces new information into the conversation. Danielle is sitting at the lunch table with a number of her friends (Clare, Tina, Jane, Gemma). Her use of right dislocation serves the pragmatic function of giving greater prominence to the fact that she is providing. Further, the pronoun tag, in addition to the discourse marker *you know*, draws attention to Danielle's knowledge, styling her as someone 'in-the-know' and hence a useful friend to have.

Danielle also used right dislocation to encode evaluative stance: *She's a liar her. I hate her* (4c); *She's like Jamie Oliver⁶ now her*. In making negative evaluations of other people (see also (4a), (4b), (4c), and (4d), (6a), (6b), (6d)), we might suggest that speakers are implicitly positively evaluating themselves (Bucholtz and Hall 2005:593). Further, as Thompson and Hunston (2000:6) point out, '[e]very act of evaluation expresses a communal value-system, and every act of evaluation goes towards building up that value-system'. In this way, the use of right dislocation contributes to the construction of group as well as individual identity. In fact, individual identity was often inextricably linked to the individual's place within a wider social grouping. In Extract 5.12, Clare uses right dislocation to negotiate her place within a task-based partnership.

Extract 5.12

(Clare and Hannah are working together to make a torch as part of their design technology class. They are struggling with one particular part of the construction.)

- 1 Hannah: I left you to do it and what do you do you do it wrong.
- 2 ((laughs))
- 3 ((18 seconds later))
- 4 Clare: It's going away look. See I'm a mag- I'm a magician, you

⁶ Jamie Oliver is a 'Celebrity Chef' who launched a campaign in Britain to make school dinners healthier. Danielle is here referring to one of the dinner ladies (who I think might actually be her mother) who is trying to get Danielle to eat her lunch.

- 5 know.
- 6 Gemma: Hold your thing where it hasn't got any glue on.
- 7 Clare: Why didn't we think of that?
- 8 ((Classroom noise -- 5 seconds))
- 9 Hannah: Clare why don't you just use that bit where there isn't any
10 glue on it?
- 11 Clare: Are you two twin sisters? (2.6 seconds) No because I've just
12 done it- (.) I'm- I'm- I'm a magician, me. (1.1 seconds) Now
13 what do you do? (0.6 seconds) You can do that. (.) Oh just let
14 me (paint a sparkly one).
- 15 ((Classroom noise – 2 seconds))
- 16 Clare: Just give me a little bit of glue.
- 17 Hannah: You're a very good magician there.

When Clare says *I'm a magician, me*, she is emphasising her success and is positioning herself in relation to her partner, Hannah. Earlier, Clare had told me that in the last Design Technology lesson she had not done any work at all; Hannah had done it all. It seems that even if Clare does do some work, she is accused of doing it wrong: *I left you to do it and what do you do you do it wrong ((laughs))* (line 1).

When Clare says *I'm a magician, me*, then, she is challenging preconceived notions of her own identity and asserting her role in this partnership as someone who *is* capable of contributing. Clare's utterance on line 12 is a reformulation of *I'm a magician you know* on lines 4-5. There appears to be a relationship between right dislocation and the discourse marker 'you know' (see (8f) and also Section 5.7).

In addition to reinforcing group membership, right dislocation was also used to highlight an individual's exclusion from the in-group. Consider, for example, Extract 5.13 below:

Extract 5.13

- 1 Caroline: Who's on the- who's on the [erm microphone?
2 Clare [Me:: me.
3 Miss Snell: Clare
4 Caroline: Are you? ((Laughs))
5 Clare: ((To Caroline)) You didn't notice. ((to Miss Snell)) Do I have
6 to give you it back now o::r [at home time?
7 Miss Snell: [No just keep it on t-
8 u- till home time.
9 Clare: E::r oo:: (hhhhhhh) oo the register that's what I need.
10 Caroline: I've never been on it, me.

Caroline's use of right dislocation on line 10 singles her out in comparison to other children, such as Clare, who have had the radio-microphone (see also the discussion of Extract 4.2 in Chapter 4.4.1.1). She is perhaps asserting her identity as someone who often misses out on such things, thereby distancing herself from other children in the class whom she perceives as being more fortunate. This interpretation is supported by ethnographic information. Caroline is not as outgoing as some of the other girls in the class. She's a quiet girl, perhaps lacking in confidence, who can appear at times to be a bit of a loner. She's part of an unstable friendship group who often get into trouble for bickering with each other in class; on at least one occasion their arguments and the resulting fall-out were brought to the attention of the headmistress. I worked with Caroline in class on a number of occasions when group work was required. For example, as part of a Design Technology (DT) lesson, the children were making torches and were asked to find a partner to work with. Caroline found herself without a partner and so asked for my help. After the interaction with Clare reported in Extract 5.13, the conversation turns to the upcoming lesson when the children will be continuing with their DT project. During

this conversation Caroline repeats *I'm on my own* three times to emphasise the fact that she does not have a partner to work with.

Extract 5.13 shows that right dislocation could be used to differentiate the speaker from other children in the class. This was not always done from a negative perspective, however. Sometimes the children wished to differentiate themselves in a more positive way. In the following example, Andrew, along with some other children, has gone to audition for clarinet lessons. There are not enough chairs in the room and the school secretary, Mrs Kavanagh, says she will go and get some more:

Extract 5.14

- 1 Andrew: I'll stand up
- 2 Olivia: You'll get a big chair won't you.
- 3 Andrew: I'll stand up, me.
- 4 Chris: Andrew, there's a seat.
- 5 Andrew: I'll stand up.
- 6 Anonymous: Andrew
- 7 Andrew: Let Miss- Let Dan sit on there.

Andrew says *I'll stand up* but there is no reaction so he says again *I'll stand up, me*. Chris points out that there is a chair but Andrew repeats *I'll stand up* and then *Let Miss- let Dan sit on there*. This is an audition and Andrew wants to differentiate himself from his classmates, if not by his skill with the clarinet, then by his politeness and deference to the teacher (something he does not often exhibit). I probably would not have expected this from Andrew, but he was actually very keen to be picked. Later in the recording, when the children were back in the class, Andrew told his classmate, Sam, *I want to get through, me*, again using right dislocation. When he found out that he was unsuccessful, he told me *Miss I wanted to get through to that (.) thingy*, and explained that he had never been to any instrument lessons. In this example, then, I would suggest that Andrew uses right

dislocation because he wants to differentiate himself from the other children in order to achieve a particular goal – to get picked for clarinet lessons.

5.6 Cross-school comparison revisited

In Section 5.3 I highlighted differences between the two schools in terms of the children's use of right dislocation, specifically in relation to their use of pronoun tags. Having identified some of the functions of right dislocation, is it now possible to explain these differences?

One potential explanation is that the children at Murrayfield Primary tend not to use pronoun tags because they have other linguistic resources which fulfil the same functions, and which they prefer. The children at Murrayfield Primary may disfavour the use of pronoun tags because they do not add anything to the referential content of the speech and, as such, leave the speaker open to criticisms of redundancy and inarticulateness in their use of language. Dines (1980) studied clause terminal tags of the form AND/OR [PRO-FORM] (LIKE THAT) as in “and stuff like that”. She claims that clause-terminal tags are judged to be vague and are stigmatised for their association with working-class speech. Discourse markers generally are often the subject of prescriptive criticism (Mendoza-Denton 2008:285). The strength of feeling towards many discourse markers makes them available for parody in the speech of comedy characters such as *Little Britain's* Vicky Pollard⁷ (Snell 2006; Snell forthcoming), where their diverse social and interactional functions are heavily oversimplified. For these reasons, the Murrayfield Primary participants may avoid right dislocation with pronoun tags in preference for other (more socially acceptable) linguistic strategies. For example, a speaker could choose to encode emphasis by using an adverb. The

⁷ *Little Britain* is a television comedy sketch show in which recurring characters enact situations that parody British society. Vicky represents the stereotype of a working-class teenager.

following examples are taken from a brief search in the Murrayfield Primary data set. They include standard (e.g. ‘really’) as well as non-standard (e.g. ‘dead’) intensifiers.

- (11) (a) *Ow that really hurts.* (Tim, Murrayfield Primary)
- (b) *I don't think I've ever ever really actually read a library book before.* (Mary, Murrayfield Primary)
- (c) *I'm really thirsty.* (Sarah, Murrayfield Primary)
- (d) *This is really really bad.* (Craig, Murrayfield Primary)
- (e) *I'm not very good at drawing.* (Craig, Murrayfield Primary)
- (f) *I'm so thirsty.* (Mary, Murrayfield Primary)
- (g) *Aw it's dead boring.* (Michelle, Murrayfield Primary)

All of the examples in (11) could have been expressed using right dislocation (e.g. ‘Ow that hurts that’; ‘I’m thirsty me’; ‘Aw it’s boring this’). Although speakers in Ironstone Primary used right dislocation more often than those at Murrayfield Primary, they also made use of intensifiers, as the examples in (12) demonstrate.

- (12) (a) *He's being really funny.* (David, Ironstone Primary)
- (b) *God this is heavy (1 second) God this is very heavy.* (Harry, Ironstone Primary)
- (c) *That's so bad.* (Danielle, Ironstone Primary)
- (d) *Because I get stuck- dead stuck on the hands.* (Hannah, Ironstone Primary)
- (e) *Gemma you're dead good at this.* (Harry, Ironstone Primary)

(f) *It's proper easy.* (Clare, Ironstone Primary)

(g) *I have it proper light as.* (Jane, Ironstone Primary)

Macaulay (2002; 2005) has suggested that different social groups adopt different discourse styles (measured in terms of frequency of occurrence of discourse features). In his analysis of the speech of socially differentiated groups in Ayr and Glasgow, Macaulay (2002; 2005) found that middle-class speakers used adverbs more frequently than working-class speakers. He explores the hypothesis that the middle-class speakers make greater use of adverbs in order to express intensity and to signal evaluation. Macaulay (2002; 2005) examines extracts from the data and shows that the middle-class speakers used evaluative adjectives and adverbs to give an evaluative interpretation of experience. In contrast, with the working-class speakers there was 'no expression of the speaker's "attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about" (Hunston and Thompson 2000: 5)' (Macaulay 2005:177). Macaulay argues that rather than giving their own interpretation, working-class speakers relied on details to provide the hearer with the information necessary to understand the situation set out in their talk: 'the working-class speakers are much less anxious than the middle-class speakers to inform the hearer directly how they feel about the situation' (Macaulay 2005:182). This explanation does not fit with the data in my study. As the above analysis shows, the speakers at Ironstone Primary were keen to encode attitude, evaluation and emphasis into their utterances. If the working-class speakers in Macaulay's study *were* less inclined to express emphasis and evaluation, it may be due, in part, to the nature of the data. The Ayr recordings are from interviews conducted by Macaulay and the more recent Glasgow data is made up of same-sex dyadic conversations organised by the researcher (though the researcher

was not present in the actual recording). Both sets of data represent formal recording situations compared to the (arguably) more naturalistic radio-microphone data used in this study. Perhaps the working-class speakers in Macaulay's study would have felt more inclined to offer subjective comments in a less restrictive setting. Or, one alternative explanation is that the speakers in Macaulay's study were using different means to encode something like intensity and evaluation. Macaulay (2002, 2005) found, for example, that the lower-class speakers used right dislocation, along with several other syntactic constructions (e.g. demonstrative focusing, noun phrase preposing, clefting and left dislocation), for the purpose of highlighting or intensifying their utterances. The middle-class speakers also used right dislocation but with a much lower frequency. Macaulay does not differentiate between right dislocation with full noun phrase tags and right dislocation with pronoun tags. The two examples he gives involve full noun phrase tags. It is therefore not possible to identify whether the difference lies mainly with pronoun tags, as in this study, or with right dislocation in general.

Given that the frequency of use of right dislocation was in complementary distribution with the frequency of use of adverbs across the working- and middle-class groups in Macaulay's analysis, is it plausible to suggest that right dislocation and intensifying adverbs are alternative ways of 'saying the same thing' (i.e. variants of the same linguistic variable)? And is there evidence for the same kind of distribution in my study?

As has often been discussed (e.g. Lavandera 1978; Romaine 1984b), variation analysis at the level of discourse cannot adopt the standard model (initially developed by Labov 1969) used for the analysis of phonological and morphological variables. The first step with this model involves identifying a linguistic variable by

isolating a set of variants that are semantically equivalent. To take an example from this study, possessive ‘me’ [mi] is one variant of the possessive singular; others include [maɪ], [ma] and [mə]. These variants are all alternative ways of ‘saying the same thing’. The speakers in this study *must* use one of these forms for the first person possessive singular. It is therefore possible to identify the precise number of environments in which a given variant could occur and so express the frequency of occurrence of one particular variant, such as [mi], as a proportion of total potential occurrences. Right dislocation is different in that it is not part of a discrete set of variants which are semantically the same. Dines (1980:15) proposes, however, that ‘variables may be postulated on the basis of *common function in discourse*’. Dines suggests that the researcher’s attention may be drawn to one particular discourse feature because it is salient in some way (e.g. as a prestige or stigmatized variant) and is used differentially by different social groups. The researcher then postulates a variable (based on discourse function) and proceeds to identify the alternative variants. My analysis of singular ‘us’ and directives in Chapter 4 followed a similar pattern.

In relation to right dislocation, the kind of investigation proposed by Dines (1980) is outside of the scope of this thesis, but it could form the basis of future work. Such a study would be problematic, however, for a number of reasons which I will outline here (see also Cheshire (2007) for a discussion of the issues associated with a quantitative analysis of discourse variation). The first problem relates to the multifunctional nature of right dislocation. In terms of pragmatic functions, right dislocation can be used for clarification, emphasis, and the encoding of evaluative and other types of stance. What, then, would we isolate as the ‘common discourse function’ of right dislocation? It would not be useful to prioritise one function over

another; this would oversimplify the situation. Perhaps, alternatively, we could take each function in turn and propose several variables. So, for example, variants for the emphatic function would include standard and non-standard intensifiers as well as right dislocation; there would be a different set of variants for the marking of epistemic stance, and so on. We have seen, however, that even within a single utterance right dislocation (with pronoun tags in particular) can fulfil several different functions simultaneously. Separating functions in the way just described, therefore, would not only be laborious but would create artificial analytical distinctions which do not reflect the speakers' reality. Moreover, while there may be other means of encoding some of the pragmatic functions expressed by right dislocation, there seem to be no obvious alternatives which can index the kinds of *social* meaning Caroline constructs when she says *I'm on my own, me*, for example.

A second (and connected) issue relates to the speakers' agency in their use of right dislocation. We have seen that the same linguistic feature could be used by different speakers in subtly different ways. Ultimately the meanings attached to right dislocation depend upon the specific context of use, where it may also interact with other linguistic forms in the process of meaning making (e.g. singular 'us' in Extract 5.6, Section 5.4.2, and 'howay' in Extract 5.11, Section 5.5).

Taking into consideration all of the above, it might still be possible to tentatively propose a set of quasi-variants for investigation, and a quantitative analysis of these variants might spotlight a linguistic form/forms which is/are used more often by the Murrayfield Primary participants than by those at Ironstone Primary (i.e. the reverse of the situation with pronoun tags). The fact that linguistic features occur in complementary distribution, however, does not necessarily entail that those features are variants of the same linguistic variable. I would like to propose a second

possibility,⁸ that the children in these two schools use language to fulfil *different* functions and that this accounts for the different frequencies of use of certain linguistic forms. Dines (1980:20-21) begins to consider this possibility but rejects it:

There is of course the possibility that there would be nothing in middle-class speech which functionally corresponds to the frequent use of tags in working-class speech. *The corollary of this view would be that the tags are redundant elements.* This hypothesis is considered and rejected...Thus the question arises as to what those speakers who do not use the tags do indeed use. [my emphasis]

Macaulay (2005:9) makes a similar point, albeit from a different perspective:

It is clear from a variety of studies, including the present one, that speakers are highly idiosyncratic in their use of these [discourse features such as *like* and *you know*] features. Some speakers use them very frequently and others seldom, if at all. If these items carry a heavy semantic or pragmatic load, it would be necessary to identify the alternative means by which speakers who do not use them convey the same information.

I do not accept that pronoun tags in my study must be regarded as ‘redundant elements’ (or ‘idiosyncrasies’) should there be no functionally equivalent constructions in the speech of the Murrayfield Primary participants. The children at Ironstone Primary may be using language to meet a particular need that generally does not arise, or is not considered salient, in the Murrayfield Primary community of practice. In using right dislocation, then, I would suggest that the Ironstone Primary speakers are doing different or additional (rather than ‘redundant’) work. Let’s consider an example. When Aaron from Ironstone Primary says *He’s shit, him* (6b), one use of the right dislocated pronoun tag is to emphasise the negative evaluation.

⁸ I was prompted to think about this following a question from Emma Moore at the third Northern Englishes Workshop, Salford University, March 2008.

A similar effect could have been achieved with an intensifier such as 'really' (e.g. 'He's really shit'). In the reformulation, however, the focus is on the intensity of the evaluation inherent in the adjective 'shit' (e.g. 'He's really shit' as opposed to 'He's quite shit', 'He's a bit shit', etc.). As such, the reformulation is a less clear example of the grammatical marking of stance (see discussion in Section 5.4.2 in relation to Biber et al. (1999)). In the original, on the other hand, the focus is less on the strength of the evaluation (i.e. the emphatic function) and more on the nature of the relationship between the speaker and the target of his utterance (i.e. the interpersonal function). The right dislocated version explicitly sets the target of Aaron's utterance apart from Aaron and from the other children in the Ironstone Primary community of practice. That right dislocation and intensifiers are not functional equivalents explains why these two linguistic features can co-occur (e.g. *You're dead nasty, you now* (5c)). This kind of social positioning is perhaps clearer when right dislocation occurs with first person pronouns (e.g. *I hate this book bag, me*) and in particular with examples in which the function of the pronoun tag is not to emphasise an evaluation (e.g. *I've never been on it, me*).

Right dislocation serves an important social function in the Ironstone Primary community of practice then. This linguistic feature explicitly sets the speaker apart from some individuals while simultaneously aligning him or her with others, and moreover, it explicitly signals the speaker's desire to be so grouped. There is no a priori reason why speakers at Murrayfield Primary would want or need to use language to signal the same kinds of social meaning: '[p]eople at different places in the political economy see the world differently, do different things, have different preoccupations, and say different things' (Eckert 2008:467). The differences between the two groups may not be a case of different discourse styles, then, but rather a case

of speakers negotiating different social and communicative needs within their community of practice.

The question of whether and to what extent children from different social backgrounds are socialised into different ways of speaking is a controversial issue and one which sociolinguists have largely avoided following the political fallout from Basil Bernstein's (1971) early work. The fear is that descriptions of communicative differences between social groups will be misinterpreted as evidence for linguistic deficit on the part of one of those social groups. Lavandera (1978) picks up on this issue in her discussion of the linguistic variable:

One of the reasons for restricting the study of variables to referentially meaningless surface variants is the fear of providing arguments which can be used irresponsibly to support ethnic, racial, and class-based prejudices...the 'dangerous' hypothesis would be that forms which clearly differ in referential meaning are at the same time socially and stylistically stratified. This kind of evidence would show that different social groups exchange different types of messages for which they make use of forms with different meaningful structures...this evidence could be used incorrectly to attribute to some groups the inability of thinking certain meanings...However, I will argue that the hypothesis is perfectly reasonable and that the misinterpretation of the evidence will have to be prevented by further evidence and direct argumentation against these kinds of prejudices.

(Lavandera 1978:179-180)

The 'further evidence' to which Lavandera refers can be provided by ethnography. For example, in her ethnographic study of three socially differentiated communities in the south-eastern United States, Heath (1982) showed that children's language was shaped by the different patterns of language socialisation prevalent within the three communities, and that this subsequently resulted in three different responses to school-based learning. Rampton (2008) points out that Heath (1982)

was engaging with many of the same issues that had preoccupied Bernstein (1971) in his discussion of a class-based distinction between what he termed a ‘restricted’ versus an ‘elaborated’ linguistic code. The wholesale celebration of Heath’s work contrasts markedly, however, with the general condemnation of Bernstein’s. Rampton (2008) suggests that different positions on ethnography might help to explain this difference. Unlike Heath’s ethnographically sensitive community comparison, Bernstein’s formulation of the relationship between linguistic code and social class was based on a limited sample of data from a small group of adolescent boys and was not supported by detailed observation of the ways in which these participants actually interacted in their own home or school environments. Milroy (1987b:35) similarly notes that Bernstein’s work is a clear example of ‘a theory based on very little properly collected and analysed linguistic data’.

There are lessons to be learned here for sociolinguistic studies of language and social class which involve the kind of approach I have outlined in this section. A great deal of ethnography is required in order to understand and describe differences in the communicative practices of different social groups if we are to avoid the potential misinterpretation of difference as deficit.

5.7 Pre- and post-clausal discourse features

Biber et al. (1999) make a distinction between what they refer to as ‘utterance launchers’ and ‘tags’. ‘Utterances launchers’ have a special function at the beginning of a turn or utterance. They include the use of left dislocation, discourse markers (e.g. ‘well’, ‘right’) and other prefatory expressions (e.g. interjections such as ‘oh’, stance adverbs such as ‘anyway’) (Biber et al. 1999:1073-1074). ‘Tag’ is a generic term Biber et al. give for elements added retrospectively to a grammatical unit. They

include the use of right dislocation as well as tag questions and ‘vagueness hedges’ (e.g. ‘sort of thing’) (Biber et al. 1999:1080-1081). Gupta (2006:247) notes that discourse markers serve two major functions (discourse management, and the marking of speaker’s attitude), but that the ‘post-clausal slot appears to be especially associated with the marking of speaker’s attitude’. The evidence from my study certainly suggests that there is a distinct functional difference between left dislocation and related constructions (such as ‘Do you know X?’), which serve to organise discourse and orient the listener to the following utterance, and right dislocation, which serves a more interpersonal, affective purpose (Carter and McCarthy 1997:16). In fact, the relationship between left dislocation (and other pre-clausal discourse markers) and right dislocation (and other post-clausal discourse markers) is an interesting one which warrants further work.

There are now a number of grammars which focus on spoken language (e.g. Carter and McCarthy 1995; Carter and McCarthy 1997; Biber et al. 1999), largely thanks to advances in methodologies for corpus linguistics. As a result, greater attention has now been given to elements of language which work outside of traditional grammatical units. A number of sociolinguists, of course, have long been interested in these kinds of discourse features. Tag questions, in particular, have been the focus of a number of studies (Holmes 1982, 1995; Cheshire 1982b, 1996; Moore 2003; and more recently, Moore and Podesva forthcoming). Like right dislocation, tag questions have a number of applications and they may fulfil several different social and pragmatic functions simultaneously. Again, like right dislocation, what all of these functions have in common is a focus on interactivity and social relationships (Cheshire 1996). Thinking about how different kinds of discourse features work together may help us to further understand the role each plays in

linguistic meaning-making (though this interrelationship between different discourse features presents another problem for a traditional variation analysis (Section 5.6)). In my study, for example, left dislocation can be seen to be working with other pre-clausal discourse features (e.g. ‘well’ (1b)), and right dislocation with other post-clausal discourse features (e.g. tag questions (9a) and ‘you know’ (3d, 8f, 8h)). I mentioned earlier (Section 5.2.2) Beal’s (2004a) example, in which right dislocation was reinforced with ‘like’: *I’m a Geordie, me, like*. Right dislocation also occurred on a number of occasions with a pre-clausal discourse marker that is used very frequently in this data, ‘aw’ [ɔ:]: *Aw they’re rubbed out them* (7b); *Aw yeah that is nice that* (8j); *Aw that’s nice that* (8k). Like other pre-clausal discourse markers, ‘aw’ seems to function as an ‘utterance launcher’. Whether or not this discourse marker is unique (or at least distinctive) to the Teesside dialect remains to be seen. There is certainly much more work to be done within this fruitful area of style, dialect and discourse.

5.8 Conclusion

I have shown in this chapter that right dislocation can fulfil a variety of pragmatic and social functions including clarification, emphasis, evaluation, the grammatically marking of stance and social positioning. Different types of right dislocation can be (and are) used in different ways by different speakers. Perhaps now we can understand why grammars have been unable to pin down this particular linguistic feature. Ultimately though, I must agree with Moore (2003:193) that:

Context is paramount to our understanding of the work that variables do. Like tag questions, right dislocated tags have the potential to indicate something about the speaker’s social identity *and* something about the nature of the discourse that contains them

(and both of these factors will contribute to our understanding of contextualised meaning).

I have also considered the nature of the linguistic variable in relation to right dislocation and arrived at the conclusion that traditional variation analysis is not suitable for this kind of linguistic feature. In fact, rather than postulating a linguistic variable on the basis of common discourse function, it may be more useful to consider the possibility that the children in these two schools are using language to fulfil *different* functions, and that this (rather than a preference for one variant over another) accounts for the different frequencies of occurrence of right dislocation in the two sets of data. The place of social class in such an explanation is by no means clear. I have suggested, though, that any link between an individual's use of discourse features and macro social categories (such as social class) must be mediated by analysis at the meso-level of social structure (e.g. community of practice), and, moreover, this analysis should be situated firmly within an ethnographic framework.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

This thesis has focused on four salient features of the Teesside dialect: possessive ‘me’, singular ‘us’, ‘howay’ and right dislocation. None of these features are traditional sociolinguistic variables in the Labovian sense. Studies in the Labovian tradition only describe a certain *type* of variation; that which draws upon sets of semantically equivalent linguistic forms and which is analysable in terms of single linear scales (e.g. vernacular to standard, informal to formal). The features that I have analysed in this study, however, are part of systems in which choices are *not* alternative ways of ‘saying the same thing’ and those choices construct meaning across multiple dimensions. I examined a related set of linguistic forms which work at the interface between grammar and discourse, and in doing so, I have not only thrown the spotlight on aspects of linguistic behaviour which have generally been of little interest to sociolinguists, I have also highlighted a number of theoretical issues. I have demonstrated, for example, the utility of studying low frequency variants such as possessive ‘me’, and I have suggested that examining such features in context, and from an ethnographic perspective, could contribute to an understanding of wider issues of language variation and change. I have also highlighted alternative perspectives on the notion of the linguistic variable. Singular ‘us’, for example, was not investigated simply as a variant of a traditional linguistic variable (i.e. OBJECTIVE SINGULAR) with a discrete set of variants that have the same meaning ([mi], [ʊs], [əs] etc.); had I left my analysis here I would have missed the rich array of social and pragmatic meanings indexed by this form. Instead, singular ‘us’ was examined in relation to the wider syntactic construction which appeared to condition its use, the imperative, and the role that the combined construction (i.e. imperative with singular ‘us’) had in relation to other directives. I have also shown that there are linguistic

features that are not susceptible to variation analysis at all. The analysis of right dislocation called into play the ongoing debate about the nature of the linguistic variable in relation to syntax and discourse, and it added to this debate the possibility that the prevalence of a discorsal feature in one particular social group over another might be due to different social and communicative needs within those groups.

This study also took a different *approach* to the investigation of sociolinguistic variation. Traditional (or ‘Labovian’ or ‘Quantitative’) approaches to language variation look for correlations between frequency of use of a linguistic form and membership in some social category (such as social class). Studies within this paradigm, for example, have repeatedly found that, at the same point on a continuum of attention paid to speech, working-class speakers use a greater proportion of ‘non standard’ linguistic forms than those who rank further up in the social hierarchy. The quantitative analysis in Chapters 3 to 6 corroborates this classic sociolinguistic finding – the Ironstone Primary participants used ‘non-standard’ or ‘dialectal’ variants with greater frequency than their middle-class counterparts. But simply highlighting the fact that working-class speakers use a greater proportion of forms perceived as ‘non-standard’ without considering the agencies involved in the use of such forms could potentially perpetuate class-based stereotypes, implying that the use of ‘non-standard’ language is an inevitable consequence of a speaker’s social position. One of the aims of this study was to challenge this kind of stereotype. An analysis of the ways in which the children used language in a range of ethnographically specific contexts demonstrated that pupils at Ironstone Primary actually utilised a whole range of linguistic options (including ‘standard’ as well as ‘non-standard’/‘dialectal’ forms), and they did so in response to a variety of complex contextual factors. These speakers used ‘howay’, possessive ‘me’, singular ‘us’, and

right dislocated pronoun tags discriminately in order to do social and pragmatic work. This finding draws attention to the complex interface between sociolinguistic variation and pragmatics – an interface that cannot be dealt with adequately using traditional variationist methods.

‘Howay’, possessive ‘me’, singular ‘us’, and right dislocated pronoun tags are all socially significant features of Teesside English, but only ‘howay’ can be categorised as dialectal in the traditional sense of being region specific. ‘Howay’ is a particularly salient marker of north-east identity. It is difficult for outsiders to appropriate this term because of the lack of transparency in its meaning and function. One cannot simply *learn* the meaning of ‘howay’; it is necessary to be ‘at the table’ at which the meanings/functions are continually negotiated (Eckert and Wenger 2005:583). The referential meaning of ‘howay’ is something like ‘come on’, and it seems reasonable to suggest that children in playgrounds across the country might use ‘come on’ in a manner similar to how Robert (and others at Ironstone Primary) use ‘howay’ (e.g. ‘Come on, you can’t guard’). In fact, pupils at Ironstone Primary also use ‘come on’ in this way. But in Teesside, and specifically within Ironstone Primary, ‘howay’ exists as an *additional* resource. Speakers can draw upon this resource to encode meanings related to solidarity, in-group identity, status, and control. When playing bulldog, for example, Robert was able to use ‘howay’ to refer implicitly to the rules of engagement at a point in which there is a potential transgression (see section 4.4.3). His use of ‘howay’ draws upon notions of what is considered fair and acceptable within this game and within the friendship grouping generally.

Possessive ‘me’, singular ‘us’ and right dislocation are *not* region specific. These features occur in varieties of informal spoken English throughout much of the English-speaking world. With right dislocation there is a regional dimension, in that

forms which are present in some regions (e.g. tags which include an auxiliary verb) are absent from the Teesside data, but overall, there is a lack of agreement in the literature as to whether any of these forms are dialectal and in some sense 'non-standard' or else simply part of informal colloquial English. Possessive 'me' adds an additional layer of complexity. This form *feels* like a salient feature of the local dialect and local identity, but if it is used only as part of stylised performances, can it really be regarded as part of a local dialect and in what sense? Perhaps possessive 'me' is a performed dialect feature which has lost touch with any local community. The analysis of possessive 'me' raises issues, then, in relation to dialect research. What can be defined as dialectal, and from whose perspective should we construct this definition? It seems to me that it is the perception of dialect users that is important. Possessive 'me', singular 'us' and pronoun tags may be geographically widespread, but for the participants in this study what matters is how these features are used and perceived within their own communities. The analysis in Chapters 3 to 6 indicates that these pronominal forms are important resources in the construction of locally specific stances, styles and identities. Further, while it may not be possible to categorise any of these forms as dialectal in the traditional sense of being region specific, 'they are all potentially dialect features in the sense of being used by some social groups much more than by others thus creating some potential for social meaning-making' (Coupland 2007:64).

Personal pronouns have, by their very nature, an underlying potential for indexing social meaning; these pronouns take their orientation from the speaker's perspective and thus provide the perfect linguistic resource for encoding stance. Regionally or socially salient pronouns, like possessive 'me', singular 'us' and right dislocated pronoun tags, are particularly useful in this respect as they encompass a whole range

of local associations and social meanings that become available for doing identity work. All of these forms were used with much greater frequency by the children at Ironstone Primary. The work performed by these features may be summarised as follows:

- **Possessive ‘me’.** The children made use of possessive ‘me’ in playful stylised performances in which this feature indexed both epistemic and affective stances.
- **Singular ‘us’.** The children used singular ‘us’ to mitigate imperatives via stances of solidarity and alignment/disalignment in situations where issues of in-group membership, peer-group status, and collective knowledge, rights and responsibilities were foregrounded. In these situations, the relationship between speaker and addressee became the target of identity work, ‘constructing meanings for ‘us’ together, ‘how we are’ (Coupland 2007:112).
- **Right dislocated pronoun tags.** The children used right dislocated pronoun tags to encode epistemic, evaluative and other affective stances in a community-specific way. This linguistic feature was an important resource for negotiating individual and group identity. A right dislocated utterance (e.g. *I hate this book bag, me*) could be used to set the speaker apart from some individuals while simultaneously aligning him/her with others.

The interactional stances indexed by possessive ‘me’, singular ‘us’ and pronoun tags were involved in the construction of fleeting interactional personae, for example, styling someone as being momentarily concerned with their own appearance (see Extracts 3.5, 3.6). These stances also built up into more permanent identities within

the community of practice, such as that of a troublemaker like Helen (Extracts 3.4, 4.2 and 5.7), a popular leader like Robert (Extracts 5.8, 5.11), or a loner like Caroline (Extracts 3.4, 5.13). These more enduring identities became apparent because ethnography enabled me to situate the extracts that I analysed in the flow of events that occurred before, during and after. Local stances might also build up into larger identity categories via processes of indexicality (Ochs 1992). Over time, the repeated stances of solidarity, informality, humour, openness (e.g. in making evaluations and social positions public), and closeness, which are revealed in the interactions of the Ironstone Primary participants, might crystallise into an ideology about working-class identity (or perhaps about northern working-class identity or, more specifically, north-eastern working-class identity), whereby members of the working-classes are perceived as warm, friendly, open and members of close-knit communities, compared to the more distant, reserved standing of the middle-classes. That these interactional stances are often constructed using (what are regarded as) the ‘non-standard’ resources of the local dialect leads to widespread acceptance of another commonly held view, that working class speakers are uneducated, unintelligent and lack social mobility.

We might therefore suggest a ‘constitutive relation’ between language and social class in that linguistic features (such as possessive ‘me’, singular ‘us’, right dislocation and ‘howay’) index social stances, which in turn help to constitute social class meanings (Ochs 1992:341). These linguistic forms directly index interactional stances but only indirectly index working-class identity. Traditional correlational approaches to language variation do not have the analytical tools to access interactive stances. Such studies only capture the indirect indexical correlations between ‘non-standard’ linguistic features and working-class identity and therefore

miss the complexity of the relationship between language and social class. In doing so, these studies may indirectly (and inadvertently) contribute to long-standing class-based ideologies/stereotypes.

Traditional variationist methods may be inadequate for a meaningful investigation of the relationship between language and social class, but as Rampton (2008) pointed out in a plenary lecture given to the BAAL annual meeting earlier this year ‘there is still a lot of scope for ethnographic and interactional sociolinguistic analyses of class processes’:

if sociolinguists want to investigate class, we don’t have to bind ourselves to large-scale comparisons of high- and low-placed social groups. In class societies, people carry class hierarchy around inside themselves, acting it out in the fine grain of ordinary life, and if we look closely enough, we may be able to pick it out in the conduct of just a few individuals.

(Rampton 2008:3)

While I agree with Rampton’s main point, I am not entirely convinced by the idea that individuals carry class hierarchy around inside themselves. For example, when Clare from Ironstone Primary is taking part in playground games, talking about photographs in the classroom, or making a war-time torch there is little evidence to suggest that she is acting out class hierarchy. Working-class identity is shared by all of the children at Ironstone Primary and hence class-based differences are not salient. On the other hand, Clare being in some ways powerful or powerless, a key or peripheral member of the peer group, skilled or unskilled in a task *is* relevant (Coupland 2007:119). Rather than theorising social class as an attribution/judgement imposed upon individuals at a wider societal level there is therefore perhaps a case to be made for class as a micro-level concept related to positions of power *within* a community. The ‘non-standard’ features analysed in this thesis enabled speakers to

be assertive within their community (even though these features may be interpreted as powerless outside of the community). For these children it is not ‘working class’ and ‘middle class’ that matters but who has power in a particular setting and how that position is achieved. Within Ironstone Primary, Clare’s use of singular ‘us’ (e.g. *Give us my shoe back*) or right dislocated pronoun tags (e.g. *I’m a magician, me*) is interpreted against a backdrop of shared understanding and the co-construction of meaning. For participants in these interactions, meanings related to shared experience, in-group identity, popularity, power, social distance, and so on, become salient. For outsiders working with indirect indexical ties and abstract ideologies, however, the same forms might index inarticulateness, unintelligence, and a working-class identity. To complicate the issue further, the association that forms such as possessive ‘me’, singular ‘us’ and pronoun tags have with working-class speech is no doubt part of the social colouration of these linguistic features; it is part of what makes them available for indexing local meanings related to social distance and in-group identity in the first place. So, which part of this process comes first? Where is the source of social meaning? Exploring the nature of this bi-directional relationship between language and social class is an important challenge for future research.

The analysis in this thesis has been very much driven by an ethnographic focus on data before theory, and there are many advantages to this method. I approached the data open to possibilities rather than being constrained by pre-existing theory and research questions. The practices that were important to the participants in this study – rather than those that I felt would be (or should be) important – were therefore foregrounded. As Rampton (2006:386) points out, however, ‘data cannot speak for itself, and descriptions are never inference- and interpretation-free’. The analyses

presented in this thesis are unavoidably influenced by the theoretical and ideological biases that I bring as a researcher and an analyst. By combining quantitative with qualitative methods, however, I was able to build methodological rigour into the analysis while maintaining an interpretative, ethnographic stance. The interpretative claims that I made following the micro-analysis of an extract were situated within a wider understanding of the place that interaction claimed within the data as a whole and against the higher-level correlations and patterns revealed by the data. In this way, evidence for interpretations was collected cumulatively and held up for the reader's scrutiny. Ethnographic studies are criticised for a lack of replicability, and it is true that no one (not even me) could recreate the same conditions in a future investigation. This does not mean that ethnographic studies lack comparability, however (Rampton 2006:403). I have presented detailed descriptions of the people, situations, interactions and practices that I encountered in the communities I studied. Ethnographically sensitive comparisons between these descriptions and other studies would help researchers to develop more nuanced understandings of the linguistic similarities/differences that exist between socially differentiated groups. Ethnography will certainly be an important tool in tackling the challenges inherent in sociolinguistic analyses of class.

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Appendix 1

Parental Consent Form



June 2006

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I would be very grateful if you could allow _____ to participate in my research. I am a PhD student in the School of English at the University of Leeds where I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr Anthea Fraser Gupta (Senior Lecturer in English Language). You may be interested to know that my supervisor and I are both from Teesside.

My study, 'Language and Style in Two Teesside Primary Schools', will explore the way in which the children of Teesside speak. I will look at how the students and teachers within the school setting are using language creatively in their own ways. The children who take part in my study will be asked to take part in group discussions and other activities, which will be video recorded. The content of recordings made during normal school hours will be agreed in advance with the teacher and will be related to the curriculum. I expect the children to enjoy the sessions and learn from them. Recordings will also be made during normal school activities using a radio-microphone.

The identity of all participants in the study will remain confidential. Participants' names will never be used. Until 2020 the data will be kept securely and will be available only to me, my supervisor and my PhD examiners. I will quote from the data when I write about my research, but the children will all be absolutely anonymous. Towards the end of my research I will give a report to the school. If you would like a copy of the report, I will also send one to you.

The research that I do with your help will become a valuable resource for future researchers. For example, in years to come, researchers might like to look at how the English of Teesside has changed. After 2020, when the children are adults, I would like to be able to make my original recordings available for future researchers (the children will still be anonymous). This has been done with recordings from the past. If you are happy for _____ to participate in this study, please read the attached consent form. If you agree, please sign the attached form and return it to Mrs _____ at _____ R.C. Primary School. The consent forms will be kept securely in the School of English at the University of Leeds after the project, and will eventually be shredded.

If you have any questions or concerns about my study, please feel free to contact me (Tel: 0113 2403546 or 07901944645; email: j.snell04@leeds.ac.uk), or my supervisor (Tel: 0113 343 4750; email: a.f.gupta@leeds.ac.uk).

I do hope that you will be able to help me.

Thank you for your time.

Your sincerely,

Julia Snell (Miss)

Consent Form

Project title: *Language and Style in Two Teesside Primary Schools*



1. I have read the letter about this project.
2. I understand that my child will be asked to take part in group discussions and other classroom activities, within the curriculum, and approved by the class teacher, and that these will be video recorded.
3. I understand that the research is about the English of Teesside.
4. I agree to the arrangements described in the letter in so far as they relate to my child's participation.
5. I understand that my child's participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time.
6. I understand that my child's name will never be revealed in written or oral presentations of the study, and will never be associated publicly with any data from the study.
7. I understand that until 2020 the recordings will be accessible only to Julia Snell, Dr Anthea Fraser Gupta and the PhD examiners and will be used only for linguistic analysis.
8. I understand that portions of the recordings made will be transcribed in written reports, but that my child's identity will not be revealed.
9. I understand that after 2020 the recordings may be made available to other researchers, but that the children's identity will not be revealed.
10. I understand that I may contact Julia Snell (Tel: 0113 2403546 or 07901944645) if I have any questions or concerns relating to this project.
11. I give consent for my child to participate in the above-named study.

Name of child: _____

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

If you would like to have your own copy of the report to the school, please give me your address here. _____

Appendix 2

Paired Extracts for Comparison (Chapter 4.4.6)

Extract 4.8

- 1 Clare: I like your pen.
2 ((Classroom noise – 1.5 seconds))
3 Hannah: That’s all you do.
4 Clare: What?
5 Hannah: Write when we make torches, that’s all you do.
6 ((Classroom noise -- 1.7 seconds))
7 Clare: Aw me I know.
8 Hannah: Ask Miss Snell to get us a bulb holder.
9 Clare: This is all I do, isn’t, just write with your pen?
. . (2 minutes 18 seconds)
. .
10 Hannah: No I’m not using another box
11 Clare: No howay because (1.2 seconds) No: because there’s- (.)no
12 way we can. Why don’t we use this one (1.4 seconds) and then
13 we can f-
14 Hannah: (Because we can’t.)
15 Clare: Why?
16 Hannah: Because we need a little one to go in there.
17 Clare: No you don’t.
18 ((Classroom noise -- 4.1 seconds. Sound of tearing paper))
19 Clare: Oops (0.6 seconds) Okay that’s no good.
. . (9 minutes 50 seconds)
. .
20 Gemma: Hold your thing where it hasn’t got any glue on.
21 Clare: Why didn’t we think of that?
22 ((Classroom noise -- 5 seconds))
23 Hannah: Clare why don’t you just use that bit where there isn’t any glue
24 on it?
25 Clare: Are you two twin sisters? (2.6 seconds) No because I’ve just
26 done it- (.) I’m- I’m- I’m a magician me. (1.1 seconds) Now

27 what do you do? (0.6 seconds) You can do that. (.) Oh just let
28 me (paint a sparkly one).
29 ((Classroom noise -- 2 seconds))
30 Clare: Just give me a little bit of glue.
31 Hannah: You're a very good magician there.
32 Clare: Thanks.
.
. (4 minutes 56 seconds)
.
33 Hannah: I need a pencil.
34 Clare: Do it in pen.
35 Hannah: No: you can't use my pe::n (.) you can't.
36 Clare: [Aw right you can't.
37 Hannah: [Clare.
38 Helen: Use a felt tip pen.
39 Clare: Caroline- Helen (0.8 seconds) Helen we can do it ourselves.
.
. (8 minutes 43 seconds)
.
40 Gemma: No we don't cut around that because we need one bigger than
41 that remember.
42 Joanne: (Well what do we do round?)
43 Gemma: We don't do it round nowt (.) We do it round nowt.
44 ((Classroom noise -- 9.5 seconds))
45 Gemma: Do it in one of the corners.
46 ((Classroom noise -- 4.4 seconds))
47 Hannah: Clare (0.8 seconds) we've done it.
48 Clare: Have we?
49 ((Classroom noise -- 1.6 seconds))
50 Hannah: We need to cover it.
51 ((Classroom noise -- 1.9 seconds))
52 Clare: Ask miss see if you can cover it (.) Miss (0.6 seconds) Can we
53 cover- (0.7 seconds) Miss can we cover- can we go over there
54 and paint ours black?
55 Mrs Trotter: I wish you'd go over somewhere and paint something.
56 Hannah: Miss (0.6 seconds) [will that be painted?
57 Clare: [Howay we need to paint-
58 Hannah: Could that be painted miss?

59 Clare: Because if it's painted black paint-

60 Mrs Trotter: Yeah

61 Clare: Howay let's go and paint it.

.

. (1 minute 21 seconds)

.

62 Hannah: Wait there. Can- (.) you just take (0.7 seconds) this off a

63 minute?

64 Clare: Here I'll hold it.

65 Hannah: No I will I'll just [take (xxxxxxx)

66 Clare: [I want to hold it.

67 Hannah: (No it's my box)

68 Clare: So I want to hold it. (1.4 seconds) When you say turn, I'll

69 tu::rn.

.

. (1 minute 14 seconds)

.

70 Helen: You can pass me my box back now.

71 Clare: Eugh don't touch me, that's my paint brush.

72 ((Classroom noise -- 2 seconds))

73 Clare: And let me- (0.8 seconds) Hannah you're just painting it.

74 ((Classroom noise and inaudible speech -- 3.2 seconds))

75 Helen: Can I have my paint brush? (.) I need it.

.

. (56 seconds)

.

76 Hannah: Clare it just wants leaving now (0.7 seconds) to dry.

77 ((Classroom noise -- 4.9 seconds))

78 Andrew: Nathan this is coming out good.

79 Hannah: Clare you need to leave it to dry.

80 Clare: I know I'm ju:st (1.2 seconds) having it a run over.

81 ((Classroom noise -- 2.1 seconds))

82 Hannah: Clare you're wasting the paint now.

83 Clare: So ((laughs))

.

. (5 minute 37 seconds)

.

84 Clare: Watch. (0.9 seconds) A::w howay I was enjoying that. (.) Now
85 let me paint this one again.
86 ((Sound of tap running - Clare is at the sink))
87 Clare: ((Singing)) 'Bill and Ben the flower pot men (1.6 seconds) in
88 his hand he's got the whole'. There's loads more.
89 ((Classroom noise))
90 Helen: Excusez-moi. I need to wash my hands.
91 Andrew: Aw yeah I need to wash my top.
92 Clare: (Tru:::e)
93 ((Classroom noise -- 2.7 seconds))
94 Clare: Miss
95 ((Classroom noise and inaudible speech -- 13.3 seconds))
96 Clare: I'll put mine in the bag. Miss can I go in the toilets and wash
97 my hands?
98 ((Classroom noise -- 5 seconds))
99 Clare: Miss (0.8 seconds) can I go in the toilets and wash my hands?
100 Mrs Trotter: Hurry up.

Extract 4.9

1 Holly: I'll go and get the proper material and we can stick it on.
2 Sarah: No we are not sticking the carpet on again.
3 Tara: Go: and get-
4 Sarah: No, don't because you're just making it all thick and (xxxxx).
5 Holly: Why do I have to get it, you're (xxxx). Pass us it here.
.
. (3 minutes)
.
6 Holly: We need some pink felt.
7 Tara: Go and get some then.
8 Sarah: We don't.
9 Holly: Yes we do because (xxxxxxx)
10 Sarah: Stop, stop, we need to stick- stick that on first. That so does
11 not look right does it?
12 Tara: [No it's all like wonky.
13 Sarah: [It's too far back.
14 Sarah: No it's too far back it should be like there (0.5 seconds)
15 shouldn't it?
16 Tara: Yeah

17 Beth: Please can we borro- can we (xxx)- can I look at your dressing
18 table?
19 Sarah: Dressing table. We didn't make it.
20 Beth: I know, can we have a look at it though
21 [so we know how to make it?
22 Sarah: [Yeah.
.
. (1 minute 4 seconds)
.
23 Sarah: Well don't you think Holly's saying no no no?
24 ((Classroom noise -- 1.4 seconds))
25 Sarah: She's being Holly.
26 ((Classroom noise -- 1.4 seconds))
27 Tara: We'll put three on the back.
28 Sarah: Right, how many is there?
29 Tara: Right three. We want three.
.
. (2 minutes 41 seconds)
.
30 Sarah: Right cut- we have to cut it into little bits.
31 Holly: Yeah. All you need is just like a little tiny bit.
32 Sarah: I know that's a bit too much but do you want to just use it?
33 Holly: That'll be fine.
.
. (3 minutes 53 seconds)
.
34 Sarah: Right do you want to pretend that there's a blue mat there?
35 Tara: What's he doing?
36 Gavin: Borrowing the masking tape.
37 Tara: Holly (.) what's that?
38 Holly: It won't- I d- uhm we're putting a bigger one-
39 Sarah: It's not- it's definitely not going to stand like that, is it?
40 Holly: Like try a bigger one then.
41 ((Background noise -- 14.6 seconds))
42 Tara: Do Sarah's idea (1.7 seconds) then put-
43 Sarah: No:: no no no no because what's that going to do?
44 (.hhh) This is rubbish. Right. We need a long one. Where's the
45 scissors?

46 Holly: They're here.

47 Sarah: [No, no, no, no, no, no

48 Holly: [Pass us it. (xxxxx) (0.7 seconds) Sarah.

49 Sarah: I want- I want to do my idea, just for once. See- see if you like

50 it, but if you don't we can do your idea, okay? Wait, where's

51 the scissors? Thank you.

.

. (34 seconds)

.

52 Tara: Right and then we can cellotape it on, can't we?

53 Sarah: Yeah, right. Here's the cellotape. Nope nope n- n- n- n-

54 Tara: Don't. Do this one because then we can-

55 Sarah: What am I going to do with this?

56 ((Background noise -- 4 seconds))

57 Sarah: Do we need this?

58 Tara: No (1.4 seconds) Right can I have the scissors?

59 Sarah: No we might need-

60 Holly: Can I just have that (xxxxxxx) please?

61 Sarah: Yes

62 Tara: Holly I need it.

.

. (9 minutes 46 seconds)

.

63 Tara: Don't we need to put that on first?

64 Anonymous: (We got beadies)

65 Sarah: No

66 Tara: Yeah, Sarah we'd better.

67 Sarah: I wouldnt.

68 Tara: I would.

69 Sarah: Okay

70 Tara: Right, shall we get another mirror?

71 Sarah: No, no it's okay because we're just wasting cardboard after

72 cardboard after cardboard.

73 Tara: No that one's too small. We're getting

74 [another one

75 Sarah: [I've got glasses like that.

.

. (6 minutes 34seconds)

.
76 Sarah: [Where's the other one of these because I want to glue it.
77 Tara: [Why don't you get some cardboard to make the wardrobe?
78 Sarah: No because it's just going to look like weird when we paint it
79 Tara: Aw yeah.
80 Holly: You know on that- on the picture?
81 Sarah & Tara: Yea::h
82 Holly: And on the thing can you see a pink thing there next to the-
83 Sarah: (.hhh) We were supposed to go on there. Go and ask Miss if
84 we can go next at putting our picture (getting our picture).
85 Holly: I'll get some cardboard for the wardrobe, right?

.
(3 minutes 21 seconds)

.
86 Tara: Go and put that ((in sing-song style)) in the bi::n.
87 Sarah: Why? With the bead?
88 Tara: Yes
89 Sarah: Why?
90 Tara: We have two more.
91 Sarah: Yes those- that's- that's for the wardrobe wardrobe
92 Tara: Uh (0.8 seconds) Well take the (heemer) beads off.
93 Sarah: (Heemer) beads?
94 Tara: (Heemer) beads.
95 Sarah: ((Laughs))
96 Tara: Sarah just do it.
97 Sarah: One minute
98 Tara: Because we can't-
99 ((Background noise))
100 Tara: Go and put them two in the bin.

.
(1 minute 50 seconds)

.
101 Sarah: Miss Mi::s (2 seconds) can you uhm mix the paint-
102 Mrs Norman: Does this jumper belong to anyone in here?
103 All: No.
104 Mrs Norman: Right. Take it into the (xxxxx)
105 Sarah: Miss uhm w- like there's only a few colours and then- there's-
106 we want something like lighter than a certain colour but

107 there's no more white left.
108 Sarah: [So like-
109 Mrs Norman: [Go under the cupboard under the sink- in the cupboard under
110 the sink.
111 Sarah: Excuse me. Excuse me Tom. Excuse me Tom. There might be
112 some more white.
 .
 . (3 minutes 36 seconds)
 .
113 Holly: Can I have a paint brush as well?
114 Sarah: [Yeah
115 Tara: [Go and get one. Get a yellow one.
116 Sarah: Right just put a bit more in.
117 Tara: No Sarah start mixing it now.
118 Holly: Where are the paint brushes?
119 Tara: There.
 .
 . (7 minutes 51 seconds)
 .
120 Sarah: No this is what you do. You turn the tap off. No right, you wet
121 your paper towel first (right). Right you turn the t- no you turn
122 the tap off-
123 Tara: It'll make it go down, look. It's going down.
124 Sarah: Yeah, can you just turn the tap off for a second?
125 ((Emphasis on 'second')) Brush it all down. Right wait.
126 Tara: Right turn the tap on. (0.6 seconds) Sarah turn it on.
 .
 . (1 minute 37 seconds)
 .
127 Tara: Don't- if you're going to pour it down Sarah, pour it down the
128 plug.

Appendix 3

Summary of Left and Right Dislocation

	Ironstone Primary				Murrayfield Primary				TOTAL			
	Left dislocation		Right dislocation		Left dislocation		Right dislocation		Left dislocation		Right dislocation	
	Subject	Object	Subject	Object	Subject	Object	Subject	Object	Subject	Object	Subject	Object
NP	0	1	4	1	1	0	4	2	1	1	8	3
Dem. Pro	0	0	11	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	18	0
Pers. Pro	0	0	31	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	35	0
TOTAL	0	1	46	1	1	0	15	2	1	1	61	3

Appendix 4

Published Paper Using Data from this Thesis

Snell, Julia. 2007. 'Give us my shoe back': the pragmatic functions of singular *us*.
Leeds Working Papers in Linguistics and Phonetics 12: 44-59.

'GIVE US MY SHOE BACK': THE PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF SINGULAR *US*

Julia Snell¹

Abstract

This paper is based on the results emerging from an ethnographic study of the language practices of 10-year-old children in two primary schools in Teesside, in the north-east of England. It focuses on the children's use of *us* for the objective singular first person pronoun. Investigation of the occurrences of singular *us* in a corpus of radio-microphone recordings indicates that this variant of the objective singular appears to have a pragmatic function associated with degrees of politeness, power and social distance. At the same time, this paper raises methodological concerns about the importance of combining quantitative with qualitative analysis, and by doing so, articulates a new approach to the study of sociolinguistic variation.

1. Introduction

In their treatment of personal pronouns, grammars usually present a table which differentiates the pronouns of English according to person and case. According to such tables, for example, the standard form for the first person objective singular is *me*. As Wales (1996:19) points out, however, such tables belie the diversity that exists in the pronoun systems in use across the English speaking world. For Beal (1993:205), the pattern of pronouns used in Tyneside is so unique that it is necessary to set it out in a table of its own, in which *us* is the paradigmatic Tyneside alternative to standard *me*, though she acknowledges that parts of this table are to be found in other dialects. The use of *us* for the first person objective singular, for example, is 'common throughout the North (and possibly further afield)' (Beal 1993:206). As Beal suggests, singular *us* is found elsewhere in the British Isles (e.g. in the Southeast of England (Anderwald 2004)), and in fact, elsewhere in the English speaking world (e.g. Australia (Pawley 2004)). This particular usage is so pervasive that it is referred to within the *Cambridge Grammar of English*, which states that '*Us* is sometimes used very informally to mean *me*' (Carter and McCarthy 2006:382).

¹ I would like to thank Dr Anthea Fraser Gupta and an anonymous reviewer for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

This variant of the objective singular has also been noted historically: the *Survey of English Dialects* shows extensive use of ‘me’ expressed by *us* (Upton et al. 1994:486); Wright’s *The English Dialect Grammar* states that ‘[i]n most dialects of Sc.[otland]. Ire.l[and] and Eng.[land]. *us* is used for the indirect object *me*’ (Wright 1905a:271); *The English Dialect Dictionary* (Wright 1905b:332) further states that *us* could be used as an ‘[u]nemph.[atic] form of the *acc. sing. me*’. This idea that *us* represents an ‘unemphatic’ form of the objective singular is echoed in *The Concise Scots Dictionary* which states that *us* is used ‘as non-emphatic substitute for *me*’ (Robinson 1985:755). Others have made similar tentative statements about the usage and meaning of singular *us*. Beal (2004:117) writes that singular *us* is used as both direct and indirect object in the North-east, but that ‘examples from Bolton and West Yorkshire show it only as indirect object’. In writing about Australian Vernacular English, Pawley (2004:635) notes that singular *us* is used ‘when the speaker makes a request for something to be given to or obtained for him/her, e.g. *Give us a light for me pipe, Give us him, Dig us out a pudlick.*’ Carter and McCarthy (2006:382) also suggest that singular *us* ‘is commonly used when making requests, perhaps to soften the force of a request’. Anderwald goes further:

this phenomenon seems to be specific to the first person, and to imperatives. Whether the use of *us* for *me* has its origin in being a mitigating factor in requests has not been investigated yet.

(Anderwald 2004:178)

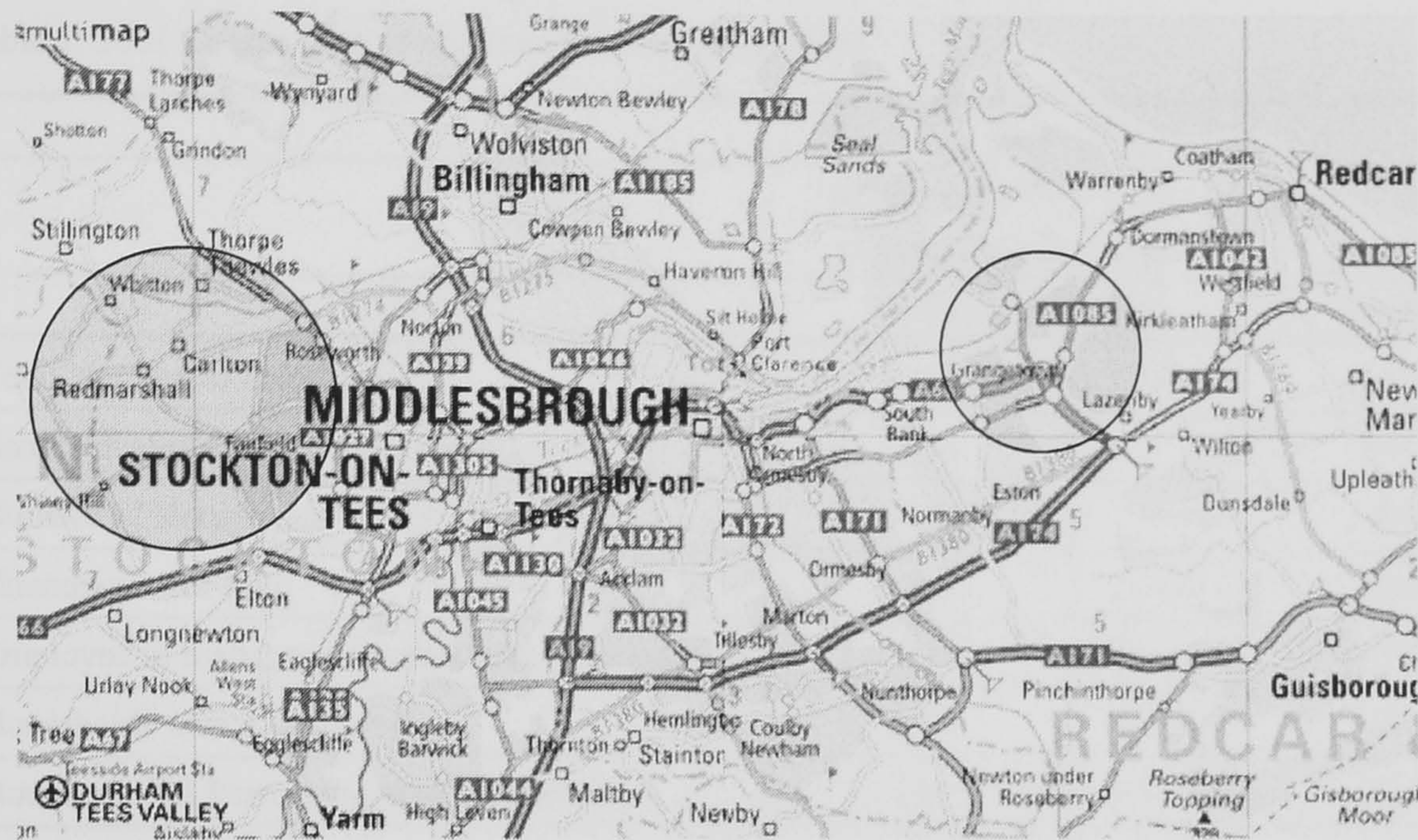
My aim in this paper is to begin such an investigation. By analysing the occurrences of singular *us* in a corpus of children’s speech, I explore the possibility that this variant of the objective singular has a pragmatic function associated with degrees of politeness, power and social distance. In doing so, I introduce a new approach to the study of sociolinguistic variation which aims to combine quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis.

2. The Data

The data presented in the following analysis are taken from 28 hours of radio-microphone recordings collected during fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in two primary schools in Teesside in the north-east of England. Six boys and six girls from both schools participated in the study, each wearing the radio-microphone for half-a-day. In this paper, I analyse data provided by 12 children: 3 boys and 3 girls from each school.

The two schools which form the basis of the study are Murrayfield primary school² in Fairfield, Stockton-on-Tees and Ironstone Primary school in Grangetown, Middlesbrough.

Figure 1: Map of Teesside showing Fairfield (left) and Grangetown (right)



These schools are differentiated in terms of the socioeconomic profile of the areas they serve, and, by implication, the social background of the students. This difference is made clear by the OFSTED reports:

The school has a stable community and pupil mobility is low. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below the national average...The overall attainment of pupils when they enter the school [at age three] is about what is expected in children who are three.

Murrayfield Primary's OFSTED Report (2003:3)

We can compare this with a similar paragraph taken from Ironstone Primary's OFSTED report:

The school serves an area facing significant social and economic challenges and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is over three times the national average. Attainment on entry to the nursery is well below expectations.

Ironstone Primary's OFSTED Report (2003:7)

² All names of people, places and institutions referred to in this article are pseudonyms.

The contrast between the ‘stable community’ of Murrayfield Primary and the ‘social and economic challenges’ of Ironstone Primary is apparent. The marked difference between the two areas is further illuminated by a comparison using 2001 Census data. Table 1 gives some of the key census statistics for these areas.

Table 1: 2001 Census Data (Neighbourhood Statistics 2001)

	Super Output Area Lower Layer*			
	Stockton-on-Tees 015B (Murrayfield Primary)		Redcar & Cleveland 009C (Ironstone Primary)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Total Number of Residents	1,673	-	1,422	-
Economically Active People Aged 16-74	1,156	-	931	-
Number of Households	713	-	486	-
Unemployment Rate	39	3.4%	96	10.3%
Employed in managerial/professional occupations	139	23.1%	39	9.1%
Households owner occupied	532	74.6%	191	39.3%
Houses rented from Council (local authority)	109	15.3%	226	46.5%
Households with 2 or more cars/vans	175	24.5%	48	9.9%
Households with > 0.5 persons per room	167	23.4%	262	53.9%
Rank on Index of Multiple Deprivation (1 = most deprived, 32,482 = least deprived)	15,626	-	1,475	-

*Census data uses a unit referred to as *Lower Layer Super Output Areas* (LSOAs). Murrayfield Primary is captured within LSOA Stockton-on-Tees 015B, and Ironstone Primary is situated in LSOA Redcar and Cleveland 009C.

One measure of the status and character of an area is a breakdown of the population in terms of occupation. In Stockton-on-Tees 015B, 23.1% of workers are employed in managerial or professional occupations. The figure drops to 9.9% in Redcar & Cleveland 009C. This difference is mirrored by levels of unemployment (3.4% in Stockton-on-Tees 015B, compared to 10.3% in Redcar & Cleveland 009C). The average unemployment rate for the north-east region as a whole is 4.5%. A further indication of the disparity between the two areas can be found in data based on living accommodation. In general, an owner-occupied house affords more status than a rented one, and a privately rented one more status than one rented from the council. Table 1 shows that the majority of the population in Redcar & Cleveland 009C are living in rented accommodation and most of these homes are provided by the local authority. The higher rate of home-ownership in Stockton-on-Tees 015B, along with lower figures for occupancy per room and average size of household, are all indicative of higher socio-economic status. The differences between these areas are not random.

Indices of Deprivation are also published along with Census statistics. The index of multiple deprivation is a measure which takes into consideration seven domains of deprivation (Income, Employment, Health Deprivation and Disability, Education Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Services, Crime and the Living Environment), and allows all 32,482 output areas to be ranked according to how deprived they are relative to each other. The output area which holds Murrayfield Primary was ranked 15,626 out of 32,482, where 1 is the most deprived and 32,482 the least deprived. In stark contrast, Ironstone Primary's output area was ranked 1,475. So, while Murrayfield Primary and Ironstone Primary do not constitute the opposite extremes of the socioeconomic continuum, there is clearly some social distance between them. This social distance means that the background and experiences of the children in these two schools are very different. The schools therefore represent distinct 'communities of practice' (Eckert 2000) as a result of the different social setting of the local community, even though they share elements as a result of being schools in the same wider urban areas.

The concept of the 'community of practice' originated in learning theory (Lave and Wenger 1991), but it was introduced to sociolinguistics in 1992 by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet:

A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour.

(Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992:464)

The school as a whole constitutes a community of practice. The members of this community come together on a regular basis to engage in the shared enterprise of learning and progressing through the educational system. As a result, members come to share certain practices, modes of behaviour and values. The shared repertoire that develops as a result of this jointly negotiated endeavour includes adherence to certain dress codes, reacting appropriately to symbols such as whistles and bells, using specific techniques to get the teachers attention (e.g. raising of hands), and so on. Within the school, each class group constitutes an embedded community of practice. These communities of practice are quite formal in organization, but others can be fluid and informal. For example, the children who attend the school are also part of other smaller communities of practice when they interact together in the playground. Here cliques form as students attempt to define their identity within the school setting. Members of these smaller communities of practice are brought

together because they share certain interests and activities, and they work together to negotiate their way through the school day.

The socioeconomic background of students has a significant influence on the primary school as a community of practice; each school-based community of practice is a product of the compromise reached between staff and students of how the school can adapt to the social situation within which it exists. No two schools, even those whose students share similar socioeconomic backgrounds, will reach the same compromise. Just as the identity of the community of practice emerges through its participants joint negotiation in this process, so too the identity of an individual emerges through their participation in different communities of practice (Eckert 2000:36). Individual and group identities are thus interrelated. Furthermore, the processes at work at this local level can be seen to reinforce, maintain, renegotiate or even challenge existing social structure:

it is the collection of types of communities of practice at different places in society that ultimately constitutes the assemblage of practice that is viewed as class culture, ethnic culture, gender practice, etc.

(Eckert 2000:39)

The community of practice is therefore a useful construct within sociolinguistics because it provides a link between macro-level categories (such as social class) and micro-level practices.

3. The Ethnography

An important feature of the community of practice as a domain of analysis, and one that differentiates it from other similar concepts such as the speech community, is that it is determined internally by participants, rather than being imposed externally by analysts. In order to gain an understanding of the communities of practice present in each of the two schools therefore, a participant driven, ethnographic approach to fieldwork was necessary.

My journey as an ethnographic researcher began several months before data collection. I entered the classroom in the first instance as a 'helper', someone who interacts with the children and assists them in classroom activities (e.g. arts and crafts, reading, spelling). This initial step was important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it enabled me to build bridges with the schools that would become my research sites. Perhaps most importantly, however, it gave me the opportunity to

form relationships with the children outside of the constraints of the research situation. I was able to interact with the children, not as a researcher who was under pressure to make recordings, but as a helper and a friend. As well as assisting in the classroom during my weekly visits to school, I also spent time with the children in the playground, chatting and playing games. As a result I was able to get to know the children's personalities, interests and friendships, and engage with their activities (both inside and outside of the classroom). In short, I was able to observe informally 'the flow of social practice' (Maybin 2006:5) in the school. My observations were augmented by those of the teachers, who gave their own opinions on the children's relationships, personalities, behaviour and academic ability. These opinions were presented formally in a recorded interview that took place towards the end of the fieldwork, but also informally through staffroom conversation and classroom asides. The accumulated experiences gained from participating in school activities have combined to form the 'ethnographically informed lens' (Maybin 2006:13) through which the analysis and interpretation of the linguistic data is presented.

4. The Findings

4.1 Comparison between the Schools

The use of *us* for the objective singular is associated with informal or dialectal usage; it is a 'non-standard' form of the objective singular. As with many non-standard features, we might expect the frequency of use of singular *us* to pattern with social variables such as socioeconomic class. This expectation is indeed borne out by the data in my study. Table 2 shows the distribution of the different forms of the objective singular used by children in both schools. The Murrayfield Primary participants used standard /mi:/ on all but two occasions, and /us/ (I here include all realisations of *us*: [ʊs], [ʊz], [əs], [əz], [s], [z]) appeared only once (0.7% of all tokens). In Ironstone Primary, however, /us/ occurred 16.1% of the time. As expected, frequency of use of the 'non-standard' variant is greater in the school whose participants rank lower on a scale of socio-economic prestige. In Teesside English, or at least within the variety of English spoken within the Ironstone Primary community of practice, *us* can be used for singular as well as plural reference. But this form is not used categorically, or even with a particularly high frequency; 83.9% of the time, the students at Ironstone Primary use *me* in objective singular position. The occasions where *us* is used must, therefore, represent a choice (whether

conscious of unconscious) on the part of the speaker; this particular variant of the pronoun must fulfil a particular function.

Table 2: Use of Objective Singular

	Murrayfield Primary		Ironstone Primary	
	#	%	#	%
mi:	136	98.6%	183	83.9%
mɪ	1	0.7%	0	0.0%
ʊs/ʊz	1	0.7%	19	8.7%
əs/əz	0	0.0%	6	2.8%
s/z*	0	0.0%	10	4.6%
Total	138	1	218	1

* Represents contracted forms of 'us' in utterances such as 'Let's have a look'

4.2 Singular *us* and Politeness

There are 36 occurrences of *us* with singular reference in the data, and all are part of imperative clauses in which the speaker is urging the addressee to do something: 'let us see', 'give us it', 'pass us that book' 'show us yours', 'turn it off for us'. Within this data set, type of grammatical construction therefore appears to be an internal linguistic constraint on this variant of the objective singular. Further work is required to ascertain whether or not this constraint operates outside the Ironstone Primary community of practice. In Tyneside English, for example, singular *us* can be found in non-imperative contexts (J. Beal, personal communication). Quantification is not yet complete, but it should be noted that there are also a number of imperatives in the data which have *me*, rather than *us*, in objective singular position (e.g. 'Just give me a little bit of glue'). In issuing an imperative, the speaker has a choice to make between *me* and *us*. The verb used may also have a role to play; of the 36 instances of singular *us*, 17 (47%) occurred with 'give' and 12 (33%) with 'let'. Burridge (2004:1118) notes that singular *us* occurs 'especially after verbs of giving and receiving'.

Imperatives are an example of what Brown and Levinson (1987) would refer to as 'face-threatening acts'. Face-threatening acts comprise any action that impinges upon a person's face, where 'face' (a term Brown and Levinson borrow from Goffman (1967)) refers to individuals' self-esteem. Brown and Levinson (1987:13) state that face embodies two specific kinds of desires: 'the desire to be unimpeded in

one's actions (negative face), and the desire (in some respects) to be approved of (positive face).' Face-threatening acts can be mitigated by positive politeness strategies, which attend to positive face wants, or, negative politeness strategies, which attend to negative face wants. An imperative is an example of an act that threatens negative face. It is 'the direct expression of one of the most intrinsically face-threatening speech acts – commanding' (Brown and Levinson 1987:191). Depending upon the situation, the speaker might feel that it is necessary to try to mitigate the face-threatening act, and the use of the 'plural' pronoun could be one of the negative politeness strategies³ they adopt. There is, after all, extensive evidence for the idea that plural forms can be used with singular reference to express something like politeness in many languages. Head (1978) examines data from more than one hundred languages in order to explore the social meaning of variation of pronominal categories and types of pronouns. He looks at first, second and third person reference, and notes for all that the use of the non-singular in pronominal reference to show greater respect or social distance than the singular appears to be a universal tendency.

The widespread European development of two pronouns for singular addressees began in Latin and still continues today in languages such as French, German, Spanish and Italian. In Latin, the plural as a form of address to one person was first directed to the emperor in the fourth century. The plural was eventually extended from the emperor to other figures of power, and a set of norms gradually formed around what Brown and Gilman (1960:255) refer to as the 'nonreciprocal power semantic'. According to the 'nonreciprocal power semantic', superiors would use the original singular form to their inferiors, and receive the polite plural form in return. A further distinction later developed around what Brown and Gilman (1960:257) refer to as the 'solidarity dimension'. The solidarity dimension provided a means of differentiating address among equals: a high degree of solidarity or 'intimacy' among equals could be established by use of the singular form of address, and low solidarity or 'formality' by use of the plural form.

These dimensions of solidarity and nonreciprocal power were expressed by English with the distinction between THOU and YOU, the direct descendants of the Old English second person singular and plural. In the Middle English period, English used THOU for 'familiar address to a single person', and YOU as 'the singular of reverence and polite distance' as well as the invariable plural (Brown and Gilman

³ Pluralisation of the pronouns 'you' and 'I' falls under the seventh negative politeness strategy outlined by Brown and Levinson (1987:190-206) – 'Impersonalise S[peaker] and H[earer]'.

1960:253). In modern standard English the use of the form YOU now obscures distinctions both of number and power/solidarity, though such distinctions continue to be expressed in a number of varieties outside standard English. Wales (1996:76) notes that ‘in those dialects of English outside the British Isles where singular/plural distinction has been introduced into the 2PP [second person pronoun], there are already signs of a semiotic of ‘distance’ or politeness for singular address becoming formalised in the plural. e.g. *oonu* in Jamaican English’.

4.3 Singular *us* in Context

In order to make a case for the special pragmatic functions ascribed by the children in my study to singular *us*, I will address some specific examples from the data in detail. One of the Ironstone Primary students, Clare, uses *us* with singular reference on 18 occasions. In the current data set, Clare’s use of singular *us* accounts for over half of all occurrences of this variant of the objective singular at Ironstone Primary. Further work on this variable will take into account a larger corpus of recordings in order to redress the balance. While the current pilot study is based on the sound files created by 6 children from each school, the full investigation will include 12 children from each school, thereby doubling the current data set. It should be noted, however, that the Ironstone Primary data analysed in this paper provides evidence for the use of singular *us* by 4 other children (Danielle, Harry, Robert and Jane). Clare’s usage, while significant, is therefore not unique. Full investigation of this variable will also take into account the internal structure within each primary school. It is possible, for example, that singular *us* is used more frequently by certain peer-group communities of practice within the school.

Clare’s use of singular *us* concentrates in two main sections. The following transcript details one of these episodes. It takes place in the school playground where a group of girls are giving each other ‘piggybacks’ and stealing each other’s shoes. At the start of this extract, Clare has approached the girls and wants to be involved in the game. Later, the girls actually steal Clare’s shoe and she has to make a series of requests to get it back.

- (1) Clare: Gemma **give us it**. (1 second) Quick Gemma **give us it**.
Gemma: No
Clare: What we gonna do hide it?
Inaudible: ((Background noise and sound of laughing)) (23 seconds)
Jane: (My feet was freezing.)

Clare: My shoe

Jane: (Feet are freezing.) Let me take your boots off (young lady).

Clare: Why don't we take yours off? (.) By the way Jane has already tried. (1.5 seconds) Jane has already tried but my shoes don't come off.

Inaudible: ((Inaudible background noise and laughing)) (10 seconds)

Gemma: Clare I promise I won't get you. (I won't be able to) get you.

Clare: I'm not (going on anyone's back) No!

.

. (3 mins 19 secs)

.

Jane: We got a boot we got a boot we got a boot.

Clare: She's got my shoe. ((laughs))

Inaudible: ((Background noise)) (10 seconds)

Clare: **Give us it.**

Anonymous1: ((chanting)) Clare's shoe Clare's [shoe Clare's shoe

Anonymous 2: [(Pass us it.)

Inaudible: ((Background noise)) (3 seconds)

Clare: **Give us it.**

Anonymous: (I know I haven't got it.)

Clare: Rosie (2 seconds) Rosie **give us it.**

Inaudible: ((Inaudible background noise)) (12 seconds)

Anonymous: Get Clare's [feet.

Clare: [(Give us⁴ back) my shoe.

Jane: Get Clare's feet.

Inaudible: ((Inaudible background noise)) (2 seconds)

Anonymous1: Get it get it.

Anonymous 2: Danielle Danielle get it ((laughing))

Anonymous3: We've got one.

Anonymous4: Alright you may as well give me the other one.

Jane: Yeah lay down on the floor.

Anonymous: Yeah lay down (xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.)

Inaudible: ((Background noise)) (3 seconds)

Tina: Because Clare's got one shoe on.

Anonymous: Give me the shoe (lee) now.

Inaudible: ((Background noise; children running around)) (16 seconds)

⁴ Since the transcription is in doubt here, this use of *us* is not included in table 2.

Clare: He::lp
 Inaudible: ((Sound of Clare running)) (12 seconds)
 Clare: Give us my shoe back.
 Tina: She hasn't got her shoe (xxxxxxxxxxxxx she's a) lucky woman.
 Clare: Jane you- (2.5 seconds) Give us my shoe back. (1.5 seconds)
 Give us my back. (1 second) Give us my shoe back.

Clare is a girl who is often on the periphery of friendship groups. This marginal position appears to be a result of her confrontational manner. Clare is quite outspoken and often falls out with the other children. I witnessed a number of arguments involving Clare during my visits to Ironstone Primary. The class teaching assistant commented on Clare's propensity to court disagreement, and a number of the other children singled her out to me as a bully or trouble maker. On this occasion, however, Clare wants to be able to join in with the play – the alternative here is to stand in the playground alone. Although the group of girls with whom Clare is trying to engage have no official power over her, Clare is not a fully integrated member of this group, and therefore the interaction ranks low on a scale of solidarity. I would suggest that Clare is aware of her position and acknowledges her place within this social group through the use of singular *us*. In this interaction, her first goal is to integrate with the group, and then later, her goal is to get her shoe back. As noted in section 4.2, imperatives such as 'give me it' constitute face-threatening acts. In this context, it makes sense that Clare would choose to use the plural pronoun to mitigate the face-threatening act; she does not want to provoke an argument that would lead to her exclusion from the group or cause a delay in the return of her shoe. The use of singular *us* is perhaps a way of appealing to some sense of group support, as if Clare's request has the backing of a group. In a situation where Clare lacks status, she attempts to augment her own social standing (and hence her chances of getting the shoe back) by implying group membership. The social meanings attached to the use of singular *us* have been cultivated by the Ironstone Primary community of practice. Clare, as a member of this community of practice, understands this special application of *us* and is using it here for particular effect.

The option to use *us* with singular reference appears to be largely absent in the Murrayfield Primary community of practice. There is one exception, however, which is presented in the following transcript. In this episode, Daniel and Ben are working together on an IT project. Ben has been doing most of the work and Daniel is keen to have a go:

(2) Daniel: Can I do this one? (.) Can I do this page? (2 seconds) **Ben let us do this page.**

Ben: **Let me just do something.**

After asking twice: 'Can I do this one?' 'Can I do this page'? Daniel follows up with 'Ben, let *us* do this page.' Daniel makes an appeal to Ben, using the plural pronoun as a negative politeness strategy. Notice that Ben replies: 'Let *me* just do something'. Daniel and Ben are classmates and friends so there is no reason why either should wield any power over the other. The activity that the boys are engaged in here, however, is part of the academic domain, within which Daniel generally has little power. Daniel has special educational needs, which are met by a teaching assistant who is employed on a part-time basis to help him. Ben, on the other hand, is of average academic ability; the teacher noted that he could do much better than average if he applied himself. At this point in the interaction, Ben has been doing most of the work and has control of the computer keyboard. It is Ben who therefore holds the power, and the resulting non-reciprocal relationship appears to be mirrored in the contrast between *us* and *me*. In this particular situation, Daniel is aware that he must relinquish power to Ben, and Ben is similarly aware of his superior position. Daniel does not always use the polite *us* form however. Later in the same recording, as the IT lesson is coming to an end, there is the following exchange.

(3) Daniel: Where's my tissues?

Inaudible: ((Classroom noise)) (3 seconds)

Ben: Your tissues are under there. (2 seconds) Jackson where did you put your tissues?

Daniel: **Give me my tissues.**

Ben: I don't have them.

Daniel: Yeah you do.

Ben: No I don't.

Daniel is much more forceful here and addresses Ben with 'Give *me* my tissues', using *me* rather than *us* for the objective singular. This interaction occurs when the

children are shutting down their computers and preparing to leave the IT room. The lesson is over and Daniel appears to hold more power in this non-academic frame. Although Daniel had to yield to Ben's superior IT skills in the previous interaction, he will not passively accept his friend's prank outside of the formal lesson.

The fact that singular *us* is largely absent from the Murrayfield Primary data is significant given that this usage appears to be part of a wider phenomenon which equates plurality with politeness (see section 4.2). If the children at Murrayfield Primary do not use singular *us* as a strategy to soften imperatives in situations where the risk attached to the face-threatening act is high, what other strategies do they use? Further work will compare the strategies adopted generally in both schools for formulating imperatives and other directives.

5. Conclusions

In the examples discussed above, Clare, Daniel and Ben demonstrate 'reflexive awareness' (Goodwin 2000) of their interlocutors and the relevant contextual factors that constitute the situation. They attend to the different pronoun options available to them and decide which is appropriate to the specific context. I would argue against Carter and McCarthy's claim that '*Us* is sometimes used very informally to mean *me*', though their claim that it softens requests is closer to the mark. The two forms actually have quite different meanings for the participants in this study; they exist as alternative options for the objective singular, and the speaker must choose between them. The specific situation, the goals of the interaction, and the social relationships between interlocutors, as well as the speaker's own social trajectory, influence the choice of pronoun, and ethnographic information is often crucial to understanding how all of these factors work together. Not all options are in play in any given moment, however. There is no evidence in the data for the use of singular *us* in anything other than imperatives, including no evidence for it in other directives. If this *is* a linguistic constraint, the option to use *us* for the objective singular will not exist in directives encoded by other grammatical structures such as interrogatives (e.g. 'Robert please will you pass me my plan?', 'can't you give me it now?').

From a wider methodological point-of-view, it seems to me that an analysis which takes into account, not just the distribution of linguistic features, but also the functions that those features fulfil within an interaction, is able to get closer to discovering the social meanings with which speakers invest their linguistic practices. Quantitative analysis enables the researcher to describe the pool of linguistic resources that speakers have available to them, but then qualitative analysis allows

for an interpretation of the pragmatic motivations behind the linguistic choices that speakers make. In this second stage of analysis ethnography can yield important insights. From this perspective, for example, Clare is not seen as a working-class speaker who is using a non-standard variant purely by virtue of her working-class background, but rather as a savvy sociolinguistic player who is able to utilise the different pronoun options available to her in order to negotiate social relationships.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

The following broad transcription conventions are used:

[shoe	Brackets signal the start of overlapping speech
[(Pass us it)	
:	Indicates lengthening
(.)	A pause less than 0.5 seconds
(# of seconds)	Timed pause (to nearest 0.1 of a second)
(text)	Speech which is unclear or in doubt
(xxxxxxx)	Indistinguishable speech
((laughs))	Annotation of other verbal/non-verbal activity
. ?	Minimal punctuation is used to aid the reader

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