

**Harmony through disharmony in online
communication: An investigation of rapport
management in discussion forums from a
perspective of situated learning**

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how people build and maintain *rapport* or harmony in interpersonal relations in the context of language learning–related forums in two websites, *Japan Reference* and *Reddit*. In the intercultural contexts of these fora, the participants negotiate their beliefs and values about communication alongside learning language, which I suggest is a part of what they learn through the forum activities. The thesis aims to answer the question of what aspects of their language use enable them to build rapport for better experiences in online fora by examining the interactions in *Learning Japanese* in *Japan Reference* and */r/Languagelearning* in *Reddit*, drawing on the rapport management model (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b) and some ideas about social learning from the model of situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Herring's (2004) computer-mediated discourse analysis was applied as the main methodology.

I collected 753 threads from *Learning Japanese* and 832 threads from */r/Languagelearning*, which were posted between January 2011 and December 2014. These threads were analysed by quantitative and qualitative methods: (1) I identified the recurrent use of expressions using the two corpora and (2) I closely analysed examples of using some of these recurrent expressions in context, and analysed the interactions where they discuss their communication explicitly.

A key finding of this work is that conflicts between participants can occur not only as the result of mismanaging face sensitivities but also inevitably having different behavioural expectations and goals in the particular learning contexts. In this thesis, I demonstrate how the rapport management model helps us to examine both harmonious and disharmonious aspects of interactions. In conclusion, I suggest that disharmonious interaction is also necessary for creating harmony in online forums and interactional reciprocity can be an important linguistic aspect to investigate the construction of rapport.

Keywords: online forum, computer-mediated discourse, rapport management, situated learning

Declaration

This thesis is my own work, and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Drawing on the term *rapprochement* and exploring harmony in interpersonal relationships, the present study aims to investigate a question about human communication, which is a part of the broader question: *How can we build good relationships in a society?* Technology must be taken into account for answering this broad question as it is embedded in the body of our society. Modern technology including digital and Internet technologies has dramatically changed our ways of communication. *Computer-mediated communication* (CMC) is significant in our mediated communication, which is “a process of human communication via computers, involving people, situated in particular contexts, engaging in processes to shape media for a variety of purposes” (December, 1997, p.1). CMC has become a significant research area and is a growing, important context for today’s human communication.

As a student of linguistics, I explore the above question by examining discourse or language use in CMC. In the early 2000s, Herring (2001) emphasises discourse in CMC and proposed the term *computer-mediated discourse* (CMD) to refer to “the communication produced when human beings interact with one another by transmitting messages via networked computers” (Herring, 2001, p.162). Although the web environment for interaction has changed since the early 2000s, typed texts are still used as a central means to convey a message and to construct meaning in the online world. Barton and Lee (2013) describe it as a *textually mediated social world* (p.26). The idea of “textually mediated” originates from Dorothy Smith’s *textually mediated social organization* (Smith, 1990) in sociology and Barton (2001) adopts it to use in the study of literacies. Smith (1990) stresses the importance of investigating “the

phenomenon of textually mediated communication, action, and social relations” (p.209). The present study investigates the construction of rapport by exploring CMD in a particular social context, namely the online learning context. This chapter provides an overview of how this study approaches the above broad question, dealing with some methodological issues and presenting the specific research questions which the study will address.

1.1 Background

Tannen (1998) gives a helpful insight to consider the influence of technology in our communication. In relation to discussing the argument culture or adversarial-oriented communication style, she suggests that “[w]hen technology provides both *speed and anonymity*, it produces a concoction that can spark hostility and attack” (Tannen, 1998, p.252, emphasis added). Indeed, speed and anonymity are the significant aspects of CMC and these terms are useful to account for the issues such as cyberbullying and internet harassment. In terms of anonymity, people can engage themselves in harmful and offensive actions, concealing their identities with the mask of anonymity, for example, trolling (e.g., Hardaker, 2010). In terms of speed, the process of publishing and spreading a digital text is much faster than a printed text. This can lead people to publishing an unexpectedly controversial comment and being involved in a public debate and criticism, which can turn to flaming (e.g., Riva, 2002). Against harmful and thoughtless behaviours, one of the preventive strategies is using a filtering system (e.g., blocking particular words) and they are widely installed in the comments sections in social media.

In fact, anonymity does not necessarily mean people lack identities in the web environment.

Since 2000s, the Internet and digital technologies have increased the interactivity of CMD, which is described as *Web 2.0* (O'Reilly, 2005). The term Web 2.0 characterises the features of the web as platform, in which applications enable people to participate, create, remix and share the contents on the web (O'Reilly, 2005). Merchant (2009) elaborates this concept of Web 2.0 and proposes that it has four characteristic features including *presence* (developing an identity or multiple identities), *modification* (personalising the content), *user-generated content* (generating the contents within or by the community) and *social participation* (participating as performers and audience). The concept of presence, in particular, helps us understand the meaning of anonymity online. Merchant explains that "Web 2.0 spaces encourage users to develop an active presence through an online identity, profile or avatar. This presence is recognisable by others, but may develop over time" (p.107). In other words, people can develop an anonymous but persistent identity in Web 2.0 through interacting with others. These characteristic features of Web 2.0 facilitate various social activities including 'learning' through CMC.

Barton and Lee (2013) propose that learning online through engaging in collaborative and interactive activities is now a part of our everyday lives. Attention to learning through CMC is increasing in the research areas of foreign and second language learning. In the late 2000s, Thorne, Black and Syke (2009) pointed out that more studies were showing that people learn and practise their target languages through various out-of-school literacy activities online such as participating in interest communities, virtual spaces and online games. The activities in open virtual communities and spaces can provide new social networks of learning a language, allowing people to communicate with native speakers and peer learners. New

learning processes, which are different from learning at school, are available through doing online activities with others. However, Barton and Potts (2013) point out that we know less about how individual learners are equipped to participate in such a new informal learning environment (p.181).

It can be assumed that interpersonal communication is necessary for people to collaboratively create a language-learning context in the online site and to mutually support their learning process through online activities. Considering this, it is important to develop a better understanding about how the two goals of learning and building social relationships are associated with each other and how people use language for achieving these two goals. In the literature, there are researchers who have explored CMD in interpersonal communication and learning a language (Hanna and de Nooy, 2003; Belz, 2005; Pasfield-Neofitou, 2012; Gonzales, 2013a; 2013b discussed further in chapter 2 and 3). However, Belz (2005) points that:

Although communication theorists, social psychologists and FL [foreign language] specialists alike have investigated CMC for some time now, these research traditions have not, in the main, engaged in disciplinary cross-fertilisation with respect to the notion of online personal relationship building. (p. 8)

Today in the 2010s, I think that the above research area still cannot be described as a “disciplinary cross-fertilisation” as there is not an established arena for the researchers to discuss these combined methodologies (e.g., journals dedicated to this area). Therefore, the present study aims to contribute to further development of this area by examining the development and management of rapport through CMD in learning a language in two online

fora. In previous research on CMD in online forums or discussion boards (bulletin board system), researchers showed how rapport was built in students' discussions on assignments (Ädel, 2011; Clarke, 2008, 2009) and students' discussion on university life (Arendholz, 2013). These studies applied different frameworks and theories to investigate CMD for building rapport, yet they used discourse analysis as their research method. In the present study, I apply Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management framework to examining CMD for building rapport. This framework draws on and relates with concepts from different disciplines including psychology, anthropology and linguistics (Spencer-Oatey, 2008a, p.8), which can be seen as a framework of "disciplinary cross-fertilisation". I will introduce this framework in Chapter 2.

1.2 Aim of Study

Based on the above background, in this study, I investigate the ways in which people build and maintain rapport through language in language-learning related online forums in two websites *Japan Reference* and *Reddit*, applying Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management model. The focus of analysis is the participants' actual use of language and my main methodology is discourse analysis, using Herring's (2004) computer-mediated discourse analysis. I also draw on situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger 1998) to illustrate the learning contexts of these online fora and Bakhtin's theory of dialogue in order to discuss rapport as 'harmony' in interaction.

By "through language" I mean that my focus is language in use. I use the term 'language use' interchangeably with 'discourse' or "semiotic elements of social practices" (Chouliaraki &

Fairclough, 1999, p.38). From the shared viewpoint of the contemporary social theory, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) define social practices as “habitualised ways, tied to particular times and places, in which people apply resources (material or symbolic) to act together in the world” (p.21). Language as linguistic practice is not the individual’s property; it is constituted historically and culturally by people’s recurrent uses of language in doing activities together. Following this viewpoint, I consider language use for building rapport to be a social practice too. The perspectives about language in Literacy Studies also influence my understanding about language use. Literacy Studies views literacy as a social practice (Barton, 2007; Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič, 2000; Baynham, 1995; Street, 1984, 1995, 2000). By conceptualising it as social practice, researchers in this field examine *literacy practice* or “the general cultural ways of utilising written language which people draw upon in their lives” (Barton and Hamilton, 2000, p.6). This facet of language in use is helpful to understand how people post a message (construct meaning) or how the CMD is constructed by texts and other semiotic resources with technology.

The term *rapport* is used to refer to interpersonal relationship in general. Researchers often express a difficulty in defining the notion of rapport (e.g., Jorgenson, 1992). For a working definition, I think that the most comprehensive is Lakin’s (2009) in *Encyclopaedia of Human Relationships*:

Rapport is a fundamental characteristic of well-functioning human relationships.

Relationships in which individuals experience rapport are characterized by mutual liking, trust, empathy, comfort, responsiveness to the other's needs, and self-reported feelings of closeness and harmony. An individual experiencing rapport with another

might also report that he or she feels “in sync” with that person or that the two have connected or “clicked.” (p. 1328)

The characteristics that define “well-functioning human relationships” can be varying in different types of social relationships. In this study, I focus on the aspect of harmony, which I think constitutes the most relevant characteristics of “well-functioning relationships” in learning contexts online. Spencer-Oatey views rapport as “harmony-disharmony among people” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.13) or “people’s subjective perceptions of (dis)harmony, smoothness-turbulence and warmth-antagonism in interpersonal relations” (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009, p.102). My focus of harmony is compatible with the rapport management framework, yet I will consider what is harmony in human interaction in Chapter 2.

1.3 Context of Study

1.3.1 Terms to describe research sites

Learning is often associated with the educational system, but this is not a type of learning that the present study considers. I focus on *informal* learning. Based on Tusting’s (2003) review and discussion, I understand that informal learning is a form of learner-centred activity. In short, it is a form of learning which takes place outside educational institutions, does not follow a planned curriculum, is not accredited through formal means of assessment (e.g., coursework, examinations) and is delivered in a colloquial way in non-hierarchical relationships between teachers and student (Tusting, 2003, p.21). These characteristics of informal learning can be applied to viewing the online fora in *Japan Reference* and *Reddit*. They are user-generated, which means the contents of the online fora are voluntarily created by participants (i.e., are outside educational institutions). The participants help each other

learn a language through peer-to-peer interactions (i.e., non-curriculum based, no assessment, colloquial style and non-hierarchical relationship). Regarding how this informal learning environment can work, the concept of *situated learning* is applied to the present study. For more detail, I will introduce situated learning that is framed within a theory of community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) in Chapter 3.

The medium features of *Japan Reference* and *Reddit* allow the participants to have interaction, which is the essential aspect of situated learning. These websites have a bulletin board system for the participants to exchange text-based messages. An online space discursively created by this system can be viewed as an online *forum*, considering its function that brings people together for public discussions:

Inspired from ancient *fora* (the public spaces in the middle of a Roman city which held public meeting or assembly for open discussion), online forums allows [sic] for messages to be posted and kept on a website for further (public) readings and discussions. (De Cindio, 2009, p.113)

The technological feature that “allows for messages to be posted and kept on a website” is an important aspect to consider in order to understand how CMD develops in an online forum. It allows the participants to read the previous messages left on the site, reply to each other and leave a new message on the site. The series of messages submitted to the online forum turns into an interaction or a *thread*, which "contains an original message and responses to that message" (Taiwo, 2010, p.190). It can be a ‘conversation-like’ interaction that enables the participants to discuss their common interests and topic. The participants create a new thread when they start a new topic. A thread is organised by topic and a collection of threads is

organised in a section or sub-forum on a particular theme.

Regarding the mode of communication, a thread is asynchronous or a delayed interaction.

The participants are not necessarily connected or present on the website at the same time.

There is a time lag between posting and reading messages. Hence, language use on a thread is *asynchronous computer-mediated discourse* (henceforth, ACMD). In the literature, there is no consensus about the terminologies to refer to this online space or context of ACMD based on a bulletin board system. For example, some researchers simply use ‘bulletin board system’ and others use ‘discussion board’ to refer to the ACMD context. According to *Dictionary of Information Science and Technology* (Khosrowpour, 2012), this ACMD context is also referred as discussion forum, discussion group and internet forum. There is also confusion between different systems for ACMD, for example, News groups and forums. The newsgroup is different from the online forum in terms of the ways of participation. The biggest difference is that while the participants in the news group need a newsgroup reader software to obtain the contents from a host of the newsgroup (e.g., Usenet), the online forum is a platform for interaction and participants do not need an additional software to read messages. Blattner and Williams (2009) explain that:

The fact that News groups – like forums – are organized by topics or theme also lends to the confusion. Even scholarly publications can contain terms that are misleading since there are often many variations of different types of new technologies. (p.264)

They suggest the researchers should provide a clear description of the site they are looking at in order to avoid misleading. Arendholz (2013) particularly distinguishes ACMD based on different technological properties for structural representation of topic threads. In the present

study, I follow De Cindio's (2009) term 'online forum' to refer to the online learning contexts based on the bulletin board systems in the two websites in order to emphasise an aspect of 'forum' of the ACMD context. Although I use 'online forum' to refer to them, they each have distinctive features that are not available on the other site. So, the next section will illustrate the two online fora and consider the differences between them.

1.3.2 Brief descriptions of the research sites

Japan Reference is a portal website synthesising information for travelling and studying in Japan and has a forum page based on a message board system. The website was launched in 1999 and later a forum opened in 2000. There were 52,915 registered members of this website in December 2014. The forum has five sections of different themes and each section has several fora and sub-fora. The present study focused on *Learning Japanese* in the Nihongo section, which is a learning-language related forum (or sub-forum if the forum page is regarded as an overarching forum) in this website. *Learning Japanese* is one of the most popular sub-fora in the forum of *Japan Reference*. The main activity is to discuss how to learn Japanese. The participants post specific questions about the language or ask for learning methods. The languages used in this sub-forum are English and Japanese but the participants mainly use English as a common medium; they use Japanese when it is necessary (e.g., asking the meaning of Japanese words).

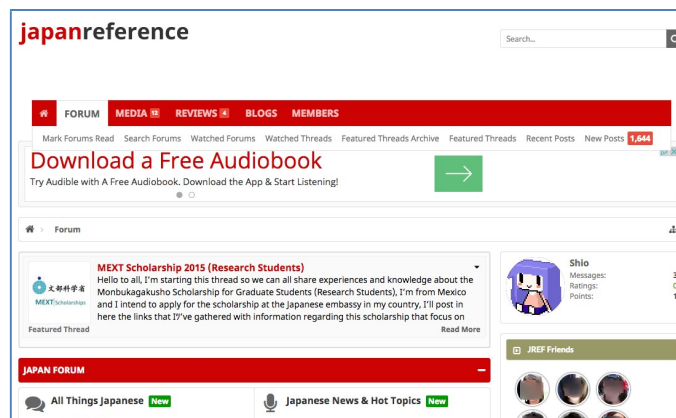


Figure 1. Forum page in Japan Reference

Reddit is a news and content-sharing website that covers various topics from food to politics and it was founded in 2005. Members of *Reddit* (called redditors) share contents by submitting text-based entries or direct links to the web contents (e.g., web article, videos, images) to the sub-forum of the relevant topic (called subreddit). A bulletin board system allows redditors to submit a comment to the submitted contents (either text-based or link entries) and reply to other comments. Unique features are (1) redditors ‘subscribe’ to subreddits they are interested in so that they can follow new contents on the subreddits and (2) there is a voting system that influences the organisation of posts. There are many subreddits that are dedicated to learning a particular language. The present study focused on */r/Languagelearning*, which is a subreddit for learning a language in general and started in 2010. This subreddit had 39,210 subscribers in December 2014. The main medium is English, but like *Learning Japanese*, the participants use other languages when necessary.

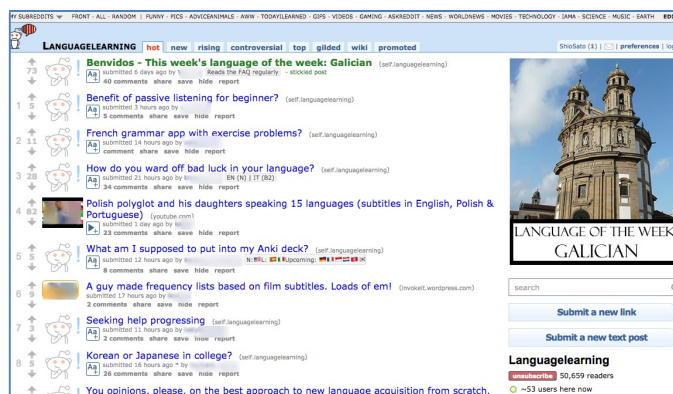


Figure 2. /r/Languagelearning in Reddit

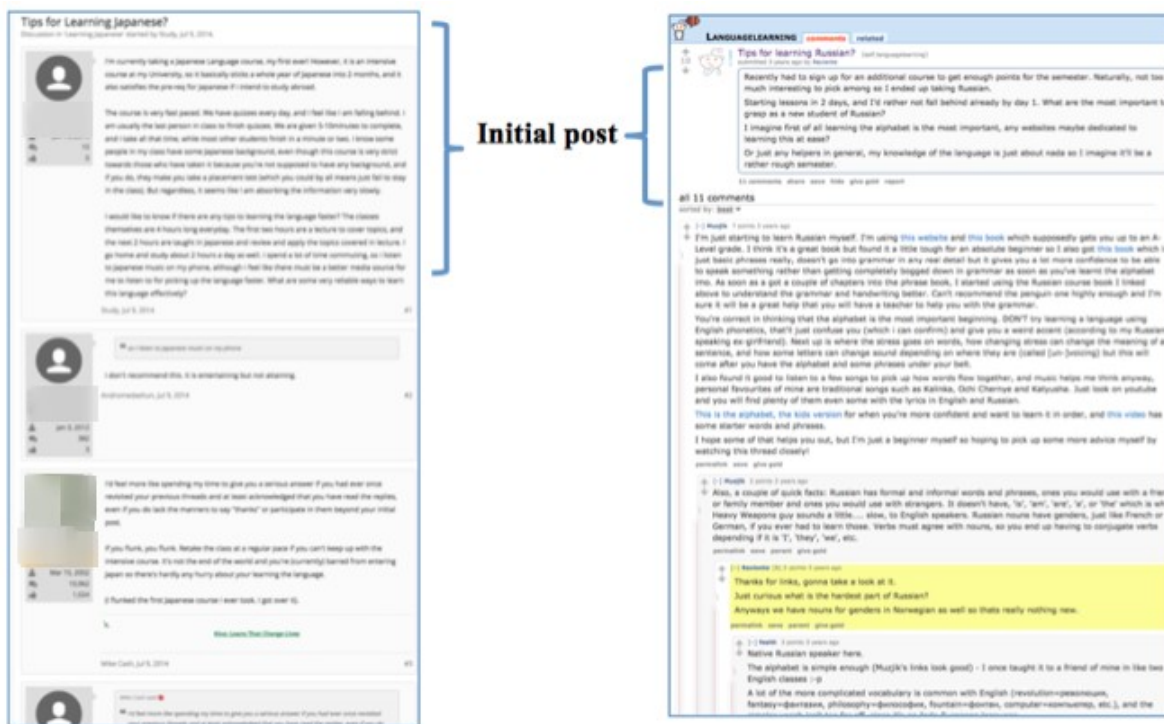


Figure 3. Different appearances of comments on threads

The notable difference of ACMD in these online fora is in their ways of organising messages or posts on a thread. In *Japan Reference*, posts are arranged linearly in a flat structure; all posts are placed below the previous posts and the initial post holds all the posts (on the left in Figure 3). In contrast, in *Reddit*, posts are organised in a tree or threaded structure; users can

place their post just below a particular post they refer to and each post holds replies (on the right in Figure 3). In Chapter 4, I will consider the features of threads again in relation to language use.

1.4 Studying ACMD

1.4.1 Methodological challenge in linguistic paradigms

ACMD in online forums is understood as one of several *familiar* discourse phenomena that continue over time from 1990s until the present (Herring, 2013, p.6). There are already many studies that build and develop methodologies for studying CMD. Nevertheless, there are methodological issues for CMD study and I will consider how the present study deals with the relevant issues. The challenge for CMD study is that existing frameworks and methods of linguistic analysis have limitations for studying current CMD that is more multimodal than earlier forms of computer-mediated communication (Herring, 2013; Androutsopoulos, 2013; Bolander and Locher, 2014). The conventional view of CMD is that typed texts are the main means of CMC, yet this is no longer an adequate viewpoint to understand new forms of online interaction.

In relation to multimodality, the idea of convergent media is discussed to understand CMD in Web 2.0 (Androutsopoulos, 2013; Herring, 2009; 2013; Herring and Androutsopolous, 2015). Herring (2009, 2013) introduces a term *convergent media computer-mediated communication (CMCMC)*. What Herring refers to as “convergent media” is the co-existence of different media in a communication such as “text comments on photo-sharing sites; text (and video) responses to YouTube videos; text (and voice) chat during multiplayer online

games; and text messages from mobile phones posted to interactive TV programs” (Herring, 2013, p. 5). These convergent media enable people to have multimodal communication.

Herring (2013) identifies these types of interactions as entirely new phenomena that are not associated with the linguistic categories of her CMDA framework (p.21). Androutsopoulos (2013) proposes three ways of understanding what ‘multimodality’ can refer to in CMC:

- (1) user activities during the production of and interaction with online content;
- (2) the simultaneous use of more than one application in people’s digital literacy practice;
- (3) the coexistence of resources from more than one semiotic mode in digital content itself. (p.244)

We can see that these multimodal dimensions of CMC can be intertwined with each other; a multimodal (multi-semiotic) message is produced through multitasks of activities with the use of more than one technology. Given the multimodality in CMD, researchers need to take into account this dynamic nature of language in use along with the change of people’s practices in CMC. Herring (2013) suggests that “multimodal discourse requires the analyst to devise new analytical methods and to draw from theoretical frameworks outside linguistics (such as visual semiotics)” (p. 19). From a perspective of social semiotics, multimodality is associated with considering the materiality of language. Materiality can be discussed in terms of “the *materials* we use and the *material processes* we are involved in when we articulate a message” (van Leeuwen, 1999, p.191). In the online forum, posting a message can be understood as a material process of bringing different semiotic resources together in a message.

The materiality in social practices is emphasised and studied through an ethnographic

approach in the field of Literacy Studies (Gourlay and Oliver, 2013; Gillen, 2014, 2015). In particular, Gillen (2014) demonstrates an approach to language in CMCMC (Herring, 2009, 2013), which addresses the three dimensions of multimodality (Androutsopoulos, 2013). She examines the materiality of digital texts in different online interactions, exploring literacy practices in online and offline spaces and applying different linguistic methods such as corpus analysis. Her approach also proposes to expand a notion of language (in use) in linguistics by paying more attention to the multimodality and materiality of language or “the quality of having form” (Gillen, 2014, p.13). She points out the lack of interest in the semiotic mode of language in linguistics. It is a pervasive viewpoint within the linguistic paradigm to understand online language as spoken and written modes in a continuum. Yet, Gillen (2014) regards this continuum viewpoint as a deliberate confusion or a “speech-writing blur” (p.20). Applying this point of view, it can be said that the inadequate examination of the multimodality and materiality of language in the past consequently leads to a limitation of the potential for using existing linguistic frameworks for studying the multimodality of CMD.

Bolander and Locher (2014) suggest that ethnography is a methodology that researchers can incorporate into sociolinguistic research for studying the multimodality of CMD. For example, there is a research area of linguistic ethnography (Rampton, et al. 2004; Tusting and Maybin, 2007; Copland and Creese, 2015). There are different approaches to combining the methodologies of ethnography and discourse analysis in linguistic ethnography. One ethnographic approach to CMD is *discourse-centred online ethnography* (Androutsopoulos, 2008, 2011), which is influenced by Herring’s (2004) CMDA. This approach uses

ethnographic methods such as interviews and observations in the process of discourse analysis. Androutsopoulos (2008) proposes the benefits of this ethnographic approach in terms of emic perspectives about language use; it gives supplemental contextual information for discourse analysis. Interview methods can also be used to understand what practices are involved in the material process of the participants' language use.

1.4.2 Approaches of the present study to ACMD

In the above, I introduced multimodality as a current challenge in CMD study and the ethnographic approach as a way to develop research methods for discourse in CCMC. Although I acknowledge the current issues and discussions around multimodality in linguistics in the above, the present study does not investigate multimodality in detail. The focus of the present study is to enquire how rapport is constructed by language. As I will refer in Chapter 2, existing research into verbal behaviours for rapport is less extensive than research into nonverbal behaviours. Therefore, I particularly focus on the use of language by applying discourse analysis methods from the viewpoint of pragmatics and consider multimodality when it is necessary to examine the participants' language use for rapport in a given context.

For the present study, the most relevant dimension of multimodality for discourse analysis is “(3) the coexistence of resources from more than one semiotic mode in digital content itself” (Androutsopoulos, 2013, p. 244). The majority of means of messages posted to the two online fora are typed texts, which indicates that the participants develop and maintain rapport relying on the means of texts. Yet, the participants also insert hypertexts (texts linked to other

texts) and graphics. The bulletin board system in *Japan Reference* allows the participants to use emoji (graphics of facial emotions) and images. Androutsopoulos' (2013:244) dimension (1) about the participants' activities during interactions and dimension (2) about participants' digital literacy practices for simultaneous use of applications are not dimensions of multimodality which can be directly observed from text-based data. However, the participants in the two fora make reference to some of their activities and literacy practices during interactions such as when they search for something in order to reply to a request for advice. These dimensions can be reflected in the netiquettes of the forums, "codified set[s] of norms (rules of behavior) that aim at regulating interaction among members of an online community and the use of the resources of that particular community" (Weder, 2008, p.586). The netiquettes about appropriate behaviours can influence the participants' language use for building rapport. In *Reddit*, a thread is developed through two activities of posting and voting on a thread/message and the forum's netiquette includes rules about the both activities. Although the present study does not examine the dimensions (1) and (2) of multimodality, I will consider them when they appear to be relevant to the norms of communication in the two online fora.

My methodology is to apply Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management framework and Herring's (2004) CMDA framework. Both frameworks are based on linguistic theories of spoken and written discourse. So, there is the "speech-writing blur" (Gillen, 2014, p.20) inherent in them, yet I find them the most helpful existing frameworks for the present study to explore language use for building rapport online. Herring (2004) explains that:

[The approach to CMDA] views online behavior through the lens of language,

and its interpretations are grounded in observations about language and language use. This perspective is reflected in the application of methodological paradigms that originated in the study of spoken and written language, e.g., conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, pragmatics, text analysis, and critical discourse analysis. It also shapes the kinds of questions that are likely to get asked. (p. 339)

The rapport management framework concerns four linguistic domains of behaviours, namely, a) illocutionary, b) discourse, c) participation, d) stylistic domain, and non-linguistic behaviours. They are linked to the linguistic perspective referred by Herring (2004) in the above quote. The illocutionary domain concerns speech acts, the discourse domain concerns the organisation of discourse content structure, the participation domain concerns the procedure of interaction such as turn-taking, and the stylistic domain concerns the choice of genre-appropriate language (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.21). The rapport management framework is not restricted to studying spoken discourse. There are studies that successfully demonstrate the application of the rapport management framework to CMD including online chat (Gonzales, 2013a, 2013b), request emails (Ho, 2011, 2014), and an online forum (Landone, 2012).

1.5 Focus of Analysis and Research Questions

Based on the above theoretical and methodological background, the present study investigates the following research questions:

RQ1: What linguistic characteristics of ACMD related to building and threatening rapport are observed in the interactions on threads in two online language-learning

fora?

RQ2: How do the characteristics of the medium of each online forum influence the language used for building rapport respectively?

RQ3: How do the participants learn to use this kind of ACMD to build rapport in the two fora?

Through answering these questions, my aims in this thesis are (1) to demonstrate rapport as an important viewpoint in studying CMD for learning online, (2) to apply the rapport management framework to CMD and to expand its application further and (3) to give pedagogical implications for what aspects of language use people should consider for building rapport and having better experiences in online forums.

1.6 Outline of Thesis

The following parts of the present thesis consist of the literature reviews (Chapter 2 to Chapter 4), the introduction of methodology (Chapter 5), the presentation of data analysis (Chapter 6 to 10) and the conclusion (Chapter 11). Chapter 2 explores a linguistic approach to rapport as harmony and introduces the rapport management model. In this chapter, I review the framework discussing the relevant issues that previous studies addressed. Chapter 3 explains the learning contexts in the two online fora from the perspective of situated learning and emphasises that more research is needed on the interpersonal aspects of social learning. Chapter 4 considers what kinds of interactions can be involved in ACMD in the two online fora. Chapter 5 provides a description of methodology based on the discussions presented in this chapter.

I will present the results of data analysis and discussion between Chapter 6 and Chapter 10. Chapter 6 shows the results based on a corpus analysis method particularly focusing on the use of *I don't know*. Chapter 7 considers language use for thanking and apologising in the two fora. Chapter 8 examines the participants' interactions regarding the norms and medium features of the two online fora in relation to building rapport. Based on these chapters, Chapter 9 and 10 focus on particular interactions, which I see as learning opportunities for the participants to acquire the community norms and conventions. I demonstrate how the linguistic features and the medium-specific netiquettes are related with each other in harmonious-disharmonious interaction. Chapter 11 is a discussion chapter to bring the findings of previous chapters together, followed by Chapter 12 as a conclusion chapter where I summarise answers to the research questions and propose future implications for the study of rapport.

Chapter 2 Rapport, Harmony and Language

This chapter examines the notion of rapport by discussing how rapport has been understood (section 2.1) and how harmony can be realised in human interactions (section 2.2). Based on these sections, I will consider linguistic approaches to the study of rapport, focusing on politeness theories (section 2.3). Finally, I will overview Spencer-Oatey's (2008) model of rapport management (section 2.4), which is a main theoretical understanding of rapport in the present study.

2.1 Approach to Rapport

2.1.1 The origin of rapport: therapeutic contexts

Rapport, which refers to a quality of a relationship today, started to be used in therapeutic contexts in the eighteenth century. According to Ellenberger (1970), a German physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) borrowed the term of rapport from physics and used it in a therapeutic method known as animal magnetism or Mesmerism. Mesmer believed in the existence of an invisible magnetic fluid that was exerted over the whole universe including all human beings: "When this magnetic fluid becomes obstructed, we become ill" (Ellenberger, 1970, p.15). Van Schlun (2007) explains that "Mesmer's idea of a universal fluid relied on seventeenth and early eighteenth-century theories by Descartes and Newton, as well as on the recent discovery of electricity" (p.29). Darnton (1968) describes that it is a view of "restoring health as the 'harmony' of man with nature" (p.4). The treatment was to restore the balance of the fluid of a patient through a doctor, who played a role as a therapeutic agent of fluid force (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Illustration of a woman held in a Mesmerist trance, from *A Key to Phisic, and the Occult Sciences* by Ebenezer Sibly, estimated 1800.

The fundamental process of Mesmer's cure is to transmit the invisible force between doctor and patient and thus they needed to be connected with each other through a rapport. In this sense, rapport was understood as physical rather than psychological and "he [a doctor] must first establish a *rapport*, that is a kind of 'tuning in,' with his patient" (Ellenberger, 1970, p.69, emphasis added). The meaning of rapport was much developed after Mesmer. His healing method of magnetism was diffused widely in the nineteenth century and many scholars explored the rapport that exists between doctor and patient. For example, a French psychologist Pierre Janet (1859-1947) found that the patients (hypnotised subjects) had a mixture of feelings toward the doctor (hypnotist) during the treatment (see, Ellenberger, 1970, pp.152-155). In the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) used and extended the notion of rapport in his theory of psychoanalysis therapy (Moore and Fine, 1990, p.160).

2.1.2 Defining rapport

With the above historical background, the notion of rapport has been studied by psychological investigations. The research methods in this field are often based on statistical

correlation. In the literature, rapport is associated with positive emotional affect and one aspect of rapport that can be observable is ‘similarity’ in interactions. Coordinating behaviours are measured for similarity (e.g., Bernieri, 1988; Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal, 1990). Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal’s (1990) work is particularly influential. They propose three components of rapport: mutual attentiveness (or mutual interest), positivity (or mutual friendliness) and coordination. They describe rapport as mutual and dynamic:

Individuals experience rapport as the result of a combination of qualities that emerge *from each individual during interaction*. This experience is expressed clearly when people say they “clicked” with each other, or felt the good interaction to be due to “chemistry.” (p. 286, emphasis added)

The important point in relation to the present study is that rapport is developing and building and it is not a static state of interpersonal relationship.

Coordinated behaviour is one of the scales used to measure rapport, and other behaviours are also considered in terms of synchrony. Many have studied nonverbal behaviours for rapport (e.g., Grahe and Bernieri, 1999; Harrigan, Oxman, and Rosenthal, 1985; LaFrance and Broadbent, 1976; Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal, 1990; Lakin and Chartrand, 2003). For example, eye contacting, gazing, postures, and facial expressions are measured. There were fewer studies that examined verbal behaviours in the earlier literature, but Gremler and Gwinner (2000) propose two dimensions of rapport in a customer-employee relationship, namely, enjoyable interaction and personal connection in their conversation during service exchange. The two dimensions are measured by self-report methods or people’s perceptions. Frisby and Martin (2010) adopt Gremler and Gwinner’s scale to explore college

instructor-student rapport. Bronstein et al (2012) developed an assessment of rapport based on the literature of politeness theory including Spencer-Oatey (2000). Their assessment consists of three domains of verbal behaviours including speech acts, discourse (behaviours related to discourse content, e.g., choice of topics) and participation (behaviours related to procedures of interaction, e.g., turn-taking). They emphasise the role of the verbal channel to build and develop rapport in the twenty-first century:

We suggest, in a manner increasingly relevant to the technology of interpersonal communication today, that when the means of communication prohibit exposure to nonverbal behavior (such as telephone and computer-mediated communication; Croson 1999), rapport will draw more heavily from behaviors in the verbal channel. (p.1093)

Rapport was introduced in relation to therapeutic treatment, yet it is not only of concern in relation to the doctor-patient relationship today. Argyle (1990) suggests that human beings experience different kinds of rapport in different relationships throughout life, from a mother-child relationship in the very early childhood to friends at school and colleagues at work. Based on literature reviews from the 1960s and 1990s, Gremler and Gwinner (2000) point out that “rapport has been considered differently in a variety of studies” (p.83).

Although the nature of rapport can be conceptualised by investigating nonverbal and verbal behaviours, it is difficult to define rapport as it is people’s subjective perception about interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships are important in different kinds of social activities, and the goals of these activities can shape what characteristics of these relationships are considered to be “well-functioning”. So, as referred to in Chapter 1, the

working definition for the present study is “a fundamental characteristic of well-functioning human relationships” (Lakin, 2009, p.1328).

Regarding rapport as a well-functioning characteristic may be broad, yet this understanding can explain why the notion of rapport is used to discuss communicative issues in goal-oriented relationships. For example, rapport is an important element of methodologies that involve human beings in research, including anthropologist-participant relationships in fieldwork (Ellen, 1984; Clifford, 1988; Mitchell, 1988) and interviewer-interviewee relationships (Erickson and Schulz, 1982; Hunt, 1984; Jorgenson, 1992). In education, rapport is considered in relation to classroom climate (Wrightstone, 1951; Bogen, 1954), the student’s satisfaction (Dobrinsky and Frymier, 2004) and students’ learning outcomes (Frisby and Martin, 2010). Jorgenson (1992) states that rapport is associated with asymmetrical relationships and social roles, although this is not always the case (p.148). It can be said that building rapport is a way of reducing a psychological distance. The next section will consider the notion of “well-functioning” through exploring harmony, which is a term often used to describe rapport.

2.1.3 Notion of harmony

Harmony refers to a state or quality of connected components, which is created as the result of connecting between them. In music, the components are sounds. Harmony in music refers to a fundamental element that different notes simultaneously sound together. The notion of harmony in music influenced the ancient Greek and Chinese philosophies; they brought significant impacts on the Western philosophy and Eastern (Asian) philosophy respectively.

Based on his etymological examination, Cheng (1989) suggests that there is a commonality between the ancient Greek and Chinese notions of harmony:

it is clear that both the ancient Greek notion of harmony (*harmonia*) in music, and the ancient Chinese notion of harmony (*ho*) in music and in food, share the same recognition that harmony results from different elements being related in an appropriate way to give rise to a totality of wholeness which leads to the experience of agreement and unity. (p.229)

Harmony appears to be more associated with the values of East Asian culture; yet, it is not a homogeneous value for Asian societies. As the above implies, the Chinese notion of harmony has a reference to diversity in a society (Leung, Koch and Lu, 2002; Miike, 2009), which is emphasised in Confucianism. Miike (2009) especially characterises a Chinese philosophical harmony as “harmony without uniformity” and claims that this is a useful worldview for today’s global society. On the other hand, harmony is also used to emphasise its characteristics of uniformity. Tamney (1996) describes Singapore’s harmony in the modern society as “an illusion based on the suppression of dissent” (p.66), discussing the discourse on harmony proposed by the government polities to form a national ideology. Regarding Japanese culture, Wierzbicka (1991) suggests that Japanese “harmony” or *wa* clearly implies ‘groupism’ and ‘anti-individualism’ (p.354). Japanese harmony entails a negative idea about disagreement with others, namely, disagreement can cause conflict and should be avoided. Harmony can be used to prevent people from saying opinions in public such as in students’ interactions (Tamai, 2009) and business negotiations (Oikawa and Tanner, 1992). In terms of a ‘harmonious’ relationship in online contexts, the notion of harmony can be better

understood by Miike's (2009) proposed worldview of "harmony without uniformity". More specifically, Barton and Lee's (2013) proposed view about a global community is helpful; the diversity of the web allows people to take part in a global world "without giving up their existing identities" culturally and linguistically (p.83). This understanding about rapport as harmony can be further developed by introducing Bakhtin's use of agreement/consent.

2.1.4 Harmony and Bakhtin's use of agreement

Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogical theory focuses on dialogical relations between utterances of human (speech) communication. He suggests that social reality or meaning is constituted through utterances, which are the fundamental components of speech communication. An important aspect of utterance is that it is responsive, which means that "the word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.280).

In other words, any utterance is not produced solely from an individual, and any utterance exists in relation to the past and the future. He illustrated this dialogical phenomenon as follows: "any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.69). Hence, utterances always respond to each other. Bakhtin (1986) called this responsive nature of utterance "addressivity" (p.95).

Bakhtin animated the concept of utterance by developing the idea of 'voice'. Emerson and Holquist (1981) explain that he used the term voice to refer to "the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness" (p.434). Wertsch (1993) suggests that when considering addressivity, utterance has at least two characters or voices: "who is doing the speaking" and "who is

being addressed” (p.53). Bakhtin considered that the utterance had multiple voices. In Bakhtin’s (1984) analysis of Dostoevsky’s novels, he demonstrated that author’s perspectives existed through the dialogues between the multiple voices of utterances or characters in Dostoevsky’s novels:

A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. (Bakhtin, 1984, p.4, emphasis is original)

A plurality of consciousness or voices is introduced as a polyphony, which is an important concept for the present study. Especially, ‘combining without being merged in a unity’ is related to the notion of harmony referred to above.

Bakhtin proposed that agreement (*soglasie*) was “the most important dialogic category” (cited in Emerson, 2000, p. 72). The term *soglasie* means agreement or literally co-voicing (*so-glasie*) in Russian (Clark and Holquist, 1984, p. 150). However, agreement entails a meaning of sameness of positions, which can be seen as not the one Bakhtin sought in his theory. Researchers of Bakhtin’s theory point that he used ‘*soglasie*’ (agreement/consent) in a particular way (Kuwano, 2008, 2011; Tindale, 2009). Tindale (2009) provides a helpful insight: agreement “does not mean an identity of two positions” but it stresses “an understanding of the positions involved” (p.95). Bakhtin also used ‘understanding’ in a dialogical sense, namely, “[u]nderstanding is opposed to utterance like one reply is opposed

to another within a dialogue” (Bakhtin, cited in Todorov, 1998, p. 22). By applying Bakhtin’s theory to harmony in human communication, harmony can be discussed as a form of agreement in a dialogical communication.

Corse (1991) notes that Bakhtin “demonstrated in his frequent use of metaphors from music his assumption that meaning in language is highly analogous to meaning in music” (p.20).

Bakhtin used the terms of vocal music as musical metaphors to present his theory of dialogism. As we have seen, these include ‘voice’ and ‘polyphony’. Regarding the use of musical metaphors, Bertau (2008) explains how:

His metaphor applies to a quality of language as well as to the nature of consciousness.

It is from the notions of word, utterance and answer that Bakhtin arrives at a conception of voice, thereby describing the foundations of language as a dynamic structure of acts of answering. (p.95)

Using a metaphor of ‘polyphony’ helps to imagine how a plurality of voices can exist without being merged. Besides, polyphony of voices indicates that the ‘dialogue’ of human communication should not only be considered as a dyadic but also as a polyphonic communication. The interactive nature of polyphony of voices can be illustrated as the creation of harmony in performance. Other researchers who also associate language and music in terms of creativity view ‘improvisation’ as an interaction through listening and answering between performers (Borgo, 2002; Monson, 2009; Seddon, 2005; Sawyer, 2014). Listening and answering are dialogical, so polyphony through either language or music can be achieved through mutual responses.

Bakhtin's idea of polyphony can be applied to harmony in text-based communication although this does not have material voices of speakers. Regarding the concept of voice, Linell (2009) proposes that voice has three dimensions: "(a) material or physical embodiment", (b) personal signature, and (c) perspectives on topics and issues" (p.114). He explains a relation between these three dimensions, emphasising that voice is not impersonal; it is embodied by human's voice (prosody and voice quality) and linked with one's identity, ideas, opinions and perspectives (Linell 2009, p.114-117). Foregrounding the dimension of voice as one's identity and perspective, voice can be presented through not only vocal means but also other semiotic means (e.g., texts).

There is research on language and music to discuss how voices can be polyphonic and harmonious. From the viewpoint of social semiotics, van Leeuwen (1999) proposes a theory of sound in communication, which conceptualises the polyphony of speech and music communication in a model of sonic interaction. Dialogic sonic interaction (including between individuals and in groups) is characterised by sequential structures of sounds and simultaneous sounds. He suggests that "speech interaction can take place in two ways: sequentially, by speaking in turns, or simultaneously, by speaking at the same time" (van Leeuwen, 1999, p.71). He refers to melody as a musical 'speech act' and describes that "different people say their own thing, yet fit together in a harmonious (or occasionally disharmonious) sounding whole. They are 'equal but different', united in a musical pluralism" (van Leeuwen, 1999, p.80). Thus, he distinguishes two dimensions of polyphony: sequential and simultaneous speech. In other words, in his theory, polyphony is not only attributed to simultaneous sounds but also sequential sounds. The sequential aspect of

polyphony can be discussed in its linguistic aspect. For instance, in spoken discourse, it is discussed in terms of turn-taking in conversation analysis. However, the turn-taking system at least as this has traditionally been understood in conversational analysis is not necessarily an adequate model to examine ACMD or a series of messages on a thread. So returning to Bakhtin's concept of dialogue, it offers an analytical viewpoint for the sequential and interactive relation of utterances. Particularly, the addressivity of utterances can be a starting point to examine harmony in human interactions. The next section focuses on how rapport or harmony is studied in linguistics.

2.2 Rapport and Language

In pragmatics, politeness theories are relevant to how harmony in interpersonal communication can be achieved through language. Mills' (2011) definition of politeness is as follows:

Politeness is a way of negotiating and demonstrating awareness of social position; interactants express attitudes towards others, comment on the state of their relationship, show whether they consider the person to be the same status as themselves, through engaging with the resources of politeness. Politeness is a display to others of our understanding of the politeness norms which we hypothesize hold within the group. (p.76)

Displaying our understanding of the politeness norms can be seen as a dialogic process of responding to each other. If the participants have an agreement in understanding about 'being polite' as the result of exchanging voices or perspectives about 'politeness', they are in harmony in communication, in which I consider rapport exists.

Researchers in politeness research have proposed a set of strategies and principles for the use of language for politeness. Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Leech (1983) are the early seminal works, which influence Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management model. Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) consider the individual's public self-image as the basis for verbal and non-verbal politeness strategies. Leech (1983) focuses on the constraints of communicative strategies based on the cost-benefit exchange.

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) formulate their politeness strategies, drawing on Goffman's (1967) concept of *face* or "an image of self [being] delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (p.5). Their politeness strategies are based on two types of face that the interlocutors want to claim in communication:

negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, right to non-distraction i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition

positive face: the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants.

(Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.61)

In their model, the purpose of politeness is to mitigate potential acts that threaten the individual's face. Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that "people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face" (p.61). Although Brown and Levinson (1987) assert that face is universal, other researchers argue that face is a culturally specific concept. Their main argument is that Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of face does not necessarily explain the social aspects of face, which is important in East Asia (Matsumoto, 1988; Ide, 1989; Gu,

1990; Mao, 1994). The concept of face began to be reconsidered in the 2000s. Locher and Watts (2005) emphasise that “For Goffman face does not reside inherently in an individual [...] but is rather constructed discursively with other members of the group in accordance with the line that each individual has chosen” (p.12). Arundale (2006, 2010) maintains that face is not an individual’s attribute but it is constituted continually in relationships with others through the threads of social interactions. Although Spencer-Oatey (2007) relates face with individuals’ attributes, she also agrees with the idea that face is constructed through interactions, suggesting that “[p]eople’s claims to face with regard to individual attributes, relational associations and collective affiliations, as well as their anticipations of the face claims that others may make in these regards, can all vary dynamically in an on-going interaction” (p.647).

Another influential politeness model is Leech’s (1983) principles of politeness, which was reformulated in the 2000s (Leech, 2005, 2007, 2014). Leech (2014) regarded politeness as “communicative altruism” or “to speak or behave in such a way as to (appear to) give benefit or value not to yourself but to the other person(s), especially the person(s) you are conversing with” (p.3). So, his principles of politeness are grounded on the following overarching principle, the Grand Strategy of Politeness:

In order to be polite, *S* expresses or implies meanings that associate a favorable value with what pertains to *O* [other] or associates an unfavorable value with what pertains to *S* (=self, speaker). (Leech, 2014, p.90)

In his model, politeness is an other-centred orientation in communication. He proposed nine sub-principles under his Grand Strategy of Politeness: Generosity, Tact, Approbation,

Modesty, Obligation (of self to others and of other to self), Agreement, Opinion reticence, Sympathy, Feeling reticence. These can be seen as the principles for meeting the O's expectations about appropriate behaviours.

Researchers in pragmatics who examine interpersonal aspects of language use focus on "face" (e.g., Locher and Watts, 2005; Locher, 2006; Arundale, 2006, 2010). On the other hand, Spencer-Oatey (2008b) proposes a wider perspective to explain the factors that can influence our use of language for relationship, proposing a model of rapport management.

2.3 Rapport Management

Rapport management is "the management of interpersonal relations: the use of language to promote, maintain or threaten harmonious social relations" (Spencer-Oatey, 2008a, p.3).

Spencer-Oatey (2008b) proposes that rapport is based on three interrelated components: (1) face, (2) sociality rights and obligations, and (3) interactional goals. Rapport management is a framework that theorises how people manage interpersonal relations in these three areas of social interactions with other people.

Rapport management can be situated in the illocutionary domain, the discourse domain, the participation domain, the stylistic domain and the non-verbal domain (e.g., gesture). These different levels of linguistic strategies are influenced by several factors including contextual variables (social relations, social/interactional roles, activity types), pragmatic principles and conventions and rapport orientations (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b). Problematic incidents for rapport are of course not restricted to linguistic behaviours. For example, failing to set up

proper seating arrangements can insult people (see Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009, pp.103-104).

2.3.1 Face

In the model of rapport management, the concept of face is understood differently from the other politeness theories (i.e., positive face and negative face, as explained above). The rapport management model considers that face is always positive face or people's want that people acknowledge their positive attributes. So Spencer-Oatey (2000) proposed two aspects of face, namely *quality face* (personal aspect of face) and *identity face* (social aspect of face). Her model of face has been updated a few times, adding respectability face in Spencer-Oatey (2005) and proposing a new model of face associated with identity in Spencer-Oatey (2007). In Spencer-Oatey's (2008) model of rapport management, she no longer uses the distinction between quality and identity face.

Instead, Spencer-Oatey conceptualises face to be associated with self-concept and proposes the idea of face as multi-faceted, inspired by Campbell et al. (2000). This change indicates the expansion of the concept of face, moving from an understanding of self-concept in the personal-social distinction to a wider range of self-concepts. Based on theories of identity in social psychology (e.g., Brewer and Gardner, 1996) and communication studies (e.g., Hecht, 1993), she associates face with three aspects of self-concepts for categorisation:

Face is closely related to a person's sense of identity or self-concept: self as an individual (individual identity), self as a group member (group or collective identity) and self in relationship with others (relational identity). (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.14)

Other researchers also propose an association between face and identity in a similar way. As Culpeper et al (2010) point out, Domenici and Littlejohn (2006) also consider face in relation to three aspects of identities, namely, personal, relational and community. Domenici and Littlejohn's (2006) model of face is also inspired by Hecht (1993). Fant (2007) also proposes that there is "a clear parallelism between aspects of identity and aspects of face" (p.343).

However, Spencer-Oatey and the above researchers do not consider face to be equivalent to identity. In particular, Spencer-Oatey emphasises the clear difference between these concepts. Based on Goffman's (1967) definition of face, Spencer-Oatey (2007) explains that:

Face is not associated with negative attributes, except in so far as we claim NOT to possess them. In this respect, there is a clear distinction between face and identity. A person's identity attributes include negatively and neutrally evaluated characteristics, as well as positive ones, whilst the attributes associated with face are only positive ones. (p.643)

Another aspect to distinguish face and identity is probably that identity can be used as a strategy in rapport management (Planken, 2005) while face is always a factor for the rapport management strategy. Planken (2005) compares negotiation talk between professional negotiators and students (as aspiring negotiators) and shows the professional negotiators present their professional identity by choosing a common topic and using the institutional "we". She suggests that "by emphasising their professional commonalities, negotiators can in fact promote a feeling of solidarity between themselves and the other negotiator(s)" (p.399).

2.3.2 Sociality rights and obligations

The second element that influences rapport management is behavioural expectations.

Spencer-Oatey (2008b) explains that our behavioural expectations are typically based on, in a given context, contractual/legal agreements and requirements, roles and social positions, or behavioural norms, conventions, styles and protocols (pp.15-16). In the rapport management model, these factors that form behavioural expectations are defined as *sociality rights and obligations* or “fundamental social *entitlements* that a person effectively claims for him/herself in his/her interactions with others” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.13, emphasis original). For the present study, the community norms and conventions are relevant as they are important to maintaining an online forum.

Spencer-Oatey (2008b) suggests that behavioural norms and conventions are not always arbitrary and are based on principles of people’s beliefs about what are socially appropriate behaviours (p.16). According to Spencer-Oatey and Jiang (2003), such behavioural principles have been discussed by researchers in pragmatics, for example, Grice’s (1975) Co-operative principle, Leech’s (1983) Politeness Principle, Gu’s (1990) maxims of politeness, and Kim’s (1994) conversational constraints. Spencer-Oatey and Jiang (2003) proposed a label to encompass the behavioural principles as *sociopragmatic interactional principles*. In the rapport management model, Spencer-Oatey (2008b) proposes two fundamental sociopragmatic interactional principles. namely, *equity* and *association*. Equity is associated with “a fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.16). Association is associated with “a fundamental belief that we are entitled to social involvement with others, in keeping with the

type of relationship that we have with them” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.16). Each principle has two components (see Table 1).

Table 1

Two Principles of Sociality Rights and Obligations

Equity	<i>cost-benefit</i> : “the extent to which we are exploited or disadvantaged, and the belief that costs and benefits should be kept roughly in balance through the principle of reciprocity” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.16)
	<i>autonomy-imposition</i> : “the extent to which people control us or impose on us” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.16)
Association	<i>interactional involvement-detachment</i> : “the extent to which we associate with people, or disassociate ourselves from them” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.16)
	<i>affective involvement-detachment</i> : “the extent to which we share concerns, feelings, and interests” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.16)

2.3.3 Interactional goals

The third element of rapport management is *interactional goals*, which is a new element that did not appear in Spencer-Oatey’s (2000) earlier model of rapport management. Interactional goals refer to people’s wants to achieve specific goals in interactions, which “significantly affect their perceptions of rapport because any failure to achieve them can cause frustration and annoyance” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.17). Interactional goals are understood in relation to functions of discourse. Brown and Yule (1983) propose that interactional goals of discourse can be distinguished between transactional (task-oriented) and interactional/relational (relationship-oriented). This distinction is widely applied in linguistic research. The rapport management model also considers transactional and relational goals; transactional goals “aim at achieving a ‘concrete’ task, such as obtaining written approval for

something, clinching a business deal, or finishing a meeting on time” while relational goals “aim at effective relationship management, such as peace-making, promoting friendship, currying favour or exerting control” (Spencer-Oatey, 2005, p.107). However these two interactional goals are often not clear-cut in real interactions. For instance, small talk, which is regarded as relationship-oriented discourse, often occurs in the institutional context of the workplace, where the interactions are predominantly task-oriented (e.g., Cheepen, 2000; Holmes, 2000). Spencer-Oatey (2015) suggests that interactional goals can include “transactional (i.e., task-oriented), relational or a mixture of the two” (p.1289).

2.3.4 Rapport orientation

Spencer-Oatey repeatedly emphasises that various factors influence rapport management strategies. Rapport orientation is one of the factors, which refers to people’s desire about positive and negative changes or maintenance in their social relationships. As introduced earlier, the rapport management model does not only focus on ways of promoting harmonious relationships (i.e., “the use of language to promote, maintain or threaten harmonious social relations” Spencer-Oatey, 2008a, p.3). Instead, Spencer-Oatey (2008b) proposes that rapport orientation is classified into the following four types:

Rapport enhancement orientation: a desire to strengthen or enhance harmonious relations between the interlocutors;

Rapport maintenance orientation: a desire to maintain or protect harmonious relations between the interlocutors;

Rapport neglect orientation: a lack of concern or interest in the quality of relations between the interlocutors (perhaps because of a focus on self);

Rapport challenge orientation: a desire to challenge or impair relations between the interlocutors. (p.32)

An issue is that the rapport orientation is not often directly researchable. Spencer-Oatey (2008b) suggests that “[u]nless people talk about them explicitly, they can only be inferred from their choice of rapport management strategies. Even so, it may still be difficult to distinguish clearly one orientation from another” (p.33). One of the approaches to examine which rapport orientation people hold is considering what kinds of relationship people seek in the interactions.

2.4 Methodological Considerations for Application

The rapport management model has been used for investigating relationships in various contexts including organisational communication (Campbell, White, & Johnson, 2003; Campbell, White, & Durant, 2007), medical contexts (Campbell, 2005), and business (Lauriks, Siebörger, & De Vos, 2015; Planken, 2005; Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2003) and also relationships through computer-mediated communication (Gonzales, 2014a, 2014b; Ho, 2011, 2014; Landone, 2012). This section considers some methodological issues addressed in the previous studies.

2.4.1 Different relationships and rapport

Social/interactional roles also influence rapport management. In particular, they are relevant to behavioural expectations; in other words, social/interactional roles “help specify the rights and obligations of each role member” (p.37). The social/interactional roles in a given context determine the relationships between the participants. The participants’ definitions of these

social roles and relationships are varying. Spencer-Oatey (2008b) suggests that “there can be significant differences in the ways in which people conceptualize the components” (p.17). Such differences can be contextual, individual and cultural. For example, Garcia (2009) refers to this point. She found that Peruvian Spanish-speakers violated equity rights but observed association rights; “the violations [of equity rights] might be permitted behavior within the context of this situation exhibiting a close relationship between interlocutors in a culture that favors interdependent self-construals or ‘relatedness’ as shown by the interlocutor’s responses” (Garcia 2009, p.217). Thus, the participants’ understanding about types of relationships can influence their judgements about appropriateness of behaviours.

Previous studies examine interactions in the unequal power relationships associated with social roles (Campbell, 2005; Campbell et al, 2003; Lauriks et al, 2015). These studies discuss how the quality of relationship is important for the participants to determine their strategies in rapport management. In the leader-member professional interaction, Campbell et al (2003) demonstrate the associations between interactional goals and the leader’s beliefs about their relationship with the members. They explain that “the leader is influenced not only by the urgency of the organizational goal but also by her awareness of the effect of her disagreement on her relationship with the member” (p.183).

On the other hand, Lauriks et al (2015) shows that maintaining a relationship is not a matter of concern in the workplace interactions in an African small business. They suggest a strong connection between rapport management and power structure. The employees challenge the existing power imbalance with the owner for their advantages. In this context, the

owner-employee relationship that the employees seek is not harmonious. Lauriks et al (2015) emphasise a discordant side of relationship. They argue that we should revisit the definitions of rapport: “it is problematic to see rapport as the equivalent of a harmonious relationship and that rapport should rather be seen as the quality of a relationship (i.e., either harmonious or discordant)” (p.24). They propose to define rapport as “the quality of a relationship [which] ranges on a continuum from harmonious to discordant” (p.26).

Spencer-Oatey does not restrict rapport management to the management of a harmonious relationship. Rather, she considers it as the management of an interpersonal relationship.

According to Spencer-Oatey and Franklin’s (2009) definitions:

We use the term ‘rapport’ to refer to people’s subjective perceptions of (dis)harmony, smoothness-turbulence, warmth-antagonism in interpersonal relations and we use ‘rapport management’ to refer to the ways in which this (dis)harmony is (mis)managed. (p.102)

In short, rapport can be people’s subjective perceptions of the quality of relationships, either disharmony or harmony. Rapport management is also concerned with the ways in which disharmony is managed and mismanaged. This definition is also used in her later work (Spencer-Oatey, 2013). Thus, Spencer-Oatey’s definition of rapport is the same as the one proposed by Lauriks et al (2015).

Despite this, it is true that rapport management tends to be considered as management of a harmonious relationship in the previous literature. Besides, the proposed rapport orientations are based on harmonious relationships, namely, to promote, maintain and challenge

harmonious relationships. However, the rapport management model does not restrict the opposite direction of rapport orientations, namely to promote, maintain and challenge discordant (disharmonious) relationships. To avoid misleading, I agree with Lauriks and his colleagues' (2015) claim that we should understand rapport management as to promote, maintain or threaten both harmonious and discordant relationships.

2.4.2 Rapport management to study discordance

Language use for the discordant side of relationships has been studied in impoliteness research. Researchers have tried to incorporate the rapport management model into the models of impoliteness, for example, examining impoliteness strategies in children's Spanish/English bilingual interactions (Cashman, 2006), comparing different perceptions of impoliteness between England, China, Finland, Germany, and Turkey (Culpeper et al., 2010), and examining response strategies to teasing and self-denigrating humour at New Zealand and Hong Kong workplaces (Schnurr and Chan, 2011). These studies that are concerned with various national cultures raise points to be considered in applying the rapport management model.

Schnurr and Chan (2011) realise an issue for applying the model of quality face and identity face to their analysis of workplace interactions between Hong Kong and New Zealand:

we observed that the distinction between quality and identity face was more obvious in the Hong Kong data but was much harder to uphold in the New Zealand data. More specifically, it was not always possible to decide which kind of face was threatened in the New Zealand examples, as the concepts of identity and quality face seemed to

overlap to a great extent. (p.100)

One of these authors, Schnurr, later suggests that there are overlaps between Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2005) earlier conceptions of face and Spencer-Oatey's (2008) conception of face and indicates that the earlier terminologies are useful to discuss the management of face (Schnurr, 2013, p.98). Culpeper et al (2010) also retain the earlier terminologies (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, 2002) and incorporate them into the new terminologies (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b), labelling three aspects of face as quality face, relational face and social identity face. Besides, after Spencer-Oatey (2008b) proposed a new model of face, some researchers still apply the earlier model of face based on quality face and identity face (e.g., Ho, 2011; Lauriks et al, 2015).

Culpeper et al (2010) carefully examined each element of rapport management and pointed out the confusions in defining them. They indicate that the confusion lies in the use of 'social roles' (e.g., teacher) that accompany the role specific relationships, rights and obligations. Social role is used to define not only face but also sociality rights and obligations and consequently there are overlaps in conceptualising these components. They propose to define face associated with the self in relationship with others in terms of the relationship with "significant others" instead of the role-related relationship (Culpeper et al, 2010, p.611).

2.4.3 Rapport management and CMC cues

In CMC contexts, the participants use also CMC cues for rapport management. Gonzales (2014b) analysed closing strategies in online chats. She observed how a learner of Spanish developed closing strategies in chat conversations with native Spanish speakers in the online site *Livemocha*. She found that the participant (the learner) adopted different rapport

orientations for closing and developed his closing strategies over time. At first his closing was short and he switched away immediately after thanking as a closing. However, he gradually engaged himself more in closing e.g., responding to the partner in the closing sequences. She suggests that such “extended closings can encourage rapport maintenance or rapport enhancement” (p.113). Extended closings were also observed in asynchronous computer-mediated communication in a discussion forum in Ädel’s (2011) study. She also reported some other features of rapport management in the student’s online discussions, which can be influenced by medium factors. In one of the examples, the participant wrote “Hugs Jasmin!!!” in the closing utterance. The virtual “hugs” would be corresponding to the physical hug in face-to-face communication. She indicates that the usage of emoticons is also a strategy for rapport-building. In another study in the same online site Livemocha, Gonzales (2014a), she suggests that laughter and humour greatly contribute to rapport management in text chatting. In her study, her participant used various forms of laughter and humour in chat conversations. She states that “the high occurrence of laughter and emoticons in his [her participant’s] conversations might explain how Vincent [her participant] was able to build positive rapport with his interlocutors in spite of the short amount of time spent conversing with them” (p.209). Hugging, showing emotion, smiling and laughing in the face-to-face context can be seen as part of the non-verbal domain of rapport management.

2.5 Summary

The first part of this chapter explored the notion of rapport by considering its origin and the psychological investigation of rapport. I related rapport in goal-oriented communication to the notion of harmony. Harmony in human interactions was considered regarding

philosophical, cultural and musical harmony. Bakhtin's theory of dialogue was drawn on to develop the understanding about harmony in relation to polyphony and agreement (soglasie). The second part of this chapter introduced linguistic models for harmony in interaction, namely Brown and Levinson's politeness model and Leech's principles of politeness. These politeness models consider the strategies and underlying principles to achieve harmony in interaction. Then, I overviewed Spencer-Oatey's rapport management model and reviewed the previous studies that pointed out some difficulties in applying the model.

According to the previous studies on rapport management, social roles and relationships significantly influence the participants' face, behavioural expectations (sociality rights and obligations) and specific goals in interactions. The participant roles and relationships are taken into account for considering power and distance: power and distance are important variables in research in pragmatics and discourse analysis. For example, these contextual variables are relevant to a teacher-student relationship. Yet, such institutionalised asymmetrical role relationships and goals are not there in the online forum. A different analytical perspective is needed to understand social relationships in informal learning in the online forum. In the next chapter, I will consider a theory of situated learning as a supplemental perspective for social contexts.

Chapter 3 Online Communities of Practice

This chapter explores contextual factors in the online learning settings, especially the participant roles and relationships. I consider informal or social learning in *Japan Reference* and *Reddit* from a socio-cultural perspective, namely *situated learning* (e.g., Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). In the first part, I introduce the theory of situated learning (section 3.1) and then I consider how to adapt the situated learning model to CMD in online forums (section 3.2).

3.1 Frameworks for Social Learning

3.1.1 Legitimate peripheral participation

Situated learning originates from the sociocultural theory developed by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky during the 1920's and 1930's. Sociocultural theory views learning as “a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human, psychological functions” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.90). This theory emphasises the importance of social interactions between people in cognitive development such as the experiences of guidance, collaboration with more capable others. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory influenced anthropologist Jean Lave's (1988) social cognitive approach to learning in real life contexts. She revealed, for instance, that the arithmetic practices in everyday activities such as grocery shopping differ from the mathematics taught in school curriculums. Lave (1988) argues that everyday activities are dynamic and constituted through individuals' expectations of what is happening and may happen and these expectations are based on their engagement in the activities (p.185).

Lave and Wenger (1991) consider the acquisition of the skills for such everyday activities as situated learning and propose a concept of *community of practice* to explicate this learning process. What they mean by a community of practice is “a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice” (p.98). Community of practice (henceforth, CoP) does not simply mean a ‘group of people’ but a kind of community that encompasses the complex relations of components that form situated learning (i.e., persons, activity, and social world). To understand the concept of CoP, ‘social engagement’ is an essential aspect. Hanks (1991) explains that Lave and Wenger “ask what kinds of social engagements provide the proper context for learning to take place” (Foreword in Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 14). Lave and Wenger (1991) pay attention to the mastering process of skills in apprenticeship and theorise situated learning as *legitimate peripheral participation* in a CoP. Although not all of the aspects of learning through legitimate peripheral participation are taken into account for analysis in the present study, I will briefly explain this concept and consider the most relevant aspect to examine rapport management in the two online fora.

Peripheral participation means participating in a peripheral way; newcomers participate in some community activities but not all of them, they have full access to community resources and they gradually engage in more activities over time. By ‘legitimizing’ such a peripheral way of participation, newcomers are accepted as a member of the community and become a full member in the future. Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that learning or “the mastery of knowledge and skills requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community” (p. 29). From this viewpoint, learning is a

construction of identity as a full member, or transformation. Lave and Wenger emphasise this aspect of social learning: “learning is not merely a condition for membership, but is itself an evolving form of membership” (ibid, p.53). Thus, Lave and Wenger propose a very different perspective to understand ‘learning’ from the pedagogical perspective and focus on a person engaged in social activities rather than seeing learning purely as a cognitive system.

Understanding a process of moving from a legitimate peripheral participant to a core member requires long-term observation so that researchers can examine how a particular participant succeeds in going through the learning process over time. However, this is not the focus of the present study and I focus on other aspects of learning through legitimate peripheral participation, particularly the negotiation of conflicts between participants in a CoP.

Lave and Wenger’s concept of legitimate peripheral participation foregrounds not only a relation between learner’s identity formation and learning but also the possibility of conflictual moments occurring during situated learning (see also Wenger 1998, pp.100-101). This aspect of social learning is particularly relevant to the present study that explores rapport management in a learning context.

a major contradiction lies between legitimate peripheral participation as the means of achieving continuity over generations for the community of practice, and the displacement inherent in that same process as full participants are replaced (directly or indirectly) by newcomers-become-old-timers. (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.115)

Lave and Wenger (1991) propose this phenomenon as the continuity-displacement contradiction. In the process of learning, newcomers cannot permanently stay in the current status as a novice. They are novice in the practices in a community while they are becoming

potentially capable members, able to introduce new viewpoints on developing the practices. So, their transit to a full member can challenge the existing viewpoints and accordingly threaten old timers (established and more experienced full members). The different generations “have a stake in its development as they begin to establish their own identity in its future” (ibid, p.115). This can generate conflicts of power relations between generations in a CoP. For example, the established members may employ their authority as more experienced members to exclude the new members from certain activities, or the new members may gain power by introducing more effective methods in activities. These conflictual or unharmonious moments can be observed in short lived interactions on threads in the online forums, which the present study focuses on for analysis.

For Lave and Wenger, this continuity-displacement contradiction, in which the members contest and negotiate their different viewpoints, is a crucial part of maintaining a CoP or a social learning context. What they mean by ‘maintaining’ is not a static condition; rather it always connotes evolving. In short, the whole process of continuity and displacement can contribute to the existence of a CoP. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that:

The practice itself is in motion. Since activity and the participation of individuals involved in it, their knowledge, and their perspectives are mutually constitutive, change is a fundamental property of communities of practice and their activities.
(pp.116-117)

Lave and Wenger’s concept of CoP is influenced by practice theory associated with Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens and Michel Foucault. These scholars discussed the ontology of structure of a society; they are “important examples of contemporary ontological dualism. In

differing ways, they explain social reproduction by reference to structure, defined as conceptual templates, patterns or rules” (King, 2004, p.40). As we can see, the continuity – displacement contradiction model is reflected by this dualism. From the perspective of situated learning, roles and participant relations are also in motion; the participants continuously redefine their relationships in the course of learning. For the present study, a further perspective is needed to understand in more detail about how such a dynamic way of maintaining a community can work. The next section introduces how Wenger (1998) elaborates this phenomenon.

3.1.2 Components of CoP for situated learning

Wenger (1998) developed the concept of CoP, dividing situated learning into four components including *meaning*, *practice*, *identity* and *community* (Figure 5). These four components are interrelated with each other.

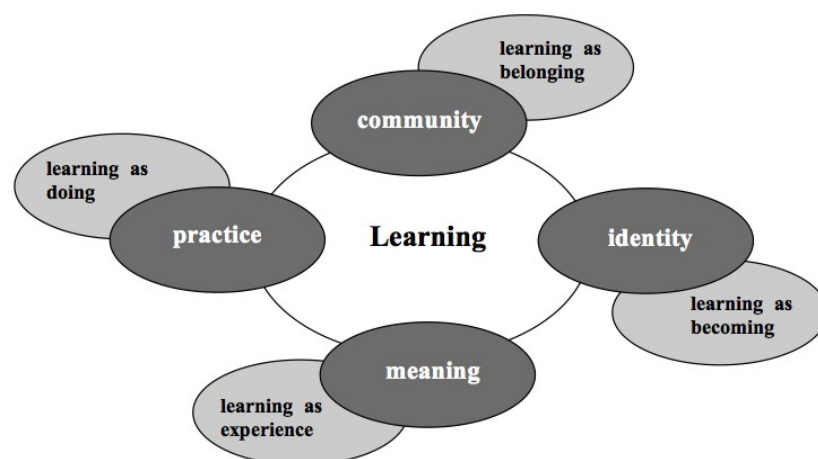


Figure 5. Components of a social theory of learning. Adapted from *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity* (p.5), by E. Wenger, 1998, New York: Cambridge University press. Copyright 1998 by Cambridge University Press.

Wenger (1998) emphasises learning as social participation, which is “[an] encompassing process of being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities” (p.4, emphasis in original). From these two angles of practices and identities, he explicates the concept of CoP, namely, how social learning takes place and how its learning context is maintained. The angle of practice (the left side of Figure 5) focuses on the system of social configuration. Wenger theorises how practices relate participants, especially considering ways of meaning making and dimensions of practices. From the same analytical perspective, the angle of identity (the right side of Figure 5) focuses on the person. Wenger explains how a sense of individual identity forms a CoP beyond the direct participation in practices. By focusing on the person, it also gives ideas of the relations between a CoP and the broader social contexts. The following section overviews each component.

(1) Meaning. The interactions between participants are an essential part of practices. In interactions, the participants always negotiate meanings as “[m]eaning is not pre-existing” (Wenger, 1998, p.54). In the CoP framework, meanings are viewed as being constructed through two interwoven modes of interaction: *participation* and *reification* (Figure 6). Wenger suggests that meaning is contextualised through the dual process of participation and reification; when the participants take part in community activities, they always simultaneously reify these experiences.

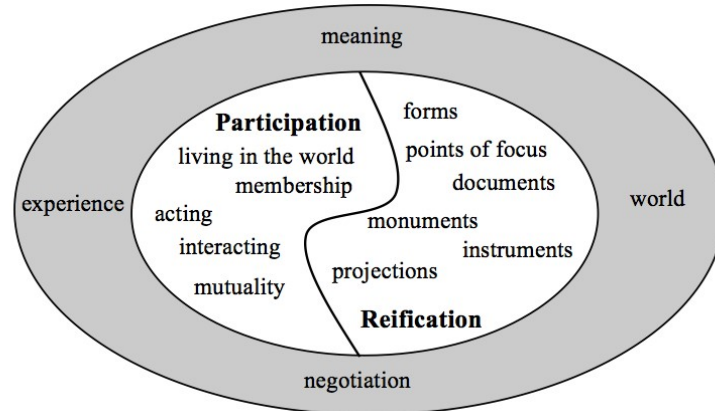


Figure 6. The duality of participation and reification. Adapted from *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity* (p.63), by E. Wenger, 1998, New York: Cambridge University press. Copyright 1998 by Cambridge University Press.

Participation is “a process of taking part and also [refers to] the relations with others that reflect this process. It suggests both action and connection” (Wenger, 1998, p.55).

Participation does not only refer to direct involvement in shared activities with people but also various ways of representation of the person’s ‘connection’ to the community through reification. Reification is both a process of “giving form to our experiences by producing objects that congeal the experience into ‘thingness’” (ibid, p.58) and a product of this process. From the perspective of social semiotics theory, reification includes both material process and materiality (see Chapter 1). Yet, Wenger does not delimit the reified ‘thingness’ to symbolic representations but includes abstractions, stories, terms and concepts that define the participant’s viewpoint on their experiences.

(2) **Practice.** Based on this meaning-making process, the participants share and develop the practices in their community. Wenger proposes that *mutual engagement*, *joint enterprises*, and *shared repertoire* constitute practices. These three dimensions refer to what kind of

involvement in actions is required (i.e., mutuality), what motivates the participants to be involved in the actions, and what kinds of resources the participants draw on in the actions (e.g., artefacts, styles, discourse, concepts, tools). In situated learning, “peripheral participation must provide access to all three dimensions of practice” (Wenger, 1998, p.100). Wenger (1998) illustrates an aspect of coherence in a CoP from the perspective of mutual relationships.

When it [mutual engagement] is sustained, it connects participants in ways that can become deeper than more abstract similarities in terms of personal features or social categories. In this sense, a community of practice can become a very tight node of interpersonal relationships. (p.76)

In this way, the shared practices relate the participants and characterise the mutual relationships in a community. Wenger (1998) views mutual relationships in real life as a complex mixture of positive and negative elements (p77). In short, interpersonal relationships can be characterised as a mixture of harmonious and conflictual; both harmony and conflicts constitute the participant relationships in an on-going way.

(3) Identity. “Building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities” (Wenger, 1998, p.145). It is important for participants to claim their identities as a full member in the process of learning. Yet, membership is contested all the time, especially for new members attempting to legitimate their full membership in a community. Wenger views this identity formation as part of social practice.

Identity in practice is defined socially not merely because it is reified in a social discourse of the self and of social categories, but also because it is produced as *a lived*

experience of participation in specific communities. What narratives, categories, roles, and positions come to mean as an experience of participation is something that must be worked out in practice. (p.151, emphasis added).

Considering identity as a lived experience of participation, it is fundamentally temporal in various trajectories of participation (ibid, p.154). The elements that constitute participant identities are always negotiated and changed in the continuity-displacement process. For this process of maintaining a CoP, an important aspect of participation is mutual recognition. The experiences through mutual engagement in activities generate certain roles and relationships and associate them with the participants' identity.

(4) Community. On the other hand, as referred to earlier, participation is not only direct engagement. Wenger (1998) conceptualises and discusses the component of “community” focusing on people's ways of belonging in a community of practice. He proposes three modes of belonging in order to understand how a community is formed beyond direct engagement:

- 1) *engagement* – active involvement in mutual process of negotiation of meaning
- 2) *imagination* – creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from our own experience
- 3) *alignment* – coordinating our energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises. (pp. 173-174)

Imagination and alignment are different dimensions in ways of relating to the practices in a community or gaining a sense of belonging; they are also the source for the participants to create a shared reality or experiences with others. Wenger (1998) suggests that “[a] given community can be constituted by all three [modes of belonging] in various proportions, and

the variety of these combinations results in communities with distinct qualities” (p.183).

3.1.3 Some critiques and inadequate perspectives

The CoP concept has been adopted by linguistic research. There is a dialogue which discussed legitimate peripheral participation in the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* (2005, vol.9, no.4). Davies (2005) claims that “legitimate peripheral participation entail[s] a process of gate-keeping” (p.571). In her argument, she problematizes the lack of attention given to the concept of hierarchy in the CoP framework despite the presence of internal structure and power in it (p.576). In response, Eckert and Wenger (2005) disagree with Davies’s suggestion that the CoP framework needs more analytical perspectives for power relations. They make it clear they have a different conceptualisation of power from Davies. Davies’s suggestion is based on the concept of a linear hierarchy and this is different from the power relations discussed in the CoP framework. They claim that:

Practice always involves the maintenance of the community and therefore its power structure. Legitimacy in any community of practice involves not just having access to knowledge necessary for ‘getting it right’, but being at the table at which ‘what is right’ is continually negotiated. (p.583)

Barton and Hamilton’s (1998) sociocultural research on literacies in a local area provides an example of how such power relations can work. Based on ethnography, they found that people used their literacies for helping other people in their personal networks of friends, neighbours and family in the local area where they live, which they characterise as “negotiated literacies” (p.254). It is ‘negotiated’ because the reciprocity and obligations in the

network are not imposed but can be negotiated in their social relationships. This network of social relationships can be seen as an important component of the local community as this relational system helps individuals' everyday learning for living in a broader social structure. Barton and Hamilton explain that the negotiated literacies "are closely connected with feelings of identity and self-worth within a significant community; participating in these relationships can be a practical way of expressing solidarity and common purpose within that community" (ibid., pp.254-255).

The concept of CoP is also widely adopted in management learning. Wenger developed the CoP framework by applying it to organisation learning (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002). This work takes a different approach from the previous works by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998); namely it moves "from theory to practice" (p.xi). In a more practical framework of CoP, Wenger et al (2002) redefine the basic structure of CoP as a combination of three fundamental elements: "a *domain* of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a *community* of people who care about this domain; and the shared *practice* that they are developing to be effective in their domain" (p.27, emphasis in original). On the other hand, there have been criticisms that the focus of the CoP concept shifted to a more instrumental approach to examine organisational learning (see, Cox, 2005; Barton and Tusting, 2005; Li, Grimshaw, Nielsen, Judd, Coyte, and Graham, 2009).

In his response to this critique, Wenger (2010) draws on dualistic thinking and argues that different perspectives can co-exist in pursuing the development of learning theory:

But for myself, I find the combination of analytical and instrumental perspectives

particularly productive. It is a tension, no doubt, but one that pushes both perspectives. Emerging from this tension, I see the beginning of a new discipline focused on the learning capability of social systems. (p.193)

For the present study, the benefit of the combination of both perspectives is gaining more insights into building interpersonal relationships in a CoP. What I particularly find helpful is the consideration given to the maintenance of interpersonal relationships in situated learning in Wenger et al (2002). This is not discussed enough from the analytical or theoretical perspectives (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

The model of situated learning by Wenger et al (2002) is based on a particular type of social learning, namely learning situated in organisations. They demonstrate the roles of interpersonal communication in organisations as CoP. For example, they discuss building trust and personal relationships as important elements of social configuration:

Because members of large distributed communities have less contact, it is more difficult to build trust and personal relationships. As we have seen, a large part of the trust-building process takes place in the private space of the community by increasing the connections between individual members. (p. 120)

From the theoretical perspective, participant relationships are seen as the consequences of participating in practices. On the other hand, in real life, building interpersonal relationships itself can be the primary goal at the individual level. Such individual relationships can also be the source to form a community. In relation to this point, Wenger et al (2002) indicate the need for facilitating interactions to achieve interpersonal goals.

Distributed communities have to work hard to create a base of trust between disparate

members. They need to be more intentional about connecting people, finding opportunities for members to interact beyond their local circles, and building interpersonal relationships. They also need to address issues of norms and openness more explicitly: they cannot assume that norms are already shared or that there is enough interaction and common ground for norms to emerge. (p.121)

The importance of interactions for building interpersonal relationships is also proposed by research on online forums (Angouri and Sanderson, 2016). Based on the analysis of threads, Angouri and Sanderson (2016) show that a health-related online forum (an online Rheumatoid Arthritis forum) has not only task-oriented functions but also rapport-oriented functions. Their study shows that both functions constitute the participants' sense of community in the online forum, demonstrating that rapport-oriented interactions also take place for establishing shared experiences and encouraging new participants to join in the online forum. They suggest that "it is valuable to move beyond description of task-related functions alone to show how a community is actively defining itself" (p.10). From the perspective of CoP, I suggest that rapport-oriented interaction is also an important aspect of legitimate peripheral participation and thus the maintenance of a CoP. Therefore, more research should investigate the interpersonal aspects of practices in social learning. The next section considers the operationalization of situated learning theory in the online forum.

3.2 Social Learning in Online Forums

3.2.1 Forming a 'community' online

Many researchers discuss the application of the CoP framework for online social learning

(e.g., Johnson, 2001; Hung and Chen 2002; Schwen and Hara, 2003; Lai, Pratt, Anderson and Stigter, 2006; Moore, 2008; Zhao and Bishop, 2011). In the relevant literature, the notion of ‘community’ is often in debate. Brown and Duguid (2000) argue that “the technological reach that conquers distance doesn’t necessarily provide the reciprocity that allows people to form, join, or participate in worthwhile learning communities” (p.225). Reciprocity is an important element of a community. Reciprocal obligations can connect the participants and enhance relationships. Without the norms of reciprocity, it hardly exists as a community.

On the other hand, in other literature published around the same time as Brown and Duguid (2000), researchers suggest that *generalised reciprocity* is one of the motivations for people to help online such as in newsgroups (Smith and Kollock, 1999; Wasko and Faraj, 2000). Although Brown and Duguid (2000) pointed out the constraints of available means online, reciprocity can be generated in the online environment and it is possible to increase a sense of community among the participants through online activities. Focusing on the system, generalised reciprocity refers to a social exchange system in which people expect to receive future help from someone else in the community but not directly from the same person whom they help. Focusing on the interpersonal relationship, it refers to “an exchange relationship balanced only in the long run, where the maintenance of the relationship is more important than any short-run gain and where the norm of the relationship is altruism” (Plattner, 1989, p.212). Indeed, generalised reciprocity is an important norm to relate people and form a community.

Although the above previous research shows the possibility of forming online communities

based on generalised reciprocity, this is not enough to know whether social learning can take place in an online-based community. Brown and Duguid (2000) propose the distinction between 'learning about' and 'learning to be'. From the perspective of community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), the participant's construction of identity through acquiring knowledge is another crucial dimension of forming a community. Brown and Duguid (2000) highlight the distinction between 'learning about' and 'learning to be' (Bruner, 1996) and relate it with Lave and Wenger's (1991) idea of identity in situated learning. Brown and Duguid (2000) emphasise that "[l]earning to be requires more than just information. It requires the ability to engage in the practice in question" (p.128). In short, 'learning to be' is learning a way of using the knowledge and information as a particular person associated with the knowledge (e.g., a member of the community of practice) rather than 'learning about' the knowledge.

Drawing on this distinction, Hung and Chen (2002) suggest that Internet sites such as Q&A or knowledge-exchange forums should be considered as "quasi-communities" rather than a CoP because the actual practices are not present in such online fora. They point out the limitations of means in CMC for practices:

in most Internet quasi-communities, participants are primarily involved in discourse *about* knowledge rather than learning *to be*. There are some limited exceptions. [...]

However, in other skills and behavioral performances where the Internet medium is a limitation, learning *how to be* is clearly lacking. (p.26)

Considering the case of communities of 'professional' practice, they point that the participants in such an online forum are not able to engage themselves in actual practices of a

profession (e.g., medical practices) and form their identity through the professional practices (e.g., a doctor).

Regarding Hung and Chen's (2002) argument, here I consider two things: (1) whether an online forum should not be considered as a CoP and (2) whether the Internet medium is a limitation for situated learning. For the first point, I partly disagree again with their claim. Although many previous studies examine CoP associated with professions, situated learning is not limited to such professional learning. For the present study, *Japan Reference* and *Reddit* as online forums are based on common interests and my focus is the sub-fora about learning a language. I regard these sub-fora as online-based CoP, in which the participants practise their target language in given online contexts and share linguistic and cultural knowledge about the language. In terms of identity, what the participants learn to be is a particular type of a language learner, namely, a self-taught learner. So, what the participants 'master' are the skills of self-teaching a language or becoming a self-taught learner who can acquire a language in an autonomous way. I think that the mastery of self-teaching is an important aspect to understand how people acquire a language through social learning (and I also think that the mastery of self-teaching is not necessarily equivalent to language socialisation discussed in the field of Second language acquisition). Therefore, from my point of view, an online forum based on sharing common interests can be seen as a CoP.

For the second point, I suggest that the Internet medium has both constraints and affordances, but this does not restrict the actual activities which build an identity. In the sub-fora about language learning, the interactions on the threads should not be seen merely as discourse

about learning; they are also more or less part of the participants' learning process to be a self-taught learner. While discussing a better method of learning on a thread can be seen as discourse about learning, such discussion itself is also a part of actual activities of self-taught learning by talking about their methods in a reflective way. Another example is Zhao and Bishop (2011). They also suggest that the participants as co-editors in *Wikipedia* are able to learn actual activities through participations (e.g., collaborative editing). Regarding the limitation of the Internet medium, it should be also taken into account that the Internet environment has changed since the publication of Hung and Chen (2002) and the CMC/CMD are more multimodal than before. This indicates that the Internet medium has new affordances that were not available in the early 2000s and more activities are available online; for example, amateur artists create a work together online (e.g., composing a piece of music, creating digital arts), exhibit or perform their work and build an identity as a more professional artist through these online activities. Returning to the focus on *Japan Reference* and *Reddit*, the available resources in these online fora are mainly symbolic (linguistic and other semiotic forms).

3.2.2 Discourse as means to form a CoP

Wenger (1998) provides descriptions of what kinds of practices are relevant in claims processing in a large insurance company as a CoP through vignettes. According to Wenger's examples, language does play a central role in everyday activities in a CoP although it is only one part (Tusting, 2005). It is not necessarily a limitation for situated learning that the majority of activities are discursive. On the other hand, there is a constraint of the online forum medium that needs to be considered. Practice is "tied to particular times and places"

(Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, p.21). However, in the online forum, the participants do not always engage in the shared activities at the same time and the notion of physical place is not applicable for situating the practices in the context.

The concepts of imagination and alignment are useful in considering how the discursive means work in time and place. Wenger (1998) explains that “[t]he process of alignment bridges time and space to form broader enterprises so that participants become connected through the coordination of their energies, actions, and practices” (pp.178-179). Tusting’s (2000) study gives insights into how imagination and alignment modes of belonging enable the participants at distance to engage in the same practices through discursive means.

Drawing on Adam’s (1990) theory, which suggests expanding our notions of time, she demonstrates that literacies allow members of a parish to synchronise their public and private activities in time. She shows the roles of discursive means (e.g., the weekly newspapers and church bulletins) which bring the members together through activities at various levels. In this way, the parish members reinforce the community identity and achieve the maintenance of the community at local level (parish) and global level (the Catholic church as a whole). I suggest that this way of synchronisation in activities can also form an online community for social learning. Georgakopoulou (2015) stresses that “digital media affordances and constraints play a key role in how time and place/space are discursively (re)worked” (p.2). In Chapter 5, I will consider the medium characteristics of *Japan Reference* and *Reddit* in relation to contexts for discourse analysis.

Here, I consider again about the notion of community. Focusing on language as part of the

semiotic means for practices, the contexts of situated learning can be seen as a *semiotic social space* (Gee, 2005). This is an alternative framework of situated learning, which focuses on the process of semiotic meaning-making in social learning. He suggests that the notion of community is not always necessarily useful for online activities (e.g., sharing interests and knowledge) as contemporary social learning. This is because despite the careful conceptualisation of CoP, the notion of community entails an attempt to label a group of people in terms of membership (p.215). So, instead of CoP, Gee proposes that the sites for such social learning can be seen as *affinity spaces*, a concept which “captures one characteristically modern and important form of social affiliation” (p.217). The framework of affinity space probably gives a useful analytical lens to examine how semiotic means are generated and how the participants apply these means for their practices, including ways of synchronising their activities.

On the other hand, the concept of CoP is useful for online social learning if legitimate peripheral participation is relevant. Previous studies discuss this process of legitimate peripheral participation in the online forum (e.g., Angouri, 2015; Burke, Kraut and Joyce, 2010; Hanna and de Nooy, 2003). For instance, new participants need to make some efforts to be accepted by the existing participants in the online forum; they need to legitimate their participation in a certain way. Burke, Kraut and Joyce (2010) suggest that three socialization strategies used by the new participants “increase a group’s likelihood of granting provisional membership, measured here by responding to the newcomers’ messages, and that these membership grants, in turn, increase the likelihood that newcomers will continue participating in the group” (p.28). The three socialization strategies include (a)

group-oriented membership claims; (b) identity-oriented membership claims; and (c) information requests. This process of legitimate peripheral participation takes place in the online forum.

Angouri (2015) suggests that one of the specific features in legitimate peripheral participation online can be lurking; “norms of participation are learnt before active contribution” (p.328). To this point, Hanna and de Nooy’s (2003) research demonstrates the importance of learning norms of participation through examining language use by the learners of French in an online forum on the website of the French newspaper *Le Monde*. They suggest that the successful students positioned themselves culturally appropriately in the forum and received informal teacherly support from the moderator and other members. The above previous studies indicate that the participation and contribution to the online sites as CoP are negotiated through interpersonal communication with other members.

Learning and building interpersonal relationships are related with each other. We can see this relation in Wenger’s (1998) proposed set of characteristics that indicate a CoP has formed:

- 1) Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual
- 2) Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
- 3) The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
- 4) Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
- 5) Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed
- 6) Substantial overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs

- 7) Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise
- 8) Mutually defining identities
- 9) The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
- 10) Specific tools, representations, and other artifacts
- 11) Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
- 12) Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones
- 13) Certain styles recognized as displaying membership
- 14) A shared discourse that reflects a certain perspective on the world. (pp.125-126, underlining added)

These characteristics are associated with the three dimensions of practice, namely, mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoires. He states that “a community of practice need not be reified as such in the discourse of its participants” (p.125). In other words, it need not to be reified ‘in’ the discourse but ‘through’ discourse as means for social practices. The underlined parts of the above characteristics can be seen as the particular aspects of practices in which discourse plays a role, including sharing (i.e., “shared ways”, “shared stories, inside jokes”, “Jargon and shortcuts to communication”, “A shared discourse”), interacting (i.e., “conversations and interactions”, “to be discussed”, “Mutually defining”) and presenting (i.e., “participants’ descriptions”, “representations”, “displaying membership”). Thus, a CoP can be analysed by looking at discursive means of practices.

In relation to this point, Angouri (2015) suggests that Herring’s (2004) CMDA is useful for analysing discursive constructions of a community. From a linguistic point of view, Herring’s

CMDA framework provides ways of looking at online community (or virtual community in her term). Herring (2004) proposes six criteria for identifying an online community based on previous literature in the 1990s and early 2000s:

1. active, self-sustaining participation; a core of regular participants
2. shared history, purpose, culture, norms, and values
3. solidarity, support, reciprocity
4. criticism, conflict, means of conflict resolution
5. self-awareness of group as an entity distinct from other groups
6. emergence of roles, hierarchy, governance, rituals (p.355)

She associates these components in the six criteria with the discursive behaviours at five linguistic and non-linguistic analytical levels (Table 2). These include the four domains of CMD that are relevant to discourse analysis methods (structure, meaning, interaction and social behaviours) and the fifth domain (participation) that needs non-linguistic methods but is relevant to discursive practices in an online community.

Table 2

Discourse Behaviours Hypothesized to Indicate Virtual Community (Herring, 2004, p.361)

Structure	Jargon, references to group, in-group/out-group language
Meaning	Exchange of knowledge, negotiation of meaning (speech acts)
Interaction	Reciprocity, extended (in-depth) threads, core participants
Social behaviour	Solidarity, conflict management, norms of appropriateness
Participation	Frequent, regular, self-sustaining activity over time

With respect to the domain of participation, there is some relevant research based on quantitative analysis by Faraj and Johnson (2011) and Graham and Wright (2014). Faraj and Johnson (2011) investigate the network exchange patterns in web-based threaded discussion

groups (i.e., online forums) in order to see the existence of sustainable online communities. They found that “the pattern of ties is consistent with norms of direct reciprocity and indirect reciprocity, and has a tendency away from preferential attachment” (p.1475). Preferential attachment refers to the phenomena where “the nodes which already have many linkages tend to receive exponentially more new linkages than the majority of weakly connected nodes” (Hartmann, 2014, p.111). Faraj and Johnson (2011) view the tendency as “a preference for novelty in choice of communication partners that is consistent with a norm of welcoming behavior toward new participants” (p. 1475). In short, the established participants in the online forum are willing to interact with a new participant, which can be seen as providing opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation. By examining the frequency and volumes of postings, Graham and Wright (2014) identify minorities of very active participants who regularly post to the online forum and call them *super-participants*. They classify the roles of super-participants into three categories: (1) superposters, “who post very frequently in a discussion forum” (p.627); (2) agenda setters, “who attempt to set the agenda of online forums” (p.628); and (3) facilitators, who “help to set the tone and can normally moderate, manage or otherwise advise broader participants” (p.629). Thus, the super-participants take positive roles in discursive practices in the online forum. The discourse behaviours in the other four domains will be considered in the next chapter.

3.3 Summary

This chapter considered the contextual factors for rapport management in the two online fora, focusing on participant roles and relationships in situated learning. In section 3.1, I overviewed Lave and Wenger’s (1991) and Wenger’s (1998) theories of situated learning.

They frame situated learning as legitimate peripheral participation, in which the power relations between different generations are contested and negotiated over time. Legitimate peripheral participation is relevant to the present study as the dynamic nature of power relations can influence the ways in which the participants perceive what rights and obligations adhere to their roles and relations. I pointed out the inadequate perspectives for building interpersonal relationships in the CoP framework, which the present study examines with the rapport management framework. In section 3.2, I considered how the model of situated learning could be adopted into CMD in the online contexts, especially the online forum. I presented relevant issues for the present study, namely a question about whether learning in an online forum is situated learning. The question is associated with the medium features of online environment; the practices in the online forum rely on discursive means. I agreed that the discursive means could adequately provide opportunities for the participants to engage in necessary practices for situated learning online. I also considered how the online CoP could be discursively constructed by introducing Wenger's (1998) set of indicators of CoP and Herring's (2004) CMDA.

Chapter 4 ACMD and Online Forum

This chapter discusses ACMD in online forums in relation to the medium of communication and interpersonal relationships. First of all, I will consider the development of CMD research and the discourse approach to CMC through section 4.1 and section 4.2. Then, I will describe the linguistic features of threads, referring to the public context of online forum and the concept of multilogue in section 4.3. I will also illustrate some aspects of ACMD that can be observed in the online forum or alike CMC media in section 4.4, and finally I will focus on the features of advice discourse.

4.1 CMD and the Technology

4.1.1 CMD research

In linguistics, the early research on CMC focuses on the variation of language, which Androutsopoulos (2006) terms as “the ‘first wave’ of linguistic CMC studies” (p.420). One of the salient studies in the first wave is Crystal (2001). He identifies linguistic variations in CMC and characterises them as *netspeak*, which is “a type of language displaying features that are unique to the Internet, and encountered in all the above situations, arising out of its character as a medium which is electronic, global, and interactive” (Crystal, 2001, p.18). His approach to the language of CMC is based on the two temporal modes of CMC, namely synchronous and asynchronous CMC, and he illustrates a language of e-mail (asynchronous CMC) and language of chatroom (synchronous CMC) as new genres. The methodology of the first wave of CMD research considers the Internet language as a homogeneous genre.

Androutsopoulos (2006) points that “[t]he move from the ‘language of CMC’ to computer-mediated discourse (Herring 2004) has important implications for the theory and methodology of CMC research from a sociolinguistic viewpoint” (p.421). The implication of the discourse approach to CMC is to shift analytical focus from decontextualised language to situated use of language, which Androutsopoulos (2008) refers to as the second wave in CMD research. Using the metaphor of ‘wave’, other researchers refer to the third wave of CMD research in sociolinguistics. In discussion of approaches to multilingualism, Leppänen and Kytölä (2016) state that the first and second waves focused on the texts of messages, the third wave is interested in “connections between online and offline social activities, by default defining (and accepting) diversity, heteroglossia, and complexity as research targets” (p. 157). In the third wave of CMD research, an ethnographic approach such as Androutsopoulos’s (2008) discourse-centered online ethnography is applied to examine the interrelated online and offline practices. Since the present study focuses on language use in contexts, the next section considers Herring’s discourse approach to CMC in more detail.

4.1.2 Herring’s discourse approach to CMC

Herring (1996) identified three key issues of CMC research including (1) the language of CMC, (2) the medium of CMC, which allows participants to have impersonal and anonymous interactions and (3) social configurations through computer-mediated interactions (pp. 3-5). For these three areas, she develops a series of linguistic approaches to CMC through Herring (2004, 2007, 2013). For the first issue of the language of CMC, as introduced in section 3.2.2, she proposed a framework of computer-mediated discourse analysis or CMDA (Herring,

2004), which consists of the four levels of language including structure, meaning, interaction and social behaviour (Table 3).

Table 3

Four Levels of Analysis of CMDA (Herring, 2004, p. 358)

Domains of CMD	Linguistic Phenomena	Issues	Methods
Structure	typology, orthography, morphology, syntax, discourse schemata	genre characteristics, orality, efficiency, expressivity, complexity	Structural/Descriptive Linguistics, Text Analysis
Meaning	meaning of words, utterances (speech acts), macrosegments	what the speaker intends, what is accomplished through language	Semantics, Pragmatics
Interaction	turns, sequences, exchanges, threads	interactivity, timing, coherence, interaction as co-constructed, topic development	Conversation Analysis, Ethnomethodology
Social Behaviour	Linguistic expressions of status, conflict, negotiation, face-management, play; discourse styles, etc.	social dynamics, power, influence, identity	Interactional Sociolinguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis

Herring (2004) proposes that “[i]n the broadest sense, any analysis of online behavior that is grounded in empirical, textual observations is computer-mediated discourse analysis” (Herring, 2004, p.339). Her CMDA framework encompasses analytical methods from different areas of linguistics to investigate CMD. In particular, five discourse analysis paradigms are considered in the CMDA framework: text analysis, conversation analysis, pragmatics, interactional sociolinguistics and critical discourse analysis. For the units of analysis, four levels of language are associated with the methods of the above five discourse analysis paradigms.

For the second issue of the medium of CMC, Herring (2007) addressed the importance of considering both technological context (medium factors) and situational context (social factors) of CMD for analysis (Table 4). These categories for each factor are based on the empirical research in the literature including Baym (1995), Cherny (1999) and also Hymes' (1974) model of the ethnography of communication.

Table 4

Factors of CMD (Herring, 2007)

Medium factors	Situation factors
M1. Synchronicity	S1. Participation structure
M2. Message transmission	S2. Participant characteristics
M3. Persistence of transcript	S3. Purpose
M4. Size of message buffer	S4. Topics of theme
M5. Channels of communication	S5. Tone
M6. Anonymous messaging	S6. Activity
M7. Private messaging	S7. Norms
M8. Filtering	S8. Code
M9. Quoting	
M10. Message format	

Her proposed classification does not rely on the existing technological modes of communication such as email, discussion list, Internet Relay Chat, or chatroom. Herring (2007) suggests that the existing mode-based classification (e.g., email, IRC) or genre approach to CMD is not flexible enough to apply to new examples of CMD (p.27). She introduces the set of medium and situation factors as a complement to such mode-based classification (Herring, 2007, p. 26). These categories of factors or contexts for CMD highlight the affordances of the online forum system. It is helpful to examine the participants'

communicative strategies associated with the medium features as well as situational factors of an on-going interaction.

Later, Herring (2013) considers discourse phenomena in Web 2.0 as convergent media computer-mediated communication (CMCMC) rather than ‘computer-mediated’. She proposes a classification to illustrate three types of discourse phenomena in Web 2.0 environments: a) familiar, b) reconfigured and c) emergent. This classification is based on whether the features of the discourse appear in “relation to their antecedents (or lack of antecedents)” (Herring, 2013, p.6). Table 5 (next page) is a summary that shows what kinds of examples and sites Herring (2013) associates with each discourse phenomenon.

For the third issue of social configurations through computer-mediated interactions, as referred to in section 3.2.2, Herring (2004) proposes hypotheses for language use for constructing a virtual community based on the CDMA framework. Herring (2004) presents a set of hypothesised discourse behaviours that are considered to represent a virtual community and suggests that a researcher should select one or two behaviours to focus on for analysis (pp.361-362). For instance, Nishimura (2008) demonstrates how CMD constructs three Japanese online communities based on a bulletin board system. She observed three typical behaviours observed in the communities including language uses for the formation of solidarity, and information exchanges involving self-disclosures.

Herring (2013) suggests that “a great deal – and perhaps the majority – of Web 2.0 discourse phenomena are familiar. For one thing, text remains the predominant channel of

communication among web users whether in blogs, micro blogs, wikis, comments on news sites, or web discussion forums” (p.8). In Chapter 1, one of the methodological issues referred to is developing methods for studying multimodality. In fact, in CMD study, the linguistic methods for examining texts are also required to develop. The next section considers the issue around analysing text-based interactions online, especially the application of conversation analysis for interactions on threads.

Table 5

Summary of Web 2.0 Discourse Phenomena (Herring, 2013)

	Discourse phenomena	Examples	Sites
Familiar	discourse phenomena that continues over time from 1990s until the present	nonstandard typography, orthography, code-switching, gender difference, flaming, email hoaxes and scams	e.g., email, chat, blog, web discussion forums
Reconfigured	some aspects of discourse phenomena are reshaped in Web 2.0, which have traceable online antecedents	personal status messages, quoting others’ messages, small stories, customized advertising spam	e.g., Web 2.0 social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr
Emergent	entirely new phenomena (unprecedented)	collaborative text production in wikis, conversational exchanges via videos or image texts, multimodal conversation	e.g., Wikipedia, Youtube, a graphical community blog, image-based online discussion board such as 4chan

4.2 Approaches to Conversation-like Online Interactions

4.2.1 Conversation or not

The rapid development of the technology of CMC requires researchers to develop and adapt their methodology. In CMDA research, conversation analysis (CA) is one method used to examine online interactions under debate. For instance, in the 1990's Herring (1999) pointed out the interactional incoherence of ACMC. This interactional incoherence is caused by (1) the lack of simultaneous feedback caused by the features of the medium and (2) the disrupted turn adjacency caused by the linear order of messages. About ten years later, Fu, Abbasi, and Chen (2008) find that since the more advanced CMC media include audio and video functions as aids for interactional cues, "lack of simultaneous feedback is no longer a severe problem for CMC interactional coherence" (p.1196).

On the other hand, the issue of "disrupted turn adjacency" (Herring, 1999) is still relevant in CMD study. Giles et al (2015) state that CA "is based on spoken conversation, it assumes that communication is linear, with each turn following another in a strict chronological sequence within a relatively short time-frame" (p. 48). However, ACMD including the interaction on an online forum does not have the same features of spoken conversation, so it is better described as "conversation-like" (Giles, et al, 2015). Giles et al (2015) call for the need to develop a CA approach to the conversation-like online interaction. One methodological issue in applying a CA approach is the use of the term 'conversation' that entails the concepts of turn-taking and floors. For the present study, it is also questionable to use the term 'conversation' to illustrate interactions in the two online fora.

Two special issues of *Language@ Internet* in 2010 and 2011 are dedicated to the theme of computer-mediated conversation. In the introduction to these issues, Herring (2010) comments on why the interactions in CMC tend to be characterised as conversational. I find the following two points particularly relevant to the present study:

- Both Internet users and scholars refer to online interactions as conversation. The Internet users' use of conversation references (e.g., "talked", "said", "heard") implies that they "experience CMC in fundamentally similar ways to spoken conversation, despite CMC being produced and received by written means." (p.2)
- The contributors to the special issues show that the Internet users "adapt to the constraints (and affordances) of CMC system in order to converse [...] there is much evidence to suggest that CMC users orient to conversational norms." (p.5)

Regarding the second point, contributors to the special issue compare different modes of communication. For example, Eklundh (2010) examines the participants' practices of quoting messages to construct a conversation-like interaction between the two different settings, namely emails and newsgroups. Other contributors, Condon and Cech (2001) analyse different turn strategies of discourse management in three types of communication, namely face-to-face, software designed for synchronous CMC and emails (i.e., asynchronous CMC).

Regarding the use of the term 'conversation' to refer to online interaction, Gillen (2014) also discusses a similar point in terms of "a seeming lack of orientation to mode by language users themselves" (p.26). She associates the users' use of conversational references ("say" "talk" "hear") with their interpersonal communicative strategies:

I would suggest the lack of distinction in much everyday speech is operationalised as a strategy to reduce a sense of distance, whether temporal or spatial. The radio presenter who says, ‘See you tomorrow’ seeks to convey a sense of a connection between herself and individual members of the audience, to set up a sense of intimacy. (Gillen, 2014, p.26)

The above description gives important implications for the present study. The participants’ use of conversational references can be seen as their strategies for rapport building by reducing psychological distance attributed to physical distance. Gillen (2014) discusses the use of the term conversation to refer to online interaction more in relation to the speech-writing blur. The next section returns to this issue of the speech-writing blur referred to in Chapter 1 in order to consider how to better approach online interactions.

4.2.2 Attention to message production

Gillen (2014) suggests that she sees “one root of the speech-writing blur as a failure to take account of observations and concepts such as those proposed by Garcia and Jacobs (1999), stemming from a lack of interest in mode” (p.27). She refers to Garcia and Jacobs’s (1999) work because they point out that chat interaction “is not synchronous with message production” (p.339). Gillen highlights the importance of paying attention to message production, which is a part of “material process” (van Leeuwen, 1999, p.191). Gillen’s (2014) above point is linked to her other point regarding linguistic stereotypes; linguistic research is based on approaches to a narrow set of genres of speech and writing and varieties of discourse types within a speech or writing genre are not necessarily examined enough (Gillen, 2014, pp.27-31). In particular, she points out an underlying idea behind the stereotypical view.

Writing is permanent, formal and public (e.g., wide audience) while speech is ephemeral, trivial and private (e.g., dyadic). She emphasises that there are “other activities and events involving speech and writing that are very different in such qualities”, for example a shopping list is a writing event but is ephemeral, trivial and private, while Martin Luther King’s ‘I have a dream’ speech, a spoken event, was formal and public and has become part of the historical record (p.29).

Regarding message production, Kitade (2000) also provides a description that points out the distinguishable features of Internet Relay Chat (IRC). She states that IRC is synchronous but text-based and describes the message production of IRC: “[t]ext-based interactions with computer technology allow interlocutors to scroll back and re-think what has been discussed and re-formulate their own utterances before sending them. [...] in IC one can edit what one says (submits) before saying (submitting) it” (p.152). IRC interaction is spontaneous but it also allows the participants to have more time to reply and to revisit the previous interactions, which are not available features of face-to-face conversation. Kitade (2000) examines learner-learner interaction in IRC, focusing on the advantages of ICR for collaborative learning. Simpson (2005b) also shows the advantages of a graphical chat room for collaborative learning by members of a virtual community. Regarding the advantages of using the medium for learning, he suggests that the participants are required to use literacy skills for effective interaction.

Kitade’s (2000) description foregrounds the participants’ practices related to the affordance of IRC for constructing discourse. Since discourse management is one of the domains in the

rapport management framework, the affordances of CMC mediums can influence the participants' language use or communicative strategies for building rapport. In the present study, interaction in the online forum is characterised as asynchronous, yet as referred to in Chapter 1, ACMD is diverse and it should not be studied as a single genre. So, I will illustrate the features of ACMD of the two online fora in Chapter 5. From the next section, I will explore ACMD or interactions in the online forum, considering some "medium factors" (Herring, 2007) of online forums and message productions in posting messages.

4.3 ACMD through Threads

4.3.1 Online interactions as multilogue

Here, I would like to cite a quote that gives me further insights into the online forum. Shank (1993) illustrates the notion of the thread as "multilogue" (see also Shank and Cunningham, 1996):

Once a thread has been started though, it is no longer under sender control. This is because the mechanics of Net response do not require turn taking. From the oral side, it is as if everyone who is interested in talking can all jump in at once, but still their individual voices can be clearly heard. From the written side, it is as if someone had started writing a piece, but before he/she gets too far, people are there magically in print to add to, correct, challenge, or extend the piece. Therefore, what we have is a written quasi-discussion that has the potential to use the strengths of each form. Since the "feel" of Net communication is still oral, I think it is best to call this form of communication "multiloguing", to retain the link with its oral heritage. (Shank, 1993, The Nature of Multiloguing, para. 9)

The important point of Shank's (1993) description to the present research is that while he mentions the hybridity of the discourse of threads, he concludes that a thread is not either writing or speaking but "multiloguing". Another important point is that he emphasises the co-operative or collaborative creation of a thread, namely, "in print to add to, correct, challenge, or extend the piece". This can be seen as a dialogical aspect of interaction. From the perspective of building rapport, it is important for the present study not only to consider how the participants develop a thread as a multilogue but also how "their individual voices can be clearly heard" through the multilogue.

In spite of the limitations of taking a conversational approach to the online data, some empirical studies have shown the potentialities of applying conversation analysis to asynchronous online interactions (Gibson, 2009, Stommel and Koole, 2010; Bou-Franch, Lorenzo-Dus and Blitvich, 2012). Simpson (2005a) and Bou-Franch et al (2012) report that sequential incoherence does not necessarily affect the communication and the participants draw on various knowledge for making sense both in synchronous CMC and in asynchronous CMC respectively. In particular, Bou-Franch et al (2012) show that disrupted turns do not always cause miscommunication in YouTube comments, suggesting that "the postings of YouTube polylogues are sufficiently connected so as to constitute a space for online interaction rather than a series of disconnected comments" (p.515). This implies that we need to look at the coherence of asynchronous interactions not only by their sequential organisation but also the other aspects that "constitute a space for online interaction". For instance, Colby (1987) proposes the notion of "communicative coherence", which "allows people to make assumptions, to interpret elliptical statements, to make implicatures, and to

arrive at tacit understandings—in short, to predict and understand on the basis of shared experience” (Colby 1987: 452). With this concept, North (2007) shows an example that a new participant or “legitimate peripheral participant” (Lave and Wenger 1991) in an online discussion board lacks an understanding of the communicative coherence needed in order to take part in the humorous exchanges (p.551).

Considering the definition of coherence in linguistics, while the concept of cohesion refers to a semantic relation in text (Halliday and Hassam, 1976), the concept of coherence can be understood as a cognitive process. De Beaugrande & Dressler (1981) explain that “a text makes sense because there is a continuity of senses among the knowledge activated by the expressions of the text” (p.84) and this “continuity of senses” is coherence. Similarly, Sanders and Maat (2006) take the view that “coherence phenomena may be of a cognitive nature, but [...] their reconstruction is often based on linguistic signals in the text itself” (p. 592). Specifically in terms of on-going discourse, Bublitz (2011) takes the view that coherence is “a cooperative achievement [...] because it depends on both the speaker’s/writer’s and the hearer’s/reader’s willingness to negotiate coherence” (p.46). In short, coherence is based on the participants’ mutual efforts in the meaning making. From the viewpoint of CA, managing turn-taking and floor in conversation is an important element for the meaning-making process. The previous studies applying CA, mentioned earlier in this section, give interesting accounts related to “addressivity” (Bakhtin, 1986) in online interactions (Gibson, 2009, Stommel and Koole, 2010; Bou-Franch et al, 2012). In other words, adopting a dialogical perspective can be useful to investigate a thread as a multilogue.

4.3.2 Medium factors and CMD: publicness

Going back to De Cindio's definition referred to in Chapter 1, another point that I would like to highlight about online forums is that the messages are "kept on a website for further (public) readings and discussions" (De Cindio, 2009, p.113). Publicness is a key aspect of medium factor to take into account in understanding the online forum and distinguishing it from other media. Wanner (2008) illustrates a comparison between online chat and online forum using analogies of interactions in a 'room' and through a 'bulletin board' respectively:

In a chatroom, one enters a room and can join a conversation or just hang around and listen to what others are saying. Postings are visible only to those who are in the same room at the same time. In a discussion forum, however, postings are visible to anyone who visits the forum at any point after the posting has been made. Messages can be read and responded to long after they have been posted, just like a note on a real bulletin board can be read long after the car that someone is putting up for sale has been sold. (p.129)

So, in a chatroom, what you say is shared within the members of the on-going interaction. Although someone may tell your story to others who are not present in the interaction later, they are no longer able to participate in the interaction when they hear the story. The interaction can be said to be rather closed and private. In contrast, in the online forum, the message you post can be replied to by anyone anytime. It can be said to be open and public. This medium feature of the online forum can influence the subsequent exchanges of messages and the context for the interactions.

To consider the relation between publicness and language, I will cite the discussion on the

public space from the second edition of *The Human Condition* (1998) by Hannah Arendt (1906-1975). Arendt was a philosopher and political theorist and wrote about the concept of “public”:

everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity. For us, appearance—something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves—constitutes reality. (p.50)

So, the public space emerges through interactions by seeing and hearing others and in turn being seen and heard by them. Arendt (1998) also wrote that:

The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be. (p.198)

Arendt (1998) did not talk about the publicness of the Internet, yet her concept of “public” can be applied to the online forum as a public space in the Internet era. The public space is created by participants’ action and speech or discourse. In the next section, I will consider what kinds of ACMD or “action and speech” constitute the online forum as a public space.

4.4 Some Aspects of ACMD

4.4.1 Expressing uncertainty

With regard to the public nature of interactions, audience can be a factor which influences the participants’ language use. In educational contexts, some researchers observed that the students use uncertainty expressions (e.g., “I don’t know”, “I’m not sure”) in their blog posts for assignments (Lester and Paulus, 2011) and online discussions in class (Jordan et al, 2012).

Lester and Paulus (2011) suggest that expressing uncertainty in the students' blog posts is a way of minimising their risk of counter arguments by others. From this point of view, they indicate that the students are conscious of the readers of their blog post; "their peers, unknown and unseen, would be reading and responding to their posts" (p.680). Jordan et al (2012) suggest that the expression of uncertainty is important for the students to foster their learning through discussion as such expressions enable the students "to play with new intellectual ideas without running the risk of sounding like a know-it-all, of being impolite, or being held accountable for their claims" (p.685). Thus, the use of uncertainty expressions is a way of avoiding a potential threat to rapport between the participants in class. They also report that the students expressed more uncertainty in asynchronous discussions in the discussion board system of *Blackboard* than in synchronous discussions in a chatroom.

4.4.2 Expressing disagreement

For public space, one of the themes that Arendt (1998) suggested is the importance of exchanging different perspectives. Canovan (1998) explains about this theme that:

Only the experience of sharing a common human world with others who look at it from different perspectives can enable us to see reality in the round and to develop a shared common sense. Without it, we are each driven back on our own subjective experience, in which only our feelings, wants, and desires have reality. (p.xiii)

Discussion is one of the activities in the online forum. Discussion is not an emotional argument but it is a productive activity through exchanging different perspectives. Agreement and disagreement are involved in the course of discussion.

In politeness theories, disagreement is more likely to be mitigated by linguistic strategies to avoid threatening the hearer's negative face (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987) or meeting the agreement maxim of the politeness principles (Leech, 1983). On the other hand, agreement can be seen as a means for building rapport as it can emphasise the similarities between the participants. Clarke (2008, 2009) and Ädel (2011) suggest that expressing agreement is salient in students' discussions online. Clarke (2008) indicates that "the social function of community building is constructed in the statements of agreement. By contrast, expressions of disagreement were far fewer" (p.138).

On the other hand, research on public online forums shows that disagreement is not always avoided but is conveyed through appropriate strategies depending on the contexts of the forum (Landone, 2012; Shum and Lee, 2013). Landone (2012) identified that one of the common devices for disagreement in a Spanish online forum is the use of discourse markers: "whereas agreement patterns tend to be structurally simple, patterns concerning disagreement often involve an accumulation of DMs [discourse markers]" (pp.1810). In the study of disagreement strategies in two popular online forums in Hong Kong, Shum and Lee (2013) found that most of disagreement strategies are direct and unmitigated and they are not negatively evaluated by the participants (the forum browsers). Locher (2004) explains that one of the contexts where people use unmitigated disagreement strategies is where "the relationship of the interactants minimizes the potential risk of damage to the social equilibrium" (p.143). The online forum can be one of these contexts where the participants' relationship does not necessarily require mitigating disagreement. In relation to this point, Shum and Lee (2013) suggest that "[t]he anonymity feature of Internet forums provides a

platform for users to discuss issues with each other on an equal footing. It is a place where disagreement is both likely and expected to happen” (p.55).

4.4.3 Anonymity, hostility and identities

According to the studies introduced above, it would seem that the participants in online learning interactions (students) are conscious of the audience and that this is a constraint on their behaviours in the context of a class where the audience of their posts is their classmates and teachers. One assumption is that in the anonymous context of public online forum, the participants are more free to exchange different ideas and thoughts and less concerned about rapport with anonymous interlocutors. These assumptions are supported by Bernstein et al (2011), Ruble (2011), and Shum and Lee (2013).

In the research on two popular discussion boards 4chan & /b/, Bernstein et al (2011) also agree that the anonymity of these discussion boards can foster particular kinds of online interactions, for instance, anonymity “may provide a cover for more intimate and open conversations” and “encourage experimentation with new ideas or memes” (p.54). However, the anonymity does not mean that the participants do not care about rapport with the other participants at all. Ruble (2011) states that “despite anonymity, most participants [of an online discussion forum for assisting with language] do appear to be careful to protect the face of everyone involved. The website appears to be a community space where participants are expected to be respectful of one another and genuinely supportive of fellow users. (p.416). In the anonymous culture online, the participants may seek information about the other users in building a social relationship. Liu, Macintyre and Ferguson (2012) examine how the

participants create networks for mentoring relationships in an online learning platform. They refer to the importance of information about the individuals for building trust online including profiles or the visibility of connections with other users: “[o]nline we use social factors (rating and voting) to assess reliability, the user’s profile and badges to demonstrate competence” (p.181). This is important information for the participants to build and maintain rapport through the management of face associated with identities.

Hostility. People may take advantage of anonymity or the invisibility of identity to show antagonism, to disrupt interactions or hurt people. These negative acts are understood as flaming (e.g., Thompsen and Ahn, 1992; Riva, 2002; O’Sullivan and Flanagin, 2003) and trolling (e.g., Donath, 1999; Herring, Job-Sluder, Scheckler, and Barab, 2002; Hardaker, 2010). Flaming and trolling were ‘familiar’ phenomena in 1990s before Web 2.0. *Trolling* is also an intentionally disruptive behaviour and it is more directly related to identity deception. Donath (1999) calls the trolling phenomenon “a game about identity deception.” Based on the analysis of a large corpus, Hardaker (2010) proposes a working definition of trolling:

A troller is a CMC user who constructs the identity of sincerely wishing to be part of the group in question, including professing, or conveying pseudo-sincere intentions, but whose real intention(s) is/are to cause disruption and/or to trigger or exacerbate conflict for the purposes of their own amusement. (p.237)

According to Hardaker (2010), one of the strategies of pseudo-naive trolling and a way to provoke emotional responses is advice giving and seeking (p.229).

Flaming is “identified as expression of hostile emotions directed at another person, as

opposed to criticism that is directed at ideas and opinions” (Kayany, 1998, p.1137). Riva (2002) points that “for a flame to take place two separate actions must occur. First the behavior has to be created. Then someone else has to interpret the behavior as being offensive” (p.538). O’Sullivan and Flanagin (2003) emphasise the intentionality of the flaming and suggest that the other problematic behaviours should be separated from the true flame:

A ‘true flame’ is a message in which the creator/sender intentionally violates interactional norms and is perceived as violating those norms by the receiver as well as by third-party observers. (p.85)

Some problematic behaviours can be caused by unintentional misalignment to the interactional norms in the context. O’Sullivan and Flanagan (2003) underline the need for adjustments for such unintentional problematic behaviours. They suggest that “[i]n relationships, adjustments might include explicit discussions about what each partner views as proper and acceptable language, interactional styles, conversation topics, channels, and interactional settings for certain types of communication” (pp.84-85). Thus, the previous research on flaming and trolling show that flaming and trolling are not necessarily caused by the lack of social cues in the online environment. Rather, the people who engage in flaming or trolling have intentions to violate the interactional norms and rules.

4.5 Advice/Information Request

4.5.1 Types of messages in advice interactions

Previous research indicates that participants’ language use is related to their identities such as being an expert or novice in the online forum. This section considers the discourse between

advice givers and seekers. Advice giving and seeking is a common activity in online forums. Many have studied advice discourse in public online forums (Morrow, 2006, 2012; Kouper, 2010; Placencia, 2012; Ruble, 2011) and other types of online interactions such as an Internet health column (Locher, 2006), Facebook group (Hampel, 2015) and online arthritis workshop (Harrison and Barlow, 2009). Morrow (2006) identifies three types of messages in an online forum about depression: (1) problem messages (a message describing a problem and asking for help); (2) advice messages (a response to the problem message); (3) thanks messages (a response to the advice message). The discourse of advice seeking and giving does not always appear as dyadic or A-B-A interactional structure and it can be more polylogic in structure (Placencia, 2012, p.286). The following considers the types of messages that constitute advice discourse online.

Problem messages. Ruble (2011) suggests that the characteristics of problem messages can influence responses to advice seeking. She investigated the communication of advice in an online message board for English speakers, who are working as language assistants at primary and secondary schools in France. In this context, she focuses on two characteristics of messages: specificity (the degree to which the problematic situations are specific to the advice seeker's experience) and emotionality (the degree of emotion expressed in describing their problematic situations). She suggests that:

the specificity and emotionality of advice-seeking message may be more important than in face-to-face communication in determining the ways that advice givers construct their messages to enhance the appropriateness, usefulness, and face protection of the advice. (p.415)

This point is relevant to interactional goal as an element of rapport management. The presentation of specificity and emotionality in messages can be a part of sharing interactional goals with other participants in order to have a smooth interaction.

Advice messages. The components of advice messages are analysed in detail by Locher (2006). She investigates the discourse structures of expert's advice in the American Internet advice column *Lucy Answers*. Locher (2006) proposes ten discursive moves that constitute the advice: address, assessment of the problem situation, disclaimer, experience, explanation, farewell, general information, guidance (advice), and prediction. Locher's (2006) taxonomy of advice message is applied to peer-to-peer advice giving in other contexts. For example, Morrow (2012) applies this taxonomy to the peer-to-peer advice giving in a Japanese online forum about divorce. Morrow (2012) shows that the peer's advice message includes more "assessment and/or evaluation of problem writer's situation" (40%) than guidance or "telling someone what they should do or think" (20%). This result is opposed to Locher's (2006) findings that there is more guidance than assessment in Lucy's advice posts (responses). For this difference, Morrow (2012) suggests that:

Because the *Rikon* site is a peer advice site, advice givers may have felt a strong need to support their advice by demonstrating an understanding of the problem message writer's situations. [...] Peers might also have felt a greater need than experts to empathize or bond with advice recipients (p.275).

In the American Internet advice column *Lucy Answers*, which Locher (2006) studied, there are involvements of publishers, editors and teams of advisors in the process of responding to

advice-seeking messages. Regarding message production, Placencia (2012) highlights the absence of such editorial participations in a peer-to-peer advice communication in a question and answer site, *Yahoo Resquestas!* (a Spanish version of *Yahoo Request!*). Placencia (2012) points out the absence of editorial participations as a factor that influences the language of messages; “the text of both questions and answers often does not conform to standards for written texts which prototypical advice columns tend to adhere to” (p. 289). In addition to the ignorance of standard grammatical rules, she also identifies the messages are colloquial, namely, “[a]ttempts at recreating or capturing some features of spoken language can also be found through orthographic representation” (p.289). These include the repetition of exclamation marks, the use of interactional discourse markers, and filled pauses (e.g., *mmm*) in her data.

Morrow (2006) found that the advice givers expressed solidarity and positive regard in their advice messages, making frequent use of lexical items and grammatical forms that make their messages informal and conversational in tone, such as using first and second person pronouns (p.544). Biber and Conrad (2009) report that the third pronoun is more used in advice messages in their data. They compared the patterns of language use between expert users and novice users in an online forum in the Apple Inc. website, where the costumers help each other resolve questions about their iPhone. The finding shows that expert users, who receive high reputation from others, use the third person pronoun more frequently than novice users. They explain that this frequent usage of the third person pronoun is associated with ways of offering advice; “[w]hile people offer their own experience, the expert group offers more information from other sources” (Biber and Conrad, 2009, p.198). Participants in this online

forum prefer informative and objective advice more than the advice based on the personal reviews of the product. The identity as an expert is constructed through the competence of meeting the participants' needs and wants.

Thanks message. Morrow (2006) finds it significant that in thanking messages “there is no clear evidence that anyone followed any of the advice that was requested or offered” (P.545). He suggests that both advice givers and seekers avoid an asymmetrical relationship between them, which influence their messages “[t]o acknowledge following the other’s advice would leave the advice-receiver in the debt of the advice-giver. Even in this Internet discourse context where identities are unknown, writers take care to avoid an unequal relationship” (Morrow, 2006, pp.545-546). Other researchers also consider an asymmetrical relationship in advice giving in other online contexts (Locher and Hoffman, 2006; Harrison and Barlow, 2009). Harrison and Barlow (2009) found that short narratives were interpreted as indirect suggestion in the online arthritis workshops. They suggest that “through their narratives, the advice givers reflect on and give structure to their own experience, constructing their identities as expert patients. However, this is achieved without creating a power imbalance” (p.107). Thus, the previous studies indicate that the participants negotiate their asymmetrical relationships associated with activities of advice request through various linguistic strategies.

4.5.2 Norms of communication

In fact, by looking at linguistic strategies, interactions between advice seeker and giver are not always co-operative or harmonious. Placencia (2012) found a small number of messages

that take disaffiliative strategies such as sarcasm. Hampel (2015) found a high number of insult and sarcastic responses to advice seeking messages in interactions between Ghanaian participants on Facebook. On the other hand, Hampel (2015) explains about this result in terms of Facebook culture that:

While the preference for direct strategies may be due to Ghanaian pragmatic norms, the great number of negative responses is ascribed to the advice-giving practice on the Facebook page, where impoliteness serves as a source of entertainment to some users. Other users have different expectations, however, which results in users' constant discussion of norms of appropriateness. (p.126)

Hampel (2015) observes the participants' negotiation of appropriate norms; they are discussing the norms of communication. This indicates the importance of incorporating the participants' perspective in examining their language use; impoliteness strategies are not necessarily associated with discordant interactions for building and maintaining rapport.

Regarding norms of communication, as referred in section 3.2.1, generalised reciprocity is one of the motivations for the participants to contribute to the group online (Kollock, 1999; Wasko and Faraj, 2000). For the present study, it can be seen as a relevant norm of communication in online forum as a community, where the participants voluntarily help with each other in process of informal learning. Biologists (Nowak and Roch, 2007) and psychologists (Graziano, Habashi, Sheese, & Tobin, 2007) suggest that gratitude can increase indirect or generated reciprocity. So, it indicates that thanks message is an important component of CMD that constitutes a community. Nowak and Roch (2007) observed the mechanism for the evolution of co-operation. They report that "gratitude and other positive

emotions, which enhance the willingness to help (given by the parameter p in our model), can evolve by natural selection” (p.608). Similarly, the findings of Graziano et al’s (2007) research also suggest that “when helpers are thanked for their efforts, the resulting sense of being socially valued, more than the feelings of competence they experience, are critical in encouraging them to provide more help in the future (p.953). Applying these explanations to the online forum, the participants are more likely to help each other or to contribute to development of a thread if they receive the appropriate level of gratitude.

4.6 Summary

This chapter looked at features of ACMD in the online forum from different points of view. Firstly, I briefly overviewed discourse approach to CMC in linguistics, focusing on Herring’s methods for CMD (section 4.1). Then, I considered the issues of using conversation analysis methods for examining ACMD and highlighting the importance of paying attention to message production of CMD (section 4.2). Considering message production, I introduced the concept of multilogue to describe a thread and indicated the application of Bakhtin’s theory of dialogue to examine a thread (section 4.3). I considered some aspects of ACMD including expressions of uncertainty, disagreement, hostility, anonymity and identities (section 4.4). Finally, I described types of messages of advice discourse and concerned the norms of communication in advice giving and seeking activities. The next chapter about methodology will explain how I examined ACMD of the two online fora based on the reviews in this chapter.

Chapter 5 Methodology

This chapter describes the types of data and the procedure of data collection and analysis for the present research. First I will explain how I adapted these methodological frameworks to the present study (section 5.1) and discuss the ethics concerns (section 5.2), Then I will present the procedure of data collection (section 5.3) and description of data and methods for analysing the data (section 5.4).

5.1 Methods for Data Analysis

5.1.1 Frameworks for discourse analysis

The present study examined the construction of rapport in the two online fora through language and my analytical approach was to examine the participants' CMD for management of face, sociality rights and obligations, and interactional goals applying Spencer-Oatey's (2008) framework and Herring's (2004) CMDA framework. Incorporating these frameworks, rapport management can be observed as part of the social behaviour domain of CMD (see Table 6). Through building and maintaining rapport in CMD, the participants in an online community can achieve solidarity, deal with conflicts, and share norms of appropriateness. These discourse behaviours are seen as indicators of a virtual community. In Wenger's (1998) theory of community of practice, the language use for rapport management especially associates with the following two characteristics of CoP: "1) sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual" and "9) The ability to assess the appropriate of actions and products" (Wenger, 1998, p.125).

Table 6

Comparison between ACMD and Rapport Management Frameworks

Herring's (2004) ACMD framework			Spencer-Oatey's (2008) RM framework
Domains of CMD	Linguistic Phenomena	Indicators of a virtual community	Domains of RM
Structure	Typology, orthography, morphology, syntax, discourse schemata	Jargon, references to group, in/out-group language	Stylistic Domain
Meaning	Meaning of words, utterances (speech acts), macrosegments	Exchange of knowledge, negotiation of meaning (speech acts)	Illocutionary Domain
Interaction	Turns, sequences, exchanges, threads	Reciprocity, extended (in-depth) threads, core participants	Participation Domain; Discourse Domain
Social Behaviour	Linguistic expressions of status, conflict, negotiation, face-management, play; discourse styles, etc.	Solidarity, conflict management, norms of appropriateness	All domains of RM

Spencer-Oatey (2008b) suggests that rapport management strategies can be employed at the various levels of language and “all play important roles in the management of rapport” (p.20). In other words, rapport management can also be observed at the structural, meaning, and interaction domains of CMD. Herring and Androutsopoulos (2015) note that the above four levels of CMD analysis are “a heuristic for organizational purposes; several phenomena could be described at more than one level” (p.131). This is reflected by the interdisciplinarity of discourse analysis methods and one linguistic phenomenon can be analysed by different approaches to discourse analysis. For instance, Lakoff (2001) demonstrates nine approaches to studying apology. Utterances or speech acts in CMD are considered as being at the level of

meaning in linguistics, yet they are also related to face management at the level of social behaviours. In particular, from the rapport management perspective, the social behaviours of CMD can be studied by looking at all of the different linguistic features of CMD, and as Herring and Androutsopoulos (2015) suggest, the categorisation is not necessarily a limit for analysis and any aspects of language use or discourse can be examined in relation to linguistic strategies for rapport management. On the other hand, it is also a difficulty for researchers to decide what aspect of language use should be focused on for analysis.

5.1.2 Discursive approach to face management

The approach of rapport management is considered as one of the discursive approaches developed in politeness and impoliteness research in the post-2000s. Researchers agree that there is a methodological shift between the first wave (1980s and 1990s) and second wave (post-2000s) paradigms in the field of politeness study (Culpeper, 2011; Mills, 2011; Kádár and Haugh, 2013). According to Culpeper (2011), the first wave of politeness research was based on classical pragmatics theories including conversational implicature and speech act. The second wave challenges these first wave approaches, which started from the critique in Eelen's (2000) book *A Critique of Politeness Theories*. Kádár and Haugh (2013) also provide an overview about the methodological difference between these waves. The first wave approach focuses on the utterance level to identify the forms and strategies of politeness, and the major methods of data collection are (1) elicitation such as discourse completion tasks/tests, questionnaires/surveys and interviews or (2) observer coding (pp.28-32). Later, the second wave approach is based on naturally occurring data and the participant's perspective is taken into account for analysis (pp.52-55). This approach is proposed as the

discursive approach (Locher and Watts, 2005; Locher, 2006; Haugh, 2007; Linguistic Politeness Research Group, 2011).

Mills (2011) proposes some common views shared by the discursive theories on: (1) what constitutes politeness, (2) the relation between the individuals and the society and (3) the form of analysis (p.35). Regarding (1), there is a debate between first-order lay conceptualisations of im/politeness and second-order theoretical conceptualisations of im/politeness in pragmatics. Regarding (2), the discursive approach relates the individual's language use for politeness and impoliteness to the power in a society drawing on social norms. Regarding (3) the form of analysis, Mills (2011) explains that “[d]iscursive theorists tend to analyse longer stretches of talk to see how politeness and impoliteness are interpreted over time, because of their belief that politeness and impoliteness are not instantiated in individual utterances but are played out over discourse level units” (p.47). Researchers approach the participants' (emic) perspective to looking at the participants' interpretation of politeness and impoliteness in a given context. In other words, the discursive approach is a way of looking at how the participants construct the meanings of politeness and impoliteness through their linguistic strategies for being polite or impolite. This can also be applied to the present study; the analysis needs to consider how the participants interpret the meanings of messages posted to a thread.

5.1.3 Approach to participants' perspective

Previous studies take different methodological approaches to investigating rapport management:

- Analysing discourse data (e.g., Gonzales, 2013 a, 2013b).
- Analysing discourse data and the participants' interview data (e.g., Schnurr and Chan, 2011; Spencer-Oatey and Xing, 2003).
- Analysing participant's reflective comments about the rapport sensitive events (e.g., Campbell, White, and Durant, 2007; Culpeper et al, 2011).

My approach was analysing discourse data and considered the participants' perspectives particularly in two ways: (1) what behaviours the participants consider as in/appropriate and (2) how the in/appropriate behaviours are reacted to by the participants. The first one is related to understanding which element of rapport management is concerned in the thread interaction. The second one is related to looking at how the participants negotiate the meanings of their behaviours throughout the interactions.

Herring (2004) indicates that ethnographic data can supplement CMDA, considering the limitations of CMDA: "Text is direct evidence of behavior, but it can only be indirect evidence of what people know feel, or think" (p.347). For the present study, interviews might have been helpful to gain the participants' perspectives about their communication. On the other hand, Spencer-Oatey (2013) points out the methodological challenges for the post-event interview:

such a procedure [i.e., stimulated recall in post-event interviews] not only entails recall challenges for the participants, but also results in co-construction between the researcher and the participant. Participants' comments, therefore, cannot straightforwardly be assumed to reflect the viewpoints they held at the time of the original interaction. (p.125)

In other words, the researcher's questions inevitably influence the participant's answers in the process of the post-event interview; the participant's viewpoint can be elicited and co-constructed with the researcher. It is said that the post-event interview can be still helpful for other research if the researcher takes into account this challenge in the interview design. However, I examined the participants' language use in past posts between 2011 and 2014 and the participants' viewpoint about their communication at that time would doubtless be co-constructed with me through asking in the interview process at a later date. Instead, in the case of the present study, I found that there were interactions in which participants explicitly discussed their behaviours. These interactions provided their viewpoint in interpreting the meanings of messages in the thread and therefore I incorporated their viewpoints into my analysis. I will present how I analysed such data in section 5.4.1.

5.1.4 Recurrent patterns and corpus-assisted approach

Regarding the methods of data collection for CMDA, Herring (2004) emphasises the importance of context for analysis and suggests that “[t]he sample should include, as much as possible, the typical activities carried out on the site. These considerations suggest intermittent time-based sampling (e.g., several weeks at a time at intervals throughout a year) as particularly appropriate” (p.352). In short, intermittent time-based sampling enables researchers systematically to collect representative language use in the activities that characterise the site. Yet, Herring (2004) also points out a disadvantage of time-based sampling: “this method is likely to produce more data than can reasonably be analyzed using most linguistic methods, such that further winnowing of the sample may be required” (p.352).

One approach to this challenge can be combining quantitative analysis with qualitative analysis. Therefore, I applied the corpus-assisted methodology for discourse analysis (Baker 2010, Partington, Duguid, and Taylor, 2013). Ädel (2011) takes this approach to develop a taxonomy of discourse for building rapport in students' discussions online and face-to-face by identifying highly frequent expressions through corpus-based investigation. She points out the advantage and disadvantage of this method based on fluency:

The advantage of this method is that focusing on the most frequent lemmas ensures that the analysis covers expressions that are central and not merely peripheral to the specific speech events under investigation. A drawback of the method is that only the most frequent and most salient expressions are captured. (p.2939)

For the present study, the purpose of using a corpus method is to focus on particular features of language use for building rapport in the stage of qualitative analysis. The above drawback is not necessarily a limit for my analysis in terms of finding the particular patterns of language use.

Taylor (2011) also demonstrates the benefit of including a corpus-based approach in the process of qualitative analysis. She uses corpora to capture potential impolite sites quantitatively and examine them qualitatively. She particularly investigates the following four sites by identifying them in corpora: (1) meta-pragmatic comment on the discourse, (2) reception/judgments of impoliteness from an addressee, (3) reception/judgments of impoliteness from third parties (neither the speaker nor the addressee), and (4) shifts from transactional to interactional mode (p.216). Her approach shows how a corpus-based approach can be used for examining the participants' viewpoints.

5.2 Ethical Consideration

Bolander and Locher (2014) propose that one of the methodological challenges for studying online data is ethics. The ethical concerns associated with Internet research should be taken into account in addition to the general ethical issues of research involving human participants. In the present study, I particularly considered two themes: (1) the public or private nature of threads and (2) the anonymity or confidentiality of participants in the online forum.

5.2.1 Public or private

Researchers have debated the issue of whether publicly accessible information on the Internet should be considered to be available for research without gaining further permissions (e.g., consent form) from participants, and they have not reached agreement on this point. Some researchers agree that it is ethically acceptable to collect data from the Internet as it should be seen as a public space which does not require further consent (e.g., Seale, Charteris-Black, MacFarlane and McPherson, 2010; Savolainen, 2011; Wilkinson and Thelwall, 2011). For instance, if an online forum is accessible to anyone without any gatekeeping, e.g., a password, it can be regarded as public in general and thereby consent may not be required.

On the other hand, others agree that the public-private dichotomy is not necessarily the most reasonable criterion on the basis of which to decide whether informed consent is necessary or not in internet research (e.g., Sveningsson, 2004; McKee and Porter, 2009; AoIR, 2012). The Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) emphasises that “privacy is a concept that must include a consideration of expectations and consensus. Social, academic, or regulatory delineations of public and private as a clearly recognizable binary no longer hold in everyday

practice” (AoIR, 2012, p.7). The point here is that researchers should respect the participants’ expectations about how their words will be read in a given online context although their words are technically publically accessible. With this ethical stance, researchers should ask permission for publishing the data to the new context and making it available for the audience associated with academic research.

5.2.2 Participants’ confidentiality

Another concern regarding confidentiality is the potential that somebody (including third parties and other forum members) might be able to identify individual participants. Bolander and Locher (2014) argue that the literature does not discuss the issues of quoting online data adequately. They raise an issue that “[w]ithout quotes, linguists cannot exemplify their results and provide support for their arguments, yet quotes can easily be traced via google searches, rendering the practice of anonymisation a pro forma act” (p.24). This point is necessary to be considered in the present study based on discourse analysis.

5.2.3 My approach to research ethics

Bolander and Locher (2014) suggest that CMC researchers should acquire relevant information about the site regarding the appropriate approach to ethics. In other words, the researchers’ ethical decision should be based on enough pre-observation of the site. Therefore, I spent a certain time period conducting observation in the forums before contacting the forum administrator/moderators and collecting data. I created accounts for *Japan Reference* in January 2014 and for *Reddit* in February 2014 and started observation in these websites. Through this observation, I developed my understanding of (1) the forum policy about

copyright and privacy and (2) the degree of anonymity and the issues of privacy that the forum users share.

The participants are assumed to understand that forum discussions are public space when they use the service of these website and agree with the policies. The terms of service and disclaimers in both fora clearly state the public nature of the online forum. Regarding the features of the forums in *Japan Reference* and subreddits in *Reddit*, anyone (whether they are signed in or not) can view the threads, except ‘Member Introductions’ forum in *Japan Reference*. This open feature is in contrast to other popular social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, where the participants can choose their posts or words to be private or public. In both *Japan Reference* and *Reddit*, the private message system (PM) is available and I found that the participants shifted to PM when they preferred a private chat. Additionally, anyone can share a post in these forums with third parties by using a sharing button. This means that the participants are assumed to understand that their words can be discussed in a new context in a group of different audience.

Considering the above, I understand that it will not violate the participants’ consensus of publicity/privacy if the researcher were to: (1) collect and store their online conversations without obtaining their permission; and (2) discuss linguistic features of CMD based on their posts with an academic audience. On the other hand, I also supposed that it would be necessary to contact and gain permission from the administrator of *Japan Reference* and the moderators of */r/Languagelearning*, who provide the service of the forum system or subreddit.

Based on the theoretical and empirical understandings about relevant ethics for the present research, I submitted documents (see, Appendix 1, 2, 3) for ethical approval to the departmental ethics committee in April 2014. After this university's approval, I contacted and received permission to conduct the present research from the administrator of *Japan Reference* in August 2014 and the moderators of */r/Languagelearning* in October 2014.

After the confirmation panel in July 2015, I reflected on my ethical stance with respect to quoting and decided to modify my ethical approach in order to make my analysis possible. With the discursive approach, the unit of my qualitative analysis is the series of comments exchanged. Thus, I need to draw on entire interactions if necessary. Considering the balance between analysis and ethics, my final ethical stance is the following (see, Appendix 3):

Although their messages are public, I assume that the forum users do not expect that excerpts of their posts will be used to discuss a particular research interest by a third party or that these will be republished in printed publications. Therefore, when I analyse individual posts more closely (i.e. using qualitative analysis) and quote them, I should ask individual posters for permission to quote their conversations if it could violate their privacy.

The most important point regarding the practice of quoting is whether “if it could violate their privacy” (underlined). I concluded that it would be reasonable to quote from the most of the participants' words in threads. For example, they refer to their experiences of learning a language to give advice. I found that quoting them does not harm their privacy and emotions if my discussion is not made for the purpose of evaluating or criticising their learning experiences. They are more likely to share such information to present their identity as a

learner of the language in a public audience. The large amount of their posts is not about personal information that can disclose their private lives (e.g., family). Nevertheless, in presenting data, I will use labels (e.g., Participant 1) to refer to the participants instead of using their usernames for the sake of confidentiality. The participants use pseudonyms as their usernames, however, some might use their real names or nicknames associated with their real names. The above stance was also reviewed and approved by the departmental ethical committees. The administrator/moderators of the both forums also confirmed my approach to quoting and gave me permission to continue the present study based on this updated ethics stance.

5.3 Data Collection and Generation

The data collection/generation was not straightforward. The final version of the dataset of *Learning Japanese* consists of texts in 753 threads and the dataset of */r/Learninglanguage* consists of texts in 832 threads.

5.3.1 Selecting threads

I applied both the time-based sampling and random sampling techniques to selecting threads. For the present study, the time-based technique was important in order to investigate the ACMD in the two forums over the same period. */r/Learninglanguage* launched in March 2010. While *Learning Japanese* had already been an established forum, this subreddit was developing at that time. Therefore, I decided to focus on the threads submitted to both forums from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2014, where possible selecting the same number of threads from each month in order to ensure the sample was representative of the threads over

the time period. All threads in *Learning Japanese* are archived in the website and there are about 2,680 threads during this time period. Since only 1,000 past threads are displayed in *Reddit*, I searched past threads using both the search engine by entering the timestamp and the external archive (<http://www.redditweekly.com>). Based on these methods, I estimated more than 8,000 threads (including both text posts and link posts) had been submitted to the sub-reddit during this time period.

By building manageable sizes of datasets, I aimed to collect 208 threads from each year by randomly selecting 4 threads from each week, 832 threads in total. In the case of */r/Languagelearning*, I only selected text posts in which the initial post is a message by the original poster not solely a link to outside. Focusing on text posts, there were not more than four threads available from some weeks, yet making a list of available threads, there were still enough threads to enable me to collect similar numbers from each month and 208 threads from each year.

However, this sampling technique was not applicable for *Learning Japanese* because of a technical issue. The website changed the website system in September 2014 and they got an encoding problem called *mojibake*. By *mojibake*, the scripts or symbols of Kanji (one of the Japanese writing systems, which uses adapted logographic Chinese characters) are not encoded properly as they should be and are transformed to a different and illegible writing system. The threads submitted from 2011 to 2014 in *Learning Japanese* had this encoding problem and this was not fixed when I was collecting the data in 2015. I included threads with minor *mojibake* (e.g., only one or two words got changed), in which I could still follow

the participants' interactions. However, I decided not to include the threads with more extensive mojobake, which makes it hard to follow the participants' interactions. Then, there were fewer than 208 threads available from 2011, 2012 and 2013 to build a corpus, and as the result of this, the distribution of threads is not even by year and the number of threads from 2014 are more than other years.

5.3.2 Building corpora

Based on the above sampling process, I extracted texts from 800 threads in *Learning Japanese* and a corpus of texts from 832 threads in */r/Languagelearning*. In the post-processing, I removed irrelevant texts (e.g., URLs) and removed some files (e.g., duplicates) from the preliminary corpora. The following explains these procedures.

Extracting. For building corpora, my method was both automatically and manually to extract the texts of threads from the two forums. Copy and paste in a manual way could be an option, yet I tried to find methods to collect texts more systematically from these sites. *Reddit* provides an API (application programming interface) and this could be used. However, I did not have enough programming skills to use the API to download all necessary text contents from the forums at once. Although this was the first difficulty for me in collecting online data, there were some tools of copying and extracting web contents available when I collected data and I applied the following methods for each forum.

For *Learning Japanese*, I used a website copier *HTTrack* (<https://www.httrack.com>) to record

contents of threads in html format and converted the html files to plain text¹. The developer of this tool asks the users to avoid network abuse, suggesting to limit the size downloaded and highlighting the time it takes to download the contents of a large website at once (<https://www.httrack.com/html/abuse.html>). This can be one of the particular ethical concerns in the process of downloading the Internet contents. In the present study, this website copier could copy the contents of the whole site automatically by entering the URL of *Japan Reference*, yet I only needed the texts of threads in one of the forums and saved them by manually entering the URLs of threads that I needed. In this way, I limited my access to the site in terms of time and size.

For */r/Learninglanguage*, *HTTrack* did not work and I used *Web Scraper* (<http://webscraper.io>), which is a Chrome extension tool to extract the selected contents of the webpage on a page. The tool finds the contents or elements from HTML documents of the page. With this tool, I could find texts of comments in a HTML document and copied all texts of comments on a page at once. I found that this method was more systematic to copy comment-by-comment from a thread. Since I only accessed one page for each time of extraction, my access to the website was also limited in terms of time and size. The preliminary corpus consisted of 832 threads.

Cleaning and removing. After extracting the threads and converting them to text files, I checked the frequently used expressions by using AntConc software and specified the irrelevant texts in the files including URL links and automatically generated messages. Gillen

¹ Acknowledgement: Dr Andrew Hardie developed a program to convert from the html to plain texts. I greatly appreciate his help in building a corpus.

(2014) shows “the influence of the high proportion of automatically generated words” (p.113) in her corpus of a discussion forum in a virtual world, Schomepark. Like the discussion forum of Schomepark, many automatically generated messages appear in both forums. For example, in *Learning Japanese* a message “sent from iPhone” is added to the end of some messages. In */r/Languagelearning*, a robot called AutoWikibot² joins threads. This can be an interesting aspect to investigate the interaction between the human participants and non-human participants. Yet, since the purpose of building the corpora in the present study was to identify the recurrent language use by the participants, I excluded these auto-generated messages from my datasets. I also removed usernames displayed on the top of their posts in */r/Languagelearning*, and indications of quotes in *Learning Japanese*. For this cleaning, I used a text editor to search the irrelevant items and remove them manually.

I removed and replaced (1) duplicates, (2) threads in which the initial post was not followed by responses and (3) the following threads from the preliminary datasets:

- *Learning Japanese*: threads that were submitted to other forum; threads that started before 2010 and continued sometime between 2011 and 2014.
- */r/Languagelearning*: threads in which the original post was not a text post but a link.

Through this process, overall, I removed 47 threads and replaced 29 threads of them with other threads for the corpus of *Learning Japanese*. So, the final corpus is based on 753 threads. The reason why I could not keep the same size of corpus was that there was overall a more limited amount of threads available from the forum. For */r/Languagelearning*, I

² This robot “finds English Wikipedia article links from new comments on reddit, gets introduction and main image of that article from wikipedia, creates imgur mirror of the image and posts it as a reply”. (<https://www.reddit.com/r/autowikibot/wiki/index>)

removed and replaced 17 threads with other threads and the final corpus remains 832 threads.

Annotation. Tagging can help the researcher to do more sophisticated corpus analysis.

There are different types of tagging including grammatical annotation and semantic annotation. Baker (2010) suggests that “it is not necessary to carry out tagging for the sake of it. Instead, corpus builders need to think about what sort of research questions they intend to ask of their corpus, and then decide whether or not particular forms of tagging will be required” (p.42). Although I agree with the value of using annotation, I found that adding annotation was not necessarily required in the present study.

5.4 Data Analysis

5.4.1 Descriptions of data

I made one text file per each thread and Table 7 shows the numbers of threads or files that the final datasets consist of for each forum. At the end, the two corpora are different sizes; the *Learning Japanese* corpus consists of 327,812 tokens (words) and the */r/Languagelearning* corpus consists of 749,250 tokens (words) in total respectively.

Table 7

Numbers of Threads in the Two Corpora

Year	Learning Japanese corpus (327,812 tokens)	/r/Languagelearning corpus (749,250 tokens)
2011	123	208
2012	186	208
2013	150	208
2014	294	208
Total	753 threads	832 threads

Here, I need to note that the */r/Languagelearning* corpus does not include the indented texts in posts, for instance the part in a red square in the following:

The following language teaching methods aim to supply students with huge amounts of comprehensible input (CI) in low-anxiety situations, while giving students the right to remain silent:

- Total Physical Response (TPR)
- Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS)
- Automatic Language Growth (ALG)

This is due to the extraction process with *Web Scraper*. When I selected and copied one element (block) where the text of comments is located from the HTML document of the page, the indented parts were not selected and copied as well since they belong to a different element in the structure of HTML document. I did not know this in the process of data collection. These indented parts usually are lists of learning materials, methods and URLs of websites and I believe these parts play a less important role in maintaining rapport. Since the overall size of the corpus is enough to examine the research questions, I focused on the texts in the above version of the corpus for analysis in the present study.

Language. The majority of texts are in English, but other languages are also included in these corpora as the participants used other languages in discussing topics of learning a specific language. I will translate the texts in other languages if necessary when I present the data.

Participants. In relation to language, the participants in the two fora include both native speakers of English and non-native speakers of English (speakers of EFL/ESL). The overview of characteristics of participants is not provided here because of the participants'

anonymity (see, “6. anonymous messaging” in Table 8 and 9). In *Learning Japanese*, you can see the participants’ information by clicking their avator icon, including gender, age and the place they are from in addition to their status as a member of the forum (the date of registering with the website *Japan Reference*, the number of posts and trophies or awards etc). Yet, not all of the participants provide their personal information about gender, age and the actual place as such information is optional to display. In */r/Languagelearning*, some participants have user flairs (text/image shown next to username) to tell what languages they speak or learn and their user page shows their status as a member of the forum (the length of registering with the website *Reddit*, number of karma or score earned by posting to the site, trophies etc.). Yet, other personal information is not provided by the users.

On the other hand, the participants in both forums are not entirely anonymous in respect to the fact that they hold a persistent identity in the site. With the viewpoint about ‘presence’ in Web 2.0 environment (Merchant, 2009), it can be seen that the participants develop their identities and particular characters over time by using the same pseudonym (username or nickname) to keep their appearance in the forum and their identities are ascribed to a history of participation with their pseudonym. So, when I discuss the participants’ use of language in the following chapters, I will acknowledge the identities of the individual participants. For ethical concerns discussed in the above (section 5.2.3), I will not refer to the participants’ usernames or nicknames to distinguish them but instead I will label them as “Participant 1, Participant 2 ...” for the participants in *Learning Japanese* and as “Redditor 1, Redditor 2 ...” for the participants in */r/Learninglanguage*. I also distinguish between the original posters and other participants by labelling the original posters as “OP1, OP2 ...” and use

“OPs” as a functional term to refer to the original posters in general (I follow the common practice of using the acronym “OP” to refer to an original poster in the online forum in general). Appendix 4 shows the list of the participants who appear in extracts discussed. As we can see, Participant 2 is the most recurrent participant to appear in extracts of interactions from *Learning Japanese*. Each “Participant 2” is the same person, who plays a particular role as a regular participant in the forum. I will discuss this point in later chapters.

5.4.2 Contexts of discourse

In analysing data, I drew on Herring’s (2007) situational and medium/technological contexts, which was introduced in Table 4 in section 4.1 in the previous chapter. The situational factors of interactions will be provided for each example in the following chapters. The text data (corpora) does not include such contextual information and I went back to the two online forums to collect additional information about the threads by taking notes and recording the threads in PDF (.pdf) or image (.png) formats. The threads were captured during the phase of data analysis, and there is a gap between extracting texts of the threads from the websites and copying the images of the threads. I also used the search engines in the forums when I needed the information about the participants, checking whether the participant is a regular member by searching how long the participant had been in the forum. In the following chapters, I will show extracts of threads in the form of images (i.e., screenshots) because they can be helpful to discuss the language use in contexts. I will also quote the participants’ posts as examples, and all the original spellings are retained in the quotes. The overall medium contexts of the two fora are the following.

Table 8
Medium Contexts of CMD in Learning Japanese

1. synchronicity	asynchronous communication
2. message transmission	one way, message by message transmission
3. persistence of transcript	the messages posted to the forum have been archived since 2003 (except ones the administrator deleted)
4. size of message buffer	N/A
5. channels of communication	texts; static or animated graphics; hyperlinks to external (Note: <i>Japan Reference</i> changed the website system in October 2014 and the animated graphics are not available after then).
6. anonymous messaging	a message is displayed with your information including user name (which is linked to your page), avatar, status, the start date, etc.
7. private messaging	available
8. filtering	search engine; options for browsing the site
9. quoting	available; the quote is embedded in a post
10. message format	the thread which has the newest message is on top; the newest message is on top within a thread

Table 9
Medium Contexts of CMD in /r/Languagelearning

1. synchronicity	asynchronous communication
2. message transmission	one way, message by message transmission
3. persistence of transcript	all messages posted to this subreddit have remained (except the deleted messages) on the system, yet only the 1000 highest-ranking messages can be seen on the Reddit.
4. size of message buffer	N/A
5. channels of communication	texts, hyperlinks to external
6. anonymous messaging	your message is displayed with your user name and the user name is linked to your Reddit page
7. private messaging	available
8. filtering	search engine; options for browsing the site
9. quoting	available; by Markdown syntax
10. message format	the thread which has the newest message is on top; the newest message is on top within a thread

5.4.3 Analysing data

Data analysis starts with a quantitative method and then shifts on examining the focused aspects of language use more qualitatively. The procedure includes a few steps:

1. Identifying the frequent multiple-word expressions or phrases.
2. Identifying the meta-pragmatic communication by searching keywords.
3. Closely looking at particular examples of interactions based on the above analysis.

For the stage of corpus-assisted analysis, I used a concordancer named *AntConc* developed by Laurence Anthony (Anthony, 2011). *AntConc* is a set of toolkits for corpus analysis including concordance plot tool, files view tool, word list/key word list tools, and clusters/N-Grams tool and collocates tool. I particularly used the clusters/N-Grams tool to look at four-word phrases which frequently occurred in the data. In the study of lexical bundles, four-words can be considered as a more common unit than two or three words (see Greaves and Warren, 2010, pp.214-215). So the present study also follows this practice and Chapter 6 and 7 will present the findings. In discussing the results, I sometimes refer to differences and similarities between the two fora, which I am not able to compare straightforwardly due to the different sizes of the corpora. McEnery and Hardie (2012) suggest that “it is usually considered good practice to report both raw and normalised frequencies when writing up quantitative results from a corpus” (p.51). The normalised frequencies are calculated as follows: $nf = (\text{number of examples of the word in the whole corpus} \div \text{size of corpus}) \times (\text{base of normalisation})$. Following the practice in the literature, I set the base of normalization as 1,000,000 and will report both raw and normalised frequencies (frequencies per million) in tables.

Throughout qualitative analysis, I held two analytical angles to examine the participants’ interactions. One is to look at what aspects of linguistic features of their discourse are related to managing the three elements of rapport (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b). Another is to look at how

the participants negotiate and learn the appropriateness of behaviours in a give context and this viewpoint is influenced by Wenger's (1998) theory of situated learning. The second angle was especially drawn on when I analysed the participants' interaction about their behaviours. I examined such interaction applying the concept of meta-pragmatic awareness and consider the interactions as meta-pragmatic communication (Kádár and Haugh, 2013). This perspective is influenced by the discursive approach of politeness and impoliteness research, which considers the participants' interpretations and evaluations in methodology.

Kádár and Haugh (2013) and Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2016) emphasise that people's evaluative judgement is an important aspect to gain their lay viewpoints about what is polite/impolite and appropriate/inappropriate about behaviours in communication. In the rapport management framework, this can give insights into the management of sociality rights and obligations. The participants' evaluative judgement is seen as indicating their meta-pragmatic awareness in interpreting the meaning of message (e.g., polite, impolite). Kádár and Haugh (2013) propose four forms of meta-pragmatic awareness articulated: metalinguistic awareness, metacommunicative awareness, metadiscursive awareness and metacognitive awareness. I particularly applied the concept of metacommunicative awareness "which refers to reflexive interpretations and evaluations of social actions and meanings" (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p. 186). For this analysis, I took into account the forum rules in looking at the participants' meta-pragmatic comments about their communication in the forum. The forum rules can be seen as one of the reified forms of articulating the norms of mutual respect in the forum. They are the localised norms or netiquettes about appropriate behaviours in the process of posting.

Face and identity. As referred to in Chapter 2, Spencer-Oatey (2007) considers that people's face is best interpreted as a dynamic process of constructing through on-going interaction (p.647). Since the notion of face is associated with the individual's identities, the present study needs to consider how to understand the participants' identities. Especially, there are different viewpoints about whether people present fake identity or real identity online. My approach to the participants' identities is based on a sociocultural perspective proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) and I took the view that the participants' identities were constructed through their language in a given context.

5.4.4 Procedure of selecting interactions for discussions

Here, I will briefly explain how I chose the extracts listed in Appendix 4 for analysis. In the procedure to select the focused threads, I used AntConc software to identify parts of interactions by searching the phrases and words relevant to my research questions. I first searched the recurrent patterns of language use by analysing the most frequent four-word expression, which will be discussed in Chapter 6. Through looking at the use of the frequent four-word expressions in interactions, I often encountered expressions of not only thanking but also apologising. According to previous studies, thanking is one of the three common message types which make up discourse in a discussion forum (Morrow, 2006) and apologising was one of the discourse functions for rapport building in student online discussions as well as thanking (Ädel, 2011). In fact, the total number of expressions for apologising is less frequent than the expressions for thanking in both forums. Yet, looking at why the participant apologised in the thread gave me some insights into what kinds of behaviours were considered as inappropriate in terms of sociality rights and obligations or

interactional goals. Therefore, I decided to examine the participants' use of expressions for both thanking and apologising. I will illustrate the participants' strategies for thanking and apologising from the perspective of the rapport management framework in Chapter 7.

There are examples in which the participants expressed their regret and apology for violating the forum rules or netiquettes in posting a comment/message. Reading these apologetic comments, I found that the participants implicitly refer to how the medium factors (Herring, 2007) can influence the community norms and their language use. I thought that examining such participants' meta-pragmatic comments would be an approach to my research question about the medium factors and characteristics of ACMD. So, for the next step, I identified the potential sites where the participants more explicitly express their ideas about in/appropriate behaviours in by searching keywords with Antconc software in two ways. Firstly, I searched for metalanguage to describe behaviours including the words *polite*, *impolite*, *rude*, which are the terms that have been investigated in previous politeness and impoliteness studies (e.g., Culpeper, 2009). Secondly, I searched for the keywords that describe negatively marked behaviours (*duplicate posts*, *threadjack*, *necropost*, *nitpicking*) and also expected behaviours (*edit*, *tl;dr*). I chose these key words considering the forum rules stated in the site pages and also my observations. Yet, the list of these key words is not exhaustive to refer to the in/appropriate behaviours in *Learning Japanese* and */r/Languagelearning*. I read the interactions where the participants use the key words and chose particular interactions where the participants address three elements of rapport. I will discuss them in chapter 8.

Finally, my analysis focused on the interaction where a new participant is involved. I

examined such interaction in order to look at how the new participants and the other participants (regular participant or more experienced participant) manage rapport in negotiating the meanings of appropriateness in the forum. This part of analysis is related to the third research question about building rapport and situated learning. I again used Antconc software to search the key words that can be used to indicate ‘a newcomer’ or ‘a beginner learner’ including *weeks* or *months* (to indicate how long the participant have studied a language) and *new*, *newbie* (to indicate that the participant is a new member). This approach to identify the new participants by searching for words is inspired by the study by Burke et al (2010), who investigated newcomers’ strategies to claim their membership in newsgroups. I chose the interactions that are interesting to discuss the participants’ engagement in the forum from the perspective of situated learning. For *Learning Japanese*, I examined a series of interactions between Participant 2 and a new member. For */r/Languagelearning*, I illustrated how the participants collaboratively suggest to a new participant to follow a good practice of posting a comment and how the new participant reacts to the feedback from others. I also picked up potentially conflictual moments relevant to rapport management in both online forums, which can highlight the unique features of each forum. The recurrent conflictual moments are requesting free translation in *Learning Japanese* and voting in */r/Languagelearning*. Chapters 9 and 10 discuss these points.

5.5 Summary

This chapter explained how I combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to the ACMD for building rapport. I applied Herring’s (2004) computer-mediated discourse analysis framework, which particularly suggested analysis methods and the process of choosing and

collecting the data. I discussed how researchers were required to be concerned with ethical issues regarding collecting data and presented my approach to the current debate on this topic. I illustrated the procedure of building the corpus and then showed the description of the data. I introduced the application of Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management framework and also other perspectives (situated learning theory, sociocultural understanding about identity, meta-pragmatic awareness) to analysing the data.

Chapter 6 Data Analysis (I): Multi-word sequences and ‘I don’t know’

In this chapter, I discuss characteristics of ACMD in *Learning Japanese in Japan Reference* and */r/Languagelearning in Reddit*. Applying the corpus-assisted approach (e.g., Taylor, 2011), I examine the participants’ language use for building rapport. First, I will examine the four-word sequences by N-gram analysis function of *AntConc* concordance (section 6.1). In this analysis, I demonstrate the results of the ten most frequent four-word sequences in each corpus. Then, I focus on the use of *I don’t know*, which is the most frequent four-word expression in both online fora. I present examples about how the phrase is used (1) by the original posters and other participants (section 6.2) and (2) in a given context (section 6.3 and section 6.4).

6.1 Results of 4-grams Analysis

6.1.1 Similarities and differences

Figure 7 and Figure 8 show the results of 4-gram analysis for each corpus and show the ten most frequent four-word expressions. The usual practice of *AntConc* concordance counts the contractions with apostrophes as two words (e.g., *don’t*) and I followed this practice. In both online fora, *I don’t know* is the most frequent 4-word expression. This result follows the findings that *I don’t know* is the most frequent collocation in the corpus of native speakers of English including the British National Corpus and Corpus of Contemporary American English (Baumgarten and House, 2010, p.1187).

Total No. of N-Gram Types			301718	Total No. of N-Gram Tokens		325553
Rank	Freq	Range	N-gram			
1	126	97	i don t know			
2	73	68	i m not sure			
3	68	50	thank you very much			
4	66	47	i don t think			
5	64	51	if you don t			
6	55	41	if you want to			
7	55	40	to be able to			
8	51	40	i don t have			
9	50	47	i m trying to			
10	42	31	at the end of			

Figure 7. Top ten 4-word expressions in Learning Japanese corpus

Total No. of N-Gram Types			672452	Total No. of N-Gram Tokens		746754
Rank	Freq	Range	N-gram			
1	341	261	i don t know			
2	154	127	if you want to			
3	152	120	if you don t			
4	148	116	to be able to			
5	147	112	i don t think			
6	143	123	i m not sure			
7	133	82	at the same time			
8	107	86	to learn a language			
9	101	93	but i don t			
10	99	83	i d like to			

Figure 8. Top ten 4-word expressions in /r/Languagelearning corpus

Table 10 (next page) presents differences and similarities between the results of the two corpora. Six of the ten expressions are the same: three clauses with first person singular subject (*i don't know*, *i don't think*, *i'm not sure*), two if-clauses (*if you don't*, *if you want to*) and an infinitive phrase (*to be able to*). In the Learning Japanese corpus, the conjunction clause of *but i don't* is ranked eleventh (frequency is 40 and range is 38).

Table 10

Comparisons of the results of the 4-grams analysis between the two corpora

	Learning Japanese	/r/Learninglanguage
1. clause with first person singular subject	<i>i don't know, i'm not sure, i don't think, i don't have, i'm trying to</i>	<i>i don't know, i don't think, i'm not sure, i'd like to</i>
2. if-clause	<i>if you don't, if you want to</i>	<i>if you don't, if you want to</i>
3. conjunction + clause	-	<i>but i don't</i>
4. infinitive phrase	<i>to be able to</i>	<i>to be able to, to learn a language</i>
5. prepositional phrase	<i>at the end of</i>	<i>at the same time</i>
6. other	<i>thank you very much</i>	-

Overall, the N-gram analysis shows that the ten frequent 4-word expressions consist of more verbal phrase or verbal phrase fragments (e.g., *I don't know, if you don't, to be able to*) than noun phrase or noun phrase fragments (e.g., *at the end of, at the same time*). In relation to this point, previous studies have found that the common lexical bundles in general conversations are more verb-based than noun-based whilst the reverse result is found in written genres (Biber et al, 1999; Biber, Conrad and Cortes, 2004; Sorell, 2013). According to this tendency, one possible viewpoint is that ACMD in *Learning Japanese* and */r/Languagelearning* has more characteristics observed in spoken discourse.

Another viewpoint is that there are many “stance expressions” (Biber et al, 2004) in the results. Stance expressions include epistemic stance and attitudinal/modality stance:

Epistemic stance bundles comment on the knowledge status of the information in the following proposition: certain, uncertain, or probable/ possible (e.g., *I don't know if, I*

don't think so). Attitudinal/Modality stance bundles express speaker attitudes towards the actions or events described in the following proposition (e.g., *I want you to, I'm not going to*). (Biber et al, 2004 p.389)

Attitudinal/Modality stance bundles can function to express desire, obligation/directive, intention and ability. In the present study, I found three epistemic stance expressions, *I don't know, I don't think* and *I'm not sure*, and three attitudinal/modality stance expressions, *if you want to, I'd like to* (desire) and *to be able to* (ability).

The noticeable difference is that *thank you very much* appears only in the Learning Japanese corpus. In the taxonomy by Biber et al (2004), *thank you very much* is also a lexical bundle that has special conversational functions, namely, politeness. It is an explicit phrase for gratitude and can be a linguistic strategy for rapport management. Yet, the less frequency of *thank you very much* does not mean that the participants in */r/Languagelearning* expressed appreciation less than in *Learning Japanese*. For more detail, I will discuss the expressions for gratitude in the next chapter. The next section considers how the phrase *I don't know* is used in linguistic strategies for building rapport.

6.1.2 Using *I don't know* by different participants

The semantic meaning of *I don't know* is that the addresser (speaker) does not have adequate information. So, this phrase can be used to elicit information (Pomerantz, 1980). In the learning contexts of the two online fora, the original posters (OPs) are often an advice/information seeker and the other posters (other participants) often take the role of advice/information giver. Therefore, I assumed that the original posters were more likely to

use *I don't know* in their request messages for advice/information or “problem messages” (Morrow, 2006). However, the other participants also used this phrase in both fora. Table 11 shows the frequencies of using *I don't know* by OPs and other participants. Note that there are ten examples of using *I don't know* as grammatical examples and English translation of original sentence in other languages (eight examples in *Learning Japanese* and two examples in */r/Languagelearning*).

Table 11

Distributions of Using 'I don't know' in the Two fora

	Learning Japanese	/r/Learninglanguage
OPs	86 (262.34)	88 (110.79)
Other participants	40 (122.02)	253 (318.53)
Total	126 (384.36)	341 (429.33)

*Numbers in brackets refer to normalised frequency (frequency per million).

Focusing on who uses *I don't know*, it shows the opposite result between the two fora. The OPs in *Learning Japanese* used *I don't know* more than the other participants while the other participants used *I don't know* more than the OPs in */r/Languagelearning*. Social relationships and roles are important contextual factors to examine the language use for rapport (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b). It should be taken into account that both original posters and other participants used *I don't know*. In the next section, I focus on some aspects of using *I don't know* to discuss how the participants' interactional relationships and roles can influence their use of the phrase in the construction of rapport.

6.2 Rapport Management and Use of *I don't know*

6.2.1 Taxonomy of functions

It can be considered that the phrase *I don't know* is particularly related to management of face in building rapport as the communicative functions of *I don't know* are associated with expressing one's epistemic stance (Biber, et al, 2004). In a socio-cultural understanding, positioning a stance is a discursive way of constructing an identity in interaction (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). Beach and Metzger (1997) particularly provide the interactional functions of *I don't know*, which can give more insights into the use of *I don't know* for expressing stance.

(a) as marking uncertainty and concerns about next-positioned opinions, assessments, or troubles; (b) as constructing neutral positions, designed to mitigate agreement and disagreement, by disattending and seeking closure on other-initiated topics; (c) as postponing or withholding acceptance of others' invite and requested actions.

(Beach and Metzger, 1997, p.526)

Based on the New Zealand, British and American spoken corpora, Weatherall (2011) also proposes that *I don't know* is used as a prepositioned epistemic device for hedging (e.g., reducing commitment to assessment). Others particularly discuss the interactional functions of *I don't know* from the perspective of politeness or managing face (Tsui, 1991; Diani, 2004; Grant, 2010; O'Keefe et al, 2007). O'Keefe et al (2007) suggest that *I don't know* can function to soften speech acts and protect the face of their addressees (p.73). For analysis, the present study adopted Grant's (2010) taxonomy (Tabel 12) to examine the use of *I don't know*, which combines Tsui's (1991) and Diani's (2004) categories.

Table 12

Pragmatic Functions of 'I don't know' for Management of Face (Grant, 2010, p.2288)

-
- Indicating insufficient knowledge or inability to provide the requested information.
 - Avoiding disagreements.
 - Prefacing disagreements.
 - Avoiding assessments.
 - Avoiding commitment to the answer (using it as an epistemic device).
 - Hedging (marking uncertainty).
 - Minimising compliments.
-

The original distinctions proposed by Tsui (1991) and Diani (2004) are kept although Grant (2010) indicates overlaps between these categories: “[t]he temptation to combine the different ‘avoiding’ categories was resisted because of clear distinctions between them” (p.2288). For example, Tsui (1991) makes a distinction between avoiding commitment to the answer and hedging (marking uncertainty) in terms of commitment:

In reply to a request, or an utterance inviting commitment, a declaration of insufficient knowledge [i.e., I don't know] is a justification for not making a commitment. [...] in prefacing a statement with a declaration of insufficient knowledge, the speaker signals that s/he is not committed to the truth of the proposition expressed, hence leaving room for him/herself to retreat from the original position, if challenged. (p.621)

As referred to in section 4.4.1, expressing uncertainty in CMC contexts such as blogs and discussion forums can be seen as an avoidance strategy for future rapport threat situations (Lester and Paulus, 2011; Jordan et al, 2012). It is a question to ask, then, in what kinds of interaction *I don't know* is used as an avoidance strategy in the online forum. Grant (2010) states that “Tsui (1991) and Diani (2004) identified the use of *I don't know* to soften or minimise some sort of dispreferred response to a request or assessment which could be

considered a face-threatening act” (p.2288). Weatherall (2011) also points out that the previous research in the literature examines “two general sorts of adjacency-pair sequences where *I don't know* typically occurs—questions and assessments”, suggesting that *I don't know* is considered as part of a sequence (p.321). Questions and assessments are components of advice seeking and giving interactions, features of ACMD in the online forum.

6.2.2 Original posters' use: *I don't know where to start*

In the two online fora, *I don't know* can be used in the OPs' original posts to start a thread. In a request message, the OPs introduce agendas that they would like to discuss in the rest of the thread or specifies what kinds of issues they would like other participants to focus on in advice messages. For this, the OPs use an expression of *I don't know + where to start* to ask specific questions or request general advice about learning the language. This phrase is especially used by the OPs who are beginner learners of the language. (1) and (2) are the examples for this usage.

- (1) Hi. I am very intrested [*sic*] in learning Japanese. But like many I don't know where to realy start. (*Learning Japanese*, 13-12-2012)
- (2) I don't even know where to begin. I want to learn Armenian as I am Armenian and my entire family knows it except for my mom, sister, and I. Except I don't know anything. At all. I don't even know if books exist for it. I don't know if there are CDs or anything or what. (*/r/Languagelearning*, 09-04-2011)

By using the phrase *I don't know where to start*, the original posters in (1) and (2) position themselves as beginner learners (“I don't know where to realy start” and “I don't even know

where to begin”). They present their motivation to learn the target language. They show their current standpoint in a journey of learning the language and also a desire to become a more advanced learner of the language for the future. Their use of *I don't know where to start* can be seen as claiming membership of or legitimating peripheral participation in the community of practice for learning a language (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Especially in (1), the original poster also refers to others, “But like many”, to emphasise the sameness of learning experiences that he and the other participants share.

The phrase *I don't know where to start* is also relevant to the specificity and emotionality of advice-seeking message (Ruble, 2011). With this phrase, the OPs state their current problematic situation in learning a language and indicates an emotional reaction to the problematic situation. In terms of the specificity, a beginner learner can justify asking a basic question and avoid a face-threat situation such as criticism by using *I don't know where to start*. Not knowing how to learn a language is a particular problematic situation that the beginner learner encounters at the very early stage of learning. In terms of emotionality, referring to the situation by using *I don't know where to start* is a way of expressing their sense of confusion and uncertainty. The phrase is an index of a beginner learner at a very early stage of learning, which can encourage the other participants including the similar beginner learners, the advanced learners or native speakers of the language to respond to the poster of the message. For instance, it can invite more advanced learners' sympathy, who also went through the situation in their learning history. In (2), the original poster emphasises his/her insufficient knowledge about learning a language; he/she states *I don't know where to begin* with using “even” as an intensifier and repeats *I don't know* with “anything” and “At

all”. This defines both the original poster as a particular learner of language and his/her interactional goal of the thread.

In general, it is not easy for beginner learners to legitimate their participation in the online forum as a community of practice; with their limited knowledge about the language and the forum, it is not easy for them to present their membership in the site by contribution as advice giver, e.g., responding to other participants’ questions about a language. It can be said that initiating a thread by stating *I don’t know where to start* is a strategy for the beginner or new member of the online forum to start getting involved in the community. Their language use with *I don’t know* can be seen as a rapport management strategy for the beginner learners to join the learning community. The following extract shows this point. This is from a thanks message by the original poster (henceforth, OP1) in example (1) to the other participants. (The numbering of #11 refers the eleventh post submitted to the thread. #1 means the initial post.)

Extract 6.1 Reasons to join the forum

One of the reasons I joined this forum is to be able to chat in the practice section when I'm a bit more comfortable. But thanks all for the great advice. And good luck to everybody else who is undertaking this journey. Weather out of necessity or just to learn a really fun language for no reason but the enjoyment like myself.

⋮ MORE | ” + QUOTE | ↩ REPLY

(#11, OP1, *Learning Japanese*, 13-12-2012)

OP1 clearly states his willingness to participate in the forum and also encourages his peer learners of Japanese. This message indicates OP1’s rapport maintenance orientation with the other participants. In fact, despite OP1’s rapport management with the thanks message, the

other participants (without OP1) argue with each other regarding learning method and their behaviours in the following messages of the thread. In the argument, there are examples of *I don't know* by the other participants, which are different from the examples I am going to introduce in the next section. In section 6.3, I will return to this thread to discuss them.

6.2.3 Other posters' use: disclaimer

One outstanding use by other participants in both fora is *I don't know* + complement (e.g., WH-word) with a conjunction *but*. This “*not X or anything, but Y*” structure is a formulaic disclaimer (Overstreet and Yule, 2001). Locher (2006) identifies disclaimer in the advice discourse of an online health column: “it is pointed out that the answer will be incomplete or cannot match expectations due to the site’s limitations or to insufficient knowledge of the questioner’s situation” (pp.63-64). In the two online fora, the disclaimer about limitation and insufficient knowledge using *I don't know* softens future face-threatening situations. Kirkham (2011) examines *I don't know* in the “*not X or anything, but Y*” structure and shows an example in which a student uses the expression as disclaimer for avoiding face threat such as correction and negative evaluation and mitigating knowledge display in classroom discussion (p.208). I also found similar examples in the other participants’ usage in both online fora. The following examples illustrate how *I don't know* as a disclaimer is used in response to the OPs’ request.

- (3) I don't know much about Spanish, but one way to refer to the future in French is to use the verb “to go” with an infinitive. If it is similar in Spanish, you're in luck.
(/r/Languagelearning, 22-02-2014)

In (3), the participant indicates a limitation of his/her advice with using *I don't know* in a disclaimer. The participant indicates his/her insufficient knowledge about Spanish and an advice message is given based on his/her knowledge about French. Unlike *Learning Japanese* that focuses on Japanese language, */r/Languagelearning* is a subreddit for learning any language and the participants learn different kinds of languages.

(3) is an example to show how a participant applies his/her knowledge about a language to taking part in interaction in a thread. In (4) and (5), the participants indicate a limitation of their advice because of inadequate information about the advice seekers rather than their knowledge about a language.

(4) I don't know the cost in your country but in Vietnam it is cheap: 40\$/3 month.
(*Learning Japanese*, 11-07-2012)

(5) I don't know if you live near French-speaking Canada, but Canada is Canada so French might be useful to speak to others. (*/r/Languagelearning*, 12-04-2012)

These examples highlight that information about the advice seeker is necessary to offer specific answers while these online fora are anonymous to a certain degree (especially in *Reddit*). In the examples, the participants are particularly concerned about the learning environment in order to give advice about learning strategies. Furthermore, examples (6) to (8) show that the participants take into account various kinds of aspects of learning such as the advice seeker's language proficiency, their mobile device and preference.

(6) I don't know how advanced you are, but the entire basis is in conversation so it seems like it would be useful for you. (*/r/Languagelearning*, 03-02-2013)

- (7) I don't know if your smartphone would be especially useful for this, but you should spend time listening to native speakers to work on listening comprehension, however you decide to do that. (*/r/Languagelearning*, 08-12-2013)
- (8) I don't know if you want this link, but this becomes really helpful if you want to learn particles. (*Learning Japanese*, 18-07-2014)

Thus, the participants express their attempt to relate their advice with the OPs' request as much as possible. In other words, they present their attempt 'to respond' to the OP's question. In this use of *I don't know*, disclaimer is a linguistic strategy not only for the management of face (positioning an expert identity) but also management of sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals. The participants consider their obligation and rights as advice giver and seeker in order to achieve the interactional goal of the thread. That is, advice seekers need to provide enough information and advice givers need to take this information into account for answering.

This section focused on two particular uses of *I don't know* by the OPs and other participants, yet this phrase is used in more different ways for maintaining rapport. So, from the next section, I will consider more various examples in a given context. Through discussing different functions of *I don't know*, I will illustrate how the participants communicate with each other to maintain or challenge rapport. I chose one thread from each forum where *I don't know* is used several times in different ways. First, I will focus on the examples in *Learning Japanese* (section 6.3) and then */r/Languagelearning* (section 6.4).

6.3 *I don't know and Rapport – Learning Japanese*

The following examples of *I don't know* are extracted from a thread posted in 2012 in the forum. It started in 12 December 2012 and ended in 19 December 2012. It consists of 91 messages and is the longest thread in 2012 in the corpus. There are eight instances of *I don't know* and one instance of *I still don't know*, which will be discussed. The main theme of the thread is about learning methods to move from the basic level of Japanese. OP1 is a beginner learner of Japanese and asks for advice on three topics: (1) suggestions about learning materials (textbook or software), (2) the timing of starting to learn kanji (one of the Japanese writing systems, which is the adapted Chinese characters) and (3) the adequate number of words to watch dramas and to be fluent for having a conversation in Japanese.

6.3.1 *I don't know in advice seeking*

The first and second examples of *I don't know* appear in the initial message (Extract 6.2 on the next page). We have already looked at the first example “I don't know where to really start” as example (1) in section 6.2.2. This statement is prepositioned before OP1 describes what he has learned about the language so far. Sharing learning history is helpful for the other participants to offer appropriate advice, which is the specificity part of the message (Ruble, 2011). Following his learning history, he states that he needs a better approach to learning the language. “But I feel I'm just waisting my time” is particularly the emotionality of the message (Ruble, 2011). A description of learning history is one of the characteristics of messages by the advice seeker in this forum and also in */r/Languagelearning*.

Extract 6.2

Dec 12, 2012 #1

Hi.

I am very intrested in learning Japanese. But like many I don't know where to realy start. I have lernt the odd word and some simple sentence structure to the point

that I could say "that car is green" "I am an *****" or "I love ramen". But I feel I'm just waisting my time.

So my questions are pretty straight forward.

1) Do you guys know any software that is decent to learn with.
And are there any books that people consider the best place to begin. I have heard of Genki something or other and Mina no Nihongo. But am I missing something, these seem to be all in japanese witch doesn't help if I don't know what it all means yet.

(#1, OP1, *Learning Japanese*, 13-12-2012)

The second use of *I don't know* softens a negative assessment of “these seem to be all in japanese witch doesn't help”. The “these” refers to the titles of textbooks including “Genki something or other” and “Mina no Nihongo”. It is followed by a conditional clause “if I don't know what it all means yet”. This conditional statement indicates that the negativity is associated with OP1's inadequate knowledge rather than the quality of the textbooks. The statement of *if I don't know* is an important aspect of language use here to avoid unnecessary misinterpretation by other participants of the thread. In this forum, I found that there were participants who have relatively strong beliefs about their own learning approaches with using particular materials and methods. Different opinions about learning methods can cause a conflict. In this thread, an argument regarding learning methods occurs between two participants in the subsequent interaction and I will discuss it later (Extract 6.3 to 6.10).

From the perspective of rapport management, the participants' references to learning approaches can be seen as a part of face claim associated with their expert identity. The more advanced they are, the more they are likely to have confidence about their learning methods. Their learning approaches are linked with their learning experiences. The textbooks and learning methods can be a form of representing their learning practices and construct their identities as an expert of learning the language. For elaborating this aspect, the theory of community of practice (Wenger, 1998) is helpful here. The learning methods and materials such as textbooks and learning programmes are a form of reification of their practices for learning. The participants need to negotiate their beliefs about learning in order to discuss the learning issues that the participants in the forum have. In advice seeking-giving interaction, they give other learners suggestions and information based on their learning experiences. Therefore, overt negative comments on a particular learning material and method can threaten rapport with the other participant if they are related with their identity construction. Even if the participant who makes the negative comment does not intend to attack an individual, it is better to mitigate the meaning of negative evaluation in their comment.

In the above example (Extract 6.2), using *I don't know* and a conditional clause is a way to mitigate the face-threatening act, considering other participants who use the material or method for their learning. On the other hand, OP1 needs to refer to a negative aspect of the particular learning materials (i.e., they are written in Japanese) in order to specify what kinds of textbooks are not suitable for his beginner level of learning the language. This is necessary for OP1 to achieve his interactional goal to receive advice he expects. OP1 receives advice and information about learning materials from more advanced learners in this forum.

Extract 6.3 shows the third instance of *I don't know* used in OP1's second thanks message to other participants in this thread (OP1's first thanks message is introduced in Extract 6.1). In Extract 6.3, OP1 states that "Holy dam I did not expect such an explosion. Haha" to see the thread he started continue after he posts the thanks message (Extract 6.1). One of the other participants recommends *Pimsleur Learning Program*, which is referred as "Pimsleur" in this thread. OP1 expresses interest in this learning program and states his impression about it.

Extract 6.3

Dec 14, 2012	#36
<p>Holy dam I did not expect such an explosion. Haha. I have sourced Genki and will look at getting Mina no Nihongo in a few months. The internet tells me there's some things covered better in one than in the other and vice versa. You have helped a lot and putting up an example of the routes you took is very informative. I heard good things about <u>Pimslers</u>, might not need the sentences they teach for business men and people on holiday just yet, but having something to listen to is what you all recommend. Plus the added advantage of being taught a host of words <u>I don't know</u>, that should surely give me some things to deconstruct and play around with. Thanks gents.</p> <p>Will check out your site as soon as I can get to a pc. Black Berry won't show kana or kanji when it's in text format.</p>	

(#36, OP1, *Learning Japanese*, 14-12-2012)

In the above message, OP1 states that there are some parts that might not be necessary for him ("might not need the sentences they teach for business men and people on holiday just yet"). Although this comment is a negative comment, it is followed by a conjunction "but" and states that the Pimsleur program is good for listening practice. OP1 does not spell "Pimsleur" correctly (i.e., "Pimslers" underlined in the extract). Considering some other typos in his posts (Extract 6.2 and 6.3) and an indication that he uses a mobile device (i.e., Black Berry), it can be assumed that the spelling of "Pimslers" is a mistouch in typing or it

indicates that OP1 is not really familiar with Pimsleur and its spelling.

OP1 gives another positive assessment. The third instance of *I don't know* occurs in this positive comment about the Pimsleur program: "Plus the added advantages". The difference between "a host of words" and "a host of words I don't know" is that the later reference more implies OP1's willingness to use the Pimsleur program. In short, OP1 gives a comment about the particular program, personalising the usefulness of the program to his learning strategy (i.e., to learn "a host of words I don't know"). Through this thanks message, OP1 shows acceptance of advice from other participants. This example of a thanks message has different characteristics from what Morrow (2006) found in the messages posted to an online forum about depression:

There were no cases in which a thanks message writer wrote, for example, 'I followed your advice', or 'I will try what you suggest', or anything similar. Nor were there instances in which a thanks message writer offered a positive evaluation of advice such as, 'That is a good idea', or 'Your suggestion is very useful'. (p.545)

In Extract 6.3, I have a different example from the above characteristics of a thanks message found in Morrow's (2006) study. This can be explained by the theme of the forum and the participant's interactional goal. The theme of *Learning Japanese*, as the name represents, is learning the language. It can be said that OP1's first goal is participating in the forum as a learner of the language in order to achieve a practical goal for their sake (e.g., asking a question). OP1 needs to present his/her membership or identity as a learner of the language. Indicating the acceptance of advice and positive evaluation shows OP1's orientation to

maintaining rapport with other participants or other learners of the language. Regarding thanks messages, I will discuss the participants' language use for gratitude in Chapter 7.

6.3.2 *I don't know anything, how and why*

So far we have seen OP1's use of *I don't know*. Other examples of using the phrase are found in the subsequent interaction after the message #36, which is OP1's last post to this thread. The other participants continue discussion on learning kanji and learning Japanese language. An argument occurs between two participants due to their different opinions about learning methods. First, I will explain the context of the interaction in which the other participants use the phrase *I don't know*, referring to three messages (Extract 6.4).

Extract 6.4 Context 1: a trigger of misunderstanding

#4 Participant 1 (P1):

Dec 13, 2012 #4

Do kanji immediately if you want to get past basics learn the 2200 joyo kanji using heisig's remembering the kanji and Anki (SRS program) then you can start on actually learning Japanese. Think of Kanji as a prerequisite to learning Japanese and if you don't learn kanji it's unlikely you're ever going to hold a real convocation.

#5 Participant 2 (P2):

Dec 13, 2012 #5

P1 said: ↑

Do kanji immediately if you want to get past basics learn the 2200 joyo kanji using heisig's remembering the kanji and Anki (SRS program) then you can start on actually learning Japanese. Think of Kanji as a prerequisite to learning Japanese and if you don't learn kanji ...

That is the most outlandish statement I have ever seen on the subject.

#14 Participant 3 (P3):

Dec 13, 2012 #14

People call Heisig an outlandish idea? Oh, it's P2, nevermind...

Heisig is the best thing you can do if you want to surround yourself with Japanese. You might not always be able to get Japanese voices into your head at every time of the day, but text should always be available, and Heisig unscarifies text, so you can actually start reading very quickly even if you don't understand things.

The first message (#4) is a response by Participant 1 to OP1's question about the timing of learning kanji. The "2200 joyo kanji" (#4) refers to the kanji characters listed on the official guide announced by Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT). The "heisig's remembering the kanji" is the title of a series of book (*Remembering the Kanji*) for learning kanji based on the method proposed by James Heisig and "Anki (SRS program)" refers to the flashcard program. Although Participant 1 recommends the book and tool for memorising kanji, the main focus of this advice is to learn kanji first more than to use the particular book or tool. Participant 1's way of putting the importance of learning kanji, especially the 2,200 joyo kanji, sounds controversial for the other participants. Other participants react regarding (1) learning kanji to "start on actually learning Japanese" and (2) learning kanji as "a prerequisite to learning Japanese" and "hold a real convocation [conversation]".

In the second message of the extract (#5), Participant 2 quotes Participant 1's post and indicates his disagreement with these ideas without using the explicit word of *disagree* but instead stating "the most outlandish statement". After #5, there are posts continuing to discuss around learning kanji and learning the language. Participant 3 is one of them. In the third message of the extract (#14), Participant 3 supports the idea of Heisig's book recommended

by Participant 1, referring to Participant 2's post (#5). Participant 3 constructs a rivalry relationship with Participant 2 by referring to him as someone who calls "Heisig an outlandish idea" and downgrading the value of his participation and contribution to the thread ("Oh, its [Participant 2's name] nevermind...").

Note that Participant 2 quotes the whole post by Participant 1 rather than a part in #5, which indicates that Participant 2 does not necessarily disagree with Heisig's book in particular.

Later in the thread, Participant 2 corrects Participant 3's misinterpretation about what Participant 2 exactly disagrees with. Yet, Participant 3 still continues opposing Participant 2. The argument between these two participants is characterised as a 'flame' by other participants. The following extract illustrates another context before they use *I don't know*.

Extract 6.5 Context 2: continuing the misunderstanding

#32 Participant 2 (14-12-2012):

Let kanji get mentioned and you jump in with the Heisig mantra with all the zeal and verve of an airport Hare Krishna.

So....when were you born?

#43 Participant 3 (15-12-2012):

Dec 15, 2012

#43

I love how P2 and I always clash 😊 But he pops up in every thread involving Heisig in any way and I feel there needs to be an equally explosive opposite to his utter negativity and personal distaste for the method - and I enjoy filling that role. Of

In (#32), Participant 2 suggests focusing on the topic of kanji rather than the Heisig. He also associates Participant 3's attitude that keeps labeling him as an anti-Heisig with a religious

belief (“the Heisig mantra”). In a response (#43), Participant 3 continues to regard Participant 1 as an opponent (“I love how [Participant 2’s name] and I always clash”), showing his behavioural expectation about his role in this forum (“I enjoy filling that role”). Thus, there is still a gap of understanding about the point of Participant 2’s disagreement between them, namely, whether this is over learning kanji or using the Heisig. The phrase *I don’t know* is used in the subsequent interaction after the above interaction. Participant 2 points out that there is a misinterpretation about what he states in previous messages, showing his ignorance about the Heisig method (Extract 6.6).

Extract 6.6

Dec 15, 2012

#44

I don't know anything about Heisig, [P3], so I have no opinion about his method. I don't know how you keep leaping to the conclusion that I am against Heisig.

[...]

So you're not going to tell us how old you are?

(#44, Participant 2, *Learning Japanese*, 15-12-2012)

In (#44), *I don’t know* is used to form an explicit statement to declare Participant 2’s lack of knowledge about the Heisig, which functions as avoiding commitment to assessment (Grant, 2010). The phrase is used with a noun phrase “anything about Heisig”. Adding the pronoun “anything” emphasises the meaning of insufficient knowledge about the Heisig. Participant 2 uses *I don’t know* as an epistemic device to put a distance from the Heisig and show his particular stance on it. In another example, *I don’t know* is used with a “how” clause (i.e., “how you keep leaping to the conclusion that I am against Heisig”). With this statement, Participant 2 emphasises the fact that Participant 2 actually has never assessed the Heisig

method. He indicates that he needs to fill an insufficient knowledge to understand Participant 3's logic to the conclusion that he is against the Heisig. By this, Participant 2 points out Participant 3's recurrent misinterpretations.

At the end of Participant 2's post (#44), he asks about Participant 3's age ("So you're not going to tell us how old you are?"). Before this post, Participant 2 continues to ask Participant 3's age but Participant 3 does not respond to the question. In Extract 6.5, Participant 2 asks the question by saying "So.....when were you born?". The next example of *I don't know* is used by Participant 3 in a response to Participant 2's question about age.

Extract 6.7

Dec 15, 2012	#45
<p>You don't want to see me react to you slapping my mother, I think, if you think I've actually been hostile. <u>You have a very grating way of giving your opinion and I'm simply reacting appropriately.</u> If you can't take what you dish out then you might want to reconsider your own behaviour before starting to find the splinters in the eyes of others, as they say.</p>	
[...]	
<p>You seem obsessed with my age despite my obvious refusal to give you this information. You are either being very rude and pushy or you have some kind of fetish, <u>I don't know</u> how to respond to this...</p>	

(#45, Participant 3, *Learning Japanese*, 15-12-2012)

Participant 3 marks negatively Participant 2's behaviour in the thread ("You have a very grating way of giving your opinion") and claims that his reaction is appropriate. At end of the post, Participant 3 also expresses his annoyance about Participant 2's recurrent question about age. In the previous posts, Participant 3 does not respond to the question, which violates the

maxim of quantity (Grice, 1975). The implicature of the repeated absence of response is unwillingness to answer the question. In (#45), this Participant 3's intention is clearly expressed by stating "despite my obvious refusal". Participant 3 characterises Participant 2's manner of asking as "very rude and pushy" and "some kind of fetish". Since Participant 2 repeats asking the same question again in (#44), Participant 3 finally 'responds' to the question by using *I don't know* ("I don't know how to respond to this..."). Here, the phrase *I don't know* functions as "avoiding commitment to the answer" (Grant, 2010). This message violates the maxim of quality (Grice, 1975) as Participant 3 could provide the information about his own age. The implicature is that he does not want to answer the question about his age and it is an indirect refusal.

In Extract 6.6 and 6.7, there is a common strategy for the participants to use the phrase *I don't know*. Both Participant 2 and 3 use *I don't know* to express what they are annoyed about by each other. While Participant 3 keeps claiming that Participant 2 is against the Heisig method, Participant 2 also keeps asking the same question. From the perspective of rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b), on the one hand, Participant 3's behaviour can damage Participant 2's face associated with a neutral stance to the Heisig method in this thread and also in this forum. On the other hand, Participant 2's manner of asking the same question repeatedly can violate Participant 3's sociality rights and obligations in terms of autonomy-imposition. In face-to-face interaction, the absence of response in an adjacency pair, such as a long pause, can affect a smooth interaction. Yet, an interaction in the online forum is not based on turn-by-turn. It depends more on each participant to decide whether to reply and when to reply, that is, thread adjacency pair of question and answer is not always

complete in the ACMD of a thread. The next example tells more about the use of *I don't know* to express annoyance or negatively marked behaviour.

Extract 6.8

I don't know why this thread annoyed me so much, but a guy who started studying two months ago giving expert advice is grating.

(#54, Participant 4, *Learning Japanese*, 15-12-2012)

In this example, *I don't know* with *why* is seen as hedging or making uncertainty (Grant, 2010). “I don't know why” softens Participant 4's negative comment about the atmosphere of the thread. Participant 4's critical opinion follows after a conjunction *but*. Participant 4 does not refer to the username of “a guy who started studying two months ago”. Yet, it is obvious for other participants that the “guy” refers to Participant 3 because Participant 4 indirectly ‘quotes’ Participant 3's posts to describe the “guy”. Earlier in this thread, Participant 3 states that he started the language two months ago (Extract 6.9).

Extract 6.9

Dec 13, 2012

#18

Yeah, so I started learning a bit over 2 months ago and am now reading Manga. I don't exactly understand everything, but reading what you went through and how much time you spent on it seems kind of hellish. I definitely couldn't take a year of textbooks or primslieur CDs.

(#18, Participant 3, *Learning Japanese*, 13-12-2012)

Participant 4 also uses an adjective “grating” to describe “a guy” (Extract 6.8), which is the term that Participant 3 uses to criticise Participant 2 (“You have a very grating way of giving your opinion” in Extract 6.7). From the perspective of dialogue or addressivity of the utterance (Bakhtin, 1984), Participant 4 ‘responds’ to Participant 3's previous messages by

quoting. This message violates the maxim of manner (Grice, 1975) as Participant 4 does not state the name of the guy clearly but implies the person. The implicature is that Participant 3's grating attitude makes the thread annoying for Participant 4. This message is an indirect criticism. Participant 4 uses "I don't know why" as a rhetorical device to soften the meaning of negative assessment. So, it is a mock politeness or "the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realisations" (Culpeper, 1996, p.356). "I don't know why" is a preface before this impolite message; Participant 4 rejects Participant 3's expertise about the languages, pointing out that he has only two months of studying it. This message can threaten Participant 3's face associated with being an experienced learner of Japanese or a member of this forum.

6.3.3 *I still don't know in disagreement*

In the above, we have looked at the use of *I don't know* in an interaction around the Heisig method between the two participants. The next examples of *I don't know* occur in another interaction between Participant 1 and Participant 2 regarding learning kanji. After (#4), Participant 1 does not appear in the interaction until (#55) in Extract 6.10. Participant 1 quotes Participant 2's previous post submitted as message #7 on 13 December 2012 and the message is Participant 1's first reaction to Participant 2's opposite opinion. Participant 1 claims that "it makes much more sense to learn the Kanji 1st" and relates learning a set of certain number of kanji with learning English words.

Extract 6.10

Dec 15, 2012 #55

said: ↑

Someday I hope to meet a foreigner who is actually conversationally functional and functionally literate who can honestly say he sat down and memorized 2000+ kanji *before* he started studying the language.

He's called khatzumoto he has a popular blog and it's not a difficult task or very time consuming. 2200 joyo kanji, Add 20 new kanji a day to Anki while continuing to review each day and you're through all 2200 in 110 days less than half a year and it costs an hour a day? if people are unable to commit to something like that I can't see them learning much in life. It makes much more sense to learn the Kanji 1st because then you can actually take on real Japanese sentences and half the kanji isn't enough for that I'd have a hard time learning English if i didn't know half the words in it.

(#55, Participant 1, *Learning Japanese*, 05-12-2012)

Then in message #57 in Extract 6.11, Participant 2 also elaborates his opinion that it is not necessarily “a prerequisite” for acquiring the language to learn the 2,000 kanji first, providing his learning experiences about how he learned kanji. The phrase *I don't know* is used in this post.

Extract 6.11

Dec 15, 2012 #57

I still won't be holding my breath until I meet him.

I would like to know on what you base your contention that learning 2000+ kanji is a prerequisite to learning Japanese....that it must be done *first* before starting to learn the language or one can never hope to hold a conversation in Japanese.

[...]

I started learning Japanese when I was 19 years old. Right now I am 47. To this day I don't know 2,000 kanji. I recently started using the "Kanji Sticky" app on my iPhone to help me brush up on my recall for writing purposes (computers *killed* that!) but prior to that the last time I actively sat down and tried learning kanji was probably about 1989....over twenty years ago. (And this Kanji Sticky app is also the first time in my life I've ever used anything even resembling a flash card).

[...]

Now.....you tell me your Japanese language background and perhaps a little bit more about how it is impossible to do anything with Japanese unless one learns 2,000 kanji **before** starting to learn the language.

I still don't know 2,000 kanji. And I can tell you from long and varied personal experience I don't *need* to know 2,000 kanji. The average foreigner can get through daily life in Japan splendidly even with way less than what I do. Most Japanese get through daily life with less than 2,000 kanji.

(#57, Participant 2, *Learning Japanese*, 13-12-2012)

Participant 2 states his insufficient knowledge about the “2,000 kanji” twice with the use of *I don't know*. Participant 2 provides a long description of his learning history; he is an advanced learner of Japanese, has studied Japanese language for 28 years but nevertheless he does not care about the 2,000 kanji. This long and detailed description is a response to Participant 1's statement in #55: “if people are unable to commit to something like that I can't see them learning much in life” (Extract 6.10). Note that Participant 1 does not request Participant 2 to explain his learning experience. So the long description about personal experience can be seen as extra information and it violates the maxim of quantity and/or the maxim of manner (Grice, 1975). The implicature is that learning the 2,000 kanji is not necessarily a requirement for all learners of Japanese. Participant 1 does not provide the advice based on ‘his’ experience of learning Japanese. So, Participant 2 requests Participant 1 to provide “*your Japanese language background*”, which indicates that Participant 1's reason stated in #55 is not adequate to claim the importance of learning the 2,000 kanji first.

In the use of *I don't know* in Extract 6.11, Participant 2 emphasises a meaning of lack of knowledge by using an adverb *still*. The text of *still* is italicised in the message and functions as an intensifier to emphasise the statement. After this *I don't know* statement, Participant 2 states that “And I can tell you from long and varied personal experience I don't need to know 2,000 kanji”. Here, the implicature of Participant 2's intention of including the long description is stated in his own words. These two examples of *I don't know* function as epistemic devices for Participant 2 to take a particular stance about learning kanji and learning the language again in this thread (cf. Extract 6.6).

6.4 *I don't know* and Rapport – /r/Languagelearning

Next, this section focuses on a thread from /r/Languagelearning and examines *I don't know* used in the thread (Extracts 6.12 to 6.17). For discussion, I chose a thread in which the phrase was the most frequently used in the corpus; in the thread there are 5 instances of *I don't know* and one instance of “I don't really know” (I don't + adverb + know). There are five threads that have four references of *I don't know*, yet the thread I am going to discuss contains more telling examples about how the participants' use of the phrase is related to building rapport. This is another reason why I chose the following thread but not other threads.

6.4.1 Context of the thread

The thread consists of 115 comments including 5 duplicated comments by the same poster. According to the poster of the duplicated comments, this was due to a technical problem (I will discuss this issue in relation to netiquettes in Chapter 8). The thread started in 13 October 2011 and the end date is not traceable. The main theme of the thread is about the linguistic

elements that the participants like or dislike about other languages. The activity of this thread is different from the threads started with an advice/information request. That is, it was not an advice seeking and giving activity. The original poster (henceforth, OP2) posted a language-learning related topic and invited the other participants to a venue for sharing ideas and opinions about the languages. OP2 listed what linguistic elements of particular languages he/she liked and disliked, including grammatical features, sounds and the flexibility of the language.

Comments following OP2's post involve evaluation about languages. From the perspective of rapport management, negative evaluation about "attributes of another language" (in the initial post) can be a face-threatening act for the speakers of the language. It can be said that the thread topic could cause a rapport sensitive moment between participants and requires them to manage rapport. However, there are no comments that developed into flames or arguments like the example in *Learning Japanese* (section 6.3). Regarding language used in this thread, some participants chose words that intensified negative and positive evaluation; they used *hate* instead of *dislike* and similarly they also used *love* instead of *like*. The participants used mitigation strategies for face-threatening comments in a rhetorical way, which include (1) to refer to the linguistic features that they don't like in general rather than specifying about a particular language, (2) to refer to linguistic features of a particular language that they like, as well as identifying those they dislike and (3) to relate the reasons you dislike the linguistic features to your difficulty of learning the language. The phrase *I don't know* is also used for mitigation strategies and we will look at these in the next section.

6.4.2 *I don't know* as an epistemic device

The first instance of *I don't know* was used in order to avoid providing reasons. Extract 6.12 is a whole comment by Redditor 1, which is a response to OP2's initial post. Redditor 1 referred only to his/her positive opinions about Arabic language but not to negative opinions about other language(s). Redditor 1 particularly states two aspects of Arabic. One is "right-to-left script" and this is followed by a reason (i.e., "because I'm a lefty"). Another aspect is the "pro-drop" or pronoun dropping, which refers to the phenomenon of omitting pronouns. Yet, Redditor 1 does not give the reason for liking this aspect, instead saying "I don't know".

Extract 6.12

[-] EN native | ES advanced | AR, FR intermediate | IS baby
 9 points 3 years ago

I LOVE Arabic morphology. It's so structured and wonderful. Also on Arabic, right-to-left script because I'm a lefty. I like pro-drop languages because...I don't know. I'm always trying to make English pro-drop in my every-day speech, but that tends to cause trouble. And has been mentioned already, idioms. Idioms are hilarious in every language.

(Redditor 1, /r/Languagelearning, 13-10-2011)

This example of *I don't know* functions as avoiding commitment to the answer (Grant, 2010). It is an epistemic device that indicates the degree of the addresser's commitment to the content. In Extract 6.12, the use of *I don't know* as an epistemic marker suggests that Redditor 1 is less willing to expand the reasons for liking the pro-drop language. This *I don't know* statement violates the maxim of quantity by not providing an adequate reason with the use of ellipsis ("..."). The implicature can be that Redditor 1's preference about the pro-drop is instinctive and it is difficult for himself/herself to verbalise the reason. Redditor 1's use of *I don't know* can be seen as a strategy to avoid a future face-threatening situation such as

criticism. This avoidance strategy can maintain a relationship with the large public of viewers who may join the thread.

Clarification is an important part of interaction in */r/Learninglanguage*. One of the expectations that the participants share is to provide clear evidence or/and explanation when posting a comment. If there are unclear points in a comment, other participants are more likely to clarify the point. For example, Redditor 1 (R1) is asked about the term “pro-drop” by Redditor 2 (R2) in Extract 6.13.

Extract 6.13

The screenshot shows a Reddit comment from user R2, who is a native speaker of Spanish and Catalan. The comment asks for clarification on the term "pro-dip". Below it, user R1 provides a detailed explanation of "pro-drop" (pronoun drop) in linguistics, including examples like "comprendo" vs. "comprende".

[-] Castellano C2 | Català B2 | Français B1 | 日本語 A1 3
 points 3 years ago
 I'm sorry to be so uneducated (considering I only study Spanish/Catalan but not the facilities of the languages), but "pro-dip"?
 permalink parent

[-] 3 points 3 years ago
 Pro-drop, which is short for "pronoun drop". In a pro-drop language, instead of "I know", I can just say "know". Pro-dropping usually doesn't show up in a language without some reasonable marking of person on the verb, e.g. "comprendo" vs. "comprende" and so on.

(Redditor 2 and 1, */r/Languagelearning*, 13-10-2011)

The misspelling of “pro-dip” can be explained by the fact that the term “pro-drop” is an unfamiliar word for Redditor 2 (cf. the misspelling in *Learning Japanese*, Extract 6.3). To respond, Redditor 1 provides its definition and examples. Like this example, insufficient information or/and evidence invites reactions from other participants and leads to follow-up questions in this forum. Redditor 2’s use of “I’m sorry” for eliciting information is also an important aspect of rapport management and I will discuss it in the next chapter. The

following will continue to consider *I don't know* in relation to identities.

6.4.3 Negotiating identities as a learner and expert

Three examples of using *I don't know* appear in an interaction between two participants (Redditor 3 and Redditor 4). Their interaction consists of eight comments and they posted comments turn-by-turn. It starts with Redditor 3's post that is a response to OP2's initial post. Redditor 3, who is learning several languages including Indonesian, shows an interest in Indonesian by referring to a particular grammatical feature of the language: "I like the doubling up of nouns to make them plural in Indonesian, it is intuitive and cool. child – anak, children, anak anak". Then, Redditor 4, who is a native speaker of Indonesian, replies to Redditor 3's post offering an "Interesting anecdote" and introducing the way of writing the plural in "net lingo/sms language" or CMC contexts (i.e., children refers to "anak2" instead of "anak anak"). At the end of the comment, Redditor 4 states that Indonesian slang was another interesting aspect of the language (Extract 6.14).

Extract 6.14

[-] Indonesian N | English C2 | Mandarin B2 | Japanese B2 1 point 3 years ago

Interesting anecdote: in net lingo/sms language (which is really hard to understand for non-native speakers with all the abbreviations, so I'm told), we usually shorten it to "noun2".

So anak-anak would be anak2, or for example jadi-jadian (fake) would be jadi2an, etc. Applies to Chinese names too; I think I've seen a use or two in the Malaysian/Singaporean webspace also.

Ling Ling could be Ling2.

When or if you get to studying the Indonesian slang language, it'll be a completely different world out there where grammar just get thrown out of the window :)

(Redditor 4, */r/Languagelearning*, 13-10-2011)

In response to the above comment, Redditor 3 uses *I don't know* (underlined in Extract 6.15) to request more information about Indonesian. Redditor 3 states that in fact he/she had already known the orthographic rule for the plural in the use on the Internet. Yet, Redditor 3

keeps showing interest about Indonesian by referring to other linguistic aspects that Redditor 3 is interested in. The insufficient knowledge and modesty are expressed with *I don't know* (“I don't know many”) and the reason is provided immediately (“I am a beginner in the language”).

Extract 6.15

[–] Currently learning: Chinese, German, Korean, Indonesian, etc 1 point 3 years ago
 thanks for the comment :) although my bahasa indonesia is horrible, I did already know about the anak2 thing, I mean, how could I not know about that because 1. I love the internet 2. the doubling thing is my favorite feature of that language, so I gotta know the details. But since we are talking interesting points of the Indonesian language, I also find the euphemisms I know (and I don't know many, I am a beginner in the language) are quite fascinating. For example, "malam kupu kupu" (night butterfly) meaning prostitute or whatever. Wanna teach me another euphemism? :)

(Redditor 3, /r/Languagelearning, 13-10-2011)

In this example, Redditor 3 uses *I don't know* to present his/her identity as a beginner of Indonesian and also constructs the learner identity by building an expert-learner relationship. The statement of insufficient knowledge is also a preface to a request for information: “Wanna teach me another euphemism? :)”. In response (Extract 6.16), Redditor 4 implies that he/she cannot provide other examples of euphemistic expressions but can provide examples of slangs as a kind of euphemism.

Extract 6.16

↑ [–] Indonesian N | English C2 | Mandarin B2 | Japanese B2 1 point 3 years ago
 ↓ Hmm, I'd be hard pressed to think specifically about euphemisms.. but when I see them I understand :) As for slangs, there are a lot about. "bete", "pewe", etc. If you want to learn insults (there is a LOT of words to insult people), you might need a few words from Javanese and Hokkien too :p

(Redditor 4, /r/Languagelearning, 13-10-2011)

For not providing the requested information, Redditor 4 does not use the phrase *I don't know* as an indication of inability to provide it (Grant, 2010). Instead, Redditor 4 refers how he/she understands euphemisms when using the language as a native speaker: “I'd be hard pressed to

think specifically about euphemisms...but when I see them I understand :)”. Redditor 4 also offers alternative information about Indonesian slang in relation to euphemisms. Through these, Redditor 4 still positions him/herself as an expert in the language. The elaborative response also shows Redditor 4’s willingness to respond to Redditor 3’s request, who wants to know more about the language. From the perspective of rapport management, Redditor 4 holds rapport maintenance and enhancement orientations by keeping their interaction on-going.

In response (Extract 6.17), Redditor 3 becomes interested in the Indonesian slang that Redditor 4 introduced and develops this topic further by asking several questions. Redditor 3 ends the comment by saying “Sorry for all the questions haha”. Redditor 4 replies to Redditor 3’s apology by saying “No problems~” and answering the questions. Extract 6.17 is the last part of Redditor 4’s response to Redditor 3, where the phrase *I don’t know* is used.

Extract 6.17

Nah, both the pig and the dog is just regular insults you use, although the pig is applicable for a glutton. However Indonesian has so many insults to use that those are pretty much considered standard and not offensive enough (in comparison to the worst, lol)

Biji (seed) can also be an insult too, for reasons I don't really know as well (guessing it's related to testicles :p). Some hokkien words come up as well (cibai, etc)

Man, trying to explain Indonesian insults is strangely refreshing! Hahaha. From my POV, out of English, Japanese, Mandarin and Indonesian, the one most flexible to use to curse people would be Indonesian due to the variety of words out there hahahaha

(Redditor 4, /r/Languagelearning, 13-10-2011)

In this response, Redditor 4 introduces another variation of Indonesian insults: “Indonesian has so many insults to use that those are pretty much considered standard and not offensive enough”. So, one expression can be interpreted both as standard and offensive (i.e., double

meaning). In contrast to the previous response to Redditor 3 (Extract 6.15), Redditor 4 uses *I don't know* with the adverb *really* as indicating uncertainty (“for reasons I don't really know as well”). In Grant's (2010) category, *I don't know* as marking uncertainty is associated with hedging. In this context, Redditor 4 refers to his/her uncertainty from the perspective of a native speaker and relates it to a general difficulty to distinguish whether it is an insult. The *I don't know* statement indicates that understanding such slang requires learners of the language to acquire high pragmatic competence. “I don't really know” is used as a part of linguistic explanation in teaching the language and functions to position Redditor 4's identity as an expert; *I don't know* is used as a voice of a native speaker or expert of the language to explain the difficulty.

“I don't really know” also emphasises the fact that Indonesian has a wide range of words/expressions for insulting. For this point, Redditor 4 characterises Indonesian as unique: “From my POV [i.e., point of view], out of English, Japanese, Mandarin and Indonesian, the one most flexible to use to curse people would be Indonesian due to the variety of words out there hahahaha”. Considering Redditor 4's willingness to explain about Indonesian slang throughout the interaction, Redditor 4 does not regard “the one most flexible to use to curse people” as a negative attribute of the language. The textual expression of laughter (“hahahaha”) also indicates Redditor 4's positive stance toward this linguistic aspect of Indonesian. By emphasising it, Redditor 4 characterises Indonesian as a distinctive language and it can be seen as promoting his positive face as a native speaker of the language.

In response (Extract 6.18), Redditor 3 both agrees and disagrees about Redditor 4's opinion

using *I don't know*. The following example shows the use of *I don't know* after showing agreement and disagreement.

Extract 6.18

[-] Currently learning: Chinese, German, Korean, Indonesian, etc 1 point 3 years ago

↑
↓ Fascinating! I knew the animal ones, but didn't know biji, so I think you've taught me something new. I agree with your POV about standard Japanese lacking some of the vulgarities found in other languages, but I disagree about Chinese... so far I've found some great colorful words in Chinese. But I suppose I don't know the depths of Indonesian dirty words. Feel free to unload and teach me any you want! I find it super interesting :)

(Redditor 3, /r/Languagelearning, 13-10-2011)

The phrase *I don't know* is used for avoiding and prefacing disagreement (Grant, 2010). First, Redditor 3 acknowledges that the language for insulting people in Indonesian is interesting (“Fascinating!”). Redditor 3 also refers to the fact that Redditor 4 has taught him/her new things, which is an implicit way of expressing gratitude. Then, Redditor 3 explicitly shows which parts he/she agrees and disagrees with. Disagreeing is a face threatening speech act, yet Redditor 3 uses mitigation strategies, including the use of ellipsis (“...”). Redditor 3 states his/her impression about Chinese (“some great colorful words”), which can be seen as a reason for his/her disagreement. In the comment, Redditor 3 does not use a conjunction “because” to link the reason with “I disagree about Chinese” and the use of ellipsis instead can soften a tone of disagreement.

Besides, Redditor 3 immediately withdraws his/her disagreement by using *but* and *I don't know*: “But I suppose I don't know the depths of Indonesian dirty words”. This use of *I don't know* after agreement and disagreement functions to present a natural position (Beach and Metzger, 1997) and also to take up a position as a learner of Indonesian by indicating

insufficient knowledge of the language or hedging (Grant, 2010). By this, Redditor 3 opens up the possibility of rejecting his/her idea and leaves room for Redditor 4 as an expert in the language to keep the same viewpoint about languages.

Redditor 3 also constructs an expert-learner relationship by using peer and student voices (“Feel free to unload and teach me any you want!”) and keeping the position of Redditor 4 as a peer and also an expert. We can see that Redditor 3 manages rapport in this peer expert-learner relationship; Redditor 3 appreciates the linguistic attributes of Indonesian by stating that learning them is “Fascinating!” and “super interesting”. These positive references to Indonesian or learning the language can respond to Redditor 4’s face claim associated with an identity as a native speaker of the language. Extract 6.19 is a response from Redditor 4 to Redditor 3 regarding the above point.

Extract 6.19

↑ [-] Indonesian N | English C2 | Mandarin B2 | Japanese B2 1 point 3 years ago

↓ I'm in the process of learning Chinese myself (Mandarin), and so far the words I know might not be deep enough ;)

Besides 幹 (which is apparently pretty common), 靠 and 混蛋 isn't that serious either. Granted, I don't know the severity of 王八蛋, for example. Taiwanese is pretty interesting though, seems like it has a lot of insults in. Taiwanese is related to Hokkien (Minnan language) so when I say cibai people in Taiwan would pretty much understand :p. There's also stuff like 靠貝 (not sure what the last one is) that's pretty interesting; "Go cry because your father is dead" or something.

(Redditor 4, */r/Languagelearning*, 13-10-2011)

Redditor 4 states that he/she is a learner of Chinese (Mandarin) and modifies his/her viewpoint in the previous post, giving a hedge that his/her knowledge “might not be deep enough”. Redditor 4 introduce some examples of Chinese slang terms for insulting such as 幹, 靠, 混蛋 and 王八蛋. These slang terms are related to euphemism. For example, 草

(“cao”) or 靠 (“kao”) are less direct compared to other direct obscene words. They are used as slang for “f**k” based on the phonetic equivalent of 肉/操 (“cao”), which literally means “to fuck” in Chinese. 王八蛋 is equal to an English slang word “bastard”. We can see that in this response Redditor 4 takes into account Redditor 3’s interest about euphemism.

Redditor 4 states “I don’t know the severity of 王八蛋” to indicate insufficient knowledge (Grant, 2010). Similar to Redditor 3’s use of *I don’t know* to construct a learner identity (Extract 6.18), Redditor 4 also positions him/herself as a learner of Chinese by using the phrase. While the two participants construct an expert-learner relationship by positioning their different roles, Redditor 4 also constructs his/her identity as a learner of a language by the use of *I don’t know*. Thus, their relationship is not fixed and their identities are negotiated through activities such as asking, answering, agreeing and disagreeing. Through exchanging comments, they present themselves as a particular learner of a language, namely, the learner who is aware of pragmatic aspects of the language and learns the language considering the social contexts.

Another aspect of maintaining rapport in their interaction is the use of CMC cues including laughter and smiles. Both participants use various smilies such as smiling :), winking ;), tongue sticking out :p. Particularly, they use the emoticon of smile face :) at the beginning and end of comments.

Extract 6.14

[-] Indonesian N | English C2 | Mandarin B2 | Japanese B2 1 point 3 years ago

Interesting anecdote: in net lingo/sms language (which is really hard to understand for non-native speakers with all the abbreviations, so I'm told), we usually shorten it to "noun2".

So anak-anak would be anak2, or for example jadi-jadian (fake) would be jadi2an, etc. Applies to Chinese names too; I think I've seen a use or two in the Malaysian/Singaporean webspace also.

Ling Ling could be Ling2.

When or if you get to studying the Indonesian slang language, it'll be a completely different world out there where grammar just get thrown out of the window :)

(Redditor 4, /r/Languagelearning, 13-10-2011)

Extract 6.15

[-] Currently learning: Chinese, German, Korean, Indonesian, etc 1 point 3 years ago

thanks for the comment :) although my bahasa indonesia is horrible, I did already know about the anak2 thing, I mean, how could I not know about that because 1. I love the internet 2. the doubling thing is my favorite feature of that language, so I gotta know the details. But since we are talking interesting points of the Indonesian language, I also find the euphemisms I know (and I don't know many, I am a beginner in the language) are quite fascinating. For example, "malam kupu kupu" (night butterfly) meaning prostitute or whatever. Wanna teach me another euphemism? :)

(Redditor 3, /r/Languagelearning, 13-10-2011)

Extract 6.16

[-] Indonesian N | English C2 | Mandarin B2 | Japanese B2 1 point 3 years ago

↑ ↓ Hmm, I'd be hard pressed to think specifically about euphemisms.. but when I see them I understand :) As for slangs, there are a lot about. "bete", "pewe", etc. If you want to learn insults (there is a LOT of words to insult people), you might need a few words from Javanese and Hokkien too :p

(Redditor 4, /r/Languagelearning, 13-10-2011)

Their use of the smile emoticon represents their positive stance about the topic and interaction. From a dialogical perspective, they 'agree' with their positive voices about Indonesian through responding to each other by the emoticons. By this, they present and share their rapport maintenance orientation in the interaction between Extract 6.14 to 6.16.

6.5 Conclusion

Based on the result of 4-gram analysis, this chapter focused on the participants' use of *I don't know* in different contexts. In the two fora, this phrase was commonly used by both the original posters and the other participant despite their differing interactional roles of advice

seeker or giver (section 6.1.3). The original posters used the phrase to build rapport by legitimating their participation as a beginner learner of a language (section 6.2.2). The other participant used the phrase as disclaimer to maintain rapport by avoiding a future face threat (section 6.2.3).

The next two sections were dedicated to discussing the examples of *I don't know* in the two threads individually (section 6.3 and 6.4). The participants used the phrase as a linguistic strategy for their management of face in building rapport. The participants' face claim is associated with identity (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b). From a sociocultural perspective (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005), positioning a stance is a means of discursive construction of identity. *I don't know* as an epistemic device presented the participants' stance about the topic, the on-going interaction and also their behaviours. To consider their significant identity in the interaction, I drew on the theory of situated learning (Wenger, 1998) and examined their relational identity as a member and a learner not only within the on-going thread but also in the forum. In *Learning Japanese*, beliefs about learning materials and methods are linked to the participants' construction of particular identities (e.g., beginner learner, advanced learner). The phrase *I don't know* was used to take a stance toward such learning methods. In */r/Languagelearning*, the participants negotiated a learner-expert relationship, using the phrase to construct their identities.

The theory of dialogue (Bakhtin, 1984) was helpful to examine *I don't know* as part of the construction of a voice in the ACMD, looking at how the participants responded to each other in a thread that is not based on a mode of turn-by-turn but message-by-message. Drawing on

Grice's (1975) cooperative principle in communication, I considered the implicature of their messages conveyed by the use of *I don't know*. Especially, in *Learning Japanese*, the participants used *I don't know* to express annoyance or take a negative stance regarding other participants' behaviour. The participants also used other linguistic strategies including indirect quote, italics and CMC cues to respond to others in a thread or "multilogue" (Shank, 1993). I showed that the participants used *I don't know* in different rapport orientations. In the example from *Learning Japanese* (section 6.3.2), the participants (Participant 2 and 3) used the phrase to challenge rapport or maintain a discord relationship in order to keep their positions and state their opinions. In the example from */r/Languagelearning* (section 6.4.3), Redditors 3 and 4 used the phrase to build rapport or maintain a harmonious relationship as learner-expert and peer-peer.

Throughout the analysis of *I don't know*, I found more aspects of ACMD which were drawn on by the participants to build and maintain rapport. One is using other speech acts such as indicating gratitude and apology in their messages. Another aspect is the participant's references about the medium of technology they used for participating in the threads to produce their messages. In the following chapters, I will consider these other aspects of language use in building rapport.

Chapter 7 Data Analysis (II): Thanking and Apologising

In this chapter, I will discuss the expressions of thanking and apologising and the following parts mainly consist of two parts. First, I will show the use of *thank you very much* and other forms of expressing gratitude (section 7.1). The analysis of thanking particularly foregrounds the reciprocal relationship in *Learning Japanese*, so I will discuss thanking as an important aspect of building rapport in the forum. Second, I will demonstrate what kinds of aspects of CMD the participants apologise for in order to maintain rapport (section 7.2).

7.1 Thanking

7.1.1 Thank you very much

In the result of the 4-gram analysis presented in Chapter 6, the most noticeable difference between the two online fora is the frequency of using *thank you very much*. This expression appears as one of the top-ten frequent four-word expressions in the Learning Japanese corpus but not in the /r/Leanringlanguage corpus. Table 13 shows the raw numbers of *thank you very much* in the two forums by the original posters (OPs) and other posters.

Table 13

Frequency of Using 'thank you very much' in the Two Fora

	Learning Japanese	/r/Learninglanguage
OPs	63 (192.18)	13 (16.36)
Other posters	5 (15.25)	4 (5.03)
Total	68 (207.43)	17 (21.40)

*Numbers in brackets refer to normalised frequency (frequency per million).

In both fora, the original posters used the expression *thank you very much* more than other

posters. This result is related to a typical discourse pattern of online forums, namely, advice seeking and giving interaction that consists of problem messages (or messages to request for help), followed by advice messages and thanking messages (Morrow, 2006). The main purpose of the two online forums is learning a language and the participants ask for advice, suggestions and resources for learning and respond to the requests if they can help. So the discourse of the two forums is based on a chain of the initial post (problem message), advice message and thanking message. Applying the rapport management framework, expressing gratitude through language is a way of building rapport by managing participants' sociality rights and obligations (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b). In particular, thanking is a speech act to fulfil the participant's sociality rights and obligations in terms of interactional reciprocity (cf. Culpeper et al, 2010, p.613).

The expression of *thank you very much* is a formal form of thanking and can sound too formulaic if the participants expect a more friendly and casual peer-to-peer relationship. Examples (9) and (10) show how *thank you very much* is used peer-to-peer relationship in informal learning contexts in the fora. In these examples, the original posters explicitly refer to their gratitude for given advice and help rather than just stating *thank you very much*.

(9) Ah thank you very much for the advice everyone, I really appreciate it.
(*Learning Japanese*, 01-08-2012)

(10) These will help a lot, thank you very much! (*/r/Languagelearning*, 01-01-201)

The speech act of thanking constitutes several components (e.g., Eisenstain and Bodman, 1986). In (9) and (10), the original posters also use thanking strategies including “Ah”

(expressing surprise), “I really appreciate it” (expressing appreciation), “These will help a lot” (reassurance). The participants increase the meaning of their sincere gratitude by emphasising the helpfulness of the advice and also add their personal touch by expressing emotion. From the rapport management perspective, thus, *thank you very much* fulfils the participants’ sociality rights and obligations in terms of reciprocity in giving and seeking advice, and also saves the participants’ face as a constitutor in the thread.

Although the most of the examples of *thank you very much* are the original poster’s use as an advice seeker, there are some instances where other participants used this expression; 5 threads in *Learning Japanese* and 4 threads in */r/Languagelearning* (Table 13). In these cases, the other participants also asked for advice or information related to the thread topic in the middle of the thread and received responses from other participants. The use of *thank you very much* by other participants can be seen as a strategy to avoid a face-threatening act. There is a threat in which the other participant starts a new topic by asking a question and this can be identified as a ‘thread hijack’ (Chapter 8 will consider this in relation to netiquette).

7.1.2 Other expressions for thanking

The result of lower frequency of *thank you very much* does not mean that there is a lesser frequency of thanking messages in */r/Languagelearning*. Recurrent patterns of thanking are related to contexts (see, Bardovi-Harlig, 2012, pp.211-213). There are other variations of thanking with *thank/thank you* (e.g., “thanks”, “thank you”, “thank you very much”), *appreciate* (e.g., “I would appreciate it ...”, “Any info is appreciated”) and *cheers* (e.g., “cheers all”). Table 14 shows the frequency of using three forms of thanking including *thanks*,

thank you, and *thank you so much*. According to the normalised frequency, we can see that the participants in *Learning Japanese* use more expressions for gratitude than in */r/Languagelearning*.

Table 14

Frequencies of Three Expressions with 'thanks' and 'thank you'

	Learning Japanese	/r/Learninglanguage
<i>thanks</i>	728 (2220.78)	925 (1164.62)
<i>thank you</i>	272 (829.74)	267 (336.16)
<i>thank you so much</i>	20 (61.01)	34 (42.80)
Total	1,020 (3,111.53)	1,226 (1,543.59)

*Numbers in brackets refer to normalised frequency (frequency per million).

In both fora, the more informal form of thanking (i.e., *thanks*) is more frequently used by the participants. In */r/Languagelearning*, *thank you so much* (34 examples) is more used than *thank you very much* (17 examples) while in *Learning Japanese*, *thank you so much* (20 examples) is less frequent than *thank you very much* (68 examples). In other words, the participants in the two fora prefer different upgraders in thanking; “very much” is more used in *Learning Japanese* and “so much” is used in */r/Languagelearning*. Spencer-Oatey (2008b) suggests that “as with the other choices of wording, cultures probably vary in both the frequency of use of upgraders/downgraders in given situations, and also in the rapport-management value associated with their use in these contexts” (p.27).

Expressing emotion. Aijmer (1996) classifies explicit and implicit thanking strategies in relation to their degree of emotion (emotional/non-emotional). Applying this viewpoint, thanking can be seen as a part of emotional expression in language use and is related to the

participants' sociality rights and obligations in terms of association or to what extent they expect to share their feelings. In the ACMD of the two online forums, expressions of thanking are often accompanied with CMC cues including exclamation marks ("!") and/or emotions of smile face. For example:

- (11) Thank you very much, that clears things up! 😊 (*Learning Japanese*, 04-10-2012)
- (12) Thank you! I'll check those out (I'm curious about "Your Corneas" in particular, aha). I already knew about that website, though I've never checked out the forum, but thank you SO much for the lakorn recs. :) (*/r/Languagelearning*, 11-05-2011)

Through these CMC cues, the participants (advice seekers) can share their positive emotions with other participants (advice givers). Adding the emotional reaction of being happy can make the other participants feel good as they can see their efforts to give advice are acknowledged. This can be considered as a motivation for the participants to help others in a relationship based on generalised reciprocity.

Thanking as a rapport management strategy does not only appear after the participants receive advice messages. The participants express gratitude for reading and taking time for responding in advance in a problem message. This conventional use of expressions with *thank/thank you* can be seen as "politic behaviour" or "behaviour, linguistic and non-linguistic, which the participants construct as being appropriate to the ongoing social interaction" (Watts, 2003, p.21). The participants in both fora use the expressions of gratitude for a request for further information in a response to an advice message or expect the responses from other participants.

7.1.3 Threads without thanking messages

Thus, thanking messages can promote the participants' face associated with their identities as learner/expert of a language and fulfil their sociality rights and obligations or expectations of appropriate behaviours in the fora. Yet, there are still many threads in which the participants do not express gratitude with explicit words including *thank*, *appreciate*, and *cheers*. Looking at these threads, I found that the participants expressed gratitude in different forms.

Thanking in other languages. The participants in the two fora stated *thank you* in non-English languages that they are learning or talking about in the thread, for example, “*gracias*” in Spanish is used in */r/Languagelearning*. The participants in *Learning Japanese* also stated *thank you* in Japanese, using either Japanese alphabets (i.e., ありがとう = thank you) or English alphabets (i.e., *arigatou* = thank you). Non-standard orthography of thanking (e.g., “thx”) is used as well. One playful example found in *Learning Japanese* is “thank yewwww!”, which presents a particular character of the participant. For this finding, I suggest that thanking in a particular language is a way of presenting an identity as a learner of the language. By this language choice, the participants are able to show their engagement in the language and the language learning-related forum.

‘Thank you’ button. In *Learning Japanese*, there are three threads³ in which the original posters as advice seekers pressed a ‘thank you’ button to express their gratitude instead of verbalising it with their own words (i.e., no thanks message at all in the threads). The ‘thank you’ button is a new function after the design of the forum was updated in October 2014.

³ There are ten threads in which the ‘thank you’ button is used in total and in seven of these the original posters not only use the ‘thank you’ button but also use explicit words to express gratitude.

Only registered members can use this function and see who pressed a ‘thank you’ button. These threads were published in December 2014 and it was just two months after the new function was introduced. The examples of using the ‘thank you’ button in the two threads are by the same original posters, who joined the forum in May 2014, while the example in the other thread is by another original poster who joined the forum in Jun 2010. In short, both the newbie (at that time) and more experienced member used the ‘thank you’ button in the same manner. If there are more examples, it will be interesting to see how the forum participants have adopted the new function for thanking.

7.2 Talking about Norms of Thanking

I also found that the absence of thanking messages was a trigger for discussing the community norms in *Learning Japanese*. One of the regular members in the forum repeatedly marked the absence of thanking negatively. On the other hand, there are not such interactions in */r/Learninglanguage* although the participants do talk about different aspects of the norms in the forum, which will be introduced in Chapter 8. This section focuses on the cases of discussing the norms of thanking and replying in *Learning Japanese*.

7.2.1 Role of superparticipant in *Learning Japanese*

One regular member appears frequently as an advice giver in the forum and sometimes points out the other participants’ inappropriate manner of replying. In Chapter 6, this participant was introduced as Participant 2. He plays a distinctive role in discussing behavioural norms or netiquettes with other participants in this forum. In particular, he raises an issue regarding interactional reciprocity; he states that the original posters should acknowledge the other

posters' responses.

Participant 2 is one of the veteran or old members in *Japan Reference* site, who joined on 15 March 2002. He is one of the top contributors in this forum; he has submitted posts the most and posted more than the forum staff. In the forum, some members are asked to be a moderator in the administrative team, but he is not a moderator and stays one of the regular members. The team members (moderators) are treated as the same as other members of the forum but also take a particular role:

Team members are considered as equal to any other forum member, and are only distinguished by their capacity to help moderate the Japan Forum according to their own judgment and availability. (*Japan Reference*, <https://www.jref.com/help/rules/>)

According to these characteristics of Participant 2's participation in the forum, I found that he also played as a particular role to help team members in the forum. He raises an issue regarding other participant's manners of posting and receives agreement from other participants and also team members through the 'Like' button.

His ways of engaging in this forum can be seen as "superparticipation" (Graham and Wright, 2014). As referred to in Chapter 4, there are three types of superparticipation including superposters, agenda-setters and facilitators. Graham and Wright (2014) define a superposter as a participant "who post[s] very frequently in a discussion forum" and especially "who has created more than 2% of all messages on a forum with between 20,000 and 99,9999 posts" (p.268). In the forum on *Japan Reference*, there are no members who dominate 2% of all messages but Participant 2 is the top participant who submits posts the most. Besides, in my

data based on threads submitted to *Learning Japanese* between 2011 and 2014, Participant 2 appears on the majority of threads and can be seen as a superparticipant. As introduced in Chapter 6, he is often involved in arguments with other participants including new members. On the other hand, he makes efforts to maintain rapport with them as a veteran member or superparticipant.

7.2.2 Example of negotiating a norm: “a habit of ‘drive-by’ posting”

The following interaction (Extract 7.1 to 7.3) is the most telling example in which Participant 2 gives the original poster (OP3, a beginner learner of Japanese) not only suggestions about learning the language but also instructions about the norms in this forum, managing the three elements of rapport. This interaction will be discussed in terms of (1) metacommunication about their beliefs about norms of reciprocity in the forum and (2) their language use for managing rapport in the interaction. For (1), I will illustrate the difference between their behavioural expectations by focusing on their metapragmatic comments about the manner of replying. For (2), I will consider how they manage rapport in discussing their different viewpoints without hostile argument, which is one of the examples for achieving harmony through disharmony in communication.

Context. The thread starts in 14 July 2014 and four participants join this thread including OP3, Participant 2, other participant and a moderator (Moderator 1). The date when OP3 registered in the forum is 19 June 2014, so the time of this thread OP3 is still a new member of the forum. In the initial post, OP3 explains his current situation that he takes an intensive Japanese class at his university and “I feel like I am falling behind”. He describes his learning

methods at present and requests advice about better learning methods, asking “I would like to know if there are any tips to learning the language faster?” and “What are some very reliable ways to learn this language effectively?”. OP3 receives a response from another participant, who points out the inefficient part of OP3’s learning method. Then, OP3 receives the following response from Participant 2 (Extract 7.1).

This message has three parts; the first paragraph is an evaluative comment about OP3’s manner of participation in this forum so far, the second paragraph is advice in response to OP3’s request and the third part (the last sentence) is a follow-up message. On the surface of this advice seeking and giving interaction, Participant 2 succeeds in meeting OP3’s interactional goal by responding. Yet, the content of Participant 2’s advice (i.e., retaking the class if you flunk) does not meet OP3’s expectation (i.e., tips for learning the language fast and efficiently not to fail behind). Participant 2 is an advanced learner or an expert in Japanese and he is able to provide learning tips based on his experiences.

Extract 7.1 Response to OP3

I'd feel more like spending my time to give you a serious answer if you had ever once revisited your previous threads and at least acknowledged that you have read the replies, even if you do lack the manners to say "thanks" or participate in them beyond your initial post.

If you flunk, you flunk. Retake the class at a regular pace if you can't keep up with the intensive course. It's not the end of the world and you're (currently) barred from entering Japan so there's hardly any hurry about your learning the language.

(I flunked the first Japanese course I ever took. I got over it).

(#3, Participant 2, *Learning Japanese*, 14-07-2014)

He implies his unwillingness to provide “a serious answer” at the beginning of this post. Participant 2 indicates that there is an imbalance in the reciprocal relationship between OP3 and Participant 2 (and other participants of this forum). Participant 2 states that he might be more willing to answer “if you had ever once revisited your previous threads and at least acknowledged that you have read the replies, even if you do lack the manners to say ‘thanks’ or participate in them beyond your initial post.” (underlined in the extract). Applying the rapport management framework, this comment is a statement of Participant 2’s beliefs about the participants’ sociality rights and obligations in this forum. OP3 replies to Participant 2 through message #4, which is divided into two parts. The first part is a response to Participant 2’s comment about his manner and the second part is an extra explanation about his current situation about learning the language. I focus on the first part for discussing the different norms that OP3 follows (Extract 7.2).

Extract 7.2

I'm not sure if it's a lack of manners of more of a cultural thing. The way I interact with my friends, family, and everyone I know is, I never say thanks or acknowledge having heard anything, but it's pretty much implied. If I give advice to my friends, they don't say anything back or even thank me, but I know they heard me. If I send messages to friends online, I know they read it due to Facebook's "read" feature, but they don't acknowledge or say thanks, so it's just normal. But, people from other countries have told me that Americans come off as rude, but I never noticed it. If it does bother you, I can find something to respond to in this threads, but I just want to get across that I didn't mean any disrespect, but rather that is just how I and the people around me communicate.

My 2 main reasons for learning Japanese were because: 1, I have always wanted to. And 2,

(#4, OP3, *Learning Japanese*, 14-07-2014)

OP3 explains his ways of interacting with other people including “my friends, family, and everyone I know”. In relation to the reciprocity, he refers to how thanks and

acknowledgement are understood in their interaction and how the function of “Facebook’s ‘read’ feature” work in their interaction. Facebook’s feature of marking a message as read is a medium factor of CMD (channel of communication) and the shared way of using this feature is a situational factor of CMD or a norm (Herring, 2007). Through the examples of how OP3 interacts with others online, he presents his understandings about the norms of communication online, namely, his beliefs about sociality’s rights and obligations in maintaining rapport with others through CMD. He also self-evaluates his behaviours drawing on a voice of “people from other countries”, with the statement “Americans come off as rude”. He states that “but I just want to get across that I didn’t mean any disrespect”, which shows his orientation to maintain rapport with other participants in this forum.

Extract 7.3 (next page) is Participant 2’s response to this meta-pragmatic comment about communication by OP3. In this message, Participant 2 responds to the interpretations about communication in the forum by OP3 and explains about what is the “minimum expected” in the forum.

Extract 7.3

Don't blame it on being an American. I'm an American and was raised with the importance of "please" and "thank you" well hammered into me from earliest childhood.

(And Japan is one of the most "please" and "thank you" intensive societies you'll find anywhere on the planet, so if you want to learn the language....develop the habit).

We aren't your friends and family and this isn't Facebook. The minimum expected from a person starting a thread is that he participate in it. The minimum expected from a person asking for information is acknowledgement that replies were seen. That is usually and most briefly handled by saying "thanks", though any other indication will serve in the case of people who lack the upbringing or who think it will break their jaw to say it.

You're an intelligent and well-spoken fellow and I'm glad to have you with us; I'm just letting you know that people *do* notice it when someone makes a habit of "drive-by" posting and will in short order either openly resent it or just totally ignore the person in the future.

Have you spoken to the teacher about your difficulties and sought advice there? Are there Japanese exchange students or perhaps some students who have taken higher levels of the Japanese courses you could ask to tutor you or help drill you on the material? What specifically do you find difficult? Memorizing vocabulary? Grasping grammar points? If you have specific problems from your course material that you just can't figure out, feel free to post them here and we'll do what we can to help you with them.

(#5, Participant 2, *Learning Japanese*, 14-07-2014)

Facebook or other sites, the 'read' feature or other feature to indicate the participant's presence and acknowledgement is not available in this forum. By this message, Participant 2 emphasises the importance of thanking in this forum. From the rapport management perspective, this message indicates OP3's obligation in return to receiving his rights in terms of equity. The message can also threaten OP3's face and sociality rights in an indirect way, by referring to negative (uneducated or peculiar) characteristics of those who choose an alternative option to express acknowledgement other than saying "thanks". This can pressure

OP3 to say “thanks”; otherwise OP3 is seen as “people who lack the upbringing or who think it will break their jaw to say it” and thus the choice of the alternative action can threaten OP3’s positive self-image of himself.

Then, Participant 2 maintains rapport by increasing OP3’s positive image or face as an individual identity (“You’re an intelligent and well-spoken fellow”) and fulfils OP3’s sociality right in this forum by warm welcoming (“I’m glad to have you with us”). Participant 2 refers to an inappropriate practice of posting as “a habit of ‘drive-by’ posting” and suggests that OP3 should stop such a habit of posting, which can cause negative experiences in the forum. In the last paragraph of this message, Participant 2 lists questions or aspects of learning that OP3 may have struggles with. This list can be seen as a resource for OP3 to know how to ask for advice or specify his questions so that the other participants are more likely to reply with helpful answers. At the end, Participant 2 shows his willingness to help by referring to “we”, which indicates that he states this message as a member of this forum (“feel free to post them here and we’ll do what we can to help you with them”). These messages imply that Participant 2 expects to have future interactions with OP3.

Disharmony in communication. This interaction shows how OP3 and Participant 2 deal with a clash between different norms in communication, which is seen as disharmony in terms of management of sociality rights and obligations. OP3 and Participant 2 draw on different norms or moral orders (Kádár and Haugh, 2013) to evaluate their manners of posting; OP3 follows the localised norms of communication with his family and friends (i.e., outside of this forum) and Participant 2 follows the community norms of communication in

this forum. Although both participants claim that their manners of posting are appropriate and there is disagreement between their opinions, their interaction does not turn to a dispute and flame by attacking their face images. Through Extract 7.1 to 7.3, they explicitly exchange their different perceptions and understandings about appropriate manners in the forum. Their interaction is conflictual but it moves on to a negotiation process, which can be characterised as “adjustment” (O’Sullivan and Flanagan, 2003).

Nevertheless, as we have seen, a part of Participant 2’s message in Extract 7.3 could threaten OP3’s face and violate his sociality rights of not having a particular habit imposed on him (i.e., saying “thanks”). Yet, Participant 2 still maintains OP3’s face by increasing or repairing OP3’s face in the subsequent message by calling him “an intelligent and well-spoken fellow”. In response, OP3 does not react against Participant 2’s message about the community norms of behaviours anymore. Instead OP3 only responds to the practical questions from Participant 2 (e.g., “What specifically do you find difficult?”) and concentrates on the primary goal of the advice seeking and giving interaction.

Rapport maintenance orientation. It can be said that OP3 and Participant 2 hold rapport maintenance orientation because they manage to achieve their interactional goal for advice seeking and giving. After Participant 2’s previous message (Extract 7.3), their interaction is followed by four more messages posted by OP3, Participant 2 and the moderator. The moderator also gave some suggestions and asked a question about OP3’s ways of participating in classes. OP3 responds to both Participant 2 and the moderator, explaining more details about his proficiency (e.g., what skills he has confidence with and not) and

current difficulties in learning the language. We can see that OP3 as an advice seeker corrects his “a habit of ‘drive-by’ posting” by meeting the minimum expectation of acknowledging the other participants’ replies to him. In fact, the thread ends with the moderator’s follow-up advice message and OP3 does not respond to it this time. Considering that OP3 does not ask for further questions, OP3 does not expect to receive further advice after he responds to the moderator and Participant 2. OP3 at least showed his explicit engagement in this thread beyond his initial post. So, his continuous participation can indicate his rapport maintenance orientation or “a desire to maintain or protect harmonious relations between the interlocutors” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.32). Participant 2’s use of language is also based on rapport maintenance orientation according to his willingness to help OP3 and expression to welcome OP3 as a member of the forum.

Rapport management. They use a range of rapport management strategies for face, association rights and interactional goals, which I have illustrated in the previous sections. Particularly, in Extract 7.2, OP3 explicitly states that he does not mean to disrespect other participants, which shows his consideration about the other participants’ rights in the forum and again indicates his rapport management orientation. OP3 also uses linguistic strategies for maintaining rapport particularly in the discourse and participation domains. He participates in the thread beyond his initial post and replies to other participants by quoting (explicit ways of acknowledging) and relating to the previous posts (implicit ways of acknowledging). Through these practices of acknowledging, OP3 fulfils the minimum behavioural expectation and responds to or aligns with Participant 2’s stance.

Situated learning and building rapport. By sharing the regular member's perspective regarding the appropriate behaviours, OP3 is able to present his identity as a member of this forum. From the perspective of the practice dimension of situated learning (Wenger, 1998), Participant 2's messages address the shared repertoires that the forum participants are required to draw on in order to achieve interactional goals: to mutually engage in the joint enterprise (i.e., participate in the thread). The minimum expectation in generalised reciprocity of this forum can be reified through expressing gratitude by language (e.g., "thanks").

7.3 Apologising

7.3.1 Functions of *sorry*

Apologising can also be seen as a common strategy for maintaining rapport in the online forum. For example, apology is used to avoid the development of flaming (Lee, 2005) and to save face or the self-image of the participants in the online discussions (Ädel, 2011). In the rapport management framework, apology is viewed as managing not only face but also sociality rights and interactional goals. In particular for sociality rights, Spencer-Oatey (2008b) explains that:

Apologies are typically post-event speech acts, in the sense that some kind of offence or violation of social norms has taken place. In other words, people's sociality rights have been infringed in some way [...] there is a need to restore the 'balance' by the other person giving an apology. (p.19)

In terms of 'balance', Leech (2014) also pointed that thanking and apologising have the common function of restoring the equilibrium between people in communication from the perspective of his model of General Strategies of Politeness.

In the case of apology, the imbalance has occurred because *S* offended *O*. In the case of thanking, the imbalance is due to a favor or good turn that *O* has done for *S*. Both speech events are basically face-enhancing for *O*, in fulfillment of the Maxim of Obligation (of *S* to *O*)” (Leech, 2014, p.197).

Previous research identifies lexemes recognised as the explicit expression of apologising (Blum-Kulka, 1984; Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper 1989; Deutschmann, 2003; Page, 2013). Particularly, Page’s (2013) proposed list of lexemes is helpful to identify the expressions by searching the corpus: *regret, pardon, afraid, excuse, forgive, sorry, apology/apologies* and *apologise/apologize*. In both sub-fora, *sorry* is used the most frequently. There are 179 references of *sorry* in the *Learning Japanese* corpus and 184 references of *sorry* in the */r/Languagelearning* corpus. (These numbers do not include the use of *sorry* as part of example sentences for grammar in the language.) In both fora, *sorry* is most frequently used as an expression for apologising and *I’m sorry* and *I am sorry* are more used in *Learning Japanese* than */r/Languagelearning* (Table 15).

Table 15
Frequencies of Expressions with ‘sorry’

	Learning Japanese	/r/Learninglanguage
<i>sorry</i>	137 (417.92)	159 (200.18)
<i>I’m sorry</i>	25 (76.26)	23 (28.95)
<i>I’m so/really/deeply sorry</i>	3 (9.15)	1 (1.25)
<i>I am sorry</i>	10 (30.50)	1 (1.25)
<i>I’m so/very sorry</i>	4 (12.20)	-
Total	179 (546.04)	184 (231.66)

*Numbers in brackets refer to normalised frequency (frequency per million).

Looking at these examples of using expressions with *sorry*, the participants apologise not only post-events but also present-events or pre-events. The following will examine what are the things that offend the participants for which they need to manage rapport by apology.

7.3.2 Apology and interactional goals

With the explicit expressions, the participants in the two fora apologise for a range of aspects in communication with other participants. In the advice giving and seeking interaction, they apologise regarding their manners of asking and answering, such as giving a late response. They are also apologetic about their behaviours and language use in relation to submitting and composing posts (Table 16).

Table 16

Typical Apology in the Two Fora

1. Submitting a post	e.g., posting in a wrong place
2. Content of a post	e.g., wrong information, missing links, length, off-topic, quality of images
3. Composing a post (Language)	e.g., formatting, typos, writing system, spelling & grammar
4. Asking and responding	e.g., a beginner-like question, too many questions, late response, limitation to offer a help

Through looking at these types of apology, I found that the participants apologised for their behaviours that they recognised as affecting a smooth interaction or their shared interactional goal of having a discussion on the topic. From another viewpoint, the participants' apologies show that they draw on meta-pragmatic knowledge about delivering messages in the context of ACMD. In the rapport management framework, the appropriate manners of submitting and

composing can be seen as linguistic rapport strategies from the discourse domain. The participants manage the topic and content of CMD at different levels; the discourse of the forum (related with learning a language), the discourse of a thread (related with a specific topic in the forum) and the discourse of a post (related with the topic of thread).

Submitting a post. When the participants apologise for submitting a post, they are worried about being against the forum rules such as posting to a wrong forum. For this reason, there are some original posters in *Learning Japanese* who show hesitation when starting a new thread by apology.

- (13) First of all, I'm deeply sorry if I've made a wrong decision choosing a place for the topic. (*Learning Japanese*, 28-10-2014)

Contents of a post. The participants in the two fora tend to apologise about the contents of their posts particularly when they think their post is not an appropriate length and not clear. Their concern can be seen as avoiding violation of the maxims of Grice's (1975) cooperative principle. For example,

- (14) It's a long one, sorry! But I'd like to know if my use of Japanese is correct here. I'm only a beginner, so I'm not very good! (*Learning Japanese*, 01-07-2012)

- (15) Sorry about the long message :) But, here are my thoughts on the matter. (*/r/Languagelearning*, 11-09-2011)

Like excusing a long speech in advance, these participants excuse the length of their posts.

This shows that they believe that posting a long entry is not positively perceived by other

participants in the fora. (14) is the example where the original poster excuses themselves for the length of the initial post. At the beginning of this post, the participant explicitly tells the other participants the reason for the long post is attributed to his/her motivation to learn the language. This interactional goal related to learning the language is appreciated by the other participants and the original poster received responses without being criticised about the long post. (15) is an example in which the participant excuses the length of the post before providing advice. The apology message ends with a smile :). This indicates that the participant thinks the long text is not a serious matter to be apologised for but it is appropriate to express hesitation in imposing its reading on others. In the rapport management framework, their apology fulfils the other participants' rights. In */r/Languagelearning*, the participants also use other strategies to display their hesitation about the length, which is adding a "TL;DR" message. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Composing a post. The participants also consider the formatting of their posts and their language in posts. They show apologetic attitudes to their abilities in composing if the texts in a post are not organised well. I will particularly discuss examples of this in section 7.3.3.

Asking and responding. Focusing on the acts of asking and responding, I found more examples of apology by the advice givers in */r/Languagelearning* than *Learning Japanese*. They apologise about their limitations in offering advice when they find their advice only partially helpful for the advice seekers.

- (16) Just to add to this, listening to something with Portuguese subtitles would be a nice intermediate step. (Sorry, I don't know a good source of materials for that language.) (*/r/Languagelearning*, 21-06-2013)

The apology in (16) can be seen as a disclaimer; it can save the participant's own face from future criticism from other participants. Similar to apology as disclaimer, the participant in (17) also apologises for being pedantic in a form with a conjunction *but*.

- (17) Sorry if this sounds pedantic, but just in case you really got confused there.
(*/r/Languagelearning*, 04-09-2012)

In Chapter 6, I discussed the participants' use of *I don't know* with *but* as positioning. Here, I suggest that the participants' apologies can also function to position them as a peer participant. This can be seen as part of their face claim and construction of identity (i.e., not being pedantic) and helps them to negotiate a relationship with other participants in an informal learning context.

7.3.3 Apologising about their language use

Regarding rapport management in CMD, what I am particularly interested in is the participants' apologies for their language use in relation to composing a post. Looking at their apology messages regarding their language, they show their awareness of what kinds of composing skills are required for participating in threads. Barton and Lee (2013) identify one of the common aspects of metalinguistic discourse in online interactions as self-deprecating metalanguage or "utterances where a person downplays their own linguistic abilities" (p.115). They demonstrate that the function of self-deprecating comments is related to ways of

participating and constructing particular identities. In the two fora, the participants also post such self-deprecating comments about their ability of composing messages as disclaimers. In both fora, there are examples where they apologise for their English.

- (18) Sorry since I'm not a native english speaker I often try to bring words from portuguese to english. (*Learning Japanese*, 2014-05-24)
- (19) EDIT: Sorry about any English mistakes, this is not my native language!!!!
(*/r/Languagelearning*, 2012-01-22)

These apologetic messages are due to the situational context of CMD in the forum; the participants use English as a common medium. There are also examples in which the participants excuse their language by referring to their use of digital tools.

- (20) First one: sorry for the bad writing/spelling. I'm typing this from tapatalk, so it's kind of hard to check for grammatical errors/typos. (*Learning Japanese*, 2011-11-23)
- (21) Typing on my phone. Sorry about the formatting and shortness.
(*/r/Languagelearning*, 2014-07-17)
- (22) I accidentally deleted this already so sorry about the bluntness of the reply, I didnt want to have to write that essay again! (*/r/Languagelearning*, 2013-07-01)

The participants refer to constraints of the technologies they are using as the reason not to choose an appropriate language or writing system. For (20), tapatalk is an application or a platform that enables people to access the forums available online in a mobile device. The participant in (21) also indicates that he/she is using the phone and is not able to format the message as he/she wants. The participant in (22) particularly states the process of failing to

post the original comment as the reason for the blunt language of the post. These examples suggest that the participants' language use for building and maintaining rapport can be influenced by their use of technology.

In *Learning Japanese*, it is common to excuse the use of Romaji characters (a Japanese writing system which uses the English alphabet) and this kind of apology is also related to their use of particular devices.

(23) Hi guys, sorry for the romaji. iPad. (*Learning Japanese*, 2013-07-28)

While the site *Japan Reference* encourages the forum members to use English as a common linguistic medium, they prefer to use or expect each other to use Japanese letters (i.e., Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji) to refer to examples of Japanese sentences or words in *Learning Japanese*. Choosing a writing system is one of the ways of showing the current level of language proficiency or a way of displaying an identity as a learner of the language. Similarly in */r/Languagelearning*, there are also examples where the participants code-switch from English (main medium) to their target language. I suggest that the choice of writing system was importantly related to rapport management in *Learning Japanese*. The participants usually use other writing systems with Japanese letters and they tend to apologise for using Romaji letters, which can be seen as part of the norms or conventions in this forum.

7.3.4 Face attack apology

Besides, there are also examples of using *sorry* that express other meanings rather than apology. Lakoff (2001, pp.202-204) explains that the form of apology (e.g., *I'm sorry*) also

can function as an expression of non-responsible sympathy (e.g., I'm sorry to hear that) and a denial (e.g., I'm sorry, but you're wrong!). These functions are also interesting aspects to consider in relation to the constructions of rapport. For example, *sorry* as non-responsible sympathy can fulfil the participants' sociality rights in relation to "affective involvement–detachment (the extent to which we share concerns, feelings and interests)" (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.16). The following example is the use of *I'm sorry* as denial. This message is a response to the original poster who wants a tattoo in German, which is the original poster's background but he/she does not speak the language.

- (24) i'm sorry but do you not see the stupidity of getting a tattoo in a language you don't know? German is your background, then learn German!
(/r/Languagelearning, 17-06-2012)

This use of *I'm sorry* can be seen as a face-attack apology, which is "uttered in situations where the remedial nature of the apology is questionable" (Deutschmann, 2003, p.46). Leech (2014) discussed face-attack apology as a preface to a FTA and suggested that "the most common means of expressing an apology, (*I'm*) *sorry*, is actually more of a variable signal, not always signifying an apology, and not always conducive to politeness" (p.119). The above face attack apology is followed by a criticism and a piece of advice, which can threaten the original poster's face by giving him/her a negative attribute (i.e., stupidity). This example of face-attack apology also shows that the participants in the forum use expressions for apology such as (*I'm*) *sorry* not necessarily for maintaining rapport. In the example, the poster of the message holds a rapport neglect orientation in order to achieve an interactional goal of giving practical advice. In both *Learning Japanese* and */r/Languagelearning*, the participants sometimes ask for help regarding tattoos in their other language. The reactions

from other participants are not always positive and especially in *Learning Japanese* the regular members had a discussion on their thoughts about this type of request made in the forum.

7.3.5 Thanking and apologising: repairing rapport

I found that thanking and apologising often appeared together in the participants' interactions. The followings are examples of how the participants negotiate a balance of equality in their relationships in a given context. Extract 7.4 shows the original poster (OP4) in */r/Languagelearning* apologising for their late response and implicitly explains the reason for the delay. In the thread, OP4 received responses from six people after starting the thread. The “Edit” means OP4 edited the initial post to add a message. The added message is a response to the six participants who give him/her advice, which consists of thanking and apologising.

Extract 7.4

I am practicing my oral French, and I cannot for the life of me get the French r right. Does anyone have any tips for this particular phenomenon?
 Edit: Thanks, all. I will try all of these tricks. I was trying to pronounce rentre and it was just miserable. Sorry for the radio silence.
 Boston>LAX>Sydney>Brisbane took a lot out of me.

(OP4, */r/Languagelearning*, 01-05-2014)

OP4 appreciates all of the participants in the threads by referring to “all” in a thanking message, which fulfils their sociality rights as being treated fairly in terms of equity. OP4 also apologises for the delay in replying by stating “Sorry for the radio silence”. The last sentence “Boston>LAX>Sydney>Brisbane took a lot out of me” implies that OP4 was traveling and could not check this thread for a while. The original posters who start a thread in */r/Languagelearning* do not always indicate their presence in the thread by responding. The

other participants in this forum do not show their negative evaluation regarding the absence of OP4's explicit presence in the thread.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on two speech acts: thanking and apologising. They are important to maintain a balance of equals or equilibrium in interpersonal communication. From the perspective of rapport management, these speech acts are not only relevant to face management but also to management of the participants' sociality rights and obligations. Section 7.2 discussed the use of language for thanking. I found that the participants also expressed gratitude in other languages that they were learning and suggested that choosing another language for thanking was related to their identity construction in the informal language-learning context. The analysis of expressions for thanking indicated that the participants interpreted the absence of thanking messages differently between the two fora. Here, applying the theory of community of practice (Wenger, 1998), this different interpretation is related to the form of participation or reification of practice for thanking.

In *Learning Japanese*, the regular participant (Participant 2) who appears as a super-participant played an important role in negotiating the norm of reciprocity with other participants. For this point, the extended interaction was discussed in section 7.2.2. I suggested that the medium context of the forum could influence their rapport management. The participants' discussion regarding the appropriate manners of posting showed how the medium factors and situational factors are related with each other in CMD. In particular, the comparison between this forum and Facebook shows how the medium factors can influence

norms of communication.

In section 7.3, I discussed the participants' expressions for apologising. I found that they apologised not only post-events but also pre-events and many of their apology strategies were related to their manners of posting. I suggested that their practice of apology was related to their interactional goal of having a smooth interaction. I also found that they used apologetic expressions to refer to their language use, which Barton and Lee (2013) identified as a common metalinguistic discourse online or self-deprecating metalanguage.

Chapter 8 Data Analysis (III): Meta-pragmatic Comments and Netiquette

So far, I have discussed the examples of rapport management in *Learning Japanese (Japan Reference)* and */r/Languagelearning (Reddit)*, focusing on particular linguistic features; the expressions frequently used by the participants (e.g., “I don’t know”) in Chapter 6 and expressions of thanking and apologising in Chapter 7. Examining the participants’ use of these expressions gave me an insight that the participants’ language use for building rapport was influenced by the netiquettes that are not only stated rules but also tacit agreement. In this chapter, I will develop a discussion of how netiquettes as the forum norms can influence the participants’ rapport management by analysing their meta-pragmatic comments about in/appropriate behaviours, focusing on different aspects of interactions including whether interactions are evaluated as polite/impolite/rude (section 8.1 and 8.2), the forum rules about posting (section 8.3) and the manners of composing posts (section 8.4 and 8.5).

8.1 Analysis of Meta-pragmatic Language

8.1.1 Talking about polite and impolite in the fora

This section focuses on meta-pragmatic lexis including *polite*, *impolite* and *rude* to examine how the participants interpret and evaluate their behaviours using these explicit terms. Using AntConc, I searched the terms *polite*, *impolite*, *rude* and their inflections (I did not take into account typographic errors of these terms). Overall, the participants in *Learning Japanese* use these meta-pragmatic terms more than in */r/Languagelearning* (Table 17). Culpeper (2009) shows that *rude* is more commonly used than *impolite* by lay people in his corpus-based study. I also found that the participants in the two corpora used *rude* more than *impolite*.

Table 17
Mentions of 'polite', 'impolite' and 'rude' in the Fora

	Learning Japanese	/r/Languagelearning
<i>polite</i>	93 (283.69)	12 (15.10)
<i>politeness</i>	26 (79.31)	7 (8.81)
<i>politer</i>	3 (9.15)	0
<i>politely</i>	2 (6.10)	4 (5.03)
<i>impolite</i>	3 (9.15)	3 (3.77)
<i>impoliteness</i>	0	0
<i>rude</i>	23 (70.16)	31 (39.03)
<i>rudeness</i>	0	1 (1.25)
Total	150 (457.57)	58 (73.02)

*Numbers in brackets refer to normalised frequency (frequency per million).

Looking at their use of the above terms, the participants discuss politeness and impoliteness more in relation to the use of language that they are talking about in the thread. In most examples, they use *polite* and *impolite* to refer to grammatical forms of language and appropriate ways of speaking in a given situation. While *rude* is used to refer to their behaviours, there are only a few examples where they use *polite* and *impolite* to characterise their own behaviours. This can be related to the situational context of CMD in the fora (Herring, 2007), that is, the theme of the fora is learning a language and so they are likely to talk about language as a thread topic. In the CMD context of learning a language, *polite* and *impolite* are more likely to be used as technical terms to discuss the language as a topic. The following are examples in which the participants use *polite* and *impolite* in the fora.

- (25) I am going to send an e-mail to both my Japanese teacher And one of my host families I stayed with a few years ago. [...] Anyway, I want to be polite, but not too formal. (*Learning Japanese*, 07-10-2011)

- (26) I think it's probably seen as impolite in general to remark on errors unless the error is absolutely immediately lifethreateningly serious (*Learning Japanese*, 21-11-2014)
- (27) Hmm, in m opinion this applies to all Romance languages. In Italian I always overestimate how polite I should be and usually get laughed at.
(/r/Languagelearning, 24-06-2012)
- (28) You are not "doing them a favour" by speaking Russian to them instead of any other foreign language, and even though most older people know Russian quite well it is really impolite to assume that everyone can.
(/r/Languagelearning, 09-06-2013)

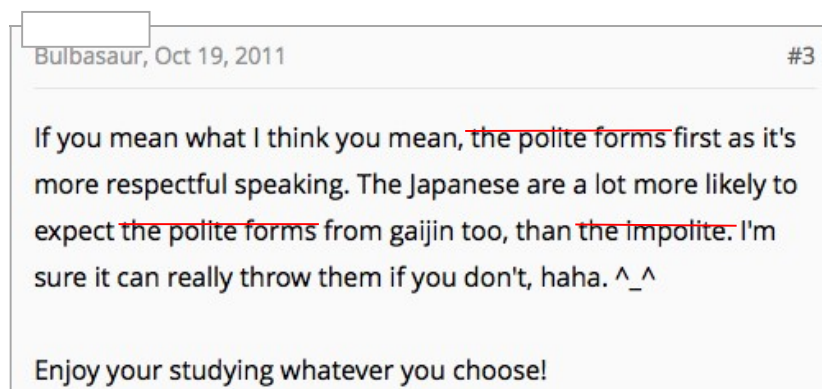
When they talk about polite/impolite forms of expressions in a language, they consider not only grammatically correct and polite linguistic forms but also ‘polite’ and ‘appropriate’ use of the language in a social context, drawing on their experiences of using the language. The participants are aware of issues of politeness and appropriateness in using a language in different contexts. In politeness theory, this aspect of language use can be seen as “sociopragmatics” (Leech, 1983, Thomas, 1983). It can be said that talking about a language with other participants is an opportunity for them to develop their pragmatic competence in the language, which is not necessarily possible in a formal learning context (i.e., classroom).

In Chapter 3 (section 3.2.1), I discussed whether the two fora about learning a language can be understood as communities from the perspective of situated learning, considering the distinction between ‘learning about’ and ‘learning to be’ (Brown and Duguid, 2000; Hung and Chen, 2002). The above examples show that the participants use their knowledge about the language to answer a language-related question. I suggest that this process is part of

‘learning to be’ a learner or user of the language. In this informal learning context, the participants are maintaining rapport by managing an interactional goal in asking and answering questions. In relation to this point, there are interesting interactions in *Learning Japanese*, in which the participants negotiate the meanings of *polite* and *impolite* in advice seeking and giving interactions. It is one of the examples where the participants use *polite* and *impolite* to compare different grammatical forms, yet in the contexts an *impolite* form does not necessarily mean lack of manners or rudeness.

Extract 8.1 Polite/impolite comparison

[Context. The original poster was wondering which grammatical form of Japanese he/she should learn first, ‘informal’ or ‘formal’ grammr. Two participants responded to this question. One of them recommends learning the ‘informal’ form. The following is another participant’s response to the original poster’s question.]



While the original poster and the first respondent in the thread use the term *formal* and *informal*, the above participant rephrases this formal/informal comparison with the polite/impolite comparison by hedging before his/her interpretation about what the original poster means (“if you mean what I think you mean”). This example shows that the participants do not necessarily share the same technical terms to talk about the language. The

usage of *impolite* can make sense only in a given context. So, if the participants do not share the term, they are more likely to negotiate the meaning of meta-pragmatic terms to talk about the language in a given context. This can be influenced partly by a situational context of CMD, the code (Herring, 2007). The participants in the forum use English as a common medium, but not all of them are native speakers of the language. Next, I will consider how the participants refer to *polite* and *rude* to show their perceptions about marked behaviours.

8.1.2 Examples of referring to behaviours with *polite*

The first example is from *Learning Japanese*. It shows that a regular participant (Participant 5) uses *polite* as a self-reference to give an evaluative comment about his previous post. In the thread, the original poster (OP5) introduces a web application of a Japanese sentence generator that he/she is building and requests the participants in *Learning Japanese* for suggestions/thoughts to improve the application. Participant 5 is one of the participants in the thread. He uses the application and points out some weakness of the application. Extract 8.2 is a part of his response to OP5.

Extract 8.2

I think that You are combining phrases by some pattern using compound phrases, or randomly returns phrases from some pregenerated set of correct phrases. I mean, that is not real 'phrase generator'

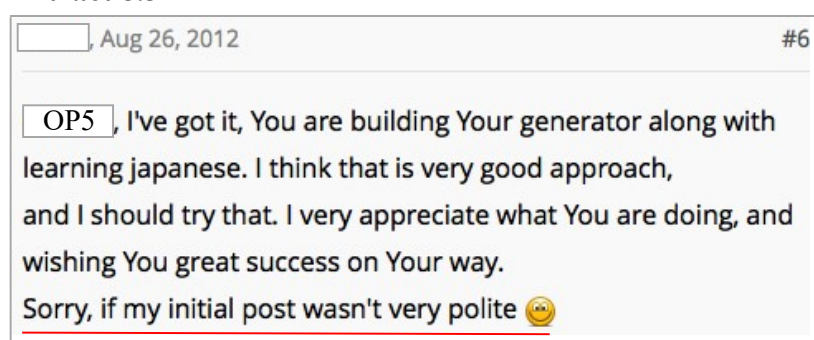
Sorry, I just started learning japanese, so my speculations could be incorrect 😊

(*Learning Japanese*, Participant 5, 25-08-2012)

Participant 5's negatively evaluative comment ("that is not real 'phrase generator'") can

threaten rapport with OP5. The participant's interactional goal of this post is to give OP5 feedback about the application. Participant 5 ends his post by adding an apology message as a disclaimer about the previous comment and a smile emoji (😊). By mitigating his negative feedback by an apology message, Participant 5 shows his rapport maintenance orientation with OP5. In response to this comment, OP5 explains what the application can do now and what features he/she will add in the future. Extract 8.3 is the next Participant 5's response to OP5.

Extract 8.3



(*Learning Japanese*, Participant 5, 26-08-2012)

In this post, Participant 5 shows his understanding about OP5's purpose for building the application, thanking and apologising. In his apology message, Participant 5 uses *polite* to refer his previous post in a reflective way; he evaluates the content of his previous post negatively by saying "Sorry, if my initial post wasn't very polite". This can positively manage rapport with OP5 by showing his concern about OP5's face damage.

Extract 8.4 is an interaction from a thread from */r/Languagelearning*. Before this extract, there was an interaction between the original poster (OP6) and a participant of the thread (Redditor 5, R5) who both speak German and are interested in learning Dutch. In the interaction, they use English instead of German as their common language. Then, another

participant (Redditor 6, R6) replies to their interaction by stating “Haha, zwei Deutscher reden auf Englisch :D [=two German speakers speak English :D]”. Redditor 5 uses *polite* to explain why they are using English and OP6 simply replies with a sticking out tongue emoticon “:p”.

Extract 8.4



(/r/Languagelearning, 10-01-2012)

Redditor 6’s comment “Haha, zwei Deutscher reden auf Englisch :D” can be seen as teasing as he/she uses the CMC cues of laughing in text (“Haha”) and an emoticon of laughing face (“:D”). Redditor 5’s comment “Just being polite” indicates that she/he believes using English as a common medium is ‘polite’ in this forum. The common language can allow participants speaking different languages to join the thread. From the viewpoint of rapport management, this norm of using an appropriate language is related to the participants’ association rights. By using English, OP6 and Redditor 5 maintain rapport on the thread; they show their intention of not using the thread as space for a private chat in German but making their interaction open to other participants. Fulfilling this association right is also related to the interactional goal of developing a discussion of this thread. This is also related to a situational context of CMD (Herring, 2007).

Redditor 6’s teasing comment is in German and the responses from OP6 and Redditor 5 are

in English and/or emoticons. From a dialogical perspective, these different choices of language are a way of responding to each other and presenting their different voices or perspectives about choosing a language. Redditor 6's use of German can be seen as his/her motivation to respond particularly to OP6 and Redditor 5 (German speakers). On the other hand, Redditor 5's use of English is a response of being polite to Redditor 6 and also other participants in the forum. These three participants react to their use of languages (German and English) by responding to each other with emoticons: the laughing face “:D”, the wink face “;)” and the sticking out tongue face “:p”. In Chapter 6, I suggested that the use of emoticons was a way of presenting a voice or perspective on Indonesian from a dialogical perspective (section 6.4.3). Similarly here, it can be seen that they present different perspectives about using English and German, using the western-style emoticons as a common medium.

8.2 Examples of Referring to Behaviours with *rude*

This section discusses the participants' use of *rude* to refer to their behaviours. Firstly I will consider an example from *Learning Japanese* (section 8.2.1) and two examples from */r/Languagelearning* (section 8.2.2). These examples show how the participants negotiate the meaning of rudeness.

8.2.1 Taking about rude in *Learning Japanese*

The following extracts are from a thread in which the original poster (henceforth, OP7) and Participant 2 have a conflict and OP7 uses *rude* to refer to Participant 2. The thread starts in 19 December 2012 and OP7, who joined the forum in June 2012, was a relatively new

member (membership of a half year) compared to other regular participants in the forum.

OP7 asks for advice to keep his motivation of learning Japanese as he/she loses motivation.

There are twelve participants in this thread including OP7, Participant 2 (super-participant), Participant 3, seven more participants, a moderator joining as a participant, and the administrator joining to moderate the thread.

Participant 2 is the first respondent and suggests there is no need to force OP7 to learn the language in 19 December 2012. One of the participants in the thread agrees with this idea.

OP7 receives responses from more participants by 24 December 2012. After one of the participants posts a comment about OP7's request, OP7 posts a message that he/she does not need a criticism about learning the language without motivation to learn it at present.

Participant 2 reacts negatively about OP7's comment referring to it as criticism. Although OP7 does not state that she/he perceives Participant 2's post (response) as a criticism, OP7's later posts indicate that the "criticism" refers to how OP7 perceives Participant 2's response. The interaction between OP7 and Participant 2 develops discussions/arguments on the behaviours in the thread including:

- an argument between OP7 and Participant 2 regarding whether there is a criticism in the thread and an attempt to call out OP7 from the thread (Argument 1)
- an argument between Participant 2 and 3 regarding Participant 2's ways of composing posts (Argument 2)
- an argument again between OP7 and Participant 2 regarding respecting behaviours in the forum (Argument 3)

In Argument 1, OP7 admits that she/he misunderstands what Participant 2 states in a post and

apologise for it, Participant 2 repeats his point and OP7 apologises again. OP7's apologies indicate her/his orientation to repair a relationship with Participant 2 and avoid further conflict. Yet, OP7 and Participant 2 have a conflict again when Participant 2 and 3 start an argument (Argument 2). The trigger of the argument is the following post from Participant 3:

Extract 8.5

Dec 24, 2012 #26

P2 said: ↑

Nobody said if you aren't motivated you shouldn't be learning Japanese. You need to work on reading what people say rather than what you think they said.

And you need to work on making yourself easier to understand instead of forcing people to scrutinize every single word you write before coming to a conclusion about what you actually mean.

(#26 *Learning Japanese*, Participant 3, 24-12-2012)

Participant 3 directly quotes Participant 2's response to OP7 and uses Participant 2's words of "You need to work on" to point out Participant 2's lack of consideration for readers in his posts. Participant 3's comment indicates that OP7's misunderstanding what Participant 2 means cannot be not solely attributed to be OP7's own fault. In terms of cost and benefit for reading, Participant 3's comment also indicates that Participant 2's manner of composing posts violates the other participants' rights not to be forced "to scrutinize every single word you write".

Participant 2 and 3 have an argument regarding the manner of composing. Their argument is ended by Participant 2's message #35, which says "Your opinion of my composition has been noted, and will be ignored. You are free to continue discussing it by yourself if you wish"

(message #35). For this Participant 2's message, OP7 also posts a comment in the thread, pointing that Participant 2 needs to respect other participants (Extract 8.5). In other words, OP7 as the third party for the interaction between Participant 2 and 3 perceives and interprets Participant 2's comments negatively. In response to OP7's comment, Participant 2 claims his rights and obligations by stating them explicitly in the interaction (underlined in Extract 8.6) and the administrator also posts as a representative of staff members. In this interaction (Extract 8.6), OP7, Participant 2 and the administrator explicitly present their thoughts and expectation regarding their sociality rights and obligations from different viewpoints (for saving space, I omit the direct quotes of OP7 before starting their comments in Participant 2's and the administrator's posts in the extract).

Extract 8.6

#36 OP7 (25-12-2012):

Dec 25, 2012	#36
<p>Now that's just unnecessary. You're a real jerk you know that? You need to take it easy with the sarcasm. I thought <u>forum staff JENFORCED the rules</u>, which should include respecting other members which I certainly don't feel you do. You may think I'm hyper sensitive, <u>but I think a lot of people feel the same way I do.</u></p>	

#37 Participant 2 (25-12-2012):

<p>"Respecting" other members doesn't include <u>being obligated to write in the way they wish to dictate. I listened to his opinion and I choose to exercise my right to ignore it. He is free to continue expressing it. What is your beef with that?</u></p> <p>It isn't as though I engaged in such disrespectful activity as gratuitous name calling.....which is what you did by calling me a jerk. Practice what you preach, brother.</p>
--

[continued]

*Do the rules you think should be enforced include "respecting" other members? Or do you merely think they *should* include that? If the latter, why would you expect anyone to enforce a nonexistent rule?*

For that matter, what does it even mean to "respect" other members? I disagreed in an entirely civil manner. You're the one ramping it up with juvenile name calling. Where did you get the idea I was being sarcastic? I was in dead earnest.

And to think I took you off the ignore list yesterday. That was certainly a premature decision on my part.

#38 Administrator (25-12-2012, last edited in 26-12-2012):

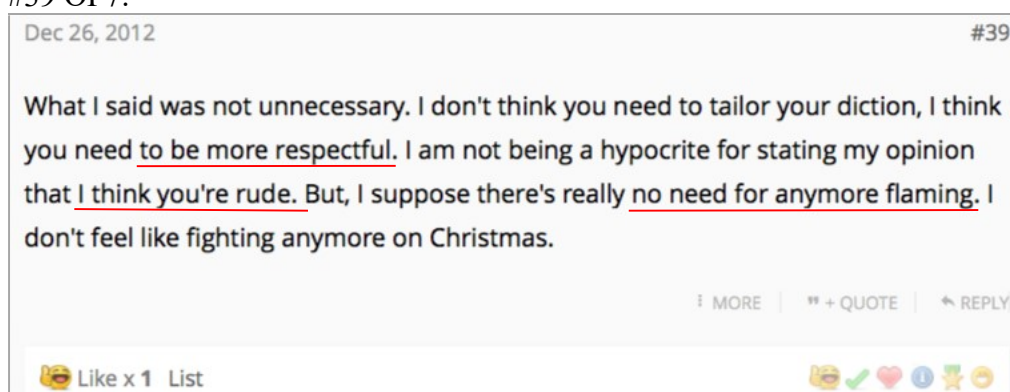
We cannot enforce respect. We can try to discipline members by imposing infractions and bans if deemed necessary, none of which will result in more respect. As I told you in my PM last night, there is always the option to put members on the ignore list. Calling someone a jerk isn't exactly respectful either, is it?

In message # 36, OP7 states the staff members' obligations and her/his rights to expect them to do so: "I thought forum staff JENFORCED [enforced] the rules, which should include respecting other members which I certainly don't feel you do". OP7 also claims that this is not necessarily her/his personal opinion but there are other participants expected to do so. Since OP7 has only been a member for half a year at this time, this comment can be seen as a viewpoint from a relatively new member of this forum. In response to this OP7's post, Participant 2 states his obligations and rights regarding respecting other members in message #37. Participant 2 claims his rights not to be "obligated to write in the way they wish to dictate". The "his opinion" refers to Participant 3's evaluative comment about Participant 2's style of composing posts. Participant 2 refers to "an entirely civil manner", which is how he behaves in the forum. Participant 2's comment is seen as a viewpoint from a regular participant of the forum.

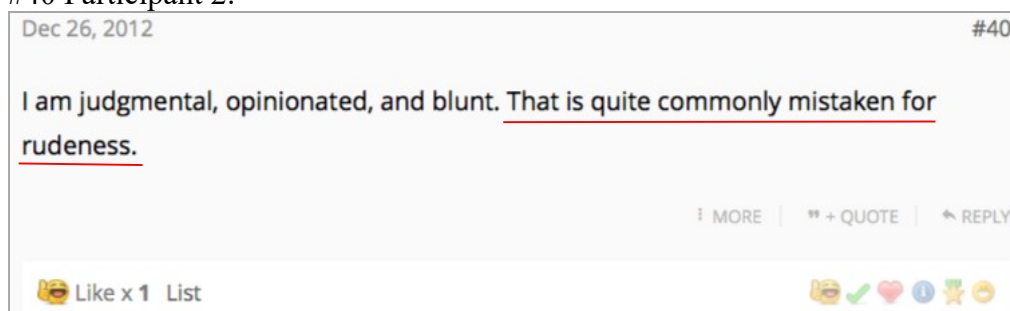
In message #38, the administrator states what staff members can do and try to do, namely facilitating disciplines for appropriate behaviours and giving infractions and bans if necessary. This administrator's comment also can be seen as a statement that explain how the administrator perceives their (both the staff members and forum members) obligations and rights in the forum. The administrator also points that OP7's use of language is also less respectful (i.e., "you're a real jerk" in message #36). OP7 posts another comment after Participant 2 (P2)'s and administrator's responses (Extract 8.7).

Extract 8.7

#39 OP7:



#40 Participant 2:



Here, OP7 uses *rude* to characterise or evaluate Participant 2's manner in the forum ("I think you're rude."). This comment can damage Participant 2's face by associating Participant 2's characteristics with a negative attribute or rudeness. Participant 2 restores his face by associating other characteristics with him (i.e., "judgmental, opinionated and blunt").

Extract 8.8

#41 OP7 (26-12-2012):

Dec 26, 2012 #41

P2 said: ↑

I am judgmental, opinionated, and blunt. That is quite commonly mistaken for rudeness.

I was a lot like you a short while ago. I still am to a degree, but I try not to outwardly display my feelings of contempt for everyone. The life of an unbridled cynic is a lonely one, but the life of a tactful cynic is one of wisdom.

#42 Participant 2 :

Dec 26, 2012 Last edited: Dec 26, 2012 #42

Are you saying I was displaying contempt? I was entirely civil.

What constitutes "cynical" is likely to differ greatly between one who has ridden the planet around the sun sixteen times and one who has made the trip forty seven times.

(And I can't ever recall having seen anyone called a cynic when it wasn't intended as an insult).

By talking about him/herself, OP7 associates the characteristics of “judgmental opinionated, and blunt” with displaying contempt. Participant 2 regards this comment as a negative comment regarding him and claims that he stays a civil manner (“I was entirely civil”). Repeating that he is civil indicates that being civil is Participant 2’s beliefs to behave appropriately in the forum. OP7 also adds a comment about “cynic” distinguishing between an unbridled cynic and a tactful cynic. OP7 does not refer Participant 2 as “cynic”, but Participant 2 implies that he perceives that being called a cynic is an intentional insult.

Extract 8.9

#43 OP7:

Dec 26, 2012 #43

I didn't mean you displayed contempt. Well enough is enough I suppose. Why don't we get back on track with this discussion. This argument is a waste of time

#44 Participant 2:

Dec 26, 2012 #44

Motivation typically arises from passion, necessity, suffering, fear, or other such stimuli. It is impossible to artificially create. Fortunately, there is a substitute which works just as well for your purposes, which is determination. A streak of bullheaded, stubborn as a jackass determination will accomplish things that mere motivation won't even attempt.

⋮ MORE | + QUOTE | ↩ REPLY

👍 Like x 2 List 👍 🟢 ❤️ ⓘ 🏆 🙏

In message #43, OP7 suggests stopping the argument, saying “Why don’t we get back on track with this discussion. This argument is a waste of time”. After this comment, Participant 2 stops referring to the previous argument and returns to the topic of the thread by responding again to OP7’s initial request for advice on keeping motivation (message #44). At the level of discourse structure, Participant 2 is ‘civil’ and maintains rapport in the advice giver and seeker relationship by meeting OP7’s expectation to have an advice for keeping to learn the language. Yet, in his advice, Participant 2 repeatedly uses negative adjectives to describe “determination”, namely, “a streak of bullheaded, stubborn as a jackass determination”. The series of negative adjectives can be seen as Participant 2’s response; it could be read as a ‘civil’ manner of avenging OP7’s previous impolite comments that implicitly associates negative characteristics with Participant 2’s personality. Participant 2 uses a mock politeness strategy to achieve his interactional goals of being ‘civil’ on the thread and also being

impolite to OP7. Thus, the interactional goal is the key element of Participant 2's strategies for rapport management with OP7.

Interactional goals. As Spencer-Oatey (2008b) emphasises, the three elements of rapport management are interrelated with each other. The above interaction highlights this interrelation of rapport management. Achieving the interactional goal of the thread is related with managing face and sociality rights and obligations. When OP7 expects to return to the original topic of the thread ("Why don't we get back on track with this discussion"), Participant 2 aligns with OP7's stance to return to the original interactional goal of the thread (advice seeking and giving) and posts a response to OP7's request. By stopping the argument, Participant 2 also fulfils OP7's sociality rights to keep a type of interpersonal relationship with the other forum participant in the thread, namely an advice seeker and giver relationship rather than one of opponents. Based on the above example, I suggest that emphasising the task-oriented goal in the interaction can be one of the strategies for the participants to find an agreement about how to interact with each other, who have different viewpoints about behavioural expectations. I will discuss management of interactional goals again in the next section.

8.2.2 Taking about rude in /r/Languagelearning

In /r/Languagelearning, the term *rude* is more frequently used than *polite* and *impolite*.

Extract 8.10 is one of the examples where the participant refers to their own behaviours with *rude*. In the thread, the participants talk about a forum website for learning a language and Redditor 7 (R7) mentions that the owner of the forum claimed ownership of the contents

including the users' posts on the website. Redditor 8 (R8) requests sources about the information but considers this request could be seen as 'rude'.

Extract 8.10

↑ [-] R8 1 point 2 years ago

↓ I'm sorry if this comes off as rude, but could you cite your sources for where he says he claims ownership of all of it? Maybe he means the posts on the webpages themselves.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] R7 2 points 2 years ago

↓ Well, the big drama thread was over here:
http://www.reddit.com/r/languagelearning/comments/pok3z/on_the_very_problematic_nature_of_the_biggest/
 Here's the excerpt you're looking for.
 Of course, there's no way of verifying it since the site is offline:

(/r/Languagelearning, 15-04-2014)

The participant expresses an apology with “I’m sorry if” and a conjunction *but*, which can be seen as a formulaic disclaimer (cf. Overstreet and Yule, 2001), and asks a question with *could* rather than *can*. These linguistic strategies for a request indicate the participant’s consideration about Redditor 7’s face and sociality rights. Requesting an original source can be taken as a face threat in terms of trust because it implies that Redditor 8 is not satisfied with the information given by Redditor 7. It also could be a cost for Redditor 7 to provide the URLs if the participant does not have the URLs at present and needs to spend time to find where they are. In response to this, Redditor 7 does not explicitly mark Redditor 8’s request as rude. Redditor 7 provides the link to the source and also quotes the particular part that Redditor 8 wants to check after the comment of “since the site is offline”. Having a question-and-answer interaction means that Redditor 8 manages rapport with Redditor 7 and achieves his/her interactional goal to get the URL of the source.

Extract 8.11 is another example of using *rude* to refer to the behaviours in the forum. The extract is the last part of the interaction between the original poster (henceforth, OP8) and Redditor 3 (who was introduced in Chapter 6), which consists of nine comments. Before this extract, five comments are exchanged between them.

Context. OP8 is a learner of Chinese as a foreign language and needs to improve his/her ability in Chinese language to attend a university. However, OP8 thinks the private tutors around him/her are not experienced in teaching learners of Chinese as a foreign language and is not happy with his/her current tutor's teaching method. In the initial post, OP8 requests advice to "deal with" the private tutor. One of the participants in the thread (Redditor 3) points out that the problem is not on the side of the tutor but on the side of the student (OP8). OP8 explains that the tutor pushes him/her to learn 160 words per day, and then OP8 and Redditor 3 (R3) discuss whether learning 160 words every day is pushing. Redditor 3 thinks OP8 means learning 160 words 'every day OP8 met the tutor' not 'every day'. The extract is the following interaction between them.

Extract 8.11

↑ [-] OP8 1 point 5 years ago

↓ I don't know why you doubt we meet every day, we do. Maybe you could tell me other assumptions you make, then we can discuss them, then you could help me suggest plans. If you don't have any experience or ideas on lesson plans or anything, then maybe we don't need to go through this.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [parent](#)

[continued]

[-] **R3** Currently learning: Chinese, German, Korean, Indonesian, etc 1 point 5 years ago

Because by your own words you are too busy to study? If you are free enough to meet every day then why are you complaining about being pushed hard? Sorry if I come off rude, but that's my experience talking. Students who expect the teacher to be magic, instead of providing the magic themselves. You decide what you want to learn and learn it. The problem is not in the tutor, if you can see that, then maybe you can get through your frustrations with learning. Just trying to help. but I don't know if we can see eye to eye on this.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [parent](#)

[-] **OP8** [S] 1 point 5 years ago

↑ If I told you to learn 1,000 words a day am I pushing too hard? If I tell you to learn 1 word a day is it too little? I'm trying to find a sustainable way of learning. I'm trying to find numbers and facts. I don't think you have any.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [parent](#)

[continue this thread](#) →

[-] **R3** Currently learning: Chinese, German, Korean, Indonesian, etc 1 point 5 years ago

↑ I guess we have entered a state of a disagreement where we can't understand each other because you said "if I told you" and my whole point is YOU should tell YOURSELF. Your problem is wanting to think of learning as external, it's internal. You set your pace, and you can do it for YOU. There is no "fact" of learning, everyone has different methods that work for them. It is an internal thing that you have to find.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [parent](#)

(/r/Languagelearning, 28-03-2011)

The above interaction starts with OP8's response with "why you doubt we meet every day". In Chapter 6, I showed the participants in *Learning Japanese* used *I don't know* as expressing their annoyance or negative stance when they perceive the comment as misunderstanding or inappropriate (Extract 6.5, 6.6 and 6.8). In the above example, OP8 also expresses his/her negative reaction toward Redditor 3's response. OP8 suggests that they could continue to discuss whether Redditor 3 is making "other assumptions" and has "experience or ideas on

lesson plans”. This request for particular answers can be seen as an evaluative comment and implies that Redditor 3’s previous comments are not helpful. OP8’s response can be seen as setting a condition for a future interaction with Redditor 3 and implies that OP8 wants to stop interacting with Redditor 3 if she/he is not able to meet the condition (“If you don’t have any experience or ideas on lesson plans or anything, then maybe we don’t need to go through this”). From the rapport management perspective, this conditional comment about the future interaction from one side can affect rapport in terms of association rights.

In response to OP8, Redditor 3 continues to present her/his opinion regarding the nature of the problem for OP8’s learning. Redditor 3 expresses apology with *rude* (“Sorry if I come off rude”), which, with the subsequent *but*, can be seen as a disclaimer or a face-attack apology (Deutschmann, 2003). The use of a face-attack apology indicates that Redditor 3 holds a rapport neglect orientation in order to achieve his/her goal of stating opinions. Redditor 3 ends the comment with “but I don’t know if we can see eye to eye on this”, which implies they have different viewpoints and cannot agree with each other. In response to this, OP8 states what kinds of answers she/he expects and thinks that Redditor 3 with the different opinions is unable to do so (“I don’t think you have any”). This message can be seen as implying closure of the interaction. Finally, in the last comment of their interaction, Redditor 3 makes a conclusion that “we have entered a state of a disagreement where we can’t understand eachother [each other]”. This can be seen as a response to OP8’s implication about closing the interaction and agrees that they do not agree with each other.

Interactional goals. Focusing on the interactional goal in the rapport management

framework, the above interaction can be seen as an example of when the participants put more weight on achieving their interactional goals than other elements of rapport. Regarding the interpersonal aspect of their interaction, there is a conflict in terms of their sociality rights and obligations in their advice seeker and giver relationship. OP8 as an advice seeker has a goal of receiving practical advice from the other participants in the thread and believes they have the right to request it in this forum. Redditor 3 as an advice giver has an obligation to make his/her comment as relevant and helpful, but it is negotiable for them to what extent OP8 requests favours from Redditor 3.

Regarding their interactional goals in advice seeking and giving, they have different viewpoints about a learner's appropriate attitude for learning a language or in a learner-tutor relationship. Hence, they also have different viewpoints about what counts as helpful advice and need to negotiate between the advice that OP8 expects as a learner and the advice Redditor 3 thinks she/he should provide as a peer learner of language. Yet, in terms of an advice seeker and giver interaction, they achieve an interactional goal although they disagree with each other. As introduced in Chapter 1, the working definition of rapport in the present study is "a fundamental characteristic of well-functioning human relationships" (Lakin, 2009, p.1328). There is not mutually emotional agreement (e.g., empathy, liking) between OP8 and Redditor 3, but applying Bakhtin's dialogical perspective on agreement, they have an agreement to maintain their different viewpoints or voices in this discussion and by doing so they have a kind of well-functioning human relationship.

Linguistic features. In the previous comments before the extract, Redditor 3 repeatedly

uses hedging before giving his opinions such as “Don’t hate me for trying to be honest with you, but” in the first response to OP8 and “Don’t take this the wrong way” in the second response to OP8. Redditor 3 as an advice giver carefully presents her/his intention to give opinions by hedging. In the interaction of the extract, they use the expressions *I don’t know* and *sorry*, which were discussed in relation to linguistic strategies for rapport management in the two fora in the previous chapters. So, from the rapport management perspective, I suggest that although they have a conflict between different opinions, they ‘agree’ on what counts as a civil tone for achieving a task-oriented interactional goal. They do not intentionally post insulting comments that harm the other side’s feelings in relation to face.

This is another example where the participants maintained a ‘civil’ tone in their interactions when they do not have the same opinions and viewpoints. In */r/Languagelearning*, there is another example in which the two participants have different viewpoints and one of them perceives the message as offence, which will be discussed in section 8.4.

8.3 Netiquettes: Talking about Forum Rules for Posting

In this section and the next section, I will focus on meta-pragmatic communication or “communication that focuses on the interpretation and evaluation of social actions and meanings in interaction” (Kádár and Haugh, 2013, p.194). I will illustrate examples that show how the participants interpret and evaluate their behaviours positively and negatively through the interactions. One of the evaluation criteria in their language use is a set of forum rules, which are reified community norms for communication. In both fora, their forum rules ban several behaviours in relation to posting. *Learning Japanese* particularly bans threadjacks,

necroposts, duplicate posts, and off-topic posts. */r/Languagelearning* bans the use of memes and to “repeatedly or solely submit your own content”. From the perspective of rapport management, banning these behaviours is especially associated with sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals. For instance, submitting duplicate posts and repeatedly posting content without intervals can be seen as disrespecting other forum member’s expectations of having an equal attention given to their posts. It can also disturb the other participants who are looking for particular content to achieve their interactional goal for learning. Needless to say, it is necessary for maintaining a forum that each participant follows the forum rules or netiquettes.

8.3.1 Duplicate posts

Duplicate posts or submitting the same contents repeatedly is a negatively marked behaviour in both fora. There are examples where the participants unintentionally duplicate the same contents. In Extract 8.12, Participant 2 uses the term “duplicate post” to point out the original poster’s (OP9’s) inappropriate manner of posting.

Extract 8.12

#2 Participant 2 (03-03-2012):

<input type="text"/>	Mar 3, 2012	#2
You already asked this. Please don't start a separate thread for a duplicate post.		

#3 OP9 (03-03-2012):

<input type="text"/>	Mar 3, 2012	#3
If I did I am sorry. It wasn't intentional.		

After OP9 apologises, this thread ends. In this example, OP9 does not provide enough information to explain why the unintentional duplicate post happens. One possible explanation is the system of posting. When a post does not appear immediately after submission, the participant can interpret that the submission is failed and need to submit it again. Duplicate posts can be related to medium/technological contexts (Herring, 2007). The next example gives further insights into the relation between contexts of CMD and an unintentional duplicate post.

Extract 8.13 (next page) is an extract of a thread in */r/Languagelearning* and this is another example in which the poster apologises for an unintentional duplicate post. The poster explains that poor Internet access caused the duplicate post and there are two reactions to this duplicate post. The first reaction (the first red arrow) is a confusion: “wasn’t sure which one to upvote”. The participant avoids pointing out or criticising the duplicate post in a direct way. Instead, this comment implicitly expresses positive evaluation by referring to her/his intention to upvote the post. The poster of the duplicate post apologises and explains that it is caused by “freakishly slow connection”. This apology message is also posted twice, with slightly differing wording (Duplicate post 2): “Sorry about that!”, indicating that the slow connection may have led him to type and upload the response a second time. Another comment (the second red arrow) is posted as a response to the apology message: “This is a fantastic explanation. Mad props and/or upvotes”. This is another positive evaluation about the poster’s original content. Thus, although the poster (unintentionally) violates the forum rules of “Do not repeatedly or solely submit your own content”, the other participants understand the poster’s medium context and do not criticise the duplicate post.

Extract 8.13

[-] [] 11 points 4 years ago Duplicate post 1

Basically, in some languages, whenever you quantify a noun as a number (five children, for example), you must must an extra word alongside the noun you are modifying. So, in Derpese, instead of saying "Five children," you would have to say "Five derp children." But not all nouns use the same measure word. A lot of times, nouns are given different measure words based on their characteristics (people, animals, long and flat, big, small, etc.)

So while you might say "five derp children", for "five dogs" you would have to say "five fleefloop dogs". It's really just an extra thing that you have to memorize with the nouns. The same sort of thing exists in english to an extent (five heads of cattle is the classic textbook example), but it is much more important in some languages.

permalink embed parent

[-] [] 2 points 4 years ago
 → wasn't sure which one to upvote.

permalink embed parent

[-] [] 4 points 4 years ago Duplicate posts 2

Sorry about that. I have a freakishly slow connection where I am. Somehow that ended up duplicating my post many, many times.

permalink embed parent

[-] [] 2 points 4 years ago
 → This is a fantastic explanation. Mad props and/or upvotes.

permalink embed parent

[-] [] 2 points 4 years ago Duplicate posts 2

Sorry about that! I had a freakishly slow connection where I was, and somehow that duplicated my response. Oops!

permalink embed parent

[-] [] 2 points 4 years ago Duplicate post 1

Basically, in some languages, whenever you quantify a noun as a number (five children, for example), you must must an extra word alongside the noun you are modifying. So, in Derpese, instead of saying "Five children," you would have to say "Five derp children." But not all nouns use the same measure word. A lot of times, nouns are given different measure words based on their characteristics (people, animals, long and flat, big, small, etc.)

So while you might say "five derp children", for "five dogs" you would have to say "five fleefloop dogs". It's really just an extra thing that you have to memorize with the nouns. The same sort of thing exists in english to an extent (five heads of cattle is the classic textbook example), but it is much more important in some

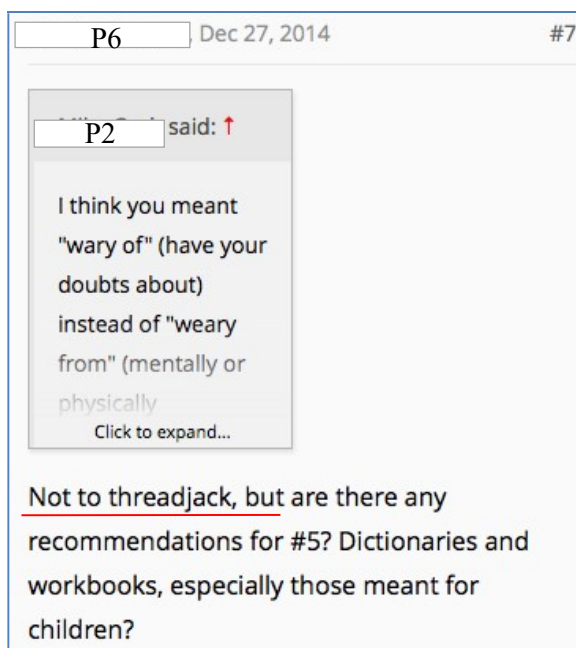
The participants in the thread value the poster's content of the post by the above comments (the two reactions) and giving upvoting, which can repair the poster's face as a participant of the thread. I will discuss more on the voting system as evaluation in Chapter 10.

8.3.2 Threadjack

Threadjack or thread highjack refers to when another poster (other than the original poster) takes over the thread by changing the topic of that thread. There are examples where the

participants consider their ways of posting could be perceived as threadjacks and refer to this as a disclaimer. In Extract 8.14, another participant (Participant 6, P6) in the thread asks Participant 2 (P2) a question about learning materials, quoting Participant 2's earlier post.

Extract 8.14

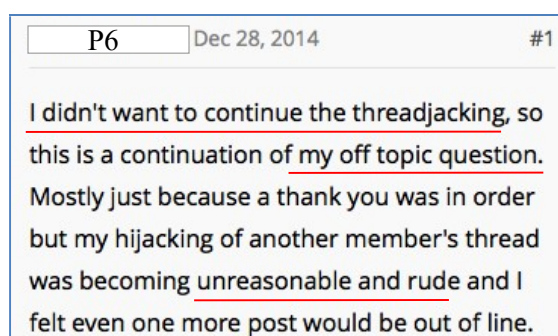


In this post, Participant 6 indicates that he is aware that asking a question on the other's thread can be moving off topic slightly and also threadjacking. Participant 6 states "Not to threadjack", and shows that threadjacking is not the intention. This can be seen as a strategy for maintaining rapport in two ways; fulfilling the thread owner's (i.e., the original poster) sociality rights by minimising the interruption and fulfilling the forum members' sociality rights by acknowledging the forum rules. In the thread, other participants and the original poster do not criticise this side question and Participant 2 answers this question in the following parts of the thread. In the situational context of CMD (Herring, 2007) or the context of this forum, the participants in the thread put more value on Participant 6's goal of

learning a language than on the strict interpretation of the forum rules. This example shows that although threadjacking should be avoided, Participant 6 could manage to ask a question for the purpose of learning through rapport management (considering the other participants' sociality rights).

In the thread, Participant 6 has more questions and eventually starts a new thread (Extract 8.15). This comment is the first paragraph from the poster's initial post on the thread.

Extract 8.15



This extract tells how Participant 6 interprets and evaluates his manner of posting. He explains why he starts a new thread because “I didn’t want to continue the threadjacking”, which indicates again that Participant 6 does not have an intention to threadjack. Participant 6 states his meta-pragmatic awareness that threadjacking is an inappropriate behaviour in the forum and should be avoided. He evaluates his ‘hijacking’ as “unreasonable and rude” in a reflective way. This Participant 6’s self-evaluative comment shows his consideration about the other forum member’s sociality right (i.e., to be respected as the owner of the thread) and his obligation as a member of the forum (i.e., to follow the forum rules). Thus, applying the rapport management framework, the above message at the beginning of the initial post is a way of managing rapport with the other participants in the forum.

8.3.3 Necropost

Necropost or posting a thread that has stopped for years is negatively marked particularly in *Learning Japanese*. There are no examples of referring to “necropost” in */r/Languagelearning* in the corpus. Having a different netiquette foregrounds a different medium context of CMD (Herring, 2007) between these fora in relation to the persistence of messages in each website system. While *Japan Reference* has an archive which stores all threads and the participants can find past threads, *Reddit* shows a maximum of a thousand threads and the participants cannot easily find older threads beyond one thousand threads. In this section, I will therefore focus on examples from *Learning Japanese* (Extract 8.16 and 8.17). Extract 8.16 is a message from a moderator (Moderator 2) to a participant who submits a post to a thread that started three years ago. Before this message, the moderator as a native speaker of Japanese replies to the participant’s post by correcting an inaccurate grammatical explanation and the participant expresses gratitude for this. In response to the participant’s thanks message, Moderator 2 (M2) posts the following.

Extract 8.16 Quoting the forum rule

M2, Dec 17, 2014
#8

Just one more thing. Please do not necropost.

VI. Duplicate posts, bumping and necroposting

Do not post to threads that have not been updated for many years, unless your post is relevant to this particular thread. Rather start a new thread and link to the old thread you want to refer to.

In this message, the moderator plays a role as a moderator rather than as a peer-advice giver or expert of the language; the moderator uses the discourse of the staff team by drawing on the forum rules. For the sake of maintaining the forum, the moderator is expected to facilitate appropriate behaviours in the forum. The moderator prioritises his social obligations associated with his roles as staff member, which influences his linguistic strategies for regulating the necropost. The directive message (“Please do not”) can affect the participant’s sociality rights in terms of imposition, yet in this context it is an appropriate message. An interesting aspect of the moderator’s manner of posting is that he separates posts for giving grammatical correction and pointing out the necropost. The moderator negotiates his roles in the forms as a peer-member and staff member. I suggest that separating posts for shifting stances is also an important aspect of language use for staff members to maintain rapport with other participants.

So far, I showed how the participants use terms to label three types of banned behaviours (duplicate post, threadjack, necropost) when they find these negatively marked behaviours in the forum. In the above examples, these behaviours do not cause conflicts among the participants, but they are marked explicitly by other participants and moderator. In the next section, I will discuss nitpicking, which is not banned by the forum rules but is negatively marked by the participants.

8.4 Negatively Marked Behaviours: Nitpicking

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, to “nitpick” means “to criticize (a thing) in an overzealous or pedantic fashion; to find fault with” (“Nitpick”, n.d.). In the two fora for

learning language, “nitpicking” refers to the corrections or comments that point out minor linguistic mistakes (e.g., spelling mistakes or typos). The following examples show how nitpicking can affect rapport in the participants’ interpersonal relationships in these two fora.

8.4.1 Nitpicking in *Learning Japanese*

In this section, I will introduce two threads from *Learning Japanese*, in which the participants refer to nitpicking to express in what ways they perceive and interpret their behaviour. These examples particularly demonstrate how the participants negotiate the meaning of nitpicking as inappropriate in the forum.

Interaction 1. In the thread, a conflict occurs between Participant 7 and moderators (Moderator 1 and Moderator 2). The original poster of the thread is a beginner of Japanese and asks about a basic grammar form. Participant 7 as one of the participants answers the question in the thread, introducing the rule about the grammar form. Moderator 2 as an expert in the language corrects Participant 7’s explanation. Moderator 1 as a peer-learner of the language also joins this thread, recommending a good website (learning resource) for the original poster. In response to Moderator 2’s correction, Participant 7 starts with a message to “everyone” on the thread, which follows a message to Moderator 2.

In the message (Extract 8.17 on the next page), Participant 7 states how he perceives corrections in the forum and shows his stance about it. In the first paragraph, he implies a degree of negative perceptions about corrections in the forum, that is, correction is made even if it is “tiny” and “the forum is even somewhat aggressive in pointing out mistakes”. On the

other hand, he also agrees that correction is “a truly good and useful thing”. His agreement with correction is also expressed by introducing the German context for such situation. In the second paragraph, Participant 7 explains that people in Germany hesitate to correct linguistic error immediately because “it’s probably seen as impolite in general”. Before this explanation, he states that “Here in Germany, the reverse is (Unfortunately) the case”, which indicates his opinion that the hesitation to correct errors is ‘unfortunate’. Overall in this message, Participant 7 shows a positive stance towards being corrected and he ends his post with a message “Feel free to comment”.

Extract 8.17 Message to everyone

Nov 21, 2014 Last edited: Nov 21, 2014 #13

Hello 皆さん everyone,

I'm beginning to understand that this forum leaves no error of nuance of language unremarked upon, however tiny. 😊 In fact, the forum is even somewhat aggressive in pointing out mistakes. Which is a truly good and useful thing. It makes the forum very useful. The worst thing when trying to learn a language is to not be corrected at all when you make mistakes.

How is this when, as a foreigner in Japan, you speak with Japanese-native-speaking friends and colleagues? Is it generally the case that these friends/colleagues will immediately correct your every error in language usage? Here in Germany, the reverse is (unfortunately) the case: colleagues and friends are extremely hesitant to point out German-language errors (I think it's probably seen as impolite in general to remark on errors unless the error is absolutely immediately lifethreateningly serious). Which creates a curious situation for people trying to learn to speak German: you talk with native speakers all the time, but you're never corrected so you just keep making the same mistakes on and on.

The participant and the moderators have different viewpoints on understanding and explaining grammar forms. So, they continue to discuss the topic. After having responses from the two moderators, Participant 7 expresses more negative reactions to being corrected

despite his stance shown in Extract 8.17. The following extracts are the parts where Participant 7 negatively marks the two moderators' behaviours in the thread.

Extract 8.18 Message to Moderator 1 (#18 submitted to 21-11-2014)

Nitpicker 😊. All right then. It can be EITHER habitual or future.

That makes the rule even simpler, since the English simple present also exactly has these two meanings of habitual or future (see again the Wikipedia article).

Extract 8.19 Message to Moderators (#21 submitted to 21-11-2014)

Curiouser and curiouser. Do you Moderators have some kind of issue with me personally, i.e. are you actually actively trying to pick on me? Are you Moderators somehow paid by JREF to take issue with and find error in every tiny detail in the postings of members? Really, I am beginning to feel just slightly harrassed here.

You two Moderators obviously have more time than me, so if you're imagining a kind of battle going on here that you're trying to win, then you're obviously going to win, not by means of having the better arguments, but by the simple tactic of wearing me out.

In Extract 8.18, Participant 7 marks Moderator 1 as a nitpicker. This comment can be seen as a face-attack on Moderator 1 as his participation in the thread is associated with the negative attribute of nitpicking. Yet, Participant 7 uses an emoji of smile face with the comment, which can mitigate the negative meaning and adds a friendly tone. In Extract 8.19, Participant 7 explicitly shows his uncomfortable feeling in the thread by stating that “I’m beginning to feel just slightly harassed here”. In the second paragraph, Participant 7 uses the analogy of ‘battle’ to tell his perceptions about the two moderators in the forum (“trying to win” through “the simple tactic of wearing me out”). From the rapport management perspective, the above message claims that Participant 7 feels his sociality rights are violated in terms of a peer learner-learner relationship in the forum. Especially, Participant 7 feels unfairness or being

treated by the moderators unexpectedly (“trying to pick on me”). The next extract is a response from Moderator 1.

Extract 8.20 Moderator 1’s response

M1 Nov 22, 2014 #29

We're not trying to "wear you out", "nitpick", etc. (Also, P2 is not a moderator, but his posts above are worth a read). This started when you came into a thread started by a beginner, and told him things like this (without any caveats):

-ています is used very very frequently, and simply translates to "is xxx-ing".

This is true in some contexts, but not true in a lot of others, and is also a common beginner misunderstanding. It is not a personal attack to point that out - not just for your sake, but for the original poster of this thread and other people who might be reading.

It is the nature of this forum, particularly the Learning Japanese subforums, that corrections are made. Since I'm not a native speaker, M2 does correct me when I say something wrong or dumb, as well. I take that as a good thing; it's actually quite hard, as P2 said, to get feedback a lot of the time.

Moderator 1 corrects Participant 7’s interpretation about their intention to correct linguistic mistakes in the thread, explaining that they do not try to “wear you out” or “nitpick”. Their corrections about the grammar form are not for the purpose of “a personal attack to point that out” but are for the participants in the thread. Applying Bakhtin’s dialogical theory, this moderator’s comment explains the addressivity of a message (correction) in the thread. Their messages are responses to not only Participant 7 but also the people reading the thread now and in the future. The moderator also explains the culture of the forum or situational contexts of CMD (Herring, 2007): “It is the nature of this forum, particularly the *Learning Japanese*

subforums, that corrections are made”. This explanation indicates how the participants of the forum should understand the meaning of making linguistic corrections in the forum.

As a learner of Japanese language, the moderator also tells how she/he perceives corrections:

“I’m not a native speaker, [Moderator 2’s name] does correct me” and “I take that as a good thing”. In the informal learning context of the forum, the forum members foreground different roles and sometimes act as a peer learner and fellow forum member. So their relationships are always negotiable in a given context and they maintain rapport sometimes in an expert-learner relationship and sometimes in a moderator-forum member relationship.

When Moderator 1 talks about being corrected in the forum, the moderator gives an opinion from a peer-learner’s perspective. The moderator’s alignment with a stance as a peer-learner shows her/his orientation to maintain rapport in a peer-to-peer relationship with Participant 7 (and other participants).

The next extract (Extract 8.21) is an interaction between Moderator 2 and the original poster (henceforth, OP10) of the thread. In the interaction, they use the term *nitpicking* as disclaimer.

The extract starts with the last part of Moderator 2’s response to OP10 (the first part that explains grammar is omitted in the extract).

Extract 8.21

#4 Moderator 2 (15-09-2014):

Probably you understand the functions of 戻ってきた人 and "people who saw them" correctly, but the use of the terms 主体 and 受身 seems not accurate. Sorry for nitpicking. 🙄

👍 Like x 2

#5 OP10 (16-09-2014):

[redacted], Sep 16, 2014 #5
Last edited: Sep 16, 2014

I see. It's fine, I like nitpicking 😊. I always assumed that 受身 would mark the receiver of the passive action :/.

[...]

Side question: how it 他に (to other(s)) read in this case? たに?

I also apologize for nitpicking. 😊

In response to OP10 (message #4), Moderator 2 points that OP10's use of 主体 [= subject] and 受身 [= passive] in her/his previous post "seems not accurate". After this correction, Moderator 2 apologises for this nitpicking ("Sorry for nitpicking 🙄"). OP10 perceives this 'nitpicking' or correction positively ("It's fine, I like nitpicking 😊") and asks further questions. In the end of message #5, OP10 also asks a side question, which he/she describes as a "nitpicking" one ("I also apologize for nitpicking 😊"). This can be seen as a means of rapport management by sharing the same negatively marked behaviours. OP10's repetitive use of the smiley can also be seen as a way of managing rapport. OP10 uses two different styles of smileys, namely, emoji and emoticon ":/ [a sceptical face]". While OP10 uses an emoticon :/ a few times on the thread, OP10 does not use the emoji in the earlier posts in the threads until Moderator 2 appears. Moderator 2 uses a smile face emoji 😊 in his post and OP10 starts using the same smile face emoji in a response to Moderator 2. Looking at the past posts of OP10 in other threads in the forum, she/he does not regularly use emoji. Considering these, it can be said that OP10's usual choice of using CMC cues is emoticons. Despite OP10's usual practice, she/he uses the same style of CMC cues that Moderator 2 uses to show positive reaction (i.e., smile face). Sharing the same style of language use can emphasise the closeness between the participants, which is related to management of their

sociality rights in terms of association. OP10 also uses “nitpicking” to characterise her/his manners of asking, which also emphasises sharing a commonality with Moderator 2.

8.4.2 Nitpicking in */r/Languagelearning*

Next, I will discuss two examples of referring to nitpicking in */r/Languagelearning* (Extract 8.22 and Extract 8.23). Extract 8.22 is an interaction between the original poster (OP11) as a learner of English and Redditor 9 (R9) as a native speaker of English. In the initial post, OP11 requests advice to learn English and wants to know what to do next.

Extract 8.22

↑ [-] R9 2 points 4 years ago
 ↓ Where are you in China? If you're somewhere like Beijing or Shanghai or Tianjin, then I'm sure you could find some Westerners to practice with you. Or you could use something like LiveMocha. I'm not sure if that's allowed in China or not.

One thing to keep in mind, though, is that Westerners who travel all the way to China are generally doing so to improve their Chinese. So you've got to be willing to give them as much help with their Chinese as they give you with English. I've read a lot of complaints from people who travel to China wanting to practice Chinese, only to find that everyone wants to use English with them.

Good luck! Your English is really good, by the way.

[permalink](#) [embed](#)

↑ [-] OP11 [S] 1 point 4 years ago
 ↓ Thanks your advices. I am Beijinger. I'd like to help Westerners with their Chinese, and I've been doing it with a few of my good foreign friends. Actually I don't teach as well as I learn. so when we start a conversation in Chinese, the speed of speaking is becoming really slow. LOL. Anyway I still like it.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] R9 3 points 4 years ago
 ↓ Oh cool. Good job. Well, if you don't find interacting with your friends is fulfilling enough, I say find a way to go abroad.

Also, one tip (not criticizing): 'advice' is a mass noun, like water or air. So you don't have to pluralize it. "Thanks for your advice", etc. You'll sound more like a native if you work on count nouns vs. mass nouns, and things like when to use "the".

Since you seem to be fluent, don't be offended if it seems like I'm nitpicking. =)
 These are just little details that help you get to the near-native level.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] OP11 [S] 3 points 4 years ago
 ↓ I appreciate you did it. yes, that's exactly what I need. I think it's time to be concentrated on those details. Thanks again.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [parent](#)

In the expert-learner relationship, they use different rapport management strategies; Redditor 9 (expert) posts an encouragement message (“Good luck! Your English is really good, by the way”) and OP11 expresses gratitude in their response (“Thanks your advices”). It can be said that they have established rapport before Redditor 9 points out a grammatical mistake and gives “one tip (not criticizing)” to OP11. Here, Redditor 9 refers to this correction as “nitpicking” by stating “Since you seem to be fluent, don’t be offended if it seems like I’m nitpicking”.

Redditor 9 is aware of the possibility that his/her comment might be negatively perceived by OP11 and it could affect their established rapport. Redditor 9 adds a comment to state her/his intention of correcting; she/he emphasises that he/she just wants to help OP11 and does not mean to criticise the mistake. In the advice message to correct the grammar, Redditor 9 also uses a few strategies for rapport management:

- (a) emphasising the advanced level of the opening poster’s language proficiency (“Since you seem to be fluent”, “just little details that help you get to the near-native level”)
- (b) using an emoticon “=)” to soften the tone of his message

(a) can enhance OP11’s face as an advanced learner of the language and (b) can increase a sense of closeness between them. In response, OP11 takes the correction positively and appreciates Redditor 9’s comment again (“I appreciate you did”). OP11 also states that the correction is relevant to the purpose of the thread (“yes, that’s exactly what I need”). Thus, no conflict occurs as a result of nitpicking in this example. This example also shows the importance of a previous relationship before a participant does a face threatening act. If there is enough of an existing positive relationship between participants so that they can point out

mistakes, they are more likely to interpret and evaluate their intentions and the meanings of comments positively. In the above example, Redditor 9's tip could be negatively regarded as unnecessary meddling if there were not enough rapport between them.

Extract 8.23 is another example of using *nitpick* to refer in a disclaimer comment before giving a grammar correction. This example is also a case where nitpicking is not viewed negatively. In the interaction, Redditor 11 (R11) finds a linguistic mistake and tells it to the poster (Redditor 10, R10).

Extract 8.23

The screenshot shows a Reddit thread with three comments. The first comment is from Redditor 11 (R11), an English US Native, posted 3 years ago. The text of the comment is: "Reading news can be difficult, but also good, and for the same reason: topics can be almost anything, so you need a *lot* of vocabulary. I have found that example sentences (or phrases) rather than single words really aid my memory and ability to actually *use* the words. | I'm open to knew, fun methods You wanted "new" instead of "knew." Just in case English is not your native language and it wasn't just a typo. Not meaning to nitpick, just in case it's useful to you..." Below the text are links for "permalink" and "embed". The second comment is from Redditor 10 (R10), posted 3 years ago, with 3 points. The text is: "Haha, that's a bad mistake. Yes, English is my native language, shame on me!" Below the text are links for "permalink", "embed", and "parent". The third comment is from Redditor 11 (R11), posted 3 years ago, with 1 point. The text is: "Bah. Happens to me all the time." Below the text are links for "permalink", "embed", and "parent".

Redditor 11 provides the motivation behind his/her correction of to correct the wrong use of “knew” by stating “Just in case English is not your native language and it wasn’t just a typo.” In the situational context of CMD (Herring, 2007), correcting grammatical mistakes in posts can be made in favour of the participant. On the other hand, as the next example (Extract 8.24) will show, not all of the participants have the same expectations about being corrected in the forum. Redditor 11 adds a disclaimer with *nitpick* (“Not meaning to nitpick, just in case

it's useful to you"). This disclaimer can save Redditor 10's face as a confident user of the language and also Redditor 11's face as advice giver by avoiding future negative reaction from Redditor 10 and others in the thread.

In fact, Redditor 10 is a native speaker of English, so she/he laughs at the mistake and says a downgrading comment about him/herself ("shame on me!") in a joking tone. In a response to this comment, Redditor 11 states that he/she also makes similar mistakes and it is "all the time". By applying Leech's politeness principle, this comment can be seen as a rapport management strategy by following the modesty maxim or maximising the expression of dispraise of self (Leech, 1983; 2014). By this self-face threatening comment, Redditor 11 restores a balance in their relationship with Redditor 10 by sharing the same feelings of embarrassment between them. In short, Redditor 11 tries to maintain rapport with Redditor 10 through management of their association rights.

This example also shows how the participants' messages are influenced by the situational context of CMD or social variables (i.e., who they are) and by the medium context of CMD (i.e., judging whether it is a typo, considering device functions such as auto-correction). In particular, the comment "Just in case English is not your native language" indicates that the participants are not sure about their interlocutors and need to confirm their identities to each other through the interaction, if necessary. One of the medium contexts of CMD which differs between *Learning Japanese* and */r/Languagelearning* is the degree of anonymity. The participants have a profile page and their avatar displays in their posts in *Learning Japanese*. The profile page and avatar help other participants have some ideas about who he/she is

(although not all forum members necessarily provide their true nationality or gender or other information). Thus, in the two fora, there are different resources available for the participants to gain contextual factors that can influence their interpersonal communication.

Finally, I will discuss an example when nitpicking is negatively marked without using the term *nitpick* (Extract 8.24). Regarding the context, the original poster of this thread asks for suggestions for a lazy person to learn a new language. The following extract is an interaction between the participants in the forum.

Extract 8.24

↑ [-] **R12** EN JA ES DE PT ZH // Next: NL, NO, Koine 7 points 1 year ago
 ↓ I wrote a book called "learning a language if your lazy." It's one page and says "you can't."
 Seriously, learning a language is hard and takes lots of time. You can't lazily learn a language any more than you can lazily run a marathon.
 permalink embed

↑ [-] **R13** -4 points 1 year ago ←Minus points
 ↓ you're = you are
 your = possession, such as your car, your house.
 permalink embed parent

↑ [-] **R12** EN JA ES DE PT ZH // Next: NL, NO, Koine 2 points 1 year ago
 ↓ I think you missed the second joke. Kind of an Arrested Development thing; you get one joke the first time through, but a second viewing reveals more hahas.
 permalink embed parent

↑ [-] **R14** 1 point 1 year ago
 ↓ Shit. I know. Talk about lazy.
 permalink embed parent

In response to the original poster, Redditor 12 (R12) suggests that there is no way to learn a language lazily and makes a joke with 'lazy': "I wrote a book called 'learning a language if your lazy' It's one page and says 'you can't'". To this joke, Redditor 13 (R13) corrects the spelling and adds a grammatical explanation between "you're" and "your". This grammatical 'mistake' is intentionally made for the joke. The spelling of "your" can be a 'lazy' way of

spelling for “you’re”. Spelling without using an apostrophe is a common orthography in digital communication including texting.

Redditor 12 does not show his/her negative reaction toward this unexpected correction.

Instead, he/she explains about the joke of the previous comment, comparing with an

American comedy *Arrested Development*. This comment is an indirect way to tell Redditor

13 that the correction is irrelevant in the context. In the joke, we can read that the title of

book has two lazy people: the author who is too lazy to spell “you’re” correctly and the

reader who is too lazy to learn how to use “your” and “you’re”. The participants in the thread

do not refer to nitpicking, but Redditor 13’s correction is interpreted as nitpicking and

negatively marked through downvoting. Redditor 13’s post receives a minus point, which

means it has attracted participants’ negative evaluation as it is irrelevant or unhelpful. There

is also a critical comment submitted from Redditor 14 (R14) to the thread: “Shit. I know. Talk

about lazy”. The comment is an explicit way of showing a negative evaluation on Redditor

13’s post as well as continuing the joke. From the perspective of rapport management,

nitpicking could violate Redditor 12’s face as a speaker of English as Redditor 12’s flair

([EN JA ES DE PT ZH // Next: NL, NO, Koine](#)) shows that she/he speaks English (EN). Except Redditor 13,

nobody points out the spelling as a mistake and others appreciate the joke. In contrast to the

previous examples, this is an example where nitpicking is criticised because it is irrelevant to

the context of the on-going interaction. Thus, in the informal learning forum, the meanings of

nitpicking depend on a given context.

8.5 Good Composition Practices

This section discusses composition practices in the two subfora. From the rapport management perspective, adopting appropriate composition practices is relevant to achieving interactional goals by having smooth communication, minimising misunderstandings and developing a reasonable interaction. I focus on the participants' use of *EDIT* and *TL;DR*.

8.5.1 EDIT

Considering that the published posts can be edited later, adding an indication when editing the original post helps the participants avoid unnecessary confusion in a flow of thread interactions. The common way to indicate modifications of the original post is adding the EDIT notation (Extract 8.25 and 8.26).

Extract 8.25

→ EDIT:
 Supplement
 My main point in my previous post is the reason the -tai form CAN take the object marker "ga". It's not because the -tai form is SEEMINGLY adjective, as you wrote, but rather because the -tai form is SEMANTICALLY stative. This idea can explain in a more rational way the reason why the -nai form can't take "ga", and the reason why "iru", "wakaru", "dekiru", or the potential form can take "ga".

(*Learning Japanese*, 21-09-2011)

Extract 8.26

↑ [-] 2 points 3 years ago*
 ↓ italki is a language learning social networking site. It has a Q&A section for each language, although answers are not necessarily restricted to native speakers.
 → EDIT: Getting stupid links to work.

(*/r/Languagelearning*, 22-01-2012)

The EDIT notation is usually used in a form of “EDIT + : (colon) + a description of which part(s) have been changed or/and a reason why the original post has been edited”. This format is not rigid; it can appear as either capital letters “EDIT” or small letters “edit” and the colon can be omitted or replaced with a semicolon or hyphen. The important function is, like the statement “Note that ...”, the EDIT notation tells the other participants what they should know for making sense about the following interaction of the thread.

There are other ways of using the EDIT. Instead of posting a new post, the participants can decide to use the EDIT to add something to the original post, using it as a postscript and a response to the participant(s) who replied to the original post. When the EDIT is used as a response, it also indicates the poster stays on the thread and read the other participants’ posts. For example, the use of EDIT allows a participant to take follow-up strategies to enhance rapport by adding a message to the other participants (Extract 8.27).

Extract 8.27

Specifically looking to learn French, if any of you can recommend a nice program that can teach me how to speak and read convincingly I'd love you.

I understand that going to France would be best and that French classes would be second best, but neither of those are an option for me right now.

Thanks guys! edit: alright, i'm gonna check out all those awesome links and save up some cash for either rosetta stone or tell me more! you guys = best <3

(/r/Languagelearning, 17-02-2011)

The message after “edit:” in the above example can function as closing this thread by adding a thanking message. (cf. I also introduced an example of thanking and apologising in which the original poster responds to other participants in Extract 7.4.) The original poster acknowledges the learning resources and tips that the other participants recommended and stated what he/she was going to do (“i’m gonna check out” and “save up cash”). This response to the advice messages can fulfil the other participants’ sociality rights in terms of reciprocity or balancing cost and benefit. The original poster also characterises the other participants (advice givers) as ‘best’ people and uses an emoticon of a heart that represents love as a salutation (“you guys = best <3”), which can increase the other participants’ face. Additionally, the original poster also mentions a future interaction with the other participants on this subreddit (“or tell me more”). Thus, the original poster effectively uses the EDIT to build rapport with the other participants, showing a rapport maintenance orientation.

There are 58 examples of using the EDIT in *Learning Japanese* and 328 examples in */r/Languagelearning*. One explanation about this difference is the different medium features of the two fora. In the forum of *Japan Reference*, there is a time limitation on editing a post after submission. The participants are not able to edit/delete their posts by themselves after the expiration of this limit and they need to request the forum team members to delete it if they want to do so. On the other hand, in the subreddits of *Reddit*, the participants are able to edit/delete their posts without a time limitation. In fact, in *Reddit*, using the EDIT is a reddiquette (i.e., a netiquette in *Reddit*): “State your reason for any editing of posts”. It is common for the redditors to update their comments after submissions. This aspect of ACMD is associated with a medium context of “the persistence of script” (Herring, 2007). Herring

(2007) considers the persistence of script in relation to how long a message remains on the system. The persistence of script can also be a useful aspect of the technological context to discuss in CMD in relation to how long the original message remains on the thread.

8.5.2 TL; DR as disclaimer

The use of TL;DR or tl;dr is another reader-friendly practice in the two fora. TL;DR is an abbreviation of “Too Long; Didn’t Read” and an Internet slang to refer to the length of a post. According to the *Dictionary of Contemporary Slang*, it is a phrase of “an online dismissal when faced with a lengthy and/or boring message” (Thorne, 2014, p.440). In the two corpora, there are 2 examples of using TL;DR with a summary in *Learning Japanese* and 73 examples in */r/Languagelearning*⁴. This difference indicates that the use of TL;DR is more common in */r/Languagelearning*. In both fora, the participants use it to refer to the length of their post and add a summary of the post. In this way, the participant offers two options for reading his/her submitted post: the original long version and a shorter version. The use of TL;DR to add a summary helps other participants catch up and get the point of a developing interaction (thread) quickly without investing time in reading the whole texts. In Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle in communication, this usage of TL;DR is a way of observing the Maxim of Manner (i.e., be brief).

The participants add TL;DR and retain the length of the post rather than submitting a shorter

⁴ The results are based on searching for “TL;DR”, “TL:DR” and “TLDR” with AntConc. In */r/Languagelearning*, there are two examples of using “TL;DR” not followed by a summary (e.g. using it as adjective in text like “a bit tl;dr”) and they are not counted in the 73 examples. On the other hand, there is one example of using “TLDT” as a “TL;DR” message in */r/Languagelearning*; although the spelling is not correct, it is included in the results.

comment despite the fact that they know the post is too long. One viewpoint about this practice of composing a post is that the poster holds two perspectives or voices toward their post. One perspective (i.e., I want to tell this and therefore it needs this length) is presented in their ‘too long’ text and another perspective (i.e., but it is too long to read) is a self-evaluative perspective presented in a summary of their TL;DR text. Extract 8.28 is a typical example where the original poster uses TL;DR in his/her initial post of a thread in */r/Languagelearning*.

Extract 8.28 Example of TL;DR (the thread started in 02-07-2011)

[Context: The original poster is a new student of the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) and has a class-placement interview to major in linguistics during the orientation time. He/she explains that he needs to relearn French and asks for study tips.]

I took three years in highschool (which is a now a blur). My community college offered only two semesters of French, both of which I took over a year ago. I'm hoping to major in Linguistics, and at my orientation on July 22nd I am expected to prove my competency at the language. A bad interview could mean either an extra year of tuition, or disqualification from the major. I dug out my college textbook that covers I think a full year of French, along with some little handbooks my dad had lying around and a bunch of old New Wave flicks. I need to get myself into a routine here. Any advice or stories of a similar experience? Anything helps!

→ tl;dr I'm in need of study tips and tricks for relearning a language

This thread is a request for advice and the original poster explains the details of his/her situation. The use of tl;dr and addition of a following comment sets up a goal of this thread; the problem for the participants to solve in this thread is that the original poster needs tips for relearning French for the coming placement test. From the rapport management perspective,

the use of TL;DR can be seen as a rapport management strategy by fulfilling the participants' sociality rights of equity. For the balance of cost and benefit in the advice seeker–giver relationship, the participants (advice giver) expect the original poster (advice seeker) not to force them to spend considerable time to read an excessively long text or so-called wall of text. A question here is whether the length of Extract 8.28 is really “too long; didn't read”. In *Learning Japanese*, there are many initial posts that are the same as or longer length than Extract 8.28. Although the original poster tends to apologise about their initial post including its length (see, Chapter 7), TL;DR is used less as a disclaimer in *Learning Japanese*.

This different use of TL;DR can be considered in relation to the medium contexts of “size of message buffer” and “message format” and a situation factor of “norms of language” (Herring, 2007). The greater use of TL;DR in */r/Languagelearning* could indicate that the participants in this subreddit are more likely to limit the numbers of characters in a post by themselves. In terms of norms, the participants in the two subfora seem to have different norms of ACMD about an appropriate length that they are willing to read. The different norms can be associated with the different systems of sorting posts; it is a flat type in *Japan Reference* and it is a tree (or threaded) type in *Reddit*. It can be said that the TL;DR is an aspect of ACMD which reifies a community's norm or reflects on their evaluations about appropriate composition practices in the forum.

Extract 8.29 is an example from *Japanese Learning*. The TL;DR is used with the EDIT notation in a response to the original poster. Looking at this participant's other posts, using asterisks (*EDIT*) is this participant's personal preference to highlight the EDIT.

Extract 8.29

Jul 15, 2014
#5

I'd say it should be better to take a physical class. Although a great teacher can set up a great course on Skype, I believe that until online courses are kicked off a bit more, you should trust physical classes more. They are more professional in a way. And besides, it'd be reliable since you won't have random disconnections.

→ *EDIT* TL;DR It's possible that it won't make a difference, or the difference would be a positive one, but chances are the physical class will be better than a class than Skype. Just to be safe, avoid it for now; maybe consider it when courses over Skype are more popular.

(Learning Japanese, 14-07-2014)

The EDIT indicates that this participant has added the TL;DR and following text. The lengths of the original post and the added text are not that different and the added message can be read as a rephrase of the original post rather than a summary. As referred to earlier, the TL;DR is an aid for other participants to get the point quickly. Considering this function, the participant's use of TL;DR can be associated with the purpose of making the point of the original post clearer. The participant's main advice can be the last sentence of the paragraph after the TL;DR: "Just to be safe, avoid it for now; maybe consider it when courses over Skype are more popular". Rather than using only the EDIT to add the rephrased advice, using it with the TL;DR can emphasise what the participant wanted to say the most so that the original poster wouldn't miss the point of the advice. In terms of interactional goal, the combination of using EDIT and TL;DR in offering advice can be seen as this participant's rapport management strategy; it makes the participant's advice clearer to avoid leading to misunderstanding.

The TL;DR can be an available linguistic resource for composition practices, letting the

participants reflect on the original post and think about what they really want to say. Although I did not have data on the participants of Extract 8.29's actual composition practices, the example of using the EDIT and TL;DR can imply such a reflective process that the participant may engage in for refining his/her original post. In relation to identity construction, the use of TL;DR can also be a linguistic means to present oneself as a competent forum member who knows the norm of ACMD in the forum and is able to contribute to a smooth interaction. The use of TL;DR implies the participant's awareness of how other participants read his/her post (i.e., evaluation) and corrects a negatively marked behaviour (i.e., a long post).

8.5.3 TL; DR as another voice

In this section, I will discuss three notable ways of using TL;DR. The first example (Extract 8.30) is a response to the initial thread post introduced earlier as Extract 8.28. In the comment, the participant gives the original poster advice before the TL;DR, suggesting conversation practice with a native speaker of the language, guessing what the class-placement interview would be like and agreeing with other participants' advice about an immersion approach.

Extract 8.30

[-] 2 points 3 years ago

Buy your favorite french speaker a bottle of wine and ask them to only speak french to you. This is the best way to get conversational fluency up; you already have the knowledge, but you need to be comfortable blurting it out. I'm not entirely sure how UCSC's placing works but I'd venture to guess **STUDYING A TEXTBOOK IS WHAT YOU SHOULD DO**. It probably is a series of questions that get progressively harder (also likely multiple guess); each new question tests a harder element of grammar. On the flip side if they're doing a legitimate eval (given a UC, this is almost guaranteed not to be the case), I would go with the immersion approach mentioned by others.

→ TL;DR. FUCK YA SLUGS

(/r/Languagelearning, 02-07-2011)

As we can see, the comment “FUCK YA SLUGS” after the TL;DR is not a summary of the post. The comment “FUCK YA SLUGS” in capital letter is read as shouting an insult message using a swear word, which follows a format of impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011, pp.135-136). Yet, in the context of this thread, this is not an insult message to the original poster as “YA[YOU]” and “SLUGS” does not refer to the original poster but UCSC (University of California, Santa Cruz). In the context of talking about UCSC, the “SLUGS” can refer to the banana slug (the yellow slug inhabiting North America), which is the nickname and mascot of UCSC. The “FUCK YA SLUGS” comment can be interpreted as cursing the college. The participant compares the college to other colleges “(given a UC [University of California], this is almost guaranteed not to be the case)”. This comment can be seen as the participant’s reference to general criticism of the college.

It can be viewed that the participant presents two perspectives or voices, namely, a perspective from an advice giver who wants to help the original poster and another perspective from a person who evaluate the college negatively. Considering rapport management in this post, the participant meets the original poster’s interactional goal (i.e., to have advice) and can maintain rapport with the original poster in the advice seeker-giver relationship. On the other hand, the participant curses the slug, which connotes the college that the original poster is going to belong to. The comment after TL;DR could threaten the original poster’s face if the group identity as a member of UCSC is significant for him/her. In this thread, this post is not downvoted enough to receive minus points and this means that the other participants do not negatively evaluate the content of this post that has a cursing comment. The forum rule indicates that the post should need quality and relevance. It can be

said that this poster follows the forum rule by offering relevant advice and linking the advice with other participants' advice ("I would go with the immersion approach mentioned by others") and the post receives upvotes from other participants. In Chapter 10, I will discuss the voting system as an expression of the participants' evaluation about other participants' behaviour.

The second example (Extract 8.31) shows the use of TL;DR for a metacomment about the TL;DR. There are two TL;DR notations used in this post. The second notation "tl; dr part deux [part two]" is the common usage as a disclaimer followed by a summary of the previous text. On the other hand, the first use of "tl;dr" is a claim about the norm of reciprocity.

Extract 8.31

tl; dr - You asked...I answered. You can't read it?

tl; dr part deux - Use a small deck of dead tree flashcards to learn new vocab, and SRS to remember it.


(/r/Languagelearning, 25-02-2012)

The comment "You asked ... I answered. You can't read it?" indicates an expectation about fairness for both sides in the advice seeker-giver relationship. In terms of reciprocity, the participants on the thread invest time in answering the original poster's questions and the original poster is supposed to take time to read the other's responses in return. In this respect, this tl;dr comment in the example can be seen as a dialogue; it is a responsive voice to the participant's general voice of "too long; didn't read" by answering "You can't read it?" and by doing so emphasising the reciprocity in this subreddit. The number of uses of TL;DR in the data can indicate that choosing to read a summary of a post after TL;DR is an appropriate practice in /r/Languagelearning. However, the above example shows that there is also a

participant who thinks it is not a good practice in terms of fairness. This participant also gives the second TL;DR (“tl;dr part deux”), which is a summary of his/her post. This is another voice that responds to the participants’ voice of “too long; didn’t read” by answering “All right, here is a summary for you”. From the rapport management perspective, these two TL;DR comments foreground different perceptions about the participants’ sociality rights and obligations in the advice seeker-giver relationship.

The third example shows how the TL;DR is used for rapport challenging strategies. There is a conflict between an advice seeker and giver. In the thread, the original poster (OP12) has unsuccessfully learnt Thai for two years and asks for tips to overcome it. One of the participants (Redditor 15) mentions “Your problem sounds like laziness [sic]” in his/her advice comment. This comment offends OP12, answering that “My problem is not laziness [sic], and frankly, I find that insulting”. Extract 8.32 is Redditor 15 (R15)’s response to this.

Extract 8.32

 [-] R15 Danish | English | Chinese -1 points 5 years ago

My problem is not laziness, and frankly, I find that insulting. You gave me no actual tips to my problem, just general methods on how to study language and then Chinese.

What? I told you to use spaced repetition software and spend time every day doing it (I use those procrastination-reducing extensions myself, both in Firefox and Chrome). Pardon me for assuming that your problem is laziness, but I find anything else hard to believe when you say you've been studying it for 2 years and still haven't moved beyond the alphabet.

(Redditor 15, /r/Languagelearning, 11-05-2011)

Redditor 15 apologises for saying it (“Pardon me for assuming that your problem is laziness, but”) as a hedging before continuing his/her comments. This could be seen as a strategy for maintaining rapport with OP12 but could also be read as a face attack apology or disclaimer

to preface the following face attack comment (Deutschmann, 2003). However, after OP12 says “and frankly, I find that insulting”, Redditor 15 does not change his/her opinion that “Your problem sounds like laziness”. So OP12 still lost his/her face and finally challenges Redditor 15’s face. Extract 8.33 is OP12’s response to Redditor 15.

Extract 8.33 “Get off your high horse, kid.”

↑ [-] **OP12** [S] 0 points 5 years ago

↓ First of, as I have said before, I have been studying it on and off. In these past two years I have studied it occasionally. Not the two whole years. Did you even read my previous reply to you? Secondly, my problem isn't simply "oh, cool, I'm just going to repeat the Thai alphabet over and over". It's that I have trouble remembering it in a way that's actually effective for reading. I thanked you for your suggestion about spaced repetition software, but the rest of your assumptions were useless.

Secondly, I have a few textbooks. Some don't really teach you the alphabet until you're halfway through and others don't really touch upon the subject until the end so there's little room for practice. Another user suggested one that is better because it teaches the alphabet nearly on and coaches you through it.

Your textbook suggestion would have been more helpful if you suggested titles instead of discussing your Korean textbook, since in case you haven't noticed there isn't only one title. In case you haven't noticed, another user did it.

Instead of being rude to people and making pointless assumptions. Do you want to make assumptions? Fine, let's do it. But first, get out of your basement and go ask your parent or guardian to give you more cheetos.

tl;dr: in your long-ass, show off posts you've given about one useful piece of the advice for which I already thanked you. The rest is basically "I learn Korean! I learn Chinese! You're lazy and don't even have a textbook for Thai, lol look at me and follow my advice!". Get off your high horse, kid.

(OP12, /r/Languagelearning, 11-05-2011)

The comment after the “tl;dr” notation is full of rapport-challenging messages, using different impoliteness strategies. OP12 could use politeness strategies to correct Redditor 15’s misunderstanding about “laziness” if OP12 holds a rapport maintenance orientation; without a series of impolite comments, the poster could have made his/her points. Note that in earlier in their interaction Redditor 15 threatens OP12’s face without intention to insult.

Based on the forms associated with impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011; 135-136), in OP12's response, I found six impolite comments that can challenge rapport in particular. Impolite comment 1 "Did you even read my previous reply to you?" is a challenging question and can threaten Redditor 15's face as a forum participant with a good manner. Impolite comment 2 "but the rest of your assumptions were useless" is a personalised negative assertion. Impolite comment 3 "since in case you haven't noticed that there isn't only one title" is a challenging presupposition, that the participant is ignorant. These comments can threaten Redditor 15's face as a helpful advice giver and a competent forum participant. Impoliteness comments 4, 5 and 6 are more related to the advice giver's personality and attitude. OP12 threatens Redditor 15's face as a mature person by belittling him/her. These comments present the participant as an immature person or "a kid" through the comments "get out of your basement and go ask your parent or guardian to give you more cheetos" and "Get off your high horse, kid". Besides, OP12 also emphasises the negative attributes of the advice giver and projects him/her as a kid "showing off"; OP12 uses the negative references of "your long-ass, show off posts" and "your high horse, kid" and rephrases the participant's previous posts in a voice of a kid showing off ("lol look at me and follow my advice!").

Summary. The use of "TL;DR" in Extract 8.30 and Extract 8.31 foreground a salient function of "TL;DR" as a notation, in short, guiding the participants to the part of the message that should be read. This indicates the original poster's interactional goal or how he/she wants the participants to read the post. In the example of Extract 8.33, the message after tl;dr consists of impolite messages, which are more associated with Redditor 15's (advice giver) identity than the previous impolite messages based on the negative evaluation

about the participant's way of giving advice. Applying the rapport management framework, OP12 explicitly shows his/her intention to challenge rapport with the participant by using the tl;dr notation, namely, holds a rapport challenging orientation in this interaction.

8.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed that the participants in the two fora were aware of the netiquettes or the forum norms, which influence their language use. In section 8.1 and 8.2, I examined the participants' use of meta-pragmatic terms by searching the frequency of using *polite*, *impolite* and *rude* and analysing the interactions where these terms are used. Similarly, in section 8.3 and 8.4, I focused on the common behaviours that are negatively marked by the forum rules and the participants' interactions. The netiquettes are seen as the community norms in the situational context of CMD (Herring, 2007) and are particularly related to the management of sociality rights and obligations from the perspective of rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b). I demonstrated that the rapport management framework was useful to examine how they perceived and interpreted their behaviours based on the norms in the fora. In section 8.5, I considered a different aspect of the participants' use of language, namely, their practices of composing posts. The participants' practices of editing and using the TL;DR tells how medium and situational contexts of CMD can influence their language use for maintaining rapport. Throughout examining the interactions, I also showed that the participants used rapport management strategies with expressions with *I don't know*, expressions of thanking and apologising. From Bakhtin's dialogical perspective, I also discussed how the participants achieved and did not achieve their interactional goals when they have different viewpoints.

Chapter 9 Interactions for Rapport in *Learning Japanese*

In this chapter and the next chapter I will continue to discuss the participants' comments about in/appropriate behaviours, focusing more on the aspect of interactions for situated learning. I will consider interactions in which participants are exposed to moments or opportunities to learn knowledge about the values and norms for rapport management in their forum. Firstly, I will examine the interactions in *Learning Japanese* in this chapter.

9.1 Participants' Use of Conventional Statements

Through looking at the participants' meta-pragmatic comments, I also found other recurrent expressions or statements that the participants used in a conventional way to forbid a particular behaviour that could affect their learning community. In the forum, the staff members use conventional statements to regulate inappropriate posting, for example the administrator terminated a thread on an inappropriate topic and the moderator reminded a participant of a forum rule. This section considers examples in which regular members use conventional statements for maintaining the learning culture of the forum. When the regular participants used a similar moderator's voice for maintaining the learning culture of the forum, important interactions took place for both the new members and regular members. Applying the perspective of situated learning (Wenger, 1998), I suggest that such interaction is a moment for the new participants to learn to be a full member and for the regular members to enhance their solidarity or the coherence of the community. In this section, I will present some examples for discussing this point.

9.1.1 Requests for translation as inappropriate

One of the issues that the participants in *Learning Japanese* often face is having a request for translating sentences/texts from Japanese to another language or vice versa ‘for free’. This type of requests is sometimes related to the original poster’s desires to consume the products of Japanese popular culture (e.g., the scripts of video games, lines of manga books) or sometimes their need to finish their own work (e.g., homework, project, business). In the process of building the corpus (see Chapter 5), I found many threads in which the original posters asked other forum participants to translate texts for them and the other participants did not respond to the initial post and the thread stopped without developing an interaction. When they responded to such a request, they rejected it using a conventional statement, like the following examples.

Extract 9.1 Conventional statement by Moderator 2

Sep 24, 2012	#2
This is the LEARNING Japanese section, and not a free translation service. <u>Try yourself first, then we can help you.</u>	

This is an example where a moderator uses a conventional statement for refusing the request for free translation. The statement starts with a message to clearly state the shared interactional goal of the forum (i.e., this is a learning forum). In the above example, the statement is followed by a message that claims the forum participants’ rights and the original poster’s obligations. In terms of equity in their advice seeker and giver relationship, the forum participants as advice givers are not the people to offer “a free translation service” and the original poster as advice seeker should prove that the request is related to a learning

purpose and they are actually learning the language. That is, “Try yourself first” (i.e., the original poster’s obligation) and “then we can help you” (i.e., the original poster’s rights). The ‘this is a language learning forum’ statement can be seen as a voice (stance) of the forum as a community to evaluate and regulate inappropriate requests, and it is used to maintain the informal context of learning.

9.1.2 Rapport management in refusing

Next, I will consider how the regular participants use a conventional statement of ‘this is a language learning forum’ to refuse the request for free translation (Extract 9.2 and 9.3).

Extract 9.2 Refusal by a regular participant

[Context. This thread has five participants including a moderator and Participant 2. The original poster (OP13) states that his/her Japanese vocabulary is very limited and asks for translating a few lines of his/her ‘professional’ or business email from English to Japanese. The following is an extract of a regular participant (Participant 8)’s response to the original poster.]

Apr 28, 2013

#7

I could understand if it were a charity. However, this sort of thing robs people of their livelihood and is totally immoral. If you are getting paid, they deserve to get paid as well. The "Help" portion of "Help Translation?" implies that you are attempting to understand and do it yourself. Therefore, this forum is for language learning, not leeching off of students.

Descriptions of language use. This regular participant criticises the inappropriateness of OP13’s request for translation by regarding it as “totally immoral”. He shows his negative reaction toward OP13’s request through these expressions and creates a distance between OP13 and the forum members by using the negatively evaluative expressions of ‘to rob’ and

‘to leech off’ to characterise the relationship between OP13 and the forum participants.

Participant 8 also uses the conventional statement of “this forum is for language learning” to emphasise that the OP’s request is not relevant to this forum.


Analysis/Interpretations. From the perspective of rapport management, Participant 8’s language use in message #7 indicates that he holds a rapport neglect or challenge orientation. Participant 8 uses the plural third person pronoun to explain the equity rights and obligations in terms of community rather than/as well as in this given context. Participant 8 expresses the view that OP13’s request infringes on their equity rights in a critical tone and that OP13 should meet his/her obligations in asking for help. Participant 8 suspends linguistic strategies for maintaining rapport in order to protect the learning forum from someone who ‘exploits’ their social rights (i.e., ‘robber’ or ‘leech’). In this way, we can see that Participant 8 plays a role of gatekeeper in this forum. In contrast to Participant 8’s approach, Participant 2 takes a different approach for refusing the request for translation. Extract 9.3 is an example in which Participant 2 points out the inappropriateness of the original poster (OP14)’s request and at the same time tries to maintain rapport with OP14.

Extract 9.3 Refusal by a regular participant (2)

[Context. This thread has three participants. OP14 asks for translating some texts from games in Japanese, listing the direct translations he generated using online translation tools. Yet, OP14 does not include a direct request such as “could you translate them?”. Participant 2 (super-participant) implies that OP14 should try to translate them first by himself. OP14 replies to Participant 2 by asking “So you’re not gonna translate for me?”. Then, a moderator also suggests more explicitly that OP14 should try translating the texts by himself first, using the conventional statement. The extract is the subsequent interaction.]

5 Participant 2:

Nov 5, 2012 #5

” OP14 said: 

So you're not gonna translate for me?

No, I'm not.

You didn't give any indication in your post that you wanted people to do translations for you.

This is a forum for learning Japanese, not a translation service. If you have questions about learning Japanese I will do my best to help you. I am *not* going to volunteer to translate what looks like screen captures from video games.

#6 OP14:

Nov 6, 2012 #6

Oh now I see what kind of person you are!
Life is not all about money!

Now even if you go on and insult me now, It's OK for me!

#7 Participant 2:

Nov 6, 2012 #7

Nobody asked you for money.

Are you trying to learn Japanese? We will help you with that. We're not going to waste our time sitting around correcting output from Google Translate.

Do you really expect to just post up random Japanese text and have us translate it for you?
For what purpose?

Description. In message #5, Participant 2 replies to OP14's question to confirm whether Participant 2 is not willing to help OP14. Participant 2 clearly states “No” without mitigation. He states the two problems of OP14's post: (1) there is no indication of a request and (2) the

inappropriateness of the request if OP14 had requested translation. After OP14 learns that Participant 2 will not translate for him, in message #6, OP14 criticises Participant 2's rejection by characterising Participant 2's personality negatively (i.e., as a person claiming money in return for helping OP14). The use of exclamation marks increases the aggressiveness of the message. In response, Participant 2 explains that the reason is not about money but is that the request for translation is not appropriate in this (sub-)forum. He also seeks a clarification of why OP14 wants to translate the game scripts.

Analysis/Interpretation. From the perspective of rapport management, this conflict occurs as the result of misalignment between OP14's wants (achieving his goal as a forum member who needs help) and Participant 2's entitlement (fulfilling sociality rights as a forum member). In rapport management, refusing someone's request can affect rapport, as a refusal does not fulfil his/her interactional goals. In the above extract, OP14's goal is to find someone to translate the texts for him. In message #5, Participant 2 does not mitigate his refusal statements. He also uses the conventional statement of "this is a learning forum" to explain the participants' rights and obligations. According to these, we can see that Participant 2 holds a rapport neglect orientation in relation to OP14 in order to preserve the forum members' rights of not being imposed on by others and the shared goal of this learning forum. On the other hand, Participant 2 also includes a message to OP14 that he is willing to help him learn Japanese in the future ("I will do my best to help you"). This statement can fulfil OP14's sociality rights, namely, equity right (i.e., receiving help like other participants in the future) and association right (i.e., being accepted in this forum). Thus, in the overall message, Participant 2 holds a mixture of rapport maintenance and neglect orientations in the

interpersonal relationship with OP14. On the other hand, OP14's message (#6) indicates that he/she holds a rapport challenging orientation. The use of negation in OP14's statement "Life is not all about money" implies that Participant 2 has made a statement of 'Life is all about money', which Participant 2 actually hasn't, and it is a face-threatening act as the statement relates a negative attribute of 'a miserly person' to Participant 2's identity. OP14 also claims that Participant 2 is insulting OP14, which again associates a negative attribute with Participant 2's identity.

In message #7 as a response to OP14, Participant 2 repeats the same statements in message #5 but this time uses the plural first person pronoun "we" and "us". This indicates Participant 2's shift in his stance/standpoint. It can be interpreted that Participant 2 considers this conflict to be an issue for the forum participants. From this point of view, OP14's message #6 can be seen as an attack on his face associated with his group or collective identity (a forum member) rather than with his individual identity. The forum members' face associated with their community identity can also be damaged. As a representative member, Participant 2 also explains that the forum participants are willing to help OP14 for learning purposes, but that translating game texts by "correcting output from Google Translate" is not an appropriate request. In this way, Participant 2 constructs his and the community's supportive identity and repairs their damaged face. Participant 2 also tries to maintain rapport with OP14 by the clarification of "For what purpose?". This clarification could fulfil OP14's association rights by inviting OP14 to engage in subsequent interactions and by giving OP14 a chance to share his ideas (different viewpoint) with other participants.

After message #7, their interaction continues until OP14 receives help about vocabulary from Participant 2. OP14 explains that the need for translation is related to his learning purpose of remembering phrases through game texts. Participant 2 gives his opinions about this learning strategy from the viewpoint of a senior learner of the language (Extract 9.4).


Extract 9.4

Nov 6, 2012	#9
<p>I believe learning phrases is a slow and useless method of learning a language, and <u>I'm not going to sit here and translate game text for you.</u></p> <p>If you have specific questions regarding grammar, vocabulary, or usage <u>I will be happy to do my best to help you with those.</u></p>	

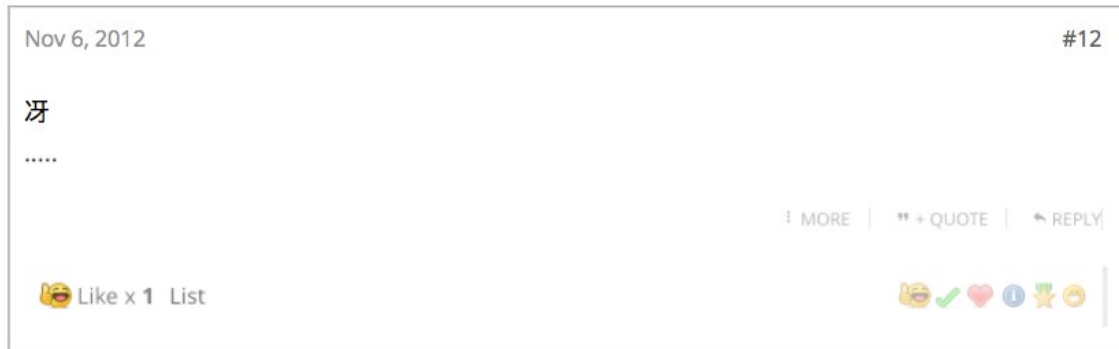
In this message, Participant 2 uses the singular first person pronoun. The use of “I” indicates that he foregrounds his individual identity in his message; he repeats his sociality rights (“I’m not going to sit here and translate game text for you”). Participant 2 also repeats his willingness to help OP14 regarding “grammar, vocabulary, or usage”. The use of “to be happy to” emphasises Participant 2’s supportive attitude. In message #11, OP14 posts another request regarding ‘vocabulary’ (Extract 9.5).

Extract 9.5 Interaction between OP14 and Participant

11 OP14:

Nov 6, 2012	#11
<p>Well What is that Kanji? Can you post me a copy of it so I can copy it?</p> 	

#12 Participant 2:



Participant 2 replies to OP14 providing the typed Kanji of “訝”. In their rapport management, OP14 finally achieves his interactional goal and Participant 2 can maintain rapport with OP14. On the other hand, this message ends with ellipsis “.....”, which indicate that Participant 2 has something to say but refrains from doing so. One interpretation is that OP14’s request is still not a type of question that Participant 2 expects the forum members to ask in this learning forum. Considering the fact that OP14 still asks for translating after all, this ellipsis dots can be read as an implicit criticism. OP14 does not reply to message #12. Instead, Participant 2’s message #12 receives a Like point (🍗 Like x 1) from one of the forum moderators. This can be seen as the moderator’s acknowledgement for Participant 2’s efforts in helping a new member and also the implicit criticism in the ellipsis dots.

Discussion. The above examples show the differences (1) between the moderator’s strategy and the regular participants’ strategies and also (2) between regular participants in using the conventional statement as a refusal response to a request. While the moderator can use the conventional statement in an authoritative/administrative voice, the regular members can use it as a part of statements which construct their claims about the forum participants’ sociality rights. Applying the framework of CoP (Wenger, 1998), the participants’ use of the

conventional statement (i.e., this is a learning forum) is a way of legitimating their participation or how to participate and reifying their participation in a form of discourse. By doing so, the participants show that they share the common understanding about the community values and norms. Clarke (2008) demonstrates that the discursive construction of legitimating values and norms is an important aspect of building interpersonal relationship in a CoP (pp.140-146). In the case of *Learning Japanese*, talking about values and norms is also important for building rapport because, as the above examples showed, the discourse of the ‘this is a language learning forum’ statement and the interaction developed by the statement helps the participants negotiate their sociality rights and obligations.

Besides, the comparison between Extract 9.2 and Extract 9.3 tells us that a conflict between the original poster’s and the forum member’s expectations can turn out to be a moment for a new member (the original poster in the above examples) to align him/herself with the community’s activities through negotiating his/her interactional goals and the forum’s goals. To consider this point, the next section further focuses on Participant 2’s strategies for conflicts with a new member.

9.2 From Disharmony to Harmony

This section will examine three interactions between a new member (the original poster, OP15) and Participant 2 taken in early August, late August and mid-September in 2011 respectively. These examples show how their interactions have changed over time; the new member expressed negative reactions to Participant 2 at first, yet they had a harmonious interaction in the advice seeker-giver relationship at the end.

9.2.1 Conflict between new and regular participants

Firstly I discuss why they were involved in a conflict by examining the following interaction.


Extract 9.6 “See what I mean?” vs. “Just Get off the high horse man”

[Context: This thread has four participants. OP15 as a beginner learner of Japanese has an idea to improve his reading skills by reading texts for Japanese children (native speakers). He asks for such reading materials, yet Participant 2 (P2) suggests that it is not a good idea for beginners. OP15 does not reply to him. On the other hand, other participants suggest some reading materials as OP15 requests. The extract is the subsequent interaction.]

#4 Moderator 2 (M2):

Aug 1, 2011 #4

And how about this pdf file linked below?


 http://www.gamba.co.jp/step_pdf/1-1-yomimono.pdf

This is from a textbook for pre-school children. There are few kanji in it but they all have furigana. There also contains katakana, since it's "critically essential" in Japanese.:-)


As P2 san wrote, I, too, think that it would be tough to grasp the meaning of the sentences even for learners who have learned for six months or maybe a year.

#5 OP15:

Aug 1, 2011 #5

” M2 said: 

And how about this pdf file linked below?

 http://www.gamba.co.jp/step_pdf/1-1-yomimono.pdf

This is from a textbook for pre-school children. There are few kanji in it but they all have furigana. There also contains katakana, since it's "critically essential" in Japanese.:-)

Hmmm you're right... Some of the Kanji I know and dont need the Furigana but the Katakana is a pain. I can understand sparse bits but not enough to get the overall plot -_-

#6 Participant 2:

Aug 1, 2011

#6

See what I mean?

#7 OP15:

Aug 1, 2011

#7

” P2 said: 🚫

See what I mean?

Yes P2, spookily enough... I do. As I already said to M2 he was right and its still a bit advanced for me. But rub it in some more its all good.. Because we're all born fluent experts with the right too talk down to others and take the piss arent we. I never in fact stated you "werent" right either. Just get off the high horse man I'm a newbie, not fluent.

Cheers all

#8 Participant 2:

Aug 1, 2011

#8

I really would like to know why you have such a huge bug up your butt regarding me. I've done nothing to you but give serious and patient replies to your posts. If it bothers you to have your mistaken and uninformed opinions addressed by others then you might wish to think twice before posting them in public places.

Description. Moderator 2 answers OP15’s request by providing a sample of the reading material that OP15 is looking for but also giving his opposite opinions about using such materials for practicing reading (message # 4). In response, OP15 states that he is convinced that his initial idea is not a good idea for him as a beginner of the language (message #5). At the end of his message, OP15 uses an expressionless emoji of “-_-” (straight lines of eyes and mouth). The use of this expressionless emoji indicates his reaction after he sees that his current reading skills are “not enough to get the overall plot”. Participant 2 joins the thread

again stating that “See what I mean?” (message #6). OP15’s response to Participant 2 consists of impolite messages at the rhetorical level (“Because we’re all born fluent experts with the right too talk down to others and take the piss aren’t we [...] I’m a newbie, not fluent.”) and at the illocutionary level (“Just get off the high horse man”). In message #7, Participant 2 also expresses his negative reaction about OP15’s response.

Analysis/Interpretation. From the perspective of rapport management, we can see that the conflict between OP15 and Participant 2 occurs as the result of different values and beliefs they have in their rapport management. The following considers which element(s) of rapport management are significant for each participant.

(1) The original poster’s side. The reason for OP15’s irritation (negative reaction) toward Participant 2 is message #6. OP15 initially thinks that reading materials can be useful for him to practice, yet he becomes convinced that it might be not a good idea as it is tough for the beginners of the language. He uses a discourse of right and wrong by the statement of “Hmmm you’re right...” in the response to the moderator’s suggestion and indicates that he is wrong (message #5). Thus, there is a negotiation in assessing OP15’s ideas on the thread. In the process of assessment and evaluation, acknowledging one’s mistakes is a face-threatening act. Although in the context of Extract 9.6 this face-threatening act on OP15 is made by himself, his face associated with individual identity can still be damaged. OP15 expresses hesitation by the use of “Hmmm” before and an ellipsis marker “...” after the statement of “you’re right”. Vandergriff (2013) suggests that the use of hmmm and ellipsis to fill pauses in chat interactions “mitigate[s] disagreement by delaying or avoiding the dispreferred

response” (p.6). In Extract 9.6, the use of hummm and ellipsis can be associated with mitigating the assertive force of the statement “you’re right”.

Considering this context, Participant 2’s message of “See what I mean?” (message #4) can be seen as an attack on OP15’s face associated with individual identity as this follow-up message acts to “rub it in some more” (message #7). In other words, Participant 2’s message can continue the assessment (i.e., who is right and wrong) and OP15 may have to commit a further self face-threatening act (i.e., accepting his idea is wrong) in the following interaction. According to OP15’s impolite messages, we can see that OP15 at this point holds a rapport challenge orientation. OP15’s message #7 can also be interpreted as a counter attack on Participant 2’s own face.

(2) Participant 2’s side. In message #8, Participant 2 states that “I’ve done nothing to you but give serious and patient replies to your posts” (underlined in the extract). This message indicates that Participant 2 had at least claimed to hold a rapport maintenance orientation although OP15’s past behaviours had affected rapport with Participant 2 (i.e., “patient replies”). In Extract 9.6, OP15’s absence of response to Participant 2 can affect rapport as it ignores Participant 2’s contribution to the thread. In rapport management, the act of ignoring someone’s participation can infringe his/her sociality rights of association in the participation domain (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.21). In short, excluding a present participant from the on-going interaction can infringe his/her entitlement to the appropriate involvement and fair treatment in the interaction. The importance of association rights in this forum can be seen in a moderator’s message #5. The moderator refers to Participant 2’s name with the honorific

suffix of “san” (= Mr) when the moderator states his opinion (“As [P2’s name]san wrote, I, too, think that”). In this way, the moderator explicitly acknowledges Participant 2’s contributions to the interaction of this thread. With regard to this point, Participant 2’s message “See what I mean?” can function as a device to gain attention from OP15 to the participant’s presence on the thread and the participant does not necessarily have an intention to “rub it in some more”.

Norm of reciprocity. In Chapter 7, I introduced another interaction in which Participant 2 underlines the importance of replying in this forum. So, the norm of reciprocity (equity rights) is also important in understanding Participant 2’s rapport management in the context of Extract 9.6. In the context of Extract 9.6, we can also see that ignoring also infringes the norm of reciprocity in the advice seeker-giver relationship. Participant 2 is the first respondent to OP15’s post. However, OP15 as an advice seeker does not explicitly appreciate Participant 2’s advice. It can be assumed that OP15 and Participant 2 have different understandings about reciprocity in the advice giver-seeker relationship.

9.2.2 Giving a hand from a regular participant

Despite the discord in the interaction of Extract 9.6, Participant 2 still tries to help OP15 when OP15 submits a question on another thread. Extract 9.7 is an extract of the second interaction between these participants.

Extract 9.7 Nice to see you back

[Context: This thread has three participants. OP15 asked about the Japanese pronouns: questions about (1) the contexts in which the male speakers need to use the first-person pronoun for female and (2) whether the plural suffix “-tachi” can be used to make the

first-person pronoun plural (“Atashi”) for both male and female. Two participants answered one question for each. OP15 does not reply to Participant 2 but replies to another participant, directly quoting the participant’s response.]

#2 Participant 2:

Aug 26, 2011

#2

The suffixes are not gender specific. Nice to see you back.

#3 OP15:

Aug 26, 2011

#3

How about using female pronouns in conversation as a male speaker? I could reference myself by saying "atashi" but I would sound feminine right? So I would think males never have to use the other genders version. But like I said when quoting a female it would be expected correct?

E.g. something like if a girl said "Atashi wa sushi wo tabemasu" if I quoted her I would say Atashi because I'm copying exactly..

Description. As the numbering of this message (#2) shows, Participant 2’s message is the first response to OP15, answering one of the two questions asked (i.e., the second questions). Responding indicates Participant 2’s willingness to help OP15 when he finds OP15’s post. This message is short, but Participant 2 also includes a welcoming message of “Nice to see you back”. OP15 does not explicitly reply to Participant 2 in this thread again; OP15 starts his post in message #3 without any acknowledgement for Participant 2 (e.g., a thank you message).

Analysis/Interpretation. Participant 2’s response indicates that Participant 2 still holds a rapport maintenance orientation in the relationship with this original poster. The message of “Nice to see you back” especially indicates Participant 2’s expectation about OP15’s future

participation in this forum and acceptance of him as a member. On the other hand, the absence of OP15's response can be seen as an infringement of Participant 2's sociality rights in the norms of both equity (reciprocity) and association.

Yet, it can also be interpreted that OP15 implicitly responds to Participant 2. In message #3, OP15 asks his first question that has not been answered yet again. He uses with the use of an expression "how about" to focus on the unanswered question, which means he accepts Participant 2's answer about his second question and does not expect other participant(s) to answer it anymore. From a dialogical perspective, OP15's message #3 as utterance responds to Participant 2 and addresses the prospective participant(s) in the thread (i.e., addressivity). This interaction also can be seen as a dialogical exchange not only between individual participants but also between OP15 and a collective addressee (a group of the participants who has more knowledge about this topic). With this perspective, OP15 does not infringe Participant 2's sociality rights as OP15 replies to the collective addressee including Participant 2 by posting another message to the thread. It can be assumed that participants may have different understandings about their interactions on threads, namely, whether it is an interaction with an individual or with the forum. This point is related to the participant's perception of anonymity in *Learning Japanese*.

9.2.3 Responding from the new participant

After about a month, they had a harmonious interaction (Extract 9.8). I will discuss this interaction by examining how they have negotiated their strategies in rapport management.

Extract 9.8 “Starting to understand them now”

[Context: This thread has five participants. OP15 is confused about Japanese verb conjugation because of the result of ‘taberu (=to eat)’ by an auto-conjugator. Other participants explain the grammar to OP15, giving URLs to the relevant information. When OP15 gradually understands the rule, Participant 2 joins this thread and gives OP15 advice for learning the grammar. The extract is the subsequent interaction.]


#7 Participant 2:

Sep 15, 2011 #7

One of the few bright spots in learning Japanese is that verb conjugation is extraordinarily regular and that once you learn a couple of key points you may with almost total confidence proceed to apply any newly learned tense to just about any and every verb you already know or ever will know.

#8 OP15:

Sep 16, 2011 #8

” P2 said: 

One of the few bright spots in learning Japanese is that verb conjugation is extraordinarily regular and that once you learn a couple of key points you may with almost total confidence proceed to apply any newly learned tense to just about any and every verb you already know or ever will know.

Starting to understand them now, I've been reading alone for 2 months looking in every book and website and not understanding it but now its kinda clicked. Now I can start widening my actual vocabulary and make some sentences finally lol..

The verb Read however is a pain in the *** because of the N/M business -_-

#9 Participant 2:

Sep 16, 2011 #9

You just have to remember that bu mu and nu all work that way. Run them together in your head as a nonsense word: "bumunu"

Descriptions. Participant 2 encourages OP15 by stating that the rule of Japanese verb conjugation is so regular that learners can have confidence about this grammar after learning

“a couple of key points” (#7). OP15 replies to Participant 2 by directly quoting Participant 2’s message. OP15’s message #8 consists of two parts. The first part is his reflective comment about his understanding about the verb conjugation between before and after asking the question on this thread, emphasising the change by using “now” three times (underlined in the extract). In the second part, OP15 expresses a different problem about exceptions in verb conjugation, providing an example of “Read”. What OP15 means by “N/M business” is that *yomu* (= to read) that is a verb ending with *-mu* changes between ‘m’ and ‘n’ sounds in the verb conjugation, from *yomu* (present tense) to *yon-da* (past tense). OP15’s message can be seen as a hint of requesting advice about the exceptions. Participant 2 explains the all verbs ending with *-bu*, *-mu*, and *-nu* have the same rule in the verb conjugation⁵.

Analysis/Interpretation. By replying to Participant 2’s message, OP15 finally fulfils Participant 2’s sociality rights in terms of both association and equity rights. OP15’s indirect request for advice is less of an imposition, which also fulfils the sociality rights of the forum participants. Participant 2 gives OP15 a short piece of advice or a cheer-up message by telling them the fact that the irregular verbs ending with *-bu*, *-mu* and *-nu* share the same rule. From the perspective of the rapport management framework, Participant 2 maintains rapport with OP15 through meeting OP15’s interactional goal by answering the indirect request and fulfilling OP15’s association rights by continuing the interaction.

From a dialogical perspective, there can be one more interpretation regarding OP15’s rapport management. In message #8, he indicates that understanding the verb conjugation helps him

⁵ e.g. *manabu* (= to learn) changes its form to *manan-da* (past tense). The only verb ending with *-nu* in contemporary Japanese is *shinu* (= to die), which changes to *shin-da* (past tense).

learn the language more (“Now I can start widening my actual vocabulary and make some sentences finally lol...”). Although OP15’s message #8 is a response to Participant 2, this message also can be seen as a response to other participants; it is feedback about how the other participants’ advice has been helpful and it can function as an acknowledgement or thanking message. One could even read a pun in OP15’s message #8 (“a pain in the *** [=bum]”) and Participant 2’s message #9 of “bumunu” as being a response to this pun. This dialogue can be seen as a mutual attunement (Linell, 2009, p.175) at an intellectual level and as a way of rapport management in terms of interactional involvement-detachment (i.e., the appropriate amount of social interaction).

The previous section (section 9.1) and this section discussed some snapshots that show conflicts between the new members’ and regular members’ different values and beliefs in their interactions. In particular, the forum member’s sociality rights that regular participants and moderator agree with are not necessarily the same in the new member’s understanding. The next section considers sociality rights in terms of replying from a different angle.

9.3 Like System and Rapport Management

In Chapter 7, I mentioned a medium feature of the message board system in *Japan Reference*; the system does not have an automatic function of showing that the message receiver has already read. From a situated learning perspective, this affordance/constraint of the forum system requires the participants to learn an appropriate way of giving a form to their participation (i.e., reification). In relation to this point, I found an interaction between Participant 2 and another new member (the original poster, OP16) regarding the Like system.

The main issue in their interaction was whether a Like point could be a replacement for a text response.

Extract 9.9 Discussion on the use of the Like system

[Context: This thread has two participants; the original poster (who became a member in April 2014) and Participant 2. OP16 asks a few questions, yet instead of answers to the questions, OP16 receives a message from Participant 2 about the netiquette of the forum. The following is the whole interaction of this thread extract the original post.]

#2 Participant 2:

Sep 28, 2014 #2

You already asked the second part....and apparently didn't even bother to check for replies.
That doesn't encourage people to take the time to answer your questions.

A review of threads you started reveals that you have a habit of starting threads and then not participating in them. At least let people know you read the replies, because it really looks like you DON'T.

⋮ MORE | 🗨️ + QUOTE | ↩️ REPLY

👍 Like x 1 List 👍👎👉👎👉👎👉👎👉👎👉

#3 OP16:

Sep 28, 2014 #3

Excuse me there, but if you look CLOSELY, you will see how i "liked" every post whose answered my questions. I even mentioned "Thanjs in advance". For the second post, you should have provided more examples, as i did not understand your post.

⋮ MORE | 🗨️ + QUOTE | ↩️ REPLY

👍👎👉👎👉👎👉👎👉👎👉

#4 Participant 2:

Sep 28, 2014 #4

I did look closely. I stand by what I said.

A "like" is no substitute for a post. If you don't understand an answer, ask for clarification instead of giving the appearance of ignoring it. Your posting manners are appalling.

⋮ MORE | 🗨️ + QUOTE | ↩️ REPLY

👍 Like x 1 List 👍👎👉👎👉👎👉👎👉👎👉

Descriptions. OP16 and Participant 2 have different opinions about ‘interactions’ in this (sub-)forum in relation to the manner of replying and the use of “like” button. While OP16 claims that he “liked every post” as response, Participant 2 thinks this is “no substitute for a post” (message #4). The two messages by Participant 2 gain Like points from one of the moderators. This indicates that the forum staff member agrees with the beliefs and values that he states about the netiquette of replying.

Analysis/Interpretation. Both OP16 and Participant 2 hold a rapport ignorance orientation in their rapport management in order to achieve their interactional goals, i.e., claiming their opinions regarding the manner of replying. The rapport management framework also explains to us that this conflict between two different opinions is related to their different understandings about in/appropriate behaviours in the norm of reciprocity (equity rights).

Participant 2’s claim. Absence of acknowledgement of another’s response can infringe his/her equity right or entitlement to being treated equally and not being taken advantage of. The participants invest time in replying to the opening poster’s question or request and they expect the opening poster to appreciate the cost that they have paid in a proper way. In terms of the aspect of cost-benefit, Spencer-Oatey (2008b) emphasises “the belief that costs and benefits should be kept roughly in balance through the principle of reciprocity” (p.16). So, a Like point is not enough to keep a balance in the norm of reciprocity.

OP16’s claim. For OP16, liking is an appropriate manner of replying to acknowledge

other participants' responses and he believes that it fulfils the reciprocity requirement. He also claims that he mentions "Thanjs[Thanks] in advance" for appreciation in his first post. This is his 'extra' linguistic strategy for rapport with other participants. However, Participant 2 does not accept this claim and characterises OP16's manners as "appalling" (message #4).

Different moral orders. This is an example of a conflict between different understandings about interactional reciprocity as the result of drawing on different norms and conventions. As Kádár and Haugh (2013) propose, our behavioural expectations are reflectively layered. We can see that OP16 draws on the norms and conventions in other CMC contexts. The Like button as rating is embedded in other popular SNSs including *Youtube* and *Facebook* and there are people who use the Like button as an indication that they read the post. Using the Like button as a form of response is a common digital literacy practice in interpersonal communication today. On the other hand, the use of a Like point as a response is not seen as a good practice in *Learning Japanese*. This is related to building and maintaining a community identity to preserve the forum's unique rules and netiquette that distinguish them from other sites.

From the perspective of situated learning, this interaction can be seen as a conflict between different generations (i.e., Participant 2 and the moderator, who are established members, and OP16 as a new member) and a moment to re-negotiate the norm of reciprocity in replying in this learning forum. In fact, there are other opening posters who keep taking part in their thread by pressing the "like" button (i.e., giving an indication of their presence).

9.4 Conclusion

In *Learning Japanese*, the regular participants construct discourses around behavioural expectations through interactions with the new members. In particular, Participant 2 posts many meta-pragmatic comments about in/appropriate behaviours based on his experiences in the *Learning Japanese* forum. Other regular members and the moderators support his ideas explicitly (by posting) and implicitly (by the use of the Like button). From the viewpoint of situated learning, such peer participants' messages about behaviours can function differently from the messages from the staff members and the statements of the forum rules. The peer learners' posts are important resources for the new participants to achieve legitimate peripheral participation. On the other hand, regular members can be involved in conflicts with the new members. In *Learning Japanese*, I found that Participant 2 is more frequently involved in such conflicts with the new members than other participants and discussed the examples in the previous chapters. As we have seen in the above sections, the participants in both sides of a conflict can perceive the messages from his/her counterparty as face attack or impolite. However, such conflicts also can be seen as a form of reifying the forum norms and conventions and a way of reinforcing their learning community. So, from the perspective of situated learning, I suggest that conflict is not necessarily a negative interaction for the participants over a long-term period and it can be a part of the process of developing a learning community. For analysing these interactions, I draw on a dialogical perspective and suggested that the participants' language use for managing association rights develops attunement between them. Through the investigation of ACMD in this forum, interactional reciprocity is a crucial aspect to examine the participants' language use in rapport management.

Chapter 10 Interactions for Rapport in */r/Languagelearning*

In this chapter, I will discuss interactions for the participants to learn the appropriate manners of posting and thereby to maintain rapport through ACMD in */r/Languagelearning*, focusing on different aspects of their interactions from the previous chapter. I will consider legitimate peripheral participation in the subreddit by looking at how the moderators and other forum participants help new members to learn the ACMD (section 10.1). I will also consider the voting system as a non-linguistic aspect of participants' evaluative feedback on their behaviours in the forum (section 10.2 and 10.3). I will particularly discuss the voting system as one of the medium contexts of CMD (Herring, 2007).

10.1 Forum Rules and New Participants

Situated learning theory suggests that new participants gradually become full members in a community of practice through legitimate peripheral participation. On the other hand, the recent study by Dejean and Jullien (2015) found that their participants in Wikipedia did not take a long period before making their first contribution to editing Wikipedia contents. In */r/Languagelearning*, participants are supposed to explore the community enough before submitting their first post, so the model of legitimate peripheral participation can be applied to this context. This section considers how the moderators and forum participants facilitate and help new participants learn the norms of participation in the forum.

10.1.1 Message from the moderators

In late December 2014, the moderators had to request new participants to check the sidebar

before posting (Extract 10.1). The sidebar includes wikis, a description of this subreddit, forum rules and other relevant resources and information, which are all basic knowledge for participating in this community.

Extract 10.1 Check the sidebar and the wiki first! (2014-12-29)

The image shows a screenshot of a Reddit post and its sidebar. The post on the left is titled "Looking to learn language X? Check the sidebar and the wiki first!" and contains a friendly reminder to check the sidebar and wiki first. The sidebar on the right shows the subreddit "Languagelearning" with a link to "Wiki Resources" that points to an FAQ. A red arrow points from the post title to the "Wiki Resources" link.

At that time, the moderator found duplicate questions were being submitted to */r/Languagelearning*, which had already been answered in this community. Posting the same question or the same contents can be seen as a type of duplicate posts (cf. Chapter 8). Although the posters are different, it causes a similar inconvenience that the same contents can occupy the space of the forum and the other forum participants' posts have less opportunity to get attention. The moderator also referred to the increase of participants ("unusual rate of subscribers and traffic") relating to the duplicate topics. Since this post was submitted in late December, the participants on the thread assumed that this might be attributed to people's preparation for New Year resolutions (i.e., more people deciding to learn a new language). This moderator's request is reflected not only by the community

norms but also by the norms of *Reddit*. The Reddiquettes (netiquettes in *Reddit*) page suggests reading forum rules and searching duplicate posts before posting. After the above post (Extract 10.1), a new rule was added as the fifth forum rule at some point during early 2015. Table 18 shows a comparison between the previous and new rules.

Table 18

Comparison between Previous and Updated Rules

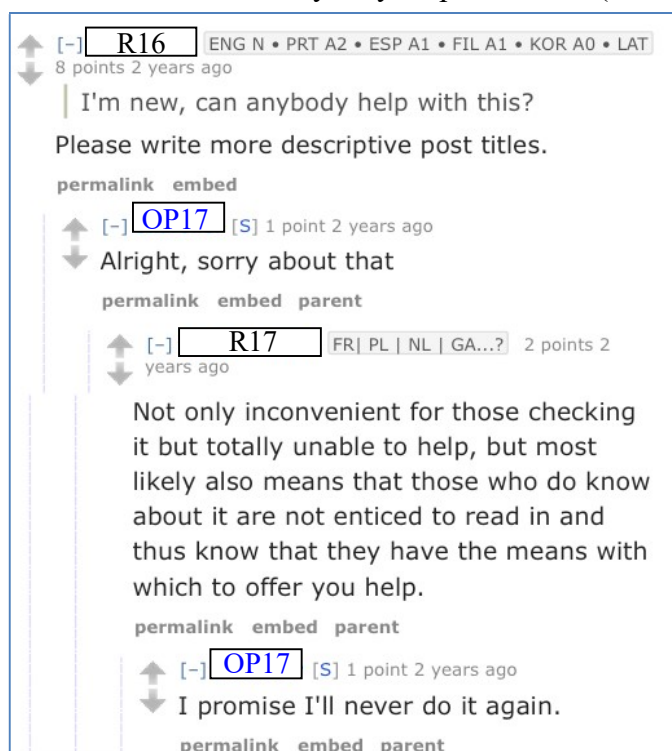
Rules (27 October 2014)	Rules (26 April 2015)
<p>Rules</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No memes. 2. Do not repeatedly or solely submit your own content. You may do so occasionally, provided it is good quality and relevant. These should be spaced between other quality submissions and contributions. In subjective cases the mods will make a judgement call. 3. No disrespect. We're all here in our own time, so please help us enjoy that time by keeping discussion civil. 4. Report people who you see break the rules. Reporting helps us out a lot. We can't scour every thread for infractions. <p>Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common European Framework of 	<p>Rules</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No memes. 2. Do not repeatedly or solely submit your own content. You may do so occasionally, provided it is good quality and relevant. These should be spaced between other quality submissions and contributions. In subjective cases the mods will make a judgement call. 3. No disrespect. We're all here in our own time, so please help us enjoy that time by keeping discussion civil. 4. Report people who you see break the rules. Reporting helps us out a lot. We can't scour every thread for infractions. 5. <u>If you are new you MUST read the wiki before posting.</u> <p>Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common European Framework of

The new rule corresponds to a statement in the FAQ section (“please first check here” underlined in Extract 10.1) and the moderator’s request for the new participants (“Check the sidebar and the wiki first!”) through the post in December. For the fifth rule, the moderators use capital letters of “must” and bold letters of “read the wiki before posting” for emphasis. Thus, a shared norm (tacit knowledge) became a clearly stated rule. From the perspective of situated learning, this incident also can be seen as an interaction between the potential new members and the established members.

10.1.2 Instructions from other participants

Sometimes, a new participant in */r/Languagelearning* starts a thread explicitly indicating their new membership in the thread title. In the present study, I found three examples in which the new members use the explicit word “new” to introduce themselves in the thread title. One of the examples includes an interaction in which two old/regular members suggested the original poster (new member, OP17) should name a better thread title (Extract 10. 2). Redditor (R16) appears between 2013 and 2014 while Redditor 17 (R17) appears between 2011 and 2014 in my data. This interaction between the participants in different generations in the community illustrates an opportunity for the new member to learn a netiquette of posting threads in */r/Languagelearning*, so I will discuss it in the following.

Extract 10.2 I’m new, can anybody help with this? (2014-08-21)



↑ [-] **R16** ENG N • PRT A2 • ESP A1 • FIL A1 • KOR A0 • LAT
8 points 2 years ago

I'm new, can anybody help with this?
Please write more descriptive post titles.

permalink embed

↑ [-] **OP17** [S] 1 point 2 years ago

↓ Alright, sorry about that

permalink embed parent

↑ [-] **R17** FR | PL | NL | GA...? 2 points 2 years ago

Not only inconvenient for those checking it but totally unable to help, but most likely also means that those who do know about it are not enticed to read in and thus know that they have the means with which to offer you help.

permalink embed parent

↑ [-] **OP17** [S] 1 point 2 years ago

↓ I promise I'll never do it again.

permalink embed parent

Descriptions. The interaction starts with Redditor 16’s comment, which receives the

highest score on this thread and so is located on the top of the thread. This means that the other participants agree that this comment contributes to the thread and should be given attention (the voting system will be discussed in the next sections). In terms of speech act, Redditor 16's comment can be seen as a request in an imperative form with *please* ("Please write more descriptive post titles"), quoting OP17's thread title ("I'm new, can anybody help this?"). The plural use of "post titles" means that this is not a request for modifying the current post title but choosing descriptive titles for OP17's future posts. This implies that Redditor 16 expects OP17 to keep contributing to */r/Languagelearning*. Redditor 16's comment is followed by OP17's response ("Alright.") and apology about the less descriptive title. Redditor 17 posts a follow-up comment to reply to OP17's apology, giving an explanation about why the thread title should be descriptive. Redditor 17's comment is followed by another apologetic response from OP17 and this interaction ends.

Analysis/Interpretation. The community values and norms are always negotiated over time. As we have seen in the previous section, */r/Languagelearning* updated its forum rules as the result of increasing numbers of participants. It can be said that the appropriateness of behaviours in */r/Languagelearning* is based on the ongoing negotiation of community norms. For the example of Extract 10.2, Redditor 16 and 17 (regular participants) collaboratively claim the participants' rights and obligations in the advice seeking and giving relationship in */r/Languagelearning*. Table 19 (next page) is a summary of their comments about how the balance or circulation of reciprocity is achieved.

Table 19

Reciprocity Discussed in Extract 10.2

	Original Poster (OP17)	Other Participants
Costs	modifying his/her habits of titling (obligations) ↑	offering help (obligations)
Benefits	maximising the possibility of being helped (rights)	minimising efforts for checking posts (rights) ↑

In terms of autonomy-imposition in equity rights (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b), if one party claims his/her rights and imposes obligations on the other party, the imbalance of reciprocity can infringe the participants' entitlements of not being imposed on by others. On the other hand, the possible obligations can be seen as 'opportunities' for the participants to contribute to the community. I refer to this as 'opportunity' because engaging with such obligatory opportunities (i.e., offering help) is an important aspect of building their identities as a full member in a community. Based on this community norm discursively constructed by Redditor 16 and 17 (and the other participants who voted), I will discuss their rapport management below.

Rapport maintenance orientation by the OP. In Extract 10.2, OP17's less descriptive post title may violate the norms of equity in the advice seeker–giver relationship of the community (Table 19). For the advice giver, the less descriptive title can cause inconvenience that requires them to take extra time for knowing the content of the thread (violating the rights not to be imposed on). It is also related to depriving the participants of obligatory opportunities to offer help and make a possible contribution to the community. So, in Extract 10.2, the balance of reciprocity needs to be fixed. OP17 apologises in his/her rapport

management. From the perspective of rapport management, apology is a face-threatening act for OP17. In short, in apologising, OP17 accepts the negative evaluations about his/her netiquette and indicates readiness to correct his/her behaviour. This could damage his/her self-image in public on the thread. Despite this, OP17 apologises twice, which indicates that OP17 puts more weight on the other participants' values and rights than on this potential damage. Thus, OP17 holds a rapport maintenance orientation throughout the interaction.

Considering the context of the online forum, OP17's rapport management strategy as a new member can also be seen as a preventative strategy to avoid being involved in a potential conflict with old members. Lee's (2005) study proposes that apology is sometimes a strategy to prevent "flaming from developing, and mutual understanding ensues" (p.393). OP17's second post is also a component of an apology message ("I promise I'll never do it again"). This second apology could increase the apparent sincerity of OP17's apology because promising indicates that OP17 will follow a particular pattern of future behaviour. Regarding the rapport management strategies of Redditor 16 and 17, it can be said that they hold a rapport maintenance orientation and a rapport enhancement orientation.

Rapport maintenance orientation by regular members. In Extract 10.2, Redditor 16's comment also functions as a suggestion. As introduced in Chapter 4, Locher's (2006) study finds that the imperative form is one of the linguistic forms used for giving advice in the Internet health column *Lucy Answers* as well as other linguistic forms of declaratives and interrogatives. In the case of *Lucy Answers*, "sections with imperatives [in Lucy's answer] were often embedded in sections softening the directive force of these imperatives" (Locher

and Hoffmann, 2006, p.86). Redditor 16's comment can be seen as both a request and suggestion/advice, considering the context of the interactions between old and new members. The directive force of Redditor 16's comment (imperative) is softened by the use of "please" at the stylistic level and Redditor 17's follow-up comment (declarative) at the discourse level. In this interaction, the two participants construct an advice discourse consisting of an imperative sentence and declarative sentences. It consists of instruction and explanation; Redditor 16's comment is a direct suggestion and Redditor 17's comment is an explanation about the practices that the participants in the subreddit generally engage in. Since Redditor 17's explanatory comment is longer in the advice discourse, the overall advice has less directive force.

Based on the norm of reciprocity presented by the two participants, this mitigation of the advice messages is an important strategy for their rapport with OP17. If they use a directive to convey a piece of advice without any mitigation, it can infringe OP17's equity rights in terms of autonomy-imposition (i.e., rights of not being imposed on). Besides, Redditor 17's greater emphasis on OP17's benefits/rights (highlighted in Table 19) can also contribute to rapport management with OP17. On the other hand, Locher (2006) argues that the use of imperatives to give advice contributes to the construction of a straightforward voice (p.262). As mentioned earlier, other participants support Redditor 16's comment by voting. With regard to maintaining rapport in a community, Redditor 16's use of the imperative form with "please" is appropriate for giving advice to a new member. From a dialogical perspective, this interaction also can be seen as a dialogue between (a voice of) a new member and (a voice of) old members regarding the community netiquette.

Rapport enhancement orientation by regular members. Considering a series of comments by Redditor 16 and 17 as advice by old members, it can be assumed that they hold a rapport enhancement orientation as their comments indicate their implicit expectations about OP17's future participation. Their expectation is particularly indicated by the fact that they give advice about titling threads (netiquette). Redditor 16's and 17's comments are evaluative; they evaluate OP17's post title as inappropriate and decide to point it out. Such negative evaluation can threaten OP17's specific face related to his/her relational identity or identity as a competent (new) participant of the community. Despite this potential threat, they point out the inappropriateness of OP17's title. As Redditor 17's comment indicates, it is because they (as old members) know that the title can affect the interactional goals for OP17 (advice seeker) and the participants (advice givers) in */r/Languagelearning*. This information is something that OP17 as a new member should know for future participation. The Reddiquette page states a similar point that "sometimes bad timing, a bad title, or just plain bad luck can cause an interesting story to fail to get noticed".

- **Search for duplicates before posting.** Redundancy posts add nothing new to previous conversations. That said, sometimes bad timing, a bad title, or just plain bad luck can cause an interesting story to fail to get noticed. Feel free to post something again if you feel that the earlier posting didn't get the attention it deserved and you think you can do better.

Figure 9. Reddiquette in 2014

However, what is "bad" depends on different cultures of different subreddits. From the viewpoint of situated learning, the advice comments by Redditor 16 and 17 (old members)

are the resource for OP17 to understand what is ‘bad’ or in/appropriate in the community.

This resource helps OP17 modify his/her knowledge and habits about titling to maximise the future opportunities to have responses.

10.2 Voting as Evaluative Feedback on Manners of Posting

For *Learning Japanese*, I have taken into account the Like system in the close analysis of interactions (Chapter 9), which is used in order to see whether the content of a message is supported by other participants and who supported the comment. In particular, this information is helpful to consider whether a comment about an in/appropriate behaviour represents a viewpoint shared more widely in the community or not. The Like point system in *Japan Reference* does not influence the organisation of threads, while the voting system in *Reddit* does.

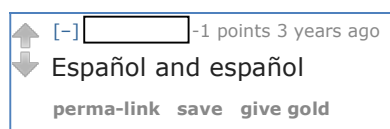
The location of a comment on a thread is not fixed but moves based on the total of upvotes (positive point) and downvotes (negative point). With the voting system, the more a comment is upvoted and the higher its total score is, the more closely it is placed to the top of thread. On the other hand, the more a comment is downvoted and the lower its total score is, the nearer it goes to the bottom of a thread⁶. The organisation of a thread visually presents which comments have been evaluated positively or negatively or it indicates the other participants’ perceptions and feedback about whether your comment is relevant and useful in the on-going interaction. Thus, the voting system can be seen as a significant element for the participants

⁶ According to the Reddit official blog (Munroe, 2009 October), the vote count is affected by time bias (i.e., older or earlier posts would have more chances to receive votes than newer or later posts). In the ‘Best’ sorting system as the default, *Reddit* uses a statistical method to count votes as a solution, estimating how many up/down votes a post would receive (see also Golbeck, 2013, pp.194-196).

(redditors) in deciding what and how to post and can influence the participants' language use for maintaining rapport by reflecting on their behaviours in a given context. For example, this is related to the previous discussion in Chapter 8 on how important it is for them to be aware of netiquette for composing and posting a comment (e.g., using “TL;DR”). I suggest that voting is also an important aspect of their interactions to learn to be full members in */r/Languagelearning*. Having feedback from other forum participants, they can develop meta-pragmatic knowledge about language use for maintaining rapport or having confidence to participate in the forums.

Unhelpful or irrelevant comments. In general in */r/Languagelearning*, the comments that do not contribute to the thread topic receive downvotes. The following are such examples.

Extract 10.3 Downvoted comment 1 (2012-12-31)



Extract 10.4 Downvoted comment 2 (2012-04-06)



The comment of Extract 10.3 appears in the thread in which the original poster asks for suggestions of a language to learn, with a reason. The poster of Extract 10.3 just strongly suggests Spanish by repeating “Español” but does not provide any reason. The comment of Extract 10.4 is posted to the thread in which the original poster asks for help to start learning Braille. Although in Extract 10.4 two dots (..) can be read as hyphen and four dots can be

read as dash (...) in Braille, the comment does not make sense unless the poster gives an explanation. According to the downvotes given to this comment, the other participants on this thread perceive these comments without enough explanations as less useful or relevant. Applying the rapport management framework, the participants react negatively by downvoting when the comment does not fulfill the original poster's wants and needs for learning a language (i.e., interactional goal). These two examples suggest that the thread topic as interactional goal constructing a situational context of CMD (Herring, 2007) influences the participants to judge the appropriateness of comments in the thread.

Troll account. In */r/Languagelearning*, there is a troll account that receives downvotes whenever it posts a comment. I treat him/her as a troll because a few other subreddit communities identify him/her as a troll. Besides, it is highly likely that this troll account is not a human but a bot (i.e., a web robot that is operated by software). There is regularity in its comments; it 'corrects' the spelling of *grammar* used in a previous comment by replacing it with the incorrect 'grammer' and leaving a comment of FTFY (= Fixed That For You).

Extract 10.5 shows that a comment by the troll receives enough downvotes to reach the "comment score below threshold" (underlined) and becomes invisible on the thread. The default setting about lower scoring for invisibility is minus four points. Registered users can change this setting on their preference page so that all comments including lower scored comments are visible on a thread (in the present study, I follow the default setting). Otherwise, if people would like to see the invisible comments, they need to click [+] next to the username (pointed by an arrow in Extract 10.5) to show the invisible comments.

Extract 10.5 Downvoting and a troll (1)

↑ [-] [redacted] 3 points 3 years ago
 ↓ I recommend [English grammar for students of Spanish](#)
 permalink embed
 ↑ [-] [redacted] [S] 1 point 3 years ago
 ↓ Ok great thanks
 permalink embed parent
 → [+][Troll account](#) comment score below threshold (1 child)

Extract 10.6 is the same interaction as Extract 10.5 but it shows the invisible comments. As Extract 10.6 show, a comment (red arrow) accompanying the troll's posting is also invisible. In the hierarchical structure of threads in *Reddit*, the scores of the previous comments affect the following responses that belong to them. As in HTML code, this relationship is called parent-child. Note that in the example of Extract 10.6, the participants reply to the troll account treating it as a human participant.

Extract 10.6 Downvoting and a troll (2)

sorted by: **best** ▼
 ↑ [-] [redacted] 3 points 2 years ago
 ↓ I recommend [English grammar for students of Spanish](#)
 perma-link save give gold
 ↑ [-] [redacted] [S] 1 point 2 years ago
 ↓ Ok great thanks
 perma-link save parent give gold
 → [-][Troll account](#) -5 points 2 years ago
 ↓ I recommend [English grammer for students of Spanish](#) FTFY
 perma-link save parent give gold
 ↑ [-] [redacted] 3 points 2 years ago
 ↓ I was going to be rude about your ignorance...but I now realize this is how you get your kicks.
 perma-link save parent give gold

The point I would like to discuss here is the function of downvoting against the troll's comments. Although customising is possible, the default setting makes lower scored comments invisible on the thread. This can be seen as a way of excluding the lower scored comments or negatively evaluated comments from the discourse of the thread. This function can be related to the participants' rapport management strategy. I observed that insulting comments were often made invisible on threads by downvotes. Such insulting comments include reference to particular ethnicities, religions and languages. From the perspective of rapport management, downvoting is a strategy to disassociate the posters from harmful and disrespectful comments from other participants and exclude such negative discourse or voices from the threads. In this way, the participants can express their shared values and norms about in/appropriateness. For this point, the next section considers how the participants discuss shared values and norms in the forum by downvotes and upvotes.

10.3 Talking about Downvotes and Upvotes

The voting system is anonymous and the participants do not know who upvotes or downvotes a thread and comment. This is one of the differences between the Like system in *Japan Reference* and the voting system in *Reddit*. Similar to talking about the forum netiquettes (see, Chapter 8), the participants also post comments about upvotes or downvotes. Such comments can indicate their meta-pragmatic awareness of what are in/appropriate manners of posting or using language in the forum. To discuss this point, I will introduce some examples here.

10.3.1 Downvoting

By searching with AncConc software, 54 references about downvoting were found in the

corpus of /r/*Languagelearning* (Table 20). While the participants talk about downvoting as the past incident by using the past tense, they also talk about it as a present incidence by using the present continuous tense and using ‘downvote’ as a noun in relation to reactions to the accumulated downvotes (e.g., “Lol at the downvotes”, “thanks for the down votes”).

Table 20

References about Downvote in Comments

Items	Freq.	Example
<i>downvote</i>	13	Why <i>downvote</i> me?
<i>downvotes</i>	9	Lol at the <i>downvotes</i> , I guess people don't like realistic solutions which involve hard work.
<i>down vote</i>	2	No need to <i>down vote</i> , I was just misinformed.
<i>down votes</i>	3	Thanks for the <i>down votes</i> ! You're a hero.
<i>downvoted</i>	25	Well, don't write highly speculative and controversial claims if you don't want to be <i>downvoted</i> .
<i>downvoting</i>	2	Personally I'm not <i>downvoting</i> you as I think that isn't the point of the down vote, [...]
<i>down-voting</i>	1	[...] it was reddit's automatic downvote anti-spam-bots randomly <i>down-voting</i> .
<i>downvoter</i>	1	I smell a random <i>downvoter</i> .
Total =	56	

In the 25 references of *downvoted*, there are 13 examples where *downvoted* is used in a present continuous passive form (i.e., be + being downvoted). Another striking linguistic feature is that the references to downvoting are often used with lexical items to express a reason and ask for a reason including an interrogative word “why” (15 examples), conjunctions “because” (4 examples) and “as” (1 example). Within these 13 examples, there are 5 examples which use this linguistic form with the phrase “I don’t know why”.

- *I don't know why* you're being downvoted because this is true. (2011-01-29)
- *I don't know why* I'm being downvoted again. (2012-01-11)
- *I don't know why* this is getting downvoted. (2013-01-02)
- *I honestly don't know why* you're being downvoted. (2013-10-04)
- *I don't know why* you're getting downvoted. (2013-12-06)

Thus, downvoting itself is also evaluated by other participants. This kind of comment that suggests reconsideration about the negative evaluation can invite a discussion. Extract 10.7 shows an example of this. This interaction took place between the members who continuously participated in */r/Languagelearning* for some periods. Redditor 18 (R18) appears between 2011 and 2013 and Redditor 19 (R19) appears in 2011 in my data. The interaction took place on 29 January 2011. For the purpose of focusing on comments about downvoting, I omit several lines of the first comment by Redditor 18.

Extract 10.7 I don't know why you're being downvoted (2011-01-29)

R18

tl;dr: listen, record, compare. How you do that's up to you; Anything else is a waste of time.

[perma-link](#) [save](#) [give gold](#)

↑ [-] R19 2 points 4 years ago

↓ I don't know why you're being downvoted because this is true. Maybe people thought it was a bit harsh to say everything else is a waste of time, I dunno.

Listening and practising against examples is definitely the most effective. Imagine being taught how to sing based only on abstract visual representations and words "The tune goes up pretty high, then kind of low then high up again." It'd be pretty much impossible to learn how to sing that tune. Obviously the abstractions help, but the core of it is you need to hear what it should actually sound like, and compare if what you're producing sounds like that.

[perma-link](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [give gold](#)

↑ [-] R18 French, Chinese 1 point 4 years ago

↓ I wondered about that myself, but decided to just tell myself that it was reddit's automatic downvote anti-spam-bots randomly down-voting. I figure in Language Learning, the redditors would at least leave an explanation of their disagreement.

[perma-link](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [give gold](#)

Redditor 19 replies to Redditor 18's comment, expressing an implicit disagreement with people who downvoted Redditor 18's comment ("I don't know why") and agreement with what Redditor 18 states ("because this is true"). Redditor 19 proposes a guess about the negative evaluations of Redditor 18's comment, referring to the question of which part of her/his statement can be negatively marked. In the context of */r/Languagelearning*, a comment like "a waste of time" can affect rapport with other participants as the comment belittles the values of language and threatens the participants' face associated with their identities of speakers/learners of the language. From the point of view of discussion, the statement of "waste of time" is seen as controversial. Redditor 19 avoids making his/her comment sound like an assumption by the use of "Maybe" at the beginning and "I dunno" at the end. According to Grant's (2010) taxonomy, Redditor 19's use of "I dunno" can be seen as having a pragmatic function of avoiding assessment. In short, these expressions of uncertainty mitigate the directness of Redditor 19's assessment about the downvotes and Redditor 18's comment. After the comment about downvoting, Redditor 19 adds his/her advice for the original poster, which aligns with Redditor 18's advice ("listen, record, compare"). This indicates another implicit agreement.

Through these linguistic strategies, Redditor 19 maintains rapport with Redditor 18 in terms of norms of association (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.16). By showing empathy and agreement, Redditor 19 involves Redditor 18 in the on-going interaction of the thread again. Note that Redditor 19 uses the present continuous tense ("I don't know why you're being downvoted"). We can interpret that his/her rapport management is successful as Redditor 18 replies to

Redditor 19 later on, sharing his/her thoughts about the reason for receiving downvotes.

Redditor 19 also expresses his/her beliefs or expectations about the behaviours of the participants of */r/Languagelearning*; “I figure in *Languagelearning*, the redditors would at least leave an explanation of their disagreement”. From the perspective of rapport management, it can be said that Redditor 19’s comment plays an important role in the interaction between Redditor 18 and the other participants in the community by creating a space for them to renegotiate different interpretations about the meanings given to each other. These participants both appear on another thread in 2013 and they both post comments about downvoting. Extract 10.8 and Extract 10.9 are extracts of their comments.

Extract 10.8 Redditor 18’s comment about downvoting (2011-03-07)

[–] **R18** 7 points 3 years ago
 Having seen "0"s on good sincere posts, I smell a random downvoter.
 So I became the "random upvoter".
 Join me in my anarchistic pursuit of learning.

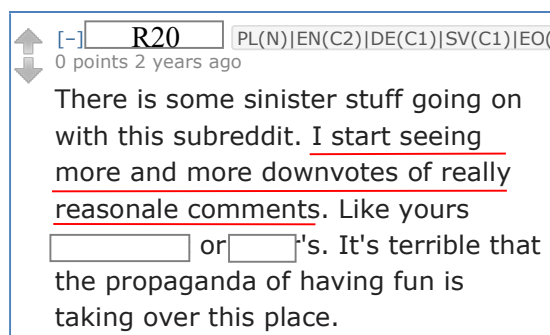
Extract 10.9 Redditor 19’s comment about downvoting (2011-03-07)

Edit: I don't understand the downvote? I think we can all agree that having human input is a huge advantage in learning a living language, and I wanted to emphasise that. I agree with everything everyone else said, but didn't want to just parrot what's already been said.
If you downvoted, please take some time to explain your point of view. I'd love to hear it, and perhaps make my points more clear.

According to his/her comments, Redditor 18 disassociates the unreasonable downvotes from the participants of */r/Languagelearning* but associates them with the Reddit’s anti-spam-bot (Extract 10.7) or “a random downvoter” (Extract 10.8). Redditor 18’s comment in Extract 10.8 receives high scores, which means other participants agrees with his/her idea of promoting upvotes for “good sincere posts”.

In Extract 10.9, as Chapter 8 introduced, “EDIT” indicates that the poster has edited his/her comment. Since “EDIT” is not followed by a message that shows which part(s) is amended, it is more likely that he/she added the comments after “EDIT” as a postscript. Redditor 19 raises a topic about downvoting in relation to behavioural norms in */r/Languagelearning* as a learning community. In the second paragraph of the comment, Redditor 19 requests the other participants to leave an explanation about downvoting by saying “please take some time to explain your point of view”. From a dialogical perspective, Redditor 19 brings a (community’s) voice about “the need of explanations for downvoting”, which was articulated by Redditor 18 previously in Extract 10.7. This discursive construction of the behavioural norms is a different meaning-making process from the forum rules, as discussed in section 10.2.2. I will introduce one more extract with a comment about downvoting (Extract 10.10).

Extract 10.10 It’s terrible (2014-12-08)



Reviewing his/her history of comments, Redditor 20 registered in *Reddit* in 2014 and started participating in */r/Languagelearning* in May 2014. The above comment was submitted in December 2014. In terms of legitimate peripheral participation, Redditor 20 had about a half of year to explore this community through participation before submitting the above comment. In my data, this participant appears on seven threads submitted in 2014. The thing

to note about this comment is that Redditor 20 brings in the discourse or voice of problematizing the downvotes of reasonable comments (underlined in Extract 10.10) like Redditor 18 and Redditor 19 in earlier generations (Extract 10.7 to Extract 10.9). This comment indicates that the participants in different generations share a similar perspective about the voting system and the need to correct inappropriate downvotes.

10.3.2 Upvoting

There are 30 references to upvotes in the corpus of */r/Languagelearning*. The variations of references to upvoting are fewer than to downvoting (8 lemmas for downvoting and 4 lemmas for upvoting) and the number of examples of referring to upvotes is also slightly less than the number of examples of referring to downvotes (30 examples referring to upvotes and 56 examples referring to downvotes).

Table 21

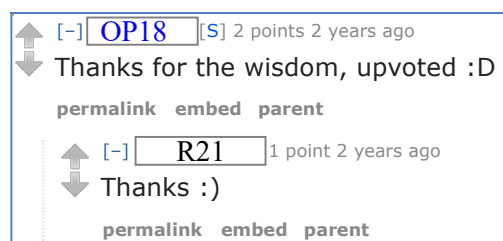
References about Upvotes in Comments

Items	Freq.	Example
<i>upvote</i>	18	I kinda feel like one <i>upvote</i> isn't enough!
<i>upvotes</i>	2	This is a fantastic explanation. Mad props and/or <i>upvotes</i> .
<i>upvoted</i>	7	Thanks for the wisdom, <i>upvoted</i> :D
<i>upvoting</i>	2	I'm <i>upvoting</i> you, since this is a useful conversation.
<i>upvoter</i>	1	So I became the “random <i>upvoter</i> ”.
Total =	30	

The above references to upvotes are used with words which express reasons (e.g., *for*, *because*) and the participants state the reasons for their upvotes. These positive comments can be seen as compliments. In rapport management, a compliment can be a linguistic means to

enhance rapport. Considering the context of */r/Languagelearning*, compliments as positive feedback are a way of acknowledging the poster’s contribution to the subreddit (forum) and this is a positive rapport management strategy. There are also examples that express explicitly and implicitly gratitude to the posters of the comments. The implicit example is “I kinda feel like upvote isn’t enough!” in Table 21. The following extract is an example of an explicit expression of appreciation in a comment about upvoting.

Extract 10.11 Thanks & Upvotes (2014-05-01)



In this extract, the original poster of the thread (OP18) replies to Redditor 21 (R21) by expressing his/her appreciation and mentioning that he/she upvoted Redditor 21’s comment. Redditor 21 also expresses gratitude OP18’s upvote in return. From this example, upvoting can be used for expressing appreciation in the context of */r/languagelearning*; in short, upvoting can be used not only for scoring/rating (i.e., original function) but also for fulfilling the norm of reciprocity. On the other hand, there is an example where the reference of “upvote” is used in a negative way (Extract 10.12).

Extract 10.12 Tips for learning two languages (2013-10-04)

[Context. The original poster (OP19) on this thread is learning French and Greek at the same time and asks for tips to learn the two languages, especially tips for “not getting the two sets of vocabulary mixed up.” Redditor 22 (R22) gives tips and encourages OP19 to pursue learning the two languages. Redditor 23 (R23) and Redditor 24 (R24) respond to this comment. The following is an extract of interaction from this thread.]

↑ [-] **R22** 12 points 2 years ago
 ↓ People will tell you that you should learn one and then the other, and they're probably right. But, if you're like me, you just HAVE to learn them both at the same time, and it's really no problem.

[omitted]

I honestly don't know why you're being downvoted. Bonne chance, monsieur **OP19**!
 perma-link save

↑ [-] **R23** -7 points 2 years ago*
 ↓ I honestly don't know why you're being downvoted.
Probably because the two languages couldn't be more different and you would have to be kinda retarded to mix them up, which renders this whole thread a pointless "I'm learning two languages at the same time, I'm so smart, pls upvote me!" (further reinforced by the fact that he felt the pedantic need of writing "Français et/και Ελληνικά" instead of the straightforward "French and Greek") . That's why I downvoted it, anyway.
 perma-link save parent

↑ [-] **R24** English/Spanish/Catalan | Norwegian/French/S 7 points 2 years ago
 ↓ Or because the same question comes up a few times every week, with the same similar comments every time.
 perma-link save parent give gold

Description. Redditor 22's comment is the top comment on this thread, which means this comment is the most supported by other participants. Redditor 22 expresses implicit disagreement with the downvotes on this thread by saying "I honestly don't know why you're being downvoted". Redditor 22 adds a cheer-up message in French that OP19 is learning, "Bonne chance, monsieur [OP19's name]! (= Good luck, Mr. [OP19's name]!)". Redditor 23

replies to Redditor 22's question about the downvotes by directly quoting. In his/her opinion, the thread is "pointless" as the two languages are so different that there is no likelihood of mixing up the vocabulary in these languages. Redditor 23 has a negative evaluation about OP19's post. On the other hand, Redditor 24 (regular member) adds a different interpretation about the downvotes. Redditor 23's comment receives more downvotes and Redditor 24's comment receives more upvotes, which means the other participants agree with Redditor 24's idea.

Analysis/Interpretation. From the perspective of rapport management, Redditor 22 holds a rapport maintenance or enhancement orientation in his/her response. Redditor 22 answers OP19's question (meeting OP19's interactional goal) and gives an encouragement (fulfilling OP19's association rights). The thread OP19 starts receives downvotes and this negative assessment could damage OP19's face. Redditor 22 also saves OP19's face related to their individual identity (as a learner of the two languages) by acknowledging OP19's attempt to learn two languages and disagreeing with the downvotes. On the other hand, Redditor 23's comment can be seen as an insult in the impoliteness framework. Redditor 23 adopts indirect impoliteness strategies and relates negative attributes to OP19's identity such as "kinda retarded" and "pedantic". Redditor 23 also rephrases OP19's post by imitating a show-off ("I'm so smart, pls upvote me!"). Here, the reference to "upvote" is used to create this negative character and Redditor 23 relates this characterisation to OP19's identity.

Regarding rapport management in the discourse domain (i.e., discourse organisation and topic), a dialogical perspective can explain the importance of Redditor 24's comment in

rapport management. Redditor 24 contributes to responses to the quoted comment “I honestly don’t know why you’re being downvoted” by using “Or because” to continue the previous comment by Redditor 23. In this response to the question, we can identify at least two voices or two different viewpoints about the downvote on OP19’s comment. When we see a dialogue between the different opinions by Redditor 23 and 24 as a single response to the previous question, the co-existing voices can mitigate the harshness of the negative evaluation about OP19’s post overall as the ‘volume’ of these voices are different. According to the scores of upvotes/downvotes that each comment earned, the two voices do not have the same volume; Redditor 23 receives a minus score in total and Redditor 24 receives a plus score in total as the result of agreement from other participants. In this way, Redditor 24’s comment that saves OP19’s face is more heavily weighted on this thread. In terms of rapport between OP19 and the participants of this thread, it can also be seen that upvoting Redditor 24’s comment can function as a means of rapport management with OP19 (i.e., repairing rapport between the forum participants and OP19 by supporting Redditor 24’s viewpoint).

The interpersonal relationship between OP19 and the participants in the extract is negotiated between harmony and disharmony in terms of face; OP19’s face is damaged by the downvotes, saved by Redditor 22’s comment, damaged again by Redditor 23 and saved again by Redditor 24. Note that OP19 does not present explicitly in this interaction. So, focusing on only the interaction of the extract, rapport management takes place without OP19. Yet, considering the thread as a whole, the participants manage and challenge rapport with OP19. A dialogical perspective can be useful to illustrate this interaction. That is, the addressivity of the comment in Extract 10.12 responds to OP19, other participants (including those who

downvote) and the participants in the following comments.

Discussion. The voting system in *Reddit* has not only a rating function to organise the contents of the site but also provides learning opportunities for the participants to know values and norms shared in this subreddit (forum) through others' reactions about the in/appropriateness of their comments (contents and language). In fact, one of the suggestions in the "Please do" list in Reddiquette (<https://www.reddit.com/wiki/reddiquette>) is to "consider posting constructive criticism/an explanation when you downvote something":

- **Consider posting constructive criticism / an explanation when you downvote something,** and do so carefully and tactfully.

On the other hand, posting to simply let the participants know your upvote or downvote is one of the suggestions on the list of "Please don't" in Reddiquette:

- **Announce your vote (with rare exceptions).** "Upvote" and "Downvote" aren't terribly interesting comments and only increase the noise to signal ratio.

However, as we have seen in the above, announcing one's vote is also an important aspect of interpersonal interactions in the context of */r/Languagelearning* and it is not just "noise". I showed the above examples of posting an "upvote" comment that is accompanied with positive feedback and gratitude. Such positive feedback can encourage the posters to make future contributions to the subreddit (forum). From the perspective of rapport management, announcing your upvote can be a part of rapport management that allows the participants to maintain and enhance their well-functioning relationship for informal learning. In sum, the above examples in this section showed that talking about downvotes and upvotes are ways of rapport management with the other participants, for example, by expressing respect for their

contributions to the community. It is also a part of negotiating and reinforcing the values and behavioural norms in */r/Languagelearning* as a community.

This section also considers the dialogical perspective for analysis. As Linell (2009) explains, one of the aspects of ‘voice’ in dialogical theory is adopting a perspective on topics. He describes voice as perspective in relation to the idea of ‘voting’:

Ideas, opinions, and perspectives on topics are by and large socially and interactionally generated and sustained. They live in the ‘circulation of ideas’ in conversations, the media etc. (François, 1993; Hudelot, 1994; Salzar Orvig, 1999). Individuals appropriate many of these ideas and make them their own. They then indulge in voicing, i.e. expressing these ideas themselves. One might also say that they “vote” for these ideas, and align with others who hold these ideas. (p.116)

For this description, Linell (2009) adds an explanation about the verb in the footnote that “In many languages, the verb for ‘to vote’ is derived from the noun meaning ‘voice’” (p.143).

This description about the relation between ‘voice’ and ‘to vote’ can explain the interactions on threads in *Reddit*. In other words, the interactions (comments and votes) in *Reddit* can be understood as the dialogues of voices (utterances) and the dialogical viewpoint is helpful to examine the multiple layers of language use. For the present study, as the above example showed, a dialogical perspective can help to understand rapport management in different linguistic domains.

10.4 Conclusion

Similar to *Learning Japanese* discussed in the previous chapter, the moderators and participants in */r/Languagelearning* also post messages to new (and prospective) members

and negotiate the in/appropriate manners of posting in this forum. They explicitly express what they expect the new participants (and also participants in general) to do, which include avoiding duplicate posts and choosing a clear thread title (section 10.1). It can be said that these appropriate manners of posting are important for them to manage sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals for treating participants' posts equally and finding how they can help others. In other words, the appropriate manner of posting is an important aspect of ACMD for generalised reciprocity in */r/Languagelearning* as a community.

In this chapter, I particularly discussed two aspects of interactions in */r/Languagelearning* for the participants to learn such necessary knowledge to posts comments appropriately. From the perspective of situated learning, I examined the messages in threads from the moderators and the regular members to new (and prospective) members and suggested that these interactions were helpful for the participant's legitimate peripheral participation (section 10.1). Another aspect is the voting system, which is a unique medium feature of *Reddit*. The voting system allows the participants to express their viewpoints or voices other than posting a comment. In section 10.2, I discussed examples in which the participants 'responded' to each other through voting and posting comments. They respond to the irrelevant and unhelpful comments by downvoting and respond to downvotes and upvotes by giving their viewpoints in comments. Although the Reddiquette suggests the participants not to post a comment to announce their upvote/downvote, comments to indicate upvote can be part of thanking messages in */r/Languagelearning* and can be a strategy for the participants to manage rapport. Thus, I found that the voting system was a particular medium context of CMD relevant to rapport management.

Chapter 11 Discussions: Expanding the Rapport Management Model

This chapter discusses how the findings of the present study can extend Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management framework. Through Chapter 6 to Chapter 10, I have illustrated the participants' language use for building, maintaining and challenging rapport in *Learning Japanese* and */r/Languagelearning* by examining them with the rapport management framework. In this chapter, I synthesise the findings about the participants' rapport management strategies discussed in each chapter. I argue that the notion of face is not adequate to explain the interpersonal aspects of ACMD in the particular contexts of the two online fora. I propose the benefits of applying the model of rapport management to investigating the construction of rapport in ACMD.

11.1 Community Practices and Rapport Management

11.1.1 Rapport Management in Learning Communities

In this thesis, I examined each of two online forums as a community of practice, which has a clear goal of learning a language and creating a culture. In the rapport management framework, culture is crucial in the consideration of various factors that can influence people's strategies for managing social relationships (see Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, pp.42-43). Spencer-Oatey (2008a) defines culture as:

a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour. (p.3)

Applying this definition to *Learning Japanese* and */r/Languagelearning*, they also have unique cultures consisting of these fundamental elements. The culture of each online forum is developing through practices of the forum. The core practice is learning a language, which is not the same sense of ‘learning’ as at school but is a form of ‘social learning by doing’. What the participants do is join the interactions for learning a language in asynchronous CMC, and they take a certain amount of time (but not necessarily being present at the same time) to talk about their proposed agendas in threads.

In these particular community cultures, I found that the notion of ‘face’ was not enough to examine how the participants build and maintain rapport with other participants. Through the previous chapters, I discussed what kinds of behaviours were perceived negatively and avoided by the participants. Particularly in chapter 8, I showed that the participants tried to avoid behaviours which could potentially interrupt their interactional goals (i.e., having smooth interactions and relating the comments to the thread topic). These marked behaviours were recognised by the forum rules and netiquettes.

11.1.2 Forum Rules

In both online fora, the forum rules particularly emphasise the participants’ mutual respect for each other. Mutual respect can be achieved by avoiding face-threatening acts (i.e., not damaging the interlocutor’s self-image) but it can be also achieved through other strategies. For example, treating other participants’ learning goals as being equally as important as your own is also a way of showing mutual respect and it can manage the participants’ sociality rights, fostering a collaborative and supportive relationship between participants.

Because the main activity is based on a series of text-based messages, the forum rules and other netiquettes particularly require the participants to avoid the behaviours that can potentially disrupt the smooth interactions in the contexts of ACDM. They include posting irrelevant contents and the same contents more than twice unnecessarily, behaviours which are marked negatively by other participants and the forum staff members. These aspects of ACDM are related to the medium features of delivering messages and cannot be directly explained as management of face as self-image. Instead, they are more related to achieving the participants' interactional goals through smooth interactions. They can also be seen as fulfilling the participants' behavioural expectations in terms of sociality rights and obligations. Applying the principles of equity rights, the participants are expected to manage a balance of cost-benefits in their time investment in the online forum, namely, the time to compose, read and respond to messages.

11.1.3 Rapport Management as Practice

The participants in these online fora are expected to or ought to follow these forum rules as legitimate members. The forum rules can be seen as a set of beliefs about appropriate manners of participation or a reified form of the community norms. From the viewpoint of administrative power, the forum rules also have a kind of force to regulate the participants' behaviour; the administrators and/or moderators require the participants to report when someone break the rules. Besides, the participants also take into account the netiquettes that are not stated as the forum rules but shared as tacit knowledge about the appropriate manners among the participants (e.g., avoiding 'nitpicking'). Considering this situational context (Herring, 2007), it can be assumed that their language use is more or less influenced by the

forum rules and community norms. The forum rules and other community norms function to maintain the two online fora as a learning community. In this respect, the participants' language use in threads is always linked to maintaining the community. In short, their rapport management for individual relationships can consequently maintain their online communities.

The above aspect of interpersonal communication, namely sharing the behavioural norms to achieve the forum's goal, can be seen as a part of community practice. In other words, rapport management is a part of practice in a community. Wenger (1998) proposes that community practice is constituted of three dimensions of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. Mutual engagement creates a mutual relationship and hence forms a community, but it does not mean that their relationships are always harmonious (Wenger, 1998, pp.76-77). The participants need to deal with disagreement and conflicts in negotiating and discussing their mutual accountability to pursue the purpose of the community or its joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998, p.81-82). Their shared repertoires are reflected in the history of such mutual engagement and used in negotiating meanings over developing the community (Wenger, 1998, pp.83-84). Thus focusing on the interpersonal aspect of practice, we can see that these three dimensions of practice are what the participants do through managing rapport. I suggest that the rapport management framework can help to explain the process of how the members of the community deal with conflictual situations and maintain the community as a community by looking at what the members actually do in a given context.

11.2 Misinterpretations and Rapport Management

In this thesis, I found that not all conflicts occurred as the results of threatening face. There were conflicts which occurred as a result of misunderstanding between the participants and such misunderstandings were attributed to the fact that the participants had different behavioural expectations and interactional goals. In these kinds of conflictual interactions, the participants showed negative reactions emotionally. Indeed, conflicts are negative experiences for the individual participants and it would be good to know the strategies to avoid all such rapport sensitivities. On the other hand, the phenomena of conflicts can be understood as a part of practice from the perspective of Wenger's (1998) model of community of practice. With respect to mutual relationships in a community, Wenger (1998) suggests that "[m]ost situations that involve sustained interpersonal engagement generate their fair share of tensions and conflicts. [...] Disagreement, challenges, and competition can all be forms of participation." (p.77). So, from the viewpoint of maintaining a community, conflicts between the participants are not avoidable and the more important thing for them than avoiding is to learn a way of dealing with such situations. I suggest that rapport management, namely an interpersonal aspect of community practices, should be more highlighted in the general discussions of situated learning in order to apply the concept of "community of practice" to wider contexts of social learning including in online learning communities.

11.3 Community Norms and Language Use

In both fora as online learning communities, the participants often refer to what are their expected behaviours in their posts. They also expressed how they understood their social

roles and relationship with others in the online fora. Their behavioural expectations were related to their perceptions about the mutual relationships in the community. I observed different domains of language use for managing their equity rights and association rights. This section particularly focuses on the management of equity rights in order to explain how this aspect of rapport management is crucial to create a collaborative context for learning a language in the two online fora.

In chapter 3, I introduced that the concept of ‘reciprocity’ was an important norm to maintain a community. Previous research suggested generalised reciprocity can motivate people to exchange their knowledge and help each other in online communities (Smith and Kollock, 1999; Wasko and Faraj, 2000). I found that the participants in both fora indicated their reciprocal relationships through interactions. The notion of sociality rights and obligations in terms of equity helped me look at how the participants understood their reciprocal obligations in the learning communities and in what ways the participants tried to succeed in striking a balance of (generalised) reciprocity in advice seeking and giving relationships.

In the illocutionary domain of rapport management, I showed in chapter 7 that thanking could function to manage reciprocity in advice seeking and giving (fulfilling participants’ equity rights) as well as increasing the participants’ face. By looking at thanking as management of sociality rights, we could understand that a thanking message was a shared discourse and conventional practice in the learning communities. According to the normalised frequency (per million) in Table 13 and Table 14, the expressions for gratitude (*thank you very much, thank you, thanks*) were more frequently used in *Learning Japanese* than

/r/Languagelearning. Although I cannot definitively conclude it, this could indicate a possibility that the norms of reciprocity are achieved through different means and practices between these two online fora.

In relation to this point, I would like to bring back in the discussion on interactional reciprocity, which is emphasised by Participant 2 as a regular participant. I observed that he claimed for the importance of giving an appropriate form to one's acknowledgment toward the help received in *Learning Japanese*. He negatively marked other participants' absence of acknowledgement as "a habit of 'drive-by' posting" (in Extract 7.3 in chapter 7) and "Your posting manners are appalling" (in Extract 9.7 in chapter 9). Participant 2 expected other participants to consider others' equity rights in a reciprocal relationship in the forum. A thanking message is a linguistic strategy to manage their equity rights at the participation domain of language use, namely filling the expected response in a sequence of exchanges. In a previous study, Landone (2012) also points out a similar aspect of ACMD; the participants in a Spanish forum have behavioural expectations about interactional conventions to develop a dialogical flow such as greeting, closing, and thanking, and the absence of such conventions is marked negatively (pp.1806-1807). In other words, the participants are expected to use shared discourses including conventional discourses and it is a part of community practices.

Norms in Learning Japanese. I observed other conventional discourse indicating the norm of reciprocity in *Learning Japanese*. The participants including a moderator recurrently used a statement 'this is a learning forum' to refuse inappropriate requests for free translation (Extract 9.1, Extract 9.2, Extract 9.3). Applying Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model

of negative face, both request and explicit refusal can threaten the participants' face. Yet, considering this context where the participants are learning a language through helping each other, these patterns of language use are more related to the management of sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals. The participants feel annoyed because their sociality rights are infringed by the request for free translation; they are not volunteer translators and do not have obligations to translate texts for free. The participants also feel annoyed because they cannot achieve their goal of the request and their expectation to receive help from others in the community is infringed by the refusal. Thus, the notion of sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals enabled me to examine the participants' language use as social practice, which is a part of maintaining a community, and how such practice is embedded in interpersonal communication.

Norms in /r/Languagelearning. I showed in chapter 8 that the use of TL;DR was related to the management of sociality rights, namely the norm of reciprocity or balancing costs and benefits in terms of time investment. The use of TL;DR is a significant feature of ACMD in */r/Languagelearning* and can be seen as a conventional discourse in this forum. I discussed the use of TL;DR in terms of good composition practices, which fall under the discourse domain of rapport management. In the domain of rapport management, the participants manage rapport through organising the discourse structure and topic. Considering the bulletin board system in *Reddit* (i.e., posts are organised in a tree or hierarchical structure), it can be said that organising a thread as discourse requires the participants to cooperate to develop the thread by following good composition practices. In relation to this point, I introduced an interaction in which a new member was advised to name a more precise thread title by other

participants (Extract 10.2). I discussed this interaction from the viewpoint of managing the reciprocity in the advice seeker and giver relationship. Again, the notion of sociality rights and obligations was useful to explain the linguistic strategies for the norm of reciprocity in this forum.

11.4 Social Roles and Relationships and Face

In the above sections, I mainly discussed the management of sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals. Indeed, the management of face was also important in the constructions of rapport in both fora. The participants' management of face was particularly relevant to their roles and relations in doing community practices. In the rapport management framework (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b), 'social relations' is considered as an essential variable that influences people's rapport management strategies. Social roles and relationships entail the sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals. Regarding face and social roles and relationships, the positive evaluation about the participant's face as being a forum member is related to the history of their participation. Applying Merchant's (2009) model of Web 2.0, we can assume that the participants build and develop a persistent identity through their engagement in the forum activities. Additionally, as stated in chapter 5, my understanding about 'identity' is based on Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) sociocultural perspective. This perspective regards identity as being constructed through discourse. I understood that the participants' identities were constructed through discourses (e.g., asking and answering questions) to negotiate their social roles and relationships.

From these viewpoints about identities, the participant's face can be associated with their

social roles and relationships situated in the community activities. Regarding the people's perceptions about their roles and relationships, Spencer-Oatey (1993) shows the possibility that the participants between different socio-cultural groups may have different perceptions about social relations (e.g., tutor-postgraduate student relationship), suggesting that they believe different norms and expectations about the relationships (pp.43-44). This possibility can be applied to the two online fora. As discussed in chapter 3, the roles and relationships in the two online fora are also not fixed and can always be negotiated through interactions.

In the present study, I discussed the face for the participants associated with their role-related identities in a given context. For instance, face as being an advice seeker or giver, a learner of a language, a member of the forum, a regular member, a new member, a moderator etc. These identities can be constructed by their discourses; their identities of advice seeker and giver are built through discourses of asking and answering questions. The administrator and moderators in both fora have identities that are more easily recognised by other participants and the participants can expect the roles of the administrator and moderators. In the present study, I also observed that Participant 2 presented his particular identity as an expert learner of the language and also a regular member who takes a role of super-participant (Graham and Wright, 2013). His identity in the community has been constructed through a long history of participation since 2002. Through this thesis, I demonstrated that Participant 2 was often involved in conflicts in the forum. From the viewpoint of Wenger's (1998) practice, it can be explained that conflicts are part of a process of constructing his persistent identity and also a process of doing rapport management (explicitly facilitating the reciprocity of the forum), which are both part of the community practice.

11.5 Three Elements and Discursive Approaches

The main method of the present study was discourse analysis by examining longer extracts of interactions and considering the medium and situation contexts of ACMD (Herring, 2007). In this respect, the present study can be seen as a case study that applied a discursive approach in politeness and impoliteness research. Analysis of a series of messages exchanged in contexts showed that rapport management is a dynamic process of considering the different aspects of interpersonal communication. Rapport management provides a wider viewpoint to identify and examine the interpersonal aspects of discourse than the traditional politeness theories (e.g., Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Leech, 1987). For instance, a smooth interaction is important for rapport between the participants in *Learning Japanese* and */r/Languagelearning*. They have expectations about the appropriate manners of organising discourse and such discourse management is a linguistic means to achieve the goal of community activities. Thus, the methodological side of the rapport management framework, which considers various linguistic and non-linguistic domains for analysis, was useful to find the relation between the construction of rapport and organising discourse contents and topics.

As pointed out in the above, I found that there were not only strategies for managing face in the participants' language use in their post. The participants' rapport management in a single post (message/comment) was not necessarily based on one of the elements of rapport. In the analysis chapters, I showed that the participants manage face, sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals simultaneously although sometimes participants were more concerned with one or two of these elements. It is important to look at the interrelationship among these elements. The approach to rapport management as social practice is a way of capturing the

complexity of managing three elements. Discourse analysis that examines such interrelation can provide more in-depth understanding about a dynamic process of rapport management. I suggest that combining this theory and this method are useful to examine how the participants manage their mixture of harmonious and disharmonious relationships.

Moreover, the discourse approach was useful to examine the participants' meta-pragmatic comments to examine their claims for face, sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals. Especially, it helped me to understand about how the participants use non-verbal means for rapport management. In the present study, I also discussed the participants' use of a 'Like' button in *Learning Japanese* and a voting system in */r/Languagelearning*. Pushing the 'Like' button and voting up or down leaves room for the participants to interpret what these actions mean to the on-going interactions. Through examining interactions, I found that the participants had behavioural expectations about these non-linguistic means as well as other linguistic means. For example, in *Learning Japanese*, a conflict occurred as the result of using a 'Like' button as the substitute for a response and acknowledgement (in Extract 9.7 in chapter 9). Participant 2 explicitly showed his opinions about the different functions between the 'Like' button and the text messages for communication in the forum. In */r/Languagelearning*, the participants posted their reflective and evaluative comments about downvotes and upvotes given to threads or comments (section 10.3). There are examples where upvoting was used to express gratitude for providing useful information in the thread; the participant voted up and also indicated it in a comment with a "thank you" message (Extract 10.11). The participants also discussed unreasonable downvotes given to comments (Extract 10.7). By talking about the non-linguistic means, they shared and negotiated their

beliefs about appropriate behaviours in both linguistic and non-linguistic means in the forum. In the Web 2.0 environment, non-linguistic practices such as using a 'Like' button are common forms of communication means in CMC and researchers also need to take into account of good practices of using non-linguistic means when examining rapport management in CMD. In the present study, I showed both linguistic and non-linguistic means were important for the participants in both fora to manage rapport through discourse analysis.

11.6 Overall

Overall in the present study, I showed that the ACMD of the two online fora is not only task-oriented but also interpersonally-oriented, illustrating the linguistic features of the ACMD for managing harmonious and disharmonious relationships. Throughout discourse analysis, I showed that drawing on the three notions of face, sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals helped to understand more adequately the rapport sensitive phenomena than focusing on one of the notions. The present study explained that looking at three different elements of rapport was a useful approach to investigate the interpersonal aspects of community practices. I believe that the present study can contribute to extending the rapport management framework by demonstrating why the sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals were as important as face for analysing the participants' language use in learning communities.

The overarching aim of the present study was to examine the language use for building rapport. The construction of rapport has been investigated in social psychology by looking at non-verbal behaviours and the linguistic approach to rapport is traditionally based on looking

at language use for facework (see chapter 2). As demonstrated in this thesis, the rapport management framework could be used to investigate the social and cultural factors influencing the people's perceptions of rapport and their strategies to build rapport in the context of ACMD. Therefore, I suggest that this framework or theory of rapport management can expand the field of research on rapport, providing more analytical perspectives for linguistics and CMC researchers to explore the construction of rapport. In sum, what I would like to emphasise in this thesis is this: rather than explaining all occurrences of conflicts as the results of face threatening acts, we can explain more why people are in discord with each other by considering a misalignment between their different interpretations and understandings about sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals. In the next chapter, I will present a few more contributions of the present study.

Chapter 12 Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the findings of the present study. First, I will answer the three research questions, summarising the main aspects of language use for rapport in each forum (section 12.1). Next I will discuss these answers (section 12.2) and consider the limitations (section 12.3). Then I will propose the contributions of the present study in three areas and implications for future research (section 12.4 and 12.5).

12.1 Overall Findings and Answers for Research Questions

The present study investigated rapport in ACMD in the contexts of informal language learning in two different websites or online fora: *Learning Japanese in Japan Forum* (a subsection of *Japan Reference*) and a subreddit called */r/Languagelearning* in *Reddit*. The public interactions in these online fora are based on posts organised as threads, which is a familiar type of CMD (Herring, 2013). I applied Herring's computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) framework as a main methodology and examined the language use on threads submitted to these sites between 2011 and 2014. For a corpus-assisted approach in my discourse analysis, I built two corpora based on 753 threads from *Learning Japanese* and 832 threads from */r/Languagelearning* respectively. For discourse analysis, I also drew on Bakhtin's dialogical perspective of human communication. Based on these text-based data, I investigated the following research questions, drawing on the rapport management framework (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b) and the theory of situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998):

RQ1: What linguistic characteristics of ACMD related to building and threatening rapport are observed in the interactions on threads in two online language-learning fora?

RQ2: How do the characteristics of the medium of each online forum influence language use for building rapport respectively?

RQ3: How do the participants learn to use this kind of ACMD to build rapport in the two fora?

12.1.1 Answers to RQ1: characteristics of ACMD and rapport

My method for examining the characteristics of ACMD in the two fora was a combination of data-driven and theory-driven (based on the previous literature) processes (see section 5.4.4). I identified that *I don't know* was the most frequent four-word sequences used in each forum and decided to examine how the participants used this expression in relation to the context of informal language learning online. In addition, as explained in Chapter 3 (the literature review about communities of practice), reciprocity is important for maintaining a community. Therefore, I focused on thanking and apologising as linguistic realisations of reciprocity in communication. In discourse analysis, I found that these linguistic features were used to maintain rapport when the participants have different viewpoints. The following will summarise the linguistic characteristics of the use of these phrases.

I don't know. Based on the result of N-gram analysis by *AntConc* concordance software, I focused on the most frequent four-gram in both fora, i.e., *I don't know*. In Chapter 6, I demonstrated how the participants used this phrase as an epistemic device for their identity

construction by positioning him/herself as a participant whose engagement with the thread is relevant and in the negotiation of asymmetrical relationships in terms of knowledge. Original posters (i.e., those who began threads) used *I don't know* in their direct and indirect requests for help, mostly in their initial posts of threads, while the other participants used this phrase as an epistemic hedge in offering help. One particularly notable linguistic feature is the combination of *I don't know* and the *but* conjunction. The original posters used this combination to present their identity as a learner of language, for example, as a beginner learner (e.g., “but I don't know where to start”) and the other participants used this phrase as a disclaimer to manage knowledge authority (e.g., “I don't know much about Spanish, but”).

From the rapport management viewpoint, the participants' use of *I don't know* was particularly relevant to the poster's (addresser/sender) face claim. In Grant's (2010) taxonomy based on Tsui (1991) and Diani (2004), the discourse functions of *I don't know* include avoiding commitment to the answer and hedging, marking uncertainty in face-to-face conversation. In the contexts of the two fora, when the participants used this phrase as an epistemic hedge in a formulaic structure of “*not X or anything, but Y*” (Overstreet and Yule, 2001), they indicated the relevance of their posts to the thread after using *but*. In the chapter, I suggested that they used this phrase to negotiate their positions, legitimating their participation in the on-going interaction and attempting to avoid potential face attack from other participants (e.g., criticism).

Thanking. The result of N-gram analysis showed that *thank you very much* was one of the ten most frequent four-word sequences in the Learning Japanese corpus. In addition,

thanks and *thank you* were more used than the formal form of *thank you very much* in both fora (Chapter 7). These expressions were used not only in response to, but also in, requests for help (e.g., “Thanks in advance.”), which can be seen as “politic behaviours” (Watts, 1989; 2003). Notably, thanking was associated with expressing emotion through CMC cues including exclamation marks or/and emoticons/emojis of smile face (e.g., “Thanks ! :)” “Thanks 😊”). Expressing emotion can be a thanking strategy (Aijmer, 1996) and the use of such CMC cues can be seen as a thanking strategy in the online context.

I also found that the participants commonly expressed appreciation in their target language rather than English. I suggested that the choice of language for thanking was related to the participants’ identity as a learner of the language. Although there are many thanks messages in both corpora, there are also a certain number of threads without thanks messages. The reaction to the absence of thanking was different between the two fora. Thanking is relevant to managing sociality rights and obligations for reciprocity in the rapport management model. In particular, there are recurrent interactions in *Learning Japanese*, in which a regular participant or super-participant (Participant 2) negatively marked the absence of thanking messages from the original posters.

Apologising. *Sorry* was the most common expression as a head act for apologising in both fora and in the majority of uses *sorry* was not preceded by *I’m* or *I am*. Formats of apologising with *sorry* were various. The striking feature of apologising in both fora was that the participants apologised about their manner of delivering messages: i.e., the submission and composition of posts. This kind of apologising message can be seen as a metapragmatic

utterance (Arendholz, 2013) and the offence related to posting is seen as infringement of the netiquette of the forum. That is, their apology was situated in the context of the CMD. The use of apology about posting can be seen as a form of self-presentation; the participants showed their awareness of netiquette by apologising and thereby claimed their membership of the forum. There were some examples where the original posters were excessively apologetic regarding their posts. The original posters minimised negative responses by apologising for potential infringement beforehand. Despite the fact that apology can be interpreted as a face-threatening act for the addresser himself/herself, the participants used the expressions of apologising as a strategy for rapport management in both fora. Similar to the formulaic structure of “*not X or anything, but Y*” (Overstreet and Yule, 2001), there are also examples where *sorry* is used in a formula with *but* (i.e., I’m sorry [...], but) as a preface before the addresser committed to challenging rapport or “face attack apologies” (Deutschmann, 2003).

12.1.2 Answers to RQ2: contexts of CMD and language use for rapport

Based on the previous studies about ACMD discussed in Chapter 4, I examined how ACMD in the two fora was influenced by the nature of these sites, both of which open up a thread that develops beyond the original poster’s control, i.e., a “multilogue” (Shank, 1993). I approached the relation between the medium features in each forum and the participants’ language use in the thread by considering medium contexts of CMD (Herring, 2007). In Chapter 5, I presented a summary of medium contexts for each forum (Table 8 and 9). As referred to above, I showed how the participants’ apologies were related to the infringement of the forum netiquette in Chapter 7. Following this finding in Chapter 8, I examined the

participants' meta-pragmatic comments that refer to communication and to the medium features of each online forum. I discussed what aspects of the medium and situational contexts (Herring, 2007) of the online fora could influence the participants' use of language for rapport.

Synchronicity and Message transmission. Communication in both online fora is based on an asynchronous system; the unit of message transmission is message-by-message. The participants are not sure who else is staying in the interaction at present, nor who will be in the subsequent interactions. These medium characteristics led to commonalities in the participants' language use between these online fora. The use of *I don't know* and apologising were considered to be linguistic resources aiming to mitigate future negative reactions from other participants in both fora. The participants expressed gratitude to everyone by referring them as *all, everyone, guys* (Chapter 7). This indicates that the original posters considered their communication as being not only one-to-one but also one (original poster) to many. On the other hand, different situational contexts (Herring, 2007) influenced the nature of the ACMD between the two fora. In terms of participation structure, the size of audience is different and */r/Languagelearning* has a bigger audience than *Learning Japanese*. There is a display function to indicate which individuals are online in the website system of *Japan Reference* while the participants can only know the overall number of online participants who are viewing the subreddit in the system of *Reddit* (see, Chapter 5). I suggested that these different situational contexts are reflected in the ways *I don't know* is used as an epistemic device. In */r/Languagelearning*, the participants responding on threads used the phrase of *I don't know* more than the original posters, while the reverse is true in *Learning Japanese*

Persistence of transcript. The persistence of transcript (Herring, 2007) is one of the aspects of the medium context which is the most different between the two fora. In *Learning Japanese*, all past threads are archived chronologically on pages and the participants are able to easily access threads submitted any time since the online forum launched. They can also search a particular topic using the search engine and find the relevant threads from the archive. These two medium features provide a method for posting a message. In their messages, the participants implied that they searched whether similar threads had already been posted and tried to avoid starting a thread on the same topic. While they tried to avoid repeating the same topic, these participants' practice allowed them to re-start a thread that had stopped for long time, i.e., necroposting, which should also be avoided in the forum. On the other hand, in */r/Languagelearning*, the maximum number of threads which can remain on the forum is one thousand. The participants can search older threads by using the search engine and searching by keyword (by author, topic) but they do not necessarily find many old threads by this means. *Reddit* archives old threads only for viewing and the participants are not able to post new comments to or vote on the archived threads. Although the participants in */r/Languagelearning* also implied that they searched any similar threads beforehand, this different archiving system was more likely not to allow the participants to do necroposting. In building the corpus, I did not find any examples of necroposting threads for this forum.

Message format and Netiquettes (Norms of language). I was particularly concerned with the influence of message format in relation to netiquettes or norms of language as a situational context of CMD (Herring, 2007). The message format of threads in *Japan Reference* is a flat discussion type while it is a threaded discussion type in *Reddit*. The

message formats of threads are different and the participants in both fora were conscious in order to organise sequences of posts as interaction on thread and sometimes apologetic about their composing skills. The most notable difference was in the use of TL;DR (too long; didn't read) and EDIT notations. The participants in */r/Languagelearning* used these notations in their posts more than in *Learning Japanese*. The purpose of using TL;DR and EDIT is to organise comments on a thread as the threaded discussion type can create a complex structure of comment. This is related to rapport management because it enables the achievement of the interactional goal of smooth interactions (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b). I also found that the participants used TL;DR creatively, namely, they used it as an eye-catching mechanism which made the other participants pay attention to the 'real' comment stated after the TL;DR. This is a way for the participants both to be civil and polite and to be impolite.

Affordances/constraints of devices. The norms of language are also related to other aspects of the situational context including the purpose and theme (Herring, 2007) of the learning communities. The participants are conscious about their choice of language. In both fora, the participants switched languages between English and other languages (e.g., the language they are learning). Such code-switching was related to rapport management, for example, using the language they are learning is a way of presenting their identity as a learner of language (i.e., making a face claim). In relation to the purpose of the learning communities, I also found that the participants negotiated around their language use shaped by the constrains/affordances of devices that they were using (e.g., computers, smartphone). In *Learning Japanese*, the participants are expected to use proper writing systems. When the participants were not able to use Japanese writing systems because of their devices (e.g.,

iPhone or mobile phone) and had to use English alphabets to type Japanese sentences, they were more likely to excuse it. This netiquette can be seen as achieving their interactional goal of providing answers and their sociality rights and obligations by showing the original poster's effort to make texts in Japanese easy to read and hence encouraging them to answer his/her language-learning related question.

12.1.3 Answers to RQ3: learning this kind of ACMD

I examined the third research question drawing on situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991). From the perspective of rapport management, learning to use the ACMD is closely related to the participants' need to understand the norms for appropriate behaviours in the community and the contexts of an on-going interaction on the thread. Besides, from the perspective of situated learning, it can be said that the participants need to access this knowledge through legitimate peripheral participation. In the online forum, they can learn them through participating in actual interactions with other participants. Through data analysis chapters, particularly in Chapter 9 and 10, I showed explicit interactions in which the participants negotiate the appropriateness of their behaviours through meta-pragmatic comments. Such interactions were not necessarily harmonious and conflicts could occur as the results of different understandings about the norms of language between participants. For example, such conflict is obvious in the interactions between the new members and regular members. In the previous chapter, I discussed this point in relation to sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals. I suggested that conflict was necessary as it is a part of the learning process, which enables the new participants to access the resources to manage rapport with others in the future. It is also an arena for the participants to discuss their

standpoints about the norms for building rapport in the forum and change the norms if they need to. This can be seen as the continuity-displacement contradiction, which is an axis of configuring and maintaining a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

I examined how the participants dealt with such conflicts from a rapport management perspective and suggested that the conflicts are salient for not only the new member's learning opportunity but also for the community's coherence for the sake of all participants. In Chapter 9, I showed that the participants used conventional statements to regulate requests for translation for free in *Learning Japanese*. This could threaten rapport with the original poster who is a new member. On the other hand, the use of conventional statements is a way of legitimating the community's beliefs and values. This kind of legitimation is essential for the discursive construction of identities and interpersonal relationships (Clarke, 2009, pp.140-146). From a situated learning perspective, the conventional statement is a reification of the community's beliefs and values that are fundamental for enabling the participants to do activities in the online forum. The use of a conventional statement is one of the practices in this community. That is, we see evidence of a shared repertoire by using the same statement, mutual engagement by using this statement together in an interaction and a joint enterprise by agreeing mutual accountability about the norm of reciprocity. Another learning opportunity is the feedback and reactions from other participants through evaluative systems: the like system in *Japan Reference* and the voting system in *Reddit*. These non-linguistic means allow the participants to express their agreement/disagreement without posting a message/comment.

12.2 Overall Discussions

12.2.1 Rapport in online forum: interrelation among three elements

The three elements of rapport are interconnected with each other in the rapport management framework (Spencer-Oatey, 2008b, p.13). As discussed in the previous chapter, the findings of the present study emphasise this aspect of rapport. For face, the answers to RQ1 indicate that the participants used linguistic means to position their identity in relation to their interactional goal (e.g., identity as a learner of a language, advice seeker) and behavioural expectations (e.g., identity as a member of the forum). For sociality rights and obligations, I presented that the norms that can influence the participants' language use included not only the stated netiquettes expressed as the forum rules (e.g., using the EDIT notation, duplicate posting, necroposting, threadjacking) but also the netiquettes they share (e.g., nitpicking, using the TL;DR notation for a long post).

The answers to RQ 2 can tell us that the participants consider the netiquettes as essential to organise posts in a thread and threads in the forum, that is, to make a thread smooth enough to reply to each other for asking and answering questions and to make posts relevant enough for maintaining the coherence of the forum. In terms of interactional goal, the answers to the RQ3 suggest that the participants' learning goal requires them to show an appropriate identity to engage in the forum activities or become a learner of language and member of the forum. For this self-representation, alignment to the netiquettes was a way of presenting their identity as a member by doing (i.e., behaving appropriately in the forum). The participants' face associated with their identity was considered through fulfilling their sociality rights and obligations in the norms of equity and association. For instance, thanking for a response

fulfils the norm of reciprocity and also acknowledges the participants' identities as a forum member, advice giver and a learner of the language who has enough knowledge to answer the question. Thus, the participants' language use for building rapport is essential to constitute the discourse of the learning-related online forum.

12.2.2 Interactional reciprocity

Through investigating the three research questions, I found that I needed a perspective not only for the norm of reciprocity in terms of exchanging benefits but also the norm of 'interactional' reciprocity in terms of exchanging posts. Interactional reciprocity is concerned with the participation domain of rapport management such as turn-taking in conversations. The concept of turn-taking is recognised in ACMD differently from the way it is recognised in face-to-face conversation. Garcia and Jacobs (1998) point out that the system of CMD influences the coordination of turn exchanges and the subsequent messages are not always the expected responses to the prior messages. I observed that the bulletin board systems in the two fora also influenced the organization of messages. In the present study I drew on the concept of addressivity in Bakhtin's theory of dialogue, which provided an analytical perspective to examine rapport management at the level of participation domain. The concept of addressivity helped me examine to whom the participants post the message. I found that the participants considered interactional reciprocity based on both one-to-one interaction and one-to-many interactions. In particular, in *Learning Japanese*, Participant 2 and some other regular members are more likely to consider 'direct' interactional reciprocity in interactions and the absence of thanking from the original posters is negatively marked. A chain of advice message and thanking message can be seen as a form of reifying participation based on the

generalised reciprocity in the forum. Here, I suggest that interactional reciprocity is an important aspect of ACMD for the participants to achieve rapport. The participants' understanding about interactional reciprocity can influence their language use and also be a way of achieving generalised reciprocity in the forum.

12.2.3 Rapport and agreement

Following the above discussion, I would like to emphasise that a linguistic approach to rapport can contribute to understanding (generalised) reciprocity in human communication, including interactional reciprocity. In Chapter 9, I discussed conflicts between participants who had different viewpoints about interactional reciprocity in *Learning Japanese* and presented why each viewpoint can be seen as appropriate. The difference between these participants' viewpoints was that one party considered interactional reciprocity as being necessary in one-to-one communication and another party understood interactional reciprocity in one-to-many communication to be adequate. I did not find this kind of conflict in */r/Languagelearning*.

It can be considered that the participants in the two fora had different norms of interactional reciprocity. In *Learning Japanese*, the regular participants were explicitly and implicitly concerned about direct interactional reciprocity between the original poster and the other participant. In */r/Languagelearning*, the participants emphasised developing the thread topics or interactions on the topic. Although some of the original posters directly replied to other participants, not all of them did so, and they did not have disputes regarding the absence of direct responses. In relation to the point that conflict is necessary for building rapport, I

proposed that more important agreement between the participants was agreeing about interactional reciprocity than agreeing about all of their values, beliefs and conventions at the very first beginning of their communication. The concept of agreement/consent or *soglasie* (literally ‘co-voicing’ in Russian) in Bakhtin’s theory (Chapter 2) is relevant to this point. Agreement in Bakhtin’s sense does not refer to the unity of the participants’ different voices or perspectives. It is a useful concept to develop our understanding about what is rapport or ‘harmony’ in human interactions.

The model of rapport orientations in Spencer-Oatey’s rapport management framework considers that construction of rapport involves building, maintaining and developing processes. This model indicates that rapport or harmony in social relationship is not a static status or moment but a dynamic process. Harmony in social relations can be achieved through agreement, disagreement and negotiations about their common understandings about the appropriateness in interactions. In the present study, I attempted to show this dynamic process of rapport through discourse analysis.

12.3 Limitations of the Study: Need for Ethnographic Approach

I applied Herring’s (2004) CMDA framework, which suggests that “the [research] question should be *answerable on the basis of textual evidence*” (original emphasis, p.347). As referred in Chapter 5, Herring (2004) also suggests the possibility of including other method(s) as a supplement if “to understand participants’ internal conscious or unconscious states” (p.347) is relevant to CMDA research. In the present study, ethnographic data could have enabled me to understand more about the participants’ emic perspective and their ways

of engaging in their learning communities. In relation to this point, Barton and Lee (2013) discuss the researcher's stance, emphasising the benefits of applying an ethnographic approach to language-focused research on CMC (pp.175-177). I initially planned to incorporate ethnographic methods into my CMDA approach by applying Androutsopoulos's (2008) discourse-centred online ethnography. However, I had not had adequate experiences in the two fora beforehand. The method I applied to this study instead was combining a corpus-assisted approach and discourse analysis, which gave me enough data to approach part of the participants' perspectives about language use for building rapport. I believe that examining the participants' meta-pragmatic comments in this thesis can partially compensate for a gap between my understanding and the participants' understanding about ACMD in the online learning communities.

12.4 Contributions

In Chapter 1, I proposed three aims of the present study: (1) to demonstrate rapport as an important viewpoint in studying interactions in an online forum, (2) to expand the applications of the rapport management model to language use in CMD further and (3) to give practical implications for what aspects of ACMD enable people to build rapport and have better experiences in online forums. This section will discuss how the findings of the present study can contribute to these three areas.

12.4.1 Rapport as an important viewpoint for CMD

Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated that language use for rapport is an essential aspect of the interactions in the two online learning communities, *Learning Japanese* and

/r/Languagelearning. Discourse analysis of examples showed that the participants managed three elements of rapport (face, sociality rights and obligations and interactional goals) through various linguistic strategies. I particularly discussed how the participants' construction of rapport was related to achieving their goals in the contexts of online informal learning environments, drawing on a situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Overall discussion of answers to the research questions in this chapter (section 12.2.1) also addressed this point. As referred to in Chapter 3, a recent study by Angouri and Sanderson (2016) emphasises the need to investigate both task-oriented and rapport-oriented functions in online forums. I believe that the present study can contribute to further understanding about the functions of online forums that support people's everyday learning. I suggested that conflicts between participants were not always to be avoided and they were necessary for negotiating and reinforcing their shared values, norms and goals for their future interactions. A more important aspect of interaction than avoiding all conflicts is sharing an agreement about the process of having such a disharmonious interaction. In the present study, rapport management helped understand this interpersonal aspect of maintaining an online forum as a community of practice. I discussed how conflicts between the participants were not only meaningful for the new members but also for old members for maintaining the online learning community.

12.4.2 Rapport management and CMD

Rapport management is a framework to theorise how people maintain rapport through a balance of three essential elements in human interpersonal communication. The present study demonstrated that this framework could also be applied to the construction of rapport through

ACMC. One methodological issue that should be considered was whether this framework could be applied to the CMD straightforwardly as the present study regards CMD as neither a spoken mode nor a written mode but as a distinctive mode. As referred to in Chapter 2, the rapport management framework is based on the spoken mode; although the framework does not limit its application to spoken discourse, the contextual variables in the framework are not adequate to examine CMD. For discourse analysis, I drew on Herring's (2007) model of medium and situational contexts. Considering how these contexts can influence the participants' language use was an effective viewpoint for the present study to narrow down to focus on aspects of CMD.

12.4.3 Pedagogical implications: a language as social practice perspective

Learning through CMC is one of the themes in research on foreign and second language learning today. I propose that we should consider how to foster better experiences in learning a language online by expanding our viewpoint about language in use or drawing on the language-as-social practice approach (Barton and Potts, 2013). The present study discussed some aspects of the participants' socialisation process in learning online, which I consider as situated learning, by examining interpersonal interactions (short lived interactions) with the rapport management framework. Based on the findings presented in Chapter 9 and 10, I suggest that we should consider more about (1) how people use instructional materials (i.e., texts such as wikis or forum rules) when they participate in an online forum by submitting posts (i.e., text production) and also (2) how people negotiate between their learning purpose and the other participants' learning purpose.

Using Instructional materials. Burke et al (2010) examined new members' strategies to claim membership through messages in Usenet newsgroups and suggests that "[o]nline groups could include instructional materials, such as FAQs or templates to help newcomers learn how to engage the group based on the successful socialization moves identified here" (p.31). In the present study, both online fora (*Japan Reference* and *Reddit*) have instructional materials to guide both new members and regular members. I found that the participants were conscious about these netiquettes by examining their meta-pragmatic comments (Chapter 8), although it is sometimes questionable whether new participants actually read the instructional materials before posting. The most telling example is that in */r/Languagelearning* a moderator had to remind members of reading the forum rules and eventually added a new rule saying "If you are new you MUST read the wiki before posting" (Chapter 10).

In *Learning Japanese*, the administrator was expected to regulate inappropriate behaviour and a moderator quoted a forum rule to remind members of banned behaviours (Chapter 8). Additionally, regular members used a conventional statement to advise the posters that this forum is not for requesting free translation (Chapter 9). I realised that there were many threads in which the posters requested translation help and I had to exclude many of these threads from the corpus because they did not receive responses. These findings indicate that we should consider the participants' practices in the process of posting; that is, how they use or do not use the instructional materials in order to understand the norms and conventions of the online forum they want to participate in. Burke et al (2010) suggested that a template message could be a useful resource for new participants to learn how to post. On the other hand, from the perspective of situated learning, the template could restrict future interactions

for participants to create new culture. In an online forum, the medium and situational contexts of the online forum can change by updating a new system of the online forum and the participants are required to adopt the new affordances/constraints of the online forum system. New members may bring in new values about communication on threads and then the existing members and new members need to redefine appropriateness in communication (i.e., there is an ongoing meaning-making process). The like system in the *Learning Japanese* section is an example. I saw an on-going negotiation between participants regarding whether a like point can substitute for a text message or not.

12.5 Conclusion and Future Research

12.5.1 Medium and situational contexts of CMD and digital literacy practices

In the present study, I consider that hostility and aggressiveness can occur as a result of misleading assumptions in posts on threads as this is inevitable because of the medium and situational contexts (Herring, 2007). It can be said that in the CMC the participants need and will need to make more assumptions to fill a gap in their understanding about the on-going context than in face-to-face communication. We can predict that our communication will become more mediated and our activities will be more interrelated between offline and online contexts. This is what Herring (2009, 2013) characterises as convergent media computer-mediated communication (CMCMC) or what Androutsopoulos (2013) refers as multimodality (see Chapter 1). We can see that we need competences to deal with inevitable assumptions in more mediated and multimodal communications.

For future research, the relation between linguistic strategies for rapport management and the

use of a particular device should be considered (e.g., what kind of device a person uses to post a message and how the functions of the device influence the linguistic strategy for rapport management). In the literature of CMD, the study of language pays attention to the medium contexts of CMD (e.g., e-mail, chat, IRC, online forum, blog) but pays less attention to the use of tools or devices to produce language as semiotic means. In the present study, the participants in both fora referred to the influence of their offline contexts through apologising messages (e.g., short response, late response). This indicates that the participants not only talk about their communicative norms by using the meta-pragmatic terms but also their digital literacy practices in everyday life by sharing the process of posting behind the screen.

12.5.2 Inevitable assumptions and hostility

Before a conflict between participants develops into hostility toward each other, it is possible for them to solve most misunderstandings about each other and correct their wrong assumptions through interactions. In this process, they need an agreement about the subsequent interactions. In the case of the two online fora, one of the necessary aspects of agreement is consent around interactional reciprocity. If the participants do not share the same norm of interactional reciprocity, one party may not reply and another party may get upset as he/she thinks it is an infringement of their behavioural expectations. Such different norms of interactional reciprocity can be compared between the participants and between different types of CMD in more detail for the future research. The present study suggests that the norm of interactional reciprocity can be influenced by the different medium and situational contexts and the participants' understandings about these contexts. I propose that interactional reciprocity can also be an important aspect to investigate the construction of

rapport in other types of CMD, including the discourse in CMCMC. To examine the discourse in CMCMC, we need to consider not only medium and situational contexts but also interrelated contexts between online and offline.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Information Sheet for the Forum Administrators/Moderators

LANCASTER
UNIVERSITY

Department of Linguistics
and English Language



Date: [insert date here]

INFORMATION SHEET

As part of my Doctoral studies in the Department of Linguistics and English Language, I am carrying out a study of online conversations in language learning forums. I would like to save and analyse some conversations by members of online forums about language learning. I will look for particular features of language that appear in these conversations. To have a better understanding of the culture of your forum, ideally I would also like to carry out an online survey and interview some members.

I have approached you because I am very interested in the ways people communicate in your forum without physical cues, particularly how they develop and maintain their learning community based on online conversations. I would be very grateful if you would agree to allow me to carry out this research on your forum.

Following the terms of service of your forum, I would like to record conversations and conduct interviews/survey by recruiting participants through threads, where they can access information sheets, consent forms or other detail of this research and I will contact individual users through instant messages.

You (as the administrator) will be free to withdraw the forum from the study at any time without giving a reason within 1 month after you sign the consent form. If you withdraw the forum after 1 month, the data collected so far will remain in the study. Your forum users (as participants) will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason within 3 months after they are interviewed or have taken part in the survey. After the 3 months, if they withdraw, their data will remain in the study. At every stage, their names will remain confidential. All recorded conversations and responses through interview and survey will be kept securely (I will encrypt and store them on a password protected computer or laptop) and will be used for academic purposes only. I will use the data for my doctoral thesis and for academic publications such as journal articles.

During this research project, I will become an upgrade forum member by donation and am willing to share useful resources for the community with other members. I will feed back the findings of this research to you and the participants in reports. I hope that you will find them useful for your forum.

If you have any queries about the study, please feel free to contact myself or my supervisor, Dr Karin Patricia Tusting, who can be contacted on k.tusting@lancaster.ac.uk or by phone on (+44) 1524 510825. You may also contact the Head of Department, Professor Elena Semino on (+44) 1524 594176.

Signed

[delete this and sign here]

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UNIVERSITY OF LANCASTER

Department of Linguistics and English Language

Consent Form

Project title: **A study of asynchronous computer mediated communication in online forums about language and learning languages**


1. I have read and had explained to me by **Ami Sato** the Information Sheet relating to this project.
2. I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.
3. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I (as the administrator) have the right to withdraw the forum from the project any time within **1 month** after I sign this form. If I withdraw the forum after the period, the data collected so far will remain in the study.
4. I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet.
5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 2 Information Sheet for the Forum Participants



LANCASTER
UNIVERSITY

Department of Linguistics
and English Language

Date: [insert date here]

INFORMATION SHEET

As part of my Doctoral studies in the Department of Linguistics and English Language, I am carrying out a study of online conversations in language learning forums. I would like to save and analyse some of your conversations with other members on threads about language learning. I will look for particular features of language that appear in your conversations. To have better a understanding of the culture of your forum, ideally I would also like to carry out an online survey and interview.

I have approached you because I am very interested in the ways the members communicate in this online forum without physical cues, particularly how they develop and maintain their community for language learning based on online conversations. You are one of the members who participate in the conversations, so I would like you to help me understand how online communities work. I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part.

You can participate at three levels: (1) agreeing for me to analyse your online conversation(s) on the threads, (2) completing an online survey and (3) participating in an online interview. You will be able to choose whether or not to participate in the interview and survey.

Regarding the procedure of recording the forum conversations, I have obtained permission from your forum administrator and follow the terms of service in this forum. However, I will also ask each member for further permission when particular ethical issues arise (e.g. if I want to quote particular conversations in my thesis for detailed analysis and discussion). I will create a thread where you can access information sheets, consent forms or other details of this research. I plan to keep in touch with all members who participate in my project through the thread.

You will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason within 3 months after you are interviewed or have taken part in the survey. After the 3 months, if you withdraw, your data will remain in the study. At every stage, your names will remain confidential. All recorded conversations and responses through interview and survey will be kept securely (I will encrypt and store them on a password protected computer or laptop) and will be used for academic purposes only. I will use the data for my doctoral thesis and for academic publications such as journal articles.

During this research project, I wish to contribute to this forum in some ways, for example sharing useful resources for the community with other members. I will feedback the findings of this research to you in reports. I hope that you will find them useful for your future use of online communities.

If you have any queries about the study, please feel free to contact myself or my supervisor, Dr Karin Patricia Tusting, who can be contacted on k.tusting@lancaster.ac.uk or by phone on (+44) 1524 510825. You may also contact the Head of Department, Professor Elena Semino, on (+44) 1524 594176.

Signed
[delete this and sign here]
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Consent Form

Project title: **A study of asynchronous computer mediated communication in online forums about language and learning languages**

1. I have read and had explained to me by **Ami Sato** the Information Sheet relating to this project.
2. I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.
3. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project any time within **3 months** after I sign this form. If I withdraw after the period, the data will remain in the study.
4. I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet.
5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 3 Particular Ethics Concerns in Internet Research

As this proposed research explores online communication (i.e., internet research), I must be aware of the particular ethical concerns associated with internet research in addition to the general ethical issues. Therefore in the proposed research I will also follow the latest guideline for internet researchers, *Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee (Version 2.0)* (<http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf>) published by Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) in 2012 and other relevant literature.

1. How to Protect Privacy in Data Collection

Internet researchers have debated the issue of whether information on the Internet is publicly accessible for research. While some researchers agree that it is ethically acceptable to collect data from the Internet as public space without consent (e.g., Seale, Charteris-Black, MacFarlane and McPherson, 2010; Savolainen, 2011; Wilkinson and Thelwall, 2011), others agree that the public-private dichotomy is not necessarily the reasonable criteria to decide whether informed consent is necessary or not in internet research (e.g., Sveningsson, 2004; McKee and Porter, 2009; AoIR, 2012). AoIR (2012) emphasises that “privacy is a concept that must include a consideration of expectations and consensus. Social, academic, or regulatory delineations of public and private as a clearly recognizable binary no longer hold in everyday practice” (p.7). If an online forum is accessible to anyone without any gatekeeper, e.g., password, it can be regarded as public in general and thereby consent may not be required (see, Robinson’s (2001) decision-making model for obtaining consent). However, the proposed research will take into account the expectations and consensus that the forum users share, following AoIR’s (2012) stance. The proposed study will take the following position in data collection.

In terms of consensus of publicity/privacy, the participants are assumed to understand forum discussions are public space. Firstly, the terms of service and disclaimers, which the posters have read and acknowledged before posting, clearly state that posts in online forums are public communication. Secondly, in contrast to other social networking websites (SNSs) such as Facebook or Twitter, anyone (whether they are signed in or not) can access the conversations in forums, link the posts to third-parties websites (i.e., blog or SNSs) and share them with the third party by email. In short, they are expected to understand that their posts

can be reproduced and distributed by others when they use the online forums. Considering these, I assume that it won't violate the participants' consensus of publicity/privacy to collect and store their online conversations without obtaining their permission. Besides, in quantitative analysis with the corpus, I will discuss linguistics features of online conversations in general rather than the specific contents of their conversations and do not focus on the particular participants' language use. I believe that this focus of analysis won't violate their consensus of publicity/privacy.

In terms of expectations of publicity/privacy, however, I assume that the forum users do not expect that excerpts of their posts will be used to discuss a particular research interest by the third party and will be republished in printed publications. Therefore, when I analyse individual posts more closely (i.e., qualitative analysis) and quote them in my thesis/other publications, I will ask individual posters for permission to quote their conversations if it could violate the participants' privacy, such as when the conversation discloses their detailed private life and those who know the participants can identify the participants with the information.

2. How to protect your confidentiality

In relation to publicity and privacy in internet research, I won't use the participants' username to refer to them in the proposed study to protect their confidentiality. People in the forums apparently use pseudonyms as their usernames, however some might use their real names (e.g., first name) or nicknames associated with their real names. Accordingly, for the sake of their confidentiality, I will use labels (e.g., Participant 1) to refer them instead of using their usernames. However, as Sveningsson (2004) points out, usernames can be an important aspect for analysis (p.53). When I need to discuss their usernames relating to the research questions in my thesis/publications, I will also ask individual posters for permission to refer their usernames.

3. How to avoid that individual users will be identified

Another concern regarding confidentiality is the potential that somebody (including the third party and other forum members) reading my thesis/publications might be able to identify individual posters.

Someone might be able to identify individual posters by seeing their posts in the 'Introduction for New Members' threads, personal information including their profile images,

and other posters which accidentally include their personal information. To avoid unexpected identification, firstly I won't use their usernames in my thesis/publications and in doing so nobody is able to search particular users by the forum search engine and trace their past posts or profiles which make it possible for someone to identify them. Secondly, I won't include identifying information (e.g., their real name, hometown/city, people's names, year/dates, etc.).

However, due to the advent of search engine technology such as Google and the publicity of online forums, the third party might still be able to access the original posters by searching particular phrases or sentences in quotes used in my thesis/ publications and to identify particular participants. To avoid this, I will only cite minimum necessary to illustrate the point in my thesis/publications.

4. How to Deal with Other Ethical Issues

AoIR (2012) suggest that "the uniqueness and almost endless range of specific situations defy attempts to universalize experience or define in advance what might constitute harmful research practice" and that "internet research involves a number of dialectical tensions that are best addressed and resolved at the stages they arise in the course of a research study" (p.7). Therefore, I will remain vigilant around emerging ethical issues in the course of this proposed study through discussing and negotiating with the participants and consulting academic staffs (i.e., supervisor, members of the departmental ethics committees etc.).

Appendix 4 List of Participants in Examples

Extract	Forum	Participants
Extract 6.1	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	OP1
Extract 6.2 – Extract 6.11	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	OP1, Participant 1, Participant 2 Participant 3, Participant 4
Extract 6.12 – Extract 6.19	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	OP2, Redditor 1, Redditor 2 Redditor 3, Redditor 4
Extract 7.1 – Extract 7.3	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	OP3, Participant 2, Moderator 1
Extract 7.4	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	OP4
Extract 8.2 – Extract 8.3	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	OP5, Participant 5
Extract 8.4	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	OP6, Redditor 5, Redditor 6
Extract 8.5 – Extract 8.9		OP7, Participant 2, Participant 3, the administrator
Extract 8.10	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	Redditor 7, Redditor 8
Extract 8.11	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	OP8, Redditor 3
Extract 8.12	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	OP9, Participant 2
Extract 8.14 – Extract 8.15	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	Participant 2, Participant 6
Extract 8.16	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	Moderator 2
Extract 8.17 – Extract 20	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	Participant 7, Moderator 1
Extract 8.21	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	OP10, Moderator 2
Extract 8.22	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	OP11, Redditor 9
Extract 8.23	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	Redditor 10, Redditor 11
Extract 8.24	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	Redditor 12, Redditor 13, Redditor 14
Extract 8.32 – Extract 8.33	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	OP12, Redditor 15
Extract 9.1	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	Moderator 2
Extract 9.2	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	OP13, Participant 8
Extract 9.3 – Extract 9.5	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	OP14, Participant 2
Extract 9.6 – Extract 9.8	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	OP15, Moderator 2, Participant 2
Extract 9.9	<i>Learning Japanese</i>	OP16, Participant 2
Extract 10.2	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	OP17, Redditor 16, Redditor 17

Extract 10.7	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	Redditor 18, Redditor 19
Extract 10.10	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	Redditor 20
Extract 10.11	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	OP18, Redditor 21
Extract 10.12	<i>/r/Languagelearning</i>	OP19, Redditor 22, Redditor 23 Redditor 24

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