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”Strategies of linguistic politeness and facework as instruments of topic transitions in English as a lingua franca (ELF)“

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This paper is dedicated to my dad,

who taught me how to climb intimidating mountains,

and whom I miss dearly.

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1. Introduction

Communication is a delicate endeavor. When we speak, we do not merely compile sounds into words, words into sentences and sentences into even greater units of language. Instead, we create discourse co-operatively through meticulous negotiation of meaning in context. After all, words are only meaningful in context, and depending on the communicative context we find ourselves in, we may choose to say things differently than in other contexts. This context-dependency renders communication a fundamentally interpersonal phenomenon. No matter what the actual communicative goals within conversation may be, the interpersonal relationships interlocutors share with one another will inevitably manifest themselves in speech. In other words, language is not a straightforward translation from cognition to speech, but generally involves linguistic modification governed by contextual parameters such as shared interpersonal relationships. According to pragmatic researchers publishing between 1970 and 2000, many modifications of talk are governed by speakers' mutual interest to maintain what socialist Erving Goffman (1967) had previously defined as "face". Face, according to Goffman (1967: 5), is "an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes" and thus a key element in interpersonal considerations. Among the first who took up this concept of face was Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of linguistic politeness, suggesting that modifications of language are a means to mitigate threatening other people's face in interaction. In light of this, communication thus seems to require speakers to maintain a balance between saying what they want to say and maintaining other interlocutors' face.

Successful communication also seems to be a continuous endeavor in which speakers will have to (more or less seamlessly) transition from one topic to the next in order to keep a conversation ongoing. This management of topics, too, can be suspected to be influenced by the interpersonal relations speakers share. Arguably, the sheer act of being able to change a topic may reflect potential power relations within a group of speakers and, consequently, in the linguistic way by which a topic is changed, may reflect this too. In Brown and Levinson's (1987: 62) model, the act of transitioning topic itself would constitute an imposition on "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his (sic) actions be unimpeded by others," and thus threaten what they have named negative face (Brown & Levinson 1987: 62). In order for a topic transition to be successful, speakers seem to be dependent on the mutual agreement and cooperation of their interlocutors. Accordingly, this agreement can only be reached by upholding – if not enhancing – the interpersonal relationship(s) of the communicative context (unless the topic is meant to threaten this relationship).

Consequently, linguistic politeness and facework strategies seem to constitute vital instruments in topic transitions. This seems especially true in situations in which there might be considerable discrepancies in power between different speakers, such as within professional or business domains. Arguably, in such contexts, less powerful speakers may have to be substantially more attentive to how they modify language that reflects their place in the power and interpersonal relation vis-à-vis more powerful speakers.

The issue of maintaining facework in communication becomes even more delicate in international or intercultural contexts, in which speakers cannot always fall back on shared linguistic or pragmatic conventions but resort to the only linguistic resource they all have in common. The most frequently shared resource speakers around the globe have resorted to in recent history is English as a lingua franca (ELF), which is, as Widdowson (2018: 101) points out, a language that is "appropriated by outsiders and adapted to suit their own communicative requirements." ELF, then, can be defined as "an additionally acquired language system, which serves a common means of communication of speakers of different first languages" (Seidlhofer 2001: 146) or as "contact language between speakers or speaker groups when at least one of them uses it as a second language" (Mauranen 2018: 8). At the turn of the millennium, Seidlhofer (2001: 133) was among the first to point out that ELF is "the most extensive contemporary use of English worldwide," indicating that there are in fact more speakers of ELF than native English speakers. Although research on English as a foreign language (EFL) existed, non-native speakers of English were generally regarded as imperfect language speakers who perpetually displayed deficiencies in language use (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011: 284). Yet, rather than being regarded flawed speakers of English, empirical research on ELF has shown that speakers of ELF "can be immensely sophisticated, characterized by highly resourceful patterns of interaction" (Deterding 2013). As Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011: 286) point out in a state-of-the-art article published a decade after Seidlhofer's (2001) original article, ELF research exhibits particular interest in linguistic levels such as lexis, lexicogrammar, pronunciation, and pragmatics, especially of spoken interaction. Over the course of the last two decades, ELF has gained considerable interest with an increasing number of publications, three ELF corpora, a series of ELF conferences, and the establishment of the Journal of English as a Lingua Franca (see Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011: 281-283).

While ELF researchers were initially preoccupied with the identification of recurrent linguistic forms in ELF talk, their primary focus seems to have shifted towards the actual (interpersonal) functions of these forms. This has given emphasis to ELF communication being characterized by its variability, fluidity and hybridity (Seidlhofer 2009b). In fact, due to ELF

speakers' linguacultural variability, researchers concluded that ELF cannot be regarded a single variety of English (see Cogo 2011; Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011; Mauranen 2018). Similarly, due to the largely ephemeral and transient context in which ELF communication usually takes place, the notion of an "ELF community" is also deemed inappropriate (Mauranen 2018: 11). Rather than being a homogenous speech community, ELF speakers' "cultural and linguistic resources are inevitably transformed as they are locally appropriated" (Cogo 2011: 98). As a consequence, groups of ELF speaker have preferably been referred to as different Communities of Practice (e.g. House 2008; Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011; Kalocsai 2011; Ehrenreich 2018) or, more recently, as Transient International Groups (Pitzl 2018). These insights have led Seidlhofer (2011: 111) to the conclusion that ELF research needs to be able "to refer to a construct that can accommodate the dynamic and fluid character of ELF while also accounting for what its realization across the globe, despite all their diversity, have in common: the underlying encoding possibilities that speakers make use of."

Although ELF speakers cannot always take certain linguistic forms for granted in interaction, "ELF is generally successful, that is to say, effective in communication, despite the considerable variability of linguistic forms it exhibits" (Pitzl 2012: 39). In fact, it is not despite this variability but precisely because of it that ELF speakers are able to "creatively and strategically exploit, intentionally appropriate, locally adapt and communicatively align the potential inherent in the forms and functions" (House 2013: 59) of their linguacultural resources. That is, research has shown that in the context of ELF, speakers skillfully exploit various pragmatic and interactional strategies to negotiate meaning as the interaction unfolds (see Cogo & Dewey 2012: 114). The success of this negotiation process is governed by one of Seidlhofer's (2001: 143) earliest observations about ELF communication, namely that it is characterized by a high degree of cooperation and mutual support. According to Kalocsai (2011: 49) "[t]he most important cooperative strategy underlying successful ELF talk is accommodation," which is in line with Cogo (2009:269) stating that "in ELF pragmatics accommodation is key to the successful accomplishment of ELF communication." Accommodation theory in the context of ELF refers to the pragmatic process of adapting, altering or adjusting one's speech to that of other interlocutors in order to ensure communicative efficiency (Cogo 2009: 254). In other words, ELF speaker seem to show a tendency for the convergence towards other speakers' communicative behavior in interaction. For instance, Cogo and Dewey (2012) propose that accommodation in ELF is achieved through receptive convergence, i.e. listeners willingly accept non-standard forms in conversation in order to sustain the conversational flow (Cogo & Dewey 2012: 104), and productive convergence, i.e.

"speakers reproducing a non-standard item previously uttered by an interlocutor" (Cogo & Dewey 2012: 106). In this way, accommodation serves as cooperative process ensuring the communicative flow and success. Naturally, besides accommodation other pragmatic strategies have been identified as resources to reach the overarching goal of communicative success. For instance, in their state of the art article Cogo and House (2018: 212) mention four main areas of pragmatic research in ELF, namely the negotiation of meaning (e.g. repetition, self-initiated repair, co-construction of utterances), the use of interactional elements (e.g. discourse markers), idiomatic expressions (e.g. Pitzl's 2012 study on the creative use of idioms and metaphorical expressions) and multilingual resources (e.g. code-switching) (Cogo & House 2018).

With special regards to linguistic politeness and facework, ELF speakers not merely employ pragmatic strategies as cooperative means but are also said to "skillfully use interactional strategies to support communication" (Cogo & Dewey 106). In fact, Kalocsai (2011: 131) finds that cooperative strategies may be used to show interpersonal involvement and build rapport, which she understands to be a key element of ELF competence (Kalocsai 2011: 131). This is in line with Ehrenreich (2016: 138) proposing that relational talk and rapport-building are paramount features of Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) competence. Similarly, Pullin (2013: 16) points out that comity (i.e. social harmony) is of special relevance to ELF since it is an interactive accomplishment necessary for achieving transactional goals in communication. Therefore, in order for ELF speakers to be communicatively successful, it is crucial to creatively exploit the interactional strategies available to them and in this way express solidarity and cooperation. However, due to its discursive nature and its vagueness in terminology (as will be discussed in Chapter 2) linguist politeness, with the exception of House (2008) and brief references in other studies (e.g. Planken 2005; Pullin 2013), has not been a prime concern of ELF research thus far. This is interesting because the scarcity in politeness considerations in ELF stands vis-à-vis a comparatively rich amount of publications mentioning potential face and rapport managing functions observable in the linguistic forms of their data (e.g. Baumgarten & House 2010; House 2013; Pullin 2013; Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick 2014; Komori-Glatz 2017; Konakahara 2017). In fact, many of these studies have adopted Spencer-Oatey's (2000) model of rapport management in particular as framework guiding the analysis and discussion of interpersonal relations and interactional strategies within ELF communication (e.g. Planken 2005; Kalocsai 2011; Pullin 2013; Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick 2014). Thus, it is Spencer-Oatey's (2000) model of interpersonal communication (and her conceptualization of face) in which ELF research and the discussion of linguistic politeness have, at least to a degree, overlapped.

Despite the scarcity of explicit politeness research in ELF, the insight that ELF speakers appear to be highly competent in exploiting "the potential of the language in ways that result from the purpose of the talk and the interpersonal dynamics of the interaction" (Seidlhofer 2009b: 50) nonetheless makes the relationship between strategies of linguistic politeness, facework and topic transitions particularly interesting. If ELF speakers achieve communicative success through solidarity, mutual support and cooperation, and if this cooperation is realized through interactional strategies, then it seems safe to assume that these strategies will be especially relevant in the 'hot spots' of topic management, that is, in the discursive process of transitioning between topics. For this reason, the following study understands itself as a first step in exploring the intersection of ELF, politeness, facework, and topic management. In order to investigate how ELF speakers may instrumentalize strategies of linguistic politeness and facework to transition between topics, and in response to the linguacultural variability of ELF discussed above, the following research questions have been formulated.

I) Which strategies of linguistic politeness and facework are exploited by ELF speakers to transition from one topic to another?

II) Are patterns of corresponding types of topic transitions and facework strategies observable, and if so, how do they correlate with each other?

III) To what extent do choice and quality of facework strategies within topic transitions differ between interlocutors of asymmetric power relations?

IV) In how far do ELF speakers accommodate their strategies of facework to each other over time?

To answer these questions, a case study examining two similar ELF datasets shall be carried out. Both these datasets were drawn from the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE), a digital corpus providing a plethora of transcribed ELF interaction. As will be described in detail in Chapter 4, both datasets constitute intercultural (business) meetings within what VOICE labels the professional organizational domain. It is therefore crucial to keep in mind that all subsequent discussions concerning linguistic politeness, facework, topic management and topic transition must not only be carried out from an ELF perspective, but should also consider the particularities of conversational talk within the context of (business) meetings, if academic literature has suggested such.

The structure of this paper is characterized by a theoretical and analytical discussion of the matter at hand. First, I will outline and discuss the academic discourse concerning linguistic

politeness and the theoretical considerations of Brown and Levinson (1987) and Watts (2003) in particular. Since, as will be shown, linguistic politeness remains to be a highly controversial and at times vague concept, I will further explore the theory of interpersonal communication with special consideration to Spencer-Oatey's (2000) model of rapport-management. Chapter 3 will subsequently shift from the discipline of pragmatics to that of Conversation Analysis (CA). That is, I will investigate the current academic discussion regarding discourse topic and topic management – in particular the contributions of Riou (2015, 2017a, 2017b), Stenström (1994), and Watson Todd (2016). This is done in order to find a suitable theoretical model of topic transitions, which can serve as a basic framework for the identification of topic transitions in this analysis. After discussing data and methodology of this study in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 will display and discuss the results of the analysis, which is designed to answer the research questions stated above. Finally, chapter 6 will conclude the main findings and insights of how ELF speakers use strategies of linguistic politeness and facework as instruments of topic transitions.

2. Theory of linguistic politeness and interpersonal communication

Politeness seems to be an intrinsically ordinary and mundane phenomenon of everyday talk. People generally have a very clear opinion as to what they perceive as polite, and they are quick to judge other people's interactional behavior according to their own understanding of politeness. While the Oxford Online Dictionary (2017) defines politeness as "[b]ehaviour that is respectful and considerate of other people," the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2017) understands politeness to be "an act or utterance that is customary show of good manners." Politeness, therefore, seems to be the label for (culturally) shared 'etiquette' that governs social harmony in conversation. From a linguistics perspective, such a definition would suggest that in communication, speakers consciously and perpetually exploit language in order to maintain interpersonal relations. And indeed, although "[l]inguists have defined politeness in various ways" (Spencer-Oatey & Xing 2003: 33), the majority of them agree "that it relates to the (smooth) management of relations" (Holmes 2012: 207). With regard to this relational aspect, politeness thus appears to encompass linguistic means aimed at the establishment of harmonious relations between interlocutors, while at the same time striving for "maximum benefits for the speaker and hearer at a minimum cost to both parties" (Watts 2003: 103-104).

Kádar and Haugh (2013: 13) describe the history of linguistic politeness research by means of a tree analogy in which the earliest models of politeness make up the roots of more recent politeness research, which are thus "the fundamental starting point[s] for understanding the field" (Kádár & Haugh 2013: 23). They continue to make a distinction between these early theories and theories proposed after the turn of the millennium by referring to the former as first-wave approaches and to the latter as second-wave approaches (Kádár & Haugh 2013: 13). Rather than suggesting a gradual development from first-wave to second-wave approaches, however, the literature seems to depict these two groups of theories as being in a rather delicate and at times contrapositive relationship with each other. While first-wave politeness theorists approached linguistic politeness as a universal concept that is realized through the deployment of specific linguistic forms, recent developments in politeness research have undergone a "far-reaching methodological shift towards examining politeness situated in discourse and interaction" (Kádár & Haugh 2013: 36). This shift is often referred to as the 'discursive-turn' (Kádár & Haugh 2013: 36). The engine putting the change of methodology into motion was the – at times severe – criticism of the most prominent first-wave model, namely that of Brown and Levinson (1987), by a considerable amount of researchers (among them Matsumoto 1989; Eelen 2001; Bargiela-Chiappini 2003; Watts 2003 Watts, Ide and Ehlich 2005). The perhaps

strongest objection to Brown and Levinson's (1987) model is its abstract way of analyzing single speech acts and how it links politeness strategies to linguistic forms. To second-wave researchers, in contrast, politeness cannot be reflected in a mere single utterance (Kádár & Haugh 2013: 48) but can only be identified in the "contextual environment" (Watts 2003: 91). Such a discursive conceptualization of politeness is thus understood to be context sensitive rather than universal, and thus a matter of interpretation by the interactants.

The discursive turn in politeness theory, however, did not come without some theoretical shortcomings either. Discursive approaches appear to be relative in nature, shifting the authority of discerning what is polite away from the researcher to the interactants themselves. Consequently, it seems that even if a sheer number of contextual and social factors are taken into account on the part of the researcher, the eventual interpretations of any person outside the conversation remain just that, potential interpretations (Locher & Watts 2005: 17). This vague methodology has subsequently made many researchers shy away from recent approaches to politeness and return to the more systematic model of Brown and Levinson (1987) (van der Bom & Mills 2015: 180). Further, the emergence of discursive approaches to linguistic politeness has also led to broader considerations of what constitutes interpersonal communication and how one may locate politeness within those. Theories of interpersonal communication - such as Spencer-Oatey's (2002) rapport management model or Locher and Watts' (2005) framework of relational talk - developed, investigating how people may manage interpersonal harmony as they are communicating. Face and facework – which are concepts related to the management of harmony in interpersonal talk – have become paramount building blocks for these theories.

Considering the previous discussion about ELF speakers being fundamentally "consensus-oriented, cooperative and mutually supportive" (Seidlhofer's 2001: 143) due to their linguacultural variability (see Chapter 1), the investigation of how exactly language is exploited in order to maintain interactional harmony seems to be warranted. In fact, how much more crucial must the management and maintenance of social harmony be to groups of speakers who cannot necessarily fall back on shared cultural understandings of politeness and other instruments governing interpersonal talk. In order for this study to be able to discern instances of politeness and the management of interpersonal relation in ELF communication, this chapter will comment on theories of politeness research and interpersonal communication, that is, facework in particular. Both discursive approaches and first-wave approaches to politeness shall be discussed and reflected through the findings of previous ELF research. While Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness will be taken as representative of first-wave approaches,

I will draw upon Eelen's (2001), Watts (2003) and Locher and Watts (2005) considerations regarding discursive politeness approaches in particular. Since, as will be argued, linguistic politeness is often understood to be vague and not always mutually agreed upon in the academic discourse, the more unified theory of facework will be further considered. In particular, I will comment on one specific model which has been referred to rather frequently by a number of ELF studies concerned with face issues (e.g. Planken 2005; Kalocsai 2011; Pullin 2013; Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick 2014; Komori-Glatz 2017), namely Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007) framework of rapport-management.

2.1. Early politeness research: Brown and Levinsons's (1987) first-wave model

From a socio-cultural point of view, politeness has always played a prominent role in interpersonal conversation. People constantly modify their speech in interaction in a way that reflects their relationships to their conversational partners. This modification of talk mostly functions as a means to an end. That is, speakers are capable of adjusting what they say and how they say it in a way that allows for them to sustain interpersonal relationships while simultaneously expressing their personal wants. For example, questions frequently serve as a vehicle to express imperatives. Instead of directly telling our conversational partner to pass us the salt, we indirectly ask if they *can* pass it to us. In a literal sense, a plain *yes* in response to a question like *Can you pass me the salt?* by the conversational partner without him/her actually moving a finger would be a perfectly appropriate answer. But this is not what usually happens. What does happen is that in order for us to get what we want, we need to take into account the social constrain of not telling others what to do. Thus, we reformulate the imposition as a question with the expectation that our interlocutor will catch up to it and interpret it the way we intend it to be interpreted. Depending on who speakers talk to and in what relationship they stand to this person, they can further add linguistic forms to boost politeness. As Sifianou (2012: 1560) remarks, early politeness research proposes that speakers add such linguistic devices to avoid conflict with their conversational partner, thus softening direct impositions (Sifianou 2012: 1560). This inevitably depicts these models as somewhat systematic in their approach, as they are, as Kádár and Haugh (2013: 13) put it, "aimed to model politeness on a somewhat abstract, theoretical level." Consequently, first-wave politeness theories define linguistic politeness as the employment of linguistic forms and behavior targeting indirectness as a means to avoid conflict.

Conflict-avoidance is evident in the works of Lakoff (1973), Leech (1980), and Brown and Levinson (1987), who are considered to be "the founding fathers [and mother] of modern politeness research, […] whose theories figure […] in a great many if not most of the publications on the subject" (Eelen 2001: 23). Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework in particular, has been - and in many ways still seems to be – the primary go-to model of many researchers referring to theories regarding politeness. Due it being "in a class of its own in terms of its comprehensiveness, operationalizability, thoroughness and level of argumentation" (Locher & Watts 2005: 10), it has "become almost synonymous with the word 'politeness' itself" (Eelen 2001: 3). Further, it still "continues to be regarded as *the* definitive work on linguistic politeness, a point which is evident from it being referred to as 'politeness theory' in many circles as if there were no other plausible approach to theorising politeness" (Kádár & Haugh 2013: 16, original emphasis). Given this theory's amount of recitation and its impact in academic literature, this section will be taking a deeper interest in Brown and Levinson's (1987) model.

One overarching characteristic of first-wave politeness approaches seems to be particularly relevant for the context of ELF. That is, they believe linguistic politeness to be a universal phenomenon. Here, universality "refers to the claim that linguistic politeness can be systematically described across languages and cultures using the same underlying theoretical framework" (Kádár & Haugh 2013: 16). In Brown and Levinson's (1987) model, the assumption is that speakers of any culture will exploit the same set of behavioral strategies as linguistic forms in their respective languages to render utterances more polite. Cultures may differ in the emphasis they put on single strategies within the framework, but the strategies themselves seem to be seen as carved into stone and therefore universal. Thus, Brown and Levinson's (1987) model takes an "'absolute' approach to politeness, by pre-identifying the types of communicative messages that require politeness and the linguistic strategies needed for conveying it" (Spencer-Oatey 2005: 97).

For an analysis of politeness in ELF, such a systematic and universal approach to politeness would seem to come in handy, assuming that all speakers would draw from the same range of a priori defined politeness strategies. In fact, Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework's highly operational approach systematically classifying universal strategies of linguistic politeness is likely the reason it was broadly recited in cross-cultural studies (see Ogiermann 2009). As for ELF research, however, many studies that do refer to Brown and Levinson's (1987) model primarily adopt their underlying assumptions about face(work) without necessarily making claims about the nature of politeness itself (e.g. Planken 2005;

Kalocsai 2011; Pullin 2013; Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick 2014; Konakahara 2017). Nonetheless, due to its prevalence in the discussion of face(work) in and beyond ELF, it will thus prove beneficial to have a closer look at Brown & Levinsons'(1987) model and its conceptualization of face.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 58), speakers are able to rationally use a set of linguistic politeness strategies as means to an end. These ends are related to the concept of face, defined as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself [sic]" (Brown & Levinson 1987: 61) and which all members of societies have. Further, face is

> something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. In general, people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face. That is, normally everyone's face depends on everyone else's being maintained, and […] it is in general in every participant's best interest to maintain each others' face (Brown & Levinson 1987: 61).

The basic idea here is that if communication ought to be successful, it will be of crucial interest for the participants to refrain from violating their conversational partners' wants and thus their face. The rational choices which serve to enhance and maintain face in conversation are thus referred to as facework. Due to Brown and Levinson (1987) attesting such a prominent role to face, their conceptualization of politeness is often referred to as 'face-saving' theory of politeness (Watts 2003: 85).

Brown and Levinson (1987) construct a twofold notion of the term, suggesting that face consists of what they refer to as negative face and positive face. Negative face concerns a person's freedom of action and thus "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his [sic] actions be unimpeded by others" while positive face refers to "the want of every member that his [sic] wants be desirable to at least some others" (Brown & Levinson 1987: 61). Moreover, positive and negative face are seen as universal phenomena and as something the speaker will be mindful of in interaction. However, there are also instances in communication where the desire to satisfy one another's face-wants will ultimately collide with the desire to reach one's personal communicative goals, such as expressing criticism or the want for one's peer to perform a specific action. The achievement of these goals will inevitably demand verbal actions that violate the desire to maintain face and instead will threaten (and potentially damage) it. In the light of this study, this also suggests that communicative goal of transitioning between topics, cannot be achieved without considerations of face. The alteration of topic as well as the act of transitioning topic itself may pose a potential threat on both the speakers' and the hearers'

face, since it is literally an imposition of topic on other interlocutors. From this point of view, it can thus be assumed that face considerations will play a part in the language involved in topic transitions.

The model refers to such face-threatening utterances as face-threatening acts (FTAs) (Brown & Levinson 1987). A distinction is made between FTAs that threaten positive face and FTAs that threaten negative face. FTAs are pivotal elements for the employment of politeness strategies in Brown and Levinson's (1987) model. As Eelen (2001: 4) points out, their "theory claims that most speech acts inherently threaten either the hearer's or the speaker's face-wants, and that politeness is involved in redressing those face-threats." In other words, the want to communicate an FTA stands in direct opposition with the want to maintain face. Therefore, unless there is a reason for urgent efficiency, speakers will as a rule try to minimize their threat without abandoning the actual content of the FTA (Brown & Levinson 1987: 68). This is usually done by means of linguistic mitigation and softening mechanisms, which Brown and Levinson (1987: 68-69) term 'redressive action.' The model proposes a hierarchy of five super-strategies which are at the disposal of a speaker to redress face-threat. The assumption is that if speakers feel that what they want to express is too dangerous to the face of the hearer, they will chose to deploy a more mitigating strategy or simply refrain from doing FTA at all. On the other hand, if speakers do not consider their upcoming speech act[1] to be particularly face threatening, they will rationally decide to what the authors label 'go on record' without redressive action (Brown & Levinson 1987: 68-69). This implies that they will not soften the communicative content of their utterance and will communicate this in an unequivocal manner (Brown & Levinson 1987: 68-69). In contrast to going on record, speakers may also do the FTA off record, meaning that "there is more than one unambiguously attributable intention so that the actor cannot be held to have committed himself to one particular intent" (Brown & Levinson 1987: 68).

If speakers decide to go on record, they can do so with redressive action, which really is the heart of Brown and Levinson's (1987) model. Redressive action may be oriented toward the hearer's positive face (thus they name it positive politeness) or the hearer's negative face (i.e. negative politeness).To each of these super-strategies (i.e. going off record, positive politeness, and negative politeness) Brown and Levinson (1987) tie a number of behavioral strategies which in turn are tied to a set of linguistic forms. For example, if a speaker decides to take redressive action by means of negative politeness, he/she could exploit the behavioral

[1] Brown and Levinson's (1987) model, like Lakoff's (1973) and Leech's (1980) frameworks, are deeply entrenched in illocutionary speech act theory and Grice's (1975) cooperative principle (see Kadar & Haugh 2017: 13-15).

strategy of ‘make minimal assumption about H’s wants’ and realize this strategy through hedging his/her utterance and/or reformulate the imposition as a question (Brown & Levinson 1987: 145-146).

To summarize, Brown and Levinson’s (1987) conceptualization of politeness, in Watts’ (2003: 86) words, consists of strategies “which aim (a) at supporting or enhancing the addressee’s positive face (positive politeness) and (b) at avoiding transgression of the addressee’s freedom of action and freedom from imposition (negative face).” It is not hard to see why this model has had such an impact on linguistic politeness theory considering that it is easily operationalizable and applicable to real life speech data. The linguistic devices that are involved in the realization of politeness strategies are systematic and, so it is argued, universal. Especially the conceptualization of positive and negative face (and thus negative and positive politeness) has promised researchers tangible and concrete tools to define and analyze face and in turn linguistic politeness. However, the model’s equation of facework with politeness has triggered an avalanche of disagreement in the academic politeness discourse. Kádár and Haugh (2013: 4), for instance, warn that a “treatment of politeness as arising from particular behaviours or linguistic forms can lead to overgeneralisations and even stereotyping” (Kádár & Haugh 2013: 4) and argue for “…[a]pproaching politeness as social practice” (Kádár & Haugh 2013: 4) instead. The following section will thus deal with criticism of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) model of politeness theory, which can be regarded as the foundation for a new approach to linguistic politeness.

2.2. The discursive approach to linguistic politeness

It did not take long for Brown and Levinson’s (1987) model to be put under the microscope by fellow researchers. Especially their claim of universality and the framework’s systematic approach combining social behavior and linguistic forms to generate a theory of politeness has been perpetually scrutinized. Asian scholars (e.g. Ide 1989, Matsumoto 1989) have dismissed Brown and Levinson’s (1987) definition of face as an inherently western conceptualization very early on, and western scholars (e.g. Eelen 2001; Bargiela-Chiappini 2003; Watts 2003; Locher & Watts 2005, Watts, Ide & Ehlich 2005) soon followed suit, rejecting the model and its understanding of face as an appropriate framework for politeness theory. The multifaceted criticism on this particular model has, however, laid the foundations for a shift in the way researchers conceptualize linguistic politeness. Especially Eelen’s (2001) work, critiquing a

bandwidth of first-wave politeness models, is likely to have played a decisive role in the initiation of a new scholarly discourse in the matter, as he was among the first to shed light on the theoretical shortcomings of first-wave approaches (Kádár & Haugh 2013: 36).

Discursive approaches are marked by their dualistic notion of politeness, with Watts, Ide and Ehlich (2005: 3) suggesting that scholars ought to distinguish between a first-order and a second-order conceptualization of politeness, or following Eelen's (2001: 30) terminology, between politeness1 and politeness2. That is, first-order politeness (or politeness1) reflects "the various ways in which polite behaviour is perceived and talked about by members of socio-cultural groups" (Watts, Ide & Ehlich 2005: 3), while second-order politeness (or politeness2) is more of a "theoretical construct, a term within a theory of social behaviour and language usage" (Watts, Ide & Ehlich 2005: 3). Whereas first-wave approaches are regarded to fall under the category of politeness2, politeness1 is more representative of the main characteristics of discursive politeness theories. In this section, I will review the most relevant criticism scholars have articulated towards Brown and Levinson's (1987) model, and unmask how this critique has led them to formulate a discursive approach to linguistic politeness.

2.2.1. Criticism of Brown and Levinson (1987) as the basis of discursive approaches

One of researchers' biggest issues with first-wave approaches to politeness is that their methods and strategies are essentially speaker and thus production-oriented (Eelen 2001: 96). This objection is rooted in the underlying thought that politeness cannot simply be a matter of rational decision-making by the speaker, but must be approved to be polite by the addressee of the utterance as well. That is, the mere intention of a speaker to be polite does not automatically imply that the hearer will also interpret it as such. Thus, politeness is ultimately discursively co-constructed in interaction. Eelen (2001: 96) indicates that Brown and Levinson (1987) fully neglect to regard any evaluation of politeness on part of the hearer. This means that politeness, in this model, "is primarily conceptualized as a form of speaker behaviour rather than hearer evaluation" (Eelen 2001: 96) and is "all about making appropriate linguistic choices in the performance of speech acts" (Eelen 2001: 96). The hearers become passive and objective listeners who are not assumed to have conversational strategic aims on their own which renders the theory "basically predictive" (Eelen 2001: 107) in nature. However, Watts (2003: 23) argues that there can be no such thing as a predictive model of linguistic politeness since whether a speaker succeeds in their attempt to be polite cannot be a matter of how high a strategy is ranked

in the politeness hierarchy of a model, but is ultimately a matter of how an utterance is perceived within the ongoing social interaction. Eelen (2001: 109) even goes so far as to propose that "the very essence of (im)politeness lies in this evaluative moment" of the hearer.

This view is also supported by Spencer-Oatey's (2005: 97) assessment of politeness being an "evaluative label" that is subjectively attached to behavior. This does not, however, mean that whatever the speaker's intentions actually are has to be dismissed. Rather, instead of researchers taking solely the point of view of the speaker, they need to position themselves "outside the interactional dyad" (Eelen 2001: 110) in order to capture (im)politeness in all of its capacity. Thus, according to Eelen (2001: 111), a theory of politeness needs to be "evaluation-centred" and "non-predictive." This is in line with Watts' (2003: 23) observation that "a theory of (im)polite behavior needs to take the perspectives of the speaker and the hearers adequately into consideration." How these perspectives are to be analyzed, and how a researchers are to position themselves outside this interactional dyad, however, is not entirely clear. In fact, it seems as if the discursive politeness discussion is still missing a thorough theoretical approach which meets the requirement of integrating both politeness1 and politeness2 into one framework (see section 2.2.3).

Another criticism of Brown and Levinson (1987) is concerned with their proposition that linguistic forms are inherently tied to their function of polite talk (Watts 2003: 39). In contrast to this, discursive approaches do not believe that any linguistic form can be inherently (im)polite (Watts 2003: 21). Although speakers may indeed make use of linguistic forms with the intent to save or maintain face, what ultimately makes these forms polite is once again a matter of evaluative judgment by the interactants. Watts (2003: 19) sees evidence for this in the usage of conventionalized linguistic forms. That is, while the absence of conventionalized forms in conversation may be considered impolite, their presence is presumed and thus 'normal' rather than being deemed polite. To illustrate, the indirect request of *Could you pass me the salt* is rather "one of the conventionally normal ways to make the request" (Watts 2003: 92) than a polite utterance. Depending on the contextual situation in which the conversation takes place, a speaker therefore may not perceive such an utterance as polite but rather as normal behavior, or, as Watts (2003: 19), and later Locher and Watts (2005: 16-17) would call it, "politic behavior". This context-dependency seems to be especially relevant for the study of ELF, given its speakers' high variability and flexibility when it comes to utilizing pragmatic resources. As Seidlhofer (2011: 111) points out, "ELF discourses are creative local realizations, or performances, of a global resource that continually get appropriated and re-fashioned by its speakers." What is polite and what is politic in an ELF context is therefore especially context-

dependent as (pragmatic) conventionalized forms may not be perceived as universally polite or impolite by speakers of differing linguacultural backgrounds. Consequently, this divorce of polite behavior from linguistic form renders politeness to be local rather than universal. In Sifianou's (2012: 1561) words, linguistic forms cannot be solely attributed to one specific 'polite behavior' but polite behavior must be "individually-, situationally-, and culturally-specific tendencies rather than universal politeness strategies" (Sifianou 2012: 1561). Therefore, polite behavior may not express itself through predefined linguistic devices, but through the usage of linguistic devices in a specific context and through the participant's evaluation rather than the linguist's evaluation thereof. In fact, such an emic and situational approach to politeness seems to fit astonishingly well into the emic and situational context of ELF.

The insight that linguistic forms can only be functioning as 'polite forms' when they are co-constructed as such in interaction has further led discursive scholars to reevaluate their understanding of impoliteness. From this new angle, impoliteness could no longer just be the absence of politeness strategies. Watts (2003: 89), for instance, illustrates that Brown and Levinson's (1987) assumption that the more politeness strategies are being used, the more polite an utterance will be, is flawed. In fact, too much politeness can be interpreted negatively and thus as impolite by a hearer (Locher & Watts 2005: 11). Asking your spouse *Could you possibly be so charming as to just let me read my paper in peace, dear?* will hardly be interpreted as polite by your partner. Instead, it is more likely that this form of over-politeness will be regarded as either sarcastic impoliteness or mock politeness. Therefore, given that 'polite' linguistic forms may be exploited as devices of impoliteness or simply reflect politic behavior, it is safe to assume that linguistic form in isolation cannot be an indicator of polite talk.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) preoccupation with facework as basis of politeness has led Watts (2003: 97) to the assessment that their model is "indeed a theory of facework rather than politeness." For example, Ide (1989: 231) argues that politeness to Japanese people is indeed not so much a matter of individual face wants but what she terms 'discernment,' i.e. the "orientation toward the wants of roles and settings." In light of this study, politeness solely based on facework can simply not account for Japanese politeness dynamics and thus challenges Brown and Levinson's (1987) claim for universality. Face and politeness, it is argued, cannot be the same thing since "one is a trait of interact*ants* while the other is a trait of interact*ion"* (O'Discroll 2011: 22, original emphasis) and that one "is something interactants have; the other something they do" (O'Discroll 2011: 22, original emphasis). Nonetheless, despite facework and politeness not being synonymous, researchers do not seem able to fully

disconnect these two concepts from each other. Watts (2003: 95), for instance, maintains that strategies of facework may indeed be tied to politeness, provided that interactants understand them as such.

2.2.2. Towards a first-order conceptualization of linguistic politeness

The criticism of Brown and Levinson's (1987) model has led to a re-evaluation of the basic understanding of linguistic politeness. The 'discursive turn' in politeness theory has shifted its focus to how politeness is constructed dynamically and subjectively in conversation rather than being a theoretically fixed construct. Watts (2003) has elaborated the conceptualization of politeness in its dualistic notion by fully rejecting the validity of second-order theories. Although he agrees with Eelen (2001:44) that the purpose of politeness2 is to "show the functionality and inner workings of politeness," he nonetheless insists that "investigating first-order politeness is the only valid means of developing a social theory of politeness" (Watts 2003: 9). In other words, the differentiation between politeness1 and politeness2 stems from the aforementioned claim that politeness theories need to be non-predictive and evaluation-centered (Eelen 2001: 11). Since what is regarded as politeness is influenced by cultural and contextual factors, interlocutors will create their own lay conceptualization of what they deem as polite, which stands vis-à-vis theoretical constructions by linguists. This inevitably means that politeness cannot be discerned by merely considering one specific speech act, as Brown and Levinson (1987) claim, but only through the evaluation of the entire contextual information of and beyond the interaction. A theory of linguistic politeness, according to Watts (2003), should thus "take as its focus the ways in which the members of a social group conceptualise (im)politeness as they participate in socio-communicative verbal interaction" (Watts 2003: 27).

To Watts (2003: 27), an appropriate politeness model should also "offer the researcher the means of recognising and interpreting the evaluative moments in which participants react to linguistic behaviour which is in excess of politic behavior." However, considering the claim that politeness is a matter of lay interpretation and that linguistic forms are not inherently polite, it does not appear entirely clear how exactly researchers are supposed to mark instances of politeness in their data. As can be seen in Watt's (2003) statement above and in Eelen's (2001) previously discussed thoughts, discursive approaches to linguistic politeness seem to demand an emic approach while simultaneously maintaining some form of evaluative tools for researchers. However, neither Eelen (2001) nor Watts (2003) nor any other discursive research

thus far (e.g. Locher & Watts 2005; Kádár & Haugh 2013) appears to have proposed a model that would fully integrate both of these demands.

Although not universal, Watts (2003) does, however, not completely disqualify linguistic forms and behavior as crucial elements to social interaction (including politeness) since they all emerge from a basic consideration of "cooperative social interaction" (Watts 2003:30) in a 'community of practice.'[2] Thus, Watts' (2003) - and Locher and Watts (2005) introducing a model of 'relational talk - discern politeness in interaction as the "[l]inguistic behaviour which is perceived to be beyond what is expectable" (Watts 2003: 19). In other words, polite behavior is any interactional element that is considered more than politic in terms of the standards shared between any given socio-cultural speech community. Obviously, this also includes any group of ELF speaker and thus makes Watts (2003) and Locher and Watts' (2005) conceptualization of politeness potentially applicable to speakers who cannot always draw from culturally shared pragmatic norms but discursively co-construct these in interaction. To illustrate, the presence of linguistic forms would only be potentially considered as a means targeting politeness if it is beyond what is (conventionally) expected in a given situation within a specific community of practice. Hence in a business context of ELF (BELF), a chair assigning a task to one of his/her employees through an indirect question may be regarded as politic rather than polite behavior since in this context indirect questions are conventionally normalized for imperatives. Adding the word *please* at the end of such a request, however, may actually go beyond what is expected by the chair and could thus potentially be interpreted as polite behavior.

As this example shows, the methodology proposed by discursive approaches is arguably rather vague. Since researchers have argued for an evaluative rather than a speaker-oriented modelling of politeness, Watts (2003) states that it is not in the researcher's power to conclude whether an utterance was actually polite. Instead, all Watts' (2003) and Locher and Watts' (2005) offer is an interpretative approach showing "ways of recognising *when* a linguistic utterance *might* be open to interpretation by interlocutors as '(im)polite'" (Watts 2003: 142–143, original emphasis). However, they do not "claim that a particular utterance is a realisation of all polite behaviour" nor do they seek to explain why (Watts 2003: 142–143). This indeed reflects the biggest limitation of politeness1 approaches, namely that they do not propose any counter-models to Brown and Levinson (1987). To date, it has not been suggested what interpretative action is actually happening on side of the hearer since the "theory of relational

[2] The group concepts of Communities of Practice and Transient International Groups (Pitzl 2018) will play a part in the case study of this thesis and are discussed in Chapter 4.2.4.

work […] only warrants *potential* evaluation by the participants (or others) as polite or impolite if it is perceived to be salient or marked behavior" (Locher & Watts 2005: 17). According to this view, the only people able to evaluate linguistic behavior as (im)polite are thus the interactants themselves, and since they can only recount subjective judgments even their evaluations are only potential. Eventually, it is thus once more largely within the researcher's discretion whether an utterance is to be regarded as potentially polite or not. This vagueness of data interpretation has also been noticed by Haugh (2007: 303, original emphasis) who comments that "an analysis which only points out linguistic behaviour that *may* be evaluated as 'polite' […] is questionable, if not disingenuous." Moreover, applying such a vague methodology to corpus data will prove to be difficult, which in turn may compromise the validity of the findings (Haugh 2007: 302). Somewhat ironically, however, the main analytic tool Watts (2003: 130-133) and Locher and Watts (2005) are making use of in exemplifying how to potentially interpret whether their data are more than just politic behavior, are considerations about face(work). That is, although they criticize Brown and Levinson's (1987) model to be solely a model of facework and not politeness, they themselves cannot seem to escape a certain degree of dependency on facework. This reliance appears to be specifically obvious in Locher and Watts' (2005) paper, in which they first state that for their model of relational talk, they "consider it important to take native speakers assessment of politeness seriously and to make them the basis of a discursive, data-driven, bottom-up approach to politeness" (Locher & Watts 2005: 16). Yet, to demonstrate their point, they analyze a speech event solely by identifying linguistic forms that, situated in the specific discursive context, could potentially be interpreted as polite. An actual emic evaluation of the events, such as interviews of the interactants, for instance, is completely missing. Although it must be acknowledged that Locher and Watts (2005) do propose a functional discursive tool for researchers to interpret possible instances of politeness in speech, their model of relational talk does not seem to completely live up to the demands of an emic approach to politeness.

The relatively vague methodology of the discursive approaches and their focus on first-order/lay conceptualizations of politeness might be the reason that from an ELF perspective, contribution to politeness research has been scarce. Although ELF research has not entirely avoided the topic of linguistic politeness, there nonetheless has been a tendency to investigate ELF talk by broader categories such as facework. This does not exactly come as a surprise considering that it is arguably hard to investigate a phenomenon in ELF for which there is no common understanding in the academic discourse of politeness studies itself (Bousfield 2008: 43) other than that it is related to facework and interpersonal relations (Spencer-Oatey 2005:

95). Nevertheless, the following section will review the findings of the limited politeness-related research among ELF studies.

2.2.3. The role of politeness in intercultural communication and ELF

That politeness in ELF and intercultural communication is “almost uncharted territory” (Kecskés 2014: 200) is indeed unfortunate considering that ELF speakers perpetually find themselves in culturally sensitive situations in which the success of communication depends on maintaining harmony between participants with differing cultural backgrounds. According to Holmes (2012: 206), communicating in an intercultural environment without causing offence to one’s interlocutors (which inevitably involves politeness in one way or another) requires “familiarity with a range of communicative norms, and the ability to draw on them appropriately.” To her, this is evidence that politeness “could be considered the heart of successful inter-cultural communication” (Holmes 2012: 206). And yet, explicit politeness research in ELF has been rare.

Interestingly enough, the perhaps most explicit study utilizing a discursive approach to politeness in an ELF setting comes from politeness researchers rather than ELF researchers. That is, the observation that “the discursive approach seems too difficult to use as an analytical approach” (van der Bom & Mills 2015: 180) has motivated van der Bom and Mills (2015) to demonstrate that a discursive approach to politeness is indeed operationalizable for an analysis of language data. More interestingly for the context of ELF, however, is the fact that they also seek to respond to Kecskés’ (2014) evaluation that there are no theories of intercultural politeness (as stated above). In an attempt to kill two birds with one stone, so to say, van der Bom and Mills (2015) is thus perhaps the only study that directly applies the methodology of discursive politeness theory to a intercultural context, focusing on “how politeness in intercultural interaction, is discursively negotiated, rather than a result of static cultural norms” (van der Bom & Mills 2015: 191). Thus, their analysis involves a contextualized qualitative analysis, interpretations of the analysts as well as “post-hoc rationalizations by the interactants” (van der Bom & Mills 2015: 198). One particularly interesting insight for this study is that van der Bom and Mills’s (2015) data appears to confirm Watts (2003) stance that face-concerns reflect potential motivation for the emergence of politeness in interaction.

ELF research specifically investigating (discursive) politeness, on the other hand, has been scarce, to say the least. Many of the ELF studies that have mentioned politeness theory do

so either in a rather incidental and at times unreflecting manner, and/or when theorizing about facework. As for the latter, while studies like Planken (2005) or Kalocsai (2011) merely acknowledge Brown and Levinson's (1987) model as the foundation of Spencer-Oatey's (2000) rapport management model, studies such as Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick (2014) or Konakahara (2017) adopt Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of FTAs in order to identify and discuss face-sensitive situations in context. In fact, it seems as if discursive approaches to politeness have often been overlooked in ELF literature, specifically if it is suggested that the term politeness is equated with facework, or that there are universal norms for politeness. For instance, Pölzl and Seidlhofer (2006) seem to understand the term politeness as synonymous with facework when they argue that ELF speakers use discourse strategies when they "balance politeness with pursuing their goals, as, for example, when they foreground a facethreatening request by mitigation" (Pölz & Seidlhofer 2006: 163). Similarly, Konakahara (2017) implies to equate these two terms when she analyzes "face-negotiation devices" through the help of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory (Konakahara 2017: 317).

In contrast to these studies, Baumgarten and House (2010) and Pullin's (2013) usage of the term politeness seems to be of a more discursive nature. Both these studies briefly mention politeness theory as they conceptualize their understanding of stance and comity. Pullin (2013: 3) refers to the discursive politeness approaches of Eelen (2001) and Watts (2003) and their notion of appropriate behavior as she discusses the term comity (i.e. social harmony). By proposing that social harmony (i.e. comity) depends on the cooperation and consensus between all participants involved in an interaction (Pullin 2013: 3), it seems as if the author implies that the achievement of comity through linguistic stance could be regarded as politic behavior. This becomes clear when she concludes that although "appropriate behaviour is considered to be subjective and dependent on individual perceptions and group culture in context […] (B)ELF users' ability to use their linguistic resources flexibly may allow them to develop or co-construct emergent forms of appropriacy in context" (Pullin 2013: 17). Similarly, despite Baumgarten and House (2010: 1185) remaring that "participants in ELF interaction operate on a much smaller common ground of mutually expectable communicative behaviour" than L1 speakers, they find evidence that ELF speakers display considerations for the "interactional framework of the discourse" through their usage of stance markers (Baumgarten & House 2010: 1194). Although this insight does not offer too many implications about politeness per se, it nonetheless suggests that despite their linguacultural variability, ELF speakers understand the interactional framework of an interaction, that is, the politic behavior of an interaction.

Consequently, if there is politic behavior in ELF interaction, there may also be behavior that exceeds it, that is, polite behavior.

Considering that the majority of the studies mentioned above use politeness theory either as synonym for facework or as basic framework for the analysis of stance and the interpersonal dynamics of ELF communication, House's (2008) research seems to be the only study explicitly interested in how politeness as a linguistic phenomenon may be discursively constructed in ELF interaction. In her paper, she analyzes three case studies of ELF interactions with the intent to find out "whether and if so how ELF speakers construct (im)polite behaviour in interactions" (House 2008: 352). Adopting Watt's (2003) discursive approach to polite behavior, House (2008) proposes that ELF speakers constitute their own community of practice.[3] That is, ELF speakers do not act as speakers of their respective language but as ELF speakers who are "united in something as vague, fluid and immaterial as the 'community of ELF speakers', a sort of 'intersociety', which is always constituted anew in any on-going talk" (House 2008: 355–356). House (2013: 59) reaffirms this view five years later by stating that although ELF speakers make use of their native pragmatic norms (which are thus variables that are not shared among all interactants in ELF conversation), they nonetheless develop "their own discourse strategies, speech act modifications, genres and communicative styles, reinterpreting linguistic expressions for their own benefit." This implies that politeness in intercultural talk is thus, albeit lacking the sharedness of native pragmatic norms, discursively co-constructed in interaction of ELF speakers creating their own ELF communities of practice.

House (2008) also finds that instances of conflict-avoidance behavior – such as Firth's (1996) let it pass principle – is unlikely to be considered to be impolite among ELF speakers (at least not in the context of her data) because "linguaculture-specific linguistic behavior" (House 2008: 355) of the target language (i.e. native English) is "perceived to be interactionally and communicatively irrelevant" (House 2008: 355). Instead, the fact that other participants do not seem to deem this kind of behavior as inappropriate leads House (2008) to the conclusion that such behavior can rather be regarded as politic behavior. At any rate, what is considered as pragmatically 'appropriate' (i.e. politic behavior), in a specific instance of communication seems to be especially dependent on the discursive context in ELF since pragmatic appropriateness will ultimately always be a "joint negotiation of pragmatic appropriateness among those who communicate regularly" (Knapp 2011: 987).

[3] The notion that ELF speakers can be regarded a community of practice has been proposed on multiple occasions in ELF research. For a critical discussion and an alternative methodology see Pitzl (2018) and section 4.2.4

Earlier, the point has been made that ELF research about pragmatics has taken more interest in the interpersonal dynamics of communication - including the dynamics of face – than in linguistic politeness in isolation. On the one hand, this is unfortunate considering that ELF research seems to have many things in common with discursive approaches to politeness. First, neither subject regards what is analyzed to be universal but rather as co-constructed in conversation. Second, second-wave approaches to politeness believe politeness to be subjective judgments of a 'community of practice' (Watts 2003), while ELF research seems to agree that "[m]uch of ELF is negotiated ad hoc, dependent on context, purpose, and constellation of speakers and their own linguacultural backgrounds (in terms of discourse conventions, interactional styles, etc.)" (Seidlhofer 2011: 111). On the other hand, however, ELF research's preference for facework is not surprising given that ELF communities of practice discursively construct their own context-dependent pragmatic norms. Rather than emphasizing one specific element of interpersonal talk (i.e. politeness), focusing on the broader investigation of how ELF speakers construct and exploit pragmatic norms in order to sustain social harmony in communication is thus a valid case to make. This is especially true considering that theories of interpersonal communication appear to provide researchers with more operationalizable tools to theorize about interpersonal talk. For instance, although Locher and Watts' (2005) model of relational talk can be considered a theory of interpersonal communication, it is - as has been argued - mainly concerned with the question of how politeness can be discerned on an interactional level. However, almost two decades after Eelen's (2001) original proposal to combine politeness1 and politeness2 into one theoretical framework, no such framework has been suggested. Other theories of interpersonal communication, such as Spencer-Oatey's (2000) model of rapport, on the other hand, have taken a more universal and analytic approach on how relationships are managed interactionally. The universal nature of these approaches is predominantly realized through considerations of face(work). Therefore, the subsequent section will discuss the basic academic assumptions concerning face and interpersonal communication and review ELF research investigating face and interpersonal talk. Finally, one specific theory of interpersonal communication, which will be of salient importance to the analysis of the present study's data, will be introduced.

2.3. Theory of interpersonal communication and the dynamics of face

The difficulty of applying discursive politeness methodology to actual language data has led researchers to revisit the relationship between first- and second-order politeness. Kecskés (2014: 204), for instance, observes that politeness1 approaches actually make use of the very descriptive tools closely related to politeness2 approaches. Haugh (2007) would agree with this statement, proposing that the key to politeness might be in reconsidering Eelen's (2001) original proposition that politeness1 should be examined through a theoretical construction of politeness2 and thus a combination of emic and etic approaches to linguistic politeness. Referring back to Eelen (2001), he states that "a theory of politeness necessarily involves an understanding of both what people think *should* happen (moral norms) and what people think *is likely to* happen (empirical norms)" (Haugh 2007: 308, original emphasis). As discussed earlier, how this is to be accomplished in particular is still not clear. Haugh (2007: 313) does point out, however, that "[a]nother theme to have emerged is that politeness should be studied within a broader theory of interpersonal communication." Such theories of interpersonal communication are, perhaps somewhat ironically, models "akin to face-work" (Sifianou 2011: 48). One reason for this could be the circumstance that "in contrast to politeness, face lends itself more naturally to a second-order approach" (O'Discroll 2011: 22). O'Discroll (2011) justifies this claim by illustrating that compared to politeness, the lexeme 'face' is nothing that interactants consider salient or often even have a concept for. While people usually have some understanding of what they consider to be polite, the concept of 'face' was introduced by sociologist Ervin Goffman (1967) largely as a theoretical term used to describe an element of social interaction and thus interpersonal communication. Therefore, models of facework may provide the necessary theoretical tools to analyze interpersonal communication and potentially discern instances of polite behavior. In this section, basic considerations about face and facework will be described before considerations of face within ELF research.

Not unlike linguistic politeness, the concept of face(work) has been the subject of lively debate in academic research (Haugh 2009: 1). Goffman (1967: 5) originally defined face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact." Although Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) were the first to tie Goffman's (1967) description of face to linguistic politeness, they were fiercely criticized for their reformulation thereof (e.g., Bargiela-Chiappini 2003; O'Discroll 2007). However, their assumption that face constitutes a cornerstone of interpersonal communication in that the social harmony of a conversation rests on the mutual maintenance of face among participants, is

undisputed. Nonetheless, what commentators have taken an issue with is that face is not only present when FTAs are likely to emerge (O'Discroll 2007), but constitute something "fundamentally interactional" (Haugh 2009: 5). As a consequence, the academic discourse has returned to Goffman's (1967) original understanding of face being constructed discursively and therefore "socially attributed in each individual instance of interaction" (Locher & Watts 2005: 12). In other words, a person's face is related to his/her positively valued social attributes and is (1) constructed in conversation and (2) always relevant to all participants (O'Discroll 2011: 28). The attributes making up face cannot simply be claimed by an individual but they need to be ascribed to them and ratified by other interactional participants (Holtgraves 2009: 193). This has led Haugh (2009: 12) to the conclusion that face is not only co-constructed in interaction but in fact constitutive of interaction. In other words, face, facework and face-consideration lie at the heart of interpersonal communication since, as O'Discroll (2011: 28) points out, people's social attributes are always relevant and always present in interaction.

Emphasizing a second-order notion of face(work), as O'Discroll (2011) suggests, may bring the advantage of understanding face(work) to be "culture-neutral" (O'Discroll 2011: 23) and would indicate that it is more of a universal phenomenon than politeness. Although cultural values do play a rule in the constitution of face (Bogdanowska-Jakubowska 2011), O'Discroll (2011: 18) nonetheless thinks of it as "an ideal concept for engaging with the crosscultural and intercultural precisely because it does not implicate specific cultures […] or construals of politeness which are inevitably culture-specific." Despite the fact that face is also a discursive construct of interaction in context, it can thus nonetheless be considered a universal phenomenon, since face is always present and relevant in any social interaction. With a universal conceptualization of facework offering tools to categorize interpersonal talk, an analysis of how face is negotiated and maintained – also by means of linguistic devices – can then be carried out in any conversational situation. This perhaps was the reason for ELF researchers to be more interested in the broader theory of interpersonal communication than politeness. Consequently, the following section will review previous studies on face in ELF.

2.3.1. Facework studies in ELF

Given ELF studies' preoccupation with the relationship between linguistic forms and function, the exploration of how specific linguistic devices may or may not be exploited in order to maintain social harmony does not come as a surprise. Seidlhofer (2009b: 49) points out that the

main question of ELF studies is “what the variability of ELF tells us about the communicative and interpersonal functions the observed forms are being used to express.” In other words, linguistic forms are understood to be context-specific ad-hoc realizations of communicative goals. Since interpersonal functions of linguistic forms are specific to their contexts, the management of interpersonal relations (including facework) must indeed lie at the heart of ELF research. And yet, Kalocsai (2011: 113) points out that “the interpersonal function has received comparably less attention than the communicative function” and has been treated more as something like “a side-effect/process in the speakers’ collaborative meaningmaking, rather than as a primary goal.” Further, Konakahara (2017: 317) indicates that “how FTAs except disagreement are managed in ELF interactions has not been clearly and extensively explored yet.” In response to these claims, this section shall review some pragmatic studies concerned with how certain linguistic forms have been identified to relate to facework among ELF speakers and, taking Kalocsai’s (2011) and Konakahara’s (2017) criticism into account, then discuss ELF studies that have gone beyond the mere relationships of linguistic form and its communicative function.

One representative of ELF research regarding linguistic devices used to mitigate FTAs is Planken (2005). Planken (2005) adapts Spencer-Oatey’s (2000) framework of rapport management and argues that this specific model does not only allow for her to consider face in an illocutionary domain - as Brown and Levinson (1987) do - but also in a discursive domain. She compares how facework is carried out in BELF between professional business negotiators and aspiring negotiators and explores the use of personal pronouns “as indicators of the negotiator relationship (facework in the participation domain)” (Planken 2005: 384). Planken (2005) finds that professional BELF negotiators were more likely to refrain from direct references (*I* and singular *you*) and instead use exclusive/inclusive *we*. Furthermore, her investigation in the discursive domain of Spencer-Oatey’s (2000) rapport model suggests that BELF professionals show a clear tendency to use interactional (safe) talk throughout the negotiations.

Pragmatic research in ELF seems to have taken a specific interest in discourse markers. One instance of research into the pragmatic functions of linguistic forms can be found in House’s (2013) study investigating how ELF speakers use the markers *yes/yeah*, *so*, and *okay* to enhance their pragmatic competence. House (2013: 60) identifies ELF speakers to be eminently aware “of the precarious nature of their intercultural interaction” and highlights *yes/yeah* as especially suitable for interpersonal ELF talk since it can be used to soften FTAs. Pullin (2013) examined how hedges and boosters are tied to the accomplishment of comity in

BELF. Comity refers to yet another term for social harmony, which she links to Spencer-Oatey's (2000) model of rapport. Pullin (2013: 5) sees the importance of stance markers in their linguistic ability to "help in mitigating face threat and power, and nurturing solidarity" and concluded that facework is the main instrument of maintaining comity. On a more detailed account, it is concluded that whereas hedges are exploited to "persuade, suggest, and mitigate power" (Pullin 2013: 16) boosters in ELF "show concession and express praise" (Pullin 2013: 16).

Besides these studies on the face-saving potential of discourse markers and Planken's (2005) study of rapport-management, only a few studies have been concerned with facework issues in ELF that go beyond specific linguistic forms. One of them is Konakahara (2017), who points out the lack of concern for how FTAs are actually managed in ELF. Adapting Brown and Levinson's politeness model (1987) and Locher and Watt's (2005) model of relation work, her study investigates face-negotiation devices applied in verbal complaints, in which the complainee is absent from the interactional group. She identifies "conversational devices such as reported speech, self-rephrasing, extreme case formulations, accounts, prefaces, hedges, and hesitations" (Konakahara 2017: 328) to be used by the complainer to mitigate face, but also refers to prosodic and physical devices which may serve to save face or intensify the FTA. Further, Konakhara (2017) also regards face-saving strategies employed by the recipient, aiming to either save his/her own face or that of the absent complainee. Similar to House's (2008) comment on politeness and ELF, Konakahara (2017: 328) identifies the employment of the let-it-pass principle, laughter and teasing as means to save face. On a more general note, she also concludes that ELF speakers "are socially and interactionally competent in adjusting the use of conversational devices appropriately to the emergent communicative needs of face negotiation in the unfolding interaction" (Konakahara 2017: 338).

The second piece of research that somehow stands out in facework studies in ELF are Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick's (2014) considerations of how recipients of impositions react to FTAs. The reason for this study to be quite different in its approach is that it is – besides Konakhara (2017) – perhaps the only research that investigates how face is maintained by other participants than those who actually utter the FTA. What makes this paper truly distinguished, however, is that rather than identifying particular linguistic devices used by speakers to maintain face, Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick (2014) single out behavioral strategies to manage interpersonal relations. These strategies are responses to FTAs, which are identified through the utilization of Spencer-Oatey's (2000) model of rapport management. Thus, analyzing corpus data of casual speech among Asian ELF speakers, Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick (2014)

find nine behavioral strategies of how ELF hearers have responded to FTAs in order to maintain face. These "mutual face preservation strategies" (Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick 2014: 275) are: (1) bald-on record disagreeing response with support, (2) bald-on-record disagreeing response without support, (3) foregrounding potential face-threatening nature of statement, (4) off-record disagreement with potential face-threatening statement, (5) signal comity through affirming discourse markers, (6) ignore potentially face-threatening statement, (7) agree with potentially face-threatening statement, (8) laughter, and (9) change topic. Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick (2014: 286) maintain that in the majority of cases "potential face-threats were countered with a move to normalise the flow of conversation and maintain the overall rapport between interactants." Further, Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick's (2014) data also confirm a preference for safe topics and the deployment of teasing in order to manage face.

What is striking about all of these studies is that most of them draw their conceptualization of face from one common framework, namely that of Spencer-Oatey's (2000) rapport management model. Due to its prominence in former ELF studies and due to its tangibility in terms of applicability and discernment of face, Spencer-Oatey's (2000) model will also play a salient part in the analysis of this present study. The following section shall thus outline the basic considerations thereof.

2.3.2. Spencer-Oatey's (2000) model of rapport managment

One possible reason for the prominence of Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007) model of rapport management in ELF research may be its analytic conceptualization of how speakers manage their relations through face while at the same time being largely independent from specific cultural or contextual factors. The management of social relations and (dis)harmony among people is in fact Spencer-Oatey's (2000) definition of rapport management. The model seeks to examine "the way that language is used to construct, maintain and/or threaten social relationships" (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 12). Politeness is also considered by Spencer-Oatey (2000: 530), suggesting that it is embedded in a conversation's "social psychological context," thus being the subject of "motivational concerns underlying the management of relations" (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 530).

Face indeed represents a crucial element in the management of rapport. Spencer-Oatey (2002: 540) proposes that whenever speakers manage rapport in interaction, two motivational

components are involved: the management of face and the management of sociality rights. These two components are defined as follows:

> face is associated with personal/social value, and is concerned with people's sense of worth, credibility, dignity, honour, reputation, competence and so on. Sociality rights, on the other hand, are concerned with personal/social entitlements, and reflect people's concerns over fairness, consideration, social inclusion/exclusion and so on. (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540)

Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2002) sees face as a universal phenomenon and establishes two types of face, that is "quality face" and "social identity face," that are at stake in interaction. Quality face is connected to an individual's self-esteem and concerned with people's wish to have their personal qualities (e.g. competence or abilities) positively evaluated by others (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540). Social identity face is constructed within a social encounter and thus "situation-specific face sensitivity" (Spencer-Oatey 2005: 103). It is concerned with an individual's desire that their social identities or roles (e.g., as group leader or close friend) are upheld by others (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540).

Sociality rights, on the other hand, include what Spencer-Oatey (2002) refers to as equity rights and association rights and are not regarded as face. Equity rights are seen as our fundamental belief that we "are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly" (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540). The model further mentions that equity rights consist of autonomy-imposition issues and the notion of cost-benefit considerations (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540). Association rights, on the other hand, refer to the "fundamental belief that we are entitled to association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship we have with them" (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 541). Spencer-Oatey's (2000) sociality rights suggest a similarity to Brown and Levinson's (1987) negative face wants. However, although Spencer-Oatey (2007: 652) acknowledges that these two concepts can be connected, she also stresses there is a conceptual difference, because an infringement of sociality rights may not necessarily lead to face loss or the threat of face (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 541).

Through the dual definition of face, speakers are able to orient their rapport (and in turn their language) towards the enhancement, maintenance, neglect or the challenge (i.e. threat) of any of these aspects of face (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 29-30). However, in line with the foundations of discursive politeness approaches, Spencer-Oatey (2000) claims that "[r]apport threat and rapport enhancement are subjective evaluations, which depend not simply on the content of the message, but on people's interpretations and reactions to who says what under what circumstances" (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 19). Face threat will, in fact, "only be perceived when there is a mismatch between an attribute claimed […] and an attribute perceives as being

ascribed by others" (Spencer-Oatey 2007: 644). In other words, although the basic qualities of face and the management of rapport are to be considered universal, speakers' rapport-orientations are not (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 31). Instead, it is implied that they are symptomatic of the respective pragmatic norms within a group of speakers, e.g. a community of practice. Thus, unless researchers have first-hand knowledge of speaker's rapport orientation, face concerns "can only be *inferred* from their choice of rapport-management strategies" (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 3, my emphasis). This is not unlike to Watts' (2003) and Locher and Watts' (2005) approach to politeness, proposing that the researcher can make only potential evaluations from speech data in order to detect instances that go beyond politic behavior.

Unlike Locher and Watts (2005), however, Spencer-Oatey (2000: 19-20) creates a set of interrelated domains in which rapport-management strategies can be carried out and 2analyzed. She proposes an illocutionary domain (managing rapport through speech acts), a discourse domain (discursive content and structure of interchange), a participation domain (procedural aspects of an interchange, e.g., turn-taking), a stylistic domain (e.g., choice of tone or considerations of genre), and a non-verbal domain (e.g., body language) of rapport-management (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 19-20). Among these dimensions, the illocutionary domain certainly reflects the most systematic approach to analyzing how speakers linguistically manage rapport since it involves "the selection of speech act components" (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 21) including apologies, requests and compliments, as well as "the degree of directness/indirectness, and the type and amount of upgrader/downgraders" (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 21). Consequently, one can position Brown and Levinson's (1987) work within this illocutionary domain. In contrast to their model, however, Spencer-Oatey (2000) neither proposes that some linguistic devices are more face-threatening than others, nor does she allocate a set of predefined linguistic forms or behavioral strategies in any of the domains. Rather, rapport strategies applied by speakers may vary across cultures are thus context specific (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 20). For instance, Spencer-Oatey (2000:41-44) indicates that cultural variation of rapport management may derive from contextual assessment norms, sociopragmatic conventions, pragmalinguistic conventions, fundamental cultural values and the inventory of rapport-management strategies of a given culture (i.e. conventionalized forms). Additionally, Spencer-Oatey (2000) also postulates that contextual variables will influence the usage of strategies, such as power relations, cost-benefit considerations, social and interaction rules, the communicative activity, and the number of participants involved in a conversation as examples thereof.

Referring back to House's (2008, 2013) evaluation that ELF speakers create their own pragmatic dynamics rather than falling back on their native pragmatics, Spencer-Oatey's (2000) model thus seems to offer categorizations of face that are flexible and universal enough to explore the management of rapport in ELF communication. This is done by posing five interrelated domains in which rapport-oriented moves, and facework, can be carried out and, in turn, be discerned. Through this, the analyst can *infer* face-orientations from strategies of any of these domains. It is particularly interesting for the study of ELF concerned with the exploration of the relationship between observed forms and their functions, that one can examine facework strategies of any domain and subsequently make assumptions about their potential strategic value for the management of rapport (i.e., the maintenance of face) in interaction. Regarding the case of speech acts within the illocutionary domain, however, it must be pointed out that without an actual emic analysis, these interpretations may still reflect a-priori assumptions about the intention of either speaker or hearer. Nonetheless, taking all of this into account, this paper will follow the trend of recent ELF studies concerned with pragmatics and adopt Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007) model of rapport management, since it seems to combine both a discursive first-order and a universal second-order notion of interpersonal communication. Furthermore, taking Watts' (2003) and Locher and Watts' (2005) assumptions about discursively created politeness in consideration, insights into the management of rapport may also point toward potential instances of polite behavior in ELF communication.

In conclusion, this chapter discussed how first-wave models of linguistic politeness have based their theories on the phenomenon of face and indirectness, and how they have been criticized and reformulated by more recent discursive approaches. While I have outlined the theoretical implications of these discursive approaches, I have also pointed out their methodological (if not philosophical) problems. That is, since a purely emic analysis of politeness in interaction seems unfeasible due to the lack of methodological or theoretical tools, interpersonal theories conceptualizing facework, such as Spencer-Oatey's (2000)'s rapport management model, seem to provide a more operationalizable framework to analyze how rapport may be maintained within topic transitions. In fact, the discourse dimension of Spencer-Oatey's (2000)'s rapport management model explicitly links the notions of facework and topic. However, before face(work) and/or linguistic politeness can be analyzed in topic transitions, it is paramount to define what a topic transition is and how one may identify it in interaction.

3. The management of topic transitions in interaction

Topic management in spoken communication does not only comprise the linguistic mechanics involved in maintaining smoothly flowing conversation, but it is also intertwined with the maintenance of interpersonal relations. After all, assuming that conversational participants carefully craft talk, topics too will be introduced or changed in a manner that is sensitive to the given interpersonal relationships within a conversation. Speakers, therefore, may not only be attentive to the interpersonal impact of the 'what' of topic but also recognize the relational impact, i.e. the 'how' of topic. In the disciplines of intercultural communication and ELF, a connection between the management of topic and maintaining interpersonal communication – including both facework and politeness – has been observed in the 'what' as well as the 'how' of topic. Firstly, as for the relation of interpersonal communication and the content (i.e. the what) of topic, a considerable amount of researchers have identified a tendency for ELF speakers to prefer safe topics in interaction (e.g. Meierkord 2000; Cheng 2003; Planken 2005; Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick 2014; Komori-Glatz 2017). While Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick (2014), for instance, reveal that ELF speakers may initiate a change to a safer topic after their face was potentially threatened, Komori-Glatz (2017) also indicates that (B)ELF speakers may digress from a current topic in order to build rapport. Secondly, as for the relation of interpersonal communication and the 'how' of topic, Baumgarten and House's (2010) work on discourse markers can be mentioned as an example for how linguistic forms may function as markers of topic transition and markers of facework simultaneously. They find that the interpersonal function of the discourse marker *I think* may be utilized for topic transfer, because they "are apparently perceived as being more easily realized, or more acceptable to other participants, when they occur in the guise of the speaker's opinion, belief, or subjective evaluation" (Baumgarten & House 2010: 1192). In light of this, topic management seems to play a vital role in the management of interpersonal communication and vice versa, including both the dynamics of facework and linguistic politeness.

More detailed analyses of how topic is being structured and managed in ELF interaction seem, however, more difficult to find. Exceptions to this include Lesznyák's (2002, 2004) research and a short section of Mauranen's (2012: 191-198) monograph. Both these authors observe a co-operative nature of topic negotiation and development among ELF speakers governed by the need to introduce new topics in a transparent enough manner so that other conversational participants will be able to identify them as such (Mauranen 2012: 192). According to Lesznyák (2002: 184), this co-operative behavior seems to manifest itself through

"[a] clear-cut pattern of topical actions […] within topic units" among ELF speakers. In a more comprehensive study of topic management in ELF, Lesznyák's (2004) analyzes how a group of ELF speakers negotiate topic over the course of a formal meeting. Interestingly enough, the study suggests that although interlocutors initially exhibited a significant degree of uncertainty and chaos in their topic development, over time they gradually assimilated their communicative behavior to each other and eventually displayed recurring patterns of topic negotiation (Lesznyák 2004: 135). In Lesznyák's (2004: 234) own words, "a process is observable in which divergent communicative behaviours converge toward each other and in which uncertainties concerning appropriate behaviour lead to the emergence of patterns that are obviously acceptable to all the parties present." However, the contextual setting from which Lesznyák's (2004) drew her data could be the potential subject of criticism. That is, despite her claim to analyze topic development in an ELF institutional setting (Lesznyák 2004: 103), the meeting that is analyzed constitutes a simulation carried out by university students and not professionals (Lesznyák 2004: 94). The speakers were thus not people who had internalized the unique communicative environment of institutional discourse, or "talk at work" (Lesznyák 2004: 103), but a group of students who had never worked with each other before and who had to spontaneously adapt to the communicative needs of the meeting. Whether such a convergence process can then be assumed for meetings within a business or professional domain may be doubted. Nonetheless, Lesznyák's (2004) research has shown that ELF speakers are – once again despite or exactly because of their linguacultural variability – able to creatively and cooperatively exploit their linguistic resources in order to create successful communication. ELF's variability may therefore also be a potential factor shaping the negotiation and management of topic.

In recent years, however, the question of how topic is changed in interaction does not seem to have been a predominant concern of ELF studies. Despite the aforementioned research regarding some aspects of the 'how' and 'why' of topic management, most of these studies used the term 'topic change' as an umbrella term encompassing any form of topic transition (e.g., Mauranen 2009; Baumgarten & House 2010; Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick 2014). However, it is reasonable to assume that the way speakers change topic does not only depend on their interpersonal aims, but also on what they are trying to achieve within conversational talk. That is, there may be a difference between the transition to a topic that is tied to the previous topic and the transition to a topic that is entirely new (especially in regards to power relations). Further, there is often also no mention of how topic transitions may be realized in the absence of linguistic forms which mark the transition to a new topic (e.g., Lesznyák 2002, 2004), or

how transitions may be realized at all (e.g., Mauranen 2009; Baumgarten & House 2010; Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick 2014). Instead, it seems that ELF studies have focused on specific lexical or discursive features of talk, whereas their usefulness for topic management has been addressed in a more incidental manner (e.g., Mauranen 2009; Baumgarten & House 2010; House 2013; Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick 2014). Considering that one of the primary interests of ELF research has been the relationship between form and function of ELF, the discipline cannot exactly be criticized for not being too interested in discussing how topics are defined. The definition of what a topic comprises seems to be a universal question of linguistics rather than a language specific one. What could, however, be criticized is that many ELF studies (as pointed out above) seem to disregard the academic discussions concerning topic and topic management in their findings. That is, observations about topic management in ELF at times appear to be more incidental in nature, refraining from clarifying what the analyst understands to be a topic or how he or she identifies a change of topic in the first place.

Furthermore, it is also important to differentiate between how topics may be managed in casual conversation and how they may be managed in the context of (business) meetings, as is the case for the VOICE data under analysis. As Svennevig (2012a: 4) points out, meetings "constitute a specific speech exchange system, with special characteristic norms and conventions regarding such things as turn-taking, sequence organization and topic progression." Handford (2010: 35) suggests that these norms and conventions of what he refers to as communities of practice entail "the notion of constraint." That is, according to Handford (2010: 34-35), elements such as topic, agenda, chair and relationships between the participants ensure that a meeting "unfolds as a meeting should" (Handford 2010: 35). Especially the role of the agenda and the role of the chair in business meetings have been identified as decisive factors shaping the dynamics of meeting interaction (Handford 2010; Svennevig 2012a, 2012b). In regards to the former, it has been suggested that the introduction of and the transitioning between agenda points are central pivots though which topic management is achieved (Svennevig 2012a: 7) since the agenda provides all participants "with a 'template' for the topics to be addressed" (Svennevig 2012b: 54). Although the agenda provides the participants with something like a basic topical hierarchy for the meeting, it seems obvious that topic transitions and thus new topics will also emerge spontaneously and do not strictly adhere to the previously defined agenda (Svennevig 2012b: 55). In fact, it is reasonable to assume that every agenda point will lead to varying degrees of 'sub-topics' arising from the conversation. For this reason, it has been pointed out that it is the chair who holds the main (but not the sole) responsibility of attending to the agenda (Svennevig 2012b: 54), "assuring the topical

progression" (Svennevig 2012a: 5) throughout the meeting. Since the chair will usually be the most powerful participant in a meeting, he or she will also have a say about who else may or may not transition to a new (sub)topic, and will also sanction "departures from norms of turn length, topical relevance, etc." (Svennevig 2012a: 6). Consequently, it will depend on the respective chair of a meeting on how rigorously he or she strives to control topic progression and management (Svennevig 2012a: 7). As the special environment of (business) meetings have shown to display special dynamics in terms of topic management, it will thus also be crucial to discuss topic within this context.

If one is to identify and then analyze topic transitions in ELF data, it needs to be discussed how topic (transition) is defined, how topic transitions are classified, and how topic boundaries are identified in spoken conversation. This chapter intends to do just that. I will thus give a review of the discussion regarding topic from the discipline of Conversation Analysis (CA) in order to find a definition and typology, as well as methodology of topic transitions suitable for the present study. Thus discussion will be carried out with special consideration to previous findings in ELF research and the unique environment of (business) meetings.

3.1. Defining (discourse) topic

The discursive conceptualization of topic in linguistic research exhibits striking similarities with the academic discourse about linguistic politeness. On the surface level, speakers generally seem to have a very clear idea of what a topic may be in conversation. It seems an easy enough task to identify what topics have been talked about and where to locate them within the spoken interaction. Yet much like the concept of politeness, conceptualizing the term 'topic' as a linguistic phenomenon cannot be considered an easy task whatsoever. The definition of what constitutes topic is at times very much dependent on the linguistic discipline or interest of research. The fact that it is a label that is used in grammar/syntax research and grammar/discourse studies, as well as extended discourse analysis,[4] has led Watson Todd (2016: 5) to view topic as "a strong contender for the title of the most confusing term in linguistics." Watson Todd's (2016) statement is, however, not to be mistaken for an insight researchers just recently have had. More than 30 years earlier, Brown and Yule (1983: 70) have already mentioned that that topic "should be described as the most frequently used, unexplained, term in the analysis of discourse."

[4] For a more detailed discussion of different usages of the term topic, see Watson Todd (2016:73).

Considering the manifold usages of the label 'topic,' it seems beneficial to firstly mention what discourse topic is not. In this sense, discourse topic is not to be understood to be synonymous with the concept of sentence topic. As Riou (2017a: 2) points out, sentence topic is conceptualized as the "first element in an utterance," and unlike discourse topic, it is a syntactic category rather than a discursive one. Discourse topic, on the other hand, is "not part of a binary opposition as in the case for the notions of topic and focus, or theme and rheme" (Riou 2015: 6). Further, discourse topic is a concept distinct from a linguistic sequence since, as Couper-Kuhlen's (2004: 351) mentions, the initiation of new sequences does not necessarily bring the initiation of a new topic with it. In the remainder of this paper, the term 'topic' will be used to specifically refer to the concept of discourse topic.

Riou (2015: 5) indicates that although topic has been a linguistic concept that has been so frequently referred to, the definitions proposed have not differed significantly and share a high degree of vagueness. For instance, while Stenström (1994: 150) defines topic merely as "what the speakers talk about," Zellers (2011: 54) attempts a slightly more discursive approach to topic being "what a unit of discourse is about, whether this is a referent, an idea, or some other element." The reason for these arguably vague definitions can indeed be found in the discursive nature of topics in interaction. As pointed out earlier, what a topic is essentially about is likely to be a subjective judgment on the part of the conversationalists rather than the researcher. Watson Todd (2016: 73), for instance, proposes two problematic issues regarding the methodologies of topic in CA. First, the methodologies which are used to identify a topic are frequently based solely on the researcher's intuition.[5] Second, it is questionable whether an analysis can actually identify *the* topic of a stretch of discourse, given the fact that "topics are created by interaction between participants and the discourse" (Watson Todd 2016: 73). Discourse topic, therefore, being constructed in discourse, has rightly be considered a largely elusive concept (Morris-Adams 2014: 152; Watson Todd 2016: 9).

Despite the fact that the specific content of topic is ultimately a matter of subjective judgment, there are observable entities in conversation that form the center of shared attention and which may be subject to change. As Maynard (1980: 263) points out, "topicality is an achievement of conversationalists, something organized and made observable in patterned ways that can be described," which is the reason researchers have been concerned with "the structure whereby topicality is produced in conversation" (Maynard 1980: 263). Riou (2015: 6) indicates that this has led researchers to investigate in "what participants do when they 'do topic', and how they manage, perceive and cue it" instead of focusing on what it is that constitutes topic.

[5] This is also pointed out by Riou (2015: 12).

For example, CA has been more concerned with identifying the boundaries of topic than its definition (as will be shown in chapter 3.3.). Naturally, that a focus on the 'how' of topic would justify the reluctance of seeing anything else than 'aboutness' in the notion of topic. However, it is arguably hard to justify an exploration of topic structure without knowledge of what is being structured. Moreover, how does one identify a topic boundary if the transition from one topic to another is linguistically unmarked? These issues have led researchers to identify basic features of topics that go beyond mere 'aboutness' and may be utilized for data analysis. In other words, it is assumed that the 'what' might offer a more complete understanding of the 'how,' and vice versa.

Although Riou (2015) acknowledges the general notion of topic being tied to aboutness, she suggests three components constituting topic in order to create "an understanding of discourse topic suited to interactional data and systematic analyses" (Riou 2015: 6). These three basic characteristics are that (1) topic is the center of shared attention, (2) topic is participant- and interaction-specific, and (3) topic is co-constructed (Riou 2015). Riou (2015: 8) intensifies her third claim by suggesting that topic is participant- and interaction-specific, meaning that it needs to be mutually agreed upon by all participants in order to be identified as such. Topic, then, cannot be "exterior to the participants or setting" (Riou 2015: 8) but is always context-dependent. An analysis of topic must therefore be a situated one, taking into account that the co-participants will also give linguistic clues ratifying the transition from one topic to the next after the transition has occurred. Lastly, Riou (2015) postulates a more complex understanding of 'aboutness' as basic element, proposing that topic is the center of shared attention. By this she refers to Chafe's (1994: 121) definition of topic as "an aggregate of coherently related events, states, and referents that are held together in some form in the speaker's semiactive consciousness." As a consequence, doing topic means for the participants to collectively focus on one shared object of attention.

Watson Todd (2016: 10) proposes another definition of discourse topic. In contrast to Riou (2015), he concludes that Chafe's (1994) conceptualization lacks operationality because researchers cannot objectively discern speakers' semiactive consciousnesses. Instead, he refers to an alternative definition of topic by himself in an earlier work, seeing topic as "a clustering of concepts which are associated or related from the perspective of the interlocutors in such a way as to create connectedness and relevance" (Watson Todd 2003: 209, cited in Watson Todd 2016: 10). To Watson Todd (2016: 10), this definition differs from 'classic' ones in three ways:

> First, the focus is on concepts not propositions […] Second, the participants' perspective is taken into account. Rather than relying on formal semantic relations

> which are traditionally taken to have binary truth values (true or false) and which are usually applied to semantic not pragmatic (i.e. context-specific) meanings, the participants' understandings of relations or associations between concepts as evinced in the discourse can be taken into consideration in analysis. Third, these definitions, although they can be applied to a whole text post hoc, can be used with discourse during construction.

This definition of discourse topic stands out in that it not only compromises aboutness and interactional co-construction but also introduces two further elements that make up topic: connectedness and relevance. Watson Todd (2016: 11) understands connectedness to be closely tied to cohesion and coherence. If a topic is maintained throughout conversation, a "clustering of concepts expressed through lexical items" (Watson Todd 2016: 13) will be evident. A change in topic may then also bring a change in, or the absence of, certain lexical ties within the topic boundary. Since "one topic has a tendency to generate another (especially in purely social interaction)" (Stenström 1994: 150), topics are also connected to each other and therefore may share certain lexical items. In order to identify topics, it is thus necessary to discern such clusterings of concepts, since "those concepts which are most frequently reiterated in the stretch of discourse […] are most likely to be prominent in the topic, meaning that cohesive lexical ties may play a crucial role in topic identification" (Watson Todd 2016: 13). As for relevance, Watson Todd (2016: 14) mentions that this feature of discourse topic considers the relationship between a proposition and the previous topic. Topics, therefore, can be identified through their level of connectedness, aboutness and relevance in relation to each other.

For this study, I will follow Watson Todd's (2016) definition of discourse topic as well as Riou's (2015) understanding thereof. Although the 'how' of topic rather than the 'what' will be of prime interest in this analysis, the case has been made for the 'what' being an important factor in the analysis of topic. Or, in Morris-Adams' (2014: 351) words, "[b]oth content and organization […] contribute to clarifying what is meant by 'topic', and together they provide the basic structure for the creation of a coherent conversation." Having discussed the 'what' of topic, the next step is to review the ways researchers have dealt with the 'how.' In particular, it is worth looking into CA's suggestion that topic transitions show differing characteristics in topic boundaries that distinguish them from each other.

3.2. Typology of topic transition

The discursive first-order nature of topic creates considerable difficulty for the analysis thereof. However, the focus of CA lying in the identification of how "people participating in conversational interactions behave and respond to one another's behavior in these contexts" (Zellers 2011: 62), may be the reason for the discipline's preoccupation with studying the management thereof. That is, analysists seem to have been more concerned with the analysis of topic boundaries and topic transitions than the content of topic. Not only are these structures easier to identify (Lesznyák 2002: 167), but they also carry meaning in their social and conversational function (Zellers 2011: 63). This has led to the identification of linguistic characteristics within topic boundaries, followed by a vital number of studies categorizing topic transitions according to their function in the overall structure of topic management.[6] The topologies suggested for the transfer from one topic to another are manifold and have often used common terminology to describe different categories of topic transition (as will be shown in a moment). This has led Morris-Adams (2014: 153) to the assessment that "there is considerable terminological confusion in the description of the various topical changes of direction that can occur during conversations." This paper will understand topic transitions as an umbrella term encompassing any instance of conversational situations in which participants move from one topic to another. Acknowledging that different kinds of topic transitions may reflect different interactional functions, this section will discuss traditional models of topic transition and outline how topic transitions are systemically conceptualized for the sake of this study.

The perhaps most traditional categorization of topic transitions is a binary conceptualization differentiating between "step-wise" (Jefferson 1984: 198) and "disjunctive" (Jefferson 1984: 194) topic transitions. In disjunctive topic transitions, participants transition to a new topic that is radically different than the preceding one. While Jefferson (1984: 194) notes that the new topic "does not emerge from it [i.e. the previous topic], is not topically coherent with it, but constitutes a break from it," Holt and Drew (2005: 40, my emphasis) mention that these kind of disjunctive transitions "usually involve the introduction of a *markedly* different matter." The notion of unrelatedness in topic, as Watson Todd (2016) would call it, inevitably implies that disjunctive topic transitions are likely to be linguistically marked at the topic boundary by the participants (Watson Todd 2016: 29). Step-wise topic transitions, on the other hand, are generally not that easy to pin down in discourse. This is due to the fact that more often

[6] Watson Todd (2016: 69) provides a rather detailed overview of such studies and the terms and typologies they propose.

than not topics transitions lack clear-cut topic boundaries and are, as a consequence, not clearly marked as such (Holt & Drew 2005: 41). Instead, transitions may "involve move from one aspect of a topic to another in order to occasion a different set of mentionables" (Maynard 1980: 271) or link "each new matter to the previous such that range of matters may be discussed without overt termination" (Holt & Drew 2005: 41). This gradual transition may happen somewhat clandestinely, imperceptibly moving from one topic to the next over a span of time.

Although the basic assumptions concerning step-wise and disjunctive topic transitions seem to be largely undisputed in research, a strict binary conceptualization of topic transition has been, as will be shown, found wanting. For instance, there may be instances in which a topic transition is marked by linguistic clues, yet is connected to the previous topic. Such a transition would neither qualify as disjunctive since it does not radically break with the previous topic, nor does it qualify as step-wise as it is clearly marked and distinct to the preceding topics. Moreover, there also seems to be evidence pointing towards the existence of sub-types of both disjunctive and step-wise transition, which has led researchers to come up with a fair number of terminology to describe such 'in-between' types of transitions (see Watson Todd 2016: 69).

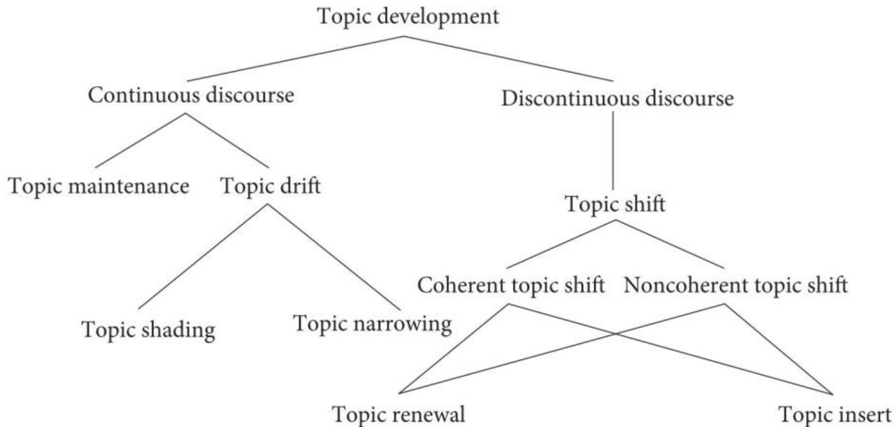

Figure 1: Watson Todd 's (2016:71) typology of topic development

Watson Todd (2016: 71) himself suggests a holistic typology of topic management, as outlined in Figure 1. As can be seen, he acknowledges the traditional distinction between continuous topic drift (i.e. stepwise topic transitions) and discontinuous topic shift (i.e. disjunctive topic transition) and adds a number of possible sub-category to these superordinates. As for topic drifts, topic shading refers to a broadening of the previous topic while topic narrowing describes a transition that leads to a topic that is more specific than the preceding one (Watson Todd 2016: 70). Topic shifts, on the other hand, may be clearly marked (i.e. coherent) or unmarked (i.e. non-coherent). Both coherent and non-coherent topic shifts may appear in the form of topic

renewals or topic inserts, marking either the return to an earlier topic or a "a brief interlude" before returning to the previous topic (Watson Todd 2016: 70). It is important to mention, however, that one way of categorizing these transitions is to not regard them as static elements but as part of "a continuum from shift through drift to maintenance" (Watson Todd 2016: 71). The location within this continuum derives from the 'strength' of a topic boundary, i.e. the frequency of markers signaling the boundary. This implies that "topic boundaries may be graded from strong to weak with strong boundaries indicating topic shift and weak boundaries topic drift" (Watson Todd 2016: 71). In light of this, topic boundaries are seen to be the deciding element defining where a transition is positioned on this continuum.

Suggesting a continuum of topic boundaries, however, appears to be somewhat redundant in the hierarchical structure Watson Todd (2016) proposes. This is rooted in the topology's distinction between topic drift being continuous, and topic shift being discontinuous, rendering this typology binary in its very core. The issue here is that Watson Todd (2016) never really seems to expand on what exactly is understood by dis/continuous discourse. If the 'continuity of discourse' refers to the connectedness/relatedness of two subsequent topics, topic drift and topic shift would indeed be largely synonymous with the traditional distinction between step-wise and disjunctive transitions. However, such a binary conceptualization based on discourse stands vis-à-vis Watson Todd's (2016: 71) proposition that topic development may be regarded as a continuum (from shift through drift to maintenance), based on the strength of the topic boundary. For example, it seems that defining topic shift by its disjunctive nature does not necessarily mean that every shift is automatically marked by strong topic boundaries. In fact, the degree of connectedness to a previous topic does not appear to show a direct correlation to the strength of topic boundaries whatsoever. Consequently, the nature of topic shift and topic drift appear to be too different on a discursive level to put them on a continuum governed by topic boundaries. In fact, it seems as if this typology does not fully account for transitions introducing new topics that are clearly related to the previous topic (i.e. continuous) while simultaneously having strong and clear topic boundaries.

One approach that largely disregards a binary understanding of transition types can be found in Stenströms (1994) typology of "topic strategies". Whereas Stenström (1994) regards all proposed strategies to be situated on the same hierarchical level, her categorizations of topic transitions and those of Watson Todd (2016) are not unalike. Stenström (1994) suggests four "strategies" for how topics may be moved in spoken interaction, including topic changes, topic shifts, topic drifts and topic digressions (which is linked to topic resumptions). Three of these transition types are largely congruent with Watson Todd's (2016). Topic change, according to

Stenström (1994: 154) involves "abandoning the current topic in favor of a new, unrelated, topic" and is generally marked, and is similar to Watson Todd's (2016) topic shift. Stenström's (1994) concept of topic drift, too, coincides with Watson Todd's (2016) notion thereof. Further, Watson Todd's (2016) conceptualization of topics insert and topic renewal largely overlap with Stenström's (1994) topic digression and topic resumption, although Stenström (1994) does not think of them as subordinates of topic change but as largely independent entities. Stenström's (1994) topic shift, however, is not to be confused with Watson Todd's (2016) concept thereof, but might actually be regarded as some sort of missing link, absent from Watson Todd's (2016) typology. The basic idea behind this additional type is that topics may move from "one topic to a related topic or from one aspect of the current topic to another" (Stenström 1994: 156) and may indeed be strongly marked. At first sight, these characteristics of Stenström's (1994) topic shift appear to be a combination of Watson Todd's (2016) sub-categories of topic shading and topic narrowing. However, Stenström (1994) does not regard topic shifts to be subordinated to topic drift, emphasizing that both types carry distinct differences regarding their potential markedness. This distinction seems justifiable considering that Watson Todd's (2016) binary division between topic shift and topic drift does not account for topic transitions that are clearly related to the previous topic (and are thus continuous) yet display strong topic boundaries.

Although Stenström (1994) does account for marked continuous transitions, her model also does not come without potential shortcomings. In her case, the boundaries between topic drift and topic shift do not appear to be clearly drawn either. Whereas topic drifts are said to be completely unmarked, there nonetheless should be "*some* associative link between the old and the new topic" (Stenström 1994: 157, my emphasis). What this associative link might look like does not seem to be accounted for, as it does in Watson Todd's (2016) model.

As has been shown, both Watson Todd's (2016) and Stenström's (1994) typologies take the degree of relatedness/connectedness between subsequent topics as starting point for their conceptualization of transition types. Therefore, although the specific linguistic devices marking topic boundaries may indeed differ across cultures/contexts, it is reasonable to argue that in any case the communicative success of conversational interaction is based on sequences of topics that display various degrees of relatedness to each other. This, as a consequence, would render these models of topic transitions universal, and thus, also directly applicable to intercultural contexts such as ELF. That this is indeed the case has been demonstrated by Cheng's (2003) intercultural study inquiring whether there are discrepancies in "topical strategies" employed in conversation between native English speakers and native Hong-Kong Chinese speakers. Using Stenström's (1994) typology, Cheng (2003: 152) finds that both

groups of speaker used a similar number of topical strategies and that no inequality of speaker rights in the topic management was apparent. Thus, resting on Cheng's (2003: 153) assessment that "stereotypical assumptions about cultural influences on employment of topical strategies do not appear to be supported," these models of 'topical strategies' indeed suggest to be understood as universal, and therefore relevant to an ELF context. This has also been indicated by Lesznyák when she applied Bublitz' (1988) typology of topic transitions to her ELF data without difficulties.

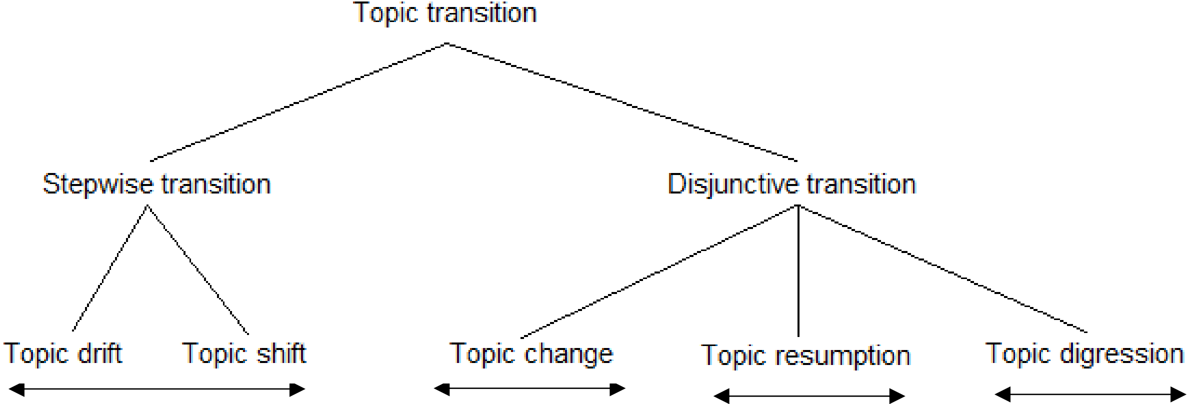

Figure 2: Typology of topic transition used for this study and adapted from Watson Todd (2016) and Stenström (1994)

For the sake of this study, I will adapt Watson Todd's (2016) and Stenström's (1994) models and combine them into one typology. While I will take up Watson Todd's (2016) hierarchical structure of topic transitions, I will add another type of stepwise transition type, which shall be referred to as topic shift. This is done in order to account for continuous transitions that display strong topic boundaries. As can be seen in Figure 2, this new typology thus merges Watson Todd's (2016) hierarchical categorization with Stenström's (1994) transition types terminology. Since both topic shifts and topic changes may display strong topic boundaries, I will not assume both superordinate transitional types (i.e. stepwise and disjunctive transitions) to be placed within one single continuum. Instead, considering that talk in interaction never strictly adheres to the manifold categories researchers impose on it, this typology will sustain Watson Todd's (2016) understanding of a continuum based on the strength of topic boundaries between topic drift and topic shift (as indicated by the arrows in Figure 2). That is, topic drift is understood as continuous transition that is generally linguistically unmarked but "may be manifested through a range of syntactic features (Watson Todd 2016:82) such as "weak topic boundaries" (Watson Todd 2016:82). Topic shift, on the other hand, is a continuous transition that displays strong topic boundaries. Topic change, too, may be signaled by topic boundaries but need not be (Watson Todd 2016: 29). Given that the

decisive element in the identification of topic changes lies in the abrupt and thus disjunctive nature of topic content, no additional type, besides Stenström's (1994) topic resumption and digression, are suggested. In this typology, topic digression signals a temporary suspension of the current topic in favor of a new and unrelated topic (thus being disjunctive in nature) (Stenström 1994: 158) while topic resumption, on the other hand, "involves ending the digression and going back to the old topic" (Stenström 1994: 160). All three types of disjunctive topic transition may be marked by strong or weak topic boundaries.

After categorizing topic transitions and what they may achieve in interaction, the next step will be to discuss how transitions and potential topic boundaries may be discerned in conversation. In this sense, the following section of this chapter will examine methodological considerations in the study of topic transitions.

3.3. Methodological issues of identifying topic transitions

In order to identify topics and topic transitions, it seems that the most frequent approach taken by researchers is to investigate "symptoms of the discourse topic structure of texts rather than the topic directly" (Watson Todd 2016: 83) and to inquire "into the role a specific linguistic form can play in topic structure" (Riou 2015: 13). In other words, the preferred approach to discerning topic transitions has been the identification of topic boundaries. In particular, the literature suggests that topic boundaries may be marked by linguistic features such as discourse markers and certain phrases (Fraser 2009; Stenström 1994; Watson Todd 2016; Riou 2017b), prosody (Riou 2017a; Zellers 2013) and/or figurative expressions (Holt & Drew 2005). Further, Morris-Adams (2014) has also suggested structural-linguistic strategies to be characteristic of topic boundaries. By that, she refers to surface features that include

> strategies such as using lexical repetition of one or more elements of the previous speaker's utterance, as well as the use of referential links. Another method of connecting utterances relies on the sequential relations implicit in the use of certain types of conversational procedures, such as adjacency pairs (Morris-Adams 2014: 154).

That adjacency pairs are potentially indicative of topic transitions seems reasonable since they ensure a topic to last for at least two speaker turns (provided they are taken up by other conversational participants). Adjacency pairs as structural-linguistic strategies of topic transition has been confirmed for the case of questions (Morris-Adams 2014; Riou 2017b), announcements (Maynard 1980; Morris-Adams 2014) and invitations (Maynard 1980).

Particularly interesting, Morris-Adams (2014) observes a tendency for questions and announcements to occur specifically in topic drifts, which by definition may only exhibit weak topic boundaries.

In terms of topic boundaries in the context of meetings, Svennevig (2012b) has investigated how topics may be introduced in agenda-based workplace meetings. He, too, finds that certain discourse markers, phrases and structural-linguistic strategies are exploited by interlocutors in order to transition between topics. Svennevig (2012b: 56) suggests that participants (and the chair in particular) will introduce new topics through invoking the agenda. In particular, he proposes that this is done through the use of discourse markers (e.g., *okay* or *anyhow*) (Svennevig 2012b: 59), the use of metacomments referring to the introduction of a new agenda item (e.g. *next item*) (Svennevig 2012b: 57) or by "simply pronouncing the title of the agenda item (Svennevig 2012b: 58). Generally, however, it is also pointed out that these instruments of topic transition seem to be highly conventionalized in meeting contexts (Svennevig 2012b: 60). In terms of topics that are not based on the agenda, Svennevig (2012b: 62-63) also mentions the exploitation of adjacency pairs such as questions, requests or suggestions. Since it can be argued that these topics do not threaten the agenda organization, but will usually refer to a subtopic of a respective point, one can assume that these markers of topic transition are likely to be used by less powerful participants of the meeting.

Studies concerned with identifying topic boundaries, however, have been mainly interested in how native English speakers may do so. However, since ELF speakers have been shown to use certain linguistic resources for other purposes than native speakers, as in, for instance, the case of the stance marker *I don't know* (Baumgarten & House 2010: 1994-1197), one could theorize that ELF speakers may not necessarily utilize the same linguistic forms to transition between topics as proposed by these studies. As Pölzl and Seidlhofer (2006: 151, my emphasis) point out, ELF speakers "achieve communicative success *despite* the fact that they cannot rely on a stock of previously agreed-upon norms of linguistic behavior." Nor is the presence of a classic topic marker within a topic boundary necessarily a guarantee for it to function as a device managing topical discourse in the first place. And yet, Lesznyák (2004: 178) has shown that topic boundaries may be explicitly marked in lingua franca topic management. Moreover, thanks to their focus on the functions of specific forms in situational discourse ELF researchers have analyzed a number of forms for their pragmatic functions and have also provided some insights in how these might mark topic boundaries. The discourse marker *okay* present in Lesznyák's (2004) study has also been identified by Mauranen (2009: 193) as an interactional element that may shift the direction of topic in ELF discourse. Further,

okay has been shown to function as a "marker of structural boundaries" used to "mark a change in a speaker's orientation and awareness" (House 2013: 64) or as a "[p]re-close and closing signal" (House 2013: 64). In Baumgarten and House's (2010) research, *I think* is shown to be potentially indicative of topic transitions in ELF interaction while *I don't know* is rather used as discourse organizational device by native speakers of English. Furthermore, ELF researchers have also considered the usage of a speaker's native language to structure discourse. House (2016), for instance, finds that German ELF speakers' use of their L1 word *so* is not accompanied by the same discursive function as the English discourse marker *so* would. On a more general level, she also finds that code-switching seems to be prevalent in "the phatic routinized opening and closing phases of the interaction" (House 2016: 65), which indicates that it may also play a role in topic transitions. Moreover, not only discourse markers have been tied to considerations about turn and topic management in ELF and intercultural communications. While Santner-Wolfartsberger (2015: 272) points out that "first-pair utterances," and thus adjacency pairs, may be used in ELF to "select a next party to speak" (Santner-Wolfratsberger 2015:272), Morris-Adams (2014) identifies both questions and announcements to be strategies of topic drifts in intercultural communication.

A sole focus on linguistic forms alone, however, neither includes transitions that are unmarked, nor are these forms necessarily indicative of the kind of topic type. The mere assumption that certain linguistic forms can inherently mark topic transitions does in fact sound similar to the struggle of discursive researcher criticizing first-wave politeness approaches. As Watson Todd (2016: 33) points out, even the idea that markers and phrases signal boundaries "is open to question." For example, linguistic forms that are said to be transition markers might as well be used for something else in interaction, and their identification as such is more a question of a researcher's discretion than of its function in discourse (Riou 2015: 14). Thus, it seems that if analysts aspire to discern a certain type of transition – especially if it is unmarked - they necessarily have to consider how the topic content has altered in relation to the previous topic. As a consequence, in order to discern the 'how' of topic, considering the 'what' of it may prove particularly beneficial. In fact, it has been argued that "a systematic study of topic needs a way of separating the identification of topic transition and their linguistic analysis" (Riou 2015: 14) and that "the symptomatic features [of topic development] can be used for triangulation purposes to confirm the primary analysis" (Watson Todd 2016: 83).

By primary analysis, Watson Todd (2016) refers to alternative approaches focusing on lexical strategies and the lexically-expressed concepts that constitute topic. He names word frequency counts, lexical chaining, text-specific hierarchy, and text-specific network of

associations as methods useful in identifying topic (Watson Todd 2016: 59). However, he also refers to a schema-theory-based approach to analyze topics in discourse, termed 'topic-based analysis using relation' (TBAR) (Watson Todd 2016: 123). The TBAR approach includes three stages, which are to first identify key concepts in the discourse, subsequently adding these together in overlapping concepts (i.e. semantic clustering), followed by mapping these clusters out on a hierarchical structure (Watson Todd 2016: 125). Concepts, according to the approach, can be identified by semantic clustering of nouns and noun phrases in particular (Watson Todd 2015: 125). Key concepts, then, may contribute to topics if they are "expressed frequently and have persistence over a stretch of discourse or be salient" (Watson Todd 2016: 126). Once a hierarchy of these concepts is created (semantic clustering), one can follow the progression of semantic clusters throughout the discourse, which in turn allows for the researcher to identify topic and topic transitions (Watson Todd 2016: 130). For instance, if the discourse is moving from one concept to an unrelated one, or between two semantic clusters, topic transitions can be identified. For triangulation purposes, these topic transitions may then be additionally analyzed for topic boundaries.

An alternative and more quantitative methodology to identify topic transitions is proposed by Riou (2015), who refrains from creating a holistic hierarchy of semantic concepts. Instead, Riou's (2015) methodology relies on choosing an interactional unit (as used in CA) in which transitions may be identified. That is, Riou (2015) favors the turn-constructional unit (TCU), which "corresponds to a potentially complete turn-at-talk" (Riou 2015: 16) and thus "end at place of possible completion" (Liddicoat 2007: 57) in conversation. The underlying idea of Riou's (2015: 16) methodology is that since TCUs correlate to potentially complete interactional moves, they will also correlate to topic transitions. In this way, corpus data can then be segmented into single TCUs, and each TCU can be situationally read. Based on linguistic features such as discourse markers, prosody, and questions (Riou 2017b), the researcher may then decide whether a TCU contains a topic transition. In order to guarantee validity of the researcher's analysis, Riou (2015) favors triangulation through inter-rater agreement.

From a discursive perspective, both Riou's (2015, 2017a, 2017b) and Watson Todd's (2016) proposals, however, display potential methodological issues. In Watson Todd's (2016) case, although maintaining that linguistic forms may be interpreted differently in interaction, he cannot fully account for a first-order conceptualization of topic since his methodology relies heavily on the researcher's discretion of identifying semantic concepts. Although Watson Todd (2016: 129) recognizes that "different analysts might produce slightly different hierarchies,"

his solution to this issue is merely that the researcher "is not applying his or her own schema onto the discourse but is trying to understand the interlocutors' schemata that are generating the discourse" (Watson Todd 2016: 129-130). How this is done, however, is not specifically mentioned. Riou (2015, 2017a, 2017b), on the other hand, seems to have quite the opposite problem. Although her methodology offers a somewhat higher degree of validity due to semiasological analysis and inter-rater agreement, it does not really indicate how topic transitions are identified. Despite the fact that each TCU could be labeled with the terms continuous, stepwise transition or disjunctive transition, there seems to be no mention of the exact parameters involved in distinguishing between these topic types. Further, Riou (2015) also does not seem to account for identifying transitions that are unmarked, other than simply being identified as such by the researcher.

Nonetheless, the methodological considerations of both Watson Todd (2016) and Riou (2015, 2017a, 2017b), as well as their definitions of topic, will be considered for the methodological basis for this study. Further, I have also proposed a theoretical framework for a typology of topic transitions, based on Watson Todd's (2016) and Stenström's (1994) models. I have discussed how topic transitions may be identified by means of discursive topic content and by means of linguistic markers as proposed by L1 and ELF studies alike. The insights gained from the theoretical discussions of linguistic politeness, facework, and topic management, are now to be used to create a suitable methodology for the datasets under analysis in order to answer the research questions proposed earlier.

4. Data and methodology: two ELF datasets of meetings located within the professional discourse domain of VOICE

In order to investigate how ELF speakers may instrumentalize facework strategies as they transition between topics, I have chosen a qualitatively oriented approach in the form a case study, analyzing spoken interaction between ELF speakers in professional meetings. This case study thus attempts to take a first step towards the qualitative exploration of the intersection where topic management, politeness, and facework in ELF meet. More specifically, a corpus analysis shall be the means to answer the research questions introduced in Chapter 1 earlier. Relating to the theoretical considerations I have provided in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, the context of these questions may now become clearer:

I) Which strategies of linguistic politeness and facework are exploited by ELF speakers to transition from one topic to another?

II) Are patterns of corresponding types of topic transitions and facework strategies observable, and if so, how do they correlate with each other?

III) To what extent do choice and quality of facework strategies within topic transitions differ between interlocutors of asymmetric power relations?

IV) In how far do ELF speakers accommodate their strategies of facework to each other over time?

In this chapter, I will discuss the nature of the datasets analyzed, as well as the methodological considerations governing the analysis of Chapter 5.

4.1. VOICE data and participants

The data of this study is drawn from the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE). VOICE is a digital online corpus providing transcribed speech events of “naturally occurring, non-scripted face-to face interaction in English as a lingua franca” (VOICE 2013b) including over 110 hours of transcribed interactions with speakers of 49 different first languages (VOICE 2013b). For the visual presentation of data samples in the analysis, this paper will

adopt the original transcription conventions of VOICE[7] with only minor visual modifications, as will be pointed out.

Since one interest of this study is to investigate in how ELF speakers might change their interpersonal behavior in topic transitions over a period of time, one requirement is for the data to be of a "micro-diachronic" (Pitzl 2018)[8] nature. This means that the dataset needs to comprise speech events with the same group of partaking participants interacting with each other over a stretch of time long enough to see possible changes. Although some speech events of VOICE do provide these qualities, the corpus does not display relations between two or more speech events. However, since I had access to a pre-published version of VOICE and therefore access to additional background information relating to the corpus' speech events,[9] it was possible to group together related speech events into two separate datasets suitable for this analysis.

Dataset 1	Sequential order	VOICE event ID	Event type	Duration	N of participants
(D1): 2004-09-20	morning (1)	POmtg403	meeting	01:16:04	7
	morning (2)	POmtg539	meeting	00:36:33	8
	lunch break	POcon543	lunch talk	00:48:04	7
	afternoon (1)	POmtg541	meeting	01:08:52	7
	afternoon (2)	POmtg542	meeting	00:24:58	6
Dataset 2 (D2): 2004-05-25	morning	POmtg404	meeting	01:26:29	11
	lunch break	POcon549	lunch talk	00:33:51	11
	afternoon	POmtg546	meeting	01:42:31	11

Table 1: The VOICE (2013) speech events comprising the dataset analyzed

As can be seen in table 1,[10] the dataset analyzed in this study compromises eight different VOICE speech events of approximately eight hours of spoken interaction. The speech events are all interactions of professionals working in quality assurance of European higher education, which fall within VOICE's label of the professional organization domain. The majority of these professionals, however, do not work for the same organization but constitute

[7] For detailed information on VOICE's mark-up conventions see www.univie.ac.at/voice/page/documents/ VOICE_mark-up_conventiosn_v2-1-odf
[8] Pitzl's (2018) methodology of taking a micro-diachronic perspective on ELF data will be discussed in section 4.2.4.
[9] Thanks to Dr. Pitzl, who was part of the original VOICE research team, I had access to this pre-published version of VOICE. Among additional background information, this pre-published version also included additional audio files and timestamps within each speech event.
[10] Except for the column "sequential order," which is additional information provided by Dr. Pitzl, the information provided in this table is drawn from the headers of the respective speech events in VOICE (2013).

more of a task group, meeting in infrequent intervals. The speech events stem from two different days, comprising two different groups of participants discussing different objectives and thus two different datasets (henceforth these two different groups shall be referred to as D1 and D2). Each of the groups entails about four hours of spoken discourse, although D1 consist of 4,594 utterances while Dataset 2 (D2) counts a total 2,307 utterances. The majority of time is spent in the actual meetings while one speech event of each group reflects a conversation over lunch. While the meetings of D1 are more of transactional task force meetings in which the participants discuss the contents of a report, the meetings of D2 are shaped by each participant giving a presentation of their respective organization, followed by shorter stretches of discussion. Consequently, D1 displayed a higher degree of interaction (i.e. a higher number of utterances and more frequent turn-taking).

Group	Speaker ID	Sex	Age	Role	First language
D1+D2	P499	m	50+	chair (participant in lunch breaks)	Danish-DK
	P502	m	35-49	participant	Finnish-FI
	P503	f	35-49	participant	Danish-DK
	P20	f	25-34	researcher	German-AT
D1	P500	f	35-49	participant	Finnish-FI
	P501	f	35-49	participant	Catalonian-ES
	P504	f	25-34	non-participant	Danish-DK
	P505	m	35-49	participant	Hungarian-HU
D2	P560	m	35-49	participant	Czech-CZ
	P561	m	35-49	participant	Dutch-NL
	P562	m	50+	participant	English-GB
	P563	m	35-49	participant	Latvian-LV
	P564	f	35-49	participant	Slovenian-SLO
	P565	m	25-34	participant	Dutch-BE
	P566	m	35-49	participant	Norwegian-NO

Table 2: Overview of participants

In terms of participants, Table 2 gives a more detailed overview of the data's speakers, their role within the group, their respective first languages and other additional background knowledge. Through the speaker information pop-up function of VOICE – which "provides cross references to the individual in the corpus and lists all events in which this particular individual participates as a speaker" (VOICE 2013b) – it was possible to identify the speakers within each individual speech event. The information provided in this table are drawn from the headers of VOICE's (2013) respective speech events. The speaker IDs of the single speech

events (e.g. S1, S2, S3) were substituted with the participants' global ID (e.g. P499, P500, P20). Similarly, in the visual representation of data samples of Chapter 5, single event speaker IDs were substituted with the participants' global ID as well. In terms of speaker relations, speakers of D1 seem to be acquainted while speakers of D2 appear to be less acquainted. The power relations appear to be similar in both D1 and D2, as the data suggests asymmetric power relations between the chair (P499) and the remaining participants of both groups. Further, besides the chair, three more participants were part of both D1 and D2. That is, while P503 seems to be a member of both task groups and is thus present in all speech events, speaker P502 is a member of group D2 but also participates in two speech events of group D1, which is due to her being assembled by P499 to provide additional thoughts on a specific matter. Lastly, speaker P20 is part of the VOICE research team. Although she is not a member of the task groups, she occasionally interacts with either groups, especially during the lunch breaks. Based on the description of this study's datasets, the following section will outline the methodological considerations and decisions involved in the analysis thereof.

4.2. Methodology

The qualitative analysis of the chosen dataset comprises two methodological steps. First, all eight speech events were examined for instances of topic transitions as will be explained in detail in section 4.2.2. Second, these topic transitions and their discursive environment were then scanned for instances of face-saving or face-enhancing strategies, as will be pointed out in section 4.2.3. Regarding the investigation of how the ELF speakers may accommodate facework strategies over time, section 4.2.4. will discuss methodological considerations for analyzing group dimension as well as Pitzl's (2018) micro-diachronic dimension.

In order to code the data for these features, I utilized a computer software for qualitative and mixed methods research named Maxqda.[11] After downloading the relevant transcriptions of the VOICE speech events, the local speaker IDs were substituted with their global speaker IDs and the transcripts were subsequently fed into Maxqda to be coded. However, to understand the methodological (coding) choices concerning the identification of topic transitions and strategies of politeness or facework, one must first understand the factors that limited this study.

[11] MAXQDA, software for qualitative data analysis, 1989-2018, VERBI Software – Consult – Sozialforschung GmbH, Berlin, Germany.

4.2.1. Limitations

Although the limitations of case studies are not infrequently treated as afterthoughts in the methodology sections of academic papers, they are something that need to be carefully considered beforehand as they shape the methodology (and thus the outcome) of an analysis more than researchers would perhaps like to admit. As a consequence, I will thus be careful to point out the obvious limitations of this study before discussing detailed methodological considerations.

I have argued in Chapters 2 and 3 that neither the concept of discourse topic nor the theory of politeness can be systematically defined. Despite its more etic nature, this vagueness in definition also holds true for the concept of face. It has also been pointed out that the academic discourse regarding these theories has not generated methodology that is generally agreed upon, if there is any more elaborate methodology at all. Additionally, to my knowledge, there are hardly any studies that regard considerations of face and politeness (i.e. Pragmatics) as elements influencing the theory of topic management (i.e. Conversation Analysis). Considering the discursive challenges these theories pose to a researcher, this is not exactly surprising. In fact, an analysis of facework, politeness, or the management of topic in an eight-hour dataset would possibly justify an entire diploma thesis for themselves. Consequently, this study is in a way one of the first of its kind, and due to the scarcity of methodology, it cannot claim to fully exhaust every aspect of academic discussion involved in these theories.

The aforementioned discursive nature of both theories of discourse topic and interpersonal communication highlight the major limitations of corpus research. To use Cogo's (2016: 366) words "[w]hat a corpus research cannot provide […] is the perspective of the participants" and "how they feel about communication." Given the fact that the data used for this analysis was recorded over ten years ago, taking an emic perspective into account is not justifiable. Thus, decisions about which instances of speech are classified and in turn coded as topic transitions or face strategies were taken from an entirely etic perspective of the author, even though all theoretical considerations of chapters 2 and 3 were taken into account. With this in mind, I will follow Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick's (2014: 273) lead and refrain from making absolute evaluations about people's evaluation of potentially face-threatening acts. Instead, I will "tentatively posit that particular utterances are open to negative [and positive] evaluation by certain participants," (Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick 2014: 273) and thus refer to "FTAs as potentially face-threatening acts (PFTA)" (Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick 2014: 273).

Moreover, the circumstance that there were no video files of the speech events available, but merely audio recordings and VOICE transcriptions, may be regarded as an additional limitation from a CA point of view (Santner-Wolfartsberger 2015: 256).

Finally, another potential limitation can be found in the fact that discourse topic management has not received an overwhelming amount of attention in ELF research. Drawing most of the methodological underpinnings from research primarily concerned with English native speakers, there is thus always the possibility that ELF speakers display their own linguistic dynamics which deviate from these models. This seems to be especially the case for topic transitions. Although not being the main focus of this study, but merely a basis for the analysis of facework, there hardly have been any studies which analyze how speakers transition between topics in ELF communication. Therefore, as will be pointed out in the following section, the methodology for indicating topic transitions is derived from research that is not predominantly ELF specific yet holds potential for future ELF research.

4.2.2. Methodology for indicating topic transitions

Following the definitions of discourse topic by Riou (2015) and Watson Todd (2016) pointed out in Chapter 3.1, the model of topic transitions applied in this study is the combined typology of Watson Todd's (2016) and Stenström's (1994), which I have outlined in Chapter 3.2. Altogether, a topic transition could be one of five different types, including step-wise transitions (topic drift and topic shift) and disjunctive transitions (topic change, topic resumption, topic digression).

The methodology involved in determining the type of transitions was twofold. On the one hand, I followed Watson Todd's (2016) TBAR methodology by identifying key concepts in the discourse through semantic clustering of noun phrases, which were subsequently put into relation. Watson Todd's (2016) methodology was then triangulated through a more conventional approach to topic management. That is, the topic boundaries were examined for linguistic features indicating topic transitions as will be listed further on. On a more detailed note, topic transitions were coded as topic changes if the semantic clusters of the utterance differed entirely from the preceding cluster. The same was the case for topic digressions. However, to qualify as such, a previous (overall) topic had to be resumed through a topic resumption later on. If the semantic cluster of the conversation changed but was still related to the previous, and if the topic boundary was clearly marked by linguistic features, the transition

was coded as topic shift. Stepwise transitions that were linguistically unmarked were coded as topic drifts. However, following Morris-Adams (2014) insights, transitions realized through adjacency pairs were on occasion also coded as topic drifts, if they were otherwise unmarked.

The linguistic features chosen for marking topic boundaries include discourse markers, adjacency pairs, pauses and code-switching. Regarding discourse markers, the coding distinguished between what Fraser (2009: 893) refers to as "topic orientation markers" (e.g. *by the way*, *now back to*, etc.) and "attention markers" (e.g. *ah, anyway, okay,* etc.) (Fraser 2009: 893). Adjacency pairs comprise questions (see Morris-Adams 2014; Riou 2017b), announcements (see Maynard 1980; Morris-Adams 2014) and invitations (see Maynard 1980). Finally, pauses of at least one second (indicated by the mark-up of VOICE in the transcripts) were also regarded as a feature marking topic transitions, as well as a more ELF specific category, namely instances of code-switching (see House 2016).

Earlier, I have mentioned that the dynamics of ELF communication may display unique features of topic management deviating from what has been discussed so far. While the topic transitioning potential of discourse markers such as *okay* (Mauranen 2009) or *I think* (Baumgarten & House 2010), or of adjacency pairs (Wolfartsberger 2011), have been confirmed in ELF research, the data has pointed towards an additional linguistic feature that is not really mentioned in the literature concerning topic boundaries. Without getting too far ahead, the data suggested strong evidence of ELF speakers utilizing the conjunctions *and* and *but* to transition between topics. For this reason, I have added conjunctions as an additional linguistic feature marking topic transitions in the coding scheme.

Generally, only transitions that were clearly identifiable as such by the author were coded. Strictly speaking, a transition from one topic of the agenda to another could potentially still be related in its content. However, since, as pointed out in Chapter 3, Svennevig (2012b: 54) defines the agenda as basic "template" for a meeting's topics, transitions between agenda items were coded as topic changes. If a speaker attempted to transition to another topic but failed to have other participants agree on this topic, the utterances comprising the failed attempt were not coded as transition.[12] Likewise, although this study recognizes that long monologues of speakers (as is the case in D2 when speakers present their organizations) may potentially hold a plethora of stepwise topic transitions, only transitions that were interactional in nature were coded as such. In other words, another requirement of topic transitions was that at least two participants had to talk about the new topic. Further, given the fact that topic is a discursive

[12] Although section 5.2. discusses one instance of facework being used to 'deny' a proposed topic transition, 'failed' transitions appear to hold interesting potential for further research of facework in topic management.

concept, instances of topic termination closing a current topic, happening immediately before the actual transition were included in the coding of a topic transition, as suggested by Stenström (1994: 152).

Limitations for this particular methodology can be found in the lack of two of Riou's (2015) requirements for a methodology of topic transitions. First, prosody was only considered as a linguistic feature marking topic transitions through the occurrence of pauses. Second, the coding was not triangulated through an inter-rater reliability procedure.

Having outlined the methodological considerations for indicating topic transitions in the data, I will now move on to do the same for the methodology of how instances of face(work) and politeness were coded for the purpose of this study.

4.2.3. Methodology for indicating face(work) and politeness

Having identified instances of topic transitions in the data, the next step was to examine whether these transitions displayed instances of facework, that is, face-saving and/or face-enhancing strategies. In order to identify such strategies, it was first necessary to discursively determine whether facework was carried out in a transition in the first place. Since, as mentioned earlier, corpus studies are per definition somewhat etic in nature, it was thus crucial to not merely analyze utterances that were coded as transitions for their facework, but to examine how these utterances discursively interact with the entire context of the speech event. In order to pass as instance of facework, the utterances within coded transitions had to meet the definition of either social identity face or quality face as provided by Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007) model of rapport management. In practice, the application of Spencer-Oatey's (2002) definitions of face to the discursive context of the situation was not as clear-cut as one might hope for. For this reason, I regarded topic transitions in which speakers exhibited a clear orientation towards positively evaluating their own personal *qualities* or that of others (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540) as the maintenance or enhancement of quality face. Quality face is thus conceptualized as more individual in nature since it directly relates to a speaker's qualities that effect his/her self-esteem (e.g. competence, expertise, etc.) (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540). Topic transitions in which speakers seemed to exhibit a clear orientation towards the maintenance or enhancement of social identity *roles* (e.g. a value member of the group, being the chair, etc.), on the other hand, were regarded as instances of social identity face (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540). These types of face were not regarded as mutually exclusive but topic transition may exhibit

both simultaneously. Once the discursive context of a topic transition exhibited the orientation towards at least one of these faces, the respective utterances were coded for being potentially face-relevant transitions. Only then could these transitions be analyzed for strategies that potentially aim at enhancing or maintaining face in interaction, i.e. facework.

Following Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007) model, after identifying face-relevant transitions, instances of facework in topic transitions could be analyzed for rapport-management strategies within the illocutionary domain, the discourse domain and the participation domain. That is, with regard to strategies of the illocutionary domain, topic transitions were analyzed for the speakers' usage of linguistic forms and speech acts, reflecting research question *I*. Fundamentally, the categories of facework strategies were not predefined but open to whatever the results of the analysis would yield. However, since certain speech acts can be realized in several ways, it was necessary to put certain labels on such diverse realizations of the same illocutionary act. Thus, I decided to use some of the labels that Brown and Levinson (1987) have provided. Yet, it is crucial to point out that, unlike Brown and Levinson (1987), I did not regard any illocutionary act as a priori instance of facework. Any strategy of facework was only identified as such if it related to its discursive context of face as defined by Spencer-Oatey's (2000) model. Further, with regard to the model's discourse domain, these strategies were then brought into relation with how topic was managed and created, investigating research question *II*. With regards to the participation domain, an analysis of how facework differences were distributed within the power hierarchy of the speakers was carried out, reflecting research question *II*. Finally, a micro-diachronic analysis of the facework strategies identified was conducted, considering research question *IV* (see section 4.2.4).

In terms of linguistic politeness, this study recognizes that whether face-sensitive situations and the mitigation of potential face-threats are intended by the speaker or evaluated by the hearer to be polite cannot be said with certainty. In Spencer-Oatey's (2013: 125) words, researchers cannot "rely solely on their own interpretations, because otherwise they run risk of imposing interpretation that are not meaningful to the participants." Consequently, such discussion can only remain purely speculative. Nonetheless, following Locher and Watts' (2005) model of relational talk, this analysis will also discuss potential instances of politeness, if the data seems to suggests such instances.

4.2.4. D1 and D2 as Transient International Groups (TIG) (Pitzl 2018)

The circumstance that the dataset entails two groups of speakers with at times overlapping participants will provide at least two methodological approaches for the analysis. First, since group D1 and D2 are both task groups operating under the same chair (P499) and working in higher educational quality assurance, it is possible to regard both groups as being part of the same Community of Practice (CoP). As Handford (2010: 34) points out, a company (and thus also a professional organization) "is a collection of regularly interacting, goal-oriented people who share routines and practices, and can therefore be interpreted as a community of practice." If the speakers of both datasets indeed constitute an own CoP, then general tendencies of how they use facework in topic transitions should be observable in both groups. For this reason, section 5.1., 5.2. and 5.3.1 of the analysis will regard both datasets as one CoP. However, section 5.3.2 of the analysis will resort to an alternative an indeed novel methodological approach.

Having two datasets to analyze does not only enable the analyst to view both groups as one CoP, but it actually allows to question the basic assumption that the ELF speakers of the data comprise such a CoP in the first place. Although the notion of Communities of Practice has been tied to the analysis of ELF talk on many occasions (e.g. House 2008; Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011; Kalocsai 2011; Ehrenreich 2018), Pitzl (2018: 29) proposes that some groups of ELF speakers may in fact be too heterogenous and short-lived to be collectively labelled CoP. Her argument is that the terminology of CoP does not always seem to live up to the "ephemeral and short-lived" nature of many ELF contexts (Pitzl 2018: 29). This indicates that some ELF groups may just be too transient in nature to internalize the shared routines and practices that Handford (2010: 37) assigns to Communities of Practice (see quote above). Concerning the datasets of this study, I have already pointed out that both D1 and D2 do not meet at regular intervals but constitute something like task groups which discuss work that has been carried out in the respective organizations of the speakers. D1 and D2 can thus indeed be regarded as short-lived and transient rather than regular groups. For groups like these, Pitzl (2018) suggests an alternative conceptualization of ELF communality which she labels Transient International Groups (TIG). She describes TIGs as

> groups of multilingual ELF users who interact for a particular purpose at a particular location for a certain amount of time. These groups are transient in the sense that a group forms, speakers negotiate and interact, and then the group dissolves again. Each TIG is therefore temporary (Pitzl 2018: 30).

In this model of group dynamics, ELF speakers come together with what Pitzl (2018: 33) refers to as Individual Multilingual Repertoires (IMRs) (including all linguistic repertoires speakers may have) which will overlap with the IMRs of other interlocutor and thus accumulate to a TIG specific Multilingual Resource Pool (MRP). However, Pitzl (2018) does not regard this MRP to be of a static nature, but instead posits that a speaker "makes use of linguistic resources that are part of her/his IMR – but not (yet) part of (some of) the other ELF speaker's IMR" (Pitzl 2018: 35). This implies that ELF speakers of TIGs may adapt linguistic resources of other participants and this in turn may lead to an expansion of each speaker's IMR and the MRP as a whole (Pitzl 2018: 35-36). Along with the group concept of TIGs, Pitzl (2018: 36) also proposes that TIGs can be relevant if one is to "engage with what one might call a micro-diachronic dimension of ELF in groups" in order to "explore systematically how language use and communication actually develop in ELF groups" (Pitzl 2018: 36). A micro-diachronic analysis of pragmatic conventions interaction, for instance, can be carried out by grouping together the speech data through timestamps of regular intervals (see Pitzl 2018). This enables the researcher to compare coded data of earlier intervals with that of later intervals. In this way one would gain a micro-diachronic perspective of how speakers may negotiate "group conventions on all levels of language, including emerging pragmatic conventions" (Pitzl 2018: 37) in the short-lived context of TIGs.

Gaining such a micro-diachronic perspective is especially relevant for this study if one considers the claim of research question IV, namely to investigate in how ELF speakers may or may not change and accommodate their facework strategies over time. Accommodation is the operative word here, as it refers to "the work done by a speaker to change and adapt one's communication to the interlocutors, their soci- cultural background or the socio-cultural context of the exchange" (Cogo 2016: 365). Consequently, if one is to find out how the speakers of group D1 and D2 may or may not accommodate their facework strategies to each other over time, Pitzl's (2018) approach of gaining a micro-diachronic perspective of both groups as independent TIGs will therefore be adopted in this study. It is thus necessary to gain insight into what speakers do over stretches of time that go beyond a single speech event. That is, if the overall frequency of a certain facework strategy increases over time while other strategies (potentially) decrease, then accommodation has taken place. Interestingly enough, although this approach relies heavily on numbers, it is highly qualitative in nature.

A potential problem regarding this datasets, however, was that VOICE neither provides timestamps within single speech events, nor do all speech events have an audio recording attached to them. These problems could be sidestepped through the aforementioned pre-

published version of VOICE, to which I had access. This version of the corpus did not only include audio recordings of all speech events, but also provided me with timestamps placed within three-minute intervals in each speech event. This allowed for me to add codes representing these timestamps in Maxqda. Adjusting the timestamps to the eight-hour duration of this study's data, 15-minute intervals were chosen to be the micro-diachronic segments of this analysis. As will be shown in section 5.3.2 the coded data of these 15-minute segments provided a micro-diachronic perspective of both TIGs.

Besides gaining a micro-diachronic approach, viewing the two groups of speakers as two different TIGs might also make an observation of tendencies towards two different sets of rapport/face strategies in topic transitions possible. If this is the case, then TIGs may actually provide a new analytic framework for linguistic politeness. As pointed out in Chapter 2, Locher and Watts (2005) argue that researchers can only make etic assumptions about potential instances of polite behavior within the context of Communities of Practice. However, the discussion of Pitzl's (2018) concept of TIGs may also give rise to the question of whether the concept of Communities of Practice might be too broad for an etic analysis of linguistic politeness. At the same time, if one considers politeness as linguistic phenomenon it indeed must be part of a speaker's IMR as well. Substituting the CoP framework with that of a TIG framework in Locher and Watts' (2005) model could therefore mean that anomalies in terms of facework found within the specific interpersonal dynamics of a TIG would point more specifically towards instances of polite behavior, which can then be discussed from an etic perspective. Additionally, it may also hold new insights into how politic behavior is discursively negotiated in the first place. In other words, my assumption is that the more independent and more homogenous a group under analysis is, and the more micro-diachronic data available for this group, the more likely it will be for potential instances of polite behavior to be regarded as such by the speakers themselves. Although this assumption can only be overtly discussed in the course of this study (see section 5.3.2.), Pitzl's (2018) concept of TIGs may hold potential benefit for future academic considerations about linguistic politeness, and thus may also be relevant for research beyond the discipline of intercultural communication and ELF.

5. Analysis of linguistic politeness and facework as strategies of topic transitions

The following chapter will give an outline of the most salient results of the analysis regarding the question of how ELF speakers may utilize strategies of facework to transition between topics. These results shall be presented and discussed through extracts of the VOICE data analyzed, adhering to the transcription conventions of VOICE. As will be pointed out throughout the analysis, salient parts of the utterances constituting central elements for the respective discussion will be indicated through bold and/or underlined print.

The presentation and the discussion of the analysis is divided into three subsections, including the analysis of facework strategies as instruments of topic transitions within the (1) illocutionary domain, (2) the discursive domain, and the (3) participation domain of Spencer-Oatey's (2000) rapport management model. Naturally, and as prespecified by Spencer-Oatey (2000), these domains are interrelated and the analysis will therefore at times overlap. More specifically, in section 5.1, the analysis within the illocutionary domain will discuss how speakers modify their speech within topic transitions in order to enhance or save face. In section 5.2., the analysis within the discursive domain will then discuss the relationship between facework and topic management. Lastly, in section 5.3., the analysis within the participation domain will reflect on how elements such as power, time, and group dynamics may influence strategies of facework as instruments of topic transitions. Interestingly enough, it is within the domain of group dynamics and Pitzl's (2018) TIG methodology that one can hypothesize about the potential occurrence of linguistic politeness too.

Furthermore, while linguistic politeness and facework remain the primary subject of this study, the identification and coding of topic transitions within both ELF datasets has had the positive side effect of gaining a few interesting insights into the dynamics of topic management in ELF. While a detailed discussion of these findings would go beyond the scope of this diploma thesis, having a look at the numbers of topic transition (types) which were coded in the datasets will prove beneficial for the qualitative analysis of facework within them (as will become especially clear in section 5.3). Table 3 provides such a quantitative overview displaying the number of occurrences of different topic types as identified in both datasets. As can be seen, 349 transitions could be identified within the given VOICE data. Not surprisingly, the majority of all transitions constitute topic shifts with over 58 percent. The second largest group of transitions is that of topic drifts making up approximately 21 percent of all transitions. In light of this, ELF speakers of this dataset more frequently utilized stepwise (79 percent) than

disjunctive (21 percent, of which the majority were topic changes) transitions. Further, the members of D1 seem to transition topics more frequently, as they carry out 60 percent of all topic changes, 70 percent of all topic digressions/resumptions, 67 percent of all topic shifts and 64 percent of all topic shifts in the datasets. Additionally, it is P499, the chair, alone who carried out over 45 percent of all topic transitions in both datasets, with a above-average number of topic changes (67 percent) and a below-average number of topic shifts (36 percent).

		topic change	**topic digression**	**topic resumption**	**topic drift**	**topic shift**	**total**
D1+D2	**total**	51	10	10	73	205	349
D1	**total**	31	7	7	49	132	226
	POmtg403	9	2	2	5	37	55
	POmtg539	3	1	1	4	21	30
	POcon543	9	2	2	20	32	65
	POmtg541	8	0	0	17	30	55
	POmtg542	2	2	2	3	12	21
D2	**total**	20	3	3	24	73	123
	POmtg404	6	1	1	3	30	41
	POcon549	10	1	1	11	18	41
	POmtg546	4	1	1	10	25	41

Table 3: Number of topic transition type occurrences in both datasets

Having outlined the extent to which topic transitions could be identified within the dataset, the remaining part of this section will now present what illocutionary strategies of facework were observable within these transitions.

5.1. Analysis of facework within the illocutionary domain of topic transitions

It is possible that the reason politeness has been equated with facework for so long is rooted in the fact that although face is a discursive concept, facework can manifest itself at the language level through illocutionary strategies. These strategies, as has been pointed out, usually surface in the form of speech acts targeting the enhancement or preservation of face in order to mitigate PFTAs. Thus, this part of the analysis will qualitatively explore how the ELF speakers of the

datasets made use of face-saving and -enhancing strategies within the illocutionary domain of rapport, as they transition from one topic to another.

From a more quantitative point of view, illocutionary facework was evident in over 86 percent (and thus the majority) of all topic transitions identified within the data. This advocates that face is indeed, as O'Discroll (2011: 28) puts it, perpetually relevant. The data also suggests that different strategies of facework do not usually occur in isolation, but speakers may exploit multiple features of facework simultaneously. Facework, on an illocutionary level, it seems, is thus an accumulation of speech modifications aimed at the preservation or enhancement of face in interaction. The number of possible facework strategies is thus – at least theoretically – infinite and very much depends on the linguacultural resources of ELF speakers in their context as CoP or TIG. However, although the facework strategies that could be observed in the datasets were subject to their discursive context and therefore indeed manifold, some of them seemed to overlap in their general rapport orientation, i.e. the function they carried in the management of rapport. In total, the analysis suggests four different rapport orientations to be apparent in both ELF datasets, that is, four different qualitative characteristics shared by different facework strategies. First, linguistic forms were utilized to hedge speech in order to mitigate face-threat. Second, ELF speakers seemed to save and enhance face through participant orientation, i.e. speakers distanced themselves or other participants from the face-threatening imposition, or they intensified the relevance of the proposed topic to other interlocutors. Third, strategies of facework which specifically target one or more interlocutors' quality face were observable. Fourth, ELF speakers also appeared to employ facework strategies aimed at enhancing or saving social identity face in particular (see sections 2.3.2 and 4.2.2 for the discussion of quality face and social identity face).

Based on their function within the discursive context, single facework strategies could be grouped together in four clusters according to the four characteristics of facework described above. These clusters are not to suggest, however, that an individual strategy cannot display differing (or the same) characteristics depending on the interaction's discursive environment. Indeed, following the central argument of discursive politeness approaches stating that facework strategies cannot be defined a priori (see Chapter 2.2), I understand these clusters of facework strategies as general functional tendencies apparent in the discursive context of this study's particular datasets, mainly introducing to aid the presentation of the data. In this part of the analysis, these four facework characteristics found within topic transitions shall now be illustrated and discussed in turn.

5.1.1. The mitigating function of linguistic form characteristicizing facework

From a quantitative perspective, topic transitions in the datasets were bursting with single words and phrases that seemed to gently soften the interpersonal impact of FTAs. The majority of illocutionary strategies of facework were in fact accompanied by discourse markers (e.g. *I think, I mean*), modal verbs (e.g. *could, would*), hedges (e.g. *just, fairly*) and boosters (e.g. *very, extremely*).[13] As will be shown, the application of such linguistic forms seems to play a crucial role in the matter attaining to facework, as they may function to mitigate PFTAs. Consider Extract 1:

Extract 1 (VOICE 2013a: POmtg403)[14]

1032 P500: <2><soft> (okay) </soft></2>

1033 P501: <slow><3> some</3>thing else </slow> than independence.

1034 P500: <3><soft> yah </soft></3>

1035 P499: hh but **i think** (.) **i think** we shou- we **should** take this discussion [P501] when we get to the: (1) the so-called manual (.) which i have introduced as well because THAT'S where we have (.) <clears throat> the higher level of specification and see whether we can fit into (.) THAT part of <4> this discussion.</4> because =

1036 SX-f: <4><soft> mhm </soft></4>

1037 SX-f: = <soft> yeah </soft> =

1038 P499: = it seems to me that there (1) we have some basic agreement that it **would** be good to look (.) at the process (.) e:r include terms e:r such as er <pvc> consistence </pvc> relevance and and <5> others.</5> and and see (.)

1039 SX-f: <5><soft> mhm </soft></5>

1040 P499: because BASICALLY to repeat myself (.) <soft> er </soft> going through this list is: to see (.) WHAT is there AT ALL any (.) ELEMENTS which we **could** adopt and thus

1041 P501: <soft> mhm </soft>

[13] A conclusive list of all the discourse markers, modal verbs, hedges and boosters that were utilized by the ELF speakers to mitigate face threat can be found in Appendix A2.2.

[14] In this extract, as well as in all other extracts to come, the parts of the utterances that are printed in bold indicate specific instances of facework crucial to the respective discussion. The parts of the utterances that are underlined mark topic boundary markers as discussed in Chapters 3.3 and 4.2.3. Further, whereas the utterance numbers of the extracts are identical with those of the respective speech event in VOICE, single speakers' local IDs were substituted with their global IDs (see Chapter 4.1).

1042 P499: in that way indicate to the [org2] and the global community that we are not completely isolated in our european perspective. (.) and that that (.) that that **could** be positive. (1) so <loud> let's just </loud> er proceed **perhaps** e:r **a little more** er speedily <fast> the NEXT problem (resource) is that's ACTUALLY **i think** that's a **very good** </fast> formulation

1043 SX: <soft> mhm </soft> (1)

1044 P499: as i remember we have we are **mostly** saying something about proportional er resources <6> but </6> (.)

1045 P501: <6><soft> mhm </soft></6>

1046 P499: e:r effective and efficient and appropriate {someone starts shuffling papers} AND proportional **i think** it's it it's a good (.) {someone stops shuffling paper} formulation <soft> we cou- </soft> we **could** (1) well look into that one (.)

Here, the participants of D1 are discussing contents and formulations of a document. Previously to Extract 1, the group discussed whether the quality criteria within European higher education are consistent. However, having shifted to a discussion about basic principles that could render these criteria more relevant to national systems, P499, the chair of the meeting, steps in and initiates a topic transition (utterance 1042) preceded by the termination of the old topic (utterances 1035-1042). In utterance 1035, P499 takes the floor in order to terminate the current topic through the conjunction *but* and the attention marker *I think*. The actual transition in utterance 1042 is clearly marked through an initiating pause, followed by the attention marker *so* and the discourse structure marker *let's just proceed*. The transition was identified as a topic change since P499 moves the discussion to an unrelated topic within the agenda, to the semantic cluster of noun phrases linked to the term *resources*.

On an interpersonal level, P499 seems to act careful as he moves the discussion to a new topic. Not only does he have to terminate the topic speaker P501 is currently addressing, without threatening either her quality face nor her social identity face, but he also intends to impose an entirely new topic on the group. One strategy to mitigate this PFTA chosen by P499 is the application of the discourse-marker *I think*. However, as Baumgarten and House (2010: 1190) argue, "I think can be used in different formal structures, each fulfilling different functions in the discourse." For instance, in utterance 1035 *I think* does not only function as a tool "introducing new or related topics" (Baumgarten & House 2010: 1192) but clearly also as a

device softening the impact of P499 cutting off P501. While this use of *I think* is oriented towards saving P501's social identity face (i.e. her being a member of the group who has the right to speak) as well as her quality face (i.e. her personal quality of making meaningful contributions to the interaction), P499 also uses this discourse marker to maintain his own social identity face (i.e. him being a considerate and respecting group leader) and the group's social identity face (i.e. them being members who may be part of how topic is managed) as can be seen in utterances 1042-1046. Here, right after the topic change has been initiated, P499 combines the discourse marker *I think* with the booster *very good* in order to signal that the next topic is about the formulation of *resources* in the document in particular. *I think* serves to clarify that P499's statement that the formulation of the document is good is indeed his own personal opinion, and not a generalized truth. This formulation also saves P499's own quality face since a negative evaluation of the formulation on part of the other participants may threaten the reputation of his competence and thus a personal quality of his. On the other hand, he also describes the formulation of the document not only as good but as *very good*. According to Pullin (2013: 16) boosters "show concession and express thanks and praise" and can thus be utilized to mitigate power. In the context of Extract 1, *very good* expresses praise towards the formulation of the text, enhancing the group's prior work and thus their quality face (i.e. their competence) and their social identity face (i.e. they are valued colleagues). Consequently, this combination of discourse marker and booster served to softened the PFTA of the topic change.

Both during the termination of the old topic and the change to the new topic, *I think* is followed by a modal verb shortly after. While the combination of modal verbs and discourse markers in facework was not always the case in the data, they both seem to accomplish a similar goal in this example. In utterance 1035, the chair mitigates telling the participants that the conversation is over through the modal verb *should*. In utterance 1046, he then imposes the new topic by suggesting that the group *could (1) well look into* the new topic. Both cases address Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of negative face, as P499 attempts to affect the participants' free will by first terminating the old topic and then transitioning to a new one. In relation to Spencer-Oatey's (2000) model, I have already pointed out how quality face and social identity face are at stake in this moment of topic transition. Therefore, as is the case here, modals constitute a tool to render speech acts more indirect and thus "function as hedges on illocutionary force" (Brown & Levinson: 1987).

Although both P499's termination and change of topic are already strongly hedged through discourse markers and modal verbs, several other instances of hedging are observable within this example and throughout the data. One instance for this can be found in utterance

1042 right after P499 has signaled the transition to the new topic, by announcing that the group should *proceed perhaps a little more speedily* to the next topic. This utterance indicates that the chair feels like the discussion of single items of the document under review is taking too long. However, if P499 would directly address that the participants are too slow or that they converse about things that he deems unnecessary, the chair runs risk of threatening the participants' quality face. Simultaneously, potentially threatening face may not only damage the interpersonal relation between P499 and the interlocutors, but may also jeopardize a successful transition, as the interlocutors may respond to the face threat rather than the new topic. In this way, the hedges *perhaps* and *a little more* not only serve to soften the PFTA within this particular transition but also ensure that the topic change is successful.

I have made the case for linguistic forms - such as discourse markers (e.g *I think*), modals (e.g. *should, could*), hedges (e.g. *perhaps*), and at times even boosters (e.g. *very*) - appearing to possess a dualistic function regarding face. Not only are they utilized by speakers to keep interpersonal relations intact, but they also seem to ensure smooth and successful topic transitions. Functioning as hedging devices rendering PFTAs more indirect, these forms are congruent with Pullin (2013:16) stating that hedges "are used to persuade, suggest, and mitigate power" in ELF. This observation thus seems to be true for topic transitions within these datasets of the professional organizational domain of ELF too.

Nonetheless, the attentive reader might have already noticed that Extract (1) offers additional illocutionary strategies involved in facework. In fact, the usage of an inclusive *we* and the direct addressing of P501, as well as the phrase *it seems to me* too appear to be involved in the maintenance of face. In fact, these strategies display yet another characteristic of facework within topic transitions, namely the tendency to distance or intensify other participants to the relevance of the new topic. This kind interpersonal participant orientation will be discussed in the following section.

5.1.2. Distance and intensify: participant orientation characterizing facework

In the previous section, I have argued that the ELF speakers of the datasets exhibited a tendency to exploit linguistic forms as strategies of facework in order to ensure smooth transitions between topics. However, modal verbs or hedging devices are by no means the sole way of mitigating PFTAs within topic transitions. Another characteristic of preserving face that could be observed was the tendency of speakers of D1 and D2 to distance themselves or their

participants from the face-threating nature of a transition, or the face-threatening content of the transition. At other times, they attempted to make a topic more relevant by boosting the hearers' face. As will be shown in this section, these distancing and intensifying strategies oriented towards the participants manifested themselves through pronoun usage, as well as through other illocutionary strategies.

Extract 2 (VOICE 2013a: POcon543)

651 P503: <5> i thought </5> that w- was the goal all the time (.) but er (.) <un> xx </un> correct it (.)
652 P499: <smacks lips> no because it's it's fairly schematic <6> e:r </6> part of it <7> and </7> i think we (.)
653 P503: <6> yah </6>
654 P503: <7> yah </7>
655 P499: hh (again) to be pre-emptive we need <1> more </1> of analy<2>sis </2> but er as we are going to expect to attempt (.)
656 P503: <1> hm </1>
657 P503: <2> hm </2>
658 P499: <un><3> x xx </3> xxxxx xx xx </un> hh actually **we** may have an agenda problem after that [P502] because if this is going to (1)
659 P503: <3> mhm </3>
660 P499: be a substantial part of discussion **we** haven't allotted THAT much time for it (2)
661 P505: no e:r =
662 P503: = that's <un> xx </un> i mean if i c- i could just add before i run out of the door hh i think it's very important if you put it on the agenda you should allow enough time because that's a <7> problem </7> we've had with [org8] hh that each time that we've started an- and coming to some good discussions about the principles and hh <1> and </1> actually (.)

Extract 2 of D1 illustrates how the chair, P499, intensifies the relevance of the new topic not only to the entire group but also to speaker P502 in particular. Previously, the group has just been discussing that they need to fasten their work speed in the sight of the approaching general assembly meeting, at which they have to present their results. In utterance 658, P499 initiates a stepwise transition by shifting the topic to the new problem concerning the assembly

meeting that has arisen, which is however not part of the agenda. Although the beginning of his utterance (utterance 658) is marked as unintelligible, the attention marker *actually* marks this transition as topic shift.

P499's first strategy aimed at intensifying the relevance of the new topic is through signaling solidarity as he makes use of an inclusive *we*. In business discourse, the preference of inclusive *we* over individual *I* is said to give greater attention to the conversational partners and thus acts as a tool creating solidarity (Bülow 2009: 146). This seems to be the case in the ELF context of this data too. In Extract 2, P499 emphasizes collaboration over individualism through the pronoun *we*, intensifying the relevance of the topic for the entire group and, in this case, addressing their social identity face by suggesting that all participants are equal members of the grouop. At the same time, however, the usage of an inclusive *we* does not only intensify the relevance of topic to others but also distances P499 himself as it reduces "the emphasis on individual agency" (Handford 2010: 157), thus functioning as "softening device" (Handford 2010: 157) mitigating power. Or, in Brown and Levinson's (1987: 199) words, P499 impersonalizes the FTA (of imposing a new topic) through treating "persons as representatives of a group rather than as relatively powerless individuals." This impersonalization leads to an enhancement of other interlocutor's social identity face since P499 seems to overcome the prevailing power relations and presents the imposition as collective desire, which in turn distances P499 further from the actual PFTA. However, as the next example will show, ELF speakers of the dataset also exploited other means to create distancing or intensifying characteristics of facework.

Extract 3 (VOICE 2013a: POmtg404)

130	P499:	Okay (.) [P562] (.) did i forget something (.)
131	P562:	<smacks lips> i think the (tie) can be <un> x </un> (2)
132	P499:	<u>SO</u> (.) that was er and any (.) other questions to (.) to the [org1] (.) operation you're very welcome (.)
133	P566:	wha- =
134	P499:	= [P566] ?
135	P566:	**<u>in terms of: the new (.) m:ember countries</u> of the bologna process** (.) er **will there be: (.) any activities to encourage the establishment of (1) e:r (.) <fast> quality assurance centers.</**fast> **i mean i could imagine** that (1) setting up something in russia **might not be** (.) as easy

as setting up in in: (.) some other (er) more established <8> e:r </8> mem<3>bers.</3> (.)

136 P499: <8><smacks lips></8>

137 P565: <3><soft> hm </soft></3>

138 P499: that's that's a good point becaus:e (1) i think that will OBVIOUS<4>LY </4> be the implication <5> that </5> we we NEED to be (.)

In Extract 3, P566 of group D2 initiates a shift to a new but related topic as he transitions from the topic relating to new members of the Bologna Convention to the topic of measures taken to attract additional new members to join the convention. P566 further marks his shift by the topic orientation marker *in terms of* and through the utterance of a question (*will there be: (.) any activities to encourage the establishment of (1) e:r (.) <fast> quality assurance centers.</fast>*).

Since P566 is not the chair of the meeting, a topic shift asking for details may be regarded as PFTA by the chair or other participants.[15] Although the chair allocates the next turn to P566 in utterance 134, the speaker still decides to distance himself from the transition by refraining from the use of pronouns at all. That is, instead of asking P499 or other members of the group directly whether they will promote new quality assurance centers, he generalizes the question and in turn distances the hearers (and himself). In fact, "state the FTA as a general rule" is a term describing a strategy of negative politeness in Brown and Levinson's (1987: 126) model. In this way, P566 seeks to maintain his own quality and social identity face as well as those of the recipient(s) of the question. Subsequently, the actual question is followed by P566 giving reason for the topic change, which is hedged by the discourse marker *I mean*, the modal *could* and the hedging phrase *I could imagine*. Here, the speakers seems to try to maintain his own quality face in the manner discussed in section 5.1.1., as he distances himself from an absolute statement indicating his individual position. For this purpose, P499 also emphasizes individual agency as he utilizes the pronoun *I*.

While Extracts 2 and 3 have illustrated how ELF speakers of this dataset have used distancing strategies to maintain face in topic transitions, Extract 4 will demonstrate that in order to initiate new topics, ELF speakers have also displayed a tendency to exploit a type of strategy that Brown and Levinson (1987: 106) have labelled "intensify interest to H[earer]."

[15] This element of power that seems to influence considerations of facework within topic transition is discussed in section 5.3.1.

Extract 4 (VOICE 2013a: POcon543)

228 SX-6: <soft> cheers </soft> =

229 P499: = <soft> yah </soft> (.)

230 SX-5: yah

231 P20: cheers (6)

232 P499: (well) [**P20**] now (.) when (2) **you can see people are (.) quite relaxed and speaking about what they (.) normally do** (.) so (.) the highlight of your project is that you **(.) just (.) a few words on the project** you're going to identify (1) <1> the nati- </1> the national (.)

233 P20: <1> erm </1>

234 P499: implications of speaking the same =

235 P20: = exactly (.)

236 P499: <2> yes </2> (.)

237 P20: <2> exactly </2>

The speech event from which example (4) stems is one of the two lunch meetings and thus not part of the actual meeting. The group has just clinked their glasses as a pause of six seconds occurs. Then, in utterance 232, P499 marks a transition of topic through the attention markers *well* and *now*, and continues to introduce an entirely new and unrelated topic (i.e. a topic change), requesting the linguistic researcher P20 to talk about her project.

In utterance 232, P499 marks the actual beginning of the new topic with the attention marker *so*, later followed by an indirect request. Once again, the request itself and thus the transition is characterized through hedges (*well, quite, just*), the lack of pronouns, and a generalization (*just (.) a few words on the project*), thus distancing the speaker from the PFTA. However, the sequence of topic transition itself is preceded by what seems to be solely facework aimed at ensuring the success of the transition. First, P499 directly addresses P20, indicating that he intends for her to provide him with information. Then he seems to reassure her that within the context of the lunch meeting, the formal requirements have loosened up and she may speak freely. By doing this, P499 seems to enhance P20's social identity face, making sure that she feels comfortable enough to take up the ensuing change of topic. Additionally, P499 generalizes his utterance yet again, as he presupposes[16] (*you can see*) that what he is about to say is known by P20. The speaker therefore intensifies the involvement of P20 in this

[16] "Presuppose/raise/assert common ground" is a term by Brown and Levinson (1987: 117) referring to a strategy of positive politeness.

preliminary facework, occurring before the content of the new topic is introduced. This tendency of intensification, however, was not only observable in the lunch meetings but in the majority of the datasets' speech events.

In conclusion, the data at hand seem to demonstrate that ELF speakers are conscious of power and solidarity issues as they transition between topics. The employment of facework strategies distancing the speaker as well as the hearer(s) from an PFTA, and facework strategies intensifying the involvement of the hearer(s) are observable characteristics. As I have pointed out, these strategies aim at the enhancement and maintenance of both quality and social identity face of Spencer-Oatey's (2000) rapport management model. The data, however, also suggests strategies that are characteristic of prioritizing one aspect of face over the other.

5.1.3. Strategies of facework emphasizing quality face

Unlike Brown and Levinson's (1987) original model, Spencer-Oatey's (2002: 540) framework of rapport management does not assume that speakers decide between orienting their strategies towards two kinds of face, influenced by how strongly they want to mitigate an PFTA. Instead, Spencer-Oatey (2000: 14) stresses that social identity face and quality face constitute face together, thus being two interrelated elements of the same phenomenon. As a consequence, speech acts meant to enhance/save face may not be tied to one of these face types a priori (as is in the case in Brown and Levinson's (1987) model) but may involve both types of face at the same time. However, Spencer-Oatey (2000: 18) also acknowledges that, depending on the contextual situation of a conversation, speech acts may indeed emphasize one type of face over the other. This tendency was also observable in the study of facework as instrument of topic transitions. Consequently, this section of the analysis will discuss facework strategies that displayed a tendency of emphasizing the enhancement and maintenance of quality face, that is, the personal qualities or competences every speaker claims for themselves. That being said, this paper does not regard the following strategies as a fixed set which may be used to indicate facework targeting quality face in an a priori manner. Rather, the discursive contexts in which they occurred suggest a tendency toward focusing on enhancing or saving quality face over social identity face. Moreover, I do not assume that speakers' considerations of social identity face are fully excluded in strategies that display this particular characteristic.

Altogether, three strategies emphasizing quality face are evident within the topic transitions identified within the data. These were laughter, agreement and complimenting, as will be illustrated in the following extracts.

Extract 5 (VOICE 2013a: POmtg539)

161 P505: <1> we can </1><2> call it a mission statement <un> xxx </un><soft> yes </soft></2>

162 P499: <2> <u>so so s- so so ACTUALLY</u> </2> we are where we (.) more or less concluded thatwe need to give a <un> xx </un> (.) an example of what (.) <soft> <u>but</u> **your way of putting it was actually quite good [P503]** </soft> (1) <8> i think </8> we just <u>i mean</u> <u>that</u>'<u>s probably PART of the problem with this text</u> that that (er) (.)

163 SX-f: <8><soft> mhm </soft></8>

164 P499: the reader is: (.) fairly at a loose <3> end </3> in terms of (.)

165 SX-f: <3> hm </3>

166 P499: what does this REALLY signify

167 P503: hm (.)

168 P499: and perhaps more of a (.) pedaGOgical approa<@>ch </@>

169 P503: hm

170 P499: should be er should be advised

171 P503: but that was exactly what came out of the discussions in [place1] that people needed (.) e:r some examples of of of <4> practice </4> of this or how should this be interpreted so that <5> was </5> the same conclusion that

In Extract 5, group D1 has just discussed the essence of *mission statements*. After P505 criticized the usage of the term *mission statement*, P499 starts his transition to a previous topic of the interaction by using the attention markers *so* and *actually,* followed by marking the new topic discursively. Since the new topic is connected to a previously discussed topic and can thus still be regard a subtopic of the overarching topic *mission statements*, this transition may be regarded as topic shift.

Throughout utterances 162-168, P499 shifts the topic to a semantic cluster revolving around how the group may add *pedagogical* examples to the mission statement section of the document under discussion. Relating back to an earlier point in the conversation in which P503

had expressed her concern about single *statements* being too intangible to the readers, P499's transition refers back to her assessment in the form of a compliment. Considering that "compliments typically enhance people's quality face" (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 18), it can be argued that this strategy enhances P503's face in such a way that she will be more likely to back up P499's proposition of the shift. Although the compliment itself here is hedged (*actually*, *quite good*) (which may again have to do with P499 preserving his own social identity face), it also intensifies the relevance of the topic for the entire group. Moreover, compliments emphasizing quality face were also used to different ends in the data, such as the termination of topics.

Another facework strategy characteristic of emphasizing quality face was that speakers tended to agree with other interlocutors of the group. In fact, "seek agreement" is yet another term proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987: 112) describing a strategy of positive politeness. The data suggests that this kind of enhancement of quality face seems to serve at least three different purposes. First, speakers agreed with some aspect of the conversation in order to transition to a topic that is a more detailed discussion of this specific aspect. Second, speakers appeared to agree with one another in order to resume a topic that has previously undergone a digression. This was especially apparent if the purpose of the digressional topic was to tease another interlocutor and the resumption had to not only restore the previous topic but also the interlocutors face (as is the case in Extract 13 in section 5.2.1). Thirdly, and as Extract 6 shows, ELF speakers also agreed to previous arguments of other participants in order to transfer to a new topic.

Extract 6 (VOICE 2013a: POmtg546)

497	P562:	(or) to claim an authority they don't have (1) but it i think it is right that their views are looked to (.) and er (1) er er <un> xxxx </un> reporting (.)
498	P560:	<soft> mhm </soft>
499	P499:	<smacks lips> hh (.) yes [P560] ? (.)
500	P560:	erm <u>there is hh one problem</u> **i don't have problems**: er with erm a kind of <pvc> metaevaluation </pvc> call it so or not (2) erm: and procedures are quite hh understandable and must be (.) in fact it's a problem of <pvc> legitimation </pvc> as well the involvement of stakeholders <un> xx </un> **i: fully agree**. hh <u>but there is then: the problem of consequences</u> (.) and authorization er what about agencies which (.) e:r don't meet (.)

requirements (.) but in (.) v- very important (1) e:r (ways) s- so what what else. what then (.) because <un> x </un> these are usually somehow {parallel conversation between SX and SX starts; they are whispering and thus barely audible (27)} legitimized at a national level (.) but (.) <soft> e:r </soft> are (.) if <2> they </2> are not recognized fully <soft> at </soft>

501 P562: <2> but </2>

502 P562: but th- the basic purpose of all this is to (.) is for the membership of [org3] (.) it's entirely voluntary <3> nobody </3> is re<4>quired </4> to <un> xx </un> [org3] (1)

During the meeting of D2, P499 allocates the next turn to P560 in utterance 499. P560 then first reflects on a rather heated discussion between P499, P562 and P565. In this argument, P562 proposed that the quality assurance organizations should not refer to external reviews as *metaevaluation* since it implies a possible judgment of the national agencies (utterances 474-497). Further, the group also discussed to what degree stakeholders may be part of such external reviews. In line 501, P560 initially marks this transition with the discursive marker *there is one problem*, before summarizing the previous discussion, then concluding with the actual agreement. Only then does he shift to the new topic, again with almost the same discursive markings as before. What can be observed here is that P560 recites the predominant arguments of the preceding talk in order to then agree with the main points, enhancing the quality face of P499 (the chair) and P562 and therefore signaling solidarity. Additionally, the agreement is even further boosted through the adverb *fully*.

The third kind of strategy that exhibited the characteristics of emphasizing quality face was laughter. In Extract 7, we can see how P565 of D2 uses laughter to maintain face when he shifts the focus of the conversation to a topic that may be potentially face threatening.

Extract 7 (VOICE 2013a: POmtg546)

368 P499: do any of you wish to (.) comment on (.) these great thoughts of (.) the <4> working group one </4>

369 P565: <4><soft> @@ </soft></4> @@@ (1) good lord (.)

370 SX-10: <soft> mhm </soft> =

371 SX-m: = <soft> @@ </soft>

372 P499: but [P565] ? (.) what's the problem (.)

373 P565: <soft> @@ <@> it's too much </@></soft> (.)

374 P499: <5> it is </5> TOO much =

375 SX-f: <5><soft><un> xx </un></soft></5>

376 P565: = <soft> er yeah it's too much (.) i'm just thinking of <un> xxx</un></soft> (.) we hav- e:r (.) er (1) the problem of external review (.) doesn't seem the problem to me (.) er er er we will adopt a code of good practice

377 P564: m<1>hm </1>

378 P565: <1> in </1> which e:r external review will be <2> er </2> (.)

379 SX-m: <2><soft> hm </soft></2>

380 P565: will will be a part of it. (.) e:r on a regular base (.) which will (.) er er (.) take in practice (mean) five or six years (1) and =

381 SX-m: = <soft> hm </soft> =

382 P565: = if (.) the (rule will be five) (.) we'll probably stick to that (2) well the second part (4)

383 P499: what was the second part (1)

Initiated by a topic change, P499 has just uttered a rather long monologue (utterances 339-368) in which he explains that the member agencies of one specific organization ([org3]) are supposed to cooperate with [org7] and [org8] to set up a report reviewing the standards of quality assurance and external reviews within a specified location. Asking if his interlocutors have any thoughts regarding the aspects he just mentioned, P565, by laughing and uttering *good lord,* requests the floor. Utterance 372 indicates that utterance 369 was potentially face-threatening, thus P499 requests P565 to expand. Subsequently, P565 yet again laughs before finally transitioning to the new topic by expressing that some of the issues that P499 has just addressed may in fact not be too problematic. Since this disagreement can be regarded as a PFTA, P565 attempts to add laughter and the joking utterance *good lord* to the transition as means to save both his own quality face and that of P499. That is, an open disagreement with P499 could potentially question P499's competence of assessing how problematic a work-related issue may be. At the same time, if the other members of the group would agree with P499, P565's same competence may be in question. Despite these risks, P565 still decides that this topic is important enough to be introduced. Laughter, then, appears to be P565's preferred choice of facework strategy to mitigate this PFTA, suggesting that this "issue" is really not that crucial. Consequently, Konakahara's (2017: 328) observation that ELF speakers may exploit

laughter (and teasing) as face-saving conversational devices is also evident in the context of topic transitions. However, the following section of this analysis will show that laughter may not only display the characteristic of emphasizing quality face. That is, the data also exhibits evidence of laughter being employed in order to primarily emphasize social identity face.

5.1.4. Strategies of facework emphasizing social identity face

As there are facework strategies characterized by emphasizing quality face over social identity face, strategies emphasizing social identity face over quality face, too, can be observed in the datasets of both groups. That is, at times there seemed to be a tendency of ELF speakers utilizing facework strategies to express their "desire to acknowledge and uphold […] social identities or roles" (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 540) as they transition between topics. This was done by illocutionary acts such as giving thanks after being given the floor by the chair, as well as by apologizing or asking for permission prior to the transition. Apologizing is in fact also identified by Brown and Levinson (1987: 187) as a strategy of negative politeness. Additionally, laughter was also used to keep social identity face intact. Consider Extract 8:

Extract 8 (VOICE 2013a: POmtg542)

274 P499: <5> ve</5>ry very close to the general assembly and we just ADvertise it to the members that (1) e::r we have (.) punished ourselves to have something available FOR them but er (.) and i'm sure i mean al- everyone OF them will realize that we have er in fact been very (1) e::r hard-working if we by (.) third FOURTH june can present what is in (1) ESSENCE (.) er the fulfilment of the mandate {P20 knocks at the door and enters the room} (.) er more than e- HALF a year before the presentation yeah? (.)

275 P20: it's just <@> me </@> (.) **can i e::r borrow er [P500] for just two seconds?** =

276 P499: = well we're finishing in TWO minutes (.)

277 P20: Okay so if you erm but do you know where my office is i <6> just have to </6>

278 P500: <6> i i borrowed </6> it a little bit earlier thank you <7> YES </7><1> i'll </1><2> i'll be <@> there </@></2>

Located in the final speech event of D1, the group has just been discussing what preparations need to be made for their next meeting, when P20 interrupts the conversation. Although no video material is available, Extract 8 suggests that P20 has given some kind of signal to the group (or the chair in particular) that she would like to say something. P499 subsequently indicates that she can have the floor at the end of utterance 274, and P20 transitions to a topic that is completely unrelated to the previous talk. That is, P20 introduces the topic of P500's availability. For this reason, and despite the fact that there is hardly any marking that suggests a topic transition is about to happen, this transition can be regarded a topic digression.

Since P20 is not part of the actual working group, but a linguistic researcher gathering data for the VOICE project, her interruption can potentially be regarded as threatening her own social identity face. Additionally, a digression of topic that is not contributing to the current conversation, and therefore is in a way disturbing, can also be interpreted as threatening the social identity face of the chair as well as the group. Despite the fact that P20 only laughs a 'little' in this extract, the delicate face-sensitivity of this situation and the strategic location of her laughter bracketing the pronoun *me* suggests that her laughter functions as mitigation device intended to distance herself from the imposition that comes with digressing topic. Thus, in this case laughter reflects a strategic attempt to maintain social identity face.

Laughter is, however, not the only facework strategy that can be observed here. P20 not only lessens the impact of her transition by distancing herself but also formulates the topic as a request for permission. While the act of asking for permission introduces the topic itself here, speakers also exploited this speech act to signal the emergence of a new topic (thus acting as topic boundary), as is the case in Extract 9.

Extract 9 (VOICE 2013a: POmtg403)

795 P499: = if she could give some comments on this and especially on on this er mission statement (.) so (.) let's: (.) keep it at hold (.) and proceed to decision making which i don't think is too (.) i mean (1) NO party has untoward influence (.)<fast> that that </fast> (.) <3> a lot of interesting discussions (.) <to P505> sorry?</to P505></3>

796 P505: <3><soft> **i'm sorry may i may i add some erm erm:</soft></3> ONE remark may i a- add one remark** <fast> to the </fast> the previous mission statem- statement question (.) h- how if we don't use the: e:r the exPRESSION er that it is a mission st- <slow> mission statement

</slow> we:<un> x </un> e:r instead of it (.) we can use only the <fast> the WORD </fast> mission and the:<4> goals and objectives and and tasks </4>

797 P502: <4> hhh <coughs></4><clears throat> =

798 P505: = which is again the same as g- as [P501] mentioned it is <5> the same in the </5> case of [place20] .

799 P502: <5><clears throat></5>

800 P499: <soft> hm </soft>

In utterance 796, P505 interrupts the chair's attempt to change the topic from discussing the document's section of *mission statements* to its section of *decision making*. P505, however, intends to address an earlier topic related to mission statements in more detail before the change is happening, thus transitioning to a topic concerned with how the group may label the section they now refer to as mission statements. As was the case in Extract 8, the speaker seems to non-verbally indicate that he would like to take the floor of the actual conversation. It is not unlikely that because P499 was already in the phase of changing the topic, P505 decided to save P499's social identity face by mitigating the interruption through apologizing and asking for permission (utterance 796). In this case, however, P505 does not wait for approval of the permission but merely exploits this speech act to signal that he means to maintain his role, as well as the chair's, within the group. Surely, quality face may also be at stake here since P505 might not want to be thought of as rude. Nonetheless, him asking for permission combined with a preceding apology seems to stress the speaker's considerations concerning upholding P499's role of deciding when topics may be changed and when not, as it is the case in meetings (see Chapter 3). Further, starting his utterance with an apology also suggests that P505 regards his interruption and subsequent topic shift as potentially rapport-threatening. As Spencer-Oatey (2000: 18) herself points out, apologies may indicate that "some kind of offence or violation of social norms has taken place." Apologies were usually exploited as face-saving strategies within topic transitions by speakers who were just given the floor by the chair. Thus, there is considerable evidence in the two datasets that the speech acts of asking for permission and apologizing primarily serve to maintain the chair's social identity face.

Moreover, yet another strategy primarily concerned with sustaining the chair's social identity face was apparent in the data. That is, and as Extract 10 will show, after the chair had allocated interlocutors the floor to speak, they frequently gave thanks before moving to a new topic.

Extract 10 (VOICE 2013a: Pomtg546)

241 P499: [P563] ? (.)

242 P563: **thank you**. (.) i wanted to reflect on what (.) [P503] suggested a l- a little bit hh well i'm er a little bit sceptical when looking at the other parts of the world we should remember that eur- europe is unique (.) europe has declared that (.) hh diversity should (.) continue existing that europe WANTS mobility that the: members er er citizens have rights and so on hh and THIS is why we we have actually developed v:ery far hh e:r the: the: recognition procedures and they are (.) they TEND to be positive (.) hh e:r (.) i'm afraid we will not find that much mo- (.) from this e:r [org4] global framework er er hh er (.) <smacks lips> er glo- global forum for recognition an- and quality assurance hh […]

243 SS: <2><soft> @@@@@@@@@@@@@@ </soft></2>

244 P563: it's <3> your </3> problem

245 SX-f: <3><soft> hm </soft></3>

The strategy of giving thanks, as illustrated in Extract 10, is a classic case of what Locher and Watts (2005) would label politic behavior. It is a conventionalized form of behavior that is responsive to receiving the allocation of the next turn by the chair. The absence of this form may be considered rude and thus as threatening the chair's social identity face. Therefore, it can be seen as interpersonal behavior aiding the success of P563's topic shift. In utterance 241, P499 assigns the next turn to P562, who shifts the current topic of *reducing costs* to the issue of *international relations*. By thanking P499 for having received the next turn, and thus the chance to initiate a topic transition, he enhances P499's social identity face by honoring his power as a chair to do so. Further, this kind of facework strategy seems to be a conventionalized behavior of D2 in particular, since no instances of giving thanks as instrument of topic transition was apparent in D1. This means that giving thanks could potentially be a TIG specific strategy of D2, which will be discussed in more detail in section 5.3.2.

In conclusion, it has been shown that the data displays traces of at least three different facework strategies targeting social identity face (of the chair, in particular) as topic was moved. In this section, as well as the previous ones, I have also made the case for various facework strategies that were utilized by ELF speakers to ensure a smooth transition from one topic to the next. That is, it appears crucial for ELF speakers to adequately address the face-needs of

themselves and other speakers in topic transitioning sequences, as the risk of potential face threat may render the transition unsuccessful. From a purely etic approach, it can be hypothesized that by potentially threatening face in a moment of topic transition, speakers may run into risk of the group preferring to respond to the face-threat rather than the intended topic, or that the topic may just not be discursively taken up by the other participants at all. However, so far it has only been discussed what kind of illocutionary facework strategies have been utilized by the speakers as they transitioned between topics without reflecting the strategies impact on the actual management of topic (i.e. the discursive domain of rapport management) or procedural aspects (i.e. the participation domain of rapport management). For this reason, the following section of this analysis will investigate the former of these two domains.

5.2. Analysis of facework within the discourse domain of topic transitions

In her model of rapport-management, Spencer-Oatey (2000: 19) reinforces the claim that facework is not merely something that epitomizes strategies within the illocutionary domain of interaction, but a phenomenon which reflects an interplay of a broad range of strategies within various rapport-relevant domains of speech. Besides illocutionary strategies, another level in which rapport manifests itself is referred to as the discourse domain. This domain "concerns the discourse content and discourse structure of an interchange" (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 19) and thus includes "issues such as topic choice and topic management" (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 19). Thus, the following part of the analysis will shift the focus from identifying single illocutionary strategies indicative of facework towards consideration to how these strategies may interact with the management of topic. In regards to research question *II*, two aspects of topic management shall be reflected on in the light of facework. The first aspect is based on the premise that topic is discursively created and agreed upon in interaction (see Chapter 3), and can therefore only be successfully transitioned to when face is maintained (unless, of course, the topic is intentionally designed to threaten face). Consequently, it shall be analyzed how the ELF speakers of the datasets managed face in order to discursively confirm or deny topic in interaction (section 5.2.1.). Secondly, the relationship between individual topic transition types and certain characteristics of facework (as identified in section 5.1.) will be examined in section 5.2.2.

5.2.1. Facework as instrument of discursive topic management

As has been pointed out in Chapter 2, the academic discussion of politeness and interpersonal communication does not regard facework as a mere accumulation of illocutionary speech acts or linguistic forms that can be defined a priori to an analysis of speech. The data of this study, too, suggests that facework was not only used by speakers to mitigate potential face threat, but displayed additional qualities in the negotiation of discourse. In fact, there is evidence that facework was strategically employed to manage and negotiate topic on a level beyond single utterances functioning as topic transitions. Specifically, the ELF speakers of the datasets displayed three tendencies of how facework was involved in topic management. These tendencies were the involvement of facework in topic termination, the display of facework in the interactional denial of proposed transitions, and facework functioning as a means to resume a topic after a topic digression has potentially threatened face (as previously mentioned in section 5.1.3.) As these three tendencies will be discussed in turn, Extract 11 illustrates how ELF speakers utilized facework to terminate topic before actually moving on to the next topic.

Extract 11 (VOICE 2013a: Pomtg404)

867 SX-m: = <soft> mhm </soft>

868 P499: <smacks lips> hh (<u>well</u>) is <u>**i think**</u> this is er **this is a very Interesting discussion** and er **i mean we** have had our discussions with you from the [org1] perspective **i think** it's this opening up in in i- in in the <1> sense </1> of our er various er affiliations <soft> er **this is er is was very good** </soft> (1)

869 SX-4: <1> mhm </1>

870 P499: <u>but</u> i still (.) unless (.) part of this **we can probably** REopen as the discussion as **we** go into <2> the </2> [name1] follow-up <u>so</u> <u>**let's**</u> <u>proCEED</u> **i <6> guess** </6> then (.)

871 P560: <2> hm </2>

872 SX-6: <6> hm </6>

873 P499: is now <loud> yes?</loud> the oldest network from ninety-<3>two the [org10]- small but old e:r [P503] </3> (.)

Extract 11 is taken from the first speech event of group D2. After speaker P560 has presented his organization to the group, various topics linked to his presentation were being

discussed. The topic directly preceding Extract 11 revolved around the question of how various aspects of higher education may be recognized internationally. In utterance 870, one can see P499 taking the floor, terminating the current topic, and then carrying out a topic change. This change is marked by the chair's introduction of the next agenda item, which is the presentation of [org10] by P503. Additionally, as indicated by the underlined elements of the extract, P499's topic change is heavily marked by conjunctions (*but*), attention markers (*well, I think*) and topic orientation markers (*let's proceed*).

In previous examples of chapter 5.1., I have already touched upon the observation that facework may be involved in the termination of a topic. According to Stenström's (1994: 152) model, topic terminations can be regarded as individual elements of topic management, separate from transition types. This is due to them being involved in "closing the old topic before introducing a new one or before closing the entire conversation" (Stenström: 1994: 152). Further, Stenström (1994: 152-153) also points out that such topic terminations are only infrequently lexically or non-lexically marked. Although the methodology of this study regards terminations to be part of their subsequent transitions, a more discursive point of view reveals that, at times, topic terminations seem to be given stronger considerations of facework than the transitions attached to them.

As is the case in Extract 11, the chair seems to make more rapport-related effort to close the current topic than he does with introducing the new topic. First, in utterance 868 P499 emphasizes the quality face of the participants by praising the value of the current discussion twice (i.e. *i think this is er a very Interesting discussion*, and *this is er is was very good*). Simultaneously, in order to save his own quality face (i.e. his competence of observing whether something was good) P499 additionally distances himself from these statements through discourse markers (*i think*, *i mean)* and the use of inclusive *we*. In utterance 870, he then proceeds to strongly distance himself from the PFTA imposed by topic termination, as he reassures the group (inclusive *we*) that they can *probably* (hedge) come back to this issue at a later point. This distancing effect perseveres throughout the actual topic transition as P499 once again uses an inclusive *we* (in this case: *let's*) followed by a hedging discourse marker (*i guess*). Consequently, although topic terminations may not be lexically marked, the data displays considerable evidence that face-enhancing and face-saving qualities of rapport-management seems to be especially characteristic of topic terminations. However, it must also be pointed out that in the datasets under analysis the termination of topic seemed to be a privilege mainly reserved for the chair P499.

At other times, the data presented instances in which speakers failed in transitioning to another topic. That is, the group, and the chair in particular (which again reflects dynamics of power), did not take up the topic presented by another participant, but denied the new topic discursively. As illustrated in Extract 12, this denial does not necessarily happen by simply not responding to the transition proposed, but by carefully employing facework in order to sidestep the undesired topic.

Extract 12 (VOICE 2013a: Pomtg539)

300 P505: <4> (may) </4> i have another point e:r

301 P499: **well** <5> i (**would**) </5> **suppose we**’re going through it page by page so (.)

302 P505: <5> tha- that </5>

303 P505: <9> that's okay </9> that’s just a general re<6>mark </6>

304 P499: <9><soft> that’s wha- </soft></9>

305 P499: <6> yah </6> okay

306 P505: that er we should take into account that there are several NEW criteria (.) included in in the[org2] membership hh

307 P499: yes =

308 P505: = cri<7>teria. and </7> and <1> those ARE </1> (.)

309 P499: <7><soft> yes yeah </soft></7>

310 P501: <1> mhm </1>

311 P505: or have not been <2> in a </2> (.)

312 P499: <2> no </2>

313 P499: exactly

314 P505: deTAILED here. (1)

315 P499: so (.) **i’ll ask [P502] to make (.) a special effort in** =

316 P501: = yes @ <3> @ </3>

317 P499: <3> **seeing** </3> **to** it that we (.) integrate these items (2) during the discussions (.) but BASICALLY **[P505] we** i mean (2) those (.) new criteria we’ll have to put INTO the same format.<4> so </4>

318 P505: <4> yah </4> that’s (so) (.) that’s i agree with <5> you </5>

319 P499: <5> i </5> regret that it was a rather (.) late reflection on my part it is a reflection (last) . (.) so (.) **there hasn’t been the time** and **[P502] has been (1) e:r on a well-deserved er leave** er so er **we** didn’t have the time

to get to go into (.) the necessary follow-up which is <6> to take </6> the other criteria and put them into the same format. (1)

320 SX-4: <6><soft> mhm </soft></6>

321 P499: so that's one of the reasons why (1) before we break for lunch in twenty minutes i (.) **i'll suggest that we try to identify another meeting** in in may because we <soft> **we we </soft> we do have some further stuff**

322 P505: <soft> mhm </soft>

In utterance 300, speaker P505 of D1 attempts to take the floor in order to transition to a new topic in a similar manner he did in Extract 9. Here, however, his failure to fully establish a new topic is caused by P499's opposite attempt to avoid any intensification of the proposed new topic. Assuming that such an endeavor is potentially face-threatening to P505, it is not surprising that one can find P499 displaying a considerable amount of facework over a stretch of a few utterances (i.e. utterances 301-319). Further, although most instances of failed attempts to transition topic did not happen over a stretch of discourse comparable to this extract, this example illustrates how facework may be applied discursively in order to soften the impact of denying a speaker's topic. Instead of going on-record and communicating that this new topic is not desired by the chair, P499 first indicates that the topic structure is predefined by the paper the group is currently examining. He does this through hedging (*I suppose*) his utterance and generalizing it (*we're going through it page by page*). P505, however, does not (want to) catch up to this indirect way of topic being turned down, and reinforces his transition, also hedging and generalizing it in utterance 303 (*just a general re<6>mark</6>*). This, in turn, leads P499 to give in (which may also be considered a face-saving strategy) and let P505 raise the issue. In utterances 317-321, one can see, however, that P499 only seemingly accepts this transition as he attempts to terminate the new topic right after it was introduced. This is done by reassuring P505 that P502 will look into the matter, followed by an utterance of apologetic nature indicating that this topic need not be discussed due to a lack of time, and due to P502 having been on a *well-deserved* (booster intensifying relevance of claim) leave. By superficially acknowledging P505's topic transition, followed by an immediate topic termination, P499 has saved both his and P505's quality face and social identity face. In fact, P499's attempt to reassure P505 that his topic is not indefinitely terminated - but rather adjourned to a later time - can also be regarded as an orientation towards rapport maintenance. In this case, P499 has expressed a considerable degree of solidarity and cooperation in order to save P505's face. This example thus implies that the ELF speakers of the datasets seem to express solidarity, mutual

support and cooperation through facework to guarantee successful topic management and therefore smooth communication.

In light of this, Extracts 11 and 12 demonstrate that the ELF speakers of D1 and D2 were likely to show concern to rapport and face in the negotiation of topic. In other words, the termination of topic and the discursive denial of topic displayed strong features of face-sensitivity. Moreover, the interlocutors also showed a tendency for exploiting rapport-enhancing strategies in order to maintain or resume a topic, which has been abandoned for topics that were predominantly face-oriented. To illustrate, it is worthwhile to consider Extract 13, in which P499 digresses from the current topic in order to tease P501:

Extract 13(VOICE 2013a: Pomtg542)

90 P501: <7> but (1) but </7> the (1) the experts the the the r- the review panel? (1) e:r

91 P505: hm

92 P501: hasn’t worked (.) and i- it’s not agency it’s not government it’s not [org1] (.) e:r (.) can be take into account in the: (1) <2> in </2> this (1)

93 P499: <2> the </2>

94 P501: it could be something which <3> is </3>

95 P499: <3> hh</3>h **yes you you are good at complicating things** <4> (but) e::r </4>

96 P501: <4> @@@@ </4><5><@> SORRY :</@> @@ </5><6> @ <@> so-so- i’m sorry </@></6><7> @@ </7> (.)

97 P505: <4> @@@@ </4><5> @@@@ </5><soft><6> @@@@@ </6><7> @@ </7></soft>

98 P499: <6> e::r </6>

99 P499: **no but you’re quite right i mean (.) it it’s a wonderful illustration** er of the (1) the tendency to see things from your own <8> e::r </8> national er agency perspective because in DENMARK of course (1)

In utterance 95, P499 digresses from the current topic by introducing a new topic addressing P501’s ability to complicate things. Naturally, by assigning a negatively connoted skill to his peer, P499 potentially threatens P501’s quality face and thus also renders her previous contribution to the discussion potentially invalid. P501 responds to this PFTA through laughter and an apology. This reaction reflects Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick’s (2014: 283-284)

finding that speakers may employ laughter (as P501 and P505 do) and agreement (indicated by the apology) to preserve their faces after PFTAs have occurred. However, utterance 99 reveals the teasing nature of P499's topic digression, as he resumes the previous topic by adding considerable emphasis on reestablishing P501's quality face. He does this by agreeing with her, demonstrating that her previous account was indeed valid and meaningful. Subsequently, P501's face is then further reinforced by praising her *wonderful illustration* of the previous topic. Through this restoration of face, P499 was able to resume the previous topic without the potential danger of having damaged his interpersonal relationship with P501. The restoration of face after potentially face-threatening utterances can thus be regarded as discursive strategy of facework serving to resume (and maintain) topic.[17]

In this section, I have made the case for ELF speakers discursively employing strategies of facework as they negotiate topic. While the examples given are by no means exhaustive of how facework influences topic management, it has been shown that the termination of topic, the face-sensitive denial of topic transitions, and the restoration of face as a means to resume topic may reflect discursive strategies of facework. In fact, the discussion of Extract 13 highlights a potential correlation between topic resumption and the restoration of face. This suggests that there may be a more profound relationship between strategies of facework and individual topic transition types. This matter shall be discussed in the following section.

5.2.2. The relationship between facework and topic transition types

Given the fact that, to my knowledge, no model of topic management regards facework as indicative of topic type similar to topic boundary markers, the vast appearance of rapport-sensitive strategies within topic transition justifies the question of whether or not facework itself may be a marker of types of topic transitions. Research question *II* reflects this interest by inquiring whether patterns of corresponding types of topic transitions and facework strategies are observable within the two ELF datasets. Therefore, this section of the analysis shall investigate and discuss a possible relationship between transition types and facework.

Acknowledging that facework is not a set of a priori defined strategies but depends on the discursive context, it seems more appropriate to firstly consider how single transition types may relate to the more general characteristics of facework I have proposed earlier. With this in

[17] In fact, an investigation in how ELF speakers may utilize facework to maintain a topic after the transition has occurred holds potential for further studies of facework as instruments of topic management.

mind, Figure 3 exhibits the composition of the topic transition types proposed in 3.2. and the four characteristics of facework I have introduced in chapter 5.1.[18] As can be seen, the two most prominent characteristics of any kind of transition type in both datasets are the exploitation of linguistic form as mitigating strategies, and facework strategies that either distance or intensify the relevance of topic to the interlocutors. The combination of these two clusters of facework constitute more than 50 percent of high frequency transitions (i.e. topic changes, shifts and drifts), as well as low frequency transitions (i.e. topic digressions and resumptions).[19] All types of topic transitions further displayed occurrences of facework strategies that emphasize quality face. Strategies emphasizing social identity face, on the other hand, were not apparent in topic drifts and topic digressions, and in merely a single instance of topic change.[20]

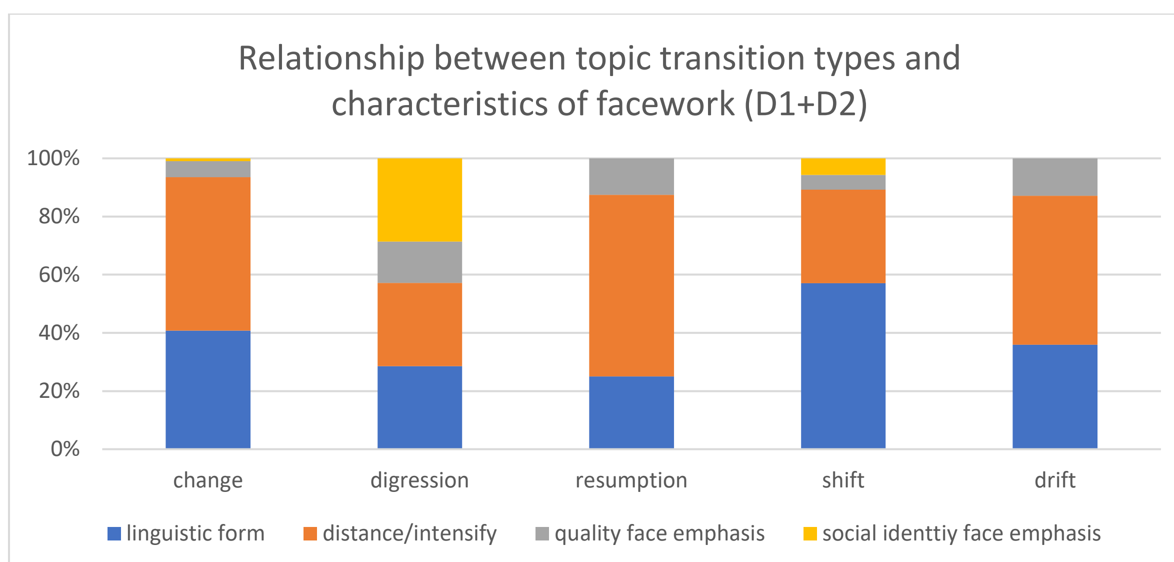

Figure 3: The relationship between topic transition types and characteristics of facework (D1+D2)

The reason that topic digressions, compared to other transition types, seem to display a higher percentage of facework strategies emphasizing social identity face may be owed to their low frequency. That is, only eleven out of 357 transitions were identified as topic digressions, and only one out of these eleven topic digressions displayed an emphasis on social identity face. However, remembering the analysis of this cluster of facework strategies in section 5.1.4, it may be assumed that topic shifts are more likely to display this kind of facework characteristic when compared to topic drifts and changes. This assumption appears even more relevant if we

[18] See the beginning of this chapter for a table providing the absolute numbers of topic type occurrences.
[19] I regard high frequency transitions as transition types making up more than ten percent of all transitions identified in the data. Consequently, low frequency transitions refers to transitions that constitute less than ten percent of all transitions identified in the data.
[20] See the beginning of this chapter for a table providing the absolute numbers of topic type occurances.

consider aspects of power within the speaker groups. That is, since participants who are not the chair have predominantly carried out topic shifts[21], and since these shifts may interrupt the topic flow controlled by the chair, special attendance to his social identity face may indeed be warranted. In contrast, topic changes were mainly carried out by the chair[22] and therefore required less attention to social identity face.

Regarding individual facework strategies, when changing topic speakers exploited every illocutionary strategy discussed in section 5.1. besides giving thanks. Discourse markers, hedges, modal verbs as well as boosters could be observed to mitigate PFTAs, whereas the strategy of giving compliments was the only apparent form of facework emphasizing quality face in topic changes. Regarding topic drifts, the participants never seemed to distance themselves from the imposition of the transition by avoiding pronouns altogether, and never exploited facework strategies emphasizing social identity face. Both topic digressions and topic resumptions showed no evidence of discourse markers, modals or boosters as hedging devices. Both these types also intensified the relevance of topic merely by directly addressing speakers, and distanced participants only through generalizations. Additionally, while laughter and asking for permission was evident within topic digressions, topic resumptions' sole face-emphasizing strategy was agreeing.

Whether any generalizations about these relationships can be made is, however, doubtful. This is due facework generally emerging as reaction to the needs of interpersonal relationships between the participants and thus the interaction's interactional context. As the analysis has shown, all four characteristics of facework are evident in topic transitions and thus paramount in the negotiation of topic. However, the data also seems to suggests that facework within topic transitions is oriented towards the content of topic rather than towards the mechanics of topic transition (i.e. transition types) themselves. This in fact reflects Konakahara's (2017: 338) observation that ELF interactants are "socially and interactionally competent in adjusting the use of conversational devices appropriately to emergent communicative needs of face negotiation in the unfolding interactions." In other words, ELF speakers seem to be highly competent in assessing the interpersonal value of topic content in the discursive context of speech and are able to adjust their facework strategies according to the required face-needs. Thus, despite the fact that facework does not seem to mark topic transitions as such, it appears to be a crucial factor for successfully transitioning topics in ELF.

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[21] More specifically, the less powerful group of speakers carried out 60 percent of all topic shifts in the entire dataset.

[22] The P499 carried out 74 percent of all topic changes in the data.

5.3. Analysis of facework within the participation domain of topic transitions

The third domain of Spencer-Oatey's (2000: 20) rapport management model that shall be part of this analysis is that of the participation domain, which is predominantly concerned with elements of communication such as the involvement of participants. Yet although Spencer-Oatey (2000: 20) sees the essence of this domain in "procedural aspects of an interchange," such as turn-taking, she also acknowledges that this includes the rights and obligations involved in turn-taking (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 20). As has been the case in previous data samples, in order to carry out a successful topic transition speakers indeed seemed to depend on the allocation and/or confirmation of the next turn by the chair. This is in line with Svennevig (2012a: 6) pointing out that "in formal meetings [...] the chair will be responsible for allocating turns, but also for monitoring them and sanctioning departures from norms of turn length, topical relevance, etc." As a consequence, such an asymmetric power hierarchy within a communicative group may or may not influence the choice and quality of facework between the interlocutors. For this reason, this study will extend Spencer-Oatey's (2000) participation domain by considering the relationship between facework and power. Moreover, being tied to these considerations about power, the hypothesis that group dynamics may also influence the choice and quality of facework tendencies, seems to be a reasonable one to make. This section of the analysis will therefore also compare the speech events of D1 and D2 from a power and a micro-diachronic perspective.

5.3.1. Aspects of power in facework

Aspects of power in facework may provide strong support for Spencer-Oatey's (2000) claim that her model's domains are of an interrelated nature. That is, throughout the analysis I have commented in almost perpetual manner on how power can be regarded a factor explaining why ELF speakers do what they do. For instance, the case has been made that within the illocutionary domain, hedging devices, the usage of inclusive *we*, and the strategy of generalization can function as means to mitigate power (see sections 5.1.1. and 5.1.2). As for the discursive domain, I have argued that the termination and the denial of topic are both more likely to be privileges held by the chair and thus the most powerful interlocutor in terms of speaking and discourse organization rights in the data. In fact, these observations are in line with Bülow's (2009: 146) assessment that "conversational power play includes introducing, accepting or

rejecting topics." Furthermore, the data also reveals that the chair was the only participant who would digress from the topic at hand in order to tease another member of the group, and that topics need to be sanctioned by the chair to be discussed in depth (see section 5.2.1).

The power imbalance between P499 and the rest of both groups is reflected in the quantity of topic transitions identified in the data. In both D1 and D2, the chair carried out over 50 percent of all transitions (54 percent in D1, 52 percent in D2). More specifically, in terms of disjunctive topic transitions, 74 percent of topic changes, 73 percent of topic digressions and 83 percent of all topic resumptions can be assigned to P499. These high percentages reflect Svennevig's (2012a: 7) observation that in workplace meeting it is the role of the chair to introduce "items on the agenda and managing the transitions between them." In terms of stepwise transitions, the chair counts 64 percent of all topic drifts and 40 percent of all topic shifts. This adds relevance to the argumentation that topic shifts seem to be the main instruments of topic transitions of more powerless speakers since they work within certain topical boundaries predetermined by the chair.

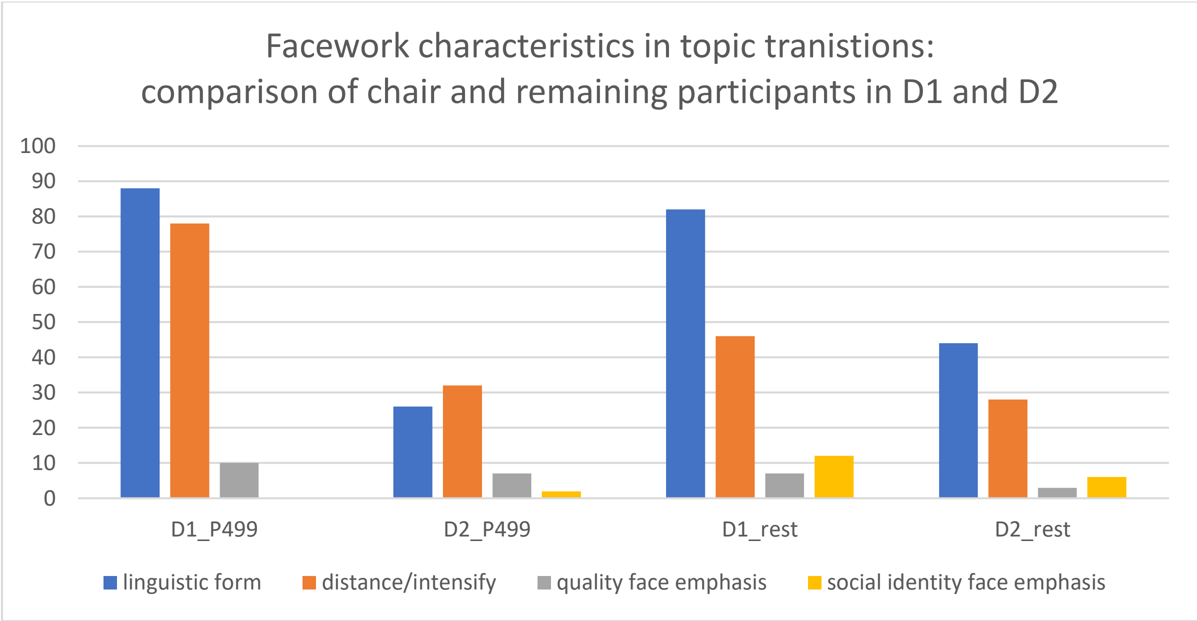

Figure 4: Comparison of facework characteristics in topic transitions between the chair and the remaining participants in D1 and D2

Figure 4 displays the composition of facework characteristics found within all types of topic transitions for both P499 and the combined rest of D1 and D2 participants. The figure shows that all four facework characteristics could be identified in both speaker groups, although in varying intensity. While the regular meeting participants of both groups show a tendency towards using linguistic forms as hedging devices more frequently, P499 seems to have focused

his facework strategies more on distancing and intensifying the relevance of topic for the participants. P499 also appears to have put a higher emphasis on enhancing/saving quality face (e.g. by being the speaker who predominantly gives praise or compliments other interlocutors), while the rest of the participants seemed to be more concerned with emphasizing social identity face. This difference in face preference reflects a number of earlier discussions. In terms of power, Svennevig (2012a: 5) indicates that the role of the chair is usually to be “a facilitator on behalf of the group.” For this reason, it seems reasonable that the chair would perpetually attempt to mitigate power and soften impositions through the highlighting of speakers’ personal abilities, and thus their quality face. On the other hand, and as already discussed, it also appears feasible to assume that regular participants would be more considerate to applying strategies emphasizing social identity face (that of the chair, in particular) in order to gain their right to move topic.

In regard to specific facework strategies, no striking pattern reflecting the relationship of power and strategy was observable except for the fact that P499 was the only participant who never asked for permission while transitioning from one topic to the next. This, however, is in line with the previous argumentation that the chair is not so much dependent on the sustenance and enhancement of social identity face in order to transition topics. In conclusion, it has been shown that although the chair may hold the theoretical power to transition between topics with only little consideration of the interpersonal relationships of the context, the face-needs of other participants and the group as a whole will prevent him from doing just that. Instead, considering that “effective team communication cannot only be task-oriented, but must also be relationship-oriented” (Komori-Glatz 2017: 88), the chair needs to employ rapport-enhancing strategies in order to successfully establish topics. As the data shows, P499 seems to predominantly exploit linguistic forms meant to hedge speech, facework that distances and intensifies the relevance of the topic to the interlocutors, and facework emphasizing quality face.

Having discussed power relevant issues of facework in topic transitions, it is also noteworthy to point out that the analysis suggests potential qualitative differences between D1 and D2 in terms of facework strategies that were applied. The following section will thus deal with research question *IV* and investigate aspects of group dynamics, including micro-diachronic aspects of the participation domain.

5.3.2. Aspects of group dynamics and time in facework: D1 and D2 as Transient International Groups (Pitzl 2018)

The previous section has shown that both groups D1 and D2 displayed a very similar distribution of facework characteristics between chair and the regular participants. Similarly, both groups showed the same facework characteristic and similar strategies, which suggests that both groups are part of the same community of practice. That is, both groups consist of ELF speakers of varying native languages working in the professional organizational domain in general, and in the domain of European higher academic quality assurance organizations in particular. Further, the argument that these groups are part of a community of practice is also highlighted by the fact that they share the same chair and are thus both subject to one overarching organization. However, in Chapter 4, I have also briefly outlined Pitzl's (2018) recent criticism of treating any group of ELF speakers solely as community of practice. That is, Pitzl's (2018) concept of Transient International Groups (TIGs) suggests that instead of assigning heterogenous groups of ELF speakers to the same overarching label of community of practice, it may be beneficial to examine the dynamics of single homogenous groups for what they are in isolation. In relation to this study, although this analysis has thus far primarily regarded both groups as a combined entity and thus as a community of practice, this section will break with this tradition and regard both D1 and D2 as independent TIGs. This not only enables the analysis to examine possible differences in facework qualities between TIG_D1 and TIG_D2, but also enables us to investigate the question of whether ELF speakers accommodate their facework strategies over time (see Chapter 1). Furthermore, it is also within the bounds of TIGs that one may able to apply Locher and Watts (2005) model of relational talk, and thus identify potential instances of linguistic politeness.

Figure 5 reveals a comparison of how facework is comprised in topic transitions between TIG_D1 and TIG_d2, indicating that their distribution of facework characteristics is largely identical. From a qualitative point of view, this is also the case for a majority of the illocutionary facework strategies that were identified in section 5.1. In both TIGs, the chair never asked for permission and never apologized. Further, with the exception of one single instance, it was solely the chair who exploited giving compliments or praise as strategy of facework as he transitioned from one topic to the next (as discussed in section 5.3.1.). However, there was one subtle difference apparent in the two datasets. That is, speakers of TIG_D1 never seemed to exploit giving thanks as facework strategy, although they frequently employed other strategies characteristic of emphasizing quality face (such as agreeing or laughter).

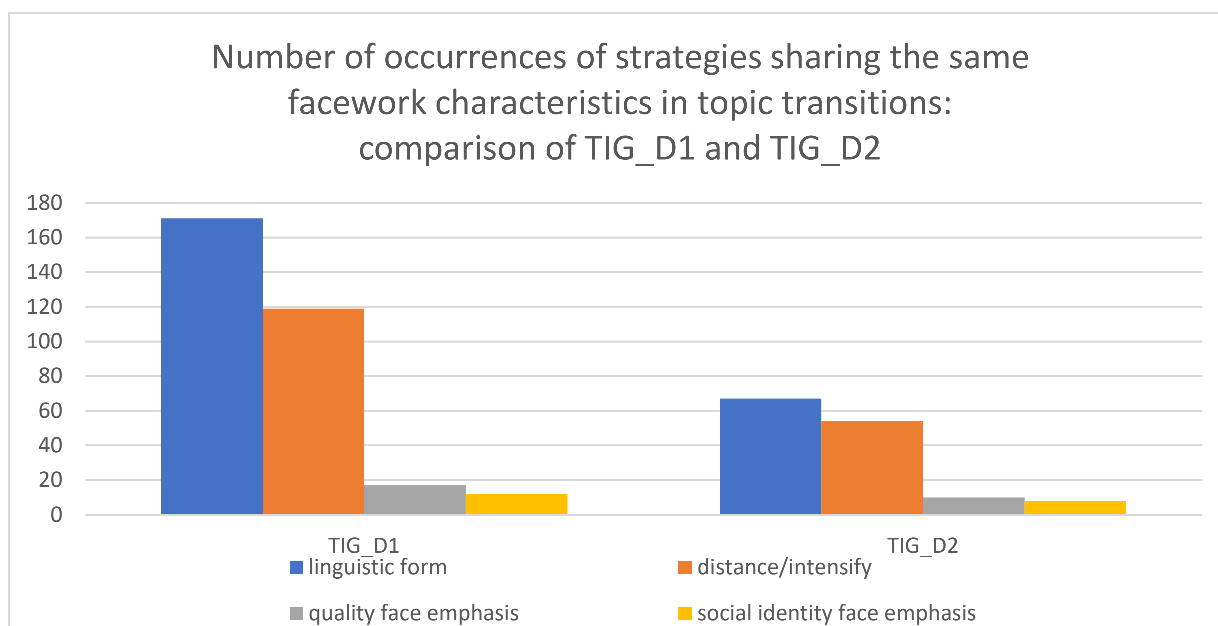

Figure 5: Number of occurrences of strategies sharing the same facework characteristics in topic transitions: comparison of TIG_D1 and TIG_D2

Such an anomaly may in fact be one of the rare indicators – if not the sole indicator – that could potentially allow for a discussion of linguistic politeness in the datasets. According to Locher and Watts' (2005: 12) model of relational work, polite talk reflects behavior that is positively marked and therefore goes beyond mere politic behavior (see Chapter 2). This means that within the context of a group any linguistic behavior that goes beyond what is expected may be evaluated as a potential instance of politeness. This is where Pitzl's (2018) concept of TIGs may be especially relevant for discussing linguistic politeness within the datasets of this study. That is, by focusing on the transient nature of a group of speakers, it may be possible to make assumptions about what strategies are part of the politic behavior within a TIG. Anomalies detectable within the usage of facework strategies, i.e. strategies that digress from general tendencies and thus from the politic behavior of the TIG, may be regarded as positively marked and therefore polite behavior.

Such anomalies in facework strategies were observable a few times within the data. For instance, in both datasets there was only one single instance of the facework strategy "complimenting" carried out by a participant other than the chair. Further, in both TIG_D1 and TIG_D2, there was only one single person[23] apologizing as he/she carried out the topic transition. There was also only one person in TIG_D2 who applied laughter as a strategy of facework. Due to these strategies deviating from the general tendency observable in their

[23] That is, one single person per TIG, meaning two distinct speakers.

respective dataset, they may be regarded as instances of linguistic politeness. However, and as has been pointed out in Chapter 2, such a methodology of identifying polite behavior still operates on the premise of a purely etic analysis, fully substituting the potential evaluation of the speakers themselves with purely hypothetical considerations about politeness on part of the researcher. Although these anomalies may be indicative of politeness within single TIGs, the etic character of such an approach does not allow to make any claims that are not deeply rooted in hypothetical speculation. Nonetheless, if future studies would integrate an additional emic dimension to this approach (for example by means of interviewing the conversational participants), the concept of TIGs may indeed hold potential for advancing Locher and Watts' (2005) model of relational work in and beyond ELF.

Besides a discussion about linguistic politeness, the analysis of two separate TIGs rather than one CoP may hold yet another advantage for the analysis of the participation domain. That is, it allows for the researcher to take a micro-diachronic perspective on the matter, which is relevant for questions concerning the phenomenon of accommodation theory, often regarded as important element of ELF communication (Deterding 2013: 16). As discussed in Chapter 1, accommodation theory refers to speakers coverging "their speech patterns to resemble those of their interlocutors" and thus describes the act of "[a]dapting one's speech or altering it for certain communicative purposes" (Cogo 2009: 254). Research has suggested that the communicative purposes leading to this phenomenon seem to be especially significant in the context of ELF, one of them being that ELF speakers, specifically in a professional context, often "need to gain another's approval in order to better fulfill the purpose of the interaction" (Seidlhofer 2009a: 210). This approval, it is argued, may be gained through accommodating speech. For this reason, the last part of this analysis will take a micro-diachronic view on the data of both TIGs and investigate whether there is evidence of speakers accommodating their facework strategies as they transition to new topics in the course of their interaction.

Figure 6 and Figure 7 illustrate such a micro-diachronic view of both TIGs, displaying the frequency of facework strategies that are part of the clusters defined in section 5.1. over intervals of 15 minutes. What is striking here is the rather abrupt decline of facework previously to, during, and right after the lunch break of TIG_D1. This decrease may indicate that speakers tend to require less facework to transition topic in communicative situations that are interactional rather than transactional in nature. This decline in facework is, however, not observable in TIG_D2, which suggests that the speakers of this group are either less acquainted or exhibit a higher degree of power imbalance, therefore requiring the preservation of a higher frequency of facework. The facework characteristic cluster of using linguistic form to mitigate

PFTAs (indicated by the blue lines in both figures) seems to be more frequent in the beginning than at the end in both TIGs. This means that the speakers of both groups show a slight tendency towards reducing the frequency of hedging devices over time. On the other hand, strategies characteristic for distancing or intensifying the relevance of topic to participants (orange) seem to have occurred rather consistently over time. That is, neither group TIG_D1 nor TIG_D2 displayed any significant alterations in this type of facework usage except for a decline during the lunch breaks. Such a continuity is also evident for strategies characteristic of emphasizing either quality face (grey) or social identity face (yellow).

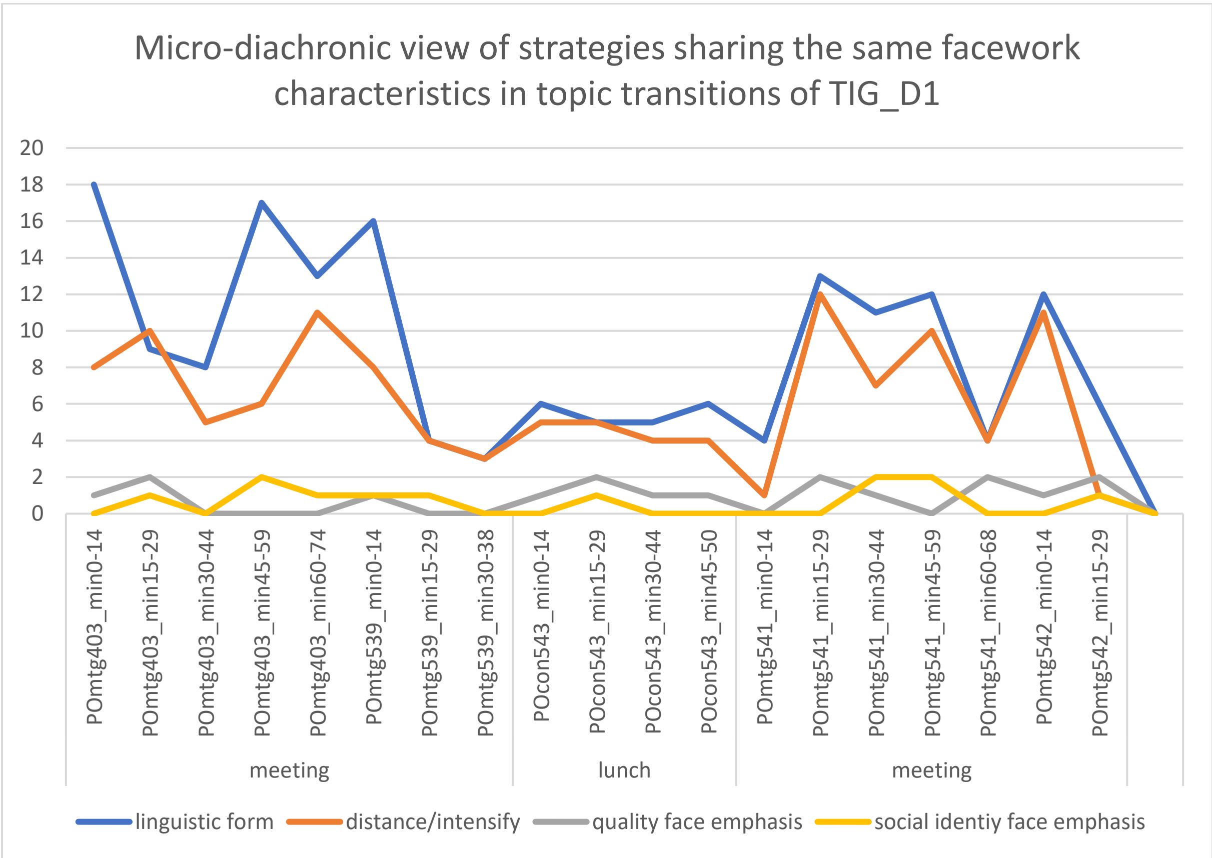

Figure 6: Micro-diachronic view of strategies sharing the same facework characteristics topic transitions of TIG_D1

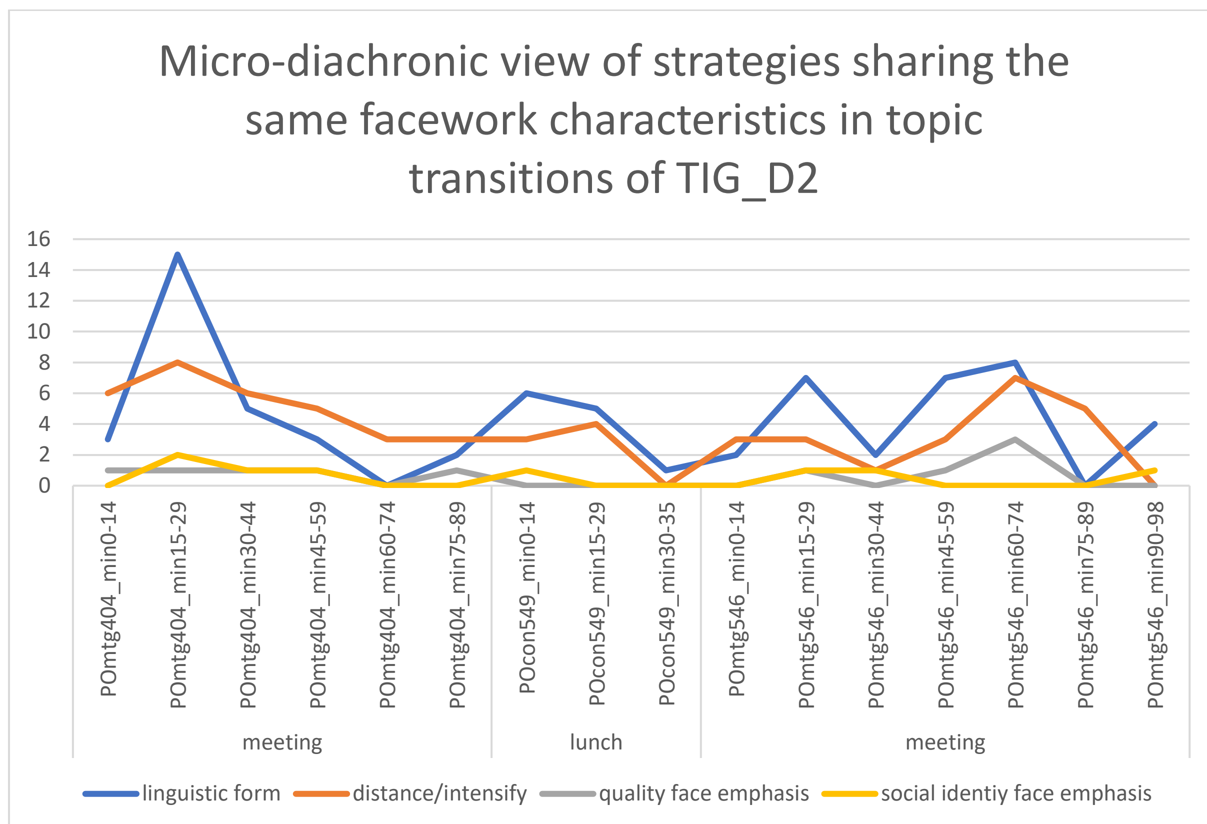

Figure 7: Micro-diachronic view of strategies sharing the same facework characteristics in topic transitions of TIG_D2

Accommodation of individual facework strategies was also not apparent in the data. As for the strategies exploiting linguistic form as resources to mitigate face threat, Figures 8 and 9 show that discourse markers, modal verbs, hedges and boosters all exhibited a general consistency in appliance over time and no tendency towards higher frequency in the beginning or the end of either dataset. The individual strategies associated with the cluster of participant orientation largely do not show a pattern of any kind either, although the strategy of generalizing appears to slightly decrease throughout TIG_D1. [24] In TIG_D2, on the other hand, this strategy exhibits the opposite effect, namely a slight rise towards the end of the day. The same level of micro-diachronic consistency is also observable for individual strategies primarily emphasizing quality face and social identity face.

[24] Due to the similar micro-diachronic tendencies regarding the occurrences of individual facework strategies (as identified in section 5.1) I refrain from providing further visual representations similar to Figures 8 and 9 in the main body of this paper. However, all figures illustrating a micro-diachronic perspective of individual facework strategies can be found in Appendix A1.

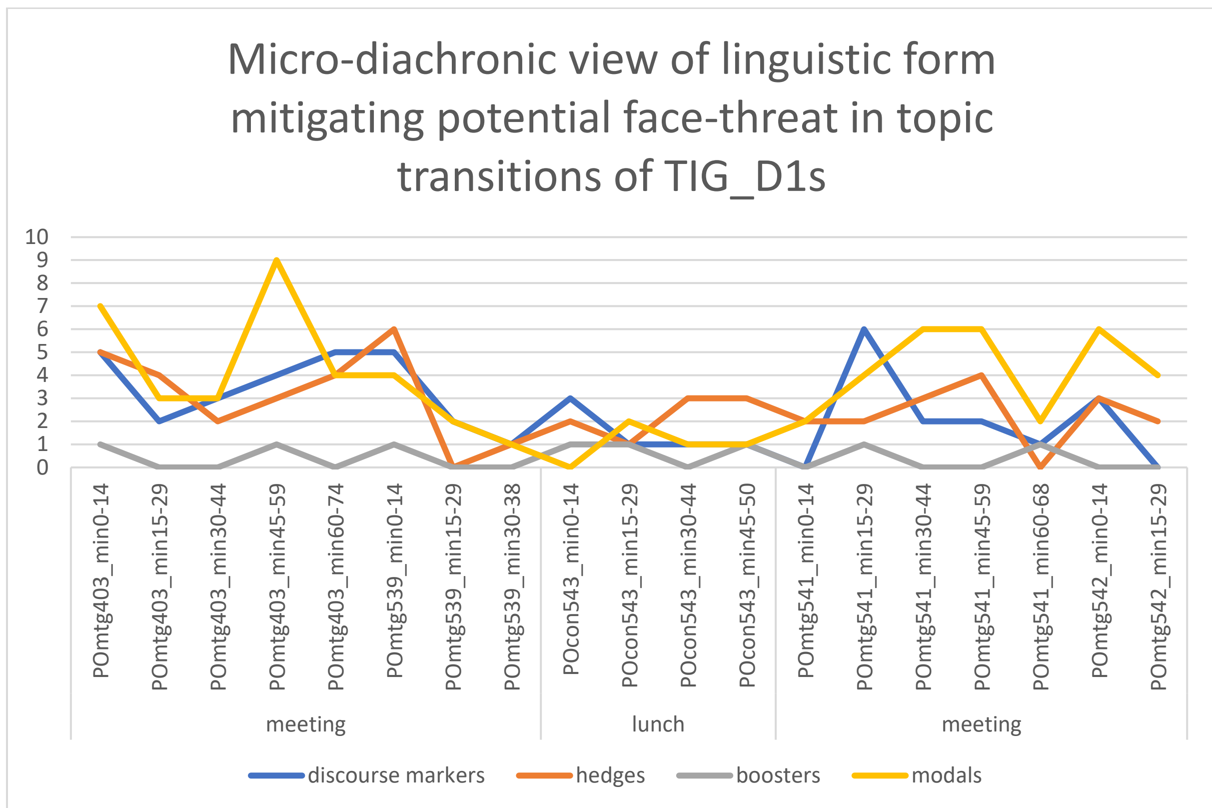

Figure 8: Micro-diachronic view of linguistic forms that mitigating potential face threat in topic transitions of TIG_D1

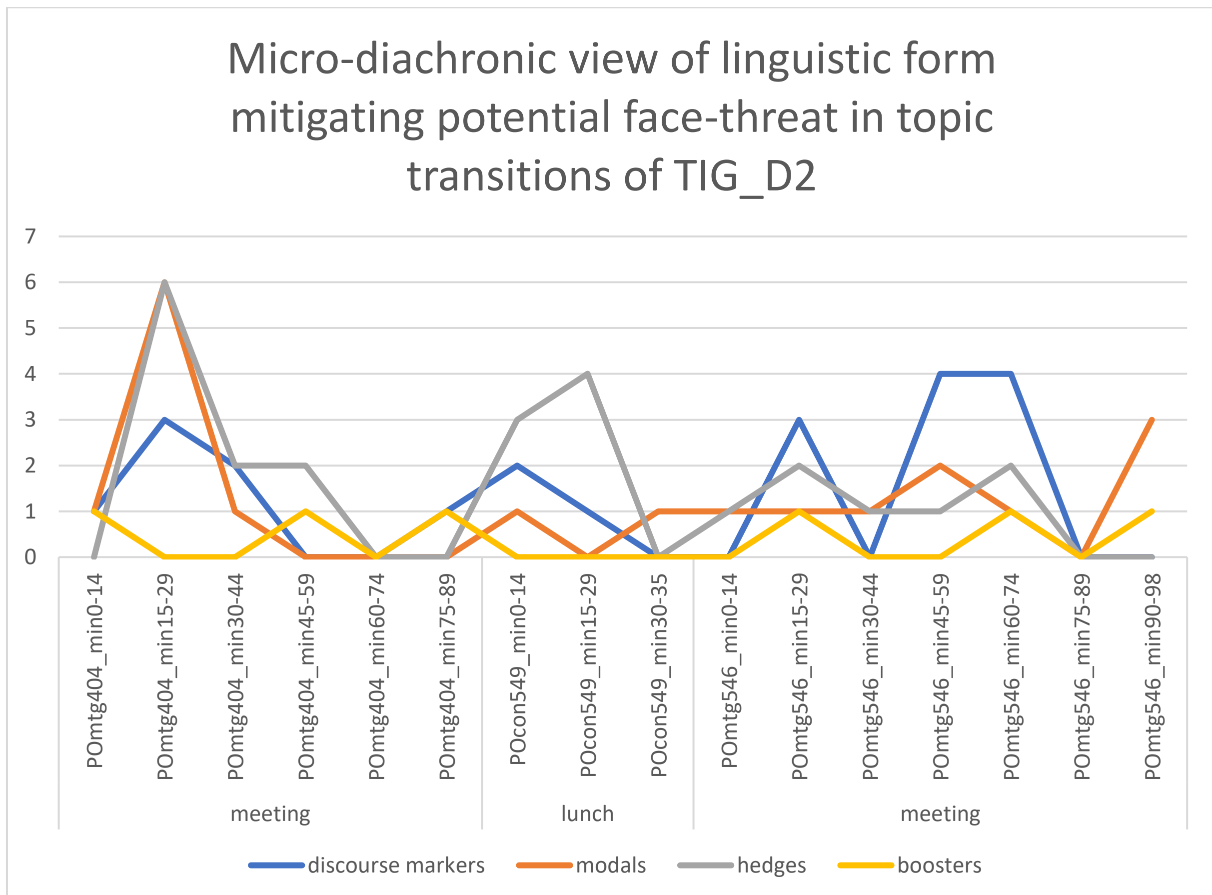

Figure 9: Micro-diachronic view of linguistic forms that mitigating potential face threat in topic transitions of TIG_D2

In conclusion, the micro-diachronic analysis did not reveal signs of accommodation for facework strategies utilized in topic transitions. Although there were slight alterations, these were by no means consistent and frequent enough to suggest that the ELF speakers of this dataset altered their speech in a conjunctive manner. In fact, the preference of one facework strategy over another in the management of topic seemed to be more dependent on the discursive context of the interaction than on the communicative purpose of introducing a new topic. As I have pointed out earlier, the data suggests that facework and its intensity seems to correlate more with the potential face-threat of the topic content and the existing interpersonal and power relations between the interlocutors. Moreover, the quantity of strategies needed to observe a qualitative change over time was compromised by the sheer variety of different strategies that were identified in this study. Although I attempted to group certain strategies together in clusters based on shared characteristics within the interaction, accommodation among ELF speakers of this dataset was not discernible. Furthermore, considering that "[s]peakers accommodate to each other to compensate for the lack of common ground by adjusting their speech" (Mauranen 2018: 13), and considering that both TIG_D1 and TIG_D2 seem to be task groups in which all members are - too varying degrees – acquainted, it is possible that accommodation might have taken place in the groups long before the speech events of VOICE was recorded. Although the groups seem to meet on an infrequent basis, and although the constellation of the groups varies and is thus temporary in nature, these groups may in fact be not transient enough to fully fit into Pitzl's (2018) concept of TIGs.

These insights, however, offer implications for further micro-diachronic research. In order to truly see whether ELF speakers accommodate their facework strategies as they transition to new topics, a TIG's speech data would have to be available from the first day its speakers meet and interact with each other. Further, a stronger focus on the actual discursive topic content may enable the researcher to link facework strategies to different 'discursive types' of topic content within the group. With these parameters, it may then be possible to discern accommodation of facework strategies in topic transitions by ELF speakers.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between linguistic politeness, facework and topic management within an English as a Lingua Franca environment. The discussion of linguistic politeness has outlined the theoretical as well as methodological issues tied to this phenomenon. Specifically, it has been shown that, in the course of four decades, scholars have yet to find a general consensus on how linguistic politeness may be conceptualized. This has subsequently led this paper's discussion to the exploration of face within theories of interpersonal communication, which have presented themselves to be more etic in nature and also more frequently applied in ELF research. Moreover, a reflection on the academic discussion concerned with the subjects of discourse topic and topic management has further provided theoretical, terminological, and methodological insights necessary for the identification of topic transitions in the data.

The analysis of over eight hours of spoken and transcribed corpus data from VOICE suggested a number of insights into the nature of pragmatics within a professional ELF context. It has been shown that ELF speakers exploited a variety of different facework strategies as they transitioned from one topic to the next. These strategies, and facework on a whole, have proved to be paramount factors involved in the successful introduction of new or related topics as they mitigate potential face threat, which could possibly compromise interlocutors' agreement on the topic. Further, the analysis also made the case that facework in topic transitions carried at least four qualitative characteristics manifested by a number of single strategies. Based on these tendencies, strategies could be grouped together into four clusters of characteristics, reflecting the use of linguistic form to mitigate PFTAs, the act of distancing or intensifying the relevance of a topic to participants, and strategies showing a tendency to specifically emphasize either quality face or social identity face over the other.

Besides the identification of illocutionary strategies involved in facework within topic transitions, an analysis of the discursive domain of rapport-management has provided yet further insights into the matter at hand. In particular, the data presented evidence that ELF speakers exploited strategies of facework as they managed topic on a broader level. That is, the interlocutors instrumentalized facework for the termination of topic preceding the transition, the denial of intended transition, as well as for the restoration of a previously abandoned topic. Moreover, the relationship between facework strategies and transition types did not suggest any particular patterns.

The final part of the analysis highlighted the participation domain of Spencer-Oatey's (2000) rapport-management model and investigated the possible impact of elements such as power, group dynamics, and time on facework as instruments of topic management. The results of this analysis indicated that power seems to deeply influence certain aspects of facework, such as the preference for strategies characteristic of emphasizing quality face or social identity face. In terms of group dynamics, there has been evidence for TIG_D1 and TIG_D2 having different needs for facework strategies, which in turn enabled a limited amount of discussion on linguistic politeness through Locher and Watts' (2005) model of relational talk. Furthermore, understanding both groups as independent TIGs, a communality concept proposed by Pitzl's (2018), has also permitted to inquire about micro-diachronic changes of facework strategies over time. A tendency of ELF speakers accommodating facework strategies within topic transitions, however, could not be observed.

In conclusion, the broad spectrum of qualitatively different strategies of facework indicated that ELF speakers display a strong orientation towards maintaining or enhancing rapport within topic transitions. It has also shown that facework does not merely play an important role in topic transitions in isolation, but also in the termination of an old topic or instances of transition denial. Consequently, a concern for interpersonal relations in the achievement of communicative goals was thus observable among the ELF speakers of these two datasets. Tying in to previous research, this concern reflects ELF speaker's tendency to "use a variety of pragmatic strategies for purposes of communicative effectiveness" (Björkman 2011: 960), and thus Seidlhofer's (2001: 143) original assessment of ELF talk highlighting cooperation, consensus, and mutual support in communication. In other words, acknowledging that the management of topic is a crucial yet basic element of communication, facework in an ELF context appears to be an efficient means to ensure the success thereof. On a more general level, these insights confirm that previous assessments of facework playing a vital role in the management of rapport (Komori-Glatz 2017), the maintenance of comity (Pullin 2013) and the smoothing of communication as a whole (Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick 2014), holds true for the discursive context of topic transitions as well.

Additionally, this study has also given reason to assume that the choice of facework (strategy) correlates with topic content and its interpersonal relevance within a group context rather than with the mechanics of topic management itself. This content-dependency, too, seems to be congruent with ELF research's postulation that "ELF communication is heavily content-oriented" (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011). The ELF speakers of this study appeared to be highly competent in assessing the relationships between appropriate facework strategy (or orientation)

and the content of the topic they wish to introduce. Since the assessment of this relationship is highly dependent on an evaluation of interpersonal relations within the ELF context – such as matters of power, social identity or group membership – ELF speakers furthermore seem to be highly flexible and skilled in how they exploit pragmatic resources of English to meet their interactional and transactional goals. This, in turn, reflects yet another characteristic that has been attested to ELF, namely its communicative success despite – or because of - its "inherent variability" (House 2013: 59).

Finally, the results of this study highlighted a number of potential research topics that have yet to be explored in further detail in ELF. These include specifics in topic boundaries, the management of topics as a whole, the management of rapport beyond the illocutionary domain, and the exploration of how speakers may exploit facework in order to maintain topic. Similarly, the subject of this paper itself offers potential for further qualitative and quantitative exploration. Altogether, however, this thesis has taken a first step towards the investigation of the intersection where linguistic politeness, facework, and topic transitions in ELF meet.

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Appendix A

Appendix A1: Micro-diachronic view of single facework strategies

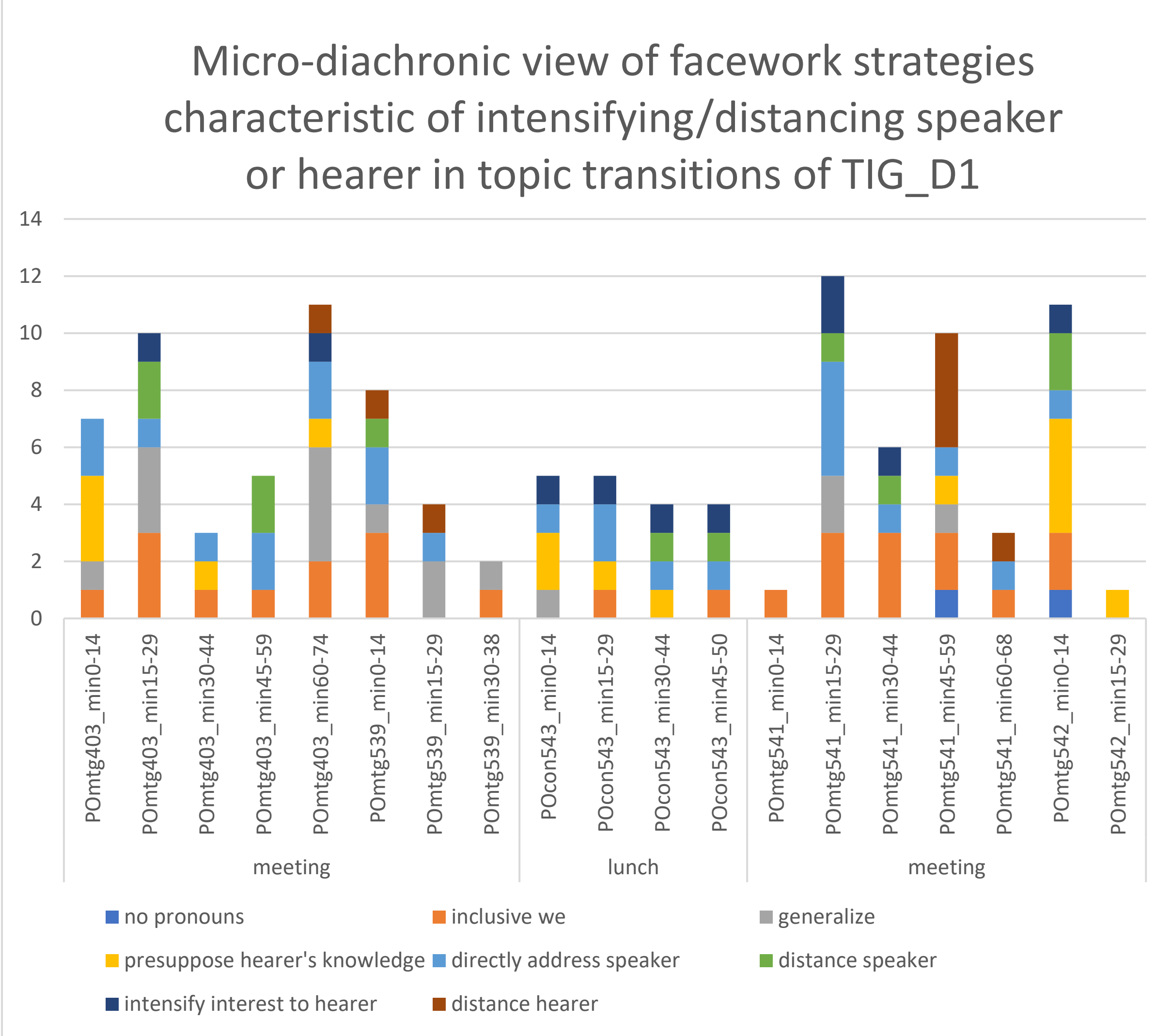

Figure 10: Micro-diachronic view of facework strategies characteristic of intensifying/distancing speaker or hearer in topic transitions of TIG_D1

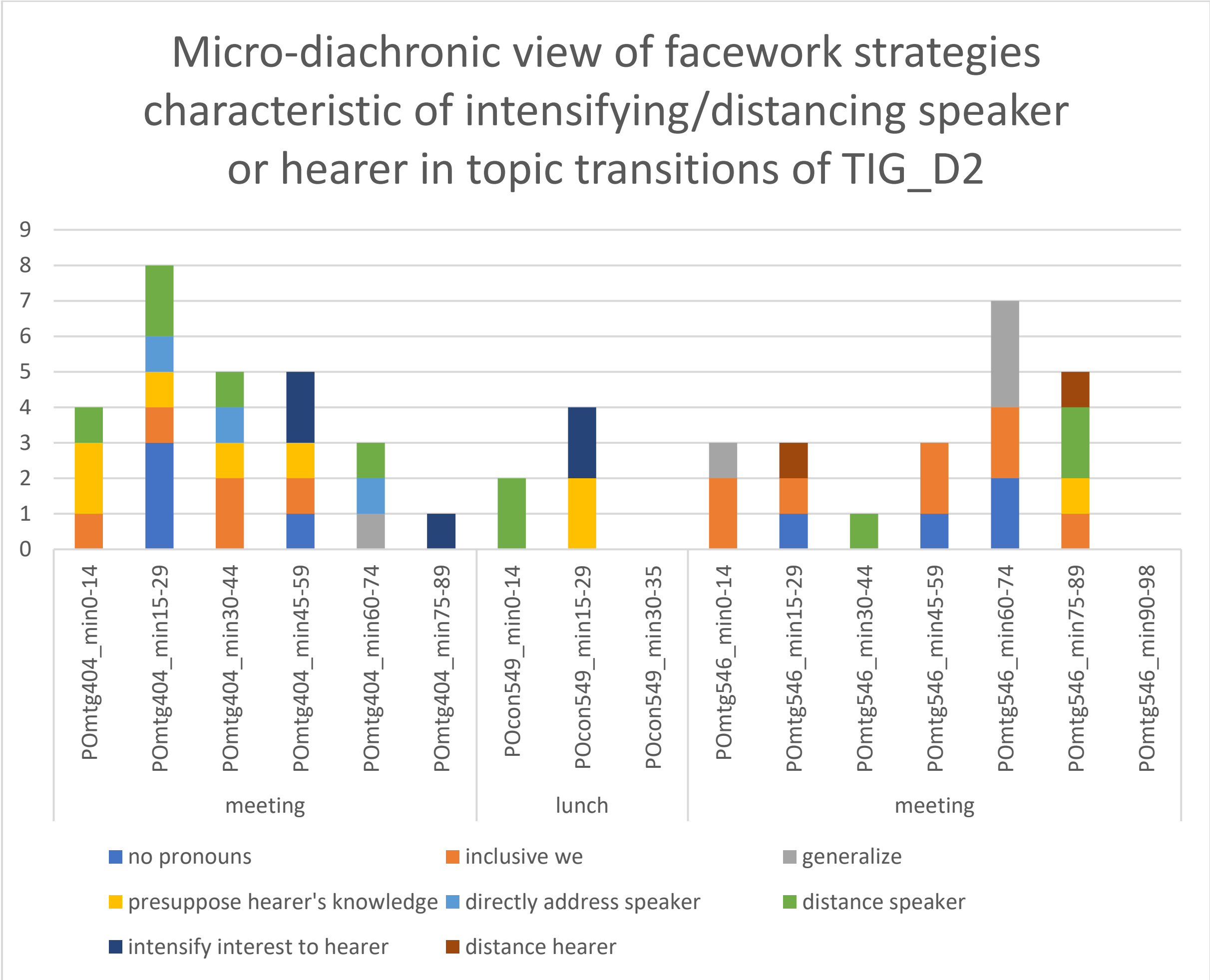

Figure 11: Micro-diachronic view of facework strategies characteristic of intensifying/distancing speaker or hearer in topic transitions of TIG_D2

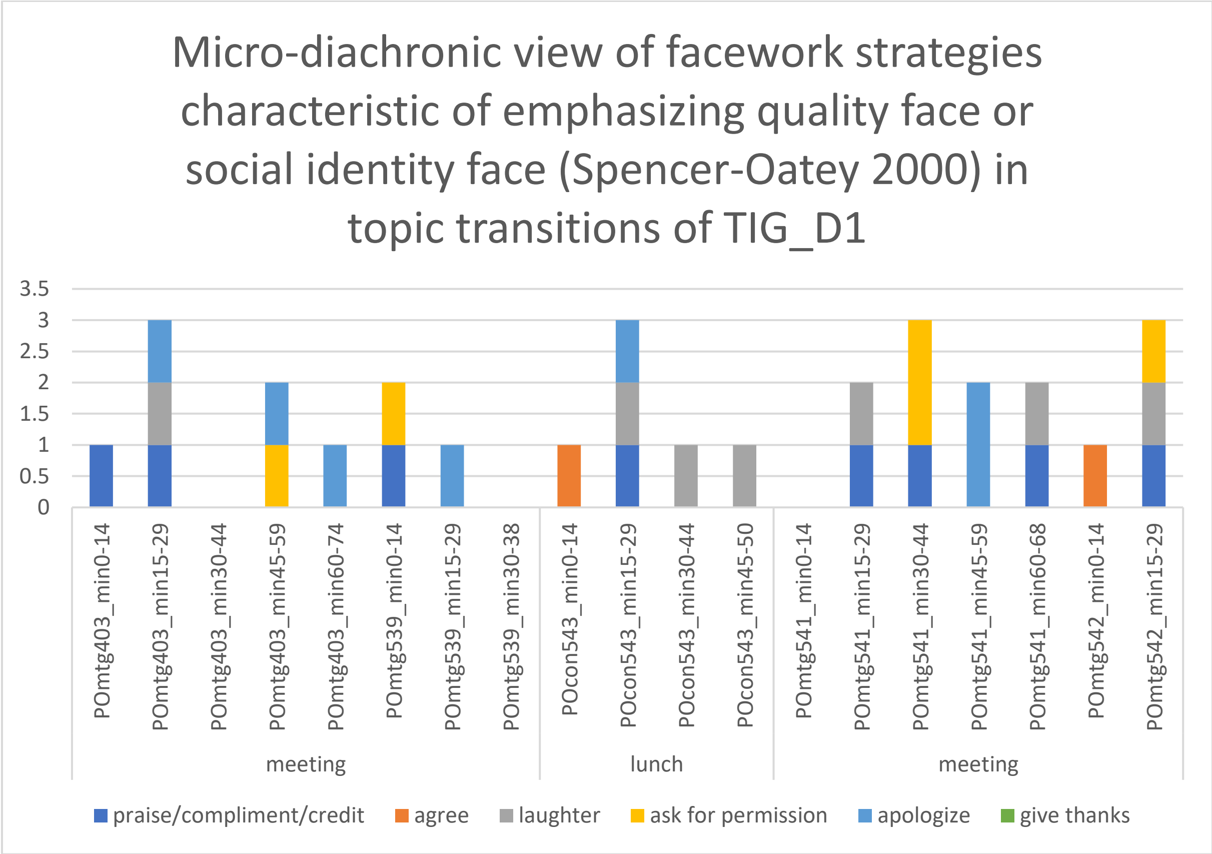

Figure 12: Micro-diachronic view of facework strategies characteristic of emphasizing quality face or social identity face (Spencer-Oatey 2000) in topic transitions of TIG_D1

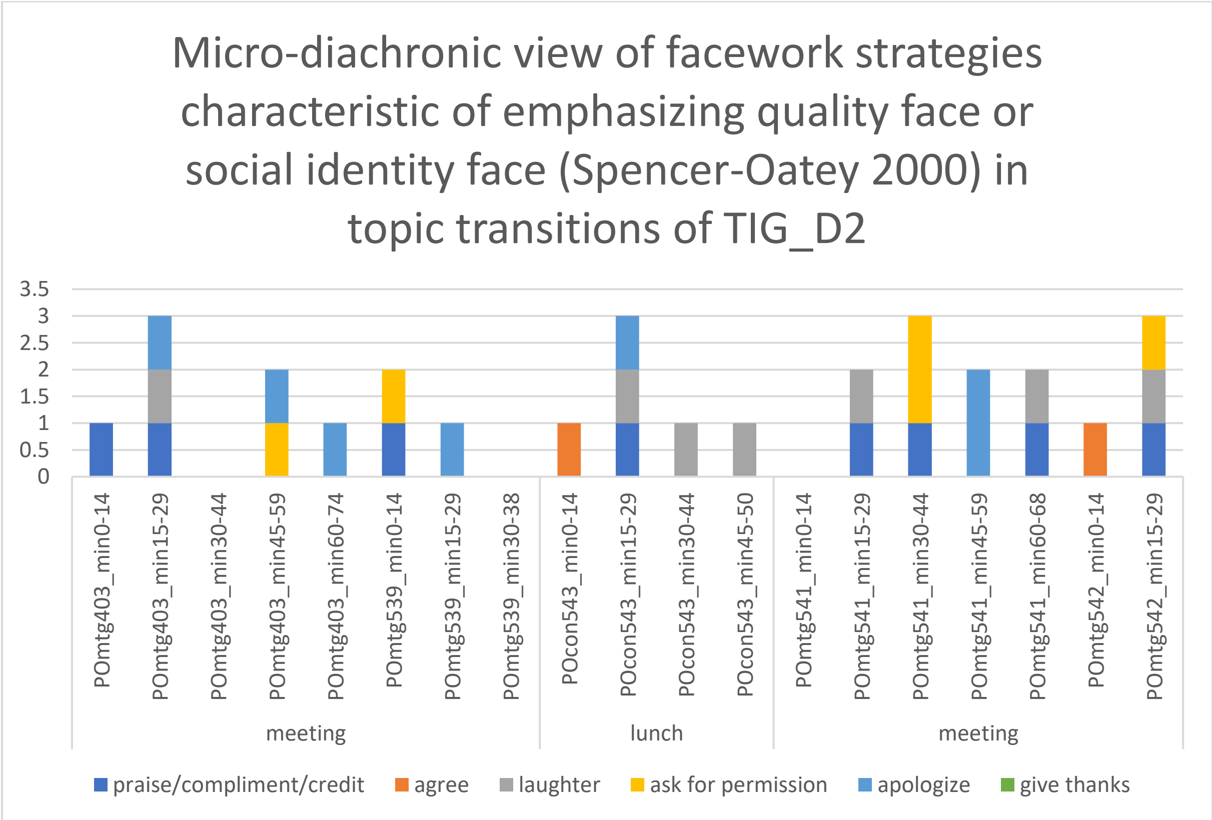

Figure 13: Micro-diachronic view of facework strategies characteristic of emphasizing quality face or social identity face (Spencer-Oatey 2000) in topic transitions of TIG_D2

Appendix A2: List of topic boundary markers identified in the data

Appendix A2.1. Attention markers (following Fraser 2009)

actually, ah, basically, good, I think, I mean, oh, okay, so, sorry, well, yah, yeah, yes, you know

Appendix A2.2. Discourse structure and topic orientation markers (following Fraser 2009)

as I said, by the way, I have (a remark / a proposal), I want (to come back to / to reflect on), in terms of, let's (get to, go on to, move on to), look at, my comment is, my next question, now (back to), on we go, the other thing is, then the next item, this leads me to, to continue, to give detail, we resume, we move on, (just a / that raises a / now comes the / one more) question

Appendix A3: List of linguistic form utilized as facework strategies identified in the data

Appendix A3.1. Modals

could, would, should, might, may

Appendix A3.2. Boosters

extremely, fully, great, high, highly, impressive, strongly, very

Appendix A3.3. Hedges

approximately, in a way, fairly, just, little, maybe, more or less, not fully against, perhaps, not necessarily, rather, really, sometimes, sort of, tag questions, *usually, very*

Appendix A3.4. Discourse markers

I guess, I mean, I think, yeah, yes

Appendix B

Appendix B1: Abstract

This diploma thesis explores the intersection of topic management, linguistic politeness and interpersonal communication in an English as a lingua franca (ELF) context. More precisely, the object of this case study is an investigation of how ELF speakers exploit pragmatic strategies of linguistic politeness and facework as they transition from one topic to the next within spoken communication.

The case study of this thesis is preceded by a reflection of the present and past academic discussion of linguistic politeness, including a juxtaposition of Brown and Levinson's (1987) (in)famous model of politeness with more recent discursive approaches (e.g. Eelen 2000; Watts 2003; Locher & Watts 2005) thereof. The seemingly emic nature of current conceptualizations of linguistic politeness leads the discussion to the more etic approach of interpersonal communication and the related terms of face (Goffman 1967) and rapport-management (Spencer-Oatey 2000), which have been more frequently applied in ELF studies. Further, this thesis also provides a theoretical discussion of topic transitions in spoken communication in order to define an adequate typology, as well as methodology, to identify such transitions within the data. The circumstance that discourse topic sometimes appears to be treated as an afterthought within ELF research extends this theoretical discussion by considerations of how previous ELF studies on topic may influence such "native speaker" models of topic management.

Drawing on an analysis of ELF corpus data, the findings provide evidence of ELF speakers creatively exploiting facework strategies characteristic of mitigating face-threat, intensifying or distancing the relevancy of new topics to interlocutors, and emphasizing other participants' quality faces or social identity faces (terms by Spencer-Oatey 2000) as they transition between topics. The analysis also discovers a tendency of ELF speakers to exploit facework on higher levels of topic management and the choice of facework strategy to be dependent on topic content rather than topic type. The data further reveals that aspects of power and group membership may influence the quality of facework strategies involved in topic transitions, while a micro-diachronic analysis of the data does not suggest that the ELF speakers of the datasets accommodate their facework strategies in topic transitions to each other over time. On a more general note, this thesis contributes to previous insights that ELF communication carries a deeply interpersonal note as it promotes the case for interpersonal

concerns (such as face and politeness) to be paramount factors in the management of topic among ELF speakers.

Appendix B2: German Abstract (Zusammenfassung in Deutscher Sprache)

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem sprachlichen Zusammenspiel von Topikmanagement (topic management), linguistischer Höflichkeit (linguistic politeness) und facework in einem English als Lingua Franca (English as a lingua franca – ELF) Kontext. Im Detail wird untersucht, wie Sprecher/innen von ELF pragmatischen Strategien von linguistic politeness und facework verwenden, um erfolgreich von einer Topik zur nächsten zu transferieren.

Bei dem theoretischen Teil dieser Arbeit handelt es sich zunächst um eine Diskussion der aktuellen und vergangenen akademischen Beiträge zum Thema der linguistic politeness in Form einer Gegenüberstellung von Brown und Levinsons (1987) sowohl berühmten als auch berüchtigten Modell der linguistischen Höflichkeit mit jüngeren und gleichzeitig weitaus diskursiveren Ansätzen (z.B. Eelen 2000; Watts 2003; Locher & Watts 2005) dieser Thematik. Da diese neueren Konzeptualisierungen von linguistic politeness einen durchaus emischen Charakter aufweisen, erweitert sich die Diskussion dieses Themas um das etischere Konzept der interpersonellen Kommunikation, welches oft mit den Begriffen Gesicht (face) (Goffman 1967) und rapport-management (Spencer-Oatey 2000) in Verbindung gebracht wird, und auf welches sich auch häufiger in der ELF Forschung bezogen wurde. Des Weiteren behandelt die theoretische Diskussion auch die Thematik der Topikübergänge (topic transitions) in mündlicher Sprache, um eine geeignete Methodik und Typologie für die spätere Analyse zu definieren. Da ELF Publikationen teils den Eindruck machen Topik nur als Art Nebengedanken zu behandeln, wird der theoretische Diskurs dieser These durch die möglichen Einflüsse von ELF Forschung auf solche „native speaker" Modelle erweitert.

Die Ergebnisse dieser ELF Korpusstudie zeigen, dass ELF Gesprächsteilnehmer/innen Faceworkstrategien kreativ nutzen, während sie von einer Topik zur nächsten transferieren. Die Analyse demonstriert, dass das Abschwächen von sogenannten face-threats (also einen potentiellen Angriff auf das Gesicht einer Person), das Intensivieren bzw. Distanzieren von Topikrelevanz zu einem/einer oder mehreren Sprecher/innen, und das Hervorheben von quality face oder social identity face (beides Begriffe nach Spencer-Oatey 2000), charakteristisch für solche Strategien sind. Weiters gibt es auch eine Tendenz von ELF Sprecher/innen, solche Strategien auf höheren Ebenen von Topikübergänge anzuwenden, bzw. scheint die Auswahl und das Ausmaß der Faceworkstrategien eher von der neuen Topik als von Transitiontypus abhängig zu sein. Darüber hinaus deutet die Analyse der Daten auch darauf hin, dass gegebene Macht- und Gruppenkonstellationen ebenfalls Einfluss auf die Qualität der Faceworkstrategien nehmen, während eine Assimilation der interpersonelle Strategien in Topikübergänge von

Sprecher/innen durch eine diachrone Analyse nicht bestätigt werden konnten. Die Resultate dieser Studie weisen daher auf eine vitale Beziehung zwischen Faceworkstrategien, linguistischer Höflichkeit und Topikübergängen hin.