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Conceptualising 'the Relational' in Pragmatics:
Insights from Metapragmatic Emotion and (Im)Politeness Comments

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Abstract

Over the past few years, there has been an increased focus on 'the relational' in pragmatics. However, different pragmatics scholars (e.g. Holmes and Marra 2004; Locher and Watts 2005; Arundale 2006; Spencer-Oatey 2000/2008) take different approaches to 'the relational' and use different terms when analysing interpersonal relations. As a result, there is considerable conceptual and terminological confusion. There are also a number of controversial issues, one of which is how interpersonal relations can best be studied from a pragmatic perspective. Most people agree that it is essential to hear the voice of the participants, yet there is less agreement as to how best to achieve that. I argue in this paper that one fruitful way is to examine the emotions and (im)politeness judgements that people recount in metapragmatic comments. I report a study of workplace project partnerships that illustrates the insights that such an approach can offer. The insights are of both theoretical and applied relevance, which is important because the effective management of diverse teams is widely recognised as particularly challenging. I contend that pragmatics research into interpersonal relations should be able to identify and illuminate such challenges for project participants, and I provide empirical evidence that an exclusive focus on discourse data is too limited for this.

Keywords
Interpersonal relations
Relational work
Rapport management
Emotions
Project partnerships

1. **Introduction**

Over the past few years, there has been an increased focus on 'the relational' in pragmatics. For example, three of the five articles in the first volume of the *Journal of Politeness Research* (Locher and Watts 2005; Spencer-Oatey 2005; Holmes and Schnurr 2005) focused on relational concerns, and Culpeper et al. (2010: 599) comment that "they all have in common a central focus on interpersonal relations, rather than, as with traditional models of politeness, a central focus on the individual performing 'politeness', which is then correlated with interpersonal relations as variables." Recent articles in the *Journal of Pragmatics* (e.g. Arundale 2010, Chang and Haugh 2011) have also explored a relational perspective, and Enfield (2009: 60) has called for a greater focus on relationships in pragmatics research, arguing that since relationships are a "primary locus of social organization", they should "constitute a key focus for pragmatics".

However, different pragmatics scholars focus on different elements when analysing interpersonal relations and they use similar but not identical terminology. As a result, it is confusing to know exactly what the different terms refer to and whether, and to what extent, they overlap or differ. For example, Holmes and Marra (2004) and Homes and Schnurr (2005) refer to 'relational practice';

Locher (2010), Locher and Watts (2005) and Watts (2008) refer to 'relational work'; Arundale (2006, 2010) simply uses the term 'relational'; and Spencer-Oatey (2000/2008, 2005, 2009, with Franklin 2009) refers to rapport management.

This paper starts by critically examining this conceptual and terminological confusion, and by exploring a number of other controversial issues in this area. One key question is how interpersonal relations can best be studied from a pragmatic perspective. Most people agree that it is essential to hear the voice of the participants rather than that of the analyst, yet there is less agreement as to how best to achieve that. I argue in this paper that one fruitful way is to examine the metapragmatic emotion and (im)politeness comments that people make and I report a study of workplace project partnerships to illustrate the insights that such an approach can offer. Such insights are of both theoretical and applied relevance.

In today's globalised and multi-sector world, it is increasingly common for people to work transnationally and cross-sectorally on projects. Yet it is widely acknowledged that the management of such diverse teams is a challenging task, with the effective management of interpersonal relations forming a very important component of this (e.g. Adler 2007; Canney Davison and Ward 1999; DiStefano and Maznevski 2000; Thomas 2002). Canney Davison and Ward (1999), for example, identify relationship-building as a key step in the management of international teams and they explain how the working through of 'strategic moments' (i.e. periods of conflict and disagreement) is of crucial importance. Similarly, DiStefano and Maznevski (2000) use success in managing relationships as the basis for classifying global teams into three performance categories (the destroyers, the equalizers and the creators) because relational management is such a critical factor. I contend that pragmatics research into interpersonal relations should be able to identify and illuminate the collaboration issues that members of workplace project partnerships experience, and I argue that an exclusive focus on discourse data is too limited for this.

2. Pragmatics and Interpersonal Relations

In this section, I discuss key issues and controversies with respect to pragmatic approaches to interpersonal relations.

2.1 The 'What' of Relations

A first key issue is the fundamental question of what is meant by 'relations' or 'the relational'. Traditionally in pragmatics this has referred to 'participant relations' and two key dimensions, power and distance, have been identified. In this perspective, interpersonal relations are conceptualised as being located on two different continua, equal/unequal and distant/close, and in much cross-cultural pragmatic research, participant roles (e.g. teacher/student, friend/friend) have been used to represent these different locatings. (For a review, see Spencer-Oatey 1996.) More recently, however, researchers have conceptualised 'the relational' in very different ways, taking a more dynamic approach and using different continua.

Locher (2004, 2010), Watts (2008) and Locher and Watts (2005, 2008) take a discursive approach and use the term 'relational work' (RW) to refer to "all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice" (Locher and Watts 2008: 96). They point out that "Impolite behaviour is […] just as significant in defining relationships as appropriate/politic or polite behaviour" (2005: 11), and they maintain that participants perceive the unfolding discourse in terms of these categories. Behaviour that conforms to participants' normative expectations is perceived as unmarked and goes largely unnoticed (labelled politic/appropriate by Locher and Watts 2005). Behaviour that breaches normative expectations is perceived as marked and can be noticed in several ways: as inappropriate and perceived negatively because it is either impolite or overly polite, or as appropriate and perceived positively because it is polite. Locher and Watts (2005: 11–12) use the categories of impolite, non-polite, polite and over-polite to describe people's differing reactions, yet they also acknowledge that there can be no "objectively definable boundaries between these categories" and that they are discursively negotiated. Haugh (2007: 300) points out that it is unclear whether the fourfold categorisation applies to participants' perceptions (i.e. is a first order representation) or whether it is intended as an analytic framework for researchers. However, Locher (2010; Locher and Langlotz 2008) stresses the benefits of a first order approach (i.e. one that studies the understandings of lay people) and seems to support research into participants' judgements of politeness, offensiveness, refinement, offensiveness and so on.

Arundale (2006, 2010) takes a very different stance. He first refers to the widespread distinction made (e.g. Brown and Yule 1983; Locher 2004 and others) between the interactional/relational use of language and the informational/ transactional use, and then explains that he uses the term 'relational' in the very different sense of "indexing the dynamic phenomena of relating as they emerge dynamically in person-to-person communication" (2006: 202). Drawing on Baxter and Montgomery (1996), he argues that relationships are characterised by three dialectics, openness/closedness, certainty/uncertainty, and connectedness/separateness. He focuses on face and maintains that the dialectic which is of primary relevance to face is connectedness/separateness. He explains 'relational' as "participants […] achieving connection and/or separation in their relationship" (2010: 2096). This is clearly an important element of relating, and has the advantage of being somewhat easier to identify in discourse than RW. However, in my view it is much too narrow. On the one hand it dismisses the other two dialectics (openness/closedness, certainty/uncertainty) as not central; on the other, it ignores the evaluative or affective reactions that people regularly experience as they interact with each other. It thus seems a rather impoverished approach with limited applied relevance to project managers who need to manage team relations.

Other researchers concentrate much more explicitly on relations in the workplace. This is the focus taken by Holmes and Marra (2004) and Holmes and Schnurr (2005), who analyse 'relational practice' (RP) in workplace contexts. Fletcher (1999), from whom they took the term RP, defines RP as follows: "Relational practice is a way of working that reflects a relational logic of effectiveness and requires a number of relational skills such as empathy, mutuality, reciprocity, and a sensitivity to emotional contexts" (1999: 84). Holmes and Marra (2004) and Holmes and Schnurr (2005) adopt (and adapt) this approach and argue that RP addresses the (positive and negative) face needs of others and helps to advance the primary objectives of the workplace. However, despite the latter, they maintain that RP is typically regarded as peripheral and dispensable in the workplace, in that people use discourse markers such as 'getting back to the point', 'moving right along', 'anyway', 'OK' which signal that RP is different from 'real work'. An important part of RP seems to be 'pro-social' behaviour, such as creating team through small talk, positive humour and off-record approval. Another part is labelled 'damage control' (Holmes and Marra 2004: 386) and deals with strategies for minimising conflict. Holmes and her colleagues focus primarily on reporting examples from authentic workplace discourse to illustrate RP but unfortunately they pay little attention to developing a conceptual framework for their approach.

Spencer-Oatey's (2005, 2008, with Franklin 2009) approach, on the other hand, demonstrates the reverse: she concentrates on conceptualisation and pays less attention to the detailed analysis of discourse. Her focus of concern is the affective quality of relations, which she labels 'rapport' and defines as follows: "We use the term 'rapport' to refer to people's subjective perceptions of (dis)harmony, smoothness-turbulence and warmth-antagonism in interpersonal relations, and we use the term 'rapport management' to refer to the ways in which this (dis)harmony is (mis)managed" (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009: 102). This approach is similar to Locher and Watts' (Locher 2004, 2010; Watts 2008; Locher and Watts 2005, 2008) in stressing the importance of participants' perceptions, but rather than concentrating on interlocutors' assessments of other participants' politeness/impoliteness/non-politeness, she focuses on their assessments of the affective quality they subjectively and dynamically experience in their relations with others. She maintains (2009) that in order to gain insights into these rapport-related concerns and reactions, discourse data need to be supplemented by post-event interview comments. (See 3.1 below for a further discussion of methodological issues associated with this.)

Clearly there is great variation within pragmatics in interpretations of the concept 'relational' and yet there is little discussion in the literature of the similarities and differences of the various perspectives. One of the aims of this paper is to help address this lack.

2.2 The 'Who' of Relations

So far we have considered the 'what' of relations; another important question is the 'who'. One way of analysing relations is in terms of the effect of one person on another. This is the approach taken by classic politeness theory. For example, Brown and Levinson's (1987) classic politeness theory categorises face-threatening acts according to whether they threaten the speaker's face or the hearer's face; e.g. they label criticism as face-threatening to the hearer, and apologies as face-threatening to the speaker. Similarly, Leech (1983, 2007) formulates his politeness maxims/constraints in terms of self and other; e.g. the approbation–modesty maxim/constraint is explained as placing a high value on O's qualities and as placing a low value on S's qualities (2007: 182).

Arundale (2006, 2010), on the other hand, in his Face Constituting Theory, argues strongly against a self-other approach and firmly in favour of a relational account:

> … the much-used distinction between 'self-face' and 'other-face' is problematic […]. A relational view holds that self and other are dialectically linked because both persons comprise the other to the self, and as such mutually define one another in their communication.
>
> Arundale 2006: 207

He links this with an interactional achievement perspective, in which he conceptualises face as "the on-going, conjoint co-constituting of connection with and separation from others in relationships" (2010: 2079). He maintains that face should not be seen as a construct that is exogenous to language use, but as a "dyadic accomplishment that is endogenous to using language because it is achieved as an integral part of the interaction among participants" (2010: 2079).

Are these perspectives mutually exclusive? Social psychological research on identity (e.g. Brewer and Gardner 1996; Sedikides and Brewer 2001) suggests they may not be, and Spencer-Oatey (2007) builds on this to propose a threefold perspective on interactional concerns: an individual level where the focus is on self and other; a relational level where the focus is on mutuality and connection/separation between the members of interpersonally significant dyads or teams; and a group level where the focus is on membership of a group category.

This is another controversial point that needs addressing.

2.3 The ‘Why’ of Relational Sensitivity

Next we consider the ‘why’ of relational sensitivity.

A large proportion of the work in politeness theory has identified face as the main source of relational sensitivity. Building on work by Goffman (1967), Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that all competent adults have face, consisting of two related aspects: negative face (the claim to freedom of action and freedom of imposition from others) and positive face (the desire that a person’s positive self-image by appreciated and approved of by others). Since then there have been numerous criticisms of this classic framework, and especially in relation to the notion of negative face. Nevertheless, face as a concept is still widely upheld. Some theorists (e.g. Ruhi 2007, 2009; Spencer-Oatey 2007, 2009) take an ‘attribute’ approach to face, and maintain that face is associated with the positively-evaluated attributes that a person wishes to claim in interaction with others. Others (e.g. Arundale 2006, 2010) dispute this approach and conceptualise face as a purely relational phenomenon that is interactionally achieved through the dialectic of connection/separation.

Other theorists have taken a very different approach to explaining relational sensitivity. Leech (1983, 2005) expounds a descriptive perspective in which he identifies a set of pragmatic constraints (originally labelled ‘maxims’) that people can be observed to follow in order to maintain communicative concord: Generosity/Tact; Approbation/Modesty; Obligation; Opinion; Feeling. Spencer-Oatey and Jiang (2003) build on this approach but argue that the constraints are value-based and hence call them sociopragmatic interactional principles (SIPs). They maintain that any failure to implement the principles as expected may result in mild to strong evaluative judgements.

Yet other theorists emphasise the importance of social norms and behavioural expectations. For example, Fraser (1990), Locher (2004) and Spencer-Oatey (2005, 2008) all refer to structures of expectations, and Meier (1995: 387) maintains that “… politeness can only be judged relative to a particular context and a particular addressee’s expectations and concomitant interpretations.” Spencer-Oatey (2005, 2008, with Franklin 2009) takes this a step further and argues that prescriptive or proscriptive overtones can become associated with expected behaviour, and that as a result, people start perceiving rights and obligations in relation to them and may feel annoyed if the expected behaviour is not forthcoming. She labels these sociality rights and obligations. She also links these with SIPs, suggesting that social norms may sometimes reflect deeper held values. She proposes two value-laden principles of interaction: equity and association

Not all politeness theorists see these different perspectives as incompatible. For example, Spencer-Oatey (2005, 2008, with Franklin 2009) combines them in her rapport management model and identifies three motivational bases: face sensitivities, behavioural expectations, and interactional goals.

The ‘why’ of relational sensitivity is thus a third controversial issue.

2.4 The Role of Emotions

An implicit thread running through nearly all this ‘relational’ research is the role of emotions. For example, in early theorising in politeness theory, it was frequently implied. Brown and Levinson (1987: 1), for instance, referred to the need to disarm potential aggression; Lakoff (1989: 102) referred to minimisation of risk of confrontation; Ide (1989: 225) talked of smooth communication; and Leech spoke of social equilibrium and friendly relations (1983: 82). Goffman (1967: 6–8) went a step further and referred to the ‘feelings’ attached to face, such as feeling good, bad, hurt, ashamed, embarrassed and chagrined. However, as both Culpeper (2011) and Ruhi (2009) point out, there has been surprisingly little research on this aspect, at least until recently.

Arndt and Janney (1985) are two of the few politeness theorists who did address this perspective. They argued that successful interaction is dependent on the production and interpretation of emotive cues and that interpersonal equilibrium is difficult to maintain without this. They proposed three emotive dimensions to speech, one of which is positive-negative affect. Their focus was on the communication of affect, and they identified some linguistic cues that can convey it. More recently, Kienpointner (2008) also has taken a productive perspective and explores the impact of emotions on (im)polite behaviour. Other theorists have explored the links between different key concepts: for example, Ruhi (2007, 2009) has drawn attention to the close interconnections between face, affect and self-presentation, and Locher and Langlotz (2008) have discussed interpersonal dimensions of human interaction by integrating cognitive, discourse analytical and emotional notions.

A complementary approach to such research is to investigate the emotional impact of different types of behaviour. A certain amount of work has been carried out in this area by scholars working in communication studies and social psychology, including Edelmann (1994), Metts and Cupach (1989) and Miller (1992). All these researchers explored embarrassing events and attempted to classify the trigger situations into categories, often according to who was responsible (e.g. individual, interactive, audience and bystander). However, their focus was limited to a single emotion, embarrassment, and they did not try to link their research to work in this area in other disciplines.

Within pragmatics, Spencer-Oatey (2002) has taken a somewhat broader approach and explored the nature of 'rapport-sensitive' incidents. She defined rapport-sensitive incidents as "incidents involving social interactions that [respondents] found to be particularly noticeable in some way, in terms of their relationship with the other person(s)" (2002: 534). This 'noticeable impact' could be either negative or positive and, in attempting to elicit accounts of such incidents from respondents, she listed a range of emotion labels (e.g. annoyed, insulted, embarrassed, proud, happy etc.) to help respondents understand what she meant by a negative or positive effect. She then analysed the incident data that she collected in order to explore the interactional concerns that seemed to underlie people's reactions.

Culpeper et al (2010) have recently carried out a follow-up study that builds on this approach. They focused on events that had a particularly negative effect, and again used emotion labels (e.g. hurt, offended, embarrassed, humiliated etc.) to help respondents understand the kind of incidents they would like them to report. They also explicitly asked respondents to describe their feelings, and so collected a range of emotion labels. Culpeper (2011: 62–65) reports the associations between these emotion labels and Spencer-Oatey's (2002) rapport management categories of face, equity rights and association rights. He reports that self-conscious emotions such as sadness and fear dominate all his data, but that other-condemning emotions such as anger take on increased importance where equity rights have been breached.

A more focused approach has very recently been taken by Chang and Haugh (2011). They examine strategic face threatening in business interactions and link it with the emotion embarrassment. Through including emotional reaction in their analyses, they are able to gain new insights into the nature of face threatening behaviour.

2.5 Summary

In this section I have identified a number of controversies and/or points of confusion that currently exist: what is meant by 'relational', who 'relational' applies to, the bases of relational sensitivity, and the role of emotions. The aim of this paper is to throw new light on these issues by exploring the insights that an analysis of metapragmatic emotion comments can offer.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A key principle of the 'relational turn' in pragmatics is that analyses of data should be grounded in the perspectives of the participants rather than those of the analysts. So this raises a fundamental question: how can the perspectives of the participants be obtained? Conversational analysts and ethnomethodologists would argue that such perspectives can (and should) be inferred from the unfolding discourse, and this is the line that Arundale (2006, 2010) takes. Haugh (2010: 155) points out such evaluations may also "surface in interaction in the form of metapragmatic comments […], or through paralinguistic or non-verbal cues […]" and illustrates this in a recent study (Chang and Haugh 2011). However, ethnographers would argue that discourse is just one source of data, and that valuable insights can be gained — and in fact are needed — by studying the fuller context, such as through (non)-participant observation and conducting interviews. Chang and Haugh (2011) have recently demonstrated the need for this in their study of strategic embarrassment and face threats in business interactions; they found that background knowledge about the participants' ongoing relationship helped them interpret the interactional practices in a more contextually grounded and 'accurate' way.

In terms of studying relational issues, Spencer-Oatey (2009: 152) recommends supplementing discourse data with post-event interview comments, which if possible include playback comments. She explains that the aim is not to establish a single 'true interpretation' but rather to "build up a rich, in-depth picture of the range of concerns and evaluations, both positive and negative, that interlocutors may hold and (re-)construct." However, conducting such interviews raises a number of challenges. For example, Chang and Haugh (2011: in press- no page yet) report that it often proved difficult to discuss the face-threatening interactions with the participants, as such talk was found to be too face-threatening in itself. Moreover, Haugh (2010: 156) points out that the role of the interviewer needs to be taken firmly into account in the analysis. This is because s/he is not a 'neutral elicitor' but rather a co-constructor of the event, both in terms of the 'content' of the interview data and the ways in which the interviewee and the interviewer may attempt to position themselves. In other words, as Talmy and Richards (2011: 2) point out, a discursive perspective is needed, so that interviews are "conceptualised explicitly as socially-situated 'speech event[s]' […], in which interviewer(s) and interviewee(s) make meaning, co-construct knowledge, and participate in social practices." When these warnings are heeded, they can provide rich insights into relational matters.

3.2 Data Collection

The data for this paper comprise a series of interviews with participants of four different workplace project partnerships. All the projects formed part of an international programme that was initiated and funded by governmental organisations in the UK and China and in which key British and Chinese universities were selected to take part. The various universities were linked together in 'arranged marriage'-like partnerships to collaborate on the development of e-based teacher training materials. The initial phase of the programme comprised four materials development projects and they each had a lifespan of about two years.

As part of the ongoing evaluation of the projects, I (in my role as programme manager) conducted two rounds of confidential in-depth interviews with all of the main team members, with the help of one of the Chinese project members. The first round of interviews took place in the spring of 2004, after the first 6–9 months of collaboration, and the second round took place towards the end of the project, between the autumn of 2004 and the spring/summer of 2005. The purpose of the interviews was broad, and had the overarching aim of understanding project management issues. The first round focused on the following issues: members' roles in the project, reasons for becoming involved, goals of the programme, personal goals for involvement, factors affecting the achievement of goals, contact with members of other projects in the programme, and communication methods and strategies. The second round covered a similarly wide range of topics, including an update on members' project roles, their collaboration experiences with respect to pedagogy, e-learning design, and communication, challenges they had faced, benefits they had gained, and their recommendations for managing future projects more effectively. In other words, the interviews were not explicitly designed to probe relational issues and no questions were asked directly about this, although respondents had plenty of opportunity to talk about them if they wished.

In all, 31 Chinese and 21 UK team members were interviewed, most on two occasions. Interviews usually lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, although some were a little shorter. The interviews with the British team members were all carried out by the British researcher. The interviews with the Chinese team members were nearly all carried out in Chinese by the Chinese researcher, although a few were carried out by the British researcher (also in Chinese). Most interviews were carried out individually, although some of the second round interviews were conducted in small groups of two or three.[1] All interviews were transcribed, and the Chinese texts were then translated into English and double-checked by a second bilingual speaker. The transcriptions from the first round of interviews have a total of about 174,000 words of running text, and the transcriptions from the second round have a total of about 122,000 words of running text, making a total of 296,000 words. Translated versions of the Chinese interview comments are presented here. All interviewees' identities have been anonymised by giving them a code (B = British, C = Chinese, M = male, F = female) and a number.

As explained above, some theorists might regard such interviews as an inadequate source of data. Arundale (2006: 209), for example, argues that researchers should "examine resources and practices for facework in specific instances of verbal and visible contact". However, I maintain that for international project partnerships (and other workplace contexts), this exclusive focus on discourse is definitely too limited. A project takes place over months or years, and this is of crucial importance in studying relational issues. Communication takes place through various media (e.g. email, digital platforms, face-to-face, reports), involves a range of different project members on different occasions, and is frequently asynchronous. Project members reflect on their experiences both during and between interactions, and since it is impossible and impractical for all members always to be included in all communications, they pass on information to other members in different ways and at different times. They quite naturally talk with each other about the project and often comment on their relationships with other project members, especially (but not only) in terms of their impact on project progress. Such reflections and reconstructions are a normal component of working life and take place on an ongoing basis. So I maintain that such reflections should not be regarded negatively as 'only post hoc reconstructions' but rather as helpful sources of new insights that can supplement those gained from the study of discourse.

Although the interviews analysed here were planned rather than naturally occurring discussions, the 'insider' status of both the Chinese researcher and me, meant that people were relaxed and trusting in talking with us. Thus in many respects the interviews were simply more formalised extensions of the discussions we were sharing on an ongoing basis. Of course, this does not eliminate the co-construction of the event, the (re)construction of viewpoints, or the mutual positioning between interviewer and interviewee that inevitably took place. However, since the purpose of the interviews at the time was not to explore relational matters, but rather to ask about things like roles, reasons for joining the project, team communication processes and so on, the risk of us asking leading

[1] This was because of programme management time constraints.

questions on relational matters is greatly minimised. It might also be argued that our insider status could blind us to elements that we were taking for granted. However, the interviews were analysed for very different purposes at the time, and six years have elapsed since then and the current analysis. This has enabled me to approach them from a distance and with a 'fresh' perspective.

3.3 Analytic Procedure

The qualitative software package *NVivo* was used to analyse the interview transcripts and a grounded approach was used. In other words, first the transcripts were read numerous times to get a feel for the issues emerging with respect to collaboration, and an iterative process of coding and re-coding took place. Main categories that were coded included communication, goals, positioning, collaboration, emotion and (im)politeness. In this paper I focus on the categories 'emotion' and '(im)politeness.

With respect to 'emotion', I first went through all the interview transcripts looking for instances where people used an emotion label to convey an emotion they felt about something, and coded this as 'emotion'. I then went through those instances again, looking to see if the emotion was associated in some way with team relations or with other individuals. If it was, I coded it as 'rapport'. If it was not (i.e. if it had nothing to do with the functioning of the team or with other individuals, e.g. if an interviewee reported feeling annoyed because of a computer failure), I did not code it any further. Clearly, the interviewees could express their emotion in ways other than selecting an emotion label (e.g. through intonation or through recounting an incident that implied, but did not explicitly state, an emotional reaction), but since that entails more subjective analyst interpretation and my aim was to take a first order approach (Eelen 2001; Watts et al. 1992), I focused only on instances of use of explicit metapragmatic emotion labels. The iterative coding process enabled me to gain a good grasp of the contexts of the interview extracts, allowing me to check and confirm that none had been preceded by a leading interviewer question. In fact, most uses of emotion labels occurred in long narrative turns by the interviewees.

After the coding with *NVivo* had been completed, I used Shaver et al.'s (1987) cluster analysis of 135 emotion labels to group the examples as Culpeper (2011) did. Shaver et al. identified 5 basic level emotion prototypes – love, joy, anger, sadness, and fear – and so the examples were grouped into these different prototype categories. This was to help me to explore the antecedents of the emotions (i.e. the source situations or 'events' that had given rise to the emotions), and to consider the implications of the findings for the controversial issues in 'relational pragmatics' discussed above.

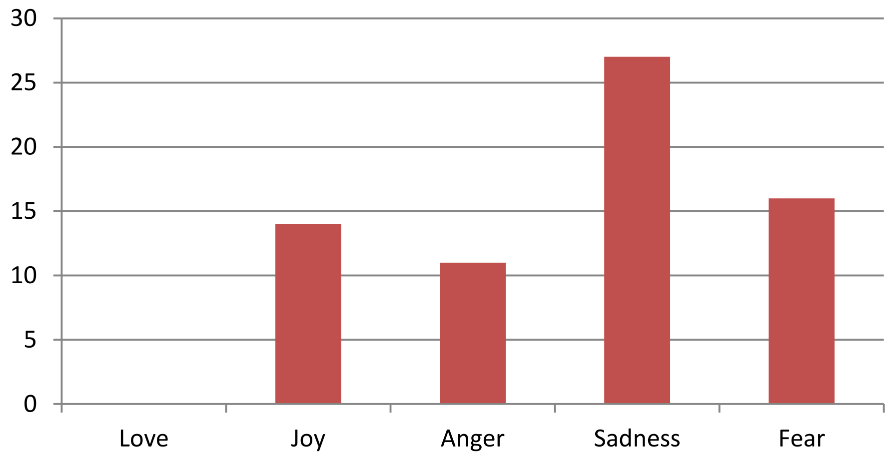
With respect to '(im)politeness', I used a two-pronged approach. First I used a text search of all the interview transcripts using key terms associated with politeness and impoliteness (see Appendix A for a list of these terms). I then checked each example, looking to see if the term was used in relation to a person. If it was, I coded it as '(im)politeness', and sub-categorised it as 'polite' or 'impolite'. If it was not (i.e. if the term was used in a different way, e.g. when 'kind' occurred in a phrase such as 'this kind of problem', or if the term had nothing to do with a person or their behaviour, e.g. when 'nice' referred to materials design), I did not code it further. After that, I double-checked whether all the instances had been found in this way by going through all of the interview transcripts one by one. Two extra examples were identified from this.

4. Findings

4.1 Metapragmatic Emotion Comments

There were 68 metapragmatic comments that included an emotion label to describe how the interviewee, or another participant, felt about a relational situation. (If the same or similar emotion word was repeated about the same situation, the reference was only counted numerically once.) The distribution of emotion labels across the core prototypes is shown in Figure 1. As with Culpeper's (2011) findings, the prototype cluster of sadness emotions were the most frequently reported. However, the purpose of this study is not to investigate the relative frequency of different types of emotion references; it is much too small scale for that. Rather, it is an exploratory study that aimed to gather information on the antecedents of the emotions and thereby to gain preliminary insights into the relational issues that pragmatic theories need to be able to explain. Findings on each of the emotion clusters are reported in turn below, and discussed in section 5.

Fig. 1: Frequency of Core Prototype Emotion References



Love

According to Shaver et al. (1987), emotion labels associated with this cluster include adoration, affection, love, fondness, attraction, caring, desire, lust, passion, longing.

None of the interviewees used any emotion labels from this cluster.

Joy

Emotion labels associated with the cluster 'joy' include amusement, cheerfulness, joy, delight, enjoyment, gladness, happiness, satisfaction, enthusiasm, zest, excitement, exhilaration, pleasure, pride, optimism, enthrallment (Shaver et al. 1987).

There were 14 joy prototype cluster references in the interviews, with 12 different emotion labels used: pleased (x3), happy (x2), enjoy (x2), satisfied (x1), enthusiasm (x1), like a honeymoon (x1), loved (x1), excited (x1), marvellous (x1), comfortable (x1), pleasing (x1), feel very at home (x1). The comments related to five main source situations, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Emotion Source Situations and Illustrative Comments
associated with the Prototype Cluster 'Joy'

Emotion Source Situation	Example Interview Comment
J1: Working effectively as a team	J1a: To work in a team where you solve problems and are not discussing "issues" is just a marvellous experience. [BM16]
J2: Making progress on task as a team	J2a: We've had lots of meetings since we got here, we've had a meeting almost every day. So we've made good progress. We feel it's gone well. Although it may seem as though the exchanges aren't very fluent, we can basically understand their meaning. We have no problem reading, and so we can understand what they write. So I've been very satisfied with the past week. [CM15][2]
J3: Team spirit	J3a: SharePoint, our internal Bulletin Board System, has performed as a team work diary, since we not only put up notices, memos and meeting information on it, but also things like pictures of our dinner party, our feelings like we felt happy when we finished a certain design. It was quite pleasing for team members to see those things. [CM16]
J4: Learning new things through the team	J4a: It's been a steep learning curve in relation to working with colleagues in China, which have just been delightful, I mean I've loved that bit of it. [BF06]
J5: External recognition	J5a: On a personal level, I'm pleased that [name of department] is being recognised from within the university more and more … because they recognise it as being the first major project between the two universities. [BF17]

As can be seen, the comments are strongly focused on team issues. Some interviewees related their pleasure to task matters – how the team has solved problems effectively (J1a), how they have made progress on their task (J2a), and how their team achievements on their task have made them feel good (J3a). Others related their pleasure to team interaction per se (J4a) and to the recognition gained from others as a result of their collaboration (J5a).

In terms of communication, they associated pleasure with discussions where the participants have been able to exchange views and understand each other (J2a), and where no "issues" have been raised (J1a). They also related it to the sharing of team achievements via a team virtual space (J3a).

Anger

Emotion labels associated with the cluster 'anger' include aggravation, irritation, annoyance, exasperation, frustration, anger, rage, bitterness, scorn, resentment, disgust, envy and jealousy (Shaver et al. 1987).

There were 11 anger prototype cluster references in the interviews, with 5 different emotion labels used: frustrated (x6), angry (x2), annoying (x2), tension (x1), pissed off (x1). The comments related to five main source situations, as shown in Table 2.

As Table 2 shows, these source situations are strongly focused on task issues. Several interviewees reported feeling frustrated or annoyed over issues that affected project progress; for example, lack of response from other members (A1a), lack of clear directions and lack of information (A2a). Other task-related situations included lack of benefits relative to the amount of work put in (A3a), failure of the course leader to provide a team member with a proper contract (A4a), and a cool, unenthusiastic evaluations of someone else's work (A5a).

[2] The emotion expressed here may seem quite weak compared with the other examples. However, Shaver et al (1987) include sense of satisfaction in their list of emotion names in the cluster 'joy', and CM15 makes it clear that this emotion derived from the progress they had made as a team on the task.

Table 2: Emotion Source Situations and Illustrative Comments
associated with the Prototype Cluster 'Anger'

Emotion Source Situation	Example Interview Comment
A1: Lack of response from other members which impacted on progress on task	A1a: Things have to be discussed at a certain level, and then they have to come back down again and weeks can go by until we get any feedback on what is happening and that can be very frustrating and difficult if you've got deadlines to meet, and you're still waiting for decisions to come back. [BF02]
A2: Lack of clear directions which impacted on progress on task	A2a: In China, we always put ourselves at the head's disposal. Thus we begin the work with the assignments given by the head. So we hope very much to get a clear description about what is expected to be done from the lead. It is an annoyance to us when we were not given any specific jobs to do, as we have no idea what to direct our efforts at. The British had the knowledge that we should have a job description before we did the job. However, we didn't have such a description for the project and everything was just under discussion. [CF18]
A3: Inequity	A3a: some people who had put in a lot of work ended up not getting anything out of it. There were some tensions around that kind of thing. [BM01]
A4: Lack of formal status within the team	A4a: I joined the project because I trusted [Name of Course Leader]. Of course, as I mentioned earlier, I had some expectations on the project, but the absence of legitimacy in doing the project is annoying. [CF04] [Note: CF04 had not been given a formal contract.]
A5: Non-positive evaluation	A5a: But when we finally saw the materials, or when he was presenting us with bits, […] there was a sort of frostiness around the reception that [Name 1] was giving to [Name 2]'s material which pissed [Name 2] off big time. [BF06]

In terms of communication, the interviewees found failure to communicate annoying; for example, lack of response to feedback requests (A1a), and lack of clear directions or information (A2a). They also reported it occurring when negative or non-positive feedback was given to a team member (A5a).

Sadness

Shaver et al. (1987) report the emotion labels associated with this cluster as including suffering, hurt, depression, despair, gloom, sadness, unhappiness, grief, sorrow, misery, dismay, disappointment, shame, regret, alienation, isolation, neglect, loneliness, rejection, dejection, embarrassment, humiliation, insult.

There were 27 sadness prototype cluster references in the interviews, with 13 different emotion labels used: disappointed (x5), embarrassing (x4), pity (x4), unhappy (x3), demotivated (x2), uncomfortable (x2), depressed (x1), distant (x1), aimless (x1), ashamed (x1), offended (x1), hurt (x1), sorry (x1). This prototype cluster had both the largest number of references, and also the largest number of different sources. The comments related to eleven main source situations, as shown in Table 3.

The examples in Table 3 show that the prototype cluster of 'sadness' covers a wide span of emotions and also a wide range of source situations. The emotions of unhappiness, discouragement, disappointment and depression were often related to the project task; for example, poor management by the project leader (S1a), implementation failures by other team members (S2a) and differing goals (S3a). They were also even more strongly linked to team issues; for example, lack of consultation (S1a), failure to carry out what had been agreed (S2a), lack of commitment from a team member (S4a), lack of mutual understanding (S6a), and distant attitude of other team members (S7a).

Table 3: Emotion Source Situations and Illustrative Comments associated with the Prototype Cluster 'Sadness'

Emotion Source Situation	**Example Interview Comment**
S1: Lack of consultation	S1a: I feel a bit unhappy with [Name 1]'s management, because he didn't even consult with me. [CM26]
S2: Implementation failures	S2a: I think the needs analysis thing was quite disappointing. I think it was difficult for us at times to know what was going on there, because we went over with our plans for the needs analysis, and we had quite lengthy discussions with [University 1] about it, and they actually helped us with the design of the questionnaire and so on. We did believe that we had secured agreement that [University 1] and [University 2] would actually carry on administering these things, and it somehow just never happened. [BF13]
S3: Conflicting goals	S3a: She worked very hard for the project, but the different goals of our two sides discouraged her. This issue pleased nobody. [CM07]
S4: Lack of commitment from other team members.	S4a: He said "Hi [Name 1]" when I saw him at the supermarket, "in town again". I said I was surprised not to see him, and he said "I've got a new job now so I've asked [Name 2] to do the work", and that was his level of commitment. I was a bit disappointed about that because it seemed to me that [name of strand] is now the weakest link. [BM07]
S5: Inequity	S5a: [Name]has done so much work for the project particularly in the later stage, but no one from our side spoke a word at the presentation, we looked like extra personnel. […] I feel it so weird. I don't know what they were thinking about. Mmm…I don't think that it was a fair academic exchange, so my participation became less and less. I am feeling kind of depressed now. [CF08]
S6: Insufficient negotiation of meaning	S6a: If we didn't communicate our understandings with each other, we would take things for granted and estrangement would emerge. For example, in many circumstances, [Name 1] had his own logic and I had mine. It could be that both of us had good intentions, but we usually ended up feeling offended. I think we should take it as a lesson. [CM07]
S7: Lack of team spirit	S7a: But people from [name of university] made me feel so distant. [CF08]
S8: Arguments	S8a: Later there came embarrassing arguments about the responsibilities in project management. [CM21]
S9: Witness to criticism	S9a: BF11: [Name 1] had written Unit 6 which was [topic 6]. It was fairly dry, but the feedback he received was very forthright from [Name of course leader]. BF02: It was very embarrassing really.
S10: Criticising others	S10a: On some of the stuff that you were reading, you're like "well, excuse me, but this isn't right, [name]!" So he wasn't keen on that. But I think we just felt very very uncomfortable, all of us, about being put in that position. [BF06]
S11: Level of competence compared with other team members	S11a: When I first came here at the end of last year, I said to the people here, because they all had a strong educational background, I feel ashamed because I have no background in education. [CM30]
S12: Low work efficiency	S12a: Although our UK colleagues were extremely hospitable and inclined to facilitate my work at any time, I still felt somewhat uncomfortable and embarrassed, as the access to materials was not as easy as it was in China. I spent a quite a lot of time searching for materials on the Internet, but still could not find enough. Really strenuous but less efficient. [CF13]

The emotions of embarrassment, shame and discomfort occurred when there were explicit arguments (S8a), direct criticism (S9a) or when an individual felt inadequate in some way (S10a, S11a).

In terms of communication, the interviewees again found failure to communicate a problem, including failure to consult (S1a), failure (to be allowed) to participate in presentations (S5a), and failure to jointly negotiate meaning adequately (S6a). In addition, they found open arguing and the verbalisation of negative evaluations particularly embarrassing.

Fear

According to Shaver et al. (1987), emotion labels associated with this cluster include alarm, shock, fear, fright, horror, terror, panic, anxiety, nervousness, uneasiness, worry, distress and dread.

There were 16 fear prototype cluster references in the interviews, with 7 different emotion labels used: anxious (x5), shocked (x4), worried (x2), stressed (x2), concerned (x1), horror (x1), nervous (x1). Comments related to eight main source situations, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Emotion Source Situations and Illustrative Comments associated with the Prototype Cluster 'Fear'

Emotion Source Situation	Example Interview Comment
F1: Unexpected behaviour of one member to another team member of higher status.	F1a: [Name 1] sometimes looked down on [name of line manager]. For example, when I said about designing this resource or whatever, [name of line manager] said this is a great idea, we should do this. Then [Name 1] cut in, it shocked me, he cut in and just focused on the issues he's interested in and just ignored [name of line manager]. I was so shocked […] He said "You are […] not in [this] field." So this makes [name of line manager]'s position as director a bit vulnerable. [CM26]
F2: Unexpected skill level or behaviour of other members.	F2a: My colleagues can do wonderful powerpoint presentations, so when they are doing summaries, there are bars or labels flashing or popping up, or whatever. [Name 1] asked "Did you do it yourself or did someone else do it for you?" They were surprised she asked it, because of course they did it themselves. This has become a basic skill. But for [Name 1] and [Name 2], someone prepared their powerpoint for them. [Name 1] was really shocked. But for our online education institute, this is one of our basic skills. If you don't have it, don't join us. [CM26]
F3: Values/beliefs held by other members	F3a: As you know a lot of the emphases now are about accessibility and individualisation and seeing learners as individuals, and they are not quite ready for that I would say, and they haven't had to think about diversity in the way that we have had to think about it. So sometimes you get the reaction that they don't want to know about that […]. So that's territory we can't go into yet with them. In a sense, it's embedded in our practice, but not in theirs, because they don't have to think about it. And that felt a little bit shocking. [BF13]
F4: Lack of information	F4a: I think we all felt quite stressed at the beginning, because normally when you start a project that's written down and you think you know it. To us there seemed this bigger context that we didn't understand or know anything about. [BF04]
F5: Task allocation concerns	F5a: Once I got an email from one of the technicians from [name of university]. He told me that he wouldn't be responsible for the flash. Thinking [name of university] wouldn't take that job, I worried a lot and suggested a videoconference to discuss the issue. […] we finally found that the division of responsibilities among the technicians at [name of university] was simply the same as ours. [CM17]
F6: Difficulties of meaning interpretation	F6a: Sometimes [name of British course leader]/ When we got the suggestion, we usually got nervous. We thought "Must we do it immediately?" Some instant objections would arise by doubting "Are they commanding us to do things?". It was a feeling like that. [CF06]
F7: Modesty concerns	F7a: I think it is important to know what other people think and what they are doing, but I felt in December in a way we were ahead of others, and I got a bit anxious that we did not appear to be too self-assured. [BF17]
F8: Lack of personal	F8a: It's been challenging and growthful, and not without its moments of pain and

confidence	horror, when I feel oh god I'm just not up to this, it's all too much, it's demanding skills I don't have, but I think I'm old enough to know that we all have days like that, and we still get up and do it. [BF06]

As can be seen from Table 4, the prototype cluster of 'fear' is particularly associated with evaluative situations. Sometimes the interviewees commented on their evaluations of other project members, expressing shock over a particular behaviour such as interruption (F1a), over another project member's level of competence (F2a) or over an espoused value not held by other project members (F3a). On other occasions the evaluation was in relation to self, such as whether the person can cope with the demands of the task (F8a) or whether or not their own project team might appear too self-assured (F7a). However, not all 'fear' cluster emotion terms were associated with evaluative situations. The interviewees also reported task-related worries, such as who would take responsibility for a given task (F5a) and how to carry out the task without a clear understanding of the bigger context (F4a).

In terms of communication, the interviewees reported that difficulties in interpreting meaning (F6a) and in negotiating meaning effectively (F5a) made them feel worried and/or nervous. And one person reported feeling shocked when witnessing the behaviour of another project member that he regarded as highly disrespectful.

4.2 Metapragmatic '(Im)politeness' Comments

There were 14 metapragmatic comments that entailed an evaluation from an (im)politeness perspective of another person or what they had done. Seven comments were 'polite' evaluations and seven were 'impolite'. (As with the metapragmatic emotion comments, if the same or compatible evaluative term was used more than once for the same person or their behaviour, the reference was only counted numerically once.)

The 'polite' comments were all generalised positive evaluations of other people. On two occasions these positive evaluations were made in conjunction with a negative evaluation of something/someone different – either another aspect that was less positive (see Example P1 below), or else another person who was less polite (see Example P2 below).

Example P1: [Description of the other person's poor materials design] And I'm saying, won't the students have already done this in school? That was really tricky. Nice man, very nice man, but not terribly experienced. [BF13]

Example P2: [Description of an occasion when a member of another team treated her badly] This was something I'd never expected. What was going on? Their pattern of work really made me … But [name of a different member of that team] was very nice. She was polite and modest. [CF08]

All the other comments were just generalised evaluations of others (e.g. see Example P3), and only on one occasion was a reason was given for the evaluation (see Example P4).

Example P3: In terms of the Chinese colleagues who came here, we had absolutely no problems. […] They were always very pleasing. [BM18]

Example P4: The leaders were nice, I think. They wouldn't force us to work on unrealistic things. [CM17]

With respect to the 'impolite' metapragmatic comments, only one comment referred to an evaluation of other people (see Example IP1); the other 6 were all made in relation to the self.

Example IP1: I think our British colleagues should know more about the Chinese culture and show more respect and understanding as to what the Chinese colleagues feel. [CM07]

Two of the other six comments were generalised, self-deprecatory comments; e.g. see Example IP2.

Example IP2: Researcher: Did you use email frequently?
Interviewee: Not really, (smiling), I'm so lazy. [CM15]

One comment described something that had happened in the team (see Example IP3) and the other three were all self-evaluatory metapragmatic comments on what the interviewees were saying to the researcher (e.g. see Example IP4).

Example IP3: Because his concepts were not consistent with the final results, and their module was changed, I criticized without courtesy. I said that the gap-fillings in your module could do nothing, and the platform and module were both changed. Judging from the relationship between him and me right now, although he did not agree with my idea, he still thought I am a good person. [CM21]

Example IP4: [Critical description of someone else's design of materials] Very old stuff. We're being terribly rude about him.

5. Discussion

Several significant findings emerge from the study that are important not only for our conceptual and applied understanding of interpersonal relation issues in workplace contexts, but also for research design.

Firstly, one of the most noticeable findings from the metapragmatic comments with emotion labels is that lack of communication was a problem for project members. Omissions of communication that were reported as problematic included lack of response to feedback requests [e.g. A1a], lack of clear directions or information [e.g. A2a], failure to consult [e.g. S1a], failure (to be allowed) to participate in presentations [e.g. S5a], and failure to jointly negotiate meaning adequately [e.g.S6a]. These gave rise to emotions associated with the prototype clusters of 'anger' and of 'sadness'. Since the lack of communication did not usually take place within a face-to-face context nor within an individual speech event but rather occurred over time as the various facets of the project developed, a discourse analytic research approach would have failed to identify these team-related problems. This suggests that the analytic approaches proposed by theorists such as Locher and Watts (2005) and Arundale (2006, 2010) are too narrow to capture some of the key relational concerns that project members may have and that project managers in the real world need to be aware of and to handle. I would argue therefore that, at least in project partnership contexts, discourse data needs to be supplemented by project members' reflective comments.

A second noticeable finding from the metapragmatic comments with emotion labels is that hindrances to the achievement of project-related tasks and goals are a major source of emotional volatility. My data indicates that progress in achieving the goals/tasks resulted in positive emotions [e.g. J1a, J2a, J3a] (i.e. joy-related) and hindrances in achieving them resulted in negative emotions [e.g. A1a, A2a, S2a, S3a, F4a, F5a]. As can be seen, the negative emotions were reflected in all three negative prototype clusters, anger, sadness and fear. This makes it clear that transactional and interactional goals (Brown and Yule 1983) are closely interconnected, and that goals need to be included in any model of motivational concerns underlying the smooth management of relations, such as in Spencer-Oatey's (2008, with Franklin 2009) rapport management framework. The frameworks proposed by Locher and Watts (2005) and Arundale (2006, 2010) offer few insights or explanation of these issues.

A third noticeable feature of the interviewees' metapragmatic comments with emotion labels is the discomfort/embarrassment they reported in relation to questions of competence. Some interviewees were clearly uncomfortable about their own level of professional competence and how this might be perceived by others [e.g. S11a, S12a]. Some reported discomfort at having to question someone else's academic knowledge [e.g. S10a] and some reported embarrassment at witnessing a colleague being criticised [e.g. S9a]. All of these examples can be regarded as face-threatening situations in that a person's positive face (Brown and Levinson 1987) or 'affectively sensitive attributes' (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009: 110) are being questioned or challenged in some way. Moreover, the discomfort was not always the result of taking part in an interaction; sometimes it was a result of self-reflection [S11a, S12a], sometimes it was from empathising with someone whom the participant overheard being criticised [S9a], and sometimes it was from anticipated concern over giving the criticism [S10a]. The latter point is supported by another interviewee comment: "I think he holds back because he doesn't know quite how to be critical, especially if it's [name of senior colleague]'s stuff" [Interviewee BF13]. Arundale (2010: 2087–8) argues that face should not be conceptualised as a person-centred attribute which can be exogenous to talk, and that instead we should view it as a "conjoint, social outcome of two individual's reciprocal affording and constraining of one another's interpreting of a given utterance." However, the interview comments in my data indicate very clearly that project participants were concerned and uncomfortable both about their own person-centred attributes, and also about making negative evaluations of others' personal attributes, not only endogenously in talk-in-interaction, but also exogenously as they planned and reflected on it.

Nevertheless, it was not only person-centred attributes that were reflected in the interviewees' metapragmatic emotion comments. They also commented on team relations matters. Having a good time as a team, working collaboratively and building a team spirit, was a source of great joy [e.g. J1a, J3a]. Conversely, lack of formal status within the team [e.g. A4a] and lack of commitment from other team members [e.g. S4a] made people feel annoyed or disappointed. Such comments fit in with Haugh's (2005) notion of 'place' in that for the project participants, the project team is the 'place one belongs'. This team relations focus also fits in with Spencer-Oatey's (2007) 'multiple levels of focus' proposal, in that people's relational concerns can be derived from team-level concerns as well as individual-level ones. Project members may not only be sensitive about their individual attributes (as discussed in the previous paragraph), but may also have a strong sense of team that is reflected in concerns about team membership and belonging.

This raises a further point. Although team-level concerns are partly about belonging, they are likely to be broader than this. For example, some of the interviewee comments [e.g. A3a and S5a] refer to equity and fairness issues; i.e. that amount of work/contribution should be rewarded in outcomes in some way. It is not clear whether Arundale (2010) would incorporate such equity concerns within the connectedness/separateness dialectic that he proposes as the primary face concern, but if he does, then it loses a helpful distinction that Spencer-Oatey (2002, 2008, with Franklin 2009) makes between equity rights and association rights. The findings support her claim that people have cost/benefit concerns and autonomy/imposition concerns (e.g. see comment F6a) in addition to those associated with connection/separation. However, the interviewees did not usually describe their concerns explicitly in terms of their rights or what people should or should not do (cf. Spencer-Oatey 2002). It was usually more implicit than that. So further research is needed to ascertain how fundamental Spencer-Oatey's (2002, 2008, with Franklin 2009) concept of sociality rights really is.

With respect to the metapragmatic (im)politeness comments, few clear insights can be gleaned from these. The much larger number of metapragmatic emotion comments than (im)politeness comments could suggest that people's personal emotional reactions are more primary and critical than their evaluative judgements of others' (im)politeness, at least when reflecting on workplace teams. Or it might be argued that assessing people in terms of (im)politeness is less central in workplace contexts, especially when participants are focusing on goal-related matters. On the other hand, the findings could simply be a reflection of this form of data collection (interviews that did not focus on relational matters), in which case it cannot be concluded that (im)politeness judgements are less common than emotional reactions. Further research is clearly needed to explore these various possible explanations.

What then can we conclude about the controversial issues reviewed in Section 2? Insights into the 'who' and the 'why' have been mentioned above, so what about the 'what' of the relational? As I explained in Section 2.1, different researchers have focused on different elements, but unfortunately these different foci and their respective labels are not clearly explained or differentiated. There is an urgent need for further work in this area. In terms of workplace contexts, I provisionally suggest distinguishing between three different, albeit interconnected, perspectives on relations. The first perspective I label 'strategic relations'. This focuses on the power relations and distance/closeness relations of the participants, and on the ways in which these elements are negotiated, challenged, upheld and so on. Arundale's (2006, 2010) connectedness/separateness dialectic approach could perhaps fit in with this orientation. The second perspective I label 'sociality relations'. This concerns the interpersonal nature of people's relations. It includes what is widely known as small talk (e.g. Coupland 2000) and what Holmes and Marra (2004) and Holmes and Schnurr (2005) call 'relational practice' (RP). It is typically regarded (at least in countries such as New Zealand and the UK) as non-central to talk at work, and as "dispensable, peripheral, and in some cases even distracting in the workplace" (Holmes and Marra 2004: 379) because it focuses on the 'social' rather than the 'task'. In other words, it is concerned with pro-social behaviour – behaviour that promotes helping, benefiting and co-operation with others. The third perspective I label 'rapport relations'. This concerns the affective quality of people's relations, such as positive/negative, smooth/turbulent, warm/antagonistic, and is the orientation taken by Spencer-Oatey (2005, 2007 with Franklin 2009). In workplace contexts, it is usually of central concern to all staff because people want to work in a comfortable atmosphere. For workplace managers, managing it effectively is of central importance because it affects staff morale and staff productivity. A wide range of factors can affect it, including the co-construction of sociality relations (i.e. these two perspectives are interconnected and have points of overlap), but also including other elements such as task-related conflicts. This paper has focused on this 'rapport relations' perspective.

Locher and Watts' (2005) RW approach probably fits in with this third perspective, especially since Locher's more recent work (Locher 2008, with Langlotz 2008) has given more emphasis to affective elements. Evaluations of other people and/or their behaviour in terms of impoliteness, non-politeness, politeness and over-politeness could be regarded as a complementary perspective to one which focuses on people's assessments of affective harmony/disharmony. I would suggest, therefore, that the approaches are compatible and complementary, but not equivalent, as Locher (2010: 528) suggests.

Needless to say, I have no intention of claiming that these three perspectives are the only ones that can be taken with respect to 'relations between people'; others are no doubt possible. Theorising and further research is very much needed in order to yield clearer insights into this complex area.

6. Concluding Comments

This paper has used interview data to explore ‘the relational’ among project members and has not used any extracts of project members’ interactional discourse. This necessarily brings limitations to the nature and range of insights that can be achieved. An interactional discourse approach focuses on the micro and can capture rich examples of specific interactions. However, such a methodology cannot illuminate the bigger picture of relations among project participants, and as this study has demonstrated, it can fail (for example) to identify the relational issues that emerge from the omission of communication. I contend that each type of data can yield different insights, and that each can complement the other.

Furthermore, I have taken a first order analytic approach (Eelen 2001; Watts et al. 1992) which has put limitations on how the data can be analysed. For example, I have not tried to infer emotional reactions by analysing the interviewees’ intonation and stress while they reflect in their interviews on their experiences as project members. If I had done this, it would have constituted an analyst’s interpretation and would have been very complex and controversial in view of the cultural and personality differences that exist in the disclosure of emotion. My aim has been to focus on the explicit voices of the participants and to draw insights from these.

What then can we draw from this study in terms of pragmatics research in this area? Firstly, I suggest that more studies of the emotional aspects of interpersonal interaction using different methodologies could yield valuable insights. Secondly, more conceptualisation is needed on the meaning of ‘relational’, drawing on theorising and empirical findings from a range of sources. We need to take a wide range of data into account and to avoid pre-conceived ideological stances that may narrow down our conceptualisations too soon. Thirdly, I would argue that since relational issues are of such importance in the management field, a key aim of our work should be to develop conceptual frameworks that are meaningful and relevant to practising managers. I hope this exploratory study offers a small step in that direction.

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Appendix A

Terms used for text searches of judgements of 'politeness':
Admiring, affable, agreeable, amiable, attentive, benevolent, bland, chivalrous, civil, courteous, courtly, decent, deferential, dignified, friendly, gallant, gentle, good-tempered, graceful, gracious, humble, kind, knightly, mannerly, mild, nice, pleasing, polite, refined, respectful, reverent, smooth, sociable, suave, sweet, tasteful, urbane, well-behaved, well-bred, well-mannered. (Based on terms in Roget's Thesaurus 1962, given as synonyms of 'Polite': courteous, respectful, elegant)

Terms used for text searches of judgements of 'impoliteness':
Abusive, angry, arrogant, blasphemous, boorish, boring, bossy, coarse, contumelious, crude, cruel, cynical, defamatory, demeaning, derogatory, disagreeable, discourteous, disgusting, disloyal, disrespectful, distasteful, dumb, flippant, flirtatious, foolish, foul, funny, harsh, horrible, horrid, hurtful, ignorant, ill-bred, ill-mannered, impertinent, impolite, impudent, inappropriate, inconsiderate, insensitive, insolent, insulting, invective, irresponsible, lazy, libellous, loathsome, nasty, nauseating, nosy, obnoxious, offensive, opprobrious, overbearing, pathetic, presumptuous, pushy, repellent, repugnant, revolting, ridiculous, rough, rough-hewn, rude, sarcastic, scurrilous, selfish, sickening, silly, slanderous, stubborn, stupid, tactless, thoughtless, ugly, unappreciative, unbecoming, uncalled for, uncivil, uncouth, ungenerous, unladylike, unmannerly, unpleasant, unprofessional, unrefined, unsportsmanlike, violent, vituperative, vulgar. (Based on lists in Culpeper 2011, pp.81 and 83, as synonyms of 'Rude' and 'Impolite': rude, impolite, aggressive, abusive, offensive)