Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

THE VERBAL EXPRESSION OF EMPATHY IN CATALAN AND ENGLISH

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THE VERBAL EXPRESSION OF EMPATHY IN CATALAN AND ENGLISH.

by

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TITLE: The verbal expression of empathy in Catalan and English.

AUTHOR: Maria del Carme Sanahuges Escoda

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this thesis is to study and compare the speech act of empathy in Catalan and British English. In order to examine how empathy-giving is communicated in these two languages, an ad hoc corpus was compiled, consisting of the recorded interactions of native speakers of these two languages, and analysed mainly from the perspective of pragmatics, conversation analysis, and discursive psychology. The study combines a quantitative and a qualitative approach, offering a comprehensive view of what we could call "socially constructed empathy". Empathy is therefore seen and treated not as a psychological phenomenon (although some relevant cognitive issues are also included) but as a social, interactional process that is constructed interpersonally. The study focuses on the verbal strategies native speakers use when engaged in troubles telling where an empathic response is expected, their impressions of those interactions and their reflections on the personal and social use of empathy.

The findings show that the expression of empathy is complex and co-constructed by the participants in the interaction, and not a matter of using a simple strategy that communicates empathy by itself. Comparing how different participants manage themselves in the same situations and what kind of verbal and non-verbal elements they tend to use allows us to examine differences and similarities in the speech act of empathy-giving in these two languages. The results obtained from analysing the interactions in both groups of speakers seem to differ basically at a pragmalinguistic level (e.g. frequency of use of expletives) but mainly converge at a sociopragmatic level (the performance of the speech act itself). When examining how these conversations are perceived by the participants, findings show that in both language groups there is a significant correlation between the number of strategies and the level of satisfaction of the empathy receiver. The social understanding, production and use of empathy reveal marked similarities between both groups, which point to some common general features characterising the speech act of empathy-giving.

By better understanding how the speech act of empathy-giving works, we can learn how to deal more effectively with those situations that require responding in a sensitive and attuned manner and, at the same time, improve our communication skills in most of our everyday interactions. The fields that can benefit from this cover different areas of interest, from the teaching of sociopragmatic aspects in L2 learning to communication skills training in business or medicine, among many others.

TITOL: l'expressió verbal de l'empatia en català i en anglès.

AUTOR: Maria del Carme Sanahuges Escoda

RESUM

L'objectiu principal d'aquesta tesi és estudiar i comparar l'acte de parla de l'empatia en català i anglès britànic. Per tal d'analitzar com expressem empatia en aquestes dues llengües, es va compilar un corpus *ad hoc* que inclou les interaccions gravades de parlants nadius d'aquestes llengües i es va analitzar principalment des d'una perspectiva pragmàtica, de l'anàlisi de la conversa i de la psicologia discursiva. L'estudi combina una metodologia quantitativa i qualitativa oferint una visió exhaustiva del què podríem anomenar "empatia socialment construïda". L'empatia doncs es considera i es tracta no com un fenòmen psicològic (tot i que també s'inclouen alguns temes cognitius rellevants) sinó com un procés social i interaccional que es construeix de manera interpersonal. L'estudi es centra en les estratègies verbals que els parlants nadius utilitzen quan participen en el relat d'un problema del qual se n'espera una resposta empàtica, les impressions de les seves pròpies interaccions i les reflexions sobre l'ús personal i social de l'empatia.

Els resultats mostren que l'expressió de l'empatia és complexa i co-construida pels participants de la pròpia interacció i no es redueix a l'ús d'una simple estratègia que expressi empatia per ella mateixa. Comparant com els diferents participants en l'estudi responen a les mateixes situacions i quins elements verbals i no verbals tendeixen a utilitzar permet analitzar les diferències i similituds de l'acte de parla de l'expressió de l'empatia en les dues llengües. Els resultats obtinguts a l'analitzar les interaccions dels

dos grups de parlants difereixen bàsicament a nivell pragmalingüísitc (ex. en la freqüència d'ús dels expletius) però convergeixen a nivell sociopragmàtic (la realització del propi acte de parla). Quan analitzem com els participants perceben les seves pròpies converses, els resultats mostren que en els dos grups hi ha una correlació significativa entre el número d'estratègies i el nivell de satisfacció de la persona que rep aquesta empatia. La percepció, producció i ús social de l'empatia revelen unes semblances marcades entres els dos grups, apuntant a una sèrie de característiques generals comuns que caracteritzen l'acte de parla de l'expressió de l'empatia.

Si som capaços d'entendre millor com funciona aquest acte de parla, podem aprendre a abordar eficaçment totes aquelles situacions que requereixen respondre de manera sensible i adient i, al mateix temps, millorar les nostres habilitats comunicatives en la majoria de les nostres interaccions diàries. Els camps que se'n poden beneficiar inclouen diferents àrees d'interès, des de l'ensenyament d'aspectes sociopragmàtics en l'aprenentatge de segones llengües a la formació d'eines de comunicació per a empreses o professionals de la salut, entre molts d'altres.

DECLARATION

I, Maria del Carme Sanahuges Escoda, declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Parts of this work have been published as:

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Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

MARIA DEL CARME
SANAHUGES ESCODA

October, 2021 in Bellaterra

Table of contents

Chapter 5 – Discussion

Chapter 6 – Conclusions

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDICES

LIST OF COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

CA – conversation analysis

DP – discursive psychology

EP – empathy provider

ER – empathy receiver

FGI – focus group interview

IRI – interpersonal reactivity index

PT – perspective taking

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Jefferson's (2004) transcription system (only the symbols used in the transcriptions and the modifications are shown).

[	overlap beginning
]	overlap end
=	no pause or break between turns
(0.0)	pauses in tenths of seconds
(.)	pause under 0.5 seconds
⊦(0.0)⊦	time elapsed in between intervals
( )	unclear talk
(wxyz)	guessed utterance
(( ))	transcriber's description/comment
<u>wxyz</u>	stressed
WXYZ	loud sound
°wxyz °	quiet sound
.hhh	inbreath
hhh	outbreath
(h)	laughing sound within the word
\	falling intonation
/	rising intonation
:	prolonged sound
-	cut-off
> <	speeded talk
< >	slowed talk

Als meus pares, Lluís i Carme.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"If you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it."

Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In most, if not all, of our everyday interactions, a plethora of communicative resources are put at work in order not only to convey a given message but also to transmit our mood, emotions and affects. How these are expressed and perceived is sometimes simple—think of a happy occasion and how easily this happiness tends to be transmitted—and sometimes more complex, as when dealing with a traumatic experience causing emotional numbing, for example. These expressions sometimes respond to our emotional state and some other times they do not, but still they fulfil an important function: conform to existing social rules and conventions and make our interactions socially appropriate and acceptable. At a funeral, we convey our condolences to the bereaved even if we did not really know the deceased because this is what we are expected to do. Offering words of sympathy is part of this etiquette and not doing it appropriately may cause discomfort or even offence. Expressing our real or fake emotions, even when not talking explicitly about them, is part of any successful interaction, allowing us to communicate more than what is just said. For example, we can make it known to others that we like or dislike something without saying it or we can perceive that our interlocutor is getting angry or anxious and consequently regulate how we express ourselves. Capturing and expressing these moods and emotions, together with our knowledge of social norms and behaviour, is key in order to make our interactions socially satisfactory. Often, when the interactional outcome is not

considered acceptable or adequate, we tend to think that this is due to some lack of understanding or we tend to blame the other person's poor or utter lack of empathy. Whether there is in fact lack of empathy or not is usually hard to say, but what we define as "lack of empathy" in most cases refers to how that person has responded in a situation which seemed to require sensitivity, care, and understanding from them but which was not properly provided.

Understanding the others' internal state is therefore essential to respond appropriately, and this is empathy's main role. "Empathy, the ability to imagine oneself in another's place and understand the other's feelings, desires, ideas, and actions": this is the definition given by *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2016), which would match those found in many other dictionaries and the definition most people would probably give if asked. Popularly, we tend to define empathy as the ability to put ourselves in someone's shoes, synthesising the cognitive and emotional processes that are involved in the act of empathising. Responding empathically would then imply doing it in a way that takes that person's feelings and thoughts into consideration. How this is interactionally managed is the main aim of this dissertation. From the perspective of different approaches, the current study intends to examine and compare the construction of empathy in elicited interactions in two different languages: Catalan and British English.

1.2 MOTIVATION

The inspiration for this research study, like on many other occasions, comes from real life. When faced with experiences that do not seem to fulfil our expectations, we tend to wonder what went wrong. This is often the case when thinking of interactions where empathy was expected but not provided. After telling a friend of yours about a problem you had, they did not respond as you expected and they were not at all supportive. At that stage many questions cross your mind: you wonder if maybe you did not make yourself understood or if the other person was angry with you, in short, you wonder what went wrong. These are the kind of questions we find ourselves trying to answer when this occurs.

The current study aims to find the answer to some of these and other issues related to the expression and perception of empathy. The cross-cultural approach to empathy-

giving in Catalan and British English makes a contribution to the pragmatic and discursive study of empathy in general and provides a broader perspective of our understanding of this speech act with a study design that covers relevant aspects related not only to the production but also the perception of empathy. At the same time, considering that the field of discourse analysis and pragmatics in Catalan is still relatively underdeveloped (Payrató, 2016), the present research study addresses the need for new speech acts to be analysed from this perspective.

The primary focus of the study is on observable aspects of empathy, on how empathy is expressed, organised, and perceived, and although some reference is made to cognitive, mental dimensions, it is only insofar as they are related to these interactional aspects. Consequently, if empathy is understood as an interactional process, as a way of performing a given social action (expressing interest in and support for the other person), the two central theoretical frameworks used (conversation analysis and discursive psychology) match this point of view and see talk as social action. The two approaches facilitate the analysis of talk in interaction and the understanding of social action.

1.3 STATE OF THE QUESTION

Traditionally, emotions and empathy have been studied by psychology as they were mainly seen as internal hardwired phenomena, but with the development of constructionist theories, these emotions became connected with the world around, with sociocultural practices. In the social constructionist model, the principle that knowledge is constructed and meaning is shared highlights the importance of interaction within society, of socialization and, consequently, of language. It is in face-to-face situations where the experience of others is possible and where expressive acts are reciprocally oriented:

> The other, however [in contrast with myself], is so appresented in the face-to-face situation. 'What he is', therefore, is ongoingly available to me. This availability is continuous and prereflective. On the other hand, 'What I am' is not so available. To make it available requires that I stop, arrest the continuous spontaneity of my experience, and deliberately turn my attention back upon

> myself. What is more, such reflection about myself is typically occasioned by the attitude towards me that the other exhibits. It is typically a 'mirror' response to attitudes of the other. (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 44)

Relating to the other makes them accessible and real, but, without an emotional attachment, the socialization process becomes almost impossible. For constructionists, emotions are also constructed by these sociocultural norms, as any other type of knowledge. One of the main representatives in the study of emotions within this approach is Rom Harré and his *emotionology,* a theory on the use of emotion words taking into account physiological, cognitive and social components (Harré, 2009). Fundamentally, social constructionist analyses of emotions focus on language and social interaction from a theoretical perspective without studying them in action, i.e. how they are interactionally used (Averill, 1980, 1985, 2012; Loseke, 1993; McCarthy, 1994; Boiger & Mesquita, 2012; Ruiz-Junco, 2013; Parkinson, 2012; Hoemann et al., 2019). The need to examine how emotions are actually displayed in social situations as part of our interactions is, however, addressed by other approaches—some originating in sociology itself, others in psychology—like conversation analysis or discursive psychology, which add a new dimension to the study of emotions.

Leading this new route are studies on medical communication. Because it is acknowledged that empathy is central in fields like healthcare, particularly regarding the doctor-patient relationship, there is a considerable number of studies about empathy in this area. Some of these are about instruments that measure empathy alone or together with other skills—like the Jefferson Scale of Physician Empathy (Hojat et al., 2001, 2002) or the consultation and relational empathy (CARE) measure (Mercer et al., 2004)—while others focus more on communicative aspects (e.g. Bylund & Makoul, 2005; Ruusuvuori, 2005, 2007; Warmington, 2012; Riess & Kraft-Todd, 2014; Merlini, 2015; Foster et al., 2016; Adamson et al., 2018; Kirkscey, 2018; Krystallidou, 2018; Smith et al., 2020; Vinson & Underman, 2020; Cannity et al., 2021; Lobchuk et al., 2021). In comparison, there are fewer studies focusing on how empathy is verbally communicated in everyday face-to-face interactions outside of medical settings (e.g. Burleson & Holmstrom, 2008; Heritage, 2011; Couper-Kuhlen, 2012; Kupetz, 2014), and many of these focus on how empathy is expressed and facilitated in online communication and social media (Preece

& Ghozati, 2001; Coulson et al., 2007; Pfeil & Zaphiris, 2007, 2009; Siriaraya et al., 2011). The current research study seeks to add to the literature that analyses empathy in face-to-face interactions and has been designed so that the kind of messages employed when constructing empathic events can be identified and the participants' perspective on those events studied.

1.4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This thesis aims to examine, describe and compare the speech event of empathy in two different languages: Catalan and British English. Under the general perspective of pragmatics, the study draws mainly on conversation analysis (CA) and discursive psychology (DP) to inquire into the verbal expression of empathy, its interactional organization, and its perception.

The research questions delve into two broad categories: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic, which require different data-gathering instruments yielding different types of data to ensure the questions in both categories can be effectively addressed. The research questions are the following:

Research question 1: How do Catalan and British English speakers verbally express support and empathy? What linguistic strategies and forms are used by speakers of both languages?

Research question 2: How do the systems of social support in Catalan and British English compare? What cross-cultural differences are there in the production and perception of interactional discourse in specific contexts where support and empathy are expressed?

The study was designed to answer these questions, using methods that provide data suitable for pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic analyses. While pragmatics has extensively studied the speech acts of apologies, requests, invitations or promises, to name but a few, the realization of empathy has been understudied, particularly in Catalan (Payrató, 2016) and from a cross-cultural perspective (Main et al., 2017). Therefore, the present work aims to contribute to its description and analysis. Although the scope of the study is limited to a group of participants, native speakers of Catalan and English, and it does not intend to extrapolate its results to make general claims, it

can still conduce to and advance in the understanding of empathy from an interactional point of view, not only in these two languages but also probably in many Western ones. Empathy is not treated as a subjective, psychological phenomenon but as an observable, interpersonal process that accomplishes a given action: the provision of support. Thus, the analytic procedures employed focus on the display of empathy—how it is made available and how it is jointly built—and the understanding of its social use. By examining how the participants manage in dyadic interactions and how they respond in interviews, the layers conforming the negotiation of empathy can be unwrapped to find what lies at its core. Although each interaction is unique and many variables play a part in how it develops, some features seem to occur recurrently, suggesting some routine approximation to the social use of empathy. The mixed-method design of the study—role plays, questionnaires and focus group interviews—allows a comprehensive analysis of the data obtained from different perspectives: the researcher's and the participants', pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic. The fact that the same methods and situations are employed in the Catalan and English groups allows replication and provides data that can be examined independently for each of these languages but also facilitates comparison. Apart from this, it is important to note that, to my knowledge, this is the first cross-cultural study on the display and perception of empathy combining Catalan and English and with this specific study design.

1.5 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 is introductory, and includes the motivation behind this research project, a brief state of the question and the aims of the study. Chapter 2 contextualises the topic of empathy within the theoretical frameworks most relevant for the approach adopted: psychology, sociology, and linguistics. It also reviews the two main disciplines this study draws on—conversation analysis (CA) and discursive psychology (DP)—highlighting their most relevant concepts and principles. The chapter aims to provide some insights into the different conceptualisations of empathy in all these fields so that a better understanding of the complexity of the construct can be gained.

Chapter 3 deals with the methodology employed, including information about the data gathering methods and process, types of data collected, transcription procedures, and

participants. There is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and each of them is described, together with the rationale behind the choice.

The next two chapters cover the results: Chapter 4 presents the results obtained and is organised following the order of administration: interpersonal reactivity index (IRI)—specifically, perspective taking scores—role plays, post-role play questionnaires and focus group interviews. Chapter 5 deals with the analysis and discussion of the results, where they are connected and seen from multiple, intersecting perspectives. This chapter reveals the similarities and differences found between the Catalan and English groups in their production, perception and interpretation of empathy.

As the closing chapter, Chapter 6 summarises the findings, connects them with the research questions posed in Chapter 1, and draws some conclusions. The contributions of this research thesis to the field of linguistics, pragmatics and discourse analysis are outlined as well as the implications, limitations, recommendations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

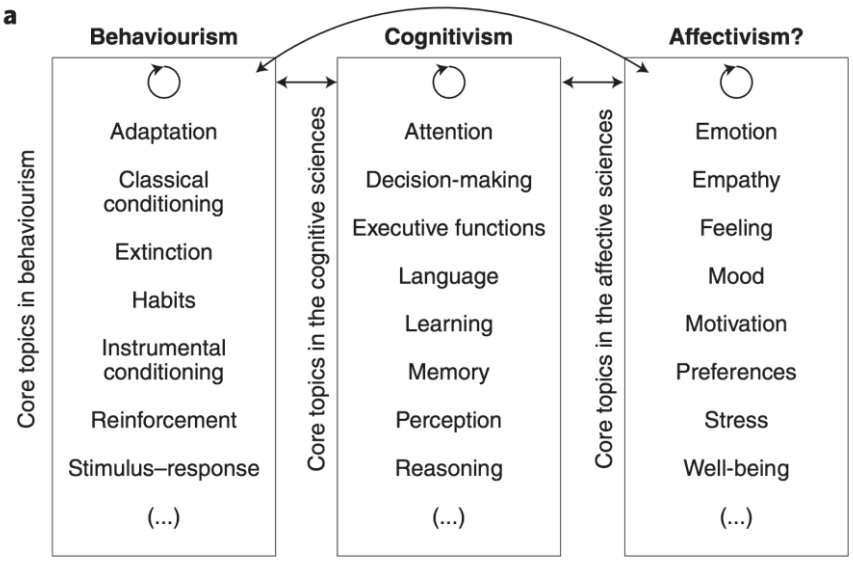
THE STUDY OF EMOTION AND EMPATHY: AN OVERVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The interest in affect and emotions in the last decades has led to many fruitful advances in research in different fields, from anthropology or psychology to computer science or linguistics, to name but a few, and has developed into what some have termed *affectivism* (Dukes et al., 2021). After the central roles of cognitivism and behaviourism, now the pendulum has swung in favour of affectivism, a model that aims to improve the understanding of affective processes by combining the former models (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Dukes et al.'s model of affectivism and its relationship with behaviourism and cognitivism (Dukes et al., 2021, p. 2).



a, Does the increasing research focus on affective processes and on their explanatory power mean we are now in the era of affectivism? The circular arrows represent how the study of the processes within each box improves our understanding of the core mechanisms typically investigated in behaviourism and in the cognitive and affective sciences, respectively. The bidirectional arrows between the boxes represent the idea that the mechanisms described in one box are important to understanding those described in the other boxes.

Affectivism is therefore an umbrella term that incorporates different visions, approaches and disciplines revolving around the study of affective phenomena, also known as *affective sciences* (Sander & Scherer, 2009; Hastings et al., 2011; Gross & Barrett, 2013; Fox, 2018). The increasing number of publications, such as the recently founded journal *Affective Science*—official journal of the Society for Affective Science—

or the specific publishing series by Oxford University Press on this area as well as the existence of research centres like the Swiss Center for Affective Sciences—comprising research groups from different universities—the research programme at Yale University or the Affective Science at Standford University show the growing importance of the field.

As shown in Figure 1 above, empathy is one of the many topics addressed by the discipline and, in this regard, the current study aims to contribute to the understanding of this phenomenon mainly from an interactional perspective. This chapter, where the theoretical framework for the current research project is established, intends to provide a general view of the different fields the study is concerned with so that a map of the subject area can be drawn, facilitating the exploration and analysis described in later chapters. What is presented in this section is clearly not and does not intend to be a complete review of the phenomenon of empathy—this would require a thesis of its own—but a brief summary of those empathy-related aspects that may be relevant in the context of the present study. Empathy is therefore briefly presented from three different perspectives: psychology, sociology, and linguistics. Since empathy implies the processing of another person's emotional state, the link between the two—empathy and emotion—is obviously strong, frequently sharing the same theoretical framework (empathy is usually embedded in studies on emotion). Given that, frequent references are made to emotion and different theories on emotion that also account for empathy. In what comes next, the concept of empathy is first reviewed from the point of view of psychology, mainly focusing on social psychology and emotional intelligence (Section 2.2). After that, Section 2.3 presents empathy from the perspective of sociology followed by a linguistic approach (Section 2.4), where a general review of the study of emotions and empathy from different linguistic approaches, e.g. politeness theory or systemic functional linguistics, is provided. The approaches included in these three sections aim to offer a general overview of the topic and a taste of some different and inspiring perspectives empathy can be studied from within each of those fields. Thus, although some of these theories and approaches may not be directly adopted or favoured in the present study, they still provide a representative picture of the scientific scene for empathy. These sections are then followed by the presentation of the two approaches this study mainly draws on: conversation analysis (CA) (Section 2.4.1) and

discursive psychology (DP) (Section 2.4.2). In the context of this study, it is important to note that, although the main theoretical contributions come from CA and DP, there are also some brushstrokes of other frameworks like pragmatics and psychology.

2.2 PSYCHOLOGY-ORIENTED APPROACHES TO EMPATHY

The Encyclopaedia of Social Psychology (2007, p. 296) defines empathy as "one person's response to his or her perceptions of another person's current experience" but, when compared to other concepts empathy is often associated with, such as sympathy, the definition is refined and empathy is then described as "understanding another person's experience by imagining oneself in that other person's situation." Although these definitions seem to only refer to a subjective, cognitive process, empathy involves multiple aspects. If this understanding and response are not shown, from a social perspective that person would quite probably not be considered empathic; therefore, empathy involves acting and responding in certain way: showing interest and understanding and addressing the other person's concern. As Wondra (2017) mentioned in his dissertation, if empathy is not shown and does not produce the socially expected results of caring, understanding and validating the other person's emotions, then it is not considered empathy and the other way round: if there is no imagining being in someone's shoes but one still responds as socially expected in terms of empathy, that is considered empathy. Consequently, empathy seems to have more to do with its manifestation (empathy-based behaviours) than with its underlying processes (one's identification with another's internal state).

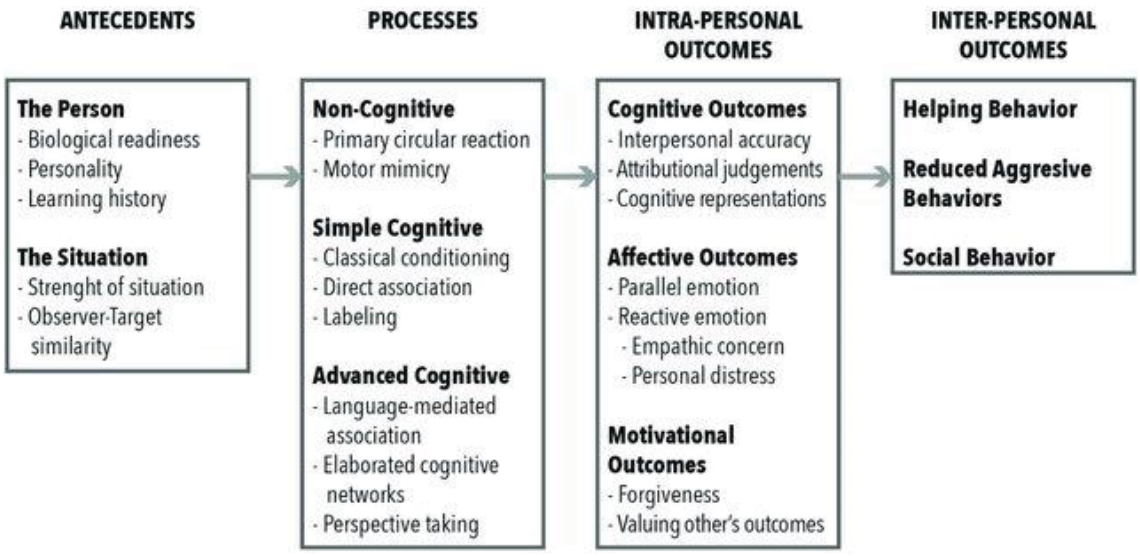
A major drawback to the study of empathy is that there exists no consensus on the exact meaning of the concept. Batson (2009) distinguished eight different concepts of empathy based on the aspect that is prioritised: (a) cognitive empathy or empathic accuracy, i.e. grasping the other person's internal state, (b) mimicry or imitation, i.e. adopting the other person's movements, posture or neural responses, (c) affective empathy or emotional contagion, i.e. feeling what the other person feels, (d) aesthetic empathy, i.e. projecting into the other person's situation, (e) perspective taking ,i.e. imagining how the other person is feeling and thinking, (f) imagine-self or projective empathy, i.e. imagining how one would feel and think in the other person's place, (g) empathic or personal distress, i.e. feeling distressed when seeing the other person's

distress, and (h) empathic concern or sympathy, i.e. feeling for the other person who is in need. Cuff et al. (2016) found over forty definitions of empathy in the literature. From all the distinct, often inconsistent, definitions and the plethora of names given to the same and different aspects of empathy, it is clear that this is not a simple concept. Empathy is a complex construct that encompasses cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects and although, in general, it is not considered an emotion in itself, it often appears in studies and research on emotions. Contrary to this idea that empathy is not an emotion, Wondra (2017) claims that emotions activated by empathy cannot be considered anything else but emotions, vicarious instead of first-hand, but emotions after all.

In spite of the multiple definitions of empathy and of its categorisation or not as an emotion, there is a general consensus that it is a multi-dimensional concept that includes different components of which the emotional and cognitive ones seem to be commonly agreed on. The emotional component—also known as affective empathy—refers to sharing the feelings of another person, whereas the cognitive component refers to the ability to understand that person's feelings and thoughts. The elements these two components are made up of vary depending on different authors. For example, Davis (1980, 1983) integrated the two components—emotional and cognitive—when developing the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) scale (Section 3.2.1). Each of these components, in turn, consist of two aspects: emotional empathy comprises empathic concern (the tendency to have feelings of sorrow or concern for those in need) and personal distress (the tendency to experience discomfort and worry when witnessing the suffering or distress of others)—i.e. the former refers to having feelings of concern for others while the latter refers to having feelings of concern for oneself—and cognitive empathy comprises fantasy (the tendency to identify oneself with fictional characters) and perspective taking (the tendency or ability to adopt the other person's point of view). The author (Davis, 2006) developed a comprehensive model of empathy (Figure 2) including the internal processes occurring within the observer, features of the context, and the resulting outcomes:

Figure 2

Davis' organizational model of empathy-related constructs (Davis, 2006, p. 444).



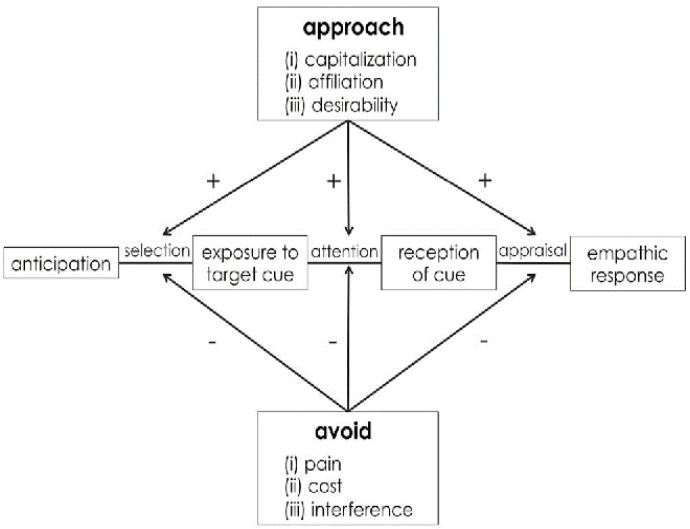
The main elements in this model—antecedents, processes, intra-personal outcomes, and inter-personal outcomes—consist of several dimensions that make the elaborateness of any empathic episode evident. The model includes personal and contextual elements that play a part in and may affect a given empathic episode, and covers the whole process activated in an empathic experience, stressing the importance of perspective taking as a central aspect of empathy. For Davis, perspective taking (the main element of cognitive empathy) enables us to function successfully in society because it allows us to manage conflict and disagreement, favouring cooperation and tolerance.

Based on how empathy operates, there is a distinction between empathy referring to a person's general ability or disposition to show empathy—trait or dispositional empathy—and empathy referring to that person's responses in a given situation—state or situational empathy. Trait or dispositional empathy therefore describes the relatively stable characteristics of a person's empathic disposition, whereas state or situational empathy is related to the specific empathic responses on one occasion (Eisenberg et al., 1994; Nezlek et al., 2007). Different methods have been developed to measure trait empathy—e.g. Hogan's Empathy Scale (1969), Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (1980, 1983), Jolliffe & Farrington's Basic Empathy Scale (BES) (2006), etc.—either as self-report or other-report instruments.

However, not all theories are based on the idea that empathy is just a trait. For instance, Zaki (2014) understands empathy not only as a trait but also as a skill, which can be modified by our experiences and can be somehow trained. Aware of its heterogeneous nature, the author sees empathy as a "motivated phenomenon" (Zaki, 2014, p. 1608) leading either to avoidance or to experience. His model identifies the motives behind these two outcomes—avoidance or experience—and the strategies that can regulate them. Motives are based on the idea of the costs and benefits that attaining a certain goal involves, which is what tips the balance in favour of one of the two options. Zaki identified six motives, three leading to the avoidance of empathy (suffering, cost, and interference) and three leading to the approach of empathy (positive affect, affiliation and desirability), together with three strategies that can modify the course of an empathic episode (situation selection, attention modulation, and appraisal) (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Zaki's model of motivated empathy (Zaki, 2014, p 1626).



The model emphasises the role of motivation in empathy, and accounts not only for the double nature of empathy, as an automatic and as a context-dependent response, but also for any successful or failing empathic episode, since it provides a flexible interpretation of the concept. By identifying both the motives and the strategies that drive us to or away from empathy, we can learn to develop and master the skill.

In general, most evidence indicates that empathy is connected with positive outcomes such as pro-social, cooperative behaviour (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Eisenberg, 2003, 2006, 2010; Vreeke & Van der Mark, 2003; De Vignemont & Singer, 2006; Hoffman, 2008; Hein & Singer, 2010; Eisenberg et al., 2010), the fostering of social bonds (Gallese, 2003; Galinsky et al., 2005; Telle & Pfister, 2012, 2016; Decety et al., 2016; Batson, 2018) or by helping interactions flow (Redmond, 1985; Preckel et al., 2018). Although the studies confirming these positive results predominate in the literature, there is also a growing body of evidence that shows that empathy can also lead to negative results such as interpersonal distance, biased choices, dehumanization or compassion fatigue, among others, (Eisenberg, 2000; Klimecki & Singer, 2012; Cameron et al., 2016; Konrath & Grynberg, 2016; Bloom, 2016, 2017; Hansen et al., 2018; Breithaupt, 2018, 2019).

Within emotional and social intelligence, empathy is one of the aptitudes included in the most relevant models that have been developed (Neubauer & Freudenthaler, 2005; Bar-On, 2006; Mayer et al., 2008; Joseph & Newman, 2010; Mayer et al., 2016). The first emotional intelligence model was Salovey & Mayer's (1990), which merged the two psychological constructs of emotion and intelligence. They described emotional intelligence as "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions." (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). The model consists of three processes—appraisal and expression of emotion, emotion regulation, and the adaptive use of emotions—and incorporates self- and other-perspective. It is in the appraisal of others' emotions that empathy emerges. In fact, one of the main aspects of empathy has to do with the idea of appraisal, that is, how a given fact or situation is judged. In psychology, empathy is said to emerge if the evaluation or appraisal of a situation by the speaker coincides with that of the recipient (De Vignemont & Singer 2006; Wondra 2017).

Salovey & Mayer's model was subsequently revised (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer et al., 2011) and the concept of emotional intelligence was reformulated:

> 'Emotional intelligence is the set of abilities that account for how people's emotional perception and understanding vary in their accuracy. More formally, we define emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive and express emotion,

> assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others' (after Mayer & Salovey, 1997). (Mayer et al, 2011, p. 532)

Empathy, therefore, is not only part of the model itself but is integrated in the definition of emotional intelligence. We cannot perceive, assimilate or understand the others' emotions without empathy, more specifically cognitive empathy. In a study carried out by the authors (Mayer et al., 1999), emotional intelligence was found to be a good predictor of empathy. These results are supported by other studies that also found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and empathy or, more specifically, with the cognitive aspect of empathy, i.e. perspective taking (Ciarrochi et al., 2000; Schutte et al., 2001; Fernández-Abascal & Martín-Díaz, 2019; Pongrac et al., 2019).

Other models followed Salovey & Mayer's, presenting their own characterisation of emotional intelligence. One of these is Bar-On's (2006) model of emotional-social intelligence, a concept understood as "a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands." (p. 15). This model consists of ten factors, one of them being empathy, which is one of the most relevant components of emotional-social intelligence as the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) tool developed by the same author confirmed (Bar-On, 1997). The findings that emerged from applying this tool show that, in most populations, emotional-social intelligence improves with age and that females have better interpersonal skills and demonstrate more empathy than males, whereas the latter tend to have better intrapersonal skills—the ability to be aware of oneself—than the former.

Even though it is not a branch of psychology in itself, many of the findings of cognitive neuroscience have been logically incorporated into it. Understanding the nature and functioning of brain structures (neuroscience) can no doubt shed light on the study of the mind (psychology), which has made cognitive neuroscience an indispensable source of many studies in psychology. Thus, for example, from the perspective of neuroscience, empathy is related to the brain mechanisms that allow us to experience another person's feelings. There is evidence that certain neural structures are activated when

empathising and any deficit or impairment in those structures would account for disorders affecting empathy such as alexithymia or antisocial personality disorder. The discovery of mirror neurons has been a breakthrough in the field, since they explain basic empathic processes. These neurons are activated when seeing (sensory) or executing (motor) an action and they recreate in our brains the actions and emotions we recognise in others, thus enabling us to share and understand them. Although evidence points to the fact that they may not be entirely responsible for empathic behaviour and that other aspects are also likely to intervene, mirror neurons seem to play a part not only in some forms of empathy but also in other processes, for example those connected with imitation or language acquisition (Baird et al., 2011; Ferrari & Rizzolatti, 2014; Debes, 2017; Bekkali et al., 2021). Cognitive neuroscience is a broad field that has studied and continues to study neuronal processes connected with empathy, offering interesting results that can illuminate the complex mental processes involved when empathising and that relate to the overt expressive facet of empathy (for reviews see Decety & Moriguchi, 2007; Decety & Ickes, 2011; Marsh, 2018; Flasbeck et al., 2018).

2.3 SOCIAL-ORIENTED APPROACHES TO EMPATHY

Within sociology, one of the theories that primarily deals with social interactions is social constructivism. Highly influenced by Vygotsky's conception that individuals are the result of a social and historical process where language is key, social constructivism aims to explore human knowledge. For social constructivists, learning is seen as actively and collaboratively constructed and shaped by social and cultural forces so our knowledge is defined by our reality, rather than being understood as an individual and isolated experience, and is mainly created through our interactional practices in social settings. Because it is through human activity that knowledge is constructed, language takes a central role in these shared social practices and interactions. In the same way as any mental process is influenced by culture, so is emotion (Averill, 1985). Emotions are therefore social constructions based on some cultural paradigms:

> Paradigms of emotion, such as the romantic ideal, provide the individual with a model and rationale for behavior, and by conforming to the paradigm, the

> individual serves to confirm the broader cultural network, of which the paradigm is an aspect. (Averill, 1985, p.93)

Emotions consist of many components governed by biological, psychological, and social factors that create these paradigms. Emotions are physiological reactions whose meaning is conveyed by the sociocultural reality in which they exist (Averill, 1980, 1985). They are conceptualised as social phenomena and, as such, they are experienced in everyday life and appraised and organised based on cultural norms. According to Boiger & Mesquita (2012), emotions are ongoing processes that adapt to the continuously changing context, which allows individuals to manage in different kinds of situations. This adaptability to the complex and diverse frames of reference involved in each specific context requires some level of empathy for social interactions to be successful. Empathy allows us to recognise and demonstrate awareness of the other's viewpoint and helps to collaboratively engage in and construct this knowledge.

One of the most relevant figures in the study of emotions in sociology is Hochschild. For her, sociocultural determinants define, express, appraise, and manage feelings (Hochschild, 1998) and it is for sociologists of emotions to find out how the rules of emotions and context are related. Feelings are social because they are produced in our interactions and because each culture has its own conventions to define and express them, or, in her own words: "it is through our apprehension of an interaction, our definition of feeling, our appraisal of feeling and our management of feeling that feeling is social" (Hochschild, 2008, p. 47). The author proposed a sociological theory of emotion and feeling (Hochschild, 1975) based on the idea that feelings get their meanings in relation to specific dimensions or spheres: the normative dimension connecting feeling and feeling rules, the expressive dimension connecting one's feelings and how other people understand those feelings, and the political dimension connecting one's feelings and the target of those feelings. The normative sphere indicates what is or is not appropriate according to sociocultural norms and it controls both behaviour and the feeling itself. The expressive sphere allows us to infer how genuine the expression of a feeling is, based on different factors that conform out knowledge of the context, the other person, the customary social habits, etc. The political sphere deals with social hierarchies and how these manage feelings and emotions.

However, it is in a later work, *So How's the Family? And Other Essays* (2013), where she focuses on empathy and introduces the notion of empathy maps: social spaces enclosing those we empathise with whose boundaries delimit high-empathy, low-empathy or no-empathy zones. These maps are developed through our experience and are flexible, extending and altering their boundaries through different actions, for example by getting to know the other person.

Another perspective within sociology, symbolic interaction theory or symbolic interactionism, draws on the basic idea that social interactions, central in the creation of society, allow to make and interpret meaning. Although the term was coined afterwards, symbolic interaction theory has its roots in Mead's ideas, posthumously published by some of his students and collected in *Mind, Self and Society* (1934), on the development of the self from social communication processes. The theory argues that meaning is constructed through our social interactions but is highly flexible and adaptable, since meaning-making is a continuous context-dependent process. Nonetheless, it was Cooley's notion of sympathy, different from how the concept was then commonly understood, that became the first sociological approach to empathy. In his book *Human Nature and the Social Order* (1922), Cooley described sympathy in the same way we currently describe empathy:

> The growth of personal ideas through intercourse […] implies a growing power of sympathy, of entering into and sharing the minds of other persons. To converse with another, through words, looks, or other symbols, means to have more or less understanding or communion with him, to get on common ground and partake of his ideas and sentiments. If one uses sympathy in this connection—and it is perhaps the most available word—one has to bear in mind that it denotes the sharing of any mental state that can be communicated […] (Cooley, 1922, p.136)

Following the path initiated by him, the notion of empathy was further developed by other authors (Shott, 1979; Clark, 1997; Ruiz-Junco, 2017). Drawing on previous sociological work on empathy, Ruiz-Junco (2017) proposed a framework for the analysis of empathy consisting of three basic components: an empathiser, a recipient, and "a moral claim for empathy based on larger cultural understandings that involve shared

values" (Ruiz-Junco, 2017, p. 420). The framework also takes into account Hochschild's idea of empathy rules (Hochschild, 2016), internalised expectations about empathy dependent on the context, that are used to discriminate those situations or recipients requiring empathy from others that do not and to manage them appropriately. How this is finally done is called *empathy performance*, including not only verbal displays of empathy but also non-verbal ones (gestures, body language, etc.), which can occur as a genuine expression of real empathy (honest empathy) or as an expression unrelated to real empathic feelings (contrived empathy). The success of these performances is assessed according to their perceived sincerity and to their empathic value. Ruiz-Junco proposes the concept of *empathy paths*, i.e. cultural and personal trajectories that govern our empathic actions, that have an impact on and define our social relationships with others and that can be self-transcendent (when self and other merge), therapeutic (when the distinction between self and other is respected), or instrumental (when empathy aims to an extrinsic goal).

One of the main figures in this branch of sociology and considered if not the most, one of the most prominent figures in sociology in general, Erving Goffman, examined face-to-face interactions and contributed to their analysis with the formulation and development of different concepts such as that of *frame* (Goffman, 1974). For him, social situations are organised according to basic frames of understanding, which allow people to make sense of those situations. Frames are therefore assumptions about what is happening in a given moment. They are socially shared and specific to each culture.

> […] forms of face-to-face life are worn smooth by constant repetition on the part of participants who are heterogeneous in many ways and yet must quickly reach a working understanding; these forms thus seem more open to systematic analysis than are the internal or external workings of many macroscopic entities. The forms themselves are anchored in subjective feelings, and thus allow an appreciable role for empathy. (Goffman, 1983, p. 9)

Goffman's conception of face-to-face interaction is that it is socially situated, coordinated and characterised by social structures—including, among others, social class or gender—which allow their extraction and analysis. Each interaction occurs within a limited time and space, offering its participants a stage where their cognitive

states can be displayed: “Emotion, mood, cognition, bodily orientation, and muscular effort are intrinsically involved, introducing an inevitable psychobiological element. Ease and uneasiness, unselfconsciousness and wariness are central.” (Goffman, 1983, p. 3). Cognition is key in interactions since it allows us to organise them in terms of meaning. Throughout these interactions individuals are categorically and/or individually characterised—i.e. they can be placed within a given social category or they can be placed as unique entities—a necessary process for interaction to take place.

Goffman’s theories of social life cannot be reduced to the few concepts referred to here, as proved by his legacy, and instead a selection of themes relevant for the sociological view of emotion and empathy have been mentioned. His influence has extended not only in his own field of sociology but also in more linguistic areas such as conversation analysis.

2.4 LANGUAGE-ORIENTED APPROACHES TO EMPATHY

Emotions and empathy are inherent in our lives and expressing and sharing them is crucial in interpersonal communication. Apart from being studied from the point of view of neuroscience, psychology or sociology, emotions and empathy are also displayed in and generated by our everyday social interactions, so other scientific disciplines are used to examine the relationship between language and emotions.

From a linguistic perspective, empathy is connected with different approaches, some purely linguistic and some interdisciplinary. For example, at the intersection of psychology and linguistics, cognitive linguistics sees language and emotions as mental systems that interact and that are mediated by cognition. Rather than studying emotions in themselves, cognitive linguistics analyses how emotions are talked about, how emotion concepts are linguistically expressed, and how language reflects our conceptualization of emotions (Foolen, 2012). Emotions are conceptualised through metaphors, metonymies, related concepts—one’s emotion and attitude towards what causes the emotion—and cognitive models, and related to some other elicited concepts such as notions related to social norms and relations or appropriateness, creating a sort of network. Because emotions are represented as mental cognitive-cultural models whose expression is socially regulated and because they are activated in given contexts,

this conceptual network varies depending on the situation (Foolen, 2012; Schwarz-Friesel, 2015; Kövecses, 2014, 2019). Cognitive linguistics embraces several frameworks, each with its own terminology and constructs. For instance, in their studies of linguistic semantics, Wierzbicka (1992, 1999) and Goddard (1995, 2002, 2010) developed a meaning-based methodology called Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) that allowed to describe and study "meaning-related phenomena in all languages" (Goddard, 2010), including emotions. The NSM system draws on a list of universal primes—i.e. words representing basic concepts and existing in all languages—and a shared set of rules essentially reducing the meaning of a given concept to a paraphrase made up of standard metalanguage. Since its origins, the system has been further developed by many other researchers (e.g. Peeters, 2006, 2020; Harkins & Wierzbicka, 1997; Ye, 2020; among many others). Emotions are related to a cognitive reference that identifies them and are also explained through this system so that they can be interpreted universally, without tying them to a specific language and culture. Wierzbicka proposes the following definition of emotion following NSM:

> emotion
> a. it can be like this:
> b. someone thinks something at some time
> c. because of this, this someone feels something for some time
> d. at the same time, something is happening somewhere in this someone's body because of this (Wierzbicka, 2010, p. 380)

Emotions are therefore analysed semantically, as emotion terms, without going into other aspects such as the subjective experience the term refers to or their social use. The main aim of NSM is to analyse and represent concepts so that they can apply to any language. Therefore, emotion terms are described following a prototypical cognitive scenario like the one presented above for the term *emotion,* untying them from specific languages and cultures. The approach accounts for the pragmatic use of these emotion terms by means of cultural scripts, which also employ semantic primes and offer a description and interpretation of social practices. For example, when comparing the cultural scripts on how to express emotions in American English and Polish, Goddard (2002) provides these two scripts, one for each language:

An Anglo-American cultural script:

people think:

when I say something to other people

it is good if these people think that I feel something good

A Polish cultural script:

people think:

it is bad

when a person wants other people to think that this person feels something if this person doesn't feel this (Goddard, 2002, p. 39)

NSM aims to study the emotion terms used in any language from a universal perspective, avoiding the predominant English ethnocentrism existing in many linguistic studies and, in turn, overcoming any potential conceptual difficulty that this ethnocentrism can entail.

In a different vein from cognitive linguistics, systemic functional linguistics (SFL) examines meaning in context by analysing the linguistic choices made by speakers in the construction of this meaning. The theory was developed by Halliday (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) in the second half of the 20th century and sees language as a tool for making meaning, organised according to three different metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational dimension has to do with the logical and representative function of language. The interpersonal component takes the interactive dimension of language into account. The textual metafunction organises discourse. Language is therefore conceived as a "network of dynamic and open systems" which speakers can choose from (Schleppegrell, 2012, p.22). As it often happens, different approaches within a given framework develop and, within SFL, one of these approaches is Martin & White's (2005). Based on the analysis of six different discourse systems—appraisal, ideation, identification, conjunction, periodicity, and negotiation (Martin & Rose, 2003)—each related to a specific metafunction (a group of systems making meanings), Martin & White aim to analyse discourse from the perspective of these metafunctions. The appraisal system, connected with evaluation and interpersonal meanings, is the one dealing with emotions and the one Martin & White (2005) focus

on. Their appraisal theory allows the analysis of the different linguistic resources that help convey emotions and evaluations operating in interpersonal contexts and that are organised according to three domains: engagement (linguistic resources used to define speakers' position with respect to their statements), attitude (linguistic resources used to make evaluations) and graduation (linguistic resources used to regulate focus and intensity). The authors developed a comprehensive coding system to identify and classify the main elements in these three domains. The domain of attitude deals with how feelings and affect are encoded, providing the speaker with tools to make their stance explicit. Their theory has been further developed in different subfields and by different authors (e.g. Bednarek, 2007, 2009; Bartley & Benitez-Castro, 2016; Alba-Juez, 2018; Su & Hunston, 2019) and it has also been used in intercultural studies (e.g. Taboada et al., 2014; Ho, 2014; Auman, 2014; Sheldon, 2018; Vinagre & Corral Esteban, 2018).

Within interpersonal pragmatics, politeness theory provides a relevant, pragmatic approach to the analysis of empathic interactions. Developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), the theory aims to explain social interactions and is based on the concept of face (one's public self-image), implicit in any communicative process. Although the theory has been further developed and enriched thanks to the contributions of many other authors (e.g. Leech, 1983; Kasper, 1990; Arundale, 1999; Locher & Watts, 2005; Terkourafi, 2005; Haugh, 2007; Katz, 2015), Brown and Levinson's work laid its foundation. According to politeness theory, face reflects a duality in terms of needs of interactional actors: on the one hand, the need to be ratified and appreciated by the other actors and, on the other hand, the need for independence of action. Politeness then refers to the communicative and interactional means used to show awareness of and support for the other person's face. In the construction of empathy, the balance between positive face (the need to be accepted and know that one's wants are approved of) and negative face (the need to be independent and not to be imposed on by others) is particularly important in order to manage any act that could be a threat to one's or the other person's face, since empathy requires the regulation of emotional reactions in order to cope with any potential infringement of norms and the negotiation and expression of, among others, solidarity. In fact, empathic interactions are successfully accomplished if face is at least preserved or, ideally, enhanced. If face is threatened, this

may have negative interactional consequences and some efforts or actions are required (facework) in order to counteract these negative effects and restore face. If the threat can be managed (face-saving act), usually with forms of indirectness and politeness, the interaction can then be redressed and face preserved. As the authors claim, "face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61), which stresses the link with the emotional aspect of any interaction. The original theory has developed and incorporated other concepts and approaches that facilitate the comprehension and study of interpersonal interactions (see Locher, 2015, for a review).

In relation to support messages, clearly associated with empathy, facework has been examined and proven to be a suitable framework to study supportive communication (Miczo & Burgoon, 2008). Evidence shows that the messages that acknowledge the recipient's face are perceived as more helpful than those that do not take face into account (Goldsmith, 1994; MacGeorge et al., 2002; Agne & White, 2004; Feng & Burleson, 2008; Hanasono & Yang, 2016).

From a linguistic perspective, the present study, however, mainly draws on and brings together two different approaches to discourse analysis—conversation analysis (CA) and discursive psychology (DP)—since they facilitate the unearthing of the linguistic and social structures associated with the speech act of expressing empathy. Both approaches understand talk as action and language as a vehicle for doing things. The combination of these two approaches has become the distinctive hallmark of the Loughborough school of social psychology (Stokoe et al., 2012), the most influential institution in the establishment of DP. In what follows, the theoretical framework of these two approaches is introduced and described and their basic principles are explained. The sections do not intend to offer a complete, exhaustive description of the two approaches but a general overview outlining the major goals and key principles of each field, which should provide sufficient understanding of the analyses and processes described in Chapters 4 and 5.

2.4.1 CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

Conversation analysis (CA) studies social interactions in everyday life taking action rather than language as the main focus of study (Sidnell, 2015). In the current research, this approach allows the examination of the sequential, interactional organization of action and the type of strategies the speakers in the study use when dealing with troubles tellings, as well as the capture of both the verbal and non-verbal elements in those interactions, offering a comprehensive and detailed picture of the whole interactional situation. Since the focus of this study is on verbal elements, significant non-verbal features are captured but not systematically analysed.

CA was developed in the late 1960s by Sacks and his collaborators Schegloff and Jefferson. The discipline emerged in a context where the prevailing view considered social interactions to be disorderly and defective and language was studied independently of its context, as an innate capacity that could be analytically and systematically approached (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990), which CA was a reaction against. CA finds its roots mainly in the work of two influential figures in sociology who moved away from the dominant perspective: Garfinkel and Goffman (Section 2.3).

Garfinkel's concept of ethnomethodology encompasses the study of different phenomena but in essence is the study of the organization of social activities based on the relationship between action and knowledge. While carrying out a study on jury deliberations, the author found that a series of methods were put at work in the deliberative process that were mainly based on common-sense knowledge and that helped the jurors to act as such. This idea of describing the processes and techniques that people use to deal with and interpret their reality is what ethnomethodology hinges on. Garfinkel put the focus on the individuals taking part in a given situation rather than on external factors such as social norms or structures, as the existing schools of sociology did back then.

Goffman's contribution to sociology covers different areas, including the organization of social behaviour, social encounters, and language and social interaction. He established some concepts like those of *move*, *frame* or *footing.* The first term, defined by the author as "everything conveyed by an actor during a turn at taking action" (Goffman, 1967) is

used as the basic analytic unit for interactions. *Frame* (see Section 2.3) refers to the system that helps making sense of any interactional event and that guides the interactional participants in the management of the situation. The last term, *footing*, refers to frame shifts—changes marking when one speaks for oneself or reports someone else's speech—which are constantly being reinterpreted and reassessed, and logically have consequences in a given interaction. Goffman also established the concept of *face* (see Section 2.4) as a sociological term. For him face is that part of one's identity that depends on social rules and values and he examined how face was maintained in social interactions.

Sack's interest in the structure of conversation sparked while studying telephone conversations to a suicide centre. He observed that there were certain standard forms that were recurrently used, pointing to regularities in utterance formats, and that the actions of callers and call-takers depended on each other. This suggested a certain structure and order in social interactions, which is CA's main aim: the analysis and description of the organization of social interactions.

In CA, sentences in interactions are not taken as independent units but as forms of action within a specific context. The study of conversation is understood "as an activity in its own right, and […] the ways in which any actions accomplished in conversation require reference to the properties and organization of conversation for their understanding and analysis, both by participants and by professional investigators" (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, p. 290). Social interactions are dynamic processes, forms of action, jointly organised by their participants to which social cognition, culture, and social rules are applied. The assumption that interactions are context-dependent is central to CA, since context is what explicates the interactional moves that the participants make. This implies that utterances are always studied as part of conversational sequences and therefore the focus is on naturally occurring ordinary interactions as a way to access their real production and development. In order to do so, the interactions must be recorded and transcribed so that all the interactional features and details are properly captured and analysed. In this regard, Jefferson's transcription system (Jefferson, 2004), which was developed originally to transcribe Sacks' work, has become the internationally adopted system for transcribing all (or as

many as possible of) the phenomena taking place in any interaction including not only speech but also, for example, movement or facial expressions.

One of CA's main contributions to the analysis of the structure of conversation has to do with turn-taking. A general idea is that conversational activity is normally organised in turns. According to CA, the turn-taking system consists of three components: (a) what is called a *turn-construction unit* (TCU)—the basic segment of speech constituting a turn and aiming to implement one or more actions—whose completion leads to a *transition relevance place* (TRP), which marks the point when the floor can be taken by another or the same speaker; (b) *turn allocation* techniques to select the next speaker; and (c) rules set out to control turn transitions. This basic, general structure is not rigid and accounts for considerable variability not only in the components themselves but also in the elements in them. As Goodwin & Heritage (1990) exemplify, a silence after an utterance can be interpreted as a TRP but, if the same speaker adds more to the TCU, it becomes a pause within the turn.

A basic notion in sequence organization is the concept of *adjacency pairs*, "the basic unit of sequence construction" (Schegloff, 2007), and although not all sequence types consist of adjacency pairs, most are constructed with this resource. Generally speaking, the concept refers to the production of a first utterance and its relevant responsive action. A basic adjacency pair is made up of two adjacent turns produced by different speakers that are ordered into a first action or *first pair part* (FPP) and a response to that action or *second pair part* (SPP). For example, an invitation such as "would you like some tea?" presupposes first that the other speaker, the one the invitation was for, understands the sort of action involved—or what the speaker uttering that question intended, which is referred to as *action formation*—and second, will respond accordingly in what is referred to as *action ascription*, thus guiding the course of that specific interaction. The question would enact a specific action and a response—either accepting or declining the invitation—would be expected, creating a sequence consisting of a FPP—the invitation—and a SPP—the response. Adjacency pairs are complementary actions such as question/answer or greeting/greeting in which a FPP mobilises an appropriate SPP. This SPP works as a recognition of the intended (or sometimes alternative) action and complies with the expectations of the FPP. Adjacency pairs work both retrospectively

and prospectively, since they imply both an understanding of the previous turn and a constraint on the next one.

This basic pattern of adjacency pairs may be altered in different ways and, for example, have more than two turns, the pairs may not be adjacent or they may be produced by the same speaker. One very common way of altering these adjacency pair sequences are expansions, which can occur before the FPP (pre-expansion), in between the FPP and the SPP (insert-expansion) or after the SPP (post-expansion). The excerpt below, taken from the data used in the present study, exemplifies one of these "altered" patterns, in this case an insert-expansion:

(1) Pair 3, hygiene (professional) – ENG

01	Diana:	hi Larry (.) how are you?
02	Larry:	not too bad thanks (.) yourself?
03		(0.6)
04	Diana:	quite upset\
05	Larry:	what's wrong?
06	Diana:	you would tell me if (0.9) there was something wrong with me?
07		(.) right?
08		(0.6)
09	Larry:	yea:h ((nods head slightly)) (.) of course
10	Diana:	ok (.) so: (.) basically (0.6) I went training today\ (.) and (.) the (.)
11		the (.) my (0.5) trainee (0.8) my trainer\ [(1.3)] told me that I
12		need to be careful about my personal hygiene\

Diana[1] begins the conversation and, after a pause of 0.6 seconds (line 03), indicates she is worried about something. When Larry asks about it, forming the FPP (line 05), the SPP does not come next and instead she replies with a question (06) that returns the interactional ball to Larry. The SPP does not arrive until her next turn (line 10). The adjacency pair is maintained but is not adjacent because in this case an *insertion sequence* (lines 06 to 09) intervenes between the two parts. The insertion sequence

[1] The names of all the participants in the study have been changed to preserve anonymity.

itself consists of another adjacency pair: a question and an immediately next positioned answer.

On other occasions, these insertion sequences are used to deal with any potential source of problems. It often happens that what is apparently a clear message is not correctly understood or has not been properly heard. When this occurs, a repair is often required to solve the issue. When it is the recipient of the message the one confronting the problem and the need of repair is initiated by them, we talk about *other-initiated repairs*, whereas if it is the other party—the teller—who initiates the repair in their own talk, then we talk about *self-initiated repairs*. Once the repair has been completed, which can be done by either party, this is then labelled *self-repair* or *other-repair*. The most common scenario is an other-initiated repair followed by self-repair, as shown in the following example.

(2) Pair 4, exam (academic) – ENG

01	Eric:	how was your morning? ((leaving piece of paper on desk arm))
02	Rosie:	my mo:rning?
03	Eric:	yeah
04	Rosie:	toda:y? ((with a smile voice))
05	Eric:	yea:h (.) today ((with a smile voice))
06	Rosie:	yea::h ((looking at the side)) (.) busy: ((turns head to look at him))

Eric's question (line 01), the FPP, although apparently clear and faultless, seems to require some clarification for Rosie and, consequently, she does not respond with the SPP, which is displaced to line 06, but with a repair: in this case a question asking for confirmation (line 02). Questions seem to be the most common form that other-initiated repairs take. The question becomes a FPP itself whose relevant SPP is the repair for the trouble expressed. These other-initiated repair sequences are arranged in adjacency pairs and are considered sequences in themselves. Their function is to resolve a problem that could affect the production of the SPP (Schegloff, 2007). The extract above contains two of these sequences (lines 02-03 and 04-05).

The minimal adjacency pair can also be modified with sequences occurring before, known as *pre-sequences*. These pre-sequences also consist of adjacency pairs and they

project an imminent adjacency pair. For example, in the next extract the news of Nichole's parents' divorce is preceded by an announcement sequence:

(3) Pair 8, divorce (personal) – ENG

01	Nichole:	e:m (.) so you know how I (.) said that I had something to tell
02		you?
03	Gillian:	°yeah°
04	Nichole:	e:m (.) well (.) I found out this weekend that my parents (0.5)
05		mentioned that they are getting divorced a:nd (.) I don't really
06		know how I feel about it/

Nichole starts with a reminder. By doing this she prepares the ground for the news that is to come and, because Gillian's response to the FPP is positive, grants Gillian's role as news recipient. Nichole can now proceed to the main objective: announcing the news (line 04).

Apart from being expanded before the FPP and between the FPP and SPP, adjacency pairs can also be expanded after the SPP. There are different types of post-expansions but, in general, they tend to happen when the SPP is not the relevant or preferred response. One of these types are *sequence-closing thirds*: the insertion of one turn designed to close or initiate the closing of the sequence. They can be used after preferred and dispreferred SPPs and typically take the form of *oh, okay* or an assessment (Schegloff, 2007). In the excerpt below, one of Larry's patients has complained about his poor skills as a physiotherapist and he tells Diana about it. The conversation is brought to an end when Larry decides to take Diana's piece of advice and talk to his supervisor, Rose.

(4) Pair 3, complaint (professional) – ENG

01	Larry:	I'll speak to: (.) e::r (.) >Rose< ((looks at her and raises eyebrows))
02		(.) and ((nods head a couple of times))
03	Diana:	yeah (.) speak to her and see what she says (.) you know I'm here
04		for you (.) if you need me ((in a softer voice like pretending she's
05		Rose)) ((laughs))
06	Larry:	of course

07 Diana: yeah

This is a minimal post-expansion of the pair. It basically certifies that the message is understood and accepted in this case by both interactants. The FPP in lines 01 and 02 is followed by Diana's SPP (lines 03-05) so what comes afterwards is a confirmation of the way to proceed proposed by Larry, an affiliative move with what came prior.

Connected with turn design and action sequences, the issue of preference emerges. In CA preference does not refer to the speaker's own inclinations or choices but to the principles governing the relationship between actions. It has to do with the possible alternative actions available in response to a prior action (e.g. accepting or declining an invitation). Preference favours relevant actions that are cooperative, affiliative, face-preserving as a response to a FPP; so, when producing a *preferred* action, it is usually produced directly, without delay or qualification and is perceived as affiliative and supportive whereas *dispreferred* actions, because they are negatively valued, are often produced with delay, hesitation, or mitigation and are perceived as disaffiliative and unsupportive. For example, as a response to an invitation, from the two basic options available, its acceptance is perceived as the affiliative, face-saving action while its refusal is perceived as disaffiliative and face-threatening.

Any action, not only responses to invitations, can be described in terms of preference. The following extract illustrates the preference for agreement or confirmation as the preferred action to align—allowing the story teller to proceed with the activity (Stivers, 2008)—and affiliate—supporting the teller's stance (Stivers, 2008)—with the prior turn. Rosie's parents are getting divorced and she tells Eric about it. Once the situation has been analysed, Eric tries to find something "positive" to them living apart: there will be less tension at home.

(5) Pair 4, divorce (personal) – ENG

01 Eric: they could ((making the gesture of taking separate paths: putting hands
02 together in front and moving them both out to the sides at the same
03 time)) just move apart (.) maybe it'd be better\
04 Rosie: °maybe:°
05 Eric: maybe they are arguing if you go home and it's so bad and it's like (.)

06 [there's a lot of tension

07 Rosie: [ye:s (.) it's sorta weird going home no:w

Eric's comment (lines 05 and 06) is immediately and directly accepted by Rosie (line 07) (in fact, her turn begins before Eric's turn finishes). The agreement token "yes" preserves contiguity with Eric's previous statement.

On the other hand, disagreement is seen as the dispreferred response so it is usually delivered distinctively. The excerpt below shows an example of a dispreferred response. Nicole studies physiotherapy and her placement tutor has asked her to be more careful with her personal hygiene. Nicole tells Gillian about it and, in order to fully understand if there is really a cause for complaint, Gillian asks Nicole questions about her habits and appearance in her training sessions.

(6) Pair 8, hygiene (professional) – ENG

01 Gillian: and do you wear your hair up?

02 Nicole: <sometimes>

03 Gillian: not always

04 Nichole: not always (.) I do shower though\

05 Gillian: yeah (0.7) e:m (.) I mean (.) like (.) do you (0.5) maybe think (.)

06 that you should (0.5) I don't know (.) how long do you give

07 yourself to get ready in the morning?

Gillian (lines 05-07), aware that her comment is delicate and may threat Nicole's face, hesitates, pauses and makes use of several mitigators, delaying the production of her dispreferred turn and displaying her unwillingness to use this type of dispreferred alternative. Her turn does not disconfirm Nicole's statement but brings to the fore a potentially disaffiliative, sensitive utterance, which she knows will not be equally valued as a preferred response because it challenges Nicole's stance.

CA has become a widely used method of analysis of talk-in-interaction, of social action. Successful interaction is only possible if its participants share certain competencies: the basics of language but also of the established social norms and patterns. These competencies is what CA aims to discover and analyse (Drew, 2005) and this the reason

that makes CA an appropriate and pertinent method for the analysis of the role-played conversations included in this study.

2.4.2 DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Building on CA and ethnomethodology among other approaches, discursive psychology (DP)'s interactionist approach is favoured in this study. Emerging from psychology but really a multidisciplinary approach drawing mainly both on psychology and linguistics, DP takes into account both the inner and outer world—mental states and emotions and social circumstances—as elements that constitute discourse, the central piece of interaction, of social life (Edwards 1999). These mental or emotional states are not analysed as internal, cognitive elements as such but as part of the constructed discourse where they are displayed or handled, which makes this approach particularly relevant in studies dealing with emotions and feelings.

The origins of DP go back to the late 1980s, when Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell, members of the Discourse and Rhetoric Group at Loughborough University, published *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour* (1987) as a reaction to the established view of discourse and cognitive processes in mainstream psychology: cognitivism. Although the term *discursive psychology* was coined somewhat later, in the early 1990s, the book became the first systematic approach to the field. In it, the authors outlined the basics of their reconceptualization of social psychology, proposing a different approach to the prevalent methods used in psychology and respecifying topics like attitudes or emotions. The dominant cognitivist view is based on the idea that our behaviour is the result of our cognitive state and therefore the role of the mind and mental structures is emphasised. For cognitivists, language is a way of accessing cognition, since it allows us to refer to or describe our cognitive states. DP rejects this notion, and claims that language is a way of performing actions rather than a sign of underlying mental entities and a way of describing reality. For this reason, DP focuses on linguistic practices, on what people do in interactions, which are seen as a way of performing social actions and practices and not as a way of accessing the mind (Edwards & Potter, 1993). Hence, psychological entities are treated and are relevant as observable elements in interaction, not as internal objects. DP does not aim to find out what motives or reasons moved the interactional participants to behave in a certain way

but to describe the actions and features visible in that interaction. In order to examine how these psychological constructs are made relevant and displayed through discourse, the data is recorded and transcribed and different analytic frameworks are employed, mainly CA.

Considering its multidisciplinary nature, DP was born influenced by different theories, one of which was Wittgenstein's philosophy. Considered one of the major philosophers in the social sciences, Wittgenstein's work is often divided into an early and a late period, when he corrected or rejected some of his former assumptions. In the early period the philosopher developed what he called the *picture theory of language,* which claimed that statements can only be meaningful if they can be pictured in the real world, so he saw language as describing the world. In the late period, he rejected this assumption and saw language more in relation to how it is used rather than to what it describes, emphasising its social, functional aspect. This late-period approach to language is what is shared with DP.

Other influences of DP are, as already mentioned, CA and ethnomethodology (see Section 2.4.1) but also Austin's (1962) theory of speech acts, which claims that many of these acts do not describe but rather do things, widening the functions of language. For Austin, even if apparently descriptive, language does much more than just describe the world, highlighting the idea that all forms of talk have a function. When producing an utterance, three related acts are activated: a *locutionary* act—the basic performance of the utterance—an *illocutionary* act—the purpose we have in mind when producing the utterance—and a *perlocutionary* act—the effect of the utterance on the recipient.

In the discursive psychological approach, discourse is seen as a situated action: a collaborative, contextualised activity involving participants. DP's main principles in relation to discourse are three: discourse is constructed and constructive, situated, and action-oriented. It is constructed because it makes use of linguistic elements to interactionally perform a given action and constructive because it is the tool used for making interpretations of the world. It is situated because it occurs within a given time and place and because it also occurs as part of an interactional sequence. It is action-oriented because it fulfils some specific goals or tasks. This conception of discourse makes DP different from other approaches to discourse analysis that stress the

examination of semantic elements ignoring discourse organisation (Wiggins, 2017). This focus on how actions are presented and constructed through interaction takes the notion of *interpretative repertoires*, first developed by the sociologists Gilbert & Mulkay (1984) and later on adapted by DP, as an analytic unit. Discursive psychologists understand interpretative repertoires as the linguistic resources available in our discourse or, as Wetherell put it, "a culturally familiar and habitual line of argument comprised from recognisable themes, common places and tropes" (Wetherell, 1998, p. 408). Interpretative repertoires help us to talk about, identify and characterise events, which at the same time can be linked to the description of more general ideological conceptions. In short, they help us to construct a version of the world.

Because discourse is considered to be actively constructed and organised in order to perform a function, variability is expected and taken into account. Variability is inherent to discourse and, since talk is constructed according to function and context, if these change, they will affect how discourse is constructed (think for example about how the same story would be told to different audiences or on different occasions). Discourse function is better understood by analysing this variability, therefore linking both and facilitating the prediction of certain types of variation for certain functions is key (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). In discourse, variability can be expressed through different devices such as *disclaimers*—a linguistic device used to minimise our interest in a given fact—such as when we say something like "I liked (the film/the book/etc.) but …", which clearly conveys the idea of contradiction as what is to come after "but" is expected to oppose the previous view. It often happens that different repertoires are combined within the same discourse and this may be taken as a sign of complexity or inconsistency, which DP assumes that exists in natural occurring language and examines.

Connected with the idea of variability is the notion of *script formulations*. Based on the script theory of social cognitive science, in which scripts refer to mental generic representations of actions and events that allow us to explain, understand and act appropriately in a given situation, DP questions the dominance of perception and action of this theory and shifts the focus onto language, viewing script formulations as "pragmatically formulated constructions" (Edwards, 1994, p. 213). DP reframes the concept and examines how these formulated constructions emerge in conversation in

order to describe actions and events. It is through these scripts that we know how to act and what we are expected to say in any given situation; for example, when shopping or when going to a restaurant there are a series of expectations that we must fulfil so that the event runs smoothly. When these expectations are not met and unusual circumstances or eventualities appear, these are considered singular or exceptional variations of the script but DP's model of script formulations also accounts for them. The linguistic turn of DP changes the traditional conception of these scripts, which are understood as ongoing flexible processes made relevant in conversation and not as something fixed in our heads.

DP's counterbalance of the traditional ways in which psychology, dominated by the cognitive perspective, had approached psychological categories and the methods commonly employed is one of the contributions of this discipline. There are many studies that deal with psychological concepts from DP's interactional perspective, re-specifying them as contextualized communicative productions. The topics are varied and go from those purely psychological, such as memory, beliefs or stress, to those connected with more cultural and sociological concepts, such as racism, inequality or politics (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Hepburn & Brown, 2001; Speer, 2001; Puchta & Potter, 2002; Wiggins & Potter, 2003; Lynch & Bogen, 2005; Sneijder & te Molder, 2005; O'Reilly, 2007, 2014; LeCouteur & Oxlad, 2011; Wiggins, 2014; Burke & Demasi, 2019; Carr et al., 2019; Demasi, 2020; Wiggins & Cromdal, 2020). These accounts of internal states do not represent what speakers are thinking or their reality; they are discursive resources that aim to perform a specific function.

There is, though, another strand of DP: it is not only how these psychological concepts and states emerge in interaction that DP is interested in but also in the words used to refer to them, since they are the tools used by speakers in discourse. According to the main principle of DP, the focus is always on how these terms are used in discourse, disconnecting them from cognitive parameters. As Edwards (2005) put it: "Once we start to appreciate the rich and systematic uses to which everyday psychological concepts are put, their status as potentially inaccurate pictures of a real mental life going on behind the scenes becomes irrelevant and misconceived." (Edwards, 2005, p. 263). This premise also works for emotions since, like other psychological categories, they are inseparable

from interaction and this is how they should be analysed and described: as observable social entities (Hepburn & Jackson, 2009). One of the main topics DP deals with is the rhetorical design and use of emotion terms. Edwards (1997, 1999) argues that analysing emotion discourse from the perspective of DP offers a flexibility that other approaches lack and he developed an analytical approach for its study. Emotion terms (including metaphors) are embedded in narrative (closely related to scripts) and rhetoric, as these are also ways of conveying emotion. By examining the discursive use of these terms, we can better understand what interactional participants are doing, what action they are performing (e.g. accepting, sharing or attributing blame or making excuses). Edwards (1999) states that emotion terms are based on a series of rhetorical contrasts—emotion vs cognition; emotion as irrational vs rational; emotion as cognitively grounded and/or cognitively consequential; event-driven vs dispositional; dispositions vs temporary states; emotional behaviour as controllable action or passive reaction; spontaneous vs externally caused; natural vs moral; internal states vs external behaviour; honest vs fake (Edwards, 1999, p. 282-283)—which discursively characterise the nature of the event being described and the action that is being performed. These contrasts are not based on meaning but on function and are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as they can be combined, disputing the consistency of emotion concepts of cognitive models.

However, emotions can also be expressed without the explicit use of emotion terms. Through our descriptions, events and actions can implicitly carry an emotional charge, evoke an emotion or convey an emotional stance and be interactionally displayed. Some other times, rather than occurring at some specific point, the display of emotion is jointly constructed and unfolds throughout the whole interaction. It is this approach to texts and talk, understood as something built and displayed in people's interactional practices, that makes DP a valid approach to understanding how empathy is co-constructed in interactions.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and discusses the methodological process used in this study and the kind of data gathered in order to better understand how native speakers of two different languages engage in the same speech act. The instruments presented here basically intend to compare the strategies these speakers typically use to effectively manage themselves in interactions that are expected to be responded empathically and analyse the perceptions of their own interactions and their understanding and social use of empathy. In order to assure the validity of the research and minimise the limitations that every single instrument has, the triangulation method was followed, that is to say, the application of different instruments to collect data, which can offer a deep and detailed insight into the act of empathy-giving. Each instrument aimed to examine a different dimension of the topic at hand and provided data that could be analysed from a quantitative and a qualitative perspective, and along the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic spectrum. Some of the methods require an individual approach whereas others involve pairs or groups. This mixed-method approach—i.e. the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study—aimed to ensure a balanced design and enrich our understanding of this speech act. The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches has been advocated as providing a comprehensive view of a given area of research. Bavelas claimed,

> […] these differences [between quantitative and qualitative research] are socially constructed, and to the extent that we insist on maintaining them, we will severely limit the number of approaches we can invent to explore our common interests. A highly restricted choice of methods inevitably stunts the growth of theory as well. (Bavelas, 1995, pp. 50-51)

Mixed methods have been widely used allowing the establishment of a wider analytical framework that offers a critical insight into their nature and conceptualization (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009; Angouri, 2010; Guest, 2013; Ivankova & Greer, 2015; Riazi, 2016; Mackey & Bryfonski, 2018). There seems to be a strong consensus, though, over how

this mixed-method approach enables a more multidimensional and precise approach to a given research question, which is particularly appropriate when trying to reveal the full complexity of a speech act such as that of empathy.

As seen in Chapter 2, the study is undertaken within the framework of pragmatics, more specifically from the approaches of conversation analysis (CA) (Section 2.4.1) and discursive psychology (DP) (Section 2.4.2). The advantage of taking CA as one of the approaches is that it can accurately describe the structure and organization of these interactions. One of CA's main contributions to the study of naturally occurring interactions is a transcription system developed by Jefferson (2004) that thoroughly reflects the norms and practices of the jointly constructed nature of social interactions. This notation system of symbols representing different speech characteristics and interactional features has become standard in linguistics. CA has also effectively contributed to explaining how interactional sequences are structured and organised, particularly relevant in joint processes like that of empathy. On the other hand, DP focuses on how psychological entities are interactionally built; therefore, in the context of this study, DP is mainly used when interpreting the data qualitatively. DP, which draws partly on CA, sheds light into how psychological entities like emotions, attitudes or, in this case, empathy emerge and are constituted and handled in these interactions. This is achieved by finding and analysing how the participants in the interaction manage to convey a certain mood or disposition.

Although typically both CA and DP advocate using naturally occurring data rather than data obtained from experimental or laboratory methods, there are more and more studies that use these approaches when examining data obtained through experimental procedures and analysed either qualitatively or quantitatively (Parmelee et al., 2007; Schrauf & Iris, 2011; Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2012; Zeidler et al., 2013; Purhonen & Wright 2013; Goldsmith & Miller, 2015; Shannon-Baker, 2015; Dorell et al., 2017; Mayer et al., 2018). This flexibilization, although resisted by some, has been accepted by many in numerous areas of research and has brought mixed-method research to the fore. There are even international publications that focus specifically on this like the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* or the *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches,* which point to the widespread importance of research using combined methods in the

social sciences. Many authors back up the complementary use of naturalistic and experimental methods, among them Kendrick (2017), who situates both methods along the same continuum, suggests that even naturalistic observation data may be subject to a certain bias, and claims that some characteristics of naturally occurring interactions can be introduced in experimental methods. He gives some reasons in support of the use of experimental and laboratory methods in research on interaction: (a) these methods can further define and enrich naturalistic observations (they are replicable and can contribute to the results of naturally occurring studies); (b) they make use of technological devices that are not yet employed in studies using naturally occurring interactions (e.g., haptic feedback technology, eye tracking technology) capturing details that may be interactionally relevant; (c) the ecological validity of the results of laboratory or experimental studies is only questioned when they contradict or do not support those found when using naturalistic methods (which can be solved by studying the same phenomenon using naturally occurring data); and (d) the findings and knowledge acquired by CA researchers should be shared and spread to other fields that also focus on social interaction and that tend to use experimental methodologies.

Schrauf (2016, 2018) argues how mixed-method designs provide useful and flexible solutions to data analysis throughout the different stages of data transformation that prove effective in the research of sociocultural aspects, particularly in cross-cultural studies. These methods can produce a more complete analysis of the object of study at a micro and macro level. He, together with de Victoria and Diaz (2020), elaborated on that initial idea and presented the theoretical foundations for mixed-method research based on the idea that conversational stancetaking is observable in both qualitative and quantitative methods, giving a more comprehensive description of sociocultural aspects. Stivers (2015) sees the use of quantitative methods in CA as a way of addressing a broader extent of research questions, thus reaching larger audiences, and studying interactional features in relation to sociodemographic variables. She claims that a method considered to be basically quantitative, such as coding, can be based on and enhance CA. Authors such as Heritage & Stivers (2013) or Kasper & Wagner (2014) see the combined use of quantitative methods and CA as a strength, offering possibilities of producing further and more varied research. Antaki (2011) states that in some cases

quantitative methods are necessary in order to find out aspects such as the level of recurrence and significance.

The current study contributes to this approach and uses CA and DP in combination with experimental data-gathering instruments to try to embrace the different dimensions involved in the act of verbally communicating empathy and identify culture-specific traits. The different instruments and their implementation are described in the next sections. According to Turnbull (2001), a good pragmatic data-gathering tool must be ethical, representative of the object of study, able to easily produce multiple examples and allow the researcher a certain degree of control. Considering this, we can say that the methods employed in this study appropriately meet all these criteria.

3.2 DATA-GATHERING INSTRUMENTS

3.2.1 INTERPERSONAL REACTIVITY INDEX (IRI)

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Davis, 1980, 1983), free and publicly available at https://www.eckerd.edu/psychology/iri/, is one of the most widely used instruments to assess empathy. It is a questionnaire consisting of 4 independent seven-item subscales measuring different cognitive and emotional aspects of empathy: perspective taking (the tendency to see things from the perspective of another person), fantasy (the ability to identify oneself with a fictional character in a book or film), empathic concern (the tendency to have feelings of compassion or worry for another person), and personal distress (the tendency to get feelings of anxiety or distress when facing other people's suffering). The questionnaire items are answered with a 5-point-Likert scale, from *does not describe me very well* to *describes me very well*. For the present study, only the perspective taking (PT) scale was examined as, according to the author himself (Davis 1983), this is connected with measures of interpersonal functioning and social behaviour, which is what we are in fact examining. PT is associated with qualities such as extraversion and good social skills, that is, abilities leading to better interpersonal relationships. PT is calculated through seven items in the questionnaire:

Item #	Item
3	I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the “other guy's” point of view. (-)
8	I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
11	I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
15	If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. (-)
21	I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.
25	When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to “put myself in his shoes” for a while.
28	Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

(-) = reversed-scored items

The instrument was translated into Catalan so that it could be administered to the Catalan participants. The translation was done by the researcher herself and revised by two native speakers of Catalan for clarity and accuracy.

3.2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRES

This simple questionnaire (Appendix 1) was used as a preparation for the role plays. It collected information about the participants’ age, sex, mother tongue, and also about the type of relationship with their partner in the role play. This last point proved to be unnecessarily exhaustive as it included seven categories and needed simplification for coding purposes so some categories were regrouped and only three were left: strangers, acquaintances and friends. Out of the 13 Catalan pairs, 2 were strangers, 7 acquaintances, and 4 friends, whereas out of the 13 English pairs, 3 were acquaintances and the remaining 10, friends.

3.2.3 OPEN ROLE PLAYS

Open role plays have the advantage that they allow to examine a given speech act in its full discourse context. This is the only method in the study that represents interactive oral production and, although role plays are not authentic conversations in the sense that they are artificially created, they are replicable, comparable and some variables can be controlled: sex and level of education of participants, social distance (the same since the participants in the study are university students and were not asked to assume a different role), and social power (the same between both interactants).

In all the interactions, the participants were asked to act as themselves without assuming a different role and were faced with plausible situations that they could easily imagine themselves in. Since the two members of each pair were university students in the same course, the vast majority with some kind of acquaintance, it was possible to keep the degree of power differential and of social distance low and constant. These two parameters, power and distance, have been widely used in linguistic studies to establish the kind of relationship between participants in an interaction that can account for language choices these speakers may make in a specific context. When analysing how these parameters have been used and conceptualized in the literature, Spencer-Oatey (1996) states that power is connected with a vertical dimension indicating any differences in status, rank or authority between the participants in the interaction, whereas distance is a horizontal dimension related to the degree of familiarity or (social) closeness between the interactants. Hudson et al. (1995) describe distance as the level of familiarity and solidarity that exists between the participants. In this study both parameters were controlled by selecting students (often friends) with equal power and distance since all the participants are members of the same group (university students in the same centre).

Félix-Brasdefer (2007) and Bataller & Shively (2011) state that, in spite of their limitations in comparison to naturally occurring interactions, role plays are suitable tools to control social variables and define certain pragmalinguistic aspects. Tran (2006) devised what he called *naturalised role plays* in order to bridge the gap between these two data gathering methods: natural data and traditional role plays, and adapted the latter to make them as valid and effective as the former. He confirmed the validity of

this kind of role plays both for cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics. Kasper (1999) emphasises the choice of role plays when focusing on aspects such as the unfolding of the interaction and conversational sequences. Consequently, if we work on the assumption that empathy is not a matter of just saying a magic word but rather something that develops throughout the whole conversation, choosing open role plays seems to be a good option. Role plays have been used for the study of different speech acts, particularly in interlanguage pragmatics: invitations (Rosendale, 1989), apologies (Demeter, 2007), requests (Kubota, 1996; Márquez-Reiter et al., 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Vilar-Beltrán & Martínez-Flor, 2008; Lundell & Erman, 2012), refusals to requests (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2011), compliments and replies to compliments (Tran, 2007, 2010; Cheng, 2011; Hasler-Barker, 2016).

Although open role plays were used in this study, they also matched the characteristics of Tran's (2006) naturalised role plays: (a) they make the object of study inconspicuous; (b) the participants do not assume an alien role; (c) the situations described are not uncommon or unlikely in the cultural environment(s) in which they are used; and (c) social distance is between status equals. According to Márquez-Reiter & Placencia (2005), because open role plays do not have a pre-determined final outcome, they are spontaneously organised and negotiated without any kind of restrictions, producing interactions oriented to communication and message, making them similar to conversations occurring in real life. In this sense, the situations devised for this study did not have a predetermined outcome; they were designed so that the speech act on focus was naturally brought up.

A total of six different situations were devised—2 personal (divorce of parents, owing money to a friend), 2 academic (late for an exam, rejected grant application), and 2 professional (patient's complaint, personal hygiene problems)—describing troubles that participants could encounter in their personal, academic, or professional life, in this specific case, related to their placement or hospital training experience. In order not to have very long sessions and prevent participants from getting tired or less concentrated, each pair role-played only four of the situations and their roles were alternated so that each participant acted twice as the teller of the story or empathy receiver (ER) and twice as the recipient of the story or empathy provider (EP). In order to elicit an empathic

response, the situations were, in Fiehler's (2002) words, "emotionally pregnant", that is, they described more or less emotionally charged situations that were narrated to another person with a more or less negative valence so that the preferred response by the recipient was expected to be empathic. According to Lindström and Sorjonen (2013), both troubles tellings and complaints are activities that typically invite the recipient to respond affiliatively, and hence this type of situations rather than favourable or happy events were chosen.

The description of the situations (see Appendix 2) was simple and open so that the participants could decide on the details and there were no hints about what was being investigated. For example, the description for the "late for an exam" situation was: "You are a university student. This morning you were so late for an exam you were not allowed to take it. You meet your friend for a coffee in the university canteen and tell him/her about it. What do you say?" In this case, the participants could decide the reason why they were late and other aspects connected with the situation at hand. The recipient, on the other hand, had the same simple instructions in all the situations: "You are a university student. You are having coffee with a friend of yours in the university canteen. Respond to your friend." This type of open scenarios allowed them to respond as they felt it was necessary or appropriate in each case and tried not to influence or restrict the participants' choices (Golato & Golato, 2012).

The final study included a total of 13 pairs in each language group (Table 1). In the Catalan group, out of the 13 dyads, 8 were same-sex—4 female/female and 4 male/male and 5 were different-sex whereas in the English group, 9 were same-sex pairs—6 female/female and 3 male/male—and 4 were different-sex. Each dyad role-played 4 situations except for pair 6 in the Catalan group that role-played only 2 due to time constrictions and pair 13 in the English group that role-played 5 in order to compensate for an invalid interaction of pair 2, giving a total of 50 conversations in Catalan and 52 in English.

Table 1

Role play pairs per language group.

Pair	Catalan	English
1	Male / Female	Female / Female
2	Male / Female	Male / Male
3	Male / Female	Male / Female
4	Female / Female	Male / Female
5	Male / Female	Female / Female
6	Male / Female	Female / Female
7	Male / Male	Female / Female
8	Male / Male	Female / Female
9	Female / Female	Female / Female
10	Male / Male	Male / Female
11	Female / Female	Male / Female
12	Male / Male	Male / Male
13	Female / Female	Male / Male

3.2.4 POST-ROLE PLAY QUESTIONNAIRES

These questionnaires aimed to assess the role plays according to certain variables that each participant had to judge and rate. They were given after each of the role plays in order to get the participants' first and fresh impression of the conversation they had just had and information about the impact the conversation had had on their mood and perceptions. Because sometimes what we do does not coincide with our perceptions or those of the other person, these post-role play questionnaires tried to check if the conversations were considered really empathic by the participants and if they had had any kind of effect on them. These were short Likert-scale questionnaires with just 5 items per participant so they were completed very quickly. There were two different models: one for the empathy receiver and one for the empathy provider (Appendix 3). The empathy receiver (ER) or, in other words, the person telling about the situation, had questions related to their level of satisfaction with the conversation, any changes in their mood or perspective of the situation after talking to their partner, or whether they felt understood or judged in any way by the other person. The empathy provider (EP), or the person responding in the role play, had questions about their level of satisfaction with the conversation, the level of responsibility they thought their partner had for the

situation, whether they thought they had helped the other person to cope better with the situation, and also questions about their level of identification with and concern about the other person.

In the pilot study, the post-role play questionnaires proved to be short enough so as not to affect the dynamics of the interactions and easy and uncomplicated as they only took one or two minutes to complete. Asking this type of questions is something that does not, or at least not habitually, happen in real life. Getting first-hand information about an interaction and how this has affected its participants is clearly an advantage compared to naturalistic observations, disclosing aspects that otherwise would remain hidden.

3.2.5 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Although focus group interviews (FGIs) are a powerful way of collecting data on interactional characteristics per se (Myers & Macnaghten, 1999; Wilkinson, 2006; Wibeck et al., 2007; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Halkier, 2010; Grønkjær et al., 2011; Morgan, 2012; Jung, 2018; Jung & Ro, 2019), they are not very commonly used in pragmatics. Traditionally, FGIs have been used in areas like market research and later on in applied social research, but gradually they have spread to other fields like communication studies or applied linguistics, and their characteristics have been analysed in detail (Kitzinger, 1995; Lunt & Livingstone, 1996; Puchta & Potter, 2005; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011; Acocella, 2012; Krueger & Casey, 2015). In the context of this study they were designed as a complementary tool that helped to understand how participants view empathy and empathic interactions and thus helped to complete the whole picture of empathy-giving. If the principle behind the role plays in this study is to see how the provision of empathy is interactionally performed, that behind the FGIs is to see how that speech act is sociopragmatically considered.

The interviews were the second part of the data gathering sessions and they were organised with all the participants in the role plays of that same session, which means that the number of participants varied from 4 to 8. Although some of the subjects taking part in the FGIs did not have their role plays included in the study in order to have an even number of pairs in the two languages, it was decided not to exclude their interventions in the interviews since its main purpose was preserved and group

dynamics were not altered. Consequently, there were a few more participants in the FGIs than in the role plays.

The number of FGIs seems to be adequate for this study in terms of data saturation. Although no clear consensus exists on this regard, Guest et al. (2016) conclude that 80% of themes seem to emerge when conducting two or three of these focus groups and 90% do when conducting from three to six. Hennink et al. (2019) label this *code saturation*, which they distinguish from *meaning saturation* (full development of the themes), and conclude that the former is reached first, usually after four focus groups, whereas the latter usually takes longer and tends to occur at different points depending on the demographic strata of the group (in their study this happened in the fifth focus group). The authors conclude that, because the parameters in each study are so different, they have to be analysed independently and thus establishing a standard number of these interviews is of no use.

The combination of role plays and FGIs was inspired by Gąsior's (2014) study on opinions in English by Irish and Polish students. She identified five different themes for her focus group interviews (the thought process, rules related to giving opinions, emotions involved in giving opinions, strategies used when giving opinions, how to disagree), which were reduced to four for this study (the thought process, the general roles of expressing empathy, the emotional involvement in empathic speech acts and the strategies used in empathic situations) (Appendix 4). The prompts for each of these themes are open-ended questions that try to help the participants reflect on what is going on in situations that require empathy and encourage them to express their opinions. The questions intend to address not only cognitive and emotional but also cultural and social aspects related to that speech act.

3.3. STUDY DESIGN

3.3.1 PILOT STUDY

A preliminary pilot study was carried out in order to test the data gathering instruments and their implementation so that they could be modified or adjusted if necessary and also to identify any problems related to the instruments themselves or to any methodological aspects of the study. Taking into account that this was a comparative

study, it was necessary to find two groups of native speakers, one for each of the languages, to ensure that the descriptions of the role plays could be properly understood and also that the instruments were adequate in the two cultural environments. All the sessions were held in the corresponding mother tongue.

In April 2015, the study was piloted with 5 Catalan volunteers (2 males and 3 females) and, in July of the same year, with 4 English volunteers (3 males and 1 female). Although the profile of the two groups was quite different (first-year physiotherapy students for the Catalan group and native English teachers working in a language school in Barcelona for the English group), the pilot study was carried out since its purpose was basically experimental, a rehearsal of the definitive study. The recruitment procedure was different in each case; for the Catalan group, students were first contacted before one of their classes where the basics of the study were presented and volunteers were requested. The volunteers wrote their names down and, a few days later, were contacted by email with the details of the date and time for the sessions. For the English group, the study was advertised to the native English teachers in one of the centres of a language school in Barcelona who were also contacted by email to organise the data-gathering sessions. In all cases, participants signed an informed consent form at the very beginning of the sessions. The adequacy of the research instruments and study methodology was proven acceptable and only some minor adjustments had to be made for the final study: five more minutes would be allowed for the role play sessions; hence, in the final study, participants were called in in slots of 25 minutes.

The other issue that had to be dealt with had to do with Labov's (1972) observer's paradox: the fact that participants felt observed could affect their performance. For the current study, some parts had to be recorded, as was mentioned in the informed consent form, so participants knew that there would be some kind of recording equipment in the sessions. It had become clear when doing the pilot study that trying to make the video camera and the voice recorder (small as they were) inconspicuous and making good recordings was impossible. Because of this and because of the effect that suddenly discovering the camera hidden somewhere could have on the participants, it was decided to opt for the opposite: place the camera and the voice recorder somewhere visible. That was not a bad decision as some informants, both in the pilot

and the final study, when asked about it at the end of the session, explicitly admitted they forgot they were being recorded and did not feel intimidated by the camera. In fact, there are studies (Kasper, 1999; Speer & Hutchby, 2003) that report that participants become unaware that they are being recorded after some time or that recording devices are less imposing than expected, which would minimise the impact of the observer's paradox. The fact that some students did not feel uncomfortable when being recorded might also be a consequence of the ubiquitous use of smartphones with video cameras and similar technology nowadays that most people, particularly the youth, are so much used to employing and having access to. Nevertheless, in spite of this being true for some people, we cannot generalise as surely some other people did not feel so at ease with the recordings and did not dare to mention it.

The conversations were transcribed in order to start identifying the different strategies used by the respondents and also to check the suitability of Jefferson's transcription system for this study.

3.3.2 FINAL STUDY

3.3.2.1 PERMISSION FOR THE STUDY

In order to comply with the necessary ethical standards and regulations of studies with human participants, which mainly aim to protect research participants from any unethical or censurable action, and make sure that the procedures are acceptable, the study was reviewed by the Ethics Committee on Animal and Human Research of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) and its approval was obtained in April 2016 (Appendix 5).

Because the study also involved English participants, it was necessary to address the corresponding Ethics Committee of the English university so that the data gathering process could take place there too. This time though, because the UAB's consent had already been granted, the process was simpler as the general guidelines were the same for both institutions. In May 2016, the study received the Chair's Approval of the Oxford Brookes University Ethics Committee to recruit the participants for the English group and the only thing that was required was to make sure that the informed consent form included a statement indicating that the study had been validated by the committee.

Apart from the institutional permission, each participant signed an informed consent form (Appendix 6) prior to the beginning of the study in which they were given some general information about the study and its procedures, had their anonymity guaranteed, and it was clearly stated that a part of the study would be recorded and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and for any or no reason without any penalty or any other consequence. When they were handed in the form, they were asked to read it carefully and ask any questions they could have about the information in the form or about the study so that their doubts could be clarified at that moment.

3.3.2.2 PARTICIPANTS AND RECRUITMENT

The participants in the study were all first-year university students of physiotherapy in Catalonia and England whose mother tongue was either Catalan or English. For the final study, of all the initial participants, 26 Catalan participants (13 males and 13 females) and 26 English participants (10 males and 16 females) were included. The average age of the Catalan subjects was lower than that of the English ones—19.38 years (SD 2.15) versus 22.30 years (SD 4.64)—although they were all in the first year of their physiotherapy degree at E.U. Gimbernat (affiliated with Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), Sant Cugat del Vallès (Barcelona), Spain) and Oxford Brookes (Oxford, England, UK). Choosing healthcare students in their freshman year at college allowed me to make sure both groups of English and Catalan speakers had a similar age and level of education.

Empathy is an important tool for any type of interpersonal relationship but it is even more important for those whose profession or routine involves interacting with other people and, particularly, it is essential when dealing with people in some type of stressful or troubling situation. Healthcare providers are often faced with people going through more or less distressing circumstances that need empathy from them. Empathy then seems to be an important skill for healthcare students, who need it to understand and show they understand their patients and thus ensure good quality communication with them.

In Catalonia the students were recruited some days previous to the study, at the beginning of March 2016. After one of their classes, they were orally informed about the

basics of the study without unveiling its true nature so as not to predispose them in any way. They were told that this was a linguistic study on interpersonal communication and that they needed no special preparation to take part in it, just to have a couple of hours available on a day that would be agreed upon with all the volunteers. The only inclusion criterion was to have Catalan as their mother tongue. The students who signed up to participate in the study wrote down their full names and email addresses on a piece of paper and, a few days later, were contacted with practical details of the coming sessions. At this stage, a total of 26 students were interviewed: 15 male and 11 female participants. Initially there were four sessions but, because it was decided that one of those sessions would not be part of the final study (half the participants did not turn up and the pair left consisted of two mature students), an additional session with three more pairs was organised in late April. In order to make the two language groups comparable in terms of amount and type of pairs, at a later stage it was decided that one of the female/female pairs in the pilot test would also be included in the final study. Ultimately, there were 4 male/male, 4 female/female, and 5 mixed-sex pairs. Each pair performed 4 role plays, except for one of the mixed-sex pairs that performed only 2 (they turned up late), giving a total of 50 conversations. For the focus group interviews, one of the female participants in the role plays did not turn up so there was one participant less but since the female/female pair in the pilot study had subsequently been included, their focus group interview with four participants altogether was also incorporated.

In England, all the first-year physiotherapy students received a copy of the participant information form by email in February 2017. This email was sent by the BSc Subject Co-ordinator and was just informative: they were told that I would be coming in to tell them more about the study but they were already informed that their participation was not compulsory and they could opt out. On my arrival at Brookes, the BSc students had already been divided into groups, to fit in with their other commitments. On 28th February, I could meet the first-year students before their first morning class. I had a 10-minute talk about the kind of study I was doing and asked and thanked them for their participation in it. The information given was same as with the Catalan group—the object of study was hidden and the only inclusion criterion was to have English as mother tongue—and a copy of the informed consent form was distributed so they could read it

carefully at home and bring it signed on the following day. Most of the signed informed consent forms were handed in to the BSc subject co-ordinator, who was the person, together with the programme lead, responsible for the organisation of the sessions. A few of the forms were brought in duly filled and signed by the students themselves and in that case the sessions started straight with the first instrument, the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). Those participants who had not previously filled in and signed the consent form did it at the very beginning of the session.

Since the number of male English students was quite limited, six altogether, and there were no more BSc male students, it was decided to have a second session with MSc students. They were also in their first year in physiotherapy but they already had a degree in a related field. The participants were contacted by email and the second session took place on 13th March with four pairs. Due to the fact that this session had to be organised in just a matter of a few days, there was no time to distribute the informed consent form before and the participants had to sign it at the very beginning of their session. Taking all the sessions into account, a total of 30 students were interviewed: 10 male and 20 female participants. In the end, in order to have two similar language groups, two of the female/female pairs were not incorporated into the final study and the final distribution was 3 male/male, 6 female/female, and 4 mixed-sex pairs. Each dyad performed 4 role plays except for one of the male/male pairs that performed 5 (to compensate for a situation of another male/male pair that was misunderstood by the story teller and therefore discarded), giving a total of 52 conversations.

3.3.2.3 PROCEDURE: FIRST PART

For the Catalan group, the final study took place in four half-day sessions in March and April 2016 and for the English group, there were two full-day and one half-day sessions in March 2017. In both cases, the sessions were held in one of the college rooms, which was slightly adapted for the occasion: light intensity was checked for the video recordings, two chairs were placed in front of the camera for the role plays; there was a small table in between the two chairs for the participants to leave the instruction sheets or any other thing necessary and to place the voice-recorder; and there was either a

table or some chairs with arm table where the participants could individually fill in the questionnaires before the role plays.

Each complete session, which was held in the participants' mother tongue, consisted of two parts: first, the IRI, the demographic questionnaires and the role plays combined with the post-role play questionnaires and second, the focus group interview in groups of four to eight. In order to organise this, the participants were summoned in pairs in slots of 25-minutes so that the first part of the sessions could be run in stages without having participants waiting or at least not waiting too long. When each of those pairs finished the first part, they were asked to come back at a certain time to do the second part of the study, which consisted of three (exceptionally two or four) pairs of participants.

When a pair entered the room, they were asked to sit separately and individually fill in the IRI followed by the demographic questionnaire. When they finished, normally after some ten minutes, they were asked to sit on the chairs prepared for the role plays and they were told this was the part that was going to be recorded. The participants were given instructions for the role plays: they had to imagine they were in the university canteen, try to speak and behave normally, as they would in real life, and act a conversation based on the prompts they would be given. The participants decided when to start and finish each time so the conversations were as long or as short as they felt necessary. Each pair was given four different situations to role-play and, after each of them, they had to answer a short post-role play questionnaire. The conversations were videotaped and voice recorded. Each participant was given the instructions immediately before each role play started in order to elicit spontaneous dialogues.

During the role plays, although the researcher was present, she did not act as a spectator of the interactions so that the participants could feel more comfortable; instead she prepared the instructions for the next role play and took some notes only supervising the ongoing process at times to make sure everything was fine. When they finished, they were asked to come back at a certain time for the second part of the session and not to say anything about what they had been doing to other people so as not to undermine the nature of the methodology. Once the pairs had done their corresponding role plays, they all got together for the second and last part, i.e. the focus group interviews.

3.3.2.4 ROLE PLAY ANALYSIS

The role plays were transcribed based on Jefferson's (2004) transcription system with a few minor modifications (see p. xiv). In order to facilitate readability, the transcriptions maintain most features of standard texts like capitalization of proper nouns and the first person singular pronoun, standard punctuation with, for example, question marks used to indicate questions or spelling conventions such as contractions or informal forms like *gonna* or *wanna*. The names of the participants were changed in order to maintain their anonymity. Speech was transcribed verbatim, i.e. any grammatical errors were left uncorrected. Visual features such as gestures and facial expressions, voice qualities judged to be relevant and pauses were included in the analysis. The recipients' responses were examined and the different empathic strategies identified and coded. A total of 102 dialogues, 50 in Catalan and 52 in English, were included in the final study.

Each of the transcribed role plays was assigned reference metadata providing information about the date and location of the recording, the language group (Catalan or English), the type of dyad (same sex - M/M or F/F - or mixed sex - M/F), the type of relationship the participants had (the multiple options in the form were finally reduced to friends, acquaintances or strangers), the role play situation discussed (divorce, debt, exam, grant, complaint, hygiene), the type of situation described (personal, academic or professional), the order of that situation in the role play session (first, second, third or fourth), the total number of words in the conversation, and the total number of words employed by the empathy provider.

3.3.2.5 PROCEDURE: SECOND PART

The focus group interviews (FGIs) consisted of several pairs that were gathered after their role play sessions. A total of 10 FGIs were included in this study, 5 for the Catalan group and 5 for the English group. The number of participants varied from 4 to 8 (Table 2) and is higher than that of the participants in the role plays because, for the role plays, the number was cut down in order to have two balanced language groups.

Table 2

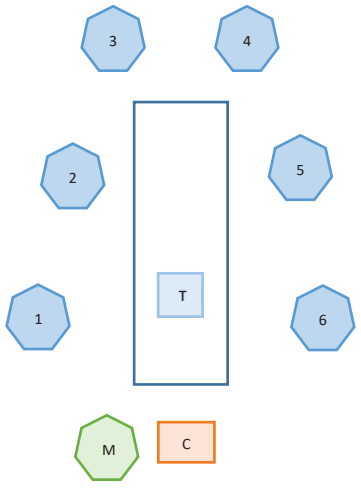
Composition of focus group interviews.

	CATALAN			ENGLISH		
FGI	**MALES**	**FEMALES**	**TOTAL**	**MALES**	**FEMALES**	**TOTAL**
1	2	2	4	3	3	6
2	3	4	7	1	5	6
3	4	2	6	0	6	6
4	4	2	6	2	2	4
5	2	2	4	4	4	8
TOTAL	15	12	27	10	20	30

Before the actual focus group interviews started, the participants were offered some drinks and snacks to make them feel at ease and, after a few minutes, the interview started: the participants sat in a semicircle around a table so that they could see each other and nobody had their back to the camera; the video camera and voice recorder were turned on (Figure 4). The researcher acted as a moderator and did not participate in the discussion, sitting out of the field of the camera and facing the participants. In the focus group interview different sociopragmatic dimensions related to empathy were discussed so that the participants could offer a more personal point of view on the topic, giving valuable information on how they imagine and consider empathic interactions to be, which could be contrasted with the role-played interactions.

Figure 4

Layout of focus group interviews.



1 – 6 = Participants / T = Tape recorder / M = Moderator / C = camera

After thanking the participants for their time and effort to participate in the study, they were informed that that was the second and last part of it and that it would be recorded, as well. The first thing the participants were asked about was what they thought when doing the role plays and their guesses about the object of study, which initiated the discussion on the topic. During the group interaction, the researcher kept her interventions to a minimum, simply asking questions to keep the conversation going or to clarify a specific point, and tried to avoid any signs or comments of approval or disapproval but rather nodded and encouraged participants to answer the questions and elaborate on their opinions. The idea was that the whole interview could not be in any way conditioned by the researcher's views or attitude so that it was the participants who decided on the focus of the issues raised or on what was relevant or not when elaborating on their responses. Because of this "unpredictability," the focus groups were carried out in a flexible way so sometimes the questions were not asked in the same order or new related themes emerged in the discussions. At the end of the interview, the participants were asked if they would like to add anything else about the topic at hand and if there was anything they did not understand or anything they would change or improve. On average, the interviews lasted from 20 to 30 minutes approximately.

The issue of generalisation arises at this point. Vicsek (2010) examines the different types of generalisations that can be made when analysing focus group data and proposes what she calls *existence generalisation* (pp. 126-127) whereby a given response is said to exist but it does not imply anything about its generalisation or the existence of other potential responses. She therefore claims that, presuming this, focus group data applies to a unique scenario but it is not assumed that it can be transferred to other, wider realities. The advantage of existence generalisation is that it overcomes the drawbacks of other types of generalisations particularly *tentative incidence generalisation* (assuming that results also apply other members of the same social category as those in the focus group) and *variation-based generalisation* (taking all the possible variations of a given phenomenon to make a generalisation). Taking all this into account, the focus groups in this study basically aim to offer a broader perspective on empathy giving by a specific group of people.

3.3.2.6 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

The interviews were not transcribed in detail as was done with the role plays, since the fundamental principle was not to analyse group interaction as such but to gather data regarding sociopragmatic features of empathy-giving. The data obtained from all the groups in each language was analysed question by question and meaningful data extracted: the most frequently mentioned or mostly agreed upon ideas or comments were elicited in order to find any trends or recurrent themes that portray what is understood by empathy and how this is socially and individually perceived, and any relevant or interesting points raised in the interview were also captured. It is the basic principle of what is called *thematic analysis* (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Guest et al., 2012; Nowel et al., 2017; Neuendorf, 2019), which was developed as a tool to systematically find and analyse themes in the data. The data obtained in these focus group discussions intends to present the social representations of the act of empathy-giving.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, the results obtained with the different data gathering instruments are presented. Each method examined a specific dimension related to the act of empathy-giving: (a) the IRI assessed the level of perspective taking of each participant, which was then related to the participants' language group, sex, and age; (b) the role plays provided data regarding the verbal strategies used when responding to trouble, the sequential organization of these conversations, and the strengthening and mitigating elements most commonly employed; (c) the post-role play questionnaires captured data on the effects that those conversations had had on the participants; and (d) the focus group interviews provided data on how empathy and empathic interactions were individually and collectively perceived by the participants.

The presentation of results is organised following the order in which the different instruments were used in the study and includes quantitative and qualitative data. As mentioned in Chapter 3, each instrument provides data that relates to a specific aspect of the research questions and contributes to the dissection of the speech act of empathy in order to reveal its nature and the elements that play a part in it.

4.1 RESULTS OF THE INTERPERSONAL REACTIVITY INDEX (IRI)

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Davis, 1980) was used in order to assess the participants' level of empathy, as this could have an impact on how empathy was expressed. Davis' questionnaire offers a multidimensional perspective of empathy by breaking the construct down into emotional (empathic concern and personal distress) and cognitive (perspective taking and fantasy) aspects that are independently treated. For the present study, only one of the four scales in the self-reported IRI, the seven-item perspective taking (PT) scale, was examined because it is the parameter that is related to measures of interpersonal functioning and social competence, as detailed in Section 3.2.1.

Taking into account that in this study two language groups were compared, it was important to know how alike these groups were in terms of PT since any differences at

this level might account for differences in aspects such as the kind and/or the amount of strategies used in a conversation. The data was tabulated and analysed using SPSS 24 (IBM, 2016), with the significance level being set at <0.05. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted in order to find out whether the perspective taking variable was normally distributed. The test shows that this variable has a normal distribution when taking all the participants (n=52) into account but when dividing them into smaller groups according to either language (n=26 in each group) or sex (29 females and 23 males), its distribution becomes non-normal. Therefore, both a parametric model for normal distributions and a non-parametric model for non-normal distributions are used.

Since the size of the sample was small, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was performed to determine whether there were any differences in PT scores between males and females in the two language groups. Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of PT scores of the Catalan and English participants in the study. In the Catalan group, males obtained higher scores than females although these differences did not reach statistical significance (p>0.05). A similar outcome was found when analysing the PT mean of the English subjects, i.e. men got higher scores than women but with no statistical significance (p>0.05), quite probably due to the small sample size.

Table 3

Mean and standard deviation of PT scores per language group with results of the Mann–Whitney U test.

	Mean (SD) PT scores		**Critical value**	**Significance level**
	Females	**Males**	***z***	***p***
Catalan	16.15 (4.93) (n=13)	17.69 (4.66) (n=13)	0.77	0.05
English	17.56 (4.55) (n=16)	20.10 (5.45) (n=10)	1.46	0.05

If we compare the PT scores—mean and standard deviation—obtained by participants of the same sex in each language group, Catalan and English, the differences are not significant (p>0.05), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Mean and standard deviation of PT scores per sex with results of the Mann–Whitney U test.

	Mean (SD) PT scores		Critical value	Significance level
	Catalan	**English**	***z***	***p***
Females	16.15 (4.93) (n=13)	17.56 (4.55) (n=16)	0.68	0.05
Males	17.69 (4.66) (n=13)	20.10 (5.45) (n=10)	1.28	0.05

When dividing participants according only to sex and not language, the differences between males and females continue emerging with men scoring higher than women without reaching statistical significance (Table 5). This time, the test used is parametric (Student's *t*-test) since it is the whole sample of participants that is analysed, making the sample bigger (n=52), and the distribution was normal.

Table 5

Mean and standard deviation of PT scores for English and Catalan males and females with results of the Student's t-test.

Mean (SD) PT scores Females (n=29)	Mean (SD) PT scores Males (n=23)	***t***	***p***
16.93 (4.69)	18.74 (5.05)	0.265	>0.05

PT scores were also analysed in relation to the participants' age. In order to find out whether there was a correlation between PT and age, Spearman's correlation coefficient was used for the language and sex groups. For the Catalan participants, the Rho coefficient obtained was 0.242 (p>0.05) and for the English group, the Rho coefficient was 0.239 (p>0.05), which indicates a non-significant correlation in both cases. The correlation is kept non-significant when grouping participants according to sex and not language with a Rho coefficient of 0.326 (p>0.05) for females and 0.077 (p>0.05) for males. When grouping all participants regardless of sex or language, the results follow the same pattern: the estimated Pearson's correlation is not statistically significant (0.122; p>0.05). All in all, PT scores show that we are dealing with two quite homogeneous groups whose differences in the speech act of empathy giving will not be accounted for by any differences in their level of perspective taking.

4.2 RESULTS OF THE ROLE PLAYS

Role plays were done in pairs and each pair had to act four different situations. The resulting conversations, 50 in Catalan and 52 in English, give valuable information regarding the type, amount and percentage of use of the verbal strategies deployed by empathy providers (EP) and how these are mitigated or emphasized; the sequential organisation of these conversations and their most common outline; and the joint construction of the interaction based on the participants' contributions and responses. While the collection of data is based on these role plays and their transcription, the results are obtained through the analysis of the different elements found in these conversations.

4.2.1 VERBAL STRATEGIES FOR DISPLAYING EMPATHY

Although empathy can also be conveyed by means of body language, active listening, prosody, etc., the focus of this study is on the verbal forms used when responding more or less empathically in dyadic conversations. Gestures or face expressions are treated as strengthening or mitigating devices.

After analysing all the conversations in the corpus (102), the different verbal responses given by the recipients were identified and coded and a list of the different strategies used when responding to the telling of a trouble was established. The verbal responses described below are not necessarily empathic per se, although some clearly show care and interest for the story teller and his/her circumstances, but they fulfil this function along the whole interaction. It is the unfolding of the conversation, how each participant proceeds and engages in it that favours their use, creating and displaying an empathic response.

Taking into consideration the conversations in the study and also other classifications by authors looking into empathy and supportive messages, the following strategies have been established and grouped under general headings that describe their main aim (Sanahuges & Curell, 2020), as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Classification of strategies used in empathic responses.

1. primal responses
    1.1. primary sound objects
    1.2. secondary sound object
    1.3. expletives / vulgar expressions
2. informative requests
    2.1. additional information about the event
    2.2. additional information about the teller
3. evaluative observations
    3.1. diagnoses
    3.2. prognoses
    3.3. remedies
4. reassuring comments
    4.1. optimistic projections
    4.2. invoking the status quo
    4.3. making light of the problem
    4.4. expressions of praise
    4.5. expressions of encouragement
5. expressions involving the recipient
    5.1. second stories
    5.2. subjunctive assessments
    5.3. observer responses
    5.4. offers of help
6. expressions of regret

A brief description for each strategy is provided below. As a way to illustrate how that specific strategy is used in context, an example taken from the conversations analysed is given in each language.

1. Primal responses

These are non-elaborated responses in the sense that they are quite automatic and instinctive. Since they describe an immediate reaction to the announcement of the situation, they tend to appear at the receipt of the story. Within this category, we can find sound objects. Sound objects, also called *response cries* (Goffman, 1978) or *reaction tokens* (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006), express the EP's most spontaneous reactions.

Goffman (1978) considered imprecations a type of response cry since they function in the same way. In this study, though, imprecations (i.e. expletives/vulgar expressions) are separated to better grasp what was intuitively thought to be a possible difference between Catalan and English—its more frequent use in Catalan than in English—but they are all contained within the same category. According to Heritage (2011), Couper-Kuhlen (2012) and Kupetz (2014), these are the most empathic forms used in interpersonal interactions because of their own nature, which connects them with primary reactions. They are typically used in combination with more substantive lexical forms. Couper-Khulen (2012) suggests that they can either express affiliation or disaffiliation with the speaker, depending on their prosodic characteristics and the moment at which they are delivered. They are generally used in the opening stage of the interaction as a reaction to news although they can also appear in other stages. Two basic types are distinguished:

1.1. Primary sound objects, which include simple, non-phrasal elements like onomatopoeias or sounds like clicks, whistles, grunts or vocalizations like "ooops!" or "oh!".

(7) Pair 1, exam (academic) – CAT

(EP=empathy provider / ER=empathy receiver)

ER: [bueno és que clar (.) ja ha sortit la primera persona de classe i: (.) ja no pots fer
'[well the thing is (.) somebody has already left the exam room a:nd (.) you can't'
l'examen
'sit it then'

EP: **uaaahhh**
'**uaaahhh**'

(8) Pair 1, divorce (personal) – ENG

EP: yea:h (.) you've got to think of it like that I suppose

ER: yea:h

EP: **o:::h** (.) [((**outbreath through the nose**))] ((**clicks her tongue**)) well (.) if there (.) if there's anything I can do: (.) let me know

1.2. Secondary sound objects or phrasal elements that are verbally more elaborated than primary sound objects. They include exclamations like “really?”, “oh God!” or “good heavens!”

(9) Pair 4, grant (academic) – CAT

ER: ho tenia claríssim\ (0.9) i:: (.) i avui ha arribat la contestació: (.) i m’han dit que no\
‘I was so sure\ (0.9) a:nd (.) and today I got their reply (.) and they told me I’ve been refused\’

EP: **què dius tia**
‘**no way mate**’

(10) Pair 9, complaint (professional) – ENG

ER: no (.) not yet (.) [I just (.)] I just know (.) there’s been a complaint (0.5) [but (1)] ((clicks tongue))

EP: [or have they spoken to you?] [**oh gosh**\]

1.3. Expletives/vulgar expressions suggest a strong reaction from the listener in affiliation and solidarity with the speaker. Authors like Jefferson (1988) and Stapleton (2010) suggest that this kind of language can be used as a way of creating a sense of intimacy and solidarity.

(11) Pair 1, exam (academic) – CAT

ER: que:: (.) he arribat ta:rd (.) m’he (.) bueno m’he apalancat a casa i he arribat tard
‘I:: (.) was late (.) I (.) well I was lazing around home and I was late for’
a l’examen i no m’han deixat entrar
‘the exam and was not allowed to get in (the exam room)’

EP: **osti::** (.) [però
‘**da::mn** (.) [but’

(12) No examples of this were found in the English data analysed. The fragment below is taken from Jefferson (1988) and is part of an extract in which a visit to the dentist is discussed:

[C.1](3) [NB:II:5:2-4R]

ER: God he wanted to pull a tooth [and make me a new go:ld uh

EP: [ahhhhh!

ER: hhhhhh (.) bridge for (.) EI:GHT hundred dollars

EP: **oh:: sh:it**

2. Informative requests

Heritage (2011) calls this type of questions *ancillary questions* and other authors like Couper-Kuhlen (2012) and Kupetz (2014), *follow-up questions*. These can be questions or statements that aim to clarify and elaborate on the situation that is being discussed and at the same time express alignment, interest and involvement. We can distinguish two basic types:

2.1 Those that try to get additional information about the event:

(13) Pair 1, complaint (professional) – CAT

EP: [bueno (.) **però estàs amb e:l (.) tutor (.) no?**

'[well (.) **but you are with the: (.) supervisor (.) aren't you?**'

(14) Pair 1, grant (academic) – ENG

ER: well I really expected to get it because I went through the process\ and I got the right grades\ and everything like that\ (.) but a:hh (.) I guess they thought someone else wa:s (.) better for the situation, so: (.) I guess I won't be able to go abroad for a year now

EP: **did they explain the reason?**

2.2 Those that focus more on the teller's experience or perspective of the problem or situation.

(15) Pair 1, divorce (personal) – CAT

EP: **i com estàs tu ara?** (.) **com ho portes?**

'**and how are you now?** (.) **how are you doing?**'

(16) Pair 1, complaint (professional) – ENG

EP: **and why don't you think you made any mistakes?**

3. Evaluative observations

Jefferson (1988) labelled these expressions *work-up* and they link the trouble being discussed with more general circumstances. These observations try to appraise the situation or internal state analysing its causes, consequences or possible solutions. By doing this, the recipient looks deeper into the trouble and hypothesises about its nature, showing their understanding of the possible implications involved.

3.1. Diagnoses. These are expressions that try to identify the cause of an event or an emotion to better understand them and their consequences.

(17) Pair 2, hygiene (professional) – CAT

ER: home (.) jo em dutxo cada dia no? (.) no sé (.) a lo millor és una
'hey (.) I have a shower every day you know? (.) I don't know (.) maybe she is a'
mica:: escrupolosa no:: [(.) o::
'bit fussy ri::ght [(.) o::r'

EP: [**potser a l'estar allà tantes hores**
'[**perhaps since you spend so many hours there**'

(18) Pair 1, complaint (professional) – ENG

EP: as I'm studying physiotherapy: (.) **maybe it could be something that e:mm (.) you don't quite understand but it maybe it's something to do with their (.) muscles (.) something maybe that they haven't quite understood themselves yet maybe it's not you it could be themselves** ((pulling the sides of her mouth down))

3.2. Prognoses. They predict how the situation or problem at hand will turn out.

(19) Pair 1, grant (academic) – CAT

ER: ja ho tenia súper en el cap i (.) REALMENT pensava que me la donarien eh?
'I already had it rooted in my mind and (.) I REALLY thought I would get it huh?'

EP: bueno pues **jo crec que si ho vols fe:r ho podràs fer després i::**
'well **I think that if you want to do it you will be able to do it later on a::nd**'

(20) Pair 2, debt (personal) – ENG

EP: **if you if you do this with Cristi:na who's your friend °it can create problems°**

3.3. Remedies. They offer solutions to the problematic event the teller is worried about. Some offer a practical solution to the trouble.

(21) Pair 2, hygiene (professional) – CAT

EP: no ho sé (.) **igua:l (.) si portes (.) desodorant o algo en allà (.) [a**
'I don't know (.) **maybe (.) if you bring (.) deodorant or something there (.) [in' la motxilla i:: [vas renovant**
'**your bag a::nd [you renew it**'

(22) Pair 1, complaint (professional) – ENG

EP: e:mmm I think **you'd be best to find out actually what their problem was since he said he wasn't ver or she wasn't very specific about it, so to know exactly what it was so you can know for the future and make sure that you keep a very kind of (.) e:mmm professiona:l (.) relationship with (them) just to make sure they know that you were maybe offended by (their)**

Some other times the remedy is less practical and more emotional and has to do either with the ER's attitude, feelings or appraisal of the situation.

(23) Pair 12, divorce – CAT

EP: (.) pensa que bueno: ((shrugs slightly)) (.) que per e:lls ((stretches right arm
'(.) think that we:ll ((shrugs slightly)) (.) for them ((stretches right arm'
forward)) (0.9) segurament és el millor\ (.) i: (.) i és el que els fa més feliços\ (.)
'forward)) (0.9) it's probably the best\ (.) a:nd (.) and it's what makes them the happiest\ (.)'
°llavors bueno:° (.) in- intenta ((moves both arms forward)) empatitzar amb
'°then we:ll° (.) tr- try ((moves both arms forward)) empathise with'
ells\ (.) i agafar-t'ho: (.) jo crec de la millor maner- (.) manera que puguis i:
'them\ (.) and take i:t (.) I'd say in the best wa- (.) way you can a:nd'

(24) Pair 12, grant (academic) – ENG

ER: [still prefer to be living in Italy for a year than (.) [in England]

EP: [I know/ (.) they did say] it was chilled ((opens both hands on the sides and traces a kind of smile)) (.) in in in (.) like just chilling in there ((moves both hands out in a kind of wavy movement)) (.) and they had their own flat and stuff (.) but [(1)] **just try and look at the positives** and eh

4. Reassuring comments

They try to explicitly make somebody less worried. The first three are part of what Jefferson (1988) calls *close implicature* (preparing for the exit of the troubles telling conversation).

4.1. Optimistic projections. They are positive, favourable guesses about the future, which intend to instil confidence into the teller.

(25) Pair 2, grant (academic) – CAT

EP: i: (.) i clar (.) jo entenc que això: de:: (.) de que: (0.6) sense beca és molt difícil
'a:nd (.) and yeah (.) I understand that (.) that (0.6) with no **grant it is very difficult**'
anar-hi però: (.) jo seguiria treballant\ (.) i: (.) **jo crec que l'oportunitat (.)**
'**to go bu:t (.) I'd continue working\ (.) a:nd (.) I think a new opportunity (.)**'
tornarà: (.) a ser-hi
'**(.) will come**'

(26) Pair 11, divorce (personal) – ENG

EP: but (1) hopefully you'll be (0.9) **you'll** ((nods head several times)) **[get better]** [(0.7)] like (0.5) this will probably be the worst (0.8) the worst time ((nods head)) [(.)] and she (0.5) **she's hopefully getting easier**

4.2. Invoking the status quo, i.e. connecting the situation being discussed with the real world, with the way the world is normally viewed or with ordinary activities. This strategy is used either to downplay the relevance or importance of the trouble or to assume that there is not much that can be done, and therefore an idea of resignation and acceptance is implied.

(27) Pair 2, complaint (professional) – CAT

EP: era una persona gra:n (.) o: era jove?
'was he old (.) o:r young?'

ER: sí sí (.) era gran
'yes yes (.) he was old'

EP: **perquè a vegades (.) la gent gran (.) es queixa**
'**because sometimes (.) the elderly (.) complain**'

(28) Pair 9, debt (personal) – ENG

ER: you know? [(.) I needed] the money or I wouldn't survive without it (.) so:

EP: [I can imagine] oh no that's it (.) we all som-(.) we've been there ((shakes head)) (.) **sometimes you don't do what you gotta do**

4.3. Making light of the problem. When this type of response is used, the speaker intends to make the trouble appear less important, more acceptable. This often involves humorous, amusing remarks that help the teller to take things more lightly.

(29) Pair 1, divorce (personal) – CAT

EP: bueno **tampoc és per tant eh?** i t'ho dic per experiència que no:: (.) **que no é:s**
'well **it's not that bad huh?** and I'm talking from experience it's no::t (.) it's not'
(.) no és tant (.) i després t'acostumes (.) costa adaptar-se això sí però
'(.) **it's not that bad (.) and then you get used to it** (.) it's difficult to adapt for sure but'

(30) Pair 5, exam (academic)– ENG

ER: it's stressing me out a bit (0.6) I should've set my alarm for earlier
(0.8)

EP: yeah (.) but then there's no (.) don't get stressed about it until you've talked to them and actually (1.2) find out ((nods head a couple of times)) what [th]ey've got to say about it [(.)] **'cos you may be getting stressed for nothing**

4.4. Expressions of praise. They include compliments and expressions of approval that clearly aim to motivate the teller and make them happier.

(31) Pair 4, divorce (personal) – CAT

EP: °claro° (.) buà (.) pues:: ((looks up at the ceiling)) (0.6) no sé: (.) o sigui **està bé**
'°of course° (.) gosh (.) so: ((looks up at the ceiling)) (0.6) I don't kno:w (.) I mean **it's great'**
que:: (.) que: t'ho hagis plantej- o sigui que t'ho prenguis així: (1.4) i:: (.) no sé
'**tha:t (.) you have thoug- I mean that you take it like thi:s** (1.4) a::nd (.) I don't know'
(.) igual si (.) hi havia discussions ((arrup les celles)) a ca:sa (.) és que (.) no sé (.)
'(.) maybe if (.) they argued ((wrinkles her brow)) at ho:me (.) I don't know (.)'
molt bé:
'very well'

(32) Pair 9, grant (academic) – ENG

EP: why? (.) I just don't ((shakes head)) [(.) it doesn't seem] fair [(.) does it? (.) because **you've been working] so hard**

4.5. Expressions of encouragement. They intend to liven the other person up with comments that directly aim to lift their spirits or expressions that voice the hope of a successful, positive result to a given situation in the future.

(33) Pair 6, divorce (personal) – CAT

EP: ((blows)) (.) no sé què dir-te\ (0.5) °o sigui° (.) **ÀNIMS** i si vols algo (.) ((small laugh))
'((blows)) (.) I don't know what to say\ (0.5) °I mean° (.) **CHEER UP** and if there's anything you need (.) ((small laugh))'
(.) ((shrugs and at the same time slightly lifts arms)) m'ho(h) d(h)ius i parlem
'((shrugs and at the same time slightly lifts arms)) just(h) t(h)ell me and we can talk'

(34) Pair 9, complaint (professional) – ENG

EP: ((nods head)) you'll be fine (0.5) ((nods head)) **you can do it**

5. Expressions involving the recipient

The common idea that empathy is the ability to put yourself into somebody else's shoes is directly addressed by the strategies in this section. Establishing a connection between the teller's circumstances and/or emotions and the recipient's experience, knowledge and/or emotions is the basic premise that all these strategies are based on.

5.1. Second stories or, in Heritage's (2011) terms, *parallel assessments*, refer to the description of a similar relevant experience that presents the listener's side without trying to enter directly into the trouble being discussed.

(35) Pair 2, debt (personal) – CAT

EP: ((nodding)) hi ha moltes feines que: (.) es fan (.) que són molt
'((nodding)) there are many jobs tha:t (.) one can do (.) that are very'
fàcils (.) per exemple (.) ( ) (.) **conec una feina que és (.) que la va fer la meva**
'easy (.) for example (.) ( ) (.) **I know one that is (.) that my**'
cosina (.) °i es va treure uns calers° (.) i:: é:s mmm (.) anar a primera hora
'**cousin did (.) °and she earned some money° (.) a::nd i:s e::r (.) go first time in**'
del matí (.) a donar cromos (0.5) als nens (0.5) i amb això et treus 10 euros
'the morning (.) and give away trading cards (0.5) to children (0.5) and with this you get 10 euro'
l'hora (.) i estàs una hora allà (.) de vuit a nou (.) donant cromos (0.5) i ja està
'an hour (.) and you spend one hour there (.) from eight to nine (.) giving trading cards (0.5) and that's it'
(.) perquè és com que fa:s
'**(.) because it's li:ke**'

(36) Pair 1, divorce (personal) - ENG

ER: e:mm she's alright (.) I think (.) e::r she took it a bit better than I did just because maybe she saw it coming a bit more? (.) I think just cos I'm the youngest I didn't really know (0.5) .hh but e:mm yeah I don't really know many people that have divorced parents I don't really know what to do about it

EP: a:hh **my parents divorced when I was very young**

5.2. Subjunctive assessments go a step further, according to Heritage (2011), and describe the recipient if they were in the situation being described.

(37) Pair 7, complaint (professional) – CAT

EP: **jo parlaria clarament amb ell\ (.) mira jo: (.) vull fer això/ (.) es lo que (.) lo que**
'I would clearly talk to him\ (.) look I: (.) want to do this/ (.) this is what (.) what'
veig que et passa és (.) és això/ (0.8) i:: (1.07) és la meva idea de tractament\ (.)
'I see happens to you (.) it's this/ (0.8) a::nd (1.07) this is my idea for treatment\ (.)'
tingues paciència i:: (.) i: ja veurem (.) les coses aquestes no són d'un dia per l'altre
'be patient a::nd (.) and we'll see (.) these things are not cured overnight'

(38) Pair 1, grant (academic) – ENG

ER: what would you do in my situation?

EP: I think (.) after a setback like this (.) **I would think (.) I would take some time for myself\ (.) °you know° forget about these studies and career and everything and maybe work for a few months (.) try to get some money for a plane ticket and go somewhere and ( )**

5.3. Observer responses are even a bit more empathic, according to the author (Heritage, 2011), and picture the recipient as a witness or observer of the situation at hand.

(39) Pair 1, grant (academic) – CAT

ER: (.) si ja surts per treballar i tal (.) ja no::
'(.) if you finish and start working and so (.) you do::n't'

EP: **ja no et fa tanta il·lusió** no?
'**you are not that eager** are you?'

(40) Pair 3, complaint (professional) – ENG

EP: ((nods slightly)) (1.5) ok (.) it's a bit tricky because ((straightens back)) (.) you don't know exactly what they said/ (0.7) so: (1.4) obviously (.) **at the moment**

((slightly shaking head)) thoughts are running into your head because you're thinking (.) mmm ((with a smiley tone)) did I do this? ((slightly tilting head to the right)) how could I offend them? (.) .hhh (.) first thing I would say i:s (0.8) speak to: (.) someone like Robert\ (.) cause Robert is quite understanding

5.4. Offers of help. These are expressions that let the teller know they can count on the recipient by explicitly offering assistance, a helping hand or support.

(41) Pair 11, grant (academic) – CAT

EP: °ja:° (0.8) i si no (.) bueno: (.) **intentarem col·laborar tots** (1.4) **veiam què hi**
'I see (0.8) if not (.) well (.) **we'll all try to collaborate** (1.4) **we'll see what**'
podem fer
'**we can do**'

(42) Pair 1, divorce (personal) – ENG

EP: yea:h (.) you've got to think of it like that I suppose
ER: yea:h
EP: o:::h (.) ((outbreath through the nose)) ((clicks her tongue)) well (.) if there (.) **if there's anything I can do: (.) let me know**

6. Expressions of regret

These are expressions of worry or sadness about the situation being discussed or the teller involved in it.

(43) Pair 3, divorce (personal) – CAT

EP: jolín (.) **ho sento** (.) a veure (0.5) i (.) no saps (.) a què es (.) o sigui tu (.) tu ja els
'jeez (.) **I'm sorry** (.) let's see (0.5) and (.) you don't know (.) what the cause (.) I mean (.) did you'
veies bé o no?
'see it coming or not?'

(44) Pair 11, divorce (personal) - ENG

EP: that's such a hard thing (.) **I am so sorry for you**

Sometimes the boundaries of these strategies are blurred, as a single strategy can fulfil different functions. When discussing the fact that the teller's hospital tutor asked her to be more careful with her personal hygiene, the recipient's responses along the conversation try to ease the problem by presenting it as a general kind of assessment for all students rather than as a personal thing. When closing the conversation the recipient emphasises this idea again and concludes:

(45) Pair 9, hygiene (professional) - ENG

01 EP: ((laughs, leans forward and crosses legs)) (2.1) ↓ it will make you [(.)] feel
02 better in the long run and then (0.6) yea:h/ (.) but as I say [I wouldn't I
03 wouldn't take it as a personal thing] (.) it's probably just a general (.) kind of comment

On lines 02 and 03, "I wouldn't take it as a personal thing" not only expresses what the recipient would do if she were in that situation (subjunctive assessment) but also tries to reduce the impact that the tutor's comment has had on the teller by presenting it as something less important than she thinks (making light of the problem). In both cases, there is a mental effort first to imagine oneself in a given scenario and think what one would do, which is a basic aspect of empathy, and second, based on one's assessment of the situation and on the teller's stance, to help the other person to better cope with it. Likewise, the position a given strategy occupies in the interaction can also modify its function and meaning. If "I wouldn't take it as a personal thing" was said right after the announcement, the teller could interpret that as a way of downplaying the situation that concerns them and even as a lack of alignment and affiliation, which could bring the topic to an end. The same statement appearing after elaborating and assessing the situation would probably be taken differently, more affiliatively. Obviously, even in these two different positions, it would be necessary to take the whole interaction into account to determine whether the statement does one thing or the other.

4.2.2 USE OF STRATEGIES

All the 102 conversations were transcribed and the empathic strategies identified and codified. Table 6 shows the total number of words in each conversation, the amount and percentage of these words employed by the EP, and the number of strategies in

each individual conversation according to the order in their corresponding role play session for the Catalan group. The mean number of words per conversation is 331.12 and that of words used by the EP, 141.62, which accounts for 42.76% of all the words in an average conversation. These figures represent an average with conversations ranging from the shortest—conversation 10/4: 138 words in total, 72 words said by the EP (52.17%) and 6 strategies used—to the longest—conversation 2/1: 640 words in total, 346 words said by the EP (54.06%) and 11 strategies used. The EP's total contribution in an interaction seems to be unrelated to the length of the conversation and the total number of strategies employed. Clearly, as shown in Table 6 below, the longest conversation does not give the largest percentage of EP talk, which can be found in conversation 12/2 with 63.87% of EP talk, or the largest amount of strategies, to be found in conversation 6/2 with 38 strategies.

Table 6

Distribution of words and number of strategies per conversation in the Catalan group.

Catalan Pair / Conversation	Total number of words	Words by EP (%)	Number of strategies
1 / 1	305	93 (30.49%)	10
1 / 2	587	310 (52.81%)	27
1 / 3	506	126 (24.90%)	19
1 / 4	441	178 (40.36%)	19
2 / 1	640	346 (54.06%)	11
2 / 2	596	288 (48.32%)	8
2 / 3	398	208 (52.26%)	14
2 / 4	505	299 (59.20%)	9
3 / 1	150	16 (10.66%)	3
3 / 2	174	109 (62.64%)	10
3 / 3	179	46 (25.69%)	5
3 / 4	251	132 (52.58%)	10
4 / 1	457	221 (48.35%)	8
4 / 2	330	75 (22.72%)	10
4 / 3	383	140 (36.55%)	5
4 / 4	391	127 (32.48%)	7
5 / 1	362	199 (54.97%)	24

5 / 2	391	159 (40.66%)	13
5 / 3	381	195 (51.18%)	20
5 / 4	322	136 (42.23%)	15
6 / 1	538	149 (27.69%)	11
6 / 2	508	290 (57.08%)	38
7 / 1	261	100 (38.31%)	10
7 / 2	230	108 (46.95%)	9
7/ 3	278	150 (53.95%)	13
7/4	320	162 (50.62%)	15
8/1	251	87 (34.66%)	3
8/2	226	143 (63.27%)	8
8/3	264	103 (39.01%)	8
8/4	324	139 (42.90%)	7
9/1	234	53 (22.64%)	7
9/2	263	93 (35.36%)	11
9/3	248	84 (33.87%)	12
9/4	285	109 (38.34%)	12
10/1	199	65 (32.66%)	7
10/2	276	144 (52.17%)	10
10/3	153	79 (51.63%)	9
10/4	138	72 (52.17%)	6
11/1	226	112 (49.55%)	13
11/2	332	121 (36.44%)	12
11/3	374	167 (44.65%)	14
11/4	343	150 (43.73%)	14
12/1	440	104 (23.63%)	10
12/2	418	267 (63.87%)	14
12/3	534	156 (29.21%)	9
12/4	361	176 (48.75%)	15
13/1	205	61 (29.75%)	6
13/2	215	96 (44.65%)	11
13/3	190	62 (32.63%)	14
13/4	173	76 (43.93%)	9
TOTAL	**16,556**	**7,081 (42.76%)**	**572**

Table 7 shows the same information—total number of words in each conversation, amount and percentage of these words employed by the EP, and number of strategies in each individual conversation according to the order in their corresponding role play—for the English group. The mean number of words per conversation is 316.69 and that of words used by the EP, 147.84, which accounts for 46.68% of all the words in an average conversation. These figures represent an average with conversations ranging from the shortest—conversation 10/1: 128 words in total, 58 words said by the EP (45.31%) and 9 strategies used—to the longest—conversation 12/4: 612 words in total, 326 words said by the EP (53.26%) and 22 strategies used. The same as in the Catalan group, the EP's total contribution, expressed as a percentage, in an interaction seems to be unrelated to the length of the conversation and the total number of strategies employed. As can be seen in table 7, the longest conversation is not the one with the highest percentage of EP talk, which occurs in conversation 3/1 with 84.29% of EP talk, or the largest amount of strategies, which can be found in conversation 9/1 with 24 strategies.

Table 7

Distribution of words and number of strategies per conversation in the English group.

English Pair / Conversation	Total number of words	Words by EP (%)	Number of strategies
1 / 1	222	80 (36.03%)	8
1 / 2	199	104 (52.26%)	18
1 / 3	278	118 (42.44%)	11
1 / 4	191	60 (31.41%)	12
2 / 2	178	68 (38.20%)	9
2 / 3	257	129 (50.19%	9
2 / 4	188	92 (48.93%)	11
3 / 1	433	365 (84.29%)	13
3 / 2	537	227 (42.27%)	12
3 / 3	372	150 (40.32%)	7
3 / 4	432	175 (40.50%)	5
4 / 1	327	136 (41.59%)	19
4 / 2	261	155 (59.38%)	9

4 / 3	303	118 (38.94%)	11
4 / 4	215	99 (46.04%)	10
5 / 1	211	64 (30.33%)	5
5 / 2	279	150 (53.76%)	13
5 / 3	218	122 (55.96%)	9
5 / 4	247	141 (57.08%)	11
6 / 1	453	296 (65.34%)	18
6 / 2	354	125 (35.31%)	8
6 / 3	495	400 (80.80%)	22
6 / 4	424	115 (27.12%)	11
7 / 1	309	172 (55.66%)	21
7 / 2	352	202 (57.38%)	15
7/ 3	354	195 (55.08%)	11
7/4	339	146 (43.06%)	18
8/1	345	118 (34.20%)	6
8/2	261	146 (55.93%)	7
8/3	466	138 (29.61%)	12
8/4	469	361 (76.97%)	16
9/1	290	156 (53.79%)	24
9/2	171	94 (54.97%)	14
9/3	236	107 (45.33%)	15
9/4	204	133 (65.19%)	16
10/1	128	58 (45.31%)	9
10/2	247	94 (38.05%)	13
10/3	242	126 (52.06%)	8
10/4	243	96 (39.50%)	8
11/1	351	217 (61.82%)	10
11/2	409	164 (40.09%)	10
11/3	266	129 (48.49%)	13
11/4	303	120 (39.60%)	11
12/1	393	137 (34.86%)	12
12/2	347	119 (34.29%)	16
12/3	352	152 (43.18%)	11
12/4	612	326 (53.26%)	22
13/1	462	101 (21.86%)	9
13/2	329	128 (38.90%)	8

13/3	403	96 (23.82%)	9
13/4	208	81 (38.94%)	9
13/5	303	87 (28.71%)	5
TOTAL	**16,468**	**7,688 (46.68%)**	**604**

The total number of strategies employed by both groups is similar: 572 strategies by Catalan speakers (50 conversations) and 604 strategies by English speakers (52 conversations), giving a mean of 11.44 strategies per conversation in Catalan and 11.61 in English. The mean and standard deviation of the number of strategies for Catalan and English males and females was calculated with t-student (Table 8). In Catalan, men use more strategies than women, 11.67 (SD 6.71) versus 7.50 (SD 3.02), whereas the opposite occurs in English: men deploy fewer strategies than women, 8.50 (SD 3.21) versus 11.50 (SD 3.08). English females use a significantly higher number of strategies than Catalan females (p<0.05) and in the case of males, although the mean of strategies used by Catalan men is higher than that of English men, the differences do not reach statistical significance (p>0.05).

Table 8

Mean and standard deviation of number of strategies for Catalan and English males and females with Student's t-test.

	Mean (SD) Catalan	**Mean (SD) English**	***t***
Male	11.67 (6.71)	8.50 (3.21)	1.042^{ns}
Female	7.50 (3.02)	11.50 (3.08)	2.72^{*}

*p<0.05 ns = non-significant

If we have a look at the number of strategies used by every subject and correlate it to their corresponding PT scores by means of Spearman's non-parametric test, we obtain a correlation coefficient of 0.031 (p>0.05), which indicates a covariance close to 0 implying no statistical significance. Therefore, these two parameters are not correlated. Regarding sex, the mean of strategies used by males (10.08) and females (9.50) is similar. The Mann–Whitney U test shows that there are no significant differences (p>0.05) between both measures. The Pearson coefficient was calculated to see if the number of strategies correlated with different items, and the results revealed no significant correlation between number of strategies and sex of the empathy receiver (r = 0.192),

sex of the empathy provider (r = .042), the type of relationship the participants in the role-play had (r = -0.112) or the type of situation being discussed (r = -0.079).

Table 9 shows the strategies identified, together with a frequency count, i.e. the number of occasions these strategies are used in the conversations, and their corresponding percentage out of the total data set. The first four most commonly used strategies in each language are highlighted.

Table 9

Use of strategies by Catalan and English speakers

		CATALAN		ENGLISH	
	STRATEGY	**NUMBER of CASES**	**PERCENTAGE (%)**	**NUMBER of CASES**	**PERCENTAGE (%)**
1.1	Primary sound objects	18	3.15	101	16.72
1.2	Secondary sound objects	16	2.80	19	3.14
1.3	Expletives / vulgar exp.	31	5.41	0	0
2.1	Additional inf. event	105	18.36	109	18.04
2.2	Additional inf. teller	19	3.32	21	3.48
3.1	Diagnoses	68	11.89	35	5.79
3.2	Prognoses	35	6.12	32	5.30
3.3	Remedies	96	16.78	58	9.60
4.1	Optimistic projections	22	3.85	40	6.62
4.2	Invoking the status quo	67	11.71	17	2.81
4.3	Making light of problem	26	4.54	47	7.78
4.4	Exp. praise	5	0.87	1	0.16
4.5	Exp. encouragement	6	1.05	17	2.81
5.1	Second stories	1	0.17	4	0.66
5.2	Subjunctive assessments	33	5.77	18	2.98
5.3	Observer responses	12	2.10	68	11.26
6	Offers of help	11	1.92	14	2.32
7	Exp. regret	1	0.17	3	0.50
	TOTAL	**572**	100	**604**	100

In both language groups, the four most common strategies—additional information about the event, remedies, diagnoses, and invoking the status quo in Catalan and

additional information about the event, primary sound objects, observer responses and remedies in English—account for over half the total of strategy use, representing by far the most commonly used strategies in each language. Two of the four are shared by both language groups: additional information, in both cases at the top of the list, and remedies. Apart from these four main strategies, the remaining seem to occupy a secondary position with lower percentages—starting at 6.12% in Catalan and 7.78% in English and going down. The three strategies showing the most marked differences in percentage of use between groups are primary sound objects (3.15% in Catalan vs 16.72% in English; percentage difference: 13.57 percentage points), observer responses (2.10% in Catalan vs 11.26% in English; percentage difference: 9.16 percentage points), and invoking the status quo (11.71% in Catalan vs 2.81%; percentage difference: 8.9 percentage points).

4.2.3 INTERACTIONAL SEQUENCE

Given that the trigger of all these interactions was a trouble that the ER—who acts as the teller of the story—was going through, the interactional sequence of these interactions was compared to that of troubles tellings and complaints that several authors have analysed (Jefferson 1988; Maynard, 1997; Terasaki 2004; Schegloff 2007). Based on their work, the following general outline can be established (Figure 6):

Figure 6

Sequential organization of interactions (problem presentation and responses).

ANNOUNCEMENT	-Pre-announcement (ER)
	-Receipt (EP)
	-Announcement (ER)
RECEIPT	-Response (EP)
ELABORATION	(ER / EP)
CLOSING	-Pre-closing (ER / EP)
	-Closing (ER / EP)

Typically, in the announcement part, the ER presents the trouble or difficult situation, which can be done in a more or less direct way, for example with the use of pre-announcements as a way of preparing the ground for the announcement itself. Once the EP—acting as the recipient of the story—has been informed (announcement), showing alignment and affiliation is the preferred response (receipt) and this is when the recipient starts to elaborate and assess the situation (elaboration). It is at this stage that the EP employs most of the strategies presented here to effectively show alignment and affiliation with the other person, successfully dealing with the social demands implied and activated by the ER's announcement. When the interactants feel that that has been achieved, they bring the topic or conversation to an end (closing). Obviously, not all empathic interactions fall into this exact interactional sequence: pre-announcements and pre-closings do not always occur and the type of response and expansion provided may also be quite different. However, in general terms, this would roughly shape most of these interactions.

The following conversations illustrate how an empathic interaction typically develops in each of the two languages and how some of these strategies are used in an interaction. The first example is taken from the corpus of Catalan role plays and the second one from the corpus of English role plays.

Catalan:

This morning in his placement, Manel got a complaint about his lack of skills from one of his patients and now he tells Laia about it:

(46) Pair 2, complaint (professional) – CAT

01	Manel:	aquest matí estava: (0.5) a l'hospita:l\ (0.8) fent les pràctiques\
		'this morning I was (0.5) in the hospital\ (0.8) in my placement'
02		Ⱶ(.) .hhh (1.5)ⱶ i:: Ⱶ(.) hhh (1.4)ⱶ en una maniobra doncs (.)
		'Ⱶ(.) .hhh (1.5)ⱶ a::nd Ⱶ(.) hhh (1.4)ⱶ while doing a manoeuvre'
03		potser he sigut massa: (.) bru:sc (.) i: (.) i: el pacient se m'ha
		'maybe I was too: (.) brusque (.) a:nd (.) and the patient '
04		queixat (.) de: de la meva poca destresa a l'hora de: (.)
		'complained (.) about my poor skills when (.)'

05		d’executar les maniobres\
		‘performing the manoeuvres\’
06	Laia:	°mm hm°
07	Manel:	i: i cla:r (.) hhh (.) no sé si:: (.) si realment és perquè: (0.5) és el
		‘a:nd and obviously (.) hhh (.) I don’t know i:f (.) if it is really because (0.5) this is my’
08		primer any i estic encara:: (0.5) en pràctique:s\ (.) o: o si: (1.2)
		‘first year and I’m still (0.5) training\ (.) o:r or if (1.2)’
09		no: (.) no és el meu fort això (.) °saps (0.9) què et vull dir?°
		‘this is no:t (.) not my forte (.) °d’you know (0.9) what I mean?°’
10	Laia:	home (.) jo crec que encara no sabem suficie:nt no? (0.5) que
		‘well (.) I think we don’t know enou:gh yet, do we? (0.5) we’
11		este:m (0.5) que tens molts anys per aprendre i per millorar-ho
		‘are: (0.5) you have many years ahead to learn and improve’
12		(0.5) i si has tingut una queixa (.) °bueno° (.) si fos cada dia\
		‘(0.5) and if you’ve got one complaint (.) °well° (.) if it was every day\’
13		(0.7) que tothom es queixés diries °home:° (.) t’ho planteges
		‘(0.7) that all your patients complained you’d say °hey:° (.) you’d consider it’
14		una mica\ (.) potser el teu mètode no és bo\ (0.6) o utilitzes
		‘briefly\ (.) maybe your method is not good (0.6) or you employ’
15		més força de la necessària (0.6) potser no tens control de la
		‘more strength than needed (0.6) maybe you do not control‘
16		teva força
		‘your strength’
17		(1)
18	Manel:	clar (.) bueno al ser (.) al ser el primer any jo també he pensat
		‘sure (.) well since this is (.) this is the first year I have also thought’
19		això\ però: (1) llavors clar sempre busques una segona opinió
		‘this\ bu:t (1) then well you always try to get a second opinion’
20		pe:r ⊦((clicks tongue)) (1.5)⊦ per reforçar la teva idea no?
		‘to: ⊦((clicks tongue)) (1.5)⊦ to reinforce the idea right?’
21		perquè: (0.5) imagina’t que: (.) li has li has fet també a algun

		‘becau:se (0.5) imagine that (.) you’ve you’ve also done it to some’
22		amic (.) i no t’ho ha volgut dir però: ⊦((clicks tongue)) (1.3)⊦
		‘friend of yours (.) and they didn’t wanna tell you bu:t ⊦((clicks tongue)) (1.3)⊦’
23		com l’any passat estan fe:nt (1.4) aquí a la uni: [(.)]
		‘like last year they are doi:ng (1.4) here at uni: [(.)]’
24	Laia:	[mm hm]
25	Manel:	do:ncs (.) potser l’any passat no s’atrevien a dir-ho [(.) °i (.)
		‘we:ll (.) maybe last year they didn’t dare to mention it [(.) °and (.)’
26		aquest any°
		‘this year°’
27		[això és
		‘[that’s’
28		l’altra\ (.) si la gent tampoc t’ho diu: (1) no (.) tampoc (.) no
		‘another thing\ (.) if people don’t tell you (1) you can’t (.) either (.) you can’t’
29		pots millorar (.) però jo crec que: ⊦((clicks tongue)) mmm
		‘improve (.) but I think tha:t ⊦((clicks tongue)) mmm’
30		(1.6)⊦ no som especialistes (.) tenim vint anys i estem aprenent
		‘(1.6)⊦ we’re not specialists (.) we’re twenty and we’re learning’
31		(0.5) no podem esperar que: (.) tot ens surti bé a la primera
		‘(0.5) we can’t expect tha:t (.) everything turns out fine at the drop of a hat’
32		(0.5) perquè no teni:m ⊦((clicks tongue)) (1)⊦ o sigui estem
		‘(0.5) because we don’t have ⊦((clicks tongue)) (1)⊦ I mean we’re’
33		aprenent (.) és que la parau- la mateixa paraula ho diu\ (0.5)
		‘learning (.) even the wo- the word itself implies that\ (0.5)’
34		no? (.) °no:°
		‘doesn’t it? (.) °no:°’
35		(2)
36	Manel:	ja: (0.5) °sí sí° (0.5) ja
		‘su:re (0.5) °yeah yeah° (0.5) sure’
37	Laia:	jo crec que dels errors s’aprèn\ (.) això (.) t’ajudarà (.) a fer-ho

‘I think that we learn from mistakes\ (.) this (.) will help you (.) to do’

38 millor el pròxim cop (.) i: (.) a vigilar més (0.5) potser si no t’ho

‘better next time (.) a:nd (.) to be more careful (0.5) maybe if he hadn’t’

39 hagués dit (.) aquest error l’haguessis mantingut durant molts

‘told you (.) you’d have kept making this mistake for many’

40 més anys\ (0.6) és millor que t’ho digui ara (0.8) que no: quan

‘more years\ (0.6) it’s better that he tells you now (0.8) than when’

41 tinguis cinquanta que et diguin bueno (.) xaval (0.5) jo no vinc

‘you’re fifty and they tell you well (.) mate (0.5) I’m not coming’

42 a tu\ (.) em canvio de físio\

‘with you\ (.) I’m changing physio\’

43 (1)

44 Manel: clar (0.5) bueno (.) i ara: Ꮒ(.) ((clicks tongue)) (1.1)Ꮒ a

‘sure (0.5) well (.) and now Ꮒ(.) ((clicks tongue)) (1.1)Ꮒ I’ll’

45 intenta:r\ (.) suposo que això: també em farà veure (.) les

‘try \ (.) I guess that this will also make me look at (.)’

46 coses (.) diferents (.) intentaré: canviar (.) el xip i: (.) i potser no

‘things (.) in a different light (.) I’ll try to change (.) gears (.) and maybe I didn’t’

47 m’hi fixava prou tampoc (.) i: (.) i (.) ara em fixaré: (.) també:

‘pay enough attention either (.) a:nd (.) and (.) now I’ll also pay (.)’

48 Laia: exacte\

‘exactly\’

49 Manel: més a l’hora de fe:r (.) les maniobres [els moviments (.) °o:°

‘more attention when performing (.) the manoeuvres [the movements (. °o:r°

50 Laia: [mm hm (.) i a pensar-hi

‘[mm hm (.) and to think about it’

51 més perquè a vegades ens passa que este:m (0.6) pensant

‘more because sometimes we happen to be: (0.6) thinking’

52 altres coses (.) i no ens donem compte

‘about something else (.) and we don’t realise’

53		(1)
54	Manel:	°sí sí°
		‘°yeah yeah°’
55	Laia:	llavo:rs (0.5) °no sé° (.) millorar\ (.) bàsicament [(1)]
		‘the:n (0.5) °I don’t know° (.) improve\ (.) basically [(1)]
56	Manel:	[mm hm]
57	Laia:	no prendre-t’ho com una cosa dolenta (0.5) no?
		‘don’t take it as something bad (0.5) right?’
58	Manel:	°clar° ((nods))
		‘°sure° ((nods))’

The conversation follows the general sequence of announcement, receipt, elaboration and closing. The problematic situation is not pre-announced but told straight from the very beginning (lines 01 to 05) to which the EP responds with an acknowledgment token (line 06) indicating reception of the announcement. At this point the trouble is presented not necessarily as such, since the implications or Manel’s perceptions of why he sees that as a problem are not specified until lines 07 to 09 and then Laia starts the elaboration part, downplaying the situation by providing two justifications (lines 10 to 16): they are training and therefore still learning the necessary skills and they do not get a complaint every day, which makes this one an exception. She starts this part (line 10) with the informal phatic interjection *home* (here translated as “well”), which, according to Cuenca (2004, 2011) and Cuenca & Torres (2008), introduces a disagreement with Manel’s previous idea that maybe he is not that good at treating patients and it also conveys an idea of closeness with the other participant. Laia tries to find a plausible explanation that challenges Manel’s assumption that he may not be a good physiotherapist and therefore, in a subtle and indirect way, mitigated by *jo crec* (“I think”) (line 10), she places the blame on external circumstances, absolving Manel of any responsibility. The statement finishes with *no?*—an interjection asking for confirmation of the previous statement, that is, a question oriented towards a positive or negative answer (Cuenca & Castellà, 1995; Torres, 2004; Vanrell et al., 2010). Laia’s intervention is constantly mitigated with her comment about this complaint being unique and with expressions such as *una mica* (“a little”, here translated as “briefly”) and *potser* (“maybe”) when talking about possible issues related to Manel’s skills. By

doing this she softens her comments so that her partner does not take them as negative or hostile.

Manel accepts her reasoning but expresses his doubts again: maybe the previous year his friends did not dare to tell him that he was not very skilful. Again, Laia turns Manel's comment into another justification that releases him from any responsibility: How is he supposed to know if nobody has ever told him? She repeats an idea she has already mentioned and emphasises the fact that they are young and still learning so making mistakes is part of the learning process. By changing the focus of attention onto external circumstances, Laia tries to reduce the stress and pressure on Manel and to make him more accepting of the situation. She does this directly addressing Manel (line 34) with a question tag that he responds to with a couple of metalinguistic interjections—*ja* ("sure") and *sí* ("yeah")—which are repeated and that work as backchanneling elements. Laia continues developing her idea and she now presents a positive argument, claiming that one can learn from mistakes and it is better if you are aware of them at an early stage because you have time to correct them rather than unconsciously repeating that mistake for a long time because the consequences can then be worse. From the beginning, she has tried to minimise the trouble by presenting it as something inevitable, inherent in any learning process and something that can help him in the future. Manel accepts that she may be right and decides that he will act differently, paying more attention to what he is doing and taking things easy (lines 44-47), signalling a change of mood and perspective of the situation, which the post-role play questionnaire supports—Manel found the conversation quite satisfactory; felt his mood had improved a little; his perspective of the situation had improved; he reported that he had felt quite understood and not judged by Laia. She celebrates this change of attitude (line 48), agrees with his refocusing and invokes the status quo (lines 51-52), since this is something that sometimes happens to all of us, bringing Manel's trouble to the level of common, frequent, almost inevitable situations. At this point, the closing part begins: the volume decreases and the topic is no longer expanded but instead, Laia summarises what she has been saying all along the conversation: this is not necessarily something bad but an opportunity to improve, which Manel accepts.

English:

Andrew owes £100 to a friend of his, he said he would pay her back in a week but, when the time is approaching, he does not have the money and tells Elisabeth about it:

(47) Pair 11, debt (personal) – ENG

01	Andrew:	I've got a bit of a situation at the moment
02	Elisabeth:	o:h (.) what's going on?
03	Andrew:	so: (1) d'you know Jade?
04	Elisabeth:	yeah ((nods head))
05	Andrew:	well (.) basically I really needed to fix my bike (.) last week
06		[(0.7)] so she lent me: (0.6) a hundred pounds (.) to do it\
07	Elisabeth:	[((nods head))] mm hm ((nods head))
08	Andrew:	e:m (.) and I thou:ght (.) I'd get my student loan back in (.) in
09		time (0.7) but hasn't (.) all come through yet (1.2) I still owe
10		[her (.) the money fo:r
11	Elisabeth:	[oh no:] ok (.) how (.) how long has it been
12		since you owe her?
13	Andrew:	((takes the instruction paper form the desk arm and reads
14		it)) (1.2) it's bee:n (1.3) ((still having a look at the piece of
15		paper)) li:ke (.) ((puts instructions down on desk arm)) I said
16		I'd pay her back in a week\ (.) and it's (.) tomorrow is gonna
17		be: (.) a week=
18	Elisabeth:	=a week?
19	Andrew:	yeah
20	Elisabeth:	mm mm\ ((sits back and looks at the ceiling)) (.) that's
21		interesting (.) d'you know when I (.) when your student loan
22		will (.) come in? (.) or is it?
23	Andrew:	no::
24	Elisabeth:	has it not come in yet?
25	Andrew:	it's bee:n (.) I thought it was coming in ((pointing at the right
26		side with left index)) (0.8) now but (.) is not coming in to: (.)
27		like another month?

Elisabeth: o:h (.) well (.) I'm sure like (.) if you: (1.2) had a conversation with Jade about it\ (0.6) she'd be quite understanding about when to pay her back (.) as long as[ ] she's not desperate for the money\

Andrew: [mm hm]

Elisabeth: bu:t (.) like (.) I think you should just talk to her about it/ (.) because (.) if (0.5) you're expecting it issued soon (0.7) then (.) it should be in the next couple of days\ (0.6) and say (.) you shou- (.) can probably pay her back (.) whe- once (.) once it comes in

Andrew: so you think I should (0.6) just talk to her about it?

Elisabeth: yea:h ((nodding head)) (.) I think that's the best thing (.) what you should do is talk to Jade about that (.) 'cos you don't want to be borrowing money from other people\ (.) and the:n (1.1) .hhh (.) having to p(.hh)ay ((frowns)) oth(h)er people back (.) that can get really complicated

Andrew: yea:h (.) ok (1.1) but don't you think she'll be: (.) annoyed at me?

(0.8)

Elisabeth: e::r (.) hhh (.) I think she is quite understanding\

Andrew: ok

Elisabeth: I think (.) the ((moves left hand, which was resting on her lap, up a bit with palm facing up)) (.) like the worst that's gonna happen is that she might be a little bit annoyed\

Andrew: yea:h

Elisabeth: but (.) I think it's (0.6) since she is the one you (.) borrowed money from (.) it's good to keep her on the loop

Andrew: ok

Elisabeth: of what's going on (1) I'm sure she'll [ ] be understanding though ((nods head))

Andrew: [yea:h] I think I'll do that then

60 Elisabeth: good ((nodding head very slightly))

61 Andrew: cool

The conversation follows the general sequence of announcement, receipt, elaboration and closing. Andrew starts with two pre-announcements (lines 01 and 03), which Elisabeth acknowledges and aligns with their corresponding second-pair part, to prepare the ground for the announcement itself, which does not start until line 05. From the very beginning, Andrew explicitly states his stance towards what he is shortly going to explain*: "*I've got a bit of a situation at the moment" clearly indicates that what is coming next is a matter of concern for him. Elisabeth reacts with the use of "oh" on line 02 which, as Heritage (2018) claims, indicates receipt of the previous message, signals that that is news for her and suggests a change of state, starting to balance the difference in epistemic knowledge between the two actors. Once Elisabeth has shown that she is willing to act as the recipient of the story asking about details, Andrew proceeds with the announcement with a short narrative (lines 05 to 10). Elisabeth first encourages Andrew to go on with his story with her head nods and "mm hm" (line 07) and then recognises the problem with the exclamation "oh no" (line 11), a non-elaborated reaction that stresses affiliation with Andrew's stance, and accepts to participate and jointly elaborate the story with the use of "ok" and a question to get more information about the event (lines 11 and 12). This strategy—additional information about the event—is used again in her next two turns, which allows her to continue getting more information about the situation in order to decide how to assess it. She then offers Andrew a possible solution to his problem (line 28), which is later on justified and reinforced with the prognosis she makes if he decides not to take her advice: asking other people for money to clear the debt can bring problems. Andrew hesitates a little but Elisabeth tries to encourage him to do what she has suggested, even though there may be the risk that the friend gets a bit angry, which she minimises when she says that she is sure the friend will be understanding. She insists by repeating the suggestion and Andrew accepts it, which starts the closing part. The initial closing line, "I think I'll do that then" (lines 58 and 59), is accepted by both, first Elisabeth and then Andrew.

We can see that empathy basically involves aligning and affiliating with the teller, which is something that occurs all along the conversation. It is not necessary for Elisabeth to

have gone through the same or even a similar experience to understand Andrew's situation and participate in its elaboration, empowering her to act as a new actor in its assessment and jointly constructing a scenario under which empathy can be displayed.

4.2.3.1. ANNOUNCEMENT

Although all the conversations in both languages followed the interactional sequence aforementioned, there was a certain variety in the initial stage when the trouble is presented. As illustrated in the examples provided, pre-announcements are not always used and sometimes the trouble is announced without preparing the floor for it. In Catalan of the 50 conversations analysed, 31 (62%) did not have any kind of preannouncement and started with the telling of the problem itself and the remaining contained either one pre-announcement (15 conversations; 30%) or two pre-announcements (4 conversations; 8%). Within this last group, i.e. those conversations containing pre-announcements, two possibilities are found: one where the pre-announcement is an independent turn which is consequently responded by the other interactant, forming the basic unit of these sequences—the adjacency pair—as in:

(48) Pair 2, exam (academic) – CAT

PRE-ANNOUNCEMENT	FIRST PAIR PART	ER:	saps què m'ha passat avui? ((blows and draws left hand across forehead)) 'you know what happened to me today? ((blows and draws left hand across forehead))
	SECOND PAIR PART	EP:	què:? 'what?'
ANNOUNCEMENT		ER:	que:: (0.5) he arribat ta:rd (.) m'he: (.) bueno (.) [m'he apalancat a casa i he arribat tard] a l'examen i no m'han deixat entrar

‘e::r (0.5) I was late (.) I (.) well (.) [I was pottering at home and I was late] for the exam and I was not allowed in

The conversation starts with a pre-announcement in the form of an adjacency pair: the first pair in which the ER directly attracts the EP’s attention and involves the EP with the question *saps què m’ha Passat avui?* (“do you know what happened to me today?”), which forms what Terasaki (2004) considers to be a major type of pre-announcement objects: those that present the news without providing it, and the second pair part, the question *què?* (“what?”), which is its preferred response: the solicitation of the news. In this case, the first pair is one of the four possible models that characterise this type of pre-announcement: the one that mentions the recency of the trouble. The first pair is followed by the second-pair part which not only allows the ER to proceed and therefore aligns with him but also indicates the EP’s lack of knowledge about the coming news, hence accepting it as such.

The other possibility is found in just a few cases (6 instances) in which there is no verbal second pair part after the pre-announcement—what Terasaki (2004) calls *elided* sequences—and therefore the telling of the trouble proceeds as in:

(49) Pair 12, divorce (personal) – CAT

01	Miquel:	mira Cesc tio (0.6) te volia dir una cosa que: (.) bueno per això t’he
		‘look Cesc man (0.6) I wanted to tell you something tha:t (.) well that’s why I’
02		convocat aquí: (0.6) que:: [(.)] bueno porto uns dies una mica: (0.5)
		‘called you here: (0.6) tha::t [(.)] well I’ve been lately a bi:t (0.5)’
03	Francesc:	[((nods head, smiles))]
		‘[((nods head, smiles))]’
04	Miquel:	ratllat/ (.) una mica mosca: (0.7) perquè: (0.9) ((rubs left eye
		‘upset/ (.) a bit worried (0.7) beca:use (0.9) ((rubs left eye’
05		with left hand)) els meus pares m’han dit que: (.) es divorciara:n\
		‘with left hand)) my parents have told me tha:t (.) they’re’

06			[(.)] i: (.) ((blows)) no: (1.2) no sé: (.) com prendre-m'ho (.)
			'getting divorced\ [(.)] a:nd (.) ((blows)) I do:n't (1.2) don't kno:w (.)
			how to take it (.)'
07	Francesc		[mm hm]

In this case the ER, Miquel, pre-announces the trouble twice, first with *te volia dir una cosa (.) bueno per això t'he convocat aquí* ("I wanted to tell you something that (.) well that's why I called you here"), which is not verbally responded but the EP, Francesc, nods and smiles, allowing Miquel to continue and expressing his willingness to act as the recipient, and then with *bueno porto uns dies una mica (0.5) ratllat* ("well I've been lately a bit (0.5) upset (.) a bit worried" followed by a pause of 0.7 seconds, which is not used by Francesc to insert the expected second pair part (e.g. "how come?" or "what's wrong?") and therefore Miquel proceeds with the telling and now announces what the trouble is.

As Schegloff (2007) pointed out, the fact that we call these sequences pre-announcements does not mean that they necessarily have to come before the announcement itself, they may come afterwards, like in the example below, and still preserve their interactional function:

(50) Pair 5, grant (academic) - CAT

ANNOUNCEMENT	01	ER:	doncs (0.7) ((leaves instruction sheet on the table))
			al final no m'han donat la beca\
			'well (0.7) ((leaves instruction sheet on the table))
			I finally did not get the grant\'
PRE-	02		(.) saps que volia: (.) marxa:r (.) fora l'any que ve?
ANNOUNCEMENT			'(.) do you know I wanted (.) to go away (.) next year?'
	03	EP:	ostres\
			'gosh\'
	04	ER:	pues no me la donen
			'well I did not get it'

In this case, the pre-announcement *saps que volia (.) marxar (.) fora l'any que ve?* ("do you know I wanted (.) to go (.) away next year?") (line 02) comes after the announcement, *doncs (0.7) al final no m'han donat la beca* ("well (0.7) I finally did not get the grant", line 01), at the very beginning of the conversation. The function of the pre-announcement is twofold, on the one hand, it contextualises the announcement as situated within and the result of a previous circumstance (the fact that the ER wanted to go away) and on the other hand it makes sure this is known or remembered by the EP. As Terasaki (2004) states, the fact that the preannouncement is a question opens up the possibility for the EP to indicate whether this is a known or unknown fact.

In the English examples, out of the total of 52 conversations, 23 (44.23%) started with no preannouncement but straight with the announcement of the trouble itself. The rest of conversations either had one pre-announcement (22 conversations; 42.30%), of which 7 (31.81%) did not present a second pair part, two pre-announcements (6 conversations; 11.53%), or even three pre-announcements (1 conversation; 1.92%) like in:

(51) Pair 3, grant (academic) – ENG

PRE-ANNOUNCEMENT 1	FIRST PAIR PART	01	ER:	so/ (.) hhh (.) e:mm (2.4) I just got bad news (.) Larry
	SECOND PAIR PART	02	EP:	Ok
PRE-ANNOUNCEMENT 2	FIRST PAIR PART	03	ER:	I'm quite upset
	SECOND PAIR PART	04	EP:	what's wrong?

PRE-ANNOUNCEMENT 3	FIRST PAIR PART	05	ER:	e:m (.) I was looking forward to studying abroad (.) I told you about it right? ((lifting right hand kind of pointing towards him))
	SECOND PAIR PART	06	EP:	mm hm ((nods head once with fingertips of the right hand covering his mouth, right elbow resting on the desk arm))
ANNOUNCEMENT		07	ER:	a:nd (.) I just got the news that I am not gonna get the grant that I needed (.) to (.) go abroad\ (.) and study and (.) I was really looking forward to it/

The pre-announcements are not only an indication that what is to follow is intended to be a piece of news for the EP but they also convey the ER's specific stance towards it: with the use of the adjectives "bad" to describe the type of news and "upset" to describe how she feels in relation to what is going to be announced later on or the phrasal verb "look forward to" to indicate that this was something she was excited about, the ER provides her evaluative stance on the news, which the EP can align with (preferred response) or not (dispreferred response). The ER pre-announces the trouble three times and on each occasion the EP's tokens of receipt grant progress to the telling of the trouble, contributing to the joint interactional activity.

Table 10 shows the distribution of announcement sequences in all the role-played interactions of the two language groups. The number of conversations falling into a given announcement pattern and their corresponding percentage in relation to the total number of conversations is given.

Table 10

Structure of announcement sequences in Catalan and English.

	CATALAN		ENGLISH	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
No preannouncement	31	62	23	44.23
1 preannouncement	15	30	22	42.30
2 preannouncements	4	8	6	11.53
3 preannouncements	-	-	1	1.92

English participants make a greater use of preannouncement sequences than Catalan participants (55.75% versus 38%). In both language groups, though, the majority of interactions are not preannounced probably due to the nature of the task itself. Unlike real-life interactions, in the case of the role plays, the participants are aware that any of the situations described will be news for the other person and therefore starting the conversation assuming this limits the announcement choices and favours straightforward announcements.

4.2.3.2 CLOSING

Closing sequences bring the conversation to an end, which can be achieved in many different ways, since it largely depends on the topic being discussed, the preceding conversational sequences and how the whole interaction is jointly managed and built. Consequently, the closing options are innumerable. Schegloff (2007) identified the outline and main characteristics of closing sequences: in general, the topic or sequence is brought to an end by shifting topics and employing one or several adjacency pairs that are barely elaborated. Closing sequences basically consist of three turns: (a) proposal of closing, (b) response to the proposal (accept and cooperate—preferred response—or reject closing—dispreferred response), and (c) ratification of closing. Typically, there is also a decrease in volume and pitch. There are certain moves that serve as an indication that the closing sequence is being initiated, such as returning to the start of the sequence or topic, summarising or assessing the topic, or using sayings, idioms or jokes. The following extracts illustrate two closing sequences, one in each language.

The first extract is taken from one of the English conversations and presents the main distinctive features of closing sequences pointed out by Schegloff (2007). Oscar was so late for his exam that he was not allowed to take it. He tells Chris that he arrived 10 minutes late because he had overslept and the bus was late so he now has to resit the exam. Chris tries to ease the problem by emphasising that it is just his first year and that he should "take it on the chin". The conversation finishes like this:

(52) Pair 2, exam (academic) – ENG

01	Chris:	next time (.) walk\
02	Oscar:	((slight laugh)) y(h)eah(h) (.) yeah
03	Chris:	I don't trust the buses any more
04	Oscar:	°no:°
05	Chris:	so: ((nods several times))
06	Oscar:	.hhh (.) no (.) they are useless (.) but
07	Chris:	hhh ((slight burst of laugh))
08	Oscar:	lesson learnt
09	Chris:	°yea:h (.) lesson learnt°

Chris initiates the closing with a piece of advice: if you walk, at least you are not constrained by timetables or possible traffic jams, which Oscar finds mildly humorous and verbally accepts with the reduplication of the acknowledgement token "yeah" (line 02), intensifying his agreement with the previous statement, without adding anything else and thus the elaboration of the topic starts to decline. Chris then continues developing the idea of how unreliable buses are ("I don't trust the buses any more"), which Oscar acknowledges with a simple "no" done in a low voice. Since Chris' comments have not been expanded but minimally acknowledged by Oscar, he just emits a "so" and nods his head several times, a clear indication that he has nothing else to add. Oscar refers back to Chris' prior comment and repeats the same idea, again the topic is kept unexpanded and Chris does not say anything else, he just emits an outbreath. Oscar finally uses an idiom as a concluding remark that is repeated in a low voice by Chris. According to Schegloff & Sacks (1973) the use of proverbs or aphorisms is one possible technique of shutting down a topic that, if accepted by the other party, the topic is understood to be brought to an end.

The next extract exemplifies a closing sequence in Catalan. Isabel has to pay back 100 euro to a friend of hers but she does not have the money. She tells Adrià about it and, after some elaboration, they agree that the best thing is to talk to the friend, be honest and tell her that she does not have the money now. Alternatively, Adrià suggests finding a job to get the money but with the tight college timetable, they reject the idea. At this point the conversation is finished:

(53) Pair 5, debt (personal) – CAT

01	Adrià:	°cla:r (.) estudiant i ta:l (.) jo també: ((shakes head slightly))
		'yea:h (.) when studying and so (.) I wouldn't ((shakes head slightly))'
02		tampoc podria fer gran cosa ° (.) .hhh (1) ((slightly moves trunk back and
		'be able to do much either° (.) .hhh (1) ((slightly moves trunk back and'
03		forth several times)) clar perquè si
		'forth several times)) because of course if you'
04		vas demanant diners a altra gent (.) encara et passarà el mateix
		'ask other people for money (.) you might find yourself in the same situation'
05	Isabel:	clar ((laughs))
		'yeah ((laughs))'
06	Adrià:	els has d'aconseguir tu (.) .hhh (.) doncs no sé que dir-te noia\ ((laughs))
		'you must get it (.) .hhh (.) so I don't know what to say gal\ ((laughs))'
07	Isabel:	doncs parlaré amb ella\
		'well I'll talk to her\'
08	Adrià:	sí ((nods head)) (.) parla amb ella i treu la pressió d'això
		'yeah ((nods head)) (.) talk to her and escape the pressure of this'
09	Isabel:	((nods head))

Adrià understands that finding a job is almost impossible considering the little time left after their placement and classes. He imagines himself having to do that and admits that it is difficult (line 02). After a pause of one second, he entertains the possibility of asking somebody else for the money but he logically concludes that she would be in the same situation. Isabel agrees with a simple *clar* ("yeah") and laughs (line 05), which automatically dismisses that possibility. Adrià then concludes that the only option left is

for Isabel to get the money herself and, after a sound exhalation (an expressive vocalization of the difficulty of the situation and the frustration of not being able to find a solution to it), concedes that he does not know what to say (line 06). Isabel then decides to do what Adrià advised her to do at an earlier point in the conversation, that is, talk to her friend. Adrià's agreement token *sí* ("yeah") is strengthened by the head nods and followed by a repetition of the advice previously given and its consequence (line 08): by talking to the friend Isabel will feel better, less stressed out about the situation, which is silently acknowledged by Isabel with ahead nod.

Sometimes, though, the closing does not exactly signal the end of the interaction but rather the end of the topic that is discussed. This transition from the ongoing conversational topic to something new may imply that a completely new topic is introduced or that the topic at hand is maintained but a different aspect is dealt with, which is known as *topic shading* or *stepwise transition* (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Jefferson, 1984). In this example, Eric tells Rosie that he was not allowed to do an exam because he was late. At the end of the conversation, he decides to contact the course coordinators to inform them about his situation.

(54) Pair 4, exam (academic) – ENG

01	Eric:		°yeah° (.) I'll just text them tonight ((placing hands together as if holding a mobile phone but resting wrists on lap))
02	Ruth:		((laughs)) (.) °t(h)ext t(h)hem°
03	Eric:		°yea:h (.) I'll just text them° ([ ) call them up
04	Ruth:		[(.) mmm
05	Eric:	┬	°but e-mail's too formal (1) I'll just call them up°
06	Ruth:	│	((makes short plosive laughing sound))
		(2.2)	
07	Eric:		((laughs quietly with mouth closed))
08	Ruth:	┴	it's not goo:d/
09		(1.2)	
10	Eric:		all the questions went well then?
11	Ruth:		[that's] (.) yeah (0.8) they went alright

Eric seems to close the topic by making a firm decision (lines 01 to 05), which Rosie does not approve of, but after a pause of 1.2 seconds Eric asks a question related to the topic (line 10) as a way of extending the conversation but abandoning the issue that they have discussed and tackling a different aspect of the exam he could not take. According to Riou (2017), questions are one of the possible cues that indicate topic transition and this is what Eric uses in order to change the focus of attention and subtly indicate that there is nothing else that can be added to what was being discussed.

Another example taken from the Catalan corpus illustrates how the topic is dropped and a new one is brought to the fore. In this case Manel owes some money which he is supposed to pay back soon but he has not been able to get it and does not know what to do so he tells Laia about it. After discussing different options such as asking other people for the money or getting a job, Manel complains about how difficult it is to get a job with their timetables at college.

(55) Pair 2, debt (personal) – CAT

01	Laura:	clar/ és que a més a més amb aquest horari és molt complicat
		‘sure/ besides with this timetable it is very complicated’
02		perquè (.) no et pots (1.5) no pots posar-hi compromís a la feina (.)
		‘because (.) you can’t (1.5) you can’t commit to a job (.)’
03		perquè com que són quinze dies laborables sí (.) quinze dies no
		‘because it’s fifteen working days yes (.) fifteen days you can’t’
04		[ ] no pots dir (.) bueno (.) ara falto ara no falto
		‘[ ] can’t say (.) well (.) now I’m coming now I’m not’
05	Marc:	[°clar°] ((clicks tongue))
		[°sure°] ((clicks tongue))
06	Laura:	°a mi m’ha passat°
		°it has happened to me°
07	Marc:	a més (.) l’any passat (.) do:ncs (.) entrenava ne:ns i:: (.) clar
		‘and also (.) last year (.) well (.) I trained children a::nd (.) of course
08		(.) em treia u:n
		(.) I got some’
09	Laura:	de què entrenaves?

		‘what kind of training?’
10	Marc:	de futbol
		‘football’
11	Laura:	mm hm ((moves head to the back and nods))
12	Marc:	i: (.) em treia alguna cosa (.) però: (.) clar (.) aquest any (.) amb la
		‘a:nd (.) I got some money (.) but (.) surely (.) this year (.) with the’
13		tarda també: (.) °doncs no::°
		‘afternoons included (.) °in this case I wo::n’t°
14	Laura:	bueno (.) l’any passat feies batxillerat?
		‘well (.) last year were you in your A levels?’
15	Marc:	no
		‘no’
16	Laura:	no/
		‘no/’
17	Marc:	l’any passa:t (.) una carrera vaig fer
		‘last year (.) I was at university’

In this case, the topic that was initially discussed is completely abandoned after Laia asks *l’any passat feies batxillerat?* (“last year were you in your A levels?”) (line14), requesting information and engaging Manel who produces the second-pair part. Although Manel’s immediate reply is a minimal type of answer, a simple interjection answer (“no”), he then provides some more information granting the expansion of the new topic. Again, like in the previous example, a question is being used to indicate topic transition but this time the conversation is moved to the topic of the participants’ background, which is not related to the topic at hand. The conversation then proceeds along this line and the participants do not go back to the trouble initially discussed.

The closures found in the corpus consist of any or several of three options emphasising different aspects related to a given interaction: those connected with a decision-making process, those connected with the idea of handling and facing up to the situation or those focusing on offering comfort to the ER. Each of them is expressed through any of the alternatives below.

Figure 7

Options found in conversational closings.

In this extract, Larry tells Diana that he owes some money to a friend of his but he cannot pay her back. The conversation is ended like this:

(56) Pair 3, debt (personal) – ENG

01	Diana:	I think the first thing you should do is talk to her about it\ (.) let her know
02		ok? (.) this is the situation (.) if she still insists\ ((moves head forward
03		emphasising the word "insists")) (0.6) that you need to pay her back
04		[(0.7)] come to me and I'll borrow you the money\
		(1.2)
05	Larry:	[mm hm ((nods head slightly))] ((nods head)) thank you
06	Diana:	°you're welcome°
07	Larry:	very good friend
08	Diana:	thank you (.) I do try ((laughs))

The closing part combines a proposal (talking to the friend, lines 01 and 02) that was previously put forward by Diana in the conversation as a possible way out to the situation and also an offer of help (lending Larry the money) (line 04), which, after a pause signalling a halt in topic expansion, are accepted by Larry both with an affirmative head movement and an expression of thanks (line 05). Authors such as Aston (1992,

1995), when analysing service encounters, state that the use of thanks in closings is a way for participants to demonstrate their alignment and satisfaction with their "role-relationship", which seems to operate in the same terms in this example. Diana proceeds with "you're welcome", an acknowledgement of thanks, that is said in a lower tone of voice and that does not encourage any further elaboration on the topic and soon terminates the conversation.

A similar closing is found in the Catalan group. When talking about Miquel's parents' divorce, Francesc, acting as the EP, has tried to encourage Miquel throughout the conversation presenting the positive side of it (e.g. if the parents are not happy, they had better be separated). The conversation ends like this:

(57) Pair 12, divorce (personal) – CAT

01	Francesc:	°doncs bueno° (0.9) jo et recomanaria que ho fessis\ (.) que: (.) els
		'°anyway° (0.9) I would recommend that you do it\ (.) tha:t (.) you'
02		hi diguessis això que et ⊦(.) ((clicks tongue)) (0.5)⊣ que et tenen
		'tell them that ⊦(.) ((clicks tongue)) (0.5) ⊣ that you are'
03		amoïnat\ (.) i això: (.) i: (.) bueno: (0.9) ° i pue:s (.)
		'worried about them\ (.) and so (.) a:nd (.) we:ll (0.9) °and so: (.)´
04		no sé:\° ((rubs right eye with index finger of left hand)) [(1.2)]
		'I don't know\° ((rubs right eye with index finger of left hand)) [(1.2)]'
05		a veure què et diuen\
		'let's see what they say\'
		(0.6)
06	Miquel:	[((nods
07		head))] mm hm (0.8) merci nano
		'mm hm (0.8) thanks man'
		(0.5)
08	Francesc:	de res home: ((the partner touches the right thigh which is
		'no problem mate: ((the partner touches the right thigh which is
09		on the left knee)) (0.7) només faltaria\
		'on the left knee)) (0.7) don't mention it\'
10	Miquel:	((chuckles))

After offering a solution (talking to the parents) (lines 01 to 05), which Miquel non-verbally agrees with (head nod), there is a short pause and an acknowledgment token ("mm hm") indicating alignment (line 07). Head nods are treated and classified as interjection-type answers, frequently used because they are pragmatically unmarked (Stivers & Enfield, 2010; Stivers, 2018; Enfield et al, 2019) and considered mostly affiliative (but not always) and alignment tokens (Stivers, 2008, 2013). After the acknowledgement token, Miquel thanks Francesc with this colloquial expression of gratitude *merci* ("thanks") combined with *nano* (here translated as "man"), an informal form of address for males, which closes the conversation and that is later expressed by a gesture (touching the partner's leg) that indicates familiarity and proximity. Francesc's reaction (lines 08 and 09) is the very final turn in the conversation and basically responds affiliatively, minimising what Miquel sees as a favour, one of the several possible options analysed by Schneider (2005) when examining the realization of responses to thanks. In the whole corpus the majority of conversations did not contain an explicit expression of thanks in the closing: only 5 in Catalan (10%) and 17 in English (32.89%).

Closings are context-dependent and, as the whole interaction, co-constructed, which makes them highly variable and almost unpredictable. Whether topic transition will be smooth or abrupt or whether the topic will end together with the conversation are just two aspects conditioned by the development of the interaction.

4.2.4. STRENGTHENING AND MITIGATING ELEMENTS

Strengthening or weakening the force of an utterance can be done by means of linguistic resources but also of non-linguistic elements such as facial expressions or gestures. In the following excerpt, Rosie announces that her parents are getting divorced.

(58) Pair 4, divorce (personal) – ENG

Rosie:	no: (.) my mum and dad are getting divo:rced\ ((looking down at the desk arm where the instruction paper lies. Her right arm rests there)) (0.7)
Eric:	o:h no:/ ((sad tone. Pouting and pressing lips))

Eric, the EP, responds making use of diverse resources: a sound object delivered in a sad tone acting as news receipt and accompanied by a facial expression conveying the same message of pity, which reinforces the message.

A similar example is found in the Catalan group. Anna overslept and was late for an exam. She now tells Cori about it.

(59) Pair 4, exam (academic) – CAT

01	Anna:	saps que (.) que teníem un examen aquest matí?
		'do you know that (.) we had an exam this morning?'
02	Cori:	sí
		'yes'
03	Anna:	pue:s (.) ((lowers gaze a bit)) és que no m'ha sonat e:l (.) e:l (.)
		'we:ll (.) ((lowers gaze a bit)) the thing is that the: (.) the: alarm clock has'
04		despertador tia (.) és que ahir em vaig (.) és que sempre em passa\
		'not gone off mate (.) the thing is that last night I (.) it always happens to
05		((moves right arm forward)) (.) quan em quedo a dormir súper ta:rd (.)
		'((moves right arm forward)) (.) when I go to bed super la:te (.)'
06		que dorms allò que dius (.) dos tres hore:s (.) pues és que no el se:nto el
		'when you sleep like (.) two three hou:rs (.) then I can't hea:r the'
07		despertado:r\
		'alarm clock\'
08	Cori:	i t'has adormit? ((covers mouth with right hand))
		'and you overslept? ((covers mouth with right hand))'

After the announcement, Cori makes a guess (line 08), which is emphasised by the gesture accompanying her response. The gesture (covering her mouth with her right hand) enriches the response, conveying surprise and, at the same time, awareness of the direct implications that Cori grasps by connecting the two basic pieces of information provided by Anna: the mention of the exam and the alarm clock not going off.

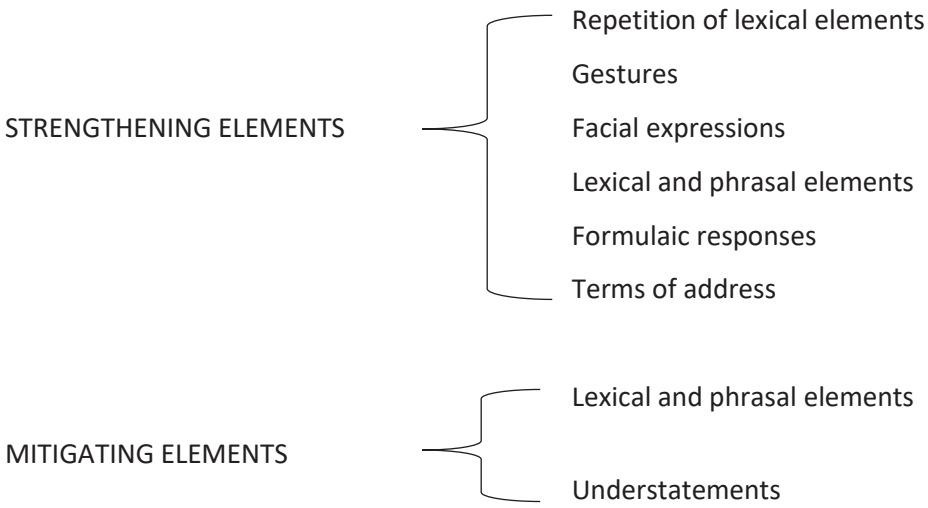
Although prosodic features such as intonation are also important when expressing emotions or emphasising the message, this dimension has not been examined in detail (for example, pitch or rhythm have not been included in the analysis) and only

remarkable examples of rising or falling intonation or tone have been considered. The aspects assessed are mainly semantic elements and non-verbal, visually relevant actions. Therefore, although the principal focus of the study is on the type of responses provided by the EP, how the force of these responses can be modified is of relevance and merits some attention.

Figure 8 shows the strengthening and mitigating elements that have been identified in the corpus of this study.

Figure 8

Strengthening and mitigating elements.



One example in each language illustrating how these elements operate in discourse is provided. A brief description is given in order to specify exactly what each of these elements refer to.

4.2.4.1. STRENGTHENING ELEMENTS

Repetition of lexical elements

It refers to the replication of the same word (mainly an interjection), which may belong to a given sentence or be self-contained and act independently. In the following excerpt, Marta is complaining about not obtaining a grant that she really expected to get. At the end of the conversation with Glòria, right before the closing, she accepts there are other possibilities but not as good as having a grant. At this point the conversation goes like this:

(60) Pair 13, grant (academic) – CAT

01	Marta:	però anar amb beca: ja és
		'but going with a gra:nt is'
02	Glòria	ja (.) això sí
		'yeah (.) sure'
03	Marta:	és molt més fàcil
		'is much easier'
		(0.6)
04	Glòria:	això sí això sí
		'sure sure'

Glòria, the EP, exhibits reception of the prior turn and acknowledges what Marta says without expanding the topic. She uses the acknowledgement tokens *ja* ("yeah", line 02) and *això sí* ("sure") as backchannels to show understanding of the situation and allowing Marta to continue with her turn. On line 04, she reduplicates *això sí* ("sure"), which she has also used in her previous turn. With this repeated occurrence of the same interjection, she accentuates her response and her alignment and affiliation with Marta.

An example in the English corpus is found when Cole tells Ethan about his parents' divorce and at some point, the conversation goes like this:

(61) Pair 12, divorce (personal) – ENG

01	Cole:	but I've always been close to them (.) as a unit\ (.) as opposed to (.)
02		individuals? [(.) that's gonna be] a bit of (.) an adjustment to [(0.6)] to
03		get my head around
04	Ethan:	[yeah (.) yeah (.) yeah]

In essence, Ethan is using "yeah" as a backchannel but the fact that the interjection is used three times reinforces his understanding of Cole's situation making it even clearer. The communicative function of "yeah" would be the same if it was only used once but, when it is repeated, the message is emphasised.

Gestures

Gestures can be used on their own or they can accompany verbal utterances. When used on their own, they mainly work as backchannels (e.g. head nods or head shakes) and when they co-occur with an utterance, the message is strengthened.

In the example below Francesc is complaining about what he considers to be an unfair situation as he was not allowed to take an exam because he was late. He explains that he talked to the teacher but she did not really listen to him and he believes that in part this is due to his looks.

(62) Pair 12, exam (academic) – CAT

01	Francesc:	potser també perquè com (.) que ((lifts left hand to head level and
		'maybe it is also because (.) I ((lifts left hand to head level and'
02		brings it down indicating the whole body)) porto aquestes pintes
		'brings it down indicating the whole body)) look like this'
03		(.) pues mira
		'(.) well [in the sense of 'take your own conclusions']'
04	Miquel:	ah (.) q(h)uè d(h)ius\ ((lifts left arm above head)) (.)
		'ah (.) wha(h)t are y(h)ou say(h)ing\ ((lifts left arm above head)) (.)
05		anda que:\ (.) que ha de ser ((puts left hand on Francesc's right thigh
		'come on\ (.) it is not ((puts left hand on Francesc's right thigh
06		and pushes it a bit)) això tio:\
		'and pushes it a bit)) that ma:n\

When responding to Francesc, Miquel first responds with *què dius?* ("what are you saying?", line 04) which is said in this slightly humorous way and, at the same time, he raises his arm above his head, a clear indication that he finds Francesc's remark an exaggeration. As he proceeds, he basically tries to convince his partner that his looks have absolutely nothing to do with the teacher's reaction, discarding this as a plausible explanation. At the end of his turn (line 05), he makes this gesture of putting his hand on Francesc's leg which clearly expresses encouragement and affiliation.

In the excerpt taken from one of the conversations in the English group, Cole has told Ethan about his parents' divorce and at the end of the conversation Ethan offers his help.

(63) Pair 12, divorce (personal) – ENG

01	Ethan:	if you ever wanna speak ((briefly opens hands on the sides with palms
02		up keeping elbows on thighs)) to anyone (.) you know (.) I'm here like
03		((briefly opens hands on the sides with palms up keeping elbows on
04		thighs and smiles)) (.) you can always ((moves right hand to the right
05		and moves thumb a couple of times like using a mobile phone)) [(0.9)]
06	Cole:	[yea:h]
07	Ethan:	just call me or drop me a text (.) like (.) I can come round or whenever
08	Cole:	maybe for a drink or something like that
09	Ethan:	yeah yeah ((nods head a couple of times)) (.) no problem
10	Cole:	°aha°
11	Ethan:	ah\ (.) that sucks innit (.) let's hug (.) come here (.) come here ((stands
12		up and opens arms))

Ethan makes a considerable use of gestures that are combined with the utterances given as a response to Cole. The closing starts with Ethan's offer of help, sprinkled with hand movements, the first two are examples of what is known as *palm-lateral gesture* (Kendon, 2004), which in this context can be explained, as Schoonjans (2019) suggests, through the *conduit* metaphor in which messages are seen like containers or parcels to be offered to the other interactant. This is what Ethan seems to be doing: offering his help as a kind of "present" to be taken by Cole.

On line 4, Ethan mimes the gesture of pressing some keys when texting a message on a mobile phone, which is done when he mentions the use of the device to contact him if necessary. The next gesture is on line 09 and again it mimes the affirmative meaning of "yeah", reinforcing the message. The most affiliative gesture, though, is the very last one. At the very end of the conversation, Ethan expresses his total understanding of his partner's feelings and offers a reassuring, friendly hug. He stands up and opens his arms in clear attempt to comfort his friend.

Facial expression

The same as gestures, facial expressions can either be used on their own or accompany an utterance. Below is an example of how surprise is visually displayed as a reaction to news. Cori is telling Anna that her parents are getting divorced and the topic is introduced like this:

(64) Pair 4, divorce (personal) – CAT

01	Cori:	la setmana passada (0.6) e::: (.) em va sobtar perquè: (.) els meus pares em van
		'last week (0.6) e:::r (.) I was shocked because (.) my parents told me'
02		dir Cori (.) bueno amb els meus germans\ (0.5) anem a:: (.) hem de parlar amb
		'Cori (.) well with my siblings\ (0.5) we're going to:: (.) we've to talk to'
03		vosa:ltres\ [(1)] i: (.) ens van dir que (.) bueno que es divorciaven
		'you\ [(1)] a:nd (.) they told us that (.) well that they're divorcing
04	Anna:	[((raises eyebrows and looks surprised)) °vale°]
		'[((raises eyebrows and looks surprised)) °ok°]'
05	Cori:	[(.)] i a més (.) saps? (.) ho van dir d'una manera co:m (.) ((shrugs
		'[(.)] and besides (.) you know? (.) they said it in a way li:ke (.) ((shrugs'
06	Anna:	[((looks surprised))] °clar ( )°
		'[((looks surprised))] °of course ( )°'
07	Cori:	shoulders)) mo:lt pendents de la nostra reacció\
		'shoulders)) they kept a watchful eye on us\'

When Cori announces that her parents want to divorce, Anna responds with short vocal acknowledgment tokens and her explicit facial expressions (lines 04 and 06). With this visual reaction, Anna affiliates with Cori's stance (she was shocked when she heard the news) and communicates her emotion or, if we detach her response from her emotional internal state as suggested by Wilkinson & Kitzinger (2006), at least she contributes with a response that is interactionally expected, validating the telling as news.

In the following example taken from the English corpus, the same topic is discussed. Claire is telling Bea about her parents' intention to get divorced and early in the interaction, they say this:

(65) Pair 7, divorce (personal) – ENG

01	Bella:	°o:hh°
02	Claire:	it's really awkward and really like
03	Bella:	°yea:h° (.) I can imagine\ (.) ((makes moaning sound, pulls ends of
04		mouth down and makes a sad face))

Bella's reaction is stressed not only by the moaning sound she makes but also by her expression of sadness, which strengthens the message and gives it a specific meaning that would otherwise be completely different or lost. Without the sound and gesture, Bellas's comment "I can imagine" could be interpreted as colder, less involved. With the sad intonation and expression, she clearly conveys they idea that she is sorry for that, achieving a more affiliative, more supporting link with her partner.

Lexical and phrasal elements

These strengthening linguistic forms include words and expressions through which we can increase the strength of an utterance. This is quite a heterogeneous group consisting of different linguistic devices mainly found within the utterance itself. They can be words or expressions whose meaning already involves some degree of intensification or that function as strengthening elements thanks to the context.

For instance, when Adrià tells Isabel that he finally did not get a grant to study abroad and asks her what she would do if she were in his situation, Isabel replies:

(66) Pair 5, grant (academic) – CAT

01	Isabel:	no sé (.) a ver (1.5) ((slightly lifts left shoulder, tilts head
		'I don't know (.) let's see (.) ((slightly lifts left shoulder, tilts head'
02		to the left and slightly reaches out with left hand)) suposo que: (0.5)
		'to the left and slightly reaches out with left hand)) I guess tha:t (0.5)'
03		jo ((quickly brings both hands to the chest)) sempre penso que tot
		'I ((quickly brings both hands to the chest)) always think that everything'

04 passa per alguna cosa\ (.) llavors (.) potser (.) no era el teu any (.) per
'happens for a reason\ (.) so (.) maybe (.) it was not your time (.) to'
05 marxar (.) és u- (.) >és una putada no? [(.)] que no te la donin< (1)
'go away (.) it's (.) >it's a bummer ain't it? [(.)] that you don't get it< (1)'
06 perquè clar (.) tu tenies molta il·lusió\ (.) en marxar?
'because obviously (.) were you very eager\ (.) to go away?'

Basically, what she is trying to do is find a way to help Adrià to come to terms with the situation by first mentioning a kind of mental strategy that works for her (thinking that things occur for some kind of reason). In her case, this is something she *sempre* ("always", line 03) does and she indirectly recommends this to Adrià. This adverb works as an intensifier of the message, indicating that she makes use of this strategy on every occasion thus justifying its appropriateness in this case. As she continues with her turn, on line 06 we can find two more words that add emphasis to parts of the message given by Isabel: *clar* (here translated as "obviously") and *molta* ("very").

In the following example, Geena is worried because her tutor has asked her to be more careful with her personal hygiene and Nancy, the EP, tries to downplay the issue. After Nancy suggests that Geena should not worry, the conversation is brought to an end like this:

(67) Pair 6, hygiene (professional) – ENG

01 Geena: well (.) I'm pleased you said that (.) I was just worried that's what
02 everyone else thought
03 Nancy: no (.) not at a:ll (.) no (.) fa:r from the truth\ (.) ((laughs a little))

Nancy's response is emphasized by two elements, "not at all" and "far from the truth", which basically intensify the negative response. The response implies that what Geena considers to be a problem, in fact it is not, redefining its significance and preserving Geena's self-esteem.

Formulaic responses

Although formulaic language includes pause fillers or collocations, these are not taken into account and for the present study only well-established speech formulas, gambits, idioms and proverbs are considered. When discussing Manel's experience with a patient who complained about his poor skills, there is a point in the conversation when Manel expresses his doubts about whether this lack of skills might be something that other people (particularly his mates in last year's placement) were aware of but did not dare to tell him.

(68) Pair 2, complaint (professional) – CAT

01	Manel:	do:ncs (.) potser l'any passat no s'atrevien a dir-ho [(.) °i (.) aquest any°
		'well (.) maybe last year they did not dare to say it [(.) °and (.) this year°
02	Laia:	[això és l'altra\ (.)
		'[that's the thing\(.)'
03		si la gent tampoc t'ho diu: (1) no (.) tampoc (.) no pots millorar (.)
		'if people don't tell you: (1) no (.) either (.) you can't improve (.)'
04		però jo crec que: ⊦ ((clicks tongue)) mmm (1.6) ⊣ no som especialistes
		'but I think tha:t ⊦ ((clicks tongue)) mmm (1.6) ⊣ we're not specialists'
05		(.) tenim vint anys i estem aprenent (0.5) no podem esperar que: (.) tot
		'(.) we're twenty and learning (0.5) we can't expect that (.) everything'
06		ens surti bé a la primera (0.5) perquè no teni:m ⊦ ((clicks tongue)) (1) ⊣
		'turns out well straightaway (0.5) because we don't have ⊦((clicks tongue)) (1)⊣'
07		o sigui estem aprenent (.) és que la parau- la mateixa paraula ho diu\
		'I mean we're learning (.) the word the word itself implies that\'
08		(0.5) no? (.) °no:°
		'(0.5) doesn't it? (.) °no:°'

Laia's response is based on the idea that this is part of the learning process and making mistakes is expected since they are still studying. Her message contains two formulaic expressions—*això és l'altra* ("that's the thing") on line 02 and *la mateixa paraula ho diu* ("the word itself implies that") on line 07—whose function is, in the case of *això és*

l'altra, to introduce and provide an alternative point of view and, in the case of *la mateixa paraula ho diu*, to emphasize the normality of the situation. The former expression in fact is typically used as *aquesta és l'altra* and although Laia has modified it a little (consciously or unconsciously), its meaning is not altered. This gambit is said as an exclamation, stressing the speaker's agreement with the idea put forward by Manel in the previous turn.

In English, this sort of expressions are also found. For instance, in the following excerpt, Nancy tells Geena that she owes some money to a friend of hers but she cannot pay her back and has not told the friend yet. Geena thinks that Nancy should talk to the friend and try to negotiate some kind of payment plan so that she can clear her debt little by little.

(69) Pair 6, debt (personal) – ENG

01	Geena:	e:m (.) but yeah (.) I think maybe try and sort it out the sooner the better
02		instead of (.) burying your head in the sand (.) but lump sums that's not
03		going to work (.) that's going to get them even more annoyed I'd say (.)
04		at least they make you being pro-active about it\

She makes use of two of these expressions: "the sooner the better" (line 01) and "bury your head in the sand" (line 02). They are both part of Geena's advice and they help her to convey her ideas through a brief phrase.

Terms of address

This section includes personal proper noun and terms of endearment and friendship which are used to address the other person in the conversation directly. Their use in general terms expresses affection and friendliness. All the examples found belonged to the Catalan group and they included *home* ("man") (14 cases), *tio* ("man") (13 cases), *tia* (2 cases), *noia* [2](2 cases), *tu* ("you") (2 cases) and a proper noun (1 case).

[2] Both 'home' and 'tio' are informal, colloquial ways of addressing a man whereas 'tia' and 'noia' are used when addressing a woman. 'Home' has lost its referential value and is also commonly used when addressing women. They are normally used as fillers by young speakers (Cuenca, 2004, 2011).

The extract below illustrates the use of *tio*. Salva's tutor has asked him to be more careful with his personal hygiene habits and when he tells Biel about it, he first complains about the tutor's lack of tact and then he responds like this:

(70) Pair 7, hygiene (professional) – CAT

01 Biel: joder pues ((swallows)) (.) ja saps (.) una altra vegada (.) tio (.) ves ben
'fuck so ((swallows)) (.) you know (.) next time (.) man (.) go freshly
02 dutxat (.) be:n ((moves left hand as if imitating action of putting
'showered (.) we:ll ((moves left hand as if imitating action of putting
03 deodorant)) (.) airejat (.) tio: (.) i::
'deodorant)) (.) aired (.) ma:n (.) a::nd'

Biel uses *tio* ("man") twice in his turn, on line 01 and 03. His language is informal and full of colloquial expressions of which *tio* is one more example. By using it, he shows closeness to Salva. As Cuenca (2004) states, this type of vocative is used to identify the speakers as members of a group and also indicate a close relationship between them.

4.2.4.2 MITIGATING ELEMENTS

Lexical and phrasal elements

These mitigating linguistic forms include words and expressions through which we can decrease the strength of an utterance. This is quite a heterogeneous group consisting of different linguistic devices, mainly found within the utterance itself. They can be words or expressions whose meaning already involves some degree of mitigation or that function as mitigating elements thanks to the context.

In the example below, notice how Laia constructs one of her responses when her partner tells her that he owes some money that he cannot pay back.

(71) Pair 2, debt (personal) – CAT

01 Laia: [he he (1) i el problema era molt greu? perquè potser si parles amb els
'[he he (1) and the problem was very big? because maybe if you talk to'
02 teus pares\ (.) ((clicks tongue)) si consideren que aquests dine:rs (0.5)
'your parents\ (.) ((clicks tongue)) if they consider that this money: (0.5)'

03 o sigui (.) jo crec que potser els teus pares (.) si els hi dius que els hi deus
'I mean (.) I think maybe your parents (.) if you tell them that you owe it'
04 a un ami:c (.) t'ho (.) t'ho t'ho donarien
'to a frie:nd (.) they would (.) would give it to you'

Laia seems to be aware that this is a delicate matter and wants to ensure her partners' face is not threatened by presenting her recommendation as just a hypothetical possibility. She makes use of words like the hedges *potser* ("maybe") (lines 01 and 03) and *jo crec* ("I think") (line 03) and the conditional (line 04), which clearly try to soften the message, reducing the partner's potential feeling of invasion of his privacy.

A similar example is found in the English group. In the same situation of owing some money to a friend and not being able to pay them back, Elisabeth acts as the EP and when she recommends that her partner should talk to his friend and be honest with her, she says:

(72) Pair 11, debt (personal) – ENG

01 Elisabeth: I think (.) the ((moves left hand, which was resting on her lap, up a bit with
02 palm facing up)) (.) like the worst that's gonna happen is that she
03 might be a little bit annoyed/

As in the Catalan example, Elisabeth mitigates her turn with the hedge "I think" (line 01), indicating that this a personal opinion and thus weakening the claim made and reducing any potential resistance by the partner. When she predicts what will happen, Elisabeth attenuates what she considers to be the worst-case scenario with the hedges "might" and "a little bit" (line 03) presenting it as a less menacing option than her partner could imagine and therefore more likely to be accepted.

Understatements

By definition, understatements imply some sort of mitigation as they present something, a situation or a fact, in a less intense or serious way. Not many examples of understatements were found in the corpus: only 3 cases in Catalan.

In this extract Albert is talking to Clara, whose parents are going through a divorce. Clara has already talked to her mother about their divorce but not to her father. Albert thinks that it would be a good idea for Clara to talk to her father.

(73) Pair 6, divorce (personal) – CAT

01:	Albert:	((nods slightly)) .hhh (.) no sé: (.) jo crec que potser (.) ((changes
		'((nods slightly)) .hhh (.) I don't know (.) I think maybe (.) ((changes
02		posture. Rests hands on the chair to reposition himself and stretches
		'posture. Rests hands on the chair to reposition himself and stretches
03		back)) si parles amb el teu pare i: (.) el fas se:nt- (.) no sé (0.8) enraonar
		'back)) if you talk to your dad a:nd (.) you make him fee- (.) I don't know (0.8) talk
04		una mica::: ((opens only the hands on the sides keeping the wrists on
		'a bi::t ((opens only the hands on the sides keeping the wrists on
05		the thighs)) (.) a veure (1.1) que potse:r (.) HA SIGU:T (0.5) el moment\
		'the thighs)) (.) so (1.1)maybe: (.) IT'S BEE:N (0.5) that occasion\
06		(1) que estaven els dos en calent i:: (1.1) ((slightly lifts right shoulder))
		'(1) they were both angry a::nd (1.1) ((slightly lifts right shoulder))'
07		s'hauran dit coses que no:: ((raises eyebrows)) (.) bueno\ (.)
		'they must have said things that no:: ((raises eyebrows)) (.) well\ (.)'
08		>que no volien [dir<
		>that they did not [mean<

Albert is aware that it is Clara's parents that he is talking about and that they are going through a difficult time so he rephrases and mitigates his message several times making sure that no offense is taken by Clara. At the end of his turn, when he tries to describe the parents' discussion, he starts saying *s'hauran dit coses que no* ("they must have said things that no") and then he hesitates as he tries to find an alternative to "awful things" or the like. Finally, he finds the understatement *que no volien dir* ("that they did not mean") (line 08), which saves Clara's face.

4.3. RESULTS OF THE POST-ROLE PLAY QUESTIONNAIRES

The short Likert-scale post-role play questionnaires were devised in order to check if empathic conversations were considered really empathic by the participants and if they had any kind of effect on them. They were completed right after each interaction in order to get the participants' first impression. The questions that the participants had to answer were related to how each of them assessed the interaction they had just had according to some different parameters depending on their part in the role play. Figure 9 shows these parameters.

Figure 9

Parameters assessed in the post-role play questionnaires.

EMPATHY RECEIVER (ER)	EMPATHY PROVIDER (EP)
• Level of satisfaction	• Level of satisfaction
• Changes in mood	• Level of responsibility of ER
• Changes in perspective of situation	• Help ER cope better with situation
• Felt understood by EP	• Identification with ER
• Felt judged by EP	• Worried about ER

Consequently, there are two questionnaires associated with each conversation. For the Catalan group there were 99 post-role play questionnaires (50 conversations) analysed—one of the questionnaires to be filled in by the empathy provider was finally not included as it was wrongly administered by the researcher—and for the English group, 104 (52 conversations). Taking the two language groups together gives a total of 203 questionnaires (102 filled in by the empathy receivers and 101 filled in by the empathy providers).

Pearson's correlation was run to determine the relationship among the parameters mentioned in Figure 9 and to determine if they were also related to the number of strategies used in each conversation for each language group (Tables 11 and 12 below). The first column of the two tables shows the results when taking the total number of strategies in each conversation in relation to all the parameters analysed with the post-role play questionnaires, the rest of columns show the intercorrelations of variables in

the post-role play questionnaires. Significant correlations are highlighted in green (p<0.01) and yellow (p<0.05).

4.3.1 CATALAN GROUP

In Catalan (Table 11), the number of strategies shows a significant positive correlation with the level of concern of the empathy provider (0.425, p<0.01) and the level of satisfaction of the empathy receiver (0.374, p<0.01), which suggests that the higher the level of concern of the empathy provider, the more strategies are used, which in turn increases the level of satisfaction of the receiver. Out of the ten correlations for the number of strategies, two are negative (perspective of situation and level of responsibility) but not statistically significant. The rest of variables, when intercorrelated, give 35.5% of statistically significant results: out of the 45 total results, 16 are significant. Of all these 45 correlations, 8 are negative although none is statistically significant.

The two variables yielding the highest number of significant results are level of satisfaction of ER—6 positive correlations: mood (0.451, p<0.01) / perspective of the situation (0.301, p<0.05) / feeling understood by partner (0.422, p<0.01) / level of satisfaction of EP (0.449, p<0.01) / help partner cope better (0.347, p<0.05) / level of concern (0.382, p<0.01)—and feeling understood by partner—6 positive correlations: level of satisfaction of EP (0.389, p<0.01) / help partner cope better (0.338, p<0.05) / identification with partner (0.295, p<0.05) / level of satisfaction of ER (0.422, p<0.01) / mood (0.413, p<0.01) / perspective of the situation (0.531, p<0.01). Therefore, these two variables, level of satisfaction of the ER and feeling understood by partner, seem to relate not only to subjective aspects judged by the ER him/herself but also to aspects of the EP.

Table 11

Pearson's correlations among post-role play variables in the Catalan group.

CATALAN	Number strategies	Level satisfaction ER	Mood ER	Perspective of situation ER	Understood by partner ER	Judged by partner ER	Level satisfaction EP	Responsi-bility EP	Help cope better EP	Identification with partner EP
Level satisfaction ER	0.374**									
Mood ER	0.052	0.451**								
Perspective of situation ER	-0.055	0.301*	0.674**							
Understood by partner ER	0.048	0.422**	0.413**	0.531**						
Judged by partner ER	0.045	0.036	0.054	0.072	-0.169					
Level satisfaction EP	0.098	0.449**	0.178	0.278	0.389**	-0.108				
Responsi-bility EP	-0.143	0.026	-0.083	0.134	0.227	-0.237	0.268			
Help cope better EP	0.265	0.347*	0.173	0.353*	0.338*	-0.071	0.482**	0.213		
Identification with partner EP	0.099	0.175	-0.104	0.063	0.295*	-0.135	0.168	0.234	0.132	
Level of concern EP	0.425**	0.382**	0.042	0.153	0.206	-0.129	0.254	0.129	0.403**	0.287*

** =p<0.01 * =p<0.05

4.3.2 ENGLISH GROUP

Regarding the correlation of the number of strategies per conversation and the post-role play variables, the English group (Table 12) shows two significant correlations: mood of the empathy receiver (0.328, $p<0.05$) and perspective of the situation (0.284, $p<0.05$), indicating that the more strategies used in the interaction, the more the mood and perspective of the situation of the empathy receiver improve. Out of the ten correlations, four are negative but none of them are statistically significant.

The variables from the post-role play questionnaires, when intercorrelated, give 53.3% of statistically significant results, that is, 24 out of the 45 total results. 8 of these show a negative correlation, of which 4 are statistically significant—mood and feeling judged by partner (-0.511, $p<0.01$) / perspective of the situation and feeling judged by partner (-0.506, $p<0.01$) / feeling understood by partner and feeling judged by partner (-0.689, $p<0.01$) / level of concern and feeling judged by partner (-0.369, $p<0.01$)—all of them related to the variable feeling judged by partner.

The two variables yielding the highest number of significant results are perspective of the situation—7 positive correlations: feeling understood by partner (0.622, $p<0.01$) / level of satisfaction of EP (0.471, $p<0.01$) / help partner cope better (0.404, $p<0.01$) / identification with partner (0.294, $p<0.05$) / level of concern (0.341, $p<0.05$) / level of satisfaction of ER (0.676, $p<0.01$) / mood (0.492, $p<0.01$) and 1 negative correlation: feeling judged by partner (-0.506, $p<0.01$)) and the level of satisfaction of the ER (6 positive correlations: mood (0.539, $p<0.01$) / perspective of the situation (0.676, $p<0.01$) / feeling understood by partner (0.732, $p<0.01$) / feeling judged by partner (0.584, $p<0.01$) / level of satisfaction of EP (0.401, $p<0.01$), level of concern (0.384, $p<0.01$)).

Table 12

Peon's correlations among post-role play variables in the English group

ENGLISH	Number strategies	Level satisfaction ER	Mood ER	Perspective of situation ER	Understood by partner ER	Judged by partner ER	Level satisfaction EP	Responsi-bility EP	Help cope better EP	Identification with partner EP
Level satisfaction ER	0.107									
Mood ER	0.328*	0.539**								
Perspective of situation ER	0.284*	0.676**	0.492**							
Understood by partner ER	0.153	0.732**	0.335*	0.622**						
Judged by partner ER	-0.268	0.584**	-0.511**	-0.506**	-0.689**					
Level satisfaction EP	0.189	0.401**	0.396**	0.471**	0.312*	-0.258				
Responsi-bility EP	-0.107	0.240	0.166	0.176	0.171	-0.033	0.257			
Help cope better EP	-0.001	0.270	0.213	0.404**	0.414**	-0.264	0.462**	0.288*		
Identification with partner EP	-0.194	0.257	0.079	0.294*	0.173	-0.147	0.250	0.120	0.111	
Level of concern EP	0.121	0.384**	0.120	0.341*	0.435**	-0.369**	0.217	0.074	0.059	0.284*

** =p<0.01 * =p<0.05

The ten highest and most significant correlations in the two groups were compared (Table 13). Only four of them (highlighted) are found in the two groups but in different positions.

Table 13

Most significant correlations of post-role play variables and number of strategies per language groups.

	CATALAN	ENGLISH
1	Perspective of situation + Mood (0.674**)	Level satisfaction ER + Feeling understood by partner (0.732**)
2	Perspective of situation + Feeling understood by partner (0.531**)	Feeling understood by partner + Feeling judged by partner (-0.689**)
3	Help partner cope better + Level satisfaction EP (0.482**)	Level satisfaction ER + Perspective of situation (0.676**)
4	Level satisfaction ER + Mood (0.451**)	Perspective of situation + Feeling understood by partner (0.622**)
5	Level satisfaction ER + Level satisfaction EP (0.449**)	Level satisfaction ER + Feeling judged by partner (0.584**)
6	Level of concern + Number of strategies (0.425**)	Level satisfaction ER + Mood (0.539**)
7	Level satisfaction ER + Feeling understood by partner (0.422**)	Feeling judged by partner + Mood (-0.511**)
8	Feeling understood by partner + Mood (0.413**)	Feeling judged by partner + Perspective of situation (-0.506**)
9	Help partner cope better + Level of concern (0.403**)	Perspective of situation + Mood (0.492**)
10	Level satisfaction EP + Feeling understood by partner (0.389**)	Level satisfaction EP + Perspective of situation(0.471**)

4.4 RESULTS OF THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

The focus group interviews (FGIs) consist of the various pairs of participants, gathered after their role play sessions. A total of 10 FGIs are included in this study, 5 for the Catalan group and 5 for the English group.

The interviews were first analysed group by group taking all the answers to the different questions and grouping them according to the idea or theme they examined. All the

participants' contributions were included in the analysis even the ones made by those whose role plays were finally not incorporated in the study. Explicit agreements either verbal (e.g. "yeah", "that's right") or non-verbal (e.g. head nods or shakes) were also taken into account and added and counted as the same kind of reply to a given question. The answers of all the FGIs were finally combined into a single document for each language (Appendix 7) and the number of occasions a theme or idea were mentioned or agreed with by different participants is given in brackets, so if a participant kept returning to the same theme or made the same comment several times, this was counted just once. This number does not intend to give a quantitative dimension to this part of the study and is of limited value if we consider the intrinsic characteristics of FGIs, mainly qualitative, but it does give us an idea, if only approximate, of what the participants in this study considered to be relevant points.

The results presented in this section include, apart from the aforementioned document in Appendix 7, one or two examples per language of the most relevant items, that is to say, those ideas or themes that were shared by most participants in one or both groups in order to get a more detailed description of some of the ideas included in the appendix. Considering that focus group interviews are quite organic and develop differently each time, sometimes the answers to different questions mingle and merge creating an amalgam of ideas that flow throughout the whole session, blurring the boundaries marked by the different questions addressed in the discussion. At times, a basic idea or thought conveyed by a participant is revised and reshaped leading to more concrete or complex conclusions, whereas some other times this idea does not seem to appeal or be found worth elaborating and is just accepted or rejected without any further elaboration. In any case, all the ideas in the interview, regardless of whether they are developed or not, are included in this section.

Most of the questions in the FGIs had to do with the concept and realisation of empathy and a few had to do with aspects connected with the methodology of this part of the study. The sections below (4.4.1 to 4.4.8) present the most significant ideas brought up in the interviews, although on some occasions they arose as a reply to a question that did not directly address that issue and that is why some questions have been grouped and are presented together. The language group as well as the group session where the

comments were made are indicated in brackets. The results are organised following the structure of the focus group interviews and examples of the two language groups are provided, since this facilitates the presentation of any coincidence or difference between groups.

4.4.1 THE REFLECTION PROCESS

What were you thinking about while doing the role plays?

The replies to the very first question show that some participants found it difficult to adapt to the constraints imposed by the role play method and indicated that they found the task and the environment unnatural. Cathy's (English FGI#2) remark "I felt awkward because it's not a real situation so, how would I respond? ...I don't know", Elisabeth's (English FGI#4) "It's hard to place yourself in the situation just in … the environment we're in. Like that kind of role play situation is hard to, yeah, think about being in the situation." or Sergi's (Catalan FGI#1) *no t'acaba de sortir espontani perquè com que és una situació premeditada. No ho has viscut sinó que ho has llegit, has de pensar i posar el context* ("it's not a spontaneous reaction because it is a premeditated situation. You have not experienced it but just read it, you must think and put yourself in the context") clearly exemplify this. Most of the participants, though, answered that they simply were trying to put themselves in the situation described without indicating whether they found it easy or difficult.

In order to connect this first question, which also helped to break the ice, with the rest of questions, the participants were asked what they thought the study was about and only a few of them in both language groups guessed, on reflection, the object of study, which suggests that this was not obvious or easily recognizable. At this point, the purpose of the study was unveiled logically leading to the question *what is empathy for you?*

4.4.2. DEFINING EMPATHY

What is empathy for you? / When do you expect someone to empathise with you?

Diverse answers were offered, which illustrate the multiple perspectives and ideas associated with empathy. For example, Albert's answer (Catalan FGI#2), *posar-te en la*

situació de l'altra persona i intentar que se senti millor ("put yourself in someone's situation and try to make them feel better") combines the traditional definition of empathy with the response or reaction that this situation is often expected to bring forth. Elisabeth (English FGI#4) also expresses the same idea when she says:

> Often empathy is like putting yourself in their situation so you're trying to relate to them and how they feel. Feel what they are feeling and then be able to comfort them in a way possibly you may want to be comforted in.

Inextricably relating empathy with some kind of usually positive or sympathetic reaction often occurs as this short extract showing the participants' responses illustrates:

(74) English FGI#5

Lance: Being able to put yourself in a situation … so … almost … I guess it's almost like reliving for a split of a second some of the situations, so you can almost either take on board and help directly if there's like an obstacle or problem and then maybe using that as a …

Cole: Feeling somebody else's emotions … so that they don't feel they are on their own.

Mary: And reassure them.

Nora: And try to understand why they feel that way.

Cole: Yeah!

James: How best react based on how you would react to the situation.

Zoe: Letting them know you understand how they feel.

Cole: Yeah

This reaction tends to elicit a pro-social response, usually expressed as some kind of help or comfort. For example, Sergi (Catalan FGI#1) claims that empathy is *sentir una mica el que sent l'altre així el pots comprendre millor i ajudar una mica més* ("feel a bit what the other person is feeling so that you can better understand them and help them a bit more"). Some participants connect the concept of empathy with that of compassion. For instance, when asked what empathy was for them, Eric (English FGI#2) immediately responded "showing compassion for someone" or Jane (English FGI#4) responded with a question "compassion?"

Sometimes this idea of putting yourself in somebody else's shoes is seen as a way of adopting the other person's perspective and forgetting yours as Marcel (Catalan FGI#3) remarked:

> Deixar de banda els teus pensaments per poder intentar veure com pensa l'altre i de quina manera veu les coses l'altre. Intentar veure què està pensant l'altre i intentar ajudar-lo però no des de com tu penses sinó quina seria la situació si et passes a tu.
>
> 'Putting your thoughts aside to try to see how the other person thinks and sees things. Trying to see what the other person is thinking and help them but not from your point of view but thinking of the situation if that happened to you.'

Some other times, though, adopting the other person's perspective does not involve forgetting yours but quite the opposite, as in Biel's (Catalan FGI#3) comment:

> Mai t'acabes de ficar en el seu lloc perquè tu ets com ets i mai arribes a entendre-ho com l'altra persona però tu pots haver viscut una situació similar i més o menys t'hi pots ficar però mai l'acabes de comprendre.
>
> 'You never completely put yourself in someone's shoes because you are like you are and you never get to understand something like the other person but you may have gone through a similar situation and more or less you can put yourself in that person's shoes but you never quite understand the situation [like the other person]'.

When asked what situations called for empathy or when they expected to get empathy, there seemed to be a general notion supported by most participants in both groups that it is mainly negative situations, troubles or problems, which seem to require some form of empathy. Judy's (English FGI#1) comment "any time someone else is in trouble or in a difficult situation that you are not necessarily in at the same time" or Jane's (English FGI#4) remark "when somebody is in distress … or upset … or difficult times" exemplify this point for the English group whereas Clara's (Catalan FGI#2) statement *quan estàs malament és quan més necessites que algú et comprengui i es fiqui en la teva pell* ("when you are down is when you most need others to understand you and put themselves in your shoes") does the same for the Catalan group. However, as the

conversation on the topic proceeded, this first idea of relating empathy to negative situations was further explored—sometimes after the researcher herself asked the participants whether empathy was only connected with negative situations—leading to some nuances and considerations, mainly that empathy is necessary in any kind of situation, as Alan (English FGI#4) remarked: "I think maybe in positive situations as well, sometimes… Say, something good has happened … you may want to celebrate or you may want somebody to celebrate with you. It's not necessarily always bad things." or as Nicole (English FGI#3) said:

> Humans are kind of social creatures and to actually be able to interact and feel like we belong with any group, we have to be able to empathise and be able to situate ourselves in kind of group settings so we are part of the group instead of being outside the group.

Its counterpart in the Catalan group was Jana's (Catalan FGI#1) comment:

> Fins i tot amb les coses bones es busca l'empatia. Som animals socials i necessitem que algú ens digui 'osti, ho has fet molt bé!'. L'empatia la busquem en tots moments perquè sempre fem les coses una mica, sí per nosaltres mateixos, però també per complaure la resta.
>
> 'Even with good things we expect empathy. We are social creatures and need somebody to tell us 'wow! You've done really well!'. We try to get empathy in all situations because we always do things a little for ourselves but also to please others'.

At the end of this discussion some participants, though, continued to believe that empathy is normally related to adverse or difficult situations, for instance Geena (English FGI#2) comments:

> With good things is kind of like difficult to be happy for somebody that for example got a better mark than you in a test. Like it sounds really awful but it's hard when you think 'I worked really hard for it', you can't really put yourself in their shoes to see how happy they are because you're kind of caught up in your own stuff so I think that sometimes positive stuff is a little bit harder to empathise with.

or Marcel (Catalan FGI#3) says:

> Les situacions negatives demanen més empatia que no pas les positives. Quan tens una situació negativa, el que vols és el recolzament de l'altra persona en canvi quan la situació és positiva potser també busques que els altres et reconeguin però no de la mateixa manera.
>
> 'Negative situations require more empathy than positive ones. When you are in a negative situation, what you want is the other person's support but when you are in a positive situation maybe you also want the others to recognise you but not in the same way.'

During the discussion, another issue had to do with one's experience. Since empathy is seen as a way of relating to the other person, sharing the same or a similar experience or being able to identify yourself with the other person facilitates this connection as Nancy (English FGI#2) puts it:

> I think it's easier to empathise with a situation that you've been in yourself so in terms of the situation of winning the lottery, I can't imagine having any more money than what I actually have in my bank account so being able to sort of relate to that situation is really difficult. I think it's much easier with situations that you've been in yourself.

or as Albert (Catalan FGI#2) says:

> Hauries de conèixer bé la seva situació. Per exemple, és més difícil empatitzar amb un refugiat o amb algú que ha patit un atemptat; et pots imaginar com aquelles persones ho estan passant però si no ho vius, et serà més difícil ser empàtic amb un nen de Síria que no per exemple amb la Clàudia, amb la qual tinc més relació, quan explicava que els seus pares es divorciaven. Intentaria ajudar-la més que no pas alguna cosa que em queda llunyana perquè encara que vulgui, no puc col·laborar amb ells.
>
> 'You must know the situation well. For example, it is more difficult to empathise with a refugee or with somebody who has suffered a terrorist attack; you can imagine what those people are going through but if you do not experience

> something, it will be more difficult for you to empathise with a Syrian child than with, for example, Clara [his partner in the role play], who I have a better relationship with, when she told me that her parents were getting divorced. I'd try to help her more than somebody who is far away because, regardless of me wanting to, I cannot collaborate with them.'

4.4.3 INAPPROPRIATENESS IN EMPATHY

Is there anything that you find inappropriate when giving/receiving empathy?

Regarding those aspects or elements that are considered to be unsuitable or out of place when giving or receiving empathy, no answers in the Catalan group are repeated but there is an idea that is mentioned in the two language groups: fake empathy. When Jana (Catalan FGI#1) says *Dir que ho entens i que no ho entenguis. Moltes vegades al no saber què dir potser és millor que escoltem que no pas voler dir alguna cosa que no serveix de res perquè pots realment molestar l'altra persona* ("Saying that you understand when you don't. Very often when you don't know what to say maybe we'd rather listen than say something useless because you can annoy the other person.") or when Diana (English FGI#1) says:

> Faking it. When somebody says something for the sake of saying it. For example, when they say 'I'll be here for you' and you know that if it actually comes down to it, they are not gonna be there for you. They just say it for the sake of saying it but don't actually mean it.

They both refer to this idea of feigning a reaction that is expected to be genuine and, when it is not perceived as such, it is seen as undesirable and sometimes even antisocial behaviour.

The kind of relationship between the empathiser and the empathisee is also relevant as some participants in the English group find that receiving empathy from strangers or from people that barely know you can sometimes be intrusive and inadequate. Cathy (EnglishFGI#2) says: "It's when you do not know somebody quite well and they try to give you life counselling and it's ((puts on a face of disgust)) like 'you don't know me that well!' I know you're trying to be nice but ((puts on a face of disgust))". In the Catalan

group a similar idea emerged when discussing what empathy was as this short extract illustrates:

(75) Catalan FGI#2

Adrià: Però hi ha d'haver confiança abans.
'But there must be mutual trust previously.'
((Albert and Isabel nod in agreement))

Clara: Si no coneixes la persona, no la pots ajudar tant.
'If you don't know the person, you cannot help them that much.'

Albert: Hauries de conèixer bé la seva situació.
'You should know their situation well.'

Adrià: No et fiques tant en la seva pell. No intentes ajudar-lo tant. Si pots ajudar-lo fàcilment, sí però...
'You don't get that much in their shoes. You do not try to help them that much. If you can easily do it, then yes but…'

Another idea shared by some of the participants in the two groups in relation to these inappropriate elements is when the empathiser eventually shifts the focus of attention from the person in need of empathy to themselves. This is exemplified by Gillian (English FGI#3) when recounting a personal story:

> One of my best friends, a really good friend at school, her mum came in and told her her dad had a stroke and he died so Lucy, my friend, came out crying and then another of her best friends went to her and burst out crying saying 'I'm so sorry', 'it's so horrible' and I don't know how she burst out crying. It's hard to put yourself in the situation but you've gotta not make it… Like, it's hard. I think some people make it about them. They start empathising and they go like 'oh, that happened to me' and it's like, 'that's not helping me' kind of thing".

The same idea in the Catalan group was expressed by Gemma (Catalan FGI#4): *Que et porti al seu terreny. Llavors comença a parlar d'algo seu. Que t'ho posi com exemple, això sí però hi ha gent que de seguida se'n va a les seves coses i ja s'oblida completament del teu problema.* ("The fact that they shift the focus of attention. Then they start talking

about themselves. Using that as an example is fine but some people quickly move the conversation on to their own interests and completely forget about you").

4.4.4 ASKING FOR EMPATHY

How do you fish for empathy?

One of the questions in the interviews had to do with how we try to get empathy and the things we do or do not do to call other people's attention and make them know that we need or look for some empathy. However, there is no single way of doing this, as Diana (English FGI#1) pointed out:

> Some people want empathy but they are not gonna say anything, they just expect you to know (e.g. you're quiet so you're upset so I'll ask you 'what's wrong with you?') and some would tell you but others wouldn't. There's no right way.

At the top of the list, rating first in the English group and second in the Catalan group, we find indirect, subtle indications such as being particularly silent or grumpy; sometimes these cues happen to be quite vague and only noticeable by those who know you well. Isabel (Catalan FGI#2) gives a straightforward response: *Jo crec que l'empatia no es demana directament* ("I think that empathy is not something you directly ask for"), the same as Cèlia (Catalan FGI#4): *Si la persona et coneix, ja et veurà*. ("If that person knows you, they will know"). In one of the English groups, for example, the same idea is formulated by Alan and Jane:

(76) English FGI#4

Alan: I think I'd generally just go quite quiet, I wouldn't say I'd go crying, I mean, I'd go for it in a quiet way and people would sort of pick it up on that. I think I'd be a little bit down and quiet.

Jane: If they're good enough friends, they would notice when you're not yourself.

Alan: Yes, I think most of my friends would know when something is different.

The other most common way of trying to get somebody to empathise with you is by overtly talking about the problem, which is often done with people that know each other well so that no or not much preamble is needed. Cèlia and Maria talk about this:

(77) Catalan FGI#4

Cèlia: Vas a les persones que saps que no els hi has de demanar [empatia], que saps que t'ajudaran i saps que es posaran al teu lloc. No aniràs a la primera persona que trobis a al metro a demanar-li 'si us plau, empatia'. No sé, aniria a persones properes a mi que sé que m'ajudaran. Un cop coneixes la persona, ja et veu [si estàs malament].

'You go to those people you know don't need to be asked to give empathy, those you know will help you and will put themselves in your place. You will not go to the first person you meet on the metro and ask 'please, empathy'. I don't know, I'd go to those people close to me that I know will help me. Once you know that person, they can say [if you're down].'

Maria: Si tu no tens aquella persona al costat físicament, doncs li expliques el teu problema i si realment saps que és una persona de confiança i que t'ajudarà, ja ho farà.

'If that person is not physically there with you, then you raise the problem and if you really know that they are trustworthy and helpful, they will eventually help you.'

Sometimes who the other person is does not seem to be that important and empathy is "fished" by presenting the problem in the expectation that somebody will respond. Cole (English FGI#5) says "I just throw my story out there and see if …" and, to the same question, Betty (English FGI#1) replies "Telling as many people about your problem".

4.4.5 REACTING TO POOR EMPATHY

How do you feel or react when you do not receive expected empathy?

As expected, receiving empathy arouses good feelings. In fact, the original positive question *how do you feel when you receive empathy?* was naturally dropped from most of the interviews as, with all the previous contributions, asking the question was clearly a repetition of the ideas that had already emerged before, linking the provision of empathy to positive feelings.

The negative form of the question was more enlightening as the answers to it were more elaborated. In general, when empathy is not provided or falls short, the feelings and reactions triggered tend to be quite negative. The adjectives and expressions used to describe what one feels when empathy has not been given are diverse and seem to move along a continuum that would go from indifference to disappointment and frustration. For instance, in response to Rosie's (English FGI#2) remark "It doesn't make you feel any better", Eric (English FGI#2) replies "It doesn't make me feel any worse though. It's just kind of like maybe they are struggling with their own things and they can't really deal with what I'm in." A similar conclusion was found in the Catalan group, Jordi (Catalan FGI#3) says *potser també l'altra persona té un problema i no pot empatitzar amb tu. Potser intentar tornar a reprendre la conversa més endavant perquè potser llavors sí que empatitza amb tu i només és un cas aïllat* ("maybe the other person has a problem too and can't empathise with you. Maybe I would try to have that conversation at some other time because maybe then they empathise with you and this has just been an exception"). The two cases would illustrate the least negative kind of emotion, a dispassionate response, whereas some other participants see this as more hostile and disapproving and use adjectives such as "irritated", "deceived" or "upset" to describe how they feel in that situation.

It is worth noting, though, that sometimes the effect of not receiving empathy is not negative and it is seen as the spark that leads to questioning one's own attitude for the best. Judy (English FGI#3) makes this point very clear when she says:

> I think as well if you have been moaning about something for a long time to someone and the empathy cuts off, you go like 'ok, I need to lighten up a bit now'. You expect it [empathy] but yeah, it depends I suppose on the situation.

However, these feelings seem to be modulated depending on who the empathy-provider is as Bridget (English FGI#3) clearly points out: "I think it depends on who the person is. If it's somebody close to you and they do not show anything towards you, that's a bit ((makes a face of disgust)) but if it's somebody you do not know, that's no problem."

The empathy receiver's personality is also important, for example, in Isabel's (Catalan FGI#2) words:

> Depèn del tipus de persona que siguis. Si ets una persona que et costa molt obrir-te i el dia que ho fas, l'altra persona no reacciona com tu t'esperaves, et sents ridícul i penses 'i ara què faig? M'he obert per res'. Però si ets una persona que tens facilitat per explicar les teves coses, suposo que no passa res, ja trobaràs algú altre.
>
> 'It depends on the kind of person you are. If you are a person who does not open up easily and when you do, the other person does not react as you expected, you feel ridiculous and think 'what should I do now? I've opened up for nothing'. But if you are a person who can easily talk about your things, I guess it's ok, you'll find somebody else.'

Some subjects also mention unreciprocated empathy as an additional fact that makes the lack of empathy even worse. If you have previously been there for that person or think that you would be there in case they needed you and, when you are in need of some empathy, you feel let down, which seems to arouse feelings of betrayal and disloyalty. Marcel (Catalan FG#3) describes how he would feel in that case: *Potser et sents com traït. Tu penses que ho faries per l'altra persona i en canvi aquesta persona, no i et sents que t'ha fallat* ("You may feel betrayed. You think you would stand by that person but they do not for you and you feel let down.") and Glòria (Catalan FGI#5) comes up the same idea: *No sé, per exemple, estic ajudant algú molt cops i estic deixant de fer coses per ajudar aquella persona i després, quan jo de veritat ho necessito, té altres prioritats. Això dol* ("I don't know, for example, I've been helping someone several times and I've not been doing something in order to help them and then, when I really need it, that person has other priorities. That hurts."). In the English group, Elisabeth (English FGI#4) mentions the same: "I'd be annoyed with that person. Especially if you've helped them and empathised with them with some situations and now they are not giving that back."

In all cases, the reactions go from instinctive and spontaneous to more thoughtful and measured. Biel's (Catalan FGI#3) comment: *Jo sóc molt impulsiu i si jo estic explicant els meu problemes i l'altra persona s'ho pren a la lleugera, m'aixeco i me'n vaig* ("I'm very impulsive and if I'm talking about my problems and the other person takes it lightly, I

stand up and leave.") would be a clear example of the former whereas the latter would be illustrated by Marcel's (Catalan FGI#3) reply to Biel's reflection:

> Jo no faria això de tallar, jo li preguntaria 'per què no et preocupes?' o m'interessaria saber perquè no em fa costat. Perquè potser l'altre no veu el problema i per això no sent la necessitat de posar-se en el teu lloc i empatitzar.
>
> 'I would not give that person the push, I would ask them 'why don't you show concern? or I would like to know why they do not support me. Because maybe the other person can't see the problem and does not feel the need to put themselves in your place and empathise.'

The most repeated reaction brought by occasions when empathy is deficient involves rethinking the friendship with that person or drifting apart from them as Diana and Betty mention in this short extract:

(78) English FGI#1

Diana: I'll cut that person out. Well, not necessarily cut you out but I'll pull myself away from them because I know where I stand.

Betty: If they're a close friend, you could rethink your friendship.

Diana: Yes, it's normal.

Sergi (Catalan FGI#1) expresses the same idea quite explicitly: *Creu. Si has vist que la persona no té capacitat d'empatitzar amb tu, 'apaga y vámonos'* ("Never again. If you see that that person can't empathise with you, that's the end of it").

4.4.6 EMPATHY IN SOCIETY

This was the first question that changed the perspective of empathy, from a personal, subjective analysis mainly based on the participants' first-hand experience to a more general interpretation in terms of societal values and standards. When asked about the role of empathy in society, the participants' answers varied and covered a wide range of perspectives.

The majority of results are divergent in the two languages groups. On the one hand, most of the answers in the Catalan interviews point to a negative conclusion and, on the other, most of the answers in the English interviews suggest a positive diagnosis. When

asked about the degree of empathy in their society, absolutely all the answers in all the interviews in the Catalan group are negative and there are no positive conclusions. As an illustration, the extract below shows what the participants in the first interview said right after being asked if empathy has the role it should have in our society:

(79) Catalan FGI#1

Laia / Jana/ Sergi: No
'No'

Jana: Queda molt per fer. Hi ha altres cultures que estan més avançades en aquest sentit. Actualment si no és per benefici propi, ningú actua.
'Much needs to be done. There are other cultures that are more advanced in this sense. Nowadays unless it is for their own benefit, nobody acts.'

Laia: De vegades tu no demanes ajuda i te la donen i penses 'aquest que voldrà de mi?'. De vegades tenim massa perjudicis inclús amb coses bones.
'Sometimes you do not ask for help but you get it and then you think 'what does this person want from me?'. We sometimes have too many prejudices even with good things.'
'((Manel nods in agreement))'

Sergi: No estem preparats perquè algú t'ajudi sense res a canvi.
'We are not prepared to have somebody helping you for nothing in return.'

The participants see this lack of genuine empathy as a culturally bound trait of our current society, an act that seems to be motivated by selfishness, although they admit that their initial adverse reaction or suspicion when somebody acts empathically may be due to preconceptions.

The opposite seems to happen in the English group. In spite of making some negative remarks, many participants believe that in general the degree of empathy is good. For example, the participants in the fifth group had the following discussion in which they distinguish between personal and cultural empathy, between what is felt and what is shown:

(80) English FGI#5

Cole: Not very good. I think at the end of the day we get a pretty bad rep.

Nora: I don't think it's that bad!

Cole: It is. In London especially it's really bad.

Zoe: I think culturally we get a bad rep.

Nora: I disagree, I think that if you look at it as a general thing but if you broke Londoners down into bad situations I think they'd have empathy. I think as individuals they would. Yeah, fair enough, we get on the tube or we don't talk to each other but that doesn't mean we are not empathetic people. Because I get on the London tube and …

Cole: Yeah, but if you are on the London tube and someone's crying next to you, [(.) how] do you feel?

Zoe: [I'd feel empathy.]

Nora: I do feel empathy.

Cole: Yeah, but how many people would actually show empathy to that person?

Nora: But that's because society has taught us to do stuff.

Cole: Yeah, exactly!

Nora: It does not mean you're not empathetic.

Cole: Yeah! I know but are you asking what's going on in your head? ((he asks the researcher whose reply is 'you tell me, the thing is that there's a difference between what you feel and what you show'.))

Zoe: Exactly, so you could feel really bad but you don't have to do a gesture to feel empathy. You might feel terrible for that person.

Cole: But I think everyone feels empathy. Well, most people feel empathy but [they don't show it.]

Nora: [I don't think everybody does but most people do]. Yeah, exactly, most people do therefore I think as a society yes, we are empathetic.

Mary: I think as a society we feel it but we show it less. I think other cultures show it more [(.)]

Susan: [Yes, we feel it but don't show it.]

Mary: Yes, they are more like ((moves both arms towards her chest like in an embrace))… more embracing.'

James: It's culturally though… because even England it's cultural... like we did university up north, in England, and culturally they are so much more [(.)]

Nora: [open]

James: overshowing of empathy than we are down here. Therefore I grew up in the south and when you're up north I was called rude because of just how I was brought up. There I was literally on the train, they'll have a chat with you ((addressing to Nora)) and, whereas in London [(.)]

Susan: [you were like 'why are you talking to me?']

A theme that emerged but was not developed in the two language groups is how social media seem to negatively affect empathy mainly due to the intrinsic shortcomings of this means of communication that can cause misunderstandings, as Isabel (Catalan FGI#2) indicates: *Amb les xarxes socials és difícil mostrar empatia. Sempre hi ha malentesos* ("With social media it is difficult to show empathy. There are always misunderstandings."), or because it is easier to forget there is somebody else at the other end of your computer, as Claire (English FGI#3) declares:

> I'd say (empathy is in) really bad (health). Like social media means that we all like, we can kind of sit behind the computer and just type whatever we're thinking and not think about how that actually affects that person. Like, you don't know, you could be the twentieth person to have said something really 'ugh' that's like hit someone that day. And we don't think about that because we just sit behind a phone or a computer and just type it.

4.4.7 EMPATHY IN HEALTHCARE

Directly addressed to the participants, all of them students of physiotherapy, the same question was asked but this time in connection with healthcare in order to see if their perceptions were any different from the ones mentioned so far when talking about society in general. In both language groups, most subjects agreed that empathy was fundamental in healthcare and they justified this by saying that when dealing with and treating people, you become more aware of its importance. They also compared their future professional field with other jobs that do not require a direct contact with people, although the stresses and strains of this profession together with the increased exposure to certain situations may have a negative impact on the quality and degree of empathy. For example, Ethan (English FGI#5) comments:

> In MSK [musculoskeletal] placements you see a lot of OA [osteoarthritic] knees, so if you've seen like ten OA knees a day, like after a few days you're just like you might not be as empathetic. You still do the same process and give the same treatment but by the end of the day you just, you're not really listening to that person's story anymore because it's the same thing and you're gonna do the same stuff.

In relation to their corresponding NHS systems, the idea of overburdened professionals with little time to do their job appears as one of the factors that hinder empathy in the two language groups. The short extract below shows Biel and Jordi's opinions about this:

(81) Catalan FGI#3

Biel: Amb les retallades la gent [el personal assistencial] va de cul i de vegades et parlen malament.

'Because of the cutbacks, these people [healthcare providers] are up to their eyeballs in work and sometimes they give you curt replies.'

((Salva and Jordi agree))

Jordi: Ells [el personal assistencial] no només van de cul sinó que també reben pressions des de dalt, tampoc reben empatia per dalt. Els metges no tenen empatia però és perquè ells tampoc la reben, els de dalt potser tampoc la reben i arriba un punt que...

'They [healthcare providers] are not only up to their eyeballs in work but they also withstand pressure from above, they do not get any empathy from those above. Doctors do not have empathy but it is because they do not receive any either, those above may not receive any either and it all get to a point when…'

In the English group, Mary (English FGI#5) says:

> I also think there's a kind of like a whole resources time constraint because I think now like you're almost like I'm not done in MSK out-patients but it's so like churning out, quick, quick, quick, you don't have the time to kind of like show empathy, compassion or action, like everyone is so stretched on the wards, you see them rushing round, like nurses and, you know?, patients are queuing but

they don't have the time to kind of … sit down and show compassion because they're like I've got to deal with this ((pointing to the back above her shoulder)).

As part of society itself, healthcare providers reflect the same diversity as we can find in society. Medical professionals are human beings and, as such, there are professionals of all kinds and patients of all kinds too, as some of the girls in FGI#3 discuss:

(82) English FGI#3

Gillian: I think, like, some people do, some people don't. Some, I'm not targeting nurses, but like, being on a hospital ward and stuff, some nurses are like all the time so bubbly and so lovely, and friendly and warm, and do empathise for people. And then there are some healthcare professionals and you're, like, 'why are you in this profession? You're the least caring person…

Claire: But, I don't know, I think there needs to be a balance in the health care professional. I think some .. like… depending … 'cos you've got such patients there are some that are gonna have someone that goes and kicks them up the backside, and it's like, 'Just get on with it' … and there are other people, you need to have that soft side.

Bridget: But people tend to focus on the bad things of the NHS, like these stories of like people in care homes being mistreated and stuff like that, but, like, I've only gone in for minor eye operations into hospital, but all the people I was with were really kind, and really empathised with me so … I think maybe it's probably better than we probably think.

Bella: Everyone's had a slightly different experience of it and ... it depends.

Claire: It might be down to luck who you got that day.

Bridget: It's a tough job, isn't it? I think it's probably hard to show it all the time, if you're feeling tired, and not great yourself. ((Bella nods her head in agreement))

Claire: I think people forget that we're all human as well, like you're not gonna always be having a great day and always be able to empathise with someone.

4.4.8 STUDY METHODOLOGY

At the very end of the focus group interviews, the participants were asked about the organisation and methodology of the study, whether they found something shocking or

something they thought they would have done differently. This was the question with the fewest contributions, maybe due to the fact that it was the last question and the participants were tired or maybe the participants did not really feel they had much to say in that regard.

Apart from a few comments relating to irrelevant aspects—for example Eric (English FGI#2) mentioned the fact that the IRI had been printed double-sided and that made him turn the page repeatedly, which he found not very practical—or aspects inherent in the data gathering instruments used—Salva (Catalan FGI#3) said that he found the IRI questions too general and repetitive or Bella (English FGI#3) pointed out that, since these were hypothetical situations, you had to imagine how you would react but you really did not know for sure—most of the comments express opposing views on the same topic. For instance, one of the participants in English FGI#3, Nicole, found that the situations did not provide much detail and this made the discussion part quite hard but, as a reply to this, Gillian remarked "but then… if you're with a friend, you're not going to say 'ok, just give me 10 minutes to think what to say'".

On a similar vein, in some cases the observer's paradox seems to be triggered by the presence of the researcher and/or the camera as Mònica and Clara (Catalan FGI#2) suggest when they say that they would have felt more comfortable without neither of them but, Albert, Cori and Adrià, in the same group, replied that they had completely forgotten about the camera. Another element that some participants speculated about regarding their interactions was the kind of relationship the role play partners had: whereas some thought that if they had known their partner better, the situations would be more realistic, other thought just the opposite.

The topics that the two language groups dealt with were also different as the summary in Appendix 7 shows. Because this, the same as the rest of questions, was an open question, the participants referred to those aspects they thought were worth mentioning without the researcher's guidance or prompts and no elaboration was offered or required. In fact, some groups did not make any comments about this and some participants said that everything seemed to be adequate.

4.5 RECAPITULATION

This chapter contains the results obtained by the two language groups through the different methodological instruments employed in the study. A quantitative method was used to obtain the results of the IRI; a mixed-method approach—i.e. a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods—was taken to get the results from the role plays; and a qualitative analysis was performed to get the results from the focus group interviews. Thanks to this combination of methods we have a comprehensive picture of what seems to go on in interactions where empathic responses are expected. There does not seem to be a unique, standard way of empathising as this is something that is jointly constructed by the participants, making of each interaction a singular and particular environment in which different elements are mobilised. The examples in the corpus intend to unveil the complexity of these interactions and how they relate to factors such as the participants' level of perspective taking or their perception of those situations. The interpretation and relevance of these results, as well as their implications and limitations, will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this chapter the findings presented in Chapter 4 are interpreted, explained and contextualised following its structure so that it is easier to refer back to the results further examined here. Therefore, the IRI results will be examined and discussed first, followed by the results obtained in the role plays, post-role play questionnaires and FGIs.

Apart from the IRI, the other three methods will sometimes have their results combined in order to better grasp, support or complement a certain idea or conclusion. That is, the results obtained from the different data collection methods sometimes cannot be taken independently from one another since they refer to the same or a closely related theme and are necessarily interrelated. Thus, by combining the comments and opinions expressed in the FGIs or the outcomes of the post-role play questionnaires with the results obtained in the role plays, more substantiated claims can be made.

5.1 INTERPERSONAL REACTIVITY INDEX (IRI)

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) measures what is called trait or dispositional empathy, i.e. empathy as a stable characteristic of our personality (see Section 2.2) and consists of four different scales. The perspective taking (PT) scale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) is used to measure the participants' cognitive ability to infer and interpret the point of view of others. The scores obtained by the participants in the study show that in the two language groups, males got higher scores than women, although the differences between them were not significant. This seems to contradict what the author of the scale (Davis, 1980) found when developing the instrument: on all four subscales males got significantly lower scores than females and, more specifically, in the case of the PT subscale women got 17.96 whereas men obtained 16.78, $F(1,1180) = 18.25$; $p < .001$.

This result—women getting higher scores than men—is consistently found in the majority of studies employing the IRI, for example, Sommerlad et al.'s (2020) study with a large sample of UK adults (n=30,033; mean age: 54.4 years) examined the levels of empathic concern and perspective taking according to some sociodemographic

variables and found similar mean scores in PT to those found by Davis (1980): 3.74 in women and 3.48 in men. Another study by Lucas-Molina et al. (2017) also report higher scores for females than males when administering the IRI to their two samples (n=2,499 university students; mean age: 21.06 years and n=1,438 adults; mean age: 40.01 years), although for the PT subscale the differences were non-significant. Chrysikou & Thompson's (2016) results are in line with this: in their study with 417 adults (age range: 18 to 70) women got higher scores than men in the four subscales. In their longitudinal study with a sample of 505 teenagers (from 13 to 16 years), Mestre et al. (2009) also found statistically significant differences in the PT scale with females getting higher values than males. They assessed the participants twice, the second evaluation being carried out one year after the first one, and found that the mean scores had increased with age for both sexes and the statistically significant differences persisted. In their adaptation of the IRI scale to Spanish, Pérez-Albéniz et al. (2003) used three samples: one of parents (n=601; mean age: 39 years), one of university students from two different Spanish universities (n=1,997; mean age: 21.44 years), and one of university students from a Basque university (n=515; mean age: 19.49 years). Their results show that females got significant higher scores in three scales (fantasy, empathic concern and personal distress). The results obtained in the PT scale also gave higher scores to women but these were only statistically significant in the third sample of 515 students.

Although all these references seem to suggest that there are in fact differences in terms of gender, which would in part reinforce the conventional and traditional notion that women are more empathic and sensitive than men, some studies reveal a different trend. For instance, Paloniemi et al. (2021) used the IRI as part of their study with dental and medical students (n= 198) and the only subscale yielding no significant higher mean scores in females than in males was the PT scale, with a mean value of 18.5 for females and 18.6 for males. Gilet et al. (2013) found no significant sex differences in perspective taking either when translating the IRI to French. The present study provides further evidence along this line, with men scoring higher than women in the PT scale without this difference reaching statistical significance. Sample size must obviously be taken into account as it affects statistical power. It must be underscored that the number of cases analysed in this study is quite small; with a larger sample, the reliability of the values obtained would increase.

Some authors have tried to explain why women usually get higher values in this kind of tests and they conclude that, in self-report questionnaires, women tend to rate themselves higher than men based on what is expected from them (Laurent & Hodges, 2009; Derntl et al., 2010; Tarampi et al., 2016). Gender stereotypes, with women believed to be more empathic and men less emotional, can therefore play a part in how self-report tests are responded to according to the assumption of typical male and female roles. Hodges et al. (2011) analysed what makes up this female advantage in empathy, more specifically in empathic accuracy (another name for PT), and they reduced it to motivation: women want to appear more empathic when performing tasks measuring empathic accuracy. Whether the results obtained in this study are due to the low level of this motivation in the female participants, to the participants' similar profiles or to any other factor is not possible to be determined here.

Another relevant aspect to be considered regarding the current study is the fact that only one of the four IRI subscales was employed, as this is the only one connected with interpersonal functioning. The other three scales—empathic concern, personal distress and fantasy (see Section 3.2.1)—were not included as they basically deal with features of empathy that were not pertinent for the current study. Getting a certain score in terms of PT does not necessarily mean that one is more or less empathic, since these two concepts, PT and empathy, are often seen as different competencies and refer to different aspects of empathy: cognitive and emotional (originating in and exemplifying the lack of uniformity in the definition of these terms). When discriminating the cognitive and emotional aspects of empathy, the former (associated with PT) seems to be more appropriate than the latter when performing certain tasks. In their study comparing PT and empathy in strategic, mixed-motive interactions—negotiation tasks whose goal can be reached by competing or by cooperating—Galinsky et al. (2008) found that PT gave better results than emotional empathy or, in other words, comprehending the other person's thoughts rather than emotions seemed to be more effective in helping individuals reach an agreement in this type of interactions. The same was analysed in competitive tasks (Gilin et al., 2013), and it was found that PT is more useful in interactions and tasks that involve competition, whereas emotional empathy seems to be more effective in tasks that require collaboration.

In another article published by the author of the IRI scale (Davis, 1983), the four subscales were related to measures of social competence/interpersonal functioning, self-esteem, emotionality, and sensitivity to others. The author's initial hypothesis expected PT to be related to better social functioning and also to higher self-esteem but not to emotionality and only in some cases to sensitivity to others. The first two relationships were confirmed but the other two gave mixed evidence depending on the scale of reference or the type of emotionality: it correlated positively with other-oriented sensitivity but negatively with self-oriented sensitivity. Davis concluded that PT seems to be one, but not the only, of several variables that influence social competence, a concept that results from the interplay of different cognitive, emotional or behavioural skills and capacities (Topping et al., 2000; Han & Kemple, 2006; Rose-Krasnor & Denham, 2009; Junge et al., 2020). Consequently, declaring someone as lacking social skills based on the results obtained in a single test would be quite daring. In fact, some studies have found that self-report questionnaires to assess cognitive empathy (i.e. perspective taking) may not be a predictor of empathic behaviour or ability (Murphy & Lilienfeld, 2019; Dang et al., 2020; Palix et al., 2021). In spite of these different views on the matter and considering the potential links of PT with interpersonal performance, it was decided to include the participants' scores for PT.

The results obtained in the current study make the two language groups (Catalan and English) and male and female participants quite similar in terms of PT, which means that we are dealing with two homogeneous groups. The fact that no significant differences were found makes the two groups comparable, discarding PT as the source of any potential differences when responding more or less empathically to troubles telling. In fact, when PT scores were correlated with the number of strategies each participant used, no correlation was found, which further supports the evidence that the participants' responses when dealing with another person's trouble are not conditioned by their level of PT.

5.2 ROLE PLAYS

The in-depth analysis of the role plays provides evidence on the type of strategies employed by the EP and their frequency of use, the most commonly used strengthening and mitigating elements as well as the interactional sequence of those conversations.

All these help to create a general picture of the interactional resources that are activated when discussing troubles that are expected to be responded to in an empathic way. The results of this part of the study are examined taking into account the strategies found and the conversational sequence of the interactions. The strategies are organised following the classification shown in Figure 5 (Section 4.2.1).

5.2.1 STRATEGIES

Identifying the strategies employed by the participants in the role plays helps to determine what respondents verbally focus on when engaged in troubles telling that requires responding empathically, but this is just part of the picture. Section 4.2.2 provides quantitative data presenting these strategies in terms of parameters such as frequency of use, and other aspects such as mean length of conversations, mean EP contribution, etc. A series of variables such as sex of ER, sex of EP, type of relationship between participants or type of situation were also examined and the results show that they are not significant when it comes to the use of these strategies, at least in the context of this study. Hence, we can discard them as factors influencing EP's responses. This quantitative approach to responses given by the EP in troubles telling provides a wider perspective when combined with the commonly used qualitative methodology (Heritage, 2011; Couper-Kuhlen, 2012; Kupetz, 2014), and thus the present study aims to advance the understanding of the topic with new data and the combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The numerous strategies identified (Section 4.2.1) show the wide variety of verbal forms speakers can employ to convey empathy, which gives us an idea of the multiple combinations to be found and the complexity of the empathic process. Empathy is clearly not elicited or expressed by means of just one strategy but is rather expressed in varied ways and through different resources, both verbal and non-verbal. Verbal communication, though, appears to be more important for empathic accuracy—one's ability to infer another person's thoughts and emotions—than non-verbal communication (Gesn & Ickes, 1999; Hall & Schmid Mast, 2007; Zaki et al., 2009; Kraus, 2017).

5.2.1.1 PRIMAL RESPONSES

The analysis shows that all the strategies presented in Section 4.2.1 are used in both languages except expletives/vulgar expressions of which only examples in the Catalan corpus were found. In most cases, they are stand-alone exclamatory responses but they can also be used to qualify somebody. For instance, when Salva tells Biel that his professor asked him to be more careful with his personal hygiene and Biel finds out that she did it in front of other people, he reacts expressively conveying his emotion:

(83) Pair 7, hygiene (professional) – CAT

01	Biel:	però ho ha dit davant de tots? (.) o què?
		'but did she tell you in front of everybody? (.) or what?'
02	Salva:	sí
		'yes'
03	Biel:	fuà:: tio:: (1) una mica cabrona no? la: (.) la profe (.) tio
		'ua::h ma::n (.) a bit of a bitch isn't she? the: (.) the prof (.) man'
04	Salva:	una mica
		'a bit'

Biel's highly expressive and evaluative reaction (line 03) is made up of a series of mechanisms: a primary sound object, *fuà* (translated as "ua::h"), a vocative, *tio* (translated as "man") and an expressive, *cabrona* (translated as "bitch"), encoding the speaker's feelings towards the situation described and validating the ER's stance. With the use of *cabrona*, he relies on the expressive, illocutionary force of the word (Payrató, 1996; Blakemore, 2011; Wharton, 2016), thus conveying his understanding of the implications of the teacher's action, and automatically agrees with Salva's negative stance towards the situation. Therefore, rather than causing offence, the slur bonds both interactants and places them on the same side. Another implication arises from his reaction: the teacher's action is socially questionable. Delicate matters like this are expected to be discussed privately, making her behavior unacceptable since it challenges the established social and cultural values and norms.

The use of expletives/vulgar expressions in this study seems to suggest that swear words and vulgar language are more common in everyday situations in Catalan than in English.

Although, as shown in the corpus, all the examples found were in the Catalan group, this does not mean that this sort of expressions are not used in English as the extensive body of literature describes (Mateo & Yus, 2013; Beers Fägersten & Stapleton, 2017; Stapleton, 2018, 2020; Padilla Cruz, 2019; Downing & Martinez Caro, 2019; Drummond, 2020).

Primary and secondary sound objects, together with expletives/vulgar expressions—when used as exclamatory responses—are all immediate, spontaneous, highly emotional reactions. While the English participants make extensive use *of primary sound objects,* ranking second on the list of most common strategies, and secondary sound objects, the Catalan subjects use a combination of these two strategies plus expletives/vulgar expressions. So when many of the interactants in English react with for example "oh, no!" to the trouble presented, in Catalan the reaction is often expressed with an expletive such as *osti!* ("damn!"). In all these cases, this strategy is not related to impoliteness, as it is often the case in many other contexts, but is rather used as a way of expressing solidarity with the partner. This is quite logical considering that all the situations describe problems affecting the ER without responsibility on the part of the EP, instead of, for example, conflicts between the two.

This divergent use of expletives/vulgar expressions has been examined (Stapleton, 2010, 2020; Dynel, 2012; Christie, 2013), placing them along a continuum ranging from impoliteness to politeness, and their multiple functions seem to be directly dependent on the specific context where they are produced and the attitudes of the interactants (Bednarek, 2019). The expletives/vulgar expressions found in the corpus all belong to the category of "politeness", as their basic function is not to offend anyone but to respond to a situation—e.g. *osti* ("damn"); *joder*, (from Spanish, "fuck")—and are common in colloquial Catalan (Payrató, 1996; Wesch, 2000; Matamala, 2008). Their function in all cases is to align and affiliate with the ER and "they are used to convey emotion directly rather than merely report it" (Wharton, 2015, p.21).

Thus, the current study provides evidence of one of these possible functions (solidarity) performed in a given context and by a specific group of young speakers. Although the conversations analysed were produced in a controlled setting, with all the implicit drawbacks, it would seem that the use of expletives/vulgar language is more tolerated

and perceived as less inappropriate in Catalan than in English. Finding these expressions would be expected in this kind of situations in natural, real-life contexts in both languages. The low incidence (5.41%) in the Catalan group or the null incidence in the English group in this corpus are probably due to the constraints of the method employed and the setting. Although the participants in the study were asked to try to act and speak normally, it seems that for some of them this posed a bit of a challenge as Sergi (Catalan FGI#1) replied when asked about what they were thinking about while doing the role plays: *pensant en com fer-ho lo més natural possible però amb la limitació de parlar una mica correcte, no amb barbarismes, perquè quan parlo amb un amic, parlo més brusc, més col·loquial* ("thinking how to do it as naturally as possible but with the limitation of speaking a bit correctly, not using loanwords, because when I talk to a friend, I do it more brusquely, more colloquially"), which is likely to affect not only the frequent use of loanwords and non-standard forms in Catalan but also the common use of swear words. In the English groups, as a reply to the same question, Geena (English FGI#2) said: "I was trying to say the right thing." In spite of the fact that her comment does not specifically refer to expletives, it is logical to think that this was, at least in part, the case as one of the first things that are normally 'controlled' when we are careful about our language is the use of vulgar language, particularly swear words.

5.2.1.2 INFORMATIVE REQUESTS

The most commonly used strategy in both language groups is additional information about the event with a similar percentage of use: 18.36% in Catalan and 18.04% in English.[3] In both languages, then, asking questions about what is affecting the ER is the main type of response to the telling of a trouble. Authors such as Heritage (2011), Couper-Kuhlen (2012) or Kupetz (2014) also found these questions being used in responses to troubles telling. Couper-Kuhlen (2012) calls them *follow-up questions* and classifies them as non-affiliative and Heritage (2011), who labels them *ancillary questions*, considers them to be "at the least empathic end of the spectrum" (p. 7), since they do not engage in the telling affiliatively and can even make the ER move away from their intended interactional course. In the examples these authors provide, this lack of

[3] For a reference, see Table 9 section 4.2.2, which shows the percentage of use of all the strategies in the two languages.

or poor affiliation is shown but, true as this is, and understanding that these questions are not empathic per se, they do express interest in the ER's narrative and contribute to the creation of supportive, empathic interactions, as Kupetz (2014) suggests.

In the following extract Nancy tells Geena about a problem with one of her patients. The conversations starts like this:

(84) Pair 6, complaint (professional) – ENG

01	Nancy:	so: (1.4) this morning I met (.) this patient\ (.) and I thought I'd done
02		really well\ (0.5) but they've been and complained (0.6) to my tutor (.)
03		saying that (0.5) apparently I wasn't very good and my skills are really
04		poor\ (.) .hhh [(.)] and I don't (.) really know what to do about it to be
05	Geena:	[((mm hm))]
06	Nancy:	honest (.) like
07		(1)
08	Geena:	so (.) did you (.) were you: (.) what (.) what sort of thing
09		were you (.) doing with the patient? (.) were you just? wer- did you
10		follow the treatment or something? (.) or?
11		(0.6)
12	Nancy:	e:m (.) so (.) it was just (0.7) during a training session (.) see? (.) I was
13		doing some treatments (.) and they just felt like I (.) I wasn't very good\
14		(.) I suppose
15	Geena:	((pulls extremes of mouth down)) did you get on alright with him? (.)
16		were you quite sort of (.) chatty? (.) and (.) did they kind of chat back
17		to you? (.) or?
18		(1.4)
19	Nancy:	yeah/ (.) I think so\ (.) yeah (.) I didn't (.) I (.) didn't get a bad vibe from
20		the patient [(.)] so: (.)
21	Geena:	[no] ((nods head)) e:m (.) and you're (.) just quite
22		worried about it (.) have you spoken to any of the (.) clinical educators
23		or anything like that? (.) or?
24	Nancy:	e:m (.) well- obviously I've (.) the tutor has spoken to me [(.) just let me
25	Geena:	[((nods

26	Nancy:	know that this is what the patient said] [(.)] but I haven't really (.)
27	Geena:	[yeah]
28	Nancy:	spoken about it yet (.) I kind of (0.5) wanted to think about it and (0.5)
29		before I picture

Geena makes extensive use of this strategy (lines 08-10, 15-17, 21-23) and in so doing she expresses interest in the trouble itself, gets a more exact, more detailed idea of the situation so that it can be properly assessed to decide if her stance matches Nancy's. At the same time, each of these questions allows her to align with Nancy and, because a reply is expected, she passes the conversational ball to her, helping the interaction to unfold. Consequently, although not empathic in themselves, these questions are essentially prosocial (Kupetz, 2014) and, as the example illustrates, they do not necessarily imply moving away from the topic or the intended interactional course. They constitute a basic move in the construction of empathy.

Another element that, according to the literature, points to these as non-affiliative responses are the delays in-between turns. Unlike preferred responses, dispreferred ones move away from the cooperative principle ruling interactions and are frequently marked (Levinson, 1983; Pomerantz & Heritage, 2013), for example by being delayed in comparison to preferred responses (Schegloff, 2007; Couper-Kuhlen, 2012; Kendrick & Torreira, 2015; Bögels et al., 2015, 2020). The long pauses before Geena's questions about the trouble would consequently suggest that what is to come is a dispreferred response. Nevertheless, the high frequency of use of questions about the event under discussion seems to point in a different direction: if this is what most of the participants in both language groups do when replying to the telling of a problem; maybe it is because this kind of response is somehow expected—consequently, preferred—and is not perceived to compromise the cooperative principle. If the EP has to decide whether or not to affiliate with the ER, a description of the trouble that is sufficiently detailed for the EP is needed in order to be able to do so and this seems to be mainly achieved through these questions. This would therefore seem to be consistent with studies that account for the normalised use of these responses like Wu's (2021). The author (Wu, 2021) states different reasons for the use of what are considered dispreferred responses—lack of knowledge, disalignment with previous turn(s), and showing

modesty— which would not necessarily alter the conversational flow or compromise the cooperative principle. In all the examples found in the corpus, most of these questions happen at the beginning of the elaboration part of the interaction and would account for this "lack of knowledge", leading to a negotiated process necessary to adjust the epistemic imbalance between the participants.

Informative requests also include questions that focus on the ER's experience of the trouble (additional information about the teller). In comparison to additional information about the event, their percentage of use in the corpus is quite reduced but similar in the two language groups (3.32% in Catalan vs. 3.48% in English). Whether this is because this type of questions may be perceived as an invasion of the other person's privacy or because their use may be restricted to more intimate contexts with emotionally close interactants is something that is difficult to determine in this study. Ng (1995) compared the strategies employed by fake interviewers when asking either personal or neutral questions in role-played job interviews and one of the conclusions reached was that, when asking personal questions, interviewers made use of more mitigating elements, such as hedges or tag questions, than when asking neutral questions. It seems then that we are aware of the "risk" involved in asking questions of this kind, as they may be perceived as sensitive or uncomfortable by the other person and face-saving mechanisms like mitigators are activated.

This dichotomy between focusing on the problem or on the feelings and emotions of the ER goes hand in hand with the type of coping or support offered. In order to reduce, limit or prevent the distress caused by an unpleasant or delicate situation, some coping strategies are needed. Broadly speaking, these strategies can be either problem-focused or emotion-focused, i.e. those directed at the (cause of the) problem or those directed at the emotional reactions caused by or associated with the problem. Both types are clearly distinguished but also interrelated since if the (cause of the) problem is effectively treated, this helps the emotional charge to dissipate and, the other way round, if the negative emotions aroused by the problem are effectively treated, the problem can be appraised in a new light (Carver, 2013).

Traditionally, research has produced evidence demonstrating that, in most cases, emotion-focused tends to be less effective than problem-focused coping (Chang et al.,

2007; Baker & Berenbaum, 2007, 2011; Ben-Zur, 2009; Carlo et al., 2012; Völlink et al., 2013; Slater et al., 2013; Tsaur et al., 2016; Shermeyer et al., 2019), which would explain its more limited use in the current study. Contrary to what may be predicted, emotion-focused coping does not always involve directly dealing with the emotional state of the person in trouble: distraction or avoidance, for example, are also included, which would further explain why this is seen as less effective than problem-focused coping. In their study on coping and prosocial and aggressive behaviour, Carlo et al (2012) found that emotion-focused coping was associated with lower levels of empathy and prosocial behaviour, and higher levels of emotional instability and aggression, whereas problem-focused coping yielded the opposite results, i.e. it was related to higher levels of empathy and prosocial behaviour, and lower levels of emotional instability and aggression.

The results in this study are therefore consistent with previous research. Problem-focused support in the form of questions or statements about the event are much more often used than emotion-focused support in the form of questions or statements about the ER's emotional or psychological state in both language groups.

5.2.1.3 EVALUATIVE OBSERVATIONS

The strategies under evaluative observations allow participants to assess a given situation from different perspectives—the cause (diagnoses), the consequences or results (prognoses) and the solution (remedies)—and thus help to reshape the ER's interpretation and response to it, in short, to appraise the situation. Appraisal theories in psychology claim that appraisal is a subjective relational, meaning-based and evaluative process (Lazarus, 2001; Smith & Kirby, 2001; Moors et al., 2013). It is a continuously ongoing mechanism whose goal is to prevent or reduce any potential negative effects or to maintain the positive ones of a given circumstance, and it can occur consciously or subconsciously. Through the activation of appraisal detectors, one's emotional state can be shaped. These detectors can be triggered by means of reasoning—a constructive and mainly verbal process—which enables the reanalysis and reappraisal of the circumstance or situation under scrutiny, often leading to a different stance and emotional response to it (Ellsworth, 2013).

Reappraising a given situation is one of the mechanisms of social support and an emotion regulation strategy. By helping the other person to redefine or reinterpret the possible (usually negative) effects arising from that situation, its importance can be reduced and consequently the emotional distress initially caused by the first impression too (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Webb et al. 2012; Troy et al., 2018; Megías-Robles et al., 2019; Salimzadeh et al., 2020). This idea of empathy helping in the reappraisal of a given situation is in fact put forward by some of the participants in one of the focus groups in a more intuitive way when discussing how they felt when not receiving the empathy they expected. This short extract (English FGI#5) reproduces the part of the conversation where the idea was produced:

(85) English FGI#5

James: I think I'd prefer, I'd have more respect for them [the EP] if I was in the wrong and they knew I was in the wrong and they showed me the way. I'd have more respect for them than if they agreed with me.

Nora: Even if I was pissed for a couple of days.

Cole: It's only your real friends who would actually be like 'you're overreacting, mate. Get a grip' and sometimes you need that.

A similar comment in made by one of the participants in the Catalan group (Catalan FGI#4) when he replies to some of his partners in the FGI who claimed that if you do not receive empathy, you feel disappointed. He reacted saying *Depèn, potser no t'ho esperaves però té raó o a lo millor, no. Depèn del que diguis i del que contestis* ("It depends, maybe you did not expect it [the lack of empathy] but they are right or maybe not. It depends on what you say and what you reply."). Therefore, the idea that sometimes having one's appreciations challenged may lead to positive outcomes emerges in the two groups and seems to be valued equally. The contrast between affiliation and the benefits of appraisal are clear. Although having somebody not affiliating with you could be perceived as annoying or disappointing, the fact that your stance is challenged, and even proven wrong, may be perceived (even if that occurs at a later stage), as something positive, stressing the importance of reappraisal over affiliation.

Differing views are found in relation to the appraisal process involving the ER and the EP. In his dissertation, Wondra (2017) proposes an appraisal theory of empathy. He holds that the same appraisal process can lead to different emotional states of which empathy is just one possible outcome. These different outcomes are basically the result of what you appraise—a situation that affects you or a situation that affects somebody else—and how you appraise it—affiliating or disaffiliating with the other person. Empathy occurs when a given circumstance or situation is appraised in the same way by the ER and the EP and thus matching emotions are produced. This view is challenged by authors such as Brunsteins (2018), who claim that for empathy to occur the ER and EP's emotions do not necessarily have to coincide.

In any case, reappraisal seems to be key for an interaction to be considered supportive, since it leads to emotional changes. How this reappraisal is achieved in the context of interpersonal interactions is obviously connected with the communicative tools employed. For example, Burleson's studies on supportive communication focused on the characteristics of effective messages in terms of reappraisal and he found that messages could be classified based on their level of "person centredness", which he defined as "the extent to which messages explicitly acknowledge, elaborate, legitimize, and contextualize the distressed other's feelings and perspective (Burleson, 1994)" (Burleson, 2008, p.208). According to this, messages can be classified as low, moderately and highly person-centred depending on how little or how much they stick to the aforementioned characteristics. According to the author, the messages found to be highly person-centred are considered more effective and helpful than the other two types in most situations. It is basically the messages that have an impact on the receiver's psychological and emotional state, i.e. those that lead to reappraisal, the ones that are most effective. In order to explain how these messages affect the receiver's thoughts and feelings, Burleson developed the dual-process theory (Burleson, 2009, 2010), which identifies three elements affecting the receiver's perception of these supportive messages: the content of the message, the context in which support is given, and the amount of scrutiny that the messages receive.

The strategies in this category are more commonly used in Catalan (34.79%) than in English (20.69%). In Catalan the three strategies—diagnoses, prognoses, and remedies—are found quite at the top of the frequency list, ranking third (11.89%), fifth

(6.12%) and second (16.78%) respectively, whereas their use in the English group drops to the seventh (5.79%), eighth (5.30%) and fourth (9.60%) positions respectively. The frequency use of prognoses is quite similar in both languages but the other two strategies show a big difference.

Remedies

Apart from additional information about the event, the other top strategy shared by both language groups is remedies—ranking second in Catalan and fourth in English, with a frequency of use of 16.78% in Catalan and 9.60% in English. Since in all cases a trouble is being dealt with, it seems that some kind of solution must be proposed and this is what this strategy does. Again, the same as additional information about the event, or any other strategy for that matter, remedies are not empathic strategies in themselves but do play an important part in empathic interactions in the two languages. Even though remedies rank high on the frequency list in both language groups, the difference in percentage of use of this strategy in the two language groups (16.78% in Catalan and 9.60% in English) points to two alternative ways of approaching the telling of a trouble. The first one is represented by the Catalan group, in which offering a possible solution to the problem is central; the second one is represented by the English group, in which coming up with a solution does not seem to be the first priority. In the latter case, other strategies seem to be prioritised: those asking for more information about the trouble at hand (additional information about the event) and those helping the EP to appreciate the importance of the event and imagine themselves in that situation (primary sound objects and observer responses).

The primary goal of remedies is to provide a possible way out of the situation or help the ER to cope better with it, in short, support them. This connection between empathising with somebody and helping them is explicitly stated by some of the participants in the FGIs of both groups. This assistance can be practical or emotional but it usually involves some kind of solution or approach to the trouble that is expected to benefit the other person. As Jana (Catalan FGI#1) said when defining what empathy was for her:

> Empatia és que a tu t'expliquin una cosa i que tu puguis rebre la informació i poder-li dir alguna cosa que li serveixi, o sigui, que tu puguis processar-ho com

una cosa que també et podria passar a tu i veure què faries tu en aquell moment per poder-lo ajudar.

'Empathy is that somebody tells you something and that you can get the information and say something useful for them, that is, that you can process it as something that could also happen to you and see what you would do then to help them.'

In the English group, the same idea emerged, as shown in this short extract with Diana and Oscar (English FGI#1) responding to the question about what situations call for empathy:

(86) English FGI#1

Diana: Every situation calls for empathy. Even if you hate someone and they need your help, you still have to be there. It's the human way.

Oscar: It's a natural instinct. No matter how you feel about something, you're always gonna sort of [(.)

Diana: [want to help.

The literature confirms that there exists a relationship between empathy and prosocial behaviour, which involves helping the other person by word or action out of no obligation (Vreeke & Van der Mark, 2003; Eisenberg, 2003, 2006, 2010; Hoffman, 2008; Eisenberg et al., 2010; Telle & Pfister, 2012; Decety et al., 2016; Batson, 2018). What seems to lie behind this behaviour is quite diverse and complex, as different elements play a part in it, e.g. who this prosocial behaviour is directed to, an in-group or an out-group member (see Eisenberg & Spinrad (2014) for a review). Pavey et al. (2012) carried out three studies to examine if different types of empathy—state, trait and experimentally induced (see Section 2.2 for the first two)—were related to helping behaviour and they concluded that this behaviour occurs due to internal interests and values (autonomous motivation) but not as a result of some kind of external pressure (controlled motivation).

In a study on values and helping behaviour in four different cultures, Daniel et al. (2015) concluded that self-transcendence predicted helping behaviour whereas self-

enhancement did not. Self-transcendence—concern for the welfare of the other person—and self-enhancement—promoting self-interest—are two of the four higher-order dimensions proposed by Schwartz (1992, 2010) containing what originally were 10 universal values, which were later expanded to 19 (Schwartz et al., 2012), and that are found in all societies. These values are concepts or beliefs that shape and direct our assessment of situations and behaviours; they are connected with affect and related and organised on a circular motivational continuum:

> All intentional behavior has positive implications for expressing, upholding, or attaining some values but negative implications for values across the structural circle [this circular motivational continuum] in opposing positions. Trying to understand the value bases of prosocial behavior by considering only values that might foster it overlooks the equally important contribution of the values that oppose such behavior. (Schwartz, 2010, p. 226)

These values are activated if there is a need, if this need can be addressed and the person considers they can help in this regard, and finally if the person feels responsibility to get involved. Prosocial behaviour therefore activates self-transcendence values but, at the same time, any prosocial act is assessed taking account of its potential costs and benefits, which is what finally tips the balance and a decision whether to take action or not is taken. Schwartz' theory of values is just one approach to explain the mechanisms of prosocial behaviour but it is not the only one. Whether or not these are the causes underlying the verbal choices that the participants in the interactions in this corpus took or not is out of the scope of this study. What is clear, though, is that the variables influencing these choices are numerous.

In the corpus we can find different kinds of remedies: most of the times they involve a practical solution to the trouble while in just a few cases they offer emotional support; in any case, though, they both intend to improve the welfare of the other person. The same as informative requests, these two types of remedies are connected with problem-focused and emotion-focused coping and again most remedies are associated with the former in the two languages, supporting the conclusion that in both groups problem-focused coping tends to be perceived as more effective than emotion-focused coping. In spite of this, examples of the two types of help have been found in both groups, which

points to the similarity between them. The fact that the dyads in the role plays were made up of people with similar demographic and educational profiles, i.e. in-group members, and the helping behaviour did not have any kind of personal or material cost for the EP seems to indicate that the provision of help could be associated with the universal values included in Schwartz's theory, which would explain why this strategy is used by members of both cultures in the study.

Remedies are often presented as pieces of advice. Advice seeking is in fact also mentioned by some of the participants as the reason why they try to get empathy. For example, to the question 'how do you fish for empathy?' Cathy (English FGI#2) replies "I usually get some people because they're kind of like my best trusted friends, the ones I know are gonna give me the most honest advice as well." In the Catalan corpus Cèlia (Catalan FGI#4), when asked about the situations that call for empathy, responded:

> A la que vius en societat mai pots estar pensant només en tu, sempre has de pensar en els altres i sempre et trobaràs situacions en què els altres necessitin el teu ajut, el teu punt de vista, que estiguis amb ells i sempre requereix aquest punt d'empatia, mínima encara que sigui, però sempre hi ha aquest punt.
>
> 'When you live in a society you cannot consider only yourself, you must always consider other people and you will always find yourself in situations where other people need your help, your point of view, your company and this always requires a certain amount of empathy, minimal if you like, but always some.'

Consequently, it seems logical that if advice is expected, it is often provided as a kind of solution to the trouble in question, which would explain why this strategy, remedies, is perceived as almost unavoidable and ranks high in troubles talk in both languages. Remedies, however, are not always welcome as they sometimes may be considered a kind of meddling. This idea was expressed by one of the Catalan participants in the FGIs, Jordi (Catalan FGI#3), when responding to the question about what they found inappropriate when receiving empathy and he said:

> Quan l'altre et diu 'hauries de fer això', es creua una barrera que no hauríem de creuar perquè t'estàs ficant en un lloc que no coneixes. És una cosa que em

molesta tot i que jo ho he fet també algunes vegades. És comprensible però ho hauríem de canviar tots una mica.

'When the other person [the EP] tells you 'you should do this', they are pushing some limits that shouldn't be pushed because you are getting into an unknown place. This is something that really upsets me even though I have sometimes done it myself. It's understandable but we should all change that a bit.'

A few more participants (6) in the English group found it inappropriate that people who are not that close try to give you life counselling. This would obviously go against the pertinence of giving advice and suggests that advice or, in other words, remedies are not always well-accepted. Jefferson & Lee (1981) found that when advice is given very early in the interaction dealing with a trouble, instead of occurring in the work-up stage where the topic has already been more elaborated, it may be resisted and lead to dispute. However, resisting or rejecting advice also depends on whether the recipient feels that their competence is somehow threatened and they are perceived as lacking knowledge, aptitudes or even morals, pushing this into the limits of judgment (Shaw & Hepburn, 2013), and it undoubtedly depends on the content, perceived face threat, and advisor qualities (MacGeorge et al., 2016c; Guntzviller et al., 2020b).

Other studies show that it is the characteristics of the message—e.g. the message's content, facework, efficacy, feasibility, consequences—that make it acceptable or not by the recipient (Feng & Burleson, 2008; Feng & MacGeorge, 2010; MacGeorge et al., 2016a, 2016b; Jang & Feng, 2018). Guntzviller et al. (2020a) examined how the advisor's interaction goals, i.e. desired end states, play a part in the production of their messages. Thus, if the advisor's end goal is, for example, to elicit the recipient's attitude and state of mind, they will focus on the recipient's feelings and perception of the problem and will encourage the recipient to elaborate on that. The authors concluded that when the advisor's primary goal was problem-solving and rated as high intensity—i.e. the degree of importance attached to the goal—both the advisor and the recipient found the advisor's behaviour during the interaction more helpful and less harmful. Their study took the integrated model of advice giving (IMA) goals as a reference. According to IMA, developed by Feng (2009, 2014), two steps are involved before giving advice: emotional support and problem inquiry and analysis. If these steps occur in the interaction, then

the advice provided is perceived as better than if it is provided without the previous interactional moves. Assuming that the first strategy found in our results (additional information about the event) is related to the second step proposed in Feng's model (2009, 2014), which ideally prepares the ground to make any potential remedy—usually in the form of advice—more acceptable for the recipient, it is no surprise that remedies are also one of the most commonly used strategies found in the corpus. The model would also account for the fact that advice giving could be considered inappropriate by a few of the participants in the two groups since for advice to be accepted, different interactional criteria have to be met.

Diagnoses and prognoses

Diagnoses rank third (11.89%) in the Catalan group but seventh (5.79%) in the English one. The frequency of use of this strategy in Catalan doubles that of the English group, which would suggest a considerable difference between the two groups. The same as the first strategy (additional information about the event), spotting the cause or origin of the problem seems to help in the assessment of the trouble at hand. This is one of the strategies that Jefferson (1988) found in the work-up phase of troubles talk, which is where the topic is prepared to be dropped or closed. Diagnoses are a way of reformulating the trouble, of seeing it from a different perspective, since the focus is not on the trouble itself but on its causes or antecedents. In this respect, prognoses are similar to diagnoses, since they provide another perspective of the trouble but this time from the likelihood of a future outcome. They both stretch the limits of the trouble projecting them into the past and into the future. Therefore, both diagnoses and prognoses allow further elaboration and assessment of the trouble, complementing informative requests and leading to full understanding of the problematic situation. Both strategies are more commonly employed by the Catalan participants than the English ones. It seems that the English participants make use of other strategies such as *observer responses* (ranking 3rd on the list with 11.26% of use) to grasp the particulars of the trouble.

5.2.1.4 REASSURING COMMENTS

Generally speaking, the strategies in this category—optimistic projections, invoking the status quo, making light of the problem, expressions of praise, and expressions of

encouragement—are altogether slightly more used in Catalan than in English with a minimal difference regarding frequency (22.02% vs 20.18% respectively). In percentage terms, most of the strategies in this category present a low frequency of use (<5%) except invoking the status quo (11.71%) in the Catalan group and making light of the problem (7.78%) and optimistic projections (6.62%) in the English one, pointing to two slightly different ways of reassuring the other person. On the one hand, the Catalan participants seem to rely more on invoking the status quo, a strategy that implies an attitude of (resigned) acceptance: this is the way things are and there is not much one can do. On the other hand, the English participants make more use of more optimistic strategies: seeing the trouble in a less serious light and with the expectation of positive outcomes.

According to Jefferson (1988) these three strategies—invoking the status quo, making light of the problem, and optimistic projections—are all used in order to either prepare the transition to a new topic or initiate the closing of the troubles talk and, indeed, this is where they are mostly found in the corpus. Apart from frequently signalling a specific interactional moment—the end of topic elaboration—the strategies in reassuring comments aim to "secure bivalent equilibrium (and ultimately affiliation) among parties" (Stivers & Timmermans, 2017, p. 3). By offering a positive side to the adversity naturally associated with the trouble, the interactants' stance can converge to a point where the negative aspects are counterbalanced by the positive ones, leading to a potential change in stance and to affiliation. Reaching this equilibrium does not deny the negative nature of the trouble, it does not change its valence, but it provides a contrasting view on it. For example, when Cori tells Anna that she finally did not get the grant to study abroad, after a brief elaboration of the topic, the conversation is closed in the following way:

(87) Pair 4, grant (academic) – CAT

01	Cori:	és que no:: entrava dintre el meu ca:p (.) que això no:: (.) que em que em
		'it's that I couldn't get my mind around (.) it (.) that I've had'
02		deneguessin la sol·licitud\
		'my application turned down\'
03		(0.5)

04 Anna: °cla:r (1.2) bueno°
‘°yea:h (1.2) well°’

05 Cori: clar\ (.) i ara:\ (0.8) ((raises eyebrows)) quedar-me aquí saps? (.) però
‘yeah\ (.) and no:w\ (0.8) ((raises eyebrows)) staying here you know? (.) but’

06 saps allò de: (.) °ja m’havia fet les expectatives°
‘you know all tha:t (.) °I had already built up expectations°’

07 Anna: bueno (.) pues (.) igua:l l’any que ve: o::
‘well (.) then (.) maybe: next year o::r’

08 (1.3)

09 Cori: sí ja ((tilts head to the side and moves it slightly with resignation)) (.) potser sí
‘yeah sure ((tilts head to the side and moves it slightly with resignation)) (.) maybe’

10 (.) suposo que: (1.2) ((clicks tongue)) sempre s’ha de busca:r (.) ((moves hands
‘(.) I guess tha:t (1.2) ((clicks tongue)) one must always fi:nd (.)((moves hands’

11 in sync on both sides at chest level)) la part positiva però:
‘in sync on both sides at chest level)) the positive side bu:t’

12 Anna: bueno [(.) igual] és que aquí et sortirà alguna feina ara i:: (0.6) per això:
‘well [(.) maybe] you will find a job here now a::nd (0.6)’
((moves hands a bit forward and then rests them on the lap again))

13 Cori: [potser ( )] segurament no era el meu moment no:?
‘[potser ( )] it probably was not my moment ri:ght?’

14 Anna: claro\ (.) potser algo (.) et ve algo millor ara ((lowers corners of mouth))
‘sure\ (.) maybe something (.) something better will come now ((lowers corners of mouth))’

15 (1.2)

16 Cori: ((tilts head and moves it slightly)) sí home sí (.) així no deixo la família\ i:

‘((tilts head and moves it slightly)) yeah sure (.) so I don’t leave my family\ a:nd’

17 (.) tot el que tinc aquí\ (0.8) algo positiu hi ha (.) en tot això ((smiles))
‘(.) everything I’ve got here\(0.8) there’s something positive (.) in this ((smiles))’

18 Anna: sí::
‘yea::h’

Anna, the EP, clearly decides not to continue elaborating on the topic and, after a short pause, initiates the closing (line 04) with an agreement token followed by quite a long pause and then *bueno* (“well”), which is the most common lexical element signalling topic or conversational closure found in the Catalan corpus (see 5.2.2.2). Because Cori returns to the topic voicing her disappointment over the fact that she will now have to stay, Anna makes the first of several optimistic projections (line 07), opening the door to getting the grant next year, which Cori accepts a bit reluctantly with a disclaimer (see Section 2.4.2): she knows this is a possibility and she knows that she should be more optimistic but she cannot really manage it. With the use of *però* (“but”, line 11) the acceptance of Anna’s optimistic projection is not complete and she implicitly reiterates that she is not happy with her situation. Anna tries again on line 12 and now offers another favourable interpretation of the possible consequences of staying—maybe if Cori stays, she can get a job—her second chance to cheer Cori up, which she now accepts and reinforces with a suggestive question, pressing for a specific answer which Anna willingly provides (line 14), together with the third optimistic projection, and Cori accepts, bringing the conversation to an end. The two interactants conduct a negotiation that does not conclude until the optimistic projection is accepted and bivalent equilibrium is achieved, resulting in the necessary affiliation that allows them to close the conversation.

In the same situation involving an English pair, a similar closing is found. This time it is Rosie who did not get the grant and Eric who acts as the EP. Their conversation ends like this:

(88) Pair 4, grant (academic) – ENG

01	Rosie:	so I just can't go on with it (.) but ((lifts left shoulder)) (1.3) it is what it i:s ((laughs and moves trunk forward))
02	Eric:	((laughs a little)) °o:h (.) d(h)on't s(h)ay that(h)/° ((puts both hands on
03		both sides of face)) (.) there should (.) there'll be other opportunities in
04		the future
05	Rosie:	yeah ((nods head slightly)) (.) I'll just have to wait a few years
06	Eric:	yea:h
07	Rosie:	yea:h/ ((nods head))
08	Eric:	it's only one year ((moves both hands to the sides keeping wrists resting
09		on corresponding legs)) (.) you can apply next year\
10	Rosie:	yeah ((nods head)) (1) yeah ((nods head))

In order to counteract Rosie's gloomy mood, Eric offers an optimistic projection on line 02 ("there'll be other opportunities in the future"), highlighting the positive side with future opportunities lying ahead and moving the conversation from the negativity of the trouble towards a more reassuring and encouraging dimension. Rosie accepts his comment but still thinks that this will take a long time, which she is resigned to. Eric first concedes but he quickly realises that that is not the case (line 07) and she can apply for the grant again in one year. Rosie now accepts this. Again, the valence of the trouble is not changed but a positive element is offered so that a bivalent equilibrium can be reached.

The two conversations end in a similar way, pointing to a convergence between both language groups both at a pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic level. None of the strategies within this category elaborate on the trouble, on the contrary, they facilitate conversational or topic closings and they do it by moving away from the mostly negative aspects involved in the trouble being discussed and bringing the conversation to a point where the trouble or its consequences are summarised and interpreted in a more positive light (Maynard, 2003; Stivers & Timmermans, 2017). In order to achieve this, the participants in the two language groups coincide in their preference for three of the five strategies: invoking the status quo, making light of the problem and optimistic projections. The infrequent use of expressions of praise and encouragement in the two

language groups confirms the idea that empathy is not something that is achieved just by uplifting the ER through messages and words of affirmation and confidence in the other person but a more sophisticated action that needs the interrelation, affiliation and joint elaboration of the interactional participants.

5.2.1.5 EXPRESSIONS INVOLVING THE RECIPIENT

The strategies within this category bring the EP into the trouble being discussed in different ways: as part of the solution (offers of help), as an imaginary witness (observer responses), as an 'experiencer' of the story (subjunctive assessments) or as a story reporter (second stories). The same as with reassuring comments, in general, the strategies in this category are minimally used (<5%) except for subjunctive assessments in Catalan and observer responses in English. In both cases, these two strategies are used much less by the other language group, so whilst subjunctive assessments rank sixth on the frequency list (see Table 9, Section 4.2.2) with a percentage of 5.77% in the Catalan group, they are eleventh on the frequency list with a percentage of 2.98% in the English group. On the other hand, observer responses are found in the thirteenth position in Catalan with 2.10% of use, and they escalate to the third position in English with 11.26% of use.

According to Heritage (2011), subjunctive assessments are a basic element to express affiliation and, since they require the EP to make a mental effort to imagine themselves experiencing the situation described, it is highly empathic. Gaining access to the other person's experience and trying to imagine how one would react or feel is quite close to the idea of putting yourself in someone else's shoes. It does not reach the point of seeing things from the perspective of the other person but it gets close, facilitating an understanding of their emotional state.

It is surprising how, in spite of this being an explicitly empathic strategy, its use is not prioritized in the conversations in the study in neither language. This may have to do with the fact that the focus moves away from the ER and veers towards the EP, which is perceived as inadequate as some participants in the FGIs state. By way of example, when discussing what they thought was inappropriate when giving empathy, Gemma's remark (Catalan FGI#4) *que et porti al seu terreny, llavors comença a parlar d'algo seu* ("[I find it inappropriate] when they make it about themselves, then they start talking about their

things") verbalises the potential risks involved when shifting the focus onto the EP as this strategy does. In the English corpus, Elisabeth (English FGI#4) mentions something similar when she says:

> it's like if there was a bad situation and I was doing alright and then my friend just kept on talking and empathising and making it worse and then I'd be like … or they'd come up with even worse scenarios. I think it can be taken too far. Like they would be like 'oh, if this has happened to me; I'd be worried about THIS' and you'd be 'I haven't even thought about that!'

Therefore, in the two language groups subjunctive assessments are sometimes considered risky, since they can produce unsatisfactory outcomes. In general, however, the strategy is used to display a congruent stance with the ER as when Sergi responds to Jana's parents' divorce. After hearing the news and talking about how this affects Jana now that she has her exams, the conversation moves on and Sergi says:

(89) Pair 1, divorce (personal) – CAT

01	Sergi:	[bueno (1) no ho sé (0.5) ara mateix lo millor que pots fer és no pensar-hi
		'[well (1) I don't know (0.5) right now the best you can do is not to think about it'
02		i: (.) i: tirar fins anatomia i després ja et trobaràs aquest problema
		'a:nd (.) a:nd go on until your anatomy exam and then you'll deal with it'
03		((shaking head slightly)) (.) perquè::
		'((shaking head slightly)) (.) because::'
04	Jana:	°exacte°
		'°exactly°'
05	Sergi:	però la veritat és que em fico al teu a la teva pe:ll (.) i esta(hh) tot molt(hh)
		'but the truth is that I imagine myself in your in your situation:n (.) and it's all(hh) very(hh)'
		((shaking head))

When Sergi advises Jana not to think about the problem and concentrate on the exam (lines 01-03), he offers a remedy, but it is not until he makes use of a subjunctive assessment (line 05), admitting that his advice may be difficult to follow considering the emotional distress she feels, that his stance becomes even more clearly and explicitly concordant with Jana's, strengthening their affiliative process.

The same can be found in one of the conversations in the English corpus when discussing the same situation, this time it is Judy's parents who are getting a divorce. After telling Betty about that, mentioning that university-related stress makes coping with the divorce more difficult, and offering her help, the conversation is closed like this:

(90) Pair 1, divorce (personal) – ENG

01	Betty:	it's not what you want is it?
02	Judy:	no:
03	Betty:	((clicks her tongue)) if I was in the situation ( ) (.) it would be horrible
04	Judy:	yea::h ((nods her head)) (.) °it's a bit tough°

All through the conversation Betty makes ample use of primary and secondary sound objects of which there is another example on line 03: she starts the closing with a click, expressing dissatisfaction with the situation and a prelude of the shift into a new perspective (Wright, 2011), expressed by the subjunctive assessment. She makes a cognitive effort to imagine herself in that situation and she concludes that it would be horrible, which Judy, as the person affected by it, confirms.

In short, although the occurrence of subjunctive assessments is lower in English than in Catalan, their function and sequential placement is the same in the two languages. A greater difference, however, is found regarding observer responses between the two groups. It seems that, when assessing the trouble at hand, one of the things that EPs do is to visualise it as if they had been there, not participating but observing it. This allows them to get a more precise picture of the trouble itself in and, although the cognitive effort taken is less considerable than that of subjunctive assessments because the EP's reactions are not analysed, this strategy still requires a certain mental work to access the trouble even if only as a witness. This is one of the main strategies used by the English participants, whereas Catalan participants seem to prefer invoking the status

quo in order to assess the trouble, linking it to the existing social and moral functioning of society: two different strategies providing different perspectives on the trouble and one of the main differences regarding how empathy is expressed in these two languages.

5.2.1.6 EXPRESSIONS OF REGRET

Expressions of regret are minimally used by the two groups. Thinking that they mainly express sympathy for the other person, more occurrences were initially expected. These expressions carry the EP's negative valence regarding the trouble and tend to be used either at the closing of the conversation or as a reaction to the announcement (Pudlinski, 2005). The few cases of expressions of regret found in the study are all used as a reaction to the announcement of the trouble, functioning almost like primal responses.

Meiners (2017) considers most of these expressions rather formulaic or conventional. In her study comparing the expressions of sympathy used by native speakers of Latin American Spanish and American English she found that when spontaneously responding to a negative situation affecting the ER (the death of a relative) with sympathy expressions like "I am sorry", the American English participants used them more than the Latin Spanish participants, with the former preferring more formal, conventional expressions and the latter combining these expressions with other more emotional and spontaneous formulations. The very few results found in this study seem to support this conclusion in terms of frequency of use.

5.2.2 INTERACTIONAL SEQUENCE

That troubles telling is interactionally co-constructed is unequivocally clear. It is the coordinated moves and turns taken by all the participants in the conversation that construct what we understand as a troubles telling interaction. Its dynamics are context-dependent but also governed by social norms and expectations, hence it is enormously flexible within the limits of shared social practices. The interactions analysed in this study, both those in Catalan and those in English, broadly follow the basic structure shown in Figure 6 (Section 4.2.3).The majority of strategies are found in the elaboration part, since they are the essential resources mobilized to establish the necessary alignment and affiliation to create and convey a sense of empathy. The parts of this

standard sequential organization more affected by the method employed in the study are the announcement and closing parts.

5.2.2.1 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Regarding the announcement part, the majority of conversations in Catalan started without any kind of pre-announcement (62%) whereas in English most of them (55.75%) had one or more (see Table 10, Section 4.2.3.1). As Schegloff (2001, 2007) and Terasaki (2004) claim, pre-announcements allow the participants in a conversation to find out if what is about to be announced is in fact news. The fact that role plays were used to elicit these conversations imposed some constraints on this part of the interaction. The participants knew that they were going to deal with a situation that neither the ER nor the EP knew about before reading the instructions for each situation, and this obviously made the use of pre-announcements less necessary than in real-life conversations.

The preferred response to a pre-announcement is a go-ahead that allows either other pre-announcements or the delivery of the news and thus the troubles telling begins. According to Schegloff (2001), when a trouble is reported, the preferred response is limited to a given set, among which expressions of sympathy, a remedy or offer of help. The data in this study shows that this is true for most expressions of sympathy, but remedies and help tend to be offered after some elaboration of the trouble and not immediately right after the announcement itself—if done at this stage, as was mentioned in Section 5.2.1.3, the effects can be quite disaffiliative.

Despite knowing that a preferred response is expected, sometimes this is held back and the announcement is not replied making use of one of these responses. The following fragment taken from the Catalan corpus, illustrating the announcement of a problem, exemplifies this circumstance:

(91) Pair 8, exam (academic) – CAT

01	Marcel:	veiam (.) jo trobo injust que: la profe no m'hagi deixat entra:r (1.1) a
		'let's see (.) I think it's unfair tha:t the prof hasn't allowed me i:n (1.1)'
02		l'aula a fer l'examen perquè: (.) veiam (.) no perquè é:s (0.7) ((looks
		'the classroom to do the exam ca:use (.) let's see (.) it's not cause (0.7)'
03		up towards the ceiling)) una cosa que marcarà: ((looks at partner

		‘((looks up towards the ceiling)) it’s something that will sha:pe ((looks’
04		again)) el meu futu:r\
		‘at partner again)) my future:\
05	Jordi:	((nods))
06		(0.7)
07	Marcel:	només pe:r (.) perquè hagi perdut el tren o:: (.) hagi passat el que hagi
		‘only ca:use (.) cause I’ve missed the train o::r (.) whatever it’s
08		passat\
		‘happened\’
09	Jordi:	((nods more intensely, turns head to the right, looks down at the floor and returns to the initial position, looking at partner))
10		(0.6)
11	Marcel:	doncs (.) no (.) jo no ho trobo lògic que: (.) ((slightly clicks tongue)) no
		‘well (.) no (.) I don’t think it’s logical tha:t (.) ((slightly clicks tongue))’
12		em deixi fer l’examen no? (.) ja m’he preparat i també:: ( ) °he pogut
		‘she doesn’t allow me to do the exam right? (.) I’m prepared and also::’
13		estudiar°
		‘( ) °I could study°’
14	Jordi:	((turns head to the right and looks at the floor. Holds right arm above elbow with left hand)) bueno però ((lifts right forearm still holding arm
		‘elbow with left hand)) well but ((lifts right forearm still holding arm’
15		with left hand and drops it on right thigh)) si has arribat tard\ (.) home\
		‘with left hand and drops it on right thigh)) if you were late\ (.) man\’
16		(.) haver agafat el tren d’abans\ ((turns head and looks at partner. Half
		‘(.) you should have taken the train before\ ((turns head and looks at’
17		smiles. Scratches top of head with left hand)) (0.6) no?
		‘partner. Half smiles. Scratches top of head with left hand)) (0.6) no?’

Marcel starts presenting his trouble without any kind of pre-announcement. He makes his stance obvious from the very beginning with the use of the adjective *injust* (“unfair”, line 01), which clearly indicates that he is against what he is about to announce. Jordi’s first response is non-verbal, he nods indicating alignment but not affiliation. There is a pause of 0.7 seconds and, because the preferred response is still not provided, Marcel

continues with his story and now mentions what seems to be the reason why he was late and could not take the exam: he missed the train. Jordi's response is still non-verbal but this time, apart from nodding, he also turns his head and looks at the floor before looking at his partner again. Gaze aversion has been demonstrated to facilitate cognitive performance (Doherty-Sneddon & Phelps, 2005; Markson & Paterson, 2009). As Doherty-Sneddon & Phelps (2005) suggest looking away from the other person may be due to the experience of a negative social emotion, which in Jordi's case would be explained as a precursor of his disagreement—not explicitly manifested at this stage. He then turns his gaze towards Marcel, signaling the passing of the speaking turn and the availability of the floor for him to proceed, reinforced by the pause that follows (line 10). Marcel, the ER, continues highlighting the unfairness of being denied the right to take the exam, now claiming that he had studied and was ready for it (lines 11-13). Jordi's first verbal response is given at this point and, as was probably predicted, he disagrees with Marcel's view. His disagreement has been postponed until now and when he decides to verbalize it, he makes use of several mitigating elements: a pragmatic marker *bueno però* ("well but"), which indicates a change in the cognitive framework set by Marcel and prepares the ground for what is likely to be taken as a disaffiliative response, his half smile, and *no?*. Jordi, the EP, does not respond in what we would understand to be a highly affiliative manner. Up to line 14 he only acknowledges receipt with the use of non-verbal resources, used as backchannels, avoiding what he assumes to be a critical interactional moment, critical because he knows that what is to come is not the preferred response.

A similar example can be found in the English corpus. The preferred response is held back and not provided immediately after the announcement. The extract below reproduces the beginning of the conversation between Diana, the ER, and Larry, the EP.

(92) Pair 3, hygiene (professional) – ENG

01	Diana:	hi Larry (.) how are you?
02	Larry:	not too bad thanks (.) yourself?
03		(0.6)
04	Diana:	quite upset\
05	Larry:	what's wrong?

06 Diana: you would tell me if (0.9) there was something wrong with me? (.) right?
07 (0.6)
08 Larry: yea:h ((nods head slightly)) (.) of course
09 Diana: ok (.) so: (.) basically (0.6) I went training today/ (.) and (.) the (.) the (.)
10 my (0.5) trainee (0.8) my trainer/ [(1.3)] told me that I need to be careful
11 Larry: [mm hm]
12 Diana: about my personal hygiene\ (.) and how (.) I hold myself (0.9) do I smell?
13 (1) would you tell me if I smelled?
14 Larry: of course (.) yeah
15 (0.7)
16 Diana: are you sure?
17 Larry: mm hm ((nods head slightly))
18 Diana: 'cause (.) I wou- (.) that really upset me (.) 'cause I bathed today/ [(.)]
19 and she said yeah you need to bathe again (.) now (.) was like
20 Larry: [yeah]
21 (1.4)
22 Diana: I did bathe

In this example Diana makes use of two pre-announcements (lines 04 and 06) where she clearly conveys her stance: she is worried about something (line 04) that affects her personally (line 06). When she announces the trouble (lines 09 to 13) she makes an appeal to Larry (line 13): she wants to know if Larry would tell her if she smelled, to which he responds just by answering the questions asked but without making any comment about the trouble itself. This is probably not what Diana expected. She probably expected him to disconfirm her supposed hygiene problems. There is a pause (line 15) which, seeing that Larry has nothing else to add, Diana uses to take the floor and insist on the matter. Again, she gets this minimal response by Larry (line 17) but still no comments that could disconfirm what the tutor said. There is now a long pause (line 21), and although it is Larry's turn, he does not seem to be ready to take the floor and he does not say anything so Diana emphasizes that she does in fact bath.

In both examples, the EPs' contributions are kept to a minimum and the conversation does not move to the elaboration stage, thereby creating a kind of impasse where the

participants seem to try to adjust and, with the ERs' production of new details or arguments regarding the trouble, take the conversation towards the next stage. The use of long pauses predicting the elicitation of dispreferred responses adds further evidence to the existing literature that confirms that this is the case (Schegloff, 2007; Couper-Kuhlen, 2012; Kendrick & Torreira, 2015; Bögels et al., 2015, 2020). The extracts show that the strategies employed when a preferred response is not provided are the same in both languages: the teller of the story, the ER, keeps on presenting details of the trouble being discussed in the expectation of getting the preferred response so that the conversation can move on.

The management of delayed, dispreferred or detached responses is also reflected in the FGIs. In one of the Catalan interviews, Cèlia's comment (Catalan FGI#4) goes along this line. When asked about their reactions when not getting empathy, she says: *Si realment necessites aquesta empatia, intentar insistir en el tema. O sigui, si veus que ell no li ha donat importància, si li repeteixes...* ("If you really need this empathy, I'd try to insist on the topic. I mean, if you see that the other person downplays it, if you repeat it…"). The implications are twofold: on the one hand, the perception that sometimes the interaction does not develop in a supportive manner and empathy is either not or poorly provided, which accounts for the existence of some mental parameters modelling how empathic communication should develop which the speaker can compare their ongoing interaction with; on the other hand, the existence of some interactional moves that can either get the interaction back on track or confirm the acceptance of disruptive modes. In one of the interviews with the English participants, when replying to the same question, Bella (English FGI#3) remarks:

> I guess it depends on what they're [the other person] like as a person. If you know they are not of the emotional sort anyway, then you're not really so bothered if they don't get so emotionally involved or upset by your problems but as long as they listen, and they show that care then I guess that's all that matters. As long as they try and listen and help you.

She mentions a potential disruptive mode—the EP being cold or detached—and stresses the importance of active listening in this kind of interactions. Rather than redirecting the conversation, she underscores the acceptance of different attachment styles

(Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Pietromonaco & Barrett, 1997; Kafetsios & Nezlek, 2002; Locke, 2008; Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009; Sessa et al., 2020).

In both cases, the two young women make reference to situations they have encountered and different ways to manage them—interactionally renegotiating the empathy-giving activity or accepting or tolerating responses deviant from the "ideal standard" of empathic interactions—so that in the end, they are not considered unsuccessful. These are just two examples of actions taken to address what can be labelled as "poor/lack of empathy", but other possibilities are mentioned in the FGIs of both language groups, for example directly telling the other person that some empathy is needed.

5.2.2.2 CLOSINGS

The other part of this standard conversation sequence, apart from announcements, that seems to be most affected by the method employed—role plays—are closings. Because the participants knew they would have to roleplay a few situations, the conversations were often ended abruptly or at least more abruptly than expected in real life. As happens with the whole interaction, closings are also coordinated and negotiated by the participants and are reached when the topic being discussed is dropped, which may or may not involve the end of the conversation—(see (53) and (54) in Section 4.2.3.2. Due to the intrinsic characteristics of the methodology employed, the closings in the corpus tend to be conversational closures as no new topics are initiated after them.

The different types of closing presented in Figure 7 (Section 4.2.3.2) were found in both languages, which points to the parallelism of the two groups in this respect. Another point in common is the production of some lexical elements that seem to indicate the beginning of the closing. In Catalan the most common lexical elements used are *bueno*[4] ("well") and *no sé* ("I don't know"). For example, in the extract below, Dani tells Pere that he was so late for an exam that he was not allowed to take it but he assumes it is his fault.

[4] Non-normative form of 'bé' ('well'). It's very commonly used in colloquial registers (González, 2001).

(93) Pair 10, exam (academic) – CAT

01	Dani:	sí bueno jo també crec que és culpa meva també: pe:r arribar tard i això:
		'yes well I think that it is my fault too: tha:t I was late and so:'
02		(.) però: (0.8) no sé (.) almenys (.) una segona opció (.) una recuperació
		'(.) bu:t (0.8) I don't know (.) at least (.) another opportunity (.) there'
03		hi haurà no?
		'must be a resit right?'
04	Pere:	mm hm (.) bueno tens (.) suposo que tindràs dret a anar a: (.) recuperació\
		'mm hm (.) well you have (.) I guess you will be allowed to: (.) resit\'
05		(0.9) no sé (.) ja ho veurem\ (.) però:: (0.6) home és una pena si havies
		'(0.9) I don't know (.) we'll see\ (.) bu::t (0.6) mate it's a pity if you had'
06		estudiat molt i te l'havies preparat\ (1.3) ((makes a sound with his
		'studied a lot and you had prepared yourself for it\ (1.3) ((makes sound'
07		mouth)) no sé (0.6) però bueno (.) és lo que hi ha
		'with his mouth)) I don't know (0.6) but well (.) it is what it is'
08	Dani:	sí: ((smiles with resignation))
		'yea:h ((smiles with resignation))'

Pere makes extensive use of these elements in combination with some of the possibilities mentioned in Figure 7—*suposo que tindràs dret a anar a recuperació* ("I guess you will be allowed to resit", line 04) (optimistic projection), *és una pena is havies estudiat molt I te l'havies preparat* ("it's a pity if you had studied a lot and you had prepared yourself for it", lines 05 and 06) *(*encouragement), or *és lo que hi ha* ("it is what it is", line 07) (invoking the status quo)—clearly bringing the conversation to an end. As González (2001) claims, *bueno* ("well") functions as a delimiter, introducing a new segment in discourse, in this case, the closing. On the other hand *no sé* ("I don't know") is used as a pragmatic marker that transmits the speaker's intention of not adding anything else to what has already been said so it makes sense that this is often found in (pre-) closings.

Contrary to what happens in the Catalan conversations, in the English corpus this kind of pragmatic markers are not used and most conversations are ended with the agreement between both parties, whose main expression seems to be "yeah". The

following extract exemplifies this. Betty has not taken an exam because she was late and she tells Judy about it. The conversation concludes like this:

(94) Pair 1, exam (academic) – ENG

01 Betty: I'm sure (.) they can (1.2) ((clicks tongue)) you know? ((moves her right
02 hand a bit from side to side)) (.) do something about it/ (.) but it makes
03 me look a bit (.) ba:d\
04 Judy: yea::h (.) I'm sure there's something they [ca:n (0.6)] do:
05 Betty: [((nods head)) ye:s]
06 Judy: you might be able to (.) resi:t [(.)] o:r
07 Betty: [mm hm ((nods head vigorously))]
08 Judy: [°take it again°]
09 Betty: [yeah\ (.) I'm sure] (.) becau:se (.) °I'm sure there's other people that
10 might [(.)] have problems° ((waves her right hand on the right side))
11 Judy: [yea:h ((slightly nodding her head))] yeah
12 ((slightly nodding her head))
13 Betty: there's alwa:ys (.) things
14 Judy: yea:h (.) this won't be the first time that this has happened (.) that's for
15 sure
16 Betty: yea:h

The considerable use of "yeah" or "yes" stresses the fact that all their contributions at this stage are repetitions or the rephrasing of ideas that were previously mentioned in the conversation. Every time one of the parties produces one of these, the response aligns with the previous turn. The topic is no longer expanded and dies away.

It is in the closing where the participants in the interaction show their alignment or complete disalignment (Raymond & Zimmerman, 2016). Taking into account the nature

of the task in this study, most of the conversations were brought to a close when the topic was no longer expanded and only a few showed the emergence of a somehow related topic, which was not widely explored quite probably due to the same reason. Apart from this alignment, however, other elements also help signal closing: mainly the lowering of the tone of voice and gaze aversion. These elements do not always appear in closings but they sometimes do in the two groups.

5.3 POST-ROLE PLAY QUESTIONNAIRES

Post-role play questionnaires aim to assess aspects related to what is called situational empathy, i.e. empathic responses in a given situation (Stueber, 2019), and relate the different variables measured with the number of strategies used in each conversation. They intend to obtain data on the participants' immediate perceptions of their own interactions, offering a complementary perspective, apart from the researcher's, on what has been going on in the role-played interactions.

The different variables, those referring to the ER and those referring to the EP (see Figure 9, Section 4.3), were intercorrelated to see how they are connected to each other. They all have to do with different parameters that each participant self-assessed based on their own understanding of each interaction, so the results obtained basically refer to purely internal mental issues that will be discussed only when relevant to the scope of this study. All these internal variables were also correlated with an external variable: the number of strategies in each conversation in order to see if any of those factors could account for what happens interactionally in terms of strategy use. This part will be more thoroughly analyzed as it is directly linked with the verbal expression of empathy.

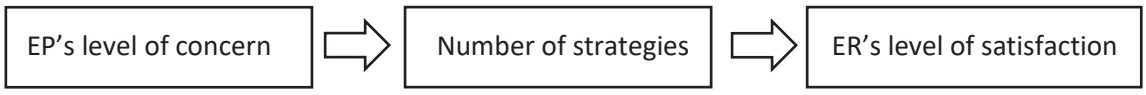
Only two variables correlated with the number of strategies, and they were different in each language group. While in Catalan, the results show that this is positively correlated with the EP's level of concern and the ER's level of satisfaction, in English, it is positively correlated with the ER's mood and perspective of the situation. Different as they may look, the fact is that both the ER's mood and perspective of the situation are no doubt elements that are contained within the concept of satisfaction. Although this concept embraces more, feeling pleased and content with the results of your interaction is, at least in part, connected with positive changes in your mood and the way you appraise a given situation. From this point of view, it would seem that a conclusion that can be

drawn is that in both languages the more strategies the EP uses, the more content the ER becomes.

In Catalan, the number of strategies is significantly related to the EP's level of concern. Whether this is an only or a contributing factor is hard to say, but it seems logical to think that if the EP is very worried about the ER's trouble, they are likely to try to assess the trouble and help the other person by mobilizing as many resources or strategies as possible, or at least a fair amount of them. At the same time, as the statistically significant value shows, the number of strategies used in an interaction is associated with the ER's level of contentment with the interactional process. Therefore, in this language group, a causal relationship is likely to be established as illustrated in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10

Possible causal pattern operating in the Catalan group.

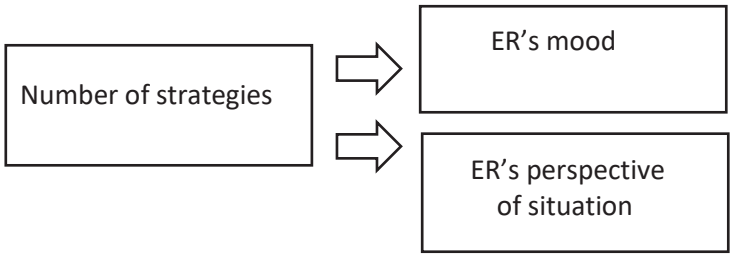


As Vreeke & Van der Mark (2003) claim, for somebody to be considered empathic, there must be a reactive emotion that leads to pro-social action. Genuine empathy is not only limited to what we feel inside, it has got to do with how we react to this feeling. The pattern proposed would align with this theory, providing the reactive emotion (concern) and the pro-social action (communicative strategies to convey support and empathy). The third step (satisfaction) would corroborate that the action is perceived as effective by the other person.

However, this does not seem to apply to the English group. No significant correlation is found that could explain the first step of this process, i.e. why a certain amount of strategies is employed, but a significant correlation is found regarding its consequences as shown in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11

Possible causal pattern operating in the English group.



In this case, although the effects on the ER are different from the one obtained in the Catalan group, they still indicate a positive outcome. The higher the number of strategies employed is, the better the ER's mood and perspective of the situation (reappraisal) are. For this "ideal" number of strategies to occur, the interaction must be long enough for the topic to be developed and for enough strategies to be included. In both languages, then, it seems that when the interactions are elaborated, and thus giving the chance for strategies to be incorporated, the ERs end up feeling pleased with the effects those interactions have had on them.

Leaving aside the number of strategies employed, the rest of variables, when correlated, give more significant results in the English group—24 results: 18, $p<0.01$ and 6, $p<0.05$—than in the Catalan group—16 results: 10, $p<0.01$ and 6, $p<0.05$—13 of which coincide in the two groups. Taking into account the main aim of this dissertation, which takes a communicative perspective, the analysis and discussion of these variables will only focus on the ones related to the ER and EP's satisfaction with their role-played interactions. The rest of correlations would probably require a more psychological approach as they deal with cognitive parameters that lie beyond the scope of the current study.

In the Catalan group, the level of satisfaction of the ER is one of the two variables with the highest number of significant correlations (6). It seems that the ERs are more content with the interaction if their mood and perspective of the situation have improved and they have felt understood by the EP, which would relate to the concepts of understanding (see Section 5.4.1) and appraisal (see Section 5.2.1.3). The other three variables the level of satisfaction of the ER is positively and significantly correlated with are variables about the EP—their level of satisfaction, their impression that they have helped the ER to cope better with the situation, and their level of concern—which points

to the speakers' mutual influence in the context of troubles telling. It seems, then, that the more satisfied the EP is, the more satisfied the ER is. At the same time, the EP's level of satisfaction is clearly linked with the perception they have of having helped the other person cope better with the situation, which may indicate the achievement of the EP's ultimate goal: the provision of support and empathy. The EP's level of concern also seems to be relevant to the ER's satisfaction. Surely this concern must be expressed and communicated for the ER to perceive it. In this group, as mentioned earlier, this appears to be connected with the number of empathic strategies, at least in part, given that prosody or facial expressions, to name a few, undoubtedly also play a part when communicating concern. Showing that you worry and care about the other person is essential to convey support and, as discussed in Section 2.2, one of the basic characteristics of the display of empathy.

Very similar results are obtained in the English group, so the same conclusions can be drawn. In this case, however, the EP's impression that they have helped the ER to cope better with the situation does not seem to play a part in the ER's final feeling of content. The notion that one is judged by the partner seems to be relevant in establishing the ER's final level of satisfaction, which is something difficult to account for as judging others, and consequently feeling judged, in theory, should be, if only temporarily, suspended in order to be able to put yourself in the other person's shoes. Additionally, feeling judged is something that, rather than helping to develop empathy, tends to prevent or hinder it (Epley et al., 2002; Hoffman, 2014). Moreover, judgment is also perceived to affect empathy from the more instinctive perception of native speakers in the FGIs. In the Catalan group for example, when responding to the question about inappropriate things when giving empathy, Maria (Catalan FGI#4) responds: *Que l'altra persona et retregui coses. Que et jutgi o que et pugui retreure alguna cosa* ("[I find inappropriate] that the other person throws things back in your face. That they judge you or can reproach you for something.") and a similar thought is expressed by Nancy (English FGI#2) when explaining her reaction to not getting the empathy that was expected:

> I often feel silly about trusting these people [those not providing empathy] enough and by then being like 'oh, why do you think I'm being silly or?' that

always makes me feel worse. So I'd be happier to just leave and try to work it out by myself.

Additionally, if being judgmental about the ER is often related to the level of responsibility the ER has for the trouble, there is evidence suggesting that there are higher levels of sympathy and empathy when the level of responsibility is low (Hoffman, 2008; Chambers & Davis, 2012; Atkins, 2013). Although the situations in the role plays could be treated as troubles for which the ER had no responsibility, they were quite general and did not contain much detail, which means that on a few occasions the ER gave details that incriminated themselves, making them completely or partially responsible for the trouble. In the majority of situations, though, the ER did not assume any responsibility for the trouble, which would further support the incongruence of this correlation. Thus, explaining how feeling judged is positively related to the ER's level of satisfaction in the English group would require further research.

In relation to the variables that correlate positively with the EP's level of satisfaction in the English group, the three significant correlations found in the Catalan group are also found. Two of these—ER's level of satisfaction and the EP's impression that they have helped the ER to cope better with the situation—have already been discussed and the remaining significant positive correlation is linked to the ER's feeling of being understood by the EP. Hypothesizing why and how these two are related would probably require a study of its own. Many questions remain open, such as why the EP's level of satisfaction does not correlate significantly with the ER's change(s) in mood or perspective of the situation, whether the EP is satisfied because they perceive the ER's feeling of being understood or the other way around or how this is perceived. In the English group, apart from the three variables found in the Catalan group, the ER's mood and perspective of the situation also give statistically significant results when correlated with the EP's level of satisfaction, leading to further questions about their interrelation, regulation and significance in the construction of empathy. The multitude of questions raised cannot be answered here, and any conclusion drawn in this regard should be taken with caution. What these correlations definitely point to is the complex and intricate interrelationship of multiple parameters that come into play in the concerted nature of empathic interactions.

In any case, this reciprocal influence of EP and ER variables appears to be an example not only of the complexity of a process involving multiple elements but also of emotional contagion (see Section 5.4.3) where the two interactants have managed to converge at a cognitive level.

5.4 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

The interviews allow to capture the participants' impressions and conceptions of empathy and its social and interpersonal use from a theoretical but also experiential perspective. In what follows, the main ideas emerging in these group interviews that have not been directly linked to any of the results obtained through different methods are analysed and compared. Since empathy involves different processes and notions, many of which were discussed or just mentioned in the FGIs, the results are organized under thematic headings. The results point to a convergence at a sociopragmatic level, where empathy is understood, expected and used in the same or very similar ways by the participants in both groups.

5.4.1 UNDERSTANDING

One of the first issues that were discussed, which turned out to be slightly controversial, raised when the participants were asked what empathy was. It was controversial because there was clearly no consensus and different opinions were voiced. Sympathy, compassion, caring or sharing were some of the concepts that emerged in the discussion and that empathy was mistaken for. This should come as no surprise as even the literature on the topic often needs to specify what is meant by empathy (see Section 2.2), confirming this amalgam of close and usually interrelated concepts (Batson, 2009; Cuff et al., 2016; Jeffrey, 2016; Nelems, 2017). In their review, Eklund & Meranius (2021) synthesize the different concepts of empathy appearing in 52 published articles and found four common themes—understanding, feeling, sharing, and self-other differentiation—which point to a common ground that could lead to a clearer consensus on its definition.

Understanding is connected with the cognitive aspect of empathy and consequently with perspective taking—in fact, Eklund & Meranius (2021) consider perspective taking a sub-theme of understanding—as, unless you are able to take the perspective of the

other person, this understanding is not possible. In both groups, the participants in the FGIs related empathy to the idea of understanding the other person. Actually, understanding is so essential that when it does not occur, it is found inappropriate. This is mentioned in the FGIs of both groups where some reference is made to the difficulties associated with those situations where there is lack of understanding. When Claire (English FGI#3) says that she finds it quite inappropriate when people "have gone past the point of being like 'I'm trying to understand' and they don't or you can tell they haven't experienced it [a similar situation]" or Jana (Catalan FGI#1) says *Dir que ho entens i que no ho entenguis. Moltes vegades al no saber què dir potser és millor que escoltem que no pas voler dir alguna cosa que no serveix de res perquè pots realment molestar l'altra persona* ("Saying that you understand when you don't. Very often when you don't know what to say maybe we'd rather listen than say something useless because you can annoy the other person."), they make evident the importance of honest and genuine understanding in empathic interactions.

It is true, though, that for most participants understanding is a necessary first step towards what most of them take to be an indissoluble part of empathy: some associated action aimed to reduce the other person's trouble or alleviate the worry, stress or concern caused by that trouble. So understanding that someone is in trouble implies that something must be done in order to help that person (Vreeke & Van der Mark, 2003; Eisenberg, 2003, 2006, 2010; Hoffman, 2008; Eisenberg et al., 2010; Telle & Pfister, 2012; Decety et al., 2016; Batson, 2018). In a study on emotion differentiation, Israelashvili et al. (2019) found that this is related to the recognition of others' emotions. As the authors claim, recognizing the other's feelings is important when expressing empathy as this is the first step to respond in an effective way.

Understanding is fundamental when responding affiliatively and, consequently, empathically. The results of the current study show that feeling understood is clearly linked with the level of satisfaction of the interactional actors—both EP and ER—as the results of the post-role play questionnaires show: the feeling understood by partner variable significantly correlates with the level of satisfaction of the ER (0.422, $p<0.01$ in Catalan and 0.732, $p<0.01$ in English) and the EP (0.389, $p<0.01$ in Catalan and 0.312, $p<0.05$ in English) in the two groups. In other words, apparently we feel content if we

feel understood. The study also sheds some light onto how this is perceived. According to the data obtained, the same variable, feeling understood by partner, also correlates significantly with another cognitive parameter: that connected with changes in the perspective of the situation being discussed (0.531, $p<0.01$ in Catalan and 0.622, $p<0.01$ in English). As mentioned earlier (Section 5.2.1.3.), the mechanism of appraisal allows us to reflect on our perception of the trouble and modify its relevance, which usually implies a reduction in any negative feeling associated with it. If the EP is able to make the ER reappraise the situation, it seems the ER feels understood. Probably this is not the only parameter involved in this perception; the data for the English group indicates that not feeling judged by the other person correlates negatively with the level of satisfaction of the ER (-0.689, $p<0.01$) but this is not reflected in the Catalan group.

The data obtained in the post-role play questionnaires and the FGIs suggests that understanding is key in the activation of some mental processes that may conform the perception of effective social support. How this is achieved seems to be somehow related to the number of strategies used in the interactions. In the English group, the number of strategies is significantly related to the ER's satisfaction in terms of either an emotional aspect such as change in mood (0.328, $p<0.05$) or a cognitive aspect such as appraisal (0.284, $p<0.05$), implying that the more strategies the EP uses, the better the ER's mood and perspective of the situation becomes. The results for the Catalan group somewhat differ from those of the English one, since the number of strategies employed in an interaction significantly correlates with different variables. In this case it correlates with the ER's level of satisfaction (0.374, $p<0.01$) and with the EP's level of concern (0.425, $p<0.01$), implying that the more concerned the EP is, the more strategies they will use in the interaction, which, at the same time, will have a positive impact on the ER's level of satisfaction. What this satisfaction is due to is unclear; it is not an improvement in mood or the fact that one does not feel judged, but it may be due to other factors not included in the post-role play questionnaires such as feeling you have the other person's attention or consideration. Moving from statistics to valid conclusions may be a daring enterprise, but the results seem to indicate that a greater number of strategies allows us to elaborate our interactions more, which would, in turn, contribute to more satisfactory interactions.

As we have seen, troubles talk is jointly rather than individually constructed, and the floor is shared by both participants, who make use of a variety of verbal and non-verbal resources to respond and elaborate on the trouble, allowing almost endless combinations. The fact that some of these resources are considered more empathic than others does not necessarily mean their intrinsic value automatically makes an interaction empathic. For instance, if the announcement of a trouble is immediately responded with one of the strategies at the most empathic end of the empathy continuum according to Heritage (2011), such as those involving the recipient, and not much elaboration is done, the effects could be even the opposite. This is exemplified in one of the Catalan role plays (pair 5), where Isabel tells Adrià that one of her patients complained about her poor skills. After getting some more details about the problem, he says *jo no em preocuparia gaire* ("I wouldn't worry much"). This subjunctive assessment is not only an example of what Heritage (2011) calls *a primary resource for affiliative response* because the EP explicitly accesses the situation as if they were in that situation, but it is also highly affiliative because it is said after the problem has been elaborated. It not only expresses what Adrià would do in the same situation but also questions the relevance of the problem. There is no doubt that there is an explicit cognitive effort of imagining himself in Isabel's position and think what he would do, which is a basic aspect of cognitive empathy. Because this strategy occupies a certain position in the interaction, its function and meaning is very clear, but if the same thing was said right after the announcement, the ER could interpret it as a way of downplaying the situation and even as a lack of alignment and affiliation and the conversation could even be brought to an end.

5.4.2 SELF-OTHER DIFFERENTIATION

Another theme that was briefly mentioned in the FGIs has to do with the idea of how far one can put themselves into somebody else's shoes and identify themselves with that person. For instance, Glòria (Catalan FGI#5), when answering the question *when do you expect somebody to empathise with you?* says:

> Molts cops passa que t'inclous en el problema i tu tens el teu problema i jo sóc jo i t'ajudaré amb lo que pugui però fins a un límit perquè primer sóc jo i després t'ajudaré amb lo que sigui però...

> ‘It very often happens that you include yourself in the problem and you have your problem and I am myself and I’ll help you as much as I can but up to a certain limit because I’m first and then I’ll help you with whatever but…’

In one of the English FGIs, Gillian (English FGI#3) recalls an episode from her past in order to acknowledge the importance of self-other differentiation:

> One of my best friends, a really good friend at school, her mum came in and told her her dad had a stroke and he died so Lucy, my friend, came out crying and then another of her best friends went to her and burst out crying saying ‘I’m so sorry’, ‘it’s so horrible’ and I don’t know how she burst out crying. It’s hard to put yourself in the situation but you’ve gotta not make it… like, it’s hard. I think some people make it about them. They start empathising and they go like ‘oh, that happened to me’ and it’s like, ‘that’s not helping me’ kind of thing.

Decety (2005) claims that a key aspect of empathy is the ability to keep this distinction between oneself and the other. Without a clear differentiation, we would experience the other person’s emotions, which would likely lead to personal distress rather than to empathic concern. Therefore this self-other distinction is a basic element of empathy and empathy-related helping behaviour (Atkins, 2013; Batson, 2018). Atkins (2013), drawing on relational frame theory, distinguishes three senses of self: self as content (who we think we are, our identities), as process (our ongoing experience here and now) and as context (who we fundamentally are, our transcendent self) that come up in and are constructed through our social and verbal interactions. These senses at the same time involve three corresponding senses of other, since the concept of self can only exist if there is an “other”. It is the second sense that relates to perspective taking and empathic responses; without the self-as-process and other-as-process distinction we would not be able to differentiate our own experience from the other’s.

From a phenomenological point of view, empathy consists of expression and perception. The other person’s emotional state is understood through its expression, which does not necessarily involve the recreation of the same feeling on the observer but can grant access to what that emotional state is like based on one’s own experiences (Breyer, 2020). The self-other distinction is therefore kept and there is no ‘oneness’; instead, self and other are independent agents (Drummond, 2006). It seems then that this separation

between oneself as distinct from others is an element shared by both groups. Without this differentiation empathy would be reduced to emotional contagion.

5.4.3 EMOTIONAL CONTAGION

Emotional contagion lies at the basis of perspective taking and refers to the generation of a cognitive, emotional or behavioural coincidence between people. Hatfield et al. (1994) describe it as "the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, postures and movements with those of another and, consequently, to converge emotionally" (p.5). Achieved through some internal mechanisms—involving mimicry, feedback and contagion (Hatfield et al., 2011)—emotional contagion positively predicts empathic behaviour (Nilsonne et al., 2021). Although the concept has been refined and reframed and we know now that this contagion does not always cause exactly the same emotion in the other person (Dezecache et al., 2015) or that it can be moderated by contextual aspects (Kimura et al., 2008; Wróbel & Imbir, 2019), it allows us to act appropriately in terms of interactional behaviour.

In an intuitive way, Zoe (English FGI#5), when asked about what they were thinking about while doing the role plays, makes reference to the concept when she says:

> Try to think how best my partner would respond to the reaction I gave. So how well do they respond…like if I went like 'Oh my God!!' would they also go 'Oh my God!!' too or…if I had a calmer approach, would they then calm down with me?...like how I know they would react, because you know, I obviously know Susan, so I know your personality ((talking directly to Susan)), so if you're quite a frenetic kind of person so I'd probably try and be really calm, whereas if you're really chilled, I could afford to be like 'Oh my God!! ((she makes a face like being very surprised)). I just wanted to reflect on what I wanted her to do; so if she was really stressed and I chilled out, then she would chill out.

In the Catalan corpus, Jordi (Catalan FGI#3), points to a less linguistic interpretation. In this case, it is a specific behaviour that is shared and that he uses to illustrate the role of empathy in healthcare:

> Ells [el personal assistencial] no només van de cul sinó que també reben pressions des de dalt, tampoc reben empatia per dalt. Els metges no tenen empatia però és perquè ells tampoc la reben, els de dalt potser tampoc la reben i arriba un punt que...
>
> 'They [healthcare providers] are not only up to their eyeballs in work but also have so much pressure from above, they do not get any empathy from above either. Doctors do not have any empathy but it is because they do not get it either, those above maybe do not get it either and it all gets to a point that…'

The two clearly emphasise the idea of emotional contagion, which promotes synchrony in interpersonal relationships. Even if it is just a perception, the notion of transferring affective states between people appears in the two language groups. The fact that emotional contagion increases in affiliative contexts (Wróbel & Imbir, 2019) might have made participants more aware of its relevance but, in any case, it seems that this is equally perceived in the two groups.

5.4.4 SELF-EXPERIENCE

One of the most recurrent ideas in all FGIs refers to feeling empathy when dealing with situations that the EPs have previously experienced themselves. The prevailing idea is that this experiential similarity between ER and EP contributes to understanding and, consequently, to empathy.

In both groups, this belief seems to be pervasive, as several participants referred to it. For instance, in one of the Catalan interviews, when replying to one of her teammates, Montse (Catalan FGI#3) says *Jo també crec que et costa bastant ficar-te al lloc de l'altra persona si tu no has viscut el mateix. Pots arribar a imaginar-t'ho fins a cert punt però no arribes al punt en el qual està l'altra persona* ("I also think that it is difficult for you to put yourself in the other person's place if you have not experienced the same. You can imagine it to some extent but you can't reach the point where the other person is."). In one of the English interviews, Diana (English FGI#1) says:

> I think generally when people don't understand a situation, they find it hard to empathise with it. People just think homeless people are just lazy but then if you know someone or you've been in a similar situation, then it's when you realise

> they are not lazy, they don't have a choice. People become more empathetic towards people when they understand the situation a bit. When they have a little bit of understanding.

Evidence on the matter is controversial with studies showing that there seems to be a connection between previous similar experiences and empathy or some components of empathy (Eklund et al., 2009; Hodges, 2010; Gerace et al., 2015), and other studies providing evidence that, when a similar negative experience is recalled, this may hinder recognition of the other person's emotions (Ruttan et al., 2015; Israelashvili et al., 2020) or that found no evidence that shared experiences improved empathy (Hodges, 2005).

It seems, though, that in spite of the existence of conflicting evidence, traditional wisdom still has it that past experience facilitates empathy. Initially, when the study was being designed and based on this widespread notion, a much more extensive use of second stories was expected since this was the strategy that was reasonably assumed to mainly communicate this idea. Its very limited use in both groups (0.17% in Catalan and 0.66% in English) would suggest that either the notion is communicated using different strategies (e.g. subjunctive assessments) or that second stories may sometimes be perceived as invasive and negative because they may move the focus from the ER to the EP.

5.4.5 FISHING FOR EMPATHY

The methods people use when asking for empathy are reported to be the same by the participants in both groups and they appear to be reduced to two: expecting others to grasp one's non-verbal cues (looking concerned or being particularly quiet) or directly telling the other person about the trouble.

In one of the Catalan interviews (CatalanFGI#4) Cèlia and Miquel refer to the two methods. She briefly says *Si la persona et coneix, ja et veurà* ("if the person knows you, they will see") and, as a reply to her statement, he alternatively introduces the second method: *Però potser si no estàs amb ell aquí, el pots citar 'tu, quedem al bar que t'he d'explicar una cosa' i llavors...* ("But maybe if you are not with them [the EP], you can arrange to meet 'hey, let's meet at the canteen. I have something to tell you' and then…").

The same idea comes up in one of the English interviews. For example, Diana (EnglishFGI#1) comments:

> Some people want empathy but they are not gonna say anything, they just expect you to know (e.g. you're quiet so you're upset so I'll ask you 'what's wrong with you?') and some would tell you but others wouldn't. There's no right way.

There is a third method that is only mentioned by a few of the English participants and that basically consists in making reference to the need of some kind of food to feel better. For example, Gillian (English FGI#3), when answering the question about how to fish for empathy, says "Or they [people asking for empathy] say little things like 'oh yeah, I need another biscuit. I've had a really bad day" to which Claire adds "That's my flatmate! Constantly 'Oh, my day is so bad, I really need a coffee!'". This type of food, which tends to be rich in sugar or fat, is known as *comfort food* and has a positive association with pleasure or well-being (Macht & Simons, 2011; Troisi & Wright, 2017; Spence, 2017; Klatzkin et al., 2019). Dubé et al. (2005) found that experiencing negative emotions is related to the consumption of this type of food in women whereas in men, it is positive emotions that encourage its consumption.

Hamburg et al. (2014) suggest that the ER's emotional state can lead to the offering—or asking for, for that matter—of food as a way of regulating emotions. At an intrapersonal level, emotion regulation is achieved through the physiological and psychological properties of food and at an interpersonal level, the authors propose the empathic emotion regulation (EER) system that regulates emotion, improving not only the ER's but also the EP's emotions and, in turn, increasing interpersonal kinship. Food offering is then a type of empathy-related helping behaviour whose aim is to reduce the ER's distress and express support and care.

Food offering or sharing is not only used as a preamble to fish for empathy, it can also be used to move the conversation on to a brighter, safer ground, the same as optimistic projections, emphasising interpersonal affiliation. One of the role plays from the English group exemplifies this use. Rosie tells Eric that her parents are getting divorced and when the conversation on the topic finishes, there is a pause of 0.9 seconds and then Eric offers a drink to Rosie to cheer her up.

(95) Pair 4, divorce (personal) – ENG

01	Eric:	d'you want something a bit stronger than coffee?
02	Rosie:	yea:h (.) ((laughs and bends forward))
03	Eric:	I've got some vodka in the bag ((points at some point on the floor on his left
04		side with his right hand)) (.) if you want it (.) ((laughs))
05	Rosie:	((laughs)) ((takes pen in her right hand and holds it as if she were writing
06		something)) (3) let's go out tonight
07	Eric:	yeah(h) ((laughs and coughs, putting left hand in front of his mouth))
08	Rosie:	°yea::h°

This time it is not food but an alcoholic drink what is offered but the aim is still the same: Eric's comments are not only a way to offer his help, to let Rosie know that she can count on him, but they also allow him to finish the conversation on a sad circumstance in a lighter tone, strengthening the bond between them both. No examples of this are found in the Catalan role plays or FGIs but there is a strong coincidence between the two groups in relation to the other two strategies, offering more evidence for the sociopragmatic similarity in how empathy and empathic episodes are socially managed and interpreted.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter offers a detailed analysis of the results obtained by means of the different instruments used in the study. In comparing the development of different conversations on the same topic where empathy is the preferred response, the findings suggest that there is a remarkable coincidence in form and content regarding how the two language groups respond in those conversations, i.e. similarities not only in terms of the type of strategies used but also in terms of how empathy and empathic interactions are organized and perceived. There exist, however, some minor differences that do not alter the general interactional sense and construction of empathy but that reveal some preferences and choices when responding to troubles, hinting at different cultural values and practices.

Limiting the number and type of situations discussed allows us to better compare how different respondents react to the same event, creating a representative picture of the collaborative moves and actions that contribute to the construction of empathic interactions. All these actions seem to serve a specific function in the interaction: some are used to assess the situation being discussed, others take the conversation to a specific interactional sequence, some mainly align with the telling whereas others affiliate with the teller, etc., but they all need the coordinated collaboration of the interactants. The telling of a trouble activates a ritualistic engagement of the participants in the interaction with the display of multiple communicative resources, ideally leading to mutual understanding, stance taking and affiliation for the telling to be complete.

In general, the findings in the post-role play questionnaires and FGIs tend to support many of the conclusions drawn from the role plays, making more sense of the whole process of empathy giving. How empathy is understood and how it is socially used are comparable in the two groups, with participants interpreting and reacting to concrete situations in the same or similar ways. Our social and cultural perspectives, shaping the organization and display of empathic responses, prove to be quite similar in the case of these two language groups. Whether this is due to intrinsic similarities between those cultures or whether globalisation and the commodification of culture also play a part in it, homogenizing cultures and reducing cultural differences around the world, is out of the scope of this study.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

The study presented here has examined the expression of empathy basically from a linguistic point of view by analysing the act of empathy-giving in two different languages: Catalan and British English. It has contributed to research in cross-cultural pragmatics, characterising a speech act, empathy providing, that has been understudied, particularly in Catalan. Additionally, the study has also described some sociopragmatic features of the realisation, perception, and conceptualisation of empathy in the two cultures. In order to carry out this study, a mixed-method design was decided upon, in order to deal with the different empathy-related aspects considered. A linguistic perspective was adopted when analysing the interactional moves made by empathy providers (EPs) when responding to the telling of a trouble presented and discussed in the role plays. A more psychological approach was required in order to gain the participants' immediate perceptions of their own interactions, which was achieved by means of the post-role play questionnaires. A more sociological perspective on empathy and how it is perceived was taken for the last data-gathering method, the focus group interviews in which the participants expressed their views on empathy and its social and personal use. This design encompassing different methods and analyses has allowed to get a global view of empathy and, more specifically, of the expression, perception, and conception of empathy in the two languages. To my knowledge this is the first study looking into the speech act of empathy-giving in these two languages as well as the first study using this design.

A central problem that was presented in the early stages of the study and that is often emphasised in the literature is the lack of consensus on the notion of empathy, which highlights the complexity of the construct. Empathy is not only a psychological phenomenon but also a communicative, interactional one. It is the latter that is dealt with in the present study. Thus, here empathy is understood as the expression of interest, support and consideration for another person's feelings and thoughts.

In this chapter, the findings are summarised in relation to the research questions (Section 1.4) and also some methodological issues are considered, putting forward some suggestions for future research.

6.1 Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI)

The level of empathy was believed to have a possible effect on its expression so, in order to address this issue, a measure of dispositional empathy was chosen: the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). This measurement tool discriminates the different constructs empathy consists of, each related to a specific feature. Only the perspective taking (PT) subscale—the tendency to take the other person's perspective—was taken into account as the other three subscales measured aspects of empathy that were not relevant for the present study. The scores obtained gave no significant differences between sexes or language groups. However, both Catalan and English males scored higher than females, which does not support the majority of studies using the IRI, in which females obtained significantly higher scores than males, but aligns with a minor group of studies that yield the same non-significant differences in their results. PT was also found not to correlate with age thus making the two language groups highly comparable in this respect. No correlation was found either between the scores obtained in the PT scale and the number of strategies used by each participant, confirming the lack of relationship between these two variables. In short, PT does not seem to play a role in how empathy is expressed, at least not when it comes to strategy use.

Some studies explain the prevailing female dominance in questionnaires that measure empathy by ascribing it to motivation. It is hard to say whether this applies in this study with either males feeling more motivated to respond in an empathic way and thus becoming level with females or females feeling less motivated to respond in this way and becoming level with males. Regardless of the underlying reasons, the fact is that no significant sex differences were found. Trying to find out what could lie behind these results is beyond the scope of this study and any potential theories are likely to be addressed by psychology rather than linguistics. For practical purposes, though, the fact that there are no significant differences between language groups, sexes or age has facilitated the undertaking of this comparative study. Sample size must be taken into account as a larger sample size would no doubt have yielded more reliable results.

6.2 Research question 1: How do Catalan and British English speakers verbally express support and empathy? What linguistic strategies and forms are used by speakers of both languages?

The detailed transcription of the role-played conversations using conversation analysis (CA) allowed the identification of the moves made by the participants when responding to the troubles presented in the situations they were asked to role-play. The compilation of data based on situations leading to empathy-eliciting responses provided information about how the telling of someone else's troubles is verbally responded to and how the conversations develop. The findings support what has already been suggested by other authors like Heritage (2011), Couper-Kuhlen (2012) or Kupetz (2014): empathy is jointly constructed by the interactional participants along their discursive practice and is not limited to the use of a single utterance or expression. By identifying and classifying the EPs' contributions in the conversations, a catalogue of verbal practices of empathy-related responses was produced. These practices or strategies were organised according to their aim and grouped into six categories: primal responses, informative requests, evaluative observations, reassuring comments, expressions involving the recipient, and expressions of regret.

The multiple linguistic strategies available make the construction of empathy a varied enterprise but characterised by some features that are widely shared in the two languages, showing a convergence of both language groups in terms of how empathy is verbally expressed. Although the same strategies were found in the two groups, some share similar percentages of use, while others show substantial differences (see Table 9). Interestingly, the most common strategy is the same in the two groups: additional information about the event, which points to a comparable approach to the management of a troubles telling. This strategy not only shows interest in the other person's situation but also allows a certain elaboration of the topic at hand for its assessment. It seems logical that if empathy in principle involves adopting the same or a similar stance to the ER's on the trouble being discussed, some information must be collected first in order to decide whether or not the stances coincide. The strategy is closely connected with the notion of understanding, which is central in empathy, as it

facilitates apprehending the trouble affecting the teller as well as its consequences and implications.

The other top strategy—occupying the first four positions on the frequency list—that was found to be widely used in both groups are remedies. The strategy is connected with another key aspect of empathy: providing help. Many studies confirm that there is a relationship between empathy and what is called prosocial behaviour, i.e. that intended to help others (Vreeke & Van der Mark, 2003; Eisenberg, 2003, 2006, 2010; Hoffman, 2008; Eisenberg et al., 2010; Telle & Pfister, 2012; Decety et al., 2016; Batson, 2018). The results of the current study seem to confirm this. In general, then, in both languages understanding and helping, favouring problem- over emotion-focus, are prioritised in response to troubles tellings. This is reinforced by the results of the FGIs in the two languages, where some participants explicitly verbalise the central roles of understanding and helping when displaying empathy.

In spite of the variety of strategies, four of them are found to account for over half the total in both languages, placing the rest of strategies in a secondary position. Two of these four are shared—additional information about the event and remedies—and the other two are different, illustrating the main differences between groups. English participants make a much more extensive use of primary sound objects and observer responses than Catalan participants, while the latter make a larger use of invoking the status quo and diagnoses than the English subjects, which suggests a more resigned approach, i.e. one of stoic acceptance, in Catalan and a more descriptive one in English when dealing with someone else's trouble.

The interactional sequence of these conversations is also coincident for both groups, following the general outline of announcement, receipt, elaboration, and closing, conforming in general to existing troubles telling and complaint sequences (Jefferson 1988; Maynard, 1997; Terasaki 2004; Schegloff 2007). The analysis of the conversations has allowed to identify the main features of each of these parts. For example, at a lexical level, some elements have been found to indicate the beginning of the closing sequence in Catalan ("bueno" and "no sé") and in English (agreement tokens, such as "yeah"). Sequence organization also includes strategy position, which plays a key role in the construction of empathy, as the same strategy may be perceived as more or less

empathic depending on its placement in the interaction. In general, for a single strategy (no matter how understanding or compassionate it may be presented) to be effective in terms of empathy, some previous topic elaboration is required. Average conversation length, average contribution by the EP to the conversation, and average number of strategies per conversation are alike, strengthening the similarities between groups. The analysis of the role plays has also allowed to identify the strengthening and mitigating elements that complement and add nuances to the EP's responses in Catalan and English. These elements have only been described, since their in-depth analysis would surely require a thesis in its own right. In consequence, further research on the use of strengthening and mitigating elements in relation to empathy is needed and encouraged, particularly gestures and facial expressions as they can work on their own, not accompanying a verbal message, to convey affiliation and understanding.

The data obtained by means of the post-role play questionnaires show the positive impact of the number of strategies on the ER in both groups. Although the statistically significant items related to the ER's satisfaction vary depending on the language, it seems that the ER perceives the use of more strategies as something favourable. The more strategies are used, the more elaborate the interaction is, which seems to lead to more satisfactory outcomes. The results also confirm that the ER's satisfaction is linked to the notion of being understood and with the change in how the trouble is perceived (appraisal), further confirming the importance of these two concepts when expressing empathy.

In short, the results show that the construction of empathic responses in both Catalan and English is comparable with only some minor differences related to strategy use. The current study deals with a small group of participants with a similar profile from two Western languages and cultures sharing many values, conceptualizations, relational norms, and social customs. It would be interesting to further explore the topic and gather data from participants with a different profile or comparing other languages and cultures, particularly a western and an eastern one since they are more likely to show more marked differences as they present differences in terms of empathy and empathy-related constructs (Cassels et al., 2010; Birkett, 2014; Atkins et al., 2016; Chopik et al., 2017; Errasti et al., 2018; Main & Kho, 2020). Therefore, carrying out more cross-cultural

studies on different languages, and preferably with a larger sample of informants, can improve our understanding of the phenomenon of empathy in general and help in the generalisation of the findings in this study.

Another possible shortcoming of this study is the use of role plays instead of naturally occurring interactions, which is favoured in CA studies. Although the majority of participants admitted that they felt comfortable all through the study and forgot about the fact that they were being recorded, a few explicitly commented that they felt they were acting and had doubts about their performance being the same as in real life situations. Thus, the methodology employed might have affected the results, for example in the limited use of pre-announcements, the way most conversations were closed or the use of a strategy such as expletives/vulgar expressions. As some of the participants acknowledged, they were more self-conscious of what they said and the language they used. However, in spite of this and although the benefits of analysing natural data are clear, the role plays have allowed to control the profile of the participants in the study, to carry out the study in two different environments, and to limit the situations being discussed, facilitating group comparison. The more controlled environment of the study design has also allowed to incorporate other methods—post-role play questionnaires and focus group interviews (FGIs)—to the study that provide a perspective that is not normally found in naturally occurring interactions. The post-role play questionnaires are a window to the participants' immediate perceptions of their own interactions whereas the focus group interviews offer a complementary view on the topic of empathy.

6.3 Research question 2: How do the systems of social support in Catalan and British English compare? What cross-cultural differences are there in the production and perception of interactional discourse in specific contexts where support and empathy are expressed?

The sociopragmatic dimension of the study is mainly analysed based on the data obtained in the focus group interviews, where the study participants answered and discussed some questions related to social and personal aspects of empathy, and partly on the results of the post-role play questionnaires. The main aim of the focus group interviews was to complement and, in some cases, explain the pragmalinguistic data

obtained through other methods and gain a wider perspective of empathy as a social and interactional phenomenon.

In general, the two language groups show a high degree of coincidence at a sociopragmatic level. Not only is empathy understood and conceptualised in the same way (with the same lack of consensus existing in the literature and extending its boundaries to include notions like compassion or caring), but the way empathy is fished for or the general perception and reactions about low or absence of empathy also show strong concordance between both groups. Again, understanding emerges as the central concept related to empathy, which supports the results obtained in the post-role play interviews—feeling understood correlates significantly with the level of satisfaction of the participants—as well as the choice of additional information about the event as the main strategy. The other notion empathy is closely related to is that of helping—also emphasised in the role plays with the use of remedies—which aims to the reappraisal of the trouble at hand. In both language groups the importance of reappraisal over affiliation is suggested. Even cases of initial disaffiliation, which tends to be generally perceived in a negative light, may lead to the reappraisal of the situation and its subsequent benefits.

Other common themes emerged in the interviews of which self-experience is recurrent in the two groups. Having had the same or similar experience is believed to contribute to understanding and, as a consequence, to empathy but this seemed to somehow contradict the choice of strategies in the role plays as second stories were seldom used in the two languages. Generally speaking, though, the coincidences between groups are remarkable. The fact that the study was carried out with young individuals of two western cultures may have an effect on the high degree of agreement. As with the pragmalinguistic dimension of the current research, further studies including participants with different demographic characteristics and from different western and eastern cultures are recommended to explore the social and personal use and perception of empathy as well as the themes associated with it.

6.4 Implications and considerations

The research on empathy has been widely carried out by disciplines like psychology or neuroscience but its study as an interactional phenomenon is limited, particularly in

languages other than English. The current study adds to the scientific knowledge of empathy within the field of cross-cultural pragmatics by exploring the responses offered by EPs when discussing someone's troubles in Catalan and British English. Taking this into account, extrapolating the results of this thesis to other languages or populations is not appropriate, although the study's replication is encouraged in order to consolidate or dispute its findings. The implications discussed below should therefore be considered within the limitations of this study in terms of population and/or languages, even though they might apply to similar realities.

The combination of methods and approaches has proven to be fruitful as different layers of the empathic process have been combined and considered in the same study. The perspective taking scale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, the post-role play questionnaires, and the focus group interviews have all allowed to better understand what underlies the verbal choices made by the participants in the role plays and what empathy involves. The results of all these methods were exploited with a specific aim in mind, but they can still be analysed from a different perspective and open new lines of research. For example, the results of the post-role play questionnaires can be useful to explore many of the resulting significant correlations such as the EP's level of satisfaction in relation to the ER's feeling of being understood (Tables 11 and 12) that have not been examined in this study and that require a different, more psychological approach. The focus group interviews can be treated as the source of processes whose specific characteristics can be analysed from an interactional point of view (e.g. the expression of agreements and disagreements, non-verbal elements like gestures or facial expressions, turn-taking, etc.). The Catalan interactions, both in the role plays and in the focus group interviews, can also be used to examine code-mixing in Catalan.

Because empathy is present in many of our everyday interactions, helping us to establish a good rapport with others and facilitating the building of social connections, the implications of the research findings are broad. Empathy is often appealed to in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict in endless environments, from politics to school or work. It is also essential in situations with intercultural actors (e.g. international businesses, educational mobility programmes, etc.) or in situations where there is vulnerability or anxiety and face must be preserved. Becoming aware of the

other person's thoughts and emotions and reacting showing and expressing interest and support for that person is likely to make you be perceived as a competent and social individual. Thus, regardless of whether we feel the same as the other person or not, reacting in this way is what is expected and believed to be appropriate, particularly in delicate or troublesome situations. Knowing how empathic interactions work, the importance of topic elaboration, and what interactional moves are normally made in these cases can help us to manage them more effectively and to be seen as more considerate towards others. By better understanding the other person's mental and emotional state we can become more aware of our own thoughts, reasoning, and values, and at the same time improve our empathic potential.

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APPENDIX 1

ROLE PLAYS

You are going to have a role play activity with a partner. Each of you will be given a card describing a situation.

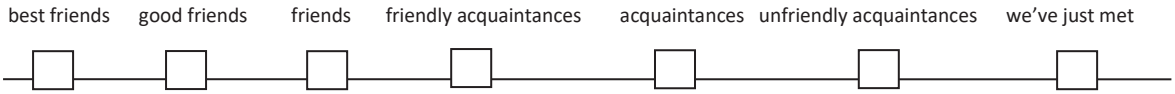
Act as you would act in a real-life situation. Use as much time as you need.

Please, before you start the role play activity, answer the following questions:

Age: Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐

Mother tongue: _____

What kind of relationship do you have with your partner?

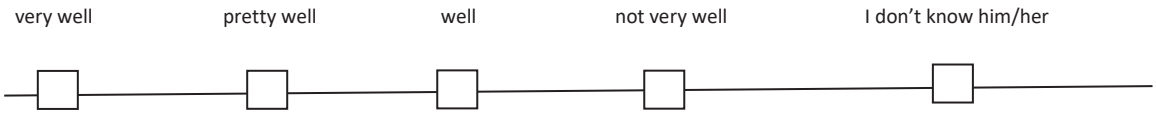


How long have your known your partner? _____ years.

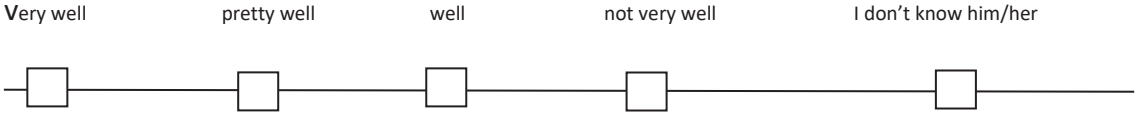
_____ months.

_____ we have just met.

How well do you know your partner?



How do you get on with your partner?



APPENDIX 2

ROLE PLAY DESCRIPTIONS

1. **A.** You are a university student. You are studying to be a physiotherapist and are having your training in a hospital. This morning, during your training session, one of your patients complained to your tutor about your poor skills. You meet your friend in the university canteen for a coffee. What do you say?

B. You are a university student. You are studying to be a physiotherapist. You meet your friend in the university canteen for a coffee. Respond to your friend.

2. **A.** You are a university student. You have just been informed that you are not going to be given a grant to study abroad for one year. You really expected to get it. You meet your friend for a coffee in the university canteen and tell him/her about it. What do you say?

B. You are a university student. You meet your friend for a coffee in the university canteen. Respond to your friend.

3. **A.** You are a university student. This morning you were so late for an exam you were not allowed to take it. You meet your friend for a coffee in the university canteen and tell him/her about it. What do you say?

B. You are a university student. You are having coffee with a friend of yours in the university canteen. Respond to your friend.

4. **A.** Some days ago your parents told you they were getting divorced. You meet your friend for a coffee in the university canteen and tell him/her about it. What do you say?

B. You are having coffee with a friend of yours in the university canteen. Respond to your friend.

5. **A.** You owe 100€ to one of your friends. You told her that you would pay her back in a week but you don't have the money and you do not know when you'll be able to give it back. Now you are having a coffee with another friend in the university canteen and tell her/him about it. What do you say?

B. You are a university student. You are having coffee with a friend in the university canteen. Respond to your friend.

6. **A.** You are a university student. You are studying to be a physiotherapist and are having your training in a hospital. This morning, during your training session, your tutor asked you to be more careful about your personal hygiene and to come freshly showered and with your hair tied up and clean. You meet your friend in the university canteen for a coffee. What do you say?

B. You are a university student. You are studying to be a physiotherapist. You meet your friend in the university canteen for a coffee. Respond to your friend.

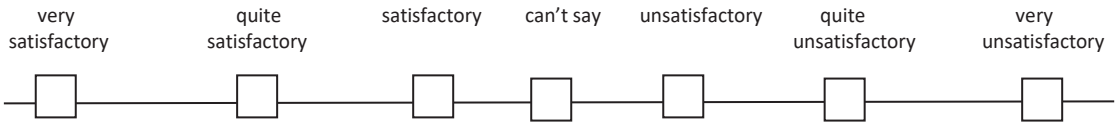
APPENDIX 3

Questions for participant A

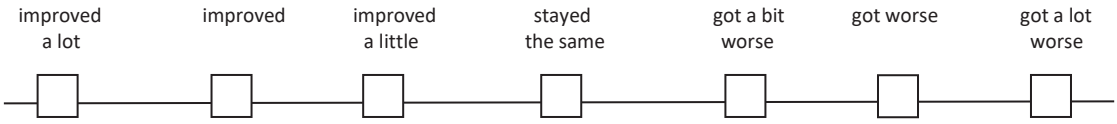
Please, choose the option that best describes your answer to the questions below connected with the conversation you have just had.

After talking to your friend,

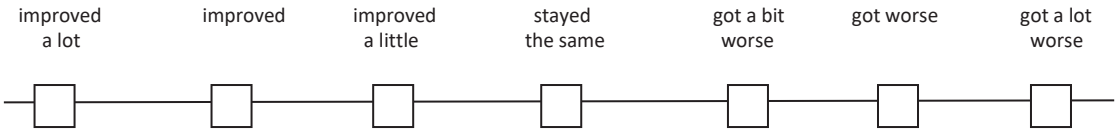
how satisfactory has the conversation been?



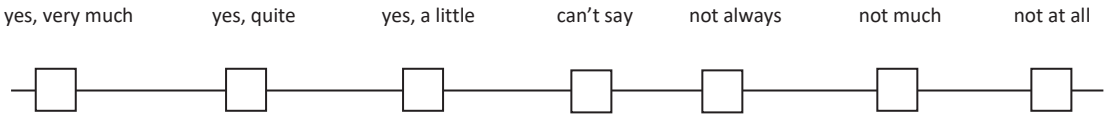
has your mood?:



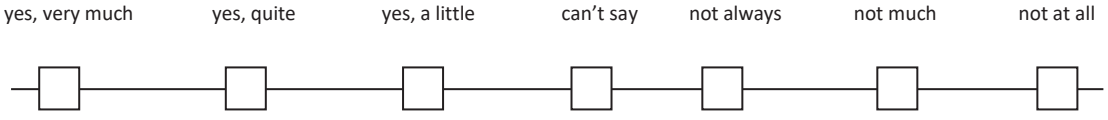
has your perspective towards the troubling situation?:



have you felt understood by your friend?:



do you feel your friend was judgmental about you?:

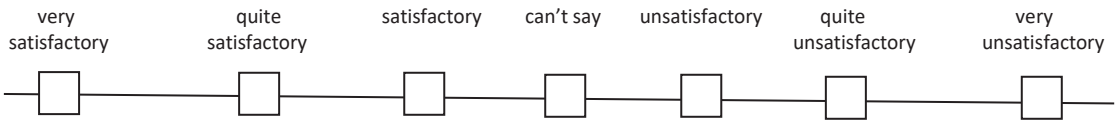


Questions for participant B

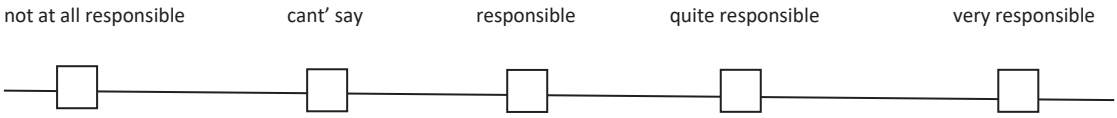
Please, choose the option that best describes your answer to the questions below connected with the conversation you have just had.

After talking to your friend,

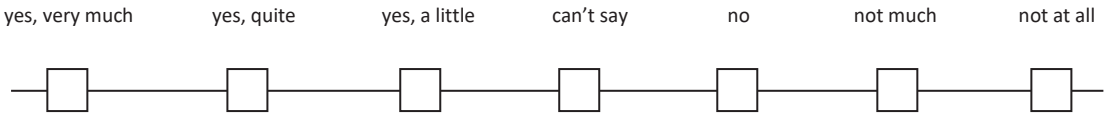
how satisfactory has the conversation been?



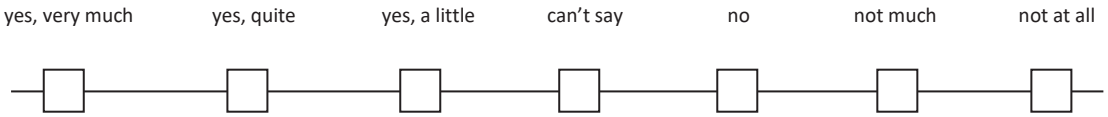
what is the level of responsibility of your friend for the situation?



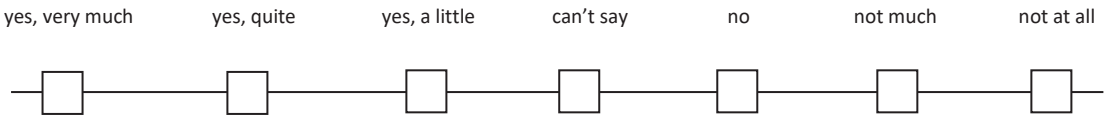
do you think you have helped your friend cope better with the situation?



did you identify yourself with your friend in that situation?



were you concerned about your friend?



APPENDIX 4

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

The thought process:

"What were you thinking about while you were interacting with your partner?"

The general roles of expressing empathy:

"What situations (don't) call for empathy?"

"When do you expect someone to empathise with you?"

"Is there anything that you find inappropriate when giving/receiving empathy?"

The emotional involvement in empathic speech acts:

"What is empathy for you?"

"How do you feel when you (don't) receive empathy?"

The strategies used in empathic situations:

"How do you fish for empathy?"

"How do you react when you don't receive expected empathy?"

Additional questions at the end of the session:

"Is there anything you would like to add about empathy, its role in interpersonal communication or its social use?"

Questions about the study:

"Is there anything about the organisation or the methodology of the study you think could be changed or improved?"

APPENDIX 5

UAB
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Vicerectorat d'Investigació

Comissió d'Ètica en l'Experimentació Animal i Humana (CEEAH)
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
08193 Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès)

Bellaterra (Barcelona), April 5th, 2016

Tho whom it may concern:

The Ethics Committee on Animal and Human Research of the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* INFORMS:

That the research which will be carried out by regarding **"The verbal expression of empathy"** project submitted by **Dra. Hortènsia Curell Gotor** and its approved on April 29 th. It will be in accordance with the provisions of Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine: Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine. This convention was approved by European Council (Oviedo, November 19th,1997) and ratified by the Spanish Parliament in October 5th, 1999.

In that sense, the researchers are aware about the absolute necessity of preserving the individual rights, privacy and dignity of the volunteers participating in the project.

The right of research subjects to safeguard their privacy will be guaranteed by the confidentiality of the participant's information, according to the Law that applies to Spain the EU directives on private data protection *"Ley Orgánica 15/1999: Ley de Protección de Datos de Carácter Personal (LOPD)"* of 13th December 1999. Therefore, all information will be processed with total anonymity.

Yours faithfully,

In Bellaterra (Barcelona), April 29th 2016

Núria Pérez Pastor
Secretary, Ethical Committee UAB

Edifici A - Campus de la UAB – 08193 Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès) – Barcelona Spain
Tel.: 34 – 93 581 35 78 – Fax: 34 – 93 581 20 23
www.uab.cat / ceeah@uab.cat

APPENDIX 6

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

You are being asked to take part in a research study on language and social interaction. Please read the following information about the study and ask any question you feel it is necessary to clarify any aspects of your participation.

Aim of the research: The purpose of this study is to analyse different linguistic aspects of interpersonal communication in Catalan and in English and how they are organised in the discourse.

Description: In order to carry out this study, both a sociolinguistic and a pragmalinguistic perspective are taken and therefore different data gathering instruments are used: short questionnaires, role-plays and a short group interview, which will be administered in a single session of around two hours. Part of the data gathering session will be videotaped and audio-recorded. Participation in the project is completely voluntary.

Risks: There are no risks related to participating in the study but should you decide you want to withdraw from the study, you can do it at any time for any or no reason without any penalty or any other consequence.

Benefits: The data gathered will contribute to a better understanding of interpersonal interactions. The conclusions reached in the study will hopefully help identify and analyse the structure and organization of these interactions.

Confidentiality: We guarantee the anonymity of the participants in the study and to use the data obtained only for scientific purposes. Only the researchers and the members of the scientific team will have access to this material. The recordings will be safely stored and treated as strictly confidential. The recordings and digital images will not be published in any video or commercial or scientific publication without the express consent of the participants involved.

Contact details: If you would like to get further information about the study, you can contact any of the people responsible for the study:

Ms Carme Sanahuges (PhD degree candidate): carme.sanahuges@gmail.com
Tel.: +34 687 56 77 55

Dr Hortènsia Curell (thesis director): hortensia.curell@uab.cat
Tel.: +34 93 581 2325

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB).
Department of English and German Philology.
Edifici B.
Facultat de Filosofia i Lletres.
08193 Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès)
Barcelona
SPAIN

Oxford Brookes University has knowledge of this study and has permitted recruitment at the University. In the event of any questions about the study, please contact the researchers in the first instance. Should you need to contact anyone at Oxford Brookes about this further, please email ethics@brookes.ac.uk

Consent to participate: By signing this consent form you indicate that you have read and understood the information above and that you agree to take part in the study.

If you decide to take part in the research project, you will be contacted and given information about when and where the session will take place.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

E-MAIL ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

APPENDIX 7

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS – CATALAN

RESULTS:

1. En què pensaves mentre feies els *role plays* amb el teu/la teva companya?

'What were you thinking about while doing the role plays?'

Limitació dels role-plays → situació poc natural (3)

'Limitations of role plays → non-natural situation (3)'

No conèixer la parella (2)

'Not knowing the partner (2)'

Dificultats per posar-se en el paper (2)

'Difficulties in imagining the situation (2)'

És més difícil explicar la situació que no pas respondre (1)

'It's more difficult to tell about the situation than to react to it (1)'

2. Quines situacions demanen empatia?

'What situations call for empathy?'

Totes les situacions (4)

'All situations (4)'

Més les situacions negatives (3)

'Mainly negative situations (3)'

Quan es necessita comprensió (2)

'When you need to be understood (2)'

Quan implica que l'altre et faci un favor (1)

'Those involving somebody doing you a favour (1)'

3. Quan esperes que algú empatitzi amb tu?

'When do you expect someone to empathise with you?'

Bàsicament en situacions dolentes (4)

'Mainly in difficult situations (4)'

Sempre (2)

'Always (2)'

Sempre però amb límits (marcant la individualitat de cadascú) (2)

'Always but within limits (recognizing one's individuality) (2)'

4. Hi ha res que trobis poc apropiat quan dones empatia?

'Is there anything that you find inappropriate when giving empathy?'

Dir que ho entens quan no és cert (1)

'Saying you understand when you don't (1)'

5. Hi ha res que trobis poc apropiat quan reps empatia?

'Is there anything that you find inappropriate when receiving empathy?'

Distraccions (e. g. que mentre parli amb tu, estigui pel mòbil) (1)

'Distractions (ex. not leaving one's mobile phone alone while talking to you) (1)'

Dir a l'altre què ha de fer (1)

'Telling the other person what to do (1)'

Retrets (1)

'Reproaches (1)'

Falta de reciprocitat (1)

'Lack of reciprocity (1)'

No aprofitar l'empatia oferta (1)

'Not making the most of the empathy offered (1)'

Falta de senyals (quan s'ha d'endevinar si l'altra persona està malament) (1)

'Lack of signals (when assessing if the other person is down) (1)'

Falsa empatia (fer veure que s'entén una cosa quan no és cert) (1)

'Fake empathy (pretending one understands when it's not true) (1)'

Reaccions exagerades (1)

'Exaggerated reactions (1)'

Riure (per reacció inesperada) (1)

'Laughing (unexpected reaction) (1)'

Riure (traient ferro de la situació) (1)

'Laughing (making light of the situation) (1)'

6. Què és l'empatia per tu?

'What is empathy for you?'

Posar-te en el lloc de l'altre i ajudar-lo (5)

'Imagining yourself in someone else's place and help them (5)'

Posar-te al lloc de l'altre / comprendre l'altra persona (4)

'Imagining yourself in someone else's place / understanding the other person (4)'

Una capacitat (1)

'An ability (1)'

Compartir un problema (1)

'Sharing a problem (1)'

7. Com et sents quan (no) reps empatia?

'How do you feel when you (don't) receive empathy?'

Indiferència per part de l'altre que et fa sentir malament (3)

‘Indifference from the other person, which makes you feel bad (3)’

Menyspreat (2)

‘Rejected (2)’

Decebut (2)

‘Disappointed (2)’

Ridícul (1)

‘Ridiculous (1)’

Incomprès (1)

‘Misunderstood (1)’

Amb ràbia (1)

‘Angry (1)’

Frustrat (1)

‘Frustrated (1)’

Traït (1)

‘Betrayed (1)’

En estat de shock (1)

‘In shock (1)’

Deixo de valorar l’altra persona (1)

‘I do no longer appreciate the other person (1)’

8. Com ho fas per demanar empatia?

‘How do you fish for empathy?’

Explicant el problema (6)

‘Explaining the problem (6)’

Indirectament (e. g. amb la cara que fas) (4)

‘Indirectly (ex. with one’s facial expression) (4)’

Parlant de coses relacionades amb el problema (2)

‘Talking about things related to the problem (2)’

Directament (e. g. dient ‘posa’t en el meu lloc’) (1)

‘Directly (ex. saying ‘imagine yourself in my place´) (1)’

9. Com reacciones quan no reps l’empatia que esperaves?

‘How do you react when you don’t receive expected empathy?’

Decidint que a l’altra persona no val la pena parlar-li de segons què (4)

‘Deciding that that person isn’t worth talking to about certain things (4)’

Interpel·lant l’altre (e. g. preguntant-li directament què passa) (4)

‘Questioning the other person (ex. directly asking them what is wrong) (4)’

Mostrant més fredor la propera vegada (3)

‘Giving the other person the cold shoulder next time (3)’

Insistint en el tema (2)

‘Insisting on the issue (2)’

Intentant entendre el perquè (2)

‘Trying to understand why [the other person has not empathised] (2)’

Marxant (2)

‘Leaving (2)’

Canviant de tema (1)

‘Changing topics (1)’

Canviant de persona (1)

‘Looking for somebody else (1)’

10. L'empatia a la societat actual

'Empathy in society'

L'empatia no té el paper que hauria de tenir (9)

Empathy does not have the role it should have (9)

Només per treure'n benefici propi (4)

'Only to one's benefit (4)'

Depèn de l'àmbit (1)

'It depends on the area (1)'

El ritme actual no ajuda a tenir empatia (1)

'Our current lifestyle does not help to have empathy (1)'

Les xarxes socials ho dificulten (1)

'Social media make it difficult (1)'

Només empatitzem amb les coses que ens són properes (1)

'We only empathise with things that are close to us (1)'

11. L'empatia a les ciències de la salut.

'Empathy in healthcare.'

L'empatia per sobre de/com a ajuda al tractament (6)

'Empathy is more important than/a help to treatment (6)'

Es treballa amb persones, per tant l'empatia és important (5)

'We work with people so empathy is important (5)'

És fonamental (4)

'It's fundamental (4)'

Desgast de l'empatia (3)

'Empathy is eroded (3)'

Empatia com a eina (1)

'Empathy as a tool (1)'

12. Metodologia de l'estudi

'Study methodology'

12.1. Relació entre els participants

'Relationship among the participants'

Situacions més reals si els participants es coneguessin (1)

'The situations would me more real if the participants knew each other (1)'

Situacions més falses si els participants es coneguessin (1)

'The situations would be more inauthentic if the participants knew each other (1)'

Naturalitat de la conversa depèn del nivell de comoditat amb el company (1)

'The naturalness of the conversation depends on the level of easiness with the partner (1)'

12.2. Entorn

'Setting'

Millor en un entorn diferent (1)

'Better in a different place (1)'

12.3. Presència de l'investigador

'Presence of the researcher'

Millor sense la presència de l'investigador (1)

'Better without the presence of the researcher (1)'

La presència de la càmera talla (1)

‘The presence of the camera makes you uncomfortable (1)’

No se’n recorden de la presència de la càmera (3)

‘You forget about the camera (3)’

12.4. IRI

IRI massa general (1)

‘The IRI is too general (1)’

Mateixes preguntes fetes de diferent manera (1)

‘You get the same questions asked differently (1)’

Escala de l’1 al 5, insuficient (1)

‘The scale from 1 to 5 is insufficient (1)’

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS – ENGLISH

RESULTS:

1. What were you thinking about while doing the role-plays?

Trying to put yourself in the situation (7)

Trying to think of the response one would like to get (5)

The environment did not help (4)

It was difficult to know how to respond (3)

It was difficult to put yourself in a situation that you have not experienced (3)

Trying to think of similar situations (1)

Trying to say the right thing (1)

Trying to imagine what it felt like to be the other person (1)

Trying to think how to respond in that situation (1)

Trying to imagine how the other person would react to their response (1)

Trying to make the other person feel fine (1)

2. What situations call for empathy?

Any situation in which a person is in trouble (16)

Any situation (11)

When somebody needs your help (2)

3. What situations don't call for empathy?

When you don't want to get involved (8)

Situations the person is responsible for (7)

When you see somebody drunk and stuff and you think 'deal with it yourself' (1)

When somebody has done something bad (1)

When you have to remain calm in a medical setting or emergency and put your emotions aside (1)

When you are in a position of authority (1)

3. When do you expect someone to empathise with you?

When you're in an emotional vulnerable state (4)

When you want support (3)

When you're in need (2)

I would expect a friend to empathise more than a stranger (1)

All the time (1)

When you've been through something similar (1)

4. Is there anything that you find inappropriate when giving/receiving empathy?

When people that don't know you quite well try to give you life counselling (6)

Pretending it (3)

When dealing with patients you shouldn't tell that much into their personal life or show much physical closeness (3)

When the teller makes the situation worse to make you empathise (2)

Downplaying the situation (2)

Being patronising (1)

When people say 'I know exactly how you feel' (1)

When people make it about them and start talking about their experiences (1)

When people make you realise of something you were not aware of that makes the situation worse (1)

When they don't interpret the situation correctly (1)

5. What is empathy for you?

Relating to someone and their feelings and emotions (4)

Putting yourself in somebody else's shoes (3)

Showing compassion for someone (2)

Try to understand why someone feels that way (2)

Let someone know you understand how they feel (2)

Your emotions towards other people (1)

How you feel and how you react to what other people say to you (1)

Reassure someone (1)

React based on how you'd react in the situation being discussed (1)

Feel what they're feeling (1)

6. How do you feel when you (don't) receive empathy?

I'd feel worse (8)

I'd feel irritated (4)

I'd rethink the friendship (3)

I'd feel upset (3)

I'd question myself (2)

I'd feel silly because I'd have chosen the wrong person to speak to (1)

I'd think they have their own problems and can't deal with yours (1)

I'd feel sad (1)

I'd think I need to relax a bit (1)

I'd pull myself away from that person (1)

7. How do you fish for empathy?

You give some sign of distress (e.g. you're more silent than normal) (15)

You go to the people who you know will respond (4)

Telling people about the trouble (3)

Some people tell you about the trouble but others don't. There's no right way. (2)

8. How do you react when you do not receive expected empathy?

I'd accept it (7)

I'd not bother to tell them about my problems again (5)

I'd tell myself to go over it (4)

I'd pull myself away from that person (3)

I'd rethink our friendship (3)

I'd tell them I was annoyed with them (3)

I'd want to know why they haven't reacted as expected (2)

If it's a close friend, I'd say 'hey, listen to me!' (2)

I'd ask them if they think I'm overreacting (1)

9. Empathy in society

The level of empathy in society is good (7)

Either you're empathic or you're not (2)

The showing of empathy is cultural (2)

Empathy is not in good health in society (particularly with social networks) (2)

People have different perspectives of what empathy means (1)

People don't empathise if they don't understand a situation (1)

Empathy can be strengthened through experience (1)

The level of empathy in society is bad (1)

English have a bad rep in terms of empathy (1)

10. Empathy in healthcare

It's very important (10)

Some healthcare providers are empathetic but others are not (4)

Healthcare providers are more conscious of empathy (2)

Healthcare students have a higher level of empathy (2)

It's easier to empathise in this context because you have information about diseases and their effects on patients (1)

11. Study methodology

11.1. Situations

Limited detail of situations, which makes discussion harder (3)

Limited detail of situations, which is more realistic (1)

The introductory part is lost (1)

You don't know how you'd really react in the situations provided (1)

Acting these situations was hard because they are not actually real-life experiences (1)

Good balance of situations (1)

APPENDIX 8

This appendix contains a conversation sample in each language. For access to the data gathered and used in this study, please contact the author.

CONVERSATION SAMPLE– CATALAN

PARELLA 1

17/03/2016
Sant Cugat del Vallès
Català
M/F
AC
Beca
Acd
2
587
310

Jana: saps que m'ha- saps que he rebut aquest matí un correu? (.) que em deien que no tenia la beca/ (.) que vaig demanar\[(.)]per anar a estudiar fora (.)

Sergi: [no fo:tis]

Jana: t'ho dic en serio\ (.) i: (.) estic súper cabrejada\ (.) perquè

Sergi: però com ha anat?

Jana: pues (.) no sé (.) jo vaig sol·licitar-la saps? (.) al al feb- al gener (.) que has de demanar totes les beques i tal\ (.) i vaig enviar-ne com tres (.) i també volia fer a veure si amb algun Erasmus em donaven i els Erasmus ja sabia que no perquè: (.) va per nota i tal\ (.) però (0.5) bue- (.) em diuen que no (.) que que no tinc la els (.) que no cumplo els requisits que tinc (.) que he de tenir per perquè em donguin una beca\(.) però tio ((obre els braços als costats)) jo no tinc pasta\ (.) i ara com ho faig?

Sergi: fuà (.) quina putada! torna'ls-hi a enviar un correu\ i explica'ls-hi la teva situació (.) potser (.) recapaciten (.) no sé

Jana: ((bufa molt lleugerament)) no sé (°estic °)

Sergi: de vegades ja saps com van aquestes coses\ (.) que:: a:: ((s'encongeix d'espatlles)) (0.5) fan lo que volen (0.5) i: [

Jana: [°ja°]

Sergi: i no avaluen bé:: (.) jo què sé\ (.) jo insistiria però és una putada (.) ja: (.) t'havies mun- t'ho havies muntat tot ( ) explica'ls-hi que: (.) ja t'ho havies

muntat\ (.) que havies mirat (.) llocs per anar\ per estudiar (.) per fer pràctiques (.) almenys que recapacitin una mica\ (.) que almenys que most- almenys que vegin que mostres interès

Jana: no si l'interès hi és però clar si no hi ha pasta (.) no hi ha pasta però (.) la gent (.) es pensa que aquí: (.) en sobra però [(0.5)] no és barat\

Sergi: [ja:] ja: (0.5) però bueno: (0.5) no sé (.) oj- (.) ojalà te la donguin (.) però: (.) hhh (.) això va com va (.) aque:sts (.) és lo que té [(.)] són trenta mil que: (.) només li poden donar a mil\

Jana: [°ja::°] °ja: (.) a vere si:°

Sergi: però: (.) jo que sé\ (.) jo crec que si t'ho (.) si t'ho curres i els hi envies\ (.) i: (.) i t'ho mires (.) i veuen que mostres interès (.) potser es tornen a mirar el teu cas (.) qui sap/ [(.)] no sé a vegades això va com va (.) per desgracia\

Jana: [°bue:no°] pues sí / (.) a veure si no ens han tancat els (.) el plaç [(.)] i: (.) puc trucar a veure que em diguin

Sergi: [ja:] a ojalà si necessites ajuda amb algo:: (.) i ens ho mirem\

Jana: °vale° (.) tu vas demanar beca o què?

Sergi: no no (.) jo: jo preferia estar aquí/ (.) jo com que no sé molt d'anglè:s [(.)]=

Jana: [((riu))]

Sergi: =a mi això d'anar fora (.) no vull morir-me de gana\

Jana: bue(hh)no jo: a veure (.) si em donen (.) pues ho intentaré (.) i si no (.) a tor(hh)nar

Sergi: sí sí (.) si no a veure (.) tampoc és (0.5) és una gran experiència (.) diuen que::\(0.5) no no tant com aprendre de la fisioteràpia si no aprens de la vida una mica (.) vale? (.) viure fora (.) estar lluny dels teus (.) >° dels teus éssers°< estimats (.) de la teva família (.) °(vic vic)° conèixer noves cultu:res/ (.) no sé jo crec que és una experiència molt maca/ (.) jo crec que (.) estaria bé que lluitessis i que provessis a veure si (.) si pots aconseguir-la/ (0.5) no sé (.) és que és una putada /(.) és que no t'ho poden fer la veritat\

Jana: és que ja sabia fins i tot on volia anar/ (.) on volia: (.) viure/ (.) i i [(.)] =

Sergi: [ja:]

Jana: = ja fins i tot tenia un col·lega que està allà també d'Erasmus i era com (.) buaaaa ens veurem (.) no sé què (.) i ara (.) pfff (.) ni idea/ (.) però bueno: (.) ja (.) ja enviaré a veure que tal què em diuen (.) i si no (.) doncs aquí/ (.) que tampoc s'està tan malament (.) je je

Sergi: no/ (.) la veritat és que no (.) la veritat és que hi ha un bon clima (.) s'està bé

CONVERSATION SAMPLE– ENGLISH

PAIR 1

1/03/2017
Oxford
ENG
F/F
CPR
Queixa
Pr
3
278
118

Betty: hi: ⊦ ((light smile)) (0.8) ⊣ how is your placement going?(.) in the hospital

(0.5)

Judy: a:h (.) yea:h (.) it's going ((nodding head several times)) really well actually:/ [(.)] yea:h (.) I'm really enjoying it

Betty: [that's good (.) yea:h] good ⊦ (.) e::m (.) ((clicks her tongue)) (1.8) ⊣ yea:h (.) I was enjoying mine but (.) e:m (.) one of the patients complained [(.) about me this morning]

Judy: [((raises eyebrows and opens eyes more))] oh no:\

Betty: which i:s (0.8) like (.) you kno:w? (.) a bit gutting because I feel like I'm trying my hardest

Judy: yea::h

Betty: and (.) and like they went to my ⊦ ((clicks tongue)) ((waves right hand slightly lifting right wrist and keeping left wrist on top)) (0.6) ⊣ tutor\

Judy: ((nods head)) yea:h

Betty: a:nd (.) said (0.6) my s- (.) you know? (.) it was poor (0.6) care (.) a:nd (.)I was like (.) .hhh

Judy: oh no::\ [(0.6)] o:h (.) I'm sorry to hear tha:t\

Betty: [y*hh*e:s] it's not (.) good (.) because I felt (0.5) quite confident ((moves right hand with palm facing up a couple of times but still keeping the left wrist on top of right wrist)) about it (.) a:nd

Judy: yea:h ((nodding head slightly)) (.) of cou:rse\

Betty: so I don't know if it's just a one-off (.) cause you know how everyone [per]ceives things differently

Judy: [yea:h] (.) they might've been having a bad day::

Betty: definitely [(.)] yea:h (.) but (.) e:m

Judy: [yea:h]

Betty: I thought I was doing really well

Judy: yea:h

Betty: so: it has knocked me a bit

Judy: have you managed to speak to your tuto:r? ⊦

Betty: ((clicks tongue)) (.) e:: (1)⊦ I'm gonna to this afternoon (.) yea:h

Judy: ok (.) that's goo:d (0.5) 'cause they might be able to explain\

Betty: yea:h

Judy: a bit more ((nods head slightly))

(1)

Betty: yeah (.) hopefully it's just a one-off\ [(.) because you know everyone is different and they (.) think] (.) you know? (.) different situations ⊦(.) .hhh (1.3) ⊦ but (.) hhh

Judy: [((nods head several times))]

yeah (.) of course

Betty: it's just one of those things (.) you (.) you really don't want to hear isn't it(h)? ((light laugh))

Judy: yea:h (.) that's really tough [(.)] and it does knock your confidence [(.) a little bit

Betty: [mm((agreeing))((nods head))] [yea:h] definitely

Judy: bu:t (0.5) yeah (.) I guess\ (.) you have to think about (.) ((moves left hand from right side to left side at the level of her chest)) you know? (.) all the other people that you've treated ((lowers left hand a bit like maintaining it on the left side stressing "treated")) [(.)] and [(.)]

Betty: [yeah] [exactly]

Judy: how much ((turns palm of left hand up towards the ceiling)) [positive impact you've had on the:m/] ((brings left hand a bit down still in the same position like stressing "them")) (0.6) you know?

Betty: [((nods head several times))]

Judy: everybody has a bad day (.) occasionally [(.)] it's one ok to: (.) to have a bad day

Betty: [yea:h]
yea:h (.) exactly ((she moves head up and looks up at the ceiling))