

**PRAGMATIC
MARKERS AND
SOCIOLINGUISTIC
VARIATION:
A Relevance-Theoretic
Approach to the
Language of Adolescents**

GISLE ANDERSEN

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PRAGMATIC MARKERS AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION

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A RELEVANCE-THEORETIC APPROACH
TO THE LANGUAGE OF ADOLESCENTS

GISLE ANDERSEN
University of Bergen

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The voice is a dangerous instrument. I don't mean the timbre of the voice, which may be high or low, melodious or grating. I'm not talking about the *sound* but about the inner world from which it springs — the underlying mysteries.

Knut Hamsun *Mysteries*

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CHAPTER 1

General introduction

1.1 Pragmatics and sociolinguistic variation

Since Labov's groundbreaking research in the 1960s, sociolinguistic studies have amply documented the effects of social factors on the language of different speaker groups within a speech community, and the significance of the interplay between language variation and language change. Considering the sociolinguistic tradition as a whole, there has been a preponderance of studies which are concerned with regional variation and variation due to social class and gender differences. To a lesser extent sociolinguists have focused on age, ethnicity and networks as social factors, but there is a growing interest in these fields. In a 1987 state-of-the-art survey, Cheshire observed that '[t]here has been little, if any, research that has had age differences in language use as its prime focus, despite the social importance of such differences' (1987: 766). Such differences are the main concern of the current study, which focuses on variation across generations of speakers and the effect of age differences on the language of speaker groups. The main objective of the current work is to describe ways in which the language of the young members of the London speech community differs from mainstream English.

In the early sociolinguistic studies, age is sometimes included as one of a number of other parameters. More recently, however, it has become increasingly common to consider the language of a particular age group in isolation, but it is mostly the language of adults and children which has been compared. To a lesser degree the language of the adolescent group has been investigated, although some influential studies can be mentioned, such as Cheshire (1982), Romaine (1984), Eckert (1988) and Rampton (1995).¹ In studies of adolescent language, it is first of all 'traditional' sociolinguistic

variables, belonging to the domains of phonetics/phonology, morphology and syntax, that have been subjected to analysis. In addition, previous investigations have commonly dealt with lexical variation, including the importance of slang in adolescent speech. (For examples of studies, see 1.1.2.) To a much lesser extent, age-specific variation has been approached from the point of view of pragmatic features, including the communication of speaker attitude, conversational politeness, the organisation of discourse and so on. The current study is an attempt at a step in this direction of linguistic inquiry, as its main objective is to describe age-specific linguistic phenomena that are principally pragmatic in nature. That is to say, the linguistic features to be accounted for here concern meanings that are largely context-dependent and arise as the result of inferential processes in utterance interpretation and not as results of mere linguistic encoding (cf. 1.1.3). In sum, pragmatics represents an understudied area of cross-generational variation, and the current study is an attempt to remedy this situation.

Differences between adolescent and adult conversation in terms of vocabulary, syntax and pronunciation are generally recognisable to the linguist and the layman alike. Adolescent language is often subject to prescriptive criticism, seemingly more profound than that which affects other varieties of a language (Kotsinas 1994). Teachers, parents and even linguists often express their concern about the corruption and decay of 'our language', and adolescent verbal behaviour is allegedly among the worst cases in this respect. From a sociolinguistic point of view, recognition of age differences in language use should be an incentive to pose a number of questions concerning the nature and extent of age-specific linguistic features. How and to what extent does the language of different age groups differ? Does adolescent language differ from the mainstream variety to an extent that justifies the conceptualisation of adolescent speech as a separate variety of a language? Perhaps even more importantly, why is teenage language different? What sorts of social, psychosocial and cognitive realities are reflected in linguistic variation that crucially depends on the age parameter? What are the diachronic processes that manifest themselves in terms of synchronic intra-generational linguistic variation? To what extent are the norms of linguistic behaviour of adolescents dependent on or independent of the socialisation process and cognitive development of this age group in more general terms? The questions concerning age differences in language use are many and wide-reaching, and within the confines of a single work it

is not possible to give exhaustive answers to them. The current study can but open a small window to our understanding of age-specificity in language, and accounts for a rather narrow set of pragmatic features, to be described in the sections that follow.

1.1.1 *Linguistic variation: why does age matter?*

Variation due to differences in age are manifested at different levels of language, and the aim here is to add empirical support to the hypothesis that adolescents play a crucial role in language variation and change. Another underlying assumption of this study is that the effects of age-specific language variation can be described with respect to linguistic phenomena that belong to the pragmatic domain of communication. Adolescents are assumed to play a prominent role in the use and development of forms that serve pragmatic, e.g. attitudinal, functions (cf. 1.1.3).

Principally, there are two main sets of reasons that provide answers to the question posed in the heading. The first explanatory set is to do with language as such, and relates to the phenomenon of *language change*; the second explanatory set is to do with adolescence as such, and relates to the phenomenon of *age-grading*. Hopefully, the current section will make it clear why I consider the study of adolescent language a worthwhile academic pursuit.²

Approached from one angle, the study of adolescent language will contribute to increased understanding of a particular language or language variety at a particular moment in time. The observation that adolescent language diverges from the adult norms or from the standard variety may be seen as an indicator that the language is changing. A range of studies have documented the importance of adolescent groups as instigators and promoters of linguistic change, for instance, in terms of the development of new phonological variants, structural change, lexical innovations, or linguistic borrowing (cf. 1.1.2). The method of cross-generational comparison (i.e. studying language in so-called ‘apparent time’) enables us to recognise and account for ongoing processes and may even, potentially at least, enable us to postulate future linguistic developments. Such an approach to the study of language may trigger sets of findings that are manifestations of large-scale diachronic processes, and the possibility of unveiling such processes should encourage the empirical linguist to look for linguistic variation across generations.

Approached from another angle, the study of the language of adolescents will contribute to increased understanding of the developmental characteristics of this particular age group. Indeed, adolescent speech can be expected to be different for a number of reasons. It is beyond doubt that the adolescent period is crucial to the individual both in terms of her cognitive and social development. Formerly, members of this age group were viewed as 'little adults' aspiring to adopt the behaviour — linguistic and otherwise — of the parent generation. In post-war western culture we have taken on an entirely different conceptualisation of adolescence, namely as a period in a person's life that is important in its own right, since it involves significant aspects of identity formation, socialisation and cognitive and physical development.

The external and internal forces that shape the individual are particularly salient in adolescence, reflected in the overall significance of in-groupness, increasing drive towards autonomy and marking of distinctness from, especially, the parent generation, but also from other groups of the same age. Socially, adolescents are neither fully autonomous adults nor dependent children. Although semi-autonomous, teenage groups are also to a large extent influential groups. This point is reflected in wide-ranging contemporary manifestations of youth culture in music, clothing, sports, media and literature, and in massive commercial pressure towards this particular group. Adolescence is also significant to the individual in terms of identity formation and acquisition of communicative competence, although the changes involved and the results of external influence may be less crucial than in early childhood. As regards linguistic development, adolescence can justifiably be considered a transitional period, as it is characterised, on the one hand, by completeness of the first language acquisition, and, on the other hand, by incompleteness due to currently ongoing growth in vocabulary and relative lack of linguistic experience (cf. 1.1.2).

In sum, it is important to point out that cross-generational differences do not necessarily imply ongoing linguistic change; they may also be instances of age-grading, that is, linguistic characteristics of a particular age group that are temporary, and are altered or abandoned as its members grow older (Hockett 1950). Age-graded linguistic characteristics may reflect the current cognitive developmental status of the teenager, or they may be manifestations of conscious or semi-conscious choices of the language user that are socially dependent on peer group norms. Observable linguistic variation may

reflect either psychological or social realities. As reported in several studies, adolescents are often found in the forefront of linguistic development and innovativeness. But linguistic innovation is both inherent in the expression of social identity and crucial to the development of new linguistic forms and norms. Therefore, it may be impossible for the linguist who investigates synchronic empirical data to decide whether an adolescence-specific feature is a manifestation of age-grading or of a profound ongoing linguistic change that will have long-term effects. At any rate, a study of adolescent speech is crucial both to our understanding of diachronic linguistic processes at large and to our understanding of the developmental characteristics of this age group in social and cognitive terms.

1.1.2 *The language of adolescents*

So what do we know about the developmental characteristics of the adolescent age group? What level of linguistic competence do we associate with this life stage? The fact that adolescence³ is a transitional period from childhood to young adulthood is, naturally, reflected in language. The language of adolescents is characterised, on the one hand, by the completeness of the first language acquisition and, on the other hand, by relative linguistic inexperience. Under normal circumstances, speakers of a language utilise a fully developed grammar from the approximate age of five. From the same age, they have a fully developed competence of phonological rules and thus master all the phonological features of their local variety (Kerswill 1995). However, it has been well documented that language development is not completed by the onset of puberty but, unlike early childhood, where rapid growth can be observed from one year to the next, language development during adolescence ‘unfolds in a slow and protracted manner and ... becomes obvious only when sophisticated linguistic phenomena are analyzed and nonadjacent groups are compared’ (Nippold & Martin 1989: 65).

It is clear that significant growth occurs in many aspects of language during adolescence. As regards vocabulary, the main body of the lexicon is acquired along with grammatical rules, but adolescents generally have not reached the adult level of minimum 50,000 (up to 250,000) words. Adolescence is a stage of rapid growth in vocabulary size; in fact, a massive expansion occurs in early adolescence, between ages 11 and 14 (Aitchison 1994a, 1994b).

With regard to syntax, it is clear that sentences gradually increase in length, complexity and informational density as young people mature. It has been shown that during adolescence, the use of low-frequency syntactic structures increases substantially (Nippold 1998), and speakers are gradually more able to produce complex sentences that contain syntactic structures that are uncommon in childhood, such as the perfect aspect, the passive voice, relative clauses, non-finite clauses, appositions and cleft sentences.

As regards sociolinguistic variation, young children acquire the vernacular of their local area mainly due to influence from the caregiver models, and the influence from outside the family is relatively limited (Romaine 1984). But in adolescence, this changes dramatically. Early adolescence is normally the first stage in a person's life where the influence from outside the immediate peer group reaches a significant level (Labov 1970; Romaine 1984). Due to increased exposure to a wider range of linguistic varieties, the sociolinguistic competence advances during the adolescent period. Adolescents recognise and practise intralinguistic variation in the ways which are to be expected, given the social norms of the adult community. They become gradually more able to modify their speech in accordance with the speech situation by applying different levels of formality in different contexts (Cheshire 1982; Hammarmo 1982; Aniansson 1996). They master style shifting from at least as early as age eleven (Romaine 1984). Moreover, Cheshire (1982) shows that non-standard regional forms of syntax are a good indicator of adherence to and loyalty with vernacular culture in adolescence. She argues that adolescent groups constitute an apt showcase to detect patterns of morphosyntactic variation, due to the high frequency of non-standard forms, while adults are to a greater extent constrained by the values of the mainstream society and produce less socially stigmatised syntactic variants (Cheshire 1987; see also Romaine 1989). Her findings are corroborated by other research which demonstrates that the proportion of non-standard forms used in speech increases dramatically in early adolescence (e.g. Downes 1984; Romaine 1984) and that adolescents are aware of the social and grammatical differences between standard and non-standard forms (Romaine 1984).

At the discourse level, turn-taking rules are acquired and managed by adolescents, but seem to operate differently from the rules that constrain adult conversation in that the principle of 'survival of the fittest' applies to a greater extent in adolescent speech (Poulsen 1996). Moreover, adolescents

produce considerably shorter turns than adults and they tend to speak marginally more rapidly (Nordberg 1985). As regards pragmatic interpretation, psycholinguistic studies have shown that, during adolescence, there is a gradual increase in the mastery of aspects of language that require a certain level of abstraction and logical reasoning, such as the use and comprehension of discourse connectives like *however* and *nevertheless* (e.g. Nippold et al. 1992; Nippold 1998). The same applies to communication that involves figurative uses of language, including the use and comprehension of metaphor, irony, proverbs and idioms (Nippold & Martin 1989; Nippold 1998).

Stylistically, adolescent conversation is commonly characterised by the so-called 'high-involvement style', in which referential meaning is superseded by the more expressive aspects of language; their conversations typically involve vivid storytelling and the frequent use of reported speech, onomatopoeia and voice quality modulation (Nordberg 1985, 1986; Tannen 1984).

These observations stem from a fairly recent (partly ethnographic) tradition of studies which takes into account the discourse and pragmatic features of adolescent language and devotes attention to topics such as turn-taking, overlapping speech and conversational (especially narrative) style. Of less theoretical interest, perhaps, are the findings of a large number of studies, that teenagers use more slang expressions and swear a lot more than other age groups.⁴ Although crucial to the expression of social identity and ingroupness, these stylistic features can hardly be ascribed to adolescents' linguistic competence. Rather, these types of age-grading are overt manifestations of youth culture adherence and probably reflect the rapid anatomical and physiological changes that occur during adolescence, causing an increase in sexual and aggressive drives and perhaps also feelings of inadequacy. Viewed in conjunction, the above observations show that it makes sense to view adolescence as a period of transition from the basic competence level to a more advanced level of linguistic competence, and its transitional, threshold-like (or 'liminal', Rampton 1997) nature makes the language of teenage groups a highly interesting ground for empirical research.

Resuming the discussion of adolescence and language change, much sociolinguistic literature has provided evidence that adolescents are a prime source of information about ongoing linguistic developments, but, relatively speaking, age does not seem to be the most crucial parameter along which differences between speaker groups have been assessed. As regards children, it is a matter of some controversy whether or not they are significant in

processes of change. On the one hand, Aitchison (1981) argues that, since children do not form influential social groups, they have little of importance to contribute to language change. Some sort of social repercussion of innovative behaviour is a precondition for language change; it is only when other members of a speaker group adopt a particular innovation that change is in progress.⁵ On the other hand, Romaine claims that '[c]hildren's innovations could still lead to cumulative change, providing that they were maintained into adulthood' (1989: 213). Despite this controversy, it is widely agreed that it is not until adolescence that speakers are able to recognise — and appreciate — the social meanings of innovations. It has been shown that adolescents are innovative at different linguistic levels, a characteristic which contrasts with the relative linguistic stability of the language of adulthood (Labov 1994). We can assume that any significant childhood innovation is likely to be reinforced in adolescence as a result of its potential as a marker of adherence to peer group norms (Downes 1984).

Previous research on adolescents and language change has mostly been concerned with linguistic features that are associated with traditional sociolinguistics and dialectology, notably phonetics/phonology, syntax and morphology. It has been shown that adolescents play the role of initiators of developments of new phonological variants (Horvath 1985), that they accelerate phonological change that is already present in a community (Eckert 1988), and that they are the promoters of dialect levelling, i.e. reduction of differences between regional dialects (Kerswill 1995; Kerswill & Williams 1997). Many of these changes are motivated by the increasing need to express autonomy from the parent group and to express loyalty to the peer group.

As regards lexical variation, slang is a significant marker of ingroupness and it is therefore to be expected that it predominates in teenage talk. Although many studies devote attention to lexical innovation in adolescent speech (e.g. Kotsinas 1994; Eble 1996; Androutopoulos 1997), we know little as regards the long term effects of this innovation on language in general. Slang is generally short-lived and has a rapid turn-over; nevertheless, Kotsinas (1994) argues that we should not rule out the possibility that teenagers' creative use of slang and lexical innovation may have long term effects on vocabulary. However, it must be pointed out that adolescents do not, in fact, master all types of linguistic creativity. Aitchison (1994a, 1994b) shows that 14-year olds are unskilled at forming 'blends' (of the type

breakfast + lunch → *brunch*), suggesting that blending is a relatively advanced type of lexical innovation.

On a more impressionistic note, I would like to suggest that it is indeed likely that much linguistic innovation of adolescent speech, be it slang or linguistic borrowing, may make its way into the mainstream language, either due to a synchronic spread to adult groups or due to diachronic persistence within speaker groups beyond adolescence. In particular, this seems to hold true for new vocabulary associated with highly youth culture-specific domains, an example being the recent borrowing of English vocabulary relating to skateboarding, snowboarding and tagging into present day Norwegian.⁶ The emergence of these youth-dominated pursuits in urban culture brings about a range of new concepts and associated vocabulary. It is equally clear that teenage groups contribute greatly to the spread of this type of lexical innovation, and the language of adolescents seems an important source to our knowledge of recent lexical innovations.

More relevant to the current study, it has become increasingly common to focus on the important role that adolescent speakers play in processes of grammaticalisation and structural reanalysis (for full discussion, see 2.1.2). Recent studies have shown that teenagers are in the forefront of the process of developments in which lexical items take on new discoursal and pragmatic functions at the expense of their lexical import. This applies, for instance, to the use of *go* as a reporting verb (e.g. Butters 1980), *like* as a marker of reported speech (e.g. Romaine & Lange 1991), *just* as an emphasiser (Erman 1997, 1998), *well* as an intensifier (Stenström 2000) and the Swedish particle *ba* as a marker of reported speech (Kotsinas 1994; Eriksson 1997). In sum, the study of adolescent language has much to offer the study of language from the point of view of language variation, linguistic innovativeness and language change.

Moreover, the study of the language of teenage groups has provided valuable supplementation to sociolinguistic research, and is to some extent also responsible for a re-evaluation of its methodology and conception of social categories. In traditional sociolinguistic research, the most significant parameter has been the factor of socioeconomic stratification, and it has been the aim of many studies to attest correlation between social class and non-standardness. It is often observed that the most innovative groups belong to the lower middle classes, which are socially upwardly mobile (Labov 1966; Trudgill 1974). A second important factor is regional variation, and it is

commonly shown that linguistic innovations spread from urban to rural areas (e.g. Chambers & Trudgill 1980).

Although pervasive, it is not altogether certain that these factors are ideal to characterise the language of teenage groups, nor that socioeconomic stratification is necessarily relevant to the description of adolescent social structure. Studies of adolescent language indicate that, for this particular age group, socio-economic factors, as manifested in the financial situation, occupation and status of their parents, play a lesser role in terms of linguistic conformity and variation. Eckert's (1988, 1997) ethnographic work in urban youth cultures challenges the assumption that social class is the most important factor; she argues that peer group membership has a more dominant position in teenage groups. Culturally dependent factors, such as taste in music, clothing and sports, are seen as reflections of the adolescents' degree of endorsement or rejection of school values, and are ultimately linked with their aspirations in career. Among urban American youth, Eckert finds that the adherence to 'jock' or 'burnout' group norms constitutes a crucial social divide that has great bearings on the linguistic and other behaviour of teenage groups, more so than the socioeconomic status of the parent generation. Similarly, Kerswill & Williams' (1997) interviews with British teenagers about group membership and social class reveal that teenagers' drive towards peer group conformity in the attempt to avoid social stigma is crucial to them, and that they wish to be seen as distinct from both the adult world and from other teenage groups. However, adults are 'seen in a relatively undifferentiated fashion' (ibid: 168), and some teenagers regard the socially diverse school student body as 'a linguistically homogenous group' (ibid: 168). This, however, does not apply to the working class students they interviewed, as they appear to be more concerned with social differences and conveniently distinguish between their own group and their 'posh' classmates.

Another significant methodological innovation that, at least partly, stems from recent sociolinguistic/sociological studies of adolescent language is an increasing focus on speakers' ethnicity and a shift in the conceptualisation of ethnicity as a social factor. The more 'classic' studies of adult multiracial encounters in Britain (Gumperz 1982; Sutcliffe 1982; Roberts et al. 1992) are concerned with multiraciality in terms of power relations, prejudice, negative social categorisations and racism. These may well be factors that are relevant to describing the effects of ethnic differences in adult or first-

generation immigrant settings, but it is not clear that Britain's multiracial youth of today perceives ethnic differences in the same way as the previous generation. In fact, recent, principally ethnographic, research provides evidence to the contrary. The important contributions of Hewitt (1982, 1986, 1989) and Rampton (1995, 1996) give clear evidence for (some) adolescents' more egalitarian view to ethnic differences and for the exploitation of ethnic minority languages as a communicative and symbolic resource. They show that in multiracial adolescent settings, in schools, clubs and playgrounds, racial stratification and differences in prestige are eradicated. It makes sense to view adolescent language as a multiracial vernacular or, in Hewitt's wording, 'a de-ethnicized, racially mixed local 'community' language' (1989: 140). Hewitt shows that creole forms occur widely in white adolescent speech, and subscribes this adoption to the general view of creole as a prestige youth language, the use of which involves a creative dimension lacking in other available codes. This, in turn, reflects a general increase in the prestige of black (youth) culture, indicated by taste in music, hairstyle, clothing, etc.⁷ Rampton (1995, 1996, 1997) investigates the ways in which inner-London adolescents of various descents use each others' ethnic languages (Punjabi, Jamaican Creole, Indian English) in strategies which obliterate racial stratification and create a new sense of multiracial urban youth community ('language crossing'). Applying a methodology of sociolinguistic discourse analysis, he shows convincingly that the youngsters 'recognise and even exaggerate the differences in their communicative repertoires in a set of stylised and often playful interactions that, up to a point at least, constitute a form of antiracism' (Rampton 1996: 171). On a similar methodological platform, Sebba (1993) provides evidence for a spread of ethnic minority features across ethnic groups. (His contribution will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 4.)

1.1.3 *Pragmatics and adolescent language*

Following this brief introduction to some of the issues dealt with in the literature, I would like to argue that, despite the importance of many of the studies mentioned above, the language of adolescents still merits further investigation. In particular, extensive research is required in order to approach an adequate level of understanding of the characteristics of this age group in terms of pragmatic features of communication. I argue in the

following that the transitional nature of the adolescent period has linguistic manifestations at all levels, including pragmatics.

Pragmatics is to do with language use, the functional properties of linguistic forms, and the ways in which utterances are comprehended in a context (cf. 1.1.4). We know that not all aspects of an utterance are equally easily accessible and not all aspects of language use involve the same level of linguistic sophistication. The interpretation of certain utterances requires greater efforts than that of others. All linguistic comprehension is affected by the graded difference between the relatively simple and the relatively advanced conversational phenomena and modes of linguistic expression (Brown & Markman 1991). As many studies have shown, adolescent language is flavoured by the fact that teenagers are undergoing rapid cognitive, social and physiological developments and that they have a somewhat limited experience in language use. At the level of language use, these factors are bound to have overtly observable consequences which are open to empirical investigation. It is highly likely that adolescents' use and comprehension of language are affected by the transitional characteristics of this life stage. We can assume that communication involving relatively high processing cost poses greater challenges to adolescents than to adults, due to various cognitive and social constraints (Bates 1976; Nippold 1998).

This might apply to those aspects of an utterance that involve elements of indirectness, such as the interpretation of implicatures, irony, metaphor, understatement, etc. As yet, our knowledge about adolescents' mastery of such contextually determined, hence pragmatic, aspects of communication is limited.⁸ For instance, although experimental psycholinguistic research has documented that the comprehension of metaphors steadily improves during adolescence, there is no literature that focuses on metaphorical production in actual use in natural (conversational) settings (according to Nippold's (1998) detailed survey). Furthermore, it may be that, say, a 13-year-old masters the use of conditional clauses only at the very concrete content level (e.g. *If it rains, I'll stay in tonight*) without having acquired the conversationally based, and less concrete, uses of conditionals at the epistemic level (e.g. *If that's a bear's footprint, than I'm King Kong!*) or the speech act level (e.g. *If you don't mind my asking, when did you come home last night?*); cf. Sweetser (1990). That this may be the case, and that conditionals generally cause serious comprehension problems even to adolescents, is evidenced by studies mentioned by Perera (1984). Discourse connectives are likely to cause

similar difficulties due to their abstract meanings and the inferential processes they invite. Again, according to Perera, '[i]t seems fair to conclude that apparently simple words like *but* and *yet* are not fully mastered in all their uses until some time after the age of eleven' (1984: 133). It may also be that to recognise standard Gricean implicatures or to recognise certain indirect speech acts requires a level of pragmatic competence that is still under development in adolescence. And it may be that politeness and cooperative behaviour are constrained by other principles in adolescence than those governing adult conversation. (For analysis of indirect speech acts and politeness in children's language, see Bates 1976.)

Furthermore, we might hypothesise that lack of linguistic experience is compensated by linguistic means which indicate that production does not come easily or which indicate a certain level of metalinguistic awareness. This may result in age-conditioned differences in type or in frequency of hesitational phenomena, hedges, metalinguistic cues, etc. Differences in social norms are also likely to have linguistic effects. The different social requirements of peer groups as opposed to mainstream society are likely to affect conversational cooperation and politeness. Consequently, it is of great interest to find out to what extent teenagers are concerned with hedging and modifying their statements in order to avoid the risk of sounding too assertive, abrupt or direct, whether they are interactionally cooperative, whether they are concerned with face-saving and face-threat-mitigation, and so on.

And finally, given the general importance of adolescence to language change, we can assume that adolescents' linguistic innovativeness extends to the pragmatic domains of communication. That is to say, teenagers may well be innovative also with respect to the development of forms which take on pragmatic and discoursal functions (as recent research on grammaticalisation seems to suggest), to the reassignment of forms from referential to subjective/interactional functions, and to the conventionalisation of implicatures (cf. 2.1.2).

The sociolinguistic approach to pragmatics opens up for a wide range of studies of age-specific features of language use, and I hope to shed light on some of these issues in the current study. However, the scope of the current work only allows for investigation of a small and relatively narrow set of features that are to do with attitudinal meanings, interactional behaviour and metalinguistic awareness (cf. 1.2.3).

1.1.4 *The sociolinguistic approach to pragmatics: methodological issues*

Linguistic pragmatics is a relatively young but rapidly growing research field. Due to its interdisciplinary nature and the lack of unity of the many studies which are placed under this heading, it has proved highly problematic to delimit and describe the characteristics and aims of pragmatic theory.⁹ Indeed, it has been suggested that pragmatics is such a complex field that it cannot be considered a third component of a theory of language, complementing syntax and semantics, but ought to be treated as a specific *perspective* on language, i.e. as ‘an approach to language which takes into account the full complexity of its cognitive, social, and cultural ... functioning in the lives of human beings’ (Verschueren 1995: 13f). Despite their complexity, studies within pragmatics have as their common denominator a preoccupation with language in context; that is, they are in some sense concerned with language in use as opposed to language ‘as such’, since the object of inquiry is not the formal properties of the grammar but rather the effect of contextual factors in utterance interpretation. As outlined above, the current study adopts an empirical sociolinguistic approach to pragmatics. Although such an approach has clear advantages, it is important to be aware of its limitations, and the following is an attempt to point out some of the methodological problems associated with this approach.

The view of communication that is taken in the current study is that communicative acts involve ostensive behaviour and that utterance interpretation is an inferential process. Successful communication involves intentional behaviour on the part of a communicator and it involves recognition of this intentional behaviour on the part of another communicator.¹⁰ These assumptions are crucial in relevance theory, which provides the theoretical fundament of the current investigation (Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995). A general outline of relevance theory is given in Section 2.1.1.

On the relevance-theoretic view, the task of the hearer in utterance interpretation is to construct and evaluate hypotheses regarding the speaker’s communicative intention. In conversation, utterances have a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic properties; they contain many layers of information, some that are intentionally communicated and others that are accidentally transmitted. A hearer can rely on a range of different perceptual stimuli in the process of identifying explicit and implicit meaning, a process which involves both decoding of a semantic representation and supplying additional

contextual information that is required in order to assign reference, disambiguate, identify implicatures, and so on.

Needless to say, the material available to the empirical linguist is much more restricted and is commonly limited to the cues provided by the linguistic form of the utterance.¹¹ Therefore, the method amounts to making assumptions as to what a speaker intended to communicate on the basis of a much more restricted set of features. Sometimes one may even have to rely on tentative judgements based on scarce linguistic evidence. This limitation, naturally, enforces a certain realism as to what questions can be solved by empirical research as regards utterance interpretation. What we can observe by means of a corpus only represents the tip of the iceberg of meanings communicated by the utterances it contains. However, we should not be unduly pessimistic. The empirical researcher will naturally also have a variety of contextual means at his disposal. This amounts not only to the information about topic and previous and upcoming discourse that is explicit in the corpus text, but also to assumptions about the speakers and the relation between them that can be inferred from the conversation, extralinguistic information about setting, etc, and, perhaps most importantly, general knowledge about the underlying principles of conversation. Consequently, the task of the empirical linguist directly parallels that of hearers generally; the linguist must use explicitly communicated material, as indicated by tape recordings and transcriptions, as input in a secondary interpretational procedure, and supply additional information so as to construct his own interpretation of what was said and implied at a given point in a conversation. For this reason, the sociolinguistic/corpus linguistic approach to pragmatics is in many ways hermeneutical. There are several examples of successful research on pragmatic/discourse features that has been carried out on such a methodological basis.¹²

The main methodological point to be noted from the discussion above is that the empirical researcher, *qua* observer and not participant, has to work his way through a secondary interpretational layer in an attempt to understand the communicative impact of utterances. The empirical approach to pragmatic aspects of conversation must necessarily involve an element of guesswork concerning the explicit and implicit content of utterances (on the explicit-implicit distinction, see 2.1.1). In many cases, the analysis is a two-step process that includes both identifying relevant linguistic forms and assigning functions to these. For instance, as Holmes (1995) argues, quantitative

comparisons of the use of tag questions may be directly misleading if one fails to take into account the different functions that can be associated with their use. The reason is that tag questions can, but need not, signal the speaker's doubt and uncertainty, they can, but need not, be expressions of politeness, and they can, but need not, signal the directive force of an utterance (cf. Millar & Brown 1979; Algeo 1988; Andersen 1998a). These are aspects of utterance interpretation that must be pragmatically inferred by a hearer, and an adequate description of social differences of politeness markers (or, for that matter, illocutionary force markers) must take such functional differences into account. For a researcher to assign pragmatic functions to linguistic forms in spoken data is necessarily a hermeneutical process. Indeed it is also a process which may be problematic (as Holmes also points out; cf. 1984: 50), and which is carried out at a certain risk of misinterpretation.

The obvious lack of a one-to-one mapping between linguistic form and pragmatic function has significant consequences for the methodology of any study that deals with pragmatic aspects of utterance meaning from an empirical point of view. As mentioned, such an approach necessarily involves qualitative analytical work, and may in many cases be supplemented by the complementary method of quantitative comparison, which is the approach undertaken in the current study. If the intention is to describe social differences in relation to some pragmatic phenomenon, it will obviously not be sufficient to count the number of tokens of a particular form. Such an investigation requires methods that go beyond the methodological core of traditional variationist sociolinguistics, which primarily involves identification of variable rules on the basis of tokens of standard and non-standard forms or different realisations of phonological/morphological variables. Indeed, due to the importance of contextual factors, it is an open question whether pragmatic phenomena are fully accountable on an empirical basis (for discussions, see Schiffrin 1987; Hudson 1996).

Consider, for instance, a study whose aim is to investigate whether one group of speakers (say adults) adheres more closely to politeness principles than another group of speakers (say adolescents), i.e. a study on a par with Holmes (1995). Given this aim, the researcher is inevitably faced with the methodological problem that the phenomenon investigated, linguistic politeness, can only be described in relation to the context of its use. Exclusive considerations of formal linguistic properties will not suffice

because the occurrence of a polite form is not necessarily a reflection of a speaker's intention to be polite. Although some expressions in English may encode the speaker's polite attitude, politeness is not an inherent feature of linguistic expressions. Polite expressions are only interpretable as such in relation to a speech situation.

In fact, a single expression may signal either a respectful or derogatory attitude,¹³ and any token of a polite expression may be a mock usage or a means of ridiculing people who tend to use a particular mode of expression or who are considered unreasonably servile. Of course, intonation, tone of voice and paralinguistic cues may give good indications of mock versus sincere uses of a particular expression, but they are rarely perspicuous. Whether or not the utterance *Would you mind closing the window, please* is actually construed by a hearer as an act of negative politeness, i.e. as an attempt to mitigate the face threat of the directive speech act in order to save the hearer's face, is not in itself warranted by the presence of the polite expressions *would you mind* and *please*. On a particular occasion, the hearer may have good reasons for being suspicious about the speaker's sincerity in sounding polite; perhaps he finds that the speaker is overdoing her polite behaviour with an intention to ridicule or belittle the hearer. We know that sarcasm occurs in conversation, but there can be no watertight method for empirically identifying it. A categorical separation of sincere from insincere uses of polite expressions would hinge on a number of extralinguistic and social factors and would require a level of analytical insight into the minds of the speakers that the corpus analyst can only dream of approaching.

Conversely, rude language is not necessarily rude in all contexts. An expression like *Fuck off, you wanker!* might in many social contexts be considered inappropriate, rude and impolite. But, importantly, a teenager may well use such an expression to his friend not in order to provoke him or to be impolite, but in order to achieve precisely the opposite effect (cf. Stenström 1995). This is because swear words (and slang expressions) convey social meanings and have a potential for enhancing inter-speaker solidarity. By the looks of things, swear words are very commonly used in a playful and jocular manner in adolescent conversation, and they are not meant to be rude, impolite or derogatory. These are potential social meanings of swear words that are important to bear in mind when considering the language of this age group. An empirical study of swear words and taboo language that reveals major distributional differences between teenagers and

adults does not imply that teenagers are less polite than adults, but it may suggest that the codes are different and that the social meanings conveyed by potentially rude or potentially polite expressions differ across the generations.

In other words, identifying genuine politeness and rudeness, and identifying speaker attitudes more generally, are never watertight pursuits. This is particularly important to bear in mind when investigating adolescent conversation, where polite and impolite expressions cannot always be taken at their face value. This is precisely what makes Rampton conclude that his group of teenagers of various ethnicities may colour their apologies with 'a conspicuously false accent [Indian English and Creole], accompanying it with an equally contradictory loudness and hilarity' (1997: 72). Although politeness is linguistically encoded by the apology marker *sorry*, adolescent use of this expression is not necessarily intentionally polite; that is, the hearer is not necessarily led to construe the utterance as a genuine act of apology. This methodological perplexity requires a certain interpretational freedom on the part of the linguist whose approach to pragmatics is empirical and whose aim is to describe speaker attitudes in naturally occurring conversations.

In fact, the investigation of any aspect of implicit and context-based meanings raises similar methodological issues, and the list of phenomena that may be difficult to characterise could have been considerably extended. The identification of sarcasm, irony, metaphors, implicatures, etc places a relatively heavy inferential burden on the hearer, but it also places a heavy interpretational burden on the empirical linguist, as these pragmatic features are not usually encoded by overt linguistic means.¹⁴ As this discussion hopefully has shown, the empirical approach to pragmatics can never be reduced to a question of token counting but it must involve qualitative and hermeneutical method. However, it is my firm belief that such a method can be carried out successfully (cf. studies mentioned in Note 12). The current study is therefore an attempt at applying quantitative and qualitative methods as complementary approaches to empirical data with a view to describing pragmatic aspects of adolescent conversation. The study is concerned with teenagers' use of a set of pragmatic markers and the speaker attitudes that are associated with their use. Clearly, assigning a particular attitude to a pragmatic marker in a context is a task that raises the very methodological problems that have been discussed in this section.

1.2 Aims and scope of the current study

From the above discussion, it will have become evident that the current study combines the research traditions of linguistic pragmatics and sociolinguistics. This section contains a short, preliminary description of the subject matter of the study, the linguistic items that will be accounted for (pragmatic markers) and the reasons for focusing on these.

1.2.1 *General outline*

This study is an empirical investigation which draws on primary data from two computerised corpora of English conversation. The main focus will be on the adolescent variety of London English, represented by the Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language (COLT), but a comparison with adult talk, represented by an extract of the British National Corpus (BNC), will also be made. (For a further description of the data, see 3.2.)

Pragmatics is a notoriously wide field, and a great number of different features could have been studied with a view to detecting age-determined variation. I have chosen to focus on a very restricted range of phenomena, namely the use of so-called pragmatic markers (cf. 1.2.2 and Chapter 2) in adolescent conversation. The main aim is to account for apparent innovations in the use and function of a small set of linguistic forms (cf. 1.2.3), assuming that the subset of markers investigated exemplifies youth-specific linguistic behaviour and reflects language change or age-grading. Having argued above that the sociolinguistic approach to pragmatics should involve both qualitative and quantitative work, I will describe the selected items accordingly by applying these two methods in conjunction. The markers will be accounted for from the point of view of their pragmatic functions, sociolinguistic variation and diachronic development. Thus, the current study aims to apply the quantitative/statistical method associated with sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics in combination with qualitative considerations of the communicative impact of utterances in a relatively comprehensive description of a set of pragmatic markers.

The current study is also to a certain extent a cross-generational study. However, the two data sets will not be given the same attention. The empirical investigation draws mainly on the teenage corpus; the adult material can be viewed as a source of reference that is applied in order to

support hypotheses regarding the teenage-specificity of the phenomena investigated.

The characterisation of pragmatic phenomena requires an underlying theoretical apparatus. Although the current study draws indirectly on the Grice-Austin-Searle tradition of pragmatics, and presupposes notions such as conversational/conventional implicature and speech acts, the most important theoretical basis is Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995). Since pragmatics deals with language use in context rather than with the language code as such, a linguistic theory that is aimed at describing pragmatic phenomena should specify the notion of context. Relevance theory provides a sufficiently wide conceptualisation that includes not only linguistic context, previous and upcoming discourse and conversational setting, but it views context as a cognitive phenomenon, specifically as a set of assumptions (mental conceptual representations treated as true by an individual) that are brought to bear in the interpretation of utterances. I describe this theoretical framework in more detail in Section 2.1.1.

The current study, then, is an attempt to combine sociolinguistics and relevance theory. This is a novel approach, which reflects the fact that pragmatic features are not the most common topic of sociolinguistic studies and that relevance theory is a fairly recent theory of communication. That such a combinatory approach can be fruitful is implied by the comment with which Sperber & Wilson conclude their Postface to the second edition of *Relevance*:

Two important and related domains have hardly been explored at all from a relevance-theoretic perspective: the theory has been developed from the point of view of the audience of communicative acts, and without taking into account the complex sociological factors richly studied by sociolinguistics. The cognitive processes at work in the communicator, and the social character and context of communication are, of course, essential to the wider picture, to the study of which we hope relevance theory can contribute, and from which it stands greatly to benefit.

(Sperber & Wilson 1995: 279)

Linguistic items that come to be used as pragmatic markers in discourse commonly develop from lexical words (cf. Brinton 1996). This type of diachronic development is a central aspect of the current investigation. It is necessary to introduce a theoretical framework that adequately captures the diachronic development of the linguistic forms studied. For this reason, the

theory of grammaticalisation (Hopper & Traugott 1993) acts as another central point of departure. This theoretical framework is presented more extensively in Section 2.1.2.

1.2.2 *Pragmatic markers: a preliminary description*

The linguistic items studied here are referred to as ‘pragmatic markers’; hence the study relies on an *a priori* assumption that the items for discussion share enough properties to be justifiably subsumed under this category. The current section is meant as a brief preliminary description of pragmatic markers, while Chapter 2 gives a more general theoretical description of this category and introduces an analytical framework that is assumed to have general application.

In her thorough account of the notion of pragmatic marker, Brinton (1996) lists a set of features shared by the members of this category. Her list will serve as a useful starting point to describe what the items considered in this study have in common. According to Brinton, pragmatic markers

- constitute a heterogeneous set of forms which are difficult to place within a traditional word class (including items like *ah*, *actually*, *and*, *just*, *like*, *now*, *really*, *well*, *I mean*, *I think* and *you know*);
- are predominantly a feature of spoken rather than written discourse;
- are high-frequency items;
- are stylistically stigmatised and negatively evaluated;
- are short items and are often phonologically reduced;
- are considered to have little or no propositional meaning, or at least to be difficult to specify lexically;
- occur either outside the syntactic structure or loosely attached to it and have no clear grammatical function;
- are optional rather than obligatory features;
- may be multifunctional, operating on different levels (including textual and interpersonal levels). (Adapted from Brinton 1996: 33ff.)

It is important to point out that the term ‘pragmatic’ is not meant to suggest that markers are void of semantic content or that the meanings they contribute are entirely inferred on an ad hoc basis. On the contrary, pragmatic markers convey meanings that are linguistically encoded, but these may be, as Brinton points out, difficult to specify in terms of lexical import. Pragmatic

markers are associated with aspects of communication that are to a great extent context-based, such as the identification of a speaker attitude towards an expressed proposition, where attitude includes notions such as speaker commitment, affective evaluation and evaluation of 'newsworthiness' (Smith & Jucker 2000; cf. 2.2–2.4). They are pragmatic in the sense of accompanying and facilitating inferential pragmatic processes that are required in order to identify the set of intended meanings that a speaker wishes to convey, including the intended implicatures of an utterance. On the relevance-theoretic view, pragmatic markers can optimise the crucial process of determining the context against which the incoming stimulus is meant to be processed; that is, they act as constraints on the interpretational procedure. As such, pragmatic markers may encode meanings that should be described as procedural rather than conceptual, which explains the problem of lexically specifying many of them. (On this distinction, see 2.1.1.) It is also worthy of note that a given marker may serve a variety of functions, and that determining its function in a particular context leaves a lot to the inferential abilities of the hearer.

Tag questions have been extensively studied, and it is widely agreed that they serve a variety of pragmatic functions, including attitudinal, epistemic and politeness functions (cf. 4.1.3). Some authors include tag questions in the inventory of pragmatic markers, for instance Faerch & Kasper (1982), Stenström (1994) and Fraser (1996).¹⁵ I wish to argue that there are good reasons for doing so, and I will follow the same practice here. There is a great deal of functional overlap between tag questions and a number of forms that are uncontroversially classified as pragmatic markers, such as *right*. For instance, there appears to be little means of distinguishing between *They're quite expensive eh?/right?/aren't they?* on functional grounds; the three alternatives seem equally fit to express a speaker attitude of reduced commitment or politeness or to have directive illocutionary force. The choice of form is presumably governed by stylistic factors more than anything, but it may also be governed by production cost, the invariant forms being simpler to produce. It is due to this functional equivalence that Holmes (1982, 1995) treats ordinary tag questions on a par with forms like *right?*, *huh?*, *eh?* and *okay?*. The conceptualisation of tag questions as a subtype of pragmatic markers is not meant to suggest that ordinary tag questions are always interchangeable with the invariant forms; Holmes provides evidence that, in some contexts, they are not. Nor is it an attempt to disguise the fact

that, as regards tag questions, the choice of the appropriate form is determined by the syntax of the proposition it is attached to. But it is clear that, to a large extent, the same pragmatic principles govern the use of tag questions and forms like *right?*, *eh?* and *okay?*. It is equally clear that Brinton's list of distinguishing features of pragmatic markers captures very well indeed the characteristics of tag questions; they are short, recurrent, optional, multifunctional, informal, non-propositional, predominantly spoken, etc. In my opinion, these points provide a good case for considering tag questions a subtype of pragmatic markers, in the fashion of the studies mentioned above.

More controversially perhaps, I wish to extend the notion of pragmatic marker even further, to include the following type of interrogative: A: *John's coming tomorrow.* B: *Is he?* I refer to these as 'follow-up questions' or the shorthand 'follow-up'.¹⁶ (Definitional characteristics are suggested in Section 4.1.1.) These interrogatives have not by far received the same attention in the literature as tag questions; nevertheless they serve important pragmatic functions. They have been described by Hudson as 'reduced interrogatives as responses' (1975: 20), and by Stenström as a type of tag (1984: 176), but are otherwise generally ignored in the literature, despite their obvious bearings on the communication of politeness and attitudinal and epistemic meanings. It is clear that B's utterance can be construed as an expression of surprise, disbelief or newsworthiness, and it may serve a positive politeness function, for instance as an attempt to show interest and encourage the previous speaker to go on and elaborate on the topic of John's arrival. Moreover, there is a functional equivalence here that parallels the one that was described in connection with tag questions, in that, functionally, it would make little or no difference if one were to replace B's response with a rising *really?*, *eh?* or *oh?* in this utterance. In other words, this type of interrogatives appears to perform the same functions as a set of invariant forms that are generally considered pragmatic markers (cf. Fraser 1996). And, again, Brinton's list of characteristic features of pragmatic markers is strikingly appropriate to characterise the formal and functional properties of interrogatives of this type. On this basis, I wish to consider follow-up questions a subtype of pragmatic markers. Again, the reason for doing so is primarily functional, but I acknowledge that formally they constitute a subgroup whose appropriateness is determined by the syntax of the previous proposition.

1.2.3 *Preliminary description of the selected linguistic phenomena*

The objective of this section is to give a brief presentation of the set of linguistic items to be accounted for in this study and to present the criteria that led to the selection of these as objects of linguistic investigation. As will become evident, the selection is motivated mainly by sociolinguistic and diachronic factors.

The first of the two main (empirical) chapters, Chapter 4, deals with a characteristic use of two forms, *innit* and *is it*, that only to a little extent has been described in the literature. London teenagers use these forms in contexts that may seem strange to an outsider. That is to say, there is a tendency to use these two (originally) interrogative structures throughout the inflectional paradigm, despite the fact that they contain a third person singular neuter pronoun. The main motivation for my choice of these forms as the object of investigation is that they involve an interesting process of structural reanalysis and that this phenomenon does not occur in the adult reference material. A range of pragmatic functions can be associated with these forms, functions which can roughly be divided into tags (cf. *Might as well go, innit?*) and follow-ups (A: *She wrote him a letter.* B: *Is it?*). Chapter 4 gives a comprehensive account of the pragmatic functions of *innit/is it*, the linguistic and social conditioning of the use of these forms, and the diachronic development involved.

Chapter 5 is concerned with the other main phenomenon to be accounted for in this study: the form *like* used as a pragmatic marker. This is common usage in the teenage corpus, but occurs only to a very little extent in the adult conversations studied. The purpose of Chapter 5 is to give a comprehensive account of the many pragmatic functions associated with this marker in London teenage language, and to point out its distributional and diachronic characteristics in the two corpora. I also wish to assess whether the different functions were equally salient at the time the recordings were made, and to describe the characteristics of the grammaticalisation process. In addition to the comprehensive account of *innit/is it* and *like*, the discussion will include frequent mention of pragmatic markers that will be treated more superficially, such as *right*, *you know*, *sort of*, etc.

The markers considered here have been selected, firstly, because they seem to involve variation between teenage and adult speech in terms of function and/or frequency. It seems as if the markers are to a great extent

distinctive features of present day London teenage talk. The uses of *innit/is it* and *like* that are the focus here represent deviations from what can be called ‘mainstream English’, as represented by the BNC extract of adult speech, and have been described in the literature as ‘non-standard’. The main point of the sections in which COLT and the BNC are compared is to provide evidence supporting the hypothesis that we are dealing with age-specific differences.

Moreover, it is assumed that these forms can be described in terms of processes of linguistic development, including internal structural reanalysis (cf. 2.1.2) and geographical and social spread via language contact. Efforts will be made at describing the origin of these features, assuming that their occurrence is partly due to external influences on the London dialect. Specifically, it is assumed that the use of *innit/is it* as invariant forms exemplifies language crossing of an ethnic minority feature, and that the frequent use of *like* as a marker is an American borrowing. However, it is problematic on the basis of the current data to conclude whether *innit/is it* and *like* in teenage talk represent age-grading or long-term linguistic change, an issue which will be addressed in Chapter 6.

Finally, it should be noted that the pragmatic markers to be accounted for are quantitatively salient in the data, thus lending themselves to statistical comparative analysis with noteworthy results. As my objective is to describe recurring patterns and general features of teenage talk, a high frequency seems to be a valid criterion for including the selected items in this study.

1.3 The structure of this book

To a certain extent the structure of the following chapters has already been revealed, but it seems appropriate at this point to give a more systematic presentation of what follows. As mentioned, the study centres around two main chapters, 4 and 5, that contain the empirical analysis of the markers investigated. Before such an account can be given, however, it is necessary to give more background information as regards the notion of pragmatic marker and the material that the study is based on. Chapters 2 and 3, then, are of a general, theoretical and introductory nature.

Chapter 2 contains a description of the analytical apparatus that will be applied in the analysis of the pragmatic markers. As both (synchronic) pragmatic functions and diachronic development have a central position in

my description of the selected items, I find that the theories of relevance and grammaticalisation constitute appropriate complementary frameworks within which to perform the analysis. Presentations of the respective frameworks are given in Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2. Chapter 2 also contains a comprehensive account of the concept of pragmatic marker. The discussion includes notions such as procedural and conceptual encoding, propositional and non-propositional meaning and the semantics/pragmatics distinction. This chapter also contains a general description of the three functional levels that are associated with pragmatic markers, which are described as subjective, interactional and textual. These notions form the core of the analytical apparatus that is applied in the empirical analysis.

Chapter 3 describes in more detail the material that this study is based on and the associated methods. In particular, it contains a brief introduction to the most relevant speaker and conversation-specific information that can be extracted from the corpora and discusses the comparability of the two data sets. It also addresses the question of statistical method and representativity.

The relatively long Chapters 4 and 5 deal with essentially different linguistic phenomena, firstly, what is referred as non-paradigmatic use of the forms *innit* and *is it* as tags and follow-ups, and secondly, the use of *like* as a pragmatic marker. I intend to give a fairly extensive account of these items from several complementary perspectives. The different viewpoints are reflected in the division of these chapters into three main sections.

The general introduction of these chapters contains a brief presentation of the linguistic features to be accounted for, it introduces the terminology applied, it describes some methodological problems connected with the identification and classification of the relevant forms, it addresses the issue of age-specificity, and it gives a survey of previous literature on the topic (cf. 4.1 & 5.1).

The sections entitled *Pragmatic functions* (cf. 4.2 & 5.2) contain the bulk of the qualitative analysis of the pragmatic markers. The aim of these sections is to describe the different functions that the markers may have and the contributions they make to utterance meaning. The point of departure for this part of the presentation is the survey of the main aspects of marker meaning — subjective, interactional and textual — that will be presented in Chapter 2. It is in connection with this part of the analysis that the methodological point made in Section 1.1.4 concerning the hermeneutical nature of this study has its greatest significance.

The final main sections of the empirical chapters, entitled *Variation and language change* (cf. 4.3 & 5.3), describe the pragmatic markers from a distributional and diachronic point of view. These sections thus contain the bulk of the quantitative analysis. The aim is to account for both linguistic and social variation in the use of *innit/is it* and *like*. In other words, the quantitative comparisons include both distributional features of the items in the teenage corpus as a whole and comparison between speaker groups. Moreover, these sections include descriptions of the diachronic processes that are manifested by marker use of these forms. In this description, the quantitative data are used, along with the account of pragmatic functions, to propose general characterisations of the linguistic development and grammaticalisation that affect these forms.

Finally, Chapter 6 contains a brief survey of the most important findings of the study and attempts to view these in a wider perspective. In particular, it addresses the question of whether the use of *innit/is it* and *like* may to some extent represent cases of age-grading, and it gives suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical background

2.1 Relevance and grammaticalisation

Like linguistic items generally, pragmatic markers can be described from a synchronic and a diachronic point of view. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the current study combines these two approaches and aims at describing the selected markers both in terms of their functions in contemporary speech and in terms of their diachronic development. The analysis thus requires a theoretical basis that can encompass both the variety of communicative functions associated with the use of *innit/is it* and *like*, and the diachronic development through which these originally lexical items have taken on new marker functions.

A substantial part of this investigation is devoted to the task of accounting for the pragmatic functions of the linguistic forms mentioned above. That is to say, the intention is to describe the contributions these pragmatic markers make to utterance interpretation. I find that relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995), with its notions of procedural encoding, contextual effects and processing costs, provides an adequate framework within which to perform this task.

I also argue that the most appropriate basis for the description of diachronic features is the theory of grammaticalisation (Hopper & Traugott 1993; Traugott 1995b), which appears fully equipped to account for the historical development of pragmatic markers. Towards the end of this section, I also briefly address the issue of the compatibility of these two frameworks, although this is an important theoretical issue that deserves much broader attention than the scope of this work allows for.

2.1.1 *The relevance-theoretic view of utterance interpretation*

The task of accounting for the various functions of pragmatic markers amounts to specifying the contribution they make in terms of cognitive effects and processing efforts. The following outline¹ will revolve round three assumptions that are fundamental to relevance theory, namely the assumptions that communication is intentional, ostensive and inferential.

As human beings, we are constantly subjected to information and stimuli that may have effects on our cognitive environment.² Nevertheless, we are capable of distinguishing between information that is relevant to us and information that is not. According to relevance theory, the human perceptual system is geared towards the maximisation of relevance; that is to say, as human beings, we pay attention to whatever seems relevant (in a technical sense; cf. below) to us. This principle underlies cognition in general and it is also crucial to human interaction and communication. Communication involves stimuli that are of a special type, because they are *ostensive*; that is, they express not only information about something, but they also express somebody's intention to make this information manifest to an individual. In other words, communication involves *intentional* behaviour; specifically it involves a speaker's intention to affect the cognitive environment of another individual in some way or other. Thus, it makes sense to distinguish between the information provided by uttering *I didn't drink any whiskey last night* and the contradictory information provided by a coarse sound of a sore throat, indicating extensive consumption of whiskey, in that the former stimulus is intentional while the latter is not. Both stimuli may be relevant to an individual, but only the latter is ostensively and intentionally communicated.

To say that an utterance is relevant amounts to saying that it achieves some kind of contextual effects.³ An utterance can be more or less relevant depending on the strength of the contextual effects achieved and the processing costs required (the greater the contextual effects, the higher the relevance; the greater the processing effort, the smaller the relevance). The principle of relevance states that, by the very act of addressing someone, a speaker creates an expectation that her utterance will achieve enough contextual effects to be worth processing for the hearer, and at the same time it will cause him no unnecessary processing effort.⁴ This expectation is also described as the 'presumption of optimal relevance':

- a. The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee's effort to process it.
- b. The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences. (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 270)

Much of the previous literature on pragmatics has not given great attention to the hearer's role in communication (cf. Brown 1986), but in relevance theory hearers are assigned an active role. Given the expectation of optimal relevance that an utterance automatically raises, the hearer's task amounts to finding out *how* the speaker could have intended it to be optimally relevant (i.e. to be worth his attention and compatible with the speaker's abilities and preferences). Hearers are seen to pursue the task of constructing and evaluating hypotheses regarding the speaker's communicative intention, including the intended explicit and implicit content and the speaker's attitude. For this reason, utterance interpretation is seen as an *inferential* process.

Context selection is a central element in this process. Naturally, the ostensive stimulus communicated by an utterance is never interpreted in isolation, but it is processed against a set of background assumptions that the hearer possesses. However, at any given point in a conversation, a hearer's cognitive environment consists of a vast amount of background assumptions (including knowledge inferred from the previous discourse or from communicative setting/situation, general encyclopaedic knowledge, etc), and only a subset of these need to be activated in the interpretation of a given utterance. Restricting the amount of context is an ad hoc process that is governed by the relevance principle; only those contextual assumptions that will make the utterance worth processing without gratuitous effort are actually brought to bear when interpreting the utterance. The important notion of 'assumptions' signifies 'thoughts treated by the individual as representations of the actual world' (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 2) and encompasses information, knowledge, beliefs, opinions, facts, etc that are entertained by, and may be communicated by speakers. Assumptions that are shared by interlocutors are described as 'mutually manifest' (ibid: 38ff).

Contextual information is crucial, not only in order to identify the implicatures of an utterance, but also in order to identify its explicit meaning. It should be noted that the notion of explicit meaning incorporates not only the proposition which the utterance expresses but also so-called higher-level explicatures, that is, information as to what speech act the utterance is used to perform and information about speaker attitudes (Wilson & Sperber 1993;

Carston 1995). What is actually linguistically encoded by an utterance, i.e. the output of the rules of the grammar, is not in itself sufficient to determine the communicative impact of an utterance. Usually, utterances are underspecified even with respect to their propositional meaning. In order for a hearer to construe the underlying proposition of an utterance, the decoded stimulus must usually be supplemented by contextual information. This applies, for instance, to any utterance containing a referential expression, e.g. *John brought it*; a semantically underspecified expression, e.g. *He opened the window and jumped* (*jumped* = 'jumped out the window'); or a lexical ambiguity, e.g. *He bought the newspaper* (a single copy or an entire enterprise); and it applies to elliptical utterances, e.g. *Over there!*. Reference assignment, disambiguation and recovery of ellipted material are context-based, pragmatic processes that require the narrowing of contextual assumptions, in the manner described above. In sum, then, both decoding and inference are required in order to grasp the communicative impact of utterances; i.e. semantic rules and pragmatic principles complement each other in the identification of intended propositional and extra-propositional meanings (cf. Carston 1988).

Finally, relevance theory makes an important distinction between two types of encoded meaning. On the one hand, there are those linguistic forms that encode concepts, i.e. act as constituents of the propositional meaning of the utterance. More generally, concepts are the constituents of assumptions that we hold and may communicate. On the other hand, there are those linguistic forms that encode interpretational procedures. These forms do not contribute directly to the propositional meaning of an utterance, but they provide constraints on the interpretation process. Concepts and procedures can be distinguished on several grounds. Concepts are representational; that is, they represent entities in the actual world. Procedures do not; they are computational and provide instructions as to how some aspect of the interpretation should proceed. Concepts, such as *bachelor* or *red*, are entities which can be brought into focus in a person's consciousness, because they contain logical and encyclopaedic information. Procedures, such as the encoded meaning of *however* or *nevertheless* (cf. Blakemore 1987), do not have this capacity. They are seen to carry meanings which cannot be brought to consciousness, and they fall outside the scope of logical operators like *if-then*. Moreover, conceptual information can have a compositional structure (cf. *young, good-looking bachelor*), while procedural information can not (cf.

**very however*). Broadly speaking, a form that encodes procedural information tells the hearer how conceptual representations are to be understood and manipulated. Blakemore's (1987) influential study of discourse connectives shows how procedural information constrains the implicatures that utterances are expected to give rise to. But procedurally encoded information may also constrain the explicit content of utterances. This is the case, for instance, with reference pronouns and mood-indicators (Wilson & Sperber 1988, 1993) and with markers of speaker attitude and illocutionary force (Andersen & Fretheim 2000).

In fact, the notion of procedural encoding is crucial to the category of pragmatic markers. In a setting where relevance is seen as involving a trade-off between contextual effects and processing costs, it is hardly surprising that interlocutors use pragmatic markers. Their prime contribution is not as propositional constituents, but they contribute to relevance by telling the hearer how an utterance is to be understood, thus reducing the processing effort that the hearer must employ in utterance comprehension. The notion of procedural meaning underlies the description of the different types of meaning that pragmatic markers may encode (cf. 2.2–2.4).

2.1.2 *Grammaticalisation theory*

The primary concern of most previous studies of pragmatic markers has been their functions in discourse, but in recent years there has been an increasing focus on their diachronic development. Several studies have shown that pragmatic markers play a crucial role in the theory of grammaticalisation, and that this theoretical framework is fully equipped to account for their historical development (cf. Romaine & Lange 1991; Thompson & Mulac 1991; Eriksson 1992; Traugott 1995a, 1996; Brinton 1996). These studies make it evident that the linguistic items which come to be used as markers can, seemingly in a majority of cases, be shown to originate in lexical material.⁵ Historically, pragmatic markers are therefore manifestations of linguistic processes by which the syntactic-semantic status of originally lexical material is being altered.

Grammaticalisation can be described as a subclass of linguistic developmental processes whereby linguistic units are recruited into grammar. Traugott formally defines grammaticalisation as 'the process whereby lexical material in highly constrained pragmatic and morphosyntactic contexts

becomes grammatical' (1995b: 1). On the traditional view, the term is used to refer to the process by which independent lexical items develop into function words (e.g. motional *go* + purposive *to* → semi-auxiliary *going to/gonna* expressing intentional future) or into even more grammaticalised forms such as derivational affixes (e.g. *dom* 'realm' → suffix *-dom*). In recent years it has become customary also to view grammaticalisation from a discourse perspective, as a development of syntactic and morphological structures through a gradual fixing of discourse functions. These two traditions are complementary rather than conflicting (Traugott & Heine 1991) and reflect a wide conception of grammar within this theoretical framework. 'Grammar' extends beyond the realms of syntax and semantics and includes the communicative and cognitive facets of a language; it 'encompasses not only phonology, morphosyntax, and truth-functional semantics but also a wide range of inferences that arise out of linguistic form, in other words, linguistic pragmatics such as focusing, topicalization, and deixis' (Traugott 1996: 3).

A number of different subprocesses are involved in grammaticalisation, and typically structural and semantic/pragmatic changes co-occur. Two main types of structural change have been identified: reanalysis and analogy. Reanalysis is not overtly observable but is defined as 'the change in the structure of an expression or class of expressions that does not involve any immediate or intrinsic modification of its surface manifestation' (Langacker 1977; quoted in Hopper & Traugott 1993: 40). It may consist in rebracketing, i.e. change in assignment of syntactic boundaries (cf. [be going] + [to] → [be going to]) or fusion, i.e. merging across word or morphological boundaries (cf. [child] + [hood] → [childhood]). Analogy, on the other hand, is overtly observable and can be described as the use of a new form in contexts where it was formerly incompatible (e.g. *be going to* before non-purposive complement).

Although much of the literature on grammaticalisation has been concerned with describing the nature of morphosyntactic changes such as those suggested above, recent studies, most systematically represented by Traugott's work, have proposed a shift in focus towards the communicative factors that motivate such changes. It is clear that the answer to the question of motivation for linguistic innovation must be sought in the direction of speakers' use of language for communicative purposes. For this reason, there has been an increasing focus on the role of speakers and hearers negotiating meaning in communicative situations. Pragmatic processes in communication have been assigned an increasing explanatory power with regard to grammaticalisation:

meaning changes and the cognitive strategies that motivate them are central in the early stages of grammaticalisation and are crucially linked to expressivity. Furthermore, the meaning changes are initially pragmatic and associative, arising in the context of flow of speech.

(Hopper & Traugott 1993: 68)

Two main factors, essentially cognitive, stand out as prime motivations for grammaticalisation: speakers' tendency to economise the speech signal and their tendency to enhance expressivity. The former tendency may lead to routinisation and idiomatisation of expressions and eventual simplification of the form (e.g. imperative *let us* → hortative *let us* → *let's*; cf. Traugott 1995a). It is also clear that much linguistic innovation stems from linguistic creativity and the desire to express oneself differently:

Expressivity serves the dual function of improving informativeness for the hearer and at the same time allowing the speaker to convey attitudes toward the situation, including the speech situation. This very process of innovation is itself typically based on a principle of economy, specifically the economy of reusing extant forms for new purposes. (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 65)

Given these two main motivations, it is clear that both semantic and pragmatic change are in operation in grammaticalisation processes, and it is widely agreed that the two complement each other. It has been proposed that there is a general tendency for linguistic items to lose gradually their lexical import and come to acquire meanings that are increasingly based in the communicative situation. Traugott (1995a, 1996) argues that over time forms develop along a unidirectional cline from referential (propositional) to non-referential meanings, and that originally lexical items come to operate at the textual and interpersonal levels. A number of examples of such clines have been suggested, including the development of *while* from a temporal adverbial phrase to a concessive connective (Traugott 1995a), the development of the adversative marker *in fact* from a prepositional phrase equivalent to 'in actuality' (Traugott & Schwenter 1998), the development of *I think/guess/suppose* from main subject and verb to so-called 'epistemic parentheticals' (Thompson & Mulac 1991), and the development of *actually, generally, precisely, loosely, really*, etc from manner adverbials to sentence adverbials (and in some cases to pragmatic markers; cf. Traugott 1996). Common to these developments is that a semantic change, weakening of lexical meaning, is accompanied by a strengthening of the form's pragmatic impact.

In other words, grammaticalisation is not so much a question of meaning loss as a question of redistribution of meaning, from meanings based in the referential domain to meanings based in the communicative situation, from propositional to extra-propositional meanings and from conceptual to procedural meanings (Nicolle 1998). The more recent forms are taken to be less concrete and lexically specifiable than their lexical predecessors and are often 'subjective', that is 'based in the speaker's subjective belief state/attitude toward the proposition' (Traugott 1995a: 31). Due to the impact of subjectivity in grammaticalised forms, Traugott has come to view subjectification as a crucial aspect of grammaticalisation:

'Subjectification in grammaticalisation' is, broadly speaking, the development of a grammatically identifiable expression of speaker belief or speaker attitude to what is said. It is a gradient phenomenon, whereby forms and constructions that at first express primarily concrete, lexical, and objective meanings come through repeated use in local syntactic contexts to serve increasingly abstract, pragmatic, interpersonal, and speaker-based functions. (Traugott 1995a: 32)

In the most recent writings on grammaticalisation, subjectification has acquired a strong position. It should also be pointed out that the principle of unidirectionality persists within this theory; that is, meanings tend to shift from less to more subjective, but not vice versa. Other implications of the unidirectionality hypothesis are that propositional functions precede discourse functions, that objective meaning precedes subjective meaning and that non-epistemic (e.g. deontic) modality precedes epistemic modality (Sweetser 1990; Traugott 1995a).

Clearly, the theory of grammaticalisation is adequate for the diachronic characterisation of pragmatic markers. Pragmatic markers are used to express non-propositional, inferential and often highly subjective aspects of communication, for instance attitudinal meanings such as epistemic commitment. They can signal illocutionary, intratextual (sequential) and interpersonal relations but only exceptionally affect propositional meaning (Andersen 1998b; Hansen 1998; Ziv 1998). In this study it is therefore assumed that the history of the individual markers studied can be traced back to a word or a construction with salient lexical properties and with a non-marker status.

2.1.3 *A combinatory approach*

It seems adequate at this point to address the question of whether it is justifiable to apply relevance theory and the theory of grammaticalisation in a combinatory approach. Despite the fact that very few studies have combined the two frameworks, I would like to argue that there is a good case for viewing grammaticalisation and relevance theory as generally compatible.

As mentioned above, grammaticalisation theorists have argued that improved informativeness and the drive for economy are the most important motivating factors for grammaticalisation processes. Clearly, there is conceptual overlap between these two motivating factors and the crucial relevance-theoretic notions of contextual effects and processing effort. In fact, a principle of informativeness and economy is implied by the principle of relevance; that is, speakers can be expected to attempt to achieve extra contextual effects (informativeness) for as little processing effort as possible (economy). Given the relevance principle, informativeness and economy are factors which characterise communication generally. In relevance theory terms, then, the ultimate motivating factor for linguistic innovations would be speakers' general drive to optimise relevance. Also, Hopper & Traugott's approach to pragmatics is essentially inferential; in fact, they conclude as follows:

it has been suggested that a maxim of Relevance alone [as opposed to the Gricean set of maxims], defined in such a way as to include informativeness, is sufficient to account for pragmatic meaning ... processes of grammaticalization seem to draw primarily on Relevance. (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 72)

The quotation seems to justify the combinatory approach taken here. However, the question of the conceptual relation between relevance and grammaticalisation is an important one and, no doubt, one that deserves a much wider treatment than what the scope of the current work allows for.

Some examples may clarify the proposed conceptual overlap between grammaticalisation and relevance theory. Hopper and Traugott argue that much grammaticalisation involves the conventionalisation of conversational implicatures. A case in point is *since*, which has developed from a connective with a temporal meaning 'from the time that', but came to be used with an associated implicature of causality. This implicature gradually became conventionalised, resulting in the polysemous *since* of present day English.

In relevance theory terms, such a development would involve a gradual change from a conceptual meaning of temporalness to a procedural meaning indicating which part of an utterance is to be taken as premise and conclusion in an inferential process. Similarly, Jucker argues that the procedural meaning of *well* as ‘a signpost signalling to the hearer that the context created by the previous utterance ... is not the most relevant one for the interpretation of the impending utterance’ (1993:440) springs from the original meaning ‘according to one’s will’, which is clearly a conceptual meaning. It appears that a similar development from conceptual to procedural meaning has affected many (though not all; cf. 2.4.1) of the items that we consider as pragmatic markers. However, the existing relevance-theoretic literature does not account for diachronic change and not many studies have combined the two approaches. But Nicolle (1998) provides theoretical justification that a combinatory approach may be successful. He argues for a gradual development from conceptual to procedural encoding of forms that become grammaticalised, as suggested by the development of *since* and *well* described above, and he concludes as follows:

Although previous accounts of procedural encoding ... have adopted a synchronic perspective, these accounts should also be compatible with diachronic evidence. In this article, I have demonstrated that a procedural account of grammatical markers is compatible with research into grammaticalization. (Nicolle 1998: 29)

2.2 Pragmatic markers

The remainder of this chapter is aimed at providing a general description of pragmatic markers. My discussion has two main objectives. Firstly, in Section 2.3, I question the assumption that the items that are usually taken to belong to this category (whether labelled ‘pragmatic marker’, ‘discourse marker’, ‘pragmatic particle’, ‘interactional signal’, ‘smallword’ or otherwise) are necessarily external to propositions and do not contribute to truth conditions. I aim to show that some pragmatic markers may affect the truth conditions of utterances, and I relate this observation to the grammaticalisation and diachronic development of the forms in question. This section also has a methodological flavour, in that it touches upon some of the problems of identifying pragmatic markers in authentic spoken data. Secondly, in

Section 2.4, I present an analytical framework of pragmatic markers that is based on the relevance-theoretic view of utterance interpretation as an inferential process. The distinction between conceptual and procedural encoding and the notion of higher-level explicature are crucial to this framework. I attempt to describe the functional complexity of this category in terms of the well-known notions of subjective, interactional and textual functions, here defined in terms of their associated inferential processes, and I propose a framework that acknowledges the multifunctionality of individual items.

In the brief preliminary description that was given in the previous chapter, the term ‘pragmatic marker’ was introduced to describe a class of short, recurrent linguistic items that generally have little lexical import but serve significant pragmatic functions in conversation. The amount of attention that pragmatic markers have attracted has increased dramatically over the last two-three decades, especially within English language studies. (Comprehensive accounts include Crystal & Davy 1975; Halliday & Hasan 1976; Schourup 1985; Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1990, 1996; Abraham 1991; Hölker 1991; Blakemore 1992; Stenström 1994; Brinton 1996; Nikula 1996; Jucker & Ziv 1998a; Andersen & Fretheim 2000.) Although there seems to be little consensus as to how this category ought to be defined and delimited and as to which items constitute the inventory of pragmatic markers in English (see Brinton 1996; Jucker & Ziv 1998b for illuminating discussions), this class is generally (and in the current study) taken to include items studied within the European ‘Partikelforschung’ tradition, i.e. so-called ‘pragmatic particles’ (cf. Weydt 1979; Fretheim 1981, 1989; Heinrichs 1981; Helbig & Kötz 1981; Abraham 1991) and within the Anglo-American ‘discourse marker’ tradition (cf. Östman 1981b, 1982; Schourup 1985; Schiffrin 1987; Stenström 1989; Fraser 1996). It also includes the commonly discussed class of ‘connectives’ like *so*, *therefore* and *but* (cf. Blakemore 1987) and so-called ‘pragmatic expressions’ such as *I mean* and *you know* (cf. Erman 1987).

Consequently, a wide range of different terms are used to describe items in this category. My preference for the term ‘pragmatic marker’ to refer to items like *well*, *so*, *but*, *after all*, *yeah*, etc is not intended to signal that the members of this category are arbitrary and not constrained by linguistic convention. On the contrary, pragmatic markers are conventional and their felicitous use requires native speaker knowledge. Commonly, it is their procedural meaning which enables them to constrain the process of utterance

interpretation. Like the meaning of concepts, procedural meaning is also linguistically encoded. However, the label 'pragmatic' is meant to suggest a relatively low degree of lexical specificity and a high degree of context-sensitivity. Pragmatic markers are generally associated with the communication of aspects of an utterance that lie beyond its propositional meaning, including higher-level explicatures and implicatures (cf. 2.4). They may be used to indicate speaker attitudes of endorsement or rejection of a proposition and positive or negative evaluation of it, and they may have speech act functions or serve to increase politeness and solidarity between speakers. They are 'pragmatic' in the sense of accompanying and facilitating inferential processes, such as the identification of the intended explicatures and implicatures, by constraining the selection of the contextual background against which an utterance is to be interpreted. Many authors prefer the term 'discourse markers'. I avoid this term because there is a possibility of confusion with Fraser's (1996) account, where it has a narrower meaning. Fraser considers 'discourse marker' as a subtype of pragmatic markers, specifically 'an expression which signals the relationship of the basic message to the foregoing discourse' (1996: 186; see also Fraser 1998). This is essentially what I will refer to as the textual function of pragmatic markers. It is evident that pragmatic markers may serve other functions that cannot be described in terms of textuality or coherence. The connection between the notion 'discourse marker' and textual functions is also salient in Schiffrin's account, where she defines discourse markers as 'sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk' (Schiffrin 1987: 31). Against this background, I claim, along with Brinton, that '*pragmatic* better captures the range of functions filled by these items' (1996: 30).

2.3 Pragmatic markers and (non-)propositional meaning

Most studies (although not Brinton 1996) seem to regard non-propositionality as an essential property of pragmatic markers. Traditionally, this appears to be the single, most important criterion for considering an item a pragmatic marker. I wish to argue that non-propositionality is only partly a valid criterion, because some pragmatic markers can be seen to have truth-conditional implications. I am advocating the view that, due to the diachronic grammaticalisation processes that are synchronically manifested in the use of

pragmatic markers, there is sometimes a gradation between uses that are non-truth-conditional and omissible and those that are not. In keeping with this assumption, I do not consider lexical transparency an essential property, as some pragmatic markers clearly have conceptual meanings, for instance *I mean, you know, I guess* and so on. Their conceptual meanings can be ascribed to the principle of persistence (retention) in grammaticalisation, namely that '[w]hen a form undergoes grammaticization ... some traces of its original lexical meanings tend to adhere to it, and details of its lexical history may be reflected in constraints on its grammatical distribution' (Hopper 1991:22). Hence, rather than taking non-propositionality for granted, I argue that a more precise description of pragmatic markers is that they guide the hearer in utterance interpretation and constrain the identification of the intended explicit and implicit meaning of an utterance.

The purpose of the present section is twofold. My first objective is to argue, in agreement with most previous accounts, that pragmatic markers are interpretable in relation to propositional meaning, hence that the proposition is a conceptual unit that is fundamental to the interpretation, analysis and understanding of pragmatic markers. In doing so, I will support the view that this unit must be regarded as a synthesis of linguistically encoded and pragmatically inferred material (cf. Carston 1996a). Thus, both semantic and pragmatic knowledge contribute to the identification of the propositional content of utterances and to their truth conditions.

My second objective is to show that, if one considers conversational phenomena in empirical linguistic data (which is the aim of the current work), it is not always easy to classify linguistic material as internal or external to propositions, despite the pervasiveness of the propositional/non-propositional dichotomy reflected in the literature. I argue that some pragmatic markers affect the propositional meaning of utterances, though not necessarily as conceptual constituents of propositions but as constraints on the interpretational procedure. The diachronic development of those items that become pragmatic markers is relevant to this issue. I suggest that their problematic status can be explained with respect to the processes of grammaticalisation which they are involved in. But it is important to point out that it is only a subset of pragmatic markers that are problematic with respect to the propositional/non-propositional dichotomy, and that many pragmatic markers are readily classifiable as non-propositional.

The interpretation of utterances is a complex task. Hearers have to rely on several types of knowledge in order to grasp the meaning of what is ostensibly communicated. Syntax, semantics and pragmatics are three types of linguistic knowledge that are brought to bear in the comprehension of linguistic meaning. In other words, both the inherent meaning of linguistic expressions and meaning derived from contextual factors are salient for comprehension. Utterances typically contain both propositional meaning (in this book signified by 'P') and other meaningful expressions that specify how the speaker intends the proposition to be understood, for instance as a request for information (*P, eh?*), or that specify the speaker's attitude towards the proposition (*Of course, P*). As Fraser puts it:

On the one hand, a sentence typically encodes a proposition, perhaps complex, which represents a state of the world which the speaker wishes to bring to the addressee's attention. This aspect of sentence meaning is generally referred to as the propositional content (or content meaning) of the sentence. On the other hand, there is everything else: Mood markers such as the declarative structure of the sentence, and lexical expressions of varying length and complexity. (1996: 167)

Generally speaking, the linguistic items with which the current study is concerned are part of Fraser's 'everything else'. The role of pragmatic markers in utterance interpretation is, crucially, to facilitate processes of pragmatic inference, processes that are required in order for the hearer to arrive at the intended meaning that a speaker wishes to communicate, including her attitudes towards what is said.

Pragmatic markers do not have an independent status; their use and meaning always rely on a conceptually meaningful unit. This feature distinguishes pragmatic markers from other elements that frequently occur in spoken discourse, such as interjections, e.g. *Ouch!*, and greetings, e.g. *Hello!* (cf. Stenström 1994), whose use does not require underlying (accompanying) referential meaning.

From the outset, it should be noted that some pragmatic markers have a capacity for taking a narrow scope and modifying propositional constituents rather than entire propositions. Consider (1) and (2):⁶

- (1) You thought that was funny **eh?** (134802/1: 28)
- (2) Cos my sister **yeah**, she wants to be responsible, she wants to be a scientist. (136405/1: 77)

The pragmatic markers *eh* and *yeah* (both pronounced with a rise) both invite the hearer's evaluation of some aspect of the utterance. While *eh* in (1) has a wide scope that includes the whole proposition, *You thought that was funny*, the marker *yeah* in (2) has a narrow scope that is restricted to one propositional constituent, *my sister*. Due to this difference in scope, the tag *eh* in (1) is capable of addressing the truth of P, while *yeah* in (2) is not. Used in this manner, *yeah* functions as a device for checking that the preceding subject noun phrase refers to a mutually manifest concept. Specifically, it checks if the hearer is able to identify the person referred to as 'my sister'. The difference in scope enforces two different procedures, one that is aimed at evoking the hearer's assessment of truth and another that is aimed at assisting the hearer's retrieval of a particular concept from memory, hence easing the process of reference assignment. Nevertheless, the two markers are closely related in function, in that they both address assumptions that are presumed to exist in the hearer's cognitive environment. (In this sense, they are hearer-oriented and have an interactional function. For a more thorough account of this function, see 2.4.5.)

The claim that pragmatic markers always rely on underlying propositional meaning does not imply that they must occur in utterances where a proposition is stated explicitly:

(3) Jasmine: I got a letter from my friend Dick the other day. Had to go to court.

Jock: **Really?** (141704/1: 19)

Jock's utterance does not contain explicit propositional information. Nevertheless, it addresses and takes scope over a proposition and expresses an attitude towards it. *Really?* has the pragmatic effect of marking that the speaker is surprised to learn that P, where P, i.e. (*My friend Dick*) *had to go to court*, is uttered by the previous speaker. As Blakemore (1987) has shown, the use of a pragmatic marker (in her terminology, a 'discourse connective') does not even require an explicit representation of propositional material in the preceding discourse. Her well-known example, (4), uttered to a hearer arriving laden with parcels:

(4) **So** you've spent all your money. (ibid: 106)

is a case where no explicit proposition occurs prior to the occurrence of a pragmatic marker. The use of *so* is nevertheless dependent on underlying

mutually manifest assumptions, i.e. on thoughts held to be true by the speaker. In this case, the underlying assumptions are not externally realised as a proposition but are due to visual stimuli. They are nevertheless salient to the speaker, salient enough for her to conclude that the hearer has spent all his money. Analogously, we can imagine the occurrence of (5) or (6) uttered in linguistic isolation, for instance if addressed to a hearer who has just returned after an oral exam:

(5) Well?

(6) So?

These utterances may well be interpreted as requests for information whose meaning is roughly equivalent to 'How did it go? Tell me!'. Again, the use of pragmatic markers is not triggered by propositional meaning that is explicitly realised. Nevertheless, an underlying related propositional meaning can be inferred, as the communicative impact of these utterances is roughly equivalent to 'I would like to know about P', where P concerns the outcome of the exam. In these examples, pragmatic markers do not occur independently, but their use relies on underlying assumptions that are held by an interlocutor. The overall point is that, although pragmatic markers can be produced in linguistic isolation, they are never interpreted in contextual isolation. Here, it is the hearer who is expected to provide propositional information that is desirable and relevant to the speaker, as signalled by *Well?* and *So?* in (5) and (6). (On the relevance of directive speech acts, see Wilson & Sperber 1988.)

2.3.1 *Identification of propositional meaning*

What are the elements of an utterance that constitute its propositional meaning? The identification of the proposition expressed is far from unproblematic. Several studies (e.g. Katz 1972; Wilson & Sperber 1981; Carston 1996a, 1998) have documented that the linguistically encoded meaning underdetermines the propositional meaning of utterances, and that pragmatic inference is required to fill the gap between encoded linguistic content and the proposition expressed. I wish to support the view that both semantic and pragmatic knowledge are required in order to arrive at the proposition expressed by an utterance.

Many attempts at describing linguistic pragmatics have semantics as the primary point of comparison and seek to delimit pragmatics on the assumption that semantics and pragmatics are complementary counterparts (the ‘complementarist’ view; cf. Leech 1983). This view is held, for instance, by Levinson, who concludes his account of this problem by claiming that ‘[t]he most promising are the definitions that equate pragmatics with ‘meaning minus semantics’, or with a theory of language understanding that takes context into account, in order to complement the contribution that semantics makes to meaning’ (1983: 32). Needless to say, however, such a delimitation of the field hinges entirely on what is meant by semantics, an issue which is no less problematic, of course. The classical view on this latter problem is that linguistic meaning is equivalent to truth-conditional content, in other words, that ‘for [an] arbitrary sentence *s*, to know the meaning of *s* is to know under what conditions the sentence *s* would count as true’ (Wiggins 1971; quoted in Wilson 1975: 5). This approach to linguistic meaning, commonly referred to as ‘truth-conditional semantics’, has achieved extensive criticism from linguists who acknowledge that the meaning of utterances cannot be arrived at solely by means of semantic knowledge. Not only has it been shown that pragmatic non-truth-conditional phenomena, such as sentence adverbials conveying propositional attitude, must be regarded as meaningful; it is also evident that pragmatic factors play a role in the identification of the truth-conditional content of utterances. This latter claim can be demonstrated by the fact that, for instance, *I will leave tomorrow* has different meanings and truth conditions depending on the speech event, due to the deictic expressions it contains. Reference assignment, disambiguation, recovery of ellipted material and enrichment of vague expressions are all examples of context-dependent, hence pragmatic, processes required in utterance interpretation, but whose outcome contributes to truth-conditional meaning. It is, for example, ultimately due to pragmatic knowledge that we are able to account for the difference in meaning between *John moved to Spain and married Carmen* and *John married Carmen and moved to Spain*. The temporal meaning ‘and then’ is not semantically encoded in the connector *and*. Nevertheless, the ordering of elements has consequences for the truth-conditional content of the utterance (cf. Wilson 1975).

Analogously, non-truth-conditional semanticists have observed that natural language sentences convey meanings which cannot be described in truth-conditional terms, but which nevertheless must be ascribed to semantics

because they are linguistically encoded and not dependent on the context of utterance. This applies, for instance, to mood-indicators such as word order and verbal morphology. The sentences *Kevin is a doctor* and *Is Kevin a doctor?* have the same truth conditions, but differ in illocutionary force, due to the conventional and linguistically encoded difference in mood determined by their different word order. Mood⁷ is considered a semantic category which distinguishes declarative sentences from imperatives, interrogatives, etc. Thus, it is argued that mood-indicators determine the illocutionary force of an utterance at the level of semantics without contributing to the truth conditions of utterances (Wilson & Sperber 1988; Carston 1996a).

The foregoing points show that pragmatic factors can contribute to truth conditions, and that semantic factors can be non-truth-conditional. Consequently, it becomes evident that the distinctions between semantic and pragmatic knowledge and between truth-conditional and non-truth-conditional phenomena do not coincide, and the position of the truth-conditional semanticists becomes untenable.

The philosophical notion of the 'proposition' is traditionally viewed as the unit which connects language and the world. Constituted by a referent (the subject) and a predication, a proposition can be described as 'something which is a bearer of truth-conditions, and is the object of belief, assertion, denial, and judgement' (Bright 1992: 284). Within the fields of both semantics and pragmatics, the proposition is regarded as an entity which is fundamental to the description of linguistic meaning. Propositions are, theoretically, testable in terms of their truth value. However, it is commonly not the case that they can be actually evaluated in terms of truth. This holds true, for instance, for evaluative statements (*That's great!*), which are not intersubjectively verifiable but nevertheless truth-conditional, since they involve a representation of a state-of-affairs which the speaker holds to be true. The proposition expressed by an utterance is used to represent states of affairs that may be actual, possible, potential or desirable to an individual.

Within pragmatics, it has long been recognised that many linguistic phenomena contribute to meaning without being part of propositional meaning. The pervasive dichotomy between propositional and non-propositional meaning is crucial in Grice's theory of meaning and conversational implicature (Grice 1975, 1989), in speech act theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969), and in relevance theory. In specifying his notion of 'what is said' as opposed to 'what is implicated', Grice draws the distinction between

sentence-meaning and utterance-meaning, while Austin distinguishes the propositional content of an utterance from the illocutionary force associated with it. On the relevance-theoretic view, the proposition expressed is distinguished from higher-level aspects of the utterance, which may be explicitly communicated (higher-level explicatures) or implicitly communicated (implicatures).

To arrive at the propositional content of an utterance thus requires a complex of semantic and pragmatic processes; it is not handled solely by the conventional lexical meaning of the words contained in the utterance. Propositions can be described in terms of their logical properties; that is, they may be analytical, synonymous, contradictory and the like. It is due to their truth-conditional properties that propositions can undergo logical operations such as *if-then*, and enter into entailment relations. Those aspects of utterance meaning that are external to the proposition are pragmatically inferred and do not have these properties. For instance, *John is a bachelor* entails *John is a man*, and the entailment is preserved in *John is, allegedly, a bachelor* and in *John is a goddamn bachelor*, although the three utterances are attitudinally very different.

2.3.2 *Pragmatic markers and propositional meaning*

Pragmatic markers are usually described as not contributing to propositional meaning. This assumption is prevalent in the definitions/descriptions provided by, for instance, Fraser (1990) and Abraham (1991). Hölker (1991) states explicitly that ‘they do not add anything to the propositional content of an utterance’ (quoted in Jucker 1993: 436). Similarly, Östman claims in connection with the marker *you know* that ‘the speaker steps out of his propositional frame and metacommunicates his attitudes and feelings’ (1981b: 16). And, indeed, pragmatic markers can commonly be omitted without affecting propositional meaning:

- (7) a. **Oh, well** that explains it. (132901/2: 88)
 b. That explains it.

The presence of the pragmatic markers *oh* and *well* does not have a bearing on the truth conditions of the utterance above, as (7a) and (7b) are true or false under identical circumstances. The difference in meaning that exists between the two is principally pragmatic; it amounts to the speaker attitude

of surprise and the need for contextual renegotiation, signalled by *oh* and *well*, respectively (cf. Heritage 1984; Jucker 1993). The claim that markers contribute to non-propositional meaning seems to suggest that there is always a possibility of omitting a marker without depriving the sentence of its conceptual integrity or causing syntactic anomaly. This assumption is supported by the observation that pragmatic markers can display great syntactic freedom and that certain markers can seemingly appear virtually anywhere within an utterance.

Although pragmatic markers may seem readily dispensable from the point of view of their contribution to propositional meaning, not all pragmatic markers are equally easily accounted for in this respect. A case in point is *sort of*, which can have two distinct uses, as illustrated by the following examples:

- (8) It's the **sort of** film you can sit and watch a few times. (132901/1: 50)
 (9) I've always got someone who **sort of** fancies me or I'm flirting with.
 (132901/1: 197)

It is clear that *sort of* in (8) is not a pragmatic marker, but that *sort of film* constitute the head and postmodifier of a noun phrase, *sort of* being equivalent to 'type of' and indicating category membership. It functions as a part of the conceptual structure of the proposition and cannot be omitted without causing anomaly. (9) is an example of the use of *sort of* that is generally treated as a member of the pragmatic marker category (cf. Aijmer 1984; Schourup 1985; Stenström 1994; Brinton 1996). Specifically, it is a so-called 'hedge' which is 'used in speech to make the reference of an entity vague and less well defined rather than clear and specific' (Aijmer 1984: 118). As mentioned, pragmatic markers are generally not considered part of truth-conditional content, which would imply that *sort of* can be omitted without any loss of propositional meaning. However, this is not the case in (9). The marker *sort of* provides a signal for the hearer to opt for a loose interpretation of the concept of 'fancying', i.e. not to take it (too) literally. (For a fuller discussion of loose use, see 5.2.2.1.) Clearly, 'fancying' and 'sort of fancying' are not identical from the point of view of propositional meaning; the epistemically strong and weak expressions would not be appropriate in identical circumstances. In fact, this truth-conditional difference can be the object of dispute:

- (10) A: You said you've always got someone who fancies you.
 B: No, I didn't, I said I've always got someone who **sort of** fancies me.

Moreover, it seems that the presence or absence of *sort of* does have an impact if the utterance is embedded in a conditional:

- (11) If you've always got someone who **sort of** fancies you, you don't need to look for a new boyfriend.

The circumstances under which the hearer need not look for a new boyfriend (i.e. the sufficient condition) are that someone 'sort of fancies' this person. The epistemically stronger condition, without the hedge, would not be a requirement for the fulfilment of the conditional. In other words, the conditional premise seems to be truth-conditionally sensitive to the presence of *sort of* in this example.

These observations provide evidence that we must regard certain pragmatic markers as elements which contribute to the propositional meaning of utterances. Moreover, the discussion of *sort of* shows that we cannot take for granted that pragmatic markers encode procedural information. Since the outcome of the conditional is sensitive to the information encoded by *sort of* in (11), this information must be conceptually encoded (Wilson & Sperber 1993).

The analyst who wants to investigate a particular pragmatic marker in authentic conversational data, and whose task is to analyse and classify a particular item as either contributing or not contributing to propositional meaning, is usually faced with numerous problematic cases (cf. Andersen 1997b; 1997d). One source of trouble is *like*, and I now wish to anticipate the discussion of this marker slightly. In many varieties of present day English *like* can be either a fully propositional item, as in *Winston tastes good like a cigarette should* (Romaine & Lange 1991: 244) or a pragmatic marker, as in *Well, like, I'm only lying*. One would assume that the task of the analyst amounts to retrieving, computationally or otherwise, the total list of occurrences of the item in question, and distinguishing the propositionally meaningful occurrences from those that are not, on the basis of considerations of syntactic integratedness and potential omissibility, and on the basis of more general contextual and thematic considerations.

However, in the case of *like*, this is far from an easy task, although clearcut cases like the ones above do occur. Used as a pragmatic marker, *like* can indicate that a linguistic expression only to a certain extent corresponds to the thought the utterance is meant to represent, and *like* may indicate that the speaker does not commit herself to the literal truth of the utterance (cf. Schourup 1985; Andersen 1997d, 1998b). No one would claim, of course,

that *like* in *Well, like, I'm only lying* is anything but non-propositional and omissible. However, *like* is particularly fitting in contexts where it precedes a noun phrase containing a measurable unit or a numeral expression. In this particular use, *like* appears to have achieved a near-lexical status as an approximator. For instance, in the utterance *My lowest ever was like forty*, the marker *like* seems to be functionally equivalent to the truth-conditional adverbials *roughly* or *approximately* and to be far less easy to omit than in the previous example. In analogy with *sort of*, discussed above, it is difficult to present a sound argument for treating *forty* and *like forty* ('roughly') as truth-conditionally equivalent. There appears to be a very close connection between the pragmatic marker *like* and an ordinary truth-conditional adverbial in terms of meaning. Hence, it is tempting to argue that *like* indeed affects propositional meaning in this type of examples. (This issue will be further substantiated in Chapter 5.) Sometimes, the discrepancy between thought and utterance is one which affects propositional meaning, but other times it does not, and it may be difficult to distinguish between truth-conditional and non-truth-conditional uses. (For discussion of classification problems, see 5.1.1.)

This shows that certain pragmatic markers may be difficult to classify according to the otherwise highly pervasive distinction between propositional and non-propositional meaning. Another use of *like* which poses challenge to the definitions of pragmatic markers mentioned above is *like* as a so-called 'quotative complementiser' (Romaine & Lange 1991), an idiomatic expression consisting of a form of the verb BE and *like*, and used to introduce a direct quotation, as in *He was like oh wow!*. In terms of meaning, the idiomatic expression BE *like* can be more or less equivalent to reporting verbs such as SAY and THINK. It is clear that this is a use of the marker where the item has a bearing on propositional meaning and where the possibility of omitting the marker without propositional loss seems unlikely. It is worth pointing out that the previous accounts (e.g. Schourup 1985; Romaine & Lange 1991; Andersen 1997d, 1998b) report these problematic types of use as genuine examples of pragmatic markers.

Some pragmatic markers are multi-word items consisting of a pronominal subject and a verb, examples being *I mean* and *you know*. A subclass of these is referred to as 'epistemic parentheticals' (Thompson & Mulac 1991), of which *I think*, *I guess*, *I reckon* and *I suppose* are fairly common (cf. Mosaker 1998). They are epistemic in the sense that they subtract from the overall

degree of commitment with which a speaker presents a proposition, and thus compare to epistemic modal verbs. However, it is important to point out the difference between the parenthetical expression *in*, for instance, *John is lying, I think*, and the modal verb *may* in *John may be lying*. The two utterances differ in that uttering the first one commits the speaker to the truth of the proposition *John is lying*, but the one containing the modal verb, *John may be lying*, does not commit the speaker to the truth of *John is lying*. This can be illustrated by the fact that it makes sense to say *John may be lying, but I don't believe it*, but we cannot say *John is lying, I think, but I don't believe it*. Hence, epistemic parentheticals should be considered external to propositions (specifically, they contribute to higher-level explicatures; cf. Ifantidou 1994) while modal auxiliaries are part of the proposition expressed.

From an empirical point of view, epistemic parentheticals can, nevertheless, be problematic to characterise in terms of the propositional/non-propositional dichotomy. The main source of this problem is that an expression like *I think* or *I believe* can have obvious truth-conditional uses, as in *I think so*, or *I believe in unicorns*, where the items *I* and *think/believe* constitute the subject and the verb of a statement concerning the speaker's opinion or belief (cf. Stubbs 1986; Ifantidou 1994). In investigations of authentic data, the distinction between the two uses is notoriously difficult to make (cf. Andersen 1997b), and in many cases one can justifiably argue that a given utterance is ambiguous between a propositional and a non-propositional reading. How are we, then, to classify a given instance of *I think* as either an epistemic parenthetical or as propositional elements? At what point does *I think* cease to be the pronominal subject and predicator in a proposition concerning the speaker's belief, and become an extra-propositional epistemic parenthetical? Obviously, considerations of thematic and linguistic context become paramount when one is faced with this problem, but very frequently, they will not entirely resolve the ambiguity.

It seems that the conceptual framework which presupposes a clearcut propositional/non-propositional dichotomy runs into some problems when it comes to characterising particular tokens of pragmatic markers in authentic data. A clearcut distinction between the two uses of *I think*, for instance, seems inconceivable. We may be justified in viewing an expression like *I think* not as having two diametrically opposite uses but as having a wide range of uses which form a continuum of varying degrees of syntactic integratedness and varying degrees of omissibility. Of course, several

linguistic factors, such as prosody and placement in the utterance, may constrain our interpretation in one way or another (Mosaker 1998). In the next section, I wish to argue that the reason why certain pragmatic markers are problematic to characterise is to do with their diachronic development, specifically their degree of grammaticalisation. It will be argued that these classificatory difficulties appear mainly in connection with a subset of pragmatic markers, namely those which are derived from lexical items and whose grammaticalisation has not yet resulted in clear polysemous forms.

2.3.3 *Pragmatic markers and grammaticalisation*

As was briefly outlined in Section 2.1.2, from the point of view of grammaticalisation, pragmatic markers are seen as expressions which, through repetitive use and routinisation, have developed non-propositional meanings of a more abstract nature than their original lexical meanings through processes of conventionalisation of implicatures and increased subjectification. It is assumed that pragmatic markers follow a cline from propositional to textual and expressive meanings, a development which is sometimes argued to be unidirectional (e.g. Traugott 1991, 1995b; Hopper & Traugott 1993).

We saw in the previous section that certain markers are not readily classifiable in terms of the propositional/non-propositional dichotomy, and it was tentatively suggested that the distinction between marker and non-marker use of an item like *I think* should be conceptualised as a continuum rather than as two mutually exclusive categories. It is not the case, however, that this description fits pragmatic markers universally. For instance, Blakemore (1987) argues convincingly that discourse connectives like *but*, *therefore*, *however*, *moreover*, and so on do not carry propositional information, but provide procedural constraints on the process of interpretation. For example, in the utterance *It's only 9 o'clock, but the Dean is already in his office*, *but* does not affect propositional meaning, but carries an explicit signal that the latter proposition is to be processed as a contrast to implicit assumptions raised by the former. The issue of how a given instance of *but* and the other discourse connectives should be classified according to the propositional/non-propositional dichotomy is uncontroversial; we are justified in treating them as universally non-propositional. Several other pragmatic markers appear to be unproblematic in this respect, for instance *oh* and *eh*, which do not enter into syntactic structures and are exclusively extra-propositional. In fact, if we

consider the inventory of forms included in Brinton's (1996) survey of pragmatic markers in English, a large proportion of the items on the list would not appear to cause classificatory problems (e.g. *ah*, *and*, *because*, *but*, *mind you*, *moreover*, *oh*, *okay*, *or*, *so*, *therefore*, *uh huh*, *well*, *yes/no*). This state of affairs is, naturally, reflected in those definitions of pragmatic markers that presuppose their non-propositionality (cf. introduction to 2.2).

Considerations of diachronic aspects of pragmatic markers are indeed highly relevant to this issue. In order to illustrate this point I would now like to compare the development of *like* and *but*. Why is it that *but* is unproblematic with respect to the propositional/non-propositional distinction, while *like* is not? In fact, both pragmatic markers have developed from conceptual lexical items. According to the *Oxford English dictionary* (henceforth OED), the present day conjunction *but* has developed from the Old English adverbial and preposition *bútan*, with a spatial meaning of 'on the outside, without' (cf. OED 1989 II: 702). This lexeme is the origin of both the pragmatic marker *but* (OED: conjunction) and the preposition *but* ('except', as in *everyone but John*) in Modern English, although only the latter has a lexical meaning that is akin to the original spatial meaning. In relevance terminology, the original lexeme has a conceptually encoded meaning and has developed into two distinct lexemes, one of which encodes a procedure. In other words, *but* represents a case of grammaticalisation.

Analogously, those researchers who have considered the diachronic development of *like* agree that it originates in a preposition with the meaning 'similar to' and has developed into a pragmatic marker (the meaning and function of which is to be extensively accounted for in Chapter 5).⁸ Romaine & Lange (1991) argue convincingly that the development of *like* is also a case of grammaticalisation. Of course, the lexical predecessor of the pragmatic marker *like* still exists as a preposition. I have previously argued that the pragmatic marker *like* encodes procedural meaning (Andersen 1998b, 2000) and will attempt to substantiate this in the course of this book.

Highly simplified, the two developments can be schematically presented as in Figure 1.

Although the development is clearly a lot more complex than suggested here,⁹ the schema is appropriate to illustrate the parallelism that is relevant to the current argument, a parallelism which seems uncontroversial: an original lexical item with a conceptually encoded meaning has undergone grammaticalisation and developed into a grammaticalised pragmatic marker

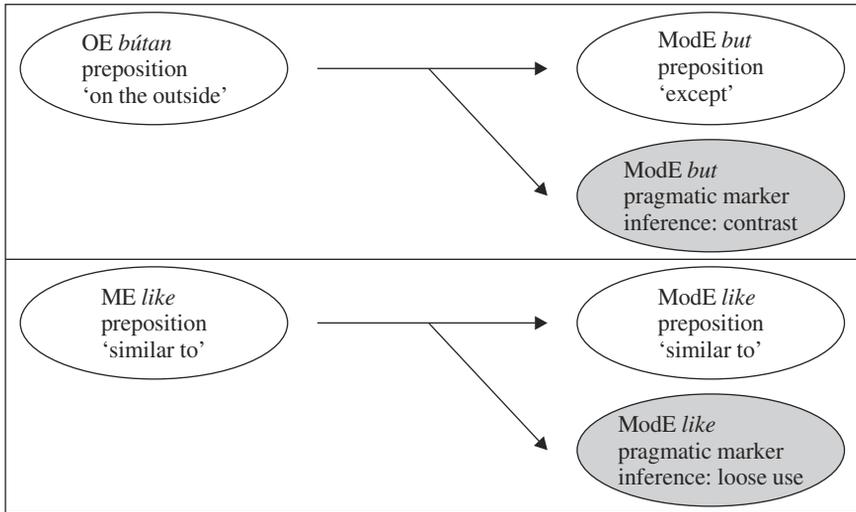


Figure 1. Development of *like* and *but*

and a lexeme with (much) the same meaning as the lexical predecessor. Although similar in nature, the timing of the two developments is different, as *but* became an adversative conjunction already in the Old English period, while the grammaticalisation of *like* is a more recent development and is restricted to present day English.¹⁰

From an empirical point of view, *but* causes no problems of classification because its grammaticalisation has reached a certain level of 'completeness'; that is, it has developed into clear polysemies. The 'end result' of this process is two distinct lexemes, the conjunction and the preposition, and these are easily distinguished in natural language data. As regards *like*, on the other hand, the grammaticalisation is apparently an ongoing process, which is reflected in the many recent studies which devote attention to *like* as a marker in present day English (cf. 5.1.2). Although the two uses may be operationalised as two distinct lexemes in the grammar of individual language users, the empirical evidence suggests a current state of flux and a fuzzy borderline between marker and non-marker usage. This state of flux is something the armchair linguist may wish to ignore, but which the empirical linguist is forced to recognise because it manifests itself externally in the

form of numerous examples that do not lend themselves to classification in terms of the otherwise pervasive propositional/non-propositional dichotomy (cf. 5.1.1). The state of flux is a perfectly predictable situation, given the diachronic facts stated above.

However, I do not wish to argue, as linguists of other theoretical inclinations may wish to do, that this fuzziness should be seen as an incentive to reject the propositional/non-propositional dichotomy as a conceptual tool appropriate for the characterisation of pragmatic markers (and other linguistic phenomena). I will maintain, following the tradition of pragmaticists such as Austin, Grice, Searle and Sperber & Wilson, that utterances are accountable in terms of propositions and attitudes towards them. Generally, the problems of classification arise in connection with those pragmatic markers which have a lexical history. Those pragmatic markers which originate in expressions with inherent conceptual meanings and which have not been fully grammaticalised are the ones that are likely to be difficult to characterise in terms of propositionality. We have seen that *like* and the epistemic parentheticals are examples of this. Other examples of pragmatic markers which have developed from conceptual lexical expressions and which may be troublesome in this respect are the markers *sort of*, *kind of*, *you know*, *you see* and, especially, *just*.

Acknowledging that a pragmatic marker such as *like* has developed from a conceptual lexeme, it becomes clear that both semantic and pragmatic change contribute to the formation of such a marker, and the development can be described from either point of view. As mentioned, the linguistic expressions that develop into pragmatic markers are subject to processes of semantic weakening and pragmatic enrichment. For instance, a marker like *well* has lost much of its lexical meaning of 'in accordance with a certain standard' and has assumed new subjective and more abstract meanings and become a so-called 'face-threat mitigator' (Jucker 1993). Usually the shift in meaning is accompanied by a reduction of phonological salience, and sometimes the development of pragmatic markers also involves morphosyntactic change, such as reanalysis and analogy (cf. e.g. Traugott 1991, 1995b; Stenström & Andersen 1996). Several studies of individual markers recognise that traces of the original lexical meanings tend to adhere to the grammaticalised forms, a phenomenon referred to as 'persistence' (Hopper 1991).

It is obvious that grammaticalisation theory is highly valuable in accounting for the problems connected with the classification of pragmatic

markers in empirical data. For instance, expressions like *I think* have 'been reanalyzed by speakers as epistemic phrases, which have a degree of freedom not possible for subject-verb combinations' (Thompson & Mulac 1991: 317). An important feature of grammaticalisation processes is that the original, older forms or types of use are not replaced by the new uses and do not cease to exist. Rather, it is common that the original and the grammaticalised forms co-exist. Therefore it is possible to trace various stages of a development in a synchronic set of data. Since the original subject-verb combinations involving *I think* do occur in contemporary data, we can claim that the proposed continuum of uses represents various stages of a grammaticalisation cline. This is precisely what justifies the view that the expression *I think* may be used in ways which may 'more or less' count as propositionally meaningful or whose truth-conditional status may be difficult to determine.

Although certain grammaticalised pragmatic markers appear to be examples of borderline phenomena with respect to the propositional/non-propositional dichotomy, it is worth emphasising that not all grammaticalised lexemes are equally semantically transparent. As Hansen puts it:

it is probably the case that discourse markers are typically items that are still in the *process* [author's emphasis] of being grammaticalised, and which are therefore naturally located at various points towards the middle of a grammaticalisation cline going from content words at one end to pure function words at the other. This would account for the heterogeneous nature of the category, largely compositional markers like *in other words* being closer to the content pole, and largely opaque ones like *well* being closer to the grammatical end of the cline. (1998: 238)

Hansen is right in pointing out the differences in the status of *in other words* and *well*. However, I would argue against the view that pragmatic markers in general are currently in the process of being grammaticalised. As I have argued, it sometimes makes sense to view marker and non-marker use of an item not as diametrical opposites, but as representing different stages in a development of grammaticalisation. But it is well worth stressing that, in contemporary data, these continua are only relevant in connection with a subset of the pragmatic markers. For instance, *but* and *well* pose little difficulties, although they, too, clearly have developed from lexemes with conceptually encoded meanings.

It is plausible that the unproblematic status of *but*, *well*, and a number of other markers, can be linked to the degree of grammaticalisation that has occurred. *Well* and *but* seem to have reached an advanced stage, as opposed to the more recently grammaticalised form *like*. On this basis, I would like to propose a diachronic model that views the development from conceptual lexeme to pragmatic marker as a three-stage process. In the initial stage, the form that later becomes grammaticalised exists as a monosemous expression. In an intermediate stage, this original lexeme assumes new functions and more opaque meanings than the original. This second stage thus encompasses the actual grammaticalisation progress; speakers begin to innovatively apply an extant form with an associated implicature (for instance, the inference of contrast associated with *but*) that gradually becomes conventionalised. It is in this second stage that the proposed continuum of propositional/non-propositional uses has its relevance. The third stage is characterised by greater fixedness and distinctness of the two functions, as the invited inference that was firstly innovative has become routinised and part of the linguistic code. As with present day *but*, the new and old forms may continue to coexist as polysemous expressions, but in other cases it is possible that the original form ceases to exist, as with *because* (Stenström 1998) and *nevertheless*. The three-stage development can be sketched as in Figure 2.

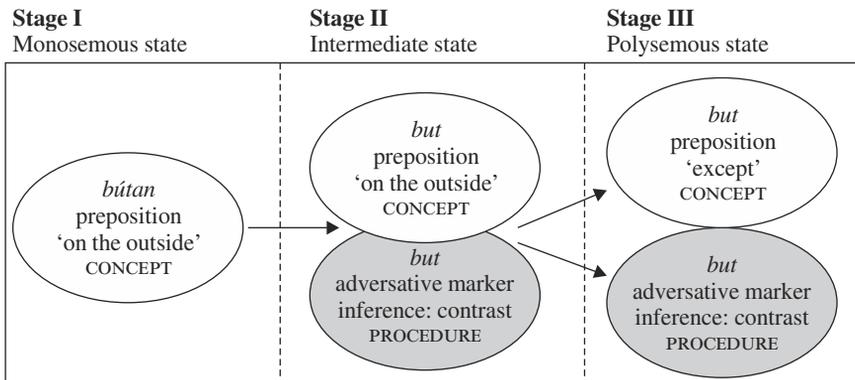


Figure 2. Development of pragmatic markers: *but* from preposition to adversative marker

The figure suggests a stage of overlap between the two expressions, before they reach a stage of distinctness. That markers develop via such an overlapping stage between conceptual and procedural encoding is suggested by Nicolle's remark:

when a formerly (or formally) lexical expression is used as a grammatical marker, it does not suddenly cease to encode conceptual information; this conceptual information may no longer be of prime importance to the interpretation of an utterance containing such an expression, but it is nonetheless still accessible. (1998: 23)

In other words, in the intermediate stage both the old and new interpretation of the form may be accessible to an individual, and the use of the grammaticalised form may or may not give rise to the invited inference. Gradually, however, the invited inference (e.g. of contrast; cf. *but*) becomes increasingly accessible to users of the language and part of the linguistic code.

A few caveats should be observed at this point. Importantly, there is no inevitability in the three-stage development suggested by this model. Firstly, it is possible that some expressions do not reach the polysemous state; this might apply to some of the forms whose problematic status has already been pointed out, such as the epistemic parentheticals. Secondly, items that have reached this most advanced stage may continue to develop beyond what is illustrated by this model; i.e., 'most advanced' is not meant to be understood as 'ultimate'.

Given the inventory of pragmatic markers in English (Brinton 1996: 32), the proposed model seems to capture a general tendency of those items that develop into pragmatic markers: they follow a cline from conceptual to procedural encoding. However, I do not wish to say that such a development is an essential property of pragmatic markers, as some items may become grammaticalised but continue to encode concepts (e.g. *I mean* and *you know*). Moreover, and importantly, some pragmatic markers have not developed from lexemes at all, such as *ah*, *eh?*, *oh* and *uh huh* (Brinton 1996: 32). But they, too, encode conventionalised attitudinal meanings, although they cannot be described in terms of a transition from conceptual to procedural encoding. (The issue of conceptual and procedural encoding of pragmatic markers is also addressed in the following section.)

This section has shown that the findings of grammaticalisation theory have obvious implications for how we conceptualise the category of

pragmatic marker. Hence, considerations of diachronic development will be crucial to my account of the individual pragmatic markers in Chapters 4 and 5. The discussion has also shown that we cannot take for granted that items that are conveniently placed under the pragmatic marker umbrella are necessarily external to propositions, nor do they necessarily encode procedural information. Consequently, these analytical features must be specified in descriptions of individual pragmatic markers (cf. 2.4.1).

2.4 Pragmatic markers and relevance

As argued above, I take it as uncontroversial that pragmatic markers are meaningful, and that their meaning is linguistically encoded and part of native speaker competence. They tend to be lexically transparent, to occur syntactically freely and to have a parenthetical nature in relation to the propositions they modify.¹¹ Also fundamental to my account of pragmatic markers is the view that utterance interpretation is governed by a relevance principle and that communication can be characterised in terms of intentional modifications to the communicators' mutual cognitive environment. As mentioned in Section 2.1.1, hearers look for an interpretation that is optimally relevant, i.e. one which yields enough contextual effects to be worth processing without putting the hearer to unjustifiable processing effort. In this process, pragmatic markers contribute in various ways. Very generally, they act as 'helpers' in the interpretation process by telling the hearer how an utterance is to be understood and by helping him to arrive at the intended explicatures and implicatures of the utterance. They tend to have a minimising effect on processing effort and their cognitive effects are typically associated with higher-level aspects of utterance meaning (Récanati 1987).

In the current section, I wish to go beyond these general statements and present a functionally based analytical model. A wide range of functions are associated with pragmatic markers. Several of these can be subsumed under the widely recognised notion of 'speaker attitude' (cf. Andersen & Fretheim 2000). This notion includes several dimensions, such as epistemic commitment, ranging from full endorsement to full rejection of propositional meaning, affective evaluation, ranging from positive to negative evaluation of propositional meaning, and newsworthiness (Smith & Jucker 2000), ranging from predictable to unpredictable propositional meaning. Pragmatic markers

may signal degree of mutual manifestness (also referred to as ‘common ground’; cf. Jucker & Smith 1996) and logical relations between a communicated assumption and a speaker’s extant cognitive environment, i.e. that a communicated assumption contradicts or supports existing assumptions or yields a contextual implication. Hence, a marker like *cos* is able to express which part of an utterance counts as premise and conclusion in a deductive process. Pragmatic markers are also commonly associated with speech act functions and politeness functions, and they may be textually salient, as conversational openers, turn-taking devices, hesitational devices, backchannels, markers of topic shift and of receipt of information, and so on (Brinton 1996: 37f).

I find that this plethora of functions can be systematically described in terms of the notions of subjectivity, interactional capacity and textual capacity. The current account is an attempt to explore these three different functional domains in terms of the different cognitive effects that markers may have in utterance interpretation. However, I argue that these very general notions cannot serve as a taxonomic apparatus, nor do they have the same status. As is well known, pragmatic markers are typically multifunctional. I argue that a degree of subjectivity is something all markers express, since any utterance expresses a speaker’s intention to make something manifest to an individual, but interactional and textual features need not be present in the meaning of individual markers. Although my account is not an attempt to propose a taxonomy, it makes sense to single out certain markers that have an interactional capacity (hearer-orientation) as opposed to those that do not (cf. *you know* vs. *I mean*). Likewise, it makes sense to single out markers that have textual features (contribute to and express coherence relations) as opposed to those that do not (cf. *so* vs. *of course*).

2.4.1 *Procedural and conceptual encoding*

Judging by the steadily growing number of studies of markers from a relevance-theoretic viewpoint, a majority of pragmatic markers contribute to procedural rather than conceptual meaning (cf. Blakemore 1987; Blass 1989; Itani 1996, 1998; Andersen 1998b, 2000; Ifantidou 2000; Fretheim 2000; Matsui 2000; Nicolle 2000). The strong connection between markerhood and procedural encoding is also evident in the following:

Discourse connectives are notoriously hard to pin down in conceptual terms. If 'now' or 'well' encodes a proposition, why can it not be brought to consciousness? Why is it so hard for non-native speakers of German to grasp the meaning of 'ja' and 'doch'? How can the results of Ducrot's complex analyses of 'but' and other connectives be at once so simple and so insightful? The procedural account suggests an answer to these questions. Conceptual representations can be brought to consciousness: procedures can not. We have direct access neither to grammatical computations nor to the inferential computations used in comprehension. A procedural analysis of discourse connectives would explain our lack of direct access to the information they encode. (Wilson & Sperber 1993: 16)

The notion of procedural encoding, originally introduced in Blakemore's (1987) account to discourse connectives, appears to have a lot to offer to any account of pragmatic markers. To exemplify, Jucker argues that *well* functions as 'a signpost to indicate that there is a discrepancy between the background assumptions which [the speaker] and her interlocutor are using' (1993: 442). The marker *well* does not encode a concept with logical and encyclopaedic properties, and does therefore not act as a constituent of a proposition, but it encodes information that is relevant in virtue of constraining the interpretation process. Specifically, *well* signals that a shift in context is necessary for the interpretation; hence it facilitates efficient processing of the impending stimulus. In other words, it denotes a specific procedure, in the sense of a way of guiding, or constraining the material which is to be recovered by pragmatic inference. Similarly, Watts shows that the 'commentary pragmatic markers' *actually*, *basically* and *really* 'indicate that certain types of assumption may be derived from parts of the linguistic input and they thus guide the hearer in assessing the way in which s/he should process the new information' and therefore 'guid[e] the search for relevance' (1988: 255). This description implies that the meanings encoded by the markers *actually*, *basically* and *really* should be considered procedural. In addition, most of the individual studies in Andersen & Fretheim (2000) describe individual pragmatic markers in terms of procedural encoding.

However, despite the common correlation of markerhood and procedural encoding, we cannot rule out that some pragmatic markers may be conceptual. After all, pragmatic markers constitute a broad category that includes not only the discourse connectives described above but also multi-word items like *I mean*, *you know*, *I think* and *sort of*. In the previous section, I argued

that there are good reasons for viewing *sort of* as a marker that encodes conceptual information and contributes to the proposition expressed. Likewise, Ifantidou (1994) shows that parenthetical epistemic constructions like *I think* encode conceptual information, and the same applies to markers of hearsay relations, such as *apparently*.

Therefore, the conceptual/procedural distinction cannot be applied as a definitional criterion to characterise the pragmatic marker category. Rather, individual markers should be studied with a view to describing what type of information they encode. In doing so, one must rely on criteria such as representational versus computational characteristics, opaqueness or specificity of their meanings and degree of compositionality (cf. Wilson & Sperber 1993).

2.4.2 *Higher-level explicatures*

A further notion that is crucial to the relevance-theoretic account of pragmatic markers is that of higher-level explicature. Again, I do not consider contribution to higher-level explicatures to be a defining characteristic of pragmatic markers, since a marker like *sort of* can be shown to contribute to the actual proposition expressed. But, in accordance with previous definitions/descriptions of pragmatic markers (cf. introduction to 2.3.2) one can assume that a wide range of markers ought to be characterised as extrapositional. The higher-level explicatures communicated by an utterance are derived by embedding its propositional form P ‘under various propositional-attitude or speech-act descriptions’ (Wilson & Sperber 1993: 11). In other words, when communicating a proposition P, a speaker also communicates higher-level meaning of the type *The speaker is saying that/asking whether P, The speaker believes/does not believe that P, The speaker is happy/sad/surprised that P*, and so on.

Commonly, it is at this level of utterance meaning that pragmatic markers have their import. Pragmatic markers are often applied precisely to trigger attitudinal or illocutionary higher-level representations, such as those suggested above. For instance, Wilson & Sperber (1993) suggest that the ‘dissociative particle’ *huh!* encodes a constraint on the explicatures of utterances, to the effect that the utterance must be taken as a case of irony (see also Blass 1990). I would like to suggest that the popular irony marker *As if!* has the same function. Similarly, Wilson & Sperber suggest that the ‘question particle’ *eh?* constrains the higher-level explicatures as an illocutionary

force indicator. In Chapter 4, I describe the functions of the invariant tags and follow-ups *inmit* and *is it*, assuming that they operate at this communicative level.

Clearly, pragmatic markers like *huh!* and *eh?* do not encode concepts; hence Wilson & Sperber treat them as providing interpretational constraints. Actually, they conclude that '[w]ithin this category of procedural constraints on explicatures, there is thus a rich variety of data to explore' (Wilson & Sperber 1993: 23). But we cannot rule out the possibility that the higher-level explicatures of utterances may be affected by pragmatic markers which encode concepts. This would imply that such items actually contribute to higher-level explicatures as conceptual constituents, rather than constraining these explicatures. This is precisely the role of parenthetical epistemic constructions like *I think*, according to Ifantidou (1994), and it is presumably also the role of other multi-word pragmatic markers, such as *I mean* and *you know*.

To sum up the discussion so far, items that are generally classified as pragmatic markers can contribute at various levels of utterance meaning:

- Markers like *sort of* and *kind of* contribute to the proposition expressed by the utterance.
- Markers like *I think* and *I mean* contribute to the higher-level explicatures of the utterance.
- Markers like *As if!* and *eh?* constrain the higher-level explicatures of the utterance.
- Markers like *so* and *after all* constrain the implicatures of the utterance.

Given Wilson & Sperber's survey of different types of communicated information (1993: 3), we should also expect to find pragmatic markers which provide procedural constraints on the proposition expressed, in addition to the types of meaning listed above. I argue in Chapter 5 that this is precisely the role of the pragmatic marker *like*.

2.4.3 *Survey of functions*

Several studies have shown that a single pragmatic marker can have more than one function, and a description of this category must reflect this fact. Some studies emphasise the role of markers as devices for signalling intra-textual (sequential) structure (e.g. Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1998), others focus on their function of expressing speaker attitude (e.g. Andersen & Fretheim 2000),

and yet others emphasise their role as devices for acknowledging and highlighting the speaker-hearer relationship and increasing politeness (e.g. Cameron et al. 1989; Stenström 1989, 1994; Holmes 1995). In the sections that follow, I will propose an analytical framework which recognises not only the structural, bracketing function of markers, but also non-structural functions such as signalling newsworthiness, epistemic commitment, empathy towards the hearer and other attitudinal functions. This analytical framework thus acknowledges both the consistency and the complexity which can be said to characterise the category of pragmatic markers.

Some studies (e.g. Crystal & Davy 1975; Edmondson 1981; Fraser 1988, 1990, 1996) classify pragmatic markers according to their pragmatic function in terms of clearly defined categories. Fraser (1996), for instance, distinguishes between 'basic', 'commentary', 'parallel' and 'discourse' markers. It is not my intention in this study to follow or present a typological framework such as that of Fraser. The reason for this is that pragmatic markers are notoriously difficult to place in a certain category, and that such taxonomies are in danger of obscuring the multifunctional aspect. Markers are not only multifunctional in the sense that they can serve different pragmatic functions in different contexts, but they are also multifunctional by virtue of displaying several pragmatic features at the same time (cf. Östman 1981b; Schiffrin 1987). Or, to put it in Jucker & Ziv's terms:

The different studies of discourse markers distinguish several domains where they may be functional, in which are included textual, attitudinal, cognitive and interactional parameters. ... Despite their initial attractiveness, these cannot be adopted as criterial functional properties due to the non-mutual exclusivity evident in the functional distribution of discourse markers throughout. (1998b: 4)

Brinton (1996) adheres to a framework which considers markers as having 'textual' or 'interpersonal' functions. I acknowledge that this distinction may be useful for descriptive purposes, but the two notions are, in practice, ineffectual as taxonomic categories of pragmatic markers in actual discourse. This is because the textual and interpersonal functions of markers can be shown to be concurrent (Fretheim 1981; Östman 1982; Schiffrin 1987; Stenström 1994).

Since the existence of *bona fide* categories of markers is dubious, and since a taxonomic framework which does justice to the multifunctional

aspect seems inconceivable, I do not consider it a purposeful task to develop a taxonomy of markers. Rather, I argue in favour of the understanding of pragmatic markers as having multidimensional meanings/functions, and that assigning a particular function to a marker on a particular occasion is a matter for pragmatic inference. I will propose a conceptualisation of pragmatic markers in which the function of a particular item can be described as a synthesis of three basic aspects of pragmatic meaning, referred to as subjective, interactional and textual. The current account is an attempt to explore the different functional domains of pragmatic markers in terms of the different cognitive effects they evoke. The notions of attitudinal meaning and subjectivity are crucial in recent accounts of pragmatic markers (e.g. Andersen & Fretheim 2000), including relevance-theoretic accounts (cf. 2.4.2). I wish to argue that a degree of subjectivity is something all markers express, since any utterance expresses a speaker's intention to make something manifest to an individual. As argued above, pragmatic markers generally tell the hearer what sort of inferential processes the utterance interpretation involves and are used to manipulate the process of context selection. They make explicit the relation that exists between a communicated assumption and the interlocutors' cognitive environment. Markers may be used not only to express how the speaker perceives the information encoded by a proposition, but also how she perceives the communicative situation and her conversational and social relation with the hearer. Sometimes, but not always, markers also express the relation that exists between units of discourse (e.g. propositions). I argue in the following that it makes sense to single out certain markers that have an interactional capacity and are hearer-orientated (take the hearer's perspective, express empathy towards him or attempt to draw him into the conversation) as opposed to those that lack such a capacity but are primarily oriented towards the speaker's own beliefs and attitudes. Likewise, it makes sense to single out markers that have textual features (contribute to and express coherence relations) as opposed to those that do not. Hence, interactional and textual features are taken to be part of the encoded meanings of certain markers, while not of others.

More specifically, a pragmatic marker which has a predominantly subjective function describes the relation between the speaker and a communicated proposition/assumption, such as whether she finds it surprising or trivial, fortunate or unfortunate, etc. A pragmatic marker that has an interactional function describes what the speaker perceives as the hearer's relation to a

communicated proposition/assumption (i.e. it is hearer-oriented). Finally, a pragmatic marker with a textual function describes what the speaker perceives as the relation between sequentially arranged units of discourse, for instance between propositions or communicated assumptions in general (cf. 2.1.1). The encoded meaning of a pragmatic marker may not be a sufficient condition to determine its entire function as principally subjective or interactional, but the task of identifying which function(s) the speaker intends the marker to perform requires pragmatic inference. This process is essentially governed by the relevance principle and may be constrained by procedural cues such as intonation and tone of voice.

Importantly, interactional functions cannot be separated from subjective functions, as both are part of the communicative content of utterances and part of the speaker's informative intention. As mentioned, the act of ostension implies that a speaker who informs somebody of something also informs somebody of her intention of informing her of something. 'Interactional features' are to be understood as functional properties that concern the mutuality of context between speaker and hearer, and may be concerned with saving hearer's face, drawing the hearer into the discourse and expressing empathy towards him.

Analogously, textual functions cannot be separated from subjectivity. A speaker who informs her hearer that P should be interpreted as a premise while Q is a conclusion also expresses her subjective belief that such an interpretation is the one which achieves the highest relevance. It is clear that some pragmatic markers have a much greater capacity for expressing sequential relations than others.

In the following, I will present these three main functional aspects in turn, and the discussion is meant to show that, although they are frequently co-represented, the functional aspects can be distinguished on the basis of the predominance of one of them in actual marker use.

2.4.4 *Subjective functions*

Subjectivity has been defined as 'the way in which natural languages, in their structure and their normal manner of operation, provide for the locutionary agent's expression of himself and of his attitudes and beliefs' (Lyons 1982; quoted in Finegan 1995: 2f). Typically, an utterance contains a proposition and an expression of attitude towards it (Andersen & Fretheim 2000).

It is clear that pragmatic markers have a capacity for expressing subjectivity. The subjective functions of pragmatic markers capture and make explicit the attitudinal relation that exists between the speaker and the proposition contained in the utterance. Subjectivity is essentially a non-structuring feature of pragmatic markers which comprises a number of different types of meaning, such as the epistemic stance of the speaker, her affective attitude and her evaluation of the newsworthiness of the propositional content. The array of different subjective functions can be schematised as in Figure 3.

The speaker's belief can be characterised in terms of strength. This is reflected in the range of linguistic expressions that can signal the degree of epistemic commitment with which propositions are presented. For instance tentativeness or assertiveness can be expressed by means of utterances of the

range		Type of attitude	range
STRONG COMMITMENT <i>Those old games are shit. Absolutely!</i>	←	epistemic stance: endorsement of P	TENTATIVE ATTITUDE → <i>Those old games are shit, I guess.</i>
DOWNRIGHT REJECTION (IRONY) <i>Those old games are shit. As if!</i>	←	epistemic stance: rejection of P	WEAK DOUBT → <i>Those old games are shit. Really?</i>
SPEAKER'S OWN CLAIM <i>I mean, those old games are shit.</i>	←	source of knowledge	OTHER'S CLAIM (HEARSAY) → <i>Those old games are shit, apparently.</i>
STRONG LEXICAL COMMITMENT <i>Those old games are what I would definitely call shit.</i>	←	metalinguistic stance	WEAK LEXICAL COMMITMENT → <i>Those old games are, sort of, shit.</i>
SURPRISE <i>Those old games are shit, actually.</i>	←	newsworthiness	PREDICTABILITY → <i>Those old games are shit, of course.</i>
POSITIVE EVALUATION <i>Thank god, those old games are shit!</i>	←	affective evaluation	NEGATIVE EVALUATION → <i>Oh no, those old games are shit!</i>

Figure 3.

type *P, I guess; I mean, P* and *P, absolutely!*, which imply varying degrees of endorsement of the proposition. Sometimes, however, markers may signal not endorsement of, but rather rejection of a proposition (irony), as in the case of *P, as if!*. But not all expressions of rejection are equally emphatic; a speaker may also express a tentative doubt, as in *P, really?*. Hence, dissociative attitudes can be viewed as ranging from weak doubt to downright rejection.

The notion of speaker belief also includes marking of hearsay interpretations by means of expressions which indicate the source of knowledge of the propositional information, e.g. *P, apparently*, and it includes marking of metalinguistic stance (lexical commitment) by means of markers that indicate that an expression contained in a proposition only partially fits the speaker's communicative intentions, such as *sort of*.

Pragmatic markers also denote the speaker's affective attitude, i.e. the speaker's positive or negative evaluation of the proposition expressed, e.g. *Oh no, P!* vs. *Thank god, P!*. Moreover, attitudinal information may involve expressions of the newsworthiness or predictability of the propositional information, e.g. *In fact, P* vs. *Of course, P*.

It is worth pointing out that expressions of speaker belief and affective attitude do not necessarily have an entire proposition as its scope, but may sometimes have a narrow scope and be directed towards a specific constituent of the proposition:

- (12) See, I was a bit shocked, you know, Mike said he went to, Chessington **was it?** (135601/3:2)
- (13) You see they have a sym= symbolic religious function ... and it represents **sort of** spiritual people. (137701/2: 154)

As is well known, tag questions are capable of expressing reduced speaker commitment. In (12) it is clear that the tag picks out a particular constituent with which the uncertainty is associated, while there is no uncertainty connected with the remaining parts of the propositional meaning; i.e. the assumption 'Mike said he went somewhere' is asserted as true. Similarly, *sort of* in (13) is specifically directed towards the immediately following constituent *spiritual people*. It signals a tentative attitude as regards the adequacy of a particular expression, rather than tentativeness towards the propositional meaning as such.

2.4.5 *Interactional functions*

It was argued in the previous section that the meaning of pragmatic markers is crucially linked to subjectivity. Certain expressions of attitude convey not only the speaker's relation to a proposition but also the speaker's conception of the hearer's relation to the proposition. In other words, it makes sense to single out certain attitudinal expressions that reveal the speaker's inclination to take the hearer's perspective in evaluating propositional meaning. This holds true, for instance for markers that express presumptions of mutual manifestness, a cardinal example being *you know*. Interactional meaning concerns the hearer's relation to a communicated proposition/assumption, or, more precisely, what the speaker perceives as the hearer's relation to a communicated proposition/assumption. However, the relation between interactional and subjective functions cannot be construed as complementary, because pragmatic markers with interactional functions are also expressions of speaker attitude. For instance, a tentative attitude may be an appeal to the hearer to evaluate the propositional meaning in terms of its truth, and an attitudinal expression may convey an estimation of the newsworthiness relative to the hearer. Interactional meaning, then, is a feature which some attitudinal expressions have while others do not, because some markers tend to take the hearer's perspective in ways which other markers do not.

Pragmatic markers that have interactional functions are hearer-orientated and may address the issue of whether communicated assumptions are mutually manifest. By means of these markers the speaker expresses presumptions as to what assumptions the hearer's cognitive environment consists of. For instance, utterances of the type *P, right?* are hearer-oriented in the sense that the speaker believes P to be an assumption held by the hearer; hence she believes that P is mutually manifest. The notion of hearer-orientation is important to the analysis of *innit/is it* in Chapter 4, and in the following subsection (2.4.5.1), I describe in detail what hearer-orientation involves in cognitive terms, by introducing the notions of A-signals and D-signals.

The interactional function of pragmatic markers can be associated with social functions of language, such as the interlocutors' mutual recognition of the conversational relationship and the expression of solidarity and politeness. Politeness functions cannot, however, be categorically associated with the interactional function; there is no intrinsic connection between hearer-orientation and the communication of politeness. For instance, a speaker who

expresses herself in tentative terms may have several motives for doing so. She may not be in a position to give a stronger expression of commitment to the proposition expressed, but it may also be that she wants to avoid sounding too assertive and apply a non-imposing strategy (e.g. Coates 1989). The latter would be a case of negative politeness (Brown & Levinson 1978), which essentially concerns the speaker's relation to the proposition expressed; i.e. it is subjective. Tag questions are examples of items that are capable of serving either function (Coates 1989; Holmes 1995). Moreover, hearer-orientation is not necessarily polite. The so-called 'challenging tag' (Holmes 1995) *are you* in (14):

(14) Magistrate to defendant:

You're not making much effort to pay off these arrears, **are you?**

(Cameron et al. 1989: 87)

is hearer-oriented and interactional in the sense proposed here, in that it concerns the hearer's relation to a proposition. Specifically it is a (strongly conducive) request for the hearer to admit the truth of P. It is clearly not the magistrate's intention to be polite; rather he uses the tag as a means of '*increasing* [author's emphasis] the addressee's humiliation. Not only is the defendant being accused of bad faith and idleness, he is also being invited to agree with the magistrate's assessment of his behaviour' (ibid: 88). These two observations show that subjective and interactional meanings, as defined here, are not distinguishable on the grounds of politeness considerations.

It is obvious that an interactionally meaningful marker like *right?* has a capacity for engaging the hearer and may be aimed at asking for his contribution. It can be considered 'empathic' in the sense of "'involv[ing]" the listener' (Stenström 1994: 46) or 'facilitative' in the sense of being 'used to facilitate the participation of others' (Coates 1989: 115). Because of its hearer-orientation, it is commonly the case that interactional meaning encourages the hearer to talk. Pragmatic markers with interactional functions can therefore frequently be associated with directive speech acts (cf. *P, eh?*). In other words, there is sometimes a clear connection between interactional functions and directive illocutionary force. However, I would not claim that there is a necessary correlation between this type of meaning and the performance of directive speech acts. An interactionally meaningful pragmatic marker like *you know* is frequently used without attempting to ask for the hearer's contribution. Moreover, studies of tag questions have shown that

they are interactionally meaningful but may occur at point in an utterance where no ostensive attempt at terminating the turn is made (cf. 4.2.2.2). This also shows that it can be difficult to separate attitudinal functions from illocutionary functions, since a pragmatic marker such as *eh?* can indicate both the speaker's non-committing attitude and directive illocutionary force in the same utterance.

2.4.5.1 *A-signals and D-signals*

The current subsection is aimed at illustrating the notion of hearer-orientation from the point of view of cognitive effects. This description will pave the way for an analysis of the interactional function of pragmatic markers in general, and, specifically, for the analysis of tags and follow-ups which I undertake in Chapter 4.

As mentioned, a very general characteristic of many pragmatic markers is their ability to mark explicitly how ideas that are communicated cohere with a context. As is evident from Section 2.1.1, from a relevance-theoretic point of view, 'context' involves not only preceding discourse or situational features but refers to assumptions that are brought to bear in utterance interpretation. In conversation, the mutual cognitive environment of the interlocutors is constantly modified as the conversation develops. And, generally, it is in this process that pragmatic markers with interactional functions play a role.

In relevance theory, one distinguishes between information (stimuli) that is relevant because it supports and strengthens existing contextual assumptions and that which is relevant because it contradicts (and possibly eliminates) existing assumptions (as well as the third type of relevance: contextual implications; cf. Note 3). Pragmatic markers are commonly used to make explicit that these inferential processes occur. They provide explicit signals that the interpretation process involves, or is expected to involve, either support or rejection of background assumptions that are entertained by the interlocutors. For this reason, pragmatic markers can be used to express agreement or disagreement, belief or disbelief, endorsement or rejection, conviction or doubt, and they can mark information as new or old, surprising or trivial, etc. Common to all these dichotomies is that they may describe how a communicated idea relates to the extant cognitive environment of a speaker, whether it supports a belief of hers or whether it contradicts one. The role of pragmatic markers is often to make this relation explicit.

More specifically, pragmatic markers may function as *A-signals*, which are expressions of contextual alignment between the interlocutors, or *D-signals*, which are expressions of contextual divergence. This distinction is crucial to my account of the interactional functions of pragmatic markers, and it can be illustrated as follows:

- (15) Catriona: We had, we had a house matron as well but anyway she was kicked out of her school for sleeping with all the sixth form blokes.
 Jess: **Really?**
 Catriona: Yeah. So I can just see Miss <name> doing it. Or at least old ones that have come back or something.
 (142602/4: 371)
- (16) Jane: Hello Peter! What are you doing here?
 Peter: Maths course work. Tt.
 Jane: [Oh oh!]
 Peter: [Have to] hand it in.
 Jane: **Right** fair enough. (132503/12: 1)

There is a fundamental difference between responding to an utterance by means of a *really?* or a *right*. And this difference, I claim, is due to the different effects the previous utterance has on the current speaker's (the person uttering the marker in question) cognitive environment. *Really?* marks that a previous utterance contains information which is incompatible with background assumptions held by the current speaker (Jess). It is a signal of divergent contextual assumptions between the interlocutors, and is therefore capable of expressing surprise or doubt. It can thus be classified as a D-signal. The current speaker may be forced to reorganise her cognitive environment, because she has acquired new information to the effect that previously held contextual assumptions must be rejected. Rejection is not necessarily what happens, however. This depends on the credibility of the new information versus the strength of previously held assumptions. *Right*, on the other hand, does not have these implications. *Right* signals that the current speaker (Jane) accepts the truth of the previous proposition without having to reorganise her contextual background, because nothing that was communicated by this utterance conflicted with previously held assumptions. Peter's utterance may well represent new information to Jane, but this new information simply adds to the extant contextual background without conflicting with it. The contextual

environment of the two speakers is therefore aligned (consisting of mutually manifest assumptions), and *right* can be considered an A-signal. A-signals can be said to strengthen previously held assumptions, because the previous utterance provides support for extant beliefs (such as Jane's view that it is *fair enough* that maths course work has to be handed in).

A further distinction is also crucial to my account. A-signals and D-signals express contextual alignment or divergence in two different ways, either as *recognition* of aligned/divergent context or as *presumption* of such. While *right* was used to acknowledge mutual contextual assumptions and *really* to acknowledge divergent contextual assumptions in the examples above, the markers *you know* and *actually* express the presumption of these relations:

- (17) Well she don't like your auntie **you know**. That's why she's crying.
(135202/12: 8)
- (18) It was quite funny listening to that **actually**. (132610/1: 24)

You know is clearly an A-signal, because it communicates the speaker's presumption that the information her utterance contains is at least readily compatible with the hearer's existing beliefs. On a stronger interpretation, *you know* may signal that the propositional information of the utterance is an actual belief of both speaker and hearer (but may be more salient to S than H, in which case the utterance is a reminder). At any rate, *you know* marks that the alignment is presumed, while *right* in (16) marks that alignment has been recognised. They have a different orientation, from current speaker to current hearer (*you know*) versus from current hearer to current speaker (*right*). A parallel comparison can be made between *actually* and *really?* in (15). The pragmatic marker *actually* has a strong flavour of meaning equivalent to 'contrary to what you might expect' or 'strange as it may seem'. Like *you know*, it expresses the speaker's presumption as to what the hearer's cognitive environment is like. Specifically, it expresses that information contained in the utterance may come as a slight surprise to the hearer, who may be forced to reorganise his contextual background. Hence the cognitive environment of speaker and hearer are presumed to be divergent, and *actually* can be considered a D-signal. But it has an orientation which is different from that of *really?*, because it operates from current speaker to current hearer, while *really?* worked the other way round. (The two orientations are henceforth symbolised by $S \rightarrow H$ and $H \rightarrow S$.)

It will have become evident that the two distinctions introduced, A-signals versus D-signals and recognition versus presumption, are crosscutting. Examples (15)–(18) represent the four different types that occur, and can be considered prototypical of markers with interactional functions. The intersection of the two distinctions can be schematised as in Figure 4.

	A-SIGNAL marking alignment of contextual assumptions	D-SIGNAL marking divergent contextual assumptions
S → H <i>presumption</i> of contextual alignment/divergence	<i>you know</i>	<i>actually</i>
H → S <i>recognition</i> of contextual alignment/divergence	<i>right</i>	<i>really?</i>

Figure 4. Contextual alignment and divergence

The four markers above serve an interactional function in the sense of bringing into focus the contextual background of the conversational partner and thus acknowledging and sustaining the speaker-hearer relationship. However, it is a general property of pragmatic markers with interactional properties that they can be multifunctional with respect to the distinctions proposed. For instance, as pointed out by Östman (1981b), *you know* can in certain contexts be equivalent in meaning to ‘don’t you know’ as opposed to ‘as you know’. The latter is a fitting paraphrase in (17) above, and suggests an interpretation of *you know* as an A-signal, while ‘don’t you know’ would suggest a D-signal reading. The markers can also be multifunctional with respect to orientation. I argued that *really* in (15) signalled the acknowledgement of divergent context, and had H → S orientation. But the marker may also have the opposite orientation and may be used to mark presumption of divergent context, as in *I like all my teachers really*, where *really* signals ‘contrary to what you might expect’.

The two aspects of marker meaning discussed so far, the subjective and interactional aspects, are necessarily interwoven. A recognition of divergent context, for instance an expression of surprise as in (15), is also a salient

expression of subjectivity. An expression of presumed contextual divergence is also subjective in that it addresses the speaker's evaluation of the newsworthiness of the propositional information. More generally, a speaker's expression of how she perceives the hearer's relation to an assumption to be is also a subjective expression. Hence, the four markers listed in Figure 4 can also be described as subjective. Interactional and subjective functions, as defined here, commonly intersect. However, I argue in Section 2.4.7 that there are nevertheless reasons to distinguish between subjective and interactional aspects of marker meaning, on the grounds that some markers are hearer-oriented and others are not. For example *you know* can be distinguished from *I mean* because the former takes the hearer's cognitive environment into consideration while the latter does not.

The set of distinctions outlined here seems adequate to describe how pragmatic markers with hearer-orientation make explicit the inferential processes involved in utterance interpretation. It is assumed that this framework is sufficient to account for individual occurrences of markers, but it should not be seen as an attempt at introducing a taxonomy of the inventory of pragmatic markers in English. Generally, multiple functions are to be expected, but it may be the case that a particular item invariably serves only one function. For instance, it seems that *oh* and *well* invariably mark contextual divergence and cannot be A-signals. This coheres with Jucker's (1993) analysis of *well* as a 'marker of insufficiency' since '*well* indicates that the addressee has to reconstruct the background against which he can process the upcoming utterance' (1993:438) and with Heritage's (1984) analysis of *oh* as a 'change-of-state token'. Analogously, *mm*, *yes* and *okay* appear to be universally A-signals (at least, given a falling intonation). It is also conceivable that the use of a particular item is constrained by semantic properties such as its original lexical meaning. But we can rarely argue that there is a necessary correlation between a particular form and one particular use. One would assume, for instance, that *right*, whose literal meaning strongly suggests contextual alignment, is invariably an A-signal. This is not the case. If pronounced with a high fall, and particularly if it occurs in conjunction with *oh*, *right* as a follow-up may in fact mark contextual divergence (surprise). Hence, there is no inherent feature which restricts *right* from being a D-signal in a given context.

The current model for the analysis of pragmatic markers with hearer-orientation emphasises their role as expressions of high or low degrees of

mutual manifestness. But the markers may also contribute to additional aspects of utterance meaning, such as conversational politeness, cooperation and turn-taking. Markers like *you know*, *right*, *really*, and tags and follow-ups in general, clearly have a capacity for face-saving, mitigating face-threat and disagreement, increasing hearer-involvement, etc (cf. Crystal & Davy 1975; Brown & Levinson 1978; Aijmer 1987; Stenström 1994; Holmes 1995). They may also be used to express topical interest, high involvement or a tentative attitude on the part of the speaker (i.e. as hedges), which I consider to be subjective functions. These additional functions must not be overlooked, but should be seen in conjunction with the more basic interpretive functions of marking contextual alignment or divergence. The fact that, say, a D-signal performs a politeness function is not surprising, because politeness functions and degrees of mutual manifestness are generally compatible aspects of pragmatic meaning. The need for face-saving occurs precisely because the contextual backgrounds of the interlocutors diverge. Functions of politeness and contextual divergence are two sides of the same coin. Linguistic politeness features, such as the face-threat mitigator *well*, reflect the relations between speaker and hearer at a social level, and at the same time they bring into focus the speaker-hearer relationship at a more basic level of information management, by expressing shared or divergent contextual backgrounds. A speaker who hedges her message by means of the tag *don't you think?* in order to sound less assertive is usually also motivated by a desire to be polite and friendly. But at the same time she expresses very clearly the presumption that the propositional information is something which the hearer holds to be true, given the positive conduciveness of her utterance. On this basis, it seems fair to assume that politeness functions and the marking of contextual alignment and divergence are generally compatible aspects of the meaning of pragmatic markers.

2.4.6 *Textual functions*

The textual functions of pragmatic markers involve their capacity for contributing to coherence and textuality in discourse. While the subjective and interactional functions of pragmatic markers concern attitudinal relations between the proposition expressed and an interlocutor, their textual properties concern the relation between sequentially arranged units in discourse (Schiffrin 1987), for instance between a proposition P and another

proposition Q, between one utterance and the next, between a current speaker's turn and the next speaker's turn, between discourse topics and so on. Pragmatic markers with textual functions, such as the discourse connectives *and*, *therefore* and *moreover*, can communicate how the speaker perceives the relation between propositions P and Q, for instance that P is intended as a premise to a conclusion Q, or that P and Q are to be processed against the same contextual background (cf. Blakemore 1987; Rouchota 1998).

It is uncontroversial that pragmatic markers like *and*, *but*, *moreover*, etc have a capacity for contributing to the structure and coherence of the discourse. Textuality is perhaps the one function which is most typically associated with pragmatic markers. Schiffrin considers discourse markers as 'sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk' (1987: 31). Her definition takes into account only the function of markers as 'discourse glue' providing structure and coherence. This is also the role of discourse markers according to Stenström (1994) (whose framework also includes the notion of interactional signal): they are 'used to organize and hold the turn and to mark boundaries in the discourse' (1994: 63). Fraser (1996) also acknowledges the textual function of markers and considers words which have this function a separate category of pragmatic markers.¹²

The present study acknowledges textual functions as one of a set of three potential components of the meaning of pragmatic markers. Given the salience of textual functions in many previous descriptions of pragmatic markers, it may be tempting to assume that textuality is a universal feature of pragmatic markers. I would argue against this view. The reason is that there are some pragmatic markers which to a very little extent (if at all) contribute to discourse structure, but whose sole purpose is to contribute to meaning of a subjective or interactional kind. Examples of such pragmatic markers are the epistemic parentheticals like *I suppose* (Thompson & Mulac 1991) and the modal particles of some Germanic languages¹³ (cf. 2.4.7).

At the other end of the scale, we find *and*, which has predominantly, if not exclusively, textual meaning. There seems to be little grounds for claiming that *and* carries considerable subjective or interactional meanings, as its function is mainly to coordinate linguistic units at various levels and indicate parallel processing.¹⁴

2.4.7 *The interrelation of subjective, interactional and textual functions*

Having illustrated the three functional levels associated with pragmatic markers, it is now convenient to discuss briefly some relations that may exist between them by pointing at markers where the meanings co-occur.

The functional overlap can be illustrated with reference to *well*. According to Jucker, *well* functions ‘on the textual level as a text-structuring device’ (Jucker 1997: 93) and is used ‘to bridge interactional silence’ (ibid: 95). Jucker thus points towards the textual function of *well* in providing a link between previous and current discourse, but acknowledges that

[t]he two functions [‘textual’ and ‘interpersonal’] are not mutually exclusive. They are both present in all discourse-marker uses of *well* but one function typically predominates over the other and thus allows a categorization into the four types listed above. (ibid: 93)

Likewise, several studies point out that the meaning of *well* extends beyond the mere textuality (cf. Svartvik 1980; Stenström 1984, 1994; Schiffrin 1987; Jucker 1993). Commonly, its textual meaning is concurrent with interactional meaning, since it can be used to indicate ‘some problems on the content level of the current or the preceding utterance’ (Jucker 1993: 438). Consider (19) for instance:

- (19) Cassie: I can’t say give me your money when she hasn’t got it
(laughing)can I(/).
Bonnie: Yeah, but she gets more allowance this week cos she was
supposed to give me bloody thirty five quid she owes me.
Cassie: She owes you what?
Bonnie: Thirty seven quid.
Cassie: For the bat? **Well** she hasn’t spent it it’s in her bank
account. (133701/1: 36)

This example can illustrate the co-occurrence of the two aspects of marker meaning. *Well* clearly provides a link between Cassie’s utterance *she hasn’t spent it it’s in her bank account* and the preceding discourse; thus it contributes to discourse structure and has a textual function. But at the same time it provides information of an interactional kind. Cassie is using *well* to signal that some sort of renegotiation of context is required, as she finds the contextual implications of Bonnie’s first utterance in need of some modification.

Thus, *well* is used textually to provide coherence and interactionally to express contextual divergence.

A specification of the relation between subjective and interactional meaning is appropriate at this point. Some researchers consider the interactional aspect of marker meaning to be superordinate and to incorporate subjectivity. This is the view taken by Brinton:

The “interpersonal” mode is the expression of the speaker’s attitudes, evaluations, judgements, expectations, and demands, as well as of the nature of the social exchange, the role of the speaker and the role assigned to the hearer. (1996: 38)

From the above presentation of the current approach, it should be obvious that I perceive this relation to be the other way round, viewing subjective meaning as superordinate. Any utterance expresses a speaker’s intention to make something manifest to an individual. This ‘something’ includes not only a proposition but also information as to how the speaker perceives this proposition, and how she expects it to affect the hearer cognitively, e.g. as information that supports or contradicts assumptions already held by the hearer, or as a contextual implication. Pragmatic markers are used to indicate the speaker’s perception as to how the inferential processes required for the interpretation should proceed. In other words, pragmatic markers with interactional functions, as defined here, express how a *speaker perceives* the degree of mutual manifestness between the interlocutors; in this sense, they are subjective as well as interactional. Moreover, there is a good case for viewing some pragmatic markers as not having interactional properties, in the sense of not taking the hearer’s contextual background into account. This can be illustrated with reference to the difference between *I mean* and *you know*:

- (20) She’s lost about three stone. It’s good. **I mean**, you probably wouldn’t see it but I can see it, she’s losing it. (132707/1: 225)
- (21) We’re all gonna get arrested **you know**. (134103/26: 47)

According to Crystal & Davy, the main function of *I mean* is to ‘indicate that the speaker wishes to clarify the meaning of his immediately preceding expression’ (1975: 97). This implies that, by using *I mean*, the speaker is signalling that a previous utterance (e.g. *she’s lost about three stone*) does not achieve exactly the contextual effects that the speaker initially intended, and some clarification or elaboration is required (in this case, in the form of a

cancellation of an implicature regarding the assumed visibility of the weight loss). *I mean* is thus directed towards the assumptions communicated by the previous and following propositions. It conveys the speaker's attitude that the previous utterance did not adequately fit her communicative intentions, while the impending utterance might do so. It concerns the speaker's relation to what was communicated, and it is subjective. *You know*, on the other hand, is primarily oriented towards the hearer's relation to the propositional content. The function of *you know* is to signal that the speaker wants the hearer to draw on mutually manifest information in the interpretation process. *You know* is hearer-oriented because it appeals to the hearer to activate some of the contextual assumptions that the speaker believes that they share. The meaning of *you know* includes the speaker's consideration of the hearer's contextual background, an aspect of meaning which is not present in *I mean*.

The Norwegian modal particles provide further arguments that pragmatic markers can express subjectivity without being hearer-oriented. Fretheim (1981) argues convincingly that the meaning of the epistemic modal particles *nok* and *vel* can be distinguished precisely because only one of them can be hearer-oriented:

- (22) a. Han kommer **nok** i morgen. (He's coming tomorrow, I think.)
 b. Han kommer **vel** i morgen. (He's coming tomorrow though, isn't he?)

Nok and *vel* signal subjectivity in similar ways, as both are markers of reduced speaker commitment. The main difference between the two is that *vel* can appeal to the hearer for his assessment of P, while *nok* does not have this ability. The difference between the two markers lies not in their ability to express modality, but in the orientation of the marker. *Nok* signals exclusive speaker-orientation, as the motivation for the hedging lies in the speaker's lack of certainty, while *vel* is hearer-orientated, because it appeals to the hearer's knowledge for confirmation of the claim contained in the proposition. Due to this difference, Fretheim finds the terms 'ego and alter softeners' (1981: 88; my translation) appropriate. It is precisely because of this difference that I wish to consider hearer-orientation/interactional meaning a property which is not inherent in all pragmatic markers.

2.4.8 *Summary*

In the sections above, I have described the functional complexity of pragmatic markers in relation to the notions of subjectivity and interactional and textual capacity. What distinguishes the three types of function from each other is the types of inferential processes they give rise to. I have argued that the role of pragmatic markers amounts to making explicit the relation that exists between a communicated proposition/assumption and an interlocutor's cognitive environment or the relation between propositions or other discourse units. Specifically, a pragmatic marker with a subjective function indicates the relation between the speaker and a communicated proposition/assumption; a pragmatic marker with an interactional function indicates what the speaker perceives as the hearer's relation to a communicated proposition/assumption (in this sense it is hearer-oriented) and the degree of mutual manifestness, and a pragmatic marker with a textual function describes what the speaker perceives as the relation between propositions or other discourse units.

My discussion has also shown that the meaning of a pragmatic marker in a particular utterance can involve several of the functional domains. In fact, multifunctionality appears to be the rule rather than the exception; the various functional aspects are generally concomitant and rarely distinct. (See Stenström 1994: 67 for a detailed survey.) If one accepts the validity of this tridimensional analysis of pragmatic markers, it may appear that the three analytical levels are inevitably co-represented as aspects of marker meaning in actual discourse. However, the claim made here is not that a marker always has textual, subjective and interactional functions simultaneously, nor that the three aspects of meaning are inseparable, but the set of functions is inadequate as a taxonomic apparatus. The three types of function are perceived as different dimensions of a usually rather complex total which constitutes the pragmatic impact of an individual marker, and a degree of subjectivity is something all markers express. It is therefore not likely that pragmatic markers are generally classifiable in terms of subjective, interactional and textual categories. Indeed, the reason why pragmatic markers constitute such a complex category is that they can be primarily associated with one of the three functional levels; that is to say, some markers are predominantly textual, others predominantly subjective and yet others predominantly interactional.

CHAPTER 3

COLT and the BNC

Data and methods

3.1 Introduction

The main aim of the current investigation is to account extensively for the (primarily adolescent) use of a small set of pragmatic markers that are assumed to represent linguistic innovations in the London dialect. As briefly mentioned in Section 1.3, the presentation centres around two main chapters that contain the empirical part of the analysis, namely Chapters 4 and 5. The current chapter gives a description of the data which the investigation is based on and the methods applied. (Methodological issues are also addressed in 1.1.4, 2.3, 4.1.1.4, 4.3.1.1 and 5.1.1.)

On a general note, the comparative nature of this project ought to be emphasised. The comparison is multi-dimensional and involves external comparison between two different corpora, COLT and the BNC (cf. 3.2–3.3), and internal comparison between different speaker groups within the adolescent corpus. The primary intention, however, is to describe pragmatic phenomena in the adolescent variety of London English, and the main focus will be on this variety. The COLT-internal comparison amounts to identifying the most common pragmatic functions of the selected forms in adolescent conversation generally, and to describe the relevant formal features, such as the markers' syntactic position, discourse position and collocational patterns. Furthermore, the aim is to assess the interrelationship between the use of the pragmatic markers and non-linguistic factors such as gender, social class, ethnicity, etc, with a view to identifying the speaker groups that typically use these markers and that can be considered the likely

instigators of the innovation. COLT contains sufficient background information to facilitate comparison of the language of various speaker groups along these parameters. Finally, the purpose of comparing the two corpora is, of course, to determine whether the markers I am focusing on represent typical adolescent features.

The current chapter is aimed at describing the two corpora and the extent to which they constitute comparable sets of data in terms of the nature and amount of text and the distribution of speakers within each data set (cf. 3.2–3.3). In addition, I address the issue of corpora and representativity (cf. 3.4).

3.2 The COLT conversations

The primary source of data is The Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language (COLT), a corpus of conversations among adolescent speakers. This material was collected by a research team at the University of Bergen in 1993.¹ It consists of roughly half-a-million words of spontaneous conversations between mainly 13- to 17-year old boys and girls from socially different school districts of London. The material constitutes a combination of dyadic, triadic and multi-party conversations. A total of 30 teenagers (referred to as ‘recruits’), equipped with a Sony Walkman and a lapel microphone, recorded their conversations with their friends and to some extent also with family members for a period of three days.² A field worker administered the data collection, but she was not present during any of the recordings, most of which were surreptitious (cf. Haslerud & Stenström 1995). The pupils who were recruited attended schools that were suggested by the local school authorities and whose headmasters gave a go-ahead to the research team. In other words, no random sampling method was applied. (The implications of this are discussed in Section 3.4.)

The 377 COLT conversations, amounting to roughly 100 hours of recorded speech, have been orthographically transcribed and word-class-tagged, and the bulk of the material has also been prosodically transcribed. The linguistic examples quoted in this book are almost exclusively from the orthographic transcriptions of COLT. (For transcription conventions, see Appendix 1).³ The analytic method applied is a combination of studying the transcriptions, listening to the recordings and searching in the COLT database by means of the TACTweb⁴ software. There may, however, be

minor discrepancies between the examples as quoted here and the version that is recently published on CD-ROM.⁵ The reason is that I have checked the correspondence between the transcription and the recordings in order to ensure maximum correctness and accuracy. In doing so, I applied an edited and much improved digitised version of the recordings and not the raw audiotapes, which were applied for the original transcriptions.

Since the linguistic features to be accounted for predominate in teenage talk, the empirical description of the data is to a large extent based on the COLT corpus only. This calls for a closer look at some of the features of this corpus. The following sections contain a brief introduction to the most relevant speaker and conversation-specific information that can be extracted from the corpus. This information is based on conversation logs and personal data sheets that the recruits were requested to fill out (cf. Appendix 2).

Most of the linguistic material that occurs in COLT is coded with respect to a number of non-linguistic factors that describe the speaker and the speech event. These codes include the speaker's age, gender, social class, etc, as well as information about the setting of the conversation (school, street, bus, home, etc) and whereabouts in London it takes place. (For details, see the COLT user's manual: Stenström et al. 1998.) This information is automatically retrievable from the corpus, and the appropriate classifications of linguistic examples can be made by means of computer searching. Speaker ethnicity is not coded in the corpus, and requires special attention. The classification of this factor was carried out by the current author as described in Section 3.2.5.

3.2.1 *Age groups in COLT*

COLT is specifically designed to represent the language of a restricted age group in London, namely teenagers. Nevertheless, the speakers that are actually classified with respect to age range from one to 59 years old. This is due to the occasional presence of some of the recruits' younger and older family members and to the presence of teachers in some of the conversations. For the current research purposes, it is convenient to bundle together some of the occurring values of the age parameter, as some age groups, e.g. two-year-olds (for natural reasons) are represented with very low word counts. I have applied a division into six different age groups, conveniently labelled preadolescence (0–9), early adolescence (10–13), middle adolescence

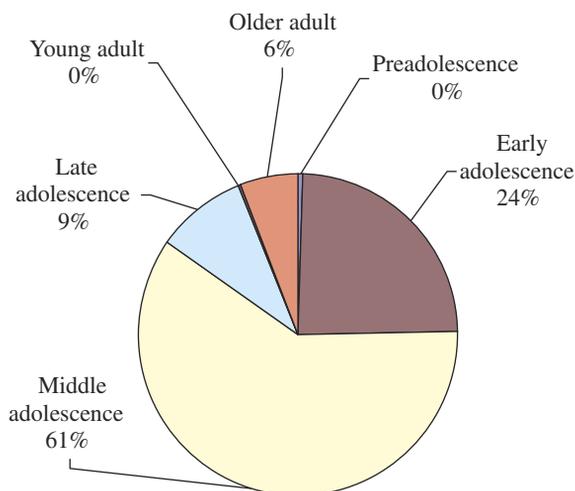


Figure 5. Distribution of COLT text material in the various age groups

(14–16), late adolescence (17–19), young adults (20–29) and older adults (30+). The distribution of text across the various age groups can be visualised as in Figure 5.

Only three of these age groups, early, middle and late adolescence, can be said to represent the core of COLT-informants and the target group of the current study. 85 per cent (373,770 words) of the corpus material comes from speakers within these age groups. The other age groups are represented to varying degrees. The preadolescent group accounts for a very small amount of text (1,855 words; 0.46%), and the same goes for the young adult group (1,138 words; 0.28%). Hence, whatever linguistic features are found within these age groups must be interpreted with caution, due to their low overall rate of contribution. The older adult group mainly comprises the recruits' parents and, to a lesser degree, their teachers. This group contributes about six per cent (23,055 words) of the corpus material.

3.2.2 Gender

The current investigation also aims to describe gender-specific variation within the COLT corpus. Investigating gender differences among adolescents

may shed light on the issue of at what age speakers show adherence to gender-specific conversational behaviour, e.g. when the girls start doing ‘the lion’s share of the conversational ‘work’’ (Holmes 1984: 56). In COLT, girls and boys contribute roughly the same amount of text: the male speakers 51.8 per cent (230,605 words) and the female speakers 48.2 per cent (214,388 words).

3.2.3 *Social class*

The calculation of a social class index has been a matter of some controversy within the COLT research team (cf. Stenström et al. 1998). The eventual classification divides the recruits into three different social classes, and is a compromise between two earlier versions, Andersen (1995) and Hasund (1996). As the information that constitutes the basis for the calculation of social class is somewhat scarce and to some extent also unreliable, the COLT team found it reasonable to operate with a less fine-grained scale than the one that was originally applied (Andersen 1995). Originally the recruits were divided into five different social classes, but the current study opts for only three groups.

The social class index is based on information that the 30 COLT recruits provided by filling out a personal data sheet (cf. Appendix 2). As this information was provided for no other speakers than the recruits themselves, only the recruits and their families are classified with respect to social class. Three pieces of information from the data sheet are used as indicators of social class: residential area, parents’ occupation and whether the parents are employed or not. Residential area and parents’ occupation constitute social indices in their own right, while the employed/unemployed distinction is used as a slight modification of the occupational index. The index is thus a complex one, calculated by means of figures from the *Key statistics for local authorities, Great Britain* (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 1994). The actual method for calculation of the index will not be described here, but can be found in Stenström et al. (1998). As only the recruits and their families are classified, only about 50 per cent of the corpus material can be assigned a social class value. The three social classes have been conveniently and neutrally labelled ‘low’, ‘middle’ and ‘high’, in order to avoid impressionistic use of the standard labels ‘working class’ and ‘middle class’. The material that has been classified is evenly distributed across the three social classes.

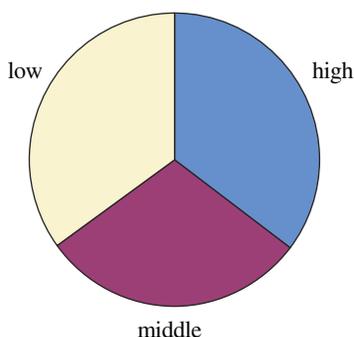


Figure 6. Distribution of COLT text material in the various social classes

3.2.4 *The London boroughs*

The COLT conversations are also classified according to the borough in which they take place and the school borough of the recruit. This classification can be used to identify correlation between the occurrence of a phenomenon and a particular geographical location of the conversation, in order to test hypotheses as to the spread of linguistic innovations within the London area, or for the purpose of describing a phenomenon as ‘central’ or ‘peripheral’ within London.

The COLT material involves five different schools located in five different school boroughs. The areas represented are the Inner London boroughs Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Camden, the Outer London borough Barnet, and the county of Hertfordshire, represented by a boarding school.⁶ Though not actually within Greater London, the Hertfordshire school is located within the London Metropolitan area, as defined in the *Key statistics for local authorities, Great Britain* (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 1994). The borough classification in COLT incorporates information on borough of residence and school borough of the recruits. The residential boroughs include Barnet, Brent, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Hertfordshire, Islington, Richmond, Tower Hamlets and Westminster. For most of the recruits, borough of residence is identical with school borough, but some recruits attend schools in a borough different from their residential borough. This applies in particular to the Hertfordshire boarding school pupils, whose conversations were mostly recorded at the boarding school and not in their homes.⁷

In these cases, the school borough classification appears to yield a more satisfactory and reliable indicator of group membership, since adolescents are more likely to identify with classmates than with parents and are thus likely to adapt to the language of their network of friends in these conversations, rather than to the norms of people in their residential area. On this background, I find it justifiable to apply the school borough classification to the Hertfordshire recruits.

3.2.5 *Ethnicity*

The British census of 1991 shows that about 5.5 per cent (just over 3 million) of the population of Great Britain were from ethnic minority groups (Owen 1996). These groups are concentrated in the major urban areas, with Greater London having the greatest concentration of ethnic minorities. 44.6 per cent of Britain's ethnic minority population live in London (other significant ethnic minority areas being Birmingham and Manchester), but only 12.2 per cent of the total population of Britain live there. London's ethnic complexity and large proportion of minority population is well documented in the official statistics of the 1991 census, published in three volumes entitled *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census*. These volumes distinguish between the 'white' group and 'ethnic minority' groups, where the latter include the West Indian, African, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Arab, 'Mixed' and 'Other' groups.

Regarding the ethnic composition of London, Owen (1996:92) writes:

Greater London stands out as having a very different ethnic mix to the rest of Britain; more than a fifth of its population (and more than a quarter of the population of Inner London) was from ethnic minority groups in 1991. The Black ethnic groups formed the largest component of the ethnic minority groups, accounting for 8 per cent of the population.

With such a high proportion of ethnic minorities in the London area, it is likely that a number of the COLT speakers have an ethnic minority background. In fact, the London boroughs represented in COLT figure widely on the lists of the largest district populations for various ethnic minority groups.⁸ However, as ethnic group membership was not specifically asked for in the speaker information survey, the available information about the ethnicity of the individual speakers is, unfortunately, scarce. Nevertheless, it

has been possible to extract some information, *post hoc*, from two different sources. Firstly, the field worker could supply information regarding the ethnic background of several of the recruits.⁹ Secondly, the corpus itself reveals the ethnicity of some of the speakers. This is generally due to explicit mention of ethnicity in the discourse, as in (23):

- (23) There's my mum. [...] My brother Glen he's always trying a s= fix up the sitting room [...] and my brother Glen, he's ver= he's, he's forgetful, he's very forgetful and he always wants a clean up the sitting room. [...] This is Romax. **It's a real Jamaican family.**
(134901/1: 220–244)

These factors allow us to make at least a tentative classification based on ethnicity. The speakers about whom such information was provided were grouped as either 'White' or 'Ethnic minority', a classification which is based on the ten main ethnic categories applied in the Census survey statistics (cf. Peach 1996). Unfortunately, this is a very crude classification and one which to no extent does justice to the ethnic diversity that exists in the London Metropolitan area. Nevertheless I will use this classification in an attempt to describe ethnic conditioning in the use of the markers investigated.

3.3 The BNC/London conversations

As argued in recent sociolinguistic literature, the standard variety of a language is not always the most ideal point of comparison for sociolinguistic studies of vernacular speech (cf. Romaine 1989). My aim in this study is to characterise what appears to be new trends in London adolescent speech. Setting aside the issue of 'what is standard English', I assume that the phenomena investigated here at least represent innovations in the sense of 'deviations from the previous generation's language'. The most relevant point of comparison, then, is a corpus of vernacular speech that is similar to COLT in as many respects as possible, with the exception of the age parameter. I have therefore included in this study a specifically designed subset of the British National Corpus¹⁰ (henceforth labelled BNC/London), extracted from its spoken demographic part. This extract is approximately the same size as COLT¹¹ and includes the orthographic transcriptions of 688 conversations recorded by ten adult recruits. (A survey of the BNC files

included in the extract is given in Appendix 3.) The speakers are mainly adults from the London area, with the occasional presence of younger speakers (cf. 3.3.1). The two corpora are thus equal in both quantity and geographical distribution.

Like COLT, the extracted BNC/London files contain informal conversations among peers and family members and constitute a combination of dyadic, triadic and multi-party conversations. Moreover, the applied method for data collection was identical: mainly surreptitious recording by means of a tape-recorder without the presence of a field worker.¹² As it is not my intention to compare speaker groups within the BNC/London corpus, I restrict myself to a brief discussion of the parameters age, class, boroughs and ethnicity in the following.

3.3.1 Age groups in BNC/London

For comparison, I have applied the same division of age groups in BNC/London as in COLT (cf. 3.2.1). The BNC/London material is distributed across the various age groups as in Figure 7.

As the figure shows, BNC/London clearly represents adult speech in the London area. A comparison with the corresponding figures for COLT reveals

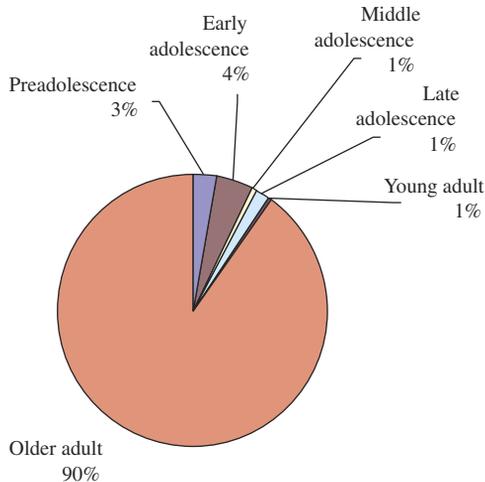


Figure 7. Distribution of BNC/London text material in the various age groups

that the two corpora are similar with respect to the amount of text that the respective target groups contribute; in COLT the target group (young, middle and late adolescence, i.e. age 10–19) contributes 85 per cent, while in BNC/London, the target group (Older adult, age 30+) contributes 90 per cent of the text material.

3.3.2 *Gender*

As opposed to COLT, where the amount of text is distributed equally across the two genders, the female speakers in BNC/London contribute substantially more text than their male companions in both absolute and relative terms. The female speakers contribute 74 per cent of the material (358,896 words), while the male speakers contribute 26 per cent (126,962 words). The 44 female speakers produce approximately twice as many words per speaker as their 33 male companions.

3.3.3 *Social class*

The BNC applies a different social scale than the one designed for COLT. The BNC speakers are classified as AB, C1, C2 or D, where AB is the highest class and D the lowest. (The presentation of the BNC given in Aston & Burnard 1998 does not specify the significance of these labels.) About 60 per cent of the BNC/London material was classified with respect to this parameter. Figure 8 illustrates that all social classes are represented in BNC/London, but not to the same extent.

A comparison with Figure 6 above suggests that COLT and the BNC/London material are comparable with respect to social class, in the sense that all social classes are represented in both corpora, although the distribution is much more even in COLT than in BNC/London.

3.3.4 *Boroughs*

In the BNC there is no available information as to the exact location of the conversations, but they are described as captured in the south of Britain. However, it is clear from the description of the individual speakers that they speak the London dialect (cf. 3.3.5).

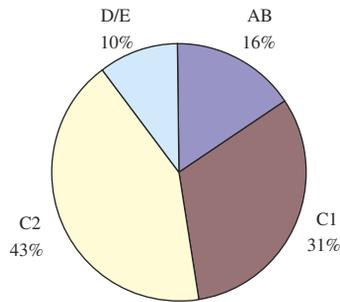


Figure 8. Distribution of BNC/London text material in the various social classes

3.3.5 Ethnicity

There is no information available in the BNC that can be used to classify the speakers in terms of ethnic background in the way the COLT speakers could be classified. However, with the exception of a few speakers who make a minor contribution to the overall amount of data, all the speakers in BNC/London are classified in the header information as being from London or the Home counties.

3.3.6 Summary: comparability of the data sets

The above survey of features has shown that the two data sets, COLT and BNC/London, are indeed comparable in a number of respects, although not in every respect:

- The two corpora are roughly equal in size.
- The two corpora have the same geographical distribution and represent speakers from the Greater London area.
- The respective target groups, adolescents versus adults, are represented with approximately the same amount of text in each of the two data sets.
- The same method of data collection was applied: surreptitious recording, absence of field worker, identical equipment.
- Both corpora contain informal conversations among peers and family members.
- Both corpora contain a combination of dyadic, triadic and multi-party conversations.

- To some extent, the respective distributions of speakers within the two corpora are equal: both genders are represented (equal representation in COLT; female overrepresentation in BNC/London), all social classes are represented (equally in COLT; less so in BNC/London), and a wide range of age groups are represented in both corpora.

The age parameter is intentionally different, of course, as COLT represents the adolescent group, while BNC/London represents the adult group. As regards ethnicity and borough location, it has not been possible to classify the BNC/London speakers/conversations. Since I do not intend to compare speaker groups internally in BNC/London, the lack of such classifications is not a major problem.

3.4 Statistical method and representativity

As is obvious from the previous discussion, the current investigation involves a substantial amount of quantitative work. In order to support hypotheses regarding distributional differences, I will apply statistical testing, in particular the chi-square test (since the quantitative data mostly involve nominal categories; cf. 3.2–3.3). Although this is a highly common approach in contemporary corpus linguistics, a major methodological objection can be raised against it. Statistics involves the notions of populations and samples. A spoken corpus can be viewed as a representation of a given variety of a language at a restricted point in time (McEnery & Wilson 1996). At one level, the informants whose language is the object of investigation constitute a sample of a finite population, say the total adolescent population of Greater London. At a different level, the utterances contained in the corpus may be seen as a sample of an infinite population of potential utterances that speakers of a certain variety may produce.

Regardless of our viewpoint, the use of corpora in linguistic research ideally requires statistical sampling methods. As Butler puts it, ‘great care must be exercised in selecting samples if generalisation to the population is to be valid’ (1985:2). But, like virtually all existing corpora of spoken conversation, COLT and the BNC are not compiled by means of random sampling methods. The fact that a certain speaker is represented in a corpus is usually not the result of a random selection procedure of the type applied in,

for instance, opinion polls or television rating. His or her participation is much more likely to be the result of more or less arbitrary practical conditions.

Consequently, it is rarely the case in connection with spoken corpora that 'every unit in the population has an equal chance of being represented in the sample' (Butler 1985: 2), and spoken corpora are not representative in a strict statistical sense. Moreover, even if random sampling methods were applied in corpus compilation, there would be no guarantee that the actual recordings contained a representative sample of all the different modes of communication that can be placed under the umbrella of 'conversation'. We can distinguish a number of different 'text types' or genres in conversation, such as narrative, gossip, argumentation, dispute, interrogation, etc, and, as yet, corpus builders have not come up with sound methods for compilation that take conversational genres into account. In fact, the ideal of representativity with respect to text types seems to be difficult, perhaps impossible to accomplish.

Representativity becomes even more problematic in corpora that include different speaker groups, as the contribution from one group may contain an overrepresentation of a particular text type, in which case different groups may not be comparable with respect to various phenomena. When applying corpora of spoken language, one should not conceal the fact that the data that are subject to linguistic inquiry have certain weaknesses from the point of view of statistical method.

But it is important to note that a corpus like COLT can nevertheless be said to 'represent' a larger population (London teenage speech), albeit not in the strict statistical sense. One may, for instance, view the 'population' as the total linguistic production of the informants over the one-week period the recordings took place, or as the total linguistic production of the informants over a longer time span, or even as the total linguistic production of this particular age group at a particular time and so on. The COLT material is non-arbitrarily restricted with respect to age group, geographical area and time span. And, as pointed out in Section 3.2, both genders and the three social classes are represented with the same amount of text. It should be pointed out, then, that COLT is meant to represent London adolescent conversation in a general sense. As mentioned, this is a conceptualisation of 'representation' that is common in corpus linguistics generally.

CHAPTER 4

Invariant tags and follow-ups

innit/is it

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the use of two different forms, *innit* and *is it*, as what I will refer to as ‘invariant tags’ and ‘invariant follow-ups’. Each of the two forms serve two main types of function, whose grammatical and pragmatic characteristics will be discussed in turn. Relevant examples are the following:

- (24) Josie: She just needs to cut back on her chocolate. She love her chocolate **innit**?
Truno: Yeah! (132707/1: 227)
- (25) Kate: He thinks he’s it.
Josie: **Innit**? If you touch him, it’s <mimicking>Do you mind? Do you mind?</> (132913/1: 22)
- (26) Georgina: <laughing>I’m gonna fail GCSE tomorrow! I’m gonna fail!</>
Terry: You’re gonna fail it, **is it**? What’s that, you’re gonna fail and you’re gonna cheat, for your GCSEs? (139501/1: 29)
- (27) Josie: Police have been questioning Mark <name> you know.
Truno: **Is it**?
Josie: And Kevin and everyone. (132706/1: 9)

The four examples illustrate the main functional categories that will be accounted for in this chapter. I refer to these types as the invariant tags *innit* (24) and *is it* (26) and invariant follow-ups *innit* (25) and *is it* (27), notions which will be defined and discussed in Section 4.1.1.

The term ‘invariant’ is meant to suggest that these particular forms are used across the inflectional paradigm, regardless of the syntactic-semantic features of the preceding proposition that they refer to. Holmes (1982) introduced the distinction between canonical and invariant tag questions in her account of the functions of tag questions (see 4.1.1 for definitions and examples). By analogy, I apply the canonical/invariant distinction to the category of follow-ups, whose scope includes a proposition stated by a different speaker (cf. (25) and (27)). Hence, I distinguish between canonical follow-ups, i.e. elliptical interrogative forms that follow the ordinary rules for question formation, e.g. *doesn't he?*, *have they?*, and invariant follow-ups like *innit?*, *is it? really?*, etc. (See also 1.2.2–1.2.3.)

In this chapter I argue that *innit* and *is it* are affected by parallel and related processes of linguistic change. The main hypothesis to be investigated is that the type of use exemplified above involves a transition from the canonical to the invariant category. The forms *innit* and *is it* are originally elliptical interrogatives (notably *ain't it?/isn't it?* and *is it?*, respectively; cf. 4.1.1.4) consisting of a verb form and the reference pronoun *it*, and requiring a third person singular neuter subject and the verb BE. The examples given show that they have undergone, or are undergoing, a development whereby these originally third person singular neuter forms come to be used in any grammatical context. This shift in function will be referred to as a case of ‘invariabilisation’, which can be defined as the process of reanalysis by which a form which was originally restricted to a particular syntactic environment comes to be used in all syntactic environments across the inflectional paradigm. The invariabilisation is perceived as a type of grammaticalisation which involves structural reanalysis, specifically rebracketing of the verb form and pronoun to a single morphemic unit ([in] + [it] → [innit] and [is] + [it] → [is it]), accompanied by loss of semantic features and increase in pragmatic significance.

The aim of this chapter is to give a thorough account of the invariabilisation that affects *innit* and *is it*, as well as to describe the functional characteristics of these forms within the framework presented in Chapter 2. It is assumed that a quantitative, variationist, approach will enable a description of the current status of each form and of the characteristics of the invariabilisation process in general terms. It is likely that the use of *innit* and *is it* as invariants co-occurs with the use of the ‘ordinary’ canonical tags and follow-ups, such as *doesn't she* (cf. (24)) *are you* (cf. (26)) or *have they* (cf. (27)), at

individual speaker level and within COLT as a whole. Hence, it is reasonable to consider *innit* and *is it* as sociolinguistic variants whose syntactically distributional properties and sociolinguistic variation are subject to various linguistic and non-linguistic constraints which can be accounted for by means of statistical methods. Previous research and preliminary findings from COLT-based investigations suggest that teenagers, and especially those belonging to various ethnic minorities, may be the initiators of this change (e.g. Hewitt 1986; Stenström & Andersen 1996; Andersen 1997a). Comparison of the two current sets of data indicates that invariant tags and follow-ups constitute a linguistic resource that is specific to the teenage corpus and that appears to be a salient marker of teenagehood (cf. 4.1.2). This feature is also one of the most striking ways in which the language in COLT diverges from mainstream English.

The objective of Section 4.2 is to analyse the functional properties of these markers with reference to the inferential processes that they contribute to, i.e. to describe the attitudinal, interactional and textual functions that they serve in the COLT conversations. It is clear that on a basic level, these interrogative forms may be regarded as ‘illocutionary particles’ in that they may serve as devices for performing a directive speech act and since they sometimes elicit (principally confirmatory) responses. Generally, *innit* and *is it* take scope over a proposition and contribute to an evaluation of its truth, as suggested by examples (24)–(27). However, their illocutionary properties appear to be largely overridden by their attitudinal functions. For instance, Truno’s follow-up *is it?* in (27) can be construed as an expression of newsworthiness, surprise or even disbelief, and it may contribute to politeness as an attempt to show interest and may be aimed at encouraging Josie to go on and elaborate on an exciting topic. These markers have salient interactional properties in that they reveal the speaker’s inclination to take the hearer’s perspective in evaluating the propositional meaning. Recall that the interactional function of markers concerns what the speaker perceives as the hearer’s relation to propositional meaning, and incorporates expressions of presumption/recognition of mutual manifestness (shared beliefs, opinions, etc). I argue that *innit* and *is it* may serve to make explicit how new information interacts with information already present in the cognitive environment of the interlocutors, i.e. to signal that the propositional information of an utterance either supports/strengthens a belief held by an interlocutor or that it contradicts/eliminates such a belief. For instance, Josie’s *innit?* in (24)

suggests that her claim *She love her chocolate* is compatible with the hearer's belief; hence the tag *innit* marks a presumption of mutual manifestness. Sometimes the tag may also have a subjective function of marking the speaker's reduced commitment. Generally, then, I wish to focus on such attitudinal and interactional functions of *innit* and *is it*.

The final main section of this chapter, 4.3, deals with variation and language change. I will focus on both intra-linguistic and social variation, and will attempt to identify linguistic and non-linguistic constraints on usage. On the basis of the identifiable patterns of variation, I account for the invariabilisation (grammaticalisation) process that is manifested in the invariant use of these forms. Moreover, with reference to previous research on invariant tag questions, I argue that there are good reasons for claiming that the use of *innit/is it* as invariant tags and follow-ups in London teenage English is largely due to the influence of ethnic minority speakers in this area. To support this assumption, it can be noted that *innit* is given a prominent position in Hewitt's comprehensive survey of creole forms that occur in both black and white adolescent speech in London:

'innit' [and other items] ... may be said therefore to have made the move from creole into the local vernacular, probably via the London English of black adolescents. Of the above words, 'innit' has become particularly well established over the past few years. ... Of all the items to penetrate white speech from the Caribbean, this is the most stable and most widely used amongst adolescents and amongst older people. (Hewitt 1986: 132)

I endorse Hewitt's hypothesis concerning the origin of *innit* as an invariant tag, and given the parallelism evident in the use of the form *is it* as an invariant tag/follow-up, I assume that this feature may also have an ethnic minority origin. Hence, ethnic group membership is an important factor which can account for the social differentiation and distributional differences in the data investigated. The question of ethnicity is explicitly addressed in Sections 4.1.3 and 4.3.2.4.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the uses exemplified in (24) to (27) are highly stylistically and sociolinguistically marked, and more so than many other pragmatic markers. Although the distribution in COLT appears to be fairly wide, some speakers do not use *innit* and *is it* as invariant tags or follow-ups. It is likely that not only ethnic, but also socioeconomic and geographical factors have important bearings on the distribution of this feature.

The use of *innit* and *is it* as invariant forms is clearly non-standard, and stands out as a much more likely candidate for prescriptive criticism than the use of pragmatic markers in general. Hence, it would also be worthwhile to investigate the extent to which the use of these markers is stigmatised, a task which goes beyond the scope of the present study.

4.1.1 *Terminology and main distinctions*

Three analytical distinctions are prerequisites for an exhaustive account of the various uses of the pragmatic markers *innit* and *is it* in the corpus: the distinctions between tags and follow-ups, between invariant and canonical tags/follow-ups, and between paradigmatic and non-paradigmatic use of *innit/is it*. These distinctions, presented below, are based on formal as well as functional properties of the two items and the linguistic contexts in which they occur.

4.1.1.1 *Tags and follow-ups*

Along with many previous accounts (Hudson 1975; Holmes 1982; Stenström 1984, 1994, 1997; Algeo 1988; Norrick 1995), I use the term ‘tag’ (‘tag question’) to refer to linguistic items which are appended to a statement for the purpose of seeking confirmation, verification or corroboration of a claim (Millar & Brown 1979), to express a tentative attitude or, more generally, to engage the hearer or involve him in the conversation:

(28) Gonna get money from next year **aren’t we?** (132408/1: 69)

The linguistic material which can be used as tags consists of the entire ‘canon’ of grammatically complex interrogative forms, e.g. *aren’t we*, *didn’t you?*, *have they?*, *should we?*, etc, a number of functionally equivalent simple forms (pragmatic markers), e.g. *right?*, *eh?*, *okay?*, *yeah?* and *innit?* (e.g. Aijmer 1979; Holmes 1982; Stenström 1994; Stenström & Andersen 1996; Berland 1997), and a group of invariant clauses with interrogative structure, e.g. *am I right?*, *don’t you think?* and *isn’t that so?* (Quirk et al. 1985: 814).

Follow-ups,¹ on the other hand, are reduced interrogative forms² like *are they*, *can she*, *doesn’t he*, etc, which are uttered as a reaction of surprise or agreement with a proposition stated by another speaker. The category of follow-ups comprises two main types of use, which can be illustrated as follows:

- (29) Danny: All they know about me is that my name is number
twenty eight.
Matthew: **Do they?**
Danny: Yeah. (141402/26: 6)
- (30) A: John drives slowly.
B: Yes, **doesn't he?** (example taken from Hudson 1975: 20)

The pragmatic scope of the follow-up is always a proposition stated by a previous speaker, and usually the follow-up constitutes an utterance in its own right, as in (29). In both the examples above, the highlighted interrogatives express attitudinal information. In addition to underlining the newsworthiness of the previous statement, the interrogative *do they* in (29) may be construed as an expression of the speaker's astonishment at the newly acquired information, or perhaps doubt as to its truth. On a weaker interpretation, it may simply be a signal that one is paying attention and it may provide an incentive for the previous speaker to go on and elaborate on a topic. Hence, Matthew's reaction is close in meaning to markers such as *really?* or the interrogative *is that so?*. The interrogative *doesn't he* in (30), on the other hand, functions as an expression of agreement with the previous speaker. Sometimes, agreement-marking follow-ups are quite forceful; they may be functionally equivalent to expressions such as *That's right!*, *Absolutely!* or *Couldn't agree more!*. The distinction between the two types of follow-ups illustrated here is coextensive with Hudson's distinction between reduced interrogative responses used as 'straight questions' or as 'exclamations' (1975: 21). To anticipate the analysis that follows in Section 4.2, only *innit* can be used to mark either surprise or agreement, while *is it* serves the former function only. Like tags, follow-ups may have varying degrees of illocutionary force; it is by no means uncommon that surprise-marking follow-ups elicit a response in the form of a re-confirmation of the claim which the follow-up was used to 'ask about' (as in (29)), but often they operate as more generalised expressions of conversational involvement that are not responded to.

It is important to point out that the distinction between tags and follow-ups relies on what proposition the tag takes in its scope and which speaker utters this proposition, rather than the more general discourse property of position in the turn. One would expect, for instance, that a tag, being an element that is 'tagged onto' a proposition, could not occur turn-initially.

Considering how *innit* behaves in COLT, however, one cannot rule out the possibility that linguistic material occurs between a proposition and the tag. This may make an occurrence look like an instance of the follow-up *innit*, when it in fact is not:

- (31) Josie: That's stinking Malcolm X shit.
 Carrie: Rubbish! Talk about <unclear>.
 Josie: Look at him, he's so ugly!
 Chana: Oh, don't you like him?
 Josie: It is so damn ugly!
 Chana: Oh no! Carrie you like Malcolm X.
 Josie: **Innit?** [With your little]
 Carrie: [Oh no!]
 Josie: glasses and your little
 Carrie: Oh no!
 Josie: Ah! Look at his T-shirt! Look at his T-shirt!
 Carrie: But he's so black.
 Chana: I'm black and I'm proud of it. (132614/15: 85)

Josie is using *innit* as a means of seeking corroboration for her claim that *It is so damn ugly (... innit?)*, which is meant to substantiate her negative view on the person wearing a Malcolm X T-shirt. *Innit* is a tag which is appended as an afterthought after Chana has expressed a side comment about Carrie. The proposition that falls within the scope of the marker is thus Josie's own. The example illustrates clearly the difference between the tag and the follow up; if *innit* were a follow-up in this example, it would refer to Chana's utterance *Carrie you like Malcolm X*. This is not the case, since Josie continues by providing further support for her view by giving examples of the ugliness (glasses and T-shirt). *Innit* is functionally equivalent to *Don't you think?* rather than *Is that so?* (which would be the follow-up equivalent). It occurs naturally in a series of arguments strategically used to convince the other speakers. This use qualifies as a tag, due to the fact that it seeks support for a claim uttered by the same speaker, and despite the fact that the proposition that *innit* qualifies is not *directly* preceding the tag.

4.1.1.2 *Canonical and invariant tags/follow-ups*

The second necessary distinction is that between canonical and invariant tags/follow-ups (cf. Holmes 1982, 1995). The term 'canonical' refers to tags

and follow-ups which follow the ordinary rules for formation of reduced interrogatives; that is, they consist of an operator, which is the same as that of the main clause or the dummy operator DO, and a pronominal subject, which agrees with the subject of the main clause in person, gender and number, as in (28) and (29) above. Canonical tag questions typically involve reversal of polarity, although constant-polarity tag questions also occur (cf. Hintikka 1982; Quirk et al. 1985; Houck 1995). Canonical follow-ups do not involve reversal of polarity if they are used to express surprise/news-worthiness; cf. (29) above. There is a categorical restriction on the use of canonical agreement-marking follow-ups, in that the follow-up must have negative polarity and the previous statement must be positive, as in (30) above (cf. Hudson 1975).

Invariant tags and follow-ups, on the other hand, are not formally constrained by the grammatical properties of the previous proposition. It has long been acknowledged that tag questions may be realised as invariant simple forms such as *right?*, *eh?*, *okay?*, *yeah?* and the clauses *am I right?*, *don't you think?*. Analogously, I perceive items like *really?* and *is that so?* as members of the class of invariant follow-ups, since they are functionally equivalent to an interrogative like *do they?* in (29).

The items under consideration in this chapter, *innit* and *is it*, are extraordinary, as they derive historically from canonical interrogatives appearing in grammatical contexts with third person singular neuter subjects and BE, but have assumed invariant use, as is demonstrated in (24) to (27). This usage is a result of structural reanalysis and provides evidence of a transition from the canonical to the invariant category, which makes them an interesting topic for empirical research.

4.1.1.3 *Paradigmatic versus non-paradigmatic use*

Although *innit* and *is it* are described as invariant tags and follow-ups because they can occur in all grammatical contexts, these forms do occur in third person singular neuter contexts as well, of course. This state of facts makes it necessary to introduce a third distinction that will facilitate a precise description of the use of these items, the distinction between paradigmatic and non-paradigmatic use of *innit* and *is it*. It is the grammatical context which determines whether a particular occurrence of one of these forms counts as paradigmatic use or non-paradigmatic use. As the terms suggest, the use of *innit* or *is it* in contexts involving the present tense of BE and a

third person singular neuter subject is considered paradigmatic, while use in other contexts is considered non-paradigmatic. In other words, *It's great innit* exemplifies paradigmatic use, while *I might go innit* exemplifies non-paradigmatic use of *innit*. Although both types must be considered non-standard, the non-paradigmatic use involves a greater deviation from the norms of standard English, since this use implies non-adherence to the rules of subject-verb concord between proposition and tag (and may for that reason seem awkward or perhaps even bizarre to outsiders). As regards the use of *is it*, it is only the non-paradigmatic use that is non-standard, while the paradigmatic use occurs in English universally.

It is only the examples of non-paradigmatic use which provide evidence that invariabilisation has taken place. The distinction between paradigmatic and non-paradigmatic use is crucial to the investigation of social variation, where I aim to investigate, among other issues, whether individual speakers categorically use invariant *innit/is it* and not the corresponding canonical forms, or whether intra-speaker variation can be observed.

4.1.1.4 *The forms innit and is it*

The historical development that has led to the use of *innit* and *is it* as invariant tags and follow-ups will be extensively accounted for in Section 4.3. However, it seems adequate at this point to anticipate that discussion slightly.

The form *innit* is a highly noticeable feature of the London teenage vernacular, and is one of the most outstanding elements of non-standard grammar to be found in the COLT corpus (cf. Stenström & Andersen 1996; Tandberg 1996; Andersen 1997a; Berland 1997). The great versatility with which this form is used as a tag can be illustrated by the following short and by no means exhaustive list of examples:

- (32) That's all you can say **innit** you can't say nothing else! (134804/2: 28)
- (33) He gets upset quick **innit**? (135207/12: 609)
- (34) You got a six hundred **innit**. (134602/7: 1)
- (35) She might wear her shorts thing **innit**? (135201/1: 67)

As regards the derivation of this form, it is difficult to be conclusive on the basis of the current data. Two alternative hypotheses come forth as plausible and are supported by my data to some extent. In short, these hypotheses can be outlined as follows.

Considering an example like (32), where *innit* would correspond to *isn't it* in standard English (and, hence, where it is used paradigmatically), it is tempting to assume that *innit* has derived directly from *isn't it* in a straightforward manner. Under this first hypothesis, the interrogative *isn't it* has undergone phonological reduction, specifically loss of [t] and [z] (presumably in that order), and the two morphemes (a negative verb and a pronoun) have merged. This development can be sketched as follows:

isn't it [ɪznt it] → isn't it [ɪzn it] → innit [ɪn it]

In the later stages of its development, the tag *innit* has assumed invariant use (or become 'invariabilised'); that is, it has come to be used in non-third person singular neuter contexts and after any verb. In my discussion of the linguistic distribution of *innit*, I take this first hypothesis as a starting point, by considering the extent to which *innit* shares (traces of) semantic features with its assumed predecessor, *isn't it* (cf. 4.3.1).

The alternative hypothesis is that *innit* is not a direct reduction of *isn't it*, but has developed via the non-standard negative verb form *ain't*, which may correspond to either *isn't* or *hasn't*. This assumption is supported by Cheshire (1982) (and upheld by Stenström & Andersen 1996), who shows that the form *in* is one of several realisations of *ain't*. This realisation of *isn't/hasn't*, along with the less phonologically reduced form *int*, is also found in COLT. Given these facts we may argue that *innit* consists of a reduced form of *ain't* and the pronoun *it*. This development can be sketched as follows:

ain't it [ɛnt it] → int it [ɪnt it] → in it [ɪn it]

This process would involve phonological change of the form *ain't*, notably raising of the initial vowel of the diphthong, monophthongisation and loss of final [t]. Again, in the later stages of the development, *innit* has come to be used invariantly, a process whose end result is utterances such as (32)–(35). I will reassess this hypothesis after I have presented the distributional characteristics of *innit* in Section 4.3.1.

It is worth pointing out that, in one case in COLT, the item *innit* serves another function than that of a tag or follow-up, namely as predicator and subject in a *wh*-question:

(36) Well, why **innit** there? (134803/1: 284)

Needless to say, as *innit* is an example of a propositional and non-omissible item in (36), this example is set aside and not included in any of the statistics.

As regards the uses of *is it* that are relevant to this study, the development directly parallels that of *innit*, in that an originally third person singular neuter form has assumed invariant use:

- (37) Danny: This is programmed just to hear my voice.
?: **Is it?** (141401/? : 298)
- (38) Ahsik: His dad went over there.
Anthony: **Is it?** (140302/1 : 105)

This development differs from that of *innit* in one respect; while *innit* is a phonologically reduced and fused form, the phonological structure of *is it* is unchanged.

4.1.1.5 Summary of distinctions and frequency distribution

It is adequate at this point to sum up the analytical definitions which have been introduced in this chapter. My main assumption is that *innit* and *is it* can be described in terms of a transition from the canonical to the invariant category. The forms *innit* and *is it* can be used paradigmatically or non-paradigmatically and they can be either tags or follow-ups. The former classification depends on the grammatical properties of the proposition which the tag/follow-up qualifies. The latter classification depends on which speaker utters the proposition that is qualified by *innit/is it*. The intersection of these two distinctions can be schematised as in Figure 9. At this stage, it

	Tag	Follow-up
Paradigmatic use	<i>That's all you can say innit?</i> <i>It's not that good is it?</i>	A: <i>Your school's quite near.</i> B: Innit. <i>You have to go miles.</i> A: <i>It's all over the place.</i> B: Is it?
Non-paradigmatic use	<i>They're at home innit?</i> <i>You're gonna fail it is it?</i>	A: <i>That man is smart.</i> B: Innit. A: <i>She wrote him a letter.</i> B: Is it?

Figure 9.

is also worth pointing out that the different types of use are by no means equally frequent in the COLT corpus, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Overall frequencies of *innit* and *is it* in COLT

Formal and functional features	n	%
<i>Innit</i> as tag, non-paradigmatic use	181	56.0
<i>Innit</i> as tag, paradigmatic use	142	44.0
Σ	323	100.0
<i>Innit</i> as follow-up, non-paradigmatic use	33	86.8
<i>Innit</i> as follow-up, paradigmatic use	5	13.2
Σ	38	100.0
<i>Is it</i> as tag, non-paradigmatic use	2	3.0
<i>Is it</i> as tag, paradigmatic use	64	97.0
Σ	66	100.0
<i>Is it</i> as follow-up, non-paradigmatic use	48	52.2
<i>Is it</i> as follow-up, paradigmatic use	44	47.8
Σ	92	100.0

From the outset, it is interesting to note that all four types of non-paradigmatic use do occur in the corpus, albeit not to the same extent. It is primarily those uses of *innit* and *is it* which count as non-paradigmatic that are of interest in this study, because, arguably, they exemplify linguistic innovation and teenage-specific features (cf. 4.1.2). It is the non-paradigmatic use of these forms that legitimates their treatment from the point of view of cross-generational sociolinguistic variation. It can be noted from Table 1 that the non-paradigmatic use is most common in connection with *innit* as a tag (n=181), fairly common in connection with *innit* and *is it* as follow-ups (n=33; n=48, respectively) but uncommon in connection with *is it* as a tag (n=2). With reference to these statistics, I will devote great attention to the use of *innit* generally. As regards *is it*, however, I will account for its use as a follow-up, but the tag *is it* will only be treated very briefly in the following sections. The reason for this priority is that, by and large, the use of *is it* as a tag is in line with adult language and with mainstream English.

4.1.2 *An adolescent feature? Comparison with BNC/London*

As mentioned, a basic assumption in this study is that invariant *innit/is it* is a characteristic feature of adolescent conversation as opposed to the language of adults, and that this feature reflects language change or age-grading. In order to support these assumptions, I now wish to consider whether this type of use occurs in the adult reference material, before I move on to a more detailed description of the function of these forms and their distribution and development in COLT.

The two forms *innit* and *is it* both occur in the BNC/London corpus of adult conversation, but, importantly, they only occur in syntactic environments where they are used paradigmatically. My data contain no evidence that invariabilisation has affected adult speech. Hence, the BNC reference data support the assumption that it is adolescent speakers who are in the forefront of the development of invariant *innit* and *is it*.

Of course, the collocation *is it* occurs widely in the BNC/London corpus (n = 610), but never as an invariant tag or follow-up. As can be expected, the distribution of the non-standard form *innit* is more restricted than the collocation *is it*, but it does occur in adult conversation. Its frequency as a pragmatic marker is 97 tokens, amounting to 0.205 instances per thousand words, the corresponding figure for COLT being 0.716 (n = 364).³ This difference between the two corpora is significant at $p < 0.0001$ ($\chi^2 \geq 97.855$; two-tailed; d.f. = 1). Moreover, *innit* almost exclusively functions as a tag (*That's a lazy language the Suffolk dialect, innit?*), with one exception, where it is used as a surprise-marking follow-up (A: *It's not like they said.* B: *Innit?*). Importantly, in the speech of adults the form *innit* is always used paradigmatically, that is after third person singular neuter subjects and where the corresponding standard English form would be *isn't it*. It is used by both genders and by young and older adults alike, suggesting that *innit* is fairly well established as a non-standard tag in London English generally. However, it is outnumbered by the equivalent standard tag *isn't it?* (n = 409), while the realisation *ain't it?* is less frequent (n = 17).

As regards the form *innit*, it is likely that we can attribute the noted quantitative difference between the two corpora to the fact that the adolescent use of this form involves a spread to environments containing other subjects than third person singular neuter and other verbs than BE. However, the use that is manifested in COLT also suggests spread along another

dimension, namely a functional expansion from tag to follow-up. A case can be made for claiming that *innit* has undergone such a functional shift, and that the use of *innit* as a tag chronologically precedes the follow-up use. The reason why such a development seems plausible is that it would constitute a direct parallel to the development of another, largely functionally equivalent, pragmatic marker that is common in ethnic minority speech, namely *you know what I mean*:

(39) A: It was a wicked party, man!

B: **You know what I mean!** (Example provided by Sebba 1993: 71)

Sebba notes that in London Jamaican, this expression ‘has gone from being an agreement-seeker to being a *marker* of agreement in conversation’ (1993: 71; author’s emphasis; see also Sebba & Tate 1986). Due to functional similarities, I take it as likely that invariant *innit* may have followed the same path of change as that of *you know what I mean*. In the course of my discussion I will attempt to present data that support the assumption that *innit* has undergone a functional expansion from ‘agreement-seeker’ (tag) to ‘agreement-marker’ (follow-up). (See 4.3.3.4, in particular.)

4.1.3 *Previous research and the issue of ethnicity*

In the current section, I give a brief overview of relevant previous literature and suggest how it relates to my own investigation that follows in Sections 4.2 and 4.3. There is a substantial amount of research on tag questions in English, and their formal and functional properties have been well accounted for. It is not my intention to discuss each study in detail in the survey that follows; rather, I wish to focus on those studies which are the most relevant to my topic, namely those that explicitly address the use and/or development of *invariant* tags.

Tag questions have been analysed from several perspectives, and with different foci. Studies which deal primarily with the syntactic and semantic features of tag questions include O’Connor (1955), Bolinger (1957), Palmer (1965), Arbini (1969), Palmer & Blandford (1969), Huddleston (1970), Langendoen (1970), Armagost (1972), Cattell (1973), Hudson (1975), Oleksy (1977), Knowles (1980), Hintikka (1982) and Quirk et al. (1985). Very briefly, these studies explore tag questions with respect to issues such as rules for tag question formation, co-referentiality, polarity, intonation,

conduciveness and speech act meaning. Some of the studies are placed within the framework of transformational grammar (e.g. Arbini, Cattell and Huddleston), while others are of a more descriptive nature (e.g. Quirk et al.). Other studies of tag questions concentrate on their functional, pragmatic or discourse features; these include Aijmer (1979), Millar & Brown (1979), Östman (1981a), Holmes (1982), Nässlin (1984), Stenström (1984, 1994, 1997), Algeo (1990), Thomas (1990), Houck (1991, 1995) and Andersen (1998a). These studies consider pragmatic aspects and functional properties, and show how tags may communicate reduced epistemic commitment, politeness and implicit meanings, and how they may contribute to turn-taking and discourse coherence. Yet other studies approach tag questions mainly from the point of view of sociolinguistic variation. These include Lakoff (1973), Dubois & Crouch (1975), Crosby & Nyquist (1977), Lapadat & Seesahai (1977), McMillan et al. (1977), Johnson (1980), O'Barr & Atkins (1980), Cheshire (1981, 1982), Holmes (1984, 1995), Algeo (1988), Cameron et al. (1989), Coates (1989) and Winefield et al. (1989). Most of these sociolinguistic studies have been concerned with differences between men and women as regards the use of tag questions (e.g. Lakoff, Crosby & Nyquist, McMillan et al., Holmes, Coates). Finally, a few studies have discussed tag questions in connection with child language acquisition, e.g. Mills (1981), Berninger & Garvey (1982), Dennis et al. (1982) and Todd (1982). (More detailed descriptions of several of these studies are given in the sections that deal with *innit* as a tag; cf. 4.2.2 & 4.3.)

Against this long list of contributions to the study of English tag questions, it is interesting to note that the interrogatives which I refer to as canonical follow-ups (A: *They're quite expensive.* B: *Are they?*) have received far less attention. This imbalance is surprising, given that follow-ups, too, make important and non-trivial contributions to attitudinal and epistemic meaning, for instance as a sign of active listenership, politeness and cooperation in conversation. To my knowledge, this type of use of interrogatives has only been mentioned in a handful of studies. These include Hudson (1975) and Stenström (1994) and very brief mention in Palmer & Blandford (1969) and Quirk et al. (1985:810, footnote d). It is indeed remarkable that none of the existing sociolinguistic studies of politeness phenomena take follow-ups into account, while they, almost without exception, devote attention to the use of tag questions. The two types of interrogative have many structural as well as functional similarities. For instance, both

types may communicate an attitude of weak doubt, and both can be used in an impolite fashion. The tag can be used peremptorily (cf. *That's not a very nice thing to say, is it?*) and the follow-up, given the right tone of voice, facial expression, etc, can be a signal of scepticism towards the hearer's previous contribution and of a more general lack of credibility.

Particularly relevant to the current investigation are the studies which describe the use of a particular elliptical interrogative structure throughout the inflectional paradigm. In the literature, there are some brief descriptions of third person singular neuter forms used as invariant tags, but I have found no descriptions of phenomena that resemble the invariant follow-ups that I am investigating in this chapter.

The reports of invariant tags that exist suggest that invariant tags thrive in multilingual environments, or, as Algeo puts it, in '[v]arieties of English that have been heavily influenced by other languages' (1988: 174). In West African English we find '[t]he use of a universal tag question — *is it?* — regardless of person, tense or main clause auxiliary: We should leave now, *is it?*' (Trudgill & Hannah 1982: 103). The term 'West African English' refers to non-native varieties of English, but which 'are unambiguously English, particularly those spoken in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone' (ibid: 101). Todd & Hancock (1986: 497) also list *isn't it* as a universal tag in West African English. In another non-native variety, Indian English, there is '[t]he use of an undifferentiated tag question — *isn't it* — regardless of person, tense, or main clause auxiliary' (Trudgill & Hannah 1982: 110; see also Nihalani et al. 1979: 104; Todd & Hancock 1986: 187). This finding is corroborated by Kachru's study of South Asian English, i.e. 'the variety of English used in what has traditionally been called the Indian subcontinent' (1982: 353). Although linguistically pluralistic, South Asia can be considered a 'linguistic area' comprising India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. Interestingly, Kachru attributes the invariant tag *isn't it* to a 'transfer ("interference")' from the grammar of the background language, in this case Hindu-Urdu, which has 'a postposed particle which is invariably *na*' (1982: 360).⁴ Moving further east, the use of *isn't it* and *is it* as invariant tag questions is reported by Platt as 'an almost universal feature' (1982: 401) in the English spoken in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. And finally, there is a tendency in Papua New Guinean English 'to use an invariable tag, *isn't it?*' (Todd & Hancock 1986: 329).

The studies mentioned above show that multilingualism provides particularly good conditions for the development of invariant tags from originally third person singular neuter forms with the verb BE. In the London context, the use of *innit* as an invariant tag is also linked with multilingualism and ethnic minority speech in the previous literature. Recall from Section 3.2.5 that London contains nearly half of Britain's ethnic minority population, the largest ethnic minority groups being the Indian, Black-Caribbean, Black-African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups. As a result of continuing large-scale immigration, London consists of a high number of first generation immigrants who speak English as a second language, and of second or third generation immigrants who are either bilingual or who have been exposed to other languages than English from their parents. In his survey of Cockney dialect and slang, Wright briefly comments on 'the use of *isn't it?* or the Cockneyised *ain't it?* as an all-purpose enclitic or tag question' (1981: 44), and regards it as being one of the features of the West Indian English spoken in London. As mentioned, Hewitt (1986) also devotes attention to *innit* as an invariant tag, and describes it as one of the most frequent forms of Jamaican Creole that has influenced the speech of white adolescents. Although Hewitt's main focus is inter-racial communication between black and white speakers, he also finds evidence for the use of invariant *innit* in the speech of white adolescents in interaction with other white adolescents. The strongest influence from creole on white adolescence speech occurs 'in localities of dense black population, where school and neighbourhood contact between black and white adolescents is greatest' (ibid: 128). This cross-ethnic borrowing is regarded as the result of the symbolic importance of the 'London Jamaican' variety of English and reflects the high prestige of black youth culture. The use of *innit/ennit* as an invariant tag is also listed in Sutcliffe's (1982) glossary of British black English. Finally, Cheshire briefly mentions 'a few sentences in the recordings where the subject and verb in the 'unconventional' tag are still further removed from those of the main sentence: *She's too good for you, in it? ... She makes her laugh, in it?*' (1982: 61).⁵ Cheshire assumes that this usage is restricted to the so-called 'unconventional tags', whose function is not to seek confirmation of a fact or support for an assumption, as with 'conventional tags', but to express some sort of hostility or aggression towards the hearer.⁶

We have seen that the development of invariant tags from originally third person singular neuter forms is quite common in multilingual contexts, and

that the use of *innit* as an invariant tag in London is considered originally an ethnic minority feature that has spread to the language of white speakers. Against this background, it is interesting to note that no descriptions of the use of *innit* or other originally third person singular neuter forms as invariant follow-ups are found in the literature.⁷ This suggests that the phenomena investigated in the current COLT-based study include some very recent innovations, namely the use of *innit* and *is it* as invariant follow-ups. The development of invariant follow-ups directly parallels that of invariant tags in terms of the original semantic features of the forms that undergo invariabilisation and in terms of the gradual loss of these features. It seems plausible that the development of *innit/is it* into invariant tags and follow-ups is a result of the same multilingualism and is ultimately due to the fact that London is ethnically and linguistically complex. An underlying hypothesis of the current study is therefore that the occurrence of invariant *innit* and *is it* as tags and follow-ups can be ascribed to the presence of ethnic minorities in the London area. Hewitt describes the use of *you know what I mean* as an agreement-marking response as 'a very recent idiomatic innovation, and one which appears to have been developed within the London English of black adolescents but derived from a Caribbean source' (1986: 133). As mentioned, I assume that *innit* has followed the same trajectory, from tag to follow-up, and it is likely that it is the ethnic minority speakers who are in the forefront of this development, too. Hence, ethnicity becomes an important factor to be accounted for in the discussion of sociolinguistic variation (cf. 4.3).⁸

As regards research on *innit*, there has been an increasing number of studies after the COLT-material was made available for investigation. In Stenström & Andersen (1996), we conclude that, '[a]lthough *innit* is formally invariant, it appears to retain elements of grammatical features which it does not share with other invariant tags' (1996: 199), hence that *innit* is gradually becoming an invariant tag in London teenage conversation. One of the aims of the current chapter is to provide quantitative evidence for these claims, and to extend the analysis to an analogous investigation of *innit* as a follow-up and of *is it* as an invariant tag and follow-up.

Tandberg (1996) presents data which support the main conclusions drawn in Stenström & Andersen (1996), and states that '[a]lthough it is reasonable to assume that the tag *innit* originated as a contraction of *isn't it*, it does no longer seem plausible to regard these two tags as equal. ... Even though *innit* can be used in connection with all subjects, IT is clearly the most favoured

subject, and *is* is the most favoured predicator' (Tandberg 1996: 83). A weakness of this study, however, is that it considers absolute frequencies only, and not frequencies of *innit* relative to the total number of tags which occur in different grammatical contexts. In Section 4.3.1 of the current study, I will attempt to remedy this situation, by comparing the use of *innit* to the use of canonical tag questions, and the quantitative analysis will be expanded to the other functional categories.

Basing her study on a 85,000-word subset of COLT, Berland (1997) shows that *innit* (and the other invariant tags *okay*, *right* and *yeah*) is more frequent in 'working class' than in 'middle class' speech and that there were no significant differences between girls and boys with respect to the use of invariant tags. However, on the basis of her limited data, she admits that 'conclusions as to whether the use of [*innit*] reflects language change in progress are difficult to reach' (ibid: 67). In the current study the ambition is to show that the use of the two forms does exemplify change in progress.

Erman's study 'can be considered a follow-up to Stenström & Andersen's study' (1998: 88). She argues that *innit* (along with *just*) is 'in the process of being grammaticalized in teenage language' and has 'changed category membership from that of ... tag question ... to that of pragmatic particle[]', specifically 'emphasizer' (1998: 87). Erman makes the presumably erroneous claim that '[i]t is only in the last decade or so that the invariant tag question, *innit*, has started to be used' (1998: 91).⁹ It is also worth pointing out that both the studies of Stenström & Andersen (1996) and Erman (1998) were based on an earlier version of COLT which included a smaller amount of transcribed material than the current version.

Andersen (1997a) and Andersen (1997c) can be regarded as pilot versions of the large-scale investigation undertaken in the current work, and will not be discussed in detail at this point, but reference will be made to these studies in other sections. Common to all of the COLT-based studies mentioned is that they deal primarily with the use of *innit* as a tag. With the exception of Andersen (1997a), none of them address the use of invariant follow-ups in any detail, although some briefly mention the use of *innit* as a follow-up. The current approach is novel, in that it scrutinises the four functional categories along the same lines, and that it addresses the issue of ethnicity in connection with the phenomenon of invariant tags and follow-ups in COLT. Moreover, the sociolinguistic variation is described more thoroughly than in the two previous accounts Tandberg (1996) and Berland (1997), as

the current study distinguishes between paradigmatic and non-paradigmatic use of these forms, with a view to identifying constraints on usage.

Finally, I should point out that there are other invariant forms that may be used as tag questions, e.g. *eh?*, *hunh?* and *not so?*. The existing previous studies generally restrict themselves to brief mention of these items (e.g. Bolinger 1957; Dubois & Crouch 1975; Aijmer 1979; Holmes 1984; Quirk et al. 1985; Algeo 1988), exceptions being Millar & Brown (1979), Holmes (1982, 1995), Stenström (1994, 1997), Norrick (1995) and Berland (1997). The inventory of invariant tags in English includes the items *eh?*, *hunh?*, *okay?*, *kay?*, *right?*, *what?*, *yeah?* and *yes?* in English generally, *e?* and *e no?* in Edinburgh Scots, *eh what?* in British English, *not so?* in Indian, Papua New Guinean and West African English and *no?* in varieties influenced by Spanish (Christian 1983).¹⁰ There is considerable regional variation in the use of the different forms. For instance, '*hunh* is common only in the United States and parts of Canada; *eh* is the counterpart of *hunh* in England, Australia and much of Canada' (Norrick 1995: 689). The Scottish tag *e* must be distinguished from *eh* in other English dialects on both phonetic and functional grounds (Millar & Brown 1979: 31). Moreover, *eh* (especially with a falling intonation) 'functions in New Zealand as an identity marker among young rural children and Maori adolescents in particular' (Holmes 1982: 56; see also Holmes 1995: 97ff). And, according to Algeo, the tag *eh what* is 'stereotypically British' (1988: 174).

4.2 Pragmatic functions

4.2.1 Introduction

In this section, I describe the markers *innit* and *is it* from the point of view of their pragmatic functions in adolescent conversation. Their contribution to utterance meaning can be described from various perspectives. In the current account, the main objective is to emphasise their attitudinal functions as markers of epistemic commitment, newsworthiness, surprise, etc, and their interactional functions as markers of hearer-orientation and degree of mutual manifestness. I also address their illocutionary properties, that is, the extent to which these originally interrogative forms have directive illocutionary

force and are used to seek support for a claim in the form of a confirmatory response from the hearer.

In Chapter 2 it was argued that some pragmatic markers have a capacity to bring into focus the contextual background (beliefs, opinions, ideas) of the conversational partner and to express whether the contextual backgrounds of the interlocutors consist of divergent or aligned contextual assumptions. This was described as an interactional function of pragmatic markers. In the current section, I argue that the invariant tags/follow-ups *innit* and *is it* are generally hearer-oriented and can be considered interactional in the sense that they reveal a speaker's disposition to focus on divergent or aligned contextual assumptions. Generally, tags (*She's lying isn't she?*) serve to express a presumption that the proposition contains information that is mutually manifest, while follow-ups (A: *She's lying*. B: *Is she?*) may be used to express that the propositional information is incompatible with some previously held assumption, hence that the contextual background of speaker and hearer diverge. In what follows, I will analyse *innit* and *is it* in terms of this proposed distinction between A-signals or D-signals. It must be pointed out, however, that tags and follow-ups may serve a variety of functions, and one should be cautious not to generalise beyond what can be empirically justified. For instance, a subtype of tag questions, the constant-polarity tags (*So she's lying, is she?*), commonly indicates the speaker's suspicion as to the truth of P, hence suggests contextual divergence rather than alignment. In my discussion of the markers *innit* and *is it*, I also aim to investigate whether they can be multifunctional in this respect.

In the following sections, I describe each of the four functional categories in turn, with special emphasis on functional properties that differ from the ordinary tag/follow-up questions found in English generally. As mentioned, due to great differences in frequency the four types of use will not be given the same attention. *Is it* as a tag will only be considered briefly due to its low frequency as an invariant (cf. 4.1.1.5), while the tag *innit*, which is the most common type of use, will be given the greatest attention.

4.2.2 *Pragmatic functions of innit as a tag*

There is a substantial amount of research on the function of tag questions. In the following discussion I focus on both similarities and differences between *innit* and the canonical tags as described in the previous literature, paying

particular attention to functional and formal aspects where the two types of tag diverge. My description of the tag *innit* has several objectives. In Subsection 4.2.2.1, I present a functional survey where I assess whether the invariant tag *innit* has the same functional range as that of the canonical tags, and I describe its functions from the point of view of contextual alignment and mutual manifestness (common ground). In Subsection 4.2.2.2, I present some functions of *innit* in the data that go beyond the functional range of ordinary tags, thereby attempting to show that this pragmatic marker is not only extraordinary from the point of view of its syntax, but also in terms of pragmatic functions. In these two subsections, I also briefly touch upon speech act functions and assess the extent to which this tag appears to be aimed at eliciting a response from the hearer. Finally, in Subsection 4.2.2.3, I point towards some formal properties that appear to be idiosyncratic, specifically prosodic patterns and the syntactic features of the preceding clause/phrase.

4.2.2.1 *Functional survey*

In the following survey, I propose a categorisation that represents a compromise of taxonomies from three different sources, Millar & Brown (1979), Algeo (1988) and Holmes (1995) (referred to as 'M&B', 'Algeo' and 'Holmes', respectively).

The survey serves the two-fold purpose of showing that the invariant tag *innit* can have the variety of functions that have previously been attributed to tag questions in general, and showing that these functions can be considered interactional and hearer-oriented in the sense that is proposed in the current work, because the tag expresses the speaker's presumption concerning the hearer's relation to the propositional meaning of the utterance.

The COLT data make it evident that the tag *innit*, like tags in general, can be associated with a variety of speaker attitudes and varying degrees of directive illocutionary force. A broad distinction can be drawn between those types of use that involve a speaker attitude of reduced commitment towards the truth of the proposition expressed, and those that do not. According to Holmes '[t]ag questions are, at the most general level, hedging devices. They qualify the strength with which the speaker asserts the truth of a proposition' (1982: 49). In other words, tags may have a subjective function of signalling a tentative attitude on the part of the speaker and make her utterance less assertive than if the tag had not been added. The two first categories in

Table 2. Basic and marginal functions of *innit* as a tag

Example	Speaker's relation to P (subjective attitude)	Speaker's evaluation of the hearer's relation to P	Labels suggested in previous literature	Content of P
<i>You told mum yesterday -innit?</i>	S is uncertain as to the truth of P and presents it as possibly true. S would like to have P verified.	S assumes P to be a belief shared by S and H but more salient in H's contextual background and therefore that H is able to verify P.	S epistemic (Holmes) informational (Algeo) Categories B + D (M&B)	fact
<i>Anthony and Lucy's doing it -innit?</i>	S is uncertain as to the truth of P and presents it as probably true. S would like to have P verified.	S assumes P to be a belief shared by S and H and that H is able to verify P.	S epistemic (Holmes) informational (Algeo) Categories B + D (M&B)	fact
<i>Romax knows it as well -innit.</i>	S is certain as to the truth of P.	S assumes P to be a belief shared by S and H and that H may wish to confirm P.	S facilitative (Holmes) confirmatory (Algeo) Category A (M&B)	fact
<i>Those old games, they're so shit -innit.</i>	S is certain as to the truth of P.	S assumes P to be an opinion shared by S and H and that H may wish to corroborate P.	facilitative (Holmes) confirmatory (Algeo) Category C (M&B)	opinion
<i>There's only one Mothercare -innit Grace.</i>	S is certain as to the truth of P.	S assumes P to be either a belief shared by S and H, or at least compatible with H's contextual background; therefore S tries to remind or convince H of P.	softening (Holmes) confirmatory (Algeo) Category E (M&B)	fact/opinion
<i>Remember I'm walking with Ritchie and Andrew -innit?</i>	S is certain as to the truth of P.	S assumes P to be a belief shared by S and H, but it may be less salient in H's contextual background; therefore S reminds H of P.	S challenging (Holmes) peremptory (Algeo) Category E (M&B)	fact
A: <i>Got any new games for your computer?</i> B: <i>No. It's fucked -innit? You must have fucked it up.</i>	S is certain as to the truth of P.	S does not assume P to be a belief shared by S and H, but believes that P is at least compatible with H's contextual background.	challenging (Holmes) aggressive (Algeo) Category F (M&B)	fact

Table 2 represent such epistemic uses of the tag *innit*. The remaining types of use, represented by five categories in the table, involve no reduced speaker commitment but are distinguished on the grounds of other subjective and interactional properties of the utterance. Each type of use will be discussed more fully below.

As is well known, a rising or falling tone on the tag crucially constrains the interpretation of the utterance in terms of its attitudinal meaning and illocutionary force. According to Algeo, a rising tone is associated with ‘a genuine request for information, indicating that the speaker expects a direct response from the addressee and is prepared to accept either a positive or a negative one’ (1988: 180), while a falling tone raises an expectation of a positive response. Quirk et al. also comment on this difference, and argue that ‘[t]he tag with a rising tone invites verification, expecting the hearer to decide the truth of the proposition in the statement. The tag with the falling tone, on the other hand, invites confirmation of the statement, and has the force of an exclamation rather than a genuine question’ (1985: 811). It is clear from these quotations that a rising tone on the tag constrains the utterance towards an epistemic reading. In the types of use that involve no uncertainty on the part of the speaker, *innit* has a falling tone.

It can be noted that the tag *innit* in COLT is overwhelmingly (98.4%) pronounced with a falling tone,¹¹ and (40), where the tag is used to express a genuine speaker uncertainty as to the truth of the proposition, represents an unusual pattern:

- (40) Georgina: Hold on, you know the barbecue area, near the Cafe
(name) and stuff?
Father: Yeah.
Georgina: Well, a few girls have tried it out, but because it is for
everyone we all have to pay one pound cos, i= they cost
them twenty pounds to hire the place after all. ...
Father: I don’t understand.
Georgina: You don’t understand? Right, a few girls (unclear) Hold
on, didn’t mum tell you?
Father: No.
Terry: Mum told, **you told mum [yesterday >innit?]**
Georgina: [She told] me she told you, and she said you had said you
could take me. (139610/1: 9)

It is generally acknowledged that tag questions are biased towards a confirmatory response. This conduciveness distinguishes them from straight yes/no-questions (*Did you tell mum yesterday?*), which involve no expectation of a particular response (Stenström 1984). Terry's utterance in (40) can be construed as a genuine request for Georgina to verify P. Hence, the tag *innit* may occasionally have this basic illocutionary function of indicating that the utterance is intended as a directive speech act. This use of *innit* affects the explicatures communicated by the utterance, to the effect that the speaker is asking the hearer whether P is the case.

As regards subjective meaning, we can construe P as a weak belief of the speaker, but one whose certainty may be inadequate. But Terry's utterance also has important interactional properties, in the sense proposed in the current work, since it expresses an evaluation of the hearer's relation to the proposition. Specifically, given the positive conduciveness of the utterance, it expresses that the speaker assumes the hearer to be in a position to verify the truth of P. The utterance not only expresses that P is possibly true, but also that the hearer is likely to be able to confirm this; hence P is assumed to represent a belief that the hearer also holds, but one that is more salient in the hearer's contextual background.¹² This shows that the tag *innit* is hearer-oriented and interactional in the sense that it concerns the extent to which speaker and hearer share beliefs, and it signals that contextual backgrounds of the speaker and hearer are *aligned* with respect to the truth of P. In terms of the analytical framework presented in Section 2.4.5, the tag *innit* can therefore be considered an A-signal. It has an S → H orientation; that is, it expresses a presumption rather than a recognition of contextual alignment. This general description is crucial, and paves the way for a uniform analysis of the pragmatic function of this marker. Moreover, (40) provides good evidence for why the interactional and subjective functions cannot be categorically separated (cf. 2.4); the tag *innit* is interactional in that it takes the hearer's contextual background into consideration; at the same time it is subjective in that it signals the speaker's uncertainty.

The two types of epistemic tag in Table 2 are distinguished on the grounds of tone of voice and degree of speaker commitment. (41) is a case where *innit* is pronounced with a falling tone (which is also the case in the rest of the examples discussed in the current subsection), but nevertheless expresses reduced speaker commitment. In such cases, the utterance conveys a lesser degree of speaker uncertainty than in those represented by (40) above:

- (41) Cassie: So basically just forget it's there okay, you don't have to say anything particular like you know.
 Peter: **Anthony and Lucy's doing it \ininit?**
 Cassie: Yeah.
 Catherine: And so is Josie, is Josie doing it? (133707/6: 79)

In this extract, where the COLT-recruit Cassie is instructing the others to behave naturally in front of the tape recorder, Peter appears not entirely certain as to whether Anthony and Lucy are recruits for the COLT project as well, but presents this proposition as probably true. As regards interactional properties, the utterance conveys the assumption that Cassie is able to verify the proposition. We note that *ininit* with a falling tone can express reduced epistemic commitment; in this respect the invariant tag *ininit* resembles canonical tags, but interestingly, differs from the other invariant tags *okay*, *right* and *yeah*, which require a rising tone in order to perform this function (Holmes 1982; Berland 1997). Again, the proposition is presented as a presumably shared element of the interlocutors' contextual background, albeit more salient in the hearer's contextual background, and the tag *ininit* can be analysed as an A-signal with S → H orientation.

I now turn to the discussion of those types of use that involve no reduced commitment on the part of the speaker:

- (42) Mark: Make her sing that other song.
 Grace: Shine <nv>singing</nv> [<nv>singing</nv>]
 Romax: [<nv>singing</nv>] <singing>Yeah yeah yeah.</>
 Mark: **Romax knows it as well ininit.**
 Dawn: Arrested Development ininit.
 Mark: Yeah, well let Romax sing it, let, go on sing it go on, sing it Grace. (134902/11: 553)

In this family setting, Mark is commenting on the fact that his little brother Romax knows the song Grace is singing. That the proposition represents information that is shared by everyone present is evident from Grace and Romax' common pursuit in singing a song by the rap/funk band Arrested Development. Mark's utterance cannot be construed as a directive speech act or as seeking verification, but rather as seeking support for the propositional claim of a representative speech act. The proposition qualified by *ininit* represents information that is presumed to be shared by speaker and hearer, and the proposed analysis of *ininit* as an A-signal is clearly appropriate in this case.

This type of use has been described as ‘facilitative’ or ‘affective’; that is, the main purpose of the tag is to facilitate the participation of others, hence to increase positive politeness (cf. Holmes 1982, 1995; Cameron et al. 1989; Coates 1989). In Stenström’s terminology, the tag serves as an ‘empathiser’, an element that ‘involves the listener’ (1994: 46).

The functional survey in Table 2 suggests a distinction between two different types of facilitative tag, according to whether the scope of the tag is a proposition that concerns a state of affairs (factual, e.g. *He drives a red Mazda, doesn’t he?*) or the speaker’s opinion on a topic (non-factual, e.g. *He drives a magnificent car, doesn’t he?*). Following a suggestion by Hudson (1975), Millar & Brown show that it may be fruitful to distinguish according to this criterion, since ‘there is a difference between seeking confirmation and seeking corroboration, such that the speaker applies a slightly different set of expectations to each case’ (1979: 38). The two types of tag-appended utterance differ in that the possible appropriate responses to the former type is restricted to expressions that are equivalent to a straightforward *yes*, *no* or *I don’t know*, while the responses to the latter type in addition include attitudinal/emphatic expressions of agreement or disagreement, such as *Absolutely!*, *I agree!*, *I know!*, *Do you think so?*, or the type of utterance that I refer to as canonical follow-ups, e.g. (*Yes,*) *doesn’t he!* (A-signal). In COLT, it appears to be quite common to use the tag *innit* after a non-factual proposition as a means of appealing to the hearer’s opinion on a topic:

- (43) Richard: Who cares about compatibility if they just [make games]
 Anthony: [See] when the Amiga first came out, five hundred, and
 th= **those old games they’re so shit innit.**
 Richard: Yeah.
 Anthony: They’re rubbish. That’s what these games are like.
 (134602/1: 744)

This type of use especially involves adjectives or nouns that express a qualitative evaluation, and these utterances are often associated with the speaker’s high emotional involvement, e.g. *She looks awful innit?*, *Wicked innit?* *It’s a laugh innit?*, etc. In (43), the speaker is expressing how he feels about some computer games, and the tag *innit* directs the attention towards the hearer’s opinion on the same topic. The proposition is believed to be consistent with the hearer’s view on the topic discussed. The utterance

expresses a presumption of a mutual opinion; hence this example is also compatible with my analysis of *innit* as an A-signal.

Holmes (1995) has pointed out that tags are sometimes used to soften utterances where there may be conflicting views between speaker and hearer, thereby fulfilling a negative politeness function. Judging by the data at hand, it seems that the invariant tag *innit* may serve this function also:

- (44) Dawn: That woman, she's got the other Mothercare top that I'm gonna buy for Romax and Jason for eight ninety nine and she's selling it for one fifty. Isn't that a screw but the only thing is erm she didn't have Romax' size when I went there.
- Grace: What Mothercare was it? What Mothercare?
- Samantha: All I'm looking for [unclear]
- Dawn: [unclear] it's wicked, **there's only one Mothercare innit Grace.**
- Grace: But I mean there's a lot of Mothercares you know Dawn.
- Dawn: Yeah but, look at him, looking like Deacon.
- Grace: Who's Deacon? (134902/12:6)

The extract displays divergent views on the number of Mothercare stores that Dawn could have been referring to in her first utterance. Dawn's second utterance expresses that Grace's question *What Mothercare was it?* is inappropriate, since it implies the existence of more than one Mothercare store. The utterance appears to be aimed at convincing or reminding Grace of this fact. The analysis of *innit* as an A-signal is not as straightforward as in the previous cases. The important thing to notice here is that the proposition expressed does not represent a belief that is shared between speaker and hearer at the moment of speaking. Nevertheless, *innit* achieves an interactional effect which suggests that speaker and hearer share parts of their contextual backgrounds. I wish to argue that it can therefore be considered an A-signal that expresses a presumption as to what beliefs the hearer's contextual background consists of, and that these represent mutual beliefs.

The communicative effect of Dawn's utterance seems to be equivalent to 'You'd have to admit that there is only one Mothercare, Grace'. What are Dawn's reasons for believing that Grace should admit the truth of P? Obviously, she knows enough about what Grace knows to conclude that it is reasonable for Grace to admit the truth of P. Her utterance seems to suggest

that Grace's cognitive environment contains background assumptions that should enable her to acknowledge the propositional meaning of the utterance. Consequently, the new information provided by the proposition expressed is at least compatible with Grace's background assumptions. So it is not the proposition itself that is believed to be shared between speaker and hearer, but the utterance brings to bear other mutual assumptions to the effect that the hearer can accept this proposition as true. In other words, this utterance is also hearer-oriented since it takes into account what assumptions the hearer's contextual environment consists of, and *innit* can be considered an A-signal with S → H orientation. (Incidentally, Dawn does not *succeed* in convincing Grace, which is evident from the way the conversation continues.) The same analysis would apply to the other type of softening tag suggested by Holmes, namely *innit* after an imperative (exemplified and discussed in Subsection 4.2.2.3).

The penultimate category in the survey comprises cases where 'the speaker and hearer know that the speaker's proposition is true, because the proposition involves shared knowledge or experience' (Millar & Brown 1979: 42), but differs from the above cases where the hearer may wish to confirm or corroborate P (cf. (42) and (43)), in that the current type of utterance also conveys that the hearer could not possibly disagree, and because of its hostile or challenging overtones:

- (45) Mother: You know what I found you know you walk all the way round with your friends down the village when you come home.
 Terry: Yeah?
 Mother: When you get down at the other side there's telephone, and I'll come and [pick you up].
 Terry: [What where] the park is?
 Mother: Not where the park, you go down at the village on the way down.
 Terry: Yeah but I'm gonna walk with Ritchie and Andrew up to, bloody, down there. **Remember I'm walking with Ritchie and Andrew innit?**
 Mother: Yeah, and I give you a lift up to here, ⟨unclear⟩. When you get the other side of the park,
 Terry: Yeah. (139502/1: 11)

Terry's utterance is clearly a reminder, and his challenging tone towards his mother is underlined by a louder voice and a higher pitch in the tag-append ed utterance. The purpose of the challenging tag is not to invoke politeness but the opposite, namely to 'aggressively boost the force of a negative speech act' (Holmes 1995: 80). It is clear that this type of tag also expresses that P represents a mutual assumption, but one that may be less salient in the hearer's contextual background, in which case the utterance can be construed as a reminder. Thus, *innit* can again be characterised as an A-signal with S → H orientation. This category sometimes involves analytical or universal truths, and Algeo refers to these tags as 'peremptory' (1988: 182).

Finally, it is evident that *innit* may also serve as a so-called 'aggressive tag', which follows a statement 'whose truth or falseness the addressee could not possibly know' (Algeo 1988: 185).¹³ Aggressive tags are also challenging and impolite, but differ from the peremptory tags, since the proposition of an aggressive tag does not express a mutual belief:

- (46) Michael: So have you got anything new since I've been away?
 Chris: Dunno.
 Michael: Got any new games for your computer?
 Chris: No. **It's fucked innit?** You must have fucked it up.
 Michael: Why what's the matter with it?
 Chris: You know the little box that goes into the back of the telly?
 Michael: Yeah.
 Chris: He pulled the wires out.
 Michael: Who did?
 Chris: Rob
 Michael: Why?
 Chris: He's a prick. (135602/5: 23)

Because Michael has been away, he could not possibly be aware that Chris' computer is 'fucked', and it is obvious that the proposition represents new information to him. Chris' hostility is evident also from his unwillingness to cooperate when responding to Michael's first question, and from the imminent false accusation that follows the tag.¹⁴ In terms of interactional properties, this utterance is similar to *There's only one Mothercare innit Grace* in (44), in that both involve the use of *innit* after a proposition that is not believed to be part of the hearer's contextual background. Again, I wish to argue that, despite the fact that the propositional content represents new information to

the hearer, this type of tag is compatible with my analysis of *innit* as an A-signal. *Innit* in (46) is hearer-oriented and brings to bear contextual assumptions that are shared between speaker and hearer, but these do not include the proposition expressed. The communicative effect of Chris' tag-appended utterance seems to be equivalent to 'It's fucked, and you ought to know!', and, as Algeo puts it, the aggressive tag casts the hearer 'into the role of an ignoramus' (1988: 185). Chris' reasons for suggesting that 'you ought to know' hinge on his knowledge about the background assumptions against which the hearer interprets the utterance. The tag-appended utterance expresses the belief that P is at least compatible with the hearer's contextual background. Like the previous uses of the tag, the utterance is hearer-oriented and brings to bear presumptions as to what assumptions the hearer's cognitive environment consists of. It focuses on background assumptions that are shared by speaker and hearer, and I therefore also characterise this type of tag as an A-signal with $S \rightarrow H$ orientation.

4.2.2.2 *Idiosyncratic functional properties of innit as a tag*

In the previous subsection it was shown that the tag *innit* may serve each of the pragmatic functions that has been attributed to tag questions in general, and that these functions can be viewed as different types of *innit* as an A-signal with $S \rightarrow H$ orientation. The A-signal is an expression of a presumption of common ground and a signal that the proposition expressed, or some associated background assumptions, is mutually manifest to the speaker and the hearer. The current subsection deals with some types of use that were found in the data that go beyond these well-known functions, and I aim to show that these can also be described as A-signals.

The first type of use is fairly trivial and can be dealt with briefly. It is obvious from the data that the tag *innit* can sometimes be used after a proposition that is not endorsed by the hearer and not even by the speaker, because it involves an ironical use:

- (47) Robert: What lesson we got next?
 Mirco: Science.
 Robert: Ah what's that o= what's that one's name we got, teacher?
 Sanjay: Mr <name>
 Robert: Mr <name>, ah. What you studying again Sanjay?
 Mirco: Sexual organs.

- Robert: Oh yeah I I I, **oh yeah I forgot you're a homosexual innit Sanjay**. Sanjay <laughing><name></>
 Sanjay: Yeah.
 Robert: But, cos you're old innit?
 Sanjay: Yeah.
 Mirco: Yeah alright. (133101/1:47)

In this passage it appears that Robert and Mirco are 'taking the mickey' out of their classmate Sanjay (the tone between the speakers is friendly rather than hostile), and it appears that Robert is not committed to the literal truth of P in the tag-appended utterance. Given this interpretation, it is obvious that the use of *innit* cannot be described as a means of seeking verification/confirmation/corroboratorion in the ordinary sense; rather it is a means of getting the hearer to *pretend* to agree (which Robert evidently succeeds in doing). Rather than characterising the tag *innit* as an incentive for the hearer to draw on mutual contextual assumptions in the interpretation of the utterance, it seems a better solution to treat this as a case that involves pretence of shared assumptions, and that represents a mock use of *innit* as an A-signal. This does not appear to be a common use; only the above example was found. Moreover, this example of *innit* does not represent a major divergence from the ordinary canonical tags, since any tag can be used after an ironical statement (cf. *Very funny, isn't it?!*).

A more interesting type of use, and one that appears to be quite common in COLT, is the use of the tag *innit* as a means of appealing to the hearer's imagination. This type of use occurs especially in narratives, where the main function of *innit* seems to be to help the hearer envisage the events described, as in (48), where Josie is describing the behaviour of her two kittens:

- (48) Josie: And then Squeak's so sneaky, I probably told you this, where she gets Nicky and starts cleaning her. Nicky loves it when Squeak cleans her, right, my rats and she gives it <nv>mimicking licking sound</nv> and Nicky's getting all ... [and there's Squeak going]
 Truno: [<nv>laugh</nv>]
 Josie: <nv>mimicking sound effect</nv> in her neck <unclear> and then, and then it's all quiet right. Say you're sleeping in the front room, as soon as you turn the light out and there's no sound <nv>mimicking sound effect</nv> they don't shut up.

I'm sure they pick things up and throw them at each other. I swear they're so loud it's like ... it's like you know when you kick through a big [pile]

Truno: [Yeah.]

Josie: of, big pile of leaves, it's like that. **Trying to sleep through a hurricane innit?** <nv>laugh</nv> It was nasty. It was like that night when I woke up and the hurricane was there, I couldn't turn my lights on or nothing I was shitting myself.

...

Josie: I was sitting in my bedroom cos I didn't, **Sam and Fern weren't there innit?** I was in the bedroom on my own. And I could hear <nv>mimicking sound effect</nv> and I could hear <nv>mimicking sound effect</nv> and I turned the light on and it wouldn't come on! (132708/1: 17 & 21)

In these examples, the proposition modified by *innit* does not represent a mutual belief of the speaker and hearer, and since the narration is entirely Josie's own pursuit, the use of the tag does not involve reduced commitment as to the truth of P. Nevertheless, I wish to argue that *innit* has an interactional effect in this type of use also, since it activates and brings into focus a set of background assumptions that the speaker and hearer share. What the tag does is appeal to the hearer's imagination of the events the speaker is describing. It is as if she is asking 'can you imagine what I'm telling you now'. It appears from the communicative situation in (48) that Josie and Truno share common ground that is associated with the situations rendered in the narrative. (For instance, Truno knows enough about Josie's residence, kittens at play, loud noises, etc, to be able to envisage what Josie is telling him.) The tag *innit* has the interactional effect of indicating that Josie expects Truno to activate such common background assumptions in the interpretation of the utterance. Specifically, Josie believes that Truno's cognitive environment consists of background assumptions which will make the utterance (*it was like*) *trying to sleep through a hurricane* relevant, because they enable Truno to conjure up an image of the scenario of Josie trying to sleep with the noisy kittens frolicking in the background. Similarly, in *I was sitting in my bedroom cos I didn't, Sam and Fern weren't there innit?*, the marker helps Truno to envisage a setting where Josie is alone in her room. The analysis of *innit* as an A-signal with S → H orientation applies to these cases also, because of its hearer-orientation and the fact that it expresses the

speaker's presumption as to what background assumptions the hearer's cognitive environment consists of.

Another, unfortunately more nasty, extract that illustrates this type of use very well is taken from a conversation between the same two speakers, where Josie is rendering what it is like to have a cold, or watching people who have a cold:

- (49) Josie: I hate it when you walk past someone <??>tall</> and they goes <nv>mimicking bringing up phlegm</nv> right in front of you and you sort of give it ... you don't care if he's ten feet tall you just look at him like this, and you see this nasty greeny. Well they got this erm, greenies! Look at my greeny! And they go <nv>mimicking bringing up phlegm</nv> <laughing>I just look at them, I think it's disgusting!</>

...

But, I was walking down <??>the street</> and this Turkish man, scratching his nose and, listen, <nv>mimicking bringing up phlegm and spitting</nv> in front of me, there's me, ah ah what are you doing! He started talking to me <unclear>

Truno: <unclear> [<nv>laugh</nv>]

Josie: [**Through his nose innit?**] Listen, my cousin does, sometimes he goes, watch this ... through his nose. There's this big green thing come out of his nose! He simply went <nv>mimicking sound effect</nv> through his nose there's me wah! **it come out like a bullet innit?** Wisht! Like that.

Truno: And this, this one was hanging <unclear>

Josie: It's nasty and they and they just get it off innit and tie a little knot <unclear>. Cos I hate it when you see someone being sick. (132707/1:69)

What distinguishes the imagination-appealing tag from the well-known tag functions discussed above? This use is clearly not equivalent to the epistemic tags, since it is the speaker who is in a position to vouch for the truth of the proposition expressed. Moreover, it is different from the challenging tags, because the speaker's tone is friendly rather than impolite and there is not felt to be any associated aggression or peremptoriness. It also differs from the softening tag, because it does not involve a speech act that threatens the hearer's face and that is in need of mitigation. The standard type of tags that the imagination-appealing tag resembles most is the facilitative tags (cf.

Romax knows it as well innit and *Those old games, they're so shit innit*). But, importantly, it differs from these in that the imagination-appealing tag raises no expectation that the hearer agrees with or can corroborate the propositional claim, as I argue below. In other words, this type of use does not fit into any of the categories proposed in the previous literature.

In my opinion, the imagination-appealing tag is not a means of seeking corroboration of the propositional content as such; in fact, it is not the propositional content that is at stake in this type of utterance. If anything, tags of this type may be aimed at eliciting corroborative feedback by which the hearer shows that the utterance achieves the image-conjuring effect the speaker intended (but response-elicitation does not seem to be a crucial function, judging by examples (48) and (49)). The function of *innit* is removed from that of evaluating a proposition in terms of its truth; rather the tag appeals to the hearer's cognitive background in more general terms. Support for these claims can be provided by considering the extent to which *innit* can be replaced by other items. Several previous accounts to tags state explicitly that they are equivalent to the interrogatives *don't you think?* or *isn't that so?* (e.g. Quirk et al. 1985; Algeo 1988); this is true of those types of tag discussed in Subsection 4.2.2.1. However, the imagination-appealing tag *innit* cannot be reformulated in this manner, nor can it appropriately be replaced by the canonical form that *innit* would correspond to in standard English:

- (49) a. *It came out like a bullet, **don't you think?** Wisht! Like that.
 b. *It came out like a bullet, **isn't that so?** Wisht! Like that.
 c. ?It came out like a bullet, **didn't it?** Wisht! Like that.

I am not, of course, claiming that (49c) is ungrammatical, only that it is functionally inappropriate as a replacement for *innit*, because the canonical tag *didn't it?* would function as an aggressive tag, it seems. Rather *innit* appears to be functionally much closer to the markers *you know* or *you know what I mean*:¹⁵

- (49) d. It came out like a bullet, **you know**. Wisht! Like that.
 e. It came out like a bullet, **you know what I mean**. Wisht! Like that.

Replacing *innit* by *you know* or *you know what I mean* does not seem to alter the pragmatic meaning of the utterance. I have previously described *you know* as the cardinal device for marking a presumed alignment of contextual assumptions, which corresponds closely to Schourup's description: 'its basic

use amounts to a prediction of common ground' (1985: 109). Rather than being an item for bringing into question the previous proposition in terms of its truth, the tag *innit* is a generalised expression that brings into focus — and possibly also boosts — the common ground of the speaker and hearer. To apply a rather clumsy reformulation, the marker seems to suggest that 'you and I share a great deal of common beliefs and assumptions — so much, in fact, that I can safely assume that you are able to imagine the kind of situation I am describing'. In terms of social meaning and ingroupness, an additional effect of this use may be to promote the solidarity and group identification of the speakers. As regards the tag *innit*, then, the notion of A-signal provides a better description of its pragmatic functions than a description in terms of attempting to seek support/agreement/corroboration of the propositional claim as such, which is clearly not what *innit* does in (48) and (49).

My analysis of *innit* as an imagination-appealing tag is further supported by some examples where this function of *innit* is made more explicit:

- (50) Selassie: anyway can you imagine some little boy fighting, **innit**.
 Elee: yes?
 Selassie: yeah little boys do fight in the wars today, and they're good fighters as well. (137803/9: 277)

In this (unique) case, what is preceding the tag is no definite proposition which can be confirmed or rejected, but the speaker is appealing to the hearer to create an image of a situation where *some little boy (is) fighting*. The imagination-appealing effect is also evident in the following example:

- (51) Imagine that **innit!** It's got a nice flavour to it fishy kind of like.
 (132701/1: 4)

Again, it appears that *innit* can be considered a generalised expression whose function is to assist the hearer in conjuring up an image of what is being described in the narrative, by drawing on the common cognitive background of the speaker and hearer. In sum, the examples discussed in connection with this category have shown that *innit* is not always directed towards the propositional aspects of an utterance but towards background assumptions. Thus, the invariant tag *innit* appears to be more flexible than the canonical tags, not only in terms of syntax but also in terms of pragmatic function. Incidentally, the last two examples also show that *innit* can be tagged onto

different sentence types. This fact is further commented on in Subsection 4.2.2.3.

Finally, I would like to devote attention to a type of use that has only briefly been mentioned in the literature, but that seems highly salient in COLT, namely turn-medial use of the tag in contexts where the speaker appears to have no intention of eliciting a hearer-contribution or terminating the turn:

- (52) Look it's their problem **innit** I mean I just wanna get over these bloody things. (133703/1: 1)
- (53) It's nasty and they and they just get it off **innit** and tie a little knot. It's what I hate when you see someone being sick. They go <nv>mimicking vomiting</nv> (132707/1: 71)
- (54) Kelly's one is like I I only got a glimpse of it but I'm sure it's like Donna's one. Donna's spoilt her hair man! She was so pretty **innit**? She was getting tall nice blue eyes and then she goes and does that. It looks alright but it looked better when it was long. (132707/1: 167)

If we consider the previous literature on tags, the underlying purpose of applying tags is generally described in terms of the elicitation of a contribution from the hearer. According to Algeo, the tag 'asks for and expects to get confirmation of the statement' (1988: 181). Quirk et al. also emphasise the function of tags as a means of 'invit[ing] confirmation of the statement' (1985: 811). Holmes claims that '[t]ag questions are generally aimed at eliciting a response, however minimal, from the addressee' (1982: 43f), and she makes this point even more strongly in the following: 'All tag questions function as devices for eliciting a response from the addressee by virtue of their interrogative form' (1984: 53). However, in the utterances (52)–(54), *innit* occurs in the midst of a rapid flow of speech, without a prosodic pause or any other signal of termination of the turn. It seems that the speaker is not licensing the hearer's contribution in terms of an overt response at the points where *innit* occurs. The claim that a speaker who uses the tag actually attempts to trigger any feedback seems inadequate in the light of examples such as these, and it seems that the function of tags as vehicles for response elicitation may be somewhat over-emphasised. It appears to be quite common, in fact, for the teenagers in COLT to use tags turn-medially and where no response from the hearer is called for.¹⁶

To my knowledge, the only study which describes the type of use illustrated in (52)–(54) is Coates (1989). She considers such ‘mid-utterance’ tags to be ‘facilitative’, a term which is inappropriate, given that ‘[f]acilitative tags are given this name precisely because they are used to facilitate the participation of others; they invite them into the discourse’ (Coates 1989: 115). In my opinion, non-turn-yielding tags are not facilitative in this strict sense. I have suggested an analysis where ‘hearer-orientation’ is meant to signify speaker’s inclination to take into account what contextual assumptions the cognitive environment of the hearer consists of. The A-signal is a means of bringing into focus the common ground that speaker and hearer share, and to set in motion the hearer’s retrieval of background assumptions required for the interpretation of the utterance. The use of *innit* (and other A-signals, e.g. *you know*, *right*, *yeah*) should not always be associated with response elicitation, but rather with the expression of the mutualness of the interlocutors’ contextual assumptions. In terms of the social aspects of conversation, these items may also be means of acknowledging the hearer’s presence and acknowledging his potential participation at the current or later stage in the ongoing conversation. Hence they may contribute to keeping open the discourse channel between interlocutors and to overall politeness and solidarity. The use of *innit* in (52)–(54) seems to indicate that the respective speakers acknowledge these fundamental interactional principles.

In this subsection, I have described some functional aspects of the tag *innit* that diverge from tag questions as described in the previous literature. These aspects can be summarised by means of the survey in Table 3.

4.2.2.3 *Some formal characteristics*

I have described the function of *innit* as a tag, paying special attention to features that diverge from that of the ordinary tag questions. I now wish to focus on some formal features that are worth pointing out, either because they have not been commented on in the previous literature on tags (certain prosodic features), or because they seem idiosyncratic to *innit* as a tag and different from ordinary tag questions (syntactic features).

As regards prosody, the tape recordings reveal that the tag *innit* may sometimes be separated from the preceding linguistic unit by a silent pause:

- (55) Anthony: That’s exactly the same as the five hundred version. **Innit**.
Richard Yeah. (134602/1: 770)

Table 3. Additional functions of *innit* as a tag

Example	Speaker's relation to P (subjective attitude)	Speaker's evaluation of the hearer's relation to P	Label	Content of P
<i>Oh yeah I forgot you're a homosexual innit Sanjay.</i>	S is certain as to the falsity of P.	S is certain that H does not agree but is using <i>innit</i> to force mock-agreement with a proposition not endorsed by either S or H.	ironical tag	fact/opinion
<i>It came out like a bullet innit!</i>	S is certain as to the truth of P.	S does not assume P to be a belief shared by S and H, but assumes it to be compatible with H's contextual background.	imagination-appealing tag	fact/opinion
<i>Look it's their problem innit I mean I just wanna get over these bloody things.</i>	S is certain as to the truth of P.	(Any type described above.) No expectation of a response.	non-turn-yielding tag	fact/opinion

The usual pattern is that the utterance does not contain a pause between the statement and the tag, and thus (55) is exceptional ($n=27$; 8.4%). I would like to suggest that the pause has an effect on the directive illocutionary force of (55). The intervening pause makes the tag seem like an afterthought, and the effect of the pause seems to be to increase the utterance's directive illocutionary force and make it more likely for the hearer to interpret the utterance as a genuine request for a response. I assume that the tag *innit* is more powerful as a response elicitor when it is uttered as an afterthought in the manner suggested in (55).¹⁷

A further prosodic characteristic that emerged was that, occasionally ($n=33$; 10.2%), the tag achieves an emphatic stress that is considerably heavier than that of the nucleus of the clause it is tagged onto (indicated by capitalised transcription):

(56) That's alright then **INNIT** (132705/1: 11)

It seems that this factor may also have a bearing on the illocutionary force of utterances containing the tag *innit*, and emphatic stress on *innit* appears to be another means of intensifying the utterance's directive illocutionary force and to enhance its efficiency as a response elicitor. Finally, it should be pointed out that a preceding silent pause and emphatic stress may in some cases combine.¹⁸

As regards syntactic features, a thing that can be noted is that the tag *innit* can be tagged onto any sentence type:

(57) You only like Cody or Hagar **innit**. (137803/9: 183)

(58) Just wear the wig **innit**. (133203/17: 195)

(59) Can you imagine some little boy fighting, **innit**. (137803/9: 277)

In the great majority of cases, the tag *innit* follows a proposition with a declarative form ($n=316$; 98.1%). This need not, but may, be a syntactically complete unit, for instance an independent clause, as in (57). Equally frequently, *innit* is tagged onto a syntactically reduced segment, for instance a single phrase (*Any time that's convenient to her innit*) or a single lexical item (*Disgusting innit?*) that can be enriched to a complete proposition.

The fact that a tag can be used after an imperative is pointed out in the previous literature (cf. *Open the door, will/won't you?*). Its function in such a context is as a so-called 'persuasive softener' (Quirk et al. 1985: 813); that

is, it has a negative politeness function and is aimed at making the request less abrupt, a function which is compatible with my analysis of *innit* as an A-signal. The speaker believes that speaker and hearer share background assumptions to the effect that both of them consider the action described by the propositional content to be a fair proposal, and *innit* is aimed at bringing these presumed mutual assumptions into focus. However, *innit* only rarely follows an imperative in the COLT data (n=5; 1.6%).

To the best of my knowledge, the use of a canonical tag after an interrogative has not been previously attested. This suggests that the tag *innit* may have an extended distribution compared to the canonical tags. The example above is unique (0.3%) and, as mentioned, it fits into the ‘imagination appealer’ category described in Subsection 4.2.2.2. It is interesting to note that *innit* can appear in such a syntactic context, because this is a feature that it shares with other invariant tags, but, as pointed out, not with the canonical tags; cf. *Can you imagine that eh?/hunh?* vs. **(?)Can you imagine that, can you?*. However, the distribution of the tag *innit* is restricted in that it cannot follow a *wh*-question; cf. **What can you imagine, innit?* vs. *What can you imagine, eh?*.

Finally, the tag *innit* is special in that it occurs as a tag in many contexts where it is very difficult to imagine the use of a corresponding canonical tag, or where a canonical tag would seem awkward (at least in teenage talk). This is suggested by the following list of examples, where I have proposed corresponding canonical forms, and marked these as impossible/improbable (in this variety):

- (60) I might as well go to registration **innit**. (134803/1: 310)
*mightn’t I?
- (61) You must have left that room early **innit**. (134901/1: 85)
?mustn’t you?
- (62) And then I’ll give it to all the other schools as well **innit**.
(137803/9: 68)
?won’t I?
- (63) I can pick up the revs. **Innit**. Pick up the revs. (139506/1: 187)
?can’t I?
- (64) I was talking to you lot earlier on innit. You and Marc **innit**.
(137804/1: 107)
?wasn’t I?

- (65) Josie: How's she gonna cut it off if he's an ice cream salesman?
 Jessica: By lac= licking it **innit**? (132701/20: 157)
 *isn't she?
- (66) Orgady: Going to Golders Green.
 Angela: What time though?
 Orgady: Well any time that's convenient to her **innit**?
 (133203/15: 171)
 *isn't it?/
 *aren't we?

My previous discussion offers explanations for why it is possible to use *innit* but unlikely/impossible to use the canonical tags in these contexts. In some of the above cases, the possibility to use *innit* is due to the fact that *innit* is syntactically invariabilised, and has thereby become a convenient means of avoiding stylistically awkward forms such as *mightn't I?* or *mustn't you?*; cf. (60)–(61). In other cases, it is due to the imagination-appealing function that *innit* may have, by which *innit* is not used as a means of 'asking whether P', but as a means of evoking common ground, and where *innit* is functionally equivalent to *you know what I mean*; cf. (62)–(63). (The proposed canonical realisations do not seem to fit, because they would seem more like aggressive tags; cf. the discussion of example (49) above.) And in yet other cases, the non-exchangeability of *innit* with the canonical tags is due to the fact that *innit* is a generalised corroboration seeker that focuses on common ground in general terms and does therefore not have to be preceded by a full proposition that it expresses agreement with; cf. (64)–(66).

To sum up, the tag *innit* serves important interactional and subjective functions in COLT. Its interactional function amounts to marking the speaker's presumption of shared assumptions. In other words, it is an A-signal with S → H orientation, and is frequently equivalent to *you know (what I mean)*. It may also have a subjective function of expressing reduced commitment. The mutual assumptions brought into focus by the tag may include the proposition expressed, but sometimes it focuses on background assumptions. The tag can also be described as a turn-transitional device, although sometimes it occurs turn-medially where there is no indication that the speaker intends to terminate her turn.

4.2.3 Pragmatic functions of *innit* as a follow-up

In this section I investigate the use of the form *innit* as a follow-up in terms of its interactional and subjective functions:

- (67) Josie: Look, he can't take it because I dumped him.
 Kate: All right I I'm never speaking to you again because, ever since you dumped him <shouting>he's been hanging around with us and he's pissing me off!</>
 Josie: He's so annoying, int he?
 Kate: He is. He thinks he's it!
 Josie: **Innit?** If you touch him, it's, <mimicking>do you mind? Do you mind?</> (132913/1: 22)

Like the tag *innit*, discussed above, the follow-up is a marker of common ground between speaker and hearer, but while the tag signals a presumption of mutual contextual assumptions, the follow-up acknowledges the existence of mutual contextual assumptions. Therefore, I argue, the follow-up *innit*, can be characterised as an A-signal with H → S orientation. The function of the follow-up can also be described in subjective terms as a means of expressing enthusiastic agreement, strong commitment to the truth of a proposition, affective evaluation, etc. Its implications for politeness are also evident; the follow-up can be used to show empathy, active listenership and topical interest, and it reveals that one is not indifferent to the utterance of the previous speaker.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, I am assuming that the follow-up *innit* and the tag *innit* have the same origin; they both derive from an originally third person singular interrogative form *isn't it* (possibly via *ain't it*) which has undergone invariabilisation. Furthermore, an underlying developmental hypothesis of this study is that the follow-up *innit* is an extension of the tag function, hence that it has followed the same trajectory of change as *you know what I mean*. (Sebba 1993). (These hypotheses will be substantiated in Section 4.3.3.)

Just like the invariant tag *innit* can often be replaced by an equivalent canonical tag in standard English, there seems to be a parallel functional equivalence between the follow-up *innit* and the canonical agreement-marking follow-ups. Due to this functional equivalence, it is often possible to replace *innit* with a canonical follow-up of the type suggested in B's response in (68):

- (68) A. John drives slowly.
 B. Yes, **doesn't he?** (Hudson 1975: 20)

Hence, a standard English equivalent to Josie's *innit* in (67) might be (*Yes, doesn't he?*). But the following discussion will make it evident that the follow-up, like the tag *innit*, cannot always be replaced by a canonical equivalent in this manner. This is because *innit* has developed into a generalised expression of common ground that does not necessarily take a specific previous proposition in its scope, but may focus on mutual contextual assumptions more generally.

In the current section I will give an account of the pragmatic functions of the follow-up which is parallel to my treatment of the tag *innit* in the previous section. In Subsection 4.2.3.1, I give a survey of its functions and propose a classification based on subjective and interactional properties of the examples discussed, focusing especially on types of use that diverge from the canonical follow-ups. In Subsection 4.2.3.2, I describe some formal properties that are worth mentioning, concerning the syntactic features of the preceding material.

4.2.3.1 *Functional survey*

For several reasons, the functional classification of *innit* as a follow-up is going to be less complex than the one that was proposed for the tag. Firstly, judging by the COLT data, there is no epistemic modality associated with the follow-up; it does not express any degree of doubt as to the truth of the proposition expressed.¹⁹ Consequently, there is no need to distinguish between types of use according to degree of reduced commitment. Secondly, the follow-up *innit* is invariably pronounced with a falling tone; hence there is no need to distinguish between different illocutionary forces or different speaker attitudes determined by a variable intonation. Thirdly, the follow-up *innit* seems to invariably function as a positive politeness device. I have identified no associated peremptory or aggressive overtones, as was occasionally the case with the tag *innit*. Given these evidently categorical features, the follow-up *innit* has a functional range that is narrower than the tag. The qualitative investigation of my data suggests that the categorisation in Table 4 may be plausible.

As already pointed out, the basic function of the follow-up *innit* is to express agreement with and endorsement of a proposition that is uttered by

Table 4. Basic and marginal functions of *innit* as a follow-up

Example	Speaker's relation to P (subjective attitude)	Speaker's evaluation of the hearer's relation to P	Content of P
H: <i>He thinks he's it!</i> S: <i>Innit.</i>	P is an opinion of S.	S acknowledges that P is an opinion of both H and S.	opinion
H: <i>We're gonna be late for that.</i> S: <i>Innit.</i>	P is a belief of S.	S acknowledges that P is a belief of both H and S.	fact
H: <i>I'm warm all in my bedroom.</i> S: <i>Innit.</i>	P may represent new information to S, but is at least compatible with S's contextual background.	S acknowledges that H and S share enough common ground for S to imagine P.	opinion/fact
H: <i>What are you saying that for?</i> S: <i>Innit.</i>	One of U's implicatures is an opinion of S.	S acknowledges that an implicature of U is an opinion of both H and S.	no definite/complete proposition that <i>innit</i> expresses agreement with, but agrees with an implicature

the previous speaker. This is illustrated in (67) above, where the two speakers seem to share their views on Josie's former boyfriend, who they find very annoying. The follow-up *innit* points back to Kate's proposition *He thinks he's it!*, and signals that this proposition expresses something which Josie also holds to be true. This use of *innit* seems functionally equivalent to expressions like *I agree*, *That's true*, or, if used more emphatically, *Absolutely!* or *Couldn't agree more!*. The follow-up *innit* seems to serve the dual function of expressing that P, as uttered by the previous speaker, represents an opinion held by the current speaker, and at the same time rather emphatically underlining the consensus between the two speakers with respect to the truth of P.

The pragmatic marker can be construed as an expression of the current speaker's recognition of common ground. The follow-up *innit* appears to be a means of bringing the hearer's contextual environment into focus, by expressing that 'you and I are in agreement'. Hence, the follow-up *innit* is hearer-oriented and can be considered an A-signal that has H → S orientation.

In the classification above, I have suggested a distinction between two types of use, according to whether the previous proposition represents a fact or an opinion (on a par with tag questions). The following example is meant to show that the follow-up *innit* can express agreement with a factual proposition:

(69) Lynne: They've still got (??)Comedy(/) Club club there. We're gonna be late for that.

Caroline: **Innit.** (140806/1: 127)

Caroline apparently uses *innit* to express that she believes Lynne's proposition to be true, i.e. that the two will arrive at an event after it has started. Hence, this example also counts as an A-signal with H → S orientation. It is interesting to note that the follow-up *innit* can take a factual proposition in its scope, because this distinguishes *innit* from the canonical follow-ups, as shown in (68) above. Millar & Brown (1979) propose a restriction on the use of the canonical follow-ups, in that they are only appropriate after statements concerning an opinion and not expressions of fact. That they may be right in doing so is clear from the fact that B's response in (68) would not be appropriate after a factual statement like *John drives a Mercedes*. Judging by (69), this restriction does not apply to *innit* as a follow-up.

The third category in my survey can be distinguished from the first two on the grounds that the follow-up *innit* is not used to express agreement with

the content of the previous proposition, since this proposition may actually represent new information to the speaker:

- (70) Josie: yesterday I went to bed at about ten, and you can hear it calling out, crying out there. I have to go to bed early and then Mum gets me up in the morning she's going get up!
First my [alarm clock]
- Truno: [I hate.]
- Josie: goes off
- Truno: That's what I hate!
- Josie: and Mum goes get up! And I I use [I like]
- Truno: [I'm all warm] I, I'm warm all in my [bedroom!]
- Josie: [**Innit**] and, and it's all, like when you get in at night it's
- Truno: It's cold, it's cold!
- Josie: and then [you get in the morning]
- Truno: [Gotta warm it up.]
- Josie: and it's all [warm and, and you get out]
- Truno: [warm <nv>laugh/<nv>]
- Josie: and it's freezing even in summer and you just have to get under them blankets for another five minutes! (132707/1:278)

The speakers obviously share the opinion that getting up in the morning is terrible, and both of them participate in a series of exemplifications of this (e.g. *Mum goes get up!*, *I'm all warm*, *it's freezing*, etc). Truno's proposition *I'm warm all in my bedroom* cannot be construed as a mutual belief, as only Truno himself is in a position to vouch for its truth. It appears to represent new information to Josie. Nevertheless, *innit* seems to express some sort of consensus and mutualness in this example also. Specifically, Josie's *innit* seems to express that the propositional information is compatible with her contextual background and to acknowledge that the two speakers share enough common ground for her to imagine the kind of scenario which Truno is describing. I therefore consider this use of *innit* also as an A-signal with H→S orientation. This example shows that the follow-up *innit* can be used to express a recognition of mutual contextual assumptions that do not include the proposition expressed but include shared background assumptions. It also provides an interesting parallel to the tag *innit*, which was shown to be directed towards mutual background assumptions rather than the proposition expressed in examples like *It came out like a bullet innit?* (cf. (49)). That the role of *innit* is not

simply restricted to a mere acknowledgement of the truth of the previous proposition (as in the two categories previously described) is underlined by the fact that a paraphrase of *innit* with its canonical standard English equivalents or with the expressions *I agree* or *That's true* is inappropriate:

- (70) a. A: I'm warm all in my bedroom.
 B1: *I agree.
 B2: *That's true.
 B3: ?Yes, aren't you?
 B4: ?You are, aren't you?
 B5: I see what you mean.

Rather, the communicative impact of *innit* seems closer to the expression *I see what you mean*. This example shows a crucial difference between the follow-up *innit* and the canonical follow-ups found in standard English. The latter, exemplified here by utterances B3 and B4, seem to be restricted to expressions of acknowledgement of the truth of a proposition, while *innit* can signal the acknowledgement of common ground in terms of the speakers' background assumptions. The current example also shows a very interesting parallel with *innit* as a tag; while the tag was used to *appeal* to the hearer's imagination in examples like *It came out like a bullet innit!*, *innit* as a follow-up can be used to signal that one is indeed able to imagine what was described; i.e. it has an *imagination-recognition* function. These converse functions of *innit* in tag and follow-up position are roughly equivalent to the converse functions provided by the expressions *you know what I mean* and *I see what you mean*.

This imagination-recognition function of the follow-up *innit* can be further exemplified by a case where this function is made more explicit. In (71), the teacher is obviously suspicious as to the two teenage girls' joint explanation for why Caroline is using a tape recorder in school:

- (71) Lynne: No it's for [Mr <name>].
 Caroline: [It's for] yeah
 Lynne: It's their project. About speech therapy.
 Teacher: Who with?
 Caroline: Mr <name>.
 Teacher: Oh. Special thing is it?
 Lynne: [Yeah.]
 Caroline: [Yeah.]

- Teacher: Oh. You're not supposed to be walking round the corridor with it though?
- Caroline: No but we have to recor= record a conversation.
- Lynne: Yeah.
- Caroline: You have to carry on as much time as
- Teacher: Oh you mean you're just looking at various people
- Caroline: No, no no no. We're having a conversation
- Lynne: And we have to tape record it.
- Caroline: Yeah, so
- Teacher: In all this noise?
- Lynne: Yeah. But it it's a microphone.
- Caroline: You have to carry it as often, as often and you're supposed to
- Lynne: Fill up ten tapes of conversation.
- Teacher: So it's an official thing is it?
- Caroline: Yeah.
- Lynne: Yeah there's erm, anoth=, a few other people doing it as well.
- Caroline: Yeah. ... That's what <name> told me. I wish Mr <name> had seen
- Lynne: He thought we were lying. <nv>laugh</nv> Can you imagine, <unclear> [lying?]
- Caroline: **[Innit!** Oh my god] I would just die! (140804/1: 33)

The function of *innit* in this context seems to be to express that Caroline is able to imagine what is suggested by Lynne's (unfortunately partly inaudible) previous utterance. Again, the marker suggests that the two speakers share common ground to the effect that it is indeed possible for Caroline to conjure up such an image, and *innit* emphasises of the degree of common ground between the two speakers.

The final category in the survey represents cases where a speaker uses *innit* to express agreement not with a definite proposition, but with an implicature of the utterance:

- (72) Samantha: Ask her what Martin's baby's name is?
 Dawn: What's Martin's baby's name? Ah?
 Chanade: It's Liam.
 Dawn: What Martin's [baby?]

- Samantha: [What's], what's Stella's, what's Stella's baby's name?
That's the one.
- Dawn: What are you saying that for?!
- Grace: **Innit.**
- Dawn: Oh [that one is yeah.]
- Chanade: [It is Liam.] (135207/1:777)

Dawn's utterance *What are you saying that for!* conveys the implicature that Samantha's question *What's Stella's baby's name?* is for some reason inappropriate. Grace seems to be using *innit* as a means of expressing agreement with this implicature, i.e. to express that she, too, finds Samantha's question unfitting. This type of use is different from the previous categories in that *innit* cannot be appropriately replaced with *I agree* or a canonical follow-up, and not really with the marker *I see what you mean* either:

- (72) a. A: What are you saying that for?
B1: *I agree.
B2: *Yes, aren't you?
B3: *You are, aren't you?
B4: ?I see what you mean.

The reason for this is that there is no definite proposition preceding *innit* that it can be said to express endorsement of (as *wh*-questions encode incomplete propositions), but it endorses an implicature raised by the utterance. The example provides evidence that the follow-up *innit* need not be aimed at evaluating the truth of an expressed proposition, but can be aimed at some higher-level aspect of an utterance. Nevertheless, the marker carries an acknowledgement of mutual contextual assumptions; the mutual beliefs which it seems to be directed towards in this case is the opinion that 'That was a stupid question', or the like. This shows that it is plausible to describe the pragmatic function of the follow-up *innit* in terms of being an expression of a recognition of contextual alignment, rather than an expression of agreement with a proposition. It also shows that as a description of the pragmatic function of the follow-up *innit*, the A-signal need not acknowledge the truth of a proposition, but it always expresses acknowledgement of mutual assumptions.

Finally, it should be pointed out that, as a signal of contextual alignment, *innit* can be applied with varying degrees of strength, ranging from a neutral acceptance of the truth of a previous statement, as in (73), to a highly

enthusiastic expression of shared opinion, as in (74) (this difference in strength is due to prosodic features — pitch level, tone of voice, speed — which are not represented in the orthographic transcription):

- (73) Terry: Guess who asked Sherry out Nick.
 Nick: Hm?
 Terry: Guess who asked Sherry out.
 Nick: Who?
 Terry: Derek.
 Nick: Mhm, he's a dickhead in he?
 Terry: **Innit**. Dad's a pig. (139506/1: 145)
- (74) Josie: I like Jodie Foster. I like her in The Silence of the Lambs.
 <nv>sound effect</nv>
 Truno: Yeah I've I've seen <unclear>
 Josie: Have you seen that?
 Truno: Yeah.
 Josie: Oh it was good. He was good in it too though, listen
 <nv>sound effect</nv>
 Truno: Yeah.
 Josie: Did you see French and Saunders do it?
 Truno: Mm.
 Josie: It was good that.
 Truno: He's he's smart. That man is smart.
 Josie: **Innit**. When he takes the man's face he puts it ah it was so bad! I
 Truno: That was really smart (132707/1: 247)

In (73) Terry uses *innit* to support Nick's negative characterisation of Derek, and he furthers the criticism by stating that (*Derek's*) *dad's a pig*. It is clear that *innit* is an explicit signal that the proposition *he's a dickhead* contains a mutual assumption. We note also that *innit* itself constitutes a response to a tag question in this example. The extract in (74), on the other hand, is taken from a previously quoted conversation between Truno and Josie. When one considers this conversation as a whole it becomes obvious that the two participants are very close friends who share a lot of views on the range of topics discussed. Most of this conversation consists of highly enthusiastic and vivid descriptions, like the extract above, and there is in fact a relatively large number of occurrences of the follow-up *innit* in this conversation.

In (74), where the participants are discussing movies and actors, the degree of consensus and common ground appears to be considerable. In this connection it seems that the role of *innit* goes beyond a mere acknowledgment of the truth of P (*That man is smart*). This is indeed a use of *innit* that is functionally equivalent to *Absolutely!* or *Couldn't agree more!*. Pronounced with great force and enthusiasm, *innit* appears to signal a downright acceptance not just of the proposition expressed, but of a wide range of conceivable associated background assumptions. For instance, *innit* in (74) expresses not only the mutual belief that *That man is smart*, but also the extent and nature of the smartness, the reason why he is smart, what counts as smart and so on. It expresses that 'I readily accept what you're saying, and I'm willing to agree to a (large) set of associated implications of what you said'. *Innit* is a forceful sympathetic expression of a high degree of speaker-hearer alignment. Again, we are faced with a usage where hearer-orientation is combined with subjective meaning, because *innit* is directed towards the hearer's proposition, at the same time underlining the speaker's own enthusiastic attitude and positive evaluation.

The two examples above illustrate a common pattern. *Innit* often precedes material which counts as further support for the claims made in the previous discourse. In (74), Josie's statement *When he takes the man's face he puts it* is an exemplification of the propositional claim that *that man is smart*. The marker serves as a link between arguments which support the same opinion regarding a state of affairs. This applies also to (73), where both the propositions preceding and following *innit* were negative descriptions of Derek. We note, then, that the follow-up *innit* is likely to occur where the speakers make joint conversational efforts in (sometimes enthusiastic) descriptions where they share opinions of the topic discussed, and that the textual potential of this pragmatic marker enables it to link the various arguments together.²⁰

4.2.3.2 *Some formal characteristics*

The examples discussed in the previous subsection have shown that the follow-up *innit* can be considered fairly versatile from a pragmatic point of view, since it can express recognition of mutual assumptions that may, but need not, include the proposition expressed, and since it may be directed towards shared background assumptions or an implicature of the utterance.

In the current subsection, I wish to briefly mention some formal properties that show that the follow-up *innit* is also syntactically versatile.

As regards syntactic features, it can be noted that the follow-up *innit* can be preceded by different sentence types:

- (75) Ken: They're about a year behind us in fashion.
Selum: **Innit** man. (138201/1: 271)
- (76) Saira: Doesn't he look spastic with that pencil behind his ear?
Josie: **Innit**. He looks so dumb. (132911/1: 8)
- (77) Dawn: What are you saying that for?!
Grace: **Innit**. (135207/1: 777)

The fact that *innit* can follow a declarative is trivial, but (76) shows that it can also be used to express agreement with a negative interrogative, which expresses the belief that the positive equivalent (*He looks spastic ...*) is true. Moreover, as already pointed out, the marker can appear after a *wh*-interrogative, which expresses an incomplete proposition; cf. (77). This versatility distinguishes the follow-up *innit* from the canonical follow-ups, in that the latter would not be appropriate in (77) (cf. (72a) above).

Two examples in my data show that there may be variation with respect to *who* uses this marker as an expression of agreement:

- (78) Toby: We we've got some wicked stuff here.
Daniel: Don't come all, <mimicking>don't come fresh man.</>
Alex: No I'd come all over the place personally.
?: <nv>laugh</>
Marc: You're sick Alex.
Daniel: **Innit**.
Marc: <nv>laugh</> (140402/8: 182)
- (79) Keat-Yee: suppose I go to this fella, hi hi I love you okay, and for Wakey I just go oh hi fee fee I never two time you and everything
many: <nv>laugh</nv>
Charitra: But you lied.
Sarah: **Innit**, but you [lied]
Keat-Yee: [wait a minute,] hold on, eh oh I, erm, I never two time you, I <laughing>lied</> (136601/1: 34)

Marc uses a vocative, *Alex*, in (78) to express who his utterance is intended towards. It is interesting to note that it is Daniel, a third party, who expresses agreement by means of *innit*, his utterance corresponding to ‘I agree that Alex is sick’. Similarly, Sarah’s *innit* in (79) expresses agreement with an utterance that is not directed to her. What these utterances reveal is that it is possible to use *innit* by somebody who is not the intended addressee of the previous proposition, but who is a third party of the conversational setting.

To sum up, we have seen that the follow-up *innit* signals contextual alignment and that it has H→S orientation. As an A-signal, it may mark agreement with the proposition of the previous utterance or it may mark the recognition of common ground in more general terms. The follow-up *innit* has been shown not to elicit a response or to indicate reduced commitment, but it may have salient subjective meanings associated with it, such as high involvement, enthusiasm, positive evaluation, etc. Finally, the follow-up *innit* has been shown to be a syntactically flexible item.

4.2.4 *Pragmatic functions of is it as a follow-up*

While the use of *innit* as an invariant tag in London teenage speech is fairly well documented in the literature (cf. 4.1.3), invariant use of the form *is it* in this variety has not been previously attested (with the exception of Andersen 1997a). In the current section, I assess this invariant follow-up from the point of view of its interactional and subjective properties:

- (80) Charlotte: You know what, she’s probably a lesbian.
 Orgady: **Is it?**
 Charlotte: Yeah, I’m really upset I’m, I was nearly crying when
 <name> told me. I couldn’t believe it (133203/15: 404)

This follow-up has attitudinal and interactional properties which differ from those that could be assigned to the follow-up *innit* above; it accompanies a reorganisation of extant cognitive environment rather than serve as an acknowledgement of common ground. The follow-up *is it* serves to mark the previous proposition as new information, and to signal the speaker’s astonishment or disbelief. It is also a sign of active listenership; it can be used to encourage the hearer to go on, and could be paraphrased as ‘Really? Tell me more!’. Hence, *is it* may also contribute to politeness, and to the textuality and coherence of the discourse. With reference to the analytical framework

presented in Section 2.4, I argue that the follow-up marks explicitly the occurrence of an inferential process, specifically that newly acquired information contradicts existing contextual assumptions and possibly leads to the elimination of these. *Is it* can therefore be considered a D-signal that has H → S orientation. In the case of (80), its standard English equivalent would be the canonical follow-up *is she?*

No examples of the follow-up *is it* as an A-signal were identified in the data. In fact, we can categorically rule out the possibility of using the follow-up for expressing contextual alignment ('agreement') because of its positive polarity. According to Hudson, exclamative responses, such as A: *He's bought a big car.* B: *Yes, hasn't he?*, require negative polarity, and the particle *n't* is 'not a marker of negation but of 'exclamation'' (1975: 21). This is also the case in exclamations of the type *Isn't Smith a good lecturer!*, where it is the positive proposition 'Smith is a good lecturer' which is held to be true. The positive interrogative *Is Smith a good lecturer?* could not be an exclamation, and neither could a positive reduced interrogative like *has he?*. My findings regarding *innit* and *is it* are in agreement with Hudson's observations. *Innit* can be an exclamation (in my terminology, an A-signal) because it has derived from a negative verb form and contains (traces of) a negative particle. *Is it* does not contain a negative particle or any historical traces thereof, and cannot be used as an exclamation (A-signal). In other words, the positive polarity of *is it* enforces a 'surprise' reading, as exemplified by (80).²¹

In the current section I give an account of the pragmatic functions of the follow-up *is it* which is parallel to my treatment of the follow-up *innit* in the previous section. In Subsection 4.2.4.1, I give a survey of its functions and propose a classification based on subjective and interactional properties of the examples discussed, drawing mainly on examples where *is it* is used non-paradigmatically. I also briefly discuss the illocutionary force and response elicitation of *is it*.

4.2.4.1 *Functional survey*

It is clear from an example like (80) above that *is it* as a follow-up may be used to ask for verification or further support of the propositional claim, and that it may have a certain directive illocutionary force. Hence, this interrogative structure may give rise to an explicature to the effect that the speaker is asking whether P is (really) the case. However, the felicity conditions

connected with the type of 'asking' which the follow-up represents are different from what applies in ordinary yes/no-questions, in that the thing asked about has already been presented as a true description, and that the only conceivable response to *is it* is a positive one. In terms of subjective meaning, the marker invariably expresses that the previous proposition contains new information that is in some respect incompatible with the contextual assumptions the speaker holds. Nevertheless, we can associate different epistemic attitudes with this marker. In the survey given below, I propose a classification based on two types of attitude, surprise or disbelief. Moreover, different types of use can be distinguished on the grounds of a variable intonation, and I have identified an example that shows that the marker may be directed not towards a complete proposition, but towards a presupposition of the utterance. As regards the content of the proposition expressed, the follow-up seems to invariably take a factual statement in its scope (cf. *I've been there*. B: *Is it?* and A: *We had a barbecue yesterday*. B: *Is it?*). The data do not include examples where *is it* is used to express surprise/disbelief towards an opinion or an attitudinal statement (cf. A: *He's so lovely*. B: *Is it?*), but it seems that we cannot categorically rule out that it may do so. These factors make it possible to single out the types of use as listed in Table 5.

It seems plausible to make a distinction between the use of the invariant follow-up *is it* according to whether the speaker endorses the previous proposition or remains suspicious as to its truth. When an interlocutor is faced with new information that contradicts an already existing belief, she may well be sceptical to the propositional claim and need not necessarily accept the new information as true. Whether elimination occurs depends on the strength of the existing contextual assumptions versus the credibility of the new information. Consequently, the invariant follow-up *is it* is assumed to incorporate both the expression of doubt and surprise, as suggested by the first two categories in Table 5. However, I identified no authentic example where the speaker seems to remain suspicious as to the truth of P. Such an interpretation is nevertheless plausible, for instance, if the follow-up is accompanied by a comment of the type *Are you sure?*, *I don't think so* or the like, as suggested in the invented example in the first category of Table 5.

All the tokens of the invariant follow-up *is it* seem to involve cases where the speaker accepts P as true:

Table 5. Basic and marginal functions of *is it* as a follow-up

Example	Speaker's relation to P (subjective attitude)	Speaker's evaluation of the hearer's relation to P	Content of P
Invented example: H: <i>He'll be back soon, I'm sure.</i> S: <i>↗Is it? I don't think so.</i>	P represents new information to S, and is incompatible with S's contextual background. S remains suspicious as regards P and may ask the hearer to verify P.	S acknowledges that the contextual background of H and S are divergent with respect to P.	fact
H: <i>(I can hear you) ever so slightly.</i> S: <i>↗Is it? Oh maybe the battery's running down.</i>	P represents new information to S, and is incompatible with S's contextual background. S nevertheless acknowledges P.	S acknowledges that the contextual background of H and S are divergent with respect to P.	fact
H: <i>No one could speak French on that French trip.</i> S: <i>↘Is it?</i>	P represents new information to S, and is incompatible with S's contextual background. S nevertheless acknowledges P.	S acknowledges that the contextual background of H and S are divergent with respect to P.	fact
H: <i>Why d'ya leave your music on?</i> S: <i>↘Is it? Turn it off then.</i>	One of U's presuppositions represents new information to S, information which is incompatible with S's contextual background. S nevertheless acknowledges its truth.	S acknowledges that the contextual background of H and S are divergent with respect to an implicature of H's utterance.	no definite/complete proposition that <i>immit</i> expresses agreement with, but agrees with a presupposition of U

- (81) Bonnie: Dan can you hear me?
 Dan: Say it again.
 Bonnie: I said Dan can you hear me.
 Dan: Ever so slightly.
 Cassie: ↗**Is it?** Oh maybe the battery's running down, I mean, can I hear it actually cos the batteries are running down.
 (133905/1: 53)

Cassie does indeed sound surprised to learn that Dan can hear Bonnie only 'ever so slightly' through the headphones. However, her utterance makes it evident that she is ready to accept Dan's proposition as true, since she tries to find an explanation for the fact his proposition represents. The invariant follow-up *is it* serves to signal that Dan's utterance is relevant to Cassie by virtue of contradicting an existing belief of hers (for instance the belief that Dan could hear everyone perfectly through the headphones). In interpreting the utterance, Cassie is forced to reorganise her contextual background so as to be able to acknowledge Dan's statement as true. In addition to its subjective features as a marker of surprise, *is it* is hearer-oriented, in that it signals that the speaker takes into account the contextual backgrounds of both speaker and hearer, indicating that the two sets of background assumptions are not identical. Hence, *is it* marks contextual divergence and can be considered a D-signal that has H→S orientation.

As can be expected, the tone of voice may constrain the interpretation of the follow-up in various ways. Given the general functional properties of tone in polar interrogatives (Stenström 1984), I am assuming that *is it* with a rise signals a more tentative attitude on the part of the speaker as regards the truth of the previous proposition. The expression of outright disbelief in the propositional information appears to be restricted to *is it* with a rising tone. As a consequence, we can expect the sequence *Is it? I don't think so* to be confined to follow-ups with a rising tone, which intuitively seems to be correct:

- (80) a. A: You know what, she's probably a lesbian.
 B1: ↗**Is it?** I don't think so.
 B2: ?↘**Is it?** I don't think so.

However, the current data do not add specific support to this assumption, since, as mentioned, there are no tokens where *is it* signals disbelief and the rejection of P. At any rate, Cassie's utterance in (81) above suggests that a

rising tone does not necessarily imply the expression of disbelief and the rejection of P, as she pronounces the marker with a rise and yet seems to acknowledge the truth of the previous proposition.

The third and fourth categories in the survey include tokens of *is it* that are pronounced with a falling tone. Everything else being equal, the fall seems to suggest that the speaker is more willing to accept the truth of P. In addition, the falling tone may appear less involved and less forceful as a surprise marker than a follow-up with a rising tone:

- (82) Josie: I couldn't speak French if I tried. No one could speak French on that French trip, not even the teachers. That's so stupid innit?
 Truno: \searrow **Is it?**
 Josie: Yeah there was one French teacher who wanted to come they wouldn't let her come they had a Spanish man there, my head of year and another teacher none of them spoke French. (132801/17:28)

I am assuming that Truno's *Is it?* is directed towards the proposition *No one could speak French on that French trip, not even the teachers*, and not towards *That's so stupid*, which is plausible given Josie's affirmative reply. Josie's first utterance contains information that contradicts an assumption held by Truno, namely the assumption that, on an organised school trip to France, somebody, at least the teachers, will be able to communicate in French. The follow-up signals that if Truno is to accept the new information as true, he is forced to reorganise his contextual background. It carries an explicit signal that the set of contextual assumptions held by the two interlocutors are diverging at this point in the discourse. Hence, this example can also be considered a D-signal with H \rightarrow S orientation.

The final category in the functional survey includes a unique case that suggests that the invariant follow-up *is it* can be used to address a presupposition of an utterance, rather than a definite proposition:

- (83) Mother: Why d'ya leave your music on?
 Terry: **Is it?** Turn it off then. Press [the]
 Mother: [No!] I don't know how.
 Terry: There's a big
 Mother: No, I don't know how.
 Terry: It says power. It sa=, the power. (139609/1:66)

In the discourse previous to the extract given here, there is no likely declarative candidate which *is it* may question the truth of, and Terry's *Is it?* appears to be directed towards Mother's utterance *Why d'ya leave your music on?* This utterance encodes the presupposition that '(for some reason) the music is on' (Levinson 1983). Terry's utterance appears to signal surprise at this fact, his utterance being equivalent to *Is it on? I didn't know*. Although there is no complete proposition that the follow-up is directed towards, the same analysis of *is it* as a D-signal with H→S orientation applies.

As supportive evidence for the claim that *is it* always marks divergent contextual assumptions, it can be noted that it readily collocates with other markers which have the same effect as recognition of divergent context, such as *oh* and *really?*, and sometimes, it may be followed by a further, related, question (A: *I've been there*. B: *Is it? What's it like, busted?*).

Finally, it is worth pointing out that, of the four functional categories considered in this chapter, the follow-up *is it* is the item that has the greatest capacity for response elicitation. It elicits a confirmatory response from the hearer (as in (82), for instance) in about a third of the cases. This observation supports my assumption, presented in the introduction to the current subsection, that this follow-up may have a certain directive illocutionary force. Moreover, it is possible to demonstrate a significant correlation between a rising tone and response elicitation; in the cases where the follow-up *is it* is pronounced with a rise, it elicits a response to a significantly higher degree than in the cases where it is pronounced with a fall (significant at $p < 0.0041$; $\chi^2 \geq 8.233$; two-tailed; d.f. = 1).

To sum up, I have analysed the follow-up *is it* as a D-signal with H→S orientation. This follow-up may fairly frequently elicit a response in the form of a re-confirmation of the propositional claim. Hence its directive illocutionary force appears to be greater than that of *inuit* used as a tag or a follow-up. Its pragmatic function has also been described in terms of subjectivity, as a marker of surprise or disbelief. Moreover, the use of this follow-up displays active listenership, and it may serve a function of showing topical interest in what is being talked about and encouraging the other interlocutor to elaborate on a topic.

4.2.5 Pragmatic functions of *is it as a tag*

So far in this chapter, it has been shown that the form *innit* readily occurs as an invariant in both tag and follow-up position, and that the form *is it* is commonly found as an invariant follow-up. Given this, one would analogously expect the fourth possibility, the form *is it* as an invariant tag, to be equally recurrent. This is not the case, however. I have identified only two instances of *is it* which may count as invariant tags, and it is not entirely certain that this analysis is correct in both cases. The one example which with reasonable certainty can be described as an invariant *is it* tag is the following:

- (84) Georgina: Terry I want you to piss off, because I have an exam tomorrow.
 Terry: But I d= I don't care. She don't know what to say.
 <nv>laugh</nv> You're allowed, fuck off you're allowed to say that. You're allowed to swear as much as you like.
 Georgina: Are you.
 Terry: Yeah.
 Georgina: <shouting>Fuck fuck fuck fuck!</> <nv>laugh</nv> <laughing>I'm gonna fail GCSE tomorrow! I'm gonna fail!</>
 Terry: You're gonna fail it **is it**? What's that you're gonna fail and you're gonna cheat, for your [GCSEs]?
 Georgina: [I've only just] said that, [how am I gonna cheat, how am I gonna cheat]
 Terry: [You're gonna cheat.] You've got the answer sheet for this GCSEs exam [<unclear> instead of <unclear>].
 Georgina: [Yeah the exam <unclear>.] Terry go away! (139501/1: 29)

It seems plausible to analyse *it is* as an invariant tag that would correspond to the canonical *are you?* in standard English. We note that both the proposition and the tag have positive polarity. *Is it* is therefore a constant-polarity tag, whose function, according to Quirk et al., may be to 'indicat[e] the speaker's arrival at a conclusion by inference, or by recalling what has already been said', and whose 'tone may sometimes be one of sarcastic suspicion' (1985: 812). In fact, both of these comments seem to describe Terry's use of the tag *is it* in (84) quite well; he is repeating Georgina's proposition and expresses a sceptical attitude towards it. (His scepticism is underlined by the fact that a person who has the answer sheet for an exam is not likely to fail it.)

The other possible candidate for a description as an invariant *is it* tag is the following:

- (85) Jock: [Julian, <reading>don't show this] to Ian because he may not see it as a joke.</> Oh that's it. <reading>From Jim. NB all the words with red underlining have been changed or made up by James <name> and so I am not <laughing>responsible for them</laughing></reading>.
- Julian: That's good.
- Jock: That's quite good actually. Yeah.
- Julian: It's not too bad is it? [Could]
- Jock: [No.]
- Julian: have been a lot worse.
- Jock: It's alright you see. Good letter. ...
- Julian: Can't read that I can't bear that Ian sees this. But it's not my fault.
- Jock: He's gonna throw crap on your head he really is.
- Julian: Why is it me? It's not my fault though is it?
- Jock: I mean you're not exactly getting, dead Jim <unclear> **is it?**
- Julian: <laughing>Yeah that's right.</> He can't dick me.
- Jock: <nv>laugh</nv>
- Julian: <laughing>He's stuffed isn't he mate.</>
- Jock: Yeah he is. (141701/1: 154)

The inaudibility of the preceding material, covering two syllables of speech, makes it difficult to determine *is it*'s status with absolute certainty. Judging by the recording, it does not seem unlikely that *is it* is an invariant tag which refers back to *you're not exactly getting*, and whose canonical equivalent would be *are you*. Given this analysis, the tag *is it* involves reversal of polarity, and its function is to seek support for the preceding proposition, without the sceptical attitude noted in the example above.

As regards the pragmatic function of the tag *is it*, there is little empirical evidence for claiming that it is different from that of tags in general. But it is worth pointing out the significance of the fact that the form *is it* has positive polarity, which distinguishes it from the tag *innit*. Due to this fact, *is it* may affect contextual alignment in one of two ways, either as an A-signal or as a D-signal.

It can be argued that *is it* in *you're not exactly getting ... is it?* in (85) seeks support for the propositional claim and marks a presumption of contextual alignment. Hence it is an A-signal with $S \rightarrow H$ orientation. But the effect on contextual alignment may be the opposite if *is it* is used after a positive statement, as in *You're gonna fail it, is it?* in (84). This utterance is in effect an expression of doubt concerning a proposition stated by a different speaker. The utterance is echoic as it repeats what the previous speaker said (*I'm gonna fail GCSE tomorrow*). The tag suggests that the propositional claim contradicts previously held assumptions. Hence, the tag should be classified as a D-signal whose orientation is $H \rightarrow S$. It is far from certain that the speaker is willing to accept the truth of the echoic proposition. Like the D-signalling follow-up *is it* and markers such as *really?*, the constant-polarity tag may signal surprise or doubt (cf. Houck 1995). The recognition of divergent context does not necessarily lead to the rejection of previously held assumptions. In fact, given its sarcastic overtones, it seems that the constant-polarity tag does not lead to such rejection in (84). The fact that constant-polarity tags can be either A-signals or D-signals, depending on the polarity of the preceding clause, applies, of course, not only to the tag *is it*, but to tags generally. That positive tags have this capacity is corroborated by several studies, among them Cattell (1973), where the subtle difference between what I call the A-signal and the D-signal is described as 'a minimal semantic difference between offering a view as your own, asking for agreement with it, vs. offering a view to which you don't necessarily subscribe, and asking whether the listener agrees with it' (1973: 615).

4.2.6 Summary

Throughout the description of the pragmatic function of *innit* and *is it*, my main concern has been to emphasise their interactional functions as vehicles for the expression of contextual alignment or divergence. I have analysed them according to the proposed analytical categories of A-signals, which mark that mutual assumptions between the interlocutors exist or are presumed to exist, and D-signals, which mark that the two sets of contextual assumptions diverge. Markers with $S \rightarrow H$ orientation express presumption of aligned/divergent contextual assumptions, while those that have $H \rightarrow S$ orientation express the recognition of such. The pragmatic markers that are treated in this chapter have been classified as in Figure 10.

	A-signal marking alignment of contextual assumptions	D-signal marking divergent contextual assumptions
S → H <i>Presumption of</i> contextual alignment/ divergence	– <i>innit</i> /tag – <i>is it</i> /tag (generally)	
H → S <i>Recognition of</i> contextual alignment/ divergence	– <i>innit</i> /follow-up	– <i>is it</i> /follow-up – <i>is it</i> /tag (if constant-polarity tag with sarcastic attitude)

Figure 10.

It is assumed that the alignment/divergence framework can have a wider application and can account for a wide variety of pragmatic markers which are hearer-oriented, including the canonical tags and follow-ups. It remains to be seen how other items like *really*, *right*, *you know* should be analysed within this framework, a task which goes beyond the scope of the current book. I consider A-marking and D-marking to be important interactional aspects of pragmatic meaning, since both represent ways of ‘bringing the hearer into the discourse’, not literally understood (i.e. not understood as triggering a contribution from the hearer or to be turn-yielding), but in a more general sense of taking the contextual background of the conversational partner into consideration and relying on this as a background for interpretation of utterances and as an point of departure for further discourse.

I have previously pointed out that the items *innit* and *is it* are remarkable from a syntactic point of view, because, historically, they consist of the singular neuter pronoun *it* but are used as tags and follow-ups in all grammatical contexts. This feature distinguishes these items from canonical tags and follow-ups. The current section has made it clear that they are also remarkable from the point of view of pragmatic function. Several examples have shown that *innit* and *is it* are not always directed towards the propositional meaning of an utterance but towards information at a higher level, for instance an implicature (A: *What are you saying that for?* B: *Innit.*), or a

presupposition (A: *Why do you leave the music on?* B: *Is it?*), and that they may have imagination-appealing (*Through his nose innit!*) and imagination-recognising (A: *I'm warm all in my bedroom.* B: *Innit.*) functions. The canonical tags and follow-ups have not been investigated in my discussion, but it is my strong impression that they are much less likely to be directed towards higher-level aspects of utterances; their functional properties are more closely linked to the explicit content of the proposition expressed, and they generally involve an evaluation of its truth. Hence the functions of invariant *innit* and *is it* in adolescent conversation seem to go beyond those of ordinary tags and follow-ups of 'asking for confirmation of' or 'expressing agreement with' a propositional claim. (For this reason, my notions of A-signal and D-signal are better fit to capture their functions than labels such as 'agreement seeker' or 'agreement marker'.) This impression is supported by the fact that the canonical paraphrases of *innit/is it* are inappropriate in many cases. Thus, the invariant tags *innit* and *is it* appear to be more flexible than the canonical tags, not only in terms of syntax but also in terms of pragmatic function.

4.3 Variation and language change

The current section aims to explore the COLT data with a view to describing the diachronic development that is reflected in the use of the forms *innit* and *is it* as invariant tags and follow-ups. It will be argued that the theoretical notions provided by the grammaticalisation framework (cf. Hopper & Traugott 1993) prove adequate to account for this development. Specifically, I argue that these pragmatic markers have undergone processes of reanalysis and loss of semantic features, which is demonstrated by their use in non-third person singular contexts. Moreover, their pragmatic functions as markers of contextual alignment and divergence and subjective aspects such as surprise, reduced commitment, etc (as surveyed in the previous section) can be viewed as the results of pragmatic strengthening.

This section also focuses on linguistic and social variation. On a par with much sociolinguistic (especially variationist) literature, it is assumed that diachronic development is reflected in contemporary language, and that various stages of, say, a grammaticalisation cline or a phonological development, may be represented in a synchronic corpus of spoken language.

Variation between different speaker groups may lead to suggestions as to which speaker groups are the promoters of the linguistic development whereby *innit* and *is it* come to be used as invariant tags and follow-ups. Although both of these forms are generally widely used, not all uses can be said to represent language change (to the same extent). For instance, some speakers use the form *innit* as an invariant, others use it only in third person singular contexts, while yet others do not use this form at all (nor the less phonologically reduced variants *ain't it* or *int it*). Similarly, all speakers of English use the form *is it*, but only some use it as an invariant tag or follow-up. Given this, it becomes an important objective to consider social variation as well as linguistic variation in terms of the syntactic-semantic features of the contexts in which these forms occur. Both types of variation are addressed in the current section.

In Section 4.3.1, I investigate the extent to which the distribution of *innit/is it* as invariant tags/follow-ups is constrained by the syntactic-semantic features of the environments in which these forms occur, assuming that a quantitative comparison with canonical tags and follow-ups may reveal whether the invariant forms are favoured in particular syntactic contexts. In Section 4.3.2, I investigate the social distribution of invariant tags and follow-ups. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, an underlying assumption is that this type of use is a characteristic feature of ethnic minority speech. The discussion of social variation is intended to add support to this hypothesis, and to provide information as to which speaker groups are initiating the spread of this feature. The findings of these two sections are meant to underline the developmental survey that is proposed in Section 4.3.3.

4.3.1 *Linguistic distribution of invariant tags and follow-ups*

As regards language variation and change, it should be pointed out initially that the use of *innit* and *is it* as invariant tags and follow-ups in COLT co-occurs with the use of the canonical tags/follow-ups, not just in the corpus as a whole, but also in the language of individual speakers:

- (86) Anthony: You haven't got an Amiga anymore?
 Robert: No, I bought this thing.
 Anthony: Mm. And you can't listen to it **can you**?
 Robert: Why the hell for, I'm watching Home and Away mate.

- many: <nv>laugh</nv>
 Anthony: Why are you excusing her, watching Home and Away?
 You got visitors **innit**.
 Robert: What.
 Anthony: You got visitors.
 Robert: No. (134602/1:913&916)
- (87) Josie: I've signed a receipt. If I break it I have to pay for it.
 Truno: **Is it?**
 Josie: Ten ninety minute tapes! TDK tapes!
 Truno: How many have you got?
 Josie: Ten! ... Ten! That's a one and an O.
 Truno: And everyone gonna listen to it?
 Josie: Yeah. No, not everyone just these students. I think, I don't
 know.
 ...
 Josie: Fire engine, two fire engines went past woo, woo! Cos it
 picks it up twice as loud.
 Truno: **Does it?**
 Josie: Yeah I can hear the, you know the motor bike that just went
 past? (132707/17:4&16)

We note that it is possible for one and the same speaker to choose between a canonical tag (*can you?*) and the invariant tag *innit* as a means of seeking corroboration for a claim, and between a canonical follow-up (*does it?*) and the invariant follow-up *is it* as a means of expressing surprise. It is this type of variation that is the topic of the current section, which involves a statistical comparison between the use of the forms *innit* and *is it* as invariants and the use of the canonical tags and follow-ups in relevant linguistic contexts.²² The aim is to identify syntactic-semantic factors of the previous proposition that may be seen to affect speakers' choice between a canonical tag/follow-up or invariant *innit/is it*. I am considering the teenage corpus as a whole in this section, disregarding differences between speaker groups and individual speakers, as these will be the focus of Section 4.3.2.

What follows, then, is a quantitative investigation of the extent to which the COLT-speakers choose *innit/is it*, or a canonical tag/follow-up in particular grammatical contexts. However, not all four functional categories are equally relevant to this part of my study. I have already pointed out that the existence of an invariant tag *is it* cannot be empirically justified on the basis

of the data investigated, as only two examples were identified (cf. 4.2.3.4). Hence, the use of *is it* as a tag is omitted from the statistical comparison that follows. As regards the other three functional categories, the distribution of canonical versus invariant tags/follow-ups is as in Table 6.

Table 6. Invariant and canonical tags/follow-ups in COLT

Formal and functional features	n	%
<i>Innit</i> as tag	323	26.8
Canonical tags	880	73.2
Σ	1,203	100.0
<i>Innit</i> as follow-up (A-signal)	38	100.0
Canonical follow-ups (A-signal)	0	0.0
Σ	38	100.0
<i>Is it</i> as follow-up (D-signal)	92	32.5
Canonical follow-ups (D-signal)	191	67.5
Σ	283	100.0

To reiterate, the notion of follow-up incorporates two types of interrogative which are pragmatically very different:

- (88) Alister: Jimmy we're being recorded on a linguistics tape.
 Jimmy: **Are we?**
 Alister: Yeah. (142101/10: 142)
- (89) A: Oh it's hot in here Jean isn't it?
 B: Yes **isn't it?** (BDKBF/6759)

The two types of follow-up are associated with diametrically different inferential processes. In (88) the follow-up *are we* indicates the speaker's surprise and that the previous utterance contradicts a previously held assumption of the current speaker. Hence it is classified as a D-signal. In (89) on the other hand, the follow-up *isn't it* is used to express agreement with the previous proposition and to underline the degree of mutual manifestness between the interlocutors, and it is classified as an A-signal. The important thing to observe in this connection is that it is only the former type of canonical follow-up that occurs in COLT, as shown in Table 6. (Example (89) is taken from BNC/London.) The agreement-marking canonical follow-ups

appear to be confined to other varieties of English than London teenage language. (The implications of this finding are discussed in Section 4.3.3) Genuine variation between canonical and invariant forms therefore only applies in two functional categories, namely *innit* as a tag and *is it* as a follow-up. I will therefore restrict the following statistical analysis to these two functional categories; in other words, the type of variation to be quantitatively investigated is that which is illustrated in examples (86)–(87).

In Stenström & Andersen (1996) and Andersen (1997a), it was suggested that *innit*, although frequently used as an invariant tag, was not entirely void of the grammatical features tense, person, number, gender and polarity that characterises its canonical predecessor. Hence, it was argued, the invariabilisation processes cannot be considered completed with respect to this tag, but the data suggested a transitional status between the invariant and canonical categories. These assumptions will be developed further here, and the analysis will be extended to *is it* as an invariant follow-up. The underlying hypothesis is that the transition from canonical to invariant tag/follow-up that *innit* and *is it* are undergoing is a gradual process that may manifest itself in certain syntactic environments before other environments. Forms that are undergoing grammaticalisation are assumed to retain traces of their original semantic features. If this is true of *innit/is it* also, we can expect these forms to be statistically favoured in contexts involving a third person singular neuter pronoun and the verb BE as opposed to other contexts. Moreover, we can expect the distribution of invariant tags and follow-ups to be lexically constrained, as certain verbs, such as *might* and *ought*, are not likely to be used in the negative, and since the invariant forms provide such a handy replacement for syntactically awkward interrogative forms such as *mightn't I* or *oughtn't they*. The aim of the statistical analysis that follows is to discover whether this kind of syntactic-semantic conditioning occurs, or whether the use of invariant *innit/is it* is randomly distributed.

Tags and follow-ups may also, of course, be realised by other invariant forms, such as *eh*, *okay*, *yeah* and *really*. These are disregarded here because they are historically unrelated to the development which I am trying to account for. However, the extent to which they are used may have bearings on the frequency of the forms that this section is aimed at describing (cf. Chapter 6). The current discussion is confined to describing the relation between *innit/is it* and the canonical forms, since the cue to the invariabilisation process lies here.

4.3.1.1 *Methodological issues*

For the purpose of the current quantitative investigation, I had to make a complete survey of all canonical tags and follow-ups in COLT. The interrogatives which can constitute canonical tags or follow-ups consist of an operator (\pm negative particle) and a reference pronoun. The identification of tokens required a large number of computer searches for two-word collocations such as *didn't + he*, *hasn't + they*, *was + I*, etc. This amounted to all possible combinations of a finite realisation of an operator (primary verbs BE, HAVE, DO (present and past tense) and the modal verbs) and a reference pronoun.²³ The searches included potential non-contracted negative tags and follow-ups, such as *did they not* and *might I not*. These are obviously more formal than the contracted equivalents, and are very infrequent in COLT. I only encountered two instances, namely:

- (90) Michael: Oh boy that is, a bit fresh out there eh? **Is it not?**
 Danny: Yeah. (141203/17: 13)
- (91) Jess: Phil's not two-faced.
 Catriona: **Is he not?** (142602/4: 419)

In the search for canonical realisations of tags and follow-ups I also included potential non-standard realisations, such as *weren't he*, *don't she*, *aren't ya?*, *int ya?*, etc.

The second main task required for the current comparison amounted to analysing all instances where the forms *innit* and *is it* were used as tags/follow-ups, and determining what their canonical equivalents would be, i.e. what canonical tag/follow-up they would correspond to in standard English (e.g. in *He's nice innit?*, the tag corresponds to SE *isn't he?*). This task posed some problems which will be described in the following. The investigation only includes those cases of *innit/is it* where the tag/follow-up has an indisputable canonical equivalent. I had to ignore a handful of cases which were indeterminable due to pragmatic or syntactic ambiguity (cf. Langendoen 1970), or because the preceding discourse was inaudible. I also disregarded cases where the canonical equivalents would be unfitting because *innit* and *is it* were directed towards background assumptions and not the proposition expressed (e.g. (49) *Through his nose innit?*; cf. 4.2).

Sometimes when a clause is followed by one of the invariant tags or follow-ups, determining its canonical equivalent was problematic for syntactic reasons. This applied to grammatical contexts containing a verb that can

be either an operator or a main verb, in other words to the semi-auxiliaries HAVE TO, and HAVE GOT TO and possessive (HAVE) GOT, since these are verbs whose negative and interrogative forms can be constructed with or without the dummy operator DO.²⁴ The analysis was based on considerations of how these verbs behave generally in COLT, i.e. whether they tend to trigger DO-support or not, in tags/follow-ups and elsewhere. The semi-auxiliary HAVE TO can theoretically be followed by a tag/follow-up consisting of either HAVE or DO (cf. *I have to go haven't I?/don't I?*). In COLT, however, the use of HAVE TO as an operator is grossly outnumbered by constructions with DO-support, (cf. *You don't have to talk into the microphone*). Given this, I chose to analyse instances of the type *I have to go innit?* as corresponding to the canonical tag *don't I?* rather than *haven't I?*, and follow-ups after HAVE TO were analysed accordingly. As regards the semi-auxiliary HAVE GOT TO, a case could be made for classifying invariant tags *You've gotta hand it in innit?* as corresponding to *don't you* rather than *haven't you*. This is due to occurrences like the following:

- (92) Matthew: I've got to give it back tomorrow.
 Marion: **Do you?** Is that all the time you have? (138604/4: 2)

As regards possessive (HAVE) GOT, as in *You've got a six hundred innit?*, I chose to classify this tag as corresponding to *haven't you* rather than *don't you*, although there is some linguistic evidence that possessive *got* can trigger a follow-up with DO:

- (93) Terry: I've got your letter ain't I?
 Nick: **Did you?**
 Terry: Yeah, last Easter. (139506/11: 155)

4.3.1.2 Linguistic distribution of the invariant tag *innit*

The linguistic data discussed so far have shown that the COLT teenagers can, in a given context, choose between canonical and invariant realisations of tags. The canonical/invariant dichotomy may lead one to believe that the number of potential variants in a given context is restricted to two. This is not the case. Given the number of different realisations that a verb form like *isn't* can have (e.g. *ain't*, *int*, *in*), and given that it is at least theoretically possible to use non-contracted tags, there is in fact a whole continuum of stylistically different tag realisations that can fit a particular context.

For instance, after a statement containing BE with a third person singular masculine subject, the appended tag can theoretically be realised by (at least) as many as seven different forms, two of which count as invariant realisations:

He is coming tomorrow,	is he not?	}	<i>Canonical</i>
	isn't he?		
	ain't he?		
	int he?		
	in he?		
	int it?	}	<i>Invariant</i>
	innit?		

The different forms represent a continuum of reducedness and informality.²⁵ They also differ, presumably, in the degrees to which they are stigmatised; only the top two would be acceptable in standard English. Similarly, after a statement with BE in the past tense, the following continuum of reducedness/informality is plausible:

He was excellent though,	was he not?	}	<i>Canonical</i>
	wasn't he?		
	weren't he?		
	int it?	}	<i>Invariant</i>
	innit?		

Two observations can be extracted from the continua presented above. Firstly, the classification as either canonical or invariant involves grouping together several forms on both sides of the canonical/invariant demarcation line. Secondly, the canonical/invariant distinction is not necessarily co-existent with the distinction between standard and non-standard forms (cf. *He was excellent though, weren't he?*).

I now turn to the task of testing if any particular syntactic contexts favour the use of the invariant tag *innit* as against the canonical form. As regards this distribution, three hypotheses come forth as plausible:

Hypothesis 1: Syntactic-semantic conditioning

The syntactic-semantic features of the preceding statement affect the choice

of the tag *innit* versus the canonical tags. Syntactic-semantic features include person, gender and number of the subject, and polarity, tense and type of verb (BE vs. other). If the grammatical context of a tag question requires a canonical tag which shares one of its syntactic-semantic features with the tag *isn't it*, then an *innit*-realisation is more likely than if the context requires a canonical tag that does not share this feature with *isn't it*, all other things being equal.

Hypothesis 2: Phonological conditioning

Speakers will prefer to use invariant *innit* where the economical gain in terms of production effort is the largest. If the grammatical context of a tag question requires a canonical tag with high phonological complexity (examples being *mustn't they*, *mighn't she*), then the canonical realisation will be dispreferred, and the tag is more likely to be realised as invariant *innit*.

Hypothesis 3: Lexical conditioning

Speakers will prefer to use invariant *innit* where a canonical realisation would require one of the low-frequency modal verbs MAY, MIGHT, MUST, OUGHT, USED, NEED and DARE. If the grammatical context of a tag question requires a canonical tag which contains one of these verbs, then the canonical realisation will be dispreferred, and the tag is more likely to be realised as invariant *innit*.

Why would I assume the distribution of *innit* to be conditioned in the manners suggested? The first hypothesis is deduced from a more general assumption concerning *innit*'s diachrony, namely that the form derives from *isn't it* (possibly via *ain't it*), which originally involves a third person singular neuter subject and a present tense form of BE with negative polarity. It is reasonable to assume that the tag *innit* retains some of the syntactic-semantic features that are inherent in the original tag *isn't it*. This assumption is in keeping with grammaticalisation theory, which claims that '[w]hen a form undergoes grammaticalisation ... some traces of its original lexical meanings tend to adhere to it' (Hopper 1991:22), a phenomenon known as 'persistence'. Hypothesis 1 predicts that *It's nice innit?* (where *innit* 'means' *isn't it*) is more likely than *He's nice innit?* which, in turn, is more likely than *He said so innit?* In the first example, the context requires a canonical tag which shares all the syntactic-semantic features with the original tag *isn't it*. In the second example, *innit* corresponds to the canonical tag *isn't he*. It deviates from the inflectional paradigm in only one respect, because the

pronominal subject that a canonical realisation would require is *he*. Provided that Hypothesis 1 is correct, this use is less likely than the first example. Moreover, *He said so innit?* is assumed to be even less likely, because the canonical equivalent would deviate from the original tag *isn't it* in several respects, namely pronominal subject, type of verb and tense of the verb.

In terms of production effort, it seems that use of invariant tags (and follow-ups) is a much simpler strategy than applying the canonical system of inflections. The invariant tag may be used for reasons of economy and simplicity and may contribute to reduced production effort. It is therefore assumed, as stated in Hypothesis 2, that invariant tags are likely to be used where the economical gain is the largest. After positive statements containing the modal verb MIGHT or MUST, for instance, a canonical tag realisation would be relatively phonologically complex (e.g. *mighn't they*, *mustn't we* as opposed to the phonologically simpler forms *do they* or *can I*) and may be dispreferred for this reason.

Hypothesis 3 predicts that tags are unlikely to be realised canonically in some contexts, due to the fact that such a realisation would involve one of certain low-frequency modal auxiliary verbs. Quirk et al. note that the formation of tag questions with MAY are problematic 'because the abbreviated form *mayn't* is rare (virtually not found in AmE)' (1985: 811, footnote c). I would like to propose that, for London teenagers, similar problems may arise in connection with a class of modal auxiliary verbs, specifically MAY, MIGHT, MUST, OUGHT, USED, NEED and DARE, due to their low overall frequency in adolescent conversation. (All of these verbs have a frequency of less than 200, as opposed to the massively recurrent verbs BE, HAVE, DO, WILL, WOULD, etc.) It is fairly unproblematic for adolescents to tag *innit* onto an utterance containing, for instance, MIGHT or OUGHT (*Might as well go innit*), while canonical tag-realizations such as *mighn't I?* or *ought she?* seem less accessible and less compatible with the informal style of the COLT-conversations. It seems likely that the invariant tag *innit* is common precisely because it provides a handy means of avoiding syntactically awkward forms such as *mighn't I?* or *ought she?*. The invariant tag *innit* seems to fill the syntactic gap created by the rare occurrence of some of these modal verbs, and therefore the proposed lexical conditioning seems intuitively correct.

To sum up, there are three factors which are assumed to contribute positively to the degree to which the form *innit* is used as an invariant tag:

syntactic-semantic closeness to the original tag *isn't it*, and phonological complexity and syntactic markedness of the potential canonical realisations. It must be pointed out, however, that these three factors are not independent of each other; rather they are likely to operate in conjunction. A syntactically awkward canonical tag, such as *mightn't they*, is also phonologically complex and diverges from the original tag *isn't it* in many respects. This state of facts makes it difficult to conclude which of the three factors actually contributes to making *mightn't they* an unlikely tag realisation. It also makes it difficult to evaluate which of the three hypotheses is supported by a particular observation. The following statistical testing will therefore be more devoted to identifying recurrent patterns in the data than postulating reasons for speakers' choice of *innit* as opposed to the canonical tags.

As was shown in Table 6 above, I have identified altogether 1,203 tag questions in COLT, and *innit* accounts for 26.8 per cent of these. The current null hypothesis, then, would be that, in any grammatical context in which tags occur, there is an even distribution of *innit*-tokens as opposed to the canonical realisations of about one in four. As evidence that the *innit*-realisations are not evenly distributed, I present a statistical survey of all the grammatical contexts in which tags occur in Table 7 below.

We have seen that in a given context a speaker can choose between a canonical tag and *innit*. It is possible to rank grammatical environments where tags occur according to the extent to which speakers have chosen the tag *innit* in the particular environments. As an example of the methodology applied, let us consider the environment which is labelled *can't you* in Table 7. This category incorporates two types of tags, notably utterances like (94) and (95).

(94) You can go up to full beam, **can't you?** (141203/1: 144)

(95) You can go with your Mum then, **innit?** (133203/15: 234)

The *can't you*-environment thus incorporates both the canonical tags realised as *can't you* and the invariant tags which occur in a grammatical context which would require the canonical tag realisation *can't you*. There are five instances of the canonical type and three instances of the invariant type in the corpus. On this basis it is possible to calculate the 'invariance ratio' for this particular environment. The invariance ratio signifies the percentage of tags in a particular environment that is realised as *innit*. (The invariance ratio

of the *can't you*-environment is three divided by eight, i.e. 37.5%. The overall invariance ratio is 26.8%; cf. previous paragraph.)

The invariance ratio (*r*) for the various environments where tags occur ranges from 0.0 per cent to 100.0 per cent. For presentational purposes, I have divided the ranking list into four intervals of 25 per cent, keeping the marginal values (0% and 100%) as separate categories, which yields six invariance ratio categories. The results of these statistical operations are presented in Table 7, which lists all the environments where tags occur, and the total number of tags (canonical realisations + invariant *innit*) found in each particular environment (*n*).

Table 7. Invariance ratio (*r*) of the tag *innit* in different environments ($\Sigma n = 1,198$)

Category I: Environments where the tag is *never* realised as *innit*

$r = 0.0\%$

am I (n=5)	did I (n=2)	have I (n=4)	weren't they (n=5)
are they (n=8)	did it (n=1)	have they (n=3)	weren't we (n=4)
are we (n=1)	did she (n=3)	haven't we (n=2)	will he (n=2)
are you (n=25)	did they (n=3)	is he (n=11)	will it (n=2)
can he (n=5)	did we (n=2)	is she (n=6)	will she (n=2)
can I (n=1)	did you (n=11)	mustn't I (n=2)	will they (n=2)
can they (n=1)	do they (n=9)	shall I (n=1)	will you (n=14)
can you (n=8)	do we (n=6)	should I (n=1)	won't he (n=1)
can't he (n=1)	do you (n=34)	should it (n=1)	won't they (n=2)
can't it (n=1)	does he (n=8)	should you (n=1)	would he (n=1)
can't we (n=1)	does it (n=7)	shouldn't I (n=1)	would she (n=1)
could she (n=1)	does she (n=6)	shouldn't she (n=2)	would they (n=1)
couldn't he (n=1)	don't I (n=7)	was he (n=2)	wouldn't it (n=12)
couldn't I (n=1)	had you (n=1)	was it (n=5)	wouldn't she (n=1)
couldn't we (n=2)	hadn't we (n=3)	was she (n=1)	
couldn't you (n=3)	hadn't you (n=1)	wasn't he (n=1)	
did he (n=6)	has he (n=2)	were you (n=2)	

Category II: Environments where the tag is *rarely* realised as *innit*

$0 < r \leq 24.9\%$

aren't I (n=13)	didn't she (n=11)	have you (n=13)	weren't you (n=9)
aren't you (n=40)	don't they (n=19)	haven't you (n=24)	wouldn't you (n=8)
didn't it (n=7)	hasn't he (n=11)	isn't he (n=62)	would you (n=5)
didn't we (n=6)	hasn't she (n=11)	is it (n=64)	

Category III: Environments where the tag is *sometimes* realised as *innit*
 $25.0 \leq r \leq 49.9\%$

aren't they (n=39)	doesn't he (n=17)	haven't they (n=5)	wasn't it (n=35)
can't you (n=8)	doesn't it (n=29)	isn't she (n=21)	wasn't I (n=5)
didn't I (n=12)	do I (n=4)	isn't there (n=11)	won't I (n=5)
didn't you (n=23)	don't you (n=54)	shouldn't it (n=3)	won't it (n=5)
didn't he (n=4)			

Category IV: Environments where the tag is *frequently* realised as *innit*
 $50.0 \leq r \leq 74.9\%$

can't I (n=2)	didn't they (n=2)	hasn't it (n=6)	wasn't she (n=3)
can't she (n=2)	doesn't she (n=8)	has she (n=2)	won't you (n=7)
can't they (n=2)	hadn't I (n=2)	isn't it (n=275)	wouldn't I (n=2)
couldn't she (n=2)	haven't I (n=8)	mightn't she (n=2)	wouldn't they (n=3)

Category V: Environments where the tag is *usually* realised as *innit*
 $75.0 \leq r \leq 99.9\%$

(none)

Category VI

Environments where the tag is *always* realised as *innit*
 $r = 100.0\%$

aren't we (n=2)	mustn't it (n=1)	shouldn't you (n=1)	will we (n=1)
can we (n=1)	mustn't they (n=1)	was I (n=1)	won't she (n=1)
mightn't I (n=3)	mustn't you (n=1)	were they (n=1)	

It is obvious from this table that the distribution of the invariant tag is far from even. In some environments, e.g. the *mightn't I*-environment, the tags are always realised as *innit*, while in other environments, such as *are you*, they never are, even though the number of tags found in that environment may be fairly high (e.g. 25). Table 7 gives the general impression that syntactic-semantic, phonological and lexical factors affect the invariance ratio and the distribution of *innit*-tags in accordance with the three hypotheses above. Generally speaking, Category I (environments where *innit* is never used as a tag) consists predominantly of tags that are disyllabic and that have positive polarity. The other extreme, Category VI, consists mostly of trisyllabic tags with negative polarity. If they were realised canonically, several of the tags in this latter category would require rather complex

realisations such as [m'atnt aɪ] and [m'ʌsnt ðeɪ]. Assuming that these require a slightly greater production effort than the disyllabic [ʔæm aɪ] and [dʔʌz ɪt], for instance, it appears that the distribution of the invariant tag is affected by the phonological complexity that a canonical realisation would require. Similarly, assuming Hypothesis 1, we would expect contexts with *it* as subject to favour the use of *innit*. It is not easy to trace such a tendency on the basis of Table 7, but it should be noticed that the *isn't it*-environment has a ratio of *innit* realisations which is higher than average, namely 51.6 per cent. Moreover, Table 7 gives the impression that tag environments whose subject is *you* favour the canonical realisations, since most of these tag environments are placed in the two lowest categories, I and II. The statistical significance testing that is reported in the following will make these preliminary observations more conspicuous.

I tested a number of semantic and phonological factors, to see if they were in agreement with the three hypotheses stated above. Each factor was submitted to a chi-square test in an SPSS matrix. Table 8 is a survey of factors that were tested.

I do not intend to describe each of the test results in detail, but I will discuss their general implications. However, in order to explain the rationale behind Table 8, I will present the underlying data (cell frequencies) for one factor only, namely polarity.

Table 9. Contingency table of factor polarity

		Tag realisation		
		canonical	<i>innit</i>	Σ
Frequencies:	negative	581/652	306/235	887/887
observed/expected	positive	299/228	12/83	311/311
	Σ	880/880	318/318	1,198/1,198

What Table 9 shows is that, of the 1,198 tags analysed, 887 occur in environments which would normally require the tag to have negative polarity (e.g. *They're nice, aren't they?*), while 311 occur in contexts where the tag would normally have positive polarity (e.g. *They're not bad, are they?*). More importantly, it shows that speakers' choice of *innit* versus the canonical realisations of tags is not evenly distributed in these two sets of environments.

Table 8. Contingency testing of tag *innit* vs. canonical tags

Obs #	variable: value1 vs. value2	Sub-hypothesis (predicted by Hypotheses 1–3)	D.F.	χ^2	$p <$	Result
1	<i>polarity:</i> negative vs. positive	An environment which requires a negative polarity tag favours <i>innit</i> -realisation.	1	110.87	0.0001	Significant
2	<i>subject:</i> <i>it</i> vs. other pronoun	An environment with 3rd p sg neu subject favours <i>innit</i> -realisation.	1	52.04	0.0001	Significant
3	<i>subject:</i> <i>you</i> vs. other pronoun	An environment with 2nd p (sg/pl) subject favours a canonical realisation.	1	23.39	0.0001	Significant
4	<i>tense:</i> present vs. past (primary verbs only)	An environment whose verb is present tense favours <i>innit</i> -realisation.	1	5.87	0.015	Significant
5	<i>verb:</i> BE vs. other verb	An environment whose verb is BE favours <i>innit</i> -realisation.	1	16.19	0.0001	Significant
6	<i>syllables:</i> disyllabic vs. trisyllabic	An environment which requires a trisyllabic tag favours <i>innit</i> -realisation.	1	85.80	0.0001	Significant
7	<i>consonant cluster:</i> 1–4 consonants	The longer the consonant cluster, the more likely with <i>innit</i> -realisation.	3	112.37	0.0001	Significant
8	<i>syntactic inadequacy:</i> yes vs. no	An environment requiring a syntactically awkward tag favours <i>innit</i> -realisation.	1	9.77	0.02	Significant

If they were evenly distributed, we would expect a frequency of *innit*-tags after statements like *They're not bad* to be 83 (cf. expected frequency of *innit*; positive), but the observed frequency is no more than 12. There is generally a substantial difference between observed and expected frequencies.

This yields a chi-square value for this variable which is as high as 110.87 (cf. first row of Table 8), far above the critical value of 3.84. There is thus a noticeable association between tag contexts which require a negative polarity tag and the use of invariant *innit*, and this association is significant at the probability level of $p < 0.0001$. Put differently, there is a significant tendency for speakers to use *innit* in contexts whose canonical equivalent would be a negative polarity tag; i.e. utterances like *They're nice innit?* occur commonly. Analogously, there is a significant tendency for speakers not to use *innit* if the canonical equivalent would be positive; i.e. utterances like *They're not bad innit?* are statistically disfavoured. Hence, the statistical testing of the semantic factor polarity supports Hypothesis 1. These statistical results are meant to be observable from the first row of Table 8. The descriptions given in the column 'Sub-hypothesis' in Table 8 is a specification of what we would predict, assuming that Hypotheses 1–3 above are correct. 'Sub-hypothesis' is not to be confused with the null-hypothesis, which predicts exactly the opposite, namely that polarity and choice of tag are independent characteristics.

The other semantic factors tested also support Hypothesis 1. In the tag environments that contain a third person singular neuter subject, speakers use *innit* to a significantly higher degree than in environments that have some other subject. In other words, there is a significant tendency for speakers to use *innit* in contexts whose canonical equivalent would be a tag containing *it*; i.e. utterances like *It's nice innit?* occur commonly. And there is a significant tendency for speakers not to use *innit* if the canonical equivalent contains a different pronominal subject; i.e. utterances like *He's nice innit?* are less common, as was predicted by Hypothesis 1.

The subject of the preceding clause has another effect on the distribution, in that subjects that refer to or include the hearer (*you/sg* or *you/pl*) tend not to trigger the tag *innit* but rather trigger the use of a canonical tag. This is seen from Observation 3 in Table 8. In other words, utterances of the type *You go there innit?* are significantly less common than those of the type *She goes there innit?*. This is not directly predicted by any of the three hypotheses, but is nevertheless interesting. It suggests that speakers tend to make explicit that the intended subject referent of the tag includes the hearer. The canonical tags, like *don't you*, provide a linguistic means to explicitly mention the hearer, while the tag *innit* does not. This observed tendency also suggests that variation between use of canonical and invariant tags may be

regarded as a linguistic resource which can increase or decrease explicitness and clarity whenever they are required.

The next semantic factor, tense, also supports Hypothesis 1. The hypothesis predicts that *innit*-realisations are more likely in environments containing a present tense verb than after past tense verbs. Observation 4 shows that there is indeed such a tendency and that this result is statistically significant. (This test was only applied to operators with morphologically distinct past and present tense forms, i.e. the primary verbs BE, HAVE and DO.) Hence, *innit* in environments like *She gives it to him innit?* are significantly more common than those in environments such as *She gave it to him innit?*

The final semantic factor that was tested was whether the tag occurs in a grammatical environment that contains a form of BE or another verb. Again, the test result supports Hypothesis 1; *innit* is significantly more common in environments containing BE. Hence, utterances of the type *She was nice innit?* are more common than those of the type *She would go innit?*. In sum, there is strong empirical evidence for the claim that the syntactic-semantic features of the preceding environment constrain the distribution of the invariant tag *innit*, in the manner proposed by Hypothesis 1.

Two phonological features were tested, and both tests yielded significant results that support Hypothesis 2. For each environment in which tags occur, it is possible to measure phonological complexity on the basis of the phonological features that a canonical realisation of the tag in such an environment would require. Phonological complexity can be measured in terms of the number of syllables and length of the medial consonant cluster of the tag. For instance, the proposition *You couldn't resist it* would require a canonical realisation *could you*, which is disyllabic and contains a medial consonant cluster of two consonants; cf. [k'ʊd ju:] (i.e. the consonant cluster consists of [d] + [j]). On the other hand, the proposition *You should go* would require a canonical realisation which is trisyllabic and contains a cluster of four consonants; cf. [ʃ'ʊdnt ju:]. I assume that trisyllabic tags require greater production effort than those that are disyllabic, and that the longer consonant cluster requires greater production effort than the shorter. Hence, the tag *shouldn't you* is considered more phonologically complex than *could you*.

As seen from Observation 6 in Table 8, there is a significant correlation between the use of *innit* and the number of syllables that the canonical realisation would require, as was predicted by Hypothesis 2. Tag environments which require a trisyllabic canonical realisation favour the use of *innit*

to a significant degree. Hence, there is a tendency for speakers to use *innit* as a substitute for the trisyllabic canonical tags, but not as a substitute for disyllabic canonical tags to the same degree.

The consonant cluster factor is worth special attention. Unlike the other factors tested, the possible values that can be assigned to it does not constitute a binary set of mutually exclusive categories, but a scale of four consecutive categories. In other words, this variable incorporates interval data and not, as the other variables, nominal data.²⁶ The scale ranges from one to four consonants. It should be noted that the lowest value on this scale includes two types of environments, tag environments that do not contain a medial consonant cluster, but either a single consonant (e.g. *am I?* [ˈæm aɪ]) or a vowel (*do I?* [dʰu: aɪ]). These have been grouped together because their phonological complexity is, arguably, approximately equal. (Strictly speaking, these tags do not involve a consonant ‘cluster’, since they do not involve more than one consonant.) We note from Observation 7 in Table 8 that there is a significant correlation between the number of syllables that a canonical realisation would require and the likelihood of an *innit*-realisation. The longer the consonant cluster, the more likely an *innit*-realisation. Hence, there are good empirical grounds for claiming that the phonological features of the canonical realisation and the extent to which speakers choose *innit* are associated, in the manner which was predicted by Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 concerns lexical conditioning, and the associated test result is presented as Observation 8 of Table 8. This hypothesis arises from the observation that a canonical tag after, for instance, *She might wear her shorts thing (mightn't she)* intuitively seems more awkward and less likely than after *She goes there every week (doesn't she)*. The difference between these two environments cannot be explained with reference to the phonological complexity of the canonical tag, because both tags are trisyllabic and contain a four-consonant cluster; cf. [dʰʌzntʃi:] and [mʰɑ:ntntʃi:]; hence they have the same complexity, as defined by my criteria. In the context of everyday teenage talk, only the tag realisation with MIGHT seems unfitting. This shows that the analysis of variation between the use of *innit* and the canonical tags should be extended to include some sort of measurement of the inadequacy of certain canonical tags. But ‘inadequacy’ is difficult to quantify and measure, and the analysis of this factor necessarily involves a certain degree of subjectivity on the part of the analyst. I have suggested that certain modal auxiliary verbs are unlikely to trigger a canonical tag, due to the ‘syntactic

awkwardness' of their interrogative forms. This applies to the modal verbs MAY, MIGHT, MUST, OUGHT, USED, NEED and DARE, which are generally relatively infrequent and whose negative interrogative forms seem particularly unfit for informal conversation. I therefore classified each tag environment according to whether or not a canonically realised tag in that environment would require one of these modal verbs. Observation 8 of Table 8 shows that there is a significant difference between those tag environments where a canonical realisation would contain one of the low-frequency modal verbs and those that would not, with respect to the extent to which they actually trigger canonical realisations or *innit*-realisations. There is thus a significant tendency for speakers to apply invariant *innit* in contexts where the canonical realisation would be syntactically awkward, as was predicted by Hypothesis 3. Specifically, the canonical tags *mightn't I*, *mustn't it*, *mustn't they* and *mustn't you* never occur in COLT, but the tags in these environments are always realised as invariant *innit*. It is possible that some of these environments categorically require an invariant realisation, but the number of tokens is really too small to decide. At any rate, it appears that invariant *innit* is a useful resource because it fills a syntactic gap created by the use of certain low-frequency modal verbs.

4.3.1.3 Linguistic distribution of *is it* as follow-up

In the current subsection, I compare statistically the use of *is it* as a follow-up with the use of canonical follow-ups (D-signals). As with *innit* above, the method will involve calculation of invariance ratio for the different environments in which follow-ups occur, and testing of whether syntactic-semantic, phonological or lexical factors constrain the distribution of the invariant follow-up *is it* (96a) versus the alternative canonical follow-ups, such as (96b):

- (96) a. Josie: If I break it I have to pay for it.
 Truno: **Is it?** (132707/17: 3)
- b. Josie: If I break it I have to pay for it.
 Truno: **Do you?**

When considering variation of this kind, we have to take notice of the fact that in one particular environment, the two variants collapse:

- (97) Christie: This is the important thing, the popcorn's cheap.
 Maggie: **Is it?** (137201/16: 104)

In the *is it*-environment, exemplified by (97), there is no available choice between a standard and a non-standard form. Since my objective here is to test whether syntactic-semantic, phonological or lexical factors constrain the distribution of one realisation as opposed to another realisation, the testing must be confined to those cases where genuine variation is possible. The set of syntactic environments where variation between invariant *is it* and a canonical follow-up is possible does not include the *is it*-environment itself, and cases like (97) were therefore excluded from the statistics.

In keeping with grammaticalisation theory, I am assuming that the follow-up retains some of the syntactic-semantic features that are inherent in the original follow-up *is it*. Compared to the tag *innit*, the three distributional hypotheses must be reformulated, but, in principle, the same conditions are expected to apply; the more a follow-up has in common with the original follow-up *is it*, the more likely it is to be realised as *is it*, and the more phonologically complex or syntactically awkward a canonical realisation would be, the more likely the follow-up is to be realised as *is it*:

Hypothesis 4: Syntactic-semantic conditioning

The syntactic-semantic features of the preceding statement (i.e. the grammatical context) affect the choice of the follow-up *is it* versus the canonical follow-ups. Syntactic-semantic features include person, gender and number of the subject and polarity, tense and type of verb (BE vs. other). If the grammatical context of a follow-up requires a canonical follow-up which shares one of its syntactic-semantic features with the follow-up *is it*, then an *is it*-realisation is more likely than if the context requires a canonical follow-up that does not share this feature with *is it*, all other things being equal.

Hypothesis 5: Phonological conditioning

Speakers will prefer to use invariant *is it* where the economical gain in terms of production effort is the largest. If the grammatical context of a follow-up requires a canonical follow-up with high phonological complexity (examples being *mustn't they*, *mightn't she*), then the canonical realisation will be dispreferred, and the follow-up is more likely to be realised as invariant *is it*.

Hypothesis 6: Lexical conditioning

Speakers will prefer to use invariant *is it* where a canonical realisation would require one of the low-frequency modal verbs MAY, MIGHT, MUST, OUGHT, USED, NEED and DARE. If the grammatical context of a follow-up requires a canonical follow-up which contains one of these verbs, then the canonical

Table 10. Invariance ratio (r) of the follow-up *is it* in different environments ($\Sigma n = 231$)

Category I: Environments where the follow-up is *never* realised as *is it*
 $r = 0.0\%$

am I (n=2)	didn't you (n=1)	has she (n=1)	will it (n=1)
are we (n=1)	do I (n=2)	have we (n=1)	will we (n=1)
can they (n=1)	do we (n=1)	isn't he (n=1)	will you (n=2)
did I (n=2)	does he (n=6)	was it (n=6)	would you (n=1)
did it (n=1)	does it (n=4)	was she (n=1)	wouldn't she (n=1)
did they (n=2)	doesn't she (n=2)	were they (n=1)	wouldn't you (n=3)
didn't he (n=1)			

Category II: Environments where the follow-up is *rarely* realised as *is it*
 $0 < r \leq 24.9\%$

are they (n=11)	did you (n=19)	has he (n=9)	have you (n=13)
are you (n=20)	do you (n=18)	has it (n=6)	is she (n=13)
did he (n=22)	does she (n=5)		

Category III: Environments where the follow-up is *sometimes* realised as *is it*
 $25.0 \leq r \leq 49.9\%$

can you (n=3)	do they (n=7)	don't you (n=5)	haven't you (n=3)
did she (n=15)	don't they (n=4)		

Category IV: Environments where the follow-up is *frequently* realised as *is it*
 $50.0 \leq r \leq 74.9\%$

have they (n=4)	is he (n=4)	was he (n=2)
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Category V: Environments where the follow-up is *usually* realised as *is it*
 $75.0 \leq r \leq 99.9\%$

(none)

Category VI: Environments where the follow-up is *always* realised as *is it*
 $r = 100.0\%$

can't she (n=1)	couldn't they (n=1)
-----------------	---------------------

realisation will be dispreferred, and the follow-up is more likely to be realised as invariant *is it*.

In actual fact, the invariant follow-up *is it* is outnumbered by the canonical follow-ups in COLT. The overall invariance ratio for this functional

category turns out to be no more than 17.3 per cent, which is lower than the ratio for the tag *innit* (26.4%). A survey of the follow-ups that occur is given in Table 10, where 'n' refers to the total number of realisations (canonical and invariant) in a particular environment.

Due to the low number of tokens of *is it* as an invariant follow-up (48 tokens of non-paradigmatic use), it is not possible to point towards systematicity in its distribution. Table 10 shows that in most environments the preferred (and only) type of realisation is canonical and that most follow-up environments are located in the two groups where we find the lowest invariance ratio. Only two environments have an invariance ratio of more than 75 per cent, the *can't she*-environment and the *couldn't they*-environment, but these are only represented by one token each. We also note that no follow-ups, canonical or invariant, occurred in environments where the canonical realisation would be syntactically awkward (e.g. *mightn't I*).

These preliminary observations are backed up by the results of the statistical significance testing that was carried out. As with *innit* as a tag, I tested the set of syntactic-semantic, phonological and lexical factors discussed above. But this time, the tests yielded the opposite result; that is, it was not possible to identify any systematic correlation between a particular feature and a particular follow-up realisation. None of the tests yielded a chi-square value above the critical level of significance. Hence, there is not empirical evidence within the COLT corpus to argue that any particular environment favours the use of the invariant *is it* as opposed to the canonical follow-ups, but a larger corpus might render this situation differently.

4.3.1.4 Summary

In this section, I have tested whether the distribution of invariant tags and follow-ups is affected by the linguistic environment in which they occur. The purpose of this testing has been to assess to what extent the four types of use have undergone invariabilisation and whether the invariant forms are about to replace the canonical tags and follow-ups in London teenage language. *Is it* as a tag has not undergone invariabilisation to any noticeable extent; only two examples were found. *Innit* is commonly used as a follow-up that signals contextual alignment, but it cannot justifiably be construed as an invariant counterpart to canonical A-marking follow-ups (A: *It's hot in here*. B: *Isn't it!*), since the latter type is non-existent in COLT. Consequently, the variationist comparison was not applied to these two functional categories.

As for the other two functional categories, the items considered can be said to have undergone invariabilisation to different degrees.

Innit as a tag yielded an overall invariance ratio of 26.4 per cent. The statistical analysis showed that the distribution of *innit* was not random, but appeared to be systematically influenced by the syntactic-semantic properties of the previous proposition and the phonological and lexical properties that a canonical realisation would require. The implications of these findings are the topic of Section 4.3.3. I take the data as evidence that the form *innit* is in a state of flux; it shares characteristics with both invariant and canonical tag questions (cf. Stenström & Andersen 1996). The grammatical conditioning that has been demonstrated here shows that *innit* provides a good example of persistence of the semantic features of forms undergoing grammaticalisation (cf. Hopper 1991; Hopper & Traugott 1993).

Is it occurs as a D-marking follow-up that shows some signs of invariabilisation, yielding an overall invariance ratio of 17.3 per cent. It was also shown that the distribution of invariant *is it* was not affected by any of the factors tested, but appeared to be random.

4.3.2 *Social variation*

In Section 4.3.1, I considered linguistic variation in the distribution of invariant tags and follow-ups in the COLT corpus as a whole. The objective of the current section is to describe social variation in the use of these items, by comparing various speaker groups in COLT. On the basis of this part of the investigation, and on the basis of the constraints outlined in the previous section, I will assess the development and current status of *innit* and *is it* in Section 4.3.3.

The use of *innit* and *is it* as invariant tags and follow ups is clearly a non-standard feature, whose social distribution can be expected to vary according to a number of non-linguistic factors such as age, social class and gender. The purpose of the current section is to identify those non-linguistic factors that seem to have a bearing on the distribution. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, several studies have shown that multilingualism provides particularly good conditions for the development of invariant tags from originally third person singular neuter forms with BE. Hewitt argues that the tag *innit* has ‘made the move from creole into the local vernacular, probably via the London English of black adolescents’ (1986: 132).

The COLT data can be expected to corroborate this proposed development, and it can be expected that invariant tags and follow-ups occur predominantly in ethnic minority speech. The current part of my investigation relies on the basic assumptions that *innit*'s functional shift from tag to follow-up, as well as the use of *is it* as invariant follow-up, also have their origins in ethnic minority speech. Identification of variation along various lines will provide indications as to which speaker groups are the instigators of this type of change.

Besides ethnicity, several other non-linguistic factors are assumed to be relevant to the social distribution of *innit* and *is it*. As regards age differences, I have already shown that the invariant tags and follow-ups were not found in the adult reference material (cf. 4.1.2). In the current section, I assess the age parameter in more detail by comparing different age groups within COLT. I will also assess to what extent gender, social class and geographical location are factors of importance.

As in the previous section, the applied method involves statistical testing of significance by means of an SPSS matrix. The matrix includes all occurrences of *innit*, but only those examples of *is it* where it is used non-paradigmatically. Hence, the types of use as listed in Figure 11 are distinguished in the current part of my study.

Category I	Paradigmatic use of <i>innit</i> as tag	<i>It's great innit?</i>
Category II	Non-paradigmatic use of <i>innit</i> as tag	<i>They're great innit?</i>
Category III	Use of <i>innit</i> as invariant follow-up	A: <i>He thinks he's it.</i> B: <i>Innit!</i>
Category IV	Use of <i>is it</i> as invariant follow-up	A: <i>I have to pay for it.</i> B: <i>Is it?</i>

Figure 11.

The examples were classified with respect to the social factors mentioned, and each factor was submitted to a chi-square goodness of fit test. In the following, I describe each of the non-linguistic factors in turn.

4.3.2.1 Gender

It is interesting to see whether the differences between the genders reported in previous studies of tag questions are reflected in the use of invariant tags and follow-ups in teenage talk (e.g. Lakoff 1973; Holmes 1984, 1995). For example, Holmes claims that 'in ostensibly equal encounters women tend to put considerably more effort than men into maintaining and facilitating

conversation and discussion. Women ... generally do the lion's share of the conversational 'work' (1984: 55f). Traditionally, it has been assumed that tag questions are a feature of female speech (Lakoff 1973), but more recent accounts have shown that the picture is more complex. Although groundbreaking, Lakoff has been criticised on the grounds that her investigation focused on tag questions as a linguistic form without taking functional differences and contextual factors into account (e.g. Holmes 1984, 1995; Cameron et al. 1989; Coates 1989). As described in Section 4.2, the invariant tags and follow-ups considered in this chapter also contribute to the facilitation of talk and to conversational cooperation and politeness, *innit* as an expression of the mutualness between the interlocutors and as a means of inviting the hearer into the discourse, and *is it* as a sign of active listenership and as an invitation for the other speaker to elaborate on a topic. Against this background, it is worth considering whether gender differences affect the distribution of these pragmatic markers:²⁷

Table 11. Distribution of *innit* and *is it* according to speakers' gender

Gender	n	%	per 1,000 words	chi-square test
male	184	45.2	0.798	$\chi^2 \geq 7.131$
female	223	54.8	1.040	d.f. = 1
Σ	407	100.0		Significant at $p < 0.008$

We note from Table 11 that there is a significant difference between the genders as regards the use of invariant tags and follow-ups in COLT; the female speakers use invariant tags and follow-ups to a higher degree than the male speakers. It is possible that this difference can be seen as an indication that girls are more inclined to cooperative and polite linguistic behaviour than boys, hence that females start doing 'the lion's share of the conversational 'work'' as early as adolescence. However, a quantitative investigation of a larger set of politeness features would be required to add support to this hypothesis. On another interpretation, the above data could be seen as an indication that it is the female speakers who are in the forefront of the spread of invariant tags and follow-ups.

Variation in the use of these items can be described in more detail if we single out the four subtypes of non-standard use that are incorporated in

Table 11, i.e. Categories I-IV (cf. survey above). The notable differences can be visualised as in Figure 12.

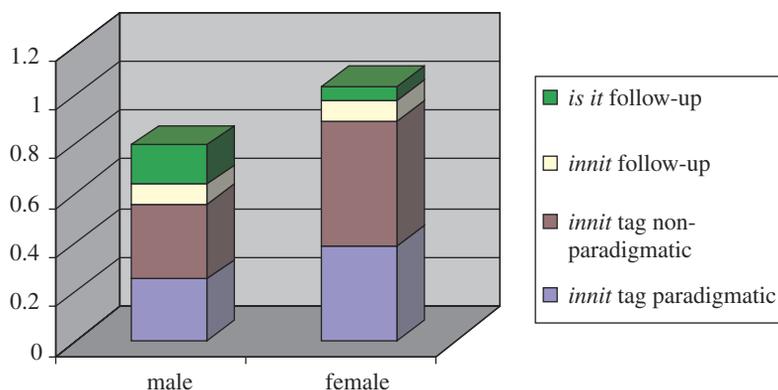


Figure 12. *innit/is it* by gender (frequency per thousand words)

The individual types of use differ with respect to gender variation. The girls use the tag *innit* to a significantly higher degree than the boys, in both the paradigmatic (male: $n = 58$; female: $n = 83$; significant at $p < 0.011$) and non-paradigmatic (male: $n = 70$; female: $n = 109$; significant at $p < 0.001$) use. The distribution of *is it* as a follow-up shows the opposite pattern; the male speakers use invariant *is it* to a significantly higher degree than the females (male: $n = 37$; female: $n = 13$; significant at $p < 0.002$). As regards the follow-up *innit*, the distribution is approximately equal, and no significant difference was found. All in all, the statistics suggest that the difference between the genders that is reported in Table 11 is due to a slight female predominance in the use of *innit* as a tag. However, the statistics do not give conspicuous evidence that the invariabilisation process must be attributed to one of the genders, since male users constitute such a large minority, and account for more than 45 per cent of the total.

4.3.2.2 Age

The use of invariant tags and follow-ups has already been shown to be primarily an adolescent phenomenon; cf. comparison of COLT and BNC/London in Section 4.1.2. A further investigation of the age variable in the current

subsection is meant to identify in more detail which groups in the teenage corpus use these pragmatic markers the most. To reiterate what was said in Section 3.2.1, I operate with six different age groups: preadolescence (0–9), early adolescence (10–13), middle adolescence (14–16), late adolescence (17–19), young adults (20–29) and older adults (30+). The grouping is first of all convenient because it avoids very low cell frequencies and unreliable test results. The preadolescent group contributed no examples that were relevant to the discussion of invariant tags and follow-ups. The distribution of invariant tags and follow-ups across the other age groups is as in Table 12.

Table 12. Distribution of *innit* and *is it* according to speakers' age

age group	n	%	per 1,000 words	chi-square test
Early adolescence (10–13)	96	25.2	0.995	
Middle adolescence (14–16)	238	62.5	0.989	
Late adolescence (17–19)	41	10.8	1.116	$\chi^2 \geq 16.921$
Young adult (20–29)	2	0.5	1.757	d.f. = 4
Older adult (30+)	4	1.0	0.173	Significant at
Σ	381	100.0		$p < 0.002$

We note from the table that there is a remarkably similar distribution of invariant tags and follow-ups across the three adolescent age groups (10–19), i.e. about one token per thousand words. The young adult group has a higher relative frequency of use (1.75 per 1,000 words), but this amounts to no more than two tokens. Due to the very small portion of text that stems from this group (1,138 words), we can hardly claim that the high relative frequency is representative of this age group as a whole. (The two examples are uttered by the brothers of two of the recruits, aged 20 and 21, respectively.) The most relevant comparison to make here is that of the three adolescent groups as opposed to the older adults, i.e. the recruits and their peers as opposed to their parents and teachers. Of all age groups, the older adults have the lowest frequency of 0.17 occurrences per thousand words. This comparison corroborates my hypothesis that the use of invariant tags and follow-ups is a 'young' phenomenon and is not common in adult speech; thus the COLT-internal comparison supports the findings that were made in Section 4.1.2, which described the use of these forms in BNC/London.

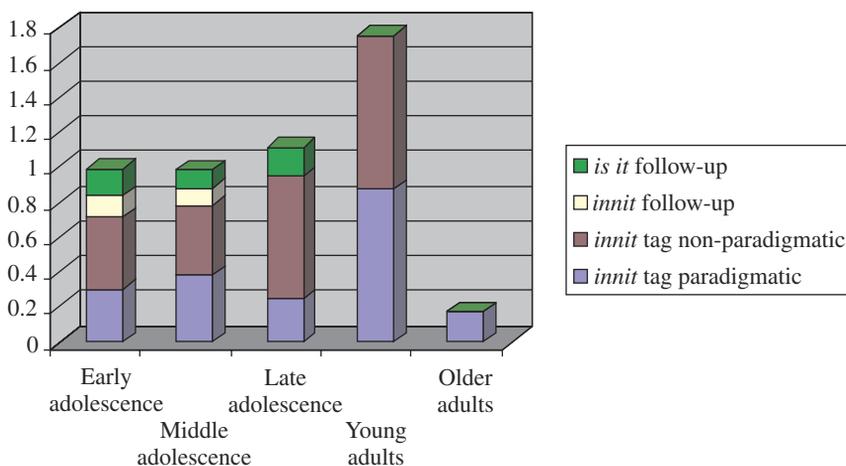


Figure 13. *innit/is it* by age group (frequency per thousand words)

If we single out the four types of use that are incorporated in Table 12, the distribution is as in Figure 13.

We note that the older adult speakers never use *innit* or *is it* non-paradigmatically; only examples where *innit* is used paradigmatically as a tag were found in this age group. In other words, use of the form *innit* is not restricted to adolescence, but its non-paradigmatic use, as well as ditto use of *is it*, are adolescence phenomena. These observations are supported by the comparison with the BNC/London data, in which the form *innit* occurs 102 times, which amounts to a relative frequency of 0.22 per thousand words. Although this form is fairly frequent, it is never used non-paradigmatically by the BNC/London adults, nor is *is it* used non-paradigmatically. There were no significant differences between the three adolescent groups with respect to the different types of use, with the notable exception that *innit* as a follow-up only occurs in early and middle adolescence. Hence, *innit*'s functional shift from tag to follow-up would appear to be primarily associated with speakers below 16 years of age. To conclude, my data provide good reasons for claiming that it is adolescents who are the promoters of the type of change that invariant tags and follow-ups represent.

4.3.2.3 *Social class*

As the use of *innit* and *is it* as invariant tags and follow-ups involves non-standard grammar, this feature can be expected to vary according to social class in the manner suggested in classical sociolinguistics studies such as Labov (1966, 1972) and Trudgill (1974). Put differently, we can expect the distribution of this feature to be skewed towards the lower social classes. The distribution of invariant tags and follow-ups across the three social classes in COLT is given in Table 13. (The figures in parentheses in the leftmost column correspond to the numeral social class label that appears in the COLT database.)

Table 13. Distribution of *innit* and *is it* according to speakers' social class

Social class	n	%	per 1,000 words	chi-square test
high (1)	11	4.0	0.137	$\chi^2 \geq 136.897$ d.f. = 2 Significant at $p < 0.0001$
middle (2)	95	34.2	1.397	
low (3)	172	61.9	2.157	
Σ	278	100.1		

Table 13 shows that the use of invariant tags and follow-ups clearly correlates with social class, as expected. The relative frequencies range from 0.1 to 2.2 tokens per thousand words and increase proportionally as one moves down the scale of social classes. All four types of use showed significant differences between the three social classes. However, the most interesting fact that emerges from this part of the investigation is not that the distribution follows this well known pattern of social class variation, but that invariant *innit/is it* occur in all three social classes.

The data show that, with the exception of *innit* as a follow-up, all types of use are found throughout the spectre of social groupings in COLT, which is a remarkably wide distribution. It must be pointed out, however, that the most common type of use in the highest social group is the paradigmatic use of *innit* as a tag (n=9). However, there is notable evidence of the non-paradigmatic use of *innit* as a tag (n=1) and of *is it* as an invariant follow-up (n=1) in the highest social class. Assuming that the use of invariant tags and follow-ups is spreading from the lower to the higher social groups, as suggested by Table 13, it seems that the paradigmatic use of the tag *innit*

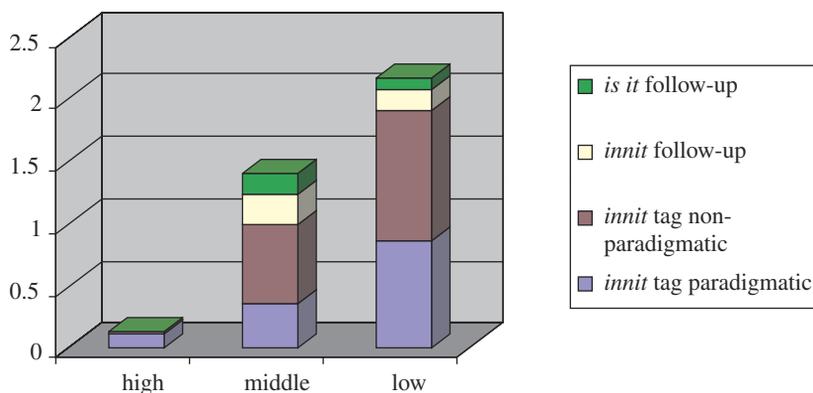


Figure 14. *ininit/is it* by social class (frequency per thousand words)

precedes the emergence of the other types of use in the highest social class. An important observation that is not revealed by Figure 14 is the fact that, with one exception, all the eleven tokens of invariant *ininit* and *is it* found in the highest social class are uttered by male individuals. This observation was gained from crosstabulation of the two factors gender and social class. It will seem, then, that it is the male speakers who initiate the spread of invariant tags and follow-ups to the highest group. (The same tendency can be observed if we consider the factor of location; cf. 4.3.2.5.)

4.3.2.4 Ethnicity

An underlying assumption of this study is that the pragmatic markers discussed in this chapter have their origins in ethnic minority speech but may be spreading to London teenage language more generally. We can expect the COLT data to display a correlation between ethnic minority membership and the use of invariant *ininit/is it*. That there may be such a correlation is likely, given that the use of the invariant tag *ininit* has been described as an ethnic minority feature in several previous studies (cf. 4.1.3). About two thirds of the examples in the matrix could be assigned values according to the white/ethnic-minority distinction. Since the ethnicity factor has not been coded in COLT, it was not possible to supply the figures for the total contribution of each of the two ethnic groups. Hence, relative frequencies could not be calculated, and the chi-square test is based on the assumption that the two

groups contribute the same amount of text to the corpus. The distribution of invariant tags and follow-ups in the two ethnic groups is as in Table 14.

Table 14. Distribution of *innit* and *is it* according to ethnic group

Ethnic group	n	%	chi-square test
White	61	23.2	$\chi^2 \geq 75.593$ d.f. = 1 Significant at $p < 0.0001$
Ethnic minority	202	76.8	
Σ	263	100.0	

On the assumption that the two groups contribute the same amount of text, their expected frequency is equal, i.e. 127 tokens. We note that the observed frequencies (n) deviate substantially from this value, hence the high chi-square value and the statistically significant test result. The use of *innit/is it* as invariant tags and follow-ups is predominantly a feature of the ethnic minority speakers, but occurs to a considerable extent also in the language of white speakers, who produce about a fourth of the tokens. Hence, the data seem to support my hypothesis that this is predominantly an ethnic minority feature.

It is also possible to point at significant differences with respect to the distribution of the four subtypes of the markers.

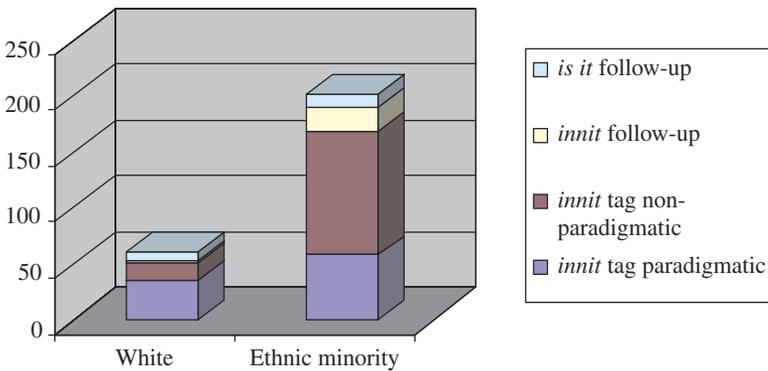


Figure 15. *innit/is it* by ethnic group (number of tokens)

The data show that all four types of use occur in the language of both white and ethnic minority speakers. There are significant differences

between the ethnic groups with respect to all types of use, except the use of *is it* as invariant follow-up, which has a surprisingly similar distribution (white: $n=8$; ethnic min.: $n=11$). Figure 15 shows that the paradigmatic use of *innit* occurs fairly frequently in both groups (white: $n=36$; ethnic min.: $n=58$; significant at $p<0.023$), while the non-paradigmatic use of the tag *innit*, is vastly more frequent in ethnic minority speech (white: $n=15$; ethnic min.: $n=111$; significant at $p<0.0001$). The same applies to *innit* as a follow-up (white: $n=2$; ethnic min.: $n=22$; significant at $p<0.0001$). All in all, the data show that the actual form *innit* cannot be considered an ethnic minority feature, while the non-paradigmatic use of this form clearly is.

4.3.2.5 Location

The factor of location is important for two reasons. Firstly, the data may enable us to locate the use of invariant tags and follow-ups geographically within suburban London, and to assess whether this type of use is a ‘central’ or ‘peripheral’ phenomenon. Secondly, the investigation of the geographical distribution may corroborate the findings concerning ethnicity that were made in the previous subsection, for instance if a correlation between the use of invariant *innit/is it* and a particular borough’s high density of ethnic minority members can be attested. As pointed out in Section 3.2.5, the London boroughs represented in COLT figure widely on the lists of the dozen largest district populations for various ethnic minority groups. The distribution of the markers across the different boroughs is as in Table 15.

Table 15. Distribution of *innit* and *is it* according to location of conversation

Location	n	%	per 1,000 words	chi-square test
Hackney	234	56.9	1.739	
Tower Hamlets	20	4.9	0.576	
Camden	61	14.8	0.995	
Brent	18	4.4	1.123	
Barnet	68	16.5	1.037	
Hertfordshire	10	2.4	0.080	$\chi^2 \geq 196.593$ d.f. = 5
Σ	411	99.9		Significant at $p<0.0001$

The distribution of invariant *innit* and *is it* varies significantly. In fact, location is the factor which yields the highest chi-square value of all the factors tested. Generally speaking, the relative frequency of the markers is much higher in the Inner and Outer London boroughs than in Hertfordshire. In fact, Barnet, Brent, Camden, Hackney and Tower Hamlets all have relatively dense ethnic minority populations, and the findings presented in Table 15 generally corroborate the ethnic minority patterns suggested above. The highest proportion of invariant *innit/is it* is found in Hackney, where the items occur with a frequency of about 1.7 tokens per thousand words. This is radically different from the corresponding figure for Hertfordshire, which is 0.1. The invariant tags and follow-ups are also fairly common in Camden, Brent and Barnet, which all have relative frequencies of about one token per thousand words, close to the overall relative frequency. Tower Hamlets is in mid-position, with a frequency of 0.6 tokens per thousand words. Although many London boroughs are not represented in the corpus, it will appear from these observations that invariant tags and follow-ups have a fairly wide geographical distribution within the London area, and that it is predominantly a central rather than a peripheral phenomenon.

If we distinguish between the four different types of use that are incorporated in Table 15, interesting distributional patterns emerge as shown in Figur 16.

The boroughs of Hackney, Camden, Brent and Barnet are similar in that all types of use were found in each borough. Not surprisingly, invariant tags and follow-ups are rarely found among the otherwise highly productive group of Hertfordshire private school goers. The ten tokens uttered by this group are mostly paradigmatic uses of *innit* ($n=8$), while the use of *is it* as an invariant follow-up occurs twice. The non-paradigmatic use of *innit* as a tag and as follow-up are non-existent in this group. In this respect, the Hertfordshire pupils resemble the adult speakers described in Sub-section 4.3.2.2 in that, although the form *innit* itself tends to occur, it is never used non-paradigmatically. It is also important to point out that crosstabulation of the factors gender and location showed that all the cases of invariant *innit/is it* that were uttered by speakers from Hertfordshire were produced by male individuals. This corroborates the impression that it is the male speakers who act as initiators in the spread of this feature.

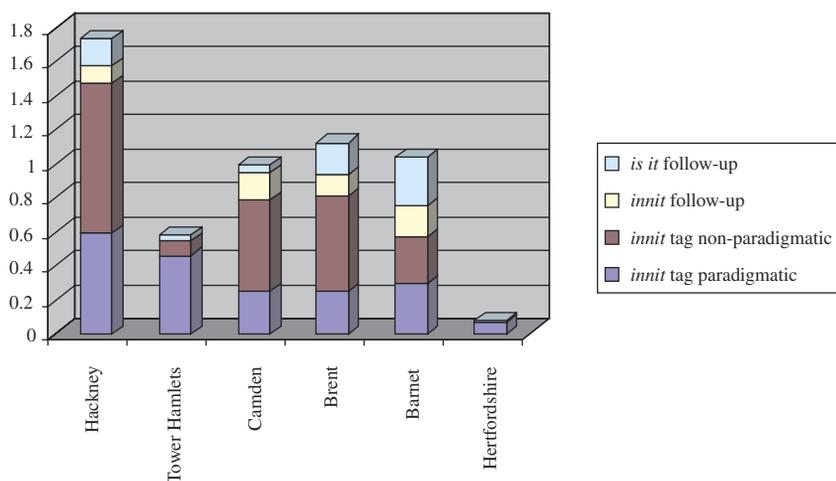


Figure 16. *ininit/is it* by location (frequency per thousand words)

4.3.2.6 Summary

In Section 4.3.2, I have been concerned with variation in the use of *ininit* and *is it* as invariant tags and follow-ups along several non-linguistic dimensions — gender, age, social class, ethnicity and borough — with a view to identifying the characteristics of the speaker groups whose linguistic behaviour most typically involves this non-standard usage. From the point of view of diachrony, it has been assumed that linguistic development is reflected in contemporary language, hence that those speaker groups who apply these forms the most are the likely initiators and promoters of the innovation and its spread. I have pointed at considerable social variation with respect to the factors tested, and all factors yielded statistically significant results.

We have seen that the use of *ininit/is it* as invariant tags and follow-ups is primarily a feature of young speakers of London English. Within the teenage group, the most typical *ininit/is it* user is a female adolescent from Hackney who belongs to the lowest social class and is an ethnic minority member. The least typical *ininit/is it* user is a white adolescent from Hertfordshire who belongs to the highest social class. Although the distributional differences in relation to gender are moderate, girls tend to use these forms more than boys overall. However, as regards the spread of this feature from

the low to the high social class, it is the male speakers who appear to be the initiators. The study has also shown that the distribution of invariant tags and follow-ups is remarkably wide; it was found to occur in all boroughs, in all social classes and in all the adolescent groups, and it was applied by both genders. Although the use of *innit/is it* as invariant tags and follow-ups is primarily an ethnic minority speech phenomenon, it also occurs fairly frequently in the speech of white adolescents. There is reason to assume that these phenomena have originated in ethnic minority speech and have gradually spread to white groups.²⁸

Moreover, the social variation suggests a chronological ordering in the adaptation of *innit* as a marker. Given the distribution of this marker according to age, social class and ethnicity, it appears that *innit* first comes into use as a tag question restricted to third person singular neuter contexts with BE in the present tense, i.e. used as a paradigmatic tag; later it comes to be used as a tag throughout the inflectional paradigm, and finally it comes to be used as an invariant follow-up. This is clear from the fact that the unlikely *innit*-users, namely adults, white speakers and speakers from the highest social class, to some extent use *innit* as a paradigmatic tag, and to a lesser extent use it as a non-paradigmatic tag, but do not use it as a follow-up. In fact, these sociolinguistic patterns make it tempting to suggest an implicational relation, in that speakers do not use *innit* as a follow-up unless they also use it as an invariant tag.

As is well known, statistical testing enables us to identify speaker tendencies, but it does not allow for making claims regarding causal relations. Although I have shown that ethnic minority speakers apply the forms to a greater extent than white speakers do, we cannot claim that there is a causal relation between ethnic minority membership and the occurrence of *innit/is it* as invariant tags and follow-ups in London teenage speech. In other words, it is difficult to say which of the five social parameters induces black Hackney girls in the lowest class to use *innit/is it* frequently. Nor can we state which of the factors make Hertfordshire girls in the highest class unlikely users of these forms. In principle, any of the factors may play a significant role. Obviously, there is considerable overlap between several of the factors which I have taken into account. To a great extent, the ethnic minority speakers in the corpus come from the most 'deprived' of the boroughs represented in COLT and belong to the lowest social class. On the other hand, the Hertfordshire public school group is exclusively white, and

includes mostly speakers from the highest social class. Hence, the most likely state-of-affairs is that a combination of several factors accounts for the skewness of the distribution of invariant *innit* and *is it* in the data.

4.3.3 *The diachronic development and social spread of innit and is it*

The previous two sections, 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, have shown that the use of *innit* and *is it* as invariant tags and follow-ups is constrained by linguistic as well as non-linguistic factors. Throughout this chapter it has been assumed that the COLT data reflect a linguistic development of these two forms. The underlying assumption is that *innit* and *is it* are originally third person singular neuter forms which follow a trajectory of change from canonical to invariant tags/follow-ups, and that the development is a gradual one. The current section is an attempt at corroborating this developmental hypothesis on the basis of the patterns of variation that were identified in Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2. The most important issues in this connection are to do with the development of *innit*, specifically whether this form has derived from *ain't it* or *isn't it*, and whether the follow-up *innit* can be considered an extension of the tag function.

4.3.3.1 *The diachronic development of innit*

The form *innit* is a highly noticeable and outstanding feature of non-standard grammar to be found in the COLT corpus. It is indeed worth paying attention to its historical development. It seems uncontroversial that *innit* is the result of regular juxtaposition of a (originally negative present tense) verb realisation *in* and the reference pronoun *it*. However, the derivation of its first element, the verb form *in*, is more controversial. Two alternative hypotheses seem plausible, either that *in* is a realisation of *isn't* or a realisation of *ain't*. Given the high frequency and pervasiveness of examples of the type *It's nice innit?*, where *innit* would correspond to *isn't it* in standard English, it is not unreasonable to assume that *innit* has derived directly from *isn't it* in a straightforward manner by regular sound change. Under this first hypothesis, the interrogative *isn't it* has undergone phonological reduction, specifically loss of [t] and [z] (presumably in that order), and the two morphemes, the negative verb and the pronoun, have eventually merged.

This development can be sketched as follows:

isn't it [ɪznt it] → isn't it [ɪzn it] → in it [ɪn it]

The alternative hypothesis is that the form *innit* has developed via the verb form *ain't*, in the following manner:

ain't it [eɪnt it] → int it [ɪnt it] → in it [ɪn it]

This process would involve phonological change of the form *ain't*, notably raising of the initial vowel of the diphthong, monophthongisation and loss of final [t]. On the basis of the current data, it cannot be determined with absolute certainty whether *innit* should be considered a development of *isn't it* or *ain't it*. To a certain extent, either hypothesis can be said to be supported by the data, but in the following, I would like to argue that my findings generally support the first hypothesis. It is also possible that both types of phonological reduction have occurred as parallel, separate processes with identical outcome, but this hypothesis will not be pursued here.

4.3.3.2 A derivation of *ain't* or *isn't*?

The form *ain't* is a well-known feature of many non-standard dialects of English. It is an invariant verb form which can be used to represent any present tense negative form of BE or HAVE. The derivation of *ain't* can be ascribed to regular sound change that dates as far back as Early Modern English (Cheshire 1981, 1982). Although the ultimate origin of the form is disputable (forms of both BE and HAVE may be considered the precursors of *ain't*), Cheshire concludes that '[t]he most probable ancestor of *ain't* is the first person singular form *am not*' (1981:367). The main support for the hypothesis that *innit* derives from *ain't it*?, and not directly from *isn't it*?, is the fact that the form *in* occurs in COLT as a realisation of *ain't* that may correspond to either BE or HAVE:

- (98) I **ain't** telling the truth. (BE) (133101/1: 35)
- (99) He goes, nah mate! **Ain't** you lot ever heard of tea bags? (HAVE) (132617/1: 101)
- (100) He is so violent **int** he? (BE) (132913/38: 25)
- (101) She's got a bit of smelly breath though **int** she? (HAVE) (135807/16: 61)
- (102) I'm quitting **in** I? (BE) (136105/1: 20)

(103) I've got your letter **in** I? (HAVE) (139506/1: 155)

As the examples show, the forms *ain't*, *int* and *in* may all correspond to either BE or HAVE, and each stage in the development of *ain't* proposed above is actually represented in COLT. Hence, *in* is sometimes a verb form with the same syntactic properties as *ain't*. It therefore seems fair to assume that the form *innit* is a result of regular juxtaposition of this verb form and the reference pronoun *it*. It is also worth noting that in COLT, the realisations *int* and *in* occur almost exclusively in tag questions (35 of 36 tokens; 97%), while *ain't* has a wider distribution (293 tokens; 9% in tags). These observations are in line with Cheshire's findings (1982: 54ff).

However, a number of observations cast doubt on this second hypothesis. Firstly, the verb realisation *in* is actually very infrequent in COLT; it occurs no more than twelve times and is by far outnumbered by the other verb realisations, as seen in Figure 17.

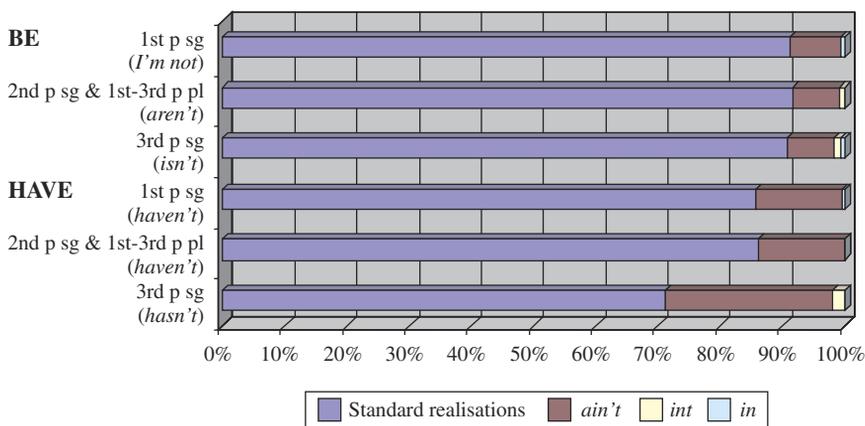


Figure 17. Distribution of negative present tense verb forms in COLT, including non-standard *ain't/int/in*

The predominant verb forms are the standard contracted forms *isn't*, *aren't*, *haven't*, *I'm not*, etc. We note that non-standard *ain't* is fairly frequent ($n=292$), but that the phonologically reduced forms *int* ($n=24$) and *in* ($n=12$) are grossly outnumbered by the other forms. The overall frequency of *ain't/int/in* as opposed to the standard verb forms is about 11 per

cent.²⁹ If *innit* followed the second developmental path illustrated above, we might expect the intermediate forms *int* and *in* to be generally frequent, and to replace forms like *haven't*, *hasn't*, etc in different linguistic contexts. But Figure 17 shows that *int* and *in* are severely restricted as regards their linguistic distribution and overall frequency.

Secondly, these forms are also restricted as regards their social distribution, and much more so than *innit* itself, as is clear from Table 16.

We can definitely not argue that there is an implicational relation between the use of *innit* and the more general use of the reduced verb forms

Table 16. Distribution of *innit/ain't/int/in* in COLT (no. of tokens)

Location	Recruit #	<i>innit</i>	<i>in</i>	<i>int</i>	<i>ain't</i>	Σ
Hackney	1	2			5	7
	2	61		4	62	127
	3	15			11	26
	4	19			4	23
	5	16	1		15	32
	6	99	1	1	18	119
Tower Hamlets	7	2			20	22
	8	3	1	1	17	22
	9	9		9	31	49
	10	2			4	6
	11	2	1		35	38
	12	1	1		7	9
Camden	13	4	3		7	14
	14	15			1	16
	15	1				1
	17	51			5	56
	18	1			1	2
21	1			5	6	
Barnet	22	19	1		11	31
	23	3			9	12
	24	4		3	3	10
	25	12			7	19
	26	11	2		8	21
Hertfordshire	29	5			3	8
	30	3	1		3	7

int or *in*, as only very few speakers use these reduced verb forms, while *innit* occurs virtually throughout the corpus (cf. 4.3.2). In fact, the use of *ain't* is also not a prerequisite for the use of *innit*, as several speakers use *innit* where there is no evidence of the use of *ain't*. In light of these observations, the claim that *innit* has developed via the verb forms *ain't/int/in* becomes less credible. It seems unlikely that the *in*-component of the pervasive and common pragmatic marker *innit* should be a realisation of *ain't*, since the verb realisation *in* is otherwise so uncommon and narrowly distributed.

Thirdly, it was shown in Subsection 4.3.1.2 (cf. Table 7) that the tag *innit* is commonly used when its corresponding standard English tag would be *isn't it*. This type of use, referred to as 'paradigmatic', is far more common than the cases where *innit* corresponds to *hasn't it*. The frequencies of both types are 147 and three tokens, respectively. If it is true that the *in*-part of *innit* is a development of *ain't*, we might expect a more even distribution of these two types of use, particularly since the overall ratio of *isn't* versus *hasn't* is about three to one in COLT.

Fourthly, and finally, the discussion of social factors in the previous section showed that several of the speaker groups use *innit* in contexts where it corresponds to standard English *isn't it* but not in any other contexts. This concerns for instance the Hertfordshire speakers, the speakers in the highest social class, and the few adult speakers who are represented in COLT. An observation that corroborates this pattern is the fact that, in the adult BNC/London data which were used for comparison, *innit* occurs 97 times and is exclusively used in contexts where it corresponds to *isn't it*. On the whole, these observations indicate that, to the extent that the use of *innit* is spreading, it does so by first becoming instantiated in third person singular neuter contexts with BE, and later it comes to be used in other contexts. The groups which could be described as more 'advanced' *innit*-users use it throughout the inflectional paradigm, while 'non-advanced' *innit*-users tend to use *innit* only in the *isn't it*-environment. This adds further support to the hypothesis that the most likely predecessor of *innit* is the interrogative form *isn't it* and not *ain't it*.

It should also be recalled that the previous accounts that describe invariant tags (cf. 4.1.3) only report cases where the invariant tag has developed from originally third person singular neuter forms with the verb BE,³⁰ specifically *isn't it* or *is it*. It will appear that this grammatical environment provides

particularly good conditions for invariabilisation. A possible explanation for why these forms in particular develop into invariant tags could be that, since tags in effect ask the question *isn't it true that P* or *is it true that P*, the tags *isn't it* or *is it* can be construed as condensed versions of these interrogatives. At any rate, since the form *isn't it* as an invariant tag occurs in many 'exotic' varieties of English, it is likely that the origin of the invariant tag *innit* can be traced back to this particular environment in London English also.

To conclude, as regards the trajectory of change that *innit* follows, my data support the hypothesis that the most likely predecessor for the tag *innit* is the form *isn't it* and not *ain't it*.

4.3.3.3 *Grammaticalisation of in + it*

Having established that there are fairly good reasons for treating *in* as a phonologically reduced realisation of *isn't*, we can proceed to the later, and less controversial, stages of *innit*'s development, the fusion of the verb form *in* and the personal pronoun *it*. The prerequisite for this stage in the process is the regular juxtaposition of the verb realisation *in* and the reference pronoun *it*. From the outset, the form *in* can occur throughout the inflectional paradigm, but it is only in one specific context, that of third person singular neuter, that the structural reanalysis has occurred. This structural change can be viewed as a type of grammaticalisation which implies fusion and rebracketing of the two juxtaposed forms, in the following manner:

[in] + [it] → [innit]

From being two distinct morphemes, the phrase has become reanalysed as a single unit. In the corpus data, the fused form has, by way of convention, achieved status as a single lexeme (along with other, and more familiar contracted forms, such as *wanna*, *gotta* and *dunno*; cf. Aston & Burnard 1998). As Hopper & Traugott (1993) point out, reanalysis modifies only the underlying representations of a linguistic structure, and not its surface manifestation. As a consequence, the actual change from [in] + [it] to [innit] is not 'visible' to the corpus analyst or the transcriber. Whether a speaker who uses *innit* in a context like *It's great innit?* perceives this form a single morpheme or as two words is impossible to tell. The investigation of social variation revealed that some speakers use *innit* as an invariant, while others use it only in the third person singular neuter contexts. It appears that the use of *innit* may be triggered by two different grammatical rules; some speakers

apply a ‘third-person-singular-neuter rule’ (‘apply *innit* after statements with third person singular neuter subjects and with BE in the present tense’), while others apply an ‘invariant rule’, (‘apply *innit* in any grammatical context’). Whenever *innit* is used paradigmatically, it is not possible to decide whether an instance represents the stage before or after rebracketing, because we are unable to make judgements regarding an individual speaker’s or a group of speakers’ mental conception of a form undergoing reanalysis.

The linguistic spread of *innit* across the verbal paradigm can be seen as a case of analogy, defined as ‘the attraction of extant forms to already existing constructions’ (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 56). Unlike reanalysis, the results of analogy are overt and observable at surface level. In the case of *innit*, the generalisation manifests itself in examples of non-paradigmatic use only (e.g. *I might go innit.*) Interestingly, Hopper & Traugott (1993) describe another grammaticalisation process, the development of the Romance perfect, which directly parallels the development of *innit*, in that

[i]t is only when clear cases of non-agreement ... occur, that we can find definitive overt evidence for the structure change. These unambiguously non-agreeing forms presumably arose by analogy (= rule generalization) from neuter singular contexts to other contexts. (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 58)

In Subsection 4.3.3.2, I suggested that we cannot be certain regarding which of the forms *isn't it* or *ain't it* should be regarded as the immediate precursor of the invariant *innit*, although my data seem to point towards the former hypothesis. At any rate, both of these forms have a number of syntactic-semantic features as part of their inherent meaning, such as [+3rd person], [+singular], [+neuter], [+present tense], [+negative]. The rule generalisation affecting *innit* implies a gradual loss of these features, a loss which constitutes the semantic weakening of the form *innit*. Evidence for the loss of the various syntactic-semantic features can be found in a number of grammatical contexts in COLT, to the effect that the use of *innit* in present day teenage talk challenges the standard rules for the formation of tag questions in every possible way: it may be used to represent any operator BE, HAVE or DO, or any modal auxiliary, it need not agree with the subject of the main sentence in person, gender or number, it need not agree with the tense of the verb of the main sentence, and it does not necessarily follow the ordinary reversal of polarity pattern.

However, although grammatically versatile, the linguistic distribution of

innit in COLT is not entirely random. It was shown in Subsection 4.3.1.2 that the grammatical context systematically constrains the distribution of *innit* according to semantic, phonological and lexical factors. It is always the grammatical contexts which are semantically closest to *isn't it* which have the highest percentage of *innit* realisations. For instance, it is more likely that *innit* occurs after positive than after negative statements, all other things being equal. A very interesting parallel observation was made by Christian (1983) in her study of the invariant tag *no* in a Pueblo variety of English. She observed that *no*, like *innit*, was unlikely after negative statements. This suggests that, when invariant tags are derived from forms with originally negative meaning, an element of 'negativity' tends to persist in the form and to constrain its linguistic distribution. I take the systematic semantic conditioning of *innit* surveyed above as evidence that the loss of semantic features is gradual, and that the invariabilisation is still in process.

Grammaticalisation theorists argue that loss in semantic meaning is typically accompanied by, or motivated by, a complementary process of pragmatic change. This latter type of change is commonly referred to as 'pragmatic enrichment' or 'strengthening':

From very early times researchers on issues related to grammaticalisation have observed that it involves a loss of semantic content. ... we have, however, spoken of pragmatic enrichment, strengthening, and so forth. This is because we have been discussing the beginnings of grammaticalisation, that is, the motivations that permit the process to begin, rather than its outcomes. There is no doubt that over time, meanings tend to become weakened during the process of grammaticalisation. Nevertheless, all the evidence for early stages is that initially there is a redistribution or shift, not a loss, of meaning. (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 87f)

The attitudinal and interactional meanings communicated by invariant tags like *innit* are many and complex. My discussion in Section 4.2 showed that the general pragmatic function of *innit* is to activate and bring into focus a set of mutual assumptions. It was shown that its function has clearly extended beyond the basic illocutionary function of 'asking whether P' to marking common ground in more general terms. This development can be characterised as a case of subjectification, defined as

the development of a grammatically identifiable expression of speaker belief or speaker attitude to what is said. It is a gradient phenomenon, whereby

forms and constructions that at first express primarily concrete, lexical, and objective meanings come through repeated use in local syntactic contexts to serve increasingly abstract, pragmatic, interpersonal, and speaker-based functions. (Traugott 1995a: 32)

Speakers use *innit* for a range of attitudinal (subjective) purposes, such as expressing reduced commitment towards P or enthusiastic agreement with P, and to express that P (or an associated background assumption) is perceived as a mutual belief of the speaker and the hearer. It seems that Traugott's notion of subjectification fits well with the development of *innit* as a pragmatic marker.

4.3.3.4 *From tag to follow-up*

The final question which needs to be addressed is, what is the diachronic connection between *innit* as a tag and as a follow-up? As argued, *innit* has developed from a tag that is used in third person singular contexts to an invariant tag that is used throughout the inflectional paradigm. Given this development, it may seem reasonable to assume that the follow-up *innit* has undergone a parallel invariabilisation processes, since it, too, has come to be used in non-third person singular neuter contexts. In other words, a possible development might be that the agreement-marking canonical follow up of the type A: *It's hot in here*. B: *(Yes) isn't it!* has, through repetitive use, undergone invariabilisation in the fashion of the tag *innit*. However, I do not consider this a likely development. The reason is that follow-ups of this (canonical) type do not occur in COLT, as pointed out in Section 4.3.1 (cf. Table 6). In the COLT data, there is no variation between the invariant follow-up *innit* and canonical follow-ups, while, as we have seen, speakers do vary their choice of *innit* as a tag *vis à vis* the canonical tags. It would seem strange to argue that the follow-up *innit* has developed from a functional category that appears to be generally confined to other varieties of English.

Therefore, it seems to me that a more likely interpretation is that the follow-up is a result of a functional shift of *innit*, from its use in tag position to its use as a follow-up. Another reason why such a development is plausible is that it would constitute an exact and highly interesting parallel to the development of another common marker of contextual alignment, namely *you know (what I mean)* in London Jamaican, as described in Sebba & Tate (1986) and Sebba (1993). Sebba shows that this expression 'has gone from being an agreement-seeker to being a *marker* of agreement in conversation'

(1993: 71). (104) and (105) are two of the examples he gives:

(104) A: It was a wicked party man!

B: **You know what I mean!**

(105) A: It was a wicked party man!

B: **You know!**

In the terminology applied in the current study, this transition also involves an orientational shift from $S \rightarrow H$ to $H \rightarrow S$; i.e. an item used for the purpose of expressing a presumption of mutual context has come to express recognition of such.

Moreover, my analysis of the pragmatic functions showed that *innit* in tag and follow-up position serve similar, but converse, A-marking functions. Both markers are used to focus on the common ground of the interlocutors, and they can be used to express the presumption/recognition that the proposition expressed is a belief of both the speaker and hearer. Importantly, both markers can express the presumption/recognition of common ground that *does not* include the proposition expressed, but includes mutual assumptions in more general terms, by bringing into focus background assumptions that the interlocutors hold. Due to this fact, I identified several cases where both the tag *innit* and the follow-up *innit* could not be replaced by their canonical equivalents, or by expressions such as *don't you think?/I agree*. Finally, both the tag and the follow-up may serve an imagination-appealing/ imagination-recognition function. The converse functions of *innit* in tag and follow-up position were found to be roughly equivalent to the expressions *you know what I mean* and *I see what you mean* (as applied in English generally).

These functional parallels seem to support my assumption that *innit* has undergone a shift in function; hence, I am suggesting a temporal ordering whereby the invariant tag is considered to arise prior to follow-up use.

4.3.3.5 Diachronic development of *is it*

The development of *is it* into an invariant follow-up is in many respects similar to the development of *innit*, in that both forms have undergone invariabilisation. I argue in this subsection that reanalysis and rebracketing as well as semantic reduction and pragmatic enrichment (subjectification) have affected *is it*, and that these processes can be seen to run parallel to the corresponding development of invariant *innit*. Due to this parallelism, and

due to the fact that *is it*'s development does not include phonological reduction processes such as those described in Subsections 4.3.3.1 and 4.3.3.2, a less detailed description than the one concerning *innit* will suffice here. As mentioned, the invariant tag *is it* is so rare that it is questionable whether the identified tokens represent idiosyncratic variation or a true instance of grammaticalisation. Due to this low frequency, a description of its diachronic development would become impressionistic, and is omitted from my discussion.

Unlike *innit*, the diachronic development of *is it* has not affected the surface morphology of the form. No new item has resulted in the grammaticalisation of *is it*, but its overt morphosyntactic composition appears to remain intact (which is reflected in the transcription of this pragmatic marker as consisting of two words). It seems justifiable to view the pragmatic marker *is it* as a combination of two separate morphemes, a verb and a pronoun, which, like the single morpheme *innit*, have come into invariant use. In the case of *is it*, the juxtaposition of a present tense form of BE and the reference pronoun *it* has assumed general use as a follow-up which is unaffected by the grammatical status of the preceding proposition. The development of invariant *is it* is a case of reanalysis that can be sketched as follows:

$$[\text{is}] + [\text{it}] \rightarrow [\text{is it}]$$

The only context where rebracketing of verb and pronoun occurs is that of third person singular neuter. The rule generalisation parallels that of *innit*, in that the third person singular form is used across the inflectional paradigm and the follow-up is non-sensitive to the features tense, polarity and nature of the verb. Again, it is not possible to judge whether a particular instance of the follow-up *is it* in third person singular contexts represents the stage before or after the rebracketing, since analogy is observable due to clear cases of non-agreement in the data. At any rate, invariant *is it* has undergone a similar loss of semantic features as *innit*, with the exception of one feature. The marker *is it* has developed from a positive-polarity interrogative and has lost its positiveness, while the precursor of *innit* was negative.

In Section 4.2.4 it was shown that *is it* is used as an expression of the speaker's surprise or disbelief. *Is it* signals that a proposition contradicts some of the existing contextual assumptions. From the pragmatic point of view, the follow-up *is it* has developed from having the function of asking a question regarding the truth of a proposition to a subjective function of expressing surprise or disbelief, and an element of pragmatic strengthening

and subjectification seems to have affected this marker also.

4.3.4 Summary

My discussion of the diachronic development and synchronic use of invariant *innit* and *is it* can be summed up in the following points:

- The forms *innit* and *is it* are used as invariant tags and follow-ups in London adolescence speech; they occur throughout the COLT-corpus and have a wide social distribution (with the exception of *is it* as a tag, which occurs only twice).
- They have a wide array of functions that can be described in terms of presumption/recognition of aligned/divergent contextual assumptions.
- Their development can be characterised as instances of grammaticalisation, specifically in terms of the process of reanalysis and analogy referred to as ‘invariabilisation’.
- The most likely precursor of *innit* is *isn't it* rather than *ain't it*.
- The use of the non-standard verb forms *ain't/int/in* is not a prerequisite for speakers' use of *innit* as a pragmatic marker.
- In the groups that are the least likely *innit*-users (white, highest social class, Hertfordshire pupils, adults), *innit* first becomes instantiated in third person singular neuter contexts;
- later it comes to be used as a tag throughout the inflectional paradigm,
- and finally it comes to be used as a follow-up (i.e., speakers do not use *innit* as a follow-up unless they also use it as an invariant tag).
- The follow-up *innit* is in all likelihood the result of functional a shift from tag to follow-up use.
- Although the difference between the genders was minor, there is some evidence that invariant *innit*, as well as the use of *is it* as an invariant follow-up, is spreading via the language of boys.

On this basis, the diachronic development may be schematised by means of the survey given in Figure 18.

Process	Development of <i>innit</i>	Development of <i>is it</i>	Social distribution
phonological reduction	<i>(am not → ain't)</i>		London English generally
	↓	↓	
phonological reduction	<i>(ain't → in)</i> <i>(isn't → in)</i>		London English generally
	↓	↓	
regular juxtaposition	<i>in + it</i> (3rd p sg neuter contexts)	<i>is + it</i> (3rd p sg neuter contexts)	London English generally
	↓	↓	
reanalysis and analogy (rebracketing, fusion)	<i>[in it] → [innit]</i> all grammatical contexts tags only	<i>[is] [it] → [is it]</i> all grammatical contexts follow-ups only	various ethnic minorities (poss. orig. London Jamaican; cf. Hewitt 1986)
	↓	↓	
social spread	<i>innit/tag</i> all grammatical contexts	<i>is it/follow-up</i> all grammatical contexts	ethnic minority → white lower → higher social class adolescents → adults
	↓	↓	
functional shift	<i>innit/follow-up</i> all grammatical contexts		ethnic minority → white lower → higher social class adolescents → adults

Figure 18. Summary of the development of *innit* and *is it*

CHAPTER 5

The pragmatic marker *like*

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I investigated the use of two forms which have long existed in British English, but whose use in present day teenage English can be said to represent linguistic innovation. Previous literature suggested that the non-standard form *innit* is a traditional London dialect feature, but the use of this item as an invariant tag and follow-up is a more recent development which, as suggested by my data and by previous literature, is the result of contact between speakers of London English and members of various ethnic minorities. The current chapter focuses on the pragmatic marker *like* in the speech of London teenagers, and, as with *innit/is it* in the previous chapter, I intend to give a broad account of its use in the teenage corpus in terms of its syntactic-semantic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic properties. *Like* is a form which has a history as a pragmatic marker in traditional dialects of Britain, but its frequent and versatile use in London teenage English today is, I argue, largely the result of fairly recent influence from an entirely different source than that of invariant *innit* and *is it*, namely American English. Various uses of *like* as a pragmatic marker can be illustrated by the following (non-exhaustive) list:

- (106) And then he goes he goes, <mimicking>well only joking.</> and **I'm like** and **I'm like** scum! (141707/1: 343)
- (107) Starts off a bit boring. First **like** twenty minutes and then it gets good. (132705/1: 7)
- (108) but if you took **like** all your A levels for the, to be a scientist and then (136405/1: 99)

- (109) Madonna? Yeah she's pretty I mean **like** ... (2) she looks better with brown hair though. (133701/1: 224)
- (110) my sis=, eh a lot of the time my my sister **like**, okay my mum would phone up and go walk her walk to school with Alex on Friday, and actually, I'm I think he might try something. (140504/1: 159)
- (111) Sean, shall I put it on in the garage? **It's like**, cos if people s= look through the w= door, yeah, they'll see it. (139602/1: 9)

Like is a pragmatic marker that is notorious for its functional complexity and distributional versatility. As regards function, it can be seen from the examples above that it may serve, for instance, as a quotative marker, approximator, marker of exemplification, discourse link or hesitational device. As regards distributional properties, it is clear that *like* can occur between clause constituents, within phrases and between propositions, as well as in the expressions *BE like* and *it's like*.

Like the previous chapter, the current one contains two main sections, one on pragmatic functions and one on variation and language change. In Section 5.2, I describe the pragmatic functions of *like* on the basis of the COLT data, taking into account its extreme flexibility and high frequency. Most previous accounts of this marker have focused exclusively on a single function, e.g. the quotative function. In the current investigation, the aim is to give a comprehensive account of all its functions and to show how the different functions are related. I propose an analysis within the framework of relevance theory that depends crucially on the notion of non-literal resemblance between an utterance and the underlying thought. *Like* is in one sense prototypical of pragmatic markers, in that the versatile use of the item exemplifies multifunctionality. Yet, in another sense, *like* proves atypical and requires special attention, because it comes forth as a marker which can be relatively deeply integrated in the syntactic context in which it occurs, as a modifier of clause constituents. In fact, it sometimes behaves as a borderline case between pragmatic marker and adverbial. This characteristic poses difficulties for several proposed accounts of pragmatic markers which presuppose their non-truth-conditionality and extrapositionality (cf. Hölker 1991). Despite its many uses, it is possible to provide a very general description of its function as a marker which provides a procedural constraint on utterance interpretation, in that it instructs the hearer to draw inferences concerning the speaker's relation to the following propositional material or

to the proposition at large. On the basis of the framework presented in Chapter 2, I will provide an analysis of *like* as a pragmatic marker with predominantly subjective functions, although its capacity to provide textual structure and coherence is also salient.

It is also interesting to observe to what extent particular functions are linked with particular collocational or structural patterns (such as the collocation *BE like*). For this reason, the account of pragmatic function is backed up by a statistical survey of the distributional and collocational properties of *like*, and on the basis of the survey, I propose constraints on *like*'s distribution. In Section 5.3, I also address issues which are relevant to the description of the diachronic development of the marker. The issues on variation and language change concern social variation within the teenage corpus and the nature of the grammaticalisation process.

5.1.1 *Formal features and problems of classification*

Due to its multiple syntactic functions and its common use as a pragmatic marker, the form *like* appears in a vast number of different syntactic contexts in the corpus. A distinction must be drawn between the examples that count as relevant to the current discussion, and those that do not. The following examples are meant to illustrate this point, as well as give an impression of the complexity and frequency with which *like* occurs:

- (112) Jess: but it wasn't **like** a long thing but **like**, I, the time that I spent with him was **like** quite a long time, **like** the evening, whatever, so he'd get and **like** it just used to be constant pauses, it used to be terrible and so we used to get off with each other **like** you pause [for for what]
 Catriona: [And you, did you **like**] did you were you attracted to him then?
 Jess: Yeah I was really attracted to him but I just could not speak to him it was awful. (142704/4: 41)
- (113) Sabrina: He's so thick why d'ya have to come out with something stupid **like** [that.]
 Caroline: [I know.] Always put my mouth in it. My foot in it. My mouth in it. <nv>giggle</nv> ... (drinking) They're gonna

- like** the ⟨American accent⟩ car⟨/⟩. Maybe she'll give it to Sabrina as a wedding present.
- Sabrina: Look they've stuck a sticker in the back, Cars kill trees.
 Caroline: Where?
 Sabrina: **Like**, they got, in this [⟨laughing⟩sticker at the back **it's like**⟨/⟩],
 Caroline: [⟨nv⟩laugh⟨/nv⟩]
 Sabrina: Cars kill, oh thank you. Why are you driving that car then? (140810/17: 198)
- (114) Josie: But when someone talks to you loud **like** I just did the microphone seems to stop. ...
 I can hear that car **like** it's just going past here.
 (132707/1: 15&21)

As is well known, *like* can be used as, for instance, a verb, as in *they're gonna like the car*, a preposition, as in *something stupid like that*, or a conjunction meaning 'in the same way as', as in *like I just did* or 'as if', as in *I can hear that car like it's just going past here*. From the point of view of sociolinguistic variation, little is remarkable about the use of *like* in these contexts; each instance is acceptable to most speakers of English and would generally be considered part of standard English (although some users condemn the use of *like* as a conjunction; cf. Schourup 1985 for discussion). In the majority of cases in (112)–(114), however, the syntactic function of *like* is less clearcut, and the omission of the form would not cause ungrammaticality. It is these syntactically anomalous cases that are of primary concern in this chapter, for example *it wasn't like a long thing but like, I, the time that I spent with him was like quite a long time* in (112). Whenever *like* does not serve one of the ordinary syntactic functions it is considered a pragmatic marker.¹

However, there are some utterances in which the status of *like* is unclear or even indeterminable. For example, in *did you like, did you, were you attracted to him then?* in (112), both the interpretation of *like* as a verb and as a pragmatic marker seem plausible. The indeterminacy is due to *like* appearing in a fractured sentence which may be the result of planning difficulties. On the basis of the transcription alone, it is difficult to judge whether the utterance was intended as a question with *like* as a verb or whether *like* is a marker, for instance, a hesitation device. A slightly different ambiguity can be observed in (115):

- (115) Did Bonnie enjoy herself in the end? Cos I know that **like** she said she did but I know she was getting really pissed off cos everyone was sticking on the music she wasn't interested in and stuff.
(134101/26: 87)

Considering the transcription only, the utterance is ambiguous between a non-marker reading, where *like* is a conjunction in the subclause *like she said*, and a marker reading, where *like* provides a link between the epistemic matrix clause *I know that* and the following complement clause, and is thus omissible and external to the proposition *she said (that) she did*. Generally, in ambiguous cases such as these, consulting the actual recordings is immensely illuminating. Considerations of prosody are particularly helpful, as prosodic features crucially constrain the interpretation of *like* as a marker or a non-marker. The pragmatic marker is unstressed and usually phonologically reduced from [laɪk]/[lɑɪk]/[lɒɪk] to [leɪk], [ləɪk] or even (in rapid speech) monophthongised to [læk]/[lək]/[lɪk]. Moreover, if *like* is followed by a brief pause, the phonological separation from the adjacent discourse unit suggests that the form is not syntactically integrated within this unit; hence a pragmatic marker interpretation becomes plausible. Indeed, the tape recordings revealed, unequivocally, that in *did you like* in (112), *like* is in fact a verb, indicated by its nuclear stress and full phonological realisation. And a brief pause immediately following *like* in *cos I know that like, she said she did* in (115) fairly strongly suggests that *like* is a pragmatic marker and not a conjunction.² Due to the importance of prosodic and phonological features, I listened repeatedly to the examples during the analysis, and many of the examples could then be disambiguated.³ However, although generally illuminating, analysis of prosodic features need not be exhaustive and does not necessarily resolve the indeterminacy. For instance, it is conceivable that *like* as a verb may be unstressed and phonologically reduced as well.

In the two ambiguous examples discussed so far, we were faced with two, and only two, possible readings of *like*. In other cases, the indeterminacy may be more complex. As will become evident in the course of this chapter, there are good reasons for claiming that the recurrent collocation *it's like* is a pragmatic marker in its own right, on a par with *like* alone:

- (116) yeah, well yeah I mean, I mean the thing is **it's like**, why have you got those headphones round your neck? (134101/1: 270)

- (117) yeah cos **it's like** erm, **it's like**, her her calves, and her shins are like same, size as her thighs (136411/8: 44)

The collocation *it's like* appears to have acquired a formulaic status and operates as a reanalysed unit with extra-propositional textual and subjective functions. It appears to have undergone a similar process of semantic weakening as that affecting *like* itself. In Subsection 5.2.2.4, I discuss its function in more detail. At this point, it should be noted that it is often rather problematic to determine its status. The relevant criterion is whether it is possible to attribute referential meaning to *it's like* on the basis of preceding discourse, topic or situational context. Usually this attribution implies searching for an anaphoric referent of *it* and interpreting *like* as 'similar to', as illustrated in (118), where it refers to *Southgate hall*:

- (118) Southgate hall's alright. **It's like** Barnet. (139613: 57)
 (119) It's actually pretty good **it's like**, this bloke yeah, it's about these people who got left behind in Vietnam. (142105: 320)

It's like in (119) is more problematic. The indeterminacy involves not just two clearcut alternatives, as with *did you like* in (112), but a whole set of possible interpretations, depending on whether the status of *it* is that of a reference pronoun or a referentially empty item. (In the following paraphrases, the pragmatic markers are in bold face):

- (119) a. It's actually pretty good, it's like,
 it = reference pronoun (*the movie*);
 like = preposition
 b. It's actually pretty good, it's **like**
 it = reference pronoun (*the movie*)
 like = pragmatic marker
 c. It's actually pretty good, **it's like**,
 it = dummy pronoun
 it's like = pragmatic marker

In other cases, the indeterminacy may be due to closeness with *it's as if*. Compare:

- (120) I don't know, it's jus=, **it's like** anything that's bad, she doesn't seem to drink. (132405/1: 33)

Due to the often fragmentary and elliptic nature of spoken discourse, fuzziness of this kind is by no means uncommon. There is frequently a need for a multi-level analysis of pragmatic markers, as considerations of aspects such as phonology, prosody, context and topic are required where the grammatical analysis arising from a mere browsing of computer lists of examples will not suffice. However, it is important to point out that the analytical problems associated with *like* (and other pragmatic markers; cf. Chapter 2) is not just a result of the analyst's lacking contextual information, as may be the case in (119). It must be ascribed to more fundamental changes affecting the item in question, specifically its ongoing grammaticalisation. It seems that the indeterminacy is mainly due to the fact that *like* is in the midst of undergoing a grammaticalisation process involving a shift from propositional to non-propositional uses, and that we can therefore expect to find a continual gradation between the two types of use; cf. Section 5.3.

Tokens of *like* as a marker are massively recurrent in COLT. The marker uses account for at least 40 per cent of a total of approximately 3,500 *like*-occurrences in the entire corpus. Hence, *like* has a legitimate place in the discussion of pragmatic markers in London teenage talk.

5.1.2 *Previous accounts of like in American and British English*

The documentation of the use of *like* as a pragmatic marker stems from three different types of sources: brief mention in a number of dictionaries, several studies based on American English, and a few recent studies of British English, some of which are COLT-based. In the current section I give a brief overview of the previous studies and suggest how they relate to my own investigation that follows in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

The dictionaries which devote attention to marker use of *like* are for the most part dictionaries of dialects, slang or unconventional English, including T. Wright (1857), J. Wright (1902), Murray (1908), Grant & Dixon (1921), Partridge (1937, 1961, 1984), *Scottish national dictionary* (1965), Wentworth & Flexner (1967), Chapman (1986) and Beale (1989). The 'anomalous' uses of *like* are also commonly mentioned in all-purpose dictionaries, such as *Longman dictionary of the English language* (1991), Wilson (1993) and *The Chambers dictionary* (1994), and are given a fairly broad description in OED. All the dictionaries refer to the marker uses of *like* as either 'non-standard',

'dialect', 'vulgar' or 'colloquial', and *like* is commonly accused of being a redundant and meaningless interjection or hesitation device (cf. OED 1989 VIII:946; *The Chambers dictionary* 1994:971; see also White 1955; Landy 1971; Major 1971; Pei 1973; Urdang 1979; Wood 1980). The following entry from Wilson's (1993) *Columbia guide to standard American English* may serve as a representative description:

The use of *like* as intensifier or interjection, however, is Casual at best and Substandard in its heaviest, most adolescent uses: *It was, like, three o'clock before we, like, got to the station.* (ibid: 272)

In the current investigation, it is not my primary concern to assess whether or not the pragmatic marker *like* should be considered part of standard English.⁴ But I do consider it an important aim to refute descriptions of *like* as a mere hesitational device or as a meaningless interjection, since, as will be shown in Section 5.2 in particular, the occurrence of this marker in an utterance can crucially constrain its communicative import.

It is important to note that the vast majority of examples given in the dictionaries are of a type which is virtually non-existent in COLT, namely *like* '[u]sed parenthetically to qualify a preceding statement' (OED 1989 VIII:946), as in '*He hasn't passed his examinations, like*' (ibid; see also Jespersen 1942:417f). The recent descriptions based on American English have much more in common with *like* as it occurs in COLT. This observation raises the possibility that we are dealing with two distinct traditions concerning the use of *like* as a pragmatic marker in British English, one of which stems from (rural) dialects of Britain. The other, represented in COLT, appears to be a relatively recent borrowing from American English. This latter assumption is, in fact, an underlying hypothesis of the current investigation, to be developed further in Section 5.1.3, and to be substantiated by the data presented in Sections 5.2 and 5.3. Within the American context, the use of *like* as a pragmatic marker is said to have its roots in New York City counterculture groups (jazz, cool and beat) in the 1960s (cf. Wentworth & Flexner 1967; Chapman 1986; OED 1989 VIII:946). But as early as 1973, Pei noted that it had 'spread to the point of appearing almost universally in the speech of younger-generation members who have no intellectual pretensions, and even of some who do' (1973:126).

The references listed above all restrict themselves to a brief mention of marker uses of *like*. I now turn to empirical studies which devote more

attention to this phenomenon. Most empirical studies of *like* are based on American English. These include Pei (1973), Crosby & Nyquist (1977), Butters (1982, 1989), Schourup (1985), Tannen (1986, 1989), Chafe (1988), Underhill (1988), Blyth et al. (1990), Romaine & Lange (1991), Yule & Mathis (1992), Ferrara & Bell (1995) and Dailey-O’Cain (2000). As a reflection of the assumed spread from American to British contexts, suggested above, we find far fewer, and much more recent, studies of *like* within the British context. These studies include Miller & Weinert’s (1995) study of Scottish English and my own previous studies of London English (Andersen 1997b, 1997c, 1997d, 1998b, 2000). In addition, Tagliamonte & Hudson (1999) compare Canadian and British English, and suggest that the quotative BE *like* has in recent decades spread from American to British English.

It is generally agreed that *like* as a marker may serve a variety of functions, and the emphases of the various previous studies vary considerably. The single function that has achieved most attention is no doubt the use of the combination BE *like* as a device for introducing reported speech, as in (121):

- (121) and miss goes, the other table and I **was like** <mimicking>oh come
Carla(</> hurry up and do the numbers inside, and I missed it I just
coul= I couldn’t catch up. (136404/1: 198)

Romaine & Lange (1991) argue that BE *like* has become a so-called ‘quotative complementiser’ as a result of a process of grammaticalisation. This construction may be equivalent to SAY, but what follows the quotative complementiser need not be an actual representation of a spoken utterance; internal thought may also be represented in this way. Romaine & Lange also observe that its use is particularly common in the speech of adolescent girls, who are supposedly the initiators of a spread of this linguistic feature (ibid: 269f). Blyth et al. (1990) also focus exclusively on the quotative construction BE *like*. They compare quantitatively its use with other quotative expressions such as *go*, *say* and *think* and make the interesting observation that ‘[t]he use of *be like* dropped off sharply after the age of 25 and disappeared altogether at the age of 38’ (ibid: 219). Tagliamonte & Hudson apply a similar variationist approach, and show that ‘the linguistic trajectory of the innovative form *be like* is remarkably parallel, not only across the British and Canadian corpora, but is also comparable with previous reports of this form in the United States’ (1999: 147). Other studies with exclusive focus on this

particular function include Butters (1982, 1989), Tannen (1986), Yule & Mathis (1992), Mathis & Yule (1994) and Ferrara & Bell (1995).

COLT offers opportunities to study the extent to which the grammaticalisation of *BE like* has occurred in the London dialect, and whether the quotative function is salient. However, preliminary investigations of the data suggest that, in most instances where the collocation *BE like* occurs, the phrase is not used with the quotative function but has more diverse functions (cf. 5.3.1.2). But the pragmatic marker *like*, as such, is very frequent. This would suggest that the quotative construction is a relatively late stage in the grammaticalisation process and that the occurrence of other less syntactically fixed uses precede the quotative use. The descriptions of pragmatic function in Section 5.2 and of diachrony in Section 5.3 are meant to shed light on the issue of chronological ordering of the various uses of the pragmatic marker *like*.

Another main function of *like* that has been described in the literature is as a device to achieve non-contrastive focus (as in *her car was like stuck on top*). Underhill considers marking off new entities or concepts to be its most salient function, and argues that '[w]ith overwhelming preponderance in the data, *like* is a new information marker' (1988:236). Working within the grammaticalisation framework, Meehan (1991) is another representative of this tradition. She argues, however, that in many of its uses '*like* still has enough meaning that it cannot be considered simply a marker of information organization' (1991:43), a position which is shared by the present author. (I question the role of *like* as a new information marker in Subsection 5.2.2.2.)

Thirdly, there is a tradition to describe *like* as a marker of 'non-equivalence', 'looseness' or 'approximation', represented by Schourup (1985), Andersen (1997d, 1998b, 2000) and Jucker & Smith (1998). The most comprehensive of these accounts is certainly that of Schourup (1985). He presents a long list of various uses, but stresses their similarity in function as markers of non-equivalence between a statement and what the speaker has in mind:

like is used to express a possible unspecified minor nonequivalence of what is said and what is meant. (ibid:42)

Schourup's analysis is comparable to the one I will present, inasmuch as it recognises a shared property of the various uses of the marker. Schourup deals thoroughly with examples where *like* precedes some sort of measurable or quantifiable unit, and where the presence of *like* imposes some element of

vagueness on this unit. His analysis also includes suggestions as to how to paraphrase *like* with a set of more or less substitutable adverbial glosses, such as *approximately*, *for example* or *SAY*. In the present study, I assess the adequacy of glosses such as these and argue that the various uses may be subsumed under a single description of *like* as a marker of non-literal resemblance (less-than-literal use of language). In two previous accounts, Andersen (1998b, 2000), I have suggested that the pragmatic marker *like* may qualify an expression both in terms of its conceptual content and in terms of its formal linguistic properties. In addition to its quotative, approximative and exemplifying functions, it has an important metalinguistic function of marking non-incorporation of, and psychological distance towards, the following linguistic expression, essentially a subjective/attitudinal function. All of these functions, I argue, can be subsumed under the notion of non-literal resemblance between utterance and thought. I maintain this position in the current investigation, and these ideas will be developed further in the sections that follow. The current account is more thorough than the previous ones, in that it is aimed at full accountability of corpus data and includes quantitative and sociolinguistic aspects.

Within the British context, there is, in addition to my own COLT-based research, Miller & Weinert's (1995) study of *like* based on Scottish English. However, the application of their analysis to the current data is problematic. They consider *like* a highlighting/focusing device (ibid: 374) with much the same pragmatic function as cleft sentences. In their material, the marker occurs 'where there has been misunderstanding and argument' (ibid: 378), and the function of *like* is to mitigate the process of clearing up misunderstanding and contradictions by highlighting certain sentence elements. In COLT, no such constraint applies, and the item appears much more freely, where no argument or misunderstanding is involved (cf. the examples above). Another important difference between Scottish English and Southern British English is that speakers of Scottish English commonly use the marker *like* in clause final position, as illustrated above. According to Hedevind, '[t]he usage is widespread in the North' (1967: 237). Miller and Weinert also refer to occurrences of the pragmatic marker *like* in older British English literature (1995: 37). Their discussion indicates that the analysis of *like* as a highlighting device can adequately account for this phenomenon in the literature as well as in northern varieties of British English. My observation that this analysis is not applicable to the current data supports the assumption

that there may be two different traditions involved concerning the use of *like* as a pragmatic marker in Britain.

Aspects of sociolinguistic variation have also to some extent been discussed in studies of *like* as a pragmatic marker. Several studies have pointed out female bias in the use of this marker, including Crosby & Nyquist (1977), Romaine & Lange (1991) and Ferrara & Bell (1995), while Blyth et al. (1990) and Dailey-O'Cain (2000) found that male speakers use it the most. Ferrara & Bell's (1995) study suggests, moreover, that the use of BE *like* is first adopted by females, but that the gender-based variation is gradually neutralised. It has also frequently been suggested that marker use of *like* predominates in the speech of the younger generations, e.g. Tannen (1986), Romaine & Lange (1991), Ferrara & Bell (1995), Andersen (1997d) and Dailey-O'Cain (2000). However, with the exception of Ferrara & Bell (1995), none of these studies applies a quantitative comparison with a comparable set of adult data, which is one of the aims of the current study. As regards social class differences, Tannen (1986) and Blyth et al. (1990) suggest that the use of *like* as a marker is a middle class phenomenon, common in so-called 'Valley Girl Talk'. To my knowledge, no study has empirically tested this assumption by means of variationist method, but my own pilot study, Andersen (1997d), shows a tendency towards higher social class predominance. However, it should be pointed out that this study was based on a subset of COLT, and it remains to be seen to what extent the tendency holds if we consider the entire corpus with respect to social class variation. (Another weakness of this preliminary study is that significance testing was not applied.) As regards ethnicity, Ferrara & Bell (1995) show that the use of quotative BE *like* in the United States was first adopted by white speakers but that black and Hispanic speakers were participating in its spread. In a British context, the use of *like* in relation to speakers' ethnicity has not previously been addressed, but this is another of the aims of the current investigation.

Other observations regarding the use of *like* as a marker are that it is more common in urban and suburban areas than in rural areas (Ferrara & Bell 1995), and that speakers generally have negative attitudes towards the use of *like* as a marker (Dailey-O'Cain 2000). According to a recent newspaper article *like* is both 'repetitive' and 'imprecise' (Knowlton 1999).

5.1.3 *An American borrowing?*

The previous studies reveal interesting facts regarding the historical development of *like* as a marker in English and shed light on the issue of the origin of this feature. Given the literature described above, a case can be made for claiming that the high frequency and versatility of *like* in the speech of London teenagers today must be considered the result of influence from American English, where it has spread rapidly, both socially and geographically, since the 1960s. The assumption that such a borrowing has occurred is suggested by Romaine & Lange (1991) and others, and is fundamental to Tagliamonte & Hudson, who argue that ‘the diffusion of *be like* beyond the United States presents a possible test case for the examination of putative ‘mega-trends’ currently underway as English increasingly becomes a global language’ (1999: 149). This is also an underlying hypothesis of the current investigation, and in this section I wish to add some further support to this hypothesis. However, it is also clear that the word *like* has been used as a pragmatic marker especially in northern dialects of the British Isles for at least two centuries. It seems unlikely that the ‘northern’ usage should have expanded into London English, since the usual spread of linguistic innovations is in the opposite direction, that is, outward from large urban centres. This is not to say that the marker did not appear in Southern British English before the onset of this apparent ‘mega-trend’.⁵ But in a London context, the use of *like* as a multifunctional marker whose capacity includes the quotative and metalinguistic functions is, to the best of my knowledge, first attested in Andersen (1997c, 1997d).

Further support for the hypothesis that we are dealing with an originally American innovation can be provided by consulting dictionaries which mention this feature. I checked a number of dictionaries, including etymological, dialect and slang dictionaries, and it is no exaggeration that they generally provide support for this assumption:⁶

like, *dial.* and *vulgar.* Used parenthetically to qualify a preceding statement: = ‘as it were’, ‘so to speak’. Also, *colloq.* (orig. sf *U.S.*), as a meaningless interjection or expletive. (OED 1989 VIII: 946)

like, Used at the end of a sentence in place of “as”, “as if”, “it will be as if”, etc. 1956: “When he dies, I’ll be robbed like. I’ll have no more father.” S. Bellow, *Seize the Day*, 92, 2 Used before nouns, adjectives, and pred.

adj., without adding to or changing the meaning of the sentence. *Thus, "It's like cold" = it is cold. Used by jazz, cool and beat groups, esp. in New York City. Prob. to avoid making a definite, forthright statement, part of the beat philosophy; reinforced by Yiddish speech patterns.*
(Wentworth & Flexner 1967: 319)

The dictionaries quoted here attribute the 'modifier' uses of *like* to originally American usage, specifically New York counterculture groups. Furthermore, they indicate a distinction between two different types of usage, *like* used to qualify a *preceding* statement as opposed to more general interjection/expletive uses. If we compare the use of this marker in present day London teenage speech with this feature in British English dialects, it becomes clear that such a distinction is justifiable and that only the latter ('American') type of use is found in the contemporary London data. The two types of use can be exemplified as follows:

(122) It was so dry that the crops were all burnt up, **like**. (Wright 1902: 602)

(123) They're **like** in the middle of the exam. (138905/1: 16)

The two examples differ with respect to the placement of the marker in the clause and the orientation of its modification (pragmatic scope). In the contemporary London data, examples of type (122), where *like* is used parenthetically to qualify a preceding statement, are virtually non-existent, but they occur with overwhelming frequency in descriptions of traditional dialects provided by, for instance Wright (1902), the *Scottish national dictionary* (1965) and OED, dating as far back as 1778. In fact, in COLT, the elements that are pragmatically qualified by *like* always immediately follow the marker, as exemplified by (123). Against this background, it is reasonable to distinguish between a 'traditional' and a 'novel' use of *like*, and the contemporary London data are aligned with the American pattern in this respect.

The clause-final *like* in the British Isles is generally referred to as a typically 'northern' phenomenon and is assumed to occur rarely in the south. As an interesting reflection of this, it can be noted that the handful of cases where *like* is actually backward-oriented in COLT are found in a passage where two speakers are cheerfully engaging in mimicking northern accent, a pursuit which in fact, brings about a clustering of clause-final *likes*:

- (124) Jenny: <mimicking Northern accent>I'm Rashira and I come from Birmingham. Ay, ay **get off like**, ay. <nv>laugh</nv> Ay, ay calm down ay. Ay alright alright alright.</>
<nv>laugh</nv>
- Caroline: <nv>laugh</nv>
- ?: Hooray. <nv>clapping</nv>
- Jenny: <mimicking Northern accent>Alright, alright ... alright alright, just calm down ay.</>
- Sabrina: <mimicking Northern accent>Why?</>
- Jenny: <mimicking Northern accent>Stop taking the mickey right?</>
- Sabrina: <mimicking Northern accent>Ay ay ay</>
- Jenny: <mimicking Northern accent>Right</>
- Sabrina: <mimicking Northern accent>Alright, alright, calm down.</>
- Jenny: <mimicking Northern accent>You know Wednesday?</>
- Sabrina: Yeah.
- Jenny: <mimicking Northern accent>You gonna go in for the rounders?</>
- Sabrina: <mimicking Northern accent>Yeah yeah, I will. What, is it this Wednesday?</>
- Jenny: <mimicking Northern accent>Yeah.</>
- Sabrina: <mimicking Northern accent>Yeah.</>
- Jenny: <mimicking Northern accent>One to one forty <unclear></>
- Jenny: <mimicking Northern accent>**Wha= what will we have to bring like?**</>
- Sabrina: <mimicking Northern accent>Your uniform, and Miss <name>'s doing it.</>
- Jenny: <mimicking Northern accent>Oh what won't we have to bring our PE kit or anything?</>
- Sabrina: <mimicking Northern accent>No</>
- Jenny: <mimicking Northern accent>No, **that's great, like.**</>
- Sabrina: <mimicking Northern accent>Right.</>
- Jenny: <mimicking Northern accent>Right.</> <nv>laugh</nv>
- Sabrina: Bye.
- Jenny: Bye.
- Sabrina: <unclear>.
- Jenny: <nv>laugh</nv>

- Sabrina: <mimicking Northern accent>Ay ay ay, **d'you ever watch it like?**</>
 Caroline: <unclear> conversation.
 Sabrina: Oh man! (140901/1, 17 & 24: 45–74)

We note from this extract that these teenagers seem to perceive clause-final *like* as a characteristic feature of Birmingham speech, on a par with the marker *ay* and various phonological features.

To sum up, I assume that the versatile and frequent pragmatic marker *like* is a fairly recent Americanism that has spread to contemporary London adolescent speech as a result of extensive cross-cultural contact on a large scale.

5.1.4 *An adolescent feature? Comparison with BNC/London*

To support my assumption that the use of *like* as a pragmatic marker is characteristic of adolescent conversation, as opposed to the conversations of adults, I now wish to consider the functions of *like* in the adult reference material, extracted from the BNC, before I move on to a more detailed description of *like*'s function, distribution and development in COLT (cf. 5.2–5.3). As mentioned, the form *like* is massively recurrent in COLT, and amounts to a total of approximately 3,484 tokens. In BNC/London, the corresponding figure is significantly lower, namely 2,079. Hence, even the raw figures suggest a marked difference between the two corpora; in COLT, *like* occurs with a frequency of 7.8 tokens per thousand words, while it occurs with a frequency of 4.4 tokens per thousand words in BNC/London. Knowing that *like* is a common pragmatic marker in teenage talk, it is of course tempting to immediately attribute this difference to the assumption that *like* is used in BNC/London exclusively with the 'ordinary' grammatical functions such as conjunction, preposition and verb. The aim of the current section is to see if this is the case, or if this very general impression needs to be modified. A notable caveat to this part of my research is that I did not have access to the BNC/London recordings, as these are not generally available. This made it impossible to check phonetic realisations and to listen to problematic examples.

In BNC/London, *like* as a pragmatic marker does occur, but it is much less frequent than in COLT; no more than 204 instances of the marker were identified in the adult reference material, amounting to 0.43 instances per

thousand words, as opposed to 2.65 in COLT. This difference between the two sets of data is significant at $p < 0.0001$ ($\chi^2 \geq 765.855$; two-tailed; d.f. = 1).

In addition to this overall difference in frequency, there are some interesting distributional facts specific to BNC/London that should be noted. Firstly, although the intention here is not to compare speaker groups within BNC/London, it should be pointed out that the tokens of the pragmatic marker *like* that do occur tend to be spoken by speakers in their thirties and early forties. In fact, 83 per cent of the tokens of the pragmatic marker *like* are uttered by speakers aged 41 or lower. This shows that this linguistic feature has to some extent been adopted by adult speakers in London, but to a very little extent by people over 45.

Secondly, judging by the distribution of *like* in BNC/London, the use of *like* as a marker is largely concentrated in the speech of only a few individuals. Three speakers, two female and one male, aged 34, 38 and 41 respectively, produce almost half the tokens of the marker.⁷ This may be seen as an indication that this feature becomes established in the speech of certain members of an age group before it spreads to other members of that age group. A more detailed, preferably longitudinal, study of *like* in adult conversation would be necessary in order to add support to this assumption, however.

Thirdly, and importantly, the pragmatic marker *like* has a narrower range of functions in BNC/London than in COLT. The functional properties of *like* are the topic of Section 5.2, but at this point it should be mentioned that some functions are non-existent in BNC/London. In the adult material, some tokens of *like* with exemplificatory, approximative and hesitational functions were identified (see 5.2.2 for a description of functional properties), but no instances of *like* with a quotative or metalinguistic function were found. The grammaticalised quotative construction *BE like* does not occur at all in this material, and the collocation *it's like*, which is frequent in COLT, does not appear to operate as a fixed unit in BNC/London.

Finally, the use that has been described above as 'traditional' on the grounds that it was non-existent in COLT, i.e. *like* used parenthetically to qualify a preceding statement, was found to occur in BNC/London:

(125) Does he pay you extra for doing car **like**? (BDKB1:PS01A)

(126) Cos I don't drink a lot of water **like**. (BDKB1:PS01C)

There are 16 tokens of this type of use in the adult material, and they are all, with one exception, uttered by speakers aged 47 or older. This seems to

support my claim that there is a 'traditional' dialectal usage of *like* that differs from the forward-referring use that dominates present day adolescent speech. However, my data also show that the 'traditional' usage cannot be considered exclusively a northern phenomenon, as it can be seen to occur among older speakers in the south as well.

To conclude, COLT and BNC/London differ greatly with respect to the use of *like* as a marker, both as regards its overall frequency and its social and functional distribution. The data clearly justify the description of the pragmatic marker *like* as primarily an adolescent speech phenomenon in London. Of course, it remains to be seen which subgroups in COLT apply it the most, an issue that is addressed in Section 5.3.2. Also, the functionally distributional patterns in the BNC/London data suggest that the quotative complementiser is a relatively recent usage of the marker that is adopted later than the other functions. In Sections 5.2.3 and 5.3.1, I consider the distributional properties of the marker *like* in COLT, with a view to shedding more light on this issue.

5.1.5 *Summary and further aims*

The aim of the current chapter is to give a comprehensive account of both the use and the development of the pragmatic marker *like* in London teenage English. (My previous studies, Andersen 1997c, 1997d, 1998b, 2000, can be seen as precursors to the current study.) It is assumed that a scrutiny of this marker may lead to new insights into its development in a British context. COLT was recorded in 1993, and a comprehensive study of the COLT data with respect to this particular feature gives a good opportunity to study what is, in all likelihood, an ongoing process of change (reanalysis and linguistic borrowing), and to draw conclusions as to which social groups are the promoters of this change. The current approach is meant to be innovative in several respects. I will give a broad account of all uses of the pragmatic marker *like* from the point of view of their contribution to utterance interpretation and subjective and textual (and, to a much lesser extent, interactional) meanings. I will apply quantitative corpus methodology and statistical method in order to assess the syntactic integratedness of *like* and in order to assess which of its functions, e.g. the quotative, approximative, exemplificatory or other, is prevailing in London teenage speech. Moreover, I will consider variation between the different speaker groups that occur in COLT.

5.2 Pragmatic functions

5.2.1 Introduction: is *like* a 'filler'?

The following descriptions of *like* can serve as a useful starting point for the discussion of its functions in discourse:

In spoken English, people sometimes say *like* when they are hesitating or when they are thinking about what to say next. This is a very informal use, which many speakers of English consider to be incorrect. *Collins Cobuild English language dictionary* (1987: 842)

Like: ... Expression used in sentences as a filler or hesitation word instead of "uhmm", has no real meaning. (Landy 1971: 120)

It is not my intention to reject the view that *like* can collocate with planning difficulties, false starts and self repairs. Several examples from COLT suggest that a motivating factor for the use of *like* may be difficulties in planning or the search for the right word. This observation corroborates Schourup's (1985) characterisation of *like* as a so-called 'evincive', an item which indicates that the speaker is engaged in thinking:

- (127) If I leave half past ten it's gon=, it's gonna be **like** take us time to go home cos it's down the village innit (139604/1: 62)
- (128) But tonight I'll prob= tomor= like, yesterday I went to bed at about ten, and (132707/1: 272)

In (127), *like* occurs where a speaker cuts off a verb phrase and resumes talk with a different lexical verb (TAKE); hence it accompanies a minor self repair. In (128), *like* separates the utterance's main bulk of propositional meaning from two preceding false starts. Given examples such as these, it must be acknowledged that *like* may occur in connection with false starts and self repairs. (For a fuller account, see 5.2.2.4.) However, the descriptions of *like* as a mere filler or a hesitation device is essentially insufficient for at least three reasons.

Firstly, an overwhelming number of tokens of the pragmatic marker *like* occur where neither speed of production nor discourse coherence suggest that there are any planning difficulties involved:

- (129) Those are awful. Especially when the one next to you has got **like** forty four inch legs, and size B bra, you're standing there and going, okay (141703/11:7)

Here, *like* occurs in the midst of a continuous and rapid flow of speech and is not prosodically separated from the rest of the utterance (a fact that is reflected by the lack of commas in the transcription); hence the on-line production of the utterance does not cause the speaker much difficulty. In fact, it is highly common that *like* occurs between elements that are constituents of the same clause and is pronounced with the same efficiency of deliverance as the 'real' constituents of that clause. This observation should be an incentive to look for other explanations for its frequent occurrence in conversation than as a mere hesitational interjection.

Secondly, and more importantly, *like* can be assigned meanings that we cannot associate with filled pauses like *er* or *erm* (cf. Clark 1996). Its meaning is one which pertains to the relation between a speaker's thought and the external representation of this thought and is crucially linked with subjectivity and propositional attitude. I claim that *like* plays a role in the process of utterance interpretation, in that it instructs the hearer to opt for a less-than-literal interpretation of the utterance, and it may signal the speaker's mildly dissociative attitude towards a chosen expression. It is this aspect of subjectivity that will be the primary concern of the current section on the pragmatic functions of *like*. Its use will be accounted for with respect to notions such as loose talk and interpretive use, and it will be argued that *like* as a marker may even have truth-conditional implications and that its omission would lead to pragmatic anomaly in some contexts.

Thirdly, the interpretation of *like* as a mere hesitation device cannot explain the synchronic and diachronic facts that can be extrapolated from a careful study of its use in present day English conversation. To describe this item as a meaningless verbal filler obscures important aspects of its development and distributional characteristics. A number of examples suggest that *like* carries traces of an original lexical meaning, 'similar to', which has been semantically weakened in the marker uses. The notion of similarity is faintly present, I argue, when *like* is used as a marker of loose use, approximation, exemplification, etc, and the original lexical meaning and the more abstract meaning of non-literal resemblance are obviously conceptually related. The fact that traces of the original meaning persist suggests that the distribution

of *like* is not as random as that of hesitational devices like *eh* and *uhm*, and its use cannot be due to planning difficulties only. It is my intention to apply statistical method to account for the systematicity of its distribution and thereby attempt to show that certain grammatical environments favour the use of *like* (cf. 5.3.1).

This is not meant to reject the assumption that the use of *like* can be motivated by planning difficulties. To some extent it is true that *like* is 'a word that bridges gaps in spoken sentences' (Major 1971:77). This is precisely what I consider to be its main textual potential; it has a capacity to provide a link between propositional elements that may otherwise be syntactically or logically unrelated. However, the hesitational function can be seen as an extension of *like*'s capacity for putting what follows into a metalinguistic focus (cf. 5.2.2.2) and marking that the most relevant interpretation is the one where the explicit meaning of the utterance is not taken too literally. Thus, the association between *like* and planning difficulties can be viewed in a more positive light, as a signal that the adolescents are metalinguistically conscious, concerned with the appropriateness of linguistic expressions, and perhaps even aware of their relative inexperience in language use. Also, the use of *like* can be linked to politeness, as it provides speakers with a tool for not sounding too assertive but expressing themselves with a tentative attitude.

The current section (5.2) has a two-fold objective. Firstly, I wish to show that although *like* has several different functions in speech, such as indicating approximation, suggesting an alternative or introducing reported speech, a general description of this pragmatic marker can be provided (cf. 5.2.2). My account rests on the basic assumption that the various uses can justifiably be subsumed under a precise, uniform description of how *like* contributes to the relevance of utterances. This part of the analysis involves an investigation of how the marker *like* has a bearing on the process of utterance interpretation, more specifically how it is associated with the relevance-theoretic notion of non-identical resemblance, and I propose an analysis of *like* as a pragmatic marker which encodes a procedural constraint on the explicatures of utterances. Secondly, I wish to describe how the various functions of *like* are distributed in the corpus (cf. 5.2.3), in order to substantiate the qualitative analysis provided in Section 5.2.2.

5.2.2 Like and interpretive resemblance

In this section I wish to argue that the most salient aspect of meaning that is communicated by the pragmatic marker *like* is a subjective one. *Like* is essentially concerned with the relation that exists between a speaker and the proposition that she presents at large, or between a speaker and some specific aspect of that proposition. What my data suggest is that *like* can play a crucial role in facilitating processes of pragmatic inference. *Like* is a marker whose main contribution to utterance meaning is as a signal that the relation between an utterance and its underlying thought is not a one-to-one relation, but a relation of non-identical resemblance. The pragmatic marker *like* provides speakers whose dialect includes this linguistic resource with a means to dissociate themselves slightly from the expressions contained in the utterance, and the marker suggests that the speaker is not vouching for all aspects of the utterance. *Like* can contribute to utterance meaning in different ways, by signalling the need for loosening or enrichment of concepts encoded by the following linguistic material, or by signalling that this material contains a metarepresentation. It provides a signal of a certain psychological distance to the following lexical material, either in terms of its conceptual or its formal properties. The discrepancy between the utterance and the thought it represents presents itself in two different guises, either as a conceptual discrepancy or a linguistic form discrepancy, and these will be discussed in turn (cf. 5.2.2.1 and 5.2.2.2). Two special types of use, the quotative and the hesitational *like*, will also be subsumed under the general description of non-identical resemblance (cf. 5.2.2.3 and 5.2.2.4). As my account of *like*'s pragmatic function rests crucially on the relevance-theoretic notions of loose talk, interpretive use, non-identical resemblance and ad hoc concepts, I will begin this section with a general description of these notions.

The relevance-theoretic notion of loose talk presupposes a distinction between descriptive and interpretive use of language, a distinction which can be illustrated by the following example:

- (130) (Mary is reading a newspaper.)
Peter: What does the newspaper say?
Mary: Labour will win the next general election.

Mary's utterance is pragmatically ambiguous. Mary is either reporting what it says in the newspaper or she is presenting a belief of her own. If she is

presenting the view of the newspaper, her utterance contains an interpretation of what somebody else (e.g. the newspaper editors, a particular journalist, etc) holds to be true. Her utterance is then an interpretation of an attributed thought, and Mary is using language interpretively. Alternatively, the utterance could be taken to present what Mary herself believes to be true, in which case she would be using language descriptively.

Let us assume that Mary is indeed reporting the view of the newspaper in (130). Then there are a number of ways in which her utterance may correspond to what is actually written in the newspaper. For instance, it may be a verbatim rendering of a headline or an extract from an article, it may be a summary of an article, it may be the general impression of the political view of the newspaper that Mary got from reading it, and so forth. Her utterance can therefore be more or less faithful to the newspaper text. In any case, however, Mary's utterance is expected to share at least some properties (semantic or logical) with what she is interpreting; that is, her utterance shares at least some implications with the attributed thought it represents. Whenever an utterance shares some, but not all implications of the thought it represents, it is a case of *non-identical resemblance* between thought and utterance; i.e. it is a case of less-than-literal/loose use of language in relevance-theoretic terms.

Relevance theory has generalised the notion of less-than-literality to apply to utterances in general. An utterance is an interpretive expression of a speaker's thought, and any utterance can be a more or less precise interpretation of the thought it represents. The utterance is only strictly literal if it has the same propositional form as the thought: 'To say that an utterance is less than strictly literal is to say that its propositional form shares some, but not all, of its logical properties with the propositional form of the thought it is being used to represent' (Sperber & Wilson 1995:233). Hence, for the purpose of achieving optimal relevance, a speaker may produce an utterance which corresponds to a thought — something she holds to be true — without the utterance itself being something she literally holds to be true. For instance, if someone is asked for the time and opts for the strictly false answer *Ten thirty* when her watch shows the digits *10:31:04*, she is engaging in loose talk by offering a loose interpretation of what she believes to be true. In this case, loose use of language is a result of the speaker aiming at optimal relevance by providing an answer which requires less processing effort than a strictly literal one would do. The only requirement on the utterance is that

it yields a sufficient set of contextual effects in the hearer's cognitive environment, at the same time requiring no gratuitous processing effort.

In relevance-theoretic terms, the proposition expressed by an utterance is viewed as an 'interpretation' of the thought of the speaker. In conversation generally, speakers tend to opt for less-than-literal interpretations of their thoughts; that is, the relation between the propositional form of the utterance and the thought it corresponds to is rarely an identity relation. In fact, literalness, or identity between the propositional form and its underlying thought, is viewed as 'a limiting case rather than a norm' (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 232). Less-than-literal use of language incorporates not only the poetic use of metaphor, hyperbole and other tropes that are found in the literature, but also the more trivial, but highly common, figurative uses of everyday conversation. Examples of the latter may be rough approximations (*Ian left at ten thirty*), metaphorical uses (*That was a wicked film!*) hyperbole (*I've got nothing to wear tonight*) and truisms (*Reading your manuscript is going to take some time*). The common denominator of less-than-literal uses of language is that there is a (slight) mismatch between the concept that is encoded in the language (e.g. 'nothing' = \emptyset) and the one that figures in the speaker's thought and that she wishes to communicate ('nothing' = nothing that is suitable for the occasion). They stand in a non-identical resemblance relation to each other and share at least some logical or contextual implications. But this mismatch is not likely to pose much difficulty to the rational communicator, because

our powerful inferential capabilities enable us to construct ad hoc concepts out of lexically encoded concepts during our on-line interpretation of utterances. (Carston 1996a: 62)

Ad hoc concepts are the results of two complementary inferential processes that are crucial to the identification of propositional meaning, notably enrichment (also known as 'strengthening') and loosening (also known as 'weakening'). Importantly, these processes contribute to the identification of the propositional meaning of utterances, alongside other inferential processes, such as reference assignment, disambiguation and recovery of ellipted material (cf. 2.3.1). In communication generally, it is rarely the case that the propositional content of an utterance is exhausted by what is linguistically encoded. In everyday conversation, given its commonly elliptical and fragmentary nature, the linguistic contribution may be particularly small, and

hearers must put a relatively great amount of effort into inferential processes in order to fill the gap between encoded linguistic content and the proposition expressed.

It is in the processes of ad hoc concept construction that the pragmatic marker *like* commonly plays the role of facilitator. I argue below that *like* is a procedural indicator of the lack of a one-to-one relation between a thought and the external representation of this thought and that it triggers processes of loosening and enrichment.

5.2.2.1 *The role of like in loosening and enrichment processes*

As suggested above, speakers can be expected to engage in loose talk, because it is a way of optimising relevance. It is evident from the data at hand that there is a strong connection between the use of the pragmatic marker *like* and loose use of language. The following examples may serve as illustrations:

(131) My lowest ever was **like** forty. (140303/1: 42)

(132) For the past week we've had **like** an hour's discussion totally nothing!
(142705/4: 27)

On the basis of discourse context, we can assume that the expression *forty* in (131) is a *rough approximation* of the score which the speaker got in a test that she had to go through. By presenting the score as a rough approximation, the speaker avoids a representation of the score that might be more exact, but perhaps also unreasonably pedantic, let us say 38.5. As such exactitude would not benefit the hearer in terms of additional cognitive effects (i.e. effects that could not be acquired by means of the loose interpretation), the speaker, in consistency with the principle of relevance, refrains from giving the more accurate alternative. Such a representation would put the hearer to unnecessary processing effort and would not be worth the while. The function of *like* is precisely to signal that the speaker is opting for a loose interpretation of her beliefs. *Like* appears to provide an explicit signal of a discrepancy between the propositional form of the utterance and the thought it represents. This observation is fundamental to my analysis of this marker. In very general terms, then, *like* can be described as a marker of non-identical resemblance between utterance and underlying thought. *Like* can, as in (131), take in its pragmatic scope a numeral phrase or some other measurable unit, thus imposing a truth-conditional qualification

on this element. But, as was shown in Andersen (1998b), the marker can also take in its scope a number of other and very different clause elements, or a proposition as a whole. Variation in the amount and nature of the material that falls within the scope of the marker makes it possible to subcategorise the use of *like* as a marker. A possible subclassification is suggested in the following discussion and is applied in Section 5.2.3.

Now, the pragmatic marker *like* is not, of course, a prerequisite for a loose use interpretation of (131). Given the right context, the hearer might just as well interpret *forty* as an approximation even if the pragmatic marker was not present. But what *like* does is to provide the hearer with a cue that the most relevant interpretation in this context is a less-than-literal one. It guides the hearer towards the intended interpretation, namely that the numeral *forty* corresponds roughly to the actual score. It seems that the relevance-theoretic notion of procedural meaning captures well the function of this pragmatic marker, since what *like* does is guide the hearer towards the intended propositional meaning. In Subsection 5.2.2.5, I attempt to substantiate this view with reference to the fact that the meaning of *like* cannot easily be brought to consciousness and that it cannot be metalinguistically negated.

In order for the hearer to arrive at the intended interpretation of (131) and (132), a process of ad hoc concept construction is required, specifically loosening of the *like*-modified lexical concepts *forty* and *an hour*, respectively. The inferential characteristics of this process is extensively described in Carston (1996a). Briefly put, loose use involves relaxation of linguistically encoded meaning. The lexically encoded concept *an hour* has certain logical and encyclopaedic properties, for instance ‘denotes temporal duration’, ‘equals 60 minutes’, etc. However, only some of these properties are contained in the concept of ‘an hour’ which is communicated in (132). Sorting out which properties are relevant and which are not is a matter for pragmatic inference. This process is governed by the principle of relevance, to the effect that those properties that do not yield adequate contextual effects are rejected and cannot be considered to be communicated in this case. The result of the loosening is an ad hoc concept ‘an hour’ that is intended as a constituent of the propositional meaning of (132). Hence, the utterance involves a non-identical resemblance between an encoded concept and a concept that figures in the speaker’s thought.

(131) and (132) above are examples that could be analysed quite straightforwardly as cases of rough approximation. It is clear that the relation

between the utterance and its underlying thought is one of non-literal resemblance, and that there is a conceptual discrepancy involved. Quite commonly, the pragmatic marker *like* introduces material that is conceptually loose but does not amount to measurable approximation. In some cases the loose use marker pragmatically qualifies the inherent semantic features of the following phrase:

- (133) Well, really, how to make a cup of tea is **like** the same thing as making a cup of coffee. (135903/1: 17)
- (134) No it's not that bad the game actually it's alright but, it is a bit, sort of **like** boring when it's, when you play it every day. (13390/1: 561)

Making coffee and tea are similar but not identical pursuits, and this non-identity relation is captured by the pragmatic marker *like* in (133). Just as in (131) and (132), the speaker is using *like* as a means of making explicit that her utterance contains a loose interpretation of what she believes. She is assuming that the chosen expression achieves enough contextual effects to communicate her point, namely that the two activities are roughly identical. She could have chosen a more precise description of similarities and differences, but giving such a comprehensive account is not the issue here, and such a description would come at the expense of overall relevance. Thus, *like* has the function of making explicit to the hearer that the phrase which follows it contains a loose interpretation of the speaker's belief. Similarly, in (134), the speaker is not saying that the described activity is downright boring but reduces the force of the adjective by means of *like*; hence *like* brings about a qualification of the concept *boring* (along with the other modifiers *a bit* and *sort of*).⁸ Technically, the *loose use* of a phrase involves the construction of an ad hoc concept whose logical or encyclopaedic features are only partly overlapping with those contained in the lexical concept encoded. The hearer is instructed to use the phrase as input in a process of constructing an ad hoc concept which shares some logical properties with its literal meaning and to, as it were, knock out some of the logical properties of the linguistically encoded concept. For example, the expression *the same thing* is intended to convey a meaning equivalent to 'the same thing except that the main ingredient is coffee rather than tea' or similar. The extension of the ad hoc concept may, of course, be difficult to grasp in some cases, and construing it is a matter for the pragmatic competence of the hearer.

There are other uses of *like* where it precedes what appears to be an *exemplification* of some kind, and where it seems appropriate to paraphrase *like* with *for example* (rather than *roughly*, *approximately*, which was fitting in the examples above):

- (135) Mates of theirs, if there's a fight, they come back with blades and that and then **like**, baseball bats, hammers, and they get ready for a fight but they're all gone. (135803/1: 9)
- (136) I know but it wouldn't be any point if someone wanted to be, **like**, a doctor and they got into a nursery place (136405/2: 52)

Thematic and discourse contextual considerations make it clear that we are not dealing with the ordinary preposition *like* in these examples; the things which *they come back with* in (135) are not something that is 'similar to' baseball bats and hammers, but they are indeed baseball bats and hammers. And the speaker of (136) is not talking about someone who wants to be 'similar to' a doctor, but, indeed a doctor. These examples illustrate *like* as a pragmatic marker whose function is to suggest that the following noun phrases are to be construed as exemplifications of wider categories. As in the approximation cases, *like* indicates that there is a slight discrepancy between the following linguistically encoded concept and that which the hearer is expected to pragmatically infer, and which is intended as a constituent of the propositional meaning of the utterance. But the exemplification uses are conceptually different from the ones considered so far, because here the noun phrases that are preceded by *like* pick out one of a larger set of alternatives, in (135) the set of items that 'they' come back with to use as weapons in a fight, and in (136), various professions which people can choose from. The less-than-literal interpretation seems justified, because the external realisations *baseball bats*, *hammers* and *a doctor* are only partly consistent with the concepts the speaker has in mind and wishes to communicate. What the hearer is instructed to do in (135) is to construct an ad hoc concept, using information that is stored under the encyclopaedic entries for *baseball bats* and *hammers*, perhaps something in the direction of 'available items that are imaginable as weapons in a fight', where *baseball bats* and *hammers* would be eligible candidates, since our general knowledge of baseball bats and hammers include the information that they can indeed be used as weapons (in addition to their more typical uses). Similarly, in (136), *like* before *a doctor*, instructs the hearer to look for a semantically wider

concept than the one which is linguistically encoded, perhaps something in the direction of ‘professions within health care’. This qualifies as non-identical resemblance because of the non-identity between the linguistically encoded concept *a doctor* and the communicated concept, i.e. ‘a doctor or some other health care profession’. This is also a clear case of loosening, since there are many features contained in *a doctor* that are not contained in ‘professions within health care’.

Like in connection with rough approximations and exemplifications can be viewed as different subtypes whose common denominator is that they involve non-identical resemblance between the encoded and the communicated concepts. Some authors have commented on these uses of *like*, for instance Schourup (1985), Chafe (1988), Meehan (1991) and Andersen (1997d, 1998b), but I would now like to focus on two different subtypes which, to my knowledge, have not been previously recognised, but which seem equally pervasive and significant in the data. These types of use follow naturally from the fact that *like* accompanies less-than-literal communication, notably *like* in connection with *metaphors*, (137)–(140) and *hyperbolic use*, (141)–(143):

- (137) And Lottie goes well if you don't hurry up with him I'm gonna go and have him, if you don't hurry up, you know, and just **like** marched over I said Charlotte give me a break. (142704/1: 125)
- (138) but I just don't think that all, everyone else should be **like** advertising the fact (142706/7: 248)
- (139) He said oh she's just, you know she, she's **like** sailed through (name of school), she gets out of everything. (142602/1: 402)
- (140) Erm, and, yeah two birds I met in Portugal and and then Kathy just **like** stormed out. It was a really insensitive thing to say. Don't you think? (142604/1: 62)
- (141) Yeah but you imagine it you're going out with someone and you see them **like** every day. And then during the holidays you won't be able to see them. (142604/6: 19)
- (142) It's just **like** all sticking out all over the place. (142005/2: 45)
- (143) You know what I mean it's **like** all plotted and you have like fifteen minutes with them then half an hour and then, it's awful. (142604/1: 24)

The claim that these examples are different from the approximation and exemplification cases, in terms of the nature of the less-than-literality they involve, is supported by the fact that the glosses *approximately* or *for example*, which were suggested above, do not fit. Compare:

*Kathy just *approximately/*for example stormed out*

*It's just *approximately/*for example all sticking out all over the place.*

Rather, I would like to suggest that the meaning of *like* corresponds more closely to *virtually* in these examples, in the sense of '[i]n effect, though not formally or explicitly' (OED 1989 XIX: 675). The use of *like* in connection with metaphors, such as *marched over*, *advertising*, *sailed through* and *stormed out*, are quite common in the data, a fact that coheres well with my analysis of *like* as a marker of less-than-literal use of language. As mentioned in the introduction to Section 5.2.2, metaphors involve non-identical resemblance between an encoded concept (e.g. '*sailed through* school') and the communicated concept (e.g. '*attended* school *without much difficulty*'). It is equally clear that *every day* (as a description of how often you meet somebody), *all sticking out* (as a description of somebody's hair) and *all plotted* (as a description of someone's daily routines) are not to be construed literally but are cases of hyperbolic loose use. It should also be pointed out that there may be uses of *like* in front of numeral expressions that indicate hyperbole rather than rough approximation:

- (144) Danny: No they actually listen, listen. Like all their films came, like Alex's film of er Spain, empties the camera, basically puts it in this pile they keep in a drawer somewhere of films okay? Every now and then when they feel like it, take a handful of films and get them developed.
- Muhammad: <nv>laugh</nv>
- Danny: It's like the re= most latest ones have been from **like** six years ago.
- Muhammad: <nv>laugh</nv>
- Danny: Just bloody irritating. (132409/1: 34)

In this extract, Danny is expressing his opinion that Alex' family have a tendency to have their films developed unreasonably late. Although an interpretation equivalent to 'approximately six years ago' does not seem

inadequate here, we may also be justified in treating this as a case where *six years ago* is used as a hyperbolic expression intended to emphasise the amount of time involved, i.e. equivalent to ‘a very long time ago’ or ‘ages ago’.

According to Carston’s (1996a) analysis, *enrichment* of vague expressions is the inferential process which constitutes a complementary counterpart to loosening. Loosening and enrichment are distinguished on the grounds that the former involves knocking out certain features from a lexically encoded concept that is too specific (e.g. *a doctor* meaning ‘health care profession’), while the latter, conversely, involves adding features to achieve an ad hoc concept that is more specific than the lexically encoded concept (e.g. *bachelor* meaning ‘eligible bachelor’). In other words, the outcome of enrichment is an ad hoc concept that is semantically narrower than the encoded concept. We have seen that *like* commonly accompanies loosening, and the question is whether it can also be used to indicate the need for an enrichment process. Indeed, tokens of *like* in the data suggest that this may be the case:

- (145) So he goes okay, and he **like** prepared himself and goes no I can’t do it in here. (142704/1: 131)
- (146) I was just talking to her downstairs and I was asking her **like** the differences between here and the States, you know the boar= cos she was in a boarding school before. (142602/1: 147)
- (147) Well why’s he got on **like** a big thing round his neck? (142103/4: 371)

In (146) *like* seems to signal that *the differences between here and the States* gives a fairly rough sketch of what the speaker was asking about. She is assuming that the chosen expression achieves enough contextual effects to communicate her point, namely that she was asking questions about what it is like in America. She could have chosen a more precise description, but giving a comprehensive account of the things she explicitly asked about is not the issue here, and such a description would come at the expense of overall relevance. Similarly, in (145), *prepared himself* appears to provide a rough guide to the nature of the event that took place, but tells us little about the characteristics, duration, etc. of the preparation. And the expression *a big thing* in (147) appears not to be specific enough to yield sufficient contextual effects (as a description of what turns out to be somebody’s beard). The more specific aspects of meaning of these expressions must be pragmatically inferred.

To arrive at more specific interpretations of the concepts *prepared himself*, *the differences between here and the States* and *a big thing*, the hearer must construct ad hoc concepts with a more restricted meaning than that of the respective lexical concepts. In other words, the communicated concept is in a subset relation to the concept encoded by the expressions used. In the contexts of (145) to (147), *like* may function as an incentive to contextually enrich these vague expressions, and the marker appears to signal that such an inferential process may pay off in terms of contextual effects.

In some cases, the loose interpretation signalled by *like* does not qualify one specific element of the proposition, but applies to a larger compositional unit, such as a verb and its complements:

- (148) Scott said to me if Paul **like** tries to take on Ollie he's just gonna break it up. (139801/1: 69)

In (148) the speaker is signalling looseness in the interpretation of a predicate, namely that Paul *tries to take on Ollie*. Here, we cannot identify a single element that *like* qualifies, but the looseness/exemplification is associated with a potential initiative on the part of Paul.⁹ The function of the marker is to signal that the utterance offered is expected to yield enough contextual effects, even though it is not put forward as an accurate description of a possible state of affairs referred to in the conditional clause. The point is that it is sufficiently accurate as an interpretation of the speaker's thought, and does not require an unnecessary explication of Paul's potential initiative, thus reducing the effort required to process the utterance.

So far, I have considered uses of *like* where an element which is part of a proposition falls within its pragmatic scope. But *like* also appears to have a capacity to qualify whole propositions, be they declarative or interrogative:¹⁰

- (149) No, no **like** you you sort of hang out with Patrick and Alan yeah for one night and (133704/1: 15)
- (150) Yeah I know, I mean but **like** where am I supposed to put it? (133906/1: 69)
- (151) cos, erm, I need to do some stuff today, **like** I need to get some rope. (132503/1: 212)

My claim is that the same analysis can be applied in these examples, the difference being that *like* does not have a narrow scope over a particular

sentence component, but it imposes some element of looseness on the propositions at large. The proposition *you hang out with Patrick and Alan for one night* in (149) is meant to make certain assumptions concerning a certain state of affairs more manifest to the hearer, and is taken to be the least effort-consuming way of doing so. In introducing the proposition with *like*, the speaker is adding to the utterance a pragmatic attribute which signals that the state of affairs described in the proposition only in certain respects resembles the set of assumptions she intends to make manifest. It may not be a very accurate or precise way of expressing the thought of the speaker, and it is as if *like* communicates that ‘what I have in mind is something like the following’, or in the case of (150), ‘what I want to ask you is something like the following’. This suggests that *like* can indicate looseness directed towards propositions at large. *Like* in (151) also appears to qualify an entire proposition but serves an exemplifying function, indicating that *I need to get some rope* provides one example of the tasks the speaker has in mind.

To sum up this subsection, *like* can provide an explicit signal of a thought/utterance discrepancy. It signals to the hearer that the following material must undergo contextual enrichment or loosening, i.e. that there is a non-identical resemblance relation between a linguistically encoded concept and the concept that figures in the speaker’s thought and that is intended as a constituent of the proposition expressed. Hence, the hearer must construct an ad hoc concept as part of the interpretation process. The interpretive resemblance can involve one of a few subcategories that have been suggested, namely approximation of a measurable unit, loose use of a lexical expression, exemplification, metaphorical use, hyperbolic use and enrichment of a vague expression. Thus, *like* can on different occasions be more or less equivalent to adverbials such as *roughly*, *approximately*, *for example* and *virtually*.

5.2.2.2 *Like and metalinguistic use*

So far, I have considered fairly straightforward cases of loose use, where there is a genuine discrepancy between the encoded lexical concept and the concept that figures in the speaker’s thought. We have seen that, in the case of loose use, the relation between what is encoded and what is communicated is one of non-identical resemblance between the content of what follows and the underlying thought. However, it is obvious that in many cases the speaker does not use *like* to signal that the following material is a conceptually loose rendering. Consider (152) and (153):

- (152) Did erm, did, Daniel just suddenly **like** ask you out or did someone get you together? (136601/5: 755)
- (153) It's **like** one day developing, right, and she hasn't got round to collecting them yet. (132409/1: 18)

It seems far-fetched to argue that the verb phrase *ask you out* in (152) is a loose rendering of a concept which a speaker has in mind. There appears to be complete overlap, in fact, between the linguistically encoded concept and the concept which the speaker wants to communicate. *Like* precedes a linguistic expression whose meaning is fairly clearcut and exact, and it would be difficult to argue that the semantic features contained in the encoded and the communicated concepts are in a non-identical resemblance relation to each other. Similarly, in (153), *like one day developing* does not mean 'approximately one day developing'. We cannot construe it as a case of approximation, even though *like* is followed by a numeral expression. To anyone who is not a photograph developer, *one day developing* means exactly that, as opposed to one hour developing or a week or whatever. By this utterance we understand that the film can be collected the day after it has been brought in and not 'more or less' one day after.

The question that presents itself is this. Can my claim that *like* is a marker of non-identical resemblance be maintained in the light of these examples? I would like to argue that these examples are also cases of non-identical resemblance, but the discrepancy concerns the formal properties of the following expression rather than its conceptual properties. In this connection, it should be noted that concepts, such as 'ask someone out' or 'one day developing' are complex psychological entities which have logical, encyclopaedic and linguistic properties (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1995: 85ff). Crucial to the current argument is the fact that concepts have a lexical entry, which 'contains information about the natural-language lexical item used to express it' and 'information about its syntactic category membership and co-occurrence possibilities, phonological structure, and so on' (ibid: 90). Although not explicitly pointed out in this quotation from Sperber & Wilson, information regarding style, register and the sociolinguistic properties of expressions are also stored under the lexical entry of concepts.

I now wish to argue that *like* in (152) and (153) above does indeed mark a discrepancy, but one that pertains to the linguistic form of the expression rather than its conceptual (logical and encyclopaedic) properties. In these

examples, and in examples to be presented below, *like* can be construed as a signal that the expression the speaker chooses may not be the most appropriate one, and that an alternative expression might communicate her ideas more efficiently. Given such an interpretation, there is a non-identical resemblance between the expression chosen and a potential, perhaps more appropriate, alternative. Analogously, *like* can be construed as a signal that the chosen expression does not fit readily into the linguistic repertoire of the speaker, i.e. that the speaker feels a minor discomfort with its use. On this latter interpretation, there is a non-identical resemblance between the expression the speaker chooses and a potential alternative expression that is fully internalised in her vocabulary. The potential alternative might be for instance a stylistically different expression, or one whose production would require less effort, given the speaker's linguistic abilities. These interpretations involve a discrepancy that pertains to the formal features of the lexical expression applied versus potential alternative expressions. I will refer to this type of use as the *metalinguistic use of like*.¹¹ Put differently, *like* has a function of putting the following expression in a metalinguistic focus. In the metalinguistic use, *like* concerns the speaker's relation to the proposition, not in terms of its propositional content as such (i.e. its logical or encyclopaedic properties), but in terms of its formal linguistic characteristics. Its function is thus primarily subjective.

Many examples where *like* does not qualify an expression in terms of its conceptual features have an echoic, metarepresentational feel to them. Consider the example with *one day developing*, for instance. Here it appears that *like* is used to put the following noun phrase in a metalinguistic focus; the utterance may well be construed as something like the following:

- (153) a. $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{It's } \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{that thing which is called} \\ \textit{that thing which might be called} \\ \textit{that thing which some people call} \\ \textit{that thing which grown-ups refer to as} \\ \textit{etc.} \end{array} \right\} \end{array} \right\} \textit{'one day developing'}$.

I am suggesting that the pragmatic marker *like* is applied in order to mark off metalinguistic use of expressions, in the way that it has been described in Carston's work on negation:

The correct generalization about the metalinguistic cases [of negation] is that the material in the scope of the negation operator, or some of it at least, is

echoically used, ... A representation is echoically used when it reports what someone else has said or thought and expresses an attitude to it. ... When it is a case of echoing an utterance there is a range of properties in addition to semantic or conceptual content that might be the target of the echo: linguistic factors such as phonetic, grammatical or lexical properties, aspects of dialect, register or style, and paralinguistic features such as tone of voice, pitch or other gestures, audible or visible. (Carston 1996b: 320)

Communication can involve several varieties of echoic use other than metalinguistic negation, including cases of mention, direct quotations, free indirect speech and echoic use in conditionals (cf. Fretheim 1997; Noh 1998). In some of these varieties, for instance metalinguistic negation, the echoing can be implicit; that is, there is no overt indicator of the metarepresentational nature of the utterance. We note from the quotation above that linguistic factors can be the target of an echo, and this is what seems to be the case in connection with the metalinguistic use of *like*. The impact of the pragmatic marker is in many ways equivalent to that of the adjective *so-called* (cf. *It's so-called "one day developing"*). This interpretation would imply that the speaker is implicitly echoing what someone else has said or might say; specifically she is echoing an expression used by other people but not used as readily by the speaker herself, in the case of (153) the expression *one day developing*. In other words, the utterance can be construed as a case of echoic use of a linguistic form without any specific attribution. This use of *like* enables the speaker to distance herself from the expression chosen and to mark it off as one which is not entirely internalised in her vocabulary.

Thus, *like* as a metalinguistic device allows the speaker to express an attitude of what Stubbs (1986) calls reduced 'lexical commitment' towards the linguistic material that falls in its scope. Consider (154):

- (154) and he he met this Thai girl, he was at Queenswood, er he'd met her before you see but he didn't **like**, fancy her but now he fancies her. (142002/1: 94)

The speaker seems to be saying that the feelings of the person talked about cannot be appropriately described as 'fancy her' at some point in the past, although he is likely to have shown some interest in her, but now, at the moment of speaking, such a description is appropriate. The rather elegant result of using *like*, is to invoke a scalar difference between different types of 'fancying' rather than conveying the meaning of opposition encoded in

the semantics of ‘not fancy her’ versus ‘fancy her’. The speaker attitude associated with the use of *like* in this case is not one of downright rejection of the material in its scope (as with metalinguistic negations like *Jane’s not happy; she’s ecstatic*), but rather concern as to its appropriateness.

Sometimes, *like* appears to be commenting on the linguistic properties of utterance, to the effect that the following material must be taken as one of a set of alternative modes of expression that may be different from the one chosen. Consider (155):

- (155) They were such a load of dicks when you first met them, I mean and they’re just **like** trying to impress all the time, and (142305/1: 10)

By qualifying the expression *trying to impress* by *like*, the speaker suggests that there may be alternative expressions that are just as fitting (or perhaps more fitting) than the one she chooses and thus marks a certain psychological distance towards the chosen expression. Aiming at optimal relevance, she is perhaps suggesting that a different wording might have communicated her ideas more efficiently or may have been more appropriate for sociolinguistic or stylistic reasons. It is as if the speaker is saying that ‘I do not guarantee that this is the most relevant/efficient mode of expression; there may be alternative expressions that may fit my communicative intentions just as well’.

The claim that *like* can have such a metalinguistic function can account for an important pattern in the data. We can often sense a mildly dissociative attitude towards the material that is metalinguistically marked. Hence *like* can achieve a psychological distancing effect, suggesting non-incorporation of the following lexical material. Why would speakers feel the need to mark such non-incorporation? What is the motivation for reduced ‘lexical commitment’, to use Stubbs’ (1986) term? It appears that cognitive, social or stylistic explanations may be equally relevant. Clearly, *like* readily enables the speaker to signal that the following linguistic material is of a type which is unusual for her to utter or if she is not entirely confident with the use of a particular word. But the speaker may also indicate that there is something stylistically or sociolinguistically inadequate about the chosen expression, as if to say that ‘this expression may well be the right one to use, but it’s not really *my* language’. Relevant examples are given in (156) through (158):

- (156) Claire: Thing is there’s no way Gemma and <name> are gonna be allowed to stay upstairs when they’ve got boys downstairs.

- Kath: Why, do you think they'll, <name>'s a <laughing> paedophile or something</>?
- Claire: No but I mean it just can't be that.
- Kath: Why not?
- Claire: It's **like** not moral.
- Kath: Not <laughing>moral</>?
- Claire: Cos that's why they had to move out of this house in the first ...
- Kath: Place. Oh well. (142302/2: 66)
- (157) No but, no he wasn't that bad though but, he, he just tried a bit, **like** complicated moves in the middle of the field. (141604/1: 113)
- (158) Cos I thought it'd be like you know for, you know **like** political things, but you can't (142704/6: 194)

In the context of an informal conversation between adolescent peers, the expression *not moral* in (156) may be seen as relatively sophisticated and as belonging to a conceptual domain that is foreign in teenage talk generally. The attitudinal implication here concerns the adequacy of the chosen expression. It is as if the speaker feels that the expression is potentially unfitting. This is corroborated by Kath's immediate reaction, where she repeats the expression and laughs at it, as if to say 'Not moral?! That's a funny way of putting it!'. Similarly, the expressions *complicated moves* and *political things* in (157) and (158) would seem to represent a level of lexical sophistication that appears fairly advanced for adolescent conversation. Judging by the data at hand, *like* has a tendency to appear precisely before lexical material which may be potentially sociolinguistically or stylistically marked. This suggests rather strongly that *like* has a capacity to indicate the lack of full incorporation of an expression in the linguistic repertoire of the speaker, i.e. that the chosen expression is 'really part of somebody else's language'. The echoic, metarepresentational nature of these utterances is emphasised by the fact that *like* in these examples may fairly appropriately be paraphrased as *as it were* or *so to speak* or even *if you like*,¹² expressions which bring about the same effect of metalinguistic marking and psychological distance; cf. *as it were*, 'a parenthetical phrase used to indicate that a word or statement is perhaps not formally exact though practically right' (OED 1989 I: 673). Moreover, my analysis provides a natural explanation for why *like* is so frequent in teenage talk. After all, it is not surprising that we should find this sort of metalinguistic focus on 'advanced', 'uncommon' or

'foreign' expressions in the speech of adolescents, who are still at a developmental stage as far as linguistic competence and vocabulary are concerned.

As suggested by some previous studies, and by many of my own examples above, *like* usually precedes lexical material with a high information value (Underhill 1988; Meehan 1991). But, as I see it, the main motivation for the qualification of lexical material by means of *like* is not necessarily newness as such, and rhematic status does not seem to be a sufficient condition for *like*-qualification. Rather, I would like to emphasise this regular correlation between the use of *like* and the occurrence of lexical material which is from a foreign conceptual domain, sociolinguistically unfitting, stylistically marked, or which appears to involve a relatively high production cost on the part of the speaker. The analysis of *like* as a marker of a psychological distance to lexical material would also explain an empirical fact that has been overlooked by the previous accounts of *like* as a newness marker, namely the fact that *like* does not mark new information indiscriminately. Specifically, speakers would not use *like* to mark new information of a highly familiar kind, no matter how new. For instance, in a context where Peter is a mutual friend of the speaker and hearer:

- (159) a. He gave it to Peter.
 b. *He gave it to **like** Peter.

the speaker could hardly use *like* to metalinguistically qualify the expression *Peter*, although his name had not been introduced in the previous discourse. Since both *Peter* in (159) and *complicated moves* in (157) are rhematic, an adequate description of *like*'s pragmatic function must account for why only the latter can be qualified by this marker. The explanation can be found precisely with reference to *like*'s metalinguistic function. While *Peter* denotes a highly familiar concept and causes little production and processing cost, *complicated moves* involves conceptual information whose mutual manifestness cannot be taken for granted, and which seems much less easily retrievable from memory.¹³ *Like*'s capacity to mark psychological non-incorporation of an expression would imply that it is not likely to appear in front of highly familiar and mutually manifest concepts like *Peter*.

Apparently, then, newness is not a sufficient condition for metalinguistic qualification by means of *like*. This claim is to some extent supported by one example in the data that shows that *like* can, in fact, precede a lexeme that has recently been uttered:

- (160) Danny: Is she really **like, like** isolated now that I'm at boarding school really
- Michael: Sorry?
- Danny: Is Beth really **like** isolated now I'm at boarding school?
- Michael: Oh she misses you obviously, more than she more than she'll erm admit cos you're very you were very close anyway weren't you, as brother and sister.
- Danny: Yeah I suppose. (141201/1: 125)

There is admittedly a pause after the first *like* in Danny's first utterance, and at that point it may seem as if he is struggling with the production of the term *isolated*. But there is no pause between the second occurrence of *like* and the term it qualifies. More importantly, the interesting fact here is that Danny actually *repeats* the marker *like* as well as the following expression when formulating his question the second time. Why would he do that, if it were not for the fact that he wants to add a pragmatic attribute to his utterance? And this attribute, I claim, is the metalinguistic signal that the term followed by *like* is not fully incorporated in the vocabulary of the speaker. There is, of course, not the slightest indication that Danny is struggling with the production of *isolated* when he formulates his question the second time round; on the contrary, he deliberately chooses to colour his utterance with this pragmatic marker. This example provides a conspicuous argument against any account of *like* that treats it as a mere hesitational device, and it shows a crucial difference between *like* and the fillers *er* and *erm*, which would hardly be repeated in the second formulation of the question, as the term *isolated* is already activated at this point and therefore cannot be considered entirely 'new'.

However, this is not to say that the speaker who uses *like* metalinguistically need actually *wonder* if the chosen expression is the right one to use. We can imagine a speaker who is absolutely certain that the term is the most appropriate one, but nevertheless chooses to qualify it with *like*. The reason for this might be the speaker's deliberate wish to indicate non-incorporation of the term in the vocabulary, thereby avoiding sounding too confident in the use of her language, avoiding undue assertiveness, or warning the hearer about a potential stylistic inadequacy. Hence it appears possible to use *like* as a resource to mark non-incorporation, i.e. to use it for the benefit of the *hearer*, and for interactional rather than subjective purposes. In other words, an interactional (side-)effect of using *like* may be to increase politeness and

solidarity between the speakers, suggesting that ‘this is the way other people talk, and not really how you and I do’.

To sum up this subsection, in the metalinguistic use of *like*, the speaker is not offering a loose rendering of the qualified concept as such. Considering the marker at large, then, *like* is not necessarily a signal for the hearer to contextually loosen or enrich the concept encoded by the following expression. I have argued for an analysis of the metalinguistic use as another case of non-identical resemblance. We have seen that the speaker is to some extent distancing herself from the expression she uses and is signalling that other expressions may be just as appropriate as the one chosen. The intended contextual effects might be achieved more efficiently by other linguistic means. We seem justified in treating this as a discrepancy between the expression used and another expression which the speaker feels that she ideally should use, either because the potential alternative might communicate her ideas more efficiently (as with *like fancy her*) or because it might be more sociolinguistically or stylistically appropriate (as with *like not moral*), hence more socially acceptable in the context of a conversation between teenagers. This can be viewed as a case of non-identical resemblance between an applied linguistic expression and a potential alternative expression that has the same reference. Hence, the metalinguistic use of *like* amounts to marking interpretive resemblance in form rather than in content. The pragmatic marker *like* provides an apt procedural clue to the metarepresentational nature of certain aspects of the utterance. The affinity between the metalinguistic use of *like* and *like* as a hesitation device is obvious. The common factor of the metalinguistic examples discussed in the current subsection is that the speaker suggests that ‘this is a term which may not be the most appropriate to use (for social, stylistic or other reasons) or which is unusual for me to utter’. There is, of course, also a more general hesitational use which signals that ‘I have something on my mind, but I don’t know how to put it’. The latter seems a fitting paraphrase if *like* occurs in connection with false starts and self repairs. Evidently, the relation between these two types of use must be construed as a continuum relation. But I have argued against the view of *like* as a mere hesitation device in all its uses. There is little prosodic evidence to suggest that the speaker is struggling with the production of the material that is qualified by *like* in most of the examples discussed in this subsection. Hence, including this type of use under the rubric of hesitation and planning difficulties is too simplistic a solution.

Its pragmatic function must be described in more specific terms, and the relevance-theoretic notion of procedural encoding seems to yield a particularly fitting description (cf. 5.2.2.5). Its affinity in meaning with metalinguistic expressions like *as it were*, *so to speak* and *so-called* clearly distinguishes *like* from purely hesitational phenomena such as the filled pauses *er*, *erm*, the elongated definite article *thiy* and so on (discussed in Clark 1996). Rather than indicating planning problems, I believe that *like* in many cases reflects a deliberate choice to mark off an expression as one which is not fully internalised in the vocabulary, and that it reflects the teenagers' wish to express their ideas without sounding too assertive.

5.2.2.3 *Like as a marker of interpretive use (quotative BE like)*

The examples discussed so far have shown that *like* can precede a variety of linguistic items and can occur in various syntactic slots. What these examples have in common is that, in some respect, *like* is used to signal that the utterance is not a precise rendering of the speaker's thought and that such preciseness is unnecessary for the utterance to achieve the intended contextual effects. Hence, *like* can be used to introduce an approximation, an exemplification or some other propositional unit which stands in a non-identical resemblance relation to the thought it represents. There is a crucial difference however, between such examples and cases where it is not the speaker's own thought that is intended as the object of loose interpretation, but rather a thought that is attributed to someone else, or to the speaker herself at some other time, and which may or may not have been verbally realised in an utterance:

- (161) and then, and then Kevin came up to me and said erm [...] if you if you go and see Mark this afternoon erm he would like to speak to you, **I was like**, he should come and speak to me (142304/19: 273)

The use of BE *like* in connection with direct speech is well known and much discussed (cf. 5.1.2). I consider the quotative use to be an extension of the uses described so far; *like* is used to signal that an utterance is a loose rendering of the thought it represents. But the quotative use constitutes a special case, in that what is loosely rendered is a case of interpretive use of language, where *like* provides an explicit signal that the following material must be construed as a representation of another representation that may or may not have been explicitly uttered.

By their very nature, quotations are loose renderings of previous utterances or previous thoughts. It is rarely the case in conversational narrative that the speaker reports dialogue exactly as originally presented (especially if tone of voice, paralinguistic cues, mimicry, etc are taken into consideration), which makes the term 'reported speech' somewhat inappropriate (cf. Johnstone 1987; Yule & Mathis 1992). Tannen argues that, in conversation

much of what takes the form of dialogue is by no means a "report" of what others have said but constructions by speakers to frame information in an effective and involving way. (1989: 118)

As exact fidelity is rarely a virtue in reported speech, Tannen (1986, 1989) and others prefer the term 'constructed dialogue'. But it is not certain that this term is much more appropriate, since the phenomenon involves just as much a *report* of an attributed thought as it does a *construction* of a way to externally represent this thought. From a relevance-theoretic point of view, the most important characteristics of quotations are attribution and resemblance. For instance, *he should come and speak to me* in (161) above can be construed as a more or less faithful rendering of some previous utterance, but is hardly verbatim. It is clearly a case of non-identical resemblance, as the rendering of the reported utterance is expected to bear some resemblance with the original that it is a representation of. Consequently, quotative *like* shares features with both types of use discussed above (cf. 5.2.2.1 and 5.2.2.2); it stands in a non-identical resemblance relation with an underlying thought, and it is attributive (metarepresentational). Moreover, quotative *like* can be said to have a dual function of indicating non-incorporation of a quoted segment (subjective) and serving as a demarcation marker, indicating the onset of a reported segment (textual).

Worthy of note in this connection is the fact that the grammaticalised construction BE *like* is not the only pattern where *like* introduces reported speech or thought. The following examples show that the teenagers have at their disposal a variety of constructions with *like* that may be used to frame attributive use of language:

- (162) But if I was to say it, it's different. Like, Carrie goes to me, cos I've got a black kitten he goes, what are you gonna call it? I goes dunno. Goes call it Malcolm X. I goes shut up! He goes, call it, call it Ma= call it Martin X and then he says and he goes call it Nigger. I think Nigger's a good name but, you know what I mean **like** come here Nigger! But ... it's, it's racist. (132901/1: 67)
- (163) but it seems like they're, they're, they don't, they're not interested in being friends with you er **it's just like** I wanna fuck you I don't wanna <nv>laugh/<nv> I don't even wanna talk to you (142305/15)
- (164) Cos first of all I didn't wanna talk in it you know I just **went** sort of **like** yeah, yeah, yeah. Now **it's sort of like** yes! (132707/1: 23)

It is not uncommon that *like* alone functions as a demarcation marker between a quotation and the rest of the utterance. This is illustrated by (162), where *like* marks off the segment *come here Nigger* as interpretively used. This imperative is not preceded by an explicit verb of saying, but its interpretive status is actually underlined by a slight voice modulation (higher pitch), as if to suggest 'this is the way one would speak to a cat'. Moreover, a variety of constructions consisting of *it*, a form of BE and *like*, including *it's like*, *it's sort of like*, *it's just like* and *it was like* sometimes also have a quotation marking function, as illustrated in (163) and the second quotative in (164). Finally, we note that *like* may also occur in connection with an explicit reporting verb, as in (164), where *like* intervenes between a verb of saying¹⁴ and its complement.

In all of these cases, my proposed analysis of *like* as a marker of non-identical resemblance can be applied, as *like* indicates the non-identity of an attributed thought and the actual thought/utterance which the attributed thought represents, in addition to its predominantly textual function of framing an interpretively used segment. It is uncertain, however, whether constructions such as *it's (just/sort of) like* have been grammaticalised as markers of reported speech, to the same extent as the construction BE *like* with a personal subject. In Subsection 5.2.3.3, I look into this issue by considering the use of *like* in connection with interpretive use from a quantitative point of view.¹⁵ Also, it is clear that in terms of grammatical status, structures of the type *I went like* and *I was like* differ, because in the former, *like* is a non-obligatory pragmatic marker, while in the latter, *like* is an obligatory component of the grammaticalised quotative complementiser.

It would be a gross oversimplification to claim that the construction *BE like* corresponds to and is interchangeable with *SAY* in all its uses. Variationist comparisons of the use of *BE like* and other means of introducing reported speech, such as Tannen (1986), Ferrara & Bell (1995) and Tagliamonte & Hudson (1999), may be problematic, because *BE like* and the other eligible variants (*say*, *go*, etc) are often not interchangeable. (This is problematised by the authors mentioned.) While *SAY* is restricted to reports of verbally expressed quotations, *BE like* can take a much wider range of metarepresentational uses in its scope. It may, for instance, correspond loosely to 'this was the thought that struck me at that point'. For example, the 'quotation' in (161) above may represent a case of explicit mention, but could just as well be said to be a representation of something the speaker felt would be an appropriate utterance at that point. Consequently, paraphrases such as 'I thought', 'I felt', 'I felt like saying', etc may often be far more appropriate than 'I said'. In some cases it may be problematic to figure out whether a reported segment represents what someone said or thought, and this is something the hearer is left to pragmatically infer. Generally, then, what the construction does is mark off the following linguistic material as a thought, an attitude or a feeling which is metarepresented, but which has not necessarily been explicitly uttered. In this sense, *BE like* has very much in common with 'zero-quotatives' ('quotations' with no explicit quotative marker), where 'the direct speech forms are presented, not as reports (or even pseudoreports) of what was said, but as indications of speakers attitude that are echoed by another speaker' (Mathis & Yule 1994: 63).

Closely related is a type of use of *BE like* which seems to involve a metarepresentation of speaker attitude, but where the attitude remains unspecified or is vaguely indicated, rather than explicitly mentioned:

- (165) I am really into the football at the moment, re= I watched Marin= San Marino you had to see it it was such, it was such an embarrassment! [...]. When San Marino scored in the first ten seconds it we all just sat there and **we were like**, ... (141702/11: 3)
- (166) Well what I tried last weekend, not quite crying but I did a sort of moody sort of thing, I di= I was really quiet and I just ignored everyone and **I was like really like**, you know, didn't say a word. (142703/7: 13)

In (165), the utterance *we all just sat there and we were like, ...* seems to provide an indication as to the reaction of the spectators of England's soccer match against San Marino, for instance their surprise, frustration or anger at the fact that San Marino scored the first goal. It is highly likely that this use of BE *like* is accompanied by a gesture or facial expression that makes the echo of the spectators' attitude more conspicuous. Similarly, in (166), nothing is explicitly reported, but BE *like* is used to introduce an unspecified feeling, a state of mind which is not representative of what the speaker feels at the moment of speaking, but one which occurred to her previously. In these cases, the BE *like* construction seems to provide or accompany (vague) indications of previous speaker attitudes, and the hearer is invited to draw inferences as to the type of attitude involved.

In light of examples such as (166) and (165), it is clear that terms such as 'quotative complementiser' (Romaine & Lange 1991) and 'introducer of constructed dialogue' (Tannen 1986) do not cover all functions of this construction, at least not as suggested by the current data. In my opinion, the common denominator of uses of the grammaticalised construction BE *like* is that it prefaces material which is to be recognised as interpretive use. This material may be explicitly linguistic, but need not, as it appears common to use this expression to accompany gestures and facial expressions that can be seen as metarepresentations of speaker attitude. The relevance-theoretic notion of interpretive use therefore seems to capture the function of the expression BE *like* more precisely than labels such as 'quotative' or 'introducer of reported speech/constructed dialogue' (cf. 5.2.3.3).

5.2.2.4 Like/it's like as a hesitational/linking device

In the introduction to Section 5.2, I mentioned that *like* can occur in connection with planning difficulties, false starts and self repairs. In the current subsection, I look into the hesitational and discourse linking functions of *like* in more detail, arguing that *like* as a hesitational/linking device primarily serves textual functions, but that weak attitudinal meanings can also sometimes be associated with this type of use.

On the basis of the data, it makes sense to distinguish between four different types that can be said to represent hesitational/linking uses of *like*. The following are relevant examples:

- (167) But like it's different if you've got a really bad cold and sometimes you have to, you can't **like** ... sometimes you can hide it but I don't go in front of someone <nv>mimicking bringing up phlegm</nv> I always do it discreetly. (132707/1: 65)
- (168) it might be better to use **like**, just wait on the edge of like a <??>jam</> or something like that, just let the ball come straight through (138903/6: 7)
- (169) Grace: Just tape conversations for school. Teacher wants to know about conversations, **like**
 Dawn: Is it still running?
 Grace: Yeah. (134901/1: 182)
- (170) I know and **like** ... on Friday yeah I mean we're gonna be there for about an hour and a half probably yeah, and I wanna (133701/1: 277)

The second instance of *like* in (167) is a case where a speaker cuts off her utterance and resumes talk with a new syntactic structure, introduced by the initial adverbial *sometimes*, apparently having shifted perspective at the point where *like* co-occurs with the pause. This counts as a *false start*, because the material that precedes *like* is syntactically unrelated to what follows it, and the speaker starts a cut-off sentence all over again. This distinguishes (167) from (168), in which the speaker resumes talk with an item that is syntactically connected with the preceding material; hence the marker occurs between items that are constituents of the same syntactic structure. This counts as a *self repair*; it is a case where the speaker makes a minor correction within an otherwise syntactically coherent discourse unit, in this case replaces the head of the verb phrase, i.e. the lexical verb *use* with *wait*. Thirdly, *like* may occur where a speaker cuts off her utterance without resuming it, as shown in (169). From the outset, this type of use, labelled *terminated utterance*, may sometimes look like an instance of the 'traditional' clause-final use of *like* (as in *He hasn't passed his examinations, like*), briefly discussed in Section 5.1.2. However, I would reject this analysis of (169) on the grounds that the recording indicates that the speaker had the intention to continue, but that planning problems (or possibly Dawn's interruption) prevented her from doing so. Finally, *like* may link syntactically (sometimes even thematically) unrelated structures; i.e. it provides a *dis-course link*, as shown in (170).

These examples show that *like* can be used in contexts where its most

salient function seems to be, to put it in Major's (1971:77) terms, to 'bridge[] gaps in spoken sentences'. This exemplifies how *like* can contribute to the textuality, coherence and stream of the discourse, and may allow the speaker to buy production time and signal utterance continuation (e.g. (167)). These are textual functions that are prominent in a number of contexts.

As argued in Subsection 5.2.2.2, *like* can also be used with a metalinguistic function to suggest that 'this is a term which may not be the most appropriate to use or which is unusual for me to utter'. When hesitational *like* is used to accompany false starts and self repairs, etc, it seems that we can sometimes associate a related, albeit weak, attitudinal meaning with its use, to the effect of 'I have something on my mind, but I don't know (exactly) how to put it'. If nothing else, it provides a signal that the speaker wishes to hold the floor and continue her utterance. It is of course not always easy to distinguish the hesitational use from *like* as a metalinguistic marker, and it would appear that the relation between the metalinguistic attitudinal meaning and the weak attitudinal meaning conveyed by *like* in examples like (167) through (169) above must be construed as a continuum.

It seems that the hesitational type of use can be considered an extension of the general function of *like* as a marker of non-identical resemblance between utterance and thought and that it may signal related attitudinal meanings. Hesitational *like* signals that there is a discrepancy between a thought entertained by the speaker at the moment of utterance and the linguistic realisation of this thought. But with hesitations and planning difficulties, the discrepancy is clearly of a more severe nature and has a more 'dramatic' effect on the production of the utterance, as it may lead to failure in expressing one's thought.

The hesitational/discourse linking function is sometimes accomplished not by *like* alone but by the common collocation *it's like*. This type of use can be exemplified as follows:

- (171) Catriona: Have blokes here slept with her?
 Jess: No I shouldn't think so.
 Catriona: I bet they have. Bet they ha= I bet you a lot of them fancy her. Come on look at her yeah, she's got a really good figure, she's not ugly, she's got a good er I mean she's really toned and that, they like that and, she's really cocky isn't she and she won't take any shit from anyone

- Jess: Yeah.
- Catriona: and she seems really full of herself and I bet you, I mean come on I'm sure if there, if there was a master like, a sports, bloke like that, you might be s= I **it's like** there must be some!
- Jess: There must be some people that fancy her actually.
(142602/1: 348)
- (172) Danny: No they actually listen, listen. Like all their films came, like Alex's film of er Spain, empties the camera, basically puts it in this pile they keep in a drawer somewhere of films okay? Every now and then when they feel like it, take a handful of films and get them developed.
- Muhammad: <nv>laugh</nv>
- Danny: **It's like** the re= most latest ones have been from like six years ago.
- Muhammad: <nv>laugh</nv>
- Danny: Just bloody irritating. (132409/1: 34)

It may be difficult to assign significant attitudinal meanings to marker use of *it's like*, but, given examples like (171), a hesitational interpretation seems plausible. In Catriona's utterance, *it's like* is in a sequence of false starts and seems to help the speaker to buy processing time while thinking what to say next.

As briefly mentioned in Section 5.1.1, this use of *it's like* cannot be paraphrased as *it's as if*, because *as if* introduces a non-factual proposition (cf. *He acts as if he owns the place*), while Danny's utterance in (172) must be assigned a factual reading. In other words, the marker *it's like* introduces a proposition that is presented as true, hence describes an actual rather than hypothetical state of affairs, although there may be subtle differences between marker usage and non-marker usage of this item.

There are some arguments for treating *it's like* as a different marker from *like* alone, although it could be replaced by *like* alone in the examples above. Firstly, like markers such as *I mean, you know, I think*, etc, *it's like* has a clausal structure. For this reason, it is always external to the propositional information in the utterance, whereas *like* can appear between elements of a clause (cf. *we were like/*it's like two years old*). This restricts the range of possible functions of *it's like*, and it seems that this marker does not operate as a signal of loose use, metaphor, approximation or exemplification.

Secondly, it appears to be universally true that *it's like* must be preceded by discourse on the same topic; *it's like* invariably seems to provide a signal that the speaker not only wants to continue speaking, but that she wants to elaborate on the topic on the floor. This is exemplified by (171), where Catriona's statement *There must be some!* (i.e. 'There must be someone who has slept with her') sums up the previous discourse and expresses what she infers from the facts she lists about the person talked about. Hence, *it's like* serves as an introductory phrase to the conclusion to Catriona's argument. Similarly, in (172), Danny continues describing his annoyance with the fact that his friend's parents develop their films unreasonably late. Judging by the examples found in COLT, a minimum of previous discourse on a topic seems to be required for *it's like* to occur, and the propositions that precede and follow the marker are always thematically related, a constraint which does not seem to apply to *like* alone. To some extent, this pattern is corroborated by the observation that the marker *it's like* occurs almost exclusively turn-medially and only rarely turn-initially, in which case it indicates that the speaker continues a topic on the basis of what someone else said:

- (173) Marsha: oh you know those small fries, you get those little weeny
erm little fries
Carla: <laughing>yeah</> **it's like** they count them out and go
that's a small one (136411/1: 63)

Due to its textual function as a topic continuation device, *it's like* is comparable with *the thing is*, which seems to serve the same function, and these markers can in fact be seen to co-occur:

- (174) Yeah. Well yeah I mean, I mean **the thing is it's like**, why have you
got those headphones round your neck? (134101/1: 270)

The grammatical status of *it* is a matter of some uncertainty, and two possible analyses seem to emerge. It can either be considered a dummy pronoun,¹⁶ which conforms well with the fact that no clear referent for *it* can be inferred from the previous discourse. Intuitively, a better solution seems to be to consider it a reference pronoun with an unspecified and very general meaning (like *thing*), where the function of the pronoun is to summon up various assumptions brought to bear by the previous discourse. For instance in (173), *it* could be taken to represent 'this whole situation that Marsha described'. I therefore opt for an analysis where *it* is seen as an anaphoric

reference pronoun, unlike Schourup who considers it to be cataphoric; cf. ‘*it* can be taken to refer to what the speaker has in mind to express’ (1985: 60).

To sum up, I would not argue that the subjective function is the most crucial one in all uses of *like*, because its textual capacity seems to be more salient when it functions as a hesitational marker or discourse link. *Like* is used to accompany false starts, self repairs and cut-off utterances and to provide a discourse link between syntactically distinct units of discourse. Both *it’s like* and *like* alone are capable of signalling that the speaker wishes to hold the floor, and they can both serve as topic continuation devices, although some important differences between the two markers have been noted. The issue of the quantitative distribution of hesitational *like* and which of the four hesitational uses are the most common is addressed in Section 5.2.3.

5.2.2.5 *Truth-conditionality and procedural encoding*

Having presented the different functions of the pragmatic marker *like* in the teenage corpus, I would now like to describe briefly the analytical properties of this pragmatic marker. In the following, I assess whether *like* contributes to truth conditions or not and whether it encodes conceptual or procedural information.

In several accounts (e.g. Hölker 1991; Jucker 1993; Fraser 1996), pragmatic markers are defined as not contributing to the truth conditions of the utterances that contain them. A discussion of the point of truth-conditionality may seem somewhat redundant against this background. However, this issue requires attention and will be discussed briefly here, since omission of the marker *like* may in some cases lead to apparent unacceptability and loss of propositional meaning.

Generally speaking, the pragmatic marker *like* can readily be omitted without affecting the truth conditions of the utterance:

- (175) a. **Like** Champion tops are usually about sixty quid and this was twenty. (142703/1: 300)
 b. Champion tops are usually about sixty quid and this was twenty.

As the two utterances are synonymous, that is, there is nothing which distinguishes (175a) from (175b) in terms of propositional content (they are true or false under the same circumstances), we conclude that *like* is non-truth-conditional. However, not all utterances containing *like* are equally

straightforward in this respect. For instance, utterances where a single measurable constituent falls within the scope of *like* are more troublesome:

- (176) a. Jonathan: How many sides did you, you wrote **like** four sides.
 Lara: Yeah that's right.
 Jonathan: But how the fuck did you do that? I've only got **like**, two [and three quarters]
 Lara: [No I write] huge. My writing's [huge]
 Jonathan: [Yeah.] (138902/1&4: 5–8)
- b. you wrote four sides ... I've only got two and three quarters

There is unquestionably a contrast between the Jonathan's *like*-appended utterances in (176a), and the modified version (176b). The question we need to consider is whether the meaning that *like* contributes can be described in ordinary truth-conditional terms or not. A hearer who processes either of the two utterances (176a) or (176b) may well identify a propositional form involving a loose reading in both cases. What *like* does in (176a) is to increase the accessibility to a reading in which no exactness is intended, and to facilitate a process of ad hoc concept construction. *Like* is close in meaning to *roughly* or *approximately*, adverbials which must be considered truth-conditional. Since treating *four* and *roughly four* as truth-conditionally equivalent is untenable, I would claim that *like* is indeed truth-conditional in this example. Is *like* then a genuine pragmatic marker? My answer would still be yes. It has the function of signalling that the utterance contains a loose interpretation of the speaker's thought, and that the speaker does not commit herself to the literal truth of the utterance, in a way which the adverbials *roughly* or *approximately* could not do. The use of these adverbials is inevitably restricted to approximation at the propositional level, whereas *like* can indicate non-identical resemblance that does not affect the conceptual content of what follows (as with the metalinguistic use). This shows that *like* is a pragmatic marker that has a special status. In some cases its omission affects the propositional meaning of the utterance, and in these cases, *like* may be considered a borderline case between adverbial and pragmatic marker.

In terms of truth-conditionality and omissibility, the marker *like* also has a special status in the expression BE *like*:

- (177) And then he goes he goes, <mimicking>well only joking.</> and **I'm like**, and **I'm like**, scum! <nv>laugh</nv> (141707/1: 343)

As previously pointed out, the combination BE *like* has been grammaticalised and operates as a fixed unit which may be close in meaning to verbs of saying/thinking (cf. 5.1.2 and 5.2.2.3). Due to the fixedness of this construction, one of its components could not be omitted without causing anomaly. Moreover, omission of the whole quotative construction would imply loss of propositional meaning, although it is possible to present reported speech also by means of a zero-quotation, which contains no explicit reporting verb or construction, but where mimicry and voice modulation would provide valuable cues to the metarepresentational nature of the quoted segment. At any rate, omission of BE *like* in (177) would clearly involve propositional loss, and the expression BE *like* has obvious truth-conditional implications, as an expression comparable with 'said' or 'felt like saying'.

The above observations show that *like* is a somewhat special kind of pragmatic marker; in certain cases, it contributes to truth-conditional meaning by explicitly suggesting the need for ad hoc concept construction, and sometimes the omission of *like* leads to what seems to be an unacceptable sentence. In a great many cases, however, it seems that *like* contributes to linguistic meaning which cannot be described in truth-conditional terms.

I now turn to the task of determining how *like* can be described in terms of the distinction between conceptually and procedurally encoded information (Wilson & Sperber 1993). The question we need to ask is whether *like* encodes a concept and acts as a constituent of the proposition that contains it, or whether it contributes to utterance meaning by constraining the information that is to be recovered by inference (cf. 2.1.1). As we have seen, *like* clearly plays a role in the interpretation process by helping the hearer to arrive at the intended propositional meaning of an utterance. I would argue that this marker should be allocated to the procedural side of communication and that a conceptual reading is untenable. The marker fits well with the relevance-theoretic notion of procedurally encoded information, since it contributes to relevance by constraining the interpretation process in such a way that the hearer is assisted to interpret the utterance as a less-than-literal rendering of a thought of the speaker and to constrain speaker attitude.

To underline my claim that *like* encodes procedural information, I would like to suggest a restriction on distribution which appears to have general

application, namely that *like* cannot be metalinguistically negated (cf. Carston 1996b). That is, a speaker cannot be accused of giving an untruthful or inadequate description of a state of affairs due to the occurrence of *like* in a sentence. This seems to be a feature which *like* does not share with the otherwise largely comparable pragmatic marker *sort of*:

- (178) a. Peter: You were sort of drunk last night weren't you?
 Mary: I wasn't SORT OF drunk, I was DRUNK.
 b. Peter: You were like drunk last night weren't you?
 Mary: *I wasn't LIKE drunk, I was DRUNK.

In either case, Mary is rejecting Peter's utterance because she thinks her drunkenness is too moderately described. We observe that the (scalar) qualification of the adjective *drunk* which *like* brings about cannot fall within the scope of the negator, while it can in the case of *sort of*. These considerations suggest that, as also argued in Section 2.3.2, *sort of* encodes a concept, here equivalent to 'not entirely', while *like* encodes a procedure. Considering *like* in connection with other scalar expressions, such as those containing numeral entities, gives the same result. The following examples are meant to show that *like* is different from adverbials like *roughly* or *approximately* in this respect:

- (179) a. Peter: You wrote roughly four pages.
 Mary: No I didn't write ROUGHLY four pages, I wrote EXACTLY four pages.
 b. Peter: You wrote like four pages.
 Mary: *No I didn't write LIKE four pages, I wrote EXACTLY four pages.

These examples show that *like* cannot be the object of a negative focus, a feature which it shares with pragmatic markers like *well*, *but*, *so*, etc, which suggests that its meaning must be described in procedural rather than conceptual terms, unlike the meaning of *sort of* and *roughly*.

It should be noted, however, that metalinguistic negation of *like* in examples (178b) and (179b) is conceivable if accompanied by a meta-comment rejecting Peter's utterance on sociolinguistic or stylistic grounds, for instance in the following manner:

- (179) c. Peter: You were like drunk last night weren't you?
 Mary: I wasn't **LIKE** drunk; you can't use the word 'like' in that way!

This example does not, however, disconfirm my hypothesis, since it is not the conceptual features of the highlighted word that falls within the scope of the negator (unlike (178b) and (179b)). After all, Peter is not being accused of giving an untruthful description of a state of affairs here, but Mary is simply rejecting his utterance due to the fact that she finds this use of *like* defective.

Another argument¹⁷ in favour of treating *like* as procedural can be illustrated by the following example, where the pronominal subject refers to a song that is compared to the song the teenagers are listening to at the time of utterance:

- (180) a. it's just so slow, **it's just like exactly the same** but like about twenty times slower. (134102/4: 121)
 b. *it's approximately exactly the same
 c. ?it's virtually exactly the same

The noun phrase *exactly the same* is clearly meant non-literally, since the song talked about is *twenty times slower* than the one it is compared to, and since the two songs must differ in other respects also. Given the analytical subclassification that I suggested in the previous sections, this utterance seems best analysed as a case where *like* qualifies the following expression in terms of its conceptual features (as opposed to the metalinguistic use), because it accompanies a case of loose use and triggers a process of ad hoc concept construction. I argued that in such cases it is generally appropriate to substitute *like* with *approximately* or *virtually*. However, the crucial point in this connection is that the proposition marked in boldface would be contradictory, were it not for the fact that *like* encodes a procedure rather than a concept (cf. Wilson & Sperber 1993; Ifantidou 2000). But no contradiction or anomaly is felt in the naturally occurring example (180a). This gives a good indication that this marker is better analysed as providing a procedural constraint on the utterance interpretation process, in this case, an indication that the following expression is a case of hyperbolic loose use. It is important to point out this difference between *like* and the truth-conditional and conceptual adverbials *approximately* and *virtually*, as the adverbial glosses represent conceptual information, hence the contradiction that is felt

in (180b) and (180c). This also shows that the meaning of *like* is in itself vague, and the hearer has to use his inferential abilities to construct an interpretation that yields adequate (non-contradictory) cognitive effects. Hence, I conclude that *like* encodes a procedural constraint on the explicatures and indicates to the hearer what type of explicatures he is expected to construct when interpreting the utterance.

5.2.2.6 *Summary*

I have argued that *like* plays a crucial role in facilitating processes of pragmatic inference, and that these processes are required in order for the hearer to arrive at the utterance meaning that a speaker wishes to communicate. *Like* contributes by signalling the need for loosening or enrichment of concepts encoded by the following linguistic material, or by putting the following material in a metalinguistic focus. *Like* contributes to utterance interpretation and to the overall relevance of utterances as a procedural constraint on the process of identifying the intended explicatures of utterances, and it may or may not contribute to the truth conditions of the utterance. Importantly, my discussion has shown that procedural markers may constrain not only implicatures or higher-level explicatures (as described in Section 2.4.2; cf. Blake-more 1987; Wilson & Sperber 1993) but may even constrain the identification of the proposition expressed. I have also argued that *like* primarily concerns the relation that exists between the speaker and the proposition she presents, and therefore has predominantly subjective meaning, but it also contributes to textuality as a hesitation device/discourse link and as a demarcation device for marking off interpretively used segments.

5.2.3 *Functional distribution*

So far in Section 5.2, I have described the functions that can be assigned to the pragmatic marker *like* in COLT. I now shift perspective from a qualitative to a quantitative analysis, as the current section is aimed at showing which of these main functions are statistically predominant in the data. As for some of the functions, a further subclassification will be provided. *Like* has been described as a marker of non-identical resemblance between utterance and underlying thought. It was shown that, in addition to the predominantly subjective function of marking that the speaker does not vouch for the literal truth of an utterance (5.2.2.1) or marking a distance

towards an expression used (5.2.2.2), *like* can occur in contexts where its main function appears to be textual; that is, it is used to accompany false starts, self repairs and cut-off utterances and to provide a discourse link between syntactically distinct units of discourse (5.2.2.4). The current section aims to provide quantitative evidence for these claims.

It should be pointed out right from the start that functional classification of empirical data is far from an easy task. In addition to the general difficulties with distinguishing marker from non-marker uses of *like*, discussed in Section 5.1.1, it may of course be difficult to determine which type of modification, e.g. conceptual or metalinguistic, is intended by a particular instance of *like*:

(181) They wanna know **like** English accent. (141401/1:281)

At the conceptual level, *English accent* may be construed as a gross under-specification of the aims of the current research project, an interpretation that would require contextual enrichment. On another interpretation, this noun phrase may be seen as an exemplification of some of the things the research team are aimed at investigating. And, on yet another interpretation, the speaker may be seen to mark a psychological distance to the expression, in which case *like* would be used metalinguistically. Moreover, in Chapter 2, I argued against taxonomies of markers, on the grounds that their functions are generally co-represented. This also holds true for *like*, of course, since, for instance, the quotative complementiser *BE like* can be said to have a subjective function of marking psychological non-incorporation of the quoted segment, or perhaps even doubt as to its truth, at the same time serving a textual function of indicating the demarcation line between descriptively and interpretively used linguistic material (5.2.2.3). Acknowledging the problems of classification and co-representation of functions, I should therefore point out that the following analysis describes tokens of *like* as having a particular function on the basis of which function seems the most *salient* in the given context and is not meant to be understood in strictly categorical terms.

As in the previous chapter, the quantitative method involves listing all the relevant examples in an SPSS matrix. COLT contains 3,484 tokens of *like*, markers and non-markers included. Of these, 1,347 tokens, that is 38.7 per cent, were included in the matrix, since they clearly represent marker use of *like*. However, the real number of tokens of the pragmatic marker in COLT is likely to be considerably higher. (Andersen 1997d suggests a

marker/non-marker ratio of about 50 per cent.) As mentioned, a certain amount of examples were difficult to classify, and if there was any doubt as to marker vs. non-marker status of a particular token, I decided not to include it in the statistics.¹⁸ Also, every token where *like* collocated with an <unclear> tag was omitted, although some of the tokens clearly represent marker uses.

The distribution of *like* across the various functional categories is as in Table 17.

Table 17. Functional distribution of the pragmatic marker *like*

Function	n	%
approximation	278	20.6
exemplification	254	18.9
metalinguistic focus	249	18.5
quotative	94	7.0
hesitational/discourse link	472	35.0
Σ	1,347	100.0

We note that subjective and textual functions of *like* are both salient in the corpus. Although the hesitational/linking uses described in Subsection 5.2.2.4 account for roughly one third of the marker tokens, *like* is used with other functions in the majority of cases. In about 40 per cent of the cases, *like* facilitates ad hoc concept construction (approximation/exemplification) and in a further 18.5 per cent the attitudinal meaning of psychological distance towards an expression (metalinguistic focus) could be associated with its use. However, perhaps the most interesting piece of information that can be extracted from these statistics is the fact that *like* with a quotative function is relatively infrequent, with its 94 instances. This is contrary to expectations, given the broad focus on this particular function in the literature, and given Tagliamonte & Hudson's (1999) much higher ratio of *like* with a quotative function in their more recent data from York. The significance of these observations are elaborated in the sections that follow.

5.2.3.1 Approximation and exemplification

The uses that are classified as approximation and exemplification both

involve cases where *like* facilitates the construction of an ad hoc concept (loosening or enrichment), i.e. cases where there is a conceptual discrepancy between the linguistically encoded concept and the one that figures as a constituent of the proposition expressed. *Like* in connection with exemplification and approximation is evenly distributed in the corpus; both categories amount to about 20 per cent of the pragmatic marker tokens. The approximation category incorporates cases where *like* precedes a numeral expression or otherwise quantifiable unit, a loosely used lexical item, a metaphor or a hyperbole. The different subtypes of use are distributed as in Table 18.

Table 18. Distribution of subtypes: *like* in connection with ad hoc concept construction (approximation and exemplification)

Type of use	Example	n	%	% of total
numeral approximation	<i>I would have got there like four minutes past ten.</i>	66	12.4	4.9
measurable approximation	<i>He's like that high.</i>	27	5.1	2.0
lexical approximation	<i>Well they did like a talk thing.</i>	95	17.9	7.1
metaphor	<i>She's like tearing the wall down.</i>	51	9.6	3.8
hyperbole	<i>We can like endlessly swear on it.</i>	39	7.3	2.9
exemplification	<i>I just normally buy like water bombs things like that.</i>	254	47.7	18.9
Σ		532	100.0	39.6

It should be pointed out that, contrary to what the given examples might suggest, the category includes some examples where *like* occurs between syntactically independent clauses and not between the elements of a clause, as in (182):

- (182) What d'ya think of them, **like**, do they get on your nerves at all?
(140808/2: 56)

where *like* introduces an exemplification (specification) of possible answers to the speaker's own question (and is fairly appropriately glossed as 'for instance').

The 'lexical approximation' subcategory actually incorporates *like* that facilitates both enrichment and loosening, i.e. cases where it precedes

underspecified lexical concepts (*they did like a talk thing*) as well as over-specified ones (*they just gonna analyse like length of words and that*), and 95 examples of these types of use were found. Equally frequently, *like* brings about quantifiable approximation, while *like* before metaphor and hyperbolic uses are slightly less frequent in the half-a-million-word corpus.

5.2.3.2 *Metalinguistic use*

Table 17 above shows that *like* as a device for creating a metalinguistic focus on the following expression is a type of use that must be reckoned with, as its frequency is as high as the approximation and exemplification uses. It occurs 249 times and accounts for 18.5 per cent of the marker tokens. This attitudinal function was described extensively in Subsection 5.2.2.2, and a further description or subclassification of this type of use does not seem necessary at this point.

5.2.3.3 *Distribution of quotative like*

As shown in Subsection 5.2.2.3, *like* in connection with interpretive use (quotations, reported speech) can be subclassified formally according to what type of structure the marker appears in. A formal rather than functional subclassification is appropriate here, since *like* can precede interpretive use not only as part of the expression *BE like*, but in several collocational patterns, and it is of interest to find out to what extent the different structures are grammaticalised as devices for marking interpretive use.

Table 19 reveals some interesting statistical facts concerning *like* as a marker of interpretive use. We note that, overall, *like* accompanying quotations/interpretive use is vastly outnumbered by the other marker uses of *like* (approximative, exemplificatory, metalinguistic, hesitational/linking) and accounts for a mere seven per cent of the total. Moreover, the much-discussed grammaticalised quotative construction *BE like* occurs no more than 34 times. This suggests that in COLT, being recorded in 1993, this expression has not been grammaticalised to the same extent as in American English, nor is it as prevalent as in Tagliamonte and Hudson's (1999) data from York, recorded in 1996. In their data, *BE like* amounted to 18 per cent of all quotative verbs. In COLT, this construction is grossly outnumbered by the other quotative forms, especially *SAY* ($n = 2,981$), and *GO* ($n = 3,457$) and amounts to less than 0.5 per cent of all quotations found in the corpus.¹⁹ However, the actual *collocation* of *BE like* is in fact far more common than

Table 19. Distribution of subtypes: *like* as a marker of interpretive use (*BE like* etc.)

Type of use	Example	n	%	% of total
<i>like</i> only	<i>cos you're so cool like</i> <mimicking> <i>not worthy</i> </>	15	16.0	1.1
<i>BE like</i>	<i>and I'm like, and I'm like, scum!</i> <nv> <i>laugh</i> </nv>	34	36.2	2.5
<i>it's like</i>	<i>everyone sits there going ooh ooh ooh</i> </> <i>it's like</i> <shouting> <i>aaaaaah</i> </> <nv> <i>laugh</i> </nv>	10	10.6	0.7
<i>GO like</i>	<i>And then he goes like, sorry man, close the door and get out.</i>	16	17.0	1.2
<i>SAY like</i>	<i>She slides down the banister and says like blurgh, la blah la blah loo!</i>	12	12.8	0.9
other verb + <i>like</i>	<i>We used to get told like, use six thousand or seven thousand</i>	7	7.4	0.5
Σ		94	100.0	7.0

the above table suggests, but in most cases it does not have a quotative function. (Cf. the section on collocational features, 5.3.1 below.) Finally, I should point out that, as in Ferrara & Bell's (1995) data, my list of quotations with *BE like* confirms that the construction can be used with all subjects and in past and historical present tenses alike.

5.2.3.4 *Hesitational/linking functions*

Table 17, which gives the distribution of the main functions of *like*, shows that the hesitational and linking (i.e. primarily textual) functions should not be underestimated, as they cover about a third of the tokens of *like* as a pragmatic marker. I have subclassified this group according to the formal features indicated in Subsection 5.2.2.4, namely according to whether *like* accompanies a false start, self-repair or terminated utterance, or whether it simply provides a link between syntactically unrelated discourse segments. The result of this subclassification is as in Table 20.

We note that *like* with self repair and terminated utterances is actually quite infrequent, with false starts less so, while the discourse linking functions account for more than half of the examples in this category. In fact,

Table 20. Distribution of subtypes: *like* with hesitational and discourse linking functions

Type of use	Example	n	%	% of total
False start	<i>I used to like, we used to see each other.</i>	113	23.9	8.4
Self repair	<i>and he listed like reeled off a load of blokes</i>	14	3.0	1.0
Terminated utterance	<i>Oh yeah and he says his name's like,</i>	9	1.9	0.7
Discourse link: <i>like</i>	<i>he had to come from America and look after her, and like, then, from then on, he ...</i>	268	56.8	19.9
Discourse link: <i>it's like</i>	<i>And I just thinking, shit! ... it's like ... that's the kind of questions I would've put there.</i>	68	14.4	5.0
Σ		472	100.0	35.0

only the top three categories in the table, amounting to about ten per cent of the marker tokens, are truly hesitational uses where the speaker clearly has planning/word retrieval difficulties. The 'discourse link' category cannot actually be considered purely hesitational, but represents tokens that to varying degrees indicate planning difficulties:

- (183) Alright. Erm, well **like**, I usually take the train about ... twenty past.
(140810/1: 297)
- (184) she used to be a really bad tomboy and **like**, she's not any more really but, (133901/1: 234)
- (185) We might be able to pick you up I'm not sure, depends what's happening or you might go with Josh **like** we'll meet outside probably.
(138905/1: 16)

In all of these examples, it is difficult to assign any salient attitudinal meaning to *like*, and its function is primarily textual rather than subjective. Specifically, *like* provides a discourse link between syntactically separate discourse units (propositions). The discourse linking use of *like* may combine with a substantial pause and/or another hesitational marker (*erm, well*), as in (183). Here, *like* is one of a sequence of items that are clearly aimed at buying processing time and signalling the speaker's intention to continue.

In such cases, labels such as ‘pause filler’ or ‘hesitational device’ may be appropriate to describe its function. On other occasions, *like* may be followed by only a very brief pause, as in (184), in which case the label ‘hesitational’ might be less appropriate. However, it is far from uncommon that the discourse link *like* occurs where there is no pause or other indication of planning problems whatsoever. This is the case in (185), where *like* is part of a very rapid sequence. Here, it is hard to see that the marker actually helps the speaker plan his utterance, and the terms ‘pause filler’ or ‘hesitational device’ seem inappropriate although no significant attitudinal (metalinguistic, looseness marker, etc) function can be assigned to it either. It merely serves as a device for linking propositions or other discourse units together and appears more or less interchangeable with a simple *and*. We note also that the collocation *it’s like* has a linking/hesitational function in 68 cases, as opposed to the less common quotative use (n = 10; cf. Table 19). The rather high frequency of this collocation, and the fact that it is indeed more frequent than the much-discussed quotative construction *BE like*, raises the possibility of this being another case where a combination involving *BE* and *like* is undergoing reanalysis and may develop into a fixed expression or a formula. This issue is addressed in Subsection 5.3.1.2.

5.2.3.5 Summary

The current section has shown that the pragmatic marker *like* can be associated with both subjective and textual functions, and that from a quantitative point of view both are salient in the corpus. The types of use that are predominantly textual, namely *like* as a discourse link or hesitational device, account for about a third of the marker tokens. In other words, a majority of the marker tokens can be assigned significant attitudinal functions. Surprisingly, the use of *like* with a quotative function (which contributes to both subjective meaning and textuality) amounts to no more than 7.0 per cent of the marker tokens.

5.3 Variation and language change

As in the previous chapter (cf. 4.3.1), I wish to begin this section on variation and language change by investigating linguistic variation in the corpus as a whole, before I compare speaker groups within COLT. I first

investigate how the use of the marker *like* interacts with syntactic structure in the corpus as a whole (cf. 5.3.1) and, secondly, I consider social variation (cf. 5.3.2).

5.3.1 *Syntactic boundedness, collocational features and grammaticalisation*

My previous discussion may have given the impression that *like* can occur anywhere in a sentence. My objective here is to show that this need not be the case; rather, *like* tends to be preferred in particular syntactic slots, and there may indeed be restrictions as to where it can occur. Assuming that *like* is undergoing grammaticalisation in present day London speech, it is of interest to identify the syntactic environments where it typically occurs. This will allow us to be specific regarding the environments in which *like* first becomes grammaticalised, to suggest putative future spread to other environments, and to identify incipient fixation processes.

The main aim of this section is to investigate the pragmatic marker *like* and its relation to syntactic structure by quantitatively exploring its systematicity and recurrence in the corpus. Specifically, I wish to examine (a) the extent to which the pragmatic marker operates within syntactic structures or external to them (cf. 5.3.1.1), (b) whether it can occur in all syntactic slots or whether there are restrictions as to where in a sentence it can occur (cf. 5.3.1.2) and (c) whether *like* particularly tends to collocate with certain other lexical elements or pragmatic markers (cf. 5.3.1.3). The purpose of this part of the investigation is to see if certain linguistic environments as opposed to other environments favour the use of *like*, thereby assessing to what extent fixation has occurred. Systematicity and recurrence are important features, because repetitive use is a prerequisite for grammaticalisation (routinisation). It is assumed that the identification of common patterns may lead to identification of cases of incipient fixation.

5.3.1.1 *Like and syntactic structure: clause-internal and clause-external uses*

Like pragmatic markers generally, *like* is nearly always an optional element, syntactically speaking, but it is clear that *like* as a marker assumes varying degrees of dependence on its linguistic environment. There is a crucial difference between *like* in utterances of the type *My lowest ever was like forty* and those of the type *Erm, well, like, I usually take the train about*

twenty past, in that the former is syntactically bound to and dependent on a linguistic structure as a pragmatic qualifier of the following expression. Hence, I wish to speak of the ‘syntactic boundedness’ of *like* in this idiosyncratic sense and not in terms of ordinary clause constituency.²⁰ *Like* is syntactically bound whenever it occurs between clause elements that belong to one syntactic structure and syntactically unbound (parenthetical) when it is external to and independent of syntactic structure. Naturally, boundedness and pragmatic function are dependent features. Bound *like* may have a near-adverbial status as approximator, but may also serve metalinguistic, quotative, etc functions. Unbound *like*, on the other hand, typically but not exclusively, serves hesitational or linking functions (cf. 5.2.3). However, functional properties are not the primary concern in the current section and will be disregarded here.

In addition to these two basic types, *like* can be bound either to the left (*and they go like, and you just sort of push past them*) or the right (*like every five out of ten words is a swear word*) if it is adjacent to one constituent. This applies to cases where *like* and the following/preceding constituent are not separated by a pause and where there is felt to be syntactic binding between them, either because the clause constituent is modified by *like*, as with the right-bound *like every five out of ten* above, or because *like* occurs at a cut-off point or a reformulation, and is thus bound to the left only.

The distribution of these four types in the corpus is as in Table 21.

Table 21. Syntactic boundedness of *like*

Syntactic boundedness	Example	n	%
Syntactically unbound	<i>Erm, well, like, I usually take the train about twenty past.</i>	456	33.9
Bound (left-right)	<i>He's supposed to have shot him like in his body.</i>	577	42.8
Bound (left)	<i>Oh yeah and he says his name's like,</i>	234	17.4
Bound (right)	<i>like every five out of ten words is a swear word</i>	80	5.9
Σ		1,347	100.0

We observe that *like* is syntactically unbound in about a third of the cases where it serves as a pragmatic marker. In other words, it is generally the case (66.1%) that *like* is syntactically bound either to the left only, to the right only or bidirectionally. This shows that the marker *like* occurs in close conjunction with syntactic structure and that its nature is commonly not as ‘parenthetical’ as a number of other pragmatic markers such as *oh*, *well*, *okay*, *uh huh*, etc, which have a much lower degree of syntactic boundedness and a much greater degree of parentheticality (cf. *It’s like/*oh/*well/*okay coming across as something funny*). I take this as an indication that *like* as a marker is atypical in that its degree of syntactic boundedness is greater than that of markers generally.

5.3.1.2 *Recurrent patterns and restrictions on use in clause-internal position*

In the current subsection I shall be concerned only with cases where the marker *like* is syntactically bound in both directions, which is the most frequent pattern (cf. Table 21). It should be pointed out that this category includes cases where *like* occurs between elements that are either obligatory or non-obligatory constituents of the clause. Hence, *like* before a non-obligatory adverbial also counts as bidirectionally bound, as in *like in his body* in Table 21 above. Bound *like* may well co-occur with another non-propositional unit, such as a pragmatic marker:

- (186) And then if he asks you what you’re doing just say it’s for **like** you know a project which you’re supposed to be doing. (142103/7: 530)

This counts as bidirectionally bound because of the syntactic coherence between the preceding (*it’s for*) and following (*a project which ...*) material, despite the insertion of the marker *you know*.

It is clear that *like* can occur in a variety of syntactic slots in a sentence, which is illustrated by the invented example (187).

- (187) Joan was having a great time while taking care of the dog that lives in the house next door.

?Joan **like** was having a great time while taking care of the dog that lives in the house next door.

Joan was **like** having a great time while taking care of the dog that lives in the house next door.

Joan was having **like** a great time while taking care of the dog that lives in the house next door.

?Joan was having a **like** great time while taking care of the dog that lives in the house next door.

?Joan was having a great **like** time while taking care of the dog that lives in the house next door.

Joan was having a great time **like** while taking care of the dog that lives in the house next door.

Joan was having a great time while **like** taking care of the dog that lives in the house next door.

- *Joan was having a great time while taking **like** care of the dog that lives in the house next door.
 *Joan was having a great time while taking care **like** of the dog that lives in the house next door.
 Joan was having a great time while taking care of **like** the dog that lives in the house next door.
 ?Joan was having a great time while taking care of the **like** dog that lives in the house next door.
 ?Joan was having a great time while taking care of the dog **like** that lives in the house next door.
 Joan was having a great time while taking care of the dog that **like** lives in the house next door.
 Joan was having a great time while taking care of the dog that lives **like** in the house next door.
 Joan was having a great time while taking care of the dog that lives in **like** the house next door.
 ?Joan was having a great time while taking care of the dog that lives in the **like** house next door.
 Joan was having a great time while taking care of the dog that lives in the house **like** next door.
 *Joan was having a great time while taking care of the dog that lives in the house next **like** door.

Although the pragmatic marker *like* can occur freely in different syntactic positions, it is clear that its distribution is not entirely random. As this example suggests, *like* can occur both between clause constituents (*having like a great time*) and within phrases (*was like having*). Nevertheless, the schema indicates that there may be restrictions as to the syntactic positions *like* may have. For example, from the outset it seems unlikely that *like* enters into indefinite and definite noun phrases in the position immediately after the determiner (*?a like great time*, *?the like dog*). Moreover, it is not possible to separate the elements of prepositional (and phrasal) verbs (**taking care like of*). And, to be sure, *like* cannot enter a fixed idiomatic expression such as *next door*. However, many of the restrictions proposed in (187) are uncertain, and the COLT corpus offers opportunities to add empirical support to assumptions such as these. It is distributional restrictions of this kind that are the topic of the current subsection. In the following, I will explore the data with a view to identifying recurrent patterns, suggesting constraints that apply, and assessing the syntactic, semantic or pragmatic factors that may cause the distributional restrictions to come into play.

The data show that there are no restrictions as to what clause elements can be modified by *like*. In the following, I generally disregard type of constituent (S, P, DO, etc) as a parameter, but concentrate mainly on *like*'s position in relation to the *phrase* it modifies. Figure 19 gives the distribution of the different types of phrases that clause-internal *like* modifies in the data.

We note that *like* can modify all types of phrases, as well as quotations and subclauses (e.g. *it's not just the fact that like he's my boyfriend*). Modification of noun phrases and verb phrases are the most common type and account for about two thirds of the examples.²¹

The first thing that can be noted in this quantitative investigation is that it is more common that clause-internal *like* occurs between constituents (67.8%;

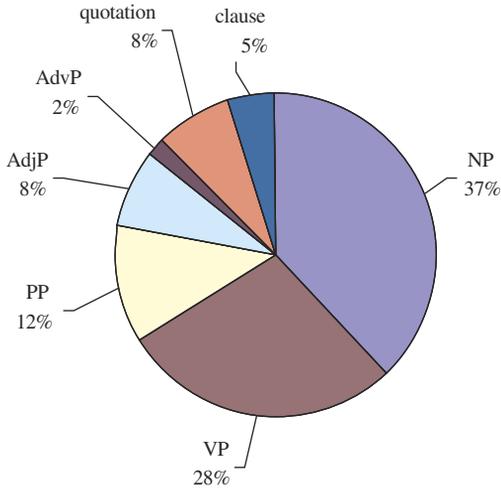


Figure 19. Type of phrases/clauses modified by *like* in clause-internal position

Table 22. Position of *like* in relation to different types of phrases

Type of phrase modified by <i>like</i>	Relation to modified phrase					
	PRECEDING		ENTERING		Σ columns	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Noun phrase	193	87.7	27	12.3	220	100.0
Verb phrase	51	31.9	109	68.1	160	100.0
Prepositional phrase	27	39.1	42	60.9	69	100.0
Adjective phrase	36	81.8	8	18.2	44	100.0
Adverb phrase	12	100.0	0	0.0	12	100.0
Σ rows					505	

n = 391) than within phrases (32.2%; n = 186). Hence, *like* appears to have only a moderate capacity to separate the elements of a phrase from each other. But, importantly, not all types of phrases are equally likely to be modified by *like* in phrase-internal position. In fact, type of phrase is a factor that can be seen to crucially constrain the likelihood of *like*-insertion in the phrase.

These statistics include all multi-word phrases that are modified by *like* in clause-internal position. The table shows that *like* has a great capacity to enter verb phrases and prepositional phrases, but that it only rarely enters noun phrases and adjective phrases and that it never enters adverb phrases in my data. The different types of use can be exemplified as follows:

- (188) NP/PRECEDING: there's like a massive queue behind you
 (189) NP/ENTERING: all the other like passengers are going
 (190) VP/PRECEDING: they always like seem to be impressing everyone
 (191) VP/ENTERING: so they can like score the equalise and win it
 (192) PP/PRECEDING: you see them like from the front going beep beep
 (193) PP/ENTERING: they should do them in like fishing shops
 (194) ADJP/PRECEDING: that's like really derogatory Dan
 (195) ADJP/ENTERING: you're permanently sad, so like sad
 (196) ADVP/PRECEDING: she tried to act like really friendly

The differences between the types of phrases, with respect to whether *like* precedes or enters the modified phrase, were found to be significant at $p < 0.0001$ ($\chi^2 \geq 155.088$; two-tailed; d.f. = 4). In other words, in multi-word noun phrases, it is significantly more common that *like* precedes the entire noun phrase than occurs after a determiner or a premodifier (cf. (188) vs. (189)), and in verb phrases the opposite pattern applies; i.e. it is significantly more common that *like* occurs after an auxiliary than before the entire verb phrase (cf. (190) vs. (191)), and so on (cf. Table 22). I now wish to look at the different types of phrase in turn, to suggest restrictions on usage.

Let us first consider *like's* position in relation to noun phrases. Disregarding single-word tokens, *like* has a moderate capacity to enter noun phrases. It can occur in a variety of positions, and its distribution can be summarised as in Table 23.

Despite this versatility, it is possible to point at some restrictions on position in noun phrases that arise from my inspection of the COLT-data. Type of noun phrase is crucial in this respect. As expected, *like* obviously never enters proper nouns (*like Parkinson's disease* vs. **Parkinson's like disease*) nor compound nouns (*automatic like machine gun* vs. **automatic machine like gun*), due to the fixedness of such lexicalised expressions. Moreover, although *like* frequently qualifies noun phrases that contain numeral or

Table 23. Position of *like* in relation to noun phrases

Position	Example	n	%
before all of NP	<i>like a restaurant</i>	193	87.7
between determiner and premodifier	<i>them like little sledgehammers</i>	6	2.7
after determiner(s) before head	<i>a lot of like mousse</i> <i>the like kind of situation</i> <i>a like Kentucky Fried Chicken</i> <i>all the other like passengers</i>	12	5.5
after premodifier before head	<i>a automatic like machine gun</i>	1	0.5
after head before postmodifier	<i>one like all silver</i>	2	0.9
after head before relative clause	<i>people like that I used to know</i>	4	1.8
part of prepositional postmodifier	<i>this row of like rasta men</i>	2	0.9
Σ		220	100.0

measurable expressions, it can never enter noun phrases denoting time, distance, frequency and age. This is shown in the following examples, where *like* could not have occurred within the phrases enclosed in square brackets:

(197) if I tell Mike to get up **like** five or [five o'clock] in the morning and

(198) and then **like** [half way] when I was eating I could feel

(199) But Dan he he cried **like** [once a day] or something like that.

(200) we were having baths together when we were **like** [two years old]

(201) I've only got **like** [two and three quarters]

So it seems that it is possible to postulate at least some categorical restrictions as regards the *like*-modification of noun phrases.

Moreover, it was tentatively suggested above that *like* would not occur in a position immediately after a determiner and before the head of the noun phrase; cf. *?the like dog*. In actual fact, the COLT data disconfirm this assumption, as some of the occurrences, exemplified in the list above, are precisely examples of this pattern: *the like kind of situation*²² and *a like Kentucky Fried Chicken*. However, the general tendency in the data is that whenever *like* modifies a noun phrase that contains a determiner and a head, the marker precedes the entire noun phrase rather than just the head. In other

words, the patterns *like a piece of paper/like the winter* are significantly more common than *a like piece of paper/the like winter* (significant at $p < 0.0001$; $\chi^2 \geq 114.201$; two-tailed; d.f. = 1). Contrary to this general tendency, definite plural countable noun phrases constitute a subgroup where *like* occurs before or after the determiner with equal frequency; i.e. noun phrases of the type *these like bowls* are equally common as *like these bowls*. The difference between this type of noun phrase and other types, such as singular noun phrases, is significant at $p < 0.0001$ ($\chi^2 \geq 26.118$; two-tailed; d.f. = 3). Nevertheless, the position after a determiner and immediately before the head of a noun phrase is the most common slot where noun-phrase-internal *like* occurs, as shown in Table 23.

Turning to verb phrases, they, too, can be modified by *like* in a variety of different phrase-external and phrase-internal positions. The distributional features of the marker can be summarised as in Table 24.

Unlike noun phrases, it is more common that *like* occurs within than before verb phrases. In particular, the position immediately before the lexical verb vastly outnumbers the other verb-phrase-internal positions. My data contain no examples where *like* occurs between the auxiliaries of complex verb phrases like *may have been going*, but this is more likely due to a low ratio of highly complex verb phrases of this kind than to any categorical restrictions on *like*'s collocational possibilities.

Table 24. Position of *like* in relation to verb phrases

Position	Example	n	%
before all of VP	<i>if Paul like tries to take on Ollie, he's just gonna</i>	51	31.9
within semi-auxiliary	<i>these people are like gonna sit there</i>	1	0.6
after auxiliary before lexical verb	<i>she's like tearing the wall down</i>	99	61.9
after <i>to</i> before lexical verb	<i>he just wants to like do some practical work</i>	7	4.4
before gerund	<i>I wouldn't mind like going into business</i>	2	1.3
Σ		160	100.1

It is interesting to note that an expression as syntactically fixed as the semi-auxiliary BE *gonna* can have *like* inserted between its two components.²³ However, if the semi-auxiliary is realised as BE *going to*, it appears that *like* cannot appear immediately before the infinitive marker; cf. **these people are going like to sit there*. Moreover, it will appear that *like*-insertion immediately before the infinitive marker is impossible in the other semi-auxiliaries, too; *you just like have to shout at them* and *they don't have to like pull you through it* both occur, but **have like to* (and **used like to*) seems implausible.

The data support the assumption made earlier that phrasal and prepositional verbs can only have *like* in phrase-external position (*he like turned round* vs. **he turned like round*; *people like talk about Kath* vs. **people talk like about Kath*). Noting from Table 24 above that *like* can occur between the infinitive marker and a verb, an implication of the proposed restrictions and observed possibilities is that the following example (202a) could be paraphrased as (202b–c), but not as (202d), due to the fixedness of the phrasal verb *take on*:

- (202) a. if Paul **like** tries to take on Ollie, he's just gonna ...
 (139801/1: 69)
 b. if Paul tries like to take on Ollie, he's just gonna ...
 c. if Paul tries to like take on Ollie, he's just gonna ...
 d. *if Paul tries to take like on Ollie, he's just gonna ...

An intriguing pattern emerges from the investigation of *like* in verb phrases. Whenever a verb phrase modified by *like* contains an auxiliary and a lexical verb, the auxiliary always precedes the marker; to illustrate, *my dad was like saying* exemplifies a very common structure, but its *like*-external counterpart **my dad like was saying* never occurs. Supporting this tendency is the observation that those 51 verb phrases that are modified by a *like* that precedes the entire verb phrase contain no modal or primary auxiliaries (cf. Table 24):

- (203) they always **like** seem to be impressing everyone (142604/1: 46)
 (204) they **like** wanna see like how we talk and all that (139501/1: 11)
 (205) I feel sort of like really two faced when I **like** start talking to Jenny and stuff (133903/2: 132)

Hence, there appears to be a categorical restriction on the position of verb-phrase-modifying *like*: in a *like*-modified verb phrase whose tensed verb is

a primary or modal auxiliary the tensed auxiliary must precede the marker. Examples (203)–(205) show that such a restriction does not apply when the tensed verb of a complex verb phrase is *seem*, *wanna* or *start* (i.e. the so-called ‘catenative verbs’; cf. Quirk et al. 1985:146ff). Of course, in a complex verb phrase, several verb forms may precede the marker:

- (206) we were supposed to be gonna **like** have a little gathering for my birthday (134101/26: 215)

The claim made here is not that *like* could not occur in a different verb-phrase-internal position in this example, but the only position where it could not occur is immediately after the subject *we*, since it must be preceded by the tensed primary auxiliary *were*.

The position immediately before the lexical verb is not only the most favoured position of *like* in connection with verb phrases, it is also the most common of all of *like*’s clause-internal positions in my data, regardless of phrase type. Moreover, when *like* occurs immediately before the lexical verb of a verb phrase, it is typically preceded by a form of BE (n=61; 61.8%). In fact, the pattern BE + *like* + verb complement (e.g. *she’s like tearing the wall down*) is so common that it outnumbers such constructions as the quotative complementiser BE *like* (n=34) and the quotative *it’s like* (n=10), discussed in connection with pragmatic function above (cf. 5.2.3). However, it does not outnumber the discourse link *it’s like* (n=69). All in all, the data show that collocations consisting of a form of BE and the marker *like* are particularly frequent, and it seems that BE has a special ‘triggering effect’ on the marker *like*. This is corroborated by the figures for another subgroup that is not included in the statistics of the current subsection, namely the left-bound *like* which occurs at a cut-off point or a self-repair. In this category also, *like* tends to occur immediately after a form of BE (n=153; 65% of left-bound *like*). It appears that the pattern S + BE + *like* (regardless of function but usually not denoting a quotation) is almost formulaic in nature, as suggested by its frequency and versatility in the following extract:

- (207) Carla: You know if you’ve erm, do you know if you’ve erm,
 recorded it if **you’re like** speaking if **they’re like**, in a group
 do you put all their names down, or d’you just put a group?
 Papya: I’d put all their names down
 Carla: yeah [same here]

- Papya: [cos that], cos it like takes up half the tape anyway ...
 ⟨nv⟩laugh⟨/nv⟩ ... and it's it might be the same people
 speaking again, your friends
- Carla: yeah probably, I'd just go, and the names are, I thought **it was like I was like** half of the tape yeah and I thought, and **I was like I had like one name to go ... I was like one, I was like** half way through the tape and I had I had I only had one name to go
- ?: ⟨screaming⟩ ⟨unclear⟩ names!⟨/⟩
- Carla: ⟨nv⟩scream⟨/nv⟩
- Papya: the university is, the, the university isn't going to tell anybody are they?
- Carla: no,
- Papya: [think it's]
- Carla: [like]
- Papya: confidential, it's just
- Carla: Sukey's just saying ⟨unclear⟩ conversation she want me to wipe it off, I'm not gonna
- Papya: don't wipe it off
- Carla: I'm not [gonna]
- Papya: [tell her] you have that
- Carla: yeah I will
- Papya: ⟨nv⟩laugh⟨/nv⟩
- Carla: and **it's just like** ... I had like half a side left, yeah
- Papya: yeah
- Carla: and I had one name left, and luckily it was on the bus and just talking and talking and talking, it's erm it was in my bag, and it did it [did pick up]
- Papya: [I have] to check two of my tapes cos I'm not sure if they, if I've used it all up
- Carla: well **I'm like**, ⟨laughing⟩**I was like**⟨/⟩ got to the last sentence and it was cut, and **it was like** really lucky
 (136406/1&2: 1-27)

As the extract suggests, the patterns *S + BE + like* usually involves a pronominal subject and is usually followed by a complement of some sort and typically serves other functions than the quotative (cf. 5.2.3).

The *like*-modification of prepositional phrases can be dealt with very briefly. No significant differences between the two types of use were found.

Like readily occurs before or within prepositional phrases, and utterances of the type *if they're like in a group* and *if they're in like a group* both occur (cf. example (207) above).

Turning to *like*-modified adjective phrases, they are normally simple, in which case the only possibility of *like*-modification is immediately preceding the adjective, as with *it's like brilliant*. However, if we single out those adjective phrases where *like* could occur phrase-internally, i.e. complex adjective phrases such as *really funny*, we note that *like* also in these cases tends to precede the entire adjective phrase rather than occur after a pre-modifier. In other words, it is more common to have *that's like really derogatory*, although the pattern *is she really like isolated* also occurs (significant at $p < 0.004$; $\chi^2 \geq 8.333$; two-tailed; d.f. = 1). Moreover, the tendency for *like* to occur immediately after a form of BE also pertains to this category, as most of the *like*-modified adjective phrases occur in the pattern S + BE + *like* + AdjP (subject attribute) (n = 34; 89.5% of *like*-modified adjective phrases).

Turning to the final and least common category, *like*-modification of adverb phrases, it should be noted that the marker does not appear phrase-internally when it modifies adverb phrases in the data. However, we cannot rule out the possibility of such a pattern. After all, cases such as *like really clearly* and *like really late* do occur, and given the possibility of the collocation *really like isolated*, mentioned above, we can analogously expect *really like clearly* to be equally possible. The reason why no tokens of this type were found is presumably that the adverb category is small overall (cf. Figure 19), and that *like*-modified adverbs tend to be simple (including *home*, *early*, *here* and *there*).

To sum up the current subsection, I have shown that the distribution of *like* in clause-internal position is by no means random. With reference to *like*'s position in relation to the phrases it modifies, I have pointed towards several significant tendencies in the data and suggested constraints that apply:

- *like* can precede but never enter proper nouns;
- *like* can precede but never enter compound nouns;
- *like* can precede but never enter noun phrases denoting time, distance, frequency and age;
- *like* can precede but never enter the semi-auxiliaries *have to*, *used to* and *going to* (but it can enter BE *going to/gonna* in the position immediately after BE);

- *like* can precede but never enter phrasal and prepositional verbs;
- in a *like*-modified verb phrase whose tensed verb is a primary or modal auxiliary the tensed auxiliary must precede the marker.

Viewed in conjunction, the proposed constraints can be summed up by two principles that seem to have general application:

The syntactic fixedness principle

The degree of syntactic fixedness of a phrase reduces the possibility of *like*-insertion in the phrase.

The principle of lexical attraction

Like tends to occur immediately before the lexical material of a phrase rather than before grammatical words.

These principles are supported by the data described above in that (a) in verb phrases, the most common position for *like* is after auxiliaries and immediately before the lexical verb; (b) pronoun-auxiliary collocations such as *I'm*, *you're*, *you've*, *he's*, etc are formulaic in nature and *like* never enters such collocations but very often follows immediately after them; (c) proper nouns, compound nouns and the semi-auxiliaries *have to* and *used to* are examples of fixed expressions *par excellence*.

5.3.1.3 Recurrent patterns in clause-external position

In this subsection, I would like to mention briefly some collocations that typically occur in the data by considering the uses of *like* described as 'unbound' above, i.e. cases where the marker is external to the syntactic structure of the adjacent proposition. As shown in Table 21 above, 33.9 per cent (n = 456) of the markers are of this type, and the function of *like* in such contexts is typically to provide a discourse link or to signal speaker continuation; i.e. it has textual/hesitational functions.

In clause-external position, *like* has a tendency to occur in conjunction with another pragmatic marker or in clusters of markers:

(208) **Like, I mean**, they can't even beat Ipswich at home. (141906/13: 14)

(209) Well yeah I mean, I mean the thing is it's like, why have you got those headphones round your neck? (134101/: 270)

Restricting the quantitative investigation to unbound *like*, we find that more often than not (n = 246; 53.9%), *like* collocates with another pragmatic

marker, as shown in the examples above. The distribution of the different markers *like* tends to collocate with *is* as in Table 25.

Table 25. Common collocations of *like* and other pragmatic markers (clause-external position)

Collocates with	n	%
<i>and</i>	84	34.1
<i>cos/because</i>	43	17.5
<i>I mean</i>	31	12.6
<i>but</i>	30	12.2
<i>you know</i>	15	6.1
<i>well</i>	13	5.3
<i>and then</i>	13	5.3
<i>so</i>	9	3.7
<i>sort of</i>	5	2.0
<i>kind of</i>	3	1.2
Σ	246	100.0

We note that it is especially the connectives that tend to collocate with *like* in clause-external contexts. It appears that the most common of these collocations, *and like*, *cos like*, *but like* and *I mean like* have achieved an almost formulaic status and seem to work as fixed or semi-fixed expressions. As indicated by the following extract, these discourse links contribute as one unit to the textuality and coherence of the discourse, and function as a take-off for further talk (Stenström & Andersen 1996):

- (210) Jess: Cos Foxy was the one that used to keep the ⟨laughing⟩ conversation⟨/⟩
 Catriona: You serious?
 Jess: no, no badly **but like** I just used to think he was so much more chatty than ⟨name⟩, we just used to sit there and go, alright we'd get off with each other then we'd break like you know, like, try you'd, like the conversations [going]
 Catriona: [You got off with ⟨unclear⟩?]
 Jess: Yeah I used to like, we used to see each other, sort of, [and I]
 Catriona: [For a long time?]

- Jess: No, no well the weird [part]
 Catriona: [How long?]
 Jess: it was like spaced, it was just like, I dunno, not long at all
 [just a]
 Catriona: [Well roughly] how long?
 Jess: couple of things, we saw each other, and then over a
 space of about two months we saw each other probably
 about three times
 Catriona: Oh.
 Jess: but it wasn't like a long thing **but like**, I, the time that I
 spent with him was like quite a long time, like the
 evening, whatever so he'd get and like it just used to be
 constant pauses, it used to be terrible and so we used to
 get off with each other like you pause [for, for what]
 Catriona: [And you, did you like] did you were you attracted to him
 then?
 Jess: Yeah I was really attracted to him but I just could not
 speak to him it was awful, **and like** there used to be awful
 pauses and (142704/1&4: 29–43)

Finally, it should be pointed out that *sort of like* and to some extent also *kind of like* regularly occur in clause-internal position (n=36), especially if the pragmatic function of *like* is to denote approximation of a measurable entity or a lexical expression, as in *I was kind of like in the middle* or *you might sort of like bark*. Due to their common uses as devices for 'mak[ing] the reference of an entity vague and less well defined rather than clear and specific' (Aijmer 1984: 118), the co-occurrence of *kind of/sort of* and *like* usually enforces a reading by which the hearer is instructed to interpret the following as a case of loose use (i.e. not as a case of metalinguistic use or a quotation, etc). It is clear that both *like* and *sort of/kind of* can perform this function individually, but my data show that they have a tendency to collocate. In fact, the expressions *sort of like* and *kind of like* appear to operate as fixed or semi-fixed markers that are fit to accompany processes of loosening and enrichment.

5.3.2 Social variation

To reiterate, a main hypothesis concerning the use of *like* as a marker is that this feature is spreading in the London area mainly as a result of influence

from American English. The fact that the COLT speakers and conversations have been classified with respect to a number of non-linguistic parameters, specifically gender, age, social class, ethnicity and location, facilitates the analysis of variation along various lines, an analysis which may indicate which speaker groups first adopt this feature in the London area, and whether *like* follows the same paths of regional and social spread as those that have been found to be the relevant in American communities (cf. survey of previous literature given in Section 5.1.2). In the current section, I investigate variation between speaker groups in COLT, with a view to identifying the dimensions along which the use of *like* as a pragmatic marker appears to be spreading in the British context. As in Section 4.3.2 (the corresponding section on social variation in the use of *innit/is it*), the method I apply involves statistical testing of significance by means of an SPSS matrix. The examples have been classified with respect to the social factors mentioned, and each factor was submitted to a chi-square goodness of fit test. The results of this testing are presented in the sections that follow.

5.3.2.1 *Gender*

Previous literature is not univocal with regard to the effect that speakers' gender has on the distribution of *like* as a marker. Most studies report that it is female rather than male speakers who first adopt this feature, but two studies, Blyth et al. (1990) and Dailey-O'Cain (2000), suggest the opposite pattern. I now wish to assess how my own data add to this research by testing whether the distribution of the pragmatic marker *like* correlates with the speaker's gender in COLT. Moreover, as most of the previous studies are concerned with the quotative construction BE *like* only, it is of interest to see if any gender bias can be observed if we analyse the use of *like* as a marker more generally.

The distribution in COLT of the pragmatic marker *like* across the two genders is as in Table 26.

Although both genders widely apply *like* as a pragmatic marker, the data suggest that this feature is primarily adopted by adolescent girls. Hence, these data corroborate the American pattern with respect to the gender parameter, in that it is largely the female speakers who are responsible for the spread of this feature. I also tested whether a similar gender-based skewness can be observed in the distribution of the two grammaticalised constructions, namely the quotative complementiser BE *like* and the construction

Table 26. Distribution of the pragmatic marker *like* according to speakers' gender

Gender	n	%	per 1,000 words	chi-square test
male	642	47.9	2.78	$\chi^2 \geq 8.214$
female	698	52.1	3.24	d.f. = 1
Σ	1,340	100.0		Significant at $p < 0.004$

it's like used as a discourse link. However, there were no significant differences between the genders with respect to the distribution of these two constructions. This is interesting, because it goes against the findings of a number of studies that it is the girls who are in the forefront of the grammaticalisation of the construction BE *like*, e.g. Romaine & Lange (1991), Ferrara & Bell (1995) and Tagliamonte & Hudson (1999). However, the quotative construction is relatively infrequent, with its mere 34 instances. My proposed explanation for this (cf. 5.3.3) is that the emergence of the quotative construction is chronologically preceded by *like* having the approximative and metalinguistic functions.

5.3.2.2 Age

The main hypothesis in relation to the age parameter is that it is adolescents, as opposed to other age groups, that are responsible for the spread of the use of *like* as a marker. That this is the case is evident from my comparison of COLT and the adult reference corpus BNC/London (cf. 5.1.4). I now wish to consider the age parameter in more detail, by comparing age groups within COLT.

The distribution of the pragmatic marker *like* across the different age groups is as in Table 27.

The table shows that there is a significant correlation between speakers' age and the extent to which the speakers use *like* as a marker. The frequency of use seems to drop dramatically after age 20, but the figures for the young adult group must be interpreted with caution, due to this group's low rate of overall contribution in COLT. (Recall that the BNC/London data showed that the marker was not uncommon among speakers in their twenties and thirties.) However, the most important finding that can be drawn from this table is that it is primarily the older adolescents in their late teens who have adopted this feature and that it is slightly less common among the younger adolescents.²⁴

Table 27. Distribution of the pragmatic marker *like* according to speakers' age

Age group	n	%	per 1,000 words	chi-square test
Early adolescence (10–13)	244	18.8	2.53	
Middle adolescence (14–16)	836	64.6	3.48	
Late adolescence (17–19)	206	15.9	5.61	$\chi^2 \geq 143.578$
Young adult (20–29)	1	0.1	0.88	d.f. = 4
Older adult (30+)	8	0.6	0.35	Significant at
Σ	1,295	100.0		$p < 0.0001$

Again, testing of the grammaticalised constructions *BE like* and *it's like* individually did not reveal significant differences between the age groups.

5.3.2.3 Social class

To the best of my knowledge, the only study which empirically or quantitatively investigates whether the use of *like* as a marker correlates with social class is my own pilot study, Andersen (1997d), which suggests that it is most commonly used by teenagers from the highest social class. In addition, two studies, Tannen (1986) and Blyth et al. briefly mention that this use is 'indicative of middle-class teenage girls' (1990: 224). As the pilot study was based on only a selection of COLT-texts, it is necessary to consider how *like* correlates with social class in the entire COLT corpus in order to substantiate these general assumptions concerning its social distribution.

In COLT, the distribution of the pragmatic marker *like* across the three different social classes is as in Table 28.

Table 28. Distribution of the pragmatic marker *like* according to speakers' social class

Social class	n	%	per 1,000 words	chi-square test
high (1)	270	39.1	3.35	
middle (2)	190	27.5	2.80	$\chi^2 \geq 4.493$
low (3)	231	33.4	2.89	d.f. = 2
Σ	691	100.0		NOT SIGNIFICANT

It is interesting to note that the pragmatic marker *like* is adopted by speakers of all social classes (which include both working class and middle class speakers) with fairly similar frequencies of about three tokens per thousand words. If we compare the three groups individually, the distribution does not correlate significantly with the social class parameter. However, Table 28 clearly suggests a higher ratio for the highest social class, and if we consider this group as opposed to the middle and low classes, by collapsing these two categories before performing the chi-square test, a significant difference emerges; the speakers from the highest class use this marker more frequently than the other speakers (significant at $p < 0.037$; $\chi^2 \geq 4.333$; two-tailed; d.f. = 1), as suggested by my pilot study. I also tested if the grammaticalised constructions *BE like* and *it's like* correlated with this parameter, but no significant differences between the social groups were found. These findings contrast greatly with the phenomenon discussed in the previous chapter, the forms *innit* and *is it* used as invariant tags/follow-ups, which were seen to follow the ordinary pattern of correlation with social class associated with non-standard features. The fact that *like* does not follow this traditional pattern of high percentage of low-status forms in the lower classes corroborates my earlier suggestion that *like* appears to be gaining ground in a fairly wide range of speaker groups and across registers and is used by speakers who otherwise speak a standard variety of English (cf. endnote 4).

5.3.2.4 *Ethnicity*

As regards ethnicity, it seems to be an implicit assumption in most of the previous literature on the topic that *like* as a marker is primarily a feature of white adolescent speech. However, Ferrara & Bell (1995) have shown that in the United States, black and Hispanic speakers are contributing to its spread, although less so than white speakers. In COLT, only the recruits and their families could be classified according to ethnic group membership. Consequently, a little less than half of the examples in the matrix could be assigned values according to the white/ethnic minority distinction. Since the ethnicity factor has not been coded in the computerised version of the COLT data, it was not possible to supply the figures for the total contribution of each of the two ethnic groups. Hence, relative frequencies could not be calculated, and the chi-square goodness of fit test is based on the assumption that the two groups contribute the same amount of text to the corpus.

The distribution of the pragmatic marker *like* in the two ethnic groups is as in Table 29.

Table 29. Distribution of the pragmatic marker *like* according to ethnic group

Ethnic group	n	%	chi-square test
White	435	75.0	$\chi^2 \geq 145.000$
Ethnic minority	145	25.0	d.f. = 1
Σ	580	100.0	Significant at $p < 0.0001$

The table shows that, as expected, the pragmatic marker *like* is primarily a feature of white adolescent speech, where it is three times as common, in absolute terms, as in ethnic minorities speech. However, we note that it does occur in the language of the latter group and is not categorically restricted to white speakers. Importantly, a crosstabulation of the two factors ethnicity and gender suggests that it is the female users who are introducing the marker *like* into ethnic minority speech (significant at $p < 0.0001$; $\chi^2 \geq 32.455$; two-tailed; d.f. = 1). This is particularly interesting in the light of Ferrara & Bell's (1995) observation that speakers of both genders contribute equally to introducing the marker *like* into the language of black and Hispanic speakers in the United States. I also tested if the grammaticalised constructions *BE like* and *it's like* correlated with this parameter, but no significant differences between the ethnic groups were found.

5.3.2.5 Location

As regards geographical distribution, the general tendency suggested by the previous literature is that the use of *like* as a marker is an urban feature that may be spreading to more rural areas (Ferrara & Bell 1995). As all of COLT was recorded in suburban London, it is difficult to postulate any spread from one borough to the next. However, given the tendencies regarding ethnicity that emerged from the analysis in Subsection 5.3.2.4, we can assume that there are distributional differences related to location, in that those boroughs with a relatively high degree of ethnic minority members are likely to have a low ratio of *like*-usage. As mentioned in connection with *innit/is it*, the London boroughs represented in COLT figure widely on the lists of Britain's largest district populations for various ethnic minority groups. Against this

background, it is of interest to see if the location factor correlates with frequency of *like*-usage.

The distribution of the pragmatic marker *like* across the different boroughs is as in Table 30.

Table 30. Distribution of the pragmatic marker *like* according to location of conversation

Location	n	%	per 1,000 words	chi-square test
Hackney	434	32.2	3.22	
Tower Hamlets	67	5.0	1.93	
Camden	142	10.5	2.32	
Brent	17	1.3	1.06	
Westminster	3	0.2	1.85	
Barnet	189	14.0	2.88	
Hertfordshire	429	31.8	3.42	
Islington	66	4.9	3.71	$\chi^2 \geq 57.256$
Σ	1,347	99.9		d.f. = 7 Significant at $p < 0.0001$

We note that the degree to which *like* is used as a marker differs significantly across the eight boroughs represented. In order to ease the interpretation of these statistics, I have ranked the boroughs by relative frequency and plotted the figures in a bar chart; cf. Figure 20.

The pragmatic marker *like* is widely used in Hackney, Hertfordshire and Islington, where it occurs more than three times per thousand words, less so in Camden and Barnet, and least frequently in Brent, Westminster and Tower Hamlets, where it occurs less than two times per thousand words. There is no clear patterned difference between the inner and outer London boroughs. However, some individual observations support the assumption that *like* correlates negatively with a high ratio of ethnic minority members: (a) the public school in Hertfordshire, where the speakers are exclusively white, ranks second highest in terms of *like*-usage; (b) Brent, which is the local authority with the highest percentage anywhere in Britain of its population comprised of ethnic minority members, has a significantly lower *like*-ratio than any other borough, and (c) Tower Hamlets, which also has a high degree of ethnic minority members, ranks relatively low in terms of *like*-usage. However, Hackney and Islington are notable exceptions to this general tendency,

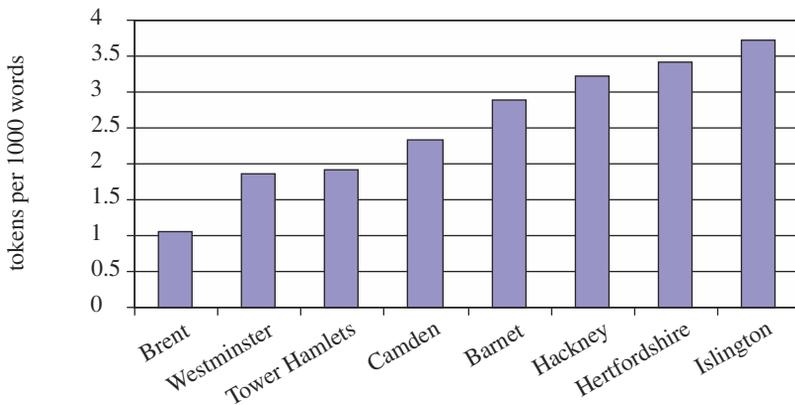


Figure 20. Geographical distribution of the pragmatic marker *like*

in that they rank high in terms of *like*-usage despite the fact that they are densely populated by ethnic minority members (cf. 4.3.2.5). The figures from Westminster cannot be assigned great importance, due to a low overall rate of contribution from the speakers from this borough (1,626 words).

Despite these exceptions, the data generally corroborate the ethnicity pattern described in the previous subsection. It is interesting to note that the distributional pattern that emerges in connection with *like* as a marker is precisely the opposite as that of *innit/is it*; those boroughs which have a high density of ethnic minority speakers have a relatively low degree of *like*-users, while they were shown in the previous chapter to have a high degree of invariant *innit/is it*-users. This suggests that members of the ethnic minority groups play a lesser role in the spread of the pragmatic marker *like* in London English, while they play an important role in the use and spread of invariant *innit/is it*.

I also tested the distribution of the grammaticalised constructions *BE like* and *it's like* individually. There were no significant differences between the locations as regards the use of *it's like*, but the investigation of the quotative complementiser revealed a significant distributional difference. It is the Hertfordshire speakers who use *BE like* to a much greater extent than speakers from the other boroughs, while the Hackney speakers use it much less than the average (significant at $p < 0.0001$; $\chi^2 \geq 21.047$; two-tailed; d.f. = 1). This adds further support to the hypothesis that the pragmatic

marker *like* is predominantly a white speech phenomenon and that its grammaticalisation first occurs among white speakers.

In sum, the previous discussion has shown that, within the target group of COLT-adolescents, the prototypical user of the pragmatic marker *like* is a white 17-year-old girl from the highest social class who attends the boarding school in Hertfordshire. Conversely, the least typical *like*-user within the target group is a male ethnic minority member aged 13 from Brent.

5.3.3 *Grammaticalisation and potential future developments*

In Section 5.3, I have focused on the use of *like* as a pragmatic marker in terms of variation between speaker groups within COLT and in terms of distributional and collocational patterns in the corpus as a whole. The unifying hypothesis that underlies both these strands of quantitative research has been that the observable patterns of variation are manifestations of linguistic change in process. The ongoing linguistic change involves both grammaticalisation and linguistic borrowing. As regards sociolinguistic variation, I have shown that it is the white female adolescents who are in the forefront of these processes in the London area. The marker occurs in all social classes, but most frequently in the highest social class.

What are the implications that can be drawn from the discussion on quantitative distributional patterns as regards the diachronic process that *like* is affected by? What can the distributional patterns tell us about the grammaticalisation process? I would like to point towards some general characteristics that emerge from the discussion above and suggest potential future developments. The fundamental assumption here is that the pragmatic marker *like* originates in a lexical item, that is, a preposition with the inherent meaning 'similar to'. In my corpus-based approach to the study of *like* in conversation, I have been assuming that frequency of use is relevant to the description of diachrony, since recurrence and routinisation are prerequisites for grammaticalisation. Recurrent patterns in the data can be seen as indications that grammaticalisation is taking place and that the implicit meanings associated with the use of *like* are becoming a part of the linguistic convention of London adolescents.

Grammaticalisation involves the gradual fixation of discourse functions, and the current chapter has provided evidence that grammaticalisation of *like* is a development that occurs in adolescent speech. Teenage talk can be

expected to be different from adult talk due to various cognitive and social factors. I interpret the frequent use of *like* in adolescent talk as an overt manifestation of adolescents' need and desire to avoid full commitment to the expressions they choose, either reflecting a genuine conceptual discrepancy between what was said and what was meant, or suggesting less-than-full lexical commitment to the appropriateness of an expression. The adolescents apply this form as a means of marking that there is a non-identical resemblance relation between what they think and what they say. It seems that the main motivation for the use of *like* is to make explicit the non-incorporation of a certain word, expression or statement in the mind of the speaker.

Several explanations for this need can be provided. Firstly, for very natural reasons, adolescents can be expected to wish to mark a psychological distance towards an expression, simply because they are genuinely uncertain as to its appropriateness due to lack of linguistic experience. Secondly, the motivation may be found in the specific social setting; a speaker may apply the marker as a means of invoking solidarity between the speakers, since *like* may have such effects as avoiding sounding too confident in the use of one's language, avoiding undue assertiveness, or warning the hearer about a potential stylistic inadequacy. Thirdly, there appear to be more general sociocultural values attached to the use of *like*; it may indeed serve as a marker of adolescence, as it seems to embody a set of values of the 'post-modern', ironic and non-committal youth of the 1980s and 1990s (the so-called 'cult of approximation'; cf. Hasund forthcoming). Regardless of which of these motivating factors are the most crucial (in a particular setting or more generally), it is clear that the lexeme *like*, denoting similarity, provides a particularly suitable means of expressing such a subjective thought-utterance relation as non-identical resemblance. In any variety of English, this form is syntactically and semantically multifunctional, and it is a lexeme with a very general meaning. Hence, the prerequisites for grammaticalisation are clearly to be found: (a) the motivating factor for this development, namely the need to enhance expressivity, and (b) the availability of a form that is used for a variety of new purposes.

My previous discussion has given ample evidence that attitudinal/subjective meanings associated with *like* are strong and salient, and that this marker is quantitatively significant in the data.²⁵ Generally, my data have provided support for the main hypothesis that this form is undergoing grammaticalisation in London English, from a preposition denoting similarity

to a pragmatic marker with subjective and textual functions. However, my data have also provided indications that the grammaticalisation of *like* is very much an incipient rather than a completed process in this variety. I have shown that not all functions are equally salient in the 1993 data, which suggests patterns of chronological ordering. The hesitational/linking functions and subjective functions such as approximation and exemplification seem to precede the quotative function.

Hopper describes grammaticalisation in terms of a set of principles that are 'potentially diagnostic of the emergence of grammatical forms and constructions out of already available material, and also of different degrees of grammaticization where grammaticization has already recognizably proceeded' (1991: 21f), principles that are also adequate to characterise the development of *like* as a pragmatic marker. Originally a lexical item that has come to serve pragmatic, subjective and discourse marking functions, the marker *like* is a massively recurrent item that displays great syntactic freedom. This provides evidence for its decategorialisation, in that it has a much wider syntactic distribution than its predecessor, the proposition or conjunction *like*. Moreover, the old forms continue to coexist with the more recent marker uses; hence the development of *like* exemplifies divergence. It has lost parts of its inherent referential meaning and, generally speaking, does not affect propositional meaning. However, the meaning of similarity is faintly present in the marker uses, suggesting persistence of meaning.

The new meanings are based in the communicative situation; they are subjective, pertaining to the relation between the speaker's utterance and the underlying thought and to the commitment with which the speaker wishes to put forward her message. *Like* can thus be seen to follow the well-known trajectory from propositional to textual and subjective meanings (Traugott 1995b).

Frequency of use can also be seen as an indication that *like* is favoured in certain environments as opposed to other environments, and that it may be spreading to other environments. *Like* does to some extent occur in expressions that are reanalysed into new structures, but such 'specialisation' (Hopper 1991) has occurred only to a certain extent. The most common pattern is that *like* occurs after a form of BE and with a following complement. Rightly, the collocation of BE *like* is highly common, but functional properties suggest that the grammaticalisation of the construction BE *like* into a fixed quotative formula is a relatively late stage in this process and is a characteristic of the speech of fairly 'advanced' users of *like* as a pragmatic

marker (namely the Hertfordshire public school speakers). Arguably, then, the data provide evidence that the initial stages of grammaticalisation has occurred: the form is widely used non-propositionally with associated inferences concerning the lack of an identity-relation between utterance and thought. However, the later stage, namely emergence of fixed idiomatic constructions, must be interpreted as incipient at this time, as the quotative complementiser *BE like* is not particularly common. *Like* also appears in another idiomatic construction, the discourse link *it's like*, which is actually twice as common as the quotative complementiser.

In this chapter, I have also pointed towards restrictions on the use of *like* in clause-internal position and shown that its linguistic distribution is far from random, despite the relatively great syntactic freedom that this marker has. In clause-external position, *like* more often than not collocates with other pragmatic markers, especially *and*, *but*, *cos/because*, *so* and *I mean*, while the marker *sort of* particularly commonly collocates with *like* in clause-internal position. It is possible that some of these collocations also represent cases of incipient fixation.

According to Hopper, 'specialisation' (obligatorification), i.e. 'the narrowing of choices that characterizes an emergent grammatical construction' (1991: 25) is a likely outcome of grammaticalisation, but 'it is only in the final stages of grammaticization the use of a form becomes obligatory' (ibid.). We have seen that *like* can be considered obligatory in the quotative *BE like* construction. As regards future developments, then, it seems likely that this reanalysed idiomatic construction will increase in frequency. Moreover, other constructions may become reanalysed if the collocations are persistently used with a high frequency. My study has shown that *kind of like*, *sort of like*, *and like*, *cos like* and *but like* may be candidates for such a development. Finally, given *like*'s fairly wide social distribution, and high frequency in the highest social class, it does not seem unlikely that a moderate use of the marker *like* gradually becomes accepted as part of the standard dialect (cf. Note 4).

5.3.4 *Summary*

My discussion of the synchronic use and diachronic development of the pragmatic marker *like* in COLT can be summed up in the following points:

- *Like* is frequently used as a pragmatic marker in London adolescence speech; it occurs throughout the COLT corpus and has a wide linguistic and social distribution.
- This marker has a range of functions (approximative, exemplificatory, metalinguistic, quotative, hesitational/linking) that can be described in terms of procedural meaning and the notion of less-than-literal resemblance between an utterance and the underlying thought.
- Although syntactically versatile, *like* tends to follow certain collocational patterns, and there are restrictions as to where it can occur (cf. 5.3.1).
- The most likely precursor of this marker is the preposition/conjunction *like*, and its development can be considered a case of grammaticalisation.
- The grammaticalisation (reanalysis) of the constructions BE *like* and *it's like* appears to be incipient at the time the COLT recordings were made.
- The use of *like* as a marker is primarily a feature of white female speakers in late adolescence.
- The use of *like* as a marker occurs frequently in all social classes, but slightly more frequently in the highest social class.
- There are little distributional differences between speaker groups as regards the constructions BE *like* and *it's like*, but it will appear that the use of these grammaticalised constructions is a characteristic of fairly 'advanced' users of *like* as a marker.

On this basis, the diachronic development may be schematised by means of the survey in Figure 21.

Process	Development of <i>like</i>	Social distribution
reanalysis	<i>like</i> : preposition/conjunction → <i>like</i> : marker (approximator, exemplifier, hesitational and metalinguistic device)	white adolescent girls
	↓	
rebracketing/fixation	<i>like</i> : marker → <i>it's like</i> (discourse link) <i>like</i> : marker → BE <i>like</i> (quotative)	
	↓	
social spread	<i>like</i> : marker (all functions)	female → male white → ethnic minority adolescents → adults

Figure 21. Summary of the development of *like*

CHAPTER 6

Pragmatic aspects of teenage and adult conversation

6.1 Introduction

The main objective of this study has been to describe ways in which the language of adolescents differs from the language of the adult generation and from mainstream English more generally. I have focused on phenomena that can be described as ‘pragmatic’, in that the meanings associated with the forms investigated crucially depend on the context of use and are generally external to the propositional meaning of the utterances that contain them. These meanings are principally of an attitudinal and interactional nature, and the functional properties of the selected items have been accounted for within a framework that distinguishes between three dimensions of marker functions, the subjective, interactional and textual.

It has not been my intention to provide a comprehensive description of age-driven linguistic variation in pragmatic phenomena. Rather, I have provided an in-depth analysis of a very restricted set of features, namely the use of the forms *innit* and *is it* as invariant tags and follow-ups, and the use of *like* as a pragmatic marker. The two empirical chapters showed that these phenomena are indeed teenage-specific; invariant use of *innit/is it* is not found in the adult reference material studied, while *like* as a marker occurs only to a little extent in that material, and with a much narrower set of functions than in the adolescent corpus.

Emphasising the adolescent data, I have described the range of different functions associated with the use of these markers in different contexts, and I have proposed a diachronic development in terms of grammaticalisation and social and geographical spread. My study has revealed considerable variation between speaker groups in COLT, and the two features differ with respect to the sociolinguistic patterns that emerge. Invariant *innit/is it* is predominantly

a lower-class, ethnic-minority feature, while the pragmatic marker *like* is predominantly a feature of white speakers from the highest social class. Overall, both phenomena are slightly more frequent in girls' than in boys' talk, but there is some evidence that boys are responsible for the spread of invariant tags and follow-ups. (For a fuller description of the most important findings of this study the reader is referred to Sections 4.3.4 and 5.3.4.)

As regards the features studied, my primary concern has been to demonstrate that they exemplify adolescence-specific phenomena that are manifestations of language change. Specifically, I have described the development of *innit* and *is it* in terms of a structural reanalysis of two originally third person singular neuter interrogative forms (invariabilisation), and the development of *like* in terms of routinisation and reanalysis of an original lexeme denoting similarity. Both developments contain the hallmarks of grammaticalisation processes; they involve loss of semantic features, increase in pragmatic significance, routinisation, decategorialisation and persistence of meaning (cf. 4.3 and 5.3). The data also suggested incipient reanalysis and fixation of two particular structures, the quotative BE *like* and the discourse link *it's like*.

In this final chapter, I wish to view these main findings in a wider perspective, by considering, firstly, the possibility that they are manifestations not only of language change but also of age-grading and hence may have implications for our view on adolescence as such, and secondly, by proposing suggestions for further research.

6.2 Language change and age-grading

In the introductory chapter, I emphasised that age-driven linguistic variation can be explained from two different perspectives, since cross-generational differences do not necessarily imply ongoing language change, but may also be indicative of age-grading. *Linguistic innovation* is the key concept which is a prerequisite for the development of new linguistic forms and functions, and for grammaticalisation. But innovative linguistic behaviour may also be symptomatic of speaker groups who wish to signal non-adherence to the norms of a different group, even if the innovations do not have long term effects. More specifically, adolescence-specific features may be manifestations of ongoing language change, provided that the innovative behaviour has long term effects on language, but it may also be indicative of the

developmental characteristics of this age group and of its expression of social identity and ingroupness. Hence, linguistic innovations may reflect language change or age-grading, and explanations for innovative behaviour may be found with reference to either phenomenon. Although the underlying assumption of this study has been that the markers investigated represent language change, specifically grammaticalisation and social and geographical spread, I wish to consider in the current section whether the teenage-specificity detected in the current study can also to some extent be explained with reference to the phenomenon of age-grading. In other words, what I want to assess is whether teenagers' frequent use of *like* and the emergence of invariant tags and follow-ups are features that can be explained with reference to the developmental characteristics of adolescents.

I have argued that the pragmatic marker *like* is commonly used as an indicator that the speaker does not vouch for all aspects of the encoded meaning of an utterance, and that the following linguistic material involves a loosely used concept or a lexical item that is not fully internalised in the vocabulary of the speaker; i.e. *like* signals psychological non-incorporation. We know from developmental, psycholinguistic studies that the vocabulary of individual speakers grows steadily in adolescence, and that the accuracy and speed of word retrieval gradually increase during the adolescent years and well into adulthood (Nippold 1998). These developmental characteristics are likely to have consequences for overtly observable phenomena in language use. Specifically, the lack of internalisation of many lexemes may have consequences for the use of pragmatic markers, as these are capable of expressing attitudinal aspects of meaning, such as the speaker's tentativeness and less than full lexical commitment. It is possible that the frequent use of *like* is an indirect result of the fact that speakers in adolescence are relatively fresh language users and still have a considerable way to go before they have a large and fully internalised vocabulary.

As argued in Chapter 5, the pragmatic marker *like* represents innovative use of this form. But does it necessarily involve a new function? Could it be that the parent generation in its youth tended to use markers to perform exactly the same function of indicating metalinguistic non-incorporation, but happened to use other lexical means, such as *sort of* and *kind of*? The attested developmental characteristics of adolescents may result in young speakers being generally more inclined to apply pragmatic markers of reduced lexical commitment than adults. However, this is not meant as an

argument against my general hypothesis that the pragmatic marker *like* involves innovative behaviour and reflects language change. I am suggesting that the marker exemplifies both language change, since it involves the use of a form to perform a function not previously assigned to it, and age-grading, since adolescents may be generally inclined to perform this subjective function by whatever linguistic means are available to them. In other words, the age-graded feature concerns the *function* performed by *like*, namely indicating non-incorporation, and not the fact that this particular form is used for this purpose, since this use may well be innovative. This interpretation would suggest that the adolescence/adulthood difference with respect to the use of *like* as a marker is due to formal preferences rather than functional differences. It would also imply that the marker *like* is an age-preferential rather than age-exclusive form of age-grading (Cheshire 1987), since all speakers occasionally apply means to perform the function of denoting less than full lexical commitment. Given what we know about language growth in adolescence, it does not seem unreasonable to propose that age-grading may contribute to teenagers' frequent use of *like* as a marker. On the other hand, it is possible, as suggested in Section 5.3.3, that marking of reduced commitment, whether lexical or epistemic, is the current young generation's conversational contribution that reflects its more general non-committal stance. In the current study, it has not been my intention to rule out that age-grading may provide a part of the explanation for *like*'s frequency of use, and longitudinal and cross-linguistic studies may shed further light on this issue (cf. Hasund forthcoming).

As regards the use of *innit* and *is it* as invariant tags and follow-ups, a similar explanation based on age-grading may be proposed. It does not seem implausible that this use is, at least partly, due to a general preference in adolescence for grammatically simple forms as opposed to complex forms. Assuming that the amount of production cost is much reduced by the selection of an invariant tag such as *innit*, as opposed to *doesn't he?* or *shouldn't we?*, it may be that certain cognitive or psychological factors can explain the emergence of the new invariant tag. Due to cognitive constraints, it is possible that teenagers have a general preference for the simpler forms, including other pragmatic markers with interactional functions, such as *right*, *yeah*, *really*, etc.¹ These assumptions would, again, provide an explanation for the emergence of the new invariant tags/follow-ups that is based on the principle of age-grading, an explanation that might be substantiated if it were

attested that the use of the canonical forms increases at the expense of invariant *innit/is it* and other invariant forms as the speakers enter into adulthood.² Moreover, since invariant *innit* and *is it* involve an element of non-standard grammar, it is possible that their occurrence in adolescent conversation can be ascribed to the social meanings of non-standard forms, as invariant *innit* and *is it* would constitute parts of a wider set of non-standard grammatical features that may be potential expressions of group norm adherence and non-adherence to the norms of the mainstream society.

6.3 Suggestions for future research

The previous discussion of age-grading raises many interesting issues. The idea that invariant tags and follow-ups may be an age-graded feature should be an incentive to investigate the hypothesis that adolescents have a general preference for the grammatically simpler pragmatic markers, as opposed to the canonical forms of tags and follow-ups. This would require a quantitative comparison of the different markers of contextual alignment and divergence that are available in adolescent varieties, for example in a variationist study on a par with Berninger & Garvey (1982) or Holmes (1995). A fruitful approach may be to expand the analysis of the use of pragmatic markers to other forms and to make a statistical comparison of invariant *innit/is it* with other pragmatic markers that perform similar functions. A related task may be to see if adolescent conversation contains other invariant tags that do not occur with the same function or frequency in adult language. In fact, the conversations in COLT reveal that *yeah* is a possible candidate:

- (211) All it is **yeah**, is a project **yeah** that six peo= me and other five other people **yeah** in the school, were asked to do **yeah**, for a university which is studying ch= erm children's language, **yeah** and what it's like and basically I've got to carry it on me for a weekend **yeah**, record loads of different conversations on ten different tapes.
(133701/1: 76)
- (212) There was this West Bromwich Albion bloke **yeah** he shot **yeah**, crossed and missed it **yeah** hit the post, hit across his chest, was cos he like turned round hit the chest **yeah**, went back to the same post
(141706/7: 14)

This tag use of *yeah* (invariably pronounced with a rise) is common in teenage talk, and, at that, it is a type of use that has not been previously described in the literature (with the exception of Berland's (1997) COLT-based study). The marker *yeah* has an interactional function; it is used as a device to check the mutualness of concepts and to help the hearer to conjure up an image of what is being described. It also seems to serve a textual function of chunking information units and structuring the utterance. An investigation of the teenage-specificity that this type of use apparently involves may add support to the hypothesis that teenagers in general prefer to use invariant tags. In the current study, I have not tested how *innit* and *is it* are distributed relative to other forms that may perform the same functions, such as *yeah?*, *really?*, *eh?*, *right?*, etc. In this connection, it should be pointed out that different tags are not always fully equivalent and interchangeable. For instance, in the examples above, *yeah* cannot be appropriately replaced by canonical tag questions, nor by *innit* in some cases (cf. *All it is yeah/*innit/*isn't it ...*). This shows that, in the variationist comparison of canonical versus invariant tags/follow-ups that I am proposing, it must be acknowledged that variation need not be possible in every context. It also shows that there is a need to consider the inventory of A-signals and D-signals (cf. 2.4.5.1) with a view to describing their formal and functional similarities and differences, before variationist comparisons can be performed.

A similar variationist approach may be worthwhile in connection with *like*, as this marker seems to be largely equivalent to markers such as *sort of* and *kind of*. On the assumption that adolescents gradually become more linguistically mature and less in need of marking thought/utterance-discrepancies, research is needed to test the hypothesis that marking reduced lexical commitment is a general adolescent phenomenon, and to test to what extent the emergence of the pervasive marker *like* has an effect on the distribution of other forms that may be used to mark this attitudinal meaning.

As regards the future use and development of *like* and *innit/is it*, *like* seems more likely to be adopted by a wider range of speakers than invariant *innit/is it*, since the former is associated with the higher classes, and, in fact, is used by influential persons and has, to date, penetrated the language of the media/literature to a much greater extent than invariant *innit/is it*.³ Investigation of more recent data, and a wider range of data, may add valuable support to these assumptions.

My study has shown that *innit* in all likelihood has followed the trajectory from tag to follow-up use. This observation should be an incentive to investigate whether it is a general tendency that agreement markers follow this development in multilingual varieties, and it opens up for cross-linguistic comparison with other languages that make use of invariant tags for seeking agreement, such as German *nicht war* and French *n'est-ce pas*, to see if these are inclined to follow the same trajectory in certain varieties.⁴

Moreover, it is necessary to consider the wider picture by investigating inter-generational differences in the use of pragmatic markers more generally. A previous study (Andersen 1997b), in which I compared statistically the use of a wide set of markers in COLT and BNC/London, showed that it is not the case that adolescents use pragmatic markers more than adults on the whole, but they use different items and for different purposes. Items such as *and, but, or, so* and *cos/because* were found to have a remarkably similar distribution. In contrast, the markers *oh, well, sort of, I mean* and the epistemic parentheticals were much more common in adult talk, while the interactionally significant markers *right, really, you know* and *okay* (in addition to *innit* and *like*) were more common in adolescent conversation. However, much investigation is needed to support these preliminary findings and to provide explanations for the differences that were found.

More generally, it is of interest to investigate whether adolescence and adulthood are essentially different with respect to interactional and politeness principles. My general impression from working on the two data sets is that the discourse is organised differently in teenage and adult conversation, with respect to both sequential structure and interpersonal features. Teenagers seem to have more relaxed turn-taking rules and pay less attention to politeness and phatic language than adults do. Interruptions dominate a large portion of the teenage corpus, and topic shifts occur frequently and often abruptly. The interruptions are often accompanied by (sometimes almost 'ritual') insults and the use of taboo expressions. These are rarely put forth in a serious manner, and the frequent use of mock insults reflect the solidarity and close relationships between the conversational partners and the ease with which the conversations tend to proceed (Stenström 1995). To some extent, previous studies add support to these general impressions (Nordberg 1985; Kotsinas 1994), but these types of teenage-specificity are yet to be attested empirically through the investigation of a considerable amount of data by statistical method. Such an approach may well reveal that adolescent

discourse is different from that of adults in terms of turn-taking rules, general rapidity of speech, available means of turn-initiation/continuation/yielding, prosodic features (pitch, rhythm, loudness, tempo) and so on. It remains to be seen, then, to what extent teenage language can be claimed to be structurally different from adult language as a result of differences in norms of interactional behaviour. Such potential differences can be linked to generational differences in the social functions that language is used to perform, and the range of functional domains in which language is used — by teenagers to mark peer group affiliation, by adults to mark aspirations in social status.

My study has only to a limited extent been concerned with pragmatic comprehension and developmental characteristics. Research has shown that language growth continues into adolescence with respect to a number of features. In terms of pragmatic interpretation, it is clear that adolescents' ability to comprehend non-literal, context-based meanings gradually improves during the adolescent years. In fact, the ability for pragmatic interpretation is one of the most salient aspects of later language development, and improvements have been attested with respect to such phenomena as the interpretation of metaphors, idioms and other types of figurative language, the identification of irony and sarcasm, and the disambiguation of utterances (Nippold 1998). Nevertheless, a great amount of research is needed to increase our understanding of how adolescents recognise the intended non-literal and context-based meanings of utterances. This is because it is mostly (if not exclusively) experimental, psycholinguistic studies that have addressed language growth in adolescence, and because previous research has focused mainly on the comprehension of these pragmatic features, while the production of metaphors, sarcasm, ambiguous utterances, etc, in everyday language use has not been subject to investigation. Moreover, research focusing on these pragmatic phenomena in the adolescent years has been conducted by means of formal elicitation tasks where adolescents are presented with sentences out of context. Therefore, there is little information as to adolescents' interpretation of truly ambiguous and metaphorical utterances in natural settings, and as to whether the interpretation of non-literal and context-based meanings in actual conversations differs from the interpretation in contrived testing situations.

There are thus a great number of issues to explore in order to add empirical support to the findings of experimental studies and to identify

aspects of adolescent-specific language use more generally. Empirical studies of discourse features and pragmatic aspects of conversation are likely to reveal a range of phenomena that are age-specific, in addition to the ones encountered in the current study. My assumption is that comparative studies of adolescent and adult conversation will enhance our understanding of adolescent language with respect to the issues mentioned above. And the steadily growing number of corpora of spoken language fortunately enables us to empirically investigate such age-specific phenomena in the future.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. The language of adolescent groups is a growing research field. See Kotsinas (1997) for a survey of studies. This is reflected in the existence of separate conferences and research projects on youth language, and in the fact that there was a separate panel on this topic at the 6th International Pragmatics Conference in 1998.
2. The current author subscribes to the view, put forward by H. Andersen (1989), that the term 'language change' is actually a convenient shorthand: 'what happens diachronically — in discourse as in grammar — is that innovations are made which for a time may occur or exist side by side with the corresponding traditional forms, and eventually may become established as traditional themselves. In such a diachronic development, which informally can be called 'a change', nothing strictly speaking changes into anything else. The key concept here is that of innovation' (ibid: 12).
3. 'Adolescence begins with the onset of sexual maturation and continues through the transition state from childhood to young adulthood. The beginning is biologically defined by the onset of puberty, usually during the 10th to 13th year. The end is less definable and, depending upon environmental factors, may be as early as 16 years or as late as 20' (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online: *Disorders associated with adolescence*).
4. For surveys of studies on teenage slang and taboo language, see Kotsinas et al. (1997).
5. For instance, metatheses in child language, e.g. *aks* instead of *ask*, can be viewed as innovations, but they do not constitute language change unless other speakers adopt this feature.
6. In fact, the word 'snowboard' was chosen as the official term for this sport by a national Norwegian TV channel in the coverage of the 1999 World Snowboard Championships, even though there exists a Norwegian counterpart 'snøbrett'.
7. The embodiment of black culture includes familiar concepts/styles such as dread, rap, rasta, reggae, socca, toasting, etc.
8. But Bates (1976) shows that these features are highly problematic for children in the pre-operational and concrete operational period.
9. For illuminating discussions, see Levinson (1983) and Verschueren (1995).
10. The terms 'speaker' and 'hearer' are applied throughout the current work. Unless gender is specified in the corpus examples, I follow the practice of using feminine pronominal forms to refer to the speaker and masculine forms to refer to the hearer.

11. In the current study it is restricted to what was audibly transmitted, since the study is based on tape-recordings and transcriptions of these.
12. See, for instance, Stenström (1984), Schourup (1985), Holmes (1995), Rampton (1995), Nikula (1996) and the many corpus-based studies of pragmatic phenomena found in Percy et al. (1996), Ljung (1997), Renouf (1998) and Kirk (2000).
13. A case in point is *lady* used as a form of address. There is a diametrical difference in the social meanings that this form communicates if someone utters *Ladies and Gentlemen!* when addressing an audience, as opposed to a teenage driver uttering *Fix it, lady; we're younger and faster!* to a middle-aged woman just after pinching her parking space (example from the motion picture *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe*).
14. There are obvious exceptions to this. For instance, the English constant-polarity tag (*So you borrowed the money, did you?*) commonly encodes a sarcastic attitude (cf. Houck 1995). Another case in point is the popular irony marker *Not!*. Although originally American, it is now common in English (teenage) language more generally.
15. Stenström (1994) uses the labels 'interactional signals and discourse markers' and her survey of forms and functions is largely overlapping with Brinton's (1996) survey of pragmatic markers.
16. It is important to point out that my use of 'follow-up' is not in line with discourse analytic studies such as Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) and Stenström (1994), where this term is used to denote a type of move that 'terminates the exchange' (Stenström 1994: 36).

Chapter 2

1. Naturally, this is not meant to be an exhaustive account of relevance theory. For instance, I have left out notions such as descriptive and interpretive use, literalness and metaphor, etc. These will be central in later chapters, and will be described in relation to the specific pragmatic markers to be discussed (cf. Chapters 4 and 5).
2. By 'cognitive environment' is meant the set of mental representations (thoughts, assumptions) that an individual is capable of accepting as true or probably true (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1995: 2, 39).
3. Contextual effects are either strengthening or weakening of assumptions that are already manifest to the hearer, or they may be contextual implications, that is, assumptions derived as conclusions in a deductive process in which background assumptions and assumptions provided by the ostensive input act as premises.
4. Sperber & Wilson state this principle as follows: 'Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance' (1995: 158).
5. There are obvious exceptions to this, e.g. the markers *oh* and *mm*, which derive from non-lexical 'sounds' and *okay*, which, arguably, originates in an abbreviation.
6. The significance of the numbering of examples is as follows. The number before the slash is the reference number of the conversation (text/file) in COLT. The number immediately before the colon is the speaker identity number, and the final number is the turn number attributed to the utterance in the transcribed text.
7. It is worth pointing out that within the mood-based approach to non-declarative sentences (Wilson & Sperber 1988) 'mood' is not used its traditional syntactic sense, 'in which it refers

to verbal inflection (e.g., indicative, imperative, optative), but in a semantic sense, in which it refers to the semantic or logical properties that distinguish, say, declarative sentences from imperative, interrogative, and exclamative sentences' (ibid: 78).

8. This etymology is reflected in dictionary entries which list marker uses of *like* alongside under prepositional and conjunctive uses of the form; cf. OED, *Longman dictionary of the English language* (1991), etc. According to Skeat (1910: 341), *like* meaning 'similar', 'resembling' has derived from the Old English form *lic*, which often was prefixed by *ge-*. In contrast, the verb *like* has developed from the impersonal verb *lician* in Old English, meaning 'to please'. Thus the pragmatic marker *like* and the adjective, adverb and conjunction *like* are semantically related, while the relationship between the marker and the verb *like* is restricted to one of homonymy.
9. For the sake of argument, I am ignoring, for instance, the fact that *but* is also an adverbial meaning 'only' (cf. *Christmas comes but once a year*) and that *like* is also a conjunction.
10. In the BrE context, the oldest OED example dates from 1778, while the uses characterised as 'meaningless interjection or expletive' are said to originate in the US in the 1950's. For a fuller discussion, see Sections 5.1.2–5.1.3.
11. This is reflected, for instance, in the fact that they cannot be the focus of cleft constructions and they cannot carry contrastive stress.
12. It should be noted that discourse structure is seen as a global phenomenon, and that the textual function is associated with markers which contribute to structure not only within a turn, but also across turns. The notion of textuality, then, is a wider one than that of Halliday (1979).
13. Relevant examples are *jo, nok, vel, sikkert, visst* in Norwegian, *ju, nog, väl, säkert, visst* in Swedish, and *ja* and *doch* in German (cf. Fretheim 1981, 1987; Aijmer 1996). Norwegian *vel*, derived from the adverb *vel*, has been further grammaticalised than *I suppose*; it has a fixed post-verbal syntactic position, while *I suppose* is more syntactically flexible.
14. Arguably, *and* can be considered interactional in the following exchange: A: *It's stopped raining.* B: *And?* I owe this example to Anna-Brita Stenström.

Chapter 3

1. The Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language (COLT) project is based at the University of Bergen and is supported by The Norwegian Academy of Science, The Norwegian Research Council, The Meltzer Foundation and The Faculty of Arts, University of Bergen. For descriptions of COLT, see Haslerud & Stenström (1995) and Stenström et al. (1998). See also <http://www.hd.uib.no/colt/>.
2. The total number of recruits was originally 33, but some of them failed to produce material that could be transcribed.
3. As regards transcription conventions, the reader should note the double functions of punctuation. Punctuation marks are used both to indicate brief pauses and sentence boundaries.
4. See <http://kh.hit.uib.no/tactweb/homeorg.htm>.
5. See <http://www.hd.uib.no/ificame.html>.
6. For a description of the social environment of the various boroughs, see Berland (1997).

7. It also applies to a small group of recruits who travel from Brent, Islington or Westminster and attend the school in Camden.
8. The boroughs of Hackney and Brent are among the top dozen areas for all of the black groups (Black Caribbean, Black African, Black Other). The boroughs of Brent and Barnet are among the top dozen areas for the Indian group. Tower Hamlets, Camden and Hackney figure on the list for the Bangladeshi group, while Barnet, Camden and Brent figure on the list for the Chinese group. In addition, Ratcliffe (1996) shows that Brent is the local authority with the highest percentage (anywhere in Britain) of its population comprised of ethnic minority groups at 44.8 per cent, followed by Newham at 42.3 per cent (not included in COLT) and Tower Hamlets at 35.6 per cent. The corresponding percentages for Hackney and Camden are 33.6 and 17.8, respectively.
9. I am grateful to Vibecke Haslerud for supplying this information.
10. For descriptions of the BNC, see Aston & Burnard (1998) and McEnery & Wilson (1996: 183f). See also <http://info.ox.ac.uk/bnc/>.
11. The exact size of COLT is 508,153 words, while the BNC extract amounts to 473,712 words. (In these counts, contractions count as more than one word; *isn't* = 2 words and *dunno* = 3 words.)
12. In fact, the method used for recording the COLT data was patterned on the Longman model used for collecting the BNC; cf. Crowdy (1993) and Haslerud & Stenström (1995).

Chapter 4

1. My use of the term 'follow-up' is not in line with customary usage. The term is borrowed from discourse analysis, where it is used to refer to a type of 'move', e.g. as a 'final ratifying comment before a new exchange is initiated' (Stenström 1994: 126; see also Sinclair & Coulthard 1975; Stubbs 1983). In Stenström's terminology, the items described here would count as 're-openers'.
2. The term 'reduced interrogative' (cf. Hudson 1975) refers to syntactic rather than phonological reduction. Both tag questions and follow-up questions are syntactically reduced interrogatives, in the sense that they involve ellipsis and/or substitution of pro-forms.
3. In addition, it has a propositional function (non-marker) in a handful of cases; cf. *Innit about time you took your wife out?*
4. 'Interference' from the background language is also observed by Edwards, who regards it as common that 'speakers of German and French, for whom the tags *nicht war* and *n'est-ce pas* are all-purpose say, in English, something like **She's a nice person, isn't it?*' (1994: 74).
5. Ethnic differences are not the focus of Cheshire's (1982) study. The speakers in her data are Reading working class adolescents.
6. In present day Reading English, invariant *innit* also occurs in white adolescent speech. I am grateful to Annie Williams (University of Reading) for reporting this.
7. Note, however, that *immit/is it* as invariant follow-ups are commonly found in the transcriptions of black London English in Sebba (1993) and Rampton (1995).
8. According to Russ (1982), the use of *isn't it* as an invariant tag is also found in Wales. Since 1536 'a diglossic situation obtained in which English was the high-level language and Welsh

the low-level language' (ibid: 31). In other words, Welsh English provides another example where invariabilisation occurs in a bilingual community. However, it is unlikely that invariabilisation in London is a result of influence from Welsh English, given that the Welsh group is quantitatively much less significant than the Third World minorities mentioned above.

9. A reader's response to an interview I gave (*The Independent* May 17th, 1997) suggested that *innit* in London dates as far back as the 1940s.
10. Berninger and Garvey (1982) also include the realisation *kay?* and *see?* as tags, the former being a reduced realisation of *okay?*. The latter, a realisation of *you see*, would in most accounts be considered a pragmatic marker with other properties than tags generally.
11. It is important to point out that, due to a certain lack of conformity among the various transcribers involved in the COLT project, the punctuation used in the orthographic transcriptions is not a reliable indicator of prosodic features. In the transcriptions, *innit* is most commonly followed by a question mark, but full stop, comma and exclamation mark also occur in a fairly random distribution. The question mark cannot be interpreted as a sign of a particular tone, nor can it be associated with a particular illocutionary act. Moreover, a comma before *innit* may have been inserted for syntactic reasons (to mark off the tag from the sentence) and is not reliable as a sign of a silent pause (cf. Haslerud & Stenström 1995).
12. The difference in salience is underlined by the fact that the topic of P is a conversation between the hearer and her mother.
13. This aggressive tag is believed to be geographically and socially restricted. Hudson claims that tags of this type are 'regularly used in working-class London speech' (1975: 24). Cheshire also suggests that these 'seem mostly to occur in working class speech' (1982: 58), but Algeo suggests a wider distribution, as 'characteristically British, rather than merely working class; it no longer is limited to London' (1988: 187).
14. The label 'aggressive' may be somewhat exaggerated and is apparently not fit to describe Chris' psychological state in (46), where he appears to be more indifferent than aggressive.
15. The same applies of course to (48); cf. (*it's like*) *trying to sleep through a hurricane, you know what I mean?* and *I was sitting in my bedroom cos I didn't, Sam and Fern weren't there you know what I mean? I was in the bedroom on my own.*
16. Some quantitative data can corroborate these claims: The tag *innit* is turn-holding, that is coincides with speaker continuation as in (52)–(54), in as many as a third of the examples. In only about 25 per cent of the cases does it actually elicit a relevant response in the form of a confirmatory/corroborative statement, a 'no' or a 'don't know' or the like.
17. The same effect is attributed to pauses preceding canonical tag questions by Berninger & Garvey (1982).
18. I tested statistically the effect of these prosodic features, as well as tone (fall/rise), on the actual response elicitation in the data, but no significant correlations were found. A larger data set may be needed to attest such correlation.
19. Although the follow-up *innit* has derived from an interrogative form, we cannot describe it as a question intended to elicit a verbal contribution from the hearer. This is supported by the fact that it exclusively has a falling tone and never elicits a response, and by the fact that utterances of the type *Oh innit?* or *Innit really?* never occur.
20. Contrary to my proposed analysis, COLT contains an example where it is possible that the follow-up *innit* marks surprise rather than agreement:

- (1) Damion: Did you find out anything about her?
 Terry: No, nothing at all.
 Damion: That's worth it.
 Terry: What, about her? (laughing) Why d'ya ask whether I know anything about her(/)?
 Damion: I know she was drunk (unclear) trying to get off with you innit.
 Terry: Who?
 Damion: Her.
 Terry: **Innit.**
 Damion: If you wanna say no, fuck off! You were turning your head away weren't you?
 Terry: Yeah. But I couldn't, like I was pissed anyway know what I mean?
 Damion: No you weren't. Bollocks! (139613/1: 12)

In this context the follow-up *innit* is directed towards Damion's highly elliptic answer *Her* and may express Terry's doubt regarding this bit of propositional information. I have no definite opinion as to whether this unique case represents an extant category in London teenage language. It may be a case of ironical use of the agreement-marking follow-up, to the effect that speaker is *pretending* to agree with the previous proposition, equivalent to the popular irony markers *Yeah, right!* or *As if!*

21. As regards polarity, it is also worth pointing out that the invariant follow-up *is it* may follow a negative statement and may involve reversal of polarity (A: *I haven't got it.* B: *Is it?*). This distinguishes it from the canonical surprise-marking follow-ups (cf. *haven't you?*).
22. 'Context' is used in a narrow sense throughout the current section and refers to the grammatical environment of tags and follow-ups, specifically the syntactic and semantic features of the previous proposition.
23. Contexts that involve a second person referent are semantically ambiguous between singular and plural (as well as impersonal *you*). I have chosen to ignore the difference between *you/sg* and *you/pl* in the current analysis. As *you* is a highly frequent subject of tags and follow-ups, making such a distinction would require a great amount of contextual checking of the identity of the referent of the pronoun, and would no doubt involve a large number of ambiguous cases. Since such a distinction is not required for any of the claims I wish to make regarding distributional constraints, the extra work load of making such a distinction would not be worth the while.
24. Certain so-called 'marginal modals' (cf. Quirk et al. 1985: 137ff) can also be either operators or main verbs in standard English. In COLT, the marginal modal *used to* is never used as an operator (cf. *What school did you used to go to?* and *Did you used to work at (name)?*). As regards the other marginal modals, *dare*, *need* and *ought to*, they are sometimes used as operators. But due to non-occurrence before invariant tags/follow-ups, these verbs did not pose the types of problems described above.
25. The tag *int it* occurs six times in COLT, three of which count as non-paradigmatic use. These tokens were grouped with invariant *innit* in the statistics.
26. This allows for application of a statistical test that is more powerful than the chi-square test, e.g. the t-test for correlated samples (cf. Butler 1985). I have chosen to stick to one type of test, for convenience and to allow easy comparison, despite the lower power of the chi-square test.

27. The figures in this and the following tables include only those examples that were actually classified according to the parameter tested. Examples uttered by speakers that were not identified, or speakers who were identified but were lacking information as regards this particular parameter, are not included. As a consequence, the total number of tokens analysed varies in the following tables.
28. My findings concerning white adolescent speech are corroborated by individual observations of *innit/is it* made by myself and other scholars on various occasions. For instance, this is common usage among British university students regardless of ethnicity, it occurs in the speech of white adolescents born and bred in Reading, and several academics have reported that it is used by their teenage children. I owe my thanks to Ann Williams (University of Reading), Richard Hudson (University College London), Steve Nicolle (Middlesex University) and Adam Bradley (ditto) for reporting the use of *innit/is it* by various speakers.
29. These are fairly low non-standard frequencies compared to Cheshire's data.
30. Spillius suggests in a newspaper article that *innit* is 'a bastardisation of "isn't it"' (*Independent on Sunday* 24 March 1996; quoted in Berland 1997: 38).

Chapter 5

1. Other non-marker uses of *like* are theoretically possible, e.g. noun (*his likes and dislikes*), adjective (*of like design*) or adverb (*be thirsty as like as not*), cf. *Longman dictionary of the English language* (1991: 919), but none of these occur in COLT.
2. Unfortunately, this pause is not indicated in the published transcription.
3. In fact, what I checked were not the original recordings but the digitised sound files, which have been edited and much improved and whose sound quality is much better than that of the tapes (noise removed by means of CoolEdit software).
4. It appears, however, that *like* is gaining ground in a fairly wide range of speaker groups and across registers. Judging by the language in the media, it is sometimes used by speakers who (otherwise) speak a standard variety but who seem to consider *like* to be no less 'standard' than *sort of* and *kind of*. For instance, *like* was used as an approximator by Salman Rushdie, a distinguished RP speaker, in an interview on Norwegian television (NRK September 19th 1999), and *BE like* was found as a quotation marker in an interview in *The Times* (September 20th 1999). Apparently, then, a moderate use of *like* is on the verge of becoming accepted even among speakers of standard English.
5. In fact, *like* is briefly listed as a 'space-filler' in Wright's fairly recent survey of Cockney dialect and slang (Wright 1981: 57). It is not listed in English dialect surveys such as Trudgill (1990), Edwards (1993) and Upton et al. (1994).
6. Three dictionaries give particularly detailed accounts of the marker *like*. Wright (1902) gives a wide range of examples from all over the country. The *Scottish national dictionary* (1965) also lists a fair number of examples, dating from 1815 to 1960. The examples in OED cover the longest time span; the earliest attested use is dated 1778, and the most recent example is from 1971.

7. These speakers are 'Brenda', a 34-year-old housewife from class C2, 'Karen', a 38-year-old housewife whose class membership is unknown, and 'Kevin', a 41-year-old draughtsman from class C1.
8. When *like* collocates with *sort of*, this collocation tends to indicate a lexical approximation as shown here, as opposed the other functions of *like* (cf. 5.3.1.3).
9. Incidentally, we could interpret *like* as having a slightly narrower scope, excluding the object *Ollie*, since both Paul and Ollie are mentioned in the previous discourse; in this case it would be the relationship between the two that is subject to qualification by *like*.
10. No occurrences of *like* preceding an imperative were found. This was tentatively explained in Andersen (1998b) as a reflection of the usual strong directive illocutionary force connected with imperatives. But their occurrence cannot categorically be ruled out.
11. Strictly speaking, this is shorthand for '*like* preceding expressions in a metalinguistic focus'.
12. Thorstein Fretheim (personal communication) suggested that *if you like* might be an appropriate glossing. In this connection, it is important to point out that this expression and the pragmatic marker *like* are etymologically unrelated.
13. Incidentally, (159) is acceptable if *like* marks a conceptual modification of the 'for instance' type, for instance in a conditional; cf. *If he gave it to like Peter I might have understood it*.
14. The verb GO is frequently a verb of saying in London teenage speech, as in American English; cf. Butters (1980, 1989) and Schourup (1982).
15. Also of note is the existence of zero-quotatives (cf. Mathis & Yule 1994). It will appear that the use of quotations without an explicit marker but accompanied with paralinguistic modulation of voice quality is a common phenomenon in teenage talk.
16. Tagliamonte & Hudson (1999) describe *it in it's like* as an 'existential pronoun', but they do not give the reason for this.
17. Further arguments can be provided, but will not be elaborated on here. These include the fact that *like* is non-compositional, that is, it cannot be combined with other words to create more complex expressions with a compositional semantic structure, and that its meaning can hardly be brought to consciousness.
18. This part of the analysis was carried out in close cooperation with Kristine Hasund, to whom I am grateful for many interesting discussions on how to classify the *like*-examples.
19. Due to this minuscule percentage, I have chosen not to investigate quantitatively the correlation of a particular subject or a particular quotative content (e.g. direct speech vs. internal dialogue) and the choice of the expression *BE like*, in the fashion of Ferrara and Bell (1995) and Tagliamonte & Hudson (1999). This is because the low overall figure for this quotative construction would lead to very low cell frequencies, which would make any statistical testing unreliable.
20. Although one might argue, of course, that *like* may be considered a clause constituent, i.e. an adverbial, in the *like forty* case.
21. I have chosen to analyse cases where *like* immediately follows a preposition (*in like fishing shops*; cf. (193)) as modified prepositional phrases with *like* in phrase-internal position, but they could also, of course, be viewed as *like*-modified noun phrases.
22. It is evident from the recording that this is not an example of *kind of* used as a pragmatic marker, but *kind* is indeed the head of the noun phrase.
23. There is no pause in the segment *these people are like gonna sit there*.

24. Testing of the three lowest age groups only also yielded a significant result ($\chi^2=73.532$; d.f. = 2; significant at $p < 0.0001$).
25. In fact, *like* outnumbered most other pragmatic markers, including *sort of*, *kind of*, *really*, *I mean*, *you know*, etc (cf. Andersen 1997b).

Chapter 6

1. The fact that agreement-marking response interrogatives do not occur in COLT may be seen as an indication of this.
2. For instance, Holmes notes that the invariant tag *eh* is 'more frequent in young people's speech' (1995: 98).
3. See for instance Helen Fielding's novel *Cause Celeb*.
4. It can be noted that the Norwegian invariant tag *ikke sant*, which literally means 'not true' is sometimes used as an agreement-marking response signal.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. COLT transcription conventions (orthographic)

Symbol	Comment
, . ? !	sentence-like boundaries; also continuing, terminating, questioning, and exclamatory intonation
CAPS	sentence beginnings
=	incomplete word
,	brief pause
.	medium pause
...	long pause
... (5)	pause 5 seconds
<nv> laugh </nv>	non-verbal sound
<name>	personal name/place name replaced to preserve anonymity
<address>	address replaced to preserve anonymity
<unclear>	unintelligible speech
<unclear> (5)	unintelligible speech 5 seconds
[<i>text</i>]	single overlap
[{ <i>text</i> }]	double overlap
<mimicking> <i>text</i> </>	paralinguistic features
(hairdryer on)	contextual comment
<??> <i>text</i> </>	uncertain transcription
(sic)	awkward pronunciation

Appendix 2. COLT personal data sheet

UNIVERSITETET I BERGEN
ENGELSK INSTITUTT
Sydnesplaza 9 - 5007 Bergen
Tlf: (05) 21 30 50
Faks: (05) 21 25 60
Telefax: (05) 23 18 97



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
Sydnesplaza 9
N-5007 Bergen
Norway

Personal data

All information will be treated confidentially. Recruits, their family and conversation partners are guaranteed full anonymity.

Recruit number 18

A) Area of residence (London borough) Brent
Postcode NW10 4AJ

B) Have you ever lived in any other part of England? If so,
where? — and for how long? —

C) Mother's occupation Teacher
Is she currently employed? Y/N Yes

D) Father's occupation Graphic designer
Is he currently employed? Y/N Yes

Please remember to take this form with you when you are giving back the personal stereo etc. to Ms Haslerud

Thanks very much for your co-operation!

Appendix 3. BNC files included in the current study

KB1

KBF

KBH

KBK

KBT

KC0

KD0

KDE

KDY

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