

Rapport in Interactive Discourse.
Discursive Practices as Indicators for the Managing of Interpersonal Relations in
Intercultural Business Meetings

Master Thesis

MA Intercultural Communication

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Abstract

This thesis provides a thick description about the construction of rapport in interactive discourse. In order to increase understanding about the interactional negotiation of interpersonal relationships and the effects on intercultural business meetings, the interaction itself has to be looked at and disassembled carefully. The dissension about the concept rapport lies within the lack of a general definition as well as its abstractness. For some scholars, rapport is the outcome of an interaction whereas its interactional and interdiscursive construction is not given sufficient attention. Goebel (to appear; in press) jettisons rapport and presents the concept *common ground* which is achieved through a series of discursive practices realized in every speaker turn. The aim of this thesis is to illustrate how rapport and *common ground* are related. The combination of three research instruments provides rich insight into the construction of *common ground* and rapport: through ethnographic field notes, conversation transcripts, and a questionnaire of nine participants of two intercultural business meetings, it was possible to make the discursive practices visible which construct *common ground* and finally rapport. The results of the two analyzed meetings are that rapport and *common ground* are related but not proportionally increasing each other. The discursive practices which lead to *common ground* need further distinction. *Common ground* does not substitute the concept rapport, but it adds to it whilst making a general definition possible. The conclusion of this thesis is that rapport should rather be defined as something that is constantly interactionally negotiated and not static. For further research, the discursive practices *role alignment* and *belonging* should be investigated regarding identity construction.

Keywords: rapport, interactive discourse, common ground, discursive practices, intercultural communication

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1. Introduction

In order to gain more insight on how interpersonal relationships are created, it is necessary to have a close look at the concept rapport. Rapport refers to the positive or negative feelings participants have after a social interaction regarding the relationship between the interactants. Being able to maintain a positive interpersonal relationship has professional as well as personal benefits. This thesis concentrates on the establishment of positive rapport in intercultural business meetings. The relevance of the topic lies within its intercultural aspect as well as within business meetings.

Intercultural encounters have been a frequent subject of research in many different academic fields. The fascination about the Other and the quest for understanding the Other are only two reasons which underlie this interest. Interculturality itself often occurs to be the reason for misunderstandings in communication (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). However, when looking at a situation within its context, *culture*, in its manifold definitions, does not seem the only important factor to consider (Holliday et al., 2017). Therefore, this thesis will look as closely as possible inside the linguistic construction of interpersonal relationships.

In business meetings in general, sensitive topics must be discussed frequently. In order to not threaten the relationships between the employees and the whole atmosphere of the organization, it is crucial to maintain positive rapport (Zhu Hua, 2014). Before being able to maintain these positive relationships, the concept itself must be unfolded to gain more insight about its structure and hence its establishment.

Existing theory on rapport investigates the topic as a subjectively perceived concept by the participants of an interaction (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). In order to analyze the concept on an academic level, the perspective of the researcher must be included as well. I want to combine both perspectives through in-depth conversational analysis and ethnographic field notes on one hand, and questionnaires of interlocutors on the other.

Furthermore, it is relevant to find out how rapport is negotiated and created as there are two contrary schools of thought on the subject. On the one hand stands Spencer-Oatey (2002) with her definition of rapport which is based on the Politeness Theory and the concepts of face (Brown & Levison, 1987; Spencer-Oatey, 2005). She concentrates with Franklin (2009) on which competencies a person needs to create positive rapport in an (intercultural) interaction. Goebel (in press: 3; 7) on the other hand refers to the term rapport as “folk theory” and the “myth of rapport”. He argues that rapport is not a scientific concept since positive feelings about an interaction cannot be investigated. He asserts that interpersonal relationships are constructed through the establishment of *common ground* through discursive practices in interactive discourse.

Both scholars agree that rapport is built and managed through interaction which is why this paper offers a closer look into two separate intercultural business meetings, each between five people. I want to give empirical demonstration that both concepts have their *raison d'être* since their combination is what rapport constructs. I will do this by answering the following research question:

How is rapport managed interactionally in intercultural business meetings?

Sub question 1: Which rapport management competencies are used?

Sub question 2: Which discursive practices are used?

Sub question 3: What paralinguistic features are used?

Sub question 4: What is the role of humor and laughter?

A qualitative analysis of two intercultural business meetings will be conducted. In order to gain insights about rapport and *common ground*, I attended and recorded the meetings, transcribed them, and included a follow-up questionnaire about the participants' perceptions about the meeting. This way, the perspectives of the participants and of the researcher is provided.

Outline

After presenting the relevance and the research question in the introduction, I will reflect critically on recent research regarding rapport and its management in the theoretical framework. In the method section, I will explain the choice of data collection as well as the participants of the study and the research design in general. Two intercultural business meetings with five participants each were attended and recorded in order to analyze their discursive practices. Furthermore, the participants filled out a questionnaire to include their insights of the perceived rapport. In the result section, two fragments of three minutes each from each meeting will be presented and analyzed. In the discussion section, I will compare the results to the presented theory and answer the sub questions. This part is followed by the conclusion about the conducted research which answers the main research question.

Furthermore, I will reflect on the limitations of the study and highlight implementations and suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is divided into three sections. First, the emergence and definition of rapport and *common ground* will be illustrated. Second, how rapport is managed, and which competencies, discursive practices and paralinguistic features are required to do so will be considered. To complete the means which manage rapport, the role of humor and laughter will be added. These will be referred to as the four strategies to manage rapport. Third, the importance of rapport in intercultural business meetings will be clarified.

2.1 Rapport

Rapport is far from being a new concept in the academic world. In the early 20th century, scholars already referred to the nonverbal aspect in interviews as rapport or described the relation between students and teachers with the term rapport (Myrick, 1928; Root, 1934). Over time, the concept has been defined and supplemented with other theories. Brown &

Levison (1987) constructed the Politeness Theory and established the concept of face which Spencer-Oatey (2002) took to relate to her definition of rapport. An elaborated overview of research on rapport in its different contexts can be found in Gremler & Gwinner (2000: 84-89). By comparing the existing definitions of the different scholars, the common theme is that “rapport experiences are characterized by an enjoyable interaction in which participants connect on some level” (Gremler & Gwinner, 2000: 90). It should be stated though, that rapport can be perceived positively or negatively, which makes it a meta-term referring to the perception of interpersonal interactions.

In this study, rapport refers to “people’s subjective perceptions of (dis)harmony, smoothness-turbulence and warmth-antagonism in interpersonal relations” (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009: 102). With this definition, the subjective aspects of rapport as well as its broad application are highlighted. Rapport is subjectively perceived in every social interaction and perspectives can change from individual to individual. Special attention must be paid regarding the mismanagement of rapport in intercultural situations which is taken to explain cultural differences (Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2004; Pullin, 2010; Zhu Hua, 2014).

Research often concentrates on problems of rapport in intercultural situations, but some theorists emphasize that those problems can occur in intracultural situations as well, e.g. business meetings, relationships between roommates, service encounters or teacher-student relations (Campbell & Davis, 2006; Nguyen, 2007; Saidia, 1990; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). The way rapport is handled in social interactions is referred to as rapport management. This is defined as the (mis)managing of the subjectively perceived harmony (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Positive rapport can be achieved e.g. through the application of so-called rapport management competencies. This and three other strategies to manage rapport will be presented in the following subchapter.

2.2 Managing rapport

In this chapter, four strategies to manage rapport will be presented. The first one, rapport management competencies (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009) describes the bigger/macro picture – the situation, in context, with all kinds of influences. The second strategy, discursive practices, provides a sociolinguistic point of view and explains how rapport is managed interdiscursively using the practices *imitation*, *uptake*, *role alignment*, *belonging*, and *rupture* which offer insights into the smaller/micro picture of rapport (Agha, 2005; Goebel, 2015; to appear). Third, paralanguage and its functions will be highlighted and lastly, the role of humor and laughter in the management of rapport will be discussed. The concept of rapport as Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) define it concentrates more on the feeling you have after an interaction about the very same interaction. This feeling can either be positive, negative or neutral. When looking closer at an interaction one can observe various negotiations of *common ground*, which is a discursive concept that influences rapport. There is however, not just one *common ground* in an interaction, but rather many. Once a *common ground* is established, it forms an interpretive frame for subsequent interactions between the same interaction partners (Goffman, 1974). An interaction consists therefore of negotiations of *common ground* whose aim it is to construct frames which interaction partners know how to use.

2.2.1 Rapport management competencies

Techniques to manage a positive rapport appear with the names of rapport management competencies or rapport building behavior (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009; Gremler & Gwinner, 2008). Reasons for this lack of terminological unity could be the broad application of the concept in research. Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) define six rapport management competencies which lean on previously defined intercultural interaction frameworks and the ‘Politeness Theory’ of P. Brown and Levison (1987). An overview of the six rapport management competencies can be found in table 1.

Rapport competency	Definition
Contextual awareness	Sensitive to key features of the interaction, including participant relations (equality/inequality and distance/closeness), the rights and obligations of people's roles, and the nature of the communicative activity.
Interpersonal attentiveness	Pays focused attention to people's face sensitivities (e.g., their status, competence, social identity), behavioral expectations and interactional goals, and manage them effectively.
Social information gathering	Gathers information about the interactional context (e.g., people's roles and positions in a hierarchy) by asking relevant others or by careful observation.
Social attuning	Uses indirect signals such as paralanguage (e.g., intonation, speaking volume and speed, pausing) and non-verbal communication (e.g., eye contact and other elements of body language) to infer social meaning – how s/he is coming across to others (how his/her behavior is being evaluated from a relational point of view) and what the emotional state (e.g., offended, annoyed) of the other person is.
Emotion regulation	Resilient – is able to handle criticism or embarrassment when things go wrong. Accepts and feels at ease with people who are different (e.g., who hold different views and values).
Stylistic flexibility	Uses a range of strategies flexibly so that they are congruent with people's rapport sensitivities.

Table 1: Rapport management competencies (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009: 102)

These six competencies describe behavior which interactants should consciously use and apply during every social interaction. In order to create positive rapport, one should therefore be attentive to the context of the situation as well as of the interlocutor, be attentive to indirect signals of the interlocutor's voice pattern which might express their emotional state and filter the rapport sensitivities of another person in order to align with their expectations. With the definition of those competencies, the creation of positive rapport seems rather complicated and requires hard work and attention to detail and if they are not applied, the danger that negative rapport will emerge. Why do most social encounters work perfectly fine and why is positive rapport closer to the rule rather than the exception? Maybe taking a closer look at how discursive practices make up a social interaction will lead to the answer.

2.2.2 Discursive practices

The concept which refers to rapport from a micro-perspective is called *common ground* (Goebel, to appear). *Common ground* is co-created discursively, one speaker at a time and established through four discursive practices: (1) imitation of each other's utterances, (2) acknowledgement of others' discursive contributions, (3) the use and recognition of voices from elsewhere, and (4) pursuit of social sameness in terms of interest (Goebel, 2015; to appear). These discursive practices will be presented in the following as: *Imitation*, *uptake*, *role alignment* and *belonging/rupture*, respectively.

From this perspective, "rapport is [...] seen as a situated intersubjective understanding about a world created in a particular interaction, rather than an enduring affective disposition" (Harr, cited in Goebel, to appear: 11) between interlocutors. This means that even when *common ground* is not achieved in one discursive interaction, the outcome of the conversation can still be perceived as positive rapport since rapport is interactionally and interdiscursively negotiated. *Common ground* is therefore not a synonym for positive rapport: it is rather a part of its establishment.

In further detail, the discursive practices which make up *common ground* (imitation, uptake, role alignment, belonging and rupture) will be unfolded.

(1) *Imitation*

Common ground can be achieved through the imitation of a fragment of a prior speaker's statement (speech repetition) or also the mirroring of the interlocutor's posture. Imitation of each other's utterances enhance the feeling of sameness. Also, research has come to find out "how cross-turn parallelism can communicate interpersonal alignment" (Lempert, 2014: 383). This makes imitation a crucial part of the creation of common ground and finally positive rapport (Goebel, to appear; Lempert, 2014).

(2) *Uptake*

An *uptake* is given when Speaker B does something in an interaction in order to recognize or to acknowledge Speaker A or the content of Speaker A's speech act. An *uptake* can be just a small response token or even a longer speech act situation. If a speaker experiences a *lack of uptake* of their utterance, it can stand for ideas of repair, preference or gossip. Research in small talk concentrates on the small words ('yeah', 'right', 'mhm', etc.) which carry the expression of *common ground* between two interlocutors (Agha, 2005; Goebel, 2015; to appear, McCarthy, 2003). The literature does not distinguish between positive or negative *uptakes*. The discursive practice *uptake* remains neutral and therefore assumes to have the same effects on *common ground* whether the *uptake* is a positive or a negative one. After the presentation of the results, it will be argued that such a distinction is in fact necessary.

(3) *Role alignment*

Role alignment takes place when a speaker expresses a socially recognized role or category in order to communicate and create *common ground*. It is defined as "patterns of congruence/non-congruence across interactional turns among semiotic behaviors expressing voicing effects" (Agha, 2005: 53). As long as patterns are visible in discursive or other semiotic behavior, *role alignment* takes place. It is employed to express *common ground* with other participants of an interaction but only successful, if the signs are recognized.

Recognition of *role alignment* is expressed through subsequent imitation of the role by others and/or an evaluation of the role which will be described in the next paragraph (Agha, 2005; Goebel, in press; to appear; Lempert, 2014).

(4) *Belonging*

Belonging is the discursive practice of imitation where an act of positive evaluation is simultaneously implemented. When *role alignment* and *belonging* are acted out discursively by two or more interlocutors, they create a frame which guarantees mutual understanding and subsequently *common ground* (Agha, 2005; Goebel, in press; to appear).

Another term to refer to *belonging* is *symmetric role alignment* (Agha, 2005). This way, *not-belonging* can be expressed also with the term *asymmetric role alignment*. The terminological discord appears again: both terms describe the positive alignment with a socially recognized role. It will be distinguished in the following way: *Symmetric role alignment* and *asymmetric role alignment* refer to the reaction of a broad audience (Cole & Pellicer, 2012). *Belonging* and *not-belonging* on the other hand are realized by one speaker reacting to another speaker. In this thesis it is argued that the term *belonging* highlights the aspect of positive relationship better than the rather technological term *(a)symmetric alignment*. Since the attended meetings are quite small, the terms *belonging*, and *not-belonging* are used.

(5) *Rupture*

A *rupture* during an interaction is acted out by one speaker in order to reevaluate and recreate new *common ground*. It takes place when a speaker decides to talk about non-normative practices which can reinforce the *common ground* about what is seen as normative among particular participant constellations. Therefore, it is a constant object and result of discursive practices (Goebel, to appear). In the results of this thesis, it is illustrated what occurs when the *rupture* is not recognized among all participants and hence the aim to establish *common ground* is not accomplished.

As already stated, these five discursive practices work together in discourse to create *common ground*. Each speaker turn can be characterized by one of these practices since interlocutors are either initiating a statement or recognizing another speaker's utterance. *Imitation*, *uptake* and *belonging* are practices which can be realized by speaker B as both comprise a reaction to a previous utterance. *Role alignment* requires one speaker who refers to an already established social voice or register (Agha, 2005). A *rupture* can be initiated by a speaker through starting to talk about a non-normative topic. Non-normative always depends on the context of the interaction as well as previously negotiated topics.

2.2.3 Paralinguistic features

Paralinguistic features are made up of pausing, intonation, speech volume and speed. These have impact on rapport since the misunderstanding of certain features can cause problematic communication situations (Gumperz, 1992). The notion of which amount of pausing or other paralinguistic features is seen as sufficient and normal can depend on language or context (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). However, differences regarding paralinguistic features are also highlighted in previous studies as cultural differences, e.g. the differences between high-context and low-context cultures (Hall, 1976). In this thesis, hypothesis about cultural influence on paralinguistic features is reduced to a minimum since the pitfall of maximum interpretation (Ten Thije, 2016) should be avoided at all time.

2.2.4 Humor and laughter

Humor is often referred to as an interactional strategy to create harmony or promote solidarity in interpersonal relations. However, humor is also delicate since it requires a lot of contextual, linguistic and interpersonal knowledge (Zhu Hua, 2014). Therefore, it should be applied the right way, at the right time and different humor should be used in different situations. Its usage is broad: in business meetings e.g., humor can help to shift the topic from a professional to a more personal one, but also create in-groups and out-groups which depends on whether the humor is appreciated or threatens the interlocutor's face or not (Ryoo, 2005; Zhu Hua, 2014). Humor can also be appreciated by mirroring it, hence, applying the discursive practice of imitation. Including or excluding participants in business meetings through humor can have subsequent consequences on relationships which makes this concept a crucial one when talking about rapport.

It is thought that humor is even more difficult to express and appreciate when people from different linguistic or cultural backgrounds come together (Zhu Hua, 2014). In contrast, Ryoo's (2005) research regarding friendly interactions between African-American customers

and Korean immigrant shopkeepers found that joking and laughing especially helped to achieve friendly interactions.

2.3 Rapport in intercultural business meetings

One domain where the perception of positive rapport of every interlocutor is crucial is in business meetings. In monolingual contexts, differences in opinion and goals can create a rather tense atmosphere. Looking at multilingual or intercultural business meetings is often considered to be the next level regarding difficulties since the cultural aspect is highlighted (Poncini, 2003; Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2004; Zhu Hua, 2014).

There are however, examples which show that successful communication is, at least, achieved in intercultural teams and that diversity can enhance its success (Koole & Ten Thije, 1994). (Intercultural) successful communication differs from rapport though, as defined here. When both interlocutors take their communicative expectations into account, make their communicative intent very clear, and are aware of the interlocutor's cultural expectations a successful intercultural interaction is achieved (Clyne, 1994). Hence, when both interlocutors get their message across, both understand and are understood, an interaction can be defined as successful. Nevertheless, a successful interaction does not have to be a harmonious one. In the professional field, rapport is seen as a core concept since it invites customers to feel at ease and enhances their consumption behavior. Also, good interpersonal relationships between colleagues promises a good atmosphere which enhances efficiency and contentment of employees (Zhu Hua, 2014). Therefore, this thesis concentrates on how rapport is managed interdiscursively through the previously defined strategies in intercultural business meetings. An intercultural business meeting is not only a meeting between representatives of different cultures. It is a meeting which comprises intercultural communication. To this day, there exist three popular definitions of intercultural communication which can be found in Ten Thije (2016). The definitions go from a broad to a very restricted one. This study makes use of the third definition of intercultural communication which was established by J. Rehbein (cited in

Ten Thije, 2016). He affirms that intercultural communication takes place when at least one of the participants in an interaction critically reflects on his or her own as well as the other's positions. These comprise the group's representations, value orientations and behavior expectations (Rehbein, 2006 cited in Ten Thije, 2016).

This chapter gave an overview over the concept rapport and how it is managed in discourse. In order to give proof to these assumptions and how the discursive concepts can be found in intercultural business meetings, the following chapter will explain the methodological approach which was taken to underpin the research question *How is rapport managed interactionally in intercultural business meetings?* A closer look will be taken at RM competencies, discursive practices, paralinguistic features and the role of humor and laughter.

3. Method

In the following, the research approach and design will be presented along with the participants of the sample. Furthermore, it will be illustrated how, and which data was collected and lastly, how the sample was analyzed to answer the main research question '*How is rapport managed interactionally in intercultural business meetings?*' The structure of the method follows Dörnyei's (2007) proposal of how to write a qualitative method report.

3.1 Research approach and design

The research needs to combine not only the perspectives of the analyst but also the perspective of the participants since the concept of rapport is defined as a subjectively perceived image of harmony (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). The feelings of the participants about rapport during an interaction are therefore of high scientific value. Nevertheless, the perspective of the researcher is also important since discursive practices and paralinguistic features are applied unconsciously and must be made visible in transcripts and with the help of ethnographic field notes in order to include the context and create a thick

description (Dörnyei, 2007; Gumperz, 1992). Thus, three components constitute the research: (1) transcripts from two intercultural business meetings with five people each, (2) ethnographic field notes of those meetings and (3) a follow-up questionnaire filled out by the participants.

The approach is constructed this way for three reasons. First, since rapport is constructed discursively, natural conversation must be recorded and afterwards transcribed. Second, ethnographic field notes of the same conversations enhance the view of the specific communicative acts and help the researcher to create a thick description (Dörnyei, 2007). Third, the questionnaire is necessary to include the participants' subjective feelings about rapport. Combining and comparing the results of every component will lead to the answering of the research question in the present study. The last two steps derive from an ethnographic approach which put the recorded conversation in its context. In this way, there is not only one single true interpretation, but rather "a rich, in-depth picture of the range of concerns and evaluations, both positive and negative, that interlocutors may hold and (re-)construct" (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009: 152).

A big point of emphasis for the study is to record natural conversations. The participants should not feel that they are in an artificial situation which would influence their speech or level of comfort. By combining discursive data, field notes and interviews, the researcher also tries to diminish the Hawthorne-effect (Dörnyei, 2007). Nevertheless, this method has some pitfalls too. The participants could have behaved differently during the meetings due to the presence of the researcher. Furthermore, the participants filled out their questionnaires themselves which they could have done in order to maintain face.

3.2 Participants

The two recorded meetings consisted of five people each which leads the researcher to a number of nine participants in total (one person attended both meetings). In order to get comparable data, all participants had a similar educational background. They all work or

study in the same academic field (Language or Literature Studies; Intercultural Communication).

The attended meetings were suggested to the researcher by her supervisor. Before joining them, the master program coordinator was informed and asked for permission to join the meetings. After his approval, the meetings were attended, and the participants were asked for their permission. After handing out information letters about the research, the declarations of consent were signed, and the meeting began (see forms in Appendix A and B). The participants did not receive any compensation for their cooperation.

The intercultural aspect of these two meetings is the fact that the participants do not have the same native language and different proficiency in other languages. Furthermore, since they all teach or study in the field of intercultural communication, it is expected that they are able to reflect critically about intercultural interactions which is where the third definition of intercultural communication gets applied (Ten Thije, 2016). By means of the questionnaire, they were asked about their language skills and the role they embodied in the meetings. The results are presented in the tables 2 and 3.

Code	Languages¹	Own role in the meeting
F1	Dutch, German, French, English	Core teacher
F2	French, English, French	Core teacher
F3	Dutch, English, Italian	Research and Education Assistant
M7	Dutch, German, English, French, Spanish	Chairman
M8	German, English, Dutch	Regular participant

Table 2: Participants meeting 1.

¹ The first language indicates the native language of the participant.

Code	Languages	Own role in meeting
F4²	-	-
F5	German, English, French	Representative of the master program
F6	Russian, Dutch, English	Discussion partner
M8	German, English, Dutch	Regular participant
M9	Dutch, English, German, French	Participant

Table 3: Participants meeting 2.

3.3 Data collection and sources of data

The data of this research comprises two intercultural business meetings of nine participants in total, ethnographic field notes of those meetings and a follow-up questionnaire. The meetings were recorded and subsequently transcribed, first in Microsoft Word and furthermore with the discourse analytical tool EXMARaLDA in order to gain more insight on specific rapport relevant situations. The transcripts were further compared and supplemented the ethnographic field notes and the answers from the follow-up questionnaire to gain a *thick description* of the situation (Dörnyei, 2007). Each instrument will be described more thoroughly in the following.

(1) Meetings (audio recording and transcription)

The first meeting was recorded on 28 February 2018, from 3 to 5 pm at Utrecht University. Colleagues of one master program from Utrecht University met for their quarterly meeting to discuss upcoming events and other recent organizing issues. The teachers knew each other beforehand and work closely together throughout the whole academic year. The language policy of the meeting depends on the participants: sometimes the meeting is held in English, sometimes in Dutch. Considering the absence of one non-Dutch teacher it was clear for the remaining five participants that the meeting was to be held in Dutch despite of the presence of two other non-native speakers.

² Did not answer the questionnaire.

The five participants did not know beforehand that the meeting was going to be recorded for research, they were asked if they wanted to join right before the meeting started. This way, they could not overthink the situation too much and hold the meeting as naturally as possible. The researcher explained the topic of the research, her thesis, distributed information letters and declarations of consent, which all five participants filled out before the meeting started. Subsequently, the researcher set up two recording devices, moved away from the table where the participants were located, and started to take ethnographic field notes on a laptop. The researcher has little receptive skills in Dutch which is why she could concentrate on nonverbal communication without getting distracted by the content.

The second meeting was a group discussion which was held during the *onderwijsgesprek*³ of one master program at Utrecht University on 5 March 2018 from 3 to 5 pm. As for the first meeting, the participants did not know beforehand that the discussion would possibly be recorded for research. The researcher presented the topic of her thesis shortly after the introduction of the *onderwijsgesprek* and nobody disagreed with being part of the research. After an overview of the topics that were to be discussed during the group discussions, the plenum was organized in four groups of five to six people. The researcher observed and recorded one group discussion. The chosen group was picked for two reasons: first, the conversation was in English and second, the participants of the group did not know each other too well beforehand. Before they started talking about an assigned topic, the researcher handed out information letters and declarations of consent, which everybody filled out and handed back to the researcher. One recording device was put in the middle of the table before the researcher withdrew herself behind the group to make ethnographic notes on her laptop again. The group discussion itself lasted 26 minutes.

³ *Onderwijsgesprek*: a conversation about the master program where students, teachers and organizing people can talk about the structure, functioning, etc. of the program.

Although both groups consisted of five people, they still have different characteristics. The first group was made up of five people who knew each other quite well on a professional level since they were all colleagues of a master program at Utrecht University. The second group was made up randomly through a counting system during the *onderwijsgesprek* wherefore they did not know each other too well. Furthermore, the first meeting was in Dutch which was the native language of three out of the five participants and the second meeting was in English which was no one's the native language. These differences promised rich findings regarding the management of rapport.

(2) Field notes

During the meetings, the researcher was attentive to nonverbal signs and paralinguistics of the participants. The first comprised of eye contact, positioning at the table and other body language signs. Paralinguistics includes intonation, speaking volume and speed, and pausing. The researcher wrote the features down in a Microsoft Word document, including also time specifications.

Since the first meeting was in Dutch it was not difficult for the researcher to concentrate only on nonverbal behavior and paralinguistics. During the second meeting however, the researcher was able to understand the content and could have been influenced by topics since the group discussion was in English.

(3) Follow-up questionnaire

After listening to and transcribing the recorded meetings in Microsoft Word, the researcher sent out two emails, one to each group with the follow-up questionnaire on 18 March 2018 (see Appendix C). The questionnaire consisted of nine categories and 14 questions. They coincide partly with the six RM competencies of Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009). Its main purpose is to find out which languages the participants speak and the subjectively perceived harmony during the meetings.

The first three categories are represented with one question each: language skills (Q1), general impression of harmony (Q2), and additional comments (Q14). The remaining six categories concentrate on the six RM competencies defined in chapter 2.2.1 and can be summarized as the following: contextual awareness (Q3, 4, 5), interpersonal attentiveness (Q6, 7, 8), social information gathering (Q3), social attuning (Q 9, 10, 11), emotion regulation (Q12), and stylistic flexibility (Q13).

3.4 Data analysis

After listening to both meetings several times, both were transcribed using Microsoft Word. Since one meeting was in Dutch and the other in English, this had to be done in two different ways. For the Dutch meeting, speakers' turns and paralinguistic features were written down for every minute. The English meeting was also transcribed fully in Microsoft Word first, but here every word was written down literally including noticeable pauses.

Comparing the transcripts, the field notes and the questionnaire, overlapping moments were chosen where both participants and researcher suspected the presence of RM competencies which influenced the interpersonal harmony of the group in a positive or negative way. By combining these three research instruments, the researcher attempted to diminish her influence on the choosing of situations but still considered it. However, the influence of the researcher and her biases or disciplinary background might have still influenced the analysis of the material. Besides, the group of the first meeting comprised two teachers of the researcher, as well as the second reader for her thesis and in the second meeting, there was a fellow student of the researcher.

The first indicator to detect situations was the questionnaire: participants were asked about the harmony during the meeting in general, and about positive/negative situations in particular. The researcher compared those situations to her field notes and the Word-transcripts and decided further on which fragments to transcribe with the discourse analytical tool EXMARaLDA (since the researcher does not understand Dutch, she wrote down a

fantasy-Dutch language⁴ for the first meeting; the second meeting was transcribed in English). For the second meeting, the detected fragment lasted three minutes. Therefore, a 3-minute fragment should be analyzed for the first meeting, too. Since there was no 3-minute fragment at a stretch, six shorter fragments were chosen for this meeting which in total make up three minutes.

For the second meeting, a situation was chosen where two participants noticed tension. This situation lasted from 19:11.8 until 22:09.1 of the recorded time. The same time frame of three minutes was chosen for the first meeting as well. Unlike the second meeting, the participants of the first group highlighted the harmony of the conversation and mentioned that jokes were made. Thus, situations with laughter were chosen. Ten situations were detected where all three instruments showed appearance of laughter. The ten situations were grouped according to similarities and two main patterns (which comprise three fragments each) were made visible.

In both transcripts, paralinguistic features (intonation, speaking volume and speed, such as pausing) were color coded. Patterns were searched, compared, and linked back to the concepts of discursive practices, *common ground*, and rapport. Especially the use of laughter was salient which is why the results mainly focus on these situations.

As a last step, in order to show the results in an adequate way, the researcher looked out for help to translate fantasy-Dutch into Dutch. This was done by a fellow student of the researcher.

⁴ Fantasy-Dutch is what I could understand and write down with having little receptive knowledge in Dutch.

4. Results

The results will be reported in the following way: the detected situations from the meetings will be presented first through transcription tables and subsequently interpreted with respect to discursive practices and paralinguistic features. An overview of the detected fragments and within both meetings can be found in table 4. Special attention is paid to the variety of *imitations*, *uptakes*, *role alignments*, *belongings*, and *ruptures*, and how these themes work together in the construction of *common ground*. Since positive rapport is constructed through the establishment and negotiation of *common ground*, it will be possible to draw conclusions about the rapport afterwards as well. The interpretation focuses furthermore on the use of laughter and giggling, and which function can be related to them. The relation to RM competencies will take place in the Discussion chapter.

Meeting 1	Situation 1 (fragments 1+2+6)	5 laughter incidents
	Situation 2 (fragments 5+8+10)	6 laughter incidents
Meeting 2		6 laughter incidents 1 topic change

Table 4: Overview of the analyzed situations.

4.1 Meeting 1

According to the answers from the questionnaire, the participants knew each other since they are all colleagues working within the same MA program. Their relationship is hence a professional one. Without exception, everybody answered the same when asked about the distribution of roles in the meeting. Everybody agreed that M7 was the chairman and that their own role is *kerndocent* of the MA program (except for F3, who is a program assistant). Also, every participant agreed on the goal of the meeting, which was the discussion of current issues regarding the program. Furthermore, M8, F2, and F1 state that their own goal was to represent their related language track and thought that this was also the goal of the other

participants. M7 was aware of his position as chairman which gave him the (social) right to lead the discussion. F3 wanted to share her experiences and ideas on topics of the agenda. Although they did not manage to discuss every point, all the participants described the meeting as a harmonious one with room for jokes but still productive regarding the agenda. A positive initial situation was created through the consensus regarding participant roles, collective goals, and harmony.

Since the participants pointed out the harmonious situation with room for jokes, the researcher took a closer look at incidents in which laughter occurred. After comparing field notes with the transcript, ten fragments were identified wherein laughter appeared. These ten fragments showed a pattern. In fragments 1+2+6, the chairman spoke English right before the laughter, although the meeting was held in Dutch and in the fragments 5+8+10, the chairman used a funny voice, which made the rest of the participants and himself laugh. Those six fragments together make up a total of three minutes, which is why they were chosen to be analyzed for their paralinguistic features.⁵ The first situation lasts from 03:56.1 until 4:32.6 (fragments 1 and 2) and 40:03.1 until 40:55.2 (fragment 6). The second situation lasts from 29:33.7 until 30:20.1 (fragment 5), 57:15.7 until 57:30.7 (fragment 8), and 92:34.1 until 93:03.2 (fragment 10).

Situation 1 (fragments 1+2+6)

Within this situation there are five laughter incidents. The discursive practices and paralinguistic features right before and after the laughter will be described in the following. Before the first laughter incident, the chairman M7 talks with a lot of intonation, speaks with

⁵ The incident situation in meeting 2 also lasts 3 minutes. In order to compare the meetings, the time fragment had to be the same; in the laughter incidents 3+4+7+9 no pattern was identifiable – laughter was probably originated by the content, which the researcher did not understand.

a higher voice and speeds up his speech (see Transcription A). F3 starts laughing while M7 is still talking and subsequently M7 starts laughing, too. At the same time as F3 starts laughing, F1 reacts surprisingly to M7's statement. This first laughter from F3 can be interpreted as an *uptake*, she acknowledges what M7 says and then, he recognizes it as well and starts laughing too which makes his laugh an evaluative activity and therefore an act of *belonging*.

	9 [04:01.6] 10 [04:02.7*]	11 [04:04.2]
M7 [v]	↑niet< gedaan en w↑eet (()) ? die mevrouw heeft op ↑nieuwe (mail	
F1 [v]	°ahja:° nee↑? ach	
F3 [v]	((laughs))	
	12 [04:07.4] 13 [04:07.9]	14 [04:09.7] 15 [04:10.7]
M7 [v]	gestuurt) ((laughs))	
F1 [v]	nee!↑	jij had geantw↑oord? ↑och nee:
F3 [v]		ja: (())↓
M8 [v]	of: er iets geb↑uurt met haar mail of:↑	

Transcription A: Laughter incident 1 within situations 1.

Interesting here is the second laughter incident (see Transcription B). The laughs of F1 and F3 follow an English statement of the chairman where he talks about himself in the third person. Before saying this phrase slower than the rest of his speech, he makes quite a long pause (1.3), and before F1 and F3 are starting to laugh he makes a short pause again (0.4) and adds ‘eventually’.

	17 [04:19.6]	18 [04:20.9]
M7 [v]	(1.3) <[M7] will answer the lady from the email> (0.4) eventually ((giggles))	
F1 [v]	((giggles))	
F3 [v]	((laughs))	
	19 [04:22.9]	
M7 [v]	((inhales)) (.) E:H >even kijken↓< punt z↑even↑ (3.7) ja↓ dat is dat	
F1 [v]	((laughs))	
F3 [v]	((giggles))	

Transcription B: Laughter incident 2 within situation 1.

The English phrase from M7 can be interpreted as *role alignment*; he uses English and speaks about himself in the third person and therefore plays someone else (a role) which make two other people laugh. The pause adds a comedic aspect, as well as the fact that he talks about himself in third person. The slowdown of his voice supports the comedy of the situation as well. The laughter of F1 and F3 are *uptakes* since they react to M7's statement. Just as in the

first incident, M7 starts laughing only after someone else started laughing. This is a sign of *belonging* since he evaluates his and the other’s activity (laughing) by imitating it. *Belonging* is an imitation which, at the same time, evaluates the reaction of the conversation partner as well as the relationship between two interlocutors.

M7 himself ends the laughing incident by inhaling and saying the fill word ‘eh’ louder than the rest of his speech. This can be considered as *role alignment* as well since he is playing his role as chairman again and leads the group back to the topic of the discussion. There are no interferences since all the participants agreed on him being the chairman of this meeting.

Fragment 6 (start: 40:03.1) then comprises three laughter incidents. M7 is talking again and at 40:07.7 after he referred in English to the ‘graduation day’, F1 giggles (see Transcription C). M7 spoke with intonation before and said that he had to answer somebody. This situation relates back to fragment 2 since M7 talks again about how he has to answer somebody. This implies that he is referring to an already established *common ground* which shows its function of an interpretive frame. He repeats the *common ground* which already caused laughter before to make the other participants laugh again. Since the participants are already familiar with this *common ground* it can be interpreted as a frame. F1’s laughter is an *uptake* since she reacts to M7’s statement. After that, M7 goes back to talk with a lot of intonation and speeds up his speech a bit but also pauses quite often.

	97 [30:17.8]	98 [30:20.1]99 [40:03.1]
M7 [v]	(()) ((inhales)) OKAY↓ (.) eh e/ v↑isit↑atie	e:hm: (.) graduation d↑ay of
F1 [v]	HAHAHAHAHA))	
		100 [40:07.7] 101 [40:09.8]
M7 [v]	(()) dat hebben wij geh↑ad, die ↑klacht die moet ik nog <steeds↓> beantwoorden↑	e:h: 29
F1 [v]		((giggles))

Transcription C: Laughter incident 3 within situation 1.

The situation before laughter incident 4 is the following (see Transcription D): M7 talks in Dutch, then pauses (0.9), adds an English word (‘anything?’), pauses again (0.4) and adds a Dutch word (‘leuk?’). He then looks at M8 as if he was waiting for his answer but M8 looks

at the agenda in front of him instead. For three seconds nobody says anything which makes F3 giggle first, then also F1 and M8 himself before he answers.

				104 [40:25.5]
M7 [v])) protokol maken (0.9) anything: ↑? (0.4) leuk: ? eh ↓		
nv [v]			((M7 looks at M8))	((phone
			105 [40:28.5]	106 [40:29.5]
M7 [v]			(())	
F1 [v]			((laughs))	((giggles))
F3 [v]			((giggles))	((laughs))
M8 [v]				((giggles))
nv [v]	vibrates))	((M8 looks at agenda and turns the page))		

Transcription D: Laughter incident 4 within situation 1.

This laughter incident 4 is an *uptake* again since F3 and F1 are reacting to M7 and M8's (nonverbal communication) behavior. It seems that M7 was waiting for an answer but M8 did not react to his behavior. Instead, he reacts to the laughing which makes his laugh an evaluative imitation, therefore an act of *belonging*.

In laughter incident 5 (see Transcription E), F1 and F3 are giggling again simultaneously to M8's speech. The laughter in this situation is *uptake* again since they are not imitating M8's behavior. M8 is still speaking and therefore the giggle interrupts him, but he does not stop talking. F1 and F3 show M8 that they recognized his statement by giggling.

	112 [40:42.2]	113 [40:42.9]	114 [40:43.4]	115 [40:44.4]	116 [40:47.1]	117 [40:48.1]
M7 [v]					↑volgorde (staan) microfoon kleding ja n↑e	
F1 [v]	((giggles))					
F3 [v]		↑JA: ((giggles))				
M8 [v]	je zij iets over		ja of: (()) kleding (staan)			

Transcription E: Laughter incident 5 within situation 1.

Situation 2 (fragments 5+8+10)

Fragments 5, 8, and 10 were combined because M7 imitates another person or makes a funny voice. In total, there are six laughter incidents.

First, M7 is talking and repairs himself five times shortly before he says a short phrase louder and with a different tone of voice than his previous speech (see Transcription F).

Before he says this, he makes a short pause. After his change of voice, F1 starts laughing and

he giggles with her before he continues his talk. The funny voice M7 imitates can be interpreted as *role alignment* since he is using a certain register to play a comedic role (Agha, 2005). F1's laughter is an *uptake* since she reacts to his funny voice, whereas his giggling after that is a sign of *belonging*.

	79 [29:42.6]	80 [29:43.6]
M7 [v]	niet merken (.) "JA:↑ WE ZIJN ER"	((giggles)) en he oh/ he dat het een ↑heb
F1 [v]		((laughs)) ((laughs))↓ ja:

Transcription F: Laughter incident 1 within situation 2.

Laughter incident 2 is very similar (see Transcription G): M7 says a word louder than before which makes F1 laugh (*uptake*) and M7 imitating and evaluating her laughing while he still speaks (*belonging*). To end this situation which M7 initiated again, he inhales and says ‘okay’ louder than before, followed by the fill word ‘eh’. This indicates a change of topic. He can do that because everybody agreed in their questionnaires that his role in the meeting is chairman which is why this behavior is expected and therefore not threatening to anybody. This repetitive behavior can also be interpreted as a frame. M7 created *common ground* through his rise in volume where afterwards, he goes back to the topic of the discussion. This frame shows the remaining participants what to expect when he raises his voice which is not because of anger or another emotion.

	96 [30:13.1]	
M7 [v]	in de verh↑aal verledning waar de meest (()) KANT (()) ((laughing and speaking)) erg	
F1 [v]	((exhales)) ((laughs	
	97 [30:17.8]	98 [30:20.1]99 [40:03.1]
M7 [v]	(()) ((inhales)) OKAY↓ (.) eh e/ v↑isit↑atie	e:hm: (.) graduation d↑ay of
F1 [v]	HAHAHAHAHA))	

Transcription G: Laughter incident 2 within situation 2.

In laughter incident 3, there is also the same pattern as before (see Transcription H): M7 says something in a funny voice (*role alignment*) which makes F1 giggle and M8 as well as M7, himself, laugh. M8's laughter is also an *uptake* since he reacts to M7's *role alignment* but M7's laughter is again an evaluative activity of the others reacting to his funny voice (*belonging*).

		131 [57:20.2]	132 [57:20.9]
M7 [v]	toen ik mijn ↑lijstje liet zien toen zeggen "↑↑ooh heb je zo (veel) mimimi"		
F1 [v]			((giggles))
M8 [v]			
	133 [57:23.0]	134 [57:24.8]	
M7 [v]	((laughs))	duz d↑at is ↑even eh/ qua: <verg↑aandheid> met meest	
F1 [v]	((giggles))		
M8 [v]	((laughs)) ((inhales))		
nv [v]	((bottle drop))		

Transcription H: Laughter incident 3 within situation 2.

The last three laughter incidents are slightly different from the one's described already. In laughter incident 4, M7 and F1 are laughing simultaneously after M7 talked again with repairs, intonation and more speed in his speech (see Transcription I). The laughter of both is initiated at the same time. They imitate each other with their short laugh and create feelings of social sameness (*imitation*). The frame of M7 speaking louder and changing the topic appears again as well.

M7 [v]	dan/ en dan dis/ dan als je dus zegd >nu leg je< ↑invoerd dan weet je z↑eker	167 [92:38.2]	168 [92:40.2]	169 [92:40.6]
M7 [v]	((giggles)) twee (()) je moet ((inhales)) DEN ZIJ wat ik heb in mijn (stoutijd), heb			
F1 [v]	((giggles))		°ja↓°	

Transcription I: Laughter incident 4 within situation 2.

Laughter incident 5 is initiated by M8 (see Transcription J). He reacts to something M7 said (*uptake*) which makes M7 and F3 giggle and therefore M8 himself as well. The laugh of M7 and F3 are *uptakes* since they react to M8's statement, whereas his laugh is an act of *belonging*. He imitates their behavior and evaluates their activity positively because he is happy that he made them laugh in the first place with his statement.

	170 [92:49.4]	171 [92:50.3]	172 [92:51.1]	173 [92:52.1]	174 [92:54.1]
M7 [v]	niet↓ (1.5)	(())		((giggles))	ja niet
F1 [v]	oh↓ (.) ja↑		ja↑		
F3 [v]				((giggles))	
M8 [v]		ja: en heb je daar ↑al een reatje op gehad?		((giggles))	

Transcription J: Laughter incident 5 within situation 2.

The last laughter incident (6) is a short giggle by M7 (see Transcription K). He is talking about himself again with a funny voice which only makes him giggle afterwards. The others

do not laugh but F1 reacts with ‘oh!’ and M8 with a question. M7 reacts to this by inhaling and giving more information about the topic.

	..
M7 [v]	ja toen ben ik bij [name] geroepen <worden> en [name] die zijden [M7] eh dat e/ ">moeten wij
	175 [92:59.2] 176 [92:59.8177 [93:00.5]
M7 [v]	niet doen<" ((giggles)) ((inhales))↑want hij zij als je zij van >(en daar was ik wel met ze)<
F1 [v]	oh↑
M8 [v]	want?

Transcription K: Laughter incident 6 within situation 2.

The funny voice is again *role alignment* as is M7’s laugh. The others react with questions or exclamations which show a *lack of uptake*. They are therefore not interested in acknowledging M7’s funny voice or his laughter but rather in gaining more information about the content of his statement. M7 wanted to repeat the frame funny voice combined with laughter but this time it was not adopted by the other participants.

4.2 Meeting 2

According to the questionnaires of the participants of this second meeting, the relationships between the people varied significantly. Some reported that they were colleagues while other participants had only met for the first time. They agreed more or less on their roles in the discussion, which was of a participant or discussion partner. F5 felt in the spotlight because she had to express her views about the master program. When asked about the goal of the group discussion and whether it was achieved or not, the answers varied a lot again. Some thought the goal was to brainstorm, others to evaluate the topics “thesis and internship” or to answer questions. They also did not agree on whether this goal was achieved or not. Another point they did not agree upon was the perceived harmony. They referred to it as “good” or that they did not have “any special feelings” about the atmosphere, whereas others mentioned a situation where they felt “tense” because they spoke about a sensitive topic with a superior. In contrast to the first analyzed meeting, there was not much consensus about the distribution of roles, goals, or perceived harmony.

Since two participants pointed out the situation where a sensitive topic was mentioned and talked about with the superior, this situation will be analyzed. This situation lasts from 19:11.8 until 22:09.1 of the recorded time, almost 3 minutes. This incident is also mentioned in the field notes, but the comment there only says that M9 is talking quite a lot which was different from his previous behavior. While looking at the detailed transcription of this situation, it appeared that there were also some laughing/giggling incidents (6 incidents). Whereas the laughter situations from meeting 1 created a positive harmony, it seems this was not the case in this group discussion.

The first difference regarding the first meeting is the use of paralanguage. Less change of intonation is noticeable, less change in the speed of speech, but more and longer pauses can be observed. One factor that might have influenced the paralinguistic features of the speakers of this group is the fact that English is not the native language of anybody. Their level of proficiency in English maybe caused them to speak slower, more monotonous, and pause longer.

The tense situation begins quite suddenly (see Transcription L). F6 enters the conversation with a lot of speech repairs and pronounces the last word, the clue word, of her question quieter than the rest of her speech. When nobody answers after a pause of (1.6), she starts giggling, before M8 makes a comment although the question is not directed at him, and after that M9 asks an evasive question in return before he himself starts giggling which also makes F5 giggle. At the same time, F6 tries to explain herself by repeating and repairing herself and asking a rhetorical question.

	..	10 [19:09.7]	11 [19:10.0]	12 [19:10.6]	13 [19:10.6]	14 [19:11.8]	15 [19:12.1]
M8 [v]						ja (.) mhm	
F5 [v]						ja ↑oh ja we do (.) ja	
F6 [v]			ja			and I/ h/h/h/ may I ↑ask you	
M9 [v]			have a ↑plenary disc↑us sion, right?				
	..	16 [19:13.7]	17 [19:14.1]				
F6 [v]			something↓ how big is the ↑chance that ehm↓ people like ↑internship coordinator and				
M9 [v]			sure!				

			18 [19:22.2]
M8 [v]			that's one
F6 [v]	tutors are going to disappear with the budget-cuts:°? (1.6) ((giggle))		
	19 [19:22.6]20 [19:23.0]	21 [19:24.7]	22 [19:26.0]
M8 [v]	option		
F5 [v]	yeah	((laughs))	
F6 [v]		well, well, w↑ell it i/ is I mean it/ it's	
M9 [v]	is that the topic of this? ((laughs)) ((laughs))		

Transcription L: Laughter incidents 1+2.

F6's question is not a reaction to a previous statement but the start of a new topic. In fact, she introduces it herself since she asks for permission to ask a question. Since she is not reacting to anything, this question can be defined as a *rupture*. She starts to talk about a sensitive topic whereas the previous situations were not sensitive. Therefore, she is reinforcing the *common ground* on what is seen as normative among this participant constellation and what is not (Goebel, to appear). The pause after her question shows that there is a lack of uptake since M9 does not answer her question. She therefore takes another speaking turn and she giggles which can be interpreted as her own *uptake* since the others are lacking one. Although the giggle does not add content it is maybe applied to reduce tension. It appears that the initiated topic is still perceived as non-normative to most of the group since there is no immediate reaction to it. After the giggle, M8's reaction is then an *uptake*. M9 however, of whom a reaction is expected, asks an evasive question which can be interpreted as an *uptake* from his side. M9's laughter then could be an *imitation* of F6's behavior or an *uptake*, whereas F5's laughing is a reaction to M9's statement and therefore an *uptake*.

The third laughter incident is located right after this part (see Transcription M). F6 is repeating her pattern from the first question. Therefore, it is the *imitation* of M9's pattern who is imitating her first giggle. It seems that both are imitating each other's behavior to find *common ground* but through this discursive practice, they do not get any further to its establishment.

..		23 [19:28.6]24 [19:28.9]	25 [19:29.4]26 [19:29.7]
F5 [v]		yeah	
F6 [v]	essential, right? ((giggle))	((giggle))	but
M9 [v]		well	I mean, I made the point my↑self,

Transcription M: Laughter incident 3.

Again, in laughter incident 4, F6 imitates her own pattern from laughter situation 1 (see Transcription N). This imitation behavior of the giggle was maybe applied to reduce the tension that her rupture-question provoked (Zhu Hua, 2014). However, there is no reaction from the remaining participants since M9 asks F5 a question simultaneously. *Common ground* is still not established.

..		35 [19:48.0]	36 [19:49.5]	37 [19:50.1]	38 [19:51.6]
F5 [v]				yes:!	I am really open I
F6 [v]		but ↑you are here to (())	((giggle))		
M9 [v]	we: are you/ are you open:				for listening?

Transcription N: Laughter incident 4.

Incident 5 is located right after incident 4 (see Transcription O). M9 is asking F5 a question which she answers (*uptake*) and subsequently, M9 giggles, too. His laugh is a reaction to F5's answer and therefore an *uptake* since he acknowledges her behavior without evaluating it. F6's giggle on the other hand could be two things: (1) the continuation of her giggling from situation 4 which was an *imitation* of her pattern from before, or (2) an *uptake* as a reaction to F5's answer. After this incident, M9 finally starts answering the question. In his monologue he uses many pauses, does not change his speaking speed much but gets louder at two points.

..		39 [19:52.0]	40 [19:52.4]	41 [19:52.8]
F6 [v]	((giggle))		((giggle))	
M9 [v]		((giggle))	what we're ↑doing is making a <lump sum>	(0.6) ehm

Transcription O: Laughter incident 5.

The last incident (6) comprises of two giggles from F6 (see Transcription P). One is in the middle of her phrase and the other one at the end. She is asking M9 a question, which is reminiscent of the first pattern. The giggle in the middle could be her reaction to a *lack of uptake*, whereas the giggle in the end is an *imitation* of her initial speech behavior.

..	
F6 [v]	↑someone in the English track ((giggles)) have to do (these things didn't) ((giggles))

Transcription P: Laughter incident 6.

Although this sensitive topic is located near the end of the group discussion, it is not the very end of it. F5 ends the situation by starting to talk about a completely different topic, one they had discussed before the *rupture* situation (see Transcription Q). She is therefore referring to an already established normative *common ground* and changing the atmosphere of the situation. The nonverbal clapping which the chair of the *onderwijsgesprek* used to mark the end of the discussion time, however, did not have any particular influence on the conversation since F5 is continuing her utterance.

	111 [22:06.1]	112 [22:07.8]113 [22:09.1]
F5 [v]		the ↑only thing what I was >just< thinking
M9 [v]	and the department °etcetera↓° ja	
F4 [v]		mhmh
		114 [22:14.9] 115 [22:15.7]
F5 [v]	about (.) was that (.) a:hm there is the internship co↑ordi↑nator and the intern ship	
nv [v]		((clap clap))

Transcription Q: Topic change by F5.

5. Discussion

In the following part, interesting findings regarding RM competencies, discursive practices, paralinguistic features, and humor will be illustrated and connected to the establishment of *common ground* and rapport. Therefore, this chapter offers answers to the sub question of this research. The main research question was: *How is rapport managed interactionally in intercultural business meetings?*

The first finding regards the RM competencies. It was not possible to uncover these competencies in the transcripts since they are not discursive strategies which can be visualized in discourse. However, the answers from the questionnaires gave more insight into the implementation of the competencies. To embody the competencies *contextual awareness* or *interpersonal attentiveness*, a person requires knowledge of the context of the situation and of the individuals (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). For intercultural business meetings, it was found that when participants agreed on everybody’s roles and goals, rapport was perceived as very harmonious. When participants did not agree on common goals and roles, overall rapport

was still perceived as “good”, “normal” or “nothing special”, but a tense atmosphere at one point was highlighted by some participants. One fact that influences the knowledge of roles and goals is whether the interactants know each other beforehand or not. In combination to that, one could argue that the interactants with common goals and roles were part of a community of practice and the other one was not (Wenger, 2000). The fact that one participant stated in his questionnaire that he wanted to “lighten up the mood with humor”, and that his embodiment of a comedic role caused laughter, rose the assumption that he possesses the RM competencies *contextual awareness*, *interpersonal effectiveness*, *emotion regulation* and *stylistic flexibility* (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009): First, he knew that he could impersonate this comedic role in the given context since he was surrounded by colleagues. Second, he must have recognized that the participants were about to get distracted which made him choose these specific moments for his comedic *role alignment*. Third, he impersonated a comedic role by talking about himself in the third-person and making fun of himself which indicates that he does not take criticism too seriously and has a resilient character. And last, he switched quite sudden between his comedy role and his role as chairman of the meeting which aligns with the *stylistic flexibility* competency.

Second, one finding regarding the establishment of *common ground* through discursive practices was the structure presented in figure 1, which was perceived positively by the participants. *Uptake* and *belonging* in this discursive structure were characterized by laughter.

Speaker A	Role alignment (comedic role)	Belonging (laughter)
Speaker B	Uptake (laughter)	

Figure 1: Common ground through discursive practices.

Although Agha (2005) reports that *belonging* takes place right after *role alignment* in order to create *common ground*, the presented structure of figure 1 was observed various times in one

of the meetings and also lead to the establishment of *common ground*. Furthermore, frames were created through this structure which created *common ground* as well (Goffman, 1974). On the other side, *common ground* was not achieved when the discursive practice *rupture* about non-normative topics in the interaction was not recognized throughout the participants. In fact, this created a tense atmosphere which was perceived by at least two of the five participants in one meeting. Talk about non-normative practices can reinforce *common ground* of a group interaction (Goebel, to appear), although it carries the risk of creating a tense atmosphere. This incident of rupture was not expected by the remaining participants. Here, relations to the RM competency *interpersonal attentiveness* appear since this takes behavioral expectations of the participants of an interaction into account (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Nevertheless, the overall rapport perceived after the meeting was mostly a good one. Another salience was that in one observed situation, the discursive practice *belonging* did not appear. The absence of *belonging* coincides with the absence of *common ground* which supports the idea that the essence of a good interpersonal relationship lies within the discursive practice of *belonging*. Nonetheless, the overall perceived harmony of the whole situation was described as just fine. This leads to the assumption that although *common ground* was not established in a specific situation, the outcome of the meeting was still harmonious. After all, only two 3-minute fragments of a 26-minute and a 2-hour conversation could be analyzed properly. However, the findings support the idea that *common ground* is negotiated in interactive discourse, but rapport is not affected when the establishment of *common ground* fails at some point.

Other findings regarding *uptakes* relate to their different implementations in discourse. In the analyzed material, *uptake* was realized once as laughter, but also once as an evasive question. The *uptake* as laughter produced *belonging*, but the *uptake* in the form of an evasive question resulted in another *uptake* which attempted to explain the situation better. Hence, *uptake* as laughter created *common ground*, but *uptake* as an evasive question did not.

Uptakes should therefore be characterized regarding their establishment of *common ground* as positive or negative ones. Positive *uptakes* provoke *common ground*, negative ones do not. This stands in contrast to Goebel's (to appear) definition of *uptakes* in interactive discourse. Besides, the structure of *imitation* was only apparent when interlocutors did not know how else to react within a tense situation. This lies against the findings reported by Lempert (2014) who claims that *imitations* create *common ground*.

Third, regarding paralinguistic features, it was noticeable that during the positively perceived harmony, the speaker talked with many changes in intonation, speech speed and volume, and paused only a few times. When the atmosphere was perceived as tense, it was noticeable that less changes in intonation, speech speed and volume occurred, but pauses were longer and realized more often. Since paralinguistic inferences are made subconsciously, the participants of this sample did not mention any saliences (Gumperz, 1992). As already stated however, the differences in paralanguage could stand in correlation to the used language. Speakers of one meeting were mostly natives whereas speakers of the other group spoke English which was no one's native language.

Fourth, the function of laughter and humor in both meetings varied. One time, laughter situations were provoked intentionally by the chairman and fulfilled their purpose since they lead to the creation of *common ground*. The laughter itself appeared in the discursive practices of *uptake* and *belonging*. Through laughter as *uptake* and *belonging*, *common ground* was created. The laughter was furthermore a joint reaction to *role alignment* and did, in fact, create harmony and promote solidarity in interpersonal relations (Goebel, to appear; Zhu Hua, 2014). The roles performed in these situations were characterized by a change of language and by a change of voice and were used to fulfill a comedic function. Both situations were carried out by the same speaker who happened to be the chairman of one meeting. By changing his role from chairman to a comedic role, he provoked a *rupture* situation as well. This time, the participants recognized the practice, acknowledged it by laughing, and *common*

ground was created (Goebel, to appear; see figure 1). Since this was achieved in the meeting where the participants knew each other beforehand, it can be stated that they had sufficient contextual, linguistic and interpersonal knowledge to make this humoristic *role alignment* fulfill its function (Zhu Hua, 2014). However, laughter (or giggling) also had different functions. When no *common ground* was created, laughter was applied as an attempt to diminish the effect of the sensitive topic change (Zhu Hua, 2014). This structure was imitated various times without showing effects on *common ground*.

Last, the intercultural aspect of the meetings does not have varying effects on the perceived rapport. The fact of different native speakership had no salient consequences on the investigated topic. The aspects of alignment regarding the distribution of participants' roles as well as the goal of the meeting had more influence on rapport than the differences from linguistic or cultural knowledge. This stands in contrast to Spencer-Oatey and Franklin's (2009) assumptions on intercultural interactions and support the idea of Holliday et al. (2017) that every social encounter should be considered in its own context and disassembled carefully.

Other saliences

Other saliences of the material regard the language use. One time, a regional lingua franca was chosen (Dutch) and the other time, English as a lingua franca was used. Since the research took place in the Netherlands, it is understandable that in the ELF group, one or two words were to be used in Dutch. In the RELF situation however, English was used as an act of codeswitching (Backus et al., 2013) which was used to play a role and lastly created *common ground*. In further research, the correlation between codeswitching, *role alignment*, and *common ground* should be investigated more thoroughly.

6. Conclusion

This paper has used transcriptions of recordings, ethnographic field notes, and questionnaires of intercultural business meetings and their participants to explore how rapport is managed in interactive discourse. The research question was: *How is rapport managed interactionally in intercultural business meetings?*

It was made visible through transcripts of intercultural business meetings that rapport is managed interactionally and discursively through a combination of discursive practices (*role alignment, uptake, belonging*) which result in the creation of frames and lastly *common ground*. *Common ground* contributes to the establishment of positive rapport however, once its creation fails, rapport is not destined for being generally negative. This contributes to a dynamic perspective of rapport through language and gives ground to a more broadly applicable definition. Rapport is in fact created through the negotiating of *common ground* in interactive discourse, but despite of what Goebel (to appear; in press) refers to in his remarks, discourse is not the only source of positive interpersonal relationships. This study shows that context plays a crucial role as well and that consent about interactional goals, distribution of roles, and the behavioral expectations have a significant impact on the creation of *common ground* and rapport. Therefore, both schools of thought regarding rapport (Spencer-Oatey 2002, 2005, with Franklin 2009; and Goebel, to appear, in press) should be looked at simultaneously through the combination of their concepts, rapport and *common ground*.

This study contributed to research about rapport since it highlighted its interactional and dynamic nature with replicable results in actual intercultural business meetings. Furthermore, it was illustrated how the perspectives of participants of meetings and the perspective of the researcher can be combined in order to increase the understanding of rapport and its establishment. Further research should consider this ethnographic approach.

Limitations

As all studies have their limitations, it is only fair to point out the limitations of this study. The subjective perception of the researcher played a significant role throughout the whole research process. The meetings consisted partly of people the researcher knew on a professional level which might have had an impact on the analysis and the interpretation of the results. The presence of the researcher or the recording devices during the meetings could have had an influence on the behavior of the participants as well. Furthermore, the researcher was influenced by her prior education and knowledge about the topic which could have had an impact as well. The field notes were only taken by one researcher which means only her subjective perceptions were considered. Regarding the follow-up questionnaire, it was distributed three weeks after the meetings. Therefore, the memories of the participants were not particularly vivid anymore and some of them did in fact mention in their questionnaire that they did not remember a specific positive or negative situation or their feelings about the harmony during the meeting. Moreover, the questionnaires could have been answered by the participants in order to maintain a positive self-position.

Since the research sample consisted of only nine participants and two different meetings, there can be no generalization of the results. Furthermore, their professional field lies within intercultural communication which may have caused biases from their sides as well. In order to gain more insight, further research is needed to reduce the limitations. Lastly, since the initial situations of both meetings were very different, it is difficult to compare the results.

Further research

Having the limitations of this study in mind, further research is necessary to make general assumptions about the creation of rapport in interactive discourse. Not only regarding the size

of the sample but also regarding two other aspects: (1) language use and (2) identity construction.

It was stated that rapport is the harmony of interpersonal relationships which is negotiated in interactive discourse. The shift in research from static to dynamic figures already appears within the concepts of culture/culturality (Dervin, 2011), identity/identification (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004), and finally should be considered within the concept of rapport as well.

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8. Appendices

A) Declaration of consent

Declaration of consent for participating in:

Multilingualism & rapport in intercultural meetings

I confirm that:

- I am well informed about the study after reading the accompanying information letter;
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this study and my questions were answered to my satisfaction;
- I have had the opportunity to think carefully about participating in this study;
- I participate voluntarily.

I give permission:

- that my data will be used for scientific reasons and will be saved as is formulated in the information letter;
- that if applicable, video- and/ or audio recordings are made for scientific purposes

I understand that:

- I have the right to withdraw my permission to use my data within 24h after participation, without the obligation to give reasons why;
- my data will be used according to the stipulations formulated in the Code of Conduct of the VSNU (www.vsnu.nl/gedragcodes).

Name participant: _____ Date of birth: ___ / ___ / ___

(dd/mm/yyyy)

Signature: _____ Date, place: ___ / ___ / ___

Consent for possible reuse of data

(1) Researchers share quite frequently their research data with other researchers, in this way data is used most optimally. Naturally, these data are completely anonymous. Do you agree that your anonymous data could be shared in the future with other researchers?

(Please, mark the intended answer with a cross, and sign if agreed)

Yes, I agree. Signature: _____ No, not agreed.

(2) Sometimes audio and/or video material is presented during a scientific conference or course (which again are sometimes placed on the internet). Such recordings can, of course, be traced back to specific people. If applicable, do you agree that such recordings are used for these abovementioned purposes?

Yes, I agree. Signature: _____ No, not agreed.

To fill out by the researcher:

I declare that I have explained to the participant what participation involves and I will ensure that the data will be treated anonymously.

Name: _____

Date: ___ / ___ / ____ (dd/mm/yyyy)

Signature:

B) Information letter**Information about participation in an experiment****Multilingualism & rapport in intercultural business meetings****1. Introduction**

You have indicated your willingness to participate in a scientific study taking place at Utrecht University. This document contains all information that you need when deciding if you want to take part in the study. You are kindly asked to read this document attentively.

2. What is the background and the aim of this research?

In order to write my thesis in the master program Intercultural Communication at Utrecht University, I want to analyze multilingualism and rapport in intercultural business meetings. The aim of this experiment is to test whether multilingualism and rapport in business meetings are related.

3. How is the research conducted?

During the experiment you will be asked to act just like you do normally and to not pay attention to the researcher. The meeting will be recorded in order to write a transcript afterwards which will be used for scientific research only.

After this meeting, there will be a follow-up questionnaire to ask you about your perceptions about the meeting and your language skills. If you disagree with these conditions, let the researcher know.

4. What is expected of you?

Since the aim of this experiment is to analyze the meeting as natural as possible, please feel free to forget about the researcher and behave as natural as possible.

5. What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of taking part in this research?

Participating in this study does not offer you any direct advantage, however in the future the study may lead to useful knowledge about language or language use. There are also no disadvantages in participating.

6. What happens if during the research you feel an objection to continue?

At any time, you may decide to stop your participation in this research.

7. Voluntary participation

Your participation is voluntary. If you decide not to take part in the research, you do not need to do anything, nor sign any document. You do not have to explain why you decide not to participate in the research. If you do decide to participate, you can always reconsider this decision and stop at any given moment – also during the experiment.

8. What happens with the data that we collect?

Data that are collected in this research will be stored in complete anonymity. Your personal data will not be stored anywhere.

Your personal data are taken care of by Susanne Klimesch. In case you would like to update your details, you can contact her at the email address: s.f.klimesch@students.uu.nl.

We are obliged to keep the research data – anonymized – for 10 years. By participating in this research, you are giving us permission to do that. If you do not like us to keep these anonymized details, you may not take part in this experiment.

9. Should you decide to take part in the research, is there a monetary compensation for your participation?

No.

10. More information on this research?

Would you like to have more information on this research? Please feel free to contact Susanne Klimesch, s.f.klimesch@students.uu.nl

C) Follow- up questionnaire

Follow-up questionnaire of the research experiment “Rapport and multilingualism”

Type 1:

Reflect on the meeting you had February 28th, 2018 from 3 to 5pm.

Please answer the questions in full sentences. You don’t have to use names but if it helps you to organize your answer you can do so. All data will be analyzed anonymously.

Type 2:

Please reflect on the group discussion you had during the onderwijsgesprek on March 5th, 2018 from 3 to 5pm.

Please answer the questions in full sentences. You don’t have to use names but if it helps you to organize your answer you can do so. All data will be analyzed anonymously.

1	Which language/languages do you speak? With speaking is meant having at least enough knowledge to manage an everyday conversation.
2	Now reflect on your feelings during the meeting. How did you feel during the meeting?
3	What is your relationship with the other participants of the meeting?
4	What was your role in the meeting?
5	What were the roles of the others in the meeting?
6	What was the goal of the meeting? Was it achieved?
7	What was your goal in the meeting? Did you achieve it?

8	What were the goals of the others? Did they achieve them?
9	How would you evaluate the harmony between the participants of the meeting?
10	Can you give an example of a specific positive/negative harmony situation?
11	Do you think everybody perceived the harmony the same way? Why yes, why not?
12	Do you have the feeling that the other people understood what you wanted?
13	Did you change your behavior/language use/other characteristics in the meeting depending on which person you spoke to?
14	Do you want to add something regarding the group harmony?

D) Transcription convention

°soft voice°

LOUD VOICE

(.) pause until 0.3 seconds

(0.6) pauses longer than 0.3 seconds

<slower speech>

>faster speech<

↑ rise in intonation

↓ fall in intonation

“different tone of voice”