The idea of *mateship* in Australian culture: the sociolinguistic dimension of three speech acts

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Resumen: En este artículo pretendemos estudiar y delimitar el significado del concepto de *mateship*. Esta idea, que define una forma especial de amistad o compañerismo, tiene una gran relevancia para la cultura australiana. Comenzamos con el análisis del concepto de *mateship* para presentar luego su sentido actual e histórico en el contexto cultural citado. También atenderemos a las consecuencias lingüísticas que ese 'valor' social tiene hoy. 'Mateship' es explicado, en concreto, de acuerdo con tres actos de habla del inglés australiano, 'chiak', 'yarn' y 'shout'. En este sentido, queremos señalar cómo se expresa el 'mateship' lingüísticanente y apuntar a su pertinencia en el uso cotidiano del lenguaje. Finalmente, abordamos los diversos avatares que tal concepto está sufriendo en la sociedad australiana actual.

Palabras clave: compañerismo, igualitarismo, sexismo, solidaridad, actos de habla

Abstract: In this article, our aim is to discuss the meaning of idea of *mateship*. This idea which consists of a special form of friendship or fellowship has a relevant role to play in Australian culture. We shall start analyzing the concept of *mateship* in order to present its current and historical meaning in that particular context of culture. Further, we will focus on the linguistics spin-offs of this outstanding social value. 'Mateship' then will be explained in terms of three speech acts of Australian English, 'chiack', 'yarn' and 'shout'. In this connection, we would like to show how 'mateship' is linguistically expressed and how relevant it is in every day use of language. Lastly, we attempt to discuss the actual situation this egalitarian concept is going through in today's Australian society.

Key words: mateship, egalitarian, sexism, solidarity, fellowship, speech acts.

1. THE MEANING OF MATESHIP

Mateship is one of the most characteristic concepts in Australian culture. Nowadays, in Australian media, especially in political media, it is reflected as a value of the 'real' Australian 'modus vivendi'. It is, in other words, a value which has proved most relevant for Australians in general

and for their particular social relationships in particular, as it is showed in the following utterance by John Howard (ex.) Prime Minister of Australia:

> I would like to see those great Australian characteristics that have been the golden thread through successive generations still there. I want us always to be seen as Australians, not as Americans or as Europeans or as Englishmen or as Asians. As distinctive Australians having those great qualities of classless-ness and mateship and fairness which have been the hallmark of Australians through all experiences and all generations. (Prime Minister John Howard, 13 September 1998)[1]

His 'patriotic' call for national identity leans on the key concept of 'contrast' with other nations' social traits which are supposedly to be scorned at, if not utterly rejected. Such social identity would be based on the *a priori* idea of social equality, as reflected in three related issues: "classlessness, mateship and fairness".

John Howard is even more definite about 'mateship' in the following example:

> It is one word in all of this which is so unarguably, distinctively and dramatically and proudly Australian ... I don't find that exclusively blokey and I don't believe any fair-minded Australian understanding the history and the spirit of this country would, either. (John Howard, Prime Minister, March 23 1999)

According to those examples, we can infer that the idea of mateship is of the utmost importance for Australians. However, we may also argue that, although the concept is straightfoward enough, it raises a number of issues that need to be accounted for. We may start with the open question, do we know exactly what that idea means in Australian culture? So let us begin by providing Anna Wierzbicka's statement (1997:102):

> The idea spending a lot of time together, doing things together, drinking together -of equality, solidarity, mutual commitment and mutual support, of companionship and fellowship in good fortune and in bad fortune.

A similar views of the idea of mateship in Australian society is put forward by Duncan M., Leigh A., Madden D., Tynan P.(2004:18-19):

> When Australians think of mateship they typically think of iconic stories such as John Simpson Kirkpatrick and his donkey at Galliopli or Edward 'Wery' Dunlop in the Japanese POW Camps. In this context, mateship stands for friendship, loyalty, cooperation and mutual

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[1] http://www.australianbeers.com/culture/mateship.htm (05.05.2005)

obligation. Mateship requires that you stand by your mates for better or for worse.

As we can see in the above statements, the idea of 'mateship' promotes people to spend a lot of time together in friendly relationship. In this concept of sharing time, the most important factors are mates and those mutual values which are performed amongst mates, such as: solidarity, loyalty, cooperation and mutual obligation.

The historical basis of this concept in Australian culture can be found in the *ethos* of the *bushman* (bosquimano) and in the demographic history of Australian nation, which was characteristically dominated by males throughout the 19th century. In actual fact, most of Australian males during the whole 19th century worked either in the *bush* or as miners. According to this, they would be prone to spend a lot of time together (in male companionship). And among other things, the very fact of being together in male companionship[2] had been the main stir-up for them to create that special kind of relationship, as it is reflected in the following example:

> The typical Australian ... was seldom religious in the sense in which the word was generally used. So far as he held a prevailing creed, it was a romantic one inherited from the gold-miner and the bushman, of which the chief article was that a man should at all times and at any cost stand by his mate. That was and is the one law which the good Australian must never break. It is bred in the child and stays with him through life ... *(CEW Bean, The Story of ANZAC, 1921)*

As it is pointed out above, 'mateship' is an old term that stands for fellowship being for a long time central to the bushman's *ethos*. Therefore, in agreement with McKenzie Wark (1997), we may attach 'mateship' to the basis of 'bush ethics'[3]:

> The basis of bush ethics is: Everyone looks out for his mates, and everyone who is a mate deserves a go. Becoming a mate involves an initiation, proving that you are 'one of us' -- that you share the values of mateship.

Furthermore, as we have suggested above, mateship belongs to the 'male gender' and is totally applicable to it. This special kind of relationship has a distinctive 'male' character because, as argued above, Australia was an exclusive 'world of men' historically throughout the 19th century. The

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[2] In English the word 'fellowship' would also be explaining the idea, but it may be understood in many other ways. For instance, we have in Shakespeare the phrase: "strange bedfellows" and today it is also been used academically to refer to *dons* living in Colleges.

[3] The 'bush' is normally referred to as a metonymy of the original scenery of Australia. The *bush*, like the wood in other places, has played the role of the symbol of rural, traditional life of the aboriginal Australians and the identifting metaphor of the aboriginal culture.

predominance of males in comparison with the number of females was outstanding in Australia in the 19th century. Eliane Thompson (1994:134) had presented the following examples of this demographical fact in the history of Australia:

> For example, in South Wales in 1.833 there were 44.688 men and 16.173 women; in Van Diemen's Land in 1.834 there were 22.240 men and 10.496 women. The squatting districts of New South Wales in 1841 had, according to Ward, a four to one excess of males over females (1987:397). The first census of embryonic Port Phillip in 1.838 showed 1.580 men and 431 women.

This demographic situation was undoubtedly the origin and the most relevant motivation for the promotion of an *ethos* of male companionship, which is expressed in the idea of mateship, as it is reflected in the following opinion:

> For more than 50 years Australia was almost entirely a masculine country. As late as 1840 the proportion of males to females was two to one. Not until the about 1880s was a reasonable balance struck between the sexes. It was inevitable that men should be thrown together, that they should rely on one another, that a strong accent should be placed on companionship. This was the heritage passed on to men and youths long after the population balance between the sexes had been adjusted. (Sidney Baker, The Australian Language, 1945)[4]

Males then created the idea of mateship, and they were conscious practitioners of this idea in Australian culture, as it is claimed by the authors of the book Imagining Australia: Ideas for our future (Duncan, Leigh, Madden, Tylan 2004:18): "Yet the rituals of mateship have been, historically, male-dominated-mateship has been quintessentially a relationship between Anglo-Celtic men"5.

According to all these examples of masculine domination, we could equate the concept of mateship with that of 'maleship'. However, as we will argue in the following pages, nowadays it is not only the concept exclusively applied to Australian males. In fact, many women use today the words 'mate' and 'mateship' in every day interaction, as Wierzbicka (1997:102-3) very aptly claims.

Now, in line with Wierzbicka's suggestion, we will discuss the term 'chiack' in the next section of this article. This speech act of Australian

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[4] http://www.australianbeers.com/culture/mateship.htm (05.05.2005)
[5] The authors of that seminal work on Australian culture suggest that, among the many nationalities shaping out Australian culture, it was people of Anglo-saxons and Celtic extraction who have lent it the original outstanding features, and quite significantly the language itself.

English (which reflects a value of 'mateship' in every day use of language) seems to be very popular today with the female part of Australian society.

But firstly we would like to point out is that mateship was created by males (Australian males) and it is a part of egalitarian ethos of Australian society. This society was in its great majority masculine for a long time (nowadays, the number of women in comparison with number of men is more or less equal, in the year 2006 it was 10. 348. 070 versus 10 257 418)[6].

According to this, mateship had been created throughout the years by males for males or by mates for mates. It can be seen in the analysis of 'yarn' or 'yarning': this speech act was "reserved" only for men's debates. This speech act will be discussed further down in greater depth of detail. For the time being, let us add that masculine and nationalist past of 'mateship' is clearly highlighted in the criticism of this central point of Australian culture. The main problem with mateship lies, as can be expected, in that today, as it appears, it seems to many a sexist and racist form of behaviour. For example, Eliane Thompson (1994:133), for one, holds the opinion that 'mateship' has nothing in common with the idea of egalitarianism, and that the synonymous concept of 'male companionship' represents in Australian culture as its worst (clearly pointing at sexism and racism).

> While the positive role of mateship in helping to create a powerful union movement should not be overlooked. Because mateship was exclusive, it was not egalitarian but racist, sexist, ethnocentric, conformist and oppresive. These criticisms are hardly New, but the unattractive aspects of mateship were deeply embedded and part of mateship's defining characteristics.

Above, we have exposed an outline of masculine history of mateship. According to it, we can't deny the possibility of the existence of racist or sexist behaviour between mates and 'non-mates'. However, as we have already pointed out, today's words 'mate' and 'mateship' are also being used by females, as it is reflected in Anna Wierzbicka's work on this particular topic (1997). According to her research on Australian culture and language (Wierzbicka 1987; 1991; 1997 and 1999), we may stress that there are no grounds to define mateship as an 'off-shoot" of racism and/or sexism. In this connection, we would like to bring along the following argument noted by Anna Wierzbicka herself (1997:118):

> But there is nothing inherently racist and sexist the word mate or mateship. [...] To say this is not to dispute the existence of either

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[6]http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3101.0Jun%202006?OpenDocumen t (10.12.2006)

sexism or racism in the Australian past, or to deny any links between the ethos of mateship on the one hand and sexist and racist attitudes on the other. But it is simply incorrect to call sexism and racism "defining characteristics" of mateship.

As we may notice, the idea of mateship cannot be defined strictly in terms of racisms or sexism. However, there seems to be no doubt that the concept of mateship is an all important value for men. Yet, it is doubtful that it is only a 'male thing', if we consider that the idea is deeply rooted and quite widely spread out through other strands of Australian society. This concept of sharing experience and of "being together for better or for worse" proves to be most relevant in the Australian way of life, thus playing a valuable role in "legendary history of nation" as some authors have pointed out (cf.Ernst 1990 in Wierzbicka 1997:104).

We may then jump at the conclusive belief that mateship was created by males themselves and that such idea was considered a typical form of interaction between male mates. According to this, mateship is essentially no less than an actual form of social integration. That means that sociologically and culturally speaking we are faced with a kind of friendship, for want of a better word to define it, even if a special kind of friendship. Perhaps the trait of 'knightly'[7] should be added to its character on top of the supposed 'male' character. What underlies this is that 'mateship' is, in practice, a conventional way of sharing free time and a meeting place, in Australia as in many other countries, where the tavern happens to be the best possible way of sharing the time to spare (this will be focused on further down in this article, where we will be discussing 'shout', one of the speech acts in Australian English). However, relevant as the place may seem, it actually has a secondary meaning, since the most central semantic space of the concept is occupied by the concept of 'mates'. According to this critical observation, I wish to offer some quotations as convincing examples:

> The greatest pleasure I have ever known is when my eyes meet the eyes of a mate over the top of two foaming glasses of beer. (Henry Lawson, Australian Legend, Early 20th Century)[8]

> It would take an awful lot of courage to jump on the back of a crocodile, but I suppose that's what you do for a mate. (Thursday Island Police Sergeant G. Burridge, *The Courier Mail*, August 20, 1999)

> I lost my mate. (S. Euston, on the death of a fellow miner, *The Courier Mail*, 28 May, 2000)

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[7] The meaning of 'knightly' here is that one man (mate) can be sure that his mate will at any cost stand by him both 'for ill fortune' and 'for good fortune', especially in the context of the spare time public space, the tavern. This public space is central to the idea of 'mateship'.
[8] http://www.australianbeers.com/culture/mateship.htm (05.05.2005)

So far we have claimed that 'mateship' is thought of as a most relevant and an undoubtfully egalitarian idea in Australian life style. However, we would also like to suggest that today this value is undergoing a remarkable change, which means that it no longer has the same relevance as it had in 19th century and in most of the 20th century. As we pointed out above, the idea of mateship includes egalitarian values such as solidarity and mutual obligation. In particular, mateship seems an egalitarian, shared point of view. And nowadays, as it is often openly recognized, egalitarian values such as 'mateship' and 'fairness' are losing ground in Australian society. This is highlighted in the following quotation (Duncan, Leigh, Madden, Tylan 2004:180):

> Australia, it seems, is now losing touch with those very values [*egalitarian values such as; fairness and mateship* – R.S.] that originally gave meaning to the country, and that once differentiated us from other developed nations.

Furthermore, the concept of 'mateship' is characteristically attributed to working class members, who are also males (Wierzbicka 1991; 1997). This apparently clashes with modern Australian society, the basic values of which are no doubt those of the uprising middle class, such as individualism or profitable productivity. Moreover, we can also note the pervasive and powerful influence of cultural *postmodernity* (Beilharz 2000) operating in Australia. Egalitarian values are allegedly today in recess because of the postmodern promotion of new values such as emancipation from mutual obligation (Bauman 2000) or individual choice (Taylor 1992). Postmodernism is seen as the way to break the fetters of mutual obligation, the most important for the individual being private rights and personal goals (Bauman 2000; Taylor 1992).

Mateship therefore is standing up in opposition to all those values represented by postmodernity, because of its character of egalitarian and not individualistic concept. However, the culture of Australia is changing and the meaning of mateship is also undergoing similar changes. Nowadays, Australian society is multicultural and, as mentioned above, the base of Australian society, needless to say, is as in all modern western liberal countries, predominantly middle class. As a consequence, Australian culture is becoming more of a 'meritocratic' kind, as in most developed western nations (Bauman 2000), rather than egalitarian.[9] As pointed out by McKenzie Wark in his work *The Virtual Society*, Australian society is more interested in

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[9] According to this, McKenzie WARK (1996) in his interesting article "Meritocracy in the land of mateship" has given a realistic account of today's changes in cultural current values at work within Australian multicultural society.

the idea of *fair go,* which is unmistakebly allusive to the meritocratic values rather than to 'mateship' ones. In this respect Wark suggests:

> Since the Labor government of Gough Whitlam (1972-1975), Australia has charted an unsteady course away from the culture of mateship towards a quite different idea of a fair go -- the meritocratic society. If democracy is a way of life in which entitlement is shared equally among the members of the tribes (demes), then meritocracy is one in which merit is its governing principle of allocation.

And there he continues:

> For 25 years Australia has charted an unsteady course away from the culture of mateship towards a quite different idea of a fair go -- the meritocratic society. Meritocracy means everyone competes for their fair share, and everyone gets what's coming to them according to supposedly objective measures of performance. Anyone can compete for the glittering prizes, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or sexual preference. Its a hierarchical ethos, just as opposed to inherited wealth and privilege as mateship, although there the similarity ends. Meritocracy values formal education and honours the authority of high achievers. [10]

Even though the idea of mateship is losing ground in the present meritocratic society of Australia, it still remains present and important for national identification (what's more in its original, that is, egalitarian sense) of Australian males in particular and of Australians in general. According to this, this concept of being together for better or for worse has a relevant role to play for Australian identity. This is quite apparent in the some claims forwarded by leading researchers (Ernst 1990; Wierzbicka 1997:104):

> Mateship is an important aspect both of the conceptions Australian males have of themselves, and of conception Australians generally have of their 'culture' [and] of 'Australian way of life'. It is part of the legendary history of nation, common parlance in the press and most other popular media, not infrequently, an object of sociological inquiry.

However, we would like to point out that, if we want to show how important this concept is for Australian identity, we should first tackle what this concept actually means for 'mates', that is, for people who makes use of this idea in everyday interaction[11]. Therefore, in the next section of this

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[10] McKenzie WARK (1997) The Virtual Society..............

[11] Social exchange, as COSMIDES and TOOBY (2004) suggest, appears to be an ancient, pervasive and central part of human social life. The universality of a behavioral 'phenotype' is not a *sufficient* condition for claiming that it was produced by a cognitive adaptation, but it seems to suggests that. As a behavioral phenotype, social exchange is as universal as any other human basic act. The heartbeat, for instance, is universal because the organ that

article we will highlight the idea of 'mateship' as expressed in the colloquial, everyday use of language.

2. "MATESHIP" IN THE SPEECH ACTS OF AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

So we will turn to the thorny issue of linguistic facts. Here we will tackle the question of how the idea of mateship is expressed in everyday interaction. The analysis of three speech acts of Australian English language will show us the egalitarian values such as, for example, 'solidarity' and 'congenial fellowship' (integral components of the idea of mateship) and how they are expressed in everyday use of language. We will be able to see how the idea of mateship tends to shape out everyday social interaction in today's Australian society.

Furthermore, the linguistic analysis should also show the relatively numerous expressions of values and attitudes as a result of the interaction at issue. For a start, the very use of the word 'mate' represents already a basic idea of 'mateship' in everyday interaction. According to many shared feelings within that culture, this word seems to have a unique meaning for Australian culture in general, as well as for ordinary partners in particular. As Wierzbicka herself believes (1997:103):

> Even though mateship itself is not a common everyday word in Australia, *mate* is such a word; and the meaning encoded in it reveals a unique combination of assumptions, expectations, attitudes, and values.

Further, the whole range of meanings evoked by the idea of 'mateship' cannot be restricted to the use of that word only. Rather, there is a wide vocabulary expressed in Australian English which is unique and typical of that culture. Though presumably originated in the aboriginal native languages, the fact is that the words involved are English-based and they express a kind of verbal interaction that suggests a whole rage of pragmatic effects. They are actually 'speech acts' of some kind. After a brief description of the speech acts triggered by the actual meanings of the words 'chiack', 'yarn' and 'shout', we will provide an outline of the analysis of them, as proposed by Anna Wierzbicka (1991: 165-176), with whom we agree to a great extent.

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generates it is everywhere the same. This is an explanation for the unversality of social exchange as well. Actually, the cognitive phenotype of the organ that generates it is everywhere the same. Like the heart, its development does not seem to require environmental conditions (social or otherwise) that are idiosyncratic or culturally contingent. However, social exchange may have different faces under varying social pressures, as in the case of the speech acts we are discussing here.

2.1. Chiack

Some Australian *speech acts* —such as making jokes about somebody or saying bad things about someone, that is, making jokes about the addressee (target) for sharing some fun—, can explain mateship. The term "chiack" reflects typically to the Australian form of humour and refers to the Australian form of social interaction.

The concept of *chiacking* is used for saying 'bad things' about the addressee in particular. However, it is a form of social behavior which reflects a main value of Australian culture, that is, mateship. If one performs a *chiack* it will be not for hurting the addressee's feelings, but for creating a good and congenial atmosphere between both the speaker and the hearer (between mates). According to this, *chiacking* is a popular form of enjoyment between mates. Let's see how it is presented by Wierzbicka:

> Usually, the man speaks one at time, making negative remarks about the addressee, while the other men are laughing, so that group of 'mates' constitutes both a group of participants and an audience... (Wierzbicka 1991:166):

This is reflected quite consistently in the following examples:

> My mates *chyacked* me all night. (Australaisan Printer's Keepsake, 1885)

> Their *chyacked* their sissy mates and their sisters who were forced to attend late afternoon dancing classes. (R. McKie 1977)

> The circle of frivolous youths who were yelping and *chy-acking* him. (Australian Monthly Magazine 1879)

> They're always a-poking borack an *a-chiackinn'* o' me over in the hut! (J.A. Barry 1893)

> They served out hot tea and in a few moments grumbling gave place to '*chiacking*'; criticism that a few moments ago had been edged was now good-humoured. (R.H. Knyvett 1918)

As we can see, the concept of 'chiacking' promotes a feeling of mateship among those who jointly engage in it. And as it is pointed by Wierzbicka (1991:167): "It is definitely a pleasurable activity, associated with laughter, rowdiness, noise, and good humor". Furthermore, Wierzbicka added an explanation of the concept of *chiacking* in Australian culture which, in my opinion, has a deep meaning:

> The concept of *chiacking* reflects some of the most characteristic features of Australian culture: sociability, 'mateship', enjoyment of joint activities with one's mates (especially idle activities, such as drinking), male solidarity and male togetherness, associated with displays of

'masculinity' in 'bad language', and so on. The concept of *chiacking* reflects also the Australian preference for saying 'bad things' rather than 'good things', about people in general and about the addressee in particular -not because one thinks 'bad things' about them or feels 'bad feelings' towards them, but of the cultural ideals of roughness, toughness, anti-sentimentality, anti-emotionality, and so on. (1991:168-169)

In our view, the concept of 'chiacking' shows in the best way the idea of 'mateship'. Because, it seems apparent that we can use *chiack* (even when it means uttering 'negative things' about a partner) in relation to our friends or even in our own family. Nobody feels hurt, nevertheless; quite on the contrary, everybody shares the fun triggered by that situation. Because both our mates and everybody present have understood that what was going on was 'chiacking'. In that context we feel free to speak and happy to be in good company, in comradeship together with our mates.

2.2. *Yarn*

"Yarn" is a term that can be used in Australia as either a noun or a verb, and it is typically used in the phrase *have a yarn.* This Australian concept refers to something like a chat or a talk. However, as it is pointed out by Wierzbicka (1991:170), it means something more concrete, embodying a characteristically Australian way of looking in the activity in question:

This is another important Australian speech act which reflects 'mateship'. Because have or having a 'yarn' often is seen like a form of pleasurable sociability. According to this, it can be seen like a form of spending 'free time' by mates, however as it is shown by following examples it suggest a serious need of human contact and for human interaction (Wierzbicka1991:171)

We may appreciate this in the following statements:

Some of me old mates from the bush turned up for a beer and a yarn. (A. Buzo 1986)

They asked the Buxtons to come over to their camp, and have a 'yarn'. (J. Bonwick 1870)

He used to delight in going to traveler camps to have a yarn with them. (M.A: Mcmanus 1913)

He says he doesn't really want to do any sort of interview, but it doesn't take long to see that deep down, the man likes a good yarn. (Sydney Moring Herald 1986)

According to the last example, we can see that 'yarn' generates 'good feelings' which is reflected in the common collocation 'a good yarn'. However 'a good yarn' (with someone) is normally a long one. But short yarn is also seen as enjoyable. All of these examples show the pleasurable, sociable, and unhurried character of 'yarning' we would like to provide a further example that clearly highlights this character of 'yarn'.

> The manager received me with open arms, and we 'yarned' for into the night over the old country. (A.W. Stirling 1884)

However, 'yarning' is not only pleasurable and without any serious meaning. This is pointed out by Wierzbicka (1991:171):

> But 'yarning', is not an idle activity undertaken solely for pleasure and devoid of any serious meaning.

> By 'yarning', dear reader, I don't mean mere trivial conversation, but hard, solid talk. (M. Clarke 1896)

This example above shows that 'yarning' is a verbal exchange that is very important for the partners of interaction. What is more, it has an important meaning for them. According to this, we may draw a clear distinction between 'chatting' and 'yarning', namely, we may 'chat' with anybody about trivial things, but this seems quite in contrast with 'yarn' which suggests a serious need for human contact. This difference is shown very well in Wierzbicka (1991:172):

> the concept of 'chat' implies 'chattiness', that is, a facility with words, an uninterrupted and easy verbal flow between two people; by contrast, the concept of 'yarn' implies a terseness and a background of silence, of isolation, and of real need for verbal exchange as a form scarce human contact, especially with one's friends (one could chat with one's neighbours every day but one could not hardly yarn with them every day).

According to this difference argued by Wierzbicka, we should note that the concept of 'yarn' reflects congenial fellowship. More specifically, it is unmistakably "male fellowship". Another difference between 'chat' and 'yarn' in this context is that 'yarning' or 'have a yarn' and 'chiacking' are concepts with strong male associations.
As argued by Wierzbicka (1991:172): "In Australia, men would traditionally have a beer and a yarn (with their 'mates'), whereas ladies would have a 'cuppa' (a cup of tea) and a chat". The cited concepts have undeniable male associations, since, as we have suggested in the first part of the article, 'mateship' has been an all-male value in Australia for a long time. Here the gender rift (or should we say 'the deep gulf' splitting up the

two sexes) seems quite apparent, in spite of later, universal developments of the concept of 'mate'.

The concept of 'yarn', however, reflects perhaps more clearly the idea of 'mateship'. Because one wants to 'have a yarn' with one's friend (mate) for spending some time with a pleasant activity, for being together, in sum. This is quite apparent in Wierzbicka's (1991:173) apt statement:

> Thus the concept of 'yarn' points, indirectly, to the concept of 'mateship', to the importance of shared activities, to the emphasis on human relations rather than on productivity or achievement of external goals, and to the relaxed attitude towards time prevailing in Australia.

2.3. Shout

This Australian concept reflects one of the most popularly known forms of behaviour, and more specifically, the behaviour of men in taverns. It is a typical sort of behaviour that reflects at its best tough life as led by workers. That apparently 'rowdy' performance is synonymous of 'open-mindedness' and straightfulness as basic male value in relation to other mates. Also and more importantly, "shouting" reflects the idea of generosity, and it often appears asymmetrical[12], as when a men with money 'shouts', drinks for the moneyless 'hands', or even for bystanders:

> Most peculiar thing to me as the night wore on, and yarn after yarn went around, the old bloke always shouted, and for all hands each time. (Western Champion 1894)

This rough behaviour is considered one of the most characteristically national customs in Australia. However, in the early history of Australia it had a more characteristic meaning (often, generous meaning). For example:

> Nearly every one drinks, and the first question on meeting generally is, 'are you going to shout?' i.e. stand treat. (W. Burrows 1859; in Wierzbicka (1991:172))

What is important in the process of shouting is that, it has strong connotations of reciprocity and turn-talking. Because you can 'shout' and other person will 'shout' you in return. As it is shown by following example:

> It is drink, drink, all day, and swim in it all night. Every one meet you will 'shout', and you have to 'shout' in return. (Demonax 1873; in Wierzbicka (1991: 174))

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[12] Yet, as we will see below, 'shout' proves a kind of reciprocal loud chat, an exchange with characteristic turns of speech, where challenging 'expletives' and other minor insults of all kind abound. This is also apparent in other cultures, notable Spanish culture where the tavern is the place for shouting at each other in a conversant kind of exchange.

Reciprocity and turn-talking and 'shouting' in particular, reflect Australian cultural value, that is, 'mateship'. Even when 'shout' is the idea of drinking companionship, it is still mate companionship. As it is shown by following example:

> The unbrakable custom that if four or five mates grouped together one started to buy all the drinks, but in the circle everyone had to have his turn. (H.O. Tesher 1977; in Wierzbicka ,1991:175)

What is most important about the concept of 'shouting', as pointed out by Anna Wierzbicka in the above examples, is the idea of being 'generous' with other people in the spirit of solidarity and congenial fellowship. These last related values are important for the social act of 'shout' in particular and for 'mateship' in general.

We may jump already at some general conclusions: 'chiacking', 'yarning', and 'shouting' are characteristic forms of interaction between mates, as it has been pointed out elsewhere (Wierzbicka 1991; 1997; 1999). The essential conditions of those *speech acts* stress a background where the value of mateship appears as most relevant for Australian culture. Accordingly, we may note that, one way or the other, the following values are mutually expressed among mates in every day use of language: solidarity, mutual approval, congenial fellowship, generosity and reciprocity. In our opinion, these values determine the idea of mateship in Australian culture. Furthermore, the above three concepts are relaxed forms of spending spare time off their hard work. According to this, mateship seems to embody the whole idea of time for relaxation and pleasure in good company. This coincides with the Renwick's (1980) belief that Australians prefer a style of life in which there is the calm pleasure of sharing time together with friends (especially with mates) than economic productivity[13].

> The peace of life in Australia is relatively slow (at least in comparison with urban/corporate America): people are less 'task-oriented' and 'future-oriented'; rather, they have a relaxed, 'day to day' orientation, they want to enjoy life and enjoy being with others, and are more interested in personal relationships (especially with 'mates') than in productivity.

However, according to McKenzie Wark (1996), productivity and individual goals are becoming increasingly important in contemporary Australian society. As a consequence, sharing time with mates, i.e. the idea

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[13] The pace of life in Australia is relatively slow (at least in comparison with urban/corporate America): people are less 'task-oriented' and 'future-oriented'; rather, they have a relaxed, 'day to day' orientation, they want to enjoy life and enjoy being with others, and are more interested in personal relationships (especially with 'mates') than in productivity (Renwick 1980: 176).

of mateship, can be seen as less and less important in everyday life. More specifically, the discussed concepts of 'chiacking' and 'yarning' are actually losing ground in Australian English.

We should be reminded at this stage that the main point of the description of the three speech acts, namely 'chiacking', 'yarning', and 'shouting', was to show how egalitarian values, notably solidarity and congenial fellowship, have been and still are relevant ways of behaviour in everyday interaction, and in personal relationships between Australian mates. Even if, regretfully, these speech acts seem to be rapidly disappearing from Australian speech, still they are valuable examples of the idea of 'mateship' in everyday face-to-face interaction. Accordingly, mateship is basically viewed as a relaxed and pleasurable way of sharing time in friendly relationship, the basis of this concept being a spirit of solidarity and congenial fellowship. In sum, the external conditions and situations may continuously change and evolve, but human behaviour is unchanging in its most wired-in values (in fact, evolutionary primitive instincts), such as solidarity and mateship which guarantees survival in a strange, hard environment[14]. In our view, it is this instinct in combination with the instinctive need of affection in adverse social circumstances which draws people together, especially there where the survival is put to test. Australia was in this sense a scenario where immigrant men had to surmount lots of troubles and fight for survival in an alien, unfriendly environment.

CONCLUSION

The main point we have stressed in the above pages was how relevant the idea of mateship was and still is in Australian culture, as can be traced by the everyday use of language. However, in our view, the most important aspect for an optimal understanding of the idea of mateship, is the egalitarian, co-operative character of this concept. Bearing this in mind, we have shown that this egalitarian basis of mateship consisting of such social values as: solidarity, congenial fellowship, generosity, cooperation and mutual obligations, are fundamental to understand some common speech

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[14] L COSMIDES and J. TOOBY (1992) expressed this point very aptly: "According to this view (the traditional model of 'social sciences' that ignored evolutionary principles and assumptions) , the same mechanisms are thought to govern how one acquires a language, how one learns to recognize emotional expressions, how one thinks about incest, or how one acquires ideas and attitudes about friends and reciprocity - everything but perception. This is because the mechanisms that govern reasoning, learning, and memory are assumed to operate uniformly, according to unchanging principles, regardless of the content they are operating on or the larger category or domain involved. (For this reason, they are described as *content-independent* or *domain-general*.) Such mechanisms, by definition, have no pre-existing content built-in to their procedures, they are not designed to construct certain contents more readily than others, and they have no features specialized for processing particular kinds of content".

acts specific to Austalian English. In our view, such values are still perceived through both an overall cultural and a specific linguistic analysis. Both areas of research prove difficult to wed since today's disciplinary technical interests seem to have parted. At stake though is the structure of the human mind. Over the years, the metaphor used to describe the structure of the human mind has been consistently updated, from blank slate to switchboard to general purpose computer, according to evolutionary psychology, as shown by Cosmides and Tooby (1987).

The dominant orthodoxy, as far as this view is concerned, holds that, as far as mainstream anthropology, sociology, and most areas of psychology is concerned, all of the specific content of the human mind originally derives from the socalled "outside world" - from both the natural environment and the social world - and the evolved architecture of the mind consists mainly of a small number of general-purpose mechanisms that are content-independent, and which are known under the names of "learning," "induction," "intelligence," "imitation," "rationality," "the capacity for culture," or simply "culture." According to this view, the same mechanisms are believed to govern how one acquires a language, how one learns to recognize emotional expressions, how one thinks about mateship, or how one acquires ideas and attitudes about friends and reciprocity -- everything but perception.

This is because the mechanisms that govern reasoning and learning are assumed to function uniformly, according to unchanging rules and principles, regardless of the content they are operating on or the larger category or domain involved. Actually, they are described as *content-independent* or *domain-general.* Such mechanisms, by definition, have no pre-existing content built-in to their procedures, they are not designed to construct some contents rather than others, and they have no features specialized for processing particular kinds of content. According to this familiar view - called by J. Tooby and Cosmides (1992) the *Standard Social Science Model* - the contents of human minds are primarily a free social constructions, and the social sciences are autonomous and disconnected from any evolutionary or psychological foundation.

Therefore we claim that mateship and what this concept implies is socially dependent on mechanism that are built-in in human brains, even if the shallow manifestations of it is outstanding to Australian culture. No doubt, under certain presuures, the content of that behaviour will surely undergo changes in the future of Australian culture, when shifting conditions will allow. The present paper aims at showing how we may make use of linguistic expressions -so called *speech acts* since the British philosopher J. L. Austin - to demostrate the actual meaning of the concepts concerned.

Furthermore, the changing conditions demonstrate that, even when the dominant cultural values and social norms only change superficially, the

independent linguistic contents still remain there to be variously fulfilled, as the use of 'mate' by women seems to show. Today's process of interaction agrees with the facts: the expression of cultural values and social norms in verbal communication by partners of interaction suggest that the changes are not deep and trasncendent, but shallow, as expected in every human culture where those links of affection are all but permanent. Semantics and pragmatics provide us with the suitable tools for investigating a great number of mental and verbal aspects of interaction that seem to move slowly in a given culture.

In this particular case, the theory of "speech acts" (Searle, 1969; 1980; 1999) has been applied for the highlighting of those concepts. The assumptions made by this pragmatic theory can allow us to investigate the cultural values and norms implied in everyday interaction. As pointed out by Wierzbicka (1999:212): "speech acts are a view of cultural values", and the pragmatic analysis of utterances can show us how some values are expressed in everyday use of language, i.e., in daily interaction between human beings. We have then addressed a sociological topic with undeniable spins-offs in the field of linguistics. However, the study of sociolinguistics jointly with pragmatics, such as it is exemplified in Anna Wierzbicka's works, allows us to understand how interaction, or even further, how the linguistic analysis of interaction can highlight the meaning of cultural values and social norms for the members of a particular society and culture.

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