

- S2: Yeah. He drinks all the time.
 S1: Does he?
 S2: Mm

(CANCODE)

However, it also occurs as part of the routines of offering and requesting. These speech acts have caused much debate in terms of their categorisation (see Clark and Lucy 1975; Bach and Harnish 1979; Gibbs 1979; Edmonson and House 1981; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Blum-Kulka et al. 1989; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Aijmer 1996; Márquez-Reiter 2000). Here we place them under two broad speech act categories, 'commissives' and 'directives' respectively (after Searle 1976; see Carter and McCarthy 2006: 680). Commissives are acts where the speaker commits to a course of action associated with acts such as guaranteeing, offering, inviting, promising, vowing, undertaking. Directives are acts where the speaker intends to make the hearer act in a particular way, associated with acts such as asking, challenging, commanding, daring, forbidding, insisting, instructing, permitting, requesting. In CANCODE, we found that the chunk *Are you sure?* was part of the routine of offering, particularly food. Within this routine re-offers of food are frequently made using *Are you sure?* (a distinction is sometimes made between 'ritual' and 'substantive' re-offers, see Goffman 1971; Schneider 2000, 2003; Barron 2003, 2005). For example:

(8.6)

- S1: Tea or coffee? *offer*
 S2: Ooh coffee please.
 S3: Nothing for me thank you.
 S1: **Are you sure?** *re-offer*
 S3: Yeah no thanks.

(CANCODE)

(8.7)

- S1: There's a little bit more pasta there. Would you like it Hannah? *offer*
 S2: I'm full thank you.
 S1: **Are you sure?** *re-offer 1*
 S2: Yeah.
 S1: Absolutely sure? *re-offer 2*
 S2: Honestly.

(CANCODE)

In these examples, the chunk *Are you sure?* enacts a social routine (or *ritual* within Goffman's 1971 terms; see also Schneider 2000) and has become pragmatically specialized, protecting the negative face of the hearer. It also gives the hearer a chance to opt out of refusal without loss of face:

(8.8)

- S1: **Are you sure** you don't want anything to drink Cora?
 There's a load out there. *offer*

- S2: No. I'm grand.
 S1: **Are you sure** now? *re-offer*
 S3: Yeah. [unintelligible utterance]
 S2: All right. I'll have one. *acceptance*
 S1: Okay. Fine.

(CANCODE)

We also find the chunk *Are you sure?* in the context of the speech act of requesting. Here it is also used relationally to soften the imposition of the request on the hearer even though the request has been acceded to:

(8.9)

- S1: . . . Would it be all right if we left some of our stuff here?
 S2: Oh that's fine. Yeah.
 S1: **Are you sure?**
 S2: Yeah. Yeah.

(CANCODE)

In extract (8.10), we see an extended routine where *Are you sure?* is employed twice along with *Positive?*, *Yeah?* *Is that okay?*, *Is that all right?*

(8.10)

- S1: . . . em what was I gonna say. Em am I still all right to come round?
 S2: Yeah course you are.
 S1: **Are you sure?**
 S2: Yes.
 S1: **Positive?**
 S2: Yes.
 S1: **Yeah?**
 S2: (laughs)
 S1: Yeah.
 S2: Yes.
 S1: Okay. Em cos I'm going to try and get out of here for about half eleven **is that okay?**
 S2: Mhm.
 S1: **Is that all right?**
 S2: Yeah.
 S1: **Are you sure?**
 S2: Yes.

(CANCODE)

If we compare this chunk across two other spoken corpora, representing Irish English and New Zealand English (LCIE and WSE, respectively), we find similar patterns in the Irish data, but with far more instances of its use in re-offers (33% of all occurrences of *Are you sure?* in LCIE relate to re-offers, almost all relating to food):