

Variational Pragmatics

EDITED BY

Klaus P. Schneider
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Variational Pragmatics

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Variational Pragmatics. A focus on regional varieties in pluricentric languages
Edited by Klaus P. Schneider and Anne Barron

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A focus on regional varieties
in pluricentric languages

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Klaus P. Schneider & Anne Barron

Where pragmatics and dialectology meet

Introducing variational pragmatics

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1. Introduction

Variational pragmatics can be considered a twin discipline of historical pragmatics, which was established in the mid-1990s (cf. Jucker 1995). Briefly speaking, historical pragmatics investigates pragmatic variation over time, whereas variational pragmatics investigates pragmatic variation in (geographical and social) space. Also, while historical pragmatics is conceptualized as the intersection of pragmatics with historical and diachronic linguistics, variational pragmatics is conceptualized as the interface of pragmatics with variational linguistics, i.e. with modern dialectology, as a branch of contemporary sociolinguistics (cf., e.g., Schneider 2001, Barron 2005a, Barron & Schneider 2005, Schneider & Barron 2005). As yet, this interface has been largely ignored in both variational linguistics and pragmatics.

Unlike traditional dialectology, which deals solely with regional variation, modern dialectology also deals with social variation (cf. Section 4.1. below). Hence, in examining pragmatic variation across geographical and social varieties of a language, variational pragmatics aims at determining the impact of such factors as region, social class, gender, age and ethnicity on communicative language use. As it is, however, impossible to investigate all of these factors at the same time, the present volume is focused on regional variation exclusively.

Region in variational pragmatics, in contrast to traditional dialectology, not only deals with sub-national varieties of a language, but also with languages as pluricentric entities (e.g. German German, Austrian German, Swiss German; English English, Irish English, ...; Argentinean Spanish, Peruvian Spanish, ...) (cf. also Section 4.1. below).¹ Both perspectives are included in the present volume, with papers investigating pragmatic variation within and especially across national varieties of pluricentric languages.

In the following section, the profiles of dialectology and pragmatics, the two disciplines involved in variational pragmatics, are discussed. In this context, the respective research gaps in the study of regional pragmatic variation

are identified. Then, in Section 3, a research agenda for variational pragmatics is developed, and in Section 4, the analytical framework is specified. In the final section, Section 5, the contributions to the present volume are introduced and systematic expansions of these are outlined.

2. Identifying the gap

This section addresses the question as to what extent the intersection between pragmatics and dialectology has already been explored. The discussion begins with dialectology, focusing in particular on regional variation and national varieties of English (2.1), and then turns to pragmatics. Here the discussion concentrates in particular on relevant studies from the field of empirical pragmatics which deal with interlingual and cross-cultural variation (2.2).²

2.1 Dialectology: Where is pragmatic analysis?

Dialectology is one of the oldest disciplines in linguistics, with roots in early nineteenth-century German Romanticism (cf. Chambers & Trudgill 1998, Schneider 2005b). For the better part of its long history, dialectology has been largely reduced to accentology, i.e., to the synchronic study of pronunciation – pronunciation being the most salient feature of any variety of a given language, immediately revealing the geographical origin or social affiliation of a speaker, both to the linguistically trained and untrained ear (cf., e.g., Niedzielski & Preston 2000). Overviews of national varieties of English, for instance, have dealt predominantly with pronunciation (cf., e.g., Trudgill & Hannah 2002). This also applies to recent research into sub-national varieties of English (cf., e.g., Labov et al. 2006 on regional variation in American English pronunciation). Overall, descriptions of this level of language have focused on phonetic, rather than phonological features (cf. Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978: 258), although this has changed over the past few decades (cf. Walters 1988).

Traditionally, vocabulary and grammar have also been examined within the framework of dialectology, albeit to a lesser extent. The onomasiological perspective has dominated in the study of lexical variation (cf. Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978: 258), while the study of grammar has concentrated on morphology, and more particularly on inflection, rather than on syntax (cf. Kortmann 2002). The pragmatic level, by contrast, has not been systematically investigated in the study of language varieties. Cheshire, for example, states in her survey of the literature on the differences between British English and American English:

The phonetic, phonological, lexical and syntactic differences between the two national varieties have long been recognised and described (though discourse structure and discourse strategies have yet to be researched) ... (Cheshire 1991: 13)

To this day, this research gap has not been filled, and not only with reference to the differences between British and American English. In her contrastive analysis of offering sequences in Irish English and English English, Barron observes:

Analyses of Irish English have established differences between this regional variety of English and English English on the phonological, syntactic and lexical levels of language ... Little is, however, known about possible divergences between these two varieties on the level of polite language use – a situation in keeping with the dearth of cross-cultural pragmatic research into non-standard varieties ...
(Barron 2005b: 141)

This observation holds not only for these and other national varieties of English, but also for sub-national varieties of English, and also for both national and sub-national varieties of other languages (cf. Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978, Tottie 2002, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 93–101).

In short, dialectology has focused overwhelmingly on the central levels of the language system, i.e., on pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, whereas language use in terms of communicative functions, linguistic action and interactive behaviour has been almost completely ignored. This applies to traditional dialect geography as well as to contemporary social dialectology, and also to the study of national varieties of pluricentric languages. Recently published overviews of some of the (regional) varieties of English, for instance, do not consider the pragmatic level of language at all (cf. Bauer 2002, Davies 2005, Hughes et al. 2005, Kortmann & Schneider 2005). Among the few exceptions briefly mentioning pragmatic features of the Englishes are Jenkins (2003: 28), Melchers & Shaw (2003: 27–28, 134–135), and Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2006: 93–101).

The general lack of a pragmatic perspective in the investigation of language variation is, however, a serious shortcoming. As Bamgbose (1995: 304), in a discussion about old and new varieties of English, puts it: “a mere structural approach ... is neither enlightening nor productive. In fact, it is sociolinguistically and functionally misleading.” In a similar vein, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes maintain:

Knowing a language involves more than knowing the meanings of the words and the phonological and grammatical structures of the language. In every language and dialect, there are a variety of ways to convey the same information or accomplish the same purpose, and the choice of *how* to say something may depend upon *who* is talking to *whom* under *what* social circumstances.

(Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 93, original emphasis)

One might, hence, argue that an analysis of varieties which concentrates on linguistic form alone and ignores communicative functions altogether is not only incomplete, but also inadequate.

2.2 Pragmatics: Where is regional variation?

While the previous section was focused on the lack of pragmatic analysis in dialectology, the present section addresses the question as to what extent regional variation has been examined in the field of pragmatics. Needless to say, a pragmatic analysis which ignores regional or social variation might be said to be equally incomplete and inadequate.

In the first decades of its relatively short history, pragmatics was primarily concerned with identifying universal features of verbal communication. Specifically, two central issues were the focus of much of the discussion concerning universality, namely (a) the universality of theoretical frameworks (cf., in particular, Matsumoto 1988: 423, Ide 1989, Gu 1990: 241–242, Kasper 1994: 3208 and Mao 1994: 472 for a discussion of Brown & Levinson's 1978, 1987 politeness theory), and b) the universality of speech acts and of the strategies and linguistic means available for realising speech acts. Initially, concerning part b) here, the rules regulating the realisation of speech acts were held to be universal, and the strategies employed in each language to perform indirect speech acts also universal (cf. Searle 1969, Fraser & Nolen 1981; cf. also Barron 2003: 25).

In 1985, however, Anna Wierzbicka formulated a vehement attack against any claims at universality underlying pragmatic analysis. Her seminal paper "Different cultures, different languages, different speech acts" begins as follows (Wierzbicka 1985: 145): "From the outset, studies in speech acts have suffered from an astonishing ethnocentrism and, to a considerable degree, they continue to do so." This ethnocentrism, she maintains, derives from the philosophical origin of speech act theory. She continues: "... statements mistaking Anglo-Saxon conversational conventions for 'human behaviour' in general abound also in linguistic literature" (Wierzbicka 1985: 146). In the summary of her analysis, in which she compares (Australian) English to her native Polish, Wierzbicka concludes: "Features of English which have been claimed to be due to universal principles of politeness are shown to be language-specific and culture-specific..." (1985: 145, cf. also 173). While this observation may be said to be broadly accurate, it was regrettable that Wierzbicka failed to work empirically. She postulated pragmatic differences between English and Polish on the bases of fabricated utterances and explained these differences relative to ad-hoc categories of cultural values such as "spontaneity," "affection," "tolerance," and "anti-dogmatism," the theoretical status of which is unclear (cf. Schneider 2003: 39–44 for details).

Irrespective of this methodological and theoretical flaw, Wierzbicka's paper identified serious deficits in pragmatic research and so had a huge impact on research in the field. Furthermore, her paper complemented, or even replaced, universalist views by a variationist perspective. This research gave rise to a number of empirical studies comparing speech act realisations across languages (cf. especially Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b, and Trosborg 1995 for a summary). Such studies have succeeded in shedding further light on claims of universality, relativising them to a certain degree. What has emerged are a number

of areas which appear to be universal. Such areas include the existence of inference, indirect speech act realisations (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989, 1991: 255), pragmatic routines (cf. Coulmas 1981), the ability to vary linguistic realisations based on the contextual constellation of a given situation (cf. Blum-Kulka 1991: 255 *passim*), a sensitivity for the importance of contextual variables (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987), the basic speech act categories (cf. Kasper & Schmidt 1996: 154), external and internal modification (cf. Blum-Kulka 1991: 261), the category of conventional indirectness (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989: 46–47), and also the broad range of realisation strategies for speech acts, such as apologies and requests (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989, Olshtain 1989, Kasper 1992: 211).

Areas of cross-cultural variation, on the other hand, which have been found, include the different weighting of specific contextual factors across cultures. It has been shown, for example, that social status is more important to the Japanese than to the Americans (cf. Takahashi & Beebe 1993). In addition, it seems that some speech acts (declarations) are culture-bound due to cross-cultural differences in institutional structures (cf. Kasper & Schmidt 1996: 154). Pragmalinguistic conventions have also been found to differ across cultures. Holmes & Brown (1987: 526) note, for example, that complimenting is a conventional request strategy in cultures, such as the Samoan culture, but not in most European countries. In addition, research has shown that although the inventory of strategies and of modification devices may be similar in particular cultures, the choices made from this inventory and the distribution of these in terms of relative frequency may differ (cf. Schneider 1999). Also, as Blum-Kulka (1989) shows, differences may occur in the particular linguistic form employed to realise an individual strategy shared across cultures (cf. Baron 2003: 25–26).

Problematically, however, underlying much cross-cultural pragmatic research is a basic assumption that language communities of native speakers are homogeneous wholes. Language variation is, thus, abstracted away. Such is highlighted by Gabriele Kasper in her (1995) article “*Wessen Pragmatik?*” (‘Whose pragmatics?’).³ According to Kasper (1995: 72), this idealisation operates on the macro-sociolinguistic level. It rests on the assumption that the members of the target language community act uniformly under the same contextual conditions irrespective of the fact that variation actually occurs relative to such factors as region, social class, gender, and generation (cf. Kasper 1995: 72–74). Added to this difficulty, is the fact that researchers rely overwhelmingly on informants from student populations – as a rule, the participants of their own courses. Consequently, the representivity of findings is often compromised. This, incidentally, holds not only for empirical pragmatics, but also for other empirical disciplines outside linguistics (cf. Kasper 1993: 42–43).

Ignorance of variation being the norm in empirical pragmatic research aside, there are some signs of an initial awareness of the importance of this area of research. Indeed, Wierzbicka, in sketching perspectives for follow-up research of her contrast of English and Polish notes:

Cultural norms reflected in speech acts differ not only from one language to another, but also from one regional and social variety to another. There are considerable differences between Australian English and American English, between mainstream American English and Black English, between middle class English and working class English, and so on. (Wierzbicka 1985: 146)

Also, early cross-cultural research in the form of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP) did recognise that regional variation might influence language use conventions. This was apparent in the diverse intralingual varieties of English for which data was collected, i.e., Australian English (Blum-Kulka 1989, Blum-Kulka & House 1989, Olshtain 1989, Weizman 1989), American English (Wolfson et al. 1989) and British English (House-Edmondson 1986, House & Kasper 1987). However, regrettably, these different varieties of English were never compared in the CCSARP, at least not in a public forum. In other words, although there was a clear recognition in this project of the possible influence of regional variation, this aspect of variation was not further investigated.

Regional pragmatic variation has been documented for a number of languages, but only to a very limited extent (cf. Clyne 2006 and also Grzega 2000, 2005 on the dearth of research on the pragmatics of national varieties of the pluricentric languages English and German). Márquez Reiter, one of the key researchers on regional pragmatics in Spanish, highlights this desideratum for research into pragmatic variation in Spanish, writing “Very few [studies in Hispanic pragmatics] ... have investigated pragmatic variation in Spanish” (2002: 135). Indeed, she describes the research area as “... an exciting puzzle waiting to be built upon” (2002: 148). Similarly, in a later paper, she comments:

Several studies in Hispanic pragmatics have focused on speech act realization. ... Very few, however, have investigated pragmatic variation in Spanish; that is to say, how different varieties of Spanish vary in their use of language in context ... (Márquez Reiter 2003: 167)

Nevertheless, considerably more work has been conducted on regional pragmatic variation in Spanish than in any other language.⁴

In her 2003 paper, Márquez Reiter contrasts requests in Uruguayan Spanish with requests in Peninsular Spanish. She illustrates that although both cultures reveal an identical preference for a conventionally indirect request strategy and for some aspects of external mitigation, e.g. the choice of grounders (i.e. justifications of request) and disarmers (i.e. attempts to “disarm” the addressees to prevent possible refusal) in the role-play situations investigated, variation is to be found on the level of form in the area of external mitigation, speakers of each variety revealing different preferences in the realisation of the alerters used (i.e. attention-getting devices which focus the addressee’s attention on the ensuing act). In addition, Uruguayans were found to combine alerters to a greater extent, and also to choose more explicit grounders relative to

the Spaniards. A similar picture emerges in Márquez Reiter (2002) on internal and external mitigation in request realisations, where Uruguayans are found to use a higher level of both internal and external mitigation than Peninsular Spaniards.

Muhr (1994) has conducted variational research on pragmatic differences in apologising between Austrian Standard German and German Standard German. He has shown, for example, that a hearer perspective is adopted to a larger extent in Austrian German than in German German, that Austrian apologies are more explicit and more upgrading than German German apologies, and also that face-threatening explanations are less frequent in Austrian German. Also, a recent study by Birkner & Kern (2000) revealed that West German interviewees and interviewers attempt to minimise inequality in job interviews whereas East Germans deal openly with inequality, leading East Germans to engage in a lower level of disagreement and to deny assertiveness outwardly.

A number of investigations concentrating on regional pragmatic variation in English also exist. Tottie (1991), for example, focuses on backchannels in British and American English, as indeed also does McCarthy (2002). Tottie finds the distribution of backchannel forms to differ across these varieties. McCarthy (2002: 69), however, while finding distributional and quantitative differences between British and American uses, concludes that the commonalities between these varieties outweigh any differences established, “good listenership” in both varieties demanding an interpersonal aspect on top of transactional efficiency.

These and similar empirical studies illustrate the aspects of linguistic behaviour which have been investigated to a limited extent to date but which, in our opinion, should be investigated on a considerably broader scale. What a research agenda for variational pragmatics may look like is addressed in the next section.

3. Aiming at a synthesis

The discussion in Section 2 shows that dialectology and pragmatics can, at best, be considered fiancées. However, we believe that they should get married quickly and have many healthy children. The question, then, is what could or should such a liaison look like, and what offspring can be expected. Much can be learned on this level from cross-cultural pragmatic research and the limited research conducted to date on intralingual pragmatic variation and, notably, on regional pragmatic variation.

In this section, two approaches to intralingual pragmatic variation are introduced which can be regarded as forerunners of variational pragmatics (3.1). These are a relatively old (given the short history of pragmatics) exploratory German journal article by Brigitte Schlieben-Lange & Harald Weydt (1978) and a much more recent short American book chapter by Walt Wolfram & Natalie Schilling-Estes (1998: 82–90, 2006: 93–101). These publications provide preliminary and rather sketchy, yet at the same time, considering the pre-

sent research situation, rather surprisingly detailed answers. Based on ideas developed in these two approaches and in some of the approaches discussed in Section 2.2 above, a research agenda is outlined, detailing areas of interest for variational pragmatics (3.2).

3.1 Early steps towards a research agenda

Under the programmatic title “*Für eine Pragmatisierung der Dialektologie*” (‘for a pragmaticisation of dialectology’), Schlieben-Lange & Weydt plead for an extension of the scope of dialect studies. After summarising the issues which (German) dialectology had dealt with in the course of its long history, the authors suggest an integration of speech act theoretic and conversation analytic considerations. They further point out that such a step would also expand the scope of speech act theory and correct inadequate generalisations made in pragmatics by providing a more differentiated picture of language use specific to individual language communities (cf. Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978: 260–261) – a claim very similar to Wierzbicka’s (1985) position formulated years later (cf. Section 2.2 above).

To illustrate what they have in mind, Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978: 261–264) list episodic evidence of eight pragmatic phenomena which, according to their communicative experience, vary across regional varieties of German spoken in (then West) Germany. More technically speaking, the authors identify eight (potentially) universal functional categories whose form mappings (or realisations) seem to differ across sub-national geographical varieties of the same language. These categories are labelled (rather non-specifically) as follows:

- A. Compliment responses
- B. Responses to thanks
- C. Promises
- D. Responses to questions by asking a question
- E. Reproachful quasi-monologues in place of thanks
- F. Greetings
- G. Closings
- H. Forms of group and family interactions

Case A: Interestingly, the first phenomenon listed are compliment responses, a speech act which has since received much attention in empirical studies focusing on differences between languages and between varieties of English, including sub-national varieties of American English (cf., e.g., Golato 2003 for a summary). Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978: 261) report that compliment recipients in the Rhineland gladly accept compliments, whereas Swabians tend to reject them by downgrading the expressed praise. Translated into the categories developed in more recent investigations of compliment responses, this means that Rhinelanders seem to prefer a realisation strategy termed “Expressing

gladness,” essentially an “Acceptance” superstrategy, while Swabians seem to prefer strategies such as “Disagreeing and denigrating,” a “Rejecting” superstrategy (cf. Chen 1993).⁵ Thus, the superstrategy preferred in the Rhineland follows the politeness maxim of agreement, and the superstrategy preferred in Swabia follows the maxim of modesty (cf. Leech 1983: 131–139). Both maxims are relevant in responding to compliments, but create a conflict for those who receive a compliment (cf., e.g., Pomerantz 1978): viz. “either they agree with the complimenter and thus do not observe the *modesty maxim*, or they disagree in order to minimize self-praise and thus violate the *agreement maxim*” (Schneider 1999: 164, original emphasis). Generally speaking, some cultures, for instance the U.S. American culture, seem to value agreement higher in this context, while others, for instance the Chinese culture, clearly favour modesty. Furthermore, there appears to be a third type of culture in which agreement and modesty have approximately equal weight (cf. Chen 1993: 66–67). Both the Irish culture and the German culture have been found to belong to this third type (cf. Schneider & Schneider 2000). These findings seem to support Kasper’s (1990: 199) hypothesis proposed in the context of an analysis of previous research on compliments, that there may be a supranational North Western European region of shared cultural values, at least as far as complimenting behaviour is concerned. She writes:

... even though systematic empirical evidence is lacking at this point, casual observation of complimenting in British, German and Scandinavian cultures suggests that not only is complimenting used much less frequently as a “social lubricant” (...), but also that it is more often than not associated with minimizing the force of the compliment: *You’re not a bad driver/writer/soccer player, that wasn’t the worst meal you’ve cooked* will be encountered in the same contexts where, say, American speakers would maximize the afforded praise.

(Kasper 1990: 199)

However, if Schlieben-Lange & Weydt’s (1978) impressions are accurate, then Swabian sub-culture resembles Chinese culture, while the sub-culture of the Rhineland is similar to American culture. This would point to the fact that German communicative culture is not a homogeneous whole, but rather composed of divergent regional sub-cultures. It is a future task for variational pragmatics to establish which values are preferred in other parts of Germany. A further task is to examine whether other national cultures (e.g. American, Irish and Chinese cultures) are equally heterogeneous or more homogeneous in this respect.

Case B: Responses to thanks are sometimes termed “minimizations” (cf. Edmondson 1981: 148) or, more explicitly, “thanks minimizers” (cf. Schneider 2005a). As a rule, they are performed using formulaic expressions, as, for instance, *Don’t mention it* in English or *Keine Ursache* in German. According to Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978: 261–262), the expressions available are distributed geographically in Germany, while another option is to say nothing. Schlieben-Lange & Weydt do not, however, associate any particular regions

with particular forms or options. They further observe that vocal grunts of acknowledgement are also heard in response to thanks, especially between students. The authors assume that this strategy is favoured by females and imitates American responding behaviour. Such insights suggest possible cross-cultural differences in the frequency of thanks minimizers and, indeed, it has been shown that for speakers of British English a non-verbal acknowledgement of thanks is possible (cf. Aijmer 1996: 39–40) and that the verbal expressions available in English vary across national varieties (Schneider 2005a).

Case C: The observations about the third phenomenon listed above, promising, are more particular in nature. Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978: 262) do not comment on the regional distribution of realisations available to perform promises, but on regional differences regarding the degree of sincerity or, rather, the binding force of a promise. They claim that the German equivalent of *I'll come tomorrow* (i.e. *Ich komme morgen*) is not meant literally in the Rhineland. In that part of Germany, *tomorrow* should be interpreted as 'in the (near) future,' rather than 'on the day after today,' especially when uttered by, e.g., a plumber. By contrast, a promise such as *Da können wir mal sehen*, which could be rendered in English as 'We'll see what we can do' would count as a strong commitment in Swabia, whereas in other parts of the country it would be considered a statement of vague intent. The authors point out that such divergent interpretations may cause miscommunication and conflict and indeed, one might add that while misunderstandings of this nature are taken into account in intercultural, or rather interlingual, communication, they are not typically expected, and are thus socially more dangerous, in intralingual communication. These observations result in two research questions for variational pragmatics: a) What do realizations such as, for instance, *I'll come tomorrow*, mean in different regional sub-cultures of the same language community?, and b) How are binding promises phrased in different regional sub-cultures of the same language community? Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978: 270–271) refer to these questions as being of a semasiological (form-to-function) and onomasiological (function-to-form) nature respectively.

Case D: The strategy of answering a question with a counter question seems to be typical of (again) Swabia. To non-Swabians this strategy may seem reproachful or aggressive. However, this is not the intended effect. Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978: 262–263) argue that the equivalent of *Well, haven't you read this?* (*Ha, hent Sie des net glee's?*), uttered by a local railway official in response to a stranger's inquiry about departure times, is meant as an explanation of or as an apology for the interlocutor's original question. In other words, the counter question is intended as a sign of understanding and solidarity (Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978: 271–272).

Case E: The next phenomenon on the list, reproachful quasi-monologue in place of thanking, was also encountered in the south west of Germany (in the Freiburg area) and also concerns what today would be termed "facework" (in its established politeness theoretic sense; cf. Brown & Levinson 1987). In the example provided for illustration (Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978: 263), a stranger tells a local driver that he has dropped his car keys. Instead of thank-

ing the stranger, the driver expresses annoyance, wondering how the keys could have fallen to the ground. While this utterance is not directly addressed to the stranger, it seems inappropriate, or even hostile. It is, however, intended as a self-reproach for causing inconvenience for the stranger, and thus, one could say, protects the stranger's negative face wants.

Case F: In addition to using common routines, some of which are regionally marked, Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978: 263) mention the exchange of first names uttered with question intonation (e.g., *Oskar?* – *Hannes?*) as a way of realising greetings. The authors report of noticing this realisation strategy only in the Rhineland (in the Bonn/Cologne/Düsseldorf area) and wonder what the geographical distribution of this phenomenon might be, expressing a desire to see it plotted on a map.⁶

Case G: Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978: 263) describe a specific strategy of terminating arguments or other interactional sequences which seems to be particular to Bavarian language use. This strategy consists in uttering an expression whose meaning could be glossed as 'that's the way' (*halt so*). Using this expression avoids giving a reason or an explanation for something the speaker has said or done which could be criticised by the co-interactant. At the same time, the speaker makes it clear that s/he does not wish to continue the conversation. Thus, while employing this strategy formally fulfils the obligation to take the floor, e.g. to realise the second part of an adjacency pair, it does not provide any substantial content, but instead terminates the conversation. This behaviour may be considered unacceptable outside Bavaria (cf. Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978: 273).

Case H: Finally, Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978: 263–264) maintain that in families and social groups in the U.S.A. members have equal rights as speakers, whereas in Germany they (have to) observe existing hierarchies. While this observation does not concern cross-dialectal variation in one language, it identifies an interesting area for research in variational pragmatics lying beyond the individual speech act or adjacency pair.

It must be emphasized that Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978) do not claim their list of cases to be in any way systematic or exhaustive. The examples they provide simply illustrate their overall approach and theoretical position and are based on the authors' communicative experiences; they involve episodes quoted from memory and also impressionistic observations made in only a few places and regions of Germany. As shown here, some of their suggestions have been already borne out, but systematic empirical research is needed to test their observations, to substantiate their claims, and to fill the geographical gaps. Nonetheless, this exploratory paper is extremely stimulating as it, as will be shown below, helps to identify possible variables in which (sub-)cultures may differ, and also possible variants of these variables from which (sub-)cultures select and which then represent the respective regional pragmatic norm.

To the examples listed in Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978), the German author of this introductory chapter can add an episode from his own experience. In his native state of Hesse, he would, without thinking and like everybody else, use *Auf Wiedersehen*, the Standard German parting formula, upon

leaving a shop. Later, in his early Hamburg days, when he would, again without thinking, but unlike everybody else, say *Auf Wiedersehen* in the same situation, local shop keepers and customers considered him arrogant, or at least very formal. What was expected instead was *Tschüs*, a routine considered informal in Standard German as well as in other parts of the country. Accordingly, the Hesse-born speaker switched to *Tschüs* (“When in Rome...”). This habit survived three years spent in Dublin. Having moved to Bonn, he would still use *Tschüs* when leaving a shop. Yet here, in the Rhineland, this speaker was regarded as inappropriately informal. He was expected to use *Auf Wiedersehen* instead. Our students tell us, however, that they do not consider *Tschüs* inappropriate and that they use it in the same context. This seems to indicate that generation plays a role. Upon consideration, the students add that there is a difference between a jeans shop and a gents’ outfitter, for instance, or a coffee shop with student staff and a restaurant with aproned waitresses. This demonstrates the interplay between macro-social factors (such as region and age) as well as between macro-social and micro-social factors (such as solidarity).⁷ Such issues need to be researched more systematically.

This example demonstrates at least three points. Firstly, it adds a further phenomenon to the list compiled by Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978). Again, this phenomenon concerns the use of formulaic routines. Realisations of parting, just as greetings (Case F), vary across regions of Germany. Secondly, while realisations of the same speech act have been found to differ regionally, resulting in a complementary geographical distribution of forms, the example of parting shows that the same routines may be available in different parts of a country, but used differently. Put another way, the realisation of a given speech act may vary across regions either pragmalinguistically or sociopragmatically. And thirdly, the above example indicates that real time pragmatic change takes place, resulting in (apparent time) age variation (which could also be termed intergenerational variation).

The other publication we consider to be a source of inspiration for variational pragmatics is *American English* by Walt Wolfram & Natalie Schilling-Estes (1998, 2006). It differs from Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978) in a number of ways: a) It focuses on English, more particularly on English in the U.S.A., not on German; b) it is much more recent, viz. 20 years younger; and c) it is a book, not an article. To our knowledge, it is the first textbook dealing with “Dialects and Variation” (subtitle) which integrates a pragmatic perspective, if only marginally. Wolfram & Schilling-Estes’ chapter dedicated to the language levels on which dialects can and should be analysed (2006: 64–102) includes an admittedly rather short section on “Language Use and Pragmatics” (2006: 93–101). Nevertheless, pragmatic differences are put on a par with lexical, phonological, and grammatical differences. In this section, the authors provide an overview of (some of) the few relevant studies, but also quote episodic evidence from their own experience.

Further important differences between Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978) and Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (1998, 2006) concern the notions of dialect and dialectology on the one hand and the range of pragmatic phenomena addressed

on the other hand. In contrast to Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978), Wolfram & Schilling-Estes adopt and advocate a broader and more modern definition of the term “dialect” which is not restricted to its traditional reading as “regional variety.” Accordingly, dialectology is understood as the study of language variation, investigating not only regional, but also social, ethnic, gender and other types of variation, as well as the interaction between different types of such variation (cf. also Section 4.1. below).

Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2006: 93–101) discuss a wide range of issues, involving not only speech acts, but also other micro- and macropragmatic phenomena, such as address terms, greeting and parting rituals, turn-taking, topic selection and small talk. The authors suggest that these phenomena “are particularly sensitive to variation” (2006: 95). Writing on conversational openings, they claim that: “... it is most important to recognize that greeting routines are sensitive to regional, ethnic, gender, and status differences in American society” (2006: 97). However, no details are presented to substantiate this claim. More specific information is provided about other phenomena, although, in general, empirical evidence is lacking. Concerning requests, for instance, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2006: 94) report that working class African American parents and teachers have been found to use more direct realisations than (middle class) European Americans when talking to children. Indirectness seems to be valued differently by different ethnic and social groups in school settings and also in the workplace. The authors also refer to Majorie Goodwin’s work on social talk among African American pre-adolescents (Goodwin 1980 and 1990), in which she observes gender differences in both requests and responses to requests. Further examples are discussed which illustrate the interaction between different types of language variation, involving different kinds of discourse phenomena, but in most cases it is clear that systematic observations are not yet available.

Despite all apparent differences between the two publications, the findings reported on in Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (1998, 2006) support many of the claims made in Schlieben-Lange & Weydt (1978). Among these are, for instance, that realisations for a given illocution vary across sub-cultures, and that the same realisation may have divergent uses in different sub-cultures. Moreover, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2006: 98) identify further pragmatic variables and variants. For example, they remark about small talk that it “may be an important preliminary to getting down to business in some Southern areas or among some Latino/a groups but is not considered to be necessary by speakers in some other regions”. They further observe that choice and treatment of topics vary across regional and social groups. Regarding turn-taking behaviour, they maintain that Native American Vernacular English speakers in the Southwest “are accustomed to relatively long pauses between turns”, whereas Jewish speakers in New York City – at the other end of the continuum, so to speak – “are used to conversational overlap” (2006: 99). These differing conventions may, they claim, cause communication problems (cf. Section 4.3 below).

3.2 Towards a research agenda for the study of regional pragmatic variation

Synthesising the findings of cross-cultural pragmatics (cf. Section 2.2 above) with those preliminary findings, both impressionistic and empirical (cf. Section 3.1), in the field of variational pragmatics, the following parameters of analysis can be proposed for future research in variational pragmatics (cf. also Section 4.2. below):

- 1) Variation between cultures/sub-cultures may be found on the socio-pragmatic and/or pragmalinguistic level (cf., e.g., cross-cultural research, parting anecdote, Case F on greetings in Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978).
- 2) The strategies available to realise a particular illocution are broadly similar across cultures/sub-cultures (cf., e.g., Case A on compliment responses in Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978 and Márquez Reiter 2003 on requests).
- 3) The distribution of strategies employed to realise a particular illocution may represent a source of variation. In other words, different strategies may be used with different frequencies in different regions to realise the same illocution. (cf., e.g., Case A on compliment responses in Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978 and also Schneider 1999, Schneider & Schneider 2000 on compliment responses).
- 4) The form taken by particular realisation strategies may vary across cultures/sub-cultures (cf., e.g., Case B on responses to thanks in Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978 and Schneider 2005a, and cross-cultural research).
- 5) The level of use of both internal and external modification used with a particular realisation strategy may vary across cultures/sub-cultures (cf., e.g., Márquez Reiter 2002 on requests, cf. also Muhr 1994).
- 6) Variation may be found on the level of form in the realisation of a particular type of mitigation (e.g. Márquez Reiter 2003 on requests, Muhr 1994).
- 7) Variation may be found in the frequency of use of combinations in the realisation of a particular type of mitigation (cf. Márquez Reiter 2003 on requests, and Barron 2005b on offers).
- 8) Varieties may reveal differences in their preference for a hearer-/speaker-perspective (cf. Muhr 1994).

- 9) In addition to an onomasiological perspective (i.e. function-to-form mapping), a complementary semasiological perspective (i.e. form-to-function mapping) can be adopted (cf. Cases C on promising and F on greeting in Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978).
- 10) The weight given to particular contextual factors may vary across cultures/sub-cultures (cf., e.g., cross-cultural research).
- 11) Cross-variational differences may occur not only on the level of speech act realisations but also on the level of turn-taking (cf. Cases G on terminating a conversation and H on forms of group and family interaction in Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978, cf. also Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 98–99).
- 12) Different types of language variation may interact, e.g. regional, gender and age variation (cf. parting anecdote, Case B on responses to thanking in Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978).
- 13) Pragmatic differences occurring between languages can also be observed between regional varieties of the same language (cf., e.g., Case A on compliment responses in Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978).
- 14) Pragmatic change in one language may be caused by the influence of another language (cf. the assumed impact of American culture on German culture discussed in Cases A and B, cf. Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978).

At this point, it should be emphasized that this list is not exhaustive and that the studies mentioned are merely illustrative. Further studies covering a wider range of languages are discussed in the papers of this volume, while the parameters identified here are integrated into a systematic analytical framework in Section 4 below.

4. A framework for variational pragmatics

The analytical framework adopted in variational pragmatics comprises two components: one specifying types of language variation, the other specifying levels of pragmatic analysis (cf. Schneider & Barron 2005). In variational pragmatics, five types of intralingual variation are distinguished. These are introduced in Section 4.1, which serves to contextualize the type of variation which is the focus of the present volume, viz. regional variation (cf. also Section 2.1 above). In addition, five levels of pragmatic analysis are distinguished. These are discussed in 4.2. (cf. also Section 2.2 above). Finally, in 4.3., a practical perspective is sketched.

4.1 Types of language variation

In our conception of variational pragmatics, we acknowledge the influence of five macro-social factors (also referred to as macro-sociolinguistic or sociological factors) on language use. These are region, social class, ethnicity, gender, and age. Accordingly, five types of macro-social variation are distinguished, viz. regional, socio-economic, ethnic, gender, and age variation (cf. Barron & Schneider 2006).

Originally, i.e. in the 19th and, at least, in the first half of the 20th century, dialectology, and especially dialect geography, dealt with regional variation exclusively. At that time, the term “dialect” was used in a narrow reading to designate regional varieties of a language, as a rule sub-national rural varieties. Typically, the informants were NORMs, this acronym meaning “Non-mobile Old Rural Males” (cf. Chambers & Trudgill 1998: 29). NORMs were the preferred type informants as they were considered to use the most conservative variety of a language.

With the advent of sociolinguistics in the 1960s, the focus shifted radically from regional to social variation, from NORMs to carefully stratified urban populations (hence “urban dialectology”), and from dialects (in its narrow sense) to sociolects (cf. Walters 1988, Schneider 2005b). The term “sociolect” was used to designate varieties of a language characteristic of a particular socio-economic class, especially in Labov’s work and studies conducted in the variationist (i.e. Labovian) paradigm. Increasingly, further social factors were included in the analysis, notably correlations of linguistic variables with ethnicity. Gender and age were also considered, but, at least initially, less systematically. Hence, urban dialectology (more recently referred to as “social dialectology”) examined not only sociolects, but also ethnolects, genderlects and age varieties (for which no analogous coinage in *-lect* seems to exist).⁸ Regional variation was not, however, included in the analysis in the initial stages at least. Accordingly, traditional dialect geography and sociolinguistic urban dialectology represent complementary fields of study, and for a comparatively long time these different objects of analysis were matched by different methodologies (cf., e.g., Walters 1988).

While the original distinction between the two approaches investigating different types of variation continues to exist, a synthesis can be found in modern dialectology, particularly in present-day American dialectology (cf. Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1998, 2006). In approaches which can be characterised as integrative, both regional and other types of variation are taken into account. Yet, treatments (studies and overviews) considering all five types of variation – regional, socio-economic, ethnic, gender and age variation – are rare (cf. Downes 1998: 176–232).

In modern, integrative dialectology, the term “dialect” is no longer used in its traditional narrow sense to refer to regional variation alone. Rather, it is now employed as a cover term relating to all types of language variation. In other words, “dialect” in this new broad sense is a synonym of “variety,” and the two terms can be used interchangeably. However, as “dialect” is now ambiguous,

and also bears negative connotations in everyday usage (cf., e.g., Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 2–7), “variety,” as a neutral term, is generally preferred. To further reduce confusion and misunderstanding, an additional term is needed for “dialect” in its traditional narrow sense. For this sense, i.e. “regional variety,” the term “regiolect” has been coined. This appears to be increasingly gaining in currency (cf., e.g., Britain 2005).

Regional variation in its original meaning refers specifically to sub-national varieties, i.e. to varieties of a language geographically distributed within a given country or nation state. Examples are the regional varieties of German spoken in Germany, e.g. Bavarian and Swabian. Regional variation in the present context includes, however, not only such sub-national varieties, but also national varieties of a language, such as Austrian German, Swiss German and German German, i.e. the varieties of the German language spoken in Austria, Switzerland and Germany respectively. Other pluricentric languages which encompass national varieties include English, Spanish, Arabic, French and Dutch (cf. Section 1).

Variation within pluricentric languages has not usually been dealt with in dialectology. At least, this applies to the study of variation in the English language. In fact, the study of national varieties is younger than the study of sub-national varieties and has its own history and tradition (cf. Section 2.1. above). In the present framework, we aim at integrating the analysis of national variation and at subsuming it under regional variation. In this view, regional variation is an umbrella term for different types of language variation in geographical space, including not only the national and the sub-national levels, but also the local and sub-local levels. Examples of the first two levels have been provided repeatedly in the course of this paper. An example of local variation is the study by Maria Placencia in the present volume. Placencia investigates aspects of language use in Spanish in two major locations in Ecuador. One is Quito, the capital city, the other is Manta, a large port on the coast. Finally, an example of a study focusing on sub-local variation is the famous Belfast study by James & Lesley Milroy, comparing the varieties of Hammer, Clonard and Ballymacarrett, three working-class districts in inner-city Belfast for phonological variables (cf. L. Milroy 1980, J. Milroy 1981).

To summarise, five types of language variation are distinguished in the present framework. These are regional, socio-economic, ethnic, gender and age variation. Not only socio-economic variation, but also gender, ethnic and age variation, are often referred to as types of social variation (hence “social dialectology”).⁹ These five types of language variation do not necessarily represent a closed set. Further factors which may cause systematic variation are conceivable. These include, first and foremost, education and religion. Education, which seems to be closely linked to socio-economic status and social class membership, is often not dealt with separately (cf., however, Plevoets et al. this volume). Yet, to obtain a more differentiated picture, it may be useful to distinguish between education and social class. Distinguishing between education on the one hand and present job, profession or position on the other hand may even replace social class altogether, social class being a tricky theoretical con-

cept which has often been challenged (cf., e.g., Downes 1998: 228, Ash 2002: 419–420). Religion may also be a relevant factor in, e.g., examining the linguistic situation in Northern Ireland. In the study by the Milroys, which was mentioned above (cf., e.g., J. Milroy 1981), Clonard and Hammer, the two neighbouring West Belfast districts examined, are Catholic and Protestant respectively. However, in the Belfast context, religious affiliation can be understood to be a shorthand label for much more complex identities which go well beyond spiritual communities.

All factors mentioned so far in this section are macro-social factors. In addition to these, there are micro-social factors. Micro-social factors include, in particular, power and social distance. Power, which is also referred to as “(relative) social status,” concerns the relationship between interactants in terms of dominance. Interactants may be equal or unequal. In other words, a relationship can be symmetrical or asymmetrical. In the latter case, a current speaker may be superior or inferior to his or her addressee, either constellation being reflected in linguistic choices. Social distance, on the other hand, concerns the degree to which interactants know each other. Social distance ranges from stranger – stranger constellations at one end of the continuum to constellations between close friends, family members and lovers at the other end of the scale, with neighbours, colleagues and acquaintances in between. These micro-social factors, which do not relate to individual speakers, but to speaker constellations, have been investigated especially in contrastive and cross-cultural pragmatics (cf., e.g., Brown & Levinson 1987: 74–83, Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a: 15). By contrast, in variationist research, i.e. in the Labovian paradigm of sociolinguistics, style has been examined. Style (or register), which concerns the level of formality chosen by a speaker for a particular task or context, is also a micro-social factor. Micro-social factors may change from situation to situation. Hence, micro-social variation is sometimes referred to as “situational variation.” Macro-social factors, on the other hand, remain relatively stable across situations and contexts.

Currently, variational pragmatics concentrates primarily on macro-social variation. It aims at determining the influence of each macro-social factor on language use individually. Furthermore, as these factors seem to interact in their impact on language use, variational pragmatics seeks to establish possible hierarchical relationships between these factors and to identify patterns of factor interaction. In this regard, typical research questions include, e.g., the following: “How does an old female New Zealander behave linguistically? Like all New Zealanders? Like all old New Zealanders, irrespective of sex or gender? Like all female native speakers of English?” At a later stage, it will be necessary to systematically include micro-social variation and to investigate the interaction between micro-social and macro-social factors (cf. Schneider 2007).

As mentioned above, in the present volume, regional variation, and, more particularly, variation across national varieties of pluricentric languages, has been singled out to exemplify the dimensions of intralingual pragmatic variation. Presently, as variational pragmatics is still in its infancy, it seems wise to

focus on only one macro-social factor at a time. This may be said to be a necessary prerequisite for studying the interaction between social factors.

4.2 Levels of pragmatic analysis

According to Leech (1983: 4), the nature of language can only be understood when both grammar and pragmatics are studied, “and the interaction between them.” In this context, Leech conceptualises grammar and pragmatics as “complementary domains within linguistics.” His definitions of the two terms are reminiscent of the Saussurean concepts “*langue*” and “*parole*.” “Grammar” is defined as “the abstract formal system of language”, and “pragmatics” as “the principles of language use” (Leech 1983: 4). So, here, grammar is not reduced to morphosyntax, or equated with a general theory of language. Rather, Leech uses “grammar” as an umbrella term for the structural levels of the language system. In particular, Leech (1983: 12–13) distinguishes three such levels, viz. phonology, syntax and semantics, and he points out “that the grammar interacts with pragmatics via semantics” (Leech 1983: 12).

Phonology, syntax and semantics are well-established levels of analysis, and further levels could easily be added to this list, most notably morphology, and also lexicology. By contrast, equally well-established levels do not seem to exist within pragmatics. This is due to the many traditions of this field. Pragmatics has been shaped by numerous approaches, notably from outside linguistics, including first and foremost philosophical, sociological, and anthropological approaches. Pragmatics may deal with (contextual) meanings, (communicative) functions, or (social) actions. Hence, while many studies concentrate on local phenomena, such as discourse markers, speech acts, or turns-at-talk, others examine sequential and global phenomena, such as discourse topics, interactional phases, or entire speech events. Pragmatics, furthermore, is sometimes reduced to philosophical questions or narrowly focused on the semantics-pragmatics interface (cf., e.g., Horn & Ward 2006). On the other hand, it may also be seen to encompass a wide and heterogeneous field overlapping with several areas inside and outside linguistics (cf., e.g., Mey 1998).

In the present framework, five levels of pragmatic analysis are distinguished. These are the formal, actional, interactional, topic and organisational level. These distinctions are based on an integrative model of spoken discourse which incorporates approaches to pragmatics from different disciplines, including speech act theory, discourse analysis and conversation analysis. This model was first introduced in Schneider (1988) and further developed for the purposes of variational pragmatics in Schneider (2001) and Schneider & Barron (2005) (cf. Schiffrin 1987: 21–29 for a similar model). Below, the five levels identified in this model are briefly commented on; illustrative examples relate to inner circle varieties of English.

a) *Formal level*

This level concerns the analysis of linguistic forms, such as discourse markers, hedges, and upgraders. An analysis which takes such forms as its starting point is aimed at determining the communicative functions these forms may have in discourse. Thus, analyses of this type can be characterised as form-to-function mappings. Work illustrating this approach include the following studies on Irish English: Amador Moreno (2005), in which the functions of *arrah* and *sure* are examined, Farr & O’Keeffe (2002), in which *would* as a hedging device is investigated, and Kallen (2005), in which gambits such as *I mean* and *you know* are compared to British English choices (cf. also Tottie 2002: 187–188).

b) *Actional level*

On this level, the focus is on speech acts. In particular, speech act realisation and speech act modification are studied in terms of directness and politeness, considering both the “conventions of means” (i.e. speaker strategies) and the “conventions of form” (i.e. linguistic devices) (cf. Clark 1979 on these terms). Here, the starting point for the analysis is the illocutionary act, i.e. the communicative function of an utterance reflecting the speaker’s intention. Thus, analyses of this type can be characterised as function-to-form mappings. In other words, research on the formal and actional levels represent complementary pragmatic perspectives. Arguably, it is on these two levels, focused on mapping form to function and function to form respectively, that the interaction between pragmatics and grammar in Leech’s sense (Leech 1983: 4), i.e. the interplay between language use and the language system, can best be studied.

Work contrasting national varieties of English on the actional level is illustrated by, e.g., Schneider (1999), in which compliment responses in American English and Irish English are compared, Barron (2005b), in which offers are examined in Irish English and English English, and Schneider (2005a), in which responses to thanks are analysed in Irish English, English English and American English (cf. also Tottie 2002: 191–194, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 94–95).

c) *Interactional level*

Here, the focus of analysis is on sequential patterns. Questions answered on this level include, for instance, how speech acts combine into such larger units of discourse as, e.g., adjacency pairs, interchanges, interactional exchanges or phases (e.g. conversational openings and closings). An example of empirical work on this level is Barron (2005b) on offer negotiation in Irish English and English English (cf. also Tottie 2002: 181–182, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 97–98).

d) *Topic level*

The topic level is the content level. The analysis is, however, not primarily focused on the proposition of individual speech acts (e.g. compliments on appearance versus compliments on possessions, or requests for verbal goods versus requests for non-verbal goods). Rather, the analysis is focused on topics as macro-propositions as a discourse-structuring device in the sense of, e.g., conversational topics. Typical questions answered on this level are: How are topics selected and addressed, how are they developed and abandoned? Which topics are considered suitable for small talk, which are taboo topics? Studies on this discourse level include, e.g., Holmes (1995) on gender differences regarding the topics of compliments and apologies, Schneider (1987) on topic selection in (British) small talk (cf. also Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 98).

e) *Organisational level*

On this level, the analysis deals with turn-taking phenomena, such as pauses, overlaps, interruptions, and backchannelling. Issues addressed concern, e.g., to what extent inter-turn silence or overlaps are expected or tolerated, and how backchannelling is managed. McCarthy (2002), contrasting response tokens in British and American conversations, is a case in point (cf. also Tottie 2002: 185–187, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 98–99).

While most studies listed here for illustrative purposes compare two or more national varieties of English (or sub-national varieties of American English in the case of Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1998, 2006), some studies focus exclusively on individual varieties (Schneider 1987, Farr & O’Keeffe 2002). At this point, it is worth emphasizing that variational pragmatics is, however, contrastive by definition. Variety-specific pragmatic features, including variety-exclusive features as well as characteristic distributions of variety-preferential features, can only be established by comparing two or more varieties of the same language (cf., e.g., Barron 2005b: 168, also Schegloff & Sacks 1973: 291).

4.3 Why do variational pragmatics? A practical perspective

Investigating the impact of social factors on language use is not a purely academic exercise. Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2006: 101) highlight the relevance for society of examining intralingual pragmatic variation and emphasize that “... the social significance of language-use differences should not be underestimated.” While in the case of intercultural communication, i.e., communication between speakers of different native languages (Knapp & Knapp-Potthoff 1987: 8), inappropriate discourse conventions may be excused, there is no non-

native speaker bonus in intralingual communication (cf. Faerch & Kasper 1987: 125; House & Kasper 2000: 114 on differing expectations which native speakers have of non-native speakers). Rather, pragmatic variation is not usually expected among native speakers of the same language and may, therefore, lead to more negative evaluations, communication breakdown and conflict. As Wolfram & Schilling-Estes comment:

Certainly, there are many shared language-use conventions across varieties of American English, but there are also important differences among groups that can lead to significant misunderstandings across regional and social dialects. ... In fact, some of the major areas of social dissonance and conflict among different social and ethnic groups in American society are directly tied to people's failure to understand that different groups have different language-use conventions which may have nothing to do with the intentions that underlie particular language uses.

(Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 100–101)

In this sense, findings from variational pragmatics are immediately relevant to real life and have practical applications in everyday communication – not only in America.

5. The present volume: Regional pragmatic variation in pluricentric languages

The present volume serves to demonstrate how variational pragmatics works by concentrating on regional variation. Moreover, as the contributions to this volume analyse pragmatic variation in and across national varieties of several pluricentric languages, they help in determining language-specific and language-independent pragmatic variables. In the following, the structure of the volume is outlined and an overview of the papers given (5.1). This article closes with perspectives for systematic expansions of the topics addressed (5.2).

5.1 The papers: Languages, varieties, pragmatic level and data

This volume contains ten papers authored by thirteen scholars based in six countries, viz. Ireland, England, the United States, Belgium, Austria and Germany. Three of the ten papers – viz. the papers by O'Keeffe & Adolphs, Placencia, and Wargha – were contributions to the panel "Variational pragmatics: Cross-cultural approaches," which was organised by the editors of the present volume at the 9th International Pragmatics Conference, held in Riva, Italy, in July 2005. This panel served to explicitly and officially establish variational pragmatics as a new field of study.

In the contributions to this volume, five languages are covered. These are English, Dutch, German, Spanish and French. The national varieties which are analysed and contrasted are British English/English English, Irish English,

American English and New Zealand English, Netherlandic Dutch and Belgian Dutch, German German and Austrian German, Venezuelan Spanish and Argentinean Spanish, and French French and Canadian French (Quebecois). The only exception is the paper by Placencia, in which two sub-national varieties of Ecuadorian Spanish are examined (cf. Section 4.1 above).

The ten papers in this volume are grouped together by language and appear in the table of contents under three headings. These are, in order of appearance, “English,” “Dutch and German,” and “Spanish and French.” The following table lists the papers by author(s) as they appear, and specifies the language they deal with and the varieties of this language which they focus on. It also indicates the focus of analysis, i.e. the pragmatic phenomena examined, and the data type employed (cf. Table 1 below).

Table 1. List of papers in order of appearance, specifying author(s), language, language varieties, focus of analysis, and data type used

Author(s)	Language	Varieties	Focus	Data
Barron	English	Irish English & English English	Requests	Experimental
O’Keeffe & Adolphs	English	Irish English & British English	Response tokens	Natural
Schneider	English	Irish English, English English & American English	Small talk	Experimental
Jautz	English	British English & New Zealand English	Thanking	Natural
Plevoets et al.	Dutch	Netherlandic Dutch & Belgian Dutch	T/V pronouns	Natural
Muhr	German	German German & Austrian German	Requests & apologies	Experimental
Warga	German	German German & Austrian German	Requests	Experimental
García	Spanish	Venezuelan Spanish & Argentinean Spanish	Invitations	Experimental
Placencia	Spanish	Ecuadorian Spanish: two regional varieties	Requests	Natural
Schölmberger	French	French French & Canadian French	Apologies	Experimental

While the papers deal with a wide range of different pragmatic phenomena, there is a clear emphasis on the actional level. Individual speech acts, namely requests (four papers), apologies (two papers), invitations and thanking (one paper each), are studied in seven of the ten papers. Two of the three remaining papers examine the formal level. They deal with response tokens (such as *Yeah*, *Oh my God*, or *Absolutely*) and with the distribution of T/V pronouns respectively. Finally, the third remaining paper focuses on the interactional

level by examining sequencing in small talk. Aspects of topic selection are also addressed in this paper.

All papers in this volume report on empirical work. Four of the ten studies are based on naturally-occurring discourse, the remaining six on experimental data. The natural data are obtained either from already existing large electronic corpora, such as the British National Corpus and the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English, or from recordings made by the respective author(s). All experimental data were collected by employing a production questionnaire or role-plays. In four of the five cases, a well-known discourse completion task (DCT) format was used, while in the remaining case an open discourse completion task, also known as a discourse production task, was used.

5.2 Perspectives for future research in regional pragmatic variation

The present volume highlights some possible approaches to variational pragmatics, and thematises a wide range of issues of relevance. There is, however, no doubt that the empirical work reported on in this volume only cuts the tip of the iceberg as far as research on pragmatic variation across national varieties in pluricentric languages is concerned and, more generally, research in variational pragmatics.

Systematic extensions of the studies presented here include the following:

- 1) To study the same phenomena in the same varieties of the same language by using a different data type (e.g., to use naturally-occurring discourse where experimental data were used)
- 2) To study the same phenomena examined across national varieties of one language across national varieties of another language (e.g., to analyse small talk across national varieties of Dutch or Spanish, or the distribution of T/V pronouns across national varieties of French or German)
- 3) To study the same phenomena examined across some national varieties of a language across other national varieties of the same language (e.g., to analyse thanking in Australian and South African English, or invitations in Peruvian and Uruguayan Spanish)
- 4) To study the same phenomena examined across national varieties of one language across sub-national varieties, both regional and social, of the same language (e.g. response tokens across gender or age varieties of Irish English)

- 5) To examine the influence of macro-social factors other than region (e.g. the impact of gender and ethnicity on language use in American English)
- 6) To examine the interaction of macro-social and micro-social factors (e.g. gender and social distance in Australian English conversation)
- 7) To cover further phenomena from all levels of pragmatic analysis (e.g. further discourse markers, further speech acts, further sequential patterns)
- 8) To combine findings on different phenomena to establish general norms or conventions for each variety (e.g. the degree of indirectness as a general feature of a particular variety)
- 9) To include further pluricentric languages in the analysis of pragmatic variation across national varieties of one language (e.g. Portuguese, Arabic or Swahili)
- 10) To include further languages, especially non-Indo-European languages, in the analysis of pragmatic variation across sub-national varieties of one language (e.g., Finnish, Japanese or Chinese)

It is hoped that some of these areas will be explored in the near future within the framework of variational pragmatics.

Notes

1. Pluricentricity as it is used in the present context refers to national standard varieties of a language. Such varieties have a certain status as a result of serving a national-binding function and serving a means of identification in a particular country. The reader is referred to Clyne (1992) and also Clyne (1995) for a discussion of this concept of pluricentricity. Cf. also Schrodt (1997) for an overview of this and other less accepted understandings of this term.

2. The distinction made here between “dialectology” (2.1) and “pragmatics” (2.2) might on one level be considered artificial since dialectological analyses which have focused on the pragmatic level and pragmatic analyses which have investigated regional and social variation essentially both investigate the same phenomena. Nevertheless, the analytical distinction made here between dialectology and pragmatics may be said to be useful and justified in the present context since pragmatics and dialectology are two rather distinct disciplines, each with their own traditions. Hence, it is useful to categorise the research done on intralingual regional pragmatic variation according to the researchers’ backgrounds.

3. This translation, as all others in this paper, is the responsibility of the authors unless otherwise indicated.

4. Garcia (this volume) and Placencia (this volume) provide detailed references on regional pragmatic variation in Spanish.

5. The reader is referred to, e.g., Herbert (1989) and Holmes (1986, 1995), for alternative, but similar, classifications.
6. Charting regional differences in a linguistic atlas would be one method of displaying results from empirical investigations in variational pragmatics. This method could be regarded as an extension of the onomasiological approach in traditional dialect geography (cf., e.g., Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 134–166) in which the aim would not be to establish and chart regional expressions for a concept, but rather regional realisations of a communicative function. Incidentally, this type of function-to-form mapping, as well as the complementary form-to-function mapping, which can be considered an extension of a semasiological approach (cf. the discussion of Case C above), are the two major perspectives pursued in diachronic pragmatics (cf. Jacobs & Jucker 1995: 13).
7. The distinction between macro-social and micro-social factors is elaborated on in Section 4.1. below.
8. Occasionally, the term “gerontolect” is used (cf., e.g., Nuessel 1996). However, this term refers to the variety spoken by old speakers exclusively, thus focusing on only one age group. A general term parallel to, e.g., genderlect or ethnolect is still lacking.
9. Constructivists approach variation in a different manner. They disregard the fact that social identities are not written sociolinguistically on a tabular rasa in a socio-historical vacuum and thus, in contrast to the approach taken here and indeed also in variational sociolinguistics, they do not see social structures as having a reality outside of local actions and practices. Rather, constructivists believe that social class, gender, etc. are things that individuals do rather than things that they are or have and thus argue that, depending on the interaction, an individual may be more or less female, more or less middle-class, etc. in a particular context (cf. Holmes & Meyerhoff 1999: 180, Coupland 2001: 2; cf. also Barron forthcoming).

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PART I

English

The structure of requests in Irish English and English English

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1. Introduction

Ireland and England, neighbours on the western edge of Europe, share a common language and enjoy extensive contact on a business, cultural and social level. Not surprisingly, therefore, they are frequently grouped together and seen as one broadly similar culture. Yet, as Keating & Martin (2007: 367), writing on leadership and culture, note: "... the inhabitants of these countries would recognize that there are fundamental differences in their outlook on life and the conduct of business." Indeed, recent research has highlighted a number of key cultural values on which Ireland and England do differ (cf. Ashkanasy et al. 2002, Keating & Martin 2007). The question posed in the present paper is whether, given these cultural differences, and given the close ties between language and culture (cf., e.g., Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a), Irish English differs from English English on the level of language use.

In contrast to the comparatively plentiful research on Irish English relative to Standard British English on the phonological, syntactic and lexical levels of language (cf. Hickey 2005 for an overview), research on the level of polite language in (inter)action in Irish English, or indeed between the varieties of English spoken in Ireland and Britain (or England – the focus of this study), is only very recent, and consequently, rather limited (cf. Barron & Schneider 2005a). Indeed, this situation is in keeping with the overall dearth of intralingual pragmatic research on the effect of macro-social factors, such as region, ethnic background, age, socio-economic status and gender, on intralingual pragmatic conventions (cf. Schneider 2001, Barron 2005a, Barron & Schneider 2005a: 12, Schneider & Barron 2005, this volume). The unhappy consequence of this is that Irish English is still generally believed to be broadly similar to English English on the level of language use (cf., e.g., Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 101 on the general lack of awareness of differences on the level of language use within one society). Indeed, this belief may be particularly detrimental for communication given that different usage norms are frequently interpreted as instances of impoliteness by the interactants involved. They may,

thus, lead to frequent breakdowns in communication, conflict and also the establishment of negative stereotypes.¹

This paper takes the case of requests as an instance of language use in Irish English (IrE) and English English (EngE).² As such, the study is situated in the field of variational pragmatics (VP), an area of research dedicated to systematically investigating the effect of macro-social pragmatic variation on language in (inter)action (cf. Schneider & Barron this volume, cf. also Barron 2005a, Schneider & Barron 2005). The analysis focuses on the head act strategies employed and on the amount and types of internal and external modification found in English English and Irish English requests. The data for the study were elicited from 27 Irish and 27 English students using a production questionnaire. Findings are interpreted against the background of linguistic, ethnographic and commerce-focused research on communication in these neighbouring national cultures, and also within the framework of variational pragmatics.

The paper begins with a brief overview of research findings on cultural differences between England and Ireland. Following this, the nature of requests is outlined and an overview is given of previous research on requesting in Irish English and English English. The methodology underlying the present study is then introduced and the findings presented and discussed.

2. Language and culture in Irish English and English English

2.1 Culture and communication in Ireland and England

Hofstede (1980, 1994), in a study on attitudes and behavioural patterns of IBM employees in different countries, categorises Ireland in the same way as Britain on all four dimensions of culture identified (i.e. on the levels of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity and individualism/collectivism). However, this categorisation has been suggested to be rather inaccurate. Scharf & Mac Mathúna (1998: 146) criticise, for instance, that Hofstede's study was rather general in form. They note that Hofstede, in his characterisation of Ireland as an individualist society, similar to Britain, did not, for instance, take into account the core status of co-operation and interpersonal relationships in Ireland (1998: 152). Related to this criticism is the rather high level of indirect communication which Scharf & Mac Mathúna (1998: 161) suggest to characterise Irish English, a characterisation which itself contradicts Hofstede's categorisation of Ireland as an individualist rather than a collectivist culture (cf. below). Finally, Hofstede's findings are now rather outdated.

A more recent study of values across cultures is the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) research project (cf. Martin et al. 1999, House et al. 2002, Javidan & House 2002). This is an empirically-based, interdisciplinary project designed to examine culture and leadership in 62 nations on the basis of nine dimensions of culture.³ Multiple datasets, including questionnaires, focus groups, ethnographic, semi-structured, qualitative

interviews, reviews of measures of culture, such as stamps, banknotes and names given to public buildings, are used. Based on these data, an “as it is” and “as it should be” score is established for each of the nine criteria for each country. The “as it is” score reflects societal practices, the “as it should be” score, on the other hand, reflects either societal change or the “ideal society” without any movement towards change (cf. Szabo et al. 2002: 64).

Ashkanasy et al. (2002) compare Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa (White sample) and the United States of America on all nine dimensions of culture and leadership within the GLOBE project. They note a high score on power distance, “the degree to which members of an organization or society expect and agree that power should be unequally shared” (House et al. 2002: 5–6), to be specific to this Anglo-cluster. In other words, there is a high emphasis on and acceptance of authority. Indeed, England and Ireland were found to share the same high level of power distance. Individuals in both cultures wished, however, that levels of power distance would decrease (cf. Ashkanasy et al. 2002: 33–35). Also, Ireland, like England, was shown to have a low level of uncertainty avoidance, uncertainty avoidance being “the extent to which members of an organization or society strive to avoid uncertainty by reliance on social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices to alleviate the unpredictability of future events” (House et al. 2002: 6; cf. Ashkanasy et al. 2002: 35, Keating & Martin 2007). This low score signifies a dislike of formal structures, rules and regulations. In addition, there was a desire for uncertainty avoidance to decrease even further in the future in both cultures.

Cultural differences were also found between Ireland and England. These were on the level of family collectivism (also termed in-group collectivism or collectivism II), institutional collectivism (also termed societal collectivism or collectivism I), the level of humane orientation and also, particularly interesting for the present study, the degree of assertiveness. Relative to England, and indeed also to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa (White sample) and the United States of America, Ireland scored particularly high on family collectivism, a newly introduced GLOBE criterion (cf. endnote 3) which signifies “the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their organizations or families” (House et al. 2002: 5; cf. Ashkanasy et al. 2002: 34, 37). Similarly, the level of institutional collectivism, the criterion corresponding to Hofstede’s collectivism/individualism criterion, defined as “the degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action” (House et al. 2002: 5), was found to be somewhat higher than average in Ireland relative to the other countries in the Anglo-cluster. The value for Ireland was also higher than that for England (cf. Ashkanasy et al. 2002: 34). In other words, Ireland was categorised as a more highly collectivist culture in contrast with Hofstede’s categorisation (cf. Keating & Martin 2007). Indeed, these classifications reflect Scharf & Mac Mathúna’s (1998: 152–153) comment mentioned above on the importance of co-operation and collectivism in Ireland. The GLOBE project found that individuals in both Ireland and England wish for a higher level of family collectivism in the future but only the Irish wish for

a lower level of institutional collectivism. Interestingly, the communication patterns characteristic of individualist and collectivist cultures have been found to differ, with collectivist cultures shown to be generally more indirect due to a greater desire to save face, and individualist cultures more direct, being more concerned with self expression (cf. Gelfand et al. 2004: 452). Fukushima (2000) also finds that language conventions are more similar from situation to situation in an individualistic society. In collectivist societies, in contrast, situational factors, such as degree of imposition, social dominance and social distance, have a greater influence on the level of directness chosen – i.e. there is more of a differentiation between in-group and out-group members. Consequently, she notes that collectivist cultures should not be associated with indirectness alone. Rather, the range of directness and indirectness is greater in collectivist societies due to the greater attention paid to context. Finally, collectivist cultures are generally high context cultures in which implicit knowledge plays an important role in communication in Hall's (1976) terms (cf. Hofstede 1994, Triandis 1994).

Ireland also revealed a higher level of humane orientation relative to all of the countries in the Anglo-cluster, and in particular relative to England and South Africa (cf. Ashkanasy et al. 2002: 34, 37). A humane orientation relates to “the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others” (House et al. 2002: 6). Individuals in both Ireland and England would like to see the level of humanism increasing.

Assertiveness refers to “the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships” (cf. House et al. 2002: 5–6). Ireland scored approximately mid-way on the criterion assertiveness, meaning that the Irish people are not particularly dominant in interpersonal relationships. They tend not to deal with issues head-on. Interestingly, Ireland scored second lowest on this criterion after New Zealand among the Anglo-cluster countries investigated by Ashkanasy et al. (2002), and below average relative to the cluster as a whole. Interestingly, in contrast to English individuals who were quite happy with the level of assertiveness in their culture, Irish individuals wished for a further decrease in assertiveness. This low degree of assertiveness characteristic of Irish society is reminiscent of that of a high context culture (cf. Den Hartog 2004: 403–404, Keating & Martin 2007). Scharf & Mac Mathúna (1998: 161) also see Ireland as a high context culture due to this tendency to communicate indirectly. In their opinion, modals and tag clauses are employed frequently in Ireland, a factor which increases the level of indirectness. They note, for instance, that:

The negative indirect request is a typical example of the manner in which politeness formulae are used. Rather than saying “could you confirm this in writing, please?”, the structure “you couldn't confirm this in writing, could you?” is commonplace. Direct requests are less common: the addressee will know from the context what is being requested. (Scharf & Mac Mathúna 1998: 161)

Interestingly, Keating & Martin (2007), writing from an Irish perspective, also mention that a high level of indirectness may cause difficulties in communication with “our closest neighbours within the British Isles.” Also, a number of other studies highlight a high degree of indirectness as characteristic of Irish English. Farr & O’Keeffe (2002), for instance, is a contrastive study which shows a higher occurrence of downtoning *would* in Irish English compared to English English or American English in situations where the propositional content is not in dispute. In addition, Kallen (2005b) found Irish speakers of English to prefer downgraders (*I’d say, you know*) in expressing an attitude towards a proposition whereas British speakers preferred upgraders (*I say, I mean*). In an earlier paper on offers in Irish English and English English, I also found a relatively higher use of external modification in Irish English (cf. Barron 2005b). However, in this paper I pointed out that Irish English should not be associated only with indirectness alone particularly since this analysis of offers revealed Irish English speakers to sometimes employ direct offers and a number of conventions of means of a more direct force than those used by their English counterparts (e.g., predication of future act) (cf. Barron 2005b: 168). Indeed, Connington (2005), in an analysis of requests, offers and giving instructions in Irish English reinforces this point, showing that in particular contexts “Irish English not only tolerates forcefulness, it expects it, particularly if offers are to be perceived as sincere” (Connington 2005: 60) (cf. below on the analysis of requests in this study). This desire for directness in some contexts and indirectness in others is indeed reminiscent of Fukushima’s (2000) finding concerning in-groups and out-groups mentioned above.

Other studies which highlight a high level of indirectness to characterise Irish English in the absence of contrasts with other varieties of English include studies in the area of international business communication. Martin (2001), for instance, analyses twelve simulated intracultural and intercultural sales negotiations between dyads of experienced Irish and German buyers and sellers, and finds Irish negotiators to be most concerned with building solidarity and emphasizing interpersonal relations (cf. Martin 2001: 361–362). Martin (2005), working on the same materials, highlights the fact that the Irish intracultural data analysed are characterised by a tendency towards concealment and non-commitment and also by a general lack of blunt demands, counter demands and confrontational strategies. A similar study by Zilles (2003), also concentrating on language use in negotiations in Irish English and German, reports comparable findings. In addition, research in the area of International Human Resource Management provides some relevant meta-pragmatic findings on language use in Irish English. Leiba-O’Sullivan (2002: 243–247), for instance, in a report of the experiences of Canadian expatriates in Ireland, describes cross-cultural differences in procedural clarity. Also, O’Reilly (2003: 204) who looks at German expatriates’ experiences of life in Ireland, comments that “... the majority of expatriates (11/12) [i.e., 11 out of 12 informants] felt that relative to a familiar German communication style, the Irish express the verbal message more indirectly.”

Also of relevance in the present context is Kallen's (2005a) suggestion that hospitality, reciprocity and silence (in the sense of indirectness) are salient and distinctive elements in Irish politeness. Specifically, Kallen sees these elements as contradicting poles of politeness in Ireland. He sees the tendency towards silence as favouring off record and negative politeness strategies in Brown & Levinson's (1978, 1987) terms, while hospitality and reciprocity generally favour positive politeness. Hospitality refers here to the sharing of goods, being cheerful and friendly, having time to chat and refraining from any hostility. Reciprocity, on the other hand, concerns acknowledging the listener's point of view and his/her positive face needs and at least neutralising any potential for disagreement. Ethnographic data and the ICE-Ireland corpus provide preliminary evidence for Kallen's (2005a) proposal.

Finally, Wierzbicka's (1985, 1991, 2003) claim that the English language tends to afford a high status to individual autonomy is also relevant in the present context. This assertion would seem to be valid for both Irish English and English English since Wierzbicka is of the opinion that despite the fact that "cultural norms reflected in speech acts differ not only from one language to another, but also from one regional and social variety to another," "there is also a remarkable amount of uniformity within English ..." (Wierzbicka 1991: 26, 2003: 26).

2.2 Requests in Irish English and English English

Requests can be described in terms of the felicity conditions outlined by Searle (1969: 66) (cf. Table 1).

Table 1. Felicity conditions for requests

	Directives (Request)
Preparatory condition	(a) H is able to perform x. S believes H is able to do x. (b) It is not obvious that H would do x without being asked.
Sincerity condition	S wants H to do x.
Propositional content condition	S predicates a future act x of H.
Essential condition	Counts as an attempt by S to get H to do x.

As outlined here, requests are illocutions which represent attempts by a speaker to get the hearer to do an act x. Consequently, they are categorised in Searle's (1976: 11) speech act taxonomy as directives.

Specifically, we are concerned in the present study with requests as initiating moves in the interactive structure of discourse. Furthermore, the requests studied are pre-event as they communicate a speaker's desire that a future act be performed by the hearer (cf. Leech 1983: 217), and the future acts requested take the form of non-verbal goods. The act is requested to take place in the

immediate future (cf. Edmondson 1981: 141, Edmondson & House 1981: 97–101 on other types of requests).

Given the speaker's wish to impose on the hearer's freedom of will, requests are non-H-supportive (cf. Edmondson 1981: 25). In a similar vein of thought, Brown & Levinson (1987: 66) describe requests as intrinsically face-threatening acts (FTAs) since in requesting, the speaker imposes on the freedom of action of the hearer and, thus, threatens the negative face wants of the hearer. In addition, although it is primarily the hearer who is affected, the speaker's positive face is also threatened to a certain extent in requesting – if the hearer refuses to comply with the particular request, this implies that the requester may not be accepted or liked by the refuser (cf. Mey 2001: 75). Conversely, however, a request may also function as a positive politeness strategy and thus build up positive face because a speaker, by issuing a request, shows that s/he believes the hearer to be a reliable person (cf. Turner 1996: 4).

For harmonious communication to occur, however, face must be saved, conflict avoided and the particular request to be issued made socially appropriate. In the case of requests, this is accomplished via indirectness and internal and external modification (cf., e.g., Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a, b). The use of indirectness serves to create the impression that the hearer has some freedom in his/her decision to comply or not. In the conventionally indirect request, *Can you give me a loan of some money?*, the hearer could, for example, theoretically say *No, I can't*. Modifiers also serve to soften the request by reducing the imposition on the hearer and lessen any negative effect associated with the illocution. By using a conditional form, such as *could* rather than *can*, for example, the speaker explicitly pays respect to the negative face of the hearer, recognising his/her status as an independent person.

Requests have attracted researchers' attention in cross-cultural pragmatics more than any other speech act.⁴ Research on requests in English English includes Márquez Reiter's (1997, 2000) cross-cultural studies of requests and apologies in Britain and Uruguay. Using role-play data, Márquez Reiter finds her British informants to be more indirect, i.e. to use more negative politeness, than the Uruguayan informants. In addition, House & Kasper (1981) contrast requests and complaints in German and British English, and find speakers of British English to be more indirect overall, using more indirect strategies, more downgraders and less upgraders. Finally, Fukushima (2000) examines requests in British English and in Japanese using questionnaire data. She finds her British informants to use a conventionally indirect request strategy in a wide range of request situations. In contrast, her Japanese informants varied their language use from the use of direct to indirect strategies depending on the degree of imposition, the power distance and social distance. She explains these differences against the background of Japan's status as a collectivist country and Britain's status as an individualistic society.

Research on Irish English from a pragmatic perspective is rather limited. Barron & Schneider (2005a: 3–6) include an overview of empirical studies in the area. They caution, however, that many of the features highlighted have not yet been shown to be unique features of Irish English relative to other varieties

of English. In addition, the papers in the edited volume, Barron & Schneider (2005b), focus on various aspects of language in interaction in Ireland (cf. below). Requests in Irish English have only been dealt with to a limited extent to date. Connington (2005), an unpublished MA thesis, is an exploratory study motivated by Wierzbicka's (1985, 1991, 2003) work on cross-cultural pragmatics. Connington (2005) aims at examining the validity of Wierzbicka's (1991: 32–37, 2003: 32–37) claim that the English language tends to avoid imperatives in speech acts in the private domain, preferring interrogative structures because of a high status afforded to individual autonomy (except in the case of questions). She also investigates Wierzbicka's (1991: 26, 2003: 26) claim that English is broadly uniform on the level of language use. Specifically, Connington (2005) investigates the relative appropriateness of action verbs in the imperative mood in requesting, giving instructions and in offering in Irish English. Her data consist of assessment data elicited from a multiple choice questionnaire and an assessment questionnaire from ten native speakers of Irish English. Her findings show interrogative structures to be used frequently in all three speech acts in Irish English, as claimed by Wierzbicka for the English language in general. In addition, the analysis of requests of the constellation high right to request and high obligation to comply (controlled for social distance and dominance) shows the imperative to be impolite in a range of Irish English requests. Rather, interrogative structures were preferred, also in line with Wierzbicka's research on English. Connington (2005: 53) concludes that autonomy is valued in Irish English. At the same time, however, she cautions against Wierzbicka's tendency towards singling out values, such as autonomy, in explaining cross-cultural differences, particularly given that her results also showed a rather high level of appropriateness for imperative offers and instructions in Irish English in situations characterised by a high degree of obligation irrespective of context-external factors, such as social distance and social dominance. Such features are normally associated with a low value placed on autonomy. Connington claims such findings to reveal that cultural differences which may exist between languages or varieties relate, not to the use or absence of an imperative, but rather to the distribution of use (cf. also Schneider 2003: 39–44 on this point).

A further study which provides information on requests in Irish English is a previous study which I conducted within the framework of a study of the development of interlanguage pragmatic competence of a group of Irish year abroad students of German (Barron 2003). Here higher levels of syntactic downgrading were found to accompany the conventionally indirect requests used in Irish English relative to those employed in German native speaker requests. Given that the same trend towards a higher level of syntactic downgrading in British English relative to German was also recorded by Faerch & Kasper (1989: 226), I suggested that the use of syntactic downgrading may be similar in Irish English and British English requests (cf. Barron 2003: 251, Barron & Schneider 2005a: 5).

3. Methodology

3.1 Data elicitation

A production questionnaire was employed to elicit requests. Production questionnaires have been used extensively in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics as a means of eliciting speech act realisations since the classic version of this questionnaire, the discourse completion task (DCT), was employed in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) to investigate both native and non-native realisations of requests and apologies for different social contexts across various languages and cultures (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a).⁵

A production questionnaire is, in essence, a series of short written role-plays based on everyday situations which are designed to elicit a specific speech act by requiring informants to complete a turn of dialogue for each item. A short description of the scene before the interaction is usually included. Here, the general circumstances are set and the relevant situational parameters concerning social dominance, social distance and degree of imposition described. In the classic DCT, the type of production questionnaire employed in the present study, a preliminary first turn of dialogue is often included to act as a stimulus, and the hearer's positive/negative response to the missing turn, termed a rejoinder by Johnston et al. (1998: 157), is also given.⁶

The DCT is, as Bardovi-Harlig (1999: 238) aptly summarises, "... at once the most celebrated and most maligned of all the methods used in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics research." However, as she goes on to emphasise, no instrument can be said to be good or bad, but rather suitable or unsuitable to the question at hand. The DCT offered many advantages for the particular analysis at hand, that of requesting across cultures. Firstly, the data elicited reflect the content of oral data despite its written form.⁷ Ease of elicitation of comparable speech act realisations from large samples of informants quickly and efficiently and across cultures was also an important advantage, as was the ease of variability of contextual variables, such as social distance and social dominance, important constraints in determining the degree of directness chosen in a particular utterance. In addition, the DCT enables the elicitation of stereotypical interactions in the mind of the respondents and, as such, portrays the socially accepted use of language in a particular culture.

On the negative side, informants, in completing a DCT, are forced to play the part of a person other than him/herself – suggesting possibly unreliable responses (cf. Wolfson et al. 1989: 181, Rose 1992: 57). Also, the belief that contextual variables, such as social distance and social dominance, can be maintained stable in an interaction, is an assumption inherent in the production questionnaire which is reductive as these factors are in fact continuously evolving. Furthermore, the situational descriptions provided are of necessity simplified, with the minimum of information given. As a result, respondents are forced to elaborate the context themselves, which naturally reduces the degree of control as different people may imagine different details (cf. Kasper 1998:

94, Bardovi-Harlig 1999: 242).⁸ Finally, there has been some evidence that the DCT elicits more direct strategies than would be found in naturally-occurring data. Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig (1992), in their research into differences between rejections elicited using production questionnaires and naturally-occurring data gathered within the institutional context of academic advisory sessions, found evidence, for example, that respondents tend to employ more direct strategies in questionnaires. Similar to the research findings on length of response, they explain this with reference to the lack of interaction in the DCT (cf. also Rintell & Mitchell 1989: 271 on this point).

The present study focuses on three request situations, a police, a notes and a lift situation (cf. Appendix 1). All three of these situations were originally included on the CCSARP questionnaire – thus, comparisons with previous findings of the CCSARP are enabled. House (1989: 106) differentiates between standard and non-standard request situations – both opposing poles on a continuum. A relatively high obligation to comply with a request, a relatively low degree of difficulty in performing the request and a high right to pose the particular request are features associated with standard situations. The opposite features describe non-standard situations although these descriptions are relative rather than absolute – representing a continuum. The lift situation in the present study is a non-standard situation (cf. House 1989: 109). The police situation, on the other hand, represents a standard situation. The notes situation is half way on the standard/non-standard continuum – as House (1989: 107) remarks, this situation is “too low in obligation to be standard and both too high in rights and low in difficulty to be included as non-standard.”

Finally, it should be noted that the request data were collected on a questionnaire which included a total of nine situations designed to elicit a range of requests (7) and responses to thanks (2) (cf. Schneider 2005 on responses to thanks). The inclusion of two speech acts served to increase the naturalness of informants’ behaviour in that it prevented skimming of situational descriptions (e.g., “Ah, they’re all requests anyhow”). The focus on the three request situations police, notes and lift was based on the continuum of standardness they represent.

3.2 Informants

Production data were elicited from 27 females in a school in the South-East of Ireland and from 27 females in a school in Southern England.⁹ The average age of the Irish group was 16.2 years, that of the English informants 16.3 years. The group sizes were established on the basis of a recommendation by Kasper & Dahl (1991: 226) who found that responses of homogeneous groups elicited using a production questionnaire, the primary instrument employed in the present study, tend to concentrate around a few sub-categories, thus rendering larger samples unnecessary despite the inevitable presence of individual variation. The concentration on females only was considered important given gender differences established in language use (cf., e.g., Fukushima 1990: 541 on

gender differences in the choice of offer strategy in English). In addition, the informants were broadly homogeneous, given similarity of age, general level of education and personal concerns. Importantly for the present research project, the informants were not influenced to any large degree by other cultures (via, e.g., parents whose first language was other than the particular variety under inspection, or via extended periods spent in different speech communities).

In total, 81 English English requests and 80 Irish English requests were analysed. The difference in one is due to one item left uncompleted in the Irish data for the police situation. This was coded as a missing value.

3.3 Coding

The coding scheme employed in the present study is that which was developed for the CCSARP by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b), itself based on an earlier coding system by Edmondson (1981). It allows a request to be analysed according to the degree of directness and the type of modification employed. This scheme is not proposed as a rigid, definitive scheme, but rather as a coding scheme open to refinement and modification, depending on the language and culture under consideration (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 274–275). Although not without criticism (cf., e.g., Mulken 1996, Hassall 1997: 190–191), it is the coding scheme which has proven most popular in analysing requests to date.¹⁰

As in the CCSARP, the head act, i.e., the minimal unit which can realise a particular speech act (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 275), is first isolated in the present study, and the strategy employed in the head act then established. Following this, modification, whether internal or external, upgrading or mitigating, is identified. An example of the coding serves to illustrate the scheme:

- (1) Lift, IrE: ... *I was just wondering if I could get a lift home with you as I've missed my bus and the next one is not due for an hour.*

Head act strategy: *I was just wondering if I could get a lift home with you* = query preparatory (perspective: speaker-based).

Internal modification:

Syntactic downgrading: *I was just wondering, if I could ...* = tense (0) & aspect (*wondering*) & conditional clause (*if*) & conditional (*could*)

Lexical and phrasal downgrading: *just* = downtoner, *I was wondering* = subjectiviser

External modification:

I've missed my bus and the next one is not due for an hour = 2 (post-)grounders

The CCSARP recognises nine distinct levels of directness in requesting (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a: 17–19, 1989b: 278–281).¹¹ A range of internal and external modifiers are also identified. Those relevant to the present study are detailed in the relevant section in the following.

The quantitative analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows. Statistical significance was investigated via an independent t-test.

4. Findings

4.1 Request head act

By far the most frequently employed of the nine request strategies identified in the CCSARP in both the English and Irish requests in the present data is the query preparatory strategy, a strategy in which the preparatory conditions of a request are thematised in a conventionalised manner. Example (1) includes one example of such a strategy. The request in example (2) in the following is a further example of a realisation of this strategy from the present data. In contrast to (1), this request is formulated from the perspective of the hearer.¹²

(2) Police, EngE: ... *can you move your car to the next street*

Here the preparatory condition for requests “H is able to perform x. S believes H is able to do x” (Searle 1969: 66) is queried in so conventional a manner that the speaker usually does not consider his/her ability to carry out the request, but rather simply decides to comply or not to comply.

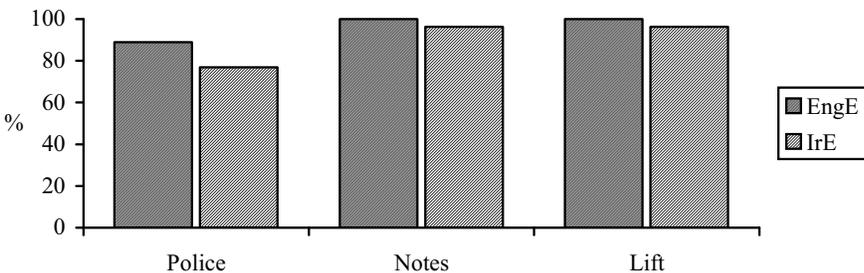


Figure 1. Distribution of query preparatory strategies in the request head act

The English English and Irish English data show no variation in the choice of head act strategy. Both speech communities clearly prefer a query preparatory request strategy in all three situations (Police: IrE: 76.9% [n=20], EngE 88.9% [n=24]; Notes: IrE: 96.3% [n=26], EngE: 100% [n=27]; Lift: IrE: 96.3% [n=26], EngE: 100% [n=27]). As in House (1989: 102), a somewhat lower use of query preparatories was recorded in the standard police situation relative to the more non-standard situations (cf. Figure 1).

The following analysis concentrates exclusively on the query preparatory strategies identified here since any mitigation employed is often related to the

underlying strategy. This approach to data analysis serves to increase the validity of a particular investigation (cf. Faerch & Kasper 1989: 222).

4.2 Internal modification

Speaking in a polite manner involves being aware of the effect that the illocutionary force of a particular speech act will have on one's addressee, and being able to aggravate or mitigate this force as required (cf. Fraser 1980: 342). The analysis of internal modification investigates how the head act may be modified to aggravate or mitigate the requestive force. In the following we look at the use of syntactic downgraders (SDn), lexical and phrasal downgraders and upgraders in the Irish English and English English requests at hand.

4.2.1 Syntactic mitigation

The use of syntactic downgraders in a requestive head act reduces the impact of the request on the addressee. In increasing the level of indirectness, they provide the hearer with some freedom and in so doing, lessen any negative face threat to the hearer in complying with the wishes of the speaker. The syntactic downgraders employed in the data are shown in Table 2. As mentioned above, the mitigators identified here were first established within the framework of the CCSARP (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a, b).

Table 2. Overview of syntactic downgraders employed with query preparatory head act strategies

	Description	Example
Conditional	Use of the conditional serves to distance the speaker from the reality of the situation and, thus, to decrease the face threat to the speaker of a request being refused. It is coded only when optional and is, thus, downgrading.	<i>Could you...?</i>
Conditional clause	The speaker, with the aid of a conditional clause, is able to distance the request in question from reality, and so decrease the face threat, should the request be refused.	<i>...if you ...</i>
Aspect	Inclusion of types of aspect, such as the durative aspect marker. Usage is only regarded as mitigating, if it can be substituted by a simpler form.	<i>I was <u>wondering</u> if I ...</i>
Tense	Past tense forms are coded as downgrading only if they can be substituted with present tense forms without a change in semantic meaning.	<i>I <u>was</u> wondering, would I</i>
Combinations of the above		<i>I was wondering, if I could: tense, aspect, conditional clause, conditional</i>

Importantly, the use of these forms must be optional for them to be coded as downgraders. The conditional form *could* in

(3) Police, EngE: *could you move your car please?*

can be replaced by *can*, for instance. Hence *could* is mitigating. A further form of syntactic downgrading identified in the literature is the negation of the preparatory conditions (e.g. *Can you not x?*) (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b). This form was, however, not found in either the English or the Irish data at hand. Of the variety of syntactic downgraders found in the data, the use of conditionals represents a rather simple form of downgrading with limited mitigating power. Combinations of syntactic downgraders, such as *I was wondering, if I could*, a combination of tense, aspect, conditional clause and conditional, are more highly mitigating (cf. also Barron 2003: 206–212).

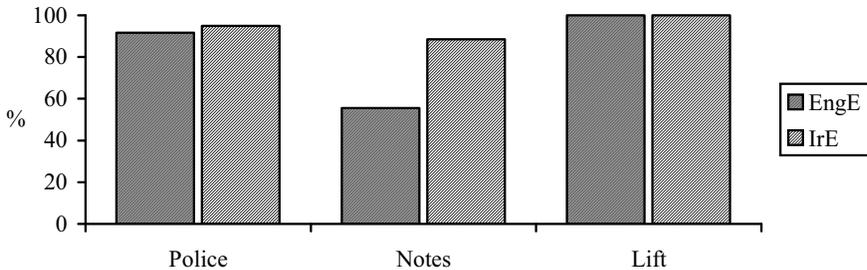


Figure 2. Syntactic mitigation employed in query preparatory head act strategies

Syntactic mitigation is used in all three situations in both speech communities. In the standard police situation, cultural differences are found neither in the frequency of syntactic downgrading employed (cf. Figure 2) nor in the number of syntactic downgraders employed when syntactic downgrading was used (cf. Figure 3).

In both of the more non-standard situations, by contrast, the Irish informants are found to be more indirect, using statistically more syntactic downgrading than their English English counterparts. In the notes situation, for instance, syntactic mitigators are used to a significantly larger extent by the Irish informants (88.5% [n=23]) than by the English informants (55.6% [n=15]) ($p=0.007$) (cf. Figure 2). The higher number of syntactic downgraders employed in this same situation in the Irish data is also notable, despite not being statistically significant (cf. Figure 3). In the more highly non-standard lift situation, the higher level of indirectness in the Irish data is not apparent at first sight since levels of syntactic mitigation are equal at 100% (IrE: n=26, EngE: n=27) (cf. Figure 2). However, the difference between the number of mitigators used per informant in this same situation is statistically significant when the average of two mitigators in the English data is compared to the average of 2.5 employed in the Irish data ($p=0.035$) (cf. Figure 3). In other words, syntactic

downgrading is employed in all of the Irish English and English English lift requests. However, the Irish requests include more such downgraders.

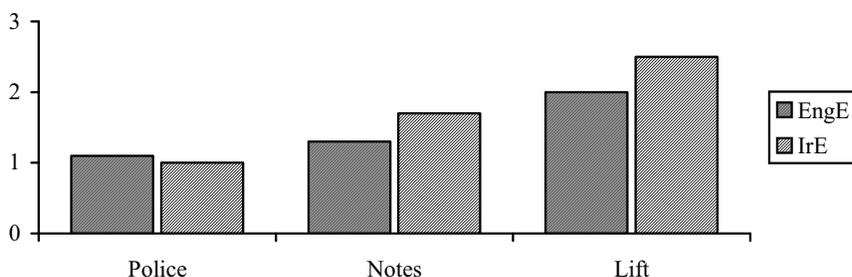


Figure 3. Average number of syntactic downgraders employed per informant where syntactic downgrading is used in query preparatory head act strategies

The analysis of the different types of syntactic downgraders employed is also insightful, pointing also to a higher level of indirectness in the Irish more non-standard requests. Here, we contrast the use of a conditional, the simplest form of syntactic downgrading in the data, with combinations of aspect and tense. Such combinations include aspect, tense, conditional clause and conditional, as in ... *I was just wondering if I could borrow your notes* and aspect, tense and conditional, as in *I was wondering could I borrow your notes*.

As above, there are no differences to be found in the police situation, both cultures preferring a simple conditional (cf. Table 3).

Table 3. Use of conditionals and combinations of syntactic downgraders with aspect-tense in query preparatory head act strategies as a percentage of the syntactic downgraders used¹³

	Syntactic downgraders	Conditionals	Aspect-tense combinations
<i>Police</i>			
EngE	n=22	95.5% (n=21)	4.5% (n=1)
IrE	n=19	100% (n=19)	0 (n=0)
<i>Notes</i>			
EngE	n=15	73.3% (n=11)	0 (n=0)
IrE	n=23	52.2% (n=12)	30.4% (n=7)
<i>Lift</i>			
EngE	n=27	48.1% (n=13)	40.7% (n=11)
IrE	n=26	19.2% (n=5)	69.2% (n=18)

However, similar to the preceding analysis, the Irish are again found to invest more in indirectness in the non-standard situations relative to their English counterparts. In the notes situation, downgrading in the form of conditionals

was used most extensively in both datasets, and findings for the use of conditionals were not significant in this situation. However, clear cross-varietal differences were found in the use of the complex combination of aspect and tense with other syntactic downgraders ($p=0.007$). This type of syntactic downgrading was namely not recorded at all in the English data. By contrast, combinations of aspect and tense were found in 30.4% ($n=7$) of the Irish notes requests, making the head act of the Irish informants' requests more indirect than those of the English informants (cf. Table 3). This same trend towards a more indirect Irish request is also seen in the lift situation where the Irish informants use significantly less single conditionals (19.2%) compared to the English informants (48.1%) ($p=0.026$), but significantly more syntactically complex and highly downgrading aspect and tense combinations (IrE: 69.2%; EngE 40.7%) ($p=0.038$) (cf. Table 3).

4.2.2 Lexical and phrasal downgrading

Like syntactic downgraders, lexical and phrasal downgraders serve to mitigate the illocutionary force of requests. The lexical and phrasal downgraders used in both cultures in the situations analysed are listed in the following. The mitigators identified here were first established within the framework of the CCSARP (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a, b).

Table 4. Overview of lexical and phrasal downgraders employed with query preparatory head act strategies¹⁴

	Description	Example
Subjectivisers	Elements which express a speaker's subjective opinion with regard to the situation referred to in the proposition	<i>I wonder, could you..., I don't suppose, you would</i>
Consultative devices	Elements chosen to involve the hearer directly in an effort to gain compliance	<i>Do you think that...? Do you mind, if...?</i>
Downtoners	Sentential or propositional modifiers employed to moderate the force of a request on the addressee	<i>possibly, maybe</i>
Politeness marker please	Downgrading function only in standard situations (cf. below)	<i>please</i>

Here it is important to note that *please* only functions as (and is, thus, only coded as) a downgrader of illocutionary force in standard situations. In non-standard situations, it upgrades illocutionary force. This can be explained by the fact that *please* can serve two possible functions – it can act as an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) and as a transparent mitigator. House (1989: 106–118), building on this insight by Sadock (1974), finds that the dual function of *please* makes it predominantly suitable for use in standard situations, because in such circumstances, the illocutionary indicating function is in harmony with the formal, clearly defined, context, and so does not “drown” the downtoning qualities of the adverb whether it is used with a query preparatory

strategy or with an imperative. Consequently, the adverb *please* acts as a lexical and phrasal downgrader when it is used in standard situations. This is also noted by Aijmer (1996) in her analysis of *please* in the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English. She writes:

Please is especially frequent with imperatives. The large number of *please* after *could you* and after permission questions (*can I, may I, could I*) is also noteworthy. Since *please* is mainly used in situations in which formal politeness is needed, ... (Aijmer 1996: 166)

On the other hand, when *please* is employed in non-standard request situations, such as in the lift situation in the present data, its illocutionary force indicating powers come to the fore, causing an increase in the directness of query preparatory head act strategies which tend to occur in such situations (cf. House 1989: 109). This happens because the query preparatory strategy is itself pragmatically somewhat ambiguous. The effect is to curtail any scope for negotiation previously afforded. The utterance moves nearer the status of an imperative. House argues that the utterance thus becomes "... inappropriate" (House 1989: 113) because impositives, i.e. direct request strategies, do not usually occur in non-standard situations. She finds that it is uncommon for native speakers to use *please* in non-standard situations and common for them to use *please* in standard situations.

Please is, thus, coded as a lexical and phrasal downgrader in the police situation only. In the lift situation, on the other hand, it is seen as an upgrader (cf. below). The status of *please* in the notes situation is more difficult to interpret since this situation is between the standard and non-standard poles. Indeed, for this reason, House (1989) does not include this situation in her discussion of *please*. This is the approach also taken here – hence the notes situation is not analysed for lexical and phrasal downgrading or upgrading.

There were no statistically significant differences in the levels of lexical and phrasal downgrading used by the Irish and English informants in either the police or the lift situation. Only situational differences between the two situations were clear. In the police situation, lexical and phrasal downgraders were employed by 75% (n=15) of informants using a query preparatory in the Irish data and by 87.5% (n=21) in the English data (cf. Figure 4). A single lexical and phrasal downgrader was usual, only 20% (n=3) of the Irish informants and 9.5% (n=2) of the English informants using a lexical and phrasal downgrader with a query preparatory strategy used two such downgraders. Both cultures showed a preference for an extensive use of *please* in this standard situation. Indeed, every time a lexical and phrasal downgrader was used in the Irish data, *please* was used (on occasion in combination). In the English data, *please* occurred in 76.2% (n=16) of requests (cf. Figure 5).

In the non-standard lift situation, 55.6% (n=15) of the English informants used a lexical and phrasal downgrader compared to 76.9% (n=20) of the Irish informants (cf. Figure 4). Here also, similar to the police situation, a single downgrader was usual although proportionally more combinations of lexical

and phrasal downgraders were employed than in the police situation, two downgraders being used by 35% (n=7) of the Irish informants and 26.7% (n=4) of the English informants. Consultative devices are only used to a very narrow extent in both datasets in the lift situation (EngE: 6.7% [n=1], IrE: 15% [n=3]). Subjectivisers, on the other hand, were employed to a large extent in both the English and the Irish data in this situation, as seen in Figure 6 (EngE: 80% [n=12], IrE: 95% [n=19]).

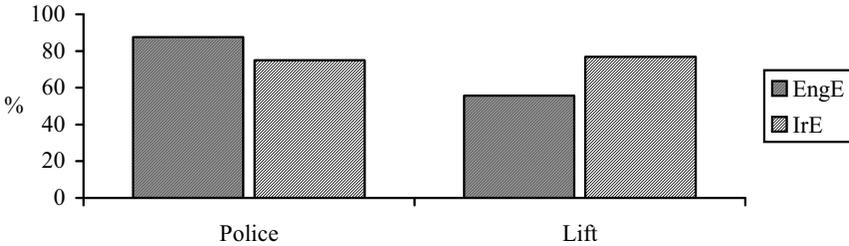


Figure 4. Lexical and phrasal downgraders distributed over query preparatory head act strategies

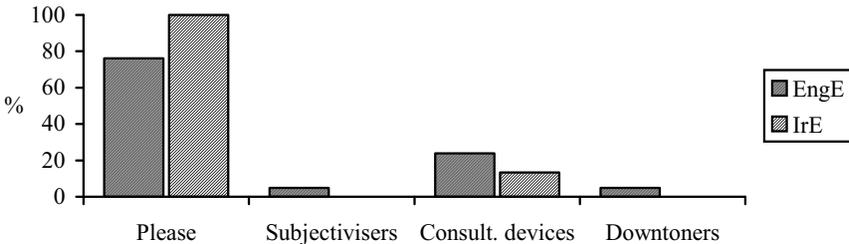


Figure 5. Police situation: Types of lexical and phrasal downgraders used in query preparatory head act strategies as a percentage of the lexical and phrasal downgraders used¹⁵

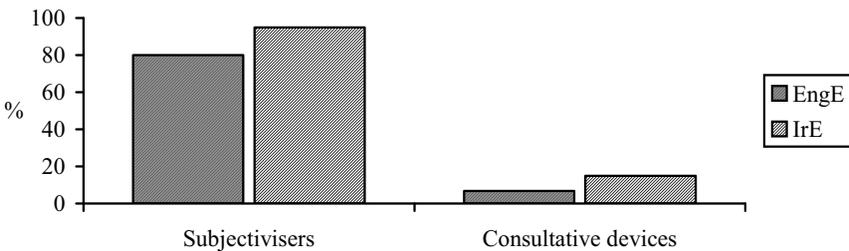


Figure 6. Lift situation: Subjectivisers and consultative devices distributed over query preparatory head act strategies as a percentage of the lexical and phrasal downgraders used

4.2.3 Upgraders

Upgraders used in the present data include time intensifiers, as in the Irish English request *would you be able to give me a lift now?*, and intensifiers, such as in the English English request *Could I possibly at all have a lift?* These examples are, however, the only two of their kind in the datasets. Far more common is the use of *please* in an upgrading function. However, as mentioned above, it is only in the lift situation that *please* has an upgrading function.

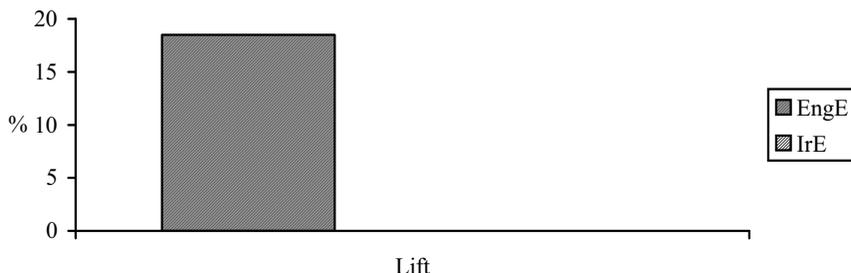


Figure 7. The use of *please* as an IFID in query preparatory head act strategies

In neither culture is the use of *please* very high in the non-standard lift situation, in line with House's (1989) and Aijmer's (1996) findings (cf. Figure 7). However, similar to the findings above on syntactic downgrading, the English informants are found to be more direct here also. While none of the Irish informants employ *please* with a query preparatory strategy, as many as 18.5% (n=5) of the English English informants employ *please* with this strategy. Examples include:

- (4) Lift, EngE: *Excuse me. I've just missed my bus, would you be able to give me a lift home please? We live on the same street.*
- (5) Lift, EngE: *Hi I'm Jack I was at the meeting with you earlier. I've just missed my bus and I was wondering if it would be OK to get a lift home with you, please?*

This difference is statistically significant ($p=0.022$).

4.3 External mitigation

External mitigators were used by both the Irish and English informants. Table 5 shows those mitigators found in the data. The category apology for imposition is not included in the CCSARP. The grounder is the most common type of external mitigator employed in all three situations, as will be seen below. One may differentiate between pre-grounders and post-grounders. Pre-grounders are situated before the head act, post-grounders follow the head act.

Cultural differences, similar to those recorded above for the more non-standard situations are also found in the standard police situation. In other words, the Irish informants are found to be more indirect, investing more effort in external downgrading than their English counterparts ($p=0.000$). Specifically, 70% ($n=14$) of the Irish informants used external mitigation in the standard police situation compared to only 33.3% ($n=8$) of the English informants (cf. Table 6). The actual number of mitigators used was similar as seen in Figure 8. The grounder is the most common type of external downgrader employed in this situation (IrE: 85.7% [$n=12$], EngE: 100% [$n=8$]). Post-grounders are preferred over pre-grounders in this standard situation in both cultures (cf. Table 6) – a fact which points to the lower mitigating power of post-grounders relative to pre-grounders. Specifically, pre-grounders were only used in 16.7% ($n=2$) of the requests with grounders in the Irish data. Post-grounders were used in 83.3% ($n=10$) of cases in which grounders were employed. Pre-grounders were not used at all in the English data in this situation.

Table 5. Overview of external mitigators employed

	Description	Example
Preparator	The speaker prepares the hearer for the request which is to follow by enquiring about the hearer's availability to carry out the request or the hearer's permission to make the request. The exact nature of the request remains, however, unknown.	<i>Hi, I live in the same street as you and...</i>
Grounder	The speaker provides reasons, explanations, or justifications for the preceding or ensuing request.	<i>I've just missed my bus, would you possibly be able to give me a lift?</i>
Disarmer	An attempt by the speaker to address, and, thus, weaken/invalidate, any possible arguments the hearer might introduce in order to refuse the request	<i>I know this is very rude to ask, but... I know this is a bit forward, but...</i>
Imposition minimiser	The speaker attempts to reduce the imposition which the request places on the hearer.	<i>...if it was o.k. with you could I...</i>
Apology for imposition	The speaker apologises for any imposition the request may cause	<i>I'm sorry to bother you but...</i>

In the more non-standard notes and lift situations, on the other hand, the levels of mitigation employed are rather different to those in the standard situation described here, and indeed also rather different to those higher levels of mitigation recorded in the Irish English data in the analysis of syntactic downgrading above. Specifically, it is the English rather than the Irish informants who invest more effort in externally mitigating their requests in these two non-standard notes and lift situations. Consequently, they are more – not less – indirect in their requesting behaviour than the Irish informants on this level. Specifically, it was found that in the lift situation the English informants use an average of 2.5 external mitigators, while the Irish only use two mitigators on average – a statistically significant difference ($p=0.014$) (cf. Figure 8). In addition, the

analysis of the types of external mitigators used shows the same pattern of a more highly direct Irish English request in the same more non-standard situations. Grounders are used by both the Irish and English informants to a large extent in both non-standard situations (cf. Table 6). There are no differences to be found in either situation in the levels of use by the two speech communities. Interestingly, however, pre-grounders are preferred over post-grounders in the English data in both situations to a statistically significant extent (lift: $p=0.026$, notes: $p=0.030$) (cf. Table 6). Pre-grounders, by acting to explain the reason for a particular request before realising the head act itself, are more strongly mitigating (indeed the lower mitigating strength of post-grounders is also seen in the fact that post-grounders were used predominantly in the standard police situation). Consequently, the Irish requests are more strongly direct in this aspect than the English requests.

Table 6. Use of external mitigation (disarmers, grounders [pre-grounders]) in query preparatory head act strategies¹⁶

	Police		Notes		Lift	
	EngE	IrE	EngE	IrE	EngE	IrE
Query preparatories	88.9% (n=24)	76.9% (n=20)	100% (n=27)	96.3% (n=26)	100% (n=27)	96.3% (n=26)
- External mitigation	33.3% (n=8)	70% (n=14)	70.4% (n=19)	88.5% (n=23)	100% (n=27)	100% (n=26)
o Disarmers	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	22.2% (n=6)	0% (n=0)
o Grounders	100% (n=8)	85.7% (n=12)	100% (n=19)	100% (n=23)	88.9% (n=24)	80.8% (n=21)
• Pre-grounders	0% (n=0)	16.7% (n=2)	73.7% (n=14)	34.8% (n=8)	87.5% (n=21)	57.1% (n=12)

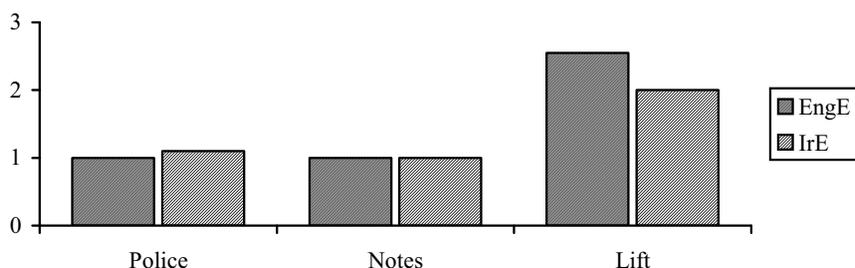


Figure 8. Average number of external mitigators used with query preparatory requests

The same higher degree of indirectness seen in the use of pre-grounders rather than post-grounders in the English English data is seen in the use of disarmers in the most non-standard lift situation. Disarmers are highly mitigating, as seen by their absence in both cultures in the police situation, and also in their absence in the notes situation, a situation less non-standard than the lift situation. Notably, the disarmer is used by 22.2% of the English informants ($n=6$) who use external mitigation in the lift situation but not at all by the Irish informants (statistically significant difference, $p=0.011$) (cf. Table 6). This finding underlines the higher level of investment in external mitigation in the English English data. Against this background, it is all the more interesting that the head acts employed in this situation were more direct in the English data on the level of internal modification (cf. Section 4.2 above).

5. Irish English and English English in contrast

The present analysis shows Irish English and English English requests to be remarkably similar on the level of the strategy chosen. In both the standard and non-standard situations analysed, the query preparatory strategy was the preferred strategy, although situational differences were found, with levels of conventional indirectness higher in the more non-standard notes and lift situations and lower in the most standard police situation – in line with previous research (cf. Blum-Kulka & House 1989, House 1989). This high overall use of conventional indirectness supports Connington's (2005) findings for requests in Irish English, House's (1989: 99) findings for requests in British English and also Wierzbicka's (1985, 1991, 2003) claim that the imperative is not widely employed in English. The strong tendency towards conventional indirectness would seem to point to what Wierzbicka (1985, 1991, 2003) and Connington (2005) refer to as a high level of autonomy in the Irish and English cultures, a characteristic which necessitates attention to the negative face of the hearer. Similarly, the extensive use of the query preparatory in the English English data might be explained in terms of the relatively high level of individualism identified by Hofstede (1980, 1994) and the GLOBE project (cf. Ashkanasy et al. 2002) as being a feature of British culture. However, according to the GLOBE project, Ireland is less individualist in orientation than Britain, being characterised by a higher level of institutional (societal) collectivism. In addition, the level of family collectivism is higher in Ireland. Consequently, one would expect a higher level of indirectness in out-group situations and a higher level of directness in in-group situations in Irish English relative to English English (cf. Section 2.1 above). In the three situations under analysis, there are no differences on the level of the strategy – however, the analysis of modification does reveal a more indirect request in Irish English in the standard police situation via a higher level of external modification (cf. Table 7). Similarly, in the non-standard situations analysed, the Irish English head act requests are characterised by a higher level of internal mitigation and a lower level of upgrading than the English English head acts. The higher level of mitigation is

seen in the significantly higher use of syntactic downgrading in the notes situation and in the significantly larger number of syntactic mitigators in the most non-standard lift situation. In addition, the use of relatively more complex syntactic downgraders is recorded in both situations (cf. Table 8). Finally, still on the subject of internal mitigation, higher levels of upgrading via a considerably higher occurrence of *please* as an IFID are also found in the English English lift data. Interestingly, the high level of syntactic mitigation in the Irish English data is reminiscent of that noted by Barron (2003) to be characteristic of Irish English requests relative to German. In contrast, however, to Barron's (2003: 251) suggestion that English English requests may be similar to Irish English requests on this level, given Faerch & Kasper's (1989: 226) finding that British requests are characterised by a higher level of syntactic downgrading relative to German (cf. Section 2.2 above), it is shown here that Irish requests invest more in syntactic downgrading than English English requests.

Table 7. Overview of the features of standard query preparatory requests in English English and Irish English

	EngE	IrE
Number of external mitigators		Higher

Table 8. Overview of the features of non-standard query preparatory requests in English English and Irish English

	EngE	IrE
Use of syntactic downgrading/Number of syntactic downgraders employed		Higher
Conditionals (simple SDn)	Higher (lift)	
Aspect & tense (complex SDn)		Higher
<i>Please</i> as an IFID (upgrading)	Higher (lift)	
Number of external mitigators	Higher (lift)	
Disarmers	Higher (lift)	
Pre-grounders (more highly mitigating)	Higher	
Post-grounders (less highly mitigating)		Higher

Table 9. Level of investment in politeness in English English and Irish English non-standard query preparatory requests

	EngE	IrE
Internal mitigation		Higher
External mitigation	Higher	

Overall, therefore, the extensive use of a conventionally indirect strategy and also the considerable use of modification points to a high degree of indirectness in Irish requests. This general indirectness in Irish English supports previous

studies which have shown Irish English to be generally indirect and indeed, it would seem, based on these data, that not only does the high level of collectivism in Irish society have explanatory value here, but also the lower level of assertiveness in Ireland, or what Kallen (2005a) terms silence (cf. Section 2.1 above). In addition, the higher degree of indirectness in the Irish requests relative to the English English requests in the standard situations and also the higher degree of indirectness in the internal modification used in the non-standard situations in Irish English point to a higher degree of indirectness in requesting in Irish English relative to English English. This general indirectness in Irish English supports those few previous studies which have shown Irish English to be generally more indirect relative to English English (cf. Section 2.1 above). Again, here the higher degree of collectivism found in Irish society relative to English society would seem relevant here, as well as the lower level of assertiveness. On the other hand, however, the analysis of the non-standard situations clearly reveals that it cannot be simply stated generally that Irish English is more indirect than English English. Rather, an assessment of the relative directness/indirectness of the externally and internally modified requests elicited would be necessary before such statements could be made. Specifically, the analysis of the non-standard situations revealed that English informants prefer to invest in external rather than in internal modification while the Irish informants show a preference for internal modification. This was seen in the larger number of external mitigators used in the most non-standard lift situation and the more extensive use of more highly mitigating pre-grounders in both of the more non-standard situations. In addition, disarmers, mitigators with a high mitigating force which serves to weaken or invalidate any possible arguments which the hearer might introduce in order to refuse the request, were used in the lift situation in the English data only. The analysis, thus, underlines the necessity of investigating language use at the level of the speech act rather than at the level of the linguistic form, and also cautions against generalised comparative statements of language use across cultures.

Finally, a further interesting finding relates to the so-called “typical” examples of Irish indirectness put forward by Scharf & Mac Mathúna (1998: 161). These include the use of a negative indirect request of the type *you couldn't confirm this in writing, could you?* In contrast to Scharf & Mac Mathúna's (1998) non-empirical claim, negation was not found to be widespread in any of the three situations under analysis. Indeed, it is only in the most non-standard situation, the lift situation, that negativity is recorded at all, specifically in the subjectiviser *I don't suppose*. Negation as a syntactic downgrader, as in Scharf & Mac Mathúna's (1998) example, is not found in any request in the present data, nor indeed was negation used in the Irish English offer or request data analysed in Barron (2003: 207–212). This is not to say that such constructions do not exist in Irish English – the likelihood is that they do exist and are used possibly to a greater extent than in other English-speaking countries. However, their absence in the present data would suggest that they are either only used in particular situations or perhaps only in particular regions in Ireland. There is, thus, a need for analyses of the frequency and

context of use of such so-called “typical” constructions. In the absence of these analyses, such statements can only lead to an inaccurate, stereotypical image of communication in Ireland – or indeed in any other culture.

6. Future perspectives

The present analysis focuses on the request realisations of three situations in Irish English and English English. As has been pointed out, more research is needed before generalisations can be made about the nature of Irish English and English English. Such research includes the elicitation of assessment data relating to the relative level of politeness associated with external and internal mitigation. In addition, analyses of data from different areas of Ireland and England are necessary since the present analysis concentrates only on data from South-West England and South-East Ireland. Finally, triangulation of data is needed. The production questionnaire data elicited for the present analyses should be triangulated, ideally with naturally-occurring data. Recent developments in this area are encouraging for the analysis of Irish English. The Irish Component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-Ireland) is currently under development (cf. Kallen & Kirk 2001 and Kallen 2005b). This corpus already exists for British English.¹⁷ Despite the lack of pragmatic coding, its stable composition across cultures will aid in confirming or rejecting a number of the suggestions put forward in this chapter. Finally, the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (LCIE), a corpus which follows the design of the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) (cf. Carter 1998), is also under construction. When it is finished, cross-varietal analyses using both the LCIE and the CANCODE will also be possible (cf. O’Keeffe & Adolphs this volume for an example).

Finally, the current study of language use in Irish English and English English adds to the research on variational pragmatics (cf. also Barron forthcoming for a more in-depth analysis). On a general level, as highlighted in Barron (2006), the finding that the choice of realisation strategies employed in Irish English and English English requests was similar in both varieties confirms previous research in variational pragmatics which suggests that, in contrast to interlingual variation, intralingual variation in the choice and distribution of strategy does not usually occur on such a general level of description in realisations of requests and offers (cf. Barron 2005a, cf. also Márquez Reiter 2002, 2003, Barron 2005b). In addition, the differences found on the levels of internal and external modification employed by both cultures was also in line with Barron’s (2005a) finding that macro-social variation may be recorded in the use of modification in intralingual analyses. Needless to say, further research is needed to confirm or refute these generalised tendencies.

Notes

1. Cf., e.g., Thomas (1983: 107), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989a: 6), Byram & Morgan (1994: 119–120), House (1996) and Gass (1997: 20–22). Scarcella (1990: 338) and Rost-Roth (1994) also present an overview of the literature relating to misunderstandings.
2. Irish English is used here to refer to Southern Irish English. The origins of the English spoken in the North of Ireland, including parts of the Republic of Ireland, such as Donegal, are rather different. While also influenced by the English of England (although not very importantly), the Northern variety also bears traces of Ulster-Scots and Mid-Ulster English (cf. Adams 1977: 56–57, Trudgill & Hannah 2002: 99).
3. The nine cultural dimensions identified built on Hofstede's (1980) four cultural dimensions, Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck's (1961) future orientation and humane orientation and McClelland's (1961) performance orientation. In addition, the GLOBE team included a further measure of collectivism, different to Hofstede's measure which moves from high individualism to low collectivism. This additional GLOBE criterion, termed family collectivism (also termed in-group collectivism or collectivism II), measures collectivism on a scale from low to high collectivism (cf. Martin et al. 1999: 270).
4. The reader is referred to the Centre for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA), University of Minnesota at <http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/bibliography/requests.html> for an overview of research on requests in pragmatics, cross-cultural pragmatics and intercultural pragmatics.
5. Kasper (2000) provides an overview of the various types of production questionnaire which have descended from the original DCT.
6. There has been much debate on the appropriateness of the hearer response. Advocates of same argue that the response serves to signal illocutionary uptake to inform subjects that the response is being understood as a full realisation of the required speech act. They contend that the contextual clues given by this response are necessary because the speech act required is not directly specified and also because there is little room for negotiations which may take place in natural discourse before the actual realisation of the speech act (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a: 14). Also in defence of the rejoinder, it has been argued that the hearer-response is a mere manifestation of the expectations which speakers may have of a hearer's response in real-life interaction, and so should not necessarily distort the resulting data (cf. Yamashita 1996: 13). On the other hand, however, Rintell & Mitchell (1989: 251) and Beebe et al. (1990) have criticised the hearer response for limiting the elicited speech acts and biasing the results obtained. Empirical evidence on this point is rather contradictory (cf. Barron 2003: 273 for an overview).
7. That this is the case was shown by Beebe & Cummings (1996) in a study which tested the validity of the production questionnaire. These researchers compared refusals gathered using telephone conversations and using a production questionnaire (a dialogue construction questionnaire). The dialogue construction questionnaire is a type of production questionnaire which does not include a hearer response. Also, the gap may or may not be prefaced by a turn from the interlocutor. Informants are required to complete the turn(s) of either one or two participants. Their data confirmed that the productions elicited using the questionnaire accurately reflected the content expressed in real-life situations. This finding has also been reported by Margalef-Boada (1993: 155), who compared open role-play data with production questionnaire data. Similarly, Bodman & Eisenstein (1988) and Eisenstein & Bodman (1993) found that natural observation, written questionnaires, oral questionnaires and open role-plays revealed similar semantic strategies.
8. At the same time, however, even when a rather extensive situational description is given, the situation described does not necessarily reflect the complexity and ambiguity of natural data (cf. Billmyer & Varghese 2000: 545).

9. I would like to thank Jolie Taublieb and Anne Tully for help in the data collection process.
10. Mulken (1996) criticises the differentiation between mitigation and indirectness and Hasall (1997: 190–191) criticises the selection criteria for internal modifiers.
11. The CCSARP is not the only categorisation of request strategies existing. Trosborg (1995), who employs a coding scheme based largely on that of the CCSARP, identifies eight rather than nine levels of directness and four rather than three major request strategies – reflecting her differentiation between speaker- and hearer-based conditions in relation to conventionally indirect request strategies. Other categorisations include those by Ervin-Tripp (1976), by Fraser (1978) and by Aijmer (1996). Ervin-Tripp (1976) identifies six strategies, Fraser (1978) 18 strategies and Aijmer (1996) 18 strategies.
12. Issues of perspective in the present datasets are discussed in Barron (forthcoming). However, despite interesting differences, the analysis did not exhibit any statistically significant cross-varietal differences.
13. It should be noted that Table 3 focuses on those syntactic downgraders and syntactic downgraders used most frequently in the data given. It does not, however, include, all instances of syntactic downgraders employed. Hence, the figures do not necessarily add up to 100%.
14. Other lexical and phrasal downgraders include understaters, hedges and cajolers, appealers. However, these are not used in the present data.
15. More than one lexical and phrasal downgrader was used in some replies. The figures in Figures 5 and 6 are, therefore, not calculated as a percentage of the total lexical and phrasal downgraders employed but rather reflect how often an informant who employed a lexical and phrasal downgrader employed a subjectiviser.
16. Here the external mitigators are given as a percentage of the overall number of query preparatory strategies employed in the particular situation. Similarly, the use of disarmers and the use of grounders are given as a percentage of the external mitigation employed and the pre-grounders as a percentage of the grounders employed. The use of preparators, imposition minimisers and apologies for imposition are not discussed in the present context due to space limitations. They did not, however, show any noteworthy cross-varietal differences.
17. The International Corpus of English (ICE) has been aiming at compiling a corpus of fifteen varieties of English since 1990. Each corpus, similar in structure, consists of one million words of spoken and written English produced in 1989 and after. The East African, Great Britain, Indian, New Zealand, Singapore, Philippine and Hong Kong corpora have already been completed (cf. The International Corpus of English [ICE]).

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Appendix

1. IN THE STREET

Margaret is driving into town when she notices a house on fire in front of her. She pulls into the side and parks and is walking towards the house when a policeman comes up to her.

Policeman: -----

 ----- We're expecting an ambulance to arrive any minute.

Margaret: Sure, I'll move it straight away.

2. Ann missed a class the day before and would like to borrow Jane's notes.

Ann: -----

Jane: Sure, but let me have them back before the class next week.

3. AT A UNION MEETING

The meeting is over. Jack's bus has just left and the next one is not due for an hour. Jack knows that the couple next to him (who he knows by sight only) live in the same street as he does and that they have come by car.

Jack: -----

Woman: I'm sorry, but we're not going home straight away.

Response tokens in British and Irish discourse

Corpus, context and variational pragmatics*

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to look at two varieties of English, British English and Irish English, within the framework of variational pragmatics, using corpus linguistics as a methodological tool in order to assess its usefulness (and limitations) to research in this area. Our analytical focus for this investigation is response tokens, a discourse feature seen as a core part of spoken grammar (McCarthy 2002, 2003, Carter & McCarthy 2006).

2. Corpus linguistics and language variation

2.1 What is corpus linguistics?

Aijmer & Altenberg (1991: 1) describe corpus linguistics (CL) as the study of language on the basis of text corpora. It has developed rapidly since the 1960s, largely due to the advent of computers and their increasing capacity to store and process greater amounts of data. This has facilitated the systematic analysis of vast amounts of language and, in turn, has meant that descriptions (and prescriptions) about the English language have frequently been contradicted by corpus linguists who work with representative samples of naturally-occurring language (cf. Holmes 1988, Baynham 1991, Boxer & Pickering 1995, Kettmann 1995, Baynham 1996, Carter 1998, Hughes & McCarthy 1998, and McCarthy 1998). CL is increasingly being applied to contexts and domains where the *use* of language is the focus of empirical study in a given context. Among the many fields where CL is being adopted to complement other methodological tools, such as discourse analysis and conversation analysis, are contexts such as: courtrooms (including forensic linguistics) (cf. Cotterill 2004),

workplace discourse (cf. Koester 2006), classroom and educational contexts (cf. Farr 2002, 2003, Walsh 2002, O’Keeffe & Farr 2003), political discourse (cf. McCarthy & Carter 2002), advertising and the media (cf. O’Keeffe 2002, 2006, Charteris-Black 2004, O’Keeffe & Breen 2007) and healthcare discourse (cf. Adolphs et al. 2004).

A *corpus* is defined as “a large and principled collection of naturalised [computerised] texts” in spoken or written form (after Biber et al. 1998: 4), which is available for analysis using corpus software packages (for further definitions cf. Renouf 1997, Sinclair 1997, Tognini-Bonelli 2001). Some debate exists as to whether CL is a theory or a method (cf. Tognini-Bonelli 2001), or indeed, whether it is a new or separate branch of linguistics. Kennedy (1998) suggests that corpus-based research derives evidence from texts and so it differs from other approaches to language which depend on introspection for evidence. In this paper, we argue that a corpus-linguistic approach benefits the analysis of a pragmatic feature across varieties.

Here, we will use spoken data as our focus. Recent years have seen a major growth in the creation and development of spoken corpora, particularly in the English language, but not exclusively (cf. McCarthy & O’Keeffe 2004). However, many of the spoken corpora thus collected are addenda to much larger written corpora. The British National Corpus (BNC), for example is a 100-million-word corpus of which ten million words make up the spoken component (cf. Aston & Burnard 1998). Other large well-known corpora include the Longman Spoken American Corpus (cf. Stern 1997) and the American National Corpus (ANC) (cf. Ide & Macleod 2001, Ide et al. 2002), of which all contain spoken components.

A number of exclusively spoken corpora are emerging which have been designed to give greater representation to spoken discourse, for example the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) (cf. McCarthy 1998, Carter 1998), five million words collected mainly in Britain and the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (LCIE) (cf. Farr et al. 2002), both of which will be used in this study (see below). Other spoken corpora include: the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English, based on over a 1000 recordings of spontaneous speech from all over the United States (Du Bois et al. 2000); the two-million-word Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English (HKCSE) (cf. Cheng & Warren 1999, 2000, 2002); the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE), which makes almost two million words of spoken language available online (cf. Simpson et al. 2000); the Corpus of Spoken Professional American English (CSPA), a two-million-word corpus made up of academic discussions, committee meetings and White House press conferences (Barlow 2000); The International Corpus of English (ICE) project, which comprises spoken data for the Englishes of Hong Kong (Bolton et al. 2003), New Zealand (cf. Holmes 1996), Singapore (cf. Ooi 1997), Great Britain (cf. Nelson et al. 2002), Ireland (cf. Kallen & Kirk 2001), Nigeria (cf. Banjo 1996), and the Caribbean (cf. Nero 2000), with others under development. The Vienna and Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE), a spoken corpus of English as a Lingua Franca, is also underway (cf. Seidlhofer 2001). In addition, the

Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage (LINDSEI), set up in 1995 (cf. De Cock 1998, 2000), provides spoken data for the analysis of learner language (cf. also Granger et al. 2002). These many sources of data provide researchers of spoken language with opportunities to look at large amounts of data whereas previously they might have only looked at qualitatively much smaller amounts, such as single conversations, for example. In recent years, many differences between spoken and written lexico-grammar have been identified and quantified. Carter & McCarthy (1995), for example, in one of their early works on the CANCODE corpus, introduced the term “spoken grammar” as distinct from “written grammar.” This notion of spoken grammar has been elaborated on and codified subsequently in corpus-based grammars, such as Biber et al. (1999) and Carter & McCarthy (2006).

Here we are interested in looking at a discourse feature across two language varieties, using data from two language corpora which have been assembled with the study of spoken discourse in mind, namely the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) and the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (LCIE).¹ Both CANCODE and LCIE have been designed using the same data collection and categorisation matrix (for an extensive description of CANCODE see McCarthy 1998 and for LCIE see Farr et al. 2002). These corpora are suited to variational research as they have been designed using the same principles, which are to be sensitive to speaker relationship, context and speech genre. Their data come from distinct sociocultural settings, Britain and Ireland respectively. In this paper we will focus on a common feature of spoken interaction, namely *listener response tokens*, in the two corpora so as to examine the degree of variation, if any, between their form and use in British and Irish English.

2.2 How to build a corpus

By way of background, we illustrate how a basic language corpus is assembled from spoken and/or written texts:

Table 1. Stages of building a corpus

Spoken	Written
1) Create a design rationale	1) Create a design rationale
2) Record data (one hour of conversation yields about 12,000 words)	2) Input texts (e.g. download, scan or type and save as text files) ²
3) Transcribe recordings and save as text files	3) Database texts (classify data according to variable such as theme, genre, author, date, source etc.)
4) Database texts (classify data according to, e.g. speaker, name, age, gender, level of education, place of birth, etc.)	
5) Check transcription	

2.3 Representativeness

The issue of how best to represent a language is a key concern to corpus designers (cf. Atkins et al. 1992, Biber 1993, Crowdy 1994, Tognini-Bonelli 2001, Farr et al. 2002, Adolphs 2006). In the case of variation-sensitive spoken corpora, there are two core concerns:

- 1) How to best represent a language variety
- 2) How to best represent a spoken language

The first is a question of geographical and demographic coverage and sampling. For example, the British National Corpus ten-million-word spoken component consists of unscripted informal conversation recorded by volunteers selected from different age groups, regions and social classes in a demographically balanced way (cf. Crowdy 1994). The second concern is a more complex matter relating to how spoken language itself is represented. Because most spoken corpora started out as appendage to much larger written corpora, many of them were based around written text typologies. The Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE), which was mainly recorded in the 1990s, is one of the few corpora that has been designed to represent both a language variety and the genres of casual conversation. Recorded in a wide range of areas across Britain and Ireland, the CANCODE corpus is carefully categorised according to the relationship that holds between the speakers and according to a broad discourse goal that the speakers pursue (cf. McCarthy 1998 for a detailed discussion of the design rationale for CANCODE).

In terms of speaker relationships, CANCODE is divided into five broad categories which reflect the degree of familiarity between the speakers. The relationship categories are as follows: intimate, sociocultural, professional, transactional and pedagogic. Conversations that have been assigned to the intimate category tend to take place between members of the same family or between partners, while the sociocultural category encompasses interactions between friends. The professional category captures discourse that is related to professional interactions. The transactional category refers to situations in which the speakers do not know one another prior to the conversation that is being recorded. Typical examples would be an interaction between a customer and a waitress at a restaurant. The pedagogic category includes interactions that take place between students and lecturers or between pupils and teachers in the given institutional context. In terms of goal types, there are three broad categories in the CANCODE corpus: *information provision*, which is characterised by uni-directional interactions; *collaborative idea*, which refers to bi-directional discourse; and *collaborative task*, which includes interactions in which the participants are engaged in a task, such as assembling flat-packed furniture, for example. Since discourse is dynamic in nature, the goal-type categories sometimes change within individual conversations. Where this happened, the inter-

action was assigned to the category which reflected the dominant goal type in the interaction.

The Limerick Corpus of Irish English has been assembled using the same design matrix as the CANCODE corpus in order to facilitate inter-varietal research between British and Irish English in the given genres. Because the CANCODE and LCIE corpora have been designed to represent spoken discourse, they are suited to our purpose of looking at the discourse feature of listener response. We will now survey the existing research into this discourse feature.

3. Response tokens

Researchers from a variety of perspectives have long recognised that conversations contain listener responses, that is short utterances and non-verbal surrogates (e.g. head nods) (cf. Fries 1952, Kendon 1967, Yngve 1970, Maynard 1989, 1990, 1997, Tottie 1991, Drummond & Hopper 1993a, 1993b, McCarthy 2002, Gardner 2002). These signals are produced by the listener, according to Kendon (1967), as an accompaniment to a speaker. Kendon suggests that there is some evidence that the speaker relies upon these signals for guidance as to how the message is being received. Examine, for example, how the word *yeah* functions in this extract from a radio phone-in (taken from the LCIE). Here an elderly caller to a radio phone-in is explaining how, when she was young, a local woman used to do home ear-piercing, using a thick darning needle, olive oil, some string and a cork.

- (1) [for transcription conventions for this and subsequent examples of data, please see Appendix]

Caller: The way this was done was a Scottish lady who lived across the road from us.

Presenter: *Yeah.*

Caller: And she would soak some grey wool. A length of grey wool in a saucer with olive oil.

Presenter: *Yeah.*

Caller: And then she'd thread it through an extremely large darning needle.

Presenter: *Yeah.*

Caller: Then there was a cork held together... and she just threaded the needle with the wool straight through your ear and into the cork... [LCIE]

In extract (1) we see that the presenter wants to signal that she is listening and that she wants the caller to continue telling her story, but she does not want to take over the speaking turn (or the “floor”). To achieve this, she uses short *response tokens* that keep the conversation going (in this case, *yeah*). Tottie (1991: 255) provides an apt metaphor for this phenomenon saying that these

tokens “grease the wheels of the conversation but constitute no claim to take over the turn.”

Many terms exist for this phenomenon in the research literature, often depending on discipline and definition. Yngve (1970) introduced the term *back-channel* to refer to the “short messages” that a speaker receives while holding the floor (1970: 568) and this term is widely used by many researchers. Fellego (1995) uses the term *minimal response* which comes from the body of research into language and gender (cf. Zimmerman & West 1975, Fishman 1978 and Coates 1986), while in another study Roger et al. (1988) use the broader term *listener response*. In this paper, we will use the term *listener response* as an umbrella term to refer to the activity involving vocal, verbal and non-verbal non-floor-holding responses when a listener responds to the floor-holding message in a conversation. We will also refer to items which are used in this activity as *response tokens*. It is worth noting that we refer here to the discourse function of these lexical items, rather than their word-class identity as adjectives or adverbs, etc. On a discourse level, Mott & Petrie (1995) point out that response tokens are the antithesis of interruptions. Duncan & Niederehe (1974) note that they project an understanding between speaker and listener that the turn has not been yielded, but they also note that it is often difficult to identify the boundary between brief utterances and proper turns where the “listener” becomes the “speaker.” This problem, however, is more for the analyst than the actual conversational participants, who, in real-time conversation, will draw on clues, such as prosodic features, facial expressions and gestures, to interpret whether an interlocutor is trying to take the floor or display listenership in a given context.

3.1 Forms of listenership

In this study, we will compare and contrast the distribution of forms and functions of such listener response tokens in two varieties of spoken English, British and Irish, using data from two corpora, CANCODE and LCIE, which have been designed for the study of spoken discourse, both using the same design matrix as detailed above. The existing research on forms shows that response tokens can be divided into *minimal* and *non-minimal* response tokens (cf. Zimmerman & West 1975, Fishman 1978, Schegloff 1982, Maynard 1989, 1990, 1997, Tottie 1991, Fellego 1995, Gardner 1997, 1998, 2002, McCarthy & Carter 2000, McCarthy 2002). Usually, minimal responses are defined as short utterances (for example *yeah*) or non-word vocalisations (such as *mm*, *umhum*), while non-minimal response tokens are mostly adverbs or adjectives functioning as pragmatic markers (e.g. *good*, *really great*, *absolutely*) or short phrases/minimal clauses (e.g. *you’re not serious*, *Is that so?* *by all means*, *fair enough*, *that’s true*, *not at all*). The distinction is, however, not necessarily clear cut, especially when using a corpus of transcribed audio cassette recordings, as these usually fail to capture non-verbal response tokens such as head nods and shoulder shrugs.³ Examples of minimal response tokens include:

- (2) A: Tis a lovely day but tis cold isn't it?
 B: Ah the days are grand shure well yesterday was a bad bad evening.
 A: *Mm.*
 B: It turned black. [LCIE]
- (3) A: Her hair is fab isn't it?
 B: Fab?
 A: It's so cool though.
 B: Yeah it's cool all right.
 A: Do you know it's so natural.
 B: *Mm.*
 A: It's a real nice shade like it's not you know. [LCIE]

Non-minimal response tokens, on the other hand, include:

- (4) A: I wouldn't have minded giving an apprenticeship to that lad here on the site cos he was a good strong worker so he was. ... he was a polite young fella too.
 B: *Is that right?*
 A: She had a tough job with them she brought up those two kids herself. Her marriage broke down there a long time ago. [LCIE]
- (5) A: ... isn't that nice now. Blue sky.
 B: *Lovely.*
 A: A bit of a breeze. [LCIE]

As noted by McCarthy (2002), non-minimal response tokens may be pre-modified by intensifying adverbs, which add further emphasis as in the case of *Oh jolly good* below:

- (6) [Woman talking about giving birth]
 A: Dick was very excited cos at one point they asked for hot towels.
 B: Oh.
 A: Just like the movies. So he skipped off down the corridor to get the hot towels.
 B: *Oh jolly good.* [CANCODE, McCarthy 2002: 65]
- (7) [Discussing tenancy problems in rented accommodation]
 A: Isn't there something in your tenancy agreement about it? You have a written agreement don't you?
 B: *Most definitely.* [CANCODE, McCarthy 2002: 65]

McCarthy (2002) notes that both minimal and non-minimal response tokens can occur in pairs or clusters, as in this example from LCIE:

- (8) A: ... you know it reminds me of am the play and ah.
 B: *Mm.*
 A: And the character in the play is not+

- B: I don’t know.
 A: +someone I’d kind of identify with+
 B: Yeah that’s true that’s true but I wonder if that’s a cultural sort of+
 A: *Yeah mm*
 B: +I don’t know I had the same question for Rosemary ... [LCIE]

Carter & McCarthy (2006) tell us that response token pairings are particularly evident when a topic is being closed down or at a boundary in the talk when another topic is being introduced.

- (9) [Couple asking permission to look at a disused railway line]
 A: It went through, it goes through. Straight, straight on.
 B: *Right. Wonderful. Great.* Can we look round then?
 A: Yes certainly.
 B: Thank you. [CANCODE]

McCarthy (2002) and Carter & McCarthy (2006) also point out that the tokens *absolutely*, *certainly* and *definitely* may be negated as response tokens by adding *not*.

- (10) [Speaker A is considering buying a CD player for the first time]
 A: ... but then I’d have to go out and buy lots of CD’s wouldn’t I.
 B: Well yes. I suppose you would.
 A: There’s no point in having a thing if you can’t play them. Haven’t got any.
 B: *Absolutely not. Absolutely not.* [CANCODE]

3.2 Functions of listener response tokens

The functions above are used to signal a boundary *and* pragmatically to add satisfaction or agreement, or simply to express friendly social support. Occasionally, triple response tokens occur.

In comparison to the volume of research on forms, relatively few studies address the micro-functions of response tokens in conversation. However, there is enough research available to assert that they have more than one macro discourse function. Yngve (1970), for example, notes from his observations of laboratory conversations, recorded audio-visually, that there is an apparent link between the use of certain forms and the marking of known or common information. Mott & Petrie (1995), in line with Bilous & Krauss (1988) and Fishman (1978), point out that listener responses signal support for, or attention to, what the speaker is saying. Fellego (1995), in a study in the context of American English minimal responses, concludes that 94.6% occur at phrase boundaries and that they function both grammatically and socially. Schegloff (1982) identifies the “continuer” function of response tokens. This function will be discussed further below. It refers to how response tokens facilitate the flow of ongoing talk, by signalling listenership at the most basic level. Building on this, Maynard’s (1989) cross-cultural study of Japanese students conversing

with American counterparts identified five functions in the data: display of understanding of content; support towards the speaker's judgement; agreement; strong emotional response; minor addition, correction or request for information. Gardner (1997), who looks at minimal responses in Australian data, points out that each has a distinctive role and interactional function (cf. also Gardner 2002). One of the few studies to look at listener response tokens in a specific social context is Antaki et al. (2000). They use the term *high-grade assessment* to refer to what other studies call *non-minimal responses* in the context of interviews (for example, tokens such as *brilliant*, *excellent*, *smashing* cf. also Antaki 2002). Antaki et al. (2000) argue that high grade assessments function in a task-oriented rather than in a content-oriented manner within such institutional interactions to mark successful completion of the interactional objective. Though expressed differently, this parallels the findings of McCarthy (2003) that these items function over and above the transactional domain of an interaction.

4. Corpus-based studies of listener response tokens across varieties

4.1 Data and methodology

This study looks at the discourse feature of response tokens in two varieties, in terms of forms and functions. Firstly, in relation to forms, we use two databases of one million words, each extracted from CANCODE (five million words in total, cf. McCarthy 1998 for further details) and LCIE (just over one million words collected in the Republic of Ireland, but not including Northern Irish English, cf. Farr et al. 2002),⁴ as described above. Each comprises only casual conversation from intimate contexts (that is, friends and families) across the three broad goal types as detailed above. Wordlists and cluster analyses were generated to identify and compare the forms used in the datasets.⁵

Word and cluster lists were generated for both corpora, and from these lists response forms were identified manually by cross-checking qualitatively with transcripts using concordancing. A cut off of the first 5000 items was used. In this selection process, a response token was defined as an item that fills a response slot, but which does not take over the speaker turn. In other words, response tokens are seen as turn yielding. In our analysis, response tokens that form part of a turn were not included as response tokens. For example, *really* in the following extract was not counted as a response token:

- (11) A: ... basically I think I shouldn't have gone at all because the prescription he gave me I think I could have gotten over the counter.
 B: *Really?* What did he give you? [LCIE]

Whereas *really* in example (12) does count as a response token because it does not take over the speaker turn:

- (12) A: And I don’t think her insurance is even that cheap.
 B: *Really*. [LCIE]

We limited our focus on forms to lexicalised items (e.g. *really*, *right*, *absolutely*, *no way*, *oh my God*) in the single word count. Vocalisations (e.g. *mm*, *umhum*, etc.) or other minimal non-lexicalised forms (such as *yep*, *oooh* etc.) were not included as single word tokens.

Finally, in a further step, we extracted from the CANCODE and the LCIE two small, highly comparable corpora in order to examine response token functions. Both of these corpora consisted of 20,000 words of casual conversations, between British and Irish females, all around 20 years of age. All participants were students and close friends, who, in most cases, shared accommodation. These data were examined qualitatively, in terms of all of the response tokens that occurred so as to identify and compare their functions.

4.2 Results

Within the cut-off range of 5000 occurrences of a word or cluster, only items that occurred at least five times as a response token were counted. This yielded 87 tokens in all, 36 in LCIE and 51 in CANCODE.

In terms of comparison at the level of forms, the corpus search brings to light a number of points. Firstly, we see that a broader range of forms is used by British English speakers, at the single and two-word level. Some of the variation in single word forms is attributable to language variety, for example, if we run concordance line searches on the forms that are not common to both LCIE and CANCODE, we find that *grand* (Irish English), and *quite*, *yes* (British English) are mutually exclusive as response tokens. We also see a broader range of forms in the British English single-word items which are also found in American English, i.e. *right*, *absolutely*, *sure*, *good*, *lovely*, *exactly*, *great*, *definitely*, *true*, *really* (as noted by McCarthy 2002). In contrast, the Irish single word forms only have *really*, *sure* and *right* in common with McCarthy’s findings for single word non-minimal responses in American English.

Table 2. LCIE and CANCODE single-word response tokens within the first 500 words which occurred more than five times (frequency per million words)⁶

LCIE				CANCODE			
<i>yeah</i>	(2092)*	<i>God</i>	(21)	<i>yeah</i>	(1946)*	<i>lovely</i>	(33)
<i>no</i>	(483)*	<i>lovely</i>	(14)	<i>yes</i>	(1260)	<i>exactly</i>	(23)
<i>right</i>	(268)	<i>maybe</i>	(10)	<i>right</i>	(1200)*	<i>great</i>	(19)
<i>what</i>	(211)*	<i>grand</i>	(9)	<i>no</i>	(989)*	<i>nice</i>	(16)
<i>really</i>	(128)	<i>brilliant</i>	(8)	<i>really</i>	(221)	<i>definitely</i>	(15)
<i>sure</i>	(66)	<i>never</i>	(6)	<i>aye</i>	(241)	<i>never</i>	(11)
<i>Jesus</i>	(57)			<i>okay</i>	(87)	<i>absolutely</i>	(11)
				<i>God</i>	(79)	<i>quite</i>	(8)
				<i>sure</i>	(60)	<i>maybe</i>	(7)
				<i>good</i>	(51)	<i>true</i>	(7)

Table 3. LCIE and CANCODE two-word clusters that occurred more than five times within the 500 most frequent forms (frequency per million words)

LCIE		CANCODE					
<i>oh yeah</i>	(245)	<i>oh no</i>	(26)	<i>oh yeah</i>	(345)	<i>do you?</i>	(26)
<i>oh right</i>	(220)	<i>all right</i>	(22)	<i>oh right</i>	(244)	<i>oh well</i>	(25)
<i>yeah yeah</i>	(214)	<i>right yeah</i>	(21)	<i>that's right</i>	(166)	<i>do they?</i>	(23)
<i>no no</i>	(45)	<i>Jesus Christ</i>	(13)	<i>oh yes</i>	(122)	<i>isn't it?</i>	(22)
<i>oh God</i>	(40)	<i>my God</i>	(10)	<i>I know</i>	(119)	<i>no no</i>	(17)
<i>is she?</i>	(35)			<i>oh God</i>	(99)	<i>very nice</i>	(16)
				<i>oh dear</i>	(92)	<i>don't you?</i>	(14)
				<i>is it?</i>	(79)	<i>very good</i>	(11)
				<i>all right</i>	(64)	<i>I see</i>	(10)
				<i>did you?</i>	(45)		

Table 4. LCIE and CANCODE three-word clusters that occurred more than five times within the 500 most frequent forms (frequency per million words)

LCIE		CANCODE					
<i>I don't know</i>	(129)	<i>oh yeah yeah</i>	(20)	<i>I don't know</i>	(93)	<i>do you reckon</i>	(10)
<i>oh my God</i>	(97)	<i>not at all</i>	(12)	<i>oh I see</i>	(44)	<i>I can't remember</i>	(8)
<i>yeah yeah yeah</i>	(63)	<i>oh right yeah</i>	(12)	<i>oh my God</i>	(35)	<i>it doesn't matter</i>	(5)
<i>yeah I know</i>	(46)	<i>no no no</i>	(10)	<i>something like that</i>	(13)		
<i>Are you serious?</i>	(30)	<i>I know that</i>	(8)				
<i>I know yeah</i>	(27)						

Table 5. LCIE and CANCODE four-word clusters that occurred more than five times within the 500 most frequent forms (frequency per million words)

LCIE		CANCODE	
<i>oh yeah yeah yeah</i>	(21)	<i>I don't think so</i>	(14)
<i>no no no no</i>	(10)	<i>oh I don't know</i>	(7)
<i>yeah yeah yeah yeah</i>	(8)	<i>Erm I don't know</i>	(6)

[No five- or six-word clusters occurring with a frequency greater than five were found in either CANCODE or LCIE.]

At a pragmatic level, we note that there are a number of differences. Firstly, *yes* and *quite* in British English have no corresponding occurrence in the Irish data. In the conversation below, two women in their 40s and 50s talk about speaker A's chiropractor.

- (13) A: But he's very nice and what he does is erm <\$/=> he doesn't </\$/=> he tries to do the minimum+
- B: Mm.
- A: +to get you right. He doesn't believe in doing everything all the time.
- B: No.

- A: If things are going well he tries to leave it alone you see.
[four turns later]
B: Well the trouble with <unintelligible> who was just so brilliant+
A: Yeah.
B: +such such a wonderful man+
A: Yes.
B: +that everyone seems poor in comparison. [CANCODE]
- (14) A: Well I do hope this Hoover thing is gonna be sorted out. Cos I am not having my flight out to Orlando <\$H> if if poss <\\$H> ruined by+
B: Mm.
A: +a bunch of Hoover-swinging Scotsmen.
B: *Quite*. [CANCODE]

We posit that such forms index a higher level of formality in British English. McCarthy (2002) also found occurrences of *quite* in his study of non-minimal forms in British data, and he comments that “intuition and subjective impressions suggest that *quite* as a single word response token is at the very least rather formal in contemporary British speech, and may be on the verge of being perceived as an archaism” (2002: 60). In the CANCODE data in this study, *quite* occurred eight times in one million words of British English.

Other form-related observations which account for the broader spread of two-word items in the British English data include the use of tag questions, such as:

Table 6. Tags in British English, occurrences per million words

Tag	<i>is it?</i>	<i>did you?</i>	<i>do you?</i>	<i>do they?</i>	<i>isn't it?</i>	<i>don't you?</i>
Occurrences per million words	79	45	26	23	22	14

We also found evidence of their use in the Irish data, but only in the form of *is she?*, which occurred 27 times per million words. Carter & McCarthy (2006) use the term *follow-up question* to refer to these forms which they say can function as a signal of engagement and attention by the listener. This function, they note, is often very similar to that of backchannel responses, such as *yeah* and *really*. They support this, saying that follow-up tag questions in informal spoken language often simply function to keep the conversation going by inviting further responses from the listener.

- (15) C: It’s one one thing I used to dread.
A: *Did you?* [CANCODE]
- (16) A: [laughing] <background noise> That’s polenta. They have polenta all the time on Ready Steady Cook.
B: *Do they?* [CANCODE]

Religious references and swear words appear in both the British and Irish data. However, their use in the British data is limited to *God* and *oh God*, while the Irish data comprise *God*, *oh God* and *oh my God* and the swear words *Jesus* and *Jesus Christ*. Here is an example from LCIE:

- (17) [Friends are looking at an old school team photo and are trying to identify the people in it]
 A: Ryan the oldest guy Tom Hartnett John Rodgers+
 B: Oh yeah.
 A: +Brian Fitz.
 B: Paul Regan.
 [laughing].
 A: *Jesus Christ*
 B: What year is this?
 A: The late nineties [LCIE]

In the differing use and frequency of religious references, we see pragmatic variation that points to a greater level of informality within the Irish data, as the pragmatic impact of *God* is more neutral compared with *Jesus*. However, there is a paradox here which is best understood socioculturally. The Irish speakers seem to accept swearing as a normal and frequent response token. It seems to have reached semantic neutrality. However, Ireland is still a predominantly Catholic country and so one might expect the opposite to be the case. The explanation may be found in Andersson & Trudgill's (1990) work; they note that swearing is associated with the areas that are taboo or significant in a particular culture.⁷ Hence, it is because *Jesus* has more significance in Irish society that is it used as a swear word in everyday conversation.

There is also a contrast in the reduplication of forms in both datasets. The Irish data display more reduplication: *yeah yeah, no no, yeah yeah yeah, no no no, oh yeah yeah yeah, no, no, no, no* and *yeah yeah yeah yeah*. For example:

- (18) [Three friends are discussing surrogate reproduction]
 A: That would kill me seeing someone else having my child.
 B: Ah *no no no no no no*. I had this conversation with my mother now.
 C: *No no no no no*.
 B: No if Caitriona couldn't have kids or one of my friends or someone and they asked me to have their kid I'd have no problem having it for them.
 A: I wouldn't have a problem doing it but I would have a problem with someone else having it. Imagine having your mother carrying your baby like.
 [laughing]
 A: My baby would be my sister like.
 [laughing] [LCIE]

The British data, while it has less reduplication, contains more clusters with the vocalisation *oh*:

Table 7. Occurrences of *Oh*-clusters in British English

<i>oh</i> form	<i>oh</i> <i>yeah</i>	<i>oh</i> <i>right</i>	<i>oh</i> <i>yes</i>	<i>oh</i> <i>God</i>	<i>oh</i> <i>dear</i>	<i>oh I</i> <i>see</i>	<i>oh my</i> <i>God</i>	<i>oh</i> <i>well</i>	<i>oh I don't</i> <i>know</i>
Occurrences per million words	345	244	122	99	92	44	35	25	7

For example:

- (19) A: They’d been cleaned and put in.
 B: Oh they’d put them back in a bag or something had they?
 A: No. They weren’t in a bag. They were just inside the chicken.
 B: *Oh God*.
 A: I just chucked them away and said nowt. [laughing] [CANCODE]

Finally, we note that the Irish form *Are you serious?* could lead to cross-cultural pragmatic failure (after Thomas 1983) because it could be misunderstood in terms of how the listener orients towards the propositional content of the message. The form, which is used in Irish English as non-minimal response token, is not found in the more dominant variety of British English, and therefore we propose that it has potential for pragmatic confusion or even face threat. Here is an example of its use in Irish English:

- (20) [Three speakers are gossiping about two young men in their locality who have built a house together]
 A: ... he’s just built his house it was built in the last six months my god it’s a massive yoke the two lads living on their own.
 B: *Are you serious?*
 A: Yes you would be afraid to touch anything.
 B: Aren’t they marvellous?
 A: Yeah really like it doesn’t look like a home at all cause everything is just perfect.
 C: Like a showhouse. [LCIE]

5. Functions of response tokens

Hitherto, we have looked at response token forms using relatively large corpus samples (though one million words would be considered a small corpus by contemporary norms). This has allowed us to see lexical patterns using our software. There is no automatic means of extracting and comparing the discourse functions of response tokens, so, in order to overcome this, we have constructed two very small and very comparative datasets which we will examine qualitatively in terms of how response tokens function within them. The datasets are again sub-corpora of LCIE and CANCODE. Both comprise 20,000 words of data and are matched in terms of gender, age, social relationship, two-

party to multi-party ratio of interactions, socio-economic class and genre of conversation:

Table 8. Description of sub-corpora of 20,000 words each

Sub-corpus	No. of words	Description
YW20a – Irish English Young women of 20 (LCIE)	20,000	Two sets of 10,000 words (all data are taken from LCIE) 1) of a two-party conversation between close Irish female friends 2) of a multi-party conversation between four close Irish female friends. In all cases the women were students around the age of 20. Topics covered include: gossip about friends and boy-friends, anecdotes and stories.
YW20b – British English Young women of 20 (CANCODE)	20,000	In parallel with sub-corpus YW20a, these data comprise sets of 10,000 words (all data are taken from CANCODE) 1) of a two-party conversation between close British female friends 2) of a multi-party conversation between five close British female friends. In all cases the women were students around the age of 20. Topics covered include: gossip about friends and boy-friends, anecdotes and stories.

All of the data were read exhaustively so as to manually identify and classify all response tokens. These functional classifications were devised by two raters and cross-checked by a third rater. In terms of frequency of response tokens, we found that there were considerably more in the British data. This is in line with the finding above that fewer response token types were used in Irish English. This result allows us to speculate that there is more response token use in British English than in Irish English. However, this hypothesis would merit a separate investigation.

Table 9. Frequency of forms in YW20a (Irish) and YW20b (British) datasets

Corpus	YW20a (Irish)	YW20b (British)
Frequency/20,000 words	191	304

Before we go into greater quantitative detail in our comparison, we first outline the four broad functions which we identified in these data as a whole (cf. Table 10):

Table 10. Functions of response tokens in casual conversation

Type of token	Function	Typical examples
Continuer tokens*	Maintain the flow of the discourse.	Minimal forms such as <i>Yeah, mm.</i>
Convergence tokens	Markers of agreement/convergence. They are linked to points in the discourse: 1) where there is a topic boundary or closure 2) where there is a need to converge on an understanding of what is common ground or shared knowledge between participants.	Many forms can perform this function such as: • single word items: <i>yeah</i> • follow-up questions such as <i>did you?, is she?</i> • short statements, e.g. agreeing statements: <i>yeah it’s pretty sad.</i>
Engagement tokens	Markers of high engagement where addressee(s) respond on an affective level to the content of the message. These backchannels express genuine emotional responses such as surprise, shock, horror, sympathy, empathy and so on.	They manifest in many forms for example: • single-word forms, such as <i>excellent, absolutely</i> • short statements, repetitions: <i>that’s nice, oh wow, oh really</i> • follow-up questions: <i>did you?</i>
Information receipt tokens	Markers of points in the discourse where adequate information has been received. These responses can impose a boundary in the discourse and can signal a point of topic transition or closure, and they can be indicative of asymmetrical discourse.	<i>Right and okay</i>

* (after Schegloff 1982)

5.1 Continuer response tokens

Continuer response tokens are facilitative in that they maintain the flow of talk. As the term suggests, they encourage the current speaker to continue. As mentioned above, many researchers have identified this function of listener response and noted that it is usually realised using minimal response tokens (cf. Schegloff 1982, Maynard 1989, Gardner 1997, 1998, 2002). Speakers perceive continuer response tokens as floor-yielding signals that mark the addressee’s desire for the talk to continue. An analysis of concordance lines for a minimal response token such as *mm*, reveals that it is surrounded by ongoing utterances rather than being part of a turn itself. In the extract (21) taken from the LCIE YW20a corpus, a friend is telling of a text message “conversation” she had with her boyfriend (note *messing* is Irish English slang for *joking*). *Yeah* signals that the listener is eager for the story to continue:

- (21) A: And he sent one back saying “ah come on now Sinead are you messing or are you serious like?”
 B: *Yeah*
 A: And ah he sent one saying “no I’m deadly serious am I’m going to kill you when I catch you” so the next thing your man was pure upset over this like and... [LCIE – YW20a]

We can observe from this example that continuer tokens are facilitative in that they maintain the flow of talk. They may be perceived by the speaker as floor-yielding signals that mark the addressee’s desire for the narrative to continue. In the following example from CANCODE YW20b in which friends are talking about buying a pair of shoes, the minimal response token *mm* facilitates the flow of the conversation.

- (22) [*Superdrug* refers to the name of a British shop]
 A: I didn’t even know they sold erm shoes in there.
 B: No. I didn’t know they sold shoes.
 C: Didn’t know that.
 A: But erm.
 C: They’re really nice.
 A: Cos like it’s really weird cos I had erm you know when you think of something you want to have.
 C: *Mm*.
 A: And you haven’t seen them in the shops.
 C: *Mm*.
 A: I sort of thought oh I really want you know. And I sort of visualised what I wanted and then erm I went down Superdrug with Rachel and we popped in and I thought Ooh. They’re the ones I want. [CANCODE – YW20b]

5.2 Convergence response tokens

Close examination of the corpus examples shows that response tokens are most frequently found at points of convergence in conversations, that is, where participants agree, or simply converge on opinions or mundane topics and this leads them to negotiate topic boundary points collaboratively, where a topic can be shifted or changed. Convergence can also be followed by a conversational closure point. In this way, response tokens have a pragmatic function in that they help bring about agreement and convergence leading sometimes to topic shifts. In the following example from the CANCODE excerpt YW20b between female flatmates, we see that the topic (a great night out that the friends had together) has run its course and it is collaboratively rounded off with the non-minimal response token *you never know*. Notice also how this phrase is a recycling of a phrase from the previous turn, which makes for a very symmetrical ending point at which participants converge topically and lexically before moving on to a new topic:

- (23) A: Yeah. We haven't had a night like that for a while have we?
 B: No. Must have another one.
 A: Silly night. [laughing] What?
 B: Must have another one.
 A: Well I think we will.
 B: Wednesday.
 A: Mm. Lifts the spirits.
 B: Mm. *You never know* we might be able to get a new recruit.
 A: [laughing] *You never know*.
 B: [laughing] [CANCODE – YW20b]

After this point in the conversation, the topic shifts. In example (24) below, two close friends are chatting about a former classmate who committed suicide. We see how one phase of the narrative ends with an evaluative formulation phased over two turns: *it just goes to show you can't take people at face value* and *And you don't know what's going on*. This evaluation is unchallenged by the addressee and convergence is signalled after each phase of the evaluation by the response tokens *no* and *exactly*. This registers the addressee's agreement and it allows the conversation to move to a side sequence to this tragic story (see turns 5 and 6) to which both participants contribute:

- (24) A: ... it just goes to show you can't take people at face value.
 B: *No*.
 A: And you don't know what's going on either.
 B: *Exactly*.
 A: But am seemingly she knew what she was doing as well because she brought the+
 B: Oh she had it all planned out. She brought the little brother into get a present inside in Galway... [LCIE – YW20a]

Adolphs & O'Keeffe (2002) note that as well as helping to bring about topic shifts, these tokens are often found in closings as they allow conversations to come to a collaborative end. The authors illustrate how in an Irish radio phone-in show, *Liveline*, the presenter uses them and other markers of agreement in the closing of the call:

- (25) [The presenter and the caller are chatting about the merits of clip on earrings]
 Presenter: And aren't they grand?
 Caller: Yes they're very very handy.
 Presenter: *Yeah*.
 Caller: But they're not as secure as having them in your ear.
 Presenter: *This is true. This is true*.
 Caller: You know you could lose them easily.
 Presenter: *That's true*. O.K. Tess well thanks for talking to us thanks very much
 Caller: Right thanks very much. Bye
 Presenter: All the best. Thank you indeed bye bye bye bye. [LCIE]

McCarthy (2003) notes that non-minimal response tokens sometimes cluster in consecutive series across speakers, providing multiple signals that a conversation is about to be terminated, while at the same time consolidating interpersonal relationships. He also observes that they often occur together with other markers of closure, such as thanks, checks, confirmations and greetings, and that clustering is especially frequent in telephone conversations where there are often pre-closing and closing routines.

In a pragmatic sense, the affective value of convergence response tokens is worth noting. These tokens are of higher relational value than continuer tokens (see Section 5.1 above). They do more than just signal turn-yielding, listener-ship and a desire for the narrative to continue. Signalling agreement or converging on mundane topics is a form of interactional bonding between speaker and addressee and convergence response tokens help maintain good relations between speakers by reinforcing commonality between them.

5.3 Engagement tokens

This type of response token again functions very much at an affective level. Engagement tokens thus signal the addressee's enthusiasm, empathy, sympathy, surprise, shock and disgust at what the speaker is saying, without taking over the turn. They are also indicative of the addressee's high level of engagement with the content of the speaker's message. These tokens are typically non-minimal responses and common items include *brilliant*, *absolutely*, *wow*, *cool*, *gosh*, *really* and short phrases, such as *that's tough*, *you're not serious*, *Is that so?* In example (26), an engagement token is used to express the addressee's delight at what her friend is saying. Speaker B is talking about how she will spend the summer with her boyfriend in Edinburgh (note: Debenhams is a well-known British department store; CV refers to curriculum vitae or *résumé*):

- (26) A: What are you going to do about a job?
 B: I don't know. He says that it's going to be like Killarney and that I should get one easily enough and I've been in contact with Debenhams and they told me to send over my CV.
 A: *Brilliant Mary brilliant.* [LCIE – YW20a]

In example (27), we see an engagement token signalling the addressee's sympathy with the speaker's message using a vocalisation.

- (27) [Speaker A has just told a story of how she and her boyfriend had a row a few days earlier]
 A: Were you out last night?
 B: I was.
 A: Where were you?
 B: Am you see we had to reconcile last night and get it all back on.
 A: *Aaahhhh*

B: He says to me “I forgive you anyway” he says “for what you did to me” and I says “I was only testing the waters.” [LCIE – YW20a]

Examples from the British YW20b data include:

(28) A: He was singing to me. [laughing] And then he come over and he gave me one. And he gave me a peck on the he kissed me on the forehead and gave me a hug.

B: *Ah. That’s nice.*

A: [laughing] And then walked me home. It was hand in hand skipping up the road. [laughing] And gave me a hug goodbye.

B: I’ve had flowers given to me.

A: *That was nice.* [CANCODE – YW20b]

(29) A: I ate almost a whole jar of Roses this weekend.

B: *Did you?*

[laughing] [CANCODE – YW20b]

This type of response token functions at a much higher relational level than continuer tokens since they not only signal a desire for the speaker to continue, but also communicate the addressee’s affective response to the speaker’s message.

5.4 Information receipt tokens

We found a small number of response tokens in both datasets which did not fit any of the above categories. While the previous three types of tokens seemed to serve relational functions, a further type of token seemed to have a more organisational function. These backchannels were usually also marked by falling pitch. In the few examples that we found, they seemed to serve a global discourse marking function (cf. Lenk 1998) within the orientation stage of a narrative. This response token is used as a “self-imposed” pragmatic marker at which the storyteller marks a boundary where the narrative can begin now that the contingent details are clear for the participants. In example (30), taken from the Irish casual conversation data (YW20a), we see that when the storyteller uses an information receipt token at the point where she assumes all of the contingent details are in place to continue with the story, the listener signals that she is not ready and still needs more details (or at least confirmation of an assumed piece information). The storyteller provides these before continuing.

(30) A: He’s been in Wexford for years right. I told you he’s separated didn’t I? And that he has a child.

B: Yeah.

A: *Right.*

B: But he’s only young isn’t he?

A: He’s only 29. [LCIE – YW20a]

In extract (31) from the British data (YW20b), we see another instance of an information receipt token being “self-imposed” so as to organize information in the preamble to an anecdote. Here we see that speaker C signals that she is *au fait* with the contingent details, but this is not the case for B and so there is a prolonged stage of inquiry about the character of the forthcoming anecdote:

- (31) A: ... I just saw this person I thought was quite nice but I can't remember what he looks like ... [laughing]
 B: Is that Trinity?
 A: Mm.
 C: *Oh right*.
 B: Is he tall? Short?
 A: Don't know really.
 ?: <unintelligible>
 B: Distorted.
 [laughing]
 A: No. He's not like really short and he's not really tall. He's sort of.
 B: Average height.
 A: Average. Yeah.
 [laughing]
 B: A normal sort of guy.
 [laughing] [CANCODE – YW20b]

Adolphs & O'Keeffe (2002) and O'Keeffe (2003) found this type of response token, particularly in the form of *right*, to be very prevalent in their analyses of Irish radio phone-in data. Here, the presenter used such response tokens in an organisational manner. Adolphs & O'Keeffe propose that this token is strongly associated with asymmetrical interaction where one of the participants is a power role holder (see below for a functional comparison, Figure 3). McCarthy (2003) has also noted that some response tokens are strongly associated with particular contexts. *Fine*, he suggests, most typically occurs in making arrangements and reaching decisions and *certainly* most typically occurs in reply to a request for a service or favour:

- (32) A: Okay. I'll see you a bit later then.
 B: *Fine*.
 A: In the morning, whenever. [CANCODE]
- (33) [To a waiter]
 A: Can I have the bill please?
 B: *Yes, certainly*. [CANCODE]

McCarthy (2003) notes that adjectives such as *excellent*, *fine*, *great*, *good*, *lovely*, *right*, *perfect* offer positive feedback to the speaker and often mark the boundaries of topics, where speakers express their satisfaction with phases of business such as making arrangements, agreeing on courses of action, and marking the satisfactory exchange of information, goods and services.

- (34) [At a travel agent’s]
 Assistant: There you go. There’s your ticket. And your accommodation there. Insurance, and just some general information.
 Customer: *Excellent. Right.* [CANCODE]
- (35) [Dealer (A) and customer (B) in a car spare parts depot]
 A: I’ll get one of the lads in to come and do it for you.
 B: *Lovely.* [CANCODE]

5.5 Summary of functions

When we look at the functions quantitatively, we find that the pattern of their distribution is reasonably similar in the Irish and British young women data, with the function of *convergence* tokens being the most frequent followed by *engagement* tokens.

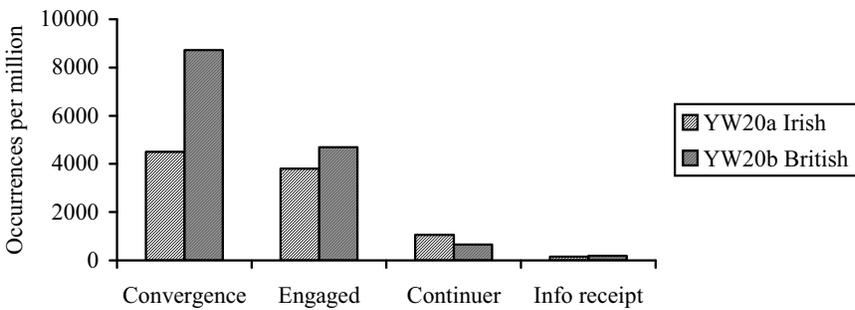


Figure 1. Functional distribution of response tokens in British and Irish young woman data (two-party and multi-party) (occurrences per million words)

However, when the results were compared across multi- versus two-party interactions (below, p. 91), we found them to be inversely proportional. In the Irish data, there are far more response tokens used in the two-party conversation (see wide-striped bar portion of Figure 2a) while in the British data, this result is reversed. It is not possible to draw any broad conclusions from this finding without conducting further analyses. The functional pattern of distribution remained the same, with convergence tokens remaining the most frequent type of response token used in all categories.

The YW20a and YW20b datasets were closely matched in terms of age, gender, social relationship, socio-economic class, but we posit that the type of conversation (everyday conversations about friends, shopping, boyfriends etc.) is the most influential factor resulting in the homogeneity of functional distribution. This is perhaps substantiated by a comparison with our earlier findings (cf. Adolphs & O’Keeffe 2002, O’Keeffe 2003), when we conducted a similar functional analysis of 20,000 words of interactions from an Irish radio phone-in

show, *Liveline*. Figure 3 compares the functions of response tokens in the young women's data and the Irish radio phone-in corpus.

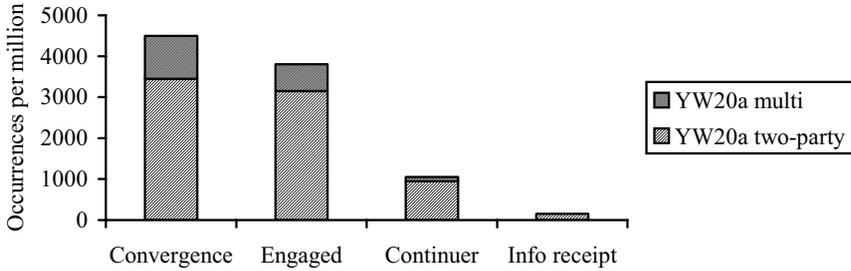


Figure 2a. Profile of functions in YW20a (Irish) two-party and multi-party conversations (occurrences per million words)

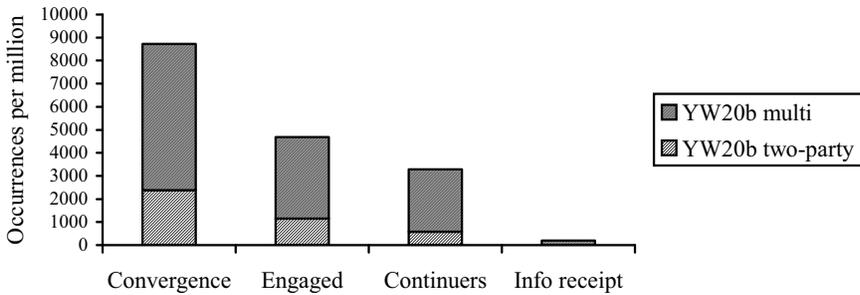


Figure 2b. Profile of functions in YW20b (British) two-party and multi-party conversations (occurrences per million words)

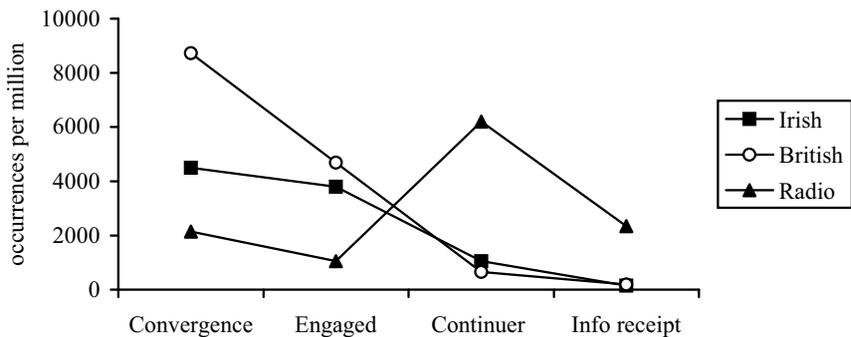


Figure 3. Comparative of functions in YW20a and b with Irish radio phone-in functions across 20,000 words (results presented per million words)

Because the genre of conversation differs, we find a different functional pattern, most noticeably, the substantially higher frequency of response tokens which function as continuers in radio discourse. This is attributable also to the mode of communication as radio conversations take place in sound-only mode.

6. Conclusion

We set out to address the dearth of comparative pragmatic research in terms of how varieties of English differ. Within the paradigm of variational pragmatics, we also wanted to test corpus linguistics as a methodological tool. The focus of our study was the discourse feature of listener response. Firstly, we can say that the area of variational pragmatics, from the perspective of our study, has great potential for development, even within this one area of listener response tokens. Further studies are planned that will look at how listener response tokens differ pragmatically in American English, as well as in languages other than English. The paradigm of variational pragmatics, therefore, serves us well and will form the basis of much more of our future comparative work.

From this short study alone, it is clear that even though British and Irish English are two neighbouring varieties of English with frequent contact, they do not represent a single monolithic entity. Rather, variation is found at the level of form, these forms reflecting sociocultural norms and subtleties that differ in Irish and British society. We also found considerable differences in the frequency of listener response token activity. British English conversations contained far more. This is something that merits further investigation and raises questions such as: Are British people better listeners? Do Irish people talk more and respond less? Do Irish people yield turns less and interrupt more? We also noted the use and variation in forms which involved religious reference, or which were swear words. These prevailed more in the Irish data. At a sociocultural level, we speculated that their higher frequency in Irish English was linked to the role of religion in Irish society. Hence, they have greater taboo value in that variety.

In our quest to compare the data functionally, we undertook a qualitative study. The results from this manual analysis of two sub-corpora of 20,000 words (each of closely matched data with respect to gender, age, social relationship, socio-economic class and genre of discourse) pointed to three main functions of response tokens in this context, and also to a minor function, *information receipt* marking. At the level of overall frequency, we again found a discrepancy between British and Irish English, where the British data contained 59% more response tokens. However, at the level of response token function, we did not find there to be any difference between their use in British and Irish English in these cohorts. In addition, the overall functional pattern held constant for two-party and multi-party interactions in both datasets. This leads us to assert, therefore, that while we have observed differences in the forms, frequencies and sociocultural subtleties of response tokens in British and Irish English, the pragmatics of the discourse function itself appear to be constant.

We note also that this manual phase of the study only looked at female data (in order to control the feature of gender). In the future, we hope to replicate this study using male data, where all other variables are controlled.

General statements about response tokens that arise from this study include the following:

- Response tokens are core fluency items which function pragmatically to show listenership.
- The items are discourse tokens rather than adverbs or adjectives.
- A vocabulary of non-minimal response tokens probably exists in all languages, but seems to vary within and between languages.
- Even between language varieties there is potential for cross-cultural pragmatic failure.

Finally, let us consider corpus linguistics as a methodological tool for the study of variational pragmatics. It has proved very useful to us as a means of accessing large amounts of spoken language samples, which we have easily been able to control for a number of variables. It allowed us to automatically retrieve results and also compare forms in the datasets (in total amounting to two million words, approximately 170 hours of talk). Where there was need to disambiguate forms or identify only those forms which functioned as response tokens, we had computerised access to the source files and the exact location in the original conversations in which the items occurred (as well as to all of the speaker information for that conversation). In this sense, it is undoubtedly a tool of considerable merit. In terms of its limitations, firstly, it is only a tool and requires other frameworks for the interpretation of data. For example, discourse analysis, conversation analysis and pragmatics aided our understanding of the forms and functions of response tokens, and our work is based on a long lineage of research in these areas. Secondly, spoken corpora are only beginning to be digitised. We are working with transcriptions of audio recordings. They have gone from the moment of recording to the person who transcribed them before our research. This raises a number of issues: 1) they have been extracted from their audio-visual situational context and transposed into the written word, 2) in so doing they have lost much of their prosodic integrity, as well as 3) visual clues such as head nods (which could operate as surrogate response tokens) and facial expressions and 4) though we can do so much automatically, corpus data still require manual and qualitative work to offset and interpret purely quantitative data. The future of spoken corpora is with digital audio-visual recording, where sound and image can be aligned to transcriptions, and we are now at a stage where technology can allow for this. With this in mind, the potential of corpus linguistics as a tool to aid our understanding of variational pragmatics is very promising.

Notes

* The authors wish to thank Dawn Knight, who worked as research assistant on this paper.

1. CANCODE was built by Cambridge University Press and the University of Nottingham and it forms part of the Cambridge International Corpus (CIC). It provides insights into language use, and offers a resource to supplement what is already known about English from other, non-corpus-based research, thereby providing valuable and accurate information for researchers and those preparing teaching materials. Sole copyright of the corpus resides with Cambridge University Press, from whom all permission to reproduce material must be obtained.
2. Most data is copyright so ensure that clearance or permission is sought beforehand.
3. Recent multi-media corpus projects may, however, be able to obviate this problem by the use of synchronised video records alongside the conversational transcript. Cf., for example, Reder et al. (2003).
4. Donegal, for example, while part of the Republic of Ireland, was not included as Northern Irish English is used there.
5. Wordlist generation is a core corpus software function which facilitates the rank ordering of all the words in order of frequency. Cluster analysis is similar to this process, except that it looks for clusters of words as opposed to single word items, for example, two-word clusters (*you know*), three-word clusters (*Are you sure?*), four-word clusters (*know what I mean?*) and so on.
6. An asterisk marks results based on a random selection of 5000 occurrences. The figures without an asterisk represent items which occurred less than 5000 times in the corpus. In the latter case, all items which occurred in the corpus were analysed. In the former case, only a sample 5000 occurrences could be analysed due to very high overall occurrences (e.g. 10,000 occurrences) which would have made the analysis unmanageable.
7. We are grateful to Bróna Murphy for pointing this out.

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Appendix

Transcription conventions for data:

A: / B:	different speakers
[]	extra linguistic information
<unintelligible>	a short indecipherable section of recorded speech
<background noise>	noise that is external to the speakers’ conversation
+	interruption
=	truncation
<\$=> </\$=>	unfinished (part of) sentence

Data references:

[CANCODE]	indicates that data come from the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English
[LCIE]	indicates that data come from the Limerick Corpus of Irish English
[YW20a]	smaller corpus of “Young women of 20”; from the Limerick Corpus of Irish English
[YW20b]	smaller corpus of “Young women of 20”; from the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English.

Small Talk in England, Ireland, and the U.S.A.*

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1. Introduction

Small talk is perceived much more positively today than in former times. The general attitude seems to have changed from spurning small talk and from viewing it as meaningless and superficial, to recognising its many social functions. This change in perception is clearly seen in an analysis of a range of sources from dictionaries to research in linguistics and business studies.

Comparing different editions of the same dictionary reveals different attitudes. While “small talk” is briefly defined as “unimportant social conversations” in the seventh edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (COD7 1982), as in earlier editions, it is defined as “polite conversation about uncontroversial matters” in the tenth edition (with addenda) of this same dictionary nineteen years later (COD10+ 2001). Such changes in dictionary definitions reflect and document changes in attitude. No longer are small talk conversations and their topics regarded as “unimportant.” Small talk is now considered polite. Its topics are, more neutrally and more appropriately, referred to as “uncontroversial.”

A similar development can be observed in the linguistic literature. A quarter of a century ago, Leech (1981) characterised small talk (and other forms of “phatic communion,” cf. Section 2 below) as “dull and pedestrian,” which he considered a “major drawback.” He continued: “The words are empty of meaning, in the sense that so long as a conversational hiatus is filled, what one says matters little” (Leech 1981: 53). By contrast, most of the linguistic studies examining small talk published since then (or even before that time) have emphasized its social significance and interpersonal functions (cf., e.g., Beinstein 1975, Laver 1975, Ventola 1979, Schneider 1988, Eggins & Slade 1997, and the papers in Coupland 2000b). Reviewing such studies, Coupland (2003: 2) concludes: “The importance of small talk to social life seems incontestable.”

Similarly, in commerce and business life, small talk is no longer considered a waste of time. On the contrary, the social significance of small talk is acknowledged in this domain as well. A multitude of books on career advice

written by communication coaches attest to this fact (cf., e.g., Baber 1991, Daly 1992, Lougheed 1995, Carducci 1999, Wysocki 2000, Fine 2002, McPheat n.d.). Being good at small talk is regarded as an important networking skill and a key qualification indispensable for commercial success. In 2005, CNN and CareerBuilder.com reported on a study in which MBAs were interviewed ten years after graduating from the Stanford University School of Business. The results can be summarised as follows: “Grade point averages had no bearing on their success – but their ability to converse with others did” (CareerBuilder 2005). Furthermore, empirical research into business communication has established that small talk is not just an exchange of greetings or a brief “warm-up,” but that sales negotiations actually include “a considerable amount of small talk” (Wagner 1995: 18). Similarly, Clyne (1994: 84), studying workplace communication, notes that “some of the exchanges in our corpus are entirely composed of small-talk,” thus quantitatively underlining the significance of small talk for social life.

In the business world, the attitude towards small talk has not always been so positive, at least not in the Western business world. As Tannen put it some twenty years ago:

Western men’s information-focused approach to talk has shaped their way of doing business. Many Western businessmen think it’s best to “get down to brass tacks” as soon as possible, and not “waste time” in small talk (social talk) or “beating about the bush”. But this doesn’t work very well in business life with Greek, Japanese, or Arab counterparts for whom “small talk” is necessary to establish the social relationship that must provide the foundation for conducting business. (Tannen 1986: 15)

In this passage, Tannen also points out that the importance attributed to small talk differs across languages and cultures.¹ This claim is supported by the results of empirical studies in intercultural communication, involving further languages and cultures (cf., e.g., Béal 1992, Halmari 1993, Villemoes 1995, Meierkord 2000). In a more general vein, Clyne, whose study includes informants from over thirty different ethnolinguistic backgrounds, notes: “The tolerance for small-talk generally and in particular work contexts is subject to some cultural variation” (1994: 84). Furthermore, Clyne (1994: 88–89) emphasizes that miscommunication is likely to occur where the expectations and conventions constraining small talk diverge.

In this context, the question arises whether the expectations and conventions constraining small talk differ also across cultures in which the same language is spoken. In the light of investigations into other pragmatic phenomena, such as discourse markers and speech acts, (cf., e.g., Schneider 1999, 2005, Kallen 2005, Barron 2005, 2006), there is reason to believe that small talk may vary across national varieties of English. Moreover, there is evidence that small talk conventions vary on a sub-national level. Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2006: 98), analysing English in the United States, observe that “... ‘small talk’ may be an important preliminary to getting down to business in some Southern

areas or among some Latino/a groups but not considered to be necessary by speakers in some other regions.” Wolfram & Schilling-Estes further observe that differences exist in the U.S. between regional, social and ethnic groups regarding which topics are considered “safe,” i.e. uncontroversial, and, thus, suitable for small talk. They write:

A middle-class European American might consider a question like “What do you do for a living?” as an appropriate conversational opener at a casual social gathering, but the same question might be considered inappropriate by some minority groups in the same situation, ... The appropriateness of direct questions about income and cost (e.g. house, car, etc.) may also vary from group to group.

(Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 98)

Thus, in their discussion of intralinguistic variation in American small talk, which, unfortunately, is not based on empirical work, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2006) address not only differences pertaining to the function and amount of talk expected (i.e. the Why and the How much), but also differences pertaining to the appropriateness of topics (i.e. the What).

While these cross-varietal differences in small talk “may lead to misunderstandings and negative evaluations of speakers from cultural groups other than one’s own,” such differences are, however, as Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2006: 98) stress, “often simply reflective of differences in cultural conventions for the appropriate use of language in its social setting.”

Against this background, the present paper aims at answering the question as to if and how small talk varies across national varieties of pluricentric languages, and more specifically, across varieties of English. To this end, comparable samples from England, Ireland, and the U.S.A. are contrasted and analysed systematically. To establish the similarities and differences between these three varieties, research questions such as the following are addressed:

- What are the expectations, conventions and norms governing small talk ?
- What are the pragmatic variables and variants involved?
- Which topics are selected?
- What counts as “an appropriate conversational opener at a casual social gathering” (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 98)?

Following this last question, the present study will consider not only what people say, but also how they say it, which is an aspect much neglected in the analysis of small talk with the current emphasis on the social functioning of this discourse type.

In the following section, features of small talk relevant to the present study are introduced. Following this, the design of the study is described, before its results are presented and discussed. In the concluding section, the findings about differences in small talk across the three varieties of English under study are summarised and some perspectives for future research outlined.

2. Small Talk

“Small talk” is a meta-communicative term in everyday language. As such, it is often used, but not often defined, in academic writing and not included in linguistic terminological dictionaries (cf., e.g., Bussmann 1996). The technical term which is included instead is “phatic,” usually listed as “phatic communion” or “phatic function.” “Phatic” is derived from *phatos*, the Greek word for ‘spoken’.

The concept “phatic communion” was first introduced by Malinowski in 1923. It is defined as “a type of speech in which the ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words” (Malinowski 1949: 15). Based on this notion, Jakobson (1960: 355–356) postulates a “phatic function” (or “contact function”) as one of six fundamental functions of language.² This function is predominantly displayed by talk which serves to establish and maintain social contact. This type of talk can be called “phatic talk” or “small talk.”

Given the vagueness of these definitions, it is hardly surprising that competing interpretations of the term “small talk” exist, both broad and narrow (cf. Cheepen 1988: 16–21, also Coupland 2000a). In a narrow sense, small talk refers to what is sometimes called an “extended greeting,” i.e. an exchange of greetings (e.g. *Good morning*) which may be followed by further moves such as inquiries after the interlocutor’s well-being (e.g. *How are you getting on?*) or words of welcome (e.g. *Lovely to see you*).³ In other words, extended greetings correspond to stretches of speech termed “opening phase” in other approaches (cf., e.g., House 1982). In alternative readings, however, small talk occurs not only in the opening but also in the closing phases. It is seen as restricted to these marginal phases which surround the conversational core in which the “big talk” takes place (cf., e.g., Laver 1975). By contrast, Edmondson & House (1981: 221–225) identify small talk as one type of core talk, which is not identical with opening or closing talk. Finally, in a broad understanding, the term “small talk” is synonymous with “casual conversation,” “social talk,” or “interactional language,” an interpretation which means that entire speech events may consist of small talk exclusively (cf., e.g., Ventola 1979, Cheepen 1988: 20–21).

According to this broad view, small talk contrasts with and is the opposite of “instrumental discourse” (Schneider 1988), “speech-in-action” (Cheepen 1988) or “transaction” (Lakoff 1989). It is, in other words, that type of talk which is governed by “second order aims” (Grice 1975) and “social,” rather than “practical reasons” (Pavlidou 1998).⁴ In more recent work, such dichotomies have been abandoned, and small talk has been located on a continuum of talk. For instance, Holmes (2000) places “phatic communion,” in which “contact *per se* is foregrounded” (Holmes 2000: 39; original emphasis), at one end of a continuum and “core business talk,” in which a specific topic or purpose is foregrounded, at the other end, with “social talk” and “work related talk” as in-between categories (cf. also Coupland et al. 1992: 214–215). In her model, phatic communion “drifts gradually towards social talk as the content of the exchange becomes more context-specific, and relates more precisely to the

individuals involved” (Holmes 2000: 39). Holmes uses the term “small talk” for both phatic communion and social talk.

Several functions have been identified for small talk. For instance, small talk “covers more than simply ‘ice-breaking’ and ‘silence-filling’ functions...” (Cheepen 1988: 17), it “warms people up socially, oils the interpersonal wheels and gets talk started on a positive note” (Holmes 2000: 49). Indeed, in more general terms, it “enacts social cohesiveness, reduces inherent threat values of social contact, and helps to structure social interaction” (Coupland 2003: 1). Some of these functions correlate with specific situations or interactant constellations. The ice-breaking function, for example, seems to be most relevant to interactions between strangers, whereas the other functions identified seem to apply to either many or all constellation types. It has, however, been argued that small talk does not occur at all in those constellations characterized by a low or minimal degree of social distance, e.g. between family members (cf., e.g., Schneider 1988: 6).

Although recent work on small talk has focused on communication in the workplace and in service encounters (cf., e.g., McCarthy 2000, Kuiper & Flindall 2000, Holmes 2003), small talk is prototypically associated with social events, such as receptions, cocktail or dinner parties (Schneider 1988: 14–15, Coupland 2003: 3). The prototypicality of party contexts is also borne out by sample sentences considered suitable for illustrating typical uses of the everyday term “small talk” in dictionaries; cf., e.g., *I don’t enjoy parties where I have to make small talk with complete strangers* (CIDE 1995, original emphasis).

Today, as mentioned in the introduction to this paper, small talk topics are usually characterised as safe or uncontroversial, meaning, as Hayakawa (1965: 72) puts it, that they concern “subjects about which agreement is immediately possible.” It is generally maintained that the safest and least controversial topic is the weather (cf., e.g., Wardhaugh 1985: 123, Schneider 1988: 212–213, Romaine 1994: 23, Coupland & Ylänné-McEwen 2000: 163–164). The weather is a neutral, i.e. impersonal, topic and, thus, non-threatening, or, at least, less threatening than personal, i.e. interlocutor-related, topics. Neither interactant is responsible for or in control of the weather, but both (or all) are equally affected. Hence, common ground can be established by remarks which state the obvious about the weather. As Leech (1981: 53) writes: “if you say ‘The nights are getting longer these days, aren’t they’, no one can possibly disagree with you.” The question is, however, whether this most neutral and non-committing topic can be used in all situations, i.e. in all contexts in which small talk may appear. It seems, for instance, that in the prototypical party situation the weather is not a suitable topic. At least, comments such as *Lovely day, isn’t it?* do not make appropriate conversational openers in this situation. Party small talk is more likely to start with a remark such as *Great party, isn’t it?* (cf. below, Section 4.2).

General remarks about the weather, as well as general remarks about a party (like the above examples), can be classified as “global assessments” (cf. Schneider 1988: 220), which are typically used as opening moves. They relate

to aspects of the immediate situation, but do not refer to the conversational partners, nor to aspects of the external situation. Indeed, reference to the immediate situation can be conceptualised as the intermediate circle in a model of topic selection in small talk comprising three concentric circles (cf. Figure 1). Topics related to the interactants and their identities, i.e. personal topics, belong to the inner circle, and topics related to neither the immediate situation nor the interactants belong to the outer circle (cf. Schneider 1987 for details, also Svennevig 1999: 217–218). As intermediate circle topics are the most obvious and, therefore, the safest topics, they are usually chosen first.⁵ Thereafter, either more general (i.e. outer circle) topics, or more personal (i.e. inner circle) topics can be selected, depending on the intended degree of involvement. However, different conventions seem to govern the choice of personal topics in different cultures. For instance, Tannen (1984: 80) observes that, unlike the English, many Americans consider it impolite not to talk about personal topics.

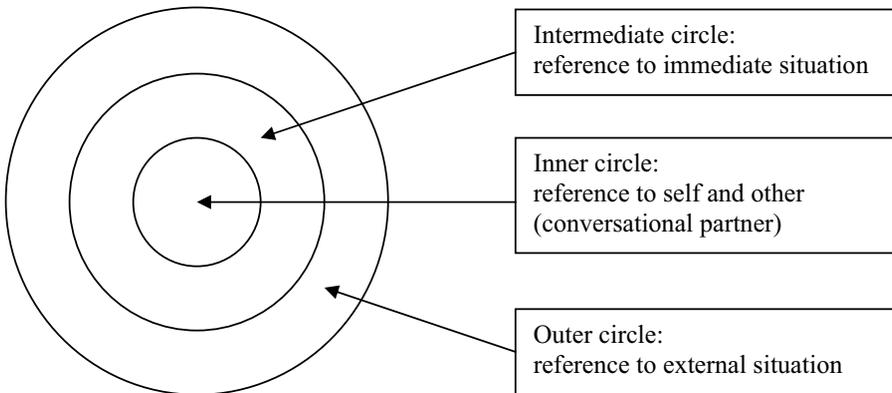


Figure 1. Basic options for topic selection in small talk

According to Laver (1975), who examines phatic communion in the opening and closing phases of English conversations, utterances in the opening phases are typically deictic, as they refer to aspects of the communication situation. This applies to utterances about intermediate as well as inner circle topics. Utterances about outer circle topics are, by contrast, non-deictic. Laver (1975: 223) distinguishes three categories of deictic utterances. These are “neutral,” “self-oriented” and “other-oriented.” The basic distinction underlying these categories is the “impersonal” (or “neutral”) versus “personal” distinction. Indeed, this reflects the division between the intermediate and the inner circles of the model mentioned above (cf. Figure 1). Utterances with impersonal reference and utterances with personal reference correspond respectively to the “indirect” and “direct approaches” identified by Ventola (1979: 273) in her analysis of casual conversation. Remarks about the weather illustrate the indirect or

impersonal type and inquiries about the interlocutor's well-being (e.g., *How's life?*) the direct or personal type.

The direct and indirect approach are two of a total seven move types identified by Ventola (1979) to characterise her casual conversation data (recorded in Australia). The remaining move types are "greeting," "address," "identification," "centering," "leave-taking" and "goodbye" (cf. also House 1982). These seven move types combine in different ways depending on whether the interactants are strangers or friends. In either constellation, however, "centering," i.e. the core part in conversations between opening and closing, occurs only in "non-minimal conversations," i.e. in casual conversations in which "the primary focus of attention is the exchange of information..." "Minimal conversations," on the other hand, i.e. casual conversations without a centering part, "are only forms of phatic communion" (Ventola 1979: 278–279).

Leech (1981: 53) notes: "With strangers and casual acquaintances, it is advisable to have a repertoire of inoffensive remarks at your command, ..." Research on what such a repertoire might look like, not only on the content level discussed so far, but also concerning the illocutions employed, as well as their sequencing and their realisations has, however, received only limited interest to date due, at least in part, to the recent focus on the social functioning of small talk. Systematic findings about such linguistic aspects of small talk are not only relevant for language teaching, as is sometimes suggested (cf., e.g., Coupland 2000a: 5), but also crucial for the modelling of communicative competence in cognitive science and artificial intelligence research, with possible applications to human–computer communication (cf., e.g., Bickmore 1999, 2003, Bickmore & Cassell 2000). While Edmondson & House (1981: 169–177 and 222–225) and Schneider (1988: 157–287) contain many detailed observations about the linguistic aspects of small talk, it seems that more systematic observations can be made by focusing on only one particular situation (e.g. party context) and also only one particular constellation (e.g. stranger–stranger). Additionally, it seems desirable to further increase the degree of homogeneity of the data analysed by concentrating on only one sex and one particular age group. Such measures are a necessary prerequisite for doing contrastive studies within the framework of variational pragmatics.

3. Method

3.1 Data collection

The present study of small talk across national varieties of English is based on a corpus of 90 dialogues, 30 each from England, Ireland and the U.S.A. These dialogues were elicited by employing a dialogue production task (DPT), also known as "free discourse completion task" (FDCT) (cf. Barron 2003: 83). This task format is similar to the much more commonly used discourse completion task (DCT) (cf., e.g., Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). In both cases (i.e. DPT and

DCT), informants are asked to provide direct speech in a written response to a brief description of a situation. However, while informants have to fill in only one turn at talk in a DCT, they have to produce a short dialogue involving two participants in a DPT.

The DPT used in the present study is part of a mixed-task questionnaire consisting of 15 tasks belonging to three task formats, viz. DPTs, DCTs and multiple choice tasks. These formats occur in random order to elicit realisations of dialogues or of individual speech acts, such as requests, thanks minimisers or responses to insults (cf. Schneider 2005: 110–111). This inclusion of a relatively wide range of pragmatic phenomena in combination with task-mixing was employed to avoid some of the negative effects of single-task questionnaires which focus on only one or two speech acts (as, e.g., Chen's 1993, or Blum-Kulka et al.'s 1989). Boredom and easy identification of the research focus are, for instance, problems overcome by the use of such distractors.

The present analysis concentrates on the second and more complex of the two DPTs in this questionnaire (task no. 7). Here, the informants are expected to create a conversation between strangers of the same sex who meet at a party (cf. Appendix). The instructions, including the description of the situation, were adapted from the cross-cultural study of "greetings" in American English by Eisenstein Ebsworth et al. (1996: 103), mentioned above in Section 2 (cf. endnote 3). It should be emphasized that in Eisenstein Ebsworth et al. (1996) the term "greeting" does not refer to an individual speech act (as in, e.g., Ventola 1979, Edmondson 1981: 150, Schneider 1988: 99). Rather, it is used as a synonym for what other authors call "conversational openings" (cf., e.g., Schegloff 1972, House 1982), or even as a synonym for "small talk" (cf., e.g., Edmondson & House 1981: 222–227, Schneider 1988).

The general strategy adopted in designing the present investigation was to control as many variables as possible. Therefore, the focus is on only one task representing one particular type of spoken discourse, viz. small talk, one particular sub-type or genre, viz. party small talk, and one particular participant constellation in terms of both social distance, viz. stranger–stranger, and sex, viz. same sex, not mixed sex. Focusing on a stranger–stranger interaction avoids variation due to (assumed) shared knowledge from prior encounters. Thus, situational, genre and gender variation do not occur, permitting full concentration on regional variation, in particular on the similarities and differences between English, Irish, and American usage in the given situation.

Too much has been said about the advantages and disadvantages of using written questionnaire data in pragmatics research to be repeated here (cf., e.g., Barron 2003: 83–87). For the present context, the most important point is that in questionnaire situations the social variables can be controlled much more systematically than in naturally-occurring situations. Furthermore, questionnaire situations represent parameter configurations which serve as a "tertium comparationis" and, thus, guarantee comparable data. As comparison is crucial to variational pragmatics, comparability is a central methodological issue. Another important point is that informants do not write as spontaneously as they would speak. Hence, informants do not necessarily write down what they

would actually say, but rather what they think is expected or should be said. For variational pragmatics, this is particularly essential information, since questionnaire data more explicitly reflect interactive norms and underlying social and cultural values acquired in communication or learnt in the process of socialisation. Written data are, in other words, manifestations of pragmatic competence, independent of the many accidentalities of actual performance. As Lakoff & Tannen (1984: 325) put it, “artificial dialog may represent an internalized model or schema for the production of conversation – a competence model...” It is the establishment of such a schemata for the production of party small talk which the present study aims at, and more particularly the determination of any schematic differences between speakers of English English, Irish English, and American English. Therefore, the informants are explicitly requested to write a dialogue which represents language *typically* used in the given situation (cf. Appendix). It is assumed that typical usage best reflects what is (usually) expected and, thus, considered appropriate or “politic” in a given situation (cf. Watts 2003: 260, Locher 2004: 90).

3.2 Informants

The 90 dialogues on which this study is based were written by native speakers of English, 30 each from England, the Republic of Ireland, and the United States of America.⁶ In a further attempt to homogenize the data, these informants were selected from the much larger overall population of our research project on variational pragmatics by using the criteria “sex,” “age,” and “region” (information about social class membership or ethnicity were not available). All informants included in the present study are female and were in their teenage years when they filled in the questionnaire some three years ago, i.e. aged between 13 and 18. The overall average was 14.8 years. 14.8 years is also the average for the English population. The Americans were slightly younger, and the Irish slightly older (on average 14.2 and 15.4 years respectively). All English informants came from the same place in Yorkshire, and all Irish informants from the same place in County Carlow. The American informants came from two places in the adjacent states of Tennessee (24 informants) and Virginia (6 informants), as neither of the American sub-corpora included 30 female teenagers. Possible differences between these two groups are not examined in the present paper.

3.3 Data processing

The following analysis of the elicited dialogues combines qualitative and quantitative perspectives. The levels central to this analysis are the levels of the turn and the move (cf., e.g. Schneider 1988: 46–59). Turns are easily identified since they are unambiguously marked by the speaker labels “A” and “B.” Furthermore, such phenomena as overlaps, interruptions and backchannelling do not occur in the type of data material used. The parameters employed in the

analysis on the turn level include dialogue length and turn complexity. Dialogue length is measured in terms of the number of turns a dialogue consists of, and turn complexity in terms of the number of moves a turn consist of (cf. Schneider 1988: 58–59). Special emphasis is on the very first turn of each dialogue, i.e. the conversational opener. Within these opening turns, the first (or only) move is of particular interest.

The analysis on the level of moves involves, first and foremost, the identification of the move types (in terms of the acts included in the head move). These are coded using categories derived in particular from Ventola (1979), House (1982), and Schneider (1988: 97–105). Examples include “greeting,” “identification,” and “approach” (cf. 4.2.2 for a description of these move types). Some of these categories comprise sub-categories, e.g. “direct” and “indirect approach,” termed more specifically “Question-after-you” (QaU) and “party assessment” (P-ASS).

A further parameter studied on the move level is the interactional status of an individual move, i.e. essentially whether a move is initiating or responding (cf. Schneider 1988: 51–54). For instance, a “self-identification” (e.g. *I’m Danielle*) is either volunteered (in which case it is initiating) or requested (in which case it is responding) (cf. also Edmondson & House 1981: 173–177 and 222). Responding self-identifications are elicited by “requests for identification” (e.g. *What’s your name?*). Identification moves, which are coded as REQ-ID and SELF-ID respectively, occur in first encounters between strangers (cf. Ventola 1979: 273).

Other parameters examined on this level of analysis include how the moves are realised and how they combine into larger dialogue units. The former pertains to the conventions of forms employed. For example, a “party assessment” can be realised as a statement (e.g. *Great party.*), a tagged statement (e.g. *Great party, isn’t it?*) or as a closed question (e.g. *Isn’t this party great?*) (cf. Edmondson & House 1981: 170, also Schneider 1988: 193–197). In addition, the exact wording can be analysed, e.g. which evaluator is used in the party assessment (*Great/Cool/Groovy/... party*). The parameter regarding the combination of moves into larger units concerns the formation of adjacency pairs or simple exchanges, which may be followed by dependent or independent exchanges (cf. Edmondson & House 1981: 222–223, Schneider 1988: 54–57).

The following dialogue is taken from the English English data set and is analysed here to illustrate the categories employed in the present analysis.

- 1 A: This party is real cool, don’t you think?
 - 2 B: Yeah, it rocks!
 - 3 A: What’s your name?
 - 4 B: I’m called Joan, what’s yours?
 - 5 A: I’m Dorothy, but you can call me Dotty.
 - 6 B: Anyway I’ll maybe see you later.
 - 7 A: Bye.
- (ENG1F57)

This dialogue consists of seven turns, viz. four by the first speaker (A) and three by the second speaker (B). The opening turn (line 1) comprises only one move, a party assessment. This party assessment is realised by employing a non-elliptical statement, in which the positive evaluator (*cool*) is prefaced by an intensifier (*real*), and a tagged question (*don't you think?*). In the second turn, speaker B emphatically agrees with A's assessment (cf. Schneider 1988: 221). Both the agreement token *Yeah* and the pronoun *it* indicate that the move realised is a responding move. The two moves in turns 1 and 2 form an adjacency pair in which a global assessment of the party is negotiated. Agreement is achieved and, thus, common ground created. This first pair of moves can be called a "global assessment exchange."⁷

The next exchange, which is independent of the first, consists of three turns (lines 3–5) containing two pairs of moves. The first pair is initiated by a request for identification in turn 3. In turn 4, speaker B complies (i.e. gives her name) and thereafter initiates the second pair of moves in this exchange by reciprocating the initial request for identification (i.e. turn 4 consists of two moves). The elliptical nature of the second request indicates that the second move pair depends on the first. In turn 5, speaker A gives her name plus additional information about how she wants to be addressed, thus reducing the social distance between the interactants and showing an interest in continuing the conversation. These three turns (lines 3–5) can be called a "mutual identification exchange." Speaker B is, however, not interested in continuing this conversation. In turn 6, she initiates a terminating exchange, which is clearly marked off by the employment of *anyway*. The move following this discourse marker – phrased literally as a vague reference to a possible later meeting – serves as a "goodbye," which speaker A responds to briefly in turn 7, thus marking the end of the conversation.

4. Results

4.1 Dialogue structure

The dialogues written in response to the questionnaire task differ in length. The 90 informants each produced between 2 and 13 turns. The overall total is 577 turns, which means that on average a dialogue consists of 6.4 turns. The speakers of Irish English (IrE) wrote the longest and the speakers of American English (AmE) the shortest dialogues, with 7.0 and 5.5 turns respectively, whereas the average English English (EngE) dialogue consists of 6.7 turns (cf. Figure 2).

While all dialogues have an explicit opening, not all of them contain an explicit closing, i.e. instances of "leave-taking" or "goodbye," for example. In most cases, the dialogues simply stop, or they end with an indication that the conversation continues beyond the beginning provided (e.g., "(so on)" or "etc"). In fact, explicit closings are found in only 27.8% of all dialogues (cf.

Section 4.3.4), and in particular in 33.3% of the American English, 30.0% of the Irish English, and only 20.0% of the English English dialogues (cf. Figure 3).

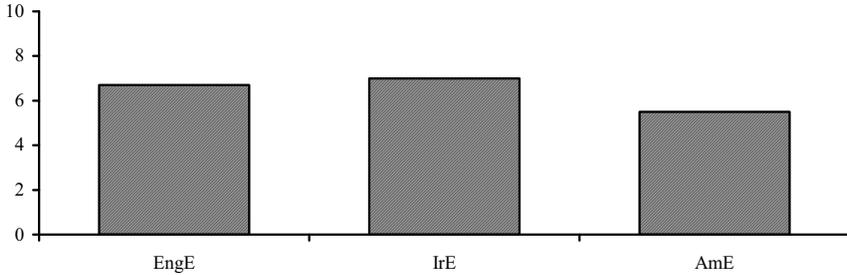


Figure 2. Average number of turns per dialogue

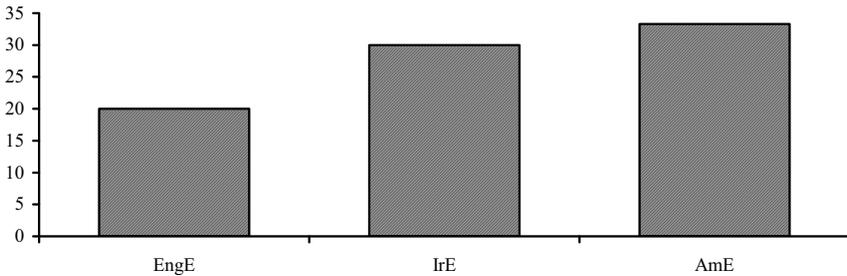


Figure 3. Percentage of dialogues with an explicit closing

It is worth noting that the AmE data include both the shortest dialogues and at the same time the highest percentage of explicit closings. The numbers and percentages presented in Figures 2 and 3 should, however, not be overrated, as they may well be artefacts of the data collection procedure. The relative shortness and open-endedness of the dialogues may result for instance from boredom or a possible reluctance of the informants to complete the task. Given the differences in dialogue length and endings, the analysis focuses in particular on the opening turns of each dialogue. The following section specifically addresses the question as to what the first thing is a native speaker of English says to a stranger at a party, and how speakers from England, Ireland and the United States differ in this regard.

4.2 Opening turns

4.2.1 *The structure of opening turns*

All opening turns comprise either one, two or three moves. The total number of moves in the 90 initial turns is 164, which means that on average opening turns consist of 1.8 moves. The opening turns in the AmE data set are longer (2.3 moves) and the EngE turns slightly shorter (1.4 moves), while the average number of moves in the IrE opening turns is the same as the overall average, i.e. 1.8 moves per turn (see Table 1).

Table 1. Number of moves in the opening turns

	Total	Average
EngE	42	1.4
IrE	54	1.8
AmE	68	2.3
<i>Overall</i>	<i>164</i>	<i>1.8</i>

The differences in the total number of moves in the opening turns reflect the distribution of single-, double- and triple-move turns in and across the three data sets (cf. Table 2). The dominant structure in the EngE data is the single-move turn, whereas in the IrE and AmE data, it is the double-move turn. Furthermore, in the AmE data triple-move turns occur at 33.3%, while there is no occurrence of this structure in the IrE data set at all.

Table 2. Distribution of move structures in the opening turns

	One move	Two moves	Three moves
EngE	63.3% (19)	33.3% (10)	3.3% (1)
IrE	20.0% (6)	80.0% (24)	—
AmE	6.7% (2)	60.0% (18)	33.3% (10)
<i>Overall</i>	<i>30.0% (27)</i>	<i>57.8% (52)</i>	<i>12.2% (11)</i>

In the light of these findings, it could be argued that the Gricean maxims appear to have different readings in different English-speaking cultures.⁸ It seems that his maxim of manner, “Be brief,” and especially his maxim of quantity, which can be paraphrased as “Say as much but no more than necessary” (cf. Norrick 1981: 185), are interpreted differently in England, Ireland, and the U.S.A., at least in the opening of party conversations. Alternatively, speakers from England could be said to observe Lakoff’s rule of politeness “Don’t impose,” whereas speakers from Ireland and especially speakers from the U.S. could be said to observe Lakoff’s rule “Be friendly” (Lakoff 1973), thus attending to their interlocutor’s negative or positive face wants respectively (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987).

4.2.2 Move types in opening turns

The analysis reveals that in all opening turns eight different move types are used. Two of these types, however, each occur only once. The six main types are (cf. Section 3.3.):

1. Greeting (GREET)
 2. Self-identification (SELF-ID)
 3. Request for identification (REQ-ID)
 4. Party assessment (P-ASS)
 5. Question-after-you (QaU)
 6. Compliment (COMPL)
- } Approach (APPR)

The term “greeting” (coded as GREET) is used to categorise formulaic utterances such as *Hi* or *Hello*. These are generally employed to open conversations of all kinds. “Self-identifications” (SELF-ID) are moves in which speakers disclose their name, e.g. *I’m Michelle*. In “requests for identification” (REQ-ID), on the other hand, speakers ask hearers to disclose their name, e.g. *What’s your name?* These two move types, SELF-ID and REQ-ID, are characteristic of encounters between strangers (cf., e.g., Ventola 1979: 273). By contrast, the three remaining move types, viz. “party assessment” (P-ASS), “question-after-you” (QaU), and “compliment” (COMPL), are not particular to talk between strangers. Examples include *Great party, isn’t it?* (P-ASS), *How are you?* (QaU), and *I really like your hair!* (COMPL) respectively. Tokens, such as *How are you?*, are not coded as greetings because they often co-occur with such forms as *Hi* or *Hello*. Of all six move types, only P-ASS is specific to the party context, the prototypical small talk situation (cf. Section 2).

In many cases, it is difficult, if not impossible, to decide whether an utterance should be classified as a P-ASS or a QaU. As a rough guideline, the occurrence of the noun *party* or of the pronoun *you* can be considered as an indicator. Thus, utterances as, for instance, *Great party!*, *Groovy party, eh?*, *It’s a good party, isn’t it?* and *The party’s good, isn’t it?* would all count as P-ASS, while *How are you doing?*, *You ok?*, *Are you having fun?* and *Are you enjoying yourself?* would all count as QaUs (albeit representing different degrees of specificity). However, several utterances include both indicators, *party* and *you*, and therefore seem to fall in between the two categories, P-ASS and QaU. Examples of this hybrid class include *This party is real cool, don’t you think?*, *What do you think of the party?*, and *Are you enjoying the party?* Clearly, *Are you enjoying the party?* and *Are you enjoying yourself?* are very similar, as are *This party is real cool, don’t you think?* and *The party is good, isn’t it?* Hence, prototypical realisations of the move types P-ASS and QaU, such as *Great party, isn’t it?* and *How are you?* mark the end points of a continuum rather than mutually exclusive categories. As P-ASS and QaU correspond to the two sub-types of Ventola’s (1979) category “approach,” viz. “indirect” and “direct approach” (cf. Section 3.3.), moves belonging to these sub-types can be coded

collectively as “approach” (APPR). In other words, the categories QaU and P-ASS are merged in the APPR move.

The move types identified in the opening turns of all dialogues occur with different frequencies, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Move type frequencies in the opening turns

Move type	Frequency
GREET	48.8% (80)
SELF-ID	15.9% (26)
REQ-ID	9.1% (15)
APPR	23.2% (38)
COMPL	1.8% (3)
Other	1.2% (2)
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0% (164)</i>

The most frequently used move types are, in order of decreasing frequency, GREET, APPR, SELF-ID, and REQ-ID. Compliments appear considerably less frequently, at only 1.8% of all moves employed in the opening turns. Two further move types, listed here under “other” and each occurring only once, will be briefly discussed below.

In Table 3, QaU and P-ASS are merged in the category APPR. The shares of these sub-types in the overall frequency of APPR are shown in Table 4, which specifies the respective frequencies not only of clear-cut cases, but also of the less clearly identifiable in-between cases discussed above, and coded here as QaU/P-ASS. Each of the three sub-types of APPR appear with a substantial frequency, with P-ASS as the most frequent and the mixed category as the least frequent sub-types.

Table 4. Relative frequencies of the sub-types of APPR

Sub-type	Frequency
QaU	34.2% (13)
QaU/P-ASS	23.7% (9)
P-ASS	42.1% (16)
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0% (38)</i>

The move types found in the opening turns are distributed differently across the varieties of English under study. Their distribution across the three varieties is summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of the move types in the opening turns across varieties of English

	EngE	IrE	AmE	Overall
GREET	35.0% (28)	28.8% (23)	36.3% (29)	100.0% (80)
SELF-ID	15.4% (4)	3.8% (1)	80.8% (21)	100.0% (26)
REQ-ID	13.3% (2)	—	86.7% (13)	100.0% (15)
APPR	10.5% (4)	78.9% (30)	10.5% (4)	100.0% (38)
COMPL	100.0% (3)	—	—	100.0% (3)
Other	50.0% (1)	—	50.0% (1)	100.0% (2)

While greetings are distributed rather evenly across the three varieties, the distribution of the remaining move types shows clear variety-specific preferences. 80.8% of all SELF-IDs and 86.7% of all REQ-IDs are used by the American informants, whereas the English informants use only 15.4% and 13.3% of these two move types respectively. Only one self-identification and no request for identification are found in the IrE data. Apparently, initiating the negotiation of identities in the opening turns has a much higher priority for Americans than for speakers from England and Ireland. In other words, Americans are found to open a party conversation with a personal rather than an impersonal topic (cf. Tannen 1984: 80).

By contrast, 78.9% of all instances of APPR occur in the IrE data, while only 10.5% each occur in the EngE and AmE data sets. An instance of this type is, in fact, found in all IrE opening turns with only one exception, while one IrE turn includes two such instances.

The compliment, on the other hand, occurs only in the EngE opening turns and is the only move type found in only one variety in this position. However, with only three instances it appears considerably less frequently than the other move types discussed so far.

The two further types listed in Table 5 under “other” were used by only one English and one American informant respectively. The EngE utterance (*I’ve got that top in blue*) refers to an aspect of the addressee’s outer appearance, and more particularly to an item of clothing, as do all of the compliments found in the EngE opening turns (cf., e.g., *I like your top*). By volunteering information of this kind about herself, the speaker reveals shared values concerning taste in clothing and thus establishes common ground (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987: 118, Schneider 1988: 186). Arguably, the utterance *I’ve got that top in blue* could also be considered an indirect compliment. While it is not surprising that clothing is an issue among females in their teenage years, it seems surprising that reference to appearance occurs only in the opening turns of the EngE dialogues.

The AmE utterance representing the remaining “other” move type is *Are you a friend of the host?* While this request for information about the relationship between addressee and host appears in second or later turns in all three data sets (cf. 4.3.2), it appears in the opening turns not more than once, namely in the AmE data, but not at all in the EngE and IrE data sets.

All of the six categories specified in Table 5 are found in the EngE data, five of them in the AmE data, but only three in the IrE data. However, one of the three move types (SELF-ID) in the IrE dialogues occurs only once, which means that the IrE opening turns are much more homogeneous than the English or American opening turns. In the IrE data, the opening turns comprise either an APPR or a GREET, or both.

A more differentiated picture emerges, when the sub-types of APPR are distinguished. Table 6 shows the distribution of QaU, P-ASS and QaU/P-ASS.

Table 6. Distribution of the sub-types of APPR in the opening turns across varieties of English

	EngE	IrE	AmE	Overall
QaU	15.4% (2)	69.2% (9)	15.4% (2)	100.0% (13)
QaU/P-ASS	11.1% (1)	77.8% (7)	11.1% (1)	100.0% (9)
P-ASS	6.3% (1)	87.5% (14)	6.3% (1)	100.0% (16)

This table shows that the number of instances of each of the three sub-types is identical in the EngE and AmE data. In both data sets, use of this move type (APPR) is very low, with only one or two occurrences in each sub-type. The table also shows that (clear cases of) party assessments outnumber occurrences of each of the other two sub-types in the IrE data, which means that APPR moves which are specific to the given situation are preferred over less specific moves which can be used in a variety of situations. This also means that speakers of IrE favour more indirect over direct approaches, or, in other words, impersonal over personal topics.

A further step in the analysis is aimed at establishing how the move types are distributed across the opening turns – i.e. the question is posed as to how frequently the moves GREET or SELF-ID, for instance, appear in the opening turn of the dialogues analysed. Table 7 shows the overall distribution of each move across all 90 opening turns (i.e. 100.0%=90), while Table 8 specifies the distribution of each move across the 30 opening turns in each of the three data sets (i.e. 100.0%=30). As more than two thirds of all opening turns consist of more than one move (cf. Table 2), the total percentages of all moves in each of the columns in Table 7 and 8 add up to over 100.0% in each case.

Table 7. Overall distribution of moves types across all 90 opening turns

Move type	Occurrence
GREET	88.9% (80)
SELF-ID	28.9% (26)
REQ-ID	16.7% (15)
APPR	42.2% (38)
COMPL	3.3% (3)
Other	2.2% (2)

Table 8. Distribution of move types across the 30 opening turns in each variety of English

	EngE	IrE	AmE
GREET	93.3% (28)	76.7% (23)	96.7% (29)
SELF-ID	13.3% (4)	3.3% (1)	70.0% (21)
REQ-ID	6.7% (2)	—	43.3% (13)
APPR	13.3% (4)	100.0% (30)	13.3% (4)
COMPL	10.0% (3)	—	—
Other	3.3% (1)	—	3.3% (1)

As Tables 7 and 8 show, a greeting is found in the vast majority of the opening turns, i.e. in 88.9% of the overall opening turns, and in 96.7% of the AmE, 93.3% of the EngE, but only 76.7% of the IrE turns. The second most frequent move type, APPR, which occurs in 42.2% of all opening turns, is clearly favoured by the Irish informants, who use it much more frequently than greetings, while the English and American informants use it in only 13.3% of their respective opening turns. As mentioned above, approach moves occur in 29 of the 30 IrE opening turns, of which one includes a combination of QaU and QaU/P-ASS. Thus, the number of IrE turns which comprise an approach equals that of the number of EngE or AmE turns which comprise a greeting. Self-identifications and requests for identification, which account for 28.9% and 16.7% of all opening turns, occur frequently only in the AmE data at 70.0% and 43.3% respectively.

In the EngE opening turns, only greetings achieve a high frequency. All other moves types occur at 13.3% or less. In the AmE data, by contrast, three move types occur in 43.3% or more of the opening turns. These are greeting, self-identification and request for identification. Finally, in the IrE data, only the approach and the greeting occur with high frequencies, while the only other move type, viz. SELF-ID, occurs only once. Thus, the differences between the three varieties of English which emerge from this analysis are of a quantitative as well as of a qualitative nature.

4.2.3 *Move combinations in opening turns*

More specific profiles of the three English language varieties can be revealed by analysing combinations of move types appearing in the opening turns. As the turns consist of one, two or three moves (cf. Table 2), single-, double- and triple-move turns are examined in turn.

Only three of the move types occur in single-move turns (cf. Table 9). These are GREET, REQ-ID, and APPR. While 19 of the 80 greetings (23.8%) occur in single-move turns, only seven of the 38 approach moves (18.4%) and one of the 15 requests for identification (6.7%) occur alone. Among the approach moves are four P-ASSs, two QaUs and one QaU/P-ASS. 17 of the 19 “greetings only” were used by the English informants, which means that more than half of all EngE opening turns are “greetings only” (56.7%). The remaining two “greetings only” were used by the American informants and are the

only single-move turns in the AmE data set. By contrast, all six of the IrE single-move turns are approaches, and half of these party assessments.

Table 9. Distribution of move types in single-move turns

	EngE	IrE	AmE	Overall
GREET	17	—	2	19
REQ-ID	1	—	—	1
APPR	1	6	—	7

In the double-move turns, seven different types of combination occur (cf. Table 10). These are, with decreasing frequency, GREET + APPR, GREET + SELF-ID, GREET + REQ-ID, and GREET + COMPL. A further three combinations GREET + other (disclose “clothing”), SELF-ID + REQ-ID, and APPR + APPR only occur once each. The frequencies of these combinations and relative distribution across variety are given in Table 10 below. It is worth noting that in each combination the move types occur in exactly the same order in which they appear in these labels. In other words, GREET, for instance, never appears in second place.

Table 10. Distribution of move type combinations in double-move turns

	EngE	IrE	AmE	Overall
GREET + APPR	2	22	3	27
GREET + SELF-ID	3	1	10	14
GREET + REQ-ID	1	—	4	5
GREET + COMPL	3	—	—	3
GREET + other	1	—	—	1
SELF-ID + REQ-ID	—	—	1	1
APPR + APPR	—	1	—	1

The most frequent type of combination in the IrE double-move turns is GREET + APPR. This combination accounts for 91.6% of the total of 24 IrE double-move turns and appears in 73.3% of the total 30 IrE opening turns. The most frequent combination type in the AmE data is GREET + SELF-ID, which occurs in 55.6% of the total 18 AmE double-move turns and in 33.3% of the total 30 AmE opening turns. By contrast, the two most frequent EngE combination types, viz. GREET + SELF-ID and GREET + COMPL, occur individually in 30.0% of the total of ten double-move turns and in only 10.0% of the total 30 EngE opening turns.

In the triple-move turns, only three combination types can be observed. These are GREET + SELF-ID + REQ-ID, GREET + SELF-ID + APPR, and GREET + SELF-ID + other (request “host”). Altogether, there are only 11 instances of these three triple-move turn types over all three varieties, ten of these occur in the AmE data. Eight of these ten combinations are of the type GREET + SELF-ID + REQ-ID (cf. Table 11).

Table 11. Distribution of move type combinations in triple-move turns

	EngE	IrE	AmE	Overall
GREET + SELF-ID + REQ-ID	—	—	8	8
GREET + SELF-ID + APPR	1	—	1	2
GREET + SELF-ID + other	—	—	1	1

As Tables 10 and 11 demonstrate, all types of triple-move combinations and five of the seven types of double-move combinations include a GREET in turn-initial position. Only two of the three least frequent types of double-move combinations (with only one occurrence each) do not include a greeting at all. The comparatively high number of triple-move turns in the AmE data occurs mostly because in 26.7% of all 30 AmE opening turns the GREET is followed not only by a self-identification, but also by a request for identification. Finally, the only combination SELF-ID + REQ-ID which is not prefaced by a GREET also occurs in the AmE data (cf. Table 10), so that 30.0% of the 30 AmE opening turns include a self-identification followed by a request for identification.

These findings on the move types found in the opening turns, their combinations, frequencies and distribution suggest clear and diverging preferences across the three varieties of English under study. The following table, which is a synopsis of Tables 9–11, summarises all patterns established and the distribution of each move or move combination in the opening turns of each of the three varieties (the most salient results are highlighted in bold type).

Table 12. Distribution of the move type patterns in the opening turns

	EngE (n=30)	IrE (n=30)	AmE (n=30)
GREET	56.7% (17)	—	6.7% (2)
REQ-ID	3.3% (1)	—	—
APPR	3.3% (1)	20.0% (6)	—
GREET + APPR	6.7% (2)	73.3% (22)	10.0% (3)
GREET + SELF-ID	10.0% (3)	3.3% (1)	33.3% (10)
GREET + REQ-ID	3.3% (1)	—	13.3% (4)
GREET + COMPL	10.0% (3)	—	—
GREET + other	3.3% (1)	—	—
SELF-ID + REQ-ID	—	—	3.3% (1)
APPR + APPR	—	3.3% (1)	—
GREET + SELF-ID + REQ-ID	—	—	26.7% (8)
GREET + SELF-ID + APPR	3.3% (1)	—	3.3% (1)
GREET + SELF-ID + other	—	—	3.3% (1)

The most typical opening turn in the EngE dialogues is a single-move turn consisting of only a GREET. It accounts for more than half of all EngE opening turns, at 56.7%. Next in frequency in the EngE data are the combinations GREET + SELF-ID and GREET + COMPL, each occurring, however, only three times (10.0%). The most typical IrE opening turn is GREET + APPR,

which appears in almost three quarters of all IrE opening turns, at 73.3%. In fact, 29 of the 30 IrE opening turns include an APPR move, one of these turns even includes a combination of two APPR moves. In the AmE data, the move type SELF-ID, which occurs only once in the IrE and four times in the EngE data, plays a dominant role. Specifically, 70.0% (21) of all AmE opening turns include a SELF-ID. The most frequent patterns are the double-move combination GREET + SELF-ID, which is employed in one third of the AmE opening turns (33.3%), and the triple-move combination GREET + SELF-ID + REQ-ID, which accounts for another quarter of these turns (26.7%). While REQ-ID – a move type which is not found in the IrE opening turns and appears only twice in the EngE opening turns – co-occurs with SELF-ID in most cases in the AmE data, it also occurs in the combination GREET + REQ-ID. Hence, 83.3% of all AmE opening turns include either a SELF-ID or a REQ-ID or both, clearly confirming that for Americans, unlike for speakers from England or Ireland, identification has the highest priority in party conversations with a stranger. Speakers from England, by contrast, start party talk much more cautiously by using a bare greeting, while the Irish are more specific and partner-oriented than the English, but clearly less personal and direct than the Americans.

In sum then, the findings about cross-varietal variation in the opening moves in party talk can be summarised by identifying the most characteristic type of opening turn for each of the three varieties of English. These are:

- **EngE:** GREET only (56.7%),
e.g. *Hi.*
- **IrE:** GREET + APPR (73.3%),
e.g. *Hi! It's a good party, isn't it?*
- **AmE:** GREET + SELF-ID (+ REQ-ID) (together 60.0%):
e.g. *Hi, my name's Jill. (What's yours?)*

These different preferences in the opening turns reflect diverging expectations. The “first thing” a native speaker of English says to a stranger at a party is not the same for all speakers. The differences which have been established above may cause cross-cultural misunderstandings between, e.g., a speaker from the United States and a speaker from the United Kingdom. A speaker from the United Kingdom may consider an American native speaker as inappropriately direct and personal. A speaker from the United States, on the other hand, addressed by a speaker from England with a bare greeting may think that this English person does not show sufficient interest and appropriate involvement (cf. also Tannen 1984: 80).

More particularly, speakers from England or Ireland may consider an American impolite, if this American speaker not only discloses her name, but also explicitly asks for the addressee's name, thus eliminating the option of ignoring the request for reciprocation implicit in a self-identification (cf.

Edmondson & House 1981: 173–174). As giving options is regarded as polite (cf. Lakoff 1973), Americans may be regarded as rude and overexplicit.

Needless to say, neither preference is per se impolite. Rather, what is considered polite (or politic or appropriate; cf. Watts 2003: 260, Locher 2004: 90) varies across English-speaking cultures. Hence, members of one English-speaking community, while observing the norms of their own culture, may be seen as impolite by members of another English-speaking community who have diverging expectations, unless an emic perspective is adopted (cf., e.g., House & Kasper 1981: 184).

4.3 Further turns

4.3.1 *Second turns*

The analysis now shifts from the opening turns to the second turns. All dialogues in the corpus of the present study include a second turn, but in four dialogues (one EngE and three AmE) this second turn is the final turn (cf. Section 4.1). By and large, the second turns in the present corpus include moves which can be expected in response to the moves contained in the opening turns, and which are, therefore, preferred second parts. Thus, greeting follows greeting, names requested are provided, party assessments are agreed to, QaUs are answered by employing the usual phrases, commonly used compliment responses are given to the compliments, and so on. In this sense, second turns are predetermined by the opening turns which they follow. In the case of multi-move opening turns, the question is, however, whether all of the moves in the opening turn are responded to in the second turn. Further questions include whether all moves in second turns are responding moves, or whether there are also initiating moves.

The overall number of moves in the second turns is 152, which means that on average second turns consist of 1.7 moves. Given the general possibility of combining responding and initiating moves in second turns (cf. Schneider 1988: 58), it is surprising that in the present corpus the move total for the second turns is not higher than that of the opening turns, which is 164 (cf. Section 4.2.1). The move structure of the second turns is detailed in Table 13 for each variety.

Table 13. Number of moves in the second turns

	Total turn 2	Average turn 2
EngE	47	1.6
IrE	53	1.8
AmE	52	1.7
<i>Overall</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>1.7</i>

The second turns also comprise one, two, or three moves; there is even one turn (in the EngE data) which consists of four moves. In general, the distribution of

single-, double-, triple- (and quadruple-) move turns is similar to the distribution in the opening turns overall and for each variety individually (cf. Table 2). It is almost identical in the case of the double-move turns. However, the number of opening turns with three or more moves is higher, and the number of single-move turns is lower. This applies in particular to the AmE data, in which the frequencies of the single- and the triple-move turns are the exact opposites for the opening and the second turns (opening turns: 6.7% single moves, 33.3% triple moves vs. second turns: 33.3% single moves, 6.7% triple moves). Otherwise, the differences are negligible. The percentages for the second turns are given in Table 14.

Table 14. Distribution of move structures in the second turns

	One move	Two moves	Three/four moves
EngE	56.7% (17)	33.3% (10)	10.0% (3)
IrE	23.3% (7)	76.7% (23)	—
AmE	33.3% (10)	60.0% (18)	6.7% (2)
<i>Overall</i>	<i>37.8% (34)</i>	<i>56.7% (51)</i>	<i>5.6% (5)</i>

The most surprising finding is the relatively high occurrence of single-move turns. More than half of the EngE, one third of the AmE and almost one quarter of the IrE second turns consist of only one move. As all of these single moves are responding moves, this means that in these cases “the ball is not kept rolling” (cf. Edmondson & House 1981: 170). In other words, the second speaker does not provide a further move to start the next exchange but leaves the initiative entirely with the first speaker, who started the conversation.

Second turns overwhelmingly include instances of the following move types: greeting (GREET), self-identification (SELF-ID), request for identification (REQ-ID), approaches (APPR), response to approach (R-APPR), and response to compliment (R-COMPL). Instances of these types account for 88.8% of all 152 moves used in second turns. Instances of further types, occurring much less frequently, were compliments, suggestions, discloses, etc. The frequencies of the main types are shown in Table 15, with the most significant results highlighted in bold type.

Table 15. Distribution of move types across the 30 second turns in each variety of English

	EngE	IrE	AmE
GREET	83.3% (25)	3.3% (1)	33.3% (10)
SELF-ID	20.0% (6)	—	80.0% (24)
REQ-ID	3.3% (1)	—	13.3% (4)
APPR	3.3% (1)	53.3% (16)	23.3% (7)
R-APPR	13.3% (4)	96.7% (29)	13.3% (4)
R-COMPL	10.0% (3)	—	—
Other	23.3% (7)	23.3% (7)	10.0% (3)

More than 80 per cent of the EngE second turns contain a GREET (83.3%), while the frequency of this move type is considerably lower in the AmE data at 33.3% and especially in the IrE data at 3.3%. By contrast, 96.6% of the IrE second turns contain a response to an APPR, whereas only 13.3% of the second turns in each the EngE and the AmE data contain this same type. Finally, 80.0% of the second turns in the AmE data include a SELF-ID, which is a move type occurring in 20.0% of the EngE second turns, but not occurring in the IrE second turns at all. These results correspond to the findings on the opening turns (cf. Table 8) and underline the clear differences between the three varieties of English under investigation.

Thus, the first and second turns of 25 of the 30 EngE dialogues include an exchange of greetings. Furthermore, of the 17 “greetings only” in the EngE opening turns (cf. Table 12), 15 are responded to by a “greeting only.” This means that 50.0% of the EngE dialogues start with an exchange of bare greetings. An exchange of this type occurs only twice in the AmE data, and not at all in the IrE data.

Of the AmE second turns, 24 contain a self-identification, among these seven single-move turns. All of these self-identifications respond to an initial self-identification and/or an explicit request for identification. Where speaker A includes no self-identification in the opening turn, it is requested by speaker B in the second turn. In only eight cases is the greeting in the opening turn responded to, but only if no REQ-ID is included in the second turn. Overall, the most typical opening exchange in the AmE data is an exchange of self-identifications, i.e. turn 1 includes a SELF-ID by the first speaker which is responded to in turn 2 with a SELF-ID by the second speaker. Exchanges of this type occur in two thirds (66.7%) of the first two turns in the AmE conversations.

In the IrE data, 29 of the 30 initial turn pairs contain an exchange of approach moves. In 14 of these cases, the opening turn includes a party assessment which is followed by a specific response (e.g. an agreement token such as *Yeah*) in the second turn. In ten further cases, the opening turn includes a question after the addressee’s well-being (QaU) which is also followed by a specific response (e.g. a variant of *Fine*) in the second turn. All seven single moves in the IrE second turns are agreement tokens used to respond to party assessments (e.g., *Great party, isn’t it? – Yeah.*). In eight additional instances, however, the agreement token is followed by a move addressing a further aspect of the party situation (e.g., *Great party, isn’t it? – Yeah, it’s brilliant, and the food is great as well.*⁹), thus initiating a dependent exchange, a phenomenon termed “chaining” (cf. Edmondson & House 1981: 171). Second turns after QaUs are, however, of a different nature. In this case, the QaU is responded to and then reciprocated (e.g., *Hey, how’s it goin’? – Not too bad. And yourself?*) (cf. Edmondson & House 1981: 191, also Edmondson 1981: 111–114). This applies to all ten IrE instances of opening exchanges initiated by a QaU.

Overall, chaining and reciprocation occur much more frequently in the IrE than in the EngE or AmE data, and in fact more frequently than in the EngE

and AmE data taken together. The frequencies of these two phenomena in each of the three varieties are specified in Table 16.

Table 16. Frequencies of chaining and reciprocation in second turns

	Chaining	Reciprocation
EngE	16.7% (5)	3.3% (1)
IrE	26.7% (8)	33.3% (10)
AmE	6.7% (2)	20.0% (6)
<i>Overall</i>	<i>16.7% (15)</i>	<i>18.9% (17)</i>

In accordance with the above findings, typical opening exchanges are designed as follows:

- **EngE:** GREET only – GREET only
e.g. A: *Hi.*
B: *Hi.*
- **IrE:** GREET + APPR – RESPONSE to APPR (+ CHAINING or RECIPROCATION)
e.g. A: *Hi. Great party, isn't it?*
B: *Yeah. (Great music.)*
- **AmE:** GREET + SELF-ID (+ REQ-ID) – (GREET +) SELF-ID
e.g. A: *Hi. My name is Nikki. (What's yours?)*
B: *(Hi.) I'm Caitlin.*

4.3.2 Later turns

This section addresses the question as to what the interlocutors talk about after the initial exchange. The simple answer to this question is: much of the same. That is to say that many of the moves which occur in the initial exchange in some conversations occur in later exchanges in other conversations. In particular, those move types which are frequently used in the first two turns by speakers from Ireland and the U.S.A. appear in later turns in the EngE dialogues.

As mentioned in the preceding section, fifty percent of all EngE dialogues open with an exchange of bare greetings. Approach moves and identification moves, which dominate in the IrE and AmE openings respectively, are rare by comparison (cf. Section 4.2.2. and 4.3.1). This does not mean, however, that these move types do not appear in the English dialogues. They do appear, but at a later stage. The overall picture is summarised in Tables 17 and 18.¹⁰

Table 17. Distribution of identification moves (SELF-ID and REQ-ID)

ID-moves	EngE (n=30)	IrE (n=30)	AmE (n=30)	Overall (n=90)
in initial exchange	23.3% (7)	3.3% (1)	83.3% (25)	36.7% (33)
in later exchange	30.0% (9)	30.0% (9)	10.0% (3)	23.3% (21)
total occurrences	53.3% (16)	33.3% (10)	93.3% (28)	60.0% (54)

Table 18. Distribution of approach moves (QaU, QaU/P-ASS and P-ASS)

APPR-moves	EngE (n=30)	IrE (n=30)	AmE (n=30)	Overall (n=90)
in initial exchange	16.7% (5)	100.0% (30)	30.0% (9)	48.9% (44)
in later exchange	60.0% (18)	66.7% (20)	43.3% (13)	26.7% (24)
total occurrences	66.7% (20)	100.0% (30)	60.0% (18)	75.6% (68)

Identification moves occur in 93.3% of all AmE conversations, but in only 53.3% and 33.3% of the EngE and IrE conversations respectively. Moreover, while 83.3% of the AmE initial exchanges include identification moves, only 23.3% of the EngE and merely 3.3% of the IrE first two turns include identification moves. By contrast, approach moves appear in all IrE dialogues (100.0%), but in only 66.7% and 60.0% of the EngE and AmE dialogues respectively. Moreover, approach moves occur in all Irish initial exchanges (100.0%), with additional approach moves appearing in later exchanges in 66.7% of the IrE dialogues. In the EngE data, only 16.7% of the initial exchanges and 60.0% of later exchanges include an approach move, whereas in the AmE data 30.0% of the initial exchanges and 43.3% of later exchanges include this move type. Overall, these findings also underline the preferences in each variety under study. Identification moves play a major role in the AmE dialogues and only a minor role in the IrE dialogues. In contrast, approach moves clearly dominate in IrE party talk between strangers.

In several dialogues, moves which can be used in the initial exchange, but occur in a later exchange are explicitly marked as delayed elements, i.e. as functional units which could or should have occurred at an earlier stage in the conversation. This applies specifically to identification moves. When a SELF-ID or a REQ-ID appears in turn 5 or later, the expression *by the way* is used as a marker, particularly in the EngE data, as in *Oh, by the way, I'm Kate*, or in *What's your name, by the way?*

Another aspect worth noting is that in EngE party talk requests for identification which do not follow self-identifications seem to be more acceptable in delayed introductions than at the very beginning of a conversation. Compare, for instance, the initial exchange in (1) with the exchange in (2), beginning in turn 5.

- (1) Turn 1, speaker A: What's your name?
 Turn 2, speaker B: Judith. Why?
 (ENG1F41)
- (2) Turn 5, speaker A: Sorry, I don't mean to be rude, but what's your name?
 Turn 6, speaker B: Sorry, my fault. It's Hayley.
 Turn 7, speaker A: Cool! I'm Phoebe.
 (ENG1F2)

In example (1), speaker B seems to be surprised at being asked her name straight away, or even feel offended. While she does comply with the request,

she also wants to know why she is asked so bluntly, i.e. before speaker A has introduced herself. In example (2), speaker A also requests her interlocutor's name without having introduced herself. Here, however, speaker B does not take offence, which may, of course, be due to A's prefaced apology. Yet B also apologises, apparently for not having introduced herself earlier in the first place.

The observation that for speakers of EngE requests for identification seem more acceptable later in the conversation is supported by four further instances of delayed introductions which are initiated by a request for identification which does not follow a self-identification. In each of these cases, the request is complied with and then reciprocated, resulting in a three-move pattern across three turns, similar to the sequence in example (2) above, but without the supporting apologies. This same sequential pattern is also found in two of the three delayed introductions in the AmE data, and in five of the nine delayed introductions in the IrE data. Interestingly, in the IrE data, such requests are prefaced by the discourse marker *so* (e.g., *So what's your name?*), indicating that after exchanges of QaUs and/or P-ASSs a request for identification is considered the next appropriate step in a conversation with a stranger (cf. also Schiffrin 1987: 217–225, Davis 2005: 134–139). This means that especially in the IrE data delayed identification exchanges are more common than early identification exchanges.

In all three varieties, *so* as a discourse structuring device is also employed with other move types. It always appears before the first move in an independent exchange, thus indicating the boundary between exchanges or longer discourse units. Examples include:

- (3) So hi, I'm Sharon. (prefacing GREET + SELF-ID)
- (4) So, great party? (prefacing P-ASS)
- (5) So, are you having a good time? (prefacing QaU)

As example (3) demonstrates, *so* may even be used at the very beginning of a party conversation, prefacing the greeting. This usage, however, is rare. Over all varieties, there are only two instances of conversation-initial *so*.

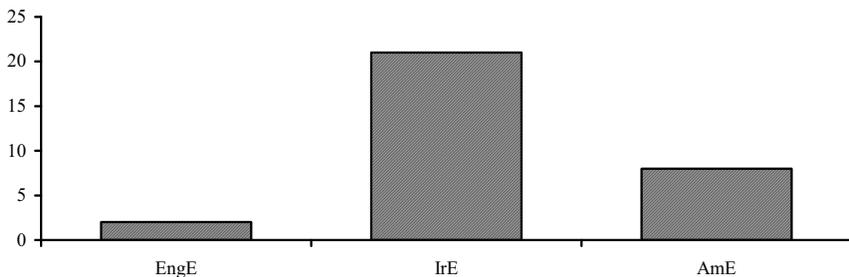


Figure 4. Occurrence of discourse structuring *so*

In all 90 conversations, there are 31 occurrences of *so* as a discourse marker. While instances are found in each of the three varieties, there are clear national preferences. There are only two instances of *so* in the EngE data and eight in the AmE data. In the IrE data, by contrast, *so* appears 21 times (cf. Figure 4, above). Thus, discourse structuring *so* would appear to be a pragmalinguistic feature especially characteristic of Irish English (cf. also Binchy 2005).

While *so* may be used before moves which typically, though not exclusively, appear in the early stages of a party conversation with a stranger (cf. examples 3, 4 and 5), *so* is more commonly used to introduce exchanges which predominantly occur in later stages. In general, further details about the interactants are mutually disclosed in such exchanges, most of which start with a request for information. Consider the following examples.

- (6) So do you know anybody here?
- (7) So how do you know the hostess?
- (8) So who are you here with?
- (9) So where are you from?

All of these questions occur more than once (up to four times), at least in the IrE data (the two EngE instances and most of the eight AmE instances of *so* preface QaUs). These questions also occur without a *so*-preface in all three data sets. Such late requests for further information about the conversation partner address three issues: a) where they live, b) what they do, and c) who they know. A specific sub-type of c) is the “host/hostess-question” d) (as in example 7 above). Consider the following examples for each of these request types.

a) WHERE THEY LIVE

- (10) Where do you live?
- (11) Have you just moved into the area?
- (12) So are you from around here?

b) WHAT THEY DO

- (13) What do you work at?
- (14) What school do you go to?
- (15) Where do you go to school?

c) WHO THEY KNOW

- (16) Who are you a friend of?
- (17) So who did you come with?
- (18) Are you with friends?

d) HOW THEY KNOW THE HOST

- (19) How do you know the person throwing the party?
- (20) So you know the party-holder?
- (21) Are you a friend of the host?

There is a total of 35 such requests for further information in the corpus, the majority of which (62.9%, $n=22$) concern people, i.e. friends and acquaintances, including host or hostess (categories c and d). This is not surprising as people constitute a topic which is comparatively safer than personal details of the interlocutors' identities, as people are an element of the party frame and, thus, constitute an intermediate-circle topic, whereas personal details of the interlocutors' identities are inner-circle topics (cf. Figure 1 in Section 2 above, also Schneider 1988: 81–86).

Of the 35 requests, 20 are included in the IrE dialogues (57.1%), while 12 appear in the AmE and only three in the EngE dialogues (34.3% and 8.6% respectively). Hence, speakers of IrE seem to take a stronger interest in the lives of their conversation partners than speakers of AmE and especially speakers of EngE. In addition, it appears that requests for further information about the interlocutor are avoided completely in EngE party small talk, particularly with respect to requests for more personal information not related to the immediate party context (cf. Section 2, Figure 1). The three EngE requests belong to the categories c) and d) (i.e. people at the party, including host or hostess), and not to a) or b) (i.e. the place where they live or work). Table 19 summarizes the distribution of the requests for further information about the interlocutor (given the small amount of data, no percentages are presented here).

Table 19. Distribution of move types across the 30 second turns in each variety of English

	EngE	IrE	AmE	Total cat.
a) WHERE THEY LIVE	—	5	2	7
b) WHAT THEY DO	—	3	3	6
c) WHO THEY KNOW	2	6	5	13
d) HOW KNOW HOST	1	6	2	9
<i>Total requests for further info</i>	3	20	12	35

As the above examples (6) to (21) show, requests for further information about the interlocutor can be phrased differently, revealing different degrees of certainty. Questions are either open (WH-questions) or closed (YES/NO-questions) (cf., e.g., example 10 versus examples 11 and 12). The fact that closed questions clearly outnumber open questions in all data sets suggests that closed questions are considered more appropriate in a social context in that they avoid the impression of an interrogation (cf. also Schneider 1988: 192–197). They seem less blunt and, thus, pay more attention to the addressee's negative face wants (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987).

An alternative and more indirect way to elicit further information about the interlocutor is to volunteer such information and, thus, to implicitly request reciprocation (cf. Edmondson & House 1981: 174). The following instances are found in the present corpus.

- (22) ... it's my mate's party and I kinda know everyone.

- (23) I'm really nervous here, I don't know much [sic!] people.
(24) I just know the host.

Admittedly, however, information is rarely volunteered in this way. All three instances of this type appear in the IrE data. A further way to indirectly elicit information about the interlocutor is to make explicit statements relating to lack of acquaintance, as in the following examples.

- (25) I haven't seen you here before.
(26) I don't believe we have met.

Such statements occur only in the IrE and AmE data, but not in the EngE data (arguably because they may be considered as face-threatening). There are, however, only four occurrences altogether, of which the two IrE instances are both phrased as in (25) and the two AmE instances both as in (26). Responses to statements of this type include such examples as *I'm new around here*, *No, I just moved here*, or *Well, I just got a new job here recently*.

Once the (directly or indirectly) requested information is provided, it may be used to establish common ground (cf. also Schneider 1988: 186–191). This is illustrated by the following examples, which are the only examples of this particular type, viz. establishing a link via an absent third party. This type is, of course, related to establishing a link via the host/hostess or other people present (cf. Table 19, categories c and d). Examples (27) and (28) below both appear in the IrE conversations.

- (27) B: So where are you from?
A: Place.
B: Oh my god! Do you know such and such person from there?
(IRE1F28)
- (28) A: Do you go to school around here then?
B: I'm down in the Pres. You?
A: Leo's.
B: Oh, do you know Mary Kavanagh then?
(IRE1F4)

While some of the observations reported on in the present section may not be statistically relevant, they do support previous findings from analyses of naturally-occurring discourse or indicate trends which may serve as a starting point for further investigations involving larger amounts of data. The same applies to the following sections, 4.3.3 and 4.3.4.

4.3.3 *Compliments*

A unique feature of the dialogues in the EngE data set is the use of compliments in the opening exchanges. No other dialogues are opened by employing this particular speech act. While, admittedly, the number of compliments is low in this position (cf. Table 3), further compliments are also used in later stages

in the EngE conversations. Indeed, compliments appear in 20.0% of all EngE dialogues. Although this percentage is still not very high, it is worth noting, as there is only one late compliment exchange in one IrE conversation, and no occurrence of compliments at all in the AmE conversations. This result seems to contradict previous findings suggesting that Americans use compliments much more frequently than other native speakers of English, notably speakers from the United Kingdom (cf., e.g., Herbert 1989: 29 and 1991: 398, Kasper 1990: 199).

The overall total of compliments is nine, including two compliments paid in response to another compliment. The realisations of all compliments in the present corpus are highly formulaic and share a number of semantic and syntactic features previously identified for compliments in American and New Zealand English (cf. Manes & Wolfson 1981, Holmes 1986; cf. also Kasper 1990: 199). Examples include the following instances:

- (29) I like your top. [three occurrences]
- (30) I like your top by the way.
- (31) I really like your trousers.
- (32) I really like your hair.
- (33) I love your eye-shadow.

As these examples illustrate, all compliments refer to aspects of the recipient's outer appearance. This is a compliment topic typically used by female speakers (cf. Holmes 1995: 130–134). More particularly, these compliments address aspects of appearance which require deliberate effort, e.g. items of clothing, hair-do, eye-shadow (cf. Manes 1983: 99). On the syntactic level, the compliments employed are even less varied. In seven of the nine compliments, the pattern “*I VERB your NOUN*” is used, a pattern in which the positive evaluation constitutive of the compliment is expressed through the verb. This verbal construction was found to be the second most frequent pattern in American and New Zealand English (cf. Holmes & Brown 1987: 529). Unlike American speakers, however, and like speakers from New Zealand, the EngE speakers in the present study favour the verb *like*; there is only one instance (in the IrE data) in which the more emphatic verb *love* is used (cf., e.g., Kasper 1990: 199). Yet, in two cases in the EngE data, *like* is prefaced by the intensifier *really*. Finally, there is one particular item of female clothing which seems to attract more compliments than any other aspect of appearance, viz. tops, surfacing as the noun after the possessive in the syntactic pattern mentioned above. Four of the EngE compliments refer to this particular item, as does the disclosing comment (indirect compliment) *I've got that top in blue*.

All compliments are responded to, i.e. none of the compliments are ignored (cf., e.g., Golato 2005: 174). Seven of the nine responses include an initial thanks, six of these contain additional elements realising various functions. In two cases, for instance, the compliment is returned. Overall, however, the responses are much more varied than the compliments they refer to, thus precluding any generalisations to support or contradict previous findings on respond-

ing strategies and respective differences between varieties of English (cf., e.g., Schneider 1999).

4.3.4 Closings

Overall, more than one quarter of all conversations have an explicit closing (27.8%). This applies to 33.3% (10) of the AmE, 30.0% (9) of the IrE and 20.0% (6) of the EngE conversations (cf. Section 4.1, Figure 3). These closings differ across the varieties in their realisations.

All of the EngE closings, without exception, comprise a variant of *see you later*. Examples include *see you later*, *maybe see you later*, *might see you later*, *I'll see you around*, and *see ya*. Such expressions precede or, more commonly, replace variants of *goodbye*. Variants of *see you later*, or of *talk to you later*, are also contained in eight of the nine IrE closings, whereas only five of the ten AmE closings contain such elements. On the other hand, five AmE closings contain variants of *nice meeting you*, which are also found in two of the IrE, but none of the EngE dialogues.¹¹ Two issues are important here. Firstly, variants of *nice meeting you* appear to be more formal than variants of *see you later*, at least from an outsider's perspective (i.e. etic view). Secondly, and more importantly, while *see you later* and similar expressions serve to terminate the conversation at hand, they, at the same time, refer to a possible future encounter, at least literally, thus indicating, if only conventionally, that the present encounter was enjoyable enough to be repeated. By contrast, *nice meeting you* and similar expressions are not prospective, but retrospective in that they evaluate the terminating conversation (cf. Schneider 1988: 101–102). Thus, the Americans appear to be the most formal and retrospective, and the English the most informal and prospective. The relevant findings are summarised in Table 20 below (here the use of all capitals indicates a realisation type which stands for several variants, some of which are mentioned above). The numbers for the leave-taking formulae show how many of all closings in one variety of English contain one or more instances of each category (type frequency).

Table 20. Distribution of leave-taking formulae

	EngE	IrE	AmE	Total cat.
SEE YOU LATER	6	8	5	19
NICE MEETING YOU	—	2	5	7
<i>Total closings</i>	6	9	10	25

In 12 of the 25 closings, the final exchanges of prospective greetings or retrospective evaluations are prefaced by an extractor (cf., e.g., House 1982: 70). Examples include *I better get going*, *I better go mingle*, and *got to see my friends*. Seven of the nine IrE conversations (77.8%), but only two of the six EngE and three of the ten AmE closings (33.3% and 30.0% respectively) contain an extractor. Additionally, or alternatively, the beginning of the closing phase is indicated by the use of a discourse marker, such as *anyway* (preferred in the EngE data) or *well* (preferred in the AmE data). In this function, which

may be referred to as boundary marking (cf. Schneider 1988: 141), discourse markers occur in 15 of the 25 closing phases (60.0%). They are found in five of the six EngE and seven of the ten AmE closings (83.3% and 70.0% respectively), but only in three of the nine IrE closings (33.3%). Hence, the English and the Americans seem to prefer discourse markers to enter into the closing phase, whereas the Irish seem to favour extractors (cf. Table 21). That neither of these two elements appears in a total of eight dialogues (8.9%) may be an artefact of the data elicitation method. On the other hand, it is surprising that discourse markers such as *well* occur in written questionnaire data at all. Their occurrence may be regarded as an indication of naturalness, thus showing that questionnaire data may not be quite as artificial as they are sometimes considered to be.

Table 21. Distribution of extractors and boundary markers

	EngE	IrE	AmE	Total cat.
Extractor	2	7	3	12
Boundary marker	5	3	7	15
<i>Total closings</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>25</i>

While these observations about the closing phases should not be overrated, considering the low frequencies of the phenomena observed, they seem to point to differences between the three varieties of English which deserve further investigation.

Those conversations which are not explicitly terminated often end with a move which closes the phase of initial talking (containing greetings, indirect and direct approaches, identifications and further information about the interlocutors) by suggesting an alternative activity (i.e. not talking), mostly an activity specific to parties, such as eating, drinking, dancing or meeting people, notably the suggestor's friends (cf. Schneider 1988: 85). Consider the following examples (some of which may be considered as offers rather than suggestions).¹²

EATING

- (34) Let's go and get some food.
 (35) Do you want to go eat?

DRINKING

- (36) Shall we go get a drink?
 (37) Do you want to go get a drink?

DANCING

- (38) Let's dance.
 (39) Want to go dancing with my mates?

MEETING PEOPLE

- (40) Do you want to come and stand with my friends?
 (41) Come over and I'll introduce you to some of my friends.

OTHER

- (42) Let's go do something fun.
 (43) Wanna go outside for a bit?

Suggestions of these types appear at the end of 24 of the 90 dialogues (26.7%), and specifically in ten EngE, eight IrE and six AmE dialogues. Overall, the two most frequent topic categories are MEETING PEOPLE (eight instances) and DRINKING (six instances), together accounting for 58.3% of all conversations which end with a suggestion. Five of the eight instances of MEETING PEOPLE occur in the IrE, two in the EngE and one in the AmE dialogues. By contrast, five of the six instances of DRINKING occur in the EngE and the remaining instance in the IrE dialogues. These findings seem to indicate that English party-goers are more focused on drinks, and the Irish on meeting people, while for the Americans no clear picture emerges. The findings are summarised in Table 22.

Table 22. Distribution of suggestions of alternative activities

	EngE	IrE	AmE	Total cat.
EATING	1	—	2	3
DRINKING	5	1	—	6
DANCING	1	1	—	2
MEETING PEOPLE	2	5	1	8
Other	1	1	3	5
<i>Total</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>24</i>

However, it must again be emphasized that given the small size of the sample and the low frequencies of the phenomena observed and discussed here, this part of the present study is purely exploratory. Yet, the qualitative results presented in this section may well be taken as hypotheses to be confirmed, rejected or modified in future studies of party small talk.

5. Conclusion

Small talk varies in a number of ways across national varieties of English. Differences include both quantitative and qualitative aspects and can be found on all levels of the discourse model proposed by Schneider & Barron (this volume; cf. also Schneider & Barron 2005).

1) *Formal level:* Differences include the choice of discourse markers indicating the closing of a conversation (English *anyway* versus American *well*),

and also the distribution of *so* indicating (delayed) discourse elements (clearly preferred by speakers from Ireland).

2) *Actional level*: Notable differences can be observed in the choice of move types in the opening turns. Typically, speakers from England open their party conversations with a bare greeting, a move type which can be employed to open any type of conversation. By contrast, speakers from the U.S. favour moves disclosing or requesting names, i.e. moves particular to stranger-stranger interactions. Finally, IrE speakers prefer approach moves in their opening turns. These are predominantly (pure or hybrid) party assessments such as *Great party, isn't it?* or *Are you enjoying the party?*, which are move types specifically referring to the party situation. These different preferences reveal different degrees of partner-orientation and different orientations towards positive and negative politeness.

3) *Interactional level*: Interactional features identified in the present corpus concern both a local and a global type of sequential organisation, namely move combinations within the turns as well as across turns. For instance, it was found that the move types employed by the American speakers in their opening turns, especially self-identifications and requests for identification, were used by speakers from Ireland and England in later turns. Furthermore, move types employed in only one turn by speakers of IrE and AmE were distributed across several turns by speakers of EngE.

4) *Topic level*: All topics selected correspond to the predictions made by the model of topic selection proposed in Schneider (1987, 1988) and supported by Svennevig (1999). This applies specifically to the topics addressed in later turns referring to such elements of the “party” frame as food, music, dance, people (other guests, hostess/host). Differences between the three varieties of English pertain specifically to personal topics related to the identities of the interlocutors, e.g. where they live or work. Such topics are avoided by speakers from England in particular.

5) *Organisational level*: Variation on this level of discourse occurs in particular in turn complexity, i.e. in the number of moves per turn, notably in the opening and second turns of the conversations analysed. While single-move turns are typical of speakers from England, double-move turns are typical of speakers from Ireland and triple-move turns of speakers from the United States. In combination with the findings on the interactional level, it seems that speakers from England expect ratification by addressee feedback for each of their moves before the next move is made. This would explain why moves included in only one turn of, e.g., the American informants, appear in two or more turns in the EngE data set. Should this be a reflection of different norms governing turn-taking (cf. also Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006: 99), then it is quite remarkable that such differences show in the type of data used in the present study.

As has been found in earlier studies in variational pragmatics, all of these different choices and conventions are variety-preferential rather than variety-exclusive. This also applies to the employment of compliments, which, contrary to previous findings, appears (almost) exclusively in the EngE data. Fur-

thermore, low frequencies in the results are a reminder of the possibility that sub-regional and also individual variation must always be taken into account.

Given the specific nature of the data material used in the present study, all results reported on in this paper should be treated as hypotheses which could and indeed should be tested by using different types of data, most notably naturally-occurring discourse. At the same time, it should have become clear that questionnaires, and particularly DPTs, are a source of valuable material in that they warrant a maximum of variable control and, thus, provide a degree of comparability which is indispensable in variational pragmatics.

Notes

* I would like to thank Anne Barron for her many helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

1. In the quotation cited above, Tannen further implies that the importance attributed to small talk may also vary across genders, at least in business communication. Moreover, she assumes the existence of supranational cultures based on shared values (cf. also, e.g., Kasper 1990: 199, and Clyne 1994: 42).

2. Austin's term "phatic act," used to denote one of the three sub-components of his "locutionary act," is not directly related (Austin 1962).

3. Cf. also Eisenstein Ebsworth et al. (1996), who in their study of cross-cultural realisations of greetings in American English, distinguish several types of greetings. One of these types is termed "the chat." Greetings of this type include "a short discussion on a topic or two before either leave-taking or the real purpose of the communication is introduced" (Eisenstein Ebsworth et al. 1996: 94).

4. For some of the problems connected with such dichotomies, cf. Žegarac (1998: 328), who discusses similar examples.

5. At least, this seems to hold for English English, Scottish English, German and Norwegian conversations (cf. Schneider 1988 and Svennevig 1999).

6. I am grateful to Svenja Hiltrop, Anne Barron, and Lisanna Görtz for their help in collecting the data.

7. For a definition of "exchange," cf. Edmondson (1981: 80).

8. Grice (1975: 48), however, thought that his maxims do not apply to conversations with a "second order aim," i.e. to small talk.

9. The topic selected in this example, i.e. *food*, names a prototypical element of the "party frame" (cf. Schneider 1988: 85).

10. As exchanges involving approach moves – unlike exchanges involving identification moves – may appear more than once in the same conversation, the percentages in lines 1 and 2 ("in initial/later exchange") of Table 18 may add up to more than a hundred percent. Line 3 ("total occurrences"), on the other hand, refers to the total amount of conversations including approach moves, be it in the initial exchange, in later exchanges, or in both.

11. Note that a variant of *see you later* and a variant of *nice meeting you* may co-occur in the same closing.

12. Cf. the distinction between “Suggests-for-us” and “Suggests-for-you” made in Edmondson & House (1981: 124–128).

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Appendix

The dialogue production task (DPT)

The present study is based on data elicited by employing the following DPT (cf. Section 3.1). The layout, the wording of the description of the situation, and the space provided for the informants to write their dialogue are as in the original questionnaire.

- 7) A conversation between strangers. At a party, one person (A) sees another person (of the same sex) who looks friendly (B). Write a short dialogue that represents language which would typically be used in this situation:
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Gratitude in British and New Zealand radio programmes

Nothing but gushing?

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1. Introduction

It is said that true feelings are hard to find nowadays, particularly in the media, a showcase of glitter and a realm of pretence. Here, following common stereotypes and prejudices, feelings are often perceived to be only put on for show. Consequently, it is to be expected that language use in the media may reveal many instances of gushing, i.e. cases where people display so much emotion when, for instance, thanking someone, that their utterances can no longer be taken to be meant sincerely.

This paper focuses on expressions of gratitude in radio phone-ins and broadcast interviews. It aims at investigating whether real gratitude is really all that rare and whether seemingly polite utterances are only examples of insincere gushing designed to create a better image of oneself in public or whether they are used to show respect for one's interlocutors and their (face) wants. In addition, a comparison of two varieties of English is attempted, viz. both British and New Zealand radio phone-ins and broadcast interviews are analysed. Specifically, the question is posed whether the "Mr Darcy is all politeness"-Englishman is really more polite than the friendly, outgoing Kiwi who lacks good manners due to all their ancestors being boorish prisoners!¹ In order to answer this question, two corpora are explored, the spoken part of the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English (WSC). Both the British and the New Zealand radio phone-in and broadcast interview sub-corpora are of the same size and consist of about 180,000 words each. The vast majority of transcripts (about 96%) are from radio phone-ins or radio talk shows, the remaining 4% from broadcast interviews.

The study at hand thus aims at contributing to the field of discourse organisation in the media from a variational pragmatic perspective, discussing issues of politeness in a corpus-linguistic and (at least partly) speech act-related ap-

proach. After first describing the nature of expressions of gratitude (2) and elaborating on radio programmes (3), the methods applied in the present study are explained (4). Thereafter, in the analysis of the corpus data (5), quantitative results regarding the overall frequency of the expressions of gratitude (5.1) and their formal realisations (5.2) are presented before turning to more qualitative issues relating to the function of these expressions of gratitude (5.3). The position of expressions of gratitude within a conversation is also discussed (5.4), as well as the question as to who thanks whom (5.5). In addition, special emphasis is placed on the question as to how expressions of gratitude are employed to end a conversation (5.6). Subsequently, the (im)politeness of the expressions of gratitude found in the corpora are discussed in general (6.1), and with regard to similarities and differences between the British and the New Zealand corpora (6.2 and throughout the paper). The results of the present investigation are summarised in a conclusion (7).

2. Expressions of gratitude

Expressions of gratitude are chosen as the focus of this study because they are textbook examples of politeness. They are among the first words to be learnt in a first as well as in a second language. Knowing when and how to thank helps us to get on smoothly with others. Indeed, acquiring such knowledge is part of the socialisation process. Expressions of gratitude are used when a speaker wants the addressee to know that s/he is grateful for what the addressee has said or done. By using such expressions, the addressee's positive face, defined as "the want of every member that his [sic] wants be desirable to at least some others" (Brown & Levinson 1987: 67) or the wish to be confirmed and approved of, is enhanced. In Searle's (1969: 67) terms, a speaker thanks the addressee for some past act (propositional content condition), e.g. when s/he is given something or when the addressee has done something for her/him in the past, which is beneficial to the speaker (preparatory condition). The speaker thanks the addressee because s/he feels grateful or appreciative for what the addressee has done (sincerity condition). The expression of gratitude must actually count as an expression of gratitude (essential condition).

In English, expressions of gratitude are most commonly realised as *thank you* or *thanks* (cf. Aijmer 1996: 39). There are further expressions including words related to *appreciation* and *gratitude* and more general positive evaluations of a fact (e.g. *that was so kind of you*). The actual formulae are frequently accompanied by optional elements, such as the naming of the benefactor, the use of intensifying particles such as *very much*, or the naming of a reason for one's gratitude. All three optional elements may be thought of as increasing the effect of an expression of gratitude – they make it more personal (by naming the benefactor), they stress the gratitude (by using intensifying particles) and make the gratitude more reasonable (by naming a reason). For these reasons, the elements could also be assumed to add to the politeness of an expression of gratitude.

Being textbook examples of politeness, expressions of gratitude are highly routinised formulae and, thus, integral parts of recurrent situations. In using such routine formulae without much cognitive effort, the speaker is given some extra time to think about, plan and develop her/his next contribution. This is why routine formulae, such as expressions of gratitude, are called “islands of reliability” (Dechert 1983: 183–184). Indeed, quite often such routines are only noticed when they are absent. Since expressions of gratitude are highly routinised, they are (often) semantically emptied (cf., e.g., Held 1995: 91–97, 249–250) and intensifications such as *very much* may just be part of the routine. This, in turn, leads to the – disputable – assumption that expressions of gratitude are (often) instances of gushing (cf., e.g., Edmondson & House 1981: 163, Aijmer 1996: 38), i.e. that they are not (or at least not altogether) meant sincerely, in the media and elsewhere. This assumption is to be tested in the present study focussing on expressions of gratitude in radio phone-ins and a small number of broadcast interviews.

3. Radio programmes

Radio phone-ins and interviews are examples of spoken everyday language found in the media. The dialogues hold a position between formal and informal conversations. This ambiguity is mirrored in the classification proposed in the corpora explored in the present study: on the one hand, the conversations are classified as “public” (Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English) and “context-governed” (British National Corpus), on the other hand the domain they are assigned to is “leisure” (British National Corpus). In addition, they are seen as examples of “informal speech” (both corpora) (cf. Table 1 below, p. 147). Due to the relative informality of the topics discussed, the conversations are not unlike everyday chit-chats between friends. However, they are, at the same time, influenced to some extent by the institution radio for and in which they take place (cf. Hutchby 1996: 7–8, 32). This is especially so because of the asymmetrical relation between the interlocutors.

Originally, radio programmes were pure monologues. However, over time the medium has opened up to its audience and has become more and more dialogic by letting the audience take part in the programme. This is especially so in the case of radio phone-ins (cf. Leitner 1983: 4–6, Cameron & Hills 1990: 52). Radio programmes currently have a comparatively democratic format. Despite the democratic concept of letting the audience take part in the show, the hosts are much more powerful than the callers. This power is necessary to enable them to stick to the time frame and the concepts and guidelines of the broadcasting station. In other words, the hosts represent, at least to some degree, the institution for which they work. They are superior to the callers in that they decide (at least to a large extent) how the conversation is begun, maintained and closed (cf. Hutchby 1996: 3, 113) – they do not only have to pay attention to time and topics, but also to entertainment value. In addition, the distinctiveness of the media genre becomes apparent in the fact that radio

phone-in conversations share features of face-to-face interactions as well as of telephone calls (cf. Cameron & Hills 1990: 53). On the one hand, the conversational partners do not know each other, yet they often discuss rather private topics. Also, in radio phone-in shows, the callers usually even phone from their private homes. The conversations, however, are not private, but public and intended to be overheard by a large audience. Radio phone-ins, thus, are at the interface between the public and private spheres. Indeed, Heritage (1985: 100, note 3) notes that “[a]n intermediate case between talk that is produced as private and talk whose design exhibits its production for overhearers is perhaps to be found in radio shows incorporating a phone-in format.”

The following phases are generally distinguished in radio phone-in conversations (cf. Hutchby 1996: 13–16). The presenters announce their callers (phase 1). Since the presenters are “known” to the callers and the audience at large alike, the hosts do not identify themselves, but the announcement usually consists of the caller’s name and her/his location and sometimes the topic (i.e. the information the caller gives the staff receiving the call at the radio station’s switchboard). Then presenter and caller greet each other. In general, “in phone-ins, which take place in a restricted time-slot and are designed to be overheard by a large audience, ‘phatic’ elements, like greetings and enquiries after health, are perceived by presenters as redundant” (Cameron & Hills 1990: 56). Presenters usually want to come to the point as soon as possible in order to keep the show going and to allow as many callers as possible to participate. After finishing off the greeting phase, both partners could theoretically start a new exchange, but most of the time the callers start expressing their opinions on some topic right away without further introduction or request by the presenters (phase 2). The caller’s statement is followed by a discussion initiated by a response by the presenter (phase 3). Usually these discussions are not very long –

callers must be “processed” – that is, have their topic, once introduced, dealt with, assimilated (or rejected) in so far as it makes (or fails to make) “some sense” of an issue-in-question, and their call terminated in order to make way for another caller.
(Hutchby 1991: 129)

Then the conversation is closed, usually by the host thanking the caller or interviewee (phase 4). Following this, the presenters frequently address the audience as a whole briefly or introduce the next caller or guest.

Schegloff & Sacks (cf. 1973: 309) note that (in everyday conversations) closing sequences are usually introduced when none of the speakers want to add anything to the conversation. To quote Schegloff & Sacks (1973: 290): “We mean that closings are to be seen as achievements, as solutions to certain problems of conversational organization.” Expressions of gratitude are often employed to accomplish such a closing of a conversation. Indeed, Schegloff & Sacks (cf. 1973: 318) describe expressions of gratitude as a kind of signature used to seal and recognize or even appreciate what has been said. They are often used along with, but also as farewells. In phone-in shows the rather “dictatorial” constraints may force the hosts to – more or less politely – interrupt or

even silence callers when the time is up or when their contributions lead too far as far as the concept of the programme is concerned. The hosts' expressions of gratitude, their turning to and addressing the audience and/or announcing the next caller may happen in such rapid succession that the caller or interviewee may not have the chance to respond to the expression of gratitude at all, i.e. the conversation is unilaterally closed rather than its termination being negotiated among the speakers as suggested by Schegloff & Sacks (1973). This may be intended or at least willingly accepted by the presenters/interviewers and clearly distinguishes conversations in radio phone-ins from everyday talk. Even if the callers are given the opportunity to respond to the hosts' expressions of gratitude, they are rarely able to introduce a new topic or to otherwise substantially drag out the conversation. The hosts use their institutional status and, thus, their power to pursue their task, viz. to organise the ongoing discourse in accordance with the broadcasting station's guidelines regarding time, contents and entertainment value. This does not only include opening, but also terminating conversations, even if the callers have not yet signalled that they are willing to come to an end. Besides, hosts are not only endowed with institutional power to terminate conversations, they may also avail of a technical feature, i.e. they could simply close the callers' line so that whatever the callers or interviewees say is no longer broadcast (cf. Hutchby 1996: 104). It is due to reasons of politeness that they do not do so (cf. below).

People who frequently listen to such radio programmes know that there are rules and limits and they accept that it is up to the hosts to determine how a conversation is begun, maintained and when and how it is to be ended. However, once people are callers or interviewees, things may be different. If they are regular listeners and, thus, "know" (or at least think that they know) the presenters quite well, they may want to deepen this "personal" relationship by obeying norms of politeness and, thus, greet them and ask them how they are when they have the chance to talk to them personally (cf. Cameron & Hills 1990: 57). This may even lead to the callers not stop talking. Here expressions of gratitude come into play. They are often found at the interfaces of the "democratic" concept of letting the audience take part in the show and the "dictatorial" concept and time frame of a broadcasting station. It is the presenters' task to serve both ends. In line with the democratic concept of these shows, the hosts thank the callers for their contributions and for taking part in the programme, but they also, at the same time, signal that time is up. This special use of expressions of gratitude in radio phone-ins and broadcast interviews is focussed on in the following.

4. Method

The present study combines (variational) pragmatics and corpus linguistics (cf. O'Keeffe & Adolphs this volume on corpus linguistics in general and its use in [variational] pragmatic research in particular). Corpora do not only offer large amounts of naturally-occurring data, i.e. language in use, but also large

amounts of comparable data from different varieties of one language. Hence, they are especially suited to provide data for pragmatics research in general and for variational pragmatic research in particular. It would take much more time and effort to collect the same amount and quality of data by using, for instance, discourse completion tasks (DCTs) or role plays. Expressions of gratitude are most often found in oral communication and usually refer to something which has been mentioned or dealt with earlier on. Corpora offer large(r) extracts of speech and, thus, allow for analysing the development of a conversation over several turns and also the situational use of language. This would not be possible with, for instance, data from DCTs or multiple choice questionnaires, where the situation eliciting an expression of gratitude would be rather short, fabricated and given as a matter of fact. Corpora, furthermore, offer information on the speakers and their backgrounds. Finally, adequate software is available to deal with queries.

The British National Corpus (BNC) and the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English (WSC) have been chosen in the present study to examine the actual use of expressions of gratitude in British English and New Zealand English. Table 1 presents some general information on the BNC, of which only the spoken part has been investigated in the present corpus, and also the WSC.

To examine the use of expressions of gratitude in a media context, radio phone-ins and broadcast interviews have been analysed. The transcripts of the respective categories make up two sub-corpora of about 180,000 words each (176,288 words from the BNC and 181,096 words from the WSC). In total, 95.91% of the transcripts are from radio phone-ins or radio talk shows, the remaining 4.09% from broadcast interviews.² Because of this majority of radio phone-ins, these are the primary focus of the following analysis. Since regrettably neither of the corpora offer access to audio (or video) files nor to the speakers themselves, there is no choice but to concentrate on the written transcripts only. The recordings of the transcripts investigated here are between five minutes and about one and a half hours long; however, most of the individual conversations (i.e. between the presenter/interviewer and one caller/interviewee) within these recordings are only a few minutes long (the corpora do not offer exact timings for individual conversations). The radio phone-ins most often contain conversations between two partners at a time, namely between the presenter and a caller. Sometimes three persons are involved when guests or experts are invited into the studio. The interviews in the corpora always comprise two speakers, host and guest.

The range of topics addressed in such conversations between host and callers is quite wide. Issues of current general interest are discussed, callers search for people with whom they have lost contact, callers attempt to sell items or inform about or ask for information or help regarding leisure activities. In the interviews in the present data, people are asked about their lives and pastimes, for instance. In all cases, it is “ordinary” people who are interviewed rather than celebrities. Examples include a fisherman, who talks about his life on an island, and a passionate gardener, who talks about what is to be done in one’s garden.

Table 1. General information on the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English (WSC)³

	British National Corpus	Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English
variety	British English	New Zealand English
Σ words	> 100,000,000 (90% written, 10% spoken)	> 1,000,000
Σ transcripts	4124 (3209 written, 915 spoken)	551 (all spoken)
time covered	data: 1975–1993 collected 1991–1994	99% of data: 1990–1994 collected and compiled 1988–1994
speech styles	spoken part: spoken context-governed/informal/ mostly dialogue ≈ 60% (spoken demographic/formal/partly [elicited] monologue ≈ 40%)	informal speech/dialogue – 75% (formal speech/monologue – 12% semi-formal speech/elicited mono- logue [interviews] – 13%)
categories	spoken context-governed, informal (mostly dialogical) part: educational lectures, talks, educational demon- strations, news commentaries, classroom interaction business company talks and interviews, trade union talks, sales demonstra- tions, business meetings, consulta- tions institutional political speeches, sermons, pub- lic/government talks, council meet- ings, religious meetings, parlia- mentary proceedings, legal pro- ceedings leisure speeches, sports commentaries, talks to clubs, <u>broadcast chat shows</u> <u>and phone-ins</u> , club meetings	informal speech, dialogue part: private conversation, telephone conversa- tion, oral history interview, social dialect interview public <u>radio talkback</u> , <u>broadcast inter- view</u> , parliamentary debate, trans- actions and meetings

Although corpora offer many advantages for (variational) pragmatics research, they are also limiting on some levels (cf. O’Keeffe & Adolphs this volume for a discussion of some of the advantages and disadvantages of using corpus data in [variational] pragmatic research). It is difficult, for instance, to investigate phenomena above the level of the word or phrase in corpora, especially phenomena as complex as expressing gratitude or politeness in general, which are influenced by many social and situational parameters. Since corpora are not (yet) tagged for speech acts, it is not possible to search for all instances of gratitude in a speech act theoretical sense. Expressions of gratitude are, however, highly ritualised formulae, and this characteristic can be taken advantage

of in a corpus-driven study. One can search for the most frequent linguistic realisations of expressing gratitude. In the present study, prior studies on expressions of gratitude have been taken into account in searching for such common linguistic realisations of gratitude (cf., e.g., Eisenstein & Bodman 1986, Aijmer 1996: 33–79, Okamoto & Robinson 1997 or Schauer & Adolphs 2006). In addition, contributions on how to express certain communicative functions have been considered (cf., e.g., Blundell et al. 1982: 191–194 for an inventory). Finally, a number of corpora (among them the BNC and the WSC) were searched within the context of small-scale studies for the expressions of gratitude found in the literature. A number of conversations located in such studies which included these expressions of gratitude were also found to contain other utterances used to express gratitude. These were then also included in the ultimate list displayed in Table 2 of expressions of gratitude searched for in the present study in the BNC and WSC.

Table 2. List of expressions of gratitude searched for in the BNC and WSC

<i>thank</i>	<i>appreciate</i>	<i>grateful</i>	<i>that's/that is/was great</i>
<i>thanks</i>	<i>appreciated</i>	<i>I'm an ingrate</i>	<i>that's/that is/was kind</i>
<i>thankful</i>	<i>appreciative</i>	<i>obliged</i>	<i>that's/that is/was lovely</i>
<i>thankfully</i>	<i>cheers</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>that's/that is/was marvellous</i>
<i>thanking</i>	<i>gratitude</i>	<i>that's/that is/was good</i>	<i>that's/that is/was nice</i>

This lexical approach allows comparable quantitative and qualitative observations to be made and also conclusions to be drawn regarding a linguistically manifest emotion. Quantitative analyses will be carried out by calculating absolute and relative frequencies and by testing their statistical significance using Fisher's exact test to calculate the p-value. Qualitative analyses will be carried out drawing on discourse analysis. Routine formulae offer the possibility of investigating which other functions may be realised, or, indeed, what else is communicated apart from gratitude if the latter is only superficially relevant because of routinisation and desemantisation. This is only possible when analysing larger extracts of conversations, as done in this study. Investigating conversations as wholes (or at least as longer extracts) permits a closer examination not only of the formulae in question, but also of clues which may have triggered them as well as responses to them.

It is evident that there are many more (verbal as well as non-verbal) ways of expressing one's gratitude than by using the expressions focussed on in the present study. These, however, cannot be considered in the following. Moreover, many of the words or phrases chosen for investigation may not only be used to express gratitude. Hits have only been included in the further analysis when they are either used to express gratitude or when they play with gratitude, i.e. when they are used jokingly or ironically. The latter would not be included in a study on the speech act of thanking, because they are not meant sincerely. However, they make use of the relevant linguistic material and can thus contribute to the picture of what gratitude is (not) about and how it is (not) used.

This is not the only problem with regard to the speech act “thanking.” Following the sincerity condition, one expects speakers to be really grateful for something the addressee did or said. Looking at many examples from radio phone-ins or interviews, speakers often, however, do not seem to be really grateful when they use expressions of gratitude to end a conversation. According to the propositional content condition, one would expect that a speaker thanks for a past act of the addressee. However, there are a number of cases where gratitude is expressed in advance, i.e. for some future act from which the speaker will, but has not yet profited (which, in turn, would be necessary to meet the preparatory condition). When an offer is accepted by means of an expression of gratitude, for instance, one might argue that the offer has not yet been fulfilled. However, the expression of gratitude may also be interpreted as referring to the offer actually being made in the first place. Finally, one has to ask whether addressees really take and accept an expression of gratitude as such (i.e. whether the essential condition is met). When callers are thanked in a radio phone-in, they often do not get the chance to respond. When they do respond, however, their responses and, thus, their point of view should be taken into account as well. As a consequence of this and because of the problems mentioned earlier, speech act theory cannot be the only point of reference. Hence, in the following, “expression of gratitude” is used as shorthand with the limitations in mind which have just been discussed.

5. Analysis

5.1 The overall frequency of expressions of gratitude

A first step to approaching expressions of gratitude in radio phone-ins and interviews is to examine which expressions occur most frequently and also how often each of these occur in relation to each other. Table 3 offers an overview of all expressions of gratitude found in the BNC and in the WSC. As becomes immediately obvious, not all of the phrases listed in Table 2 above actually occur.

As can be seen in Table 3 below, there is a considerable difference in the overall frequency of expressions of gratitude in the two sub-corpora, although they are of the same size. Specifically, 287 (BNC) as opposed to 129 (WSC) expressions of gratitude were found, a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.0001$). This result seems to confirm the cliché drawn on in the overview of research questions above, namely that the British are (said to be) very polite – and definitely more polite than New Zealanders. Whether this can be confirmed in general, however, will be investigated in the following.

Looking at the table in more detail, it can be observed that *thank (you)* is more common in British English (62.37% BNC vs. 47.29% WSC), while the more informal *thanks* is more frequent in New Zealand English (32.40% BNC vs. 44.96% WSC). Again, this supports another common stereotype claiming

that the British are very formal, while New Zealanders are said to be relaxed and easy-going. The differences are not, however, statistically significant. The other, less common expressions of gratitude are more or less similarly distributed in the two sub-corpora. Unless stated otherwise, the total of 416 expressions of gratitude for both corpora and the subtotals of 287 and 129 for British and New Zealand English respectively will be the point(s) of reference in the following analyses.

Table 3. Overall frequency of expressions of gratitude in the BNC and WSC

expression of gratitude	Σ BNC	Σ WSC	Σ
<i>thank</i>	179 (62.37%)	61 (47.29%)	240 (57.69%)
<i>thanks</i>	93 (32.40%)	58 (44.96%)	151 (36.30%)
<i>thankful</i>	–	1 (0.78%)	1 (0.24%)
<i>thanking</i>	1 (0.35%)	–	1 (0.24%)
<i>appreciate</i>	1 (0.35%)	4 (3.10%)	5 (1.20%)
<i>cheers</i>	6 (2.09%)	2 (1.55%)	8 (1.92%)
<i>grateful</i>	1 (0.35%)	–	1 (0.24%)
<i>ta</i>	–	1 (0.78%)	1 (0.24%)
<i>that's/that is/was good</i>	3 (1.05%)	1 (0.78%)	4 (0.96%)
<i>that's/that is/was great</i>	2 (0.70%)	–	2 (0.48%)
<i>that's/that is/was kind</i>	1 (0.35%)	1 (0.78%)	2 (0.48%)
Σ	287 (100% BNC)	129 (100% WSC)	Σ 416 (100%)

5.2 The form of expressions of gratitude

This section is dedicated to an analysis of regular realisations and collocations of expressions of gratitude in the corpora at hand. As mentioned above, there are three optional elements often found along with expressions of gratitude: Speakers may name the benefactor of their gratitude, they may intensify their gratitude by adding particles such as *very much* to the expression of gratitude they use, and they may give a reason why they are grateful.

5.2.1 Naming the benefactor

Thank makes up 57.69% of all the expressions of gratitude under investigation. It is the most frequent expression in both varieties, even though there is a (statistically non-significant) difference between them (62.37% BNC vs. 47.29% WSC; cf. Table 3). Apart from a few false starts, *thank* is realised as *thank you* (56.25% of all expressions of gratitude found over both corpora take the form *thank you*). The naming of the benefactor of one's gratitude is syntactically required here. This is different with the other expressions of gratitude investigated. However, even though the naming of a benefactor is not syntactically required with the other formulae, a benefactor is nevertheless mentioned in 22.36% of all cases (22.65% BNC vs. 21.71% WSC). This figure of 22.36% includes all realisations of naming a benefactor apart from *thank you*. Figure 1 lists the various possibilities (which may be used in combination) to pay tribute

to the person who did something for which the speaker is grateful. These include actually naming the person (“name”) or an institution (“institution”), using a term of endearment to refer to the person (“endearment”) or referring to a benefactor who is part of a group and, thus, in the given cases not the only addressee of the utterance (“specific other”).

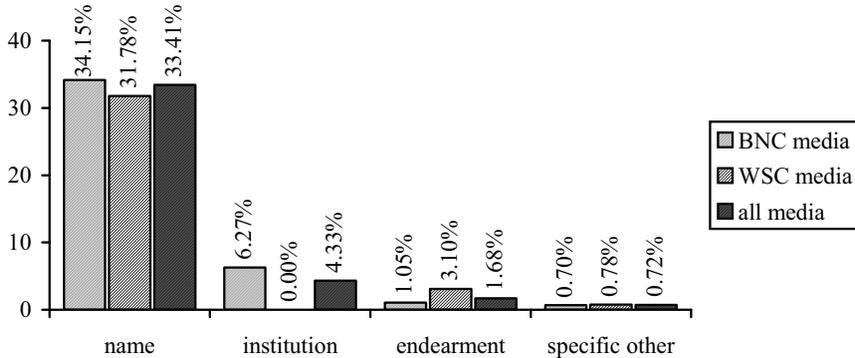


Figure 1. Naming the benefactor of one’s gratitude in the BNC and WSC (excluding *you* in *thank you*), multiple references possible

Calling the benefactor by their name, as in example (1), is by far the most frequent way of addressing the benefactor in both varieties (34.15% BNC vs. 31.78% WSC). Naming the actual benefactor often appears in combination with *thank you*.

- (1) Presenter: Donald thanks very much for talking to us. (WSC thanks 3/DGB 009)⁴

Addressing the benefactor by means of a term of endearment, as illustrated in example (2), is slightly more common in New Zealand English (1.05% BNC vs. 3.10% WSC, which is not a statistically significant difference).

- (2) Host: Thanks love bye. (BNC thanks 57/HMD 776)

However, this possibility is not very frequent compared to calling the benefactor by their name. This may be explained by the fact that the conversations are public and the interlocutors usually do not know each other personally, or at least not very well.

The category “institution” follows the category “name” in terms of relative frequency. It is a special case because the examples included here are exclusively from the British corpus, where institutions were thanked for sponsoring events. This naming type occurs in 6.27% of the expressions of gratitude found in the BNC. It did not occur in the WSC, a statistically significant difference ($p=0.0025$).

Apart from the results for the category “institution,” the findings for the two varieties are not significantly different from a statistical point of view – the British slightly favour addressing the addressees by their names, while New Zealanders prefer an even more personal way when using slightly more terms of endearment than the British.

5.2.2 Using intensifying particles

Asked for a polite expression of gratitude in English, many people would probably propose *thank you very much*. Intensifying particles, such as *very much* are used in 26.92% of the cases (26.83% BNC vs. 27.13% WSC). In other words, a simple *thank you* would generally seem to be considered sufficient. However, it also has to be taken into account that the syntactic realisations of *cheers* and *ta* do not permit the use of intensifying particles. All other expressions of gratitude do permit their use, but intensifying particles are only employed with *thank*, *thanks*, *grateful* and *that’s kind* in the present corpus.

Very much is more common in New Zealand English (cf. Figure 2). This intensifier is found in 18.60% of the WSC expressions of gratitude, but only in 9.06% of the BNC data, which is a statistically significant difference ($p=0.0246$). The more formal *very much indeed*, however, is far more common in British English than in New Zealand English (10.80% BNC vs. 0.78% WSC; again a statistically significant difference; $p=0.0004$). One could suspect that the British are more formal when using intensifying particles. However, one should also keep in mind that these results may be related to the different frequencies of *thank* and *thanks* in British and New Zealand English respectively: While *very much indeed* is found almost exclusively with *thank* (there are only two instances of *thanks very much indeed* [in the British corpus]), *very much* collocates readily with *thanks* as well. *A lot* is only found with *thanks*, the category “others” comprises modifications for various expressions of gratitude, e.g. *thank you so much*.

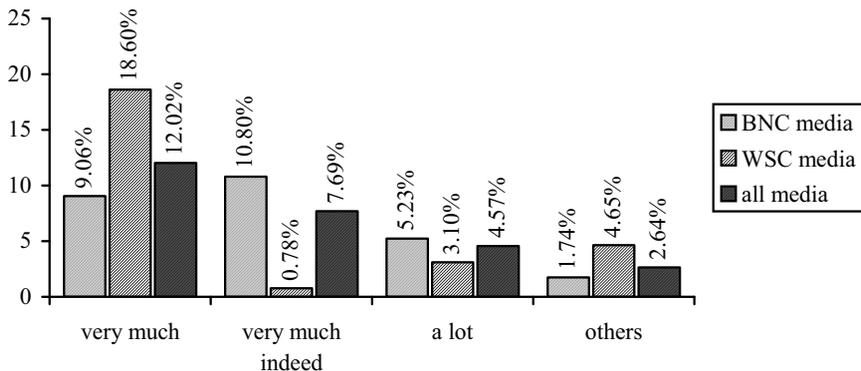


Figure 2. Intensifying particles employed in the BNC and WSC with an expression of gratitude

5.2.3 Naming a reason for one's gratitude

Looking further at how expressions of gratitude are phrased, it becomes apparent that *thank you (very much)* in particular is often followed by *for* plus a reason for the speaker's gratitude. Reasons for gratitude are mentioned in 27.40% of all expressions of gratitude present (20.91% BNC vs. 41.86% WSC, a statistically significant difference; $p=0.0018$). In most cases, this is done by using either *for* + NP (10.45% BNC vs. 24.81% WSC, a statistically significant difference; $p=0.0023$) or *for* + VP-ing (9.41% BNC vs. 13.18% WSC). The following example illustrates both cases:

- (3) Presenter: Okay Noel, thank you for your er your time and being a good sport this afternoon and I hear you have a little one, you had better go back and sort things out. (BNC thank 193/HV0 358)

Such *for* constructions are used with *thank*, *thanks*, *thankful*, *cheers* and *grateful* in the present corpus. *Appreciate* and the various *that's...* constructions (e.g. *that's so kind of you*) cannot be used with *for*. In the case of *appreciate*, a reason may immediately follow the expression of gratitude (i.e. *I appreciate NP*), and in the case of *that's so kind of you* or the like, a reason for gratitude has been mentioned earlier and is referred to by *that*. These cases are covered by the category "other" in Figure 3.

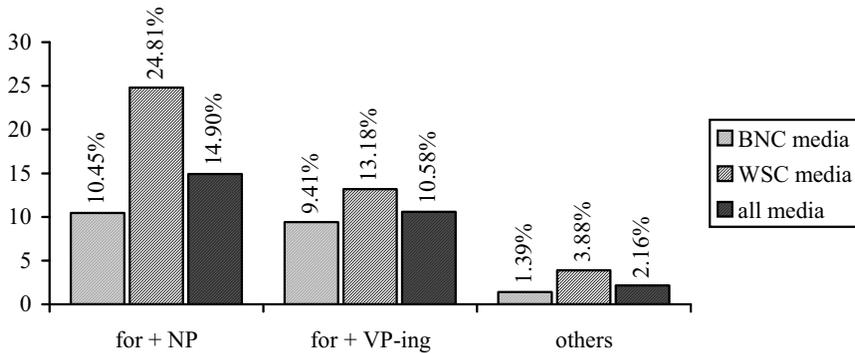


Figure 3. Naming a reason for gratitude: Formal realisations in the BNC and WSC, multiple references possible

There are considerable differences between the sub-corpora. Naming a reason (specifically, using a *for* + NP construction) is significantly more common in New Zealand English. In general, New Zealanders name a reason for their gratitude in 41.86% of all cases, while the British only do so in 20.91%, although they use more expressions of gratitude altogether ($p=0.0018$, cf. above). Thus, New Zealanders seem to know better what they are actually grateful for – or at least, they name a reason more often than the British do. Below, we will discuss whether this quantitative difference may point to qualitative differences in thanking between the two varieties of English.

5.3 The function of expressions of gratitude

After having had a look at some of the formal characteristics of expressions of gratitude, the possible functions of expressions of gratitude are now examined. The focus here is first on the reasons actually mentioned in using constructions like *for* + NP or *for* + VP-*ing* (cf. 5.2.3), i.e. what speakers are grateful for or for what aims they use an expression of gratitude. Thereafter, the reasons are grouped according to the function served. The reasons identified were either named explicitly using *for*-constructions or the like, or were referred to by some other reference markers and are, thus, easily retrievable from the context of the conversations.

Table 4. Naming a reason for one's gratitude: Functions in the BNC and WSC (in order of frequency)

expressing gratitude for...		BNC	WSC	Σ
1. "discourse organisation"	<i>total</i>	164 (57.14%)	78 (60.47%)	242 (58.17%)
contribution + "structuring discourse" ⁵⁵		86 (29.97%)	35 (27.13%)	121 (29.09%)
making contribution		42 (14.63%)	17 (13.18%)	59 (14.18%)
"structuring discourse"		23 (8.01%)	8 (6.20%)	31 (7.45%)
contribution		8 (2.79%)	17 (13.18%)	25 (6.01%)
offer "accepting" + "structuring discourse"		4 (1.39%)	0 (0%)	4 (0.96%)
listening + "structuring discourse"		1 (0.35%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.24%)
making contribution + "structuring discourse"		0 (0%)	1 (0.78%)	1 (0.24%)
2. "phatic communion"	<i>total</i>	46 (16.03%)	31 (24.03%)	77 (18.51%)
enquiry after health		18 (6.27%)	14 (10.85%)	32 (7.69%)
good wishes		11 (3.83%)	11 (8.53%)	22 (5.29%)
compliment		6 (2.09%)	6 (4.65%)	12 (2.88%)
"relief"		8 (2.79%)	0 (0%)	8 (1.92%)
offer "refusing"		2 (0.70%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.48%)
"request"		1 (0.35%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.24%)
3. "material goods & services"	<i>total</i>	36 (12.54%)	4 (3.10%)	40 (9.62%)
financial support		22 (7.67%)	0 (0%)	22 (5.29%)
material goods		13 (4.53%)	0 (0%)	13 (3.13%)
services		1 (0.35%)	4 (3.10%)	5 (1.20%)
4. "immaterial goods & interpersonal support"	<i>total</i>	22 (7.67%)	11 (8.53%)	33 (7.93%)
help & advice		18 (6.27%)	4 (3.10%)	22 (5.29%)
information		3 (1.05%)	6 (4.65%)	9 (2.16%)
character		1 (0.35%)	1 (0.78%)	2 (0.48%)
5. "joking use/irony"	<i>total</i>	5 (1.74%)	0 (0%)	5 (1.20%)
"joking use/irony"		5 (1.74%)	0 (0%)	5 (1.20%)
unclear cases	<i>total</i>	14 (4.88%)	5 (3.88%)	19 (4.57%)
?		14 (4.88%)	5 (3.88%)	19 (4.57%)
Σ total		287 (100%)	129 (100%)	Σ 416 (100%)

In a small number of cases, it was not possible to ascertain what speakers thanked their interlocutors for. In addition, there were a number of cases in which it was concluded, based on an analysis of the context, that the expressions of gratitude were meant ironically.⁶ However, apart from such instances, the reasons found were taken at face value. The results are presented in Table 4 (above).

The analysis revealed that radio phone-ins and broadcast interviews display quite a specific set of reasons for gratitude. These are illustrated with some examples in the following.

5.3.1 *Discourse-organising function*

The reasons grouped under the heading “discourse organisation” in Table 4 all serve – in one way or the other – to manage the ongoing conversations. The category labelled “contribution + ‘structuring discourse’” is the most frequent category identified. It accounts for 29.09% of all cases (29.97% BNC vs. 27.13% WSC). It includes cases where (usually) the presenter of a programme thanks a caller for their contribution and at the same time prepares the end of their conversation or at least a change of topic or speaker. The following example serves to illustrate this classification:

- (4) Presenter: Sir Frederick, thank you for er speaking to me this afternoon.
 Interviewee: Thank you.
 Presenter: Interesting talking to you, bye bye. (BNC thank 184/HUV 1639)

The caller is addressed by his name, “Sir Frederick,” to catch his attention. Hesitation markers, such as “er,” before naming a reason for one’s gratitude, may be suggested to show that the presenter does not only have gratitude on his mind, but that he is also preparing the end of the conversation. This assumption is further underlined by the use of “this afternoon,” which refers to the time frame available for the interview. Cases belonging to the category “contribution + ‘structuring discourse’” also often contain verbs of perception in the imperative form which appeal for the addressee’s attention in order to end the conversation, e.g.

- (5) Presenter: Yep they do. All right David. Listen, thanks for your advice, nice to hear from a pro. (WSC thanks 30/DGB 040)

It is not only the “listen” here which gives rise to the impression that the presenter does not only want to thank the addressee for his advice, but also wants to end the conversation. Rather, the impression is also underlined by the short and agreeing “yep they do” (referring to installing video cameras for reasons of security, which is what the conversation has been about), as well as the concluding “all right” followed by the addressee’s name, “David.” In example (5), as well as in example (4), a compliment follows the indirect proposal to terminate the conversation, and also serves to mitigate the closing.

As has been elaborated on above, it is usually the hosts who end the conversations. This is part of their job. They often use expressions of gratitude to do this, as in examples (4) and (5) presented above. Indeed, there is only one example in the WSC where a caller uses an expression of gratitude to not only thank the host for being given the opportunity to make a contribution in a show, but also to end a conversation. This example, (6), is included in the category “making contribution + ‘structuring discourse’” (0% BNC vs. 0.78% WSC):

- (6) Presenter: Oh well Karl well we’ll have a talk to them and find out and find out what they-
 Caller: Well thank you, thank you very much Bill, that’s all I wanted to say. (WSC thanks 35/DGB 039)

Usually the addressees of an utterance are given time to respond to an expression of gratitude. However, the category “structuring discourse” here includes cases where the callers or interviewees are hardly given a chance to respond to the fact that the conversation has been ended by the interviewer or presenter. In such cases, the presenter immediately goes on by saying the name of the programme, the phone number to be called in order to take part, what time it is or the name of the next caller. Here are two examples:

- (7) Presenter: ... Good to hear from you thanks indeed. Good call. Six minutes to nine. Three oh nine three oh double nine is the Radio Pacific Talkback number. (WSC thanks 52/DGB 066)
- (8) Presenter: ... And that’s when shock sets in all right. Thanks for your call. Good morning Rick [= next caller]. (WSC thanks 31/DGB 041)

Overall, 7.45% (8.01% BNC vs. 6.20% WSC) of the expressions of gratitude are as such. In these instances, ending the conversation or shifting the topic is claimed to be the dominant function for the expression of gratitude used. Consequently, such instances are grouped under the heading “structuring discourse” (cf. Table 4). This is not, of course, to claim that the presenters in these cases are not grateful for a caller’s contribution.

There are many other cases, however, where the context suggests that the host’s primary aim is to thank their interviewees or callers for their contributions. 6.01% of all cases (2.79% BNC vs. 13.18% WSC) belong to this subcategory “contribution.” The following are examples from this category:

- (9) Presenter: ... thanks for telling us about it ... (WSC thanks 56/DGI 127)
- (10) Presenter: ... Thank you very much indeed for talking to us John er er and I’m so sorry it’s not going to be more of a a m m milestone in your life. (BNC thank 178/HUV 1039)

As the figures for the sub-corpora show, New Zealanders seem to find much more reason to use this “pure” and “innocent” form of gratitude – they thank for contributions in 13.18% of the cases, while British people only do so in 2.79% of the cases, a statistically significant difference ($p=0.0003$). This difference will be elaborated on below.

There are also 14.18% of cases (14.63% BNC vs. 13.18% WSC) where callers or interviewees thank the host for being able to make a contribution (sub-category “making contribution”), as in examples (11) and (12):

- (11) Caller: ... Yes thank you for talking to me. (BNC thank 277/KM2 623)
- (12) Presenter: I um but thank you very much for your time.
 Caller: Thank you for the opportunity. (WSC thank 4 + 5/DGB 010)

Example (12) shows a common exchange pattern – the presenter thanks for the contribution and the caller, in turn, for being able to make this contribution – thus there is a kind of echo here. The categories “contribution” and “making contribution” correspond to the roles of presenter/interviewer and caller/interviewee respectively.

There are also some examples of phone-ins in the British corpus where callers sell things. They negotiate the price with the presenters, who accept their final offer with an expression of gratitude (1.39% BNC vs. 0% WSC). These expressions of gratitude serve at the same time to close the conversation in this type of programme, which is why the category “offer ‘accepting’ + ‘structuring discourse’” is discussed as a discourse-organising function:

- (13) Presenter: ... Actually sir, thank you very much indeed for your offer. (BNC 27/FXT 262)

Conversations and even radio shows may be closed by thanking the audience at large (rather than a single caller) for their attention, i.e. for listening to the show. (14) is an example of the category “listening + ‘structuring discourse’” (0.35% BNC vs. 0% WSC):

- (14) Presenter: ... we got there in style for the past four hours. Thank you for your company. It’s for all week so I’ll see you tomorrow afternoon. (BNC thank 29/FXT 437)

The expressions of gratitude just discussed all served to organise the ongoing discourse, particularly the closing phase. Indeed, this function “discourse organisation” is the most frequent reason for uttering expressions of gratitude in the present data. This is seen by grouping reasons, such as “contribution,” “contribution + ‘structuring discourse,’” “making contribution,” “making contribution + ‘structuring discourse,’” “structuring discourse,” “offer ‘accepting’ + ‘structuring discourse’” and “listening + ‘structuring discourse’” together.

Specifically, 58.17% of all the reasons given for thanking in the corpus were “discourse-organising reasons” (57.14% BNC vs. 60.47% WSC).

The remaining reasons displayed in Table 4, i.e. those which are not discourse-organising and which have not yet been discussed, are also merged in Figure 4 to make up further superordinate functions, viz. serving “phatic communion,” “satisfying material goods and service interactions” or “satisfying immaterial goods and interpersonal support.” Alternatively, some expressions of gratitude may also be used jokingly or to convey “irony.” Expressions of gratitude serving these functions are not found as often as expressions of gratitude employed to primarily organise the ongoing discourse. Their relative distribution is given in Figure 4 and they are discussed in the following. It should be emphasised that only the function which is considered primary in the present contexts is coded here – expressions of gratitude may well serve more than one function at a time, but this is not dealt with here.

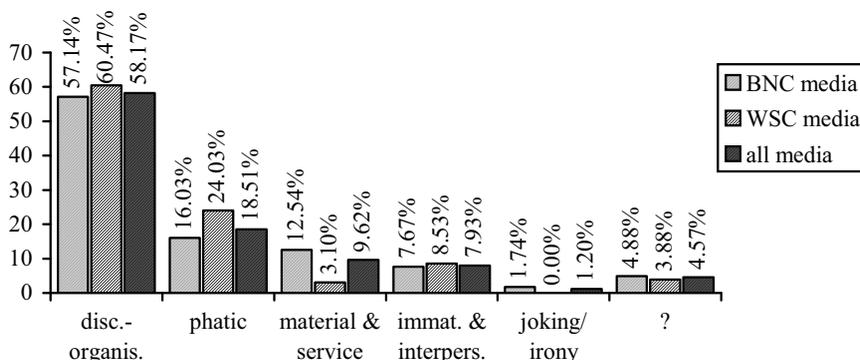


Figure 4. Summary of functions of expressions of gratitude in the BNC and WSC

5.3.2 Phatic function

Expressions of gratitude in response to phatic elements are quite common in the present data. Indeed, they follow expressions of gratitude which serve a discourse-organising function as regards frequency. Specifically, 18.51% of all expressions of gratitude in the corpora serve to enhance or maintain phatic communion (16.03% BNC vs. 24.03% WSC). In the present analysis, the phatic function includes expressions of gratitude in response to “enquiries after one’s health” (especially at the beginning of a conversation), and also in response to “good wishes” or “compliments.” In addition, expressions of gratitude employed in “refusals of offers,” “requests” and expressions of “relief” also serve a phatic function (cf. Table 4). Once again there is a difference between the sub-corpora: While the phatic function is served in 16.03% of all the cases in the BNC, it is used in 24.03% of all the cases in the WSC. This may be a further indication of New Zealanders showing more sincere feelings by caring for their partners more than people from Britain do (cf. below). The difference is not, however, statistically significant.

7.69% (6.27% BNC vs. 10.85% WSC) of all the expressions of gratitude found are triggered by enquiries after one's health, as in the following example:

- (15) Presenter: Kia ora Marie.⁷
 Caller: Kia ora Eva.
 Presenter: How are you?
 Caller: Good thanks. (WSC thanks 8/DGB 010)

It should be noted here that exchanges of the format "How are you?" – "Good thanks." found at the beginning of an encounter were only included when they followed a greeting exchange (as in example 15). Only in such instances was it clear that a "How are you?" exchange was an enquiry after the addressee's well-being and not a greeting.

A further example of maintaining phatic communion is the use of expressions of gratitude in reply to good wishes (cf., e.g., example 16). Gratitude was employed in 5.29% of all cases to reply to such wishes (3.83% BNC vs. 8.53% WSC):

- (16) Caller: Morning Dougie. Er, first of all, good luck for next week.
 Presenter: Oh thank you ... (BNC thank 102/HM4 713)

(16) is an example in which a caller wishes "Dougie," a presenter of a British radio phone-in, all the best following him having told his audience that he has to undergo some surgery in the future. This and other similar cases show that there are exceptions to the "rule" that presenters avoid personal statements which trigger enquiries after their well-being (cf. p. 144 for the quotation from Cameron & Hills 1990: 56). However, even Douglas tries to keep these exchanges short. Being addressed, he has to (politely) respond, but he does not go into much detail, but instead tries to come back to the point of the caller's call. Interestingly, there are slightly more examples of expressions of gratitude in response to good wishes in the New Zealand corpus than in the BNC (3.83% BNC vs. 8.53% WSC), just as there are more expressions of gratitude in response to enquiries after the addressee's well-being here (6.27% BNC vs. 10.85% WSC).

As well as responses to enquiries after one's health and good wishes, there are 2.88% of cases where expressions of gratitude are uttered in response to compliments (2.09% BNC vs. 4.65% WSC), e.g.

- (17) Caller: ... much better Dominic, you've improved dramatically.
 Presenter: Thank you very much. (BNC thank 92/HM4 21)

Furthermore, there are some expressions of gratitude in the British corpus (2.79% BNC vs. 0% WSC) which are used to – literally – thank God. They are expressions of gratitude, but they are also intended as an expression of relief when talking with one's interlocutor,⁸ e.g.

- (18) Caller: I mean thank God I'm not broke, I'm not, I'm not skint I'm alright. (BNC 30/FXT 527.1)

The British corpus also includes a few examples (0.70% BNC vs. 0% WSC) where offers are refused and expressions of gratitude are used to soften this refusal and to acknowledge that the offer has actually been made, e.g.

- (19) Presenter: Right, fine well maybe you ought to be announcing where you live James at the end of this so-
 Caller: No thank you. (BNC thank 170/HUV 561)

The British corpus also includes a request (0.35% BNC vs. 0% WSC) realised with the help of an expression of gratitude. The presenter wants to make sure that a colleague (presumably) serves him a cup of coffee by using the expression of gratitude as a mitigator.

- (20) Presenter: Bring me a cup of coffee, thank you. (BNC thank 174/HUV 805)

Examples like (19) and (20) represent ways of refusing an offer or requesting something respectively. Since these expressions of gratitude are employed with a focus on an agreeable and harmonious relationship of the interlocutors, they also serve a phatic function.

5.3.3 *Satisfying material goods and services*

When thinking of reasons for being grateful, “material goods,” “financial support” or business-related “service interactions” may readily come to mind. In the present corpus of radio phone-ins and interviews, however, there are not that many examples of this function, since people do not interact face-to-face in most cases. Gratitude functions in only 9.62% of all expressions of gratitude to acknowledge that one was given money or a present, or that someone provided some sort of service. Once again there is a statistically significant discrepancy between the two sub-corpora – specifically, this type of gratitude occurs in 12.54% of cases in the BNC, but only in 3.10% of cases in the WSC ($p=0.0055$). This is especially due to expressions of gratitude relating to “financial support” from the Australian airline Qantas which sponsored a quiz for a British broadcasting station – this is constantly mentioned by thanking the people from Qantas for their financial support.⁹ (21) is an example of gratitude expressed for financial support:

- (21) Presenter: ... Good on you. Thanks for raising the money. (BNC thanks 6/FXT 359)

Altogether there are 5.29% cases of gratitude for financial support, all of them in the British corpus (7.67% BNC vs. 0% WSC, which is a statistically significant difference; $p=0.0005$).

Expressions of gratitude used in response to “material goods” were also found in the corpus. Indeed, in total 3.13% of all expressions of gratitude in both corpora (4.53% BNC vs. 0% WSC, a statistically significant difference; $p=0.0124$) carried out this function. The following is an example:

- (22) Presenter: ... and er I'll sort you out with a T shirt as well all right?
 Caller: Yes find super thanks Geoff. (BNC thanks 37/HMA 255)

In the WSC, there are no transcripts of shows where callers are given (or rather promised) material goods, which explains the difference between the sub-corpora. In the British transcripts, in contrast, there are a number of examples where callers are given (or promised) some merchandising goods from the broadcasting station.

Different kinds of “services” may also be the reason for people’s gratitude. This is significantly more often the case in New Zealand English (0.35% BNC vs. 3.10% WSC; $p=0.0363$), e.g.

- (23) Presenter: ... thank you very much for presenting the PPTA programme today. (WSC thank 59/DGI 127)

In this case, the addressee is the head of a New Zealand teacher association, who had been invited to explain their programme. The WSC comprises some examples where people have been invited to the studio to report on a certain topic. They, thus, perform some kind of service – to the broadcasting stations represented by the hosts as well as to the audience.

5.3.4 *Satisfying immaterial goods and interpersonal support*

There is also gratitude at an interpersonal level between purely phatic and business-related matters: In 7.93% of all cases (7.67% BNC vs. 8.53% WSC), people thank for immaterial goods such as “information,” “help and advice” of some kind as well as for the way people are, i.e. some traits of their “character.” These comparatively low numbers are rather surprising, because people often call to get advice or information in radio talk shows.

People ask for help and advice in 5.29% of all cases (6.27% BNC vs. 3.10% WSC), e.g.

- (24) Presenter: Alright, we'll try and find Mary for you and if we do we'll give you a call Ida.
 Caller: Yes thank you very much. (BNC thank 136/HMD 775)

Speakers (usually callers) ask for specific information in 2.16% of all cases (with the statistically significant difference of 1.05% in the BNC as opposed to 4.65% in the WSC; $p=0.0321$), e.g.

- (25) Caller: Is it possible for us to get an address whereby we could write to you?

Expert: Care of Parliament Buildings Wellington.
Caller: Oh that simply thank you. (WSC thank 41/DGB 043)

The British sub-corpus comprises some programmes where, as in example (24), help is offered when people search somebody, while the WSC includes more transcripts of shows where the audience can ask for specific information, as in example (25). This explains the differences in the figures for these two categories.

There are also a few cases (0.35% BNC vs. 0.78% WSC) where callers are thanked for their patience or for some other trait of character, as in example (26):

(26) Presenter: You've been waiting quite a long time. Thank you for waiting Pauline. You have a question about your car. (WSC thank 46/DGB 045)

This category is labelled "character" in Table 4. It is intended to serve interpersonal support.

5.3.5 *Joking use and irony*

Some expressions of gratitude are used ironically in the British corpus (1.74% BNC vs. 0% WSC), e.g.

(27) Caller: ... and, er if the werewolves come out then er we'll send them round to your house.
Presenter: Oh thank you. (BNC thank 129/HMD 195)

In addition, there are a number of examples where it is difficult to determine whether the expressions of gratitude are meant ironically or not. Since audio files are not accessible, these instances have been left unclassified. All in all, there are 4.57% of cases (4.88% BNC vs. 3.88% WSC) where it was not possible to ascertain what people thanked for.

5.4 The position of expressions of gratitude

After elaborating on the functions which expressions of gratitude may fulfil, we now focus on one aspect which has only been mentioned in passing as yet. It relates to the question as to where expressions of gratitude are found in conversations, i.e. their position. The position is of special interest with regard to the dominance of the discourse-organising function of expressions of gratitude. Following Hutchby's (cf. 1996: 13–16) phases elaborated on above, the positions of the expressions of gratitude under investigation have been assigned to the categories "beginning," "middle" and "end." "Beginning" refers to the phase where presenters introduce their callers, where presenters and callers greet each other (and sometimes do some small talk). The category "middle" refers to the phase where caller and presenter discuss the caller's statement on

some topic and the category “end” includes expressions of gratitude found in the closing phase of a conversation.

As can be seen in Figure 5, the majority of expressions of gratitude are found at the end of conversations, viz. 65.14%. This is more (though not statistically significantly more) often the case in the New Zealand data (58.54% BNC vs. 79.84% WSC). Indeed, this finding also correlates with the higher number of cases serving a discourse-organising function in the WSC (57.14% BNC vs. 60.47% WSC). 24.04% of all of the expressions of gratitude are found in the middle of conversations in the present corpora. Here, a statistically significant difference is found between the two corpora. Specifically, 31.71% of all expressions of gratitude found in the BNC are in the middle of a conversation as opposed to only 6.98% of cases in the WSC ($p < 0.0001$). These expressions of gratitude found in the middle of conversations most often relate to material goods or financial support. That there are far more cases of such in the BNC relative to the WSC explains the difference in the positioning of these expressions of gratitude as the function “satisfying material goods and services” shows a statistically significant difference of 12.54% in the BNC as opposed to 3.10% in the WSC ($p = 0.0055$; cf. 5.3.3, cf. also Table 4). Finally, 10.82% of the expressions of gratitude (9.76% BNC vs. 13.18% WSC) are found at the beginning of conversations. This position clearly correlates with expressions of gratitude serving a phatic function (cf. 5.3.2). Here the difference between the sub-corpora is not statistically significant and not as large as with the other positions, but one could also ask whether New Zealanders pay more attention to phatic communion than British people in general.

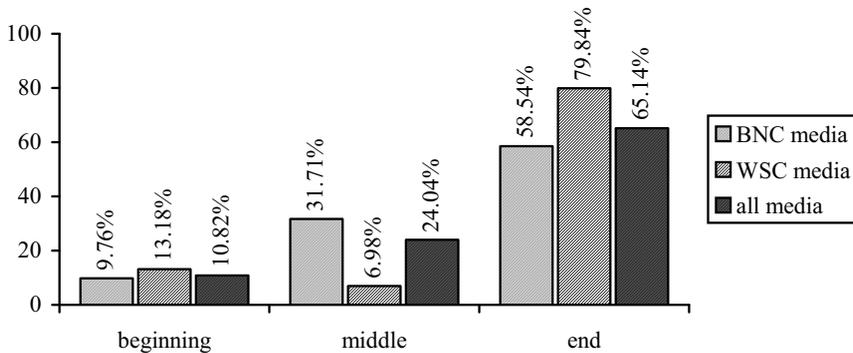


Figure 5. Position of expressions of gratitude within conversations in the BNC and WSC

5.5 The speakers and addressees of expressions of gratitude and their relationship

As already mentioned, there appears to be a correlation between the position and the function of expressions of gratitude. In this context it is interesting to examine who uses an expression of gratitude to whom, and also what the relationship of the partners is to each other. Information regarding the speakers' sex and their profession provided in the manuals of the corpora is drawn on in this analysis.

A glance at the speakers' sex in Figure 6 shows clearly that there are far more men than women involved: 72.12% (70.73% BNC vs. 75.19% WSC) of all expressions of gratitude are uttered by men, and 66.11% (68.64% BNC vs. 60.47% WSC) of all expressions of gratitude are addressed to them. Women, on the other hand, only utter 24.76% (25.09% BNC vs. 24.03% WSC) and receive 23.80% of all expressions of gratitude. Indeed, it is especially striking that there are significantly more female addressees in the New Zealand corpus from a statistical perspective (17.07% BNC vs. 38.76% WSC; $p=0.0004$). In some cases, it was not clear who was addressed and here the number is significantly higher for the British corpus (14.29% BNC vs. 0.78% WSC; $p<0.0001$), which may at least partly compensate for the difference in female addressees between the corpora. However, there are also differences regarding the number of male speakers (70.73% BNC vs. 75.19% WSC) as well as regarding male addressees (68.64% BNC vs. 60.47% WSC), even if they are smaller and not statistically significant. The corpora, taken as a whole, represent the sex ratio in the two countries (approximately fifty-fifty in both). However, it is not possible to say whether the ratio of males to females in the sub-corpora under analysis reflects the demographic facts of those involved in the media. Apart from the differing figures regarding how men and women are represented in the transcripts under investigation, no sex-related influences were found regarding the expressions of gratitude used by males and females, nor where these expressions were used in a conversation, nor which function they served.

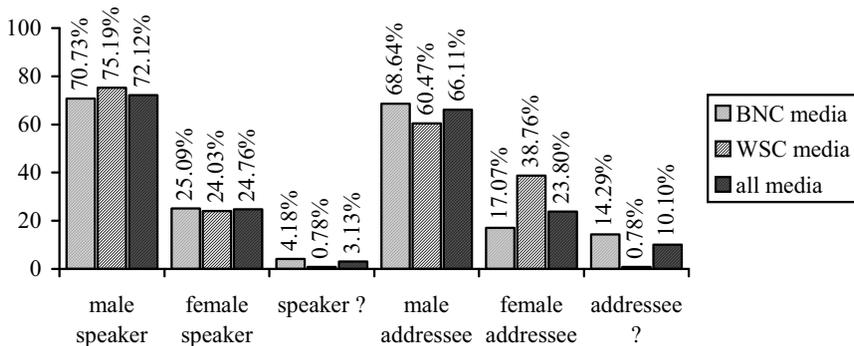


Figure 6. Speakers and addressees by sex uttering/receiving expressions of gratitude in the BNC and WSC

In the present analysis, the information regarding the interlocutors' professions is of special interest. Speakers are either hosts, i.e. presenters or interviewers, or callers or interviewees. Looking at the professions and, thus, at the speakers' relationships, there is either superiority or inferiority. There are no panels of experts with equal rights, for instance, but only shows or interviews where the presenter or interviewer is superior to the caller or interviewee due to their institutional role. Since there are no interviews with politicians or celebrities of any kind, it is assumed that the hosts are always superior.

Figure 7 shows that in 56.73% (55.05% BNC vs. 60.47% WSC) of all cases in which an expression of gratitude is produced, the speakers are superior to the addressees, i.e. there are more hosts uttering expressions of gratitude than callers or interviewees. The hosts use their institutional status and thus their power to pursue their task, viz. to organise the ongoing discourse in accordance with the broadcasting station's guidelines regarding time, contents and entertainment value. One way to pursue this task is to suggest the end of a conversation with the help of an expression of gratitude. Hosts thank the callers or interviewees for their contributions when the time is up, when there is nothing substantially new or interesting to be expected or when callers make statements which cannot be accepted for various reasons. This again highlights the importance of the discourse-organising function of expressions of gratitude. This correlation holds especially for the New Zealand data, where there are not only more superior relationships, but also more examples of expressions of gratitude serving a discourse-organising function (57.14% BNC vs. 60.47% WSC) and more expressions of gratitude found at the end of conversations (58.54% BNC vs. 79.84% WSC). However, these results represent only tendencies which require further analysis, particularly since they are not statistically significant.

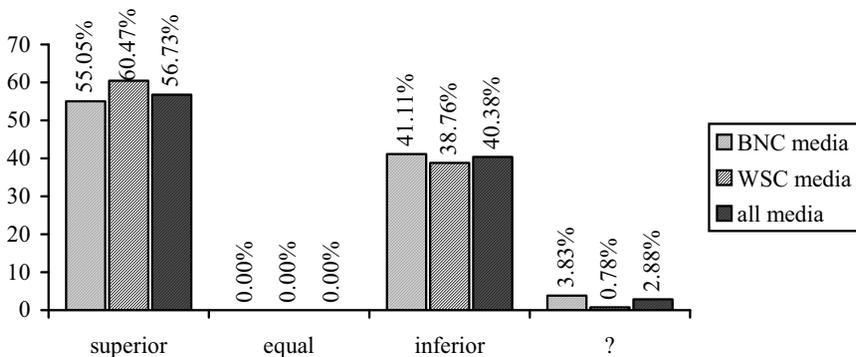


Figure 7. Status and power of speakers using expressions of gratitude in the BNC and WSC

5.6 Closing a conversation by using expressions of gratitude

As has been shown in the analysis of the positions, reasons for expressions of gratitude and their functions, expressions of gratitude are often used as a “signature” (cf. Schegloff & Sacks 1973: 318) to acknowledge what has been said before, but also to either directly indicate that the conversation is ended or to indirectly hint at negotiating its closing. An analysis of what is said in the turns before and after those including expressions of gratitude yields interesting insights into the role which these expressions play in closing conversations. Farewells are often found in the turns before (“farewell in preceding turn”) or after the turn which comprises the expression of gratitude under investigation (“farewell in subsequent turn”). Alternatively, the turn with the expression of gratitude may itself include a farewell (“additional farewell”). Figure 8 illustrates the results for these three cases.

In approximately one third of all cases (31.01% BNC as well as 31.01% WSC), there is one or more farewell(s) in the surrounding turns. Most of these farewells are found in the subsequent turn, especially in the British corpus (25.78% BNC vs. 20.16% WSC). There are only a rather small number in the preceding turn, more in the New Zealand than in the British corpus (4.53% BNC vs. 9.30% WSC). 11.30% of the farewells directly accompany the expressions of gratitude under investigation, i.e. they are found additionally within the same turn (10.10% BNC vs. 13.95% WSC, a statistically non-significant difference).

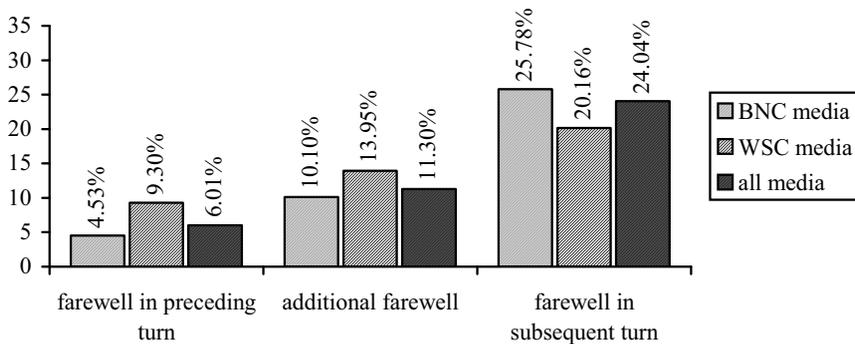


Figure 8. Farewells in turns surrounding an expression of gratitude in the BNC and WSC, multiple references possible

These results further support the assumption that expressions of gratitude play an important part in organising or negotiating the ongoing discourse, particularly in closing the discourse. The interplay of expressions of gratitude and farewells in negotiating the end of a conversation may be seen in the following extract:

- (28) Presenter: Well good luck. I hope er you can keep the nervous tension under control and that you can enjoy the game as well Anne.
 Interviewee: Well we'll do both and thank you very much indeed.
 Presenter: Thank you very much Anne and good luck with the bowls.
 Interviewee: Oh thank you indeed. All right.
 Presenter: Okay thanks very much for your time Anne. Bye bye.
 Interviewee: Right. Bye bye. (WSC thank 59-61 + thanks 53/DGI 079)

In 56.25% of all cases (55.40% BNC vs. 58.14% WSC) there are further expressions of gratitude, greetings and/or farewells in the turns surrounding the turn which contains the original expression of gratitude under investigation. The results for further expressions of gratitude are particularly interesting.¹⁰

Figure 9 shows the distribution of additional expressions of gratitude in the turn under investigation and/or in surrounding turns. All in all, there are 35.09% of cases in which an expression of gratitude is accompanied by further expressions of gratitude (35.54% BNC vs. 34.11% WSC). In 6.62% of the cases in the BNC and 11.63% of the cases in the WSC, there is more than one expression of gratitude within the turn under investigation; in 17.07% of the cases in the BNC and in 13.18% of the cases in the WSC an expression of gratitude is to be found in the preceding turn and in 17.77% of the British examples and 13.18% of the New Zealand examples, there is an expression of gratitude in the subsequent turn.

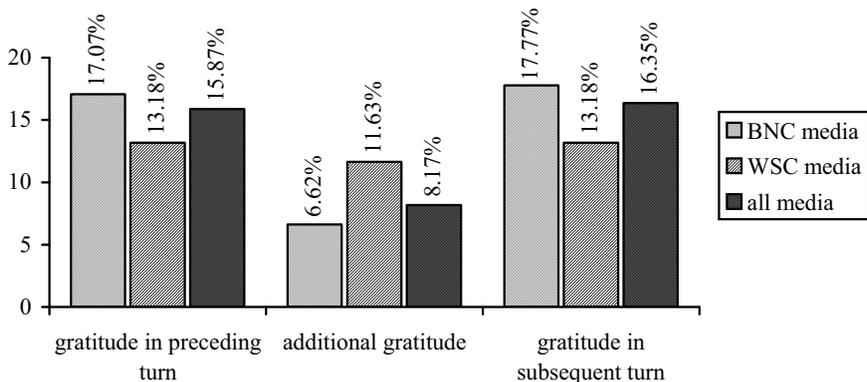


Figure 9. Expressions of gratitude in surrounding turns in the BNC and WSC, multiple references possible

Even though these differences are not statistically significant, the figures show a tendency that expressions of gratitude are more highly “intensified” in the New Zealand corpus, i.e. people, such as the presenter in example (29), repeat their expressions of gratitude within a single turn more often than do the British speakers.

- (29) Presenter: Bill thank you, thank you for having the courage to call, please be assured of my prayer for you. (WSC thank 22 + 23/DGB 27)

The British sub-corpus, however, comprises more examples of exchanges such as in example (28) above, in which interlocutors negotiate the end of a conversation by making use of expressions of gratitude. The fact that such patterns occur repeatedly in the present data shows that discourse-organising expressions of gratitude are constitutive elements of radio phone-ins – especially when conversations are to be closed.

6. Discussion

6.1 Issues of (im)politeness regarding expressions of gratitude in radio programmes

At the beginning of this paper, the question was posed as to whether real gratitude is in fact rare and also as to whether apparently polite utterances are only examples of insincere gushing used to create a better image of oneself in public rather than to show respect for one's interlocutors and their (face) wants. It is these questions to which we now turn. Although issues of facework and politeness have only been dealt with in passing, some general conclusions on the basis of the results for forms and functions of expressions of gratitude are possible.

Expressing one's gratitude appears per definition to be a polite act. However, expressions of gratitude (just as any other linguistic form) are not inherently polite, more specifically, they are not polite in each and every context (cf. Watts 2003: 168–172). In order to further investigate how conversations are closed by means of expressions of gratitude and why people (willingly, as it seems) tolerate the "irony" of being impolitely silenced by a polite expression of gratitude, it is necessary to define what is meant by politeness – in general and in the present context. In ordinary language use, politeness may be commonly defined as "proper social conduct and tactful consideration of others," following Kasper (1998: 677). Taking this definition for granted, using expressions of gratitude to cut callers or interviewees short or interrupt them cannot be considered polite. The hosts readily accept a face loss of their addressees – although they are their guests, and also their customers (and the customer is always right...).

However, a definition of politeness has to consider the goal of effective communication as well, especially in the context of radio phone-ins, where time is limited. There is no doubt that effective communication would be at risk in radio phone-ins if each and every caller insisted on discussing their topics or contributions fully and thoroughly. On the one hand, one could blame hosts for cutting callers short and pretending gratitude just to close a conversa-

tion even though they do not know the callers personally and do not see them face-to-face – and thus do not see how they react and whether some face-saving act would be in place to compensate the damage they caused when they tried to close the conversation unilaterally. On the other hand, however, hosts do not have many other possibilities to compensate for a loss of face due to the institution of the radio and the concepts behind programmes such as phone-ins. The hosts do not simply use the technical devices at their disposal and close the line without saying anything or just use a farewell. Instead, they rather try to bring the conversation to an end which is conciliatory and acceptable for both parties by thanking the interviewees or callers for their participation and their contributions. They, thus, attend to their face wants. Indeed, Aston (1995), whose focus with regard to thanking is on local constraints, stresses the importance of a final alignment. He writes:

thanking can be seen as motivated to a large extent by concerns of conversational management, where there is a need to ratify referential and/or role alignment. Where alignment is problematic, the conversation may only close when such ratification has taken place. (Aston 1995: 78)

Before going into further details regarding the motivation for uttering gratitude, the results yielded in the present study shall be reviewed with regard to the (im)politeness of expressions of gratitude. As for the mere quantity of expressions of gratitude, the British seem to be more polite than New Zealanders because they use far more expressions of gratitude. However, quantity does not necessarily equal quality, as the analysis has shown. As far as the formal realisations of expressions of gratitude are concerned, it was suggested that the use of the optional elements of naming the benefactor, using intensifying particles and giving reasons for one's gratitude could possibly be taken as markers of reasonable and polite instances of gratitude. However, none of these elements are very frequent in the present data – each of them is used in only about one quarter of all expressions of gratitude (cf. 5.2). Furthermore, politeness may not be the only reason to employ these elements. In general, addressing the caller by their name and, thus, (re)identifying them for the audience at large is a feature commonly found in radio phone-ins. Looking at the present examples, many instances of naming a benefactor along with an expression of gratitude may at the same time be attributed to this (re)identification of the caller and not (exclusively) to add to the politeness of the expression of gratitude. One could further speculate that using an intensifying particle makes an expression of gratitude more reasonable, more convincing and maybe even more polite. The examples in the present data, however, show that in about three quarters of all cases, intensification is not considered necessary. Furthermore, neither that which is thanked for nor the situations in which intensified gratitude is expressed seem to be any different from cases where no intensifying particles are used. Hence, intensifying particles do not seem to be dependent on whether people are especially grateful or want to be particularly polite. Instead, they are rather simply one of many ways of thanking in a routinised way. As for naming

a reason of one's gratitude, it was found that New Zealanders do not thank more often than the British, but more often say what they are actually grateful for when they use an expression of gratitude. They make more of an effort in phrasing their expressions of gratitude and name a reason more often than the British do. By concretely naming a reason, they attend more to the (positive) face wants of their addressees than the British. This may be taken as a small piece of evidence that New Zealanders in fact are more polite than the British in this respect.

In many of the cases found in the present corpus, the functional analysis reveals that gratitude is not expressed sincerely (at least not in a speech act theoretical sense), because the speakers' aim may well be to end a conversation when using an expression of gratitude, and not – or not only – to sincerely thank the addressee, which would be a requirement to be able to talk about the speech act of “*thanking*.” Even though the present study can neither draw on evaluations by the persons affected, nor on data in audio or video format, the discourse-organising use of expressions of gratitude looks very much like “*politeness as disguise*” – i.e. pretending to be polite in order to reach one's goal, but actually being rather rude. This holds especially for cases of “*structuring discourse*,” when hosts cut callers short, sometimes even by interrupting them. Interruptions at places where turn taking is not permitted not only have sequential, but also moral consequences (cf. Hutchby 1996: 77), since the person who is interrupted is not given the right to finish off their contribution – or this right is at least questioned (cf. Sacks et al. 1974). With regard to Brown & Levinson's (cf. 1987: 66–69) application of Goffman's ([1955] 1967) notion of face, it can be said that expressions of gratitude may well constitute a threat to the addressee's negative face, defined as “*the basic claim ... to freedom of action and freedom from imposition*” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 66), rather than supporting the addressee's positive face by confirming her/him that s/he has done something beneficial and favourable.

The important question is whether the addressees consider such expressions of gratitude to be polite or not. Since the corpus data offers larger sequences of conversations, the addressees' reactions can be taken into account. In the present corpus many of the interruptions are made by the hosts who, thus, claim the rights they are entitled to due to their institutional power. This may in fact be one reason for callers to tolerate – despite some irritation – such rather impolite attacks on their right to speak or finish their contributions. Cameron & Hills explain that

listeners accept, or are obliged to accept, closing strategies from presenters which would elsewhere be flagrant breaches of politeness. The presenter is the arbiter of when enough has been said on a particular topic, either because time has run out or because the caller is becoming repetitive and tedious for the listeners “*out there*.”
(Cameron & Hills 1990: 58)

Thus, the callers or interviewees accept the institutionally legalised dominance of the presenters or interviewers and are often happy that they have been given

a chance at all to utter their opinion on the topic in question. Some (if not most) of the callers may even be excited or at least think that it is something special to be on the air. Typically, they are not used to talking to a large audience (even if they cannot see them) and to knowing that their voices (and maybe also their private thoughts on some topics) are being broadcast. This may be another reason not to contradict and not to insist on one's right to talk or to finish one's contribution. The callers may be somehow "carried away" by the feeling of being on the air and actually talking to "their" presenter, but at least in theory they know that they should be brief and stick to some other rules which serve to gain as much entertainment from a show as possible. It can be summarised then that callers who show that they are puzzled by interruptions as in example (30) finally surrender their personal wants to the overall structure of the genre.

- (30) Presenter: ... thanks, thanks for your call George.
 Caller: Right, oh – good. (WSC thanks 5 + 6/DGB 009)

As has been stated above, rather than just closing the line, presenters make use of expressions of gratitude and, thus (at least superficially), attend to their addressees' face wants and terminate the conversation in an appeasing way. As example (30) shows, callers (again, at least superficially) acknowledge this. If this is taken to be (a kind of) politeness, it is in some respects comparable to the concept of *wakimae*, which only approximately translates into English 'discernment' and which has been testified for Asia, where the concept of positive and negative politeness as described by Brown & Levinson (1987) has proved problematic. In Asia, politeness is not used as strategically as it is in Europe or (Northern) America. Smooth communication within a group is considered a more important sociocultural rationale than strategically pursuing one's aims (cf., e.g., Ide et al. 1992: 281), i.e. politeness may even be described as independent of a speaker's goals, because it is most important that honorifics or other forms of personal reference linguistically encode the status of an interlocutor and her/his social properties within a group (cf. Kasper 1998: 679). Even if in English the relative position of a speaker towards the addressee is not formally visible in terms of address, the linguistic behaviour mirrors the acceptance of the roles of presenter/interviewer and caller/interviewee respectively in this special context of radio programmes. As has been shown above, expressions of gratitude are employed strategically – amongst other reasons – to close a conversation. Such a use does not correspond to the concept of *wakimae*. However, the way in which these expressions of politeness are employed in the interest of the successful outcome of the radio programme as a whole and in the interest of the aims of informing and entertaining a large audience (two issues which have priority especially for hosts), is at least reminiscent of the concept of *wakimae*.

Since expressions of gratitude very often appear when closing a conversation, it may be concluded that politeness is an important issue, independent of questions as to what kind of politeness is represented by these expressions of

gratitude. Kasper (1998: 681), writing on formulae in general, concludes: “Since such formulae encapsulate events which require routinely conveyed politeness, they provide pragmaticists with a window to a speech community’s value structure and notion of politeness.” Expressions of gratitude are highly routinised and it may be that they are used simply to meet social conventions and expectations (cf. Mills 2003: 67). Thus, enthusiastically repeating or intensifying an expression of gratitude may only serve to signal to the caller that their speaking time is up rather than expressing exceptional gratitude. However, radio phone-ins are dependent on people calling and contributing to the show. Thus, this is reason enough for a presenter to be grateful that people call and it would not be justified to say that gratitude is only put on. However, the gratitude uttered at the end of a conversation between a host and a caller does not necessarily need to be a sincere and deeply felt personal gratitude. Rather, it may well be expressed on behalf of the concept “radio programme” and on behalf of the institution for which the host works.

In conclusion, the data reveal some tendencies that point to politeness for the British as being perhaps more of a question of a distancing, non-intruding formality. New Zealanders, on the other hand, appear to be more sociable in their use of expressions of gratitude and, thus, pay more attention to establishing or maintaining interpersonal relations. These hypotheses, which are detailed further in the comparison of the two varieties in 6.2, are, however, only tendencies yielded from the formal and functional analysis of expressions of gratitude in the present data. Further research on the politeness of expressions of gratitude might include an application of various models of politeness to the data – it should be examined in particular, for instance, whether expressions of gratitude are mostly used as positive politeness strategies, attending to the addressee’s positive face wants, or whether expressions of gratitude should rather be considered threatening to the speaker’s negative face, as proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987: 70–73), whether expressing gratitude usually relates to the approbation maxim and whether its dominant illocutionary function is convivial as Leech (1983: 132, 104) proposed, or whether applying the distinction of polite as opposed to politic, as proposed by Watts (1992: 50–52, 2003: 17–24), may help in cases where expressions of gratitude are used routinely to end a conversation between the host of a radio phone-in and a caller.

6.2 Comparison: British English vs. New Zealand English

Finally, the comparison of the two varieties under investigation yields some interesting findings. The (provocative and, of course, stereotypical) question posed at the beginning of this paper was whether the “Mr Darcy is all politeness”-Englishman is really more polite than the friendly, outgoing Kiwi who lacks good manners given that their ancestors were boorish prisoners. Following these stereotypical views, the British Mr and Ms Darcies are assumed to be very formal and to invest a lot in etiquette and politeness rituals, while the stereotypical New Zealander is assumed to be easygoing and less formal than

the British, paying less attention to etiquette and formality and rather enjoying life casually. The results of the linguistic analysis of expressions of gratitude in the present study provide evidence that the British may indeed be more formal than New Zealanders. However, a closer investigation of the results from the functional analysis shows that there may be more to politeness than formality, namely caring for the other and paying attention to a person's needs and (face) wants in interaction in the New Zealand data. The latter results rather seem to provide a negative answer to the question of whether the British are more polite than New Zealanders. However, since it is difficult to measure what "more" or "less" polite means exactly, one should rather draw the conclusion that the speakers from the two varieties of English prefer different kinds of politeness. To show this, the most important findings will be summarised with respect to the two varieties and some of the results will be further elaborated on.

The first noticeable variation is the significant difference in the overall frequency of expressions of gratitude in the equally-sized sub-corpora. 287 expressions of gratitude were found in the British corpus, while only 129 were found in the New Zealand corpus. Assuming quantity to be a valid indicator, this result suggests that the British are more polite since they use more expressions of gratitude. However, one could also explain the figures by supposing that New Zealanders use expressions of gratitude only (or at least more than the British) in cases where they are really grateful, and that they avoid instances of gushing. Looking at single expressions of gratitude, *thank (you)* was shown to be more common in British English than in New Zealand English (62.37% BNC vs. 47.29% WSC), while in New Zealand English *thanks* was more common than in British English (32.40% BNC vs. 44.96% WSC). This difference is mirrored in the use of intensifying particles. In New Zealand English *very much* is significantly more common than in British English (9.06% BNC vs. 18.60% WSC), while in British English *very much indeed* is significantly more frequent than in New Zealand English (10.80% BNC vs. 0.78% WSC). Assuming *very much indeed* to be more formal than *very much*, New Zealanders often use less formal expressions of gratitude than the British. If one wanted to subscribe to the stereotypical view of the formal British as opposed to the relaxed New Zealander, these results would fit nicely.

A further difference between the two corpora refers to the naming of reasons. New Zealanders name reasons for their gratitude significantly more often than the British (20.91% BNC vs. 41.86% WSC). This result may be explained by New Zealanders knowing exactly what they are grateful for and wishing to state it, while the British seem to use expressions of gratitude quite often without an explicitly mentioned reason – especially if one takes into account that they use many more expressions of gratitude overall than do New Zealanders. This, however, does not necessarily mean that they do not know what they are grateful for – they just name it less often than New Zealanders. There is also a difference in terms of structural preferences. While 20.91% of the reasons given by the British are equally distributed over *for* + NP (10.45% BNC) and *for* + VP-ing (9.41% BNC) constructions, New Zealanders significantly favour

for + NP constructions (24.81% WSC as opposed to 13.18% WSC for *for* + VP-ing). Leaving preferences regarding how a reason is phrased apart, the question may again be posed whether the British are more or less polite than New Zealanders – they use more expressions of gratitude, but New Zealanders seem to know better (or rather say) what they are grateful for. Does the higher quantity of expressions of gratitude in British English mirror their quality or is the higher quantity rather a sign of gushing? The latter case has to be considered especially since so many expressions of gratitude serve a discourse-organising function – and may well be used to silence callers – as has been shown above for both varieties. The question of sincerity cannot be tested empirically, particularly since the speakers cannot be asked directly in the present case. Nonetheless, some other figures may help to shed further light on these questions. When comparing the figures for thanking for “contributions” (rather than “contributions + ‘structuring discourse’”), it is striking that this function only occurs in 2.79% of cases in the BNC, while there are 13.18% in the WSC, which is a statistically significant difference. For “contributions + ‘structuring discourse,’” the figures are more similar for both corpora (29.97% BNC vs. 27.13% WSC). These figures may suggest that New Zealanders show more “real” gratitude than the British.

This view may be supported by the present results for the function of establishing or maintaining “phatic communion.” While in the British corpus 16.03% of the expressions of gratitude serve this function, 24.03% of the expressions in the New Zealand corpus serve the same function. Since such differences are found for almost all of the reasons subsumed under this function (e.g. responses to “enquiries after the addressee’s health”: 6.27% BNC vs. 10.85% WSC; “good wishes”: 3.83% BNC vs. 8.53% WSC; “compliments”: 2.09% BNC vs. 4.65% WSC etc., cf. above), they would all seem to confirm the hypothesis that New Zealanders care more for their interlocutors than the British, even though the figures only represent tendencies, the differences not being statistically significant.

The figures for expressions of gratitude used to appreciate some sort of “service,” “financial support” or “material goods” are significantly higher in the British corpus (12.54% BNC vs. 3.10% WSC). This finding is only partly due to the Quantas examples, as described above. This also – partly – explains the differences in figures regarding the position of expressions of gratitude: In the British corpus there are significantly more expressions of gratitude in the middle of conversations (31.71% BNC vs. 6.98% WSC) and – comparatively – fewer at the end (58.54% BNC vs. 79.84% WSC). The statistically significant preference of the British to thank for something material may be contrasted with the preference of New Zealanders to pay more attention to phatic communion and interpersonal relationships when thanking someone. It should also be highlighted that New Zealanders thank significantly more often for some sort of service (0.35% BNC vs. 3.10% WSC). Although these service interactions serve to obtain material goods or something else which is usually paid for, it does include an interpersonal aspect. In general, however, the figures for both corpora stress the importance of the discourse-organising function of ex-

pressions of gratitude. In addition, in both corpora expressions of gratitude are particularly common at the close of conversations.

While the tendencies for males are (at least roughly) the same, the smaller number of female British addressees (a statistically significant difference) is striking (17.07% BNC vs. 38.76% WSC). This figure can only partly be explained by the significantly higher number of unclear cases in the BNC (14.29% BNC vs. 0.78% WSC). However, since no sex-related differences were found for the features under investigation, these results are not crucial in the discussion of variational differences.

In the New Zealand corpus, there are more expressions of gratitude uttered by the presenters than in the British corpus (55.05% BNC vs. 60.47% WSC). This result reflects those relating to the dominance of the discourse-organising function of expressions of gratitude, which is higher for the New Zealand corpus (57.14% BNC vs. 60.47% WSC) and those of expressions of gratitude found at the end of conversations (58.54% BNC vs. 79.84% WSC). These results taken together stress the importance of the use of expressions of gratitude by presenters of radio phone-ins in order to organise the ongoing discourse and especially its closure in New Zealand English. This is further corroborated by the finding that expressions of gratitude may well be accompanied by farewells at the end of conversations (10.10% BNC vs. 13.95% WSC). While in British English expressions of gratitude are rather followed by farewells (25.78% BNC vs. 20.16% WSC), in New Zealand English they are rather preceded by them (4.53% BNC vs. 9.30% WSC). All in all, the results show that there may at times be considerable differences between two varieties of one language.

7. Conclusion

The investigation of British and New Zealand radio phone-ins shows the importance of expressions of gratitude in organising discourse in this genre – in beginning, maintaining and especially in closing conversations. This finding holds for both varieties of English, but more so for the New Zealand corpus. Assuming that cutting other people short is not considered polite, while using many expressions of gratitude is considered polite, it would seem based on these findings and also on the fact that New Zealanders use a significantly lower number of expressions of gratitude overall relative to the British, that the British are more grateful and more polite than New Zealanders. However, such is not necessarily the case. Rather, most of the other findings suggest the opposite. Indeed, New Zealanders thank significantly more for “contributions” alone. The assumption that this gratitude is more genuine and that New Zealanders care more for their conversational partners than the British may be supported by the results for the phatic function and the interpersonal function. Specifically, New Zealanders use expressions of gratitude more often than the British to respond to enquiries after their well-being, good wishes, compliments and the like. Compared to the British, they seem to know better what they are grateful for – New Zealanders use significantly less expressions of

gratitude from a statistical point of view, but they name a concrete reason for their gratitude significantly more often than the British. These findings along with those cases where expressions of gratitude are employed to close conversations indicate that there is more gushing in British radio phone-ins than in those from New Zealand.

In general, there is a high proportion of gratitude found in radio phone-ins and there is certainly room and reason for real gratitude. Phone-ins and interviews would not work, if the audience did not call or respond to questions, thus presenters have reason to be grateful. However, since it is their job to present radio programmes, there are many instances of professional gratitude – on the one hand, presenters are polite to the callers and interviewees (last but not least on behalf of their radio station and employer) because the callers are their customers and because they are after all being broadcast. On the other hand, conversations in radio phone-ins have to be closed due to reasons such as time pressure, other callers waiting for their turn, opinions leading too far and entertainment value. Expressions of gratitude are one way to make up for the face loss associated with the host cutting the caller short and rendering a conversational closing less abrupt and impolite than it would be without a discourse-organising expression of gratitude. For callers or interviewees, however, things are usually different. They are happy and (really) grateful for being given the opportunity to contribute to a programme. In addition, since they do not have to pay attention to time, topics or entertainment value, they usually only engage in the discourse-organising use of expressions of gratitude in response to presenters. However, since callers (and also the interviewees in the present data) are usually not used to being broadcast, there may also be instances of gushing because they want to get things right, show their good manners and appear as polite as possible – for instance by showing their gratitude. Thus, referring back to the title of this article, expressions of gratitude in radio phone-ins and interviews are not “nothing but gushing,” but real gratitude does not seem to be all too common either. Instead, a very special kind of gratitude as well as of politeness is found in the present data. Here, the British appear more formal, while New Zealanders seem to be more partner-oriented when they express gratitude. It is up to further studies to find out (on the basis of different data) whether people really feel the way the results of the present study suggest.

Notes

1. “‘Mr Darcy is all politeness,’ said Elizabeth, smiling” (Austen [1813] 1996: 25).

2.	hits in phone-ins	hits in interviews
BNC (287 expressions of gratitude)	284 (98.95%)	3 (1.05%)
WSC (129 expressions of gratitude)	115 (89.15%)	14 (10.85%)
Σ (416 expressions of gratitude)	399 (95.91%)	17 (4.09%)

3. Cf. the websites of the British National Corpus, <<http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>>, and of the corpora held at Victoria University of Wellington, <<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/corpora/index.aspx>>, for further information on the corpora used in the study at hand.
4. For ease of readability, examples from the BNC and the WSC are reproduced without tags or any other mark-up.
5. It is not explicitly stated that “structuring discourse” is the reason for the expression of gratitude. In cases such as this, quotation marks are used in the present context.
6. Particularly in cases of (suspected) irony, it would have been helpful to have access to audio files, but since this is not possible with the corpora under investigation, examining the context was the only way to come to terms with such cases.
7. The Maori *kia ora* literally means ‘your health.’ It is commonly used as a greeting in New Zealand English.
8. Excluding these examples from the analysis would not have changed the overall picture, since there are so few of them anyway.
9. The expressions of gratitude relating to this sponsoring amount to 6.27% of the BNC cases – even if they were left apart, there would still be more cases of gratitude for financial support in the BNC, since in the WSC there are no such examples at all.
10. 1.68% (1.39% BNC vs. 2.33% WSC) of all expressions of gratitude found have a greeting in the same turn as an expression of gratitude, 7.21% (5.23% BNC vs. 11.63% WSC) of cases have a greeting in the turn preceding the turn in which the expression of gratitude occurs, and 0.24% (0% BNC vs. 0.78% WSC) of cases have greetings in the turn subsequent to the expression of gratitude. Although the figures are not as striking as those for farewells, they further underline the importance of expressions of gratitude in organising the discourse – be it to close or to open it.

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PART II

Dutch and German

The distribution of T/V pronouns in Netherlandic and Belgian Dutch

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1. Introduction

Ever since the publication of Brown & Gilman's (1960) seminal paper, linguistics has witnessed a blossoming of research on the pronouns of address across a wide range of languages. The distinction between familiar T pronouns and polite V pronouns together with its relation to the dimensions of power and/or solidarity among speakers has been the topic of numerous studies trying to capture the various intricacies and complexities of address systems all over the world. In fact, the axes of power and solidarity are just two among a plethora of pragmatic features that account for the manner in which address terms are actually put to use.

This article focuses on the pronouns of address in contemporary Dutch from a quantitative and variationist perspective. The line of inquiry is comparative, in that for several factors, such as register, region, age, sex and educational and/or occupational level, the Belgian situation will be contrasted to that in the Netherlands. The statistical technique that we use is a slightly modified version of correspondence analysis.

We begin by first offering the historical background behind the current linguistic phenomena in Belgian Dutch. Then, we proceed to define our linguistic variables, the pronouns of address, in such a way that they can be operationally dealt with in querying a corpus. The corpus is succinctly described next, followed by an outline of the method. The analyses show that the factors determining the use of the T/V pronouns have strikingly different effects in the Netherlands compared to Flanders, especially for register and region. The Flemish linguistic situation on the whole is found to be more complex than the Netherlandic situation. The main findings and conclusions are summarised in the last section of this paper. The appendix contains the data tables used for our analyses.

2. Background

Unlike its neighbouring countries, e.g. the Netherlands, Great Britain, France, and to a certain extent also Germany, Flanders (i.e. the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) did not engage in the massive standardisation processes of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Instead, it remained scattered with the original Flemish dialects. Only in the twentieth century was the decision finally made to adopt the Dutch Standard from the Netherlands, which at that time was already largely developed. As a consequence, a firm language policy was implemented during the period after World War II. This ultimately resulted in a diglossic situation: speakers used Standard Dutch in the written and more formal registers, while they still relied heavily on their dialect in colloquial speech (for summary studies, cf. both Jaspaert 1986, and Van de Velde 1996). This situation changed drastically during the 1980s, however, as the use of the dialects started to decline, giving rise to a mixture of Standard Dutch with dialectal elements. This supraregional variety that resided “in-between” Standard Dutch and the original Flemish dialects was first expected to be merely an “intermediate” stage in the ongoing standardisation of Flanders. It was likewise nicknamed *tussentaal*, literally ‘in-between language’ or ‘inter-language.’ Nevertheless, at the end of the 1990s and the turn of the new millennium, *tussentaal* proved to be more resistant than was assumed. It spread rapidly among younger speakers as the new and fashionable slang, and was picked up by the media (for some case studies, cf. Geeraerts 2001 and Van Gijssel in press). The emergence of the *tussentaal* variety represents, in other words, a linguistic change, and the aim is now to reveal the underlying factors that determine its use – at least insofar as the pronouns of address are concerned.

3. Linguistic variables

For the case study at hand, we focus on the pronouns of address in Dutch, numerous aspects of which have already been studied (cf., for instance, Goossens 1990, Grezel 2003, Vandekerckhove 2004, and for an in-depth diachronic study, Vermaas 2002). There are, depending on one’s perspective, two or three address systems. These are schematically represented according to the following three grammatical functions for which they each have a lexical element:

Table 1. Grammatical functions & abbreviations

Grammatical function	Abbreviation
non-inverted subject form	“.not”
inverted subject form	“.inv”
object form	“.obj”

The least troublesome of the three address systems is the system for polite speech, the so-called U-system:

Table 2. The U-system of address

	subjective, not inverted	subjective, inverted	object
	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>

Familiar speech, on the other hand, is more complicated. The standard system is the J-system, which makes a distinction between phonetically reduced forms and full forms. The latter are in turn classified into singular and plural forms:

Table 3. The J-system of address

		subjective, not inverted	subjective, inverted	object
reduced		<i>je</i>	<i>je</i>	<i>je</i>
full	sing.	<i>jij</i>	<i>jij</i>	<i>jou</i>
	plur.	<i>jullie</i>	<i>jullie</i>	<i>jullie</i>

This duality between polite U-forms and familiar J-forms reflects the situation as it exists in the Netherlands. Hence, it constitutes the norm adopted by Flanders in the twentieth century. However, Flanders has a supplementary system for familiar speech. This third system is the G-system:

Table 4. The G-system of address

		subjective, not inverted	subjective, inverted	object
reduced		<i>ge</i>	<i>ge/-de</i>	<i>u</i>
full		<i>gij</i>	<i>gij/-degij</i>	<i>u</i>

The G-system is in fact a merger of what is historically the endogenic Flemish T/V-duality. For instance, the enclitic *-de* is a reduced relic of what originally was the medieval Dutch pronoun for familiar speech, namely *du*. The forms *ge* and *gij* are descendent from *ghi*, which used to be the polite form for address in Middle Dutch. Adoption of the Netherlandic system “pushed,” so to speak, the endogenic Flemish forms along the stylistic axis: *ge* and *gij* have become regular familiar pronouns, while *du* has been nearly lost, only to survive as a reduced and enclitic form to be used in highly restricted grammatical positions. Officially, these endogenic forms are regarded as sub-standard nowadays. Nevertheless, their usage persists to this day in Flanders.

With these distinctions in mind, we define our linguistic variables with respect to the three grammatical functions identified above. The distinction between subject and object is based on the POS-tag with which each token in our corpus comes annotated. Subject forms have the label “nom” for the feature “CASE”; object forms have the label “obj.” Among the subject forms them-

selves, the distinction between inverted and non-inverted forms relies on the following decision procedure:

- non-inverted *if and only if* the subject form appears immediately before a finite verb
- inverted *if and only if* the subject form appears immediately after a finite verb OR immediately after a subordinating conjunctive/determiner.

The following examples serve to illustrate the point:

Table 5. Overview of relevant grammatical contexts

Feature	Example	Translation
– Non-inverted subject form	<i>Jij kunt komen.</i>	You can come.
– Inverted subject form	<i>Kun jij komen?</i>	Can you come?
	OR <i>Ik vraag of jij komen kunt.</i>	I ask whether you can come.
– Object form	<i>Ik vraag jou iets</i>	I ask you something.

The result is a set of three linguistic variables comprising the following 18 statistical variables:

Table 6. Overview of statistical variables

Form	Description	Example	Translation
je.not	non-inverted subjective <i>je</i>	<i>Je kunt komen.</i>	You can come.
jij.not	non-inverted subjective <i>jij</i>	<i>Jij kunt komen.</i>	You can come.
jullie.not	non-inverted subjective <i>jullie</i>	<i>Jullie kunnen komen.</i>	You can come.
ge.not	non-inverted subjective <i>ge</i>	<i>Ge kunt komen.</i>	You can come.
gij.not	non-inverted subjective <i>gij</i>	<i>Gij kunt komen.</i>	You can come.
u.not	non-inverted subjective <i>u</i>	<i>U kunt komen.</i>	You can come.
je.inv	inverted subjective <i>je</i>	<i>Kun je komen?</i>	Can you come?
jij.inv	inverted subjective <i>jij</i>	<i>Kun jij komen?</i>	Can you come?
jullie.inv	inverted subjective <i>jullie</i>	<i>Kunnen jullie komen?</i>	Can you come?
ge.inv	inverted subjective <i>ge</i>	<i>Kunt ge komen?</i>	Can you come?
gij.inv	inverted subjective <i>gij</i>	<i>Kunt gij komen?</i>	Can you come?
de	inverted subjective <i>-de</i>	<i>Kunde komen?</i>	Can you come?
degij	inverted subjective <i>-degij</i>	<i>Kundegij komen?</i>	Can you come?
u.inv	inverted subjective <i>u</i>	<i>Kunt u komen?</i>	Can you come?
je.obj	objective <i>je</i>	<i>Ik vraag je te komen.</i>	I ask you to come.
jou	objective <i>jou</i>	<i>I vraag jou te komen.</i>	I ask you to come.
jullie.obj	objective <i>jullie</i>	<i>I vraag jullie te komen.</i>	I ask you to come.
u.obj	objective <i>u</i>	<i>I vraag u te komen.</i>	I ask you to come.

4. Corpus

The corpus that we make use of is the ‘Spoken Dutch Corpus’ (*Corpus Gesproken Nederlands* – abbreviated as “CGN”). It consists of a total of ten million word tokens, two thirds of which stem from the Netherlands, one third from Flanders. The CGN is a stratified corpus, in that the linguistic material is sampled from 15 different types of speech situations, called “components”:

- a: Spontaneous conversations (“face-to-face”)
- b: Interviews with teachers of Dutch
- c: Spontaneous telephone dialogues (recorded via a switchboard)
- d: Spontaneous telephone dialogues (recorded on MD via a local interface)
- e: Simulated business negotiations
- f: Interviews/discussions/debates (broadcast)
- g: (Political) discussions/debates/meetings (non-broadcast)
- h: Lessons recorded in the classroom
- i: Live (e.g. sports) commentaries (broadcast)
- j: News reports/reportages (broadcast)
- k: News (broadcast)
- l: Commentaries/columns/reviews (broadcast)
- m: Ceremonious speeches/sermons
- n: Lectures/seminars
- o: Read text

These 15 components will prove highly valuable to our analyses, as they enable us to capture the stylistic differences of the linguistic forms. One remark to be made beforehand concerns the fact that component “e” (simulated business negotiations) includes material from the Netherlands only, i.e. no such data are available for Flanders. Each utterance in the corpus is furthermore annotated for its speaker’s characteristics, such as region, age, sex, educational level, and occupational level. Region is obviously different for the Netherlands and for Flanders. For the Netherlands, the coding scheme is quite intricate:

- N1a: The Netherlands, central region, Zuid-Holland, excl. Goeree Overflakkee
- N1b: The Netherlands, central region, Noord-Holland, excl. West Friesland
- N1c: The Netherlands, central region, West Utrecht, incl. the city of Utrecht
- N2a: The Netherlands, transitional region, Zeeland, incl. Goeree Overflakkee and Zeeuws-Vlaanderen
- N2b: The Netherlands, transitional region, Oost Utrecht, excl. the city of Utrecht
- N2c: The Netherlands, transitional region, Gelders rivierengebied, incl. Arnhem and Nijmegen
- N2d: The Netherlands, transitional region, Veluwe up to the river IJssel
- N2e: The Netherlands, transitional region, West Friesland
- N2f: The Netherlands, transitional region, Polders
- N3a: The Netherlands, peripheral region 1 (north east), Achterhoek
- N3b: The Netherlands, peripheral region 1 (north east), Overijssel
- N3c: The Netherlands, peripheral region 1 (north east), Drenthe

- N3d: The Netherlands, peripheral region 1 (north east), Groningen
- N3e: The Netherlands, peripheral region 1 (north east), Friesland
- N4a: The Netherlands, peripheral region 2 (south), Noord-Brabant
- N4b: The Netherlands, peripheral region 2 (south), Limburg

Flanders has the following coding scheme:

- V1: Flanders, central region (Antwerpen and Vlaams-Brabant)
- V2: Flanders, transitional region (Oost-Vlaanderen)
- V3: Flanders, peripheral region 1 (West-Vlaanderen)
- V4: Flanders, peripheral region 2 (Limburg)

The variable sex makes the obvious distinction between male (M) and female (F) speakers. With respect to age, the CGN only lists the speakers' year of birth. As this level of granularity might be too fine-grained for our analyses, we have decided to construct an age variable ourselves, coding instead for the decade in which the speaker was born. Consequently, the "oldest" decade in our corpus is "1920–29," while the "youngest" is "1980–89."

The CGN codes the speakers' educational level as a ternary variable:

- edu1: high
- edu2: middle
- edu3: low

Occupational level, finally, will only be considered as an extension of educational level. The reason for this is twofold. First and foremost, individuals' occupational level tend to correlate strongly with their educational level, making one of both variables highly redundant. Secondly, the CGN employs a different coding scheme for the Netherlands than for Flanders. The Netherlandic scheme is the following:

- occ1: occupation requiring higher level of education (doctor, lawyer, etc.)
- occ2: occupation requiring middle level of education (teacher, journalist, etc.)
- occ3: occupation requiring lower level of education (mechanic, teacher nursery school, bank employee, etc.)
- occ4: occupation not requiring any level of education (garbage collector, cleaning lady, taxi driver, etc.)
- occ5: holding no job, unemployed
- occ6: holding no job, attending school
- occ7: holding no job; housewife
- occ8: holding no job, declared unfit
- occ9: holding no job; other

The Flemish scheme, by contrast, is as follows:

- occA: occupation in higher management or government
- occB: occupation requiring higher education
- occC: employed on the teaching or research staff in a university or a college

- occD: employed in an administrative office or a service organisation
 occE: occupation not requiring any level of specification
 occF: self-employed
 occG: politicians
 occH: employed with the media (journalist, reporter) or artist
 occI: student, trainee
 occJ: holding no job

Moreover, it is possible for the Flemish scheme to exhibit combinations of levels, such as “occC+G,” for instance. This is not the case in the Netherlandic scheme. Consequently, a direct comparison of the Netherlands and Flanders is not straightforward. However, it is not necessary either, given the expected overlap with educational level. The solution is to treat occupational level only as an additional source of information for our analyses.

5. Method

The variables register, region, age, sex, educational level and occupational level represent six factors, each of which will be cross-tabulated with the set of linguistic variables. The result is a contingency table, i.e. a table of frequency counts. The contingency tables that are analysed in this case study can be found in the appendix at the end of this paper. For the sake of comparison, the material of the Netherlands will be analysed separately from that of Belgium. The aim of the analysis is to measure the associations between rows and columns of the contingency table.

The statistical technique with which this is done is correspondence analysis. Correspondence analysis considers the rows of a table as a datacloud of points in a geometrical space defined by the columns of the table. The columns of the table, vice versa, are a datacloud of points in a geometrical space defined by the rows of the table. The idea is then to derive a lower-dimensional representation of these dataclouds that approximates them as closely as possible, thus retaining as much of the original (i.e. high-dimensional) structure as possible in as few dimensions as possible. Most often, the approximation is two-dimensional, i.e. a plane. When such planes are plotted, the associations between rows and/or columns shows up as distances in the plot. Points in the vicinity of each other are highly correlated, the relative positions of the points reflecting the associational strength (for an introduction to correspondence analysis, cf. Benzécri 1992).

Mathematically, correspondence analysis takes the same approach to its calculations as the chi-square test does. Correspondence analysis (also) starts from the assumption that there is no difference between the rows or columns of the table. It then computes the deviation of the frequency counts that are expected under this assumption from the frequency counts that are actually observed in the data set. The overall measure of this deviation is expressed in the well-known χ^2 -statistic. The next step is to map the data points in a lower-

dimensional space such that the χ^2 of that particular space optimally approximates the χ^2 of the table. As such, correspondence analysis is essentially an exploratory statistical technique: it describes a data sample (and does so as accurately as possible), but it neither constructs nor confirms a theoretical model of it.

Thus executed, correspondence analysis captures the variation of the contingency table *as such*. However, what is of primary interest to us is what we term “formal onomasiological variation,” that is formal variation for a given grammatical function (for a detailed account of the notion of formal onomasiological variation, together with its relation to other types of – lexical – variation, cf. Geeraerts et al. 1994). As mentioned above, we consider three grammatical functions: non-inverted subject forms, inverted subject forms, and object forms. Our research addresses the question as to which form Dutch speakers choose *given* a certain grammatical function, disregarding precisely the choice of function itself (which of course has a bearing on the choice of form as well). Consequently, the variation between inverted *ge* and inverted *je*, for instance, answers our research question, whereas the variation between inverted *je* and non-inverted *je* does not, nor does the variation between inverted subject forms as such and non-inverted subject forms as such (or between subject forms and object forms for that matter). In other words, what we want to measure is the variation *within* each of our three grammatical functions – non-inverted subject forms, inverted subject forms, and object forms – but not the variation *between* them. The procedure by which this aim is met is to partition the contingency table according to the three grammatical functions specified, amounting to three sub-tables, also called “profiles” (for a further elaboration on the concept of “profile,” cf. Geeraerts et al. 1999, and Speelman et al. 2003). The measure that is needed in order to capture the variation within these profiles is provided by Huyghens’ theorem, according to which the total amount of variation in a (partitioned) contingency table can be neatly decomposed into a quantity measuring the variation between the sub-tables, and a quantity measuring the variation within the sub-tables as follows:

$$\chi^2_{\text{TOTAL}} = \chi^2_{\text{BETWEEN}} + \chi^2_{\text{WITHIN}}$$

The χ^2_{TOTAL} is the usual χ^2 -value of the contingency table in its unpartitioned format. The χ^2_{BETWEEN} is obtained by collapsing the frequency counts in each sub-table, and then constructing a new contingency table from the counts of the collapsed sub-tables – in our case, this would be a table with three rows (or columns). The χ^2 -value of the latter contingency table is the χ^2_{BETWEEN} , as it obviously captures the variation between the sub-tables, or grammatical functions. Our desired measure of variation, χ^2_{WITHIN} , consists in taking the sum of the three χ^2 -values of each of the sub-tables.¹ This is the quantity, then, that we let correspondence analysis approximate. Carried out this way, the technique is sometimes also referred to as “partitioned correspondence analysis” (for more mathematical details concerning both Huyghens’ theorem and partitioned correspondence analysis, cf. Greenacre 1984, especially pp. 202–204).

6. Analysis

Before we begin the analyses, it needs to be specified that the Netherlandic material does not cover the whole range of formal variants. More specifically, the typically Flemish endogenic variants – i.e. *ge*, *gij*, and *-de(gij)* – will not be included in the analyses of the Netherlandic material. The reason is not that they are not present in the Netherlands, but that they are highly dialectical, as the following table shows (we remember that the suffix “.not” indicates a non-inverted form, while “.inv” indicates an inverted one; the forms *-de* and *-degij* are enclitic and therefore by definition inverted):

Table 7. Distribution of address forms in the Netherlands

	N1a	N1b	N1c	N2a	N2c	N2d	N2e	N3a	N3b	N3d	N3e	N4a	N4b
de	7	10	2	3	219	1	3	7	4	6	0	588	2
degij	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	1	91	0
ge.inv	4	2	0	1	25	1	0	0	0	0	0	248	0
ge.not	1	2	0	2	35	2	0	3	0	2	0	128	1
gij.inv	4	4	2	0	4	2	0	2	0	0	0	36	2
gij.inv	3	6	1	0	7	3	0	2	0	0	0	72	1

The forms *ge*, *gij*, and *-de(gij)* only appear in two regions in the Netherlands: the southern province of Noord-Brabant (N4a), and to a lesser extent the area around the cities of Arnhem and Nijmegen (N2c). Both regions are known for their more “southern” variety of Dutch, in which they resemble Belgian Dutch. Apart from these two regions, however, occurrences of the word forms in question appear to be only coincidental. Hence, it was decided to omit these word forms from the analyses of the Netherlandic material and retain them for the Belgian material only.

6.1 Register (component)

Comparison of the registers (the so-called “components”) points to the stylistic subtleties of the various variants used in the Netherlands and Flanders. The plots show a striking difference between both countries. Remember that distances in the plot reflect the strength of association between rows and/or columns.

In the Netherlands, register variation is unidimensional (Figure 1), the vertical axis accounting for no important variation. All variation lies on the horizontal axis of the plot, ranging from the familiar J-forms to the polite U-forms, the latter being associated with components “e” (simulated business discussions), “f” (broadcast interviews, discussions & debates) and “g” (non-broadcast discussions, debates & meetings). The former are used in the more colloquial registers.

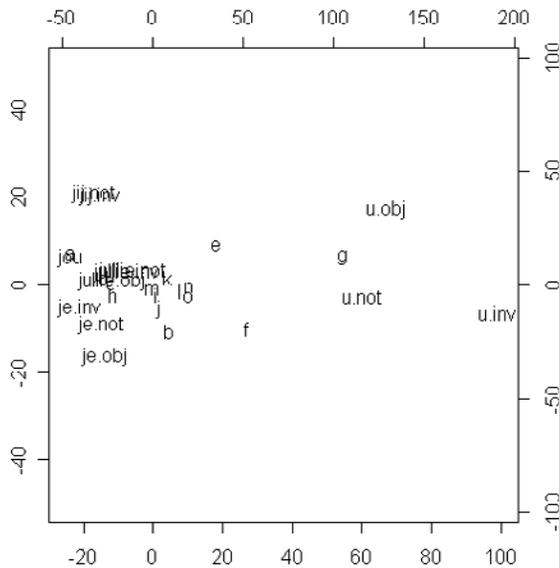


Figure 1. Register variation in the Netherlands

The difference with the situation in Flanders is clear (Figure 2), if only for the presence of the G-system. More specifically, the three systems of address, the U-system, the J-system, and the G-system, neatly fall into three distinct clusters. The G-forms are associated with the colloquial and spontaneous registers “a” (face-to-face conversations), “c” (telephone dialogues recorded via a switchboard), and “d” (telephone dialogues recorded via local interface). The U-forms are again associated with the more formal registers “f” (broadcast interviews, discussions & debates), “g” (non-broadcast discussions, debates & meetings), but this time also with “b” (interviews with Dutch teachers). The J-forms are associated with registers that involve more monitored speech, viz. “h” (lessons) and “o” (read text). The correlations of the other components with specific word forms and/or systems are less outspoken. They, therefore, reside neutrally in the middle of the plot. Moreover, the three clusters do not fall on a single line, but rather exhibit a triangular structure. Given the positions of the 14 components in the plane, the horizontal axis of the plot can be said to differentiate between colloquial conversation on the one hand in which the endogenous G-system is still employed, and the formal registers on the other that require polite forms of address. The vertical axis, which accounts for the deviant behaviour of the J-system, constitutes a range from spontaneous to monitored speech. In this respect, one might wonder why component b (interviews with Dutch teachers) is a polite style in Flanders, but not in the Nether-

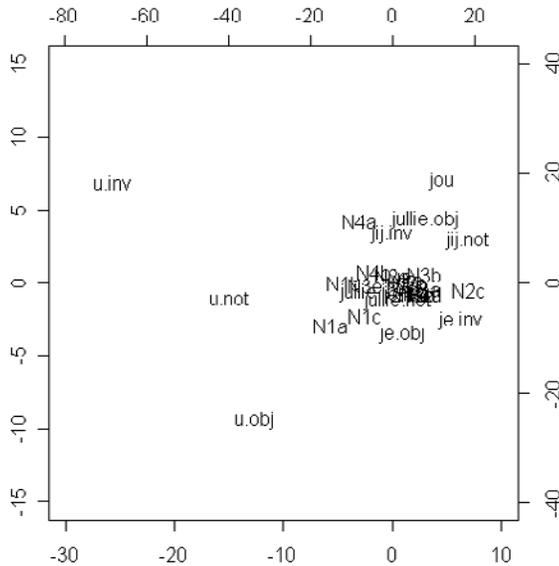


Figure 3. Regional variation in the Netherlands

regions nowadays use more or less the same set of words, but use them differently. The Brabantian region (V1) uses the Brabantian D-forms *-de* and *-degij* more than the G- or J-forms. The Limburgian province (V4) typically relies on the G-forms. The West-Flemish situation (V3), finally, is somewhat more complex. Some dialects in West-Flanders originally possessed J-forms. These are then homonymous to the exogenic, Hollandic, adopted variants, and as such are nearly indistinguishable from them. Consequently, the frequency of the J-forms in West Flanders cannot be said to prove that West-Flanders would be more standardised than the other regions. On the contrary, West-Flanders appears to be quite identical to Brabant and Limburg with regard to its use of dialectal forms. The only region that has a somewhat even distribution of all forms is – quite fitting for a transitional zone – the province of East-Flanders (V2), which is positioned in the middle of the plot. Furthermore, it seems that the grammatical function of *inverted subject forms* is most sensitive to these dialectal differences, hence the so-called “exceptions” in the plot. This finding is in line with previous research on enclitic pronouns, such as that by both Stroop (1987) and De Schutter (1989), for instance. From a dialectological viewpoint, these studies discovered the enclitic position to be more prone to dialectal resistance. Finally, the significant use of polite *u* in Brabant is again attributable to the Brabantian working student in component “b.”

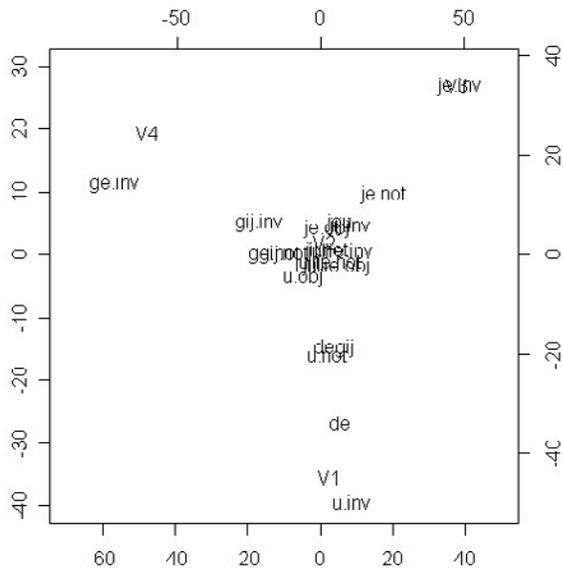


Figure 4. Regional variation in Flanders

6.3 Age

The following analysis of the factor age reveals some similarities between the Netherlands and Flanders.

In both countries, there is a generation gap from the decade of “1970–79” onwards, in that these speakers tend to use the familiar forms more often in addressing each other than the previous generations. In fact, young speakers barely seem to make the distinction between familiar and polite anymore, but instead use the familiar forms as generic forms of address. The explanation for this change probably involves the cultural revolutions at the end of the 1960s – in May 1968 – to be more precise. It is well-known that this date marked the end of a hierarchically structured society in which social distances had been very strict. The aftermath of this revolutionary period has consisted in large-scale dehierarchisation and informalisation, the net effect of which is the fact that social relations have been loosened and have become closer. Linguistically, this change has manifested itself in an increase in the use of familiar forms for address. This can be particularly seen in the Netherlands, for instance, where the polite U-forms only occupy a marginal position today.

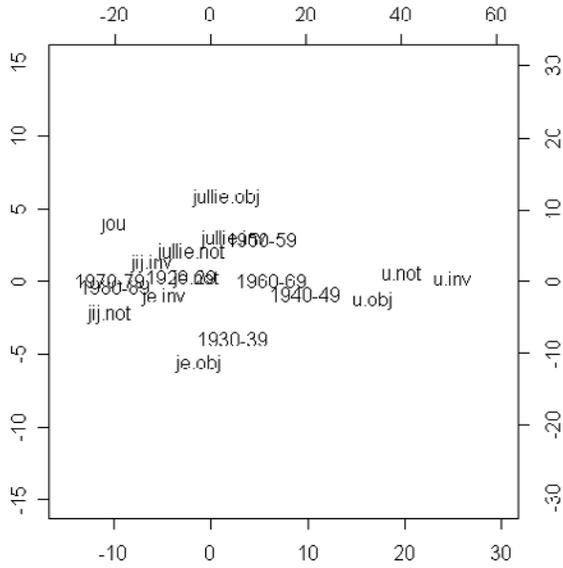


Figure 5. Age variation in the Netherlands

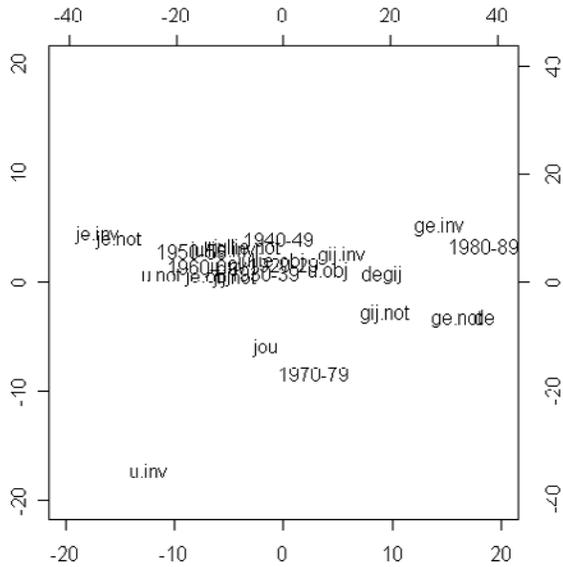


Figure 6. Age variation in Flanders

The difference between Flanders and the Netherlands lies in the choice of the particular system to embody this colloquialisation of communication. The plots show that younger speakers in the Netherlands have chosen the J-system (Figure 5), whereas in Flanders, they have chosen the G-system (Figure 6).

6.4 Sex

The distinction of male versus female speakers also seems to indicate a difference between the Netherlands and Flanders. In the plot for the Netherlands (Figure 7), we see that female speakers use the familiar forms almost exclusively, whereas male speakers tend to alternate between familiar and polite forms.

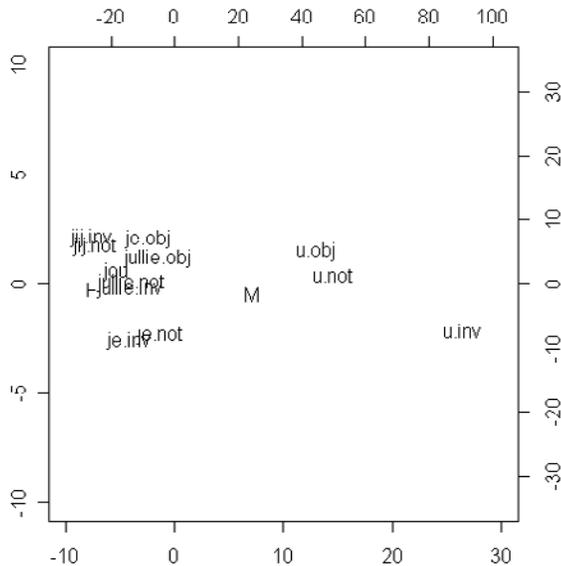


Figure 7. Sex variation in the Netherlands

Such a distinction seems absent from Flanders (Figure 8) at first sight. Both female and male speakers appear to employ familiar and polite forms on an equal par: “u.inv” and “jij.inv” are used by women, while “je.not” and “u.not” are used by men.

However, we have already mentioned that the polite U-forms tend to be used in very formal registers such as the political components “f” (broadcast interviews, discussions & debates) and “g” (non-broadcast discussions, debates & meetings) – and for Flanders, also “b” (interviews with Dutch teachers). Furthermore, it is well-known that politics nowadays is still very male-dominated.

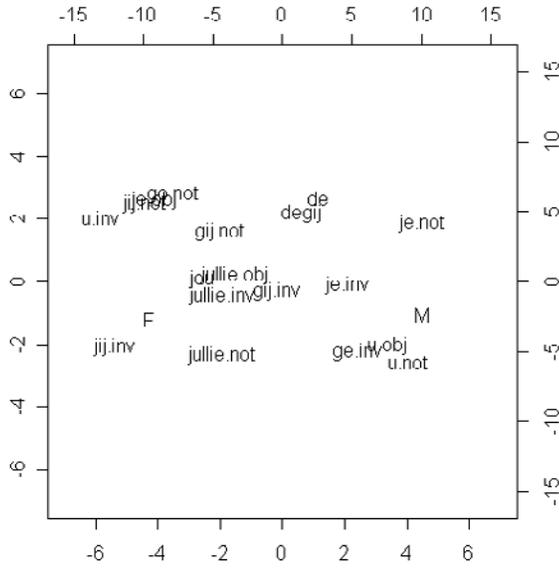


Figure 8. Sex variation in Flanders

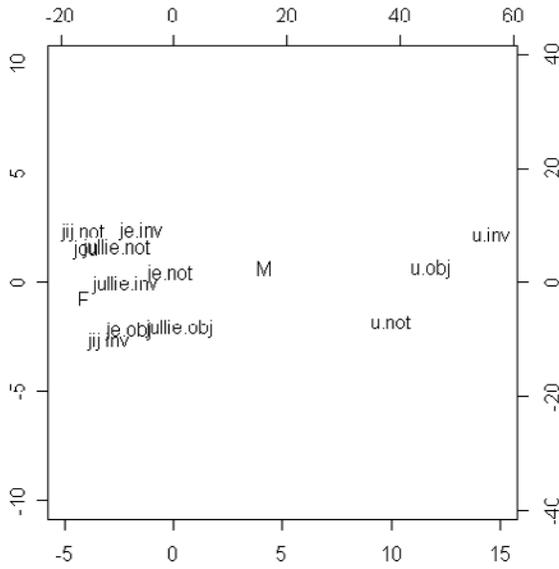


Figure 9. Sex variation in the Netherlands without components “b,” “f,” and “g”

One might even conjecture that for familiar speech there is a difference in the choice of particular system. In the plot, the J-forms seem to be more in the vicinity of the female speakers, with the G-forms nearer to the male speakers. It is not obvious, however, whether this difference is significant.²

6.5 Educational & occupational level

Educational level again exhibits some similarities between the Netherlands and Flanders. The only real difference is the fact that the plots mirror each other (which is a computational side effect of correspondence analysis).

In both plots, educational level “high” (edu1) is associated with the polite forms, “middle” (edu2) with the familiar forms, and “low” (edu3) being somewhere in-between. The difference between both countries lies in the usage of “je.not” and “je.inv.” In Flanders, these forms are also used by speakers with educational level “high” (Figure 12), whereas in the Netherlands, they are not (Figure 11).

Nevertheless, we need to be aware of the influence of political debates and the like, in which the use of the U-forms is conventional. The participants in speech situations of this kind – viz. politicians – typically belong to the higher educated, at least in the CGN corpus. As a consequence, these registers can skew the association between polite *u* and educational level “high.” If we again drop components “b” (interviews with Dutch teachers), “f” (broadcast interviews, discussions & debates) and “g” (non-broadcast discussions, debates & meetings), we see that the higher educated loose their ties with the U-forms in the Netherlands (Figure 13). The same holds for Flanders (Figure 14). The reduced subjective J-forms (*je*), however, retain their outlying position in the plot.

Analysis of the occupational level suggests the explanation for this behaviour. The plot for Flanders (Figure 15) reveals the *u*-subjects and *je*-subjects to be associated with two different social groups. The polite forms remain the territory of politicians (“occG”). The forms “je.not” and “je.inv,” on the other hand, are employed by academics (“occC”). Both groups belong among the higher educated and, therefore, both have a “high” educational level. The more fine-grained coding scheme of occupational level, by contrast, discriminates between the two groups and their linguistic practice.

The Netherlandic plot only confirms the earlier results on educational level (Figure 16): the two highest levels use the polite forms more often.

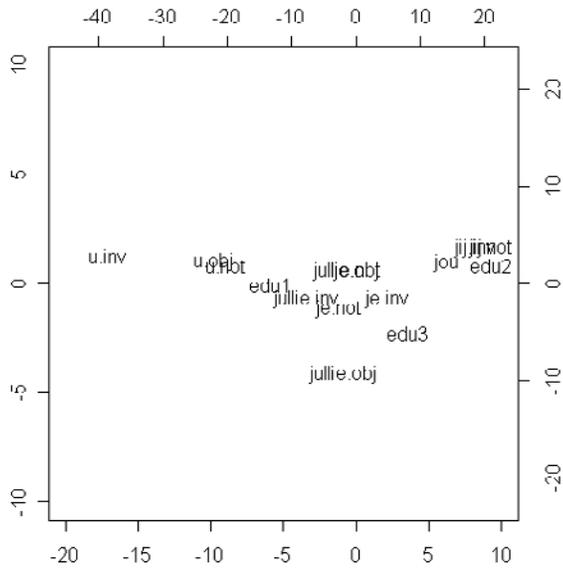


Figure 11. Educational variation in the Netherlands

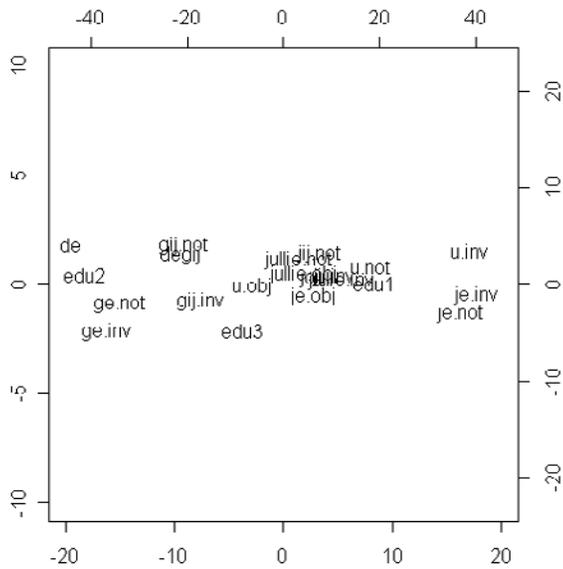


Figure 12. Educational variation in Flanders

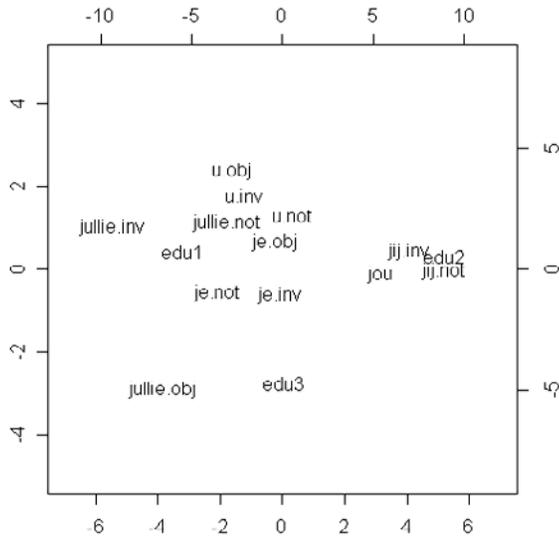


Figure 13. Educational variation in the Netherlands without components “b,” “f,” and “g”

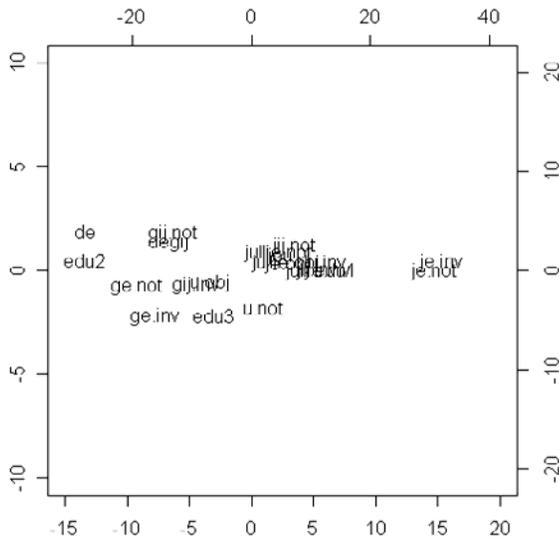


Figure 14. Educational variation in Flanders without components “b,” “f,” and “g”

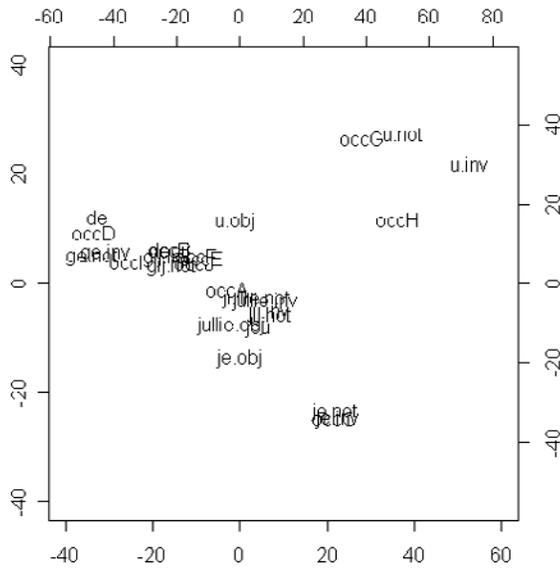


Figure 15. Occupational variation in Flanders

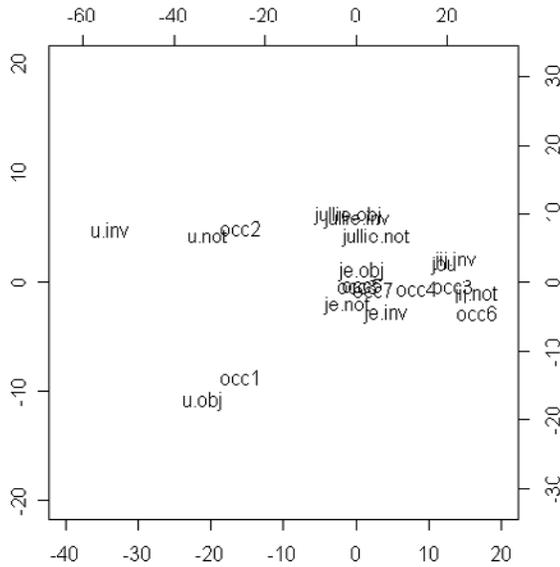


Figure 16. Occupational variation in the Netherlands

7. Conclusion

In this study, we compared the Netherlands and Flanders concerning their use of the pronouns of address. With the exception of two dialectal regions, it was found on the whole that the Netherlands is more uniform than Flanders. Stylistic variation, for instance, is unidimensional in the Netherlands, whereas it comprises two dimensions in Flanders. The first axis was found to discriminate between colloquial and polite style, whereas the second axis distinguished spontaneous from monitored speech. Furthermore, there is little regional variation in the Netherlands, while the Flemish regions show profound differences. The social stratification in both countries is remarkably similar, however. The Netherlands as well as Flanders exhibit a generation gap that seems to have started in the late 1960s: when social distances became closer, speech became more colloquial accordingly. In both countries, there is also a clear sex difference, in that women use the familiar forms, while men move between familiar and polite forms. With regards to the education and occupation of the speakers, those with the higher levels occasionally still make use of the polite forms in specific circumstances. For the lower levels, the use of the polite forms is rare in the corpus studied here.

What can be concluded, given these insights, about the status of *tussentaal*? In sum, *tussentaal* is shown to be a colloquial variety that is particularly employed among the post-'68 generation, regardless of sex and social level. Although women may act in accordance with norms somewhat more than men, this difference is not firmly established. Furthermore, while it is indeed true that polite speech is still popular among the higher educated, our corpus attributes this to the formal style in which politicians express themselves. Upon removal of the political speech situations, the effect disappeared. An effect that could not be neglected, on the other hand, is the clear difference in age. When dehierarchisation of society set in during the 1970s, accompanied by a colloquialisation of speech, young people in Belgium did not choose the Standard Dutch J-forms, but opted instead for the endogenic and sub-standard G-forms. Finally, the analysis of register revealed these G-forms to be typical for spontaneous and colloquial speech.

We end on a methodological remark. Our analyses conducted thus far have only treated each of the sociolinguistic factors individually. We did not study their simultaneous effects. However, it is clear that these factors interact, as indeed we have seen in the case of register, sex and educational and/or occupational level, for instance. We have tried to compensate for these problems, but only in a rather ad-hoc fashion. The next step necessitates incorporating all factors into one global model. This can be done by means of such statistical techniques as multiple correspondence analysis as well as loglinear analysis. Only in this way can we obtain a truly overall picture of the pronouns of address in Dutch.

Notes

1. There is a slight subtlety regarding the calculation of χ^2_{WITHIN} . Remember that the Chi-Square distance is $(O - E)^2 / E$ where O is the observed frequency count and E is the expected frequency count according to the well-known formula $E = (\text{row-total} * \text{column-total}) / \text{table-total}$. Computation of χ^2_{WITHIN} , then, requires the expected frequency E in the *numerator* $(O - E)^2$ to be obtained by taking the product of the row total and column total in the particular *sub-table*. The E in the *denominator*, however, is computed by taking the product of the row and column total from the global, *unpartitioned* table. This is necessary in order to standardise the variation that possibly exists between the sub-tables.
2. An interesting question in this respect concerns the extent to which female speakers comply with the official norms differently than male speakers. This is a long-standing topic in the sociolinguistic research on gender, an overview of which can be found in Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003).

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Appendix

This appendix lists all 16 contingency tables that constituted the input for the correspondence analyses, in the order in which these appeared in the text.

Table A.1. Register variation in the Netherlands

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o
je.inv	22902	3553	9436	6891	1383	5705	683	5880	360	953	16	534	70	613	2355
je.not	5908	1097	2685	1621	539	2086	174	1814	122	348	5	160	31	205	960
je.obj	1076	192	725	360	258	397	19	337	16	64	1	39	11	16	607
jij.inv	2329	86	909	580	320	238	1	394	12	19	4	12	2	5	261
jij.not	1499	20	533	359	246	165	1	226	9	14	0	5	0	2	170
jou	1077	36	619	418	256	120	2	175	8	11	0	9	0	3	180
jullie.inv	656	23	277	202	70	134	1	331	2	15	0	13	17	4	145
jullie.not	269	19	143	86	60	75	1	157	2	8	0	4	7	1	66
jullie.obj	244	7	172	88	113	33	0	225	1	4	1	18	12	0	58
u.inv	300	447	161	35	518	1342	787	87	27	92	6	84	5	98	459
u.not	106	94	352	29	307	853	355	36	23	51	4	67	6	68	253
u.obj	79	20	37	17	228	223	422	26	4	9	7	52	3	77	198

Table A.2. Register variation in Flanders

	a	b	c	d	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o
de	1261	12	1435	851	39	4	17	0	0	1	0	0	54	1
degij	255	6	395	245	7	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	4	1
ge.inv	3654	49	1770	1417	209	62	205	6	30	12	20	1	252	47
ge.not	2240	48	1590	1162	144	23	73	4	7	3	14	1	160	36
gij.inv	529	11	455	340	10	10	26	0	2	0	13	0	67	16
gij.not	428	2	349	288	11	9	21	0	0	1	10	0	3	18
je.obj	97	76	42	31	48	2	62	6	7	3	13	2	30	346
je.inv	3650	2231	1086	765	1069	65	1370	97	200	33	172	24	481	1122
je.not	1150	701	262	160	449	9	439	38	61	14	62	15	188	380
jij.inv	284	41	85	47	77	0	97	2	2	0	7	0	7	109

Table A.2. Register variation in Flanders – continued

jij.not	152	20	35	27	42	0	41	1	2	1	5	0	6	53
jou	117	21	47	32	65	3	20	0	0	1	3	0	11	69
jullie.inv	111	25	44	53	62	5	82	3	9	1	1	6	21	38
jullie.not	47	4	12	14	27	1	47	0	7	0	1	1	11	21
jullie.obj	56	7	44	47	18	4	68	1	2	0	2	5	14	20
u.obj	588	152	686	552	262	418	122	18	39	25	41	22	121	107
u.inv	95	1458	43	91	650	468	41	72	97	47	83	11	59	153
u.not	81	324	119	101	443	225	16	42	79	22	36	12	48	44

Table A.3. Regional variation in the Netherlands

	N1a	N1b	N1c	N2a	N2b	N2c	N2d	N2e	N2f	N3a	N3b	N3c	N3d	N3e	N4a	N4b
je.inv	7559	6040	2195	1985	1743	8686	2657	820	73	2209	3131	1314	2263	743	8481	3041
je.not	2463	1896	662	545	510	2032	687	214	17	550	808	361	761	208	2298	927
je.obj	568	509	126	108	139	437	142	52	9	129	201	86	167	30	429	254
jij.inv	600	543	185	139	203	619	195	73	4	206	354	93	196	68	793	270
jij.not	379	305	115	111	111	474	107	59	7	134	211	49	119	27	426	195
jou	299	309	79	94	96	423	98	46	4	88	165	50	81	41	487	154
jullie.inv	250	185	87	62	69	198	95	51	6	67	74	64	73	19	284	116
jullie.not	126	76	45	28	32	83	33	28	1	30	35	38	41	8	114	50
jullie.obj	81	89	27	41	23	93	48	19	2	27	46	36	41	7	165	54
u.inv	596	495	148	91	54	148	77	50	0	46	93	31	56	66	732	231
u.not	314	278	75	30	46	88	29	21	2	33	48	9	22	37	220	116
u.obj	262	144	92	26	19	54	27	14	0	17	36	14	17	26	108	50

Table A.4. Regional variation in Flanders

	V1	V2	V3	V4
de	1878	1262	312	170
degij	527	242	101	44
ge.inv	2314	1538	494	3120
ge.not	1856	1631	828	1067
gij.inv	415	340	164	481
gij.not	394	316	142	275
je.obj	237	142	203	134
je.inv	3305	2881	4546	1259
je.not	1201	947	1316	336
jij.inv	228	174	256	80
jij.not	129	111	94	43
jou	107	83	137	51
jullie.inv	169	96	136	45
jullie.not	79	41	49	16
jullie.obj	126	53	76	22
u.obj	1177	851	458	547
u.inv	2381	397	372	124
u.not	883	281	226	126

Table A.5. Age variation in the Netherlands

	1920–29	1930–39	1940–49	1950–59	1960–69	1970–79	1980–89
je.inv	2192	3458	9981	9551	7922	17788	6340
je.not	681	1090	3168	2941	2460	4444	1557
je.obj	136	404	734	658	543	957	369
jij.inv	228	306	709	874	664	1596	596
jij.not	111	234	455	505	416	981	416
jou	102	176	412	522	372	836	363
jullie.inv	65	86	358	360	242	515	186
jullie.not	31	47	146	173	128	237	100
jullie.obj	40	55	169	242	129	222	63
u.inv	79	238	907	730	699	659	110
u.not	25	134	476	410	385	201	50
u.obj	29	130	330	290	186	80	23

Table A.6. Age variation in Flanders

	1920–29	1930–39	1940–49	1950–59	1960–69	1970–79	1980–89
de	15	178	515	332	562	1456	588
degij	2	25	162	99	139	338	151
ge.inv	83	375	1416	1147	945	2688	976
ge.not	55	377	1001	614	764	1925	720
gij.inv	20	62	208	254	218	500	196
gij.not	19	43	166	119	182	422	171
je.obj	12	59	103	202	148	181	19
je.inv	111	703	2109	2090	2505	3987	623
je.not	46	264	835	791	749	1056	101
jij.inv	6	43	142	121	162	237	30
jij.not	0	18	74	68	91	105	13
jou	3	12	67	60	69	158	8
jullie.inv	2	34	71	90	113	118	20
jullie.not	2	18	30	35	59	31	12
jullie.obj	0	14	63	48	78	58	22
u.obj	48	221	580	550	552	851	298
u.inv	12	174	399	538	576	1603	17
u.not	19	93	249	352	351	442	40

Table A.7. Sex variation in the Netherlands

	M	F
je.inv	31357	29551
je.not	9699	7941
je.obj	2127	1964
jij.inv	2419	2725
jij.not	1589	1648
jou	1415	1481
jullie.inv	897	984
jullie.not	438	456
jullie.obj	503	473
u.inv	3176	1218
u.not	1627	678
u.obj	987	397

Table A.8. Sex variation in Flanders

	M	F
de	1719	1945
degij	433	489
ge.inv	3643	4050
ge.not	2613	2880
gij.inv	676	801
gij.not	535	604
je.obj	328	437
je.inv	5792	6553
je.not	2101	1823
jij.inv	274	483
jij.not	149	236
jou	170	219
jullie.inv	191	269
jullie.not	83	110
jullie.obj	132	156
u.obj	1675	1468
u.inv	1377	1987
u.not	860	701

Table A.9. Sex variation in the Netherlands without components “b”, “f”, and “g”

	M	F
je.inv	24235	26739
je.not	7313	6973
je.obj	1723	1760
jij.inv	2204	2615
jij.not	1450	1601
jou	1297	1442
jullie.inv	780	943
jullie.not	373	426
jullie.obj	484	452
u.inv	1197	648
u.not	682	337
u.obj	536	198

Table A.10. Sex variation in Flanders without components “b”, “f”, and “g”

	M	F
de	1679	1930
degij	422	487
ge.inv	3421	3952
ge.not	2436	2842
gij.inv	648	798
gij.not	517	600
je.obj	261	378
je.inv	3959	5020
je.not	1359	1406
jij.inv	220	419
jij.not	111	212
jou	120	180
jullie.inv	137	231
jullie.not	62	99
jullie.obj	119	140
u.obj	1110	1203
u.inv	521	269
u.not	351	218

Table A.11. Educational variation in the Netherlands

	edu1	edu2	edu3
je.inv	41858	12955	1917
je.not	12343	3328	467
je.obj	2701	913	111
jij.inv	3386	1346	174
jij.not	2100	857	99
jou	1854	801	96
jullie.inv	1410	349	56
jullie.not	654	176	20
jullie.obj	675	191	48
u.inv	2805	368	39
u.not	1328	199	18
u.obj	886	136	9

Table A.12. Educational variation in Flanders

	edu1	edu2	edu3
de	2599	983	63
degij	660	246	14
ge.inv	5852	1659	159
ge.not	4115	1233	131
gij.inv	1116	326	30
gij.not	828	290	20
je.obj	600	82	9
je.inv	10768	1156	128
je.not	3539	231	56
jij.inv	655	68	6
jij.not	335	37	2
jou	330	42	3
jullie.inv	412	29	3
jullie.not	161	23	1
jullie.obj	246	34	2
u.obj	2516	550	45
u.inv	3148	171	13
u.not	1407	132	17

Table A.13. Educational variation in the Netherlands without components “b”, “f”, “g”

	edu1	edu2	edu3
je.inv	34349	12767	1903
je.not	9851	3265	464
je.obj	2288	904	111
jij.inv	3160	1343	174
jij.not	1987	854	99
jou	1746	795	96
jullie.inv	1284	344	56
jullie.not	588	175	20
jullie.obj	654	191	48
u.inv	930	320	37
u.not	484	173	16
u.obj	374	127	8

Table A.14. Educational variation in Flanders without components “b”, “f”, “g”

	edu1	edu2	edu3
de	2556	972	62
degij	647	246	14
ge.inv	5612	1583	155
ge.not	3930	1206	129
gij.inv	1086	325	30
gij.not	807	289	20
je.obj	478	81	6
je.inv	7539	1070	95
je.not	2437	201	34
jij.inv	542	63	6
jij.not	274	36	2
jou	243	41	2
jullie.inv	325	27	3
jullie.not	135	19	1
jullie.obj	219	32	2
u.obj	1751	492	43
u.inv	675	77	6
u.not	458	90	16

Table A.15. Occupational variation in Flanders

	occA	occB	occC	occD	occE	occF	occG	occH	occI	occJ
de	119	209	953	1236	52	82	8	119	749	80
degij	26	47	244	321	7	30	1	34	186	19
ge.inv	215	448	2809	2091	58	134	75	209	1250	149
ge.not	214	377	1642	1616	52	135	37	161	965	147
gij.inv	49	128	469	436	17	29	1	59	239	27
gij.not	28	81	320	339	6	29	3	58	233	29
je.obj	14	8	365	130	0	1	2	90	68	1
je.inv	332	245	7204	1463	5	66	194	1079	1083	88
je.not	121	80	2487	328	4	17	58	427	177	19
jij.inv	21	8	413	88	0	8	3	103	73	3
jij.not	16	0	211	36	0	1	0	67	30	2
jou	14	1	178	50	0	3	0	89	35	0
jullie.inv	17	5	241	62	0	2	3	71	32	3
jullie.not	5	4	98	26	0	1	3	28	14	0
jullie.obj	15	19	137	49	0	0	2	31	27	2
u.obj	110	176	878	647	14	56	361	358	364	53
u.inv	60	29	1685	136	3	15	447	854	26	8
u.not	37	26	487	120	3	10	257	525	49	5

Table A.16. Occupational variation in the Netherlands

	occ1	occ2	occ3	occ4	occ5	occ6	occ7	occ8
je.inv	3159	28345	8360	4757	19	12021	583	6
je.not	1100	8678	2157	1224	3	2881	139	0
je.obj	158	1696	468	438	5	580	22	1
jij.inv	129	2116	830	575	1	1118	33	0
jij.not	94	1265	475	396	1	754	12	0
jou	49	1140	492	356	2	584	27	0
jullie.inv	46	950	253	118	0	336	10	0
jullie.not	19	450	127	62	0	147	7	0
jullie.obj	13	521	123	102	0	117	18	0
u.inv	366	2530	175	156	0	203	8	0
u.not	176	1309	70	107	0	97	0	0
u.obj	193	589	40	85	0	44	4	0

The pragmatics of a pluricentric language

A comparison between Austrian German and German German

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1. Introduction

German is a so-called “pluricentric” language, as it is the state or co-state language in several countries. There are, of course, differences not only on the level of the lexicon, pronunciation and grammar, but also in language usage, within each country. The individual and collective language situation in pluricentric languages is usually split between two forces: Maintaining communication across borders and developing and maintaining a distinct language identity. The latter is under pressure from the economy and local elites who usually argue for little or no differences to the (standard) variety of other countries sharing the same language. So far little attention has been paid to the pragmatic differences between national language cultures within a pluricentric language as it is commonly assumed that language and culture are congruent across different countries. The main objective of this paper is to show that this assumption has to be revised due to substantial differences between the pragmatics of the two national varieties of German.

The description of pragmatic features of language use in Austria and Germany can be divided into two categories: (1) macropragmatic and (2) micropragmatic features. Category (1) deals with norms of public discourse on a very abstract pragmatic level, usually called “cultural standards” (Thomas 1988, 1993, 1996 and Thomas et al. 2003). The data of category (2) are pragmatic features of discourse on the level of personal communication and interaction between ordinary speakers of a given language community.

2. Macropragmatic features and cultural standards of public discourse in Austria and Germany in comparison

The term “macropragmatics” subsumes all those features of public discourse in which large social groups, e.g. political parties, unions, associations and pressure groups, engage and also the general cultural standards which act as unspoken underlying premises for behaving in a given society. This also embraces the important question of how conflicts and contradictory interests between the main social groups of a society are dealt with. Included in this field is also the interaction between different organisational levels of large firms and institutions. Macropragmatics then, as used in this paper, primarily deals with general cultural norms – the so called “cultural standards” – of a given society in a given country. Austria and Germany show some basic differences in this field. The concept of cultural standards adopted in this paper is that of Thomas (cf. Thomas 1991, 1993, Thomas et al. 2003). It has been used widely to investigate cultural differences in business relations in multinational firms and in the training of managers who work in inter-cultural contexts. For an excellent survey of this concept and its use in management theory, cf. Gulyanska (2005). Cultural standards, as they are understood in this paper, are, thus, defined as follows:

Unter Kulturstandards werden alle Arten des Wahrnehmens und Denkens, Wertens und Handelns verstanden, die von der Mehrzahl der Mitglieder einer Kultur für sich persönlich und andere als normal, selbstverständlich, typisch und verbindlich angesehen werden. Eigenes und fremdes Verhalten wird auf der Grundlage dieser Kulturstandards beurteilt und reguliert. Als zentrale Kulturstandards sind solche zu bezeichnen, die in sehr unterschiedlichen Situationen wirksam werden und weite Bereiche der Wahrnehmung, des Denkens, Wertens und Handelns regulieren, und die insbesondere für die Steuerung der Wahrnehmungs-, Beurteilungs-, und Handlungsprozesse zwischen Personen wirksam sind.

(Thomas 1993: 381)

(‘By cultural standards, we mean all those ways of perception and thinking, evaluating and acting which a majority of the members of a culture consider as normal, natural, typical and binding. The assessment and regulation of one’s own behaviour and that of others is based on cultural standards. Central cultural standards are those which take effect in different situations and which regulate large areas of perception, thinking, assessing and acting. These are standards which are particularly effective in controlling processes of perception, assessment and action between individuals.’)¹

2.1 Cultural standard I: Identity and national pride – Historical parallels and discontinuities between Austria and Germany

The level of self-esteem and self-assurance of a nation and its individuals is in many ways connected to historical experiences and key events that are saved in a collective memory. This, in turn, can be assumed to be an important cultural

standard and an essential factor in shaping language behaviour in general and the use of specific features in discourse in particular. National pride and self-assurance might not seem to be pragmatic features at first glance. It should, however, be taken into account that self-assurance and a high amount of self-esteem have a considerable influence on the amount of indirectness – directness and on the amount of person-orientation versus goal-/object-orientation used in discourse. A low amount of national pride and self-esteem, together with traumatic historical experiences stored in collective memory, usually leads to a high amount of indirectness and person-orientation in discourse behaviour. This will be shown in detail below.

Austria suffered a particularly cruel experience in the 20th century, being involved in two World Wars, one civil war (1934) and two fascist regimes in a period of only 31 years. Furthermore, it was reduced from a European empire (Austro-Hungarian Empire) to a small and politically insignificant country, which disappeared from the map for seven years (1938–1945), to find itself isolated next to the Iron Curtain. Germany has also suffered from two World Wars. It was split into two countries, but still remained, and soon regained its position as an important economic and political player in Europe and in the world. Austria and Germany share the memories of two World Wars which differentiates them from Switzerland.

Table 1. National pride in three German speaking countries (Source: Plasser & Ulram 1993: 40)

	Austria	Germany	Switzerland
very proud	53%	21%	31%
rather proud	35%	45%	40%
<i>total</i>	88%	66%	71%

Table 1 shows data from opinion polls which have been conducted regularly ever since 1959. The figures in Table 1 show that 53% (88% includes “very proud” and “rather proud answers”) of all Austrians, 31% (71%) of all Swiss, but only 21% (66%) of Germans are very proud of their country.² The positive attitude of Austrians towards their country is a relatively new phenomenon. In 1959, when the opinion poll was conducted for the first time, only 50% of the population believed that Austria was an independent state. Hofstede (1991) points out that a high amount of national pride is typical for young democracies. This applies to Austria because a true sense of democracy and self-assurance in Austria developed only in the “Second Republic” which was constituted in 1945. Social scientists (cf. Haller & Gruber 1996b: 463) explain the high scores of the Swiss (an “old-date” democracy) by their economical success, which is connected with a high amount of self-assurance. The low scores of the Germans are influenced by national shame over the Third Reich.

There are also differences in content: Austrian national pride is mainly based on the beauty of the country, the high standard of living, political stability and political neutrality, the latter which has been seen as a shield against

dangerous political involvement. The strong orientation towards economical success, which is typical for Germany and Switzerland (and in the case of Switzerland connected with a high amount of work ethic³), seems strange to Austrians. Even though Austria is quite successful economically, and has been more successful since 2000 than either Germany or Switzerland, this is no real source for self-assurance. At present, Austrian self-esteem is mainly shaped by the fact that the country has survived the catastrophes during the first half of the 20th century and that it has since developed steadily for the better, leading to a high standard of living. Austrians show a rather low amount of self-assurance and tend to criticise their country in almost ritual ways – an attitude which was widespread, and also a dominant feature of Austrian literature, in the second half of the 20th century. This phenomenon has been called “austro-masochism.” It is a reaction to hegemonic structures of the state and attempts to deny the ugly involvement during the Nazi regime.

Swiss national pride is based on their system of (direct) democracy, high standard of living, political neutrality and the beauty of the country (cf. Melich 1991: 8).

German patriotism and national pride is low, rather distanced (especially in the elites) and “unemotional” (Plasser & Ulram 1993: 40). Central to German identity and self-assurance is economic success since World War II and a sound political constitution since 1949. It is therefore called “constitutional law-patriotism.” This goes along with a high amount of self-assurance and strong goal-oriented attitude which non-Germans often perceive as arrogant. The reluctant forms of German patriotism can be interpreted as a reaction to the bad experiences with the exaggerated nationalism before 1945 and the strong self-assurance as a compensation for this.⁴

The strong patriotism of Austrians (and Swiss) seems strange and exaggerated to other nations. Taking a closer look at these attitudes, we can see that patriotism in Germany is an attitude favoured by the political right wing parties, whereas in Austria patriotism is an attitude linked to the re-erection of Austria after the end of World War II and the stimulating “myth of the second republic” (Haller & Gruber 1996b: 463). It serves as a means of demonstrative delimitation from Germany and as a defence against home-bred Germanic-minded nationalism of the extreme right (cf. Plasser & Ulram 1993: 39) which persists in pan-Germanic ideology.

Swiss patriotism is self-assured and determined, whereas Austrian patriotism is rather “quietist” (Bruckmüller 1984: 198) and reserved. Military parades, emphasising national glory and showing demonstrative pride are considered strange and archaic. The national holiday is celebrated as a national field day, with people going on cross-country walks. Subdued demonstrations of national identity may be due to confusion about the nature of this identity. For several decades after 1945, Austrians felt inferior to Germany as this country developed so much better after World War II. This feeling has been gradually changing since the late 1990s. Trompenaars’ (1993) wide scale study of 14,000 managers in 47 countries found a large difference in the factor “extrinsic orientation” between Austria and (West) Germany (56:40 points). This shows that

Austrians tend(ed) to look at Germany as a model but not vice versa. In the light of economic difficulties in Germany since the mid-1990s, the German media have begun to portray Austria as a model for Germany, a fact which has been noticed with surprise in Austria.

2.2 Cultural standard II: The role of the German language for national and individual identity

Austria shares the German language with Germany and Switzerland. German is the official language in Austria and Germany, while Switzerland has four national languages. Furthermore, Austria and Germany have a long common history as part of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (which was led for 700 years by the Habsburg emperors), as members of the German federation (1815–1864) and as part of the Third Reich. Although the German language is the state language in Austria and Germany, it is only in Germany that German plays a decisive role for German national and individual identity. For Austrians, German is one characteristic among others that creates their national and individual identity. And it is not just “German,” but “Austrian German,” which has become more and more the symbol of Austrian linguistic identity. In addition, the idea that Austria might be considered a German state has been rejected vigorously in Austria ever since 1945, because accepting this would once again question the country’s independence (cf. Zöllner 1988: 94). Equally disliked is the proposal that Austrians are “Germans” because of their shared mother tongue. This is difficult to understand for Germans and Swiss Germans. Indeed, Haller & Gruber (1996a: 69–70), in their study about the dimensions of Austrian nationality, showed that Austrians’ concept of nationality is “multi-dimensional” as it is neither completely based on the idea of a state-nation, nor on the concept of a pure “ethnic-nation.”

Table 2. Data on Austrian national identity (Source: Haller & Gruber 1996a)

What nationality do you feel you belong to?		Is Austria a nation of its own?	
Austrian	89%	yes	87%
German/German Austrian	9%	by and by	9%
other	2%	no	4%

Contrary to the Austrian concept of identity, Germans base their identity primarily on their national language. The German language has played a decisive role in the history of Germany as it was the only bond during the time of German sectionalism (17th–19th century) when the German-speaking area was split into almost 400 territories. For Germans, the German language symbolises the unity of the country and its people. It is no coincidence that Herder ([1772] 2001) brought forward the idea that nations are basically founded on ethnic principles as he and his contemporaries had suffered from the political sectionalism of their time. The Austrian-Hungarian Empire of the Habsburg emperors,

on the other hand, was a multinational conglomerate which prevented the development of a national identity on the basis of a single common language.

Due to these differences, the German concept of national identity, based on the German language, has caused constant irritations on both sides. Austrians complain, for instance, that German institutions take advantage of their literature by using the term “German literature” and not “Austrian literature.” The German reaction is distinguished by incomprehension because for them, anyone who speaks or writes in his German mother tongue is considered German. A TV program by the German ZDF TV station in 2003/2004 aiming to find the “most famous Germans of all times” caused further irritation because they included personalities like Freud and Haydn who had been born and spent the most part of their lives in Austria.

Irritation is also caused by the fact that German German speakers have difficulties to accept the idea that another norm of German – Austrian German – is equal to their variety. Most Germans think of Austrian German in terms of a “dialect” and so ignore the fact that it is the language of a sovereign country. One of the effects of this attitude is a split in the language attitudes of Austrians who sometimes show a tendency to adapt to the German German norms and to be hypercorrect in their use of language. According to Clyne (1992), this is typical for the language behaviour of non-dominating varieties of pluricentric languages in general and for their elite in particular. The effect of this ambiguity in language attitudes can be felt in the pragmatics of Austrian and German discourse behaviour (cf. Muhr 1995). Austrians tend to use several norms in conversation and to switch between different varieties even within small sections of an utterance. They differentiate strongly between the norms of everyday and public language and have to cope with the irresolvable gap between the exogenous norms of written language and the endogenous norms of everyday spoken language. German German speakers, on the other hand, have a clear idea about which norms are considered “correct” and, therefore, only use one norm with little variance between public and everyday contexts.

2.3 Cultural standard III: Collective and individual self-esteem vs. uncertainty avoidance

2.3.1. *Uncertainty avoidance as a central factor for coping with reality*

The collective trauma, resulting from all the catastrophes during the first half of the 20th century, caused deep uncertainty, high anxiety and a strong desire for uncertainty avoidance in both Austria and Germany. Indeed, Hofstede (1984: 122, 1991: 11) in his famous investigation of cultural norms of 50 countries, found that Austria showed a high “uncertainty avoidance index” (UAI). Austria was ranked 24th, while Germany was five ranks lower at the 29th place. These results coincide with the findings of Lynn’s (1971, 1982) studies of 18 developed countries using official health statistics. In this study, Austria scored on top of the “anxiety factor scale.” These findings go along with those of Veenhoven (1993, 1997) who also showed a strong negative correlation be-

tween the anxiety factor and how happy people feel with their life. This may explain a behaviour, thought to be typical for Austrians and Viennese people in particular, circumscribed by the word *Raunzer*, meaning ‘grouch.’⁵ However, it is also said to be a feature of Bavarians in Germany which might have to do with a similar cultural (catholic) background. It refers to people who are unsatisfied, have a tendency to grouse and grumble (*schimpfen/raunzen*) about trifles and to rail against something or somebody with no particular reason. This in return makes people seem hysteric and nervous. Hofstede (1991: 115) points out that people in countries with strong uncertainty avoidance generally “...come across as busy, fidgety, emotional, aggressive and active.” He adds that

the more anxious cultures tend to be the more expressive cultures. They are the places where people talk with their hands, where it is socially acceptable to raise one’s voice, to show one’s emotions, to pound the table (Hofstede 1991: 115).

This is certainly true for Austrian culture, which is viewed as rather expressive, as reflected in Austrian literature (esp. Thomas Bernhard) and paintings (e.g. Schiele, Klimt). Impatience has also been portrayed as the salient Austrian feature on an ironic poster named “The perfect European should be ...” issued by the EU-commission in 2000. They picked one “typical” behaviour for each member country and reversed it (e.g. as patient as an Austrian, as humorous as a German, as sober as the Irish).

2.3.2. *Bureaucracy – Rigid laws and lenient control*

Another effect of a high UAI is a longing for rules and control which invoke an impression of security. Hofstede states that a high uncertainty avoidance also

leads to a reduction of *ambiguity*. Uncertainty avoiding cultures shun ambiguous situations. People in such cultures look for structure in their organisations, institutions and relationships, which makes events clearly interpretable and predictable. (Hofstede 1991: 116, emphasis in the original)

This leads to a high level of bureaucracy, an extensive desire to control and administer everything and a large amount of laws which try to regulate everything. However, in Austria rigid laws are executed with lenient practice which in turn creates ambiguity. Even though Austria and Germany have a high level of bureaucracy in common, there is a difference between both countries in the way rules and laws are followed. In Austria they are not considered to be followed rigidly, they are much more a guideline that is to be altered or disobeyed if necessary. This may seem strange in the light of a high UAI but is a reverse reaction of a population which is longing for security but also gets frustrated by the restrictions connected with it. The ambiguous behaviour of Austrians, in respect to rules and laws seems strange to Germans who tend to follow the rules strictly if they have been laid down and agreed upon. James sums this attitude up in the following way:

Die Österreicher sind seit jeher daran gewöhnt, in allen Lebensbereichen mit Tausenden von kleinlichen Restriktionen belegt zu werden. In entsprechendem Maße ist natürlich jeder clevere Bürger bemüht, unliebsame Einschränkungen zu umgehen. Das Ausfindigmachen der passenden "Hintertürln" kann man ...als eine Art Nationalsport oder als eine Kunst betrachten. (James 1997: 93)

(‘At all times and in all fields of life Austrians were used to have thousands of petty restrictions imposed on them. Accordingly, every citizen endeavours to circumvent unpleasant constrictions. The search for a handy *Hintertürl* [‘backdoor’] ... can be seen as a kind of national sport or as an art.’)

This is probably an exaggeration but it depicts a general attitude which considers rule-breaking as a kind of self-defence against a bullying bureaucracy and a dominating state. The next section (2.4) will show that this attitude can also be seen as a reaction to hierarchical structures partly caused by the dominating religion of the country. This may have to do with the high power distance between the citizens and the state which itself is an aftermath of the late introduction of democracy (1918) and the negative experiences with two fascist regimes in the 20th century.

Austria and Germany both suffer from a large amount of bureaucracy. According to an OECD report from 2000, Austria has the highest bureaucracy index of the 21 countries analysed. It ranks five places higher than Germany. The high employment rate in public services can be seen as a parallel to the high UAI. In Austria it amounts to 21% of the total workforce, in Germany “only” to 15%, even though Germany’s population is ten times larger. These figures also indicate the Austrians wish for a “strong state” (cf. 2.5 below).

2.4 Cultural standard IV: The relationship between state and individual – Society and religion

2.4.1 *The relationship between society, culture and religion – Individualism – Collectivism – Concepts of self – Obedience to rules and superiors*

Austria is a Roman Catholic country in which about 75% of the population adhere to this confession.⁶ Germany, on the other hand, is a country which has been shaped by Protestantism. Secularisation and a lack of confidence in the church have resulted in a massive loss of influence and power on the part of the churches in both countries during the past decades. This is also reflected in the amount of churchgoers: According to data from Haller & Janes (1996), only one fifth of all Austrians attend mass at least once a week. A third never goes to church and 39% – the majority – go occasionally. The Catholic Church had a firm grip on Austrian society until the 1960s, whereas today this is no longer the case. The tremendous influence of the church on culture and society, however, remains. The tendency towards a more secular society is quite surprising if one takes into account that the Habsburg monarchy was the protecting force of the Catholic Church for a period of more than 700 years until the beginning of the 20th century. This strong influence was clearly shown by the “counter-

reformation" (1580–1740) under which an overwhelmingly Protestant population (up to 99%) from all the territories of the Habsburg emperors were forced to abstain from Protestantism and to convert back to Catholicism. Herzig (2000) points out that the hundred thousands of those who did not submit to the wish of the sovereign were either killed or evicted. This was engraved into collective memory and partly responsible for the development of the so-called *Untertanenmentalität* ('mentality of subordinates'). It was only in 1783 that Emperor Joseph II allowed other confessions in his territories. The emperor gave in after it had become clear that he would not be able to fight the powerful Protestant rulers in Germany. The result was a predominantly Protestant Germany and a predominantly Catholic Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The influence of the Roman Catholic Church today is primarily on the cultural level. It has had a strong impact on the self-perception and self-definition of followers. Unlike the Protestant church which has no hierarchy, the Roman Catholic Church is strictly hierarchically organised with an infallible pope at the top. The believers are called to obey the edicts of the pope (in principle) and to see the interpretations of the Bible as the "truth," as it is conveyed by the priests. In Protestant churches, in contrast, it is the believer himself who finds his way to God by reading and understanding the Bible. This frees the individual of the priest's paternalism and of the hierarchical structure in the church. This setting has encouraged individualism in primarily Protestant countries (e.g. USA, GB, Australia) while Catholic societies (e.g. Austria, France, Spain, Italy) are rather marked by collectivist structures reflecting the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. This is confirmed by Trompenaars' (1993) study. He found a particularly strong difference in the factor "collectivism" between (West) Germany and Austria (37:48 points). Out of ten Central European countries, only East Germany scored higher on collectivism (55 points).

The extensive collectivism among Austrians is very important in understanding the differences in the self-concept and the self-assurance of Germans and Austrians. Washietl found a strong contrast between Austrians and Germans in this respect:

Österreichisches Selbstbewusstsein. Wenn ein Deutscher ein Produkt anbietet, das fünf Vorzüge und zwei Nachteile hat, dann ist er, wenn es sein Partner wünscht, durchaus bereit, über alle sieben Punkte offen zu reden. Der Österreicher entschuldigt sich im voraus für zwei und zieht sich zurück. ... Ich habe nie erlebt, daß Deutsche jemanden scheel angesehen hätten, weil er eine Strategie hat. Dies deutet nämlich auf einen dahinterstehenden Willen hin, und der gilt bei den Deutschen als ein noch nicht in Frage gestellter Grundwert. (Washietl 1987: 177)

('Austrian self-assurance: When a German offers a product which has five advantages and two disadvantages, he will be quite willing to talk about all seven points frankly if his partner wishes to do so. The Austrian apologises in advance for two points and retreats. ... I have never seen that Germans looked strangely at somebody who had a strategy. This points to a will behind it and this is a basic value for the Germans which has not yet been questioned.')

Germans generally define themselves as individuals mainly via their personal *Leistung* – their personal accomplishment, represented by their income. There is agreement among social scientists (cf. Breidenbach 1994) that Germany is considered a typical *Leistungsgesellschaft* ('society of accomplishment'). It is also accepted to show one's accomplishments, to be proud and self-assured of it. Austrians define themselves rather as part of a social group, by their position on the social ladder and the quality of life connected with it. A common saying in Austria is that *Österreicher arbeiten um zu leben, Deutsche leben, um zu arbeiten* ('Austrians work to live, Germans live to work'). This, of course, is a stereotype but shows an attitude that life must not be overwhelmed by work and enjoyment in work and life must be ensured. Another effect of collectivism is the preference for a more person-oriented and less task-oriented behaviour. In Austria, person-oriented solutions are given priority to the necessities arising from a task or project. A strictly task-related approach is favoured by Germans, putting person-oriented considerations in second place. This seems unbearable to Austrians.

Even more important is the Catholic concept of sin and how believers are supposed to deal with it. This can be seen as the main source for the differences on how rules and laws are to be treated. Catholic believers can confess and can do penance to rid themselves of sin. This assures that the problem has been solved and God and mankind can once again be approached with a clear conscience. This persuades Catholics to treat rules and laws in a lenient way because of the loophole of personal confession. Protestant churches have no system of penance and have to come to terms with their own conscience. This leads to a so called *Gewissenskultur* ('culture of conscience') which includes a feeling of obligation and adherence to obey self-imposed, inherent rules and aims.

Evidence for this can be found in studies by Schroll-Machl (2000) and Fink & Meierewert (2001a). Germans, according to these authors, show strong internalised rule-governed behaviour because they are disciplined, conscientious and responsible, whereas Austrians usually show a lower degree of rule-governed behaviour.

Generally speaking, in Catholic countries, the responsibility for making decisions and for abiding by rules and obligations is seen to be the responsibility of higher ranking people. In Protestant countries, the individual him-/herself must participate actively in realising rules and concepts. This causes uncertainty because the individual must decide on his/her own if he/she is going to obey the rules. The strong structure of the Catholic system, on the other hand, provides support should anything go wrong. The relaxed Austrian attitude towards rules has also been confirmed by the findings of Trompenaars (1993: 63). Mole (1992) also points out that Italians have a similar attitude to Austrians in this regard.

In short, rules are seen in Austria as something relative and flexible, as adaptable to the circumstances. In Germany, however, rules are valid at all times and not to be modified. This causes a paradox situation where Austrians perceive Germans to be rather "obedient to authority" even though the Austrian

structures are much more hierarchical and strict compared to the German structures. In turn, the Germans think that the Austrians are rather “undisciplined” and somewhat “anarchical” and their obvious disrespect of rules causes disapproval and raised eye brows.

Hofstede (1991: 132) points out that there is a strong correlation between the percentage of Catholics in a country and its UAI. A second correlation exists between Catholicism and a high masculinity index meaning that women do not hold leading positions and that there is preference for rigid and hierarchical structures. This does not mean, however, that a high masculinity index must lead to a high power distance between the top ranks and their subordinates.

Hofstede’s data (1991: 54) also show that Austria has the lowest power distance index (PDI) in work relations, and that it is relatively individualistic compared to countries such as Greece and Japan. The reasons are unclear but they may be found in the tight family-like structures of social partnerships (which will be dealt with in the following) and the large number of medium and small sized businesses. Germany has a medium PDI (35 points) and high individualism index.

The impact of hierarchical structures in Austria is softened by familiar structures because the country is quite small and social networks are tightly knit. This means that the hierarchical barrier creates a natural distance but that it is backed up by a very familiar social climate. If the hierarchical barrier is surmounted, people tend to work together on a very amicable basis. A German stage director working at the national Austrian theatre reported her experiences as follows:

Es geht sehr hierarchisch zu in Österreich. Da ist es für mich als Regisseurin erst einmal schwer, das “Du”-Wort anzubieten. Ich kann ja nur arbeiten, wenn ich mich selber zeige. Das hat gedauert, aber ich merke große Freude an der Arbeit ...
(Extract from an interview with the German stage director Antje Lenkeit)⁸

(‘Everything is very hierarchical in Austria. For me, as director, it was difficult at first to be on first name terms. I am only able to work, you know, when I can show who I am. This took quite a while, but now I get a lot of joy out of the work.’)

In language use, there is a strong tendency to mark social rank by the use of a differentiated system of address forms and the use of academic and professional titles. There are approximately 99 titles for the different positions in the fine grained hierarchy of the Austrian civil service, 25 professional titles which are awarded by the Austrian president to people with special merits and approximately ten different academic titles.⁹

It is common for and expected by many university graduates to be addressed by their academic title. This title often replaces the name if the two interlocutors know each other: *Griß Gott, Frau Magister/Herr Doktor!* (‘Good morning/afternoon, Mrs./Mr. + academic title’). Academic titles can also be used in public life, and the title may be entered in official documents, like passports.

Academic titles are also used in Germany but according to a court decision of the German supreme court in 1957, they are not part of the name (but can be included in passports and ID cards).¹⁰ It is rare that people are addressed by their academic titles in everyday communication but quite common to use them when speakers are introduced or presented, as speakers in conferences, for example. Only a small number of German federal states have titles in their civil service and there are no professional titles, such as *Kommerzialrat* ('economic counsellor').

2.4.2 *Political participation and the influence of political parties on society – Provisioning – Control – Structuring*

Democratic societies are built by political parties and civil society – people who commit themselves to political activities and participate in public life. Several surveys on the percentage of political participation show a number of substantial differences between Austria and the other German-speaking countries in this field. These also play an important role in explaining discourse behaviour.

The data (cf. Table 3) clearly reveal a vast difference in party membership (24%:4%), party identification (49%:67%:58%) and trust in political parties (17%:36%) with the lowest figures for trust in political parties in Austria and the highest in Germany. This general picture of the political landscape in Austria is also supported by the political participation figures. Here we see that there are many inactive and conformist citizens in Austria, but few reformists or activists. Indeed, according to Plasser & Ulram (1993: 114), 72% of the Austrian population believe that they have little or no influence on politics. There is a particularly large difference between the high numbers of party members and the limited trust the same population has in political parties.

Table 3. Data on political participation in Austria (Source: Plasser & Ulram 1993)

Political participation (in %)	Austria	Germany	Switzerland
1. Party membership	24	4	
2. Party identification	49	67	58
3. Trust in political parties	17	36	
4. Political participation			
4.1. Inactive + conformists	54	40	39
4.2. Reformists	21	25	26
4.3. Activists + protesters	25	35	35

A possible explanation for this political situation in Austria may be the overwhelming role that political parties play in everyday life. Pelinka describes the situation as follows:

Der Einfluss der politischen Parteien ist in allen gesellschaftlichen Bereichen festzustellen, in der Wirtschaft und in der Kultur ebenso wie in dem Sektor, der als politisch im engeren Sinn verstanden wird. Die Parteien üben auch jenseits

von Parlament und Regierung einen entscheidenden Einfluss aus. Die überall spürbare Präsenz der Parteien setzt die für ein traditionelles Denken typischen Grenzziehungen zwischen Staat und Gesellschaft, zwischen politischen und unpolitischen Bereichen außer Kraft. (Pelinka 1982: 48)

(‘The influence of [Austrian] political parties can be found in all areas of society, in the business, in culture and in those sections of public life which are understood as politics in the narrower sense. The parties also exert influence beyond parliament and government in a decisive way. The omnipresent influence of the parties overrides the typical demarcation which exists in traditional thinking between state and society, between political and non-political areas.’)

The immediate effect of this social system is that without party membership there is no patronage, nobody to support a candidate to get a good job or an influential post in public administration, in schools or in businesses close to the state. Securing a job in the public sector by means of qualifications alone is difficult under such circumstances. The close connections between political parties and society lead to a strong tendency towards positive interventions for party members and persons affiliated with them. According to a study by Heinrich (1989: 22), 300,000 interventions are conveyed every year in Vienna through the diverse channels of political parties. People who refuse to take part in this system of patronage or are too shy to use it, have reduced opportunities for jobs and privileges. This is mainly the case in public administration, schools, and universities and also in businesses underlying the influence of public institutions. In private industry and commerce, patronage through party membership is of little or no significance.

The pressure to secure a living and a job often forces people to become members of a certain party. Usually, this is not a voluntary act but a necessity to secure a (good) income. This causes ambiguity and might explain why trust in political parties, party identification and a readiness to participate in the political process are much lower in Austria than in Germany. The data show that the power of the state in relation to the power of the individuals is very strong in Austria. In the light of the high UAI, this is accepted as it offers a feeling of safety. At the same time, the amount of bureaucracy is a reason for incessant complaints and anger. A similar effect is connected to the “social partnership” which will be outlined in the following section (cf. 2.5).

2.5 The “social partnership” and the regulation of societal antagonisms in Austria – The strong paternalist state – Informal structures with formal power

This section shows that the political parties have extended their influence on the economy via the system of *Sozialpartnerschaft* (‘social partnership’ – SP). This *Sozialpartnerschaft* is a central feature of Austrian institutional public discourse. It was institutionalised in Austria in 1957 after social unrest had broken out and endangered the reparation of the country (cf. Wimmer 1984, Gerlich et al. 1985). It was also a reaction to the bitter experience the country

had made with the deep political and social split during the First Republic (1918–1938) which led to a civil war in 1934 and subsequently to two fascist regimes. The consensus between all layers of society and, in particular, within the political elite was to do everything in their power (a) to avoid any kind of social split and (b) to avoid exclusion of any of the main parts of society from political participation. The SP has since played a central role in Austrian politics. Indeed, it has developed such a strong influence on all parts of society that it must be considered as a cultural phenomenon (cf. Menasse 1990). This system of accordance between the main social and economical players has shaped the Austrian way of life and strongly contributed to the reconstruction of the country after World War II. The downside of this system is that until recently its influence penetrated almost all parts of society, leading to stagnation and frustration. Because of this, social scientists consider Austria's political culture as "hierarchical collectivism." Germany (West), on the other hand, is categorised as "competitive individualism" (Plasser & Ulram 1993: 43). Hofstede (1991: 53) found that Austria had an individualism index of 55 points (out of 100) (despite the corporatist structures of SP), whereas the index for Germany and Switzerland was 67 and 68 respectively.

The power of the SP has slowly faded since 2000 when a centre-right coalition took over the government. Nevertheless, it is still a very strong force in the political and social field in Austria. The country is also moving away from a consensus-oriented democracy to a more conflict-oriented one as recent data from surveys show (cf. Denz et al. 2001). The institutions of the SP are still consulted when new laws are proposed. However, they no longer have blocking power on the parliamentary process, power which they effectively had during the 1980s. In addition, the member institutions of the SP suffered a loss of credibility during the 1990s. Despite the present limitations of the SP, it is important to have a closer look at its main features as this institution has moulded the self-conception of Austrian public life in many ways. The main impact of the SP on public discourse was that for a long time it was not individuals who were supposed to become involved in solving (their) social problems but rather corporate organisations functioned as a representative for them. These usually decided independently without having to look for the consent of the members of their organisation.

In other words, the Austrian SP used to work top-down rather than bottom-up in the sense that decisions were made by the top ranks. Single individuals had little or no say because the higher ranking people of each organisation spoke for them. In turn they expected their "superiors" to safeguard a decent income and social security. It was mainly a paternalistic and hierarchical system rather than a self-determined and egalitarian one in which mutual rights and obligations are shared by members and higher ranks. This system of high level discourse was based on a system of centralised unions and obligatory membership for industrial companies and businesses in chambers representing their interests. According to Gauß (1989) and Menasse (1990), this was in line with a certain tradition ever since the late 18th century when Emperor Josef II reigned under the motto: *Alles für das Volk, aber nichts durch das Volk* ('Do

everything for the people but nothing through the will of the people'). Social scientists call this type of attitude and model of action "Josephinism" following Emperor Joseph II (1741–1790) who introduced it. The model is also known as the "benevolent despot." It has been strongly criticised by members of the Austrian cultural elite because it leads to dependence and obedience. It is probably also connected to the high masculinity index in Austria (cf. Hofstede 1984), a parameter on which Austria is on top of the scale.

Another important feature of the SP (and of public discourse in Austria in general) is that achieving a positive result is more important to the members of the participating organisations than safe-guarding fundamental principles. This means that decisions are mainly made on pragmatic considerations reflecting the circumstances and opportunities rather than the principles of the parties involved. The side effects are ambivalence on the validity of norms and rules and indirect forms of discourse because it might be risky to lay one's opinions too open. Different from other neo-corporatist structures in Europe, such as the Netherlands or Sweden, the Austrian SP is not based on formal rules but rather exercises formal power on the basis of informality. At the same time, it is closely interwoven with the political parties and the political system.

A comparison between the SP in Austria and Germany reveals a number of substantial differences: (1) Contrary to Austria, in Germany, open industrial and social conflicts are not avoided but carried out until one of the parties in the conflict gives in or both parties come to the conclusion that further confrontations make no sense. (2) The top representatives of the SP and the leading personalities of the main political parties in Germany do not carry out double functions. (3) Unlike in Austria, the political process is focused on the parliament(s) and not on extra-parliamentary institutions. (4) The political players in Germany tend to sharpen their profile at the cost of other political competitors and there is little desire for harmony. The SP and public discourse in Austria is much more consensus-oriented and harmony-seeking than in Germany or in Switzerland.

2.6 Central pragmatic features of public and private discourse in Austria

Based on the data and observations in the previous sections, an outline of some of the main pragmatic discourse features in Austrian German relative to German German can now be attempted. Washietl, a former correspondent for a large Austrian newspaper in Germany, remarked:

Manche der österreichischen Delegationen, die mit politischer, wirtschaftlicher, touristischer, kultureller ... Mission, die in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland so häufig aufkreuzen, kommen mit einer gewagten Mixtur aus Selbstbewusstsein und Unterwürfigkeit. Ihre Ausgangspunkte sind von denen der Deutschen zumeist ebenso grundverschieden wie die Zufahrtswege zum Verhandlungsziel ... Die labyrinthische, in vielen Jahren der Sozialpartnerschaft und Koalitionserfahrungen erarbeitete Form österreichischer Bewusstseinsbildung auf breitester Basis verführt offenbar zum Fehler, diese Maschinerie überall dort vorzuführen, wo ei-

gentlich schon deren Produkte erwartet werden. Dann setzt sich das Räderwerk eines hierarchisch, föderalistisch, kompetenz-, rang- und machtmäßig gegliederten Apparates ... vor jedermanns Augen in Bewegung. Das Stirnrunzeln des Leiters irgendeiner Bezirkssektion steuert Rücksichten und Vorsichten ..., bis beim deutschen Gegenüber das Urteil fertig ist: ein hochinteressanter Fall, aber noch nicht spruchreif. (Washietl 1987: 170),

(‘Some of the Austrian delegations who come to Germany so often these days on political, economic, tourist, cultural ... missions come with a daring mixture of self-assurance and servility. Their starting points are just as different from those of the Germans as their route to the aims of the negotiations ... The maze-like way of shaping opinions on a broad basis developed by Austrians over many decades of social partnership and coalitions leads them to mistakenly present this complicated machinery instead of presenting products. The wheelwork of a hierarchical, federalist apparatus which is structured according to competence, rank and power starts working ... in front of everybody. The frown of the chief of some district sections leads to precautions and constraints until the German counterpart comes to the conclusion: an interesting case but not yet ready for decision.’)

This kind of behaviour has disappeared since Austria joined the EU and became an equal partner among the 27 member states. However, the extract shows the effects of corporatist structures on discourse behaviour, effects which are still relevant to a certain degree.

The German preference for self-definition by achievements, combined with high individualism and a fairly high power distance, often leads to a strong tendency towards self-presentation and constant self-portrayal. This is seen as normal and is also expected from the interlocutor. It gives non-Germans the impression that Germans only talk about themselves. Austrians, on the other hand, with their burden of corporatist, hierarchical structures, a high level of bureaucracy, strong influence by political parties and tight social networks avoid outright self-portrayals. Indeed, these are considered obtrusive and overbearing. Instead, they prefer to be reserved until they are requested to present themselves and are rather sparse in giving information. This makes them seem reticent, distanced and even incompetent (especially to Germans). This behaviour is related to face-saving attitudes and a tendency to look for non-confrontational forms of interaction and a high willingness to achieve a compromise.¹¹

A comparison of central cultural standards and norms on the level of discourse behaviour in Austria (A) and Germany (G) shows the following differences:

- (1) A quest for preserving harmony vs. a quest for preserving norms and rules

A: There is a strong tendency to preserve harmony by attempting to find common solutions acceptable to all. It is more important to keep harmony and to find an acceptable solution than to insist on rules. The motto is: “Live and let live.”

- G: There is a general preference for maintaining one's point of view and doing one's best to convince the interlocutor that one's viewpoint is the more adequate. The speaker is certain that his/her concept is the better one. The motto is: "There is only one best solution!"
- (2) Conflict avoidance vs. conflict delivery
- A: There is a strong wish to act on a consensual rather than a confrontational basis and to avoid open conflicts which one might not win. It is thought to be more important to avoid conflicts and to give in to some degree rather than to enforce one's claims at all costs. The motto is: "Say things that make the best of the situation for both parties and save your partner's face, as long as you get your share."
- G: There is a tendency to act primarily according to one's own needs and to present one's own wishes and demands to get the maximum out of others. The motto is: "Make your point and get the most out of the situation!"
- (3) Alter- and person-orientation vs. ego- and task-orientation
- A: Negotiations are entered on the assumption: "Don't ask too much of your interlocutor – instead anticipate his limitations and adapt your demands accordingly. Act as if his/her point of view was yours and accept it as given but not final."
- G: Negotiations are entered on the assumption: "Consider your interlocutor as somebody who will stand up for his interests as you do. As both parties will exchange their views freely on the matter of common interest, an accord will be reached only if it is advantageous. Act from your own point of view as you can be sure that your partner will do the same."
- (4) Person- and status-orientation vs. task-orientation and reduced attention to status
- A: When solving tasks, the interests and needs of the person/group (subject) involved are the starting point for plans and actions and not the objective facts of the subject matter. Rank and status of the partners are always taken into consideration and there is a deep-rooted belief that the power of a formal position cannot usually be surpassed by knowledge and expertise. The motto is: "Consider objective facts but relate them to the person connected with them."
- G: The focus of all plans and actions lies on the "objective" needs of the task. The interests of the persons involved are secondary and not a starting point for considerations. What counts are the achievements for which one expects to get acknowledgement. The motto is: "Pay attention to rank and status of your superiors, but be aware that achievement will surpass rank and status to some degree."
- (5) Indirectness and face-saving vs. straightforwardness and ego-presentation
- A: To save the social face of the interlocutor is thought to be a central necessity. This implies that people will not always show what they

really think. When asking for answers and results, one has to be aware that a “yes” may not mean “yes,” but rather “no” and vice versa. When agreement has been reached on a plan, one must keep in mind that this is nothing more than a starting point and alterations can happen at any time during the project.

The motto is: “Be polite and indirect and as straightforward and honest as possible but not more than necessary if your partner’s face is threatened.”

- G: There is a strong wish to be clear and precise, to be rational and to say what one wants and what the problem is. When a problem must be solved, the most rational way is sought for its solution and little attention is paid to personal considerations. When asking for answers and results, it is expected that a “yes” always means “yes” and a “no” always “no.” The motto is: “There is no need to feel offended, when the best solution is being discussed as it is not personal, it is only the search for the best possible way.”

(6) Situational adaptation of principles vs. abiding to rules and principles

- A: There is a general readiness to adapt concepts/plans, if necessary. There is a lax treatment of standing rules and principles. The focus rather is on looking at what is possible and then at what can be achieved. The motto is: “Adapt the rules to reality and not the reality to the rules.”

- G: The general concept of work is based on the idea that it must be rational and methodical. This means that concepts are developed thoroughly and put into practice as planned. The underlying principles are not to be diluted by short-term considerations. Agreeing upon a plan means that it will be put into practice without further changes. The motto is: “Adapt reality to your plans and don’t let reality adapt your plans.”

Interestingly, several studies on differences in managing styles between Western European and Eastern European countries (e.g. Schroll-Marchl 2000, 2002, Fink & Meierewert 2001b), have revealed a number of central standards which are also relevant for Austria: 1. person-related conscientiousness, 2. devaluation of structures/love for improvisation, 3. group solidarity, 4. awareness of hierarchical relations, 5. conflict avoidance, 6. unsteady self-assurance, 7. emotionality, 8. communication with strong context-reference, 9. simultaneity.

In respect to cultural standards, Austria seems to be in many ways halfway between the West and the East if we take Germany as a model for Western cultural standards.

3. Micropragmatic features of discourse in Austria in comparison to Germany

In this section, data will be presented which reveals differences in speech act realisation (SAR) behaviour. These data support the above findings on cultural standards in several ways and also reflect structures of public and private discourse. The data are mainly related to two fields of pragmatics: (a) speech act realisations and (b) the use of politeness formulas. Other differences existing in the use of (c) address forms (cf. Muhr 1987) and (d) in the use of modal particles are not addressed in the present context for reasons of space.¹² The findings are the result of several studies during the past years.

3.1 Speech act realisations (SAR)

In a large scale project (The Austrian Speech Act Realisation Project), SAR were collected by a discourse completion task (DCT) for 16 situations. The DCT was, for the most part, based on the questionnaire used in the CCSARP (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). Eight situations aimed at triggering requests and eight at apologies, and 200 Austrians and 200 Germans were asked to complete the task.¹³ The Austrian data were collected in the 1990s. More recently, additional data have been collected for the purposes of a diachronic analysis of the SAR data. In many ways the data confirm the above findings on cultural standards.

Given the differences outlined above on cultural standards, the following hypotheses can be put forward, namely that the Austrian requests should be (a) more indirect, (b) reveal a larger amount of politeness forms and (c) contain more face-saving forms. German apologies should be (a) more explicit, (b) pay more attention to repairing the damage done and (c) show an inclination for self-blame. The hypotheses are based on the main differences between Austrian/German cultural standards outlined above which showed a high level of reluctance for self-representation, a low level of self-esteem, a high UCI and a strong awareness for social ranks and hierarchies. It is assumed that Austrian-German SAR are marked by substantial differences as one might assume that self-assured individuals who base their self-esteem on personal achievement, as the Germans do, will have little reason to be very indirect or invest a lot in politeness in conversation when requesting. Likewise, it is assumed that such individuals will feel a need to use particularly polite forms in apologies. The reverse is assumed for Austrians.

3.1.1 *How to be polite I – Indirect SAR forms and the usage of subjunctive request formulas*

The data show that a number of different structures can be used in German to realise requests. The most explicit and direct forms – like in many other European languages – are imperatives, e.g. *Kommen Sie her!* ('Come here!'). A second, and very central, structure is the use of interrogatives (with or without

modal verbs) which belong to the category of polite requests, as in *Gibst du mir das Buch?* ('Will you hand me the book?'). The most polite requests are those formed with modal verbs, especially in the subjunctive: *Kannst/Könntest du mir das Buch geben?* ('Can/could you hand me the book?'), *Können/Könnten Sie kommen?* ('Can/could you come?'). Declaratives (often combined with modal intensifiers) can also be used to express requests (e.g. *Sie kommen [ja] bald!* ['You're coming soon, (aren't you!)]). However, they are rather rare. Other forms, like ironic remarks or rhetorical interrogatives, are of minor importance and will not be taken into account in the present context. Imperatives and declaratives are direct SAR forms and mostly avoided because they are considered impolite or even offending in many situations. The most common structure to realise a request in German is to use an interrogative structure combined with a modal verb, i.e. a form such as *Könnten Sie/Könntest du/Könntet ihr ...?* ('Could you ...?') rather than to use the indicative form (e.g. *Können Sie/Kannst du/Könnt ihr?* ['Can you...?']).

Interrogatives can also be downgraded using subjunctive forms, illocutive indicators (e.g. *bitte* ['please']) and additional modal elements, such as adverbs (e.g. *vielleicht* ['maybe']) or modal particles, like *ja*, *eben* and *doch* and many others).

The data in Table 4 (below) confirm the initial hypotheses in the use of indirect speech act realisations: Line (1.) shows the number of subjunctive verb forms for both groups and a 61.5%:38.5% difference between both groups in the area of requests. Another strong difference between the two groups is the amount of interrogative request realisations in the indicative. The German respondents realised 20% more indicative modal verb (MV) interrogatives than the Austrian group (cf. line 2.1.). The ratio is even higher (33%:66%) if one takes into account all the realisations where modal verb interrogatives are combined with personal pronouns. The difference in the use of modal verb interrogatives in the subjunctive (line 3.1.) between the two groups is lower, but still statistically significant. The Austrian respondents realised 10% more interrogatives in the subjunctive. In combination with personal pronouns (line 3.2.) the difference is reduced to 5% but it is not significant. A very strong difference also exists in the use of subjunctive forms of the verb *sein* ('to be') (line 4.1.) with Austrian levels amounting to 74.2%. No difference was found in the use of the subjunctive form *würden* ('would'). This is the only verb where the German group realised more subjunctive forms than the Austrian group. The initial assumption that Austrians will prefer more indirect SAR-forms is confirmed by these data. Utterances such as the following are typical:

- (7) A: *Bitte könntest du die Küche wieder aufräumen?*
Please, could you tidy up the kitchen again?
G: *Kannst Du jetzt bitte mal da aufräumen?*
Could you please tidy up here now [intensifier]?
- (6) A: *Sei so lieb und borge mir dein Skriptum zum Abschreiben.*
Be so kind and lend me your notes for copying.

- G: *Hi Maria, kannst Du mir vielleicht die Mitschrift von letzter Stunde geben?*
Hi, Maria, can you maybe lend me your notes from last week?

Table 4. The use of interrogative forms to express requests¹⁴

	requests ¹⁵	
	A	G
1. All subjunctive verb-forms	635 61.5%	397 38.5%
2.1. MV interrogatives indicative total	193 39.5%	296 60.5%
2.2. MV interrogatives indicative + pers. pron.	130 33.8%	255 66.2%
3.1. MV interrogatives subjunctive	386 55.5%	310 44.5%
3.2. MV interrogatives subjunctive + pers. pron.	314 52.8%	284 47.2%
4.1. Auxiliary verb subjunctive I	138 74.2%	48 25.8%
4.2. Auxiliary verb subjunctive II + pers. pron.	82 78.4%	22 21.6%
5. Auxiliary verb subjunctive II	81 48.8%	85 51.2%

3.1.2 *How to be polite II – The Austrian preference for requests instead of demands: Some more exemplary data from situation (1) “dirty kitchen”*

The data of the situation “dirty kitchen” can be used as an example for a large number of request-situations where the relationship between the interlocutors is very close. The setting of this situation is as follows: speaker A has invited friends to the common flat, but he finds the kitchen in a real mess. Speaker B has left the mess behind after a party. The respondents are asked to complete the task by simulating what speaker A says. The SAR obtained were classified according to two criteria: (a) The illocution (request, demand) of the utterance and (b) its grammatical structure (interrogative, imperative, declarative). This approach leads to a scale of indirectness-directness as interrogatives are more indirect/polite than declaratives and imperatives. The main categories obtained using this classification are:

1. Explicit demands (*Aufforderungen*): Comprises all SAR where the illocutive content is clearly derivable from a formal element of the utterance, like an imperative or a modal verb, such as *must*. All “explicit” SAR differ from “implicit” SAR by the use of a formal illocutive indicator.
 - 1.1. Interrogative demands is a sub-category of explicit demands (1.) and comprises SAR which are interrogatives formed with a main verb or a

modal verb but without any other illocutive indicator (e.g. *Räumst du die Küche auf?/Kannst du die Küche aufräumen?* [‘Will you clean the kitchen?’/‘Can you clean the kitchen?’])

- 1.2. Imperative demands is a sub-category of explicit demands (1.). Realisations in this category are formed with an imperative (e.g. *Räum sofort auf!* [‘Clean the kitchen at once!’])
2. Explicit requests (*Bitten*): All SAR that contain an explicit illocutive indicator, such as *bitte* (‘please’) or *sei du so gut* (‘be so kind’), indicating a request.
 - 2.1. Interrogative requests is a sub-category of explicit requests (2.) of the same formal structure as (1.1.) (interrogative demands), but additionally containing a formal element like *bitte* (‘please’) which turns the illocutive content of the SAR into a request.
 - 2.2. Imperative requests: This category is like category (1.2.), but utterances here include an explicit illocutive indicator for requests (e.g. *Putz bitte die Küche!/Bitte putz die Küche!* [‘Tidy up the kitchen, please!’/‘Please, tidy up the kitchen!’])

Table 5. The use of requests and demands in situation (1), “dirty kitchen”

Requests and demands	Total	Austrian	German	level of significance
1. Explicit requests	154	84 / 54.5%	70 / 45.5%	9% (not significant)
1.1. Interrogative requests	126	75 / 59.5%	51 / 40.5%	<0.005%
1.2. Imperatives requests	28	9 / 32.1%	19 / 67.9%	
2. Explicit demands	143	63 / 44.1%	80 / 55.9%	<0.001%
2.1. Interrogative demands	97	38 / 39.2%	59 / 60.8%	<0.001%
2.2. Imperative demands	46	25 / 54.35%	21 / 45.65%	

Table 5 shows the results for the use of requests and demands in situation (1). The data show no significant difference in the overall amount of explicit requests (line 1.) but a clear difference for explicit demands (line 2.). Both groups also differ on a highly significant level in the amount of interrogative requests (line 1.1.) and demands (line 2.1.) realised by both groups. The Austrian respondents preferred explicit requests and interrogative requests, the German respondents preferred explicit demands and interrogative demands. There is little difference in the category “imperative demands,” but a clear preference by Germans for imperative requests.

This also supports the findings that Austrian discourse rules by using the same linguistic structures of German are marked by a clear preference for indirect forms whereas the German speakers in the sample showed a preference for more direct forms in expressing requests.

3.2 How to be impolite – Supposedly on good grounds – Emotional vs. neutral expressions for something which is really annoying – A ”dirty kitchen”

As mentioned in previous sections, countries with a high UAI, such as Austria, seem to be more anxious and more expressive than countries with a low UAI. Hofstede (1984) assumed that the more anxious societies are also the more emotional ones. The data from our SAR-project support this assumption – at least for situations where the speakers, like in situation (1), “dirty kitchen,” are in a symmetric and close relationship. When it comes to expressing dissatisfaction about the bad condition of the kitchen which the room-mate had left behind, the question may be posed as to the terms used and the levels of anger shown. Looking at the terms which were used by the respondents in order to refer to the kitchen or to the disorder in it, two categories can be distinguished:

1. Neutral terms:

(1) *die Küche* (‘the kitchen’), (2) *die Wohnung* (‘the flat’), (3) *deine Sachen* (‘your things’), (4) *das/dein Geschirr* (‘the/your dishes’), (5) *den Abwasch* (G) (‘the dirty dishes’)

2. Emotional/negative terms:

(1) *die Unordnung* (‘the disorder’), (2) *dein/das Zeug* (‘your/the stuff’), (3) *dein/das Chaos* (‘your/the chaos’), (4) *das Schlachtfeld* (‘the battlefield’), (5) *deinen Schrott* (G) (‘your scrap’), (6) *den/deinen Saustall* (‘the/your pigsty’); (7) *die Sauerei/Schweinerei* (‘the mess’).

Table 6. The use of neutral and emotional terms in the “dirty kitchen” situation (1), a situation marked by a close personal relationship (total number of respondents: 163 per variety)

Terms for “dirty kitchen”	Total	Austrian		German	
1. Neutral terms	<i>total</i> 242	117	48%	125	52%
1.1. <i>Küche</i> (‘kitchen’)/ <i>Wohnung</i> (‘flat’)	215	100	45%	115	55%
1.2. other terms	27	17	63%	10	37%
2. Emotional expressions	<i>total</i> 54	42	78%	12	22%
2.1. <i>das/dein Chaos</i> (‘the/your chaos’)	17	15	88%	2	12%
2.2. <i>den Saustall/die Sauerei/Schweinerei</i> (‘mess,’ ‘pigsty’)	16	14	88%	2	12%
2.3. <i>den/deinen Dreck/Mist/Ramsch</i> (‘codswallop,’ ‘crap,’ ‘mud,’ etc.)	13	9	69%	4	31%
2.4. other	4	2	50%	2	50%

As the figures in line (1.) of Table 6 show, there is almost no difference between the two varieties in the number of neutral terms used to refer to the kitchen. A wider variety of terms were used by the Austrian group, but only in low quantities.

Substantial differences between the Austrian and the German group can, however, be found in respect of the use of emotional expressions. Line (2.) of

Table 6 shows a 78%:22% difference in the overall amount of emotional terms which depreciate the condition of the kitchen. Lines (2.1.) to (2.3.) also show quite a number of different and very strong terms which were used by the Austrian group. In discussions with respondents who had completed the questionnaire about the use of such emotional expressions, it was found out that their use depended on how close the interlocutors are and how often similar problems had already happened in the past. However, the respondents did not think it inappropriate to use emotional terms if one gets very annoyed. These findings confirm (together with other results which cannot be presented here in detail) Hofstede's (1984) assumption that societies with a larger UAI are more emotional than those with a lower UAI.

3.3 How to be polite if someone has missed a lecture – Asking a fellow student for his notes of the lecture one has missed

The data from this situation also show differences between the two varieties in the use of request structures. The setting of this situation is that a student has missed a lecture and asks a fellow student for his/her notes. The respondents were requested to take the part of the student, who had missed the lecture. The interaction is symmetric and the relationship between the two interlocutors is fairly close as they probably know each other and are on equal terms as they attend the same courses. The setting of this situation differs from that in the "dirty kitchen" situation as no rule has been broken. The speaker is in a subordinate position to the hearer as he/she needs help. The hearer can respond positively or negatively to the request. Usually it is expected that the hearer will react positively to this kind of request, if there are no substantial obstacles on his side.

Table 7. The use of interrogative modal verb requests and requests in an asymmetric situation marked by a fairly close personal relationship ("notes" situation)

	Total	Austrian	German	χ^2 / level of significance
1. Interrogative requests with modal verbs (MVIR) and the illocutive indicator <i>bitte</i> ('please')	101	69 68.8%	32 31.6%	56.88; $\chi^2=0.0001$ significant
1.1. MVIR + subjunctive	61	45 73.7%	16 26.3%	16.96; $\chi^2=0.0001$ significant
1.2. MVIR + indicative	40	24 60.0%	16 40.0%	1.78; $\chi^2=0.17$ not significant
2. Interrogative requests total	112	78 69.6 %	34 30.4%	23.76 $\chi^2=0.00001$ highly significant
3. Requests total	115	80 69.6%	35 30.1%	79.93 $\chi^2=0.00001$ highly significant

Table 7 shows the figures for the use of requests with an interrogative structure, modal verbs and the IFID *bitte* ('please') (cf. line 1.). The Austrian respondents used (a) significantly more MVIR (A: 68.8%, G: 31.6%), (b) significantly more interrogative requests (A: 69.6%, G: 30.4% [cf. line 2.]) and (c) more requests of all different categories (cf. line 3.). There is also a large difference between the two varieties in their use of MVIR in the subjunctive, i.e. *könntest du* ('could you') vs. *kannst du* ('can you') (A: 73.7%, G: 26.3%). There was no significant difference in the use of MVIR in the indicative.

On the basis of this data, it can, therefore, be concluded that the Austrian group once again used linguistic forms that are less direct and leave the hearer more freedom as to how to handle the interlocutor's request. In addition, it is worth noting that about 50% of all SAR in this situation belonged to the category of interrogative requests. 72% of all SAR of the German group were interrogative requests, but only 41% of the requests of the Austrian group. The difference in the overall amount of requests can be explained by a large number of supportive elements which the Austrian group used to "cajole" the hearer. These elements narrow the interactive options for the hearer as he/she is put under emotional pressure to concede to the wish of the hearer. This is even more so the case if the wish is additionally backed by specific reasons and justifications by the speaker. That strategy is particularly used by the Austrian respondents, as shown in Tables 8 and 9:

Table 8. The use of declaratives as supportive moves in the "notes" situation

	Total		Austrian		German	
1. Number of respondents using supportive declaratives	103	100%	82	80%	21	20%
2. Declaratives total	123	100%	105	85%	18	15%
3. Declaratives giving some reason for missing the lecture	80	65%	67	84%	13	16%
4. Declaratives with modal verbs (wishes)	30	24%	25	83%	5	17%
5. Others	13	11%	13	100%	0	0%

Line (1.) shows that 103 (31%) of the total 326 German and Austrian respondents used supportive declaratives in this situation. 80% (82) of these 103 informants belonged to the Austrian group. Indeed, these Austrian informants produced 85% of the total declaratives employed in the Austrian and German data (line 2.). The overwhelming number of the total declaratives used were declaratives giving a reason for missing the lecture. The Austrian group employed 84% of the total number of these declaratives found over both data sets (line 3.). The remaining 13% were employed by the German group. These figures show that most declaratives are used to back the request by giving some reason why the lecture has been missed (line 1.). About a fourth of the total declaratives in the Austrian and German data overall are wishes (line 4.), which in the Austrian case are mostly moves which precede the first move. The main function of all supportive declaratives is to "ground" the request and to support

it with additional information. It can be concluded from this data that it is very important for the Austrian respondents to give an explanation for the request. This can be attributed to the face-saving, non-obtrusive strategies of Austrian discourse behaviour in general outlined above (for further details, cf. Muhr 1994).

The data from this situation and others support the findings outlined in the section about “cultural standards” which pointed to a more person-oriented, expressive kind of interaction by the Austrians as compared to Germans. In addition, Table 9 contains data about the use of initial elements – salutations – which have a mitigating function as appeasers or “cajolars” to create a pleasant and kind impression on the hearer.

Table 9. Initial interactive elements which function as appeasers or “cajolars” in the “notes” situation

Initial interactive element	Realisation
1. Salutation	<i>hallo, servus, hej</i>
2. First name	<i>Maria, Hans, ...</i>
3. Salutation + first name	<i>Servus, Judith ...</i>
4. Personal pronoun <i>du</i> (‘you’) + first name	<i>Du, Maria ...</i>
5. Personal pronoun <i>du</i> (‘you’) + first name + apology	<i>Du, Maria, entschuldige ...</i>
6. Appealing phrases + first name	<i>Geh!Mensch/Hör mal/Weißt eh/Ach! Du weißt ja</i>
7. Personal pronoun <i>du</i> (‘you’) + apology	<i>Du, entschuldige ...</i>
8. Explicit appealing phrases	<i>Sei so lieb ...</i>

Importantly, most of these elements appear in combination. Table 10 shows the figures for the actual use of the most important categories of initial elements.

Table 10. Figures for the use of initial interactive elements in the “notes” situation (many elements appear in combination) (total number of respondents: 163 per variety)

	Total	Austrian		German	
1. Number of respondents using initial interactive elements	105	71	44%	34	21%
2. Appeasing elements total	135	92	68%	43	32%
3. Salutation + first name	81	56	69%	25	31%
4. Personal pronoun <i>du</i> (‘you’)	36	30	83%	6	17%
5. First name + personal pronoun <i>du</i> (‘you’)	20	18	90%	2	10%
6. Appealing phrase + first name	8	6	75%	2	25%
7. Others (apologies, appealers)	19	19	100%	0	0%

Line (1.) shows that 44% of all Austrian respondents, but only 21% of all German respondents, used an initial appeasing element. The most common form of initial appeasing element is the use of a salutation plus first name (line 3.). The data show a 69%:31% difference between the Austrian and the German group

respectively for this combination. The ratio for the use of the personal pronoun *du* ('you') and the combination of first name plus *du* ('you') (lines 4. and 5.) reveal even clearer differences (A: 83%+90%, G: 17%+10%). Finally, the use of an initial apology, such as *entschuldige* ('sorry'), and explicit appealing phrases, like *sei so lieb* ('be so kind'), is confined to the Austrian group.

It seems clear from these data that the Austrian respondents pay a lot more attention to safeguarding their requests by using additional moves which compensate for the more indirect request forms. It can be assumed that this is a rather effective strategy to achieve the objectives as the hearer is confronted with additional arguments which cause emotional pressure and leave little room for a negative reaction.

3.4 Differences in the use of apologies

Apologies are very important social acts because they symbolically straighten out some kind of misbehaviour which speaker A has committed against speaker B. The imbalance which so arises can be fixed by a range of means depending on how serious the rule-breaking was considered and on how serious the speaker him/herself takes the repair work.

Two basic types of apologies were distinguished in the present analysis, namely (1) listener-oriented and (2) listener-averted realisations. These are outlined in detail in Muhr (1994): Type (1) comprises apologies which are genuine attempts to repair the damage, mainly by the use of canonical phrases like *excuse me, I am sorry*, explanations and other expressions. Type (2) are utterances which either deny that an offence has been committed at all or try to minimise the offence in question. They constitute a refusal to acknowledge any guilt. A further distinction can be drawn between "explicit" and "implicit" apologies. The difference lies in the use of performative elements which clearly indicate the illocutive content of a speech act. Implicit apologies can be: (a) simple statements that a rule has been broken, (b) promises that the offence will not happen again, (c) offers for compensation and (d) utterances that attempt to play down the damage done to the listener. The amount of listener-orientation can be increased using personal address forms, such as, for instance, *Herr Kollege* ('dear colleague'), exclamatory elements (e.g. *oh, hm, aha*) and appealing phrases, such as *Hören Sie ...* ('Listen, ...'), *Wie Sie wissen, ...* ('As you know ...') and *Tja, Sie sehen ja, ...* ('Well, as you can see ...').

Data collected using a discourse completion task completed by 163 Austrian and 163 German respondents show a number of clear differences in the use of apologies. These will be exemplified by the data from one situation (situation 8). The setting is the following: A student arrives at the office of his professor to ask for his grades. The professor had promised to return the student's seminar work that day. However, he had not fulfilled his promise as he had not managed to read the student's paper. The respondents were asked to take the part of the professor and to write an answer. The following utterances are examples of some of the responses:

- (8) A: *Tut mir leid, aber ich bin gestern nicht mehr dazu gekommen. Eine wichtige Sitzung hat es leider verhindert.*
 Sorry, but I didn't manage it yesterday. There was an important meeting that kept me from doing it.
- G: *Ich bin leider noch nicht zum Durchlesen gekommen.*
 Unfortunately I didn't manage to read (your paper) yesterday.

3.4.1 *The use of listener-oriented moves and repairs*

As outlined above, apologies can be distinguished according to whether they are listener-oriented or listener-averted. The use of listener-oriented SAR can be seen as an attempt to maintain/reconstitute harmony between the interlocutors and to avoid confrontation.

Table 11 shows that the usage of listener-oriented elements by Austrian and German respondents differs to a high level of statistical significance. The Austrian group used almost twice as many listener-oriented elements. These also often appear in combination. Another interesting result is the high percentage of exclamatory elements which take an initial position in the apology SAR particularly in the Austrian data (A: 64%, G: 36%). These elements also indicate emotions and sympathy with the listener. These findings support the previous data, and, therefore, also the hypothesis that Austrian speakers are more expressive than German speakers (cf. above).

Table 11. Listener-oriented moves and repairs in the “student’s paper” situation¹⁶

Results	Total	Austrian	German	α
R1 Listener-oriented address forms	72	46 64%	26 36%	0.0018% highly significant
R2 Exclamatory elements, particles	53	34 64%	19 36%	
R3 Address forms, names	13	12 92%	1 8%	
R4 Appealers/cajolers ¹⁷	12	10 83%	2 17%	

3.4.2 *The use of face-saving or face-threatening repair moves*

Apologies usually also consist of supportive moves which try to explain how and why the damage happened. These explanations function as face-saving appeals to the listener to show understanding for exceptional circumstances which caused the damage. Another kind of explanation avoids any appeal to the listener and simply states some kind of circumstances which show the unwillingness of the speaker to fulfil his obligation towards the listener. These strategies are clearly face-threatening and a sign of a high power distance (cf. Table 12).

Line (1.) of Table 12 shows the results for the number of face-threatening explanations in the sample. The German group used 4.3 times more face-threatening explications than the Austrian group. This difference is highly significant. Almost the same difference can be found in line (2.) (i.e. 12:44 [21%:79%]) which shows the number of SAR which contained no explication at all and where the speaker simply stated that the paper had not been cor-

rected. In Austria, such behaviour would be considered strange because the obligation to give some sort of explanation is very strong. The findings are in accordance with the data on general differences in the cultural standards between Austria and Germany where it was shown that Austrians tend to show a preference for saving face and for preserving harmony between the interlocutors, whereas the Germans prefer a more ego-oriented approach.

Table 12. Face-threatening moves and repairs in the “student’s paper” situation

	Total	Austrian	German	α
1. All face-threatening explanations	100	17 17%	83 83%	<0.001 highly significant
2. SAR with no explanation at all	56	12 21%	44 79%	<0.001 highly significant
3. Reference to “external causes” (“It was impossible”)	19	1 5%	18 95%	<0.001 highly significant
4. “I simply forgot”	10	4	6	-

Table 13 shows the number of face-saving explanations and those of the most important sub-categories. The Austrian respondents realised twice as many face-saving explanations as did the German informants. The large number of explanations means that the Austrian group used this SA-move more than once. This reveals a strong tendency on the part of the Austrian respondents to try to avoid mentioning the problem. In this way, they save the speaker’s face. This is supported by the large number of explanations which refer to external causes and to “lack of time.” The German group did not show any particular preference for specific explanations except “lack of time.” This demonstrates a low inclination for face-saving which may be based on the asymmetry and power distance between the speakers. Furthermore, this means that if German speakers are in a superior position they usually feel no necessity to bow down to lower ranking persons. For Austrians, any person irrespective of their rank must be given a reason for inappropriate behaviour. Otherwise, the speaker is considered “rude” and “uncivilised.” At this point one must recall that Austria had the lowest power distance index of all countries in Hofstede’s (1984) data, a fact which might explain the obvious differences between the two groups in this context.

Table 13. Face-saving moves and repairs in the “student’s paper” situation

	Total	Austrian	German	α
1. Face-saving explications total	347	231 / 66.6%	116 / 33.3%	3.3–7% highly signif.
2. Explications referring to external causes	54	41 / 76%	13 / 24%	3.2–5% highly signif.
3. Lack of time	168	100 / 60%	68 / 40%	0.0004% highly signif.
4. “Didn’t get to it yet!”	34	17 / 50 %	17 / 50%	3.55–5% signif.

4. Summary

This paper has presented data showing macropragmatic and micropragmatic differences between two national varieties of German – Austrian German and German German. The first categories of pragmatic features, also called “cultural standards,” are identified with reference to the differences in history, social and political development and – most of all – to the influence of the dominating religion on culture. Data were presented in this regard which revealed that Austria and Germany differ mainly in respect to the uncertainty index, the individualism index and the power distance index. In Austria, these basic differences are reflected in a preference for indirect, face-saving SAR and an acknowledgement of hierarchical, person-oriented structures. German speakers, on the other hand, prefer ego-oriented, rather direct SAR, a preference which is guided by task-oriented attitudes. The micropragmatic data showed a significant preference on the part of Austrian speakers for indirect SAR, emotional expressions, requests instead of demands and the use of face-saving moves in apologies. The results indicate that the differences between the two language cultures are substantial on the pragmatic level and a possible source of misunderstandings.

The finding of this paper are also supported by a recent study on pragmatic differences in the discourse of migrants from Germany and Austria (many of them were married couples), who had been living in a foreign language environment for a long time. The study was conducted in Australia (Clyne et al. 2003) and confirmed many of the findings exemplified here. It was found that even up to forty years of marriage and exile in a foreign language environment had not levelled the basic differences in communication style and pragmatics which participants had acquired during early socialisation in both countries. It can, thus, be concluded that pragmatics and discourse rules are closely linked to the social environment of a variety/nation and in a way a semi-autonomous system which is only partly linked to a specific language. It would therefore be interesting to look into the pragmatics and discourse rules of neighbouring countries which share a long common history.

Notes

1. This and all other translations are the responsibility of the present author unless otherwise stated.
2. The data for Switzerland are only included when they are available and serve to show that neighbouring countries may differ largely in respect to very basic social concepts.
3. Lalive D’Epinay & Garcia point to the importance of work for the Swiss identity:
Genaugenommen ist die Arbeit kein Gründermythos der Schweizer Nationalität, und dennoch scheint diese undenkbar ohne jene. (Lalive D’Epinay & Garcia 1988: 1)
(‘Work is, in the strict sense, not a founding myth of Swiss identity, but the Swiss identity is nevertheless unimaginable without it.’)

4. Janssen-Jurreit (1985) asked prominent (West) Germans whether they loved Germany. Very few answered in the affirmative. This may, however, have changed since German reunification in 1992.
5. A search for the word *Raunzer* in Google returns more than 500 pages mostly connected with the terms “Austria” and “typical.”
6. Cf. Haller & Janes (1996: 253). The figures given are based on the general census of 1991. There have been massive losses for the Roman Catholic Church in the past 15 years due to a number of embarrassing scandals.
7. Indeed, Petzold writes of German culture:

Ohne die Tradition des Protestantismus, ohne seine Gewissenskultur und die damit verbundene hohe Wertschätzung der Individualität, ohne seine Autoritäts- und Religionskritik und ohne sein Berufsethos und Freiheitspathos lassen sich unsere moderne Kultur insgesamt gar nicht verstehen. (Petzold 2001)

(‘Our modern culture cannot be understood at all without reference to the tradition of Protestantism, its culture and tradition of conscience, the consequent high value placed on individuality, its criticism of authority and religion and its occupational ethos and pathos of freedom.’)
8. Excerpt from an interview printed in the Austrian newspaper *Der Standard*, 13 September, 1991 (p. 12).
9. For details, cf. <<http://www.help.gv.at/Content.Node/173/Seite.1730300.html>>.
10. For details, cf. <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akademischer_Grad#F.C3.Fuehrung_akademischer_Grade>.
11. A key-phrase in the central document of the “social partnership” in Austria could be seen as a program for general discourse behaviour: “The essence of the social partnership is the commitment of these four interest groups to pursuing common long-term economic and social policy aims and their shared conviction that such aims are better achieved through dialogue leading to cooperation and co-ordinated action than through open conflict. ... Social partnership does not mean, however, that conflicting interests are denied or ignored. It is instead a method of balancing contradictory economic and social interests by seeking solutions that benefit all participants and maintaining a willingness to compromise to achieve this end” <http://www.sozialpartner.at/sozialpartner/Sozialpartnerschaft_mission_en.pdf>.
12. Cf. Sproß (2001), Glück & Koch (1998) and the large-scale project on address forms in several European languages by Clyne et al. (2003–2005).
13. The German data consist partly of data collected within the framework of the CCSARP-project (thanks to J. House & J. Vollmer) and partly from our own data collection efforts.
14. The figures of Tables 4 through 13 are calculated on the basis of the 163 respondents for each variety which were chosen from a total of 200 respondents. Depending on the variety and on the setting of the situation, the utterances often differ in length and in the number of heads acts within each SAR. The total number of realisations of all categories mentioned in each table, therefore, may surpass the total number of respondents.
15. The data are calculated separately for each category and sum up to 100%.
16. Cf. the paper of Warga (this volume) for similar results, showing the importance of supportive moves (grounders) in Austrian German requests.
17. Cajolers are expressions like: *Bitte verzeihen Sie, aber Sie bekommen die Noten sicher noch diese Woche* (‘I am terribly sorry, but you will definitely get your grades this week’).

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Requesting in German as a pluricentric language*

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1. Introduction

Interlingual pragmatics – better known as “cross-cultural pragmatics” – has been a well established discipline for more than fifteen years (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). *Intralingual* variation, on the other hand – in particular at a regional level – has received comparatively little attention in pragmatics research. This dearth of pragmatics research on intralingual regional varieties has been pointed out recently by many researchers (cf., e.g., Clyne et al. 2003: 96, Barron & Schneider 2005: 12).

As far as German as a pluricentric language is concerned, there have been some studies examining pragmatic variation across national varieties of German since the beginning of the 1990s: these studies, comparisons of the Austrian and the German varieties of the German language, have yielded some evidence that Germans are more direct in their verbal behaviour than Austrians (cf. Muhr 1993: 35, 1994: 142, Clyne et al. 2003: 150).¹ However, not only the range of speech acts and situations, but also the range of respondents studied has been very limited to date. This is insofar problematic as different levels of directness are frequently interpreted as instances of impoliteness by the conversational partners (cf. Barron 2003: 2) and can therefore cause serious misunderstandings. Given the strong interrelations between Austria and Germany, not only at the social but also at the economic level, research into intralingual differences in speech act realisation strategies represents a research desideratum.

This paper is intended to contribute to the body of research in intralingual pragmatic variation by focusing on the speech act of request produced by speakers of German German and Austrian German. A brief definition of the speech act of request will be followed by an overview of studies on the pragmatic similarities and differences in German as a pluricentric language. After this, methodological issues are taken up. Finally, the results of the study are presented and discussed.

2. Literature review

Before reviewing the literature relevant to the present study, the speech act of request will be briefly defined.

Searle (1976: 11) categorises requests as directives since “they are attempts ... by the speaker to get the hearer to do something.” Moreover, requests concern events that are costly to the hearer as they make demands on the hearer’s future action and consequently restrict his/her freedom of action. In Brown & Levinson’s (1987: 66) terms, making a request is therefore a face-threatening act which threatens the negative face wants of the hearer and consequently calls for redressive action. To compensate for their impositive effect on the hearer’s face, requests call for mitigation. From the speaker’s perspective, requests are supportive acts as they communicate a speaker’s desire that a future act, which is beneficial to the speaker, be performed by the hearer. If, however, the hearer does not comply with the request, the speaker’s positive face may also be threatened. Consequently, requests may not only be costly to the hearer, but also to the speaker. On the other hand, requests may not only be seen as supportive acts from the speaker’s, but also from the hearer’s, perspective: by making a request, the speaker shows that he/she believes the hearer to be a reliable person (cf. Turner 1996: 4). This in turn strengthens the hearer’s positive face.

As Clyne et al. (2003: 96) state “there has been relatively little research so far on pragmatic variation among national varieties of pluricentric languages.” The languages studied to date in intralingual pragmatics include English, Spanish, French, and German (for a literature review, cf. Garcia this volume, Placencia this volume, Schneider & Barron this volume). The studies on intralingual variation in German are small in number. Let us, therefore, briefly review the general findings on requests in German German before turning to the studies on intralingual variation in German.

In a study on politeness markers in English and German, House & Kasper (1981) looked at the directness levels and modality markers in complaints and requests in a number of situations acted out by German and English native speakers. The analysis of the German native speaker requests yielded the following results: as far as the directness level is concerned, the German speakers were found to opt for higher levels of directness than the English speakers. Their preferred request strategy was the rather direct locution derivable (*Du solltest das Fenster zumachen* [‘You should close the window’]). The conventionally indirect query preparatory was only the second most frequently used strategy in the situations. As far as modality markers were concerned, German speakers were shown to use more upgraders and less downgraders than their English speaking counterparts.

As part of the CCSARP (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989), Blum-Kulka & House (1989) investigated variation in requesting behaviour in five different languages. As far as the degree of directness is concerned, speakers of German (just as speakers of Canadian French) were found to occupy the mid-point in the cross-cultural scale of directness, with the Germans using 20% impositives,

77% conventionally indirect strategies, and 3% non-conventionally indirect strategies. These results confirm previous findings showing that speakers of German opt for higher levels of directness than speakers of English (cf. House & Kasper 1981).

Faerch & Kasper (1989), also part of the CCSARP, is a study on internal and external modification in request realisations. Although the focus is on the interlanguage of Danish learners of English and German, some information is also presented on the request realisations of the Danish, English and German native speakers. First, it is found that the conventionally indirect query preparatory is the most widely used strategy by all groups. However, as compared to native speakers of British English, native speakers of German show a rather greater situational variation in this strategy (1989: 223). Moreover, as far as internal modification is concerned, it is said that the German native speakers clearly prefer the modal *können* ('can') to *dürfen* ('to be allowed') in two out of the three situations (1989: 229). No detailed information is given on the use of external modification in the German native speaker data apart from the fact that the grounder is the most frequent external modifier in all groups (1989: 239).

When summarising these findings on requests in German German, it can be said that speakers of German German are situated at the mid-point of the directness scale, that is Germans are more direct than speakers of English and less direct than speakers of Hebrew and Argentinean Spanish. Their most preferred directness level is the conventional indirect query preparatory strategy (cf. House & Kasper 1981 for a divergent result). This is in line with findings for languages other than German. As far as internal and external modification in requests is concerned, Germans have been found to produce more upgraders and less downgraders as compared to native speakers of English.

Pragmatic similarities and differences between German German and Austrian German have been the subject of research since the early 1990s. As part of a larger project, Muhr (1993) examined the requests of German and Austrian speakers of German. Data were collected from 530 students from Austria and Germany; the exact places where the students come from are not mentioned in the article. The elicitation instrument was a discourse completion task (DCT) consisting of 30 items. However, for this 1993 study only one situation was analysed. In this analysis, Muhr found that Austrian requests were longer than German requests. He argues that this is because Austrians tend to justify their requests more than their German counterparts (1993: 34). Furthermore, it is shown that the Austrian requests have a lower degree of directness. This finding is supported by the fact that Austrians use the conditional (*könnte* ['could'], *hättest* ['would have']) in situations where Germans use the indicative (*kannst* ['can'], *hast* ['have']). Also, introductory elements play a more important role in the Austrian than in the German data (1993: 36). As to modal particles (e.g. *mal*, *doch*) – important upgrading und downgrading elements in German – it is found that not only the amount, but also the types and combinations, of modal particles differ considerably between the Austrians and the Germans, with the Austrians using less modal particles than the Germans (1993: 37).

Muhr (1994) is a speech act study which contrasts the apologies of 163 speakers of German German and an equal number of speakers of Austrian German. Similar to Muhr (1993), the study is also part of the larger project termed *Sprechaktrealisierungsunterschiede zwischen Österreich und Deutschland* ('Differences in speech act realisations between Austria and Germany'). Here, Muhr (1994) again reveals that the apologies produced by the Austrian respondents on a DCT are considerably longer than the German apologies (1994: 133). Furthermore, the IFID *Tut mir Leid* ('I'm sorry') is used significantly more often at the very beginning of the apology, that is, without any introductory elements (e.g. *Herr Maier* ['Mr. Maier']; *Hören Sie* ['Listen']), by the German speakers than by the Austrian speakers (1994: 136). Muhr claims that the absence of any introduction in this case may seem impolite to Austrians. In addition, it is shown that Austrians tend to use face-saving strategies when mentioning the reasons for their mistake (e.g. external reasons; *Ich war krank* ['I was ill']) whereas Germans use predominately face-threatening strategies (e.g. *Es war nicht möglich* [ohne weitere Erklärung] ['It was not possible'] [without further explanation]) (cf. Muhr 1994: 137–142 for a more detailed explanation of the difference between face-saving and face-threatening strategies). This, in turn, suggests a more indirect style on the part of the Austrians and a more direct style on the part of the Germans. On the whole, these results corroborate the findings in Muhr (1993).

Clyne et al. (2003) is a third study on pragmatic variation among German national varieties. It is a small-scale exploratory study on apologies, requests and modal particles in German and Austrian German with a very interesting research design. The sample comprises ten Austrians and ten Germans who are married to each other – one partner is Austrian, the other German. All live in an English-speaking country (Australia). The Australian context is said to prevent any external push to converge towards either the Austrian or the German variety. Consequently, it is seen as serving as a test of the durability of distinctive pragmatic features of national varieties. However, it has to be noted that it may be that some speakers adopt the Australian pragmatic norm more than others and that this may influence their L1. Data were collected using a 15-item DCT. The results show that the two groups display important distinctive traits even after a long absence away from the country of origin. As far as apologies are concerned, it is shown that the German group tries to repair the offence as quickly as possible, whereas the Austrian group is willing to “invest” more time in providing explanations/justifications for the offence (2003: 117, 120). Moreover, the authors find that the Austrian way of producing apologies is more “creative and person-oriented” (2003: 112) whereas the German way is more focused on conventionalised and routinised apology strategies. As far as the requests are concerned, Clyne et al. (2003: 128) reveal that the majority of the Austrian speakers provide reasons for the request before asking the favour. It is argued that invading someone's territory needs to be announced and explained in the Austrian culture (cf. Muhr 1994 for a similar result). Furthermore, it is found that the Austrian responses are considerably less direct than

the German responses (2003: 134).² These results are in line with Muhr's previous studies (1993, 1994).

While, of course, caution is necessary when summarising the findings of research into such a new "discipline" as intralingual regional pragmatics, the following remarks can be made at this early stage:

It has been found that Austrian German and German German share important similarities in that they employ the same inventory of head act strategies, external and internal modification devices. Differences, however, are also found both at the level of the strategy and – to an even greater degree – at the level of modification. As far as the speech act realisation strategies are concerned, Austrians have been found to be less direct than Germans. This finding regarding the directness level can be confirmed at the level of modification devices. As to external modification, Austrians have been found to engage in considerably more explanations and justifications than Germans. Also, the Austrians reveal a tendency to introduce their requests and apologies by introductory elements whereas the Germans get to the point right away. At the level of internal modification devices, the Austrian informants have been shown to employ considerably more conditional forms than German informants, who use predominately indicative forms.

Overall, it has been suggested that Austrians are less direct in their requesting and apologising behaviour than Germans and that the former tend to use face-saving strategies, whereas the latter tend to use face-threatening strategies. However, as far as the speech act of request is concerned, the data basis has been rather limited to date as there are only two studies on requests, the first of which (Muhr 1993) investigates only one request situation and the second of which (Clyne et al. 2003) studies ten speakers of Austrian German and ten speakers of German German. Therefore, this paper aims to contribute to the research on Austrian and German requests not only quantitatively by enlarging the data basis, but also qualitatively by investigating the requesting behaviour of high school students, a group of respondents which has not yet been studied.

3. Method

3.1 Informants

Two groups of students took part in the present study: one group of native speakers of Austrian German (n=19 [15f+4m])³ and one group of native speakers of German German (n=25 [16f+9m]).⁴ All respondents were high school students aged between fifteen and eighteen years. The Austrian respondents were from Graz, the German respondents from Münster. None of the respondents was influenced to any larger degree by other cultures. The respondents can, therefore, be described as a broadly homogeneous group on the basis of age, general level of education and personal concerns.

3.2 Elicitation

The instrument employed to elicit requests was a production questionnaire. The version employed in the present study was the open item discourse completion task (cf. Kasper 2000: 327–328). The items in the DCT included a situational description. As opposed to the classic format and the dialogue construction format of the DCT, neither an interlocutor initiation nor a rejoinder was provided. The context given in the description was designed to elicit the communicative act of request. The situations themselves were chosen based on a pilot study conducted in Austria to find out the types of requests which students of this age usually make. The situational descriptions used in the present study are based on the results of the pilot study (cf. Appendix 1 for an example). Apart from the translation for *final exam*, which is *Matura* in Austrian German and *Abitur* in German German, no cultural adaptations were made. Table 1 provides an overview of the six situations under discussion in the present study.

Table 1. Situational descriptions

Situation	Synopsis of Situation
<i>Maths</i>	You were ill so you ask your maths teacher to help you to catch up on the lessons you missed.
<i>School party</i>	You promised to help with the organization of the school party some time ago. It is drawing near though now and you do not have any time. You ask a schoolmate to do the work for you.
<i>Spain</i>	You want to go to Spain with a friend during the school term. You ask your teacher for permission.
<i>English</i>	You ask your teacher to reread your English essay because you think that you deserved a better mark.
<i>Exam</i>	You ask a classmate to swap examination dates because you have not studied yet.
<i>Presentations</i>	You ask a schoolmate to help you with the preparation of a presentation in English.

The situations were controlled for three major situational variables: social dominance varied depending on whether the interactions were with peers or teachers; social distance was equalised across all situations as speakers and addressees knew each other; the degree of imposition was high in all scenarios. All situations were carefully designed to facilitate participants' identification with the roles they had to play. Female participants had only female interlocutors, male participants only male interlocutors in order to exclude the possible influence of cross-gender effects.

The DCT was the elicitation device used in this study because, when carefully designed, it is a highly effective tool for studying the stereotypical semantic formulas and strategies of speech acts. Moreover, DCTs are useful for obtaining information on the speakers' sociopragmatic knowledge, allowing researchers to keep the speech act constant while social variables, such as social

distance, social dominance and the degree of imposition, are varied. In addition, it has been shown that data elicited using a DCT reflect the content of oral data despite their written form. However, in spite of the advantages which the DCT offers, there are also a number of drawbacks that need to be borne in mind: firstly, the DCT does not elicit authentic data as the subjects write or say what they *believe* they would say in an authentic situation. Furthermore, features related to the dynamics of a conversation, such as turn-taking and sequencing of action cannot be investigated. All paralinguistic and non-verbal elements are also excluded from investigation (cf. Kasper 2000). However, despite these disadvantages, the DCT has been found to be a very suitable data-gathering instrument when it comes to investigating speech acts from a cross-cultural and/or interlanguage pragmatics perspective (cf. Beebe & Cummings 1996 for a review of the strengths and weaknesses of DCTs).

3.3 Data analysis

The requests were analysed according to a coding system developed in Warga (2004) (cf. Appendix 2). This system is largely based on the CCSARP coding scheme in Blum-Kulka et al. (1989: 273–294) and the coding scheme in Held (1995: 473–486).

The analysis of request strategies first requires that the minimal unit which can realise a particular speech act be isolated (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989: 275). These so-called “head act” strategies are then divided into superstrategies and strategies. The following example of the coding of a request elicited from the present German German data serves to illustrate the scheme (cf. Appendix 2 for the coding scheme):

- (1) Situation *School party*, GG (German German):
 (...) *Könntest du vielleicht morgen Abend auf dem Schulfest meine Arbeit übernehmen? Ich möchte so gerne zu einer Party gehen (...).*
 (...) Could you perhaps take over my job tomorrow evening at the school party? I would really like to go to a party (...).
- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Head act strategy | <i>Könntest du vielleicht morgen Abend auf dem Schulfest meine Arbeit übernehmen?</i>
Could you perhaps take over my job tomorrow evening at the school party?
(superstrategy: query preparatory; strategy: ability question) |
| Internal modification | <i>vielleicht</i>
perhaps (downtoner) |
| External modification | <i>Ich möchte so gerne zu einer Party gehen.</i>
I would really like to go to a party
(grounder) |

The present analysis involves both quantitative and qualitative aspects. For the quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics are employed in the presentation of

results and, where possible and appropriate, also chi-square tests, which point to significant or insignificant differences between datasets. However, the study also includes a number of rather close detailed analyses which do not always permit statistical analyses. Therefore, the findings presented should be viewed as exploratory (cf. House 1996).

4. Results and discussion

The present analysis of requests in German German and Austrian German focuses on the head act strategies and also on any internal and external modification used in requesting. Let us turn first to the analysis of head act strategies.

4.1 Head act strategies

Table 2 presents an overview of the frequencies of head act superstrategies in German German (GG) and Austrian German (AG).

Table 2. Frequency of head act superstrategies in German German and Austrian German

	GG		AG	
	n	%	n	%
imperative	0	0.00	0	0.00
performative	40	35.71	42	41.18
locution derivable	5	4.46	1	0.98
want statement	2	1.79	1	0.98
query preparatory	60	53.57	55	53.92
hint	4	3.57	2	1.96
other	1	0.89	1	0.98
<i>total</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>102</i>	<i>100.00</i>

Table 2 reveals a rather uniform picture across the German and the Austrian data. Both groups clearly prefer the query preparatory strategy. It is interesting to note that the percentages of query preparatory strategies are the same in the German and the Austrian data sets (GG: 53.57% vs. AG: 53.92%). Moreover, it can be seen that for both Germans and Austrians, the second most popular strategy after the query preparatory is the performative, a rather direct request strategy. As compared to other request studies, the percentage of performatives may appear high (e.g. Mulken 1996, Hill 1997). This may relate to the fact that performatives containing a query preparatory, a rather frequent strategy in German, are subsumed under performatives (*Ich wollte dich bitten, ob du mir helfen kannst*, ['I wanted to ask you whether you could help me']; cf. Appendix 2 for more details). In addition, it seems that performatives are more frequent in German than in other languages, such as English. Kohnen (2000), for instance, who investigated directive performatives in two English language cor-

pora (Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus and London-Lund Corpus) comes to the conclusion that “speech act verbs in performative function are relatively rare and may be associated with specific functions and contexts” (Kohnen 2000: 184). For German, however, the situation seems to be different: For instance, in House & Kasper (1981), it is found that native speakers of German use more performatives (6.5) than native speakers of English (2.3). However, within the German native speaker group, the performative is only the fourth most frequently used request strategy. House & Kasper (1987) corroborate this finding insofar as their native speakers of German also use the performative more often than the two other groups of native speakers, namely English and Danish. The performative is the second most frequently used strategy after the query preparatory among these German speakers. However, it has to be noted that there is an important gap between the two strategies in House & Kasper’s study (query preparatory: 81.3; performative: 6.6). Similarly, Warga (2005) reports that French speakers use significantly fewer performatives than speakers of Austrian German.

On the whole, then, Table 2 shows that the German and Austrian informants realise their requests almost exclusively (GG: 89.29% vs. AG: 95.10%) using two strategies, namely the query preparatory and the performative. Apart from these strategies, want statements, locution derivables and hints are also employed in both data sets. However, none of these strategies are employed in more than 5% of all requests. Interestingly, the most direct request strategy, the imperative, is not used a single time, either by the German or by the Austrian informants.

Despite these similarities in the choice of request strategies on the super-strategy level, important differences are to be found between the two data sets on the level of the strategy.

Table 3. Frequency of query preparatory strategies in German German and Austrian German

	GG		AG	
	n	%	n	%
ability question	44	73.33	33	60.00
possibility question	3	5.00	12	21.82
willingness question	7	11.67	6	10.91
availability question	5	8.33	4	7.27
permission question	1	1.67	0	0.00
<i>total</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>100.00</i>

As can be seen from Table 3, the inventory of modal verbs which Germans and Austrians use when uttering a query preparatory request is the same. However, their distribution differs between the two data sets. Both the German and the Austrian informants reveal an overall preference for the ability question with the Germans employing ability questions slightly more frequently than the

Austrians (the difference is not, however, of statistical significance). Examples of this strategy can be seen in (2) and (3):

- (2) Situation *English*, GG:
Können Sie die Arbeit nicht noch einmal durchlesen?
Can't you read the paper once again?
- (3) Situation *English*, AG:
Könnten Sie mir vielleicht helfen?
Could you maybe help me?

Statistically significant differences are, however, found in the use of the possibility question. Example (4) includes a possibility question:

- (4) Situation *Maths*, AG:
Wäre es möglich, den Termin der Prüfung zu tauschen?
Would it be possible to change exam dates with you?

The Austrians employ this strategy significantly more often than their German counterparts (AG: 21.82% vs. GG: 5%, $\chi^2=6.22$, $p=0.13$, chi-square analysis). This is insofar interesting as it has been suggested by Held (1995) and Mulken (1996) that the possibility question has a more polite effect on the hearer than the ability question. The reason for this is not only that the ability question seems to be the standard query preparatory strategy in many languages (cf. Held 1995, Mulken 1996, Warga 2004), but also that the possibility question has an impersonal construction. Impersonal constructions have namely been suggested to be more polite than personal constructions due to the greater distance from the deictic centre. Consequently, it can be argued that Austrian requests are slightly more polite than German requests because they contain more possibility questions.

In sum, the above analysis shows that Germans and Austrians employ similar directness levels at the macro level, with striking similarities established in the use of the query preparatory strategy in the German and Austrian data. These findings contrast with those by Muhr (1993: 34–35) in that they do not reveal different levels of directness for the German German and the Austrian German request strategies. The reason for this difference may be a methodological one: Muhr (1993) did not only investigate different situations and a different group of respondents, he also used a different coding system. On the micro level, however, the analysis of the modal verbs used in query preparatories highlighted noteworthy differences between the two data sets. This corroborates Barron's (2005: 530) finding suggesting that in intralingual pragmatics "differences appear to be at a deeper level at least for offers and requests than is the case in inter-lingual variation."

4.2 Internal modification

Moving from speech act strategies to internal modification devices, we can see that the inventories of morphological and lexical internal modifications are identical in both data sets. Speakers of German German and speakers of Austrian German use conditional and past tense forms, downtoners, understaters, subjectivisers, and politeness markers in order to mitigate their requests.

Table 4 reveals that conditional, past tense and downtoners are employed frequently by both German and Austrian informants with past tense forms and downtoners being employed to a similar extent by the two groups (past tense: GG: 30.36% vs. AG: 28.43%; downtoners: GG: 41.96% vs. AG: 40.20%). The remaining internal modifications are rather infrequent; none of them are employed in more than 11% of the requests. In addition, except for the subjectiviser, their levels of use are similar in the German and the Austrian data.

Table 4. Frequency of internal modification devices in German German and Austrian German

	GG (n=112)		AG (n=102)	
	n	%	n	%
conditional	76	67.86	97	95.10
downtoner	47	41.96	41	40.20
past tense	34	30.36	29	28.43
understater	5	4.46	2	1.96
subjectiviser	4	3.57	11	10.78
politeness marker	5	4.46	6	5.88

Apart from the similarities, noteworthy differences are also found on the level of internal modification. A slight, but nonetheless statistically significant, difference concerns the frequency of the subjectiviser. This modifier is used by the Germans in 3.57% of all requests whereas it is used by the Austrians in 10.78% of their requests ($\chi^2=3.96$, $p=0.047$).⁵ Given that the requester expresses his/her subjective opinion in using a subjectiviser, it has a mitigating force. Consequently, request strategies containing a subjectiviser have a less direct effect on the requestee. Here is one example of a request containing a subjectiviser:

- (5) Situation *Maths*, AG:
 (...) *Es wäre echt toll, wenn Sie einmal nach der Schule mit mir den Stoff aufholen würden, den ich versäumt habe.*
 (...) It would be really great if you could help me catch up with the topic I missed sometime after school.

Let us now turn to the most striking difference between the German and the Austrian data. The conditional has been shown to play an important role as a modification device in both the German and the Austrian data. However, the frequency of its use in these two data sets is different. It can be seen from Ta-

ble 4 that the Austrians use the conditional significantly more often than the Germans (AG: 95.10%, GG: 67.86%). In Austrian German almost every request is mitigated by a conditional. The Germans, on the other hand, resort to the conditional form to a much lower degree. A chi-square analysis reveals that the difference between the two data sets is statistically significant ($\chi^2=4.90$, $p=0.027$). Here are two examples of requests, one by a speaker of German German using the indicative form, and a second one by a speaker of Austrian German using a conditional form:

- (6) Situation *School party*, GG:
 Hi! **Kannst** du eventuell bei dem Fest mithelfen, weil ich an dem Tag keine Zeit hab' ...?
 Hi! **Can** you perhaps help with the party because I don't have time that day.
- (7) Situation *School party*, AG:
 Hallo! ... Es handelt sich um das Schulfest. Ich sollte bei der Organisation helfen, aber ich bin verhindert. **Könntest** du nicht für mich helfen? ...
 Hello! It's about the school party. I'm supposed to help with the organization, but I can't. **Couldn't** you help instead of me?

The finding that Austrians use significantly more conditional forms when requesting is in line with previous research (cf. Muhr 1993: 35). Also, it may be one reason why Austrians are considered more indirect than Germans.

4.3 External modification

As regards external modification, Table 5 illustrates that the same devices are found to dominate in both data sets, with grounders being used by far the most frequently (cf. Faerch & Kasper 1989: 239 for a similar result) and disarmers, preparators, repairs and greetings used to a large extent. This overall picture is rather harmonious.

Table 5. Frequency of the external modification devices in German German and Austrian German

	GG (n=112)		AG (n=102)	
	n	%	n	%
grounder	126	112.50	121	118.63
disarmer	37	33.04	28	27.45
preparator	32	28.57	39	38.24
repair	8	7.14	29	28.43
greeting	61	54.46	26	25.49
gratification	9	8.04	8	7.84
promise of reward	11	9.82	13	12.75
offer of retreat	4	3.57	1	0.98

As far as grounders are concerned, the German and the Austrian informants are found to employ more than one grounder per request. The frequency of use is similar in the German and the Austrian data. Striking similarities are also found in the positioning of these grounders. Grounders can be either pre- or post-posed relative to the head act. It can be seen from Table 6 that both Germans and Austrians use grounders to an equal extent in pre- or post-position.

Table 6. Frequency of pre- and post-posed grounders in German German and Austrian German

	GG		AG	
	n	%	n	%
grounder pre-posed	61	48.41	61	50.41
grounder post-posed	65	51.59	60	49.59
<i>total</i>	<i>126</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>100.00</i>

Consequently, as opposed to previous research (cf. Muhr 1993: 34, Clyne et al. 2003: 137–138), no differences between German and Austrian German are found in the use of grounders.

As far as greetings (*Hallo* ['Hi']) and repairs (*Entschuldigung* ['Excuse me']), two modifiers with a similar function, are concerned, Table 5 reveals considerable differences between the German and the Austrian data, with the Germans using more than twice as many greetings as the Austrians and the Austrians using significantly more repairs than the Germans. In other words, it seems to be the case that Germans and Austrians use different strategies for performing the same goal, namely that of introducing a request.

The picture, however, becomes more varied when we analyse the external modification appearing before the head act in detail, i.e. the introductory elements of the requests. The following is an example of a request introduction elicited from the present German German data.

- (8) Situation *Maths*, GG:
Guten Morgen! Ich hätte gleich mal eine Frage. (...)
 Good morning! I have a question. (...)

The following analysis of the use of request introductions focuses on both quantitative and on qualitative aspects. Turning first to the former, we now discuss the number of external modifiers which Austrians and Germans use prior to the head act strategy.

Table 7 shows that for both groups the combination of two modifiers is the most frequent variant, with the Austrians and Germans combining two modifiers in around 30% of all requests (AG: 30.36% vs. GG: 30.39%). However, the figures for the use of less than two modifiers reveal that the Germans tend to use fewer elements in their introduction than the Austrians: while 40.18% of all requests contain zero or one modifier in the German German data, only 31.37% of the Austrian requests contain an equal number of introductory modi-

fiers. Similarly, only 29.46% of all German German requests contain between three and five modifiers, whereas in Austrian German, 38.24% requests contain more than two modifiers (both differences are, however, not statistically significant).

Table 7. Frequency of external modification devices (EM) used before the head act strategy

	GG		AG	
	n	%	n	%
0 EM	14	12.50	10	9.80
1 EM	31	27.68	22	21.57
2 EM	34	30.36	31	30.39
3 EM	19	16.96	29	28.43
4 EM	11	9.82	8	7.84
5 EM	3	2.68	2	1.96
<i>total</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>100.00</i>	<i>102</i>	<i>100.00</i>

Nonetheless, these results, which suggest that Germans “get to the point” faster than Austrians who “prepare” their requests more extensively, corroborate Muhr’s finding that:

Die DGWP [deutsche Gewährspersonen] verzichten hingegen weitgehend auf diese Einleitungselemente und kommen direkt “zur Sache” ... (Muhr 1993: 36)

(‘The German respondents largely do without these introductory elements and get to the point directly’ ...)

Moving from the quantitative to the qualitative aspect, we will now focus on one area which has been neglected to date in inter- and intralingual pragmatics, namely on the kind of combinations which Germans and Austrians use for their introductory sequence. It has to be noted that due to the close detail analyses, the following section does not permit statistical analyses. The findings must, therefore, be viewed as exploratory.

Our analysis reveals a rather different picture for the German German and the Austrian German data. What will be discussed in the following is the standard introduction to requests. Given that these introductions are highly variable, all kind of deviations are possible. It is, therefore, not possible to state whether an element is ultimately obligatory or optional.

For the Germans, the pattern is relatively straightforward: as can be seen in Figure 1, the standard German German introductions to requests begin with a greeting. This greeting is sometimes – not always – followed by an address term, such as a title or a name. The greeting (or address term, if present) is then followed either by a grounder or a preparator. If a preparator is employed, this is most of the time followed by a grounder.

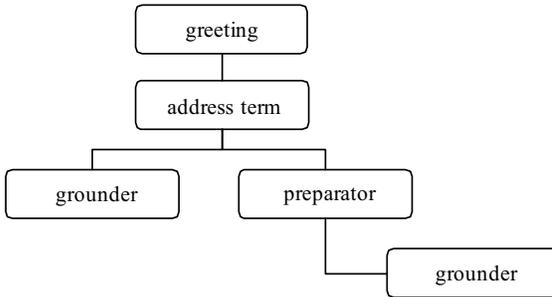


Figure 1. Structure of request introductions in German German

The following request represents a typical example:

- (9) Situation *Maths*, GG:
Hallo Frau...! [greeting + address term] *Ich war ja in den letzten zwei Wochen krank und ich verstehe einige Sachen in Mathe nicht.* [grounder] *Könnten Sie mir vielleicht dabei helfen?* [head act]
 Hello Mrs. ...! [greeting + address term] You know the way I was ill for the last two weeks and I don't understand some of the things in maths [grounder]. Could you perhaps help me with it? [head act]

The structure of request introductions in Austrian German, on the other hand, seems to be more varied.

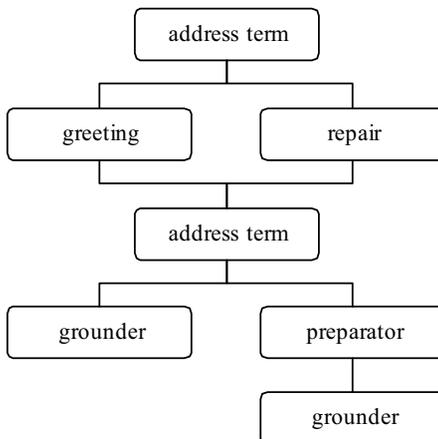


Figure 2. Structure of request introductions in Austrian German

Figure 2 reveals that Austrian requests are introduced either by a greeting or an anticipatory repair (*Entschuldigung* ['Excuse me']), the latter being a modifier which appears considerably less frequently in the German data. Both of these elements are very often either preceded or followed by an address term. The greeting or repair (plus address term) is followed by either a grounder or a preparator, just as in the German data. In the latter case, a grounder can follow. The following request illustrates this pattern:

- (10) Situation *English, AG*:
Tschuldigung. [repair] Ich hätte eine Bitte [preparator] und zwar ich hab' ein Englisch-Referat und bräuchte deine Hilfe, [grounder] hättest du einen oder zwei Nachmittage Zeit um mir zu helfen [head act]?!
 Excuse me [repair]. I would like to ask you something [preparator]. I have a presentation in English and I'd need your help [grounder]. Would you have one or two afternoons to help me?! [head act]

Another common structure for request introductions in the Austrian data is shown in Figure 3. In this case, an obligatory address term is followed by either a grounder or a preparator, the latter which is often followed by a grounder. This structure corresponds to the second part of the first structure (cf. Figure 2).

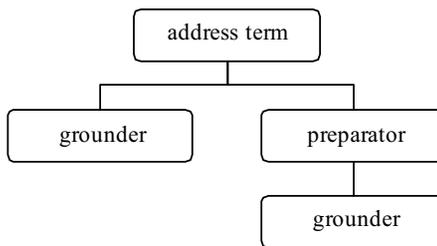


Figure 3. Structure of request introductions in Austrian German

In sum, differences on the level of the introduction are not only seen in the German informants' use of a smaller number of modifying elements in the introduction but also in their tendency to employ request introductions that are more formulaic in nature. The Austrians, on the other hand, use more elaborate introductions in that they tend to combine more modifying elements. Furthermore, the Austrians' introductions are more varied than the German ones. Both of these differences may contribute to the "more indirect" effect which the literature reports Austrian requests to have on the requestee (cf. Muhr 1993, 1994, Clyne et al. 2003). Indeed, it is interesting to note that Clyne et al. (2003: 111–112) come to a similar result in their analysis of apologies: they also observe a "less frequent use of formulaic responses" (2003: 111) on the part of the Austrian respondents.

5. Conclusion

To summarise then: similarities between German German requests and Austrian German requests have been found in the inventory of request strategies used, and also in the inventory of internal and external modifiers. In addition, Germans and Austrians have been found to share many similarities on a macro level as far as the distribution of request strategies is concerned. Differences were, however, found in the choice of modal verbs on the strategy level. In addition, as far as internal modification are concerned, Austrians were shown to use significantly more conditional forms than Germans. In addition, on the level of external modification, the Austrian respondents were found to use not only longer, but also more creative and less formulaic introductions than the German respondents.

The fact that the data were not collected from all over Austria and Germany, but from only one region in Austria and one region in Germany is certainly a drawback of the study. It might be argued, for instance, that the similarities and differences shown cannot be attributed to similar/different pragmatic styles in Austria and Germany but only to similar/different styles in Graz and Münster. However, the fact that Muhr (1993, 1994) comes to similar results in his studies on requests and apologies, although his respondents come from different regions in Austria and Germany, does not support this supposition. As a result, it is assumed that the data collected in this study represent samples of the national varieties of Austrian and German German. Another limitation of this study concerns the fact that despite the variation in the frequencies observed between the groups, the issue of individual variability was not addressed specifically.

Given that comparatively high levels of directness are often interpreted as instances of impoliteness and arrogance, and given that comparatively low levels of directness are often interpreted as instances of awkwardness (cf. Muhr 1995: 233), the differences we have found in this study can potentially cause serious misunderstandings between Germans and Austrians – not only on a social, but also on an economic level. Specifically, the findings of the present study suggest that Germans may appear rather direct to Austrian conversational partners and that, conversely, Austrians may seem rather indirect to Germans. Given the practical consequences of such interactional differences, there is little doubt but that there is an urgent need for further research in this area. In addition, in order to prevent inter- and intracultural misunderstandings that can be ascribed to a link between language and identity, it is strongly recommended to promote a sensitivity towards variation in pragmatic conventions in the classroom (cf. Barron 2005: 530–532).

Notes

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comments and suggestions. All limitations of the paper remain, of course, the responsibility of the author.

1. Other national varieties of German have not been studied with regard to pragmatic variation.
2. There is, however, one situation where there is some convergence on the part of the Germans towards the more indirect forms of requests, which are otherwise more typical of the Austrian speakers (cf. Clyne et al. 2003: 134–138).
3. The Austrian German data were collected in the framework of a larger study (Warga 2004).
4. I would like to express my thanks to Bettina Kraft who collected the German German data for this study.
5. It should be taken into consideration that the raw frequencies of subjectiviser use are small (GG: 4, AG: 11).

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Appendix 1

Sample item from the Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

Du musst in den nächsten Tagen ein großes Englisch-Referat halten und hast große Schwierigkeiten bei der Vorbereitung. Plötzlich erinnerst du dich an einen Schüler aus der Maturaklasse (du kennst ihn nicht gut), der zweisprachig ist. Du hättest gerne, dass er dir bei der Vorbereitung hilft. Das würde einen oder zwei Nachmittage dauern. Du weißt, dass dieser Bursche nicht viel Zeit hat, da er für die Matura lernen muss. Am nächsten Tag gehst du zu ihm in die Klasse und sagst:

(‘You have to give an important presentation in English in a few days time. You are having great difficulties preparing it. Suddenly, you remember that there is a pupil in one of your classes who is bilingual (you do not know him well). You would like him to help you with your presentation. That would take one or two afternoons. You know that this boy does not have much time because he has to prepare for his final high-school examinations. The next day you go to see him in his classroom and you say:’)

Appendix 2

Coding Scheme for requests

This coding scheme was developed on the basis of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and Held (1995). The version shown here contains only the categories relevant to the present study. Cf. Warga (2004: 264–269) for a complete version of the coding scheme.

Head act strategy

1. **Imperative** – Utterance in which the grammatical mood of the verb signals the illocutionary force.
Hilf mir bitte bei meinem Referat! (‘Please help me with my presentation!’)
2. **Performative** – Utterance in which the illocutionary force is named.
Ich bitte Sie, meine Schularbeit nochmals durchzulesen.
(‘I would ask you to read my paper once again.’)
Includes the combination of performative and *query preparatory*:
Ich wollte dich bitten, ob du mir bei meiner Arbeit helfen kannst.
(‘I wanted to ask you whether you could help me with my work.’)
3. **Locution derivable** – Utterance in which the illocution is directly derivable from the semantics of the locution.
Hilfst du mir bitte bei der Vorbereitung für das Referat?
(‘Will you help me to prepare my presentation please?’)
4. **Want statement** – Utterance which states the speaker’s desire that the act is carried out.
Ich hätte gern, dass Sie sich das nochmals anschauen.
(‘I would like you to have one more look at this.’)
5. **Query preparatory** – Utterance in which a preparatory condition of a request is addressed as conventionalised in the given language.
 - a. Ability question
Könntest du vielleicht morgen Abend auf dem Schulfest meine Arbeit übernehmen?
(‘Could you perhaps take over my job tomorrow evening at the school party?’)

- b. Possibility question
Wäre es möglich, den Termin der Prüfung zu tauschen?
(‘Would it be possible to change exam dates with me?’)
- c. Willingness question
Würdest du mir bei meinem Englisch-Referat helfen?
(‘Would you help me with my English presentation?’)
- d. Availability question
Hast du Zeit mir zu helfen? (‘Do you have time to help me?’)
- e. Permission question
Kann ich nächste Woche frei haben? (‘Can I have next week off?’)
6. **Hint** – Utterance which contains partial or no direct reference to objects of elements needed for the implementation of the act.
(Intent: getting the teacher to read the paper once again.)
Ich finde, dass Sie meine Schularbeit zu schlecht benotet haben. Ich habe sie mit den Arbeiten von Mitschülern verglichen und finde, dass meine Schularbeit ungerecht benotet ist.
(‘I think that the mark you have given me is too low. I have read some of my classmates’ essays and I think that my mark is not fair.’)

Internal Modification

1. **Conditional** – The conditional form has to be optional to be coded as internal modification, that is, it has to be replaceable by an indicative form.
Würden Sie mir morgen eventuell helfen? (‘Would you maybe help me tomorrow?’)
2. **Downtoner** – Sentential or propositional modifier employed to moderate the force of a request on the addressee.
vielleicht, eventuell (‘maybe, perhaps, possibly’); *mal, doch*
3. **Tense** – The past tense form has to be used with present time reference to be coded as internal modification.
Ich wollte Sie bitten, mir zu helfen. (‘I wanted to ask you to help me.’)
4. **Understater** – Adverbial modifier that under-represents the situation presented in the proposition
ein bisschen (‘a bit’)
5. **Subjectiviser** (Embedding in Trosborg 1995) – Element in which the speaker explicitly expresses his/her subjective opinion vis-à-vis the situation presented in the proposition.
tentative: *Ich wollte wissen, ob* (‘I was wondering whether’)
appreciative: *Du würdest mir einen großen Gefallen tun, wenn* (‘I’d really appreciate it if’)
subjective: *Ich denke, dass* (‘I think that’)
6. **Politeness Marker** – Element which represents an effort to seek cooperation
bitte (‘please’)

External Modification

1. **Grounders** – The speaker gives reasons, explanations, or justifications for the request.
(Könntest du eventuell deinen Prüfungstermin mit mir tauschen?) Ich brauche unbedingt noch mehr Zeit zum Lernen.
(‘[Could you maybe change exam dates with me?] I desperately need more time to prepare for my exam.’)

2. **Disarmer** – The speaker tries to remove any potential objections the hearer might raise upon being confronted with the request.
Ich weiß, Sie haben im Moment viel zu tun, aber
(‘I know you are very busy at the moment, but’)
3. **Preparator** – The speaker prepares the hearer for the request to come by announcing that he/she will make a request (e.g. by asking about the potential availability of the hearer).
Ich würde dich gerne um etwas bitten. (‘I would like to ask you to do something.’)
4. **Repair** – A repair is an element whose function is to alert the hearer’s attention to the ensuing request by apologizing in advance for any anticipated disturbance which the request may entail for the requestee.
Entschuldigung. (Ich habe eine Frage.) (‘Excuse me. [I have a question.]’)
5. **Greeting** – A greeting is an element whose function is to alert the hearer’s attention to the ensuing request.
Hallo. (‘Hi.’)
6. **Gratification** – The speaker expresses anticipatory gratitude for the potential fulfilment of the request.
Das wäre sehr nett von dir. (‘That would be very kind of you.’)
7. **Promise of reward** – The speaker promises a reward which is due on fulfilment of the request.
Ich werde das wieder gut machen. (‘I will make it up to you.’)
8. **Offer of retreat** – The speaker explicitly offers the hearer the possibility of not complying with the request.
Ich kann verstehen, wenn du mir nicht helfen kannst.
(‘I can understand it if you can’t help me.’)

PART III

Spanish and French

Different realizations of solidarity politeness

Comparing Venezuelan and Argentinean invitations*

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1. Introduction

The study of the realization of different speech acts in Spanish and how it reflects preferences for different politeness strategies has captivated the attention of many Hispanists in the last twenty years. Although most studies have concentrated on specific varieties of Spanish, interest in intralingual regional pragmatic variation (cf. Placencia 1994, 1998; Márquez Reiter & Placencia 2005) is on the rise.¹ Among these studies, it is worthwhile mentioning Placencia's comparison of openings in telephone calls in Peninsular Spanish and Ecuadorian Spanish (1994), Delgado's study of directives in Colombian and Peninsular Spanish (1995), Puga Larrain's analysis of mitigation in Chilean and Peninsular Spanish (1997), Achugar's study of compliments in Spanish-speaking countries (2001, 2002), Márquez Reiter's analysis of Peninsular Spanish speakers' and Uruguayan Spanish speakers' requesting strategies (2002), Márquez Reiter & Placencia's study of Ecuadorian and Uruguayan service encounter interactions (2004), and García's comparative analysis of Venezuelans' and Peruvians' strategies in reprimanding and responding to a reprimand (2003, 2004a).² Pragmatic variation in two varieties of Ecuadorian Spanish is the subject of Placencia's study (this volume). Findings from these different contrastive empirical studies point towards sociopragmatic variation. In fact, Márquez Reiter & Placencia show that

in some varieties of Spanish [Argentinean, Peninsular, Uruguayan, Venezuelan] politeness appears to have more of an orientation towards positive politeness or expressing solidarity, interdependence, affiliation towards the interlocutor and, in others [Ecuadorian, Peruvian, Mexican]... both orientations appear to have equal importance. (Márquez Reiter & Placencia 2005: 190)

This paper contributes to this body of research by comparing the realization of one speech act, inviting, by two Spanish-speaking cultural groups, Venezuelans and Argentineans, in an informal setting where participants hold a (-D -P)

relationship; that is, where there is small social distance between participants and no power differential (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987). For the purpose of this paper, Hancher's (1979) categorization of inviting is used.

Hancher (1979: 6) classifies inviting as a "hybrid speech act that combine[s] directive with commissive illocutionary force." As such, he states, "when I invite you to do something, I am indeed trying to direct your behaviour. But more than that is involved... it [an invitation] commits the speaker to a certain course of action itself" (1979: 6). Invitations to informal or formal get-togethers are frequent in the Spanish-speaking world, but variations in the way they are issued and the way the interaction develops, may occur not only because of different individual personality traits, but more importantly, because of the speakers' different cultural values and perspectives (cf. Spencer-Oatey 2000). For some cultural groups, issuing an invitation, due to its partial directive force, is the same as requesting, i.e. it may be considered a negative face-threatening act on the hearer because it impinges on his/her freedom of action. Consequently, "speakers may hesitate ... for fear of exposing a need or risking the hearer's loss of face" (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a: 11–12). On the other hand, an invitation can also be perceived as a face-boosting (cf. Bayraktaroğlu 1991) or face-enhancing act (cf. Sifianou 1992) since by issuing an invitation the speaker is expressing his/her approval of the interlocutor and offering him/her something that might be to his/her liking (cf. Iglesias Recuero 2001). Studies focusing on invitations in the Spanish-speaking world show these differences. They include the work of Ruiz de Zarobe (2000/2001), Hernández-Flores (2001), Ferrer & Sánchez Lanza (2002) and García (1992, 1999, 2007). The first two scholars have studied invitations in Peninsular Spanish while Ferrer & Sánchez Lanza and García have focused on invitations in different varieties of Latin American Spanish.

Ruiz de Zarobe (2000/2001) studied invitations using Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989c) classification of head acts and supportive moves and Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies. In his study, based on data obtained from written questionnaires answered by university personnel in the Basque country, he concludes that the choice of politeness strategy depends on the social distance between interlocutors. Interlocutors who have a close and intimate relationship prefer using positive politeness strategies; interlocutors who do not have a close relationship, prefer deference politeness strategies.

Similarly, Hernández Flores' (2001) in her study of Peninsular Spanish invitations points out that "invitations... in Spanish colloquial conversations are polite mainly because *solidarity* gets all the stress by the interactants" (2001: 37). In addition, she asserts that insistence is not perceived as face-threatening by the participants in her study mainly because there was a high degree of intimacy between them, and because Spaniards "[do] not seem to worry about Brown and Levinson's *negative face* in the same way as other cultures do" (2001: 38).

Ferrer & Sánchez Lanza (2002) described the issuing of invitations in Rosario, Argentina basing their study on observations of naturally+ occurring interactions and questionnaires. Although their study does not specifically fo-

cus on politeness strategies, their findings lead them to distinguish between implicit and explicit invitations, i.e. those that include a performative verb and those that do not. In Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989a: 18) terms, these would correspond to impositive and conventionally indirect strategies respectively. Ferrer & Sánchez Lanza further distinguished between mitigated and reinforced invitations depending on whether the invitations included mitigators, such as interrogatives, or reinforcers, such as repetitions.

García studied Peruvian, Venezuelan and Argentinean invitations (1992, 1999, 2007 respectively). In her study of Peruvian invitations, García (1992) found that invitations were made in two stages, i.e. an invitation-refusal stage and an insistence-response stage. In addition, it was found that while participants preferred an expression of respect and deference towards the interlocutor when issuing an invitation, as soon as they received a refusal, they changed from the expression of deference to a preference for the expression of camaraderie.

Venezuelan participants also went through these two stages, but preferred the expression of solidarity to that of deference from the very beginning (cf. García 1999). They also used strategies that threatened their own and their interlocutor's face almost equally. The message they conveyed was that they liked and approved of the interlocutor and wanted to be liked and approved of by her, even at the expense of their own and their interlocutor's freedom of action.

Similar to Venezuelans, Argentinean participants preferred expressing solidarity to conveying deference. In her study, García (2007) shows that Argentineans expressed solidarity to a much greater extent than deference and imposed extensively on both themselves and the interlocutor. Participants, she notes, preferred "to curtail their own and the interlocutor's freedom of action rather than present themselves and/or the interlocutor as (un)likable" (2007: 299). Furthermore, she states that

[t]hey preferred to boost their own and their interlocutor's positive face, sending a strong message that they liked and approved of the interlocutor and wanted to be liked by him or her. Sacrificing their own and their interlocutor's freedom of action was a further expression of the extent to which they would go to ensure their closeness and protect their *vínculo* (Fitch 1998). (García 2007: 299)

Based on this research on invitations, and in order to study the similarities and/or differences between Venezuelans' and Argentineans' invitations and their perception of them as negative face-threatening acts or as positive face-boosting acts, a theoretical framework for the behaviors studied is developed. The data are then used to test the following null hypotheses when issuing an invitation.

Venezuelans and Argentineans do not differ in their preference for

1. deference or solidarity politeness strategies as head acts.
2. mitigators or aggravators as supportive moves.
3. strategies threatening their own or the interlocutor's negative or positive face.

2. Theoretical framework

Strategies used by Venezuelan and Argentinean participants to issue an invitation are first classified in terms of head acts and supportive moves. The head acts are then in turn categorized along a directness-indirectness continuum (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a, 1989b). Following this analysis, Brown & Levinson's (1987) framework is used to classify these strategies as bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness and off record.³ At the same time, Scollon & Scollon's terminology (1983) is used to group bald on record and positive politeness strategies into a solidarity politeness system (henceforth SPS) and, negative politeness and off record strategies into a deference politeness system (DPS).

In their study of requests, a directive speech act (cf. Searle 1975), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b: 275), define head acts as "the minimal unit[s] which can realize a request; [they are] the core of the request sequence." Speakers might use one or more head acts to make a request, or, in our case, to issue an invitation, a type of request which has not only the directive force of a request but a commissive illocutionary force as well, as discussed above.

Supportive moves, are "unit[s] external to the request, which modif[y] its impact by either aggravating ... or mitigating ... its force" (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 276). Again the number used will vary from speaker to speaker or from culture to culture.

As mentioned above, head acts are classified along a directness-indirectness continuum (Blum-Kulka 1989: 45) as impositives, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect. Impositives, which, ordered in terms of levels of directness, include mood derivables, explicit performatives, hedged performatives, obligation statements, locution derivables, and want statements, are the most direct strategies. They are "... syntactically marked as such [by], for example, imperatives, or by other verbal means that name the act ..." (Blum-Kulka 1989: 46). In addition to these categories, we have included concealed commands (Placencia 1992) under impositives as a strategy appearing in our data (see example 5 below). Conventionally indirect strategies, on the other hand, are those that "... realize the act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalised in the language" (Blum-Kulka 1989: 47). They are characterized by their pragmatic duality, that is, "a[n invitation] interpretation is part of [their] meaning potential, co-present with the literal interpretation" (Blum-Kulka 1989: 45). Conventionally indirect strategies include suggestory formula and query preparatory strategies. Finally, non-conventionally indirect strategies "realize the [invitation] ... by reliance on contextual clues" (Blum-Kulka 1989: 47). They are characterized by their pragmatic vagueness, that is they "...[display] a multiplicity of meanings and [tend] to be nonspecific..." (Blum-Kulka 1989: 45) and include strong hints and mild hints. Mild hints, however, do not appear in the data we examine here.

Impositive head acts are included within the SPS category while conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect strategies appear under the

DPS category. Supportive moves are classified as mitigators and aggravators, depending on whether they mitigate or intensify the force of the invitation.

2.1 Method

2.1.1 *Subjects*

Data were collected in Caracas, Venezuela in 1993 and in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2001 using a role-play scenario. Venezuelan participants included twenty adults, ten males and ten females; males averaged 34 years, and females 29. 15 informants were members of the upper-middle class, and five were members of the middle-middle class. The subjects interacted with a 40-year-old female Venezuelan Spanish speaker, a high school graduate. The Argentinian participants also included twenty adults, ten males and ten females. All were native speakers of Spanish. The average age was 23 for both males and females. The group was diverse in terms of education and occupation, including ten members of the middle-middle class and ten members of the upper-middle class. The subjects interacted with a 27-year-old male Argentinian Spanish speaker, a university student.

2.1.2 *Tasks*

Each of the participants engaged in one role-play interaction. Prior to the role-play, both the subjects and the interlocutor received oral instructions to engage in a natural conversation. They were informed that their conversation would be videotaped. The instructions (given in Spanish) set forth the following situation for both parties, i.e. for the subject and the interlocutor:

Your (the subject's) birthday is this Saturday. You meet a friend (the interlocutor) on the street and invite him/her to your party. You (the interlocutor) cannot go.

After this, each subject and his/her "friend" improvised conversations. They were not given further instructions or a time limit to develop their participation, since the purpose was to allow them to have maximum control over their conversational interchange.

2.1.3 *Data analysis*

Videotapes of the forty role-played interactions were transcribed using Atkinson & Heritage's (1984) conventions (see Appendix). Following this, the head acts and supportive moves were identified and the relevant strategy employed identified.

To test the statistical significance in the use of different strategies within a single cultural group, a proportion test was used. When comparing the strategies used by the two different cultural groups, a difference-of-proportion test was used. These tests establish two different levels of significance, at .05 (95%) or at .01 (99%). According to Kachigan (1986: 185), "[t]ypically, we set $\alpha=.05$ or $\alpha=.01$, so that if the hypothesis H_0 is in fact true, we will erroneously reject it only 1 time in 20, or 1 time in 100, respectively." Now, "the value of

$z=1.96$ [is] needed to discredit the null hypothesis at the $\alpha=.05$ level of significance” (1986: 184–185). “For a significance level $\alpha=.01$, a value of z greater than 2.58 is needed” (1986: 165).

2.1.4 *Strategies used*

Making an invitation, a commissive directive act, is considered face-threatening and in need of mitigation (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987). The present investigation of Venezuelans’ and Argentineans’ invitations enables us to examine whether Brown & Levinson’s assertion can also be applied to these two cultural groups, and if intralingual regional pragmatic variation is observed.

Venezuelan and Argentinean invitations involved three distinct stages: invitation-response, insistence-response, and wrap-up. Although a variety of head acts were used in the present invitation data, different strategies were emphasized at each stage. These were classified as impositives (SPS) (mood derivables, explicit performatives, obligation statements, concealed commands, locution derivables, want statements); conventionally indirect (DPS) (suggestory formulae, query preparatories); and, non-conventionally indirect (strong hints). In addition to directive strategies, participants used other head acts which can be classified either as SPS (accepting excuses, expressing understanding, dismissing excuses, defying/accusing/complaining, requesting information, compliments, emotional appeals and promising rewards) or as DPS (grounders, imposition minimizers and expressing sorrow). They also used supportive moves, both mitigators (preparators, grounders, minimizing disappointment, providing information, promising rewards, imposition minimizers) and aggravators (emotional appeals and indebting the interlocutor).

Although for the most part there was a clear differentiation between those strategies that were exclusively used as head acts and those that were only used as supportive moves, some strategies (grounders, emotional appeal, imposition minimizer and promising reward) were used as head acts or as supportive moves in the different stages of the interactions. For example, a grounder, frequently used as a supportive move to mitigate the strength of an invitation or insistence, was sometimes used as a head act. The sample presented below illustrates this. The abbreviations AM or VF are used here and in the rest of the document to identify the participants; A stands for Argentinean, V for Venezuelan, M for male and F for female.

- (1) VM *cónchale Lola* [*tienes que ir*
 darn Lola [*you have to go*
 Friend [*tú sabes cómo es él. dos palitos, dos traguitos y*
 empieza así a tirarme punticas y no se lo voy a soportar. Ya la última vez acuérdate de de de de la situación del disgusto que tuvimos y después todo el mundo se pone mal y entonces es preferible que no vaya.
 [*you know how he is. two drinks, two drinks and*
 [*he starts throwing his darts at me and I am not going to put up*

- with it. Last time, remember the unpleasant situation we had and then everybody feels bad and then it is better for me not to go.
- VM *yo hice esa fiesta para que tú fueras.*
I organized this party so that you would go
- Friend *sí: : yo sé César pero él también va a ir (0.2) y tú sabes cómo es la cosa.*
 yes, I know César but he is also going to go (0.2) and you know how things are.
- VM *haz que no lo ves.*
 pretend you don't see him

In this sample, after receiving the friend's refusal, VM insists that his friend go to his party using a grounder as a head act (*Yo hice esa fiesta para que tú fueras*), telling her that she is the reason why he organized the party.

Definitions and examples of the strategies used as head acts and supportive moves in the three different stages of the interaction follow.

2.2 Solidarity politeness strategies

2.2.1 Directive strategies (*Impositives*)

1. *Mood derivable*. This is a strategy type wherein “[t]he grammatical mood of the locution conventionally determines its illocutionary force as a[n] invitation]. The prototypical form is the imperative. However, functional equivalents such as infinite forms and elliptical sentence structures express the same directness level” (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 278–279).

- (2) AM *bien. Mirá el sábado festejo mi cumpleaños, van a venir todos los chicos del grupo*
 good. See I am celebrating my birthday on Saturday, all the guys are coming
- Friend *no me digas, no sabía que era –*
 don't say. I didn't know it was –
- AM *sí, venite más o menos a las 8 de la noche.*
 yes, **come** more or less at 8 p.m.
- Friend *ché, sabés que me vas a matar, sabés que me voy voy en la noche a Córdoba*
 hey, you know, you're going to kill me, you know I am going to Cordoba tonight

2. *Explicit performative*. These are statements where “[t]he illocutionary intent is explicitly named by the speaker by using a relevant illocutionary verb” (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 279).

- (3) AF *mirá justo que te encontré aprovecho de – y así te invito así no (te tengo que) llamar y así. Yo cumplo este sábado y y y*

see now that I see you I am going to take advantage of – and then **I invite you** so (I don't have to) call and so. My birthday is this Saturday and and and

3. *Obligation statement*. These are “utterance[s] ... which state the obligation of the hearer to carry out the act” (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 18).

- (4) VF = *bien bien. sabes que es mi cumpleaños el sábado?*
 = fine fine. You know my birthday is on Saturday?
 Friend *sí?*
 yeah?
 VF ***y tienes que venir.***
 and you have to come.

4. *Concealed commands*. As part of their insistence, some participants issued concealed commands, that is assertions where “on the surface C is not commanding A, but only asserting something” (Placencia 1992: 81).

- (5) AM *eh el sábado por la noche nos reunimos, si te vas, no sé, te vas el domingo, no sé algo, vas otro fin de semana*
 ah Saturday night we're getting together, if you leave, I don't know, **go on Sunday, I don't know, do something, go another weekend**
 Friend *pasa es que ya tenemos los pasajes sacados y*
 the thing is that we already have the tickets and

5. *Locution derivable*. These are strategies where “[t]he illocutionary intent is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution” (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 279). This strategy, as opposed to obligation statement presented above, is less imposing and/or demanding on the interlocutor.

- (6) VF *mira, sabes que el sábado cumplo años?*
 hey, do you know my birthday is on Saturday?
 Friend *A: y qué bueno.=*
 O: h good.=
 VF [[***vas a venir?***]
 [[**are you coming?**]

6. *Want Statement*. These are statements for which “[t]he utterance expresses the speaker's desire that the event denoted in the proposition come about” (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 279).

- (7) AM *bue: escucháme eh vamos a hacer vamos a hacer una fiesta en casa así que bueno, no?, quiero que vengas, no, van a estar todos los amigos, y bueno es importante que vos estés, si no que no estés*
 we: listen to me uh we're going to have we're going to have a party at home so that well, no, **I want you to come**, no, all our

friends are going to be there, and well it is important that you be there, if you're not there

2.2.2 Non-directive strategies

7. *Accepting excuse.* Some participants accepted the excuse provided by the interlocutor.

- (8) Friend *voy a tratar, pero la verdad que lo veo difícil porque ya lo arreglé la semana pasada para ir*
I will try, but the truth is I see it difficult to comply because I made arrangements to go last week
- AF ***bueh 'tá bien, cualquier cosa: : me avisás***
well it's ok, anythi: : ng let me know

8. *Expressing understanding.* One participant expressed understanding with the interlocutor's dilemma.

- (9) Friend *de cualquier manera si yo puedo llegar a escaparme, sabés que voy*
Anyway if I can get out of it, you know I will go
- AF ***bueno, no, tampoco quiero provocar un inconveniente en el trabajo ni mucho menos, pero bueno yo te avisaba obviamente no no me gustaría que después te enteraras***
well, no, I don't want to cause a problem at work at all, but well I was letting you know, obviously I wouldn't like you to find out later

9. *Dismissing excuse.* Speakers' insistence also involved contesting the validity of the excuse given by the interlocutor, sometimes in very strong terms.

- (10) Friend *sabés que me voy a Córdoba*
You know I am going to Cordoba
- AM ***no, no, me estás jodiendo***
no, no, you are bothering me
- Friend *no, de veras*
no, really

10. *Defying/accusing/complaining.* Upon receiving a refusal, many participants insisted by protesting, complaining or accusing their interlocutor.

- (11) Friend *no, no, no de veras, o sea, te digo podemos vernos otro día, o sea, la semana que viene, nos podemos, no sé, reunirnos a tomarnos un café, te digo ya tenemos los pasajes sacados, me matan, me matan, o sea, yo no voy y me matan*
no, no, no really, that is, I am telling you we can see each other another day, I don't know, get together, have a coffee, I am telling you we have the tickets, they'll kill me, they'll kill me, that is, I don't go and they'll kill me

- AM *claro, pero quién es esta chica? tu novia te dice algo y tenés que ir?*
of course, but who is that girl? **Your girlfriend tells you something and you have to go?**

11. *Requesting information.* Not satisfied with the interlocutor's excuse, some participants made further inquiries related to the excuse given.

- (12) Friend *sabés que se casa mi hermano*
you know my brother is getting married
AF *a qué hora se casa tu hermano?*
at what time is your brother getting married?
Friend *Y y la fiesta empieza calculo ahí a las 10 pero eso va ser una fiesta que sigue hasta la mañana*
And and the party starts I think at 10 but that is going to be a party until the next morning
AF *A: : , bueno entonces qué podemos hacer?*
A: h, well then what can we do?

12. *Compliment.* Participants paid compliments to their interlocutor as another insisting strategy to get the interlocutor to accept the invitation.

- (13) AM *ay: : no. mirá sabés que vos sos una persona importante sabés que están, sabés que te esperan*
o: : h no. see you know **you are an important person, you know they are, you know they are waiting for you**

13. *Promising reward.* In order to make the invitation more attractive, Venezuelan participants enhanced either the place where it was going to take place, the people attending the party, and/or the food/drinks/entertainment that were going to be offered.

- (14) VM *=tú sabes que este sábado es mi cumpleaños. tengo una fiesta pero tienes que ir Obdulia, va a ser una fiesta a todo dar, va a se en en la en la Quinta Esmeralda, en la Quinta Esmeralda imagínate*
=you know that my birthday is this Saturday Obdulia. I am having a party but you have to go Obdulia, **it's going to be a big one, it's going to be at the Quinta Esmeralda, at the Quinta Esmeralda imagine that**

14. *Making/accepting future plans.* Both Venezuelans and Argentinians overwhelmingly promised and/or accepted a future encounter with the invitee, thus assuring that their relationship remained unblemished.

- (15) VM *vamos a hacer ésta, vamos a celebrar, vamos a hacer otra celebración*
we are going to do this one, we are going to celebrate, we are going to have another celebration

Friend	= <i>y vamos a Boca de Uchire?</i> =and we will go to Boca de Uchire?
VM	<i>nos vamos a Boca de Uchire.</i> we will go to Boca de Uchire

15. *Accepting refusal*. Some participants accepted the interlocutor's refusal of their invitation.

(16) Friend	= <i>porque: no, porque mis hi: jas tú sabes yo no tengo con quien deja: rla, y 'tonces en la noche, vivo muy lejos y me complica,</i> =becau: se no, because my daugh: ters you know I don't have anyone to lea: ve her with, and then at night, I live very far and it gets complicated,
VF	= <i>ay, bueno, bueno qué lástima!</i> = ah, okay okay what a shame
Friend	= <i>pena, sí:</i> =sad, ye: s

2.3 Deference politeness strategies

2.3.1 Directive strategies (Conventionally indirect)

16. *Suggestory formula*. For strategies of this type "the illocutionary intent is phrased as a suggestion by means of a framing routine formulae" (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 280).

(17) VM	<i>cumplo treinta y seis.</i> I turn thirty six.
Friend	<i>treinta y seis? ah yo creía que tú eras un poquito mayor que yo</i> thirty six? Oh I thought you were a little older than I am.
VM	= <i>es viviendo en Caracas.</i> =it's living in Caracas.
Friend	<i>anda así, sí. (LF) muy bien.</i> ah, that's better. (LF) very good.
VM	<i>sí, mira y tú a propósito por qué no vienes?</i> yes, look and you by the way why don't you come?

17. *Query preparatory*. These strategies are defined as "utterance[s] [which contain] reference[s] to a preparatory condition for the feasibility of the [invitation], typically one of ability, willingness, or possibility, as conventionalized in the ... language" (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 280).

(18) VF	<i>okey, 'tonces quisiera que tú fueras. tú tienes tiempo el sábado?, de ir?</i> okay, then I'd like you to go. do you have time on Saturday?, to go?
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2.3.2 Directive strategies (Non-conventionally indirect)

18. *Strong hint.* These are strategies whereby “[t]he illocutionary intent is not immediately derivable from the locution; however, the locution refers to relevant elements of the intended illocutionary and/or propositional act” (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 280).

- (19) AM *así es la vida, larga y dura según dicen. ché escucháme, justo, mirá, nos encontramos en mejor tiempo imposible. el sábado cumpla años, no sé si te acordás. pero bueno*
 that’s life, long and tough, they say. Hey, listen to me, I was just, see, we couldn’t meet at a better time. **my birthday is on Saturday**, I don’t know if you remember, but well
- Friend *ah no, no sé, yo con las fechas soy terrible, no recuerdo ni el de*
 oh no, I don’t know, I am terrible with dates I don’t even remember that of
- AM *’tá bien, no importa. La verdad es que yo tampoco soy muy bueno con las fechas y ni me importan, pero bueno voy a hacer así en casa una fiesta, van los chicos, los los compañeros de secundaria y todo este*
 ok, no problem. The truth is that I am not very good with dates and I don’t care, but well **I am going to have a party in my house** the guys are coming, our high school friends and all that

2.3.3 Non-directive strategies

19. *Not indebteding the interlocutor.* Some participants accepted the interlocutor’s refusal of their invitation (and her excuses) by dismissing the negative effects of that refusal.

- (20) Friend *viste? entonces el lunes y de verdad el sábado pues. >sábado y domingo> voy a tener que estudiar. tengo que estudiar. entonces bueno, después que sacamos esos exámenes nos echamos*
 you see? then on Monday and for sure Saturday, <Saturday and Sunday> I will have to study. I have to study. then well, after we finish those exams then we
- VM *bueno la verdad es que una cosa así es muy () lo que pasa es que se trataba de ti, pero bueno no importa, nos hablamos luego.*
well the truth is that something like that is very () what happens is that it was about you, but then it doesn’t matter, we’ll talk later.

20. *Expressing sorrow.* A number of participants expressed sorrow after hearing the interlocutor’s refusal.

- (21) VF =no puedes?
 =you can't?
 Friend =te soy sincera. no puedo porque ya tengo otro compromiso.
 I'll be honest with you. I can't because I have already made other plans
 VF [[a: y cuánto lo siento. y no te podrías
 [[o: h I'm very sorry. And you couldn't
 Friend [[ya:
 [[already

2.4 Supportive moves

2.4.1 Mitigators

21. *Preparator*. Preparators are utterances through which “the speaker prepares his or her hearer for the ensuing [invitation] by announcing that he or she will make a[n invitation], by asking about the potential availability of the hearer for [complying with the invitation], or by asking for the hearer’s permission to make the [invitation] – without however giving away the nature or indeed the content of the [invitation]” (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 287). The following illustrates an announcement:

- (22) AM *mirá, te quería decir algo*
hey, I wanted to tell you something
 Friend =qué es?
 =what is it?

22. *Providing information*. Preceding or following the head act through which the invitation was made, participants provided their interlocutor with an abundant amount of information that would make attending the party more enticing. This information included not only date, time and place where the party was going to take place, but also information, for instance, on food, drinks and people attending.

- (23) AM *me gustaría que vinieras, estoy invitando a mis amigos*
 I would like you to come, **I am inviting some of my friends**
 Friend *el sábado?*
 on Saturday?
 AM *el sábado, el sábado a la noche, para comer algo, unas cervecitas y bueno*
Saturday, Saturday at night, to eat something some beer and well

23. *Grounder*. Grounders express reasons/explanations/justifications supporting the invitation.

- (24) VM *tú sabes que este sábado es mi cumpleaños. Tengo una fiesta pero tienes que ir Obdulia, va a ser una fiesta a todo dar, va*

a ser en en en la en la quinta Esmeralda, en la quinta Esmeralda imagínate.

you know my birthday is this Saturday. I'm having a party but you have to go Obdulia, **it's going to be a big one, it is going to be at the Emerald club, at the Emerald Club, just imagine**

Friend =niñ: : :

=gir: : :

VM =*va a ser a todo dar. mis veintiún años por favor, tengo que celebrarlos.*

=**it is going to be a big one. my twenty first birthday please, I have to celebrate it.**

24. *Imposition minimizer.* These are strategies through which “the speaker tries to reduce the imposition placed on the hearer by his request” (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 288). In the following example, the speaker minimizes the type of party that she is going to have, thus making it easier to accept.

(25) VF *sí, bueno porque es mi cumpleaños y pienso hacer una reunión=*
yes, well because it is my birthday and I am thinking about having a party=

Friend *ah=*

oh=

VF =*pero nada así: :*

=**but nothing big: :**

Friend =*ajá*

=*uhum*

VF =*del otro mundo pero: es una reunión: n=*

=**of the other world but: : it's a party:=**

Friend =*exacto fa* [[*miliar*

=*exactly with the fa* [[*mily*

VF [[*familiar*

[[*family*

25. *Minimizing disappointment.* Upon receiving an intensive apology for the refusal, some participants mitigated their disappointment.

(26) Friend *perdonáme, perdonáme o sea sé que me vas a matar pero bueno, sea, tenéme piedad, tenéme piedad.*

forgive me, forgive me that is, I know you're going to kill me, but well, have mercy on me, have mercy on me.

AM *bueno, sí, 'tá bien, no no hay drama,*
well, yes, that's ok, no there's no drama

2.4.2 Aggravators

26. *Emotional appeal.* To strengthen their invitation participants appealed to the interlocutor's emotions highlighting the importance of their presence at the party.

- (27) AM *bue: escucháme eh vamos a hacer vamos a hacer una fiesta en casa así que bueno, no, quiero que vengas, no, van a estar todos los amigos, y bueno es importante que vos estés, si no que no esté*
 we: listen to me uh we are going to have a party at home so well, no, I want you to come, no, I want you to come, all our friends are going to be there, **and well it is important that you be there, if you're not, if you are not**
- Friend =*me vas a matar*
 =you're going to kill me
- AM *por qué?*
 why?
- Friend *sabés que me voy a Córdoba*
 you know I am going to Cordoba.

27. *Indebting the interlocutor.* Some participants finished the interaction by indebting the interlocutor because of her refusal as in the following sample:

- (28) Friend *ay Yadira. bueno es que se me hace muy difícil. de repente lo celebramos la otra semana, el tuyo. seguimos la rumba y nos vamos de feria.*
 o: h Yadira. Well it's that it's very difficult for me. We can probably celebrate yours next week. We will continue the party and go to – have a good time
- VF *pero vas a tener que pagar tú*
but you will have to pay
- Friend *ah bueno. por supuesto. ése es tu regalo.*
 oh well, of course. That will be your present

After having presented the different strategies used in the three different stages of the interaction (invitation-response, insistence-response, and wrap-up), we will now proceed to analyze each stage in detail.

3. The three stages of Argentinean and Venezuelan invitations

3.1 First stage: Invitation-response

The first stage, invitation-response, began after the exchange of greetings and pleasantries, which in many cases was very extensive due to the participants' seemingly pervasive need to establish rapport with each other. This stage ended with the interlocutor's first refusal.

A variety of head acts was used to invite in this first stage. The following illustrates a sample of this first stage. Head acts and supportive moves are labeled.

- (29) VF *hola Obdulia cómo está?, cómo le va?*
hello Obdulia how are you?,
- Friend *bien Dalia, y tú?*
fine Dalia, and you?
- VF *chévere. cómo está todo?*
great. how's everything going?
- Friend *bien, y las niñas?*
fine, and the girls?
- VF *bien, cómo está la familia?*
fine, how's the family?
- Friend *bien, toditos chica.*
fine, everybody.
- VF *oye Obdulia yo qui↑sie:ra que fueras para la casa el*
Sábado↓
hey, Obdulia I ↑wanted you to come to my house on
Saturday↓ HA: Want statement
- Friend *el Sábado? por qué?*
Saturday? why?
- VF *sí, bueno porque es mi cumpleaños y pienso hacer una*
reunión=
yes, well because it's my birthday and I am thinking about
having a party= SM: Grounder
- Friend *ah=*
oh=
- VF *=pero nada así: : del otro mundo*
=but nothing big: : SM: Imposition minimizer
- Friend *=ajá*
=uhum
- VF *pero: es una reunión: n=*
but: : it's a party:= SM: Grounder
- Friend *exacto fa* [[miliar=
exactly with the fa[[mily=
- VF *te veía* [[familiar pero como tenía tiempo que no
[[a family gathering but since I hadn't seen
you in a while SM: Grounder
- Friend *ay bueno >pero estoy traba [jando full<*
yeah well >but I am wor [king full<

As the sample above shows VF's first three turns were devoted to the exchange of greetings and pleasantries. It is only in her fourth turn that VF issues the invitation using an impositive head act – want statement – (*oye Obdulia yo qui↑sie:ra que fueras para la casa el sábado*↓), which she mitigates later with grounders (*sí, bueno porque es mi cumpleaños y pienso hacer una reunión*=; *es una reunión: n exacto fa*[[miliar=; *como tenía tiempo que no te*

veía) and an imposition minimizer (*pero nada así: : del otro mundo*). This first stage ends with the first refusal provided by the friend (*ay bueno >pero estoy traba[jando full<*).

As observed above, the impositive strength of the head act seems to be defused both by the rich initial exchange of pleasantries and by the mitigating supportive moves accompanying the head act. The friend seems to participate in the tone established by VF, latching her responses to hers and maintaining an animated tone. There is no expression of discomfort at any point of the interaction.

Table 1. Distribution of Venezuelans' and Argentines' strategies across the types used as head acts and supportive moves in the invitation-response stage⁴

		Argentines		Venezuelans	
		n	%	n	%
<u>Head acts</u>	<i>total</i>	23	29	32	38
Solidarity politeness strategies (SPS)	<i>total</i>	13	57	18	56
Impositives					
1. Mood derivable		2	9	2	6
2. Explicit performative		3	13	1	3
3. Obligation statement		1	4	2	6
4. Locution derivable		3	13	2	6
5. Want statement/question		4	17	11	34
Deference politeness strategies (DPS)	<i>total</i>	10	43	14	44
Conventionally indirect	<i>total</i>	4	17	4	13
1. Suggestory formula		3	13	1	3
2. Query preparatory		1	4	3	9
Non-conventionally indirect	<i>total</i>	6	26	10	31
1. Strong hint		6	26	10	31
<u>Supportive moves</u>	<i>total</i>	55	71	52	62
Mitigators	<i>total</i>	54	98	52	100
1. Preparator		1	2	9	17
2. Grounder		2	4	33	63
3. Providing information		51	93	7	13
4. Imposition minimizer		0	0	3	6
Aggravators	<i>total</i>	1	2	0	0
1. Emotional appeal		1	2	0	0
Total # of strategies		78		84	

Table 1 illustrates the overall distribution of strategies used by Venezuelans and Argentines in the first stage of "making an invitation." Head acts are classified either as solidarity or deference strategies and supportive moves as mitigators or aggravators. Table 1 shows that both groups had a slight preference for SPS over DPS as head acts (56% vs. 44% for Venezuelans and 57% vs. 43% for Argentines); results from a difference of proportions tests shows that the null hypothesis that there was no difference between the two cultural groups cannot be rejected ($Z=0.086$).

Since the interactions studied here represent conversations in a –D –P situation, the results can be compared to those by Ruiz de Zarobe (2000/2001) and Hernández Flores (2001) mentioned above; that is, participants signified approval and liking of the interlocutor and used a significant number of SPS due to their close and intimate relationship. However, while SPS emphasized the bonds of friendship, participants also used DPS to issue the invitation in a less imposing fashion.

It is important to highlight that although both groups used almost the same type of strategies to issue their invitation, Venezuelans used more head acts than Argentineans (32 vs. 23). Among the impositives, two important differences are noticeable. After announcing their birthday, Argentineans used a locution derivable strategy or what Ferrer & Sánchez Lanza (2002) term an implicit invitation. This strategy accounted for 13% of their strategies. Although Venezuelans used this strategy as well, they did so to a much lower scale (6%). Argentineans also preferred explicit performatives to a much larger extent than Venezuelans (13% vs. 3%). This difference, however is not statistically significant ($Z=0.64 < 1.96$). Venezuelans, on the other hand, employed want statements/questions to a larger extent than Argentineans (34% vs. 17% respectively). Again, however, the difference is not statistically significant ($Z=1.12 < 1.96$). Nevertheless, these tendencies seem to reflect a stronger inclination on the part of Argentineans to be more direct in their invitations, (apparently) imposing on their interlocutor and curtailing his/her freedom of action. Venezuelans, on the other hand, appear to leave more options open for refusal when they state that they want the interlocutor to attend the party.

As far as the DPS used are concerned, there were no notable differences between these two cultural groups. Both preferred strong hints, which accounted for 31% of the Venezuelans' head acts and 26% of the Argentineans'.

Head acts accounted only for 38% of the strategies used by Venezuelans and 29% of those used by Argentineans. The other 62% and 71% respectively, of their strategies were supportive moves. While, as seen above, these supportive moves may take the form of either mitigators or aggravators, the preference for mitigators was overwhelming for both Venezuelans and Argentineans (100% and 98% of the total number of supportive moves respectively).

The difference in the type of supportive moves used by each cultural group, however, was marked. Argentineans preferred providing information about the party as an enticer to a much larger extent than any other supportive move (93%). Venezuelans also promised such rewards, providing the invitee with information as an enticer to attend, but this strategy was not used as heavily, accounting for only 13% of their supportive moves. The difference between Argentineans' and Venezuelans' providing information as an enticer was highly significant ($Z=14.15 > 2.58$). Instead, Venezuelans provided excuses, reasons and justifications (=grounders) to support their invitation (63% of their supportive moves). Argentineans only used these to a very small extent (4%). Again, this difference was highly significant ($Z=5.56 > 2.58$).

Summing up the first stage of making an invitation, we find that Venezuelan and Argentinean Spanish speakers made a much higher use of SPS than

DPS as head acts and mitigators rather than aggravators as supportive moves. However, their strategy choices and the weight they had in the interaction were different. To further visualize the ritual of making an invitation, we now look at the second stage, insistence-response.

3.2 Second stage: Insistence-response

The insistence-response stage immediately follows the interlocutor declining the invitation and ends when the participant accepts the friend's refusal. This stage is where most of the interaction took place in the present data. Venezuelan and Argentinean participants used one or more of nine head acts to insist. An example of the second stage follows. Again, head acts and supportive moves are labeled. This time the sample illustrates an Argentinean female participant:

- (30) Friend *sabés que=*
you know that=
AF *=es un imposible. no, no escucho explicaciones ni nada*
=it is impossible. no, I don't want to listen to explanations or
anything, HA: Dismissing an excuse
es mi cumpleaños, primer cuarto de siglo
it's my birthday, first quarter of a century SM: Grounder
así que vas a ir, no?
so you are going to come, no? HA: Locution derivable
Friend *sabés que se casa mi hermano*
you know my brother is getting married
AF *a qué hora se casa tu hermano?*
at what time is your brother getting married?
HA: Requesting information
Friend *Y y la fiesta empieza calculo ahí a las 10 pero eso va ser una*
fiesta que sigue hasta la mañana
And and the party starts at 10 more or less but it's going to be
a party that will go on until the morning
AF *aj: : bueno*
uj: : well HA: Accepting an excuse
entonces qué podemos hacer?
then what can we do? HA: Requesting information
vos, vos no vas a venir a mi cumpleaños?
you, you are not going to come to my birthday?
Friend *Y y vos sabés que a mí me encantaría, pero-*
And and you know that I would love to, but-
AF *-pero qué? es el casamiento por la iglesia el Sábado?*
-but what? is the religious ceremony on Saturday?
HA: Requesting information
Friend *todo, va a ser el civil primero y después por la iglesia-*
everything, the civil ceremony is going to be first, then the
religious one-

- AF *bueno, entonces hagamos una cosa, nosotros pensábamos encontrarnos, yo tengo un grupo de 12 amigas de la facultad que va a venir y unos chicos amigos de mi casa que nos vamos a encontrar a la tarde, tipo 5: 30-6: 00 porque como vamos a hacer un asado va a ser largo así que hacemos una cosa,*
 well, then let's do something, we were thinking about getting together, I have a group of 12 girlfriends from college that are coming and some male friends from my neighbourhood, we are going to meet in the afternoon, around 5: 30-6: 00 because since we are going to have a roast it is going to be long so let's do something. SM: Grounder
- por qué no te venís temprano,*
 why don't you come early, HA: Concealed command
- estás un rato con nosotros, festejamos o tomamos, brindamos por mi cumpleaños y después te vas al casamiento de tu hermano.*
 you stay there with us for a while, celebrate or drink, celebrate my birthday and then you go to your brother's wedding.
- Friend *puede ser, no te puedo prometer nada porque estoy muy muy lleno de laburo. yo te llamo y arreglamos.*
 maybe, but I can't promise you anything because I have a lot of work. I will call you and we make arrangements.
- AF *pero vas a trabajar el día del casamiento de tu hermano? but are you going to work the day of your brother's wedding?*
HA: Requesting information
- Friend *sí, sí, hasta la la tarde sí, después nos vamos a ahí,*
 yes, yes, until the the afternoon, then afterwards we go there
- AF *AY no te puedo creer, qué decepción! (LF)*
 OH I can't believe you, what a disappointment! (LF)
HA: Expressing sorrow

The above sample shows a very strong insistence where the participant dismisses the excuse provided by the friend (*es un imposible. no, no escucho explicaciones ni nada*), makes a number of requests for specific information as if doubting the veracity of the friend's excuse or willingness to attend (*a qué hora se casa tu hermano?; entonces qué podemos hacer?; pero qué? es el casamiento por la iglesia el sábado?; pero vas a trabajar el día del casamiento de tu hermano?*), provides a locution derivable invitation (*así que vas a ir, no?*) and a series of concealed commands (*por qué no te venís temprano, estás un rato con nosotros, festejamos o tomamos, brindamos por mi cumpleaños y después te vas al casamiento de tu hermano*). Although the first refusal is accepted (*Aj: : bueno*) and later on the participant ends the interaction expressing sorrow that the friend will not be able to attend the party (*ay no te puedo creer, qué decepción! [LF]*), the exchange is very powerful indeed. In fact, it is only mitigated by grounders (*es mi cumpleaños, primer cuarto de siglo; nosotros pensábamos encontrarnos, yo tengo un grupo de 12 amigas de la facultad que va a venir y unos chicos amigos de mi casa que nos vamos a encontrar a la*

tarde, tipo 5: 30-6: 00 porque como vamos a hacer un asado va a ser largo). Nevertheless, although AF's insistence might be considered imposing by different cultural groups, the friend's response does not lead us to infer that this was the case. He gives a number of reasons for not being able to comply with the invitation (his brother's wedding, and details of when it will take place, and information of being overworked), but does not complain about being imposed upon or being asked for specific information about his affairs. Consequently, we assume that the participant's "imposition" and questioning is understood as interest on her part to have him attend her party.

Table 2 shows the distribution of strategies across the types used by participants as head acts and supportive moves during the second stage of "making an invitation" in the Venezuelan and Argentinean data.

Results from Table 2 show that Venezuelan and Argentinean participants drew their head acts from a large variety of strategy types in the insistence stage. This time, Argentines were more verbose than Venezuelans (133 vs. 89 strategies), and more verbose than they themselves had been in the first stage where they only used 78 strategies. This use of multiple strategy types made the Argentinean participants' insistence stronger and created added pressure on the interlocutor to accept the invitation. Venezuelans' insistence, on the other hand, was similar to their initial invitation in terms of the number of strategies they used (84 and 89). That is, they put the same amount of effort into inviting as they did into insisting.

Examining the type of strategies used shows that in the case of Argentines a much larger percentage of request proper strategies again fell under the category of impositives than under conventionally indirect (92% vs. 8%). Within the impositive category, their preferred strategies were mood derivables, obligation statements and locution derivables (41%, 22% and 22% respectively). Looking at Venezuelans' request proper strategies, on the other hand, it can be observed that impositives, although predominant, accounted for only two thirds of their strategies, the other third were conventionally indirect strategies (67% vs. 33%). Venezuelans' preferred impositives were obligation statements, want statements/questions and locution derivables (44%, 11% and 11% respectively). Venezuelans did not use mood derivables, explicit performatives or concealed commands as their Argentinean counterparts did. The difference between Venezuelans' and Argentines' use of impositives head acts, however, is not significant ($Z=1.54 < 1.96$).

In addition, in the course of the interaction, Venezuelan and Argentinean participants used other head acts that were not request strategies. Again, Argentines used SPS strategies almost exclusively (93%) but these accounted for only 52% of Venezuelans' strategies. The difference between Venezuelans' and Argentines' use of non-request SPS head acts in the second stage of the interaction was statistically significant at the 99% level ($Z=5.94 > 2.58$).

Table 2. Distribution of Venezuelans' and Argentines' strategies across the types used as head acts and supportive moves in the insistence stage

		Argentines		Venezuelans	
		n	%	n	%
<u>Request head acts</u>	<i>total</i>	37	100	9	100
Solidarity politeness strategies (SPS)	<i>total</i>	34	92	6	67
Impositives	<i>total</i>	34	92	6	67
1. Mood derivable		15	41	0	0
2. Explicit performative		1	3	0	0
3. Obligation statement		8	22	4	44
4. Concealed command		2	5	0	0
5. Locution derivable		8	22	1	11
6. Want statement/question		0	0	1	11
Deference politeness strategies (DPS)	<i>total</i>	3	8	3	33
Conventionally indirect	<i>total</i>	3	8	3	33
1. Suggestory formula		0	0	1	11
2. Query preparatory		3	8	2	22
<u>Non-request head acts</u>	<i>total</i>	68	100	64	100
Solidarity politeness strategies (SPS)	<i>total</i>	63	93	33	52
1. Accepting an excuse		19	28	0	0
2. Expressing understanding		1	1	0	0
3. Dismissing excuse		11	16	9	14
4. Defying/accusing/complaining		5	7	10	16
5. Requesting information		18	26	0	0
6. Emotional appeal		7	10	7	11
7. Compliment		2	3	0	0
8. Promising reward		0	0	7	11
Deference politeness strategies (DPS)	<i>total</i>	5	7	31	48
1. Grounder		0	0	12	19
2. Imposition minimizer		0	0	11	17
3. Expressing sorrow		5	7	8	13
Total # of SP head acts		97	92	39	53
Total # of DP head acts		8	8	34	47
Total # of head acts		105	79	73	82
<u>Supportive moves</u>	<i>total</i>	28	21	16	18
Mitigators	<i>total</i>	28	100	14	88
1. Grounder		3	11	8	50
2. Minimizing disappointment		6	21	0	0
3. Providing information		19	68	0	0
4. Promising reward		0	0	6	38
Aggravators	<i>total</i>	0	0	2	13
1. Emotional appeal		0	0	2	13
Total # of strategies		133		89	

In addition to this, the main difference between these two groups lies in their emphasis on different strategies. Argentines accepted the excuse, but also dismissed it (28% and 16% of their strategies respectively). Venezuelans, on

the other hand, did not accept the excuse at all; they only dismissed it (14%). The difference between Argentines' and Venezuelans' dismissal of the excuse, however, was not statistically significant ($Z=0.39 < 1.96$).

Additionally, Argentines wanted to know the reasons that kept the invitee from accepting the invitation, a clear imposition on the interlocutor's privacy (26% of their strategies), but Venezuelans did not. That is, in their effort to obtain their friend's compliance with their invitation, Argentinean participants deemed it necessary to request further private information that would justify why they were being rejected. Although, as stated above, this could be perceived as a violation of the interlocutor's privacy, the invitees did not respond negatively. In fact, they provided the information requested, as example (30) above shows. This seems to reflect a similarity between Argentinean and Peninsular Spanish speakers who, in friendly interchanges, might not exhibit a preference for "shielded private conversation" as Thurén notes (1988: 219). Venezuelans, on the other hand, did not accept the excuses they received, and did not make any further inquiries about the reasons that kept their friend from accepting.

These results might indicate that within the deference-solidarity continuum, Argentines might be closer to the solidarity end than Venezuelans who in this case preferred to balance their call for closeness with distancing strategies.

As far as supportive moves are concerned, Argentinean participants used mitigators exclusively, whereas Venezuelans used a small number of aggravators (13%). However, a difference of proportion test does not reject the null hypothesis of no difference between Venezuelans and Argentines in their use of supportive moves. Again, Argentines provided information as a further enticement to convince the invitee (68%), but Venezuelans did not. Instead, as in the first stage, they gave reasons to support why they were issuing the invitation (i.e. grounders). In a hypothetical intercultural interchange, Argentines' additional information about the party could be perceived as an expression of self-affirmation (cf. Thurén 1988) or self-enhancement, while Venezuelans' reasons/explanations/justifications might be perceived as a self-humbling or self-defense strategy. Venezuelans might be taken aback by Argentines' request for further information about the reasons for their refusal and by Argentines' self-enhancement. These, in turn, might perceive Venezuelans' not asking for specific information as lack of real interest in their compliance, and their providing of reasons and justifications as insecure in their desire to have a party. However, as Häggkvist & Fant (2000) state, these predictions are hard to make, since in intercultural communication participants might adapt their own strategies based on their perception of the situation at hand. To complete our discussion of "making an invitation," we now look at the third stage, wrap-up.

3.3 Third stage: Wrap-up

The third stage of the interaction starts when the person issuing the invitation accepts the invitee's refusal. An example of a third stage interaction follows.

- (31) VM =*bueno mira tú te lo pierdes*,
 =well see you are going to miss it, HA: Accepting refusal
hay una cantidad de cosas,
 there's a number of things, SM: Providing information
una amiga mía vino de Francia,
 a friend of mine came from France, SM: Providing information
- Friend [EHHH
 [AHHH
- VM [*y trajo unos quesos hay unos vinos*.
 [and brought some cheese there is some wine
 SM: Providing information
- Friend *ay, qué divino. Me guardas un poquito, sí?*
 oh, how wonderful. You save some for me, ok?
- VM *Y hay guarapita también.*
 And there's hard liquor too. SM: Providing information
- Friend *guarapita.*
 hard liquor.
- VM *guarapitas sí.*
 hard liquor, yes.
- Friend *Y cervecitas.*
 And beer.
- VM *Y cervecitas.*
 And beer. SM: Providing information
- Friend *también hay vinito.*
 there's also wine.
- VM *también.*
 also.
- Friend *ay muy bien, bueno Homero me guardas ese poquito de vinito
 de cervecitas y de guarapitas para la semana que viene.*
 ah, very good, well Homero you save a little bit of wine of
 beer and of hard liquor for next week
- VM *vamos a hacer ésta, vamos a celebrar, vamos a otra
 celebración*
 we are going to do this, we are going to celebrate, we'll
 have another celebration
 HA: Making/accepting future plans
- Friend =*Y vamos a Boca de Uchire?*
 =And we'll go to Boca de Uchire?
- VM *nos vamos a Boca de Uchire*
 we'll go to Boca de Uchire
 HA: Making/accepting future plans
- Friend *okey, okey, así yo le digo al que te conté,* [okey.
 okay, okay, so I will tell you know who, [okay

VM	[ajá y lo hacemos en Boca de Uchire [right and we'll do it in Boca de Uchire. <u>HA: Making/accepting future plans</u>
Friend	<i>Y lo hacemos en Boca de Uchire. chau pues Homero</i> And we'll do it in Boca de Uchire. bye then Homero
VM	<i>bueno.</i> okay.
Friend	<i>encantada de verte.</i> great seeing you.
VM	<i>bueno.</i> okay.

As seen above, the interaction finished in a congenial tone despite the refusal that had been received. The inviter offered information about what the invitee was going to miss out (*hay una cantidad de cosas, y trajo unos quesos hay unos vinos, Y hay guarapita también, Y cervecitas*) and made future plans (*vamos a otra celebración Vamos a hacer ésta, vamos a celebrar, nos vamos a Boca de Uchire, ajá y lo hacemos en Boca de Uchire*).

Table 3 shows the distribution of strategies used by Venezuelans and Argentineans in this wrap-up stage. As Table 3 shows, Venezuelan and Argentinean participants used a variety of head acts to wrap up their invitation. Although Venezuelans were much more verbose than their Argentinean counterparts (58 vs. 21 strategies respectively), just as they were in the first stage, Argentineans continued using request/inviting strategies in this stage whereas Venezuelans did not (12 vs. zero). 83% of the Argentineans' request/inviting head acts fell under the category of impositives; the other 17% were conventionally indirect strategies. Argentineans' additional non-request head acts were very limited (6) and included only making/accepting future plans (under the SPS category). Venezuelans also made and accepted future plans, but to a larger extent (68% of their non-request head acts). In addition, they also accepted the refusal (SPS), did not indebted the interlocutor and expressed sorrow (DPS), strategies not used by Argentineans in this stage. The difference between Venezuelans' and Argentineans' non-request head acts is highly significant ($Z=6.32>2.58$).

As far as supportive moves are concerned, Argentineans used mitigators exclusively, and again one third of these were providing information strategies. That is, until the very last moment of the interaction, Argentinean participants continued enticing the interlocutor to convince him/her to attend the party. Venezuelans, again, refrained from doing so. On the other hand, two thirds of Venezuelans' supportive moves were aggravators, emotional appeal and indebteding the interlocutor (39% and 28% respectively). Argentineans did not use aggravators. The difference in the use of supportive moves between Venezuelans and Argentineans is significant.

Table 3. Distribution of Venezuelans' and Argentines' strategies across the types used as head acts and supportive moves in the wrap-up stage

		Argentines		Venezuelans	
		n	%	n	%
<u>Request head acts</u>	<i>total</i>	12	0	0	0
Solidarity politeness strategies (SPS)	<i>total</i>	10	83	0	0
Impositives					
1. Mood derivable		8	67	0	0
2. Locution derivable		2	17	0	0
Deference politeness strategies (DPS)	<i>total</i>	2	17	0	0
Conventionally indirect					
1. Suggestory formula		2	17	0	0
<u>Non-request head acts</u>	<i>total</i>	6	100	40	100
Solidarity politeness strategies (SPS)	<i>total</i>	6	100	34	85
1. Making/accepting future plans		6	100	27	68
2. Accepting refusal		0	0	7	19
Deference politeness strategies (DPS)	<i>total</i>	0	0	6	15
1. Not indebting the interlocutor		0	0	4	10
2. Expressing sorrow		0	0	2	6
Total # of SP head acts		16	88	34	85
Total # of DP head acts		2	11	6	15
Total # of head acts		18		40	
<u>Supportive moves</u>	<i>total</i>	3		18	
Mitigators	<i>total</i>	3	100	6	33
1. Minimizing disappointment		1	33	0	0
2. Grounder		1	33	3	17
3. Providing information		1	33	0	0
4. Promising reward		0	0	3	17
Aggravators	<i>total</i>	0	0	12	67
1. Emotional appeal		0	0	7	39
2. Indebting the interlocutor		0	0	5	28
Total # of strategies		21		58	

3.4 Summing up issuing an invitation

In order to give an overall picture of the strategies used throughout the three stages of the interaction, it is important to look at the invitation as a whole. Table 4 does this by presenting the aggregated results from Tables 1, 2 and 3.

The detailed information presented in Table 4 shows Argentinean participants' preference for SPS (impositives) over DPS (conventionally indirect and/or non-conventionally indirect strategies), 79% vs. 21% respectively. This made their invitations solidarity-based, yet very strong. It is also observed that Venezuelans, similar to their Argentinean counterparts, preferred SPS over DPS throughout the interaction, 59% vs. 41%, yet the weight of the former SPS strategies was not as strong in the interaction as was the case with Argentine-

ans. The difference in the use of SP request strategies by Argentines and Venezuelans is statistically significant at the 95% level ($Z=2.22>1.96$). Among the SPS used, important differences between these two cultural groups are noticeable. Argentines used mood derivable more extensively than Venezuelans (35% vs. 5%) and this difference is highly significant ($Z=3.94>2.58$). In addition, they used locution derivable to a larger extent than Venezuelans (18% of their inviting strategies vs. 7% of Venezuelans'), thus allowing little chance for the interlocutor to disagree, but this difference is not statistically significant ($Z=1.52<1.96$). Venezuelans' preferred SP strategy, on the other hand, was the want statement/question (29%) which left the interlocutor the door open for refusal. The difference in use of this strategy by Argentines and Venezuelans was significant at the 95% level ($Z=2.35>1.96$).

Considering the non-request strategies, differences between these two groups also became apparent. First, Argentines used SPS almost exclusively (93% of their non-request head acts), whereas over one third of Venezuelans' non-request strategies were DPS (36%). The difference between Venezuelans' and Argentines' use of SPS in their non-request strategies is significant ($Z=4.39<2.58$). Again, the null hypothesis of no preference is rejected. By the same token, the difference between Venezuelans' and Argentines' overall use of SPS (including both request and non-request head acts) is highly significant ($Z=3.89>2.58$). Thus, the null hypothesis of no preference is rejected.

The more extensive preference for SPS by both groups, and especially by Argentines, illustrates a close relationship between participants, a relationship where imposition is not only accepted but expected. Venezuelans' higher use of DPS might indicate more willingness to negotiate than to impose, thus creating camaraderie with the interlocutor, without sacrificing respect and distance. In other words, the inviter made every possible effort so that the interlocutor would accept the invitation, but left the decision up to him/her without further inquiring about the reasons that kept him/her from accepting.

In terms of supportive moves, Argentinean participants overwhelmingly preferred mitigators over aggravators (99% vs. 1%) throughout the three stages. Venezuelans, on the other hand, although preferring mitigators, did not discard the use of aggravators (84% vs. 16%). Argentines' preferred mitigator was providing information (83% of their supportive moves) whereas Venezuelans favored providing reasons/explanation/justifications for the party. So, it could be said that Argentines expressed their closeness and solidarity using enticers that could be perceived as a self-enhancement strategy, and Venezuelans did so by justifying their invitation, which in turn, could be perceived as a humbling or self-defense strategy.

To look at this interaction from a somewhat different point of view, we now examine how the strategies used threatened the speaker's and/or the interlocutor's face.⁵ That is, we can examine whether they threatened the speaker's and/or the interlocutor's positive face (their desire to be liked and approved by others), or the speaker's and/or the interlocutor's negative face (their desire not to be imposed on by others). Table 5 presents the quantitative information.⁶

Table 4. Strategies used by Argentinean and Venezuelan participants in the three stages of the interaction

		Argentineans		Venezuelans	
		n	%	n	%
<u>Request head acts</u>	<i>total</i>	72	50	41	28
Solidarity politeness strategies (SPS)	<i>total</i>	57	79	24	59
1. Mood derivable		25	35	2	5
2. Explicit performative		4	6	1	2
3. Obligation statement		9	13	6	15
4. Concealed command		2	3	0	0
5. Locution derivable		13	18	3	7
6. Want statement		4	6	12	29
Deference politeness strategies (DPS)	<i>total</i>	15	21	17	41
Conventionally indirect	<i>total</i>	9	13	7	17
1. Suggestory formula		5	7	2	5
2. Query preparatory		4	6	5	12
Non-conventionally indirect	<i>total</i>	6	8	10	24
1. Strong hint		6	8	10	24
<u>Non-request head acts</u>	<i>total</i>	74	50	104	72
Solidarity politeness strategies (SPS)	<i>total</i>	69	93	67	64
1. Accepting an excuse/refusal		19	26	7	7
2. Expressing understanding		1	1	0	0
3. Making/accepting future plans		6	8	27	26
4. Dismissing excuse		11	15	9	9
5. Defying/accusing/complaining		5	7	10	10
6. Requesting information		18	25	0	0
7. Emotional appeal		7	10	7	7
8. Compliment		2	3	0	0
9. Promising reward		0	0	7	7
Deference politeness strategies (DPS)	<i>total</i>	5	7	37	36
1. Grounder		0	0	12	12
2. Imposition minimizer		0	0	11	11
3. Not indebting the interlocutor		0	0	4	4
4. Expressing sorrow		5	7	10	10
Total # of SP head acts		126	86	91	63
Total # of DP head acts		20	14	54	37
Total # of head acts		146		145	
<u>Supportive moves</u>	<i>total</i>	86		86	
Mitigators	<i>total</i>	85	99	72	84
1. Preparator		1	1	9	10
2. Grounder		6	7	44	51
3. Minimizing disappointment		7	8	0	0
4. Providing information		71	83	7	8
5. Promising reward		0	0	9	10
6. Imposition minimizer		0	0	3	3
Aggravators	<i>total</i>	1	1	14	16
1. Emotional appeal		1	1	9	10
2. Indebting the interlocutor		0	0	5	6
Total # of strategies		232		231	

Table 5. Strategies threatening the speaker's and interlocutor's face

		Argentineans		Venezuelans	
		n	%	n	%
<u>Strategies threatening the I's face</u>	<i>total</i>	117	50	90	39
Strategies threatening the I's negative face	<i>total</i>	101	44	71	31
1. Mood derivable		25	11	2	1
2. Explicit performative		4	2	1	0.4
3. Obligation statement		9	4	6	3
4. Concealed command		2	1	0	0
5. Want statement		4	2	12	5
6. Locution derivable		13	6	3	1
7. Strong hint		6	3	10	4
8. Query preparatory		4	2	5	2
9. Suggestory formula		5	2	2	1
10. Indebting the interlocutor		0	0	5	2
11. Compliment		2	1	0	0
12. Preparator		1	0.4	9	4
13. Requesting information		18	8	0	0
14. Emotional appeal		8	3	16	7
Strategies threatening the I's positive face	<i>total</i>	16	7	19	8
1. Dismissing excuse		11	5	9	4
2. Defying/accusing/complaining		5	2	10	4
<u>Strategies threatening the S's face</u>	<i>total</i>	115	50	141	61
Strategies threatening the S's negative face	<i>total</i>	110	47	131	57
1. Grounder		6	3	56	24
2. Providing information		71	31	7	3
3. Expressing understanding		1	0.4	0	0
4. Minimizing disappointment		7	3	0	0
5. Making/accepting future plans		6	3	27	12
6. Accepting excuse/refusal		19	8	7	3
7. Promising reward		0	0	16	7
8. Imposition minimizer		0	0	14	6
9. Not indebting the interlocutor		0	0	4	2
Strategies threatening the S's positive face	<i>total</i>	5	2	10	4
1. Expressing sorrow		5	2	10	4
Total # of strategies		232		231	

From Table 5 we can observe that Argentinean participants threatened their own and their interlocutor's face wants – both positive and negative – with the same strength (50% each), whereas Venezuelans preferred threatening their own face wants to a higher degree (61%) than their interlocutor's (39%). The difference between Argentineans' and Venezuelans' strategies used to threaten their own face wants is significant at the 95% level ($Z=2>1.96$).

When threatening their interlocutor's negative face wants, Argentineans used more strategies than Venezuelans (44% vs. 31%), and this difference is statistically significant at the 95% level ($Z=1.96$). When threatening their own negative face, Argentineans used a lower number of strategies than their Vene-

zuelan counterparts (47% vs. 57%), and this difference is statistically significant ($Z=2.22 < 1.96$).

It can be inferred then that although both groups used similar SPS, Argentinians threatened their own and their interlocutor's face equally, whereas Venezuelans preferred strategies that threatened their own face rather than the interlocutor's. Both groups, though, albeit their differences, preferred to threaten their own and their interlocutor's freedom of action, and to a much lesser extent their own need to be liked and approved of. Argentinians however, seemed to be more protective of their positive face than Venezuelans, and as seen above, this difference was significant. These results might indicate that at least participants in this study belong to and reflect what Brown & Levinson term a positive politeness culture (1987: 245).

4. Conclusions

We have examined role-play interactions of Venezuelan and Argentinean Spanish speakers in an informal setting (-D -P) where participants made an invitation to a friend to attend his/her birthday party. Even though inviting may be considered an imposition on the hearer (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987) requiring a deferential tone from the speaker, Venezuelan and Argentinean participants expressed solidarity to a much greater extent than deference, and extensively imposed on both themselves and the interlocutor. The most notable distinctions between these two cultural groups were that Argentinians used a much higher percentage of SPS than Venezuelans, and Venezuelans preferred to negotiate the satisfaction of the request rather than to impose it. This was most clearly observed in the effort put forth by Venezuelans in making the invitation and in closing the interaction. Argentinians, on the other hand, put their efforts into insisting.

In their pursuit for closeness and camaraderie, Venezuelan and Argentinean participants preferred SPS, mitigators and strategies that enhance their likeability at the expense of their own and their interlocutor's freedom of action. Such curtailing of their own and of their interlocutor's freedom of action is a further expression of closeness between interlocutors. This was especially true for young Argentinean participants in this study who it can be inferred, similar to Briz' findings for young Peninsular Spanish speakers,

la petición directa, a menudo convertida en orden, ya no es un acto de amenaza, la fuerza de la recriminación no es tanta, como tampoco lo es el insulto ni la intensificación del desacuerdo. Todo forma parte del juego interaccional juvenil y de su identidad social como grupo (Zimmerman 2003, Briz 2003). (Briz 2004: 78)

(‘use direct requests, frequently changed to orders, but which are not threatening acts. The strength of the recrimination, the insult or the intensification of the disagreement is not so high, but rather is a part of their youthful interactional game and their social identity as a group.’) [my translation]

Invitations, then, within these sociocultural groups are face-boosting (cf. Bayraktaroğlu 1991) or face-enhancing acts (cf. Sifianou 1992) and not face-threatening acts. Strong insistence, contesting the validity of the refusal, and requesting further specific information from the invitee are understood (at least by the Argentinean invitees) as strategies that accentuate the sincerity of the invitation and the close relationship between interlocutors. This bond is expressed from the very beginning with long exchanges of greetings and phatic communion. It continues with firm and steadfast insistence, and is sealed with plans for a future encounter through which the stability of the relationship is confirmed.

Throughout the interaction, Argentineans used impositives to a greater degree than Venezuelans and this, as observed above, was statistically significant. Within this group of strategies, Argentineans' preference for mood derivables and Venezuelans' for want statements/questions is of particular interest. Mood derivables leave the interlocutor little room to disagree or decline, whereas want statements/questions leave the door open for the interlocutor to decline the invitation.

As far as their non-request strategies are concerned, Argentineans, but not Venezuelans, used SPS almost exclusively (93% vs. 36%) and again this difference was statistically significant.

Argentineans devoted equal effort to both inviting and negotiating compliance, whereas Venezuelans preferred to negotiate. This, similar to the different use of impositives and want statement/question mentioned above, and Venezuelans' higher use of DPS seems to imply that Argentineans (similar to Peninsular Spanish speakers as pointed out by Briz 2003 above) prefer to emphasize the establishment of a close relationship where imposition is accepted and expected while Venezuelans do not sacrifice the expression of respect in their establishment of camaraderie.

As regards the use of supportive moves, a similar difference is observed. Argentineans preferred providing information to entice the interlocutor into accepting the invitation (a strategy that could be perceived as self-enhancing) while Venezuelans provided reasons/explanation/justifications for the party, a strategy that could be perceived as humbling.

All the above might lead us to infer that in a hypothetical interaction between members of these two different cultural groups, pragmatic failure may arise. That is, Venezuelans may feel coerced when Argentineans try to establish and maintain solidarity leaving the interlocutor no option to refuse. By the same token, Venezuelans leaving the door open for the interlocutor to decide and expressing respect may be perceived by Argentineans on the one hand as a lack of a strong desire on the inviter's part to have them attend the party, and on the other hand as a lack of strong closeness between the interlocutors.

A caveat is in order. This paper looked at only a select group of Venezuelan and Argentinean Spanish speakers participating in an informal situation. As such, the results may not apply generally to all Venezuelans and Argentineans performing this type of speech act. Studies of real-life interactions would add valuable information to support or reject the results found here.

Notes

* This study compares data analyzed in García (1999) and (2007) with the purpose of studying regional pragmatic variation.

1. Studies focusing on specific national or ethnic varieties of Spanish include analyses of Peninsular Spanish dealing with requests (Pair 1996), advice (Hernández-Flores 1999), invitations and offers (Hernández-Flores 2001), responses to compliments (Lorenzo-Dus 2001), offers (Chodorowska-Pilch 2002) and expressions of gratitude (Hickey 2005). Studies on Mexican Spanish include the work of Valdés & Pino on responses to compliments (1981), Curcó on requests (1998), Koike on suggestions (1998), Wagner on apologies (1999), and Félix-Brasdefer on refusals (2002). Although no extensive work exists on the realization of different speech acts in Cuban or United States Spanish, Ruzickova has studied apologies, compliment responses and requests in Cuban Spanish (1998a, 1998b, 2007), Arellano studied requests in Californian Spanish (2000), and Yañez compliments in Chicano Spanish (1990). Studies on Venezuelan Spanish include the work of García on invitations and responses to invitations, requests and responses to requests, reprimands and responses to reprimands (1999, 2002, 2004a). García also studied refusals to invitations, requests and responses to requests, reprimands and responses to a reprimand in Peruvian Spanish (1992, 1993, 1996). Placencia studied responses to requests in Ecuador (2001a) and directives in Bolivia (2001b). Bustamante López & Niño Murcia, on the other hand, studied impositives in Andean Spanish (1995) and Cordella studied apologies in Chile (1990). Studies on Argentinean Spanish include Alba-Juez' study on praise (2000), Ferrer & Sánchez Lanza's study of greetings, compliments, apologies, expressions of gratitude, invitations, offers and promises (2002), and García's study of reprimands and responses to reprimands (2004b) and invitations (2007). Studies on Uruguayan Spanish includes Márquez Reiter's analysis of requests and apologies (2000).
2. For a detailed study of Venezuelan performance in different speech acts, the reader is referred to Placencia & García (2007).
3. Brown & Levinson's (1987) model has been criticized extensively and, as a result, alternative models with different conceptualizations of face and politeness have been proposed (e.g., Watts 2003). However, these alternative models, based on theories developed in social science, have proven to be only of limited benefit for empirical analysis and description, as they permit merely subjective single-case interpretations of individual interactions (cf., e.g., Watts 2003: 156–160, Locher & Watts 2005: 17–28). Yet, contrastive studies, such as the present one, in which two varieties of Spanish are compared, require an elaborated "tertium comparationis" that enables a systematic, speech-act based comparison across cultures speaking the same language. Indeed, Watts, summarizing "Post-Brown and Levinson (1987) Research into Politeness" (2003: 98–99), concedes that Brown & Levinson's theory remains the preferred approach for empirical work on individual speech acts and for cross-cultural studies, as it provides the most efficient and stable tool for analysis available.
4. The low incidence of some strategies in the different stages of the interaction might offer a limitation to the findings presented here.
5. Brown & Levinson's (1987) criteria are here used to classify strategies as threatening the speaker's and/or interlocutor's positive/negative face wants. Following this model then, the interlocutor's need not to be imposed by others was threatened by the strategies mood derivable, explicit performative, obligation statement, want statement, concealed command, locution derivable, strong hint, requesting information, suggestory formula, query preparatory, emotional appeal, preparator, and compliment. The first 12 strategies "[indicate] potentially that the speaker (S) does not intend to avoid impeding H's freedom of action ..." (1987: 65). Similarly, compliments "predicate some desire of S toward H or H's goods, giving H reason to think that he may have to take action to protect the object of S's desire, or give it to S" (1987: 66) and so threaten the interlocutor's negative face. The interlocutor's need to be liked and approved of

was threatened by dismissal of excuse and defying/accusing. Dismissal of excuse indicates that the speaker “thinks H is wrong or misguided or unreasonable about some issue, such wrongness being associated with disapproval” (1987: 66). Defying/accusing, on the other hand, indicate that the speaker “doesn’t like/want one or more of H’s wants, acts, personal characteristics, goods, beliefs or values” (1987: 66). The speaker’s need not to be imposed on (or negative face), on the other hand, was threatened by grounder, providing information, accepting excuse/refusal, expressing understanding and making/accepting future plans. Grounders indicate that the speaker “thinks he ha[s] good reason to do, or fail to do, an act ... [which may] cause a confrontation between H’s view of things and S’s view” (1987: 67); along the same lines, by providing information the “S indicates that he thinks he has good reason to do, or fail to do, an act which H has just criticized” (1987: 67). In the case of invitations, the act might be rejected by the addressee; promise of reward indicates that the “S commits himself to a future act for H’s benefit” (1987: 66); accepting excuse/refusal and imposition minimizer indicate that the “S is constrained to accept a debt, and to encroach upon H’s negative face” (1987: 67); by minimizing disappointment the S may feel constrained to minimize H’s debt or transgression [in this case, his refusal to the invitation]; making future plans, similar to promises, indicates that the speaker “wants H to commit himself to whether or not he wants S to do some act for H, with H thereby incurring a possible debt” (1987: 66). The speaker’s positive face was threatened by expressing sorrow because through this strategy the “S indicates that he regrets doing a prior FTA, thereby damaging his own face to some degree” (1987: 68).

6. Since strategies used by Argentines and Venezuelans are included, sometimes lower percentage points are presented in one cultural group or other (for example 0.4 in Venezuelans’ use of the explicit performative or 0.4 in Argentines’ use of the preparatory) but it was important to include them because they served to highlight these differences in a comparative study.

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Appendix

The transcription marks used were:

A. Simultaneous utterances:

[[are used to link together utterances that start simultaneously.

B. Contiguous utterances:

= is placed between utterances with no time gap uttered by different speakers or to link different parts of a speaker's utterance that has been carried over to another line because of an interruption.

C. Intervals:

(0.0) is placed to measure pause lengths (measured in tenths of a second).

- is placed at the point of interruption. An utterance was considered to be interrupted when the speaker started making an utterance and changed its content and/or form.

D. Characteristics of speech delivery:

- . marks fall in tone.
- , marks continuing intonation.
- ? marks rising intonation.
- ?, marks weaker rising intonation.
- ! marks an animated tone.
- ↑↓ marks rising and falling shifts in intonation.
- >< marks that the enclosed utterance is delivered at a faster pace.
- ::: marks lengthened syllable; each : marking one “beat”.
- (LF) marks laughter.
- (()) encloses description of gestures or other non-verbal information.
- Underlining marks emphasis.
- CAPITAL LETTERS mark increased volume in the production of a given word or words of the utterance.

E. Transcriber doubt:

- () is used to mark unintelligible utterances.

Requests in corner shop transactions in Ecuadorian Andean and Coastal Spanish*

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1. Introduction

On the basis of audio-recordings and observation of naturally-occurring interactions, I explore pragmatic variation in the realisation of requests in corner shop (*tiendas de barrio*) transactions in Quito and Manta. Quito and Manta are taken here to represent the two main sub-varieties of Ecuadorian Spanish (ES) that have been identified (cf. Toscano Mateus 1953, Lipski 1994, Córdova 1996): Andean or *Serrano* Spanish and Coastal or *Costeño* Spanish, respectively. It should be noted that some sub-regional variation, at the phonological level, for example, has been described for these two broad varieties (cf. Lipski 1994). It is therefore possible that variation at the pragmatic level will also be found. As such, the labels Andean and Coastal are treated here as referring to Quito and Manta more specifically. Additionally, it should be noted that there are a number of studies available that deal with pragmatic aspects of Ecuadorian Andean Spanish (cf. below). There are, however, no pragmatic studies on Ecuadorian Coastal Spanish. This study thus aims to contribute to the (pragmatic) characterisation of Ecuadorian Coastal Spanish.

In this analysis, I build on my previous proposal (Placencia 1994, 1998) that *pragmatic variation* or the study of language use in context across varieties of Spanish (or other languages), or what Schneider & Barron (this volume) call “intralingual pragmatic variation,” merits attention, as does the study of variation at other levels, such as the lexical or morphosyntactic levels.

While most studies that explicitly or implicitly examine pragmatic variation, at least with reference to Spanish, focus on national varieties and cultures (e.g. Puga Larráin’s 1997 study of Chilean Spanish and Peninsular Spanish), here I examine variation with respect to the two sub-varieties referred to above, that is, in relation to Schneider & Barron’s “sub-national” level. I also highlight the need for more studies that look at such intracultural variation.

Pragmatic variation can be analysed in relation to different domains, as Schneider & Barron (this volume) propose, including speech act realisation and the overall organisation of conversation. Here I look at these two domains

which, to employ Spencer-Oatey's (2000) classification of domains in the study of rapport management, I call the *illocutionary* and the *discourse* domains, respectively. I also consider Spencer-Oatey's *stylistic* domain in relation to "the stylistic aspects of an interchange, such as choice of tone (for example, serious or joking) ... and choice of genre-appropriate terms of address" (2000: 20), and her *participatory* domain, which refers to aspects of turn-taking. The *non-verbal* domain (e.g. the use of eye contact, gestures and proxemics) is also part of Spencer-Oatey's (2000) classification of domains in the handling of rapport management. Some reference is made to this area in this paper; however, it is not included as a separate domain for examination since video recordings of the interactions would be needed for a systematic analysis.¹

Before the results are considered, some background to the study is offered, including a brief review of work on requests, with reference to Spanish, in particular, and some methodological considerations. Details on the data examined are then provided.

2. Background

2.1 Studies on requests and some methodological considerations

The study of requests has been approached from different perspectives, employing different methodologies. Initial interest in this area derived from work in speech act theory and the ethnography of communication in the 1960s and 1970s. Searle (1969) outlined conditions and rules for speech acts, including requests, which he claimed to be universal; this, together with his (1975) characterisation of different types of indirectness and his suggestion that indirectness is associated with politeness, sparked considerable interest in the empirical examination of requests and other speech acts across languages. On the other hand, in the same period, it was Hymes (1967, 1974) who highlighted the embeddedness of communicative activities in their social context, prompting the investigation of the "rules of speaking" associated with different "speech events" in different "speech communities." Ervin-Tripp's (1976) study on directives in American English is among the first to draw on the ethnography of speaking tradition.

In the 1980s and 1990s, interest in requests was fuelled by Brown & Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of politeness, where requests were presented as prototypical face-threatening acts requiring redressive action, and also by the work of Blum-Kulka and her colleagues (cf. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984, Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) who sought to explore the realisation of requests and apologies in seven different languages. Building on Searle's (1975) work on (in)directness, Blum Kulka et al. (1989) developed a coding scheme to categorise request realisation. Also, under the influence of studies in second language acquisition, they developed a methodology, namely, the use of discourse completion tasks (DCTs), to facilitate comparisons across cultures and between

native speakers and learners. Both their coding scheme and methodology or related methodologies (e.g. role-plays) have since been extensively used. In contrast, studies on requests drawing on the ethnography of speaking tradition of employing data obtained in their natural environment have not been as numerous.

DCTs and other data elicitation tools offer a number of methodological and practical advantages as they allow for variable control and the collection of large samples of data in a (relatively) short period of time. Nonetheless, the extent to which the data they elicit represent actual use has often been subject to discussion (cf., for example, Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig 1992, Beebe & Cummings 1996, Félix-Brasdefer 2003). Concerning DCTs, it is now generally agreed that they mainly provide access to informants' perceptions only (cf. Kasper 2000, Lorenzo & Bou 2003). In this respect, based on a study on responses to compliments using DCTs and naturally-occurring data, Golato, for example, claims that "while DCTs provide researchers with data rather quickly, that data can be very different from naturalistically collected data" (2003: 110). As to the data elicited using role-plays, the degree of "naturalness" seems to depend on, amongst other factors, the degree to which the role-play is structured (cf. Félix-Brasdefer 2003), a factor related to the degree of "researcher involvement" (Potter & Wetherell 1995) in the generation of the data, as well as other factors such as the familiarity of respondents with the situation or the particular role they are required to play.² However, there seems to be a consensus that while role-play data approximate naturally-occurring interactions more than DCT data, data obtained by means of role-plays cannot be taken as a "faithful representation of reality," to use Kerbrat-Orecchioni's (2005: 29) words.³

This is not to say that the use of naturally-occurring data is problem-free (cf. Márquez Reiter & Placencia 2005). The "naturalness" of the data given the presence of the researcher or a tape-recorder can be and is often questioned. In relation to service encounters as those in the present study, however, we do not think this presented a major problem given that in these encounters a real transaction, meaningful to both participants, is at stake therefore demanding their full attention. In this respect, we agree with Malone (1997: 152) when he says that there may be some self-monitoring, but that "conversations demand participant attention, and hence talkers are quickly drawn in, or the interaction fails" (cf. also Duranti 1997). At the same time, given the nature of the encounter in corner shops, there are no issues of privacy or confidentiality as there may be in other types of encounters (e.g., doctor-patient interactions) where the presence of an observer may create unease among the participants and make them more aware of their speech and of the exchange.

A further problem with some naturally-occurring data is that it may be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain information about the participants (e.g., age, occupation, origin or ethnicity, the relationship between participants); this information can be very important particularly in contrastive studies as the groups need to be comparable. In some contexts, as in the present study, this, however, can be overcome to some extent with access to the service providers

who can give out some information about their customers (cf. also Placencia 2004). Nonetheless, information about factors, such as age, can only be noted down impressionistically.

Another problem is that in cross-cultural studies, it may be difficult to find truly equivalent contexts; for example, the physical setting in corner shops may be different from one place to another and this may affect the way the transaction is carried out.⁴ This was indeed a factor taken into account in the choice of corner shops in the present study.

On the other hand, one obvious advantage in the use of naturally-occurring data is that it allows communicative activities, such as requests, to be studied in the sequences in which they are embedded. Studies based on DCTs, for example, are subject to the criticism that has for some time now been levelled at the examination of speech acts in isolation given the importance of the co-text in the interpretation of utterances (cf. Franck 1981, Linell 1996). Blum-Kulka herself more recently advocates the examination of stretches of discourse rather than isolated speech acts (cf. Blum-Kulka 1997). The co-text is also important for the interpretation of the rapport value of each utterance in relation to preceding or following utterances. In request studies, following Brown & Levinson (1987), the emphasis has been on relating isolated request realisations to politeness strategies. However, it is not only in the actual request that interpersonal concerns are expressed. Rather, rapport-enhancing strategies, for example, may initially be put into operation in opening exchanges from the outset of the interaction, through the exchange of greetings and how-are-you inquiries, as well as through other interactional exchanges over the course of the encounter (cf. Placencia 2004).

Ultimately, however, the choice of methodology and hence type of data employed has to be made in relation to the goals pursued by the researcher, and often, practical considerations. The present study is an exploration of similarities and differences in the way customers and service providers in Quito and Manta *actually* carry out their transactions in a specific situational context. For this purpose, naturally-occurring data are regarded here as “essential to get a clear idea of the workings of language,” also to use Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s (2005: 29) words.

In brief, in examining requests in corner-shop transactions, the present study draws on elements of the different traditions considered in this section: the focus is not only on requests, but rather on the sequences in which they are embedded; the study is carried out on the basis of naturally-occurring interactions. As such, it is in line with Kong (1998), who examined particular service encounter transactions in Hong Kong and, more recently, Upadhyay (2003) who looked at requests in service encounters and other contexts in Nepal. In terms of looking at the transaction as a whole, it can also be said to be similar, for example, to Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s (2005) study on transactions at the bakery in France.

For the analysis of request utterances, we draw on Blum-Kulka et al.’s (1989) framework. We also draw on politeness theory, albeit in a broad sense,

to discuss interpersonal concerns that can be manifested through different domains (cf. Spencer-Oatey 2000). In this area, we build on Aston's (1988) work on how friendly relations are constructed and on more recent work that deals with relational talk and its functions, as exemplified in Coupland's (2000) collection of papers on small talk. Both conventional forms of phatic communication, such as greeting and parting exchanges, and also creative, individualised forms, such as verbal playfulness (cf. De Klerk & Bosch 1999), joking and teasing (cf. Norrick 1993), were particularly prominent in the Quito corpus.

2.2 Requests in Spanish

As far as Spanish is concerned, one of the first studies on requests is Blum-Kulka & House's (1989) study on Argentinean Spanish in contrast with four other languages. The study examined directness levels in different situations, showing that despite some situational variation, conventional indirectness was the most frequently used type of strategy for all the languages examined, including Argentinean Spanish. Argentinean Spanish, nevertheless, displayed a more frequent use of directness relative to the other languages examined.

Studies on requests in Spanish along the lines of Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) analyses, i.e. also based on elicited data obtained mainly through DCTs or role-plays, are numerous. They include, amongst others, García (1993) on Peruvian Spanish and García (2002) on Venezuelan Spanish, Pair (1996) on Peninsular Spanish and Spanish L2 among Dutch participants, Arellano (2000) on the Spanish of Mexican Americans in California, Márquez Reiter (2002) on Uruguayan and Peninsular Spanish, and Vázquez Orta (1995), Díaz Pérez (1999), and Lorenzo & Bou (2003) on Peninsular Spanish and British English. On the other hand, Hurley's (1995) study of requests in ES and Quichua in the Otavalo area in northern Ecuador combines the use of data from interviews in which role-play questions were presented with recordings of naturally-occurring interactions. Other works on requests/directives based on naturally-occurring data include Fitch's (1994) ethnographic study in Colombia (Bogotá) and the U.S. (Boulder, CO), and Placencia's on (a) requests for information at reception counters in hospitals in Quito and Madrid (1998), (b) directives, including requests by service providers, in La Paz (2002), and (c) requests for a product in corner shop interactions in Quito and Madrid (2005). These studies, with the exception of Placencia (2005), do not employ Blum-Kulka's framework of analysis, so direct comparisons with the results from the studies above are not possible.

With respect to studies along the line of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), in terms of head acts, a recurrent pattern among most studies is the higher overall frequency of conventional indirectness relative to direct requests. One exception regarding Peninsular Spanish is Lorenzo & Bou (2003). Their study is based on data obtained from a DCT with six situations where social variables were manipulated to produce interactions involving different combinations of power relations (+/-/=) and social distance (+/-). Concerning levels of directness, the

authors found that, overall, direct forms predominate in both male and female speech; the exception was a situation involving +power and +social distance where conventional indirectness was employed more frequently. The difference in results with other studies may be related to intralingual variation within Spain, or perhaps to Lorenzo & Bou's inclusion of two service encounter situations among the five situations yielding higher levels of directness. In a study based on naturally-occurring interactions with shopkeepers in corner shops in Madrid, Placencia (2005) found a clear preference for directness on the part of customers. It is possible that the use of directness in certain kinds of service encounters is characteristic of the activity type irrespective of the degree of power or social distance between the participants. Both old and new customers may ask for a loaf of bread, for example, by means of a direct form (*una barra de pan* ['a loaf of bread']) because it is the most efficient way of carrying out the transaction. In any case, Lorenzo & Bou do not provide results for all the situations they examined, so it is not feasible to make any comparisons with other studies; additionally, comparisons with other studies are difficult to make in that the situations employed in each study tend to be different.

Beyond Peninsular Spanish, the imperative (with a politeness formula) was found to be the preferred request realisation in Arellano's (2000) study of requests among Mexican Americans in California, based on a DCT with a multiple choice format. The use of the imperative (accompanied by downgraders) also prevails in Hurley's contrastive study of Spanish and Quichua in a range of requests in the Otavalo area in Ecuador, an area of prolonged contact between Quichua and Spanish. Interestingly, conventional indirectness was hardly existent in Hurley's ES corpus and nonexistent in her Quichua corpus. Fitch's (1994) ethnographic study, based on a sample of 1000 instances of directives in Colombia, also highlights the widespread use of directness in a range of contexts; the author links this phenomenon to the existence in Colombia of what she calls an ideology of interconnectedness. Additionally, Fitch explores matters of compliance gaining, uncovering the existence of *intermediated* directives, that is, "directives reissued by someone other than the original persuader" (1994: 195). For some desired actions to be successfully carried out, help from a suitable intermediary needs to be sought. These are directives that can only be accessed when naturally-occurring interactions are observed.

Placencia's (1998) study of requests in hospitals in Quito and Madrid, employing Blum-Kulka et al.'s terminology, shows a higher frequency of direct forms over conventionally indirect ones in both sociocultural contexts, and, more clearly so does Placencia (2005) in the context of corner shops in Quito and Madrid, as indicated above. The direct forms identified in these studies are not restricted to the use of the imperative but include elliptical forms or what we call here quasi-imperatives. As in these studies, the present work shows an overall preference for direct requests in both Andean and Coastal Spanish in the context examined. This is not surprising given that customers normally ask for what they are entitled to; in other words, requesting a particular product, such as a carton of milk, is within the specifications of the activity type (cf. Levinson 1979) and should not require much verbal effort. Nonetheless, as we

shall see, Quiteños employ a great deal more internal modification in their request formulation and produce more relational talk overall; this suggests that they do not perceive the corner shop transaction in the same way as Manteños do.

With respect to internal modification, some general patterns have been noted. Vázquez Orta (1995) and Díaz Pérez (1999), among others, have found that syntactic and lexical downgraders are less frequent in Peninsular Spanish than in British English, for example. Comparing varieties of Spanish, Márquez Reiter (2002) found less modification in Peninsular Spanish than in Uruguayan Spanish. Placencia (1998) reports on the more frequent use of politeness formulas, for example, in ES compared to Peninsular Spanish, and a preference for formality in ES, in contrast with Peninsular Spanish, as reflected in the use of address forms and other lexical choices. Likewise, Placencia (2005) reports of a much smaller use of interpersonal padding in transactions in corner shops in Madrid compared to interactions in similar shops in Quito. Quiteños were found to use more politeness formulas and diminutives, for example, than Madrileños.

However, as we noted earlier, very little attention has been paid to intracultural variation. The present study shows less internal modification in Manta when compared to Quito. Interestingly, in this respect, and in the use of relational talk more generally, we found that the behaviour of Manteños represented in this study, appears to have more features in common with that of Madrileños as described above and also in Placencia (2005). As such, this study highlights the need for more studies on intralingual variation before any generalisations can be made about national varieties of a particular language.

3. Data

This study is based on audio-recordings of 171 interactions, gathered *in situ*, in five corner shops in comparable residential neighbourhoods of Quito and Manta, representing here, as stated earlier, Andean and Coastal Spanish, respectively. Specifically, the corpus consists of 68 interactions from two shops in Quito and 103 interactions from three shops in Manta. Permission was sought from shopkeepers to make the recordings, and a sign was placed at the entrance of the shop informing customers of the recording and giving them the possibility of opting out.

In both cities, the shops selected sold basic food products on a daily basis. They were located in the heart of their neighbourhoods and had been long established (between six and ten years). The five selected shops offered service over the counter for the majority of products sold, transactions thus requiring verbal interaction.

No attempt was made to take account of social variables, such as the age or sex of the participants. Four shopkeepers were involved in each geographic location, three women and one man, all middle-aged, in Quito; and two women and two men, also all middle-aged, in Manta. In Quito, the number of female

shoppers was higher (42 vs. 26), whereas in the Manteño group the number of male shoppers was higher (57 vs. 46), possibly reflecting in both cases the fact that females in Quito and males in Manta appear to be more frequent users of these shops. The majority of customers were between the ages of 20 and 55.⁵ The audio-recordings were made at different times to ensure a wide representation of the respective populations of shoppers. Informal interviews with the shopkeepers were made to ascertain the type of relationship they had with different customers and to clarify some language uses. Shopkeepers reported to knowing the majority of customers well from regular contact over a number of years, and it was ascertained that no customers and shopkeepers had relationships with each other outside the corner shop context.

4. Findings

4.1 The illocutionary domain

The focus of the analysis in the illocutionary domain was on request utterances, more precisely on the first request for a product in the interaction. Requests for favours that go beyond the normal transaction were not included in the main analysis.

Following Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), requests from both datasets were examined with respect to the customers' choice of overall request strategies and sub-strategies, internal modification as well as the use of supportive moves.

Also, in line with Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) categorisation of the (in)directness of request strategies, direct and conventionally indirect strategies were differentiated. No instances of non-conventional indirectness were found. Examples (1) and (2) below illustrate direct and conventionally indirect requests, respectively.

- (1) [Quiteño Spanish] (QS, henceforth)⁶
por favor deme pancito
 please give^V me bread^D
- (2) [Manteño Spanish] (MS, henceforth)
me puede vender una pasta de tomate
 can you^V sell me one tomato puree

Direct requests in the data examined include the use of imperatives as in (1) (*deme ...* ['give me ...']), quasi-imperatives or elliptical forms as in (3) (*un litro de leche* ['one litre of milk']),⁷ want statements, as in (4) (*... quiero* ['... I want']), and assertions of the hearer's course of action, as in (5) (*me da ...* ['you give me ...']):

- (3) [MS]
un litro de leche
 one litre of milk

- (4) [MS]
diez libras de arroz quiero
 ten pounds of rice **I want**
- (5) [MS]
me da una de sal
 you^V give me one [bag] of salt

Imperatives, quasi-imperatives and want statements fall within Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) sub-categories of direct forms; however, there is no equivalent in their coding scheme for *me da...* ('you give me...'). Assertions of this type seem to be as forceful as other direct forms, such as want statements or elliptical forms, in that they assume that the hearer will carry out the action. Similar forms produced with question intonation have been classified as instances of conventional indirectness by some authors. Pair (1996: 663), for example, translates *¿Me ayudas...?* as 'Do you help me?' and presents this form under the label of prediction of hearer's course of action, together with forms of the "Will you do X?" type. However, as suggested by Carmen García (personal communication) (in Placencia 2005: 597), the use of question intonation with utterances of this type may be more appropriately regarded as a type of "pro-sodic downgrader" of the direct form illustrated in (5) above.

Conventionally indirect forms in the data analysed correspond to Blum-Kulka et al.'s preparatory strategy, as in (2) (*me puede vender ...* ['can you sell me ...']). Direct forms were found to predominate in both groups with 67 instances (98.52%) in the Quiteño corpus, and 101 instances (98.05%) in the Manteño corpus. There was only one instance (1.47%) of conventional indirectness in the Quiteño data and two (1.94%) in the Manteño corpus. As for directness sub-strategies, their distribution in both datasets was as represented in Figure 1.

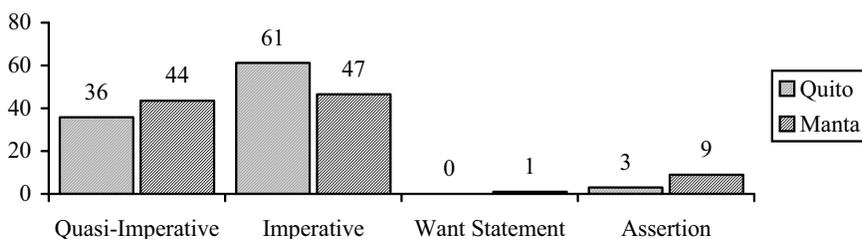


Figure 1. Directness sub-strategies in Quito and Manta (in percent)

As we can see, while Quiteño participants prefer imperatives in particular (61.19% [n=41]), Manteño customers display a very similar preference for the use of quasi-imperatives (43.56% [n=44]) and imperatives (46.53% [n=47]).

With respect to internal modification, internal modification of the head act with a mitigating function was realised in QS using diminutives, politeness formulas, lexical downgrading of the command verb and hedging mechanisms.

An example of the use of diminutives can be found in (6) (*pancito* ['bread^D']). This example also illustrates the use of the politeness formula *por favor* ('please') and lexical downgrading of the command verb, where *regalar* ('to give away') is used instead of the standard *dar* ('to give'), making the request sound more like a plea. Under hedging mechanisms, I refer to the use of vagueness or a lack of specificity (cf. Jucker et al. 2003) as to the amount of product requested, including the use of generic forms such as *pancito* ('bread^D') in (6), or hedges proper preceding the specification of the product requested, as in *unas* ('some') in (7). These seem to function as softeners of the request.

(6) [QS]
regáleme pancito por favor
 give^V me bread^D for free' please

(7) [QS]
unas seis de éstas deme
 give^V me some six of these

Instances of all of these strategies, except the lexical downgrading through verb choice, were also found in the Manteño data, albeit to a much lower degree. Comparing the two datasets in this respect: while 91 instances were found in the Quiteño corpus (with an average of 1.33 occurrences per request), only 15 instances (with an average of 0.14 occurrences per request) were found in the Manteño corpus.

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the sub-types of internal modification employed in the two language varieties:

Table 1. Sub-types of internal modification in Quito and Manta

	Diminutive	Politeness Formula	Lexical Downgrading	Hedges	Total Number of Instances
Quito	37(40.65%)	22 (24.18%)	8 (8.79%)	24 (26.37%)	91 (100%)
Manta	8 (53.33%)	4 (26.66%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (20.00%)	15 (100%)

As can be seen, Quiteño participants use more diminutives, followed by hedges, politeness formulas and lexical downgrading.⁸ The findings for the Manteño data interestingly enough are very much in line with those reported for Madrileños in a similar context (cf. Placencia 2005), as noted earlier.

It is also worthwhile pointing out that, as far as diminutives are concerned, the Quiteño data exhibit greater variation in the type of structure to which the diminutive can be attached: diminutives can be used with the noun corresponding to the product requested as in (8), with a demonstrative pronoun as in (9),

with numerals as in (10) and with adjectives qualifying the product requested as in (11). The few instances of diminutives in the Manteño data appear only with one of these structures, namely with nouns corresponding to the product requested.

- (8) [QS]
deme cuatro pancitos
 give^V me four bread rolls^D
- (9) [QS]
y estito también
 and this^D too
- (10) [QS]
docitas leches
 two^D milks
- (11) [QS]
un queso fresquito ...
 one fresh^D cheese ...

In relation to politeness formulas, in addition to more frequent use, a wider range of formulas was found in the Quiteño corpus, including *por favor* ('please'), *tenga la bondad* ('have the kindness/be kind enough') and *hágame el favor* ('do me a favour'). From these, only the standard *por favor* was found in the Manteño data, except for requests that go beyond the normal duties of the shopkeeper, where more elaborate request formulas were also found. Such requests include, for example, asking for change for a dollar note, when change is normally scarce, as illustrated by example (12).

- (12) [MS]
hágame un gran favor don Ramiro cámbieme éste
 do^V me a big favour Don Ramiro give^V me change for this

These results in relation to the Manteño corpus are, once more, in line with findings for Madrileño Spanish in a similar context and with claims that have been made for Peninsular Spanish more generally concerning the infrequent use of politeness formulas. Hickey (1991), for example, suggests that formulas such as *por favor* ('please') or *gracias* ('thank you') tend to be used in Peninsular Spanish "in asking or giving thanks for a personal favor, as distinct from a service that is part of one's duty, such as a shop assistant's duty to serve and a customer's duty to pay for, an article purchased" (1991: 4) (cf. also Haverkate 1994). As illustrated here, Hickey's suggestion seems to be applicable to the Manteño context too.

In their first request in the interaction, Quiteños were also found to avoid specifying the amount of a particular product they wished to purchase more frequently than Manteños (ten vs. three) (14.7% vs. 2.9%), as in (13) below.

Instead, they use generic forms, such as *pancito* ('bread^D') (line 03) or *leche* ('milk'), forcing shopkeepers to produce an additional turn requesting specification of the amount required:

- (13) [QS] (C = Customer; SK = Shopkeeper)
- 03 C *por favor deme pancito*
please give^V me bread^D
- 04 SK *de cuál*
what kind
- 05 C *eh (0.2) deme pa: n tiene reventados↑*
uh (0.2) give^V me brea: d have you^V got reventados↑
- 06 SK *sí cuántos*
yes how many
- 07 C *a ver deme (0.1.) dos reventados dos de estas empanaditas↑*
let me see give^V me (0.1) two reventados two of these turn-overs^D↑

Being unspecific in this context may be interpreted as Quiteños preferring a more gradual or what they might deem a less brusque approach to the transaction.⁹ This feature, nevertheless, appears to be gender-related as it occurs in the speech of eight females vs. two males in Quito. This is something that would need to be explored in a larger sample. In Manta, generic forms appear in the speech of three males only. However, taking into account the co-text and paralinguistic features (i.e., volume), it may be wrong to classify all the three forms identified in the Manteño corpus as downgraders. In two of the three instances available, they are produced in a loud voice and on their own (e.g. *MAÍZ* ['CORN']), as the customer enters the shop. They thus seem to act as upgraders, in that they constitute forceful demands for service.

Yet another difference between Quiteños and Manteños in their use of internal modification in the context examined is that Quiteños may use multiple downgraders in the same request utterance, employing sometimes three or even four of the elements listed earlier, as in (14). In this example, the customer uses a hedge (*unos* ['some']), a diminutive with the product requested (*pancitos* 'bread rolls^D') and a lexical downgrader (*regáleme* ['give^V them to me "for free"']):

- (14) [QS]
unos diez pancitos regáleme
some ten bread rolls^D give^V them to me 'for free'

In the Manteño corpus, the use of more than one strategy was found only in requests that go beyond the rights and obligations attached to corner shop transactions, as in example (15) below where the customer requests a cup to drink the soft drink he is going to purchase. While *regalar* ('to give away') is employed literally in this example, three other downgrading strategies can be identified: Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) query preparatory embedded in another question also querying the feasibility of the action, and the use of a diminutive:

- (15) [MS]
sí me puede regalar un vasito ↑
 do you^V think you^V can give me a cup^D↑

As for aggravators, shouting is a paralinguistic device employed only by Manteños, and particularly by males, that can make the request more forceful, as in (16):

- (16) [MS]
UN DÓLAR DE QUESO (.) QUE SEA DURO Y NO SEA SALADO
ONE DOLLAR OF CHEESE (.) IT SHOULD BE HARD AND NOT
SALTY

This strategy, as observed in the shops where the data were collected, seems to ensure faster compliance.¹⁰ Interestingly, as for Spencer-Oatey's (2000) non-verbal domain, which we do not deal with here, such requests were found to be produced at the threshold of the shop, before any verbal or non-verbal contact was established with the shopkeeper.

Finally, in terms of supportive moves, urgency can be explicitly added to the request, making it more forceful, as in (17):

- (17) [MS]
una poma de aceite lo más rápido que pueda
 a large container of oil as fast as you^V can

Two instances of this type of aggravation were found in the MS data and no instances in the QS corpus.

4.2 The discourse domain

Differences in the way Quiteños and Manteños open and close the interaction could also be observed in the analysis of the discourse domain, taken in the present study to mean the sequences in which the transaction is embedded. As many as 63 (92.6%) of the Quiteño interactions start, for instance, with a greeting or a greeting exchange, as in (18). However, only 18 (17.5%) of the Manteño interactions include a greeting or greeting exchange.

- (18) [QS]
 01 C *buenas días*
 good morning
 02 SK *cómo está buenos días señor (.)*
 how are you^V **good morning** Mr (.)
 03 C *una leche semidescremada deme*
 give^V me one semi-skimmed milk

Additionally, in 25 or 36.76% of the QS interactions there are longer openings with how-are-you inquiries where these may be reinstated before the request is realised, as in (19):

- (19) [QS]
- | | | |
|----|----|--|
| 01 | C | <i>buenos días</i>
good morning |
| 02 | SK | <i>cómo está Sr Guerra buenos días</i>
how are you^V Mr Guerra good morning |
| 03 | C | <i>cómo le va</i>
how are you^V doing |
| 04 | SK | <i>bien no más usted</i>
fine and you^V |
| 05 | C | <i>bien gracias</i>
fine thanks |
| 06 | SK | <i>cómo le ha ido</i>
how are things |
| 07 | C | <i>bien</i>
fine |
| 08 | SK | <i>sin novedades</i>
no news |
| 09 | C | <i>nada nuevo (.) usted</i>
nothing new (.) and you^V |
| 10 | SK | <i>igual igual en las mismas</i>
just the same just the same |
| 11 | C | <i>sigue la bronca de esto de la Concordia</i>
the conflict in La Concordia continues |
| 12 | SK | <i>eso seguirá largo</i>
that will carry on for a long time |
| 13 | C | <i>regáleme una fundita vea qué vergüenza que es verle a ese ...</i>
let ^V me have a bag ^D it's so shameful to see that ... |

In the Manteño corpus, how-are-you exchanges, as seen in the Quiteño Spanish data in (19), are rare. Only three instances (2.9%) were found; as such, in Manta, the transaction request normally comes in the client's first turn, that is, without an exchange of greetings or how-are-you inquiries, as in (20), or as in (21) where the client issues a greeting but does not leave room for a return greeting.

- (20) [MS]
- | | | |
|----|----|---|
| 01 | C | <i>medio cartón de Líder</i>
half a carton of Líder |
| 02 | SK | <i>tome niña</i>
here you ^V are niña [literally girl] |
- (21) [MS]
- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 01 | C | <i>buenas noches una cola de 50 de ésa</i>
good evening one soft drink of 50 of that kind |
|----|---|--|

The request may come in the customer's second turn when his/her first turn is occupied by an inquiry about the availability or price of a product as in (22):

- (22) [MS]
 01 C *a cómo salen esos* [points to the product]
 how much are those
 02 SK *a treinta*
 thirty each
 03 C *deme uno*
 give^v me one

By contrast, in the QS corpus, exchanges of greetings, which may combine two greetings proper or a greeting and a how-are-you inquiry, are found in 58 of the interactions.

In addition to making use of more conventional phatic exchanges in the form of greetings and how-are-you inquiries (cf. also farewells and welfare wishes below), Quiteños were found to engage in more individualised forms of small talk or positive rapport-building activities (Aston 1988), which include, amongst others, exchanges about health and politics, teasing, verbal play and joking. Instances of this kind of small talk were found in 29 (42.6 %) conversations in Quito, compared to four (3.9%) in Manta. Example (23) below illustrates an instance of teasing where the customers pretend not to see the bread or the milk in front of them:

- (23) [QS]
 01 C *buenos días*
 good morning
 02 SK *buenos días llegó la alegría*
 good morning joy has arrived
 03 C1 *señora tiene pan*
ma'am have you^v got bread
 04 SK no
 no
 05 C1 *bien ((risas))*
 fine ((laughter))
 06 C2 *tiene leche ((risas))*
have you^v got milk ((laughter))
 07 SK *si cómo les ha ido*
 how have you been

(Example taken from Placencia 2004: 233)

Verbal play, such as play with address forms and word play, is illustrated in (24) below. In this example, the name of the shopkeeper coincides with the name of the product requested:

- (24) [QS]
 01 C /buenos días/
 /good morning/

- 02 SK /buenos días/ cómo está
/good morning/ how are you^V
- 03 C **doña Rosita unas rositas**
doña Rose^D some rose buns^D
- 04 SK cuántas
how many

(Example taken from Placencia 2004: 232)

Small talk or other forms of rapport-building, as indicated earlier, were found to be minimal in the Manteño corpus. One instance of joking is the following:

- (25) [MS]
- 01 C *un Belmont azul (.) tengo que fumar por las penas*
one blue Belmont (.) I have to smoke for my sorrows

As for closings, they mirror openings in both cases; in other words, they tend to be rather elaborate for Quiteños in a large number of cases and swift for Manteños. Example (26) below illustrates the occurrence of thank you utterances, farewells and welfare wishes in an interaction in Quito, while (27) illustrates a typical Manteño closing without these utterances.

- (26) [QS]
- 13 SK *tres ochenta y seis*
three eighty six
[customer pays]
- 14 SK *ya*
okay
- 15 C *gracias*
thank you
- 16 SK *a usted*
thanks to you^V
- 17 C *hasta luego no↑*
good bye okay↑
- 18 SK *hasta luego que pase bien*
good bye have^V a nice day

- (27) [MS]
- 04 C *cuánto cuesta*
how much does it cost
- 05 SK *treinta centavos*
thirty cents
- 06 C *deme dos*
give^V me two
[customer pays and leaves]

While not all closings in Quito are as elaborate as (26), thank you utterances, which appear to function as farewell utterances too, were found in 48 (70.6%) interactions, compared to nine (8.7%) in Manta; explicit farewell utterances in

14 (20.6%) in Quito, compared to zero in Manta; and welfare wishes in 17 (25%) in Quito, also compared to zero in Manta. In 56 (82.3%) of the Quiteño interactions, compared to nine (8.7%) in Manta, at least one of these elements was found. In Manta, in most interactions (i.e., 94 or 91.3%), the closing is effected with the payment exchange as in (27) above.

Concerning thank you exchanges, it is interesting to see that a range of forms are employed in QS for both pair parts. The first thank you may be issued by the shopkeeper when he hands over any change due for a payment made, or by the customer when s/he receives any change due or when the transaction has been completed. *Gracias* ('thank you') was used by both shopkeepers and customers, and *muchas gracias* ('many thanks'), *mil gracias* ('a thousand thanks') and *Dios le pague* ('will God reward you') by customers only. The second pair part can take the form of *gracias también* ('thank you too') or *a usted* ('thanks to you') on the part of customers, or *ya* ('okay'), *ya + address form* ('okay + address form'), *a usted* ('thanks to you') or *no tiene de qué* ('it's nothing') on the part of the shopkeeper. Such a range does not seem to be used in the Manteño context, with *gracias* ('thank you') being the only first pair part employed, and normally not followed by a second pair part. There are only two instances of a thank you exchange in Manta (1.9%), compared to 21 in Quito (30.9%).

In examples such as (27) above in Manta, one may argue that perhaps the customer and shopkeeper do not know each other very well. However, there are instances in the Manteño corpus that show that there is a certain *confianza*¹¹ between the participants, as reflected in their use of address forms (e.g. *Borrachito* ['Drunkard^D']) or the occurrence of small talk, where similar closings are found, as in the following example:

- (28) [MS]
 01 C *deme un belmón [Belmont] (.) se me van mañana a Guayaquil se van mañana*
 give^V me one Belmont (.) they are leaving tomorrow for Guayaquil they are leaving tomorrow
 [customer pays and leaves]

In this example, the piece of information the customer gives to the shopkeeper (not explicitly mentioned in the interaction) is about a group of nuns in his school going away the following day. It shows that there is shared knowledge, and therefore some degree of closeness between the participants who seem to exchange personal information. It is possible, precisely because of this familiarity, that they do not need to formally close the interaction by saying thank you or goodbye. Wolfson (1988) suggested that relations where there is not much distance or intimacy between the participants (i.e., those in what she calls the "bulge") require more interpersonal work compared to those where there is distance or intimacy. In this respect, and as suggested for corner shop interactions in Madrid (cf. Placencia 2005), relationships with the shopkeeper in

Manta also appear to be outside of Wolfson's (1988) bulge, similar to those among intimates that do not require much interpersonal work.

4.3 The stylistic domain

The tone of the interaction as reflected in participants' choice of (in)formal address forms, greetings and politeness formulas, as well as in relation to the use of rapport-building activities, is considered here as part of Spencer-Oatey's stylistic domain.

One similarity between the two groups is their distinct preference for the use of the formal pronoun of address *usted*, implicit in the verb form in (29), and respectful address terms such as *señor/a*, as also in this example, or *niño/a* in (30). The latter form appears in the Manteño corpus only:¹²

(29) [QS]
03 C *cuatro panes **señora** Mariita hágame el favour*
four bread rolls **Mrs** Maria^D 'do^V me the favour'

(30) [MS]
01 C ***niña** deme un café*
***niña** [literally child] give^V me one [jar of] coffee*

Concerning address terms, however, one difference these examples illustrate is that while Quiteño customers, like Manteño customers, show distance and respect through the choice of forms such as *señora*, they often also construct the relationship as familiar and somewhat close. They do so by employing, in addition to these terms, a first name which is often diminutivised, as in (29) above thus conveying some affection or what Flórez's (1975) terms *simpatía*. This is generally not the case in the Manteño context despite the fact that participants also know one another through regularity of contact. Leaving aside impersonal formal address occurring on its own (e.g. *señor/a* ['mister/madam']) personal forms such as first name (+ diminutive), abbreviated first name (+ diminutive), title + name/surname and a range of terms of endearment were found in 48 (70.6%) of the Quiteño interactions, compared to seven (6.8%) in Manta. Additionally, in Quito, the conveyance of *simpatía* was found to be reinforced through the repetition of the address form two or three times throughout the interaction, or through the occurrence of more than one form within the same interaction.

Some of the address terms employed in Quito display the use of individualised rapport-building strategies such as linguistic play (cf. De Klerk & Bosch 1999) with names (e.g. *Sebas*^C abbreviated form of *Sebastián*) embedded in conventional exchanges. Participants use these to mark affection/*simpatía*. In so doing, they construct the relationship as personal and somewhat close. Nevertheless, formal forms were also employed sometimes in a joking manner so it was important to consider the co-text in determining their rapport value. In (31) below, the customer addresses the shopkeeper twice employing a name abbre-

viation + diminutive (*Sebitas^{CD}*), whereas he uses *señor* ('Mister') in the closing. From the co-text, it can be seen that this formal form is being used in a playful manner:

- (31) [QS]
 01 SK *cómo estás Luis*
 how are you^T Luis
 ... 08 C *gracias Sebitas*
 thanks Sebitas^{CD}
 ... 14 C *gracias Sebitas ...*
 thanks Sebitas^{CD}
 ... 19 C *chao señor*
 bye Mister
 20 SK *chao que te vaya bien*
 bye I hope things go well for you^T

With respect to greetings, it was noted in the previous section that exchanges of greetings are more common in the QS context. As for the choice of greeting, formal forms such as *buenos días* ('good morning') occurred in both datasets but in Manta there were also instances of the abbreviated form *buenas*, which is a less formal form than *buenas tardes/noches* ('good afternoon/good evening') so there seems to be less formality in the Manteño context in this respect.

It was also noted previously that while Manteños seem to have *por favor* in their repertoire only for standard corner shop transactions, Quiteños have a wider range of formulas in theirs. The formulas they use go from the neutral (*por favor* ['please']) to the deferential (e.g. *tenga la bondad* ['have the kindness/be kind enough']). Manteños, on the other hand, do not seem to mark respect through the choice of deferential politeness formulas. In this, Manteños behaviour also appears to be closer to that of Madrileños (cf. Placencia 2005).

In relation to openings and closings, it was noted that Quiteños invest more effort than Manteños in conventional phatic exchanges to open and close the transaction. In addition, more individualised forms of rapport-building by means of which solidarity is constructed are found in other sections of the interaction in the Quiteño corpus.

In brief, Quiteños appear to display more interpersonal concerns than Manteños in their corner shop transactions, creating a more personalised style of interaction. Quiteños' style in this context can be categorised as more person-oriented than that of Manteños, the latter which appears to be more task-oriented. Person-orientedness is defined by Fant (1995: 198) as paying attention to the persons with whom you interact, whereas task-orientedness denotes focusing on getting the task accomplished. Manteños, like Madrileños, can be regarded as more task-oriented than Quiteños. This task-orientedness can be identified not only from the scarcity of relational talk, but also from the speed of the interaction. In contrast to Quiteños, Manteños seem to be constantly in a hurry and to want to speed up the transaction, doing without many of the preambles that Quiteños employ.

4.4 The participatory domain

Two features concerning aspects of turn-taking were noted in the analysis of the participatory domain. Firstly, in both datasets the shopkeepers were not infrequently found to serve more than one customer at the time, that is, a turn-taking pattern of A–B–A–B is not always observed. The following is one example of three customers embedded in one interaction with the shopkeeper:

- (32) [QS] Santiago = C1 Paquito = C2 Another male customer = C3
- 01 SK *qué fue Paquito (0.2) cómo estás* ↑
how are things going Paco^D (0.2) how are you^T ↑
- 02 C1 *ya don Sebas daráme* ()
okay don SebasC giveV me ()
- 03 SK *ya Santiago (.) qué más Paquito*
okay Santiago (.) what's new Paco^D
- 04 C2 *dame unos tres panes de: de agüita [pequeños]*
give^T me some three bread rolls wa: water^D ones small ones
- 05 SK *[de agüita↑] si hay de éstos también*
water^D ones ↑ yes there are these other too
- 06 C1 *dos dije vea*
I said two don't^V forget
- 07 SK *ah para usted también* ↑ [to Santiago]
oh for you^V too ↑ [to Santiago]
- 08 C1 *claro*
certainly
- 09 SK *ya [to Santiago]*
okay [to Santiago]
- 10 C2 *deme unos tres de éstos*
give^V me some three of those
- 11 SK *tres de éstos*
three of these
- 12 C2 *unos cuatro de éstos también*
some four of those too
- 13 SK *uno dos tres cuatro*
one two three four
- 14 C2 *deme uno de dulce*
give^V me one sweet one
- 15 SK *es que ojo justo el último*
look it's the very lasts one
- 16 C2 *((risas))*
((laughter))
- 17 SK *el último de dulce*
the last sweet one
- 18 C3 *deme un malboro light don Sebas*
give^V me one Marlborough Light Don Sebastián^C
- 19 SK *ya*
okay
- 20 C3 *una cola también* ()
a coke too ()

- 21 SK *qué más Paquito*
what else Paco^D
- 22 C2 *nada más El Comercio*
nothing else El Comercio

Such a pattern of interaction could be taken as an orientation to Hall's (1989) polychronism, in that the shopkeeper interacts simultaneously with more than one participant, rather than in a linear way which would be characteristic of monochronic cultures.

On the other hand, a phenomenon identified only in the Manteño corpus, which relates to example (16) above, is that some customers did not attempt to engage with the shopkeeper through greetings or eye contact, but simply shouted their request as they came into the shop, normally succeeding in interrupting ongoing interactions. This, however, seemed to be male behaviour only, and this is a topic that needs further investigation.

5. Summary and conclusions

The analysis presented here shows that there are some similarities in the way Quiteños and Manteños carry out their transactions in corner shop interactions in relation to three specific domains (the illocutionary, the stylistic and the participatory domains): direct forms and formal pronominal address forms are preferred in both contexts and there is some orientation to polychronism in turn-taking. However, some differences were found in both the illocutionary and the discourse domains in particular, but also in the stylistic and participatory domains. As far as the illocutionary domain is concerned, a great deal more internal modification was found in the realisation of the request in the Quiteño corpus compared to the Manteño corpus. On the other hand, aggravating devices were only found in the Manteño corpus. With respect to the discourse domain, longer preambles and closings were found in QS, as well as more focus on the person, whereas there seemed to be more focus on the task in MS. In relation to the stylistic domain, less formality was found in MS with respect to choice of greetings and politeness formulas. Finally, with respect to the participatory domain, only a small number of Manteño customers were found to proceed to the transaction before engaging the shopkeeper's attention through verbal or non-verbal means.

In brief, the findings from this study suggest that Quiteños and Manteños do not operate according to similar norms of interaction. The Quiteños approach the encounter in a more personalised way and also reflect a perception of the transaction as being more of an imposition, requiring more interpersonal work. Manteños, as suggested earlier, seem to be more task-oriented, engaging in little or no interpersonal work. In this way their behaviour resembles more that of Madrileños rather than Quiteños in a similar context (cf. Placencia 2005).

To sum up, given the differences encountered, this study suggests the need to examine intracultural variation within broad varieties (of Spanish) perhaps before generalisations about national cultures are made. More studies on corner shop and other interactions in different socio-economic sectors in both Quito and Manta (and other areas of the Ecuadorian Andes and Coastal region) are needed. It would also be of interest to explore differences that seem to be gender-related, such as the use of some of the aggravating devices considered here in relation to the Manteño corpus, as well as variation relating to age, which may be relevant for the analysis of small talk, for example.

Notes

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1. In many shops nowadays there are security cameras installed which can facilitate the collection of video data for analysis (cf., for example, Bailey 1997). This facility was not available in the corner shops employed in the present study.
2. Fant and his colleagues (cf. Fant 1995) based a number of cross-cultural studies on business negotiations carried out in the 1990s on simulations collected for the training of negotiators. In other words, the negotiations were not recorded for the purposes of linguistic research. On the naturalness continuum, this kind of data would, for example, be closer to naturally-occurring data than role-plays as employed within sociopragmatics. These data were gathered without the researcher's involvement and the participants were familiar with the situation and the roles they had to play as they were already negotiators.
3. Kerbrat-Orechioni's (2005) remarks relate to the use of elicitation methods in general. She, nevertheless, acknowledges their value when she says that elicitation methods can "highlight a number of pertinent facts" (2005: 29). This is a view we share.
4. The reader is referred to the work of Mitchell (1957) and Traverso (2001). They, as well as other scholars, have highlighted how the setting in service encounters determines to a large extent the type and amount of verbal exchanges that occur, including relational talk. Self-service shops, for example, often involve very little talk.
5. The approximate age of the participants was noted down through non-participant observation of the interactions. Participants were classified into the following categories: young adults (20–35), middle-aged participants (36–55), older participants (56–65) and elderly participants (66–80). The original corpus for the Quiteño study (Placencia 2004) also includes interactions with children and adolescents. These interactions were not included in the present study.
6. Cf. Appendix for transcription conventions. Please note that the utterances have been translated somewhat literally from Spanish into English to enable the reader to understand the strategies employed by participants better.
7. "Elliptical sentence forms" is the term which Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) use to refer to what we call here quasi-imperatives, a sub-category of Blum-Kulka et al.'s mood derivable. According to these authors, the prototypical form of mood derivable is the imperative, but "functional equivalents such as infinite forms and elliptical sentence structures express the same directness level" (1989: 279).

8. A future study based on a larger corpus could test the statistical significance of the differences encountered across sub-varieties, and within each corpus, in relation to the sex of the participants, for example, a factor, which, as indicated, was not taken into account in this study.
9. Interestingly, vagueness, imprecision or underspecification have been described as features of the communicative style of the Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican community (Morris 1981).
10. This is a feature that García (2002) observed in relation to Venezuelan Spanish in the context of coffee shop interactions.
11. A relationship of *confianza* is one “based on trust, affection, and a choice to be interpersonally connected to another human” (Fitch 1991: 260).
12. *Niño/a* was described by various Manteño shopkeepers as a respectful form of address. Some also remarked that they used this form to keep distance from their clients to avoid “acquiring *confianza*” (*para que no tomen confianza* [‘so that they do not get too friendly’]), that is, so that they do not become too close and possibly start making demands on them. Relations of *confianza* come attached with rights and obligations (cf. Fitch 1991).

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Appendix: Conventions employed

//	overlapping talk
()	inaudible or unclear utterance
[]	where extra-linguistic behaviour takes place (e.g. shopkeeper wraps up product)
↑	rising intonation
(.)	pause between 0.01 and 0.03 seconds
!	utterance produced as an exclamation
D	diminutive
c	name or address form contraction
you ^v	'you' formal in the singular
you ^T	'you' informal in the singular
...	more talk preceding or following a turn

CAPITAL LETTERS mark increased volume

Apologizing in French French and Canadian French

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1. Introduction

The present study explores the use of apology strategies found in two varieties of French, namely in the French spoken in France and Quebecois spoken in the Canadian province of Quebec. Analyses of French French and Canadian French have established differences between the regional variety of Quebecois and standard French on the phonological, syntactic and lexical levels of language (cf. Boulanger 1993). Situational variables such as social distance, social dominance and degree of imposition have also been taken into account. There is, however, little known about possible differences in polite language use attributable to regional factors. According to Barron (2005b), region is one of a number of *macro-social factors* underlying intralingual pragmatic variation (others are age, socio-economic status, gender and ethnic identity). Problematically, however, such intralingual pragmatic variation is often associated with impoliteness and may cause conflicts in communication (cf. Barron 2005b). Barron & Schneider (2005) have, thus, proposed the establishment of a new discipline – variational pragmatics (VP), a sub-field of pragmatics. The purpose of this paper is to make a contribution to this new field by analysing regional variation in the speech act of apologising in French. The two regional varieties to be examined are the variety of French French (FF) spoken in the South West of France and Quebecois (QB) spoken in the greater Montreal area. The article begins with an overview of apologies. This is followed by a discussion of the culture-specificity of language use. Methodological and coding issues are then taken up and the findings are presented and detailed and their relevance to variational pragmatics discussed.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Defining apologies

2.1.1 *Universality*

One central issue in pragmatics in recent years has been the issue of universality. One strand of pragmatic research emphasizes the universal aspects of apologies, namely the nature of apologies, their classification and also linguistic realization. For Brown & Levinson (1987), an apology is a face-saving act for the hearer because it provides support for the hearer's negative face which was "malaffected by a violation X" (Brown & Levinson 1987: 187). From the perspective of the speaker, however, an apology is a face-threatening act as it damages the speaker's positive face. By apologizing, the speaker acknowledges that a violation of a social norm has been committed. This functions as a remedial interchange (cf. Goffman 1971 on this subject). Another universal quality of apologies is their role in restoring the equilibrium between the apologizer and the offended person (cf. Holmes 1990). According to Meier (2004: 4), the convergence of the speaker's and the hearer's worlds – as effected by an apology – "serves a superseding goal of social harmony as it contributes to greater interactional equilibrium."

2.1.2 *Interlingual and intralingual pragmatic variation*

Another strand of pragmatic research studies variation in apologies across languages. Many studies (cf., e.g., Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a or Suszczynska 1999) have dealt with apologies across cultures. Speech act patterns may also vary within one language, i.e. there may be intralingual variation in the national and/or social varieties of one language. Problematically, however, only very little attention has been paid to intralingual pragmatic variation. Rather, languages have been generally seen as homogeneous wholes (cf. also Barron 2005b). Acting in response to this research gap and this need for a focus on intralingual variation, a number of cross-cultural studies have recently examined pragmatic variation across region. There have, however, been very few analyses of intralingual pragmatic variation in French – in contrast to the situation in English (cf., e.g., Barron 2005a, 2005b and Barron & Schneider 2005) and Spanish (cf. García this volume for an overview) and, to a lesser extent, in German (cf., e.g., Muhr 1993, 1994; Warga 2005, this volume for an overview). Bernicot et al.'s study (1994) on interactions between mothers and their children is one of the rare studies on intralingual variation in French. The findings reveal that Quebecois mothers produced longer and a greater number of assertive and expressive speech acts than their French counterparts. These findings are explained with reference to the North American child-rearing style of stimulating and enriching the environment and with the general North-American child-centred orientation and emphasis on individualism (cf. Bernicot et al. 1994: 30).

Of particular interest for the present paper is Muhr's (1993, 1994) analysis of speech acts across intralingual varieties. On the subject of pragmatic differ-

ences between German German and Austrian German, Muhr (1993) differentiates between the macropragmatic level and the micropragmatic level. In Muhr's terms, the macropragmatic level represents interaction on the level of society, whereas the micropragmatic level concerns more precise situations of communication (cf. Muhr 1993: 27). Examining requests, Muhr finds a tendency on the part of his Austrian German subjects to produce longer statements. Specifically, the Austrian informants were found to employ more, and more detailed, explanations and justifications than the Germans, a finding, which Muhr (1993: 34) ascribes to a wish on the part of Austrians to play it safe. Muhr (1996), in a later study on cultural standards in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, correlates these findings with cultural norms and beliefs prevailing in the two countries. In this paper, Muhr examines, for instance, the cultural standard level of collective self-esteem with reference to the cultural dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) identified by Hofstede (1984).¹

According to Hofstede, the UAI concerns a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. Uncertainty avoiding cultures minimize unstructured situations, i.e. novel, unknown, unusual situations. Uncertainty accepting cultures, on the other hand, are more open to new opinions and to unknown situations. Muhr suggests that the Austrian tendency to "play it safe" and to avoid uncertainty is due to contemporary history (e.g. to questions of identity after World War II and geographical isolation). He also finds this rather low collective esteem to be reflected in Austria's well established bureaucracy, as well as in Austria's strong wish to maintain neutrality. These revelations also confirm the findings of another earlier study by Muhr (1994), in which he examined explanations given in apologies in German German and Austrian German. These findings point to a preference for face-saving explanations and justifications on the part of some of the Austrian informants. Face-saving justifications minimize the speaker's guilt by referring to external reasons for the rule-breaking in question (cf. Muhr 1994: 137). The German subjects, by contrast, were found to employ more potentially face-threatening expressions (e.g. overt admission of having forgotten an obligation) in their apologies (cf. Muhr 1994: 137).

Similar to Muhr (1993, 1994), the purpose of the present paper is to examine apology realizations across intralingual varieties as well, as to discuss the influence which the uncertainty avoidance index may have on these realizations.

3. Methodology

This study is designed to examine (1) the use of apology strategies found in two varieties of French, i.e. French French and Quebecois, and (2) to link any differences found with different cultural norms and assumptions. The methodology employed to this aim is outlined in the following.

3.1 Data collection procedures

Apology realizations were elicited from two groups of informants, namely from 20 native speakers of French French (10f+10m) and 20 native speakers of Quebecois (10f+10m). The informants form a rather homogeneous group: They are students of the Université Michel de Montaigne, Bordeaux, France, and of the Université de Montréal, Canada respectively, studying a range of subjects. Most of the students did not know much about the respective other French language community. Both groups ranged in age from 18 to 25 years, the average age of the French students being 22.2 years, that of the Quebecois students 22.3 years.

These 40 students completed four apology situations presented in an open ended Discourse Completion Task (DCT) with no hearer response. Each situation varied according to the social factors of distance and power, that is the informants responded to two student-student apology situations (student 1 [S1] and student 2 [S2]) and to two student-professor apology situations (professor 1 [P1] and professor 2 [P2]). A full list of the situations used in the DCT and the abbreviations used to refer to them is presented in Table 1 (cf. also the Appendix for an example of one of the DCT items employed in the study).

Given a first turn of dialogue which acted as a stimulus, the participants were required to provide the turn of one interactant to complete the discourse. The design of the DCT also took possible gender effects into account in that the characters who appeared in a particular situation were of the same gender as the students assessing the situations. Prior to the collection of the DCT data, ten persons (not included in the group of respondents) were asked to rate the DCT situations on a rating scale for two context-internal factors (imposition and likelihood of the apology being accepted) and for four context-external factors (social distance, social dominance, the relative likelihood of the situation occurring in real life and the relative difficulty in imagining the situation). Problematically, however, the rating assessment test was only completed by Austrian students, due to lack of access to French and Quebecois informants at the time. Although it was taken into account that such factors vary from culture to culture, it was nonetheless felt that such information would provide some insight in the weight of the factors underlying the speech act in the respective situations. As well as these assessment scales, retrospective interviews were conducted with the Quebecois and French students. In this context, the subjects confirmed the relevance of the DCT items employed to their culture. Nevertheless, the lack of such assessment questionnaires for the individual culture groups investigated certainly is a limitation of this study and the importance of sociopragmatic cultural assessment should be emphasized for further empirical studies. Such a situational assessment was necessary for the design of the discourse completion task since the variables embedded in the apology contexts have been found to influence the choice of apology strategies. In addition, the sociopragmatic assessments of the contexts used in the research design enable the researcher to ground the situations empirically and to improve control over the context variables (cf. also Kasper & Rose 2002).

Table 1. Situational descriptions

Situation	Description of situation
S1: Birthday party	You are invited to a birthday party and do not bring the mousse au chocolat which you promised.
S2: Teamwork	Once again, you didn't do your part of the group work.
P1: Unfinished work	You did not finish your term paper on time and you meet your professor.
P2: Books	Your professor gave you a loan of some books and you left them at home.

The advantages and disadvantages of data resulting from different elicitation methods have received considerable attention in the literature to date. Importantly, however, a data collection instrument should not be classified broadly as good or bad *per se*, but rather its merits assessed with regard to its suitability for the purpose at hand (cf. also Barron 2003). The DCT is at the interface between oral and written data in that it reflects oral data in written form since the research focus is on what *is said*. At the same time, however, the DCT cannot be equated with naturally-occurring data. According to Beebe & Cummings (1996), the main difference between written DCT data and spoken data is the presence or absence of psycho-social mechanisms. Since more and stronger emotions emerge in interaction in natural conversations, spoken language is usually longer, more repetitive, more elaborate and more varied in terms of different formulas and strategies relative to DCT data. Eisenstein & Bodman (1993) conclude that the structures and strategies found in the DCT are the same as those elicited using oral instrument types. Consequently, whereas naturally-occurring data provide additional insight into the function of a speech act, the DCT permits an initial classification of both the strategies that are likely to occur in speech and the structures underlying them. The different sequences employed in an apology context can, thus, be located easier. Another advantage of the DCT is that it gives access to cross-cultural data. In the present study, the DCT-situations were completed by two cultural groups, i.e. the French and the Quebecois group. Consequently, the resulting data is of cross-cultural and intralingual value.

20 French subjects and 20 Quebecois subjects completed four apology situations. The resulting 160 apologies were analysed using a modified version of both the coding scheme developed in the CCSARP (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b) and in Meier (1997), the latter a coding scheme originally based on the CCSARP. The initial quantitative analysis is carried out with the goal of highlighting similarities and differences existing in the apology strategies of the two groups. Chi-square tests are employed to establish whether the divergences are significant or not. Following this, a further closer examination is conducted. It is at this level of analysis that many of the differences in cultural communication styles underlying the apologetic responses of the French and Quebecois group become apparent. In this closer examination, rigorous statistical analyses are not always possible.

3.2 Coding scheme

The analysis of the apology strategies found in the two varieties of French first demanded isolation of the different apology units, that is isolation (1) of the apology presequence, (2) of the apology head act and (3) of the apology postsequence (cf. Appendix).

The presequence is realized using a variety of alerters, which function as conversation starters, as well as the categories preparator (Pre) and preparator specific to an excuse (Prex), the latter type of presequence which is designed to explicitly lead to the actual apology.

The head act is realized using high-frequency apology strategies, i.e. apology strategies frequently employed in both of the present data sets, such as illocutionary force indicating devices (IFID), repetition of the IFID (RIFI), excuses and justifications, as well as low-frequency apology strategies, such as making an effort, explicit statements of inconsistency, explicit self-blames, expressions of embarrassment and justify hearer. These strategies all function as superstrategies. Sub-strategies were developed based on the data elicited. For instance, a distinction was made between face-saving and face-threatening justifications. Furthermore, the explicit hearer-addressing IFID was classified into three different IFIDs, namely expressions of regret (IFIDer), offers of apology (IFIDoa) and requests for forgiveness (IFIDrf). This latter distinction has also proved relevant in cross-cultural comparisons (cf. Suszczynska 1999). Postsequences include the concern for the hearer strategy (Sta), expressions of appreciation (App), expressions of no harm done (Har) and offers of repair (Rep). All of these categories are detailed in the Appendix.

The following is an example of the coding of an apology sequence. It serves to illustrate the coding scheme.

(1) Situation Teamwork S2

Tu vas me tuer...Pourtant je te jure je ne le fais pas exprès pour t'embêter. J'ai une fois de plus pas fait ce que je devais faire. Je sais que dans un groupe il faut partager le travail. Je suis désolé. Cela m'embête pour l'instant c'est toi qui a fait la majorité. Si tu veux je ferais la rédaction finale pour me rattraper.

You are going to kill me ... But I promise you I didn't do it on purpose to annoy you. Once again, I didn't do what I was supposed to do. I know that in a team you share work. I am sorry. It annoys me that you did the major part of the work. If you want I can do the final draft in order to make up for the lost time.

Presequence strategy

Tu vas me tuer...

You are going to kill me... (Strategy: Prex)

Head act strategies

Pourtant je te jure je ne le fais pas exprès pour t'embêter.

But I promise you I didn't do it on purpose to annoy you. (Strategy: Concern for the hearer)

J'ai une fois de plus pas fait ce que je devais faire.

Once again, I didn't do what I was supposed to do. (Strategy: Excuse)

Je sais que dans un groupe il faut partager le travail.

I know that in a team you share work. (Strategy: Explicit statement of inconsistency)

Je suis désolé.

I am sorry. (Strategy: IFID; Sub-strategy: IFID[er])

Cela m'embête pour l'instant c'est toi qui a fait la majorité.

It annoys me that you did the major part of the work. (Strategy: Expression of embarrassment)

Postsequence strategies

Si tu veux je ferais la rédaction finale pour me rattraper.

If you want I can do the final draft in order to make up for the lost time.

4. Findings

The present analysis of apologies in Quebecois and French French focuses on the superstrategies and sub-strategies employed to realize an apology.

4.1 Introducing an apology in French French and Quebecois

This section deals with the strategies which introduce an apology, that is with alerters, preparators and preparators specific to an excuse.

Table 2 reveals that the strategy alserter (e.g. *Écoute* ['listen']), which functions as an attention getter, is employed only to a moderate extent in both data sets, with the exception of the student-student birthday party situation (S1) where the Quebecois informants showed a significant preference ($\chi=7.14$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$) for alerters as conversation starters.

Table 2. Frequency of alerters

	P1 (unfinished work)	P2 (books)	S1 (birthday party)	S2 (teamwork)
FF (n=20)	25.00% (5)	15.00% (3)	25.00% (5)	30.00% (6)
QB (n=20)	10.00% (2)	20.00% (4)	60.00% (12)	30.00% (6)

FF refers to native speakers of French French, QB refers to native speakers of Quebecois.

P1 (unfinished) refers to professor situation 1, P2 (book) refers to professor situation 2, S1 (birthday party) refers to student situation 1, S2 (teamwork) refers to student situation 2.

Table 3. Frequency of preparators

	P1 (unfinished work)	P2 (books)	S1 (birthday party)	S2 (teamwork)
FF (n=20)	25.00% (5)	15.00% (3)	20.00% (4)	30.00% (6)
QB (n=20)	10.00% (2)	10.00% (2)	30.00% (6)	30.00% (6)

Table 4. Frequency of preparators specific to an excuse

	P1 (unfinished work)	P2 (books)	S1 (birthday party)	S2 (teamwork)
FF (n=20)	10.00% (2)	10.00% (2)	5.00%(1)	0.00% (0)
QB (n=20)	45.00% (9)	20.00% (4)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)

Let us now turn to the preparators and preparators specific to an excuse. Whereas the preparator prepares the listener for the following speech act (e.g. *en fait je voulais vous dire...* [‘actually I wanted to tell you...’]), the preparator specific to an excuse explicitly leads to the apology (e.g. *j’ai une mauvaise nouvelle* [‘I have bad news’]). The number of preparators (Pre) and preparators specific to an excuse (Prex) employed by each culture is also similar (cf. Tables 3 and 4). Both, the Quebecois and the French informants use the preparator specific to an excuse strategy only at a low level in the student-student contact situations (birthday party and teamwork). Table 4 reveals a more frequent, but still moderate, employment of the Prex strategy in student-professor situations. Most noteworthy, however, is that the Quebecois students use significantly more Prex in P1 (unfinished work).

As far as the introduction part of the speech act is concerned, the quantitative analysis reveals that there are small but noteworthy divergences in the use of the introductory strategies *alerter* and preparator specific to an excuse. Let us now turn to the analysis of the main part of the speech act.

4.2 The apology head act in French French and Quebecois

This section deals with the strategies used by the two culture groups in the main part of the apology. It presents and discusses the frequency of explicit and implicit apology strategies, as well as their realization patterns and structure.

4.2.1 IFID

The overall picture of the distribution of the strategies used in the main part of the apologies produced by the two cultures is rather homogeneous. Table 5 illustrates that the number of IFIDs used by the French and Quebecois culture groups is similar. Any differences existing between the two data sets are not of statistical significance. However, variation in the number of IFIDs employed across situation is of statistical significance: Table 5 reveals that both culture groups show a tendency to chose IFIDs in the “book” situation (80% [n=16] in FF and 60% [n=12] in QB) and in the “birthday party” situation (85% [n=17] in FF and 80% [n=16] in QB). Both situations refer to an object not submitted. The obvious break with a social norm might explain the need for explicit, formulaic strategies, which results in a general preference for IFIDs. P1 (unfinished work) and S2 (teamwork), on the other hand, show comparatively low values of IFID usage (cf. Table 5).

Table 5. Frequency of IFIDs

	P1 (unfinished work)	P2 (books)	S1 (birthday party)	S2 (teamwork)
FF (n=20)	35.00% (7)	80.00% (16)	85.00% (17)	40.00% (8)
QB (n=20)	30.00% (6)	60.00% (12)	80.00% (16)	30.00% (6)

The analysis of the super-level strategy IFID revealed no divergences of statistical importance between the two informant groups. In a second, more indepth, analysis, the three sub-categories of the IFID were examined. Due to its relevance in previous cross-cultural comparisons (cf. Suszcynska 1999), the IFID was divided into three sub-categories. Examples from the present data include:

- (2) Expression of regret (IFIDer):
Je suis désolé.
 I am sorry.
- Offer of Apology (IFIDoa):
Je m'excuse.
 I apologize.
- Request for forgiveness (IFIDrf):
Je vous demande sincèrement pardon.
 I sincerely ask you to forgive me.

Both the Quebecois and the French informants showed a clear preference for the IFID sub-category expression of regret. As illustrated in Table 6, all informants clearly preferred the expression of regret to the other sub-categories. This leads to the assumption that this IFID, IFID(er), is the most formulaic and routinised form of IFID. Indeed, in situation S1 (birthday party), all French informants used this IFID sub-type.

Table 6. IFID variation

		P1 (unfinished work)	P2 (books)	S1 (birthday party)	S2 (teamwork)
FF	IFID Σ	100.00% (7)	100.00% (16)	100.00% (17)	100.00% (8)
	IFID(er)	42.86% (3)	68.75% (11)	100.00% (17)	87.50% (7)
	IFID(oa)	28.57% (2)	25.00% (4)	0.00% (0)	12.50% (1)
	IFID(rf)	28.57% (2)	6.25% (1)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)
QB	IFID Σ	100.00% (6)	100.00% (12)	100.00% (16)	100.00% (6)
	IFID(er)	83.33% (5)	91.67% (11)	81.25% (13)	66.67% (4)
	IFID(oa)	0.00% (0)	8.33% (1)	18.75% (3)	33.33% (2)
	IFID(rf)	16.67% (1)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)

This more in-depth analysis demonstrated that the choice of sub-category is relatively similar in both culture groups. In a further analysis, the internal

modification (morphological, syntactic and lexical elements) employed within the IFID is examined.

The following intensifiers appeared in the data:

- (3) *très, vraiment, sincèrement, énormément*
 very, really, sincerely, tremendously

In situation S1 (birthday party), the Quebecois students use lexical intensifiers significantly more often than the French students. In this situation, the Quebecois reinforced 75.00% (n=12) of all IFID(er)s using an intensifier, compared to only 29.41% (n=5) intensified IFID(er)s found in the French data (cf. Table 7). It may be that for the Quebecois students, the IFID(er) requires intensification in this birthday party situation (S1) for it is too weak in its apologetic force.

Table 7. Frequency of intensified IFIDs

		P1 (unfinished work)	P2 (books)	S1 (birthday party)	S2 (teamwork)
FF	IFID Σ	100.00% (7)	100.00% (16)	100.00% (17)	100.00% (8)
	IFID intensified	28.57% (2)	56.25% (9)	29.41% (5)	25.00% (2)
QB	IFID Σ	100.00% (6)	100.00% (12)	100.00% (16)	100.00% (6)
	IFID intensified	66.67% (4)	50.00% (6)	75.00% (12)	0.00% (0)

A preference by the Quebecois speakers for intensifiers in situation P1 (unfinished work) can also be observed. These differences were not, however, statistically significant. Neither were any further statistically significant differences recorded between the French and the Quebecois group.

The IFID, thus, constitutes a very important, formulaic part of the apology realization. Let us now turn to the excuse strategy.

4.2.2 Excuse

In this strategy the speaker gives an account of the rule-breaking (e.g. *j'ai oublié les livres à la maison* ['I forgot the books at home']). The analysis of the use of excuses reveals a uniform picture across cultures and situations. The frequency with which the informants of both groups chose the excuse strategy is strikingly similar (cf. Table 8).

Table 8. Frequency of excuses

	P1 (unfinished work)	P2 (books)	S1 (birthday party)	S2 (teamwork)
FF (n=20)	90.00% (18)	90.00% (18)	75.00% (15)	95.00% (19)
QB (n=20)	85.00% (17)	90.00% (18)	80.00% (16)	95.00% (19)

4.2.3 Justification

Justifications might easily be confused with excuses. However, whereas the excuse strategy accounts for the social rule-breaking which led to the apology, the justification justifies, i.e. explains the reason for breaking the social rule (e.g. *j'étais en voyage* ['I was on a trip']). (For examples of justifications from the present data, cf. Appendix).

Table 9. Frequency of justifications

	P1 (unfinished work)	P2 (books)	S1 (birthday party)	S2 (teamwork)
FF (n=20)	45.00% (9)	35.00% (7)	65.00% (13)	30.00% (6)
QB (n=20)	40.00% (8)	25.00% (5)	45.00% (9)	10.00% (2)

Table 9 reveals that there are no divergences of statistical importance between the Quebecois and the French informant groups. The number of justifications employed in each culture is rather similar. Nevertheless, findings do point to a preference on the part of the French students for a justification strategy in situation S1 (birthday party). It may indeed be that this preference for justification in S1 is related to the fact that the IFID(er) is not intensified by the French students in this situation (cf. 4.2.1 above). In other words, the unintensified IFID(er) may be perceived as too weak in its apologetic force and, thus, in need of additional justification. Similarly, in situation S2 (teamwork), the French students are seen to use more justifications (30.00% [n=6]) than their Quebecois counterparts (10.00% [n=2]). However, in contrast to situation S1, this divergence cannot be explained by a lower use of intensified IFIDs, since both culture groups use them only at a low level (cf. Table 7).

On the level of the superstrategy, the analysis, thus, shows many similarities in the employment of justifications between the two cultures. Any other divergences seen in Table 9 are not of statistical significance. At this point, however, the question arises as to the type of justification employed. Justifications may either save or threaten the speaker's face. They may save face by giving reasons for the offence, reasons which minimize the speaker's guilt. In that sense, justifications serve to intensify apologies by communicating any efforts made. On the other hand, however, if the speaker overtly states to have forgotten or simply not to have met the obligation at hand, the justification is associated with personal weakness and the speaker risks loss of face (cf. also Muhr 1996). In face-threatening justifications, the speaker does not resort to external explanations in order to justify the rule-breaking, whereas in face-saving justifications s/he does. Two justifications are listed in the examples below. The first justification is face-saving to the speaker, the second face-threatening:

(4) Situation S1 (birthday party)

Je t'avais préparé une délicieuse mousse au chocolat comme tu m'avais demandé...sauf que l'ennui c'est que mon colocataire et ses amis ont passé au travers hier soir. Je m'en ai rendu compte que une heure avant mon départ.

I had prepared a delicious mousse au chocolat as you asked me for ... It's just that my flatmate and his friends ate it all last night. I just found out an hour before I left.

(5) Situation S2 (teamwork)

J'ai beaucoup réfléchi à notre sujet, j'ai beaucoup d'idées concernant la partie que j'avais à faire mais je n'ai rien préparé à l'écrit.

I reflected on our topic and I have plenty of ideas as far as my part is concerned, but I didn't write down anything.

Table 10. Frequency of face-threatening (ft) and face-saving justifications (fs)

		P1 (unfinished work)	P2 (books)	S1 (birthday party)	S2 (teamwork)
FF	Jus Σ	100.00% (9)	100.00% (7)	100.00% (13)	100.00% (6)
	Jus (ft)	33.33% (3)	71.43% (5)	46.15% (6)	50.00% (3)
	Jus (fs)	66.67% (6)	28.57% (2)	53.85% (7)	50.00% (3)
QB	Jus Σ	100.00% (8)	100.00% (5)	100.00% (9)	100.00% (2)
	Jus (ft)	0.00% (0)	40.00% (2)	22.22% (2)	100.00% (2)
	Jus (fs)	100.00% (8)	60.00% (3)	77.78% (7)	0.00% (0)

Table 10 reveals the actual employment of face-threatening and face-saving justifications by both groups. Both face-threatening and face-saving justifications are employed in the data sets, with face-threatening strategies used to a higher degree by the French informants and face-saving strategies used to a higher degree by the Quebecois informants. The exception is situation S2 (teamwork) in which the Quebecois students exclusively threatened their own face. This may be explained by the overall low employment (20.00% [$n=2$]) of the justification strategy on the part of the Quebecois speakers in this situation. The reason for this might be that a justification does not excuse a notoriously late student in the Quebec cultural background. However, when a justification is employed, it is done by directly acknowledging that it is the speaker him/herself who is at fault. Overall, however, the results in Table 10 point to a preference for face-saving justifications in the Canadian data.

4.2.4 Strategy sequences

The examination of the apology sequences is of particular interest for variational pragmatics, since they may give a hint as to the level of directness prevailing in a language/culture group. In addition, they have not been the focus of many VP investigations in empirical studies to date.

The analysis of the apology head acts essentially reveals parallels as well as divergences between the two data sets on the level of the superstrategy as well as on the level of the sub-strategy.

Table 11: Apology sequences

		P1 (unfinished work)	P2 (books)	S1 (birthday party)	S2 (teamwork)
FF (n=20)	IFID	20.00% (4)	35.00% (7)	60.00% (12)	15.00%(3)
	Exc/Jus	80.00% (16)	65.00%(13)	40.00% (8)	85.00% (17)
QB (n=20)	IFID	20.00% (4)	30.00% (6)	50.00% (10)	15.00% (3)
	Exc/Jus	80.00% (16)	70.00% (14)	50.00% (10)	85.00% (17)

Table 11 provides a survey of the linguistic strategies found in initial position in the head-act, e.g. in situation P1 (unfinished work), 20% (n=4) of the French informants use an IFID at the beginning of the head act, whereas 80% (n=16) start the head act with either a justification or an excuse. The French data do not differ significantly from the Quebecois data on this level. What is interesting though is that there is a clear preference for justifications and excuses to introduce the head act in both cultures. As illustrated in Table 11, the clear majority of the Quebecois and French students start the head act with a justification or an excuse in P1 (unfinished work). In situation P2 (books) and S1 (birthday party), both situations in which the student forgets to bring a promised object, the distribution of IFID and justification/excuse to start the head act is more balanced. The balance between justification/excuse and the IFID as an introducing strategy may partly be explained by the wish to overtly and directly report on what has happened. The hearer gets a full account of the happenings before the apologetic formula is uttered, if it is uttered at all. Thus, the informants in situation P2 (books) and S1 (birthday party) resort to both a rather conventionalized IFID and a justification or excuse to an equal degree.

4.3 Postsequence to an apology in French French and Quebecois

Moving from the analysis of the apology head act to that of the strategies employed in the final part of the apology, i.e. the postsequence, the overall impression is that there are general similarities in the choice of strategies. As far as the individual situations are concerned, there is, however, a statistically significant cross-cultural difference in the use of offers of repair. An example of the following offer of repair found in the present French French data serves to illustrate the strategy:

- (6) *Par contre, comme je sais que vous voulez intégrer mon travail à votre présentation de vendredi, je vous ai apporté une copie de ce que j'ai déjà fait, comme ça vous pourrez commencer à l'intégrer dans votre présentation, et je vous apporterai la version finale demain soir, pour que vous ayez le temps de modifier votre exposé.*

However, as I know that you really want to integrate my work into your presentation on Friday, I brought you a copy of the work I have done so far so that you can start working it into your presentation and I will pass by with the final version tomorrow evening so that you have enough time to modify your presentation.

In situation S2 (teamwork), the Quebecois informants finish 90% (n=18) of their apologies with an offer of repair, whereas their French counterparts employ an offer of repair to finish their apologies in only 60% (n=12) of the apologies realized (cf. Table 12).

Table 12. Frequency of offers of repair

	P1 (unfinished work)	P2 (books)	S1 (birthday party)	S2 (teamwork)
FF (n=20)	100.00% (20)	80.00% (16)	40.00% (8)	60.00% (12)
QB (n=20)	80.00% (16)	95.00% (19)	50.00% (10)	90.00% (18)

The general preference for the offer of repair strategy may be explained by the fact that the speech act of apology does not only imply cost to the speaker due to losing face in public, but sometimes also to the speaker's well-being as well (cf. Olshtain 1989). Not offering repair in these situations may have severe consequences: The student's university career may be at stake. Only a moderate tendency towards the use of offer of repairs to finish an apology occurs in situation S1 (birthday party). This trend may relate to the nature of the apology-context: The party has already started and the student did not bring the promised *mousse au chocolat*. No immediate repair-work is possible, unless the student offers repair on a remote date. The result of this analysis relates to the finding illustrated in 4.1 where a strong preference for explicit apologetic formulae (IFID) was found in situation S1 (birthday party).

5. Discussion

On a global level, the analysis of the French and Quebecois data sets reveals a rather uniform picture of the strategies employed in the apology realizations. Generally, the two informant groups did not show any culture-specific preferences in the choice of a particular apology realization pattern: Both culture groups employ the same strategies to introduce an apology, i.e. the *alerter* strategy, the *preparator* strategy and the *preparator* specific to an excuse strategy. As far as the head act of the apology is concerned, both the French and the Quebecois informants use the expression of regret (IFIDer) most frequently in situations in which a promised object was not submitted (P2 and S1). This obvious break with a social rule might explain the need for a strongly formulaic apology strategy. Furthermore, all informants resort to the excuse strategy and the justification strategy in their apology realizations. As to the postsequence to

the apology, both culture groups employ the offer of repair strategy as it functions as a means to compensate for damage done. Hence, the analysis showed a rather homogeneous distribution of the strategies among the two informant groups.

The examination of the individual situations, however, also revealed some divergences between the French data and the Quebecois data: In order to introduce the apology, the Quebecois students used significantly more alerters in the student-student situation S1 (birthday party). Similarly, in situation P1 (unfinished work), the strategy preparator specific to an excuse was significantly more frequent in the Quebecois data than in the French data. These results may point to the hypothesis that the Quebecois prefer a more indirect approach to apologies – introducing them via alerters, preparators and preparators specific to an excuse – whereas their French counterparts apologize without these pre-sequence strategies. The analysis of the head act also revealed some differences on the situational level, namely that in situation S1 (birthday party) and situation S2 (teamwork) the justification strategy was employed more often by the French students than by their Quebecois counterparts. Another divergence between the two data sets was found in the postsequence to the apology: The Quebecois employed significantly more offers of repair in situation S2 (teamwork).

To conclude, we can state that on the level of the superstrategy, the apology realizations are rather similar. There are, however, some important divergences on the situational level.

As far as the analysis of the sub-strategies is concerned, two differences are found between the two data sets in (1) the internal modification within the IFID and (2) the distinction between face-saving and face-threatening justifications. As far as internal modification using intensifiers is concerned, the Quebecois students modified 75.00% (n=12) of their IFID(er)s in situation S1 (birthday party) compared to 29.41% (n=5) in the French data (cf. Table 7). This divergence may be related to two divergences found on the level of super-strategies. First, in situation S1 (birthday party) the Quebecois students employed the alerter strategy significantly more often than their French counterparts. Second, in the same situation the justification strategy occurred significantly more often in the French data. The findings may be explained by the nature of the IFID itself: The IFID is considered the most routinized and most formulaic expression of apology. The perception that the apologetic force of a single unintensified IFID is too weak may be the reason for the strong tendency to intensify the IFID on the part of the Quebecois group on the one hand and for the high frequent use of the justification strategy on part of the French group on the other hand.

As to the second difference mentioned above, i.e. (2) the classification of justifications, the isolation of face-saving and face-threatening justifications divulged a preference for face-saving justifications in the Quebecois data and a preference for face-threatening justifications in the French data.

Recapitulating, the analysis revealed similarities and differences in the two varieties of French. At this point, I would like to refer to the levels of intralin-

gual pragmatic variation examined by Muhr (1993) and (1994). The analysis of the apologies elicited in the present paper revealed some similarities with Muhr's (1994) findings on the apology productions of Austrian German speakers and German German speakers. The most important parallel is found in the use of the sub-strategy face-saving justification: both Austrians and Quebecois speakers have been shown to prefer face-saving justifications over face-threatening justifications and explanations (cf. Muhr 1994).² Face-saving justifications intensify apologies by communicating the efforts made and/or by minimizing the speaker's guilt. They do not refer directly to the speaker's role in the problematic past act (cf. Muhr 1994: 139), and, thus, save the speaker's face (e.g. *je ne pouvais pas apporter le dessert puisque mon frigo est cassé* ['I couldn't bring anything because my icebox is broken']).

As outlined in 2.1.2, Muhr, in a later study published in (1996), suggests that Austria's high uncertainty avoidance index is linked to contemporary history. In this context, I assume that Austria's high score on the uncertainty avoidance index (cf. Hofstede 1984) may be related to the Austrian preference found for face-saving justifications and accounts (i.e. by communicating to the hearer that the past act was not the speaker's fault, but rather due to external circumstances, the speaker-hearer relationship is not jeopardised). In other words, I am suggesting that there may be language forms (i.e. face-saving justifications) linked to a high uncertainty avoidance index. The question might, therefore, be posed in the present context as to whether the preference for face-saving justifications on the part of the Quebecois speakers might not also be related to a high level of uncertainty avoidance due to contemporary history.³ Quebec's collective self-esteem can be perceived as being the result of several historical experiences. I would like to point out two of these, which I consider particularly influential: (1) the British Conquest and (2) the question of sovereignty. As to the British Conquest (1), the British attempted to impose their language and culture on Quebec, as in the rest of Canada.⁴ However, Quebec asserted its cultural identity quietly, but successfully.⁵ The result was that Britain failed in defeating the French language (cf. Head n.y.). As to the basic question of sovereignty (2), Quebec asserted its cultural identity officially in a referendum on sovereignty put to the people of the province of Quebec in 1995. This second referendum was put forward by the *Parti Québécois*, a political party advocating national sovereignty for the Canadian province of Quebec and secession from Canada.⁶ In this referendum, 49.44% of the respondents voted "Yes" to the proposition seeking a mandate to begin negotiation for independence. The question of sovereignty, therefore, although rejected, was, clearly a controversial issue. Indeed, this question has shaped Quebec's cultural identity decisively in that the high percentage of the population in favour of sovereignty is evidence of a strong wish in the population to assert its cultural position within an anglophone environment. Indeed, it is my hypothesis that this process of identity finding in Quebec society brought with it a desire on the part of the Quebecois to attempt to avoid future uncertainties, similar to what Muhr revealed for the Austrian culture group. However, it is, of course, too early to draw conclusions at this point. Further investigations need to be con-

ducted. What is interesting, however, is that there may be a parallel between levels of uncertainty avoidance and language use between Austrian German and Quebecois – both varieties generally not considered to be high-standard relative to the German spoken in Germany and the French spoken in France. Related to this hypothesis is one of Muhr's (1996) findings concerning cultural standards in Germany, Austria and Switzerland: i.e. whereas German as a language is a decisive criterion for identity construction in Germany, the German language plays a rather subordinate role in Austrian national identity (cf. Muhr 1996: 752). Indeed, Austrians tend to emphasise the fact that they are German-speaking but not German in the national sense. This lack of identification with their mother tongue may be reflected in the way language is used. Indeed, the question might be posed whether it is possible that so-called non-standard varieties are more likely to use forms linked to a high uncertainty avoidance index.

6. Conclusion

This study provides an insight into the realization of apologies by two cultures which share the same language. The findings reveal that there are many parallels in the realization of apologies in French French and Quebecois French as far as strategy selection and frequency of use are concerned. A closer examination, however, exhibits subtle differences in the strategy realizations. My hypothesis is that Quebec's unique historical position in North America may have triggered a high level of uncertainty avoidance, similar to that observed with the Austrian culture (cf. Muhr 1996) since Quebec society has always, in maintaining their culture and language, put an emphasis on differentiating themselves from the Anglo-Saxon culture. This "resistance" may be reflected in language use and may explain the subtle differences found in the data.

However, one has to be careful when associating apology realizations with cultural values. This work may thus be seen as a first step in doing so. It is hoped that further investigations will focus on further aspects of the pragmatics of French French and Quebecois and that other hypotheses about pragmatic language use and cultural standards will be put forward. Further data collection of both ethnographic information and production data are needed to confirm or reject the hypotheses raised in this paper. Additionally, it has to be taken into account that individual factors also play a role in speech act realization. That is to say that there is also variation within the respective culture group. In the present paper, however, the focus is on the differences found between the two groups investigated.

French is a pluricentric language. As a pluricentric language, it entails a number of culture systems. Quebec as a culture system is distinct from France as a culture system. The findings of this study suggest that the cultural differences may be reflected on the level of language in use. On the one hand, differences on the level of face were observed. The hypothesis was put forward that the differences on the level of face might be reduced to a higher level of uncer-

tainty avoidance on the part of the Quebecois culture relative to the French culture. It is hoped that the present paper will provide a new perspective on the study of French pragmatic variation and trigger a re-examination of prevailing concepts of language as a homogenous whole and a move towards the appreciation of the many levels of pragmatic variation.

Notes

1. Others are Power Distance (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), and Long-term orientation (LTO).
2. In his 1994 article, Muhr uses the term “explanation.” It is basically the same strategy as the present “justification” strategy.
3. Hofstede (2001) did not investigate the UAI of Quebec as an individual society.
4. France ceded its North American possessions to Great Britain in the Treaty of Paris (1763) (cf. Fauteux 2004).
5. In 1774, the British parliament passed the Quebec Act giving recognition to French law, the Catholic religion and the French language in the colony.
6. In 1980, the *Parti Québécois* had also initiated a referendum on national sovereignty which was rejected by 60% of the respondents.

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Appendix

Sample DCT item

Anne, avec qui tu fais tes études mais avec qui tu n'es pas particulièrement liée, fait une fête pour son anniversaire et t'y invite. Dans son invitation elle a demandé de préparer quelque chose à manger pour le buffet et de l'apporter. Puis tu lui as promis de t'occuper du dessert préféré d'Anne: une mousse au chocolat. Tu n'as malheureusement pas eu le temps nécessaire pour préparer quoi que ce soit et tu dois donc arriver les mains vides. C'est embarrassant pour toi. Que lui dis-tu lorsqu'elle t'ouvre la porte ?

Toi: Salut Anne! Bon anniversaire!

Anne: Merci, super que tu soies venue!

Toi:

It's your friend Anne's birthday party. Anne is one of your colleagues from university but you do not consider her as a very close friend. In her invitation she asked that everyone bring something for the buffet. You promised to prepare some mousse au chocolat, but you didn't manage to do it. You feel embarrassed. What do you tell her when she opens the door?

You: Hi Anne! Happy birthday!

A: Hi! Good to see you!

You:

Coding Scheme (developed on the basis of Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 291–294 and Meier 1997)

1. **Alerter** (Ale) – Alerters operate as conversation starters.
Monsieur!/Écoute. ('Mister!/Listen.')
2. **Preparator** (Pre) – Preparators prepare the hearer for the following speech act.
La raison pour ma visite est la date de remise pour les travaux. ('I wanted to see you about the deadline for handing in the papers.')
3. **Preparator specific to an excuse** (Prex) – Preparators specific to an excuse explicitly lead the hearer to the apology.
J'ai une mauvaise nouvelle. ('I have bad news.')

4. **Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID)** – IFIDs are formulaic, routinized expressions in which the speaker's apology is made explicit.

Sub-categories:

Expression of regret (IFIDer): *Je suis désolé.* ('I am sorry.')

Offer of apology (IFIDoa): *Je m'excuse.* ('I apologize.')

Request for forgiveness (IFIDrf): *Pardonnez-moi.* ('Forgive me.')

5. **Repetition of IFID (RIFI)**

6. **Excuse (Exc)** – Excuses are expressions in which the speaker gives an account of the rule-breaking.

Je ne peux pas vous rendre le travail aujourd'hui. ('I can't hand in my paper today.')

7. **Justification (Jus)** – Justifications are expressions in which the speaker justifies/gives a reason for his/her rule-breaking.

Je me suis trompé de date./J'étais en voyage. ('I mixed up the dates./I was on a trip.')

Sub-categories:

Face-saving justification – Face-saving justifications communicate any efforts made. They save the speaker's face.

Je t'avais préparé une délicieuse mousse au chocolat comme tu m'avais demandé ... sauf que l'emmie c'est que mon collocataire et ses amis ont passé au travers hier soir. ('I had prepared a delicious mousse au chocolat as you had asked me...it's just that my flatmate and his friends ate it all last night.')

Face-threatening justification – Face-threatening justifications are expressions in which the speaker overtly states not to have met an obligation and so risks loss of face.

Je n'avais pas réalisé l'ampleur du travail et je m'y suis prise un peu tard. ('I didn't realize how much work this paper actually is and I started a bit late.')

8. **Making an effort (Eff)** – Making an effort is an expression in which the speaker shows his/her intent to avoid the rule-breaking.

J'ai tellement voulu le parfaire. ('I wanted it to be perfect.')

9. **Explicit self-blame (Seb)** – Explicit self-blames are expressions in which the speaker overtly acknowledges to be guilty.

Je suis impardonnable. ('It is unforgivable.')

10. **Expression of embarrassment (Emb)** – Statements in which the speaker expresses embarrassment.

Je suis très embarrassé. ('It is really embarrassing for me.')

11. **Explicit statement of inconsistency (Inc)** – Explicit statements of inconsistency are expressions in which the speaker states that such a rule-breaking is not a habit of hers/his.

Ce n'est pas dans mes habitudes. ('It is not my style.')

12. **Justify hearer (Hea)** – The justify hearer strategy includes expressions which justify the anger of the hearer.

Je comprends que vous soyez énervé. ('I understand that you are angry.')

13. **Concern for the hearer (Sta)** – The concern for the hearer strategy includes expressions in which the speaker shows concern for the hearer. Both strategies – Hea and Sta – focus on the hearer. Their primary purpose is to show sympathy for the hearer.

J'espère que tu ne m'en veux pas. ('I hope you are not angry with me.')

14. **Expression of no harm done** (Har) – Expressions of no harm done are expressions in which the speaker checks if s/he has done any damage. In contrast to Hea and Sta, its primary purpose is to show concern for the *harm* done. It is, thus, not hearer-centred.
J'espère que cela nous n'empêchera pas de passer une bonne soirée. ('I hope we will still have a nice evening.')
15. **Expression of appreciation** (App)
Ca serait très gentil. ('It would be really nice.')
16. **Offer of repair** (Rep) – If the damage or inconvenience which affected the hearer can be compensated for, the speaker may choose to offer repair.
Je propose que je vais faire tout le reste de notre travail. Est-ce que c'est correct pour toi? ('I suggest I do the rest of the work. Is that ok with you?')

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