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Contrastivity and comparability: pragmatic variation across pluricentric varieties

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Abstract: The recent pragmatic turn in the study of pluricentric varieties marks a shift in analytical focus, with increasingly more research contrasting the conventions of language use and interaction across pluricentric varieties. This turn demands new data types and new methods of analysis which uphold the principles of contrastivity and comparability. Addressing this basic requirement for the case of cross-varietal speech act analyses, the present article examines the contextual factors to be considered in the choice of data types and the potential definition and usability of a pragmatic variable in speech act analyses across data types. These considerations are applied to a cross-varietal analysis of responses to thanks in direction-giving exchanges across English in Canada, England and Ireland. The study highlights the frequent necessity of a multi-faceted definition of the pragmatic variable. In addition, challenges of contextual equivalence which emerge in the course of the analysis highlight a basic need for research to regularly re-examine the linguistic context and the definition of the pragmatic variable and to potentially redefine the variable during the analytical process. The contrastive analysis reveals a more extensive use of routinised responses to thanks in the Canadian English data relative to the Irish English and English English data. A more complex closing, with more continuations and confirmation checks, is shown to characterise the Irish English data, a finding which is suggested to potentially relate to a strong orientation towards hospitality in the Irish context.

Keywords: pragmatic variation, variational pragmatics, pragmatic variable, responses to thanks, closings, direction-giving, pluricentric varieties

1 Introduction

Recent years have seen an intensified interest in the study of pragmatic variation across pluricentric varieties, marking a shift in analytical focus from phonological and lexical analyses of pluricentric varieties to research contrasting the conventions of language use and interaction (cf. Barron 2017a). Pragmatic analysis means an analysis of the pragmatic choices made by informants in a particular situation (pragmatic variability). In the speech act of responses to thanks, for instance, users make choices between a wide range of frequently recurring routine formulae, such as *you're*

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welcome, *no problem* or *okay*. The choice of one form over another to realise a particular speech act is governed by a range of contextual factors, such as the relationship of interactants within a particular context, the particular identities of the speakers themselves, and also genre conventions (Verschueren 1999). Thus, given the role of context, a pragmatic analysis across pluricentric varieties needs to strive for comparability of context.

Cross-varietal pragmatic analyses also require comparability of the pragmatic feature (e.g. realisations of responses to thanks) under analysis. However, the negotiability of pragmatic meaning means that there is generally no one-to-one relationship between an individual form and a particular function. Rather, meaning generation in language use is always highly dynamic and dependent on the adaptability of the human mind to situated interaction (Verschueren 2008). Despite its routine form, for instance, *no problem* may realise a response to thanks or a response to apology (Leech 2014).

Given pragmatic variability and negotiability, particular attention needs to be paid to the choice of data type and method of analysis to achieve verbal contrastivity and comparability in cross-varietal analyses (Barron 2017a, 2021a). New data and methods of analysis are required which ensure that that which is contrasted across varieties is equivalent or as equivalent as possible. In pragmatics, the struggle for equivalence concerns both comparability of the pragmatic feature (e.g. response to thanks) and comparability of context. Addressing this need, recent discussions in cross-varietal pragmatic studies have considered the applicability of the sociolinguistic concept of the variable (defined via semantic sameness) to pragmatic variation. The present article takes up this discussion of contrastivity and comparability on the level of the speech act. In a methodological section, it examines the contextual factors to be considered in the choice of data types (section 2.1) and the potential definition and usability of the concept of a pragmatic variable in speech act analyses across data types (section 2.2). The discussion is then applied to a cross-varietal analysis of the speech act of responses to thanks from the Lueneburg Direction-Giving (LuDiG) corpus, a corpus of direction-giving exchanges with informants of Canadian English (CanE), English English (EngE) and Irish English (IrE) (section 3). This study highlights the frequent need for a multi-faceted definition of the pragmatic variable. In addition, challenges of contextual equivalence which emerge in the course of the analysis highlight a basic need for a regular re-examination of the linguistic context and of the definition of the pragmatic variable during analysis, and in cases of incomplete equivalence for a re-definition of the pragmatic variable during the analytical process.

2 Methods in the study of pragmatic variation across pluricentric varieties

Empiricity, contrastivity and comparability are three central methodological tenets of variational pragmatic research, a field focused on the comparison of pragmatic choices across varieties (Schneider/Barron 2008; Barron/Schneider 2009; Schneider 2010; Barron 2014, 2017a, 2021a; Schneider/Placencia 2017). The importance of contrastivity derives from the fact that that which is preferred or unique to a variety can only be established by contrasting pragmatic features empirically across varieties. In turn, contrasting varieties necessitates comparable data. In a variational pragmatic context, comparability needs to be established on two levels, on the level of context and on the level of the pragmatic feature (cf. section 1). Generally speaking, the higher the degree of control over context, the more comparable the pragmatic feature; the less controllable the context, the more care needs to be taken to ensure comparability of the pragmatic feature within and across datasets.

In a recent monograph, Staley (2018: 31) writes that "... the concept of comparability has, to date, not been extensively discussed in variational pragmatics". To a large extent, this has been due to the high levels of contextual control and thus high levels of comparability of the pragmatic feature offered by the production questionnaire, an instrument employed in many early variational pragmatic studies (cf. Barron 2017a, 2021a; cf. also Ogiermann 2018). As an example, the linguistic context of the production questionnaire item set out in (1), used to elicit responses to thanks across England, Ireland and the United States (Schneider 2005), is designed to ensure comparability of the pragmatic feature (illocution). Firstly, the initiating expression of gratitude is a first pair part which elicits a response to thanks as a second pair part. Secondly, in the questionnaire item at hand, the felicity conditions for responses to thanks are indirectly communicated, i.e. a previous act (giving someone a lift) has been carried out by the thankee and has been appreciated by the thanker. It is clear that the thankee now needs to redress the imbalance created by the expression of gratitude. The social context is also defined indirectly in the questionnaire item via the linguistic context and specifically via the choice of the rather formal realisation of the expression of gratitude *Thank you very much*, a realisation communicating a distant relationship between the interactants. In addition, control over the social characteristics of the informants is determined via researchers' choice of informants. In the present context, the social characteristics of the thanker remain unknown. The production questionnaire format does, however, allow such contextual parameters to be controlled via the inclusion of an initial contextual description.

(1)   Please complete:
        Thank you very much for the lift

        _____
        (Schneider 2005: 133)

Production questionnaires thus offer high levels of control over the context, making context as similar as possible for respondents (without guaranteeing identical reception of context by all respondents).[1] In turn, they offer a high degree of control over the pragmatic feature. Discussions on contrastivity and comparability only started to emerge with the broadening of the database of cross-varietal pragmatic research to include less controlled oral and interactional data, both valuable data sources which reveal what speakers actually say in a particular context rather than – as in the case of production questionnaires – what represents a prototypical realisation in a particular context (cf. Barron 2003). In the following, we look first to contextual comparability (section 2.1) and secondly to the comparability of the pragmatic feature (section 2.2).

2.1 Contextual comparability

Context is a multifaceted concept, which continues to create discussion and defy definition (cf. De Saint-Georges 2013). It is built in interaction and continuously changing. Building on Fetzer's (2010) conceptualisation of context as consisting of a linguistic, cognitive, social and socio-cultural layer (cf. also Fetzer/Oish 2011; De Saint-Georges 2013; Staley 2018), Figure 1 depicts the multiple facets of context to be considered in cross-varietal analyses and also introduces a more differentiated concept of the social layer (micro-social context, macro-social context) in line with discussions in variational pragmatics. Variational pragmatics focuses on social variation, and in particular on macro-social variation, or in other words, on variation stemming from the social parameters of the interactants with relation to such factors as region, age, gender, socio-economic class and ethnic identity. Region, which can be conceived of on various levels, such as on a national, sub-national or local level, is one macro-social factor. In pluricentric analyses, region has the status of an independent variable. However, analyses of pluricentric varieties focusing on the influence of region on the conventions of use and interaction also need to be aware of the interaction of region with other macro-social factors (age, gender, socio-economic class, ethnic identity). In addition, micro-social factors are to be recognised given that social variation is

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1 Assessment questionnaires are frequently employed in the research design stage of production questionnaire studies to guard against socio-cultural variation in contextual reception, as for instance, where a particular status group might be viewed to have a higher or lower status (cf. e.g. Barron 2003).
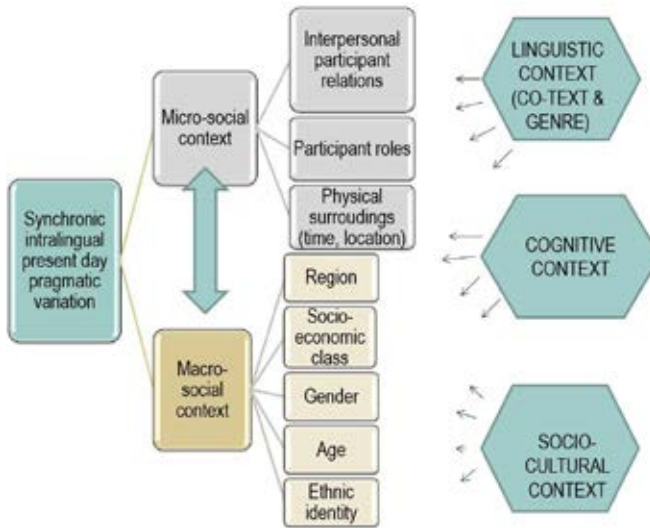
Figure 1: Multiple facets of contexts to be considered in synchronic intralingual present-day analyses of pragmatic variation

not limited to the macro-social context; rather it also encompasses the micro-social context, involving such factors as the influence of interpersonal situational factors (e.g. social distance, social dominance), physical surroundings, the time of the interaction, as well as participant roles (e.g. doctor/patient, host/guest).

In addition, as well as social context, the linguistic context, cognitive context and socio-cultural context also influence pragmatic conventions and need to be kept in mind in studies of intralingual pragmatic variation. Linguistic context encompasses genre, surrounding text and intonation. In a production questionnaire, as seen in (1), the linguistic context is controlled (and is thus not a source of discussion), but in a less controlled context, there may be considerable variation in what precedes and follows the pragmatic feature under analysis. Cognitive context refers to the mental models and representations we use in communication to ensure our contributions are appropriate ways of doing things. Expectations of a typical interaction influence how inferences are drawn and how language use is interpreted and these may differ across varieties. Finally, socio-cultural context encompasses culture-specific knowledge of social context, meaning that extra-linguistic variables, such as the status of a professor or a priest, may differ across varieties. It also involves knowledge of social conventions with regard to the appropriate use of language and knowledge of potential differences in cultural values (e.g. value of hospitality across varieties, knowledge of what is a sensitive topic).

As described above, the use of a production questionnaire controls many contextual facets. Many cross-varietal studies using naturally-occurring speech act

data introduce a prior contextual limitation and, in this way, attempt to control the cognitive and linguistic context by focusing on speech act realisations within selected spoken genres. Examples include studies of specialised corpora of restaurant interactions (e.g. Rüegg 2014; Staley 2018), medical consultations (Lindström et al. 2017) or service encounters (Nilsson et al. 2018). Such a focus on genre functions as a contextual limitation, concentrating the analysis on recurring structural patterns and lexico-grammatical features within a given context. However, even with this contextual limitation, differences in linguistic context remain. Within the context of a study of greetings in booking office interactions in Finland Swedish and Swedish Swedish service encounters, for example, Nilsson et al. (2018) comment that the co-text of initial interactions may be influenced by such factors as institutional differences in the regulation of customer flows (queue number vs. wait in line) and whether it is clear whose turn it is next. Also, cognitive context may vary, with mental models of how genres are negotiated differing. Contextual variation then is multi-faceted. Such variation threatens comparability within and across datasets and needs to be considered in the analysis and in the definition of the pragmatic feature (cf. section 2.2).

2.2 Comparability of the pragmatic feature: pragmatic variable

Achieving equivalence of the pragmatic feature under analysis within and across datasets is one of the most important challenges in pluricentric studies of pragmatic variation. Variationist sociolinguistics focuses on linguistic variation within a particular national variety and relates variation to stylistic constraints and to underlying socio-demographic parameters. Linguistic variation is analysed using the abstract concept of the variable, conceptualised as a set of different concrete linguistic realisations (variants) of saying the same thing (Labov 1972). In recent years, researchers have examined the potential applicability of the concept of the variable to pragmatic research, not least to raise awareness of and encourage discussion on the comparability of datasets (cf. Lavandera 1978; Dines 1980; Schneider 2010; Terkourafi 2012; Jucker/Taavitsainen 2012; Pichler 2013; Barron 2017a, 2021a; Staley 2018). The primary obstacle in establishing a pragmatic variable for analysing pragmatic choice along the lines of the sociolinguistic concept has been the underlying criterion of semantic equivalence between variants, as pragmatic variants frequently do not represent truth-conditional equivalents. To take an example, a response to thanks strategy, such as a minimising the favour strategy (realised via routines such as *no problem*, *no worries*) cannot be said to be semantically equivalent to an expressing appreciation response to thanks strategy (realised via routines such as *sure*, *you're welcome*) (cf. also Jucker/Taavitsainen 2012). Also, the feature of negotiability (cf. section 1) is problematic, i.e. the fact that one form may have different pragmatic

meanings in different contexts. This means that it is not possible to claim identity of variants for a particular form due to potential differences in pragmatic meaning (cf. section 1 on the routine form, *no problem*, realising a response to thanks and a response to an apology). In addition, a single routine form can differ in meaning across cultures. Schneider (2005) suggests, for instance, that the routine *you're welcome* may be seen as a formal variant for responding to thanks in the IrE context (cf. also Barron forthcoming).

Several modifications of the variable have been put forward to allow its application to pragmatic variation. Functional equivalence between the variants of a pragmatic variable has, for instance, been suggested to serve as a defining criterion to replace semantic equivalence (e.g. Lavandera 1978; Dines 1980; Schneider 2010; Jucker/Taavitsainen 2012). The concept of functional equivalence has been used to study speech acts (actional level) in variational pragmatics (Schneider 2010). In this context, the illocution under investigation has been conceived of as the variable and the speech act strategies realising this illocution as variants of this variable. Similarly, the individual speech act strategy may be considered a variable and its linguistic realisations the variants. Increasingly, however, and above all with increases in studies using less controlled data, the recognition is emerging that to contrast speech acts across varieties, it is essential to define the variable on multiple levels (cf. Barron 2017a, 2021a; Staley 2018). In a recent monograph on present-day speech act socio-economic variation in Los Angeles, Staley (2018), for instance, characterises the pragmatic variable of offers via sequential location in communicative activity (e.g. pre-offer, offer, re-offer), function as commissive-directives and offer type.

Importantly, irrespective of the operationalisation of the pragmatic variable, an openness to a potential redefinition of the variable during the analytical process is indispensable (cf. Barron 2021a). Cross-varietal differences in contextual parameters (cf. section 2.1) may not be obvious from the beginning of an analysis but rather may only become clear during the analysis. The analysis in section 3 demonstrates, for instance, how varying communication dynamics across varieties influence the analysis of the pragmatic variable of responses to thanks and force a redefinition of the pragmatic variable (cf. also Barron 2021a). In some cases, even despite redefinition, complete equivalence may well be the exception, and rather partial equivalence the norm. It is important that researchers recognise this and take it into account in the analytical and interpretive process.

3 Comparability and contrastivity in analysing responses to thanks

In sections 3.2 and 3.3, we apply the considerations discussed in sections 2.1 and 2.2 on contextual comparability and comparability of the pragmatic feature to a study of responses to thanks across pluricentric varieties of English. The data are taken from a sub-corpus of the Lueneburg Direction-Giving (LuDiG) corpus comprising male direction-givers (and thus male thankees and responders to thanks) and a female direction-seeker (and thus thanker). Data were collected using a Labovian rapid anonymous format (section 3.2). The pluricentric varieties focused on are CanE, EngE and IrE. The IrE data were recorded in Galway, the EngE in Bristol and the CanE data in Calgary (36) and Halifax (40) (cf. Table 1). Informant numbers varied due to the need to exclude some recordings because of recording quality and/or obstacles in identifying responses to thanks (section 3.3). Data were audio-recorded and permission to use the data for research purposes was requested individually from each informant after the goals of the project were explained and anonymity guaranteed (cf. section 3.2 for further details). The corpus design is detailed in section 3.2 (cf. also Barron 2021b, forthcoming).

Table 1: Informants in male responses to thanks sub-corpus of the Lueneburg Direction-Giving (LuDiG) corpus

IrE	EngE	CanE
34	39	76

Section 3.1 gives an overview of the nature of and previous scholarship on responses to thanks. We then turn to the direction-giving context in which the responses to thanks were initiated (section 3.2) and discuss contextual constraints and variability. Following this, the focus is on the definition of the pragmatic variable and the need to redefine the variable in the course of the analysis (section 3.3). Finally, in section 3.4 we present findings on the use of responses to thanks across CanE, EngE and IrE which show how the varying contextual dynamics across varieties are accounted for in the analysis.

3.1 Responses to thanks

Responses to thanks represent a reactive speech act. They occur as a second part of an adjacency pair initiated by an expression of gratitude, the expression of gratitude itself occasioned by a previous favour or other face-enhancing act performed by the thankee to the thanker. Functionally, responses to thanks address the imbalance in

the speaker-hearer relationship caused by the hearer-supportive thanks (Schneider 2005; Staley 2018). The terms used to refer to responses to thanks are many, some highlighting position, others function.[2]
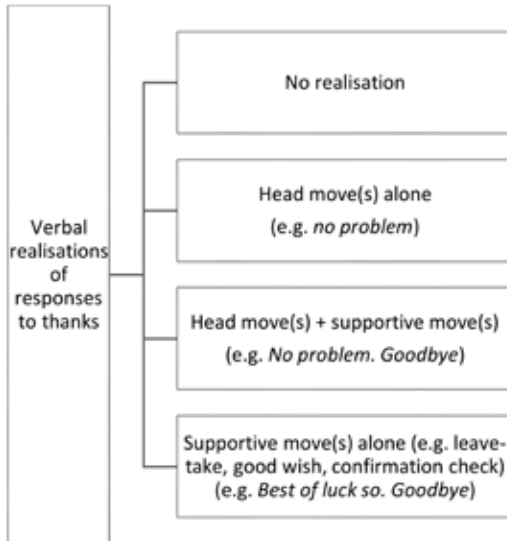

Figure 2: Possible realisations of responses to thanks

Responses to thanks may be realised verbally or non-verbally. Verbal realisation options are depicted in Figure 2. There may be no verbal realisation of a thanks at all. If there is a verbal realisation, it may take the form of a head move (also termed head) and/or a supportive move. Head moves are realised via pragmatic routines, i.e. via recurring conventional verbal realisations, such as *okay*, *no bother*, *you're welcome* or *no problem*. Given their recurrence in many response to thanks situations, such routines are generally said to be situation-independent (cf. Schneider 2005). In addition to realisations via head moves, supportive moves have also been analysed in studies of responses to thanks. Schneider (2005) describes supportive moves as being longer, non-elliptical, less conventionalised than head moves and frequently situation-specific. In the lift context depicted above (cf. (1)), he categorises subsequent offers, such as *Anytime you need something, call me* or expressions of joy, such as *It was fun,* as supportive moves.

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2 Some terms, such as "minimize" (Edmondson/House, 1981), "thanks minimizer" (Schneider 2005), or "imbalance reducer after thanks" (IRATs) (Bieswanger 2015) highlight function. Others are more neutral as to the exact function of responses to thanks and rather reflect position. These include "responses to thanks" (Mulo Farenkia 2013; Leech 2014; Dinkin 2018), "responses to gratitude" (Gesuato 2016), "thanking responders" (Aijmer 1996) or "thanks responses" (Rüegg 2014; Staley 2018).

Schneider (2005) also differentiates between additional moves and supportive moves, with farewells categorised as an additional move in the same situation. There is no previous description of supportive moves or additional moves in response to thanks analyses in the context of direction-giving. Leave-takes (*Bye*), confirmation checks (e.g. *Is that okay?*) and continuations (*It's only five minutes from here*) were identified in the present data to follow an expression of gratitude either with or without a response to thanks. However, the boundaries between supportive moves and additional moves were difficult to apply to such categories. Consequently, in the present analysis, we do not differentiate between additional moves and supportive moves, but rather define supportive moves as any move which accompanies or replaces a response to thanks. In the latter case, the data are coded as a zero response to thanks and a supportive move.

Cross-varietal analyses of pluricentric variation in responses to thanks in English have employed a range of data types. Analyses of production questionnaire data include Schneider's (2005) study of responses to thanks across American English (AmE), EngE and IrE, and two later studies with the same questionnaire focusing on CanE (Schneider 2017) and Namibian English (Schröder/Schneider 2018). Mulo Farenkia (2013) is a further study contrasting responses to thanks in Cameroon English with responses in CanE using production questionnaire data, albeit with different situations to those used by Schneider (2005). Research using oral data includes an analysis of role-play data by Edmondson/House (1981). They suggest that responses to thanks are more frequent in AmE than in British English (BrE) and also report that responses to thanks do not occur in their data, if the act motivating the expression of gratitude is a verbal act. Bieswanger (2015) is a further cross-varietal study of responses to thanks in Vancouver, Canada and New York City in the United States using oral data. In a rapid anonymous Labovian-style methodology using field notes, he elicits responses to thanks uttered following a constant expression of gratitude. In contrast to Edmondson/House's (1981) claim, he finds high levels of responses to thanks following the verbal act of direction-giving in both CanE and AmE.

3.2 Contextual comparability in analysing responses to thanks

Given the need for contextual comparability in cross-varietal pragmatic analyses (cf. section 2.1), a number of contextual constraints were introduced in the present analysis of responses to thanks across CanE, EngE and IrE. These are detailed in the following using Fetzer's (2010) contextual layers.

3.2.1 Delimiting linguistic context

The present study focused exclusively on the genre of direction-giving given that genre has been found to influence realisations of responses to thanks (cf. Schneider 2007). Direction-giving is a highly conventionalised exchange (Myers Scotton/Bernsten 1988) and thus a high frequency of structural uniformity could be expected within and across societies. In other words, broad comparability could be assumed with regard to the range of communicative tasks within the interaction, including seeking and giving directions, expressing gratitude, responding to thanks and closing the conversation (cf. Myers Scotton/Bernsten 1988). Within the genre of direction-giving, the analysis was focused on one interactional phase of direction-giving given research pointing to co-textual variation across communicative activities influencing speech act realisations (Staley 2018). Direction-giving interactions consist of three phases (Psathas/Kozloff 1976), namely a) the definition of the situation with regard to the direction-seeker's starting point, goal, means of transportation, and the direction-seeker's familiarity with the area between the two points, b) the provision of information and instructions concerning the route and c) the ending of the set. In ending the set, the direction-giver assures the direction-seeker on the directions again or tries to simplify or summarise previous directions given. They also seek the seeker's approval that the directions can be followed and the interaction concluded. The direction-seeker, for their part, employs terminal pre-closing phrases, such as *okay*, *thank you* or *goodbye*, to signal their readiness to end the direction-giving interaction and to communicate that they understand the directions given. The responses to thanks analysed in the present context were issued in response to an expression of gratitude produced by the direction-seeker in the ending of the set phase. The expression of gratitude, thus, had the status of a sealing thanks (cf. Schneider 2007).

In a further step designed to increase the comparability of the linguistic context across datasets, a single protocol was employed for the complete interaction broadly based on Bieswanger (2015) (cf. Table 2). This format included use of the controlled form of *thanks* by the direction-seeker to realise an expression of gratitude in the ending phase (step 3, Table 2). This step prevented co-textual variation.[3] The responses to thanks analysed were adjacent speech acts following this controlled expression of gratitude.

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3 Response to thanks research which has recorded co-textual variation as a result of variation in the form taken by the first pair part includes studies by Leech (2014) and Dinkin (2018). Leech (2014) reports a heightened use of verbal responses to thanks when the thanks has been strongly expressed. Dinkin (2018), focusing on the context of direction-giving, finds co-textual variation in responses to thanks in CanE based on the form of the expression of gratitude employed. On the other hand, however, a study by Staley (2018) does not find any co-textual variation in responses to thanks produced by lower class guests in a restaurant context.

Table 2: Direction-seeking protocol followed by researcher (broadly based on Bieswanger 2015)

Steps	Interviewer's text	Directions
1	*Excuse me, are you from X?*	If positive answer, continue to step 2. Uncertain or negative responses, end interaction
2	Ask for directions: *Could you tell me how to get to X?/ Could you tell me the way to X please?*	You can back-channel with *okay*, *yes*, *mhm*, during direction-giving
3	Thank for direction using *thanks*	Use exact form *thanks*
4	Ask for permission for data for research purposes	

Also, in an effort to keep the co-text as similar as possible, direction-seekers were asked to keep the direction-giving simple and straightforward and to this aim asked to choose well-known landmarks (e.g. hotel, bus station), ideally at opposite ends of one straight street, or just around the corner. They also asked people coming towards them only and the location was in the direction in which the direction-seeker was walking to avoid offers of accompaniment.

3.2.2 Delimiting cognitive context

Focus on a single genre fostered comparability of cognitive context as the expectations and obligations of direction-seekers and direction-givers were assumed to be broadly comparable across cultures. Direction-seekers expect the direction-giver to provide them with information about how to get to where they want to go. Direction-givers, for their part, expect direction-seekers to pay attention and to be grateful for service. Such comparability means that the inferences and interpretations are broadly comparable. So, for instance, a *thanks* realised by the direction-seeker may be interpreted as a signal to end the direction-giving, communicating that the directions have been understood. At the same time, however, the researcher needs to be aware that mental models of how genres are negotiated may differ across cultures and may influence the definition of the pragmatic variable. Such a case is illustrated below (sections 3.3, 3.4, 4).

3.2.3 Delimiting social context

The delimitation of the genre exerted some limitations on the social context with regard to location, participant role and relations. Direction-giving occurred in the public space on streets in larger cities in the varieties at hand. On a micro-social level, the interactants did not know each other, an important fact given that the form taken by a response to thanks has been found to be influenced by the relationship between interlocutors (Leech 2014). Also, role relations of direction-seekers and direction-givers are well established and comparable, with direction-givers helping direction-seekers if possible. Comparability on the macro-social level was achieved via a focus on region, with the initial question *Excuse me, are you from X?* (cf. Table 2) designed to ensure data were elicited from informants who self-identified as from the region at hand. Gender is controlled in the corpus, with a focus on apparent male direction-givers (cf. Myers Scotton/Bernsten 1988 on gender variation in thankee's responses to thanks). The apparent age of the informants was apparent peak standard usage (i.e. approx. 30–50 age) (cf. Dinkin 2018 on age variation in responses to thanks) and apparent socio-economic status was judged as apparently middle-class (Bieswanger 2015; cf. also Staley 2018 on the effect of socio-economic class on responses to thanks). There were two direction-seekers (and thus thankers), both female. The same female, a native speaker of CanE who had also studied in England, functioned as the direction-seeker in the CanE and EngE data. A native speaker of IrE functioned as the direction-seeker in the IrE data. Given Myers Scotton/ Bernsten's (1988) finding that the characteristics of the thanker (e.g. age, gender, social status) did not influence direction-giving, no negative repercussions of having two different direction-seekers involved in the data collection process were expected although future research validating these findings would certainly be interesting (cf. discussion in section 4 also).

3.3 Defining and redefining the pragmatic variable

Depending on the data employed, previous studies of responses to thanks have defined responses to thanks via a) position as a second pair part occurring after an expression of gratitude and/or b) function in restoring the imbalance in the speaker-hearer relationship (Schneider 2005, 2017; Mulo Farenkia 2013; Bieswanger 2015; Gesuato 2016; Dinkin 2018; Schröder/Schneider 2018; Staley 2018). Building on such research, the pragmatic variable in the present analysis was initially defined via position and function. Adherence to this definition highlighted the need to exclude a number of forms or cases and to double code others as shown below. In addition, however, the analysis itself drew attention to the need to redefine the variable.

We start with the criterion of position. As well as aiding to identify responses to thanks, this criterion forced particular attention to be paid to overlap in the text

to ensure that a particular utterance did actually positionally follow a response to thanks. Excerpt (2) is a case in point. Positionally, *Ok* uttered in turn 12 by HM1 in the Halifax data overlaps with *Thanks* in turn 11. Thus, it cannot be coded as a response to thanks. Rather it is understood to have been uttered in response to the initial *Ok* in turn 11. This case was therefore excluded from the analysis.

(2)   5   I: Could you tell me how to get to the Public Gardens?
      6   HMI: Oh yeah, if you go this way (.) it's see the brick building there in
                    that
      7   I: Yeah
      8   HMI: (inc.) other side of the street
      9   I: Yeah
      10 HMI: it's just after that.
      11 I: Ok. Tha<[>nks.]
      12 HMI: [Ok.   ]
      13 I: Eh, one more thing,...

The criterion of function supplemented position in the definition of the variable. It served primarily to differentiate head moves and supportive moves which occurred either as a head move or alone with a zero response to thanks (cf. section 3.1). In excerpt (3) from the EngE data, *Excellent* in turn 18 was omitted from the analysis due to overlap. Using the additional criterion of function, we identify the routine *Bye, bye* as a supportive leave-take. The case of *cheers* is somewhat more ambiguous. It may function together with *bye, bye* as a supportive leave-take (Cambridge Dictionary n.d.) or it may function as a response to thanks (cf. Staley 2018: 131). Given such ambiguity, the function of *cheers* was double-coded both as a response to thanks and as a leave-take and separate analyses conducted (cf. alternative (Alt) figures, also presented after slash (/) in section 3.4).

(3)   17 I: Ye<[>ah Thanks]
      18 BM30:   [Excellent   ] Cheers. Bye, bye.
      19 I: Ah, one more thing ...

A further example of coding ambiguity concerned the presence of an elliptical *alright?* or *okay?* with upward intonation following the expression of gratitude as seen in turn 14 of excerpt (4) from the CanE Calgary data. Two coding options presented themselves here: as a confirmation check or as a response to thanks head move. In the absence of uptake in turn 15, coding as a head move might be suggested to be more accurate particularly as the length of time between the expression of gratitude and the next utterance of the thanker was checked in order to ensure a response would have been possible (cf. footnote 5). However, to avoid any ambiguity, such realisations were also doubly coded (cf. alternative (Alt) figures, also presented after slash (/) in section 3.4).

(4) 12 CM1:   [That's the] Glenbow museum
     13 I: Thanks
     14 CM1:   Alright?
     15 I: Ah, one more thing …

(5) 3   I: Could you tell me the way to the train station, please?
     4   GM29:   Yeah! If you actually just- do you see that kinda blue building there?
     5   I: Yeah.
     6   GM29:   Go straight out the door
     7   I: Yeah.
     8   GM29:   and stay walkin' straight
     9   I: Okay.
     10 GM29:   and it'll be on your right hand side.
     11 I: Okay. Thanks.
     12 GM29:   So- you're only- not even five minutes away from it.
     13 I: Okay. Thanks.
     14 GM29:   It's Eyre. Turn right. And stay goin' straight out, ehm (.) Yeah, you can see the buses- you can see the buses on the right hand side, lining up and the train station is behind the buses.
     15 I: Okay. Thanks.
     16 GM29:   Alright. [No problem.]

Thus, the definition of the pragmatic variable using the criteria of position as second pair part and function proved helpful in identifying responses to thanks in the data across varieties. However, throughout the analytical process, it became apparent that a number of dialogues included not just one expression of gratitude and response to thanks as in excerpt (2), but several. In excerpt (5), for instance, there are three expressions of gratitude in the ending of the set phase (turns 11, 13, 15). Although the direction-seeker signals via these expressions of gratitude that she is ready to close the interaction, the direction-giver engages in extensive clarification of the directions given, employing terminal phrases, such as *So- you're only- not even five minutes away from it* (turn 12) and then proceeding to reformulate parts of the directions in a summarising manner (turn 14). It is only in turn 16 that the exchange comes to an end. As becomes clear in Figure 3, differences in the number of multiple occurrences of the expression of gratitude *thanks* as a first pair part were statistically different across the pluricentric varieties ($\chi^2(2)=15.128$, p =0.0001, $\varphi=0.319$). Post-hoc differences revealed that with 26.4 % (23.5 % + 2.9 %) multiple *thanks* in the IrE data relative to 5.1 % in the EngE and 3.9 % in the CanE data, differences in the IrE data were statistically significant relative to both the CanE and EngE data (IrE vs. CanE: $\chi^2(1)=12.828$, $p=0.000$, $\varphi=0.341$; IrE vs. EngE: $\chi^2(1)=6.465$, $p=0.011$,

φ=0.298) albeit with a Bonferroni correction (0.05/3 =0.017) only relative to the CanE data.[4]

According to the definition of the variable by position and function, the responses to *thanks* in turns 12, 14 and 16 of excerpt (5) would all have been coded. Turns 12 and 14 would have been coded as a zero head plus a supportive continuation and turn 16 as a double-headed response to thanks head. However, such a coding would not have yielded a comparable analysis of responses to thanks within and across varieties.
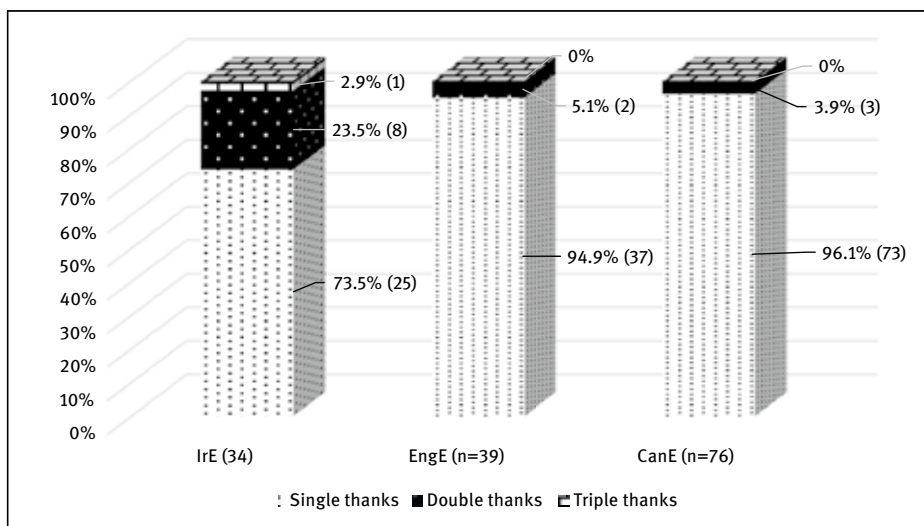

Figure 3: Single and multiple occurrences of *thanks* as a first pair part

As Figure 3 shows, it would have led to many more codings in the IrE data. To address such difficulties and to strive for maximum equivalence, the variable was redefined early in the analytical process to include not only position and function, but also sequential position, and specifically response to the final sealing *thanks* in the sequence. As described in section 3.4, however, the detailed analysis forced an even more nuanced characterisation.

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4 The Bonferroni correction is applied here to adjust statistical significance for the number of tests performed given that it is one of the most straightforward corrections available. However, it should be noted that this correction has been criticised for being over conservative as it focuses on the general null hypothesis, assuming that all null hypotheses are true simultaneously. As such, findings depend on the number of tests performed. The correction also increases the likelihood of type II errors occurring, meaning that important differences may be deemed non-significant (cf. Loewen/Plonsky 2016).

3.4 Responses to thanks across pluricentric varieties

In this section, we examine the distribution of head moves and supportive moves in responses to thanks across CanE, EngE and IrE. Head moves, you will recall from Figure 2, are responses to thanks realised using pragmatic routines, such as *no problem* or *you're welcome*. Supportive moves are defined in the present context as moves accompanying or replacing a response to thanks as uttered by the thankee, for instance, when *Have a good day* is combined with the head move *You're very welcome*. The definition of the pragmatic variable in section 3.3 according to position, function and sequential position underlies this analysis. In the following, the need to remain vigilant throughout the analytical process for a lack of contextual equivalence which may threaten comparability becomes clear, as also does the influence of the definition of the variable on the subsequent analysis.

We first investigate whether a head move followed a final sealing *thanks* across varieties, either with or without a supportive move (cf. Figure 4).[5] Data labelled (Alt) refer to alternative coding figures (cf. section 3.3). These data do not include any ambiguous responses to thanks. Hence, in these figures *cheers* is coded as a leave-take and *okay?* and *alright?* with upward intonation as a confirmation check. Findings show the IrE speakers to use significantly fewer head moves than the CanE speakers, with IrE speakers using a head move in only 55.9 % of interactions compared to 86.8 % of CanE speakers ($\chi^2(1)$=12.821, *p*=0.000, φ=0.341; AltIrE vs. AltCanE: $\chi^2(1)$=20.308, *p*=0.000, φ=0.430, both also significant with a Bonferroni correction: 0.05/3=0.017). Also, EngE speakers use significantly fewer head moves than CanE speakers ($\chi^2(1)$=3.910, *p*=0.048, φ=0.184, AltEngE vs. AltCanE: $\chi^2(1)$=10.114, *p*=0.001, φ=0.297), albeit, when the Bonferroni correction is employed, only in the AltEngE data.

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5 Where neither a head move nor a supportive move was present, care was taken to check the length of time between the expression of gratitude and the next utterance of the thanker, a request for permission, in order to ensure that a response would have been possible. Heldner/Edlund (2010: 563) note that the majority (51–55 %) of all turn transitions across corpora take place in under 200 ms. Given that expressions of gratitude and responses to thanks represent an adjacency pair, this short time frame would have been sufficient to produce an expression of gratitude (cf. Levinson/Torreira 2015). This was the measure used in the present context.
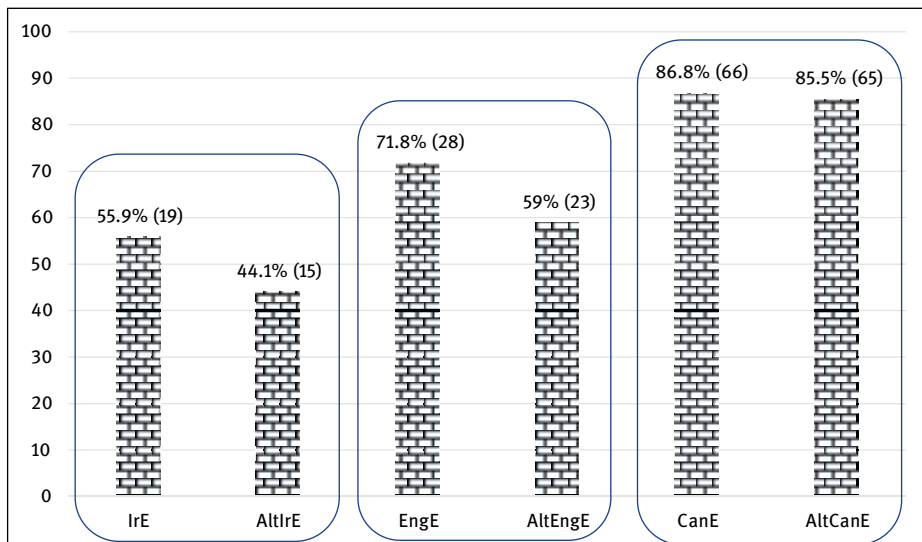
Figure 4: Presence of at least one conventionalised response to thanks token (head) across varieties (IrE, AltIrE: n=34; EngE, AltEngE, n=39; CanE, AltCanE, n=76)

Table 3: Distribution of move structures used in responses to thanks across varieties[6]

	IrE (n=34)	EngE (n=39)	CanE (n=76)
Head only	52.9 % (18)/ 41.2 % (14)	64.1 % (25)/ 56.4 % (22)	77.6 % (59)/ 76.3 % (58)
Head & supportive(s)	2.9 % (1)/ 2.9 % (1)	7.7 % (3)/ 2.6 % (1)	9.2 % (7)/ 9.2 % (7)
Supportive only	20.6 % (7)/ 32.3 % (11)	7.7 % (3)/ 20.5 % (8)	7.9 % (6)/ 9.2 % (7)
No head or supportive	23.5 % (8)/ 23.5 % (8)	20.5 % (8)/ 20.5 % (8)	5.3 % (4)/ 5.3 % (4)

Table 3 shows the distribution of move structures used in responses to thanks. Four move structures occurred, namely a head only, both a head and supportive move, a supportive move only and no head or supportive move (cf. Figure 2). In Figure 4 above we looked at occurrences of a head move whether alone or with a supportive move. If we look now at occurrences of a head move only across varieties in Table 3, we also see significant differences (χ^2(2)=7.096, *p*=.029, φ=0.218; Alternative codings

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6 In Tables 3, 4 and 5, numbers after the slash (/) refer to alternative coding figures (cf. section 3.3). These data do not include questionable responses to thanks. Hence, in these figures *cheers* is coded as a leave-take and *okay?* and *alright?* with upward intonation as a confirmation check.

(Alt): $\chi^2(2)$=13.467, p=0.001, φ=0.301). Post-hoc tests show that also here CanE speakers (also AltCanE) use more head moves only than IrE speakers (also AltIrE) (CanE vs. IrE: $\chi^2(1)$=6.819, p=0.009, φ=0.249, AltCanE vs. AltIrE: ($\chi^2(1)$=12.828, p=0.000, φ=0.341; both tests also significant with Bonferroni correction: 0.05/3=0.017). Any differences between the CanE and EngE data are only significant with the AltEngE data, and then without the Bonferroni correction: $\chi^2(1)$=4.824, p=0.028, φ =0.205, Bonferroni correction: 0.05/3=0.017). Cross-varietal differences were also recorded for the absence of both a head and supportive move (cf. Table 3). The IrE and EngE informants were shown to include neither a head or a supportive move in more cases than the CanE informants (CanE vs. EngE: $\chi^2(1)$=6.413, p=.011, φ=0.236; CanE vs. IrE: $\chi^2(1)$=8.054, p=0.005, φ=0.271, both also with the Bonferroni correction: 0.05/3=0.017; Alt data are identical). In other words, more of the IrE and EngE informants (Alt data also) did not include any response at all, either head or supportive move, after the expression of gratitude relative to CanE informants.

Finally, looking at the supportive moves, we see in Table 3 that CanE informants use fewer supportive moves on their own without a head move than IrE informants (CanE: 7.9 % (9.2 %); IrE: 20.6 % (32.3 %) (CanE vs. IrE: $\chi^2(1)$=5.840, p=0.016, φ=0.233; AltCanE vs. AltIrE: $\chi^2(1)$=9.193, p=0.002, φ=0.289, both also significant with a Bonferroni correction: 0.5/3= p=0.017). In addition, Table 4 shows the frequencies of supportive moves with or without a head move across varieties as well as their types. While no significant differences were recorded in the overall use of supportive moves (alone and with a head move), cross-varietal differences were recorded in the types employed, whether confirmation checks, continuations or leave-takes (cf. section 3.1). Contrastively viewed, the types of supportive moves employed across varieties are statistically significant (CanE vs. EngE vs. IrE: $\chi^2(4)$=14.268, p=.006, φ=0.514, Fisher's exact test: 0.003; AltCanE vs. AltEngE vs. AltIrE: $\chi^2(4)$=14.493, p=0.006, φ=0.455, Fisher's exact test: 0.002). Figures are too low to conduct post-hoc tests but the frequencies suggest that the IrE (AltIrE) informants use more confirmation checks and continuations than the EngE/CanE (AltEngE/AltCanE) informants and that the EngE and CanE (AltEngE/AltCanE) employ more leave-takes than IrE (Alt IrE).

Table 4: Frequency and types of supportive moves with or without a head move across varieties

	IrE (n=34)	EngE (n=39)	CanE (n=76)
Supportive moves	**23.5 % (n=8)/ 35.3 % (n=12)**	**15.4 % (n=6)/ 23.1 % (n=9)**	**17.1 % (n=13)/ 18.4 % (n=14)**
Continuation	37.5 % (3)/ 25 % (3)	16.7 % (1)/ 11.1 % (1)	15.4 % (2)/ 14.3 % (2)
Confirmation check	50 % (4)/ 66.7 % (8)	–/ 22.2 % (2)	–/ 7.1 % (1)
Leave-take	12.5 % (1)/ 8.3 % (1)	83.3 % (5)/ 66.7 % (6)	84.6 % (11)/ 78.6 % (11)

The higher use of supportive moves in the IrE data relative to the CanE data and above all the higher use of continuations/confirmation checks among the supportive moves in the IrE data beg the question whether the cross-varietal differences are culturally-based, or whether they cannot perhaps rather be explained by co-textual differences. By issuing a sealing *thanks*, the direction-seeker signals that she has understood the directions and is now ready to close the interaction. In the IrE data, heightened uses of continuations and confirmation checks, however, suggest that the direction-giver is not yet ready to close the interaction. These differences called for an examination of the direction-giving interaction prior to the thanks adjacency pair analysed across varieties. With this aim, we examine whether there were any cross-varietal differences with regard to whether the direction-giver had themselves initiated a pre-closing prior to the utterance of the sealing *thanks* analysed. Pre-closings, as discussed in section 3.2, occur in the ending phase of direction-giving and function to close the direction-giving. From the perspective of the direction-giver, they include phrases signalling completion (*you can't miss it*, *it's easy*, *and there you are* and *So- you're only- not even five minutes away from it* (cf. excerpt (5)), understanding checks (*okay?*, *got that?*, *alright?*) and restatements of part of the set and elaborations of crucial steps in the instructions (*It's Eyre. Turn right. And stay goin' straight out, ehm Yeah, you can see the buses- you can see the buses on the right hand side, lining up and the train station is behind the buses* (cf. excerpt (5)). Thus, the analysis examines whether there is a difference in the structure of the interactions across varieties prior to the sealing *thanks* analysed, a difference which may have yielded a different use of supportive moves or a different number of response to thanks head moves.

Table 5 shows the presence or absence of pre-closings by the direction-giver before the sealing *thanks* across varieties. It reveals differences between the use of pre-closings across the three datasets ($\chi^2(2)$, *p*=0.010, Fisher's exact: p=0.013), with the *thanks* in the IrE data produced more frequently without a pre-closing by the direction-giver than in the CanE and EngE data (IrE: 44.1 % vs. EngE: 23.1 % vs. CanE: 17.1 %). Within the interactions with and without pre-closings, Table 5 also shows a) the number of verbal head moves (with or without supportive moves) in interactions with and without a pre-closing by the direction-giver before the sealing *thanks*, b) uses of the supportive moves continuation and confirmation check and c) frequencies of no verbal response. We see that there are indeed more continuations (20 %/20 %) and confirmation checks (20 %/26.7 %) in the IrE data without a direction-giver pre-closing prior to the *thanks* (IrE: 40 %/AltIrE: 46.7 %) than in those with a pre-closing (IrE: 5.3 %/AltIrE: 21 %) (cf. Table 5). Hence, the high use of continuations and confirmation checks in IrE does appear to be somewhat related to the lack of direction-giver pre-closings in IrE. However, it is also notable that in the CanE and EngE data without a pre-closing, continuations and confirmation checks are not common relative to the IrE data (CanE: 7.7 %/AltCanE: 7.7 %; EngE: 0 %/AltEng: 22.2 % vs. IrE: 40 %/AltIrE: 46.7 %). Table 5 also shows that the cross-varietal differences in the use of a head move (with or without supportive moves) recorded above remain in the data with a

Table 5: Frequency of direction-giver pre-closings and use of head moves (with/without supportive moves), continuations and confirmation checks in thanks exchanges across varieties

	IrE (n=34)	EngE (n=39)	CanE (n=76)
No pre-closing before *thanks*	**44.1 % (n=15)**	**23.1 % (n=9)**	**17.1 % (n=13)**
Verbal head move	46.7 % (7)/ 40 % (6)	88.9 % (8)/ 66.7 % (6)	84.6 % (11)/ 84.6 % (11)
Continuation	20 % (3)/ 20 % (3)	–/ –	7.7 % (1)/ 7.7 % (1)
Confirmation check	20 % (3)/ 26.7 % (4)	–/ 22.2 % (2)	–/ –
No verbal response	20 % (3)/ 20 % (3)	11.1 % (1)/ 11.1 % (1)	7.7 % (1)/ 7.7 % (1)
Pre-closing before *thanks*	**55.9 % (n=19)**	**76.9 % (n=30)**	**82.9 % (n=63)**
Verbal head move	63.2 % (12)/ 47.4 % (9)	66.7 % (20)/ 56.7 % (17)	87.3 % (55)/ 85.7 % (54)
Continuation	–/ –	3.4 % (1)/ 3.4 % (1)	1.6 % (1)/ 1.6 % (1)
Confirmation check	5.3 % (1)/ 21 % (4)	–/ –	–/ 1.6 % (1)
No verbal response	26.3 % (5)/ 26.3 % (5)	23.3 % (7)/ 23.3 % (7)	4.8 % (3)/ 4.8 % (3)

direction-giver pre-closing, with the number of head moves in the IrE and EngE lower than in the CanE data. In the data without a previous pre-closing, the use of head moves in the IrE data is also lower than in CanE and EngE.

The analysis shows, therefore, that irrespective of the interactional structure analysed, the IrE informants use fewer head moves. In addition, where a pre-closing on behalf of the direction-giver exists, a continuation/confirmation check is less likely in all datasets. Hence, some of the cross-varietal differences in supportive move use might rather be explained by the difference in where the adjacency pair expression of gratitude (*thanks*/response to thanks) appeared in the interaction structure rather than to cross-varietal differences. However, we have also seen that where no pre-closing exists, the CanE and EngE informants are less likely to engage in continuations and confirmation checks than their IrE counterparts. In addition, and related to this fact is our definition of the pragmatic variable (cf. section 3.3) which focused the analysis on a late expression of *thanks* – due in large part to the presence of multiple thanks in the IrE data (cf. Figure 3). Had we chosen to focus on responses to thanks after an initial *thanks*, then the number of pre-closings by the direction-giver prior to the *thanks*/responses to thanks adjacency pair would have been lower in the IrE data (cf. Table 6) and consequently also the number of continuations and confirmation checks higher. Given that continuation and confirmation checks were used to only a very limited degree in the CanE and EngE data, this may also point to a generally higher use of continuations/confirmation checks in IrE relative to CanE and EngE.

Table 6: Presence of direction-giver pre-closings before the first and final *thanks* uttered in IrE (n=34)

	First *thanks* uttered	Final *thanks* uttered
Pre-closings	35.3 % (12)	55.9 % (19)

Excerpt (5) above illustrates this tendency in the IrE data to engage in continuations and confirmation checks. The first sealing expression of gratitude and attempt to close the interaction begins in turn 11. There is no preceding closing on behalf of the direction-giver, rather the directions were not complete until turn 10. The initial expression of gratitude, *thanks*, is followed by a continuation in which the direction-giver offers some clarification of the way, giving more information on the time needed to get to the train station. In turn 13 a second expression of gratitude and with it a second attempt to close the interaction occurs. This is followed by a restatement of directions giving further clarification. In turn 15, the final *thanks* is uttered and then followed by a response to thanks using two tokens, *Alright* and *No problem*.

4 Discussion and conclusion

Using the example of responses to thanks, the present study draws attention to the importance of comparability of context in cross-varietal pragmatic analyses. It also highlights how the concept of the pragmatic variable can be applied fruitfully to enable contrastive research on speech acts across pluricentric varieties using less controlled data, and it demonstrates that ultimately the data chosen will influence the level of attention needed in defining the pragmatic feature and context. The empirical cross-varietal analysis of spoken direction-giving exchanges showed – despite contextual control – the need for a multi-faceted definition of the variable, for continual attention to the comparability of data and for regular re-examination of the definition of the pragmatic variable and should the need arise, as it did in the present analysis, for redefinition of the pragmatic variable in the process of analysis. Like previous cross-varietal studies of responses to thanks in English (Schneider 2005; Bieswanger 2015; Mulo Farenkia 2013; Schröder/Schneider 2018), the study shows the importance of position as a second pair part as well as function in guiding the analysis. In addition, the analysis highlighted some incomparability in linguistic context in the IrE analysis which led to the need to include sequential position of the initiating sealing thanks as well as presence of a pre-closing issued by the direction-giver in the definition of the pragmatic variable.

The cross-varietal analysis yielded many insights into the head moves and supportive moves occurring after a response to thanks across the pluricentric varieties of CanE, EngE and IrE. In addition, it highlighted variation in the structure of closings

across varieties. The main findings are listed in turn in the following, compared to previous research and discussed in the light of possible explanations and possible data limitations.

a) Conventionalised responses to thanks (head moves) are frequent in response to a sealing *thanks* in the direction-giving context across CanE, EngE and IrE. This finding is at odds with a previous suggestion by Edmondson/House (1981) that responses to thanks do not follow when the favour granted by the thankee was a verbal act. In addition, the present findings refute Aijmer's (1996) data which report that only 1 % of thanks in the London-Lund corpus of BrE are followed with a response. The inconsistencies between the present study and these previous studies can be explained with reference to a) the nature of the thanks exchange and b) the genre. In relation to a), we note that Schneider (2007), in a contrastive analysis of responses to thanks across a range of genres in BrE and AmE, reports that sealing thanks used to initiate terminal thanking exchanges require a thanks minimiser to a larger extent than do other expressions of gratitude which occur during a speech event. In relation to b), we also note that this same study finds that responses to thanks are used less frequently in informal everyday conversation than in marked genres, such as interviews, shop encounters and telephone enquires (Schneider 2007). Thus, on the one hand, the status of the initiating thanks in the present context as a sealing thanks may explain the relatively high uses across varieties. On the other hand, the direction-giving genre may have influenced the levels of use across varieties (cf. also, e.g., high levels of responses to thanks in Bieswanger (2015) and Dinkin (2018), also situated in the direction-giving context).

b) Head moves including or excluding supportive moves are used to a higher extent in CanE relative to IrE and in some cases also relative to EngE (cf. section 3.4 for details). This finding applies to expressions of gratitude posed both with and without an initiation of a pre-closing by the direction-giver. The high occurrences of a head move in the CanE data are in line with previous research on CanE by Bieswanger (2015) and Dinkin (2018), who in their field-notes studies both report 90 % and 81.7 % presence of a head move respectively. Compared to the CanE data, use of conventionalised responses to thanks in IrE is low. In addition, the instances of no response at all, either head or supportive move, are higher in EngE and IrE than in CanE. Such findings point to a higher degree of indirectness in IrE and EngE relative to CanE. Furthermore, it can be noted that the similar use of such responses in IrE and EngE contrasts with a previous suggestion by Schneider (2005) that EngE speakers use more no response – whether head or supportive move – than IrE informants. However, Schneider (2005) uses a production questionnaire without an opt-out option and bases his suggestion on incomplete questionnaire items. He himself cautions of the need for future research. The present study is the first to analyse actual uses.

c) The analysis was the first analysis of responses to thanks in direction-giving to analyse supportive moves. Continuations, confirmation checks and leave-takes were the moves recorded. The findings build on and support descriptions of the ending of the set phase in direction-giving research (cf. Psathas/Kozloff 1976).

d) Overall, the CanE speakers used a smaller number of supportive moves than the IrE speakers. In addition, the IrE speakers showed a generally higher use of continuations and confirmation checks relative to CanE or EngE. In contrast, the CanE and EngE data revealed a higher use of leave-takes. A subsequent analysis of the co-text of the expression of gratitude revealed the expression of gratitude in the IrE context to have been issued more frequently prior to a pre-closing initiated by the direction-giver. However, a contrast of realisations with and without a pre-closing across varieties showed that with or without a pre-closing by the direction-giver, continuations and confirmation checks appear more common in IrE. Added to this is the fact that only a final sealing *thanks* was analysed in the present context. The IrE data showed multiple sealing *thanks* relative to CanE and EngE. An analysis of these multiple realisations would have further increased the number of continuations and confirmation checks recorded in such contexts. Thus, while confirmation checks and continuations are more likely in an IrE context without a pre-closing by the direction-giver than with a pre-closing, they appear to be employed more often overall than in CanE or EngE.

The cross-varietal findings reveal a larger use of head moves in CanE relative to IrE and also a smaller number of supportive moves in IrE relative to CanE, and of these for continuations and confirmation checks to be employed to a larger extent in the IrE data and leave-takes in the CanE and EngE data. One possible explanation for these findings relates to potential cultural differences. Kallen (2005) describes Irish politeness using the three poles of silence (indirectness), hospitality and reciprocity. Hence, it is possible that the higher use of continuations and confirmation checks in the IrE data and the lower use of head moves may act as face-saving in the light of a hearer-oriented *thanks*. In other words, the simple use of continuations and confirmation checks itself allows for a zero realisation of response to thanks – and thus allows the hearer-supportive speech act to be in some way overlooked, ignored or silenced.

A further related explanation concerns a high hearer-orientation in the IrE context and in particular the high status which hospitality enjoys in IrE. Kallen (2005: 132) explains that hospitality practices in Ireland are not necessarily about establishing or maintaining friendships, but rather "ways of adhering to the values of hospitality even among relative strangers". The status of hospitality in Ireland is also highlighted in non-scholarly writings. Hayes (2012: 61), in a lay-man's conversation guide to Ireland, for instance, writes that in Ireland, "[h]ospitality in the home is not an act of kindness; it is a duty" (cf. also Moore 2015: 180). Also, in scholarly writings, Barron (2017b) finds a higher use of hospitable offers in the Irish (Republic of Ireland)

component relative to the British component of the International Corpus of English (ICE)-IRE(R). Related to the importance of hospitality is also talkativeness which has been recorded in lay writings to characterise Irish culture (cf. DoChara Insider Guide to Ireland 2017 [2008]). In the present context of direction-giving, the extensive use of continuations and confirmation checks in the IrE data might be suggested to relate to a heightened hearer orientation and thus a heightened sense of responsibility to offer help and support in a hospitable manner.

Also connected to the pole of hospitality, a final potential explanation may be that the directions in the IrE context were more complex. Specific directions were given (cf. section 3.2) to keep direction-giving simple but it may be that the conventions of direction-giving are more complex in IrE. Moore (2015), in a book entitled *Irishology* designed for a lay audience, dedicates a chapter to giving directions. He likens giving directions in Ireland to a murder mystery, in which the way is revealed only at the very end of the direction-giving (2015: 78–79) (cf. also The Late Late Show with the Irish comedian Bernard O'Shea (RTÉ 2013)). Thus, the heightened use of continuations and confirmation checks may relate to the cognitive context and to differing genre conventions in giving directions.

While discussing the findings of the study, potential limitations of the analysis and potential influences on the data should also be addressed. It should be kept in mind, for instance, that the interactional structure in the data may have been affected by the experimental set-up in which the direction-seeker was guided in the structure of the interaction (cf. section 3.2). It may potentially have led to a lack of attention to the interaction itself and rather to a heightened focus on expressing gratitude and closing the interaction via the use of *thanks*. In addition, an awareness of having to address permissions following the analysis may have influenced the body signals of the direction-seekers. In naturally occurring interactions, direction-seekers have been found to bodily signal that the information needed has been received and that they are about to leave (cf. Raymond/Zimmerman 2016; also Pillet-Shore 2008, on how gaze and bodily conduct regulate physical and social co-presence). Despite such possibilities, the situation was the same for both direction-seekers in the present study. Hence, should the setting itself have played an explanatory role, it could only relate to potential individual differences in enacting the interactional pattern. This is possible, should one researcher, for instance, have been more or less prone to "act" that the interaction is over, or just stand still in the same position and by doing so unconsciously signal that she needs more information. Further research is thus required on responding to thanks across these varieties using naturally-occurring data without a script.

The present study has been above all methodological in nature, revealing how unexpected incompatibilities in datasets may arise, how they may be dealt with in striving for comparability of the pragmatic feature under analysis and also how such incompatibilities may themselves open up further research questions. The analysis of responses to thanks across varieties has highlighted differences in levels of use of conventionalised responses to thanks across pluricentric varieties. Further research

will examine the types, tokens and strategies of conventionalised responses across these pluricentric varieties (cf. Barron forthcoming).

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6 Transcription conventions

Yeah [no worries] [Thanks]	Overlapping speech
Over<[>lap	Overlapping speech interrupting a word
[[ ]]	Used to distinguish sequences of overlap
(.)	Indicates a pause in the talk of less than two tenths of a second.
(inc.)	Incomprehensible speech
!	Exclamation marks are used to indicate an animated or emphatic tone.
Word.	Indicates falling, stopping tone – not grammatical
Word,	Indicates a "continuing" intonation – not grammatical
Word?	Indicates a rising inflection – not grammatical