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<https://doi.org/10.48548/pubdata-156>

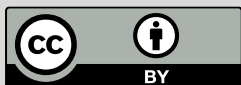
Citation details

Barron, A. (2019). Norms and variation in L2 pragmatics. In: Taguchi, N. (Ed.): *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Pragmatics*. Routledge. pp. 447-461.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351164085-29>

First published: 14.02.2019 by Routledge

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Chapter 29

Norms and variation in L2 pragmatics

Anne Barron

Abstract

In research and teaching, L2 pragmatics has typically employed a homogeneous inner-circle standard pragmatic norm and, thus, has frequently overlooked target language variation. In today's global world, however, L2 exposure to pragmatic variation is inevitable. The present paper discusses intralingual regional pragmatic variation and examines L2 users' awareness and use of regional pragmatic features. It also examines the factors influencing such L2 awareness and use, including learners' attitudes, exposure to local norms, and complexity of the pragmatic features. The paper concludes with implications for future research and teaching.

Keywords: pragmatic variation, regional variation, intralingual pragmatic variation, variational pragmatics, macro-social variation

Introduction

Taguchi and Roever (2017) identified three major areas in which the impact of globalisation is prominent in L2 pragmatic research: English as a lingua franca, intercultural competence, and heritage language learning. The present chapter proposes a fourth area, namely intra-lingual regional pragmatic variation. Intralingual regional pragmatic variation is defined as pragmatic variation within a single language where variation according to region is seen on a number of levels, including a national level (e.g., Philippine English vs. American English) and a sub-national level (e.g., the state of Lower Saxony vs. Bavaria in Germany) (cf. Schneider & Barron, 2008; Schneider & Placencia, 2017).

In the language classroom, regional variation is typically disregarded, and instead an oversimplified homogeneous standardised native speaker norm is presented (cf. Barron, 2005; Bieswanger, 2008; Nestor, Ní Chasaide & Regan, 2012). For example in a German classroom *Hochdeutsch*—Standard German—often serves as the norm. However, as L2 speakers become more globally mobile, they become exposed to intralingual regional pragmatic variation in the target language. L2 German users in Austria, for instance, may witness speakers of Austrian German producing speech acts of greeting and leave-taking in a different way compared to the speech acts which they are exposed to in a German classroom in Germany; the same L2 German users may also recognise regional pragmatic features in different areas of Germany, which are not addressed in a classroom due to the focus on a homogeneous norm. An awareness of intralingual regional pragmatic variation is important in a global context, particularly when L2 users are in the target language community, such as the case of immigrants or stay abroad students (cf. also Nestor & Regan, 2015). It is namely above all in such contexts that ‘ideologies surrounding ‘standardness’ may come into conflict with the desire to integrate into the local community’ (Diskin & Regan, 2017, p. 192). Indeed, L2 speakers in those contexts may experience a conflict between the particular standard language variety propagated in instructional contexts and the variety of the region in which they find themselves.

It is only recently that research in L2 pragmatics has investigated L2 users’ awareness and production of regional pragmatic features. Traditionally, L2 pragmatics research has assumed a homogeneous native speaker norm, ignoring variation among native speakers (cf. Barron, 2005; Kasper, 1995). Kasper (1995) notes that traditionally the macro-sociolinguistic characteristics of native speakers (based on region, age, social status, gender, and ethnic identity) have been either abstracted away or, at the very least, not systematically discussed in L2 pragmatics research. Lamenting on this situation, Kasper comments that, from a sociolinguistic perspective, the use of a homogeneous target language norm is not justified

because language use is influenced by context-external and context-internal factors. However, the underlying assumption that variation from macro-social factors does not exist still underlies much of L2 pragmatics research today. In today's globalised world, however, learners are exposed to first language (L1) regional norms as well as to pragmatic variation according to gender, age, socio-economic status, and ethnic identity. Recognising such intralingual pragmatic variation is critical for research and teaching in L2 pragmatics.

The present paper focuses on intralingual regional pragmatic variation and examines recent research on L2 users' awareness and use of target language regional pragmatic features, as well as the factors influencing their awareness and use of those regional features. The chapter first contextualizes the study of intralingual regional pragmatic variation by presenting existing findings on such variation. Then, the chapter turns to research on L2 users' awareness and use of such regional pragmatic features, as well as factors which impede or facilitate L2 users' awareness and use of regional pragmatic variation in the target language. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research and practical implications.

Theoretical underpinnings and key concepts

Regional pragmatic variation

In the article published in *The Handbook of World Englishes* (Kachru, Kachru, & Nelson, 2006), Kachru (2006) wrote that 'Although there is a large body of research available on speech acts across languages, not much has as yet been published comparing speech acts across varieties...' (p. 366). A decade later in the article which appeared in *The Oxford Handbook of World Englishes* (Filppula, Klemola, & Sharma, 2017), Kachru (2017) notes that:

Users of English do not use the language to make meanings in identical ways. They do not respond to invitations, make requests, pay compliments, apologize, and so on, in

the same ways. How these acts may be different had, however, received little attention until recently... (p. 276)

As these quotes reveal, researchers in the area of World Englishes have long recognised the existence of intralingual regional pragmatic variation. However, it is only in recent years that actual empirical attention has been paid to such pragmatic variation. With such research has come the insight that the way speakers 'do things with words' via speech acts (Austin, 1976) is influenced by regional conventions of language use. That is, speech acts, and in particular speech act realisation patterns, differ not only across languages (as cross-cultural pragmatic research had shown; cf., e.g., Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989), but also across varieties of a language.

Parallel to these discussions in World Englishes, variational pragmatics has emerged as a branch of pragmatics, influenced by cross-cultural pragmatics and modern dialectology within sociolinguistics. Variational pragmatics has focused on revealing intralingual pragmatic variation across varieties of languages via systematic analysis (Barron, 2014, 2017a; Barron & Schneider, 2009; Schneider, 2010, 2012; Schneider & Barron, 2008; Schneider & Placencia, 2017). As in World Englishes, the focus of variational pragmatic research is on regional variation; however, variational pragmatics also focuses on other macro-social factors, such as gender, age, socio-economic class and ethnicity, on language. It also addresses the interplay among these macro-social factors, as well as their interaction with micro-social factors.¹ Thus, variational pragmatics can be defined as the study of synchronic intralingual pragmatic variation coming from macro-social factors of region, gender, age, socio-economic status and ethnic identity, as these factors interact with micro-social factors (e.g., social distance and degree of imposition). In contrast to the field of World Englishes where much of the focus is on speech act realisations across varieties of English, variational pragmatics distinguishes five levels of analysis: (1) the formal level (e.g., discourse-pragmatic markers, pragmatic routines), (2) the actional level (e.g., speech acts), (3) the interactional

level (e.g., sequential patterns), (4) the topic level (e.g., content and topic management) and (5) the organisational level (e.g., turn-taking). Empirical analyses sometimes combine these levels.

In the variational pragmatic framework, region may be investigated on a range of levels. These levels include the supranational, national, and sub-national levels, but also local and sub-local levels (Schneider & Barron, 2008; Schneider & Placencia, 2017). While variation on the supranational level refers to norms shared among varieties or languages (e.g., north-western Europe), variation on the national level refers to national varieties of pluricentric languages (e.g., Germany vs. Austria). Sub-national variation denotes variation within different regions (e.g., variation between the Rhineland and Hesse, coming from different states in Germany). Local level variation refers to variation in a particular town or city (e.g., Berlin vs. Hamburg), and sub-local variation means variation existing within a town or city (e.g., Hammer, Clonard, Ballmacarrett—all working class districts in Belfast; cf. Milroy, 1980).

Region in variational pragmatics may be operationalised as a geographical variable in research design, but it may also be viewed as an identity. Such a perspective views region as a social fact (similar to gender, age and socio-economic status, and ethnic identity). In other words, using a particular regional pragmatic feature may be interpreted as evidence of ascribing to a particular identity. There are various approaches to the study of region as identity (Haugh & Schneider, 2012). On the one hand, research may be constructionist in nature, involving in-depth ethnographic analysis. On the other hand, researchers may take an emic first-order approach, treating ‘macro-social factors as identities as they are displayed and perceived by participants (in the emic sense) in an interaction’ (Haugh & Schneider, 2012, p. 1017; Schneider & Placencia, 2017, p. 543). The latter approach builds on the observation that language users categorise other language users based on verbal and non-verbal behaviour during interaction.

In sum, with developments in the fields of variational pragmatics and World Englishes, it is only recently that macro-social pragmatic variation according to region (and also according to gender, age, socio-economic status and ethnic identity) has been added to the research agenda in L1 pragmatics (cf. Félix-Brasdefer & Koike, 2012). Schneider (2017) summarizes the goal of variational analysis in pragmatics as follows:

The ultimate aim [of the study of intralingual macro-social pragmatic variation] is to establish the patterns of language use that are relatively invariant across varieties and situations and thus may be seen to form the pragmatic core of a language, and those patterns that vary in systematic ways and can therefore be seen as pragmatic variables. (p. 320)

As this quote shows, Schneider envisages both the identification of a ‘pragmatic core’ of language patterns shared across varieties, and also the systematic description of pragmatic variation existing across varieties. In the next section, we turn to descriptions of systematic pragmatic variation across varieties, focusing on Irish English in comparison to other English varieties.

Irish English—A case of regional pragmatic variation

To date, much research on regional pragmatic variation has focused on pragmalinguistic variation (cf., e.g., Barron, 2017b on regional sociopragmatic variation). Pragmalinguistic variation is concerned with the linguistic resources used to convey meaning and involves linguistic features such as deixis, discourse-pragmatic markers, speech act strategies, and pragmatic routines. On the pragmalinguistic level, variety-specific and variety-preferential variation has been identified. Variety-specific variation exists where a particular variety has a specific linguistic form realising a particular function in language, which does not exist in another particular variety. Variety-preferential variation, on the other hand, refers to cases where the same strategies and forms are found in the varieties contrasted, but particular forms are preferred in one variety relative to another. Variety-preferential

pragmalinguistic variation is considered more common in a regional context. In the following, using Irish English as an example, we review studies that revealed variety-specific and variety-preferential macro-social pragmalinguistic variation. We focus on pragmatic variation on the formal level, specifically studies on discourse-pragmatic markers. Our review focuses on region as a macro-social variable. However, as will become clear in the review, there is interaction among different macro-social variables (e.g., role of socio-economic class in the use of Irish English clause-final *like*). We focus on the case of Irish English because there is a considerable amount of research on this variety both in L1 and L2 contexts.²

A highly salient and frequent linguistic feature perceived as ‘emblematic’ of Irish English (Migge, 2015, p. 390) is the discourse-pragmatic marker *now*. Although *now* in Irish English shares many functions with *now* in British English, two specific functions – ‘hedging *now*’ and ‘presentative *now*’— have been found as variety-specific features of Irish English (cf. Clancy & Vaughan, 2012). Speakers of Irish English use ‘hedging *now*’ to downtone the illocutionary force of face-threatening acts, such as challenges (‘That’s not fair now.’), disagreements (‘You can’t say that now.’), evaluations (‘I’d say I’m crap now.’), direct questions (‘How many Euros would that be now?’), and orders (‘Hold on a minute now.’) (Clancy & Vaughan, 2012, p. 236-238; examples from Limerick Corpus of Irish English). Clancy and Vaughan (2012) argue that such uses of *now* function to minimise power and add to ‘the emphasis on solidarity and corollary downtoning of power, both actual and conversational’ in Irish society (p. 240). On the other hand, ‘presentative *now*’ involves the use of *now* as a lexicalised pointing device. The following example from the Limerick Corpus of Irish English illustrates this:

Speaker 1: How much is that?

Speaker 2: One fifty. Now. Thanks.

In this example, the word *now* accompanies the sales assistant’s returning change and thus makes ‘money’ salient (Clancy & Vaughan, 2012).

Other discourse-pragmatic markers, specifically tag questions, have revealed variety-preferential and variety-specific uses in Irish English. Barron, Pandarova and Muderack (2015) compared Irish and British English in the International Corpus of English (ICE) and found variety-preferential uses of tag questions in Irish English, as seen in the more frequent use of tag questions exhibiting constant polarity between anchor and tag (e.g., ‘You were dreaming that, were you?’) and in the higher use of interrogative anchors (e.g., ‘. . . , is it?’). On a functional level, they recorded a higher frequency of tag questions used to seek information in Irish English than in British English. Variety-specific uses, on the other hand, included the uses of *sure*-tags recorded in Irish English, but not in the British counterpart (e.g., ‘You didn't have that long with the Dubs really sure you didn't.’) (see also Barron & Pandarova, 2016).

Finally, we turn to variety-preferential and variety-specific use of the discourse-pragmatic marker *like*. Investigations of native speaker uses of *like* are many, with several studies highlighting its global nature and others documenting its multi-faceted functions and the range of positions it occupies (cf. Diskin, 2017; Murphy, 2015; Nestor & Regan, 2015). On a variety-preferential level, studies found that the frequency of *like* in Irish English is particularly high relative to other varieties of English, such as British English, Indian English, Philippine English, and East African English (cf. Schweinberger, 2015; Siemund, Maier & Schweinberger, 2009). In addition, rather specific to the use of *like* in Irish English relative to many other varieties of English is its extensive use in clause-final position (e.g., ‘I mean like big in a good way like.’; source: ICE-Ireland) and in clause-marginal position that encompasses clause final and clause initial *like* (e.g., ‘Like I haven't visited her in years.’; source: ICE-Ireland) (Diskin, 2017; Nestor et al., 2012; Schweinberger, 2015; Siemund et al., 2009). In addition, clause-final *like* in Irish English is distinctive on the phonetic level, as Diskin (2017) notes:

[in *like*] the vowel tends to be reduced and less diphthongal than its clause-initial and clause-medial counterparts Moreover, the /k/ tends to be fully closed and realised, rather than lenited ... and the utterance is generally accompanied by an abrupt falling intonation. (p. 154)

Thus, Irish English has a localised, variety-specific clause-final *like* and a globalised clause-medial *like*, with the latter associated with American English (cf. Nestor & Regan, 2015).

Studies on Irish English have revealed that the use of *like* is not consistent across all regions of Ireland and that the regional variable may interact with other macro-social variables (e.g., socio-economic status), leading to variation in the use of *like*. For instance, Amador-Moreno's (2012) study suggests that globalised *like* is frequent in Dublin English and that clause-final *like* is used to a lesser extent than in the rest of the country (cf. Amador-Moreno, 2015). However, as Amador-Moreno (2012) also points out, it may not be just Dublin English that is associated with clause-medial *like* over clause final *like*; rather, it may be that upwardly mobile, globally-oriented upper and middle-class Dublin South-side speakers distance themselves from the more local Dublin speakers by using clause-medial *like* rather than close-final *like*. Nestor et al. (2012) also suggest that this division of *like* relates to socio-economic class since the southside of Dublin is more upper/middle class and the northside is more working class.

So far we have illustrated variety-preferential and variety-specific uses of discourse-pragmatic markers in Irish English. We have also highlighted the interaction between the regional factor and other macro-social factors on variation. We now turn to the research on L2 users' awareness of pragmatic variation in the target language, as well as their use of regional-specific pragmatic features and factors influencing their use.

Literature review: Pragmatic variation and L2 users

L2 users' awareness and use of regional pragmatic features

L2 research on macro-social pragmatic variation examines three primary issues: (a) whether L2 speakers are aware of intralingual regional pragmatic variation; (b) whether L2 speakers actively use L1 regional pragmatic features; and (c) what factors may affect L2 speakers' awareness and use of L1 regional pragmatic features. The following review first addresses L2 users' awareness and use of regional pragmatic features in the target language and then discusses factors affecting their awareness and use.

Overall, existing findings point to L2 speakers' awareness of regional pragmatic features but generally low level of use of these forms. Migge (2015), for instance, investigated immigrants' awareness and use of the discourse-pragmatic marker *now*. She conducted semi-guided interviews with 59 newcomers to Ireland from a variety of countries (both European and non-European) including also L1 English speakers from a range of countries (e.g., Britain, U.S.A., India, and Africa) (cf. Migge, 2012). Migge revealed participants' awareness of the distinctive uses of *now* in Irish English. She also found that newcomers used the 'hedging *now*' specific to Irish English, but not the 'presentative *now*'. However, Migge (2015) found that the use of the 'hedging *now*' was not widespread among newcomers. In addition, one of the pragmatic functions of *now* appeared to be slightly different from the functions of *now* described in Clancy and Vaughan (2012). Migge (2015) found that immigrants used *now* not only to mitigate a threat to the hearer's face, but also to downtone a threat to the speaker's face. Based on these findings, Migge (2015) suggested that '... interviewees have not at all or only weakly acculturated to Irish ways of speaking English' (p. 405). Similar findings were reported in Davis's (2007) study, which investigated Korean ESL learners' attitudes towards, awareness of, and preferred uses of Australian English routines while studying in Australia. Using a multiple choice ranking task and an attitude questionnaire, Davis found that, despite their awareness of Australian English routines, they showed resistance to Australian English routines and a preference toward American English routines.

Diskin (2017), Nestor et al.'s (2012), and Kanwitt, Elias and Clay (2018) reported similar findings in terms of the use of variety-specific or variety-preferential forms. Diskin (2017) investigated the use of the discourse-pragmatic marker *like* by 42 Polish and Chinese migrants in Dublin, and compared their use to data from native speakers of Irish English. She found that, after three years in Ireland, L2 users employed *like* as frequently as native speakers. However, in her functional-positional analysis of *like*, she reported that, in contrast to other uses of *like*, *like* as a mitigator in clause-final position (variety-specific use of *like* in Irish English) was only adopted by a small number of migrants. Similarly, Nestor et al. (2012) investigated the use of *like* by L2 users of English in Ireland. They analysed the positional distribution of *like* in sociolinguistic interviews conducted with Polish migrants in the urban area of Dublin and in rural Ireland. They found that the use of clause-final *like* was associated with a large degree of inter-speaker variation. In other words, L2 users did use clause-final *like* but their rates of usage differed. Although such inter-speaker variation was also seen among native speakers, L2 users showed a higher degree of variation. Finally, using a multiple-choice test, Kanwit et al. (2018) reported L2 Spanish learners' acquisition of regional-preferential intensifiers while abroad (in Spain and Mexico). They found that the learners' usage patterns of intensifiers differed depending on the adjectives intensified. The learners' awareness of context-specific constraints affecting the use was rather limited.

These findings suggest that L2 users have some awareness of regional pragmatic features, but they only exhibit limited use of these forms. Also, inter-speaker variation may be high and context-specific constraints may remain unnoticed among L2 users. The next section surveys the literature on the factors facilitating or impeding L2 speakers' awareness and use of regional pragmatic features.

Exposure to regional pragmatic features in the local community

Low levels of contact with local speakers of a particular variety may (partly) account for the low levels of awareness and use of regional-specific or regional-preferential pragmatic

features found among L2 speakers. Migge (2015), for instance, suggests that low-level exposure to variety-specific uses of *now* could explain L2 users' low-level awareness and use of this marker. Migge's interview data revealed that her participants did not have a close relationship with Irish locals (cf. also Nestor et al., 2012; Nestor & Regan, 2015). Similarly, Kanwit et al.'s (2018) study on intensifier variation revealed that L2 Spanish learners in Ovideo, Spain, preferred the intensifier *muy* more than their counterparts in Mérida, Mexico. Kanwit et al. explained this finding with reference to learners' exposure to native speaker input. The intensifier *muy* occurs more frequently among native speakers in Oviedo than in Mérida. However, the authors also noted differential degrees of use across intensifiers tested in L2 data because particular intensifiers were not 'robustly available in learner input abroad' (p.467). They also noted that such different uses may have resulted from the types of adjectives intensified and from the frequency of those adjectives in learners' input.

Prior exposure to regional pragmatic features

Prior exposure to pragmatic features, such as exposure in a classroom, may prepare L2 users for the input they receive in the target speech community and thus influence their awareness and use of regional pragmatic features in the target speech community. Diskin (2017) found that L2 users' overall frequency of use of *like* matched with native speakers' frequencies after three years in Ireland. However, L2 users did not show similar distributions of functional-positional uses of *like* as native speakers. In contrast to other uses of *like*, *like* as a mitigator in clause-final position (a particularly characteristic use of *like* in Irish English) was only adopted by a small number of migrants. Diskin (2017) argued that, although features of conversational English such as discourse-pragmatic marker *like* are not generally taught in the classroom context (cf. Rühlemann, 2008), migrants may have been exposed to more global forms of *like*, such as clause-medial *like*, through films and TV shows. However, migrants probably had no prior exposure to clause-final *like* given the general homogenisation of English in the language classroom and the lack of attention to varieties in the classroom

context (cf. Bieswanger, 2008). As Diskin (2017) argued, the lack of exposure to and instruction on varieties of English may also potentially explain the limited use of localised varieties among L2 speakers. Similarly, Kanwit et al. (2018), writing on the acquisition of intensifier variation in the stay abroad context, noted that pre-departure instruction can help L2 users process the varied input they experience while abroad.

Attitudes

L2 users' attitudes towards a particular variety may affect language use. Korean ESL study abroad students in Davis' (2007) study showed a conscious resistance to Australian English routines in Australia. Davis explained the findings with reference to the status of American English as the preferred variety and a recognised global norm in English classrooms in South Korea. Australian English was seen to be globally less recognised, and the ESL participants explicitly noted a potential lack of comprehensibility if they used Australian routines outside the Australian context. This study, thus, shows that learner attitudes may determine whether localised features are employed or not.

Attitudes that language users perceive L2 localised language use to potentially trigger among native speakers may also influence L2 users' reluctance in using localised features despite having an awareness of these features. L2 users may feel that local members might have negative attitudes towards learners' use of localized pragmatic features. Migge (2015), for instance, reported that some informants of African origin and interviewees from the U.S.A. noted that native speakers of Irish English may feel ridiculed by a non-Irish speakers' use of localised features because of the status of these features as in-group identity markers in Ireland (see also Davis, 2007; Migge, 2012).

Context of use

The context of L2 use also affects whether L2 users produce a regional pragmatic form or not. L2 users, for instance, show different preferences for the localised norm depending on whether the context of use is global or local. In Davis' (2007) study, Korean

ESL learners revealed a general preference toward American English routines over Australian English routines. At the same time, they were also aware of the benefits of using Australian routines in the Australian context because data showed that the preference for American English routines became weakened in the Australian context. These findings illustrate a case of dynamic language use, with choices of language use tailored to the circumstances at hand. As Davis (2007) writes, ‘one of the determining factors in learning routines in an ESL environment will be the socio-political relevance of different styles of English at global and local levels’ (p. 636).

In addition to the context of L2 use, the context of data collection can also influence L2 users’ production of regional pragmatic features. Kanwit et al. (2018), for instance, suggested that a written multiple-choice task used in the study might have affected their findings because some intensifiers such as *bien* occur primarily in colloquial, informal contexts. In other words, informants may have decided not to use *bien* due to the written form of the task.

Identity construction

Regional pragmatic features specific to a particular variety may be used to signal identity. L2 speakers’ use of a specific regional pragmatic feature may be related to whether they wish to acculturate to the local community and construct a local identity for themselves. Nestor et al. (2012), for example, explained their findings on clause-final *like* with reference to the kind of identity that this discourse-pragmatic marker helps to construct and also to L2 users’ desire to employ the marker as a way of acculturating into Ireland. They suggested that clause-final *like* is employed by L2 users who are locally-aligned and who identify themselves with Ireland. Migge (2015) also showed that identity construction plays a role in L2 speakers’ use of the discourse-pragmatic marker *now*. She commented that many of the informants interviewed held positive opinions about Irish English as a variety and were largely happy to use linguistic features specific to Irish English. However other informants stated that they

‘actively avoided such properties as they felt that it undermined their identity’ (cf. also Migge, 2015, p. 405). Some of these informants with a strong discourse of resistance were from other English-speaking countries (e.g., UK).

These studies make it clear that investigation into L2 speakers’ use of regional pragmatic variation also means finding out the extent to which L2 users recognise the social identity that the variation indexes. Such investigation also means finding out the extent to which L2 users construct a particular regional identity for themselves, while at the same time recognising that L2 identity is fluid and multi-faceted (cf. Norton, 2000). In other words, L2 users may construct a local identity for themselves using a localised pragmatic marker in a local context of use or with the interlocutors who are familiar with a particular local variety. The same users may, however, construct a different identity for themselves in a more global context where use of Irish English features may not lead to alignment with the culture, but instead to potential estrangement or to potentially negative evaluation in a formal examination context (cf. above *context of use*).

Complexity and functional range of pragmatic features

The complexity of the local pragmatic features may also affect L2 speakers’ use of the features. For instance, clause-final *like* in Irish English requires interaction between syntactic and pragmatic information, and as such it is subject to instability and incomplete acquisition among L2 users. In addition, this form is phonologically-distinct and has a mitigating function that is also challenging for L2 users. Diskin (2017) suggests that such complexity involved in the form may also explain the fact that only a limited number of L2 speakers in her study used this regional-specific pragmatic marker.

Another explanation for the limited uses of localised pragmatic features is a limited range of the functions exhibited in the features. Diskin (2017) argued that L2 users may not use clause-final *like* potentially because this discourse-pragmatic marker serves a limited range of functions, and as a result L2 users have limited exposure to this marker compared to

like in clause-initial and medial positions. For example, clause-final *like* serves a mitigatory function and occurs when expressing opposing opinion to the interlocutor. In contrast, *like* in other positions serves a greater range of functions, including illustration, filler, hesitation, approximation, and self-correction (Diskin, 2017), suggesting that *like* in clause-initial and medial positions are more frequent than clause-final *like* in input.

Age

Nestor et al (2012) found that five of their eight L2 informants did not use the discourse-pragmatic marker *like* (in global or local forms) to any significant degree. The informants who used *like* were relatively young (age range: 21-40). Nestor et al. suggested that *like* was not used by older speakers as it does not express social identity in this age group. However, not all young participants used *like* either. Although Nestor et al.'s study did not reveal a statistically significant effect of age, there is evidence that younger native speakers (particularly young females) tend to use *like* (global uses) more frequently than older speakers, especially in teenager discourse (cf. Diskin, 2017; Murphy, 2015; Nestor & Regan, 2015), suggesting potential future research on the age effect. It is possible that the regional factor may interact with other macro-social factors (e.g., age, gender, socio-economic class, and ethnic identity) affecting the use of clause-final *like*, and thus merits future investigation.

Conclusion and future directions

The present chapter has focused on regional pragmatic variation as a type of macro-social pragmatic variation. The study of macro-social pragmatic variation (i.e., intralingual pragmatic variation according to factors like region, gender, age, socio-economic class and ethnic identity) is a relative new-comer in the field of L1 pragmatics. In L2 pragmatics, research on L2 users' awareness and use of regional pragmatic features (and other macro-social pragmatic features) has just started. On the one hand, existing studies have revealed some awareness of regional pragmatic features among L2 speakers. On the other hand, studies have revealed that L2 users can use regional pragmatic features, but their use is often

limited. Also, inter-speaker variation may be high among L2 users, and context-specific constraints may remain unnoticed. The factors influencing L2 users' awareness and use of regional pragmatic features include exposure—both exposure to local speakers' use in the community and prior exposure in a classroom setting. L2 speakers' attitudes towards the localised variety also influence their use of localized features. L2 speakers may choose to reject localised pragmatic features due to their preference toward a standardised variety taught in the classroom. L2 speakers may also think that local speakers might hold negative attitudes towards their use of in-group features and thus refrain from using regional features. The context of use may also influence L2 speakers' use of a localised pragmatic feature. While a regionalised pragmatic norm may be rejected in a global context, it may be accepted in a local context as a means to display alignment with local speakers. L2 speakers may also use regionalised pragmatic features to construct an identity in a way that it aligns to local context. Moreover, the complexity of a particular pragmatic feature and its functional range may influence L2 use. Finally, macro-social factors such as age, along with region, can potentially influence L2 use. The following section presents implications for research and teaching on regional pragmatic variation.

Research implications

Recent research developments in investigating L2 users' awareness and use of macro-social pragmatic variation present a trend to be continued. This chapter has focused on variation at the formal level and specifically on discourse-pragmatic marker use. As Nestor and Regan (2015) note, discourse markers are “available as a quick route to ‘sounding’ like a native speaker due to their salience and frequency in the input available to the L2 speaker” (Nestor & Regan, 2015, p. 409). Discourse markers are also ‘a powerful tool in the identikit of both L1 and L2 speakers’ (Nestor et al. 2012, p. 349). However, research scope should be broadened in the future, extending to different levels of language (e.g., speech acts, topic

management, conversation openings and closings, turn-taking) and varieties of languages (see Endnote 2).

From a methodological point of view, two types of data collection methods have dominated the current L2 research—multiple-choice questionnaires and semi-directed sociolinguistic interviews. In Kanwit et al.'s (2018) study, for instance, informants were given a multiple-choice questionnaire consisting of a series of situational scenarios and were asked to indicate what a particular individual in the situation would say. They were asked to choose a sentence from two options that differed in the intensifier given. Multiple-choice questionnaires have also been used in combination with attitude questionnaires, as in Davis's (2007) study. Semi-directed sociolinguistic interview (Labov, 1972) is another popular data collection method (Diskin & Regan, 2017; Migge, 2015; Nestor & Regan, 2015).

Sociolinguistic interviews should be conducted in an informal setting in order to relax informants (Nestor & Regan, 2015). Topics discussed in the interviews vary. For instance, Nestor and Regan (2015) and Migge's (2015) studies used topics related to different facets of informants' experiences in Ireland, while Diskin and Regan (2017) talked about participants' daily lives, interests, and attitudes towards Irish English. Sociolinguistic interviews are sometimes triangulated with ethnographic questionnaires eliciting biographical, linguistic, socio-psychological, and linguistic-educational information (cf. Nestor & Regan, 2015). These data collection methods are suited to investigating localised features as they generate data based on participants' everyday language use. These methods can also generate insight into L2 users' attitudes towards the variety.

There are several methodological points to consider in future research. First, studies need to take into consideration that L2 speakers' use of macro-social pragmatic variation may be context-dependent. This means that L2 speakers may deem a regional-specific/regional-preferred form to be appropriate in some contexts but not in others (see the section on *context of use* above). Thus, research conducted in a formal examination context (e.g., oral interview

which is later graded) may not reveal L2 speakers' use of localised features because the formal examination context typically demands standard norms. Similarly, since many regional features are acquired in an informal context, their use may be rejected in written contexts (e.g. written multiple-choice questionnaires) (cf. Kanwit et al., 2018). This is because the written mode and the questionnaire format are often associated with a formal context. In contrast, the semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews that create an informal atmosphere would appear more likely to elicit localised uses.

Similarly, future studies should clearly state with whom L2 users are interacting and discuss possible influences of their interlocutors on the data. In Nestor and Regan's (2015) study, for instance, the sociolinguistic interviews with Polish immigrants were conducted by the first author who speaks fluent Polish and has spent time in Poland, which, as the authors suggested, contributed to the relaxed atmosphere in the interviews. Not only does the background of an interviewer have an effect on the relative formality of a setting, but informants may also try to accommodate the interviewer's norms (Thackerar, Giles, & Cheshire, 1982). As a result, informants may produce more or less of a pragmatic feature depending on its use by the interviewer. Also, as discussed above, perceived attitudes to native speakers' views on alignment may also influence L2 speakers' use of a localised feature in data collection. Hence, details about interviewers' backgrounds need to be presented clearly as possible influences on the data. In addition, interviews should be conducted systematically using a format comparable to all participants. In Nestor & Regan' (2015) study, interviews with younger informants were conducted with the first author alone, but the interviews with older participants were carried out by two interviewers whose backgrounds were unknown. Hence, it is possible that the atmosphere of the interviews with the younger informants were more informal, leading to these informants' higher use of discourse-pragmatic *like*.

A third methodological consideration is that L2 research should use the same data collection method as the L1 research to which the L2 data are compared. Otherwise, different data collection methods may influence findings. For example, the semi-guided interviews in Migge's (2015) study may partly explain low frequency of the pragmatic marker *now* among L2 speakers, because the interview data differs from the conversational data among peers used as the baseline L1 data. L1 variational pragmatics research often uses corpus data and elicited data, such as data collected through discourse completion tasks (Barron, 2017a). Hence, achieving comparability between L1 and L2 data represents a challenge for researchers.

Another methodological consideration is that, in future research, multiple-choice questionnaires and sociolinguistic interviews might be triangulated with the use of verbal guise tests to gain informants' perceptions toward a localised feature. In verbal guise tests, informants are given two spoken texts and asked to rate the speaker in each text using a series of semantic differential scales (cf., e.g., Davydova, Tytus, & Schlee, 2017). These scales focus on a variety of personality traits (e.g., annoying vs. pleasant; casual vs. formal) and use a scale for evaluation (e.g., Likert-scale ranging from 1 to 5). Another useful data triangulation involves eliciting informants' overt reactions towards certain localised uses. Informants can be asked what they know of the use of a particular feature, who uses it, in what type of talk, and whether they themselves use it (cf. Davydova, Tytus, & Schlee, 2017). Such instruments can supplement the existing interview-based methods and help us gain additional insights into L1 and L2 users' attitudes towards pragmatic variation.

Finally, L2 pragmatics research in general needs to take on board the L2 findings on macro-social pragmatic variation when selecting an L2 comparative norm. To take an example, Sell, Renkowitz, Sickinger, and Schneider (forthcoming) selected Canadian native speaker data as a norm to assess L2 pragmatic development against, because participants were exposed to Canadian English during their stay in Canada. One might argue that this norm is

appropriate since the participants were exposed to Canadian English. However, the participants were German students coming from a system in which a standardised British norm is upheld. The participants also returned to Germany after their sojourn abroad. Hence, it is possible that the school-goers would reject Canadian pragmatic norms if they appear to diverge from the British English norms practiced in the German EFL classrooms. What can researchers do in such cases? It seems necessary to examine whether L2 participants have an awareness of the pragmatic feature under investigation, and if so, whether they orient to a localised, global, or lingua franca norm of the feature. Metapragmatic interviews and ethnographic data can help investigate such orientations and identities. These methods can also help us go beyond pre-determined categorisations (e.g., region, gender, age) when investigating individual orientations (cf. Regan, 2013).

Pedagogical implications

Research on intralingual regional pragmatic variation makes clear that the homogeneous prestige native speaker norm presented in the classroom is short-sighted in the present global society (Bieswanger, 2008; Nestor et al., 2012). As we saw in this chapter, pragmatic variation abounds in the globalised world. Thus, L2 users need to be aware of the existence and status of pragmatic variation, understanding it not as an incorrect feature relative to an external prestigious norm, but as a systematic component of the variety at hand. In addition, L2 users require an awareness of the role that regional pragmatic features play in signalling identity and attitudes towards a variety.

Similarly, the current use of standardised norms for teaching and the absence of macro-social pragmatic variation in the school context may actually affect students' attitudes to variation and impede their use of localized norms. Student mobility continues to record ever higher numbers of stay abroad students each year (cf., e.g., European Commission, 2015). These stay abroad students are exposed to the target language in its local context during their sojourn abroad, but they have to return to the institutional framework after a

limited time (cf. Barron, forthcoming). If in this institutional context macro-social pragmatic variation has no role, is frowned upon, or is even penalised, students will avoid using such regional pragmatic features despite the role they play in constructing and performing a localised identity, with the potential assimilation benefits offered (cf. also McKay & Rubdy, 2013). Some suggestions have been made as to how macro-social pragmatic variation can be integrated into the foreign language classroom (cf. Barron, 2005; Schneider, 2006). Critically, proposals have been made to inform L2 users that languages are not homogenous, standardised entities; rather, languages adapt to their context of use and are frequently employed to create identities. In this vein, metapragmatic descriptions of varieties can be incorporated into teaching so L2 users understand the features of a variety.³

Notes

1. The term macro-social pragmatic variation derives from the term *makrosoziolinguistisch* ('macro sociolinguistic'), a term which was first employed in L2 pragmatics by Kasper (1995) in an article in which she problematizes the homogeneous target language pragmatic norm adopted in L2 pragmatics research. Kasper's (1995) use of the term is reminiscent of Fishman's (1970) societally-oriented macro-level analysis, in which he contrasts macro-level analysis with linguistically oriented micro-level analysis. In L1 and L2 pragmatics, micro-analysis (or analysis of situational variation in language use) is generally studied by means of micro-social factors such as social distance, social dominance and degree of imposition (cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987).

2. Kachru (2017) and Schneider (2012) both provide an overview of a range of pragmatic variation across the varieties of English. Fuchs and Gut (2016) present an overview focusing on intensifiers across the Englishes. Schneider and Placencia (2017) include an overview of regional intralingual pragmatic variation focusing on speech acts, turn-taking, topic and pragmatic sequences in a range of languages. Finally, Barron and Pandarova (2016) provide

an overview of macro-social variation focusing on particular sub-regional levels of variation and the interface of factors, such as gender, age and region.

3. Empirical findings on language contact and retention explain many synchronic variational pragmatic features. Barron et al. (2015), for instance, suggest that their findings on tag questions in Irish and British English can be explained from linguistic conservatism and retention of earlier forms of English imported during colonisation.

Further reading

Barron, A. (Ed.) (2015). Special Issue: A variational pragmatic approach to regional variation in language: Celebrating the work of Klaus P. Schneider. *Multilingua*, 34(4).

This publication is a special issue on regional pragmatic variation. L1 analyses focus on a broad range of regional varieties of English, Spanish and French, with the levels of analysis investigated including the formal level (e.g., tag questions, nominal address forms), the actional level (e.g., invitation refusals, responding to thanks, advise and complaints), the interactional level (e.g., rapport management), and the topic level (e.g., self-disclosure). All papers follow three methodological principles of variational pragmatic research: empiricity, comparability, and contrastivity. In other words, the analyses are empirically-based and involve contrasts of regional varieties using comparable data.

Beeching, K., & Woodfield, H. (Eds.) (2015). *Researching sociopragmatic variability.*

Perspectives from variational, interlanguage and contrastive pragmatics. Hampshire, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

This edited volume presents research on sociopragmatic variability from the standpoints of variational pragmatics, interlanguage pragmatics, and contrastive pragmatics. The volume presents a wealth of variational pragmatic studies focusing on macro-social L1 pragmatic variation, also for languages apart from English, and using

an array of methods ranging from data eliciting instruments (e.g., discourse completion tests) to corpus data. The range of macro-social factors examined in the studies is broad, including region, gender, age and socio-economic class.

Félix-Brasdefer, J. C., & Koike, D. A. (Eds.) (2012). *Pragmatic variation in first and second language contexts. Methodological issues*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

This edited volume focuses on pragmatic variation in a variety of first and second language contexts. It includes several chapters focusing on pragmatic variation according to macro-social factors (e.g., gender) and micro-social factors (e.g., social power, social distance, and situation) and includes analyses of a wide range of pragmatic features, such as speech acts, conventional expressions, stance, frames, mitigation, communicative action, and implicature. A particular focus of the volume is methodological issues, with quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method approaches featured across chapters.

Schneider, K. P., & Barron, A. (Eds.) (2008). *Variational pragmatics: A focus on regional varieties in pluricentric languages*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

This seminal volume established variational pragmatics as a field of research. The introductory chapter outlines the rationale for studying variational pragmatics as a separate field of inquiry, systematically illustrating the broader theoretical framework and presenting a framework for further analysis. Individual chapters in the volume present examples of empirical variational pragmatic research focusing on regional varieties of a range of pluricentric languages. Languages and varieties investigated include English (British English, Irish English, American English, and New Zealand English), Dutch (Netherlandic and Belgian Dutch), French (French French and Canadian French), German (German German and Austrian German) and Spanish (Venezuelan Spanish and Argentinean Spanish). Analyses are on the formal (e.g.

response tokens, T/V pronouns), actional (e.g. requests, apologies, invitations, and thanking) and interactional (e.g. small talk) levels.

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