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Teaching pragmatic competence with corpora: Intensification in expressions of gratitude across varieties

Abstract: This chapter considers the use of corpora as a resource in the teaching of pragmatic competence. It presents an online corpus task for teachers to use in the foreign language classroom aiming a) at examining intensification patterns in the expression of gratitude in English in online communication and b) at investigating intralingual pragmatic variation across the varieties of English, in the present case in British English and Irish English.

Keywords: corpora, expressions of gratitude, routines, varieties, pragmatic variation, intensification, online communication

1. Introduction

Communicative language teaching, building on Hymes' (1972) concept of communicative competence, is today the dominant approach adopted by EFL education departments and teachers alike (cf. Forsberg, Mohr & Jansen 2019). An important sub-component of communicative competence is pragmatic competence (e.g., Bachman & Palmer 1996). Pragmatic competence entails pragmalinguistic knowledge, i.e. knowledge of the linguistic resources necessary to do things with language (e.g., request strategies, expressions of gratitude) and also sociopragmatic knowledge, i.e. knowledge of how language use varies depending on situational factors, such as distance, hierarchy, and degree of imposition. Furthermore, it is now recognised that pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic conventions vary not only across languages, but also across regional and social varieties (cf. Barron & Schneider 2009; Schneider & Barron 2008). In other words, pragmatic norms of how to express gratitude or request may vary across regions (e.g. British English vs. Irish English) and also across different genders, age groups, socio-economic classes or ethnic groups. An awareness of pragmatic variation is thus also a key component of pragmatic competence (cf. also Barron in press c).

Textbooks are widely used in the language classroom. The representation of speech acts in textbooks has, however, been found to be incomplete and sometimes inaccurate. In addition, some speech acts are not represented and metapragmatic information is limited (cf., e.g. Barron 2016; De Pablos-Ortega 2011; Eslami & McLeod 2010; Limberg 2016; Petraki & Bayes 2013). Similarly, information on regional and social pragmatic variation is absent (Barron 2005;

Bieswanger 2008). The present article discusses corpora as a resource in addressing textbook deficiencies in teaching pragmatic competence. To date, pedagogical uses of corpora have focused on the lexico-grammatical level. Pragmatic tasks are scarce. The present article thus attempts to fulfill a gap by introducing a step-by-step inductive corpus task for teachers to use in the foreign language classroom to promote pragmatic competence. The task, which uses the freely available Global Corpus of Web-based English (GloWbE), focuses on expressions of gratitude, a speech act which is an integral part of foreign language syllabi. The educational standards (*Bildungsstandards*) for lower secondary level (*Sekundarstufe I*) in Germany, for instance, include ‘expressing gratitude’ under ‘ability to establish social contacts’ (KMK 2004: 13), making it a fundamental part of learners’ speaking competence. The task aims at a) examining how gratitude is expressed in English in online communication with a particular focus on the most frequent intensification patterns used and b) at investigating intralingual pragmatic variation across the varieties of English. It is designed according to the principles of data-driven learning (DDL) (Johns 1991) and focuses on the varieties of British English and Irish English.

In the following, the article first addresses what corpus linguistics and pragmatics have in common and why corpora represent an important resource for pragmatic teaching and research. It then looks at pedagogical approaches to the use of corpora in the language classroom before the pragmatics task is introduced and alterations and further developments of the task are discussed. The paper concludes with a discussion of implications for the foreign language classroom.

2. Corpora as a resource in teaching second language (L2) pragmatic competence

A corpus is a large collection of texts which has been systematically collected and is representative of a particular domain (language, variety, register, genre, situation) (cf. Friginal 2018: 10f; Staples & Fernández 2019: 241). Texts are generally stored on a computer and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively in their context of use using corpus software programs. Generally, these texts are naturally occurring but they may also contain elicited data (cf. Barron 2019; Staples & Fernández 2019: 242f).

The vast majority of scholarship pertaining to the use of corpora in L2 teaching has focused on the use of corpora for learning lexico-grammatical features, such as collocations or semantic prosody (cf., e.g., Mukherjee 2001, Kreyer 2007; cf. also Boulton & Cobb 2017; Cobb & Boulton 2015 for an overview). In contrast, scholarship on the use of corpora in L2 pragmatics is limited (cf. Aijmer & Rühlemann 2015; Barron 2019; Callies 2013; Staples & Fernández

2019: 241). This is perhaps not surprising since corpus pragmatics, a field which uses electronic corpora to examine language in its context of use with a focus on communication purpose and circumstances, is a relatively recent development (cf. e.g. Aijmer & Rühlemann 2015; Clancy & O’Keeffe 2015: 235f). Indeed, there exist only a handful of recent studies concerned with the use of corpora as a resource in teaching L2 pragmatic competence. Bardovi-Harlig, Mossman & Vellenga (2015) focus on the potential use of corpora for developing corpus-based materials to teach pragmatic routines for the classroom. Götz (2012) examines the effectiveness of using corpora in the teaching of communicative routines using learner-led vs. teacher-directed methods. Barron (in press a) provides step-by-step instructions on how the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) can be used by learners in the classroom setting to inductively examine intensification patterns in apologising in American English and how these patterns have changed over time. Barron (in press b) is a step-by-step class plan showing how the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) might be used inductively to deal with expressions of gratitude and responses to thanks in Academic Spoken American English.

Corpus linguistics offers a number of advantages in developing learners’ L2 pragmatic competence. Corpora of native speaker or lingua franca interactions offer learners an insight into uncensored, real-life interaction, increasingly frequently free of charge (cf., e.g. Spoken British National Corpus (BNC) 2014, Brigham Young University (BYU) corpora, MICASE). They allow search words/phrases to be seen in their context of use, show how various communicative acts are realised linguistically and provide learners with patterns of language use which are not intuitive. In addition, formulaic patterns relevant to a search word can be easily identified, as can frequency information on the use of a particular word or phrase (cf. Friginal 2018; Rühlemann & Clancy 2018). Furthermore, corpus data allows learners to see how speech acts are negotiated over several turns (cf. Pfingsthorn & Flöck 2014: 160ff; Schauer & Adolphs 2006: 119, 130f). Depending on the corpus, sociolinguistic information relating to age, gender, level of education and social class, may be provided (cf., e.g. spoken BNC 2014, MICASE). Such information gives a more detailed insight into the context-of-use and so supports a pragmatic analysis.

The use of corpora as a source of L2 pragmatic knowledge also involves some difficulties. Two of the most important challenges to speech act research in particular are the problems of precision and recall (cf. Jucker, Schneider, Taavitsainen & Breustedt 2008), both of which relate to the fact that the entry point to pragmatic information in a corpus is via form, not function. Thus, teachers interested in extracting realisations of the speech act of requesting from a particular corpus

will not be able to search for “request”, rather, they are forced to search by form, e.g. via “can I VP?” (e.g. *can I have some tea?*), despite the fact that there is no one-to-one relationship between form and function. This means that a particular search will also yield unwanted hits (the problem of precision). A search for “can I + VP?”, for example, will not necessarily give only requests. Rather, it may also return offers, for instance, such as *can I get you some water?* Similarly, a conventionalised routine, such as *Hello* may realise a greeting or an attention-getter, depending on intonation and context (cf. Barron 2017, in press e; Clancy & O’Keeffe 2015: 236; Jucker 2018; Rühlemann & Clancy 2018). The problem of recall also relates to the form-based search. Recall applies when a particular search does not return all instances of the speech act of interest. A form-based study of the speech act of request, for instance, will have low recall for non-conventionally indirect speech acts (i.e. hints) as these cannot be searched for via form. Automatic pragmatic annotation schemes are needed to solve the problems of precision and recall, and recent attempts do exist to develop such schemes (e.g. Weisser 2018). However, such work is in its infancy and in the meantime, electronic searches of corpora are restricted to form, which means that precision and recall may be low, with searches generating many more hits than those of interest to the researcher and also missing less formulaic realisations. Such difficulties are most severe in the case of less formulaic speech acts, such as realisations of disagreements (cf. Barron 2017; Jucker 2009). Finally, a further challenge of speech act research relates to decontextualisation: although linguistic features can be viewed in their co-text, contextual information relating to the participants and situation is frequently missing (cf., however, above on recent developments) and the illocutionary intent needs to be reconstructed. Learners must thus be encouraged to recontextualise such texts by attempting to understand the context of use and the authors’ illocutionary intent (Kaltenböck & Mehlmauer-Larcher 2005: 69–70).

3. Pedagogical approaches to L2 teaching with corpora

From a pedagogical perspective, corpora can be used directly or indirectly in L2 language learning (Götz 2012: 250–251). Used indirectly, corpora represent a source of data for developing reference and teaching materials, such as dictionaries, grammar books, textbooks or worksheets. Direct uses of corpora in language learning include the use of corpora by the language learners themselves. Originally suggested by Johns (1991), this approach to language learning which bases instruction on corpora and corpus-linguistic methods is termed data-driven learning (DDL). It is an inductive approach to language learning

which involves learners observing data, classifying salient features and generalising the rules of the language in question themselves (cf. also McEnergy & Xiao 2010: 371). As such, DDL promotes language awareness and makes data salient and thus noticeable (Schmidt 1993). The approach puts learners in the role of researchers and thus encourages a discovery approach to learning, an approach which has been claimed to lead to a higher level of cognitive processing and deeper learning (Gilmore 2015: 517). In addition, it gives learners the tools to take control of their learning and thus facilitates autonomous learning.

Traditionally, DDL represented a learner-led approach to language learning with learners posing their own research questions and finding answers in the corpus. However, recently, a teacher-directed approach has also evolved (Götz 2012; McEnergy & Xiao 2010: 370). The advantage of the teacher-directed approach is that it addresses one of the major problems of learner-led DDL, namely that learners can feel overwhelmed at the large amount of output a search may return. The teacher-directed approach makes corpus work more manageable for many learners, supporting learners in the challenges of dealing with large numbers of concordance lines with clear instructions. Teacher-directed DDL may simply involve the teacher providing learners with pre-edited concordance lines to be analysed. It may, however, also involve learners using computers. In this case, the teacher provides structure by, for instance, testing the research question beforehand and/or choosing the corpus and/or the concordancing tools to use and giving tasks and directions for use.

The effectiveness of DDL, whether learner-led or teacher-directed, has yet to be investigated for pragmatic tasks, a situation also explained by the limited scholarship in the area (cf. above). However, in a meta-analysis of pre/post-test designs focusing on the effectiveness of using corpora in language learning, Boulton & Cobb (2017) conclude that DDL proves effective in almost any context in which it has been extensively tried and among both advanced and intermediate learners (cf. also Friginal 2018: 42; Liu & Lei 2017: 108). They also point out, however, that there is a lack of research on the effectiveness of DDL for key linguistic areas – among these discourse and pragmatics. Götz (2012) provides information on the relative effectiveness of different corpus-linguistic task types using a learner-led and teacher-directed method with university learners. She notes that DDL is beneficial for frequency-based tasks if the topic is interesting. She finds learner-led work to be successful only if the task is unambiguous. In addition, the study shows DDL to be successful for tasks focusing on communicative routines if the tasks are teacher-led. Similar to Götz's (2012) study, most corpus work has been carried out with students at the tertiary level. The use of DDL for school-goers requires further research given that corpora are

still largely absent from ELT in primary and secondary education (cf. also Cobb & Boulton 2015: 483; Kaltenböck & Mehlmauer-Larcher 2005: 66; McEnery & Xiao 2010: 370). The general recommendation is, however, that with suitable scaffolding, corpora can potentially be used even with beginner-level learners (Friginal 2018: 41).

4. Doing corpus pragmatics in the classroom: Intensification in expressing gratitude across the varieties of English

In the following, the article presents a teacher-directed corpus linguistic task designed to increase L2 pragmatic awareness of pragmatic conventions and of pragmatic variation. The overriding aim of this task is twofold: a) to examine the most frequent intensification patterns used in expressing gratitude in online discourse and b) to investigate pragmatic variation on a regional level. The task focuses on routine expressions of gratitude and in particular on the use of intensification across two varieties, namely British English and Irish English.

Thanking is an expressive speech act, i.e. in thanking, a speaker expresses his/her psychological state vis-à-vis a state of affairs of a person (Searle 1976: 12). The speech act boosts the hearer's positive face, i.e. his/her self-image in the eyes of others, by making the speaker's appreciation of the hearer plain (Brown & Levinson 1978, 1987). Intensifiers, i.e. adverbs, such as *very* and *so*, which „maximize or boost meaning“ (Ito & Tagliamonte 2003: 258), enhance this act of positive politeness. In this corpus task, the learners are guided to examine the most frequent intensification patterns used in expressing gratitude with the form *thanks* across varieties. This makes use of the formulaic nature of expressions of gratitude and thus decreases the difficulties of form-focused corpus searches for pragmatics (cf. 2).

The corpus employed is the Global Corpus of Web-based English (GloWbE), a corpus of 1.9 billion words from web pages, 60% of these blogs, from twenty English-speaking countries. The corpus also makes it possible to revisit the original blogs and internet pages, meaning that data can be easily re-contextualised (cf. 2). This global focus facilitates comparisons of language use across several varieties of English. Among the varieties in the corpus are British English and Irish English, both inner circle varieties, i.e. varieties in which English is employed as a first language (Kachru 1985). Irish English shows sub-stratum influence from the indigenous Celtic language, Irish, which was traditionally spoken in Ireland before colonialism by the British Empire. Retention of features inherited from the colonising variety at that time is also a feature (cf. Hickey 2017).

The present task focuses on communicative routines in expressing gratitude and employs the corpus linguistic methods of frequency and collocation. Specifically, the 'List' and 'Collocate' functions in the 'Search' display option in the GloWbE are employed. 'List' in the 'Search' display option is the default in the GloWbE. It searches for a lexical item entered and displays how frequently it is used in the corpus. The 'Collocates' option searches for collocates of a search item, i.e. words that co-occur more often than would be expected by chance. In both functions, it is possible to switch from the findings to see the keyword in context (KWIC). Here, the search term (the 'node') is centred, with co-text to the right and left (cf. Figures 8–11). It is possible also to see the expanded co-text of a particular item in both functions by clicking on that item. Both the 'List' and 'Collocate' functions also allow searches to be narrowed and to focus only on select varieties or on a select register. Such searches also yield normalized frequencies which provide information on the number of tokens of the search item in the corpus per million words and so make frequencies comparable across varieties or registers regardless of the total number of words in the corpus for each variety or register. The 'Collocates' option further allows a comparison of collocates of a search word across varieties, provides information about collocate frequencies, and points to statistically meaningful differences across varieties.

The present task is written from the teacher's perspective. It is inductively organised, i.e. it is arranged in a bottom-up manner, letting the learners themselves discover first the orthographical realisations of the form *thanks* in the online context and then the intensifiers employed. The same corpus and corpus linguistic methodologies and instructions can be re-used for comparisons across a range of other varieties and speech acts (cf. further suggestions below).

Pragmatics task:

Intensified thank patterns in online communication across British English and Irish English

Level(s): Intermediate to advanced second-level learners (from Year 9 in the German school system)/adult beginners to advanced

Aims:

- Familiarize learners with the variety of formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude in online communication.
- Raise awareness of variation across the Englishes in intensification patterns with reference to the form taken and relative frequencies of use.

Preparation time for learners: None

Resources: Computers or smart phone, internet, Worksheet 1 & 2 (see Appendix)

Steps:

- Step 1: Identify the orthographic forms of *thanks* used in online communication.
- Step 2: Identify the intensified patterns used with *thanks* plus variants in online communication across Great Britain and Ireland taken together.
- Step 3: Contrast intensified patterns used with *thanks* plus variants in online communication across Great Britain and Ireland.
- Step 4: Contrast the distribution of intensified patterns used with *thanks* plus variants in online communication across Great Britain and Ireland.
- Step 5: Discuss findings.

Procedural alternatives – longer/shorter option:

The initial steps in this task are dedicated to extracting the realisations of *thanks* plus its variants in the online context as well as the intensifiers used with these forms from the corpus itself in an inductive fashion. An alternative option is to introduce a more top-down approach to the task to shorten it. In this scenario, learners are given the forms of thanks used in the online context (*thanks, thanx, thankz, thank* and *thanxs*) and the intensifiers employed (*a lot, very much, so much, a million, again*, and use of exclamation marks) in advance. Using this information, learners can then be asked to find out whether one variety uses more or less intensification overall, whether one variety has disparate preferences for particular forms or has preferences for one form over another. To use this option, invite learners to open the Global Corpus of Web-based English (GloWbE), a corpus of websites and blogs, at <https://www.english-corpora.org/glowbe/>. Then start at command 16 in step 4 and use Worksheet 2 rather than Worksheet 1 (cf. Appendix).

Procedure:

Step 1: Identify the orthographic forms of thanks used in online communication.

1. Invite learners to open the Global Corpus of Web-based English (GloWbE), a corpus of websites and blogs, at <https://www.english-corpora.org/glowbe/>.
2. In the ‘Search’ display options, tell learners to go to ‘List’ (cf. Figure 1). In the search box, direct learners to type *than** where the wild card * stands for any letter/s following *than*. The wild card search allows us to see the range

Corpus of Global Web-Based English (GloWbE)

SEARCH FREQUENCY

List Chart Collocates Compare KWIC

than* [POS]

Find matching strings Reset

Sections Texts/Virtual Sort/Limit Options

Figure 1: List search for *than** in GloWbE across all varieties

of orthographic forms of *thanks* employed in the online corpus. Ensure the ‘Sections’ box remains unticked.¹

3. Direct learners to click ‘Find matching strings’ (cf. Figure 1). The output shows alternative orthographic forms of *thanks* and *thank you* (cf. Figure 2). Instruct learners to check the output for relevant and irrelevant forms given that there are a number of forms listed in the output which have nothing to do with thanks. Some information on irrelevant forms is given in the note in Table 1 (cf. Table A on Worksheet 1 in Appendix). In addition, learners can be directed to check through the output list and click on the highlighted words to access the key word in context (KWIC). Once the relevant forms have been identified, direct learners to enter these alternative forms of *thanks* and *thank you* in Table A (cf. Worksheet 1 in Appendix) with the accompanying line number (cf. solution in Table 1).

¹ Given the inductive approach, the form *thnx* was not included in the search. Its occurrence in both nations is very low (British English: 0.2 p.m.; Irish English: 0.1 p.m.) so its absence does not have any effect on the overall findings here.

	<input type="checkbox"/>	CONTEXT	ALL
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	THAN	
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANKS	
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANK	
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANKFULLY	
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANKFUL	
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANKSGIVING	
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANKED	
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANKING	
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANKYOU	
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANK-YOU	
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANX	
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANKLESS	
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANKFULNESS	
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANG	
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANA	
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANI	
17	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANE	
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANOS	
19	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANH	
20	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANET	
21	<input type="checkbox"/>	THANT	

Figure 2: Excerpt from search results for *than** in 'List' option within 'Search' display in GloWbE

Table 1: Alternative online forms for *thanks* and *thank you* with line number yielded by a list search for *than** in GloWbE

Alternative/variant online orthographic forms for <i>thanks</i>	Alternative/variant online orthographic forms for <i>thank you</i>
<i>thanx</i> (line 11)	<i>thankyou</i> (line 9)
<i>thankx</i> (line 31)	<i>thank-you</i> (line 10)
<i>thanks.</i> (line 47)	
<i>thankz</i> (line 56)	<i>thank-yous</i> (line 39)
<i>thank</i> (line 61)	<i>thanku</i> (line 40)
<i>thanxs</i> (line 67)	<i>thankq</i> (line 71)
<i>thankss</i> (line 72)	<i>thankyous</i> (line 78)
<i>thanksss</i> (line 82)	<i>thanyou</i> (line 99)

Note: The search should concentrate on examples which represent differing orthographic representations of the forms *thank* and *thanks* – some creative, some due to typing errors. Examples of irrelevant forms include the following: *Thang(s)* is a slang word for thing; *Thanka* is a painting school; *thana* is a police station in India; *Thani* is a person's name and the name of a province in Thailand; *Thane* is a person's name, *thanos* is a fictional superhero, *Thanh* is a surname; *Thanet* is a place in England, *Thant* was a Burmese statesman; *Thandi* is a surname; *Thangka* is a painting in Buddhism.

Step 2: Identify the intensified patterns used with *thanks* plus variants in online communication across Great Britain and Ireland taken together.

4. In the 'Search' display option, have learners click on 'Collocates'. In the space for 'Word/phrase', they should enter *thanks* and the five most popular variant forms as follows *thanks|thanx|thankx|thankz|thank|thanxs* (cf. Figure 3).
5. Direct learners to go to the row of numbers and to select the numbers 1 and 2 on the right-hand side of the blue square. These number boxes turn green when selected (shaded in light grey in Figure 3). No other box should be green except for these (hint: If you have problems, click on 0 to reset the boxes to white, and then click 1 and 2 on the right-hand side) (cf. Figure 3). This step will help identify the intensification used to the right of *thanks* and its variant forms (e.g. *thanks a lot* rather than *many thanks*).
6. Finally, have learners click on 'Sections' and choose 'Great Britain' and 'Ireland' in Box 1 on the left (cf. Figure 3). To select both countries, first select 'Great Britain' and then hold down shift to also select 'Ireland'. Ensure the box beside 'Sections' remains unclicked (cf. Figure 3).
7. Direct learners to then click 'Find collocates.'

List Chart **Collocates** Compare KWIC

thankx|thankz|thansk|thanxs Word/phrase

* Collocates [POS]

+ 4 3 2 1 0 0 1 2 3 4 +

Find collocates Reset

Sections Texts/Virtual Sort/Limit

1 -- IGNORE -- ^
 United States
 Canada
 Great Britain
 Ireland
 Australia
 New Zealand v

2 -- IGNORE -- ^
 United States
 Canada
 Great Britain
 Ireland
 Australia
 New Zealand v

Figure 3: Collocate search for Collocates 1–2 to the right of *thanks|thankx|thankz|thansk|thanxs* in Great Britain and Ireland together in GloWbE

8. Direct learners to look at the output (cf. Figure 4). Ask learners to find any potential intensification of *thanks* plus variants from the first 15 lines of output. To do this, they should check through the output list and click on the highlighted words to access the key word in context (KWIC) (cf. Figure 5 for an example with *million*, which occurs in 15th position in the output). Here they should look for re-occurring formulaic intensified forms of *thanks* (e.g. *thanks a million*). Any formulae found should be entered in Table B (cf. Worksheet 1 in appendix). Learners should also note the line number from the list of collocations in Table 4. A solution is provided in Table 2.

	<input type="checkbox"/>	CONTEXT
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	FOR
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	YOUR
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	!
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	AGAIN
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	MUCH
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	SHARING
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	EVERYONE
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	ADVANCE
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	LOT
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	READING
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	TAKING
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	GUYS
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	VISITING
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	POSTING
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	MILLION

Figure 4: Collocations 1–2 words to the right of *thanks|thanx|thankx|thankz|thank|thanxs* for Great Britain and Ireland viewed together in GloWbE

: cancelled if I were lucky enough to win. # **Thanks a million** for sharing your stories with us. We
 rently working on. Rachael: Heya Steve. **Thanks a million** for taking the time to do this interview
 Hey donkeys' Just a quick note to say **thanks a million** for playing at my SURPRISE 30th! Me and

Figure 5: Collocation lines for the collocates *million* in Irish English (IE)

Table 2: Solution: Intensifiers used with *thanks* plus variants in GloWbE for Great Britain and Ireland viewed together

Intensifiers used with <i>thanks</i> and variants (with line number) in British and Irish search	Example with <i>thanks</i>
! (line 3)	<i>Thanks!</i>
<i>again</i> (line 4)	<i>Thanks again²</i>
<i>much</i> (line 5)	<i>Thanks very much</i>
<i>lot</i> (line 9)	<i>Thanks a lot</i>
<i>million</i> (line 15)	<i>Thanks a million</i>

Step 3: Contrast intensified patterns used with *thanks* plus variants in online communication across Great Britain and Ireland.

9. Direct learners to the ‘Search’ display option and ask them to click on ‘Reset’. They should then go to the option ‘Collocates’ again.
10. Ask learners to repeat lines 4–5 in Step 2 above and enter *thanks|thanx|thankx|thankz|thansk|thanxs* and 1–2 collocates to the right of the search term.
11. Direct learners to click on ‘Sections’ and to choose ‘Great Britain’ from column 1 and ‘Ireland’ from column 2 (cf. Figure 6). The ‘Sections’ box remains unclicked.
12. For Sorting, choose ‘Frequency’ (sorting by relevance is also possible but it favours low-frequency words that tend to co-occur).
13. Click ‘Find collocates.’
14. In the output, the results for Great Britain are displayed to the left, those for Ireland to the right. The lines marked in green or red in the output represent key collocates, i.e. words that occur one or two words to the right of *thanks* and which are particularly frequent (green) or particularly infrequent (red) in one culture relative to the other. The brighter the colour, the more frequent or infrequent the word in that variety.

2 Note: The collocate *again* communicates a repetition of thanks which is also intensifying.

List Chart **Collocates** Compare KWIC

Word/phrase

Collocates [POS]

+ 4 3 2 1 0 0 1 2 3 4 +

Sections Texts/Virtual Sort/Limit C

1 -- IGNORE -- ^ 2 -- IGNORE -- ^

United States
Canada
Great Britain
Ireland
Australia
New Zealand v

United States
Canada
Great Britain
Ireland
Australia
New Zealand v

SORTING

MINIMUM 15

Figure 6: Collocate search for *thanks|thankz|thankx|thankz|thansk|thanxs* in Great Britain compared to in Ireland in the GloWbE corpus

Ask learners to look through the forms in green in the output and consider if any might be part of an intensified *thanks*-formula. To answer this question, learners should click on the key words and see the KWIC. The learners should then look for re-occurring formulaic intensified forms of thanks (e.g. *thanks a mil*, *thanks a mill*, *thanks so much*, *thanks very much*). They should note all key intensifiers plus line number along with an example from the data in Table C (cf. solution in Table 3).

Table 3: Solution: Key collocate intensifiers used with *thanks* plus variants in GloWbE for Ireland

Key collocate intensifiers used with <i>thanks</i> and variants (with line number) in Irish online communication	Example with <i>thanks</i>
<i>again</i> (line 6)	<i>Thanks again</i>
<i>much</i> (line 11)	<i>Thanks so much/ thanks very much</i>
<i>so</i> (12)	<i>Thanks so much</i>
<i>million</i> (line 19)	<i>Thanks a million</i>
<i>very</i> (line 20)	<i>Thanks very much</i>
<i>mil</i> (line 63)	<i>Thanks a mil</i>
<i>mill</i> (line 73)	<i>Thanks a mill</i>

The KWIC lines shown in the ‘Collocate’ function are not only for the varieties selected under ‘Sections,’ but rather include all concordance lines for this form. It is therefore often necessary to navigate through data sheets to get to the Irish (IE) data via the page arrows at the top left. Alternatively, to look at the KWIC of the key collocates in Irish English and British English alone (excluding other varieties), learners can return to ‘List’ in the ‘Search’ display option, click on ‘Reset’ and then search for *thanks|thanx|thankx|thankz|thansk|thanxs*, making sure to select the boxes 1 and 2 to the right (collocates 1–2 to the right) and enter the collocate they are interested in (e.g. *mil*, *mill*, *so*) in the ‘Collocates’ box (cf. Figure 7 for an example with *so*).

Have learners choose ‘Ireland’ and ‘Great Britain’ in the left-hand list under ‘Sections’ or ‘Ireland’ only. The box beside ‘Sections’ should also be clicked to see the frequencies across varieties. Finally, direct learners to click ‘Find collocates.’ Once the frequency of the collocate is returned by variety (cf. Figure 8), learners should click on the relevant frequency to access the KWIC of that variety.

Step 4: Contrast the distribution of intensified patterns used with *thanks* plus variants in online communication across Great Britain and Ireland.

15. Have learners merge the list of intensified formulae in Tables B and C (cf. Worksheet 1 in Appendix; cf. solutions in Table 2 and Table 3) and list all intensified formulae found in Table D (cf. Worksheet 1 in Appendix) (cf. solution in Table 4).

List Chart **Collocates** Compare KWIC

hankx|thankz|thansk|thanxs Word/phrase

so Collocates [POS]

+ 4 3 2 1 0 0 1 2 3 4 +

Find collocates Reset

Sections Texts/Virtual Sort/Limit

1 -- IGNORE -- ^ 2 -- IGNORE -- ^

United States

Canada

Great Britain

Ireland

Australia

New Zealand

United States

Canada

Great Britain

Ireland

Australia

New Zealand

Figure 7: Collocate search for the collocate *so* employed 1–2 to the right of *thanks|thankx|thankx|thankz|thansk|thanxs* in Great Britain and Ireland in the GloWbE corpus

	<input type="checkbox"/>	CONTEXT	ALL <input type="checkbox"/>	US <input type="checkbox"/>	CA <input type="checkbox"/>	GB <input type="checkbox"/>	IE <input type="checkbox"/>
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	SO	1846			1290	556

Figure 8: Frequency of the collocate *so* employed 1–2 to the right of *thanks|thankx|thankx|thankz|thansk|thanxs* in Great Britain and Ireland in the GloWbE corpus

16. Direct learners to the ‘List’ function in the ‘Search’ option and have them enter each phrase in the search box individually with its variant forms. I.e. to search for *thanks so much* plus its variant forms, learners should enter *thanks|thankx|thankx|thankz|thank|thanxs so much* in the search box (cf. Figure 9).³ They should do the same for all phrases.

The screenshot shows the 'List' search interface in GloWbE. At the top, there are tabs for 'List', 'Chart', 'Collocates', 'Compare', and 'KWIC'. The search box contains the query '|ankz|thank|thanxs so much' with a '[POS]' label to its right. Below the search box are two buttons: 'Find matching strings' and 'Reset'. Underneath, there are three tabs: 'Sections', 'Texts/Virtual', and 'Sort/Limit'. Two dropdown menus are visible, labeled '1' and '2'. Menu '1' has 'Great Britain' selected, and menu '2' has 'Ireland' selected. At the bottom, there are 'SORTING' and 'MINIMUM' sections, both currently set to 'FREQUENCY'. The 'MINIMUM' section includes two input boxes, both containing the number '0', and a checkbox on the right.

Figure 9: Search for *thanks so much* plus its variant forms in Great Britain compared to Ireland in the GloWbE corpus

3 When searching for *thanks a million* and its alternate forms, enter *thanks|thankx|thankx|thankz|thank|thanxs a million|mill|mil*; when searching for *thanks!* and its alternate forms, enter *thanks|thankx|thankx|thankz|thank|thanxs!* The space between *thanxs* and *!* is important.

SEC 2 (Ireland): 101,029,231 WORDS

	WORD/PHRASE	TOKENS 2	TOKENS 1	PM 2	PM 1	RATIO
1	THANKS SO MUCH	507	1177	5.0	3.0	1.7
2	THANX SO MUCH	1	4	0.0	0.0	1.0

Figure 10: Frequencies and ratios of the use of *thanks so much* and variants in Great Britain and Ireland

17. Under 'Sections', learners should choose 'Great Britain' on the left and 'Ireland' on the right. Sorting by frequency should be selected (cf. 'Sort/Limit' tab if this option is not shown).
18. Direct learners to click 'Find matching strings'.
19. An example of the output is provided in Figure 10. Shaded lines (displayed in green and/or red online) point to statistically significant differences. Green signifies significantly more, red significantly less.

Table 4: Solution: Frequencies of intensified formulae used with *thanks* plus variants in GloWbE for Great Britain compared to Ireland

Intensified formulae with <i>thanks</i>	British English p.m. word frequency	Irish English p.m. word frequency	Significantly higher use in IE (Irish data) or GB (British data)
<i>Thanks!</i>	<i>Thanks!</i> : 4.6 <i>Thanx!</i> : 0.0	<i>Thanks!</i> : 4.6 <i>Thanx!</i> : 0.0	<i>Thanx!</i> : GB
<i>Thanks again</i>	<i>Thanks again</i> : 4.9 <i>Thanx again</i> : 0.0	<i>Thanks again</i> : 10.4 <i>Thanx again</i> : 0.0	<i>Thanks again</i> : IE
<i>Thanks so much</i>	<i>Thanks so much</i> : 3.0 <i>Thanx so much</i> : 0.0	<i>Thanks so much</i> : 5.0 <i>Thanx so much</i> : 0.0	<i>Thanks so much</i> : IE
<i>Thanks very much</i>	<i>Thanks very much</i> : 1.5 <i>Thanx very much</i> : 0.0	<i>Thanks very much</i> : 2.1 <i>Thanx very much</i> : 0.0	<i>Thanx very much</i> : IE
<i>Thanks a lot</i>	<i>Thanks a lot</i> : 1.4 <i>Thanx a lot</i> : 0.0 <i>Thankx a lot</i> : 0.0	<i>Thanks a lot</i> : 1.4 <i>Thanx a lot</i> : 0.0 <i>Thankx a lot</i> : 0.0	<i>Thanx a lot</i> : IE
<i>Thanks a million</i>	<i>Thanks a million</i> : 0.2 <i>Thanx a million</i> : 0.0	<i>Thanks a millon</i> : 2.5 <i>Thanx a million</i> : 0.0	} 3.2 <i>Thanks a million/ thanks a mill/ thanks a mil</i> : IE
<i>Thanks a mill</i>	<i>Thanks a mill</i> : 0.0 <i>Thanks a mil</i> : 0.0	<i>Thanks a mill</i> : 0.3 <i>Thanks a mi</i> : 0.4	
<i>Thanks a mil</i>			

20. Have learners note the words per million (p.m.) frequencies of the intensified formulae searched for each variety in Table D (cf. Worksheet 1 and Worksheet 2 in Appendix) (cf. solution in Table 4). The figures for Great Britain will be found under PM1, those for Ireland under PM2. The colour green signifies a significantly higher use in one corpus relative to the other. In Table D, the learners should note any formulae coloured green in the output (cf. solution in Table 4) as well as the relevant variety. Note: Calculations are done based on actual frequencies. Hence, usage may be higher or lower despite a p.m. frequency of zero.

Step 5: Discuss findings.

21. In a final step, ask learners to address questions i)–v) on Worksheet 1 (respectively, questions i)–iv) on Worksheet 2) to summarise the different findings of the corpus work. The main findings are listed in the following by question:
- i) What formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude are employed with thanks plus variants?
Answer: *Thanks so much, thanks very much, thanks again, thanks a lot, thanks!* and, in the Irish context *thanks a million/mill/mil*, are intensified formulaic patterns used to express gratitude in the online context in Great Britain and Ireland.
 - ii) What formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude are preferred in Great Britain?
Answer: In the British data, *thanks again* and *thanks!* are the favoured intensified formulae (*thanks again*: 4.9 p.m.; *thanks!*: 4.6 p.m.).
 - iii) What formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude are preferred in Ireland?
Answer: Of the intensified formulae available, the Irish prefer *thanks again, thanks so much, thanks!* and *thanks a million/mill/mil* most in this order (*thanks again*: 10.4 p.m. *thanks so much*: 5p.m.; *thanks!*: 4.6p.m.; *thanks a million/mill/mil*: 3.2 p.m.).
 - iv) Are there any differences in the use of the individual formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude in Great Britain and Ireland? How might any differences be potentially explained?
Answer: *Thanks a million* represents an intensified formulaic form which is frequent in Irish English but used very infrequently in British English. Variants of this form include *thanks a mill* and *thanks a mil*.

In addition, *thanks so much* and *thanks again* are employed to a larger extent in Irish English. *Thanks very much* is used also to a higher extent in the Irish data but the differences between these uses are not significant. Most intensified combinations with *thanx* are used more in the Irish English data also but numbers of use are very small for such data.

The use of *thanks a million* is suggested to relate to sub-stratum influence from Irish, the indigenous language of Ireland. *Thanks* in Irish is *go raibh míle maith agat*, literally translated as ‘a thousand thanks’. Indeed, the use of *thanks a million* around the globe, e.g. in America and, to a limited extent in Britain, is possibly due to the traditionally high levels of Irish emigration to English-speaking countries throughout Irish history.

- v) Is there any difference in the overall use of formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude in Great Britain and Ireland? How might any differences be potentially explained?

Answer:

Further research is needed on premodification of thanks (e.g. many thanks) also, but, from the perspective of the findings here, overall, *thanks* in Ireland is intensified to a larger extent in Irish English relative to British English. This might be explained by a need to invest in personal relations to a larger extent in Irish English, and to communicate one’s esteem of and good will towards one’s interlocutor. It might be suggested that this higher attention to making one’s interlocutor feel good relates to cultural differences across the varieties. The interdisciplinary Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) project designed to examine culture and leadership in 61 nations on the basis of nine dimensions of culture using multiple data sets shows Irish society to have considerably higher levels of family collectivism and higher institutional collectivism relative to England (Ashkanasy, Trevor-Roberts & Earnshaw 2002). As collectivist cultures are more close-knit, it may be suggested that they may invest more in relationship management (cf. also Barron in press d on similar findings of a higher attention to relationship management in apologies in Irish English relative to English English).

Further corpus tasks:

The present task can be extended in the following ways:

- o The present task focusing on intensification of *thanks* and its variant forms might be repeated for a range of other varieties, such as American English, Canadian English, Australian English or Indian English. To do this, learners should start at command 4 in step 2 and instead of Great Britain and Ireland, select their chosen varieties.

Redecoration!!

June 18, 2016 admin No Comments news

We'd like to say a big '*go raibh maith agat*' to the JP McManus Foundation for funding that has enabled us to redecorate our building and bring it up to modern health and safety standards. This work is now complete and the Centre is far more welcoming, cleaner, brighter and of course, safe, as a result.

Figure 11: Example from GloWbE corpus showing multilingualism with Irish *go raibh maith agat* ('thanks'), <https://www.bedfordrow.ie/news/>

- Learners might be directed to search for intensification to the left of *thanks* (e.g. *many thanks*, *sincere thanks*) and comparing its use across varieties. To do this, the present task can be adapted and repeated from command 4 step 2.
- In the investigation of *than** above we see that *thank you*, like *thank*, had many variant forms, e.g. *thankyou* (line 9), *thank-you* (line 10), *thank-yous* (line 37), *thank-yous* (line 37), *thanku* (line 38), *thankq* (line 63), *thankyous* (line 69), *thanyou* (line 90) (cf. Table 1). An interesting extension of the corpus work here would be to investigate the frequencies of these pronominal forms within and across Great Britain and Ireland. In addition, intensification used with these forms and with further forms of thanking via *ta*, *cheers*, *appreciate*, *grateful* and *obliged* is an option. The task outlined above using the 'List' and 'Collocate' options can be adapted for such purposes.
- Multilingualism is also a feature of language use. In the Irish context, learners might like to investigate current uses of expressing gratitude in the Celtic language, Irish (cf. Figure 11). This can be done via a simple search for the form *go raibh maith agat|agaibh* (*agat* for a singular interlocutor, *agaibh* for several) using the 'List' function in the 'Search' option.
- Variation across the conventions of language use is found not only with relation to region, but also with relation to such macro-social factors as gender, age and socio-economic class (cf. Barron & Schneider 2009; Schneider & Barron 2008; Xiao & Tao 2007). In a further task, learners might examine variation in the use of intensified thanks formulae according to such factors. The spoken BNC 2014, hosted by the University of Lancaster, offers the possibility to search spoken data by gender, age and socio-economic class using a freely available user-friendly interface.
- The present analysis is based on written data from websites and blogs. The work with corpora might be extended using spoken data given that previous research shows a higher use of intensifiers in speech (Xiao & Tao 2007). The International Corpus of English (ICE), for instance, contains a large amount

of spoken data. Further work might also look at different components of the ICE, such as ICE-Ireland, ICE-Great Britain, but also ICE-Canada, ICE-East Africa, ICE-Hong Kong, ICE-India, ICE-Jamaica, ICE-New Zealand, ICE-The Philippines and ICE-Singapore. Most of these components can be used with AntConc, a freely available concordancer (cf. Liu & Lei 2017: 16ff for usage instructions). It would be interesting to see, if the same formulaic patterns are used to express gratitude in the spoken and online written data and also if such patterns as *thanks ever so much* and *thanks awfully*, neither of which collocate with *thanks* in the present data are employed to any significant degree (Aijmer 1996: 39; Leech 2014: 200).

- o Further corpus work on variation in language use conventions might focus on routine realisations of other speech acts. Like expressions of gratitude, apologies are also hearer-supportive. Consequently, intensification is also a frequent feature. Corpus-work might be focused on cross-varietal intensification of the routine form *sorry*.

5. Conclusion

The goal of language learning is for learners to become communicatively competent. Pragmatic competence is a central part of communicative competence. Previous textbook analyses have, however, highlighted a tendency in textbook production to rely on intuition in depicting language use. The result is a frequent lack of or misrepresentation of pragmatic knowledge in the language classroom. In contrast, corpus data provide an insight into how language is used. Consequently, as in the task above, corpora can be used to foster pragmatic knowledge. The present task might be seen as a first step in using a corpus to research pragmatic usages. It might be followed up by searches of further conventionalised speech acts, such as apologies (cf. Barron in press a), requests or compliments. Searches for non-conventionalised realisations must await further developments in the area of pragmatic tagging. Conventionalised realisation forms given in textbooks might be used as search forms and textbook uses and corpus output compared for the use of intensification – as in the present context – or for the use of mitigation in requests. In addition, sequential aspects, such as responses to apologies or to thanks can be investigated and discussed (cf. Barron in press b). Where productive competence is the learning target, corpus searches need to be followed up with exercises which focus on developing learners' pragmatic ability, and fostering productive competence. Scaffolding in the form of controlled tasks, such as cloze tasks, is a possible initial task choice. These should then

be followed up with low control tasks, such as roleplays or – to remain in the online context – blog comments.

Corpora also – as in the task presented in this chapter – can provide information on pragmatic variation across regional or social varieties. Currently, there is a lack of information in textbooks on how pragmatic conventions vary across regional and social varieties despite the fact that communicative competence is the widespread aim of ELF teaching. Focusing on one standard variety of English and expecting uniform pragmatic norms is at odds with the external reality that communication norms vary across varieties. This desideratum needs to be addressed and corpora provide a means of creating awareness of pragmatic variation on these levels. The exact goal – whether awareness only or also productive competence – will depend on learner needs.

Corpora offer learners unique access to real-life language across a range of varieties and registers. The present analysis focused on blogs and websites in the online context given that this context is generally not dealt with in the school context despite the fact that it is becoming increasingly important for learners around the globe. However, a variety of further corpora which represent spoken language use and written language use in more traditional contexts are also available. The Spoken British National Corpus (BNC) 2014, for instance, represents everyday conversation in Great Britain across a range of social demographic variables. MICASE represents Academic English in America across a range of genres and social demographic variables. The International Corpus of English (ICE) depicts language use across a large range of varieties of English for a range of registers. A final example is the large range of corpora available from Brigham Young University (BYU), many of which allow contrastive work across the varieties. The GloWbE corpus employed in the present chapter is one of these. Finally, from a pedagogical perspective, a further advantage of corpora above and beyond its role as a source of input for a variety of registers and varieties not available in the classroom is that they lend themselves to inductive learning and in so doing turn language learners into researchers. As such, they encourage noticing and language awareness.

Finally, from a research perspective, future research might address the gap for further corpus tasks designed to promote pragmatic competence. The present paper presented step-by-step instructions on how the GloWbE corpus might be used inductively following the principles of teacher-led DDL to investigate intensification patterns in expressing gratitude in the online context across British English and Irish English. Further such tasks focusing on a range of pragmatic features, such as discourse markers, speech act realisations or speech act sequences might be developed for the classroom. In addition, future research is

needed to test the effectiveness of the present task and other pragmatic tasks on the acquisition of pragmatic competence and also to investigate teachers' and learners' attitudes and opinions towards the use of corpora for pragmatic tasks. It is not suggested that the use of corpora should replace other explicit and implicit means of teaching pragmatic competence but it is suggested that corpora can be employed as a component in the teaching of pragmatics. How effective corpora are – and how they are best used for teaching pragmatic awareness – remains a question which only research can answer.

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Appendix

Worksheet 1: Intensification in expressions of gratitude in online communication across Great Britain and Ireland

Aims:

- Get to know the variety of formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude used in online communication.
- Raise awareness of variation across the Englishes in intensification patterns with reference to the form taken and relative frequencies of use.

Table A: Alternative online forms for *thanks* and *thank you* with line number yielded by a list search for *than** in GloWbE

Alternative/variant online orthographic forms for <i>thanks</i>	Alternative/variant online orthographic forms for <i>thank you</i>

Note: The search should concentrate on examples which represent differing orthographic representations of the forms *thank* and *thanks* – some creative, some due to typing errors. Examples of irrelevant forms include the following: *Thang(s)* is a slang word for thing; *Thanka* is a painting school; *thana* is a police station in India; *Thani* is a person's name and the name of a province in Thailand; *Thane* is a person's name, *thanos* is a fictional superhero, *Thanh* is a surname; *Thanet* is a place in England, *Thant* was a Burmese statesman; *Thandi* is a surname; *Thangka* is a painting in Buddhism.

Table B: Intensifiers used with *thanks* plus variants in GloWbE for Great Britain and Ireland viewed together

Intensifiers used with <i>thanks</i> and variants (with line number) in British and Irish search	Example with <i>thanks</i>
! (line 3)	Thanks!
	Thanks _____

Intensifiers used with <i>thanks</i> and variants (with line number) in British and Irish search	Example with <i>thanks</i>
	Thanks _____
	Thanks _____
	Thanks _____

Table C: Key collocate intensifiers used with *thanks* plus variants in GloWbE for Ireland

Key collocate intensifiers used with <i>thanks</i> plus variants (with line number) in Irish online communication	Example with <i>thanks</i>
	Thanks _____
	Thanks _____
	Thanks _____
	Thanks _____
	Thanks _____
	Thanks _____
	Thanks _____
	Thanks _____

Table D: Frequencies of use of intensified formulae used with *thanks* plus variants in GloWbE for Great Britain compared to Ireland

Intensified formulae with <i>thanks</i>	British English p.m. word frequency	Irish English p.m. word frequency	Significantly higher use in IE (Irish data) or GB (British data)

Discussion questions:

- i. What formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude are employed with *thanks* plus variants?
- ii. What formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude are preferred in Great Britain?
- iii. What formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude are preferred in Ireland?
- iv. Are there any differences in the use of the individual formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude in Great Britain and Ireland? How might any differences be potentially explained?
- v. Is there any difference in the overall use of formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude in Great Britain and Ireland? How might any differences be potentially explained?

Worksheet 2: Intensification in expressions of gratitude in online communication across Great Britain and Ireland

Aims:

- Raise awareness of variation across the Englishes in intensification patterns with reference to the form taken and relative frequencies of use.

Table: Frequencies of use of intensified formulae used with *thanks* plus variants in GloWbE for Great Britain compared to Ireland

Intensified formulae with <i>thanks</i>	British English p.m. word frequency	Irish English p.m. word frequency	Significantly higher use in IE (Irish data) or GB (British data)
Thanks!			
Thanks again			
Thanks so much			
Thanks very much			
Thanks a lot			
Thanks a million			
Thanks a mill			
Thanks a mil			

Discussion questions:

- i. What formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude are preferred in Great Britain?
- ii. What formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude are preferred in Ireland?
- iii. Are there any differences in the use of the individual formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude in Great Britain and Ireland? How might any differences be potentially explained?
- iv. Is there any difference in the overall use of formulaic intensified expressions of gratitude in Great Britain and Ireland? How might any differences be potentially explained?