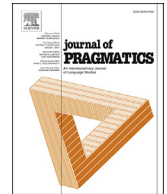


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# Payment offers, suggestions to share expenses and payment negotiation sequences on initial dates in Germany and the United Kingdom

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## ABSTRACT

Settling the bill is often an integral and unavoidable part of initial dates. The speech acts of payment offers and suggestions to share expenses have been shown to play a key role in payment negotiation, and to also reveal gender variation (Barron, 2025). From a pragmatic standpoint, however, our understanding of payment negotiation is confined to the cultural context of the United Kingdom (Barron, 2025). The present paper addresses this research gap by focusing on payment negotiation interactions broadcast in Germany and in the United Kingdom (UK) on the first date reality television series, *First Dates – ein Tisch für zwei* and *First Dates*. Examining the speech acts of payment offers and suggestions to share expenses, and payment negotiation sequences, the analysis takes a cross-cultural perspective on how interactants negotiate the wider payment event, also with a view to the interaction of gender conventions. In so doing, the study also adds to the naturalistic data on offers and suggestions and at the same time to research on pragmatic analyses of reality TV shows. Findings highlight cross-cultural variation on a sociopragmatic and discursive level in speech act sequencing and in the use and status of suggestions to share expenses across cultures, and a correlation between gender and speech act choices in both cultures. On a pragmalinguistic level, cross-cultural variation is recorded, with a higher level of directness in payment offers in the UK. Findings have implications for cross-cultural understanding and for foreign language teaching.

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## 1. Introduction

First dates can be challenging on an interactional level. They involve attention to social norms, to interpersonal and relational goals and also to self- and other-identity construction. A pivotal element in this regard is the question of who pays on a first date. Research has shown that the speech acts of payment offers and suggestions to share expenses play a key role in negotiating payment. Furthermore, their use has implications for identity construction and social relationships, with payment offers playing a role in masculine identity construction, for instance, and suggestions to share expenses representing a hub of feminine identity construction. From a pragmatic perspective, however, our understanding of payment negotiation and its relation to gender is largely limited to the cultural context of the United Kingdom, as depicted in the reality TV show *First Dates* (Barron, 2025). Hence, there is a need for (contrastive) pragmatic research on payment offers, suggestions to share

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expenses and payment negotiation sequences in a range of languages, also from the perspective of the interaction with gender.

The present paper adopts a cross-cultural pragmatic perspective and investigates payment offers, suggestions to share expenses and payment negotiation sequences as depicted in initial dates among heterosexual pairs on reality TV across Germany and the UK, also taking the interaction of culture and gender into account. As such, the study addresses the gap in cross-cultural pragmatic scholarship on payment offers, suggestions to share expenses and payment negotiation sequences. In addition, it adds to research on German payment offers, suggestions to share expenses and payment negotiation sequences, and also on a superordinate level to the study of German offers and suggestions in general given a general research gap in both speech act descriptions. The data analysed are payment negotiation sequences broadcast on the UK and German reality TV series, *First Dates* and *First Dates – ein Tisch für zwei*, respectively.

As a reality TV series, the data underlying the present study represents a media product, and thus adds to the research on pragmatic analyses of the discourse of reality TV shows across cultures (cf. [Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2013](#); [Ren and Woodfield, 2016](#)). However, reality TV series involve ordinary people interacting in real situations, with interactions between participants for the most part unscripted ([Kavka, 2012:179](#)). Thus, as discursive reproductions of patterns of payment negotiation in their respective cultures ([Garfinkel, 1967](#)), the data sheds some light on payment negotiation patterns across genders and cultures. As such, the study adds to the naturalistic data on payment negotiation from a pragmatic perspective ([Ren and Woodfield, 2016](#)). Such data is particularly valuable given the difficulties of data collection in such socially-delicate contexts. Nonetheless, it is recognised that the reality depicted on reality TV is frequently orchestrated by the casting process, by the situations constructed and above all by footage editing (cf. [Kavka, 2012:179](#), [Chu, 2020](#); cf. also [Mast, 2016](#)), with this implicit (rather than explicit) scripting also potentially varying across cultures (cf. [Chu, 2020:42](#)). Thus, the potential influence of implicit scripting on the interactions is present.

The present analysis combines pragmalinguistic, sociopragmatic and discourse analytical perspectives in investigating the distribution and realisation of payment offers and suggestions to share expenses and in exploring patterns of use and interaction in payment negotiation speech act sequences. In the following, attention first turns to scholarship on offers and suggestions from a pragmatic, cross-cultural pragmatic and gender perspective, with a particular focus on the more specific case of payment offers and suggestions to share expenses in dating and on the German and UK context (2). Focus then turns to the database and to coding (3). The analysis and findings (4) and discussion (5) follow and the paper closes with a conclusion outlining limitations and further research perspectives (6).

## 2. (Payment) offers, suggestions (to share expenses) and (payment) offer sequences across cultures and genders

We first describe and review the pragmalinguistic scholarship on offers (2.1) and suggestions (2.2), before turning to the important question of speech act definition within the dating context (2.3). Section 2.4 then offers a discursive perspective on offers and payment offers and 2.5 examines the empirical pragmatic literature on offers and suggestions across the German and UK cultures. The section ends with an overview of payment offers and suggestions to share expenses from the perspective of gender variation in first date interactions (2.6).

### 2.1. Offers

In the following, we first describe offers from a speech act perspective (2.1.1) before turning to descriptions of offer realisations and to the influence of topic on offer realisations (2.1.2).

#### 2.1.1. The speech act of offers

Offers combine both commissive and directive force, and thus represent a hybrid speech act belonging to the category of commissive-directives ([Hancher, 1979](#)). By offering, a speaker commits themselves to undertake a future action, *x* (commissive force) ([Searle, 1976:11](#); [Edmondson and House, 1981:49](#) *passim*). That future action is costly to the speaker and believed to be beneficial to the hearer. At the same time, offers are seen as also having directive force ([Hancher, 1979](#)) since, in offering, a speaker attempts to direct the hearer to declare themselves able and willing to engage in the proposed action (cf. [Hancher, 1979](#); [Wierzbicka, 1987](#); [Pérez Hernández, 2001:78](#)). Offers are conditional speech acts ([Wunderlich, 1977:43](#)) given that the execution of an offer is conditional on the hearer indicating their wishes on whether they want the act in question to be executed.

Offers are closely related to invitations and it is important to draw a distinction between offers and invitations in the context of the present German/UK comparison because of the existence of underlying polysemy in the verb *einladen*, a verb frequently used in the present German payment negotiation data. Two related meanings of the verb *einladen* are:

- a) to invite or ask (*bitten* (ask))
  - *jemanden zu sich einladen* (to ask (or invite) sb to one's home (or house))
  - *jemanden zum Tee einladen* (to invite (or ask) sb to tea)

- b) to treat (*auffordern und bezahlen* (ask and pay))
- *ich lade dich dazu ein* (I'll treat you to it, this is on me, it's my treat)
  - *jemanden zu einem Glas Wein einladen* (to treat sb to a glass of wine)

(Langenscheidt, 2024, *einladen*)

Thus, depending on the context, *einladen* can, on the one hand, mean to invite/ask and on the other hand to ask and pay. In English, case a) of inviting can be translated as “invite”, as in “I'm inviting you to tea”/“I'd like to invite you to tea”. However, the verb “invite” is not used for case b) of asking and paying. Indeed, notably, the verb and noun “invite/invitation” are completely absent from the present UK payment data. Rather, the equivalent in this context is the verb “treat” (cf. b)). From a speech act perspective, uses of *einladen* in the former contexts of asking (cf. a)) can be categorised as social invitations; those in the latter contexts of asking and paying (cf. b)), the context involved in attempting to settle the bill, represent offers. In social invitations, the act of directing the addressee to attend the future social event is to the fore (directive) (Leech, 2014:180).<sup>1</sup> Offers, in contrast, are focused on the future act that the speaker is willing to carry out for the addressee (i.e. in the present context on paying the bill) (commissive). The speech act pivotal in the present payment negotiation context is the payment offer, i.e. an offer to settle the bill (case b)).

From a politeness perspective, in offering, in terms of Leech's (1983) politeness maxims, the benefit to the offeree is maximised (Tact maxim) and the cost to the offerer simultaneously maximised (Generosity maxim). With reference to face (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987), offers enhance the positive face of the addressee since in offering, speakers commit to a future action in the interest of the addressee (commissive force). At the same time, offers may also be face-threatening. Their directive force may threaten the negative face of the addressee in that an offer represents an attempt to direct hearer action and so encroaches on or constrains the addressee's freedom of action. Given that speech acts are culture-bound, their relation to face may vary across cultures (cf. Sharqawi and Anthony, 2020).

### 2.1.2. Offer realisations and topics

Pragmalinguistic descriptions of offers have employed two main coding schemes. An early widely used scheme is one by Barron (2003) (cf. e.g. Allami, 2012; Bella, 2016). This scheme is broadly based on Kasper (1981:113–114), and on the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) coding scheme for requests (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Barron (2003) coding scheme differentiates between direct offers (impositives), conventionally indirect offers (CI) and non-conventionally indirect offers (non-CI), and identifies a range of subordinate strategies in each category. Direct offers are those in which the speech act is transparent based on syntax and semantic content. An example is a hedged-performative strategy (e.g. I'd like to offer you my help), where the act of offering is clearly named. Conventionally indirect offers are distinguished by pragmatic duality: on the one hand, they involve a literal interpretation which refers to contextual preconditions for offers; on the other hand, they function conventionally as offers. An example is a state-preparatory strategy, (e.g. I could help you). Such a strategy functions on a literal level as a representative stating the speaker's ability to carry out an offer. On a conventionalised level, the utterance works as an offer realised via a state-preparatory strategy, which conventionally addresses one of the contextual preconditions of offers. Similarly, a question-hearer-desire strategy questions the desire of the hearer to accept the offer, without explicitly indicating that the offerer will carry out the action or without explicitly directing addressee action. Instead, it conventionally addresses the conditional nature of offers and in so doing leaves the hearer to conventionally suppose a future action from this statement. Finally, non-conventionally indirect offers are utterances presented as other speech acts but functioning as offers via inference rather than convention. The utterance, ‘There's still some tea here’, for instance, can function as a representative on a literal level but by inference as a non-CI offer.

The tripartite superordinate system put forward by (Schneider, 2003:183–185) is a further widely used coding scheme for verbal offers which has been further differentiated into subordinate strategies by Barron (2005) and widely used since (cf. e.g. Barron, 2017a, b; Anchimbe, 2018). This scheme identifies three superordinate offer strategies, namely execution, directive and preference offer superstrategies, which reflect the commissive, directive and conditional nature of offers respectively (cf. 2.1.1). Execution strategies are speaker-oriented and centre on the speaker's execution of the act at hand (e.g. I'll get you some tea; can I get you some tea?). Preference strategies are hearer-oriented, and put the dependence on the will or preference of the hearer to the fore (e.g. Do you want some tea?). Furthermore, directive strategies (also termed imperative strategies (cf. Anchimbe, 2018:113)) reflect speakers' efforts in offering to persuade the addressee to accept the offer (e.g. Have a cuppa). Finally, Anchimbe (2018:119, 228) has recently added a fourth superstrategy, the declarative superstrategy, to the tripartite scheme, making it a quadripartite scheme. He describes declarative strategies as offers uttered as (mostly passive) declarative statements about the future action of the offer. In his Ghanaian data, this category always took the form *you are invited* (+VP + NP), with the latter + VP + NP representing optional modifying moves. The subordinate strategies within each of the

<sup>1</sup> Both offers and invitations assume that the envisaged future action by the speaker will be pleasing to the addressee. Both belong to the class of commissive directives (Hancher, 1979). However, in invitations, the directive force is more to the fore than in the case of offers. Thus, in invitations, the commissive force is prototypically focused on the speaker's upcoming organisation of a social event which would frequently take place irrespective of the outcome of the invitation. Most important is, however, the attempt to direct the hearer to engage in the future event in question (Leech, 2014: 180) (directive force). Offers, in contrast, despite also potentially involving directive force, are more focused than are invitations on the future act that the speaker is willing to carry out for the addressee (i.e. in the present context on paying the bill) (Leech, 2014: 180) (commissive).

tripartite/quadrupartite categories can be further categorised into direct and conventionally indirect offers (cf. also [Bella, 2016](#)). Non-conventionally indirect offers (hints) reside outside of the tripartite system given that these involve inference to be understood as offers ([Barron, 2017b](#)).

Payment offers represent one type of offer topic. Others include hospitable offers, offers of assistance, gift offers, trade offers and offers of verbal goods (e.g. offering to tell a joke) (cf. [Barron, 2025](#) for an overview). While long undifferentiated in pragmatic research, recent empirical work suggests the existence of pragmatic variation across offer topics. Hospitable offers in British English are, for instance, realised in a different manner to offers of assistance. Such was found in an analysis of offer realisations in the British component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-GB) by [Barron \(2017b\)](#). While hospitable offers in ICE-GB were realised using preference strategies and, to a lesser extent, using directive strategies, execution strategies were used extensively in offers of assistance in the same British English data. Similarly, [Barron \(2025\)](#) finds payment offers in British English as depicted in the reality TV show, *First Dates*, to be realised by execution strategies, and to a lesser extent, by directive strategies. Payment offers using preference strategies were not recorded. Furthermore, strategies were identified in the payment data which had not been previously recorded in other offer topic types. These included a direct speaker-oriented-payment-offer routine strategy (e.g. ‘This one’s on me’) and a conventionally indirect directive refusal strategy (e.g. ‘No’) that functioned conventionally as an offer (cf. 4.1).

## 2.2. Suggestions to share expenses

In the following section we deal with suggestions from a speech act (2.2.1) and pragmalinguistic perspective (2.2.2).

### 2.2.1. The speech act of suggestions

Suggestions are directive speech acts, focused on directing the future actions of the addressee (cf. [Searle, 1976](#)). Within the directive category, suggestions represent non-impositive speech acts given that – in contrast to impositive speech acts, such as requests, in which the speaker is the sole beneficiary of the future act – the speaker in producing a suggestion believes that the addressee will benefit from the future action proposed ([Haverkate, 1984](#)). Indeed, not only the addressee is a beneficiary of the future action proposed, but also potentially the speaker themselves (cf. [Koike, 2006:260](#); [Santos and Silva, 2008:652](#); [Li, 2010](#)). Finally, like offers, suggestions are also conditional speech acts, since the action *x* will only be carried out should the addressee agree to it (cf., [Martínez-Flor, 2005:168](#)).

Within the category of suggestions, a differentiation is made between “suggests-for-us” and “suggests-for-you” (cf. [Edmondson and House, 1981](#); [Leech, 2014:137](#)). Suggests-for-you attempt to direct a future action of the addressee. They are seen as belonging to the broader speech act of advice (cf. [Martínez-Flor, 2005:169](#)); in contrast suggests-for-us attempt to direct future joint action, with the joint future action assumed to be beneficial to both speaker and addressee (cf. [Leech, 2014:137](#)). In that they direct future action, suggests-for-us have directive force; at the same time due to the involvement of the speaker in the proposed future action, they also have commissive force (cf. [Flöck, 2011](#)). However, in suggests-for-us – in contrast to in offers (cf. 2.1.1) – it is the directive point which is rather to the fore.

Suggestions to share expenses represent suggests-for-us (cf. [Barron, 2025](#)). From a politeness perspective, the directive force of suggests-for-us means that they are potentially face-threatening acts ([Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987](#)) given that the speaker in suggesting attempts to direct future action. At the same time, given that the suggested future action put forward is undertaken by both speaker and addressee, and given that it is presumed beneficial for both, suggests-for-us may also enhance positive face. The extent that positive or negative face is enhanced or threatened may potentially reveal cultural variation.

### 2.2.2. Suggestion realisations

Across languages, pragmatic descriptions of suggestions are strongly form-oriented, focused to a large extent on identifying the underlying forms employed to realise suggestions. For German, for instance, [Kotorova and Zuchewicz \(2018\)](#) identify performative verbs, imperatives and a range of interrogative constructions, such as *sollten/könnten wir (nicht)* (should/could we (not)), *möchtest du/möchtet ihr/möchten Sie vielleicht ...* (would you (singular) like/would you (plural) like/would you (polite) like), *hättest du/hättet ihr/hätten Sie (nicht) Lust ...* (would you (singular) like/would you (plural) like/would you (polite) like), to realise suggestions.

[Martínez Flor \(2005\)](#) puts forward a taxonomy of forms which realise suggestions in English, albeit based only on suggests-for-you. This form-based taxonomy also relates formal realisations of suggestions to three broad categories of directness levels, namely direct forms, conventionalised forms and indirect forms. Direct forms, in which the illocution of an utterance is clearly communicated, include the use of performative verbs, the noun “suggestion”, imperatives and negative imperatives. Conventionalised forms are more indirect. They include the use of interrogative formulae (e.g. Why don’t you ... ?; How about ... ?; What about ... ?), modal verbs of possibility or probability (can, could, may, might), the verbs “should” and “need”, and the use of the conditional. Indirect forms realising suggests-for-you are impersonal constructions (e.g. It might be better to ...) and hints. This broad categorisation was later further developed by [Li \(2010\)](#) who focused on suggestions of benefit to the hearer and/or speaker. [Li \(2010\)](#) added a range of subordinate strategies to each of the three overriding directness categories, with each sub-category directly linked to a number of underlying syntactic structures (cf. also [Heidari-Shahreza, 2014](#); [Edstrom, 2015](#)).

### 2.3. Speech act identification: payment offers and suggestions

In payment negotiation, attempts to pay the entire bill and attempts to share expenses have been shown to be a pivotal speech act in the UK dating context (cf. Barron, 2025). Attempts to foot the entire bill may clearly be identified as payment offers given that the future act is undertaken by the speaker alone and believed by the speaker to be of benefit to the addressee. However, there is some ambiguity as to whether attempts to share expenses represent suggests-for-us, offers or indeed requests. These ambiguities are intricately related to the social context, and in particular to gender roles, and centre above all around for whom the action is costly and for whom it is beneficial. According to traditional role conventions, it is the man's role to pay (cf. 2.6). Hence, a woman who adheres to traditional values and seeks to share expenses would be engaging in a commitment to a future payment that primarily benefits the man, rather than herself. In such a case, the utterance moves towards an offer, given that the future act is of cost to the speaker. Conversely, if the same woman were non-traditional, the act of sharing expenses could be perceived as advantageous for both parties, with the man relieved of financial obligations and the woman and man positioned as equal partners. This mutual benefit and collaborative action would frame the utterance as a suggestion (suggest-for-us). Additionally, it is conceivable that a man might propose to share expenses. In this instance, the traditionally-oriented woman may not interpret the proposal as a suggestion which would be beneficial for both, but rather as a request for action from the speaker given that the proposed future action would be favourable for the man (reducing his financial load) but not for the woman. Such analysis illustrates how varying social contexts can lead to different speech acts, whether they are offers, suggestions, or requests. Without metapragmatic information which would provide insights into speaker intentions underlying individual utterances, it remains challenging to ascertain the specific speech act relevant to a given context.

In an attempt to address the difficulty of speech act identification, Barron (2025) conducted a bottom-up coding of utterances attempting to share expenses in the UK reality TV program, *First Dates*. The resulting categories and their distribution uncovered a diverse array of strategies. Many of these strategies, and those most extensively used in the data, focused on collaborative efforts and thus reflected previous analyses of the speech act of suggestions (cf. 2.2.2, Edmondson and House, 1981; Sadock 1974; Koike, 1994; Leech and Svartvik, 1994; Carter and McCarthy, 2006; Jiang 2006; Adolphs, 2008; Li, 2010; Heidari-Shahreza, 2014) (cf. also Barron, 2025 for a more detailed analysis). This analysis motivates the speech act description given to attempts to share expenses in the present data as suggests-for-us. It is also the description which fits best with the focus on joint action and it prevents having to assume a traditional division of roles and traditional identity constructions in the data from the outset. At the same time, it is noted that metapragmatic data throwing light on speakers' illocutions might show cross-cultural or individual deviations.

### 2.4. Payment offers and suggestions to share expenses: A discourse perspective

Research on offers focuses on offers as single-utterance speech acts (cf. 2.1.2), but also provides insights into offer speech act sequences (cf. Barron, 2003, 2025; Almusallam, 2023). Key to many analyses of the interactional structure of offer negotiations has been the framework for discourse analysis put forward in Edmondson (1981) and Edmondson and House (1981). Important concepts in this scheme are those of Initiate, Contra, Satisfy and Counter. Initiates are interactional moves which initiate an exchange. Contras are attempts by a speaker to get their interlocutor to withdraw a preceding Initiate, and Satisfys are moves which produce a positive or negative outcome. Finally, Counters are moves which attempt to have a preceding move adjusted, specified, modified or retracted in light of the content of the Counter. Counters are specifically addressed by interlocutors and are thus followed by Satisfys which address the content of the Counter. We illustrate these concepts in the following.

Discursive analyses on offers have brought forth a number of categorisations of different offer types. We deal here with initiative offers, insistent (ritual or substantive) reoffers and embedded offers (cf. also Almusallam and Ismai, 2022; Almusallam, 2023; Barron, 2025). Initiative offers are initial offer moves in an offer sequence realising an Initiate move. Insistent reoffers follow initiative offers and refusals and are "further attempts on the part of the speaker to reiterate a particular initiative offer within one offer sequence" (Barron, 2003:127). Interactionally, offer exchanges involving insistent reoffers contain multiple Contras and take the form Initiate-n>1(Contra)-Satisfy. For instance, in the interaction, Coffee? (Initiate (offer)) – No thanks, I'm fine (Contra 1 (refusal)) – Go on, you'll have a cup (Contra 2 (reoffer)) – I will so, thanks (Satisfy Initiate (acceptance of offer)), Contra1 is an attempt to have the initiative offer withdrawn, whereas Contra2 is an attempt to have the refusal withdrawn and the initiative offer reinstated. The more Contras present, the more complex the interaction. Reoffers in insistent offers may be ritual or substantive (Barron, 2003). Substantive offers are sincere offers, whereas ritual offers involve speakers' pretence of sincerity and the addressees' recognition of this pretence serving an off-record purpose. These are also termed ostensible speech acts (Isaacs and Clark, 1990). Finally, embedded offers involve exchange structures in which an initiative offer is replied to by another offer and this second offer itself usually functions as a refusal of the initiative offer (e.g. Tea? (Initiate) – I'll get it (Embedded offer)) (cf. Almusallam and Ismai, 2022; Almusallam, 2023).

In the present context, we focus on the interactional structure of payment offers. Using Edmondson and House's (1981) interactional approach, Barron (2025) shows payment offers and suggestions to share expenses to function as both Initiates and Contras. The analysis identifies six patterns in payment opening sequences, most of these involving payment offers and suggestions to share expenses. Patterns include a stand-alone payment offer (O), a stand-alone suggestion to share

expenses (S), an initial suggestion to share expenses followed by a payment offer (S–O), an initial payment offer followed by a suggestion to share expenses (O–S), two payment offers (O–O) (including an embedded offer) and a stand-alone request for payment (RP), in which one party asks, if the other is covering the costs of the meal. The suggestion-offer (S–O) sequence was the preferred payment negotiation pattern in the British data, with S, O–O and RP dispreferred. Finally, Counters questioning hearer sincerity were also a feature of interactional structure in the data. Thus, in the fabricated example, I'll pay (Initiate) – Are you sure? (Counter) – Yes, no doubt about it (Satisfy Counter) – Thank you (Satisfy Initiate), 'are you sure?' functions as a Counter, requesting confirmation of hearer sincerity with regard to the offer. Once this is Satisfied, the initiative offer is then accepted with the Satisfy 'thank you' (cf. also Example (4)).

## 2.5. Offers and suggestions: variation across cultures

Scholarship on both offers and suggestions provides valuable insights into commonalities and cultural preferences across varieties and cultures. Section 2.5.1 reviews the literature on offers, while suggestions are the focus of 2.5.2.

### 2.5.1. Offers and offer sequences in English and German

Research on spoken offers includes research from a variety of languages, including Arabic (Grainger et al., 2015), Chinese (Chen, 1996; Zhu et al., 1998; Feng et al., 2011; Chen and Hu 2020), Greek (Bella, 2016, 2019; Karafoti, 2021; Terkourafi, 2001), Japanese (Fukushima and Iwata, 1987) and Persian (Allami, 2012; Koutlaki, 2002). Cross-cultural research on offers has revealed differing conventions across cultures. In the following, we focus on findings involving German as spoken in Germany and English, particularly on English as spoken in the UK. Research on German offers in particular is limited to Barron (2000, 2003). Offers in English have been the focus of extensive research with much attention paid to the nature of offers and to offer realisations in many varieties of English, including American English (Fukushima and Iwata, 1987; Staley, 2018; Chen and Hu, 2020), Australian English (Wierzbicka, 1985), British English (Edmondson and House, 1981:136–137; Aijmer, 1996; Schneider, 2003:181–193; Barron, 2005, 2011, 2017a, 2017b; Curl, 2006; Leech, 2014:180–186; Grainger et al., 2015), Cameroonian English (Anchimbe, 2018), Ghanaian English (Anchimbe, 2018), Irish English (Barron, 2003, 2005, 2011, 2017a) and Nigerian English (Gut et al., 2024).

Cross-cultural pragmatic and variational pragmatic comparisons involving British English help to highlight the specific nature of offers in British English. Barron (2005), for example, is a comparative analysis of offers in Irish English and English English collected using a discourse completion task (DCT). The findings indicate that both varieties exhibit numerous similarities in making offers, with both linguistic communities employing preference, execution, and directive strategies to a comparable degree and with similar distributions across various contexts. At the same time, the study highlights notable differences in terms of strategy, with English participants producing less direct offers and utilising a number of conventionalised direct offers that carry a less powerful force than those preferred by their Irish counterparts. It was suggested that the cross-varietal differences in the assertiveness of the offers may relate to sociopragmatic differences in participant relations and stem from different cultural obligations to extend hospitality, this obligation being lower in the English context vis-à-vis the Irish context.

Moving to studies of reoffering in the context of hospitable offers, many contrastive studies find the need for insistence in reoffering in British English to be relatively low, and ritual, ostensible speech acts to be seldom on a relative scale (cf. Eslami, 2005; Grainger et al., 2015). For instance, Grainger et al. (2015) find shows of hospitality and generosity to be less important in British English relative to Libyan Arabic. In addition, the social obligation for guests to show restraint in accepting food was smaller in British English. On the other hand, there was a more pronounced need to be cautious and to avoid imposing on individual needs in British English, as far as, for instance, time pressure and needs for self-determination and freedom of action were concerned. Hence, the host in a British English context is obliged to be generous on the one hand and at the same time respect the offeree by balancing their freedom of action. Thus, whereas ritual reoffers of a particular future act were typical in Libyan Arabic, initial refusals were commonly accepted in British English and preferably followed by a slightly different, more generous offer sequence rather than a reoffer of the same offer (as happens in Libya). Such subsequent offers function as being generous but less imposing in a British context.

Research on offers in German has been conducted within the context of a cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatic study by (Barron, 2000, 2003). Part of these studies involved contrasting productions of hospitable offers and offers of assistance in German and Irish English. Production data was elicited using a Free Discourse Completion Task (FDCT), a particular type of DCT which requires respondents to write both sides of an open roleplay or dialogue for a series of situations in which each participant's communicative goal is explicitly stated. As such, the FDCT allowed analysis of interactional structure as well as speech act realisations. The cross-cultural findings pointed to a larger occurrence of ritual refusals and ritual reoffers among speakers of Irish English relative to speakers of German. Ritual reoffers in Irish English were frequently realised conventionally via formulaic routines, such as "are you sure?" or via elliptical routines such as "sure?". This higher conventionalisation of insistent reoffers and offer refusals in the Irish data relative to the German data led to a more complex exchange structure in the Irish English data (cf. also Barron, 2000). Guided also by the metapragmatic analysis, Barron (2003) explains the findings with reference to a different hierarchy of values in both cultures. She posits that the need to make the offeree feel wanted and to be understanding of their wants and feelings is primary in offering in Ireland. Thus, initial refusals are frequently interpreted in Ireland as potentially ritual and are followed by ritual reoffers in which the offerer re-asserts an offer. In contrast, in Germany, honesty is a fundamental value, and thus rituality less important (cf. also Barron, 2000). This truth-orientation in German culture is also supported by research on other speech acts. (Grieve 2010:216), for instance, found

in her roleplay data that Germans do not shy away from face-threatening acts of truthful apology, but rather give a truthful account of events. Australians, in contrast, disprefer face-threatening acts. Where an apology is required, Australians often mitigated the potential for face-threatening by resorting to partial truths (cf. also House and Kasper, 1981; Kotthoff, 1989).

To date, there exists no comparative study of offers in general or of payment offers in German and British English. However, House (2006), working on the basis of a range of empirical findings, suggests German and Anglo-Saxon culture to differ on a number of continua, among them a directness continuum, where German language use is described as direct and Anglo-Saxon language use as comparatively indirect. Also, we can see Barron's (2000, 2003) research on Irish English described above as potentially relevant to offering in British English as variational pragmatic studies contrasting offers in British English and Irish English have highlighted many similarities in interactional structure, with both speech communities sharing many offer realisations and superstrategy preferences, and engaging in ritual reoffers (Barron, 2005) (albeit the latter potentially not as extensively as in Libyan cultures (cf. Grainger et al., 2015, cf. above)).

### 2.5.2. Making suggestions across cultures

Suggestions have been researched for a variety of languages, including Arabic (El-Dakhs and Ahmed 2024), Cantonese (Li, 2010), Persian (Farnia et al., 2014; Heidari-Shahreza, 2014) and Portuguese (Santos and Silva, 2008). Pragmatic descriptions of suggestions in English are readily available (cf. Edmondson and House, 1981; Sadock 1974; Koike, 1994; Leech and Svartvik, 1994; Carter and McCarthy, 2006; Jiang 2006; Adolphs, 2008; Li, 2010; Flöck, 2011; Heidari-Shahreza, 2014; Edstrom, 2015; Sharqawi and Anthony, 2020). Descriptions of suggestions in German rather represent a research desideratum (Kotorova and Zuchewicz, 2018).

Suggestions in British English and German have not been the subject of cross-cultural research to date. However, previous empirical studies of suggestions have highlighted that realisation patterns may be shared across cultures, but also that cultures may have their own realisation preferences. Research focusing on pragmatic perspective in suggestions (cf. 2.2.2), for instance, reveals the use of a range of perspectives across languages, but differences in the perspective preferred. For varieties of English, a joint perspective has frequently been recorded to represent a commonly used suggestion strategy. The joint dominance perspective was found to be most pervasive, for instance, in Li's (2010) Australian English native speakers (NS) roleplay data. In her Cantonese NS data, in contrast, the implicit perspective was employed most frequently, although the joint perspective was also used extensively. Similarly, Heidari-Shahreza (2014), contrasting American NS and Iranian NS suggestions using DCTs and open roleplays, found both groups to prefer a joint perspective. Differences were recorded with respect to the alternative perspective options, with the implicit perspective more frequent in the American NS data, and the other perspective more frequent in the Iranian NS data. However, the joint perspective preference in Li's (2010) and Heidari-Shahreza's (2014) American data was not recorded in Edstrom's (2015) research on American English NS using naturally-occurring task-based data. Rather, she finds the speaker dominance and hearer dominance perspectives to be most common.

Turning to realisations of suggestions and to directness considerations (cf. 2.2.2), research similarly shows broad similarities but also differences in preferences across cultures. Flöck (2011), for instance, in a study of suggestions in British and American English using NS corpus data, finds many similarities in formal realisations of suggestions in both cultures. However, modals of obligation were employed more often in the British NS data relative to the American NS data. A further study also involving American NS by Heidari-Shahreza (2014) found American NS informants to use more direct strategies than Iranian NS with the latter preferring non-conventionally indirect suggestions more than American NS. The high levels of directness in Heidari-Shahreza's (2014) American NS data are also reflected in Edstrom's (2015) research. In her naturally-occurring task-based data, she found American NS to prefer direct strategies in the first instance, followed by non-conventionally indirect strategies. Finally, the tendency towards directness recorded in the American NS data is also reflected in a study by Li (2010) on Australian NS and Cantonese NS speakers' suggestions. On a superordinate level, both groups preferred a direct strategy over a conventionally indirect strategy and a conventionally indirect strategy over a non-conventionally indirect strategy. On a subordinate level, however, different strategy preferences were recorded, with, for instance, obligation statements ("we must take him") and ability statements ("we can take him") used more frequently in the Australian English data than in the Cantonese data.

### 2.6. Payment offers, suggestions to share expenses and gender variation in first date interactions

Linguistic variation is all present, also in the patterns of language use employed across genders. Pragmatic research on gender variation in the speech act of offers and suggestions is limited, and not available for the British or German context. Nonetheless, some offer and suggestion studies do reveal variation in the conventions of use. Haddad (2022), for instance, explores gender variation in Jordanian Arabic offers and finds gender, as well as age and social status, to have a statistically significant impact on offer strategy choices and modification choices. Also, Heidari-Shahreza (2014) finds male Iranian NS to be more direct than their female counterparts when suggesting, a finding explained with reference to the traditional male-domination of Iranian society still notable today. This difference across genders was not recorded for the American English NS data.

Similarly, pragmatic research on payment negotiation and gender reveals a desideratum. Research is limited to Barron (2025) on payment offer negotiation in the UK as depicted on *First Dates*. The study found sociopragmatic gender variation, with payment offers found to be nearly exclusively employed by men and thus suggested to link to the construction of masculinity. Pragmalinguistically, these offers were realised directly, underlining clearly recognised gender conventions. By contrast, suggestions to share expenses were associated with the construction of femininity. Pragmalinguistically, speech act

realisations of suggestions to share expenses were more varied, pointing to interactional dynamics in identity co-constructions and also to potential individual variation in the pragmatic meaning associated with this speech act particularly in relation to its relative rituality and/or sincerity.

Previous scholarship in Psychology and Sociology conducted in the US context supports recent insights from pragmatic research in the UK context (cf. above). Such US research, based on self-reported typical action sequences in fictional or past first dates, finds a distinct role differentiation across genders, with men clearly expected to pay the bill (Rose and Frieze, 1989; Laner and Ventrone, 2000; Emmers-Sommer et al., 2010; cf. also Eaton and Rose, 2012; Cameron and Curry, 2020; Lamont, 2021). Particularly interesting is a study by Lever et al. (2015) focused on dating in general, rather than first dates only. Examining reported behaviour and attitudes in the US using an online survey, Lever et al. (2015) found that men were perceived by both men and women as typically covering more of the costs on a date, regardless of age, level of education, or wealth. At the same time, a small majority of women (less among older women) revealed they always attempt to contribute to the bill, even on a first date (57 %) (2015:6). However, of these, 32 % stated they would prefer the man to decline such attempts, and another 34 % stated that they would be offended if such a contribution was expected by men, pointing to reluctance among women to losing their “female privilege” (Lever et al., 2015:11). In contrast, the majority of men (64 %) felt that women should contribute to payment, especially if they earned more. As such, it appears that men are potentially more open to changes in gender norms in the dating context than women. Such is the state of the art for the English-speaking context. However, knowledge of gender variation in payment sequences and speech act realisations in a German context represents a desideratum, and one addressed in the present context.

### 3. Method

The present study compares payment offers, suggestions to share expenses and payment negotiation sequences in the German and UK reality TV series, *First Dates*. We describe the data in detail in 3.1 and present analytical procedures in 3.2.

#### 3.1. *First Dates* – A reality TV series

The first dates reality TV series format, *First Dates*, is a format broadcast in countries all over the world. The German format is entitled *First Dates - Ein Tisch für zwei* ('First Dates: A table for two'). Potential participants in the reality TV show apply for a place in the show. If chosen, they are paired and meet for a blind date meal in a restaurant. Cameras are concealed throughout the restaurant to capture the footage and daters are aware of these video-recordings, as they are of the mass media target audience. In the German show, meals and drinks are covered by the guests themselves, with meals reasonably priced at a maximum of €20- (Küpper, 30.01.2023). In the UK show, daters are given a £25- token allowance each towards the cost of their meal. However, their meals are considerably more expensive, with some mains costing as much as £39 (steak) (Broster, 3.12.2018; Gayle, 29.04.2022). Thus, in both countries, with meals and drinks together, a substantial bill is to be paid.

The database underlying the present study consists of a total of 33 German episodes of *First Dates – ein Tisch für zwei* broadcast between December 2019 and January 2021 on VOX, and a total of 60 UK episodes of *First Dates* broadcast between April 2020 and November 2020 on Channel 4 and 4seven. Each episode in both countries included several dating interactions. However, given the time constraints of reality TV and their aim to entertain, programs are narrativised, structured and edited (Mast, 2016). Consequently, not all dating interactions broadcast showed the payment scene. Only those dating interactions which included a payment scene were transcribed.

In a subsequent step, gender was operationalised and the confounding variable of date success controlled. We turn first to gender: the focus of the analysis of gender was placed on cisgender individuals identifying as men and women. In the absence of self-identifying data on gender, gender was operationalised as sexual orientation and the focus placed on heterosexual couples only.<sup>2</sup> The gender control left a sample of 103 dates (206 persons) in our German corpus and 105 dates (210 persons) in our UK corpus (cf. Table 1). The final step taken to attempt to control the influence of potential confounding variables in a cross-cultural context was to control for date success. Date success was defined as interest in another romantic date with the person dated at the end of the recording. This control was introduced in the light of previous research pointing to a potential influence of date success on payment negotiation, with some men's payment patterns related to expectations of sexual activity (Emmers et al., 2010; Lever et al., 2015) (cf. also Barron, 2025).

**Table 1**

German and UK *First Dates* payment corpus.

	German data	UK data
Total heterosexual dates with payment interaction	103	105
Total successful heterosexual dates (further romantic date) with payment interaction	36 (72 individuals)	50 (100 individuals)

<sup>2</sup> Cisgender is frequent in a heterosexual context. Hence, choosing only heterosexual dating couples meant access to cisgender data. At the same time, it is recognised that not only cis-gendered individuals may go on a heterosexual date and that the data may, for instance, also include a small number of bisexual individuals.

In sum then, the present analysis focuses on heterosexual interactions which ended in daters' reciprocal interest in engaging in a further romantic date. The successful heterosexual date sub-corpus consisted of 36 German dates (72 persons) and 50 UK dates (100 persons) (cf. Table 1). The analysis focuses on the unscripted interaction between daters.

### 3.2. Speech act and speech act sequence coding

The pragmalinguistic analysis of both payment offers and suggestions to share expenses (5.1, 5.2) is grounded in the concept of the head act, characterised as the smallest unit capable of realising a speech act (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Thus, in Example (1), "I would like to treat you after all, if that is okay" is identified as representing the payment offer head act. The non-essential background justification which precedes this head act is an external modifying supportive move and not further analysed in the present context. Similarly, the internal mitigating conditional seen in "would" is not further analysed.<sup>3</sup>

(1) M: *Wie sieht es aus? Ich bin eigentlich (.) ich bin mit dem Gedanken hier reingekommen*

*(.) dass jeder für sich selbst zahlt (.) aber eigentlich würde ich dich doch gerne einladen (.) wenn das in Ordnung ist ('What's the story? I actually (.) I came in here with the thought that we each pay for ourselves (.) but actually I would like to treat you after all (.) if that is okay')*

(FDGer\_SaMa)<sup>1</sup>

Where multiple instances of a speech act occurred within one utterance, the most explicit instance was recorded. Other instances of the same speech act are categorised as repetition and classified as upgrades. However, the analysis of internal modification, whether upgrading or downgrading (as in Example (1)), extends beyond the limitations of the current analysis.

Payment offers were coded pragmalinguistically based on a coding scheme developed in Barron (2025), itself based on the tripartite offer coding scheme developed by Barron (2005). In addition, offer codings were analysed for directness levels (cf. Barron, 2003). On the superordinate level, this scheme identified execution, directive and non-conventionally indirect payment offers. Furthermore, the German data in the present analysis dictated the need for the inclusion of additional categories than those originally needed for the UK data (cf. 4.1). Suggestions to share expenses were coded using the bottom-up approach to head act categorisation employed in Barron (2025). The scheme resulted in four superordinate category options, namely joint action strategies, preference strategies, execution strategies and directive strategies (cf. 4.2). Finally, interactional patterns in the data are analysed for speech act sequences, also using Edmondson's (1981) integrative discourse approach (cf. Barron, 2025) (cf. 2.4, 4.3).

## 4. Analysis and findings

The following sections present an analysis of payment offers and payment offer strategy choices (4.1), of suggestions to share expenses and their realisations (4.2), and finally, of payment negotiation sequences (4.3) as employed in the UK TV show, *First Dates*, and the German TV show, *First Dates – ein Tisch für zwei*.

### 4.1. Payment offer use and strategy choices across cultures

Initiative payment offers are omnipresent in both cultures, with 93.9 % of German interactions and 95.7 % of UK interactions including an initiative offer. In both cultures, the majority of payment offers were verbal offers (cf. Table 2). In the German data, all payment offers were produced by men (cf. Table 3). In the UK, there were two interactions which included a payment offer by a woman to settle the bill. One of these two offers represented an embedded offer in which the woman's offer followed that of the man's (cf. 2.4) (cf. Table 3). Thus, overall, in both cultures, men typically produced a payment offer (G: 100 %; UK: 95.6 %) and also, in their role as offerers, prototypically footed the final bill (G: 100 %; UK: 86.7 %) (cf. Table 4).

<sup>3</sup> The abbreviations used here and in the following are: W stands for woman and M for man. FDEng stands for the English-language *First Dates* series broadcast in the UK and FDGer stands for the German-language *First Dates* series broadcast in Germany. The letters following FDEng and FDGer refer to the ID given to the individual anonymised payment interactions.

**Table 2**  
Frequency and mode of initiative payment offers in successful interactions.<sup>41</sup>

	German (33)	UK (47)
Total offers	93.9 % (31)	95.7 % (45)
Verbal offers	(n = 31) 96.8 % (30)	(n = 45) 95.6 % (43)
Exclusively non-verbal offers	3.2 % (1)	4.4 % (2)

**Table 3**  
Frequency of initiative payment offers by gender as a percentage of total payment offers in successful interactions.

	Germany (31)	UK (45)
Man offers	100 % (31)	95.6 % (43)
Woman offers	–	2.2 % (1)
Man offers; woman embedded offer	–	2.2 % (1)

**Table 4**  
Frequency of bill settlement by offerers as a percentage of total payment offers in successful interactions.

	Germany (31)	UK (45)
Offerer settles the bill	100 % (31)	86.7 % (39)
Offerer does not settle the bill	–	13.3 % (6)

The pragmalinguistic analysis of payment offers centers, in the interest of comparability, on offers made directly to the date themselves; offers to pay directed at the waiter are not included in this analysis. In addition, the analysis focuses only on initiative offers; it thus excludes the embedded offer identified in Table 3 and also any reoffers identified in 4.3. The analysis takes as its starting point the coding scheme for payment offers set out in Barron (2025) (cf. 3.2 for further details).

Table 5 gives an overview of the superstrategies employed across cultures and depicts the distribution of the directive, execution, declarative and non-conventionally indirect superstrategies across cultures (cf. also Table 6 for examples). Execution strategies are extensively used in the German and UK data, and are the clear preference for payment offers in the German context, with 88.9 % of all offers taking this speaker-oriented form. UK offers also take an execution strategy frequently, but less than in Germany (57.9 %; Fisher's exact test;  $p = 0.0116$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). However, offers in the UK also use directive strategies to a considerable extent (UK: directive: 36.8 %; execution: 57.9 %) (cf. Table 5; Table 6). Indeed, the use of directive strategies in the UK data is more extensive than in the German data (G: 7.4 %; UK: 36.8 %) (Fisher's exact test;  $p = 0.0082$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Declarative strategies are only used in the German data, but to a minor extent (3.7 %). Similarly, indirect strategies are not used extensively in either culture.

**Table 5**  
Distribution of initiative verbal payment offer superstrategies directed at date in successful interactions.

Superstrategies	Germany (n = 27)	UK (n = 38)
Directive	7.4 % (2)	36.8 % (14)
Execution	88.9 % (24)	57.9 % (22)
Declarative	3.7 % (1)	–
Indirect	–	5.3 % (2)

On a subordinate level, Table 6 shows the strategies used within the superstrategies identified, as well as giving information on whether each strategy is a direct, conventionally indirect or non-conventionally indirect strategy. Within each superordinate category, strategies are ordered in terms of increasing indirectness. Many of the strategies identified have been previously recorded for offers outside of payment offers (cf. 2.1.2). Added to these is the speaker-oriented-payment-offer-routine strategy (e.g. “This one's on me”) which was newly identified for payment offers based on the UK *First Dates* data in Barron (2025) (cf. 2.1.2). Similarly, the conventionally indirect refusal strategy was also newly identified for payment offers (cf. Barron, 2025; cf. 2.1.2). This latter strategy follows a suggestion to share expenses and on a literal level, refuses a suggestion to share expenses. However, such a refusal also functions simultaneously as an offer to settle the entire bill. Given the frequency of refusals as realisations of payment offers, refusals were categorised as conventionally indirect payment offers. The German payment offer data also motivated the inclusion of a new query-speaker-permission payment offer strategy taking an interrogative form as, for instance, in “*Darf ich dich einladen?*” (“May I treat you?”). The query-speaker-permission

strategy differs from the request-permission strategy (e.g. “let me get this”) originally identified in Barron, 2005 and also used in the present data (cf. Table 6). In the new query-speaker-permission strategy, permission is queried whereas in the request-permission strategy, the underlying form is a directive (Let me V you). A further new strategy not used in Barron (2025) for payment offers is the state-completed-action strategy, realised in the present data by a passive construction, such as “*Du bist eingeladen*”, literally translated as ‘You are treated’ and perhaps more pragmatically appropriate as ‘consider yourself treated’. This strategy was identified by Anchimbe (2018:228) and termed a state-offeree-invitation-(passive) strategy. However, given the differentiation discussed above between the speech acts of invitations and offers (cf. 2.1.1), the description “state completed action” is preferred in the present context to avoid confusion between the speech acts of invitation and offer. Given the focus of state completed action offers on the statement of completed action, this strategy belongs to an overriding declarative superstrategy (cf. Anchimbe, 2018:119, 228).

Turning to employment of the strategies within the supercategories (cf. Table 6), we look first at the directive strategies. This strategy type is of minor importance in the German context. However, in the UK data, a conventionalised refusal strategy (36.8 %) is extensively used. The differences in use of the conventionally indirect directive refusal strategy is significant across cultures, with this strategy used in 36.8 % of the offers realised in the UK data and only in 7.4 % of the German offers (Fisher's exact test:  $p = 0.0082$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). The limited use of directive superstrategies in the German data vis-à-vis the UK data is thus predominantly linked to a low use of refusals as conventionally indirect offers.

**Table 6**

Distribution of initiative verbal payment offer superstrategies and strategies directed at date in successful interactions.

Superstrategies	Directness (D, CI, non-CI)	Strategies	Examples	Germany (n = 27)	UK (n = 38)
Execution	D	Speaker-oriented- payment-offer-routines	This one's on me (FDEng_AnSt)	–	7.9 % (3)
	D	Request- permission	Let me get this (FDEng_ArSi)	–	5.3 % (2)
	D	State-future-act-of-speaker	I'll get it (FDEng_ShJa) <i>Ich lade dich ein</i> ('I'm treating you') (FDGer_NaSa)	29.6 % (8)	36.8 % (14)
	CI	State-speaker-desire	<i>Ich lad dich sehr gerne ein</i> ('It's my pleasure to treat you') (FDGer_ReAn)	37 % (10)	–
	CI	State-speaker-willingness	I'll eeh happily pay this. (FDEng_MaDa)	–	5.3 % (2)
	CI	State-speaker-ability	I can get it if you want (FDEng_NaDa)	–	2.6 % (1)
	CI	Query-speaker-permission	<i>Darf ich dich einladen?</i> ('May I treat you?') (FDGer_CaAd)	22.2 % (6)	–
Directive	CI	Refusal	Kirsty: I've got half of this (.) just [just fyi (0.5)] Oliver: [No, you're not] (FDEng_KiOl)	7.4 % (2)	36.8 % (14)
Declarative	CI	State-offer-as-completed-action	<i>Du bist eingeladen</i> ('consider yourself treated') (FDGer_ToLu)	3.7 % (1)	–
Indirect	Non-CI	Strong-hint	Put <-> put that wallet away (FDEng_AmSa)	–	5.3 % (2)

Cross-cultural differences are also recorded in the strategies employed within the execution superstrategy. The UK data reveals a broad range of strategies but shows a clear preference for a state-future-act-of-speaker strategy (36.8 % overall or 63.6 % of the execution strategies). The German data, in contrast, reveals a broader range of rather extensively used execution strategies. Most prominent among these are the state-speaker-desire strategy (37 % overall or 41.7 % of German execution strategies), the state-future-act-of-speaker strategy (29.6 % overall or 33.3 % of execution strategies), and the query speaker permission (22.2 % overall or 25 % of execution strategies) (cf. Table 6). Whereas the state-future-act-of-speaker strategy is used to an extensive degree by both cultures (G: 29.6 %; UK: 36.8 %), the speaker-desire strategy (G: 37 % vs. UK: 0 %; Fisher's exact test:  $p < 0.00001$ ) and the query-speaker-permission strategies (G: 22.2 % vs. UK: 0 %; Fisher's exact test:  $p = 0.0036$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ) are only used in the German context. Finally, an overview of directness reveals that 86.4 % of UK execution strategies are direct strategies compared with only 33.4 % of German strategies (Fisher's exact test:  $p = 0.0003$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Overall then, relative to the UK use of execution strategies, Table 6 shows a pattern towards a more indirect payment offer execution strategy in the German data.

In sum, more directive offer strategies are employed in the UK data vis-à-vis the German data. These are exclusively realised via a conventionally indirect refusal strategy and as we will see in 4.2 and 4.3, the result of UK payment negotiation

<sup>4</sup> The total number of potential payment interactions in which an initiative payment offer may be present (Germany: 33; UK: n = 47) may differ somewhat from the total successful interactions with payment interactions displayed in Table 1 above. This is due to film cuts and relates to the fact that on occasion, a recording did not include any payment negotiation between the daters or only incomplete negotiation despite including a payment transaction.

conventions which involve a higher use of suggestions to share expenses, and thus the need for a directive offer in the light of such suggestions. In addition, execution strategies are realised directly, producing forceful offers in the UK data. In the German data, payment offers are typically realised using execution strategies and thus offerer-oriented. This fact, coupled with higher uses of relatively more indirect state-speaker-desire and query-speaker-permission execution strategies in the German data as compared to a preference for more direct state-future-act-of-speaker execution strategies in the UK data, shows that offerers in German payment offers pay more attention to the offeree's freedom of action.

#### 4.2. Suggestions to share expenses use and strategy choices across cultures

Suggestions to share expenses emerged as a second important speech act alongside payment offers in the initial stages of the payment negotiation data in both cultures. However, they are more important in Britain than in Germany, with significantly less suggestions to share expenses recorded in the German data (39.4 %) compared to the UK data (72.3 %) (Fisher's exact test:  $p = 0.005$ ). In both cultures, it is the woman who typically issues the suggestions to share expenses (G: 92.3 %; UK: 100 %) (cf. Table 7). The majority of suggestions identified are verbal in both cultures (G: 100 %; UK: 94.1 %) (cf. Table 8). Non-verbal suggestions coded relate to suggestions realised when an action, such as reaching for wallets, purses or bags, is acknowledged as meaningful by the interlocutor in the payment setting.

**Table 7**  
Suggestions to share expenses in successful interactions across genders.<sup>5</sup>

	Germany (n = 33)	UK (n = 47)
Suggestion	39.4 % (13)	72.3 % (34)
	n = 13	n = 34
Man suggests	7.7 % (1)	–
Woman suggests	92.3 % (12)	100 % (34)

**Table 8**  
Verbal and non-verbal suggestions to share expenses in successful interactions.

	Germany (n = 13)	UK (n = 34)
Verbal suggestions	100 % (13)	94.1 % (32)
Exclusively non-verbal suggestions	–	5.9 % (2)

Suggestions to share expenses were categorised according to the suggestion to share expenses scheme developed by Barron (2025) (cf. 3.2). It was not necessary to add any further categories to the coding scheme in coding the German data. Table 9 shows four main superordinate strategy types, namely joint action superstrategies, preference strategies, execution strategies and directive strategies. Superordinate strategy uses across cultures are similar and reveal a wide variety of strategy use. Joint action strategies are the most widely used suggestions to share expenses in both the German and UK data (G: 38.5 % vs. UK: 46.9 %) (cf. Table 9). Preference strategies are the least used (G: 7.7 %; UK: 15.6 %). Directive strategies are used in 30.8 % of the German data and in 12.5 % in the UK data. However, these differences are not statistically significant ( $p = 0.2019$ ). Indeed, care must be taken when viewing the German distributions as the overall number of strategies is small ( $n = 13$ ). Within each of the superordinate categories, the choice of strategies is rather varied, particularly among the joint action and execution strategies (cf. Table 9).

**Table 9**  
Verbal suggestion to share expenses categories, patterns, examples and distribution across stand-alone (S), initial (S–O) and subsequent position (O–S) suggestions in successful interactions.

Superordinate strategy	Directness (D, Cl, non-Cl)	Strategy	Structure	Example	German (13)	UK (n = 32)
Joint action	D	Propose-joint-action-via-suggestory-formulae	Let's VP	Let's split	–	9.4 % (3)
	D	State-joint-future-action	We're VP Wir VP	We're going half and half <i>Das teilen wir uns (.) ne?</i> ('We'll share that, won't we?')	15.4 % (2)	15.6 % (5)
	D		Are we VP?	Are we going halves?	–	12.5 % (4)

(continued on next page)

<sup>5</sup> The count of successful interactions in which a suggestion may have taken place varies slightly from the overall number of successful interactions presented in Table 1. This discrepancy arises from film cuts that depicted a payment scene without capturing the entire payment interaction. In such instances, a dater may have been seen making a payment, but the interaction between the daters was not fully broadcast. In these incomplete interactions, the opportunity to record a suggestion was absent.

Table 9 (continued)

Superordinate strategy	Directness (D, CI, non-CI)	Strategy	Structure	Example	German (13)	UK (n = 32)
		Question-joint-future-action	Do we VP?	Do we split?		
	D	Question-joint-obligation	Should we VP? <i>Sollen wir VP?</i>	Should we just go halves? <i>Sollen wir teilen?</i>	15.4 % (2)	3.1 % (1)
	CI	Question-joint-ability	Can we VP?	Can we do splitsies (.) plea<:>se?	–	3.1 % (1)
	CI	State-joint-ability	We could VP <i>Wir können VP</i>	We could [go both ways] <i>Wir können es auch aufteilen</i> ('We can share it between us')	7.7 % (1)	3.1 % (1)
TOTAL JOINT ACTION					38.5 % (5)	46.9 % (15)
Preference	D	Grammatically-elliptical	NP	A half each <i>Halbe halbe?</i> ('Half half?')	7.7 % (1)	3.1 % (1)
	CI	Question-hearer-desire	Do you want to VP? Do you want me to VP? You don't want NP?	(Do you) want to go halves on it? Do you want me to? You don't want any money towards the meal?	–	12.5 % (4)
TOTAL PREFERENCE					7.7 % (1)	15.6 % (5)
Execution	D	State-future-act-of-speaker	I VP	I'll put [towards it]	–	9.4 % (3)
	CI	Question-speaker-ability	Can I VP?	Can I pay half?	–	3.1 % (1)
	CI	State-speaker-ability	I Can VP <i>Ich kann VP</i>	I Can go halves (.) with you <i>Ich kann auch selber bezahlen</i> ('I can also pay myself')	7.7 % (1)	3.1 % (1)
	CI	State-speaker-willingness	I am/would be (intensifier) happy to VP <i>Ich wäre bereit gewesen, VP</i> <i>Ich hätte sonst gesagt VP</i>	I am so happy to go Dutch <i>Ich wäre auch bereit gewesen</i> ('I would have been willing') <i>Ich hätte sonst gesagt wir teilen</i> ('I would have said we'll share')	15.4 % (2)	6.2 % (2)
	CI	Question-permission <sup>a</sup>	Are you going to let me VP	Are you going to let me pay for some of this?	–	3.1 % (1)
TOTAL EXECUTION					23.1 % (3)	25 % (8)
Directive	CI	Indirect-refusal	No	No <i>Nein</i> ('no') <i>Muss nicht</i> ('no need')	15.4 % (2)	9.4 % (3)
	CI	Question-payment-via-question-word-interrogatives	What do I VP? <i>Wie wollen wir VP?</i>	What do I owe you? <i>Wie wollen wir's machen?</i>	15.4 % (2)	3.1 % (1)
TOTAL DIRECTIVE					30.8 % (4)	12.5 % (4)

<sup>a</sup> The question-permission strategy was termed a request-permission strategy in Barron (2025). The strategy has been renamed to better reflect its focus.

#### 4.3. Speech act sequences in payment negotiation across cultures

Payment offers and suggestions to share expenses are the central speech acts observed in the initial turns of the German and UK payment interaction exchanges. Requests for payment were also identified in the UK data, but played a very minor role. Below, we outline the primary sequential patterns involving these speech acts in the payment interaction in both cultures and analyse the interactional structures underlying these patterns using Edmondson and House's (1981) discourse model. A total of six distinct patterns were identified, and specifically:

- Payment offer (O)
- Suggestion to share expenses (S)
- Payment offer – suggestion to share expenses (O–S)
- Suggestion to share expenses – payment offer (S–O)
- Payment offer – payment offer (O–O)
- Request for payment (RP)

Fig. 1 illustrates the distribution of these patterns. It is evident that all interactions within both databases encompassed either a payment offer (O) or a proposal to share expenses (S), with the sole exception of one instance where a request for payment (RP) by a woman was noted in the UK data. The O–O and RP sequences were not present in the German data. However, given that these sequences are of minor importance in the UK data, this difference is not noteworthy.

Stand-alone offers (O) were the preferred pattern in the German data and significantly more frequent than in the UK data (G: 60.6 %; UK: 23.4 %) (Fisher's exact test:  $p = 0.001$ ). Realisations of this pattern included offers followed by acceptances of offers as in Example (2). Here, the Initiate move (*Ich darf dich einladen?* ('I may treat you?')) takes the form of an offer. This is

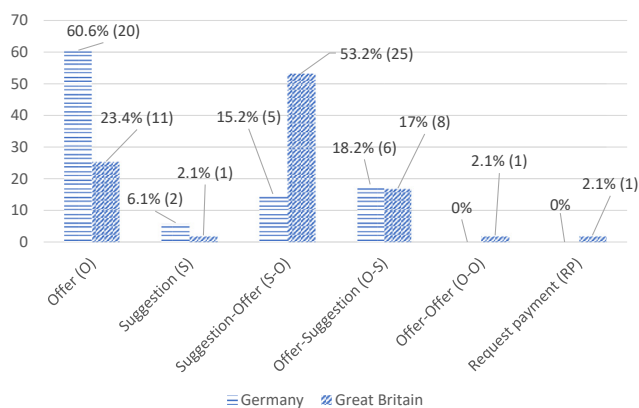
directly accepted and the Initiate thus promptly Satisfied. In addition, the O pattern also includes offer exchanges with an insertion sequence in which hearer sincerity is checked before the offer is graciously accepted. In Example (3), for instance, an offer Initiates the exchange. In contrast to Example (2), this offer is, however, not immediately Satisfied, rather W produces a Counter move in which she enquires about the sincerity of the offer (*Wirklich?* ('really?')). Once this Counter is Satisfied by M, W accepts the initiative offer and the Initiate is Satisfied with an expression of gratitude (*Danke* ('Thanks')).

### (2) Offer (O)

M: *Ich darf dich einladen?* ('I may treat you?') OFFER (INITIATE)

W: *Oh (.) vielen (.) vielen Dank* ('Oh (.) many (.) many thanks') ACCEPTANCE (SATISFY)

### (FDGer\_GuAn)



**Fig. 1.** Initial payment negotiation exchange structure in successful interactions (Germany: n = 33; Britain: n = 47).

### (3) Offer (O)

M: *Ich bezahle gerne die Rechnung* ('It's my pleasure to pay the bill') OFFER (INITIATE)

W: *Wirklich?* ('Really?') REQUEST CONFIRMATION OF HEARER SINCERITY (COUNTER)

M: *Sehr gerne* ('You're very welcome') CONFIRM HEARER SINCERITY (SATISFY COUNTER)

W: *Danke* ('Thanks') ACCEPTANCE (SATISFY INITIATE)

### (FDGer\_SoMa)



Use of the O–S pattern is more similar than the S–O pattern across cultures (G: 18.2 %; UK: 17 %). Example (5) exemplifies this pattern. Here, the offer in line 1 is followed by a suggestion to share expenses (“... we can also split it between us”). This suggestion is then refused with a Contra move and the original Initiate is reinstated with this Contra. This is then Satisfied with an expression of thanks which accepts the offer.

(5) Offer-Suggestion (O-S)

M: *Jo (.) Soll ich oder soll du? Ah (.) ich nehme (5) ich bezahl mal* OFFER (INITIATE)

(‘Yeah (.) Should I or should you? Ehm (.) I’ll take it (5) I’ll ehm pay’)

W: *Musst du aber nicht (.) wir können es auch aufteilen* SUGGESTION (CONTRA)

(‘you don’t have to though (.) we can also split it between us’)

M: *Nein* (‘no’) REFUSAL (CONTRA)

W: *Oh (.) danke dir (.) sehr lieb* (‘Oh (.) thank you (.) that’s kind’) ACCEPT OFFER (SATISFY INITIATE)

(FDGer\_SaRo)

The O–O pattern is a very rare pattern in both cultures (G: 0 %; UK: 2.1 %). In this pattern, an offer is issued as an Initiate and this Initiate Contraed with another offer to form and embedded offer. To illustrate, an offer, such as “I’ll get tha<:>t” Contraed by “I’ll get i<:>t” (FDEng\_laMa), an embedded offer (cf. 2.4), is an example. The final pattern, RP, is also very rare (G: 0 %; UK: 2.1 %). There is only one example in the database in which a woman requests payment by asking “Are you getting this?” (FDEng\_KaMi). This is refused and the refusal met by a surprised reaction, a reaction also underlining the dispreferred nature of situations in which the man does not foot the bill (cf. Table 3).

In sum then, three exchange patterns were dispreferred in both cultures, namely stand-alone suggestions (S), reciprocal offer (O–O) patterns and a request for payment (RP). A stand-alone offer (O) was the preferred pattern in the German data. This pattern was significantly more frequent in the German data than in the UK data. By contrast, the suggestion-offer (S–O) pattern was used significantly less in the German data relative to the UK data, where it was the prototypical pattern.

## 5. Discussion

The exploration of payment interactions within the blind date series *First Dates – ein Tisch für zwei* and *First Dates* in Germany and the UK respectively revealed that payment offers to cover the bill play an important role in reality TV representations in both cultural settings. Furthermore, this speech act was associated with the construction of masculine identity in both the German and UK contexts. Thus, despite social changes in the equality of the genders in recent years, both *First Dates* series portray prototypically, and with very few exceptions, the man in the active role of settling the bill in successful dates. In addition, it should be noted that although based on reality TV data, and thus not a one-to-one reflection of everyday language use (cf. 1, 3.1), findings support those of previous psychological and sociological survey-based research highlighting an active male role in payment negotiation (cf. also Laner and Ventrone, 2000; Emmers-Sommer et al., 2010; Lever et al., 2015).

Payment offers also revealed similarities across cultures, with speakers from both the German and UK TV programs preferring speaker-oriented, execution superstrategies which underline the commissive nature of offers and thus the future action of the addressee. As such, these findings lend further weight to previous findings indicating topic-based variation in the realisation of offers (cf. Barron, 2017b, 2025) (cf. 2.1.2). Within this superordinate execution category, speakers of both cultures used a state-future-act-of-speaker strategy extensively. In addition, there was considerable use of the speaker-desire strategy and also a query-speaker-permission strategy in the German context, the latter to a lesser degree. These latter strategies, the speaker-desire strategy and the query-speaker-permission strategy, do not appear in the UK data and, together with a state-completed-outcome strategy, were added to the payment offer coding scheme to allow the German data to be coded. A further difference concerned the cross-cultural use of directive strategies to realise a payment offer. These were frequently employed in the UK show, but not in the German show. On the subordinate level, such directive strategies are

realised via a conventionally indirect refusal strategy in the UK context, and are thus the result of UK payment negotiation conventions which involve a higher use of suggestions to share expenses (cf. 4.3). Contrasting payment offers in both cultures then, the German data revealed a strong speaker orientation, seen in a near exclusive preference for an execution strategy, and within this category revealed a preference for a less direct offer relative to the UK. In contrast, in the UK data, there was a preference for more forceful offers, as seen in the use of directive strategies and in the greater use of more direct execution strategies. It is important to note that the finding of a more direct British payment offer relative to German offers challenges previous generalisations of more direct communication in German relative to the UK (cf. e.g. House, 2006) (cf. 3.2). As such, the study also suggests that relative directness cannot be seen in a simple relationship with culture; rather the relative directness employed depends on culture, but also on speech act, situation and genre (Fukushima, 2000; Barron, 2012).

The differences in the representation of payment negotiation in Germany and in the UK on a first date can potentially be explained with reference to differences in the polite conventions of interaction. In Germany, offers appear to be linked to masculine identity construction. At the same time, such offers may potentially threaten the negative face of the dating partner (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987) given their status as persons with their own income and as persons potentially opposed to traditional gender conventions. The men in the dating interactions are seen to attend to these negative face needs by mitigating their offers, frequently posing them as something of benefit to the offerer himself (state-speaker-desire (*“Ich lad dich sehr gerne ein”* (it's my pleasure to treat you)) or of something for which permission has to be asked (query-speaker-permission (*“Darf ich dich einladen?”* (May I treat you?)). In other words, offerers in German payment offers pay particular attention to the offeree's freedom of action and to their status as independent persons with negative face wants. In the UK data, in contrast, men, in constructing masculine identity, are rather depicted to emphasise their generosity to build up the positive politeness needs of the addressee. In the UK context, this appears more important than any negative face needs that the addressee may have. Consequently, direct offers, taking the form of direct execution strategies or directives are the preferred choice.

Overall, suggestions to share expenses were used in both cultures, and in both cultures were either preceded or followed an offer or stood alone. Their production was linked to the construction of femininity in both Germany and the UK, with suggestions by men representing an outlier in the German data and not present in the UK data. In neither culture did the production of the speech act of suggestions to share expenses have any effect on outcome. This gender distribution is in line with the active financial role recorded for men in traditional gender conceptualisations and in current psychological and sociological survey-based descriptions of dating in the US (cf. 2.6). Similarly, Counters questioning hearer sincerity were seen in a number of women's productions following offers in Examples (3) and (4) (cf. 4.3). This interactional move would appear to communicate an appreciation that the offerer may be simply following traditional gender conventions. Counters test the sincerity of the offer and in so doing minimise the benefit to self that the offer brings and allow the offeree not to appear greedy (Generosity Maxim). In both examples, the offerer confirms the offer and in so doing again maximises benefit to the hearer (Tact Maxim) and maximise cost to self (Generosity Maxim) (cf. Leech, 1983:111f).

The analysis of interactional structure also shed light on the use of suggestions to share expenses across cultures. Significantly, suggestions to share expenses were more common in the UK than in German first date TV interactions. Indeed, in the UK data, the suggestion-offer (S–O) pattern was the preferred payment negotiation pattern; in contrast, a single offer (O) without any suggestions to share expenses was the preferred pattern in the German data. As such, the link between suggestions to share expenses and feminine gender construction can be suggested to be stronger in the UK. This fact may also have implications for the status of the speech act of suggestions to share expenses. In the UK context, the extensive use of suggestions to share expenses preceded or followed by a payment offer points to the potential status as an ostensible speech act functioning on a ritual level (Isaacs and Clark, 1990). In other words, in the UK context, the pragmatic meaning of suggestions to share expenses may, rather than representing a sincere suggestion to share expenses, instead ritually allow a speaker to communicate a lack of greed vis-à-vis a previous payment offer or vis-à-vis the expectation of a payment offer to come and thus address any negative face threat associated with a payment offer. Not wishing to appear ungenerous, and appreciating the potential rituality of suggestions to share expenses, a payment offer in an S–O pattern would thus function to maximise the benefit to the hearer (Tact Maxim) and maximise cost to self (Generosity Maxim) (Leech, 1983). Finally, it might be noted that such rituality in the UK context might also be potentially linked to the strong force of the payment offers produced or anticipated to be produced by male daters. To restore the imbalance of such strong payment offers, women attempt to save their negative face by signaling their willingness and ability to share the cost of the meal, and thus engage in extensive negotiation involving suggestions to share expenses.

The discussion of the potential rituality of UK suggestions to share expenses does not exclude the possibility of sincere suggestions in the data. It is indeed possible that individual women were very sincere in attempting to direct their addressees to the future action of sharing costs. In the German context, the lower use of suggestions to share expenses coupled with previous scholarship pointing to a low degree of rituality in offer negotiation in the German context (cf. Barron, 2000, 2003) (cf. 2.4), rather point to suggestions in German culture as primarily sincere. That potentially sincere attempts to share expenses do not generally come to fruition in the data might be explained by interactional dynamics which pay attention to face-threat. For instance, payment offers in the German context are less direct and thus take the negative face of the woman into account. Consequently, they are less face-threatening to accept. An alternative explanation is the public context in which the interactions take place. Payment negotiation is interactional and thus constructed by both parties. Women in either culture may suggest that expenses are shared in a more or less forceful manner. At the same time, they may decide to simply accept a payment offer, if issued. On occasion, it may be that women may decide not to persist with a suggestion to share

expenses due to perceptions that the face threat to the suggestee is overly high, such as when sharing expenses may threaten male identity construction. In sum then, both scenarios, suggestions to share as an ostensible speech act and suggestions to share as sincere speech acts, are possible and it is suggested that the data potentially contains both. Further qualitative and metapragmatic research would be needed to delve into the intricacies of individual interactions.

Finally, the study also sheds light on pragmalinguistic realisations of suggestions to share expenses across cultures. Pragmalinguistic realisations of suggestions patterned similarly across cultures revealing a strong focus on joint action, but at the same time, extensive variation in suggestion realisations in both cultures. The range of variation points potentially to variation among speakers as to the pragmatic meaning of suggestions to share expenses and also potentially to social conventions in flux, some women treating suggestions as ritual speech acts; others in contrast possibly being sincere in their desire to share payment but not forcing payment due to the intricacies of masculine identity construction and the need for face management in the face of forceful offers produced by dating partners.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study examines pragmatic conventions in payment negotiation in the UK and Germany as depicted in the reality TV show, *First Dates* and *First Dates – ein Tisch für zwei*. The study adds to previous research on pragmatic conventions on reality TV (cf. [Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2013](#)) and at the same time represents a source of naturalistic data for pragmatic research on payment negotiation (cf. [Ren and Woodfield, 2016](#)). The study is the first on payment offers, suggestions to share expenses and payment negotiation sequences in German and thus adds to the limited research on offers in German. It is also the first cross-cultural analysis on payment offers, suggestions to share expenses and payment negotiation sequences. The suggestion to share expenses – payment offer (S–O) pattern was the preferred payment negotiation strategy in the UK data; a single offer (O) without any suggestions to share expenses was the preferred pattern in the German data. In both cultures then, payment offers were found to represent an important speech act in payment negotiation in first dates. They were linked to masculine identity construction in both cultures and revealed significant differences in offer strategy choice across cultures, payment offers in the UK being realised more directly than in Germany, a finding which contradicts previous research on directness levels across these two cultures (cf. 5), but which was suggested to potentially relate to cross-cultural differences in the attention paid to positive and negative face and also to the interactional structure around payment offers, payment offers in the UK often following a suggestion (S–O) and needing therefore to be more forceful. Suggestions to share expenses also played an important role in payment negotiation in both cultures, but a significantly more important role in the UK context relative to in Germany. In both cultures, they are linked to feminine identity construction (albeit to a stronger degree in the UK), with suggestions to share expenses by men clearly dispreferred in both cultures (cf. also [Lever et al., 2015](#)). In neither culture do suggestions to share expenses have an impact on payment patterns. Rather, their presence, particularly in the UK context where the frequency of suggestions to share expenses is higher, was suggested to potentially relate to ritual politeness conventions pointing to the status of an ostensible speech act. Alternatively, the possibility was discussed that these suggestions were sincere, potentially reflecting a desire by women for increasing equality in the payment process. That any such sincerity was only rarely mirrored in actual payment, was suggested to relate to the fact that in a face-threatening public context of reality TV, women may withdraw a suggestion to share if its presence threatens male identity construction. Indeed, it is very possible that both explanations are valid and that individual variation is at play in the use of suggestions. Pragmalinguistically, realisations of suggestions showed large variation, with many realised via a joint perspective which constructs suggestions to share expenses as jointly beneficial for speaker and hearer; others however rather emphasised the commissive force, highlighting the potential cost for the speaker or the benefit for the hearer rather than the benefit for both. Similarly, directness levels of suggestions showed considerable variation, potentially reflecting different levels of sincerity. It is suggested that payment negotiation sequences are a current nexus of potential social change.

The present study provides insight into speech act interaction and cross-cultural and gender variation in a dating context. However, it is not without its limitations. Individuals on the show are from a broad range of social categories. Variational pragmatic research highlights the potential impact of such factors as age, socio-economic status and ethnic identity, on pragmatic conventions (cf. [Schneider et al., 2008](#); [Barron and Schneider, 2009](#) on intralingual pragmatic variation). This is, thus, an area where further research is needed. Furthermore, the present study focuses on payment offers, suggestions to share expenses and payment negotiation sequences in Germany and the UK. The data underlying the analysis is, however, reality TV data and while the payment interactions, as unscripted interactions, may be claimed to represent discursive reproductions of patterns of payment negotiation in their respective cultures (cf. 1, 3.1), it must also be recognised that daters may potentially construct a different identity of themselves for TV (cf. [Mast, 2016](#)). Moreover, the data represent a narrativised and edited media product produced by the production team with the aim to entertain (cf. 1). Future studies might focus on payment offers and payment negotiation sequences using data from authentic interactions or from elicited sources.

The present study is the first to shed light on payment offers, suggestions to share expenses and payment negotiation sequences in a dating context in Germany, and also the first to investigate these speech acts and speech act sequences contrastively in English and German. Further pragmatic investigations for different languages and also for cross-cultural pragmatic investigations currently represent a desideratum. The reality TV show, *First Dates*, represents a potential source of data for future explorations, with the format, for instance, being or having been employed in Belgium (*First Dates - Belgique*), the Netherlands (*First Dates - Netherlands*), Spain (*First Dates a la carta*), Greece (*First Dates (Greece)*), Italy (*Primo appuntamento*) and Sweden (*Første date*), to name just a few countries. Furthermore, pragmatic variation across

pluricentric varieties has been recorded for offers (cf., e.g., Barron, 2017a). Such variational pragmatic studies on payment offers and payment negotiation sequences on the level of national varieties also represent a research gap. Here too, the reality TV series, *First Dates*, represents a potential focus. For the case of German, for instance, future research might focus on payment negotiation in the Austrian *First Dates Austria* or in the Swiss *First Dates – Nacht für Zwei* or indeed for English on payment negotiation in *First Dates Ireland* (cf. Barron, forthcoming) or in *First Dates Australia*.

On a broader level, the present study might be further extended to explore not only payment offers, suggestions to share expenses and payment negotiation sequences in a dating context, but rather to approach a “pragmatics of dating”. Dating, as a social phenomenon, is prevalent in various aspects of life. It manifests in our personal experiences, through dating applications, on television, in films, literature, art, and music. Pragmatic research on initial encounters (Haugh and Sinkeviciute, 2021) is available, as is research on intimate discourse (Clancy, 2016). Nevertheless, with few exceptions (cf., e.g., Korobov, 2024 on compliments in dating), the pragmatics of dating has not received significant focused attention, with research on dating interactions predominantly coming from psychological studies in practical contexts, as well as in theoretical frameworks within the social sciences (cf. 2.6), many conducted under experimental conditions. The pragmatics of dating thus represents an area deserving of future research, and one not just focusing on payment offers, suggestions to share expenses and payment negotiation sequences, but rather one encompassing multiple levels of pragmatic analysis and focusing on the construction of intimacy in the romantic setting, on gender constructions, and both from a cross-cultural perspective.

### CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Anne Barron:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Software, Resources, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

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### Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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