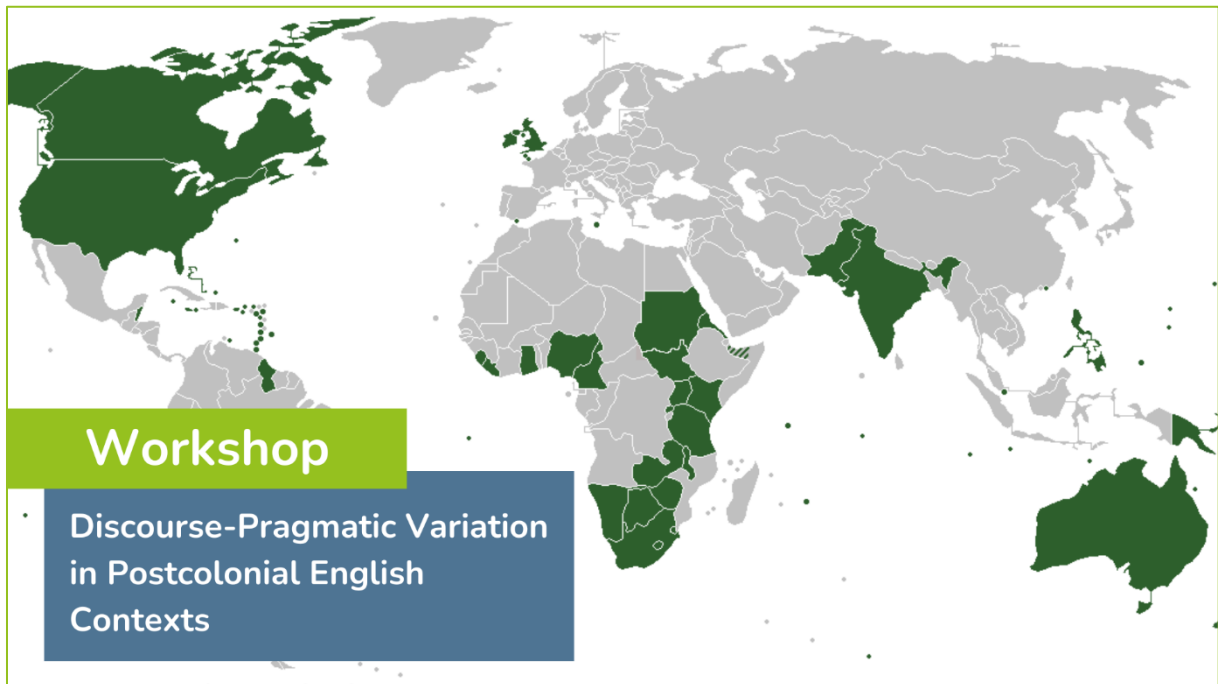


WORKSHOP

Discourse-Pragmatic Variation in Postcolonial English Contexts (DVPEC)



6–7 February 2025 | College for Social Sciences and Humanities, Essen

English varieties spoken in African, Asian, and Caribbean multilingual societies are influenced by ethnic languages and cultures of the respective regions, leading to variation in the use of discourse-pragmatic features. This workshop brings together international linguistics scholars to discuss different theoretical approaches and methodologies in the field.

Organisation

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PROGRAMME

DAY I: 6 February 2025

- 9.00 **Welcome**
- 9.15 Ulrike Gut (Plenary)
Apologising in Nigerian English
in-person
- 10.15 **Tea break**
- 10.45 Anne Barron, Ezekiel Olajimbiti, Ayo Osisanwo, Akin Odebunmi
“Well, I am paying”: Payment Negotiation Patterns and Gender on a First Date in Nigeria
in-person
- 11.15 Lisa Lehnen
“yeah. (1.0) but i i always think that the hong kong people prioritise the the international movies sometimes” – Discourse-pragmatic variation in DISAGREEMENTS from Hong Kong
in-person
- 11.45 Kazuko Matsumoto
“Charrach, that’s freaking normal, man”: Grammaticalization and contact-induced discourse-pragmatic change in Palauan English
virtual
- 12.15 **Lunch break**
- 13.45 Bruna Almeida-Büttner
Responses to thanks in Nigerian English: A corpus pragmatic analysis of dialogues from ICE-Nigeria
in-person
- 14.15 Oluwayemisi Olusola Adebomi
Multimodal communicative acts in Nigerian religious-oriented 2023 general elections-related memes
virtual
- 14.45 **Tea break**
- 15.15 Jemima Asabea Anderson, Kwaku Osei-Tutu, Bernard Cassie
Discourse-pragmatic markers in Ghanaian Pidgin
in-person

15.45 Deborah Fifelola, Foluke O. Unuabonah
Thanking strategies in Ghanaian and Ugandan Englishes: A corpus-based study
virtual

18.30 **Conference dinner** (Location TBA)

DAY II: 7 February 2025

9.00 Bebwa Isingoma (Plenary)
Pragmatic variation in the speech acts of greeting and leave-taking: Evidence from Ugandan English
in-person

10.00 **Tea break**

10.30 Ilka Flöck, Onwu Inya & Anne Barron
Requests in Nigerian and British English conversational interactions: A corpus-based approach
in-person

11.00 Carina Stick
Politeness in Hong Kong business correspondence: investigating genre development and nativization processes from a diachronic perspective
in-person

11.30 Rachel Thompson, Jemima Anderson
Pragmatic functions of please, sorry, and thank you in Ghanaian English
virtual

12.00 **Lunch break**

13.30 Temitope Michael Ajayi, Temidayo Akinrinlola
Address terms and politeness in Nigerian English
virtual

14.00 Foluke O. Unuabonah, Deborah Fifelola
Well as a pragmatic marker in Ghanaian and Nigerian Englishes
in-person

14.30 Christiane Meierkord
Analysing PRAISE in Ugandan English - Corpus pragmatics meets macrosociolinguistics
in-person

15.00 **Final discussion and workshop closing**

Discourse-Pragmatic Variation in Postcolonial English Contexts (DVPEC)

ABSTRACTS OF WORKSHOP CONTRIBUTIONS

Multimodal Communicative Acts in Nigerian Religious-Oriented 2023 General Elections-Related Memes

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Communicative act refers to the action or set of actions that a speaker accomplishes by producing an utterance (Cassillas and Hilbrink, 2020). It applies to concrete acts performed by someone at a particular time and at a particular place (Plunze, 2010), i.e., the linguistic encoding and decoding of a communicative act is closely tied to both the interactants present when the act is communicated; and the context in which they find themselves. Communicative acts are used to perform linguistic functions such as making requests, promises, invitations, apologies, threats, greetings etc. (Cassillas and Hilbrink, 2020). Even though it has connections with the speech acts theory of Austin and Searle, and specifically Austin's 'illocutionary force' (Green, 2000), communicative acts have wider implications in terms of its applicability to sign languages and multimodal texts, unlike the speech acts theory which is not extensible to nonverbal texts (Cameron-Faulkner 2014). In spite of its seemingly broader perspective, several aspects of communicative acts [theory] have remained unexplored (Cassillas and Hilbrink, 2020), and only a few studies have investigated the way communicative acts perform specific communicative functions in multimodal texts. Some of these studies include Oyebode & Unuabonah (2013) and Nurudeen (2024) which substantiate how communicative acts are used to perform the functions of instructing, advising, beckoning, encouraging, warning, questioning, ordering and informing in HIV/AIDS posters and Nollywood film advertisement posters respectively.

The present study, therefore, extends scholarship on [multimodal] communicative acts by exploring the religious-oriented memes relating to Nigeria's 2023 general elections with a view to uncovering the various communicative acts deployed in the memes vis-à-vis their functions. 50 Internet memes, shared within the Nigerian WhatsApp space, will be purposively sampled. These will be analysed qualitatively using aspects of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) multimodal discourse analysis and van Leeuwen (2005) communicative acts. Preliminary findings show that communicative acts of mocking, advising, encouraging, promoting, complaining and persuading are largely deployed to express disapproval of the [negative] influence of religion on politics in Nigeria. The findings also show that the Nigerian Pidgin English is not only used for solidarity but to portray religious-politics as a widespread phenomenon in postcolonial Nigeria. Furthermore, the findings reveal that Yoruba, one of Nigeria's major indigenous languages, is employed to push ethnic agenda in the religious-

oriented memes. In addition, there is a predominant use of Nigerian English variety marked by coinages, codemixing and lexical transfer. This is also deployed for solidarity and to underscore the boom of religious-politics in postcolonial Nigeria.

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Address Terms and Politeness in Nigerian English

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Address terms and politeness constitute two major phenomena that characterize human interactions across cultures. In the Nigerian socio-cultural context, address terms are deployed as a face management device, geared towards politeness. Although extant studies have explored address terms in the Nigerian context, especially with respect to the use of kinship terms; there has emerged a new pattern involving the incorporation of royalty-related and social status markers from English and Nigerian languages, especially Yoruba into the use of English to achieve certain pragmatic goals in discursive interactions.

Thus, this study, with recourse to Brown and Levinson's Politeness theory, explores the pragmatic functions of address terms among Nigerians, with particular reference to the southwestern part of the country. This is with the aim of demonstrating the influence of the Nigerian socio-cultural imprint on address terms within the Nigerian socio-cultural context. As such, data for the study, elicited through participant observation and field note, comprise 15 randomly sampled interactions/speech events in 3 purposively sampled popular Pentecostal churches/denominations (5 worship centres from each denomination); 5 ATM spot interactions; 5 law-enforcement officer-citizen interactions; and 10 teacher-learner school interactions, in southwestern Nigeria. With evidence from pragma-discursive implicated interactions in Nigeria, it becomes clear that address terms are strategically deployed to achieve different pragmatic goals in the postcolonial Nigerian.

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Responses to Thanks in Nigerian English: A Corpus Pragmatic Analysis of Dialogues from ICE-Nigeria

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This study forms part of a broader project that explores speech act variation across four varieties of English: Nigerian, Philippine, Trinidadian, and Canadian English. This paper focuses on responses to thanks in Nigerian English, utilizing data from the spoken texts of the Nigerian component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-Nigeria). The primary

goal is to reveal synchronic variation in the realization of this speech act in this variety, particularly to shed light on how register affects the distribution of verbal and non-verbal responses to thanks. Previous research on thanking in Nigerian English (Gut & Unuabonah, 2024) has shown “distinct strategies and forms of expressing gratitude” in this variety, which points towards increasing nativization at the speech act level. This paper builds on that research and zooms in on responses to thanks, assuming that this speech act may also show differences across varieties (see, e.g., Schneider, 2005) due to cultural differences. The project addresses two research gaps in existing literature. First, it highlights the need for analyses of pragmatic variation in second-language postcolonial contexts like Nigeria, since most previous research on responses to thanks has been conducted on Inner Circle Englishes (e.g., Schneider, 2005), except for Schröder & Schneider (2018). Second, it addresses the shortfall of research on pragmatic variation in registers other than conversations (see, e.g., Barron, 2022).

This paper focuses on seven spoken dialogue registers: conversations, phone calls, broadcast discussions, broadcast interviews, legal cross-examinations, business transactions, and parliamentary debates. These registers, while all dialogic in nature, vary in terms of formality, communicative context, and speaker roles. For example, conversations and phone calls occur in private settings with minimal constraints on speaker roles, whereas formal registers, such as parliamentary debates and legal cross-examinations, involve predefined roles and institutional settings. It is expected that these differences will affect the realization of responses to thanks. The analysis employs a corpus pragmatic approach (Aijmer & Rühlemann, 2015), starting with a vertical reading of the corpus data, searching for occurrences of lexical items with recurring pragmatic functions—such as *thanks* and *thank you*. These occurrences are then separated by register type and type of response (verbal or non-verbal). The responses are further coded according to their head move strategy (cf. Schneider 2005, p. 113): minimizing the favor, expressing pleasure, expressing appreciation of the addressee, returning thanks, and verbally acknowledging thanks.

Preliminary findings reveal that, of the 431 thanking tokens found in the corpus, only 27.7% were verbal. In terms of register variation, parliamentary debates exhibited the highest number of *thank you* tokens (138), along with the highest rate of verbal responses (24.17%). Legal presentations, on the other hand, showed the lowest rate of verbal responses (2%). Notably, the most frequent response strategy observed in the corpus was returning thanks (35%), followed by minimizing the favor (18%). The least-used strategy was expressing pleasure (2.2%). The findings show that register has a substantial effect on speech act realization in terms of verbal vs. non-verbal responses. The paper will also show how register influences strategies used in verbal responses. Additionally, the importance of register as a salient factor suggests it requires more attention in future research on the pragmatics of (postcolonial) Englishes.

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Discourse-Pragmatic Markers in Ghanaian Pidgin

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It is well-established that postcolonial varieties of English exhibit the influence of the indigenous languages of their new homes. In addition to exhibiting distinctive features in their phonological, morphological, semantic, lexical, and syntactic systems, empirical studies have demonstrated that these emergent varieties of English incorporate pragmatic elements borrowed from substrate indigenous languages. Unuabonah et al. (2021), for example, look at *abeg*, *sef* and *na*, which are all pragmatic markers borrowed into Nigerian English from Nigerian Pidgin. They argue that consistent with prior research (e.g., Boas and Weilbacher, 2007), speakers employ these markers to construct and express their Nigerian identity. Within the Ghanaian context, there have been a number of studies (Ollenu, 2017; Otoo and Sapaty, 2018; Thompson, 2019; Unuabonah and Anderson, 2023; Anderson et al., 2024) that have examined the use of indigenous language interjections and other discourse-pragmatic features in Ghanaian English, and shown that they are indeed prevalent and do express a wide range of pragmatic functions. However, research on the use of pragmatic markers in Ghanaian Pidgin—an important sub-variety of Ghanaian English that plays a crucial role in informal communication—remains limited. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the source, frequency, distribution, and discourse-pragmatic functions of three pragmatic markers in Ghanaian Pidgin: *norr*, *saf/sef*, and *deɛ/dier/diɛ*. The data for the analysis were drawn from the NOW (Newspapers on the Web) and GloWbE (Global Web-Based English) corpora. Data from both corpora were cleaned to ensure accurate representation of these markers in Ghanaian Pidgin. The data were analysed using the theoretical framework of pragmatic borrowing (Andersen 2014). Preliminary findings of this study show variations in the frequency, distribution and discourse-pragmatic functions of the three markers. *Norr* produced 2 hits (0.000143 per million) in the NOW Corpus and 0 hits in the GloWbE Corpus. *Saf/Sef* in the NOW corpus revealed 57 hits (0.003 per million) and 24 hits (0.013 per million), with the majority of occurrences found in clause-initial, medial, and final positions. *Deɛ* yielded 21 hits (0.001 per million) in the NOW corpus and 7 hits (0.004 per million) in the GloWbE corpus while its variant, *dierr*, returned 8 hits (0.0004 per million) in the NOW corpus and 7 hits (0.004 per million) in the GloWbE corpus. Most instances of these forms appeared

in clause-final positions across both corpora, which is consistent with how they are used in their source languages. The preliminary findings also show that the pragmatic functions of these markers are borrowed from indigenous West African languages. Norr functions as a marker of immediacy or urgency, *saf/sef* has additive and dismissive functions as it does in Nigerian Pidgin (Unuabonah et al., 2021), while *dier/deε/ diε* functions as an emphasis marker.

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“Well, I am paying”: Payment Negotiation Patterns and Gender on a First Date in Nigeria

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From a speech act perspective, the study of language use in Nigerian English is a recent and expanding endeavour (cf. Mustapha, 2011; Dozie and Otagburuagu, 2019; Dozie et al., 2022;

Gut and Unuabonah, 2022; Gut et al., 2024). For the case of offers, scholarship suggests cross-varietal variation relative to Inner Circle varieties of English (Gut et al., 2024; cf. also Barron, 2005, 2017). Current descriptions of offers in Nigerian English, however, focus on hospitable, service, gift and assistance offers. Payment offers and payment offer sequences represent a research gap in the Nigerian context, as also in many (postcolonial) contexts. In a Western dating context, payment offer sequences have been shown to reveal cultural variation across a British and German context on a sociopragmatic and discursive level in speech act choices and sequencing patterns, and on a pragmalinguistic level in the directness of payment offers (Barron, under review b). In addition, gender-specific patterns are reported for both the UK and German context, reflecting a strong breadwinner role for men in a heterosexual context (Barron, under review a).

The present paper addresses this research gap for scholarship on payment offers and payment offer sequences in Nigerian English, by exploring heterosexual payment negotiation interactions as depicted by Nigerian speakers of English. Data were elicited using a free discourse completion task. Informants were 46 Yoruba speakers of Nigerian English. Examining in particular the speech acts of offers to settle the bill and suggestions to share expenses, the analysis focuses on how interactants negotiate the wider payment event. Findings highlight sociopragmatic and discursive gender variation within Nigerian English in the uses of both speech acts. In addition, comparisons of findings with previous research on payment offers (Barron, under review b) also reveal cross-cultural variation on the pragmalinguistic level in payment offer realisations and on the discursive level in speech act sequencing patterns. Such gender and cross-cultural variation is suggested to have implications for gender awareness pedagogy and for cross-cultural understanding.

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Thanking Strategies in Ghanaian and Ugandan Englishes: A Corpus-Based Study

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Thanking is a communicative act in which a speaker shows gratitude or appreciation to another person or entity, usually in response to a favour, service, or benefit received. Thanking strategies encompass the different methods people use to express gratitude in their interactions, which are crucial for understanding the pragmatic and sociolinguistic dimensions of language use (Holmes, 1995). Thanking strategies have been widely examined in various contexts, such as academic discourse (e.g. Altakhaineh et al., 2024), radio texts (Jautz, 2013), films (Syifa et al., 2023), and literary works (Beloufa, 2022). Most studies on thanking strategies in World Englishes have concentrated on Inner Circle varieties, such as British and American English (Cheng, 2010; Schauer & Adolphs, 2006), and on learner English (Azima & Hesabi, 2015). The few studies on thanking strategies within postcolonial contexts have focused on Hong Kong English (Wong, 2010), South Asian Englishes (Funke, 2020), Filipino English (Arman et al., 2023), and Nigerian English (Gut & Unuabonah, 2024). Some of these studies have compared thanking strategies between different world Englishes, including British and New Zealand English (Jautz, 2013). However, there are limited studies on other postcolonial Englishes, such as Ghanaian and Ugandan Englishes.

This study aims to expand the research on thanking strategies in postcolonial English contexts by exploring pragmatic variation in the use of thanking strategies between Ghanaian English and Ugandan English, in terms of frequency, formal properties, functional aspects, and their occurrence in different text types. The data for the study, extracted from the Ghanaian and Ugandan components of the International Corpus of English, are examined through a variational pragmatic framework and were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The analysis reveals that thank explicitly is the most prevalent strategy in both varieties. Interactional moves such as intensifiers, reasons for gratitude, and inclusion of benefactors are commonly employed to reinforce the sincerity of the gratitude expressed in both Ghanaian and Ugandan Englishes. These findings underscore the role of cultural norms in shaping pragmatic behaviour and highlight the variation that exists within postcolonial English varieties.

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Requests in Nigerian and British English Conversational Interactions: A Corpus-Based Approach

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Recent years have seen an increasing interest in pragmatic phenomena in postcolonial Englishes. The inclusion of data from these multilingual and multicultural contexts (cf. e.g. Anchimbe & Janney, 2017) has shown that explanatory frameworks established for the analysis of Western speech acts may not be able to explain the use of speech acts in non-Western contexts. To date, there is still a regrettable lack of research into these patterns of speech act use in postcolonial Englishes. While there are some studies on speech acts and, more specifically, request realisation in postcolonial Englishes, many national varieties have not been studied at all or in sufficient detail. The few empirical investigations of requests indicate both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic differences between postcolonial Englishes and British English (BrE) (Degenhardt, 2023; Gut & Unuabonah, 2022; Kranich et al., 2021). For Nigerian English (NigE), Gut & Unuabonah (2022) find that while the requests sampled from the International Corpus of English (ICE) generally take similar linguistic forms in NigE and BrE, the evaluation of factors influencing contextual appropriateness differ. The authors report that the request per word ratio is higher in NigE than in BrE and that NigE requests are generally more direct across a wide range of text categories. Differences in sociopragmatic patterns are also reported for business and social letters in particular, a fact the authors explain with reference to cross-varietal differences in perceptions of social distance.

The present project seeks to complement Gut & Unuabonah's (2022) analysis of NigE corpus-based requests by focusing specifically on the forms and function of requests in the conversation text category in ICE-Nigeria and ICE-GB and adds a qualitative perspective in that we examine different types of requests (discourse-functional requests such as requests for floor management and requests for information) in order to be able to determine refunctionalisation of the speech act (Nair, 2022). To avoid relying on etic perspectives, we only include those requests in our database, that are responded to as such by the discourse participants. With this design, we are able to compare NigE requests with Variational Pragmatic research into requests in different varieties of English (e.g. Barron, 2008; Breuer & Geluykens, 2007; Flöck, 2016) and uncover request patterns that have not been described for inner circle varieties of English. Our initial results suggest that the vast majority of requests in NigE conversations are requests for discursive-verbal action (such as requests for information and requests related to local turn-management). A cautious first analysis of the requests for action reveals that they are predominantly realised by direct linguistic means with mood derivable strategies being most frequent. A first qualitative analysis indicates that some request sequences tend to be quite extended with requesters repeating their requests even after several explicit indications of non-compliance were produced by the addressee. Such patterns have not been reported for inner circle varieties of English and cannot easily be described in terms of existing politeness theories. Instead, such patterns may be explained by Nwoye's (1992) notion of 'group face'. We also find instances of

refunctionalisation of requestive acts in the form of frequent *let me*-requests with floor-holding and emphatic functions.

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Apologies in Nigerian English

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This talk reports on a study exploring the speech act of apologising in Nigerian English. English in Nigeria is spoken in a highly multilingual and multicultural context and has been shown to have developed its specific uses in the areas of phonetics and phonology (e.g. Gut 2004), morphosyntax (e.g. Gut & Fuchs 2013) as well as semantics (e.g. Callies 2017). Previous studies on speech acts in Nigerian English have identified nativisation processes

that reflect local cultural and communicative practices (e.g. Gut & Unuabonah 2024 for thanking).

Situated within the postcolonial pragmatics approach (Anchimbe 2018), this talk reports on an empirical study of apologies in Nigerian English. Apologies are highly frequent speech acts in human interaction and play an important role in human life on both a social and cultural level. They have been shown to differ systematically across varieties of English, both in terms of form and frequency of use (e.g. Degenhardt & Bernaisch 2022, Sarfo-Kantankah 2021). In order to explore the forms and functions of apologies in Nigerian English as well as the factors that condition speakers' choice of the linguistic forms of apologies, 113 apologies contained in ICE Nigeria (Wunder et al. 2010) and 588 apologies elicited in DCTs (discourse-completion tasks) were analysed. They were coded according to (i) their linguistic form, i.e. the linguistic expression used; whether they constitute a compound apology or not; the linguistic strategy used (Aijmer 1996: 83) and (ii) their function, i.e. whether they constitute a substantial or a ritual apology (Goffmann 1971).

The results show that Nigerian speakers of English have preferred strategies for apologising, using mostly compound forms that contain an expression of regret and are emotional. In addition, a nativised strategy of apologising that reflects a transfer of pragmatic features from indigenous Nigerian languages was identified. Moreover, it was found that both the form and the function of apologies produced by Nigerian English speakers is systematically conditioned by the communicative situation and varies across spoken and written communication as well as across corpus data and data elicited via DCTs. A comparison with other postcolonial Englishes showed that the form of apologies in Nigerian English is similar to those found in other world Englishes, while distinctive features are also found in terms of nativised forms of apologising due to influence from indigenous Nigerian languages.

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Pragmatic Variation in the Speech Acts of Greeting and Leave-Taking: Evidence from Ugandan English

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This study is set out to present Ugandan English (UgE) as a good example where pragmatic variation is manifest in the speech acts of greeting and leave-taking, stemming mainly from the admixture of indigenous languages, local sociocultural practices and the post-colonial context in which Uganda is found (cf. Anchimbe & Janney, 2011). Using data from corpora (ICE-Uganda, Web-UG, and GloWbE for some dimensions of comparison), elicitation exercises and ethnographic observations (where 120 acrolectal speakers of UgE were involved), the study shows that there are a number of particularities observable in UgE. For example, the L1 English informal greeting *How's things?* was diametrically unfamiliar to the study participants and absent in the Ugandan corpora, similar to leave-taking expressions such as *Cheerio* and *So long*, while formulae such as *Adios* and *Ciao* were not only sporadic in the corpora but also unfamiliar to the study participants. Although some of these informal expressions are also less frequently used in L1 English (cf. GloWbE), and more rarely used in other African Englishes such as Nigerian or Kenyan English (GloWbE), they are characteristically much rarer (or totally absent) in UgE. Furthermore, even where the participants were familiar with some of the L1 English (informal) greetings, the responses to the greetings they provided were different from what is found in L1 English; for example, while in L1 English *What's up?* requires the response *Not much* (Baratta, 2015, p.170; Redman & Zwier, 2010, p.40), it has idiosyncratic responses in UgE. Furthermore, while, according to Jucker (2017), the greeting *How're you?* is mainly used phatically in L1 English and is only occasionally used with propositional content, in UgE it is typically used with propositional content, while its phatic use is very sporadic. In addition, calqued innovations such as *Stay well*, *We meet*, *We shall talk* (see also Buregeya, 2021 for their occurrence in Kenyan English) are common leave-taking expressions in UgE.

The study also highlights cases of intra-national variability observed in UgE based on ethnolinguistic backgrounds; for example, while Bantu speakers of UgE quintessentially used terms of address as a major constituent of greetings, non-Bantu did not typically use them. Importantly, the observed UgE pragmatic codes cannot be viewed as face-threatening acts (FTAs) in the sense of Brown and Levinson (1987), or evidence of (socio)pragmatic failure (Ebsworth, Bodman & Carpenter, 1996), or a lack of pragmatic competence (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989). Rather, they should be viewed as useful idiomorphic pragmatic codes, arising from the nexus between local sociocultural praxis, influence from indigenous languages and the prevailing exogenous linguistic factors (cf. Anchimbe & Janney, 2011). Very relevantly, these pragmatic codes adequately serve the communicative needs of the users of UgE. This is also in sync with variational pragmatics (Barron & Schneider, 2009),

which puts a premium on pragmatic variability between different national varieties of pluricentric languages such as English (e.g., in this case, UgE vs. British English), while recognizing intralingual variability, manifested in this case along ethnolinguistic lines. Misgivings about FTAs or (socio)pragmatic failure in situations of cross-varietal communication should not arise if interlocutors are sensitive to pragmatic variation (Barron, 2008) and “co-construct understandings of what is meant” (Kecskes, 2016, p.56). Crucially, in keeping with the relevance-theoretic approach to communication, full propositionhood or phaticity in every act of communication can only be contextually constructed (Carston, 2005; Žegarac & Clark, 1999).

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yeah. (1.0) but i i always think that the hong kong people prioritise the the international movies sometimes – Discourse-Pragmatic Variation in DISAGREEMENTS from Hong Kong

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Language variation is studied in several fields of linguistics but depending on the research area and phenomena, theoretical frameworks and methods differ to a substantial degree. In this paper, I will discuss how approaches from variational pragmatics and world Englishes can be integrated to analyse variation in the discourse-pragmatic phenomenon of DISAGREEMENT in the postcolonial context of Hong Kong. In conversations, DISAGREEMENTS typically create interpersonal tension that speakers need to resolve communicatively to maintain a casual and friendly atmosphere (Locher, 2004; Muntigl & Turnbull, 1998; Pomerantz, 1984). To do so, they employ (non-)conventional linguistic means considering external factors, such as their relationship to the interlocutor and the situation. In postcolonial settings in particular, sociopragmatic norms are strongly influenced by the historical and cultural context, leading to differences in the pragmalinguistic conventions for the realisation of discourse-pragmatic phenomena across Englishes (Anchimbe & Janney, 2011). The chosen setting in this study is that of Hong Kong, which provides a particularly interesting test case since the territory never gained independence but was handed over from Britain to another superpower, i.e., the People's Republic of China. According to E. W. Schneider's (2007) Dynamic Model, striving for independence is an important driving force in a variety's nativisation. When it comes to interpersonal norms, such as politeness, previous research has shown that Chinese conceptualisations differ vastly from Anglo-American ones (Gu, 1990; Kádár & Pan, 2011; Mao, 1994). With Hong Kong sitting between western and eastern orientations, it is likely that diverging patterns will show in expression of DISAGREEMENTS. Furthermore, the community of speakers of English in Hong Kong is by far not homogenous meaning that cultural background and individual style of speakers may further drive such variation.

Following the methodological requirement of contrastivity in variational pragmatics (K. P. Schneider, 2010, pp. 252–253), this study addresses variation within the English-speaking community of Hong Kong and compares Hong Kong Chinese to Mainland Chinese, returnees and expats. In video recorded dyadic conversations, participants talked to an acquainted or unacquainted person about uncontroversial topics, such as the local cuisine or entertainment

industry. Within these conversations, DISAGREEMENTS were analysed in terms of the strategy and modification used for their realisation. Descriptive statistical analyses reveal certain preference patterns for the speaker groups. For instance, Hong Kong Chinese opt for concessions to realise their DISAGREEMENTS in contrast to the other groups who prefer contradictions. To further scrutinise such discourse-pragmatic variation, a random forest analysis was conducted measuring the effect of intra- and extralinguistic variables on the level of (in)directness in the realisation of DISAGREEMENTS. Specifically, the role of speaker background, speaker relationship and several situational factors was analysed. The results show that considerations about the illocutionary force and the interpersonal functions of DISAGREEMENT strategies are carefully balanced in interaction. These considerations depend on extralinguistic factors, such as the social distance between speakers and the topic. The sociopragmatic variation induced by these factors leads to partly different outcomes for the four groups, which are indicative of their respective orientation towards a western or Chinese understanding of politeness.

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“Charrach, that’s freaking normal, man”: Grammaticalization and Contact-Induced Discourse-Pragmatic Change in Palauan English

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This variationist analysis investigates the emergence, spread, and functional expansion of the substrate address terms *ollei*, *charrach*, and *cherrang* in Palauan English (PE), a postcolonial English variety in Micronesia. Their increasing versatility includes functions similar to discourse markers in other varieties of English, such as exclamation and mitigation (e.g., *dude*; Kiesling 2004). The data comprise over 85,000 words spoken by 20 teenagers, part of a corpus of PE from different generations recorded between 2010 and 2015. Spontaneous conversations among same-sex close friends are qualitatively and quantitatively analysed to examine the distribution and functions of over 800 tokens of these substrate address terms, alongside nearly 600 tokens of *dude*, *man*, and *bro* in PE.

Our real-time trend analysis of these address terms, comparing these data with an older corpus collected in 2000, indicates ongoing linguistic change on two levels. First, the propagation of these Palauan address terms reveals sociolinguistic stratification by mobility, class, gender, and age. This is evident in their rare occurrence in our older corpus compared to their frequent use among predominantly teenagers, particularly boys attending public school, in more recent data. Second, there is ongoing grammaticalization (Bybee 2003): from the noun (*ollei*) to the vocative (*hi, ollei*) to the discourse marker (*oh ollei!*); semantic bleaching (*ollei*’s original referent ‘young boy’ has been lost and it is currently used towards female and non-younger interlocutors, while *charrach* now predominantly functions as a discourse marker); and phonological reduction (*ollei* [olei] to *ola* [olə]). These findings are discussed in relation to: a change in the indexicality of these address terms (from traditionally masculine address terms to more gender-neutral uses; from familiarizer/endearment to solidarity and localness); contact effects of American and Philippine English (media, face-to-face); teenagers’ reduced competence in Palauan; and a shift in how English is perceived in Palau—from being an L2 for adults to being a distinct nativized variety among teenagers.

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Analysing PRAISE in Ugandan English - Corpus Pragmatics Meets Macro-Sociolinguistics

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Whilst there exists considerable research on speech acts such as requests, apologies and compliments, the expressive speech act of praise has not received similar attention, despite the fact that it is substantial to many (lingua)cultures, including the Ugandan. “To praise something is [...] a favourable assessment of it” making the illocutionary verb praise fall into the same group as verbs such as commend, laud, extol, express approval or express satisfaction and recommend (Searle 1969: 151), with their semantics of favourably assessing something or somebody. Praise is an expressive speech acts used “to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content” (Searle, 1976: 1), and thus also similar to thank, congratulate, apologize, condole, deplore and welcome.

Employing a post-2000, second-wave, understanding of politeness, I approach praise from a first-order politeness perspective, that is from how it “is perceived by its users” (Kádár and Haugh 2013: 41), to look at how praise is performed in Ugandan English, more precisely in the Uganda component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-UG). My paper examines how praise is used in different text genres and what functions, both interpersonal and societal, it performs. Results reveal that praise is highly prevalent in ICE-UG, that it assumes a large variety of forms, and that praise is mainly targeted at individuals or groups of human beings, typically for their achievements and performance. The analyses also indicate that a comprehensive discussion of speech acts benefits from combining corpus pragmatics with macro-sociolinguistic methodology and reasoning to further our understanding of why Englishes around the world differ in the ways they do.

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Politeness in Hong Kong Business Correspondence: Investigating Genre Development and Nativization Processes from a Diachronic Perspective

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English in Hong Kong or Hong Kong English (HKE)? In my PhD project, I investigate politeness phenomena in Hong Kong business correspondence from a diachronic perspective to provide empirical evidence for the development of HKE as a distinct variety.

Empirical evidence is needed as the status of HKE has been questioned by many researchers (Evans 2015: 391-394), among others because Hong Kong has never reached independence. Studies that have investigated HKE as a variety often found features formerly assumed to be variety-specific to be genre-specific, meaning that genre might actually be a stronger predictor than variety. Consequently, diachronic data is needed to assess changes in one genre over time and in comparison to the superstrate to be able to distinguish between varietal and genre developments.

Whereas earlier research on HKE has mainly focused on grammatical features (e.g. Edwards 2016), this project is interested in more subtle, culturally induced changes. In this regard, politeness is an interesting phenomenon as there are significant differences between what is considered polite in Western cultures and in Chinese culture (e.g. Zheng 2021). Most research on politeness in business correspondence has focused on requests (e.g. Del Lungo Camiciotti 2008), among others, because they represent potentially face-threatening acts that are sensitive to politeness strategies and occur very frequently in business letters. However, requests are often used in combination with other moves, such as justifications (Kong 1998), apologies (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1989), or thanking, which are yet to be studied extensively. Therefore, the project seeks to investigate the following questions:

- How has the use of requests in combination with other moves in Hong Kong business correspondence changed from the 1900s to the 1960s? How does this tie in with the development of the genre as a whole?
- In the context of postcolonial Hong Kong: To what extent has the genre developed differently in the colony than in the colonizing country, based on an analysis of requests in combination with other moves in Hong Kong and British business correspondence from the 1960s to the 1990s? To what extent do the letters from Hong Kong display processes of nativization?
- Methodology: What approach and methods are most useful for the study of requests in combination with other moves?

The project relies on a mixed method approach, using quantitative methods to identify requests in the corpus and both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze them. In a first step, typical expressions that indicate a request were identified by manually reading through the letters of a test corpus from the 1920s. In a next step, using AntConc, the corpus was searched for these words and phrases to identify all requests in the test corpus. These were then coded according to a coding scheme that is based on Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1989) coding scheme for requests and was adapted to the purposes of the project. The next step consists in coding a second test corpus of letters from the 1940s so that a first analysis of diachronic change can be done.

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Pragmatic Functions of *Please*, *Sorry*, and *Thank You* in Ghanaian English

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Ghana is a multilingual society with over 70 indigenous languages. English serves as the de facto official language and a medium of instruction. As the official language, English has been adapted to reflect local culture, impacting grammatical structures and vocabulary (Ngula, 2010; Brato, 2018, Anderson et al., 2024). Research has explored several linguistic features of GhE, focusing on phonology, grammar, and vocabulary (Dako, 2003; Wiredu, 2012; Yussif & Imoro, 2022). Despite the existing studies, there remains a significant gap in understanding the pragmatic aspects of frequently used expressions such as please, sorry, and thank you. These expressions are integral to social interactions in Ghana, serving not only to convey politeness but also to foster interpersonal relationships and social harmony. Scholars such as Kirkpatrick (2010) have highlighted the impact of local cultures on language use, however, the specific pragmatic adaptations of commonly used expressions in social interactions in Ghanaian English remain largely underexplored.

This study explores the pragmatic functions of please, sorry, and thank you within the context of Ghanaian English, drawing on data from the Ghanaian component of the Global Web-Based English (GloWbE) corpus. This corpus provides a rich resource for analyzing the expressions as they appear across various online platforms, reflecting contemporary usage patterns. By employing a qualitative corpus-based analysis, grounded in the theoretical framework of pragmatic functional adaptation (Andersen, 2014), the study shows how these expressions not only retain their conventional meanings from standard English but also adapt to the local sociolinguistic landscape.

Through this analysis, the study reveals that the pragmatic functions of these expressions undergo some changes in the Ghanaian context. For instance, while please typically functions as a politeness marker in standard English to soften the force of imperatives, its usage in Ghana may go beyond this. Its usage includes rejecting offers and apologising. Similarly, sorry transcends mere apology; it often serves as a means of showing empathy and as a polite prefatory remark to ensure social cohesion among speakers. The expression thank you also reflects unique adaptations. The nuances of usage vary based on cultural expectations around politeness, asymmetrical interactions, and expressions of gratitude.

The study acknowledges that while the basic functions of these expressions may cut across both native and non-native varieties, sociocultural norms influence how and when they are used in the social interactions. It not only uncovers some illocutionary shifts associated with these expressions but also highlights some new discourse functions emerging from specific communicative nuances. Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of how global Englishes evolve through local usage, highlighting the significance of sociocultural context in shaping pragmatic expressions.

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Well as a Pragmatic Marker in Ghanaian and Nigerian Englishes

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Well is one of the most frequent and highly investigated pragmatic markers in different varieties of English (Aijmer, 2013; Beeching 2016). It is a multifunctional pragmatic marker that may be used to indicate word search, self-repair, disagreement, agreement, mark quotations, and preface feedback to questions, amongst several other functions (Aijmer, 2013). Previous accounts of *well* have been largely studied in different Inner Circle Englishes such as American English (e.g. Müller, 2004) and British English (e.g. Beeching, 2016). Others have explored *well* in Expanding Circle and learner Englishes, such as Chinese, German, Dutch, and Spanish learners of English (e.g. Huang, 2019; Buysse, 2020). The fewer studies on *well* in Outer Circle/postcolonial English varieties have focused on South African English (de Klerk, 2005), Hong Kong English (Lam, 2010), and Zimbabwean English (Chapwanya & Nel, 2024). Some of these studies have shown pragmatic variation in the use of *well* between different world Englishes (Chapwanya & Nel, 2024) as well as between different text types (Aijmer, 2013). However, there is less focus on the use of *well* in other postcolonial English varieties such as Ghanaian and Nigerian Englishes.

This study aims to widen the research on *well* in postcolonial English contexts by exploring pragmatic variation in the use of *well* between Ghanaian English and Nigerian English, in terms of its frequency, formal properties, functional aspects and occurrence in different text types. The data for the study, which are extracted from the Ghanaian and Nigerian components of the International Corpus of English, are examined from a variational pragmatic framework and are analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. Initial results reveal similarities and differences in the use of *well* in Ghanaian English and Nigerian English. There was no significant difference in the overall frequency of *well* in GhaE and NigE; *well* occurred most frequently in GhE broadcast interviews, commentaries, and social letters while it appeared most often in NigE commentaries, phone calls, and business transactions. The study also indicates that *well* performs both textual (e.g. word search, self-repair) and interpersonal functions (e.g. agreement, disagreement) in both varieties. The study contributes to the research on *well* as well as pragmatic variation between Ghanaian English and Nigerian English.

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