

## **An ethnographic multimethod investigation of speech actions in Namibian English and English English: A focus on offers and responses to thanks**

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English is one of the pluricentric languages par excellence and hence well-studied in the framework of Variational Pragmatics (VP) (e.g. Schneider & Félix-Brasdefer 2022). However, L2 varieties and more specifically African varieties of English are relatively underexplored in this paradigm. In the present paper, we contrast English English (EngE) to Namibian English (NamE), the latter representing a particularly unique research object, as the country in which it is spoken is shaped by an unusual colonial history leaving behind two former colonial languages (German and Afrikaans) in addition to English. The country also hosts 20-30 indigenous languages and therefore is an ideal test case for investigating the interplay of multilingualism, complex facework, and diverging cultural norms influencing pragmatic behaviour. This linguistic diversity shapes the linguistic ecology and thereby the variation of English at various levels (see Schröder 2021). In this, NamE noticeably differs from EngE, to which NamE data is systematically compared in our research.

In this paper, we describe the development of ethnographically informed research tools on the basis of a series of explorative qualitative interviews and ethnographic field notes as well as close collaboration with local experts, shedding light on culture- and language-dependent concepts of politeness as well as the conceptualisation and contextualisation of a range of speech acts, namely APOLOGIES, OFFERS, REQUESTS, and RESPONSES TO THANKS. By triangulating these qualitative data with elicited quantifiable oral (100 recorded questionnaires) and written (800 questionnaires) DCT data, we will show how communicative behaviour is influenced by the macrosocial background of members of the respective Community of Practice, i.e. students at the University of Namibia and at three universities in England (Lancaster, Norwich, Sheffield). In our presentation, we will specifically focus on two of the speech acts, namely OFFERS and RESPONSES TO THANKS. Our data suggests that realisation strategies for these two speech acts differ notably e.g. in terms of directness depending on ethno-social group, language background and participant constellation, as well as national variety.

In this, the present paper answers Anchimbe & Janney's (2017:117) call for community-based and emic approaches to pragmatic practices in postcolonial speech communities, in that the data collection includes "perspectives that prioritise the local, situated, emic and hybridised forms rooted in these societies" (Anchimbe 2018:43), while allowing these insights to inform stringently controlled, quantifiable research in the tradition of VP, suitable for immediate comparison with other national varieties of English.

### References

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