

# Variational (im)politeness and the corpus-based approach

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A relatively recent development within pragmatics has been the evolution of “variational pragmatics” (Schneider and Barron 2008), a subfield that operates at the intersection of pragmatics and dialectology and aims to examine how different pragmatic features vary according to a range of different social variables. Although most work has studied variation in pluricentric languages, such as English and Spanish, **across** different nations, my focus has been on variation **within** one language and one nation. Furthermore, I focus specifically on (im)politeness and deploy corpus methods to pursue this research.

In this presentation, I will review the programme of work that I have undertaken with Mathew Gillings and Isolde van Dorst (e.g. Culpeper and Gillings 2018; van Dorst, Gillings, and Culpeper 2024; Culpeper, van Dorst, and Gillings *fc.*). For example, Culpeper and Gillings (2018) used synchronic spoken British English corpus data from the *British National Corpus 2014* (BNC2014) to examine whether there were differing levels of solidarity, tentativeness, and deference politeness formulae across the north and south of England. The results suggest that the United Kingdom has a **general** affinity for negative politeness, i.e. a tentative, indirect style of politeness. I will discuss this research programme, and our extensions to it, reflecting in particular on method.

I will also make some general remarks about the study of (im)politeness, methods, and cultural and linguistic variation in Europe.

## References

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### **Jonathan Culpeper**

Jonathan Culpeper is Professor and former Head of the Department of English Language and Linguistics at Lancaster University, UK. His research covers pragmatics, stylistics and the history of English. His major publications in pragmatics include *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence* (2011), *Pragmatics and the English Language* (2014; with Michael Haugh), *The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistic (Im)politeness* (2017; co-editor with Michael Haugh and Dániel Kádár) and *Second Language Pragmatics: From Theory to Research* (2018; co-authored with Alison Mackey and Naoko Taguchi). For five years he was co-editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Pragmatics* (2009-14).