

# **Does pragmatic behavior vary across geographical space?**

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When examining language use in relation to geographical space, some phenomena are more straightforward to investigate than others. European variational linguistics and dialectology have long focused on spatial variation in the use of phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactical features, which are seemingly easy to map out. In recent years, however, the scope of investigation has expanded to also include pragmatic variation between national varieties of a language or regional differences within a language (see, e.g. Schneider and Barron 2008a; Jucker and Hausendorf 2022; and contributions therein). But, is there really geographical spatial variation in pragmatic behavior? Do phenomena such as greeting, cussing, and using certain forms of address vary across different regions? And how can we be sure that it is geographical space that affects any pragmatic differences?

In order to map out recurring pragmatic behavior, I believe it to be fruitful to start at the micro level of interaction. Here, interactional linguistics is very helpful, as it guides us in understanding why a specific pragmatic behavior is used in a particular context (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2017). By looking at the micro level of situated interaction, we may gain insights into the pragmatic patterns of a group. After investigating the interactional behavior of several groups, we can hopefully say something about recurring pragmatic patterns in a larger geographical space (i.e. region or even nation).

However, as has been pointed out by many scholars concerned with space, not least within the field of variational pragmatics, we have to keep in mind that space is a layered concept (Schneider and Barron 2008b). As such, it is difficult to single out geographical space as a decisive or even a one-dimensional factor for linguistic variation. In this talk, I aim at problematizing geographical space in relation to pragmatic variation. I will draw on examples from a large video corpus of the national varieties of Swedish (Sweden-Swedish and Finland-Swedish) and tackle the question of what we may or may not be able to investigate of recurring pragmatic behavior across space

when using interactional linguistics, statistical analyses, and variational pragmatics.

## References

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