

On Politeness in Canadian and Australian English: a Corpus-based Study



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Abstract

Although politeness is a well-known concept within the field of communication, it is often approached from a specific cultural angle. While politeness theory is a popular basis for cross-cultural comparisons, not many studies have involved intercultural communication in their investigation into politeness theory. This paper explored politeness from a linguistic approach by doing a comparative study between Australian and Canadian English, using Brown and Levinson's 1987 politeness theory as foundation. Exploring the differences in politeness between two native-speaker varieties of the same language could broaden the knowledge of cognitive processes during an intercultural exchange as any differences would show that cultural background plays a big role in intercultural communication, even if two people speak the same language at a similar level. To investigate the differences in politeness between Australian and Canadian English, this study compared the use of pragmatic markers in both varieties by using the International Corpus of English for spoken Australian and Canadian English (ICE-AUS and ICE-CAN). A few discourse markers were selected, after which the frequency and context were examined by utilizing log likelihood calculations and qualitative analysis. The results indicated that speakers of Canadian English use pragmatic markers more frequently, and that both varieties seem to use these linguistic devices for different purposes. While Canadian English speakers use markers in order to avoid imposition and conflicts (negative politeness), the markers found in Australian English indicated friendliness and solidarity (positive politeness). The results of this research support the idea that speakers of Canadian English are more formal and indirect, whereas speakers of Australian English prefer informal and familiar speech.

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1. Introduction

In the last couple of decades, cultural relativity has often been underscored in comparative politeness research (Janney & Arndt, 1993, p.13). Although politeness might seem like a fairly universal concept, cross-culturally, many people would disagree on what they think to be polite behavior (Watts, 2003, p.1). One reason for this is according to Thomas (1982) ‘pragmatic failure’, by which she means the “inability to understand what is meant by what is said” (p. 91). In this paper, politeness between different forms of English will be investigated by doing a comparative study between Australian and Canadian English based on the following research question:

Is there a difference in how pragmatic markers are used in Australian and Canadian English, and what effect does it have on politeness?

This study is especially relevant considering the increasing volume of mixing of cultures due to (sociocultural) globalization (referring to the transmission of values, ideas and meanings around the world to extend social relations). Exploring the differences between two native-speaker varieties of the same language, in this case English, could broaden the knowledge of cognitive processes during an intercultural exchange as any differences would show that cultural background plays a big role in intercultural communication, even if two people speak the same language at a similar level. If it is indeed true that the global spread of English has induced the multicultural diversification of English, it is interesting which elements (of politeness) could cause miscommunication amongst (native) speakers of English. Thus, this study could also have a more insight on intercultural communication, in for example business environments.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study will be supported by studies on discourse, politeness theory, pragmatics and studies on World Englishes. The theoretical framework of Fialova (2010) and Holmes (2000) will be used as basis for the theories on politeness and pragmatic markers in this study (in 2.1 and 2.3).

2.1 Politeness and 'Face'

This thesis will investigate the differences in politeness in two varieties of English mentioned above. According to Fialova (2010), politeness has been well researched within linguistic pragmatics and sociolinguistics (p.12). A large goal of studies on politeness is to investigate why interlocutors sometimes use indirect utterances, “especially if a hearer has to be motivated to do a particular act” (Seiwald, 2011, p.4). In his foreword of Brown and Levinson’s 1987 *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use*, Gumperz describes politeness as being “basic to the production of social order, and a precondition of human cooperation”, meaning that “any theory that provides an understanding of this phenomenon at the same time goes to the foundation of human life” (p.17). Brown and Levinson also note that the problem for any social groups is to “control its internal aggression while retaining the potential for aggression both in internal social control and, especially, in external competitive relations with other groups” (p.1). In this respect, politeness makes it possible for “potentially aggressive parties to communicate”, and thus has a “sociolinguistic significance that goes beyond table manners and etiquette” (Brown & Levinson, p.1).

Especially within the field of intercultural communication, politeness

plays a major role as there often seems to be a “mismatch between what is said and what is implicated” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.2). According to Fialova, Brown & Levinson (1987) described what is “considered one of the most significant and developed model of politeness” (p.15). Their theory is largely based on the notion of ‘face’, a term connected to ‘losing face’, thus being “embarrassed or humiliated” (p. 61). Face is something that is “emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction” (p.61). Although it is assumed that people usually cooperate in “maintaining face during interaction”, the interpretation of “face” can differ amongst various cultures (and are expressed differently in different languages), which can lead to problems during intercultural communication (p. 61-62).

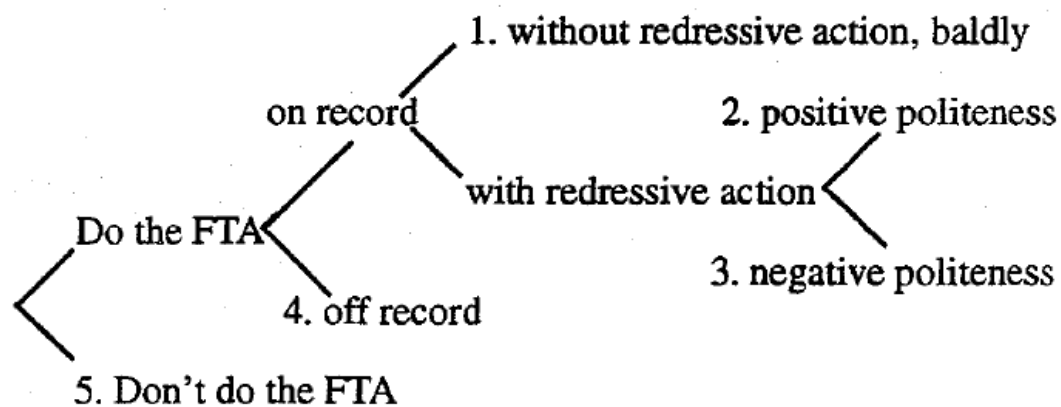
2.1.1 Politeness Strategies

According to Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory is divided into two basic categories: negative and positive face/politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 61) and Fialova (2010, p. 19) claim that negative face is “the desire to be unimpeded in one’s actions and to avoid conflicts”, while positive face is the “desire [to be] approved of”, and “a way to show solidarity and express sympathy towards the speaker”. This thesis will focus on negatively polite discourse markers in Australian and Canadian English, based on Brown and Levinson’s 1987 politeness strategies, and Wilamova’s (2005) general typology of pragmatic markers (as cited in Fialova, 2010).

Fialova (2010) claims that everyone wants to defend their face: “if [the participant] is threatened, and tries to maintain his/her face during the social interaction, consequently; each member of the conversation tries to soften the face-

threatening acts [hereafter: FTA's] to a minimum" (p.17). An interactant first "evaluates the danger of a potential face-damage, and then decides either to avoid it or to minimise it by choosing an appropriate linguistic strategy" (Fialova, 2010, p.17). Brown and Levinson (1987, p.79) describe five possible strategies:

Figure 1: Brown and Levinson's politeness strategy (1987)



According to Wilamova (2005), "negative politeness enables the speaker to go on-record, but with redress, which means that the speaker makes an effort to minimize the imposition, authoritativeness or directness of his/her utterance" (p. 85). Goody (as cited in Fialova, 2010) describes these redressive actions as "avoidance-based", something Urbanova agrees with: "negative politeness enables the speaker to maintain his/her face and avoid conflicts by distancing the speaker from the hearer, such as in refusal, disagreement, or critique" (as cited in Fialova, 2010). According to Dontcheva-Navratilova, by using negative politeness, with for example pragmatic markers, the speaker "gives the hearer an option to refuse or disagree and the speaker usually apologizes for imposing" (as cited in Fialova, 2010, p. 19). An example, as shown by Dontcheva-Navratilova (as cited in Fialova, 2010, p. 19), is the following utterance: "*I am sorry to interrupt but could you be so kind and tell me what time it*

is?”. The use of pragmatic markers as politeness strategy is further discussed in chapter 2.2.3.

Although politeness is mostly used in order to avoid imposition, Holmes (2000) describes a ‘dark side of politeness’, meaning that traditional politeness theory does not explain “barbed, competitive or confrontational humour” (p. 159). According to her, this aspect of politeness can function as both positive as negative politeness strategy. Hedges can, for example, serve as a “humour oriented” devices to meet the addressee’s positive face needs by indicating friendliness and solidarity, or to the speaker’s positive face needs by conveying “self-deprecatory meanings or apologetic sentiments” (p. 167). Holmes (2000) claims that “shared humour emphasizes common ground and shared norm, thus creating and maintaining solidarity and enhancing the speaker’s status within the group” (p. 167). Politeness can also be a way of reinforcing the positive face “by means of self-disclosure”, or “expressing self-deprecatory sentiments”, for example to tone down an embarrassing moment (Holmes, 2000, p. 169).

The examples below show how hedges can be used as positive politeness strategy. In the first excerpt colleagues discuss arrangements regarding their annual leave, showing collegiality and solidarity by using shared humour. (Holmes 2000, p.168):

Hel: “People might have to take some leave by that stage as well with this sort of panic before the end of November.”

Will: “Oh I’m saving up all mine.” [laughs]

Sel: “*Well*, people could panic early.” [laughs]

[general laughter]

Sel: “*Well*, the HR coordinators might crack the whip so that people panic early yes.”

Toni: “I planned to panic early by taking the school holidays off, *but* that didn’t work.” [laughs]

In the second excerpt the section manager Fay is talking to Pam, her administrative assistant. Pam has just found a file on her computer which she forgot she had created. By admitting her mistake, and using hedges to humorously convey ignorance, she preserves her positive face by amusing Fay (Holmes 2000, p. 168):

Pam: “Oh *well I must have* done it.”

[Both laugh]

Pam: “Oh isn’t that gorgeous...”

Fay: “When did you send it?”

Pam: “It’s a mystery to me.”

[Fay laughs uproariously]

Pam: “It really is.”

Humour can however also be used negative politeness strategy, by attenuating the addressee’s negative face by down toning or hedging an FTA (hedging devices or pragmatic markers are further discussed in chapter 2.3), or by attenuating the threat to the addressee’s positive face (such as an insult) by down toning or hedging. This strategy is based the traditional use of politeness theory as described by Brown and Levinson (1987), only the utterances have a humorous intent.

2.2 World Englishes

Like British/English English, both Australian and American (including U.S.A and Canadian English) are regarded as what Goddard (2012, p. 1038) calls “macro-varieties” of “Anglo-English”, or, what Kachru (1992) refers to as inner circle English: “the traditional, cultural and linguistic bases of English” (p. 356). Even though there is a big overlap in values and cultural norms between these varieties of English, Goddard (2012) claims that there are many sociolinguistic differences within these varieties (p. 1038). In the following chapter, Australian and Canadian English will be discussed sociolinguistically, that is, the way in which cultural aspects of both varieties affect the language.

2.2.1 Australian English

According to Goddard (2012), a popular Australian ideal is “egalitarianism”, an aspect of culture that has an impact on the conversational style within this variety, as suggested by various ethnopragmatic and semantic studies of Australian English (Wierzbicka, 2001, 2002; Goddard, 2006, Béal, 1992, 1993; Peeters, 2004; Mullan, 2011) (p. 1040). There is a preference for a “horizontal society”, a “presumed social equality” that is supported by a high level of “informality” and “familiarity” in communication (Goddard, 2012, p. 1040). This is reflected in, for example, forms of address: Australians seem to prefer addressing someone by their first name (Goddard, 2012, p. 1041). Furthermore, Australians have been described as having “a lack of reserve [and a] comfortableness with strangers [...] predicated on a spirit of shared understanding” (Bryson, 2000, p. 373).

Wierzbicka (1986) argues that a salient characteristic feature of

Australian English is “the combination of friendliness and antisentimentality linked to the practice of ‘mateship’ and solidarity shaped by common experiences and shared attitudes” (p. 356). For example, she calls the use of abbreviations (like “Kezza” for Kerrie/Ker, and “Shazza” for Sharon/Shar) and depreciatives (abbreviation of the standard noun, combined with a “pseudodiminutive” suffix, like ‘prezzie’ for present and ‘barbie’ for barbecue) a reflection of “the Australian antiintellectualism, toughness and informality”. Also, it shows a need to express fellowship and well-intended humor. Thus, Australian English “tampers with forms of words”, or as Wierzbicka describes, it “distorts words for the sake of sheer distortion”:

“The urge [to] abbreviate [...] can be seen as an expression of the Australian cult of “toughness” and the Australian dislike of articulated, intellectual, “cultured” speech. But the urge to extend, in a new way, what has previously been shortened, can be seen as an expression of the Australian need to express affection and friendliness – and to do it in a clearly “non-sentimental” way” (p. 358-359).

2.2.2 Canadian English

Canadian English is phonetically very closely related to General American English, but has gained recognition as a unique variety with efforts of media and various Canadian sociolinguists (Dollinger, 2012, p. 1859, p. 1866). This variety of English is commonly and stereotypically perceived as polite, but academic research on sociolinguistic behaviour and pragmatics in Canadian English is limited (Sachgau, 2016, Tagliamonte, 2005 p.1897). Unlike Australian English, Canadian English has been reported to be the “most formal and indirect variety in request patterns” (DAI-A 64/09, 3270), and according to Dollinger (2008, p.52), gives “empirical support to

stereotypes of Canadian politeness”. One of the reasons for this is, according to Dollinger (2012), the fact that Canadian English has, for a long time, been defined as “dainty”, meaning that emancipation from the Queen’s (British) English happened very gradually (p.1872).

2.2.3 (Im)politeness and the use of Pragmatic Markers

As described in chapter 2.1, the negative politeness strategy enables speakers to maintain his/her face and avoid conflicts by distancing the speaker from the hearer, such as in refusal, disagreement, or critique. The interactant first evaluates the danger of a potential face-damage, and then decides either to avoid it or to minimise it by choosing an appropriate linguistic strategy, in most cases using certain pragmatic markers.

Contrary to the negative politeness strategy, Australian English appears to be a variety of English that uses lexical and pragmatic forms in communication that according to Harris (as cited in Wierzbicka, 2003, p.169), instead of “minimizing imposition”, avoids “coming into conflict with [a] basic antipathy towards the public expression of sentiment and emotion”. Furthermore, Harris claims that the non-sentimental way Australians express their social affection is caused by the cynical attitude towards emotions (as cited in Wierzbicka, 2003, p.169). Similarly, Haugh & Bousfield (2012) claim that the use of mock impoliteness is something that is positively valued by Australian speakers of English, as it appears to “strengthen and confirm [...] the social bonds of friendship” (p.1105, p. 1112). This way of interacting is, in chapter 2.1, described by Wierzbicka as practice of “mateship” and solidarity created by common experiences and shared attitudes, and fits with the “comfortableness with strangers” she describes. Mock impoliteness is according to

Haugh (2009), a “complex intertwining of evaluations of face interpretations as threatening and supportive” and has a different approach than the traditional evaluation of face as described by Brown and Levinson (p. 2107). While it is important to note that the conversational style of mock impoliteness used to achieve solidarity and a humorous effect rather than aggressiveness, it can be perceived as aggressive if the hearer is not aware of the speaker’s intention: “indeed the target, or any participants sympathizing with the target, may actually (covertly or overtly) evaluate the talk or conduct as impolite” (Haugh & Bousfield, 2012, p. 1103).

An example of mock impoliteness is the following conversation between two 20-year old, Australian students (taken from Haugh & Bousfield, 2012, p. 1105). In this conversation, the two participants are talking about a night out the evening before. One of the participants is clearly exaggerating his complaining, but this is perceived as jocular by both participants:

Tony: “And then he was just *like*- spent most of the time *like* flirting with these chicks. While he’s meant to be working. Poor work ethic, that’s what that is.”

Alfie: “Horrible. Should find out where he lives and threaten his life.”

In this conversation, Tony gives a negative evaluation of the barman’s behaviour, and according to Haugh & Bausfield (2012, p. 1106), describes this as an instance of “poor work ethic”. Tony is displaying exaggeration and thereby provokes a non-serious frame, which in return is reciprocated by Alfie, who responds with a clearly exaggerated comment. Tony uses the pragmatic marker *like* to elongate and exaggerate his description of the barman’s behaviour, in order to humour Alfie.

Thus, instead of using pragmatic markers to minimize a face-threat for the hearer, these speakers of Australian English rather seem to express a ‘non-seriousness’ by using negative-politeness markers in various combinations of (mock) insults, ambiguity, lexical exaggeration and contrastiveness in relation to “both teasing and non-serious talk” (Haugh, 2009, p. 2108). While Australian English may contain as many pragmatic markers as Canadian English, they don’t seem to be used as hedging devices utilized for negative politeness, that usually make an utterance more vague and indirect in order to avoid insulting the hearer. Rather, they are used to emphasize an insult in order to create solidarity, as described in chapter 2.1.1. Thus, although speakers of Australian English may use the same pragmatic markers, they could have a different purpose than their traditional usage and become a positive politeness strategy (as described by Holmes, 2008 in chapter 2.2.1).

In their 2015 study, Schmidtke and Sneffjella compiled more than three million Canadian and American geo-tagged tweets from February to October 2005, to find that Canadians used more polite words and phrases than Americans. A very obvious and specific pragmatic marker in Canadian English is *eh*. According to Gold (2004), the use of ‘eh’ behind expressions such as *Nice day, eh?*, and *I know, eh?* are perceived as positive amongst Canadians (p. 5), and seems mostly used to express solidarity (positive politeness). Apart from *eh*, discourse markers linked to negative politeness (described by Denis (2005) as disjunctive forms) have generally been more stable throughout the development of Canadian English, than positive politeness markers (adjunctive forms) (p. 106). The discourse marker *or something* is “the most frequent disjunctive variant”, with a stable frequency throughout the last century (Denis 2005, p. 106). Other forms, like *or what*, *or whatever* and *or whatnot*, are “infrequent among the oldest speakers”, but have increased in frequency after the

1940s (p. 106). Even though disjunctive forms have been quite stable over the last century, a newer generation of Canadian English speakers seem to use discourse markers as *like*, *just* and *so*, more frequently (Tagliamonte, 2005, p. 1897), for example:

1. *Like*, that's what I *like* told you
2. I'm *like just so* there, you know?

(Tagliamonte, 2005, p.1897).

According to Tagliamonte (2005), these markers are used as pause fillers, hedges as well as “indicators of vagueness” (p. 1898).

2.3 Discourse markers

According to Andersen (2001, p.40), discourse markers are lexical items that generally express non-propositional aspects of communication. Discourse markers are typically used to show a certain attitude (they can weaken the imposition, but also strengthen the message), and to “be more polite throughout face-to-face conversation” (Fialova, 2010, p. 24). Thus, pragmatic markers or hedging devices “help the hearer to identify the semantic meaning of the message”, which means they are able to properly interpret the utterance (Fialova, 2010, p. 24). According to Wilamova (2005), “hedging devices are the dominant means of expressing negative politeness, which confirms the hypothesis that attenuation is connected primarily with respect for other people's privacy [...]” (p. 86). Attenuation can be achieved in different ways, by using pragmatic markers.

The design of the classification of pragmatic markers is based on Wilamova's

2005 study (as cited in Fialova, 2010), which in turn is a reorganized version of Fraser's 2005 characterization, broadened in correspondence with Brown and Levinson's negative politeness strategy. In the following subchapters, the categories and markers will be further explained.

2.3.1. Subjectivity Markers

Subjectivity markers show the speaker's attitude to the conversation. The content of the utterances are softened by using these markers, which indicate that the hearer should mostly interpret the message as the speaker's personal view. The hearer has in turn the possibility to reply or to have a different opinion. Wilamova (as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.25) describes three kinds of speech acts where subjectivity markers are brought into the interaction:

1. Disagreement (reservation or refusal):

- *I am afraid* I can't agree.

Wilamova (as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.25)

These markers naturally attack face because the speaker does not take into consideration what the hearer wants or feels. Therefore, these types of speech acts tend to be mitigated.

2. Suggestion

- I *thought* maybe I would sleep in here tonight.

Wilamova (as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.25)

With these markers, it is very likely for either of the interlocutors to lose face. The hearer could either accept (because they would feel awkward to reject) or reject the suggestion, in the first case, they would lose face themselves, in the second case, the speaker could lose face.

3. Uncertainty

- Well, I *don't think* we have met, *have we?*

Wilamova (as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.26)

Whenever a speaker uses these markers, he expresses uncertainty and reduces the responsibility for the truthfulness of his utterance. Instead of a direct sentence, the speaker accepts the possibility that they have not met.

2.3.2 Clausal Mitigators

Like subjectivity markers, this group of pragmatic markers are used to weaken to utterance, with the purpose of face-loss reduction (Wilamova, as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.26). There are two groups of clausal mitigators:

4. Pseudo-conditionals

- Would you close the window, *if you will forgive my asking?*

(Brown & Levinson, as cited by Fialova, 2010, p.26).

This group are employed to weaken the previous part of the utterance, which by the hearer could be viewed as an imposition. As shown in the example, the first part of the sentence is direct and on-record, but uses the pseudo-conditionals as mitigator.

5. But-clauses

- Thanks *but* I can't stop.

- Terribly sorry, *but I lost my key.*

Wilamova (as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.27)

Wilamova (as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.27) defines this group as clauses beginning with a 'but' preposition. These markers are usually used to openly give reason for the statement. The first sentence is a "thanks + but-clause" expressing polite refusal. The speaker does not want to stop the vehicle, thus politely refuses by using this strategy to not offend the hearer. The second sentence is an "apology + but-clause" expressing a polite apology. In this case, the speaker wants to achieve his/her goal via a request. Brown and Levinson (as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.27), call this strategy "highly productive in formal English language."

2.3.3 Tentativizers

Tentativizers are used to express hesitation, uncertainty or vagueness and can be divided into two groups (Wilamova, as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.27):

6. Hesitation

- *Well*, I am kind of tied up right now.

(Wilamova, as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.27)

These markers are quite similar to subjectivity markers. The speaker is not sure about it and softens the propositional content, expressing hesitation.

7. Vagueness

- *Looks like* someone *may have* had too much to drink

(Brown & Levinson, as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.28)

The intentional vagueness is connected to negative politeness, because the speaker expresses his opinion. By not telling the whole truth, the message is softened and more acceptable for the listener.

2.3.4 Downgraders

According to Wilamova (as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.28) downgraders enable the speaker to “express the negative meaning indirectly”, by defending the face of the hearer and themselves.

8. Minimizing imposition

- Would you give me *just a few* minutes to change the sheets?

(Wilamova, as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.28)

The speaker does not have clean sheets and needs to change them, which takes some time. The words *just a few* downgrade the imposition the hearer might feel.

2.3.5 Pragmatic Idioms

This group of markers show the hearer how an utterance should be understood. By weakening its content, the speech act becomes more polite. This is achieved by using hesitation (*perhaps* or *maybe*).

9. Pragmatic Idioms

- Would you switch on the light, *please?*

(Wilamova, as cited in Fialova, 2010, p. 28)

Especially with requests, pragmatic idioms soften the speech act.

2.3.6 Hedges on Politeness Maxims

Politeness maxims are speaker-oriented (used in order to minimize face-threat for the speaker) based on the idea that “all members of social interaction ought to tell the truth and their claims should be based on facts” even though it could be an attack on the hearer (Fialova, 2010, p. 28):

10. Hedges on politeness maxims

You don't mean to tell me that he has been cheating on you?

(Wilamova, as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.28).

Since the message is unpleasant, the speaker uses these hedges to minimize the face-threat.

2.3.7 Performative Hedges

Like hedges on politeness maxims, this final group of markers are also speaker oriented hedging devices (Wilamova, as cited in Fialova, 2010, p.28). The goal is to introduce the utterance that follows straight after:

11: Introducing content

I was going to say that before we go any further, perhaps we ought to come to an understanding

(Wilamova, as cited in Fialova, 2010, p. 28)

By using an indirect sentence like this, the speaker expresses politeness, but it also gives the hearer more time to think about what has been said.

2.4 Discourse markers and Cross-Cultural Structures

There have been several studies on the possible influence of factors as cultural background, discipline, gender and academic status on the use of discourse markers.

If cultural background, for example, is indeed of influence on discourse markers in a specific language, this would mean that certain (varieties of) languages would have a pattern or system of spoken and written discourse. According to Kaplan (1966) “[t]he English language and its related thought patterns have evolved out of the Anglo-European cultural pattern” (p. 3). According to Moder (2004), Kaplan was one of the first to contribute to the field of Contrastive Rhetoric, “espous[ing] tenets of mainstream linguistic and applied linguistics, in particular the notion of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis concerning the role of language in shaping a world view” (p. 4). Moder (2004) also claims that many studies on cross-cultural discourse have been carried out since then, stating the structural differences in discourse amongst languages and cultures (p. 4, p. 5). Taking the Anglo-European thought pattern in native English (as described by Kaplan) in account, it’s interesting to see whether Australian and Canadian English have similar discourse patterns.

3 Method

In order to answer the research question, this study will be comparing pragmatic markers in Australian and Canadian English. The methodological approach taken in this study is a mixed methodology based on Babanoğlu's (2014) and Fialova's (2010) corpus studies on pragmatic markers, and the categorization of pragmatic markers is based on Wilamova's study (as cited in Fialova, 2010). Data for this study were collected using the International Corpus of English for spoken Australian and Canadian English (ICE-AUS and ICE-CAN). Of each variety, two comparable texts will be used to find pragmatic markers that indicate (im)politeness. Each ICE corpus, including the Australian and Canadian English corpora, has been created following the common ICE corpus design, as well as common schemes for textual and grammatical annotation. All corpora are made up of 500 texts (300 spoken, and 200 written), of approximately 2000 words each, which brings the total word count of each corpus around 1 million words. Although the design of this study is based on the study of discourse markers of Babanoğlu (2014), this thesis will be based on spoken texts instead of written texts. This choice was made because, as Newman (2008) describes, using spoken data reflect a more usage-based approach to linguistics, meaning that data drawn from spoken conversations shed more light on phenomenon as 'false starts', which means they are more detailed (p. 31). Similarly, Babanoğlu (2014) claims that conversation is different from both writing and formal speech, because it is "unplanned and [...] produced under cognitive constraints that are expressed by filled and unfilled pauses, repetition and incomplete grammatical structures" (p. 187). Pragmatic markers as *you know*, *actually*, *like* and *sort of* are, according to Babanoğlu (2014), more peculiar to spoken language (p. 187).. Each ICE

corpus consists of the following spoken texts (the numbers in brackets indicate the number of 2000-word texts in each category):

Table 1: Spoken samples in ICE-CAN and ICE-AUS

Spoken (300)	Dialogues (180)	Private (100)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face conversations (90) • Phonecalls (10)
		Public (80)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Lessons (20) • Broadcast Discussions (20) • Broadcast Interviews (10) • Parliamentary Debates (10) • Legal Cross-examinations (10) • Business Transactions (10)
	Monologues (120)	Unscripted (70)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneous Commentaries (20), • Unscripted Speeches (30) • Demonstrations (10) • Legal Presentations (10)

		Scripted (50)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadcast News (20) • Broadcast Talks (20) • Non-Broadcast Talks (10)
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A limitation of using these corpora is that the texts are dated from 1990 to 1995, which means they are not recent. Although recent corpora would be more useful to this study, these Australian and Canadian texts were the most recent to be found. Another reason for using these corpora is the similar corpus design and texts, which makes it easier to compare them. All speakers are aged 18 or above and were educated in English. They subjects were either born in the country in whose corpus they are included, or they moved there at an early age and received their education in English. Both males and females are featured in the speech samples, and a wide range of age groups are represented.

As mentioned before, this thesis uses texts that are comparable in substance and style in order to be as consistent as possible. Although the topics of the broadcast interviews differ, they will be used to compare the Australian and Canadian corpora which means that in each variety, 10 spoken texts (approximately 20.000 words) will be used. These texts are chosen according to Fialova's (2010) argument that the way people talk to each other is "derived from the degree to which the members of the conversation know each other, their social status, age, and formality of the occasion" (p. 16). This means that two friends catching up will use less polite and indirect language than two people who are not acquainted, or who talk to each other in a formal setting (p. 16). Hence, to fully understand the way in which politeness is used

in Australian and Canadian English, this study will focus on interlocutors that did not did not meet before or are not well acquainted.

The broadcast interviews in the ICE-CAN corpus were broadcasted on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Radio in Montreal, Quebec, between May 12th 1995 and August 8th 1995. All speakers have been verified as Canadian English speakers, regardless of nationality. The following metadata has been published for ICE-CAN:

Table 2: Metadata for Canadian sample (broadcast interviews)

Interview	Gender	Mother Tongue	Occupation	Date
1	F	English	Radio Announcer	08/08/95
	M	English	CEO	
2	F	English	Radio Announcer	12/05/95
	M	French	-	
3	F	English	Radio Announcer	15/05/95
	M	English	Musician	
4	M	English	Radio Announcer	15/05/95
	M	English	Musician	
5	F	English	Radio Announcer	08/07/95
	M	French	Lawyer	
6	M	English	Radio Announcer	15/05/95
	M	English	Business Owner	
7	M	English	Radio Announcer	12/07/95
	M	French	Politician	

8	M	English	Radio Announcer	12/07/95
	M	French	Police Officer	
9	M	English	Radio Announcer	23/05/95
	F	English	Musician	
10	M	French	Radio Announcer	12/07/95
	M	English	Police Officer	

The following metadata are available for the broadcast interview samples for ICE-AUS (dated between 1990 and 1995):

Table 3: Metadata for Australian sample (broadcast interviews)

Interview	Gender	Mother Tongue	Occupation
1	M	English	Radio Presenter
	M	English	Farm owner
2	M	English	Radio Presenter
	M	English	Politician
3	M	English	Radio Presenter
	M	English	Librarian
4	M	English	Radio Presenter
	M	English	Radio personality
5	M	English	Radio Presenter
	M	English	Politician
6	M	English	Radio Presenter
	M	English	Barrister

7	M	English	Radio Presenter
	F	English	Journalist
8	M	English	Radio Presenter
	M	English	Artist
9	M	English	Radio Presenter
	F	English	Accountant
10	F	English	Radio Presenter
	F	English	Journalist

Following Babanoğlu's (2014), corpus study, a few pragmatic markers will be selected. The selected markers are, as described in chapter 2.3, based on Wilamova's 2005 categorization of markers (as cited in Fialova, 2010). Of each category, two markers are selected, as shown in table 4 below:

Table 4: Selected categories and pragmatic markers

Category	Selected pragmatic markers
Subjectivity markers	<i>I guess, I think</i>
Downgraders	<i>I just, sort of</i>
Tentativizers	<i>Well, you know</i>
Performative hedges	<i>I was going to say, actually</i>
Pragmatic idioms	<i>Perhaps, maybe</i>
Hedges on politeness maxims	<i>Unfortunately, I'm afraid</i>
Clausal Mitigators	<i>If I may, but</i>

Counting the occurrence of pragmatic markers will be done with help of the Ant Conc program. According to Denis (2015), however, simply analyzing the occurrence of pragmatic markers is not enough, as certain lexical items have ambiguous meanings. Babanoğlu (2014) agrees, and argues that pragmatic markers can show both marker and adverbial function, such as *well* and *just* (p. 188). Establishing the right taxonomy for pragmatic is problematic, according to Hansen, 1998, in Aijmer, 2002: “[C]ompared to many other areas within linguistics, the study of markers is a relatively new phenomenon, and attempting an exhaustive taxonomy of content categories in this domain [...] simply seems premature as long there is little consensus [...] about the function of individual morphemes” (p. 38). Babanoğlu (2014) classifies the markers *well*, *you know*, *I think*, *sort of/kind of* and *I guess/I suppose* as follows:

“More specifically, *well* is a versatile discourse marker but it functions generally as a “deliberation signal” reflecting the speaker’s need to give a brief thought or consideration about the point at issue. [...] while *you know* is used to assume shared knowledge, whereas *I think* and *I guess* express uncertainty, also *sort of* signals fuzziness [...] (p. 188).

Other ambiguous markers are *but* and *actually*. *But* is often used as conjunction, it shows a relation between two conjuncts, and, as described by Schiffrin (1987) “marks an upcoming unit as a contrasting action” (p. 152). However, as pragmatic marker, it is called a *discourse* or *sequential* but, and has a utterance-initial position (Hussein 2008, p. 2). *Actually* as pragmatic marker has three roles: marking an opinion, marking a correction or objective, and as a “topic shift marker” (Li, 2005, p. 1).

Examples of these markers within a sentence are:

- “*But* what I'm saying to you is that we should go”
- “He was really emotional, *you know*”
- “*Well* as I said to you, we’re having dinner now”
- “It's not their jobs that I'm so concerned about, *I guess*.”
- “*Actually*, I don’t think we should go by car.”

Aside from calculating the percentage of pragmatic markers, a qualitative analysis will be conducted to determine the significance of the results. Only the lexical items that meet the description of pragmatic markers as discussed above will be selected for this study by qualitative analysis (by means of case study). Log Likelihood (LL) calculates the differences in frequency between the two corpora.

4. Results

The results of the selected pragmatic markers used by Australian and Canadian English speakers in 20 broadcast interview samples in ICE-AUS and ICE-CAN corpora are listed in table 5, as shown below:

Table 5:

Class	Oral features	Australian	Canadian
Subjectivity Markers	I guess	7	9
	I think	46	56
Downgraders	I just	4	7
	Sort of	11	11
Tentativizers	Well	86	93
	You know	47	109
Performative Hedges	I was going to say	1	0
	Actually	12	25
Pragmatic Idioms	Perhaps	14	6
	Maybe	3	16
Hedges on Pol. Max.	Unfortunately	2	0
	I'm afraid	0	0
Clausal Mitigators	If I may	0	0
	But	10	53

Some examples of these markers in sentences are:

Subjectivity Markers:

ICE-AUS

- “I thought I was just gonna go and teach a bit of radio make a few radio programs and then get the hell out of there I guess but after about oh two or three months I thought: wow if I really wanna know what's going on here I'm gonna have to stick around for quite some time.” (text 7)
- “I think the collections are very important um extremely important.” (text 3)

ICE-CAN

- “I’ve got the feeling that there needs to be some kind of upgrading or sense sensitivity training I guess you 'd say for officers in this whole field of conjugal violence.” (text 8)
- “I think the enthusiasm with the sport uhm just leads to the fact that there 's going to be thirty percent new skaters.” (text 6)

Downgraders:

ICE-AUS

- “Well I didn't er uh uh actually withstand it I don't think because I I I actually couldn't stop the the the the kind of criticism that uh that that brings about um through being away but my life was so full anyway of er of of opera and

music and people and uh uh and and and Europe and um travelling the world that that that that *I just* didn't notice anything you know.” (text 8)

- “And the one that was *sort of* put out by the library was, by the university, was the most sympathetic.” (text 2)

ICE-CAN

- “*I just* really didn't want to record pop albums any more.” (text 3)
- “To put an acoustic jazz band together and to uh, to *sort of* uhm record a genre of music that was, that I grew up with.” (text 3)

Tentavizers:

ICE-AUS

- “*Well* I mean I said in a couple of my exchanges: aren't you going to belt me around the ears, ah because of what I've been continuing to say on the subject of democratisation of Hong Kong, and I was just met with a fairly robust chuckle and “next topic please” so there is a sense in which that one has gone off the boil” (text 5)
- “Um well *you know* I'm not gonna discuss ah what we talked about with the department of communications.” (text 6)

ICE-CAN

- “Well, no one wants to think about dying but preparing for that eventually ah eventuality I should say, certainly saves a family and friends a lot of confusion and frustration.” (text 1)
- “Uh no doubt about that, but uh, we 're you know, we 're looking at this from a different angle actually.” (text 1)

Performative Hedges:

ICE-AUS

- “Well I was going to say with [...] obviously um you know getting on in years um um and er um I mean er ah his demise I mean what do we expect then...” (text 5)
- “You've answered actually the question before I asked it...” (text 4)

ICE-CAN

- “And then what happened was uhm, we actually told everybody.” (text 2)

Pragmatic Idioms:

ICE-AUS

- “I remember seeing that on air that particular night which was wonderful television but I I didn't work for the the ten network then but I I think perhaps just on that one occasion I I would er have not used the super live eye” (text 4)

- “A hundred thousand people supporting er the the right the neo Nazis so erm maybe that wasn't such a good er move fellers.” (text 4)

ICE-CAN

- “It relates or perhaps is influenced by an era of music but it 's not really that era at all.” (text 3)
- “And the other thing to watch out for is a big warning to anyone who has just gotten blades who does want to maybe venture onto the street is they repair the streets with this gooey tar that fills the cracks in the city...” (text 6)

Hedges on Politeness Maxims:

ICE-AUS

- “We're out of time unfortunately, Mr Gray. Let's leave it there.” (text 6)

Clausal Mitigators:

ICE-AUS

- “We might come back to that but let's keep going on the directors” (text 6)

ICE-CAN

- “But when I asked you specifically about that question of, of immigration it's true you didn't say that uhh you thought we should stop immigration.” (text 7)

Even though, as shown in table 5, the frequency of markers between the ICE-AUS and ICE-CAN samples is quite similar for some markers, the overall results show some interesting frequency differences. Of approximately 20.000 words each, the

percentage of pragmatic markers found in the Australian sample is 1,27%, and 1,99% in the Canadian sample. Table 6 shows the difference in frequency of markers among the two corpora:

Table 6: Total amount of pragmatic markers in the broadcast interview samples of ICE-AUS and ICE-CAN

	ICE-AUS	ICE-CAN
Markers	243	385

The statistical measurement of the difference between the two samples was calculated by LL, and is shown in table 7:

Table 7: Total amount of pragmatic markers in the broadcast interview samples of ICE-AUS and ICE-CAN as calculated by LL

ICE-AUS vs ICE-CAN

Markers	31.89 -
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p < 0.01 (critical value: 6.63); + indicates overuse in the first corpus (ICE-AUS) relative to the second corpus (ICE-CAN), - indicates underuse in the first corpus relative to the second corpus

With a critical value of 6.63 (df 1), there is a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) amongst the overall frequency of pragmatic markers between Australian and Canadian English,

showing an underuse in pragmatic markers in the Australian corpus (versus the Canadian corpus). The most frequent markers in both varieties are *I think*, *well*, *sort of*, *actually* and *you know*, as shown in table 5. Not all individual markers show a significant difference, but *well*, *maybe* and *you know* are, as indicated by LL, underused by Australians. Interestingly, the only pragmatic marker that Australians overuse in relation to Canadians is *perhaps*. Table 8 shows the differences between the two varieties as calculated by LL:

Table 8: Significant differences between markers in the broadcast interview samples of ICE-AUS and ICE-CAN as calculated by LL

Markers	ICE-AUS vs ICE-CAN
Well	6.45 -
Maybe	4.78 -
You know	4.99 -
But	15.72 -
Perhaps	8.02 +

p < 0.05 (critical value: 3.84); + indicates overuse in the first corpus (ICE-AUS) relative to the second corpus (ICE-CAN), - indicates underuse in the first corpus relative to the second corpus

As shown in table 9, the class of markers that are most frequently used in both corpora are the subjectivity markers and tentativizers. Overall, there is not much

difference between the categories used in both varieties. The only exception for this are Clausal Mitigators, based only on the pragmatic marker *but*.

Table 9: Percentage of categories of pragmatic markers found in ICE-AUS and ICE-CAN

Category	ICE-AUS	ICE-CAN
Subjectivity Markers	21.81	16.88
Downgraders	6.17	4.67
Tentavizers	54.73	52.46
Performative Hedges	5.34	6.46
Pragmatic Idioms	6.99	5.71
Hedges on Politeness Maxims	0.82	0
Clausal Mitigators	4.11	13.76

% of all categories in each variety, in 10 broadcast interview samples per variety

(20000 words)

5. Discussion

As mentioned in the introduction, the research question of this thesis is as follows:

Is there a difference in how pragmatic markers are used in Australian and Canadian English, and what effect does it have on politeness?

Research on pragmatic markers in Australian and Canadian English has pointed out that there is a difference in frequency of pragmatic markers in these varieties, but this does not necessarily mean that this has consequences for the way the pragmatic markers are used. The following chapter discusses the differences amongst the use of pragmatic markers in the Australian and Canadian English samples, and the possible effects on politeness in both varieties.

As shown in the results, three types of calculations were made: the overall amount of markers, the overall percentages of markers within each category, and the amount of individual markers. Although the percentages of categories of pragmatic markers are not far apart, there is a significant difference in the frequency of overall and individual markers. This means that although in the samples, Australians do not use as many pragmatic markers as Canadians, there seems to be a pattern in the types of markers that are used in each category. One of the reasons for this could be the notion of Anglo-Euro thought patterns that, according to Kaplan (1966), occur in native English (as described in chapter 2.4).

Considering the frequency calculations and log-likelihood results, speakers of Canadian English compared to speakers of Australian English generally overuse pragmatic markers. Both varieties use pragmatic markers as politeness strategy in the traditional sense (as described by Brown and Levinson, 1987), but further analysis of

the context in which the pragmatic markers are used, points out that Australians also often use pragmatic markers as positive politeness strategy, something that Holmes (2008) describes as “indicating friendliness and solidarity” (chapter 2.1.1). This means that speakers appear to use pragmatic markers in order to meet the addressee’s face needs by by toning down and contrasting other utterances that may come across as impolite.

As shown in the results, examples of positive politeness are:

- “I thought I was just gonna go and teach a bit of radio make a few radio programs and then get the hell out of there I guess but after about oh two or three months I thought: wow if I really wanna know what's going on here I'm gonna have to stick around for quite some time.”

The radio presenter asks a journalist why she chose to live in Nicaragua. After the journalist agrees that it’s not a common choice, she claims she indeed wanted to leave as soon as possible in a direct and possibly rude manner (“get the hell out of there”). Furthermore, she conveys modesty and self-deprecation by toning down her sentence with pragmatic markers as ‘a few’, ‘I guess’, while she is careful not to boast about her profession by saying “teach a bit of radio”. She seems to be using these markers as ‘sympathy strategy’, thus, trying to create a bond with or showing solidarity to the radio presenter.

- “I remember seeing that on air that particular night which was wonderful television but I, I didn't work for the the ten network then but I I think perhaps just on that one occasion I I would er have not used the super live eye.”

In this excerpt, the radio presenter and his guest Bruce Mansfield (radio personality and voice-over) talk about the late radio presenter Norman Banks, who has been an inspiration to Bruce. As the radio presenter brings up a memory of an embarrassing but funny moment of Norman Banks on television, to which Mansfield responds jokingly that although he enjoyed watching that moment on TV, he would not have done the same thing on live television. By using pragmatic markers as *but* and *perhaps*, Mansfield seems to attenuate his humorous comment about this moment, in order not to directly embarrass or make fun of Banks. By doing so, it appears as if he acknowledges the shared humour between him and the presenter, and expressing solidarity towards him.

- “A hundred thousand people supporting er the the right the neo Nazis so erm *maybe* that wasn't such a good er move fellers.”

In this interview, the radio presenter and his guest are talking about a particular documentary about Hitler that aired the day before, and link it to a right-wing movement in Australia that at that moment has gained many followers. The guest then points out that airing this documentary will probably lead to more people supporting this movement, which he does not think is “a good move”. The use of the pragmatic marker *maybe* seems to be used sarcastically, to emphasize the fact that he certainly thinks it was not smart to broadcast the documentary at that particular moment. Also, like the examples above, the speaker seems to rely on the fact that the hearer has all the information to fully ‘get’ the joke, which is another sign of emphasizing common grounds or shared norms, something Holmes (2008) links to positive politeness (chapter 2.1.1).

These examples show that, as discussed in chapter 2.2.1 and 2.2.3, Australians use hedges as humour oriented devices, to meet the addressee's positive face needs by indicating solidarity, non-seriousness and informality (Haugh & Bousfield, 2012).

While this does not mean Canadian English speakers use hedges for positive politeness strategy at all, or that Australian English speakers only use hedges for positive politeness strategy (as shown in some examples in the results, Australians also use hedges as 'traditional' politeness strategy), hedges as humour devices were only found in the Australian samples. This means that after comparing the 20 spoken broadcast interviews of ICE-AUS and ICE-CAN, there is indeed a difference in the way pragmatic markers are used. While Canadian English speakers use more hedges, and by doing so try to avoid potential face-damage and minimizing imposition (negative politeness strategy), Australian English speakers also use hedges for positive politeness, and thereby indicating friendliness and solidarity. Looking the theories discussed in chapter 2, the difference in frequency and usage of pragmatic markers is not surprising, as Canadian English is claimed to be one of the most formal and indirect varieties of English, while Australian is characterized by its "antisentimentality and informality" (DAI-A 64/09, 3270, Dollinger 2008, Goddard 2006).

There are some limitations to this particular study. Grammatical tagging is often used corpus linguistics, in order to mark up words as corresponding to a particular part of speech. This makes it possible to identify grammatical items as nouns and verbs. While tagging programs are able to find grammatical items and patterns systematically, it is not entirely accurate and rather complex, as certain words have ambiguous meanings, and the programs are not able to understand the context (such as humour). Hence, this study did not use grammatical tagging to find

pragmatic markers, but rather set a framework (as set by Babanoğlu (2014), Schiffrin (1987), Hussein (2008), and Li (2005)) to classify pragmatic markers in the text and analyse the full utterances in which they were used. Furthermore, of a total of 1 million words per corpus, only a small sample was used to attain data (20.000 words per sample). Using a bigger sample could not only give different results as there are more words to take into account, but could also shed more light on pragmatic markers used in different kind of texts, such as private, informal conversations, or business meetings. Also, other texts could have a bigger variety of subjects in different age categories, and with different backgrounds and educational levels.

6. Conclusion

In this study, politeness between Canadian and Australian English has been investigated by doing a comparative study between the Australian and Canadian ICE corpora. The following research question was posed:

Is there a difference in how pragmatic markers are used in Australian and Canadian English, and what effect does it have on politeness?

This study has shown that although both Canadian and Australian English speakers seem to use the same kind of pragmatic markers, there is a difference between frequency and the way they are used. Canadians use pragmatic markers more often, and in the corpus samples that were examined, mainly use them in order to avoid imposition and conflicts, something Brown and Levinson (1987) call negative politeness. Australians use fewer pragmatic markers in general, but aside from negative politeness strategy, also seem to use them by means of “mock impoliteness”, indicating friendliness and solidarity, which Holmes (2008) calls positive politeness. The results of this research support the idea that speakers of Canadian English are more formal and indirect, whereas speakers of Australian English prefer informal and familiar speech. Still, instead of concluding that Canadians are more polite than Australians, the suggestion is that speakers of Canadian English overall use a different kind of politeness than speakers of Australian English.

Further study might explore the effect of these differences in politeness between native and non-native varieties of English. One question that can be posed is whether differences in politeness only mean that people from different cultures

sometimes just have different humor, or if it could have more serious implications, for instance in international business environments.

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PLAGIARISM RULES AWARENESS STATEMENT

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