

Responding to Thanks: An Empirical Study of Thanks Minimizers in Germany and Canada

Yifang Yuan & Kirsten Toren
University of British Columbia

Based on Aijmer's (1996) and Schneider's (2005) classifications of responses to thanks, this paper aims to explore and compare strategies and forms utilized to realize responses to thanks in German English and Canadian English. The present study investigates and compares 36 German (18 males and 18 females) and 36 Canadian informants' (18 males and 18 females) actual responses to thanks in Bayreuth, a large city in northern Bavaria of Germany, and in Vancouver, a coastal seaport city in British Columbia of Canada, respectively. Speech acts such as the act of thanking and responding to thanks are generally considered pragmatically universal because they satisfy basic human needs in communication. For instance, responding to thanks is conventionally realized as brief and formulaic expressions in most, if not all language communities such as English *you're welcome*, *no problem*, German *bitte* and Chinese *bu keqi*. By comparing responses to thanks in German English and Canadian English, this paper demonstrates that the realization of responding to thanks vary between these two varieties in terms of both strategies and forms.

References

- Aijmer, Karin. (1996). *Conversational routines in English: Convention and creativity*. London: Longman.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford university press.
- Schneider, K. P. (2005). "No problem, you are welcome, anytime: Responding to thanks in Ireland, England, and the USA." In: Barron, Anne et al., eds. *The Pragmatics of Irish English*. Berlin: de Gruyter. 101-140.
- Searle, John R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- (1975). "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary." In: Gunderson, Keith, ed. *Language, Mind, and Knowledge: Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science IX*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 344-369.