

Pragmatic Idioms in Australian English

—A Survey of Gender and Age-related Usage of Greetings, Leave-takings, Thanks, and Apologies.

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1. Introduction

The motivation for this study derives from my experience as an L2 learner of English aspiring to communicate appropriately in Australia. After nine years of formal English instruction at school, I had to face up to the fact that I was not able to adequately perform basic speech acts such as greetings, leave-takings, thanks, and apologies. The problem was not so much making myself understood or comprehending what my interlocutors' wanted to communicate, but rather the lack of knowledge of an adequate usage of basic pragmatic idioms used to perform simple linguistic exchanges.

Interacting appropriately in the target language should become a priority for L2 learners who want to live, work, study, or travel in the country where the language is spoken. In order to enable L2 students to do this, they need to be taught what pragmatic idioms there are to choose from and how to employ them effectively in different situations. L2 text books usually only include standard forms like *Hello*, *Good Bye*, *Thank you*, *I'm sorry*, etc., but as we will see below in English native-speaker interaction a much larger variety of tokens is used to perform these speech acts. In order to include pragmatic aspects in second language instruction, lists of different tokens to choose from have to be set up and rules for their choice

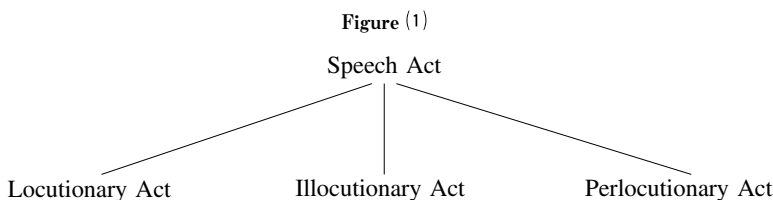
established. Since their actual use varies according to age, gender, and social status of the interlocutors as well as the local dialect of the speech community, these aspects also have to be taken into account.

This paper is an attempt to give an overview of age and gender-related use of pragmatic idioms for greetings, leave-takings, thanks, apologies, and their acknowledgements in Australian English (AusE). The results presented below are based on a survey undertaken in metropolitan Sydney. The paper starts with a presentation of pragmatic theory, which will provide the theoretical framework for this study (section 2). Section 3 will describe the investigation methods used in this survey, and the final section (4) will be devoted to a presentation of the results.

2. Theoretical Framework

This survey is based on assumptions of pragmatic theory. It explores how individual speakers employ different expressions from a given speech variety to perform functions like greeting, taking leave, thanking, and apologising within a defined situation and with different interactants.

Austin (1962) suggested that utterances can be seen as actions since speakers may change the state of affairs or may impact their interactants' social status by their words. He claimed that all utterances have a so-called *speech act force*. To illustrate his notion of speech acts he distinguishes between the conventional meaning or proposition of an utterance, the speaker's intention, and achieving certain effects on the interactant as is demonstrated in following figure 1.



The *locutionary act* is the basic act of uttering or producing a meaningful linguistic expression. The *illocutionary act* is the communicative purpose of the utterance, and the *perlocutionary act* describes the intended effect of the utterance. Various scholars have dealt with a further classification of *illocutionary acts* (cf. Searle. 1969, 1975, 1979). For this study, I would like to present a bottom-up approach proposed by Edmondson and House (1981).

The speech acts selected from their model are *Apologies*, *Excuses/Justifies*, *Forgives*, *Thanks*, *Minimizes*, *Greetings*, *How-are-yous*, *Welcomes*, *Wish-wells*, and *Leave-takes*. They differentiate between *Apologies*, *Excuses*, and *Justifies*. *Apologies* have the function “to placate the hearer and to restore thereby one’s own social status, following a real or potential offence” (ibid. 153). By using an *Excuse* the “speaker admits that what he did was undesirable but suggests that there are or were mitigating circumstances which lessen the blame attached to himself, e.g. physical, mental or emotional stress, ignorance, and so on” (ibid. 157–8). With a *Justify* “the speaker seeks to persuade that what he did was ‘justified’, such that *no* blame attaches to himself for having done it” (ibid. 158). The obligatory acknowledgements of *Apologies*, *Excuses* and *Justifies* are called *Forgives*, which “restore[s] the social status of the hearer” (ibid. 161).

Thanks are defined as an *illocution*, which “is used when a speaker believes he has received a social or material benefit from the addressee” (ibid. 163). These are in turn acknowledged by *Minimizes*, in which the speaker “should underplay or suppress his own benefits. *Minimizes* can also be transmitted non-verbally, for example by smiles or gestures.

Greetings, *How-are-yous* and *Welcomes* are defined as openings and *Wish-wells* and *Leave-takes*, as closing ritual *illocutions*. “In performing a Greet[ing] a speaker ritually recognises the presence of the hearer, and salutes him as a fellow social member” (ibid. 188), whereas “in using a *How-are-you*, a speaker asks after

the hearer, or a close relative or friend of the hearer's, in order to express a ritual interest in his welfare" (ibid. 189). As in *Greetings* the interactants establish or maintain contact by exchanging these formulae, in the case of *How-are-yous* by showing interest in the social well-being of the interlocutor. *How-are-yous* are usually preceded by *Greetings*, which may be omitted. In this case the *How-are-you* takes over the function of the *Greet*. In a *Welcome*, finally, "a speaker expresses his positive emotional attitude towards meeting the hearer" (ibid. 60). *Greetings* are usually returned by the same or different ritual tokens of the same category. There is no alternative to reciprocating a *Greet*. If one fails to return a *Greet* it may be considered as an insult or an unusual disturbance of the social relation. *How-are-yous* are usually answered or may be acknowledged by ritual *Thanks*, or if regarded as *Greetings* they may only be reciprocated. *Welcomes* are ritually acknowledged by *Thanks*.

Leave-takes have the "function to bridge the gap between the termination of the ongoing encounter, and the resumption of social contact at the next time of meeting" (ibid. 197). *Leave-takes* as well as *Greetings* are normally reciprocated. *Wish-wells* are similar in function to *Leave-takes*. They can either be reciprocated, acknowledged by *Thanks* or satisfied by non-verbal means, like waving or nodding. The actual linguistic tokens used in AusE to perform the speech acts above will be examined in section 4.

3. Methods

The study draws on sociolinguistic investigation methods, such as observation, interviews (qualitative), and questionnaires (quantitative). Prior to the survey, data was collected from dictionaries and data-based articles on AusE (Ramson 1988; Collins and Blair 1989; Seal 1999; Delbridge 1981) and from 'real-life' situations. Careful observations were made of how people greeted, said good-bye, thanked,

and apologized. A questionnaire was set up in order to obtain data on the frequency with which the tokens collected were used, and to determine to what extent speaker variables influence to choice of particular tokens,.

The first part of the questionnaire was dedicated to personal data about the informant, which covered the main sociolinguistic variables such as gender, age, social class, ethnic and linguistic background. Another part was dedicated to *Thanks*, *Apologies*, and their acknowledgements. Special emphasis was put on the situation in which the different tokens were used, because in contrast to *Greetings* and *Leave-takings*, it is not so much the addressee who plays a crucial role, but rather the situational context. An attempt was made to think of different situations which — for the addressee — involved different levels of gratitude (for *Thanks*) or damage inflicted by them (for *Apologies*). For each of the sections a number of pre-supposed tokens, which were considered to be the most frequent ones, were supplied. The informant was asked to tick the one(s) s/he uses, and blanks were left to elicit alternative tokens. After each of the sections a category for acknowledgements was included, which only contained a blank.

In the final section on *Greetings* and *Leave-takings* special emphasis was placed on the interlocutors, because the degree of formality which is chosen primarily resides in the relationship to the addressees rather than in the circumstances in which the encounter takes place. Once again pre-supposed tokens, which were selected from the list set up earlier, and blanks for alternatives were provided. In order to account for the level of formality, five groups of addressees were chosen (*fleeting acquaintances*, *strangers*, *close friends*, *superiors*, and *elderly people* (respect)). A further differentiation was made as to whether the addressee was *male* or *female*. Finally, the frequency with which the tokens were used was also accounted for, by asking the informants to tick whether they used the given expression *rarely*, *sometimes*, *often*, or *never*.

In total 150 questionnaires were handed out at and around University ; to strangers, fleeting acquaintances, colleagues, and friends. 62 questionnaires were returned, 40 of which were selected for the following analysis. 20 males (M) and 20 females (F) were selected respectively ; 10 of each group were 29 years or younger (M-/F-) and 10 were 30 years or older (M+/F+).

4. Results and Discussion

The results of the survey will be presented in the form of tables, which list the frequency of the pre-supposed tokens according to the variables of age and gender. The elicited tokens will be listed in separate tables. The figures will be compared with results of previous sociolinguistic studies. The discussion is based on the following hypotheses :

1. There is a great variety of different tokens which are used to perform the functions of thanking, apologising, greeting or taking leave.
2. Situational context as well as the addressee are decisive factors for the choice of the token used.
3. The choice of the token varies according to age and gender.
4. Young people used more non-standardised terms and informal language.
5. More formal language is used towards and by elderly people.
6. The language of women is more polite.
7. *Thanks* can function as *leave-takings* and *How-are-yous* can function as *greetings*.

4.1. Thanks and Minimizes

Tables 1 a-d list the frequency with which different pre-supposed and elicited tokens were used in four situations that involve more or less gratitude. Below are the informants' replies to the question "*How do you thank if ... ?*" :

Table 1 a : ... a waiter serves you

	F—	F+	M—	M+	T
<i>Thank you !</i>	8	9	7	8	32
<i>Thanks !</i>	4	3	7	4	18
<i>Cheers !</i>	1	1	2	1	5
<i>Ta !</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Thanks a lot !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Thanks very much !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Sensational !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Phantastic !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Thank you very much !</i>	0	0	0	1	1

Table 1 b : ... somebody lets you by

	F—	F+	M—	M+	T
<i>Thanks !</i>	7	5	6	6	24
<i>Thank you !</i>	4	7	4	3	18
<i>Cheers !</i>	2	0	1	2	5
<i>Ta !</i>	3	0	1	1	5
<i>Thanks a lot !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Thanks very much !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>(smile)</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>(nod)</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Thanks, mate !</i>	0	0	1	0	1

Table 1 c : ... somebody gives you a present

	F—	F+	M—	M+	T
<i>Thank you !</i>	8	8	7	9	32
<i>Thanks !</i>	2	5	3	3	13
<i>Cheers !</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Ta !</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Thanks a lot !</i>	1	0	1	0	2
<i>Thanks very much !</i>	1	0	0	1	2
<i>Thank you very much !</i>	0	1	1	0	2
<i>Thanks so much !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>How nice !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>o-o-o-oh !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Thanks man !</i>	0	0	1	0	1

Table 1 d: ... *you are receiving change*

	F-	F+	M-	M+	T
<i>Thanks !</i>	8	8	9	8	33
<i>Thank you !</i>	4	5	4	2	15
<i>Ta !</i>	2	0	1	1	4
<i>Cheers !</i>	2	0	0	0	2
<i>Right !</i>	0	0	0	1	1

Since the degree of gratitude involved plays a significant role in the choice of token, the informants clearly distinguished between situations like ‘... *waiter serves you*’ and ‘... *somebody gives you a present*’, where a rather high level of gratitude is involved, and the more casual encounters of ‘... *somebody lets you by*’ and ‘... *you are receiving change*’, where the act of thanking tends to be more ritualised. As has been suggested by earlier sociolinguistic studies, the politeness of an utterance depends on the number of words a speaker uses to perform his/her speech act. For the act of thanking, this hypothesis was substantiated by the data obtained. In ‘high-gratitude’ situations the complete expression “*Thank you !*” is favoured to its abbreviated form “*Thanks !*” and additional longer tokens like “*Thank you very much !*” or “*Thanks so much !*” were mentioned by the informants. In the ‘low-gratitude’ encounters the abbreviated “*Thanks !*” seems to be more appropriate and if ‘... *somebody lets you by*’ a *smile* or a *nod* would be sufficient. This is also reflected in the usage of the more informal British interjection “*Ta !*”, which only seems to be suitable for ‘low-gratitude’ situations. “*Ta !*” therefore appears to be a more ritualised and rather serves as an acknowledgement. From a pragmalinguistic point of view, it is interesting to see that almost all the tokens which were mentioned in this category contain the *performative* verb ‘to thank’, suggesting that there seems to be a need for being explicit in performing the act of thanking. *Thanks* do not show any significant differences or preferences as far as the variables of age and gender are concerned.

Thanks are acknowledged with *Minimizes*. Tables 2 a–d list the frequency of the elicited tokens according to four different situations. Below are the informants' replies to the question “*How do you acknowledge a thank if somebody thanks you for... ?*” :

Table 2 a : ... doing him/her a favour

	F–	F+	M–	M+	T
<i>That's Ok !</i>	4	2	3	1	10
<i>You're welcome !</i>	2	3	3	1	9
<i>No problem !</i>	2	2	0	1	5
<i>No worries !</i>	2	0	2	0	4
<i>That's alright !</i>	0	0	0	2	2
<i>My pleasure !</i>	0	1	0	1	2
<i>Don't mention it !</i>	0	1	0	1	2
<i>That's fine !</i>	0	1	0	1	2
<i>You'll be right !</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Quite welcome !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>Thanks !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Pleasure !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>No need to thank me !</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Welcome !</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>No problems !</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>That's cool !</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Anytime !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>It's a pleasure.</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Not a problem !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>no acknowledgement</i>	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2 b : ... paying

	F–	F+	M–	M+	T
<i>That's Ok !</i>	2	0	4	1	7
<i>(no acknowledgement)</i>	1	2	0	3	6
<i>You're welcome !</i>	1	2	1	0	4
<i>Thank you !</i>	2	0	1	1	4
<i>Thanks !</i>	1	0	0	2	3

	F－	F＋	M－	M＋	T
<i>That's alright !</i>	0	1	1	0	2
<i>No problem !</i>	1	0	1	0	2
<i>My pleasure !</i>	1	0	0	1	2
<i>smile</i>	1	0	1	0	2
<i>Pleasure !</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>That's quite alright !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Oh, please !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>It's nothing !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Shush !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Don't worry !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>No need for that !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>It's a pleasure !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Thank you very much !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Not a problem !</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Anytime !</i>	0	0	1	0	1

Table 2 c : ... receiving a present from you

	F－	F＋	M－	M＋	T
<i>You're welcome !</i>	1	2	7	1	11
<i>My pleasure !</i>	1	2	3	1	7
<i>Pleasure !</i>	4	0	0	2	6
<i>That's Ok !</i>	1	1	3	0	5
<i>smile / nod</i>	1	2	0	0	3
<i>That is fine !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>That's alright !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>Don't mention it !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>Glad to.</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>It's nothing.</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>OK !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>No worries !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>It's a pleasure !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>No problem !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>I hope you like it !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>I saw it and I knew it was perfect for you !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Open it !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>You're quite welcome !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>no acknowledgement</i>	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2 d : ... letting him/her by

	F—	F+	M—	M+	T
<i>That's OK !</i>	5	0	2	1	8
<i>smile / nod</i>	1	2	1	0	4
<i>That's alright !</i>	0	0	2	2	4
<i>You're welcome !</i>	2	0	1	1	4
<i>No worries !</i>	1	1	2	0	4
<i>Thanks !</i>	0	0	0	3	3
<i>It's OK !</i>	0	2	1	0	3
<i>No problem !</i>	2	0	0	0	2
<i>Thank you very much !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>You're right !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>You're most welcome !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Ta !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>It's fine !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>no acknowledgement</i>	0	0	1	0	1

First it becomes apparent that there is a large variety of different tokens that are used to acknowledge *Thanks*, which supports hypothesis 1. Secondly, it is revealed that *Minimizes* are not as uniform as *Thanks*. They can express different attitudes towards the person who utters the *thank-you*. There are, for example, acknowledgements which make the addressee feel at ease by expressing that there is no need thank or worry, since no efforts had to be made on the part of the thankee, as is presented by the tokens “*Not a problem !*”, “*No worries !*”, “*Don't mention it !*”. Furthermore, there are *Minimizes* which accept the *Thank* and assure the addressee that the status quo is maintained, as in “*That is fine !*”, “*That's OK !*”, “*That's quite alright !*”. Other tokens express that the action for which they are being thanked was even a pleasure for the person who performed it, as in “*It's a pleasure !*”, “*My pleasure !*”, “*Glad to !*” or “*Anytime !*”. As mentioned earlier *Thanks* can also be acknowledged by using the same tokens like “*Thank you !*” or “*Thanks !*”.

By taking a closer look at the different *Minimizes*, it seems that the same or similar tokens appear in all situations. However, as was the case with *Thanks*, there seem to be certain preferences for the choice of particular tokens. The most favoured token for all situations is “*That’s OK!*”, yet other tokens only seem to be appropriate for acknowledgements to either ‘low-gratitude’-*thanks* such as “*Ta!*”, as is the case when somebody thanks you for ‘*letting him/her by*’, or to ‘high-gratitude’-*thanks*, which sometimes induce non-ritualised acknowledgements as “*I saw it and I knew it was perfect for you!*”. In the encounters where more gratitude is shown from the person who utters the *thank-you*, likewise more politeness is expected for its acknowledgement. Thus it seems to be obligatory to use an appropriate *Minimize* if somebody thanks you for ‘*receiving a present from you*’, whereas no acknowledgement is required if somebody thanks you for ‘*paying*’. As far as an age and gender specific usage of *Minimizes* is concerned, the only noticeable difference is that “*That’s OK!*” is a token which is favoured by young people.

4.2. Apologies and Forgives

This section will examine the use of tokens for *Apologies*, *Excuses* and their acknowledgements “*Forgives*”. While the situations in section 4.1. differed according to the level of gratitude involved, the situations listed in Tables 3 a–f show differences at the level of the offence which caused by the person who apologises. The following tables show the informants’ replies to the question “*How do you apologize / excuse if ... ?*” :

Table 3 a : ... you want attract somebody’s attention

	F–	F+	M–	M+	T
<i>Excuse me !</i>	9	9	7	9	34
<i>Sorry !</i>	1	0	0	1	2
<i>Pardon me !</i>	0	0	2	0	2

	F—	F+	M—	M+	T
<i>I apologise !</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Scuse mate !</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Hey !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>signs / gestures</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>call their name</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>wave</i>	1	0	0	0	1

Table 3 b : ... you bump into somebody

	F—	F+	M—	M+	T
<i>Sorry !</i>	9	9	9	8	35
<i>Excuse me !</i>	3	1	2	1	7
<i>Pardon me !</i>	0	1	1	1	3
<i>I apologise !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>I'm terribly sorry !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Terribly sorry !</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>I beg your pardon !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>Sorry dude !</i>	0	0	1	0	1

Table 3 c : ... you are sneezing in somebody's presence

	F—	F+	M—	M+	T
<i>Excuse me !</i>	6	8	7	6	27
<i>Pardon me !</i>	5	4	1	1	11
<i>Sorry !</i>	1	2	1	2	6
<i>I apologise !</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>nothing</i>	1	0	1	0	2

Table 3 d : ... you want to pass by

	F—	F+	M—	M+	T
<i>Excuse me !</i>	9	10	8	7	34
<i>Sorry !</i>	0	1	0	1	2
<i>Pardon me !</i>	0	0	2	0	2
<i>I apologise !</i>	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3 e : ... you are asking to repeat what somebody said

	F－	F＋	M－	M＋	T
<i>Sorry ?</i>	5	4	5	6	20
<i>Pardon me ?</i>	3	4	1	3	11
<i>Excuse me ?</i>	3	3	3	1	10
<i>I apologise ?</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Pardon ?</i>	1	1	1	0	3
<i>Say again !</i>	0	1	1	0	2
<i>Wha t ? (close friends)</i>	1	0	1	0	2
<i>I beg your pardon ?</i>	1	1	0	0	2
<i>Come again !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Sorry, I didn't get that !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Would you mind repeating ?</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Could you say that again, please ?</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Could you please repeat that ?</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>What was that ?</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Again !</i>	0	0	0	1	1

Table 3 f : ... you want to express regret

	F－	F＋	M－	M＋	T
<i>Sorry !</i>	7	4	7	5	23
<i>I apologise !</i>	4	3	1	5	13
<i>Excuse me !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Pardon me !</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>I'm sorry !</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>I'm so sorry !</i>	1	0	0	1	2
<i>Is there something I can do ?</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>I'm very sorry !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>Please accept my regrets !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>I'm sorry to hear that !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>I'm terribly sorry for...</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Tough break !</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>an understanding look</i>	0	1	0	0	1

In analysing these encounters, it is important to differentiate between *apologies* and *excuses*. The situations ‘bumping into somebody’ and ‘you want to express

your regret’ could be seen as a true offence for which an *Apology* is required, whereas the other situations can be described as ‘low-offence’-encounters for which an *Excuse* would suffice. Some informants expressed that they would not excuse or apologise at all, by explicitly writing “*nothing!*”. In fact, the token “*I apologise!*”, which includes the *performative* verb, was only ticked in the two ‘high-offence’-situations. This difference is underlined by the high frequency of the rather ritualised “*Excuse me!*” in ordinary excuse-situations as compared to the less frequent apologetic forms of “*Sorry!*” or “*I apologise!*”. As was the case with *Thanks* (for the level of gratitude) the length of the token used here, corresponds to the level of offence. The longer tokens “*Please accept my regrets!*” and “*I’m terribly sorry for ...*” are confined to situations where the informant apologises for a strong offence. An interesting aspect concerning the degree of politeness can be seen in the situation of ‘*asking to repeat what somebody said*’, in which, instead of simply using a ritualised token such as “*Come again!*” or “*What was that?*”, the informants mentioned as alternatives rather explicit questions such as “*Would you mind repeating?*” or “*Could you say that again, please?*”.

There are only slight differences concerning the variables of age and gender. For example, the rather polite token “*Pardon me!*”, as an *excuse* for ‘*sneezing in somebody’s presence*’, is favoured by women, which seems to support hypothesis 6. Only young people wrote explicitly that they do not excuse themselves for sneezing and that they use the rather impolite “*What?*” for ‘*asking somebody to repeat what s/he said*’. This can be seen as an indicator of the relative lack of politeness among young people as opposed to the tendency towards formal language used by older people, which was stated in hypothesis 5.

Apologies and *Excuses* are acknowledged using *Forgives*. Tables 4 a–d list the frequency of the elicited tokens according to four different situations. Below are the informants’ replies to the question “*How do you acknowledge if apologises /*

excuses for... ?” :

Table 4 a : ... causing you inconvenience

	F—	F+	M—	M+	T
<i>That's OK !</i>	6	1	5	1	13
<i>No problem !</i>	3	0	0	1	4
<i>Don't worry about it !</i>	2	1	3	1	4
<i>It's OK !</i>	0	4	0	0	4
<i>That's fine !</i>	2	0	1	0	3
<i>Don't worry !</i>	1	0	0	1	2
<i>depends on situation</i>	0	2	0	0	2
<i>That's alright !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>No worries !</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Forget it !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>You're right !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Not a problem !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Never mind !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>Don't do it again !</i>	0	0	0	1	1

Table 4 b : ... sneezing in your presence

	F—	F+	M—	M+	T
<i>Bless you !</i>	5	4	4	3	16
<i>no acknowledgement</i>	2	2	2	2	8
<i>That's OK !</i>	1	0	2	2	5
<i>smile</i>	1	1	1	0	3
<i>Don't worry !</i>	1	0	0	1	2
<i>That's alright !</i>	1	0	0	1	2
<i>It's OK !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Apology accepted !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Excuse you !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>Never mind !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>God bless you !</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>No problem !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Gesundheit !</i>	0	0	1	0	1

Table 4 c : ... bumping into you

	F—	F+	M—	M+	T
<i>That's OK !</i>	6	2	6	3	17
<i>It's OK !</i>	0	4	1	1	6
<i>That's alright !</i>	1	0	0	3	4
<i>Don't worry !</i>	1	1	0	1	3
<i>No worries !</i>	1	1	1	0	3
<i>Don't worry about it !</i>	2	0	0	0	2
<i>No problem !</i>	1	0	0	1	2
<i>smile</i>	0	1	1	0	2
<i>You should pay more attention !</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>That's fine !</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>You're right !</i>	0	0	1	0	1

Table 4 d : ... attracting your attention

	F—	F+	M—	M+	T
<i>Yes ?</i>	3	4	5	3	15
<i>Yeah ?</i>	1	2	1	1	5
<i>Can I help you ?</i>	1	0	1	0	2
<i>What can I do for you ?</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>You want me ?</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Yes, what is it ?</i>	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Excuse me ?</i>	0	0	0	1	1
<i>I'm sorry ?</i>	0	0	0	1	1

As was the case with *Minimizes*, *Forgives* show a large variety of different tokens. Once again we find rather ritualised tokens like “*That's OK !*” or “*No worries !*” and more explicit ones like “*You should pay more attention !*” or “*Don't do it again !*”. Like *Minimizes*, *Forgives* may also reflect different attitudes towards the addressee. There are *Forgives* which make the addressee feel at ease by expressing that there is no need to apologise since no real offence has been done, as is implied by the tokens “*Never mind !*” and “*No worries !*”. Furthermore, there are acknowledgements in which the speaker accepts the *Apology* and assures the

interlocutor that the status in their social relation is maintained, as in “*That’s fine !*”, “*That’s OK !*”, “*Excuse you !*” or “*Apology accepted*”. There are instances in which an *Apology* can be returned with another *Apology*, for example, when two people bump into each other and it is not evident whose fault it was.

No acknowledgement is required for ‘*sneezing in somebody’s presence*’ or when somebody excuses ‘*attracting attention*’. In the second case questions like “*What can I do for you ?*” or “*Yes, what is it ?*” seem to be more appropriate. As was the case with *Minimizes*, there are no significant age or gender differences in the use of *Forgives*, except for the token “*That’s OK !*”, which is again favoured by young people.

4.3. Greetings

The results for *Greetings* and *Leave-takings* will also be presented in the form of tables. The number of informants who ticked a particular token for a certain interlocutor (fleeting acquaintances, strangers, friends, superiors, elderly people) are given as percentages. The figures listed in the tables are the added percentages for informants who use the token *sometimes and often*.

Tables 5 a—i : *Greetings*

5 a : *G’Day !*

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	20	5	15	5	0
M	30	30	50	25	5
–29	20	15	25	5	5
30+	30	20	40	25	15

5 b : *How is it going ?*

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	25	15	25	5	5
M	50	45	65	15	5
–29	55	35	40	0	0
30+	20	25	25	50	10

5 c : *How are you going ?*

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	30	25	70	15	20
M	40	40	50	45	45
–29	50	30	65	30	40
30+	20	25	55	30	25

5 d : *Hello !*

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	80	70	65	65	60
M	65	70	60	35	60
–29	70	75	65	75	60
30+	75	65	60	55	60

5 e : *Hi ?*

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	75	70	85	40	50
M	60	45	70	75	40
–29	80	70	80	40	45
30+	65	45	75	40	45

5 f : *Hey !*

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	25	5	40	5	5
M	45	30	50	10	0
–29	50	10	20	10	0
30+	15	10	20	10	0

5 g : *Good Morning ! Good evening ! ...*

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	65	60	40	75	70
M	45	50	40	65	55
–29	55	55	40	85	70
30+	55	55	40	55	55

5 h : How are you ?

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	75	60	90	80	90
M	55	55	75	60	70
–29	70	55	80	70	80
30+	60	60	85	70	80

5 i : Are you going alright ?

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	0	0	0	0	0
M	0	0	15	0	5
–29	0	0	10	0	0
30+	5	0	5	0	5

If not indicated differently, the percentages in brackets in the following discussion refer to the total of informants ($F + M$) who ticked (*s/o*). A typical Australian *Greeting* is “*G’Day!*”, which is frequently used for fleeting acquaintances (25%) and close friends (32.5%). It seems to be favoured by males and people over 30 regardless of the addressee. “*How is it going?*” shows a similar pattern. Its usage when addressing elderly people (10%) and superiors (20%) is markedly low and restricted to speakers over 30. Another typical Australian *Greeting* is “*How are you going?*”, which is commonly used for all addressees, especially close friends (60%). It is slightly preferred by males and by younger people. The most popular *Greeting*, however, is “*Hello!*”, which is a rather formal token in AusE and is preferred by women and younger people. It is frequently used for all groups of addressees, particularly fleeting acquaintances (72.5%) and strangers (70%). Another popular *Greeting*, slightly less formal, is “*Hi!*”, which is used very often for close friends (77.5%), but also for fleeting acquaintances (67.5%) and slightly less frequently for superiors (40%) and elderly people (45%). The most informal *Greeting* is “*Hey!*”, which is indicated by the

low frequency with which it is used for superiors (7.5%) and elderly people (2.5%), likewise it shows only limited usage for fleeting acquaintances (32.5%) and strangers (17.5%). It is, however, quite popular among close friends (45%). This token is slightly preferred by males and younger people, and only towards strangers, friends, and fleeting acquaintances. The very formal *Greetings* “*Good morning !*”, “*Good afternoon !*” and “*Good evening !*” find a limited use among close friends (35%), but have a rather high distribution among superiors (70%), elderly people (62.5%), and strangers (55%). Another rather formal *Greeting* is “*How are you ?*”, which is used quite often for all groups of addressees, except strangers (only 57.5%) as compared to elderly people (80%) and close friends (82.5%). It is generally preferred by women for all groups of addressees. According to my observation, the *Greeting* “*Are you going alright ?*” was commonly used, however, this was not substantiated by the data obtained. Apart from the pre-supposed *Greetings*, the survey revealed a large variety of other *Greetings*, which are listed in Table 6. The table reveals that the *Greetings* differ significantly between genders ; there is not a single token which has been mentioned by both.

Table 6 : Elicited Greetings

<i>Male –29</i>	<i>Male 30+</i>	<i>Female –29</i>	<i>Female 30+</i>
<i>Hiya !</i>	<i>How are you today ?</i>	<i>Hi there !</i>	<i>How are things ?</i>
<i>How you doin' ?</i>		<i>Hi, how are you ?</i>	<i>How's things ?</i>
<i>What's up ?</i>		<i>Hey, how are you ?</i>	
<i>How are you today ?</i>		<i>Oy !</i>	
		<i>Nice meeting you !</i>	
		<i>How's things ?</i>	
		<i>What's happening ?</i>	
		<i>What's up ?</i>	
		<i>What's doing ?</i>	

4.4. Leave-Takings

The results of the use of pre-supposed and elicited *Leave-takings* will be presented in the same fashion as Greetings.

Tables 6 a—h : *Leave-Takings*

6 a : Good bye !

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	55	40	35	75	60
M	55	50	30	75	60
—29	60	45	40	85	60
30+	50	45	25	55	60

6 b : See you later !

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	65	40	90	30	55
M	65	45	80	45	50
—29	70	50	85	30	50
30+	60	35	85	45	65

6 c : See ya !

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	35	15	60	10	10
M	65	55	85	30	15
—29	65	30	85	20	15
30+	35	30	60	20	10

6 d : Bye !

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	75	65	90	65	60
M	60	50	65	35	35
—29	85	70	90	65	70
30+	55	45	65	35	25

6 e: Thank you !

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	60	70	50	55	50
M	55	65	55	70	70
–29	55	60	45	60	55
30+	60	75	60	65	65

6 f: Cheers !

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	15	15	25	10	10
M	35	30	20	0	5
–29	35	30	25	10	15
30+	15	15	25	0	0

6 g: Ta !

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	30	10	35	10	5
M	15	15	20	5	5
–29	30	10	30	10	5
30+	15	10	25	5	5

6 h: See you around !

	acquaint.	strangers	friends	superiors	elderly
F	25	5	25	0	0
M	30	25	45	15	0
–29	30	25	30	0	0
30+	15	5	40	15	0

The rather formal *Leave-taking* “*Good bye !*,” is quite frequently used for all groups of addressees, except for close friends (only 32.5%), as compared to superiors (75%) and elderly people (60%). It is generally preferred by women and younger people. Another quite formal *Leave-taking* is “*See you later !*”, which, in contrast to “*Good bye !*”, is very popular among friends (85%) and for fleeting acquaintances (65%), but less frequent for strangers (42.5%), superiors (37.5%),

and elderly people (52.5%). “*See you later!*”, as well as “*Good bye!*”, is preferred by females and, as far as strangers, fleeting acquaintances and close friends are concerned, also by younger people. Its informal abbreviation “*See ya!*” shows a similar pattern, however with slightly less frequency for superiors (20%) and elderly people (12.5%). In contrast to its formal counterpart, it is preferred by men. Another popular *Leave-taking* is “*Bye!*”, which is frequently used for fleeting acquaintances (70%) and close friends (77.5%), and less frequently for the remaining groups.

As stated in hypothesis 7, *Thanks* can also function as *Leave-takings*. Therefore “*Thank you!*”, and the British tokens “*Cheers!*” and “*Ta!*” have also been included in the pre-supposed *Leave-takings*. The use of “*Thank you!*” as a *Leave-taking* is quite common and popular for all addressees, particularly strangers (82.5%), as compared to close friends (52.5%) and elderly people (60%). This may be due to the fact that it is mainly used in service encounters, where interaction between strangers is commonplace. “*Thank you!*” is generally preferred by people above 30 and, as far as strangers and fleeting acquaintances are concerned, also by women. In contrast to that the use of the shorter forms “*Cheers!*” and “*Ta!*” is relatively low (varying between 5 % and 27.5%) for all groups of addressees. The only notable difference according to age and gender is the younger people’s preference for the token “*Cheers!*”. The *Leave-taking* “*See you around*” is only used for fleeting acquaintances (22.5%), strangers (15%) and close friends (35%). It shows a slight preference by male speakers. As far as the elicited *Leave-takings* are concerned, the results also seem to support the idea that women choose from a larger variety of different tokens.

Table 7 : Elicited Leave-Takings

<i>Male –29</i>	<i>Male 30+</i>	<i>Female –29</i>	<i>Female 30+</i>
<i>Bye Bye !</i>	<i>Cheerio !</i>	<i>Anon !</i>	<i>Ciao !</i>
<i>Ciao !</i>	<i>Bye, mate !</i>	<i>Speak to you soon !</i>	<i>Cheerio !</i>
		<i>Tschüß !</i>	
		<i>Ciao !</i>	
		<i>Nice to meet you !</i>	
		<i>Thanks !</i>	
		<i>Spot ya !</i>	

In summary there are indeed differences in the usage of *Greetings* and *Leave-takings* as far as the variables of age and gender are concerned. One of the findings was that men seem to prefer the typical Australian *Greetings* like “*G’Day !*” and “*How are you going ?*”, whereas women prefer to use the Standard English forms “*Hello !*”, “*Good bye !*”, and “*How are you ?*”. This observation seems to be supported by the results of a study carried out in 1965 by Michell and Delbridge. They found that 51% of men spoke the locally coloured *Broad Australian*, as compared to only 19% of the women, whereas the variety of *Cultivated Australian* was preferred by women (with 18%) compared to only 2 % of the men (Mitchell and Delbridge 1965 : 39).

Cultivated Australian is, and continues to be, the variety which carries overt prestige. It is the one associated with females, private elite schools, gentility, and an English heritage. Broad Australian carries covert prestige and is associated with males, the uneducated, commonness, and republicanism. (Horvath 1985 : 40)

In this connection women’s preference for the use of rather formal language can be observed, since they prefer the unabbreviated version “*See you later !*”, in contrast to men’s tendency to use its abbreviation “*See ya !*”. Formality also seems to be a decisive factor in age-related usage of *Greetings* and *Leave-takings*. This is,

for instance, reflected by older people's preference for the substitute *Leave-taking* "Thank you!" to "Cheers!", which is in turn preferred by younger people. The popularity of "Hey!" and "Bye!" by people under 30 is also indicative of this trend. As far as the addressee is concerned the same tendency can be observed: *Greetings* like "Hi!" and "Hey!" are hardly ever used for elderly people, whereas the very formal "Good morning!", etc. seems to be the preferred tokens for this group.

5. Conclusion

As stated at the beginning, the motivation for this study originally derived from the ambition to interact and to communicate appropriately in the L2 and to ask for the integration of pragmatic aspects into second language instruction. Due to the lack of data on the actual use of pragmatic idioms in everyday conversation, a survey was carried out to determine the choice of particular tokens used to perform *Greetings*, *Leave-takings*, *Thanks*, *Apologies*, and their acknowledgements in AusE. The data drawn from observation, interviews, and questionnaires was quite substantive and provided a valuable source for drawing some conclusions on age and gender-related usage of pragmatic idioms in this variety.

While there were no major differences concerning the age and gender-related choice of different tokens for *Thanks* and *Apologies*, some preferences were revealed for *Greetings* and *Leave-takings*. First, there are large age and gender-related differences as far as the degree of formality is concerned. For example, more formality is used by and towards older people, whereas young people prefer more informal tokens. The same phenomenon can be observed by a gender comparison: women tend to use the standard language, while men seem to prefer the local vernacular, which is often marked by informal or even ungrammatical tokens. It was also revealed that women and young people choose from a larger variety of tokens and are more inclined to create alternative expressions, while men

and elderly people prefer the standard forms. In general, the results of this study correspond to those of other sociolinguistic studies. However, as far as AusE is concerned, the speech acts under review in this survey have not been thoroughly dealt with yet, and leave room for further investigation.

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