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Greetings as social action in Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish service encounters – a pluricentric perspective

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Abstract: While greetings are performed in all cultures and open most conversations, previous studies suggest that there are cross-cultural differences between different languages in greeting behavior. But do speakers of different national varieties of the same language organize and perform their greeting behavior in similar ways? In this study, we investigate the sequential organization of greetings in relation to gaze behavior in the two national varieties of Swedish: Sweden Swedish spoken in Sweden and Finland Swedish spoken in Finland. In recent years, the importance of studying pluricentric languages from a pragmatic perspective has been foregrounded, not least within the framework of variational pragmatics. To date, most studies have focused on structural differences between national varieties of pluricentric languages. With this study, we extend the scope of variational pragmatics through adding an interactional, micro perspective to the broader macro analysis typical of this field. For this study, we have analyzed patterns for greetings in 297 video-recorded service encounters, where staff and customers interact at theatre box offices and event booking venues in Sweden and Finland. The study shows that there are similarities and differences in greeting behavior between varieties. There is a strong preference for exchanging reciprocal verbal greetings, one at a time, in both. There is also a similar organization of the greeting sequence, where customer and staff establish mutual gaze prior to the verbal greetings, thus signaling availability for interaction. The duration of mutual gaze and the timing of the greeting, however, differ between the two varieties. We have also conducted a multi modal analysis of gaze behavior in correlation to the greeting. We found that the customers and staff in the Finland Swedish data share mutual gaze before and during the verbal greeting, and often avert

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gaze *after* the verbal greetings. However, in the Sweden Swedish data, the participants often avert gaze *before* the verbal greetings. Our results thus indicate that both similarities and differences in pragmatic routines and bodily behavior exist between the two national varieties of Swedish. The present study on greeting practices in Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish should contribute to the field of variational pragmatics and to the development of pluricentric theory.

Keywords: greetings, gaze, variational pragmatics, cross-cultural, pluricentric languages, multimodal, service encounters, Sweden Swedish, Finland Swedish

1 Introduction

In the present article, we compare communicative patterns in Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish based on how *greetings* are performed in brief service interactions between customer and staff at theatre box offices and event booking venues in Finland and Sweden. Similar to many other languages, Swedish is a pluricentric language, i.e. a language that has more than one national center (Clyne 1992). Most research on pluricentric languages has focused on structural differences – in particular phonological, lexical and grammatical aspects – between national varieties of pluricentric languages. However, within the framework of *variational pragmatics* (Schneider and Barron 2008), pragmatic variation has been raised as an issue of importance in the study of pluricentric languages in use.

The present study is situated within this field, but extends its scope through adding an interactional, micro perspective to the broader macro analysis typical of variational pragmatics (see 2.2 below). For this purpose, we analyze how greetings are performed in video-recorded service encounters equally distributed across the two national varieties of Swedish. Greetings are social actions which lend themselves to cross-cultural comparisons: they exist in all cultures, and in all types of interactions. In that respect, they are well suited for systematic examination of which pragmatic routines are culture specific, and which may be universal (Kendon 1990: 153; Duranti 1997). We investigate how greetings are produced sequentially, and how they emerge in interaction through embodied actions, in particular in relation to gaze, with a focus on both similarities and differences between the two varieties. Thus, the present study on greeting practices in Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish should be seen as a contribution to the field of variational pragmatics as well as to the development of pluricentric theory more generally.

The article is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a background followed by a description of the data in Section 3. The results are presented in Section 4 and finally, in Section 5, we discuss the results from a pluricentric perspective and present a short conclusion in Section 6.

2 Background

This section is organized as follows: In Section 2.1 we give a brief background to Swedish as a pluricentric language. In 2.2, we introduce the theoretical and methodological frameworks used. In Sections 2.3 and 2.4, we give an account of selected research on service encounters and greetings respectively.

2.1 Swedish as a pluricentric language

Swedish is the main language in Sweden and one of two official languages in Finland, alongside Finnish. In Sweden the vast majority of the population of 10 million (Statistics Sweden 2017) has Swedish as their first language. In Finland, Swedish is a non-dominant variety where the Swedish-speaking Finns constitute a linguistic minority of 5.3 per cent of the population of about 5.5 million (Statistics Finland 2015; see also Östman and Mattfolk 2011). It is a minority with a strong legal, economic and cultural position, as a result of historical circumstances (Liebkind et al. 2007). The Finnish provinces formed part of the Swedish kingdom until 1809 when they became part of the Russian empire as an autonomous grand duchy. However, Swedish remained the language of the public sphere until Finnish slowly replaced it after Finland gained independence in 1917 (Saari 2012). The language contact between Finnish and Finland Swedish in Finland impacts on the communicative patterns used in both varieties. At the same time, the pragmatic similarities between Finland Swedish and Finnish could also be explained by shared sociocultural preferences.

Finland Swedish is an exceptionally well-documented non-dominant variety (Clyne 1992; Norrby et al. 2012), not least because of a tradition of active language cultivation. In particular, features of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary have been documented and contrasted with Sweden Swedish, but there has been much less focus on language use in various interactional contexts. With the exception of a few studies, such as Saari (1995) on politeness, address and greeting practices, Fremer (1996) on address and personal reference, Clyne et al. (2009) and Norrby et al. (2007) on reported address practices, our on-going

research program¹ is the first large-scale comparative study on pragmatic and interactional variation in the two national varieties of Swedish (e.g. Henricson and Nelson 2017; Norrby et al 2015a; 2015b; Lindström et al. 2017).

2.2 Variational pragmatics and the study of interaction

The variation found across varieties of pluricentric languages can fruitfully be analyzed within the framework of variational pragmatics (Schneider and Barron 2008). It combines insights from pragmatics and sociolinguistics, in that it examines pragmatic variation across geographical and social space in order to determine what impact macro-social factors such as region, social class, age, gender and ethnicity might have on language use (see Schneider and Barron 2008; Schneider 2010). It is related to cross-cultural pragmatics, but in contrast, variational pragmatics does not treat languages and cultures as homogenous wholes, but sets out to explore the pragmatic diversity found within a language/culture. Traditionally, in dialectology, regional varieties are synonymous with sub-national varieties of a language within a given nation. In variational pragmatics, however, regional variation includes also the complexities of national variation found across pluricentric languages. The focus of this inquiry is “primarily on macro social variation” (Schneider and Barron 2008: 18) such as age, gender etc. and their impact on the linguistic output at the micro level. In variational pragmatics, the micro level is understood as how different situational contexts, linked to power and social distance, give rise to changes in formality. Here, we extend the variational pragmatic approach to also include an interactional perspective where we analyze interactional routines and pragmatic devices associated with them, in this case greetings, in their micro-context of sequential development (see also Félix-Brasdefer 2015).

We draw on the assumptions made within Interactional Linguistics and Conversation Analysis (CA) that conversations are sequentially organized and incremental, and that an utterance is always produced in relationship to previous turns and makes as response relevant (Schegloff 1968; Sacks et al. 1974; Sacks 1987). In addition, conversation is a social activity (Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Sacks 1992; Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 2001). This means that speakers jointly construct the interaction turn by turn, and that each such turn is a social action shaped to display an orientation to the conversational context and the co-participants, so-called recipient design (Sacks et al. 1974).

¹ This research is supported financially by Riksbanken jubileumsfond (grant no. M12-0137:1).

While early CA scholarship predominantly focused on verbal interaction, multimodal aspects of communication such as gaze, body movement and handling of objects have been foregrounded more lately. Pioneers in this field are Charles Goodwin (e.g. Goodwin 1979, 2000, 2009, 2013; Goodwin and Goodwin 1986) and Lorenza Mondada (e.g. Mondada 2007, 2009, 2014, 2016) whose work demonstrate that participants in interaction mobilize a range of multimodal resources to achieve interactional goals. The interest in embodied action is attested not least by the growing number of edited volumes dedicated to multimodality and interaction (see e.g. Streeck et al. 2011; Haddington et al. 2014; Neville et al. 2014; Seyfeddinipur and Gullberg 2014). There is also some research of cross-cultural patterns from a CA perspective (see Stivers et al. 2009; Sidnell 2009 and contributions therein). Stivers et al. (2009) compared principles for turn taking in ten different languages and found strong evidence for universals in the underlying pattern of response latency. There were, however, clear differences in the average gap between turns. A study of great importance for the present study is the cross-cultural comparison of gaze in relation to talk conducted by Rossano et al. (2009). They investigated how gaze operates in questioning sequences between acquaintances in three languages found in three separate speech communities (Italian in Italy, Tzeltal in Chiapas, Mexico and Yêlî Dnye on Rossel Island, Papua New Guinea). Just as Stivers et al., they found both universals and cultural variation between the studied varieties: the gaze behavior of speakers was very similar regardless of speech community; the gaze behavior of recipients on the other hand, was culture specific.

2.3 Service encounters

Service encounter interaction is a type of goal-oriented institutional discourse where participants – who are usually unacquainted – collaborate to solve a task or to carry out a transaction (Drew and Heritage 1992). We define service encounters in accordance with Félix-Brasdefer (2015: 227) as “interactions where some kind of commodity (e.g. goods, information or both) is exchanged between a service provider (e.g. clerk, vendor) and a service seeker (e.g. customer, visitor, patron)”. The encounters usually have a projectable structure (Raymond and Lerner 2014: 238) and consist of the following phases: Opening (with greetings), Presenting a reason for the visit, Transaction, Leave-taking and Closing (see Linell 2009: 203 for a similar division of communicative action types). For a service encounter to be successful, both staff and customers need to make themselves available for communication in the opening phase and create mutual alignment (Mortensen and Hazel 2014), i.e. a

mutual *interactional space* (Mondada 2009). This is achieved through verbal means as well as through embodied actions such as mutual gaze.

Several recent studies have taken a multimodal approach in investigating how interaction in service encounters is conducted, showing the importance of various objects for how the interaction proceeds. For example, in a study of service encounters at a restaurant, Raymond and Lerner (2014) showed how the handling of artefacts at the counter launches a “recognizable service routine” (2014: 238) and in a study of requests in a public bar, Richardson and Stokoe (2014) demonstrated the salient role of the computer for carrying out the transaction. Fox and Heinemann (2015) found that customers in a shoe repair shop handle objects brought in for repair in ways that aligned with the production of the verbal request. In a study based on parts of the same corpus used for this study, Lindström et al. (2017) found that the handling of artefacts has a central role in structuring and projecting phases of an encounter and coordinating the participants’ intersubjective orientation to tasks at hand.

Embodied actions, such as gaze direction and body movement, have also been found to impact on how service encounters develop. In their study of requests for goods at a convenience store chain, Sorjonen and Raevaara (2014) found that interactional focus was established through the means of mutual gaze as well as the customer’s trajectory towards the counter. Mortensen and Hazel (2014) studied the organization of bodily and verbal behavior in openings of service encounters and found that gaze and the timing of greetings are closely related. In other words, embodied actions were essential for initiating interaction, and the pre-condition for the next action, i.e. making a verbal query or request.

2.4 Greetings

Kendon and Ferber, pioneers in researching greetings, defined greetings as a “unit of social interaction often observed when people come into another’s presence, which includes a distinctive exchange of gestures or utterances in which each person appears to signal to the other, directly and explicitly, that he has been seen” (see Kendon 1990: 153). In other words, lexical items conventionally signaling greeting may not be the only way to greet. Embodied actions, such as head nods or waves, may also function as a greeting, as may other verbal items than *hello* and *hi*, such as “howareyou” (see also Duranti 1997). Based on a comprehensive study on conversational openings between acquaintances, Pillet-Shore (2008), defines greetings as “verbal/lexical and body-behavioral actions that parties deploy to compose

greeting exchanges in the very first moments of encounters” (Pillet-Shore 2008: 26, 63). Furthermore, she suggests that greetings are a way for participants to move into *social co-presence* (or a mutual interactional space), preferably as soon as possible when the participants are *physically co-present*.

According to Kendon and Ferber (see Kendon 1990), gaze is a first step in initiating a greeting, and brief mutual gaze is a display of mutual attention (Kendon 1967). Later research on gaze confirms the role of gaze in interaction, and suggests that gaze operates on a sequential level and is part of a larger action performed in interaction (see Stivers and Rossano 2010; Streeck 2014; Rossano 2012, 2013; Rossano et al. 2009). In that respect, speaker gaze is an action, and may function as a means to mobilize a response (Stivers and Rossano 2010), such as a greeting. Pillet-Shore (2008) found that the greeting-deliverers often gaze at the greeting recipient before/at the moment of the greeting. As the above studies have shown, gaze is crucial in the organization of greetings.

From a cross-cultural perspective, greetings in different languages have been compared and contrasted. As previous research on greetings has concluded that the greeting ritual is an essential communicative competence to members of all speech communities (Duranti 1997), there is good reason to assume that the greeting ritual is well suited for systematic examination of what are universal patterns for communication and what are culture specific (Kendon and Ferber 1973: 153; Duranti 1997). For example, Pinto (2008) conducted an ethnographic study of greetings in peninsular Spanish compared to US English, and discuss greetings from a politeness perspective. Félix-Brasdefer (2015) conducted a large-scale pragmatic-discursive study of audio-recorded service interactions in Mexico and the USA and found both similarities and differences in the organization of the greeting sequence. Wierzbicka (1985) argued that greetings are language- and culture specific by comparing Polish and Australian English (she did, however, not investigate them empirically). Schlieben-Lange and Weydt (1978, see translation in Schneider and Barron 2008: 8–11) discussed regional variation in greetings within Germany, and noted that certain lexical forms of greetings were restricted to some regions.

As outlined in this section, previous research has covered greetings, gaze in introductions, cross-cultural differences in gaze and greeting behavior respectively, service encounters as well as, to some extent, differences in pragmatic behavior in pluricentric languages. None of the above studies have, however, combined these perspectives. In our study, we contrast Sweden Swedish and Finland Swedish greeting behavior in order to compare how speakers of two national varieties of a pluricentric language (Swedish) perform greetings, verbally and bodily, and to see whether their behavior differs or not.

3 Data and analysis

The data consist of video-recorded service encounter interactions collected in 2013–2016 at five theatre box offices and event booking venues in Finland and five in Sweden.² All interactions took place in Swedish between a total of 297 customers and 20 staff members (6 in Finland and 14 in Sweden). Table 1 accounts for the customers' gender, as well as the location where the recordings were made.

Table 1: The customers.

Location	Females	Males	TOTAL
Fin: Helsinki	42	12	54
Fin: Turku (2 venues)	62	15	77
Fin: Raseborg	7	2	9
Fin: Vasa	7	2	9
Swe: Gothenburg (2 venues)	36	36	72
Swe: Stockholm	32	15	47
Swe: Karlstad	13	8	21
Swe: Umeå	3	5	8
TOTAL	202	95	297

As shown in Table 1, 202 customers were female and 95 male. Of the staff members, all six in Finland were female, and 6 out of 14 were male in Sweden. All customers but one were L1-speakers of Swedish in the Swedish data set and in Finland five customers had Finnish as their first language. Nevertheless, these customers greeted the service provider in Swedish. In all of these encounters, a customer buys tickets to, or requests information about, theatre performances and other events. The interactions varied considerably in length; the shortest lasted for only 11 seconds, while the longest lasted for 13 minutes. All customers were asked as they entered the venue if they were willing to participate in a research study. After the recording, all participants received more information and signed a participation agreement form.

² The data was recorded by the research program *Interaction and Variation in Pluricentric Languages* which compares interactional patterns in the two national varieties of Swedish in three domains: service, education and health-care. The research program is supported by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (Grant ID: M12:0137). More descriptions of the program and some of its findings can be found in Norrby et al. (2012); Norrby et al (2015a, 2015b) and Lindström et al. (2017).

The physical design of the venues falls into two basic configurations: those where the customer approaches the counter unobstructed (see Figure 1, “open design”), and those where staff and customer may have limited vision of one another due to a glass division (see Figure 2, “closed design”).



Theatre in Sweden

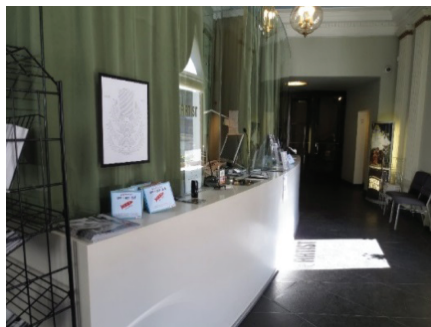


Theatre in Finland

Figure 1: Counter with open design.



Theatre in Sweden



Theatre in Finland

Figure 2: Counter with closed design.

The configuration illustrated in Figure 1 allows for mutual visibility and early recognition, whereas an approach towards a counter in the venues illustrated by Figure 2, is usually done from the side which results in delayed recognition (Mondada 2009: 1991), since eye contact can be made only in the last few steps towards the counter.

The regulation of the flow of customers follows different institutional practices. At most venues in Sweden, customers take a queue number as they enter the premises, and staff summon the customers in turn by pressing a button that emits a beeping sound as the ticket number is displayed on a monitor. At other venues (both in Finland and Sweden), customers walk straight up to the counter, or wait in line for their turn. All circumstances described above could potentially affect the initiation of the greeting sequence.

We conducted two types of analyses. First, we analyzed if the greeting sequence in each encounter consists of mutual greetings or not, and whether these were produced one at the time or in overlap. This more quantitative analysis gave an overview of the organization of verbal greetings. Second, we carried out a more thorough multimodal analysis of a subset of 56 recordings (28 Sweden Swedish, and 28 Finland Swedish interactions) with special attention to how gaze correlates with the verbal greetings.³ The participants' gaze were easily visible in these recordings, and some of them were filmed with 3–5 cameras, offering an even better view of gaze direction. These data were recorded at different venues in Sweden and Finland. We chose recordings both from venues with open and closed designs and where customers had similar errands in order to get maximal comparability between the data sets, and eliminating, to the extent possible, the risk that we would compare contextual or situational settings rather than pragmatic patterns.

3.1 Transcription

We transcribed the data in such a way that it will be possible to follow how greetings emerge in interaction in correlation to gaze behavior (for an in-depth discussion on how to capture embodied action through multimodal transcription, see Mondada 2016), and illustrate some actions with images from the video recordings where relevant. Below we show an excerpt from the data in order to explain how to interpret our multimodal transcriptions, and how they aid in

3 In each recording, the opening sequence from the moment the customer is visible in the frame up to the point where the customer presents the reason for the visit has been analysed. This means that approximately ten separate gaze actions have been measured and analysed in each recording. For example, we have measured the time from when the customer and staff may have visual contact to the point where one participant seeks gaze, the time between one participant seeking gaze to when the interlocutors engage in mutual gaze, the duration of each participant's gaze directed towards the other, and at which point each interlocutor averts gaze. This has also been timed in relation to the verbal greeting.

illustrating how a greeting emerges in interaction.⁴ In the excerpt, a customer (C) visits a box office at a theatre in Sweden in order to pick up pre-booked tickets. The staff member (S) summons the customer by pressing a button which then emits a beeping sound in line 1.

Excerpt 1. Opening a service encounter (Swedish venue, closed design)

01 com: SUMMONS BY BEEPING SOUND
 02 (2.4±) (0.6≠#) (0.1*) (0.1#) (0.3≠)# (0.3)
 com ±C enters
 C ≠ (0.5) ----->≠
 S * (2.2) ----->
 Im. #im1.1 #im1.2 #Im1.3



Im.1.1



Im.1.2



Im.1.3

03 C: ≠he#j≠ #
 hi
 C ≠-->≠
 S ----->
 Im. #im1.4 #im1.5
 04 S: hej#
 hi
 Im. #im1.6



Im.1.4



Im.1.5



Im.1.6

⁴ The transcriptions are made using the principles developed by Mondada (2014 [2001]). All transcription symbols are also found in the Appendix.

- 05 (0.7) (0.1*) (0.6)
 S ----->*
- 06 C: *ja ska hämta ut biljetter som ja* har bokat*
 I'm collecting tickets that I have booked
- S *?(0.5)-?->*
- 07 S: mm

Line 2 in the transcription has information about how much time elapses between different actions performed by the participants, and the lines below line 2 has information about which actions are performed (only actions relevant for this study are included, such as movements and gaze direction). The first line marked *com* (comments) in this example tells us that the customer enters the picture recorded by the video camera after 2.4 seconds. The video camera is placed so that it records the moment the staff member and customer have clear visibility of each other; in other words, the participants are physically co-present (Pillet-Shore 2008: 17) at this point. The second (marked with C) line marks the customer's gaze towards the staff member (beginning and end marked with ≠ around the dotted arrow, duration 0.5 seconds), and the third line shows the staff member's gaze towards the customer (beginning and end marked with *). The fourth line marked *im* shows where in this series of actions the images are captured. In this case, image 1.1 is from exactly 0.6 seconds after the customer enters the recorded frame, and illustrates how the customer gazes towards the staff member who looks down on some sheets of papers on her desk. The participants' gaze direction is illustrated with arrows in the images. The staff member turns her head towards the customer (im. 1.2) who, after mutual gaze is established, briefly looks down (im. 1.3). In line 3, the customer looks at the staff member again and greets the staff member (im. 1.4) and then averts her gaze again (im 1.5). The staff member returns the greeting and then averts her gaze (im. 1.6). This is followed by the customer presenting the reason for the visit, to pick up pre-booked tickets, in line 6.

4 Results – patterns for greetings in Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish

In this section, we present the results of this study in the following order: In 4.1 we account for typical greeting patterns in both varieties. In 4.2. we turn

to cases that deviate from this format as these cases shed further light on the relationship between gaze and greeting, as well as how the physical and situational context influence the trajectory of the greeting sequence. In other words, the deviations help pin-point how interlocutors usually perform greetings and how greetings are organized in interaction. In Section 4.3, we present quantitative results based on the categories in 4.1 and 4.2 with a focus on comparing patterns for greetings in Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish.

4.1 Typical greeting sequences

In Excerpt 1 (Section 3.1) above, we saw a typical pattern for a greeting sequence. Below, Excerpts 2 and 3 also exemplify typical greeting sequences, and here we discuss the excerpts in more detail.

In Excerpt 2, the customer approaches the counter at a box office in Finland in order to ask about a guided tour of the theatre in which she is going to participate.

Excerpt 2. (Finnish venue, closed design)

01 (0.5≠) (0.2*) (0.5#)

C ≠(0.9)----->

S *(1.5)----->

Im. #im.2.1



Im. 2.1

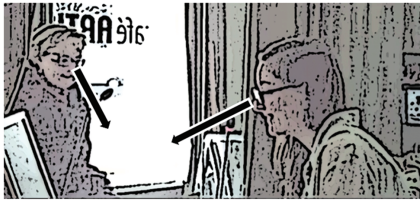
02 C: *hej*

hi

C ----->

S ----->

- 03 S: *h#ej*#*
hi
- C >≠ ((averts gaze towards counter and then turns her head towards the room))
- S --->* ((averts gaze towards computer screen))
- Im. #im.2.2



Im. 2.2

- 04 C: *vi ska ha eh en guidni#*&ng här kvart i me nån Förnamn h*
 we're having a guided tour here quarter past with a FIRSTNAME h
- C ≠(4.0) ----->
- C & ((comes to a standstill))
- S *(2.7) ----->
- 05 S: *me Förnam*n* (.) *okej*
 with FIRSTNAME okay
- C ----->>
- S ----->*

In line 1, the customer is approaching the counter from the side as she turns her head toward the staff member. The staff member turns her head towards the customer, and, in Image 2.1 she is looking straight at the customer. This head and gaze orientation functions as a signal of readiness for engaging in interaction, and once the interlocutors have established mutual gaze, the customer produces a verbal greeting in line 2, which is reciprocated by the staff member in line 3. According to previous research, the most common pattern for greetings is that they occur in pairs (see e.g. Schegloff 1968; Schegloff and Sacks 1973). This is also the case in our data: in most cases a conventional verbal greeting is followed by a conventional greeting in the next turn (see Section 4.3), and most common is the use of *hej* [hi]. Furthermore, previous research suggests that mutual gaze is usually

established before the exchange of verbal greetings (Kendon 1967; Mortensen and Hazel 2014), as is the case in the above excerpt.

Pillet-Shore (2008: 66) also points out that it is out of the ordinary when a greeting participant does not gaze at their recipient.

Immediately after the exchange of greetings, the customer and staff both avert their gaze; the staff member towards the computer screen (im. 2.2) while the customer briefly looks down on the counter, before turning her head to her left towards the room. The aversion of gaze correlates with the transition from the greeting into the next phase of the interaction, and the customer proceeds to present her reason for the visit (l. 4). At the same time, she comes to a standstill, and customer and staff engage in mutual gaze again.

Maintaining mutual gaze through the greeting, as in Excerpt 2, is more common in the Finland Swedish data than in the Sweden Swedish data where customer and staff often avert their gaze from each other before producing the verbal greeting. This is illustrated in excerpt 3, from a box office at a Swedish theatre where the customer is picking up pre-booked tickets for a lunch theatre.

Excerpt 3. (Swedish venue, closed design)

01 (2.2±) (0.5≠) (0.3*#) (0.3≠)#

com. ±((customer enters))

C ≠ (0.6)----->≠

S *(0.5)---->

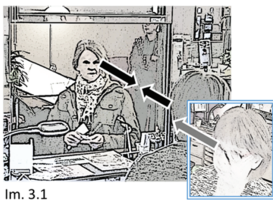
Im. #im.3.1 #im.3.2

02 C: *h*e#j*

hi

S ->* ((averts gaze towards computer screen))

Im. #im.3.3



Im. 3.1



Im. 3.2



Im. 3.3

03 S: *hej*

hi

04 ((0.5))

- 05 C: *skulle hämta: lunchteaterbiljetter men vi blir fem stycken: där*
 picking up lunch theatre tickets but we will be five there
- 06 C: *i stället ((0.6)) där var nu mret där*
 instead there was the number there

The customer has her head turned toward the staff member as she takes the last steps towards the counter (l.1). The staff member raises her head and gazes towards the customer, and once they have engaged in mutual gaze for a brief moment (l.1, im. 3.1), the customer averts her gaze towards the number ticket in her hand (im. 3.2). The customer then produces the verbal greeting with averted gaze (l. 2). At the same time, the staff member averts her gaze and turns her head towards the computer screen before reciprocating the greeting (l. 3), followed by the customer presenting her reason for the visit (l. 5–6).

In both Excerpts 2 and 3, the customer and staff avert their gaze from each other in direct adjacency to the verbal greeting. Even though the duration and timing of the averted gaze differ somewhat between Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish service encounters (see further in Section 4.3), the function of the averted gaze seems to be the same. Rossano (2012) found that participants usually turn their gaze away from each other when an action sequence is completed (see also Mortensen and Hazel 2014; Streeck 2014). In our data, the averted gaze usually lands on artefacts relevant for the ensuing interaction – such as documents or mobile phones containing booking references, wallets, handbags and computer screens. Artefacts such as these can be deployed to signal readiness for doing business (i.e. a wallet may signal readiness to make a transaction, see Lindström et al. 2017), and in the above examples the staff members’ orientation to the computer screen at this point functions as a way to signal readiness to progress the customer’s order.

4.2 Deviant cases

Some cases in our data deviate from the typical format of greeting sequences described above. These deviant cases highlight the organizational power of gaze and greetings, and show how contextual and situational circumstances may affect the realization of the opening practices in service encounters. These cases include overlapping verbal greetings (Section 4.2.1), non-reciprocal verbal greetings (Section in 4.2.2) and cases where there are no conventional verbal greetings at all (Section 4.2.3).

4.2.1 Overlapping greetings

There are only a few cases of overlapping greetings in the data, and they are equally unusual in the Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish data sets (see Section 4.3.). One such example is found in Excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4 . (Finnish venue, closed design)

01 (0.1#) (1.0≠±*)# (0.3≠*) (0.2)#
 com. ±((customer reaches for pocket))
 C >>----->≠ ≠(0.2)----->
 S *(0.3)-> *
 Im. #im4.1 #im4.2 #im4.3



Im. 4.1

Im. 4.2

Im. 4.3

02 C: [he≠j,]
 hi
 03 S: [hej*,]
 hi
 C -->≠
 S *(2.5)---->
 04 ((1.5))
 05 C: *en biljett fö Ka^{*}ppan: i morgon:*
 a ticket for the Overcoat tomorrow
 S ---->*

In Excerpt 4, both customer and staff seek their interlocutor's gaze, but their efforts are mismatched. They do not exchange gaze before the verbal greeting, and this results in overlapping greetings. In this case, the customer approaches the counter from the side and gazes towards the staff member, showing availability for interaction (im. 4.1). However, the staff member is busy looking at her computer screen (im. 4.1). When a staff member is oriented towards a screen before greetings have been exchanged, it signals unavailability (as opposed to in

a later stage when the same action is used to signal readiness to serve a customer, see Lindström et al. 2017 as well as 4.2.1 above). The customer then averts his gaze as he reaches for something in his pocket (im. 4.2), and at the same time, the staff member turns her head and looks at the customer, signaling readiness to begin the interaction. The customer then looks up (im 4.3), but the staff member simultaneously averts her gaze again (probably because the customer, having been occupied with a search in his pocket, was unavailable for initiating interaction just before). Both parties produce their verbal greeting at the same time (l. 2–3).

To conclude, overlapping greetings typically occur when one of the (to be) interlocutors is occupied with something else (talking to someone else, solving another task or looking at something else) as the customer approaches the counter, and due to this does not manage the timing of the initiation of the encounter together with their interlocutor. As pointed out by Pillet-Shore (2008: 80), synchronizing gaze is bilateral work, and mutual gaze is an interactional achievement. In addition, some overlapping greetings are the result of another person blocking the view between customer and staff. All overlapping greetings in our data have in common that mutual gaze has not been established before the greeting exchange. However, lack of such mutual gaze does not necessarily result in overlapping greetings.

The participants do not treat the simultaneous greeting in Excerpt 4 as problematic. In their seminal paper from 1974, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson noted that speakers talk one party at the time, but that brief overlaps are usually not repaired. This is also the case in our data in those few cases where an overlapping greeting occurs. We have found only one case in the data where the overlapping greeting is repaired with a repetition of the greeting by the customer.

4.2.2 Non-reciprocal verbal greetings

There are only a few cases of non-reciprocal verbal greetings in the data. As we saw in 4.1, the relevant next after a first greeting is a second greeting (Schegloff 2007). In all non-reciprocal cases, a staff member initiates the interaction with a greeting, but the customer goes on to present the reason for the visit instead of returning the greeting. This is illustrated in Excerpt 5 where a customer comes to buy tickets for a hockey game.⁵

⁵ The analyses of Excerpts 5 and 6 do not require images in the transcriptions.

Excerpt 5. (Swedish venue, closed design)

01 (1.9) (*0.6)
 S *?(2.1)----->
 02 S: [h#ej]
 hi
 03 C: [en] *pensionärsbiljett till hockeyn** =
 one senior ticket for (the) hockey =
 C *?(5.0) ---->>
 S -----> *
 04 S: = *ja*
 = yes

In (5), the staff member seeks and establishes eye contact with the customer and greets the customer as he takes the final steps towards the ticket counter. The customer does not greet verbally, but presents the reason for his visit in line 3 after the staff member has delivered his greeting. The venue is very busy at the time of the recording. There are other customers standing in line awaiting their turn, and there is also a time limit: the hockey game is about to start, and transactions are carried out quickly and efficiently. As soon as one customer is ready, the next in line steps forward. In our data, it seems that not returning a verbal greeting depends on extraordinary circumstances, such as time constraints and others waiting.

4.2.3 No verbal greeting

In some interactions in the data, there are no verbal greetings at all.⁶ This is illustrated in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6. Box office, Sweden: Ticket number question

01 S: *mm* (.) *nummer sext*ify*[ra]
 mm number sixtyfour ((leans forward))
 02 C: [x] (*de var här ja*)
 it was here yes ((responds while
 approaching counter))
 S *?(4.0)---->

⁶ At least not conventional verbal greetings: As Duranti (1997) points out, not only *hi*, *hello* etc. function as greetings, but it is an empirical question what speakers of a particular language use as greetings.

Table 2: The organization of verbal greetings in the data.

	Interactions	Reciprocal conventional greetings	Overlapping greeting	Non-reciprocal greetings	Lack of greetings
Finland	149	135 (90.5 %)	3 (2 %)	7 (4.5 %)	4 (2.5 %)
Sweden	148	130 (88 %)	3 (2 %)	4 (2.5 %)	11 (7.5 %)
Total	297	265 (89 %)	6 (2 %)	11 (3.5 %)	15 (5 %)

As shown in Table 2, the most common pattern in both varieties is that staff members and customers exchange reciprocal greetings, one at the time (in total 89%). This pattern is very similar between the two investigated varieties (90.5% in the Finland Swedish and 88% in the Sweden Swedish data). Further, the opening sequence is orderly in both varieties in the sense that there are only three examples of overlapping verbal greetings in each dataset (2%). The two varieties are very similar also with regard to non-reciprocal greetings. As Table 2 shows, there are only a handful of cases of non-reciprocal greetings in both data sets. Accordingly, our data suggest that a reciprocal verbal greeting sequence, produced without overlap, is the standard format for verbally opening service encounters in both Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish. The only difference between the two varieties as shown in Table 2 is cases where there are no conventional verbal greetings at all. This is more common in the Sweden Swedish data, but there are few cases.

As mentioned in Section 4.1, there are differences between the two varieties in the timing and duration of mutual gaze in relation to the greetings. In order to investigate this in more detail, we have analyzed 56 comparable recordings (see Section 3). In most of these recordings, reciprocal conventional greetings were exchanged. In 11 recordings (7 from the SS data and 4 from the FS data), something else than a conventional greeting opens the interaction.

In this sub-set of the 56 recordings, the participant who seeks eye contact first also tends to greet first, a pattern noted also by Mortensen and Hazel (2014). Gaze seeking by one participant often results in mutual gaze being established before the verbal greeting: in the Finland Swedish data in 18 of 28 interactions (64%), and in the Sweden Swedish data in 16 of 28 interactions (57%). In other words, it is common to establish mutual gaze before the greeting in both data sets. The duration of mutual gaze differs somewhat between the two varieties, which is illustrated by Table 3.

As Table 3 shows, the Finland Swedish customers and staff engage in mutual gaze not only before the verbal greeting, but in eight cases (28.5%)

Table 3: Distribution of mutual gaze (MG) in relation to the verbal greeting sequence in 56 Finland Swedish (FS) and Sweden Swedish (SS) service encounters.

	FS (28)	SS (28)	TOTAL (56)
MG before greetings	8 (28.5 %)	12 (43 %)	20 (36 %)
MG before and during first greeting	1	3 (11 %)	4 (7 %)
MG before and during both greetings	7 (25 %)	1	8 (14 %)
MG during both greetings	3 (11 %)	6 (21.5 %)	9 (16 %)
MG before, during and after greetings	2	0	2
MG during and after greetings	1	0	1
MG after greetings	2	2	4 (14 %)
No MG	4 (14 %)	4 (14 %)	8 (14 %)

they extend this mutual gaze through the exchange of verbal greetings (as in Excerpt 2 above), and in two cases even after the exchange of greetings. The Sweden Swedish staff and customers only do so in four cases (14 %), and they never engage in mutual gaze for as long as the Finland Swedish participants do (that is, before, during and after the verbal greeting).

These findings suggest that there are two recurring sequential patterns in this data set, Patterns A and B (see Table 4). In the first, Pattern A, customer and staff direct their gaze at their soon to be interlocutor. After achieving mutual gaze, the verbal greetings are exchanged. Only after this, the customer, and often the staff member, avert their gaze. The customer often averts gaze before the staff member, regardless of whom seeks gaze first, which could have to do with the social roles of customer and staff member. Pattern A is more common in the Finland Swedish data. In the second pattern, Pattern B, customer and staff direct their gaze towards each other and engage in mutual gaze. After this the

Table 4: The two most common sequential patterns for opening service encounters in our data. X and Y stands for either participant, whereas C and S illustrates the most common pattern for the participants customer and staff.

Sequential pattern A	Sequential pattern B
X: Seeking eye-contact	X: Seeking eye-contact
Y: Seeking eye-contact	Y: Seeking eye-contact
= Mutual gaze	= Mutual gaze
X: Verbal greeting (mutual gaze)	C: Averting gaze to artefact
Y: Verbal greeting (mutual gaze)	(S: Averting gaze to artefact)
C: Averting gaze to artefact	X: Verbal greeting
(S: Averting gaze to artefact)	Y: Verbal greeting

customer (and in many cases also the staff member) averts gaze *before* exchanging reciprocal greetings. This pattern is more common in the Sweden Swedish data. In pattern A, the mutual gaze and the verbal greeting is performed as a unit. In pattern B, mutual gaze is brought to a close before the verbal greetings. These patterns hold true regardless of the type of venue (open or closed design) where the recordings were made, a fact which suggests that it is a pragmatic difference between the two investigated varieties.

To summarize the results of the analysis, the sequential organization of greetings in service encounters is very similar between the two national varieties of Swedish, with the notable exception that the timing and duration of gaze differs. In Section 5 below, we discuss this further, with a focus on the similarities and differences between Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish service encounters and how these findings can benefit Variational Pragmatics.

5 Discussion

The main objective of this study has been to contribute to research on pluricentric languages by investigating similarities and differences in how greetings are performed in Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish. We have focused on the correlation between gaze and verbal greetings, as well as the sequential ordering of greetings, in the two varieties in order to investigate universal and culture specific pragmatic patterns.

Previous research within multimodal CA has highlighted the importance of gaze (alongside other bodily means) in correlation to verbal actions (see Section 2). Here, we have drawn on this body of research in order to investigate the sequential ordering of greetings, and how greetings emerge in service encounters.⁷ We have found, similar to other studies, that gaze regulates the timing of the greeting in both the investigated varieties. The averted gaze when the customer is approaching the counter functions as a way to signal unavailability – not until a customer is close to the counter do the interlocutors turn their gaze towards each other, thus signaling availability for interaction. In Pillet-Shore's words, the participants have then become physically co-present, and the next step is to become socially co-present, which is usually performed through a verbal greeting (Pillet-Shore 2008). The first step towards performing the verbal greeting in our data is to exchange mutual gaze (see also Mortensen and Hazel 2014; Pillet-Shore 2008; Kendon and Ferber 1973; Kendon 1990).

7 Of course, there could be different or similar patterns in other activities and settings.

This initial mutual gaze mobilizes the next action (see also Stivers and Rossano 2010) – reciprocal verbal greetings. Subsequently, the customer averts gaze, as does the staff member in most cases. The averted gaze here does not necessarily function as a signal of unavailability, but rather as a way of ratifying the closure of an action sequence and showing readiness to move into the next phase of the encounter – the customer presenting the reason for the visit and the staff member providing service (c.f. Lindström et al 2017, see also Streeck 2014; Rossano 2012, 2013).

The verbal greeting functions as a transition between not being in interaction and being in interaction. In this article, we have not focused on the indexicality of the greeting form, apart from mentioning that the most common greeting is the neutral *hej* (equivalent to “hello” and “hi”). Other forms occur in the data, and sometimes index gender and age (see Nilsson and Norrby 2017; Nilsson et al. 2017). In most cases in the investigated service encounters the greeting seems to, more than indexing gender or age, neutrally perform the opening of the interaction (c.f. Duranti 1997). This is further highlighted by the fact that when the greeting position is filled by other verbal utterances (such as questions about who is next in line) there is no verbal greeting, but instead, such summon-answer sequences function as the openers of the interaction. In other words, gaze and/or other verbal matter can signal social co-presence when a verbal greeting is lacking.

Finland Swedish and Sweden Swedish show several similarities in the organization of greetings: overlapping greetings are equally uncommon, the sequential actions follow the pattern averted gaze, seeking and achieving mutual gaze, and averting gaze, and, in both varieties, the most common pattern is that customer and staff exchange reciprocal verbal greetings one at the time.

Given that other studies have found that Finland Swedish interactional patterns show similarities with Finnish patterns (see e.g. Saari 1995), greater differences could have been expected between Sweden Swedish and Finland Swedish openings. Studies on Finnish service encounters suggest that there is a tendency towards more non-reciprocal verbal greetings than in our data. Lappalainen (2009) reports that 23% of the Finnish service encounters she analyzed did not include verbal reciprocal greetings.⁸ Sorjonen and Raevaara (2014) also note that it was relatively often the case that the customer did not return the greeting before presenting the reason for the visit, even though customers reciprocated the staff's greeting in the majority of interactions. The

8 It should be noted that Lappalainen investigated a slightly different type of service encounter than we have done here.

preference for reciprocal greetings in Finland Swedish suggests that it has more in common with Sweden Swedish than with Finnish in this case.⁹

There are, however, also important differences between the two investigated varieties with regard to the duration of the mutual gaze and the timing of the greeting. This results in two sequential patterns for openings. Many customers and staff in the Finland Swedish data share mutual gaze before and during the verbal greeting, and often avert gaze *after* the verbal greetings. In the Sweden Swedish data, the participants often avert gaze *before* the verbal greetings. This holds true regardless of whether the design of the counter is open or closed. This, of course, does not mean that there are no situational or socially relevant factors that have implications on the outcome of the greeting sequence. Factors such as whether it is clear who is next in line and whether both parties are available for initiating the interaction obviously play a part in the organization of the greeting sequence.

Rossano et al. (2009) suggest that the fact that the three cultures compared in their study most likely have had no contact, the similarities in gaze patterns “can be presumed to derive from universal tendencies or from systematic functions within an underlying shared interaction system” (2009: 203). From our study, we cannot draw such conclusions as the speakers of the two investigated national varieties have close contact. Similarities could be due to universals, but it could also be the case that these two varieties (and perhaps also other Nordic countries) constitute a pragma-cultural area, where these patterns are common. The reasons for the differences are also, at this stage, difficult to pinpoint. They could simply be “local implementation[s] of a universal” (Stivers et al. 2009: 10590), or, in other words, culture specific “calibrations” (Stivers et al. 2009: 10590) of gaze organization in greeting sequences. It is possible that Finland Swedes prefer longer eye contact as a way to “double-check” the establishment of the initial interactional contract through verbal and ocular means, i.e. seeking to secure that the participants have achieved social co-presence – but in order to establish that and the cultural underpinnings of such a practice, other types of investigations would have to be carried out.

The activity type (service encounters between strangers) and the participants roles (one professional and one lay-person) also affect the greeting sequence. In their studies of interactions between interlocutors who know each other well, both Kendon and Ferber (1973) and Pillet-Shore (2008) found that the greetings were performed in other ways than in our service encounters. For example, Pillet-Shore (2008: 64) pointed out that the participants in her data do not produce greetings in a routine-like fashion, but adapt them to their current recipients. This is not always the

⁹ The preference for reciprocal greetings in the opening sequence does not seem to be universal. In the US and Mexican service encounters investigated by Felix-Brasdefer reciprocal greetings were only used in as little as in 10.7% and 11.4% respectively.

case in our data – some staff members clearly have individual preferences for the timing of the greeting (some always greet first, regardless of who seeks gaze first), and also show preference for certain forms of greetings (for example, one staff member always greets with the reduplication *hejhej* [hi hi]). In our data, there is a clear preference for greetings being produced without overlap, while the opposite is preferred in encounters between friends (see e.g. Pillet-Shore 2012). Also, Kendon and Ferber (1973) found that when friends have visual contact they would often wave and call out verbal greetings at some distance, before approaching the other interlocutor. In our data, long distance verbal greetings and waves are absent. There are apparently differences in greeting behavior between interactions where the participants are strangers, and interactions where the participants know each other. And, there are similarities in greeting organization in service encounters between different languages and varieties. For example, there are several similarities regarding the choreography of mutual gaze and verbal greetings between our data and the studies on openings in service encounters conducted by Sorjonen and Raevaara (2014) on Finnish and Mortensen and Hazel (2014) on Danish.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study shows that there are both similarities and differences in embodied actions in the national varieties of a pluricentric language, in this case Swedish. There is plenty still to investigate when it comes to universal and culture specific performances of pragmatic routines between pluricentric, and other, languages. Our results demonstrate the importance of also taking into account the sequential organization and embodied interaction when comparing greeting behavior cross-culturally. In this sense, a micro analysis of the type performed here has much to offer Variational Pragmatics.

To our knowledge, research on pluricentric languages has not investigated interactional patterns and bodily behavior to any great extent, and we suggest that this perspective on national variation benefits the theoretical framework Variational Pragmatics. Where Variational Pragmatics predominantly has taken a quantitative approach, and to a large part investigated experimental data (see however exceptions in Félix-Brasdefer 2015; O’Keeffe and Adolphs 2008; Placencia 2008), our study contributes to the understanding of pragmatic similarities and differences between different varieties by using both quantitative and qualitative methods in the analyses of naturally occurring interactions. The use of multimodal analyses highlights that pragmatic routines are performed not only through verbal means, but through other bodily means as well, and that embodied pragmatic routines (in this case gaze) may differ between varieties of a language.

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Appendix

Transcription symbols.

The conventions for multimodal transcription are from Mondada (2014 [2001]) and adapted to this study.

,	level intonation
˘	slightly rising intonation
[point of overlap onset
]	point where overlapping talk stops
=	"latching", i.e. no silence between two adjacent utterances
(.)	micropause, less than 0.2 seconds
((0.5))	silences timed in tenths of a second
(0.5)	elapsed time between embodied actions
va:	lengthening of a sound
v <u>a</u>	emphasis indicated by underlining
(v <u>a</u>)	uncertain transcription of talk
?	uncertain transcription of gaze timing
((va))	meta comments
± / &	Symbols mark where embodied actions described as meta comments begin.
* *	The duration of a speaker's gaze towards the other speaker is marked with two identical symbols (one symbol per participant).
*--->	One speaker's gaze towards the other continues across subsequent lines
---->*	until the same symbol is reached.
> >	A speaker's gaze towards the other begins before the excerpt's beginning
---> >	The action described continues after the excerpt's end.
#	The exact moment at which a screen shot has been taken.

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