Inga-Lill Grahn

Thanking actions: interactional variation in Swedish-language service encounters in Sweden and Finland

Abstract: The social action of thanking is an everyday practice in most cultures and, as such, it has been the focus of contrastive studies of different languages, cultures, and countries. This article focuses on the sequential organisation of the action of thanking in Swedish, which is a pluricentric L1 in Sweden and Finland. The study's data are actions of thanking realised through the Swedish interjection *tack* ['thank you'] in service encounters in the two countries. By analysing the sequential position of actions that are similar in form, their potentially different interactional functions can be examined. The actions of thanking are described in two different sequential positions in relation to adjacency pairs, as either responsive or initiating thanking actions. After an initiating thanking action a response is conditionally relevant or expected. A contrastive analysis of these responses reveals that in 73 % of the cases they constitute another action of thanking with the word *tack*. In Finland, the proportion amounts to 81 % and in Sweden it amounts to 65 %. This contrasts with my earlier study on thanking in medical encounters in the two varieties (Grahn 2019), where a slightly higher proportion of thanking actions as responses to initiating thanks was reported in Sweden than in Finland. In sum, sequential position is highlighted as critical for the management of interpersonal relations and the organisation of this institutional setting.

Keywords: variational pragmatics, pluricentric languages, sequential analysis, actions of thanking, responses to thanks, service encounters

1 Introduction

Thanking is an everyday social action which may be performed in different ways in different cultures (Brown/Levinson 1987). The focus of this article is the interactional variation of thanking using the word *tack* ['thank you'] in Swedish-language service encounters from two countries, Sweden and Finland, where Swedish is spoken as L1 and has the status of a national language.

Being grateful and feeling gratitude can be done in silence, but thanking is specifically an expressive and thus conversational practice which is found in different inter-

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actional contexts (Brown/Levinson 1987). Empirical studies of ordinary conversations show that thanking plays a vital part in the organisation of conversations, for example in sequence closings (Schegloff/Sacks 1973; Lindström 2000; Grahn 2019). Schegloff (1986) suggests that the practice of thanking is a social routine, and accordingly an interactional achievement. The analytical approach in this study is sequential analysis and according to the conversation analytic tradition, every turn is considered to be recipient-designed (Sacks/Schegloff/Jefferson 1974; Schegloff 2007; Sidnell 2010), and the conversation is seen as a joint social activity (Atkinson/Heritage 1984; Sacks 1992).

Pluricentric linguistic contexts offer a fruitful area for empirical studies of social action conditioned by local culture (Norrby et al. 2012). This article contributes to cross-cultural research on Swedish as a pluricentric language by undertaking an interactional analysis of the action of thanking with *tack* in authentic conversations.¹ I present a sequential analysis of uses of the word *tack* in service encounters. The analysis takes as a point of departure two different sequence types where the actions of thanking are used in two different sequential positions. These two types are introduced in Grahn (2019), which shows how the sequential position of actions of thanking with *tack* results in a difference in their interactional functions and their inherent features for projecting a subsequent turn: some actions of thanking make a response relevant, while others form responses in themselves. When a response to thanks is relevant, another action of thanking is the most frequent response in this Swedish-language context. In the medical service encounters studied, the analysis also shows differences between the two sequence types when it comes to participants' multimodal behaviour.² The participants in Finland produced responses to thanks, when sequentially relevant, more often than those in Sweden. The present study sets out to broaden the perspective with another type of data, from service encounters at theatre box offices.

The article is structured as follows: section 2 provides background to previous research on thanking, and section 3 presents the data and methodology. Section 4 describes the two different interactional patterns of thanking in the data, discusses the interactional function of thanking in each of the two patterns, and contrasts the findings in the Swedish and the Finnish data. Finally, section 5 presents the study's conclusions.

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² Multimodal behaviour in conversation analysis refers to non-verbal communicative resources such as body position, gesture, and gaze (Mondada 2016).

2 Background

Thanking, gratitude, and politeness are three ingredients in everyday human lives which have been studied in different disciplines and from different perspectives, for example in anthropology (Visser 2009) and psychology (Emmons/McCullough 2004). According to Brown/Levinson (1987: 60), the expression of gratitude is connected to strategies of politeness and is potentially face threatening (to the speaker) since thanking in some aspects means admitting debt in social relations (1987: 67). From this perspective, thanking is primarily a social action and thus possibly culture specific.

According to conversation analysis (CA), any social action is interactive, and any interaction consists of social actions (Schegloff 2007; Sidnell 2010). Thanking as a conversational resource can therefore have different functions depending on its position in the unfolding sequence organisation. For example, several researchers have noted that thanking is used in closings, and according to Schegloff (1986) thanking is a routine, something that is done without great attention. However, Schegloff underlines that even a routine is a social action and an interactional achievement. In the closing of a conversation, the social actions between participants also define their roles and relations, their interrelated “identities” (Raymond/Zimmerman 2016: 717). The work that is done by participants in closings involves the establishment of a common ground for closing the interaction. Lindström (2000) and Tykesson-Bergman (2006) both suggest that a *thank you* often has the double function of thanking and leave-taking in institutional contexts, and that the action forms are reciprocal.

A sequential perspective on thanking is considered in Mosegaard Hansen (2016) where thanking in the closing section of UK service phone calls is analysed in relation to how it might reflect the preceding conversation. The study reveals three patterns of thanking: a unilateral thanking, and a reciprocal thanking over two or three turns (Mosegaard Hansen 2016). In the first case an action of thanking is produced but not responded to by another action of thanking. In the second case an action of thanking is produced and responded to by another action of thanking and in the third case a third action of thanking is also produced. The author proposes that unilateral thanking on the part of callers is correlated with unmarked interaction, whereas more elaborated thanking sequences show interactional markedness (Mosegaard Hansen 2016).

The present study focuses on the thanking actions’ roles in adjacency pairs, as either a first or a second pair part, and the sequential unfolding of thanking actions. In a similar vein, Peräkylä (2019) studied therapy encounters and sequences of questions-answers with the focus on the third-position action as having either the function of *thanking*, *commiseration* or *emotional inference* (Peräkylä 2019: 259). In his data he found that the interactional function of thanking in this third position is to close the sequence and imply that no further elaboration on the sequence is expected (Peräkylä 2019: 259). In my study a sequence-closing third action is sometimes realised with an action of thanking, which also has similarities with the reciprocal thanking over three

turns found in Mosegaard Hansen (2016). Thus, a sequential analysis of an action of thanking can reveal interactional variation and variation in the functions of the action.

Previous research on responses to thanks relevant to this study includes a seminal study by Schneider (2005), who examined responses to thanks in England, Ireland, and USA. Following Aijmer (1996), he uses the term *thanks minimizer* when categorising responses into thanking strategies based on lexical form (Schneider 2005: 103). Using a questionnaire with mixed questions, Schneider found variation in thanking strategies between the three English varieties. This method has been used in several studies since then, all showing that form-related variation in responses to thanks exists in different contrasted varieties (for regional varieties, see e.g. Mulo Farenkia 2012, 2013, 2018; Schröder/Schneider 2018; for socio-economic varieties, see e.g. Rüegg 2014, and for a “revisit” of Schneider see Bieswanger 2015 who uses a method of data collection inspired by Labov (1966) which involves natural speech). The present study adds to this existing research by applying an interactional perspective to authentic video-recorded data where the Swedish word *tack* is frequently used.

The study of thanking using *tack* in medical encounters mentioned above (Grahns 2019) showed a tendency towards slightly different communicative patterns in Sweden and Finland, with differences in response patterns and length of the thanking sequences. The present study expands on these findings by studying another institutional context, service encounters at theatre box offices. It aligns with the view that thanking is a routine (Schegloff 1986) and focuses on the interactional work speakers do to accomplish this routine, including the multimodal aspects in relation to the specific institutional context (Mondada 2014). In the same data corpus as used in the present study, Lindström et al. (2019) have studied shifts in body positions in relation to task-completing assessments and artefact handling (2017).

Earlier studies on Swedish as a pluricentric language has shown both similarities and differences in the communicative patterns in different settings in the two countries. Linguistic and interactional micro analysis has shown that general ideas on cultural differences, such as Swedes being more outspoken, and Finns being more reserved, can sometimes be evidenced, and sometimes contradicted, by empirical analysis (for an overview see Norrby et al. 2021). In line with this research the present study aims to contribute to the interactional perspective in the field of variational pragmatics (Schneider/Barron 2008; Norrby et al. 2012), focusing on the sequential unfolding of speech and on variation in communicative patterns. The study thus has a contrastive ambition, by linking micro analysis of conversations in the two countries to their cultural contexts (Schneider/Barron 2008: 16–18).

3 Data and method

The empirical data of the study comprise 254 sequences in which the word *tack* is used once or several times. They are drawn from video recordings of 145 Swedish-language service encounters (74 from Finland, 71 from Sweden). The recordings were made as part of the research programme *Interaction and variation in pluricentric languages* (2013–2020), which studied Swedish as a pluricentric language from an interactional perspective (see Norrby, this volume). The aims were to describe communicative patterns in authentic spoken data from Sweden and Finland, and to contribute to the understanding of the relation between language, nation and culture. The service encounters analysed in the present study were recorded at two theatre box offices in the capital of Finland and in the second largest city of Sweden, and at one theatre box office/ticket booking agency in a smaller city in Sweden. The data constitute a subset of a corpus of 1,300 service encounters (for further details on the data collection, see Norrby et al. 2021).

The institutional agenda of the service encounters is to sell tickets (pre-booked or not) for theatre performances and other cultural events, and to answer questions about repertoires or booking conditions in general (see also Félix-Brasdefer 2015 for a description of service encounters). The salesperson and the customer interact in a box office environment, that is, at a counter where the salesperson is sitting and where the ticket transfer is executed. The handling of artefacts is a recurrent feature of the routine in this institutional agenda or setting (Raymond/Lerner 2014). As they arrive at the venue, customers take a queuing ticket and wait for their turn to approach the counter. The salesperson's main working tool is a computer, positioned close to the ticket counter. Consequently, the salesperson is physically oriented either to the computer or to the customer, depending on the business being performed.

The identification of the 254 thanking sequences was established through a close search for *actions of thanking* with *tack* in the 145 service encounters. In total only four of the encounters did not contain *tack* (two from Sweden, and two from Finland) which points to *tack* being a highly conventionalised form. An action of thanking in the present study is limited to an action where the speaker uses the Swedish interjection *tack* ['thank you'] in simple or elaborated form (e.g. *tack så mycket* ['thanks a lot'], or *tusen tack* ['thousands of thanks']) or the related verb *tacka* ['to thank'], which is rarely deployed. The study takes a Wittgensteinian approach, in the sense that by studying words in use we wish to develop our understanding of their meaning (Wittgenstein 1953).

A micro analysis of the sequences was carried out, with the focus on how the lexical resource *tack* was positioned as either a first pair part or a second pair part (or both) in adjacency pairs. According to Grahn (2019), this variation can be described as *initiating* or *responsive thanking sequences* respectively. The description of the two sequence types in the service encounters was also supported by an analysis of the participants' embodied behaviour (hand movements, gazes and body positions) in the thanking situations.

The next section opens with a schematic description of the two types of thanking actions, followed by a description of their sequential environments (sections 4.1 and 4.2), and a contrastive analysis of the findings from the two countries (section 4.3).

4 Results

The sequential analysis in this section explores uses of the word *tack* in the datasets from Sweden and Finland. In relation to its positioning in the unfolding interaction, the word *tack* shows either a responsive or an initiating function (cf. Grahm 2019). The function of an action of thanking is analysed through the notion of *adjacency pairs* (see Schegloff 2007). A schematic description of the two types of actions of thanking in relation to the adjacency pair is given in (i) and (ii). The examples are provided in English to clarify the principle guiding the analysis (S stands for Salesperson, C for Customer).

(i) Adjacency pair with *responsive action of thanking*

- S: here you are, this is your ticket (1st pair part)
C: thank you (2nd pair part)

The responsive action type of thanking occurs as a response to an immediately preceding turn that expresses the delivery of an artefact or of a piece of information (cf. descriptions of paired interactions like *offer>accept/decline* in Schegloff 2007: 14). In contrast to this, the initiating thanking action type is performed even though the immediately preceding turn does not contain something “to thank for”, that is, a delivery turn. The preceding sequential environment is instead some kind of task completion, expressed as confirming or assessing actions about the task and with pre-closing function, as in (ii) (cf. Lindström et al. 2019: 14; Antaki/Houtkoop-Steenstra/Rapley 2000).

(ii) Adjacency pair with *initiating action of thanking*

- C: that's perfect
S: okay, great
C: thanks a lot (1st pair part)
S: you're welcome (2nd pair part)

This means that the thanking action in (ii) initiates a new sequence or adjacency pair, here the closing proper, and thereby projects a response (see Schegloff 2007: 14). The two types of thanking actions also differ in patterns of embodied behaviour. A further description of the verbal and embodied actions linked to the two types is given below.

The 254 sequences in the collection all include at least one action of thanking with *tack*, of the two types just described. Table 1 shows the distribution of the two different types in the Finland-Swedish and the Sweden-Swedish data (the data are further quantified for the two countries in Table 4).

Table 1: Occurrences of responsive and initiating thanking actions with *tack*

	Finland N	Sweden N	Total
Responsive thanking	81	59	140
Initiating thanking	57	57	114
Total	138	116	254

As shown in Table 1, the number of sequences with a responsive thanking action is higher (140) than the number of sequences with an initiating thanking action (114). This was expected, since the responsive type typically figures frequently in service encounters: transactions where artefacts are physically transferred between the participants, or verbal transactions of different kinds of information. The responsive thanking type is most often found at the end of the encounters but can also occur in the beginning or in the middle of the interaction. In contrast, the initiating thanking action typically occurs in closings. We can also see in Table 1 that the number of sequences with a responsive thanking action is higher in Finland (81) than in Sweden (59), which is discussed further in section 4.3.

4.1 Responsive thanking

A typical scenario in service encounters is that physical artefacts are transferred, such as money, tickets, or flyers, or that information is delivered. In these cases, the recipient performs an action of thanking in direct response to the delivery of some kind from the co-participant. A delivery may happen at any time, and several times, during a service encounter, but most frequently in the final phase. There are a total of 140 sequences involving a responsive thanking action in the data. As seen in Table 2, it is the customer who thanks in the majority of the cases, and even more so in the Sweden-Swedish data (92% of the cases versus 83% in the Finland-Swedish data).

The distribution of who takes on the thanking role presented in Table 2 is not surprising considering that the purpose of a service encounter is to provide a service to the customer, which in theatre box offices mostly involves a physical transfer of a ticket and a receipt (Felix-Brasdefer 2015). At the moment of transfer both participants

Table 2: Responsive thanking by customers and salespersons

	Finland N	Sweden N	Total
Customer doing the responsive thanking	67	54	121 (86 %)
Salesperson doing the responsive thanking	14	5	19 (14 %)
Total	81	59	140 (100 %)

are focused on a physical artefact, and their bodily positions, gestures, and gazes are oriented to the handling of the artefact (Mondada 2014).

The following two extracts illustrate the sequential environment of a responsive thanking action. Extract (1) begins when the participants have clarified whether a senior citizen discount is available or not. The discussion ends with a joking comment on ageing from the customer, leading the participants to laugh together. In line 1 the salesperson then announces the cost of the tickets. The joke explains the customer's laughing voice in line 2. (The relevant utterances are in bold, and the asterisks stand for simultaneous verbal and embodied actions. For further details on transcription symbols, see the end of the article.)

(1) Theatre box office, Finland. S = salesperson, C = customer

- 1 S då blev de dedär sexti euro tillsammans
then it's sixty euro altogether
- 2 C ☺jå: ☺
yes
- 3 (41.4) ((C pays, enters code in card machine))
- 4 S ***så där var så god**
that's it there you go
*((hands over ticket and receipt to C, gazes at artefact))
- 5 C #***tack:**
thank you
*((takes ticket and receipt, gazes at artefact))
#Img 1
- 6 (3.9)
- 7 C °så där°
that's it
- 8 (23.9) ((C puts tickets in wallet))

After the announcement of the price (line 1), the customer confirms with *jå*: ['yes'] (line 2) and starts the payment process by entering the code on the card machine (line 3), while the salesperson is orienting to the ticket system on her computer. When the payment is confirmed, the salesperson takes a receipt from the card machine and then the tickets from a printer under her desk. She hands over the tickets and the receipt through the office window while producing *så där var så god* ['that's it there you go'] (line 4). The customer responds by taking the artefacts, saying *tack* ['thank you'] (line 5, Image 1), and starts putting her things into her wallet.

Image 1: The customer takes the tickets and receipt, gazes at artefact

During the delivery of tickets, both participants' gazes are directed to the artefacts, and the customer – who can move around more easily than the salesperson who is sitting on a chair – has her body positioned towards the counter. In line 7, the customer mirrors the salesperson's *så där* ['that's it'] in low voice, indicating self-talk (Keevallik 2018), while continuing to gather her things. The thanking action performed by the customer is in itself a second pair part to a first pair part (the delivery turn), and consequently a response is not conditionally relevant here, but a sequence-closing third would have been possible (Schegloff 2007: 118 ff; Mosegaard Hansen 2016).

Extract (2) shows the same pattern, this time in the data from Sweden. It starts as the customer is paying, focusing on the card machine and entering her pin code (line 1).

When the payment is confirmed by the system, the salesperson hands over the ticket to the customer and says *så*: ['so'] (line 2). The customer takes the ticket while thanking in a low voice in an elaborated form, *tack så mycke* ['thanks a lot'], and while gazing at her wallet (line 3, Image 2).

(2) Theatre box office, Sweden. S = salesperson, C = customer

- 1 (14.6) ((C pays with card))
 2 S **så: kvitto [kommer där] bredvid*
so receipt comes there on the side
 *((hands over ticket))
 3 C #*[*tack °så mycke°*] *ja*
thanks a lot yes
 *((receives ticket, gazes at artefact))
 #Img 2
 4 (10.7) ((C takes receipt and puts it with ticket in
 wallet))

Image 2: Customer takes her ticket while thanking in low voice with gaze directed at wallet

The salesperson also informs the customer that the receipt will be printed from the card machine, *kvitto kommer där bredvid* ['receipt comes there on the side'] (line 2). The customer acknowledges this information with *ja* ['yes'], with her gaze still directed toward the artefact, right after her action of thanking (line 3). She then takes the receipt and puts it in her wallet (line 4). During the ticket delivery and her thanking action, the customer gazes at the artefacts and her bodily position is oriented to the counter.

Extracts (1) and (2) illustrate the sequential pattern in which a responsive action of thanking takes place. The turn immediately preceding the thanking action is a physical action of artefact transfer, which is often, but not always, accompanied by a verbal announcement, for example *så där var så god* ['that's it there you go'] (extract (1), line 4). The delivery action projects a second pair part, which in these cases is an action of thanking with the use of *tack*.

In the majority (75 %) of cases of this type there is no response to the action of thanking, and the participants do not orient to the "non-occurrence" of a response as "official absence" (Schegloff 2007: 20). This is shown by the fact that both partici-

pants continue handling their things and then move on either to the next transaction or to closing the interaction. In one quarter of the sequences of this type in the whole dataset a response to the responsive thanking action is actually produced, constituting a sequence-closing third (Schegloff 2007: 118; Peräkylä 2019) and taking the form of another action of thanking, through the use of the word *tack* in simple or elaborated form. From a pluricentric perspective we can conclude that both the Finnish and the Swedish data show very similar patterns in this regard (for further discussion, see section 4.3).

4.2 Initiating thanking

In service encounters, as in every conversation, participants use practices for “getting out of interaction” in a socially accepted way to which an action of thanking can contribute (Schegloff 1986; Lindström 2000: 144; Raymond/Zimmermann 2016). In transactions in a theatre box office, both participants generally have social reasons to thank each other: the customer for the service and the salesperson for the customer’s patronage. This may raise the question of who is expected to initiate a thanking action (cf. Raymond/Zimmerman 2016). In the 114 sequences of this type in the data, it is the customer who performs the initiating thanking action in the majority of cases (Table 3), which can be explained by the institutional setting and by the interactional and situational circumstances.

Table 3: Initiating thanking by customers and salespersons

	Finland N	Sweden N	Total 114 (100 %)
Customer initiating thanking	54	54	108 (95 %)
Salesperson initiating thanking	3	3	6 (5 %)

As shown in Table 3, the customer takes the initiative to thank the other participant in 95 % of the cases, when the service task or tasks are completed and the interaction is about to be closed. The data from Finland and Sweden show the same patterns in the number of occurrences, but the most interesting result here is the high number of initiating thanking initiatives from the customer. In the following, I present two extracts to illustrate how the initiating thanking action differs from the responsive thanking, and why – according to the data – the preferred sequential organisation is that the customer performs the initiating action. A preferred organisation can be explained here based on frequency in the data, but points at the same time to a social preference on how to interact in the specific situation (Schegloff 2007: 58 f).

The actions of thanking described in this section are preceded by task completion, sometimes accompanied by assessments (Lindström et al. 2019; Antaki/Houtkoop-Steenstra/Rapley 2000). This means that this type of thanking action constitutes a first pair part in a new sequence. Extract (3) is the continuation of extract (1) in the previous section. The customer arranges in silence the tickets into her handbag during an extended time (line 1). She then simultaneously makes three embodied and one verbal action (line 2): she takes her gloves from the office desk, looks up and gazes at the salesperson, turns her body away from desk, and says *tack så mycke* [‘thanks a lot’].

(3) Theatre box office, Finland (line 1 = last line in extract (1) above)

```

1          (23.9) ((C puts tickets in handbag))
2      C    ((C turns *gaze to S, takes her gloves and turns
           body away))
           #*tack så mycke
           thanks a lot
           # Img 3
3          (0.5) *((S gazes quickly at C))
4      S          *tack *[tack]
           thanks thanks
           *((looks down toward desk))
5      C          *[hej ]
           bye
           *((nods and leaves the desk))
```

The extract starts after the service task has been completed through the transfer of tickets from the salesperson, and after the acknowledgement by the customer through a responsive action of thanking (see extract 1). The fact that both participants turn to their own artefacts (line 1: customer arranges her handbag; salesperson consults some papers on her desk) shows an intersubjective understanding of the institutional agenda as completed. The only thing left to do is to formally “get out” of the interaction. The customer takes the first step by seeking mutual gaze with the salesperson before performing the action of thanking, here in slightly elaborated form, *tack så mycket* [‘thanks a lot’] (lines 2–3, Image 3). Mutual gaze is shown to be preferred in greetings in data taken from the same corpus (Nilsson et al. 2018), and is also found in initiating closing by an action of thanking.

Upon hearing the verbal thanking turn from the customer, the salesperson quickly looks up and responds to the thanking action with another action of thanking, *tack tack* (lines 4–5) before looking down at her desk again.

Thanking actions in the data in the same sequential position as the one in line 3 are analysed as the first part of an adjacency pair, therefore called an *initiating* thanking action (Grahm 2019). A second pair part is thereby projected by this thanking action and

Image 3: Customer looks up at salesperson and performs an action of thanking

does occur in the majority of cases (cf. *reciprocal thanking over two turns*, Mosegaard Hansen 2016). Compared to the responsive thanking action described in section 4.1, the embodied behaviour is different when it comes to artefact handling, gaze, and body position. The artefact handling (such as customers' arranging of tickets and other personal things) is in general managed immediately before the initiating action of thanking is performed. Promptly before and/or during the verbal thanking action, the thanker gazes at the co-participant, turns her/his body away from the desk, and leaves.

The next extract (4), from Sweden, illustrates the same pattern both when it comes to the sequential position of the thanking action and to the participants' embodied behaviour. Extract (4) shows the continuation of extract (2) in section 4.1 above. After the completion of the transaction, the customer is arranging her ticket and receipt into her wallet and no verbal interaction is taking place (line 1). When she is done, she gives the salesperson a glance while performing an initiating thanking action (line 2, Image 4) before leaving.

(4) Theatre box office, Sweden (line 1 = last line in extract (2) above)

- 1 (10.7) ((C takes receipt and puts it with ticket in wallet))
- 2 C #***tack så mycke**
 thanks a lot
 *((glances quickly at salesperson, body oriented to handbag))
 #Img 4
- 3 S **tack**
 thanks
- 4 C ((puts wallet in handbag and leaves))

The transaction, which is the institutional goal in the service setting in our data, is completed in the turns preceding this extract (see extract 2 in the previous section). Consequently, the action of thanking by the customer in line 2, *tack så mycke* ['thanks a lot'], is analysed as a first pair part.

Image 4: Customer glances at salesperson, with her body oriented to her handbag

A second pair part is projected, which the salesperson performs in terms of an action of thanking, *tack* ['thank you'] (line 3), thereby sealing the formal closing of the interaction (cf. Lindström 2000). The customer puts her wallet in her handbag and leaves. The pattern of embodied behaviour of the thanker has the characteristic features found in the data for a thanking action in this position. After the arranging of personal things, there is a glance at the co-participant, while the body takes a “ready-to-go position”. The thanker leaves following the completed verbal exchange.

The institutional and physical environment, where customers approach the sales desk and after the transaction are the ones who physically leave, can probably explain the similarities between Finland and Sweden in the data, and shows clearly that moving out of interaction is also a multimodal accomplishment (see section 4.3).

4.2.1 Deviant case in a sequence with an initiating thanking action

Since a second pair part is projected by the thanking action in first pair part position, the participants orient to it as absent if it does not occur (Schegloff 2007: 20). They therefore engage in interactional work to “repair” the fact that the second pair part is missing. This is illustrated in extract (5) from the Swedish data, but this type also occurs in the Finnish data. The service provided in this encounter is information about season tickets for students. There is no ticket transaction, but an information task is about to be completed here. In line (1), the customer offers a first task-completing assessment, *ja men eh va bra* ['yes but eh that's fine'] (Lindström et al. 2019), but the salesperson continues giving information about brochures that might be of help to the

customer (line 4). This leads to a second and upgraded task-completing assessment from the customer, *jamen perfekt* ['that's perfect'] (line 7), followed by an initiating action of thanking (line 7).

(5) Theatre box office, Sweden (line 1 = last line in extract (2) above)

- 1 C okej (1.0) ja men eh va bra men då vet ja lite mer så [ska ja]=
okay yes but eh that's fine but then I know some more so I will
- 2 S [ja]
yes
- 3 C =(0.5) kolla [upp]
check
- 4 S [ta] gärna en tidning där (.) på si[dan] så håll-=
please take a brochure there on the side so hold-
- 5 C [ja]
yes
- 6 S =finns lite mer om abonnemang
is there some more on season tickets
- 7 C jamen perfekt (0.3) ***tack för hjälpen**
that's perfect thanks for the help
*((bodily position and gaze toward salesperson))
*((S leans her body over the counter))
- 8 S *den tidning där
that brochure there
*((points at a brochure holder outside the box office))
- 9 C *den här
this one
*((steps forward, bends down and takes a brochure from the stand))
- 10 S ja
yes
- 11 C *((steps back, raises posture, turns gaze to salesperson))
***tack för hjälpen**
thanks for the help
- 12 S **tack själv** (0.3) *välkommen
thanks to you welcome
- 13 C *((leaves))

In this extract, the response projected by the thanking action in line 7 is not performed. Instead, the salesperson continues to inform the customer about a brochure that she may take away with her, *den tidning där* ['that brochure there'] (line 8), while half standing up from her chair, leaning her body over the desk and pointing. When the salesperson withholds the second pair part, the closing is rejected and she treats

the suggestion to the customer to take a folder as something that warrants action before the interaction can be closed. The customer responds to this by leaning over to the brochure stand and verbally verifying which brochure is the right one, *den här* ['this one'] (line 9), delivered with slightly rising question intonation. Upon the salesperson's confirming *ja* ['yes'] (line 10), the customer stands up, turns her body and gazes at the salesperson and repeats the initiating thanking action with the same lexical resources as in line 7, *tack för hjälpen* ['thanks for the help'] (line 11). The analysis of this turn as a new first pair part is strengthened by the customer's gaze at the salesperson as she shows with her bodily orientation that she is about to leave. This time, a second pair part is offered by the salesperson, *tack själv* ['thanks to you'] (10) and the customer leaves. This illustrates that the customer's repetition of the thanking action as a first pair part allows the salesperson to respond in a preferred way and thereby facilitates a formal closing of the interaction.

One might also argue here that this is a case where the second thanking action from the customer can have a double function: as a response to the salesperson's information about the brochure, and as an initiative for closing the interaction (cf. Lindström 2000; Tykesson-Bergman 2006).

As mentioned earlier, an initiating thanking action at the end of the encounter is usually performed by the customer (95 %). The explanation for this is not only that she or he is supposed to say thank you for the service, but possibly also that the customer is the one who is *physically* leaving the interaction. When she or he is ready to leave, the verbal action of thanking functions as pre-closing or closing in a recognisable and socially accepted way (Schegloff 1986; Raymond/Zimmerman 2016). If the salesperson initiates a thanking action before the customer is physically ready to leave, the interaction runs the risk of reaching verbal closure prematurely, that is, before the bodily withdrawal of the customer can occur. No such premature closing initiative from the salesperson occurs in our data, which points to it as a dispreferred behaviour in these settings.

To sum up, the analysis shows that actions of thanking with the use of *tack* have different functions depending on their position as either a first or a second pair part in the sequential environment. In situations where an artefact is transferred to a co-participant, an embodied response is called for (receiving the artefact), but a verbal action of thanking is also a preferred response since the delivery is a first pair part. Such thanking is therefore *responsive* and does not in itself project a subsequent action. In some cases a response is nevertheless given to a thanking action of this kind, analysed as a sequence closing third. The embodied behaviour of the thankers in the context of a responsive action of thanking follows a consistent pattern: hands engaged in the transfer of artefacts, gaze oriented to the artefact (not to the co-participant), and body firmly oriented to the desk where the artefact handling takes place.

In other situations, an action of thanking is performed even though a delivery of an artefact or of information is not produced in the immediately preceding turn. This action of thanking then constitutes a first pair part in a new sequence, and makes

relevant a second pair part – a response to the initiating action of thanking. The description is strengthened by a deviant case (extract 5 above) in which the absence of a response to the thanking action is explicitly oriented to by the speaker, leading to a repetition of the initiating thanking action. This type of thanking action has the function of pre-closing or closing. In the overwhelming majority of cases, it is the physically mobile co-participant who performs the thanking in order to close the interaction when she or he is ready to leave. The embodied pattern accompanying the initiating thanking action differs from the one in a responsive thanking action: the arranging of artefacts into a wallet or handbag precedes or overlaps with the thanking, the gaze is oriented to the co-participant, and the body is preparing to leave by orienting away from the desk.

4.3 Contrastive observations on the two varieties

When a response to a thanking action with *tack* is relevant in our Swedish-language data, as is the case after an initiating thanking action, it takes the linguistic form of *tack* in simple or elaborated form. This is true for about three quarters of the responses, with a slight variation between the two cultural contexts. In the remaining cases, the response is for example *fint*, *ja*, *hejdå* ['fine', 'yes', 'bye']. Cases of zero-response can be explained by the fact that the interaction restarts on another topic and the closing is postponed. For instance, the salesperson gives some information about where to find the right stage or a programme for the show, or the customer poses an additional question.

The findings from the comparison of the Finland-Swedish and the Sweden-Swedish data show that thanking with *tack* is performed through quite similar communicative patterns, and follows the two sequence types. Both types of thanking actions are found in both datasets, with further details of the distribution shown in Table 4.

Both types of thanking occur frequently in the 145 encounters analysed (as mentioned earlier, in only four encounters was no thanking with *tack* performed). The total number of thanking sequences where the word *tack* is used at least once is slightly higher in Finland than in Sweden (138 vs. 116). It is the number of responsive thanking actions which accounts for this difference (81 vs. 59), which could imply that there is a higher preference among Finland-Swedish-speaking participants to respond with *tack* after a delivery turn. However, it is important to point out that the study does not take into account the number of supposed or possible situations where responsive thanking might have been relevant; the difference may be due to a higher frequency of possible situations to perform responsive thanking in the Finland-Swedish data. Since the encounters in the Sweden-Swedish data on average are longer (3.7 min) than in the Finland-Swedish data (2.2 min), the frequency of thanking sequences per minute is higher in the latter dataset. However, this does not tell us anything about the number of possible situations in which responsive thank-

Table 4: Distribution of thanking sequences in the two Swedish varieties

	Finland N	Sweden N	Per encounter in Finland	Per encounter in Sweden
Responsive thanking	81 (59 %)	59 (51 %)	1.1	0.8
Initiating thanking	57 (41 %)	57 (49 %)	0.8	0.8
Total	138 (100 %)	116 (100 %)		

ing would be relevant, and the difference in length might also be due to information sequences or small talk.

The number of initiating thanking actions is more interesting since this action type occurs in the closing of interactions and is therefore expected once in each of the 145 encounters. In this respect a comparison between the varieties shows a similar pattern. In both countries an initiating thanking action with *tack* is performed in almost every encounter (0.8 per encounter in both datasets). In the cases where it is not performed, another closing action is used (such as assessments or greetings) and the leave-taking is done without thanking.

When it comes to who is performing the thanking actions, in the clear majority of cases the customers are the thankers. In the responsive sequences the customers perform the thanking actions as a response to a delivery from the salesperson, and the pattern is similar for the two countries (see Table 2). In the initiating thanking sequences the customers are the ones who perform the initiating thanking action in most cases, in both countries (see Table 3). I suggest the main explanation for this is the similar institutional environment, such as a relatively simple transaction agenda where customers receive service and, above all, the fact that it is the customers who physically leave the interaction and consequently initiate a closing. This analysis is also strengthened by the fact that deviant cases, where a closing is postponed when an initiating thanking action is not responded to as in extract (5), occur in both datasets.

A contrastive look at responses to thanks after an initiating thanking sequence reveals, as mentioned earlier, that in 73 % of the cases the response constitutes an action of thanking with *tack* – 81 % in Finland and 65 % in Sweden. This difference contrasts with my earlier study on thanking in medical encounters in the two varieties (Grahm 2019), where a slightly higher proportion of thanking actions as responses to initiating thanks was reported in Sweden than in Finland. The difference between the medical setting and the service encounters when it comes to physical aspects of the environment might be one explanation. In the former the participants are sitting in front of each other and the institutional roles prescribe that it is the doctor who decides when the encounter is to be closed, which certainly affects the pattern of thanking. Another explanation might be the fact that the present study encompasses a larger amount of data (254 sequences) than the study of medical encounters (29 sequences).

5 Conclusion

This article examined two different interactional patterns of saying *tack* ['thank you'] in Sweden-Swedish and Finland-Swedish service encounters. The analysis of authentic video-recorded spoken data has made it possible to follow the participants' sequential organisation of thanking in service encounters in detail and the coordination of the verbal action of saying *thank you* with embodied behaviour. Departing from the notion of adjacency pairs, the uses of the word *tack* were analysed as first or second pair parts in their respective sequential environment.

In the responsive thanking action, the participants are focused on the physical handling of artefacts such as tickets, and the action of thanking is typically done without looking at the co-participant and without response from the co-participant. In the initiating thanking action, the focus is placed on the preparation of physical leave-taking, and thus how to end the turn-taking and the activity. The participants need to come to an intersubjective understanding of the interaction as completed, and therefore the thanker's *thank you* is accompanied by a gaze at the interlocutor, and a confirming gaze and verbal action from the latter is preferred. In cases where this does not occur, it is because the interaction continues for some reason: the customer might pose another question or the salesperson might volunteer some extra information. A deviant case in the analysis shows that the thanker then takes a new initiative to thank, again making relevant a response from the co-participant that confirms the closing of the interaction.

Regarding the initiating thanking type, which projects a response, the interactive perspective can supplement the literature on responses to thanks (Schneider 2005 and others). We can see that the most frequent response to thanking in both datasets is another action of thanking with the use of *tack* in simple or elaborated form. The two varieties of Swedish examined here show similar patterns in terms of how to thank with the use of *tack*, which is the conventionalised form in both countries. The two types of thanking actions are found in both datasets and there is a similar preference in both varieties for responding to an initiating thanking action with another action of thanking. Other studies on communicative patterns between the two countries have shown some evidence for a perceived difference in social behaviour, Swedes being more outspoken with many social hedges, and Finns being more reserved with a more direct way of communicating (see e.g. Norrby et al. 2015; Henricson/Nelson 2017; Nilsson et al. 2020; Norrby et al. 2021). In this study of the use of *tack* we see more similarities than differences between the two countries. The clearest difference is the higher amount in Finland of responsive thanking and of responses with *tack* to an initiating thanking action, which does not support the image of more reserved Finnish cultural behaviour. This tells us that more research from a pluricentric perspective is important to improve our understanding of the relation between language, culture and context. From the perspective of variational pragmatics, an interactional view on micro-phenomena can contribute to the description and understanding of commu-

nicative patterns in different cultures. Our results possibly reflect a basic interactional pattern for thanking common to Nordic countries, with a preference for using *tack* as an answer to *tack*, but research in other countries and different interactional settings is needed in order to draw such a conclusion.

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7 Transcription symbols³

<u>but</u>	prosodic emphasis
bu:t	lengthening of a sound
°but°	sotto voce
☺	smiley voice
(but)	parenthesised words indicate uncertain interpretation
bu-	cut-off word or unfinished intonation unit
=	turn continues in another line
(.)	micro pause
(0.5)	pause in seconds
((gazes))	transcriber’s comments
*	timing of embodied action with talk (beginning point)
#	shows the exact moment of a screen shot (“image”)

³ For standard CA transcription conventions, see Ochs/Schegloff/Thompson (1996: 461–465).