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Jörg Zinken, Giovanni Rossi and Vasudevi Reddy
Leibniz-Institute for the German Language / University of California at Los Angeles / University of Portsmouth

Doing more than expected

Thanking recognizes another's agency in providing assistance

Abstract: In informal interaction, speakers rarely thank a person who has complied with a request. Examining data from British English, German, Italian, Polish, and Telugu, we ask when speakers *do* thank after compliance. The results show that thanking treats the other's assistance as going beyond what could be taken for granted in the circumstances. Coupled with the rareness of thanking after requests, this suggests that cooperation is to a great extent governed by expectations of helpfulness, which can be long-standing, or built over the course of a particular interaction. The higher frequency of thanking in some languages (such as English or Italian) suggests that cultures differ in the importance they place on recognizing the other's agency in doing as requested.

Keywords: agency, cooperation, courses of action, cultural diversity, expectation, gratitude, offers, recruitment, requests, thanking

Introduction

This chapter examines thanking after another person has provided assistance or contributed to some everyday work. Language ideologies, especially in Western cultures, suggest that thanking is important, and that socialising children into it is a central goal for many families (Gleason *et al.* 1984; Gleason and Weintraub 1976). However, in actual conduct in informal interaction between family and friends, people rarely say thanks after getting another's assistance. Even in English, a language with a relatively higher rate of thanking, speakers thank only after less than 15% of successful everyday requests (Floyd *et al.* 2018). In this study, we zoom in on those cases where recipients of assistance do thank their givers. Our goal is to delve deeper into the meaning of thanking as a social action and through its lenses to add to our understanding of the organization of cooperation in interaction.

Requesting, broadly intended as getting another to do something, is a fundamental way in which cooperation is mobilised. And it normally runs rather simply and smoothly: I ask you to fetch a cloth and you do it – *because I have asked you*. But the familiar and unproblematic nature of such moments of everyday cooperation can hide from us the deep layers of social meaning that are involved. After all, you could just ignore my request. Parents can feel a sense of wonder on the first occasions when their toddler *actually does* what they needed her to do. How does this "causal ontology without physics" (Levinson 2013: 105) come about? Why don't we just not care? Concepts such as altruism, commitment, and reciprocity are often invoked as motives for our remarkable human cooperativeness (e.g., Tomasello 2008). Whatever the best description may be, the fact is that moving others and being moved by them are important desires in our lives (Reddy 2012), and we can generally expect another person to help us when we ask. In a request sequence, then, there are at least two forces at play in mobilising action: most proximally, the request move, a first pair part that makes another's action conditionally relevant in next position (Schegloff 2007); at the same time, there is also an expectation of cooperativeness, which gives meaning to my request move in the first place and may transcend a single request sequence.

Expectations of cooperativeness can be based on various grounds. Leaving aside broader anthropological and developmental principles of cooperation among humans (which we might notice when we encounter the helpful toddler), previous research on everyday informal interaction has shown that our expectations about another's cooperativeness are systematically grounded in "local" concerns and understandings, such as the other's previous commitment to the relevant task, their relationship to us, or their seeming fitness for the task (e.g., Rossi 2015; Zinken and Deppermann 2017). When I want you to help me move the fridge, I might expect you to do this because you said you would, or because you are my friend and I can expect you to help with such things, or because you just happen to be around, look strong enough, and are in a general sense available for the job.

We can ask then about the relationship between the two forces at play in mobilizing others to act: how the situation at hand provides for the expectability of help by someone, and how the design of my move reflects or construes the expectability of that help. For example, imperative requests indicate a locally grounded expectability (e.g., you have already positioned yourself by the fridge, or you previously said that you would help me rearrange my kitchen furniture). This kind of local expectability of help will be crucial in our analysis as we will show that thanking takes place mostly when it is absent, that is, when the recipient of assistance does not treat it as taken for granted (we will refer to the main participants generically as the *Provider* of help and the *Recipient* of help).

Why do we need the notion of expectability to explain thanking? Isn't there a simpler explanation? Initially, we might think that the basic reason for thanking is just that somebody has done something good for us. In the terms of the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy: "Gratitude is the proper or called-for response in a beneficiary to benefits or beneficence from a benefactor."[1] In request sequences, Recipients of assistance are often "beneficiaries" while Providers are "benefactors" (see Couper-Kuhlen 2014; Clayman and Heritage 2014) and acknowledgement validates such benefactive relationships (Clayman and Heritage 2014: 62–64). This becomes apparent in those request sequences that are expanded with thanks. However, we will also see that benefaction is not sufficient to explain thanking. In the mundane business of our everyday lives, many episodes in which Providers do good things for us that could in principle merit a 'thanks' actually run off without it, and without participants treating the absence of thanks as problematic. Consider these two examples from German and Italian.[2] In (1), Monja asks Tim to pass her a bottle. In (2), Beata asks Franco to give her a paper towel after he uses one to wipe his nose.

(1) PECII_DE_Game3_20160708_56415 (German)

```
01 monja    ((places her glass down, looks at tim,
              looks at bottle, points))
02 Monja:   gibst    de  mir bitte  die ↑cola rüber,
            give.2SG you DAT  please the  NAME  across
            (will) you please pass me the coke
03 tim      [((passes bottle))
04 Monja:   [ph::: a:: ((="feeling hot" sound))
```

(2) CampUniTaboo01_172458 (Italian)

```
01 franco   ((finishes wiping nose, folds paper towel,
               puts it into pocket))
02 Sandro:  è veramente   comunque per+verso_ [(     )
            be.3SG really anyway    perverse
            anyway (that thing) is really perverse ( )
03 franco                              +turns back to table
```

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1. This is the first sentence in the entry for "Gratitude" (https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/gratitude/; accessed 6th February 2018).

2. In the transcripts we present, we have tried to find a compromise between detail and readability in providing grammatical glosses and in the transcription of multimodal conduct. Interlinear glosses for non-English talk are provided according to the Leipzig Glossing Rules (https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/pdf/Glossing-Rules.pdf). In transcribing intonation, especially for Italian, we have used GAT2 conventions (Selting et al. 2011) to mark pitch movements associated with certain focal syllables that are crucial for distinguishing, for example, interrogative from declarative utterances. The third line provides an idiomatic translation that is not necessarily true to the grammatical forms of the actual data.

```
04 Beata:                                    [mi b-
                                              1SG.DAT b-
                                             (will) you b-
05        ˆDAi anche   a  me    un  pezzo +di ‘SCOT[tex.
          give-2SG also to 1SG.DAT one piece  of  paper.towel
          give a paper towel to me too
06 franco                                  +turns to get paper towels
07 Franco:                                    [sì;
                                              yes
08 Sandro: è è veramente per+verso il::_  il trabicolo lì.
          be.3SG be.3SG really perverse the the contraption there
          it's it's really perverse the:: the contraption there
09 franco                    +holds out paper towels across table
10 beata    tears off paper towel 0.3
11 Sandro: il tre[piedi.
          the tripod
12 Beata:       [sì:_
                ye:s
```

In both cases, the requester clearly benefits from the requestee's compliance. Moreover, there seems to be a "place" for thanking. In Extract (1), Monja audibly exhales as she takes the bottle from Tim (line 4). In Extract (2), Beata remains silent as she tears off a paper towel from the roll Franco is holding out for her (line 10), but speaks soon thereafter (line 12). In both cases, the requesters do not take the opportunity to thank. The sequence runs off smoothly without it. So what is it that recipients of assistance do when they *do* thank?

We argue that, in order to explain this, we need to consider the requester's understanding of and orientation to the requestee's *agency* in complying. Agency has to do with how a Provider of help gets involved; how they come to participate in the course of action; to what extent their assistance is expectable by the Recipient of help or, rather, the result of an autonomous decision. Thanking is a way of treating assistance, even if it is compliance with a request, not as taken for granted, but as going beyond what the Recipient can expect, and thus involving the Provider's autonomous decision to help.

Data

We examine data from informal interaction in four Indo-European languages: English, German, Italian, and Polish, and from Telugu, a Dravidian language of Southern India. The English and Polish data (20 hours) come from matched corpora of family interactions (Zinken 2016). The Italian data (50 hours) come from a corpus of informal interactions collected by Rossi (2015). The German data (10 hours) are part of an emerging matched multi-language corpus, the *Parallel European Corpus of Informal Interaction*, which comprises video recordings of comparable

everyday activities across five languages (Rossi et al., July 2018). The Telugu data are part of a developing corpus of video recordings of child-caretaker interactions, collected by Srujana Jonnalagadda and Vasudevi Reddy. Some of the Italian and Polish cases considered here were also examined in a previous quantitative study of thanking for assistance, mentioned earlier (Floyd *et al.*, 2018).

The four European languages have indigenous expressions for thanks, which are derived from verbs or nouns (Table 1). Telugu does not have an indigenous expression for thanking.

Table 1. "Thanks" in the four European languages

	Verb	**Noun**
English	*Thank you*	*(Many) thanks*
German	*Danke*	*Vielen Dank*
Italian	*Ti ringrazio*	*(Tante) grazie*
Polish	*Dziękuję*	*Dzięki*

While expressions of acknowledgment after compliance with a request can be found in roughly 15% of successful request sequences in English and Italian, they are very rare in Polish informal interaction (2%) (Floyd *et al.* 2018). German might lie between English and Italian on the one side, and Polish on the other: In a collection of 73 successful requests examined for this chapter, seven (10%) received some form of acknowledgement (a positive conveyance of appreciation or satisfaction) and in four cases (5%) such acknowledgment consisted, more specifically, in giving thanks. Telugu does not have a word for thanks, and thanking is a less common practice in Telugu everyday life. Still, we knew that Telugu speakers use the English word to give thanks, and were interested in learning what it is about some situations that seems to call for a thanks so strongly that speakers draw on a foreign language expression. We hence specifically searched for and identified one such case, which is analysed below (Extract 5).

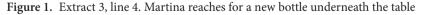**Thanking in response to volunteered action**

We argue that, by thanking, the Recipient recognises that the Provider has done more than what could be taken for granted by the Recipient, or in terms of what we can observe, more than what the Recipient has treated as expectable. The first source of evidence for this analysis are cases in which the Recipient thanks after the Provider has *volunteered* to do something for them. As Coulmas puts it in his classic paper on thanks and apologies, thanking responds to another person's

"intervention" (Coulmas 1981). Within the domain of everyday practical cooperation, this sense of an intervention might be clearest in cases where a person takes the initiative to do something for another without having been asked.

Consider Extract (3). During breakfast, Lotte announces that she will get herself some water (line 2). She gets up from the table and reaches for a water bottle on an adjacent table. She inspects the bottle and finds it to be empty (line 3). As Lotte puts the empty bottle back down, her mum, Martina, reaches underneath the table and produces a new bottle (line 4, see Figure). Lotte thanks her mum for this "intervention" (line 5), and then thanks her again after having received the bottle (line 7).

(3)   PECII_DE_Brkfst_20160213_3255678 (German)

```
01        (1.9)
02  Lotte: ich hol mir schnell wasser
           I   get me  quickly water
           I'll just get me some water
03  lotte  (2.0) ((gets up, takes bottle, inspects))
04  martina (2.2) ((grabs new bottle from under table,
                  Lotte retracts))
05  Lotte: ↑danke ↓mami
            thanks mummy
06        (0.8) ((M hands bottle to L))
07  Lotte: vielen vielen dank.
           many   many   thanks
```


Figure 1. Extract 3, line 4. Martina reaches for a new bottle underneath the table

What is important for us here, and what is captured in Coulmas' term of an "intervention", is that Martina does something for Lotte out of her own initiative. While Lotte's actions in lines 2 and 3 made her intention and her trouble public (see also Curl 2006; Kendrick and Drew 2016; Floyd, Rossi, and Enfield in press), they did not indicate an expectation that another person would get involved.

Such helpful initiative can be responsive to some trouble that another person has, as in the above German case. But it can also be a routine action, as in the following Polish case. At the beginning of supper, Ilona is putting sugar into her own and the children's teas and finally, also in her husband's. She marks this with an elongated *proszę::* ("please/here you are") in singing voice, which in a playful manner highlights the initiative she is taking in sweetening his tea (line 1). Jacek thanks her in response (line 2), and Ilona continues, in overlap, with her singing "performance" of sweetening the tea (line 3). When she raises a second spoonful of sugar, Jacek halts her with a double saying of the adverb *już* ("already", here: "enough") (on multiple sayings, Stivers 2004).

(4) PP2-5_949800 (Polish)

```
01  Ilona:  proszę:: ((singing voice))
            plead.1s
            please/here you are
            ((spoons sugar into Jacek's tea))
02  Jacek:  dzię[kuję bardzo.
            thank.1s  very
            thank you very much
03  Ilona:      [słodzę:: [*ci mężu ((singing voice))
                 sweeten.1s you.DAT husband.VOC
                 I sweeten it for you, my husband
                          *((lifts second spoonful))
04  Jacek:               [już=    już
                          already already
                          enough enough
05  Ilona:  ((stops putting sugar into tea))
```

A person's helpful initiative seems to be a circumstance that makes thanking meaningful across cultures – even in our Telugu data, as the following example shows. Remember that Telugu is a language that does not have an indigenous word for thanking. This does not mean, of course, that Telugu speakers do not experience and show gratitude. As in other Southern Indian cultures (see Appadurai 1985, for Tamil), and as is probably universally true (Floyd *et al.* 2018), gratitude is ultimately shown not by thanking but by a readiness to reciprocate. The practice of thanking, in this light, appears rather like a cultural elaboration of one aspect of gratitude, namely, as we suggest, acknowledging that another has autonomously decided to be helpful. The few instances in which speakers of Telugu use the English *thank you* should be all the more informative for our analysis. Our example comes from a recording of a child-caregiver interaction. Srujana, the researcher making the recording, is taking the glass from which she has been drinking back to the kitchen, where the mother of the children who are being recorded is standing at the sink (so this is a case where the persons involved are not friends or relatives). Moving

towards the sink, Srujana asks, "shall I put the glass here" (line 1). In response, the mother offers to take it instead, and the researcher thanks her for this (line 3). The fragment is off camera, so we do not know how the thanking is timed relative to the glass passing.

(5)   Hyderabad.feeding1 (Telugu)

```
01   Srujana:   Emandi  glass ikkada petteyana
                what.HON glass here  put.1SG.Q
                Ehm, shall I put the glass here?
02   Mother:    aan ila      icheyandi ((takes glass))
                PRT like.this give.HON
                PRT give it here/like this
03   Srujana:   thanks andi
                thanks HON
                thanks (respectfully)
04   Mother:    aan
                PRT
                okay
```

This case is again a bit different from the two previous ones. Note first that Srujana could conceivably have just put the glass into the sink. By asking "shall I put the glass here", and thereby addressing her 'trouble' of what to do with the glass directly to Mother, she makes her action contingent on the mother's decision, and thereby opens a space for a different outcome – such as the one that comes to pass. In that sense, we can wonder whether Mother's assistance here is as strongly her initiative as, for example, Martina's in Extract (3). Still, there is no doubt that what Mother does here is more than what Srujana has treated – indeed, than what she *can* treat – as expectable. We need to consider the cultural context to get a better sense of this. In many Hindu families in India it is customary not to 'pollute' others through contact with the vessels from which one has drunk or eaten. This is often markedly strong with Brahmins (as both Srujana and Mother are). So Mother's offer to take the glass from Srujana's hand can be seen as exceptional against the background of this cultural norm. It is this decision by Mother to assist over and against a cultural norm that prompts Srujana's expression of thanks.[3]

These cases illustrate instances where thanking responds to an "intervention", a helpful initiative on the part of the Provider. In fact, such helpful initiatives can carry an expectation that the help be recognized, as evidenced by cases in which

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3.   Note that Mother acknowledges, or 'minimizes', this thanks with *aan* (roughly, "okay"). This is further evidence of the special nature of thanking in Telugu interaction. In the large multi-language analysis of recruitments ($N = 1597$), in which Telugu was not included, we have only three cases where (1) a successful recruitment is acknowledged with thanks and (2) thanks is in turn acknowledged by the Provider of assistance (e.g. by saying "You're welcome").

thanks are pursued. In Extract (6), from the same breakfast recording as (3), Martina offers Lotte another bread roll.

(6)   PECII_DE_Brkfst_20160213_724411 (German)

```
01          1.8 ((Lotte turns to face Martina))
02  Martina: möchtst  du  nochn    brötchen,
            like.2SG you still.ART bread.roll
            do you like another bread roll?
03          (0.2)
03  Lotte:   mhm?  ((yes))
04          (2.0) ((Martina takes bread roll from
                    basket, holds out for Lotte))
05          (1.2) ((Lotte takes roll, puts it
                    down on her tray))
06  Martina: bitte     schön
            plead.1SG nice
            here you are/you're welcome
07  Lotte:   danke
            thanks
08          (1.1)
09  Lotte:   ich kau      grad deswegen
            I   chew.1SG now  therefore
            I am chewing that's why
10  Martina: achso deswegen °okay°
            PRT   therefore okay
            oh I see that's why okay
```

Lotte takes the bread roll that Martina offers her and puts it on her plate. Martina then says *bitte schön*, a phrase that can accompany holding an object out for another to take (best translated in English as "here you are"). In the present situation – with the bread roll already on Lotte's plate – it works to pursue a thanks that wasn't given during what Zhan and colleagues have called the 'gratitude opportunity space' (Zhan *et al.* 2018). Lotte promptly says thanks at line 7. Her account at line 9 for not having said thanks earlier shows her recognition that thanking was accountably absent in response to Martina's "intervention", offering and handing her a bread roll.

In sum, if a person takes the initiative to provide some assistance, this creates a situation that merits recognition for speakers across languages. When we turn to cases in which Recipients thank after Providers have complied with their request, however, we encounter a very different situation: compliance with a request is clearly not an initiative in the sense in which we have seen this so far, because the action of requesting has made compliance relevant as a normatively expected response. Still, we find that here, thanking similarly occurs in circumstances where the Provider's help is not taken for granted by the Recipient.

Treating compliance with a request as not taken for granted

In the offer sequences examined in the previous section, thanking responds to help that the Provider has given out of their own initiative, without being solicited by the Recipient. The organization of request sequences is of course very different from this. Compliance is a "second pair-part" (Schegloff, 2007) and the preferred response to a request. Consider again the example of Monja asking for the coke, reproduced here in simplified form.

(7)   PECII_DE_Game3_20160708_56415 (German)

```
01  Monja: gibst de mir bitte die ↑cola rüber,
           (will) you please pass me the coke
02  tim    ((passes bottle))
03  Monja: ph::: a:: ((="feeling hot" sound))
```

Tim passing the bottle is a response to the action accomplished by Monja's question: a request; it completes a sequence initiated by her. By doing nothing more than passing the bottle, Tim aligns with the course of action launched by the request, and Monja, by doing nothing to expand the sequence in line 3, treats Tim's response as a satisfactory completion of the sequence.

A request sets up a normative expectation for a response. At the same time, as many other sequence-initiating actions, a request creates a response space that affords options. While compliance is the preferred response, non-compliance remains a possibility (Searle 1975:74–5; Ervin-Tripp 1976:60; Brown and Levinson 1987:172; Wootton 1997: 148, among others). We argue that what Recipients of assistance do by thanking in "third position" (after the request and its response) is to orient to the Provider's compliance as an autonomous decision to implement the preferred response option.

Consider Extract (8). Cheryl and Joe are making preparations for breakfast with their toddler Tom. Tom is seated in his highchair and Joe is entertaining him while Cheryl is gathering various breakfast items around the kitchen. At line (1), Cheryl stops in her tracks with a "noticing" sound (*oop*), then spells out this noticing (*must get your bib*) while she picks up the bib, and then formulates the request while holding out the bib for Joe to take (*can you put a bib on him for me please babes*). On the face of it, the requested action here is utterly unproblematic. Also, by holding out the bib for Joe to take as she formulates her request, Cheryl displays – in her *nonverbal* conduct – a strong expectation that he will take it and do as requested.

(8)   BB1-1 (English)

```
01  Cheryl:  oop(.) must get your ↑bib,=>can you put a
02           ↑bib on him for me< plea:se babes ((holds
03           out bib))
```

```
04          (0.4)
05  Joe:    sure ((takes bib from Cheryl))
06  Cheryl: °mh°
07          (1.0)
08  Cheryl: thank you
09          ((Joe puts bib on Tim))
```

However, in her *verbal* turn, Cheryl construes a different stance. She suggests that equipping Tim with a bib would in principle be her job and that Joe is being asked to do it "for" her (line 2). Together with the further turn extensions "please" and "babes", Cheryl verbally displays a stance that Joe's assistance is not being taken for granted (e.g., as part of his parental duties) and rather treated as a favour (see also Zinken and Rossi 2016).

We can distinguish then between the normative expectations carried by an action, and how the design of the action embodies different stances on the part of its producer (see also Stivers and Rossano 2010). As Extract (8) shows, normative expectation and design can lead to a somewhat 'mixed' import. Thanking, we suggest, is part of a stance displaying that compliance was not taken for granted by the requester, even if what the requestee was asked to do is largely unproblematic. The next case allows us to delve deeper into the relation between thanking, the requester's stance, and the context in which the request is made. Extract (9) is an Italian case featuring a request formatted as a simple (non-modal) second person interrogative – a format that appears to share many usage properties with the English modal *can you do x* format (Rossi 2015, Chapter 3; Curl and Drew 2008). A group of friends are cutting and peeling potatoes at the kitchen table. Marti, one of the peelers sitting on one side of the table, finds herself without unpeeled potatoes within her reach: the bag of potatoes she and other peelers have been drawing from, at the centre of the table, is empty. A second, unopened bag of potatoes is lying at the opposite end of the table from Marti, close to Stella, one of the cutters, who is momentarily absorbed in her task (Figure 2). Again, the request here (to place the bag of potatoes where Marti can reach it) is unproblematic. Stella's compliance, however, requires momentarily halting what she is doing.

(9)   CampUniPictionary (Italian)

```
01 marti   ((scans the table in search of
             unpeeled potatoes))
02         ((notices second bag of potatoes next to Stella))
03 Marti:  ´MEtti 'qua il sac'CHET'to? (.) di pa'TA'te,⁴
           put-2SG here the bag-DIM      of potatoes
           (will) you put here the bag (.) of potatoes
```

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4. This interrogative utterance can be distinguished from an imperative or declarative one on the basis of the nuclear pitch accent being used: a rise from low that is repeated both on *sac`CHE´Tto?* and *pa`TA´te*.

```
04 stella   (0.6) ((continues cutting potato))
05          ((halts cutting potato, lifts bag
              across the table))
06          [((places bag at centre of table,
              closer to Marti))
07 Marti:   [↓↓gra::zie, ((reaches into bag for potato))
                tha::nks
```


Figure 2. Extract 9, line 2. Marti notices the bag of potatoes next to Stella

The simple interrogative format reflects the requester's understanding that the re-quested action involves a departure from what the requestee is presently doing (Rossi 2015, Chapter 3),[5] In addition, Marti displays extra recognition of the favour she is asking by uttering her request utterance with stylised intonation (exagger-ating the production of the rise-fall pitch accent on *metti qua* – up to 587 Hz and down to 251 Hz, nearly 15 semitones), and by using stylised intonation again on *gra::zie* (produced with a markedly low tone and elongation on the first syllable before the final rise). This stylised intonation is hearable as a way of "ingratiating" the addressee; as such, it partakes in construing an otherwise largely unproblematic cooperative action as a favour.

In these last two cases, Recipients designed their requests in ways that did not strongly *display* an expectation of compliance. While we can assume that both Cheryl and Marti expected the other person to do as requested, the *stance* they

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5. Besides Stella's visible engrossment in the cutting task, which she continues for a brief but noticeable moment after the request is produced (line 4), the discontinuity between the two courses of action is evidenced also by the increment in Marti's request utterance ('the bag (.) of potatoes'). By adding further specification of the target object, Marti displays her understanding that Stella may require more information to recognise a referent that is not within her focus of attention.

conveyed was different. By selecting an interrogative format, using an "ingratiating" prosody, and extending a possibly complete request turn to characterise the other's compliance as a "courtesy", these requesters built a *low expectation stance* into their requests. Speakers can *treat* request sequences as relatively uncertain, and they can thank to recognise the other's decision to comply, even if there wasn't, on the face of it, anything problematic or uncertain about the request at all.

With these observations, we are now moving into what seems to be more culture-specific territory. Rather than treating another's assistance as exceeding expectations based on local grounds, thanking after the request can participate in *construing* another's decision to help as special (some observers' impression that thanking in English is a matter of etiquette rather than gratitude might derive from such usages, see Appadurai 1985). Consider the following example involving a toddler, Jack, and his dad, Mike. If there is something that a toddler can take for granted it is that he will receive food from his parents. Still, English parents frequently model thanking for toddlers in the mundane context of food provision. Here Jack wants some of what his dad has in his bowl. Mike models saying "please" for Jack (line 5), then models saying "thank you" (line 10).

(10) BB4-1_151615 (English)

```
01  Jack:  da:↓::d,
              ((points to Mike's bowl))
02  Mike:  you want some of daddy:'s,
03  Jack:  ya
04         (0.2)
05  Mike:  plea:se¿
              ((gaze to Jack))
06  Jack:  beez
07  Mike:  good boy here we go¿
              ((puts spoonful of peas into J's bowl))
08         (0.9)
09  Jack:  a:: ((reaches into his bowl))
10  Mike:  thank you¿
11  Jack:  thank you¿
12         ((both eat))
```

We never find such interactions in a matched corpus of Polish family interactions (Zinken 2016). Young children (2–3 years old) in those data never thank after being given food that they have requested, and adults do not pursue or model saying thanks. Modelling 'thanking' might be a practice that parents in some, but not all, cultures use to socialize children into appreciating episodes of assistance as involving another's autonomous decision to do something for them.[6]

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6.   There is a large literature on the meanings of autonomy and independence as socialization goals in different cultures, for example, Fasulo *et al.* (2007), Keller *et al.* (2007), Ochs and Izquierdo (2009).

When thanks are given after compliance with a request that was made in a conventional format, this is mostly a second person polar question request such as the English *can you do x*. This finding supports our argument that thanking after a successful request treats the provision of assistance as more than was locally expectable. Earlier research on a number of European languages has shown that this request format typically orients to the discordance between the action being requested and what the requestee is presently doing, requiring a departure from it (Rossi 2012; Wootton 1997). In these circumstances, there is no good local reason to expect that the requestee is already aligned with doing what is being requested. In that way, a second person polar question request makes public the stance that compliance will rest on the requestee's autonomous decision.

It comes as no surprise therefore that across languages we find an affinity between thanking after compliance and the request format of a second person interrogative. In the large-scale comparison of requests across languages that we conducted with colleagues (Floyd *et al*. 2018), acknowledging compliance (including by thanking) was significantly more common in English and Italian than in any of the other languages in the study (Polish, Russian, Siwu, Cha'palaa, Lao, Murrinhpatha). And this appears to be associated with the relatively frequent use of a question format for requesting in those two languages (Kendrick in press; Rossi in press). These findings point to a locus of cultural diversity in the 'situation design' of requests. In many situations in everyday life, the reqestee's alignment with the course of action advanced by the request is ambiguous. Preparing breakfast *together*, for example, generally implies that the chores involved as part of this larger activity will be shared. When the time comes for a particular chore to be attended to, however, you may or may not have shown readiness to contribute to it at that moment (see Extract 8). In requesting that the chore be attended to, speakers of certain languages (such as Polish) might lean towards expecting you to do it by virtue of the shared commitment to the overarching project (Zinken and Deppermann 2017), whereas speakers of other languages (such as English or Italian) might lean towards orienting to your present engagement in unrelated business (Zinken and Ogiermann 2013).

Cultural diversity can then draw our attention to observations about social action that in fact apply in general: in our conduct, we not only adapt the design of our actions (e.g. requests) to the local situation, but also reflexively create the situation by selectively orienting to certain aspects of the context and not others (e.g., Heritage 1984, Chapter 5). With this in mind, let's now take a closer look at how thanking contributes to reflexively construing a cooperative situation as involving the Provider's decision to be helpful. Example (11) contains two utterly unremarkable requests, in terms of both the format and the requested actions. An extended family have gathered for dinner to celebrate Margaret's birthday. This is

quite early in the event, and people are passing around dishes. At line 6–7, Viola asks her nephew Jason to pass her the cabbage.

(11) BD_4915640 (English)

```
01              (2.0)
02  Margaret:   That camera's pointing quite down is
03              that- [is it up enough.
03  Jason:            [yeah but that- [yeah it is
04  Viola:                            [that's good
05              (0.3)
06              §(0.1)
    viola       §begins point to cabbage----->
06  Viola:      .m.H:: ↑can you pass me
07              the cabbage please§ Ja*son
                -----retracts,,,,,§
    jason                               *extends hand, takes
                                         bowl, passes----->
08              (1.6)*
    jason       ---->*
09  Viola:      §°thank you¿°
                §takes hold of bowl
    ((8 lines omitted; Viola serves herself cabbage))
17              §(1.2)
    viola       §holds bowl, moves to J's field of
                            vision------------->
18  jason       *oh-*
                *moves torso back, puts down cutlery*
19  Viola:      sorry Jason§*
                ---------->§
    jason               *takes bowl
20  Viola:      and now can you just pass o- the roast
21              pota(h)toe(h)hu[:s
22  Jason:                     [*.Hu
                                *takes bowl, passes->
23              (1.4)*
    jason       ---->*
24  Viola:      °thank you°
```

We suggest that by thanking Jason in line 9 for having passed her the cabbage, Viola orients to and emphasises a component of his cooperation, namely that his assistance involved an autonomous decision on his part to comply. In other words, Viola treats Jason's assistance as a decision to be helpful, as something that she is not taking for granted. That these social orientations are indeed at play becomes more apparent in the further course of the interaction. When Viola wants Jason to put the bowl back again, she apologizes (line 19), and when she then asks him to pass her another bowl, she infuses the last word of her turn with laughter (lines 20–21), thus treating his involvement in circulating the food as possibly "asking too much", rather than, for example, as simply part of his contribution to and responsibility for the organizational needs of having a joint meal.

While the modal format *can you* is ubiquitous in (British) English requesting, its counterpart in Italian (*puoi x*) has a marked status: it is restricted to making requests that the requestee may be unwilling or reluctant to comply with (Rossi 2015, Chapter 4). In Polish, too, second person interrogative requests with a modal auxiliary are rare, and are selected in problematic contexts in adult interaction (Zinken in press). We do not know of a systematic analysis of these request formats for German, but, in contrast to English, it is at least common in German to formulate interrogative requests without a modal auxiliary (see Extract 1), which suggests an organisation similar to Italian and Polish, where the modal auxiliary format is dedicated to treating the request as potentially delicate.

It is noteworthy, then, especially considering the small number of cases overall, that in all of these three languages – Polish, German, and Italian – we find cases of thanking after successful requests that were made in the format of a second person interrogative with a modal auxiliary ('can you x'). In (12), Bernd asks Kerstin to pass the butter at the breakfast table. In (13), Mum asks Dad to bring a knife from the kitchen. In (14), Gosia asks her dad Karol to slice her pizza.

(12)   PECII_Brkfst_20160424 (German)

((Bernd and Kerstin are having breakfast with their two children.))
```
01  Bernd:   kannst  du  die butter einmal
             can.2SG you the butter once
             can you pass the butter once
02           rüberreichen  bitte
             across.pass.INF please
             across pleas
03  kerstin  ((passes butter))
04  Bernd:   °°danke°°
              thanks
```

(13)   MaraniPranzo_1416453 (Italian)

((The family are finishing their lunch, and Dad has arrived to the table bringing a bowl of fruit. He is standing by the table.))
```
01  Mum:   e::hm::_
           u::hm::
02         (.)
03  Mum:   puoi   prendere anche allora un: col˘TEllo
           can-2SG take-INF  also  then   one knife
           can you then also get a: knife
04         da [sbuc˘CIAre=
           to peel-INF
           to peel
05  Dad:      [m- m- ((nods))
06  Mum:   =sta ˘ROba? [già   che vai] di ´LÀ,
            this stuff  since CMP go-2SG of there
            this stuff  since you're going over there
07  Dad:               [ma certam-   ]
                        but surel-
```

```
08  Dad:    ma certamente.
            but surely
09          ((1 minute omitted, during which Dad
             clears the table of dirty plates before
             going to the kitchen))
10  Dad:    ((approaches dining table with knife))
11  Mum:    grazie caro,
            thank you dear
```

(14)   PP6-4_425819 (Polish)

((A family with two daughters is having pizza at the kitchen table.))

```
01  Gosia:  możesz  to  tutaj (pokroić), [taki,
            can.2SG this here  cut.INF     such
            can you cut it here like this
03  Karol:                               [aha,
                                          ((yes))
02  Gosia:  ale nie skórke
            but not crust
            but not the crust
04          (1.4) ((Karol indicates food in his hand))
    ((6 lines omitted; Karol finishes eating))
11          *(6.3)      *
    karol   *cuts pizza*
12          *(1.2)
    karol   *stretches out arm to put cutter away--->
13  Gosia:  dzię*kuję?
            thank.1SG
            thank you
    karol   --->*
14          (0.8)
15  Karol   °proszę   bardzo°
            plead.1SG very
            you're welcome
16          (1.7)
```

All three requests are produced in such a way as to treat the request as potentially problematic, besides the use of the modal interrogative format itself. In (12), Bernd uses the mitigating temporal adverb *einmal* ("once"), which is quite uncommon in requests for such everyday acts of cooperation as passing the butter ((unlike the ubiquitous particle *mal*, derived from this adverb, see Zinken and Deppermann 2017). In (13), Mum adds an account ("since you are going over there"), justifying a request that might potentially, for some reason, be not entirely agreeable to Dad. And in (14), Gosia's request comes with a 'pleading' intonation (cf. Extract 9) and an unclear articulation of the action she wants her dad to perform (the verb in line 1 is incomprehensible), suggesting a degree of uncertainty in asking for this service. In sum, in languages other than English, second person modal interrogative requests ('can you x') treat the requested action as somewhat problematic. This is an orientation to the cooperative episode that makes thanking relevant as a way of

acknowledging that the other has chosen to be helpful despite their potential initial unwillingness or reluctance.

So far, we have provided two forms of evidence for our argument that people thank others to convey that their assistance was not taken for granted. The first was that thanking is most 'at home' after assistance that was volunteered by the Provider, that is, in situations where the recipient had not done anything "on-record" to elicit assistance. The second was that thanking after compliance with a request, that is, when the recipient *has* done something to make assistance conditionally relevant, is found mostly when the request was designed in such a way as to treat compliance as not assumed and in some cases potentially uncertain.

We now turn to a third source of evidence for our argument. The meaning of thanking as recognizing that the Provider has done something the Recipient is not taking for granted also becomes tangible in situations where thanking is used to retroactively construe and possibly modify the nature of the action that led to a cooperative act. Here, thanking becomes a tool flexibly used to manage the question of "putting in more than expectable" contingently.

Consider Extract (15). After dinner, Maggie, the host, asks to take Anna's plate. Anna first responds as to a request, accepting with a polar token (*yeah*, line 5) and taking hold of her plate. She then adds *thanks*, thereby acknowledging that Maggie's request embodied an offer to do something for Anna, to clear away the plates.

(15)   Catching_up_2959 (English)

```
01  Anna:    KH:.
02           (0.8)
03  Maggie:  Anna would you $pass your plate.
                            $point to plate
04  Maggie:  [°please°
05  Anna:    [yeah. &thanks.
                    &takes hold of plate
06           (0.2)
```

Here, we have a case of thanking after a request, but it is not the requester who thanks – because it is not the requester who is the Recipient of assistance, but the requestee. By thanking, Anna reinterprets Maggie's move as not a request but an offer. This is a straightforward example where thanking is used to retroactively modify the understanding of the action that initiated an episode of cooperation. The next case is more complex.

Extract (16) comes from the same breakfast as the water bottle case (Extract 3). Here, Lotte has been complaining that her bike is too small and the saddle is too low. Her parents, Martina and Ludwig, receive this complaint with some bemusement (apparently, it is a new bike, lines 3–4). After Lotte renews her complaint and her demand that the saddle be moved higher (lines 5–10), Martina turns to Ludwig and repeats Lotte's demand, introduced with a turn-initial *ja dann* ("well then"): *ja*

dann musse den sattel mal wieder höher stellen ("well then you must put the saddle up higher again", lines 12–13).

   (16)   PECII_DE_Brkfst_20160213 (German)

((This is the same family as in Extracts 3 and 6. Lara is Lotte's younger sister.))

```
01  Lotte:      du  musst den sattel mal wieder
                you must  ART  saddle PRT again
                you must put the saddle
02              höher  stellen
                higher put.INF
                higher again
03  Ludwig:     dein neues fahrrad is klein des  is
                your new   bike    is small that is
                your new bike is small, that is
04              sensationell
                sensational
05  Lotte:      du  musst den sattel mal wieder
                you must  ART  saddle PRT again
                you must put the saddle
06              höher  stellen hallo? ich ich
                higher put.INF  hello  I  I
                up again hello? I I
07              (0.2)
08  Martina:    ((laughs))
09              (0.5)
10  Lotte:      das  is mir    viel zu  klein
                that is me.DAT much too small
                that's far too small for me
11              (1.3)
12  Martina:    ja  dann (0.9) musse    den sattel
                yes then       must.you ART   saddle
                well then you must put the saddle
13              mal wieder höher  stellen ((gaze>Lud))
                PRT  again  higher put.INF
                up again
14  Lotte:      ja:.
                yes
15  Lara:       oder du  kannst dir   ja_n
                or   you can.2SG you.DAT PRT.ART
                or you could wish
16              neues fahrrad wünschen
                new   bike    wish.INF
                for a new bike
17  Martina:    und mir   die butter geben  bitte
                and me.DAT ART butter give.INF please
                and (you must) pass me the butter please
18              (1.2)
19  Ludwig:     °(bitte schön)°
                 please very
                 here you are
20  Martina:     hehe danke schön
                      thank pretty
                      thanks a lot
```

The request that interests us here starts at line 17. Re-using the latently available syntactic structure from her prior turn (Auer 2015), Martina designs the request as a continuation: *und mir die butter geben bitte* ("and (you must) pass me the butter please", line 17). Such personal deontic statements ("you must do x") are highly unusual in everyday requests in the languages examined in this study, and particularly so in relation to a unilateral request benefitting the requester. Formulating a request for the butter in this way, Martina builds it into a list of things that Ludwig must do, as it were; her turn becomes a playful continuation of, and commentary on, the seriousness with which Lotte has just been making demands of her father.

Ludwig passes Martina the butter, accompanied with a softly spoken verbal turn (probably *bitte schön*, "here you are"). If then, at line 20, Martina had just silently taken the butter from Ludwig, she would have treated his compliance simply as a fitted response to her request, aligning with and thus making "official" the social relations constructed by the request: the claim that Ludwig "must" pass her the butter, as stated in her request. Instead, Martina expands the sequence by thanking him (*danke schön*, "thanks a lot"). As we have seen above, however, Martina's "you must do x" format serves as a form of banter rather than as a way of making an actual deontic claim about Ludwig's cooperation. By thanking Ludwig and laughing, she further orients to the non-seriousness of her request formulation, and thereby treats Ludwig's compliant action as something that he did not because he "must" but independently of the deontic dimension of Martina's turn. In other words, we could say that, by thanking, Martina retrospectively cancels the deontic dimension of her request and recognizes Ludwig's compliance as an autonomous decision.

Note that Martina's banter relies on the understanding that the requested action is in her interest only, something that fulfils a need or wish of hers. If it was somehow Ludwig's established role to pass around the butter, or if he had entered a special commitment to do so, then Martina's request would have been hearable as a reminder of Ludwig's duties. In the actual circumstances in which Martina's request is issued, her subsequent *thanks* works as a way of calling her own bluff. While her request says "you must do this for me", the *thanks* says "you *chose* to do this for me".

Conclusion

We have examined when people thank for the assistance they receive in everyday, informal interaction. Our analysis shows that, by thanking, Recipients of assistance recognize that their Provider has autonomously decided to be helpful – in other words, they recognize their agency in providing assistance. This meaning is made available across a range of contexts where Recipients of assistance thank, which

share the quality that the assistance provided is (treated as) more than expectable. We have discussed three sources of evidence for this analysis. Firstly, thanking seems to be most relevant in response to assistance that was volunteered by another person. This seems to be a circumstance that makes the expression of thanks similarly meaningful across cultures. Secondly, in the relatively rare cases when recipients thank for assistance that they had explicitly requested, this happens after requests that conveyed a stance of 'low expectability' of compliance. Thirdly, there are cases in which thanking is employed as a tool to retrospectively treat another's action as assistance beyond the call of duty.

Benefaction alone is not a sufficient motivation for thanking. This is most immediately visible from cases where the size or magnitude of the benefaction is comparable (e.g. Extracts 1 and 2 vs. Extracts 9 and 11), but thanking occurs only in some. We have shown that the primary motivation is instead agency. In everyday interaction, thanking does not mean 'I recognise that you did something good for me' but rather 'I recognise that you *decided* to do something good for me'.

What does our analysis here tell us about how we mobilize others and how we design moves to do this in accordance with the larger activity or situation at hand (see Betz *et al.*, this volume)? At the beginning of this chapter, we distinguished between two 'forces' at work in moves that mobilize another's action: (i) the sequential status of the request move itself as the first pair part of an adjacency pair and (ii) a situated expectation of the other's helpfulness. The latter can more or less strongly built on local commitments that have been established earlier in the activity or sequence (e.g. Rossi 2015; Wootton 1997) or on understandings of the other's availability tied to their participation in the overall event (Zinken and Deppermann 2017). In the absence of such local commitments, we can still rely on the helpfulness of others, on our human motivation to move others and be moved by them (Reddy 2012). Against this background, our analysis suggests that, in informal interaction among family and friends, thanking for compliance with a request construes another's cooperation as not expectable in terms of the current activity or situation. Instead, giving thanks re-invokes the 'situation design' of the request as appealing to the other's general helpfulness.

The overall rarity of thanking suggests that people in their everyday lives mostly mobilize others' cooperation as part of activities that involve expected contributions. Here, the understanding of an individual's agency relies on the responsibility of each contributor to "do their part". At the same time, the relatively higher frequency of thanking in some languages, and the related importance placed on thanking in language socialization, suggest that certain cultures put a premium on working against the pervasive expectability of cooperation. In these cultures, the understanding of an individual's agency accentuates personal autonomy and independence – one of the defining values of the 'modern Western self'

(Taylor 1989). Thus the tendency to *not* take another's effort – however small – for granted, and to instead recognise it as a *favour* rather than a *contribution* (Zinken and Rossi 2016).

There is another entry into the analysis of thanking in interaction, one that we have said nothing about. This would begin with the observation that thanking after compliance with requests occurs in third position, and in that position plays a role in the navigation of interactional projects (Bangerter *et al*. 2004). Of course, such an account runs into the same problem as one based on benefaction does: all episodes of everyday cooperation need to be interactionally navigated, so why is thanking rare? However, there might be a connection worth mentioning between the agency-based account we have proposed here and the observation that thanking participates in 'closing' a cooperative episode. In relation to high-grade assessments (such as *lovely, brilliant*) used in third position after, for example, a question-answer sequence in an institutional interview, it has been suggested that these display a claim of ownership of the larger, overarching activity (Antaki 2002). In a similar way, our analysis suggests that by closing a cooperative episode with thanking, a Recipient 'discharges' the Provider from their role in dealing with whatever the recipient needed to be dealt with (see Extract 4 in particular). Rather than being a co-owner of the project who is expected to *contribute* to it, the Provider has been momentarily recruited to *assist* the owner – the Recipient – in it (Zinken and Rossi 2016). Put that way, an examination of what thanking brings to sequence closure might bring us right back to agency.

Abbreviations used in glossing

1, 2, 3	first, second, third person	INF	infinitive
ART	article	PRT	particle
CMP	complementizer	Q	question marker
DAT	dative	SG or S	singular
DIM	diminutive	VOC	vocative
HON	honorific		

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