Linguistic variation between and within languages is typically characterized at the phonological or lexical level. However, pragmatic variation is also important, and critical for successful second language acquisition. Imperfect understanding of pragmatic differences is a common cause of difficulties in cross-cultural communication. However, even within the same linguistic community, there can be significant pragmatic variation. This point will be illustrated with research on regional differences in the use of sarcasm and irony within the United States.

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