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Irish English and Variational Pragmatics



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CHAPTER 19

IRISH ENGLISH AND VARIATIONAL PRAGMATICS

ANNE BARRON

19.1. Introduction

Since its recent beginnings in the early years of this millennium, pragmatic research on Irish English (IrEng) has flourished (cf. the edited volumes Barron and Schneider 2005 and Amador-Moreno et al. 2015; cf. also Vaughan and Clancy 2011; Schneider 2012a; Hickey 2015). From these early stages onwards, a substantial part of pragmatic research on IrEng has centered on pragmatic variation (cf. Vaughan and Clancy 2011: 50; Hickey 2015: 20; Barron and Pandarova 2016), a circumstance also influenced by the parallel emergence of variational pragmatics as a research area (Schneider and Barron 2008; Barron and Schneider 2009).

At the interface of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, variational pragmatics is concerned with investigating pragmatic variation within a single language according to macro-social factors, such as region, gender, age, socio-economic class and ethnic identity. It also examines the interaction of these macro-social factors and the interaction of macro-social factors with micro-social factors, such as social distance and social dominance as they influence language use and interaction. Variational pragmatic research is empirical, contrastive and uses comparable data, enabling variety-specific and variety-preferential conventions to be identified (Schneider and Barron 2008; Barron and Schneider 2009; Schneider 2010, 2012b, 2020; Barron 2014, 2015, 2017a, 2021a; Schneider and Placencia 2017). Six levels of pragmatic analysis are identified, namely the formal level (e.g., discourse-pragmatic markers, pragmatic routines), the actional level (e.g., speech acts), the interactional level (e.g., sequential patterns), the topic level (e.g., content and topic management), the organisational level (e.g., turn-taking) (Schneider and Barron, 2008) and the stylistic level (e.g., polite/ plain styles, pronominal address forms), the latter level proposed by Félix-Brasdefer (2012). Empirical analyses may also combine these levels.

Variational pragmatic research on IrEng has three main foci. It focuses on describing the conventions of language use and interaction in IrEng as contrasted with other varieties of English (type 1). Such research focuses on region on a national level and concentrates on identifying variety-specific and

variety-preferential patterns of usage within IrEng relative to other pluricentric varieties of English. Secondly, type 2 variational pragmatic research on IrEng focuses on pragmatic variation within IrEng as influenced by region, gender, age, socio-economic class and ethnic identity. Type 2 variation views region on a more subordinate level, encompassing, for instance, sub-national, local and sub-local regional variation. A final branch of scholarship on pragmatic variation in IrEng investigates the development of localised IrEng pragmatic conventions by L2 speakers residing in Ireland (type 3).

The analysis of language use and interaction in IrEng relative to other pluricentric varieties of English (type 1) and also its analysis within IrEng (type 2) plays a central role in investigating how identities, national, regional, gender-based, age-based, socio-economic-based or ethnic-based are constructed in IrEng (cf. Barron 2017b; Hickey and Amador-Moreno 2020: 15). Identity, broadly speaking, is the view that each of us constructs of ourselves as unique human beings. From a linguistic perspective, identity construction is seen in the dynamic linguistic choices – both conscious and unconscious – which speakers make from the selection of variable linguistic options available to them in society. Speakers express a unique individual identity through language, conveying a speaker's character or personality, but also a collective identity, the latter which provides a sense of group belonging by identifying a person as belonging to one or more social group, whether based on regional, gender, age, socio-economic or ethnic criteria (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 2010; Llamas and Watt 2010; Hickey and Amador-Moreno 2020; Terrazas-Calero 2020). Type 1 research is one step towards identifying indexes of Irish identity but type 2 research is also required to shed light on distributions across IrEng and to determine if a particular marker plays a role in identity construction not on a wholly national level, but rather in interaction with further macro-social factors (e.g. Irish women). In addition, type 2 research is also complementary in shedding light on whether a particular pragmatic feature or convention is receding or whether it is a stable index of IrEng linguistic identity (cf. Schweinberger 2020).

Variational pragmatic research on IrEng to date has been descriptive, primarily observing how pragmatic conventions are linked to regional and social factors via corpus data and questionnaire data (first level indexicality, Silverstein 2003). In addition, a small number of studies have also engaged in cross-varietal research on pragmatic representations in literature and delivered some insights on indexes of national, regional and social identities. Depending on the literature at hand and the author's intentions, such data may deliver information on those forms and patterns which group members see as linked to a particular sociodemographic context (second order indexicality) and/ or also information on those forms and patterns which are widely perceived as being stereotypical for a particular socio-demographic context (third order indexicality) (Silverstein 2003).

The present chapter begins with an overview of research on pragmatic variation in IrEng structured around type 1 and type 2 pragmatic variation, focusing on pragmatic conventions in IrEng in comparison with other varieties of English (Section 2.1) and on pragmatic variation within IrEng respectively (Section 2.2).¹ Following this, an empirical study investigating type 1 and 2 pragmatic variation is described with the aim of illustrating some of the methods, trends and issues arising in the analysis of pragmatic variation in IrEng (Section 3). Specifically, the study, using data from the cross-varietal Lueneburg Direction-Giving (LuDiG) corpus compares speech act realisations of request consents in IrEng and Canadian English (CanEng) (type 1) and across gender (type 2). It also functions at the interface of type 1 and type 2 variation and contrasts masculine/ feminine language use in CanEng with that in IrEng (Section 3). Finally, after a discussion of the findings, the paper closes with some considerations of potential future research questions in the study of pragmatic variation in IrEng (Section 4).

19.2. Irish English and Pragmatic Variation

19.2.1 Pragmatic variation across national varieties: focus on Irish English

The study of IrEng from a variational pragmatic perspective originally started with a focus on type 1 variation (cf. edited volume Barron and Schneider 2005). It aimed at highlighting those pragmatic features and patterns of IrEng shared with other national varieties of English and also at ascertaining which features of IrEng pragmatics are particular to IrEng (variety-specific) and which preferred or dispreferred in IrEng relative to other national varieties (variety-preferential). The study of type 1 variation in IrEng examines region on a national level. It has focused primarily on the formal and actional levels of analysis and these are the levels focused on in the following (cf. Barron and Pandarova 2016 for an overview of research on other levels). We look first at pragmalinguistic forms specific or particularly salient to IrEng, then at discourse-pragmatic markers with distinctive functions in IrEng and finally at variety-preferential language uses in IrEng which reflect basic societal values.

We turn first to the pragmalinguistic forms in IrEng which are variety-specific or particularly frequent in IrEng. Hickey (2017), for instance, identifies the use of the adjective *grand* with a second person pronoun (e.g. *you're grand*) to realise the intersubjective function of reassuring ('reassuring *grand*'), a form/function combination specific to IrEng. In addition, he finds subjective uses of *grand*, termed 'approving *grand*' (e.g. *It's a grand morning*), used to some extent

¹ The reader is referred to Barron (2019) for an overview of type 3 variation, focused on the acquisition of pragmatic features of IrEng by L2 speakers residing in Ireland.

in varieties, such as CanEng, to be used to a far greater extent in IrEng. In a study of responses to thanks in American English (AmEng), English English (EngEng) and IrEng, Schneider (2005) reports the same token, *you're grand*, and also the form *no bother*, both realisations of the NO PROBLEM type, to be exclusive to IrEng (cf. also Barron in press b). A further variety-specific pragmalinguistic form is reported in an analysis of offers in the Republic of Ireland and British components of the International Corpus of English (ICE) (ICE-Ireland (ROI), ICE-GB) (Barron 2017b: 232). The offer strategy 'question future act of speaker', although realised by the conventionalised pattern 'AUX I + actional verb?' in both varieties, was realised using the modal verb *will* in IrEng (*Will I pour out your water?*) but with *shall* in British English (BrEng). As a final example, Barron (2020), in a study of the Global Corpus of Web-based English (GloWbE), reports *thanks a million/ mill/ mil* to be an intensified formulaic pattern used to express gratitude which is used in IrEng but very infrequent in BrEng (cf. also Barron and Pandarova 2016 on *sure*-tags, also specific to IrEng).

Moving on to discourse-pragmatic markers, research in this area is vibrant in IrEng and has highlighted a number of noteworthy interactional functions which are specific to or notably frequent in IrEng. The discourse-pragmatic marker *now*, for instance, is used in IrEng, but not in BrEng as a) a deictic presentative ('presentative *now*'; e.g. *There you go now*) and b) to mitigate face-threatening behavior ('hedging *now*', such as in challenges; e.g. *That's not very nice now*) (Clancy and Vaughan 2012, cf. also Hickey 2015). Similarly, the discourse-pragmatic marker *sure* has been shown to be more frequent in IrEng relative to BrEng or AmEng (Pandarova in progress). Its range of functions is also broader, including signaling that the information it modifies is shared or presupposed knowledge and that the speaker expects agreement, consent or consensus (> *Sure Bertie Ahern can't speak neither Irish nor English* <&> laughter </&> (ICE-Ireland)) (cf. e.g. Amador-Moreno 2005; Kallen 2006). Finally, particular to the use of the discourse-pragmatic marker *like* in IrEng, relative to many other varieties of English, is its extensive use as a speech-final unit (e.g., *Oh it's sort of a kind of a a sort of a a negative kind of a word in a way like* (ICE-Ireland)). A number of functions have been suggested for *like* in final position (cf. Schweinberger 2020: 91). Diskin (2017), for instance, suggests a mitigating function in uses with short potentially face-threatening statements of personal opinion (cf. also Kallen 2006; Amador-Moreno 2010: 121).

Much of the research on language use in IrEng, rather than identifying variety-specific forms or functions, has highlighted variety-preferential uses in IrEng. Some such preferential uses have been suggested to underline particular socio-cultural values in Irish society. One such value is the importance in IrEng of avoiding forwardness in language use, whereby forwardness is defined as spanning directness and self-promotion (Farr and O'Keeffe 2002: 42). Below I show that the avoidance of forwardness appears to have a dual orientation, a) the avoidance of speaker-oriented assertiveness and b) a hearer-orientation

designed to reduce any face threat to the hearer, both features which may downtone the weight given to power relations in society. Farr and O’Keeffe (2002) first drew attention to this tendency to reject forwardness in IrEng in an analysis in which uses of the modal verb *would* as a hedging device were higher in IrEng relative to BrEng and AmEng. A subsequent qualitative analysis, focusing on two particular institutional settings in IrEng, provided evidence that *would* is used frequently by power holders to downtone facts where the propositional content is not in dispute (cf. also Amador-Moreno 2010: 119). Farr and O’Keeffe (2002) link the downtoning of assertiveness and directness with a disfavouring of forwardness. A further study by Kallen (2005b) which contrasted the discourse pragmatic markers *you know*, *I’d say*, *I say* and *I mean* in ICE-GB and ICE-Ireland, suggested a similar avoidance of directness and assertiveness and an accompanying attention to the hearer’s negative face given that *you know* and *I’d say*, both downgrading the force of a speaker’s assertion, were more common in ICE-Ireland than in ICE-GB. In contrast, *I mean* and *I say*, both used to upgrade the force of a speaker’s assertion, occurred to a larger extent in ICE-GB. Also, Schneider (1999), in an analysis of compliment responses, found IrEng speakers to prefer a ‘rejecting’ strategy encompassing a range of strategies, such as explaining, doubting, denigrating and expressing embarrassment (e.g., *Do you really like it? I wasn’t very happy with it*), all designed to decrease self-praise and thus to avoid forwardness. AmEng speakers in contrast preferred an overriding ‘accepting’ strategy (*Yeah, it’s nice, isn’t it? I’m glad you enjoyed it*) (cf. also Amador-Moreno 2010: 127). Finally, a tendency to avoid forwardness in IrEng is also seen in a study on responses to thanks in language use in IrEng, CanEng and EngEng (Barron in press a, in press b). The IrEng and EngEng data showed a lower number of verbal responses relative to CanEng as well as a tendency to realise thanks verbally using a ‘minimise the favour’ strategy (e.g. OKAY, NO PROBLEM). There was also a lower use of an ‘expressing appreciation’ strategy (SURE, WELCOME) in IrEng relative to CanEng and EngEng.² The lower use of responses to thanks, as well as the preference for a “minimise the favour’ strategy, were suggested to downgrade the original beneficial act carried out by the responder to thanks for the thankee and so lessen self-praise and thus forwardness. At the same time, such language use also served to lessen any potential face-threat vis-à-vis the thankee, the one for whom the hearer-oriented act was executed. Overall, these studies, showing an attempt to avoid forwardness, point to a strong hearer-orientation in IrEng which, via silence, indirectness or minimising strategies, is

² These findings contradict those by Schneider (2005) who finds IrEng speakers, like AmEng speakers, to express appreciation more frequently than EngEng speakers. Further research is required on this question. The differences may relate to the act for which the thanks was issued. Alternatively, the data type may play a role; Schneider’s (2005) analysis employed production questionnaires which elicit prototypical realisations rather than actual utterances. Barron’s (in press a, in press b) research used a spoken rapid anonymous format to capture spontaneous naturally-occurring realisations.

focused on the one hand on decreasing any face-threat to the hearer and on the other hand on decreasing self-praise. This emphasis on decreasing directness and self-praise is also reflected in the variety-specific discourse functions discussed above. Thus 'hedging *now*', and speech-unit final mitigating *like* are both concerned with decreasing assertiveness and self-praise and thus also on downtoning a potential threat to the hearer's face.

A further feature of IrEng pragmatics are efforts made by speakers of IrEng to employ positive politeness in language use to enhance a sense of harmony and solidarity vis-à-vis their interlocutors. Uses of such positive politeness appear to be higher at least vis-à-vis BrE or EngE. In contrast to directness in speech acts which threaten hearer's face (cf. above), directness in speech acts of positive politeness enhance the hearer's face. This orientation towards enhancing solidarity has been recorded in studies of expressions of gratitude and apologies in IrEng. In a previous study on expressions of gratitude, for instance, I found *thanks* in IrEng to be intensified to a larger extent relative to BrEng (Barron 2020). Similarly, a higher use of vocatives, combined with higher levels of situation-specific upgrading, characterised IrEng apologies relative to EngEng apologies in a recent production questionnaire study I carried out (Barron 2021b). It should, however, be noted that levels of positive politeness appear to be higher in other varieties of English, such as CanEng, than in IrEng. This was seen in higher uses of an overriding 'expressing appreciation' strategy (SURE, WELCOME) in responses to thanks in CanEng relative to IrEng (Barron in press a, in press b).

Finally, and related to the employment of positive politeness to create a sense of harmony and solidarity in IrEng, a number of studies point to the particular status of hospitality in IrEng, even among relative strangers, as a pole of Irish politeness (cf. Kallen 2005a). Barron (2017b), for instance, shows a higher use of hospitable offers in the Republic of Ireland component of ICE-Ireland (ROI) relative to ICE-GB. In addition, talk, Kallen (2005a: 132) posits, brings pleasure to others and is therefore valued for its role in creating a sense of hospitality. In a cross-varietal analysis, Barron (in press a) found that continuations and confirmation checks are more common in IrEng direction-giving exchanges in IrEng relative to CanEng and EngEng. It is suggested that this may be explained by a heightened hearer orientation in IrEng and thus a heightened sense of responsibility to offer help and support in direction-giving in a hospitable manner.

In sum then, cross-varietal analyses portray IrEng as a variety which has a high hearer-orientation which expresses itself in a number of language-use conventions. Research shows IrEng to avoid forwardness (which threatens hearers) via silence, indirectness, minimising strategies and the avoidance of self-praise. Thus, IrEng speakers attempt to decrease any face-threat to the hearer, attempting to avoid conflict and thus enhance relationships. At the same time, there is an unwritten rule that self-praise is to be avoided. IrEng speakers

also lay importance on enhancing the hearer's positive face via directness (in hearer-oriented acts) and intensification and place particular value on acting hospitably towards others. The weight given to a hearer-orientation in IrEng in its various facets has been suggested to relate to higher levels of collectivism (cf. e.g. Barron 2021b). The interdisciplinary Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) project designed to examine culture and leadership in 61 nations on the basis of nine dimensions of culture using multiple data sets shows Irish society to have considerably higher levels of family collectivism and higher institutional collectivism relative to England (Ashkanasy et al. 2002). Related to language use, collectivist cultures are more close-knit, and it may be suggested that relationship management enjoys a particular status in such cultures. Also related to this explanation of collectivism is the history of Ireland and thus also IrEng as a modern society with its origins in a rural background (Hickey 2015: 19). Communication in such rural communities was characterised by small group communication among members who knew one another, shared common values and relied on each other for support.

19.2.2 Pragmatic variation within Irish English

Recent years have seen an increasing growth in research aimed at identifying pragmatic variation within IrEng (cf. also Barron and Pandarova 2016 for an overview). Such research sheds light on the robustness of a particular pragmatic convention as an index of IrEng identity and brings regional and social indexes at a more subordinate level to light (cf. Section 1). On the level of region at a subordinate level, pragmatic variation within the island of Ireland may, for instance, potentially exist across political boundaries (Northern Ireland vs. Republic of Ireland), across rural/urban boundaries, or across province, county or city boundaries. As well as region, variation within IrEng may pattern with social factors, such as gender, age, socio-economic class or ethnic identity, although most research has focused on gender and age. Research on ethnic variation would potentially focus on immigrant groups throughout the island of Ireland, on Catholic and Protestant speakers in Northern Ireland (cf. Hickey and Amador-Moreno 2020: 9) and in addition on the Traveler community, a group which has recently been given the status of an ethnic minority (O'Halloran and O'Regan 2017). While some studies on pragmatic variation within IrEng focus on a particular macro-social factor in isolation, many discuss pragmatic variation as it relates to the interaction of a number of factors. Consequently, the following overview is structured by linguistic feature rather than by macro-social factor. We start with hedges, then turn to speech-unit final *like*, swearing, tag questions and quotative use.

Analyses of hedges have looked at cross-border pragmatic variation as well as on variation across gender, age, socio-economic class and ethnic identity. Kallen's (2005b) analysis of *I mean* and *you know* and *I say* and *I'd say* (cf. also Section 2.1) was one of the first studies to include a contrast across political borders within IrEng. He finds *you know* to occur more often in the Northern Irish (NI) component of ICE Ireland, a fact which shows more similarities with the ROI data than with the GB data. By contrast, however, the use of *I say* in NI shows a pattern more similar to the GB data. Murphy (2010) is a further study which finds age, and to a lesser extent, gender, to influence hedging conventions in IrEng. Murphy (2010) finds women in their 20s and 40s to use more hedges than 70-80 year olds. In addition, 40s women preferred *you know* and *I think* compared to the 20s women who preferred the forms *like* and *actually*. Findings are explained as a product of the different conversation types which speakers engage in at different ages, younger women engaging in more face-threatening discussions relative to older speakers. Men were reported to hedge less with increasing age, a feature explained with reference to length of acquaintance. Clancy (2011) showed that hedges, such as *like*, *I think*, *just*, *you know* and *actually* were more frequent in settled family interaction than in Traveller family interactions. Clancy explained these differences with reference to the fact that in mainstream culture, such hedging is essential for polite interaction. In the Traveller community, in contrast, such hedges are superfluous.

Also related to hedging, there has been a significant amount of research on uses of clause final or speech-unit final *like* as it correlates with the macro-social factors. Schweinberger (2020), in a multivariate analysis of ICE-Ireland, finds no correlation between speech-unit final *like* and any of the macro-social factors age, gender or religious affiliation. He points out that this finding in contrast to his previous research which found men older than 50 to employ this marker more than women of the same age group (Schweinberger 2012). Given that speech-unit final *like* is employed by all IrEng speakers irrespective of residence, age, gender, religion or occupation, Schweinberger (2020) suggests it to have the status of an identity marker among speakers of IrEng. On the other hand, Amador-Moreno (2015: 376), in an analysis of Paul Howard's literary depictions of modern Dublin speech, finds that globalised clause-medial *like* is frequent in Dublin English and the more localised clause-final *like* infrequent. However, given the focus of Howard's work on upper-class speakers, there is evidence to suggest that socio-economic class may interact with region in this case, with globalised *like* used by upwardly mobile, globally-oriented upper and middle-class Dublin South-side speakers who wish to distance themselves from the more local Dublin speakers by using clause-medial *like* rather than close-final *like* (cf. also Nestor et al. 2012).

Turning to swearing, Terrazas-Calero (2020) analyses how character depiction via pragmatic features in Irish literature may correlate with regional and social factors. She finds the use of taboo language to index rural identity,

suggesting that *fecking* indexes rural usage among 50-60 year olds. In contrast, *fucking* marks a younger, generally male, urban speaker in their 20s-30s. Terrazas-Calero (2020: 270) also suggests that while both women and men express negative emotions using *fucking*, the range of emotions is larger among men. While Terrazas-Calero (2020) uses literary data, Schweinberger (2018) analyses swearing in ICE-Ireland. He reports cross-border regional differences, with speakers of Northern IrEng or Ulster Scots using swear words to a significantly larger extent than speakers in the ROI. In addition, on a rural/urban level, Schweinberger (2018) finds rural speakers between 26 and 33 years of age to be significantly more likely to swear relative to urban speakers or younger or older rural speakers. He suggests that these cross-regional findings may point to a higher covert prestige for swearing in tight-knit multiplex networks. Further analysis across the macro-social factors finds men to swear more than women (a finding in line with previous research), but in the case of IrEng use, the gender gap is larger). With regard to age, Schweinberger finds that in line with research on swearing, speakers over 30 use swear words to a lower extent, possibly due to an increased language awareness (cf. also Murphy 2009 on uses of *fuck* across age and gender). No socio-economic differences were noted. However, it is suggested that this may also relate to a skew in the IrEng corpus towards speakers with higher educational levels.

Research on tag questions across region on a subordinate level and gender finds both NI and ROI speakers in ICE-Ireland to employ tags to realise questions to a similar extent. Both of these groups were found to use more question functions, the original use of tag questions, than speakers in ICE-GB (Barron and Pandarova 2016). Finally, quotative research on literary representation suggests that quotative *go* indexes young upper-class male speakers in IrEng (cf. also Amador-Moreno 2015), whereas quotative *be* like rather indexes young women in their 20-30s (Terrazas-Calero 2020).

19. 3. Empirical Study: Request Consents across Region and Gender

The following study exemplifies an actional study of type 1 and type 2 pragmatic variation. It reports on a study of realisations of the speech act of request consents issued in response to a request for permission across IrEng and CanEng (type 1) and within and across these varieties across gender (type 2). We begin with a description of request consents and an overview of the research in the area (Section 3.1). We then describe the data underlying the study and the coding scheme developed (Section 3.2). Section 3.3 presents the findings and discusses the data in light of previous research in particular within the context of IrEng.

19.3.1 Request consents

Responses to requests may be compliant (request consents) or non-compliant (request refusals). Consents, also termed compliant responses (Leech 2014: 176), are preferred over refusals (cf. Goldschmidt 1998: 145; Rauniomaa and Keisanen 2012: 830; Flöck 2016: 157). Requests impose on the freedom of action of the requestee and thus threaten the negative face-wants of the requestee. Request consents, in their turn then, attempt to minimise any perceived imposition which the request may cause (Goldschmidt 1998: 151). In addition, they are positive politeness acts, which observe the generosity maxim (Leech 1983) and thereby minimise benefit to the speaker and maximise cost to the speaker (Leech 2014: 176). To date, request consents in IrEng have not been analysed; neither are there cross-gender studies of request consents.

Request consents may be verbal or non-verbal (Rauniomaa and Keisanen 2012; Flöck 2016) and verbal request consents may express consent explicitly or implicitly (Flöck 2016: 157). Implicit request consents are realised in an opaque manner, communicating compliance by requesting specification of the request (cf. also Goldschmidt 1998: 146; Flöck 2016: 160). Explicit request consents are used most frequently in AmEng and BrEng than implicit request consents, reflecting the preferred status of the compliant request (Flöck 2016: 159). Common verbal routine responses in both varieties include *okay* (Aijmer 1996: 142; Goldschmidt 1998: 146; Leech 2014: 176; Flöck 2016: 159), *mhm/unhunh* (Aijmer 1996: 142; Flöck 2016: 159), *sure* (Aijmer 2009: 328; Goldschmidt 1998: 146; Leech 2014: 93; Flöck 2016: 159), *certainly* (Aijmer 1996: 142; Leech 2014: 93) and *of course* (Aijmer 1996: 142; Leech 2014: 93). In addition, the routines *no problem*, *that's fine* and *I'd be glad to* have been recorded in studies of AmEng (Goldschmidt 1998). Looking specifically to studies of cross-varietal differences, *sure* is described as a response token which occurs primarily in AmEng (cf. Flöck 2016: 159, cf. also Goldschmidt 1998: 146; Aijmer 2009: 328), while *right* is only found in studies on BrEng data (Flöck 2016: 159; cf. also Aijmer 1996 on *all right*).

Additional agreement forms in both AmEng and BrEng include the first person used together with a modal auxiliary (e.g. *I can*) (Aijmer 1996: 142; Leech 2014: 176). The hypothetical form (*I could*) is reported to be used only in responses when the initiative request itself takes this form or when the eagerness to oblige is otherwise made clear, as for instance via upgrading (Leech 2014: 176). The polarity particles *yes/yeah* also realise request consents in AmEng and BrEng (cf. Aijmer 1996: 142; Leech 2014: 176; Flöck 2016: 159). However, Goldschmidt (1998: 146) finds that *yes* is rarely used in favour-granting. She suggests it to communicate a lack of conviction which may cause a loss of face to the requestee. As seen in Example (1), however, conviction may

be communicated when *yes* is used in combination with other routine responses, such as the token *no problem* (cf. also Leech 2014: 93).

(1) IGM39³: *Yes, no problem.*

Variational pragmatic research on request consents is limited. Flöck (2016), mentioned above, contrasts request consents in AmEng and BrEng using corpus data. El-Dakhs (2018) is a further variational pragmatic study examining request consents in Arabic across region and gender. El-Dakhs (2018) employed production questionnaire data which enabled responses to similar situations across varieties. She reports that her Egyptian informants used more direct and more elaborate consents than those of her Saudi Arabian respondents. Gender differences were also recorded, with Saudi women preferring more direct consent realisations than Saudi men. The same study found both Saudi and Egyptian women to both produce more emphatic request consents than the men from the respective varieties (El-Dakhs 2018).

El-Dakhs' (2018) study looked at the role of gender in the realisation of request consents. However, in general, research on request consents across gender represents a research desideratum. However, research on related speech acts, such as apologies, which also build up positive face suggests that gender may influence language conventions, with women generally paying more attention to social relationships linguistically. Ogiermann (2008), for instance, in a production questionnaire study finds BrEng women to engage in apologetic and polite behaviour via a high number of routine strategies, intensifying devices and exclamations. Similarly, Holmes (1995) in a study of apologies across genders in New Zealand English using ethnographic data finds women to use apologies to express concern and solidarity, while men regard them as confessions of failure.

19.3.2 Data description and coding considerations

The data for the present study is taken from a sub-section of the Lueneburg Direction-Giving (LuDiG) corpus (cf. Barron 2021c, in press a, in press b for further details). The LuDiG corpus is a cross-varietal collection of audio exchanges recorded using a rapid and anonymous Labovian-style methodology (Labov 1972). They involved a researcher asking strangers, both men and women, for directions (cf. also Myers Scotton and Bernstein 1988). The direction-seekers are also the permission seekers. The permission requested concerned the inclusion of the direction-giving interaction in the LuDiG corpus. Despite some pragmalinguistic variation in the request type (e.g. *Would I be*

³ IGM39 is Irish (I), from Galway (G), masculine (M) and with informant number 39; IGF41, on the other hand, is Irish (I), from Galway (G), feminine (F) with informant number 41.

allowed keep the recording?, Would you mind if I kept the recording?, I would like to ask your permission to use the recording, Would it be alright if I kept the recording?), levels of control are – relative to corpus analyses of reactive acts – nonetheless high, given that all consents are in response to the same request for permission. Recordings of poor quality were deleted, as were recordings in which the response was oriented to an additional offer. There was one permission seeker per sub-corpus. Both were women and a native speaker of the respective variety. The CanEng data was gathered in Halifax (n=83); the IrEng data in Galway (n=60), both urban centres. All request consents were issued by informants subjectively judged to be between the ages of 30-50. Informants were both men and women, as categorised subjectively by the researcher on the basis of the social category of informant appearance (IrEng: women: n=28; men: n=32; CanEng: women: n=40; men: n=43).

A previous request consent categorisation system put forward by El-Dakhs (2018) focused on responses to requests for non-verbal objects and to requests for action. It did not, however, include responses to requests for permission. Hence, a system of categorisation was put forward in the present analysis which focused solely on consents to a request for permission. The present scheme employs the concept of the head move, defined as the minimal unit in an utterance which realises a particular act (Barron in press b). In the present study, all request consents were realised explicitly. Hence, the categorisation scheme focuses on explicit request consents and distinguishes between routine and non-routine head move types (cf. Table 19.1). There were two non-routine head move types identified. These included belittling the impact of the request on the requestee (e.g. *I don't see any harm, I don't care, why not?*) and downgrading the value of the requested item (e.g. *I probably come across all squeaky*). Turning to routine head move types, there were many more of these. They are given in upper case in the following. Each routine head move type was realised via a range of tokens similar on a formal and semantic level. Tokens are given in italics in the present. The most frequent token of a particular type is mirrored in the type name. The routine types included YEAH (*yeah, yes*), NO (*no*), YOU CAN (*you can, you could*), SURE (*sure, sure thing*), COURSE (*(of) course⁴, certainly, absolutely*), GO FOR IT (*go ahead, go for it, you have that, you got it*), FINE (*fine, grand, cool, perfect*), OKAY (*okay, alright*) and NO PROBLEM (*no problem, no worries, no bother*). Neither YOU CAN (cf. Example (2)) nor GO FOR IT had not been recorded in request consent descriptions previously. To a limited extent, the choice of YEAH or NO also depended on the exact form of the request strategy chosen. NO, for instance, was the only possible polarity particle possible in response to a request in the form of *would you mind if I?* . Combinations of head move types (routine or non-routine) was also possible. Example (2), for instance, shows a combination of two routine head move types,

⁴ *(Of) course* might also have been coded as upgrading in the data. Given ambiguities, it was decided to treat the form as a routine type.

the type YEAH and the type YOU CAN. Each of these is analysed separately in the following, if it involves different head move types. Finally, two categories of upgrading were identified, namely repetition of a single head move type (cf. Example (2)), repetition of YEAH, realised via *yes* and *yeah*) and intensification via adverbial modifiers (cf. Example (2) (*indeed*), Example (3) (*absolutely*)).

- (2) IGM34: *Yes, you can indeed yeah*
 (3) IGM46: *That's absolutely fine*

The routine and non-routine explicit head move types were also grouped into three major overriding strategies depending on their politeness orientation with regard to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory. Specifically, we differentiate between a) bald on record strategies (YEAH, NO, YOU CAN), b) strategies which increase the requester's positive face (SURE, COURSE, GO FOR IT) and c) strategies which minimise the request and so address the negative face threat which asking the request puts on the requester (FINE, OKAY, NO PROBLEM, belittle impact, downgrade value of requested item) (cf. also Section 3.3).

19.3.3 Requests consents across region and gender in Irish English and Canadian English

In the following, we contrast request consents across region and gender across a) single or multiple head move use, b) use of routine vs. non-routine head move types, c) preferred head move types, d) upgrading, e) routine tokens and f) overriding strategies. We begin with the number of head moves employed.

Focusing first on regional variation across IrEng and CanEng, an independent t-test shows that a higher number of head moves are used per informant in the IrEng data compared to in the CanEng data ($t(141)=-3.341$, $p=0.001$), with only 40% of IrEng informants using one head move compared to as many as 71.1% of CanEng informants (cf. Figure 19.1).⁵ Indeed, on average, the CanEng informants employed only 1.4 head moves per response compared to 1.8 head moves employed by IrEng informants (cf. Figure 19.2). Adding gender to the analysis of region does not reveal any statistically significant gender differences within either variety, with men and women within each variety employing similar numbers of head moves. A comparison of average head move use also makes this clear: IrEng women: 1.9, IrEng men: 1.6; CanEng women: 1.3, CanEng men: 1.4 (cf. Figure 19.2). Viewing both gender and region together shows that the IrEng women employ a significantly larger number of head moves than CanEng women (IrEng women vs. CanEng women: $t(66)=-$

⁵ Independent t-tests are employed to test for significance in the number of consent head moves used. Chi-square analyses tests significance for all remaining analyses.

3.3, $p=0.02$) or CanEng men ($t(69)=-2.736$, $p=0.08$). In addition, IrEng men use a higher number of head moves than CanEng women ($t(70)=-2.097$, $p=0.04$). There are no significant differences, however, between the IrEng and CanEng masculine data. Thus, we may conclude that with regard to the number of head moves used, IrEng women are more like IrEng men than CanEng men or CanEng women. IrEng men are more like IrEng women and CanEng men and most unlike CanEng women.

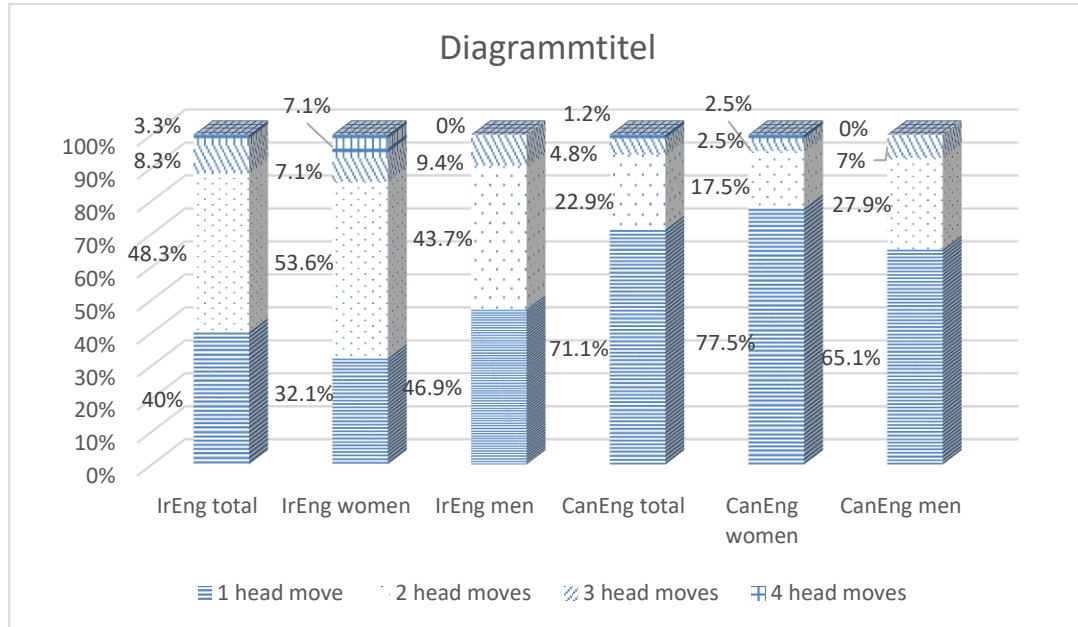


Figure 19.1: Single and multiple head move use in request consents across gender in IrEng and CanEng

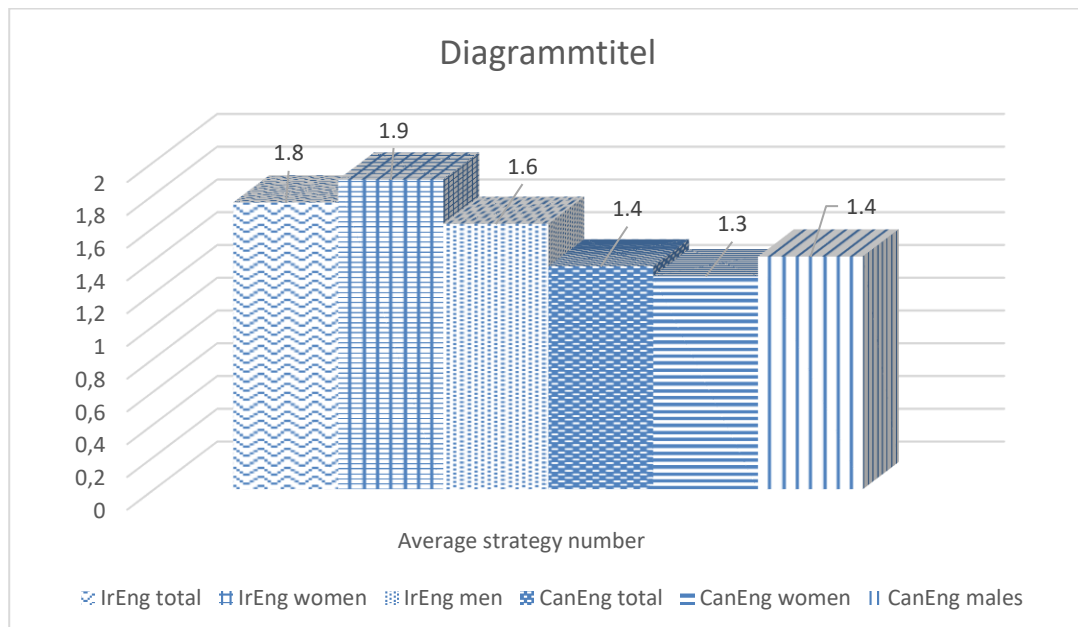


Figure 19.2 Average number of head moves employed in request consents per informant across IrEng and CanEng

Looking further at the distribution of routine and non-routine head moves, Table 19.1 shows the explicit routine and non-routine head move totals given as a percentage of the total head moves per variety and gender. Here, it is clear that routine realisations were preferred across varieties and genders, with non-routine realisations only employed very rarely (IrEng: 2.9%; CanEng: 4.4%). Moving on to head move types, Table 19.1 shows the variety of types. The response type SURE is the type most used in the CanEng data. Indeed, this type is employed in the CanEng data to a significantly larger extent than in the IrEng data, with 49.6% of the total CanEng head moves taking this response type compared to only 9.5% in the IrEng data ($\chi^2(1) = 41.323$, $p = .000$, $\phi = 0.435$). Within neither the IrEng nor the CanEng data is use across genders significant. Thus, an analysis of gender with region shows SURE to be significantly more common among the types used by CanEng women than by IrEng women ($\chi^2(1) = 26.555$, $p = .000$, $\phi = 0.503$) or IrEng men ($\chi^2(1) = 21.150$, $p = .000$, $\phi = 0.451$). The data also show SURE to be significantly more common among CanEng men than among IrEng women ($\chi^2(1) = 20.662$, $p = .000$, $\phi = 0.426$) or IrEng men ($\chi^2(1) = 15.758$, $p = .000$, $\phi = 0.373$). Viewed per informant, SURE is used by 67.5% of informants in CanEng and only by 16.7% of informants in IrEng (cf. Figure 19.3).

	IrEng (n=105)	women (n=53)	men (n=52)	CanEng (n=113)	women (n=52)	men (n=61)
<i>Explicit routine types</i>	97.1% (102)	96.2% (51)	98.1% (51)	95.6% (108)	96.1% (50)	95.1% (58)
YEAH	38.1% (40)	39.6% (21)	36.6% (19)	12.4% (14)	7.7% (4)	16.4% (10)
NO	3.8% (4)	3.8% (2)	3.8% (2)	-	-	-
YOU CAN	5.7% (6)	1.9% (1)	9.6% (5)	-	-	-
SURE	9.5% (10)	7.6% (4)	11.5% (6)	49.6% (56)	53.8% (28)	45.9% (28)
COURSE	6.7% (7)	7.6% (4)	5.8% (3)	5.3% (6)	3.8% (2)	6.6% (4)
GO FOR IT	1.9% (2)	-	3.8% (2)	9.7% (11)	11.5% (6)	8.2% (5)
FINE	10.5% (11)	11.3% (6)	9.6% (5)	9.7% (11)	9.6% (5)	9.8% (6)
OKAY	8.6% (9)	9.4% (5)	7.7% (4)	5.3% (6)	5.8% (3)	4.9% (3)
NO PROBLEM	12.4% (13)	15.1% (8)	9.6% (5)	3.5% (4)	3.8% (2)	3.3% (2)
<i>Explicit non-routine types</i>	2.9% (3)	3.8% (2)	1.9% (1)	4.4% (5)	3.8% (2)	4.9% (3)
Belittle the impact on the requestee	1.9% (2)	1.9% (1)	1.9% (1)	2.6% (3)	3.8% (2)	1.6% (1)

Downgrade the value of the requested item	1% (1)	1.9% (1)	-	1.8% (2)	-	3.3% (2)
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Table 19.1 Routine and non-routine head move types of request consents across gender in IrEng and CanEng calculated as a percentage of the total number of head moves employed per informant group

In contrast to the CanEng overall preference for SURE, YEAH is the type preferred in the IrEng data, with 38.1% of all head moves taking this form. Adding gender does not change this pattern, with no significant differences across the feminine IrEng and masculine IrEng data (cf. Table 19.1). A cross-varietal analysis, however, reveals significant differences with only 12.4% of the total CanEng head moves taking the YEAH form ($\chi^2(1) = 19.300, p = .000, \phi = 0.298$). This pattern remains stable across genders, with no significant differences across the CanEng feminine and CanEng masculine data (cf. Table 19.1). Leading on from this, we see that significantly more IrEng men employ a YEAH head move type than CanEng men ($\chi^2(1) = 5.971, p = .015, \phi = 0.230$) and significantly more IrEng women a YEAH head move type than CanEng women ($\chi^2(1) = 13.044, p = .000, \phi = 0.375$). The data also show YEAH to be significantly more common among the IrEng masculine head move types than among the CanEng feminine head move types ($\chi^2(1) = 12.560, p = .000, \phi = 0.348$) and use of YEAH by IrEng women more common than in the CanEng masculine data ($\chi^2(1) = 7.729, p = .006, \phi = 0.260$). Indeed, viewed per informant, Figure 19.3 shows that 66.7% of all IrEng informants used a YEAH type compared to 16.9% of CanEng informants. Adding the direct bald on record realisations NO, YEAH and YOU CAN together, we see that over 83.3% of IrEng speakers used a bald on record strategy compared to 16.9% of the CanEng speakers (cf. also 19.4).

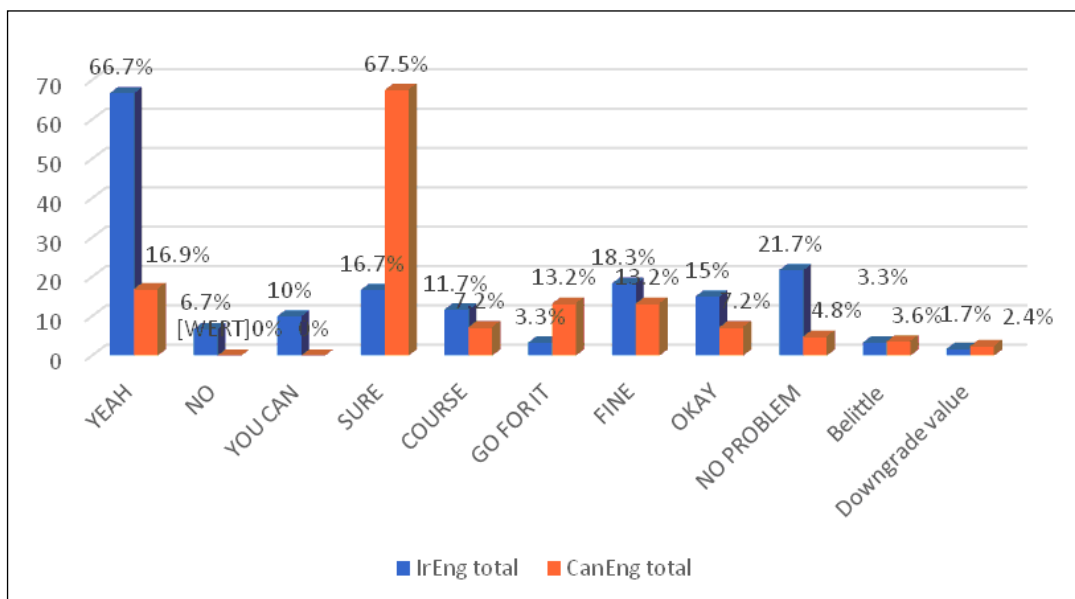


Figure 19.3 Head move types in request consents in IrEng (total) and CanEng (total) calculated as a percentage of the total informants (IrEng: n= 60, CanEng: n=83)

The type YEAH has been suggested to be potentially weak in affirmative strength (cf. Goldschmidt 1998, Section 3.1). Hence, it is interesting to examine co-occurrences with YEAH in the database. Table 19.2 shows that all uses of YEAH in the CanEng data are in combination with other head moves. Also, at 77.5%, the majority of all YEAH uses in IrEng are in combination, with no gender-related differences recorded. Of the YEAH types used alone, near half (44.4% (4)) were followed by a request seeking confirmation that permission had been granted, a fact which in itself points to YEAH responses having a weaker affirmative force.⁶

	IrEng total (31)	IrEng women (21)	IrEng men (19)	CanEng total (14)	CanEng women (14)	CanEng men (10)
YEAH in combination	77.5% (31)	76.2% (16)	78.9% (15)	100% (14)	100% (4)	100% (10)
YEAH alone	22.5% (9)	19.% (4) & 4.8% (1) in repetition	21.1% (4)	-	-	-
	n=9	n=5	n=4			
YEAH alone + request seeking confirmation	44.4% (4)	60% (3)	25% (1)	-	-	-

Table 19.2 YEAH alone or in combination with other head move types across gender in IrEng and CanEng as a percentage of the total YEAH per sub-corpus

The head move types YEAH and SURE showed most cross-varietal regional variation. In addition, NO PROBLEM showed some differences across the CanEng and IrEng data. Whereas NO PROBLEM only formed 3.5% of the total head move usage in the CanEng data, it made up 12.4% of the total use in the IrEng data ($\chi^2(1) = 5.917, p = .015, \phi = 0.165$) (cf. Table 19.1). The effect size was however, much smaller than in the other contrasts.⁷ Per informant, NO

⁶ In total, only 11.67% (7) of all request consents in IrEng were followed by a request seeking confirmation of consent. In CanEng only 3.6% (3) of informants' request consents were followed by such a request for confirmation.

⁷ The effect size in the cross-tabulations carried out here uses Cramér's V. Findings with $\phi = 0.1$ point to a small effect size, 0.3, a medium effect size and 0.5, a large effect size (Cohen 1988).

PROBLEM was used by 21.7% of IrEng informants and by only 4.8% of CanEng informants. There are no significant differences between the use of NO PROBLEM across gender within either variety. In addition, a small effect size was also found for the type GO FOR IT. Uses of this consent type were higher in the CanEng data, with 9.7% of head move types compared to 1.9% in the IrEng data ($\chi^2(1) = 5.950$, $p = .02$, $\phi = 0.165$) (cf. Table 19.1). Similar to NO PROBLEM however, the effect size is low. Per informant, 13.2% of CanEng speakers used it compared to 3.3% IrEng speakers. (Figure 19.3). Finally, it was noticeable that the type YOU CAN was not used in the CanEng data. In the IrEng data, this type was used by 10% of informants (cf. Figure 19.3).

Upgrading, designed to increase the force of a speaker's utterance, is a further aspect of request consent realisations. As detailed in Section 19.3.2, it can take two primary forms in request consents, namely repetition of a single request consent type and intensification via adverbial modifiers. Upgrading was much more prominent in the IrEng data than in the CanEng data. There, nearly one in four informants (23.3%) employed some form of upgrading compared to only 3.6% of CanEng informants ($\chi^2(1) = 12.927$, $p = .000$, $\phi = 0.301$) (cf. Table 19.3). Variety-specific levels of upgrading do not vary across gender, with IrEng women employing more upgrading than CanEng women ($\chi^2(1) = 6.39$, $p = .011$, $\phi = 0.307$) and CanEng men ($\chi^2(1) = 4.7741$, $p = .029$, $\phi = 0.259$), and IrEng men employing more upgrading than CanEng men ($\chi^2(1) = 4.931$, $p = .010$, $\phi = 0.296$) and CanEng women ($\chi^2(1) = 8.229$, $p = .004$, $\phi = 0.338$).

	IrEng total (n=60)	IrEng women (n=28)	IrEng men (n=32)	CanEng total (n=83)	CanEng women (n=40)	CanEng men (n=43)
Repetition	18.3% (11)	17.9% (5)	18.8% (6)	2.4% (2)	2.5% (1)	2.3% (1)
Intensification	5% (3)	3.6% (1)	6.3% (2)	1.2% (1)	-	2.3% (1)
Total upgrading	23.3% (14)	21.4% (6)	25% (8)	3.6% (3)	2.5% (1)	4.6% (2)

Table 19.3 Use of upgrading by informant across variety and gender as a percentage of informant numbers

The next level of analysis concerned the tokens realising the routine head move types. There were broad similarities on this level. However, a number of tokens were present in one variety, but not in the other. Further research is nevertheless needed on these general preferences given overall low levels of use. The type COURSE, for instance, was realised in the data overall by (*of*) *course*, *certainly* and *absolutely*. The CanEng speakers preferred *absolutely*

followed by *certainly*. *Of course* was not employed. In IrEng, in contrast, *certainly* was not used. Rather, *of course* was prototypically used, followed by *absolutely*. Similarly, realisations of the type GO FOR IT took the forms *go ahead*, *go for it*, *you have that* and *you got it* in the CanEng data whereas *Go for it* was the only token used in IrEng. NO PROBLEM was realised via *no problem* in both varieties and, in addition, on one occasion via *no worries* in the CanEng data. Both of these forms have also been recorded to be used in responses to thanks in IrEng and CanEng (Barron in press b)). In addition, the token *no bother* realised the NO PROBLEM type in the IrEng request consent data. Although frequencies of usage are low, the exclusivity of the token *no bother* to IrEng in the present study also reflects Barron’s (in press b) analysis of responses to thanks in IrEng, EngEng and CanEng and Schneider’s (2005) analysis of responses to thanks in EngEng, IrEng and AmEng, both of which found *no bother* to be exclusive to IrEng (cf. Section 2.1). Finally, the type FINE was realised via *fine*, *grand* and *perfect* in the IrEng data; in CanEng only *fine* and *cool* were recorded. In all cases, the adjective is either used with *That’s*, *It’s* or used elliptically. The use of *grand* in the IrEng context supports previous research on particularly high uses of ‘approving *grand*’ which expresses a speaker’s subjective approval of a state of affairs in IrEng (Hickey 2017) (cf. Section 2.1).

The final analysis grouped the explicit routine and non-routine types into three major strategy types depending on their politeness orientation with regard to Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) politeness theory, namely into a) bald on record strategies, b) strategies which increase the requester’s positive face and c) strategies which minimise the request and so address the negative face threat which asking the request puts on the requester (cf. Section 3.2). In order to examine the overall picture of responses per person, the findings are viewed by informant use (cf. also Figure 19.3).

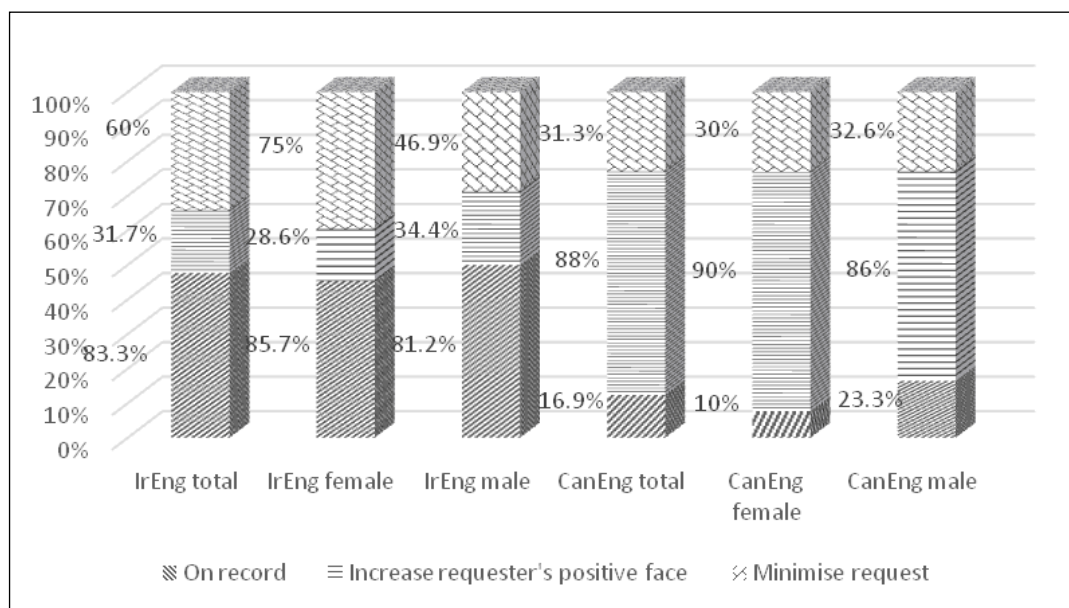


Figure 19.4 Request consent strategy types across gender in IrEng and CanEng as a percentage of total informant numbers (IrEng: total: n = 60; women: n = 28; men: n = 32; CanEng: total: n = 83; women: n = 40; men: n = 43)⁸

Contrasting the data, cross-varietal differences become clear (cf. Figure 19.4). IrEng speakers employed a higher number of bald on record strategies relative to CanEng speakers, irrespective of gender (IrEng: 83.3% vs. CanEng: 16.9%, $\chi^2(1) = 62.224$, $p = .000$, $\phi = 0.660$; CanEng vs. IrEng women: $\chi^2(1) = 38.982$, $p = .000$, $\phi = 0.757$; CanEng vs. IrEng men: $\chi^2(1) = 24.722$, $p = .000$, $\phi = 0.574$). These strategies were used in combination with strategies to increase the interlocutor's positive face (IrEng: 31.7%) and minimise any threat to negative face (IrE: 60%). Informants engaged in minimising any negative face threat to the hearer to a significantly larger degree than the CanEng speakers (IrEng: 60% vs. CanEng: 31.3%; $\chi^2(1) = 10.662$, $p = .001$, $\phi = 0.273$). This difference is also significant for women across CanEng and IrEng ($\chi^2(1) = 11.900$, $p = .001$, $\phi = 0.418$) but not for men. The data also shows a somewhat higher level of negative face minimisation in the IrEng feminine data ($\chi^2(1) = 4.922$, $p = .027$, $\phi = 0.286$) relative to the masculine data. On the other hand, CanEng speakers prefer to increase the positive face of their interlocutors. They employ such a strategy significantly more often than IrEng speakers, irrespective of gender (CanEng: 88% vs. IrEng: 31.7%; $\chi^2(1) = 48.083$, $p = .000$, $\phi = 0.580$; CanEng/ IrEng women: $\chi^2(1) = 27.215$, $p = .000$, $\phi = 0.633$; CanEng/ IrEng men: $\chi^2(1) = 21.261$, $p = .000$, $\phi = 0.532$).

19.3.4 Discussing the findings: request consents across region and gender

The study examined the influence of gender and region (national level) on request consents. We turn first to region given that many significant differences were recorded in preferences for how consent is granted across IrEng and CanEng. With regard to head move type, despite broad similarities in the range of response types across both varieties, variety-preferential differences were evident in frequencies of use. SURE was significantly more common in CanEng than in IrEng. High levels of SURE suggest that from the point of view of language conventions, CanEng is close to AmEng, SURE having been reported to occur in request consents in AmEng rather than in BrEng (cf. Section 3.1). In IrEng, on the other hand, the YEAH type was preferred. Similarly, uses of NO PROBLEM were higher in IrEng relative to CanEng, whereas GO FOR IT was used more in CanEng. The effect sizes for both of the latter types were, however, small. Finally, the use of *YOU CAN* in the IrEng data and not in the CanEng data was interesting given that the form had not been recorded before in

⁸ Occurrences of multiple head moves mean that the figures per group exceed 100%.

descriptions of request consents (although the related form I CAN had been noted in research on BrEng (cf. Section 3.2)). Interestingly, modal verb responses have been reported to be a feature which, due to sub-stratum influence from Irish, are employed to a comparatively large extent in IrEng instead of clear-cut polarity particles (*yes, no*) (cf. Filppula 1999; Diamant 2012). Uses here may reflect this pattern. However, in contrast to previous research on this feature, the type YOU CAN in the present context was not limited to reflections of a modal verb in the initiative request. Thus, GF41's response in Example (4) follows a question of the form *Would it be alright if ...?*

(4) IGF41: *Of course you can. No problem at all.*

It is thus suggested that YOU CAN may represent a conventionalised routine in the context of responses to requests for permission in IrEng.

More multiple head moves were used in request consents in IrEng relative to CanEng, a finding which can be explained by high levels of YEAH in IrEng. This head move type, the favoured type in IrEng, appears to have weak affirmative power when used alone (cf. Section 3.1). It is prototypically combined with further consent types or upgrading, as also in the present data. Notably in this context, upgrading, used to enhance the requester's positive face, was also significantly higher in the IrEng data. Accompanying types in the data either decreased any negative face threat which the request for permission posed (e.g. via NO PROBLEM, FINE) and/ or enhanced the requester's positive face (e.g. COURSE, SURE).

Finally, the analysis of the overriding strategies revealed IrEng speakers to convey consent in a more direct manner via use of YEAH, NO and YOU CAN than CanEng speakers, a fact which enhances positive politeness, given that the speech act observes the generosity maxim (cf. Section 3.1). IrEng speakers supplement this directness with positive-politeness strategies, upgrading and/or minimising strategies. While directness, upgrading and positive-politeness strategies reflect previous research on IrEng pointing to the importance of hospitality and building solidarity in IrEng society (cf. Section 2.1), the comparatively high use of minimising strategies also shows an effort to minimise the value of the act of permission, thus reducing self-praise and avoiding forwardness. In addition, it also shows an attempt to show concern for any face threat the hearer may be experiencing (cf. Section 2.1). In contrast, CanEng speakers primarily engage in building the positive face of their interlocutors, revealing attention to relationships and communicating hospitality. Such findings also support previous findings on the pragmatics of CanEng which point to a strong orientation towards positive face (cf. Barron 2021c on responding to thanks).

Finally, from a gender perspective, the study shows high levels of homogeneity in the realisation of request consents across men and women in

both cultures. Men, however, engaged in minimising behavior in the IrEng data to a significantly lower extent than women. In other words, men decreased self-praise to a lesser extent than IrEng women and paid less heed to potential threats to the hearer's negative face. Overall, they engaged then in a higher level of forward behavior. These findings deviate from those of El-Dakhs (2018) who found women in both Egyptian Arabic and Saudi Arabic to produce more positive-politeness oriented, so-called "emphatic" request consents (*sure, certainly*) than men from the same varieties. As such, the data point to differing gender conventions across varieties.⁹

19.4. Conclusion

The study of pragmatic variation in IrEng has come into its own in recent years. Three research foci were differentiated: the first focus is on regional variation on the national level. Research on this level is concerned with isolating the nature of language use in IrEng relative to other varieties of English and thus addressing questions of what IrEng is and how it relates to identity construction. The second research focus is on pragmatic variation within IrEng according to region on a subordinate level, and according to gender, age, socio-economic class and ethnic identity. Such research sheds light on distributions of pragmatic features and conventions within IrEng. The third focus, not dealt with explicitly in the present paper, is on the development of localised features of IrEng (type 1, type 2 features) by non-nationals and learners of IrEng. The present paper focused on type 1 and type 2 variation, also reflecting the fact that type 1 research alone cannot identify indexes of Irish identity; rather type 2 research is also needed to determine if a particular feature or convention plays a role in identity construction on a wholly national level or rather in interaction with further macro-social factors (e.g. Irish men). In addition, type 2 research is also important in determining whether a particular pragmatic form or convention is receding or whether it is a stable index of IrEng linguistic identity.

The study on request consents in IrEng and CanEng showcased a contrastive empirical analysis of IrEng on the actional level which also took gender variation into account. It put forward a request consent coding scheme for affirmative responses to requests for permission and identified head move types not previously recorded (YOU CAN, GO FOR IT). From a type 1 perspective looking at region on the national level, the study showed IrEng consents to be more elaborate relative to CanEng usage, involving a more extensive use of multiple head moves. This fact was explained with reference to high uses of

⁹ Given that a previous study on masculine responses to thanks in IrEng and CanEng (cf. Barron in press b; cf. Section 2.1) reports higher levels of minimising in IrEng relative to CanEng, the robustness of the avoidance of forwardness as a description of Irish identity is not in question. However, there is a need for further research on gender-related variation on the issue.

YEAH, a type with lower conviction which thus demands combination with further request consent types. Bald on record strategies of consent (YOU CAN, YEAH, NO) were common in IrEng. These were prototypically employed together with a strategy designed either to enhance the requester's positive face (e.g. COURSE, SURE and/or upgrading) and/ or to minimise any negative face threat which the request for permission may have posed (e.g. via NO PROBLEM, FINE). The higher uses of minimising strategies in IrEng reflect an avoidance of self-praise and also attention to potential face-threats to the hearer and thus, in line with descriptions of IrEng language use (cf. Section 2.1), reflect an avoidance of forwardness. In addition, heightened upgrading and also the presence of positive-face strategies show a tendency towards a high level of generosity and hospitality vis-à-vis the hearer. In CanEng, in contrast, responses were prototypically realised using single head move type and orientated to enhancing the speaker's positive face (e.g. SURE), and pointing to a hospitality orientation.

Cross-gender findings pointed to a homogeneous realisation of request consents in CanEng, which suggests stable conventions. In IrEng, despite high levels of homogeneity in the use of multiple head move types, in the choice of head move type and upgrading, men were shown to engage in minimising behavior to a significantly lower extent than women (cf. Section 3.4). They thus decreased self-praise to a lower degree than IrEng women and paid less heed to potential threats to the hearer's negative face, both aspects of forwardness. The findings thus point to a need for further research on gender-related variation vis-à-vis the status of forwardness avoidance in language use in IrEng.

Going forward, the analysis enabled high levels of control and thus limited situational variation. However, it was not without its limitations. The study focused only on language use in two cities and generalised to a national level. In addition, given the status of Galway, for instance, as a county capital, it is possible that informants were from both rural and urban areas. Further research is, thus, needed on request consents in different regions and also systematically across rural/ urban boundaries in order to come to robust generalisations. Furthermore, the gender analysis in the present setting was based on apparent gender as categorised based on informants' appearance. Further research is needed to offer a more nuanced account of gender identities, also using self-identification. In addition, there was some variation in the realisation of the request for permission. Further research using production questionnaires would allow control over the realisation of this initiative speech act. Finally, future studies might take non-verbal communication or prosodic means into account.

Also looking forward, the majority of research on IrEng from a type 1 or type 2 perspective to date employs descriptive research. As such, research does not generally provide information on whether features of IrEng identified represent a conscious or unconscious part of IrEng identity. Future research

might focus to a larger extent on second and third level indexicality, i.e. on investigating whether and, if so, how patterns of language use are linked to a particular sociodemographic context in the eyes of group members (second level indexicality), and on investigating which forms are widely perceived as being stereotypical for a particular socio-demographic context (third level indexicality; Silverstein 2003). Literary representations go some way in presenting such indexes. However, in-depth metapragmatic analyses, focusing on informants' beliefs and knowledge vis-à-vis their own and others' pragmatic conventions would allow us to establish conscious indexes of Irishness, of rurality/ urbanity, of gender, of age, of socio-economic class, of ethnic identity and interactions of these vis-à-vis other groups and to compare these to descriptions of actual language use. Some recent work, which focuses on perceived differences between language use in the cities of Belfast, Dublin and Cork (Lucek and Garnett 2020), has produced some interesting findings which point to second and third level indexicality and also provide interesting questions for further descriptive analysis. On a regional level, for instance, the study reports the clause-final discourse marker *like* to be associated with the language use in Cork, in the south of Ireland. The same study also mentions the use of the *boy* (with the pronunciation [bar]) as an indicator for a Cork dialect. Future metapragmatic research may throw more light on speakers' consciousness of the pragmatics of IrEng and how this relates to linguistic identity across the macro-social factors.

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