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‘Sorry Miss, I Completely Forgot about It’ Apologies and Vocatives in Ireland and England



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Sorry Miss, I completely forgot about it:
Apologies and vocatives in Ireland and England

Anne Barron (Leuphana University of Lüneburg)

1. Introduction

In a recent newspaper article entitled ‘The sorry state of us: Why do we always apologise’ published on the Irish Independent web-site, we get a folk pragmatic view of apologising in Ireland (John, 2014). The article mentions numerous situations in which apologies are employed in Ireland. It concludes that apologies are overdone in Ireland. The present study takes up this interest in apologies in Ireland but rather than examining the relative frequency of apologising cross-varietally (cf. Lynch, 2013), it adds to the research by taking a variational pragmatic perspective and examining how apologies are realised linguistically in Irish English (IrE) as compared to other varieties of English. The present comparison is with English English (EngE).

Although a relatively recent endeavour, the study of the pragmatics of IrE has yielded extensive research on language conventions in Ireland (cf. Barron & Schneider, 2005; Hickey & Vaughan, 2017; Vaughan & Clancy, 2011). From a speech act perspective, a range of illocutions, such as offers, requests, compliment responses, expressions of gratitude, and responses to thanks, have been investigated (cf. Barron & Pandarova, 2016 for an overview). Apologies too have been the focus of some research interest. Palma-Fahey (2005), for instance, contrasts apology realisations in an Irish and Chilean soap opera. In addition, Lynch (2013) offers a form-functional study of the use of *sorry* using data from the Irish component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-Ireland). To date, however, there has been no cross-varietal research on apologies in IrE which would establish those conventions of apologising which are shared across IrE and EngE and also which would identify the apologetic speech norms which are specific to (variety-specific use) or preferred in IrE relative to EngE (variety-preferential features).

The present study attempts to fill this research gap. In doing so, it follows variational pragmatic scholarship and observes the principles of empiricity, contrastivity and comparability (Barron & Schneider, 2009; Schneider & Barron, 2008). The analysis aims to contrast the norms of appropriate verbal apologetic behaviour in IrE with the norms of apologising in EngE. Specifically, it focuses on remedial apologies using data elicited from a standard questionnaire format employed in contrastive research, a so-called production questionnaire, also termed a discourse completion task. The analysis centres on the apology strategies employed across the varieties, on the linguistic realisations of these strategies, and finally on the use of vocatives in these apologies across varieties. In the following, we first sketch the nature of apologies and the scholarship on apologies in IrE and EngE, before turning to methodological issues and a description of the data employed in the present study. The analysis then follows, and is followed by a discussion of the data. The paper closes with suggestions for future potential research.

2. Apologies in Irish English and British English

Apologies are an expressive speech act in which the speaker expresses their psychological state of mind about or attitude to a prior action (Searle 1976). A number of apology types are identified and include a) formulaic apologies uttered for matters of minimal offence for which apologising is rather a routine matter (e.g. an apology for coughing); b) formulaic apologies for minimal offences and involving additional functions, such as calling for attention (e.g. *Sorry, could you help me?*); c) face attack apologies followed by a face-threatening act, such as a directive (e.g. *I'm sorry but that's just not on*) and d) remedial

apologies (Deutschmann, 2003, pp. 45-46). The prototypical apology, and the focus of the present study, is the remedial apology. Remedial apologies concern a past act carried out by the speaker which the speaker believes to have offended the hearer. The speaker regrets this action and attempts to redress the damage of the social error to restore the relationship with the hearer. Remedial apologies are face-threatening for the speaker given that they admit to a previous offence. On the other hand, by apologising, the speaker seeks to repair social relations with the offended individual and so builds up their own positive face, i.e. their acceptability to others. For the hearer, apologies are face-enhancing and can be classified as hearer-supportive acts. They redress the offensive act by communicating the speaker's wish not to impact on H's negative face, i.e. on their right to be regarded as an independent person (cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Deutschmann 2003; Goffmann, 1971; Holmes, 1990, pp. 159-164; Ogiermann, 2009; cf. also Owen, 1983). Realisations of apologies can address the need to be accepted and approved of in society (positive face wants) and/ or the need to be regarded as an independent person (negative face wants) (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Grainger & Harris, 2007; Holmes, 1990, p. 162). Showing concern for the hearer or offering repair for the act committed are examples of realisations of positive politeness; the use of deference markers, such as titles, on the other hand, rather attends to negative face needs.

Studies on apologies in IrE include only research by Palma-Fahey (2005) and Lynch (2013). Palma-Fahey's (2005) cross-cultural study examines apologies in IrE and Chile using data from the soap operas *Fair City* and *Amores de Mercado*. She notes a higher use of deference markers oriented towards negative face, in the form of titles, in the Chilean data. In addition, differences were noted in the strategies employed, particularly in the explicit apologies realised by routines, also termed illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs). Specifically, Palma-Fahey (2005) finds hearer-oriented IFIDs taking the form of demands for forgiveness (*excuse me*) and explicit apologies using a performative verb (*I apologise*) to be employed most in the Chilean data. In contrast, speakers in the IrE data were found to favour a speaker-oriented IFID expressing their regret (*sorry*) for the state of affairs accompanied also by implicit apologies taking the form of explanations. The focus in the IrE data then is rather on regret that the action happened and on excusing the speaker for the action. In addition, in the IrE data, intensifiers (e.g. *really*) were used with the expression of regret IFID (*sorry*) in remedial apology situations of high offence to underline the sincerity of the speaker (cf. Palma-Fahey 2005). A caveat of Palma-Fahey's (2005) data which should be noted is that the underlying power relationships in both series were not identical, with *Amores de Mercado* including more apology interactions in situations of a social dominance difference (e.g. apologies to superiors). Turning to Lynch (2013), this study is a form-functional analysis which investigates the functions of the form *sorry* in the spoken texts of the Irish component of ICE-Ireland (Republic of Ireland) with the support of SPICE-Ireland (Kallen & Kirk, 2012). Lynch (2013) contrasts her findings with those of Deutschmann (2003), the latter similarly a form-functional analysis based on an analysis of the 5-million-word spoken part of the British National Corpus (BNC). Within the Irish data, Lynch (2013) finds a higher use of *sorry* in informal conversation, a higher use of *sorry* in the younger and older age brackets relative to in middle-aged speech and a higher use by females and by self-identified Christians.

Apologies in BrE have been the focus of much research attention. Large-scale studies include a number of corpora studies such as Aijmer (1996), Deutschmann (2003) and Leech (2014). Deutschmann (2003) finds *sorry*, an expression of regret, to be the most frequently used IFID in British English (BrE). There also exist a plethora of cross-cultural studies which compare apologies in an array of languages to apologies in English. Such studies frequently take a BrE norm (cf., e.g., Márquez Reiter, 2000; Ogiermann, 2008, 2009; Suszczyńska, 1999). This research has found the broad range of realisation strategies for apologies to be universal while the choice of strategy and its realisation has been found to be sensitive to context and culture. In addition, orientations towards positive and negative face (Brown & Levinson 1978,

1987) vary across cultures, with Ogiermann (2009), for instance, reporting that apologies in BrE are weighed rather towards negative face needs in comparison with Russian and Polish native speaker apologies which orientate rather towards positive face. Finally, research on BrE also reveals the influence of social factors, such as gender, on apology use (cf. Ogiermann 2008, Holmes 1990).

To date then, there exists no systematic cross-varietal study of apologies involving IrE. Lynch (2013) contrasts her data with previous findings on BrE but the focus on *sorry* means that a range of apology types, not just remedial apologies, are represented. In addition, she focuses only on one explicit pragmatic routine, namely *sorry*, and her use of a corpus means that control across apology contexts is not guaranteed in the cross-varietal comparison. The present paper, taking a variational pragmatic approach (Barron & Schneider, 2009; Schneider & Barron, 2008), addresses this research gap by contrasting remedial apologies in IrE with apologies in EngE using data drawn from a production questionnaire. It is to the methodology which we now turn.

3. Method

3.1 Instrument

The research questions underlying this project are:

- a) How are apologies realised in IrE?
- b) How do apology realisations in IrE compare to apology realisations in EngE?

To address these questions, data was collected using two production questionnaire items included on the mixed-task Questionnaire on English Usage originally designed at the University of Bonn to elicit a range of pragmatic phenomena, including besides apologies, also such speech acts as requests and thanks minimisers (cf., e.g., Barron, 2008; Schneider, 2005). The apology items employed were adapted from the production questionnaire originally designed for the Cross-cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989a). Both apology items elicit remedial apologies, and within this category include a breach of expectation item (book) and a lack of consideration item (offence) (Deutschmann, 2003). In both cases, an apology is required to restore harmony (cf. Appendix). Importantly, production questionnaire data do not necessarily uncover what a person would actually say in a particular situation; rather the instrument reveals underlying pragmatic knowledge of an informant's particular speech community regarding what is appropriate to say in a certain situation (cf. Barron, 2003, pp. 83-93; Schneider, 2012; Sweeney & Hua, 2016, p. 215). In the present context, therefore, the production questionnaire is employed to uncover prototypical apologies viewed as appropriate in the contexts at hand.

Contrastivity and comparability of data are important requirements of variational pragmatic research (Barron, 2017, 2021, in press; Barron & Schneider, 2009; Schneider & Barron, 2008; Schneider, 2010, 2021). The production questionnaire facilitates a high degree of comparability given that the same production questionnaire is distributed to both informant groups. Contextual equivalence regarding, for instance, the participant relationships and comparability of domain, is communicated in the situational description (school/ work; classmate/ work colleague relationship).ⁱ Functional transparency and thus also comparability is enabled via reference to a past action mentioned in the situational descriptions (past offence, book forgotten) and via the hearer response representing apology (*O.K., but please try to remember it next time; Well, I was a bit upset, but it's all right now that we've talked about it*) (cf. also Barron 2021; in press; Grainger and Harris, 2007, p. 3).ⁱⁱ

3.2 Informants

Eighty-seven informants from the same town in the South-East of the Republic of Ireland completed the questionnaire. The EngE data was elicited from sixty informants from the same town in North Yorkshire. Given findings that social factors, such as age and gender influences apology use (e.g. Lynch, 2013; Ogiermann, 2008, cf. 2 above), gender was controlled, with both data sets only including females. The average age was also similar, at 16.02 years in the Irish data and 13.76 years in the EngE data (cf. Table 1).

	Informants	Total apologies analysed overall plus per situation (book, offence)
England	60	108 (56, 52)
Ireland	87	173 (87, 86)
Overall		281

Table 1: Overview of informants

3.3 Coding

The coding scheme adopted in the present study is based broadly on Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b). Five basic semantic strategies are employed in apologies, including a number of sub-strategies (cf. Table 2). Alternations to Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989b) scheme are made in a broadening of the category explanation/ account to include not only external reasons for the past offensive action, but also mitigating circumstances involving the offender him/ herself.ⁱⁱⁱ Thus, in the present context, explanations include both external mitigating circumstances (e.g. *it's been a very busy day; It's just one of these days*) and internal mitigating circumstances involving the first person (e.g. *I was in a hurry; I wasn't being serious, honest!*) all of which attempt to excuse the offender to some extent for the offence committed.

Table 2: Apology coding scheme broadly based on Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b)

Strategy	Sub-strategy	Explanation	Example
Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID)		Explicit apologies given as routine expressions	<i>Sorry</i>
Taking on responsibility		Acknowledgement of responsibility for the offence	
	Explicit self-blame	The speaker explicitly acknowledges that they are to blame for the offence	<i>I was out of line</i>
	Lack of intent	The speaker explicitly clarifies that the offence to the hearer was not intended	<i>I didn't mean it</i>
	Justify hearer	The speaker tells the hearer that they are right to be annoyed	<i>I know it wasn't very nice.</i>
	Expression of embarrassment	The speaker states his/ her embarrassment regarding the offence	<i>I feel awful</i>
	Admission of facts but not of responsibility	The speaker admits that they are involved in the offensive act but they do not openly accept responsibility	<i>I forgot it</i>
	Refusal to acknowledge guilt	The speaker rejects responsibility for the act by blaming the hearer, by	<i>Don't be so sensitive. Can't you take a joke?</i>

		denying responsibility or by pretending to be offended	
Explanations		Mitigating circumstances offered by the speaker as an excuse for the offensive act having occurred	<i>I was in a rush this morning. It's just one of these days.</i>
Offer of repair		The speaker offers to make up for the offence in a way related to the offence	<i>I will try to bring it tomorrow</i>
Promise of forbearance		The speaker promises that the offence will not re-occur	<i>I'll be more considerate next time</i>

Alerters may also be employed with apologies (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989b, p. 277). They appear in initial position and have two functions, serving to a) open the move of the speech act and b) orient hearer's attention (Maros & Halim, 2018, p. 71). Different types of alerters can be differentiated: we extend Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989b) scheme of alerters to focus on three main categories of alerters used in the present data. These include attention-getting operative markers (e.g. the imperatives *look, listen*) (Romero-Trillo, 1997), attention-getting greetings (e.g. *hi, hey*) and vocatives (e.g. *Lisa, Miss, teacher*) (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989b; Leech, 1999).

Vocatives are nominal forms used to directly address an addressee (e.g. *Paul, come here*). They take a range of forms. Those of relevance for the present study include first names (*Lisa*), title & surname (*Mr. Schmidt*), terms of endearment (*love*) and honorifics (*sir, miss, teacher*) (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad & Finegan, 1999; Clancy & O'Keeffe, 2015, p. 244-245; Leech 1999, p. 111; McCarthy & O'Keeffe, 2003). The form taken by a vocative provides information on a projected or assumed social distance and relative status between the interlocutors (cf. Leech 1999, p. 107). Positionally, vocatives have been analysed using the concept of the C-unit or communicative unit, a unit defined as a spoken equivalent of a written sentence (Leech, 1999). Vocatives can be found in different positions:

a) final position, following a C-unit to which they are most closely attached (e.g. *Sorry Lisa or No sorry Miss. I'll bring it tomorrow*). The vocative *Lisa* is seen attached to the preceding sorry in the first example here. In the second example, *No sorry Miss* is regarded as one C-unit and *I'll bring it tomorrow* another. The vocative *Miss* is attached in final position to *No sorry*.

b) initial position preceding a C-unit to which it is most closely attached (e.g. *Lisa, I'm so sorry*). In Leech (1999), vocatives in alerter combinations, such as *Listen Lisa*, would be coded as final C-units. In the present context in the offence situation, however, the combination was treated as in the alerter coding scheme as realising one functional unit. Positionally, therefore, the vocative in *Listen Lisa, sorry if I offended you earlier* would be coded as an initial vocative vis-à-vis the following unit to which it is attached.

c) stand-alone position (e.g. *Lisa!*)

d) medial position where the vocative occurs in a C-unit or where the vocative occurs between two C-units and it is unclear to which the greater attachment is (e.g. *Sorry Lisa I hope you weren't upset I didn't mean to offend you*).¹ In this example, it is unclear whether the vocative *Lisa* is rather attached to the preceding *sorry* or to that which follows it.

¹ In cases of lack of clarity, the element to which the vocative is attached is established via position in the turn (turn final = C-unit final; turn initial = C-unit initial) or position in an orthographically defined unit in transcription (comma notation more attached than period notation) (Leech, 1999, p. 108, 115).

Functionally, vocatives may be employed as alerters to summon attention. In addition, they may also function to identify an addressee and to establish and maintain social relationships. Vocatives realising the former two functions (summoning, identifying) are suggested to be most likely initial C-unit, those employed to establish and maintain social relationships are final C-unit vocatives (Leech, 1999, p. 117; cf. also Biber et al., 1999, p. 1112).^{iv}

4. Findings

4.1 Apology strategies across varieties

The analysis of apology strategies (cf. Table 3) reveals a very homogenous situation across varieties for each situation. Irrespective of situation, the explicit routine apology (IFID) is seen as a generalisable solution to appeasing the hearer. It is employed extensively in both the book situation (EngE: 90.8%; IrE: 92.86%) and in the offence situation (EngE: 84.61%; IrE: 94.19%) in both varieties. In both varieties, a single IFID was the preferred form (cf. Figure 1) and of the range of IFID types available, only APOLOGISE, FORGIVE and SORRY were employed.^v Of these, SORRY was the IFID type most employed across situations and varieties (EngE: 95.32%; IrE: 94.47%) (cf. Figure 2). Realisations of this IFID include *sorry*, *I'm sorry* and *I am sorry*. In the offence situation, the IFID is preferentially realised by the form *I'm sorry* in both varieties (Eng: 73.33%; IrE: 51.1%); in the book situation the prototypical apology *sorry* is employed most (EngE: 59.65%; IrE: 69.13%). Intensifiers are also regularly employed. As many as 31.37% (32) of SORRYs in the EngE data and 25.15% (43) in the IrE data include an intensifier. *Really* was the most frequent intensifier, used in 75% (24) of cases in the EngE data and in 65.11% (28) of cases in the IrE data. *So* was a further popular intensifier (EngE: 15.62% (5); IrE: 27.9% (12)) followed by low uses of *very* and *real*. Any cross-varietal differences in the IFID findings are not statistically insignificant.

Similar to the IFID strategy, the taking on responsibility situation is used extensively across varieties and situations. It is most frequently realised via an admission of facts but not of responsibility sub-strategy in the book situation across varieties and via a lack of intent strategy in the offence situation, also across varieties. The IrE informants use a significantly higher level of upgrading via intensifiers with the admission of facts but not of responsibility sub-strategy in the book situation than their counterpart EngE informants (IrE: 46.51% (40); EngE: 24.53% (13)), $p=0.000$). Realisations include *I completely forgot*, *I totally forgot*, *It totally slipped my mind*, and *I left it on my desk at home!*

		Book EngE (n=56)	Book IrE (n=87)	Offence EngE (n=52)	Offence IrE (n=86)
Explicit routine (IFID)		92.86% (52)	90.8% (79)	84.61% (44)	94.19% (81)
Taking on responsibility	Explicit self-blame	0	0	0	4.65% (4)
	Lack of intent	3.57% (2)	4.6% (4)	55.77% (29)	62.79% (54)
	Justify hearer	0	0	3.85% (2)	1.16% (1)
	Expression of embarrassment	0	0	0	0
	Admission of facts but not of responsibility ^{vi}	94.64% (53)	98.8% (86)	40.38% (21)	26.7% (23)
	Refusal to acknowledge guilt	0	0	5.77% (3)	3.49% (3)

Explanations		12.5% (7)	5.75% (5)	5.77% (3)	23.26% (20)
Offer of repair		35.71% (20)	52.87% (46)	3.85% (2)	2.32% (2)
Promise of forbearance		0	0	0	0

Table 3: Strategy overview (strategy per speaker – combinations disregarded)

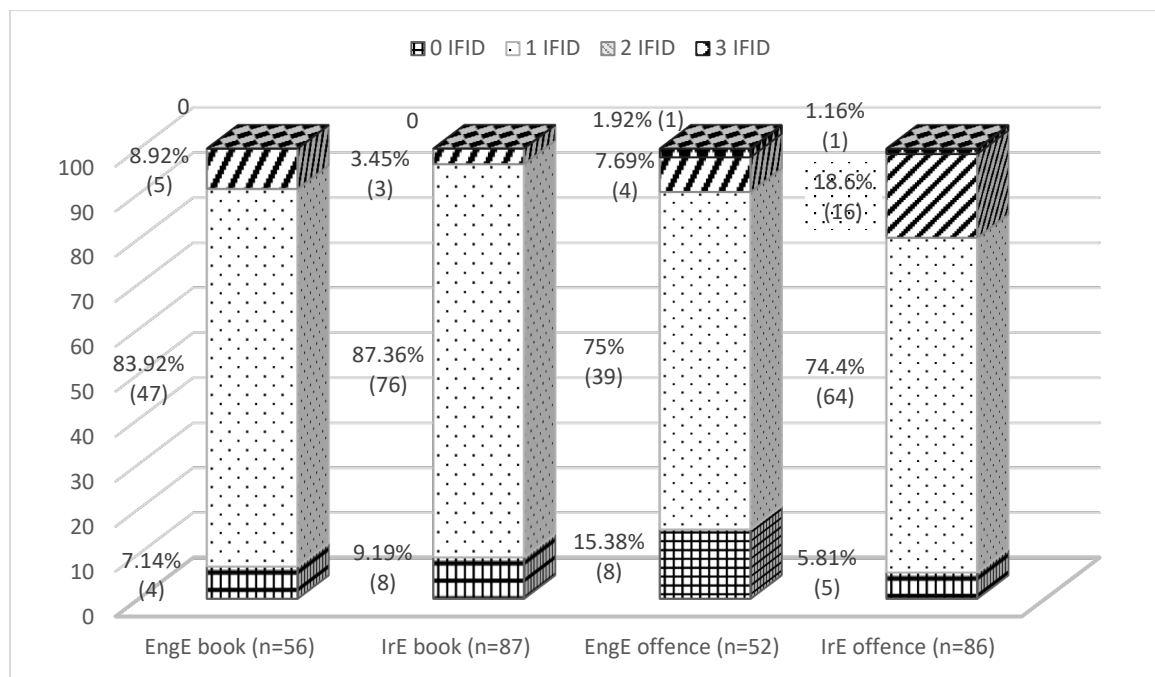


Figure 1: Use of illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs) (explicit routine apologies) and IFID combinations by situation by variety

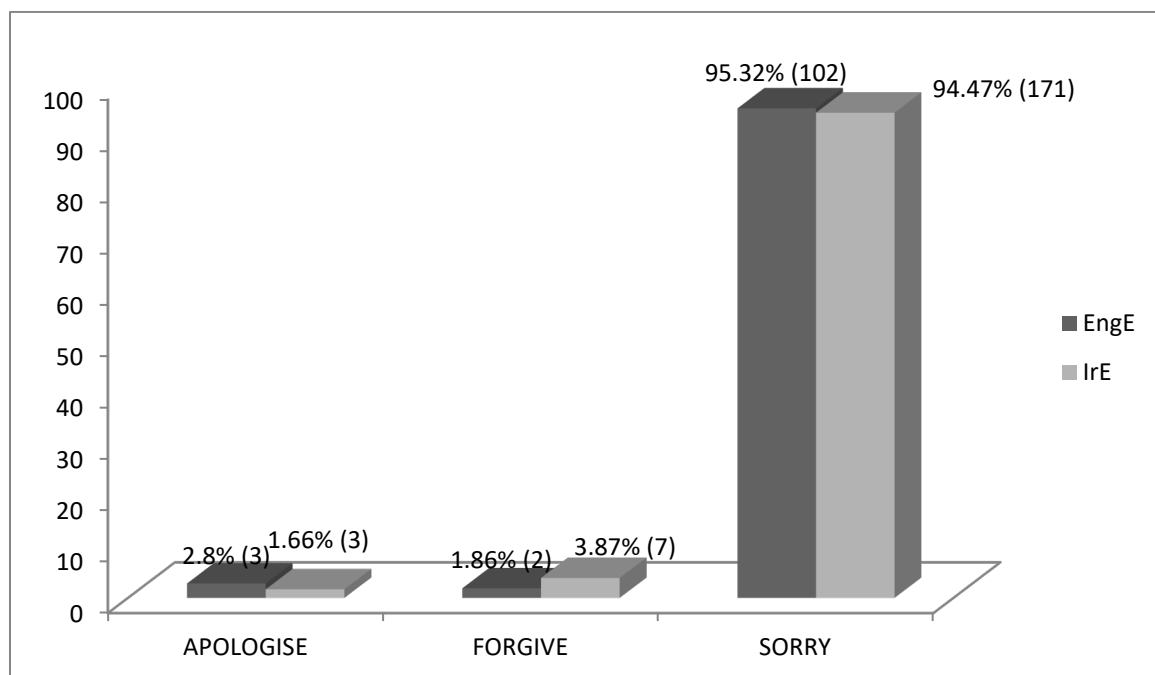


Figure 2: IFID types (APOLOGISE, FORGIVE, SORRY) as a percentage of the total IFIDs employed across both situations by variety (EngE: n=107; IrE: n=181)

The only strategy for which statistically significant differences are recorded is the explanation strategy in the offence situation ($p=0.009$). This strategy is used to a higher extent in the IrE data relative to the EngE data (IrE: 23.26%; EngE: 5.77%). Realisations of the explanation strategy were further divided into excuses which depicted the speaker in an active role (*I wasn't thinking, I was just angry!, I was in a rush, I was studying last night*) and those which depicted the speaker as a victim of circumstances (*I'm having a bad day, I've got a lot on my mind, my mind's full of stuff, It's just one of those days*). These categories are reminiscent of Trosborg's (1995, pp. 380-381) differentiation between implicit and explicit apologies, the former taking the form of situation-specific utterances, the latter the form of vague statements. The vast majority of explanations in the IrE data in both situations depict the speaker in an active role. In contrast, the EngE explanations in both situations frequently show the speaker as a situational victim (cf. Figure 3). However, given low numbers in some categories (cf. Figure 3), this trend requires further research. Finally, lexical downgraders are used frequently with the explanation strategy and so serve to save the S's face (e.g. *I was a bit hot-headed, sometimes I say things I don't mean*).

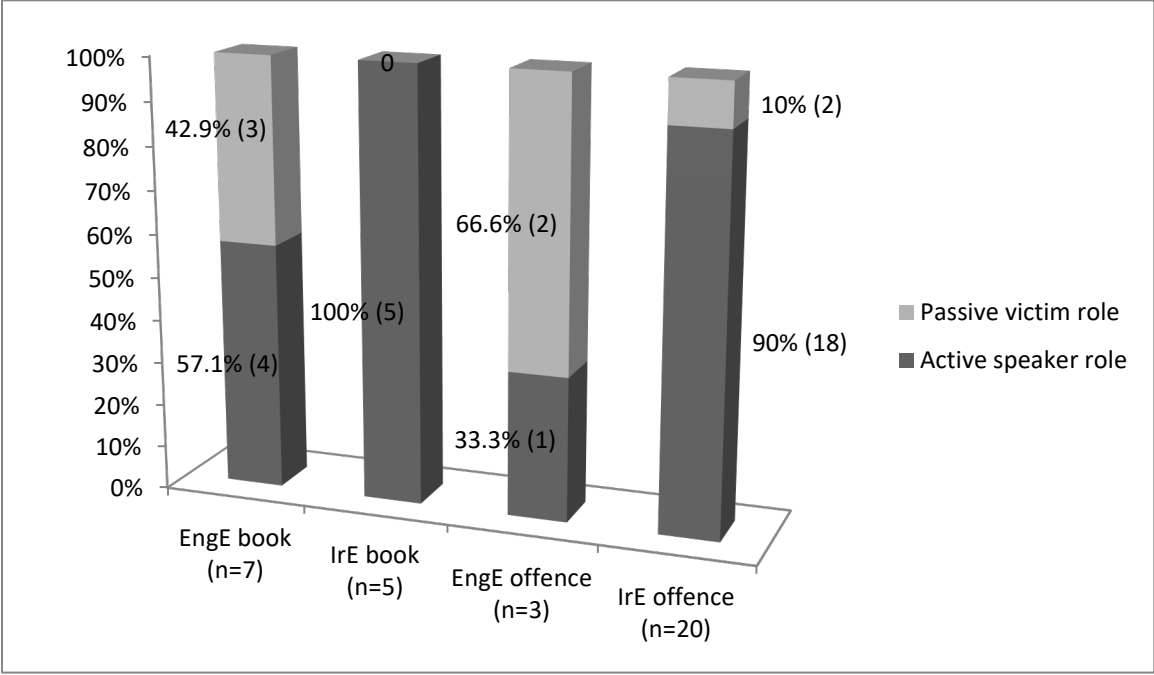


Figure 3: Active speaker role and passive victim role realisations of the explanation strategy

4.2 Alerters and vocatives across varieties

The apology in the book situation (cf. Appendix) is a second pair part, a response to a question, and thus does not include alerters. The analysis of alerters is thus limited to the offence situation (however, see below on the use of vocatives in both situations). Figure 4 shows that alerters were used significantly more often in the IrE data ($p<0.0001$). Overall, 60.46% (52) of the IrE informants used an alserter in contrast to only 11.54% (6) of the EngE informants. Of those alerters used, a number were also in combination (e.g. *Hi Lisa listen, hey Lisa, hey look*), but a single realisation (e.g. *Look, listen, hi, hey*) was most common in both databases (cf. Figure 4). Alerters employed in both varieties were distributed over the three main alserter types,

attention-getting operative markers (*look, listen*), attention-getting greetings (*hi, hey*) and vocatives (e.g. *Lisa*) (cf. Table 4). Of the attention-getting operative markers in the IrE data, 63.33% (19) were realised with *listen*, 36.67% (11) with *look*. Both operative markers in the EngE data were realised with *look*.

Offence	EngE (n=7)	IrE (n=68)
Attention-getting operative markers	28.57% (2)	44.12% (30)
Attention-getting greetings	42.86% (3)	11.76% (8)
Vocatives	28.57% (2)	44.12% (30)

Table 4: Form taken by alerters across varieties (as a percentage of the total number of alerters including combined forms)

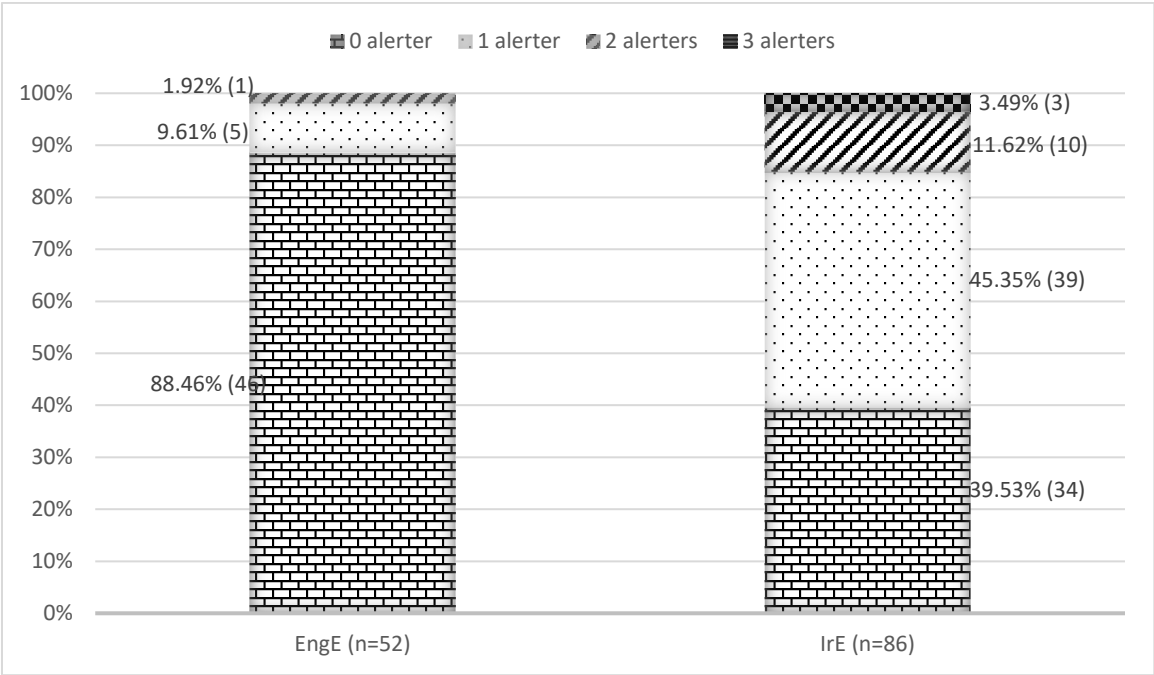


Figure 4: Distribution of alerters and alerter combinations across varieties

Vocatives, as seen in Table 4 showing the use of alerters, were used in the data in a summoning/ identifying function. However, as outlined in section 3, vocatives may also realise a relational function. In the following, vocative use is analysed over all positions and across both situations. Figure 5 shows a significantly higher use of vocatives in the Irish context in both situations taken together, with only 19.44% of utterances in the EngE data including a vocative compared with 51.45% in the IrE data ($p=0.0001$). This difference also applies across both situations separately (book: EngE: 28.57% vs. IrE: 57.97%, $p=0.0004$; offence: EngE: 9.62% vs. IrE: 46.51%, $p=0.0001$) (cf. Table 5).^{viii} The majority of apologies in both varieties included one vocative per utterance (cf. Figure 5).

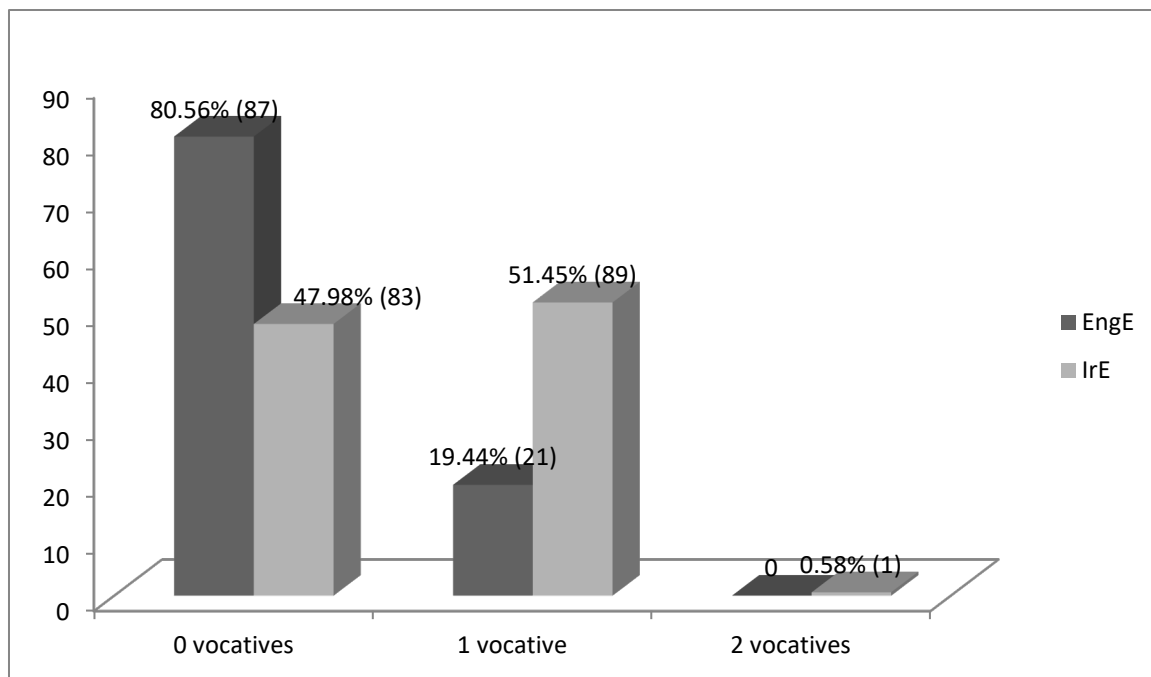


Figure 5: Vocative use across varieties across both situations (EngE: n=108; IrE: n=173)

	Book EngE (n=56)	Book IrE (n=87)	Offence EngE (n=52)	Offence IrE (n=86)
Vocatives	28.57% (16)	57.62% (51)	9.62% (5)	46.51% (40)
	<i>n=16</i>	<i>n=52</i>	<i>n=5</i>	<i>n=40</i>
Initial position	-	19.23% (10)	40% (2)	77.5% (31) (38.7% (12) in alerter combinations)
Medial position	75% (12)	46.15% (24)	-	12.5% (5)
Final position	25% (4)	34.6% (18)	60% (3)	10% (4)

Table 5: Vocative use and vocative position across varieties by situation

The analysis of position across situations and varieties is given in Table 5. The use of medial and final position (cf. (1)-(3)) is dominant in the book situation across varieties (EngE: 100% (16); IrE: 80.75% (42)). This reflects the nature of the apology in this situation as a second pair part apology in which a summons is inappropriate. Hence, all vocatives realise a relational function, boosting the H's positive face. Interestingly, we also have 19.23% vocatives in initial position, as in (4) and (5) in the IrE data despite the general pattern recorded in the literature towards a summons function for initial position (cf. 3). We may thus conclude that vocatives in initial function in IrE may also be relational.

- (1) No sorry Miss I completely forgot about it. I'll bring it in tomorrow (IrE) (medial).
- (2) No sorry Miss. I'll bring it tomorrow (EngE) (final).^{viii}
- (3) Sorry I've just realised that I've left it on my desk teacher (EngE) (final).
- (4) Miss, I'm really sorry but I forgot it. I promise to bring it in tomorrow. (IrE) (initial).
- (5) Oh miss I'm really sorry, it totally slipped my mind, I forgot to bring it today (IrE) (initial).
- (6) Sorry Lisa I hope you weren't upset I didn't mean to offend you (IrE) (medial).

(7) I'm sorry I didn't mean to offend you in anyway Lisa! (IrE) (final).

(8) Lisa, I'm so sorry, I really didn't mean to offend you, I didn't even think! I'm so sorry. (IrE) (initial).

(9) Listen Lisa, I didn't mean to upset you earlier. It wasn't intentional, I'm sorry (IrE) (initial).

(10) Gosh Lisa I'm so sorry. I really didn't mean to offend you. I wasn't thinking. I was totally inconsiderate. I'm really sorry. (IrE) (initial).

The situation in the offence item is so that both a summons/ identification and a relational function are possible. Vocatives in medial and final position are illustrated in (6)-(7). These realise a relational function. Vocatives in initial position in this situation are especially frequent in the IrE data (77.5%), suggesting a summons function (Leech 1999) (cf. (8)-(9)). However, 38.7% (12) of these initial vocatives were in alerter combinations and in the majority of these cases (10 in total), the vocative was in final position (e.g. *Listen Lisa, hey look Lisa*). Given this fact and also that vocatives in the book situation realised a relational position in initial position in the IrE data, it is possible that initial vocatives, as in (8) and (9) also serve a relational function. This is also seen in (10) which despite it being in initial position is difficult to envisage as a summons. We may thus conclude that the analysis of vocatives reveals a higher use of vocatives in the IrE data. These vocatives frequently realised a relational function or a part-relational function.

5. Discussion/ Conclusion

The analysis has revealed many similarities between apology strategies and their realisations relative to previous research on IrE and EngE, such as a high use of an explicit routine apology, also termed an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), particularly of the SORRY type (cf., e.g. Deutschmann, 2003; House, 1989; Lutzky & Kehoe, 2017; Lynch, 2013; Palma-Fahey, 2005; Suszczyńska, 1999). Indeed, it would appear that the IFID SORRY represents a situationally independent apology in both varieties given that it is used extensively across situations. At the same time, however, a number of variety-preferential pragmatic differences were identified. We see:

- A higher use of alerters in IrE.
- A higher use of vocatives in IrE, many of these which played/ also involved a relational function.
- A larger use of explanations in the offence situation in the IrE data.
- A tendency towards more active involvement in explanations in IrE.
- A higher use of upgrading in admission of facts but not of responsibility in the IrE data (threat to S's face) (book).

The higher levels of vocative use in particular show higher levels of relational orientation in the IrE data. Not only were there many medial and final vocatives with relational function, but vocatives in initial position, frequently in alerter combinations, were also suggested to act in a multi-functional manner and to also realise a relational function. The higher use of explanations in the Irish data is reminiscent of Palma-Fahey's (2005) research which also finds that explanations play an important role in apology realisations. The IrE explanations tended to explicitly mention active speaker involvement. Such realisations redress the speaker's loss of positive face (cf. Holmes 1990, p. 162). In contrast, the EngE explanations, where used, were generalised and unpersonalised, pointing to negative politeness. In the IrE data also, the higher upgrading levels recorded in the admission of facts but not of responsibility strategy also allow the speaker to redress their loss of positive face. Several reasons might be put forward to explain the above findings. One relates to cultural differences across the varieties. 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, Trevor-Roberts, & Earnshaw, 2002) (cf. also Scharf & Mac Mathúna, 1998 on collectivism in Ireland). A collectivist culture possibly allows a higher level of confession of failure, as in the active speaker involvement witnessed in the explanation realisations. Also, it might be suggested that there is also a need for people to get on with each other in a collectivist culture, suggesting that they may invest more in relationship management, such as in the use of vocatives. The GLOBE project also finds Irish culture to have a higher humane orientation relative to England. This orientation may also potentially help explain the need to invest linguistic effort in apologies as an H-supportive act (Ashkanasy et al., 2002).

A potential limitation of the present study is that the EngE informants were slightly younger than the IrE group (EngE: 13.76 years; IrE: 16.02 years) leaving open the question of the effect of differing power relations and development patterns. Regarding power relations, previous research by Holmes (1990) suggests that powerful victims receive more elaborated apology strategies than equal or less powerful victims. Following this line of argument would suggest that the EngE apologies might be more elaborate than the IrE apologies given that the victim would be more powerful relative to the younger EngE informant. That rather the opposite is the case suggests that such status differences did not play a role. The possible influence of pragmatic development patterns, however, needs to be further investigated. To date, scholarship on first language speech act development has focused predominantly on very young children's language development despite the fact that a number of aspects of speech act do not develop until later childhood or adolescence (cf. Casillas & Hilbrink, 2020, p. 79). Hence, further research is required to investigate at what age the use of the relational function of vocatives, for instance, develops to ensure that the differences recorded here are not explainable by age.

The present study only examined how apologies are prototypically realised across the varieties of EngE and IrE. In the present analysis, regional variation was operationalised on a national level by choosing one place from each variety. In addition, a range of social factors, such as gender, age, and ethnic identity were kept constant. Variational pragmatic research shows, however, that regional variation may exist not only on the national level but also on more subordinate levels. Barron (2009), for instance, finds sub-national variation between apologies, with informants in Tennessee preferring a more elaborate apology than those in Virginia. Barron and Pandarova (2016) show regional differences between the use of tag questions in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Northern Ireland in ICE-Ireland, with the ROI speakers using more tag questions. In addition to a more diversified concept of region, research is also needed on the influence of the other macro-social variables of gender, age, socio-economic class, and ethnic identity identified in variational pragmatics (Schneider & Barron, 2008) on apology and vocative conventions in IrE. Deutschmann (2003), for instance, found *sorry* to be used more by middle class than lower class speakers, suggesting that the use of apologies may construct and signal social identity. Similarly, Ogiermann (2008) finds BrE woman to use many routine strategies and intensifying devices than BrE men. Also, Lynch (2013) finds a higher use of *sorry* by females, and by speakers in the younger and older age brackets than in the middle-aged bracket. In sum then, further research is needed on apologies in EngE and IrE for different regions, genders, age groups, social classes, and ethnic identities before we can generalise and speak of EngE and IrE.

The present study uses data elicited using a production questionnaire. Ideally, this data should be triangulated with naturally-occurring data using a cross-varietal corpus, such as the Corpus of Global Web-based English (GloWbE). In addition, screenplay data from both the Irish and English context might be used, such as was done cross-culturally in Palma-Fahey (2005). Indeed, given the face-threatening nature of remedial apologies in particular and thus

their potentially low use in corpora, the latter data may give a wider variety of remedial apologies than a corpus can offer. Finally, further research on the use of vocatives using corpus data represents a research gap (cf. Clancy & O’Keeffe, 2015, p. 246), as does also cross-varietal research on the use of vocatives in apologising and in performing other speech acts.

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Appendix:

Book situation:

A pupil has borrowed a book from her teacher which she promised to return today. However, she realises she has forgotten to bring it along.

Teacher: Mary, did you remember to bring the book?

Mary: _____

Teacher: O.K., but please try to remember it next time.

Offence situation:

In a discussion at work, Lisa was offended by something Maeve said. Maeve comes up to Lisa afterwards:

Maeve: _____

Lisa: Well, I was a bit upset, but it's all right now that we've talked about it.

ⁱ Use of an assessment questionnaire to examine equivalencies across cultures on such constraints as social distance, social dominance and degree of imposition, would add to the validity of the present findings (cf. Barron, 2003).

ⁱⁱ There has been much research on the validity of production questionnaire data relative to naturally occurring and other types of elicited data. The reader is referred to Ogiermann (2018) and Sweeney & Hua (2016) for discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the production questionnaire.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Ogiermann (2009, pp. 133-137) for a detailed criticism of the category explanations/ accounts in the CCSARP coding system.

^{iv} Cf. also McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003) and Clancy and O'Keeffe et al. (2015) for a categorisation of further sub-functions.

^v Other IFID realisation types identified in scholarship include *excuse*, *regret* (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989b), *afraid*, *pardon*, *apology(ies)* (Deutschmann, 2003).

^{vi} *No* was one realisation of the admission of facts but not of responsibility strategy in the book situation given that the situation was initiated with the question *Mary, did you remember to bring the book?* The figures here for this situation include a number of combinations of this strategy (e.g. *No I forgot it*). In the EngE data there were 43.4% (23) combinations, in the Irish data 39.53% (34).

^{vii} In the book situation, the vocative *Miss* was that most employed in the IrE setting. A recent article published in the BBC News (2014) gives evidence that school-goers in the EngEng context employ similar terms in the classroom context.

^{viii} Although (1) and (2) appear similar, the vocative in (1) is coded as medial and that in (2) final. The difference relates to the presence of a period in (2) which makes clear that the vocative *Miss* belongs to the c-unit preceding it. In contrast, in (1), as also in (6), it is unclear to which c-unit the vocative belongs.