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The study provides a unique insight into the use of this politeness formula in a number of different conversational settings, with a focus on the use of the 'I'm sorry' form in dialogues produced by over 700 speakers.

The politeness norms of any society can be seen as the product of socio-economic factors and reflect not only the use of linguistic politeness, but have wider implications concerning the social power structures and the use of linguistic politeness.
Apologising
in British English

Mats Deutschmann
In memory of my father, a man who was often honest, but rarely polite
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Linguistic forms: Italics: sorry, pardon
Categories and terminology: Single quotation marks: ‘Challenging’ apologies
Citations: Double quotation marks: “…”

Commonly used abbreviations

ANOVA: Analysis of variance
B&L Brown and Levinson
BNC: British National Corpus
DS: Demographically sampled texts in the BNC
CG: ‘Context-governed’ texts in the BNC
LLC: London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English.
IFID: Illocutionary force indicating device
SGML: ISO 8879: Standard Generalized Mark-up Language
FTA: Face Threatening Act
RWS: Repair Work Strategies

BNC codes and the typography used in the examples

Codes indicating the text and line in the BNC are given in brackets (e.g. KB0 345-56) after each example cited in the thesis. The initial three-letter code is the text code. The figures that follow indicate the line number in the particular text cited. Note that many of the examples in this thesis include ‘ungrammatical’ constructions. These are not errors, but simply reflections of the language spoken in the BNC.

The transcription used in the BNC is described as orthographic in the BNC handbook (Aston & Burnard 1998:36). In this transcription system non-vocal events and vocal events other than identifiable speech are made explicit by means of SGML mark-up. The following list summarises the mark-ups encountered in the examples cited in this thesis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Markup</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;-</td>
<td>-&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;belch&gt;</td>
<td>Belch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;cough&gt;</td>
<td>Coughing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;gap cause=anonymization desc=&quot;last or full name&quot;&gt;</td>
<td>Gap in the transcription – omitted name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;laugh&gt;</td>
<td>Laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;pause&gt;</td>
<td>Longer pause (time often indicated).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;unclear&gt;</td>
<td>Inaudible material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;voice quality: mimicking&gt;</td>
<td>Indication that the voice quality is not 'ordinary' (voice quality given in comment).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

Thank God it’s over! The past year has probably been the toughest in my life and I don’t think I would have made it if it had not been for my fantastic family. Sassa, I owe you so much more than a few words on paper. You have made this whole experience bearable. You have encouraged me when things have seemed hopeless, told me to slow down when things were going ‘too’ well, and you’ve always been ready to listen to my ramblings about silly apologies. For months now, you’ve had to shoulder the responsibilities of keeping three boys happy, while at the same time completing your own studies, and recently, while working full-time. For all this I thank you. This is just as much your work as mine and don’t you forget it!

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Chapter 1
Introduction and Overview

1.1 General introduction

Ever since the publishing of Brown & Levinson’s influential article “Universals in language usage: politeness phenomena” in 1978, linguistic politeness has been the subject of extensive research in the fields of pragmatics and sociolinguistics. Goffman (1971:ix) equates politeness with cultural norms of ‘interaction practices’, and the shape and conventional usages of such norms in different (sub)cultures are revealing in many ways.

On a macro level, the politeness norms of any society can be seen as the product of socio-economic factors (Brown & Gilman 1960, Ehlich 1992, Watts 1992). The form and practice norms of linguistic politeness in any culture are a reflection, not only of the present social structure, but also of the historical circumstances out of which these norms have grown. Indeed, intercultural politeness research, focusing on comparing the linguistic politenesses of various languages as a reflection of societal differences, has been one of the major areas of research in the field of pragmatics during the past two decades (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984, Meier 1992, Márquez Reiter 2000).

On a micro level, many researchers (Brown & Levinson 1987, Coates 1993, Tannen 1994b, Holmes 1995) see the patterns of politeness usage as a product of the distribution of status and power within groups. For this reason, studying who is polite to whom has been a popular topic within linguistic gender studies. Gender differences in the use of several politeness formulae have been investigated, for example with reference to compliments (Wolfson 1983a, Holmes 1988), hedges (Preisler 1986, Holmes 1989b), honorifics (Ide 1991), requests (Walters 1981, García 2002) and apologies (Holmes 1989a, Tannen 1994b, Aijmer 1995).

In this thesis, rather than studying politeness in general, I will look at the use of a specific form, the explicit apology, a speech act which comprises politeness to a significant extent. The speech act of apologising is a good object for such a study since it is an example of what Brown & Levinson call “culturally stabilized interaction rituals with conventionalised formulae” (1987:235). Such ritual formulae constitute a large part of the folk model\(^1\) of politeness. At the same time the use of apologies is closely associated with speaker/addressee face needs, power relationships and social distance, issues central to the more academic approaches to politeness. In Holmes’s (1990:156) words:

an apology is primarily and essentially a social act. It is aimed at maintaining good relations between participants. To apologize is to act politely, both in the

\(^{1}\) The term folk model is used here in the sense defined by Ungerer & Schmid 1996:52, i.e. a naive cultural model “based on informal observations, traditional beliefs, and even superstitions […] “.
The general aim of this dissertation is to investigate the manner in which the formulae associated with the speech act of apologising are used in authentic spoken British English, and how this usage varies depending on the identity of the speaker, the person addressed and the conversational situation. A contrastive investigation of naturalistic speech produced by a large group of demographically representative British speakers, participating in conversations at different formality levels and in a variety of genres will shed more light on apologising, and ultimately on the use of polite forms as a sociolinguistic phenomenon in contemporary Britain. The study is based on the dialogue corpus of the spoken part of the British National Corpus, and the majority of the texts explored were recorded in the early 1990s (1992-3).

1.2 Background

During the past two decades, the speech act of apologising has been a popular subject for investigation, particularly in the field of pragmatics (see also Section 2.8.5). Initially, the form and function of remedial interchanges were the main topics of interest in apology research (Edmondson 1981, Fraser 1981, Olshtain & Cohen 1983, Owen 1983 and Aijmer 1996). More recently the field of research has expanded to include the effects of social factors, such as relative power and social distance, on apologising.\(^2\) In addition, a large number of studies have adopted a cross-cultural approach, comparing apologising, or remedial behaviour in general among different languages (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, Meier 1992, Lipson 1994, Trosborg 1995, Márquez Reiter 2000).

One major limitation of the majority of apology studies to date, however, is that they have drawn their conclusions from language produced under artificial conditions such as role-play situations or discourse completion tests.\(^3\) Other studies have attempted more ethnographic approaches but have relied on limited data from a single genre or based conclusions on retrospective self- or second-hand reports. Practical obstacles involved in the collection of naturalistic speech can largely explain the reliance on non-authentic speech data in previous studies; as Trosborg points out (1995:141), a reliable study based on ethnographic data is very time-consuming.

The completion of the British National Corpus has provided a unique material for large-scale sociolinguistic research into speech acts such as apologies in spoken British English. The corpus comprises recordings of a large cross-section of the British population, over 4700 speakers, acting in a range of different conversational settings. In addition, the design of the BNC allows the effects of such variables as speaker role and social distance on speech patterns to be investigated since the corpus also includes information about the relationships between the participants.

\(^2\) Most of the studies conducted under the CCSARP project (Cross cultural speech act realisation patterns) take these factors into account. In addition, researchers such as Holmes (1989), Aijmer (1995) and Tannen (1994) have looked at the effects on remedial acts of the gender make-up of dyads.

\(^3\) Two notable exceptions to this are Owen (1983) and Aijmer (1995, 1996).
1.3 Aims

It is the general aim of this study to investigate the form and function of explicit routine formulae associated with apologising in authentic contemporary spoken British English, as well as the sociolinguistic factors that affect the frequency and types of apologies produced in different texts. The specific aims can be summarised as follows:

- To isolate the explicit expressions of apology in the spoken part of the BNC, and to identify their functions. The relationship between function and form will also be investigated.

- To examine how the frequency and typology of apologies vary depending on the social identity of the speaker. ‘Social identity’ includes the variables gender, age and social class.

- To investigate how the frequency and typology of apologies vary depending on the conversational setting. The aspects of conversational setting studied in this thesis include formality level, conversational genre, and the size of the conversational group.

- To investigate the manner in which the frequency and typology of apologies vary depending on the relationships that exist between the speakers and the addressees. Aspects investigated include variables of social identity such as speaker/addressee gender and age, and the relative power (P) and social distance (D) between the speaker and addressee.

The results will be discussed in relation to existing theoretical frameworks of politeness and, when necessary, new hypotheses will be postulated. Ultimately, the ambition is to reveal general characteristics of the use of politeness formulae in British English by looking at this specific speech act in the BNC.

1.4 Material

The examples of apologies used as basis for the analysis in this study were found in the dialogue texts of the spoken part of the British National Corpus (BNC). Only dialogue produced by speakers whose age and gender were known was included in the sub-corpus, and it comprises 5,139,082 words produced by over 1700 speakers.

The bulk of the spoken texts in the BNC were recorded in the early 1990s and special attention was paid to the question of demographic representativeness. Demo-

---

4 It is the form rather than the interactional function of the apology which is the basis for the definition of the speech act in this study (see Section 2.4).
5 Because the demographic compositions of the conversations encountered in the corpus were relatively ‘monocultural’ when it came to the variable social class, i.e. individuals of a certain social class tended to communicate with individuals of similar social class, it was deemed futile to include this aspect of addressee social variables in the analysis (see Chapter 6).
6 Details of these speakers and texts are given in Appendix 1. The entire spoken part of the BNC encompasses some 10.3 million words produced by 4705 speakers (Berglund 1999: 40).
graphic sampling was used, and a spread of respondents in terms of age, sex and social group were asked to record their everyday conversations during a period of up to a week (Aston & Burnard 1998:32). Geographic spread was also important when respondents were chosen. The resulting recordings make up the demographically sampled (DS) part of the BNC.

Additional recordings were made of more formalised types of conversation (business meetings, parliamentary debates, public broadcasts etc.) making up the so-called ‘context-governed’ (CG) part of the BNC. The text types were selected according to “previously-defined criteria” (Aston & Burnard 1998:32), to ensure that a range of genres were covered (for more detailed descriptions see Burnard 1995, Aston & Burnard 1998, and Section 5.2).

According to Rayson, Leech & Hodges (1997:134), the BNC provides an “unparalleled resource for investigating, on a large scale, the conversational behaviour of the British population in the 1990s.” One of its main strengths is the large number of participants included in the corpus. The current study, for example, draws its results from over 1700 speakers. To try to match this sample size in an experimental situation would be unrealistic.

More specific details concerning the speakers and texts included in the subcorpora used for the different parts of the study are provided in Appendices 1a, and 1b.

1.5 Method

Wolfson, Marmor & Jones (1989:194), arguing in favour of observational methodology in pragmatic research, state that:

…our own intuitions cannot provide us with a complete picture of the social circumstances that result in a given speech act. It is only through an iterative process which makes use both of systematic observation and increasingly sensitive elicitation procedures that we can begin to capture the social knowledge that is the unconscious possession of every member of a speech community.

The main motivation for the present thesis is thus methodological. Previous research into this speech act has been based on limited and, at times, artificial data. The reported response obtained by asking someone how they think they would react in a given situation is not likely to coincide with how they would actually respond in a ‘real’ situation. Nevertheless, much of the research into speech acts to date has been conducted in this manner. The BNC has made it possible to carry out a large-scale study of a speech act based on observation of authentic speech. It is hoped that this endeavour will provide a methodological starting point for future studies of apologising, and other speech acts.

7 ‘Respondents’ here refers to the people recording the material.
1.5.1 Corpus data vs. research-specific data^8

Two methods in particular have been favoured in previous speech act studies: discourse completion tests (DCTs) \(^9\) and role plays. Although the advantages of such experimental methods are obvious (the investigator can choose his/her subjects, and manipulate independent variables in a controlled fashion), there are several drawbacks with this type of research.

The written discourse completion test (DCTs) has one obvious shortcoming; it attempts to investigate speech behaviour on the basis of written responses. Beebe (1985), \(^10\) who compared speech act data collected through the use of DCTs with that collected during naturally occurring telephone conversations, found that the former data was biased towards more simplistic, stereotypic responses. She concludes that while DCTs are an effective means of gathering large amounts of data which can then be used in an initial classification of semantic formulas and speech act strategies, the responses obtained “do not accurately reflect natural speech” (10).

Because of the drawbacks associated with DCTs, many of the more recent apology studies (Meier 1992, Trosborg 1995, Márquez Reiter 2000) have employed methods involving role play and role enactment. McDonough (1981:80) makes a distinction between ‘role playing’ and ‘role enactment’. The former method is described as “pretending to react as if one were someone else in a different situation” while the latter entails “performing a role that is part of one’s normal life or personality.” Both of these methods have one obvious advantage over DCTs: they sample spoken rather than written dialogue. It is, however, questionable to what extent language produced during such situations reflects the subjects’ natural way of speaking.

In neither of these methods are the subjects engaged in natural interaction (Rintell & Mitchell 1989:251). In role plays, for example, the respondents are often asked to act out roles of which they have no personal first-hand experience; the method thus fails to capture the “dynamics of spontaneous interaction” (Trosborg 1995:144). Although role enactment comes closer to capturing authentic dialogue, the subjects nevertheless act under artificial conditions and lack emotional involvement in the situation. Essentially, such studies do not investigate natural speech, but merely the canonical shape of politeness formulae “in the minds of the speakers” (Wolfson, Marmor & Jones 1989:183). In contrast, the speakers in the BNC were acting in naturalistic settings; many of the recordings took place in the home environment, for example. No instructions were given concerning topics to be discussed, the composition of the conversational group, physical setting etc. Arguably, the corpus can thus be seen as a true representation of authentic speech.

An additional negative effect on the data extracted using role play and role enactment methods is the inhibiting effect caused by the presence of a researcher (cf. Labov’s “Observers’ paradox” (1972:xvii-xviii)). These problems were partly elimi-

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^8 For further discussions of the advantages and disadvantages of elicited versus naturalistic data see Olshtain & Cohen 1983, Wolfson, Marmor & Jones 1989 and Holmes 1990.

^9 This method was advocated in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain et al. 1984, and Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper 1989), and has subsequently been used in a number of studies directly or indirectly associated with the project.

^10 For further discussion of DCTs see Wolson, Marmor & Jones (1989:182-186).
nated in the BNC since the recordings were made mainly by the participants themselves. Spontaneity is clearly evident in most texts.

Yet another weakness of experimental approaches to date is that financial and practical restraints often severely limit the number of subjects included in a study. As participants tend to be selected from a sub-population easily accessible to the researcher, often students, there is also the risk that the sample used in the research is highly skewed. In spite of this criticism, it must be pointed out that DCTs and different forms of role play have proved extremely useful in shedding light on the shape and function of remedial interchanges, information which has provided the starting point for this research.

There are some studies of remedial responses that have been conducted on naturally occurring data. Owen (1983) used telephone conversations and tape recordings of transactions in shops in order to elicit apologies, and Mattson Bean & Johnstone (1994) looked at apologies uttered during telephone interviews conducted for a non-profit public-opinion polling service. The problem with drawing conclusions from such research-specific situations is that the results may give a misleading picture of remedial behaviour in general. Both telephone conversations and transactional interchanges can be classed as “task-oriented professional talk” (Mattson Bean & Johnstone 1994:60), a genre which contains a notoriously high proportion of short, routinized perfunctory apologies, whose functions mainly involve discourse task management.11

Other apology studies (Holmes 1990; McLaughlin, O’Hair & Cody 1983) have drawn their conclusions from ethnographic data reported retrospectively (first or second hand). Holmes (1990), for example, used students to record apologies using a method advocated by Hymes (1962, 1964, 1972). Students were asked to note down the next 20 apologies they heard “as soon and as accurately as possible” and “without selection or censorship” (Holmes 1990:166). Contextual details were also recorded. On the basis of this data Holmes investigated linguistic form, pragmatics, and some sociolinguistic aspects of apologies in New Zealand English. The reliance on such second-hand reporting of incidents is questionable, however; casual and apparently insignificant apologies are less salient, and easily overlooked. In addition, the identity of the reporter is likely to affect the results.12

One further drawback of methods involving first and second-hand reporting is that they can, at best, only provide a reliable qualitative analysis of remedial behaviour. Statements concerning quantitative aspects of apologising made in such studies cannot be evaluated in a larger context; in order to analyse quantitative aspects of speech act usage one must have some record of the total amount of speech sampled. Aijmer (1996:4) points out the advantage of using a large-scale text corpus as a source in that it enables the investigator to estimate how frequently a particular speech act occurs in the corpus as a whole, allowing for subsequent comparative quantitative studies (e.g. diachronic, cross-cultural or genre studies). As McEnery & Wilson

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11 In Aijmer’s (1996) corpus study of routine phrases, telephone conversation contained about three times as many apologies as face-to-face speech (90). In Mattson Bean & Johnstone’s (1994) study 95 per cent of the apologies served functions related to discourse management, such as requesting repetitions and signalling performance errors (66).

12 All of Holmes’s volunteers were female students, and the large number of examples of females apologising found in this study may simply have been a result of the ‘reporters’ being exposed to mainly female speech.
Introduction and Overview

(1996:99) argue when they compare the merits of corpus data with research-specific data in sociolinguistic research: a general, computerised corpus “can provide what these kinds of data do not provide - a representative sample of naturalistic data which can be quantified”. It is, however, crucial to consider the composition of the corpus in question before drawing any general conclusions.

What kind of language do the texts of a chosen corpus actually represent? In the case of the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English, the corpus used in Aijmer’s (1996) study, the recordings were made during the 1970s, and although the texts include a number of different conversational genres such as face-to-face conversation, telephone calls, public speeches, news broadcasts and interviews, they are limited to a mainly academic setting (Aijmer 1996:5).

It is also debatable to what extent the aspiration to produce a corpus of spoken English which was representative of the spoken language in Britain in the early 1990s was actually realised in the BNC. Certain social groups are underrepresented in the corpus, and it was obviously impossible to cover more than a few conversational genres. In spite of these limitations, the BNC is by far the most well-balanced and current corpus of spoken British English where the social identities of the speakers are given. The BNC is also the largest corpus of spoken British English available, with the exception for the Cobuild Bank of English. This corpus, however, contains little or no information about the speakers, limiting its usefulness for sociolinguistic research. Seen from a sociolinguistic point of view, the spoken material in the BNC is the best source of naturalistic spoken British English available at present, and it comes close to what Trosborg (1995:141) describes as the “ultimate goal” of pragmatically oriented research:

The ultimate goal in most pragmatically oriented research is the collection of ethnographic data, i.e. naturally occurring data, collected along with information about the age, sex, status, situation, culture, relationship, etc. of the interactants

1.5.2 General account of procedure

Because one of the aims of this study is to provide a survey of the uses of the apology in ‘real’ spoken English the form, as opposed to the function, of the apology is the starting point for the investigation (cf. Mattson Bean & Johnstone 1994:63). The approach thus follows the tradition of descriptive linguistics, and as little as possible is assumed about the functions of forms such as excuse me and I’m sorry. A step-by-step account of the procedure is given below:

- The investigation was limited to explicit apologies which appeared in the form of illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs as defined by Searle 1969). Thus, for the purpose of this study, expressions containing variants of the words

13 ‘General’ here refers to a corpus of natural speech, which has been recorded for general purpose use.
14 The most striking imbalances and shortcomings in the spoken corpus are dealt with at the beginning of Chapters 4, 5 and 6. For further discussion of the skewed nature of the spoken part of the BNC see Berglund (1999).
afraid, apologise, apology, excuse, forgive, pardon, regret and sorry were considered.\footnote{For a motivation for this choice of lexemes, see Section 3.2.1.}

- Searches for these lexemes were made using the BNC\textsubscript{web} Query System.\footnote{Software available from http://escorp.unizh.ch} Only dialogue produced by speakers of known age and gender was included in the sub-corpus. The results were downloaded and saved in an Excel database.

- The lists of occurrences were examined manually in order to establish which of the obtained utterances were examples of explicit expressions of apologies. Other uses of the words (excuse used as a noun as in the phrase there was no excuse for his behaviour, for example), and examples where the apologies appeared in reported speech were deleted. Once the desired examples were isolated, each apology was examined in detail.

- Each apology was analysed in the context of the conversation in which it was uttered, and it was subsequently classified taking functional and other pragmatic factors into account (see Chapter 3).

- The sex, age and social class of the speaker and the person addressed were noted for each apology. The sex and age were known for all the speakers; speech produced by speakers not identifiable by sex and age was excluded in the study. The information available on the social class of the speakers was less complete; the ‘context-governed’ (CG) texts of the BNC, for example, contained extremely limited information on speaker social class. In addition, the nature of the transcriptions in the BNC (see 1.5.3) sometimes made it difficult to identify the addressee. At other times the wanted social variables for the addressee were unavailable. Consequently, information regarding the addressees in the study is less complete than that available for the speakers.

- Aspects of the conversational setting such as formality level, conversational type, the number of participants present and the gender composition of the conversational group were noted (see Chapter 5).

- Finally, the role of the speaker in relation to the addressee was also noted. Details about this were usually available in the BNC text headers under “relationships”, or could, sometimes, be worked out from the context. The information obtained was subsequently used as the basis for the analysis of ‘relative power’ and ‘social distance’ (see Chapter 6).

Statistical analyses were subsequently carried out on the data in order to compare a) the total number of apologies produced and b) the types of offences apologised for by different groups of speakers in various situations. More detailed information about the methods used and how the effects of imbalances in the corpus on the findings have
been adjusted for will be provided in the relevant chapters (see specifically Section 4.2 and Appendix 3).

1.5.3 Sources of error

The spoken part of the BNC is orthographically transcribed. Thus important audio-visual cues as to what is going on in the conversations are lacking. Unfortunately, many elements that cannot be investigated in a corpus of this format (such as intonation patterns, for example) may be of major importance in speech act analysis.

The limited information about stress and tone available from the texts posed a problem when categorising the apologies. A simple sorry can be expressed in a number of ways and the prosody largely defines the speech act’s pragmatic qualities. The intonation pattern of an apology becomes especially important when analysing politeness. Whether an apology is seen as appropriate or not (a polite or rude act) will largely be decided by how it is delivered. Ladd (1978:324), for example, maintains that it would be acceptable to use sorry uttered in a casual tone when trying to get through a crowd, but that this type of intonation would be inappropriate when bumping into someone in the supermarket causing them to drop their eggs on the floor. This is emphasised by Lindström (1978:177), who points out that an apology with a low fall nuclear tone sounds genuine and regretful, whereas an apology uttered with high rise nuclear tone sounds superficial, indifferent and, at worst, contradictory.

The lack of prosodic information was therefore a serious limitation in this study. It was, however, often possible to deduce the tone of an apology by looking at punctuation, transcribers’ comments and the context in which it appeared. Nevertheless, there remained a potential for erroneous interpretations. ‘Sarcastic’ apologies, for example, were primarily identified by the contexts in which they appeared, and by looking at the type of responses they evoked. In instances where such information was lacking or incomplete, however, sarcastic usage may have been overlooked since the lexical and syntactic forms of both sincere and sarcastic apologies were found to be similar in the corpus (Section 3.7)

The absence of visual cues in the BNC posed a problem when trying to identify the recipients of apologies (see Section 6.1.1). This was especially true for conversations with many participants. The social conventions associated with apologising, however, helped in this process; apologies were often acknowledged by the addressees and in many cases apologies were uttered after the offender had been made aware of the offence by the offended.

Finally, the lack of insight into the real-life situations which were the source of the corpus made the interpretations of the results complex; apologising entails verbal repair work after some form of infringement has taken place, and in the corpus a speaker may incorrectly have been deemed to be ‘impolite’ because s/he rarely apologised. Infrequent use of this speech act should not automatically be equated with ‘rudeness’, however; on the contrary, the person in question may be extremely aware of politeness norms and avoiding exposing her/himself to situations where s/he feels

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17 In McEnery, Baker and Hardie’s (2000) study of swearing and abuse in the BNC, the gender of the addressee could only be identified in 240 of the 1301 cases of swearing that their material contained.
the need to apologise in the first place. In this study, for example, females apologised less for social gaffes (belching, for example) than males did. Is this a reflection of a tendency for females to commit fewer such offences or the result of this particular group’s disinclination to apologise for such behaviour? This example illustrates the need for caution when interpreting findings from a corpus study such as this one. On the whole, more may be going on than meets the eye when examining the transcribed texts.

One other important source of error was the quality of the recordings in the BNC: The transcribed texts contained a number of passages described as “unclear”. This sometimes made it difficult to work out the context for some apologies. Similarly, apologies which appeared at the very beginning of new recordings (unfortunately the beginnings of recordings did not always coincide with the beginnings of the conversations) posed a problem.

Several coding errors were noted during the course of the study. There were at times discrepancies between the information about speakers given in the introductory headers of the texts and the information that appeared inside the texts. Such inconsistencies were particularly common in two social categories of speakers: many speakers who were described as being working class in the header of a text were not given a social class when they later appeared in conversational contexts, and a number of young speakers aged 15-17 were wrongly classed as age-group 0-14. In all of these doubtful cases, it was the information provided in the introductory header that was deemed to be correct and used in this study.18

Some errors involving the transcriptions of the texts were also discovered. There was one instance of the same text having been transcribed twice (FMM and KNE). Text KNE was consequently excluded from the sub-corpus. A small number of apologies appear in an identical context in two different parts of the same text (KE1 618 and KE1 1231, KE1 580 and KE1 887). Again, it appears that the transcribers have unknowingly transcribed the same material twice. There were also some obvious cases of mistaken identity; one striking example of this is the following. The speakers are PS0M4 (Nicola, a 33-year-old housewife) and PS0M5 (Oliver, her three-year-old son):

Ex. 1.1 (KDE 1005-1011):

Nicola: What's that mummy?
Oliver: Pardon darling.
Nicola: What's that?
Oliver: What's what?
Nicola: What <unclear> that? <unclear>
Oliver: Oh that's just a thank you because <pause> the person in the car behind let me through <pause> so I just said thank you. That was all.

‘Mummies’ are generally not called Oliver and three-year-olds do not drive cars. This particular passage was preceded by one where Oliver asks his mother if she has been in the garden on her skateboard. The mother’s code has clearly been mistaken for her

18 It was the information in this header which should have been used as a source by the transcribers when marking up individuals in the texts. It appears that some transcribers were careless in so doing.
son’s and vice versa. In this example the error was obvious and easily corrected, but how many other, less obvious, similar errors the corpus contains remains unanswered.

Another important source of error, only indirectly related to the nature of the BNC, is the size of the sample retrieved. Over 3000 apologies were included in the study and there is, of course, a potential for human error in dealing with such a large body of data. In order to minimise the risk of errors, all data were classified separately at least three times. Incongruities were re-examined.

The fact that speakers were aware they were being taped was an additional source of error. There are examples where apologies were produced as a direct result of this fact:

Ex. 1.2 (KC2 4063):

Florence: A pick up a penguin <pause> right, great, come on then Jeff say something <pause> pardon it didn't pick that up <pause> he said bollocks, Jeff just said bollocks <laugh>, that's good <pause> oh if tonight we would, see me driving along in the car and got that on, oh no, it'll be really funny, we're gonna be sitting there going come on as if we'd said that today

On the whole, it is reasonable to assume that awareness that they were being recorded resulted in speakers being more restrained.

1.6 Overview of the different chapters

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1, Introduction and Overview, gives a brief outline of the background, aims, material and method of the study.

Chapter 2, Apologising and Politeness, discusses the theoretical framework of the thesis. After a general survey of relevant definitions and theories associated with these two concepts, there is a brief discussion of how apologising fits into the general framework of politeness. An overview of previous research into apologising concludes the chapter.

Chapter 3, The Apology, explores pragmatic aspects of the apologies encountered in the study. The situations that motivate apologies are examined, and how the functions of these apologies are reflected in their lexical form. Additional, less conventionalised strategies, such as explanations and acknowledgements of responsibility, are also considered. Finally, the chapter looks at the apparent sincerity levels of different types of apologies.

In Chapter 4, Variation across Speaker Social Variables, variations in the frequency of apologising for different social groups of speakers are analysed. In addition, there is a comparative analysis of typological aspects of the apologies in relation to speaker social group. The social variables taken into account include gender, age and social class.

Chapter 5, Variation across Conversational Settings, investigates how formality level, conversational genre and the number of participants present affect apologetic behaviour. As in Chapter 4, quantitative and typological differences in apologising between different settings are examined.
Chapter 6, *Dyadic Patterns in Apologising*, examines how the relative roles of speaker and addressee affect the total frequency of apologising and the kinds of apologies produced. The effects on apologising of the gender and age of the speaker in relation to the addressee are considered, as are the effects of relative power and social distance.

In Chapter 7, *Summary and Conclusion*, the findings of the study are summarised and their relevance is discussed.
Chapter 2
Apologising and Politeness

2.1 Introduction

The main aim of this thesis is to investigate the usage of a specific linguistic form associated with politeness from a sociolinguistic perspective. The methodological approach taken is largely empirical; conclusions about the uses of the apology, as an example of the use of politeness formulae in British English, are based on the observed examples of this particular speech act in the corpus rather than on existing theories. Nevertheless, a limited theoretical framework which has influenced me in my methodological approach has to be presented. Similarly, I will also briefly mention some of the views on the functions of politeness which have proved to be of interest in explaining the observed patterns of apologising that occur in the corpus. Since my approach in this thesis is largely sociolinguistic, the main emphasis will be on politeness theories deriving from this field of language research. How the object of investigation in this study, the apology, is related to the general concept of politeness will also be discussed.

2.2 Politeness – a personal encounter

On my way to Lancaster University I was subjected to one of the frequent train cancellations which are so much a part of commuting in Britain nowadays. I was stuck in Preston with three hours to kill, and being tired of lukewarm, watery coffees served in polystyrene vessels, I ventured outside the railway station to look for some more wholesome refreshment; not surprisingly, I ended up outside the Preston Railway Inn.

On entering the pub, I found myself in the middle of an Irish evening that was reaching its climax. As I made my way towards the bar, burdened by bags and my overloaded briefcase, I felt rather out of place among Celtic United supporters and Guinness-swilling regulars, who were all chanting in unison to the lyrics of some, to me, obscure Irish folksong. I negotiated my way through the crowd while delivering a seemingly endless stream of ‘sorries’, ‘excuse mes’ and ‘pardon mes’, and proceeded to try to catch the barman’s attention in a similar manner (unsuccessfully, I may add).

A man standing next to me enquired why I was apologising all the time. I apologised again (for apologising) at which he explained that ‘in there they were all mates and if I wanted a beer I’d better cut the crap, put my fiver on the bar counter and state loudly and clearly what I wanted.’ He demonstrated what he meant by addressing the barman with a “John, you dozy bastard. Give the man a pint.” The result was instantaneous; before I could say “face work”, a cold and well-needed lager stood before me.

As the evening progressed I got to talk to my saviour, whose name was Andy. I explained what I did for a living, and that I was on my way to Lancaster to begin my study on politeness in the BNC. He proceeded to give me his own theory on polite-
ness: to him it was just another form of dishonesty, either used by “wankers” who did not dare deliver a straight and honest message (he was probably indirectly referring to me and my rather pathetic attempts to order a drink), or by “slimy bastards” whose mild manners concealed some devious ulterior motive. He was, on the whole, rather suspicious of polite people.

I guess that his theory was not the most well articulated one, but it did tell me something important: the form which politeness takes is not universal; it is shaped by the social setting and must never be dissociated from it. What is considered polite or rude depends very much on the cultural norms of the person addressed, the situation s/he finds her/himself in, and the nature of the message delivered. I had obviously misinterpreted all of these factors in the Preston Railway Inn.

In spite of the fact that the politeness norms of different social groupings vary depending on social context, intuition tells us that prescribed social standards for polite behaviour do exist in Great Britain. Such prescribed standards are in the words of Márquez Reiter (2000:1) not ‘natural’ phenomena, but “socioculturally and historically constructed”.

2.3 The term politeness: etymology and dictionary definitions

The etymology and existing dictionary definitions of politeness are of interest since they may provide clues to the historical origin of the phenomenon and common values associated with the term.

Polite is derived from the Latin adjective politus, meaning polished or smooth. In the early sixteenth century, this meaning was transferred onto the semantic fields of the arts or any intellectual pursuits, so that the word came to be more or less synonymous with modern terms such as refined, elegant, correct, scholarly, and exhibiting a refined taste (The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) 1993). In the seventeenth century the word was increasingly used to describe individuals (as opposed to cultural phenomena) and by the mid-eighteenth century being polite was the same as being civilized, cultivated, cultured, well-bred or modish. The first direct reference to politeness in relation to social interaction recorded in the OED comes from the The English Theophrastus: or the manners of the age (1702), where the following definition of the term appears: “Politeness may be defined as a dextrous management of our Words and Actions whereby men make other people have a better Opinion of us and themselves [my italics]” (108).

The primary definitions of the term in contemporary dictionaries tend to include some aspect of ‘showing consideration for others’, as well as the display of ‘manners’, for example: “having or showing that one has good manners and consideration for other people” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 1995); “showing great regard for others, as in manners and speech” (Collins Concise English Dictionary 1992) or “someone who is polite has good manners and behaves in a way that is socially correct and considerate of other people’s feelings” (Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary 1993). Interestingly, the latter dictionary includes an alternative definition of

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19 At this time in history, typically the pastimes of the upper classes.
the concept, namely “[…] things that you say or do simply because it is socially cor-
rect to do or say them, rather than because you mean them sincerely.”

Looking at the contemporary definitions above, politeness appears to be associ-
ated with the more universal human trait *consideration*. At the same time references to
words such as *manners* and *socially correct* show that politeness involves certain set
codes of conduct. This double-sided aspect of politeness is not surprising; there is an
inherent duality embedded in the concept, as Werkhofer (1992:156) points out:

The act or behaviour of being polite is performed by an individual agent and
yet it is, at the same time, an intrinsically social one, social that is, in the dual
sense of being socially constituted and of feeding back into the process of
structuring social interaction.

### 2.4 Socio-cultural and historical perspectives on politeness

In order for an act to be regarded as ‘polite’ it has to be set upon a standard, a
standard which lies beyond the act itself but which is recognised by both the
actor and the hearer or a third party who might be part of the interaction. This
standard is based on collective values or norms which have been acquired by
individual agents usually early in their lives as part of a socialisation process.
(Márquez Reiter 2000:2)

The ‘social norm’ view of politeness assumes that each society has its own set of pre-
scriptive rules which dictate what constitutes ‘good manners’ in a given situation. Ac-
cording to this view “a positive evaluation (politeness) arises when an action is in con-
gruence with the norm, a negative evaluation (impoliteness, rudeness) when an action
is to the contrary” (Fraser 1999:2). Although this view is generally dismissed by most
linguists today (see Fraser 1999, Márquez Reiter 2000 and García Pastor 2001), it is
still clearly evidenced in everyday life. In the public debate in Britain and America, for
example, several conservative policy makers are promoting the traditional values of
‘good manners’. Some writers (Anderson 1998 and Moffat 2001, for example) even go
far as to equate a decline in manners with ‘societal decline’: “Incivility […] indicates
societal decline. Taken far enough, it means nothing less than the destruction of soci-
ety.” (Moffat 2001:70). A less dramatic everyday manifestation of the ‘social norm’
view is the great effort parents spend in trying to teach their children ‘good manners’
(see Ex. 2.1 and Blum-Kulka 1990).

Socialisation processes or “cultural experience” are seen by many researchers as
the main influences shaping patterns of behaviour (Tannen 1994a:13). Lakoff (1975) 20
and Tannen (1991; 1994a; 1994b), for example, claim that differences in the ways
boys and girls are brought up explain gender differences in politeness norms. 21

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20 Cf. Lakoff’s statement that women experience linguistic discrimination “in the ways they are taught to use
language” (1975:4).

21 Bernstein (1971) also emphasises socialisation processes when he proposes his model of *elaborated* and
*restricted* codes in order to explain class related differences in language usage. Brown and Levinson (1987:246)
claim, arguably erroneously, that the differences in Bernstein’s (1971) ‘elaborated’ and ‘restricted’ codes can be
assigned to “negative-politeness versus positive-politeness preferences in linguistic expressions”.
(1991:18) even claims that “talk between women and men is cross-cultural communication”. According to Tannen women and men have different conversational styles, to which she assigns the labels ‘rapport-talk’ and ‘report-talk’, respectively. Women use language for ‘intimacy’ in conversations, something which they are socialised to do from an early age. For women, conversations thus represent “negotiations for closeness in which people try to seek and give confirmation and support, and to reach consensus” (Tannen 1991: 25). Men, on the other hand, view conversation as competition, where the main purpose is to gain self-esteem at the expense of others. According to Tannen, gender differences in conversational styles are reflected in the politeness norms of men and women. Other researchers (O’Barr & Atkins 1980, Deuchar 1989, Cameron & Coates 1989, Coates 1993) place more emphasis on gender-based power differences in society in their explanations of gender differences in politeness.

While, according to Fraser (1999:4), linguists agree that there “are no inherently polite markers, lexical items, syntactic structures, sentences, utterances or even speech acts”\(^{22}\), it would be naive to assume that any such consensus exists in society at large. Many people in Britain would equate politeness with certain set formulae and attach moral and even political values to their use. The degree of adherence to the politeness norms of the ‘standard’ \(^{23}\) can thus become a way of signalling your position towards this variety, and in extension, towards the values associated with it.

When discussing politeness from a sociolinguistic perspective, the origin of what Márquez Reiter calls ‘collective values’ and ‘norms’ which form the basis for the standard are of interest. Drawing their evidence from history, some researchers see linguistic politeness in Britain (and other European languages) as a cultural standard originating from the ruling elites. Ehlich (1992:71-107), for example, highlights the fact that, despite the clear etymological evidence of words such as “courteous” and the German “höflichkeit”, researchers have ignored the historical connections of linguistic and ritualistic politeness with a specific social setting- that of the European royal courts of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In this environment politeness codes offered the various members of the court a highly ritualised means of advertising their social status. The same author claims that the new power elite of the eighteenth century, the bourgeois middle classes, were to adopt and modify these courtly norms of politeness. The purpose of their use, however, remained the same: they were formalised ways of declaring one’s status:

> Politeness is included among the ideological goals of the bourgeoisie and is first put to use to invest the bourgeoisie with greater social significance, so that their growing economic prosperity and significance in the overall social structure could be appropriately stressed. The final goal of this process, however, was to effect the wholesale shift in social relations in order to ensure that bourgeois forms of social intercourse were the hegemonic ones in society.

(Ehlich 1992:99)

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\(^{22}\) Fraser modifies this statement by excluding deference markers.

\(^{23}\) ‘Standard’ here refers to the prescriptive sense of the word, as in Trudgill’s (2000:6) definition: the variety “which is usually used in print, and which is normally taught in schools and to non-native speakers learning the language. It is also the variety which is normally spoken by educated people […]”.
Sell (1991:208), who bases his conclusions on an analysis of Augustan English literary texts,\(^{24}\) has the following to say about politeness:

> [...] ‘politeness’ embraced intellectual enlightenment and civilization as prized by the Augustans, and particularly by a metropolitan aristocracy which disdained rural life and cultural provinciality.

Possessing these qualities was a way of signalling allegiance to the upcoming social elite and thereby gaining access to it. In the words of Sell, politeness was “not only an affair between individuals but also had something to do with ideological tensions between different classes” (1991:210). On a similar note, McIntosh (1998:1) points out that there was a radical change in style in English literature from the in years from 1710-1790, with the texture of prose becoming more formal and flowery or “polite”.

Watts (1992) also emphasises the importance of politeness as a social marker in eighteenth-century England. He maintains that ‘politeness’ involved a strict canon of ritualised forms dictating verbal behaviour (including appropriate ways of carrying out certain types of speech acts such as thanking and apologising) and social interaction. In Watt’s (1992:47) words politeness is a “mask to conceal the ego’s true frame of mind” and:

> ...for modern scholars the mask functions to avoid conflict, to tone down potential aggression, and to ensure that the interaction will be accomplished smoothly. For the cultivators of polite manners and good breeding in eighteenth-century England, the mask served a more important function, viz., to enhance their social standing and signal their membership in an elitist social class. This could easily entail, and indeed often did entail [...], the conscious exclusion of would-be members or the outright persecution of out-groupers who opposed their claims to socio-political hegemony.

According to Watts, the negative connotations associated with the term ‘politeness’ among some social groupings of English native speakers today can be traced back to these social applications of politeness (i.e. persecution of out-groupers) throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Arguably, the origin of linguistic politeness norms in Britain can thus be seen as evidence supporting Nevalainen’s (1996:4) claim that “language change need not be ‘natural’ and take place below the level of social awareness, but can indeed originate ‘from above’ in the concrete prescriptive sense of the term.”

Political values have been shown to affect politeness norms in more modern times. From the study of the usage of T and V forms (derived from Latin \(tu\) and \(vos\)) in European languages, Brown & Gilman (1960) showed that political forces and class attitudes can have an effect on linguistic politeness norms: they were able to correlate students’ political affiliations with their use of the V form, showing that the more politically conservative the student, the greater the V form usage. Based on these findings Brown & Gilman developed their theory of the ‘Power Semantic’ and the ‘Solidarity Semantic’.

\(^{24}\) Note that “literary texts of the time” were primarily ‘male’ texts, written by males for males.
In Brown & Gilman’s system, the ‘Power Semantic’ involves non-reciprocal use of deference markers signalling power differences between speakers. In British English, which does not have a deference marked singular second person pronoun form, an example of the ‘power semantic’ would be the non-reciprocal use of titles (a servant addressing his master as ‘Sir’ while he himself is referred to as ‘James’, for example). In contrast, the ‘Solidarity Semantic’ involves the linguistic signalling of ‘like-mindedness’, a symmetrical relationship based on similarity and solidarity. The principle of solidarity also has a political dimension, according to Brown & Gilman; it is the basis of left-wing political philosophies. In the sixties, Brown & Gilman argued that the general movement towards more egalitarian societies in Europe had resulted in a gradual movement towards the ‘solidarity semantic’. In the Europe of the 21st century, the political situation is very different and we may well be experiencing a gradual return to the ‘power semantic’. According to Brown & Gilman’s model, we can predict that a more egalitarian (sub)culture will result in reduced usage of politeness forms that signal social distance and power differences, while a more conservative (sub)culture will favour their use. In this way different class-related politeness norms may evolve in society.

### 2.5 Views on the functions of politeness

In the current literature on the subject a range of views is expressed regarding the functions of politeness. At one extreme of this continuum there are those who emphasise altruistic aspects of politeness. This phenomenon is described as a way of expressing concern for others, thus helping to maintain or restore harmony in social interaction. Others take a more neutral stance and claim (as does Meier 1995, for example) that politeness is simply doing what is socially acceptable. At the other extreme, a more cynical view of politeness is expressed. Here politeness is ultimately seen as a means of enhancing the desires of the ego.

According to Lakoff (1975:64), one of the pioneers in politeness research, politeness consists of forms of behaviour which have been “developed in societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction”. This view is supported by many other researchers in the field: Leech (1983:104) interprets politeness as forms of behaviour aimed at creating and maintaining harmonious interactions; Fraser & Nolen (1981:96) postulate that the degree of politeness expressed is a result of a conversational contract made by the interlocutors in order to avoid conflict and disharmony; Brown & Levinson (1987:1) maintain that politeness presupposes a potential for aggression “as it seeks to disarm it and makes possible communication between potentially aggressive partners”. Green (1989:145) refers to politeness as “whatever means are employed to display consideration for one’s addressee’s feelings”, while Holmes (1995:5) defines politeness as “behaviour which actively expresses positive concern for others, as well as non-imposing distancing behaviour”.

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25 In recent years I have heard many informal reports of an increased usage of the Swedish V-form pronoun ni. This form was considered very old-fashioned as recently as fifteen years ago.

More recently, some researchers (Watts 1992, Ehlich 1992, Meier 1995, Jary 1998 and Held 1999) have begun to consider egocentric aspects of politeness with the motivation that traditional politeness models are too focused on the hearer’s face needs. Watts’ (1992:69) view is that linguistic politeness is “an attempt on the part of the ego to enhance her/his standing with respect to alter – for whatever reason”. On a similar note Jary (1998:11) claims that, although a person may appear to express politeness out of concern for the addressee’s face, the ultimate motivation is to ensure his/her own continued well-being, in both the long and the short term:

In the short term, a communicator’s aims will be to get an addressee to do or believe something; in the longer term, her aims will include that of becoming/remaining a liked and respected member of a certain group.

Showing that you hold a co-member of a group in high esteem will, according to Jary, be beneficial because it will raise your own standing in the eyes of this person. Manifesting one’s positive opinion of someone else, however, is not simply a matter of providing evidence for this. The evidence must also be seen as relevant and sincere. If it is not, efforts to show appreciation of another person may have a detrimental effect since the addressee will apprehend your real motive – to raise his or her opinion of yourself. Based on these assumptions, Jary points out that politeness is a balance “between appearing rude and appearing ‘too polite’” (12).

Held (1999:21) reaffirms the traditional view of politeness functioning as a means of minimising potential conflict, but adds that this is done in order to maximise personal profit. Leech (1983:82) also touches on this aspect of politeness when he very shrewdly points out that: “unless you are polite to your neighbour, the channel of communication between you will break down, and you will no longer be able to borrow his mower”.

Ultimately the view of politeness held by a researcher is going to have a bearing on his/her interpretation of the usage of linguistic politeness markers such as apologies inter- or intra-culturally.

2.6 Brown & Levinson’s theory of linguistic politeness

Fraser (1999) lists a number of more or less comprehensive models of politeness: the ‘Maxim models’ (Lakoff 1973 and Leech 1989), ‘The Conversation Contract Model’ (Fraser & Nolen 1981), ‘The Relevance Theory Model’ (Sperber & Wilson 1995 and Jary 1998) and Brown & Levinson’s model (1978, 1987). Whilst all these models have contributed to the understanding of politeness on a more theoretical level, only one, namely Brown & Levinson’s theory, can be said to have directly affected me in my methodological design. I have thus chosen to focus on this model.

Brown & Levinson’s (hereinafter referred to as B&L) model of politeness was constructed in an attempt to complement Grice’s Cooperative Principle and the associated four maxims (1975:41-58). B&L pointed out that “polite ways of talking”

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27 See 2.6 for further discussion of this term.
28 See also Grice 1989.
were manifested as deviations from the rational and efficient communication which is at the heart of Grice’s socially neutral framework. Politeness was seen by B&L as the reason for such deviations, and provided an added social dimension lacking in the Cooperative Principle. The essay was thus an attempt to provide rational principles explaining how the forces of politeness counterbalance the forces of the Cooperative principle in language.

Underlying B&L’s theory was the idea of ‘face’, derived from the everyday terms “losing face” and “saving face”. The term was first adopted by Goffman (1967 and 1971) to describe people’s need to maintain a positive image of themselves in the presence of others; while it is obvious that most of us try to project as positive an image of ourselves as possible, Goffman pointed out that individuals also tend to avoid threats to other people’s self images. Someone unintentionally making a fool of her/himself can be just as awkward for the audience as for the actor; similarly, an apology can make the recipient feel as embarrassed as the apologiser. According to Goffman, people interact in a cosy conspiracy in order to avoid such embarrassment. In this sense, our 'selves' are presented for the purpose of interacting with others, according to Goffman, and are developed and maintained with the co-operation of others through the interaction.

Building on Goffman’s theory of ‘face’ needs, B&L formulated their linguistic politeness theory. They defined two different components of ‘face’:

negative face- the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others

[and]

positive face- the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others.

(B&L 1987:62)

Almost any social interaction involves acts that are potentially threatening to one, or both, of these aspects of ‘face’. Such acts were labelled ‘Face Threatening Acts’ (FTAs) in B&L’s terminology. Most obviously FTAs include negative evaluations of, or disregard for other people’s positive ‘face’. These may be expressions of disapproval, contradictions or ridicule directed towards another person, as well as impetuous behaviour such as raising taboo subjects, expressing inappropriate or exaggerated emotions, or being blatantly uncooperative by showing a lack of attention to what someone is saying. Less obvious FTAs are acts such as suggestions, predictions of future action, reminders, advice and requests, which can all be potentially face threatening since they infringe on another person’s freedom of action, i.e. a person’s negative face.

Given the mutual indisposition felt when ‘face’ is lost, any rational agent with good intentions will try to minimise the impact of an FTA wherever possible. However, set against this desire, is the need to maintain one’s own face, and to communicate efficiently. Given this inherent conflict of interests in any speech act, the shape it takes will be determined by the circumstances prevailing: little or no threat of loss of ‘face’, or the need to communicate efficiently, e.g. in an emergency, should result in a bald, on-record statement without redress (Lower the lifeboats! expressed
during an emergency, for example). At the other end of the scale, extreme threat to face should result in avoidance of the FTA altogether. Figure 2.1 summarises the possible strategies proposed by B&L.

**Figure 2.1. Circumstances determining choice of strategy** (B&L 1987:60)

Since strategies 2 and 3 (positive and negative politeness) both apply to apologies, these will be dealt with more thoroughly. Positive politeness is used when a speaker wants to appeal to the hearer’s positive ‘face’, and is described by B&L (1987:101) as:

redress directed to the addressee’s positive face, his perennial desire that his wants (or the actions/acquisitions/values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable. Redress consists in partially satisfying that desire by communicating that one’s own wants (or some of them) are in some respect similar to the addressee’s wants.

This type of politeness is associated with high solidarity, and involves the speaker’s desire that the hearer should feel wanted, appreciated and somehow part of the group:

positive-politeness utterances are used as a kind of metaphorical extension of intimacy, to imply common ground or sharing of wants to a limited extent even between strangers who perceive themselves, for the purposes of the interaction, as somehow similar.

(B&L 1987:103)

Examples of positive politeness strategies given by B&L (1987:101-130) include the use of in-group markers, avoiding disagreement, complementing, showing an interest in the hearer’s needs, involving the hearer in the activity, joking etc. B&L (1987:101) point out that positive politeness behaviour is very similar to normal, everyday
communicative behaviour, but claim that the only thing that distinguishes it is ‘an element of exaggeration’.

Negative politeness entails the use of more formalised behavioural codes, including the use of linguistic formulae. This type of behaviour is typically what most people would refer to when they use the term politeness in a popular sense. The main motivation for using this strategy is an assumption that you may be imposing on the hearer, and intruding on his/her space; its use thus involves various means of minimising this imposition.

The use of negative politeness involves an inherent conflict for the speaker between wishing the message to have the desired effect but also wishing to minimise the imposition felt by the hearer. Negative politeness thus acts to redress the impact of an FTA. In polite requests, for example, the use of a negative politeness strategy makes the request appear to be indirect, leaving the speaker the possible option of easily declining the request. At the same time there is a wish on part of the speaker to maximise the chance that the intended meaning will take effect. B&L list a number of different strategies for redressing the impact of an FTA. Apologising is, according to B&L, one of these.

B&L (1987:76) argue that there are three variables which any rational individual with good intentions has to take into account when assessing the seriousness of a particular FTA. These are:

- The ‘social distance’ (D) of S and H (a symmetric relation)
- The ‘relative power’ (P) of S and H (an asymmetric relation)
- The ‘absolute ranking of imposition’ (R) in the particular culture.

B&L describe social distance (D) “as a symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference” (1987:76). The size of D diminishes with frequent interaction, and in the exchange of material or non-material goods between H and S.

Relative power (P) is the “degree to which H can impose his own plans and his own self-evaluation (face) at the expense of S’s plans and self-evaluation” (B&L 1987:77). The authors identify two sources of relative power: material control (economic and physical force), and “metaphysical control (over actions of others, by virtue of metaphysical forces subscribed to by those others)” (B&L 1987:77).

The absolute ranking of imposition, (R) is a situational and culturally determined rating of the imposition a particular FTA will cause an agent. This imposition can involve the expenditure of ‘services’ (including the provision of time) and ‘goods’ (including non-material goods such as information); negative face impositions, and/or the potential threat of an action to someone’s self-image (positive face threats). Asking someone to polish your shoes, might in other words not only involve the provision of service, but also a potential threat to someone’s social status. One important contributory factor that influences R is the role a particular agent has in a specific situation: a teacher asking students to put away their books is an expected act and will thus not be regarded as particularly face threatening; a doctor asking someone to take their clothes off in a surgery is a similar case. A doctor asking a waiting patient to put away his/her
book, or a teacher asking a student to take his/her clothes off is, of course, entirely different.

D, P and R together influence how face threatening an act is. B&L propose the following formula:

\[ W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x \]

\( W_x \) is the numerical value which measures the “weightiness” (i.e. seriousness) of the FTA\(_x\). \( D(S,H) \) is the value measuring the social distance between speaker and hearer, \( P(H,S) \) is a measure of the power that the hearer has over the speaker, and \( R_x \) is a value that measures the degree to which the FTA\(_x\) is rated as an imposition in that culture (B&L 1987:76). The weightiness of the FTA will consequently influence which politeness strategy is chosen (see Figure 2.1).

B&L, however, point out that the evaluations of these factors are not objective in the sense that they are intended to serve as “sociologists’ ratings of actual power, distance etc.” (B&L 1987:74). They are the actors’ subjective assumptions of these ratings, “assumed to be mutually assumed”.

These assumptions are influenced by:

- the cultural norms of different speech communities: Rosaldo (1982:230) for example, argues that the impact of the variable P is very different in an egalitarian society compared to a hierarchical one;
- the specific situation: asking for ten pence outside a telephone booth is not as face threatening as begging on the street;
- individual factors: person ‘A’ may be more offended by an informal greeting than person ‘B’ by virtue of his/her upbringing.

The subjective nature of D, P and R creates problems when, as an outsider, you try to evaluate differences in linguistic politeness among different social groupings.\(^{29}\)

At this stage I will not comment on my position vis-à-vis B&L’s theory. Suffice it to say that the model has provided me with a viable paradigm around which to structure my investigations. This is particularly evident in Chapter 3, where the types of offences committed are viewed in relation to the form and frequency of apologising in seen in the corpus. Essentially this entails an investigation of the ‘absolute ranking of imposition’ (variable R in B&L’s formula) of different social transgressions in British culture. B&L’s theory has also influenced the design of the model in Chapter 6, where the effects of the variables relative power (P) and social distance (D) on apologising are examined in detail.

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\(^{29}\) Obviously this is even more true in this study where one can only guess the exact nature of the conversational situations.
2.6.1 Criticism of Brown & Levinson’s theory

B&L’s theory has been criticised on several points. Many authors have objected to B&L’s claims concerning the universality of their paradigm. Some scholars (Blum-Kulka 1987, 1989; Held 1989; Wierzbicka 1985, 1991) have noted the problems that occur when evaluating politeness on the basis of the degree of indirectness in cross-cultural studies. Meier (1995:387) argues that “‘direct’ and ‘indirect’, ‘more polite’ and ‘less polite’ are dangerous terms, to be used with extreme caution if at all, especially cross-culturally.” Others, especially Asian scholars (Matsumoto 1988; Ide 1989; Gu 1990; Nwoye 1992; Mao 1994; Ide 1998), have pointed out that B&L’s theory contains an ethnocentric bias towards Western languages. According to Ide (1989:241) the focus on individualism in Western societies facilitates the notion of face as the key to interaction. In a society where group membership is the basis for interaction, however, the notion of face becomes less useful. This thesis focuses on a single culture, namely Britain in the 1990’s. Nevertheless, the doubts concerning the universality of the theory expressed in cross-cultural research may also be applicable to cross-cultural research. Caution thus needs to be exercised when interpreting the observed patterns of apologising in different social groups in relation to politeness.

It has been claimed that B&L’s model of politeness is oversimplified and does not account for all the factors which affect politeness. Contextual factors such as formality, for example, are not discussed separately as factors affecting politeness. Holmes (1995:19-22) argues that formality should be included as a separate factor in an analysis of politeness. In formal settings, speakers tend to focus on transactional roles, concentrating on the informative content of language. In informal settings personal relationships play a more significant part in conversations and phatic functions of language become more important. In general, negative politeness will be used more frequently in formal than in informal settings, with the reverse being true for positive politeness, according to Holmes. To illustrate her point she gives the example of barristers who are brothers but who would nevertheless address each other as my learned colleague in court. She also maintains that men and women have very different interpretations of appropriate linguistic behaviour depending on the formality of the context. In this thesis, contextual variables such as formality will be analysed separately (see Chapter 5).

Slugowski & Turnbull (1988:101-121) suggest that ‘affect’ ought to be added to the list of factors affecting politeness. On a similar note Fraser (1990:219-236) criticises the dualism of B&L’s theories as being too static a model to account for real interaction. He sees the degree of appropriate politeness as something which is constantly being negotiated and reassessed during any interaction. In his proposed model of the Conversational Contract, factors such as like or dislike between partners, which arise as an interaction progresses are taken into account. In a corpus study, there are no means available for measuring potential (dis)like between speakers. The potential influence of such factors, however, should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

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30 Malinowski (1923)
32 Fraser prefers to use the term deference rather than politeness since it is this aspect only which is measurable. (Im)politeness is something which is perceived by the hearer.
Wolfson (1988:32-36) introduces an additional factor influencing the choice of politeness strategies: ‘relative certainty of relationship’. According to Wolfson, negative politeness strategies are commonly observed in interactions between intimates as well as strangers (the two extremes of the social distance scale), while positive politeness strategies seem to be the norm during interactions between acquaintances. Wolfson proposes the ‘bulge’ model of interaction and maintains that the explanation for this rather unexpected tendency lies in the ‘relative certainty’ of the relationship between the speakers. Between intimates, as well as total strangers, there is a ‘fixed state’ in which the speakers know what to expect from one another. Among friends and acquaintances the picture is more complicated. Wolfson argues that “in a complex urban society in which speakers may belong to a variety of nonoverlapping networks, relationships among speakers are often uncertain” (33). It is hard to know where one stands on the social ranking scale, and the result is thus that instead of signalling differences, people take care to show solidarity in order to avoid confrontation.

2.7 The concept of politeness in relation to this study

The starting point for this study, i.e. the motivation for choosing the apology as an object of study, was an assumption that politeness is somehow linguistically encoded in this speech act. This assumption, that inherently polite markers exist in a language, is controversial. Thomas (1983:97) has the following to say on the matter: “it would be fatuous to suppose that there is any absolute ‘Politeness quotient’ which can be assigned unambivalently and out of context to a particular linguistic structure”.

After studying the 3070 apologies encountered in the corpus, I acknowledge that not all uses of this speech act can be classed as examples of politeness. Some apologies (sarcastic usage, for example) entailed impoliteness. However, such examples of alternative (impolite) uses of a polite form make an impact on the hearer precisely because they represent a breach of the culturally encoded politeness norms conventionally associated with the form. It is thus my belief that most native speakers of a language will associate certain linguistic forms with the specific politeness codes of that culture. This is not the same thing as saying that all speakers adhere to such standards. Individuals are not “sociolinguistic automata” (Giles 1973); they can choose whether or not to adhere to standard codes. The result is that the (im)polite intentions of a ‘polite’ form can only be decided in context, a fact which unfortunately places “a heavy interpretational burden on the empirical linguist” (Andersen 2001:18).

The function of politeness (see Section 2.5) with respect to alter/ego needs is also an issue where my position may be of interest to the reader. At this stage, I choose to remain noncommittal on this matter. It is my belief that the expressions of politeness in a society can be seen as a sum of several influencing factors. On the one hand people are constrained by their socio-cultural upbringing and politeness often simply entails the adherence to the expected norms. At other times, people are genuinely aware of the face needs of others and communicate this awareness through politeness. On the other hand, evidence from the corpus also shows that manipulative uses of politeness are common in British English. The ego/alter aspect of politeness is one of the issues which will be discussed in relation to the results in the following chapters.
I will now turn my attention to the specific object of investigation in this study, namely the apology.

2.8 Apologising and politeness

The apology has been the object of investigation in a number of studies on linguistic politeness (Aijmer 1995, Holmes 1995 and Márquez Reiter 2000 to give just three examples). Several features of this speech act contribute to making it a suitable object for politeness research.

Firstly there is a practical aspect worth noting; apologising tends to be accompanied by a limited set of easily identifiable routine formulae. Of course it is theoretically possible to apologise without using forms such as I’m sorry or excuse me but research has shown that this is rarely the case in English (Meier 1998). It is thus relatively easy to identify apologies in a research material and this is particularly advantageous in corpus linguistic research.

The limited repertoire of routine formulae used in apologising also means that native speakers readily associate the linguistic forms with the complex social ritual involved. Langacker (1999:93) refers to this process as “entrenchment”, whereby highly complex events become “pre-packaged” into easily elicited units through the process of repetition and well-rehearsed routine. Arguably, such easily identifiable units (thanking and greetings would be other examples) constitute a large part of ‘politeness’ in the mind of the ‘average English speaker’.

The process of apologising is not a matter of mere routine however. It involves many of the complex social and psychological issues which are at the heart of politeness research. A prototypical apology involves redressive action that ‘gives face’ to the addressee. At the same time apologising may well result in the apologiser losing face. Deciding whether to apologise or not is thus likely to be affected by such factors as power relationships and social distance. We can easily predict that an employer will thank his employee after being presented with a gift. This is a matter a mere routine and involves few face considerations. Whether the same employer would apologise to the employee after making a mistake is less predictable, and thus of academic interest when studying politeness from a sociolinguistic perspective.

In conclusion, the apology (and by extension the linguistic forms associated with the act) is closely associated with politeness on a folk-linguistic level. At the same time the socio-psychological processes involved in the speech act make it an interesting object for politeness studies.

33 One exception mentioned by Meier (1998) is Trosborg’s (1987) study, where a surprisingly low occurrence of formulaic expressions was recorded.
2.8.1 The term *apology*: etymology and dictionary definitions

Again the etymology and existing dictionary definitions of *apology* are of interest since they reflect historical developments and current concepts associated with the term (c.f. Section 2.3). *Apology* is derived from the Greek term ἄπολογία, meaning a ‘defence’, or a ‘speech in defence’ (OED 1993). This ‘defensive’ aspect of the term seems to have been the main semantic implication from the late sixteenth century to the mid nineteenth century: The OED (1993) describes this early meaning of the term as follows:

The pleading off from a charge or imputation, whether expressed, implied, or only conceived as possible; defence of a person, or vindication of an institution, etc., from accusation or aspersion.

(OED 1993)

A gradual transference of meaning away from the institutional domain to the more inter-personal sphere seems to have taken place during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. By the seventeenth century the term had, at least informally, come to mean the defence or justification of a specific action: “Justification, explanation, or excuse, of an incident or course of action” (OED 1993).

The more current usages of the term imply an expression of ‘regret’ on behalf of the speaker for an act committed:

An explanation offered to a person affected by one's action that no offence was intended, coupled with the expression of regret for any that may have been given; or, a frank acknowledgement of the offence with expression of regret for it, by way of reparation.

(OED 1993)

Other current dictionary definitions of *apology* include “an act of saying sorry” (*Cambridge International Dictionary of English*, CD-ROM version 2001), “something that you say or write to show that you are sorry for doing something wrong.” (*The Longman Dictionary*, Web version 2001), and “something that you say or write in order to say that you are sorry that you have hurt them, upset them, or caused them trouble.” (*Collins CoBuild English Language Dictionary* 1993). Note the close association of *apology* with the form *sorry* in the above dictionary definitions.

Secondary definitions of the term constitute the informal usage of the term as meaning a poor excuse for something: “An apology for a particular thing is a very poor example of it.” (*CoBuild English Language Dictionary* 1993). In more formal usage, an element of defence is still implied, for example “An apology is a formal explanation or defence of a belief or system, esp. one that is unpopular.” (*Cambridge International Dictionary of English*, CD-ROM version 2001).

Although most people today would associate the term *apology* with an expression of regret, its historical meaning should be kept in mind; some of the ‘less polite’ usages of apologies (see ‘Challenging’ apologies Section 3.7, for example) do in fact partly correspond to the historical implications of the term (i.e. a defence).
2.8.2 Views on the functions of apologies

The views on the functions of apologies expressed by various scholars illustrate the close relationship between scholastic approaches to the study of this speech act and the theoretical views on the functions of politeness (see Section 2.5). There are those who point to the disarming effects of apologising. Goffman (1971:140), for example refers to apologising as ritual work that helps to restore social equilibrium and harmony. The apology:

allows the participants to go on their way, if not with satisfaction that matters are closed, then at least with the right to act as if they feel that matters are closed and that ritual equilibrium has been restored.

On a similar note, Holmes (1990:159) gives the following definition of *apology*:

An apology is a speech act addressed to B’s face-needs and intended to remedy an offence for which A takes responsibility, and thus to restore equilibrium between A and B (where A is the apologiser, and B is the person offended).

These definitions clearly place apologising in the domain of politeness if, like Leech (1983:104), one sees politeness as forms of behaviour aimed at the “social goal of establishing and maintaining comity”. Leech (1983) also touches on the remedial qualities of apologies when he discusses the transactional nature of the speech act. In doing so he draws a parallel between apologising and thanking, another speech act which has received much attention in politeness studies:

Apologies express regret for some offence committed by *s* against *h* […] an apology implies a transaction, in that it is a bid to change the balance-sheet of the relation between *s* and *h*. […] Significantly, if we commit an offence against someone, we talk of *owing* that person an apology, thereby treating the apology as in some sense an expiation of the offence. The metaphor whereby deeds make us ‘debtors’ or ‘creditors’ of one another applies not only to good deeds (favours), but also to bad deeds (offences), so that apologizing, like thanking, can be regarded as an acknowledgement of an imbalance in the relation between *s* and *h*, and to some extent, as an attempt to restore the equilibrium.  

(Leech 1983:124-125)

The views on politeness expressed by the ‘ego-oriented school’³⁴ school of politeness (Watts 1992, Jary 1998, and Held 1999) are mirrored in Meier’s (1996:152) model of apologising or ‘Repair Work’ as functioning “to remedy damage incurred to the Speaker’s image when the latter behaves in some way below the standard expected relative to a particular reference group.” Here the main emphasis on the function of

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³⁴ My own term.
apologising is thus on restoring the speaker’s public image rather than on disarming a potentially aggressive situation and restoring social harmony.

The ‘social norm’ view of politeness is indirectly reflected by those who point to the routine nature of apologising. Aijmer (1996), for example, argues that informal unplanned conversation puts great pressure on the speaker as it has to be planned and produced under extremely tight temporal conditions; information has to be deciphered and responded to more or less simultaneously. In order to cognitively rationalise the world, certain linguistic forms have become generally associated with certain social situations. Such forms are used more or less automatically in the appropriate situation. Aijmer (1996:27) describes this process as follows:

> It is clear that in the course of the communication many situations tend to recur. It is not surprising that when a situation is repeated the linguistic behaviour which has worked in the past is also repeated and becomes the established pattern for members of the speech community. In this way a linguistic form comes to be routinely associated with a greeting, thanks or apology and is used automatically [my italics] when a type of situation recurs.

Seen from this point of view, most instances of apologising would simply entail doing what is socially acceptable more or less automatically.

### 2.8.3 Apologising and the concept of ‘face’

The concept of ‘face’ is a useful tool when analysing the socio-psychological processes involved in apologising. Issues involving both negative and positive face needs should be to be taken into account when we consider different uses of this speech act. In addition, these should be viewed from both hearer and speaker perspectives:

> An apology is basically a speech act which is intended to provide support for the H (hearer) who was actually or potentially malaffected by a violation X. In the decision to carry out the verbal apology, the S (speaker) is willing to humiliate himself or herself to some extent and to admit to fault and responsibility for X. Hence the act of apologizing is face-saving for the H and face-threatening for the S, in Brown & Levinson’s (1978) terms.

(Olshtain 1989:156-7)

While this is an eloquent description of the situation in a prototypical apology seen from a traditional politeness perspective, it is not sufficient to describe the range of different apologies found in this study. I will now discuss the issue of face in relation to apologising in more detail, starting from a speaker perspective.

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35 i.e. the view that politeness primarily functions as a means of attending to alter needs.
2.8.3.1 Apologising and speaker face

Most examples of apologising involve a certain amount of face loss on the part of the speaker. By apologising we admit that we are at fault and somehow responsible for a transgression. This is arguably why we sometimes feel reluctant to apologise. Anyone who has had children can confirm that apologising is not something which comes naturally; it has to be learnt. Tremendous efforts go into teaching children to “say sorry”.36 This socialisation process is motivated by societal norms and the consequences of breaking these according to Aijmer (1995:56):

A person who does not apologise in situations where it is demanded by the social norm runs the risk of being regarded as impolite and rude and as a less competent member of society.

Consider the following example, where two parents, Chris and Rosie, desperately, but unsuccessfully, try to get their two-year-old son, Kyle, to apologise after having hit his friend:

Ex. 2.1 (KP7 47-81):

Chris: Give Rosie a kiss and say ta-ta. <voice quality: shouting> Kyle. <end of voice quality>
Rosie: Come here.
Rosie: I'll get his coat.
Chris: You've hurt Matthew say sorry. Do want smacked? [sic]
Chris: Did he hit you <unclear>
Rosie: He never gets smacked does he?
Chris: Say sorry. What a defiant little
Rosie: You gonna give us a kiss there now? Kyle.
Chris: He doesn't deserve one.
Chris: Say sorry.
Rosie: You give us a kiss. Give us a kiss.
Chris: Right you'll be put to bed without any supper tonight.
Rosie: You've had it now. Straight to bed I just put him to bed now.
Chris: Mhm.
Rosie: Go and get his pyjamas and I'll <|-|> <unclear> <|-|>
Chris: <|-|> Come on then <|-|> come and get your pyjamas on.
Rosie: No bath straight <|-|> to bed <|-|>.
Chris: <|-|> You're <|-|> going straight to bed.
Phil: Bye bye Kyle.
Rosie: Say bye bye.
Kyle: Bye.
Chris: <laugh> Ta-ta.
Rosie: Ah Matthew's not your friend now. Is he now?

36 Note that the expression say sorry is synonymous with the concept of apologising. This illustrates the close connection between the linguistic form and the social ritual.
At times adults also find it hard to apologise, especially in public situations. Olshtain (1989: 155-156) gives an account of one such example where an apology, or rather a half-hearted apology, almost resulted in the fall of the Israeli cabinet. At the time there was a coalition government in power, and Industry Minister, Ariel Sharon of the Likud Party, had made a series of speeches criticising Prime Minister, Shimon Peres of the Labour Party. Peres threatened to fire Sharon unless he “fully, clearly and unequivocally” (Olshtain 1989:155) apologised on six points. Sharon proceeded to do so rather reluctantly, acknowledging the fact that his statements were not intended as a personal insult to Peres, but refusing to change his mind on the main issues. Peres responded with the statement “I am not playing nursery games and Sharon will not avoid the issue with half an apology”. Only after the third apology attempt, namely “I support the government and of course I apologize for having used such strong terms in my speech”, was Sharon’s apology accepted by Peres, and the crisis was averted.

Deborah Tannen (1998) describes a similar situation in her article “Apologies: What It Means to Say ‘Sorry’”. After his grand jury testimony in the Lewinsky affair, President Clinton was blamed by the press for not having apologised sufficiently. The main reason for this, according to Tannen, was the fact that he never explicitly said “I’m sorry” or “I apologise”. Tannen points out that such an explicit apology was likely to have weakened his public image. The American public seemed satisfied enough with the President’s statement, since, as they did not think that Clinton should be forced out of office, “they would rather have a strong president than a weak one.”

The examples illustrate the fact that while apologising may restore harmony, it often does so at the expense of the speaker appearing weak. Was it perhaps for this reason that P.G Wodehouse (1914) presented the advice “It is a good rule in life never to apologise. The right sort of people do not want apologies, and the wrong sort take a mean advantage of them.”?

Most research has focused on hearer benefits in apology studies (c.f. Meier 1995:383). Given the right circumstances, however, an apology can also improve the speaker’s image in the eyes of others. This may well be a strong motivation for some apologies, especially when the speaker wants to show that a transgression was ‘out of character’, and thus not to be taken as a true reflection of his/her self. This type of apology is often accompanied by explanations. In the following example, Enid, a seventy-year-old housewife has invited her friend, Patsy, for lunch. Enid’s husband, Noel, is also present:

Ex. 2.2 (KC0 3025-3033):

Enid: I should **apologize** for canned soup, but I spent so long talking to Stanley this morning

Patsy: Mm?

Enid: you know sometimes you can just tell he wants you to talk to him, and erm <pause> so I er couldn't make a proper soup, sorry, <-|-> but this is <-|->

Patsy: <-|-> I think <-|->

Enid: good actually I think.

Patsy: Yes, which is it? Is it Heinz?

Enid: Heinz tomato <voice quality: laughing> <unclear> <end of voice quality>

Patsy: I <pause> I made some stock the other day
Patsy goes on to explain, in great detail, how she boiled the bones, added the herbs etc. One can speculate over the real motive for Enid’s apology. Is she really apologising for the canned soup which, according to her, is quite nice, or is it her real intention to show Patsy (who indeed does make her own stock) that she is a ‘proper’ housewife, who does not, under normal circumstances at least, resort to easy options like canned soup? Arguably this apology is not just uttered out of concern for the hearer, but could equally well be seen as an attempt to improve self-image.37

Sometimes such improvement of self-image is achieved at someone else’s expense. Austin (1990:279) argues that B&L’s assumption that the speaker invariably wants to maintain the hearer’s face cannot always be taken for granted. One such situation is when the solidarity of a group is strengthened by a face attack on another person or group. Sarcastic use of apologies is common in such situations, and in the BNC this type of behaviour seems particularly common among adolescents. In the following example a group of teenage boys (17-21) are getting ready to go out for the evening:

Ex. 2.3 (KD) 1219-24):

Leigh: Excuse me lad, we're in a hurry here!
Mark: We're supposed to be in a hurry. Look. […]
Leigh: About the time we're fucking get away […]
PS001: <laugh>
PS6TK: All this waiting time!

By uttering this sarcastic remark, Leigh arguably improves his image in the eyes of the rest of his friends. Examples 2.2 and 2.3 show that the function of apologies as devices for enhancing the speaker’s image should not be overlooked.

2.8.3.2 Apologising and hearer face

According to B&L (1987:187) apologising is primarily an example of negative politeness addressing hearer face needs: “By apologizing for doing an FTA, the speaker can indicate his reluctance to impinge on H’s negative face and thereby partially redress that impingement”. Ex. 2.4 illustrates one such usage of the speech act when a teacher, John, apologises for changing the time of a tutorial:

Ex. 2.4 (FME 396-402):

John: <-|-> Hello I'm sorry to <-|-> mess up your tea <-|-> and everything. I was explaining I got <unclear> <-|->
PS000: <-|-> Oh no it's it's alright. <-|->
John: so many changes in lessons and everything today <-|-> <unclear> <-|->
PS000: <-|-> Yeah. <-|->
John: had something else that I was just doing and I thought Oh I should be at Ian's for five o'clock. I didn't look at my timetable which I've got with me.

37 Holmes (1990:163) also discusses this aspect of apologies, as does Norrick (1978: 281), when he says that apologies can serve such functions as “to envoice good manners, to assuage the addressee’s wrath, or simply to get off the hook and be on one’s way”.
In this example, impingement on the student’s negative face is clearly being redressed. To say that such negative face redress is the only function of apologies, however, is to take far too limited a view of this versatile speech act.

Meier (1995: 385) argues that even apologies as disarming requests (an example of negative politeness in B&L’s model) can, under certain circumstances, be interpreted as positive politeness. Fraser (1999:12) gives one such example, where requesting a person to temporarily look after one’s child on the beach could be interpreted as a way of showing that person that you trust them. There are, however, many more obvious examples where apologies redress threats to the positive face needs of the hearer (cf. Holmes 1990: 162). Consider the following examples:

Ex. 2.5 (JTB 347-351):

**PS4US**: But I thought that er with <gap cause=anonymization desc="last or full name"> coming off that, Malcolm was going on to that.
**PS4UV**: Malcolm was doing part of it.
**PS4US**: *Sorry* I'm not laying any criticism anywhere <-><unclear> <->|-|
**PS4UV**: <-><unclear> <->|-| I know you're not Steve but all I'm saying is that we had a discussion about this earlier in the week. Chris refuses to do something I'm afraid when somebody's already done three quarters of the work, you can't put somebody on to do the last quarter.

In Ex. 2.5, which represents a minor disagreement over a responsibility allocation during a business meeting, the person disagreeing with PS4UV is careful to redress this with an apology and a declaration of positive intent. Using B&L framework, this is an example of the positive politeness strategy “Avoid disagreement” (B&L 1987:113).

Ex. 2.6 (KGT 757-761):

**B. Singh**: *sorry*, Phil, are you alright?
**P. Ford**: It's alright.
**B. Singh**: Don't worry, I did go at a pace. Because...
**P. Ford**: Okay.

In Ex. 2.6, B. Sing, a sales executive participating in a training course, is clearly showing concern for his colleague, Phil, by apologising and claiming that he was going too fast when the latter seems lost. This is an example of B&L’s positive politeness strategy “Notice and attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)” (B&L 1987: 103). These, and many other examples in the corpus, show that apologies are often used to redress FTAs to the hearer’s positive face.

To summarise, the function of apologies as politeness markers is multi-faceted. On the one hand, one can see them as typical negative politeness devices, but as I have shown their use also extends into the positive politeness domain. Traditionally their use has been regarded as a way of showing concern for the addressee, but in many cases apologies are probably more strongly motivated by the need to improve self-image, sometimes even at the expense of the addressee.
2.8.4 Apology defined by form or function

Most apology studies to date have used the function of apologies as a starting point for their investigations. Subjects have been presented with different situations which merit apologies, and the responses have subsequently been recorded and analysed. ‘Apology’ in these studies is thus defined by function; a speech act used to remedy a transgression. My study uses the form of the apologies as its starting point. Thus, the object of study is the form of the explicit apology, the IFID (illocutionary force indicating device), and how it is used in spoken British English. As we shall see, this formula has a range of functions. In order to illustrate this, it is first necessary to take a closer look at the prototypical view of *apology*.

Most definitions of *apology* include four basic components: the ‘offender’, the ‘offended’, the ‘offence’ and the ‘remedy’. The ‘offender’ is the person who feels responsible for an act which merits an apology. Many see this responsibility link as central to the concept of apology. The offender does not necessarily have to play an active part in the transgression. Holmes (1990:163) points out that it is enough that s/he feels responsible in one way or another. Such examples include adults apologising for children or pets, or individuals apologising in the roles of representatives of organisations. In the following example, a radio presenter apologises for the rude language used by a person in an earlier part of the programme:

Ex. 2.7 (HV3 298-9):

*Ed Dolan:* …And er finally on er on our debate earlier on, a lot of callers tonight are er I would say quite justifiably angry about the language used in an earlier debate, the earlier drugs debate by Vernon <gap cause=anonymization desc="last or full name"> Well we we back that up here at Central Weekend and we *apologize* if anyone's been offended

The ‘offended’ is the victim of an offence. This person does not, however, necessarily perceive her/himself as such. There are numerous examples in the BNC where the addressees seem surprised when they receive apologies. In the following example Audrey apologises to her future daughter-in-law for the way that her sister, Marge, has declined the invitation to the forthcoming wedding (for further discussion of this example see Section 3.4.2):

Ex. 2.8 (KBC 5290-6):

*Audrey:* But I thought the reply was abs-- I thought it was utterly disgraceful! And she's done it to spite me Rosie.  
*Rosie:* I didn't, I didn't take a lot of notice really. I mean what er, what she put was that o-- okay wasn’t it? 
*Audrey:* I know, but the paper Rosie! And no address

Conversely, it is sometimes the offended who has to point out the offence to an unaware offender. In Ex. 2.9, father and son are having breakfast:

Ex. 2.9 (KCH 460-3):

*David:* <unclear> I can't eat it plain.
Phillip: <-> I'm not, <-> I'm not asking you to eat it Dave, I just wish you didn't pass it across to me like that.
David: Oh! Sorry!

The ‘offence’ refers to the incident which merits the apology. At times it is enough that there is an anticipation that this incident merits an apology. Apologies are often uttered as disarmers in anticipation of potentially offensive acts (Edmondson 1981:282, Aijmer 1996:98). In such cases, Edmondson regards the apology as remedial work for the “intention of performing a particular communicative act” (1981:282). In this example, John, a Department of the Environment adjudicator, points out a person as being the only one to have any objections to a proposal during a public enquiry on greenbelt planning. Note how John hesitates and apologises before exposing Mrs ‘Anonymous’. He thus attempts to disarm the potential embarrassment he is about to cause:

Ex. 2.10 (FMP 983-4):

John: It may well As far as I know it's it is only Mrs <gap cause=anonymization desc="last or full name">er who has said, I I'm sorry to er to say this Mrs <gap cause=anonymization desc="last or full name">, you are the only person who has said that you wish to produce additional representations. It could be others are keeping quiet about this, I don't know.

The final and arguably the most important component of the apology is the ‘remedy’. It contains three sub-components, all of which are essential for an apology to be recognised as such:

- The offender (but not necessarily the offended) has to recognise the offence. Without such recognition there can be no apology, merely unresolved conflict.

- There has to be some form of acceptance of responsibility on the part of the offender, explicit or understood (see above).

- Lastly, an apology has to include some form of expression of regret on the part of the offender. The semantics of explicit expressions of apologies illustrate this (‘sorry’, ‘pardon’, ‘excuse’, ‘forgive’).

The concept of the prototypical apology from a functional point of view is summarised in Figure 2.2:
There are a number of examples of usages of the apology form in the corpus which fall partly outside this prototypical view of the speech act. The following categories can be identified:

- ‘Formulaic’ apologies: uttered in situations where the offence is minimal, almost non-existent, and where apologising is more a matter of routine. Examples include apologies for social gaffes such as coughing, and apologies for slips of the tongue.

- ‘Formulaic apologies with added functions’: uttered in situations where the ‘offence’ is minimal and the apology has other functions in addition to that of repair work. Request cues and attention cues are examples.

- ‘Face attack’ apologies: uttered in situations where the remedial nature of the apology is questionable. Examples include sarcastic apologies where the offence is trivialised, and situations where apologies are used to introduce a challenge, e.g. “No, sorry you're way out of line Chris!” (KDA 1940)

Mattson Bean & Johnstone (1994:60-63) argue that there is a functional continuum for the apology form. At the “situational” end of this continuum they place the most routinised forms with set functions. These apologies tend to be unelaborated expressions such as sorry and pardon, whose functions generally involve speech management tasks. ‘Situational’ apologies help to keep the flow of a conversation going and signal requests for repetition, changes in topic, interruptions, minor mistakes etc. They only meet the prerequisite conditions for a prototypical apology in a loose sense. At the other end of the functional continuum are the most heartfelt and ‘personal’
apologies. ‘Personal’ apologies tend to be more elaborate and are often accompanied by explanatory accounts according to Mattson Bean & Johnstone. This functional continuum of apologies was evident in the present study and was mirrored in the forms of the observed speech acts. Function in relation to form will be one of the topics of discussion in Chapter 3.

2.8.5 Earlier research into apologies

Most studies of apologising to date have been conducted in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics. It has been noted that second language speakers who have an excellent grammatical and lexical command of the target language may still fail to communicate effectively because of cross-linguistic differences in speech act realisation rules (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984:196). The ambitions of most cross-cultural studies have thus been to investigate similarities and differences in the realisation patterns of apologies across different languages. An additional aim has been to identify the contextual factors, such as the severity of the offence and interlocutor relationship, that influence speaker choices. With these aims in mind, studies have been conducted comparing native and non-native apologising in English, trying to explain differences by looking at linguistic and cultural background interference among second language speakers. Apologising among native English speakers has been compared with that of a number of second-language learners of English, including native speakers of Danish (Kasper 1989, Trosborg 1987, 1995), German (House 1989), Austrian (Meier 1992, 1996), Hebrew (Cohen & Olshtain 1981, Olshtain 1989), and Spanish (Venezuelan - Garcia 1989).

Comparative inter-language studies of apologising include contrasting the use of this speech act in, primarily, American English with other languages including German (Vollmer & Olshtain 1989; Meier 1997), Polish and Hungarian (Suszczenia 1999), Spanish (Uruguay – Márquez Reiter 2000), Russian (Olshtain & Cohen 1983,) and Hebrew (Olshtain & Cohen 1983; Olshtain 1989). In addition, several monolinguistic studies of apologising in English have been carried out. These include American English (Edmondson 1981; Fraser 1981; Wolfson, Marmor & Jones 1989; Tannen 1994b), New Zealand English (Holmes 1989a, 1990) and British English (Owen 1983, Aijmer 1995, 1996).

Meier (1998:215-231) points to another field of research which has been concerned with the study of apologies, namely that of social psychology. Early studies from this field were primarily concerned with taxonomy (Scott & Lyman 1968; Schonbach 1980; Holtgraves 1989). Subsequently, others have looked at the effect of situational parameters on the choice of apology strategies (McLauogin, O’Hair & Cody

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38 Methodological approaches in the various studies cited have been discussed in Section 1.5.1 and will not be dealt with here.

39 Many of these projects have directly been part of the CCSARP (Cross Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns) project (for further details see Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984), or have been spin-offs from that endeavour.

40 Of these studies Trosborg (1987; 1995) and House (1989) look at British English. The rest refer to American English.

41 Two other studies investigating non-native use of apologies, namely Borkin & Reinhart (1978), and Rintell & Mitchell’s (1989), do not specify the countries of origin of their respondents.
1983; Schlenker & Darby 1981). The effectiveness of such different strategies in ame-
liorating the audience’s negative evaluations of an offender following a transgression
has also been extensively investigated (Riordan, Marlin & Kellog 1983; Holtgraves
1989). Benoit (1995) provides an extensive study of this aspect looking at public
apologies. Meier (1998:215) argues that studies from the field of social psychology
should not be overlooked as a valuable source of insights into understanding apo-
lgies.

The present study sets out to investigate several, hitherto unexplored, aspects of
apologising using a largely new method. Examples of ‘new ground’ explored in the
following chapters include the effects of the social variables age and social class on
apologising (see Chapter 4) as well as the effects of formality and the number of par-
ticipants present during the conversation (see Chapter 5).
Chapter 3

The Apology

3.1 Introduction

Explicit apologies are multifaceted speech acts. They are generally associated with politeness, but as we shall see, their pragmatic complexity requires a more careful analysis before it can be stated with certainty whether or not an apology uttered in a particular situation really is a polite act or not. Often apologising simply constitutes routine behaviour; at other times an apology can serve as a rhetorical device introducing a challenge.

The main aim of this chapter is to describe the different types of apologies encountered in the corpus and to provide an overview of both functional and quantitative aspects of apologising in spoken British English. The speech acts encountered are thus considered from a variety of perspectives. These include the relationship between the offence and the form of the apology (the lexemes used, and the syntactic structures in which these appear); the pragmatic functions of different apologies; the use of additional strategies other than explicit apologies in remedial work, and the apparent sincerity with which apologies are uttered (sarcastic usage, for example). The ultimate ambition is, as far as possible, to relate the different findings to the more general concept of how polite forms are used in British English.

The following questions are addressed:

- What lexemes are used in explicit apologies and in what types of syntactic structures do these occur? (Section 3.2)
- What are the pragmatic functions of the encountered apologies? (Section 3.3)
- What kinds of events (offences) result in apologising? (Section 3.4)
- Is there a relationship between the lexemes used in the explicit apologies and the offences that cause them? (Section 3.5.1)
- Is there a relationship between the syntactic structures of the apologies and the offences that cause them? (Section 3.5.2)
- What other remedial strategies are used in combination with explicit apologies? (Section 3.6)
- Do certain types of offences lead to certain types of additional strategies, such as explanations and acknowledgements of responsibility, being used in combination with the explicit apology? (Section 3.6.1)
- What can be said about the apparent sincerity with which apologies are uttered? (Section 3.7)
- What conclusions can be drawn about apologising, and in extension, the use of polite forms in British English? (Section 3.9)
3.2 Form

The following sections deal with the forms of the apologies encountered in the corpus. Firstly, in Section 3.2.1, the taxonomy used in this study is motivated and contrasted with some of the taxonomies used in other apology studies. The overall distributions of the lexemes in the corpus are then presented and compared with the findings from previous studies. Secondly, in Section 3.2.2, the syntactic structures of the apologies are described in more detail. Again, the distributions of the various syntactic categories in the corpus are evaluated in relation to other apology studies on naturalistic speech.

3.2.1 The lexemes

The expressions of apologies chosen for this study were based on the taxonomy provided in the CCSARP coding manual (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper 1989:290), which lists apology IFIDs as expressions containing the words sorry, excuse, apologise, forgive, pardon, regret, and afraid. This taxonomy provides the most complete list of IFIDs used in apology research to date.

Other authors have used different taxonomies: Olshtain & Cohen (1983:22) list three sub-formulae which cover the main semantic formula “An expression of apology”, namely: i) offers of apology, ii) expressions of regret, and iii) requests for forgiveness. As examples of lexemes which express direct apologies, Olshtain & Cohen (1983:22) list the “apology verbs”: apologise, be sorry, forgive, excuse, and pardon. The forms regret and afraid are not included in this taxonomy.

Owen’s (1983) list of apologies did not include pardon or excuse, two very important forms in the present study. She did, however, choose to include the use of the form be afraid under apologies, as I have also done. The classifying of expressions including I’m afraid... as apologies is debatable. In many instances the form merely expresses “the speaker’s ‘apolectic’ attitude towards a proposition which is asserted or announced” (Aijmer 1996:85), rather than functioning as an explicit apology. Arguably, adverbs such as unfortunately or regrettably serve a similar function, and indeed their use can in many cases be more or less synonymous with expressions containing I’m afraid: for example, the utterance I’m afraid it is raining could equally well be expressed as Unfortunately it is raining. Both constructions indicate an objective perspective. The speaker communicates regret over the situation, but there is no link of responsibility between him/her and the unfortunate state of affairs. When, as in the above examples, this link of responsibility was missing, utterances containing afraid were not classed as apologies. On the other hand, statements such as I’m afraid I have broken your vase do function as apologies. The link of responsibility between the speaker and the offence is clearly expressed, and in the present study such examples were counted as apologies.

Figure 3.1 lists the lexemes and the number of instances these were encountered in the corpus.

42 For a more thorough discussion of the remedial nature of afraid see Owen (1983:88-92).
A total of 3070 explicit apologies were encountered in the corpus. Of these, 59.2 per cent contained the form *sorry*, 26.5 per cent the form *pardon* and 10.4 per cent the form *excuse*. The remaining lexemes *afraid, apologise, forgive* and *regret* together constituted approximately 3.9 per cent of the apologies.

In accordance with many other apology studies (Owen 1983, Holmes 1990, Meier 1992, Mattson Bean & Johnstone 1994 and Aijmer 1996), the findings from the BNC show that *sorry* is the most common formulaic expression of apology used in English; 59 per cent of the explicit apologies encountered in this study contained the form. This is, however, a relatively low frequency compared to the findings in many other studies: Mattson Bean & Johnstone (1994:65) recorded *sorry* being used in 77 per cent of the apologies investigated. In Aijmer’s (1996:86) study, 83.7 per cent of the apologies were variants of *sorry*, and in Holmes’s (1990:172) study 79.3 per cent contained the form. The forms *excuse* and especially *pardon* were much less frequent in these studies. Methodological differences and differences in the styles of language sampled in the various studies can largely explain these discrepancies.

Mattson Bean & Johnstone (1994) sampled formal telephone interviews only, and similarly, Aijmer’s (1996) study of the LLC drew its data from a corpus of formal speech. It appears that *sorry* is more common in more formal texts than in informal texts, and in the present study the form accounted for 74.7 per cent of the apologies in

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43 The corpus used for the purpose of this study included all speech produced by speakers of known age and gender partaking in dialogue in the BNC. The total size of this corpus amounted to 5 139 083 words and 508 130 utterances, giving a total explicit apology rate of 59.7 per 100 000 words spoken or 60.4 per 10 000 utterances.
the more formal ‘context-governed’ texts (Section 5.2.5). Variations in methodology could explain Holmes’s (1990) higher frequency of *sorry*. Holmes did not obtain her results from a corpus of recordings, but relied on second-hand reporting of occurrences of the speech act (Section 1.5.1). As a result many apologies for minor offences were likely to have been overlooked. The low occurrence of *pardon*, which only accounted for 2.3 per cent of Holmes’s apologies, is probably one effect of this methodological approach. The form is a common response when a speaker has misheard what was said, and such minor apologies are likely to have been overlooked by the respondents in Holmes’s study.

### 3.2.2 Syntactic considerations

The above lexemes occurred in a number of syntactic frameworks. The most common syntactic structure was, what I have chosen to label, the ‘Detached’ apology. In such forms, the IFID alone constituted the utterance and there was no verbal reference made in the clause to the offence. Such examples frequently ‘stood alone’ and constituted the only move in the remedial interaction. The simplest and most common forms of ‘Detached’ apologies were the syntactically shortened, arguably ellipsed, forms *sorry* and *pardon*. These apologies usually constituted complete one-word sentences or were, at times, detached semantic units interspersed within other utterances (*I never attended the lecture last Monday, sorry, Tuesday*). A second group of detached apologies comprised the ‘partially’ or ‘fully expanded’ forms. Examples include *I’m sorry* (partially expanded) and *I am sorry* (fully expanded).

‘Detached’ apologies were often accompanied by various markers intensifying the apology or signalling the emotional state of the speaker. Examples include the use of emotives, such as interjections (*Oh!*), discourse particles signalling hesitation (*erm*), and the use of intensifiers (*I am really sorry!*), epithets (*sorry love*) and *please*.

Due to the lack of prosodic information in the transcriptions, it was sometimes difficult to determine the pragmatic function of ‘Detached’ apologies. A request, for example, tends to be uttered with a rising tone, and the pragmatic function of an utterance such as *pardon* can be hard to determine if the transcription lacks annotation for intonation. This problem could be partly overcome, however, since the apologies were often marked with question marks and exclamation marks in the transcript.

Finally, a limited number of apologies were syntactically complex constructions, where reference to the offence was made within the syntactic framework of the actual apology (*Pardon me for being so rude*, for example).

Table 3.1 gives the total and relative distributions of the different syntactic categories found in the corpus. The percentages represent the relative distributions of the syntactic categories in the corpus as a whole. The different syntactic forms are discussed in more detail below, where there will also be a brief discussion of the use of coordinating conjunctions in apologies.

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44 See Appendix 2 for the ‘syntactic frames’ (Owen 1983:66) in which the lexemes appeared.

45 Note that I am referring to the syntactic structure of the IFID only here. There were examples of ‘Detached’ apologies which were accompanied by explanations or other remedial strategies later in the remedial interchange. Such examples will be discussed in Section 3.6.

46 Note that *excuse me* cannot be further simplified.
Table 3.1. Distribution of the syntactic forms in the corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntactic form</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>and %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘Detached’ Apologies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1. Detached, ellipsed form, and/or simplest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possible form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Unmarked</td>
<td>sorry, pardon, excuse me</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>(28.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Exclamation marked</td>
<td>sorry!, pardon!, excuse me!</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>(6.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Question marked</td>
<td>sorry? pardon?</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>(29.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2. Partially/fully expanded, detached</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) unmarked or exclamation marked</td>
<td>I’m sorry. I beg your pardon.</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>(8.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Question marked</td>
<td>I’m sorry?, beg your pardon?</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>(1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘Detached’ apologies + markers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>534</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Interjection + apology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) exclamatory emotive + apology</td>
<td>Oh, sorry</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) downtoner + apology</td>
<td>Well, pardon me!</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>(9.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) hesitation marker + apology</td>
<td>Erm, sorry.</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>(1.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Explicit apology + proper name or epithet</td>
<td></td>
<td>124</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) + proper noun</td>
<td>Sorry Bob</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>(2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) +epithet</td>
<td>I am sorry love</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>(1.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D. Intensifier/emphatic ‘do’ + apology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do apologise!</td>
<td>I’m really sorry!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E. Apology + please</strong></td>
<td>Forgive me please</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Syntactically complex forms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>256</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Apology + about/for + Demonstrative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) that</td>
<td>I’m sorry about that</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) this</td>
<td>I apologise for this</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>(1.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Apology + about + NP</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m sorry about the interruptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H. Sorry + to +VP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorry to say this</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Apology + (for) + NP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardon me for being so rude!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>J. Apology + (that) + S’</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m afraid I was a long time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K. Apology + if’ + S’</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We apologise if anyone’s been offended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L. Modal marker of intent + apology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I must apologise for...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M. Request form</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you excuse me?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O. Others</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perhaps you’ll hopefully find that you can forgive me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘Detached’ apologies:

Detached forms without additional markers such as intensifiers (groups A1 and A2 above) represented approximately 74 per cent of the apologies in the corpus. This is a very similar result to that found in Aijmer’s (1996:85-91) LLC study, where such apologies made up 77 per cent of the data.

In other studies, this simple formulaic form of apologising appears to have been less frequent. In Holmes’s study (1990:172) for example, less than 66 per cent of the sampled apologies were what could be called ‘detached’. This relatively low figure illustrates how a reliance on second-hand reporting when investigating apologising is likely to lead to an underestimation of the importance of formulaic routine usage of this speech act. Simple detached forms are frequently used in discourse management (c.f. ‘situational apologies’ Section 2.8.4), to request repetitions and to announce minor slips of the tongue. Such routine apologies are easily overlooked using Holmes’s method of second-hand reporting. In contrast, using a computerised corpus will allow the researcher to find all instances of the apology form, no matter how trivial the offences leading to these may be.

‘Detached’ apologies with additional markers:

Interjections frequently accompanied the apologies (category B above); approximately 12 per cent of the observed explicit apologies were such examples. The most commonly used interjections were emotives such as oh, oops, and ah. The use of emotives has a dual effect; it conveys a speaker’s involvement, while at the same time operating as a marker of surprise. The overall effect is that genuine and spontaneous regret on behalf of the speaker is emphasised, while the responsibility for the event itself is toned down. Apologies accompanied by emotives were seldom followed by explanations or justifications; the unintentional nature of the offence was understood. Typically emotives occurred in apologies for inadvertent offences such as minor accidents or mistakes; these apologies were often uttered after the offender had been made aware of his/her blunder. The following example is in many ways typical:

Ex. 3.1 (KP8 504-507):

Michael: Not till I get this side, ah! Ah, you're standing on them here! <-|->
Wendy: <-|-> <voice quality: laughing> Oh sorry <end of voice quality>. <-|->
Michael: No, no you didn't know my feet was there.

The use of emotives was also common in apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’ offences (Section 3.4). This offence category included standard etiquette breaches such as overlooking someone. In the following example, there are two possible sources of

47 Holmes makes no distinction between detached apologies with and without intensifiers and thus the real figure for unmarked detached apologies is likely to be significantly less than 66 per cent.
48 Meier (1992), who classed the use of emotives as a separate apology strategy, found it to be the second most common strategy after explicit apologising in her study.
49 The use of Oh sorry! shows that the speaker is unaware of the offence (or at least indirectly claims to be so) since it marks a “change of state” in its producer’s state of knowledge thus partly relieving the same of responsibility (Heritage 1998:291).
offence; firstly there is a misunderstanding, and secondly Rachel was overlooked when the cake was served. Again, the offence(s) had to be pointed out:

Ex. 3.2 (KPU 1556-63):

Anne-Marie: < voice quality: laughing > This cake's lovely < voice quality: laughing > are you not having any?
Rachel: Yes.
Anne-Marie: Oh yes, < voice quality: laughing > < unclear > < voice quality: laughing >
Michael: Just that I haven't passed her any
Anne-Marie: < voice quality: laughing > Oh sorry!
Michael: cake.
Anne-Marie: < voice quality: laughing > Sorry! < end of voice quality >.
Michael: < voice quality: laughing > Oh sorry, sorry, < voice quality: laughing > sorry < end of voice quality >!

In contrast to emotives, the use of well in combinations with explicit apologies signalled a half-hearted display of regret. Typically well occurred in combination with apologies for offences involving ‘Breach of consensus’ (Section 3.4). Most of these were anticipatory apologies uttered before challenges or contradictions. In the following extract, for example, Ann challenges a newspaper delivery person:

Ex. 3.3 (KB8 4138-40):

Ann: You haven't given me the bits missing from the Mirror.
PS000: Well that's tt nothing I can do about that until asking for the Mirror itself.
Ann: Well I'm sorry but my Daily Mirror deliv-- delivered this morning without the television supplement, and without the comic and I want

This form was also closely associated with joking and sarcasm, as in the following example:

Ex. 3.4 (KB0 2457-59):

Alan: And so, I'm asked to record all the conversations I make this week.
Ida: I see! Oh well I'm sorry I didn't know I was on record and I withdraw all the remarks and I shall deny everything in court.

Markers of hesitation (erm, for example), were found almost exclusively in apologies for ‘Talk’ offences and these may be examples of ‘floor-holding devices’.

The occurrence of proper names and epithets in combination with apologies (group C above) was relatively rare. Interestingly, such apologies often constituted sarcastic or challenging remarks. For example, consider the following extract recorded during a television discussion on the pros and cons of wearing wigs. The conversation is described as a “heated argument” in the information given about the setting in the BNC:

Ex. 3.5 (HVE 65-67):

Barbara: Well that's because somebody has told them that bald is ugly, bald isn't ugly, it's < unclear >
John: I'm sorry my darling, bald is ugly.
Sue Jay: Calm down guys I want to ask you is he better with it or without it?
Surprisingly few apologies, only 0.8 per cent, were accompanied by intensifiers. This form appears to have been more common in speech sampled in the 1970s: Aijmer (1996:87) noted the use of intensifiers in combination with sorry in 8 per cent of her apologies; the equivalent figure in Owen’s study was 11 per cent. One may postulate that the more limited use of intensifiers with apologies observed in this study may be evidence of a change having taken place in British English, whereby hyperpolite forms are becoming less frequent.

Of the intensifiers used in combination with sorry, so (I am so sorry) was the most common (8 instances), closely followed by very (6 instances). Awfully occurred twice, whereas really, the most common apology intensifier in American English according to Meier (1997:217), only occurred once in the corpus. The most common intensifier used in combination with the apology verbs pardon, forgive and apologise was emphatic do. Please in combination with apologies was also rare. Only nine instances were found in the corpus.

Complex forms:

In complex syntactic apologies, reference to the offence was often made in the actual apology. Such apologies were often more formal and usually remedied more serious offences such as ‘Lack of consideration’ (Section 3.4).

The frequencies of the forms sorry about this/that (group F above) highlight an interesting aspect of apologising: the speaker frequently tries to distance her/himself from the offence. Sorry about that was used more than five times as often as Sorry about this, and the frequent use of the former could rarely be motivated by the object (the offence) being located at a distance in space or time. Only one such example was found (“Sorry about that last week.” (GYP 217)). Instead that seems to function as a device to disassociate the offender from the offence.

Wiener & Mehrabian (1968:34) point out that the use of demonstratives in the literal sense describes “the relationship between a communicator and the object of his communication in spatial or temporal” terms. However, the authors argue that if the spatio-temporal contexts are inconsistent with the demonstrative used in the communication, the utterance can be “interpreted”. Wiener & Mehrabian (1968:35) suggest that such examples of demonstrative usage can be interpreted as signifying “the communicator’s negative affective, evaluative, or non-preferential experience”. Caffi & Janney (1994:356) also discuss the metaphorical use of this/that, claiming that these spatial proximity markers “regulate metaphorical distance between ‘inner’ events and ‘outer’ events”. The use of that indicates a low degree of emotive involvement whereas the use of this indicates a high degree of emotive involvement.

Of the remaining syntactic forms examined, group K, the use of an if-clause in combination with an apology (I’m sorry if you didn’t like it, for example), is worth noting. In such instances the offensive nature of the act, and/or the victim’s right to feel offended, are questioned in the apology. This form was, however, extremely rare, with only nine instances being recorded.

50 Although the frequencies were higher in Owen’s and Aijmer’s studies the forms of intensifiers were the same; so was also the most common intensifier in both of these studies.
Note also some of the hyperpolite forms. One such form was when the intent to apologize was declared (Group L). This type of apology appeared mainly in formal contexts such as Ex. 3.6, recorded during a city council meeting:

Ex. 3.6 (JP7 192):

Andy: Erm I would like to apologize on behalf of myself and my <unclear> proof reading team for the fact that two calls for nominations that erm that are in this newsletter don't actually appear to have closing dates on them

A second example of hyperpolite usage was when the apology was presented as a request (Group M) as in the following example:

Ex. 3.7 (H47 27-28):

Trevor: To provide a professional service satisfact-- I'm sorry Dennis, would you just excuse me? Can I hand over to you?

The remaining syntactic groups of apologies (G, H, I, and J) tended to be examples of ‘Real’ apologies, where the offence needed clarifying in some way. Group O (others) consists of a number of apologies which defied classification, such as examples of the form excuse where the object was not me (“excuse fingers” KDB 1169) and the extremely hedged apology “perhaps you'll hopefully find that you can forgive me” (H48 3).

The use of coordinating conjunctions in apologising:

One final aspect concerning syntax that merits some attention is the use of coordinating conjunctions in apologies. The data was searched for examples of the coordinating conjunctions and and but which linked the apology with the preceding or subsequent clause. The following examples illustrate such usages:

Ex. 3.8 (H48 12):

Eri it was insulting to you and I apologize for that.

Ex. 3.9 (KE3 9166):

I'm sorry but you're not doing that at quarter to eleven.

According to Quirk & Greenbaum (1985:930-35) the conjunction and indicates that there is some relation between the contents of the linked clauses, while but expresses contrast. This difference is reflected in the use of these conjunctions in apologies. Whereas and tends to be used as a device establishing a link (of responsibility) between the speaker with the offence (see Ex. 3.8), but usually introduces explanations or justifications dissociating the speaker from the offence.

Of the 104 examples of coordination found in the corpus, 89 made use of the conjunction but. Five of the fifteen uses of and were examples of the following type of rhetorical device used to introduce a conflicting opinion:

Ex. 3.10 (HV2 231-34):

Ray: And I'm sorry, I cannot respect a man
Nicky Campbell: The man who's name has been mentioned tonight?
Ray: Tonight. I cannot say that anybody can respect a man in this country and to run for their country as a well known IRA supporter.

The co-ordinated clauses introduced with *but* had numerous functions such as explanations:

Ex. 3.11 (KC6 2270):

Jane: Oh I'm sorry, *but* there was only that one which is all, it's got her latest stuff on it, I'm not really keen on anything else, it's got those last, you know the sort of her last few records of it, on it I should say <pause> I didn't know there was any others around, when I told you I wanted the Cher one, it was the one that was out now not the old ones.
John: <voice quality: shouting> This one's out now <end of voice quality>, <pause>

excuses:

Ex. 3.12 (FML 140-1):

Toby: Sorry about the delay, <pause> *but* the the school in front of you were <pause> nearly half an hour late. Thank you very much for turning up on time.

justifications:

Ex. 3.13 (KC9 251):

Dinda: Well I'm sorry *but* I've been working <unclear>.

and the trivialisation of the offence:

Ex. 3.14 (KB0 2536-37):

Ena: Sorry about cutting the top of your head off <pause> *but*, never mind, you know! <pause> You've still got your best features on.

The use of *but* and *and* show that an important additional function of apologies (the first being remedial) is to get the offender ‘off the hook’. Before we turn to the offences causing the apologies in the corpus, I will briefly digress to discuss some functional aspects of apologising.

### 3.3 Some functional aspects

In this section two functional aspects of the apologies in the corpus are considered. Firstly, there is the question of the prototypical apology v/s other usages of the form (see Section 2.8.4). Secondly, I will briefly discuss some temporal aspects of apologising, i.e. when apologies are uttered – in anticipation of an offence or after an offence has taken place.
‘Real’ and other types of apologies:

A large proportion of the apology forms encountered in the corpus fall outside the prototypical view of the ‘Real’ apology discussed in Section 2.8.4; only about one third of the apologies were real expressions of regret for non-trivial transgressions. The remaining apologies were either for insignificant acts or did not signal the element of regret included in the prototypical view of apology.

Apologies for ‘Talk’ offences and ‘Social gaffes’, for example, were extremely formulaic; the seriousness of the offence and the display of regret were minimal.51 There were also several apologies which, in addition to being extremely formulaic, had an added pragmatic function (see below). Such speech acts included apologies for ‘Hearing’ offences and ‘Requests’ for attention. Finally, there were a number of apologies where the regret of the offender was questionable; apologies serving as dis-armers for forthcoming face attacks.52 This category constituted apologies uttered in response to ‘Breach of consensus’ offences (see Section 3.4). Figure 3.2 illustrates the relative distributions of these various types of apologies in the corpus.

![Figure 3.2. Proportion of ‘Real’ and other types of apologies in the corpus](image)

51 Certain social gaffes could of course be considered serious offences, but there were very few of these.
52 See Austin (1990:277-292) for further discussion of this term.
Temporal considerations:

Apologies can be classified as ‘Anticipatory’ or ‘Retrospective’ depending on when they are uttered in relation to the offence they remedy. The functions and forms of apologies are closely related to this temporal aspect. Temporal considerations can be classified as ‘Anticipatory’ or ‘Retrospective’ depending on when they are uttered in relation to the offence they remedy. The functions and forms of apologies are closely related to this temporal aspect. Two functional sub-categories of anticipatory apologies were distinguishable in the data; firstly there were ‘Disarmers’, which, for example, served to prepare the hearer for a potentially unwelcome statement. Their function was to lessen the negative impact of such an utterance. Typical utterances merit such apologies were disagreements. In the following example two sixth-form students disagree about the responsibility they have as role models for younger students:

Ex. 3.15 (KP6 3205-10):

Catriona: Yeah. <pause> No I'm sorry I don't agree with you there.
<sniff> <pause> I hate this thing about you know you're making a ter es er you're setting an example for the rest of the school, you know.
PS000: But don't you think that <pause>
Catriona: What? Do I think that we're setting, we are setting, us personally are setting an example for all the little people? No. <-|>

Disarmers were also often used in situations involving fixed social rituals. When breaches of conventions were anticipated these were often preceded by an apology. In the following example, ‘Alan’ has invited a minister for tea and the latter ends up in a position where he has to be in charge of the teapot:

Ex. 3.16 (KB0 497-99):

Alan: Er, are you ready for tea or?
Bob: Yes please, mm, mm
Alan: Sorry I'll have to put you where the teapot is

The second functional category of anticipatory apologies was ‘Request cues’. These types of apologies have probably evolved from disarmers through the process of ellipsis (I am sorry, could you repeat that please?, shortened to a simple Sorry?, for example). An apology such as Pardon? thus serves a dual function; the apology itself is a request cue for repetition, while at the same time it disarms itself. The reason I have chosen to include ‘Request cues’ as a separate category even though they are essentially disarmers, is that they have become so conventionalised in English that their mere utterance is a request in itself. This type of explicit apology thus functions as a request cue. This does not, however, mean that the form has entirely lost its quality as a politeness marker; compare for example What? and Pardon? used in a similar context.

53 For a more thorough description of the different functions of anticipatory and retrospective apologies see Aijmer (1996: 98-105).
54 Other authors such as Aijmer (1996:100) and Edmondson (1981) do not make this distinction and include such apologies under disarmers.
Retrospective apologies function as ‘Redeemers’, uttered after an offence has taken place. In the corpus they served as a means of genuinely or ritually taking responsibility and expressing regret.

Apologies were used as disarming moves in half of the examples encountered (this includes request cues). Aijmer found a similar tendency in the LLC (1996:99), as did Edmondson (1981:288) in his study of American dialogue. Arguably, redeemers are “supportive” and “self-demeaning” (Aijmer 1996:99), whereas the use of disarmers involves a more calculated form of politeness, where primarily self-interest is at heart. Caution should however be observed before assigning politeness quotients to a particular apology category. Each apology in the corpus was unique and the degree and form of politeness it expresses must be evaluated in the context in which it appears.

![Proportional distribution of the functional categories in the corpus](image)

**Figure 3.3. Proportional distribution of the functional categories in the corpus**

### 3.4 The offences

The following sections deal with the types of offences which led to apologies in the corpus. Firstly, in Section 3.4.1, the taxonomy used in this study is motivated and contrasted with some of the taxonomies used in other apology studies. The overall distributions of the various offences are then presented and compared with the findings from some previous studies of naturalistic speech. In Section 3.4.2, the offences are described in more detail.
3.4.1 An overview

The ‘offence’, or “object of regret” (Coulmas 1981:75), is what motivates an apology. Arguably, the nature and severity of this event will largely determine the form of the subsequent apology. Coulmas (1981:75-6) discusses ‘type’ and ‘gravity’ as being two dimensions that have to be taken into account when considering the offence. Not being able to attend a party will most probably result in a different apology than would stepping on someone’s toe, for example. Similarly, bumping into someone lightly will not merit as serious a response as knocking someone over, breaking his/her leg.

In this study the types of offences which led to apologies were systematically examined. However, judging the gravity of these offences from the corpus material was more problematic; hidden contextual and subjective factors may have played important parts in deciding the seriousness of a transgression.

Identifying and categorising the offences in the BNC was demanding for several reasons: in some conversations the information needed to identify the offence was missing from the corpus. Such examples included instances where the event leading up to an apology took place before the recording started, or when the offence was of such a nature that a mere audio recording did not capture it. In addition, there was a limited number of instances where two or more potential events could have motivated the same apology. These problems, and the fact that the prosody of the apologies was unavailable, resulted in a total of 125 offences in the corpus remaining unidentified.

Unfortunately there has been little consensus over the taxonomy of offences in past studies. Wolfson, Marmor & Jones (1989:178-9) list the following kinds of social obligations which, when broken, result in apologies among American subjects:

- The obligation to keep a social or work-related commitment or agreement. […]
- The obligation to respect the property of others. […]
- The obligation not to cause damage or discomfort to others.

Holmes (1990:178) provides a different taxonomy based on the types of offences which merited apologies found in her ethnographic study. Six major offence categories were listed: ‘inconvenience’, ‘space’, ‘talk’, ‘time’, ‘possessions’ and ‘social gaffes’. Building on this framework, Aijmer (1996:109) further developed the categories presenting the following taxonomy:

A: Talk: interruption, not having heard or understood what sb says, ‘slip of the tongue’, digression, correction, not having made oneself clear.

B: Time: being late, wasting another person’s time, causing delay, keeping another person waiting, not keeping in touch, cancelling an appointment.

C: Space: disturbing or bothering another person, intruding on sb’s privacy.

D: Social gaffé: clearing one’s throat, hiccupping, coughing, etc.
E: Inconvenience or impoliteness to another person: mistaking sb’s identity, leaving the room before the conversation is finished, interrupting the conversation in order to answer the telephone etc., non-compliance with a request, invitation, proposal, etc.

F: Possession: damaging a person’s possessions

The offence categories used in this study were partly based on Holmes’ and Aijmer’s taxonomies, but they had to be modified in order to accommodate the range of apologies encountered in the corpus. Consequently, the original taxonomies of Holmes and Aijmer were restructured and a number of ‘new’ offence categories were created. The aim of each category label was to capture the essence of the social situations which led to the apologies that appear in the corpus.

Table 3.2 summarises the taxonomy used to categorise the offences in this study and the relative distributions of these in the corpus. Figure 3.4 illustrates the total distributions of the different categories in the corpus.
### Table 3.2. Offence categories encountered in the corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Offence</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: ACCIDENTS (2.5 %)</td>
<td>Damage to property, hurting someone unintentionally, bumping into a person, unintentionally being in the way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: MISTAKES AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS (8.9%)</td>
<td>Misunderstanding someone, mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: BREACH OF EXPECTATIONS (8.8%)</td>
<td>Declining offers, declining requests, forgetting agreements, not keeping agreements, inability to fulfil expectations, personal shortcomings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: LACK OF CONSIDERATION (15.5%)</td>
<td>Interruptions, overlooking a person, not paying attention, forgetting a name, being late, leaving inappropriately, causing inconvenience, taking something without permission, taboo offences, hurting someone’s feelings unintentionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: TALK OFFENCES (9.7%)</td>
<td>Slips of the tongue, digressions, hesitations, corrections, being unclear, forgetting to mention something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: SOCIAL GAFFES (5.0%)</td>
<td>Coughing, burping, sneezing, clearing the throat, laughing loudly unintentionally, flatulence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G: REQUESTS (3.9%)</td>
<td>Requests for attention, asking someone to do something, asking a person to move.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H: HEARING OFFENCES (31.6%)</td>
<td>Not hearing, not understanding, not believing one’s ears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: OFFENCES INVOLVING BREACH OF CONSENSUS (9.9%)</td>
<td>Disagreeing or contradicting, reprimanding, refusing, denying, retaliating, insisting, challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J: UNIDENTIFIED (4.1%)</td>
<td>Offences which could not be identified in the corpus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because of taxonomical differences, it is hard to make direct comparisons between the offence data obtained in the present study and the results of other studies of naturalistic speech. Certain parallels, however, can be drawn.

Apologies used as discourse management devices were common in the present study. Such apologies were made after ‘Hearing’ offences (31.6 per cent) and ‘Talk’ offences (9.7 per cent) and constituted 41.3 per cent of all the apologies in the corpus. In Aijmer’s (1996:110) study of the LLC, the equivalent figure was 45.4 per cent. In Mattson Bean & Johnstone’s (1994) study, the role of apologies in discourse management was even more marked; 59.5 per cent of their apologies remedied ‘Hearing’ offences and 24.2 per cent of the apologies remedied ‘Talk’ offences. These figures can be compared to those of Holmes’s study, where ‘Hearing’ and ‘Talk’ offences only led to 16.4 per cent of the encountered apologies. Again methodological differences can explain these discrepancies, and the low frequencies of apologies used in discourse management in Holmes’s study further support the proposition that second-hand reporting leads to an under-representation of more trivial apologies.

More serious offences, where the negative or positive face needs of the hearer were seriously threatened, were also a common source of apologies in the corpus. Examples of such offences are especially typical of the categories ‘Lack of consideration’

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55 These studies include Holmes (1990), Mattson Bean & Johnstone (1995) and Aijmer (1995 and 1996) (Section 1.5.1). Note, however, that Owen’s 1983 study, which also investigated natural speech, is not discussed here since it lacks quantitative data on the offences which motivated the apologies in her study.

56 Aijmer’s category ‘Talk’ offences corresponds approximately to the two categories ‘Hearing’ and ‘Talk’ offences in the present study.

57 Again Holmes’s category ‘Talk’ offences is equivalent to the two categories ‘Hearing’ and ‘Talk’ offences in the present study.
and ‘Breach of expectations’, and these two categories constituted 24.3 per cent of the
oxences apologised for in the corpus.58 In Aijmer’s (1996) and Holmes’s (1990)
udies, apologies for such offences were even more common. Offences belonging to
the category ‘Inconvenience/impoliteness’ (Aijmer 1996:110) motivated approxi-
mately 40 per cent of the apologies in both of these studies. Once again Holmes’s use
of second-hand reporting will have led to a higher frequency of serious offences. One
possible explanation for the disparity between Aijmer’s results and the present results
is the difference in the styles of speech sampled in the two studies. As we shall see in
Chapter 5, apologies for more serious offences were more common in formal texts
than in informal texts.

Prototypical apologies were relatively rare in Mattson Bean & Johnstone’s
(1994) study. Only 9.5 per cent of the apologies were classed as ‘personal’ (Section
2.8.4). This is not surprising however; the interviews sampled were extremely formal-
ised, the interviewer often reading from a manuscript. There was thus little risk of of-
fending the interviewees personally.

In summary, the ‘functional continuum’ of the apology form (Section 2.8.4) was
evident from the offences which led to apologies in the corpus. These offences range
from the very trivial, such as a slip of the tongue, to more serious transgressions such
as hurting someone’s feelings. Section 3.4.2 will further illustrate the range of situa-
tions which merited apologies.

3.4.2 A more detailed look

The following section gives a more detailed description of the incidents which resulted
in explicit apologies in the corpus. The various offences, and the apologies remedying
them, are illustrated with numerous examples. I also discuss the type of politeness
which is involved in the different remedial acts from a face theoretical perspective.
The offence categories are described systematically starting with those incidents which
merited prototypical or ‘Real’ apologies. Similarly, I illustrate the offences leading to
‘Formulaic’ apologies and ‘Formulaic apologies with added functions’. Finally, I ex-
emplify some of the ‘confrontations’ that resulted in ‘Face attack’ apologies.59

An overview of the categories and sub-categories of offences is presented in
Figure 3.3. The figures in brackets give the total frequencies of each offence category
in the corpus.

58 There were however examples of more serious offences in some of the other offence categories too, especially
in the group ‘Breach of consensus’. It is, however, difficult to make an accurate comparison with Aijmer’s and
Holmes’s studies of this type of apology since the authors have not classified such transgressions as a separate
category.

59 This taxonomy of apologies is discussed in Sections 2.8.4 and 3.3.
Figure 3.5. Distribution of the offences in the corpus

The Apology

Explicit Expressions of Apologies

Real Apologies

Formulic Apologies

Formulac Apologies with Added Functions

Heathe of Speech

Hesitations (78)

Requests (42)

Others (17)

Breach of consensus (84)

Breach of consensus (19)

Breach of consensus (28)

Breach of consensus (32)

Breach of consensus (38)

Breach of consensus (19)

Breach of consensus (43)

Breach of consensus (52)

Breach of consensus (66)

Breach of consensus (50)

Misunderstandings

Mistakes and Misunderstandings

Mistakes (160)

Name offences (21)

Interruptions (66)

Lack of consideration

n=475

Inconveniences (105)

Exits (42)

Overlooking (78)

Taboo (57)

Time (15)

Exits (42)

Tiboof (66)

Overtouching (78)

(105)

(10)

(16)

(37)

(27)

(37)

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Offences leading to ‘Real’ apologies:

‘Lack of consideration’:

The largest category of offences leading to ‘Real’ apologies was ‘Lack of consideration’ offences. These offences were transgressions where it was primarily the positive face wants of the hearer that were threatened in some way, i.e. “acts that threaten the positive-face want, by indicating (potentially) that the speaker does not care about the addressee’s feelings, wants etc.” (B&L 1987:66).

A number of subcategories of such offences were distinguished (see Figure 3.5). These included: ‘Inconveniences’, 60 (sources of irritation such as a speaker being ill prepared, it being too cold or too hot, cigarette smoke, unforeseen disturbances etc.); ‘Overlooking’ (overlooking a person’s needs), ‘Interruptions’, ‘Taboo offences’ (using coarse language or making reference to taboo topics inappropriately), ‘Exits’ (un-timely exits), ‘Name offences’ (forgetting names or calling someone by the wrong name), and ‘Time offences’ (being late). In addition, 91 offences were difficult to assign to any specific category (‘Others’ in Figure 3.5); these included not paying attention to what was being said, taking something belonging to someone else without asking permission or hurting someone’s feelings.

Arguably, the above categories represent breaches of standard British politeness conventions, norms of which both the speaker and the hearer are aware. By apologising for such offences speakers demonstrate this awareness. In some apologies this additional function, namely to show that the behaviour was out of character and not something associated with the speaker under normal circumstances, was particularly transparent (see also Ex. 2.2). One typical such situation was when speakers apologised for transgressions committed by a third party. In Ex. 3.17, Audrey and Gordon, a future mother and father-in-law, apologise to Rosie, (bride-to-be) on behalf of Audrey’s sister, who has rejected an invitation to a pending wedding:

Ex. 3.17 (KBC 5248-56):

Gordon: I think you’d better mention something to Rosie love about that <-> er <->
Audrey: <-> Oh <-> <pause> oh yes <-> Rosie <->
Gordon: <-> an <-> apology about that letter.
Audrey: we have been most upset Gordon and I <-> about <->
Rosie: <-> Oh. <->
Audrey: this letter you received off my sister.
Rosie: Oh! That's alright. <-> Doesn't matter <->

Rosie dismisses the incident as unimportant, but Audrey continues to apologise. She takes the opportunity to explain, at great length, how she and her sister are at ‘loggerheads’ over some old dispute, and that she thinks that her sister’s action is unforgivable. Rosie has some trouble understanding why there is such a fuss:

60Inconveniences caused by requests, such as the asking of favours etc., were not included under this category. These can be seen as impeding negative face wants, someone’s freedom of action, and they will be discussed under the offence category ‘Requests’ below.
(KCB 5290-301):

Audrey: But I thought the reply was abs-- I thought it was utterly disgraceful! And she's done it to spite me Rosie. And I apologize.

Rosie: I didn't, I didn't take a lot of notice really. I mean what er, what she put was that o-- okay wasn't it?

Audrey: I know, but the paper Rosie! And no address.

Gordon: Just a

Audrey: on it!

Gordon: notepad with all holes in the top.


Audrey: But I, I really do apologize about it but she has done it erm.

Rosie: Well it's not, not your fault is it, you know?

Audrey: I feel, to spite me.

Rosie: Mm.

Audrey: Ooh! I was most upset when I saw it.

Rosie: Yes. Well never mind anyway. It doesn't matter at all.

Audrey and Gordon are clearly using the apology as a way of showing Rosie that they would never do such a thing, i.e. reject a wedding invitation by sending a note written on spiral notepad paper “with all holes in the top”.

‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’:

Apologies for misunderstandings and mistakes typically involved remedial work following threats to positive face needs. The apologies for these offences exemplify B&L’s positive politeness strategy “claim common ground; seek agreement, avoid disagreement” (B&L 1987:112-116). Most of the offences apologised for in this category were relatively trivial, and the minor disagreements which resulted from mistakes and misunderstandings were quickly resolved once the interlocutors realised that they were talking at cross-purposes. The apologies for these offences often marked the actual moment of realisation that a mistake or misunderstanding had occurred, and the IFIDs were often combined with exclamatory interjections (Oh!, Aha! or Yeah!). Conversations oriented towards information exchange (common in the ‘context-governed’ texts) typically yielded many such apologies. It tended to be the information provider (a teacher, for example) who blundered, and apologised after this had been pointed out.61 In Ex. 3.18 Mark, a technician is instructing his colleague, Bedge, on how to perform a computer task:

Ex. 3.18 (KD5 8439-45):

Bedge: Well E and F on here is thirty three.

Mark: Oh right, sorry! That's I me--, erm F and H. Make them both point nine five then.

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61 This may be one reason why those interlocutors with the most power in power-asymmetrical dyads were the ones who apologised more (see Chapter 6).
Misunderstandings apologised for in the corpus characteristically involved speakers talking at cross-purposes. These types of offences were often apologised for once the misunderstanding had been explained and thus resolved; the apology marked that the original line of conversation could be resumed. The following extract from a sales pitch is typical:

Ex. 3.19 (JNY 203-13):

Markus: The price includes VAT,
John: Yeah.
Markus: includes the fitting.
John: What's the waiting time?
Markus: The weighting? Wh--
Gill: How long to wait?
Markus: Oh the waiting time. **Sorry** I thought you were talking about the weights on the
John: Oh no no no.
Markus: <laugh> Erm it's two to three weeks

‘Breach of expectations’:

‘Breach of expectation’ offences were also transgressions which involved a threat to the hearer’s positive face. The apologies uttered for these offences were examples of B&L’s first positive politeness strategy, namely “Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)” (1987:103-104). The speakers apologised for not living up to the addressee’s expectations, by not keeping promises or by rejecting invitations or requests, for example.

The most common type of apology in this category was made retrospectively after a speaker had disappointed someone by not keeping a previously made agreement. Speakers frequently gave reasons for their behaviour in combination with the apologies. Such explanations included something unforeseeable coming up, personal shortcomings or, as in Ex. 3.20, plain forgetfulness. The speakers also frequently offered to repair the ‘damage’ they had caused in some way. The following apology is combined with such an offer (spaghetti bolognais). The conversation takes place between a forgetful husband (Mark, who has left the pork chops at work) and a frustrated wife (Sue).

Ex. 3.20 (KD5 937-43):

Sue: Oh Mark! Oh no you haven't left it at work?
Mark: I have. It'll have to be bis-- spaghetti bolognaise. **Sorry**!
Sue: Oh God! And I keep <-|-> telling you! <-|->

Not all apologies for offences in this category were made retrospectively; many apologies were actually made prior to potentially face threatening acts such as declining an invitation, rejecting an offer or announcing a broken agreement. These apologies thus functioned as disarming devices clearing the ground for the coming transgression. Two types of situations resulted in these ‘Declinations’ and ‘Rejections’ (see Figure 3.5): when the speaker was unable to a) receive something (declinations of offers or invitations), or b) provide something (rejections of requests, or in some other
way being unable to comply with the addressee’s wishes). Apologies for these offences were usually combined with explanations, as in Ex. 3.21, where Tracey refuses to prepare some item of food (exactly what is unclear from the context).

Ex. 3.21 (KB7 1304):

Tracey: <unclear> <laugh> <pause> Sorry I can't do these <unclear> they're off.

‘Accidents’:

The final category of offences leading to ‘Real’ apologies was ‘Accidents’. Examples included minor mishaps, such as spilling coffee or accidentally damaging something, and minor injuries to body, for example hurting someone physically or bumping into a person. Interestingly, many ‘Body accidents’ (see Figure 3.5) occurred when parents, especially mothers, were attending to their children. In the following example a mother (Carol) is putting her daughter Emma to bed:

Ex. 3.22 (KBJ 416-22):

Emma: Get on there.
Carol: Sorry!
Emma: Ah ah!
Carol: I'm sorry! It's my nails. You alright? Let's kiss it better.

In summary, most examples of ‘Real’ apologies involved positive politeness breaches. This important function of apologising has been entirely overlooked by B&L and many other scholars, who have primarily classed apologising as an example of negative politeness.

Offences leading to ‘Formulaic’ apologies:

Apologies for ‘Talk’ offences and ‘Social gaffes’ were almost exclusively formulaic. A typical apology for a ‘Talk’ offence functioned as a discourse management device, and consisted of a simple, detached I’m sorry, sorry or uhm, sorry uttered mid-sentence after a slip of the tongue, a hesitation or a digression. A correction or insertion often followed immediately after the apology, as in Ex. 3.23.

Ex. 3.23 (KBD 5157):

Terri: […] And I'm, I'm faxing <pause> erm <pause> I'm sorry, I'm not gonna fax it, I'm just going to send a letter to national office <pause> about The Savoy in First Leisure.

In contrast, ‘Social gaffes’ were examples of accidental socially unacceptable behaviour such as coughing, burping or hiccupping. Apologies for such events were usually detached from the rest of the conversation. Speakers rarely made any reference to the actual offence. Potentially, this could have resulted in problems in identifying these offences in a transcribed corpus, but fortunately, the offences were usually noted in the transcript as in Ex. 3.24:

---

62 This is an aspect which may well have affected the gender distribution of apologies for this type of offence (see 4.4.1, Chapter 4)
Ex. 3.24 (KDM 4923):

Margaret:  <hiccup> <pause> oh excuse me! <pause> <hiccup> <pause> and excuse me again!

Nevertheless, such comments may have been omitted on a number of occasions, and many of the 125 unidentified offences may well have been social gaffes. Finally, ‘Social gaffes’ classed as ‘others’ in Figure 3.5 included “breaking wind” and speaking or laughing loudly.

‘Talk’ offences and ‘Social gaffes’ are primarily infringements of negative face needs. The former type of offence involves inconveniencing the hearer, who has to reassess the information given. ‘Social gaffes’ are breaches of social taboos and thus the cause of embarrassment. Not apologising for such offences would be a sign of disrespect.

Offences leading to ‘Formulaic apologies with added functions’:

‘Formulaic apologies with added functions’ are essentially short-hand forms of polite requests (Section 3.3). Sorry?, for example, could arguably be paraphrased as, “I am sorry to bother you, but could you repeat that, please”. Used in this context, sorry? has two functions; it is an apology for the inconvenience caused and at the same time it is a cue for repetition. Similarly, excuse me!, uttered as a means of catching someone’s attention, could be paraphrased as “Excuse me for bothering you, but would you spare me a moment’s attention.” As illustrated by the above paraphrases, there were two types of additional functions linked to the apology forms: request cues for repetition and request cues for attention.

Because these types of apologies essentially redressed implied requests, they were examples of negative politeness; the requests were FTAs on a hearers’ negative face needs, i.e. a person’s “want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded” (B&L 1987:129). When B&L (1987:187-190) list “Apologize” as one of ten negative politeness strategies, they are primarily referring to the use of apologising in conjunction with requests.

‘Hearing’ offences:

Apologies for ‘Hearing’ offences were the largest subcategory in this group. A typical apology made for this offence was extremely formulaic, a simple sorry or pardon uttered with a rising tone (indicated by a question mark in the transcript). Typically, the apology was followed by a repetition of what had just been said:

Ex. 3.25 (KE0 4664-6):

PS0T0: Still recording Simmone?
Simmone: Pardon?
PS0T0: Still recording?

---

63 This categorisation of the apologies is further motivated in Section 3.3.
On 84 occasions (see Figure 3.5), the ‘Hearing’ offences involved interlocutors not understanding, rather than not hearing, some aspect of an utterance. Such instances were distinguishable as a reference to what needed clarifying accompanied the apologies (see Ex. 3.26):

Ex. 3.26 (HVF 649-53):

Stuart Cowley: Mr Grigson <unclear> the positive paper this morning was er one item and also the more general question of the nineteen eighty nine projections <unclear> closer than the nineteen eighty five ones. Er we've used the nineteen eighty nine ones but we are reluctant to do so.

We don't necessarily believe that they are all correct in what they say.

R. Whittaker: Sorry the nineteen eighty nine projections for what?

Stuart Cowley: Headship.

Finally, the most problematic ‘Hearing’ offences to classify were what I have chosen to call ‘Exclamations of disbelief’. Such apologies were uttered when the contents of a statement was such that the hearer was taken aback by it, and had to ask the speaker to repeat her/himself just in case there had been a misunderstanding. Such examples, like Ex. 3.27, were classified under ‘Hearing’ offences:

Ex. 3.27 (F7U 120-23):

PS000: What happens if you kill your mummy and daddy?

Danny: Pardon?

PS000: What if you kill your mummy and daddy?

Danny: If you kill your mummy and daddy I'll have to talk to you Peter!

The non-inclusion of prosody in the transcript may have resulted in some apologies uttered as exclamations of disbelief being taken for simple request cues for repetition and vice versa. The classification of this type of apology did indeed place “a heavy interpretational burden on the empirical linguist” (Andersen 2001:18).

An added problem in classifying these apologies was the fact that there were two distinct, but closely related, types of ‘Exclamations of disbelief’. The second type of ‘Exclamations of disbelief’ constituted ‘dummy’ exclamations, where the speaker used the apology as a challenge or reprimand, akin to ‘I dare you to repeat that’. These apologies typically occurred in situations where there was a power asymmetry between the interlocutors, and when the person with less power had previously challenged the more powerful person’s authority. Such situations were classified as ‘Breach of consensus’ offences. In the following example a father (Phillip) is trying to persuade his six-year-old son to get out of the bath:

Ex. 3.28 (KCH 4795-809):

Phillip: Mm mm. Dave! Stop it! Come on, sit up. You've gotta be out in half a second now.

… [interrupted by second son- four utterances]

David: I'm not getting out yet.

Phillip: I beg your pardon?

David: I'm not getting out yet.

Phillip: Aren't you?
David: No!
Christopher: Oh no he's not, he's, he's gonna get out in ten seconds.
David: No I'm not.

In many cases it was difficult to decide whether the exclamation of disbelief was genuine, or challenging. In Ex. 3.27, for example, it may well be that the father was reprimanding the child for his/her macabre ponderings.

‘Request’:

Apologies for the offences in this category were also examples of negative politeness strategies. Most apologies for requests were formulaic, typically the form excuse me uttered when a speaker wanted to catch an audience’s attention before making an announcement. Other examples included people trying to make others aware of their physical presence, when making their way through a crowd for example (categorised as ‘Space’ in Figure 3.5).

A few examples (24) of more extensive requests were also found. Strictly speaking these should not have been classed under ‘Formulaic apologies with added functions’.64 These included the asking of various favours, and the apologies associated with such instances functioned as anticipatory disarming devices performed in order to maximise the potential for a positive answer. In the following example the father (Tony) is rather reluctant to go upstairs to fetch some money, which he owes his daughter (Christine):

Ex. 3.29 (KE3 3000-2):

Tony: I have to go upstairs and get it.
Christine: Ok, **sorry** dad, but I need it in <unclear>.
Tony: Yeah ok.

**Offences leading to ‘Face attack’ apologies:**

Finally, the category ‘Face attack’ apologies represented examples of apologies made before or after premeditated attacks on a hearer’s positive face needs. Such attacks involved differences of opinion or wants being expressed, and consequently these apologies were invariably made in response to ‘Breach of consensus’ offences. In B&L’s scheme of classification such offences are examples of acts that “show that S has a negative evaluation of some aspect of H’s positive face” (1987:66).

The authors identify two categories of such acts: firstly acts which indicate that the speaker ‘doesn’t like/want one or more of H’s wants, acts, personal characteristics, goods, beliefs or values” (1987:66); examples include expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt, or ridicule, including speech acts such as complaints, reprimands, accusations, and insults.

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64 Because so few of this kind of apology were found, and because their function (anticipatory disarming devices) was similar to the more formulaic apologies in this category it was deemed acceptable to include them here. In addition, similar politeness (negative) was expressed by these apologies as by other apologies in the category. However, considering their complex syntactic structure, they should arguably have been allocated a category of their own.
Of the examples listed above, reprimands were the most common acts apologised for in the corpus. The apologies were generally uttered prior to the reprimand thus disarming the hearer. Most commonly, reprimands disarmed in this way were made after someone had interrupted another person inappropriately. *Excuse me* was a much used form for such apologies. Typically the reprimand was made by a person in authority (parents, for example) addressing a less powerful interlocutor. In Ex. 3.30 a father (Phillip) is telling his son off for interrupting:

Ex. 3.30 (KCH 2753-55):

```
David: <-|-> Dad I said er <-|-
Phillip: well er, I'm, *excuse me* David I'm talking to Chris. Yeah, they're normally every half
<pause> hour, but
```

Although rare, instances of apologies disarming reprimands made between adults were also found. In the following example a professional interviewer (Rod) is reprimanding a job interviewee (Trevor) for questioning the salary terms (commission based) of the job he is being interviewed for:

Ex. 3.31 (JA2 1320-23):

```
Rod: Yeah but surely *sorry* I I have to why do you question that now? That has to have been
explained to you on the phone. It must have been.
Trevor: Yes.
```

All social pretences are later abandoned (JA2 1354):

```
Rod: <-|-> Trevor with <-|-> respect you've just wasted a hell of a lot of time for you and me
haven't you?
```

The offence category ‘Retaliations’ (see Figure 3.5) was similar to that of reprimands, the difference being that the former were uttered in response to some prior attack made by hearer.

The second category of acts which “show that S has a negative evaluation of some aspect of H’s positive face” in B&L’s taxonomy are acts which indicate that the speaker believes the addressed to be “wrong or misguided or unreasonable about some issue, such wrongness being associated with disapproval” (1987:66). Examples include challenges, contradictions and the expressing of disapproval.

In the corpus approximately half of the offences in the category ‘Breach of consensus’ involved such challenges, contradictions, and expressions of disapproval (‘Contradictions’, ‘Disbelief’ and ‘Others’ in Figure 3.5). Most apologies for such offences functioned as anticipatory disarming devices and they were thus uttered prior to the FTA as in the following example (see also Ex. 3.15, and Ex. 3.38).

Ex. 3.32 (HVH 779-80):

```
Whittaker: *And I'm sorry* if this is going to ruin Mr <gap cause=anonymization desc="last or full name">’s weekend.
PS000: <laugh>
```

---

65 Note the sarcastic use of the polite form “with respect” here (c.f. discussion in Section 3.9).
Whittaker: It is not going to be helpful to have the panel supplied with the information

The category ‘Disbelief’, which involved dummy request cues functioning as challenges to something that had been said, has already been discussed above (see Ex. 3.28).

**In summary:**

Summing up the findings from this section (Figure 3.6), it seems that B&L’s classification of apologies as primarily negative politeness strategies does not cover the full functional range of this speech act; roughly half of the apologies in the corpus were made for offences involving threats to positive face. The categories in the boxes in the figure below refer to the offences leading to negative and positive politeness apologies.

![Figure 3.6. Distribution of apologies for FTAs involving negative and positive face](image_url)
3.5 Offences and apology form

In this section I will take a closer look the forms of the apologies in relation to the type of offence they aim to remedy. I will start by looking at the lexemes used in the explicit apologies for the different offence categories and then continue by looking at how the syntactic frames of these apologies vary in each offence category.

3.5.1 The lexemes used for different offences

The first cross-referential analysis calculated the relative distributions of offences apologised for with each of the lexemes (sorry, pardon, excuse, afraid, apologise, and forgive) were calculated. The analysis yielded two sets of data: i) the relative distribution patterns of the offence categories apologised for with each lexeme (the lightly shaded figure in the top left hand corner of each box in Table 3.3) and ii) the relative distribution patterns of the lexemes used in apologies for each offence category (dark shaded figure in bottom right-hand corner of each box in Table 3.3). The subtotals for the meta-categories ‘Real’ apologies (apologies for offence categories ‘Lack of consideration’, ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’, ‘Breach of expectations’ and ‘Accidents’), ‘Formulaic’ apologies and ‘Face attack’ apologies (apologies for ‘Breach of consensus’ offences) were also calculated.

How to decipher Table 3.3:

When interpreting the results given in Table 3.3, it is possible to see the distributions of offences apologised for using each lexeme by reading the lightly shaded percentages in the top left-hand corners of the boxes vertically down the IFID column (disregard the subtotals here). Conversely, the percentages in the darkly shaded boxes should be read horizontally across the offence row in order to see the distributions of the IFIDs used to remedy each offence category.

For example, from reading Table 3.3 in this manner, it becomes apparent that 20.9 per cent of the offences apologised for with the lexeme sorry were ‘Lack of consideration’ offences, and that 80.2 per cent of the ‘Lack of consideration’ offences were apologised for with the lexeme sorry. By comparing these figures with the overall distributions of the lexemes and the offence categories in the corpus (indicated as percentages in the bottom, ‘Total’ row and the ‘Total’ column to the far right), it is possible to see whether a particular lexeme is/is not preferred as an apology for a particular offence. In the above example, the expected distribution (assuming that each IFID is equally likely to be used for any type of offence) would be 15.5 and 59.3 per cent respectively. In this particular example, it is apparent that sorry is a preferred form in apologies for offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’. This is indicated by the (+) in the bottom right hand corner of the box. Where there was little difference between expected and observed results this position was left empty.

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66 Regret, which was only encountered once in the corpus as an apology for a mistake, was not included (* this explains the total number of apologies in Table 3.3 being 3069 rather than 3070).

67 Note that the categories ‘Formulaic’ apologies and ‘Formulaic apologies with added functions’ have been merged into one category for the sake of simplicity.
Table 3.3: Explicit expressions used in apologies for various offences

Lexemes used in ‘Real’ apologies:

Of the lexemes investigated, sorry was the preferred form in all ‘Real’ apologies accounting for 82 per cent of this category. Other preferred lexemes in this meta-category included apologise (not in apologies for ‘Accidents’, however). The use of afraid was extremely specialised to apologies for offences involving ‘Breach of expectations’. The reason for this specialised function is that the semantic content of afraid makes it a suitable form for introducing ‘bad news’:

Ex. 3.33 (HV0 828-29)

A: Well why don't you bring it over here?
B: Well we can't I'm afraid we're always too drunk to drive.

The forms pardon and excuse were largely avoided in ‘Real’ apologies. One exception was the use of excuse in apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’ offences. In this context, excuse was mainly used to announce untimely exits:

Ex. 3.34 (KDM 7379)

Raymond: Oh well <pause> oh well I think that er would be a good proportion to er Morell's, but then we got to, anyway, excuse me I must go somewhere.

Lexemes used in ‘Formulaic’ apologies:

In the ‘Formulaic’ apologies the use of sorry was much less frequent. It was a preferred form in apologies for ‘Talk’ offences, but relatively rare in the remaining three categories. Pardon was extremely specialised, being used in 78.3 per cent of all apologies made for ‘Hearing’ offences. This form was also used extensively in apologies for ‘Social gaffes’, especially belches.

Ex. 3.35 (KDA 7386):

Stuart: half past seven <pause> <belch> pardon me

Excuse was also a preferred IFID for ‘Social gaffes’, especially for inadvertent coughs and sneezes:

Ex. 3.36 (HES 445):

Evan John: <cough> Ah excuse me

Another offence which was typically apologised for using the form excuse me was requests for attention. Almost all the 78 examples of this offence (see Figure 3.5 in Section 3.4.2) were apologised for with excuse me. The remaining lexemes (afraid, apologise, and forgive) were avoided in ‘Formulaic’ apologies.

Lexemes used in ‘Face attack’ apologies:

In ‘Face attack’ apologies remedying ‘Breach of consensus’ offences, sorry was the most common form used (55.4 per cent). Here, however, the relative distribution of this form was lower than in the sub-corpus as a whole. Excuse was relatively more fre-
quent in this type of apology than in ‘Real’ and ‘Formulaic’ apologies; 22 per cent of the ‘Face attack’ apologies used this form. More specifically, the majority of these apologies were made for contradictions, retaliations and reprimands, as in Ex. 3.37:

Ex. 3.37 (KBW 774-76):

Dorothy: Excuse me mister fingers.
Christopher: <laugh> I didn't taste, I only tasted the bread. So the bread's alright

Of the remaining lexemes, afraid was used most frequently in ‘Face attack’ apologies for ‘Breach of consensus’. These apologies worked as disarmers before contradictions, and they were confined to more formal settings, as in Ex. 3.38, where teachers are discussing grade terminology:

Ex. 3.38 (F7G 265-71)

Don: mean. I think that we must <pause> whe-- when we're, we we must come to some sort of consensus in the staff as to what the levels mean <pause> in inverted commas.
Angela: Can I <pause> suggest belo--, below average <pause> rather than poor?
Paul: I'm afraid I don't like that average.
Angela: I know it isn't ideal
Paul: Ooh no.
Angela: but it's <pause> er it's <pause> a little bit better than poor

In summary:

Of the investigated IFIDs sorry had the most generalised usage, featuring in apologies for all categories of offences investigated. Preferred usage of this form was particularly apparent in ‘Real’ apologies. Usage of the forms apologise and forgive also seemed to be generalised, and to occur mainly in ‘Real’ apologies. It is, however difficult to draw any conclusions from the limited sample of apologies containing these forms. The remaining IFIDs had more specialised usage patterns; the use of pardon was confined mainly to apologies for ‘Hearing’ offences and ‘Social gaffes’; excuse was used mainly to announce untimely exits, in apologies for ‘Social gaffes’, as attention cues, and as disarmers in ‘Breach of consensus’ offences; afraid was used mainly as a disarming device announcing ‘Breach of expectations’.

3.5.2 Apology syntax in relation to offence categories

For the purpose of this part of the study, syntactic forms were grouped into the three meta-categories: i) simple detached forms (sorry, pardon and I’m sorry, for example), ii) detached forms with added markers of politeness (interjection+ apology, apology + epithet, intensifier + apology, and apology + please), and iii) complex syntactic forms (see also Table 3.1 in Section 3.2.2). The distributions of the syntactic categories in apologies for different offences are given in Table 3.4.
### Table 3.4. Syntactic categories used in apologies for different offences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>Simple detached</th>
<th>Detached + marker</th>
<th>Complex</th>
<th>Total Offences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>249 10.9%</td>
<td>122 22.8%</td>
<td>104 40.6%</td>
<td>475 15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>151 6.6%</td>
<td>96 18.0%</td>
<td>27 10.5%</td>
<td>274 8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>163 7.1%</td>
<td>36 6.7%</td>
<td>70 27.3%</td>
<td>269 8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>42 1.8%</td>
<td>29 5.4%</td>
<td>7 2.7%</td>
<td>78 2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Real’ subtotal</td>
<td>605 27%</td>
<td>283 53%</td>
<td>208 81%</td>
<td>1096 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>234 10.3%</td>
<td>62 11.6%</td>
<td>3 1.2%</td>
<td>299 9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>110 4.8%</td>
<td>41 7.7%</td>
<td>4 1.6%</td>
<td>155 5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>935 41.0%</td>
<td>33 6.2%</td>
<td>1 0.4%</td>
<td>969 31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>96 4.2%</td>
<td>23 4.3%</td>
<td>2 0.8%</td>
<td>121 3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Formulaic’ subtotal</td>
<td>1375 60%</td>
<td>159 30%</td>
<td>10 4%</td>
<td>1544 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>215 9.4%</td>
<td>57 10.7%</td>
<td>33 12.9%</td>
<td>305 9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Face attack’ subtotal</td>
<td>215 9%</td>
<td>57 11%</td>
<td>33 13%</td>
<td>305 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>85 3.7%</td>
<td>35 6.6%</td>
<td>5 2.0%</td>
<td>125 4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2280 100%</td>
<td>534 100%</td>
<td>256 100%</td>
<td>3070 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis was carried out in the same way as for the lexeme distributions, and thus yielded the offence distribution for each syntactic category, as well as the distributions of the syntactic categories used in apologies for each offence category. Table 3.4 should be interpreted in exactly the same way as Table 3.3 (for further explanation see How to decipher Table 3.3 in Section 3.5.1).

**Syntactic forms used in ‘Real’ apologies:**

Simple detached syntactic forms were relatively unpopular in ‘Real’ apologies, which consisted of more detached forms with politeness markers and complex syntactic con-
structions than the other types of apologies. Of the politeness markers found accompanying the apologies, emotives were the most common. The use of interjections such as *Oh! Ah* and *Oops!* was especially frequent in apologies for ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’ and ‘Accidents’. Syntactically complex forms were most frequent in apologies for offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’; 40.6 per cent of all the complex apologies were made for this type of offence. Complex apologies were also commonly employed as remedies for ‘Breach of expectation’.

In many of the complex apologies, the clauses, verb phrases or noun phrases accompanying the apologies served as statements of the violations, thus partly functioning as strategies for acknowledging responsibility (see section 3.6). Examples included expressions such as *sorry to ask...* (F7U 545), *sorry to bother you...* (KB9 5377), *sorry to intrude...* (KB7 2052), *sorry to interrupt...* (G4V 406), *sorry to trouble you...* (KE5 223), *sorry to disturb...* (KD5 1658), *excuse me reaching over...* (KC3 1257), and *I’m afraid I forgot to...* (G3U 719).

**Syntactic forms used in ‘Formulaic’ apologies:**

The relative frequencies of simple detached forms in ‘Formulaic’ apologies did not generally deviate markedly from the expected values. One noteworthy exception, however, were apologies for ‘Hearing’ offences; in this category of apologies 96.5 per cent of all the apologies were simple forms such as *sorry?* and *pardon?*. Indeed, 41 per cent of all the detached form apologies in the sub-corpus remedied ‘Hearing’ offences. Detached apologies with politeness markers were marginally the preferred forms of apologies made for ‘Talk’ offences and ‘Social gaffes’. Again, emotives were the most common markers used. Very few of the ‘Formulaic’ apologies had complex syntax forms; 68 of the 1544 apologies included in this meta-category only 10 were syntactically complex. One example is the following apology for a social gaffe uttered by a 72-year-old gentleman: “Pardon me for being so rude.” (KCP 1511).

**Syntactic forms used in ‘Face attack’ apologies:**

‘Face attack’ apologies were made in response to ‘Breach of consensus’ offences. The relative distributions of the various syntactic categories in this group of apologies largely resembled the overall relative distributions of these categories in the corpus as a whole. Complex forms, however, were marginally preferred. The complex syntactic structures encountered here were similar to those of the syntactically complex ‘Real’ apologies above; statements of violations were included in the apologies. In ‘Face attack’ apologies the offence stated in the apology tended to be the act of communication itself. Examples included forms such as: *sorry to press this...* (JAC 405), *sorry to say this...* (KM5 644), *sorry to sound a little perverse...* (HVK 454), *I apologize for the word overspill, but...* (Hvj 438), *forgive me for saying so...* (KPP 4045), and more retaliatory remarks such as *sorry I asked!* (KC8 211) and *I’m sorry I opened my mouth!* (KD7 2600).

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68 This statement is at first sight tautological. *Formulaic* here however refers to the function and not the form, i.e. apologies uttered as a matter of routine for trivial offences (see 2.8.4, and 3.3).
3.6 Additional strategy descriptions

Obviously, all examples of apologies viewed in this study consisted of some form of explicit expression of apology, but as has been pointed out by several authors (Fraser 1981, Olshstain & Cohen 1983, Leech 1983, Holmes 1990, Aijmer 1996 and Meier 1998) this type of apology represents only one of a number of possible apology strategies. Unfortunately, there has been little consensus among authors about how to categorise the additional apology strategies.69

Olshstain & Cohen (1983:22-3) and the CCSARP manual (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper 1989:289-294) list four main strategies and a number of sub-strategies other than IFIDS that can be interpreted as apologies. These include:

1. Taking on responsibility:
   - Explicit self-blame
   - Showing lack of intent
   - Justifying hearer’s right to react
   - Expressing embarrassment
   - Expressing self-deficiency
   - Admission of facts but not responsibility
   - Refusal to acknowledge guilt

2. Explanation or account (“objective” reasons for the violation).70

3. Offer of repair.

4. Promise of forbearance.

‘Concern for the hearer’ is not listed as an independent apology strategy, but as a strategy of IFID intensification in their taxonomy. The CCSARP taxonomy, which has formed the basis for the taxonomy systems of many apology studies to date (Trosborg 1987,71 Holmes 1990, Suszczynska 1999 are just three examples), has been criticised by Meier (1998:222), who quite correctly points out that the strategy ‘Taking on responsibility’ listed in the CCSARP manual includes sub-strategies which actually involve the partial or total rejection of responsibility.

Apology studies from the field of social psychology have focused on evaluating the success of various apology strategies, particularly accounts, and the taxonomies used here have consequently differed from those used in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics. The main difference is the distinction social psychologists make between two types of accounts, ‘excuses’ and ‘justifications’.72 In these taxonomies ‘excuses’ are defined as “socially approved vocabularies for mitigating or relieving...

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69 Meier (1998:222) points to this lack of consistency as a major problem when comparing findings from different studies.
70 Under the CCSARP system explanations which are subjective, such as “I missed the bus”, should be included under the category ‘Taking on responsibility’.
71 Trosborg does not actually include refusal of guilt or responsibility as part of her category ‘Acknowledgement of responsibility’ (1987:151).
72 Most of these taxonomies are modifications of the system devised by Scott and Lyman (1968).
responsibility when conduct is questioned” (Scott & Lyman 1968:47), and include such strategies as appeals to accidents, appeals to defeasibility,\(^{73}\) appeals to biological drives and scape-goating. Justifications, on the other hand, involve the acceptance of responsibility for an act, but a denial of its pejorative quality.

Meier (1997:207-8) provides yet another taxonomy with no less than 17 so-called ‘repair work strategies’ (RWS). These fall into one of three categories:

- Strategies involving the speaker understanding the hearer’s position and showing appreciation of the hearer’s feelings. Examples include acceptance of blame, redress, and concern for the hearer.

- Strategies which involve making the hearer understand the speaker’s position. Examples include appeals to the victim’s understanding, excuses and justifications.

- Strategies involving the speaker and hearer meeting halfway and where the focus is on absolution, i.e. attempts to wipe the slate clean. Routine formulae and expressions of hope for the continuation of the status quo are mentioned as examples of this category.

The goal of RWSs, according to Meier, is to repair a damaged image, “thereby assuring the hearer that the speaker is a bona fide member of the group, who can be counted on to act appropriately in the future” (1997:198).\(^{74}\) Meier’s taxonomy is useful because it provides a framework for analysing ego/alter aspects of politeness.

The study of additional strategies in this study – taxonomy:

The focus of this study is on the explicit expressions of apologies, but nevertheless an attempt was made to look at additional strategies accompanying these. A simplified taxonomy for the overall analysis of the data was devised, based on the speakers’ inclination to take on responsibility (explicitly or inexplicitly), or to reject responsibility for the offence (partly or totally). Table 3.5 gives some examples of strategies included under each category:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TAKING ON RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>MINIMISING RESPONSIBILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit acknowledgement e.g. <em>My fault!</em></td>
<td>Explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect acknowledgement such as:</td>
<td>Scapegoating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Self-deprecation e.g. <em>I’m an idiot!</em></td>
<td>Excuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Offer of repair</td>
<td>Justifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise of forbearance(^{75})</td>
<td>Claiming lack of intent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{73}\) Situations where the ‘will’ of the offender is not seen as free.

\(^{74}\) Cf. Jary 1998.

\(^{75}\) Arguably this strategy should form a separate category but only three examples were found in the corpus.
Procedure:

Conversation immediately preceding and following explicit apologies was scrutinised for additional use of strategies, and these were noted when found. The results obtained should not be interpreted as the total frequencies of these strategies in the corpus; alternative apology strategies unaccompanied by explicit apologies, or far removed from these will not have been covered by the method. The results are, however, useful for comparative analysis of various text types and speakers of different social groupings within the study.

Results:

In all, 582 instances of additional strategies used in close combination with explicit apologies were recorded in the material. This suggests that 81 per cent of the apologies investigated involved the use of an explicit apology expression only, without explanations, justifications, acknowledgements of responsibility etc.

The relatively small number of apologies accompanied by additional strategies (19 per cent) found in this study was mirrored in the results of Aijmer’s (1996:95) corpus study, where only 13.3 per cent (24 of 180) of the apologies found in the LLC were such examples of multiple strategy apologies. In contrast, many other researchers have shown the use of additional strategies in apologising to be much more frequent. Such strategies were used with explicit apologies in 89 per cent of the speech acts investigated in Meier’s study (1992), and in approximately 55 per cent of the apologies investigated in Holmes’s study (1990), for example.

A difference in methodological approach is the most likely explanation for the discrepancies observed. Studies based on elicited data or second-hand reports probably give a false picture of general apologetic behaviour since they ignore trivial offences. In the corpus, apologies for more serious offences, such as ‘Breach of expectations’ for example, were much more complex than apologies for trivial offences.

Of the two main strategies listed in Table 3.5, ‘Taking on responsibility’ was relatively rare. Only 106 instances of this strategy used in combination with explicit apologies were found. In contrast, additional strategies of the category ‘Minimising responsibility’ were used in combination with explicit apologies on 439 occasions in the corpus. In a small number (37) of apologies a combination of strategies was used. Many of these involved an explanation or excuse combined with an offer of repair as in the following example:

Ex. 3.39 (H49 910-12):

Anne: Shall I, I shall have to apologize to the council, cos I mean I did do the, the survey of the erm residents and of course I had flu last month, I do apologize, I didn't actually manage to get that done. But if you still want me to do it I will do it.

There are discrepancies in results concerning the use of additional strategies with explicit apologies; some studies indicate that almost all apologies tend to include some form of explicit apology which then may or may not be accompanied by other strategies; Holmes (1990:168), for example found that 94 per cent of the apologies in her material contained explicit apologies at some stage. Other studies have found the use of explicit apologies in apologising less frequent; only 7.2 per cent of the native English speakers in Trosborg’s (1987) study, for example, used explicit apologies. She attributes this low usage of explicit apologies to the severity of the offences in her study.

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76 There are discrepancies in results concerning the use of additional strategies with explicit apologies; some studies indicate that almost all apologies tend to include some form of explicit apology which then may or may not be accompanied by other strategies; Holmes (1990:168), for example found that 94 per cent of the apologies in her material contained explicit apologies at some stage. Other studies have found the use of explicit apologies in apologising less frequent; only 7.2 per cent of the native English speakers in Trosborg’s (1987) study, for example, used explicit apologies. She attributes this low usage of explicit apologies to the severity of the offences in her study.
Peter: I think it would be probably worthwhile erm talking to the residents down there, and actually explaining that th-- what's happening to them.

The relative distributions of the two main categories ‘Taking on responsibility’ and ‘Minimising responsibility’ are given below in Figure 3.7.

![Proportional distribution of non-explicit apology strategies](image)

**Figure 3.7. Proportional distribution of non-explicit apology strategies**

*Strategies involving taking on responsibility for the offence used in the corpus:*

Acknowledging responsibility for an offence was either done explicitly or more subtly, by displaying self-deprecation or by offering some form of damage reparation. Explicitly taking on the responsibility for an offence by accepting the blame was relatively rare in the corpus. When this strategy was used, it tended to appear in apologies for ‘Accidents’ (situations where the lack of intent was understood), or in apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’ or ‘Breach of expectation’ offences in ‘host/guest’ dyads. The strategy was often combined with reparation offers as in the following example, where a housewife, Dorothy, has served ‘inadequate’ cakes to her guests:

**Ex. 3.40 (KBW 14893):**

Dorothy: Oh dear, yeah that was my fault, *sorry* <pause> now if you have my plate then you won't have any trouble with that <pause> erm, what <|-|> <unclear> <|-|>

Self-deprecation was common in apologies for trivial ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’. In the following example Joanne, aged thirteen, apologises to her friend for her spelling, but partly justifies her lack of knowledge:
The Apology

Ex. 3.41 (KCE 3334-8):

Joanne: How do you spell it?
Helena: C H.. double E K. <pause> You can't spell anything you.
Joanne: I know, I'm crap at spelling, I'm sorry. But nobody's perfect.

Strategies involving minimising the responsibility for an offence:

Strategies involving partial or total rejection of responsibility typically involved providing explanations, which in some way relieved the speaker of personal responsibility for the offence by placing the blame on circumstances beyond his/her control, in some cases even on a third party (scape-goating, see Ex. 2.2). In the following example, Dorothy blames an abstract outside agent (the English school system) for her having to rush her three-year-old daughter:

Ex. 3.42 (KBW 16926):

Dorothy: I'm sorry mummy had to rush us so much this morning it's just when we're in a rush we have to get to school on time you see, it's a bit rotten when you're only three isn't it?

Similarly, the following declination, a common ‘Breach of expectation’ offence, is accompanied by an explanation serving a similar function:

Ex. 3.43 (JYN 1029-30):

PS6NR: <-|-> Yeah I was wondering about using tape <-|-> actually.
PS6NM: I'm afraid I, I've only got one spare tape recorder and I've lent it to somebody already <voice quality: laughing> erm <end of voice quality>

Justifications, serving as a means of legitimising an offence, were relatively common in apologies for ‘Breach of expectation’ offences. When employed, these usually involved putting the blame for the breach on circumstances beyond the control of the speaker. In the following example, Ann, a registered child-minder, apologises for not letting James take his toys outside, but justifies her action:

Ex. 3.44 (KB8 9423-26):

James: please can I have <-|-> the cars and bikes out <-|->
Ann: <-|-> why's he mumbling <-|-> like that all the time?
James: please
Ann: no I'm sorry but you can't have the cars and bikes out because it's tea time and you're going home for your tea, Bryony's had her hair cut and mummy's come back

Additional strategy usage and politeness:

According to many authors the aim of an apology is to remedy a transgression. To achieve this aim, strategies involving taking on responsibility for the transgression are arguably most successful. There is, however, a limit to how much face a speaker can lose before his/her image as a bona fide member of a group is damaged. Such considerations motivate the use of the second category of strategies listed above, namely those minimising the speakers’ responsibility for the transgression.
Of the two main categories of strategies examined, those involving the minimising of responsibility for an offence occurred approximately four times more frequently than those involving taking on responsibility. The preference for strategies involving the rejection of responsibility for an offence seen in the BNC can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, this can be seen as evidence that the function of apologising in British culture is generally ego-oriented, a strategy aimed at preserving one’s image in the eyes of others. Justifications, for example, can only be interpreted as self-image preservation devices.

On the other hand, in certain situations explanations and excuses can be negative politeness strategies aimed at dissociating the speaker and the addressee from a particular infringement. In some situations an unqualified taking on of responsibility for an offence can be perceived as insulting by the offended. Apologising and saying it was your fault when arriving late to a lecture, without providing an explanation, for example, indirectly conveys an attitude of indifference.

3.6.1 Offences and additional apology strategy usage

In this section, I will take a closer look the strategies used in apologising in relation to the type of offence they are aimed at remedying. The apology strategies are grouped into four categories: i) explicit apology only, ii) explicit apology with an added strategy minimising the responsibility for the offence (explanations and justifications, for example) iii) explicit apology with an added strategy involving taking on responsibility for the offence, and iv) explicit apology with combined usage of strategies involving minimising and taking on responsibility. The distributions of these different strategies in apologies for different offences are then calculated. Again the meta-categories ‘Real’, ‘Formulaic’ and ‘Face attack’ apologies are viewed separately. The results are given in Table 3.6. This table should be interpreted in the same manner as Tables 3.3 and 3.4 (see How to decipher Table 3.3 in Section 3.5.1).

---

77Cf. B&Ls negative politeness strategy 7: Impersonalize S and H (Brown and Levinson 1987:190ff)
Table 3.6. Strategies used when apologising for different offences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>Explicit only</th>
<th>+ explanations and justifications</th>
<th>+ responsibility</th>
<th>Combined usage</th>
<th>Total Offences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>322 (12.9%)</td>
<td>109 (24.8%)</td>
<td>33 (31.1%)</td>
<td>11 (29.7%)</td>
<td>475 (15.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67.8% (+)</td>
<td>22.9% (+)</td>
<td>6.9% (+)</td>
<td>2.3% (+)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>165 (6.6%)</td>
<td>79 (18%)</td>
<td>25 (23.6%)</td>
<td>5 (8.9%)</td>
<td>274 (8.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60.4% (-)</td>
<td>28.9% (+)</td>
<td>9.2% (+)</td>
<td>1.8% (+)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>126 (5.1%)</td>
<td>97 (22.1%)</td>
<td>30 (28.3%)</td>
<td>16 (43.2%)</td>
<td>269 (8.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46.8% (-)</td>
<td>36.1% (+)</td>
<td>11.2% (+)</td>
<td>5.9% (+)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>53 (2.1%)</td>
<td>18 (4.1%)</td>
<td>6 (5.7%)</td>
<td>1 (2.7%)</td>
<td>78 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67.9% (-)</td>
<td>23.1% (+)</td>
<td>7.7% (+)</td>
<td>1.3% (+)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Real’ subtotal</td>
<td><strong>666</strong> (26.8%)</td>
<td><strong>303</strong> (69%)</td>
<td><strong>94</strong> (88.7%)</td>
<td><strong>33</strong> (89.2%)</td>
<td><strong>1096</strong> (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>61%</strong> (+)</td>
<td><strong>28%</strong> (-)</td>
<td><strong>9%</strong> (+)</td>
<td><strong>3%</strong> (+)</td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>279 (11.2%)</td>
<td>16 (3.6%)</td>
<td>2 (1.9%)</td>
<td>2 (5.4%)</td>
<td>299 (9.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>93.3% (+)</td>
<td>5.4% (-)</td>
<td>0.7% (-)</td>
<td>0.7% (-)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>143 (5.7%)</td>
<td>8 (1.8%)</td>
<td>4 (3.8%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>155 (5.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>92.3% (+)</td>
<td>5.2% (-)</td>
<td>2.6% (-)</td>
<td>0% (-)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>964 (38.7%)</td>
<td>4 (0.9%)</td>
<td>1 (0.9%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>969 (31.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99.5% (+)</td>
<td>0.4% (-)</td>
<td>0.1% (-)</td>
<td>0% (-)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>108 (4.3%)</td>
<td>13 (3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>121 (3.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>89.3% (+)</td>
<td>10.7% (-)</td>
<td>0% (-)</td>
<td>0% (-)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Formulaic’ subtotal</td>
<td><strong>1494</strong> (60%)</td>
<td><strong>41</strong> (9.3%)</td>
<td><strong>7</strong> (6.6%)</td>
<td><strong>2</strong> (5.4%)</td>
<td><strong>1544</strong> (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>97%</strong> (+)</td>
<td><strong>2.5%</strong> (-)</td>
<td><strong>0.5%</strong> (-)</td>
<td><strong>0%</strong> (-)</td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>208 (8.4%)</td>
<td>91 (20.7%)</td>
<td>4 (3.8%)</td>
<td>2 (5.4%)</td>
<td>305 (9.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>68.2% (+)</td>
<td>29.8% (-)</td>
<td>1.3% (-)</td>
<td>0.7% (-)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Face attack’ subtotal</td>
<td><strong>208</strong> (8.4%)</td>
<td><strong>91</strong> (20.7%)</td>
<td><strong>4</strong> (3.8%)</td>
<td><strong>2</strong> (5.4%)</td>
<td><strong>305</strong> (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>68%</strong> (+)</td>
<td><strong>30%</strong> (+)</td>
<td><strong>1%</strong> (-)</td>
<td><strong>1%</strong> (-)</td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>120 (4.8%)</td>
<td>4 (0.9%)</td>
<td>1 (0.9%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>125 (4.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>96% (+)</td>
<td>3.2% (-)</td>
<td>0.8% (-)</td>
<td>0% (-)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>2488</strong> (100%)</td>
<td><strong>439</strong> (100%)</td>
<td><strong>106</strong> (100%)</td>
<td><strong>37</strong> (100%)</td>
<td><strong>3070</strong> (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>81%</strong></td>
<td><strong>14%</strong></td>
<td><strong>4%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategies used in ‘Real’ apologies:

‘Real’ apologies were more complex that the other apology categories investigated. Almost 40 per cent of the explicit apologies in this category were accompanied by additional strategies. This figure can be compared to the mean for all the apologies investigated where only 19 per cent of the IFIDs were examples of multiple strategy usage.
The most frequent additional strategies used were those serving to minimise the blame assigned to the offender, explanations and justifications, for example. These types of strategies were particularly common in apologies for ‘Breach of expectations’. In fact, more than 36 per cent of the apologies for ‘Breach of expectations’ made use of this additional strategy; it appears that declining requests, or in some other way being unable to accommodate a person’s wishes are seen as weighty offences in British culture. In this example Ann is unable to give her colleague money:

Ex. 3.45 (KB7 3851-70):

Stuart: happen to have er got er <unclear> <pause> pound coin or two spare <-|-> on you? <-|-
Ann  <-|-> I don't <-|-> think I have any. No, cos I was gonna pay the butchers which I would have had to have changed a note and you said <pause> I'll pay. All I've got is some coppers for the tin. […] <pause> Sorry. <pause>

Explanations were also frequently provided for ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’. In such situations speakers often felt obliged to explain themselves after a misunderstanding had been brought to their attention:

Ex. 3.46 (KDA 5409):

Stuart: Yeah sorry I thought it was <unclear>, I didn't realise these are coming off <-|-> <unclear> <-|->

Strategies involving the taking on of responsibility were also preferred in real apologies. The most frequent (relatively speaking) use of strategies involving acknowledging responsibility was found in apologies for offences involving ‘Breach of expectations’ and ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’. This strategy was also common in apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’ offences.

The use of three or more strategies in the same apology was relatively common in remedies for more serious offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’ or ‘Breach of expectations’. These apologies often figured in public settings and sometimes speakers expended considerable energy to explain themselves in such situations. The following example contains numerous apologies and the offences committed include having broken an agreement and showing lack of consideration. The setting is a British Rail ‘quality assurance seminar’. The offence occurs during the morning session, when one of the speakers somewhat surprisingly leaves the seminar in the middle of his briefing and unexpectedly hands over responsibility for the seminar to his unprepared assistant (strategies involving acknowledgement of responsibility are marked in bold, and those trying to minimise the damage in italics):

Ex. 3.47 (H47 27-32):

Trevor: To provide a professional service satisfact- I’m sorry Dennis, would you just excuse me? Can I hand over to you? I-- I--I do apologize. Right. Sorry about that. <pause>
Dennis: Sorry I'm <unclear> totally unprepared for this.

Trevor later returns and explains himself (H48 2-16):
Trevor: I just came back er ladies and gentlemen to apologize for this morning's cock up, I mean it was totally inexcusable of me. Er I'll explain why it happened an-- and then perhaps you'll hopefully find that you can forgive me, and er then I'll go on and say one or two of the things that I was gonna say this morning but er didn't. I made the mistake this morning of trying to squeeze in er before I came here to just cl-- try and clear another task. Er that was silly er I didn't allow myself sufficient time to prepare for this opening and ob-- obviously to compose myself. The result of that was that by the time I'd rushed across the road, dashed up the stair-- well found the place, dashed up the stairs, I was out of breath and er hadn't composed myself and I just res-- resembled a quivering blob that er

PS000: <laugh>

Trevor: that left you about er twenty past nine.

PS000: <cough>

Trevor: I'd unnecessarily put myself in a stressful situation. It's rather interesting that the only two management er training courses I did last year, were er stress management and time management and I seem to cocked them both up <unclear> <-|->

PS000: <-|-> <laugh> <-|->

Trevor: <laugh> Er anyway as I say er I realized when I'd started talking er that I was digging a bigger and bigger hole for myself so I er I climbed out of it and <-|-> and made an exit. <-|->

Dennis: <-|-> And passed me the shovel. <-|>

PS000: <-|> <laugh> <-|>

Trevor: Er i-- it was insulting to you and I apologize for that. Both for not being prepared, not giving the opening of this course the importance that it did deserve, and obviously for the embarrassment that er you must have felt having to sit there while I made a total fool of myself. Interesting as well that on the subject here to discuss quality, and I didn't bother to, to put a quality presentation together. A-- a-- again I am very very sorry. If I'm g-- go over things that Dennis covered or that have already been covered this morning, I, I will be brief a-- and I just wanted to say these are some of my personal views on the quality initiatives.

What is striking about this apology is the enormous energy that Trevor spends on self-denigration. Interestingly, he is also aware of, and points out (underlined text above) one of the key aspects of Goffman’s face theory, namely that a person making a fool of her/himself is not only an embarrassment to her/himself, but also his/her surroundings.

‘Formulaic’ apologies:

As expected, most ‘Formulaic’ apologies were single strategy explicit apologies. On rare occasions such apologies were, however, accompanied by additional strategies as illustrated by the following examples of multiple strategy apologies for ‘Hearing’, ‘Talk’ and ‘Social gaffe’ offences:

Ex. 3.48 (F77 151):

Andrew: Sorry, I can't hear you Paul. [comments about noise follow later]
Ex. 3.49 (HD5 1094):

Sue: I think the management thing can be addressed in a different way <cough> **erm excuse me** erm, oh I've lost my thread now but, oh yeah that's <-|-> right

Ex. 3.50 (KCH 2747-48)

Phillip: <"blowing nose"> **Oh excuse me!** <pause dur=6> That's the damp grass.

Apologies for ‘Requests’ were the ‘Formulaic’ apologies that were accompanied by most explanations (relatively speaking). Approximately 11 per cent of the apologies requesting attention and space were followed by a statement giving reasons for the appeal, as in the following example:

Ex. 3.51 (KBG 984-85):

Andrew: <-|-> Excuse me <-|-> please, I wanna get over there.
Christopher: Oh!

‘Face attack’ apologies:

‘Face attack’ apologies were primarily accompanied by strategies minimising blame. Such statements were often introduced by the co-ordinating conjunction **but** and included explanations, excuses, justifications and the trivialisation of the offence. For a further illustration of these different strategies see Ex. 3.10 - Ex. 3.14 in Section 3.2.2.

### 3.7 Apparent sincerity level

The final, and in many ways the most problematic, aspect of apologising investigated in this chapter was the ‘apparent sincerity level’ of the apologies. Bach & Harnish (1979:51f) point to the importance of making a distinction between serious and casual apologies, but no research to date has seriously attempted to systematically investigate the factor of sincerity. Judging the sincerity of different apologies was problematic for a number of reasons:

Firstly, only the speaker knows the actual level of sincerity with which an apology is uttered. An important distinction thus needs to be made at this stage; it is only the form of the apology which can be used in determining its level of **apparent** sincerity. For example, knowing the context and the offence committed it is possible to say that an apology with the form **perhaps you'll hopefully find that you can forgive me** (see Ex. 3.47) appears to be sincere. We can assume that the speaker wants the audience to interpret this statement as a genuine apology. Whether s/he feels real remorse and guilt, however, is a different matter and beyond the scope of this study.

Secondly, the tone of an utterance conveys important information about the apparent sincerity of an apology in a conversation. As intonation is not noted in the BNC, determinations of sincerity cannot be made with any absolute certainty. The context of the apologies and their effects on the addressees, however, often provides
useful clues when interpreting the apparent sincerity of the speech acts. Consider the following example of teenage conversation.

Ex. 3.52 (KBM 1360-64):

Steven: Mr sensitivity there, is your fucking hair thickener working.
David: <laugh> Well is it? <laugh>
PS000: Come on <gap cause=anonymization desc="last or full name"> PS000: <unclear>
Chris: ah, he's upset now, I'm sorry <-|-> about it <-|->
Steven: <-|-> I'm not <-|-> <pause>

Thirdly, we know little about the emotional relationships existing between interlocutors. Such factors of affect have been claimed to have an important influence on politeness (Slugowski & Turnbull 1988:101-121).

Despite the difficulties associated with determining the apparent sincerity, this variable was included in the present study. To exclude it would have meant neglecting an important aspect of apologising, and sarcasm, for example, could not have been accounted for.

Each apology was classified as belonging to one of four levels of apparent sincerity. These levels can be envisaged as divisions on a continuum, where one end represents a total lack of apparent sincerity and the other complete apparent sincerity (see Figure 3.8). The apparent sincerity levels are closely correlated with the function of the apologies. Most of the ‘Challenging’ apologies, for example were made for ‘Breach of consensus’ offences.

![Figure 3.8. Apparent sincerity levels](image)

The distributions of apologies of different sincerity levels in the corpus are summarised in Figure 3.9 below.
‘Sarcastic’ apologies:

Only 87 examples of ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were identified in the corpus. In reality, however, this figure may well have been larger. ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were often made for the same offences as ‘Sincere’ apologies and often consisted of the same forms (Section 3.7.1). Without having access to the recordings, it was difficult to say whether the intonation and stress patterns typical of sarcastic remarks were being used or not. The following apology, for example, may well have been overlooked and interpreted as genuine had it not been for the transcriber’s comment:

Ex. 3.53 (KPX 112-14):

Zoe: Please get to the back of the queue!
Robin: <"mimicking girl's voice"> <voice quality: mimicking> Sorry <end of voice quality>!
Zoe: I'm fed up with <unclear>!

‘Sarcastic’ apologies tended to be used as face attacking devices (see also Ex. 3.52). Consider the following example where Danny, a 46-year-old chemistry lecturer, harasses his students. The conversation preceding the ‘apology’ is full of snide remarks and a student finally seems to have had enough:

Ex. 3.54 (F7U 543-46):

Danny: <pause> Kempson <pause> what would you call this one?
<pause dur=9> Don't cry!
<pause> I'm sorry to ask you a question Kempson.
PS000: Can't you be nice for once?
'Sarcastic’ apologies, however, were not always examples of face attacks. There were several instances of these apologies being used as positive politeness devices, made in jest between friends. Such examples were often surrounded by ‘tongue in cheek’ discourse. Speakers belonging to younger age groups, in particular, favoured their use (see 4.4.3). In the following example, three teenagers (Scott, Helena and David) are playing Monopoly with their mother. The atmosphere is one of friendly bantering. Scott is out of money and is looking for a loan:

Ex. 3.55 (KCE 6442-46):

Scott: this is a French private building society
Helena: We're not giving out mortgages at the moment <laugh>
Sheila: I'm sorry we're not giving money away today
David: Yeah, but if you would just like to fill in a form, we will be with you as soon as possible
Helena: In the next three years <laugh> <pause>

‘Sarcastic’ apologies were also used to reject unreasonable requests in a humorous fashion. In the following extract a mother (Dorothy) is having difficulties meeting the culinary demands of her three-year-old son:

Ex. 3.56 (KBW 1208-12):

Tim: 'Mato .
Dorothy: Well I'm sorry. It's a bit difficult to get the tomato out cos it's all chopped in with the mince you see.
Christopher: I'll have the tomato. <pause>
Dorothy: I'm sorry it's not cordon bleu dear like you've been having at Pontepool.

Jesting is also apparent in the following two examples:

Ex. 3.57 (KD8 3934-39):

Martine: Nearly didn't recognize you there Jimbo. <pause>
Jim: Me?
Martine: No, sorry another Jim.
Jim: Oh.
Martine: Jim with a suit on. Must be going to a funeral.

Ex. 3.58 (KD0 4340-41):

Ruth: Oh I thought <|-|> <unclear> <|-|>
Andrew: <|-|> Excuse me <pause> <|-|> just because the tape's on there's no need for you to use big words like prognosis.

In his discussion of sarcastic politeness Culpeper (1996) makes a distinction between sarcastic and ironic remarks. The former are seen as “mock politeness for social disharmony”, while irony is referred to as “mock impoliteness for social harmony”. Using this definition, examples Ex. 3.55 - Ex. 3.58 would probably be examples of irony rather than sarcasm.
‘Challenging’ apologies:

In the corpus, 246 apologies were judged to be ‘Challenging’ apologies. The vast majority of these were made for ‘Breach of consensus’ offences. The ‘tone’78 of these apologies was ‘aggressive’. In the following extract, for example, a teacher, Jean, is getting irritated over a stapler that does not work, and is finding it hard to hide her irritation with the students crowding her:

Ex. 3.59 (KCK 945):

Jean: <-|-> I never have <unclear> <-|-> it's mine actually I told them they have to be very careful, I'm wondering if they put the right size in, excuse me can you go right out the way

Many of the ‘Challenging’ apologies were uttered during arguments or heated discussions. In the following example Stuart and his colleague are arguing over the pros and cons of wearing a helmet when riding a motorbike on the motorway:

Ex. 3.60 (KDA 1939-43):

PS000: About one in two wants to <unclear> with a helmet on.
Stuart: No, sorry you're way out of <-|-> line Chris! <-|->
PS000: <-|-> Yes. <-|-
Stuart: Way out of line, I don't know where you work that one out!
PS000: Oh I dunno.

Similarly, in this transcript from a TV debate, Michael, an anti-terrorist expert, and the TV presenter are at loggerheads over some detail concerning the problems in Northern Ireland:

Ex. 3.61 (HV2 254-58):

Nicky Campbell: But how long would it take for the army, the S A S or whatever to go in and erm clean up the situation as it were? In purely <-|-> practical terms <-|-> ?
Michael: <-|-> Well that <-|-> that is an entirely hypothetical question.
Nicky Campbell: <-|> But in purely practical terms. <-|>
Michael: <-|-> <unclear> <-|-> but I I'm sorry b-- if you would let me answer.

Reprimands were also disarmed using ‘Challenging’ apologies. The following example is taken from a teacher’s conference:

Ex. 3.62 (J8D 1863-67):

J8DPS000: <-|-> No, I'm booked <-|-> for a game of croquet at half past five!
J8DPS004: Pardon?
Rod: Aye, I'm sorry, listen you're here to damn well work you're not <-|-> going off to enjoy
J8DPS000: <-|-> But I'm working! <-|->
Rod: yourself lad!

---

78 ‘Tone’ here refers to my interpretation (qualified guess) of the tone based on contextual factors such as the topic of conversation and addressee response.
Parents also used this type of apology when they were ‘sorting out differences’ with their children. Here a mother, Carol, makes it quite clear to her daughter what they are having for tea:

Ex. 3.63 (KBH 5184-89):

Carol: Shall we cook a chicken?
Charlotte: No I don't want, I don't want <unclear>.
Carol: Oh Charlotte stop whining.
Charlotte: I don't want, I don't want.
Carol: Well I do, I'm very sorry, I want to have chicken, so there.
Will you please be careful what you're doing with that tin!

‘Challenging’ apologies as represented in Ex. 3.59 - Ex. 3.63 are problematic to analyse using politeness theories. Formally, the apologies represent disarming or redeeming devices for attacks on negative and positive face, but the aggression with which they are delivered makes it difficult to equate them with politeness. Instead they seem to be rhetorical devices used routinely in the discourse of disagreement. Speaking from personal experience, the cue “I’m sorry, but…” tends to be a signal for an argument.

‘Casual’ apologies:

There were 1471 examples of ‘Casual’ apologies in the corpus. Almost all of these remedied ‘Talk’, ‘Hearing’ or ‘Social gaffe’ offences and consisted of single detached lexemes such as sorry, sorry? or pardon? Such apologies have been discussed above.

‘Sincere’ apologies:

Finally, there were 1159 examples of apparently ‘Sincere’ apologies in the corpus. The syntactic frames of these were generally more complicated than ‘Casual’ apologies. Politeness markers such as exclamatory interjections and intensifiers, as well as additional strategies such as explanations and acknowledgements of responsibility often accompanied the IFIDs. Such examples have been discussed under the heading ‘Real’ apologies in Sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 and will not be dealt with further here.

3.7.1 A closer look at ‘Sarcastic’ apologies

In this final section, I will briefly consider the offences which led to ‘Sarcastic’ apologies. In other apologies the apparent sincerity of the apologies simply reflected the function of the apologies so that ‘Real’ apologies remedying serious offences were apparently sincere, ‘Formulaic’ apologies made for trivial offences were casual, while the tone of the ‘Face attack’ apologies resulting from ‘Breach of consensus’ was challenging. ‘Sarcastic’ apologies, however, were made for a variety of offences. These are summarised in Figure 3.10.
Figure 3.10. *Offences apologised for using ‘Sarcastic’ apologies*

Although ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were common in confrontational situations (‘Breach of consensus’ offences), there were a number of instances where they ‘remedied’ offences which would normally have merited ‘Real’, ‘Sincere’ apologies. In the following example Richard is trying to make arrangements with his sister, who has other things to do.

Ex. 3.64 (KSV 5575):

Richard: Oh yeah you're absolutely booked up, I have to, I'm sorry I forgot you have such a taxing social life with Stuart <pause> yeah definitely, er

Many of the ‘Sarcastic’ apologies made for offences other than ‘Breach of consensus’ were examples of such ironic, as opposed to sarcastic, usage (see Ex. 3.55- Ex. 3.58).

The syntax of ‘Sarcastic’ apologies:

The syntactic forms of ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were interesting. On the whole apparently hyperpolite forms were common. These included the use of IFIDs associated with formal contexts (apologise, for example), intensifiers (“Oh I do apologize **profusely**” (KCY 1953)) and epithets (“No, sorry **love** I'm not a lesbian” (KBN 1666)). Figure 3.11 summarises the syntactic forms, other than simple detached forms, used in ‘Sarcastic’ apologies in comparison with other more sincere apologies.

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79 Only about 40 per cent of the ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were simple ‘Detached’ forms. This figure can be compared with 55 per cent for ‘Real’ apologies (see Table 3.4).
‘Sarcastic’ apologies were on the whole more complex syntactically than other apologies. Seen proportionally, there were more examples of fully expanded forms such as *I am sorry* and *I beg you pardon* in this group of apologies than in the other apologies. Epithets such as *love* and *darling* also figured more often in ‘Sarcastic’ apologies than in other apologies, as did intensifiers such as *do* and *awfully*. In conclusion, ‘Sarcastic’ apologies resemble ‘Sincere’ apologies in form except that the politeness is exaggerated. Based on these results, we can thus say that in British English in the 1990s “awfully polite is rude”.

### 3.8 Summary

This chapter has investigated the forms and functions of the various apologies which were found in the corpus. In order to structure the findings, a number of different taxonomies were employed. Some of these taxonomies were based on systems used in previous studies, while others were devised specifically for the purpose of this study. The defining criteria for the different systems of categorisation varied depending on which specific aspects of apologising were being investigated.

In Section 3.2, the form of the apologies was the object of interest. Two features were investigated; the lexemes used in the IFIDs and the syntactic structures in which these occurred. An investigation of the distribution of the different lexemes in the corpus showed that *sorry* was the most common IFID used in British English followed by *pardon* and *excuse*. The remaining lexemes investigated, *afraid, apologise, forgive* and *regret* were relatively rare.
In order to investigate the syntax of the apologies, a categorisation system based on the syntactic simplicity/complexity of the apologies was constructed. Three meta-categories were identified: i) ‘Detached’ forms – those apologies which consisted of the actual IFID only, without intensifiers or qualifying clauses, ii) ‘detached forms with additional markers’ – apologies with additional markers of politeness such as intensifiers or interjections, but without qualifiers, and iii) ‘complex forms’ in which a completer was present in the actual syntactic frame of the apology (sorry about the mess, for example). The first of these three categories was by far the most common in the corpus. More than 74 per cent of the apologies found were examples of such simple, formulaic forms. Of the remaining two categories, ‘detached apologies with additional markers’ were more common, accounting for 17.4 per cent of the apologies. The most common form in this group was sorry marked with an exclamatory emotive (Oh sorry!). Syntactically complex forms were relatively rare.

In Section 3.3, functional aspects of the apologies were examined. Two different perspectives were considered. The first of these was the apology functions in relation to the concept of the ‘prototypical’ apology (i.e. an expression of real regret for a non-trivial transgression). The apologies encountered in the corpus could be divided up into four distinct groups with the following distributions: i) 36 percent of the IFIDs were ‘Real’ apologies that corresponded to the concept of the prototypical apology, ii) 15 per cent were ‘Formulaic’ apologies which remedied trivial offences and where the display of regret was minimal iii) 35 per cent of the apologies were ‘Formulaic with added functions’, apologies which, like the previous category, were formulaic but which also functioned as request cues, and iv) 10 per cent were ‘Face attack’ apologies that disarmed premeditated attacks on a hearer’s positive face needs. Formulaic usage of the apology form thus accounted for approximately half of all the investigated speech acts. Secondly, temporal aspects of apologising were considered in this section. Two types of apologies were distinguishable: approximately 50 per cent of the apologies were ‘Disarmers’, made in anticipation of a potentially face threatening act, and 48 per cent were ‘Redeemers’, apologies remedying an offence which had already been committed.80

In section 3.4, the events which resulted in apologies being made were identified. Nine offence categories with the following distributions were distinguished: ‘Hearing’ offences (31.6 per cent), ‘Lack of consideration’ offences (15.5 per cent), offences involving ‘Breach of consensus’ (9.9 per cent), ‘Talk’ offences (hesitations, slips of the tongue etc.- 9.7 per cent), ‘Misunderstandings and mistakes’ (8.9 per cent), ‘Breach of expectations’ (8.8 per cent), ‘Social gaffes’ (5.0 per cent), ‘Requests’ (requests for attention- 3.9 per cent), and ‘Accidents’ (2.5 per cent). In 4.1 per cent of the apologies the offences remained unidentified.

In section 3.4.2 the offences were described in more detail and illustrated with various examples from the corpus. I also considered whether the apologies for the various offences were examples of negative or positive politeness. Contrary to expectations based on B&L’s classification of apologising as a negative politeness strategy, approximately half of the investigated speech acts redressed attacks on the positive face needs of the hearer.

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80 Two per cent of the apologies could not be assigned to either of these categories due to incomplete information about the offences they remedied.
Section 3.5 considered the form of the apologies in relation to the offences they remedied. An analysis of the distributions of the lexemes in apologies for different offences (Section 3.5.1) revealed that some forms such as sorry, apologise and forgive had broad fields of application, while other forms were more specialised and used to remedy one or two types of offences only. Pardon was the most specialised form in the corpus, being used almost exclusively to remedy ‘Hearing’ offences. Excuse me was also relatively specialised, the main types of offences remedied with this form being requests for attention, inadvertent coughs and sneezes and ‘Breach of consensus’. The form afraid was primarily used as a disarmer for ‘Breach of expectations’.

In Section 3.5.2, the syntactic forms of the apologies were viewed in relation to the offences. ‘Real’ and ‘Face attack’ apologies were structurally more complicated than the ‘Formulaic’ apologies, where approximately 90 per cent of the IFIDs were detached forms.

In Section 3.6, additional strategies used in conjunction with explicit apologies were found to belong to one of two categories: i) strategies functioning as means of acknowledging responsibility for an offence, and ii) strategies involving minimisation of responsibility for the offence. The strategies concerned with self-image preservation constituted the second of these categories and were more common in the corpus, accounting for 76 per cent of the additional strategy usage.

In section 3.6.1, the uses of the two categories of additional strategies were examined in relation to various offences. Again, ‘Real’ and ‘Face attack’ apologies were more complex in that they were frequently accompanied by additional strategies. The bulk of examples of additional strategies involving acknowledgement of responsibility were found in ‘Real’ apologies. In contrast, explanations and justifications were the strategies most commonly combined with apologies for ‘Face attacks’. Many of the most complex multi-strategy apologies in the corpus were made for ‘Breach of expectations’.

Section 3.7, focused on the apparent sincerity of the apologies. The ‘tone’ of the apologies was interpreted and a taxonomy consisting of four categories was devised: ‘Sarcastic’ (2.8 per cent of the apologies), ‘Challenging’ (8 per cent), ‘Casual’ (48 per cent) and ‘Sincere’ (38 per cent). The 87 examples of ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were subsequently analysed in more detail in Section 3.7.1, and were found to have structures similar to those of ‘Sincere’ apologies, but with exaggerated markers of politeness (Oh, I do apologise profusely, for example).

On a final note, comparisons of the findings from this study with those from apology studies of naturalistic speech showed that the method employed in data collection seemed to have a marked effect on the results. Of the studies examined, the results from Aijmer’s LLC corpus study corresponded most closely the findings from the present study. Overall, the investigations in this chapter have shown that form and function are closely interrelated in apologising. Figure 3.12 illustrates this interrelation in the apologies found in the corpus.
Figure 3.12. Overview of the relationship between form, function, complexity, sincerity and offence.

* The boxes outside the circle represent the offences which led to the apologies. The inner circle illustrates the complexity of the remedial acts as reflected by syntactic structure and the combinations of strategies used when apologising. The apologies in italics represent examples of typical apologies; the curved, bold text show their typical pragmatic function. The examples given are stereotyped in order to illustrate the general tendencies; in reality there were many examples of simple, single strategy ‘Real’ apologies.
3.9 Discussion

It is interesting that most dictionary definitions and indeed most linguists would simply equate apologising with a speech act addressed to a hearer’s face needs, intended to remedy an offence for which the speaker takes responsibility. When one views the functions of the apology form as used by native English speakers, however, a more complex picture emerges. The apology is indeed sometimes a remedy, but more often it is a request cue, or a discourse management device, or something you just say after coughing, and at times, apologising can even be a way of introducing a challenge.

But before discussing these alternative uses of the apology form, let us first consider the ‘Real’ apologies found in the corpus from a politeness perspective. Firstly it was evident that apologising is not an example of primarily negative politeness, as has often been claimed in earlier research. Most of the real apologies were made because speakers had failed to satisfy hearers’ positive face needs – the desire to be liked, admired, cared about, understood, listened to etc. Thus, when made sincerely, apologies tended to be ways of showing that the speaker cared about the feelings of others. Only rarely did real apologies signal a speaker’s disinclination to intrude on someone’s personal space.

However, when the forms of the remedial acts in the corpus were examined it became clear that a show of concern for others was not the only function evident in these polite acts. More often than not, an important additional function was to get the speaker “off the hook”, or to place the offender in a better light than s/he perhaps deserved, sometimes even at the expense of a third party (see Ex. 3.17). Evidence of the ego-centric functions of apologies was seen in syntactic features such as the preference for the form sorry about that rather than sorry about this, the preferred usage of but rather than and as a conjunction co-ordinating the apology with the subsequent clause, and in forms such as I am sorry if I offended you. Moreover, the clear preference for additional strategies aimed at minimising the responsibility of the speaker for the offence showed that apologies clearly have an important additional function, namely restoring the speaker’s self-image. All of the evidence listed above shows that the apology functions as a means of distancing the speaker from the cause of the offence by blaming external circumstances, or by showing that the action was entirely unintentional.

However, in the majority of the apologies in the corpus neither ego nor alter-oriented politeness was evident. These apologies were entirely formulaic and arguably uttered more or less reflexively. The high frequencies and limited variations of such routinised forms show that the formulae associated with politeness norms are firmly ingrained in the minds of the native speakers. Many examples from the corpus also illustrated this socialisation process, which starts at an early age (see Ex. 2.1). Politeness viewed from this perspective is thus not so much a matter of redressing hearer or speaker face needs, but merely of doing what is socially acceptable.

In the case of apologising in face attacks it appears that here too a certain amount of routinisation has taken place. Intuitively, we recognise forms such as excuse me, but... and pardon me madam! as challenges and these forms were also evident in the corpus. Arguably, certain polite forms have been used to legitimise impolite acts so frequently that we have come to equate them with face attacks. The structure of ‘Sarcastic’ apologies also showed that hyperpolite forms tended to be used as markers
of insincerity in the corpus. I do not believe that the apology is the only polite form which has developed this contradictory function. Consider the use of *thank you* meaning “I am disappointed with you because you did not support/help me” or *thank you!* meaning “stop it”, or the inappropriate use of honorifics (*Now you go to bed mister!*), or the brusque *Good day!* as someone slams the door.

In conclusion, the range of functions and forms of the apologies in the corpus supported Mattson Bean & Johnstone’s claim that there is a functional continuum of apologies (see 2.8.4). However, an extra dimension covering (in)sincerity signalled through uses of this speech act should arguably be added to their model if all uses of this versatile speech act are to be accounted for.
Chapter 4

Variation across Speaker Social Variables

4.1 Introduction

Arguably, most native speakers of British English are intuitively aware that social variables such as gender, age and social class affect politeness norms. In linguistic research to date, however, it is primarily gender differences in politeness behaviour that have been the focus of attention. A number of politeness phenomena, including apologies, have been investigated and, based on the findings from such studies, some authors have come to the conclusion that “women are more polite than men” (Holmes 1995:1). In spite of the acknowledged importance of the effects of speaker age and social class on language production, as shown in classical sociolinguistics studies (Labov 1966 and 1972, Trudgill 1974, and Cheshire 1987), little has been written on the effects of these two variables on politeness behaviour. 81 In this study, the potential effects of speaker age and social class on apologetic behaviour are assigned potential explanatory status equal to that accorded to gender. Thus they will be systematically examined in the corpus.

More specifically, aspects investigated include social differences in the frequency of use of the apology form, as well as typological differences in the apologies produced. The questions addressed include:

- Do certain social groups 82 use the speech act of apologising more frequently than others?
- Do different social groups tend to apologise for different offences?
- What differences exist in the use of additional apology strategies between various social groups?
- Are there social group variations in the apparent sincerity level of apologies in the corpus?
- What do the findings say about social differences in the use of this form in the Great Britain of the 1990s?

The emphasis of this chapter is on the social identity of the speaker. Obviously the conversational setting and the identity of the person addressed are also of major importance when considering apologetic behaviour and these aspects will be dealt with in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

81 One exception is Andersen 2001, whose study on the use of pragmatic markers in the COLT and the BNC includes an analysis of the effect of the social variables age and social class on the use of invariant tags and follow-ups.

82 Refers to the social variables gender, age and social class.
4.2 Interpreting a skewed corpus – problems and solutions

One of the major challenges of this study lay in interpreting the results, isolating the effects of each of the investigated independent variables influencing apologetic behaviour. In an experimental situation it is relatively easy to control for different factors so that the effects of one variable at a time can be investigated. For instance, a researcher investigating gender differences in apologetic behaviour may choose an equal number of male and female subjects of similar age and social class, and test the responses of these individuals to identical stimuli. In an ideal experimental situation, the measured differences in responses between the two groups should thus be a measure of gender effects on politeness behaviour. In the present study, matters were not so simple, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the corpus was skewed for the variables gender, age and social class (Tables 1-4 in Appendix 4). Consequently, adjustments for corpus imbalances had to be made before quantitative comparisons of apologising between speaker groups were possible. More specifically, the apology rate per 100,000 words spoken for each individual included in the study was calculated. As apologetic behaviour varied across individuals depending on social class etc., each individual in the corpus had to be given equal value in the statistical analysis. The mean apology rate of a particular social group could then be calculated from these individual rates.

Furthermore, while gender and age were known for all the speakers included in the present study, social class information was more sporadic. There was no indication of social class for many of the speakers in the DS texts, and practically all the speakers in the CG texts. The resultant sub-corpus used to investigate social-class variation was thus significantly smaller than the overall corpus and consisted of approximately 2 million words produced by 195 speakers (Table 2 in Appendix 4). All the conversations included in this sub-corpus were taken from the less formal recordings of the DS part of the BNC. As a result, the effect of the social class of the speaker could not be accounted for when comparing apologising in formal and informal speech. This chapter reports separate analyses carried out on the overall corpus and the ‘social-class sub-corpus’.

An added difficulty when interpreting the results was that speakers of different age and gender did not figure equally in formal and informal speech. Females and younger individuals, for example, were heavily underrepresented in the more formal CG texts. As a consequence of this imbalance, a straight comparison of the apologetic behaviour of males and females in the corpus would have been misleading if formality remained unaccounted for in the analytical model. Similarly, the size of the conversational group was another factor which had to be included in the model.

The BNC employs relatively fine scales when describing the social characteristics of the speakers. There are six age groups (0-14, 14-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-59 and 60+) and four distinct social classes: AB described as “top or middle management, administrative or professional”, C1 described as “junior management, supervisory or clerical”, C2 making up the “skilled manual workers”, and DE, the “semi-skilled or unskilled workers” (The BNC Handbook, Burnard 1995).

83 Note, however, that people who produced very little speech were not included in the calculations. For an explanation of this praxis and further discussion of the statistical method, see Appendix 3.
After careful consideration, it was decided to merge some speaker categories. This merger resulted in three age categories: 0-24-year-olds, 25-44-year-olds and 45+-year-olds. Arguably, the first of these categories, the 0-24-year-olds is problematic, and grouping small children with young adults may at first sight seem frivolous. However, here it must be pointed out that teenagers (13 and 14 year-olds) comprise over 67 per cent of the individuals in the original 0-14 age category. Similarly, teenagers (15, 16, 17, 18 and 19-year-olds) represent the majority of the speakers in the original 15-24-year-old category. Thus, while two age categories, namely 0-14 and 15-24-year-olds, represented adolescent speakers in the original BNC taxonomy, this group is represented here by one category only (0-24-year-olds).

The social class categories were also merged to produce two groupings: AB and C1 speakers were merged to form the category ‘middle-class’ speakers and C2 and DE speakers were merged to form the category ‘working-class’ speakers. The apologetic behaviour of the original four social class groupings was studied before this merger was decided upon. Preliminary analyses of the results showed that the number and types of apologies produced by AB and C1 speakers were very similar, and that these were very distinct from those produced by the C2 and DE speakers (who also displayed similar apologetic behaviour). The merger was thus deemed justified.

The final models constructed for analyses of the sociolinguistic data accounted for several independent variables. These variables included the age, gender and social class of the speaker, as well as the formality of the situation in which the conversation took place and the number of people present at the time the apology was made. Dependent variables included a) the total apology rate and b) the typology of the apologies produced. Three typological aspects were systematically considered: the offences leading to apologies, the use of additional strategies in combination with the explicit apologies and the apparent sincerity of the apologies. In addition, Chapter 5 includes a comparison of the lexemes and syntactical structures favoured in apologies produced in formal versus informal conversations. Naturally, statistical tools were needed to elucidate the complex interrelationships of all these variables.

4.2.1 Statistical models used in Chapters 4 and 5

Caution needed to be taken when analysing the results so that “conclusions about the language [were] not based on results obtained by, inadvertently, studying a skewed sample” (Berglund 1999:48). When comparing the apologies produced by men and women, for example, observed ‘gender’ differences may in fact have been an effect of the different stylistic levels (informal and formal) of speech produced by these two groups in the corpus (men tended to be overrepresented in formal conversations).

In order to avoid such potential misinterpretations of the data, the effects of independent variables not being studied at the time had to be accounted for. For this purpose two statistical methods were employed in Chapters 4 and 5. Firstly, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for the total frequency analysis, and secondly, log-linear modelling was used for the analysis of the variation of typological aspects of the apologies.

84 A careful study of preliminary results showed that little descriptive value would be lost by this merger.
ANOVA:

In the ANOVA test, here used to elucidate the effects of independent variables on the total apology rates, the key statistic is the ‘F-test of difference’ of group means. This test checks whether the group means (based on the independent variables speaker age, speaker gender, speaker social class, formality and group size in this study) differ sufficiently from the overall mean to preclude their occurrence by chance. If the group means do not differ significantly then the inference is that the independent variable(s) did not have an effect on the dependent variable. However, if the F-test shows that the independent variables affect the dependent variable (in this study, apology frequency per 100 000 words spoken), then ‘multiple comparison tests’ of significance are used to explore just which value groups of the independent(s) are most concerned in the relationship (see Oakes 1998:22-24; Woods, Fletcher and Hughes 1986:194-223, for further details).

Two different ANOVA models were used on the data. Firstly the ANOVA test used to analyse the entire corpus, accounted for the effects on the total apology rate of the following independent variables:

- a) speaker gender (male or female)
- b) speaker age (0-24, 25-44, or 44+-year-olds)
- c) formality of the conversation (informal or formal)
- d) the group size (dialogue or multilogue)

The social class of the speaker was not included in this model since this information was unavailable for speakers participating in the formal conversations.

A second model was employed on the smaller social-class sub-corpus. Because these speakers were found in the informal DS texts only, and because these texts tended to constitute interactions among three or more participants, the model only had to account for the effects of the following independent variables:

- a) speaker gender (male or female)
- b) speakers age (0-24, 25-44, and 44+-year-olds)
- c) speaker social class (middle class and working class)

Log-linear modelling:

When considering variation in the types of apologies produced by different speaker groups in different situations, ANOVA was inadequate. I wanted to elucidate which independent variables were significant in deciding the types of apologies produced, and to what extent the degree of observed variance in the typological sub-categories could be accounted for by each variable. Because several sub-categories were involved in each main typological category, and because several independent variables may

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85 Typological aspects examined in this chapter were a) the different offences leading to apologies, b) the additional strategies used, and c) the apparent sincerity of the apologies.
have affected the distributions of these, simple chi-square tests were not sufficient to describe the these potentially complex effects. Instead log-linear analysis was used.

Essentially, the log-linear model makes it possible to take a standard frequency cross-tabulation of more than two dimensions and determine which variables seem statistically most likely to be responsible for a particular effect. For example, it was possible to hypothesise several factors which could have affected the use of apologies of different sincerity levels. More specifically, the gender, age or social class of the speaker may have affected the choice to use ‘Challenging’ apologies. Similarly it may have been the formality of the situation or the number of people present which decided whether speakers used the form or not. Any one of these factors may have been solely responsible for the observed patterns of usage, or a combination of factors may have been responsible. Interaction effects between different independent variables may also have been operating on the data. The log-linear analysis provides a number of models which take these aspects into account.

The way that models are tested in log-linear analysis is that a ‘saturated model’ is first constructed. This model takes all of the independent variables and all possible interactions of these into account, and by definition it fits the observed data perfectly. One interaction effect at a time is then removed from the model to see if the resultant simpler models fit the observed data equally well. This is done until a model with the lowest possible dimensions explaining the observed data is reached. This most economical model is used in the continued analysis of the data.

Using the most economical model as a basis, log-linear analysis next constructs a hypothetical frequency table, and the actual data is then compared with the hypothetical values in this table. By studying the deviations of the actual values from the expected means, ‘effect estimates’ for each independent variable and their interactions are obtained through a process of iterative proportional fitting.

In the log-linear model used here, the effect estimates are presented as $\lambda$ values, logarithmic factors of deviance from the ‘intercept’ (a logarithmic average frequency value). These $\lambda$ values, or ‘parameter estimates’, show how much of an overall observed variance can be assigned to the effects of a particular independent variable or interaction effect. The parameter estimates of the effects of the different independent variables on the dependent variables are presented in Figures 4.2-4.8 in this chapter and Figures 5.1-5.5 and Figure 5.7 in Chapter 5.

When interpreting these figures, the magnitude of the $\lambda$ values reflect the magnitude of variance of the dependent variables which can be assigned to the effects of the particular independent variable being investigated. These $\lambda$ values can be positive or negative. In other words an independent variable, such as being working class, can result in more or less than the expected number of apologies of a particular category being used (‘Challenging’ apologies for example). Finally, the sum of the effect estimates of the independent variables on a particular dependent variable is always zero. Where there were only two variants of an independent variable (gender for example), the $\lambda$ values for one group are therefore the opposite equivalent of the other; in Figure 4.2, for example, the $\lambda$ value of females for ‘Accidents’ was +0.34, and the male equivalent was -0.34.

86 The logarithmic factors of deviance from the intercept
As for the ANOVA analysis, separate models were used for the overall corpus and the social-class sub-corp us. The effects of the same independent variables (see above) were investigated. The dependent variables included in the log-linear models were:

A) Offence categories:

i. ‘Lack of consideration’
ii. ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’
iii. ‘Breach of expectations’
iv. ‘Accidents’
v. ‘Talk’ offences
vi. ‘Social gaffes’
vii. ‘Hearing’ offences
viii. ‘Requests’
ix. ‘Breach of consensus’

B) Additional apology strategies:

i. ‘Taking on responsibility’
ii. ‘Minimising responsibility’

C) Apparent sincerity of the apologies:

i. ‘Sarcastic’ apologies
ii. ‘Challenging’ apologies
iii. ‘Casual’ apologies
iv. ‘Sincere’ apologies


Finally, the significance levels used for the ANOVA and the log-linear models were (•••) = p<0.001, (••) = p<0.01, and (•) =p<0.05.
4.3 Overall apology rates

In this section, variation in the overall frequencies of apologies made by different social groupings in the corpus is investigated. The results are presented below. The apology rates for speakers of different social groups in the overall corpus are summarised in Table 4.1, whereas Table 4.2 shows the equivalent figures obtained from the social-class sub-corpus. In Sections 4.3.1- 4.3.3, these findings are compared to those of other studies and possible explanations for the observed patterns are discussed.

Table 4.1. *Average apology rates of social groupings in the overall corpus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social groups</th>
<th>0-24-year-olds</th>
<th>25-44-year-olds</th>
<th>44+-year-olds</th>
<th>Total apology rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female speakers</td>
<td>91.96</td>
<td>63.30</td>
<td>45.97</td>
<td>66.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male speakers</td>
<td>86.99</td>
<td>73.62</td>
<td>64.09</td>
<td>72.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total age groups</strong></td>
<td><strong>89.48</strong></td>
<td><strong>69.04</strong></td>
<td><strong>57.70</strong></td>
<td><strong>69.99</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2. *Average apology rates of social groups in the social-class sub-corpus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social groups</th>
<th>0-24 -year-olds</th>
<th>25-44 -year-olds</th>
<th>44+-year-olds</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle-class females</td>
<td>107.75</td>
<td>98.44</td>
<td>44.93</td>
<td>91.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-class males</td>
<td>86.84</td>
<td>125.22</td>
<td>76.29</td>
<td>95.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-class females</td>
<td>40.43</td>
<td>48.28</td>
<td>34.58</td>
<td>40.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-class males</td>
<td>84.21</td>
<td>39.36</td>
<td>32.66</td>
<td>46.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle class total</strong></td>
<td><strong>98.87</strong></td>
<td><strong>107.86</strong></td>
<td><strong>60.61</strong></td>
<td><strong>93.07</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working class total</strong></td>
<td><strong>58.46</strong></td>
<td><strong>44.17</strong></td>
<td><strong>33.74</strong></td>
<td><strong>42.96</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total age groups</strong></td>
<td><strong>86.81</strong></td>
<td><strong>81.58</strong></td>
<td><strong>45.26</strong></td>
<td><strong>71.72</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results from the ANOVA models (Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix 5) revealed that speaker age significantly (***) affected the apology rates in the overall corpus, and in the social-class sub-corpus. Similarly, the social class of the speakers had significant effects (*** on the overall apology rates. In contrast, in this study the gender of the speakers did not affect the rate of apologising.

The general tendencies found in the corpus showed that the tendency to use explicit apologies decreased with age. Furthermore, middle-class speakers used the apology form more than twice as often as working-class speakers. Contrary to expectations, there were no significant differences in the apology rates of female and male.
speakere in the corpus. The results are summarised in Figure 4.1 and are discussed in Sections 4.3.1-4.3.3.

Figure 4.1. Overview of social group apology rate differences

4.3.1 Gender differences

No significant gender differences in the apology rates were observed in the present study. Evidence for the existence of distinct gender trends in apologising, as indicated by earlier research, is inconclusive. Of the limited number of apology studies which have explored this aspect to date, some have shown that women tend apologise more than men, whereas one study (Mattson Bean & Johnstone 1994) showed that men apologised more than women during telephone interviews. Many others have failed to confirm any gender differences in the use of this speech act.

Holmes’s (1989), and Tannen’s (1994) studies point to the existence of wide gender differences in the apologetic behaviour of native speakers of English in New Zealand and the United States respectively. In Holmes’s study, women were responsible for 74.5 per cent of all the apologies included in her corpus. According to Holmes’s interpretation of her results, New Zealand males “avoid apologies where possible” (1989:209). Similarly, Tannen (1994:44-51), who based her conclusions on

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87 One significant interaction effect was found to be operating on the gender data, namely gender:formality. Females tended to increase their apology frequency in formal situations whereas the opposite was true for males. This effect will be discussed in Chapter 5.
recordings of speech produced in work environments, claimed that males were disinclined to apologise, even on a strictly ritual level.

The observed disparities between these two studies and the present one may on the one hand be the result of cultural differences in the sampled populations; the cultures of the United States and New Zealand may be more ‘macho’ than that in Britain, leading in turn to greater gender distinctions in the use of polite forms such as apologies. An alternative, and in my opinion, more likely explanation is that the lack of correlation between the findings of the studies is a consequence of methodological differences.

Tannen based her conclusions on a very limited sample of speakers acting in one specific context only. Four managers were systematically recorded at their places of work, and of these speakers only one was male. Similarly, Holmes sampled a limited sub-population. Students collected all the data in her study, which probably meant that a demographically homogenous environment as regards age and social class was sampled; the gender tendencies, which Holmes claims to be general, may actually only reflect the speech behaviour of a very limited sample of the population. In addition, as Holmes herself points out, there was a danger that the “environments in which the data were collected provided a higher proportion of female than male speech acts” (1989:197). This potential danger was especially marked in her study, considering that at least seven of the nine students who collected the data were female; the remaining two chose to remain anonymous. The results from such a potentially skewed sample can be misleading if the frequencies of apologies encountered are not made absolute.

Two other studies (Gonzales, Pederson, Manning & Wetter 1990 and Rothman & Gandossy 1982), from the field of social psychology, arguably indicate that women apologise more than men. Gonzales et al., investigating the effects of sex, status and consequence severity on the accounting strategies produced by 99 American students, found that female students produced more explicit apologies than their male counterparts. In this study, as in Holmes’s, only a specific population, i.e. students, was investigated. Rothman & Gandossy, focussing on conduct during court cases, found women to be more likely to apologise and express remorse than men. This gender difference in apologetic behaviour may, however, have been limited to the specific context sampled. In this study, for example, women were found to apologise more in formal situations than in informal situations (Chapter 5).

The results from Mattson Bean & Johnstone’s (1994) investigation of the use of the apology form during telephone interviews also pointed to the existence of gender differences with reference to apologising. In their study, however, it was the male interviewers who favoured the form and used it more than twice as often as their female counterparts. The authors correctly point to the fact that in the specific genre sampled, apologising was a way of managing the discourse. Used in this way, the speech act functioned as a means of accurately and efficiently dealing with the task in hand, i.e. getting the questionnaires filled out. Mattson Bean & Johnstone thus argue

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88 The texts in the DS part of the BNC show that the identity of the respondent affects the type of speech sampled; texts tend to contain a higher proportion of speech produced by speakers of the same sex, age and social class as the respondent who recorded it. This is especially true for texts recorded by respondents in age group ‘0-24-year-olds’.

89 I.e. expressed as the prevalence of the investigated form in terms of a proportion of the total number of tokens uttered by a particular social group.
that the necessity for these apologies had more to do with the demands made by the respondents (the interviewees) than with gendered discourse tendencies of the interviewers.

In contrast to the five studies mentioned above, several other researchers have failed to show gender differences in rates of apologising. Aijmer (1995), investigating a limited part of the London Lund Corpus (37 conversations), found no significant differences in the number of apologies produced by males and females. Fraser (1981), looking at apologising in American English, found that there were no gender differences in the frequency of apologising in any of the situations recorded. Likewise, Márquez Reiter (2000:165) found no such differences in apologising in her study of British and Uruguayan speakers.\(^{90}\) Similarly, Schlenker & Darby (1981), investigating the use of apologies in social predicaments, did not find that the sex of the speaker affected the responses in any consistent fashion.

How then do we explain the lack of gender differences in apologising observed in the present study? Some linguists (O’Barr & Atkins 1980, and Deuchar 1989, for example), who have applied B&L’s theory of politeness to explain gender differences in language, have concluded that observed tendencies for women to use more polite forms stem from this group’s relatively powerless position in society. Applying B&L’s theory in a similar fashion to explain the results in the present study, would suggest that gender power differences among the speakers represented in the BNC are minimal, at least when viewing the corpus as a whole.\(^{91}\)

One of the strengths of the BNC is that it contains such a variety of spoken genres. The average apology rates obtained in this part of the study reflect the average apologetic behaviour of men and women acting in various situations, ranging from informal interactions in the home to formal public meetings. While women may have been relatively powerless in formal debates, they did perhaps hold more dominant positions in the home environment. Such differences have been evened out when the corpus is considered in its entirety. Arguably, previous universal claims concerning gender differences in politeness norms have erroneously been based on studies of specific social groups acting in a narrow range of genres. The findings from such research are perhaps not supported when one examines a more representative sample of speakers and genres. On a final note of caution, however, it must be pointed out that only one specific speech act has been studied here, and no general conclusions concerning the relationship between gender and politeness can be made from this limited investigation.

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\(^{90}\) The findings of this study are rather confusing since although she initially states that there are no observed gender differences, she later claims that her findings “contradict Fraser’s (1981) claim that women do not offer more apologies than males” (167). The actual results do however suggest that the gender differences observed in her study are minimal.

\(^{91}\) Again note that significant gender differences in apologetic behaviour were observed when examining formal and informal speech separately.
4.3.2 Age differences

There were significant age differences in the apology rates of the various age groups in the corpus. Younger speakers tended to use the form more than older speakers. Stylistically, adolescent conversation has been characterised as ‘high involvement style’ “in which referential meaning is superseded by the more expressive aspects of language” (Andersen 2000:7). This mode of conversation was evident in interactions between teenagers in the corpus. Conversations between speakers in this age group tended to consist of rapport-building chats. Arguably, the apology, remedying potential threats to hearer positive face needs, will be a frequent feature in such interaction primarily aimed at negotiating relationships. In emotionally involved conversation, the risk of offending someone’s person inadvertently is simply greater than in conversation strictly oriented towards information exchange.

An additional factor explaining the higher apology rates seen among 0-24-year-olds is that they were acting in a different social setting than the older speakers. Many of the apologies uttered by these younger speakers (about 20 per cent) were made during parent/child interactions. Evidence from the corpus suggests that this type of dyadic interchange encourages the adherence to formal politeness norms; parents expected their children to say sorry, please, and thank you and ‘encouraged’ (sometimes by using threats) them to do so (see Ex. 2.1 in Section 2.8.3); children, in their turn, were probably more aware of being polite in the presence of their parents.

The higher apology rates observed in the BNC among younger speakers may in other words have been the result of social conditioning processes. There were several concrete examples of such social conditioning in progress. In the first of the two following examples a mother apologises on behalf of her two-year-old daughter who seems to be suffering from flatulence; in the second example six-year-old David apologises after having been reprimanded by his father:

Ex. 4.1 (KCU 937-947):

Julie: **Pardon!**

<laugh> <pause> Vicki!

Gary: Oh Vicki!

Vicki: <laugh>

Julie: What was that?

Vicki: <laugh>

Gary: Hmm!

Vicki: Mummy.

Gary: Oh dear!

Julie: It wasn't Mummy!

Vicki: Vicki.

Julie: Yeah, it was you weren't it?

Gary: Sounded like Mummy!

Ex. 4.2 (KCH 4743-4753)

Phillip: Get off.
Similarly, the prevalence of parent/child interactions in the corpus may partly explain why 25-44-year-olds produced relatively high apology rates (especially in the social-class sub-corpus). Most parents of minors were found in this age category, and ten per cent of the apologies uttered by this speaker group were made by individuals acting in the parental role. Gleason’s study (1980) on parents’ teaching of politeness formulae such as please and thank you showed that parents, especially mothers, were aware that they were role models and adapted their speech accordingly. Ervin-Tripp, Guo & Lampert (1990) provide an alternative explanation for a decrease in the use of politeness formulae with age. In their study “Politeness and persuasion in children’s control acts”, the authors noted that after an initial increase in the use of politeness formulae between the ages three and five, their use diminished with age. Since the use of politeness tactics actually resulted in higher adult refusal rates in the observed requests, the authors conclude that children learn to use other, more direct, persuasion tactics with age. The situation may thus be such that humans are socially conditioned to be polite from an early age, but gradually learn to use alternative strategies when these are associated with higher rates of success.

4.3.3 Social-class differences

In this study, working-class speakers apologised far less than middle-class speakers, thereby indicating that social class is an important factor influencing the use of this form. B&L (1987:245) “have a hunch” that there is a universal pattern in all complex societies whereby “dominated groups (and sometimes also majority groups) have positive-politeness cultures”, while dominating groups have “negative-politeness cultures” (cf. Scollon & Scollon’s politeness systems of solidarity and deference (1981:169-202)). Several studies from all over the world support this ‘hunch’: Brown and Gilman (1960), France; Geertz (1960), Java; Friedrich (1972), nineteenth-century Russia; and Paulston (1976), Sweden are but a few examples. B&L go so far as to claim that the differences in Bernstein’s (1971) ‘elaborated’ and ‘restricted’ codes can be assigned to “negative-politeness versus positive-politeness preferences in linguistic expressions” (1987:246). If apologising is viewed as an example of formalised negative politeness, the results of this study too seem to support the above claims, i.e. that the higher strata of societies are an example of a “negative-politeness culture”. One may speculate as to why these class differences should exist.

B&L (1987:246) give two alternative explanations for class differences in politeness behaviour. Firstly, they propose that negative politeness is a “natural symbol of high status” which “fits aristocratic virtues”. They quickly dismiss this line of argument, but for the purpose of this study of British English it is worth considering

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92 This sub-corpus consisted almost entirely of texts recorded in home settings.
more closely. Historically, the development of formal politeness codes in British society has been the work of the upper strata of society. Simply regarding politeness as a language universal, whose purpose it is to tone down potential aggression, ignores an additional, potentially important function of this phenomenon; that of linguistic social marker. Ritualised politeness has certainly been an important class-signalling device in the past (Section 2.4) and may still be so today. My encounter in the Preston Railway Inn (Section 2.2) exemplifies this.

B&L’s second explanation for class differentiation in politeness behaviour is based on network theorising. B&L argue that the important operative factor influencing class differences in politeness behaviour is social distance. Drawing their evidence from Bott’s (1957) analysis of networks in different social classes in Britain, they point out that upward mobility involves a loosening of social networks so that “property, mobility, and ambition appear to be the divisive forces that break the solidarity of the upper strata” (1987:246). Put in another way, this means that middle-class people move in an environment where, on average, they encounter people of greater social distance than working-class people do. This in turn influences their politeness behaviour. In the social-class sub-corpus, extracted from the DS texts of the BNC, most speakers, regardless of class, tended to interact primarily with family and friends. Social distance was thus not an operating variable here.

If instead we see negative politeness usage as a language standard akin to that of standard pronunciation, network theories can still explain the observed differences without bringing in the social distance factor. Several network studies (Milroy 1980, Cheshire 1982, Eckert 1988 and Edwards 1992) have found that members of closely knit networks tend to use more vernacular forms than members of loose networks, who use more standard language forms. Non-standard varieties function as in-group markers, distinguishing the group from the rest of society.

Seeing the use of a polite form such as the explicit apology as part of a standard language norm would thus explain working-class speakers’ antipathy towards this speech act. If formalised politeness is associated with standard speech and the ruling classes, it may well be that groups who want to dissociate themselves from these norms will avoid polite forms (cf. the concept of ‘covert prestige’ (Trudgill 1972)). Whatever the reasons, there is clear evidence that large social-class differences in the use of the apology form exist in the BNC.

4.4 Social variation in the types of apologies produced

It is not enough to look at the total apology rates when discussing social variations in apologising. How and why the form is used by different social groupings is also of interest. The following section attempts to investigate these aspects. Social variation in three typological categories was investigated: the offences which motivated the apologies (Section 4.4.1), the use of additional strategies in combination with the explicit apologies (Section 4.4.2), and the apparent sincerity with which the apologies were uttered (Section 4.4.3).

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93 See Chambers (1995:66-84) for more recent work based on network theories.
In the analyses in the following sections, it is the relative frequencies of usage of the different subcategories which are of interest. Tables 4.3-4.8 give the raw data distributions for different social groupings as found in the overall corpus and in the social-class sub-corpus; I have not attempted to cross-tabulate here and, consequently, hidden effects caused by independent variables other than the one referred to in a specific cell may be operating on the data. Such effects have been taken into account in the log-linear models used to analyse the data (see Tables 3-7, Appendix 5). Accordingly, Figures 4.2-4.8 show the effects assignable to a specific independent variable (age, for example). Section 4.2 gives a more thorough account of the statistical models used.

4.4.1 Social variation in offence types leading to apologies

The analysis in Chapter 3 (Sections 3.4 and 3.5) showed that the types of offences leading to apologies were of major importance in deciding the form of these speech acts. Here, it is hoped that social differences in politeness norms will be revealed by examining the patterns of transgressions leading to apologies.

Tables 4.3 and 4.4 summarise the offence distributions of the different social groupings examined in the overall corpus and in the social-class sub-corpus.
Table 4.3. *Total and relative social group distributions of apologies for different offences in the overall corpus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>0-24-year-olds</td>
<td>25-44-year-olds</td>
<td>45+-year-olds</td>
<td>Total mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Real’ subtotal</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Formulaic’ subtotal</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Face attack’ subtotal</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1446</td>
<td>1624</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>1258</td>
<td>1077</td>
<td>3070</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4. *Total and relative social-class distributions of apologies for different offences in the social-class sub-corpus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Working class</th>
<th>Middle class</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lack of consideration</strong></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mistakes and misunderstandings</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breach of expectations</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accidents</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘Real’ subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>27.1%</strong></td>
<td><strong>31.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>29.9%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talk offences</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social gaffes</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hearing offences</strong></td>
<td>147</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Requests</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘Formulaic’ subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>56.9%</strong></td>
<td><strong>53.9%</strong></td>
<td><strong>54.8%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breach of consensus</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘Face attack’ subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>10%</strong></td>
<td><strong>10%</strong></td>
<td><strong>10%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unidentified</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>369</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>1197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The relatively large variations in the overall distributions of different offences in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 can be ascribed to the fact that the social-class sub-corpus only contains informal speech.*
Gender differences:

There were significant (*** ) gender differences in the offences apologised for in the overall corpus. Two offence categories in particular showed major gender variation (see Figure 4.2): females apologised more for ‘Accidents’ than males whereas males produced more apologies for ‘Social gaffes’ than females.

When the offences involving ‘Accidents’ were viewed in more detail, it became apparent that this gender difference stemmed from the tendency for females to apologise for offences involving some form of accidental bodily contact or harm; there were no gender differences in the rates of apologies involving ‘Property accidents’.

Holmes, who observed a similar tendency in her study, claims that “a predominance of apologies for accidental body contact is not surprising in a group who are the main victims of sexual harassment” (1989:201). In the present study, the most likely explanation for this difference is that it was an effect of gender differences in the tasks performed in the home: many of the apologies for accidental bodily contact or harm involved mothers accidentally hurting their children in daily care routines such as combing hair or dressing (see Ex. 4.3 and Ex. 3.22 in Section 3.4.2):

Ex. 4.3 (KD1 2732-37)

Charlotte: Ow!
Larna: Sorry, sorry
Charlotte: Stop that
Larna: No sorry it's mummy's fault, she pulled the wrong one, that's it, good girl, I'll er brush your hair in a minute, get all your knots out, right, sit down for a minute, well turn round, <-|-> there <-|->
Charlotte: <-|-> No <-|->
Larna: you don't want to go to bed with knots in your hair

In the present study males apologised more for ‘Social gaffes’ than females and a similar tendency was also found in Holmes’s (1989) study. The question remains whether the observed gender difference in this study resulted from females committing fewer ‘Social gaffes’ or from their disinclination to apologise after such offences? Intuition tells us that it is less unacceptable for men to belch in public, for example, and it is likely that they did so more often than females in the corpus. I suspect that this gender difference in politeness norms explains the observed differences in apologetic behaviour, but until the entire corpus has been gone through and all the social gaffes committed by both sexes counted, the above explanation remains speculative.

Figure 4.2 summarises the parameter estimates (λ values – Section 4.2.1) of the offence categories for males and females.

---

94 Females produced 38 of the 47 apologies involving body contact. Compensating for the different sizes of the gender sub-corpora, the expected figure would be 28.7 (p=0.006 in a Chi squared test).

95 However, the small number of such apologies found in her corpus made her results inconclusive.
Age differences:

There were significant (***), age differences in the offences apologised for in the overall corpus. These differences were especially large in four offence categories, namely: ‘Accidents’, ‘Talk’ offences, ‘Hearing’ offences, and ‘Requests’.

Older speakers apologised less for ‘Accidents’ than younger speakers did. Again, this can probably be ascribed to general behavioural differences of the various age groups; older speakers probably exposed themselves less to potential ‘accident situations’ than younger speakers did. For example, it is difficult to imagine the following interchange taking place between two old age pensioners (Danny is 13 and Takeo 14):

Ex. 4.4 (KPA 476-80):

Danny: <pause> **Oh sorry** I didn't mean to hit you that hard. Are you alright?
Takeo: No I'm not. I'm dying will you help me <unclear>.
Danny: Shut the fuck up.

The nature of the remaining offence categories which showed large age variation reflected age differences regarding functional aspects of the conversations in the corpus. On average, conversations between younger speakers tended to be more emotionally involved, geared towards rapport-building. Among older speakers, there were more examples of conversations in which the exchange of information was the primary

Figure 4.2. *Estimated parameter values in the log-linear model gender:offence categories (intercept=2.61)*
Variation across Speaker Social Variables

Consequently, apology forms used as discourse managing devices (apologies for ‘Hearing’ and ‘Talk’ offences) were more common among older speakers than younger speakers.

The results in Chapter 6 (Section 6.2.2.1) also suggest that older speakers were more active in presenting information during interchanges between older and younger speakers. In contrast, the younger speakers in such dyads tended to be more passive and ‘talked to’. It is telling that younger speakers produced more apologies for ‘Requests’ than older speakers; most of these (80 per cent) involved some form of request for attention.

The age differences in the parameter estimates for the offences are summarised in Figure 4.3 below.

Figure 4.3. Estimated parameter values in the log-linear model age:offence categories (intercept=2.61)

---

96 An additional piece of evidence (not dealt with in this study) supporting this hypothesis was the average utterance lengths of speakers of different age groups. The average utterance lengths for the three age groups in the DS, starting with the youngest speakers were 8, 9 and 11 words per utterance respectively. The equivalent figures for the more formal CG texts were 20, 55 and 52 words per utterance respectively. Older speakers thus tended to produce considerably longer utterances, especially in more formal situations.
Social-class differences:

In the social-class sub-corpus, there were significant \( ** \) social-class differences in the offences apologised for. More specifically, large social-class differences in the apology rates of five offence categories were observed: offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’, ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’, ‘Accidents’, ‘Social Gaffes’ and ‘Requests’ (see Figure 4.4.).

Middle-class speakers apologised relatively more for offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’ than working-class speakers. This category consisted of offences typically involving breaches of formal politeness norms: interruptions, overlooking a person, not paying attention, forgetting names, being late, leaving inappropriately, and causing inconvenience, for example (see Section 3.4.2 for a more thorough account). That middle-class speakers apologise more frequently for these offences suggests that this social group regarded such politeness norms as relatively important (Ex. 3.17 in Section 3.4.2 and Ex. 4.5, where a middle-class father is reprimanding his family illustrate this):

Ex. 4.5 (KBW 13697-700):

Andrew: Erm that's right, everyone's eating with their mouths full.
Dorothy: You mean talking with their mouths full?
Andrew: I mean that, yes, talking with their mouth full.
Dorothy: **Sorry** we're so excited.

Middle-class speakers also apologised more for offences involving ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’ than working-class speakers. It appears that ‘Getting it wrong’ was considered a serious offence by the middle-class speakers investigated. In the following example Tony (a civil servant) wrongly questions information given by an instructor (Dot) during a training session:

Ex. 4.6 (KE3 6820-33):

Tony: Mm. Yeah. But they will take into account any special help that is needed for somebody who's disabled.
Dot: Washing. Extra, extra money for wa-- if they've got lots of washing to do. <unclear> <pause dur=10>
Tony: So you can get special help if somebody's disabled. Oh you're right. There's a pension <unclear> as well.
Dot: Yeah.
Tony: Yes. Yes. **Sorry**.
Dot: That's alright.
Tony: Right.

Working-class speakers apologised more for ‘Accidents’ than middle-class speakers. No explanation for this observation could be found. Working-class speakers also apologised relatively more often for ‘Social gaffes’ than middle-class speakers. This could be interpreted as an indication of the latter group’s greater awareness of social etiquette, but judging by the type of offences apologised for the opposite is likely to have been the case: the ‘Social gaffes’ apologised for by working-class
speakers tended to be more serious offences (belching) than those apologised for by middle-class speakers. Such offences were probably judged as less socially taboo among working-class speakers, and were therefore committed, or at least acknowledged more often.

Finally, middle-class speakers apologised more for ‘Requests’ than did working-class speakers. Most such offences in the corpus involved requests for attention and it may be that working-class speakers used alternative cues for this purpose (Oi! for example).

The observed patterns in the offences apologised for by middle-class and working-class speakers suggest that social-class differences in politeness norms exist in British society. The social-class differences in the parameter estimates of the offences in the social-class sub-corpus are summarised in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4. Estimated parameter values in the log-linear model social class:offence categories (intercept=1.76)

\[97 \text{ Of the 49 registered social gaffes apologised for by middle-class speakers 11 involved belching; of the 28 social gaffes apologised for by working-class speakers 15 involved belching.}\]
4.4.2 Social variation in additional strategy usage

In this analysis social differences in the use of additional strategies in combination with the explicit apologies were investigated. The relative social group distributions of the two broad additional strategy categories ‘Taking on responsibility’ and ‘Minimising responsibility’ were investigated (for a more thorough description of these see Section 3.6). The overall results are presented in Tables 4.5 and 4.6. The effects of background variables such as formality are not taken into account in the results given in these tables, but are adjusted for in the results presented in Figure 4.5.

Table 4.5. Social group distributions of additional apology strategies in the overall corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Strategy</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>0-24 year-olds</td>
<td>25-44 year-olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking on Responsibility</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimising Responsibility</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total additional strategies</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6. Social-class distributions of additional apology strategies in the social-class sub-corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Strategy</th>
<th>Speaker social class</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking on Responsibility</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimising Responsibility</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total additional strategies</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results from the log-linear analysis showed that there were significant (***) gender and age differences in additional strategy usage.\(^{98}\) No such social-class differ-

---

\(^{98}\) The log-linear model also revealed a significant interaction effect between the variables age and formality. This will be dealt with in Chapter 5 (5.2.3).
ences were observable. This lack of significance may have been a result of the relatively small size of this corpus.

The following patterns of additional strategy usage were elucidated: females and younger speakers used relatively more strategies involving the taking on of responsibility than did males and older speakers (45+). These latter groups displayed a relatively greater tendency to use strategies which involved the minimising of responsibility (see Figure 4.5). Overall, however, all groups used more additional strategies which involved the minimising of responsibility.

The tendency for women to use more ‘other-oriented’ apology strategies found in this study is supported by the results from previous apology studies. Gonzales, Pederson, Manning & Wetter (1990) found that women, especially low-status women, were more likely to “proffer concessions”, than men i.e. to acknowledge responsibility, during accounts. In the same study, women also expended more effort on helping to rectify situations than did men. The results here also lend support to Tannen’s claims that women’s language is co-operative, paying attention to the hearer’s face needs, while men tend to communicate in a more competitive fashion (1990, 1991). Similarly, Holmes (1989:199) claims that “women’s motivation for apologies may be related to their perception of what is necessary to maintain the relationship with the person offended”. The results thus suggest that women are less afraid of losing face. The following apology made by Joelle, an eighteen-year-old au-pair, illustrates this tendency. Also note the supportive role played by Carol, her employer:

Ex. 4.7 (KBH 6810-23)

Joelle: I heard me laughing.
Carol: What on the tape?
Joelle: I think I must do something.
Carol: What you can't do anything you can't change anything about your voice or your laugh.
You are what you are that's it.
Joelle: Yes I can.
Carol: Yes dear. <laugh>
Joelle: Sorry about the way I laughing.
Carol: Everybody has their laugh that's it. You can't change it can you?<laugh><pause dur=9>
Joelle: No I can’t

In this study, the tendencies for groups conventionally regarded as having high status (middle-aged males) to use additional apology strategies which involved the minimising of responsibility is in accord with B&L’s (1987) theory. It predicts that speakers with more relative power will show less concern for the face needs of people with less power. The more self-oriented apologetic behaviour seen among high-status speakers could also be explained by the needs of these groups to preserve their image as “respected members of a certain group” (Jary 1998:11).

Arguably, high-status speakers had more to lose by unconditionally acknowledging responsibility for transgressions, and were therefore more likely to place blame

---

99 Interestingly, exactly the opposite tendencies were observed in Holmes’s (1989) study, where men used strategies which involved acknowledgement of responsibility to a greater extent than females (relatively speaking).
on factors beyond their control. This is illustrated in Ex. 4.8, where a 50-year-old export manager blames a misunderstanding for his croquet blunder:

Ex. 4.8 (KBK 5559-62):

David: Always try to be behind the other ball when you come through the hoop, because you’re going that way, you see?
Chris: Yes.
David: Erm, but erm, what I really wanted to do was to cover about <unclear>.
Chris: Oh <unclear>, **oh sorry**, it's <pause> it's the next one we're aiming at, the one we're aiming at isn't it yes.

On the whole, however, the observed social differences in apologetic behaviour studied here were relatively small, and all the investigated groups showed a strong preference for additional apology strategies which involved the minimising of responsibility. The parameter estimates for additional strategy usage among speakers of different genders and ages are summarised in Figure 4.5.

![Figure 4.5. Estimated parameter values in the log-linear models age:additional strategies and gender:additional strategies (intercepts=2.43)](image-url)
4.4.3 Social variation in apparent sincerity levels

In this analysis, social differences in the apparent sincerity of the apologies were investigated. Apologies were classed as belonging to one of the apparent sincerity categories: ‘Sarcastic’, ‘Challenging’, ‘Casual’ or ‘Sincere’ apologies (Section 3.7). Tables 4.7 and 4.8 summarise the relative distributions of sincerity level in the social groups. The effects of background variables are not taken into account in the results given in these tables, but are adjusted for in the results presented in Figures 4.6 - 4.8.

Table 4.7. Relative distributions of sincerity levels in different social groupings in the overall corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent Sincerity Level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>0-24-year-olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>124%</td>
<td>122%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>710%</td>
<td>761%</td>
<td>323%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincere</td>
<td>514%</td>
<td>645%</td>
<td>259%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1446%</td>
<td>1624%</td>
<td>735%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8. Relative distributions of sincerity levels in different social classes in the social-class sub-corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent Sincerity Level</th>
<th>Speaker social class</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincere</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>828</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Log-linear modelling revealed significant (***) gender, age and social-class differences in the relative use of apologies of different sincerity levels. The overall patterns that emerged indicated that females used fewer ‘Sarcastic’ apologies than males, whereas only minimal gender differences in the relative frequencies of the remaining sincerity levels were found.

Young speakers (0-24-year-olds) produced more ‘Sarcastic’ apologies than the remaining age groups. This age group also produced fewer ‘Casual’ and ‘Sincere’ apologies than the other groups. There were only marginal age differences in the relative usage of ‘Challenging’ apologies.

On the whole, there were small social-class differences in the relative distributions of apologies of varying sincerity levels. There was, however, a slight tendency for working-class speakers to use more ‘Challenging’ apologies than middle-class speakers. Further, middle-class speakers showed a slight preference for ‘Sincere’ apologies. The result of the log-linear analyses are summarised in Figures 4.6-4.8.

![Figure 4.6. Estimated parameter values in the log-linear model gender:apparent sincerity levels (intercept=1.62)](image-url)
Figure 4.7. Estimated parameter values in the log-linear model age: apparent sincerity levels (intercept=1.62)

Figure 4.8. Estimated parameter values in the log-linear model social class: apparent sincerity levels (intercept=2.3)
‘Sarcastic’ apologies:

Although the use of ‘Sarcastic’ apologies was a relatively rare phenomenon in the corpus as a whole, the examples encountered seemed to suggest that this use of the apology form was typically a feature of ‘teenage speech’. Among teen-agers, ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were often uttered when several interlocutors were present and the speech acts were often surrounded by ‘coarse’ in-group dialogue.\footnote{Andersen (2001:127) also found ironic use of the tag \textit{innit} to be common among teen-agers.}

A significant interaction effect (\(*\)) between the independent variables gender and age was also seen to be operating on ‘Sarcastic’ apologies; young males were particularly sarcastic.\footnote{Another group which displayed relatively high frequencies of sarcastic apologies were 45\(^+\) females. Many of these apologies were uttered during interactions with teenage children and husbands.} The following extract of male, teenage speech, recorded in a pub setting, is preceded by a rather sexist discussion about who is going ‘to have’ a certain young lady:

Ex. 4.9 (KD9 1934-37):

\begin{verbatim}
Albert: Sorry! No touts,\footnote{soliciting} thank you.
Leigh: Thank you! Just fuck off!
\end{verbatim}

In the next example Alex (14 years old) has just given a poor excuse for missing an appointment. What follows is a display of ‘non-regret’:

Ex. 4.10 (KNY 1145-50):

\begin{verbatim}
Alex: Sorry bud. But I had to stay home.
PS6U6: I left my rehearsal for you.
Alex: Don't give that shit.
PS6U6: I was sit there for twenty five minutes for you.
Alex: Liar.
\end{verbatim}

Although more commonly used by young males, there were examples of ‘Sarcastic’ apologies made by young females; Ex. 4.11 is a recording of two fifteen-year-old girls:

Ex. 4.11 (KPG 1769-78)

\begin{verbatim}
Kerry: I'm black <pause> and I'm a nigger! <laugh> <pause> <-|-> Fuck you! <-|-> […]
Josie <-|-> Really? Really? We didn't know that. We didn't know that. Sorry Kerry I thought you were Chinese, you know. <-|->
\end{verbatim}

‘Challenging’ apologies:

Whereas in the corpus ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were typical of good-humoured (though coarse) teenage speech, ‘Challenging’ apologies were more closely associated with confrontational dialogue. No clear gender or age patterns were distinguishable, but on a number of occasions in the corpus parents used ‘Challenging’ apologies when repri-
manding their children. In the following example a father is reprimanding his son for interrupting (see also Ex. 3.63 in Section 3.7):

Ex. 4.12 (KCH 2754):

Phillip: well er, I'm, **excuse me** David I'm talking to Chris.

‘Challenging’ apologies were also typical devices used to introduce differences of opinion during discussions (see Ex. 3.60 - Ex. 3.62 in Section 3.7), explaining the slightly more frequent use of this type of apology by 45+-year-olds, a group which was overrepresented in formal debates and public meetings.

Working-class speakers produced relatively more ‘Challenging’ apologies than middle-class speakers. Arguably, this pointed to class differences regarding politeness norms among the speakers in the corpus; disagreeing may have been more acceptable among working-class speakers than middle-class speakers. The results from the offence distributions (see Figure 4.4) suggest that working-class speakers apologise more for ‘Breach of consensus’ offences than middle-class speakers. In the following example two working-class males in their twenties are arguing about how to drive on the motor way:

Ex. 4.13 (KDA 2388-93)

Mark: it's better than fucking <pause> better be-- being late <pause> than not being there at all.

Stuart: Can't you that by retaliating <pause> yo--

Mark: No I <-|-> can't <-|->

Stuart: <-|-> you're <-|-> interrupting your own journey <-|-> as well. <-|->

Mark: <-|-> No I <-|-> can't <pause> **sorry** <pause> you're on the lost cause here.

Stuart: Obviously!

‘Casual’ apologies:

Speakers in the 45+ age group produced most ‘Casual’ apologies, relatively speaking. This can be explained by the fact that this group is overrepresented in conversations where information exchange was the primary purpose. ‘Casual’ apologies were typically made in response to ‘Talk’ and ‘Hearing’ offences, and thus functioned as important discourse managing devices. (also discussed in Section 4.4.1)

‘Sincere’ apologies:

The higher relative frequencies of ‘Sincere’ apologies seen among middle-class speakers was probably a direct result of this group’s greater tendency to apologise for offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’ (see Figure 4.4). As discussed in Section 4.4.1, middle-class speakers in the corpus seemed to place importance on formal politeness etiquette, a tendency which arguably resulted in more apparently ‘Sincere’ apologies.
Finally, note that interaction effects affecting the apparent sincerity levels of the apologies were found between the independent variables formality and gender, and formality and age. These will be discussed in Section 5.2.4.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, social variation in the total apology rates encountered in the corpus was investigated. The analyses showed that while the variables speaker age and social class did have effects on the apology rates, speaker gender did not.

Younger speakers apologised more than older speakers in the corpus, a tendency which could be ascribed to this group’s inclination towards ‘rapport-style’ conversation. The frequent use of this formula by younger speakers was arguably also the result of socialisation processes in progress, and many of the apologies produced by this group were responses to parents’ reprimands for transgressions of social norms. Middle-class speakers apologised more than twice as often as their working-class counterparts, suggesting that the use of polite forms such as apologies is a feature of a middle-class sociolect.

A closer look at social variation in the type of apologies produced revealed gender, age and social-class differences in the offences which led to apologies, gender and age differences in the use of additional strategies accompanying explicit apologies, and gender, age and social-class differences in the apparent sincerity of the apologies.

More specifically, females apologised more for ‘Accidents’ than did males, most likely a result of gender differences in the tasks performed in home settings. Males apologised more for ‘Social gaffes’ than females, indicating that different politeness norms exist for these two groups in British society. Younger speakers apologised less for offences arising from situations involving information exchange (‘Talk’ and ‘Hearing’ offences) in the corpus. A likely explanation is that younger speakers did not participate in formal conversations, where the main purpose was information exchange, to the same extent as older speakers. The offence analysis indicated the existence of social-class differences in politeness norms in Britain. Middle-class speakers tended to apologise more for social etiquette breaches (‘Lack of consideration’ offences), and were more inclined to apologise for disagreements arising from misunderstandings. Working-class speakers, on the other hand, apologised more for ‘Social gaffes’, especially for more serious breaches such as belching, indicating that such offences were less taboo among speakers in this group.

Analysis of additional strategy usage showed that low-status groups (females, and young speakers) were more inclined to use strategies which involved the acknowledgement of responsibility for an offence. High-status groups (males and older speakers), on the other hand, showed a greater tendency to use strategies that minimised responsibility. These differences in apologetic behaviour suggest that low-status groups are more ‘other-oriented’ in their politeness and/or that high-status groups have more personal image to lose by unconditionally admitting fault.

Relatively large social differences in the use of ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were found in the corpus. Males and younger speakers, especially, favoured such apologies and irony and sarcasm seemed to be typical of ‘teenage speech’. ‘Challenging’ apologies were typically made by working-class speakers, suggesting that breach of consensus is
more acceptable in this social group. ‘Casual’ apologies were overrepresented among 45+-year-olds, reflecting this group’s frequent use of apologies in discourse management. Finally, apparently ‘Sincere’ apologies were favoured by middle-class speakers. Many such apologies were made in response to breaches of politeness norms.

4.6 Discussion

One important issue which has to be addressed when interpreting social variation in the use of polite forms such as the apology is whether or not the norms guiding usage are universal. If, as B&L claim, such universality does exist, the realised politeness should, according to these authors, be entirely determined by contextual factors: i.e. the relative power and social distance existing between the interlocutors, and the imposition of the particular situation.

But in order for their hypothesis to be accepted it must be applicable to real data; it should, for example, stand the test of explaining observed social differences in the use of the apology form in a corpus study such as this one. B&L claim that apologising is an example of negative politeness and thus we would expect high apology rates among groups with relatively little power. Similarly, apologising should be frequent in conversations where there is great social distance between the interlocutors and in situations where the imposition is great. Using B&L’s theory to interpret the result of the present study, I would conclude that, on average, no relative power differences exist between the genders in Britain, whereas younger speakers possess relatively less power than older speakers, and/or act in environments of greater social distance than the latter, and/or commit more serious offences than older speakers. All of these explanations are possible, although some seem more likely than others.

When it comes to explaining the social-class differences observed in the corpus, however, B&L’s theory falls short. It is unreasonable to assume that the low apology rates observed among working-class speakers can be explained by this group’s greater relative power. Nor does the explanation presented by B&L, namely that the more frequent use of negative politeness observed in middle-class cultures should be a result of this group interacting in an environment of great social distance, apply to this study of the BNC. All speakers in the social-class sub-corpus were acting in home and/or familiar environments.

Nevertheless, the results show that social-class differences in apologetic behaviour do exist in Britain. This is hardly surprising in a nation described by George Orwell as “the most class-ridden country under the sun” (1941). Intuition tells us that the use of formalised politeness norms is primarily associated with the middle and upper classes and this intuitive feeling is supported empirically in this study. The use/avoidance of polite forms appears to be an important way of signalling class allegiance. Social etiquette and formalised politeness have traditionally been upper-class registers, and still appear to be so, and the use of polite forms appears to be (at least partly) a feature of a middle-class sociolect. In contrast, avoiding their use may be a way of distancing oneself from the values associated with this group.

As is the case with most features of a sociolect, there are no absolute patterns of apology usage assignable to one group or another. There is an inherent variability in the use of this polite formula. Consequently, we will find that working-class speakers
do apologise, but the important point here is that, given similar circumstances, they do so to a lesser extent than middle-class speakers.

It is thus my belief that interpretations of the uses/non-uses of polite forms have to take the socio-cultural identity of the speaker into account. Apologising explicitly may indeed be an attempt to show concern, but, in Britain, it is perhaps also a way of linguistically signalling your social identity.
Chapter 5

Variation across Conversational Settings

5.1 Introduction

The B&L model of politeness has been criticized for excluding conversational settings. Holmes (1995:19-22), for example claims that formality, as determined by the setting, affects politeness. Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that the conversation between a lecturer and a student meeting in a pub, for example, will differ stylistically from an interaction between the same participants during a tutorial. Formality, however, is only one of the aspects of the conversational setting examined in this chapter.

The number of participants present during a conversation is an additional aspect of the conversational setting that is of interest when considering the speech act of apologising. To illustrate this, hypothesise a one-to-one conversation between the same lecturer and student referred to above and ‘compare’ (again hypothetically) this conversation with an interchange between the two in a lecture theatre full of other students. Arguably, the presence of an audience will affect the level and type of politeness expressed.

The genre of a conversation may also affect politeness norms. A doctor interviewing a patient and a potential employer interviewing a job applicant superficially represent similar conversational settings; both are examples of formal dialogue between relative strangers. A linguistic comparison of two genres, however, is, as we shall discover, likely to reveal a number of differences in the use of polite formulae such as the apology form.

These three aspects of conversational setting (formality, group size and genre), and their potential effects on the apologetic behaviour of speakers are thus examined in this chapter. More specifically the questions addressed include:

- Do the conversational setting variables formality, group size and genre affect the total apology rate?
- Do the conversational setting variables formality, group size and genre affect the types of apologies produced?
- From the observed patterns in the corpus, what can be deduced about the uses of the apology form in the Britain of the 1990s?

103 Naturally there are many other aspects of conversational setting which cannot be taken into account in a study such as this. The BNC provides only limited insight into the real-life situations behind the recordings and we know little about the actual setting in which the conversations take place. For example, it may well be that a crowded and noisy environment will lead to a number of apologies as people ask each other to repeat what they have just said. Although not dealt with, such potential background effects could affect the results and this should be kept in mind when interpreting the results in this chapter.

104 Typological aspects considered include variation in offences apologised for, variation in additional strategy usage, and variation in the apparent sincerity levels of the apologies. In addition, differences in the lexemes used and the syntactic complexity of the apologies produced in informal and formal settings are examined.
5.2 Effects of formality on apologising

In this section, the effects of formality on apologising are investigated. Determining the formality of different settings in the corpus is challenging. There is no specific information about this aspect in the BNC. However, the header of each text includes a description of the setting in which the conversation took place and information about the ‘spontaneity’ of the speech (as determined by the transcriber). These pieces of information were used to estimate the formality of a particular conversation. Formality is of course a continuous variable, but for the purpose of this study two formality levels only were distinguished: ‘informal’ and ‘formal’.

‘Informal’ texts were exclusively those described as high in spontaneity, taking place in informal settings, primarily conversations taking place in the homes of the participants, and between friends in pubs. Such texts were found in the demographically sampled (DS) texts of the corpus.

‘Formal’ texts were those in which speakers acted in their professional roles, and where the conversational limits were dictated by the situation. Medium and low spontaneity levels were characteristic of these texts. The texts comprising this sub-corpus were all taken from the ‘context-governed’ (CG) part of the BNC.

The methods used to collect the DS and CG texts of the BNC differed: The DS texts were recorded using so-called ‘respondents’, 124 people who were recruited according to demographic sampling techniques. The aim was to produce a sample of speakers that was balanced as far as sex, age, social class and geographical region were concerned. The respondents were asked to record their everyday conversations over a period of up to a week. In addition to these texts, 29 recordings from the University of Bergen COLT Teenager Language Project were included in the DS part of the BNC. This project primarily used material recorded by teenagers aged sixteen and below from Greater London schools. In all, over 700 hours of recordings from 153 respondents were included in the DS part of the BNC (Burnard 1995 and Aston & Burnard 1998:31-33). The texts consisted almost exclusively of informal everyday conversations and represented the ‘informal’ settings in this study.

The ‘context-governed’ Texts were selected on the basis of “a priori linguistically motivated categories”, and included monologue (40%) and dialogue (60%) from four main ‘domains’: ‘Educational and Informative’, consisting of lectures, talks, tutorials, classroom interaction and news commentaries; ‘Business’, including regionally sampled company talks, consultations, interviews, meetings and conferences; ‘Public and Institutional’, including court and parliamentary proceedings, council meetings, public enquiries, and group discussions; ‘Leisure’, including radio and television chat shows, phone-ins, commentaries and club meetings (Burnard 1995 and Aston & Burnard 1998:31-33). The monologue texts were not included in this study. The remaining dialogue of the CG texts represented the ‘formal’ settings in this study.
5.2.1 Formality variation in overall apology rates

In this section, the overall apology rates for speakers partaking in formal and informal conversational settings are compared. Table 5.1 summarises the apology rates of conversations in informal and formal settings. The gender of the speakers is also included here since ANOVA (see Section 4.2.1 for a description of this method) revealed an interaction effect between the independent variables gender and formality.

Table 5.1. Average apology rates in informal and formal settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker gender</th>
<th>Informal setting</th>
<th>Formal setting</th>
<th>Total apology rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female speakers</td>
<td>61.05*</td>
<td>82.12*</td>
<td>66.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male speakers</td>
<td>80.36*</td>
<td>66.15*</td>
<td>72.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total formality</td>
<td>69.77</td>
<td>70.28</td>
<td>69.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘*’ signifies the significance level in the ANOVA test

Discussion of the overall lack of variation in apology rates:

The results from the ANOVA model (Table 1 in Appendix 5) showed that the formality of the setting had no marked effect on the apology rates of the speakers. This result was contrary to expectations based on B&L’s model of politeness. It is reasonable to assume there was a greater average social distance between the participants in formal conversations and consequently we would expect more frequent use of the apology, a speech act which, according to B&L, is primarily associated with negative politeness.

Wolfson (1988), who bases her observations on a number of politeness studies of middle-class American speakers, points out that the usage patterns for various politeness formulae, such as thanking, apologising and complementing, are surprisingly similar in conversations between intimates and between strangers; both types of interaction display a relatively infrequent use of formalised politeness. In contrast, conversations between friends and acquaintances tend to be characterised by frequent use of such formulae. Wolfson proposes ‘the Bulge Theory’ to explain this pattern. She postulates that interactions between intimates and strangers are similar in that the roles that speakers have in these two types of interaction are fairly fixed. She argues that roles and relationships between friends and acquaintances are more complicated, and have to be continually negotiated, resulting in more frequent use of politeness formulae.

In the informal texts of the BNC, conversations between intimates (spouses and close family) were over-represented; the formal texts, on the other hand, consisted mainly of speech between socially distant interlocutors. In this study of apologising, two extremes of a British ‘bulge’ pattern of politeness may thus have been sampled,
and it may be that conversations between friends and acquaintances would have yielded higher apology rates.\textsuperscript{105}

\textit{Discussion of the formality:gender interaction effect:}

There was a significant (\textbullet) interaction effect between the independent variables formality and speaker gender: females tended to apologise more in formal than in informal situations, whereas the opposite pattern was observed among males. Using B&L’s model of politeness the above results could be interpreted in a number of ways. These will be evaluated below:

1a) Females possessed more relative power than males in informal situations (the texts were mainly recorded in home environments).

1b) Males possessed relatively more power than females in formal situations, where they were acting in their professional roles.

and/or

2a) In informal situations, females experienced less social distance between participants than males did.

2b) Females experienced more social distance in formal situations than males did. This may have been an effect of females having less access to professional social networks, and/or females being more aware of formal roles.

and/or

3a) Compared to males, females committed more serious infringements in formal contexts, or at least experienced these infringements as being more serious.

3b) Compared to females, males committed more serious infringement in informal contexts, or at least experienced these infringements as being more serious (on average).

What evidence is there from the corpus to support these hypotheses? Arguably, females tended to act in the role of leader in the home environments. As far as it could be discerned from the texts, it was the mothers of families who were responsible for the everyday running of the households. This fact also seemed to give them the authority to delegate work to other members of the households. In the following two examples, both representing speech between spouses, the males apologise for not fulfilling their commitments:

\textsuperscript{105} Interestingly, one group which did display relatively high apology rates, namely 0-24-year-olds, produced many of these apologies during interactions with friends (see Chapter 6).
Ex. 5.1 (KC6 464-719):

Sue: I bet you didn't go to Safeways to get one of those dips did you?
Gavin: No.
Sue: No you didn't.
Gavin: Nor did you ask.
Sue: I said yesterday! <pause>
Gavin: Oh you did actually, yeah.
Sue: I did actually <unclear>
Gavin: Oh I'm sorry. <pause>

Ex. 5.2 (KDN 5695-708):

Raymond: <voice quality: shouting> I'm sorry love, I'll do it <unclear> you know that
Jean: <-|-> <unclear> [-unclear] [...] Raymond: <-|-> I'll do it before <-|-> you're up in the morning <end of voice quality> [...] Jean: <-|-> I done the di-- <-|-> Raymond:<-|-> She kno-- everybody <-|-> knows you do it love.
Jean: done the dishes and all and had the house kept <-|-> <unclear> and all clean for you<-|->

The question remains whether males are more apologetic than females in informal situations as a result of their lack of power, or because they actually fail to fulfil their commitments in the home. Judging by the above examples the latter explanation is the most likely. Apologising may thus be a way for males to 'get off the hook', thereby maintaining the unequal relationship in the household as regards daily responsibilities.

In the formal texts, males tended to hold positions of more relative power than females. In mixed sex, power-asymmetrical dyads, it was usually the males who were in positions of power. Some examples included tutor/student dialogue, where most of the tutors were men; doctor/patient dialogue, where the general practitioner was invariably male while patients where both male and female; job interviews, where the interviewer was always male while the interviewees were of both sexes; more formal meetings, where the chairmen tended to be male and the secretaries female etc. Perhaps as a consequence of this power asymmetry, females were more apologetic than males in formal situations in the corpus. Consider the following two examples. The first apology was made by a sixteen-year-old student apologising for asking her tutor’s opinion about the correctness of the marking of a chemistry question, the second example was made by a 24-year-old female while introducing a report at the annual meeting of a theatre society:

Ex. 5.3 (KF7 891-97):

Sarah: Yeah, but I got <-|-> that bit wrong <-|>
John: <-|-> Forty two. <-|>
Sarah: <laugh>
John: Okay well they get they've got lots of them to mark and they marked quickly but I <pause> <unclear> Looks alright to me that.
Sarah: Hmm. Sorry, I just wanted your opinion <-|> <voice quality: laughing> I mean <end of voice quality> <end>
John  <-|-> <unclear> <-|-> Mm. I mean it might be wrong but I can't see <-|-> <unclear>
Sarah <-|-> <laugh> <-|-> John

Okay. You don't know much about heptane and ethanols.

Ex. 5.4 (J3M 89-90):

Tracy: Right, first of all I'd like to apologize for the fact that Alan's report and my report especially the first half, are very similar. I'm sorry about that.

Unfortunately it is not possible to test the validity of the remaining hypotheses listed above (2a, 2b, 3a and 3b) since these involve elements of speakers’ subjective evaluation. For example, we know very little about the real-life relationships between participants acting in the various conversations, and because the BNC observes strict anonymity concerning the speakers we cannot retroactively ask the participants about this. Similarly, it would be necessary to interview the participants in order to evaluate the seriousness with which males and females in the corpus view different types of infringements in formal and informal situations.106

There were other factors which may have affected the gender/formality differences in the apology rates. As we shall see in Chapter 6 (Section 6.2.1), there was limited evidence that speakers tended to apologise more in mixed gender interactions than during interactions with members of their own sex. Because males were over-represented in the formal texts, males often participated in single-sex dialogue in formal settings. Females, on the other hand, who only constituted 28 per cent of the speakers in the formal settings, were more likely to participate in mixed sex dialogue. The DS texts were more balanced regarding the variable speaker gender with 53 per cent of the speakers being females. If, as the results in Section 6.2.1 suggest, speakers apologised more during mixed sex conversations than when they interacted with speakers of their own sex, the imbalance in the gender composition of the CG texts may be the explanation for women apologising more in the formal settings.

Finally, the higher apology rates seen among female speakers in the formal texts may have been a result of this speaker group’s greater awareness of politeness norms, norms which were especially important in formal situations. Males apologising more than females in informal situations may simply have been a result of this group’s greater tendency to transgress.

### 5.2.2 Formality variation in offences apologised for

I will now turn to typological differences in the apologies encountered in the formal and informal settings, starting with the variations in the types of offences which led to apologies. The log-linear model (see Section 4.2.1) revealed that there were significant differences (*** in the offences for which speakers apologised in formal and informal settings respectively. Table 5.2 gives the total and relative distributions of apologies for different offences in formal and informal settings and Figure 5.1 summarises the

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106 The log-linear model did not reveal any gender:formality interaction effects in the types of offences apologised for (see Section 5.2.2). This suggests that at least hypotheses 3a) and 3b) above are of minor explanatory value.
parameter estimates ($\lambda$ values – Section 4.2.1) of the offence categories in these two settings.

Table 5.2. Total and relative distributions of apologies for various offences in informal and formal settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>Informal speech</th>
<th>Formal speech</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Real’ subtotal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Formulaic’ subtotal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Face attack’ subtotal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2141</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>3070</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The magnitude of the variation assignable to the independent variable formality was much greater than the variation which could be assigned to the other independent variables included in the log-linear model (speaker gender, speaker age and group size – compare Figure 5.1 with Figures 4.2 and 4.3).

More specifically, speakers in formal settings apologised considerably more often for ‘Talk’ offences than speakers in informal settings. Similarly there were more apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’ offences and for ‘Misunderstandings and mistakes’ in this setting. In formal settings, speakers also apologised marginally more often for ‘Breach of expectations’.

In contrast, speakers in informal settings made more apologies for ‘Accidents’ than did speakers in formal texts. These speakers also apologised more often for ‘Social gaffes’ and ‘Hearing’ offences. Apologies for ‘Requests’ were also marginally more frequent in the informal texts. There were practically no differences regarding the relative frequencies of apologies for offences involving ‘Breach of consensus’ between the two settings.

The above distributions suggest that different politeness norms apply to formal and informal settings respectively. This was particularly apparent in the distributions of the various offences in the category ‘Lack of consideration’ (see Section 3.4.2). Apologies for these offences were almost twice as common in the formal texts. More specifically such apologies included apologies for interruptions, which were almost completely lacking in the informal texts (only 12 were found), but relatively common
in the formal texts (54 examples were found). The following example was recorded during a Green Party meeting.

Ex. 5.5 (JP7 549-56):

Helen: Well it's important to get his support so that's one person that we can write to to erm seek support. That's Robert Atkins M P.
Bob: <unclear> What <--> what <-->
Helen: <--> Also <-->
Bob: is his actual title?
Bob: Sorry to butt in.
Helen: He's the Secretary of State for Energy or Minister <--> for Energy <--> Minister <unclear> <--> yes sure.

Similarly, almost all apologies for ‘Time’ offences, were found in the more formal texts. In the following example Trevor (see also Ex. 3.47 in Section 3.6.1) makes an entrance and apologises for being late:

Ex. 5.6 (H47 14-15):

Trevor: <cough> Sorry for coming in under the wire at er nine fourteen according to this clock. Erm Hugh's asked me to open this morning's erm quality seminar

Other examples of apologies for offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’ which were typical of more formal texts were apologies for mistaken identity and apologies for inconvenience as in Ex. 5.7:

Ex. 5.7 (KM5 702):

Peter: If you go into that weekly han--< -->, that session hand-up booklet, that one yes, if you just hold it up Alistair, so everybody can see it, I know you may have put it away sorry, […]

Such examples suggest that politeness etiquette is more important in formal settings. This may well be a result of there being greater social distance between the participants in the CG texts.

In contrast, the speakers in the informal texts seemed to be more at ease with each other. This is illustrated by a number of apologies for ‘Taboo’ offences in informal settings. In Ex. 5.8, a 53-year-old working-class male apologises for swearing:

Ex. 5.8 (KDN 2431-33):

Raymond: I said to Kelly Ann today, maybe it's fucking, erm sorry, maybe he's dying. Cor! I shouldn't have said it.

The more relaxed atmosphere in informal settings allowed such offences to be committed. The relaxed atmosphere and less stringent adherence to politeness norms in informal settings arguably also explain the greater number of apologies for serious ‘Social gaffes’ encountered in these texts.

Differences in politeness norms in formal and informal settings alone could not explain the observed variation in the offence distributions. A second important contributory factor was that there were differences in functional aspects between formal and informal conversations. The offences apologised for in formal settings indicated
that information exchange was of primary importance in these interchanges. Apologies for ‘Talk’ offences, for example, were almost four times more frequent in formal texts. Apologies for ‘Misunderstandings and mistakes’ were also over-represented in this setting. In informal conversation, the specific information being communicated seemed to be of less importance to the hearer. ‘Hearing’ offences, for example, were more than twice as common in informal settings, indicating that rather unfocused information exchanges were taking place. On average, speech in this setting was more phatic, primarily aimed at negotiating relationships.

5.2.3 Formality variation in additional strategy usage

In this section, variation in the use of additional apology strategies (see Section 3.6) found in texts of different formality levels is examined. Overall, the log-linear model revealed only minimal formality variation in the proportional usage of strategies where speakers acknowledged responsibility for an offence and those where speakers tried to minimise responsibility for an offence. In both formal and informal texts, strategies involving the minimising of responsibility greatly outnumbered strategies involving the taking on of responsibility. The former type of strategy accounted for approximately 80 per cent of the additional strategy usage in both formality levels.

The analysis did, however, reveal a significant (**) interaction effect between the independent variables speaker age and formality and the dependent variable additional strategy usage. More specifically, the use of strategies involving the taking on of responsibility tended to increase with age in the informal texts and decrease with age in the formal texts. Table 5.3 gives the overall distributions of the additional strategies in settings of varying formality. Figure 5.2 summarises the parameter estimates for the additional strategy of taking on responsibility by speakers of different ages acting in formal and informal settings.

Table 5.3. Age differences in the use of additional apology strategies in informal and formal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Strategies</th>
<th>Informal setting: Age groups</th>
<th>Formal setting: Age groups</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-24</td>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>45+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking on Responsibility</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimising Responsibility</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total additional strategies</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledging the responsibility for an offence invariably involves potential loss of face, and a danger that the long-term standing of the apologiser will be compromised in the eyes of the people present. Set against this, is the short-term aim of an apology, i.e. to repair the damage of a transgression. Demeaning oneself in public will arguably improve the chances of an apology being accepted.

Whether a person chooses to use strategies involving the taking on of responsibility or the minimising of responsibility for an offence will largely be determined by the relative importance of the long-term (to be respected) and short-term (to be forgiven) goals of the speaker in any particular situation. The variation in usage of these two strategies by speakers of different ages in formal and informal settings should thus reflect the relative importance that these individuals place on maintaining self-image vis-à-vis being forgiven in the various settings.

According to the psychologist Maslow (1967), and much subsequent research, the need to be accepted and to feel that you belong to a group is fundamental to humanity, and of particular importance during adolescence. At this stage in life, identity is primarily negotiated with, and confirmed by, family and, especially, peers. It is in informal contexts that such negotiations take place. On the whole, adolescents in the corpus probably assigned less importance to their professional identities (i.e. being a competent student) than to their social identities (i.e. being accepted by friends). It thus follows that attempts to minimise face loss by speakers in this age group should be particularly numerous in informal situations, during interactions with friends and family. This need, to maintain personal face, is exemplified in the following interchange.

Cassie, a fifteen-year-old student, apologises for ‘having a go’ at her friends, but justifies her action, placing the blame on the addressees:
Ex. 5.9 (KP4 2062-67):

Cassie: <pause> **Sorry** about having a go at you two about talking about me all the time but I mean that's the w-- that's, that's the impression I've always got.

Bonnie: Well you <pause> <unclear> <pause>

Cassie: <pause> Cos every time I turn around yeah <pause> cos you two always sort of w-- looking at me and whispering and, you know, m-- half the time you have been talking about me cos I've heard you mention my name and it's not very nice.

Bonnie: Yeah but me and Catherine really don't talk about you know.

Cassie: You do! People have told me.

As individuals mature they become more confident in their social roles, and are therefore better equipped to cope with losing face in informal situations. However, according to Maslow, esteem needs, to achieve and to be seen as competent professionally, become increasingly important when a person reaches adulthood. These needs are more closely related to a person’s professional identity than to his/her social identity. A person acting in a responsible professional role may thus feel a greater need to appear competent and to find excuses for mistakes related to work than a person in a less responsible position; a maths tutor making a mistake when calculating a sum during a tutorial is arguably subjected to greater face loss than a student making the same mistake. In the following example, a trainer finds an excuse for repeating himself:

Ex. 5.10 (JSN 804-9):

Peter I've been on the phone since nine o'clock this morning
PS000: <unclear>, <laugh>
PS000: <unclear>
Peter That's right, now, <pause> y--, you know very well, some of you again, **forgive me if I'm repeating something we've talked about before**, but we've actually used this as an example, haven't we? That it's almost impossible for the human brain to concentrate for more than ten minutes of time on any
PS000: Yes.
Peter: Because what it does, it just gets fed up of doing it,

The age variation in the use of additional strategies seen in the various formality levels in the corpus may thus be an effect of age differences in the “absolute ranking (R) of imposition” (B&L 1987:76) associated with different types of transgressions: Adolescents appear to be more concerned with appearing competent socially than professionally. The opposite seems to be the case for older speakers.

5.2.4 Formality variation in apparent sincerity levels

In this section, formality variation in the apparent sincerity of the apologies is investigated. The relative distributions of ‘Sarcastic’, ‘Challenging’, ‘Casual’ and apparently ‘Sincere’ apologies (see Section 3.7) made by speakers acting in formal and informal settings were compared. Table 5.4 summarises the overall distributions of these sub-
Variation across Conversational Settings

categories in various settings. Figure 5.3 summarises the parameter estimates of the formality effects on the apparent sincerity of the apologies.

Table 5.4. Relative distributions of sincerity levels in texts of different formality levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity level</th>
<th>Informal setting</th>
<th>Formal setting</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>1081</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>1471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49.1%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincere</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>1159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2141</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>3070</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.3. Estimated parameter values in the log-linear model formality:apparent sincerity (intercept 1.62)
The formality of the setting had a significant effect (***) on a speaker’s use of apologies of varying sincerity levels. The log-linear analysis showed that ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were more common in informal settings, and that apparently ‘Sincere’ apologies were more common in formal settings. Only small differences in the use of ‘Challenging’ and ‘Casual’ apologies were found in settings at different formality levels.

As mentioned previously (in Sections 3.7 and 4.4.3), ‘Sarcastic’ apologies tended to be used jokingly, as mock politeness devices in informal multilogues among teenagers in particular. In contrast, apologies for offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’ (typically sincere apologies) were particularly common in formal texts (see Section 5.2.2), explaining the higher proportion of ‘Sincere’ apologies in these texts.

Two significant (***)) interaction effects were found to be operating on the data, namely formality:gender, and formality:age. The interaction effect between gender and formality was such that women used relatively fewer ‘Sarcastic’, and more ‘Casual’ apologies than males in formal situations (see Figure 5.4). In informal situations, however, the reverse was the case, i.e. women used more ‘Sarcastic’ apologies than males overall (note that this overall apology pattern was a result of the apologetic behaviour of older speakers; young males produced more ‘Sarcastic’ apologies than young females in informal situations).

![Figure 5.4. Estimated parameter values in the log-linear model apparent sincerity:high formality:gender (intercept=3.02)](image)

Since sarcasm in the corpus generally appeared to be associated with situations characterised by small social distance, the findings support the hypothesis (2b) proposed earlier in Section 5.2.1, namely that men had greater access to professional networks than females and thereby experienced less social distance in formal, work-
related settings. In contrast, women appeared to be more at ease than men in the informal setting of the home. The relative power of speakers may also have affected the use of ‘Sarcastic’ apologies, with relatively powerful interlocutors favouring such usage. The gender/formality variation in ‘Sarcastic’ apologies could also have been a result of women in the corpus being more attuned to when it was appropriate to use sarcasm.

The interaction effect between the independent variables formality and speaker age was such that younger speakers tended to use relatively more ‘Sarcastic’ and ‘Challenging’ apologies, but fewer ‘Casual’ and ‘Sincere’ apologies in informal contexts than older speakers (see Figure 5.5). The exact opposite pattern was observed in more formal texts, i.e. here it was the older speakers who used relatively more ‘Sarcastic’ and ‘Challenging’ apologies than younger speakers.

![Graph showing parameter values for different age groups](image)

**Figure 5.5.** *Estimated parameter values in the log-linear model apparent sincerity: low formality: age (intercept=3.02)*

Since most ‘Sarcastic’ and ‘Challenging’ apologies uttered by adolescents were produced in conversations with peers, the pattern above lends support to the findings that this type of mock politeness is typical of ‘teenage speech’ (see Section 4.4.3). In formal situations, younger speakers were probably less self-confident and avoided sarcasm and challenges, while older speakers, who had dominant roles in the formal texts, favoured their use. As we shall see later (in Section 5.4.1), teachers, for example, frequently used sarcasm during interchanges with students.
5.2.5 Formality variation in lexemes and syntax

The effects of formality on a speaker’s choice of lexemes in the explicit apologies and on the syntactic complexity of these speech acts are examined in this section.\(^\text{107}\) The relative distributions of the various lexemes in formal and informal texts are given in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5. The relative distributions of the various lexemes in formal and informal texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexemes</th>
<th>Informal speech</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sorry</td>
<td>1127</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>1820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardon</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologise</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgive</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2141</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>3069*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* ‘Regret’ was not included as only one example was found, in the formal sub-corpus.

The form *sorry*, was favoured in formal speech, while *pardon* and *excuse* were favoured in informal speech (see Table 5.5). The observed distributions of these common IFIDs could largely be explained by the variation in the offences apologised for in the two settings: formal texts contained more apologies for offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’, ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’ and ‘Talk’ offences. All of these offences were typically apologised for using *sorry* (see Table 3.3 in Section 3.5.1). Informal texts contained more apologies for ‘Hearing’ offences, explaining the relatively more frequent use of *pardon* here. Informal texts also contained relatively more apologies for ‘Social gaffes’ and ‘Requests’, explaining the relatively frequent use of *excuse* in these texts.

The relative distributions of the more unusual lexeme *apologise* suggests that this form is typically formal in style, supporting the claims that this IFID is more or less restricted to formal interactions (Fraser 1981 and Holmes 1990). No marked formality differences were discernable in the distributions of *afraid* and *forgive*.

\(^{107}\) Note that the lexemes and syntactic complexity were not included in the log-linear model. The choice of lexeme was highly dependent on the type of offence apologised for as was syntactic complexity (see Table 3.3 on page 78 above). It was thus deemed unnecessary to carry out a separate analysis for these dependent variables.
Formality variation in the use of the three general syntactic categories: i) simple detached explicit apologies, ii) detached explicit apologies with added markers of politeness, and iii) complex syntactic forms (see Section 3.2.2 for a more thorough description of these categories) were subsequently examined. The distributions are summarised in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6. Relative distributions of syntactic form in texts of varying formality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntactic form</th>
<th>Informal speech</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple detached forms</td>
<td>1658</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>2294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detached + markers</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2141</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>3070</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apologies with complex syntactic forms were favoured in formal settings. These forms often incorporated a statement of the violation in the actual apology as in Ex. 5.11-Ex. 5.13, all taken from formal texts:

Ex. 5.11 (JSN 484):

Peter What you've got to do now is make them into salesmen, forgive me again for using the phrase salesmen, I appreciate that all of you are not men.

Ex. 5.12 (JA1 806):

Rod <pause> Yes I'm sorry that I'm having to scribe all this out but er the new documentation they've changed the erm <pause> that's a Monday <pause> sorry about this

Ex. 5.13 (F8U 40)

Wendy: <-|-> Erm <-|-> now I was supposed to check and I'm afraid I haven't, whether we still need to get sermons from Scotland and Liverpool.

Detached apologies with additional markers of politeness were also marginally more common in the formal texts.
5.3 Effects of group size on apologising

To my knowledge, there are no previous studies that investigate the effects of group size on apologetic behaviour. In this section, the effect of this conversational setting variable is investigated, and the apologetic behaviour of speakers acting in settings with only two participants was compared with the apologetic behaviour of speakers acting in larger groups.

In the CG texts, group size was determined by referring to the information in the ‘text header’ about the number of participants present in a particular text. Since each CG text represented one conversational situation, it was assumed that this figure accurately reflected the number of speakers present during the entire recording.

Determining the number of participants present during the conversations in the DS texts was more challenging. The information about the number of participants in the headers of each text represented the total number of speakers present during the entire 2-7-day recording of a particular respondent. One such ‘text’ could actually contain hundreds of individual conversations, constituting a number of different group constellations. The fact that the information in a header of a DS text indicated that there were 30 participants, for example, did thus not mean that there were 30 participants present at any one time during the recordings, but that 30 different speakers participated at some point in the total number of conversations recorded. In order to overcome this problem, a value of ‘mean participants per conversation’ for each DS text was calculated from the actual number of participants present on 20 different conversational occasions chosen at random from each text.

The group size categories used in this analysis were: ‘pure dialogue’ (2 participants only) and ‘multilogue’, (which was further sub-divided into three sub-categories: 3-4 participants, 5-7 participants and 8+ participants). Most examples of pure dialogue were found in the more formal CG texts, as were most examples of interactions in large groups (more than 8 speakers). The average group size in informal conversations was 4.4 participants.

5.3.1 Group size variation in overall apology rates

In this section, the overall apology rates for speakers participating in pure dialogue and in multilogue settings were compared. Figure 5.6 summarises the total apology rates of speakers participating in conversations with 2, 3-4, 5-7 and more than 8 participants. Note that only the main categories ‘pure dialogue’ and ‘multilogue’ were included in the ANOVA model.

108 Note that only the apology patterns in the two main categories (pure dialogue and multilogue) were included in the statistical models. This merger was done for practical reasons and arguably resulted in an oversimplification of the real data. However, it was deemed that it was the presence of a third party that was important in affecting apologetic behaviour rather than the number of third parties present.

109 For more information on the composition of the corpus with regard to speaker group size see Table 5 in Appendix 4.
The ANOVA model showed that the number of participants present during a conversation had a significant (*) effect on the apologetic behaviour of speakers in that they apologised more when a third party was present during the interaction (Table 1, Appendix 5).

Using B&L’s model this effect could be explained by there being greater social distance between the speakers in larger groupings, which in turn would have led to more frequent use of negative politeness formulae such as apologies. However, most of the conversations with 3-4 and 5-7 participants were recorded in informal settings and were examples of interactions between family and friends. Social distance effects were unlikely to be operating in such settings. In contrast, the pure dialogues were almost exclusively examples of more formal recordings from the CG part of the corpus. These dialogues included medical consultations, job interviews and tutorials, all very formal settings. If social distance was a factor leading to higher apology rates in the various group-size settings, we would have expected a high occurrence of apologies in the formal settings mentioned. This was not so and it is unlikely that effects of social distance can explain the apology rate pattern in Figure 5.6. Instead it is my belief that the presence of individuals other than the offender and the offended per se will affect apologetic behaviour.

When there is a third party present an apology serves a dual function. On the one hand it is, as an addressee-oriented act, repairing the potential damage caused by an

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110 Of the variables other than group size included in the ANOVA model (age, gender and formality) only speaker age was found to significantly affect the overall apology rate (see 4.3). It was only in the pure dialogue conversations that the average age of the speakers notably differed from the average age in the other groupings; the mean age of the speakers in the pure dialogue corpus was 50.2 years. The mean ages of the speakers in the remaining three groupings were approximately the same (35.7, 34.5 and 37.1 years respectively). The main effect explaining the differences in total apology rates in the three multilogue sub-categories was thus likely to have been the number of participants present at the time of the recording.

111 102 of the 113 texts included in this corpus were taken from the CG part of the corpus.
Chapter 5

infringement. At the same time the apology may be a way of showing others present that the offence was unintentional and out of character. The apology is thus arguably partly audience-oriented. Consider the following example recorded at a public county council planning meeting with ten participants:

Ex. 5.14 (JAD 379-849):

Miss D. Whittaker: I have been puzzling to establish and I have failed, whether on the fourteenth of January nineteen eighty seven when the Secretary of State wrote the notice of approval, which in confirms his view that forty three per hectare is right, whether the use classes order had then been amended. It seems to me, racking my memory that the use classes order post dates and therefore the introduction of class B one which was the main thing in the new use classes order, the chairman tells me it was nineteen eighty eight. In that sense, if my logic is okay so far, and it is the amendment to the use classes order which has significantly shifted how we regard employment development for planning, I wondered if the justification for the forty three per hectare, on the grounds that the Secretary of State imposed it, actually holds water, these days? Sorry that was a long and complicated version to your question. But was the question clear Mr Potter?

Mr David Potter: The the question was clear yes and er I in fact I agonized over that very question myself when I was trying to put these figures together.

The apology for the wordy and rather convoluted question was probably not entirely directed to Mr Potter, but partly also to the others present. Similarly, in the following example of teenage conversation (7 participants), it is actually difficult to say whom Josie apologises to for using the derogatory term ‘nigger’. From the conversation preceding and following the apology it is clear that her friends are not racially prejudiced and the apology serves as a way of showing them that neither is she.

Ex. 5.15 (KPG 5569-87):

Josie: But because they're black it don't make no difference, do you know what I mean.
Alice: Cos $<$-$>$ if we say it $<$-$>$
Shelley: $<$-$>$ We say it $<$-$>$
Josie: But if I was to say it, it's different. Like, Kerry goes to me, cos I've got a black kitten he goes, what are you gonna call it? I goes dunno. Goes call it Malcolm X. I goes shut up! He goes, call it, call it Ma-- call it Martin X and then he says call it Nigger. I think Nigger's a good name but, you know what I mean like, come here Nigger! But $<$<pause>$>$ it's, it's racist. If I'd a, if I were walking down the street going $<$"makes kissing noise as if to call cat"$>$ Nigger! $<$unclear$>$ sorry! $<$laugh$>$

Alice Last year, right, I was on holiday in the South of France and I, I'd made friends with these two German people and I'm a bit wary of German people anyway, cos of what's happened and everything.
Josie Mm.
Alice And, no, they hadn't done anything racist up until then and I goes casually, do you like Bob Marley? No, he's a black nigger. What! Do you know what you're saying you are, you are $<$-$>$ some stupid $<$unclear$>$ $<$-$>$
Josie $<$-$>$ He's a legend, man. $<$-$>$
It is reasonable to assume that the importance of such audience-directed subsidiary functions is greater in conversations with many participants. This lends further support to Jary’s (1998:11) view of politeness as being a product of a speaker’s short-term aims (“to get an addressee to do or believe something”), and long-term aims (“becoming/remaining a liked and respected member of a certain group).

The higher apology rates found in larger conversational groups may also have been a result of the fact that the presence of many individuals increased the likelihood of someone being offended by an action. One would also have expected apologies for offences involving communicative breaches such as ‘Hearing’ offences and ‘Misunderstandings and mistakes’, to increase as conversational groups became larger. Surprisingly, no such evidence was found in the corpus (see Section 5.3.2).

5.3.2 Group-size variation in the types of apologies produced

The log-linear analysis revealed no significant effects of the group size on the offences which resulted in apologies. Nor did the same model show group size to have any significant effect on the types of additional strategies which speakers used in combination with the explicit apologies. Group size did, however, have a significant (\(*\) effect of the apparent sincerity level of the apologies. The overall and relative frequencies of ‘Sarcastic’, ‘Challenging’, ‘Casual’ and apparently ‘Sincere’ apologies are summarised in Table 5.7. Figure 5.7 shows the parameter estimates (\(\lambda\) values – Section 4.2.1) of group size on these four categories in the log-linear model.

Table 5.7. Relative distributions of sincerity levels in dialogues and multilogues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent Sincerity Level</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
<th>Multilogue</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>1304</td>
<td>1471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincere</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>1042</td>
<td>1159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>2775</td>
<td>3070</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.7. *Estimated parameter values in the log-linear model group size: apparent sincerity (intercept 1.62)*

Of the investigated apparent sincerity levels, ‘Challenging’ apologies were particularly common in multilogues. In conversations with many participants, this type of apology often functioned as a device to gain the floor, announcing that a difference of opinion was about to be expressed. Consider this extract from a teachers’ conference. Assessment is on the agenda.

Ex. 5.16 (FG7 280-93):

Angela: &lt;|--&gt; Oh &lt;|--&gt; not poor, come on! How, how can you possibly like poor? The negative connotations of a word like that, come on!
Don: But some &lt;|--&gt; of them &lt;|--&gt;
Alan: &lt;|--&gt; Well &lt;|--&gt;
Don &lt;|--&gt; are bloody poor! &lt;|--&gt;
Alan: &lt;|--&gt; well wo-- well one &lt;|--&gt; out of ten is indicating that they're poor!
Angela: I ye-- yes &lt;pause&gt; and I agree with that, but we're supposed to be communicating with the little &lt;|--&gt; bastards right &lt;|--&gt;
Don: &lt;|--&gt; No, no I'm &lt;|--&gt; sorry!
Angela: in a sensitive way right, emphasising the positive
Andrew: &lt;laugh&gt;
Rod: &lt;laugh&gt;
Don: No, &lt;|--&gt; no we're supposed &lt;|--&gt; to be communicating with the parents!
Paul Parents &lt;|--&gt; &lt;unclear&gt; &lt;|--&gt;
Angela: &lt;|--&gt; Exactly &lt;|--&gt; &lt;|--&gt; little bastards, that's what I said! &lt;|--&gt;
Don uses the apology to butt in on Angela’s argument, while at the same time signalling his difference of opinion to the others present.

‘Challenging’ apologies were also relatively common in less formal multilogues. In the following extract, Arthur is defending the quality of food at his local after his wife (Paula) and mother-in-law (PS5OU) have expressed disappointment about a meal they had there. He seeks the support of his sixteen-year-old son Anthony (Ton).

Ex. 5.17 (KP1 2823-38):

Arthur: oh you and, you and Sally had the same, at the pub
PS50U: Pardon?
Arthur: How much did they charge you for that down the pub?
Paula: I was disappointed in it
PS50U: I was disa--
Arthur: Oh we weren't were we Ton?
Anthony: No […]
Paula: <-|-> Where we went was <-|-> […]
Arthur: <-|-> Well I'm sorry but where we went it was great <-|-> weren't it Ton?
Paula: Well last time I went to that one it was okay
Arthur: There you are then
Paula: weren't it?
Anthony: Mm
Paula: but that, yesterday I was very disappointed
Arthur: Did you tell them?

The function of ‘Challenging’ apologies thus seems to be three-fold: a disarming device directed at the addressee aimed at softening the impact of the attack on hearer face, a rhetorical device for gaining the floor, and finally, a way of indirectly pleading support for your opinion. The last two of these functions largely explain the preference for this type of apology in multilogues.

5.4 Conversational genres

In this section, the effect of the genre of conversation on apologising is examined. The CG texts in the BNC are divided into four domains: ‘Business’, ‘Educational’, ‘Leisure’ and ‘Public and Institutional’. However, these labels did not adequately describe the type of conversational situations that the texts included in this study represented. In order to give a more accurate account of the genre of the conversations, new genre categories were constructed based on the specific information in the headers of the texts. These resultant genres are listed and described below starting with the genre with the lowest average text apology rate (apologies per 100 000 words spoken – figure in bold in parenthesis). Further statistical details about these genres are given in Table 6 in Appendix 4:

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112 The apology rates were worked out from the individual text apology rates. Texts with fewer than 500 words were not included in order to avoid extreme and misleading values (see Appendix 3 for further discussion of this praxis)
• ‘History interviews’ (18.3) consisted of texts from the Leisure domain which were recorded as part of an oral history project. The interviewees, mainly elderly people, were asked to talk about their lives and consequently these texts bordered on monologue; the interviewer (male in all cases) said little, his role was mainly to give conversational cues.

• ‘Medical consultations’ (20.6) were recordings of doctor/patient interactions. In all texts the general practitioner was male and there was usually only one patient present.

• ‘Tutorials’ (40.4) typically consisted of 1-3 students interacting with a tutor. Most of these texts were recorded at universities and the students were thus young adults. Some examples of GCSE tutorials were also included.

• ‘Sales pitches’ (40.5) were examples of salesmen trying to sell their wares in what appeared to be private home settings. There were only three examples of conversations belonging to this genre in the corpus.

• ‘Job interviews’ (63.3) represented texts where speakers were interviewed in the role of job applicant. There were also a few examples in this genre of students being interviewed by career’s advisors.

• ‘Informal conversations at home’ (68.2) consisted of DS conversations recorded in private, informal settings (in the home or in the car, for example). Most of these exchanges took place between family and friends.

• ‘Informal conversations at work’ (72.5) represented the DS texts that were recorded at work. These consisted mainly of leisure conversations between colleagues. A few more work-oriented conversations, such as telephone conversations with customers, were also included in this category.

• ‘Classroom conversations’ (73.5) were mainly recorded in schools and typically there were a number of students but only one teacher present during the interchanges.

• ‘Adult courses’ (77.8) represented texts from a number of domains (mainly Business and Educational) and were examples from training courses and similar situations, where professionals received further education.

• ‘Public broadcasts’ (79.1) comprised a number of texts recorded from television and radio. These typically consisted of unprepared dialogue such as chat shows on radio and debates on television.

• ‘Meetings’ (85.8) consisted mainly of business meetings of various kinds. They differed from the category ‘Public meetings’ below in that their form was somewhat less rigid.
Variation across Conversational Settings

• ‘Public meetings’ (101.7) were examples of legal proceedings, political debates and public enquiries. The form was rigid with speakers announcing their turns in the presence of a chairman.

It was not possible to conduct ANOVA and log-linear analysis on the genre data since the number of apologies encountered in many of the genres was too small to allow for sophisticated statistical analysis. Some general tendencies were however noted, but when interpreting the results in Section 5.4.1, it should be observed that there were many background variables other than the genre of the setting which may have affected the distributions of the apologies.

5.4.1 Observed trends in the different genres

Total apology rates:

Overall, the genres with the lowest average text apology rates were those with the lowest numbers of participants. This supports the finding that group size was an important factor affecting apologising in the BNC. The overall average apology rates in the texts of the different genres and the average number of participants participating in these conversations are summarised in Figure 5.8.

![Figure 5.8. Mean text apology rates and mean number of participants in different genres](image)
One genre which deviated slightly from the above pattern was ‘Job interviews’. This genre was special in that the settings of the conversations were highly formalised and much was at stake. Both the interviewer and interviewee often appeared to be rather self-conscious and ill at ease. In the following example an interviewer apologises for his choice of terminology.

Ex. 5.18 (JA2 496):

Rod: But it's only doable, I'm afraid that's an Americanism that's crept into our language, doable, erm only if you listen to the people who've been doing it.

There are many examples of such seemingly unmotivated apologies for ‘Talk’ offences in the texts of this genre, indicating nervousness. Apologies for offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’ were also common.

Typological differences among apologies in different genres:

The proportional distributions of apologies for different types of offences in the genres were also examined. The distributions of apologies for three offence categories in particular proved to be interesting: apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’, ‘Social gaffes’ and ‘Breach of consensus’. These will be discussed below, starting with apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’. The relative distributions of apologies for such offences in the different genres are summarised in Figure 5.9.

![Figure 5.9. Proportional genre distribution of apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’](image-url)
The distributions of apologies for offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’ (see Figure 5.9) indicated that politeness etiquette was more important in formal situations and when an audience was present during the conversation. Two exceptions were the distributions of these apologies in the genres ‘Medical consultations’, and ‘Job interviews’, both of which consisted almost exclusively of private dialogue. These genres were unusual since they represented rather ‘awkward’ situations.\footnote{The results from ‘Medical consultations’ were unreliable since only 13 apologies were encountered in these texts.}

Common ‘Lack of consideration’ offences apologised for in the genres above included untimely exits, interruptions and offences related to ‘manners’ in general, as in the apology in Ex. 5.19, where Malcolm arrives late to a committee meeting.\footnote{Example 5.19 can also be interpreted as an apology involving subtle use of sarcasm. Interpreting the apology in this way, Greg is not sorry at all, but uses the speech act as a way of reprimanding Malcolm for being late.}

Ex. 5.19 (FXR 26-29):

\begin{verbatim}
Malcolm: <-|-> Hello. <-|->
Pauline: <-|-> Start again. <-|->
Greg: I'm afraid we've nicked the comfy seats. \textbf{Sorry about that.}
\end{verbatim}

Another offence category related to ‘manners’ was ‘Social gaffes’. Figure 5.10 summarises the distributions of apologies for such offences in the various genres.\footnote{Note that the results for ‘Social gaffes’ in the genres ‘History interviews’, ‘Medical consultations’ and ‘Sales pitches’ were not included in Figure 5.10 since the very small number of apologies in these genres resulted in extreme values for this offence. The proportional distributions of apologies for ‘Social gaffes’ in these three genres were 11.4\%, 30.8\% and 16.7\% respectively.}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{apologies.png}
\caption{Proportional genre distribution of apologies for ‘Social gaffes’}
\end{figure}
We would expect participants to avoid social gaffes in more public situations and this was indeed the case in the corpus. One exception to the overall pattern was the unexpectedly high figure for apologies for ‘Social gaffes’ observed in the genre ‘Public meetings’ (one of the most formal and public genres). There were, however, situational circumstances that could explain this distribution: Speakers often produced very long utterances during the public debates and most of the gaffes apologised for in this genre involved the clearing of throats. In addition, one of the speakers in the texts was suffering from a cold, as the eloquent disarming apology in Ex. 5.20 clearly indicates:

Ex. 5.20 (JAC 10):

Mr. Ken Williamson: Could I just say before I start, I apologize in advance while I'm on the air if there there are any inadvertent s— coughs and <laugh> <unclear> little bit of a cold <unclear> don't want to deafen anybody while er the volume was up.

The final offence category showing interesting distributions in the various genres was apologies for ‘Breach of consensus’. The relative distributions of apologies for these offences in the various genres are summarised in Figure 5.11.

![Figure 5.11. Proportional genre distribution of apologies for ‘Breach of consensus’](image)

Apologies for ‘Breach of consensus’ were particularly common in the more ‘public’ genres ‘Public broadcasts’, ‘Meetings’ and ‘Public meetings’. This finding supports the findings above (see Section 5.3.2), that ‘Challenging’ apologies are especially common when there was an audience present. The functional nature of the conversations in
the three genres above would also have contributed to the high proportions of apologies for ‘Breach of consensus’: many of these conversations were debates and consequently differences of opinions were frequently expressed. Ex. 5.21 was recorded during a television debate on animal rights.

Ex. 5.21 (HV3 161-66):

Animal rights defender: With that cat going through the flame. It had all the stress indicators, i-- enlarged pupils, fluffed tail, I saw, I saw <unclear> That act was <-|-> punishment centred <|-|> It's stress, oh my god <|-|>, and <unclear> given <unclear> token food at the end of the act, but believe me, all circus training involves a lot of cruelty, especially with elephants, <|-|> because they're so <unclear> <-|->

Gavin:<-|-> Excuse me <-|-> I don't involve cruelty in my training <unclear>

Interestingly, many apologies for offences involving ‘Breach of consensus’ were also made in informal conversations in the home. It appears that the secure social environment of family and friends encourages speakers to express their opinions. This supports the findings of D’Amico-Reisner (1985), who found that among native speakers of American English direct disapproval was expressed almost exclusively to intimates or to strangers. The findings here also lend further support to Wolfson’s ‘Bulge Theory’ (1988): Among intimates and relative strangers, relationships and roles are more set and consequently speakers allow themselves be less polite than they would among friends and acquaintances.

Of the remaining typological aspects of the apologies examined in the various genres, additional strategy usage was not found to be affected markedly by the genre of the conversation.

The proportional distribution of apologies of different sincerity levels in the various genres showed that ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were more common in the informal genres. Interestingly, however, the genre with the highest proportion (8.2%) of ‘Sarcastic’ apologies was ‘Classroom conversations’. In spite of the fact that the total number of apologies in this genre was rather small,116 it is telling that all of the ‘Sarcastic’ apologies encountered were made by teachers (see Ex. 3.54 in Section 3.7 for example). In addition to ‘Sarcastic’ apologies, several other examples of the use of sarcasm by teachers were also found in these texts.

Ex. 5.22 (F7U 129-30):

Danny: Right <pause> children! <pause> First of all <pause> Tracey <pause> you can have the first opportunity to show how little you know.

Apparently ‘Sincere’ apologies were more common in more formal genres, and ‘Challenging’ apologies tended to be common in genres comprising conversations with many participants. These results support the findings from sections 5.2 and 5.3.

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116 There were only 73 apologies in all and 6 of these were sarcastic.
5.5 Summary

In this chapter three aspects of conversational setting have been examined, namely formality, group size and genre, and their effects on the apology rates and the types of apologies produced were elucidated.

Formality did not affect the speakers’ inclinations to apologise on the whole; the mean speaker apology rates in formal and informal texts were very similar. One interaction effect operating on this variable was discovered, however; the apologetic behaviour of males and females in formal and informal contexts differed. Females tended to apologise more as formality increased, while males apologised less.

The number of participants in a conversation had an effect on the total apology rate. On the whole, speakers tended to apologise more when a third party was present. Group size also seemed to be the main factor affecting the apology rates in the various genres.

Text genres in which many participants were present during the conversations were characterised by high apology rates, whereas those with few participants present contained relatively few apologies. Formality and ‘degree of awkwardness’ also seemed to be factors affecting apology rates, particularly in the genre ‘Job interviews’. Figure 5.12 summarises the magnitude of impact on total apology rates of the three aspects of conversational setting investigated.

![Figure 5.12. Overview of conversational setting apology rate differences](image)

Various effects were found of the conversational settings on the types of apologies produced. More specifically, apologies for offences which involved breaches of conventional ‘manners’ increased with formality. Apologies for communicative breaches on the part of the speaker (‘Talk’ offences and ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’) were also more common in formal contexts. Apologies for offences in-
volving ‘Breach of consensus’ were particularly common during debates involving many participants. Examples from the corpus suggest that this type of apology had the added task of functioning as a rhetorical device to gain the floor.

The analysis of additional strategy usage in the various conversational settings showed that younger speakers were disinclined to acknowledge responsibility in informal conversations while older speakers were reluctant to do so in more formal contexts. Age differences regarding the experienced importance of social and professional roles were thought to be the cause of the observed pattern.

Analysis of the distribution of the sub-categories of the independent variable ‘Apparent sincerity level’ showed that on the whole ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were more common in informal speech. Moreover, younger speakers favoured ‘Sarcastic’ apologies in informal contexts, whereas older speakers mainly used this form of apology in formal contexts. In addition, males used more ‘Sarcastic’ apologies in formal contexts than women. Surprisingly, the genre ‘Classroom conversations’ contained a relatively large number of examples of ‘Sarcastic’ apologies, and here it was the teachers who used the form.

The distributions of ‘Challenging’ apologies in different conversational settings showed that while younger speakers tended to use this type of apology in informal contexts, they rarely did so in formal settings. In addition, ‘Challenging’ apologies were far more common in multilogues than in pure dialogue. This finding was supported by the distributions of this type of apology in the different genres: it was in the ‘public genres’ such as ‘Public broadcasts’ and ‘Public meetings’ that this type of apology figured most often.

Finally, an examination of the distribution of the syntactic forms and the lexemes used in the explicit apologies in informal and formal settings showed that more complex apologies were favoured in formal speech. The relatively rare lexeme *apologise* was also favoured in such contexts.

### 5.6 Discussion

It appears that formality, and especially group size, do affect apologetic behaviour in British English. The effects of the formality on apologetic behaviour in the corpus illustrated that there appear to be private and public politeness norms in Britain, and that ‘manners’ become increasingly important as the formality of the setting increases. More interestingly, however, the presence of an audience had an even more marked effect on apologetic behaviour than formality. This leads to speculations that apologising in British English is not only addressee-oriented, but also a way of enhancing your own standing in the eyes of others present. The frequent use of ‘Challenging’ apologies during debates also shows that this polite formula is used strategically as a device for gaining the floor and as a way of gaining support from an audience. The old eighteenth century definition of politeness described in Section 2.3 may thus still be partly applicable: “Politeness may be defined a dextrous management of our Words and Actions whereby men make other people have a better Opinion of us and themselves” (*English Theophrastus*:108).
Chapter 6
Dyadic Patterns in Apologising

6.1 Introduction

So far, I have examined two general aspects which affect the use of the apology form in the corpus, namely the social identity of the speaker and the conversational setting in which s/he acts. A third factor of crucial importance when analysing the use of this polite formula is the identity of the person addressed, an identity which is defined by the relationship that exists between the speaker and addressee.

In B&L’s model of politeness, ‘social relationships’ are broken down into two more specific variables, relative power (P) and social distance (D). The authors point out (1987:78) that it is difficult to assign values to these variables outside the context of the specific conversation under investigation.

To illustrate this fact, they argue that most people would give a bank manager a high rating, and an ordinary worker a low rating on a relative power scale. But in fact it is the context of the conversation which determines the actual relative power of interlocutors. If the context is such that the worker is holding a gun, is sitting on a jury trying the manager, or is representing a worker’s union, the expected power relationship may well be reversed. B&L propose that a more plausible view of the variable P would be that its value should be “attached not to individuals at all, but to roles and role-sets” (1987:78). According to B&L, asymmetrical power is built into role-sets such as manager/employee, parent/child etc.\(^{117}\)

The variable social distance (D) should arguably be easier to determine outside the context, but B&L (1987:79) point to potential problems here too. We might, for example, assume that there is great social distance between two total strangers, but if they happen to come from the same town and meet by chance in a foreign country, they may well feel close in spite of never having met before. Factors other than common geographic origin that may operate in reducing social distance between strangers include common sub-/cultural, political or philosophical values. Relative strangers can soon feel reasonably intimate if they have common points of reference.

Naturally, there are many challenges in trying to determine the above factors (P and D) in a corpus such as the BNC. The focus of attention in this chapter is largely determined by what it was possible to investigate in practical terms. The questions addressed in this chapter include:

- Does the social identity of the addressee in relation to the speaker affect the apology rate in a conversation?\(^{118}\)

\(^{117}\) B&L point to a difficulty with this strict role-set view, namely that “high P values in one role do carry over into the conduct of another. When a new President is elected, his old friends may still be friends, but they are unlikely to retain the old equality.” (79)

\(^{118}\) For practical reasons (see 6.2 below) the social variables gender and age alone were included here.
• Does the social identity of the addressee affect the offences apologised for and the apparent sincerity level of these apologies? 119
• Does the relative power of the speaker in relation to the addressee affect the apology rate in a conversation? 120
• Does the relative power of the speaker in relation to the addressee affect the offences apologised for and the apparent sincerity level of these apologies?
• Does the social distance between the participants in a conversation affect the offences apologised for and the apparent sincerity level of these apologies? 121
• What do the observed tendencies say about the uses of the apology form in the Britain of the 1990s?

Finally, a matter of definition: the term ‘dyad’ is used in this chapter to refer to the speaker/addressee relationship; male/female dyads, female/female dyads, parent/child dyads, for example. ‘Symmetrical dyads’ are those in which the investigated social or role identities of the speaker and addressee are similar (males interacting with other males, for example). In contrast ‘asymmetrical dyads’ are those in which the investigated identities of the speaker and addressee are different (e.g. teachers interacting with students).

6.1.1 Methodological considerations

This section concerns some of the practical difficulties encountered in this part of the study, difficulties which resulted in the setting of certain limitations to the investigation. I also explain how some of the problems encountered were overcome.

The addressee sub-corpus:

The sub-corpus used in this part of the study was smaller than those on which earlier investigations in this thesis were based. The reason for this is that in the study as a whole, the corpus of apologies was limited to examples uttered by speakers who could be identified for at least the variables gender and age. In this part of the study, the identity of the addressee was of interest, but many of the 3070 apologies were directed to people who were not described as regards age and gender. Only 2268 apologies were made to individuals described for these variables. These 2268 apologies make up the ‘addressee sub-corpus’ of apologies. The bulk of the remaining 802 apologies were made to people who could not be identified at all, or whose gender and/or age (and social class) were unknown. Some apologies were addressed to more than one person, to an audience or a group of people present. Such examples are also excluded from the present analysis.

119 Additional strategy usage was not investigated here. There were too few examples of such usage in apologies in the various dyads investigated to draw any conclusions.
120 Relative power was determined using the information about the role of the participants available in the setting headers (see 6.3 below).
121 It was impossible to investigate total apology rates in conversations involving participants with different social distance (see 6.1.1 and 6.4).
Information about the social class of the addressees in the addressee sub-corpus was particularly limited. The social class of the person addressed could only be worked out for 728 of the 2268 apologies. In only 185 of these 728 apologies were the social classes of both the speaker and the addressee given. The relatively small sample of apologies made to addressees of known social class led to difficulties when interpreting the results; in most cases there were simply too few apologies available to allow reliable conclusions to be drawn and, consequently, the effects of the social class of the addressee on the use of the apology form could not be investigated. More details of the addressee sub-corpus are given in Appendix 6.

**Standardising the results:**

The greatest challenge encountered in this part of the study was how to standardise the results. Whereas the absolute apology rates (apologies per 100,000 words spoken) for the speakers were easily calculated, it proved problematic to obtain a similar figure for the dyadic interactions. It was possible to calculate how many apologies an individual made to one particular social group, but it was difficult to standardise this figure in order for it to be used in comparative analyses (i.e. to obtain the unit apologies/100,000 words spoken by a particular group during interaction with another particular group).

The difficulty stemmed from the fact that there was no rational way of finding out how many utterances made by a speaker were directed to a particular social group (short of going through every utterance produced in the corpus and identifying the speaker and recipient of each one). The list of the participants for the different texts given in the headers was of little help here; just because two speakers appeared in the same text did not automatically mean that they interacted. This fact became evident when the apology patterns in different texts were examined. I found that speakers tended to apologise to people who were of the same age and social class as themselves. The apology rates in dyads of speakers of similar social identity (symmetrical dyads) were thus misleading: Young speakers apologising primarily to young addressees, for example, was not a result of selective apologetic behaviour among this group of speakers, but an indirect consequence of their socialisation pattern (young individuals interacted mainly with other young individuals).

Because of the difficulties discussed above, attempts to estimate total apology rates based on the unit apologies per 100,000 words spoken in the dyadic interactions were largely abandoned (the apology rates in the gender interactions in single-sex and mixed-sex settings were an exception to this, see Section 6.2.1). An alternative solution for comparing the apology rates in various dyadic interactions was thus sought.

The number of times the participants apologised to each other within a specific dyad could be calculated and compared. However, in order for this comparison to be meaningful, two important assumptions had to be made. The first of these was that:

*the number of times a speaker (X) addresses an individual (Y) in the BNC is equivalent to the number of times that this individual (Y) addresses the speaker (X).*

This assumes that conventional turn-taking rules were observed in the conversations of the BNC, i.e. that a person responded to being addressed. The above assumption was
tested on a number of texts where only two speakers participated and it was found to apply; although the number of words produced by the two participants differed greatly, the number of utterances produced by the same was more or less equal. In the twenty mixed-sex dialogues found in the corpus for example, female speakers produced 2821 utterances and men produced 2836 utterances, a marginal difference. The probable correctness of the assumption is further illustrated in a small sample of texts in Table 6.1:

Table 6.1. Number of utterances and words of speakers from a few examples of dialogue texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Code</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Words produced</th>
<th>Utterances produced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G3V</td>
<td>Music lesson</td>
<td>PS1VL</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PS1VK</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3520</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3Y</td>
<td>Careers guidance</td>
<td>PS1VT</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1396</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PS1VS</td>
<td>Careers advisor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6634</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G48</td>
<td>Medical consultation</td>
<td>PS1W8</td>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PS1W7</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HF2</td>
<td>Interview-history project</td>
<td>PS2Y4</td>
<td>Interviewer</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PS2Y3</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7800</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because the response to long statements could be simple one word utterances, apologies per x utterances was the basis for the standardisation adopted in this part of the study. This also meant that a second assumption had to be made when comparing the apology rates of speakers in dyads. This assumption was that:

*the length of an utterance did not affect the probability that it contained an apology.*

Since utterances containing apologies were generally mono-functional, i.e. the illocutionary force of the utterance was simply the speech act of apologising, this assumption was arguably correct on the whole, except in the case of apologies for ‘Talk’ offences. The chance of a speaker making a slip of the tongue and apologising for it obviously increases with the length of a statement. Special attention thus had to be paid to the distribution of this type of apology when interpreting the typological patterns of apologies in specific dyads (see Section 6.2.2.1).

Presuming the above assumptions were correct, the apology rates of participants in various asymmetrical dyads (see Section 6.1 for an explanation of this term) could be calculated. One limitation of this practice was that it only allowed comparisons to be made within a dyad being investigated. It was thus possible to say whether parents apologised more to children than vice versa, but it was not possible to say whether apologising was more frequent during parent/child interactions than during husband/wife interactions.
Calculating apology rates in symmetrical dyads (for an explanation of this term see Section 6.1) was problematic. For reasons discussed above it was impossible to obtain standardised apology rates in different dyads in the corpus. The total number of apologies made in the corpus between friends, for example, was thus meaningless since it could not be used in comparative analysis. One attempt to compare the total apology rates in mixed and single-sex conversations was made however. That part of the investigation (Section 6.2.1) compared the total apology rates based on the unit apologies per 100,000 words spoken in texts consisting of all-male, all-female and mixed gender conversations.

Typological aspects:

Typological aspects of the apologies made in various social group dyads and role dyads were also investigated. Since it was the proportional distributions of different types of apologies which were of interest here, apology patterns in both symmetrical and asymmetrical dyads could be contrasted in the analyses. The number of apologies produced in some dyads, however, proved too small to make investigations meaningful. There were, for example, only 13 apologies made during interactions between working-class and middle-class interlocutors.

The more limited size of the addressee sub-corpus also meant that variations in additional strategy usage in different dyads could not be investigated. There were not enough examples of such usage to make an analysis meaningful. Consequently, the typological aspects which were systematically examined in this section were the offence patterns and the apparent sincerity of the apologies in the various dyads.

In summary, the structure of the corpus allowed quantitative and typological aspects of apologising to be compared within asymmetrical dyads, whereas only typological aspects of apologising could be compared across symmetrical and asymmetrical dyads.

Statistical methods used in this chapter:

In this chapter chi-square analysis was used to compare the specific apology behaviour within dyads. Again three levels of significance were used, denoted using a system of asterisks: (***) = p<0.001, (**) = p<0.01, and (*) = p<0.05. In order to avoid erroneous interpretations, separate analyses of texts of varying formality, and at times, group-size were made. Possible variables not accounted for in the chi-square test, but which may have affected the results are pointed out in the text.122

122 There were too many variables to be accounted for to allow overall ANOVA or log-linear models to be applied here. These variables included the age, gender and social class of the speaker; the age gender and social class of the addressee; the relative power of the speaker; the social distance existing in the dyad; the formality level of the conversation and the number of participants.
6.2 Aspects of social identity and apologising in dyadic interactions

Do men apologise more to women than women apologise to men? Do women apologise for different things when communicating with men as opposed to women? How will the fact that the addressee is an elderly person affect a teenager’s politeness behaviour? These are just some of the questions asked in this section, where potential effects on apologising of the social identity of the addressee in relation to the speaker are examined.

6.2.1 The relative apology rates in different social dyads

In this section, the apology rates of participants in various asymmetrical social dyads are compared. The asymmetrical dyads examined include interactions between male and female speakers, 0-24-year-olds and 25-44-year-olds, 0-24-year-olds and 45+-year-olds, and finally 25-44-year-olds and 45+-year-olds. The dyadic interactions in formal and informal multilogues and dialogues are investigated separately and the results are given in Table 6.2. and Tables 1-5 in Appendix 7. When interpreting the results in Table 6.2, note that the expected ratio in the various dyads (based on the null hypothesis that the social identity of the addressee did not affect the apology rate) is 50:50.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of apologies in dyads</th>
<th>Number of apologies in asymmetrical dyads</th>
<th>Sig. (χ²-test)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females → Males</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males → Females</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 0-24 → Age 25-44</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25-44 → Age 0-24</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 0-24 → Age 45+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 45+ → Age 0-24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25-44 → Age 45+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 45+ → Age 25-44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2. Relative apology rates in asymmetrical social dyads

Key: X → Y (X is the speaker and Y is the addressee)

There were significant differences in the apology rates for all of the social dyads investigated. The results revealed that the social groups conventionally regarded as

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123 Social identity here included gender, age and social class, but for practical reasons only the first two of these could be investigated fully.
low-status groups (females and younger speakers for example) produced fewer apologies than the high-status groups in all but one of the investigated dyads (females apologised more to males than males apologised to females during informal multilogue). Overall, it was thus not the low-status speakers who favoured the apology form during interactions with high-status groups, as the theories of B&L would lead us to expect, but it was rather the high-status speakers who showed a greater tendency to use the apology form when addressing low-status addressees.\textsuperscript{124}

A more careful examination of the results presented in Table 6.2 will provide further confirmation that there is a tendency for high-status groups to apologise to low-status groups. The dyads with the greatest differences in apology rates were those where the relative power differences between the social groups in the dyads were probably the greatest. In the dyadic interactions recorded in formal dialogue (as opposed to multilogue), for example, the relatively powerless groups hardly apologised at all. The majority of the apologies produced in formal dialogue were found in the recordings of the ‘Job interview’ genre. In these recordings 87 per cent of the apologies were uttered by the interviewer and directed to interviewee.\textsuperscript{125} During such interviews it was clearly the interviewer who was in a position of power. Large differences in the apology rates were also found in the interactions between 0-24-year-olds and 25-44-year-olds. In these dyads the older participants were usually teachers or parents, and clearly in positions of power.

At first sight the results above seem to contradict some of the previous findings in the study. In Section 4.3, for example, it was found that young speakers apologised more than older speakers in the corpus as a whole, and in Section 5.2.1 the results indicated that females apologised more than males in formal texts. In contrast, the results in this section seem to indicate that high-status groups (older speakers and males) actually apologised more to low-status groups in the corpus than vice versa.

However, the majority of apologies in the texts of the corpus were not produced during interactions between power-asymmetrical participants. The largest proportion of apologies produced by teenagers, for example, was directed to peers, not elders. Similarly, the great majority of apologies produced by men in the formal texts were directed to other men. Asymmetrical power effects on the total apology rates were thus only one factor affecting the overall apology rate of a social group in the corpus.

\textit{Total apology rates in mixed sex and single sex conversations:}

In this section, the apology rates in mixed and single-sex interactions in the corpus are compared. The total apology rates for texts where only females or only males participate are compared with the apology rates of texts with mixed sex participation. Details of these texts are presented in Table 1 in Appendix 6.

Mixed-sex conversations contained significantly (***\textsuperscript{126}) more apologies than single-sex conversations; the mean text apology rates in the all-female and all-male multilogues were 55 and 50 apologies per 100,000 words spoken respectively. In contrast,

\textsuperscript{124} I will not attempt to provide any explanations for why the apology form should be favoured by the relatively powerful speakers in dyadic interactions at this stage. The problem will be addressed later in the general discussion (Section 6.5) after the types of apologies made by the various groups in the dyads have been fully examined.

\textsuperscript{125} In most cases the interviewer was an older male (in his fifties).
mixed-sex dialogue texts contained an average of 79 apologies per 100,000 words spoken. From these results, however, it is impossible to say whether the higher apology rates in the mixed-sex conversations is a general phenomenon resulting from the behaviour of both genders, or the result of male or female-specific behaviour.

There were discrepant results from two previous studies which examined the effect of the gender of the addressee on the tendency to apologise. In her study of 27 multi-party, mixed-sex conversations in the LLC, Aijmer (1995) found that women tended to apologise more to men than to other women. Men, on the other hand, were not markedly affected by the sex of the addressee. In Holmes’s (1989) study, which also investigated the effect of the sex of the addressee on apologetic behaviour, quite the opposite tendencies were found; women apologised far more to other women than to men. In addition, males were also found to apologise more to women than to members of their own sex.

**Apology rates in interactions between spouses:**

Finally, the apology rates in husband/wife dyads are examined. Here it is again assumed that husbands and wives addressed each other equally in the corpus, i.e. that every statement or question made to a spouse by a spouse was responded to. Assuming that this was the case, the number of apologies made by husbands to wives should be directly comparable to the number of apologies made by wives to husbands. In the DS texts, 228 examples of husbands apologising to wives were found and 201 examples of wives apologising to husbands. This marginal gender difference did not prove to be significant in a chi-square test (see Table 6 in Appendix 7).

### 6.2.2 Typological aspects of apologising in different social dyads

The effects of the social identity of the addressee on two typological aspects of the apologies are examined in this section: the proportional distributions of the offences apologised for in various dyads, and the apparent sincerity level of the apologies produced in the various dyads. Complete data presentations are given in Tables 7-28 in Appendix 7. Particularly large differences in the investigated variables are illustrated in figures in the text. In order to avoid effects of the independent variable formality leading to potential misinterpretations of the data, separate analyses of formal and informal texts are made. There were very few apologies directed to addressees of known social class and the effect on apologetic behaviour of this variable is not investigated here.

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126 Information about the relationships of participants in the texts in the DS part of the corpus was available in the header of each text.
6.2.2.1 Offences leading to apologies

Offence patterns in dyads of formal texts:

The addressee sub-corpus of apologies found in formal texts consisted of 563 apologies (in nine cases the offences could not be identified). Unfortunately, the apologies were unevenly distributed among the social groups, and the small number of apologies produced by females and young speakers (0-24-year-olds) in these texts meant that some of the observed dyadic offence patterns were inconclusive.127

Offence patterns in gender dyads of formal texts:

No significant differences were found between the offence patterns in female/female and female/male dyads in the formal texts; this was perhaps a result of the limited number of apologies found in the recordings of these interactions. Two interesting, though inconclusive, tendencies were recorded, however. Females apologised to other females for ‘Hearing’ offences more often than expected, and no apologies for ‘Breach of consensus’ were made by females to other females in this part of the corpus. Similarly, there were only small variations in the offence patterns in male/female and male/male dyads, and none of these were large enough to be statistically significant in the chi-square analysis. In conclusion, the sex of the addressee seemed to have little effect on the offences apologised for in formal situations. The results are summarised in Tables 7 and 8 in Appendix 7.

Offence patterns in the age dyads of formal texts:

Of the three age groups investigated, only 45+-year-old speakers showed significant differences (***s) in the offences apologised for to addressees of a different age. Particularly large differences were observed in six offence categories: ‘Lack of consideration’, ‘Breach of expectation’, ‘Talk’ offences, ‘Social gaffes’, ‘Hearing’ offences and ‘Breach of consensus’. The proportional distributions of apologies for these offences made by 45+-year-olds to 0-24-year-olds, to 25-44-year-olds and to other 45+-year-olds are summarised in Figure 6.1. The complete data set from which the proportional distributions have been calculated is presented in Table 11 in Appendix 7.

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127 Only 106 apologies were produced by females, for example, and only 24 of these were directed to other females. Similarly young speakers (0-24-year-olds) only produced 64 apologies in all.
Older speakers rarely apologised to younger speakers for offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’. Instead most such apologies were directed to addressees of their own age group or to 25-44-year-olds. Arguably, this is an indication that in the corpus this age group paid less attention to politeness etiquette when addressing children, teenagers and young adults. This could in turn be interpreted as older individuals placing less importance on showing respect towards younger individuals than towards interlocutors of their own age. Of the two examples of apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’ made by older speakers to younger addresses, one was exceptional in that the ‘young’ person in question was a 23-year-old doctor attending a society committee meeting. The remaining example was an apology made by a school teacher to a nine-year-old pupil after she had interrupted him:

Ex. 6.1. (JAB 32-36):

P. Lynch: […] Because when Jesus was born the the Roman soldiers were there and the kind at that time Herod ordered that all babies were killed and the Romans went out to do that didn't they? All babies born…
Kieran:<unclear>
P. Lynch : You tell us Kieran sorry?
Kieran: He killed the <unclear> and heard that Jesus was born and he would be made king so he sent his men to go out and find every baby that was under two or three years old and kill them.
P. Lynch : Can you speak up when you're telling us.

Furthermore, older speakers were disinclined to apologise to younger addressees for ‘Breach of expectations’. Most such apologies uttered by older speakers were directed to addressees of their own age group. Arguably, older speakers in formal contexts regarded ‘Breach of expectations’ as more serious when they were committed against equals or superiors.
On the whole, 45+-year-olds did not appear to assign much importance to showing deference to younger addressees, but did so instead when the addressees were of similar age to themselves. This supports Jary’s (1998) ego-centric view of politeness in that the maintenance of self-image appears to be particularly important during interactions with equals and superiors in professional situations. The finding can also be interpreted as indirect evidence for the variable relative power (P) being important in determining the use of certain types of apologetic behaviour.\(^{128}\)

Older speakers apologised far more than expected for ‘Talk’ offences to young addressees than they did to their own age group. More than 65 per cent of all the apologies made by this age group to 0-24-year-olds were for ‘Talk’ offences. There are two possible explanations for this.

Firstly, the tendency may be the consequence of a methodological error, a direct result of utterance length differences in these age groups (Section 6.1.1). The average utterance length of 0-24-year-olds in the formal texts was only 6.8 words per utterance. In contrast, the 45+-year-olds produced utterances averaging 23.5 words per utterance. Long utterances potentially increased the chances of slips of the tongues occurring and if such instances were accompanied by an apology, this could lead to an asymmetrical offence pattern in the results when the two groups of participants in a dyad produced utterances of different average length. Initially, it was postulated that older speakers apologising frequently for ‘Talk’ offences was a result of their long utterances, something which became noticeable in interactions with addressees who produced short utterances.

In order to test this further, the proportions of the total number of apologies which were made for ‘Talk’ offences in the three age groups were examined. If longer average utterance length did indeed lead to more apologies for ‘Talk’ offences being made, we would expect a positive correlation between utterance length and the proportion of apologies for ‘Talk’ offences produced by a social group. No such correlations were found and the above hypothesis could thus be dismissed.\(^{129}\) Some other explanation for the pattern had to be found.

The second possible explanation for why older speakers apologised relatively more frequently for ‘Talk’ offences when addressing younger interlocutors was that the older speakers in the formal texts tended to be ‘distributors’ of information (teachers, tutors, lecturers and trainers). They represented the authority on a subject, while younger interlocutors were the recipients of their knowledge (pupils, students and trainees). Arguably, a mistake made by a person in authority when presenting information was serious in the sense that it could lead to his/her credibility being questioned. Speakers were therefore quick to point out ‘Talk’ offences by apologising for them, making it clear that the slip was unintentional and that the speaker really knew better. Consider the following examples of tutors making slips in front of their students:

\(^{128}\) We do not know what power relationships exist in the different dyads here. We can only assume that older speakers were less likely to be relatively powerful when interacting with someone their own age.

\(^{129}\) Apologies for ‘Talk’ offences comprised 27 per cent of the total number of apologies made by the 45+-year-olds in formal texts. The figure was identical for 0-24-year-olds. Among 25-44-year-olds, a group of speakers who also produced long utterances, this type of apology comprised only 13 per cent of the apologies made.
Ex. 6.2. (K7F 845-50):

John: So instead of dealing with sort of high <unclear> trying to push everything <unclear>
So if you bring your voltage down from two forty volts to say you could get a a transformer, a
battery eliminator, for a tape recorder. If you that runs on one and a half volts.
Sarah: Mm.
John: Three volts sorry, three volts. So plug two forty volts into that, just not
Sarah: Mm.

Ex. 6.3 (FMJ 526-29)

John: Sixty four point two seven nine
Simon: Eight <unclear> seven eig-- eight.
John: Oh sorry two seven eight seven six.
Simon: Yeah.

Ex. 6.4 (FM5 601-3):

John: Drip metal onto an acid <unclear> I'm sorry <voice quality: laughing> acid onto a
metal <end of voice quality>. Right.
Andrew: <unclear> think that might be a bit difficult <|--> er <|-->

Older speakers apologising less frequently for ‘Hearing’ offences when interacting with younger interlocutors than with 25-44-year-olds and addressees of their own age can also be explained using the above line of reasoning. If 25-44-year-olds and 45+-year-olds were relatively active in presenting information in the formal texts, while the younger participants were more passive, the conversational situations would be such that ‘Hearing’ offences would be more likely to occur during interactions between the speaker groups who were active in information presentation.

Lastly, older speakers apologised more often for offences involving ‘Breach of consensus’ to addressees in their own age group. In contrast, this group of speakers directed very few such apologies to younger participants in the formal texts. Arguably, this result indicates that young and old participants rarely expressed differences of opinion in formal situations. In teacher/student or tutor/student dyads roles are reasonably fixed. Teachers were only rarely questioned by their students (there was only one example of an apology for a ‘Breach of consensus’ offence made by a 0-24-year-old to a 45+-year-old in the formal texts) and when teachers reprimanded their students they perhaps did not feel the need to apologise for doing so. In contrast, speakers of equal status appeared to express their differences more openly in formal contexts (see Ex. 3.31 in Section 3.4.2). The following example was recorded at a Parish council meeting:

Ex. 6.5 (JA2 1320-23):

Kevin: But, er er this this is a highways erm matter
Arnold Bower: No it's alright, <|--> it's alright to put these houses up and down <unclear> <|-->
 <|--> Ca--, can I just do that then, with, with, yes, excuse me Kevin, <|--> I think we we
voiced that one,

In summary, the results show that apologies made by 45+-year-olds were used for different purposes depending on whom was addressed. The results suggest that the
high rate of apologising among older speakers to young addressees in formal contexts (seen earlier in Section 6.2) was not a result of greater deference being shown by the former group to younger participants in conversations. In such dyads, the apology form was used for other purposes of which discourse management was one important example. In interactions with interlocutors of similar age prototypical uses of the apology form by the 45+-year-olds was more common.

Offence patterns in dyads of informal texts:

In this section, the offence patterns in the informal texts are examined. In these settings, the participants did not act in their professional role and arguably the gender and the age of the addressee per se had a greater effect on speaker apology behaviour here. In all, 1705 apologies directed to addressees of known gender and age were found in the DS texts. These are reasonably evenly distributed across the genders (985 apologies were produced by females, and 720 were produced by males) and the different age groups (422 apologies were produced by 0-14-year-olds, 765 by 25-44-year-olds and 518 by 45+-year-olds). I begin by considering the offence patterns in the gender dyads.

Offence patterns in gender dyads of informal texts:

Of the two gender groups investigated, only female speakers showed significant differences (*** in the offence pattern of the apologies addressed to males and females (the overall results are presented in Tables 12 and 13 in Appendix 7). The differences were particularly great in three offence categories, namely ‘Accidents’, ‘Social gaffes’ and ‘Hearing’ offences. The proportional distributions of apologies for these offences made by females to males and to other females are summarised in Figure 6.1. The complete data set from which the proportional distributions have been calculated is presented in Table 12 in Appendix 7.

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130 In 69 of these apologies the offences could not be identified.
Females apologised more for ‘Accidents’ in single sex interactions than in mixed sex interactions. Holmes (1989:201) argues that women, who as a group are the main victims of sexual harassment (Section 4.4.1), are more aware of physical infringements than men. It may well be that this awareness is especially noticeable when the victim of an offence is another woman. In the following example, a teenage girl apologises to her friend for grabbing her somewhere unacceptable:

Ex. 6.6 (KCW 3440):

Lorna: Sorry that's er, <-|-> only place I could grab you! <-|->

There was also limited evidence in the corpus that girls were socialised to apologise for accidental physical contact. In the following example two young parents are delighted when their two-year-old daughter Vicki apologises to her brother:

Ex. 6.7 (KCU 1156-62):

Gary: Shall I give your brother a kiss cos you sat on him?  
Julie: Good girl!  
Vicki: Sorry!  
Julie: Sorry! <-|-> <laugh> <-|->
Gary: <-|-> Sorry! <-|->
Julie: Yeah, she's saying to him.  
Gary: Good girl!

Females also received more apologies for ‘Social gaffes’ from other females (and males, although this difference was not large enough to be statistically significant). It may well be that it is generally acknowledged that women are expected to be more concerned with social etiquette than men in Britain, and that speakers will make a point of apologising for social gaffes in the presence of women. The result above can also be interpreted as an indication that women feel more at ease in the presence of
other women and thus commit social gaffes more readily during such interactions. Ex. 6.8 and Ex. 6.9 of teenagers interacting could be seen as evidence for both these hypotheses:

Ex. 6.8 (KP6 2828-29):

Jess: *<voice quality: laughing>* I'm sorry, I'm so windy tonight *<end of voice quality>*.

Lucy: I really hate *<->* it when you burp. *<->*

Ex. 6.9 (KBN 1525-26)

Clare: *<belch>* Pardon me, I couldn't help it

Melissa: Clare stop burping girl *<pause>*

The final large difference observed in the data was that females apologised more often for ‘Hearing’ offences when the addressee was male as opposed to female. Men also apologised more to other men for ‘Hearing’ offences, but this difference was not large enough to be statistically significant. There are several ways of interpreting this result. Firstly, men may have been less clear in their communication than women, this leading in turn to a greater number of apologies for ‘Hearing’ offences being expressed by the listener during such interactions. There is actually limited biological evidence that linguistic gender differences exist and that women are less likely to stutter or be aphasic (Chambers 1995:105). Perhaps in the corpus men were less competent at expressing themselves than women:

Ex. 6.10 (KB7 12689-91):

Stuart: D'you get them?

Ann: Pardon?

Stuart: You got them, have you?

And/or it may also be, as Tannen (1991) suggests, that men’s communication tends to be more oriented towards information exchange, whereas women are more concerned with social interaction in their communication. If this was the case in the corpus, there would have been more scope for missing important details during interactions with men:

Ex. 6.11 (KBH 547-48):

Adam: you count one bedroom for all the *<unclear>*. You may even have to count two. You certainly got to count one. So two bedrooms out of twelve are no longer available.

Carol: Sorry? Say that again in English.

An alternative explanation for this difference would be that women did not listen to what men said (at least not to the same extent as to what women said). In Ex. 6.12 PS06J is an adult male:

Ex. 6.12 (KBL 3605-10):

Cherrilyn: Sorry?

PS06J: Mum, I mean John would be lost without my mum at the moment!

Cherrilyn: Mm.
PS06J: Oops! And my mum got seven Valentine's cards this year, I was really upset cos I didn't get any!

Cherrilyn: Sorry? 

On a final note, there were significant differences (**) in the offence patterns of wives and husbands in interactions between spouses (see Table 14 Appendix 7). The offence patterns of spouses interacting in informal texts reflected the general findings in the gender dyads in similar settings. Wives apologised far less for ‘Social gaffes’ than husbands did, but tended to apologise more for ‘Hearing’ offences. In addition, there was a slight tendency for husbands to apologise more often than wives for ‘Breach of consensus’ offences.

**Offence patterns in the age dyads of informal texts:**

The age of the person addressed had a more marked effect on the apologetic behaviour of the speakers in the informal texts of the corpus than did the gender of the addressee. In all the investigated age dyads in the informal texts there were significant differences in the proportional distributions of the offences apologised for.\(^\text{131}\)

In the following section, the relative distributions of four offence categories which showed large differences in the various dyads are discussed in more detail. These categories are: ‘Lack of consideration’ offences, ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’, ‘Social gaffes’ and offences involving ‘Breach of consensus’. The distributions of these offences in the various dyads are given in Figures 6.3-6.5. Other offence categories which displayed particularly large differences in the dyads are also discussed briefly. The complete data sets from which the proportional distributions discussed below have been calculated are presented in Tables 15-17 in Appendix 7.

\(^{131}\) The significance levels in the $\chi^2$ tests were 0-24-year-olds (***) , 25-44-year-olds (**), and 45+-year-olds (**),
The distributions of apologies for offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’ in the various dyads showed that this type of apology was commonly made to 45+-year-olds. In two of the three investigated dyads this age group received the largest proportion of such apologies. Young speakers especially, favoured this type of apology dur-
ing interactions with 45+-year-olds. Many of these apologies were examples of young adults apologising to their elderly parents or other older relatives. In the following example a twenty-three-year-old woman is showing her parents her new home for the first time. It is obvious that her ambition is to be seen as a responsible adult in their eyes:

Ex. 6.13 (KCB 332-39):  

Sarah: You'll have to excuse the washing.
Ann: <unclear>
Graeme: Oh I almost went down another step that wasn't there!
Sarah: I have been able to do the washing cos I haven't been able
Graeme: Hello lazy!
Sarah: to dry any.
Ann: Oh that's lovely!
Graeme: Here's lazy bones!
Sarah: I haven't been able to dry the washing cos we haven't <unclear> out the

Young speakers also favoured the use of apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’ offences during interactions with peers. This was especially true for young females:

Ex. 6.14 (KPH 1343-50)

Claire: No cos erm I was, I was saying, I was saying ages ago that
Kath: I had such a weird dream last night
Claire: Oh yes.
Kath: Sorry, just interrupting you
Claire: Yeah it's okay. What, what was it?
Kath: it was such a fucking odd dream. Okay I was sitting on the bench at the pavilion

The few examples of apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’ made by younger speakers directed to 25-44-year-olds were all apologies made by children to their parents. These apologies were often uttered after the offence had been pointed out by the parent, as in the example of a ‘Taboo’ offence in Ex. 6.15, where Jonathan (10 years old) uses the name of the Lord in vain:

Ex. 6.15 (KCT 7065-70)

Jonathan: Oh God!
June: Don't keep saying that!
Jonathan: What, God?
June: Yeah it's not very nice!
Jonathan: Sorry.
June: Alright.

---

132 For practical reasons, I have not separated the genders when looking at the age dyad interactions, but in this particular dyadic interaction 22 of the 31 apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’ offences were made by young females, of which 18 were directed to female peers.
On the whole, there were relatively few examples of middle-aged and older speakers apologising for ‘Lack of consideration’ offences to young addressees. Arguably, the display of manners was less important when older speakers interacted with children and teenagers.

The sorting out of misunderstandings and reaching consensus was particularly important for 25-44-year-olds when they were interacting with addressees of their own age. The majority of apologies made for this type of offence in this age dyad were produced during husband/wife interactions. In the following example both husband and wife end up apologising after a minor misunderstanding about an evening out.

Ex. 6.16 (KDW 5526-33):

Garry: What are we going to do about a babysitter? […]
Sandra: You're, you're not going <pause> only me and Annette are going.
Garry: Oh sorry, right. Fine.
Sandra: Sorry about that. <laugh>
Garry: Right, <-|-> right <-|->
Sandra: <-|-> No <-|-> you're getting the other thing on a Thursday <pause> the quiz night, twenty seventh. <-|-> Annette and John are going <-|->

In contrast, there were relatively few apologies for ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’ made by 25-44-year-olds and 45+-year-olds to 0-24-year-olds in the corpus. As was the case in apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’, ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’ appear to have been less deserving of an apology when the addressee was young.

The distributions of apologies for ‘Social gaffes’ in the various age dyads showed that this type of apology was most common during interactions where the speaker and addressee were of similar age. One potential explanation for this is that such offences were more likely to be committed in situations where interlocutors were equals and felt at ease with each other.

In all dyads examined, apologies for ‘Breach of consensus’ were most common during interactions with young participants. Especially 0-24-year-olds favoured this form during interactions with peers, and almost 20 per cent of all the apologies produced by such dyads were made for this type of offence. Among speakers in this age group in the corpus, it therefore appears that disagreements were primarily expressed, and consequently apologised for, during interactions with equals.

In contrast, 45+-year-olds apologised less than expected for ‘Breach of consensus’ offences when interacting with interlocutors of similar age. However, they apologised more than expected for this type of offence to young participants. Most of these apologies were examples of the apology form being used as a reprimand (see Ex. 3.28 and Ex. 3.30 in Section 3.4.2, and Ex. 4.2 in Section 4.3.2).

Finally, apologies for ‘Hearing’ offences were very much overrepresented in the 0-24-year-old/25-44-year-old dyad. Over 60 per cent of all apologies made by young speakers to the 25-44-year-olds were for ‘Hearing’ offences. The addressees in these interactions were primarily parents. This result may be an indication that parents in the corpus spoke ‘at’ rather than ‘with’ their children, but on the other hand it could also be an indication that younger speakers did not pay attention to what their parents said,
as in the following example of an interaction between an eleven-year-old and her mother.

Ex. 6.17 (KCD 1556-61):

Helen: But still if you, you, otherwise when it's tidy you just leave it alone.
Clare: Pardon.
Helen: When it's tidy, you don't play with it <pause dur=20> <noise>.
Clare: I've stopped my traffic.
Helen: You've stop the traffic have you?
Clare: Pardon.

‘Hearing’ offences were also overrepresented in the apologies made by 25-44-year-olds to 0-24-year-olds, suggesting that the seeming lack of attention that children paid to their parents was in fact a shared phenomenon.

In summary, the overall apology pattern which emerges from the age dyads of the informal texts is one where apologies functioning as deference markers were more common during conversations with equals and elders. Young speakers received relatively few such apologies from older interlocutors, who instead favoured the use of the apology form as a way of reprimanding the younger addressee.

6.2.2.2 Apparent sincerity of the apologies in the social dyads

In this section, variations in the apparent sincerity levels of apologies addressed to various social groups were examined. The proportional distributions of ‘Sarcastic’, ‘Challenging’, ‘Casual’ and ‘Sincere’ apologies directed to different social groups were compared.

Again, the size and composition of the sub-corpus proved problematic; there were too few apologies produced by females and young speakers in the formal conversations to provide conclusive results concerning the apologetic behaviour of these groups interacting in such contexts. The distributions of apologies of different apparent sincerity levels in the gender and age dyads of formal and informal texts are summarised in Tables 18-28 in Appendix 7.

Apparent sincerity in the gender dyads:

There were no significant differences in the apparent sincerity of apologies addressed to males and females by male and female speakers in either formal or informal contexts. Neither were there any significant differences in the apparent sincerity of the apologies produced during interactions between spouses. In conclusion, the gender of the addressee seemed to have little effect on the apparent sincerity of the apologies produced by speakers from different social groups.
In the formal texts, only 45+-year-olds showed significant differences (***\textsuperscript{3}) in the apparent sincerity of apologies addressed to interlocutors of various ages. More specifically, 45+-year-olds used more ‘Challenging’ apologies than expected when apologising to their own age group and more ‘Casual’ apologies than expected when addressing young participants. The 45+-year-olds also used more ‘Sincere’ apologies when addressing 25-44-year-olds and interlocutors of their own age group. This result supports the finding in the previous section, namely that in formal contexts, this age group used more prototypical apologies when interacting with equals, but used the form mainly as a discourse management device when interacting with young addresses.

In the informal texts there were significant differences (***\textsuperscript{3}) in the distributions of apologies of different apparent sincerity levels among 0-24-year-olds and 45+-year-olds interacting with addressees of various age groups.

More specifically, 0-24-year-olds produced more examples of ‘Sarcastic’ apologies than expected when addressing interlocutors of their own age group in informal contexts. This supports the hypothesis proposed in Section 4.4.3, namely that sarcastic usage of politeness is one characteristic of ‘teenage speech’. The 0-24-year-olds also used more ‘Challenging’ apologies when addressing peers. In contrast, this group produced many more ‘Casual’ apologies than expected during interactions with 25-44-year-olds. A large proportion of these apologies (66 of 87) were examples of apologies for ‘Hearing’ offences made to parents. Possible explanations for this tendency have been discussed in Section 6.2.2.1. Finally, young speakers used more apparently ‘Sincere’ apologies than expected when interacting with peers and 45+-year-olds. In contrast, 0-24-year-olds did not favour such usage when participating in conversations with 25-44-year-olds.

There was a tendency (not strong enough to be statistically confirmed, however) for 25-44-year-olds to use more ‘Sarcastic’, ‘Challenging’ and ‘Casual’ apologies than expected during informal interactions with 0-24-year-olds. In contrast, ‘Sincere’ apologies were disfavoured during such interactions. The exact opposite pattern was apparent during the interactions of this age group with 45+-year-olds and interlocutors of their own age. During such conversational situations, 25-44-year-olds produced more apparently ‘Sincere’ apologies and fewer ‘Sarcastic’, ‘Challenging’ and ‘Casual’ apologies than expected.

There was a marked tendency for 45+-year-olds to use ‘Challenging’ apologies when addressing 0-24-year-olds. This age group also favoured ‘Sincere’ apologies when addressing interlocutors of their own age group and 25-44-year-olds.

In conclusion, the findings from this section confirm the previous indications that adults show a greater tendency to use the apology form to express genuine regret when addressing equals and elders as opposed to children, teenagers and young adults. During interactions with the latter groups less prototypical use of the apology form dominates.
6.3 Relative power and apologising

Because the relative roles of participants in the different texts of the BNC are noted in the headers to the texts it is possible to investigate the effects of the variable relative power (P) in more detail; the apologies made by parents to their children, for example, can be directly compared (quantitatively and typologically) with those made by children to their parents. In order to investigate the effects of the independent variable relative power (P), the speakers and addressees in the different dyads naturally have to be designated a value for this variable. In this part of the study speakers are assigned one of three P values in relation to the person addressed: ‘more’, ‘less’ or ‘equal’ relative power. Obviously, these values represent a coarse simplification of the real-life power relationships. In reality the relative power scale is continuous and a speaker can have ‘slightly more’, ‘quite a lot more’ or ‘much more’ power than an addressee in a conversation. In addition, this power relationship may constantly change as a conversation proceeds.

Without having full insight into the power relationships of the participants in the different conversations at the specific time that an apology was made, designating values of relative power is precarious. Apologies used in this part of the study are thus taken from role-sets where the power relationships are reasonably apparent. Role-sets with asymmetrical power examined include informal interactions between parents and their children and more formal interactions between teachers, tutors or lecturers and their students; interactions between job interviewers and job applicants; conversations between employers and their employees and finally interchanges between chairmen of meetings and the other participants. In all, 837 apologies formed the basis for this part of the analysis. Examples of apologies made during interactions between power equals were found in informal conversations between friends and colleagues, but also in more formal settings, during interactions between meeting or course participants. In all 610 such examples were found.

Note that quantitative analysis only could be carried out on the power-asymmetrical data (see 6.1.1). Typological aspects of the apologies of asymmetrical and symmetrical dyads were however compared. All the different role-sets identified in the corpus and the number of apologies found in each one of these are summarised in Table 2 in Appendix 6.

6.3.1 Apologising in power-asymmetrical dyads

Overall apology rates in power-asymmetrical dyads:

Using the method described in 6.1.1, it was possible to compare the relative apology rates in asymmetrical power dyads. The number of apologies made by the relatively ‘powerful’ interlocutors to the ‘powerless’ interlocutors, so-called ‘downward’ apologies, was compared to the number of apologies made by the relatively ‘powerless’ directed to the ‘powerful’ (‘upward’ apologies). Only apologies directed to individuals who were included in the main corpus were considered (those whose age and gender
were known). The number of ‘downward’ and ‘upward’ apologies found in the different role-sets is summarised in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3. Downward and upward apologies in asymmetrical power dyads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role-set</th>
<th>Downward</th>
<th>Upward</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Sig. ($\chi^2$-test)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent/child</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/student</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job interviewer/</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job applicant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer/employee</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman/participant</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall total</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all the role-sets examined, it was the relatively powerful participant who apologised more often than the less powerful participant. Overall, this tendency proved highly significant in the chi-square analysis (see Table 29 in Appendix 7). The results in Table 6.3 mirror those in Section 6.2.1 (Table 6.2), where it was the participants who arguably had relatively high status who apologised more frequently to participants with relatively low status. This usage pattern of the apology form is not what we would expect from B&L’s model of politeness.

Offence distributions in power-asymmetrical dyads:

In this section, the proportional distributions of the offences apologised for by relatively powerful and powerless participants respectively are compared. Separate chi-square analyses of the proportional offence patterns in the dyads parents/children, teachers/students and powerful/powerless adults were carried out. The dyad ‘powerful/powerless adults’ was created by merging the results from the three role sets: job interviewer/job interviewee, employer/employee and chairman/participant. In addition, an analysis was carried out on all the overall results for the powerful/powerless dyads. The results are presented in Tables 30-33 in Appendix 7.

There were significant differences in the offences apologised for by powerful and powerless participants in two of the three dyads investigated, namely parent/children (*) and powerful/powerless adults (***). In conversations between parents and children, parents showed a relatively greater tendency to apologise for ‘Talk’ offences and offences involving ‘Breach of consensus’. Children, on the other hand, were more in-
clined to apologise for offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’ and for ‘Social gaffes’ (relatively speaking). The distributions in these offence categories are summarised in Figure 6.6.

![Figure 6.6. Offence distributions in parent/child dyads in informal texts](image)

During interactions between relatively powerful and powerless adults, the former group apologised far more often for offences involving ‘Lack of consideration’, and more often for ‘Talk’ offences than did the relatively powerless speakers. The powerless speakers in turn apologised relatively more for ‘Social gaffes’ and ‘Hearing’ offences. The results are summarised in Figure 6.7.

![Figure 6.7. Offence distributions in powerful/powerless adult dyads in formal texts](image)
Although the proportional differences in the various dyads were statistically significant they were nonetheless relatively marginal, and there was no specific type of apology which could account for the higher overall apology rates seen among the relatively powerful speakers. The powerful speakers in the dyads apologised more often, seen totally, for all but one offence category, namely ‘Social gaffes’. In other words, the overall higher apology rates seen among the relatively powerful speakers cannot be fully explained by a greater tendency for this group to use, for example, more non-prototypical apologies, apologies used as discourse management devices or apologies used to disarm contradictions or reprimands. Relatively powerful speakers apologised more often, regardless of the offence. This finding totally contradicts the expectations based on B&L’s theorising, and alternative explanations will be offered in the general discussion at the end of the chapter (Section 6.6).

Apparent sincerity of the apologies in the power-asymmetrical dyads:

In this section, the variation in the apparent sincerity levels of apologies in the power-asymmetrical dyads was examined. The proportional distributions of ‘Sarcastic’, ‘Challenging’, ‘Casual’ and ‘Sincere’ apologies in downward and upward apologies were compared. The results are given in Tables 34-37 in Appendix 7. No significant differences in the apparent sincerity of the apologies of the various dyads were found. This supports the findings from the previous section, namely that the relative power of the addressee affects the total rate of apologising regardless of the type of apology.

6.3.2 P-equal and P-asymmetrical dyads contrasted

In this section, I compare the proportional distributions of the types of offences apologised for in power-asymmetrical and power-equal dyads. As explained earlier in section 6.1.1, a comparison of total apology rates is unfortunately not possible here. Typological aspects of 610 apologies produced between friends and acquaintances are compared with the 837 apologies from the power-asymmetrical role-sets investigated in Section 6.3.1. There are no separate analyses of apologies recorded in formal and informal settings since roughly equal proportions of the apologies in the two data sets were produced in these two settings (approximately 60 per cent of the apologies were recorded during informal conversation and 40 per cent were found in formal texts).

Highly significant differences (*** in the proportional distributions of offences were found in the investigated dyads. The results are given in Table 38 in Appendix 7. The offence categories which showed the greatest variation in the dyads are summarised in Figure 6.8.

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134 This type of apology was relatively rare: Powerful speakers produced 15 such apologies whereas powerless speakers produced 18 (see Table 38, Appendix 7)
Figure 6.8. The offence distribution in various power dyads

‘Formulaic’ apologies were more common in power-asymmetrical dyads. This was particularly apparent in the distribution of apologies for ‘Hearing’ offences. In contrast ‘Real’ and ‘Face attack’ apologies (see 3.4) were more common in conversations between equals. Apologies for ‘Lack of consideration’, for example, were far more frequent in power-equal dyads, as were apologies for ‘Breach of consensus’.

The overall apology patterns in power-asymmetrical and power-symmetrical dyads became clearer when the distributions of apologies of various apparent sincerity levels in the three dyadic constellations were examined (see Table 39 in Appendix 7). The apologetic behaviours of the speakers in the two power-asymmetrical dyads were similar, but the apologies produced during such interactions differed significantly (*** ) from the apologetic behaviour of the speakers interacting in power-equal dyads. More specifically, ‘Casual’ apologies were more frequent than expected in the set of apologies made by powerful speakers to powerless addressees. This type of apology was also more frequent in apologies made by powerless speakers to powerful addressees. Apologies of the remaining three apparent sincerity levels were less frequent in the asymmetrical dyads. In contrast, ‘Sarcastic’, ‘Challenging’ and apparently ‘Sincere’ apologies were more frequent in conversations between power equals. These results are summarised in Figure 6.9.
On average, the apologetic behaviour in power-equal dyads in the corpus was more ‘honest’ than in power-asymmetrical dyads. Routine usage of the apology form was less common in the former role-sets. Instead the form was used to express sincere regret, but also disagreement and conflict. The distinct apology patterns in power-symmetrical and asymmetrical dyads indicate differences in the politeness norms existing in these two types of social situations in Britain. This aspect is further discussed in Section 6.6.

6.4 Social distance and apologising

The final aspect examined in this chapter is the effect of social distance on the use of the apology form. One of the main challenges in this part of the investigation was trying to define the social distance between the participants in the different dyads. At times it was impossible to determine how well the participants knew each other. There were also very few examples of conversations between total strangers in the corpus, which meant that the effect of great social distance on the use of this speech act could not be fully investigated.

In addition, it was hard to avoid interference from other factors which might influence apologising. For example, the effects of social distance on the use of apologies in conversations between colleagues could not be directly compared to the effects of the same variable on apology usage patterns between parents and children. In the latter dyad there was the added factor of relative power differences affecting the apology usage (as well as age, and various other social variables) and thus differences in the apology patterns seen in the dyadic groups could not be ascribed to the variable social distance alone.
In order to control for the factor P, I decided to focus on the apologetic behaviour of power equals only. The apologetic behaviour of equals at different levels of social distance was compared, and three such dyadic groups of equals were identified in the material.

The first dyadic group was ‘intimates’. This data set consisted of 429 apologies produced during interactions between spouses. Approximately half the apologies (53 per cent) were produced by males and the average age of the participants in this sub-corpus was 39 years. Many would perhaps argue that conversations between husbands and wives are not examples of interactions between power equals, but for the purpose of this study they were deemed to be so. Possible P-effects on the apologetic behaviour in this dyadic constellation should however be kept in mind when the results are evaluated.

The second dyadic group examined was ‘friends’. The 358 apologies included in this data set were all found in the informal DS texts and were produced during interactions between individuals described as ‘friends’ in the text headers. Again, approximately half of the apologies (49 per cent) were produced by males, but the average age (about 29 years) of the participants in this sub-corpus was lower than that of ‘intimates’ and ‘acquaintances’ below. The possible effects of this age difference should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

The final dyadic group was ‘acquaintances’. The 252 apologies included in this sub-corpus were produced by colleagues, course participants and meeting participants, acting mainly in the formal texts of the CG part of the corpus. Apologies produced by males were over-represented in this sub-corpus (75 per cent), and the average age of the participants was 37 years. The possibility of typically male behaviour skewing the results should be borne in mind when interpreting the apologetic patterns of this dyad. So too should the fact that these apologies were produced in a more formal environment than the apologies in the other dyads. It is however difficult to disentangle the two variables social distance and formality; increased formality is generally speaking a result of increased social distance existing between the participants.135

Two typological aspects of the apologies produced in the different dyads were examined: the proportional distributions of the offences apologised for, and the apparent sincerity of the different apologies. For reasons explained in Section 6.1.1 variations in the total apology rates could not be investigated.

**Offence patterns in dyads of varying social distance:**

Highly significant differences (*** in the proportional distributions of offences were found in the investigated dyads. The results are given in Table 40 in Appendix 7. The offence categories which showed the greatest variation in the dyads are summarised in Figure 6.10.

135 There are exceptions, of course, such as the example of two brothers addressing each other as *my learned colleague* when in court cited by Holmes (1995:19).
Figure 6.10. The offence distribution in different social distance dyads

There were large differences in the distributions of several offence categories in the three social distance dyads. Relatively speaking, speakers apologised more than twice as often for ‘Lack of consideration’ offences when interacting with acquaintances as opposed to intimates. In conversations between acquaintances the apology patterns suggested that participants were careful not to offend each other unnecessarily. There were, for instance, many examples of seemingly unmotivated apologies for interruptions and untimely exits between acquaintances. In the following example recorded during a public enquiry both participants apologise for interrupting each other.

Ex. 6.18 (FMN 403-6):

PS1TT: Do you <--> regard <-->
John: <--> Er so-- <--> sorry Mr <--> <gap cause=anonymization descr="last or full name">.
PS1TT: <--> I'm sorry sir. <-->.
John: Er forgive me interrupting,

Similarly, there were many examples of apologies for seemingly minor causes of inconvenience as in this example recorded during a planning meeting.

Ex. 6.19 (FM2 1690):

Derek: <--> Excuse <--> me while I find our papers.
Apologies for ‘Misunderstandings and mistakes’ were also more common during interactions between acquaintances. In many such instances it was apparent that both conversational parties were concerned that the misunderstandings should be sorted out. In this extract recorded at a Parish council meeting, both participants apologise.

Ex. 6.20 (HD5 870-75)

Sue: what's thi-- we're including that one, yeah. What's this annual sickness rate for C Ts and <unclear>?
Keith: Clerk typists.
Sue: Oh right.
Keith: Sorry.
Sue: Sorry I understand I thought it was careers teachers for a minute.
Keith: <laugh>

Apologies for this type of offence were also relatively common between spouses (see Ex. 6.16).

Apologies for ‘Talk’ offences were significantly more common in conversations between acquaintances. This was probably a direct result of the types of genres sampled. Many of the texts in which the group ‘acquaintances’ acted were recordings of business and council meetings, and the conversations dealt with facts and figures. In such situations it was probably important that the specific information conveyed was correct. The following example was recorded during a business meeting.

Ex. 6.21 (FLS 188-9):

Norman: There's erm <pause> there's twenty <pause> beg your pardon, there's twenty two complaints
Roger: Right.

Apologies for ‘Social gaffes’ were almost non-existent in conversations between acquaintances; only one example was found; the speaker apologised for clearing his throat. It appears that serious social gaffes were avoided in situations of greater social distance. Apologies for ‘Social gaffes’ were more common in conversations between intimates and friends. In both of these groups apologies for serious social gaffes such as belching made up approximately 40 per cent of the apologies.

Apologies for ‘Hearing’ offences were extremely common in conversations between intimates (this pattern was also found in conversations between parents and their children). One potential explanation for this pattern is that husbands and wives in the corpus were so familiar with each other that they did not fully pay attention to what the other party had to say. Here is just one of many examples of apologies for ‘Hearing’ offences between spouses in the corpus.

Ex. 6.22 (KDS 894-98):

Rosemary: That's the travel agency isn't it?
John: Pardon?
Rosemary: That's the travel agency things, I'll put them on there to sort out to throw away.
<pause dur=12> Can you, can you think where that came from, that book?
John: Pardon?
In contrast, relatively few apologies for ‘Hearing’ offences were found in conversations between acquaintances. Furthermore, many of the apologies for this type of offence among acquaintances differed in nature from those found among intimates; many of the ‘Hearing’ offences apologised for between acquaintances functioned as cues for clarification as opposed to cues for repetition. In such instances the person apologising had obviously heard what was being said but needed further explanation on some point as in Ex. 6.23 recorded during a planning meeting.

Ex. 6.23 (FM2 1148-60):

Wendy: […] No we wouldn't want any spiders around.
Derek: <laugh>.
Wendy: Erm
Derek: Moving swiftly along. <laugh>
Clare: That's speciesist that is.
Wendy: Pardon?
Clare: Speciesism.
Clare: Yes. <|-->
Derek: Speciesist. <|-->
Wendy: Speciesist.
Derek: You're discriminating <|-->
Wendy: Yes. <|-->

Of the ‘Hearing’ offences apologised for between acquaintances, 30 per cent were such examples of cues for clarification; in conversations between intimates the equivalent figure was only 7.6 per cent. In contrast to apologies functioning as cues for repetition, cues for clarification indicated that the interlocutor was paying attention to what was being said.

Finally, the proportion of offences involving ‘Breach of consensus’ showed large differences between the three dyads. Surprisingly few apologies for this type of offence were found in conversations between spouses and of the 29 examples found, 19 were made by husbands to their wives. Note that in the apology patterns in power-asymmetrical dyads examined earlier in this chapter, it tended to be the ‘powerful’ interlocutors who apologised for ‘Breach of consensus’ offences to the ‘powerless’. This may be an indication that husband/wife dyads were examples of power-asymmetrical interactions.

On the other hand, the fact that individuals were aware of being recorded may also have contributed to the relatively small number of apologies for ‘Breach of consensus’ offences made by wives to husbands. Disagreements between husbands and wives were most likely to have been more private in nature than disagreements between friends and acquaintances, where apologies were primarily made for challenging of facts. It may be that especially women in the corpus regarded it as inappropriate to flaunt marital disagreements on tape, and this may have contributed to wives producing few apologies for this type of offence. The kind of dispute between husband and wife exemplified in Ex. 6.24 was rare in the corpus, and it is telling that the wife whispers when she responds to her husband’s irritated remark.
Ex. 6.24 (KD7 2600-5):

Matt: I'm sorry I opened my mouth!
Jan: Oh that's fine. <voice quality: whispering> <unclear> <end of voice quality>.
Matt: Well we're getting there.
Jan: Pardon?
Matt: <whistling>
Jan: I'm gonna go and watch the telly! Ooh ooh ooh! <"banging something”>

Apparent sincerity of the apologies in the social distance dyads:

There were significant differences in the apparent sincerity levels of the apologies produced in conversations between intimates, friends and acquaintances. The results are given in Table 41 in Appendix 7 and the relative proportions of ‘Sarcastic’, ‘Challenging’, ‘Casual’ and apparently ‘Sincere’ apologies found in the dyads are summarised in Figure 6.11.

![Figure 6.11. Apparent sincerity levels of apologies in different social distance dyads](image)

The general pattern of apparent sincerity observed in the apologies from the dyads of various social distances was that the proportions of ‘Challenging’ and ‘Sincere’ apologies increased with social distance. ‘Casual’ apologies, on the other hand, became less frequent as social distance increased. ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were most common in conversations between friends. This was largely a result of the younger average age of the speakers in these dyads. Of the 21 ‘Sarcastic’ apologies
produced in this dyad, 15 were made by 0-24-year-olds. The remaining 6 ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were uttered by 25-44-year-olds.

In summary, prototypical use of the apology form seems to increase with social distance, as does the use of apologies to disarm disagreements. This is what we would expect based on B&L’s theory of politeness. Note however, that conversations between total strangers were not sampled here.\textsuperscript{136} Potential explanations for the observed patterns will be further discussed in Section 6.6.

### 6.5 Summary

This chapter has examined the effects of the addressee identity on the use of the apology form. Three aspects of this identity have been considered in more detail, namely the social identity of the addressee, the relative power of the addressee in relation to the speaker (determined from the roles of the participants in the conversations) and finally, the social distance existing between the speaker and the addressee. The effects of these aspects on the total apology rates, on the types of offences apologised for and the apparent sincerity of the apologies were examined in various dyadic interactions.

Surprisingly, the analyses of the apology rates in the various asymmetrical dyads showed that it was the participants with high status and/or more relative power who apologised more to the low-status and/or relatively powerless participants rather than vice versa. This tendency was especially strong in those dyads where the power differences were greater, in the conversations between job interviewers and interviewees and in conversations between parents and children, for example. The differences in apology rates of males and females in mixed-gender dyads were less marked, and in the conversations between spouses, husbands and wives used the apology form equally frequently. There were, however, indications that speakers apologised more often in mixed-gender conversations than when they interacted with interlocutors of their own sex.

The analyses of the typological aspects of apologising in the various dyads indicated that, of the social variables investigated, the gender of the addressee had least effect on a speakers’ use of the apology form. Differences in the offences apologised for in mixed and single sex conversations were minimal. Female speakers acting in informal settings revealed a tendency to apologise more to other females for ‘Accidents’ and ‘Social gaffes’, whereas they apologised relatively more for ‘Hearing’ offences when interacting with males. No such gender effects were found among male speakers. In the conversations between spouses only two offences differed markedly between husbands and wives. Wives apologised more for ‘Hearing’ offences than husbands, while husbands apologised more for ‘Social gaffes’. There were no significant differences in the apparent sincerity levels of the apologies made to males and females in any of the investigated gender dyads.

In contrast, the age of the addressee had a more marked effect on a speaker’s use of the apology form. In formal texts, it was primarily the 45+-year-olds who were affected by the age of the addressee in their apologetic behaviour. This group used pro-
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totypical apologies to remedy offences arising from ‘Lack of consideration’ and ‘Breach of expectations’ when interacting with 25-45-year-olds and addressees of their own ages. Similarly, they favoured apologies for ‘Breach of consensus’ when interacting with these groups of addressees. In contrast, 45+-year-olds rarely used such apologies in conversations with 0-24-year-olds. When interacting with young participants they used instead formulaic apologies, for ‘Talk’ offences for example. This usage pattern was reflected in the apparent sincerity of the apologies made by the 45+-year-olds to various addressees in the formal texts. When interacting with 25-44-year-olds and other 45+-year-olds, ‘Sincere’ apologies were relatively common. In conversations with 0-24-year-olds ‘Casual’ apologies dominated.

In the informal texts, the age of the addressee had marked effects on speakers of all age groups. Young speakers favoured ‘Real’ apologies for offences such as ‘Lack of consideration’ and ‘Mistakes and misunderstandings’ during interactions with other 0-24-year-olds and 45+-year-olds. Younger speakers also showed a strong tendency to apologise for offences involving ‘Breach of consensus’ when interacting with peers. In contrast, formulaic apologies, especially for ‘Hearing’ offences, were extremely over-represented when 0-24-year-olds interacted with 25-44-year-olds. The 25-44-year-olds and the 45+-year-olds favoured ‘Real’ apologies when interacting with other adults. In conversations with 0-24-year-olds these groups tended to use formulaic apologies for ‘Hearing’ offences and apologies for ‘Breach of consensus’, where they functioned primarily as reprimands.

A clear age-differentiated usage of the apology form in various age dyads became evident when the apparent sincerity patterns were examined. Young speakers favoured ‘Sarcastic’, ‘Challenging’ and ‘Sincere’ apologies during interactions with peers, but tended to use ‘Casual’ apologies when interacting with elders. In contrast, the two groups of adult speakers favoured ‘Sarcastic’, ‘Challenging’ and ‘Casual’ apologies when interacting with 0-24-year-olds. In these age groups, ‘Sincere’ apologies were most common during interactions with other adults.

The analyses of typological differences in apologies made in the power-asymmetrical dyads revealed that although there were tendencies for the powerful in certain dyads (parents/children dyads especially) to use the apology form non-prototypically, as a reprimand for example, such usage could not account for the higher overall apology rates for the powerful vis-à-vis the powerless. In fact, in adult power-asymmetrical dyads, it was the powerful who apologised more for ‘Lack of consideration’ offences. This overall lack of difference in the typology of apologies uttered by powerful and powerless speakers was made clear when the apparent sincerity of the apologies made by each respective group were compared. No significant differences were found. The most marked difference between the apologetic behaviour of powerful and powerless speakers was thus not in the types of apologies produced by these groups, but in the frequency with which they used the form. Powerful participants apologised more than twice as often to the powerless than the latter group apologised to the powerful.

A comparison of the typology of apologies produced in power-asymmetrical and power-symmetrical dyads revealed that formulaic, casual usage of the form was much more common in the former. In conversations between equals, the apology form was instead used more often to convey sincere regret, but also to disarm challenges and to
make sarcastic remarks. In contrast, formulaic usage of the apology form was relatively rare between equals.

The final aspect examined, namely the effects on apologising of the social distance between the participants, showed that routine usage of this formula was greatest during interactions between intimates. Sincere, but also challenging usages of the apology form increased as social distance between the interlocutors increased. As expected, ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were most common among friends.

### 6.6 Discussion

The results from this chapter revealed that addressee identity had a decisive effect on speaker use of the apology form in the corpus. However, contrary to expectations based on B&L’s theory of politeness, it was speakers with relatively high status and relative power who favoured the use of the form during interactions between non-equals.

One potential explanation for this unexpected pattern is that the higher apology rates seen among relatively powerful speakers resulted from differences in the seriousness with which powerful and relatively powerless individuals viewed transgressions. Arguably, powerful individuals estimated the potential loss of face resulting from transgressions as being greater than did powerless speakers. Psychologically this can be explained by the increased expectations placed on the holders of powerful roles in modern society.

This state of affairs may well be a recent development. In the past, when social roles in British society were more fixed and largely determined by hereditary rights, there may have been less need to be polite to those with less power. In modern British society however, the class structure is becoming less predictable as a result of a mobile middle class. Status is increasingly determined by an individual’s personal achievements (as opposed to his/her family background). In such a society, status can just as easily be lost as it can be gained. Projecting a positive image will thus become increasingly important as one’s status rises. Being conventionally polite, achieved by using formulae such as the apology, may be one way of projecting such a positive image. Arguably, this kind of behaviour is simply expected of a person in a powerful role in Britain.

An additional, and potentially complementary, explanation would be that the use of formulaic politeness, such as apologising, is part of a power register in Britain. Furthermore, most of the powerful speakers in the corpus (lecturers, teachers, chairmen at council meetings, job interviewers etc.) were likely to have been middle-class and the observed differences in apology rates in the dyads may thus partly be a direct social-class effect. Even when this was not the case, however, it may well have been the case that the taking on of a relatively powerful role actually meant that a speaker adjusted his/her speech, making it more conventionally polite. If the results of this study are representative of British English, it would appear that frequent use of the

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137 B&L’s study was carried out in the 1970s and the class structure of Britain was arguably more fixed at that time in history. Interestingly the other two languages (Tamil and Tzeltal), apart from English, used in B&L’s study, represent cultures where roles are fairly fixed by birth rights (the caste system for example)
apology form in power-asymmetrical interactions is not primarily a means of showing deference, but rather a way of signalling your own status.

The apology patterns in the various age dyads further illustrated how a polite formula such as the apology can be used in the implementation of power. It was telling that young addressees received fewer prototypical apologies than any other age group investigated in the corpus and that instead they were addressed by older speakers with apologies functioning as discourse managing devices and even reprimands. The uses of the apology form in such situations serve to legitimise adults’ excessive floor-time and, at times, face attacks made on the younger interlocutors. In contrast, more ‘polite uses’ of the apology form were evident when adults communicated with other adults. Arguably, this illustrates the importance of this speech act in self-image maintenance. Being polite seemed to be especially important when the people present were of equal status and their opinions mattered.

The importance of the apology form in self-image preservation was also evident in the social distance dyads investigated. As the social distance between interlocutors increased, apologising increasingly involved social repair work (‘Sincere’ apologies), and disarming functions allowing the speakers to express disagreements in a socially acceptable way (‘Challenging’ apologies). Wolfson (1988) argues that the relatively uncertain state of relationships among friends and acquaintances (as opposed to the more certain state existing between intimates) means that relationships have to be constantly negotiated. Signalling ‘solidarity and concern’ for the conversational partner thus becomes important in order to be accepted in the eyes of others during such social interactions.

In conclusion, there appears to be different usage norms regarding the apology form in Britain depending on whether the speaker wants to signal ‘power difference’ or ‘solidarity’. In the former type of apology usage, it is the use of the form itself as a means of signalling speaker status which appears to be of importance. In contrast, the apology is used more prototypically, to signal regret and concern, in conversations between friends and other power equals. Whether this show of concern is genuine or aimed at improving the addressee’s and/or the audience’s opinion of the speaker is debatable.

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Chapter 7
Summary and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In this thesis, several different aspects of the use of the apology in British English have been examined: Chapter 3 focused primarily on the form and function of the apologies found in the corpus, while Chapter 4 investigated social variation in the usage of these different forms. In Chapter 5, the effects of the setting of the conversations on apology use were analysed, and finally, the relationship between speaker and addressee provided the starting point for the analyses in Chapter 6, where variations in the use of the apology form in different role-sets were identified. All of these aspects are facets of a more general dilemma, namely to describe the unwritten social rules governing the use of this linguistic form, a form which is generally associated with politeness in British English. Ultimately, it is hoped that this examination of one specific speech act will shed new light on a more general aspect of British English, namely the uses of linguistic politeness.

In order to present an integrated view of the results of the thesis, I will start by briefly summarising the main findings from the various chapters. From these I will then attempt to elucidate general patterns, patterns which arguably reflect aspects of a British code of politeness.

7.2 Overall summary

In this section I will briefly summarise the main findings from each part of the study.

Form and function:

The first general aim of this thesis (expressed in Section 1.3 and addressed in Chapter 3) was to identify the functions of the apology form as it appears in the corpus and to examine the relationship between function and form in these speech acts. Three main functional categories were elucidated, namely prototypical or ‘Real’ apologies, ‘Formulaic’ apologies and ‘Face attack’ apologies.

‘Real’ apologies remedied a range of transgressions where the apologiser somehow felt that s/he had offended the person addressed and therefore expressed regret for having done so. These apologies, making up 36 per cent of the material, were, on the whole, relatively complex syntactically. In contrast, ‘Formulaic’ apologies, comprising approximately half of the apologies in the corpus, often consisted of simple, syntactically detached IFIDs functioning as discourse managing devices, as request cues for repetition or as apologies used to point out ‘slips of the tongue’, for example. The degree of ‘regret’ expressed in such apologies was minimal. The final functional category, ‘Face attack’ apologies, functioned as disarmers, primarily uttered before
reprimands or challenges concerning opinions were expressed. This type of apology made up roughly ten per cent of the investigated apologies, and the syntactic structures of these remedial acts were on average more complex than those of the ‘Formulaic’ apologies. In four per cent of the investigated speech acts in the corpus, the offences that motivated the apologies could not be identified.

An investigation of apology strategies (other than explicitly apologising) accompanying the IFIDs showed that strategies which somehow involved speakers trying to minimise responsibility for an offence were four times more frequent in the corpus than strategies where speakers acknowledged responsibility for an offence. This observation seems to suggest that an important additional function of apologies is to ensure that the loss of face on the part of the speaker is kept to a minimum.

The analysis of the apparent sincerity with which apologies were uttered revealed that roughly three per cent of the apologies encountered in the corpus were examples of sarcastic or ironic usage of the apology form. Using apologies in this way made it obvious that the speaker did not feel remorse. This type of apology tended to be found in informal conversations between friends, and frequently appeared in humorous ‘tongue in cheek’ discourse. Interestingly, ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were very similar to ‘Real’ apologies in form, being syntactically complex and often containing intensifiers. The main difference was that the former category of apologies tended to consist of exaggerated ‘hyperpolite’ constructions. Three further apparent sincerity levels in apologies were identified. These were ‘Sincere’, ‘Casual’, and ‘Challenging’ apologies. The distributions of these categories were more or less equivalent to the functional categories ‘Real’ apologies, ‘Formulaic’ apologies and ‘Face attack’ apologies respectively.

The overall conclusion from this chapter is that the apologies encountered in the corpus express a functional range, of which prototypical usage of the form is only one possibility.

Social variation in the use of the apology form:

The second general aim of the thesis (expressed in Section 1.3 and addressed in Chapter 4) was to examine the effects of the social variables speaker gender, age and social class on the use of the apology form. Of these three social variables, speaker gender had the least effect on apologising. No overall gender differences in the frequency of apologising were found, and the typology of the apologies produced by men and women differed only marginally. However, two noteworthy gender tendencies were that women used relatively more additional strategies which involved the taking on of responsibility for an offence than men, and that men tended to use more ‘Sarcastic’ apologies than women. Both of these forms of apologising represented marginal usages of the speech act, and were consequently relatively rare in the corpus.

In contrast to speaker gender, the age and social class of the speakers were important factors affecting the use of the apology form. On the whole, younger speakers in the corpus apologised far more frequently than older speakers, as did middle-class speakers compared to working-class speakers.

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139 There was however an interaction effect between gender and formality; females apologised more in formal texts and relatively less in informal texts. The opposite pattern was found among males.
Analysis of the distributions of offences leading to apologies produced by the various social groups showed that the independent variable speaker social class had the greatest effect on the observed offence patterns. Middle-class speakers tended to apologise more for what could conventionally be regarded as politeness norm breaches than working-class speakers. The offence distributions in the different age groups did not indicate any substantial age differences regarding politeness norms, but showed that there were differences in the communicative roles that speakers of different age groups played in the conversations. Older speakers showed a greater tendency to apologise for offences committed when producing speech (‘Talk’ offences), while younger speakers apologised relatively more often for ‘Hearing’ offences.

The distribution of additional apology strategies (other than explicit IFIDs) used by the different social groups indicated that social groups conventionally seen as high-status groups (the 45+-year-olds and males) showed a greater preference for strategies which involved minimisation of their responsibility than low-status groups. Note, however that minimisation of responsibility was the most frequently used alternative in all social groups investigated.

The final observation made in Chapter 4 was that males and, especially, younger speakers showed a preference for ‘Sarcastic’ apologies. ‘Challenging’ apologies were relatively more frequent among the 25-44-year-olds and the working-class speakers.

The overall conclusion of this chapter is that the use of the apology form in Britain may be a way of signalling your social identity linguistically, and that its use is primarily part of a middle-class sociolect.

Conversational setting and the use of the apology form:

The third general aim of the thesis (expressed in Section 1.3 and addressed in Chapter 5) was to examine the effects of the conversational setting variables formality, group size and genre on the use of the apology form.

Formality was not found to affect the total apology rates, but there was a clear indication that the number of participants present during a conversation did so; more participants led to more frequent use of the form. This finding was further supported by the apology rates in the twelve genres, which could be positively correlated to the number of conversational partners present during the conversations in those genres.

Whereas the total apology rates of speakers were not affected by the formality of the setting, the typology of the apologies produced clearly was. Analysis of the offence distributions over the different setting variables investigated showed that offences which involved breaches of conventional politeness norms increased with formality and group-size. Other patterns elucidated were that apologies for offences involving communicative slips on the part of the speaker (‘Talk’ offences for example) were more common in formal texts, whereas apologies for ‘Breach of consensus’ offences increased as the number of participants in conversations increased.

Formality or group size did not markedly affect the use of additional apology strategies. There was, however, an age interaction effect operating on this data. In informal texts younger speakers were particularly disinclined to use additional apology strategies which involved acknowledgement of responsibility. Older speakers showed a similar tendency in formal texts.
The analysis of the distributions of apologies of different apparent sincerity levels revealed that ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were on the whole more common in informal texts. ‘Challenging’ apologies were far more common in situations where many participants were present.

The overall conclusion from this chapter is that a third, hitherto neglected, factor seems to be of major importance in affecting the use of the apology form in British English, namely the audience. B&L’s model of politeness only takes into account variables related to the speaker and hearer identities, but it appears that the presence/absence of an audience is also an important additional factor affecting linguistic politeness.

Effects of the dyadic relationship on the use of the apology form:

The fourth and final general aim of the thesis (expressed in Section 1.3 and addressed in Chapter 6) was to examine the effects of the relationship existing between the speaker and the addressee on the use of the apology form. Aspects of this relationship investigated included the gender, age and social class of the speaker in relation to the addressee, and the relative power and social distance between the interlocutors.

Analysis of the effects of social relational variables on apologetic behaviour indicated that the gender relationship between speaker and addressee did not markedly affect the total apology rate. Nor did the gender of the addressee have any major effects on the typological aspects of the apologies produced in various dyads.

In contrast, the age of the addressee had a marked effect on both the number and type of apologies produced in conversations. Surprisingly, older speakers apologised more to younger addressees than vice versa in formal as well as informal settings. The analysis of the typological aspects of the apologies in the various age dyads, however, showed that apologies functioning as deference markers were most common during conversations between equals and when elders were addressed. In contrast, adults favoured ‘Challenging’ and ‘Casual’ apologies when addressing younger people.

A comparison of ‘downward’ and ‘upward’ directed apologies in power-asymmetrical dyads revealed that powerful speakers apologised far more to powerless interlocutors than vice versa. Surprisingly, the typologies of the ‘downward’ and ‘upward’ directed apologies were relatively similar, at least in conversations between adults. In contrast, the typologies of the apologies produced during conversations between power-equals were markedly different from those produced in power-asymmetrical dyads. The apologies produced by the former group contained far more ‘Sincere’, ‘Challenging’ and ‘Sarcastic’ apologies, whereas the majority of the apologies in the power-asymmetrical dyads were in the form of casual, routine formulae.

The effect of social distance on apologetic behaviour was the final aspect investigated in this chapter. It was found that the relative number of ‘Casual’ apologies tended to decrease as the social distance between the speakers increased. As social distance increased, there were proportionally more ‘Sincere’, but also ‘Challenging’ apologies. ‘Sarcastic’ apologies were most common in conversations between friends (as opposed to intimates or acquaintances).

The most striking result from this chapter is that, contrary to expectations based on the theories of B&L, relatively powerful speakers were seen to apologise more to those with relatively less power than vice versa. The type of politeness expressed by
the apologies in these power-asymmetrical interactions was, however, relatively formulaic. It was proposed that using politeness formulae such as the apology in British English is a way of signalling high status.

7.3 General discussion

The aim of this section is to try to elucidate patterns from the numerous individual observations presented above and to discuss these in relation to a more general phenomenon, namely the use of politeness formulae in British English in the 1990s. By extrapolating the findings from the study in this way I have to make two potentially incorrect assumptions: that the language in the BNC reflects British English in the 1990s in general, and that the use of the apology form is representative of a more general usage pattern of politeness formulae in British English.

B&L’s theory of politeness, and much of the subsequent research into politeness, focuses on the hearer’s face needs and how these motivate a speaker’s use of politeness. However, in this study there were several indications that the minimisation of damage to the speaker’s image was often the motivation for apologies. For example, approximately 80 per cent of the additional strategies used in combination with the explicit apologies were aimed at minimising responsibility for transgressions. This type of strategy was also particularly common among speakers who arguably had much to lose by admitting fault. The types of offences apologised for in various conversational settings and role-sets also indicated that many of the apologies were simply attempts to show the hearer that a transgression was out of character, and not a reflection of the offender’s true self; the frequent apologies for ‘Talk’ offences made by teachers and lecturers constituted this type of apology.

Some researchers have increasingly begun to explore the idea that the key to understanding usage patterns of politeness formulae lies in focussing on the benefits that a polite act will bring the speaker (Watts 1992, Meier 1995, Jary 1998 and Held 1999). Held (1999:22-24) discusses the changing functions of politeness in democratised societies, where equal rights are given increased social significance. She argues that the relation of forms of respect to the ideology of power is undergoing a “sociogenetic process of redistribution” whereby the social value of the individual, as opposed to his/her social rank, is becoming the object of address. This ‘social value’ is not birth-given, but determined by the person’s social competence and/or his/her achievements, and as a result, expressing politeness has become a process involving “active reflection” rather than “passive automatism”. ‘Who is polite to whom’ is still a reflection of the power structures in a society, but these have become infinitely more complicated, as have the existing politeness norms.

Held argues that with the increased economisation of society, the ‘exchange value’ of politeness prevents it from becoming redundant, and this value is the key to its raison d’être. Held (1999:22) explains this ‘exchange value’ as follows:

\[
\text{self-withdrawal, self-denigration and personal submission in favour of the interactional partner […] leads to the elevation of } \text{alter, the indirect strengthening of her/his position and the mediated confirmation of her/his self-image. However, according to the ‘laws’ of politeness, } \text{alter is obliged to}
\]


She goes on to claim that in studying politeness “the only important goal is to evaluate what the social consideration for alter brings for ego, i.e. how much profit each individual can gain for her/himself” (Held 1999:23). According to Held, “strategies that were originally necessary for survival become goal-directed, finely nuanced means of self-empowerment.”(24); the primary function of politeness is being transferred from self-preservation to self-representation.

A true story that my mother told me from her school days in Sweden of the 1940s will serve as an illustration of these changes. One morning a boy in her class did not pay the teacher due respect; he arrived late, for which he did not apologise, forgot to take his cap off and did not utter the obligatory phrase “Good morning Sir”. The teacher in question was furious and ordered the boy to his desk. He then seized hold of the insolent child’s ear and hurled him across the classroom. The boy was projected some ten metres across the room, leaving the teacher facing the class with part of an ear in his hand; in those days, being polite was clearly a matter of ‘self-preservation’. Since the 1940s, Sweden and Britain, have undergone many substantial social changes and today my eldest son would argue that students who appear too polite to teachers risk being accused of ‘brown-nosing’.

Arguably, the unexpected distributions of apologies in power-asymmetrical exchanges, whereby the powerful used the form more often than the powerless, are a reflection of a relatively unfixed power structure. In such situations the apology, and also conceivably other politeness formulae, are important ways for the speaker to preserve a positive image in the eyes of the less powerful interlocutor. While acts of politeness have traditionally been ways for social inferiors to show deference towards social superiors, the latter group have come “to use them towards social inferiors as a sign of solidarity or favour” (Held 1999:29). Held (1999:24) sees this as a process of redistribution involving a symbolic assignment of power to the weaker partner as “a polite game in order to stabilise the real relationship of power”. The holding of a position of power in an egalitarian society is thus in many ways a contradictory state of affairs, a ‘source of embarrassment’. After all, if all individuals are seen to be of equal value what legitimises the exercise of power by one individual over others?

In reality, however, this egalitarianism is an illusion. It is clear that western societies such as Britain are still highly socially stratified. There are enormous differences between rich and poor, and a small percentage of the population controls a large percentage of the resources. In multi-national companies, on the political scene, and in the public sector it is the privileged classes who are in charge. One strategy for minimising the gap between pseudo ideals and the real state of affairs is for the powerful to appear ‘humble’ when confronted with the less powerful; downward politeness is one expression of such a strategy. As this mode of rhetoric becomes the norm, downward politeness paradoxically becomes a linguistic marker of power, and a tool for exercising that power.

The potential self-image enhancing nature of polite formulae was also evidenced in that apologising in the corpus was partly a public ‘performance’. There were clear indications in the study that apologising was far more common when there was an au-
dience present. This effect was particularly evident in more formal situations. Using polite formulae in public situations is arguably a way of presenting oneself as ‘respectable’, not only to the addressee, but also in the eyes of others present.

In public situations, it is difficult to know what value norms are held by the audience and most individuals tend to play it safe by conforming to standard views and standard ways of expressing them. When differences of opinions are aired, the apology (and probably other politeness formulae) plays an important role in disarming and toning down statements which can be conceived as controversial. This was evident in this study, where apologies uttered in more ‘public’ situations contained a relatively high proportion of the speech act functioning as a disarmer of statements which somehow contradicted the opinions expressed by another interlocutor. It is telling that the genre ‘Public debates’ contained the highest frequency of such apologies.

The apology and other politeness formulae thus make face attacks in public less controversial and this use of politeness is clearly evident in the register of public debates in Britain. In the Houses of Commons, for example, the language can be characterised by frequent use of honorifics and other markers of politeness coupled with harsh, sometimes personal, face attacks. Conforming to the expected ‘standard’ and using politeness makes such attacks appear more ‘civil’, and helps to protect the image of the speaker, making his/her views more acceptable. In this way, politeness is a rhetorical vehicle for expressing potentially controversial opinions, and a vital constituent of the rhetorical arsenal of anyone who wants to bring about changes in a democratic society.

In this study it was the middle classes who favoured the apology form, and arguably the use/avoidance of politeness formulae in general is an important marker of social class in Britain. The adherence to formal politeness norms has traditionally been practically synonymous with being civilized, cultivated, cultured and well-bred (see definitions in Section 2.3), the very essence of middle/upper-class values. Many scholars recognise the fact that what are regarded as politeness ‘norms’ in English today, are in fact the social ‘etiquette’ of the eighteenth-century British elite passed down to the masses. At the same time the very core functions of politeness (a means of showing deference and disarming of potential conflicts) indirectly serve the interests of the dominant classes by helping to maintain a social status-quo. Held (1999:21) has the following to say on the subject:

Politeness [...] is based on the stronger giving power symbolically to the weaker and thereby setting in motion a mechanism of reciprocal exchange or balance of power that upholds the existing social relationships, and interprets and perpetuates them by constantly reformulating them. Out of the momentary defusing of conflict arises a workable social code of order which indirectly, but all the more efficiently, serves to strengthen the power of those who already possess it.

The socio-historical origin of formalised politeness thus makes the use/avoidance of forms associated with the phenomenon (such as the apology) good potential candidates for inclusion in the category lexical markers of social class. If the middle/upper classes have traditionally adopted certain forms of linguistic politeness to signal their membership of a social elite, it is equally likely that the working classes have avoided
these forms when possible, as a symbolic way of showing that they do not share the values of the higher socioeconomic groups. In this context we can note that the popular caricature of upper class speech, the ‘Eton’ public school dialect, can be characterised by its frequent use of hyperpolite forms (in the literature of P.G Wodehouse, for example).

One of the problems when viewing politeness as a marker of social class is that, unlike the phonological or grammatical markers of sociolects, the use of politeness formulae has important functions other than signalling social-class allegiance. It is hard to imagine a language where speech acts such as thanking, apologising etc. did not exist. These expressions of politeness have necessary social functions, and will at certain times be used by all members of a society. Strictly formulaic politeness, however, is a different matter. Apologising when there is nothing to apologise for, showing respect by using honorific terms of address when no respect is felt, wishing someone a pleasant day when one is completely indifferent are all examples of such uses of politeness.

The apology form was used to signal different types of politeness in the corpus. On the one hand, the form was used to signal solidarity and concern between equals. On the other hand, formulaic usage of the apology form tended to dominate during power-asymmetrical interactions. The typology of the apologies produced by young speakers interacting with peers, for example, showed that prototypical usage of the apology was more common between power equals than in power-asymmetrical relationships. During such interaction between equals ‘Challenging’ and ‘Sarcastic’ usages of the form were also more frequent. In contrast the apologies used between parents and children (and many other power-asymmetrical dyads) were mainly formulaic, functioning for example as discourse managing devices.

For genuine politeness to be accepted as such it has to be regarded as sincere and a prerequisite for this is that mutual frankness exists between the interlocutors. The resultant type of politeness can thus be characterised by sincere expressions of concern, but also frank expressions of differences in opinions etc. As suggested by the apology patterns in the corpus, this type of ‘honest’ politeness is arguably evident in the conversations between younger speakers. Held, who investigated gestures of submission among young people, concludes that:

[...] young people today use a whole range of gestures of solidarity. In deormalised, spontaneous and affective form, these are related equally to complimenting alter, to personal, maximised representations of feeling, to genuine, accompanying and supporting (re)actions, etc.

(Held 1999:34)

There are reasons why ‘genuine’ expressions of politeness should be more common among adolescents. Among individuals in this social group the opinions of peers are probably of extreme importance in forming self-image. At the same time young people move in a social environment which is very unstable; friendships, intimate relationships, pecking order etc. are constantly changing. In such an environment politeness, when used skilfully, can be greatly beneficial to the speaker socially.

The apologies made between non-equals were less likely to express genuine “representations of feelings”. Interestingly, the apologies made between intimates
were also rather formulaic. This finding seems to suggest that the degree of fixedness in a relationship is an important factor influencing the use of politeness formulae. Arguably intimates feel little need to negotiate their relationship; presumably, this has already been done. In this sense, the situation in fixed-role, power-asymmetrical dyads, such teacher/student, employer/employee or prisoner/warden dyads, are similar. The role relationships are fixed and there is consequently little need for social negotiation. In contrast, apparent genuine usage of the apology form, and conceivably other politeness formulae, in British English is most obvious in un fixed relationships, which are being negotiated.

In conclusion, the observed usage patterns of the apology form as it appears in the corpus seem to suggest that the use of polite formulae is a way of signalling status, while at the same time providing the speaker with socially acceptable linguistic tools with which to manipulate his/her surroundings. However, this less noble usage of politeness formulae does not exclude their use in displays of genuine concern and affection, as evidenced in the conversations between equals.

7.4 Concluding remarks

One of the main goals of this work has been to show that large computerised corpora can be used successfully in sociolinguistic research. In spite of the methodological problems encountered and the limitations that these incurred, the nature (relatively naturalistic speech), composition (relatively well-balanced) and size (roughly 1700 speakers) of the sample all contributed to providing a ‘real’ insight into everyday British speech patterns in the 1990s. Admittedly this study only sampled an extremely limited phenomenon, but the potential for future research is boundless.

It is easy to sound over-enthusiastic at this stage and I do not deny that the efforts involved in producing this thesis have been enormous. It is also ironic that four years of arduous work merely served to confirm what that rather original armchair linguist, Andy, told me in his uncensored fashion over a pint or two (or was it three?) in the Preston Railway Inn: Politeness is just another form of dishonesty, either used by “wankers” who do not dare deliver a straight and honest message, or by “slimy bastards” whose mild manners conceal some devious ulterior motive.
Bibliography


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Appendices

Appendix 1. Raw data presentations

The lists of apologies are given in Appendices 1a and 1b available at the following address:

http://www.eng.umu.se/personal/mats

The 3070 apologies making up the main sub-corpus are listed in Appendix 1a (Excel format). This document also contains details of all the speakers included in the study as well as a list of the various BNC texts sampled. Appendix 1b, available at the same address, lists the 2268 apologies making up the addressee sub-corpus. Again, details of the addressees and texts included in the analyses of Chapter 6 are given.

Appendix 2. Syntactic frames of the apologies

The syntactic frames encountered for each of the investigated apology verbs in the corpus (except regret) are summarised below. Eight apologies found in the corpus are not included within the frames given in the figures below; in three of these the noun apology was used in explicit apologising (for example, “And I have an apology to make” (KSR 576)).

The system below is based on Owen’s (1983:66) presentation of possible syntactic constructions of sorry. Note that the syntactic combinations presented in the figures are not the only ones theoretically possible; they represent the actual frames found in the corpus. In these frames, obligatory elements are written in bold and are enclosed in brackets {}. Optional elements are enclosed in parentheses ( ). To illustrate this, compare the frames of sorry and excuse. Sorry can occur as a detached form and still be grammatical whereas excuse has to be accompanied by a first person pronoun in the object form or a noun phrase (Excuse the wrapping, for example (KB0 438)).

Of the symbols used above, S’ denotes a syntactically complete clause, NP a noun phrase, VP a verb phrase and PP a prepositional phrase. Note that in most of the cases where noun phrases occurred, these were in the form of the present participle (Forgive me interrupting (FMN 406), for example)

Note also the syntactic frames of pardon and afraid, where mutually exclusive possibilities existed; in the case of pardon these were the subjective form, e.g. I beg your pardon, and the objective form, e.g. Pardon me. In the case of afraid, the detached form I’m afraid occurred only when preceded by some form of statement (“I don’t have anything else that I could show you at the moment, I’m afraid” (KSR 536)). When this was not the case, afraid, was accompanied by a statement (“I’m afraid I forgot to write it down” (G3U 719)).

140 For further discussions of these denotations see standard works on syntax such as Thomas (1993).
Appendix 3. Statistical Methods

Statistical formulas used in the thesis:

Three statistical methods were used in this thesis: ANOVA, log-linear modelling and Chi-square analysis. The formulas are provided below:

**Analysis of variance:**

\[
\bar{y}_j = \frac{\sum y_{ij}}{n_j}
\]

\[
y = \frac{\sum \sum y_{ij}}{n_T}
\]

\[
SSTR = \sum n_j \left( \bar{y}_j - \bar{y} \right)^2
\]

\[
SSE = \sum \left[ \sum \left( y_{ij} - \bar{y}_j \right)^2 \right]
\]

\[
SST = \sum \sum \left( y_{ij} - \bar{y} \right)^2
\]

\[
MSTR = \frac{SSTR}{k-1}
\]

\[
MSE = \frac{SSE}{n_T - k}
\]

\[
F = \frac{MSTR}{MSE}
\]

**Log-linear model:**

The log-linear analysis used the method of Proportional Iterative Scaling (Fitting). The statistical software used is described in Ihaka & Gentleman (1996:299-314).

**Chi-square analysis:**

\[
X^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}
\]

where O= observed results and E= expected results.
Method for calculating the mean:

Overall averages of total apology rates in the ANOVA analysis were based on the average apology rates of all the individual speakers included in a social or setting category. An alternative model would have been to add up the number of apologies produced by the investigated social group and then dividing this figure by the total number of words produced by the group in question. This latter method could, however, have resulted in misleading overall apology rates as the behaviour of a few individuals who produced a great deal of speech during the recordings would have weighted the results.

In order to illustrate this, consider a hypothetical social group A, represented by ten individuals in the corpus. Of these ten individuals one produced 100 000 words, and the remainder 10 000 words each. The total number of words produced by this social group would be 190 000 words. In this hypothetical example, the person producing most of the speaking was disinclined to apologise and only produced 10 apologies during his/her 100 000 words of conversation. The remaining individuals also apologised 10 times each during their shorter contributions. The method used in this study allocates equal weight to each individual’s apology rate, making the total average for group A 91 apologies per 100 000 words spoken (sum of individual apology rates divided by number of individuals). If the apologies produced by the group as a whole were simply divided by the number of words produced, there would have been a different result, namely 52.63 apologies per 100 000 words spoken (100 apologies in 190 000 spoken words).

Note, however, that people who produced less than 500 words were not included in the calculations. The reason for this was that such small samples led to extreme apology rate values; the majority of these speakers did not produce any apologies during the short time they were recorded and thus misleadingly ended up with apology rates of 0 apologies per 100 000 words. Conversely, a few speakers in this group, those who did happen to apologise during the short recordings, displayed disproportionately high apology rates. The most extreme example of this was a speaker who only uttered two words in the corpus, one of which happened to be an explicit apology. This person’s apology rate was calculated as 50 000 apologies per 100 000 words spoken, a figure which was clearly unrealistic.
Appendix 4. Composition of the main corpus and the social-class sub-corpus

Table 1. Age and gender composition of the main corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social grouping</th>
<th>No. of speakers</th>
<th>No. of words</th>
<th>No. of utterances</th>
<th>No. of Apologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females: 0-24 years</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>516 923</td>
<td>65 650</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females: 25-44 years</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>1 021 323</td>
<td>104 313</td>
<td>654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females: 45+ years</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>971 250</td>
<td>97 970</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Females</strong></td>
<td><strong>752</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 509 496</strong></td>
<td><strong>267 937</strong></td>
<td><strong>1446</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males: 0-24 years</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>444 870</td>
<td>63 645</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males: 25-44 years</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>847 633</td>
<td>78 562</td>
<td>604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males: 45+</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>1 337 084</td>
<td>97 990</td>
<td>724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Males</strong></td>
<td><strong>1032</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 629 587</strong></td>
<td><strong>240 197</strong></td>
<td><strong>1624</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1784</strong></td>
<td><strong>5 139 083</strong></td>
<td><strong>508 130</strong></td>
<td><strong>3070</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Composition of the social class sub-corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social grouping</th>
<th>No. of speakers</th>
<th>No. of words</th>
<th>No. of utterances</th>
<th>No. of apologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle-class females: 0-24 years</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>176 809</td>
<td>18 174</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-class females: 25-44 years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>284 467</td>
<td>30 550</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-class females: 45-60+ years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>212 923</td>
<td>22 077</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total middle-class females</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
<td><strong>674 199</strong></td>
<td><strong>70 801</strong></td>
<td><strong>511</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-class males: 0-24 years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>102 367</td>
<td>12 204</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-class males: 25-44 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>177 574</td>
<td>21 123</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-class males: 45-60+</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>124 180</td>
<td>13 528</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total middle-class males</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>404 121</strong></td>
<td><strong>46 855</strong></td>
<td><strong>317</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total middle-class speakers</strong></td>
<td><strong>110</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 078 320</strong></td>
<td><strong>117 656</strong></td>
<td><strong>828</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-class females: 0-24 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>66 451</td>
<td>8 982</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-class females: 25-44 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>275 006</td>
<td>26 396</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-class females: 45-60+ years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>274 906</td>
<td>28 190</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total working-class females</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>616 363</strong></td>
<td><strong>63 568</strong></td>
<td><strong>240</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-class males: 0-24 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29 736</td>
<td>3 910</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-class males: 25-44 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>84 704</td>
<td>9 433</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-class males: 45-60+</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>204 126</td>
<td>21 428</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total working-class males</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>318 566</strong></td>
<td><strong>34 771</strong></td>
<td><strong>129</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total working-class speakers</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
<td><strong>934 929</strong></td>
<td><strong>98 339</strong></td>
<td><strong>369</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total social class sub-corpus</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2 013 249</strong></td>
<td><strong>215 995</strong></td>
<td><strong>1197</strong></td>
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</table>
Table 3. *Formality/gender in the main corpus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formality</th>
<th>No. of speakers</th>
<th>No. of words</th>
<th>No. of utterances</th>
<th>No. of Apologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal: females</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>2 203 673</td>
<td>247 330</td>
<td>1261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal: males</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>1 402 101</td>
<td>173 239</td>
<td>881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total informal</strong></td>
<td><strong>1004</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 605 774</strong></td>
<td><strong>420 569</strong></td>
<td><strong>2142</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal: females</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>305 823</td>
<td>20 603</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal: males</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>1 227 486</td>
<td>66 958</td>
<td>747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total formal</strong></td>
<td><strong>780</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 533 309</strong></td>
<td><strong>87 561</strong></td>
<td><strong>928</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All texts total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1784</strong></td>
<td><strong>5 139 083</strong></td>
<td><strong>508 130</strong></td>
<td><strong>3070</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. *Formality/age in the main corpus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formality</th>
<th>No. of speakers</th>
<th>No. of words</th>
<th>No. of utterances</th>
<th>No. of Apologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal 0-24</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>848 375</td>
<td>112 963</td>
<td>646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal 25-44</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>1 389 960</td>
<td>156 733</td>
<td>904</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informal 44+</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>1367439</td>
<td>150 873</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total informal</strong></td>
<td><strong>1004</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 605 774</strong></td>
<td><strong>420 569</strong></td>
<td><strong>2142</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal 0-24</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>112 906</td>
<td>16 257</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal 25-44</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>478 941</td>
<td>26 120</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal 45+</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>941 462</td>
<td>45 184</td>
<td>486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total formal</strong></td>
<td><strong>780</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 533 309</strong></td>
<td><strong>87 561</strong></td>
<td><strong>928</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All texts total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1784</strong></td>
<td><strong>5 139 083</strong></td>
<td><strong>508 130</strong></td>
<td><strong>3070</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. *Group sizes in the main corpus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group size</th>
<th>No. of speakers</th>
<th>No. of words</th>
<th>No. of utterances</th>
<th>No. of Apologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pure dialogue</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>558 553</td>
<td>36 649</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 participants</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>2 333 128</td>
<td>246 956</td>
<td>1280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 participants</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>1 618 428</td>
<td>185 635</td>
<td>928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8+ participants</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>628 974</td>
<td>38 890</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total multilogue</strong></td>
<td><strong>1615</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 580 530</strong></td>
<td><strong>471 481</strong></td>
<td><strong>2775</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All texts total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1784</strong></td>
<td><strong>5 139 083</strong></td>
<td><strong>508 130</strong></td>
<td><strong>3070</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Composition of the genres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>No. of texts</th>
<th>No. of speakers*</th>
<th>No. of words</th>
<th>No. of utterances</th>
<th>No. of Apologies</th>
<th>Av. no. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History interviews</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>205 921</td>
<td>5150</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical consultations</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>39 563</td>
<td>4771</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>276 113</td>
<td>21 633</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales pitches</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19 679</td>
<td>1441</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job interviews</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>109 933</td>
<td>7568</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal conversations at home</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>3 127 863</td>
<td>366 333</td>
<td>1849</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal conversations at work</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>477 911</td>
<td>54 236</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom conversations</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>102 357</td>
<td>4986</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult courses</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>167 321</td>
<td>6241</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public broadcasts</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>143 669</td>
<td>6841</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>271 678</td>
<td>23 378</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public meetings</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>197 075</td>
<td>5552</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>1784</td>
<td>5 139 083</td>
<td>508 130</td>
<td>3070</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note that only speakers coded for age and gender are included here. The actual number of participants present was higher.
Appendix 5. Results from ANOVA and log-linear models.

ANOVA:

Table 1. Summary of results from ANOVA model 1 (independent variables: gender, age, formality and group size. Dependent variable: average apology rate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sum sq.</th>
<th>Mean sq.</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9 840</td>
<td>9 840</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>187 590</td>
<td>187 590</td>
<td>16.742</td>
<td>4.5 E-5***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group size</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>67 041</td>
<td>67 041</td>
<td>5.983</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formality:gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50 296</td>
<td>50 296</td>
<td>4.489</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formality:group size</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 276</td>
<td>5 276</td>
<td>0.471</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residuals</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>12 325 563</td>
<td>11205</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance codes: (*** = p<0.001, (**) = p<0.01, and (*) = p<0.05.

Table 2. Summary of results from ANOVA model 2 (independent variables: gender, age and social class. Dependent variable: average apology rate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sum sq.</th>
<th>Mean sq.</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48 547</td>
<td>48 547</td>
<td>12.97</td>
<td>0.0004***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social class</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>82 427</td>
<td>82 427</td>
<td>22.02</td>
<td>5.5 E-6***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residuals</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>647 588</td>
<td>3 743</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance codes: (*** = p<0.001, (**) = p<0.01, and (*) = p<0.05.

Log-linear models:

Model 1: gender (1), age (2), social class (3), offence category (4)
Model 1a) 1 + 2 + 3 + 4
Model 1b) 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1:2 + 1:3 + 1:4 + 2:3 + 2:4 + 3:4
Model 1c) 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1:2 + 1:3 + 1:4 + 2:3 + 2:4 + 3:4 + 1:2:3 + 1:2:4 + 1:3:4 + 2:3:4

Table 3. Summary of results log-linear model 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Deviance</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Delta (dev)</th>
<th>Delta (df)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1a)</td>
<td>307.1</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>197.4</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1b)</td>
<td>109.7</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0.002**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1c)</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.002**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance codes: (*** = p<0.001, (**) = p<0.01, and (*) = p<0.05.)
**Model 2:** formality (1), gender (2), age (3), offence category (4)

Model 2a) $1 + 2 + 3 + 4$
Model 2b) $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1:2 + 1:3 + 1:4 + 2:3 + 2:4 + 3:4$
Model 2c) $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1:2 + 1:3 + 1:4 + 2:3 + 2:4 + 3:4 + 1:2:3 + 1:2:4 + 1:3:4 + 2:3:4$

Table 4. Summary of results log-linear model 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Deviance</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Delta (dev)</th>
<th>Delta (df)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 2a)</td>
<td>1312.2</td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2b)</td>
<td>134.8</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1177.5</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2c)</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>119.6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance codes: (*** = p<0.001, (**) = p<0.01, and (*) =p<0.05.

**Model 3:** formality (1), gender (2), age (3), apparent sincerity (4)

Model 3a) $1 + 2 + 3 + 4$
Model 3b) $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1:2 + 1:3 + 1:4 + 2:3 + 2:4 + 3:4$
Model 3c) $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1:2 + 1:3 + 1:4 + 2:3 + 2:4 + 3:4 + 1:2:3 + 1:2:4 + 1:3:4 + 2:3:4$

Table 5. Summary of results log-linear model 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Deviance</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Delta (dev)</th>
<th>Delta (df)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 3a)</td>
<td>879.7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3b)</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>794.1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3c)</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance codes: (*** = p<0.001, (**) = p<0.01, and (*) =p<0.05.

**Model 4:** formality (1), gender (2), age (3), additional strategy (4)

Model 4a) $1 + 2 + 3 + 4$
Model 4b) $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1:2 + 1:3 + 1:4 + 2:3 + 2:4 + 3:4$
Model 4c) $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1:2 + 1:3 + 1:4 + 2:3 + 2:4 + 3:4 + 1:2:3 + 1:2:4 + 1:3:4 + 2:3:4$

Table 6. Summary of results log-linear model 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Deviance</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Delta (dev)</th>
<th>Delta (df)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 4a)</td>
<td>228.2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4b)</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>208.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4c)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.008**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.688</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance codes: (*** = p<0.001, (**) = p<0.01, and (*) =p<0.05.
Model 5: formality (1), gender (2), age (3), group size (4), sincerity (5)

Model 5a) $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5$
Model 5b) $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 1:2 + 1:3 + 1:4 + 1:5 + 2:3 + 2:4 + 2:5 + 3:4 + 3:5 + 4:5$
Model 5c) $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 1:2 + 1:3 + 1:4 + 1:5 + 2:3 + 2:4 + 2:5 + 3:4 + 3:5 + 4:5$
Model 5d) $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 1:2 + 1:3 + 1:4 + 1:5 + 2:3 + 2:4 + 2:5 + 3:4 + 3:5 + 4:5$

Table 7. Summary of results log-linear model 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Deviance</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Delta (dev)</th>
<th>Delta (df)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 5a)</td>
<td>$1180.1$</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 5b)</td>
<td>$160.3$</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>$1020.6$</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 5c)</td>
<td>$38.9$</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>$121.4$</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 5d)</td>
<td>$2.3$</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$36.6$</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.035*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated</td>
<td>$0.00$</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$2.3$</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.893</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance codes: (***$p<0.001$, (**$p<0.01$, and (*)$p<0.05$.  

Appendix 6. Composition of the addressee sub-corpus

Table 1. Composition of mixed and single sex multilogues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text-types</th>
<th>No. of texts</th>
<th>No. of speakers</th>
<th>No. of words</th>
<th>No. of utterances</th>
<th>No of apologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All-female multilogue</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>160 011</td>
<td>16 570</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All-male multilogue</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>392 828</td>
<td>29 496</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed sex multilogue</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>1311</td>
<td>3 821 869</td>
<td>412 299</td>
<td>2296</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. *Dyads in addressee sub-corpus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker role</th>
<th>Addressee role</th>
<th>Speaker’s relative power (P)</th>
<th>Social distance (D)</th>
<th>Apologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Intimate</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Intimate</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Intimate</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Intimate</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling</td>
<td>Sibling</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Intimate</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older relative</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Older relative</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childminder</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Childminder</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-in-law</td>
<td>Son/daughter-in-law</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son/daughter-in-law</td>
<td>Parent-in-law</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relatives</td>
<td>Other relatives</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour</td>
<td>Neighbour</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague (informal)</td>
<td>Colleague (informal)</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague</td>
<td>Colleague (professional)</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course participant</td>
<td>Course participant</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting participant</td>
<td>Meeting participant</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Meeting participant</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Participant</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher, tutor, lecturer etc.</td>
<td>Pupil, student, course part.</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil, student, course part.</td>
<td>Teacher, tutor, lecturer, etc.</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>Salesperson</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salesperson</td>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee (historical)</td>
<td>Interviewer (historical)</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer (historical)</td>
<td>Interviewee (historical)</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job interviewer</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td>Job interviewer</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicitor</td>
<td>Client</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client</td>
<td>Solicitor</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV/Radio presenter</td>
<td>Show participant</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show participant</td>
<td>TV/Radio presenter</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified role</td>
<td>Unidentified role</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Great</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2268</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7. Results from Chi-square analyses

Table 1. *Chi-square: gender dyads.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females:males</td>
<td>males:females</td>
<td>Females:males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal dia.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal dia.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal multi.</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal multi.</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. *Chi-square: 0-24-year-olds:25-44-year-olds*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young:mid.aged</td>
<td>mid.aged:young</td>
<td>young:mid.-aged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal dia.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal multi.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal multi.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>202.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. *Chi-square: 0-24-year-olds:45+-year-olds*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>young:old</td>
<td>old:young</td>
<td>young:old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal dia.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal multi.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal multi.</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. *Chi-square: 25-44-year-olds:45+-year-olds*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mid.aged:old</td>
<td>old:mid.aged</td>
<td>mid.aged:old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal dia.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal dia.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal multi.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal multi.</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>142.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. *Chi-square: mixed sex and single sex texts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>observed apologies</th>
<th>expected apologies</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>all-female conversations</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>96.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all-male conversations</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>171.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed gender conversations</td>
<td>2296</td>
<td>2391.77</td>
<td>2.71E-11***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6. Chi-square: spouses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Husbands to wives</th>
<th>Wives to husbands</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>201</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>214.5</td>
<td>214.5</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 7. Chi-square: offence distributions females apologising to males and females in formal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>Females Observed</th>
<th>Females Expected</th>
<th>Males Observed</th>
<th>Males Expected</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.76</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.87</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.87</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17.86</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.77</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.14$ (Unidentified=3)

### Table 8. Chi-square: offence distributions males apologising to males and females in formal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requests</th>
<th>Females Observed</th>
<th>Females Expected</th>
<th>Males Observed</th>
<th>Males Expected</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30.45</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>78.55</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.72</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>48.28</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.06</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25.94</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30.45</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78.55</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.09</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.97</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36.03</td>
<td>50</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.14$ (Unidentified=3)
Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.425$ (Unidentified=6)

Table 9. *Chi-square: offence distributions 0-24-year-olds apologising to various age groups in formal texts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>0-24-year-olds</th>
<th>25-44-year-olds</th>
<th>45+-year-olds</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.46$ (Unidentified=0)

Table 10. *Chi-square: offence distributions 25-44-year-olds apologising to various age groups in formal texts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>0-24-year-olds</th>
<th>25-44-year-olds</th>
<th>45+-year-olds</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20.37</td>
<td>13.87</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.37</td>
<td>13.87</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.04</td>
<td>8.20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17.13</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>7.57</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.29$ (Unidentified=1)
Table 11. Chi-square: offence distributions 45+year-olds apologising to various age groups in formal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>(Formal) 45+-year-olds apologising to:</th>
<th>0-24-year-olds</th>
<th>25-44-year-olds</th>
<th>45+-year-olds</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>O</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.04</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13.56</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.61</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=8.75E-09***$ (Unidentified=6)

Table 12. Chi-square: offence distributions females apologising to males and females in informal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>(Informal) Females apologising to:</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>53.02</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35.67</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38.56</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21.69</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20.73</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21.69</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>198.58</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.01</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>52.06</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.0005***$ (Unidentified=41)
### Table 13. Chi-square: offence distributions males apologising to males and females in informal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>(Informal) Males apologising to:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>45.55</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28.45</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36.94</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.06</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32.01</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19.99</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.62</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.84</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>36.32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22.68</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>187.76</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>117.24</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17.85</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.15</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38.78</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24.22</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>692</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level \( \chi^2 \) test: \( p = 0.17 \) (Unidentified=28)

### Table 14. Chi-square: offence distributions spouses apologising in informal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>Wives apologising to husbands</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21.31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.69</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.84</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23.16</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15.15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.85</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.58</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15.63</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17.37</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>93.29</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>103.71</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.73</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.27</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level \( \chi^2 \) test: \( p = 0.001 \) **(Unidentified=13)**
Table 15. Chi-square: offence distributions 0-24-year-olds apologising to various age groups in informal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>0-24-year-olds</th>
<th>25-44-year-olds</th>
<th>45+-year-olds</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O  E</td>
<td>O  E</td>
<td>O  E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>31 26.27</td>
<td>7 16.13</td>
<td>11 6.60</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>17 15.55</td>
<td>5 9.55</td>
<td>7 3.91</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>16 16.62</td>
<td>13 10.20</td>
<td>2 4.17</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>20 12.33</td>
<td>1 7.57</td>
<td>2 3.10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>7 5.36</td>
<td>2 3.29</td>
<td>1 1.35</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>18 13.94</td>
<td>5 8.56</td>
<td>3 3.50</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>60 84.71</td>
<td>80 52.01</td>
<td>18 21.28</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>4 8.04</td>
<td>6 4.94</td>
<td>5 2.02</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>42 32.17</td>
<td>13 19.75</td>
<td>5 8.08</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=4.5E-08$ *** (Unidentified=21)

Table 16. Chi-square: offence distributions 25-44-year-olds apologising to various age groups in informal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>0-24-year-olds</th>
<th>25-44-year-olds</th>
<th>45+-year-olds</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O  E</td>
<td>O  E</td>
<td>O  E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>22 31.32</td>
<td>39 33.35</td>
<td>18 14.32</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>15 25.37</td>
<td>36 27.02</td>
<td>13 11.60</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>23 25.77</td>
<td>27 27.44</td>
<td>15 11.79</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>15 10.71</td>
<td>5 11.40</td>
<td>7 4.90</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>11 15.07</td>
<td>18 16.04</td>
<td>9 6.89</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>14 18.63</td>
<td>23 19.84</td>
<td>10 8.52</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>150 125.68</td>
<td>120 133.83</td>
<td>47 57.48</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>11 11.50</td>
<td>12 12.24</td>
<td>6 5.26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>32 28.94</td>
<td>32 30.82</td>
<td>9 13.24</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>739</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.007$ ** (Unidentified=26)
Table 17. Chi-square: offence distributions 45+year-olds apologising to various age groups in informal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>0-24-year-olds</th>
<th>25-44-year-olds</th>
<th>45+-year-olds</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p= 0.003$ (Unidentified=22)

Table 18. Chi-square: apparent sincerity females apologising to males and females in formal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p= 0.066$ (Unidentified=2)

Table 19. Chi-square: apparent sincerity males apologising to males and females in formal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>63.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p= 0.41$ (Unidentified=6)
Table 20. Chi-square: apparent sincerity females apologising to males and females in informal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.08</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.92</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42.87</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46.13</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>245.17</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>263.83</td>
<td>509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>160.88</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>173.12</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>955</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.089$ (Unidentified=30)

Table 21. Chi-square: apparent sincerity males apologising to males and females in informal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.55</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.45</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32.64</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20.36</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>246.95</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>154.05</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>134.87</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>84.13</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.41$ (Unidentified=25)

Table 22. Chi-square: apparent sincerity spouses apologising in informal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>Wives apologising to husbands</th>
<th></th>
<th>Husbands apologising to wives</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.89</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.11</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>118.39</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>131.61</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>63.46</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>70.54</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.39$ (Unidentified=13)
Table 23. *Chi-square: apparent sincerity 0-24-year-olds apologising to various age groups in formal texts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.78</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14.05</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.50</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.50</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: p= 0.08 (Unidentified=0)

Table 24. *Chi-square: apparent sincerity 25-44-year-olds apologising to various age groups in formal texts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.97</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29.17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.86</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27.27</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>56.96</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38.78</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: p= 0.1(Unidentified=1)

Table 25. *Chi-square: apparent sincerity 45+-year-olds apologising to various age groups in formal texts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.87</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13.90</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21.12</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47.84</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>56.03</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21.97</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>49.76</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>58.28</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: p= 0.0001*** (Unidentified=5)
### Table 26. Chi-square: apparent sincerity 0-24-year-olds apologising to various age groups in informal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>0-24-year-olds</th>
<th>25-44-year-olds</th>
<th>45+-year-olds</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>217</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level \( \chi^2 \) test: p= 5.95E-06*** (Unidentified=16)

### Table 27. Chi-square: apparent sincerity 25-44-year-olds apologising to various age groups in informal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>0-24-year-olds</th>
<th>25-44-year-olds</th>
<th>45+-year-olds</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>293</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>740</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level \( \chi^2 \) test: p= 0.09 (Unidentified=25)

### Table 28. Chi-square: apparent sincerity 45+-year-olds apologising to various age groups in informal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>0-24-year-olds</th>
<th>25-44-year-olds</th>
<th>45+-year-olds</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level \( \chi^2 \) test: p= 1.37E-05*** (Unidentified=14)
Table 29. *Chi-square: total apology rates in power- asymmetrical dyads*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>p-values</th>
<th>significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent/child</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>8.84E-14</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher/student</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>7.11E-05</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job interviewer/job applicant</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>8.27E-10</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer/employee</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.82E-01</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman/participant</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2.95E-02</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall total</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>418.5</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>418.5</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>4.64E-24</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 30. *Chi-square: offence distributions parents and children apologising in informal texts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents apologising to children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35.09</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.91</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19.86</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.86</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.88</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.12</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.61</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.90</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>179.44</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>91.56</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13.24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.76</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33.11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.89</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>341</strong></td>
<td><strong>341</strong></td>
<td><strong>174</strong></td>
<td><strong>174</strong></td>
<td><strong>515</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.02$ *(Unidentified=17)*
### Table 31. Chi-square: offence distributions teachers and students apologising in formal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>Teachers apologising to students</th>
<th>Students apologising to teachers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.63</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.93</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.63</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34.55</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.28</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>97</strong></td>
<td><strong>97</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.73$ (Unidentified=0)

### Table 32. Chi-square: offence distributions relatively powerful and powerless adults apologising in formal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>Powerful adults apologising to powerless</th>
<th>Powerless adults apologising to powerful</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30.84</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.68</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28.63</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18.35</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>116</strong></td>
<td><strong>116</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.006^{**}$ (Unidentified=1)
Table 33. *Chi-square: Overall offence distributions relatively powerful and powerless participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>Powerful apologising to powerless</th>
<th>Powerful apologising to powerless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>75.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>54.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>70.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>215.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>43.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>554</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.009^{**}$ (Unidentified=18)

Table 34. *Chi-square: Apparent sincerity of apologies produced by parents and children in informal texts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>Parents apologising to children</th>
<th>Children apologising to parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>204.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>104.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.26$ (Unidentified=11)

Table 35. *Chi-square: Apparent sincerity of apologies produced by teachers and students in informal texts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>Teachers apologising to students</th>
<th>Students apologising to teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>53.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.30$ (Unidentified=1)
Table 36. Chi-square: apparent sincerity of apologies produced by powerful and powerless adults in formal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>Powerful adults apologising to powerless</th>
<th>Powerless adults apologising to powerful</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>Observed: 2 / Expected: 1.47</td>
<td>Observed: 0 / Expected: 0.53</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>Observed: 53 / Expected: 55.06</td>
<td>Observed: 22 / Expected: 19.94</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>Observed: 58 / Expected: 55.80</td>
<td>Observed: 18 / Expected: 20.20</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.61$ (Unidentified=1)

Table 37. Chi-square: apparent sincerity of apologies produced by all powerful and all powerless speakers in texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>Powerful apologising to powerless</th>
<th>Powerless apologising to powerful</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>Observed: 42 / Expected: 37.11</td>
<td>Observed: 13 / Expected: 17.89</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>Observed: 312 / Expected: 314.44</td>
<td>Observed: 154 / Expected: 151.56</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>Observed: 195 / Expected: 197.70</td>
<td>Observed: 98 / Expected: 95.30</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Observed: 556 / Expected: 556</td>
<td>Observed: 268 / Expected: 268</td>
<td>824</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=0.53$ (Unidentified=13)

Table 38. Chi-square: offence distributions power-asymmetrical and power-symmetrical dyads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>Powerful&gt;powerless</th>
<th>Powerless&gt;powerful</th>
<th>Equal&gt;equal</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>O: 51 / E: 56.70</td>
<td>O: 29 / E: 27.12</td>
<td>O: 64 / E: 60.18</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>O: 36 / E: 44.89</td>
<td>O: 20 / E: 21.47</td>
<td>O: 58 / E: 47.64</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>O: 15 / E: 25.99</td>
<td>O: 18 / E: 12.43</td>
<td>O: 33 / E: 27.58</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p=4.90E-09$ (Unidentified=40)
Table 39. Chi-square: apparent sincerity of apologies in power-asymmetrical and power-symmetrical dyads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>Powerful&gt;powerless</th>
<th>Powerless&gt;powerful</th>
<th>Equal&gt;equals</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.76</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46.40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>273.67</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>131.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>222.16</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>107.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p = 1.7E-09$ (Unidentified=33)

Table 40. Chi-square: offence distributions dyads of various social distances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offences</th>
<th>Intimates</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Acquaintances</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of consideration</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>63.39</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes and misunderstandings</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44.75</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of expectations</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37.29</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.36</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk offences</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31.90</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social gaffes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27.35</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing offences</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>140.46</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>115.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.43</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach of consensus</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48.06</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>39.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p = 1.1E-23$ (Unidentified=35)

Table 41. Chi-square: offence distributions dyads of various social distances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apparent sincerity</th>
<th>Powerful&gt;powerless</th>
<th>Powerless&gt;powerful</th>
<th>Equal&gt;equals</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35.71</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>200.57</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>164.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently sincere</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>168.60</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>138.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance level $\chi^2$ test: $p = 8.93E-14$ (Unidentified=30)
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