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Barron, Anne

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Offering in Ireland and England[1]

Anne Barron

1. Introduction

Analyses of Irish English have established differences between this regional variety of English and Standard British English on the phonological, syntactic and lexical levels of language (cf. Hickey this volume for an overview).[2] Little is, however, known about possible divergences between these two varieties on the level of polite language use – a situation in keeping with the dearth of cross-cultural pragmatic research into non-standard varieties (cf. Barron 2003: 75, Schneider and Barron this volume). Cross-cultural analyses have, however, shown that languages differ on the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic levels of language use. In addition, it has been revealed that such different usage norms are frequently interpreted as instances of impoliteness by the interactants involved, frequently causing breakdowns in communication, conflict and also the establishment of negative stereotypes.[3] Consequently, in the light of the close economic and social ties between Ireland and England, and indeed given that Ireland is a popular destination for learners of English who have usually been taught Standard British English (cf. Barker and O'Keeffe 1999: 5), the importance of cross-cultural pragmatic research into the English spoken in England and in Ireland is undeniable.

The present paper is an attempt to redress this research gap in cross-cultural pragmatics and in the study of Irish English. The variety of Irish English (IrE) chosen is that spoken in the South-East of Ireland, that of English English (EngE) the variety spoken in the South of England. The article begins with an overview of the nature of offers and their realization. Following this, methodological and coding issues are taken up. Finally the findings are detailed and discussed.

2. Offers

2.1. Defining offers

Searle (1976: 11) categorizes offers as commissives since they commit a speaker to some future course of action x, a categorization followed by Bach and Harnish (1979: 50–51) and Edmondson and House (1981). Other linguists have, however, highlighted what Aijmer (1996: 189) terms the "... fuzzy nature ..." of offers, and have argued for a different classification. Wunderlich (1977: 30), for example, proposes a further class of conditional speech acts to which offers, as also warnings, threats, advices, extortions, negotiations and proposals, belong. These speech acts, he explains, "... interfere with the addressee's planning of actions. The propositional content, which is a conditional, supplies the addressee with a certain cognitive premise that he can use in his practical inferences" (1977: 32). In other words, the execution of an offer is always conditional on the reaction of the hearer in which s/he indicates in some way whether s/he wishes the speaker to carry out the deed in question or not. Despite not always being realized using a conditional, Wunderlich (1977: 43) argues that offers have the standard form: "If you want it, I shall do *a*" [original emphasis]. For example, the offer *Do you want a sandwich?* can be said to have the standard form, *If you want a sandwich, I shall make you one.* Indeed, Leech (1983: 219) also uses the feature conditional/unconditional as one of a number of criteria to describe a variety of speech acts. According to his analysis, offers, like requests, are conditional speech acts, as "... *s* intends that the event will not take place unless *h* indicates agreement or compliance ..." [original emphasis].

Hancher (1979: 6) goes further than either Leech or Wunderlich in stressing the importance of the involvement of the hearer as well as the speaker in realizations of offers. He criticizes Searle's taxonomy for neglecting this issue and argues that offers should not be classified as commissives because they not only require the speaker to honour his/her commitment vis-à-vis the hearer (Searle's commissives), but also involve the speaker's attempt to persuade the hearer to accept the offer in question whether in a more or less obvious manner. In other words, in offering, the speaker attempts to get the hearer to declare him/herself able and willing to engage in the proposed action (Searle's directives). As such, offers represent "... hybrid speech acts that combine directive with commissive illocutionary force" (Hancher 1979: 6). As both illocutions are believed to carry

equal force, Hancher proposes adding a further category to Searle's taxonomy, which he terms *Commissive Directives*. On the other hand, Wierzbicka (1987: 192), while agreeing that offers may be of a directive nature, believes that they are not necessarily so. She writes: "It is true that *offering* is often combined with attempts to influence the addressee's behaviour, but it doesn't have to be" [original emphasis].

Turning to the face-threatening features of offers, it is clear that offers, given their part-directive nature, are similar to requests in that they threaten the hearer's negative face (Brown and Levinson 1987: 66). They do so by the speaker exerting pressure on the hearer to react to, and in some cases to accept, the offer. The speaker's offer, although beneficial to the hearer, impinges on the hearer's privacy, lessens his/her freedom and also encourages him/her to engage in an action that may place him/her under the speaker's debt although this danger to H's face is relatively small since the action is in the interest of the hearer (Brown and Levinson 1987: 69). At the same time, the speaker's positive face is threatened because s/he is committing him/herself to a future action, which may not be accepted by the hearer. If it is not accepted, the offerer's positive face is damaged – however, the degree of face threat in this case is not as great as in the case of requests since, as Wierzbicka (1987: 96) points out, the "... (assumed) conditional nature of the first speaker's wish makes it possible for the second speaker to respond negatively without hurting the other person's feelings." Unlike requests, the speaker's negative face is also threatened in offering. This potential threat is associated with the commissive nature of offers – and in particular with the possibility that the speaker will have to carry out the relevant deed, and thus restrict his/her freedom of action, should the hearer accept the particular offer in question. On the other hand, by offering, the speaker builds up the hearer's positive face by indicating that s/he is positively disposed to the hearer. Such aspects of face have, of course, an effect on the realization of offers. While on the one hand, building up positive face may point to a preference for directness (Kasper 1981: 141), the threats to the speaker's and hearer's particular face wants may lead the speaker to mitigate the force of the illocution by realizing it in an indirect manner (cf. Searle 1975: 80). Indeed, as Searle (1975: 80), speaking on indirection, suggests, "... the richest mine for examples other than directives is provided by commissives ..." (cf. also Edmondson 1981: 30; Kasper 1981: 141).

2.2. Offer types and strategies

Offers of assistance, hospitable offers and gift offers represent the most common types of offers. The present study deals with the former two types, although the focus is on offers of assistance. In both hospitable offers and offers of assistance, two offers can be identified, namely initiative offers and also reoffers. Schneider (2000: 295), writing from a discourse-analytical perspective, defines initiative offers as "… the first move in each offer sequence".[4] Reoffers (Schneider's *offer renewals*), on the other hand, can be described as further attempts on the part of the speaker to reiterate a particular initiative offer within one offer sequence. Two types of reoffers are distinguished, namely ritual and substantive reoffers, although ritual reoffers do not occur in every culture (cf. Section 2.3.). The difference between these types of reoffers appears to lie in the interaction between the reoffer and the preceding initiative offer. Where ritual reoffers occur, the sincerity condition is not fulfilled in the initiative offer since this is the function of the ritual reoffer – as such, illocutionary intent is communicated in the initiative offer, but it is not until the ritual reoffer that the felicity conditions for offers have been met and the offer competently realized. This discourse convention to realize reoffers has also been termed pressing (cf. Schneider 2000: 295).

The linguistic form of offer realizations reflects their colourful nature. While ritual reoffers, given their frequent occurrence when employed in a particular culture, are commonly realized via a small range of pragmatic routines (cf. Barron 2003: 169–173; Coulmas 1981), the range of initiative offer realizations is much broader. Aijmer (1996: 189), in an analysis of offers in the London-Lund corpus, finds, for example, that a large variety of commissive and directive strategies are used to realize offers – a result in her view of the "fuzzy nature" of offers.[5] Also, Schneider (2003: 183–185), building on Schneider (1980), identifies three main types of strategies for realizing initiative hospitable offers. Preference questions, such as *Would you like some scotch?*, Schneider writes, point to the conditional nature of offers. They have the underlying pattern AUX *you* V NP?, with the auxiliary realized via *would* and *do* and the verb via *like, fancy, want, feel like.* Execution questions, such as *Can I get you a drink?*, on the other hand, underline the commissive nature of offers and have the underlying pattern AUX I V *you* NP?, with *may, could* and *can* being the auxiliaries employed and *offer* and *get* the verbs used. Finally, offers of an imperative form, such as *Have a drink*, reflect the directive character of offers.

The strategies identified by Schneider (2003) and Aijmer (1996) include both direct offers, where "… the speaker says what he means …" (Searle, Kiefer, and Bierwisch 1980: viii) and where the literal meaning conveys the illocutionary force (e.g., *Have a drink.*), and also conventionally indirect offers, although the greater part of the realizations are of the latter type. These conventionally indirect realizations (e.g., *Would you like me to help you?, I can help*, …) are characterized by pragmatic duality since, as well as having the force of an offer (indirect speech act), such utterances also encompass a literal interpretation, i.e., in the first example a direct question concerning the hearer's desire to be helped. This characteristic makes conventionally indirect speech acts negotiable – i.e., the hearer may choose to ignore or the speaker may choose to deny the indirect speech act and instead choose an interpretation on the literal level (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989: 41–45 on indirect requests). As far as the interpretation of conventionally indirect offers is concerned, the hearer interprets illocutionary force based both on the literal meaning involved and the pragmalinguistic conventions employed. Such pragmalinguistic conventions exist for the realization strategy (conventions of means) and for the specific linguistic forms employed in the realization of a particular strategy (conventions of form) (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989: 41–45).[6] The conventions of means of many conventionally indirect strategies concern the felicity conditions of the act in question – e.g., reference to the preparatory condition of an offer that the hearer wants the speaker to perform a future act x (commissive nature of offers). Also, the predication of a future act relates to the propositional content condition.[7] In addition, Blum-Kulka (1989: 56), writing on requests, argues that formulaic suggestions also fulfil the criteria outlined for conventional indirectness.

2.3. Offers across cultures

In the past two decades, much empirical research has been devoted to the investigation of the extent to which speech acts and also the strategies and linguistic means available for realizing speech acts are universal. Searle (1969), for example, claimed that because the strategies employed in each language to perform indirect speech acts are based on universal felicity conditions, these strategies are also universal. Also, Fraser and Nolen (1981) went so far as to suggest that not only are realization strategies for

requests the same across languages, but also the ranking of the deference level of these strategies.

Empirical research findings on a number of speech acts in various languages have, however, relativized these claims of universality. Such empirical research on offers is rather limited to date for English and for other languages, and empirical cross-cultural analyses focusing on offers alone are more or less non-existent except for an analysis of offers by Fukushima and Iwata (1987) into (U.S.) English and Japanese offers. There exist no studies focusing on offers in varieties of English. Nevertheless, the findings which do exist on offers complimented with those gained from the analysis of other speech acts in different languages provide some light on the matter of universality. What has emerged, namely, are a number of areas which appear to be universal. Such areas include the existence of inference and of indirect speech act realizations (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989, 1991: 255), the use of pragmatic routines (cf. Coulmas 1981), the ability to vary linguistic realizations based on the contextual constellation of a given situation (cf. Blum-Kulka 1991), a sensitivity for the importance of contextual variables (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987), the basic speech act categories (cf. Kasper and Schmidt 1996: 154), external and internal modification (cf. Blum-Kulka 1991: 261) and also the broad range of realization strategies for speech acts (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989; Kasper 1992: 211; Olshtain 1989). The category of conventional indirectness has also been claimed to have universal status (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989: 46–47).

On the other hand, areas of cross-cultural variation have also been established. Specific contextual factors have been found to differ in weighting across cultures – degree of closeness was shown, for instance, to have a larger influence on offer realizations in Japanese than in American English (cf. Fukushima and Iwata 1987). Of particular interest to the present study is that pragmalinguistic conventions have been found to differ across cultures. Although Blum-Kulka (1989), within the framework of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), found that the basic features of the category of conventional directness in requests (conventions of means) were similar, Wierzbicka (1985), using non-empirical, intuitive data, noted otherwise. She observed that whereas an ability question is a conventionalized request in English, it is not in Polish. Likewise, a conventionalized offer in English of the form *Would you like x?* carries the force of a question rather than an offer in Polish (cf. Wierzbicka 1985: 148). This finding disconfirms Searle's (1975) belief that the precise strategies for indirect speech acts can be specified on the basis of the felicity

conditions. Le Pair (1999) finds requests by Spanish native speakers and Dutch learners of Spanish to vary on the level of both conventions of means and indeed also form – a finding he attributes to transfer (albeit in the absence of Dutch data). Further cross-cultural variation on the level of conventions of form has been identified by Blum-Kulka (1989), for example, who, using questionnaire data, finds realizations of requesting strategies to vary across Australian English, Canadian French, Hebrew and Argentinean Spanish.

Offer sequences also reveal differences across cultures. In particular, ritual reoffers and ritual refusals, although not present in all cultures, play an important role in what constitutes polite behaviour in many speech communities. Barron (2000, 2003: 154–167) reports, for example, that whereas ritual reoffers are common in the Irish culture, they do not exist in German language use. In her analysis of the development of pragmatic competence of a group of Irish learners of German over a study-abroad period spent in the target speech community, Germany, she shows that misunderstandings may result when speakers of speech communities without ritual offers meet speakers used to ritually reoffering. Other groups of speakers, besides the Irish, who engage in ritual reoffering include the Chinese (cf. Chen, Ye, and Zhang 1995; Günthner 1988: 29–30, 1994: 482; Liao 1994: 142–148; Zhu, Li, and Qian 1999), speakers of Iranian Persian (Koutlaki 2002) and speakers in the Arab world (cf. Rubin 1983: 14).[8]

3.   Methodology

3.1.   Elicitation

The instrument employed to elicit native speaker offers in the present study was a production questionnaire. Production questionnaires have been used extensively in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics as a means of eliciting speech act realizations since the classic version of this questionnaire, the discourse completion task (DCT), was employed in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) to investigate both native and non-native realizations of requests and apologies for different social contexts across various languages and cultures (cf. Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989a).[9] The version of the production questionnaire employed in the present study was the free discourse completion task (FDCT), developed in Barron (2003) to elicit sequential aspects of offers and refusals of

offers. This research instrument essentially requires respondents to imagine themselves in a series of situations and to write both sides of an open role-play or dialogue for each situation (cf. appendix for an example). For each item, the initial situation is described and each participant's communicative goal explicitly stated; in the latter case, the actual speech act to be elicited is openly stated. The inclusion of a short description of the scene before each interaction enables the general circumstances and also the relevant situational parameters to be set. On the questionnaire, respondents are specifically instructed to write as much as they feel is necessary for each situation, an instruction which also makes the analysis of interactional structure possible. Table 1 provides an overview of the five situations under discussion in the present study. The situations represent a number of constellations of social distance and social dominance. Imposition also ranges from a high obligation to offer in the accident situation to a low obligation in the bag and, most particularly, in the work experience situation.

Table 1. Situational descriptions

Situation	Synopsis of Situation
Accident (Accid)	Following being knocked off your bike by a car driven by a priest, you refuse the priest's offer to bring you to hospital.
Work experience (Work)	You offer to help new boss's son with economics at school. Boss refuses help.
Maths	You offer friend help in maths before an exam. Friend refuses help.
Beverage (Bev)	Uncle in area. He calls by. You offer him refreshments. Uncle refuses.
Bag	You offer stranger of same age help carrying suitcases in airport. Stranger refuses help.

The FDCT offered many advantages for the particular analysis at hand, that of offering across cultures. Firstly, the sequential nature of speech act realizations can be investigated at ease in a comparative manner since the interactions elicited are relatively complex, involving a significant degree of inner negotiation. Ease of elicitation of comparable speech act realizations from large samples of informants quickly and efficiently and across cultures is also an important advantage, as is also ease of variability of contextual variables, such as social distance and social dominance, important constraints in determining the degree of politeness chosen in a par-

ticular utterance. In addition, the FDCT enables elicitation of stereotypical interactions in the mind of the respondents and, as such, portrays the socially accepted use of language in a particular culture. On the negative side, it is clear that although informants interact with an imaginary interlocutor in the FDCT until an appropriate compromise is found, the consequences of inappropriate language use are not as serious as in real life communication. Also, the subject is forced to play the part of a person other than him/herself for one participant in the dialogue – suggesting possibly unreliable responses (cf. Rose 1992: 57; Wolfson, Marmor, and Jones 1989: 181).

3.2. Informants

Production data was elicited from twenty-seven females in a school in the South-East of Ireland and from twenty-five females in a school in Southern England.[10] The average age of both groups was 17 years. The group sizes were established on the basis of a recommendation by Kasper and Dahl (1991: 226) who found that responses of homogeneous groups elicited using a production questionnaire, the primary instrument employed in the present study, tend to concentrate around a few subcategories, thus rendering larger samples unnecessary. The concentration on females only was considered important given gender differences established in language use (cf., e.g., Fukushima 1990: 541 on gender differences in the choice of offer strategy in English). In addition, the informants were broadly homogeneous, given similarity of age, general level of education and personal concerns. Importantly for the present research project, the informants were not influenced to any large degree by other cultures (via, e.g., parents whose first language was other than the particular variety under inspection, or via extended periods spent in different speech communities).

4. Findings

The present analysis of offers in IrE and EngE focuses on the interactional structure of offer sequences, on the offer strategies employed to realize both initiative offers and reoffers (conventions of means, conventions of form) and also on external modification used in offering. Let us turn first to the analysis of offer sequences.

4.1. Offer sequences

Figure 1 reveals that offers may be realized over a number of turns in Irish English and English English, and Table 2 shows that more than one attempt was made in each situation in both the Irish and English data to persuade the hearer to accept the offer in question. The only differences of any statistical significance between Irish and English language use here are those found in the work experience situation (p=0.012, chi-square analysis). In this situation, the Irish informants demonstrate a clear tendency to realize their offer in one turn (84.6%) whereas the English informants use a relatively high number of reoffers (48% in total). Overall, it seems, therefore, that reoffers are just as much a part of the English culture as the Irish culture, but that the Irish informants see reoffering as face-threatening in situations where the obligation to offer is very low and the social distance high.
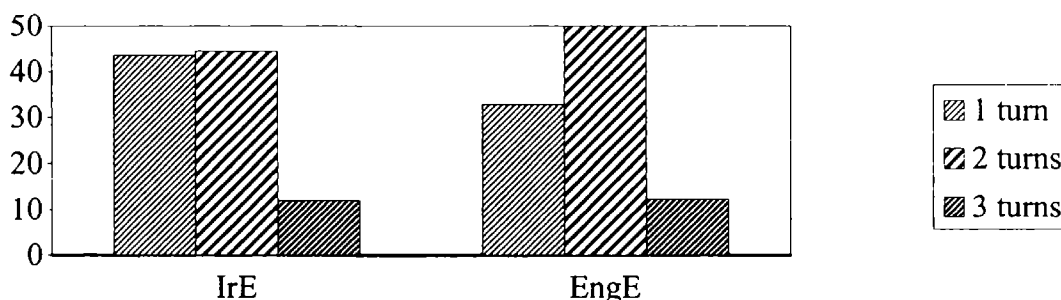
Figure 1. Number of turns employed to realize offers in IrE and EngE (All figures expressed in percentages.)

Table 2. Number of turns employed to realize offers in IrE and EngE (All figures expressed in percentages.)

	Accid IrE	Accid EngE	Work IrE	Work EngE	Math IrE	Math EngE	Bev IrE	Bev EngE	Bag IrE	Bag EngE
1 turn	38.5	16.0	84.6	52.0	44.4	30.4	29.6	57.9	22.2	20.8
2 turns	38.5	56.0	15.4	44.0	44.4	52.2	66.7	36.8	55.6	70.8
3 turns	23.1	28.0	-	4.0	11.1	17.4	3.7	5.3	22.2	8.3

Table 3. Irish English and English English first reoffer by situation (All figures expressed in percentages.)

	Accid IrE	Accid EngE	Work IrE	Work EngE	Maths IrE	Maths EngE	Bev IrE	Bev EngE	Bag IrE	Bag EngE
Ad hoc	56.3	61.9	-	42.9	53.3	68.8	47.4	25.0	33.3	26.3
Routine	43.8	38.0	100.0	57.1	46.7	31.3	52.7	75.0	66.7	73.7

An analysis of the form which the first reoffer takes in the Irish and English data (cf. Table 3) reveals that the reoffers employed in both cultures are to a large extent ritual since they are realized via pragmatic routines, such as *are you sure?*, *if you're sure?* and *(are you) positive?*; a fact which in itself reveals the recurrent nature of these reoffers. Hence, it may be suggested that the difficulties experienced by the Irish learners in Barron (2003) in reoffering in German, difficulties which stemmed from transfer of ritual reoffering from Irish English into German, a language which does not have substantive reoffers, may also be relevant to English learners of German (cf. also Section 2.3.). No significant differences were found in the linguistic realizations of the first reoffer.

4.2. Initiative offer strategies

A study of initiative offer strategies first necessitated isolation of the head act strategies, i.e., isolation of the minimal unit which can realize a particular speech act (cf. Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989b: 275). The particular offer strategy (conventions of means for conventionally indirect strategies) chosen and also the particular form (conventions of form) used in the realization of these strategies were then analysed. On the level of the strategy, it was necessary to differentiate between superstrategies and strategies. The superstrategies were those strategies identified by Schneider (2003) and included a preference strategy which underlined the conditional nature of offers, an execution strategy which highlighted the commissive nature of the offer at hand, and finally a directive strategy (Schneider's 2003 imperative [renamed to avoid confusion on the level of form]). The strategies underlying each superstrategy were developed based on the realizations found in the data at hand, and an overview of those strategies employed in offering in the English and Irish data is provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Initiative offer superstrategies, strategies and linguistic realizations

	Conventionalized Pattern	Examples		IrE	EngE
Preference strategies					
Question future act of hearer	*Will you V NP?*	IrE23F, bev:	*... Will you have a cup of tea ...*	+	-
	You'll V NP?	IrE5F, bev:	*You'll have a cup of tea?*	+	-
	Are you sure you won't VP?	EngE15F, bev:	*are you sure you won't stay for a cup of tea?*	+	+
	Won't you VP?	IrE26F, bev:	*... won't you come in and have some tea?*	+	
	Would you V NP?	IrE22F, bev:	*Would you stay for some tea?*	+	-
Question desire	*(Do/did) you want/ fancy NP?*	EngE28F, bev:	*Did you want a cup of tea? ...*	+	+
		EngE35F, bag:	*You want a hand?*		
	Do/did you want me VP?	EngE9F, work:	*... Do you want me to help your son?*		
	Are you sure you don't want NP/ VP?	IrE23F, accid:	*Are you sure you don't want to go to the hospital*	+	+
	NP?	EngE29F, bev:	*... Cup of tea?*	-	+
Question need	*Do you need NP?*	IrE23F, bag:	*Do you need a hand with that luggage?*	+	+
State need	*You look like you could VP.*	IrE12F, bag:	*Hi, you look like you could do with some help.*	+	-
Suggestory formula	*How about NP?*	EngE14F, bev::	*... how about a cup of tea anyway.*	-	+
Question wish	*Would you like/fancy NP? Would you like me to VP?*	EngE2F, bev: EngE12F, maths:	*...would you like a cup of tea? Would you like me to help you*	+	+

Execution strategies

Request permission	*Let me V you*	EngE21F, bag: *Oh, let me help you with that*	-	+
State future act of speaker	*I will V you*	EngE13F, maths: *I'll help you.*	+	+
Question future act of speaker	*Will I VP?*	IrE22F, acid: *... Will I take you to the hospital?*	+	-
State ability	*I can VP*	EngE24F, work: *... I can help ...*	+	+
	I could VP	EngE33F, work: *... I could offer some help ...*	+	+
Question ability	*Can I V (you) (NP)?*	EngE19F, accid: *... can I give you a lift to the hospital?*	+	+
State wish	*I would like VP*	IrE8F, accid: *I would like to drive you to the hospital.*	+	-
	I would love VP	EngE19F, work: *... and I would love to help him.*	+	+
State speaker's obligation	*I better VP*	IrE18F, accid: *I better drive you to the hospital ...*	+	-
	I should VP	EngE14F, accid: *... I should take you to see a doctor.*	+	+
State willingness	*I'd be happy VP*	IrE26F, work: *I'd be happy to help*	+	-
	I'd be willing VP	IrE4F, work: *I'd be willing to give him grinds.*	+	-
	I wouldn't mind VP	IrE20F, work: *I wouldn't mind helping ...*	+	-

Directive strategies

Imperative	*V NP*	IrE18F, bev: *... come in and have a cuppa ...*	+	-
State permission	*You can VP*	EngE27F, bev: *you can come in any way ...*	+	+

An example of the coding of the following offer elicited from the present Irish English data for the bag situation serves to illustrate the scheme:

(1)   Bag, IrE4F: ... would you like me to help you with them, you seem weighed down.

   Head act strategy: *would you like me to help you with them* = preference (superstrategy) (strategy = question wish); External modification: *you seem weighed down* = grounder

The range of strategies for both the preference and execution superstrategies is quite broad, as seen in Table 4, while the directive category only includes two strategies, an imperative and a state permission strategy.

The only direct offer which occurs in the present data is a directive imperative V NP, as in *have a cup of tea*. All other strategies can be classified as conventionally indirect in nature, given their duality, negotiability and conventionalization on the level of means and form (cf. Section 2.2. above). The conventions of means involved in these preference, execution and directive strategies relate to predication, ability, desire, need, wish, permission, obligation and willingness. Suggestory formulae are also found (cf. Table 5).

4.2.1. Similarities in IrE and EngE offer strategies

Table 6 reveals that both preference and execution strategies are employed to a large extent in both of the data sets, with directive strategies being used to a lesser degree. This overall picture is rather harmonious as far as the distribution among the Irish and English informants is concerned, no statistically significant differences being found. The analysis of the use of superstrategies employed by situation also reveals a rather uniform picture across the Irish and English data, any differences existing in the data from these cultures not of statistical significance. Execution strategies are clearly preferred by both groups in the accident and work experience situations, and by the Irish informants in the maths situation, while preference strategies characterize the bag and most particularly the beverage situation. In addition, directive strategies are only employed to any extent in the beverage situation in both data sets. This may be explained by the lack of social distance between the interactants and a high obligation to offer in this situation.

Moving from the analysis of superstrategies to that of the strategies employed (also Table 6), we see that the number of strategies employed by each culture is similar in each situation. It is also clear that both the Irish and English informants reveal an overall preference for both the state ability strategy and the question wish strategy, the Irish employing a state ability in 24.8% of all initiative offers, the English in 25.9% of all such offers. Similarly, the Irish informants employed a question wish strategy in 25.6% of all initiative offers, the English informants in 23.3% of all such offers. As far as the individual situations are concerned, the frequently employed state ability strategy is employed by both Irish and English speakers in every situation except in the beverage situation. This trend may relate to the nature of the offer at hand. Unlike the four other situations in which the offerer offers to do something which the offeree him/herself is not able to do very well (economics, maths, carry bags, drive to hospital), that which is offered in the beverage situation is not related to an ability which the other does not have. On the other hand, the question wish strategy is used in all situations in both data sets, its frequency of use albeit varying somewhat by situation.

4.2.2. Variation in IrE and EngE offer strategies

Despite the general similarities in the choice of initiative head act superstrategy in the Irish and English data, and despite some similarities in the most frequently employed strategies, noteworthy differences are also to be found between the two data sets on the level of the strategy, particularly concerning the chosen conventions of means.

Turning to Table 5, we see that there are statistically significant cross-cultural differences in the use of the convention of means, predication of a future act. The Irish employ this convention overall significantly more often than their English counterparts (IrE: 33.8% vs. EngE: 4.3%, p=0.009, independent t-test). Differences in use are seen here also. Indeed, on the level of the individual strategies of this convention of means (i.e., question future act of hearer, state future act of speaker, question future act of speaker), we see that the English informants do not employ the execution strategy "question future act of speaker" (e.g., *Will I* VP?) in any situation (cf. Table 6). Irish use of this strategy is confined to the accident situation, where the obligation to offer is high. As regards the strategy "stating the speaker's future act" (e.g., *I will* VP), this is employed by both English and

Irish informants in the accident and maths situations, and in the Irish data in the beverage situation also. The preference strategy "question future act of hearer" is only seen in both data sets in the beverage situation. This distribution over situations where the obligation to offer is relatively high reflects the fact that this is also a forceful convention.

Further differences on the level of the strategy chosen are seen in the Irish informants' significantly higher use of direct offers (IrE: 3.8% vs. EngE: 0%, p=0.023, independent t-test). Use of this strategy is, however, confined to the beverage situation in the Irish data. It is notable here that many of these rather direct strategies used in the Irish data were employed in the beverage situation. Indeed, this was the only situation in which the distribution of strategies in the English and Irish data proved statistically different (p=0.015, chi-square analysis). Not only was this the only situation in which direct offers were employed, but significantly more of the preference predication strategy "question future act of the hearer" was employed (IrE: 25.9% vs. EngE: 10.5%) (cf. Table 6).

However, it is not only the Irish informants who reveal particular preferences on the level of conventions of means. The English informants prefer desire (strategy: "question desire") as a convention of means to a significantly higher degree than the Irish informants (IrE: 6% vs. EngE: 19%, p=0.023, independent t-test) (cf. Table 5). This difference relates to four of the five situations (exception: accident situation, where levels in both data sets are low) but it is particularly obvious in the beverage (IrE: 7.4% vs. EngE: 46.4%) and maths situations (IrE: 11.1% vs. EngE: 26.1%).

Finally, a permission convention of means (strategies: "request permission", "state permission") is found to be significantly more preferred among the English informants (IrE: 0.8% vs. EngE: 9.5%, p=0.017, independent t-test). Indeed, the rather direct "request permission" strategy (*let me* VP) is not used at all in the Irish data, but it represents 7.8% of all strategies in the English data, occurring in a number of situations.

Finally, not a statistically significant difference over all situations, but statistically significant in the work experience situation is the use of the willingness strategy (p=0.048, chi-square analysis). This strategy is employed by 23.1% of Irish informants in this situation compared to 4% of the English informants. This shows a preference in the Irish data for a low directive force in this situation.

Table 5. IrE and EngE initiative offer conventions of means by situation (all figures expressed in percentages)

	Accid IrE	Accid EngE	Work IrE	Work EngE	Maths IrE	Maths EngE	Bev IrE	Bev EngE	Bag IrE	Bag EngE	TOTAL IrE	TOTAL EngE
predication	26.9	12.0	-	-	14.8	4.3	33.3	10.5	-	-	33.8	4.3
ability	42.2	40.0	42.2	64.0	51.8	34.8	-	-	33.3	16.7	33.8	32.8
desire	3.8	4.0	-	8.0	11.1	26.1	7.4	46.4	7.4	16.7	6.0	19.0
need	-	-	3.8	-	-	4.3	-	-	18.5	20.8	4.5	5.2
suggestory formula	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.3	-	-	-	1.7
wish	15.3	24.0	30.8	24.0	14.8	17.4	40.7	26.3	40.7	33.3	28.6	25.0
permission	-	16.0	-	-	3.7	8.7	-	10.5	-	12.5	0.8	9.5
obligation	11.5	4.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.3	0.9
willingness	-	-	23.1	4.0	3.7	4.3	-	-	-	-	5.3	1.7
direct offers (not conventional)	-	-	-	-	-	-	18.5	-	-	-	3.8	-

Table 6. IrE and EngE initiative offer superstrategies and strategies by situation (all figures expressed in percentages)

	Accid IrE	Accid EngE	Work IrE	Work EngE	Maths IrE	Maths EngE	Bev IrE	Bev EngE	Bag IrE	Bag EngE	TOTAL IrE	TOTAL EngE
Preference strategies												
Question future act of hearer	-	-	-	-	-	-	25.9	10.5	-	-	5.3	1.7
Question desire	3.8	4.0	3.8	8.0	11.1	26.1	7.4	46.4	7.4	16.7	6.0	19.0
Question need	-	-	-	-	-	4.3	-	-	11.1	20.8	3.0	5.2
State need	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.4	-	1.5	-
Suggestory formula	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.3	-	-	-	1.7
Question wish	11.5	20.0	23.1	20.0	11.1	17.4	40.7	26.3	40.7	33.3	25.6	23.3
TOTAL	15.3	24.0	26.9	28.0	22.2	47.8	74.0	88.5	66.6	70.8	41.4	50.9
Execution strategies												
Request permission	-	16.0	-	-	-	8.7	-	-	-	12.5	-	7.8
State future act of speaker	19.2	12.0	-	-	14.8	4.3	7.4	-	-	-	8.3	2.6
Question future act of speaker	7.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.5	-
State ability	30.7	32.0	38.4	52.0	48.1	34.8	-	-	7.4	4.2	24.8	25.9
Question ability	11.5	8.0	3.8	12.0	3.7	-	-	-	25.9	12.5	9.0	6.9
State wish	3.8	4.0	7.7	4.0	3.7	-	-	-	-	-	3.0	1.7

State speaker obligation	11.5	4.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.3	0.9
State willingness	-	-	23.1	4.0	3.7	4.3	-	-	-	5.3	1.7
TOTAL	84.4	76.0	73.0	72.0	74.0	52.1	7.4	33.3	29.2	54.2	47.5
Directive strategies											
Imperative	-	-	-	-	-	-	18.5	-	-	3.8	-
State permission	-	-	-	-	3.7	10.5	-	-	-	0.8	1.7
TOTAL	-	-	-	-	3.7	10.5	18.5	-	-	4.6	1.7

4.2.3. *Variation in IrE and EngE realizations of offer strategies*

Table 4 above provides interesting material on the linguistic realizations of the strategies employed in the data sets. On the one hand, realizations of strategies employed by one group and not the other (cf. Section 4.2.2. above) are, of course, unique to that particular data set in which the strategy occurred. Such is, for example, the case with the "request permission" strategy realized using the formula *Let me* V *you* which is found in the English data only.[11] Similarly, the predication strategy "question future act of speaker" is present in the Irish but not in the English data, as is also the realization of this strategy, *Will I* VP? Indeed, previous researchers have highlighted a tendency in Irish English to use the auxiliary *will* in the first person singular as a marker of prediction without necessarily implying volition. According to guides to Standard British English, *shall* should be used in such contexts (although it does not appear in either of the present data sets), as *will* in the first person singular in Standard British English is said to indicate volition (i.e., that the act will be carried out) rather than simple predication, as, e.g., in the utterance *Will I get any training?* (cf. Harris 1993: 158; Trudgill and Hannah 2002: 102).

There are other cases where a particular convention of means and strategy is present in both data sets but the conventions of form used to realize it differ (cf. Table 4). The predication strategy "question future act of hearer" occurs, for example, in both the Irish and English data in the beverage situation. However, patterns, such as *Will you* VP?, *You'll have* NP? and *Are you sure you won't have* VP? are employed in the Irish data, whereas only the latter form is used in the English data along with the pattern *Would you* VP?, not used in the Irish data. The state obligation strategy is also only realized in the English data via *I should* VP. The Irish also use *I better* VP. As for the state wish strategy, this is employed in both data sets also. Here too, however, differences are seen in the conventions of form. The form *I would like to* VP is used in the Irish data, for example, but not in the English data. Both the English and Irish informants use the form *I'd love to* VP. The range of realizations of the state willingness strategy is also broader in the Irish data. Here formulae, such as *I'd be happy to* VP, *I'd be willing to* VP and *I wouldn't mind* (VP) do not occur in the English data. Further research and more data is, however, required in order to establish whether the overall more limited range of realizations of particular conventions of form found to be used by the English English speakers are statistically significant relative to the Irish data, or whether they are perhaps the

result of chance or indeed related to sociopragmatic differences. It may indeed be that these differences point to a very conventionalized use of a small number of realizations in English English and, thus, to a very limited use of other possible realizations.

4.3. External modification

Aijmer (1996: 191) lists two main types of external modification found in offers – namely conditionals, such as *if you can/if you wish/if you want*, and also grounders. These two types of external modification also dominate both the Irish and English data though differences are found across cultures in the distribution of these strategies and also in the linguistic form which the explicit conditionals are found to take.

4.3.1. Explicit conditionals in IrE and EngE

Explicit conditionals are phrases which, according to Aijmer (1996: 191), accompany an offer when it is clear that the action is of benefit to the hearer. However, offers are arguably always of benefit to the hearer. More important is the fact that this modification represents a negative politeness strategy – by communicating that the speaker does not expect the hearer to except the offer unless s/he wants to, the speaker gives the hearer "a real 'out'" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 72). In other words, the force of a particular offer is mitigated by underlining its conditional nature. Such mitigation is found in both the Irish and English data (cf. Table 7). The figures presented here are calculated on the basis of those utterances where such a strategy is possible – i.e., they only take explicit conditionals occurring or not occurring in execution strategies into account since preference strategies (e.g., *Would you like* NP?) already include explicit reference to the conditional nature of offers and so never include explicit conditionals. Likewise, directive strategies are not suited to an explicit conditional. Of the possible execution strategies, only the state ability and the state willingness can include such mitigation. For this reason, the analysis does not concentrate on the beverage or the bag situation (cf. Table 6 above).

Table 7. Explicit conditionals in IrE and EngE initiative offers by situation (all figures expressed in percentages)

	Accid	Work	Maths	TOTAL
IrE	21.4	79.0	90.5	68.5
EngE	16.7	42.9	77.8	42.9

The difference in use of these explicit conditionals over the three situations at hand in the Irish and English data is statistically significant (p=0.02, independent t-test), with the Irish informants employing more mitigating explicit conditionals overall. Hence, even when a speaker-oriented execution strategy is employed, there appears to be a stronger tendency in the Irish data to employ this negative politeness strategy in the offer and so decrease the degree of imposition on the hearer and downgrade the force of the offer. The higher use of this strategy in the Irish data is particularly prominent in the work experience situation, a situation which when analysed alone also yields statistically significant differences (p=0.033, chi-square analysis).

Statistically significant differences between the Irish and English data were also found to exist here on the level of conventions of form (p=0.000, independent t-test). A closer analysis reveals that these differences primarily concern the realization *if you like*. This form, as seen in Table 8, is used frequently by the Irish informants but not at all by the English informants. Indeed, taking the situations separately, the differences in the use of *if you like* were also found to be statistically significant in the two cultures in the maths and work experience situations (maths: p=0.014, work experience: p=0.012, chi-square analysis) but not in the accident situation due to a low number of conditionals. The realization *if you like* is not noted by Aijmer (1996: 191) in her discussion of this mitigation strategy. Indeed the lower use of *if you want* among the Irish informants is reminiscent of their low use of desire (realized, e.g., via *Do you want* NP?) as a convention of means in the initiative offer which was recorded in Section 4.2.2. The preference for *like* would also seem to point to a higher level of indirectness in the Irish data as underlying the form *if you like* is the conditional *if you would like me to*. This hypothesis, however, demands further investigation.

Table 8. Linguistic realizations of explicit conditionals in IrE and EngE initiative offers by situation (all figures expressed in percentages)

	Work IrE	Work EngE	Maths IrE	Maths EngE	TOTAL IrE	TOTAL EngE
if you like	60.0	-	52.6	-	55.9	-
if you want	20.0	50.0	42.1	100.0	32.3	76.9
if you need	6.7	-	-	-	2.9	-
Situational (*if he wants/needs, if you're hurt/...*)	13.3	50.0	5.3	-	8.8	23.1

Table 9. Use of grounders in IrE and EngE initiative offers by situation (all figures expressed in percentages)

	Accid IrE	Accid EngE	Work IrE	Work EngE	Maths IrE	Maths EngE	Bev IrE	Bev EngE	Bag IrE	Bag EngE	TOTAL IrE	TOTAL EngE
Grounders	26.9	28.0	84.6	79.2	44.4	17.4	14.8	5.0	40.7	20.8	42.1	31.0

Table 10. Use of pre und post-grounders in IrE and EngE initiative offers by situation (all figures expressed in percentages)

	Accid IrE	Accid EngE	Work IrE	Work EngE	Maths IrE	Maths EngE	Bev IrE	Bev EngE	Bag IrE	Bag EngE	TOTAL IrE	TOTAL EngE
1 pre-grounder	14.3	28.6	77.3	89.5	100.0	-	25.0	-	54.5	60.0	66.1	61.1
1 post-grounder	71.4	71.4	18.2	10.5	-	100.0	50.0	100.0	45.5	40.0	28.6	38.9
2 pre-grounders	-	-	4.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.8	-
2 post-grounders	14.3	-	-	-	-	-	25.0	-	-	-	3.6	-

4.3.2. Grounders in IrE and EngE

Employed with requests, grounders serve to mitigate the force of the request by providing the hearer with a reason for the request (cf. Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989b: 287). Similarly, by using grounders in offers, "the speaker justifies the imposition" of the offer (Aijmer 1996: 191) and in so doing explains the impingement of the hearer's negative face. The use of grounders represents a positive politeness strategy (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987: 128).

Grounders are a popular means of external mitigation in both cultures in the offer data. Examples include the following offers drawn from the data (grounders in italics):

(2)   Maths situation, IrE10F: *I'm not too bad at calculus.* I can give you a hand if you like.

(3)   Maths situation, EngE4F: Do you want a hand *I'm free this weekend.*

Overall, the Irish are found to employ significantly more grounders (42.1% of all initiative offers including a grounder) than their English counterparts who use grounders in only 31% of their total initiative offers (p=0.019, independent t-test). Table 9 also shows that the scale of these differences differs by situation. Higher levels of grounder-use are found in the Irish data in all situations except the accident situation, the differences in the maths situation being statistically significant in their own regard (p=0.000, chi-square analysis). Indeed, this data supports the trend in the Irish data identified in the analysis of explicit conditionals (cf. Section 4.3.1.) towards a greater tendency towards mitigation of the offer.

Significant differences are also found in the positioning of these grounders (cf. Table 10). Grounders can be either pre-posed (as in example [2]) or post-posed (as in example [3]) relative to the initiative head act. The Irish use more pre-grounders than the English (p=0.013, independent t-test). These differences are most significant in the maths situation (p=0.000, chi-square analysis).

Also notable is the fact that it is the Irish informants use grounder combinations, as in the following example which includes two post-grounders:

(4)   IrE15F: Come on in out of the cold and have a nice cup of tea. The kettle's just boiled and I would like to hear how your family is getting on.

The English informants made no use of such combinations. However, these differences were not statistically significant. Nonetheless, further research in the use of combinations may reveal interesting results.

5.   IrE and EngE: Similar yet different

Offers in Irish English and English English share many similarities on the level of interactional structure and indeed also on the level of the super-strategy. Both speech communities engage in ritual reoffering to a large extent and also utilize the preference, execution and directive strategies to a similar extent and with a similar distribution by situation. Similarities are also found on the level of the strategy, with both cultures preferring conventionally indirect strategies. The most frequently employed strategies are shared by both groups, namely the execution strategy "state ability" and the preference strategy "question wish", and both strategies are similarly distributed across situations, the latter strategy having something of the status of an all-purpose strategy, being the only strategy employed in both the Irish English and English English data in all situations. In addition, the variety of strategies employed per offer situation and the choice of modification (explicit conditionals and grounders) were similar in both speech communities.

Differences in offering norms were, however, found to exist in the two varieties on the pragmalinguistic and also sociopragmatic level. These are dealt with in the following.

Let us turn first to the pragmalinguistic level. Here differences were found on the level of the strategies employed (conventions of means) and also on the level of form. Unique to the Irish data was the use of a direct offer, realized via an imperative. In addition, although no significant differences were found to exist between cultures as regards use or non-use of the conventions of means identified, significant differences were found regarding frequencies of use. The Irish, for example, were found to prefer predication, a convention used only to a limited extent in the English data. Indeed, such direct offers and also the use of high levels of predication would seem to support Kallen's (2005) idea that hospitality is one of the pillars of Irish politeness (the other two being reciprocity and silence [in the

Irish politeness (the other two being reciprocity and silence [in the sense of indirectness]). On the other hand, the English informants tended towards strategies referring to desire and permission, conventions only employed sparingly by the Irish informants.

On the level of the strategy, both speech communities were found to employ strategies not used by the other group. The Irish informants, for example, employed the strategy "question future act of speaker", a strategy not present in the English data. Among the English informants, on the other hand, the request permission strategy was unique. Restraint was, however, advised in making broad statements as to the uniqueness of a particular strategy to a particular culture. Preferences for particular strategies may differ, and usage/non-usage may be influenced by sociopragmatic factors.

On the level of form, the realization *Will I* VP? of the "question future act of speaker" strategy was one of a number of realizations found in the Irish data only (others included *Will you* VP? and *You'll have* NP? to realize a "state future act of hearer"), and indeed, in general, a wider level of variation of form was found in the Irish data, both in the realizations of initiative offers and also in the realizations of explicit conditionals. Although it was suggested that a tendency towards a higher level of variation on the level of form may characterize offers in Irish English, caution was advised against drawing premature conclusions. Undoubtedly, however, this is a hypothesis worthy of future research, and one which is reflected in findings by Schneider (this volume) on thanks minimizers in Irish English, English English and American English.

Finally, the IrE informants revealed a tendency to engage in a higher level of external mitigation than the EngE informants via the use of grounders in particular, but also via explicit conditionals. In other words, the Irish speakers were seen to pay more attention overall to and invest more effort in decreasing the face threat associated with offers. This high level of indirectness is reminiscent of research on other aspects of Irish English (cf. Kallen 2005, this volume; Martin 2001, this volume). However, it must be emphasized that a higher level of indirectness was not found to be a feature of all aspects of offering in Irish English. Indeed, the Irish informants also employed direct offers and a number of conventions of means of a more direct force than those used by their English counterparts (e.g., predication of future act). Interestingly, Schneider (this volume) also finds a higher level of both internal and external modification to characterize Irish English realizations of thanks minimizers.

Turning now to sociopragmatic variation, two situations in particular were found noteworthy here in the investigation of cross-cultural differences in the choice of linguistic realization of a particular illocution due to the differing effect of such constraints as social status, social distance and degree of imposition. These situations were the work experience situation and the beverage situation.

In the work experience situation (social dominance high, obligation to offer low), Irish speakers employed the rather indirect willingness conventions of means to a significantly higher degree than their English counterparts – and thus employed a rather low persuasive power. Reoffering was also significantly lower in the Irish data than in the English data in this situation, and thus the offers less forceful. Indeed, it may be suggested that the initiative offer may have been too face-threatening in the Irish context as to have been sincere in the first place as the sincerity condition is conventionally fulfilled in the reoffer. Finally, the Irish speakers engaged in a significantly higher degree of external mitigation by means of the explicit conditional in this situation – a further sign of the high face threat associated with the situation. Overall, therefore, we may suggest that offers in situations characterized by a high social dominance (S < H) and a low obligation to offer are more face-threatening in IrE than in EngE and therefore require a more extensive use of negative politeness strategies.

The beverage situation (some social dominance, obligation to offer high) also revealed differences on a sociopragmatic level between the Irish and English sample. In this situation, the Irish informants were found to employ a rather large amount of direct offers and to also take recourse to a large use of predication as a convention of means – also a rather direct strategy. Their English counterparts, on the other hand, did not use any direct offers. The Irish, thus, produced more forceful offers, pointing perhaps to a lower face threat in the situation. This may indeed relate to a higher obligation to offer in this situation in the Irish culture given the fact that not to be offered some tea or coffee upon visiting someone is viewed as extremely impolite. As Hayes (1997: 51) notes in his guide to conversation in Ireland: "Hospitality in the home is not an act of kindness; it is a duty."

6.   Implications and considerations

Pragmatic descriptions of a particular variety of language provide a snapshot of language use in that particular culture. They fail, however, to underline what, if anything, is distinctive about polite language conventions in the particular culture. Consequently, their value in understanding varieties of a particular language is limited unless findings can be compared to those of similar investigations of other varieties of the language. Cross-cultural analyses, such as the present study and that by Schneider (this volume), which concentrate on language use across two or more (regional) varieties, provide a solution to this difficulty. By analysing a number of varieties of one language in similar or identical situations, similarities and distinctiveness in language use may be established. The use of the FDCT in the present study provided an insight into the realization of polite offers in Irish English and English English and highlighted some interesting differences on the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic levels. Instances of the indirectness which is often said, and also found, to characterize Irish English were found in the area of mitigation. However, we should be careful of associating Irish English with indirectness alone. The analysis revealed, for instance, that Irish English speakers sometimes employ more direct strategies than their English counterparts, and that this may be related to sociopragmatic factors. In addition, directness and indirectness are not the only issues of interest. Instead, preferences for particular conventions of means to realize conventionally indirect speech acts appear to differ across cultures, as indeed was the case in the present Irish and British data.

In some cases, however, particularly on the level of form, the FDCT only allowed possible differences to be pointed out and the need for further research to be underlined. It is hoped that triangulation via the use of corpora, such as the forthcoming Irish Component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-Ireland) (cf. Kallen and Kirk 2001 and Kallen this volume), which already exists for British English, for example, and whose composition is stable across cultures, will aid in confirming or rejecting a number of the hypotheses raised in this chapter.[13]

Appendix

Sample item from the Free Discourse Completion Task

You are in the airport. You see a girl your own age with two huge bags. As you haven't much luggage yourself, you offer to help. She <u>REFUSES.</u>

You:
Girl:

        :
        :
        :
        :
        :
        :
        :

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the University of Potsdam. I would like to thank the participants for valuable comments and suggestions. All limitations of the paper remain, of course, the responsibility of the author.
2. Irish English is used here to refer to Southern Irish English. The origins of the English spoken in the North of Ireland, including parts of the Republic of Ireland, such as Donegal, are rather different. While also influenced by the English of England (although not very importantly), the Northern variety also bears traces of Ulster-Scots and Mid-Ulster English (cf. Adams 1977: 56–57; Trudgill and Hannah 2002: 99).
3. Cf., e.g., Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989a: 6); Byram, Morgan, and colleagues (1994: 119–120); Gass (1997: 20–22); House (1993, 1996); Kasper and Zhang (1995); Reynolds (1995: 5) and Thomas (1983: 107). Rost-Roth (1994) and Scarcella (1990: 338) also present an overview of the literature relating to misunderstandings.

4. Initiative offers are to be distinguished from offers which do not, as initiative offers do, represent the first move in a sequence but rather function as a contra in the interactional structure (e.g., offers made following an offence or a request) (cf. Edmondson and House 1981: 137–138).
5. The London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English is a corpus of almost half a million words of educated British English. The original recordings on which Aijmer's (1996) research is based were made during the 1960s and 1970s at University College, London, as part of the Survey of English Usage (SEU) project.
6. It was Clark (1979) who introduced this differentiation between conventions of means and forms.
7. It should be noted that Brown and Levinson (1987: 100) classify this strategy, predication of a future act, as a bald-on-record imperative. However, Blum-Kulka's (1989) definition of conventional indirectness is adopted in the present analysis.
8. Ritual reoffers are also reported to occur in parts of India and Taiwan (cf. Holmes 1992: 306–307) and also in Tenejapa, a North American Indian ethnic group concentrated in the central highlands of the State of Chiopas in Mexico (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987: 233).
9. Kasper (2000) provides an overview of the various types of production questionnaire which have descended from the original DCT.
10. I would like to thank Jolie Taublieb and Anne Tully for help in the data collection process.
11. The suggestory strategy realized via the pattern *How about* NP?, is not found in the Irish data either – however, the quantitative differences between the Irish and English data sets were not statistically significant in this case. Hence this realization is not discussed further.
12. The British National Corpus (BNC) was completed in 1994. It contains 100 million words of contemporary spoken and written British English, 10% (10 million words) of which are spoken English (cf. British National Corpus).
13. The International Corpus of English (ICE) has been aiming at compiling a corpus of fifteen varieties of English since 1990. Each corpus, similar in structure, consists of one million words of spoken and written English produced in 1989 and after. The East African, Great Britain, Indian, New Zealand and Singapore corpora have already been completed, and also the written section of the Philippine corpus (cf. The International Corpus of English [ICE]).

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