The Use of the Pragmatic Marker 'like' by Irish Teenagers: Is it a girl thing?

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by

Angela Farrell

Abstract

The innovative use of ‘like’ as a pragmatic marker has generated much
discussion in linguistic circles in recent times. This study sets out to explore
this linguistic phenomenon, typically associated with teenagers and teenage
girls in particular, in an Irish-English setting, in an attempt to determine how
the marker is used by young Irish speakers and whether gender differentiated
patterns of usage prevail, as has been suggested in some previous accounts.
The findings of this research show that Irish teenagers use ‘like’ as a
pragmatic marker in both an older, traditional pattern as in, ‘I don’t want any
‘like’ ‘and in the newer American usage, as in, ‘she’s ‘like’ so weird’, with the
latter type dominating teenage speech, although there is no evidence of
gender bias for the general use of the marker in either of the two traditions of
usage. ‘Like’ is used pragmatically to mark off a discrepancy between a
speaker’s thought and its conceptualisation and as a result, contributes to
utterance interpretation. It also acts as a marker of minimum politeness and
as such reflects the broader socio-cultural context of use. Thus, ‘like’ plays a
unique pragmatic role in the discourse of young Irish-English speakers.
For Lara and Sophie
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Chapter One

The Problem and its Setting
Chapter One: The Problem and its Setting

1.1 Introduction

This study is undertaken from the viewpoint of a social group which occupies a unique and influential transitory position in Western culture both in sociological and economic terms, namely teenagers. Its aim is to provide a comprehensive account, in an Irish setting, of a linguistic feature which is stereotypically associated with the speech of American and British adolescents and in particular that of teenage girls, that is the pragmatic marker 'like'. The study is an empirical one drawing on primary data from two computerised corpora of English conversation – a six thousand-word corpus of 'teenage girl talk' and a similar sized corpus of 'teenage boy talk'. It seeks to determine the extent to which, if any, gender differentiated patterns of usage exist in relation to the use of the pragmatic marker 'like' by Irish teenagers. It is hoped the study will provide new insights into this much discussed aspect of teenage linguistic behaviour, drawing on a variety of English not yet explored in this respect.

Chapter One outlines the research problem and its setting. It then discusses the importance of the study in relation to language research in general and it compares this research to previous studies of the pragmatic marker 'like' in teenage language.

1.2 The Importance of the study

The study is important in a number of ways. Firstly, within corpus linguistics as a whole, it is generally the case that a severe imbalance exists in favour of written data. For example, the British National Corpus consists of only 10% spoken data. Whilst the Limerick Corpus of Irish English, known henceforth as L-CIE, goes some way to redressing this balance in that it is made up entirely of spoken English, it consists mainly of adult speech. This
brings us to our second consideration. It is commonly accepted that teenage language has been under researched by comparison with that of adults and children (Stenström, Andersen and Hasund 1996, Andersen 2001). This is said to be due in part to its under representation in language corpora in general. Indeed, it is widely agreed that no empirical data has been compiled in relation to teenage language in an Irish setting and as a result no empirical research has been conducted into the linguistic behaviour of Irish teenagers to date. This study is an attempt to address some of these issues in some way and to provide data for further research into the nature and organisation of conversational language in general and more specifically that of teenagers. In addition, communicative language teaching methods place spoken language to the forefront of English language teaching. However, the availability of authentic spoken language is a problem for many teachers and learners. This data has the potential to become a useful classroom resource for all those involved in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language, as a second language and as a native language, that is teachers, students, material and course book writers, syllabus designers, teacher trainers, examiners and others. Of course, it is generally accepted that some mediation is advisable, a topic of discussion which is outside of current delimitations.

1.2.1 Why is Teenage language suitable for linguistic analysis?

The study of teenage speech is important for several reasons. Firstly, the collection and linguistic classification of teenage language is important because there then exists the scope for the study of spoken language variation. According to Crystal (1997: 42):

One of the most important functions of language variation is to enable individuals to identify with a social group or to separate themselves from it. The markers of solidarity and distance relate to family, sex, ethnicity, social class or to any groups or institutions that define the structure of society.
The transitory nature of adolescence in respect of linguistic competency makes the language of this group a particularly interesting area for empirical research in this respect. Secondly, a great deal of sociolinguistic evidence exists to suggest that teenage language has the potential to influence the way language develops, with some of the many innovations in teenage talk working their way into the standard language (Labov 1972, Trudgill 1974). As Hudson states, 'it is the peer-oriented stage which lays the basis for the adult language' (1980: 16). Thus, teenagers are both an important and highly influential group for empirical research of both linguistic variation and language change in society.

1.2.2 How this study differs from previous analyses of teenage language

Many different empirical studies have been undertaken of the pragmatic marker 'like' over the past twenty years. Most are American-based and use American data with some of these focusing on teenage usage (Romaine and Lange 1991, Ferrara and Bell 1995). However, these accounts tend to focus overwhelmingly on the use of the construction 'Be like' as a new reporting verb with several authors using Traugott's (1982) gramaticalization model to account for this new usage (Romaine and Lange 1991, Ferrara and Bell 1995). Other accounts are based on British teenage usage with Andersen's (2001) study providing the most comprehensive analysis of the various functional uses of the marker, drawing on Sperber and Wilson's (1986, 1995) Relevance Theoretical framework for analytical purposes. This account focuses on both a diachronic and pragmatic analysis of the marker. The present analysis differs from the above mentioned studies in a number of ways. Firstly, it is undertaken in an Irish setting and draws on Irish primary data. Secondly, it examines all of the functional uses of the pragmatic marker 'like' by Irish teenagers specifically in relation to the issues of age and gender differentiated use. Finally, whilst this account builds on the work of Andersen in that it shows how the marker 'like' contributes to pragmatic
inference, it also draws on Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory (1987) as an alternative explanation for the specific use of ‘like’ as a hedging device in an Irish socio-cultural setting.

1.3 The Statement of the problem

The purpose of the study is to identify and analyse the use of the pragmatic marker ‘like’ by Irish teenagers and to determine whether gender differentiated patterns of usage exist in this respect using a female corpus and a male corpus of teenage language.

1.4 The Statement of the sub-problems

1. To examine teenagers' use of the pragmatic marker ‘like’ by comparison with that of adults.
2. To investigate the functional uses of this lexical item in teenage speech.
3. To explore similarities and differences in the use of the pragmatic marker ‘like’ by teenage girls and teenage boys.

1.5 The Hypotheses

1. The pragmatic marker ‘like’ is used more frequently by Irish teenagers than Irish adults.
2. This lexical item is used by teenagers to express a variety of functions.
3. Teenage girls and boys use the marker to a similar extent in terms of overall frequency but use it differently in relation to functionality.

1.6 Delimitations

1. The term teenager as used to describe the participants in this study refers specifically to six teenagers, three fourteen year old girls who
formed the female group, and three fourteen year old boys who formed the male group. No other person is featured on the recordings.

2. The teenagers who took part in the study are in no way representative of Irish society as a whole in terms of social class, ethnicity, age or regional background. They are all native speakers of Irish English.

3. Due to the constraints of time, the primary data are limited to two separate corpora of six thousand words each, making a total of twelve thousand words. This represents ninety minutes of recordings, that is forty-five minutes each of female and male conversation.

4. The study did not attempt a diachronic analysis of the corpora. It is limited to a synchronic analysis i.e. how the marker 'like' is used currently by the Irish teenagers who participated in the study.

5. The Observer's Paradox: (Labov 1972). This is a problem which affects all research projects of this nature. In essence, the presence of an observer is likely to cause the subjects participating in the research to behave differently from how they would otherwise have behaved, the paradox being that we can't know what people do, unless we observe them but if we observe them, they will behave differently so we still don't know how they would have behaved when unobserved. I have tried to minimise the effect by maintaining a physical distance from the subjects of the research and relying on tape recordings made in my absence. However, this raises questions of ethics. These are discussed in Chapter Three, with details of the measures taken to protect the rights of the individuals who participated in this study. Ultimately, all researchers must acknowledge that the 'observer's paradox' (Labov 1972) may have affected the research outcome and I do so in this study.
1.7 The Assumptions

1. The first assumption is that teenage speech is different to that of adults both in terms of linguistic competency and conversational style (Romaine 1984, Nippold and Martin 1989, Aitcheson 1996).

2. The second assumption is that teenage talk represents a sub-genre of the 'intimate' genre (McCarthy 1998: 10).

3. The third assumption is that the linguistic item 'like' has both a traditional grammatical usage (i.e. noun, verb, preposition, conjunction, suffix) and a more vernacular usage as a pragmatic marker (Romaine and Lange 1991, Andersen 2001).

1.8 The Definitions of the terms

1. Discourse Analysis: The analysis of language in use (Brown and Yule 1983: 1)

2. Corpus Linguistics: A new discipline in which large-scale computer-based language corpora (mainly extensive collections of spoken and written texts) are utilised by means of sophisticated concordancing programmes for the purpose of language analysis (Carter and Nunan 2001: 220).

3. Corpus: a collection of pieces of language that are selected and ordered according to explicit linguistic criteria in order to be used as a sample of the language (Sinclair 1995: 19)

4. Collaborative idea: collaborative ideas are concerned with the interactive sharing of thoughts, attitudes, opinions and judgements (McCarthy 1998: 10).

5. Sub genre: Sub-classes within a genre that are quite different to one another e.g. fiction include the sub-genres adventure fiction, romance fiction and modern-day classics (Biber, D., S. Johansson., G. Leech., S. Conrad., and E. Finegan, 1999: 17)
1.9 The Organisation of the study

Chapter Two begins with a brief discussion of the changing nature of age and language research and provides a profile of teenagers as a distinct sociolinguistic group. Crucially, it then situates the study within the language and gender debate focusing mainly on previous studies in this field relating to teenage language use. Next, the concept of vagueness in language use is discussed together with hedging as an interactional strategy speakers use in conversational discourse. Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (1986, 1995) is considered an appropriate theoretical framework for the analysis of the marker in teenage language in terms of the contribution it makes to utterance interpretation. Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987) also provides a relevant framework with which to interpret one aspect of usage for the marker in an Irish context, that is the use of 'like' as hedge by the young speakers, which the author concludes is a reflection of the socio-cultural context of use for this linguistic item. A brief description of the key defining characteristics of the pragmatic marker class in general is also given before the final section of this Chapter which reviews previous accounts of the marker in the sociolinguistic literature and covers aspects such as its syntactic and functional uses. Crucially, this section also provides previous descriptions of the usage of this linguistic item in relation to age and gender. A short recapitulation concludes this chapter.

Chapter Three is a methodological chapter in which the approach taken in the research is outlined and the processes of data collection and the building of the two corpora are described. Next, ethical considerations are discussed and a description of the additional data drawn on in the study for contrastive purposes is given. Finally, a summary of the contents of the teenage conversations is provided together with a brief outline of the methodological steps taken in order to analyse the data.
Chapter Four consists of both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data and offers possible motivations for the linguistic behaviour of the teenagers in respect of the use of the pragmatic marker 'like' using the previously mentioned analytical frameworks.

Chapter Five contains a brief survey of the most important findings of the study and it gives further suggestions for future research.
Chapter Two

A Review of the Literature
Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature

2.1 The changing nature of age and language research.

The relationship between social factors and the language used by different speakers in a speech community (Labov 1972) has been well-documented in the sociolinguistic literature since the 1960s with research focusing largely on variation due to differences in regional background, socio-economic class and gender and to a lesser extent on ethnicity, social networks and age (Labov 1972, Trudgill 1974, Cheshire 1982). Indeed, where age has been included in classic variationist accounts it has usually been as one of a number of other parameters influencing language use rather than as a major consideration in its own right (Trudgill 1974, Cheshire 1982). As Cheshire observed in her pioneering 1987 survey, 'there has been little, if any research that has had age differences in language use as its prime focus, despite the social importance of such differences' (1987: 766).

In recent years, however, there has been a growing interest in the study of age-related differences in language use and it has become increasingly more common for researchers to study the language of a particular age group in isolation. Most attention in this field has been directed towards comparing the language of adults and children. By contrast, until fairly recently, with the notable exception of some influential studies undertaken in the 1980s such as Cheshire (1982), Romaine (1984), and Eckert (1988), there has been a marked absence of research into the language used by adolescents. This is surprising given the fact that earlier variationist accounts show that teenage language is often a marker of linguistic change in progress in society, making this an important and influential linguistic group for research (Labov 1972, Trudgill 1974). As Stenström observed in the introduction to her ground-breaking 1996 study of the language of London teenagers based on the data of the Corpus of London Teenage
English, 'so far, teenage language has not been given the attention in linguistic circles that it merits' (Stenström et al. 1996: Introduction x).

This situation had been partially redressed by the publication of a number of ground-breaking studies in recent years, which provide vivid and fascinating accounts of how teenagers speak in mainly American and British contexts, based on naturally occurring speech data, (Romaine & Lange 1991, Stenström et al. 1996, Andersen 2001). The advent and growth of corpus linguistics since the 1970s has both facilitated and changed the nature of language research in general by increasing the availability of language corpora, including that of teenage speech and by providing a new methodological approach for researchers. Furthermore, more contemporary studies of teenage language reflect a general shift in analytical perspective from a narrow form-focused view of language to a more contextualized and communicative approach in line with the emergence of new disciplines such as pragmatics (Yule and Brown 1983), and the renewed interest in others such as ethnographic research (Goffman 1967, Eckert 1988), and Speech Act Theory (Austin 1962, Searle 1969), which operate under the rubric of discourse analysis and provide new frameworks for language analysis.

Thus, whilst earlier classic quantitative studies of language variation focused on traditional linguistic variables relating to the formal properties of language such as phonetics, morphology and syntax (Labov 1972, Trudgill 1974, Cheshire 1982), more recent accounts have been concerned with investigating the functional and increasingly, the pragmatic features of teenage speech as manifested in mainly casual talk. This current study aims to build on research in this domain by examining the pragmatic use of language by Irish teenage girls and boys in a conversational setting. The starting point of this account is an overview of the developmental characteristics of this age group in social, cognitive and linguistic terms, which will be valuable given the fact that social, psychological and linguistic identity are closely intertwining constructions.
2.2 Teenagers as a distinct sociolinguistic group

Adolescence is a crucial transition period between childhood and adulthood not only for physical and psychological development but also for identity building across a number of domains: social, linguistic and also in respect of gender. Several accounts suggest that whilst teenagers cannot be viewed as a homogenous social or linguistic group, in many ways youth culture appears more uniform than that of adults with social and linguistic norms that are separate and distinct from those of adults (Romaine 1984, Eckert 1988). From both a social and linguistic perspective, this is the first stage when the influence of the home and family is reduced as adolescents move away from a social order based primarily on parents' socio-economic class to one which they construct for themselves, largely through close interaction with peers (Romaine 1984, Eckert 1988). As Stenström observes, [for teenagers] 'who you are is largely who you hang out with' (1996: 29). Indeed, a large number of studies show that teenagers generally have a drive towards peer group conformity and attempt to avoid social stigma (Romaine 1984, Stenström et al 1996, Kerswill and Williams 1997). Furthermore, they wish to be seen as distinct from both the adult world and from other teenage groups (Eckert 1988). Eckert identifies distinct and opposed teenage social sub-categories referred to as ‘Jocks and Burnouts’ (as well as a group of in-betweens) (1989). Adherence to these groups constitutes a crucial social divide that greatly affects the way teenagers behave in relation to school, the leisure activities they pursue, their taste in music and fashion and how they look. Significantly, it also influences the way they speak with the ‘Burn Outs’ leading in the use of urban sound changes and vernacular features such as negative concord (Eckert 1989: 183-207). Research by Cheshire (1982) also shows correlation between linguistic variables and participation in adolescent vernacular culture supporting the findings of earlier studies into the role of social networking in promoting linguistic variation undertaken by Labov (1972) and Trudgill (1974). Milroy suggests that the most important
contribution of the concept of network is in its analysis of the manner in which individuals utilise the resources of linguistic variability available to them to indicate loyalty to a particular group (Milroy 1987). Tajfel (1974 cited in Bouchard Ryan 1979: 149) proposes that when members of a group interact with other groups they are led to look for qualities in their own group, which can serve to differentiate themselves favourably from the out-group and to maintain positive social identity and satisfaction with their own group membership. The teenage years are a critical age site for social networking as teenagers seek to distance themselves both from the norms of adults and from those of other adolescent social groups. This leads to increased linguistic variability within this age cohort.

Teenage speech is different from that of adults in a number of ways. Firstly, in terms of what are referred to as 'age graded' differences, that is differences which relate to the level of linguistic competency as determined by age, and secondly, in respect to how teenagers use language interactionally, that is their conversational style. From a developmental perspective, the transitory nature of adolescence is reflected in the language of this age-group. As Andersen states, 'the language of adolescence is characterized on the one hand by the completion of the first language and on the other by relative linguistic inexperience' (2001: 45). Several studies reveal that this is a period of major linguistic growth particularly in the domains of syntax and vocabulary (Aitchison 1996, Nippold and Martin 1989). Indeed, Aitchison speaks of a 'massive expansion' of lexis between the ages of eleven and fourteen (1996: 65).

Differences in conversational style between teenagers and adults are generally recognisable to the expert and layman alike with vocabulary, syntax and pronunciation being the most striking areas in this respect. Teenagers are remarkable for their 'expressive' and 'opinionated' style, (Nordberg 1987 translated and cited in Romaine and Lange 1991: 238) their vivid story telling and the creative and innovative use of lexis that is
the use of slanguage, taboo and vogue words and new meanings given to old ones (Stenström et al 1996), with many of the innovations in these areas working their way into mainstream language either due to synchronic spread to adult groups or due to diachronic persistence within speaker groups beyond adolescence (Kotsinas 1994). Indeed, a range of studies have documented the importance of adolescent groups as instigators and promoters of linguistic change, for instance, in terms of the development of new phonological variants, structural change, lexical innovations or linguistic borrowings (Labov 1972, Cheshire 1982). A noticeable growth in sociolinguistic and metalinguistic awareness is also noted during this stage with an increase in 'style shifting' from the age of at least eleven, correlating with adherence to vernacular culture (Cheshire 1982, Romaine 1984, Eckert 1988). Differences are also observed in respect of the pragmatic uses of language by teenagers in areas such as turn-taking, the use of politeness strategies, interruptions, and topic shifts with teenage speech typically involving more rapid turn-taking and a greater frequency of interruptions and topic change (Labov 1972, Kotsinas 1994). It is also assumed that teenagers have a lower politeness threshold than adults reflecting the different social requirements of adolescent peer groups. However, these assumptions are generally considered to require empirical research. Given teenagers' high propensity towards creativity, innovativeness and vernacular usage, it is not surprising that their speech is often subject to prescriptive criticism from parents and teachers and is typically described in disparaging terms in the media, as in the following comment by Alex Spillius in ‘The Independent on Sunday’ of March 1996.

It would appear that a yawning linguistic gap is opening up to separate a younger generation who have been brought up on a mixture of US television, films and music, Australian soap operas and rave culture – from the rest of the population.

Thus, in many ways teenagers can be viewed as a distinct and separate sociolinguistic group to adults.
2.3 Language and gender in the teenage years

The teenage years are a critical age site to examine the relationship between language and gender as it is a time when a great deal of identity building takes place in this respect. As Eckert observes, 'adolescence is a particularly important crossroads for gender – it is one place to examine some of our most deeply engrained beliefs about gender'. In her pioneering 1988 study, she describes the process of gender construction which begins in elementary school through same-sex peer play and is largely complete by the adolescent years where it is enforced by the all-important peer group and adolescent institutions such as the high-school. This results in a new gender division of labour as teenage girls and boys take up distinct social activities through which they accomplish their 'femininity' and 'masculinity' respectively. Crucially, this gender differentiated behaviour extends also to the linguistic domain as both groups develop new verbal practices in line with stereotypical gender norms (Maltz and Borker 1972, Tannen 1986).

However, as Eckert points out, this compelling view of gender breaks down in part when we take a closer look at general patterns as becomes particularly clear in the data on adolescent speakers (Eckert 2003: 387). This view is shared by several feminist linguists who reject both the 'dominance' (Lakoff 1973, Zimmerman and West 1975) and 'difference' (Maltz and Borker 1972, Tannen 1986) theoretical models, which framed the language and gender debate in the 1970s and 1980s and point to a number of important studies which reveal deviation from the stereotypical linguistic norms proposed by these models (Freed 2003, Holmes and Meyerhoff 2003). For example, whilst Lever's 1976 study found that fifth grade girls did not tolerate or resolve conflict during play but disbanded instead, thus supporting the dual cultural model of female 'cooperative' talk as opposed to male 'conflictive' talk (Maltz and Borker 1972, Tannen 1986), later research by Goodwin (2000), based on transcripts of naturally
occurring behaviour in disputes, shows that urban working class black girls do engage in conflict without disrupting play and that arguments were as common for girls as they were for boys and could even be more extensive. In a similar vein, Eder’s (1990) research on romantic and sexual teasing amongst adolescent girls reveals that they often move away from many traditional gender roles through humour and verbal play. Furthermore, as Eckert (2003: 387) points out, earlier gender differences in data on phonological and grammatical variation such as indicated in Biondi (1975), Macauley (1977), and Romaine (1984), wherein males in general were seen to lead in the use of ‘non-standard’ forms, can often be explained by the fact that the use of vernacular language is closely linked to adherence to vernacular culture, which in turn is related to gender, teenage boys often associating ‘masculinity’ with ‘toughness’ and adherence to vernacular culture being one way in which to accomplish this (Cheshire 1982, Eckert 1988). Whilst these general conclusions are supported by Eckert’s research which finds a ‘Burnout’ lead in the use of urban sound changes, in her account it is the female ‘Burnouts’ who are the most vernacular (1989).

Such findings lead many feminist authors to challenge some of the basic underlying assumptions of the debate on which the two theoretical models are based, not least the validity of taking sex and gender difference as a starting point. For as Freed comments, ‘the over-reaching conclusion to be drawn about language practices amongst girls, boys, women and men is the presence of elaborate variability’ (2003: 702). Moreover, increasingly, researchers have come to question the prevailing concept of gender as a fixed, stable biological endowment. As Freed states, ‘it is the popular and prevailing understanding of gender as the social and behavioural manifestation of sex that lies at the heart of the problem’ (2003: 704). Indeed, feminist linguists Janet Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff believe there has been a movement away from what they describe as ‘an essentialist and dichotomous conception of gender’ to ‘a differentiated, contextualized and performative model, which questions claims about gender’ (2003:
Introduction: This view is supported by Thorne’s call for an approach that analyses the way gendered behaviour is shaped ‘by situation and context’ (1993). Finally, a number of feminist scholars, in a variety of disciplines, argue that the discussion of gender must be broadened to include other social factors such as class, race, ethnicity and age (Eckert 2003, Freed 2003, Holmes and Meyerhoff 2003).

2.4 Vagueness in language use

Eckert (2003: 389) claims that both teenagers and women share in common a trivialisation of their language as imprecise or vague. This leads us to a discussion of the concept of vagueness in language use which is highly relevant to this study. Several analysts emphasise the role ‘vague expressions’ play in the process of communication. However, it is generally agreed that a precise definition of vagueness is difficult to arrive at since there are unlimited ways of being vague in language (Channell 1994: 4, Jucker, Smith and Lüdge 2002: 1734). For Daitz (1956), vagueness is a requirement for communication to be adequate. Channell views it as ‘part of our taken for granted world’ (1994: 4). Indeed, in her work in this field in which she provides a systematic account of vagueness in conversation listing a whole range of lexical items through which this may be expressed, she argues that vague language is ‘neither all bad nor all good’ (1994: 3), but what matters is that it is used appropriately. The ability to vary the precision of utterances and to use them in appropriate contexts is seen as part of the speaker’s communicative competence and the interpretation of such expressions is a natural part of language use. Several authors suggest that as well as being an inherent feature of natural language, vagueness is also an interactional strategy (Channell 1994, Andersen 2001, Jucker et al 2002). Channell claims that her study shows that both speakers and writers ‘tailor their language to make it suitable to the situation’ (1994: 3). Crystal and Davy (1975: 11) list a variety of reasons for vagueness in language use. It may be due to the degree of formality or informality of the situation that is, the less formal the situation the more
vagueness there will be. It could also be influenced by the subject of the conversation and a deliberate wish to maintain the atmosphere. The use of vague expressions may also be governed by cognitive factors such as memory loss, lack of a suitable word or lack of knowledge in general. Social factors may also come into play in that vague language may provide speakers with a means of establishing camaraderie or common ground. Sperber and Wilson’s Relevance Theory (1986, 1995) has generalised the notion of vague language to apply to language in general and provides an analytical framework for the analysis of vague expressions in conversation. It is based on a number of essential assumptions about communication. First, that it involves ostensive behaviour and that utterance interpretation is an inferential process. Second, successful communication involves intentional behaviour on the part of a communicator and it involves recognition of this intentional behaviour on the part of another communicator. From this perspective, vague expressions are seen to carry more contextual information than precise ones and as a result, may be more effective in communicating intended meaning than precise language. Thus, vagueness is a communication strategy which facilitates utterance interpretation. A variety of purposes can be served in this way such as, to focus a hearer’s attention on the most relevant information in a unit of discourse, to convey assumptions about the speaker’s attitude towards the proposition expressed, for example, it may be a major means of conveying different levels of certainty towards the propositions expressed or it may express other functions such as newsworthiness or personal evaluation more indirectly. Finally, vague expressions may also serve as politeness strategies softening implicit complaints and criticisms and as such serve a social role too (Jucker et al 2002).

Teenagers are typically associated with vague language (Stenström et al 1996). For some authors, both cognitive and social factors play a crucial role in this respect. As a group, teenagers are less linguistically mature than adults and may find themselves unable to cope with the linguistic
demands of a given situation and thus are more reliant on using vague expressions as a linguistic strategy in order to overcome this. Moreover, in the teenage world it is considered cool to be vague and to demonstrate that one cannot be bothered to precise (Stenström et al 1996, Hasund forthcoming cited in Andersen 2001: 288). Women have also been stereotypically portrayed as a linguistic group which favours vague speech. Channell (1994) reports that her respondents thought that women use more vague expressions than men do. This was not confirmed by her study but she suggests reasons which might support this view, for instance, with reference to Coates and Cameron (1988), that 'vague language may be an exponent of power relations' and that 'women have their own varieties for speaking about matters of concern to women' which according to Carter (1980: 232) 'incorporate a high degree of unspecificity'. The COLT study showed that contrary to these assumptions, the use of vague language was 'remarkably evenly distributed across the two genders' (Stenström et al 1996: 118). As Stenström states, 'the use of vague language in COLT cannot be associated with a specific genderlect' (Stenström et al 1996: 118). Nonetheless, a central issue in the language and gender debate over the past thirty years has been the role of hedges in female speech (Lakoff 1973, Cameron and Coates 1988) which will be discussed in the following section.

2.4.1 Hedges

Hedges are one of a number of linguistic devices through which speakers may express vagueness for a variety of reasons. This term was introduced originally by George Lakoff (1972: 15) to describe lexical expressions 'whose job it is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy'. Robin Lakoff (1973: 5) proposed that women's speech typically displayed a range of features such as tag questions and hedges which marked it off as 'inferior or weak' due to their subordinate social and economic position in society in relation to that of men's. This assumption was largely based on her own observations and intuition and has become contentious as research in this area based on
naturally occurring speech data has been proved either inconclusive or has failed to support Lakoff’s claim (Holmes 1990, Bradac, J, A. Mulac, and T. Lundell, 1995). Concurrent with this research come new studies which mark a move away from George Lakoff’s (1972: 15) original concern with the semantic contribution that hedges make to the statement in which they occur, to the treatment of hedges as a realization of an interactional communicative strategy (Markkanen and Schroder 1997: 15). Within pragmatics in general, several attempts have been made to classify hedges into ‘approximators’ and ‘shields’. ‘Approximators’ are hedges that affect the truth conditions of propositions, thus ‘his feet are sort of blue’ signals that the speaker is fully committed to the truth of the proposition she is conveying. ‘Shields’ are hedges that imply that the speaker is not fully committed to what she is saying, for example, in the proposition ‘I think his feet were blue’, ‘I think’ marks a level of uncertainty on the part of the speaker in that she does not fully believe what she is saying (Prince et al 1982). The truth condition of the proposition remains unaffected. However, over the past three decades hedges have received so much attention from so many analysts in different disciplines that the term is said to have lost some of its clarity and to have reached a state of ‘definitional chaos’ (Markkanen and Schroder 1997: 15).

Studies which are concerned with the pragmatic aspect of hedges in discourse focus on examining why hedges are used and offer alternative explanations to those proposed by Lakoff (1973: 5), such as vagueness which we have already discussed in general. From the Relevance Theoretic viewpoint, hedges or ‘downtoners’, as they are sometimes referred to, (Jucker et al 2002: 1734) are used either because of uncertainty or because of the speaker’s inability to access information at the time of speaking. They are a means by which the speaker avoids committing herself/himself to the accuracy of the information or they may be employed purposely if using more precise expressions in an utterance.
would not provide any extra information for the hearer. Thus, hedges are used because they require less processing effort in the interpretation of utterances than a strictly literal use of language would.

An alternative pragmatic explanation for the analysis of hedges in discourse is Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Theory of Politeness. From this perspective politeness is defined as,

A special way of treating people, saying and doing things in such a way as to take into account the other person’s feelings. On the whole that means that what one says politely will be less straightforward or more complicated than what one would say if one wasn’t taking the other person’s feelings into account (Brown 1980: 114).

Brown and Levinson identify a number of linguistic devices and strategies which constitute politeness in a given culture, such as participles, intonation, irony, address forms and discourse strategies. Within this approach hedges are context dependent and are integral to face saving strategies (1987). Leeche’s (1983) Politeness Principle accords with Brown and Levinson’s Theory in that they both hold that politeness investment varies according to contextual factors such as social power that is, (interlocutors’s relative positions in social hierarchies, age, gender and language impairment), social distance (most politeness evident with familiars but not intimates, least with intimates and strangers), and degree of imposition associated with a given face threatening act for example, in requesting (for example, urgency, legitimacy), apologising (for example, obligation to apologise and likehood of acceptance of apology), thanking (for example, indebtedness) and complaining (for example degree of social obligation violated by the offender). Both studies also assume a positive correlation between politeness and indirectness.

Finally, the socio-cultural dimension has been emphasized by many theorists as an important consideration in understanding how language is
used in a given society (Vygotsky 1986, Asîn and McCullough 1997, Lantolf 2000). From this perspective, politeness norms are not a universal absolute but may vary from one society to another. Recent research by a number of analysts suggest that hedging has an important socio-cultural dimension in Irish society and that it is relative to societal context (Clancy 2000, Farr and O'Keeffe 2002). This contention will be discussed further in sub-section 4.8 of Chapter Four. Most studies of hedging have focused on examining this linguistic feature in adult language (Holmes 1984, 1995, Coates 1996, Farr and O'Keeffe 2002). Whilst it is generally agreed that the politeness norms of teenagers are different from adults leading to different levels of hedging for this age group to those observed for adults, very little empirical research has been undertaken to confirm these assumptions (Andersen 2001).

In order to fully understand the role the pragmatic marker 'like' plays both in contributing towards utterance interpretation and in expressing politeness, it is necessary first to provide a brief analysis of the characteristics of the pragmatic marker class in general, before proceeding to examine the specific qualities of this linguistic item as revealed in previous empirical accounts.

2.4.2 Pragmatic markers

Pragmatic markers are one of a number of linguistic items speakers may avail of to express politeness and vagueness in conversation. The term itself is used to describe the short, recurrent items that we use in mainly spoken language such as 'oh', 'well' and 'really' which generally have little syntactic or semantic importance but may serve a number of significant pragmatic functions in conversation (adapted from Brinton 1995: 33ff). They are a feature which has become the focus of increased attention by analysts from a number of academic traditions over the past twenty years and have proved to be a notoriously difficult linguistic group to label, define and classify due both to their functional complexity and the wide range of
word classes they may share with, such as interjections (oh), conjunctions (and, but, so), adverbs (now, then) and lexical phrases (y'know). Moreover, they tend to be viewed by analysts from the perspective of their own discipline. As a result, a wide range of different terms are used to describe them: 'sentence connectives' (Halliday & Hasan 1989), 'discourse markers' (Schiffrin 1987), 'pragmatic particles' (Ostman 1982) and 'pragmatic markers' (Romaine and Lange 1991, Andersen 2001) to name but a few. Researchers who emphasize the pragmatic role of these linguistic items tend to refer to them as 'pragmatic markers' and the term 'discourse markers' is associated more with their textual capacity. As this study is concerned primarily with the pragmatic role of markers in teenage language, the author finds it more appropriate to refer to these items as pragmatic markers. They are generally seen to act in a number of communicative domains, textual, interactional and subjective, where they express a variety of functions, with multifunctionality appearing as the rule rather than the exception. Indeed, this multifunctional capacity poses huge challenges for language analysts (Schiffrin 1987).

In addition to studies which have focused on the textual (Halliday and Hasan 1989) and interactional roles of pragmatic markers (Schiffrin 1987), several accounts analyse how they operate in the attitudinal / subjective domain where they have been shown to act in a variety of functional roles such to signal epistemic commitment (Holmes 1995, Coates 1998), to indicate newsworthiness and to establish common ground between speakers (Andersen 2001). There has been a steady growth of studies which take a Relevance Theoretical approach to the analysis of pragmatic markers within the subjective domain (Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001, Jucker, Smith and Ludge 2002). These are mainly concerned with establishing the connection between markers and procedural encoding, which is viewed as crucial to the category of pragmatic marker (Blakemore 1987). From this viewpoint, the main contribution of pragmatic markers is not as propositional constituents but as contributors to Relevance (Sperber
and Wilson 1986, 1995) as they indicate to the hearer how an utterance is to be understood both in terms of the proposition and the speaker’s attitude towards it, thus facilitating utterance interpretation. With this in mind, we will now proceed to review previous accounts of the marker 'like' which describe its syntactic properties, functional capabilities and its sociolinguistic distribution in respect of age and gender.

2.5 Previous accounts of the pragmatic marker 'like'

In recent years, considerable attention has been paid both within and outside of linguistic circles to the innovative use of 'like' by American and British teenagers where it is used as a pragmatic marker as in 'she’s ‘like’ so annoying' rather than in its more conventional grammatical usage. The novel 'like' is said to be an American borrowing with origins in New York city music clubs of the 1960’s, which has since spread as a result of extensive cross-cultural contact (Tagliamonte and Hudson 1999). It is widely viewed as one of a number of linguistic items said to reflect an inarticulate way of speaking popular with teenagers and teenage girls in particular, known as 'Mallspeak'. Patricia Skarda in the New Jersey Star of August 29, 1999, provides the following 'Mallspeak lexicon':

Like is an approximation – an unwillingness to say one thing. “You know” begs for agreement, as if the speaker is terribly unsure of him or herself. “I mean” indicates that the speaker does not in fact know what he or she means (cited in Eckert 2003: 394).

Whilst it is sometimes acknowledged that both males and females use these forms as in the previous examples 'Mallspeak' is most often associated by the media with teenage girls as the name itself reflects. As Eckert observes, 'the very fact that this way of speaking is referred to as 'Mallspeak' points to gender – to the girls who hang out in shopping malls'. Furthermore, she claims that it is often interpreted as a hedge and taken to signal the adolescents' 'lack of concern or precision or their unwillingness to take responsibility for their statements' (Eckert 2003: 394). Eckert points out that when discussed specifically with respect to girls, hedges are still
widely held to indicate insecurity and an unwillingness to state a forceful opinion, reflecting the popular Lakoffian view of women’s language as more ‘tentative’ or ‘unassertive’ than that of men’s, that still prevails (2003: 394).

In addition to its media attention the new ‘like’ has been the focus of ongoing theoretical and empirical interest in linguistic circles since the 1980’s. The vast majority of studies undertaken in this respect have been based in the United States on American usage with much of this research drawing on naturally occurring speech data. It includes Tannen (1986), Underhill (1988), Blyth, Rectenwald, and Wang (1990), Romaine and Lange (1991), Ferrera and Bell (1995) and Dailey-O’Cain (2000). Fewer studies have been located in the United Kingdom. These include Miller and Weinert’s (1995) empirical account of the use of the marker in a Scottish setting. Tagliamonte and Hudson’s York based study of how marker ‘like’ is used by Canadian and British youth (1999) and a number of recent studies which examine the use of this feature by London teenagers (Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001). These draw on the data of the Corpus of London Teenage English, known by its acronym COLT. No empirical research in respect of American ‘like’ has been undertaken in an Irish context, to the best of my knowledge, except for Farrell and O’Sullivan’s (2004) preliminary investigation of this phenomenon, which is based on the data of the Limerick Corpus of Irish English, L-CIE (2004).

2.5.1 ‘Like’ – a syntactic description

When serving in a pragmatic role ‘like’ has been observed in several studies to show a high level of syntactic flexibility. In this respect, it is viewed as a prototypical pragmatic marker (Romaine and Lange 1991, Andersen 2001). The following examples provided by Andersen (2001: 227) reveal that it may occur in the following syntactic patterns:
1. between clause elements, as in, 
   It's gonna be 'like' take us time to go 
2. prior to an item it focuses on, as in, 
   It's a bit sort of 'like' boring 
3. between propositions, as in, 
   It's not that bad actually 'like' its alright 
4. in the construction 'Be like', as in, 
   I was 'like' he should come and speak to me 
5. and in the construction, 'It's like', as in, 
   It's 'like' one day developing 

However, in other respects, it is viewed by several analysts as atypical (Romaine and Lange 1991, Andersen 2001) due to the fact that it can be relatively deeply integrated into the syntactic context in which it occurs, as for example when its acts as a reporting verb in the construction 'Be like', as in number four above and when it behaves as a borderline case between a pragmatic marker and an adverbial, as in the second example shown. In these respects, its classification as a pragmatic marker is seen to be problematic both from the perspectives of syntactic independence and non-propositionality which are traditionally viewed as essential defining characteristics for this linguistic class within pragmatics (Ostman 1982, Fraser 1990). Some authors suggest that in view of this, 'like' must be placed within a special sub-category of pragmatic marker which due to on-going grammaticalization (Traugott 1982) contain traces of an earlier lexical meaning whilst at the same time accompanying and facilitating processes of communication and include other lexical items such as 'y'know', 'sort of', 'kind of' (Romaine and Lange 1991, Andersen 2001, Jucker et al 2002). However, it is important to note that despite this, most accounts generally identified and referred to 'like', in its vernacular usage, as a genuine example of a pragmatic marker (Schourup 1985, Romaine and Lange 1991, Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001). Some authors (Romaine and Lange 1991, Andersen 2001) acknowledge that two distinct syntactic patterns of usage exist for the marker. Thus, it may occur in a clause final position where it appears to serve to qualify a preceding statement as in,
‘It was so dry the crops were all burnt up ‘like’

and in the American pattern of ‘usage’ where it is placed prior to the linguistic item it qualifies as in,

‘They’re ‘like’ in the middle of the exam’
(cited in Andersen 2001: 222).

As a result, Romaine and Lange (1991) and Andersen (2001) propose the possibility of two distinct traditions of usage for ‘like’ as a marker, an older dialectal British use and a more recent American variety. Empirical support for this view comes from the 1995 study undertaken by Miller and Weinert into Scottish English usage which suggests that ‘like’ has been used unconventionally in a clause final position in rural dialects of Northern Britain for over two hundred years where it serves as a highlighting or focusing device ‘where there has been misunderstanding or argument’ and that it is used to mitigate the process of clearing up the misunderstanding and contradiction by highlighting certain sentence elements. (Miller and Weinert 1995: 37). Similarly, research by Clancy (2000) and O’Keeffe (2003), using mainly adult data, refers to the use of ‘like’ as a marker in Southern Irish English in a clause final position in both propositional and interrogative statements. However, in these studies it is interpreted to act as a hedging device for reasons of politeness (this aspect of usage is discussed further in sub-section 4.8 of Chapter Four). Andersen observes that the use of the novel ‘like’ by London teenagers is overwhelmingly of the American variety and finds Miller and Weinert’s functional analysis ‘problematic’ in relation to the COLT data (Andersen 2001: 238). Furthermore, there is no evidence of a clause final usage of ‘like’ as described by Clancy (2000) and O’Keeffe (2003) in the speech of London teenagers (Stenström et al 1996).
2.5.2 'Like' - a functional description

As a marker, 'like' has been observed to be typically multifunctional, with previous accounts suggesting it can perform a variety of functional roles in both the textual and subjective communicative domains, as, for example, a discourse link / hesitational device, a focuser of information, a marker of approximation or 'vague talk', an exemplifier and a so-called quotative complementizer. For authors working within the Relevance Theoretic approach, (Sperber and Wilson 1987, 1996) all of these various uses may be subsumed under a single description of 'like' as 'a marker of non-literal resemblance', that is of 'less than literal' use of language (Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001, Jucker et al 2002). This analysis rests crucially on the Relevance Theoretic notions of 'loose talk', 'interpretative use', 'non-identical resemblance' and 'ad-hoc concepts'. The Relevance Theoretic notion of loose talk pre-supposes a distinction between descriptive and interpretative use of language. Whenever an utterance shares some but not all of the implications of the thought it represents, it is a case of 'non-identical resemblance' between thought and utterance, that is, 'less than literal use of language'. As Sperber and Wilson state, '[t]o say that an utterance is less than strictly literal is to say that its propositional form shares some but not all of its logical properties with the propositional form of the thought it is being used to represent'. With this in mind we will now proceed to a functional description of the marker 'like' as revealed in previous accounts. A discussion of the analytical difficulties which arise in interpreting these various functional capacities is undertaken in sub-section 4.1 of Chapter 4 of this study. Further, the question of the quantitative distribution of the marker in relation to age and gender as revealed in previous research is addressed in sub-section 2.6 of this chapter.

2.5.3 Quotative 'BE like'

Most American studies have tended to focus on the increasing use of the construction 'Be like' as a device for introducing reported speech or
thought, that is as a so-called quotative complementizer (Butters 1982, Tannen 1986, Butters 1989, Romaine and Lange 1991, Ferrera and Bell 1995, Tagliamonte and Hudson 1999). The following examples of usage are provided by Tagliamonte and Hudson (1999) and reveal how ‘BE like’ is used as an alternative to the traditional reporting verbs ‘SAY’ and less conventional ‘GO’ and is used either with a direct quotative of what was actually said as in,

‘She’s like’, ‘Right you know, we’re taking you out’. (1999: 147)

or with an interpretation of what the speaker was thinking at the time, as in

And I was thinking, ‘Well, surely they can all get on’. (1999: 148)

When used in this way ‘BE like’ would appear to blur the grammatical distinction between direct and reported speech. Romaine and Lange (1991) are among several authors who explain the increasing use of ‘BE like’ in American English as a possible case of grammaticalization in progress (Meehan 1991, Ferrera and Bell 1995, Tagliamonte and Hudson 1999, Andersen 2001). Their account is commonly referred to as the most highly developed exposition of the grammaticalization of ‘like’ by several authors (Ferrera and Bell 1995, Tagliamonte and Hudson 1999, Andersen 2001). They describe grammaticalization as a unidirectional historical process whereby words acquire a new status as grammatical or morphosyntactic forms (1991: 270-279) observing that change is often gradual as old forms take on new functions during which time there is a transition stage where old and new meanings co-exist, giving rise to ambiguity. This analysis is based on Traugott’s model of grammaticalization (1982 cited in Romaine and Lange 1991: 257-265), whereby it is seen as a semantic / pragmatic process rather than as a syntactic one, with a gradual change form semantic to pragmatic meaning for the linguistic item involved. Romaine and Lange (1991) presume that it
is the syntactic functions of 'like' as a preposition and a suffix that provide the kind of grammatical context from which 'like' can be extended to focus on a whole clause sentence or chunk of discourse as in its use in this respect (1991: 257-265).

Tagliamonte and Hudson claim that until the 1990's the construction 'BE like' appeared to be entirely confined to the United States (1999:149). Evidence of its usage in the United Kingdom dates from Stenström et al's (1996) account which observes that whilst the marker 'like' is a 'very frequent' linguistic item in the speech of London teenagers in general, in most cases it is not used in the quotative function, leading her to conclude that the quotative use is a later stage in the grammaticalization process than other uses of 'like' as a marker and that in COLT recorded in 1993, the expression had not been grammaticalized to the same extent as in American English (Stenström et al 1996: 118). Nor was it as prevalent in Tagliamonte and Hudson's 1999 data from York, recorded in 1996 (Tagliamonte and Hudson 1999).

From a Relevance Theoretic perspective, quotative 'Be like' is considered a marker of interpretative use, that is, it is used to signal that an utterance is a loose representation of the thought it represents and as such is an expression of 'non-identical resemblance between utterance and thought (Andersen 2001: 228).

2.5.4 The pragmatic functions of 'like'

Apart from its use as a new reporting verb, American 'like' has been observed to serve in a number of pragmatic capacities in both the textual and subjective communicative domains.
A hesitational / linking device

Firstly, there is a tradition to describe the marker as a "hesitational device" or even as a meaningless "filler" or "textual gap-filler" in dictionaries and grammar references as in the following description by Landy, 'Like', expression used in sentences as a filler or hesitation word instead of 'uhmm', has no real meaning' (Landy 1971: 120). In this interpretation American 'like' is often said to be associated with planning difficulties, false starts and self-repairs. This idea corroborates Schourup's (1985:65) characterization of the marker as a so-called 'evincive', that is an item which indicates that a speaker is engaged in thinking. Several empirical accounts confirm that 'like' is often used in these capacities to accompany false starts, self-repairs and cut-off utterances (Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001). Furthermore, it has been observed to provide a link between propositional elements that may be syntactically or logically unrelated. Indeed this is viewed as the main textual potential of the marker (Andersen 2001, Jucker et al 2002). However, some authors emphasize that there are a number of important reasons why American 'like' cannot be dismissed as merely acting as a hesitational filler, even though there are occasions when it can and does serve this role (Romaine and Lange 1991, Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001). Firstly, it is observed to occur where there is no evidence of any planning difficulties (as may be indicated by the speed of production and the coherence of the discourse) and secondly, unlike fillers such as 'er' or 'uhm' which do not carry any real meaning, the marker can be seen to make a semantic contribution to an utterance as when it acts as a hedge / approximator and modifies the propositional strength of the unit of discourse. Furthermore, Andersen suggests that this interpretation of 'like' cannot explain the synchronic and diachronic facts of its usage. As she states, 'the fact that it carries traces of an original lexical meaning', 'similar to', suggests that its distribution is not as random as that of hesitational devices such as 'eh' and 'uhm' and that its use cannot be down to planning difficulties only (2001: 229). Further, that
the new 'like' features significantly in the speech of the London teenagers she observed in a hesitational / linking capacity for two important reasons. Firstly, from a Relevance Theoretical perspective she believes that the association between 'like' and planning difficulties may be interpreted as a signal that adolescents are metalinguistically conscious, concerned with the appropriateness of linguistic expression and perhaps even aware of their relative inexperience in language use. In addition, Andersen proposes that when used in this capacity 'like' may serve to increase linguistic politeness and solidarity between teenagers as 'it provides speakers with a tool for not sounding too assertive allowing them to express themselves with a tentative attitude' (2001: 239).

A focuser
A number of studies have observed the functional capacity of 'like' to act as a focuser of information within a unit of discourse (Underhill 1988, Meehan 1991, Romaine and Lange 1991, Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001). Underhill proposes, in an American context, that the marker serves primarily as a device 'to achieve non-contrastive focus' as in, 'Her car was 'like' stuck on top' where it marks off new entities or concepts. As Underhill states, '[w]ith overwhelming preponderance in the data 'like' is a new information marker' (1988: 236). Meehan's (1991) account also observes that the marker usually precedes lexical information with a high information value. The focusing role of new 'like' has also been noted by Stenström et al (1996) and Andersen (2001) in the speech of London teenagers. However, Andersen claims that the main reason for the use of 'like' in this respect is not related to the 'newness' of the information but rather to the fact that the information belongs to a linguistic domain that is both conceptually and stylistically outside the speaker's normal terms of reference or grasp. Thus, she describes the 'regular correlation between the use of 'like' and the occurrence of lexical material which is from a foreign conceptual domain, is sociolinguistically unfitting, stylistically
marked, or which appears to involve a relatively high production cost on the part of the speaker, as in the following example,

‘Cos I thought, it’d be ‘like’ you know, for you know ‘like’ political things.

(2001: 247)

She suggests that the marker ‘like’ is unlikely to occur in front of highly familiar concepts and mutually manifest concepts and explains the high frequency of use of this item by teenagers in this capacity to the fact that they are still at a developmental stage as far as linguistic competence and vocabulary are concerned. Thus, it indicates the teenagers’ ‘lack of full incorporation of an expression in their linguistic repertoire’, (2001: 246) that is, it is a way for teenagers to show that the expression is part of someone else’s rather than their own language. In this way ‘like’ acts as a metalinguistic focus on ‘advanced’, ‘uncommon’ or ‘foreign expressions’ in teenagers’ speech.

A marker of ‘approximation’, ‘looseness’, and ‘exemplification’

In addition to its quotative, hesitational / linking and focusing functions, there is a tradition to describe American ‘like’ as a marker of approximation. Several authors use the Relevance Theoretic framework to account for the various usages of the marker in the category of hedge / approximator (Shourup 1985, Meehan 1991, Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001, Jucker et al 2002). Shourup provides a long list of sub-categories of usage in this respect. However, he stresses the similarity of these functions in that they are ‘markers of non-equivalence between a statement and what the speaker has in mind’. As he states, ‘like’ is used to express a possible unspecified non-equivalence of what is said and what is meant’ (1985:197). This usage occurs for example where ‘like’ acts as an approximator preceding some sort of measurable or quantifiable unit and where the presence of ‘like’ results in some sort of vagueness on the item as in,
‘He ran ‘like’ forty miles’. (1985: 198)

Schourup suggests in this case the marker can be substituted by a number of adverbial glosses such as ‘approximately’ ‘and ‘say’. Its function is to provide the hearer with a ‘cue’ that the most relevant information in this context is a ‘less-than –literal-one’. (1985:198). Jucker et al (2002) also refer to the marker in relation to a sub-category of vague expressions they define as ‘additives’ similarly used to denote imprecisions of quantity, which include other expressions such as ‘about’ and ‘around’.

In addition to its capacity to qualify a numerical expression some theorists have also observed the use of the new ‘like’ as a hedging device where it qualifies the semantic features of the following phrase. However, opinion in this respect is divided as to the extent to which the marker can contribute to the truth-conditionality of an utterance. In the following example provided by Andersen from the COLT data, ‘like’ is seen to bring about a qualification of the concept.

“No, its not that bad the game actually it’s alright but it is a bit sort of ‘like’ boring when it, when you play it everyday”.

(2001: 235)

In this case, as Andersen points out, the speaker is not stating that the game is entirely boring but has reduced the strength of the proposition by means of ‘like’. She suggests that here the marker can be viewed as similar in meaning to other ‘modifiers’ such as ‘a bit’ ‘sort of’ and ‘kind of’. (2001: 235). Jucker et al (2002) also suggest that there may be a very close connection between the marker ‘like’ and ordinary truth conditional adverbials such as those listed in Andersen’s account. Further, they observe that marker ‘like’ is often supported in its role as a ‘hedge’ or ‘downtoner’, as they refer to it by its collocation with other ‘downtoners’ in
fixed or semi-fixed expressions as in the following examples of what they label 'double' and 'treble hedges',

I feel 'like' kind of stupid' (double hedge)

'She was 'like' kind of like my superior' (treble hedge)  
(Jucker et al 2002: 1747)

As we have noted previously, for Relevance Theorists 'downtoners' represent a 'loose use' of language indicating that the meaning the speaker wants to convey is not sufficiently covered by an available word. Thus, the use of 'like' as in the examples indicated, signals that while 'stupid' and 'superior' may be the closest category the speaker can think of, it is an inexact representation of her thought and it warns the hearer against an interpretation of meaning that is too specific to this concept (Jucker et al 2002). Andersen describes 'like' as a marker which acts 'mainly as a procedural constraint' but which 'may on occasions contribute to the truth conditionality of utterances' (2001: 262). Ifantidou (1994 cited in Jucker et al 2002: 17) refers to 'sort of' and 'kind of' in a similar vein. However, Andersen suggests that there are differences between markers 'like' and 'sort of' and 'kind of' when used in this capacity, observing that the meaning of 'like' is more difficult to pin down conceptually and that the use of 'like' can be more constrained than that of the other two markers. By way of example, she suggests that 'like; cannot be the object of a negative metalinguistic focus whilst this is possible for 'sort of' as is illustrated below.

In order words, a speaker cannot be accused of giving an untruthful or inadequate description of a state of affairs, as in example b) due to the occurrence of 'like' in an utterance.

a.    Peter: You were 'sort of' drunk last might weren't you?  
      Mary: I wasn't 'sort of' drunk. I was drunk.
b. Peter: You were 'like' drunk last night 'weren't you?  
   Mary: I wasn't 'like' drunk. I was drunk.

This leads Andersen to propose that in such cases the role of 'like' must be described as procedural rather than conceptual (2001: 262).

As noted earlier, the use of the pragmatic marker 'like' as a hedging device has been referred to by a number of analysts in recent years in an Irish setting (Clancy 2000, Farr and O'Keeffe 2002, O'Keeffe 2003). These accounts are mainly concerned with an examination of the strategy in adult language across a variety of speech genres. They share in common the belief that hedging can only be fully understood in terms of its societal context. Politeness is viewed as a highly valued attribute in Irish society as a result of which Irish speakers tend to use hedging items more than speakers in other English language varieties, in order to downtone assertiveness and directness (Asian and McCullogh 1997, Farr and O'Keeffe 2002). Brown and Levinson's Politeness framework (1987) is used by these analysts to account for the role of hedging in this context. However, it should be noted that all references to hedging in the above mentioned accounts refer only to the clause final syntactic pattern of usage and not the American variety. A more detailed discussion of this usage in respect of Irish data is undertaken in sub-section 4.8 of Chapter 4.

An exemplifier

The marker is also viewed by some authors (Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001, Jucker et al 2002) as a different sub-type to that of numerical approximator and hedge, within this broad category, when it acts as an exemplifier. In this capacity the role of 'like' is to instruct the hearer to look for a semantically wider concept than the one linguistically encoded, as in the following example where it signals that the following noun phrase is
to be considered as an exemplification of wider categories. In this role it is suggested that 'like' can be substituted by the adverbial gloss 'for example',

'I know but it wouldn't be any point if someone wanted to be 'like' a doctor and they got into a nursery place'.

(Andersen 2001: 236)

These are also examples of less-than literal communication to facilitate processing efforts.

**A metalinguistic cue**

Andersen adds two different sub-categories to the role of 'like' within the broad category of approximator, which she claims previous analysts working within this framework have not previously recognised. These are where the marker serves in a metaphorical or hyperbolic usage as in the following examples:

1. 'He said oh she's just you know she she's 'like' sailed through [name of school] she gets out of everything. (metaphor) (2001: 237)

2. Its just 'like' all [his hair] sticking out all over the place. (hyperbole) (2001: 237)

Here it is suggested that the meaning of 'like' corresponds more closely to 'virtually' in the sense of '[I]n effect, though not formally or explicit' (OED 1989 XIX: 675 cited in Andersen 2001: 238). Andersen refers to these patterns as the metalinguistic uses of 'like', that is, that the marker has the function of putting the following expression in a metalinguistic focus. This allows the speaker to express an attitude of 'reduced lexical commitment' towards the linguistic material that falls within its scope (Stubbs 1986 cited in Andersen 2001: 244). It is suggested that teenagers may use 'like' in
these respects to mark a psychological distance towards an expression because they are genuinely uncertain as to its appropriateness due to lack of linguistic maturity or to mark a departure from the stylistic norms of their age-group. It may also be applied in this usage to invoke solidarity since it has the effect of helping the speaker to avoid sounding too assertive or confident (2001:245).

2.6 Usage in relation to age and gender

Whilst the common perception of American 'like' as a highly prominent feature of teenage speech is largely borne out by the empirical evidence, its popular image as a highly visible phenomenon of 'teenage girl talk' is shown to be less convincing. Much of the data in respect of these findings relates almost entirely to the use of quotative 'Be like' by American teenagers. In respect of age variation, general studies of the various usages show a significant correlation between speaker's age and the extent to which the speakers use the marker 'like'. Blyth et al (1990) observe that the use of 'like' dropped off sharply after the age of twenty-five and disappeared altogether from the age of thirty-eight. This pattern is corroborated by the COLT findings which show that the frequency of use of 'like' in a general capacity by London teenagers 'seems to drop dramatically after age twenty' (Stenström et al 1996: 91) However, it is primarily the older British adolescents in their teens who have adopted this feature and it is seen to be used slightly less amongst younger adolescents (Andersen 2001: 288)

In relation to the gender distribution of the marker, several American-based empirical accounts reveal that quotative 'Be like' is more favoured by teenage girls than teenage boys in line with the commonly held perception of this feature (Tannen 1986, Romaine and Lange 1991, Ferrera and Bell 1995). Indeed, in her 1986 account, Tannen refers to it as 'valley girl talk', attributing its popularity amongst mainly young white middle class females to a 'highly involved conversational style' which involves discussing topics
of a more interpersonal nature and the greater use of dialogue (1986: 56). This view supports Lakoff’s claim that women tend to use more direct quotes than men (Lakoff 1973) although Nordberg considers quotation techniques to be an important style marker of adolescent speech in general in a Swedish context (1987 translated and cited in Romaine and Lange 91:213). Similar to Tannen’s findings, Romaine and Lange’s study reveals that quotative ‘Be like’ is favoured considerably more by teenage girls than boys. However, they do not claim that girls are more likely to use this item as a quotative complementizer, but that they actually use more of the kind of constructed dialogue that calls for the use of the marker ‘like’ in this capacity (1991: 270). However, significantly, Blyth et al (1990) and Dailey-O’Cain (2000) found that male speakers use quotative ‘Be like’ more than females thus contradicting the findings of previous American based research which showed that it is girls who are in the forefront of the grammaticalization of this construction. Ferrera and Bell’s account suggests that the use of this construction is first adopted by females but that gender based variation is gradually neutralised (1995: 42). The COLT findings, in respect of London teenage use are also to some extent inconclusive in this respect for, whilst they find that it is largely the female speakers who use ‘like’, it is observed that when the marker is analysed more generally, there are no significant gender differences as for example in relation to its use in a quotative and textual capacity. Eckert’s research also finds no gender differences in the general use of the pragmatic marker ‘like’ in the speech of the American high-school teenagers she observed, leading her to conclude that ‘there is no simple relationship between gender and the discourse marker ‘like’. (2003:395). Yet, as she points out, the popular misconception of ‘like’ as a phenomenon of ‘teenage girl talk’ persists, as do other deeply entrenched gender-specific linguistic stereotypes of how men and women speak.
2.7 Summary of Chapter 2

There has been a growing interest in the pragmatic aspects of language use in recent years reflecting a general trend in discourse analysis. However, teenage language remains under researched in this respect. The transitory nature of the teenage years make it an important life-stage for the study of age differences in language use and to examine the relationship between language and gender. Teenagers lead in the use of innovative language and as a result often find themselves subject to prescriptive criticism in this respect. One important feature of conversational language is the use of vague expressions which are typically associated with the language of teenagers and females in particular and may be used to facilitate processes of pragmatic inference and to promote politeness between speakers. Pragmatic markers are one of a number of linguistic items which speakers avail of for these purposes. Whilst the spread of the unconventional American 'like' has generated much interest in linguistic circles in recent years, no research to date has been undertaken into this usage in an Irish setting although some analysts have referred to a well-established tradition of use for 'like' in a pragmatic capacity in adult Irish-English. The new 'like' is typically associated with teenagers and said to be particularly popular with teenage girls. Previous accounts confirm that it is indeed a highly visible phenomenon of teenage language use for a variety of reasons which can be linked to cognitive and social factors pertaining to teenagers as a sociolinguistic group. However, the question of gender differentiation remains largely unresolved. Many analysts draw on Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (1986,1995) as a framework for the analysis of the many uses of the marker in conversational speech. In an Irish socio-cultural setting, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987) may also be applied in order to gain an understanding of the hedging aspect of usage of the marker which is uniquely important to the Irish-English context.
Chapter 3

Methodology
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 The Approach

The methodology of the study involved data collection of discourse for analysis. Nunan (1992: 77) describes a research methodology whose aim is to probe deeply and to analyse the intensity of the multifarious phenomenon that constitutes the life cycle of a unit with a view to establishing generalisation about the wider population to which the unit belongs. This ability to establish generalisations is essential to the study because it deals with the issue of the representativeness of the corpus which clearly contains the recorded speech of only six people. Therefore, the data are not representative in any sense. Rather, this research is more like a case study which is aimed at allowing a meaningful interpretation of the speech of 'the unit', which in this case is a group of teenagers. This approach offers the researcher the opportunity to go from the particular to the general and attempts to provide a picture of what is going on in a particular setting at a particular time (Nunan 1992: 77).

3.2 Data collection

The data needed for the study was relevant extracts from the two corpora and lexico-grammatical information provided by frequency counts and concordance sheets of various lexical items. It was located in two corpora of conversational English, a 6,000 word corpus of teenage girl talk referred to henceforth by the acronym TGT and a 6,000 word corpus of teenage boy talk, identified as TBT. The data are situated in the 'intimate sub-genre' of speech genres as defined and classified by McCarthy (1998: 10) and in the area of 'collaborative idea' (e.g. making arrangements, plans, decisions) (McCarthy 1998: 10). No other goal types are represented in the data. To build the two corpora, spoken data was collected by the researcher from two same-sex groups, each made up of three fourteen-year old teenagers. Each group contributed forty-five minutes of recordings of spoken data,
which were transcribed by the researcher. These transcriptions are contained in Appendix B). The total recording time therefore was one hour and thirty minutes, resulting in a total of 12,000 words of transcribed speech which were stored on a floppy disk for later analysis. The recordings were made on three separate occasions, one week apart, in fifteen minute sessions. One session for each group, took place in the common room of the teenager's school and two sessions respectively, in one of the teenager's homes. A Sony Dictaphone Recorder with a microphone attached was used, which the teenagers operated themselves. No other person was present at the time of the recordings. The teenagers involved were told that the researcher was interested in finding out about teenage language but they were not told the specific language focus. This gave them little opportunity to react to any given situation and adjust their speech accordingly.

3.3 Ethical considerations

All research involves issues of confidentiality and this is particularly important when the subjects of the research are minors as in this study. I have taken the following measures to protect the rights and confidentiality of the subjects involved. First, the written agreement of the individual parents and teenagers who took part in the study was obtained. These are contained in Appendix A. Second, the names of all the participating teenagers were anonymised in the transcripts of the recordings. Thirdly, it was agreed by all parties involved in the study that the teenagers and parents had the right both to view the transcripts of the recordings before they were computerised and to withdraw from the project at any stage. These conditions were specified on the consent forms which were signed by all parties.
3.4 Additional data used in the research

This study is based primarily on the data of the two corpora outlined previously, namely TGT and TBT. For contrastive analytical purposes, the researcher also draws on the data of the Limerick Corpus of Irish English, referred to henceforth as L-CIE, and the Corpus of London Teenage English, known by its acronym COLT. LCIE is a spoken corpus of one million words of Irish English. Its compilation began at the University of Limerick in 2002 and is still in progress. The Corpus contains mainly adult conversations recorded throughout Ireland (excluding Northern Ireland) in predominantly informal settings. The overall emphasis is on casual conversation (82% of the data), the remaining 18% comprising professional transactional and pedagogic data. COLT, as its name suggests, is a corpus of the spoken language of London teenagers. It was designed and compiled in the early 1990’s by a research team from Bergen University in Norway and consists of half a million words of casual conversational English held between 13-17 year old girls and boys from different parts of London and from various ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

3.5 The conversations

Before outlining the methodological steps undertaken in the study, I feel it would be valuable to briefly describe some of the most salient features which emerged from the teenage recordings in order to provide a fleeting glimpse of the teenage world and gain some insight into the reasons for the linguistic behaviour of this age group. The conversations are colourful, loud, often extremely funny and highly irreverent. They suggest an attitude towards life which is laid back and introspective and a preoccupation with activities and concerns including eating, friendships, romance, sport, earning pocket money, shopping, fast cars and sex – with the girls by far the most interested and knowledgeable in respect of the latter. There is also a great deal of verbal humour and friendly banter but at times this borders on outright insult and verbal abuse. Again, here the girls seem to
be the worst offenders. The boys spent more time talking about food – or rather the lack of it, TV programmes they had watched and the merits and costs of various cars and motor bikes. The girls were more concerned with finding out who fancied who, who said what to who, making social plans for the week-end and complaining about teachers they disliked. Schoolwork was discussed by the boys who complained about dodderly teachers, unfair grades and cheating in exams, but not by themselves. The overriding impressions to be gained from the recordings was the youthfulness of the speakers, their closeness to each other, particularly the girls, the lack of inhibition and the frankness with which the speakers expressed their views and opinions. The youthfulness and intimacy of the speakers is reflected in the type of language they used with each other.

3.6 Methodology

The methodological part of this study consisted of both a quantitative and qualitative corpus analysis of the data using both Wordsmith Tools computer Software Programme (Scott 1997) where this was appropriate, and a manual examination of the data by the researcher, where this was necessary. I used for example, word frequency lists from Wordsmith Tools. However, most of the identification and classification of the marker ‘like’ into syntactic and functional patterns was undertaken manually due to the ambiguous nature of ‘like’ as a linguistic item that is, it exists both as a traditional grammatical item and as a pragmatic marker. Furthermore, two different syntactic and functional traditions of usage emerged for the marker, an older variety and the American type and only a manual examination of the data could make these crucial distinctions.
Chapter 4

Findings and Analysis
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to undertake both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data. This will involve a superficial overview of the extent to which Irish teenage girls and boys use the pragmatic marker 'like' both in relation to adults and to each other and a comparison will be made between the linguistic behaviour of Irish and London teenagers in this respect drawing on the data of COLT. The findings of this research will be compared with those of previous accounts and an attempt made to offer explanations for similarities and differences which have emerged in respect of the various usages of the marker in female and male teenage speech and also between speakers in the two age groups. The final part of this chapter consists of a theoretical analysis of how the marker is used by the teenagers in this study using Sperber and Wilson’s Relevance Theory (1986, 1995) to interpret many of the functional uses of 'like' and Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory (1987), specifically in relation to the use of 'like' as a hedging device in an Irish setting. Before this, there is a brief discussion which highlights some of the analytical difficulties which arise in general in researching the pragmatic use of language and more specifically, those problems which occurred for the researcher in this study in interpreting the many and varied uses of 'like' as a pragmatic marker.

4.1 Analytical problems

Identifying and classifying the various uses of 'like' proved difficult for a number of reasons. First, problems of indeterminacy or fuzziness are generally often caused by the fragmentary and elliptic nature of conversational language (Biber et al 1999). Furthermore, an examination of the pragmatic use of language is not an easy task for it is based on a number of assumptions about what the speaker intended to communicate on the basis of a restricted set of linguistic features. In order to interpret the speaker’s intention, it is necessary to draw on a variety of contextual means where possible, such as information about the topic, previous and up-
coming discourse and assumptions about speaker and hearers’ relationships that can be inferred from the conversations. Where possible it is also necessary to make an appeal to extralinguistic information about the setting and the sociocultural aspect of use. The empirical approach to pragmatic aspects of conversation must to a certain degree, therefore, involve an element of guesswork concerning the explicit and implicit context of utterances.

Additional difficulties arose due to the ambiguous nature of ‘like’ as a linguistic item. As noted in Chapter 2, pragmatic markers are a highly complex class for analysis due to their syntactic versality and multifunctional capacity (Schiffrin 1987). Markers such as ‘like’ which are engaged in on-going grammaticalization pose even greater challenges for researchers (Romaine and Lange 1991). For example, several previous analysts refer to the difficulties of distinguishing between the status of ‘like’ as a conventional grammatical item or as a pragmatic marker within a unit of discourse (Stenström et al. 1996, Andersen 2001). Problems of this nature were also observed in this study. On several occasions the status of ‘like’ was unclear as in the following example where its interpretation as a verb or as a pragmatic marker was possible. In such cases the item was omitted from classification.

Extract 1: TGT: All of them ‘like’ Limerick

Problems of indeterminacy were even more complex in relation to the collocation ‘It’s like’, as in

Extract 2: TBT: It’s actually pretty good it’s ‘like’ this is alright

This usage involved a whole set of possible interpretations depending on whether the status of ‘it’ was that of a reference pronoun or a referentially empty item. In such ambiguous cases, it was necessary for the researcher
to examine prosodic, phonological and contextual features in order to be able to identify class categories. For example, Andersen suggests that the presence of a pause before ‘like’ may often be an indication of pragmatic marker use whereas ‘like’ in its more conventional grammatical usage usually occurs as part of an uninterrupted flow of dialogue. However, other factors may intervene so that this must be viewed as a general guide rather than a hard and fast rule (Andersen 2001: 232). Finally, the identification and classification of the various functional uses of the marker also proved a difficult task due to a number of factors such as the ambiguity of scope of the item in a unit of discourse and also in respect of its pragmatic interpretation. This is illustrated in the following example where ‘like’ acts in a multifunctional capacity in the utterance and may be interpreted in a number of ways such as, as an exemplifier, a hesitational device or discourse link and as a hedge, respectively.

Extract 3: TGT: You see em those Russians ‘like’ are usually ‘like’ they’re really annoying ‘like’.

Thus, in line with previous accounts ‘like’ proved a difficult item for linguistic analysis (Romaine and Lange 1991, Andersen 2001).

4.2 Frequency lists for ‘like’ across varieties

An investigation of the extent of usage of ‘like’ as a lexical item in all of its uses (i.e. grammatical and pragmatic), through a measurement of word rank and frequencies in both the teenager and adult data revealed that it is a highly visible linguistic feature of contemporary Irish English in respect of both teenage and adult usage.
Table 4.1: Word rank and raw frequencies of 'like' in TGT, TBT and L-CIE.

Table 4.1 shows that 'like' ranks 13th in adult speech as compared to 3rd in both the female and male teenage data, occurring in 164 or 154 cases respectively, that is 32,300 wpm and 29,400 wpm in TGT and TBT as compared to 10,473 wpm in L-CIE. Thus, whilst this item figures prominently in the speech of both age groups, it is significantly higher in the teenage data. These findings suggest that 'like' has multiple usages and confirm previous research which indicates that it is an item which may be used in a variety of capacities (Romaine and Lange 1991, Stenström et al. 1996, Andersen 2001).

4.3 'Like' in pragmatic marker and non-pragmatic marker functions

A manual examination of the data revealed the two types of usages for 'like', referred to in previous accounts as traditional grammatical or non-pragmatic usage and pragmatic marker usage (Romaine and Lange 1991, Andersen 2001). Due to constraints of time, a random sample of 100
entries was taken from the 10,473 occurrences of 'like' in L-CIE for classification purposes in this respect in the adult data. The findings for TGT, TBT and L-CIE are illustrated in Chart 4.1.

Chart 4.1: Categorisation of 'like' as a pragmatic / non – pragmatic marker in TGT, TBT, L-CIE and COLT.

Chart 4.1 reveals that 'like' is used more frequently as a marker than as a standard grammatical item by both the Irish adults and teenagers. Nevertheless, it is markedly more popular amongst teenage girls and boys occurring in this capacity in 134 cases constituting a remarkable 82% or 820,000 in TGT and 131 cases, representing 85% or 850,000 in TBT compared to 70 occurrences, that is 70% or 700000 wpm in L-CIE for adult usage. These figures confirm the findings of previous research which indicates that the use of 'like' as a marker is more visible in teenage rather than adult speech (Romaine and Lange 1991, Stenström et al 1996, Tagliamonte and Hudson 1999). The high levels of usage of 'like' in this capacity by Irish teenagers are all the more striking when compared with the findings of COLT in this respect i.e. 40% / 60% for pragmatic / non pragmatic usage of 'like' by London teenagers (Stenström et al 1996). There are a number of possible explanations for this large discrepancy between Irish and London teenage usage. Firstly, the COLT recordings were made in the early 1990's when the pragmatic use of 'like' may not have been as well-established as it is today. Secondly, there is some evidence to suggest that 'like' has been used as a pragmatic marker in
Ireland for some time (Clancy 2000, O’Keeffe 2003) in a different and additional usage to that observed in most recent accounts including the COLT research, that is in a pattern which pre-dates the new American borrowing which is generally agreed to have emerged in the 1960’s and to have since spread to the United Kingdom (Tagliamonte and Hudson 1999). Thus, the high levels of usage of the marker in Ireland by both adults and teenagers may in fact reflect two different traditions of usage which when combined in terms of overall frequency produce such noticeably high figures in the Irish data.

4.4 ‘Like’ as a pragmatic marker; two syntactic patterns of usage

A manual examination of the data for the purpose of establishing whether these two different varieties of pragmatic marker usage existed in TGT, TBT, and L-CIE, that is an American pattern, as described in several previous accounts, where ‘like’ precedes the item it relates to (Romaine and Lange 1991, Stenström et al 1996) as in, ‘he’s ‘like’ weird’ and a more traditional variety, wherein ‘like’ is said to occur in a clause final position (Miller and Weinert 1995, Clancy 2000, O’Keeffe 2003) as in, ‘were you there ‘like?’”, produced findings which supported this view.

![Chart 4.2: Categorisation of ‘like’ as a pragmatic marker into 2 patterns of usage in TGT, TBT and L-CIE.](chart)

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Chart 4.2 shows that the two syntactic patterns of usage were observed in both the teenage and adult Irish data. For the former group, the American and traditional varieties accounted for 105 cases representing 78% or 780,000 wpm and 29 cases representing 22% or 220,000 wpm for TGT and 105 cases representing 81% or 810,000 and 25 cases representing 19% or 190,000 wpm for TBT in the two patterns, respectively, by comparison with 29 cases representing 41% or 410,000 and 41 cases representing 59% or 590,000 wpm, in the adult data for American and traditional clause final ‘like’, respectively. These figures indicate that there are significant differences in teenage and adult usage in relation to these two varieties with adults tending to favour the traditional clause final pattern whereas the American type is the more dominant of the two usages in both the female and male teenage data. The extent of usage of both varieties was similar to a high degree in the speech of the teenage girls and boys in the study. These findings would seem to corroborate the conclusions of several previous studies which find that American ‘like’ is more typically associated with teenage rather than adult speech (Romaine and Lange 1991, Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001). Crucially, it also supports empirical research by Eckert (1988), Stenström et al (1995) and Andersen (2001) which find little difference between female and male frequency of usage for the marker in general. Thus, the findings of this study refute the popular stereotypical view of American ‘like’ as a linguistic feature favoured more by teenage girls than teenage boys.

4.5 ‘Like’ as a pragmatic marker; syntactic patterns in TGT, TBT, L-CIE and COLT

This sub-section examines the range of syntactic patterns which occur within the American and clause-final varieties of usage for ‘like’ as a marker in order to compare and contrast, where possible, how ‘like’ is used by the female and male teenage speakers in this respect, in relation to each other, their London counterparts and also Irish adult speakers.
4.5.1 Syntactic patterns for American ‘like’ in TGT, TBT, L-CIE and COLT

A manual examination of the data was required in order to be able to identify, classify and compare syntactic patterns for American ‘like’ in the various speech varieties. The marker was observed to occur in a number of patterns in the Irish data in the frequencies illustrated in Table 4.2. Whilst a similar range of patterns was noted in the London data, no figures for frequencies of usage were available in this respect. The large scale of the corpus (ie. 500,000 words) may have made a manual examination of the data for these purposes an impractical task Stenström et al (1996), Andersen (2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of syntactic patterns and example of usage</th>
<th>Frequencies of occurrences in TGT, TBT and L-CIE - sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Between clause elements. Extract 4 TGT</td>
<td>Occs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is in the charts and that ‘like’ I haven’t really got any favourite group.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Prior to an item focused on. Extract 5 TBT</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had ‘like’ to live here all the same</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Between propositions. Extract 6 L-CIE</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She’s gone ‘like’, it doesn’t matter though</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In ‘Be like’. Extract 7 TGT</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m ‘like’ but he did this.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. In ‘It’s like’. Extract 8 TBT</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s ‘like’ she never buys enough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of occurrences of American ‘like’</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Frequencies of types of syntactic patterns for American ‘like’ in TGT, TBT and L-CIE.

As Table 4.2 indicates, American ‘like’ occurs overwhelmingly in the second type of syntactic pattern where it precedes an item it focuses on or relates to in some way, in both the teenage and adult data, with 63%, 75% and 62% of all occurrences of the marker to be found in this syntactic location in TGT, TBT and L-CIE, respectively. It is least used in the construction ‘It’s
'like' by all speaker groups occurring in only 5% and 4% in the teenage male and female data, respectively, and in 7% of cases in adult use. The most significant difference that emerges is the markedly higher usage of 'Be like' by the female speakers who use it in 20% of all cases as compared to only 7% for the teenage male and adult speakers. As will be seen, these syntactic patterns largely reflect the functional patterns of usage for the marker. The wide range of syntactic patterns observed for American 'like' in the Irish data reveal the syntactic versatility of the marker and as such corroborates previous findings in this respect (Romaine and Lange 1991, Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001).

4.5.2. Lexical clustering with American 'like'

In this sub-section I would like to briefly mention some recurrent patterns that typically occur in the female and male data and compare frequencies in these respects with those to be found in other speech varieties. As Table 4.3 shows 'like' has a tendency to co-occur with either another pragmatic marker or with clusters of pragmatic markers in a similar range of patterns in the various corpora. However, the frequencies for these individual items tend to vary considerably in respect of the different speech varieties.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'Like' collocates with:</th>
<th>Example of usage</th>
<th>Frequencies of occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TGT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Occs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. And</td>
<td>Extract 9 TGT</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'And 'like' they go round thieving at night.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. cos / because</td>
<td>Extract 10 TGT</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'It's actually kind of bad cos 'like' it's...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I mean</td>
<td>Extract 11 TBT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'I mean 'like' what did he say'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. but</td>
<td>Extract 12 TBT</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'But 'like' you can wait'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. you know</td>
<td>Extract 13 TBT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'It's you know 'like' crap'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. yeah</td>
<td>Extract 14 TGT</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Yeah 'like' she's such a cow'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. then</td>
<td>Extract 15 L-CIE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'then 'like' he goes...'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. so</td>
<td>Extract 16 L-CIE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'So 'like' what do you mean?'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. sort of</td>
<td>Extract 17 TGT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'It's sort of 'like' annoying'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. kind of</td>
<td>Extract 18 TBT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'He's kind of 'like' handicapped'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Frequencies of common collocations of American 'like' in TGT, TBT, L-CIE and COLT.

As Table 4.3 shows, the most popular collocation in the Irish data is 'you know 'like' which occurs significantly in the adult discourse, that is, in 24% of cases, but only seldomly for both groups of teenagers, that is, in 2% of occurrences in both TGT and TBT. Interestingly, 'yeah 'like'' is the most common recurring pattern for both groups of teenagers constituting 5% and 6% of all cases of the marker in the female and male teenage speech, respectively. It is a pattern used slightly less by the Irish adults occurring in 7% of cases but surprisingly, it does not feature at all in the COLT findings presumably because its frequency of usage is so insignificant. However, it
is mainly connectives that tend to collocate with 'like', in the Irish teenage discourse, the most common ones being 'cos / because', (8% and 7% in TGT and TBT respectively), 'but' (7% and 5%), and 'and' (6% and 4%).

The most striking finding from a comparative perspective is the high degree of similarity of usage for these items by the female and male teenage speakers across the range of collocations and the large discrepancies which exist between the Irish teenagers and their London counterparts in respect of the use of the connectives 'and', 'cos / because' and 'but', which are significantly higher in the COLT data where they are observed to work as fixed or semi-fixed expressions achieving an almost formulaic status in the speech of the London teenagers (Andersen 2001: 234). The function of 'like' in these contexts is typically to provide a discourse link or to signal speaker continuation i.e. it has a textual / hesitacional function. These discourse links contribute as one unit to the textuality and coherence of the discourse and function as a starting point also for further talk as is illustrated in the following extracts from the Irish teenage conversations.

Extract 19: TGT She kept staring at her and 'like' she goes...

Extract 20: TBT I know cos 'like' his Mam won't let him.

Extract 21: L-CIE I mean 'like' they go down to Kerry every summer.

Apart from this discourse / hesitacional usage, there is a general similarity between the three teenage groups in respect of the items they chose to use 'like' in connection with. The most significant difference between the Irish adult and teenage discourse is the fact that the former group use hedges such as 'you know 'like'' and 'I mean 'like'' significantly more than the younger speakers and also 'kind of 'like''; but to a lesser degree. These expressions are commonly used in a subjective capacity as a device for mak[ing] the reference of an entity vague and less well -defined rather than clear and specific (Aijmer 1984:118). These findings corroborate Jucker et
aI's account (2002: 1747), referred to earlier, which suggests that there is a tendency for 'like' to collocate with this type of linguistic item in what they refer to as 'double' or 'treble hedges' in order to strengthen this role in conversational speech.

4.5.3 ‘Like’ as a pragmatic marker; syntactic patterns in the traditional variety in the Irish data

Within this variety of usage, ‘like’ was observed to occur only in a clause-final position in both the adult and the teenage Irish data. This finding supports Miller and Weinert’s (1995) description of a similar syntactic pattern used by speakers in rural communities in Northern Britain, noted in Chapter 2, which they claim could date as far back as two hundred years. It also corroborates accounts by Clancy (2000) and O’Keeffe (2003), also referred to earlier, which observe this syntactic usage in an Irish setting, in mainly adult data. However, whilst Miller and Weinert refer only to a clause-final ‘like’ in propositional utterances, the Irish researchers also describe the use of ‘like’ in this syntactic pattern in interrogative statements (Clancy 2000, O’Keeffe 2003). The presence of both propositional and interrogative clause-final occurrence of ‘like’ was observed in all of the Irish speech varieties in this study, as is illustrated in the following extracts from TGT, TBT and L-CIE:

Extract 22: TGT:  I dunno, it was a present ‘like’
Extract 23: TGT  Where are you going ‘like’?
Extract 24: TBT  That was cool ‘like’
Extract 25: TBT  Really, what with who ‘like’?
Extract 26: L-CIE  That was grand ‘like’
Extract 27: L-CIE  What do you mean ‘like’?
No other references to interrogative clause-final 'like' have been found in the linguistic literature outside of the Irish context. This leads the author to contend that this usage may be unique to Irish-English. Clearly, this hypothesis requires further empirical investigation which is beyond the scope of this research but it may serve as the starting point for future empirical investigation. The existence of 'like' as a marker in a clause-final position in propositional statements in both British and Irish varieties of English suggests cross-cultural spread for this linguistic feature which is probably plausible given the close economic, political and social ties which have existed between the two countries for centuries. Interestingly, whilst the clause-final usage for 'like' is not observed in the London teenage data which leads the COLT researchers to propose that its use is confined in the UK to rural rather than urban British areas, Stenström describes an incident in her 1996 study when 'like' was used in this syntactic pattern by a group of London teenagers whilst they were consciously mimicking Northern accents (1996: 15). This would appear to add weight to the argument that clause-final 'like' is a fairly well-established and well-known Northern British linguistic feature. Further research is required in order to investigate whether this usage of 'like' has a rural or urban dimension in an Irish setting and whether it is typically associated with any one geographic area of the country.

4.5.4 Lexical clustering with traditional clause-final 'like'

Within this variety of usage a more restricted range of collocational patterns for 'like' was observed in the Irish data as is illustrated in Table 4.4
Table 4.4: Frequencies of common collocations of clause final ‘like’ in TGT, TBT and L-CIE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'Like' collocates with</th>
<th>Examples of usage</th>
<th>Frequencies of occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TGT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Occs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You know</td>
<td>Extract 28 TGT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She'll go ballistic you know 'like'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind of</td>
<td>Extract 29 L-CIE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They're tourists kind of 'like'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>Extract 30 L-CIE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I'll have to see maybe 'like'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Might</td>
<td>Extract 31 TBT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I might 'like'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most popular collocations here for both teenage and adult speakers are other hedges such as ‘you know ‘like’” and ‘kind of ‘like”, which are present to a similar extent in all speech varieties. However, they occur fairly infrequently within this tradition of use for the marker.

Thus, distinctive collocational patterns were observed within the two syntactic varieties of ‘like’ with lexical clusters for American ‘like’ tending to be associated more with the discourse linking/hesitational capacity of the marker whereas in the second variety, most of the collocations observed can be seen to relate to the role of ‘like’ as a hedging device. These functional aspects of usage will be discussed in detail in the following subsection.

4.6 ‘Like’ as a pragmatic marker; functional patterns in TGT, TBT, L-CIE and COLT

In order to explore the multifunctional capacity of ‘like’ as suggested by previous research Romaine and Lange (1991), Stenström et al (1996), Andersen (2001) an examination of the data was undertaken and the various functional uses of the marker were identified, classified and
quantitatively compared in the different speech varieties. For these purposes in the adult data, a manual examination of all entries of 'like' as a pragmatic marker was undertaken from the random sample of 100 selected previously and referred to in sub-section 4.3. The findings reveal a similar range of pragmatic usages in both the teenage and adult Irish conversational discourse to that observed by the COLT analysts in the speech of London teenagers (Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001). It is widely held that these authors provide the most comprehensive and systematic functional analysis of the pragmatic uses of 'like' in the linguistic field. For this reason, it seems practical and appropriate to apply the system for functional categorisation of this linguistic item devised and employed by the COLT researchers, in order to describe a similar range of functions which have emerged in the Irish data. Accordingly, 'like' serves the following functional roles in the speech of Irish teenagers and adults:

1. as a Focuser / Highlighter, as in:

Extract 32: TGT: They're such a 'like' weird family.

Extract 33: TBT: M's kitchen went up...and there's 'like' smoke all over the house.

Extract 34: L-CIE: I'm one of the 'like' errand dogs around here.

2. as an Exemplifier, as in:

Extract 35: TGT: It's always the way with the 'like' foreign boarders, you know the Russians.

Extract 36: TBT: Yeah, I'd love to hear their tape. I bet it's all about lads they fancy. That's all they talk about and laugh about 'like' stupid things.
Extract 37: L-CIE: I suppose 'like' em French, Germans.

3. as a Discourse Link / Hesitational Device, as in:

Extract 38: TGT: Em I'm so 'like' oh get off me alright

Extract 39: TBT: I'm not doing 'like' em washing them for you.

Extract 40: L-CIE: You see em the Americans 'like' are usually 'like'.

4. as an Approximator / Hedge

Within this category two distinct types of usage were observed in the Irish data, in line with the COLT research (Andersen 2001): firstly, where 'like' preceded a numerical unit or quantifiable entity, as in the following examples from TGT, TBT and L-CIE:

Extract 41: TGT: He's been held back 'like' ten times.

Extract 42: TBT: They cost 'like' two hundred thousand.

Extract 43: L-CIE: It was 'like' the last six months were horrible.

and secondly, where 'like' served as a hedge, as in

Extract 44: TGT: Do you 'like' need all that?

Extract 45: TBT: Maybe 'like',

Extract 46: L-CIE: It's cool 'like'.
5. and finally, as a Quotative, as in:

Extract 47: TGT: She’s ‘like’, she’s ‘like’, why do you have a stitch?

Extract 48: TBT: ...and he’s ‘like’ open your books on page 73 right.

Extract 49: L-CIE: And I’m ‘like’ but he did it.

These findings reveal a multifunctional dimension for the marker in the Irish data. This supports Schiffrin’s analysis (1987) of multifunctionality as one of the key defining characteristics for membership of the pragmatic marker class. The wide range of functional uses observed for ‘like’ in the Irish conversations also confirms numerous previous accounts which describe the many and varied roles ‘like’ may serve in a pragmatic capacity in conversational speech such as Romaine and Lange (1991), Ferrera and Bell (1995) and Tagliamonte and Hudson (1991) to name but a few.

However, a more comprehensive investigation of Irish usage revealed that a different functional range for ‘like’ was present within each of the syntactic varieties, that is, within the American and the traditional clause-final ‘like’. Thus, whilst the marker occurred in the former pattern in all of the five functional domains listed previously, in the traditional clause final usage only two functions were observed, that of hedge and exemplifier. These findings lead the author to contend that the two different syntactic patterns of usage for the marker which are present in the Irish data reflect different functional ranges and that this is unique to Hiberno-English usage.

4.6.1 Functional uses of American ‘like’ in TGT, TBT, L-CIE and COLT

When analysed quantitatively, it became apparent that American ‘like’ was used in a functional capacity to a strikingly similar degree by the Irish teenage speakers as Chart 4.3, overleaf, indicates.
Chart 4.3: Functional uses of American 'like' in TCT, TBL, L-CIE, and COLT.
Chart 4.3 shows that American ‘like’ is used most often by both the teenage girls and boys in the study as an exemplifier and as a focuser / highlighter. Together, these usages account for more than half of the total pragmatic marker usages of ‘like’ in the respective corpora, ie. 57 cases representing 56%, and 69 cases or 67% in the female / male data respectively. The teenagers use ‘like’ in its discourse / hesitional role to exactly the same degree, that is 17 occurrences representing 16% of all total cases in TGT and TBT. There is also a high degree of similarity in the extent of ‘like’s’ role as an approximator / hedge, in that it accounts for 8 occurrences representing 8% and 14 occurrences representing 13% of all cases in the female and male teenage discourse respectively. The most noticeable difference in functional usage between the female and male teenage speech lies in the role of ‘like’ as a quotative where it is used nearly three times as often by the girls as by the boys, that is 21 occurrences that is, 20% and 7 occurrences that is, 7%, respectively, of all cases of the marker. This finding for quotative ‘like’ corroborates previous accounts including Tannen (1986), Romaine and Lange (1991) and Ferrera and Bell (1995) which conclude that teenage girls favour this function more than teenage boys due to the fact that they use more of the kind of constructed dialogue that calls for the use of the marker in this capacity. However, this result contradicts the findings of Blyth et al (1990) and Dailey-O’Cain (2000) which indicate a slight male lead for quotative ‘like’. A number of strategies may be used to report what has been said in conversation. In order to explore the possibility that the low usage of ‘like’ as a quotative by the teenage boys might be due to the fact that they prefer to use alternative reporting verbs for this purpose, it was necessary to measure and compare the range of reporting strategies used by both groups of teenagers.
Chart 4.4: Distribution of GO, SAY and ‘BE like’ as reporting verbs in TGT and TBT.

As Chart 4.4 reveals, the structures GO and SAY were observed to act in both corpora as additional reporting strategies to ‘BE like’. The following examples illustrate these alternative usages:

Extract 50: TGT: She ‘goes’, why have you got an attitude?

Extract 51: TBT: You ‘said’ he ‘said’ he sprained it, not broke it.

As indicated, there is a significant difference in female and male usage across the entire range of reporting structures. For example, the teenage girls use GO ten times more than the boys, SAY, more than six times more often and as noted earlier, the construction ‘BE like’ three times as much, reflecting the more extensive use of constructed dialogue in the female conversations. The following extract provides a good example of the liberal use of all three reporting structures by one of the teenage girls in the study.
Extract 52: TGT: No, no what she ‘said’ right, I was right beside her and she em ‘goes’ run and C <name of friend> ‘goes’ I was running and she em ‘goes’ no you weren’t and she ‘goes’ I have em a stitch and she’s ‘like’ she’s ‘like’, why do you have a stitch and she’s ‘like’, I was eating and she’s ‘like’, no you don’t and she ‘said’ something and then....

These findings support previous research by Romaine and Lange (1991) and Tannen (1986) which suggest that female speakers use more of this kind of constructed dialogue than male speakers. Therefore, I believe this is a plausible explanation for the remarkably higher usage of ‘Be like’ as a quotative by the teenage girls in this study as compared to that of the teenage boys.

When compared with the COLT findings for teenage functional use of the marker, (Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001) a number of similarities and differences emerge, as is evident from Chart 4.3. Firstly, both Irish and London teenagers use the marker in more than 50% of cases as a focuser / highlighter or as an exemplifier (Stenström et al 1996). However, whilst the textual role of ‘like’ is a salient one in the COLT data constituting 35% of total pragmatic usage of this item, for the Irish teenagers this textual capacity is relatively low, standing at less than half of this figure for both the female and male speakers. This suggests that the London teenagers involved in the COLT research may be less mature linguistically than their Irish counterparts in this study as a result of which their speech may be more hesitant and less fluent. Clearly, this hypothesis requires further empirical investigation which is beyond the scope of this study, based on an analysis of the use of ‘like’ in this specific function by same-aged speaker groups within the two settings from a diachronic perspective. In line with the COLT findings, (Stenström et al 1996), the Irish data for the male teenagers reveals a very low overall usage of ‘like’ in the quotative function.
The low COLT figure in this domain may be explained by the fact that this function was, at the time of the COLT recordings, a newly emergent one and according to several authors (Romaine and Lange 1991, Andersen 2001), is a relatively late stage in the grammaticalization process of 'like' as compared with the marker's other functional roles.

Whilst American 'like' is more popular with Irish teenagers than the older age group there is nonetheless a great deal of similarity in respect of the range of functions it serves in the adult and teenage speech. For example, as Chart 4.3 shows, the most significant functions of use for the marker by the adults are as a focuser / highlighter and as an exemplifier, which account for 28% and 27%, respectively, of all occurrences. This compares with 23% and 28% respectively for teenage girl and teenage boy usage for 'like' as a focuser / highlighter and 33% and 36% respectively for teenage female and male usage in respect of 'likes' role as an exemplifier. Thus, teenagers use 'like' slightly less as a focuser and slightly more as an exemplifier than the adults. The fact that the teenagers show a higher incidence of usage in the latter case is not surprising given that they are relatively less mature linguistically and as a result may feel the need to provide more examples for illustrative purposes in their speech in order to be sure they have successfully put across the point they wish to make. As a result, they may have greater call for linguistic items which can be used in this capacity such as the marker 'like'. However, contrary to expectations 'like' is used more as a discourse link / hesitational device by the adults than by the teenagers (22% compared to 16% each for female and male teenage usage). This is surprising as one would expect teenagers to rely considerably more on 'like' in this capacity to compensate for a lack of linguistic confidence due to their transitory developmental stage (Aitchison 1996). One possible explanation for this lies in the nature and settings of the conversations. For, whilst the teenagers chatted informally in a relaxed and familiar environment with their close peers about topics which they selected themselves, it is possible that many of the adult conversations
which made up the data for L-CIE were based on interviews which may have involved asymmetric power relationships between the interviewers and interviewees and may have centred on topics drawn up and controlled by the former, producing a relatively more formal and thus more stressful setting for the adults and as a result may have caused higher levels of dysfluency in their speech than normal. As a quotative ‘like’ was used by the adults in the study to the same degree as the male teenagers, that is in 7% of all cases of the marker. This is interesting because it suggests that Irish adults have adopted ‘Be like’ as a reporting strategy in their speech and that this usage is not only a phenomenon of teenage speech as is the popular prevailing view. Finally, some discrepancy has emerged between the adult and teenage use of ‘like’ as an approximator / hedge in the Irish data. In this role, it is used in 19% of occurrences by the former group by comparison with 8% and 13% by the female and male teenagers. Thus, the adults used ‘like’ more than twice as much as a hedge than the girls in the study and about a third more than the boys. It is not surprising that adults would choose to hedge more than teenagers for reasons of negative politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987) as discussed in Chapter 2, given that teenage relationships tend to be more informal and of a less respectful nature to those which take place, in general, between adults (Romaine 1984). As has been indicated by previous research, the socio-cultural dimension may be an important factor in understanding the motivation for this linguistic practice (Farr and O’Keeffe 2002). Indeed it would appear to be of particular relevance to an understanding of the use of ‘like’ as a hedge by Irish speakers. This aspect of usage is analysed and discussed in greater detail in sub-section 4.8.
4.6.2 Functional uses of traditional clause-final 'like' in the Irish data.

A quantitative analysis of the functional distribution of 'like' within this syntactic pattern of usage in TGT, TBT and L-CIE is illustrated in Chart 4.5.

Chart 4.5: Functional uses of traditional clause final 'like' in TGT, TBT and L-CIE

The findings reveal that in this pattern of usage, teenage girls and boys use the marker for similar purposes and to a largely comparable degree. Thus, it is used in the two functional roles identified earlier, as a hedge/approximator and as an exemplifier. It serves in the former capacity in 58% and 52% of all cases in the female and male data, respectively, and in the latter usage in 42% and 48% of all occurrences, in the female and male conversations, respectively.

When compared with the adult data, a higher use of 'like' as a hedging device/approximator is observed for this group. Thus, it occurred in 68% of all cases in the adult's speech as compared with 58% in female teenage speech and 52% in that of the males. The comparative figures for the exemplificatory function are 32% for the adults and 42% and 48%,
respectively, for the female and male teenagers. Thus, as in the American pattern of usage, adults are seen to use 'like' more as a hedge and less as an exemplifier. Possible reasons for this linguistic behaviour in respect of the greater use of 'like' as an exemplifier by teenagers have already been suggested. The role of 'like' as a hedge in Irish adult and teenage conversational speech will be looked at in more depth in the following section as part of a discussion of a more qualitative nature which seeks to offer explanations for the pragmatic use of 'like' by the teenage speakers across all of the functional domains which have been observed in this study drawing on the two main theoretical frameworks for this study, namely, Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (1986, 1995) and Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987).

4.7 'Like' as a marker of non-identical resemblance

The purpose of the following discussion is to build on the work of Stenström (Stenström et al. 1996) and Andersen (2001) and show how the pragmatic marker 'like' acts as a marker of non-identical resemblance between propositional thought and content in an Irish setting and as such plays an important role in facilitating utterance interpretation between the teenage speakers in this study. This analysis rests crucially on the underlying assumption that speakers aim for optimum relevance in communication providing utterances which require less processing efforts (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995). In Chapter 2 we noted the role of vague expressions as an interactional strategy speakers avail of to facilitate pragmatic inference by helping hearers to sort out which properties are relevant in an utterance and which are not, a process governed by the principle of relevance. The data show that the pragmatic marker 'like' can play a role in facilitating such processes of pragmatic inference and in so doing contribute to utterance interpretation. This is achieved either by signalling the need for loosening or enrichment of concepts encoded by the following linguistic items. Carston (1996) defines loose use as the relaxation or weakening of linguistic encoded meaning and enrichment as the counter
process which involves the strengthening of concepts. These are ways in which speakers optimize relevance because they signal a discrepancy between thought and actual utterance. As will be illustrated, the marker 'like' can be seen to signal two types of discrepancy in this respect. Firstly, a discrepancy between a thought and a concept encoded by the following item and secondly a discrepancy between what a speaker is thinking and the linguistic form through which she chooses to express this thought. In other words 'like' can also signal that the material contains a metarepresentation of the thought. As noted in Chapter 2, Andersen refers to this as the metalinguistic focusing role of 'like' as a pragmatic marker.

Whilst the most salient aspect of meaning that 'like' communicates in the Irish teenage data is a subjective one in that it is essentially concerned with the relationship between a speaker and the proposition she expresses, there are many cases where 'like' contributes to the textuality and coherence of the discourse. This aspect of usage will be discussed first.

'Like' as a hesitational / discourse link.

Although the textual function of 'like' is not as significant in the Irish teenage discourse as that of the London teenagers represented in the COLT data, 'like' nonetheless plays an important hesitational and linking role occurring in connection with false starts, self repairs, cut-off utterances and generally serving as Meehan (1991: 48) observed 'to bridge gaps in spoken sentences', by linking discourse elements which may be either syntactically related or unrelated. These various usages within this functional category have been sub-classified and measured quantitatively and are illustrated in Table 4.5.
### Table 4.5: Distribution of subtypes; 'like' with hesitational and discourse linking functions.

As indicated, there is a high degree of similarity of the various subtypes in respect of female / male usage. Very few uses of 'like' in the data occur with terminated utterances and false starts. Whilst there are slightly more uses of the marker with self-repairs, it is the linking function which is most salient, representing more than half of the examples in this category either with 'like' alone or with the construction 'It's like', with the former being used to a significantly higher degree as a subcategory in both the teenage girl and teenage boy data. The first three categories, namely 'like' accompanying false starts, self repairs and cut off utterances, can be interpreted as hesitational uses. Indeed, they often occur with a slight pause and the use of a filler such as 'em' indicating, that the speaker has planning or production difficulties. In these cases the marker would appear to allow the speaker production time whilst thinking of what to say next as the following examples illustrate.
Extract 58: TGT (False Start)  
We’re never ‘like’ ... em just hurry up would you.

Extract 59: TBT (Self repair)  
You know em when he ‘like’ went to the em doctors place ‘like’ you know surgery last time.

Extract 60: TBT (Cut off utterances)  
How comes he em ‘like’...?

Additionally, in the case of false starts and self repairs ‘like’ can be seen to signal that the speaker wishes to continue the utterance as in the examples provided. The discourse link subcategories would seem to involve less indication of planning difficulties. Rather ‘like’ acts either alone or with 'It's like' to provide a link between either syntactically related or unrelated units of discourse. In addition, it can serve to show that the speaker wants to hold the floor in order to continue a theme or to elaborate on a topic as the following extracts illustrate:

Extract 61: TGT:  
Yeah ‘like’, there’s always loads of them working

Extract 62: TBT  
Cos ‘like’ that’s the way he likes it.

From a Relevance Theoretic perspective, hesitational ‘like’ can be interpreted as providing a cue that there is a discrepancy between what the speaker is thinking at the moment of speaking and the linguistic realisation of this thought. In this way it can be viewed as an extension of the general use of ‘like’ as a marker of non-identical resemblance between utterance and thought. The use of ‘like’ in this capacity by the teenagers in the study may be the result of both cognitive and social factors or indeed an interplay of the two in that the speakers may not have full or immediate access to the cognitive item they require in order to express what they are thinking due to linguistic inadequacies such as an incomplete vocabulary or they may be
experiencing retrieval problems due to linguistic inexperience. Such
difficulties can be related to the transitory developmental stage of this age
group. Alternatively, it may be the case that no planning or production
problems exist but that the young speakers are avoiding sounding too
confident and fluent for fear of being viewed as 'different' and being
excluded from their social group. In this instance 'like' may be seen to
serve as a politeness strategy for teenagers to maintain common ground
with the all-important peers.

'Like' as a focuser / metalinguistic cue

The focusing role of 'like' is a significant one in the teenage data and would
appear to incorporate two distinct aspects of usage: firstly, it occurs as
Underhill (1988) suggests, to mark the newsworthiness of an item or
similarly, as Meehan proposes (1991) to indicate the high information value
of a concept. As such it can be related to the expressive and dramatic
nature of the storytelling of this age-group, as referred to by Nordberg
(1987 translated and cited in Romaine and Lange 1991:246) and Tannen
(1986). The teenage male conversations are the most striking in this
respect involving several examples of vivid re-telling of events which are
enhanced for the audience by the liberal use of 'like' by the young
speakers. The following extract forms part of an amusing account of how
one young boy almost set his house alight whilst making chips but sat
watching T.V. oblivious to the chaos he had caused around him:

Extract 63: TBT  Yeah 'like' and the whole street and everyone 'like'
screaming and choking and he's 'like' watching the telly
and and the firebrigade all outside and everyone's 'like'
crowding around and his Mam's screaming, 'save my
son my only son and he's 'like' waiting for his chips.
Thus, the pragmatic marker 'like' may be used by the young speakers for reasons which pertain to the norms of teenage conversational style. Whilst a similar focusing usage is observed in the teenage girl talk, it generally occurs in relation to less dramatic contexts and before concepts which are familiar and even mundane but which are nonetheless of newsworthy value to the teenage speakers who are typically preoccupied with teenage concerns such as how they look and how they are viewed by their peers, as is illustrated in the following extracts:

Extract 64: TGT And they're all 'like' staring at me and I can feel my face 'like' getting red

Extract 65 TGT I'm not 'like' weird she's 'like' the weird one.

Andersen's (2001) argument that 'like' is unlikely to occur before well-known concepts is not borne out by this research which shows that 'like' is used by the teenage speakers to highlight both familiar and unfamiliar concepts provided they are deemed to be of sufficiently newsworthy value to them. However, 'like' can sometimes occur before concepts which are seemingly beyond the teenagers normal conceptual or linguistic range due either to developmental or stylistic reasons, respectively. In the following extract from the male teenage corpus, the boys have been discussing how much money they can make from washing cars and what to spend it on.

Extract 66: TBT <$1> Those cornettos and McDonalds.

<$2> You fat bastard. You're 'like' obese

<$1> You don't know what you're talking about. Obese is fat. I'm not fat.
Whilst the concept of obesity would probably be known to the boys, it is doubtful that it is a word they would have call to use in everyday conversation with their peers. Moreover, it is possible that the exact meaning of the terms has not been fully understood. This interpretation is supported by speakers 2’s claim that speaker 1 is not using the term correctly and his insistence that he is not in fact ‘fat’. Andersen’s argument that ‘like’ is used in such cases to indicate an inappropriate use of a term which belongs to a more advanced and unfamiliar lexical range is a plausible one in this case. Here, there is a non-identical resemblance between the chosen expression and an alternative one which might communicate the idea more effectively. ‘Like’ may signal that the speaker feels a minor discomfort with the expression and seeks to disassociate herself from it. In this way, the marker serves as a metalinguistic cue to help the speaker to avoid sounding too knowledgeable or pedantic, both of which are unfashionable and uncool behavioural traits for this age group. Two further examples of ‘like’ s role as a metalinguistic focuser are provided from the female and male teenage data in order to illustrate this point.

Extract 67: TGT Em it’s got something to do with ‘like’ research.

Extract 68: TBT Dunno someone said he ‘like’ sprained it.

It is likely that in both cases the speakers used the concepts of ‘research’ and ‘sprained’ entirely correctly and competently but that the omission of ‘like’ would have made the utterances sound inappropriate and unacceptably sophisticated in the context of teenage casual talk. Thus, ‘like’ allows for the loose use of such specialized and exact concepts so that teenage speakers can maintain good social relations with their friends. Another type of usage wherein ‘like’ serves as a metalinguistic cue is in hyperbolic use, which is observed in the data in two different types of usage: Firstly, where ‘like’ is used before a numerical / quantifiable
expression and indicates hyperbole rather than rough approximation, as in the following extracts.

Extract 69: TGT: Yeah, he stayed back ‘like’ ten times.

Extract 70: TBT: ...and you're doing ‘like’ two hundred miles an hour.

Here, it is obvious that these descriptions are not to be construed literally but are exaggerations of the speakers thoughts and may be described as processes of lexical enrichment (Carston 1996). This involves adding features to achieve an adhoc concept that is more specific than the lexically encoded concept. So the outcome of enrichment is an adhoc concept that is semantically narrower than the encoded concept. For example, in Extract TGT: 69, the speaker is referring to a fellow past primary school pupil who is obliged to stay back in school and repeat the academic year, probably because he was deemed to be too weak academically to be able to cope with the higher class. This is a fairly common practice in Irish primary schools but it is highly improbable that anyone would be required to stay back ten times as the speaker states. Similarly, in Extract TBT: 70, it is rare that anyone would drive at 200 mph, given the legal speed restrictions which operate, even if she / he owned a vehicle with this speed capability. A different type of hyperbolic usage, unrelated to numerical expressions has also been observed in the teenage data in just one case, illustrated below, where the boys are describing the behaviour of a group of travellers in a local hospital.

Extract 71: TBT: and they're ‘like’ ranting and raving up and down the corridors.

In this case, it is clear that the use of the expression ‘ranting and raving’ adds to the drama of the story. This and the previous examples reveal a
more obvious discrepancy between the following item and that which is expected to be pragmatically inferred and may be viewed as a typical feature of the high-involvement conversational style of this age group (Nordberg 1987 cited in Romaine and Lange 1991: 250). These findings relating to hyperbolic usage confirm Andersen's description of 'like' serving in this capacity in the COLT data. However, no examples of 'like' in a metaphorical usage were observed in the Irish teenage usage of the marker. Furthermore, the functional usage of 'like' referred to by Miller and Weinert (1995) as a focusing device for clearing up misunderstanding between speakers was not observed either in the teenage or adult data, suggesting that 'like' is not used in this capacity by Irish speakers.

'Like' as a marker of approximation

As we have seen, one of the functions American 'like' serves in the teenage data is to indicate approximation. Within this broad category two sub-groups were identified, classified and measured in line with previous accounts (Schourup 1985, Stenström et al 1996, Andersen 2001). The first is where 'like' precedes a numerical phrase or some other measurable unit and the second is where 'like' acts as a hedge. As Table 4.6 indicates American 'like' is used mainly in the former capacity in both the female and male teenage data but slightly more by the boys than the girls in terms of overall frequency. 'Like' is used less often by both groups as a hedging device within the American pattern of usage.
Subcategories of 'like' as an approximator and examples of use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>TGT Occs</th>
<th>TGT %</th>
<th>TBT Occs</th>
<th>TBT %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. before a numerical phrase / measurable unit.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extract 72 TGT: She's given us 'like' two hundred lines, the cow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. as a hedge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extract 73 TBT: It's 'like' you know crap</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Subcategories of 'like' as an approximator in TGT and TBT.

Where 'like' is used in the first category it serves to indicate rough approximation of an amount and allows the speaker to avoid an exact representation as the following extracts illustrate:

Extract 74: TGT: I can't cos I've only got 'like' five euros left.

Extract 75: TBT: I'd get a Harley for 'like' seventy-five grand.

In the first example, it is highly unlikely that the speaker has this precise amount of money in her purse. Similarly, in the second, whilst the cost of a Harley Davidson motorbike is probably close to the figure mentioned by the male speaker, it is doubtful that it is this price exactly. These representations may be viewed as loose uses of language which involve taking out certain features from lexically encoded concepts that are too specific (Carston 1996). Such uses of language arise for a number of reasons. Firstly, an exact representation of the amounts in question would not benefit the hearer in terms of providing additional contextual effects i.e. effects that would not be acquired by means of the loose interpretation. Thus, in these cases, the speakers may be refraining from giving the more accurate alternative in line with the principle of relevance because such a
representation would put them to unnecessary processing effort and so would not be worth their while. I believe in cases such as these it is plausible to suggest that the function of 'like' is to act as a procedural indicator of a lack of a one-to-one relation between the speaker's thought and the external representation of that thought. It signals that the speaker is opting for a loose interpretation of her thoughts and in this way guides the hearer towards the intended propositional meaning. An additional explanation for the tendency of speakers to avoid exact representation in casual conversation is that it would be unacceptably pedantic. Hasund suggests that in the teenage world it is cool to be vague and to show that you can't be bothered to be precise (Hasund forthcoming cited in Andersen 2001: 288). Indeed, she claims that these are some of the essential values of post-modernist youth culture which determine in-group membership. When used in this capacity 'like' may serve an important social role for teenagers helping them to remain within the accepted linguistic norms for their age group and as a result be part of the gang. The fact that 'like' is used more often by the teenage boys as an approximator before a measurable quantity than by the girls, is indicative of the male conversations which, as we have seen in Chapter 3, centre on themes such as calculating how much money can be earned by washing cars and the cost and speed of various cars and motor bikes, subjects which clearly call more for the use of 'like' in this capacity than those to be found in the teenage girl conversations.

'Like' as an exemplifier

As we have seen, the role of 'like' as an exemplifier is a significant one for all of the speaker groups in this study. It occurs in the Irish data in both of the syntactic traditions of usage for the marker and is the most salient function in both the American and clause-final usages in the teenage discourse. The following extracts reveal that when 'like' is used in this
capacity it is clear that we are not dealing with the ordinary preposition 'like'.

Extract 76: TGT: She said we could talk about 'like' hobbies and things like that.

Extract 77: TBT: It all depends on the speed 'like'.

These cases illustrate both syntactic patterns of usage for 'like' as a maker in this function where it can either precede or follow noun phrases. In both types of usage, it serves to indicate that these noun phrases are to be construed as exemplifications of wider categories. As in the approximation case, 'like' indicates a slight discrepancy between the linguistic item it relates to and that which the hearer should pragmatically infer indicating that the external representation is only partly consistent with the concept the speaker has in mind. However, in this usage, the speakers are instructed to seek out semantically wider rather than semantically narrower concepts which in the extracts provided are 'hobbies' and 'speed' and to create adhoc concepts, a term referred to earlier, from their broader encyclopaedic knowledge. Thus, 'like' in these examples may be replaced by the gloss 'for instance', 'hobbies' may be interpreted as 'hobbies and other areas of interest of teenagers' and 'speed', as 'speed and other factors which determine the value of motor bikes'. Therefore, in its exemplificatory function 'like' brings about a process of lexical enrichment and as in cases of approximation, 'like' may serve to indicate a non-identical resemblance between a speakers thought and it's linguistic realisation. In this way 'like' facilitates utterance interpretation in line with the principle of optimum relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995).
'Like' as a quotative

The Relevance Theoretic notion of interpretative use may be applied to the function of 'like' as a quotative in the speech of the teenagers in this study (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995). As we have seen, the phenomenon of reported speech is viewed as a typical feature of teenage language and said to be a central aspect of the 'high involvement style' which teenagers commonly apply when telling stories. Such stylistic norms have been a visible feature of the conversations which form the basis of this study. The findings of this research indicate that 'BE like' has become a well-established marker of reported speech in adolescent Irish-English. Indeed, as we have seen, it is used more than any other reporting structure by both the female and male teenage speakers in this study. Many authors suggest that in conversational narrative it is rare for a speaker to report dialogue exactly. Hence, there is always said to be an element of 'loose talk' or 'non-literalness' involved (Johnstone 1987, Yule and Mathis 1992).

Tannen argues that much of what takes the form of dialogue is by no means a report of what others have said but are constructions by speakers to frame information in an effective and involving way (1989: 118). As a result, Tannen and others prefer the term 'constructed dialogue'. From a Relevance Theoretic perspective, the most important characteristics of quotations are attribution and resemblance. Quotative 'like' may be seen as incorporating both types of use in that it stands in a non-identical resemblance with an underlying thought and it is attributive i.e. metarepresentational, in that the speaker is interpreting what someone else said. The notion of the speaker's non-incorporation or quotative distance is also a crucial one from this theoretic viewpoint. 'Like' occurs in a quotative capacity in three types of usage in the Irish teenage data confirming previous descriptions (Tannen 1986, Romaine and Lange 1991, Stenström et al 1966, Andersen 2001). In the first two instances, it is used to introduce either direct speech or thought as the following examples illustrate.
Extract 78: TGT: And I'm 'like' oh my God I am not carrying this yoke.

Extract 79: TBT: But after I'm 'like', well, it wasn't so bad.

In these cases 'like' is used to signal that an utterance is a loose interpretation of the utterance or thought it represents. These then are cases of non-identical resemblance because the interpretation bears some resemblance but is not an exact report of the original utterance or thought. A closely related third type of usage was also observed in the Irish data which seems to involve a metarepresentation of the speaker's attitude. However, this attitude is vaguely indicated rather than explicitly mentioned as the following extracts illustrate.

Extract 80: TGT He just kept staring and I was 'like'.

Extract 81: TBT And I'm 'like' aaagh...

Here, nothing is explicitly reported but the reaction of the speaker at the previous moment is indicated. It is highly likely that in such cases 'like' accompanies gestures or facial expressions which help the hearer to correctly identify the unspecified feeling. In all of these usages 'like' precedes material which is to be recognized as interpretative use. As indicated, this may or may not be explicitly linguistic.

4.8 'Like' as a marker of minimum politeness in teenage discourse

The vast majority of the hedging which was observed in the teenage data in this study took place within the clause-final syntactic pattern of usage for 'like' as a marker. For example, out of a total of 20 and 15 occurrences of 'like' in this role in the female and male discourse, respectively, 17, or 85%, and 13 or 87%, respectively, occurred in the clause-final position and only
very seldom did hedging occur in the American syntactic pattern of usage, ie. preceding the item to be qualified, as is illustrated in Chart 4.6.

Chart 4.6: Distribution of 'like' as a hedge in the American and clause-final patterns of usage.

I believe the overwhelming preference to use 'like' as a hedge within the traditional clause-final variety of usage of the marker reflects the broader socio-cultural context of usage. Teenagers are generally expected to have a lower politeness threshold than adults for a number of reasons. Firstly, as noted previously the relationships between them tend to be informal and relatively intimate reflecting the closely-knit social structure of the peer group (Eckert 1988). Further, the typical characteristics of teenage speech such as the frequent use of slanguage, mimicry and ritual insults suggest less respectful social behaviour than that of adults (Labov 1972, Romaine 1984, Stenström et al 1996). Thus, one should expect that negative politeness has a lesser role to play in teenage discourse than in many other speech genres. As we have seen, politeness is viewed as a highly valued attribute in Irish society (Asian and McCullogh 1997) as a result of which it is claimed Irish speakers tend to hedge more than speakers in other English speaking environments. Farr and O'Keeffe (2002) argue, using Irish English spoken data from institutional settings, that Irish speakers use the linguistic item 'would' significantly more than English and American speakers and that this is relative to the politeness norms of Irish society. I
propose that teenagers choose to express these inherent cultural norms through a familiar and well-established linguistic pattern which has proved adequate for these purposes in the past, that is, through the clause final usage of 'like' rather than opting for the newer American variety to express this function. However, clearly this hypothesis requires empirical examination from a diachronic perspective which is beyond the scope of this study.

As we have seen, Relevance Theorists view hedges as representations of a loose use of language. They signal to hearers that a discrepancy exists between the speaker's thought and the actual utterance and as such they facilitate the process of pragmatic inference and optimize relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1986,1995). Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987) provides an alternative and I believe a more appropriate theoretical framework for the analysis of 'like' as a hedge in an Irish context because it better reflects the socio-cultural dimension of language in use. The following examples from the teenage Irish data indicate that 'like' is used by the young speakers in this study in the traditional pattern of usage to soften the face threatening impact of assertions, oppositions and direct questions, respectively, in line with the minimum politeness norms of Irish society.

Extract 82: TGT: You must be such a bike cos I wouldn't be seen dead with him 'like'  
Extract 83: TBT: I don't really want any 'like'  
Extract 84: TGT: Can I get food when I'm at your house 'like'?  

These findings support the contention of Asian and McCullough (1997) and Farr and O'Keeffe (2002) that directness is associated with impoliteness in Irish society and that hedging is used as a face saving strategy by Irish speakers. As mentioned previously, very little empirical research has been
undertaken in relation to hedging in teenage language. In order to examine the role negative politeness plays in teenage discourse, the data for the teenage speakers was compared to other spoken data for adult usage so that some instances of hedging could be examined. The data for adult use was compiled by O'Keeffe (2003) from Liveline, an Irish Radio phone-in programme. Table 4.7 contains a list of 3 hedges and frequency counts for their occurrence in the two sets of data, both of which are for one hour in length.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hedges</th>
<th>Liveline</th>
<th>Combined Teenage data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kind of</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sort of</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Like' (clause final variety)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: Frequency counts for hedges 'kind of', 'sort of' and 'like'.

(O'Keeffe 2003: 38)

From the point of view of the individual hedges, the most significant differences occur between the frequency counts of 'kind of' and 'sort of'. The occurrences of 'kind of' and 'sort of', two hedges that according to Aijmer (1984:118) are used without any difference in meaning or function, are significantly higher in the Liveline data than in the teenage discourse. Holmes suggests that these hedges function 'to reduce social distance between speakers and to express the speaker's desire for a relaxed relationship with the addressee' (Holmes 1995: 101). Given the more egalitarian nature of teenage relationships it is not surprising therefore to see less of these items in teenage speech and more in adult speech where there is a greater need to lower social distance and in particular in the context of a radio-phone-in, in order to create an atmosphere of pseudo-intimacy between the callers. The results show that there are a total of 44 of the three hedges in an hour of teenage discourse compared with 77 in an
hour of adult conversation. It could be proposed therefore that the more
equal and intimate the relationship between the speakers, the less need
there is to hedge or to soften utterances. These findings support the view
that teenagers have less need for the type of behaviour evidenced in
negative politeness than adults. Furthermore, hedges such as 'like' which
dominate teenage discourse could be said therefore to represent those
which are critical to politeness in Irish culture, that is, they are the minimum
needed for polite interaction between Irish speakers.

4.9 Summary of Chapter 4

To briefly summarize this chapter, 'like' is a marker which plays a visible
textual role in teenage casual talk but which features mainly in an attitudinal
capacity, in that it is essentially concerned with the relationship between a
speaker and the proposition she expresses, playing an important
procedural role in the interpretation process by helping a hearer to arrive at
the intended propositional meaning of an utterance (Sperber and Wilson
1986,1995). When it serves as a hedging device in teenage discourse it
also plays an alternative pragmatic role which may be more closely
associated with face-saving strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987) in line
with the minimum politeness norms of Irish society.
Chapter 5

Summary and Recommendations
Chapter 5 Summary and Recommendations

This study was concerned with a linguistic item which is commonly viewed as one of the most significant innovations in teenage vernacular speech in recent times, namely the pragmatic marker 'like'. It set out to provide a full account of how the marker is used by teenagers in an Irish setting in respect of both syntactic and functional patterns of usage, a previously unexplored area of empirical investigation. The purpose of the research was two-fold: to address the issue of age-related differences in the use of the marker and to determine whether a gender bias prevailed in any of its various uses in the conversational language of the young Irish speakers who participated in this study.

The findings of the study are that 'like' abounds as a linguistic item in spoken Irish-English where, remarkably, it is used more frequently as a pragmatic marker than as a so-called standard grammatical item in both teenage and adult discourse. However, the Irish data clearly reveals two seemingly distinct traditions of usage for 'like' as a marker, an older variety wherein it occurs in a clause-final position and would seem to be similar in syntactic terms to a rural dialectal pattern of usage said to exist in Northern England and an innovative pattern in which the marker occurs in one of a number of syntactic locations within a unit of discourse, which is commonly viewed as an American borrowing dating from the 1960's which has since spread as a result of extensive cross-cultural contact. Evidence of these two traditions of usage is visible in the discourse of both speaker age-groups and this probably goes some way to explaining the notably high frequency levels for the marker in the Irish data as compared to the COLT findings for London teenage use in which only the American variety of 'like' is observed. However, there is nonetheless a manifest difference in how the marker is used by adults and teenagers in respect of the two traditions, in that Irish adults tend to favour the older clause-final variety whilst American 'like' dominates in the teenage conversations. These findings
justify previous descriptions of the new 'like' as primarily an adolescent speech phenomenon although its usage by the older speakers, albeit less significant, should not be ignored.

In relation to the question of whether or not gender differentiated patterns of usage exist for the marker in the teenage data, in line with the researcher's expectations and contrary to the seemingly popular view, at least in respect of the US media, the findings of this study are that female and male speakers of this age group use the marker to a broadly similar degree in terms of overall frequency. These results apply to both traditions of usage and support the hypothesis stated in Chapter One that no gender bias exists in respect of the extent of use of pragmatic 'like' in teenage discourse.

Within each of the varieties of usage for the marker, that is the clause-final and the American borrowing, distinct and separate syntactic patterns emerged which were broadly similar for all three Irish speaker groups in terms of overall frequency. American 'like' was observed as the more versatile and flexible of the two types occurring in the constructions 'It's like' and 'Be like', between clause elements and between propositions but was located in the overwhelming majority of cases prior to an item it related to in a unit of discourse, whilst the older 'like' was found only in a clause-final position in either propositional or interrogative statements, with the latter usage possibly unique to Irish-English. The most striking discrepancy to emerge between the different speaker groups was the significantly higher usage of 'Be like' by the young female speakers in relation to that of the adults and the male teenagers who used the construction to exactly the same degree which was about three times less than the former group. A distinctive set of recurrent lexical patterns also emerged for the older and newer 'like' with the American version tending to collocate with a number of other pragmatic markers, particularly 'you know' in the adult data and connectives such as 'and', 'cos / because' and 'but' which featured as semi-
fixed / fixed expressions in all three Irish speech varieties but were more popular in the adult discourse. However, 'yeah 'like'' featured more prominently in the female and male teenage conversations and once again to a strikingly similar extent. This collocation was seldom used by the adults and wasn’t noted at all in the COLT findings. The most salient difference between the Irish and London teenage data was the notably lower use of discourse connectives by the former group as collocations of 'like'. For the older 'like', a more restricted set of lexical patterns was observed which were identified as hedging items with 'you know 'like'' the most popular of these for all three Irish speaker groups and 'kind of like' featuring slightly more prominently in the adult speech. These distinct syntactic patterns for the older and newer pragmatic 'like' provided some indication of how the marker was used in a functional capacity by the various speaker groups.

The marker performed an extensive and similar range of functions in the teenage and adult conversations acting as a focus / highlighter, an exemplifier, an approximator / hedge, a hesitational device / discourse link and also in a quotative capacity as a new reporting structure. However, these uses were reflected differently in the American and clause-final patterns for 'like' with all of the five functional roles listed being served by innovative 'like' and only two, that of exemplifier and hedge being expressed by the older type. The most notable findings in these respects were the high degree of similarity for teenage and adult functional use of the marker in the two traditions of usage with the focusing / highlighter and exemplificatory roles the most popular for all three Irish speaker groups within the American pattern and the role of 'like' as a hedge the most significant one for clause-final 'like'. However, some discrepancies in the usage of the marker by the two age-groups were observed such as the higher use of 'like' as a discourse link by the adults, which was surprising, the more prominent use of 'like' as an exemplifier by the teenagers and the adults' greater use of the marker as a hedging device in both the older and
newer varieties of 'like' which seemed to confirm previously stated assumptions concerning the higher usage of this strategy by adult speakers by comparison with teenagers. In relation to the issue of gender patterns in the functional uses of the marker, again female and male teenage speakers showed very little difference in how they used pragmatic 'like' except in one area, that is for quotative 'like' which was favoured overwhelmingly more by the young female speakers whilst the Irish adults and male teenagers used it to a far lower degree. This finding reflected the greater use of 'constructed dialogue' in the teenage girl conversations supporting previous empirical research in this area. The results of this study for the Irish teenage use of American 'like' were broadly comparable to those of the COLT research with one notable exception, that 'like' served a more prominent textual role in the London data.

The conclusions of this study therefore are that the pragmatic marker 'like' has two distinct traditions of usage in Hiberno-English – an older pattern favoured more by adult speakers wherein it serves largely as a hedging device or an exemplifier in a clause final syntactic position, and a newer recently borrowed American variety which has a more multifunctional dimension and features more prominently in teenage speech. Young Irish female and male speakers use both varieties to a largely similar degree to express an identical range of functions. The most striking discrepancies in usage are for quotative 'like', within the American pattern, which is notably more popular amongst young female speakers and the higher use of 'like' as a hedging device in both patterns by the adult speakers. Hence, the findings of this research are that American 'like' is undoubtedly a more visible linguistic phenomenon in Irish teenage conversational speech than that of adults but it cannot generally be associated with any particular gender group.

Pragmatic 'like' marks off a discrepancy between what a speaker thinks and what a speaker says and in this way allows an individual to express an
attitude, feeling or a reduced lexical commitment towards a lexical item which may both facilitate the process of pragmatic inference and increase politeness between communicators. Several reasons may explain why teenagers favour this feature so overwhelmingly. It may be linked to the developmental characteristics of this age group and the current young generation's expression of social identity and in-groupness through a unique and distinct set of post-modern values such as coolness and non-commitment which also differentiates them from the values of the adult world. Finally, the broader socio-cultural context of use may also be a significant factor in understanding why hedges such as 'like' dominate the casual talk of young Irish speakers in that they can be seen to reflect the minimum politeness norms of Irish society.

A number of areas for further research have arisen from this study such as: a diachronic analysis of the extent of usage of both traditions of 'like' as a pragmatic marker in respect of different age-groups; a study of the influence of other non-linguistic factors such as regional background and social class in relation to both the older and newer traditions of usage for the marker and also an investigation of whether differences exist in respect of adult and teenage usage of other pragmatic markers which may also be related to age-graded factors. Teenage discourse also merits further research and comparison with the linguistic behaviour of adults in respect of other areas such as turn-taking, topic change, interruptions and the use of other politeness strategies.
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Appendix B

Transcript TGT Corpus and TBT Corpus
Transcript (Girls)

<$1>$ She's being all nice now like.
<$2>$ Fuck you.
<$3>$ What's it for?
<$1>$ Um I don't know like. Oh we're having a book wrote about the three of us aam we're representing all these+
<$2>$ we're bookies.
<$1>$ +kids in Tipperary.
<$3>$ Really?
<$2>$ Has anyone got a hairbrush? They're probably listening to that and+
<$3>$ What the fuck was that?
<$2>$ +oh I am do you mind doing this again?
<$3>$ I do <$E1> laugh </$E>
<$1>$ Cos I don't aam think I'm aam going to Limerick anyway do you want to come in?
<$2>$ Actually I think I'm going to skip market aam do you wanna come? Do you wanna come?
<$3>$ Em I'm em so like oh get off me alright.
<$1>$ OK my cousins playing in a band he's the lead aam in aam Tom Murphys all of them like Limerick.
<$2>$ What day's that on? Why can't you come like? Where are you going like?
<$3>$ No I can't cos I'm like playing hockey that em day.
<$1>$ +or something in Cork aam Cork on um Sunday. You like their music.
<$2>$ Do I really like? What it in the charts and that like I haven't really got any favourite group.
<$3>$ Really seriously she's like this er I am not you liar.
<$2>$ She's just want her to come with me. <$2> <$E1> laugh </$E2>. Yet but what time are you getting back?
<$1>$ J agrees you never said it works but I do like.
<$3>$ Would you not be messing with my bloody hair like get it right. Leave it you cow.
<$2>$ Well we know its you shit I forgot to bring a T-shirt in oh no I didn't no I didn't shit. No seriously like I'm em not getting back late.
<$1>$ Have you got it? Well then where is it oh give it here now.
<$2>$ Yeah I think so yes I have I think.
<$1>$ Well what are you waiting for you idiot. You're supposed to like remember if you know what I mean.
<$3>$ Are you going to see it? Ringside seats if you know what I mean.
<$2>$ S. wants to give it a blow-job <$E1> laugh </$E>
<$1>$ No I don't you cow you're so dirty.
<$3>$ H's my new dildo <$E1> laugh </$E1>
<$1>$ You're so dirty you are.
<$2>$ And you didn't know that?
<$1>$ Is that all going on the tape oh my God <$E1> laugh </$E>
<$3>$ Yeah its all going in a bloody book like yeah but its not gonna say what we're actually saying.
<$2>$ It's not actually talking about things like you know. She said we could talk about like hobbies and things like that.
H’s actually kind of bad cos it’s like we’re like representing all the kids apparently in Tipperary. Em its got something to do with like research.

So are the lads as well like. That’s if they do it properly and don’t mess like.

We’re probably fucking what the fuck was that like?

We’re probably pricked ha ha ha.

They probably think that we’re just making+

Yeah they’re probably just I mean like yeah.

+I mean it’s like a microphone $<$E 1> laugh </$E>

They should’ve just given ya like a thermometer sort of think.

Yeah but how do they know its more like the way you know how you only hear what you hear like how do they know it’s just us?

I’d say they know our voices.

Cos we both have it cos there’s three of us and like+

Oy lads fuck off.

+bullshit.

They should’ve given you a like mini or like credit thing to hide in your pocket.

Yeah I suppose.

I’ve got a better one at home better than that like mind you any things better than that crap it’s so embarrassing.

Oh yeah lets divide it oh no+

What? What’s wrong with you now?

Yeah I was expecting this really cool think like not this crap.

Yeah I was thinking we’d be getting some clip ons+ and then she comes along with this yoke and I’m like oh my god I am not carrying this yoke I don’t wanna carry that shit not in front of everyone and they’re all looking $<$E 1> laugh </$E>

Yeah it’s my name for the whole world+

The boys are waiting.

+its its recording its going round and round for ya.

Whose is whose?

Do you think J’s gonna you know?

Yeah don’t say+

J well what? D’you think J. will get like cultured again?

+yeah don’t say anything I mean like stupid about me on that CD.

Say it slowly so I can’t hear you $<$E 1> laugh </$E>

D’you think she’s mixed up again?

Yes I do.

Sexual baddies.

Oy oh God its worse.

I have to talk to you later Ok like alone alone. If you know what I mean.

So you gonna go German class with me?

Where are you going with sweets?

Where are you going?

Buy sweets.

Buy sweets?

How long are you going for like? Go on tell me.

Oh about three weeks.

And who are you going with?

Myself.

Are you the only one going like?
Sure I was going with B.

Well B wouldn’t wanna go with me yuk.

Is she going? Really, what with who like?

Boys.

Take up the place like.

OK hello could you open the door for me please.

Oh right what?

Oh I hate them. I not like weird. She’s like the weird one.

And who do you like S?

Who do I like? What do you mean like.

Yeah.

Nobody.

Nobody what the fucks that about.

I don’t know.

Well I think it’s nice when it’s so funny S said it’s nice.

You won’t be able to look at it right?

No I’m not going down in the corner.

Do you wanna sit here?

Em+

You wanna sit here at the back or back in the middle?

No where we sat last time.

No cos like all the like knockers sit in the front.

They always sat there last year its disgusting.

Did maybe they all like all the lads won’t the lads like who sat there an all.

No cos its so annoying cos like an all cos like we can’t even go into the toilet like+

Yeah you know.

Yeah you know.

Yeah.

Yeah cos you had to pass them all like everything and they’re all shouting abuse 
at you real loud and everyone’s staring at you oh my god.

Yeah right.

Is that L over here?

Ah no they’re grand but they’re from bad backgrounds if you get what I mean so. They’re really bad.

D and em D em walked passed and I was sitting standing there and I’m oh shit am I and they said hello to me ‘hi ya’ they actually thought I liked them and I’m ‘hi ya’ they’re all in there mocking you an I’m like but he did this+

I got off the bus the other evening there and em er and a lad and a girl that we went to school with in primary school she was fucking staring at me and S kept staring at her and like she goes hi how are ye.

+I’m not talking to J anyway.

They’re only tinkers that’s all they are the w’s.

There such a like weird family.

Mind you S wasn’t too bad.

Ah he was grand like <$E1> laugh </$E>

Five euro he’s not in school anymore.

Whose not in school?

This fella we went to school with he was like a year ahead of us oh he was the biggest gosser going.
He stayed back as well.

Who did oh him. What did he stay back for? Cos he was thick?

Yeah he stayed back like ten times. He was the biggest dinosaur. Everyone in his family stays back. They're all thick as planks.

Yeah em 

Yeah he's been held back like ten times.

Are you going home this weekend?

Might like.

What sauce is that?

You have to eat that ham.

What?

Will you eat the ham? Do you like need all that.

Are you mad with me.

Are you happy over what I told ya?

Hello be happy he's gorgeous.

Yeah he's so fine em he's so fine though and brilliant.

He's not that bad.

C's just bursting to tell you go on fuck it talk.

You mean C. M?

He went out and I said good and he said you going em and did you+

Did you meet him?

And he said to me are you going out? And he said I said no and em and he goes and he said are you meeting or anything?

Well did you meet him?

And I said yeah and then he said do you know what I'm gonna say and I said I don't know and he said OK and I as I went over I went over as I went out my face was like dropping and I'm like bursting out laughing.

Who fucking cares.

Who told you that?

Well I know it too I mean I heard him say it in class. He's got such a big mouth that D.

Mind you I heard it off one of the girls talking or else I heard him talking or something. I know I did I'm sure.

Are you lying seriously?

Yeah are you lying?

No what d'ya mean? Course I'm not lying. I heard it.

S. I've been anyway. He's a state anyway. Just look at the state of him.

C. absolutely fancies you anyway cos like why would they be slagging him like in front of you like know what I mean? Why would they? 

laugh 

You must be such a bike cos I wouldn't be seen dead with him like.

He's really cool like and I'm like I might take up a place. It's up to me. My life.

Oh my God lads imagine if all of like this if I was like oh em my big mouth if that was published I'd piss myself laughing.

I actually wouldn't mind if he read about it I'd just piss myself laughing.

You know what I mean about fellas.

He's like a dog oh no imagine if Miss O'B or something was reading a book or something 

laugh 

Yeah right and when she does she knows its you imagine Miss O'B.

I hate Miss O'B anyway.
No I don’t care I hate her I hate her.
I actually lover her she’s nice.
You mean you hate her.
No I think she’s nice she get’s so loud I mean her voice even though she’s funny like when she said that thing about Jack.
What did you say?
Well em Jack suffers from nose bleeds and em+
Yeah ah but Jack did she say picking your nose in class then?
+yeah. I can’t believe it either. Fancy saying that to him in front of all the class and everyone’s listening and staring at him.
When? Oh he’s a spastic though. Everyone knows that.
She said Jack please don’t pick your nose in public yeah it’s disgusting actually.
Oh my God that was actually lousy that was but he’s em such a fat-ass I hate him. Everyone hates him.
He’s so weird he’s dyslexic isn’t he? You try when you em walk past him he em sticks his foot out or tying to em he’s always tapping your arse.
Oh that’s like the Russians as well. You see em those Russians like are usually like they’re really annoying like and like they go around thieving at night.
Yeah he’s em so like disgusting that way.
Yeah he’s weird. He em he’s always been strange but now.
D’s the same he’s like he’d kinda smack you with the hurley and you’re like fuck off and he’s just so annoying like so weird like.
You know B it’s beyond bugging now if you know what I mean. It’s got to stop.
He thinks he’s like lovely. I do $<$E1> laugh $<$E$>$.
You know B the Russian I’m always messing with the like I’m em always messing with the Russians like but I’d be like nice enough I’m just messing with him and they were teaching me dirty words in Russian whatever and em then what is it B he struts raging maybe pushing each other and I’m like ah go on back to Chernobyl whatever like.
Yeah right but now B he’s so sound but now he’s starting to feel me up whenever I pass him and it was like fuck off. He just kept staring and I was like.
Yes em fuck it now you mention it I turned round and I belted him like there yesterday.
Yeah right em its them messing it wasn’t that bad.
And they’re all looking at me dirty.
J isn’t that bad.
Yeah. Its always the way with the like foreign boarders, you know the Russians.
Like scummy and smelly I need a haircut.
Yeah his hairs like red or orange now have you seen the state of it now?
J is up on ye J is a legend isn’t he. I mean everyone thinks he’s cool.
He’s a sod. He’s cool. I think so anyway and I don’t care what you think cos you’ve got no taste anyway.
J went up. He was like today with one all back like that oh yuck. It was really horrible.
Oh yeah E is cool like.
What em a big mother fucker $<$E1> laugh $<$E$>$
Yeah right what if this wasn’t on and we’re just wasting our whole+
Exactly. We’re wasting all our time on a moron.
+time.
I’m so hungry still. They only give you a small bit. It was tiny.
D’ya want them noodles here they were grand. I liked them anyway.

Why d’you drain out the juice? You’re not supposed to do that.

I meant to drain out all the juice but it was too dry without the juice.

No you’re supposed to put the chicken in first. That’s how you do it. Yeah I know I was going to em but I don’t know I was copying R like. She took it out.

Why d’you drain out the juice? You’re not supposed to do that.

Another five minutes to go about. I think my watch is slow but.

What time are we going home?

No you’re supposed to put the chicken in first. That’s how you do it laugh.

Yeah I know I was going to em but I don’t know I was copying R like. She took it out.

Em yeah what time is it?

Another five minutes to go about. I think my watch is slow but.

What time are we going home?

Fuck+

What?

+is that OK oh I didn’t tell her. Oh no she’s gonna go mad at me.

Tell her what.

Me mam. You know that we’re going home early.

We’re going home before six oh my god I keep forgetting that that things on tonight. I wonder what S’s gonna wear. Some stupid suit I bet.

Lads my tongue is like so sore and em my fucking shin Jesus Christ aah laugh.

It’s not that bad.

It’s huge it looks like a big aah.

Well it’s your own fault. You shouldn’t have tackled that fat cow G. She’s a bruiser. She’s like a tank.

Not that bad? If it’s worse if it’s there we’ll go down I want to get some sweeties or something can I get food like when I’m at your house.

You what?

Can I get food like when I’m at your house I mean like.

Yeah I know.

Fucking bitch.

No no what she said right I was right beside her and she em goes run and C goes I was running and em she goes no you weren’t and she goes I have em a stitch and she’s like she’s like why do you have a stitch and she’s like I was eating and she’s like no you don’t and she said something and then+

She said you’re only run for two minutes. She made her hit it really hard. It’s like hello what have you got there?

Yeah and she goes and C goes I ate something before this and then she starts shouting off and I’m her pal like when I tell you to run that means run.

Yeah and something and C em said something about stitches and I went off and I didn’t hear anything after then em she’s like em C I haven’t been able to play for the last five hours laugh. Yeah she’s always like.

Yeah I heard that give hours.

Then she goes and em its over to you. It’s sort of like annoying.

What has she attitude?

She goes why have you got an attitude. And then I don’t want to hear about a bad attitude you can have a bad attitude or do you want to face me now and there’s like silence then she goes em no I don’t want this attitude against me.

Oh yeah I nearly knocked my tray into em H em and I was holding it next to Miss D then like the dish fell and I was like oh my god and Miss D started laughing at me and I was like see that one there it’s like his fault and he looked at Miss D as
though like OK she’s sitting down and like sorry. And there all like staring at me and
I can feel my face like getting red.
<$1$> Will you wait a minute? Do we have time do we? Wait for me please please
please.
<$2$> Don’t take forever. We never like em just hurry up would you.
<$1$> What?
<$2$> Don’t take forever. She’ll go ballistic you know like. She’s given us like two
hundred lines the cow.
<$3$> And excuse me G and she accused me of like he just spat on my hand yeah. Can
you believe that. Oh my bloody hand I mean. Disgusting.
<$2$> And that’s not C’s at all.
<$1$> What do you use eh?
<$3$> He just spat on my hand he’s gone the fat ass.
<$2$> Words you use for Tipperary?
<$1$> Yeah but you know the way we were listening to it we’re like fucking yoke is
big enough like<$E$> laugh </$E$>.
<$3$> Like em yeah like you know the way it looks old and we’re saying stuff on it.
<$2$> Sure it is.
<$1$> Actually I do.
<$3$> Do you?
<$1$> He’s in study no like I was in tea and then I came in and he’s sat there and I
didn’t care about that I didn’t like him and then he looked at David and he’s like yeah
like this.
<$2$> Yeah right. In your dreams. I reckon he’s going out with someone.
<$3$> No I just looked at him and I was like but seriously he was em like actually he
was looking at me as I looked down at him and saw him looking at me.
<$2$> Oh yeah. I believe you. Not.
<$1$> There’s another good many minutes before we have to go anyway.
<$3$> Yeah about nine and a half Are you eating this?
<$2$> I’ll see. Buy something of your own.
<$3$> I can’t cos I’ve only got like five euros left. Why in the hell didn’t I get it. Oh
yea cos she always picks you.
<$2$> Because she’s serious.
<$1$> I always look I do. I never get picked either so stop going on.
<$2$> Ah come off it will you. You always get called up.
<$3$> Ah yuck em it’s warm. It’s still warm from when it was cooked.
<$2$> What the hell is that? It looks disgusting. Really disgusting.
<$3$> Yeah yew its all that stuff in it like I’m er all curry now ah yuk.
<$2$> Here B give the the spuds here now. I’m gonna mash it all up.
<$1$> God say its your period say it’s your period.
<$3$> Err yew. You are gross gross.
<$2$> Is he gone now? Hey you’re not meant to talk. Go away. Go on piss you you
wanker.
<$3$> So what do you want us to talk about S?
<$2$> Is he gone or not? I’m not saying anything if he’s listening.
<$3$> So what do you want to talk about S? Go on.
<$2$> Politics.
<$3$> Yeah right politics or piss. I prefer piss to politics. Piss or politics.
<$2$> Right em what the fuck are you doing fuck off fuck off.
<$1> What are going to do about it?
<$2> Give me the fucking thing. Go on. Give it to me you cow.
<$1> Yeah and you’re supposed to be this thing.
<$2> What? What?
<$1> I’ve to go to the big man now I’ve to go at six.
<$3> Why?
<$1> Cos did you get kicked out in the last one?
<$2> Don’t put that there.
<$1> Everyone look at me look at me.
<$3> H’s actually H.
<$2> He’s a fucking wanker.
<$1> Oh my God who’s that?
<$2> Who’s that?
<$3> I don’t know G or something like that and she said oh no I think I’ve got cancer.
<$2> I knew it was M giving it to her in the arm oh yeah M.
<$3> Don’t try it like that.
<$2> On her arm yeah.
<$1> Were you wondering this morning why he had this thing out like.
<$2> Bastard.
<$3> I bet you’d have gone ew.
<$1> I thought he was like I cut myself shaving and I’m like shave it off.
<$2> I think that’s funny.
<$1> What’s funny?
<$2> That smiley.
<$3> Yeah its so sweet.
<$2> What happened?
<$1> I want to know what you did to that smiley.
<$2> I didn’t even ask you em look at him last year it was hilarious.
<$3> No remember it was in first year and he came home and he had one you had one
and you were fuck off not on me you went out and you started screaming at me.
<$1> What? Maybe you did get out I didn’t even know that.
<$2> When was that in First year?
<$1> Remember is this going for since J and I know and I remember him sidling up
to J.
<$2> Yeah and she goes what are you doing?
<$1> That was only a minor thing oh J was pissed then ey ey.
<$3> Yeah he would think that was so J were you em embarrassed?
<$1> Embarrassed?
<$2> She’s meeting C.
<$1> Is he just chatting her up?
<$2> No she’s meeting C?
<$3> Who is?
<$2> C.
<$3> Nine o’clock news.
<$2> Stop stop em No I have to have this when I’m talking I just have to pretend it’s
em not here you know yeah.
<$1> H’s yeah it’s like she’s meeting C like.
<$2> Shut up.
<$1> Anyway.
<$2> Leave me alone.
H's a huge cunt of a microphone.
Yeah.
It'll be my turn next week to talk.
You're not meant to talk into it.
Yeah we're not meant to do it with the boys just come here.
Can I do it?
Go on.
Shut up I'll tell em a story shut up.
For what?
They're making a book and they want to know how we talk.
A book?
Yeah she's meant to be meeting C and C doesn't talk to her and he's really nice to her and everything so she should just meet him you know.
Who?
D no shut up stop being so boring.
Yeah alright oh right.
Another one bites the dust can I ask you what your intentions are?
Nine o'clock news what the fuck's going on.
Turn it off.
I will when I'm ready. Don't tell me what to do.
You're not supposed to be listening anyway. It's private. Nothing for your big nose.
I don't care whose listening to it. It's all a load of rubbish anyway.
Are you coming to German? It's nearly five to. W will go mad if we're late. He gave S. 100 lines.
Good. I'm glad. I'm waiting for S. She's getting a cloth. Look at that juice. It's all over the table. It's his fault. He pushed my hand.
You loved it. You're only doing it for attention.
Oh right as if. My wonderful looks mean I get all the attention I want.
Stop talking crap. Is it still going round? Turn it off like.
I can't. I've got to wait for S. She's supposed to be in charge of it all. She gave it to her.
I'm turning it off.
So is it going round properly? It looks slow a bit.
Course it is. Can't you see it? It's moving. It's just quiet. My one's really loud. It like whirs in your what I mean.
I'd like a nice small one like those new ones out. Mine's like enormous. I feel stupid carrying it round. It's impossible to em take it anywhere.
My sister's got a really cute one. It only cost like fifty euros. She got it for Christmas.
What time is it?
I dunno. It was a present like. Ten past. What+
Are you going to hockey?
+time do we have to be there?
Half past I think. I don't care if I'm late. I hate that cow+
Yeah do do I. Scraggy bitch.
I mean she's always making me run and tackle really hard.
Yeah I hate tackling. I mean you+
It's like dangerous.
+could get your em teeth knocked out right.
Yeah laugh imagine having no front teeth. Oh my God imagine opening your mouth.

Yeah right and this gorgeous lad comes over to talk to you and you've got no teeth laugh.

Yeah and he's like 'got to go I forgot something'

I'd get those fake ones.

You mean false teeth. Oh my God imagine having false teeth and they fall out when you're talking to a lad.

Yeah and what if you're kissing and his tongue pushes them out laugh.

Oh my God I'm gonna die. I can just see it.

Look we have to go.

Where like?

She already said deafie. Hockey.

Will we bring the machine?

No what for?

Like we're gonna talk into it while we're playing hockey.

Yeah wait a minute. I just need to finish my recording.

+and they belt the ball off you and get a goal.

Yeah right. Can you imagine C's face if we did that. She'd go like ballistic.

I know. She'd em probably pass out with the shock laugh.

Shall we go like?

We'll get into trouble with Miss C the cow if we em like don't go now. I hate her.

Can I borrow your hockey stick?

Thought you were em gonna say you're gum shield like 'eew'

Yeah right like I want all your germs.

Got enough of your own laugh.

I've gotta get a new shinguard. I hate playing without it. Yeah like especially when that D comes up. She whacks it really hard.

Yeah and like nearly knocks you out+

The power like.

She hit it so hard.

Have you got a spare one?

What d'ya want? What are you going on about now?

Cow. I need a aah my shin. I need a shin guard. It's already all bruises. I'm crippled from it like agony.

Just put up or shut up.

That's a good one. Put up or shut up. I'll have to remember that for that whinge cow myself.

Come on let's go. We'll be late.

She'll go ballistic. You know what she's like when she gets going.

She loves it. I mean she's one of those like those what d'ya call them?

It's a sadist you moron. Not a masochist laugh.

Yeah like someone who likes putting pain on others.

How d'you know brainbox?

Well some of us have brains like sponges.

Yeah dirty stinky saummy ones.

You're just jealous of my brain. You'd love to be me. But you_
Yeah right. In your dreams.
Can't. Never mind. You can be you even if you're second best.
Shut up S. You're full of yourself.
She's listening and looking over like. She's dying for us to be late so she can give us detention.
She can't. We gotta go to typewriting after hockey.
Yeah but she em can't she em give it another night. She doesn't care about what we em miss anyway.
Tell her we've got it when we've got maths. Then we'll miss it laugh
And father C won't know. He's such an
She'll give it us anyway. You know what she's like.
Idiot. He's about like a hundred.
Are you ready? You're making us late. Just slam it.
It won't shut properly. Otherwise they'll thieve my racket again. And she won't buy me another one.
Did you say that.
Yeah. She went mad. Thieving bastards. That's my tennis racket and my hockey stick and oh yea my Tommy jacket. You know the red one you said you liked.
Is it going around now. Right its moving alright I think.
Anyway it looks alright. Is she actually gonna listen to this.
Yeah em she said something about like research.
What d'you mean?
I dunno really something about computers whatever.
What's the time now? Let's see. Show me. Turn your arm move it. Ok.
It's slow a few minutes I think.
Are you going? She'll go ballistic if we're late.
I don't care. I'm not rushing for that cow.
Ouch that hurt. You nearly pulled my wrist off.
Where d'you get it.
What oh you mean the watch. Got I for Christmas off me Mam. I wanted one of those Gucci one.
Oh yeah. Silver like with the holes in the straps.
Yeah a bit but not the really em big one.
How much?
What
The watch.
I dunno it was a present like.
They've got them in the Crescent quite cheap.
Yeah but not the em like real Gucci.
I dunno. Anyway you can't even tell.
Yeah - its not like someone looks at it to see if its real em right?
Is it five past em nearly?
We better go. She go mad otherwise and I've got to tell her about my stick.
What like
You know em someone nicked it.
Did they? When then?
<$1> Dunno last week after hockey – I lost my locker key so I em like couldn’t lock it proper and so I lett it open.
<$2> I’m always leaving mine open.
<$3> Yeah but those Spanish are right thieves.
<$1> Yeah em they like go around thieving at night.
<$2> How d’you know?
<$3> She goes with them.
<$1> Funny – you are so funny like not, loads of people had stuff thieved. M got her tennis racket taken.
<$2> I bet they just do it for a laugh – like and em just throw them away.
<$1> Yeah its not like they can wear it. I mean you’d know would you like?
<$3> So are we em going then. We’d better cos its nearly ten past now.
<$2> You go. I need to collect my stuff for typing.
<$1> Oh God. I forgot to do that? Is it for today.
<$3> She said she’s gonna give you detention. Oh my God you won’t be able to go to H’s party cos its on Friday.
<$1> What is?
<$2> Detention – Friday night. You’ll have to em what are you staring at?
<$3> I’m not. I just remembered something.
<$1> Just make up an excuse will I?
<$2> Yeah but she’ll still give it to you.
<$1> How d’you know. You want me to get it so you have S.all to yourself at the party.
<$2> Get lost. I don’t even fancy him <$E1> laugh </$E>.
<$3> <$E1> laugh </$E>. I think he’s fit – I mean he’s alright. About four and a half.
<$2> What out of a hundred.
<$1> Four for effort like.
<$2> Right get them em just pick that up would you – there my hands are full.
<$3> I’m not your skivy you lazy cow.
<$2> I’ll remember that. Look now look em what you’ve done. I’ve dropped it.
<$1> Everyones like staring at you S.
<$2> Fuck you. You are such a cow J.
<$1> It’s on the machine. It’s still going round.
<$3> Turn it off. Is it forty five minutes.
<$2> I don’t know. Who cares. She’s like gonna kill us. We are so in trouble.
<$1> Tell her we’re doing important research for whats it again?
<$2> The Government <$E1> laugh </$E> seriously like.
<$3> No just say C told us to do it like. It’s real important.
<$1> I’m out of here. Get off it. That’s my mouth shield er yuk you stood on it. Now its all em like germs thanks to you.
<$2> Get a life. Just give me it her. Look you just have to wash it. Stick it in the jug.
<$1> Oh gross now you’ve put all her germs in the water.
<$2> Who cares? I’m not drinking it am I?
Transcript (Boys)

<$1>$ So what d’ya wanna talk about then.
<$2>$ Stop he’s making me laugh its supposed to be like normal talking not like we’re like actors its supposed to sound normal like.
<$1>$ She said you can talk about anything you like whatever she said things like em hobbies or TV or whatever em.
<$3>$ Yes like I’m gonna start discussing hobbies Oh I play tennis I’m brilliant em if you saw me you’d be amazed I’m like the next Wimbledon champion.
<$1>$ Stop messing its supposed to be proper like and the girls did it like they were supposed to I bet. It’s actually pretty good it’s like this is alright.
<$2>$ Yeah I’d love to hear their tape I bet its all about lads they fancy that’s all they talk about and laugh about like stupid things like.
<$3>$ Did you see the Italy match right load of amateurs can’t kick a ball and did you see that one with the blonde dyed hair what an idiot.
<$1>$ Yeah he’d look like a wanker didn’t he?
<$3>$ +yeah he looked like a nerd what a nerd he must have just been to the hairdressers.
<$2>$ What did you get for the geography test?
<$1>$ I got a B but I should have got an A that Father R is a right tight bastard.
<$2>$ And he’s a crap teacher I mean he’s so boring I just fall asleep and he doesn’t even notice like.
<$3>$ Yeah like half the class is asleep and he’s like open your books on page 73 right.
<$1>$ Yeah and he answer the questions for himself I’m not joking you can’t get a chance to answer coz he’s already said it.
<$2>$ Well B’s worse he gives piles of homework and those lines we all got coz of T he’s such a nerd its so unfair I don’t see why we should get lines coz he can’t shut up. He’s a mental case.
<$3>$ Yeah I’d love to poke him one in the eye with his glasses on.
<$1>$ Yeah right and you’d be done for hitting a cripple – it’s like in goal.
<$2>$ He’s not a cripple you moran he’s kind of like handicapped.
<$1>$ No he’s not he just can’t see he’s not blind.
<$3>$ So did you go hurling training I never saw you there old M was losing it screaming at B to run with the ball but he just passed it to S what a spastic M.
<$2>$ He’s crap at rugby too in fact he’s crap at everything he’s just a crap human specimen if you get by drift crap crap.
<$1>$ And you’re his brother in crap.
<$3>$ I’m starving all I had since this morning is a mars bar. Go on make us some food your man won’t say anything she likes me.
<$2>$ There’s nothing here she’s gone shopping. I’m not allowed to cook she’d go berserk if I touch the cooker she keeps thinking I’ll set the house on fire.
<$1>$ Yeah she’s em driving home all happy then she sees the smoke coming out the house and she’ll be like oh my god oh my god my children somebody save my children holy Jesus and Mary.
<$3>$ M’s kitchen went up and there’s like smoke all over the house when he left the chipper on the stupid spas forgot em and went in to watch telly and there like smoke all over the house and the kitchen covered in flames em+.
Yeah and he’s like thinking oh dear those chips are taking ages to cook what’s up?
Yeah right and the house is burning down.
Yeah like and the whole street and everyone like screaming and choking and he’s like watching the telly and the fire brigade all outside and everyone like crowding around and his Mam’s screaming save my son, my only son and he’s like waiting for his chips.
What a spas.
Yeah like she doesn’t care about the rest of them.
+and he’s waiting for his chips.
Did he get burned?
Na they got him out it was in the what’s it called oh yeah the Nationalist what a nerd.
Yeah and he’s in the photo next to his mam and all the neighbours are like giving him em staring him out coz he’s nearly blown up the road.
He’s a spas. Everyone hates him. I’m not sitting next to him in Irish he copied all my test and Mr M thinks he’s good and he’s crap and I get the blame can see him looking and writing it down+
I put my hand round like that and no once can see.
+yeah but he keeps doing it and he can see with those big thick glasses they’re like binoculars.
Yeah long vision I mean long distance he can see the answers from about that em far away.
I’d tell sir.
Yeah but he sucks up did you hear him tell Miss C that her hair was nice what a woman.
Yeah but she likes him she gave him a high mark for his geography project but it was such crap+
Yeah just because he did a model volcano on the front.
Yeah did you see the state of it? All egg boxes what a state.
It was crap he shouldn’t have got 30 I mean he came first and it was crap. P’s was better but she gave him a crap mark.
Yeah she hates him cos he doesn’t give a shit but he’s better than G’s.
+his brothers linked someone in Clonmel it was in the paper.
Yeah and he’s a nutter he came vowing for Mr M when he hit G when em he fell asleep in study.
He’s been in prison He’s a nutter Did you see all his tattoos He’s got a great big snake on his arm here right up there and on the back of his neck+
He didn’t go Rockwell did he?
+I dunno he probably was in prison at our age. He works as a bouncer in Clonmel.
His mum and dad have got a restaurant – an Italian restaurant all that pizza they get it free you can eat as much as you want.
I wish I had a restaurant I’d eat all night – pizza em Chinese spare ribs.
Go on get us something to eat I’m starving.
You can go to the shop and buy something. I’m not making shit like.
Go on just a sandwich she won’t notice. I know cos like his Mam won’t let him it’s like she never buys enough.
Get lost anyway I’ve got to take the dog for a walk.
Oh Yeah I’ve got to take the smelly poodle for a walk its my responsibility.
Go on then and then I can steal some bread yeah I'm a thief.

Give him some bread or something otherwise I'll have to go to my house and get something coz his mam's gone to Waterford like.

I don't care. D' ya want some cereal? We've got cornflakes but there's no milk I think yeah its empty.

Jesus em doesn't anyone buy any shopping around here - don't your Mam do any work?

I'm deprived I'm neglected I keep telling her but she doesn't care anyway she's gone to Supervalues now in Tipperary town with B - she's bringing back Pringles those dipper ones I love those.

They're disgusting tastes like you're eating snot.

Yeah with salt on that sour creams disgusting like I hate it its enough to make you puke up anyway how do you know what snot tastes like ha ha you eat snot.

Doritos are alright I'd eat anything I'm starving - go on+

Alright have an apple+

It's probably got a maggot in it eer its all brown. It's like you know crap.

+it's the last one left in the yoke that's why nobody wants it.

I don't care I could pass out+

Yeah right and I'd step on you.

Yeah we'd like to have you dead and play Nintendo over your dead body.

+then your mam 'd be arrested for neglecting children or what's it called?

What?

You know when you let kids starve to death and you get put in prison.

Yeah but she's not your mam you moron.

You mean childline like when you them up.

Yeah it's a laugh you can em I kept phoning them with P and he's going that his Mam and Dads drunk and beating up X.

Yeah and they're taking it all serious and he's killing himself trying not to laugh on the phone.

And the silly cow's now don't worry we'll help you just give us your name and address.

Yeah right so he given X

P's address and the police probably came round and put his Dad in jail.

That's a good idea to do it when you wanna go out and they won't let you just phone up and say they're beating you up.

Get off you wanker aah get off you'll break it.

It's stupid anyway how are you supposed to like play it it sounds stupid.

That's coz you're not doing it properly you're meant to put it have the that you spaz not hold it like that that stops the strings vibrating.

Em right anyway I'm gonna start learning the drums.

All right and what one you gonna practise on wally?

I'm getting some I've got the money I'm just working 'til I start learning.

Well you're only doing it coz P's got drums but he's crap anyway he can't play.

I think I've guitars miles better any day than a crappy drummer - yes like you're the next Ringo Star.

Who's that?

Oh my God like the Beatles I bet you don't even know who they are you're a moran man get real seriously.

I'm only messing course I know him but he's about eighty anyway.
Yeah but he was gook like before.

Ever heard of Keith Moon he killed himself and that was cool like.

Yeah he was in the who they were mega quadraphonic and all that you know the mods.

Did you see that scooter he drove they all have them in France.

No they don’t moron they’re like specially done for Mods not like stupid mopeds.

Oh yeah they all have mopeds.

I’m getting a Harley. I’d get a Harley for seventy-five grand.

A what?

You know a Harley Davidson best bike in the world.

No its not they’re crap – they can’t beat a Ferrari. It all depends on the speed like.

A Ferraris a car you wally.

I know but they’re they’re same price I mean why would you like get a Harley when you could have a Ferrari.

That’s crap Ferraris cost about two hundred thousand Harley’s are only like seventy five thousand or something.

No they’re more than that I reckon they’re about one hundred thousand but you can get them second-hand.

You can get them on the Internet.

Yeah like order it through the post – oh by the way I thought I’d send off for a Harley today Mam.

Or a Ferrari like outside the door and everyone’s like staring thinking you’ve like won the lotto or something and your doing like two hundred miles an hour.

Yeah right em I’d get on if I won the lotto and a Porsche.

No they’re crap. Aston Martins better they’re faster.

No the best one’s a Lambourgni they do like two hundred miles per hour.

Yeah right down Tipperary high street and everyone’s jumping out the way and I’m like aaagh.

Yeah I’d drive it into school and park it real flash I’d only let you and G have a go.

You haven’t got it yet.

I know but if I did em.

You wouldn’t drive it in Ireland you’d get done for speeding.

Yeah like two hundred miles an hour oh sorry I was late for school em right.

What’s your Dad got now?

A ford focus or something its crap I like those Mitsubishi jeeps they’re really cool like really long at the back like a lorry.

Have you seen the size of the wheels they’re like a tractor.

No I’d get a Range Rover they’re cool like.

Yeah the old ones look like tin cans though they’re weird sort of square.

Have you got a CD player in yours I want one but we’ve just got a crap tape recorder all the tapes get stuck inside its crap.

Yeah and we’ve got air conditioning and like em airbags +

Have you seen those ones which have a comuter like on.

Yeah like on the back of the seat at the back brilliant it’s a real computer you can do it when they’re driving.

Have you got one of those?

Don’t be stupid they’re just out I forgot which ones they are.
I think it’s a Japanese one like Mitsubishi.
Yeah I bet they cost a load. They cost like two hundred thousand.
Or a stretch limo. I bet they’re like a room inside em.
Yeah right you can fit the whole class and go to+.
Yeah imagine turning up at school in one real flash like.
+yeah and everyone’s like can I sit inside?
I’d tell em to lick my feet.
Yeah right you could make em do anything like.
Like on that weird Japanese programme where they dare them to do mad things.
Yeah like eat glass or stay in a pit with snakes+.
Yeah did you see that last week I couldn’t believe that man with the headband
he was walking on burning hot coal – I mean it was on fire.
Yeah but it’s not supposed to burn you.
+but it must I mean it’s real it’s not fake like.
It must be true because they lit something and it went on fire so it was real fire.
Yeah right he could be like covered in something to stop em like it burning it
you know what I mean.
Yeah but you’d see it no I reckon its really fire but the sort of switch off the em
pain.
Yeah right but I bet it’s full of blisters from heat after.
Yeah but they didn’t show that em bit did they?
I think its fake – its just a trick nobody could do that its not possible.
You could like psyche yourself up you know with yoga and all that its supposed
to sort of out it all off the pain I mean.
That’s crap you can’t cut off that much pain you’d pass out your body em like
id just sort of collapse in agony.
Yeah right.
How much more do we have to do like?
I dunno. She said like fifteen minutes.
So what have we done?
About that I reckon.
So what are they gonna do with it.
I dunno em she em said something about putting it in a computer. I dunno
whatever.
Can we see it I mean?
Yeah I think so. I’ll ask her.
Did you see that programme about em on telly last night? It was brill. About
getting em like a challenge between whose the fiercest a white shark or+
Yeah it was between a shark and a crocodile wasn’t it. I mean how could a
crocodile beat a shark.
Yeah I knew like it wouldn’t but did you see how it shook its head like the
force to rip things apart.
That’s like in that film em what’s it called again?
Jaws? I saw that.
No that other one ‘Out of the Blue’ or something.
Never heard of it. I like that Aussie bloke. He’s mad. He goes right up and
touches them with his hand+
Yeah he’s had loads of injuries. He’s gonna get his arm bit off+
What’s on now?
+if you ask me.
Only that crap Home and Away. I fucking hate that.
That's Australian too. Isn’t it?
What’s his name again?
Crocodile Dundee laugh
No not that old man. The other one.
I forget. He talks really stupid too.
Yeah right em like all Australians do.
H’s better than South African. What about R. He’s from there.
What in second year that em that he’s got black long hair. You mean that one?
I never knew he was from Africa. I thought he came from America.
There’s loads of Spanish this year+
I know. They’re always going on in Spanish.
+they all hand around together.
Father R hates them cos like they keep yabbering in Spanish. He’s got to teach English. You can tell he+
Yea he hates them all cos they don’t shut up. Do they?
+really em like hates them. Em I like they’re always annoying the girls.
Anway they’re leaving.
Who says?
They go home don’t they+
Yeah but they’re coming back in September.
+at the end of term.
Who says? They only stay one year. They don’t stay like long.
Yeah but they’re coming back in September
No but they go em I mean only come for like about a year you know like improve they’re English.
They talk really stupid don’t they?
Yeah right. I can’t understand a word.
That’s why that Father R hate teaching them. They can’t understand anything you say like.
I know like and they em just keep yapping in Spanish all the time.
well what about that Russian one. He’s mad. Did you see him jock that what’s her name you know em in first year?
Oh yea R.
He’s suspended. He’s done it loads of times. I’ve seen him.
I know. But they can’t send him back to Russia. Can they? I mean like what did he say.
Anyway they only want the money.
I’m starving. Get us some food.
What do you want? But like you can wait.
I dunno anything. Got any em biscuits?
I’ll have a look. I might like. Wait a minute I’ve still got an Easter egg. It’s a Mars one.
Yes! Go on open it then.
Get off. You’ll smash it. It’ll be all broken. I said you can have some. Just get off would ya.
Get a move on.
I’m not giving you any now+
Go on you mean bastard. Anyway its gone all mouldy.
<$2> Cos you broke it.
<$3> No it seems delicious. You’re not having any. Is he?
<$2> You can have that right. That’s all. You’re lucky you’re getting that.
<$3> Yeah you never give us any in your house.
<$1> Yes I do What do you mean. I gave you ball those chips last night outside the chipper
<$2> oh yeah. All right you can have that but don’t ask for anymore.
<$1> oh I don’t ask for anymore. I don’t want it em any like.
<$3> Good. I’ll have it. Oy give me his. Don’t have it. He’s a stingy bastard.
<$1> You wait P. I’m not giving you any chips tonight after gaelic so don’t even ask.
I don’t get if you’re on your knees begging. It’s no good.
<$3> Piss off R. I’ll buy my own. I’ve got twenty - five euros yesterday. I don’t really want any like.
<$1> Where d’ya get that you jammy bastard.
<$3> You know its whats left from the em the you know money we got washing those cars. It’s my share what’s left over.
<$1> I spent all mine. Ages ago. We could get up again in the summer holidays.
We’d make a fortune.
<$3> Yeah remember all that money we made last time?
<$1> Yeah but I reckon we should up it five euros a car. Fours not enough.
<$2> How much is it in Bansha?
<$3> if we did like twelve a day.
<$1>Twelve. That’s nothing. You mean like twenty.
<$2> No. Twenty’s impossible cos you got to wait for them come like they don’t just wait in a row. Do they?
<$3> No but if you em like put up a sort of you know like a sign. They’d know.
Wouldn’t they?
<$1> Yeah. That’s a good idea actually like if we put it up in the morning. Then they’d see you and em come back later. Couldn’t they? Yeah I reckon that’s a good idea.
<$2> What will we write it on? Anyway I can’t do it this week – end cos I’ve got to go to Tramore.
<$3> Oh Mammy’s taking me to Tramore!
<$2> Fuck off R. It’s cos my aunt invited us. I have to go.
<$1> Do it when you get back. We could+
<$2> Why don’t we do it all summer?
<$1> +start at about eight.
<$3>No I’m not washing cars all fucking summer.
<$1> Don’t. Nobody asked you anyway.
<$2> You’re a right lazy bastard R.
<$1> So I don’t care.
<$3> How are you em I’m not doing like em washing them for you. If you’re gonna do it with us you have to do+
<$2> Yeah the same numbers as us.
<$3> +the same as us. We’re not em doing it for you.
<$1> I’ll take the money <$E1> laugh <$E>
<$2> Yeah fuck off R.
<$3> He’d like he gone with it all when we weren’t looking.
<$1> Oh yes. And I’d spend it all for myself. Just think all+
Fuck off R
Those cornettos and McDonalds.
You fat bastard. You’re like obese.
You don’t know what you’re talking about. Obese is fat. I’m not fat.
That C is a fat cow. Every time I see her she’s eating taytos.
Her mam’s a fat cow too. She can’t walk.
I’ve gotta go. What time is it anyway?
About three.
I said I’d get back.
what d’ya have to go for? I thought you were staying. C’s coming round in a minute.
Is he? How d’ya know?
Cos like I asked him cher.
What’s he coming round for?
God you’re so nosey. Anyway em we’re playing down the G.A.A.
What now?
When he comes cher
Right see you later. What time will you be down there?
Dunno. About half an hour. Maybe like.
Right. Se you later. Text me if when you’re leaving.
I dunno. Might.
Anyway I told C to meet us down there cos he’s in town.
What’s he gone in for?
Get new runners. They’ve got crap ones in Wheelan’s.
Yeah but there Adidas. Those Nike ones are cool. I might get them next time.
How much?
Dunno. About a hundred. Might be cheaper in Limerick.
Have they got good ones like lots?
Think they’re better than lifestyle. Dunno about cheaper though.
Where’s he gone then?
Dunno you said he said he sprained it, not broke it.
What em his foot? How comes he em like?
I think em I dunno I’m not sure if its his foot or just his ankle. Dunnor someone said he like sprained it.
How did that happen er was he playing football or what
No it was en em the em McGraths field you know
Where’s that?
Down near P’s shop you know in front of the bus stop.
You know em when he like went to the em doctors place like you know surgery last time.
Yeah in front you know. There’s that big field at the back near the tennis courts.
Oh I did the Pepsi tennis there.
Yeah it was good wasn’t it.
He must have twisted it. He’s out now for the season.
No he’s not. How do you know anyway. You’re not a doctor.
Yeah he could have just sprained it.
That’s what I said.
No you said broke.
No I didn’t you fat liar. Did I M?
No he said sprained.
Well it would be broken. I man its easy like to em break it if you like fell right on it hard.
So who took him.
Dunno – his brother – to em emergency . I went there when I broke my arm. Oh yeah I remember you em your what it – oh yeah that white thing that put around it.
That’s a caste you moron.
Is it what we wrote on remember all those em that writing.
Rember S did a scraastina on it and G went beserk. That was cool like.
I’m sick of waiting. Has he got his mobile like. I mean did he em say he was em going to ring?.
Yeah but you can’t like use them there.
What cant you use?
You know em in the hospital you’ve got to em turn them off.
Or otherwise they take up.
It stops the machine or something.
Don’t talk crap. How can a phone stop em the like all those massive machines. It’s a joke.
That’s because they don’t like the em noise you know like all the music when you’re waiting.
There was a big fight there last time – all those knackers just all sitting there.
They stink. All the men were like drunk and shouting and screaming in the em corridors.
And the women were fighting as well.
Really what with who like?
I dunno they just kept shouting all the time and they’re like ranting and raving up and down the corridors.
That’s because someone was dying.
No they weren’t wally – they just like shouting. I mean like they’re loud and I mean loud man.
They smash up cars em too I heard that they em did some in the car park like to steal the sound system right.
They nick everything man tea leaves.
What?
You know like tea leaves is thieves.
Oh yeah who told you that.
When I lived in Hackney everyone em like they go apples and stair you know stair.
Oh yeah. Give me that it’s not yours.
Let you you moron it’ll break em just let go of my hand will ya?
Yeah he’s only touching it not like its worn a lot or anything.
So it’s not yours anyway. That cost ninety euros and I paid for it out of my em.
So are you em coming or what. Dunnor – after the Simpsons.
Oh he wants to watch the Simpsons cos like that’s the way he likes it.
Better em than your stupid Friends.
Is it on just get the remote.
I dunnor look em there like em under it year under.
What the bed.
<$2> Dunno it might have slipped down behind.
<$1> Where’s he gone? He told me not to em be late.
<$2> Who? Who are you talking about now?
<$1> J he said he was em gonna show me how to tune it when I came round
<$2> I dunnor em he’s gone with M to get S in Cahir. You know that house she’s renting.
<$1> Yeah but em is he like gonna be long cos I’ve got to er only got like about 10 minutes otherwise em I’ll have to walk back sort of later like.
<$2> I dunnor. He’s coming back cos he said he was. But I don’t know about the guitar. Have you got one.
<$1> No but I’m gonna get one in town on Saturday you know in T. Ryan’s that music shop.
<$2> Get one in Limerick they’ve got a better selection.
<$1> No can’t be bothered. I em can’t like get into Limerick anyway. I’m supposed to be helping F on Saturday with the cars.
<$2> Oh yeah are you shit doing that. I thought you’d stopped like.
<$1> No I am. Got to like. I mean its good when you get a lot like the money good but not it em+
<$2> +yeah it it’s raining nobody gets them washed.
<$1> The weathers lousy.
<$3> Alright man – when did you the here.
<$2> He’s been waiting ages.
<$3> As if. I just got back. Did he tell you there em that I em had to go to Cahir with M to her em house like. You know the one she’s in with C.
<$1> I know. Don’t matter. Look you em know em remember the guitar thing?
<$2> What oh yeah that metal things gone missing. D’you mean that?
<$1> Sort out oh its em for tuning it like
<$2> No you dan do it yourself by ear.
<$1> I can’t even em don’t even know the strings like so em+
<$2> Don’t matter you get used to the sound.
<$1> +i’rn not gonna know it.
<$3> Are you gonna get one then?
<$1> Haven’t decided. I might like depends on em you know the time. I mean I don’t know it. I’ve got the time to em like practice.
<$2> Yeah I know what you mean. You’re em got em at least you have to do an hour a night.
<$1> Your’re joking fuck I haven’t got ten minutes let alone an hour like.
<$2> Yeah but once you get into it em its alright.
<$1> Yeah maybe. I’ll see I might get one if its not that much but I said I’d see on Saturday. I went in on Friday and after I’m like well it wasn’t so bad.
<$2> Do you know which one you’r getting. I mean is it like this.
<$1> Dunno – I’ve tried a few but I’m not sure – look if you want you can come and check em out if you like.
<$2> When are you going like?
<$1> Dunno, maybe Saturday morning cos I’ve em got to em get back like for the em cars.
<$3> Are you up for it again?
<$1> I need the dosh man. I’m fucking skint, brassic. I did thirty euros last night.
<$2> On what?
<$1> Dunno nothing really just got a pizza with J and went up to M F house like.
You must have got something else with it for thirty euros. It’s only about 12 euros for a pizza you know.

Yeah but I can’t remember. I gave M.S. euros to get a kebab.

Oh I hate them that I hate it.

Did he know he’s always on the scrounge. I lent him ten euros last week and he still won’t give it back. I know he keeps saying oh I forgot it and he thinks I’m just like gonna forget but I’m not man. It’s like so fucking annoying.

Yeah but you keep on like giving it to him so it’s like your own fault like

Look is he doing it or what? Get that metal thing what’s it called again?

No I can’t now cos J’s got it and he’s locked it in+ what his room? You mean he’s locked it in there like.

I dunno. He locks it up so like precious you know what he’s like fucking pouffer laugh

Its cos he thinks he’s a great musician you know.

Yeah like the next like Elvis you must not

No really he rates himself.

Who does? J? I think he’s quite good really for his age but he annoys everyone cos he’s such an em big head.

Yeah I know. Everyone hates him at school like cos he’s always em+

Do they?

+like going on about his fucking guitar.

No but seriously I know you’re em jealous of him. You know what I mean?

Get lost am I. He’s just a wally fucking Avril What’s her name.

Oh yea Avril Lavine <a popstar>

Look are we doing em going to the garage tonight or what. M owes me thirty five euros.

How come?

From last weekend you know when we did those cars.

Oh year. How come he paid me?

Dunno he fancies you. Fancy boy.

Fuck off. I can’t help it if everyone like me better than you you fucker.

Oh year cos you have such a great like personality don’t you?

Get off my foot you wally. My shoes.

Oh mind my new shoes you moron+

+they’re like new.

I’m out of here. ‘She’s’ gonna kill me. I’m dead.

who is? You mean your mam.

No M cos I said I’d help her pump up the tyres on her bike.

Just cos you fancy her we all know don’t we. I mean everyone’s talking behind your back.

Get lost. She’s not anyway. She’s not allowed out. Her Mam and Dad’s right tight. She’s got to look after her brothers and sisters after school.

Yeah but they probably pay her+

Every day like.

Loads of money. She’s got a flash new mobile you moron the fold up ones those sort of silver em

Yeah the vodaphone new ones. I know. They’re cool.
<$2>$ Yeah they're like two hundred euro. Where did she get that I mean.
<$1>$ She does em babysitting for her cousin you know in the village next to the garage.