"I'm fine girl, and how are you?":

The Use of Vocatives in Spoken Irish English

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Abstract

The use of phatic communion and small talk are obvious examples of how interpersonal relationships are built and maintained. This paper explores the use of vocatives, which play an equally important part in the affective realm of communication. This paper uses corpus-based tools and methodologies to explore the use of vocatives across a range of contexts in Irish English, highlighting the strong link between the use of vocatives and casual conversation in particular. Focusing on three high frequency forms (*girl*, *lads* and *boy*) in casual conversation, we investigate how their distribution and functions are conditioned by sociolinguistic variables like age and gender. The paper reveals new insights into interpersonal interaction which has informality at its core.

Keywords: vocatives, social contexts, age, gender, casual conversation

1. Introduction

This paper explores vocatives in an Irish English context drawing on a number of spoken corpora. Using corpus-based tools and methodologies, it seeks to identify high-frequency vocative forms that are common to Irish English and how they are used across a number

of contexts. We explore the use of vocatives in tutor-student teaching practice feedback on an MA teacher education programme in an Irish third level institution, professional talk collected across a range of office settings in Ireland as well as focus, in detail, on the use of vocatives in Irish English casual conversation across the sociolinguistic variables of age and gender. We define vocatives in line with Biber et al. (1999) who highlight the fact that such items can take many different forms ranging from endearments (*honey*), kinship terms (*Daddy*), familiarisers (*dude*), first names familiarised (*Johnny*), first name full form (*John*) (see also Hook 1984), title and surname (*Mr Smith*), honorifics (*Sir*), nickname (*Speedy*), and even structures such as *those of you who want to bring your pets along*. In terms of the functions, we draw on McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003), who highlight six discrete functions: relational, topic, badinage, mitigator, turn and summon. In doing so, we examine the role of vocatives in negotiating the relative formality or informality of the context, social relationships among speakers and speakers' social identities (Ervin-Tripp 1971; Murphy 1988). The present paper investigates vocatives as an area of grammar which, according to Leech (1999: 107) has been neglected.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Types of Vocatives

Those preoccupied with the socially-based study of language have been investigating and discussing ways in which people address each other in spoken interaction since the earliest work in this area began with Brown and his associates in the 1960s (Brown and Gilman 1960; Brown and Ford 1961). In the most general sense, the term can be used to

denote people or objects present or non-present. More specifically "terms of address" (Jefferson 1973) or "forms of address" (Brown and Gilman 1960) relate to those present. Leech (1999) distinguishes between a term of address as any device used to refer to the addressee of an utterance, and a vocative as a particular type of address term. Previous research has differentiated various categories of address terms and vocatives. Brown and Ford (1961: 375) proposes an initial binary contrast between the use of first names (including familiar abbreviations and diminutive forms) and the use of title with last name (including personal and professional/occupational titles). In a precursor to Biber et al. (1999), Leech (1999) distinguishes three types of vocatives semantically depending on familiarity between the interactants: familiarised, honorifics, and others.

Using American and British English corpus data, the eight way distinction proposed by Biber et al. (1999: 1108-1113), again based on degree of familiarity between the speakers, is the most comprehensive categorisation found in the literature examined. As previously mentioned, on a scale from most to least familiar or intimate they distinguish: endearments, kinship terms, familiarisers (all of which are primarily American English such as *dude,* with the exception of the British English *mate*), first names familiarised/shortened, first name full form, title and surname, honorifics, nickname, and other structures. In general, they conclude that these vocatives maintain or reinforce interpersonal relationships. For example, endearments are used with intimates, close friends and family members, kinship terms with older generation family members, and familiarisers with friends of equal status, for example, teenagers to signal social solidarity and in-group membership. The position and distribution of vocatives is also examined in some detail in Biber et al. (1999), the results of which show that first names are most frequently used in a combined sample of British and American data, followed closely by shortened first names, familiarisers, kinship terms, and endearments. Title and surname

and honorifics are significantly less frequent than all the other types of vocatives. Syntactic position is also examined and it is found that final position was most preferred (70% of the data analysed), e.g. *Let's go, Mary*, followed by initial (10%), e.g. *Mary, let's go*, stand-alone (10%), e.g. *Dad!,* and medial (10%), e.g. *I'm sorry, Pat, I can't make it.* Biber et al. (1999) do not suggest a functional link with the syntactic positioning of the vocative but illustrate a direct link between the length of the unit and the position of the vocative. Initial vocatives tend to be associated with longer units and final vocatives with shorter units.

2.2. *Previous research on other varieties and languages*

Previous studies in this field have focussed on particular geographical varieties of English, on other languages, and on specific contexts of use. Some of these studies will now be discussed in brief. In their examination of terms of address in American English, Brown and Ford (1961) draw on speech from four contexts: plays, actual usage in a Boston business firm, reported usage of business executives, and recorded usage in the Midwest. The focus of this study is on reciprocal employment of address terms. They find three major patterns in the data, each of which is determined by the relationship between the speakers. Mutual use of title and last name is found with formality and distance, mutual first name with more intimacy, and non-reciprocal occurrence between speakers of relatively higher or lower status. In the Anglo-Caribbean context, Mühleisen (2005) draws on historical data to investigate specific nominal and pronominal forms of address in terms of influencing factors and from a socio-pragmatic perspective. Using Goffman's theory of the self to frame her research, she discusses avoidance of personal names, the extension of kinship terms, and hierarchy with reference to title and first name

usage. In a later paper (2011), she looks more specifically at the second person pronominal distinction as it is used for face management and for emphasising the existence of more than one addressee. Moving from varieties of English to other languages, Jaworski and Galasiński (2000: 35) discuss how terms of address reflect the relative position of interactants vis-a-vis one another and society as a whole. Examining adversarial political speech events in Poland (television debates) they suggest that the speakers' choice of a particular form of address locates the addressee in social space and defines and constructs the social actors' mutual relationship. They link this idea to Goffman's work on face-to-face interaction, especially his concepts of "participation framework" and "production format" (Goffman 1981), and to concepts of ideology (citing van Dijk 1998) as a social representation shared by members of a group and used by them in repeated contexts. The focus on norm violation in the Polish political debates found that marked, non-standard, often unacceptable, vocatives were used to challenge the relational status quo between the speakers, which had the effect of suggesting inferiority or lower social class of the opposing speaker. Ultimately, Jaworski and Galasiński (2000: 49) conclude that the address forms are "used strategically by the participants of political debates to gain legitimacy for their ideologies". Other languages have also been examined for vocative usage, for example, a detailed pragmatic-syntactic study of Romanian, Bulgarian and Umbundu was recently conducted by Hill (2007). All of this research is building towards a more comprehensive understanding of universal language norms and differences in the way people address each other in different geographical locations.

Address terms have also been explored from a variety of different perspectives in terms of contexts of use. Emihovich (1981), for instance, explored friendship markers in children's social play and put forward the idea that real names and pretend names

function to mark context shifts in the children's activities as well as delineate role relationships among the participants along the dimension of power and affiliation. Brown and Gilman (1960) explored vocatives in terms of power semantics and concluded that they are sensitive to the social context of communication i.e. the power semantic framework. More recently, McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003) have explored vocatives in casual conversation and radio phone-ins. They conclude that in neither data-set were the vocatives semantically necessary and established that their use served overwhelmingly a pragmatic function. Wilson and Zeitlyn (1995) look at vocatives in family dinner table talk and explore them also from a corpus linguistics perspective. They found that vocatives are common at topic boundaries (see also Zwicky 1974; Panhuis 1986; Predelli 2008), while Leech (1999) identified three functions for vocatives: summoning attention, addressee identification as well as the establishing and maintaining of social relationships. He noted that final vocatives were often found to be concerned with the social relationship. This finding is of particular interest to our paper.

3. Data and Methodology

For the analysis, we draw on corpus data from a number of sources including the 1-million-word Limerick Corpus of Irish English (L-CIE) (Farr, Murphy and O'Keeffe, 2004), which represents mainly casual conversation collected across a range of contexts and geographical locations in Ireland (excluding Northern Ireland). A number of smaller, register specific corpora are also examined so that contextual factors such as communicative functions of the interaction can be isolated for more detailed analyses. These genre-specific corpora include tutor-student teaching practice (TP) feedback on an

MA teacher education programme in an Irish third level institution (Farr 2011), and professional talk collected across a range of office settings. Each of these corpora contains approximately 80,000 words.

Smaller corpora of casual conversation are analysed in terms of gender and age using the CAG-IE (Corpus of Age and Gender in Irish English), which contains approximately 90,000 words. The data have been compiled across gender into a Male Adult Corpus (MAC) and a Female Adult Corpus (FAC), each organised according to three age groups (the 20s, the 40s and the 70s/80s cohorts) (see word counts in Table 1). The speakers are 31 adult volunteers, who fitted the age groups the researcher was looking to sample from and who were willing to take part in the study (Murphy 2010). The recordings took place in a range of locations from the speakers' homes to university cafés, the speakers' cars as well as the supermarket and were recorded by the speakers' themselves without the presence of the researcher. In the female corpus, the topics of conversation include, for instance, drinking games, holidays, and sleeping routines in the 20s' females discussions, work and family in the 40s and politics, religion and weekly shopping in the 70s/80s' females. In the male corpus, the 20s' men discussed daily chores, sport and going out while the older men discussed sport and work, primarily. Table 1 summarizes the corpus data used in this study.

Table 1: Corpus data used in this study

Corpus	Genre	Word Count	Gender(s)
L-CIE	Casual Conversation	1,000,000	M and F
TP Feedback	Professional/academic	80,000	Predominantly F
Professional Talk	Office Talk	80,000	M and F

CAG-IE	Casual Conversation		
	MAC	47,462 • 20s – 17, 987 • 40s – 17, 693 • 70s/80s – 11, 782	M
	FAC	48, 531: • 20s – 15, 602 • 40s – 14, 494 • 70s/80s – 18, 435	F

The methodology employed in this research is a combined quantitative and qualitative corpus-based discourse analysis. Statistically significant items are isolated using appropriate computer software (Wordsmith Tools; Scott 2004, 2008) and these are examined using frequency lists, concordances and contextualised extracts. The analysis that follows in the next section consists of two main parts. The first examines the use of vocatives in contexts of use: casual conversation, TP feedback, and professional talk. The second part investigates the influence of gender and age on vocative usage and draws on casual conversation corpora from gender differentiated speakers at various ages. Both parts of the analysis are further sub-divided into the various vocative types that occur: names, kinship, endearment, familiarisers, and titles/honorifics.

4. Context of Use: Casual Conversation

To establish the most prevalent contexts for use of the various types of vocatives, three individual corpora, each representing a different genre, were searched. The corpus of TP

feedback talk from a formal institutional educational setting displays no occurrences of any of the vocative types other than first name vocatives (these will be examined in further detail below). The professional talk corpus, along with first name vocatives, displays some uses of *guys* and *lads*, but none of the other categories. Therefore, it would seem that the use of kinship terms, endearments and familiarisers especially are characteristic of casual conversation as represented in L-CIE (see Figure 1). Our analysis will thus focus exclusively on the latter genre. Table 2 shows the distribution of the various categories across the 1 million word corpus of casual conversation. Name vocatives are not included in this part of the analysis as there is no automated way of easily isolating them from the data. They will receive more detailed attention in Section 5 below.
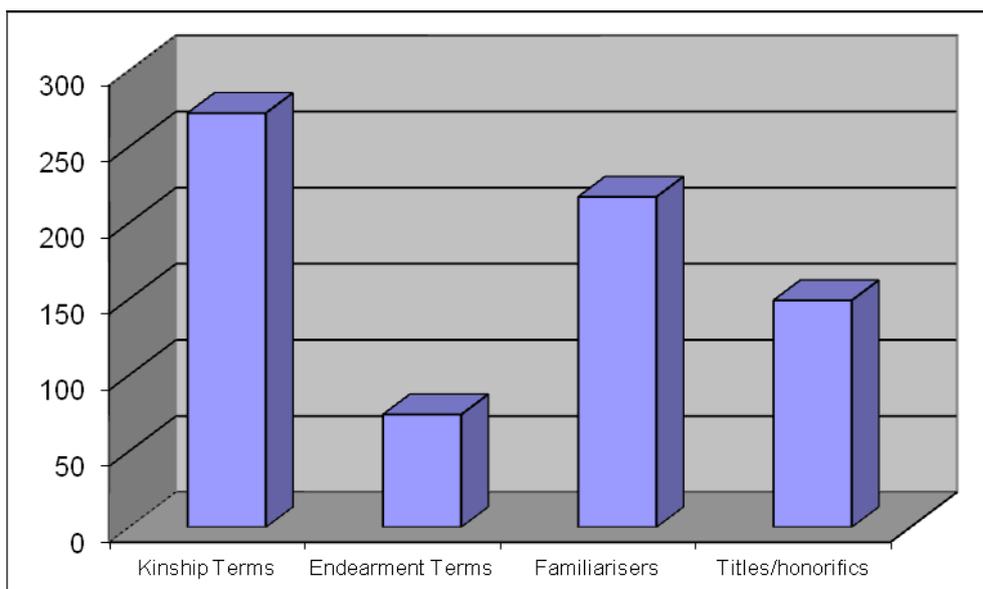

Figure 1: Vocatives in casual conversation in L-CIE (words per million)

Kinship terms are the most frequent of the vocative types, an indication of the number of family units represented in the data, which was collected in large parts in people's homes. There is a relatively even drop to familiarisers and titles/honorifics, and endearments are

lowest at just 74 occurrences. We will investigate the nature of the items in each of these categories in the following sections, where the items functioning as vocatives have been isolated. The total word count for each item is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Vocative categories in L-CIE (words per million)

Kinship Terms		Endearment Terms		Familiarisers		Titles/Honorifics	
Mam(my)	98	pet	17	lads	179	Mr	57
Dad(dy)/Dada	72	love	17	girls	20	Father	24
Mum(my)	32	sweetheart/sweetie	14	man	12	Mother	16
Nan(a)	32	darling	13	dude	3	Mrs	15
Mom(my)	22	honey/hon	13	guys	3	Miss	12
Father	7					Sister	8
Mother	7					Minister	6
Son	2					Ms	5
						Sir	5
						Madam	1

At the top of the kinship terms listing we see *Mammy/Mam*, which, if combined with *Mum* and *Mom*, account for a very significant majority of all the kinship terms used. These are followed by the various realisations of *Dad* and *Nan*, and much lower in frequency are the somewhat more formal *Father, Mother* and *Son*. What is interesting about these results is not the comparative aspect, but the range of forms found. The fact that *Mam* is used more often is probably just an indication that there are more child-mother relationships represented in the data. We find the Irish *Mammy* significantly ahead of the more British English *Mummy* and the American English *Mom*. We also see the use of *Dada*. *Dada* in the L-CIE is not an instance of child language use, but is

characteristic of Irish traveller speech. Irish travellers are an ethnic minority group within Ireland who are traditionally nomadic. Their main language is English. However, their linguistic and cultural practices distinguish them from mainstream Irish society (see O'Sullivan 2008).

Interestingly, there is a relatively even distribution of endearment terms found across casual conversations. *Pet*, which is felt by many to be a term used primarily by Irish English speakers, is jointly at the top of the frequency list with the more ubiquitous *love*. In the cases of *sweetheart* and *honey*, the shortened forms *sweetie* and *hon* are much more frequent than the full forms. The fact that *lads* is now used to refer to both males and females accounts for its very high frequency in the familiarisers category (this is examined in more detail in later sections). *Girls*, which is gender specific, except perhaps when used in a teasing way, has a much lower frequency, while *dude* and *guys*, which are more typical of American English, are very infrequent. Despite the fact that this could be considered among the most informal of genres, titles and honorifics are nonetheless present. *Mr* and *Mrs* followed by surname only are frequent, as are references to priests and nuns through the use of *Father* and *Mother*.

5. Gender and Age

5.1. Vocatives in CAG-IE

The analysis, as outlined below, explores vocatives in an age and gender-differentiated corpus of casual conversation. The first step involved running a frequency list of the combined male and female data and selecting all of the forms which had the potential to function as vocatives. The function of the forms was checked using concordance lines.

From these analyses, a total of 16 vocative forms emerged from the data-set (see Table 3).

Table 3: Vocative forms in CAG-IE (words per million)

N	Vocative	Freq.	N	Vocative	Freq.
1	Ellen	2983	11	Mrs	271
2	lads	911	12	darling	162
3	Maire	2276	13	girlín[1]	54
4	boy	1233	15	Mary	488
5	girl	651	16	Deirdre	128
6	man	564			
7	Kathleen	827			
8	Anne	413			
9	love	162			
10	Niamh	320			

Table 3 reflects a spread of vocatives as categorised in McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003) ranging from full first names (*Ellen, Maire, Kathleen, Mary, Deirdre,*), familiarisers (*lads, boy, girl, man, girlín*), to titles and surname (*Mrs Molloy*), and terms of endearment (*love, darling*). These forms are illustrated in Figure 2 which shows that the most frequent types of vocatives, by far, occurring in adult discourse are full first names as well as familiarisers. The discussion below will focus, in detail, on the role of familiarisers in Irish English casual conversation. Due to limits of space, full first names will not be discussed here (see McCarthy and O'Keeffe 2003; Zwicky 1974).

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[1] [1]*Girlín* is a form that is characteristic of Irish English. It consists of the English noun *girl* and the Irish diminutive suffix *ín*.
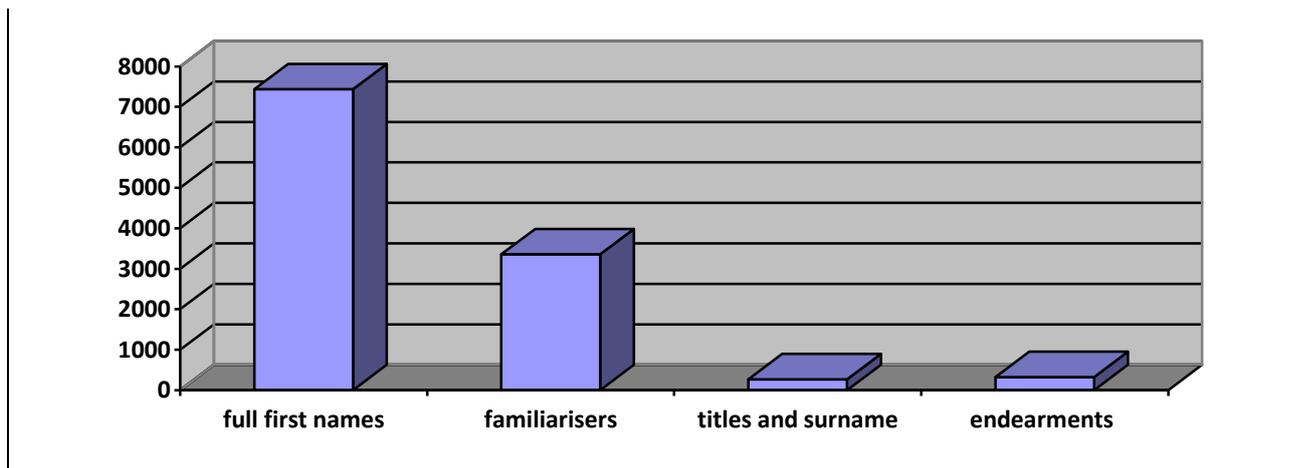
Figure 2: Vocative categories in CAG-IE (words per million)

5.2. Familiarisers in CAG-IE

Looking more closely at familiarisers in the corpus, we note that there are six main
forms: *girlín*, *lads*, *guys*, *man*, *girl* and *boy* which occur with various levels of frequency
as highlighted in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Familiarisers occurring in CAG-IE (words per million)

From this graph, four high frequency forms appear: *boy*, *lads, girl,* and *man*.
Interestingly, in contrast, the use of *girlín* is very infrequent. In terms of gender (see
Figure 4), it appears that men use these forms more often than women, with the

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familiarisers occurring 2270 times in the male corpus and only 1089 times in the female data.
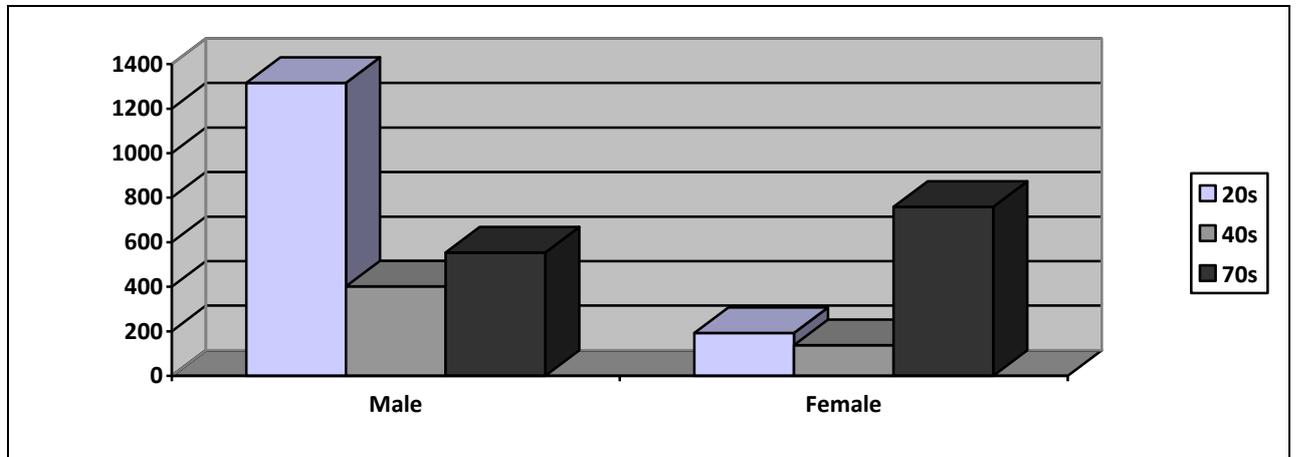

Figure 4: Age and gender-related use of familiarisers in CAG-IE (words per million)

Figure 4 shows interesting trends which reflect sociolinguistic variation in relation to how the vocatives are used in CAG-IE. Here, we note that the 20s' males tend to use the vocatives considerably more often than their female counterparts, with 1315 occurrences in the male data to only 192 occurrences in the female corpus. The drop between the 20s' males and the 40s' males is also steep, while variation between the 40s' males and 40s' females is also evident, with the males tending to use vocatives more often than their female counterparts. The figure also shows that the 70s/80s' females use the forms more frequently than the 70s/80s' males. This graph illustrates that there is evidence of age-related variation and highlights that the 20s' males and the 70s/80s' females are the most frequent users of familiarisers. Further analyses of the familiarisers reveal how the individual forms map out across the different sociolinguistic groups (see Table 4).

Table 4: High-frequency familiarisers across age and gender groups (words per million)[2]

	Males 20s	Males 40s	Males 70s	Females 20s	Females 40s	Females 70s
boy	278	452	594	64	69	54
girl	0	0	0	0	0	651
man	500	0	0	64	0	0
lads	778	0	0	64	69	0
girlín	0	0	0	0	0	54

Table 4 shows that a number of vocatives emerge as high frequency items across the age and gender groups (see also Murphy 2011). They include *girl* in the 70s/80s group and *man* and *lads* in the 20s' males group. Familiarisers tend to be used most frequently among males and among men in their 20s in particular. The patterns provide evidence of the dynamic nature of the groups (see Mullany 2010) which is in line with variationist sociolinguistic work carried out by Eckert (1997; 2000), Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003) and Tagliamonte (2011), for example. Given the high frequency of *lads*, *girl* and *boy*, the discussion that follows will focus on these forms and their use by the male and female cohorts. We will now look at each of the vocative forms in context with a view to establishing how they are used.

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[2] To accommodate the different sizes of the CAG-IE sub-corpora a Log likelihood calculator (http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html) was used. This type of tool shows how more likely the forms are in one corpus than in another. In this case it showed that the word *lads* is more likely to occur (in the 99.99 percentile) in the male 20s than in the female 20s data. Likewise *boy* is more likely to occur (in the 99th percentile) in the 20s males than the 20s females data.

5.3. Lads in MAC 20s

In an exploration of concordance lines for the use of *lads* as a vocative in MAC 20s, we found that the men commonly use the form to refer to each other as a collective group (see Figure 5, lines 1-9) as well as to address football players taking part in matches they are watching on television (see Figure 5, lines 10-12).

Figure 5: Concordance lines for *lads* in MAC 20s

1	Jesus there is they're a lot wilder than us,	**lads.**	They are. That isn't hard
2	you a stronger character <laughing>	**lads**	lads. Time like when it happened
3	I think it's this weekend yeah he's class	**lads.**	Aaah shoot[3]
4	Bla bla bla	**lads**	Keep going[4]
5	is listening to this that you're not gay.	**Lads**	in fairness like shut up
6	Right see ye	**lads**	Good luck
7	Good luck[5]	**lads**	Have fun see ye see ye Sunday
8	material part two of the kitchen stories.	**Lads**	<singing,laughing>for Christ sake[6]
9	Put it back in put it back in rotten	**lads**	I know I know ye
10	the match get across great play oooh	**lads**	Where the hell are ye? It's only ha
11	what he has to do anyway come on	**lads**	<laughing> go on Desailly
12	Well done linesman come on	**lads**	Look alive

Figure 5 shows that the use of *lads* as a vocative to refer to the collective group is a common pattern in the men's interaction. In the following extract, the 20s' men, who are all postgraduate students, discuss how their undergraduate neighbours hold more parties than they do. The use of *lads* as a vocative can be seen in line 4.

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[3]The speaker is talking to his friends about a football match which will take place and is discussing a particular player. At the same time, he is advising his friend who is playing a Nintendo football game and the utterance *ah shoot* is an instruction to his friend to try for a goal.

[4]The speaker is annoyed with his friends' teasing and equates their discourse to noise 'blah blah blah lads', using 'lads' to direct the utterance to the group who are having fun at his expense.

[5]*Good luck* in Irish English is synonymous with *goodbye*.

[6]The group of males decide to tell fabricated stories for the benefit of the recording. The speaker in this concordance line is directing his annoyance at the group and asking them to stop. He addresses the group as *lads*.

Extract 1: Use of *lads* in MAC 20s: Concordance line 1

Tom: I'd say they could be having a party next door tonight.
Kyle: Yeah.
John: Jesus there is.
Tom: They're a lot wilder than **us, lads**.
John: They are.   *5*
Tom: That isn't hard.
Kyle: *Speak for yourself.*
Tom: Went on the beer now later I reached my peak around December and I came back after Christmas and I didn't drink for a month and the smell of beer.
Kyle: You didn't you didn't drink because you were so screwed.   *10*
Tom: Screwed.
John: You were dying like weren't ya?

Extract 1 reveals a view into the men's shared social practices which play a part in binding them together (Fowler 1985: 66). Although they are young men in their twenties, it is implied that their recent social life has been inactive. There is an implication that they are not as able for excessive socialising involving drinking (see lines 8-13), as they once may have been. This would appear to be unusual for young men and uncommon at their stage in life. Tom's utterance, *they're a lot wilder than us, lads,* implies that they see themselves as a group of students who are different from the younger group next door who are preparing for a party. There seems to be an almost 'us' and 'them' implication in Tom's utterance. This implied division and the explicit acknowledgement of them as a unit, through the use of *us* and *lads*, reflects "the relative position of the interactants vis-a-vis one another and in society as a whole" (Jaworski and Galasiński 2000: 35). There is an implication that the use of *lads* and *us* marks them as a collective group. This implication is picked up by Kyle, in line 7, whose response, *speak for yourself*, shows that he disagrees with this perception and breaks away from the idea of the men as a unit, in the sense that he does not agree with being seen as part of a collective unit. He distinguishes himself as an individual and distances himself from being seen as socially inactive or indeed, boring, as Tom might suggest.

In addition to how the 20s' men used the vocatives, such as *lads*, this study also collected interview data from the 20s' men which captured their perceptions of their choice of vocatives (among other features). In the interviews, the men mentioned that the use of *lads*, as a vocative seemed 'to be more Irish' than *guys* or *boys* and was a form that they preferred over the other choices. One of the men, Kyle (23), highlighted that it was 'a more ordinary way' of addressing their friends as a group. Their insights would seem to reflect issues of identity and belonging which are important in creating and marking the boundaries of their mutual social and interactive relationship. Another perception that emerged was that the form *lads* was more informal than *guys*, for instance, as this seemed to fit their interactions and how they communicate and perceive each other better.

Also emerging from the data is the men's use of the vocative form *lads* to signal and downtone a reprimand to the group, while appealing to the collective unit, which can be seen in Extract 2. Here, Kyle and John are joking and discussing topics for the benefit of the recording, which Tom finds inappropriate,

Extract 2: Use of *lads* in MAC 20s: Concordance line 5

Kyle:	Fuck buddies ha?	
Tom:	Why why did ya say that what made what made ya say that though?	
Kyle:	Because god only knows what shite < laughing >	
John:	Y'think a comic like myself and Harney are going to erase all	*5*
	the material ah Tom you'll have to do far better than that Tom I'll	
	tell ya you'll probably have to perform like sex with a woman to	
	convince whoever's listening to this tape that you're not gay.	
Tom:	*Lads in fairness like shut up.*	
Kyle:	Well she hardly expected mature conversation < laughing >	*10*

The use of *lads* here addresses the group once again, but this time it signals and downtones a reprimand (line 9), which also comes across in the tone of voice used by Tom. It is interesting to note that Tom is very aware of the topic being discussed by the men (sex) and gets somewhat irate with them for discussing what he feels is

inappropriate. The men know that Tom, who is in charge of the recorder and knows the researcher, thinks that his friends' behaviour is disrespectful and they play on this insight. This insight was revealed in the interviews and through correspondence with the men. The use of *lads* along with *in fairness like* here softens the reprimand but is immediately followed by the demand to *shut up* (line 9) which is bold on record. We gain insights here into the men's banter, which involves Kyle and John making fun of Tom in a friendly way, which they enjoy, and which seems to be reflective of the kind of interaction that the members of the group engage in and their mutual relationship. The use of *lads* marks the collective group which seems to have an identity and a role in this particular extract namely to make fun of Tom. By using the vocative *lads* to reprimand the group, Tom is drawing the boundaries for his involvement. He is also clearly delineating the roles in the group dynamic (Emihovich 1981). This group dynamic appears to be influenced by the fact that the men know each other well as they live together and, to a certain extent, share a communal space and function as a unit (they study, cook, eat, and socialise together). This contrasts with the older men in the corpus who have a range of different roles, in this particular study. They are fathers and grand-fathers and crucially they do not function as a unit unlike the younger men. This social difference may explain the wider range and higher frequency of vocative forms in the 20s' male data than in the other groups.

In addition, as Figure 6 illustrated, the data also show the use of *lads* as a vocative when the men directly address football players on television. Their involvement includes providing advice on the state of play and words of encouragement to the players, as illustrated below in Extract 3. As lines 1-3 show, the men refer to the on-screen players as *lads* and break away from their face-to-face conversations in order to directly address the players and, in the case below, the linesman.

Extract 3: Use of *lads* in MAC 20s: Concordance line 12

Tom: Kyle you can sing.
John: We can all sing.
Kyle: Ha ha aah off-side have to be well done linesman come on ***lads*** look alive.

The interpersonal space which the men define by the way they address each other can be seen here to extend to other contexts such as the live commentary directed at the players which appears to have become a continuation of the relationship that the men have with each other, suggesting that they are almost an extension of the men's collective group. One of the male interviewees, Dean (29), stated that 'sport is tribal and people are always looking for the collective which makes them feel included and part of something'. He stated that there is a familiarity and a close group dynamic, an inclusivity even, which is suggested by the use of *lads* and it is commonly used in sports. He also adds that 'you wouldn't call the group you're not supporting *lads*' which further underlines the supportive or inclusive pragmatic function which is associated with the form.

   In a brief exploration of the use of *lads* by the 20s' females, we found that it was used to refer only to females and was commonly used as a discourse marker to introduce dramatic or important news or gossip as in '*lads*, oh *lads*, I really hope she's not going to fucking come after any of us'. This practice is not common in the 20s' males.

5.4. Girl in FAC 70s/80s

While *lads* is characteristic of the 20s' males, the use of *girl,* as a vocative, is a frequent form in the 70s/80s' women discourse.

Figure 7: Concordance lines for *girl* in FAC 70s/80s

1	I'd have so much trust in god	**girl**	I wouldn't hear nothing
2	So anyway she I said so anyway	**girl**	she came they went away
3	ovely to see someone different Ellen. Tis	**girl**	isn't it**?**
4	It all depends on who you are now	**girl**	it does it does
5	The fire brigade anyway tis it is	**girl**	You're tired now from walking
6	Looking at this now to myself. No	**girl**	But I wouldn't mind Fair City
7	Isn't that beautiful? Two weeks	**girl**	Lovely lovely
8	Thank God. God knows	**girl**	But shure I'm pucking away
9	Can get out of all these things. They can	**girl**	They can
10	Had to give the house he had it bought	**girl**	Shur the Sullivans were full of

In Figure 7, we notice the vocative functioning in a very relational way. Relational talk refers to talk whose primary function is the establishment and/or maintenance of social relations, rather than the transmission of goods, information or services (McCarthy and O'Keeffe 2003: 160). It marks a connection between the two speakers, in this case, as they relate to each other while they engage in small talk. From an exploration of a selection of concordance lines above, a number of trends in the use of *girl* become evident.

Firstly, it would seem that the vocative is used commonly when there is agreement between the women as illustrated in concordance lines 3, 5 and 9. In Extract 4, an extension of concordance line 3, we have an example of the women agreeing with each other. Interestingly, in this extract, Maggie directs an utterance to Ellen using a first-name vocative to create, it would seem, interpersonal space (line 2). Ellen responds by agreeing and confirming the interpersonal space by saying *tis (it is) girl*. The use of *girl* in line 3 helps to maintain their social relationship and is a marker of the friendship that they share. Maggie in line 4 below again seeks confirmation that this is true by using a tag *isn't it?* And Ellen responds in line 5 with agreement. Maggie continues on the same topic by elaborating on why this is nice. In interviews with the women, they highlighted

that *girl* is often used with other females they know well. They felt that they used it to provide support for what their interlocutor was saying.

Extract 4: Use of *girl* in FAC 70s/80s: Concordance line 3

Maggie:	Tis grand to get the breath of air and tis lovely to see somebody different Ellen.	
Ellen:	Tis ***girl***.	*3*
Maggie:	Isn't it?	
Ellen:	Tis very true.	*5*
Maggie:	It broadens your outlook and it's nice if it's only to say good evening or good morning to them.	

In Extract 5, the women are discussing politicians and their dissatisfaction at political intervention in society's problems. The form *girl* is used again in strong agreement and the repetition of the tag *they can* (line 3 below) by Mary shows the extent to which she wishes to boost or add strength to Ellen's utterance.

Extract 5: Use of *girl* in FAC 70s/80s: Concordance line 9

Mary:	Expose all these people that were ill treated in the homes.	
Ellen:	But what kills me dead is how well they can get out of all these things.	*2*
Mary:	They can ***girl*** *they can they can they can they can*.	*4*
Ellen:	But everybody knows different though.	

In Extract 6, an extension of concordance line 4, the women talk again about politics and in particular, about how society is very hierarchical and all progress is dependent on how individuals can court favour with the politicians. The extract shows the 70s/80s' women's use of the vocative in agreement once again and the repetition of *it does* four times. Ellen's utterance in line 1 is boosted by the use of *girl* which again relates to Mary on a very interpersonal level. Mary replies in complete agreement which, as we mentioned above, is indicated by the multiple repetition of the tag *it does* twice before the

use of *girl* and twice after. It seems that the older women tend to establish and reinforce their bonding and interpersonal relations through boosted agreement (see Murphy 2010). This practice is not usual in the 20s' females and it seems that this strong agreement and interpersonal relationship which comes from this way of interacting may be related to the older women's status in society and the respect which is attached to the women's life-experience because of their age.

Extract 6: Use of *girl* in FAC 70s/80s: Concordance line 4

Ellen: It all depends on who you are now *girl*.
Mary: It does it does *girl* it does it does.
Ellen: It does really.

5.5. Analysis of *boy* in MAC

Although the use of *boy* as a vocative in Irish English occurs across all age-differentiated sub-corpora in both male and female talk, it occurs most frequently in the male corpus and particularly in the 20s' and 70s/80s' talk. It is also culturally associated to be characteristic of the discourse of speakers from the city of Cork[7] as well as Cork County. The men in this study are, for the most part, from this area. Investigating the use of *boy* as a vocative in MAC 20s, we notice how it is used primarily to indicate badinage (McCarthy and O'Keeffe 2003).

Figure 8: Concordance lines for *boy* in MAC 20s

1	Ah that's good ah Tom cop on	**boy**	will ya? That's a fucking bad attitude you
2	At Christmas you'd never know	**boy**	you might get an auld invitation or
3	He should be embarrassed	**boy**	ah no I'm only joking with ya
4	sick of the old recording Tom are you	**boy?**	No no <laughing> love doing it

---

[7]Cork is a city and county in the province of Munster in the Republic of Ireland.

Each of the randomly selected lines above illustrates the 20s' males' use of *boy* to joke and wind each other up. Three of the four instances above are accompanied by laughter or as in line 3, the fact that the speaker is *only joking*. They appear to use *boy* as a vocative for making fun which also emerged in the interviews. Colin (24) highlighted that he uses *boy* to be funny but feels that it is more associated with older men's discourse and more particular of men who live in rural areas, particularly in Cork County. However, in an exploration of concordance lines for the 40s' and 70s/80s' males, we see that *boy* is used in two different functions. In the 40s' data-set, it is used with a boosting function which usually occurs after instances of interesting or very newsworthy topics (see Extract 7).

Extract 7: Use of *boy* in MAC 40s

Will:	<reading from the newspaper> In Taiwan "scientists have admitted that they have inadvertently developed a two headed fish" <laughing> "the genetic engineers the two headed"	*3*
Mike:	Jesus.	
Will:	Florence zebra fish during studies into muscular disdrop I think it is".	
Mike:	By the Lord God they're bad enough with one head not to mind saying two heads so they are *jez* there's a big swell outside today *boy* *<brief pause>* you'd think it'd be grand day it ain't good at all on the water.	*8*

The use of *boy* boosts and emphasises Mike's observation that the sea is rough. The observation is also emphasised by the occurrence of *jez* in line 7, which indicates his surprise, the use of *big* before *swell* and the explanation. Their interest in the sea goes back to the fact that Mike is a fisherman and Will is a sailor and both are interested in sea-related topics.

Figure 8: Concordance line for *boy* in MAC 40s

1 Jez there's a big swell outside today   **boy**   you'd think it'd be a grand day

While this boosting function is also common in the 70s/80s' male data, further explorations of the 70s/80s men's data show that they also use the form in a relational way, which is similar to how *girl* is used by the 70s/80s' women (see Section 5.4). The use of *boy* by the 70/80s' men also appears to maintain good relations and creates a friendly informal interpersonal space. This minimises hierarchy and is an important indicator of how the men, who are friends but who work together on a farm, negotiate boundaries and roles within the relationships they share (see Extract 9).

Extract 9: Use of *boy* in MAC 70s/80s

Denis: Tis a good week I have your black bucket so for I took down oats a Saturday and
Terence: That's fine *boy*.   **3**
Denis: I have it in the car all the time I'd be taking it up again maybe later on.
Terence: Don't worry at all about it at all ... I dunno should I bring in the sheep at all this morning Dinny.
Denis: You can of course Terence *boy* any time.   *8*

In lines 1-5, Denis and Terence negotiate the discomfort Denis seems to feel regarding having not yet returned Terence's black bucket and indirectly apologises in line 1 by telling Terence that he still has it. It seems that for Denis this may be a potentially face-threatening situation, as he is in possession of Terence's property, and he seeks to explain also in lines 1-2 why he still has the bucket, perhaps by way of justification. In line 3, Terence acknowledges the potential threat to face, as he is more powerful in this scenario because the bucket belongs to him. He seems to diffuse any potential threat by reassuring Denis that it is fine. Here he uses the vocative *boy* possibly as a hedge to downtone the utterance and make it clear that there is no problem. In line 3, Denis suggests he may

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need the bucket for a little longer to which Terence responds favourably and changes the subject. In the final two turns of the extract, the roles are then somewhat reversed in terms of power as Terence indirectly asks for permission from Denis to bring in the sheep, which is a role Denis is responsible for. In line 6, Denis responds positively using the relational *boy* to again downtone any power or hierarchy that exists between them and also possibly to make clear that relations between them are good. It is interesting to note how Denis' response involves items which indicate very strong agreement (see line 8 in Extract 9) for a request that requires a positive or negative answer. This in itself suggests that Denis is doing positive politeness and making an effort to maintain good relations and create a friendly interpersonal atmosphere. The exploration of this vocative indicates its varying functions, again, across the three groups of males, which highlights the dynamic view of gender mentioned earlier which acknowledges intra-variation within gender groups.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the use of vocatives shows age and gender-related variation (see also Murphy 2010). *Lads*, for instance, is reflective of the younger groups and how they define and attend to the interpersonal space that they share as a unit while the use of *girl*, in the older women's discourse, shows the importance of the relational function A brief analysis of the use of *boy* as a vocative shows how it is used in badinage by the young 20s' men but differently, namely as a booster and a relational marker by the older men. All three vocatives play a role in maintaining good relations in an informal context. There is no hierarchy between the speakers and this is reflected in how they address each other. The use of the vocatives is very much related to pragmatic functions. There is a social function which is embedded in the informal context of casual conversation and the vocatives are used to tend to this context. The vocatives reinforce their agreement with each other, as in the case of the use of *girl* by the 70s/80s females,

which helps create a group identity. The use of *boy* boosts agreement and also facilitates good relations in a friendly informal way.

6. Conclusion

This paper explored the use of vocatives in a number of Irish English contexts and highlighted that the forms were highly linked to casual conversation. In the exploration, we found that with the exception of first name vocatives, the academic context of tutor-student feedback sessions produced no other vocative forms while the professional talk corpus provided evidence of first name vocatives as well as some familiarisers such as *guys* and *lads*. This initial insight consolidates the strong link, in this paper, between the context of casual conversation and the use of vocatives. Three main forms emerged from the analyses, *lads*, *girl*, and *boy*. The use of *lads* was frequent in the 20s' males discourse and seemed to be a predominant form to referring to a collective group of male friends when engaging in banter with each other. The use of *girl* revealed itself to be most commonly used by the 70s/80s' females and functioned in a very relational way. The third form, *boy,* was used by the males and differed in terms of frequency across the groups as well as showing functional variation across the male cohorts. This analysis in particular reinforced a dynamic view of the role of gender when considered with other sociolinguistic variables.

In our investigation of vocatives, we highlight and acknowledge the importance of the forms in marking occasion with regard to the informality of the context. The use of *lads*, for instance, reflected a level of ease and informality in the relationship between the men which was also echoed in their behaviour, linguistically and otherwise. The paper also indicated levels of seemingly reduced hierarchy between speakers, as in the case of the professional talk corpus, for instance, where the use of *guys* and *lads* were frequent thus

indicating again, as was illustrated in the casual conversation data, a possible level of informality. The use of only first name vocatives in the academic data, explored here, also suggests a level of informality coming through which we could argue may be linked to an expression of social identity (Ervin-Tripp 1971). Irish English is often linked to a high level of informality, in terms of its range of taboo language and religious references, for instance, (Farr and Murphy 2009; Murphy 2010; Murphy 2011) as well as other forms. Given this context, it is interesting that we notice the use of vocative forms in creating and facilitating this informality. There is also a sense of group identity coming through from the use of vocatives such as the form *lads* as well as attendance to face and relational business which makes the interlocutor feel good or feel a part of the interaction, such as the relational use of *girl* and *boy* which hits an interpersonal chord (Escure 2001). Further study of vocatives in an Irish English corpus might explore other settings to discover how the use of vocatives plays out in other contexts or indeed focus on larger corpora of academic or professional discourse to gain further insights into variation across different settings.

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List of Abbreviations

CAG-IE – Corpus of Age and Gender in Irish English
FAC – Female Adult Corpus
L-CIE – Limerick Corpus of Irish English
MA – Master of Arts

MAC – Male Adult Corpus
TP – Teaching Practice