

**‘OH MY GOD! Did you *fucking* see that?’: A longitudinal study of Intensifying  
*Fucking* in the *Ross O’Carroll-Kelly* series**

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**Abstract**

This paper contributes to the fields of Irish English (IrE) Variational Pragmatics and expands research on (IrE) taboo language by conducting a detailed, longitudinal analysis of the use, colligational pattern preference, pragmatic multifunctionality, emotional conveyance, and speaker identity indexicality value of Intensifying *Fucking* (InF) in a corpus of three *Ross O’Carroll-Kelly* novels which span a period of 16 years (i.e. 2006-2022). Using quantitative and qualitative Corpus Stylistics methods, the paper not only presents findings that align with the literature (e.g. prominence of use among young(er) male speakers and transmission of *negative* emotions and *anger*, in particular) but also appears to document developments that may have taken place in the span of time covered by the corpus. These include the potential gender-neutrality of this intensifier which surges and increases among (young(er)) female speakers by 2022, as well as a seeming shift in colligational pattern preference from *InF+Noun Phrase* to *InF+Verbal Phrase*, with the appearance of new patterns including *Standard* and *Non-Standard Tmesis* by the last book. Pragmatic developments also seem to be documented in the corpus, with an expansion of the *positive* emotional repertoire and with the emergence of a wide variety of *negative* emotions, most of which are only present in the 2022 book.

**Keywords:** Corpus Stylistics; (Fictionalized) Irish English; IrE Variational Pragmatics Intensifier *Fucking*; Taboo Language.

**1. Fictionalized Irish English Orality and the *Ross O’Carroll-Kelly* Universe**

The rendition of Irish English (hereafter IrE) in contemporary (literary) IrE fiction offers an excellent source of data with which to assess any potential linguistic developments that may have occurred in the last forty years. While fictional renditions of orality are often criticized by some academics due to their fabricated nature, the fact remains that authors base their portrayals on patterns of naturally-produced language, which makes these fictionalized renditions great sources for linguistic investigation (see Simpson,

1997; Schneider, 2002, or Amador-Moreno, 2006, inter alia). In the context of Ireland, one such source is Paul Howard's *Ross O'Carroll-Kelly* (hereafter RO'CK) series, which is taken in this paper as representative of modern-day IrE use.

RO'CK is a series of humorous and satirical books which originated from a sports column in *The Sunday Times* in 1998 and later developed into a spin-off series of annually best-selling novels (as well as guidebooks, plays, and faux-interview books). The series, which satirizes the affluent society that arose in Dublin during the Celtic Tiger period (ca. mid 1990s-2008/9) and which is embodied in its eponymous first-person narrator, revolves around the daily (mis)adventures of the former school rugby jock and womanizer Ross. Although the series reached its end with the publication of *Don't Look Back in Ongar* in 2024, Howard continues to publish a weekly article and podcast set in the RO'CK universe in *The Irish Times*.

Apart from its immense popularity among readers, the RO'CK universe has been highly acclaimed for its value as a chronicle of modern-day Irish sociocultural events (Kelly, 2017), including the excesses of the Celtic Tiger, the onset of the subsequent economic recession, the 2015 referendum which legalized same-sex marriage, among many others, as well as international events, such as the 2016 election of President Trump, Brexit, among others (see O'Brien 2023 for more on the cultural significance of this series). The books have also been academically praised (Amador-Moreno, 2012, 2015; Amador-Moreno & Terrazas Calero, 2017, 2022, among others) for their sharp rendition of Dublinese *local* and *non-local* accents (Hickey, 2005, pp.7-8). In particular, they focus on displaying the socioeconomic and linguistic divide between the Northside (i.e. traditionally a working-class area whose *local* accent and dialect favor locally-bound linguistic items) and the more affluent Southside, which distances itself from local identit(ies) by using less IrE regionally-bound items in its *non-local* accent and dialect

(for a detailed description of the linguistic style of the series, see Terrazas-Calero, 2022, pp. 236-245). This focus in orality representation is rooted on the oral nature of the narrative itself, with each book being prefaced with the disclaimer that they are written “as told to Paul Howard”. The reader is, therefore, presented with (re)constructed oral narratives that are rendered as though they were transcriptions of a recording, which also creates a sense of familiarity between the readers-characters-author (Terrazas-Calero, 2022, p. 119). Notice, for instance, the representation of features of IrE orality in fragment (1) below, which includes taboo words *arsehole* and *focking* (the latter of which is representative of centralization of the STRUT lexical set characteristic of the Southside *non-local* accent (Hickey, 2005)). Notice also the phonetical portrayal of Northside *local* features, such as lexicalized *oul’* (auld/old), pejorative *wan* (a woman), or the orthographic rendition of intensifying *fucking* as *fooken* in fragment (2).

(1) You stood up for me – to that focking arsehole. (Howard, 2022)

(2) Not a word to me oul’ wan, ’member. It’d break her fooken heart (Howard, 2006)

Due to the key value of the RO’CK books with regard to recording contemporary IrE orality, this paper will investigate the use of arguably one of the most prominent linguistic items in everyday orality: taboo words. By means of Corpus Stylistics methods (see section (3) for an explanation of this methodology), the analysis will focus on longitudinally studying in detail the use, colligational pattern preference, pragmatic multifunctionality, emotional conveyance, and identity indexicality value of Intensifying *Fucking* (as per Terrazas-Calero’s 2022 terminology) as represented in a corpus of three RO’CK novels which span a period of 16 years. In doing so, this paper contributes to the

field of IrE intra-variational pragmatics (Barron, 2024) as well as to the arguably understudied field of Taboo Language (in IrE in particular).

## 2. The Multifunctionality of Taboo Language

Taboo language has often been identified by many scholars as one of the most common features in spoken interactions (see Jay, 2000, or Murphy, 2009, 2010, *inter alia*). Given their pragmatic multifunctionality, these terms also convey a level of heightened emotions that other words fail to express (Stapleton, 2010, p. 294; Andersson & Trudgill, 1990, p. 195). This gives the speaker an emotional outlet through which they can convey *positive*, *neutral*, and *negative* emotions (Jay, 2009, p. 155). However, studies have found that *negative* emotions tend to be the most commonly conveyed ones, with *anger* (Stapleton, 2010, p. 294) ranking as the most prominent one, while others also include *frustration* (Murphy, 2010, pp. 168-169).

Furthermore, and given the fact that taboo words are believed to be ‘social creations’ (McEnery & Xiao, 2004), the use of these items can also function as an index of speaker identity. With regard to gender, early studies such as Lakoff’s (1973, p. 50) often associated the use of taboo words with male speakers whereas females were believed to use euphemisms<sup>1</sup>. These claims have since been challenged by more recent studies (e.g. Coates, 2004, p. 98) which believe them to be stereotypical and untrue. In terms of age, taboo words appear to be age-graded towards younger speakers, particularly adolescents, and seem to fade out of use over time (see Jay, 2000, p. 163; Stenström et al., 2002).

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<sup>1</sup> Due to word count restrictions, please, see Terrazas-Calero (2020, pp. 252-271, and 2022, pp. 162-187) for detailed overviews of studies dealing with age, gender, and social class in the use of taboo language. Terrazas-Calero is also currently working on future publications that will deal with this subject.

While there are many other functionalities that are particular to taboo language in orality (see Terrazas-Calero, 2022, p. 162-66 for a detailed overview of these), in fiction, likewise, taboo words can serve multiple functions, such as creating humor, as found by Walshe (2011) in his study of the dialogue in the Irish TV series *Father Ted*, where the humor is created through the incongruence and unexpectedness of the use of taboo words. Similarly to real orality, the use of taboo words in fiction can also serve as a stylistic tool with which the author 1) enhances the characterization of the fictional world by (re)constructing and/or manipulating character identit(ies), and 2) manipulates the audience's "emotional reactions to characters, their inter-relationships, and/or events in the books" (Terrazas-Calero, 2022, p. 166).

Despite the frequency of taboo words in orality, the fact remains that these items appear to have received relatively little academic attention, particularly in the context of IrE (see Murphy, 2009, 2010, Schweinberger, 2018, and Terrazas-Calero, 2020, 2022). Given the fact that Terrazas-Calero (2022, 2022) found Intensifying *Fucking* (see examples (1) and (2) in section (1)) to be one of the most prominently reproduced pragmatic items in a corpus of contemporary IrE fiction, this paper will focus on studying the use, colligational pattern preference, pragmatic functionality, emotional conveyance, and speaker identity indexation value of Intensifying *Fucking* (see section (4) for a discussion of findings) in a corpus of *Ross O'Carroll-Kelly* books (see section (3) for a description of the corpus).

## **2.1. Intensifying *Fucking* and its Use in IrE**

Intensifying *Fucking* (hereafter InF) is, in its form, a variant of lemma FUCK and its use is often typically overlooked in favor of analyzing its lemma form. Indeed, previous research into other varieties of English find FUCK to be the most commonly used taboo

word. For example, Stenström et al.'s (2002) analysis of the *Corpus of London Teenage Talk* found FUCK to be most commonly produced by male adolescents, which contradicts early sociolinguistic studies regarding the use of taboo language by gender yet supports Coates' (2004) call for a revision of this stereotype. Similarly, findings retrieved by McEnery & Xiao (2004) from their investigation of the *British National Corpus* identified FUCK as one of the most recurrent taboo items in imaginary (generally fictional) texts which had been written by male authors for a male-only or mixed audience. Their study also found *fucking* to be mostly used for emphatic purposes, which can also take the form of an infix (i.e. a process also known as *tmesis*) separating either one word or a name into two parts (e.g. Merry *fucking* Christmas). In terms of identity indexicality, McEnery & Xiao's (2004) study also found InF to be commonly used across all age cohorts, although it appeared to be more prominently used by speakers aged 15-23 and 25-34, thus emphasizing the young(er) nature of the speakers.

In terms of colligational pattern preference, MacKenzie (2019) offers the most detailed analysis of the syntactic patterns of InF to date. He adopted a Functional Discourse Grammar approach to identify the syntactic distribution of *fuck*, *fucking*, *fucking well*, and *the fuck* (including *tmesis*) in online sources such as *The Urban Dictionary*, *Green's Dictionary of Slang*, or the blog *Strong Language*, and checked their discursive/grammatical acceptability against his own "self-consultation as a native speaker" (Mackenzie, 2019, p. 62). He describes those expletives as semantically bleached yet syntactically functional. In terms of InF, MacKenzie (*ibid.* pp. 77-78) proposes it as an optional syntactic marker which triggers emphasized emotive meaning. This paper follows MacKenzie's classification of syntactic distribution and applies it to the study of InF in a corpus of three RO'CK novels.

In the context of IrE, and despite the well-documented Irish inclination for swearing (Bartley, 1954), there is a dearth of studies that investigate the use of taboo words, particularly the use of InF. For example, Murphy (2009, 2010) analyzed the form and functionality of lemma FUCK and its variants in her *Corpus of Age and Gender differentiated Irish English* (CAG-IE), which comprises 90,000 words of spoken interactions. While divided into Male and Female subcorpora and into age cohorts (i.e. 20s, 40s, 70s/80s), Murphy found FUCK to be a very prominent item, particularly among males in their 20s (2009, pp. 90-94) who favored *fucking* as their most common intensifier (*ibid.*, pp. 92-100). Similar findings were retrieved from her study of taboo words in the female corpus where *fucking* was also the most frequently used intensifier by females in the 20s cohort (Murphy, 2010, p. 180). With regard to pragmatic functions, Murphy (2009, pp. 96-102) pointed out that *fucking* transmitted attitude in the form of mostly *positive* or *negative* emotions, with both genders almost exclusively conveying *negative* emotions (particularly in relation to other speakers). Another study would be Clancy's (2016) examination of intimate talk in the *Limerick Corpus of Irish English*, where taboo language is found to be a very frequent feature, with InF functioning as a bonding tool in intimate discourse.

Finally, Terrazas-Calero (2020, 2022) identified *fucking* as the second most-frequently reproduced pragmatic marker in her *Corpus of Fictionalized Irish English* which comprises ca. 1 million words and 16 works of fiction published by 8 authors in Ireland. In her analysis of the form, use, colligational pattern preference, pragmatic functionality, emotional conveyance, and identity indexical value of InF, Terrazas-Calero (*ibid.*) finds that its use is also mostly representative of young(er) male voices, particularly by speakers in the 20-30 cohort. In terms of colligational pattern preference, she finds InF to precede nominal phrases more frequently, while also identifying patterns such as

colligation with demonstratives (e.g. I want fucking this!) which MacKenzie (2019) predicted as not possible in his study (for a detailed explanation, see Terrazas-Calero, *ibid.*, p.185-191).

Classifying InF for *positive*, *neutral*, and *negative* connotations, Terrazas-Calero's (2022) findings also mirror Murphy's (2009, 2010) with regards to the salience of *negative* emotions. Finally, she developed an original repertoire of emotional conveyance, identifying *anger* as the most prominently transmitted emotion, although *positive* emotions were also present in the corpus. Since, to date, there are no other studies which investigate in detail and from a longitudinal perspective the use of InF in the context of (fictionalized) IrE, this paper will follow Terrazas-Calero's (*ibid.*) methodology, which is outlined in section (3), in order to determine the form, colligational pattern, pragmatic functionality, emotional conveyance, and identity indexicality value of InF in the *Ross O'Carroll-Kelly Corpus*.

### **3. Methodology of Study and The *Ross O'Carroll-Kelly Corpus***

In order to investigate the frequency of use, colligational pattern preference, pragmatic functionality, emotional conveyance, and speaker identity indexicality value of InF in the *Ross O'Carroll-Kelly* series, a corpus had to be compiled in advance. In this case, I used three novels from the *Ross O'Carroll-Kelly Corpus* (hereafter CoROCK) which I compiled in a previous study of the representation of IrE features (i.e. including *fucking*) in contemporary IrE fiction<sup>2</sup> (Terrazas-Calero, 2020). For this particular paper, and as outlined in Table (1) below, the corpus documents comprise 370,124 words and cover a

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<sup>2</sup> The use of intensifying *fucking* was investigated in *Downturn Abbey* in that previous study but not in the other two books outlined in Table 1.

period of 16 years which will allow for the identification of any potential developments that InF may have undergone in IrE as portrayed in the books.

**TABLE 1**

***CoROCK Titles, Publication Years, Acronyms, and Approximate Word Counts***

<b>Title</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Word Count</b>
<i>The Curious Case of the Dog in the Nightdress</i>	2006	CIDN	96,388
<i>Downturn Abbey</i>	2013	PHDA	140,075
<i>Once Upon a Time in...Donnybrook</i>	2022	OUTD	133,661
		<i>Total</i>	370,124

In order to conduct this analysis, Corpus Stylistics (hereafter CS) was used as the methodological framework of this study. CS is a relatively emerging field and methodology which combines the quantitative, computational methods of Corpus Linguistics (e.g. *word frequencies, concordance lines, keyword searches, etc.*) with the more qualitative analysis of the researcher. The researcher can, then, apply frameworks from different approaches and disciplines (e.g. discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, etc.), thus enriching the more qualitative analyses and interpretations with empirical data offered by the Corpus Linguistics tools (for a more detailed description of CS, see McIntyre & Walker’s 2019 monograph).

The software suite which was used in this study to analyze the CoROCK texts was *Wordsmith Tools 6.0*. © (Scott, 2012) as it allowed for a faster retrieval of the pertinent data than if done manually. Through the use of the *word frequency* tool (which retrieves all words from a corpus and ranks them by frequency), all occurrences of InF (including the orthographic forms *focking* and *foken* since there were no occurrences of standardly-

spelled *fucking*) were retrieved from each text. Then, the *concordance line* tool was used to retrieve all occurrences of InF in context. Once retrieved, they were manually sorted. Any interrupted occurrences (e.g. ‘The focker,’ she goes, ‘The fucking—’ and she suddenly... [OUTD]), occurrences where *fucking/fooken* were not used in their intensifying sense (e.g. As I was fucking off (i.e. leaving) out the door... [CIDN]), or cases where it was used in codeswitched sentences (e.g. 'Ich Will die fucking Maus morden!' [OUTD]) were excluded from analysis. The occurrences produced by Ross in his narrative role (e.g. He really is a steamer. His focking glasses are SO getting broken when I see him [CIDN]) were also discarded since his (comparatively excessive) narrative production would have skewed the findings.

Once all cases of InF had been identified, they were extracted onto a *Microsoft Excel* file (see Figure (1) below for a sample) where they were manually classified for 1) *concordance line* (i.e. the sentence in which InF is used in context), and 2) *colligational pattern preference*. In this case, the occurrences were classified for colligation with *adjectival, adverbial, nominal, prepositional, or verbal phrases* as well as for cases of *Standard* (e.g. Boo-focking-hoo [OUTD]) or *Non-Standard Tmesis* (Jesus focking Christ [DA]), as per Terrazas-Calero’s (2022) terminology.

## FIGURE 1

### *Screen Shot of Classification of InF in CoROCK-OUTD on Excel*

1	Conc. Line	Colligate	Prag.Functio	Emotic	Speaker	Gender	Age	Region
2	, going. ‘I don’t want you to meet him! He’s a focking embarrassment!’ I turn around and – yeah, no	ADJP	NEG	INSULT	HONOR	F	13	S
3	k she’s got a good tactical brain.’ I go, ‘in terms of calling the play. But she couldn’t kick petals off a focking rose b	NP	NEUTRAL	X	RC	M	40	S
4	ive me an answer one way or the other. ‘What a focking hypocrite,’ she just goes. ‘And then she’s of	ADJP	NEG	INSULT	Sorcha’s sister	F	40s	S
5	daughter, who’s standing over there wearing a focking facecloth for a skirt.’ Let’s just say the me	NP	NEG	ANGER	RC	M	40	S

As shown in Figure 1, InF occurrences were also classified for *positive*, *neutral*, and *negative* pragmatic functions. The emotional repertoire developed in Terrazas-Calero (*ibid.*) was also applied here, with new emotions being identified in this study (e.g. exasperation, disdain, etc.). While the identification of emotions can be a subjective process, my familiarity with the context and interpersonal relationships of all characters in the books lends a measure of objectivity to the emotional classification. Finally, and in order to determine the identity indexical value of InF in CoROCK, each occurrence was also manually classified for speaker gender and age. The following section will describe in detail the findings.

#### 4. Discussion of Findings

The quantitative examination of InF in CoROCK retrieves a total of 601 occurrences which are distributed across time as illustrated in Table (2).

**TABLE 2**

*Raw and Normalized (1,000 Words) Distribution of InF Occurrences across CoROCK*

<b>Book</b>	<b>InF Occurrences</b>	<b>Words per Book</b>	<b>InF normalized by 1,000 words</b>
CIDN (2006)	137	96,388	1,42
DA (2013)	215	140,075	1,53
OUTD (2022)	249	133,661	1,86

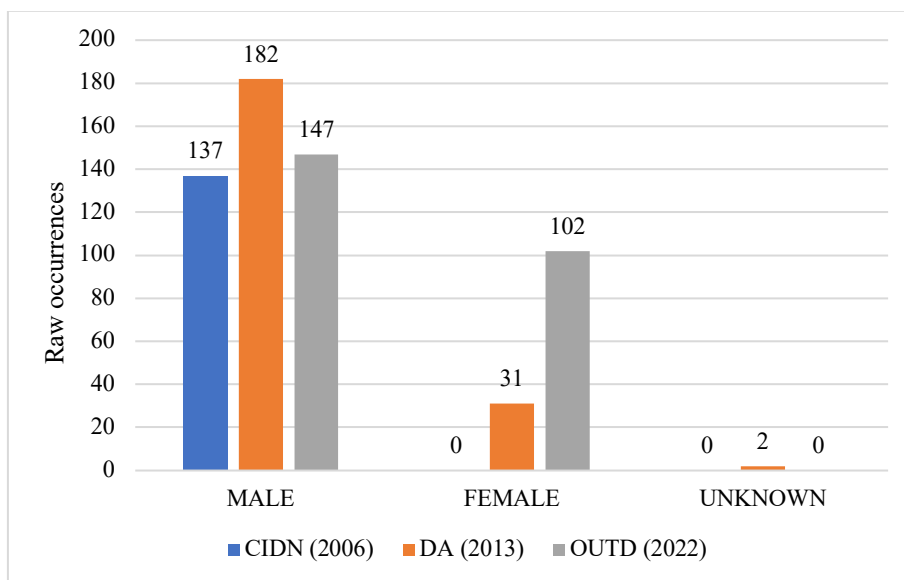
As shown in Table 2, the quantitative analysis highlights an increase in the production of InF occurrences across CoROCK. This progressive increase by 2022 could be reflective of the prominent nature of this particular intensifier in the context of (IrE) orality, which appears to have become even more commonly used in recent times.

#### 4.1. Gender Indexation in CoROCK

With regard to the identarian indexical value of InF, all occurrences were classified for gender and age. In terms of gender, the quantitative analysis of InF (see Figure (2)) shows this particular intensifier is much more prominent in the speech of male characters, which coincides with previous findings regarding InF use in real and fictional speech (Terrazas-Calero, 2020; Murphy 2009, 2010; McEnery & Xiao, 2004, among others).

**FIGURE 2**

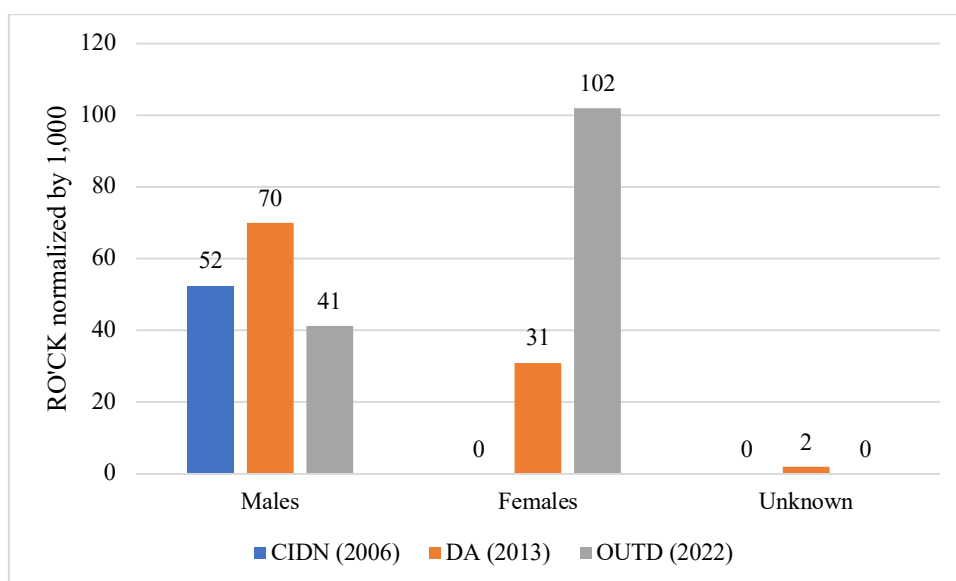
*Raw Distribution of InF Occurrences by Gender across CoROCK*



A disclaimer must be issued at this stage with regard to the male production of InF in CoROCK. Given the fact that Ross acts as both first-person narrator and character in the books, his quantitative production of InF as a character was found to be considerably larger than that of the remaining cast of characters. Thus, and in order not to skew results, his production as a character was normalized by 1,000 words (as shown in Figure (3) below) and added to the raw production of the remaining cast of male characters.

**FIGURE 3**

*Distribution of InF Occurrences with RO'CK Data Normalized by 1000 Words*



As shown above, while male characters continue to dominate the use of InF in 2006 and 2013, the quantitative analysis of the data finds, not only the surge in use of InF by female characters in 2013, but also the fact that the female production of InF is much larger than the male production by 2022, as evidenced in Figure (3). This could hint at the fact that female speakers (at least as represented in CoROCK) have become more comfortable with the use of taboo words, and of InF in particular, to the point where, by 2022, the alleged male-preference<sup>3</sup> of InF seems to become more indexical of female speech. This could also be due to the age-graded nature of taboo words which, as mentioned in section (2), often tends to be more prominent among younger speakers and to fall into disuse as the speaker ages<sup>4</sup>. In the case of IrE, Murphy (2009, 2010) and Terrazas-Calero (2020, 2022) also mirror these findings. Thus, and seeing as how the main cast of characters ages throughout the books to the point where Ross is in his 40s

<sup>3</sup> This male preference could also be due to male characters being allotted more “speaking time” than females or to the potentially smaller number of female characters that may feature in the books.

<sup>4</sup> As mentioned earlier, for detailed discussions of the age-graded nature of taboo words, please, see Terrazas-Calero (2020, pp. 252-271, and 2022, pp. 162-187).

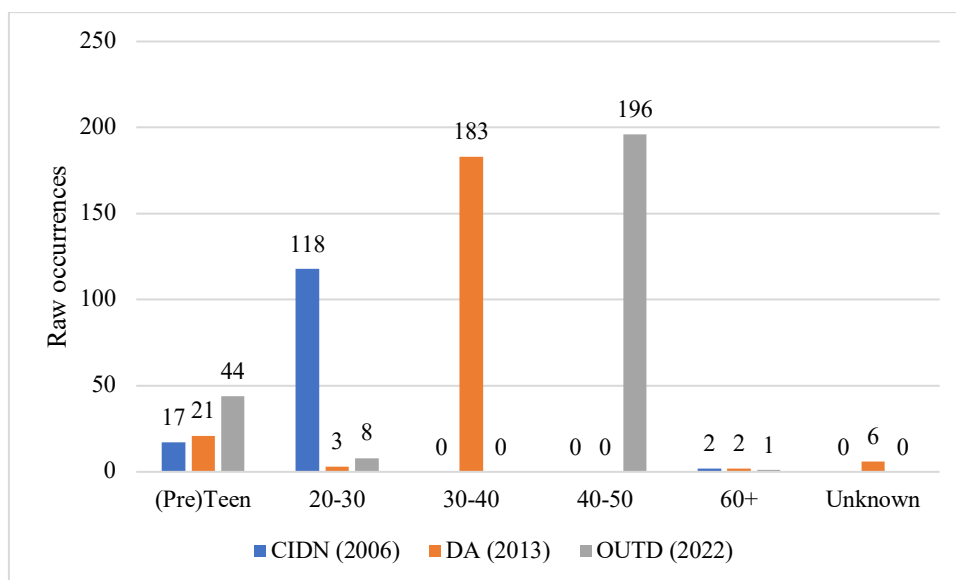
by 2022, the quantitative findings in Figure (3) could also validate the age-gradedness of InF in Dublin as represented in CoROCK (see section (4.2.) for more on age-gradedness). These findings should, however, be contrasted against a corpus of real, spoken Dublin English which, at the point of writing, does not exist.

#### 4.2. Age indexation in CoROCK

In terms of age, and after normalizing Ross' data by 1,000 words, the quantitative study of InF occurrences (see Figure (4)) reveals that this intensifier is more consistently produced by young(er) speakers, particularly those in their (pre)teens and in the 20-30 cohort, including the 30-40 cohort of which Ross and his friends are still part of by 2022.

**FIGURE 4**

*Distribution of InF Occurrences by age with RO'CK Production Normalized by 1,000 Words*



Not only do these findings align with those retrieved from previous research (e.g. Stenström et al., 2002; Murphy 2009, 2010, inter alia), but the CoROCK data also seems

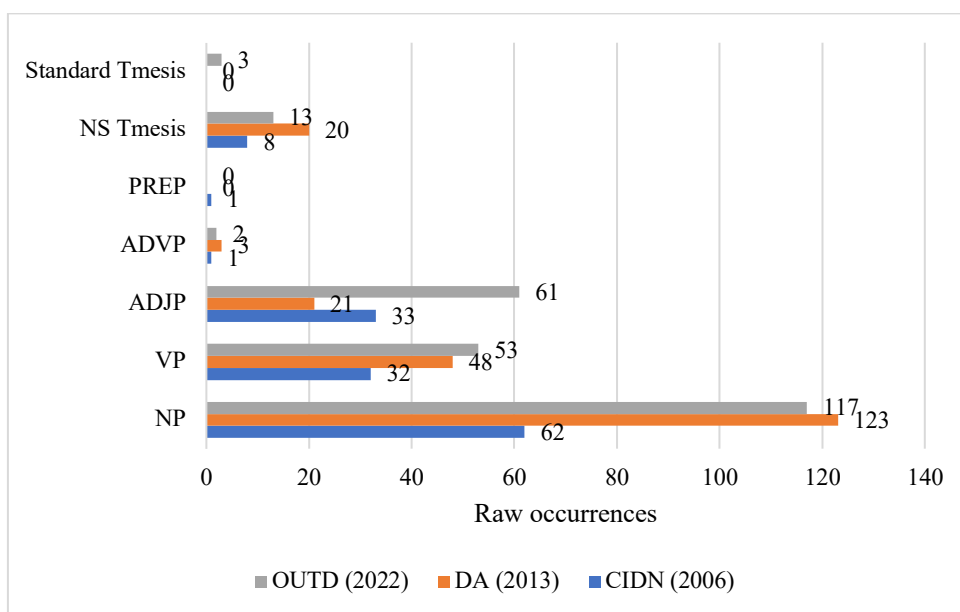
to support the age-graded nature of InF since, as shown in Figure (4) above, the number of occurrences in the 60+ cohort is practically non-existent throughout the books. It is worth mentioning that this dearth of occurrences could also be due to a lack of ‘speaking-time’ allotted to older characters since the books focus mostly on Ross, his friends, close family, same-aged acquaintances/lovers, and his children. Regardless, contrast against real-spoken Dublin English should be conducted to determine whether the findings retrieved from CoROCK correlate to InF-use in spoken IrE.

### 4.3. InF Colligational Pattern Preference in CoROCK

In order to analyze the colligational pattern preference of InF in CoROCK, and as mentioned in section (3), I follow MacKenzie’s (2019) syntactical categorization as well as Terrazas-Calero’s (2022) by classifying the occurrences for the colligational patterns outlined in Figure (5).

**FIGURE 5**

#### *InF Colligational Pattern Preference across CoROCK*



As illustrated above, the findings highlight the prominence of the *InF+Noun Phrase* pattern across all books in cases like fragment (3) below where Ross compliments a rugby player on her tactical preparation.

- (3) Dude, she has a Rugby Tactics Book that's thicker than mine and has more **fucking Post-it notes** sticking out of it than I've ever seen in my life. [OUTD; all bolds hereafter are my emphasis]

Notice also the high frequency of the *InF+Verbal Phrase* pattern across all books in cases like (4), where Ross, who has not played rugby in six years, catches a rugby ball and successfully kicks it over the crossbar and between the goal posts.

- (4) OH MY GOD! Did you *fucking see* that? [CIDN; italics in the original]

Notice Ross' excitement at having successfully scored the goal despite being out of practice. This is rendered, not only through the capitalized, intensifying "OH MY GOD!", but also through the italicized *fucking*, which lends double emphasis to the InF. It is worth mentioning the fact that while *InF+Verbal Phrase* is present across all books, as shown in Figure (5), there is a noticeable increase in use from 2006 through 2022 whereas the *InF+Noun Phrase* pattern appears to show a slight decrease in use toward 2022. This could, perhaps, hint at a shift in the colligational pattern preference of InF in the context of Dublin which should be checked against real spoken data.

The third most frequent pattern is *InF+Adverbial Phrase* which shows a quantitative increase in production toward 2022 in cases like (5), where Ross tells his wife that he considers his mother to be dead to him.

(5) I'm serious, Sorcha. The woman is **fucking dead** to me. I told her that. [DA]

Despite there being considerably fewer numbers of other patterns like *InF+Adverbial Phrase* across the books, the quantitative analysis in Figure (5) seems to indicate the disappearance of the *InF+Prepositional Phrase* patterns but to also highlight the emergence of both *Standard* and *Non-Standard Tmesis*, as evidenced in examples (6) and (7).

(6) 'You teddle that fooker from me that if he dudn't come howum, eer maddidge is oaber.' I'm like, 'Tell him **your fucking self.**' [OUTD]

(7) '**Mrs fooken Doubtfire!**' a woman, who's so mullered she's barely capable of standing, shouts at me from, like, twenty yords up ahead. [DA]

*Standard Tmesis* is shown in (6) where InF splits apart the reflexive pronoun *yourself* whereas *Non-Standard Tmesis* infixates InF within more than one word, as in (7) where the Northside speaker references the main character in the 1993 movie *Mrs. Doubtfire*. The fact that *Non-Standard Tmesis* increasingly appears throughout the books and that *Standard Tmesis* only appears in the last novel could be evidence of the emergence of new colligational patterns in the context of Dublin, at least as perceived by Paul Howard.

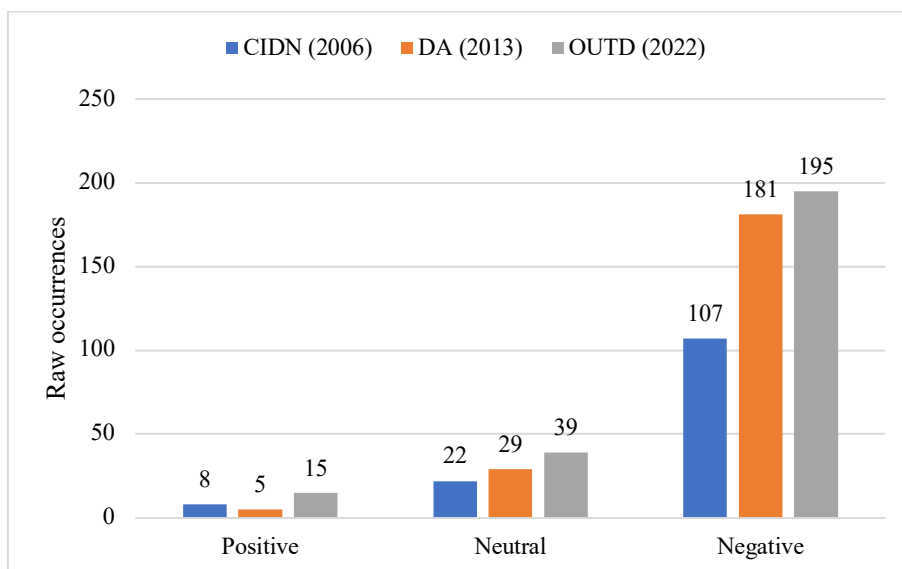
#### 4.4. InF Pragmatic Functions and Emotional Conveyance in CoROCK

The quantitative analysis of the distribution of InF occurrences with regard to the conveyance of *positive*, *neutral*, or *negative* pragmatic functions illustrated in Figure (6)

below indicates that the majority of occurrences serve *negative* functions, which mirrors previous findings (i.e. Jay, 2009; p. 155; Murphy 2009, 2010; Terrazas-Calero, 2022).

**FIGURE 6**

***Raw Distribution of Pragmatic Functions across CoROCK***



While *neutral* functions in the form of conveying *simple emphasis* (e.g. “She’s a stomach like a **fooken goat**, dat one.” [CIDN]) are the second most prominent function, it is worth pointing out the increase of *positive* functions, which rise considerably by 2022. This could hint at a potential pragmatic development in recent years, particularly if we take into consideration the quantitative analysis of the *positive emotional* repertoire identified in CoROCK which is illustrated in Figure (7) below.

**FIGURE 7**

***Raw Distribution of Positive Emotional Repertoire across CoROCK***

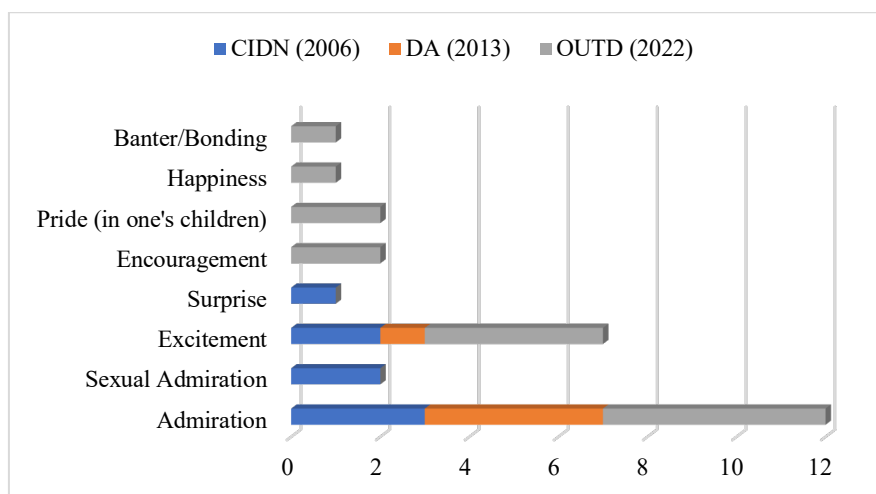


Figure (7) above indicates that the most frequent *positive* emotion conveyed by InF throughout all the CoROCK books is *admiration* in cases like (8), followed closely by *excitement* (9).

(8) Not tellin’ ye a woord of a loy, son. Hot-wired me car. Didn’t get far ourra de droyivway now, but he started de **fooken ting** [CIDN]

(9) He’s there, ‘Yes, I’m entering a team, Ross.’ I end up punching the air. I’m like, **‘Focking yes! [...]**’ [OUTD]

In (8) we find the Northside Dublin grandfather of Ross’ illegitimate son, Ronan, showing *admiration* for his grandson’s intelligence as he proudly (as a criminal himself) recounts how Ronan managed to hot-wire his car at 5 years of age. Confronted with Ross’ skepticism, the speaker explains that while Ronan did not drive far, he *did* manage to start the car (“the focken ting”). Ross’ *excitement* is evidenced in (9) when his friend tells him that he will be entering a rugby team. This *excitement* is not only linguistically conveyed

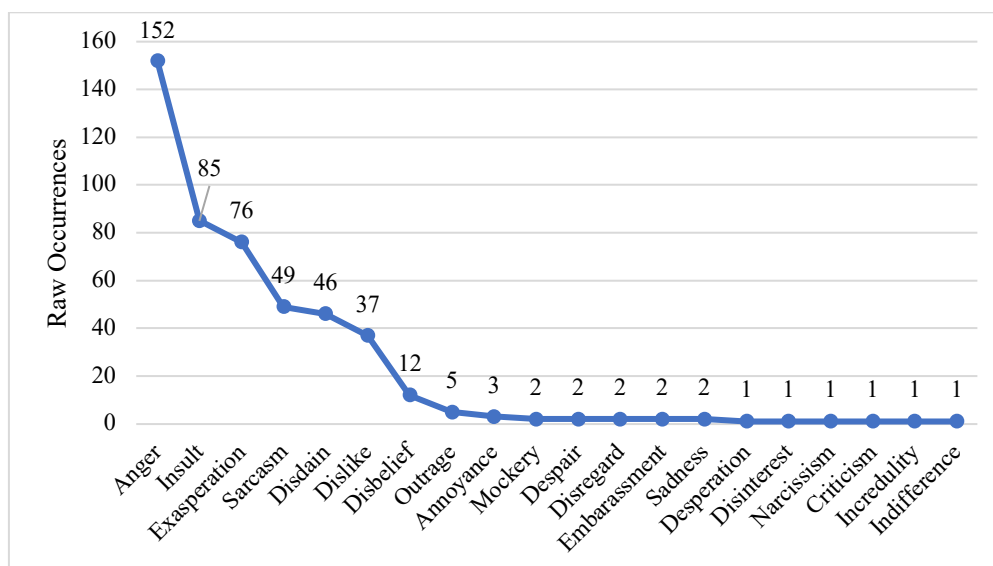
through the exclamatory “Focking yes!” but also by his body language (i.e. punching the air in excitement).

With regard to potential pragmatic developments, Figure (7) seems to display a variety of *positive* emotions which are only present in the 2022 novel, which could indicate the fact that InF may have undergone a pragmatic broadening in the recent past, as evidenced by its representation in CoROCK. This theory should, not only be tested against other RO’CK books, but also against real spoken Dublin English.

The prominence of *negative*-functioning InF occurrences which was highlighted in Figure (7) also seems to be mirrored in the wider range of emotional conveyance that was identified through qualitative and quantitative analyses illustrated in Figure (8).

**FIGURE 8**

***Raw Distribution of Negative Emotional Repertoire in CoROCK***



As shown above, the qualitative analysis of the emotional range of *negative*-functioning InF occurrences in CoROCK identified a much wider scope of emotions than those conveyed by *positive*-functioning occurrences (see Figure (7)). Quantitatively, the

most recurrently conveyed emotion is *anger*, which corroborates previous findings (see Murphy 2009, 2010; Stapleton, 2010, p. 294; Terrazas-Calero 2020, 2022). An example is offered in fragment (10), where the speaker angrily confronts her ex-husband on the fact that his (much younger) influencer girlfriend has posted a video of her underaged son online without her permission.

- (10) I'll tell you what's **focking wrong**,’ she goes. ‘**Your focking girlfriend** here posted a video of *my* son ... *on* the internet ... *without* my permission. [OUTD; italics in the original]

The *anger* that is transmitted through both InFs in (10) is not only conveyed through the intensifier but also through her emphatic (orthographic) stress, which is placed on the specific issues that anger her (i.e. the fact that *her* son’s privacy has been published *on* the internet *without* his mother’s consent).

*Insults* and *exasperation* would be the second and third most recurrent emotions in cases like (11) and (12) below. For example, the speaker in (11) recounts the first time he saw Ross and how he thought he was a “fucking waste of space” and a “fucking plank” (i.e. slang for an idiot). *Exasperation* is displayed in (12) by Kennett, Ross’ Northside co-father-in-law, who is about to be tried for fraud. Kennett, then, asks Ross for help. Confused as to how he would manage that, Kennet exasperatedly reminds Ross that he is “on the fucking jury” and to use his influence to convince the other jury members that there is reasonable doubt of his innocence. Notice how his *exasperation* is not only conveyed by *foken* but also by the exclamation mark.

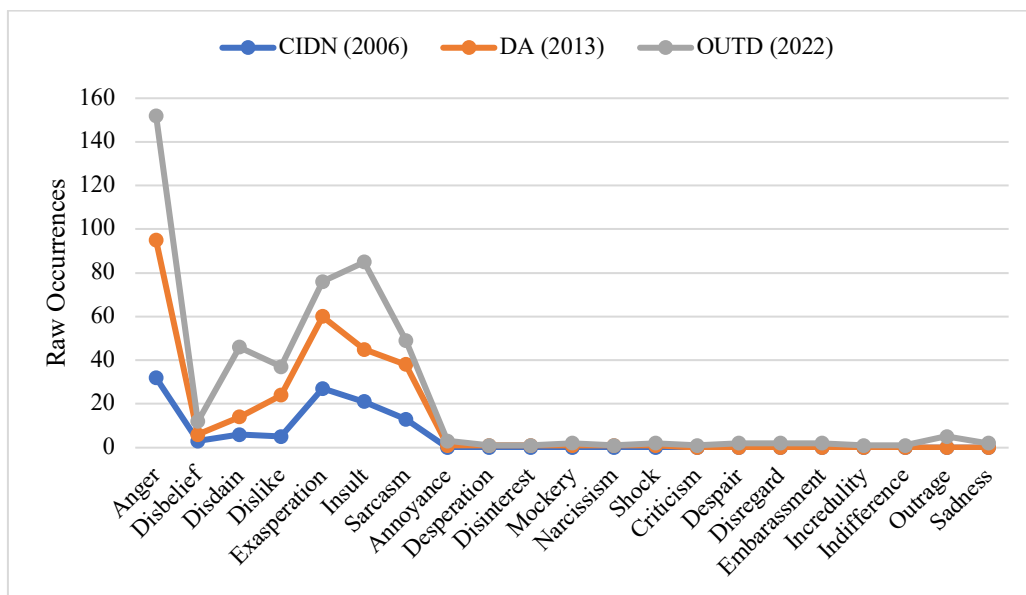
- (11) [...W]e taught you were a **foken waste of space** at foorst. Do you member him foorst arrivin, Gull. Says I, what kind of a **foken plank** is this fedda? [CIDN]

(12) You're on **the fooken jewery!** Use yooer influence. Alls you've got to do is convince a few of the utters tat lne n . . . n . . . not giddlety. [DA]

While providing examples of all other emotions would be impossible given the space constraints of this paper, I believe it is relevant to longitudinally examine the distribution of the emotions in order to determine whether there have been any developments in the emotional range of *negative-InF* occurrences throughout time (see Figure (9)).

**FIGURE 9**

***Longitudinal Distribution of Emotional Repertoire Occurrences across CoROCK***



The data in Figure (9) shows that while there are a number of emotions that seem to be present across all books (i.e. from *anger* to *sarcasm*), the remaining ones are completely absent from CIDN, with *annoyance* through *shock* occurring minimally in both DA and OUTD, and *criticism* through *sadness* appearing solely in the 2022 book with an average of 1 to 2 occurrences. I believe these findings could be indicative of the

fact that the emotional range of *negative*-functioning InF occurrences, while having a core of distinctive features, may have expanded in recent times in the context of Dublin English, at least as represented by Howard in CoROCK. Further testing should be done on previous RO'CK books as well as on real-life Dublin orality so as to check the validity of these findings.

## 5. Conclusions

This paper aimed to contribute to the field of IrE inter-varietal pragmatics and to expand the research on (IrE) taboo language by conducting a detailed Corpus Stylistics analysis of the use, colligational pattern preference, pragmatic multifunctionality, emotional conveyance, and speaker identity indexicality value of Intensifying *Fucking* in a corpus of three *Ross O'Carroll-Kelly* novels which span a period of 16 years.

While some of the findings mirror those retrieved by previous scholars on the use of this particular intensifier, such as the fact that it tends to be favored by young(er) male speakers in the 20-30 cohort, although it is most prominently produced by speakers in the 30-40 and early 40 cohorts mostly due to Ross' contribution as he ages, as well as the fact that it mostly has *negative* functions, particularly conveying *anger*, the CoROCK data also seems to highlight some potential developments that may have taken place in the context of Dublin that is represented in the corpus.

On the one hand, and with regard to gender, the corpus shows that while InF was only distinctive to male discourse in 2006, by 2022 this intensifier is considerably more prominently used by female speakers in the books. The CoROCK data, therefore, might suggest that female speakers in Dublin have become more familiar with the use of this intensifier, which, by 2022, is considerably less gender-specific, thus challenging traditional linguistic stereotypes. Another potential development was identified in the

study of colligational pattern preference. While *InF+Noun Phrase* was identified as the most prominent pattern in the books, the analysis revealed its decrease by 2022, which contrasts with the increase in occurrences of the *InF+Verbal Phrase* pattern by the same year. This could potentially be indicative of a shift in the colligational pattern preference of InF, which also seems to have expanded to include *Standard* and *Non-Standard Tmesis* in 2022.

On the other hand, and with regard to potential pragmatic developments, the study of InF in CoROCK identified a variety of *positive* emotions, the most frequent of which were *admiration* and *excitement* across the corpus, with newer emotions (i.e. *encouragement, pride, happiness, banter/bonding*) being displayed only in the 2022 novel. The expansion of the emotional repertoire is also evidenced in the qualitative and quantitative analyses of the *negatively*-functioning InF occurrences, which, 1) identify a core of commonly prominent features through the books (i.e. *anger, insults, exasperation, etc.*), while also 2) indicating the absence of the remaining emotions from CIDN (2006), which highlights the recency of this development. This is further underscored by the fact that, with the exception of some emotions which also appear in DA (2013), the majority of the remaining emotions (e.g. *criticism, sadness, etc.*) are only present in OUTD (2022). I believe this could potentially indicate the extension of the pragmatic and emotional repertoire of InF in the context of Dublin that is represented in CoROCK.

Given the fact that the findings retrieved from this study are based on fictional representations of IrE orality, future researchers may want to test the validity of these results and hypotheses against a corpus of contemporary, real, spoken Dublin and Irish English which, at the moment of writing, are yet to be compiled.

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