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"*Sorry* it took me a long time to reply": *Sorry* as a discourse-pragmatic feature in African Englishes

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the use of *sorry* as a discourse-pragmatic feature in three African varieties of English: Ghanaian English, Nigerian English and Ugandan English, in terms of its frequencies, forms, positioning, collocational patterns, pragmatic functions and use with different clause types and in various text types. The data for the study, which are extracted from the Ghanaian, Nigerian and Ugandan components of the International Corpus of English, are examined from a variational pragmatic framework, with insights from rapport management theory. The results show similarities and differences in the use of *sorry* in the three varieties. In all three varieties, *sorry* appears more often as a single lexical item than in other forms, occurs more frequently with declaratives, and appears more often in the clause-initial position. Moreover, *sorry* occurs more frequently in Nigerian English than in the other two varieties; it collocates more often with intensifiers and interjections in Ghanaian English, honorifics and politeness markers in Nigerian English, and interjections in Ugandan English. In addition, *sorry* is used to mark self-repair, regret, empathy, polite redirection, correction, mitigation and interruption at varying degrees in all three varieties. Possible first language influence may have led to some of the differences between the three varieties.

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1. Introduction

English was brought into West African countries such as Ghana and Nigeria from around the 16th century and into East African countries such as Uganda from the 19th century, via (slave) trade and colonialism (Ssempuuma, 2012; Gut, 2012). It competes with over 500 local languages (e.g. Edo, Efik, Hausa) in Nigeria, 80 indigenous languages (e.g. Akan, Dagaare, Nzema) in Ghana, and 41 local languages (e.g. Acholi, Ateso, Luganda) in Uganda (Eberhard et al., 2023). Thus, English in Africa has been influenced by these indigenous African languages and other socio-historical factors (Wolf, 2021), including the value attached to the language by African liberation movements, the view of English as the language of modernity and a vehicle of

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upward mobility among many Africans (Van Rooy, 2020: 219). These have led to national varieties such as Ghanaian English (GhE), Nigerian English (NigE) and Ugandan English (UgE). English functions as the official language in Ghana and Nigeria, and as a co-official language (with Swahili) in Uganda, serving in domains such as the media, education, commerce and administration (Gut, 2017; Meierkord, 2016a). While it is a second language (L2) for many of the speakers in these countries, it is also a first language (L1) for a rising number of young people in the cities (Huber, 2004; Isingoma and Meierkord, 2016; Jowitt, 2019). Based on Schneider's (2007) Dynamic Model for the development of postcolonial English varieties, the three varieties are at the nativisation stage (Adokorach and Isingoma, 2020; Collins, 2022), with NigE showing some signs of entering the endonormative stabilisation stage. The nativisation stage involves the indigenisation of English used in these postcolonial contexts in which there is the borrowing or transfer of linguistic and cultural features from local languages and cultures into English, which manifests itself not only at the lexical and grammatical levels, but also at the pragmatic level. For instance, local pragmatic items such as *kraa* and *paa* are transferred from ethnic Ghanaian languages into GhE (Unuabonah and Anderson, 2023), while there is the influence of local Nigerian languages on the pronunciation and pragmatic functions of the English pragmatic marker *now* in NigE (Oladipupo and Unuabonah, 2021). While the nativisation stage is the most dynamic stage, which typically begins with political independence and encompasses lexical expansion and shifting grammatical forms, the endonormative stabilisation stage covers the recognition of local norms, manifestation of literary creativeness and codification.

There are a number of studies that deal with phonological (e.g. Huber, 2004; Meierkord, 2016b; Akinola and Oladipupo, 2022), lexico-semantic (e.g. Isingoma, 2016a; Callies, 2017; Brato, 2019) and syntactic (e.g. Isingoma, 2016b; Akinlotan, 2018; Brato, 2020) aspects of these three varieties. There is also a growing number of pragmatic studies in the three varieties and these have largely focused on politeness (e.g. Adegbija, 1989; Anderson, 2009; Isingoma, 2021), discourse-pragmatic features (DPFs; e.g. Honkanen, 2022; Meierkord and Isingoma, 2021; Unuabonah and Kupolati, 2023), and speech acts (e.g. Meierkord, 2016c; Anchimbe, 2018; Gut et al., 2024). These studies utilise different research methods, including small-scale studies, discourse completion tasks and corpus data in their analyses. Scholars working on these varieties have explored single DPFs such as *now* (Oladipupo and Unuabonah, 2021) in NigE and *actually* in GhE (Sarfo-Kantankah and Yussif, 2019) or groups of DPFs (e.g. Gut and Unuabonah, 2019) in GhE and NigE. These studies indicate that there are differences in the use of these different pragmatic items between these African English (AfE) varieties and other varieties of English due to the influence of indigenous African languages and cultures. Notwithstanding, there are shared cultural behaviours amongst users of different AfE varieties, such as the avoidance of calling people by their names (Anchimbe, 2011; Unuabonah, 2018) and the use of direct strategies in making requests (Meierkord, 2016c; Gut and Unuabonah, 2022). These shared cultural behaviours, which have been transferred from indigenous African languages and cultures into the different AfE varieties, contribute to the nativisation of these varieties and distinguish them from other varieties of English.

In addition, other scholars have examined DPFs borrowed from indigenous African languages into GhE (Unuabonah and Anderson, 2023), NigE (e.g. Unuabonah and Oladipupo, 2021) and UgE (Isingoma, 2016a). For example, Isingoma (2016a) identifies different DPFs such as *naye* (*but*) and *kale* (*okay*) in UgE, and suggests that these DPFs are used in place of the English equivalents because these local forms carry extra pragmatic meanings that are not captured in the English forms. In some instances, these local forms co-occur with English DPFs in these varieties, such as *biko* (Igbo form of *please*) and *please* in NigE (Unuabonah and Oladipupo, 2021). In some cases, DPFs in NigE and GhE are embedded within studies that address several varieties of English (e.g. Mazzon, 2019; Collins, 2022), thus limiting the extent to which specific attributes of these DPFs in these varieties are studied. Hence, it is necessary that other kinds of DPFs are explored in order to expand the knowledge of the different characteristics of these features in these AfE varieties, since these features contribute to nativisation and endonormative stabilisation processes in postcolonial Englishes. This study, therefore, extends existing ones on discourse-pragmatic variation in AfE by investigating *sorry* (and its clausal variants such as *I'm sorry*) as a DPF in GhE, NigE and UgE.

Sorry is a politeness marker that is typically used to indicate regret but has been noted to perform other kinds of discourse-pragmatic functions such as indicating self-repair (Arizavi and Choubsaz, 2019). As such, it is a lexical item that is useful in managing rapport between interlocutors, especially when an addresser's utterance may be face-threatening. In many cases, research on *sorry* is embedded within studies that generally deal with different ways of expressing apologies (e.g. Lwanga-Lumu, 2005; Degenhardt and Bernaisch, 2022), which lead to restricted attention on *sorry* as a DPF. Besides Lwanga-Lumu (2005), who explores UgE and Degenhardt and Bernaisch (2022), who focus on Indian and Sri Lankan Englishes, others centre on L1 varieties of English. Moreover, Lwanga-Lumu (2005) utilises data from discourse completion tasks administered to respondents from only one ethnic group, without considering participants from other ethnic groups in Uganda. All these limit a full understanding of the roles of *sorry* in L2 varieties such as GhE, NigE and UgE. Previous accounts of *sorry* in its adjectival and discourse-pragmatic forms have been studied in other varieties of English including Irish English (e.g. Lynch, 2013), American English (e.g. Arizavi and Choubsaz, 2019) and British English (BrE; e.g. Islentyeva et al., 2023). For instance, Arizavi and Choubsaz, 2019 indicate that *sorry* generally marks interruption, self-repair and regret while *I'm sorry* basically expresses regret. They identify other DPFs such as *oh* and *very* which tend to co-occur with *sorry*. In addition, there is also a restriction on the examination of *sorry* across different text types as the few existing studies either focus on spoken genres (e.g. Degenhardt and Bernaisch, 2022) or are silent on them (Arizavi and Choubsaz, 2019).

Based on previous studies on *sorry* as well as other DPFs in the three AfE varieties, it is expected that there will be variation in the use of *sorry* in these AfE varieties due to the influence of local languages and cultures. Specifically, we expect that there will be distinct functions of *sorry* in GhE, NigE and UgE. We also expect that there will be links between different forms of *sorry* and its pragmatic functions as well as connections between different forms of *sorry* and different text types. Moreover, there may also be some variation in the use of *sorry* across different text types in these AfE varieties. Thus, in order to investigate pragmatic variation in the use of *sorry* in GhE, NigE and UgE, in terms of its frequencies, forms, positioning, collocational patterns, pragmatic functions and frequencies with various clause types and in different text types, this study will answer the following research questions:

(i) Are there variations in the frequencies and forms of *sorry* as a DPF across GhE, NigE and UgE?
(ii) Are there specific positions *sorry* occupies in a clause and are there certain clause types which tend to accommodate *sorry* in the three varieties?
(iii) What are the collocational patterns and pragmatic functions of *sorry* in the three varieties?
(iv) What kinds of variations exist in the frequencies of *sorry* across different text types in GhE, NigE and UgE?

The rest of the paper is as follows: In Section 2, we explore variational pragmatics and rapport management, which form the theoretical approach within which this study has been investigated, and review prior research on *sorry*. In Section 3, we outline the data and methods, and we present our results in Section 4. We then discuss our findings in Section 5 and conclude the study in Section 6.

2. Theoretical perspectives and prior research

This study benefits from Schneider's (2007) Dynamic Model for the development of postcolonial English varieties, Schneider and Barron, 2008 variational pragmatics and Spencer-Oatey's (2005) rapport management theory. Since we have discussed the Dynamic Model in Section 1, Section 2.1 focuses on variational pragmatics and rapport management theory.

2.1. Variational pragmatics and rapport management theory

Variational pragmatics deals with a "systematic analysis of the effects of regional and social factors on language in action and interaction" and the investigation of pragmatic variation in geographical and social spaces (Schneider and Barron, 2008: 1). It was developed to bridge the gap between pragmatics and variational linguistics, and assist the description of language in use based on different social factors. As a pragmatic analytical framework, it recognises two levels of pragmatic analysis, which involve types of language variation and levels of pragmatic analysis. At the level of language variation, the framework distinguishes five macro-social variables such as region, ethnicity, social class, gender and age, and their impact on language use. On the other hand, it presents five levels of pragmatic analysis, which involve the formal (e.g. pragmatic markers), actional (e.g. illocutions), interactional (e.g. adjacency pairs), topical (e.g. propositions), and organisational (e.g. turn-taking) levels (Schneider, 2012:348). Moreover, it includes other variables such as discourse types (e.g. speech, writing) and social situation (e.g. chat, dispute) among others as important factors that may influence pragmatic variation (Aijmer, 2013:3). The present study focuses on the formal level of pragmatic analysis, which enables a form-to-function mapping of the DPF *sorry* and its clausal variants *I am*/*I'm sorry* in the three AfE varieties: GhE, NigE and UgE. The study contrasts the use of *sorry* in the AfE varieties with a view to exploring the impact of regional variation on its frequency, form and functions in various registers.

In discussing the functions of *sorry* in this paper, we borrow aspects of Spencer-Oatey's (2005, 2008) rapport management theory, which involves the management (or mismanagement) of relations or (dis)harmony among people (Spencer-Oatey, 2005). Rapport management posits that the bases of rapport involve sociality rights and obligations, interactional goals and face sensitivities. Sociality rights and obligations involve "social expectancies and reflect peoples' concerns over fairness, consideration and behavioural appropriateness", while interactional goals address the "specific tasks and/or relational goals that people may have when they interact with each other" (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 13–14). For the purpose of this study, we focus on face sensitivities, which include identity face, "a situation-specific face sensitivity that is highly vulnerable". Spencer-Oatey (2005) proposes that people's claims to identity face are based on the positive social values that they associate with their various self-aspects (Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 121–122). Furthermore, she posits that rapport can be threatened through the performance of face-threatening behaviour, which is an act which makes the addressee lose 'face' or credibility such as criticisms or oppositions (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

Spencer-Oatey (2005) opines that different domains, including illocutionary, discourse, participation and stylistic domains need to be properly managed as these could affect rapport. The illocutionary domain addresses the management of speech acts that could create, maintain or threaten harmony, while the discourse domain covers the management of topic choice and topic organisation. The participation domain attends to turn-taking rights, inclusion/exclusion of people present as well as

use/non-use of listener responses, while the stylistic domain addresses the management of choice of tone, genre-appropriate lexis and syntax, and use of address terms and honorifics. *Sorry* may be termed as an appropriate lexical item at the stylistic level that is useful in managing illocutionary and participation domains, as explained in Section 4.3. Moreover, Spencer-Oatey (2008) adds that four types of rapport orientation may influence interactants' use of rapport management strategies: rapport enhancement, rapport maintenance, rapport neglect and rapport challenge orientations. The use of *sorry* reflects orientations that tilt towards rapport enhancement and maintenance. Rapport enhancement orientation is "a desire to strengthen or boost harmonious relations" between interactants, while rapport maintenance orientation is "a desire to maintain or protect harmonious relations between interlocutors" (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 32). In this paper, we discuss the functions of *sorry* in the light of identity face, rapport domains and orientations.

2.2. Previous studies on sorry in different varieties of English

As noted previously, existing studies on *sorry* have concentrated on apology strategies in different English-speaking contexts. For instance, Aijmer (1996) examines expressions and strategies of apologies in BrE, using the London–Lund corpus. She notes that *sorry* and its variants make up the majority (83.7 %) of 215 apology expressions found in the corpus. Moreover, El-Khalil, 1998 in his study of Jordanian apology strategies finds that Jordanians often use conventional expressions such as *sorry*, *I'm sorry* or *sorry* + an account of the offence to reduce the effect of the offence on the offended.

Lynch (2013) examines *sorry* in Irish English and finds that it functions mainly as a positive politeness strategy, and sometimes as a hedging device, a request and a conversation entrance marker. The study finds that the frequency of *sorry* in Irish English is influenced by sociological factors such as gender, level of formality or informality, age group and religion. In addition, females have been found to use *sorry* more than males; younger and older speakers use the single form-*sorry*, while middle-aged interactants prefer other forms. The study also shows that *sorry* appears more in informal conversations and is preferred in conversations of interactants who identify as Christians.

Arizavi and Choubsaz, 2019 investigate the form and functions of *sorry* and *I'm sorry* in spoken American English. On the collocational patterns of the expressions, the study finds that the preceding co-text of *sorry* are infinitive verbs, some main verbs, interjections, discourse markers and adverbs. In some other instances, they collocate with demonstrative pronouns and sometimes appear in repeated forms. They show that *sorry* is followed by complementation patterns such as zero complement, that-clause, a prepositional phrase or an adverbial clause of reason, which implies that the functions of *sorry* and *I'm sorry* depend on their preceding and subsequent environments. On their pragmatic functions, the study finds that *sorry* marks interruption, self-repair and regret while *I'm sorry* basically expresses regret.

Focusing on apology expressions in Ghanaian parliamentary debates, Sarfo-Kantankah (2021) confirms that apology expressions involving *sorry* (52.54 %) play a major role in the corpus, followed by a new parliamentary-specific apology term *withdraw* (26.78 %). In addition, Degenhardt and Bernaisch (2022) explore apologies in Indian, Sri Lankan and British Englishes, using the corresponding national components of the International Corpus of English (ICE). They show that the two sets of South Asian English speakers use *sorry* more than other apology expressions. While these very few studies confirm the use of *sorry* to apologise, they pay less attention to the use of *sorry* to perform different discourse-pragmatic functions. Moreover, Sarfo-Kantankah (2021), which examines GhE, only focuses on one text type: parliamentary debates without investigating the use of *sorry* in other text types, which might restrict the understanding of the functions of *sorry* in different text categories. In all, these studies cannot account for pragmatic variation in the use of *sorry* in different AfE varieties. Thus, this paper focuses on the use of *sorry* in three AfE varieties: GhE, NigE and UgE, using ICE data that involve different text types.

3. Data and methods

The data for this study were sourced from the Ghanaian, Nigerian and Ugandan components of ICE (ICE-GH, ICE-NIG and ICE-UG). These three varieties were selected due to the availability of recent corpora that were identical in composition, making them valuable for comparative purposes. The three corpora contained about 1 million words of spoken (~600,000 words) and written (~400,000 words) English texts of various genres, collected from speakers who were above 18 years and had received secondary school education in the respective countries (Huber and Dako, 2013; Gut, 2014; Meierkord and Isingoma, 2022). They formed a part of the ICE project, which aimed to collect comparable 1-million-word corpora of all varieties of English spoken around the world (Greenbaum, 1991). Table 1 shows the word count for each of the text categories used for this study in the three ICE-corpora. Cross-examinations and legal presentations were removed from ICE-NIG, since these did not appear in ICE-UG; there was also no legal presentation category in ICE-GH; thus, cross-examinations only were removed from ICE-GH.[2]

[2] The newest possible version of the spoken component of ICE-GH (not the final one) as provided by the compilers was used for the study. This indicates why some text types such as business transactions and parliamentary debates had less word count than their counterparts in ICE-NIG and ICE-UG.

Table 1
Word count for each text category in ICE-GH, ICE-NIG and ICE-UG.

Category	ICE-GH	ICE-NIG	ICE-UG
broadcast discussions	46445	40290	40438
broadcast interviews	23290	20356	20262
broadcast news	43191	40916	40058
broadcast talks	14014	40138	40539
business transactions	2301	20732	20411
class lessons	45614	41394	40185
commentaries	20090	40770	40447
conversations	200843	180789	183135
demonstrations	9549	20594	20527
non-broadcast talks	20096	20156	20303
parliamentary debates	11186	20161	20380
phone calls	51857	20624	20815
unscripted speeches	28343	61699	60223
academic writing	85676	80045	80627
administrative/instructive writing	21309	19992	20165
business letters	31157	30142	30179
editorials	20735	20013	20110
exams	21163	20211	20098
novels	42961	40031	40257
popular writing	86760	80144	80811
press reportage	50811	40073	40382
skills and hobbies	19581	20007	20199
social letters	31369	30141	30305
student essays	20993	19997	20127
Total	**949334**	**969415**	**970983**

In order to address the research questions about the use of *sorry* as a DPF in GhE, NigE and UgE, corpus searches and concordance analyses were carried out to investigate the frequencies, forms, positions, use across different text types, collocational patterns, register variation and pragmatic functions of *sorry* in the three AfE varieties. The three corpora were searched for all cases of *sorry* using AntConc 3.4.4 (Anthony, 2015), a corpus analysis toolkit. Instances of *sorry* that were syntactically optional, as in (1), and cases in which *sorry* occurred in syntactically optional comment clauses, as in (2), were retained. Thus, instances in which *sorry* occurred within a clause that was not syntactically optional, as in (3), where *sorry* was used as a modifier, as in (4), and cases in which it was mentioned and not used, as in (5), were eliminated.

(1) *sorry* please we'll take the minutes (ICE-NIG_btr_04)
(2) pardon our inability to present these minutes *I'm sorry* these proceedings (ICE-NIG_btr_04)
(3) *I am sorry* to say that within a few hours, she went into coma and died. (ICE-GH_W2B- 007)
(4) So you find everything is going to be in a in a *sorry* state (ICE-UG_S1A-083)
(5) Some people were raised badly to the extent that one cannot say simple courteous words such as thank you, please and *sorry*," (ICE-UG_W2D-018)

The final data were then analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative analysis was used to investigate the forms, positions, co-occurrence with different clause types, collocational patterns, and the discourse-pragmatic functions of *sorry*, as a close reading of the concordance lines helped in revealing the structural and functional aspects of the DPF in different utterances. The quantitative analysis involved the use of absolute and relative (calculated at per million words) frequencies and log-likelihood ratio (LL) tests. A simple percentage score was also used to calculate the preferred forms of *sorry* in the data, the position *sorry* took within the clauses, the preferred clause types to which *sorry* was attached, collocational patterns and the discourse-pragmatic functions of *sorry* in the utterances.

4. Results

This section deals with the findings of the study; the following sub-sections capture the results for frequencies, forms, positioning, occurrence with clause types, collocational patterns with other DPFs, pragmatic functions and register variation of *sorry* as a DPF in the three African ICE corpora.

4.1. Frequencies, forms and positions of sorry *as a DPF in the three varieties*

The results reveal that *sorry* as a DPF has an overall frequency of 88.5 pmw (N = 84) in ICE-GH, 115.5 pmw (N = 112) in ICE-NIG and 74.2 pmw (N = 72) in ICE-UG. While there are no significant differences in the overall frequency of *sorry* as a DPF between GhE and NigE (LL = 3.4; Sig. = 0.06), and between GhE and UgE (LL = 1.2; Sig. = 0.3), there is a significant difference in the overall frequency of *sorry* as a DPF between NigE and UgE (LL = 8.83; 0.003).

The results show that *sorry* may appear as a DPF in four different forms in the three varieties: as a single lexical item (*sorry*), as in (6), in an uncontracted clausal form (*I am sorry*, *we are sorry*), as in (7), in a contracted clausal form (*I'm sorry*), as in (8), and in repeated forms (*sorry sorry*), as in (9). There is also the existence of the clausal form in which the pronoun first person singular *I* has been ellipted (*am sorry*), as in (10).

(6) *Sorry* you need to <,> you need to find out (ICE-UG_S1B-018)
(7) *I am truly sorry* I got it only a few days ago. (ICE-GH_W2F-019)
(8) pardon our inability to present these minutes *I'm sorry* these proceedings here and now (ICE-NIG_btr_04)
(9) green vegetation that gives natural beauty to a city..." "*Am sorry* sir, I do not and will not merit all the praises (ICE-NIG_nov_16)
(10) Oh *sorry sorry sorry* i'm so sorry I take my words back (ICE-GH_S1A_046)

Fig. 1 shows the frequency of the different forms of *sorry* across the three AfE varieties.

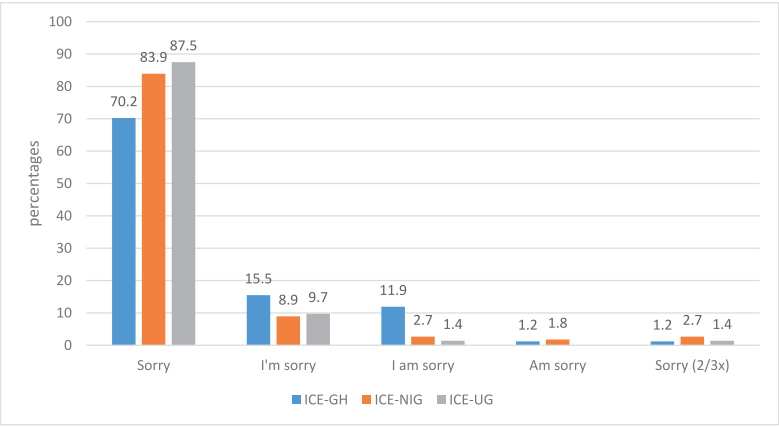


Fig. 1. Forms of *sorry* in ICE-GH (N = 84), ICE-NIG (N = 112) and ICE-UG (N = 72).

Fig. 1 shows that the single word form, *sorry*, is the most frequent across the three varieties followed by the contracted clausal form (*I'm sorry*) and the uncontracted clausal form (*I am sorry*). GhE and NigE include very few instances of the non-standard form *am sorry*, where *am* represents *I'm*; these were found in NigE novels. The only example of *am sorry* in the data from ICE-GH was found in private conversions, an indication of its tendency to occur in informal talks. Fig. 1 also reveals that the single word form is more frequent than the clausal form in NigE and UgE than in GhE, while the opposite is the case with the clausal forms.

The position that *sorry* occupies in the different clauses is also examined. This position can be clause-initial, if *sorry* occurs before the subject of the clause, even if preceded by another DPF, as in (10), and clause-medial, if it occurs after the subject and in any other position within the clause, as in (11). It is also categorised as clause-final, if it occurs at the end of the clause, as in (12). *Sorry* is categorised as (semi-)free, if it occurs alone or if it co-occurs with another DPF, as in (13).

(11) it was in selected from a corpus of about six thou- erm *sorry* four thousand five hundred erm phrases (ICE-NIG_unsp_04)
(12) I've forgotten your name *sorry* (ICE-UG_S1B_001)
(13) A> You can take us through it
B> *Okay yes sorry* (ICE-UG_S1B_074)

Fig. 2 shows the frequency of *sorry* in the different positions across the three varieties.

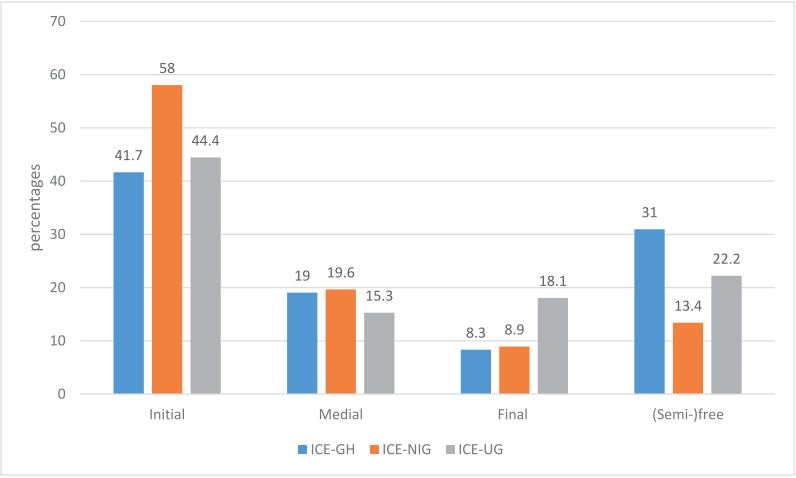


Fig. 2. Positions of *sorry* in ICE-GH (N = 84), ICE-NIG (N = 112) and ICE-UG (N = 72).

Fig. 2 shows that in all three varieties, *sorry* occurs most frequently in the clause-initial position, followed by cases where it occurs (semi-)freely in GhE and UgE, and in the clause-medial position in NigE. Log-likelihood tests further show that there are significant differences in the use of *sorry* only at the clause-initial position between GhE and NigE (LL = 8.52; Sig. = 0.004) and between NigE and UgE (LL = 11.5; Sig. = 0.001).

4.2. Clause types and collocational patterns of sorry as a DPF with other DPFs in the three varieties

The occurrence of *sorry* with different clause types is also examined. These clause types include declarative clauses, as in (14), interrogative clauses, as in (15), and imperative clauses, as in (16). There is also the occurrence of *sorry* with elliptical/minor clauses or phrases, which are mostly noun phrases and a few prepositional and verb phrases, as in (17), (18) and (19), respectively. It is interesting to note that the imperative clauses found in ICE-NIG are those starting with *let* (e.g. *sorry* let me cut you in [ICE-NIG_con_47]).

(14) Mh hmm *sorry* you feel bored now (ICE-UG_S1A_99)
(15) *Sorry* so what does trust mean for you (ICE-GH_S1A_62)
(16) Uhm <,> put your beans in it sorry <,,> (ICE-GH_S2A_54)
(17) Such such kind of data *sorry* (ICE-UG_S1B_016)
(18) *sorry* at that young age (ICE-NIG_con_01)
(19) voiced out *sorry* (ICE-GH_S1A_97)

Fig. 3 presents the frequency of *sorry* with different clause types across the three AfE varieties.

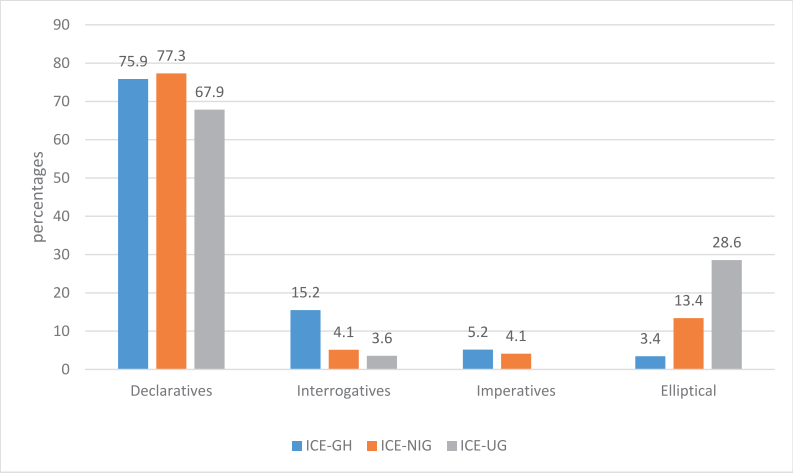


Fig. 3. Frequency of *sorry* with different clause types in ICE-GH (N = 84), ICE-NIG (N = 112) and ICE-UG (N = 72).

Fig. 3 shows that *sorry* occurs more frequently with declaratives than with other clause types in all three varieties. Next are elliptical clauses in NigE and UgE and interrogatives in GhE. Log-likelihood tests show that *sorry* with declaratives is significantly higher in NigE than in GhE (LL = 7.53; Sig = 0.006) and UgE (LL = 12.28; Sig = <0.001); however, there are no significant differences between GhE and UgE (LL = 0.59; Sig = 0.44) in the use of declaratives. In the case of elliptical clauses/phrases, there is a significant difference between GhE and NigE (LL: 8.79; Sig = 0.003) and between GhE and UgE (LL = 12.08; Sig = <0.001) but not between NigE and UgE (LL = 0.32; Sig = 0.57); there are no significant differences in the use of interrogatives across all three varieties.

The results also reveal that *sorry* as a DPF tends to co-occur with other kinds of DPFs, such as honorific/politeness markers (e.g. *sir*, *please*), agreement and contrastive devices (e.g. *okay*, *but*), intensifiers (e.g. *so*, *truly*), interjections (e.g. *oh*, *uh*), as in (20), (21), (22), (23) and (24), respectively.

(20) *I'm sorry Sir* let me quickly give him a point of order (ICE-NIG_bdis_18)
(21) *sorry please* there was an omission in my remark on our resolutions (ICE-NIG_btr_10)
(22) *I am truly sorry* I got it only a few days ago. (ICE-GH_W2F_019)
(23) Spot pass here for ball *but uh sorry* for Saints rather sent it away (ICE-GH_S2A_020)
(24) *Uh sorry* those of you who uh who support ManU God bless you (ICE-UG_S2A_042)

Overall, *sorry* fairly co-occurs with other DPFs at 48.8 % (N = 41) in GhE and less often in NigE at 36.6 % (N = 41) and UgE at 31.9 % (N = 23) of all cases of *sorry* found in each of the three corpora. Log-likelihood tests further show that while there is no significant difference in the overall collocation of *sorry* with other DPFs between GhE and NigE (LL = 0.01; Sig = 0.92), there are significant differences in the collocation of *sorry* with other DPFs between GhE and UgE (LL = 4.89; Sig. = 0.027) and between NigE and UgE (LL = 4.53; Sig. = 0.033). Fig. 4 shows the frequency of the collocational patterns of *sorry* with these different DPFs.

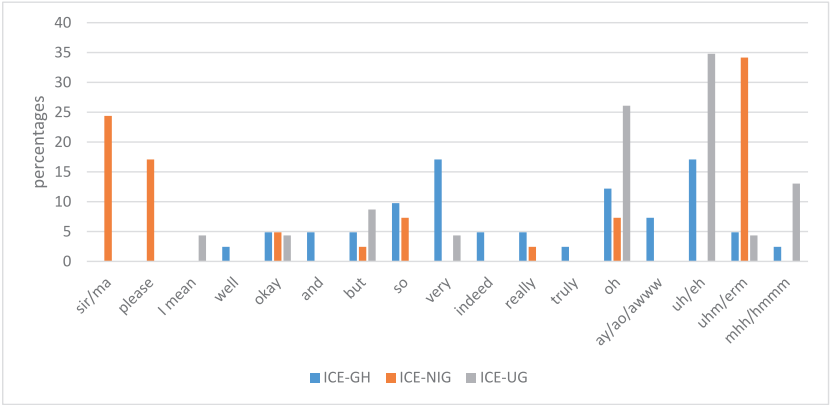


Fig. 4. Collocational patterns of *sorry* with other DPFs in ICE-GH (N = 41), ICE-NIG (N = 41) and ICE-UG (N = 23).

Fig. 4 shows that *sorry* tends to co-occur with *okay*, *but*, *oh* and *uhm/erm* in all three varieties; however, there are differences in terms of frequency and preference for certain DPFs. *Sorry* tends to co-occur most frequently with *very*, *uh/eh* and *oh* in ICE-GH, *erm*, *sir/ma* and *please* in ICE-NIG, and *uh/eh*, *oh*, *mhh/hmmm* in ICE-UG. These show that *sorry* tends to co-occur mostly with intensifiers and interjections in ICE-GH, which is evident in its preference for intensifiers such as *indeed*, *really* and *truly*, which do not co-occur or which co-occur very rarely with *sorry* in ICE-NIG and ICE-UG. The results also show that NigE users prefer to use *sorry* alongside honorific/politeness markers, which do not co-occur at all with *sorry* in ICE-GH and ICE-UG; *sorry* tends to co-occur most often with interjections in UgE.

4.3. *Pragmatic functions of* sorry *as a DPF in the three varieties*

The results reveal that *sorry* performs different pragmatic functions in the three varieties: self-repair, marking regret, empathy, polite redirection, correction, mitigation and interruption, as in (25)–(38).

Sorry is used to signal self-repair when a speaker makes a mistake and self-corrects, as in (25) and (26):

(25) But body hits uh *sorry* ball hits the woodwork (ICE-UG_S2A-002)
(26) and of course erm Shehu erm *sorry* Umar Musa Yar'Adua candidate of the PDP (ICE-NIG_bdis_17)

In (25), the speaker uses *sorry* to mark a change from *body* to *ball*, while the speaker, in (26), utilises *sorry* to signal the change from *Shehu* to *Umar Musa Yar'Adua*. In both cases, *sorry* is used to save the speaker's face in a situation where the mistake may have undermined the speaker's competence and possibly have led to some inconvenience for the addressee.

Sorry may also be used to mark regret for a wrong past action, as in (27) and (28).

(27) *Sorry* it took me a long time to reply. (ICE-GH_W1B-006)
(28) Uh I delayed a bit *I'm sorry* (ICE-UG_S1A-092)

In (27) and (28), *sorry* is used to express the writer's/speaker's regret for delayed actions, and thus, it assists in managing the illocutionary domain as it is used in the expression of an apology. In both cases, *sorry* is used to manage and maintain rapport between the interlocutors by signalling the addresser's sincerity in the expression of the apology.

Sorry can also be employed in order to empathise or identify with the addressee's feelings, as in (29) and (30).

(29) B> So I'm a sick man now
A> Oh *sorry* (ICE-UG_S1A-096)
(30) B: it was t- horrible yesterday
A: oh *sorry* (ICE-NIG_ph_01)

In (29) and (30), *sorry* expresses the speakers' empathy towards their co-interactants. In (29), *oh sorry* comes as speaker A's response to the health status of speaker B. In (30), speaker A empathises with speaker B on speaker B's unpleasant experience. In the two scenarios, *sorry* is used to enhance rapport between the interlocutors since identifying with the feelings of the addressee is an indication of the addresser's concern for the addressee.

Sorry can also be used to indicate polite redirection, where it redirects the addressee to a previous utterance by the addresser who requires the addressee's clarification or correction, as in (31) and (32).

(31) A: how can you help your community with the language you studied
C: *Sorry*
A: Ah <w> I'm </w> saying how can you help the community (ICE-UG_S1A-053)
(32) "I see, are you expecting your B. F. for the week-end...? "*Sorry* sir. I don't understand you" "I mean will your boyfriend be (ICE-NIG_nov_16)

In (31) and (32), *sorry* is used to seek clarification on the preceding comments of the co-interactants. In both examples, *sorry* is used to maintain rapport while correcting or seeking clarification, which may be face-threatening for the addressee.

Sorry may also be used to indicate correction, where it signals a speaker's response to the listener's prompt for clarification/correction, as in (33) and (34).

(33) A: it should be what from which type of language Arabic and what
All: Latin and Greek
A: Latin and Greek okay sorry (ICE-GH_S1B-009)
(34) A: Now that means you are starting thirtieth December
B: Oh no *sorry sorry sorry* it is thirteenth December (ICE-UG_S1A-098)

In (33), speaker A uses *sorry* to admit and correct an error, which was brought to their notice by the class of people being addressed. In (34), on the other hand, *sorry, is* repeatedly used to express speaker B's attempt to correct the wrong impression speaker A had from what B communicated earlier. At the instance of speaker A's move to seek clarification, B realises and corrects the error. These examples set the function of *sorry* as a marker of correction apart from its function as a self-repair marker, which usually comes from the speaker without any prompt from the listener. In (33), *sorry* collocates with *okay*, an indicator of the speaker's admittance of the mistake made. In (34), *sorry* is repeated and collocates with *oh no*, indicating the speaker's emotional response to their error.

Sorry is also used to mark mitigation when it is used to tone down the face-threat that a speaker's utterance could make to the listener, as in (35) and (36).

(35) Mr. uh uh uhm Mr. <Sadius?> *Sorry* uhm this decision of yours uh has it got any links with the current role that you play for CHRAJ in it's public hearings (ICE-GH_S2B-009)
(36) Do everything yourself. And if you're not technical, *sorry*, you're going to have to be technical. (ICE-NIG_SkHo_04)

In (35), the speaker uses *sorry* to mitigate the face-threat contained in their utterance, which questions the decision made by Mr Sadius. In (36), the speaker uses *sorry* to reduce the effect of his comment on the listener, a comment the speaker perceives may be blunt and unappreciated by the listener. As in other cases, *sorry* is used to maintain rapport between the interlocutors by managing the illocutionary domain, where the speech acts of questioning and commenting may be face-threatening.

Sorry may also be used to signal an interruption when it is used to hijack an ongoing turn, as in (37) and (38):

(37) B: I would say then is
A: Mh
A: *Sorry* we have a meeting (ICE-UG_S1B-080)
(38) C: I know some <unclear>accept it some tribes also
B: Oh I see hmm okay
C: under the <> exactly
D: *sorry* ordinance I think the moslems also do this ordinance thing (ICE-GH_S1B-030)

In (37), speaker A, who has been trying to get speaker B's attention, interrupts the speaker's turn to indicate the need to cut short the ongoing conversation for a meeting. In (38), speaker D takes over the turn from speaker C to express their opinion on the ongoing talk. In signalling an interruption, *sorry* is used to manage the participation domain, and thus, maintain rapport between the interactants.

Fig. 5 shows the frequency of the functions of *sorry* across the three corpora.

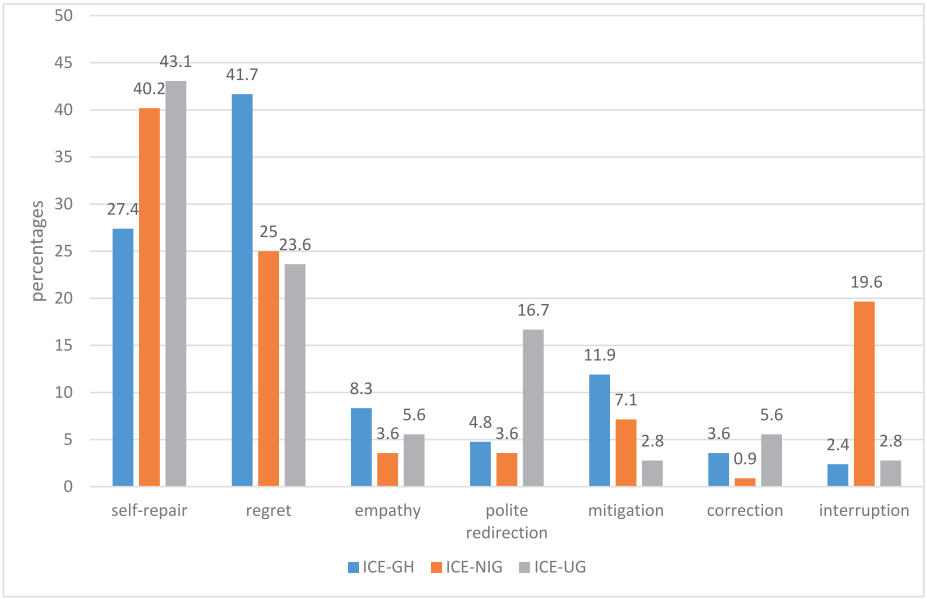


Fig. 5. Functions of *sorry* in ICE-GH (N = 84), ICE-NIG (N = 112) and ICE-UG (N = 72).

Fig. 5 indicates that there is the frequent use of *sorry* to express regret in GhE followed by self-repair and mitigation. For NigE, there is the frequent use of *sorry* to mark self-repair, followed by regret and interruption, while for UgE, *sorry* is largely used to indicate self-repair and followed by regret and polite redirection. *Sorry* is also used to signal empathy and correction at varying degrees across the three varieties.

4.4. *Register variation in the use of* sorry *as a DPF in the three varieties*

The frequency of *sorry* across different text types was also explored. Fig. 6 shows text type variation in the use of *sorry* as a DPF in the three ICE corpora. The raw count is presented in Appendix 1.

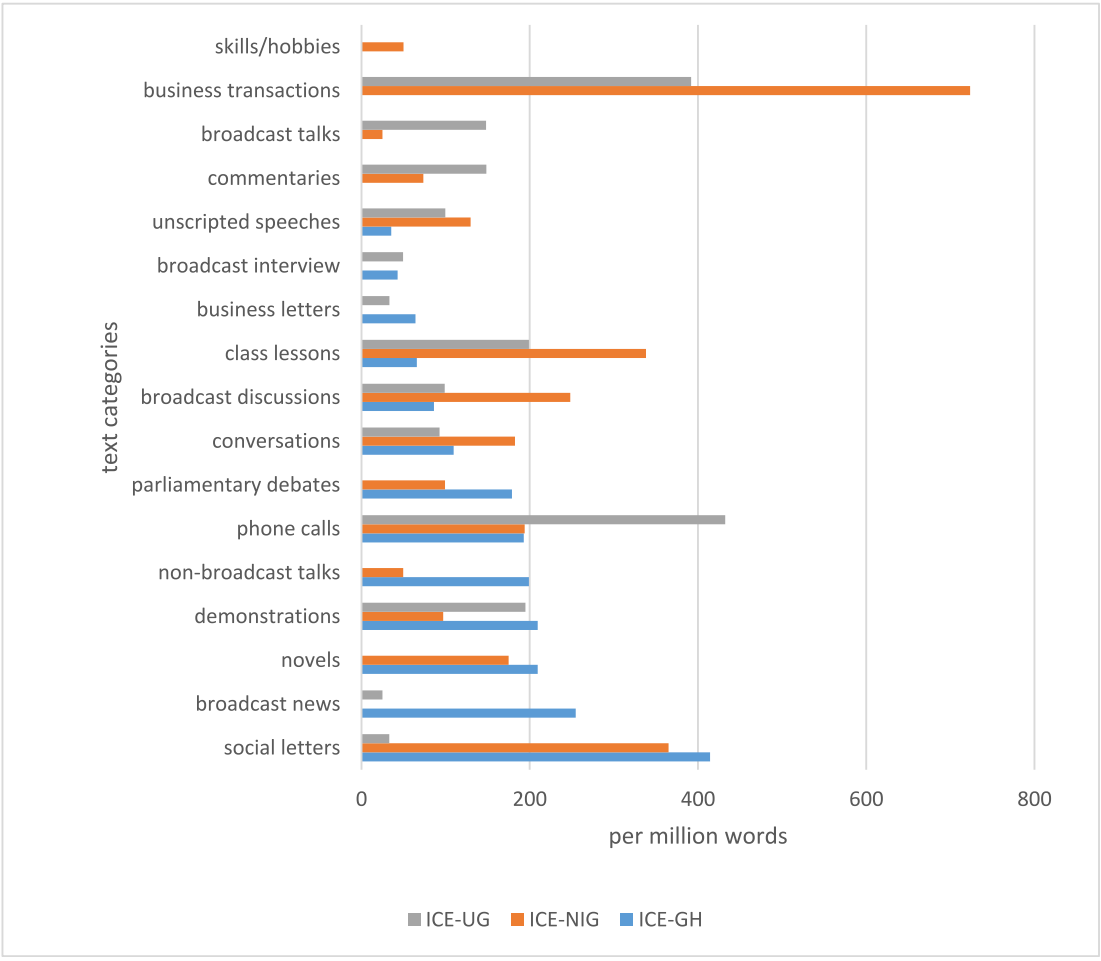


Fig. 6. Register variation in the use of *sorry* across the three ICE corpora.

Fig. 6 shows similarities and differences in the use of *sorry* across different text types in the three corpora. *Sorry* as a DPF occurs most frequently in ICE-GH social letters, followed by broadcast news, novels and demonstrations; it occurs most often in ICE-NIG business transactions, classroom lessons and social letters. In ICE-UG, *sorry* occurs most often in phone calls, business transactions and classroom lessons. Thus, there seems to be some preference for *sorry* as a DPF in social letters, which falls under informal writings, and business transactions and classroom lessons, which fall under public dialogues. In ICE-GH social letters, *sorry* is mainly used (84.6 % of the cases of *sorry* in social letters) to indicate regret for past actions, as in (39).

(39) *I am sorry* I did not ask your state of health (ICE-GH_W1B-001)

In (39), the writer uses the uncontracted clausal form of *sorry* to indicate regret for not calling the addressee, which could hamper smooth relations between the interactants.

In ICE-GH broadcast news, *sorry* is largely used to mitigate potential face-threatening behaviour (63.6 %), as in (40).

(40) and *sorry* apologies to the sensibilities of uh those of our listeners our listeners who who are really keen on hearing the story (ICE-GH_S2B-009)

In (40), the speaker uses *sorry* to mitigate the potential effect a story (about court cases related to the actions of some soldiers) could have on the listeners.

In NigE business transactions, *sorry* is mainly used to mark interruption (40 %), regret (20 %) and self-repair (20 %), as in (41), (42) and (43), respectively.

(41) Speaker 1: thank you very much
Speaker 1: page two
Speaker 5: erm *sorry* Mister president erm on page one too
(ICE-NIG_btr_003)

(42) Speaker 1: they recommended and I give them names let ANON
Speaker 1: drinks for him quickly
Speaker 1: *sorry* so
Speaker 1: please erm government house just sent for some information
(ICE-NIG_btr_010)

(43) Speaker 1: the com- the erm academia *sorry* the Nigerian Academy of ANON
(ICE-NIG_btr_007)

In (41), *sorry* may have been used to mark an interruption of the President's talk since *sorry* has the potential of minimising the threat to the sociality rights of the President to maintain the flow of talk, especially when the interruption takes the talk to a previously concluded matter, i.e. going back to page 1 when page 2 was the focus. In (42), the speaker apologises or signals their regret for talking to someone else while still speaking with the wider audience, while in (43), the speaker utilises *sorry* to mark self-repair when they mention *academia* instead of the *Nigerian Academy*. The dialogic and transactional nature of business transactions induces these functions of *sorry* in the text type.

Almost half of the cases in ICE-UG phone calls are used to signal regret (44.4 %), as in (44), while the remaining half are used to perform other functions in the text type.

(44) you know it is cold here so uh I delayed somewhere <w> I'm </w> sorry (ICE-UG_SIA-92)

ICE phone calls are informal non-face-to-face interactions that provide contexts in which interpersonal relations need to be well managed. This may indicate why *sorry* is typically used in marking regret in order to maintain rapport, as in (44), where the speaker apologises for their lateness in meeting the addressee.

Fig. 6 also shows that *sorry* does not occur in certain text types in the three corpora: commentaries, broadcast talks, business transactions and skills/hobbies in ICE-GH; broadcast news, business letters and broadcast interviews in ICE-NIG; and novels, non-broadcast talks, parliamentary debates and skills/hobbies in ICE-UG. What is also clear is that *sorry* as a DPF is not prevalent in many written text types across the three varieties, including popular writings, administrative writings, editorials and reportage. Overall, while there is no significant difference between GhE and NigE, there are significant differences across classroom lessons (LL = 7.49; Sig = 0.006) and unscripted speeches (LL = 6.05; Sig = 0.013) in the use of *sorry* between both varieties. Likewise, there are significant differences in the use of *sorry* across some ICE-GH and ICE-UG text types: social letters (LL = 12.48; Sig = 0.0004), broadcast news (LL = 9.98; Sig = 0.002) as well as unscripted speeches (LL = 3.9; Sig = 0.05), even though overall, there is no significant difference between the two varieties in the use of *sorry*. Moreover, there are significant differences in the use of *sorry* across different text types in ICE-NIG and ICE-UG: social letters (LL = 9.77; Sig = 0.002), conversations (LL = 5.24; Sig = 0.022) and broadcast talks (LL = 3.95; Sig = 0.047), besides the overall significant difference in the use of *sorry* between the two varieties.

5. Discussion

This article aimed at examining the use of *sorry* as a DPF in three African varieties of English: GhE, NigE and UgE, in terms of its frequencies, forms, positioning, collocational patterns, pragmatic functions and occurrence with different clause types and in different text types. While there is an overall significant difference in the frequency of *sorry* as a DPF between UgE and NigE, there is no significant difference in the frequency of *sorry* as a DPF between GhE and NigE and between GhE and UgE. The similarities between GhE and NigE may be attributed to shared linguistic and cultural behaviour as well as geographical proximity and shared socio-historical development of the varieties in the two countries. Such similarities have been found for other pragmatic phenomena that encode cultural practices. Examples include the use of *o* as a pragmatic marker (Amuzu et al., 2018; Unuabonah and Oladipupo, 2018) as well as groups of stance markers (Gut and Unuabonah, 2019) in GhE and NigE. Furthermore, the similarity in the frequency of *sorry* as a DPF between GhE and UgE may also be attributed to shared linguistic and cultural behaviour, and possibly, the similarity in the nativisation stage in which both varieties are located. NigE, on the other hand, is already showing signs of endonormative stabilisation and this may account for its significant difference from UgE. In particular, the higher frequency of *sorry* and other politeness markers such as *please* with their different pragmatic functions which reflect local practices in NigE, compared with GhE and UgE (Unuabonah et al., under review), confirms that NigE is showing signs of entering endonormative stabilisation and is ahead of the other two varieties along the continuum in Schneider's Dynamic Model. Notwithstanding the differences in the frequency of *sorry* as a DPF in NigE and UgE, all three varieties share some linguistic and cultural behaviour, which have also been found in other

pragmatic features such as patterns of greetings and address terms in the three varieties (Adegbija, 1989; Anderson, 2009; Meierkord and Isingoma, 2021). Some of these features also occur in other African varieties of English such as Cameroon English (Anchimbe, 2011).

With regard to the forms, there is preference for the use of the DPF *sorry* as a single word form in the three varieties, which is shared with other varieties such as BrE, Indian English and Sri Lankan English (Aijmer, 1996; Degenhardt and Bernaisch, 2022). This is to be expected since all the varieties belong to the same language. Notwithstanding, there are degrees of variation across the three varieties in relation to the forms. The single word form is more frequent than the clausal form in NigE and UgE than in GhE, while the opposite is the case with the clausal form. Generally, clausal *sorry* (*I'm*/*I am sorry*) appears more formal and polite than the single word form, and is tied to the use of *sorry* for marking regret, a function that is favoured in GhE. In addition, it is easier to use the single lexical form, *sorry*, for self-repair, which is most frequent in NigE and UgE. It does appear then that the function of *sorry* may influence the linguistic form of *sorry*.

With regard to clause types associated with *sorry* in the three varieties, the declarative clause is the preferred clause type, which might be as a result of explaining the reason for expressing regret or other actions which warrant the use of *sorry* (see also Aijmer, 1996). In addition, the frequent use of elliptical clauses in UgE may be linked to the corrective and self-repair functions of *sorry*, which are prominent in UgE. Regarding the positioning of *sorry* in the three varieties, the preference for the clause-initial position may reflect the characteristic nature of most DPFs, which tend to occupy the clause-initial slot in an utterance (Aijmer, 1996). Moreover, as a politeness marker, *sorry* will tend to appear first in an utterance before the reason for saying it is presented to the hearer (Aijmer, 1996). In addition, the preference for the clause-initial position is partly tied to its function of indicating self-repair, particularly in NigE and UgE. For example, 40 % (18 out of 45 instances) of cases in NigE and 51.6 % (16 out of 31 instances) of cases in UgE in which *sorry* is used to signal self-repair occur in the clause-initial position. The relative higher frequency of *sorry* that is unattached to a clause ([semi-]free) in UgE may be tied to the use of *sorry* for polite redirection, which is a fairly prominent function of *sorry* in UgE. For example, out of 16 cases of unattached *sorry*, 10 are used for polite redirection. On the other hand, unattached ([semi-]free) *sorry* is associated with expressing regret in GhE, which is prominent in GhE. The implication is that the occurrence of *sorry* with different clause types and the positioning of *sorry* in a clause are determined by the different functions of *sorry*.

In terms of the collocational patterns of *sorry* with other DPFs, there are some differences: *sorry* co-occurs more often with intensifiers in GhE and NigE than in UgE. This variation may be due to L1 influence, as there are limited numbers of intensifiers in indigenous Ugandan languages such as Luganda, which has a strong influence on UgE (Lwanga-Lumu, 2005). Instead, in UgE, *sorry* co-occurs mostly with interjections that have cognitive functions: realisation (e.g. *oh*) and mental planning (e.g. *uh*), which are relevant for self-repair and polite redirection, functions that *sorry* largely performs in UgE. Another interesting feature is the collocation of *sorry* as a DPF with the politeness marker *please* and the honorific address terms *sir* and *madam* in NigE, which does not occur in GhE and UgE. This might mean that NigE users are more explicit in marking politeness and deference than GhE and UgE users. Preliminary studies show that politeness markers such as *please* are far more frequent in NigE than GhE and UgE (Unuabonah et al., under review).

In relation to function, *sorry* is often used to signal self-repair in NigE and UgE while there is preference for the use of *sorry* to signal regret in GhE. Furthermore, the use of *sorry* to mark mitigation is higher in GhE than in NigE and UgE while the use of *sorry* to mark polite redirection is higher in UgE than in GhE and NigE. Thus, it appears that GhE speakers tend to be more explicit in mitigating face-threat with *sorry* and seem to be more careful in saving the face of the hearer by largely avoiding polite redirection. This may point to some cultural differences between GhE users and users of other varieties. NigE users are also prone to interrupting their interlocutors but are also quick in mitigating the face-threat by using *sorry* as a DPF. Generally, while the preference for the use of *sorry* to signal regret in GhE is similar to findings for BrE, the preference for the use of *sorry* to mark self-repair in NigE and UgE differs markedly from BrE (Islentyeva et al., 2023). While the similarity between GhE and BrE in respect of expressing regret might be mere coincidence, the differences between NigE and GhE on the one hand, and BrE on the other hand, may be linked to nativisation. In all, *sorry* is used in managing rapport by appealing to face sensitivities in managing illocutionary and participation domains, and is equally useful in maintaining and enhancing rapport among interlocutors.

Regarding register variation, there are no significant differences in the use of *sorry* across several text types in the three categories, which may be related to shared linguistic and cultural behaviour among users of these three AfE varieties, as noted earlier. Notwithstanding, there are noticeable differences across some text categories in the three varieties. As seen in the results, *sorry* occurs most frequently in ICE-GH and ICE-NIG social letters, where it is largely used to signal regret. In particular, marking regret is the most frequent function of *sorry* as a DPF in GhE. In addition, *sorry* is also most frequent in GhE broadcast news, where it is mainly used to signal mitigation, which is another function that is also favoured in ICE-GH. In addition, *sorry* as a DPF occurs more frequently in NigE business transactions and classroom lessons than in the GhE and UgE counterparts. In business transactions, it is largely used to indicate regret and signal interruption, which are the major functions of *sorry* in NigE. In classroom lessons, *sorry* is mainly used to mark self-repair, which is the most frequent function of *sorry* as a DPF in NigE. Conversely, *sorry* occurs mostly in ICE-UG dialogues: phone calls, classroom lessons and business transactions. In phone calls, it is mainly used to mark regret in UgE. All these indicate that there is a connection between function and text type in the use of *sorry* as a DPF in the three varieties (see also Aijmer, 2013 for other pragmatic items).

6. Conclusion

This article has examined the use of *sorry* as a DPF in GhE, NigE and UgE, in terms of its frequencies, forms, positioning, occurrence with different clause types, collocational patterns, pragmatic functions and use in different text types. The study has shown that similarities between the three varieties are based on shared cultural behaviour while differences may be based on possible L1 differences as well as the developmental stages in which the three varieties are found. The study, therefore, confirms the influence of indigenous languages and cultures on the use of *sorry* in the three varieties and contributes to the research on the pragmatics of *sorry* as well as pragmatic variation among AfE varieties. The influence of indigenous languages and cultures on the use of *sorry* in these three AfE varieties contributes to the nativisation of these varieties; the increased use of *sorry* in NigE also contributes to the suggestion that NigE is on its way into the endonormative stabilisation stage of Schneider's Dynamic Model. In addition, the study contributes to variational pragmatics as it extends research within this approach to the use of *sorry* in the three AfE varieties, focusing on the frequency, forms and functions of *sorry* in different text types, and accounting for the various results found in the study. It also adds to the theory of rapport management as it shows how *sorry* is used to manage face sensitivities, especially within the illocutionary and participation domains, and to maintain and enhance rapport among interlocutors.

Notwithstanding, the study is limited to the use of *sorry* as a DPF in the three AfE varieties, without addressing the influence of other sociolinguistic factors, such as age, gender and ethnicity on the use of *sorry* in these varieties. Further studies are thus required to explore the influence of these sociolinguistic factors on the use of *sorry* in these three AfE varieties. In addition, this study utilises data from ICE corpora which involve "standard" or acrolectal forms in L2 varieties of English, which may be limiting as other sub-varieties may capture specific functions of *sorry* not revealed in this study. Moreover, ICE corpora do not contain web registers, which are increasingly used as communicative contexts by speakers; thus, this study can be extended to include other corpora that capture different sub-varieties and involve online interactions. In addition, more insights into cultural practices in the use of *sorry* may be obtained through other methods of data collection such as elicitation and discourse completion tasks. Further studies may also investigate the use of *sorry* in other New Englishes as well as other kinds of DPFs across different New Englishes.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Foluke Olayinka Unuabonah: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Resources, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Florence Oluwaseyi Daniel:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation. **Deborah Abiola Fifelola:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Investigation, Formal analysis.

Declaration of competing interest

This paper is a contribution to the VSI: New Englishes. The corresponding author for this paper is also the Executive Guest Editor for the Special Issue. There are no other conflicts of interest.

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Appendix

Table A2
Frequencies of *sorry* in the individual text types across the three AfE corpora.

	ICE-GH Raw count	ICE-GH (pmw)	ICE-NIG Raw count	ICE-NIG (pmw)	ICE-UG Raw count	ICE-UG (pmw)
social letters	13	414.4	11	365	1	33
broadcast news	11	254.7	0	0	1	25
novels	9	209.5	7	174.9	0	0
demonstrations	2	209.4	2	97.1	4	194.9
non-broadcast talks	4	199	1	49.6	0	0
phone calls	10	192.8	4	193.9	9	432.4
parliamentary debates	2	178.8	2	99.2	0	0
conversations	22	109.5	33	182.5	17	92.8
broadcast discussions	4	86.1	10	248.2	4	98.9
class lessons	3	65.8	14	338.2	8	199.1
business letters	2	64.2	0	0	1	33.1
broadcast interview	1	42.9	0	0	1	49.4
unscripted speeches	1	35.3	8	129.7	6	99.6
commentaries	0	0	3	73.6	6	148.3
broadcast talks	0	0	1	24.9	6	148
business transactions	0	0	15	723.5	8	391.9
skills/hobbies	0	0	1	50	0	0
Total	**84**		**112**		**72**	

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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