Sorry, I apologize!
The difference between men’s and women’s usage of apologies in emails

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Abstract

This essay aims to discover differences and similarities in the linguistic behavior of politeness in apologetic expressions between men and women in emails. Material was taken from the Enron Corpus. This Corpus includes information about the senders and recipients of the chosen email, the context, and an email thread. We searched for two different apologetic expressions, "sorry" and "I apologize", and chose 25 of each expression to analyze superficially. We also compared them to each other and by the gender of the user. Out of those 25, we chose ten to analyze more in-depth, five of which used "sorry" and the other five used "I apologize" as apologetic expression. We analyzed the emails through the lens of politeness theory, which apologetic expression was used, if humour occurred, and to what email genre it belonged. Our results based on this study showed that women used the apologetic expression "I apologize" more than men, and that men used "sorry" more frequently than women. One possible conclusion of this is that women appeared to be more formal in their emails. They also indicated tendencies to be nurturing, cohesive, and cooperative in their language. On the other hand, men showed less tendencies of formal behavior and more informal language.

Keywords: email, Enron Corpus, apologetic expressions, politeness, gender.
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**Introduction**

For a long time, there have been societal discussions about men and women functioning in different ways on many levels, where *politeness* in the form of apologies is an aspect that is considered a difference between the two *genders*. Some research has been done on *apologetic expressions*, for example, Deutschmann (2003) and Jacobsson (2004). Previous research in the field of *politeness* between men and women has been conducted in many different studies, such as Holmes (1995) and Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003), where research has been done on how men and women differ in the use of *politeness* in language. What has not been researched as much is *politeness* in emails. Research on politeness in email is scanty, however Diesner and Carley (2005) looked at gender differences in how men and women interact within email. It has been shown from some scholars, such as Hobbs (2003), that women can appear to be more polite than men. We therefore chose to focus on *gender* in this study to see if this statement occurred in email communication as well in contexts where *apologetic expressions* were made.

In the analysis section of this essay, we will investigate how men and women navigate *politeness* in different ways in writing within email in the context of apologies where "sorry" and "I apologize" are the keywords.

This study is both qualitative and quantitative. To be more specific, the usage of the *Enron Corpus* has given us quantitative means to investigate 50 examples where *apologetic expressions* are found. The qualitative studies will come later in the essay, where we will analyze the context in ten of the email examples more carefully. We are partly going to analyze how *humour* is expressed in the emails since *humour* is considered integral in some interpretations of *politeness theory* (Holmes, 2000). In addition, *boosters* such as "terribly", "so" and "very", will be investigated in our findings and analysis. Beyond all of the above, we will analyze the genres *noticeboard*, *postman* and *dialogue* (Kankaanranta, 2006) and identify these in the emails that we analyze in our qualitative part of the study.

The purpose of this essay is thus to discover differences and similarities in the linguistic behavior of *politeness* in *apologetic expressions* between men and women in emails. We will not present any hypothesis nor any preconceptions in this study. The reason for this is that the amount of data that we collected does not meet the requirements for having a reasonable hypothesis to bring forth. We will therefore let the
results speak for themselves and identify differences and similarities regarding the use of apologetic expressions in emails between men and women, and make assumptions regarding the outcome. The research questions for this work are thus; How do men and women express apologetic expressions through the phrases "sorry" and "I apologize" within email, and do they boost their apologies in any way?
2. Background

In this section our chosen keywords will be presented in more depth in the following section. Concepts that have great impact on the study, such as gender, politeness, humour, and apologetic expressions will be introduced and explained.

2.1 Email

Email is one of the many mediums for expressing a message. There are three different types of emails in multinational organizations; noticeboard, postman, and dialogue (Darics & Koller, 2018, p. 290). Noticeboard is used to inform the receiver about corporate issues. The postman is about forwarding documents and expecting an email in response. The traditional dialogue is an email conversation where information about corporate issues is exchanged (Kankaanranta, 2006, p. 218). The use of email has developed drastically over the past five years, Campaign Monitor (2019) claims. According to Statista, there has been a percentage increase in email users, of 2-3%, since 2018. This trend is expected to continue until 2023. In the middle of this period, in 2020, approximately 306 billion emails were sent and received. This figure may have been increased thanks to the covid pandemic that swept the world around that same year, 2020. These numbers can display how convenient email is as a communication form.

2.2 Gender & language differences

There has been previous research that presents the relationship between language and gender such as Yule (2006). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) examined whether there is a distinct difference in the language used between the two sexes and why this potential difference arose. First and foremost, gender must be defined and distinguished from sex, based on how we use the term in this work. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) explain that gender is not something we are born with or something we have, but something we do. A boy can be influenced by a male role model and try to emulate that person's gender stereotypical traits, such as a girl being able to emulate a female role model and act more from her way of being. Of course, it can be the other way around, but it might not be considered appropriate. Thus, gendered performances are accessible
to all, but there may be societal barriers to who may perform which personae with impunity.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) believe that this is where *gender* and sex come together, as society tries to match up ways of behaving with biological sex assignments. One could say that sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive material. In comparison, *gender* is the social elaboration of biological sex. It can also be described that the difference in the language used between the two *genders* is that women and men possess different conversational styles named "rapport-talk" and "report-talk". Women often use language for intimacy and cohesion in conversations. This is something they learn to do early in life. On the contrary, men see conversations as competitive where the objective is to gain self-esteem at the expense of others (Tannen, 1991, p. 111).

### 2.3 Gender & Email-usage

Gefen and Straub (1997) have relevant views regarding the differences between men's and women's use of emails. They suggest that women tend to use email for more interactive and context-building exchanges than men because of feminine discourse tendencies to use communication for rapport and cooperative behavior, and men's tendencies to focus on content. The suggestion is that women, compared to men, see email as relatively higher in social presence and information richness (Gefen & Straub, 1997, p. 394).

Gefen and Straub (1997) also go into masculinity, abbreviated (MAS), and how this could be linked to email usage. They say that The MAS dimension affects whether the organization will be people-oriented, emphasizing the quality of life and the environment (low MAS) or task-oriented (high MAS). Low MAS is related to sympathy for the weak and social leveling. *Gender* roles, as reflected in MAS, are transferred through socialization. Men are taught to be assertive and women to be nurturing (Gefen & Straub, 1997, p. 391)

### 2.4 Politeness

Many studies have been conducted in the area of *politeness*, not least with the work of Brown and Levinson (1987). They indicate that *politeness* can be divided into two
certain constructs: positive politeness and negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Positive politeness is approach-based. It displays benevolence to the face of the addressee by illustrating that, in some ways, person A has an interest in person B's wants by treating them as a component of a group, a mate, or as a person whose wants and character attributes are recognized and treasured.

On the other hand, negative politeness is avoidance-based. Realizations of negative politeness strategies consist of assurances that the speaker identifies the addressee's negative-face wants and will seldom meddle with the addressee's freedom action. Therefore negative politeness is portrayed by self-effacement, courtesy, and restraint (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 317). A concept closely connected to politeness theory is the concept of "face" taken from Goffman (1967) and from the English folk term, which ties face up with notions of being embarrassed or humiliated or "losing face". This face is emotionally invested, and that can evolve to becoming lost, maintained, or improved, and must at all times be managed in interactions (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 311).

2.5 Apologetic expressions

To undertake this study, an understanding of the very act of an apologetic expression must be explained. According to Jacobsson (2004, p. 188), apologies are sets of relatively fixed expressions consisting of verbs (e.g., apologize, excuse, pardon), adjectives (e.g., sorry, afraid), and nouns (e.g., pardon). Along with these apologetic expressions, there are ways to enhance and emphasize one's forgiveness by using boosters before the apologetic expression itself with words such as "terribly", "so", and "very".

Deutschmann (2003) further explains the view of apologetic expressions associated with politeness. He states that:

"the process of apologizing is not a matter of mere routine, however. It involves many of the complex social and psychological issues which are at the heart of politeness research. A prototypical apology involves redressive action that 'gives face' to the addressee. At the same time apologizing may well result in the apologizer losing face. Deciding whether to apologize or not is thus likely to be affected by such factors as power relationships and social distance" (Deutschmann, 2003, p. 36)
2.6 Humour - A effective politeness strategy

Holmes (2000, p. 167) suggests that humour can function both as a positive politeness strategy expressing solidarity or as a hedging strategy, modifying illocutionary force, expressing negative politeness. All things considered, what is humour, and how can it be defined? Some theorists distinguish between humour and wit. Some categorize jokes as instances of humour, while others treat jokes as a distinct category different from humour. Several analysts identify that humour must always involve some cognitive dissonance, such as establishing an incongruent relationship or meaning (Holmes, 2000, p. 162-163).

Humour can be used effectively in many different contextual situations. It can, for instance, help maintain solidarity and a sense of belonging to a group. It can also serve as a management strategy to attenuate or reinforce power relationships. Humour can also reduce inequalities between those of different professional statuses. Alternatively, it can emphasize power imbalances (Holmes, 2000, p. 159-160).

Humour is always intended to be amusing, but it may also serve a range of more complex functions in the workplace. Humour generally creates and maintains solidarity or collegiality, and it may hedge or attenuate face-threatening acts such as directives and negatively affective speech acts such as criticisms and insults. In all these functions humour contributes to social cohesion. Humour is sensitively oriented to participants' face needs. It is a dynamic means of expressing and constructing solidarity and an effective strategy for reducing potential offense (Holmes, 2000, p. 179).
3. Method & Material

The methodology that has formed the basis for the work has been a corpus-based approach. What we used in this study is called Enron, which is a corpus that consists of emails from the Enron company, sent in the year 2004. Inside the Enron Corpus, senders and recipients with names are displayed. It is also dated from what day and time the email was sent. The emails excluded attachments, but made them visible. Enron includes various data and statistics on communication, knowledge, and relationships. The information that Enron distributes leads to a deeper understanding of communicative relationships in social contexts such as email (Diesner & Carley, 2005, p. 202).

As early as 2015, Enron was filled with over half a million messages. These have been compiled by the CALO project (A Cognitive Assistant that Learns and Organizes). The Enron Corpus contains numerous raw data on relationships, communication, resources, and different events/happenings in a company in crisis. With the help of corpus analysis, one can obtain information and data on how communication works within a selected company (Diesner & Carley, 2005, p. 202). One can make further analyses depending on what one is looking for in the email. It is worth pointing out that this particular corpus contains certain private conversations between persons not involved in legal investigations. Some emails were uploaded but then needed to be deleted for legal reasons (Diesner & Carley, 2005, p. 202). Unfortunately, we might have become victims of this. During our writing process, we noticed that six separate emails had been removed from the Enron Corpus since we began this study. However, the statistics on these emails were written down in tables 1 and 2 before they were removed. We have not been able to analyze these more carefully, given that they are no longer available to the public. Therefore, we have chosen other emails to take a closer look at analytically.

Below is an example of how an email can be displayed on Enron's website.
The expressions "sorry" and "I apologize" have been keywords in our search field in this study. First of all, we used the latest version of Enron, i.e., which was launched and updated on May 7, 2015. We did not use any other tools to help us in our research.

When we started to acquaint ourselves with Enron, we noticed that there were a lot of subheadings that we were able to choose from. We carefully chose and tried different variants to see if the end result would turn out to be the same which it did. Therefore, it was not deemed significant how the navigation of the corpus was carried out as it indicated the same result either way. In the actual search bar at the top of the page of Enron, we typed the phrases "I apologize" and "sorry" to then get search results in various email conversations. As a quantitative study, we decided to use 25 examples of the phrases "sorry" and "I apologize" each. Although we recognize that 50 examples is a relatively small amount of data for a quantitative study, we believe this will provide further clarity in the project. The emails were randomly chosen since we simply took the 25 first examples that were found. We chose this because our search results of "I apologize" were relatively few due to contextual circumstances such as why the apology

Figure 1. A sample within the corpus of Enron
was written in the email and how it was written. However, the sequences of "sorry" were significantly more in number. After randomly choosing emails within one of the two _apologetic expressions_, we later looked for _boosters_ that perhaps could emphasize the apology. We looked for words such as "terribly", "so", and "very" in the 25 emails and did this to both of the apologetic expressions.

As previously mentioned, we can no longer find six of our chosen emails at the _Enron Corpus_. Out of these 50 emails, we handpicked ten of them to analyze more in-depth more qualitatively, half of these were written by men and the other half by women. Five of these belonged to the phrase "sorry", while the other five consisted of the _apologetic expression_ "I apologize". We did this to provide a deeper understanding and analysis of the contextual situation.

We based the choice of the emails on how the _apologetic expression_ was expressed in the email. In some instances, we found that the person that sent the email with the apology was not apologizing. However, it could instead be that the person mentioned another person that was making an _apologetic expression_ and these examples were deemed irrelevant. The email was further read through and analyzed. Then we found out if the sender was a man or a woman. We did this by looking at "from" in the selected email. If the username of the email address was not clear enough, we looked for designations in the written email. Such as first names, Mr. and Mrs.

In the survey conducted in _Enron_, we used a spreadsheet to number the different sequences. We identified the _gender_ of the person who uttered the specified phrase and which headline the email had on _Enron_ in order to be able to coordinate and identify the results more quickly. Table 1 shows how we proceeded with the examples containing the _apologetic expressions_ "sorry" and "I apologize".

The three email genres from Darics and Koller (2018), _noticeboard, postman_, and _dialogue_, will be considered in our qualitative section. While in the qualitative section, we will identify which of these genres categorize themselves in our ten handpicked emails and explain why they fit the given genre. There was no correlation in the choice of email to our qualitative part in the context of which genre belongs to which email. How we identified the right genre for the right email was to investigate whether there were clear issues (_noticeboard_) that arose in the email, a conversation (_dialogue_) where a conversation chain was created between the people who wrote the email. Finally, we investigated why the email was written. For example where one
sends a message with documents/information (*postman*) to several people and expect a certain response (Kankaanranta, 2006).

The concept of *humour* is used in our analysis to identify whether the person who apologized used this tool to implement *positive politeness* or increase collegiality as well as equalize positions of power (Holmes, 2000). We identified *humour* by examining the context of the email. In some cases, it could be clear that the people in question knew each other on a friendly level. In these cases, it turned out that jokes were a common phenomenon.

We have given aliases to all senders, recipients, and others involved in the ten selected emails. We have also changed names and surnames that are now marked with an asterisk to protect their privacy. We also chose to mark the few mentioned company names with stars. We even removed all of the namnes in figure 1 to protect their integrity.
4. Findings & analysis

We have compiled our survey and created an overview of the research that contained 50 different examples where the apologetic expressions "sorry" and "I apologize" were used in emails by both men and women. This is compiled in Figure 2 with additional figures. This helps to give a clear overview of how the quantitative part can be summarized. We will further analyze the chosen ten emails. We will discuss gender-stereotypical differences that may have been decisive in the email and how the two different genders express their apologetic expressions linguistically with or without any relevant boosters, and how this affects its recipient. We will also touch on the concept of humour, we will see if this has been used in some of the examples. Finally, we will divide these ten emails into three categories/genres, dialogue, postman, or noticeboard, to see the reason behind sending the email.

4.1 Quantitative

According to our quantitative study, containing rather insufficient data, women apologized through the phrase "I apologize" more often than men, while men apologized through the phrase "sorry" more extensively. To sum up the specific tables in the research, the 25 people who stated the apologetic expression "I apologize" in their email, consisted of 14 women and eleven men, giving a majority of 56% of women. The other phrase, "sorry", was not as close in percentage as the outcome of "I apologize". Out of the 25 people who stated the apologetic expression "sorry" in their email, 19 were male. Only six were women, leading to 76% of men stating the apologetic expression "sorry". An overview can be found in Figure 1 below in more detail.
This result could be the case because women use writing in email to create more interactive exchanges and more context-building exchanges than men. Having that in mind, the reason could lie in the feminine discourse of using communication to collaborate and ally with its recipient (Gefen & Straub, 1997, p. 394).

If we move on to the various *boosters* used among the 50 examples, it can be concluded that it has not been used extensively. Out of the 50 surveyees, only two people have used a *booster* to accentuate their *apologetic expression*. We were not prepared for this during the research, as we thought we would see a greater use of this linguistic aid to enhance one's *apologetic expression*. Out of all the 50 different emails we have in our study, the *boosted apologetic expressions* make up only 4%. These 4% sum up to only two *boosters* being found. Out of these two emails where *boosters* occurred, we reckoned one woman and one man using it. This thus leads to a 50% usage of *boosters* between men and women. Out of the two results we got from used *boosters*, they used the word "so" in front of the phrase "sorry" to highlight their *apologetic expression*. This percentage conclusion should not be considered too much since the number of people who used *boosters* was so low. To investigate this further and access a more precise outcome part of this would require a broader range of emails used in one's research to access more email examples where these *boosters* were used.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Booster</th>
<th>Headline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>RE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Re: CEO - congrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Houston Trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oops!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>RE: Steve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>RE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>BE CAREFUL IF AT WORK!! Guaranteed, the best email ever!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Good luck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>RE: Genesis Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>FW: creditex , LoanX, Enron Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:bpaddock@ghcf.org">bpaddock@ghcf.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:markskilling@hotmail.com">markskilling@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>RE: Accenture Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>RE: Last night!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>RE: New Law Firm : Fulkerson &amp; Wollam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>FW: ARE WE STILL ON FOR WEDNESDAY?????????????????????????????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>FW: My mother's service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>RE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Voice from the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kate Symes Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>URGENT REQUIRES IMMEDIATE ACTION : Welcome to UBS meeting tomorrow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Compilation of the 25 email examples of "sorry"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Booster</th>
<th>Headline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>FW: Hello and an Update</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Re: EBS EQUIPMENT BUILD WAREHOUSE LOCATION?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>ENA NNG Demarcs APE Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Answers to interrogatories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Re:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up re: e-rehab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Re: Enron/Ponderosa: Proposed Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emails/Transition relative to Cynthia Sandherr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fax Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Update on Contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>PT Kaltim Rima Coal v. AES Barbers Point/Third-party subpoena on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>FW: We have a leak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>FW: Marlys Palumbo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>RE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Re: Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>RE: Monthly Meeting / Coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>RE: Meredith (Fraker) Thompson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Re: Schmalbach-Lubeca missing invoices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>ASE on February 12-13, 2001 in Dallas, TX…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Re: RSVP for tomorrow morning's board meeting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>RE: ORGANIZER ERROR! PARTY IS DEFINITELY ON! Please disregard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Re: UK CEOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>RE: Mendocino</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 2: Compilation of the 25 email examples of "I apologize"
4.2 Qualitative

The qualitative methodology will be analyzed and discussed in this part of the findings and analysis. We have thus selected five emails from each phrase, "sorry" and "I apologize", which are ten emails together. Half of these emails were written by women and the other half by men. We chose to include the two emails, where we identified two boosters, in our qualitative analysis to be able to analyze them further.

See appendix 8.1.1: The context of the first email is a dialogue between two female friends. We have chosen to call them Nelly and Petra. In this case, Nelly sends the first email to discuss her partner, who we have given the alias, Simon. She chooses to tell Petra that their life situation at home does not look good and safe. Simon has threatened to take Nelly's life in front of their daughter and has been generally disrespectful. Nelly expresses her fear and explains the situation at home in more depth. Petra responds to the email only 30 minutes later and shows good understanding and sympathy by writing, "I'm so sorry to hear [...]". Here, a booster is used to emphasize and reinforce the apology for Nelly's situation. Petra does this because she expresses a "so" before the initial apology, creating a boosted apologetic expression. The feeling could have made this an act of pity from Petra's side. She becomes genuinely sad to hear what Nelly's situation with Simon looks like at home, and she wants to show this remorse by using this booster to enhance her apology. Petra reinforces this apology in the following sentence when she expresses compassion and writes that "I definitely know what that feels like".

According to Holmes (1995, p. 267), Petra displays positive politeness in this context. Positive politeness involves facilitating talk and generally making the person one is speaking to feel good. This type of politeness is also associated with high solidarity. It involves the speaker's desire that the hearer feels wanted, appreciated, and somehow part of the group (Deutschmann, 2003, p. 31), which is the case in this email. Nelly gets in touch with Petra and expresses fear and sadness, which Petra counteracts with positive politeness by expressing her boosted apology. Among other things, the email contains an invitation and expresses that the sender needs to talk to the receiver. The email in question could be considered possessing the noticeboard genre. Noticeboard informs the receiver about corporate issues (Kankaanranta, 2006, p. 218). In this context, no corporate issues are addressed because the email does not relate to
the workplace, but in the context of two friends having a *dialogue* that solely consists of the issues on Nelly's private life. This could, in this case, be seen as the *noticeboard* genre. If one would analyze the whole email conversation, not only this specific, one would probably categorize this by *dialogue*. The email can be considered a *dialogue* if information about corporate issues is exchanged (Kankaanranta, 2006, p. 218). No use of *humour* is permeated in the email conversation. This can be because *humour* is not available to display *positive politeness* in this particular context, which can be seen as a problematic situation for Nelly.

Another *apologetic expression* took place in this conversation chain. This time, Nelly apologized to Petra by writing, "Hey girl! Sorry i didn't get the chance […]". In this context, Nelly apologizes through the phrase "sorry". The same kind of *apologetic expression* that Petra gave to Nelly at the beginning of the email conversation. On the other hand, it can be considered that Nelly does not attach as much importance to this apology as Petra did in hers. This could be due to the fact that the circumstances are not as severe as they were when the first apology was expressed. In this context, Nelly apologizes for not having had the time to call her the day before. This feeling of a less serious apology could be referred to as the very greeting phrase that Nelly gives Petra at the beginning of the email. Nelly starts the email with "Hey girl" which could be considered a typical greeting phrase for friends among themselves which also can be linked to positive politeness as it signals an optimistic, friendly attitude (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Just then, the *apologetic expression* is expressed, which creates a dynamic between these two words that can give the feeling of frivolity. There is no weight in the apology, in other words. However, Nelly refers to why she could not call her and thus, in a way, explains the underlying information as to why the *apologetic expression* was necessary from the beginning. This can be connected to women's tendency to use email for more interactive and context-building purposes. This can lead to greater use of communication for rapport and cooperative behavior towards one's recipient. One could imagine this gives women a higher social presence and information richness within email communications (Gefen & Straub, 1997, p. 394).
See appendix 8.1.2: The context of this email is pretty straightforward. Only one email was sent by a man that we have decided to be called Jonas. He writes to another man by the alias Adam who has not responded. Jonas writes a long email where he explains and gives tips on how this Adam should navigate around Paris. Jonas gives the apology in the first sentence of the email; "So sorry this took me so long […]". One could assume that Jonas is apologizing to Adam because of a delayed answer to him. Adam seems to be on the brink of leaving the country for a trip to Paris, and Jonas seems to take the departure into significant consideration in the email. The relationship between Jonas and Adam is unknown. Jonas uses a booster by using "so" before his apologetic expression "sorry". The use of the booster could be seen as a helpful aid to increase one's apologetic expression considerably.

On the contrary, one could see this as negative politeness. The consequence of Jonas taking his time and thus delaying his answer can be seen as an FTA (face-threatening act) towards Adam. By apologizing for doing an FTA, the speaker (Jonas) can indicate his reluctance to impinge on the recipient's negative face (Adam), leading to the aftermath of partially redressing that impingement (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 187). This can be why Jonas boosted his apologetic expression from the beginning, simply by communicating regret with an apologetic expression "so sorry". Despite the use of negative politeness for apologetic expression, Jonas nevertheless shows some signs of the use of positive politeness in the email. He shows an interest in Adam's needs, which in this context seems to be a description of how to navigate in Paris and can be seen as a positive politeness act by Jonas (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 101). This email has a hard time finding relevance within the three genres. It is not in the noticeboard category as no issues appears in the email. It does not belong to the genre dialogue as there is no conversation chain between the recipient and the sender. It may appear like a stretch, but one could consider this closest to the postman genre, where one expects a response from one's recipient. In this case, it is Jonas who expects some kind of response back from his recipient Adam. However, at the time of writing, he has not received a response back.
See appendix 8.1.3: This email gives the impression of being between two very close friends and colleagues in the same industry, not the same company. The sender, whom we named Christian, has a strong tone in the first sentence but in a humorous way. He is blaming the recipient, whom we gave the alias Ben, for being the cause of the alleged crisis. Early in the email, in sentence two, Christian apologizes for the crisis at the company that Ben seems to be CEO of. Nicknames such as "Big Ben" are used which can be connected to positive politeness as it can lighten the mood between sender and recipient (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Hence the reason to believe that they are close friends. The sentence in which there was an apology was relatively short, and Christian did not use a booster. The apology is written as follows "Listen, sorry to hear about the problems at *****."

The whole email is permeated by humour. Thus, because of the friendly relationship between Christian and Ben, it can also be possible that Christian is using humour to involve a cognitive dissonance, for example, a non-consistent relationship between the two (Holmes, 2000, p. 162-163). Humour is an effective way to build relations with others and maintain solidarity and create the feeling of belonging in a group. In this case, it can be seen that Christian is using humour to either reduce the gaps in their professional hierarchy. Alternatively, he is using it to emphasize that he is higher in rank than Ben is and, indirectly, wants to diminish Ben (Holmes, 2000, p. 159-160). This all depends on their actual relationship and what intentions they have with one another. If we assume that Christian has got good intentions with Ben. It can be identified that distinct positive politeness is being used throughout the sent email. Thus, Christian clarifies that he cares for Ben and the company crisis. Otherwise, he would not have written that he was sorry about the situation. He also treats Ben like a friend rather than an outsider (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This can be shown by reading and analyzing the part where "Hey, maybe this will give you the chance to take a holiday in Ecuador (Christmas turkey at our house this year?)" is written. This email did not have a response registered at the corpus, but it can still fall under the genre dialogue. Thus the initial email contains questions that with high probability will be answered, because the context is information about the company crisis that might be exchanged (Kankaanranta, 2006, p. 218).
See appendix 8.1.4: This email contains a chain of conversations between a man we named Cal and a woman with the alias Kimmy. The context is that Cal invited Kimmy to a house party with him. Kimmy then kindly accepted the offer and asked if she had brought one plus one. An email written by Cal appears, in which he hopes he was not rude or obnoxious towards her. Kimmy responds with what can be read at 8.1.4.

Kimmy clearly shows her frustration over the situation that Cal's friend had gone crazy over the fact that there had been a flirtatious atmosphere between Kimmy and Cal and expressed an apologetic expression with the phrase "sorry" towards Cal. One might imagine that Kimmy has done an FTA against Cal's positive face through an intrusive behavior of flirtatious actions. Through this consciousness, one might assume that Kimmy has been using negative politeness in this context as she realizes her mistakes and indicates her reluctance to impinge on Cal's negative face and redresses the impingement (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 187). No humour could be identified because it might not be appropriate to use it in this case, even though they are friends and seem to have a good relationship. Humour is indeed sensitively oriented to the receiver's face. If used at the wrong time or in the wrong situation, it might lead to the recipient feeling offended (Holmes, 2000, p. 179). Humour may have been used before or after the original mail in this email thread. This is not relevant for the analysis of the apology. This chosen email belongs to the classic genre - dialogue. This is because emails are exchanged between Kimmy and Cal regarding a recent event that concerns the two (Kankaanranta, 2006, p. 218).
See appendix 8.1.5: This is an email between a man by the alias Jack and a woman by the alias Diane. These two people seem to be close colleagues as there is a lot of conversation about work-related topics about Diane's boss and various meetings. The atmosphere can be seen as very relaxed because she is expressing herself rather colloquially. Diane apologizes at the end of the email after a long paragraph where she complained about her duties, she writes: "Anyway, sorry about all the griping but I was on a roll!!". In this situation, Diane apologizes for all the "griping" that her email consists of by using the apologetic expression "sorry". What she did was thus relieve what weighed on her to Jack, which was indicated in the beginning of the email where Diane writes "Today. Definitely in the top 10 as far as crappy days go.". This excuse can be considered relatively frivolous on Diane's part. This is because shortly after the apology she writes that "I was on a roll!!". This can lower the meaning of the apology and instead be considered relatively transparent towards Jack. However, this does not have to be something that can be considered negative as Diane's and Jack's relationship seems to be on a friendly level where simple language is used everyday.

One can also note that the sequence where the apology is made can be seen as quite humorous for the reason of the exaggerated exclamation marks "I was on a roll!!" which can be related to a positive politeness strategy where exaggerated expressions and behaviours can generate positive politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This can be connected to Jack and Diane's relationship, that they both have a jargon that builds on cooperative style of humour, which is when people work together to produce a humorous sequence with each person contributing and building on that feeling (Holmes, 2006 p. 112). This is what Jack and Diane do in this email conversation as Diane tells Jack that her dad gave her a "book about prayers and money" and Jack answers in a humorous way that she will probably "find more happiness in the money". This all together builds on a collaborative style of humour that can help create and maintain solidarity and collegiality between Jack and Diane (Holmes, 2000). Thus, this could decrease the likeliness of Diane damaging Jack's positive face with an FTA.

Although Brown and Levinson (1987) considers that apologies are an act that is connected to negative politeness, one can consider this context to be opposite as Diane is showing indications of positive politeness as she attends to Jack's interests and needs. For example, she is asking him if his day has been good (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 103). Humour is not only good for gaining collegiality, it can also be considered a basic positive politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 124) which permeates in the
entire dialogue between Diane and Jack. Therefore, one can imagine that the *apologetic expression* is not to be taken with too much consideration as the context of the email is very casual. This email could be classified as a classic *noticeboard*, which is about communicating issues about corporate issues to one's recipient (Kankaanranta, 2006, p. 218). This can be identified in the email because Diane describes her boss' work behaviors from both the positive to the negative. She also describes an occasion during the working day that goes bad where Diane and her boss seem to have misunderstood each other, which led to irritation on Diane's part.
See appendix 8.2.1: The alias Amanda wrote an email and sent it to 34 recipients, including the first reader, whom we chose to call Thomas. These seem to be a mix of family and close friends. She apologizes for sending many emails using the phrase "I apologize for the […]". She updates the recipients about her current career situation and, in general, about moving and current housing. She also writes a lot about her alleged partner, who got the alias Sam, and their two dogs, Napoleon and Halle.

Amanda seems to know everyone well as she also talks about privacy on an in-depth level and about what both she and Sam does in their spare time. She expresses herself so that the recipients already know that she likes to exercise but also relax in her free time. At the end of the email, Amanda apologizes further by writing, "Again, I apologize for not contacting each of you […]". Since Amanda sends this to 34 recipients, she needs to adapt to different recipients. In this case, most of the recipients seem to be family and close friends of Amanda, so consideration for the recipients would probably not weigh as much as if it were in a work-related environment where more professionalism should be emphasized. However, Amanda must consider the situation as the recipient can interpret both the email and the sender negatively.

With this in mind, more time needs to be put into the actual formulation of writing an email so that it is perceived as a reasonable degree of directness and reflects well on the relationship between sender and receiver (Darics & Koller, 2018, p. 291). This may be associated with the recognition that women tend to use email for more interactive and context-building exchanges than men because of feminine discourse tendencies to use communication for rapport and cooperative behavior. This may suggest that women, compared to men, see email as relatively higher in social presence and information richness (Gefen & Straub, 1997, p. 394). Amanda apologizes twice in the email without any use of intensifiers or boosters for the apologetic expressions. Repeatedly apologizing may enhance the effect of her apologies, and one could imagine that many recipients accept the apology with greater allowance.

Asking for forgiveness twice instead of once can also be observed as a gender norm as women are more likely to apologize than men (Hobbs, 2003, p. 244). This email could be considered to have its place in the noticeboard genre. Although the email does not fit this category fully, as Amanda does not express any explicit issues,
the email is still closest to the noticeboard as a genre. This is because Amanda's email seems to inform family and friends about her current life situation. After all, she allegedly had bad contact with them for some time. This could be why she sends this informative email to many people, so that many can take part in her current situation.
See appendix 8.2.2: This email includes a conversation between several people involved in a business deal with a bank. The two main characters identified in this dialogue chain have been given the aliases, Bob and David. The context is that David sent confidential information to the people who gained access to his mass mail. He then gets an answer from Bob, who writes, "I spoke with Deutsche bank immediately after my conversation with David L****. I apologize as I must not have communicated clearly that I understood the importance of this issue from a legal point of view". Through this email's contextualization, it can be concluded that the email genre could be classified as a postman email. This could be realized because the postman genre is heavily connected to forwarding documents or other information regarding public or classified data within the organization. An emphasis also lies in expecting a response to one's message (Kankaanranta, 2006). This statement may go in line with why there are many recipients in the email, and Bob would like an answer to his message. According to Deutschmann (2003)

"[...] a prototypical apology involves redressive action that 'gives face' to the addressee. At the same time apologizing may well result in the apologize losing face. Deciding whether to apologize or not is thus likely to be affected by such factors as power relationships and social distance.". (Deutschmann, 2003, p. 36)

This can be acknowledged as an essential factor in this context because the circumstances in the email can be seen as highly professional, hierarchical, and competitive. This challenging environment could then have been a crucial factor for a reason behind Bob's apologetic expression. As men's conversation often has a hidden agenda of achieving and maintaining social standing, male communication patterns tend to be based on a social hierarchy (Gefen & Straub, 1997, p. 392).
See appendix 8.2.3: This email is a conversation thread between two men and a woman. We have renamed the men Marcus and Jacob. The woman has also had her original name removed, and we have chosen Serena instead as an alias. This dialogue appears to be in a work-related environment. The context is that Marcus tells Jacob in his email that they got rid of a board member in their UK group. He then asks Jacob if he would like to take the vacant seat and hold a meeting for the remaining board members. Marcus then receives a reply from Serena in the following email where she says that Jacob is happy to accept the place and that they should decide on a date that works based on Jacob's current schedule.

We assume from this case that Serena acts as Jacob's assistant as she responds on his behalf and takes care of his work-related schedule. Otherwise, the natural situation occurring in the email thread would be Jacob responding to Marcus' offer himself and not Serena. Since this could be considered a professional work-related environment, one can imagine that the apology "my apologies" as Serena expresses, is formal and adequate. Serena displays *positive politeness* to Marcus through different word choices and how she treats Marcus in the email. She uses the *politeness* strategy, "seek agreement", which claims common ground with one's recipient. She asks Marcus what date is suitable for him for a meeting between Marcus and Jacob (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 112). Another *politeness* strategy within the email is "exaggerating" for interest, approval, or sympathy (Brown & Levinson, 1987). She uses "definitely" when explaining to Marcus that Jacob is interested in his new job offer. Even this can be considered a part of claiming common ground with one's recipient since Serena acknowledges and agrees with Marcus' wants, making it a *positive politeness* strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This conversation can be identified to two different email genres. The first one is the classical *dialogue*. This genre fits in because of the fact that information about corporate issues is being exchanged (Kankaanranta, 2006, p. 218) between Serena and Marcus. It also goes under the *noticeboard* genre because the initial emails inform Serena about corporate issues (Kankaanranta, 2006, p. 218). In this case, an available seat at the board table is emptied and a request about filling it is made.
See appendix 8.2.4: The content of the email gives the feeling that it belongs to the genre noticeboard because Tristan is informing the aliases Kevin, Rebecca, and the other three coworkers about related things to the company (Kankaanranta, 2006, p. 218) where they all seem to work. He only wrote "I apologize […]" and did not use any booster to intensify the apology. The fact that Tristan is a leader to those receiving the email, despite this, apologizing might lead to Tristan increasing gain in both respect and trust (Graham, 2017, p. 28). This could also give the impression that he cares for his colleagues which goes hand in hand with positive politeness. This involves facilitating talk and generally making the person you are speaking to feel good (Holmes, 1995) even though he only apologized for something so "meaningless" as the length of the email. However, after the apology is made, he writes a short paragraph of four rows explaining that he wanted to keep the recipients updated on the work status and that they are free to contact him if they get any inputs or questions. This part is implemented with positive politeness because he seems to have the company's and colleagues best interest in mind. However, it also indicates politeness to the recipient's face, partly by Tristan treating the team he is emailing as a part of the success and the company's journey (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

It is obvious that this email is taken from a work-related context. One of the reasons for this, can be identified by the formal apology that Tristan gives to his recipients by applying pleasure and collegiality. However, sticking to a good formality and directness in email can strongly depend on various cultural factors. Not only culture that is considered linked to ethnicity but also the organization’s culture in question (Darics & Koller, 2018, p. 291). One can then imagine that Tristan is well acquainted with his corporate culture and knows how the jargon is permeated in the workplace. However, there is uncertainty about whether this jargon is used in the same way in email as physically in the workplace. Humour was not used in this email. This may be because Tristan wants to maintain his status concerning his employees, as humour can be a way to reduce inequalities between those of different professional statuses (Holmes, 2000, p. 159-160).
See appendix 8.2.5: This email is written by a man by the alias "Pete". He writes to a person we renamed "Jarvis". However, it is not Jarvis who receives the email but a woman with the alias "Sarah" who is assumed to be Jarvis' assistant. This assumption is made because the email is in a work-related environment. The email is formally written. It is long and contains information about a woman. Pete talks arbitrarily about her in the hopes that Jarvis will find consent and help her in her candidacy in politics. He tries to find sponsorship for the woman. He apologizes in the last paragraph of the email where he writes "I apologize for taking up your time". The email seems to be very formally written in its entirety. One can assume that this is because Pete is in a work environment and does not seem to have any previous contact with Jarvis before, which means that he then expresses himself professionally. Pete apologizes with the phrase "I apologize" and he does this because, according to him, he took up Jarvis' time with the email. This may be because it contains a large amount of information that takes time to read. This in turn creates a sense of positive politeness because Pete presupposes Jarvis' feelings regarding this proposal which is a kind of positive politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 117). This is clearly seen when Pete writes "Of course, this issue may be completely outside the realm of those interests, and if so, I apologize for taking your time.". Thus, this might lead to the apologetic expression gaining more impact as he exhibits that he cares for Jarvis' best interests that he does not want to take his precious time. On the other hand, this could also be an act of negative politeness.

One way of displaying negative politeness is by the form of an apology. One might wonder if Pete is aware that he has done an FTA towards Jarvis' positive face by giving him the content of the email and asking him for a favour by helping the women with her candidacy. If so, the objective of the apologetic expression might be to redress the impingement on Jarvis face by admitting to the impingement which is a bald-on-record admission from Pete's point of view (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 187-188). No humour was found when the email was analyzed. This may be because the context in which Pete finds himself is work-related. Of course, humour can be used in professional environments, but in this case he may not have earned anything from using it when he informs about a person he is trying to sell to Jarvis. Then one could assume that a more professional approach can be more effective. This email could end up between the two genres: postman and dialogue. The reason for this is that Pete is expecting an email in response (Kankaanranta, 2006, p. 218) as the purpose for his message is to get Jarvis to
answer "yes" to his proposition to help with sponsorship for the woman in question in purpose of her political career. It also belongs to the genre *dialogue* where the main focus is of course that a dialogue should be held, which as I said is a purpose of Pete. But what makes it possible to link it to the *dialogue* genre is because these types of emails contain information that wants to be passed on to one's recipient (Kankaanranta, 2006, p. 218), which this email largely consists of, information about who this woman is.
5. Discussion

In this section, we will go into discussions about the essay where we will have a particular focus on what we have analyzed and come to in "5. Findings & analysis". We will continue to follow in the footsteps of gender, politeness, apologetic expressions, and humour that permeated the essay.

5.1 Gustav’s discussion

First of all, it should be pointed out that this work has had its disadvantages in the form that the quantitative part contained a small amount of data. This quantitative conclusion as mentioned above should be taken into account as it may not be fully legitimate answers that will be presented regarding the quantitative work of the essay.

To connect the work back to the research question;

How do men and women express apologetic expressions through the phrases "sorry", and "I apologize" within email, and do they boost their apologies in any way?

The results in the quantitative part of our work, displayed that women accounted for 56% of the apologetic expression "I apologize". Men, on the other hand, accounted for 76% of the apology "sorry". Only two cases of the usage of boosters/intensifiers were found throughout the 50 examples in our study. One woman uttered the booster "so" and one man expressed the other booster "so" in their apologetic expression.

However, there are relevant results from the qualitative analysis that had a positive impact on the thesis. We analyzed the context in ten selected emails more in depth to gain an understanding of why the apologetic expression occurred. We have linked concepts such as politeness, humour, gender, and the email genres; postman, noticeboard and dialogue to our analysis. The results from these were definitely mixed. Both men and women used positive politeness as well as elements of negative politeness in their emails, which affected their respective apologies. It could in some cases redress ones FTA. Admitting to the impingement was the strategy that some others went for. In some apologies, positive politeness could be identified when the context of the email was taken into account. In these cases, the sender showcased consideration for the recipient's wants and needs. Also, joking and exaggerating in friendly contexts could enhance the apologetic expression and provide further positive politeness.
Humour was a mechanism that some used in their emails. These were mainly used in situations where a dialogue was held between sender and recipient. It was also assumed that these persons in question had a friendly relationship to one another. Humour could also be a tool to show positive politeness. This in turn could lead to one's apologetic expression being highlighted as more frivolous. This could be considered negative in some contexts as the recipient might believe that the person expressing the apology might not take it seriously. It can also be considered positive in some cases as it can help to de-dramatize an event and instead joke about it.

I believe there are some limitations to our study. For example, I think our quantitative study could have been further developed. This could be done by including more email examples in the study, going from 25 people of each apologetic phrase to having 50 people in each category instead. This would have given us a more legitimate answer regarding the usage of boosters/intensifiers for example. However, I find no doubt that the small quantitative part that was accomplished, was in some way, important for this study. It gave us funds for the main survey that was performed and emphasized, which was the qualitative analysis of a selected number of emails. This element is linked to the significance of our study, which is that men and women use to some extent, different apologetic expressions in email communication that are emphasized in some way by politeness, humour in a specific email genre; noticeboard, postman or dialogue. Hopefully, when reading this study, readers will become more enlightened about how men and women differ in the use of apologetic expressions in email. Even though there are certain similarities in language usage between these two genders, one can see different characteristics in how men and women communicate differently in the form of apologizing.

Further research in the field of boosters/intensifiers can be considered something that one can take a closer look at, as our quantitative study was not sufficient to cover this part of apologetic expressions. One can also go another direction in the field of apologetic expressions and instead of examining the difference between genders, one can investigate differences between apologetic expressions among different cultures or ethnicities to further explore this area.
5.2 Rebecca’s discussion

How do men and women express *apologetic expressions* through the phrases "sorry" and "I apologize" within email, and do they *boost* their apologies in any way? The use of *humour*, *politeness*, *face-threatening acts*, and *boosters* were partly consistent throughout the ten deeply analyzed emails in 4.2. This study indicated that women did use the *apologetic expression* "I apologize" more than men did. In conclusion, 56% of the people who used "I apologize" were women, and the rest were men. The majority of people that used the *apologetic expression* "sorry" were men and made up 76% of the total. This left only 24% of the total being women. Hobbs (2003) provided the most extensive set of sociolinguistic research clusters that suggest that women are more likely than men to use *politeness* strategies which supported our results.

We found that only two emails contained *boosters* and *intensifiers*. The use of boosters was evenly distributed between men and women. Jonas from 8.1.2 used the booster "So" in order to intensify his apology, and Nelly from 8.1.1 also used the intensifier "so" as a booster for her initial apology, as she expressed her sorry twice in two different emails. Both of them used the *apologetic expression* "sorry" after the intensifier. It is difficult to explain and discuss the result of *boosters* only being used before the phrase "sorry" aside from it being related to that, it may feel more natural to intensify the apology when "sorry" is used, aside from adding it before "I apologize" is being used. Suppose the material was able to become broader in the study in question. In that case, I believe that we would have noticed some boosters that intensified the *apologetic expression* "I apologize" as well. The method limited us to conclude only 50 emails, 25 emails of each apology phrase, because only a small number of emails registered at Enron consisted of the *apologetic expression* "I apologize".

This study aimed to assess the importance of discovering differences and similarities in the linguistic behavior of *politeness* in *apologetic expressions* between men and women in emails, which was achieved. As expected, there were indeed differences in the linguistic usage of *politeness* between men and women. As well as differences, we identified some similarities. The *boosters* were used with the same *apologetic expression* for both the man and the woman who used the *booster*. I believe that our research did not lack consistency concerning previous research on *politeness*
between men and women. Many different studies have been done by, amongst others, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) and Holmes (1995). Their studies are based on how different genders differ in their use of politeness in language. A strong relationship between gender and the use of politeness and different apologetic expressions has been presented in those and other literature.

Working with the limitations of the essay had its pros and cons. In a way, it was advantageous for this work that the material was relatively small. If it had been broader, it would have become too wide and not fit the description of this work or the timeframe that Gustav and I had. On the other hand, the limitations affected our results drastically. The data is too small for sweeping conclusions, and it only becomes assumptions regarding the results. However, as previously mentioned, we were forced to go with only 50 emails because the phrase "I apologize" only had between 25-30 emails registered at the Enron. If these boundaries had not existed, we could have been able to do broader research by adding more categories than just gender and later on finding more emails that included the two chosen apologetic phrases. I believe that, despite the small qualitative data that we were able to collect, the qualitative part 4.2 has been of great importance in increasing the understanding of our work. The ten analyzes are thoroughly made and contribute to the conclusions that can be drawn by others than ourselves'.

In future investigations, it might be possible to, in addition to gender, also focus on ethnicity and/or leadership which would have been fun and interesting to write further about. It is not optimal to focus only on one category when analyzing different language usage (Darics & Koller, 2018, p. 198), which contradicts our research. We chose to go through with our work either way. Expressing an apology in an email, where body language, emphasis, and other crucial factors are present, can be challenging. Sticking to a good formality and directness in email can strongly depend on various cultural factors. Not only culture that is considered linked to ethnicity but also the organizations culture in question (Darics & Koller, 2018, p. 291) and the culture linked to how different genders should relate to specific writing rules within emails. Darics and Koller (2018) refer to Bienesch-Lucas (2007) and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011). They suggest that second language users may find it more challenging to identify communicative intentions and that this can easily lead to misunderstandings of the whole context. It is clarified by Darics and Koller (2018) that Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) examined different approaches used by non-native
speakers in their communication. As a result, words that made the message more indirect were rarely used to present messages. This usually made their messages very direct and to the point, which could later lead to misunderstandings between users and recipients. The recipient can interpret both the email and the sender of the email, negatively. With this in mind, more time needs to be put into the actual formulation of writing an email so that it is perceived as a reasonable degree of directness and reflects well on the relationship between sender and receiver (Darics & Koller, 2018, p. 291). Therefore, a further study with more focus on more categories such as class, age, and/or ethnicity is suggested.

Furthermore, it was easy to determine if a man or a woman had written the email in question. The context was visible. When analyzing the emails, we partly analyzed the usage of politeness, which apologetic expression was used, if humour occurred, and to what email genre it belonged. The three different types of email are noticeboard, postman och dialogue (Kankaanranta, 2006, p. 218). All of these three different genres were related to emails that were about corporate issues. However, we ignored this and applied them to the emails, regardless of the content that might have been. Thus, it was vivid what email belonged to what category. Although, I believe that the genres would have been of greater importance if the context of the chosen emails only were about company issues. Perhaps even the whole essay's aim would be to study leadership in relation to gender, email, and the usage of different genres. One could, after that, analyze the pattern of which gender seems to prefer what genre and the context of the actual email to conclude that later.
6. Conclusion

To give an overview and summarize this essay, we have now completed our research on the difference between men’s and women's use of apologies in emails.

Our quantitative performance should have been further developed in this study. We only had access to a limited number of possible emails that contained the apologetic expressions we selected for the survey. If we would have been using other corpus tools we would have greatly facilitated by covering up a much larger material. Being limited to only 50 emails, this part of the study lacks material. Had this been possible in this study, we would probably have been able to draw more definite conclusions about the quantitative results. Our material had been larger and the opportunity to find more boosters had existed. We believe that "I apologize" for a full main clause meant that we received limitations regarding our search results. However, the qualitative surveys were thoroughly made. This was when we had the opportunity to go deeper into the meaning regarding how the expressions were used, depending on whether it was a man or a woman who wrote the email.

This paper has argued to discover differences and similarities in the linguistic behavior of politeness in apologetic expressions between men and women in emails. The study did indeed result in both differences and similarities. Differences being that women used the apologetic expression "I apologize" more than men, and men using the phrase "sorry" more extensively. The similarities, however, were that both men and women used boosters equally. It is still important to point out that this result might not be legitimate considering the minuscule amount of data. Nevertheless, this study has hopefully contributed to more insight in how men and women use apologetic expressions in emails.

Although face-to-face interactions are at the heart of social life, everyday conversational exchanges are crucial in constructing gender identities and gender ideologies and relations (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 59). One can consider that communicating in a medium such as email may be equally relevant for achieving constructional gender identities and gender ideologies as they are in speech. As Statista states that there has been an increase in the users of emails and that approximately 306 billion emails were sent and received in the year 2020, it shows that email can be a convenient source of communication that can construct and normalize gender identities and ideologies.
7. References


https://books.google.se/books?id=c9GtDgAAQBAJ&hl=sv&source=gbs_navlinks_s


file://edunet/dfs/home34/ht19/guslih192/Downloads/9781315845722_previewpdf.pdf


Number of e-mail users worldwide from 2017 to 2025 (article). Published by Statista, Apr 28, (2022).


8. Appendix

8.1 Sorry

8.1.1 Woman + Booster

From: Nelly.S***@dynegy.com@ENRON [mailto:IMCEANOTES-Nytasha+2ES***+40dynegy+2Ecom+40ENRON@ENRON.com]
Sent: Tuesday, September 25, 2001 10:00 AM
To: M***, Petra.
Subject: RE: Simon

Hey girl! Sorry I didn't get a chance to call you last night. I was in bed by 9:30. Simon got home around 11:00 and didn't say a word to me. He turned on lights and made lots of noise, but said nothing. He slept upstairs in the game room last night, so evidently, he goes in late today. He could've at least dressed and taken the kids to school, since I do it every morning, but he didn't. I can't worry about it. I'm so use to doing it all by myself anyway, so it really doesn't matter. What time will you be at rehearsal tonight? Maybe we can talk before then.

From: Petra.*.M***@enron.com
To: IMCEANOTES-Nelly+2ES***+40dynegy+2Ecom+40ENRON@enron.com
cc: 09/24/01 10:23
Subject: RE: Simon AM

Nells,

I'm so sorry to hear that things are getting hectic again. I definitely know what that feels like. Do you think we could get away without the kids for an hour or so this evening? Even if it's late..I need to see you and talk to you. I still need to check with Tommy to see if he's working tonight or what, but let's see what we can find out!
Hi Adam:

So sorry this took me so long, and I hope you haven't already left---I recall you saying that you guys were leaving on the 1st, which I hope is the case. Anyway, hope that this finds you before you depart.
8.1.3 Man

From: c***christian@hotmail.com
To: ben.t***@enron.com
Subject: Oops!
Cc:
Bcc:
Date: Mon, 3 Dec 2001 08:57:37 -0800 (PST)

Ben, what did you do to the company!? Listen, sorry to hear about the problems at *****. What a strange turn of events. It is pretty bizarre after 10 years of ***** being the model for other companies on how to succeed in the energy industry. What's your take on why it happened? We get a little bit of news down here but we're a little out of touch.

How are you taking it? Are you pissed? Do you feel like you squeezed pretty much what you wanted out of the job? What's the next thing for Big Ben? Well, like all of life's curve-balls there is always something sweet in the next pitch you get (jeez, how sappy is that!). Anyway, hope you're taking it all with the good nature you always do.

Hey, maybe this will give you the chance to take a holiday in Ecuador (Christmas turkey at our house this year?). Say hi to Kris for us, drop me a line as soon as you can (a better address to reach me is christian@ph.com.ec). Sorry I haven't sent a note before this but you know we are always rooting for you.

Your pal, Christian.
8.1.4 Woman

From: h****<.w***@enron.com

To: cal@teXla*****.com

Subject: RE:

Date: Mon, 2 jul 2001 15:15:20-0700 (PDT)

Sorry for flirting a little too much - I do not know if you told Stanton that I hit on you until 5 in the morning or if he just read that into your story - but it drove him crazy.

He called my house at 2:30 am Sunday morning very drunk and being very wierd!

Anyway, it was a great party - thanks for the invitation.

Until next time -

Kimmy
Sure, just remind me. It should cut down on your "depends" expenses as well...

Today. Definitely in the top 10 as far as crappy days go. Started out great. Breakfast with Dad was nice (LePeep by my house). He was very happy I broke up with the energy guy. Wasn't too keen on him being Jewish. Dad's pretty religious in his elder years. Gave me a book of prayers and money....That's what I'm talkin' about!! (I'm going to he@@). Anyway, my boss calls me as we are finishing up and asks me if I knew anything about a meeting I was supposed to be working for NP's (nurse practitioners) at the Westin and I'm like "Uh, No...never got the message". Well, never got the message because she never sent it. Bottom line, I had to blow off all my plans(I was actually planning on calling on doctors today and getting ready for my smonday program) and go work this meeting which isn't that big of deal. We just stand around at display tables and answer questions from the doctors/NP's. I was there for and hour and then went to lunch. I came back for an hour and have to do some things here. The good thing about my boss is she's very "hand's off". She stays out of your business unless you call her for something. She has a life outside of this job which is rare for managers. The bad thins she can be "flighty" sometimes and forgets to send things on or lets them pile up and we get the messages a week late (which is probably what happened in this case)

Anyway, sorry about all the griping but I was on a roll!!
Hope your day has been good. You workin' out or goin' out after work?
Decisions. Decisions. Your gym sounds cool. Laughed at the physique comment. So something I would have said. Later,
8.2 I apologize

8.2.1 Woman

From: Amanda P** F**** [mailto:apazfrost@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, October 21, 2001 11:15 PM
To: Thomas M*****, + 33 more
Subject: Hello and an Update

Hey Everyone,

I wanted to take this opportunity to check in and say 'hello'. I apologize for the mass email but in my overall business and general flakedome I have been totally out of touch with just about everyone I know. Sam and I have had a lot of changes in the past months and I'll briefly fill you in on the highlights.

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Not much else to report. I am including all of our new address information for your records. Again, I apologize for not contacting each of you personally.
As we get into a regular routine I expect to do a better job with correspondence and general balance.

Love,
Amanda
8.2.2 Man

From: bob.k******@enron.com
To: David.l****@enron.com
Subject: Re: Enron/Ponderosa: Proposed Language
Cc: A number of people involved
Date: Fri, 27 Oct 2000 14:07:00-0700 (PDT)

I spoke with Deutsche bank immediately after my conversation with David L****.
I apologize as I must not have communicated clearly that I understood the
importance of this issue from a legal point of view. My intent on having
language proposed was not to concede to any proposed language by Deustche but
to determine if it was possible to be assured of bringing in a significant
commitment to the syndication of the transaction as well as not create any
potential legal issues. As this was not the case, I told Deutche that after
reviewing their proposed documentation, we could not make the change and that
they should come into the transaction and hold the entire $35MM amount and
hold that amount rather than syndicating it out the back end as initially
contemplated.
Marcus, my apologies for the delayed response. Jeff is definitely interested in chairing the September 2001 meeting. Please let me know if you have any dates in mind and we'll see how they work on Jacobs schedule.

Regards,

Serena S***
8.2.4 Man

From: tristan.j****@enron.com
To: kevin.l**@enron.com
Subject: Update on Contributions
Cc: rebecca.f******@enron.com, + 3
Bcc: rebecca.f******@enron.com, + 3
Date: Fri, 15 Oct 1999 07:29:00 -0700 (PDT)

I apologize for the length of this memo. However, I did want to keep you updated on the status of these various requests. I will present recommendations to you on each of these pending requests in the coming weeks. In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments, please contact me.
8.2.5 Man

From: p****@*********.com
To: s*****@enron.com
Subject: FW: Marlys Palumbo
Date: Wed, 1 Aug 2001 14:05:34-0700 (PDT)

I am not asking that you do anything as a favor to me, but only if it would serve Enron's interests to do so. Of course, this issue may be completely outside the realm of those interests, and if so, I apologize for taking up your time. I hope all is well with you and Carrin, and look forward to seeing both of you again soon.

Parker