

LIKE in Irish English and around the World

Martin Schweinberger

www.martinschweinberger.de

Hamburg University

martin.schweinberger@uni-hamburg.de

Freie Universität Berlin

martin.schweinberger@fu-berlin.de

Research questions

- Does the use of LIKE in Irish English differ from use of LIKE in other varieties of English?
- If so, how and why does it differ?

Aims of this talk

- State of the art: research on LIKE
- LIKE in Irish English vs. LIKE in other varieties of English
- Provide possible explanations for the differences we observe

Structure of the talk

- Introduction
- State of the Art
- Case study:
LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond
- Discussion of the results
- Summary

Discourse marker LIKE

- (1) Cos I thought about *like* inviting my mum and dad and my aunties and uncles and all round for dinner. (ICE Ireland:S1A-038\$B)
- (2) He got on he got on with the Black and Decker business *like*. (ICE Ireland:S1A-015\$A)
- (3) *Like* wee kids tend to hang out at you know the very top of the street at College. (ICE Ireland:S1A-038\$B)
- (4) [A]nd she just *like*, you know i= er it puts other people off you know? (COLT:u who=33-10 id=32)

Common beliefs

- Non- or substandard, dialectal and vulgar (OED Online)
- Symptomatic of careless speech, functioning merely as a meaningless interjection (White 1955:303)
- “It [LIKE] can occur grammatically anywhere in a sentence” (Siegel 2002:64).
- Americanism
- Used only by teenagers and particularly by girls (Californian Valley Girl)

State of the art

Discourse markers

- Examples: *you know, so, just, sort of, kind of, though*
- Syntactically optional (sentence remains “acceptable/grammatical” if one leaves them out)
- Semantically empty (no propositional content)
- (Occur more often in informal than in formal text types and more often in oral rather than written discourse)
- It is difficult to assign them to a traditional word class
- Typically stigmatized
- Multifunctional

The (Multi-)Functionality of Discourse Markers

Intra-linguistic function

Extra-linguistic functions

Discourse-pragmatic, grammatical

Social, psychological

Hedging, focus marking, ...

Identity marking, signaling group membership, priming, accommodation, ...

Discourse-pragmatic functions

- Hedge

- Expresses a minor non-equivalence between what is said and what is meant (Schourup 1983:31)
- Used to soften statements for face-saving purposes (Siegel 2002)
- Expresses uncertainty about the truth of the statement (Buchstaller 2006)

- Focusing device

- Highlights new information (Underhill 1988)
- Serves to counter possible objections (Miller & Weinert 1998)

Sociolinguistic profile

- Age
 - Predominantly used by younger speakers (e.g. Andersen 1998, D'Arcy 2005, 2007)
- Gender
 - (Young) Women use it most?
 - Mixed results (Ferrara & Bell 1995; Tagliamonte 2005)
- Perceptual studies
 - Speakers believe that women use LIKE more often than men.
 - Speakers using LIKE are considered friendly but not intelligent (Buchstaller 2006; Dailey-O'Cain 2002)

Syntax and grammar

- Circumscribed and linguistically defined (Tagliamonte 2005:1896; D'Arcy 2005:ii; Mille 2008; Schourup 1983; Underhill 1988).
- Possible positions have been described with respect to clausal structure
 - Clause-initial
 - Clause-medial
 - Cause-final
 - (Non-clausal)

Syntax and grammar

Discourse Marker LIKE		
(Syntactic) Environment	Example	Function
Before clauses (clause-initial)	[S]he wants to make friends but well <i>like</i> she keeps bloody well coming to sit back at the table, Trina (COLT: u who=33-10 id=30)	linking: introducing specifications or examples
At phrase boundaries (clause-medial)	Cos I need some friends around just to <i>like</i> protect me (COLT: u who=33-7 id=400)	hedging/focusing the following phrase
After clause (clause-final)	[S]o that money prizes aren't gonna go to a school <i>like</i> . (COLT: u who=33-1 id=11)	Focus marking
No relation to the clausal structure (non-clausal)	And my mum my da= g= my dad starts going <i>like, like, like</i> , and they go what d'you do you know. (COLT:u who=29-8 id=62)	Buying processing time to continue turn

Historical Origin(s) of LIKE

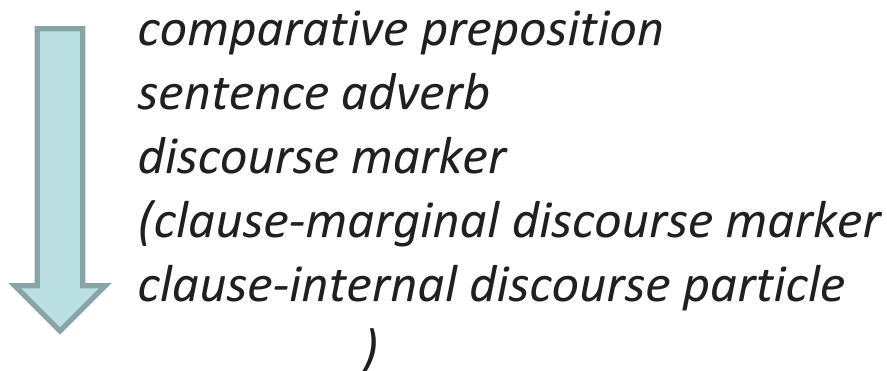
- Hypothesis 1: Americanism
 - New York Counter Culture Movement (1960s)
(Andersen 2000:116)
 - Californian Valley Girls (1980s)
(Siegel 2002)
- Problem
 - LIKE occurs in historical data from England, Ireland, Scotland and New Zealand (cf. D’Arcy 2008; Schweinberger forthc.).
 - (5) I think more of the sorrows of Sir Condy, (says my master, joking *like*). (Corpus of Irish English: Castle Rackrent, an Hibernian Tale 1801; Author: Maria Edgeworth)

Historical Origin(s) of LIKE

- Hypothesis 2: Grammaticalization
 - Origin in England app. 200 years ago (D'Arcy 2007; Schweinberger forthc.)
 - Grammaticalized from the comparative preposition, e.g.:
(6) You walk just *like* my brother.
 - In certain context comparative like lost lexical meaning and gained more syntactical flexibility (Meehan 1991)
 - Gradual reinterpretation of *like* as a pragmatic element

Historical Origin(s) of LIKE

- Hypothesis 2: Grammaticalization
 - Grammaticalization in progress (D'Arcy 2005: 5)
 - LIKE continues to intrude into formerly constrained syntactic environments (Tagliamonte & Hudson 1999, D'Arcy 2005).
 - *Grammaticalization pathway*



Historical Origin(s) of LIKE

- Hypothesis 2: Grammaticalization

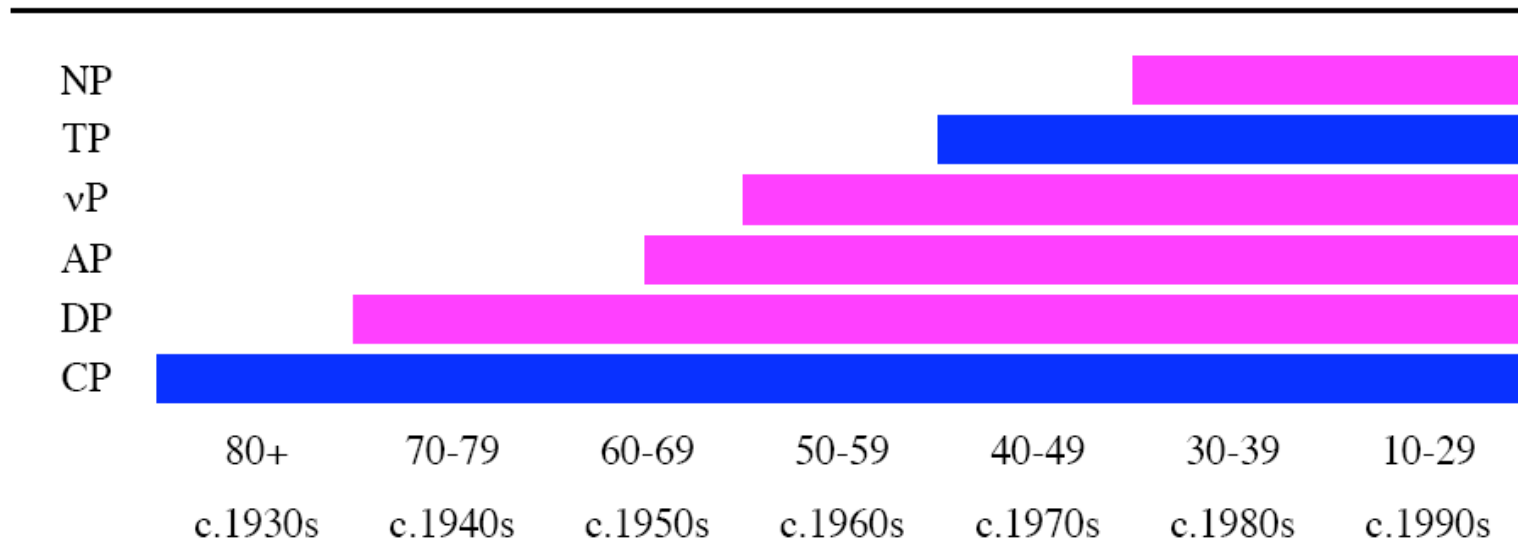


Figure 1: Grammaticalisation pathway of clause-medial LIKE adapted from D'Arcy (2005: 209).

LIKE across Varieties of English

- LIKE has conquered the English-speaking world
- LIKE as a focusing device
 - attested for 42 varieties (74 varieties of English)
 - 70% of “Traditional L1” varieties (Kortmann & Luckenheimer 2011)
 - Rather infrequently found in Pidgins and Creoles
- Clause-final LIKE
 - Restricted to “Celtic Englishes”
 - Attestations in Irish English, especially (cf. Siemund, Maier & Schweinberger 2009; Schweinberger 2012)

LIKE across Varieties of English



Figure 2: Use of focusing LIKE according to Kortmann & Lunkenheimer (2011).

LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond

Case Study

- How does the use of LIKE in Irish English differ from the use of LIKE in British English?
 - Differences with respect to
 - (Clausal) Positioning
 - Social profile
 - H1₁: Clause-final LIKE is more frequent in Irish English than it is in British English
 - H1₂: Adolescents exhibit higher frequencies of LIKE than older speakers
 - H1₃: Adolescent females exhibit the highest frequencies.

Case Study

- Additional perspective
 - LIKE use across varieties (data from my PhD dissertation)
 - North American English (Santa Barbara Corpus)
 - Canadian English
 - New Zealand English
 - Indian English
 - Jamaican English
 - Philippine English

Data & Methodology

- Data
 - International Corpus of English (ICE-Ireland & ICE-GB_{R2})
 - The Berger Corpus of London Teenage Speech (COLT)
- Methodology I
 - Extracting all tokens of *like*
 - Coding each instance of *like*: discourse marker LIKE (yes/no)
 - Determining the speaker for each instance of LIKE

Data & Methodology

- Methodology I

- Coding each instance of LIKE

- Clause-initial LIKE: ini
 - Clause-medial LIKE: med
 - Clause-final LIKE: fin
 - Non-clausal LIKE: non
 - Unclassifiable cases: NA

- Calculating the relative frequencies for (all variants of) LIKE for each speaker (LIKE per 1,000 words)

Results

LIKE's Frequency & Positioning

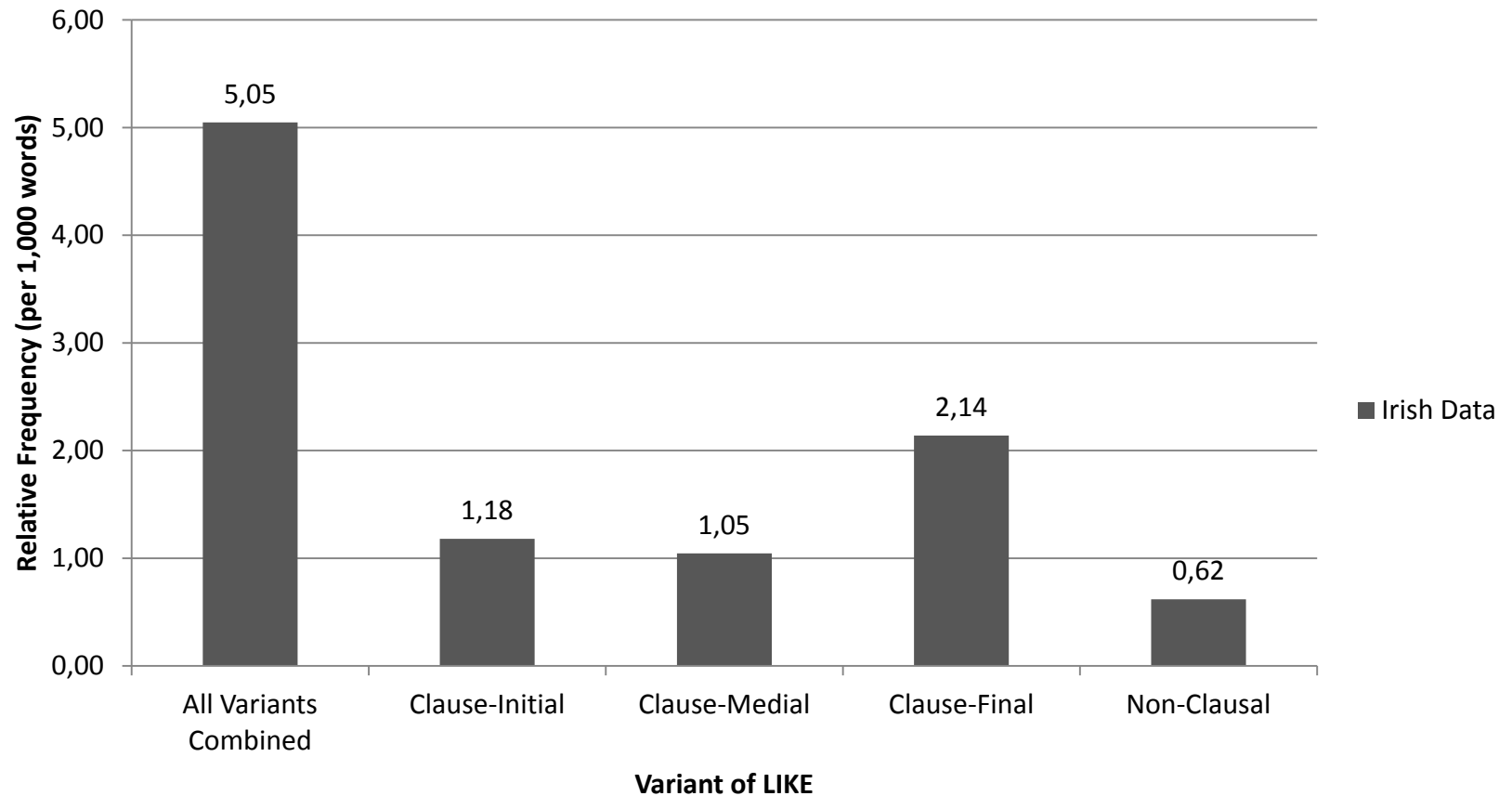


Figure 3: Frequency of positional variants of LIKE in Irish English.

LIKE's Frequency & Positioning

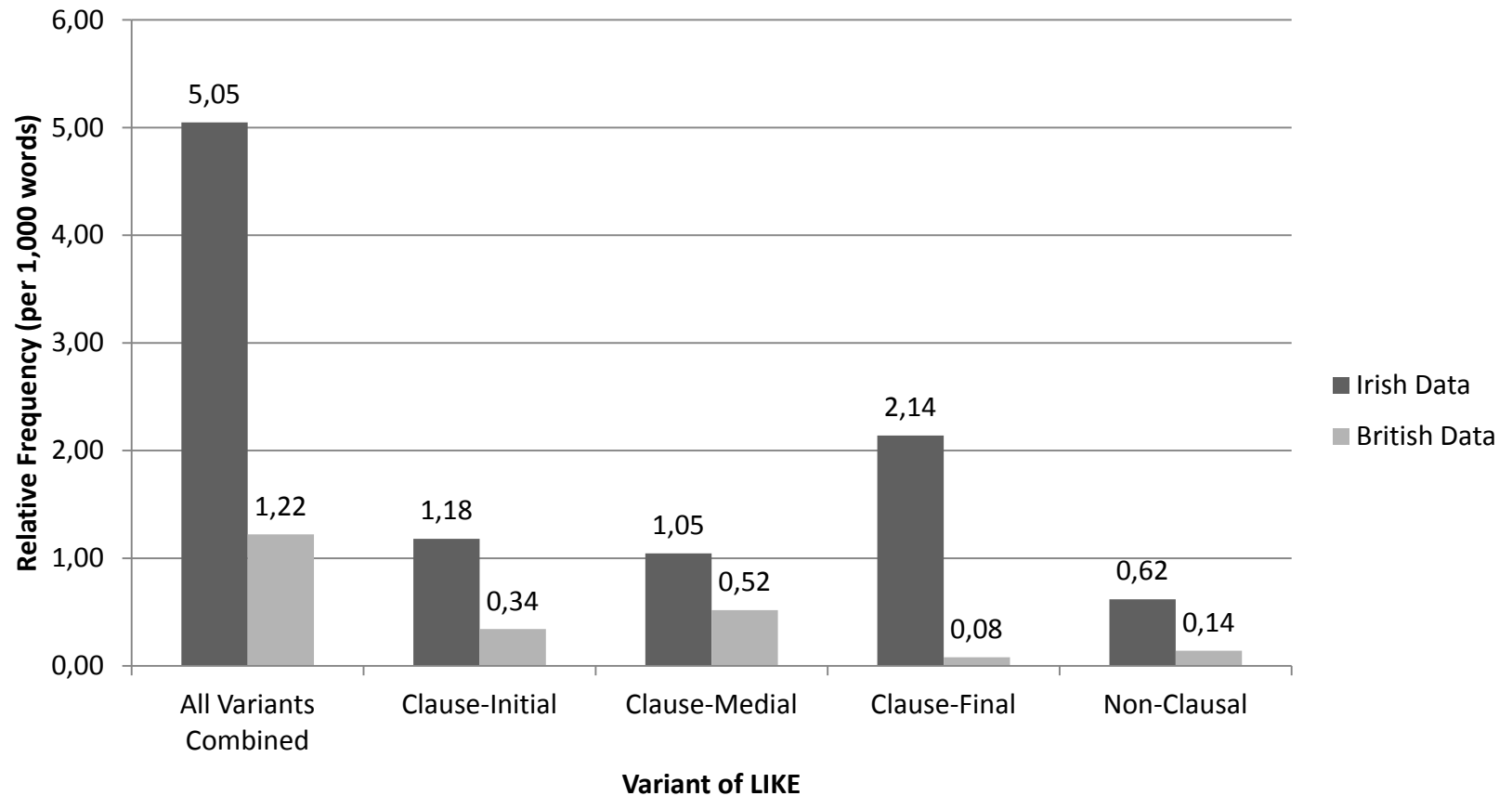


Figure 4: Frequency of positional variants of LIKE in Irish English and British English.

LIKE's Frequency & Positioning

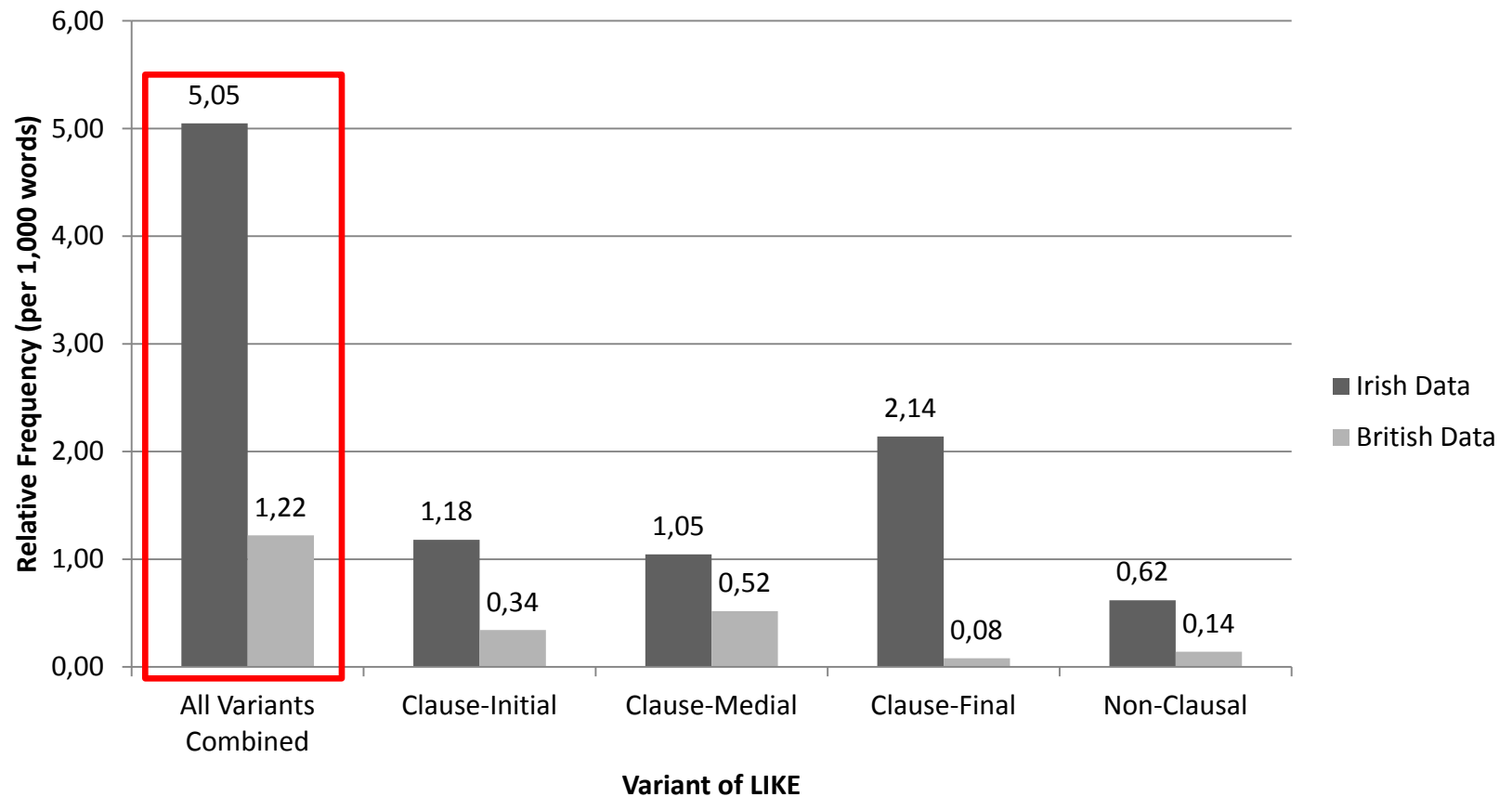


Figure 4: Frequency of positional variants of LIKE in Irish English and British English.

LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond

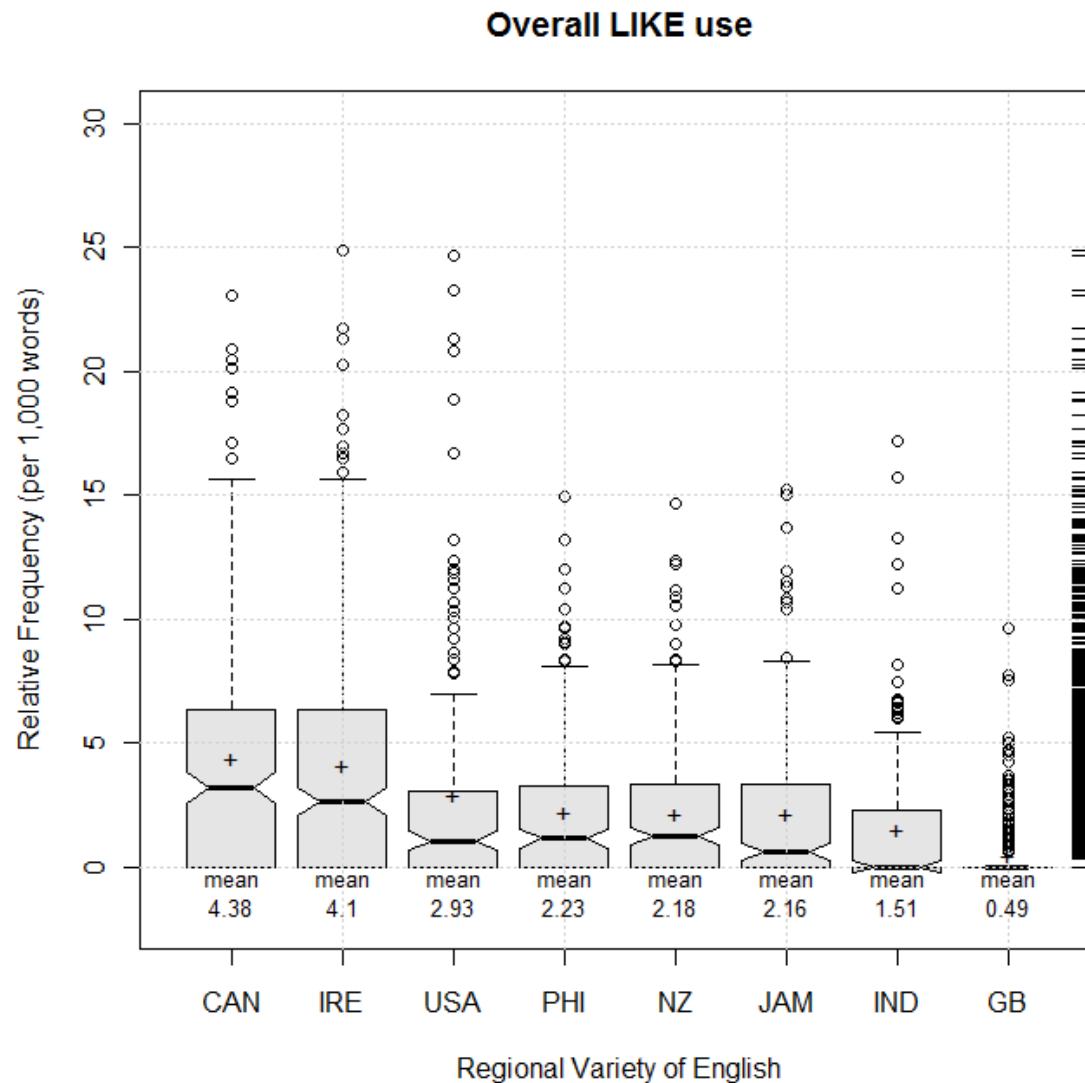


Figure 5: Frequency of LIKE across varieties of English.

LIKE's Frequency & Positioning

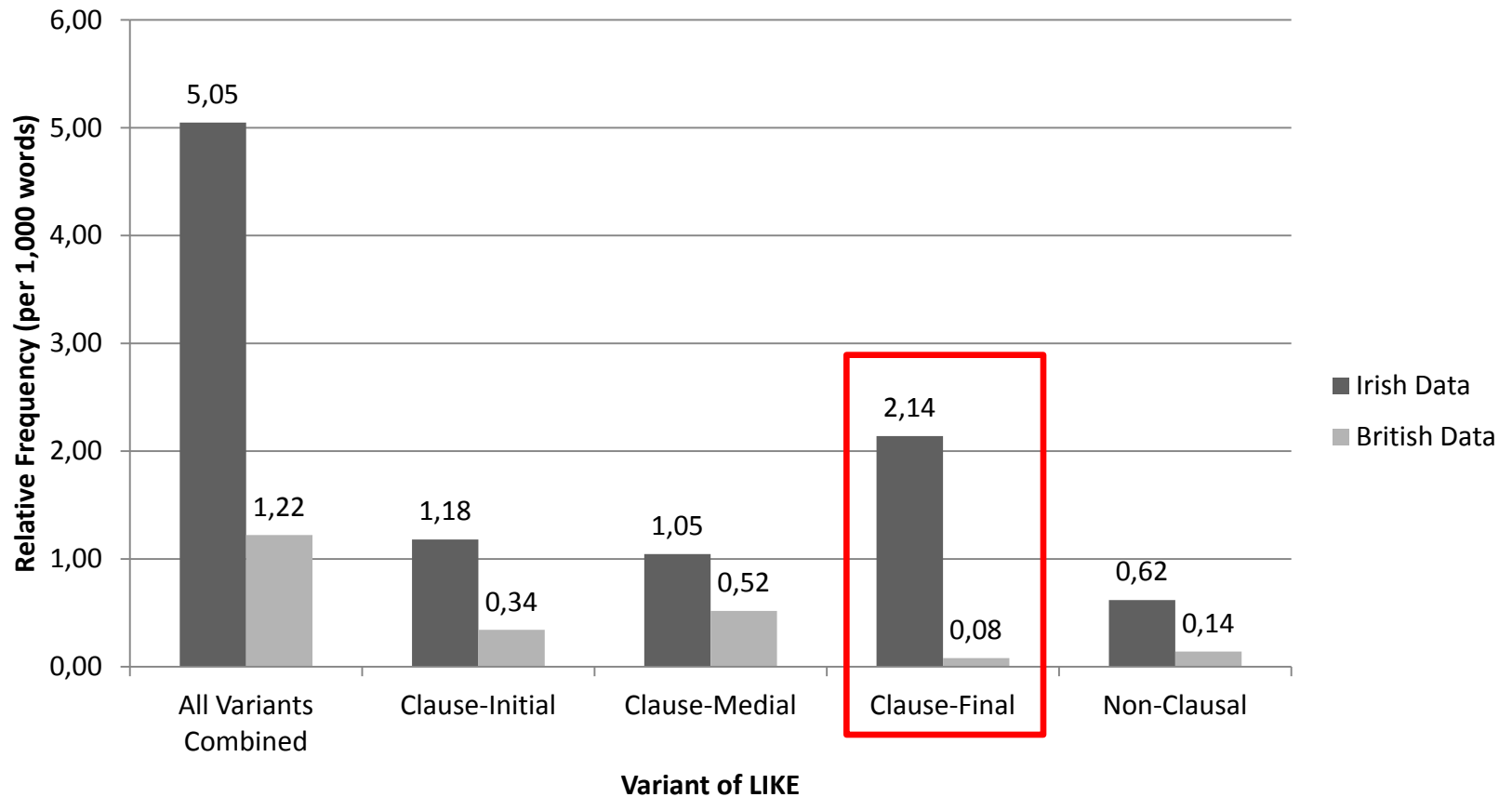


Figure 6: Frequency of positional variants of LIKE in Irish English and British English.

LIKE's Frequency & Positioning

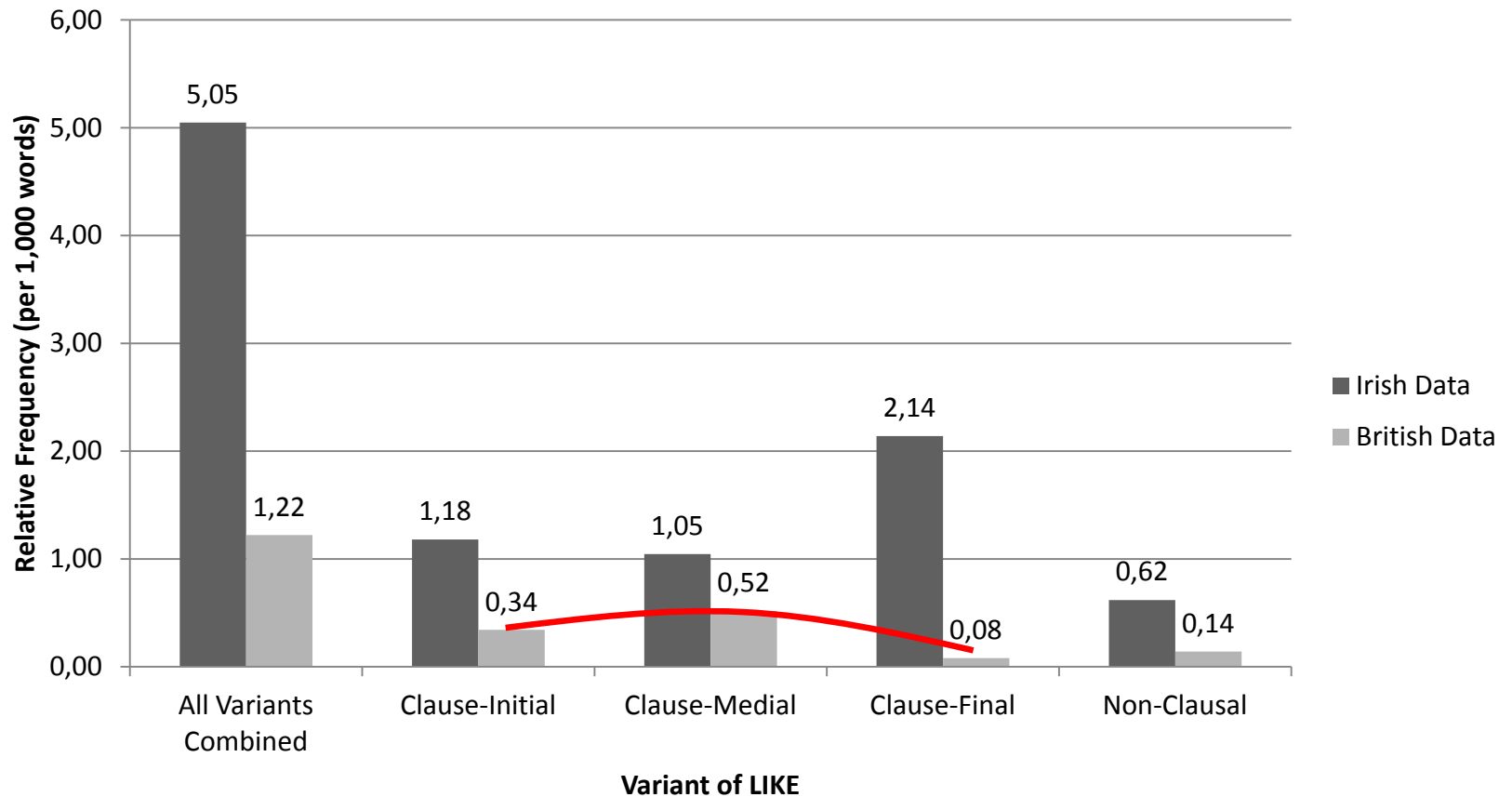


Figure 6: Frequency of positional variants of LIKE in Irish English and British English.

LIKE's Frequency & Positioning

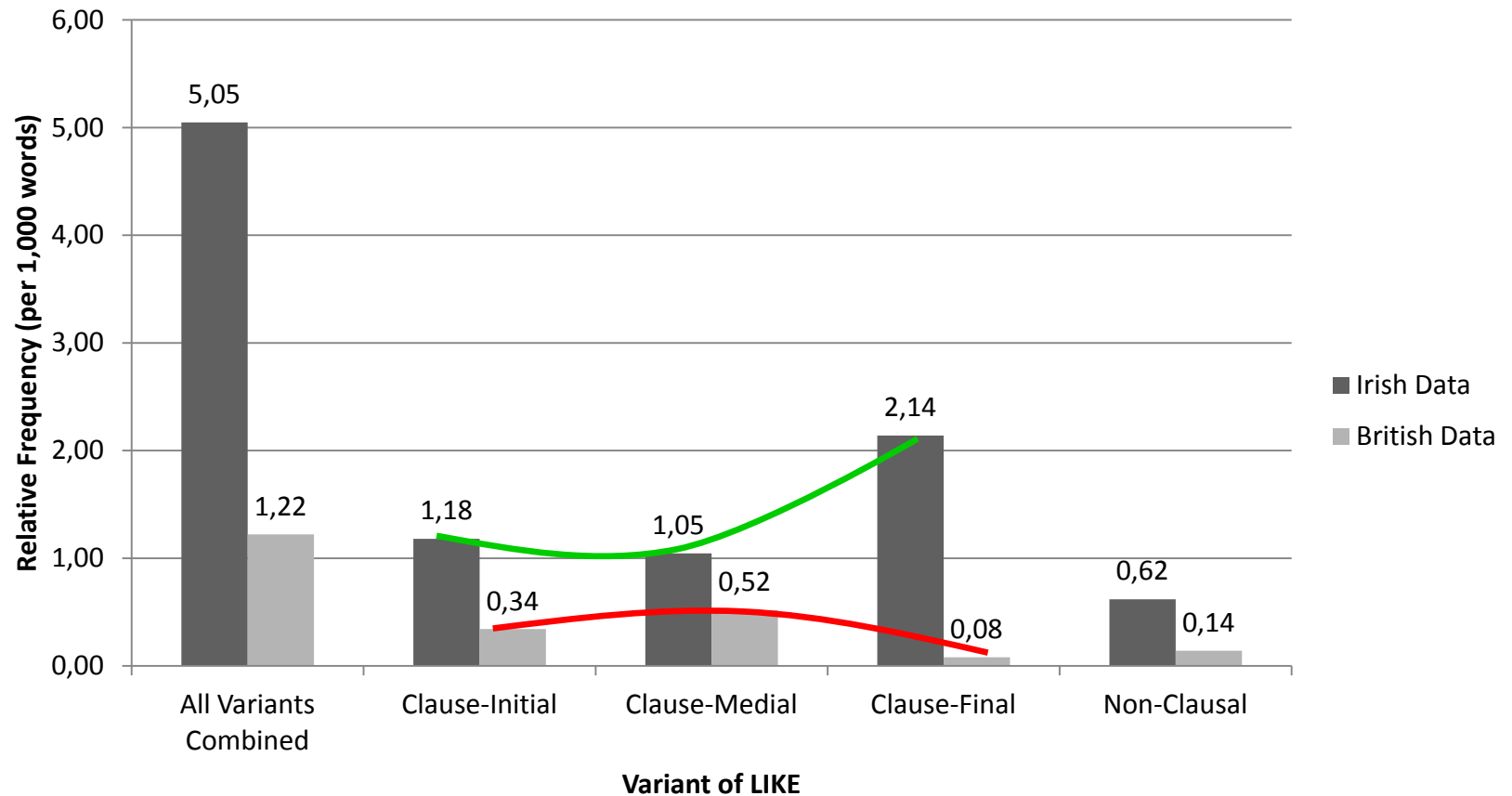


Figure 6: Frequency of positional variants of LIKE in Irish English and British English.

LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond

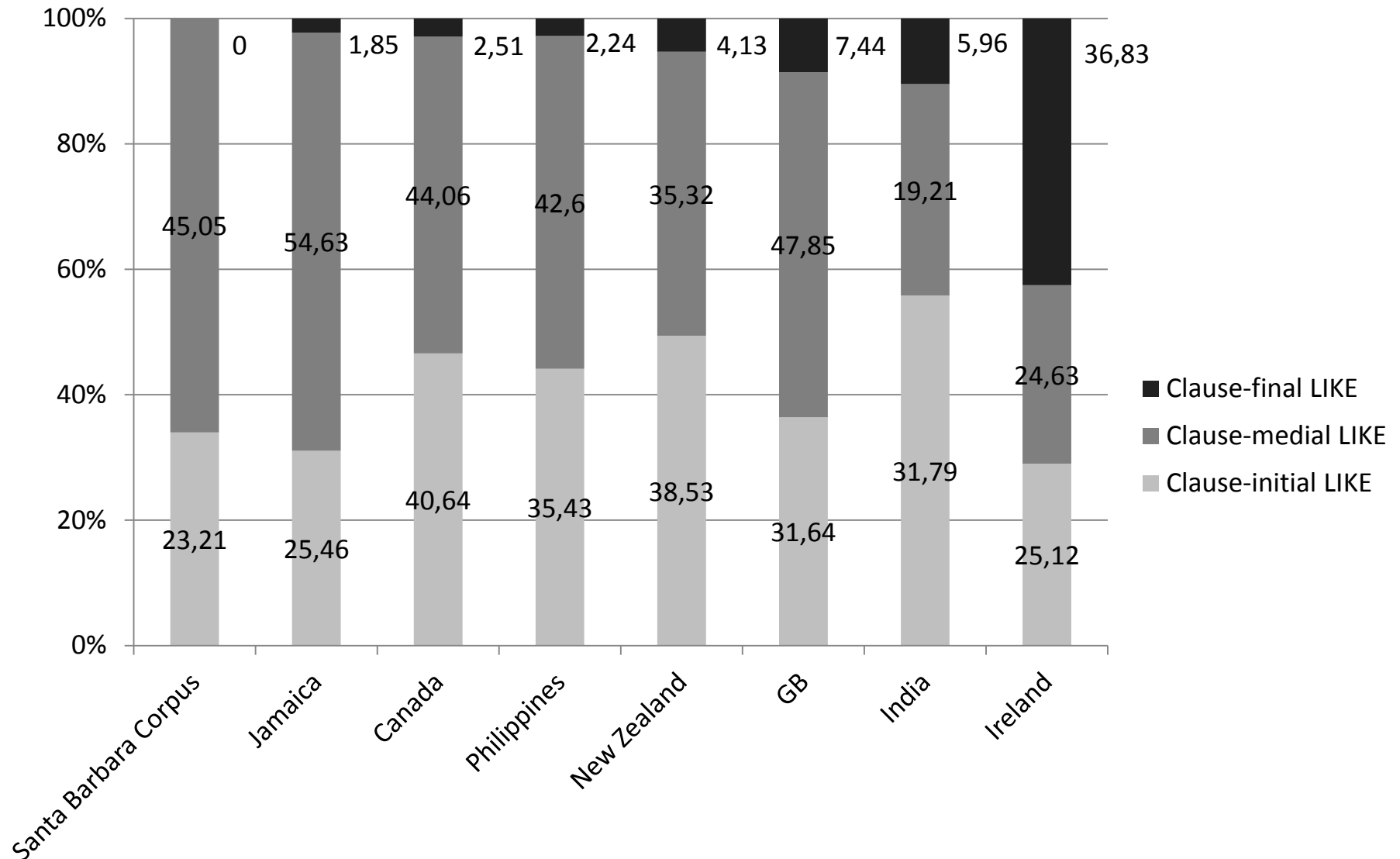


Figure 7: Distribution of positional variants of LIKE across varieties of English.

LIKE's Social Meaning

- Who uses LIKE?
 - Age of speakers
 - Sex/gender of speakers
- Differences in social profile indicate differences in the social meaning/function of LIKE as an in-group marker.

LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond

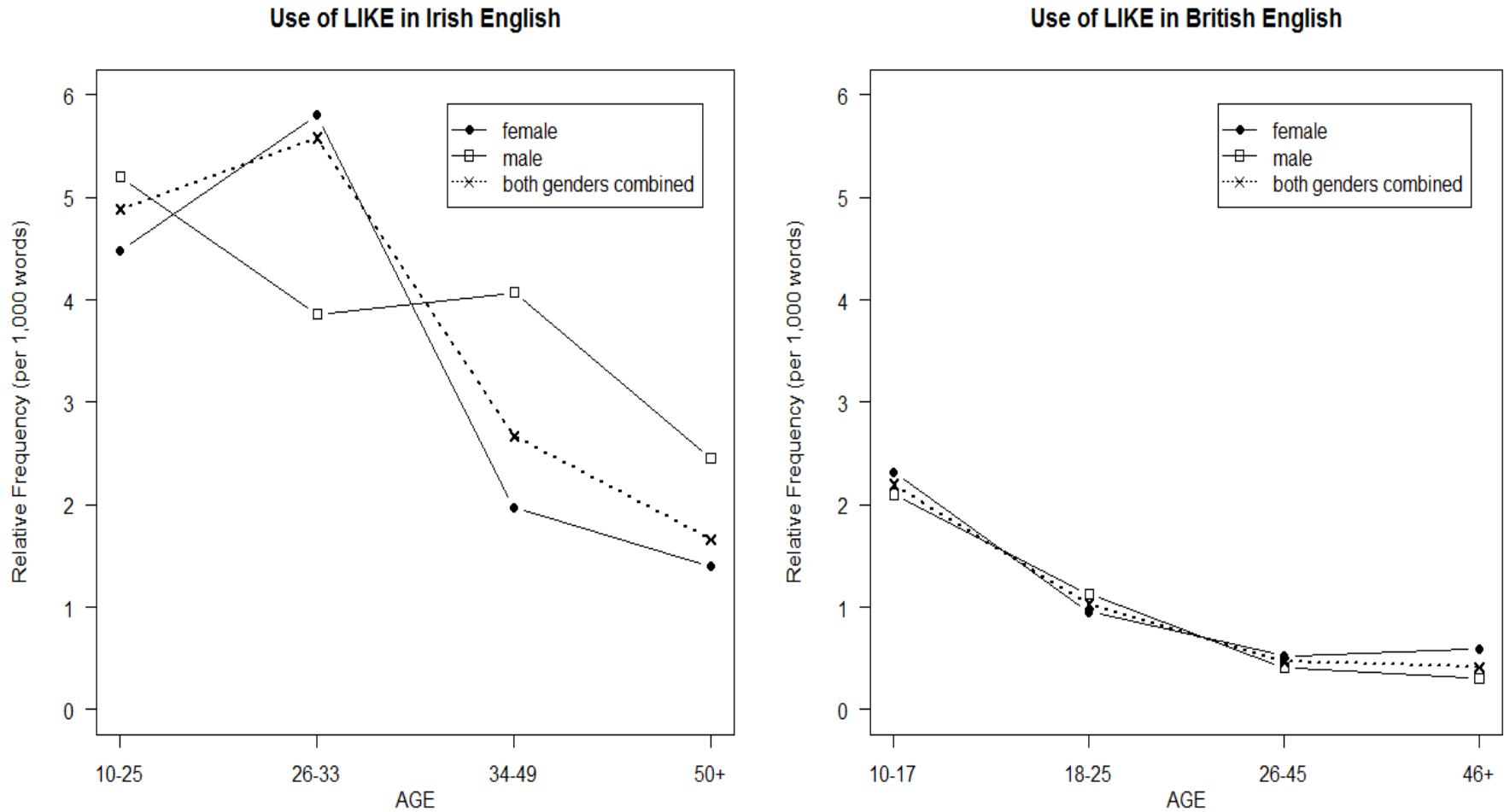
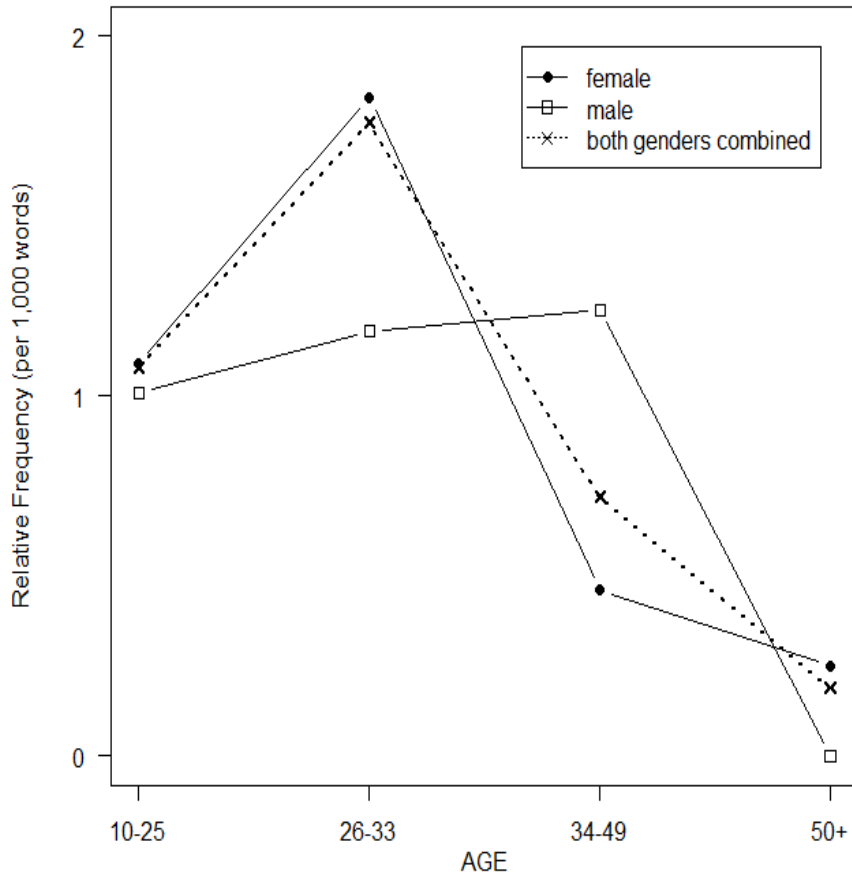


Figure 8: Age and gender profile of LIKE in (a) Irish English and (b) British English.

LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond

Use of Clause-Medial LIKE in Irish English



Use of Clause-Medial LIKE in British English

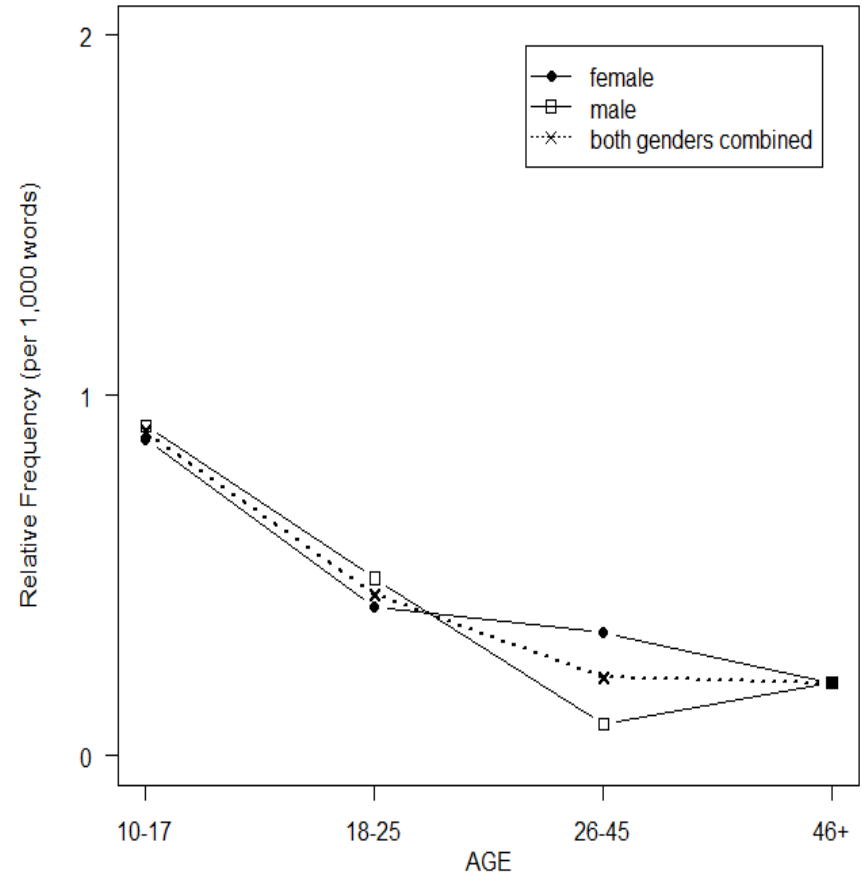
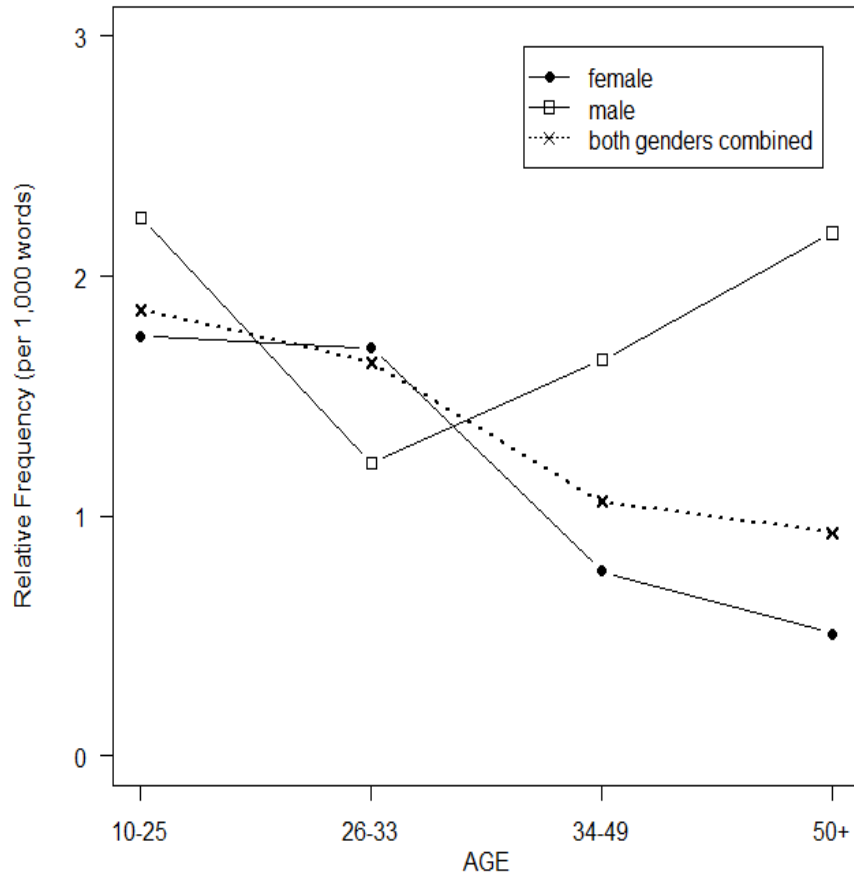


Figure 10: Age and gender profile of clause-medial LIKE in (a) Irish English and

LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond

Use of Clause-Final LIKE in Irish English



Use of Final-Medial LIKE in British English

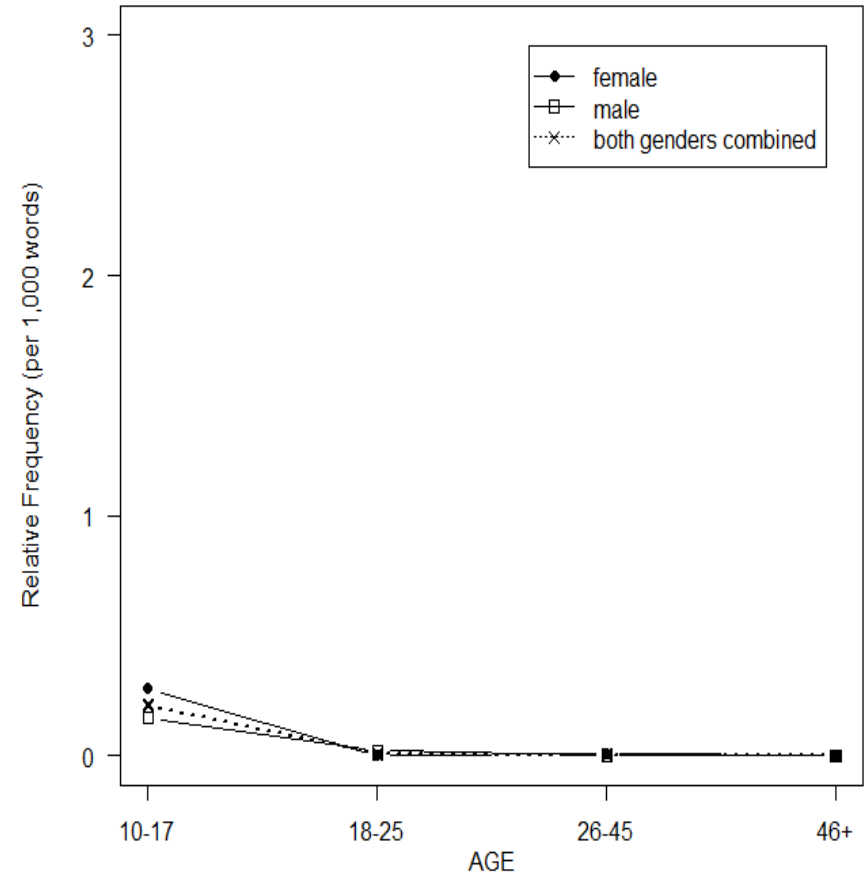


Figure 9: Age and gender profile of clause-final LIKE in (a) Irish English and (b) British English.

LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond

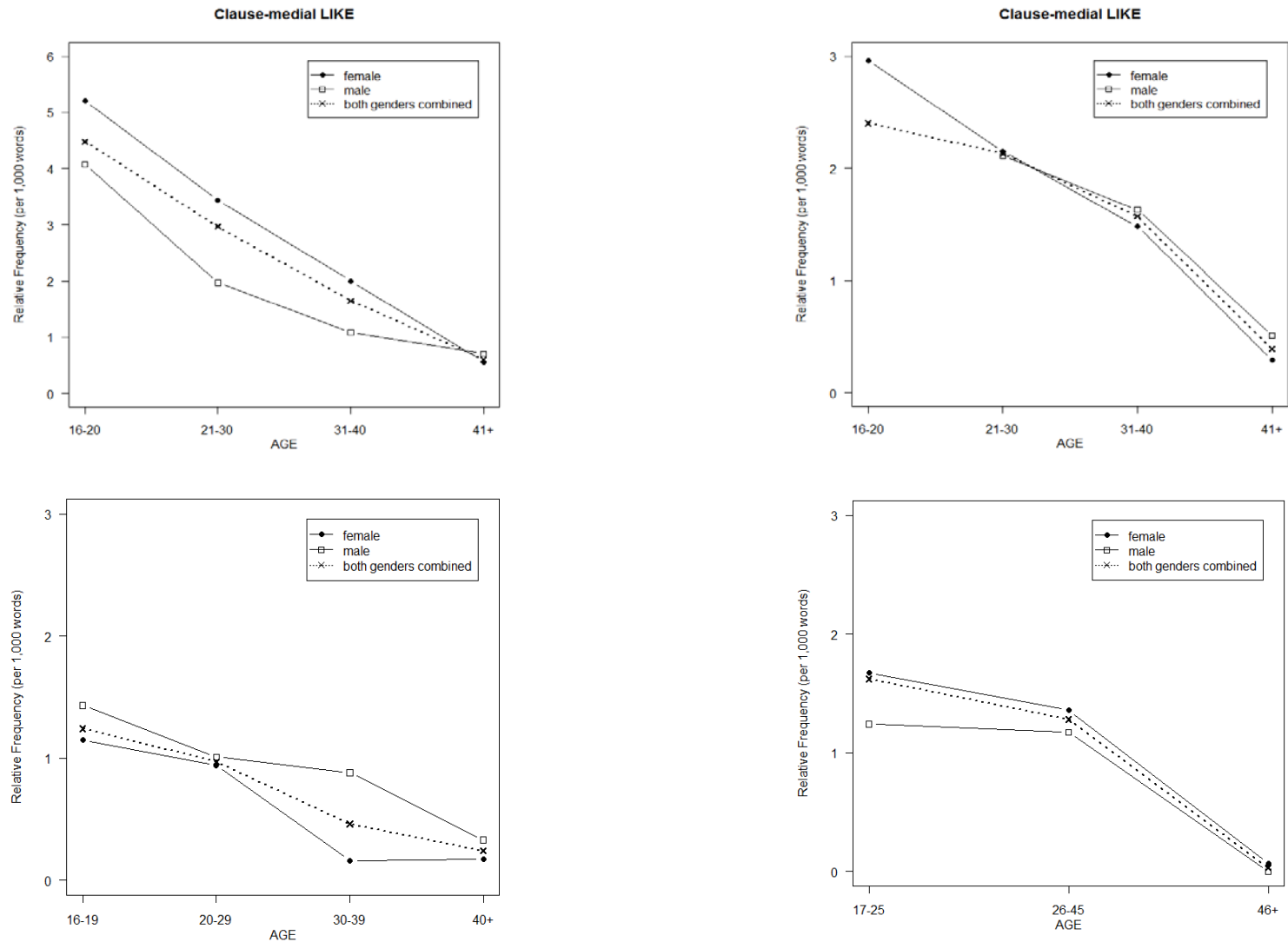


Figure 11: Age and gender profile of clause-medial LIKE in (a) Canadian English (top left), (b) US American English (top right), (c) New Zealand English (bottom left), and (d) Jamaican English (bottom right)..

Discussion

Discussion

- Differences in positional preference
- Differences in frequency
- Differences in the social profile
- Why are there such substantial differences between Irish English and British English?

Discussion

- Differences in positional preference
- H_{1_1} : Clause-final LIKE is more frequent in Irish English than it is in British English

LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond

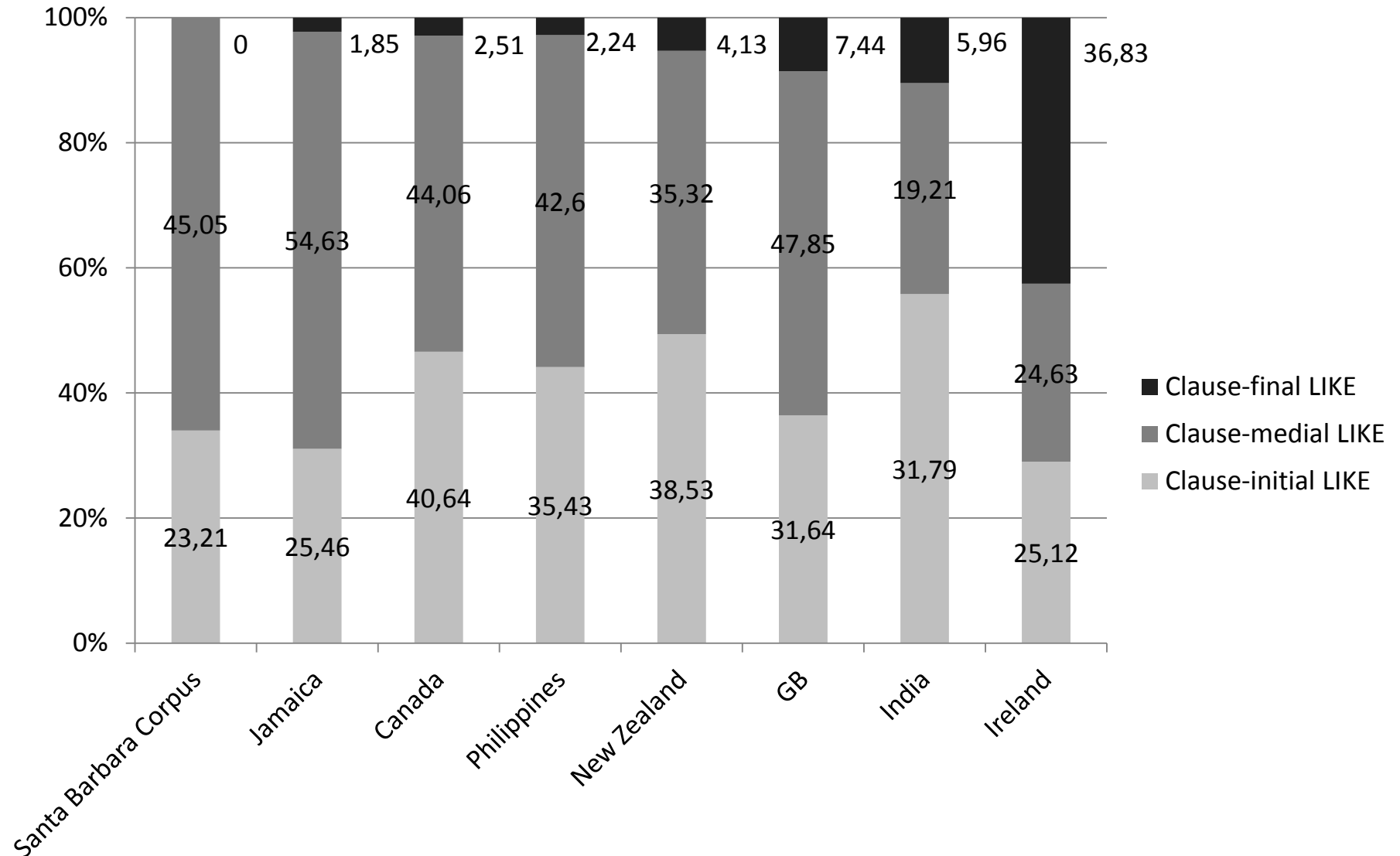


Figure 12: Distribution of positional variants of LIKE across varieties of English.

Discussion

- Differences in positional preference
- $H1_1$: Clause-final LIKE is more frequent in Irish English than it is in British English

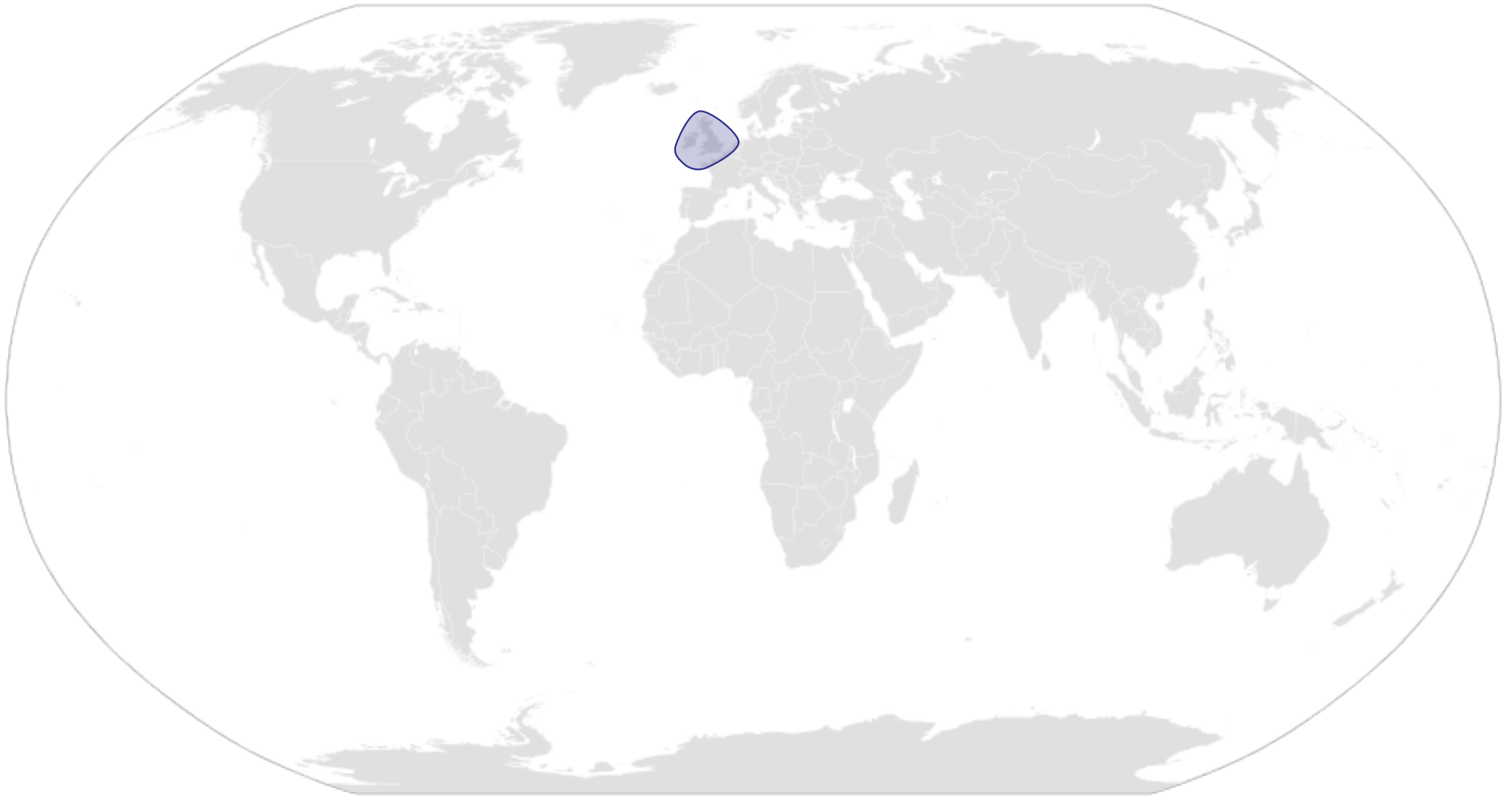
Discussion

- Differences in positional preference
- H_{1_1} : Clause-final LIKE is more frequent in Irish English than it is in British English ✓

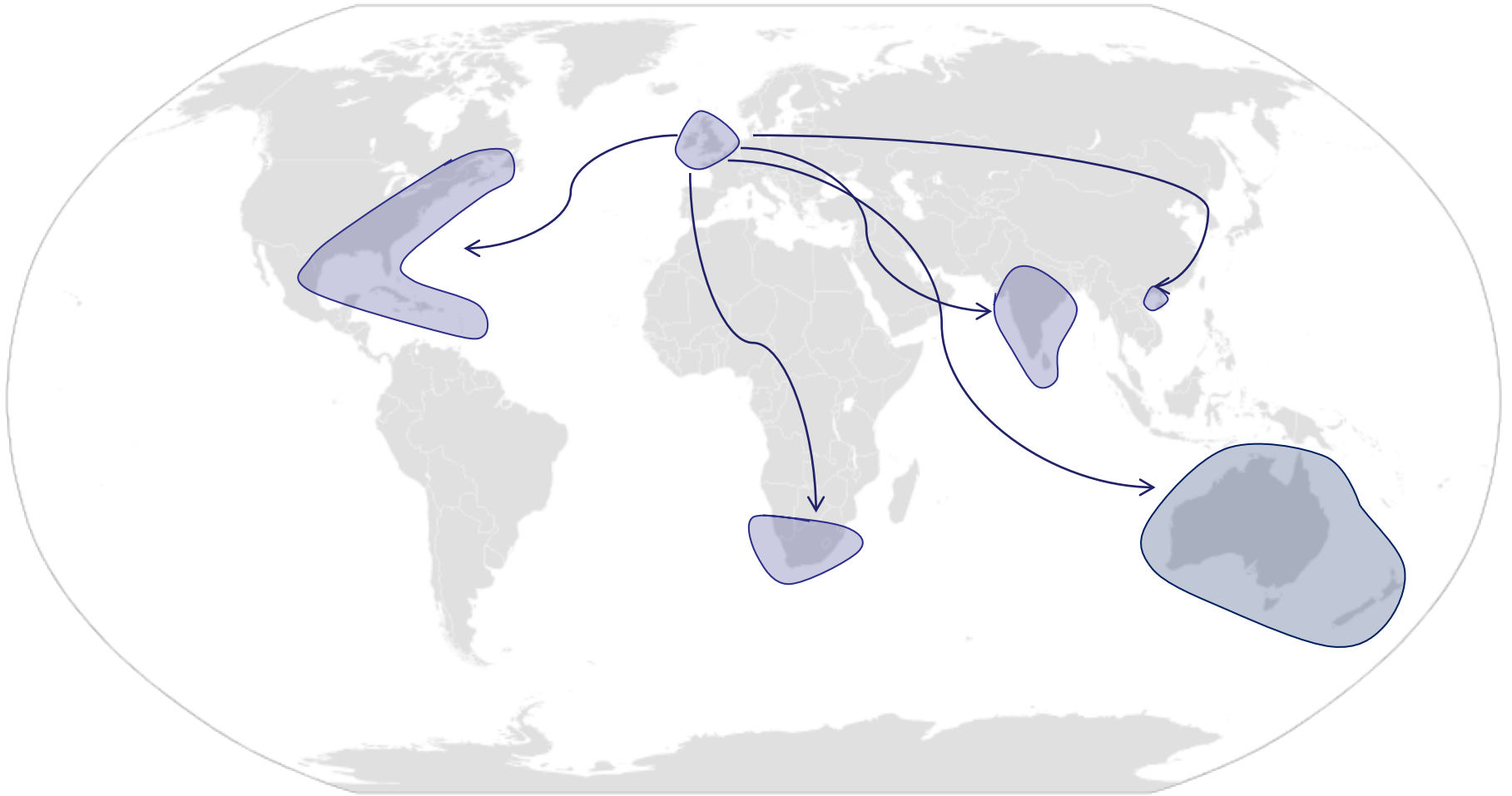
Discussion

- Differences in positional preference
 - *Two patterns*
 - *American pattern: LKE in clause-medial position*
 - *Irish pattern: LIKE at clause-boundaries*
 - *Colonial lag/fossilization*
 - *Two waves of spread*

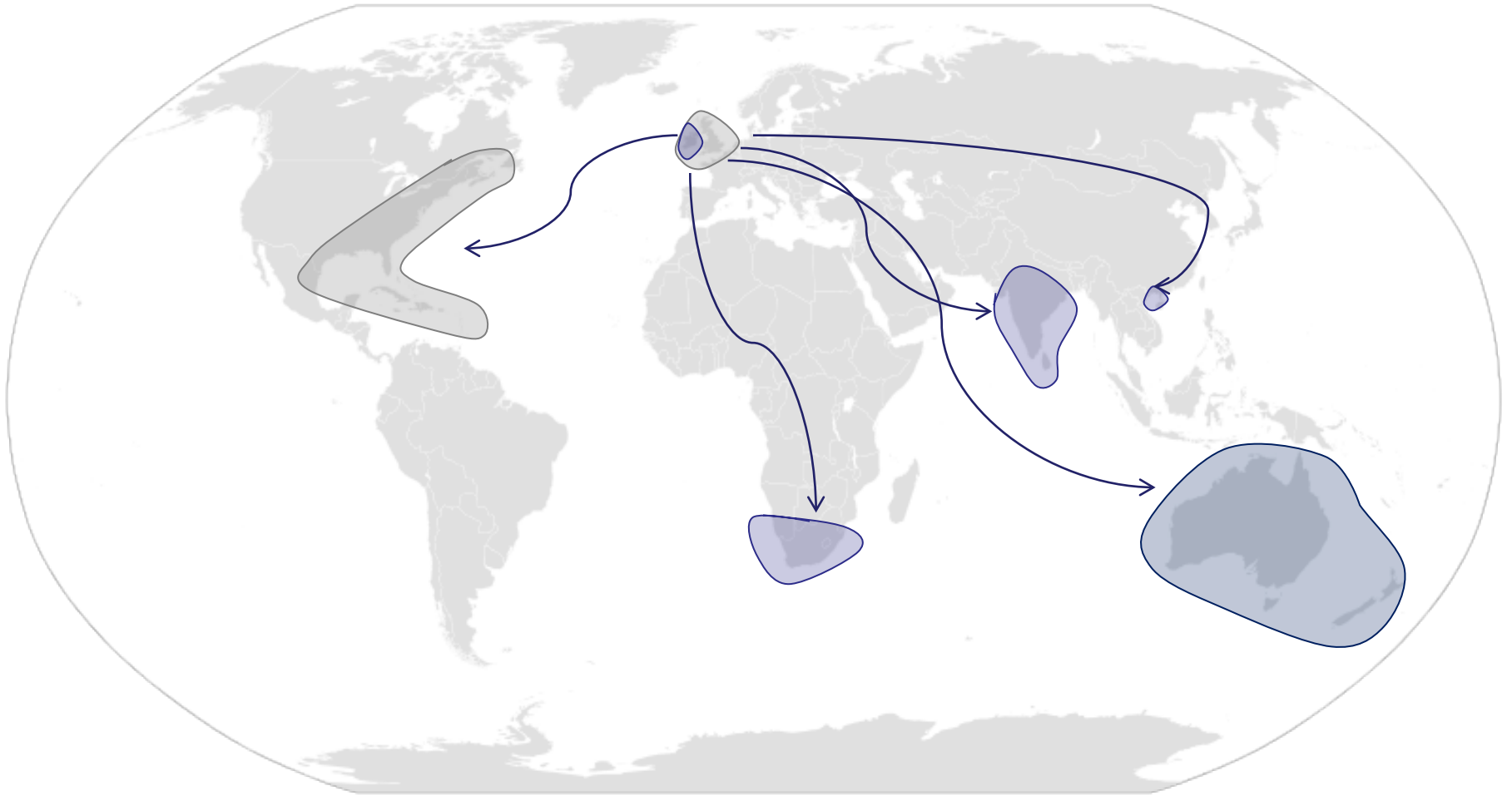
LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond



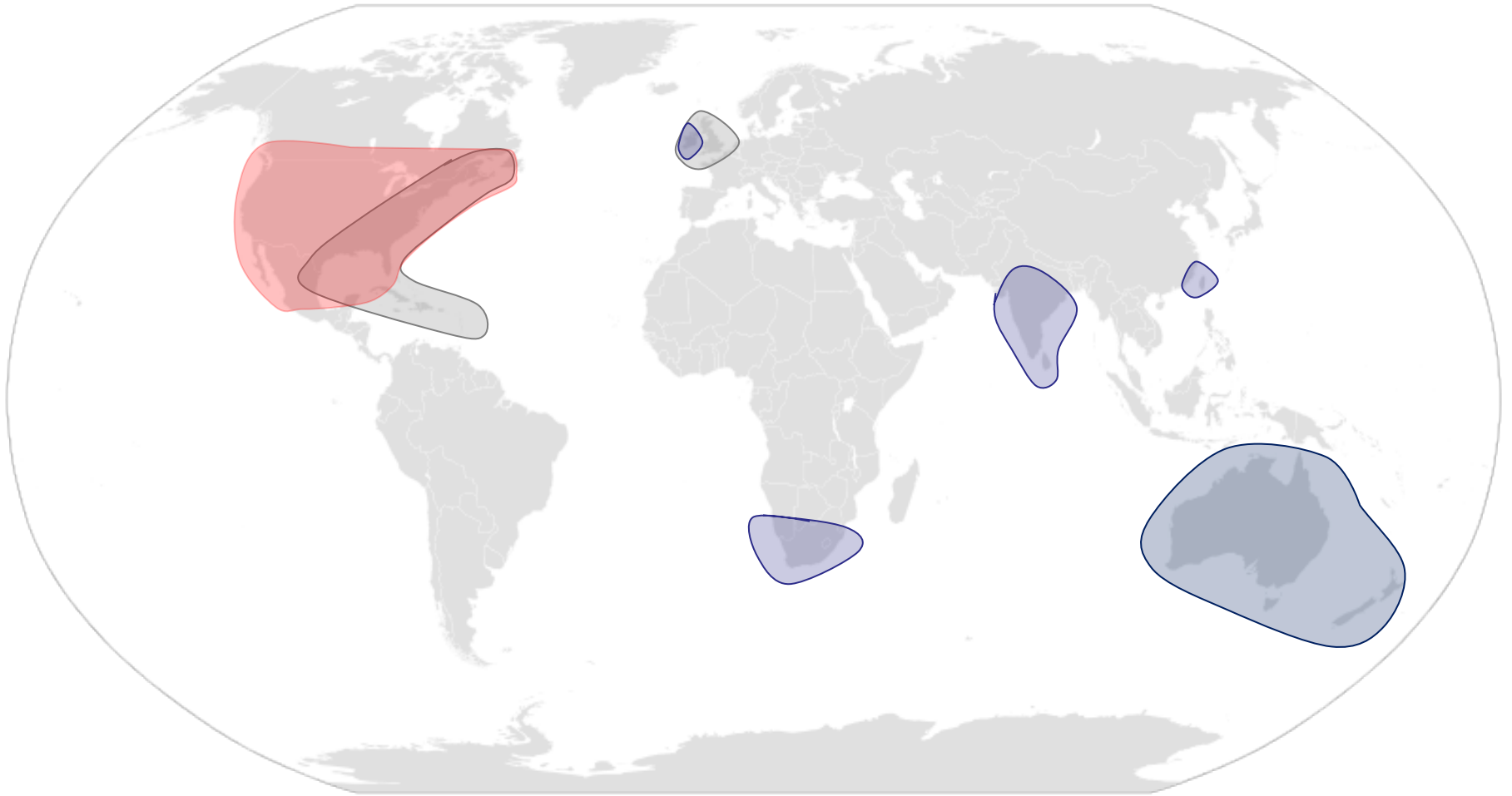
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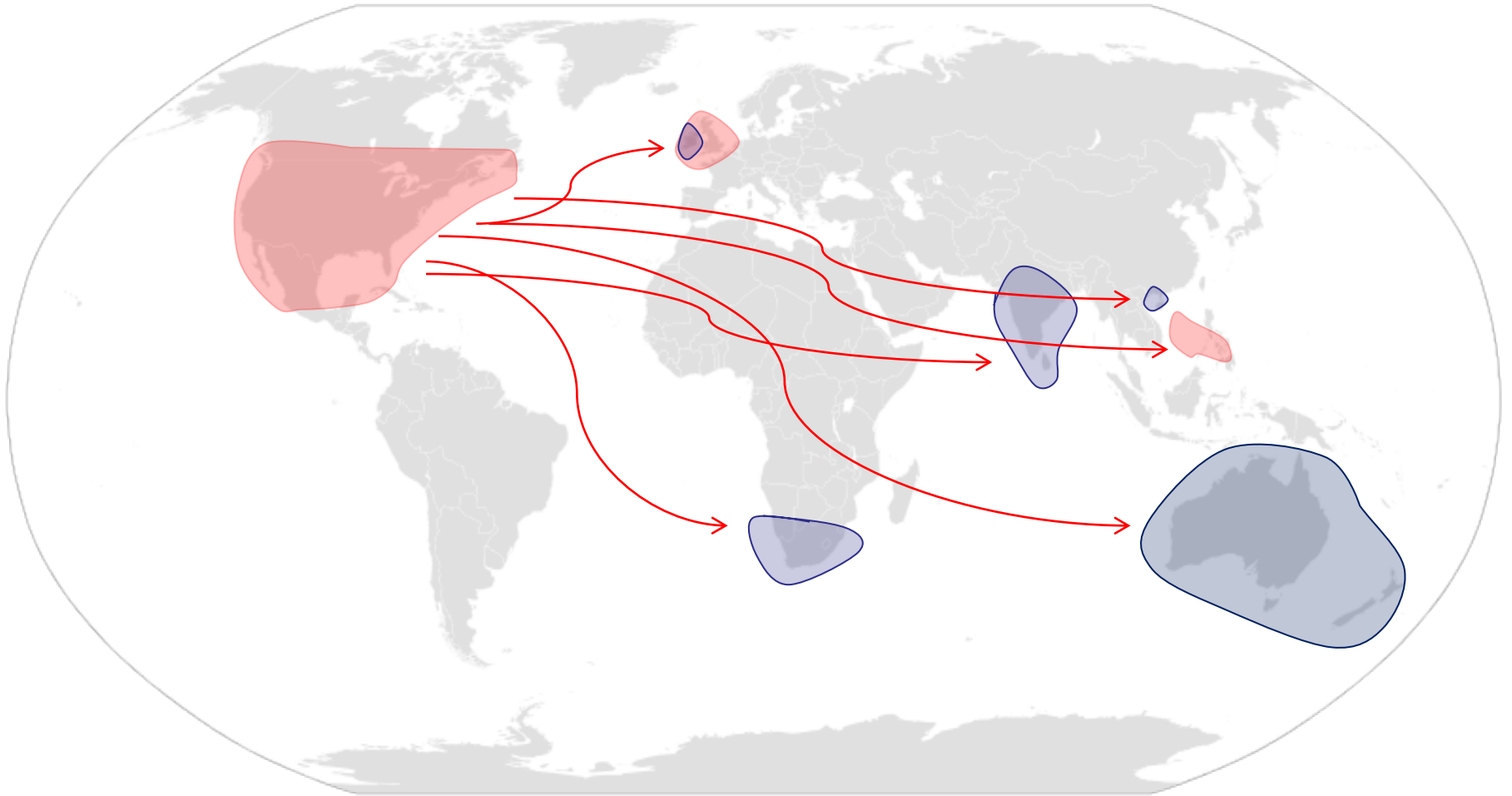
LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond



LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond



LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond



Discussion

- Differences in frequency
 - *Identity marking*
 - *Clause-final LIKE as a marker of “Irishness”*
 - *Clause-medial LIKE as a marker of “US American culture”*
 - *Covert prestige*
 - *Middle-aged and older speakers in England rejected LIKE as a marker of “Americanization”*
 - *Among the younger generation clause-medial LIKE has covert prestige as a marker of US American culture*

Discussion

- The social meaning of LIKE
 - H1₂: Adolescents exhibit higher frequencies of LIKE than older speakers.
 - H1₃: Adolescent females exhibit the highest frequencies.

LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond

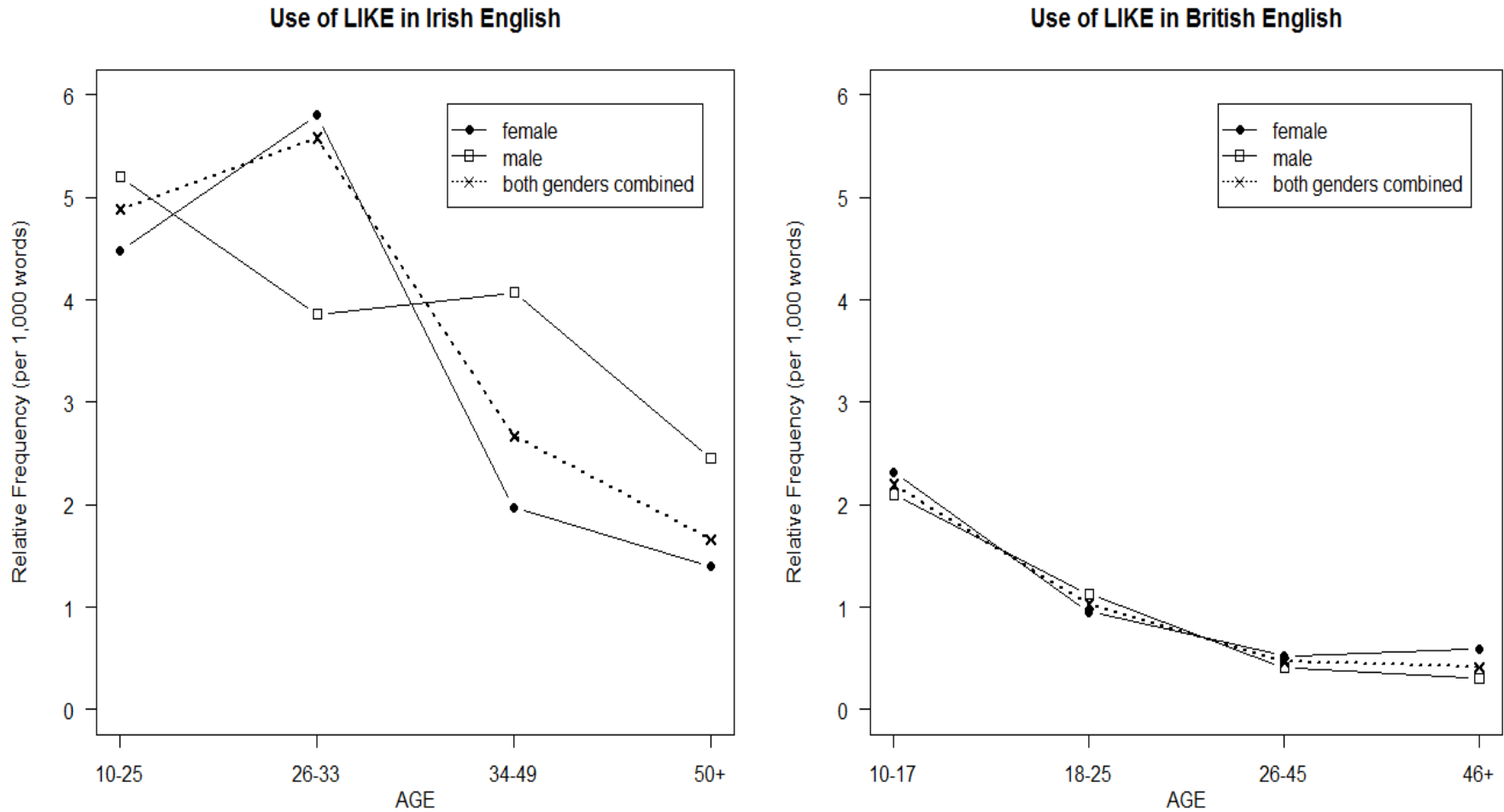


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LIKE in Irish English, British English, and beyond

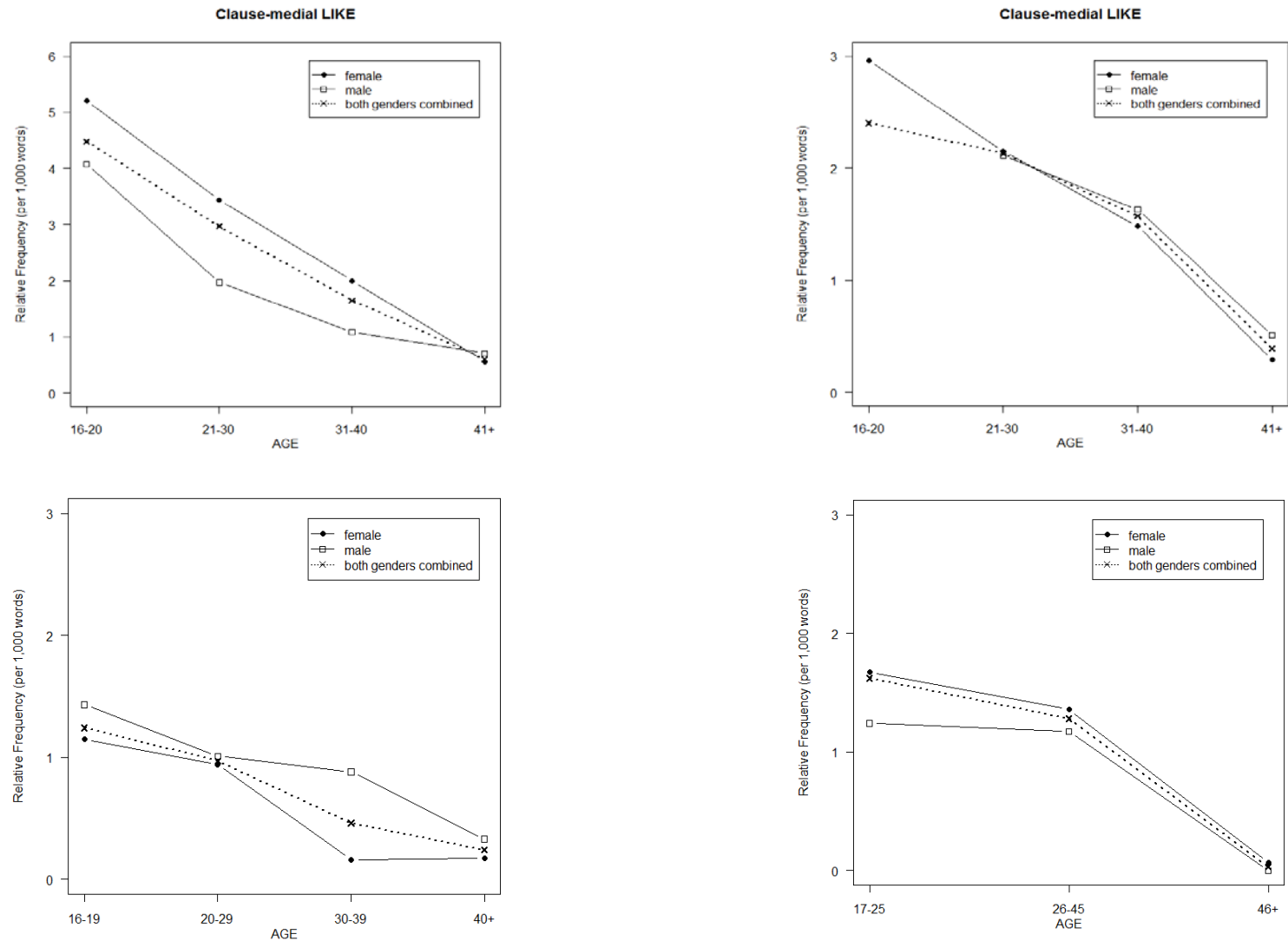


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Discussion

- The social meaning of LIKE
 - H_{1_2} : Adolescents exhibit higher frequencies of LIKE than older speakers
 - H_{1_3} : Adolescent females exhibit the highest frequencies.

Discussion

- The social meaning of LIKE

- H1₂: Adolescents exhibit higher frequencies of LIKE than older speakers. (✓)

- H1₃: Adolescent females exhibit the highest frequencies. (✗)

Discussion

- The social meaning of LIKE

- AGE

- Younger speakers use LIKE consistently more than older speakers

BUT

- In Irish English it is not the youngest age cohort that uses LIKE most, but the second youngest (speakers aged 26 to 33)

Discussion

- The social meaning of LIKE
 - SEX/GENDER
 - The gender distributions of LIKE use are rather varied and do not seem to follow a coherent trend.
 - The effect of gender appears to be culture specific.

Summary

- LIKE is very common in Irish English
- Clause-final LIKE is typically “Irish”
- The social profile of LIKE
 - Young speakers use it more than older speakers (angloversal)
 - The effect of gender appears to be culture specific.
- LIKE originated on the British Isles and has spread across the English-speaking world in two waves
 - 1st across the British Isles/over-sea settlements (clause-final LIKE)
 - 2nd from America across the world (clause-medial LIKE).

Thank you very much!

You can find the slides, the references, the data and most of the r-scripts for the graphs on my homepage:

martinschweinberger.de

(Publications >> Presentations & Talks)

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