‘I Ø hoping this will find you all in the same [good health]’

Be-deletion in Irish English, 1730-1840

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## Attested BE-deletion in eWAVE (Kortmann & Lunkenheimer 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature No. (K&amp;L)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Attested in varieties worldwide (%)</th>
<th>Attested in Br. &amp; Ir. varieties</th>
<th>Attested in traditional L1 (total n=10; in bold typeface) or high-contact L1 (total n=22) varieties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>Deletion of copula be: before NPs</td>
<td>He Ø a good teacher</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>IrE</td>
<td>IrE, Urban AAVE, Rural AAE, Earlier AAE, Bahamian E, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha, Liberian Settler E, Coll. Singapore E, Philippine E, Aboriginal E (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178</td>
<td>Deletion of copula be: before locatives</td>
<td>He Ø at home</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>IrE</td>
<td>IrE, Urban AAVE, Rural AAE, Earlier AAE, Bahamian E, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha, Liberian Settler E, Philippine E, Coll. Singapore E, Aboriginal E (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>177</td>
<td>Deletion of copula be: before AdjPs</td>
<td>She Ø smart</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>IrE</td>
<td>IrE, Urban AAVE, Rural AAE, Earlier AAE, Bahamian E, Liberian Settler E, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha, Philippine E, Coll. Singapore E, Aboriginal E (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174</td>
<td>Deletion of auxiliary be: before progressive</td>
<td>So you Ø always thinking about where where you go to work</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>IrE</td>
<td>IrE, Urban AAVE, Ozark E, Appalachian E, Rural AAE, Earlier AAE, Bahamian E, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha, Liberian Settler E, White Zimbabwean E, Coll. Singapore E, Philippine E, Aboriginal E, AusE, Maltese E (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td>Deletion of auxiliary be: before gonna</td>
<td>I Ø gonna go work</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>IrE, SEEEng, SWEng, ChIsE</td>
<td>IrE, SEEEng, SWEng, ChIsE, Urban AAVE?, Ozark E, Appalachian E, Rural AAE, Earlier AAE, Bahamian E, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha, Liberian Settler E, White Zimbabwean E, Coll. Singapore E, Philippine E, Aboriginal E, AusE (18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BE-deletion in GB and Ireland today

• Little research

• Deletion in existential-*there* clauses:
  – Ayr (Macauley 1991), Cumnock, Ayrshire (Tagliamonte & Smith 2002)
  – Cullybackey, Co. Antrim (Tagliamonte & Smith 2002)
  – NIrE in general (Pietsch 2005a, 2005b)

• Deletion in wider contexts:
  – West Riding (Melchers 1972)
  – Wheatley Hill, Northumbria (Tagliamonte 2013)
  – Waterford, southeast Ireland (Hickey 2001, 2007)
**BE-deletion in GB and Ireland in the past**

- Even littler research

- Deletion of copula and auxiliary:
  - Sporadically from OE on (Visser 1963)
  - Late 18\textsuperscript{th}-c. West Riding (Giner & Montgomery 2001)
Constraints on be-deletion in AAE, etc.

Preceding grammatical environments (Rickford 1998, etc.)

- personal pronoun > NP > other pronoun

Following grammatical environments (Rickford 1998, etc.)

- gonna > V-ing > Adj. > Loc. > NP

Be (near-)categorically present (Blake 1997, etc.)

- Past-tense be (was, were)
- Be in clause-final position
- Non-finite be (infinitive, imperative, modal + be constructions)
- First-person singular am
- Existential-there contexts
- WITT contexts (what, it, that, this)
Be-deletion in Waterford (after Hickey 2007: 176–177)

*Deletion of BE occurs mainly with 3rd-person subjects*

1. She Ø not too far up the road. (WER, F55+)
2. But how as ever, they Ø all big now. (WER, M50+)

*Also with 1st-person subjects*

3. When I Ø gettin’ in the car, I do be kind of a bit shaky on my feet. (WER, F85+)
4. I Ø not saying they’re doing great, but they’re okay. (WER, F85+)
Be-deletion in Waterford (after Hickey 2007: 176–177)

*Deletion of BE with existential-there*
1. She Ø [is] never lonely, there Ø always someone there. (WER, F45+)

*Deletion of BE in what contexts*
2. Another woman, what Ø her name? (WER, F80+)
Be-deletion in Waterford (after Hickey 2007: 176–177)

*Deletion of BE followed by gonna/going to*
1. I don’t know what he Ø going to do. (WER, F55+)

*Deletion of BE followed by V-ing*
2. She Ø looking well, isn’t she? (WER, M50+)

*Deletion of BE followed by BE after V-ing*
3. Some say, they Ø after buying the ground. (WER, M55+)
Be-deletion in Waterford (after Hickey 2007: 176–177)

_Deletion of BE followed by AdjP_
1. And J . . . ’s doing a great job, yeah, he Ø great now. (WER, F80+)
2. She Ø lonely after the husband, I suppose. (WER, F55+)

_Deletion of BE followed by LocP_
3. She Ø not too far up the road. (WER, F55+)

_Deletion of BE followed by NP_
4. What happened then was there Ø a chap here in Rice Park. (WER, M50+)
5. Another woman, what Ø her name? (WER, F80+)
Evidence from Earlier Irish English (CORIECOR and Cullen, Shovlin & Truxes 2013)

Copula BE

John ø the same good-natured pleasing man that I remember him in Ireland (Mary Cumming, Co. Antrim/Down, 25.11.1811)

and my name ø William = and I understood that I was my uncle’s intended Heir – (William Neely, Co. (London)Derry, 24.06.1811)

but I ø a feared thats too much out of the way for you, (John Besnard, Cork, 02.03.1757; in Cullen et al. 2013: 93)
Evidence from Earlier Irish English (CORIECOR and Cullen, Shovlin & Truxes 2013)

Auxiliary BE

I Ø not saying this before yours faces it is far behind your backs (John Stevenson Sinclair, Co. Derry, 20.07.1880)

some few was [tried?] in Carrickfergus and Down; and all Ø acquit
Except four or five whose crimes was Felony and suffered; (Henry Johnston, Co. Down, 20.04.1773)
Evidence from Earlier Irish English (CORIECOR and Cullen, Shovlin & Truxes 2013)

Existential-*there*

Shou’d I meet any disappointments in them Shall lay it all at your Door as *there Ø no such thing* as Children being naturally bad, (Walter Codd, Dublin, 21.10.1756; in Cullen et al. 2013: 114)

I will not promise how soon as *their Ø nothing but one thing certain* (James Horner, Co. (London)Derry, 10.12.1803)
Evidence from Earlier Irish English (CORIECOR and Cullen, Shovlin & Truxes 2013)

Non-finite *be*

he wrot me to send him Directions to Direct to you and probil How to travel to you I did not nor will not for nither William, George nor Robert Neely would Ø any credit to you (Benjamin Neely, Co. (London)Derry, 05.05.1820)

N.B. If Beef and Pork is not to Ø Procd on Reasonable Terms thee will be pleased to ship me from England the following Articles. Viz. ... (John Greer, Co. Tyrone, 05.01.1778)

I’m pleased Ø able to hear that my lands are fixd upon Pedee in the King’s division as I may expect them Clean of Quit - Rent for ten years from the felling the patent (A. Dobbs, Co. Antrim, 01.01.1749)
‘Be’-deletion in Irish

Identifying clauses
Ø Múinteoir é an fear sin
Ø teacher he the man that
‘That man is a teacher’

Ø Bríd mo bhean
Ø Bríd my wife
‘Bríd is my wife’

That-/this contexts
Ø Sin scéal eile
Ø that story other
‘That’s another story’

Ø Sin teanga nach dtuigim.
Ø that language not-that understand-I
‘That’s a language I do not understand’

(after Ó Siadhail 1989: 244)

(after Hickey 2007: 176, fn.22, 2013)
### Be-deletion in CORIECOR, 1731–1840

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Tokens/100k words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1731–99</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>180,000</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800–10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43,000</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811–20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821–30</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831–40</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>179,000</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>253</td>
<td><strong>687,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>34.2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BE-deletion in CORIECOR (1731–1840; n=253)
BE-deletion in IrE by following grammatical environment, 1731–1840 (n=253)

BE-deletion Hierarchy in IrE (following environments):
Part./Adj. > V-ing > Loc./NP > going to
BE-deletion in IrE by subject type, 1731–1840 (n=253)

BE-deletion Hierarchy in IrE (preceding environments):
NP > Personal pronoun (/ > Other Pers.Prn.) > WITT > Existential-there > Others
Be-deletion in Irish English – conclusions

- Be-deletion existed in IrE in 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} c.
- Lowish rates of occurrence
- Possibly declining
Be-deletion in Irish English – conclusions

- Constraint hierarchy in preceding environments totally unlike AAVE, Caribbean creoles, etc.

- Constraint hierarchy in following environments totally unlike AAVE, Caribbean creoles, etc.
Be-deletion in Irish English – preliminary conclusions

Deletion in IrE in
- existential-*there* contexts
- WITT contexts

Deletion in IrE of
- 1st-person *am*
- past-tense *was/were*
- non-finite *be* forms

Unlike present-day AAVE
**but** like Earlier AAE!

Might IrE be one source of *be*-deletion in other Englishes?
Further work

- Complete diachronic survey
- Investigate geographical distribution in IrE
- Investigate social dimensions
- Look further into issue of Irish (Gaelic) substrate influence
‘Now ... I must soon quit talking to yous for want of rom’

(William Fife, Drumcullion, Co. Fermanagh, January 18 1860)
References


References


McCafferty, Kevin 2014. “I don’t care one cent what goying on in Great Britten”: be-deletion in Irish English. American speech 89.4: ***–***.


