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Appendix

Target words elicited from subjects with their target pronunciation (only the target vowels in bold type in the spelling have been analyzed):

/ɛ/	/ɔ/	[ə]
cab**e**ll [kəˈβɛʎ]	esc**o**la [əsˈkɔlə]	g**e**gant [ʒəˈɣan]
c**e**l [ˈsɛl]	fl**o**r [ˈflɔ]	menj**a**dor [mənʒəˈðo]
jers**ei** [ʒəɾˈsɛj]	futb**o**l [fubˈbɔl]	p**a**pallona [pəpəˈʎonə]
pedr**e**ta [pəˈðɾɛtə]	gr**o**c [ˈgɾɔk]	p**a**per [pəˈpe]
p**e**ra [ˈpɛɾə]	n**o**u [ˈnɔw]	p**a**perera [pəpəˈɾeɾə]
per**e**ta [pəˈɾɛtə]	**o**li [ˈɔli]	pedr**e**ta [pəˈðɾɛtə]
princ**e**sa [pɾinˈsɛzə]	**o**lla [ˈɔʎə]	p**e**lut [pəˈlut]
s**e**tze [ˈsɛdzə]	pil**o**ta [piˈlɔtə]	per**e**ta [pəˈɾɛtə]
telè**e**fon [təˈlɛfun]	r**o**sa [ˈrɔzə]	p**e**tit [pəˈtit]
verm**e**ll [bəɾˈmɛʎ]	s**o**l [ˈsɔl]	tov**a**llola [tuβəˈʎɔlə]
z**e**ro [ˈzɛɾu]	tar**o**nja [təɾˈɔnʒə]	–
–	tovall**o**la [tuβəˈʎɔlə]	–

Prepositional aspect constructions in Hiberno-English

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Tense-aspect periphrases of the structural type *be* + preposition + gerund have been a shared feature of Irish and English for several centuries. Its best-known instantiation is the so-called *after* perfect. However, it can best be accounted for in the context of the other, similar constructions, although some of these come from a historically different origin. Based on a scenario involving reinforcement of already present constructional possibilities in English through contact with Irish, it is suggested that the syntactic productivity of the prepositional construction schema in Irish was among the crucial cognitive factors that conditioned both the replication of the *after* construction and the strengthening and preservation of its siblings with *for* and *about* in Irish English.

Keywords: English, Hiberno-English, Irish, tense and aspect, grammaticalisation, syntactic productivity, Construction Grammar, contact linguistics, syntactic replication

1.   Introduction

This paper[1] deals with the history of a class of verbal periphrases of the type in (1), henceforth called "prepositional tense/aspect constructions", or "prepositional constructions" for short, in Irish English (Hiberno-English) and in Irish.

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(1)   a.   English:
         be + preposition + V-*ing*
      b.   Irish:
         bí + preposition + Verbal Noun

The best-known instance of this pattern is the so-called "*after* perfect" in Hiberno-English (2a) and its equivalent in Irish (2b).

(2)   a.   I am <u>after</u> going
      b.   *Tá   mé*   **tar éis**   *imeacht*
            is   me   after   going

This, however, is only one member of a whole family of equally interesting – if less prominent – patterns, which has been quite productive in Irish and to a somewhat lesser extent in Hiberno-English. In Irish, at least the following prepositions have been attested in this role: *ag* 'at', *i*^N 'in', *do* 'to', *ar* 'on', *iar*^N 'after', *tar éis* 'after', *i ndiaidh* 'after', *chun* 'towards', *le* 'with', *ar tí* 'on the point of'.[2] In English, the relevant items include *on, for, about, after,* and *upon.* In both languages, these constructions cover the aspecto-temporal semantic areas of simultaneity (duration/progressive), retrospectivity (perfect) and prospectivity.

This article will put forward the hypothesis that the parallel development of the English constructions following the Irish ones is at least partly due to language contact, even though the scenario is not a straightforward one. In the previous literature, only the *after* perfect has generally been recognised as a clear instance of structural transfer. The other, minor instantiations of the pattern are partly not yet very well documented historically, and – what is even more problematic from a contact-linguistic point of view – some of them have not been restricted to Ireland but are also attested in other, unrelated varieties. The pattern *be* + preposition + VP was an option whose structural foundations were already present in English, in the form of one or two minor, peripheral instantiations, when English-Irish contact was in its crucial stage. However, under contact with Irish, and enriched with new lexical instantiations such as the *after* perfect, it was apparently reinforced and gained significantly in productivity and frequency in Hiberno-English as compared with other varieties.

2.   Following a notation convention of Celtic linguistics, superscript letters in cited forms of Irish words, here and further below, denote initial consonant mutation patterns triggered on the following word. Superscript L stands for lenition, N for nasalisation (eclipsis). (See Mac Eoin 1993; Ó Siadhail 1989, for details).

Besides the purely historical interest inherent in this scenario, there is also a theoretical concern to this discussion. The contact scenario crucially involves cognitive acts of "interlingual identification" (Weinreich 1953) between abstract structural patterns in the two languages that are functionally and formally similar but not identical. This implies an approach to grammatical theory that takes the "construction" to be a central unit in the organisation of linguistic knowledge. In particular, I will argue that an approach based on Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995, 2006) lends itself best to the description of this process, where interlingual identification seems to have operated simultaneously on the level of the more abstract constructional schema of 'be' + preposition + VP, and on the level of its specific, lexically filled instantiations with their individual semantic and pragmatic properties, such as the *after* perfect.

The paper is organised as follows: In Sections 2–3, I will provide an historical survey of the constructions in question. I will first give a brief outline of the situation in Irish (Section 2), based on the existing descriptive literature. This will serve as the typological backdrop to the developments in Hiberno-English. The situation in English will be the subject of Section 3. This section will present original corpus data from Hiberno-English material of the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as some comparative data from British varieties. Section 4 will then provide discussion and comparison of the data and relate them to the theoretical issue of a cognitively plausible modelling of contact-induced change.

2.   Irish

In Irish, prepositional tense/aspect constructions – known in the grammatical literature under terms such as "aimsirí timchainteacha" ("periphrastic tenses", Bráithre Críostaí 1960: 173), "periphrastic aspectual phrases" (Ó Siadhail 1989: 294–302), or "conjugaison périphrastique" (Gagnepain 1963: 240) – have been a feature of the language for a long time, although most of them have not been fully grammaticalised to the same extent as in some other modern Celtic languages (Ó Corráin 1997). Table 1 lists the patterns that are or have been attested, for a brief overview. These constructions can be seen as a family linked together by a common semantic schema instantiated by each, and by a common syntactic shape – even though, it should be noted, the syntactic structure of the embedded verbal noun clause differs somewhat between constructions.[3]

3.   Internal differences relate mostly to the coding of object NPs within the verbal noun clause. While in some types they are coded as genitives following the verbal noun, in others they are preposed to a position before the verbal noun, and separated from it by a particle *a*.

Table 1. Prepositional tense/aspect constructions in Irish.

Construction	Lexical source	Function
ag + VN	'at'	Progressive
i^N + poss. + VN	'in'	Progressive (unaccusatives)
do^L + poss. + VN	'to'	Progressive (passive)
a^L + VN (< *do*)	'to'	Progressive (in wh-movement environments)
for/ar + VN	'on'	Durative
iar^N/*ar*^{N} + VN	'after'	Perfect
tar éis + VN	'after'	Perfect
i ndiaidh + VN	'after'	Perfect
chun + VN	'towards'	Prospective (intentional)
le + VN	'for/with'	Prospective (obligative)

2.1   *Ag* 'at', *do* 'to', and *i* 'in'

The preposition *ag* (Old Irish *oc*) has been attested in the pattern *be at* V-*ing* since the earliest medieval documents of Irish (Gagnepain 1963: 49). While in Old Irish it was still only in an early phase of its grammaticalisation and not yet consistently used to denote progressive aspect (Ronan 2003), its use has steadily expanded and gained in importance throughout the history of Irish (Gagnepain 1963: 141). In Scots Gaelic and Welsh, a similar progressive construction has all but ousted the simple tense forms in many environments (Ó Corráin 1997).

Within the progressive construction, *ag* alternates with some other prepositional items depending on the environment. In passive clauses, *ag* is replaced by *do* 'to'. (As is generally the case in Irish, the passive itself is marked not by verb morphology, but by the presence of a resumptive possessive pronoun marking the patient of the verbal noun as coreferential with the subject).

(3) *tá   mé   do   mo   bhualadh*
     ís   I$_i$ to   my$_i$ beating
     'I am being beaten.'

Additionally, in some constellations where the order between the verbal noun and its objects differs from the canonical structure, especially when the object is moved out of the verbal noun clause by means of *wh*-movement, the preposition is further weakened and replaced by *a*^{L}, also historically a reflex of *do*. Yet another alternation occurs with a certain closed class of intransitive (unaccusative) verbs, most of them expressing physical position or state. Here, *ag* is replaced by *i*^{N} 'in'. (The construction then also displays a special syntax similar to that of the passives

mentioned above, with a resumptive possessive pronoun between the preposition and the verbal noun.)

(4) *tá   sé   ina   shuí*
     is   he$_i$ in.his$_i$ sitting
     'he is sitting.'

2.2   *Iar* and *ar* 'on/after'

The historical situation with this group of prepositions is complex, owing mostly to the conflation of several source prepositions during Middle and Early Modern Irish (Gagnepain 1963: 174, 261, 287; Greene 1979; Ó Sé 2004: 191f.). In 17th-century Irish, there was one preposition *ar* 'on', itself a product of an earlier merger of two items *ar* and *for*; and another preposition *iar*^{N} > *ar*^{N} 'after'. Both items came to be distinguished only by the pattern of initial mutation triggered on the following word, and their functions tended to be conflated, to the point where *ar*^{N} 'after' was eventually replaced by other items *(tar éis, i ndiaidh).*

For/ar 'on' had been an alternative to *ag* as an item expressing duration of a state or action in certain environments. Its use in such a durative function can be traced back to roughly the 14th or 15th century. In the 17th century, it occurred in passive progressives (5) and in progressives of some intransitive verbs (6).

(5) *do chleachtadh   Ceat   inchinn   Mheis-Geaghra*
     was.accustomed Ceat   brain   M.G.GEN
     do   bheith **ar   iomchar   *aige***
     PRT   being   on   carrying   at.him
     'Ceat used to carry Meis Geaghra's brain with him.' [Gagnepain 1963: 289]

(6) *an roth   geintlidhe do bhí* **ar   siubhal** *ar   dhorus an   dúnaidh*
     the wheel magic   REL was on   turning on   gate   the   fort.GEN
     'the magic wheel that was turning at the gate of the fort'
     [Gagnepain 1963: 289]

The near-homophonous *(i)ar*^{N} 'after' was the original item used to form the 'after' perfect. Isolated instances of it in this function have been attested since the 12th century, but it did not become common in the written language until the 16th or 17th century (Ó Sé 2004: 187–189). Unlike in present-day Irish, where its prototypical use is to denote recent past (as is also characteristic of the Hiberno-English *after* perfect), at earlier stages it could also express more generally perfect and relative-past meanings, as in (7). It was then ousted from this wider use by the rise of a rival construction, the participial perfect of the type *tá sé déanta agam* 'I have it done' (Ó Corráin 2006: 167).

2nd proofs

(7) *Dia   fíre   do   Dhia fhíre, atá*   **iarn** -*a* **gheineamhoin**
     God   true   from God true, REL.is after his begetting
     gan   déanomh
     NEG   making
     'true God of true God, who was begotten, not created'
     [1616; Uí Bheirn 2004]

The durative construction with *ar* 'on' and the perfect construction with *(i)ar*N 'after' were formally indistinguishable in some environments and were sometimes conflated. Thus (8) shows an instance where the preposition can morphologically be identified as *(i)ar*N 'after' but behaves semantically more like the earlier durative *ar* 'on', while (9) shows a sentence containing two instances that are formally identical, but of which the first can be glossed as present/durative and the second as perfect.

(8) *bíaidh   an ghrían arna   dhorchughadh*
     is.FUT   the sun   after.its darkening
     'the sun will be darkened.' (Lat. 'sol obscurabitur') [Ó Corráin 2006:157]

(9) *gé   atá mo chorp* **ar** **marthain** / *táim*   **ar**   <u>*scarthain*</u>
     although is   my body <u>on</u> living /   is.1SG <u>after</u> parting
     rem   anam
     from.my   soul
     'although my body lives, I have parted from my soul.' [Ó Sé 2004:191]

From the 17th century onwards, *(i)ar* 'after' became obsolete in Irish in most environments and was lexically replaced by other items, composite prepositional expressions such as *tar éis* (contracted *tréis*) and *i ndiaidh*. These also took over its role in the perfect periphrasis.

2.3   *Le* 'with', *chun* 'towards'

Besides the progressive and perfect constructions discussed so far, Irish has for a long time had a number of future-oriented, prospective periphrases. They use the prepositions *le*, *chun*, as well as several composite prepositional items.
    Chun 'towards' (from earlier *dochum*) has been attested in this function since the 15th century in written Irish, but has reportedly become restricted to Munster dialects (O'Rahilly 1932:233). The form *le* is today identified with the lexeme *le* 'with'. However, historically it is a reflex of yet another case of a merger with a different preposition, *fri > ré > lé*, which has gone through a semantic development from orientation in space ('facing towards') through adversative ('against'), comitative ('with') to instrument ('with') meanings, as well as meanings of goal ('to')

and purpose ('for'). Its usage in a periphrastic construction with verbal nouns or other process nouns can be traced back to Old Irish (Gagnepain 1963:69, *Dictionary of the Irish Language*). Today *le* is used either in intransitives (10), or in passives, which in turn can either express possibility (11) or necessity/obligation (12). In many cases, its most natural translation equivalent in Standard English would be *be to* V.

(10) *Tá sé   le   theacht amáireach*
      is   he with/for/to coming tomorrow
      'He is to come tomorrow.'

(11) *Níl   dada   le   fáil*
      NEG.is nothing with/for/to getting
      'there is nothing to be got.'

(12) *Tá an leabhar le   léamh   agam*
      is   the book   with/for/to reading at.me
      'The book is to be read by me.'

In environments where both *le* and *chun* are possible, they are reported to contrast in such a way that *le* carries implications of obligation, *chun* of intentionality (Ó Siadhail 1989:296, 293). Finally, the distinction between *ar tí* ('on the point of') and *chun* is described in Bráithre Críostaí (1960:173) as one of immediate versus non-immediate futurity.

3.   English

We can now turn to the situation in English, both in the British English of the time of contact (i.e. mainly the 17th/18th century), and in Hiberno-English itself. The main data source for the treatment of Hiberno-English in this investigation, besides existing studies such as Bliss (1979), Filppula (1999) and McCafferty (2003, 2004, 2006), is a preliminary version of the *Hamburg Corpus of Irish English*, a collection of dialectal, subliterary English texts of Irish provenance, currently compiled at the University of Hamburg.[4] The material used in this study amounts to some 270,000 words of text. For varieties outside Ireland, a number of subsidiary data sources were used, in particular: the *Old Bailey Proceedings Online,* a large

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4.   The corpus consists for the most part of letters written either in the context of emigration (written to or from Ireland), or of the social and political unrest in the country (prisoners' letters, anonymous threatening letters, petitions etc.). The material collected for this purpose is complemented with some similar material already published in other sources, such as O'Farrell (1984), Fitzpatrick (1994), and Miller et al. (2003).

Table 2. Prepositional tense/aspect constructions in English.

Construction	Function
on + V-*ing*	Middle English progressive, obsolete
(will be) after + V-*ing*	Durative (?), 17th/18th cent.
(will be) for + V-*ing* †	Durative (?), 17th cent.
(will be) upon + V-*ing* †	Durative (?), 17th cent.
after + V-*ing*	Perfect
about + V-*ing*	Prospective (immediate)
for + V-*ing*	Prospective (intentional)
on + V-*ing* †	Prospective (imminent necessity)?

† Only sparse attestations; *hapax legomena*

collection of published trial records spanning the time between 1670 and 1834; the *Corpus of Late 18th Century Prose* (Van Bergen/Denison 2003,[5] henceforth *CL18CP*), which consists of letters written by and to the manager of a large rural estate in north-west England during the late 18th century; a corpus of New York newspaper advertisements, also from the late 18th century (Triggs 1996); and finally some data from the *Corpus of 19th Century English (CONCE)* (Kytö/Rudanko 2000[6]).

What we find in English is, again, a whole group of seemingly similar constructions (see Table 2 for an overview). They came from different sources, some of them within Standard English and some directly replicated from Irish.[7] Because of the heterogeneity of the sources, the contact effect did not result in an exact one-to-one correspondence between all items involved across the two languages. However, the net effect was nevertheless one of structural convergence:

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5. The *Corpus of Late 18th Century Prose,* compiled by Linda van Bergen and David Denison, was created in the course of the research project "The English language of the north-west in the late Modern English period" at the University of Manchester, on the basis of material held in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

6. The *Corpus of Nineteenth-Century English (CONCE)* was compiled under the supervision of Merja Kytö and Juhani Rudanko at Uppsala University and University of Tampere in May 2000. My thanks go to Merja Kytö, who kindly ran several corpus searches for me and provided me with the excerpted search lists.

7. Of the constructions listed here, the Middle English progressive with *on* needs not to be considered further, as it had long become obsolete by the time of the the Irish-English contact. Hypotheses about the role of a different (British) Celtic contact effect involved in its development cannot be treated in this paper (cf. Keller 1925; Wagner 1959; Elsness 1994; Vezzosi 1996; Poppe/Mittendorf 2000; Poppe 2002, 2003; Filppula 2003).

as the outcome, we find a family of constructions in Hiberno-English that bears unmistakeable points of correspondence to the Irish one.

3.1   Non-perfect *after* and related uses

Before dealing with the well-known *after* perfect itself, we need to discuss a group of curious use types found in earlier (17th and 18th century) literary representations of Hiberno-English, which have given rise to a good deal of discussion and some puzzlement in the literature (Bliss 1979: 302f.; Filppula 1999: 99–107; McCafferty 2003, 2004; Ó Sé 2004; Ó Corráin 2006). Here, *after,* as well as other prepositions (at least according to some isolated attestations) are employed in a function that is not easily definable but clearly distinct from the perfect function familiar from later stages of the dialect. The preposition is typically combined with other markers of non-present time, most frequently a future-oriented modal such as *will* or *would* (13). The resulting construction generally appears to have the temporal meaning expressed in Standard English by the same combination just without the prepositional element, rendering the preposition itself seemingly otiose. This use type has been dubbed the "futuric" *after* (McCafferty 2003), although it is far from obvious in what sense the preposition as such really contributes futuric meaning to the overall construction.

(13)   I expect your honour <u>will be after doing</u> the same this year
(= '…will be doing…'?)
[1800, quoted in McCafferty 2004: 140]

According to one opinion proposed by several older authors and most recently upheld to some extent by Ó Sé (2004: 243), non-perfect *after* should be seen with scepticism and should most probably be discarded as an inauthentic artefact of "stage Irish", produced by English authors not natively familiar with the dialect. However, McCafferty (2004) and Ó Corráin (2006) argue convincingly for its authenticity, which leaves us with the question of how to analyse it semantically. *Pace* Hickey (2000: 100) it seems fairly clear that the construction is semantically distinct from the perfect *after* and that the semantic contribution made by the preposition is not one of perfect (relative past); thus the combinations with *will* cannot simply be analysed as future perfects (McCafferty 2004: 102). However, McCafferty's alternative proposal, of analysing *after* as a separate futuric construction, meets with some empirical difficulties too. McCafferty (2004) develops an ingenious scenario according to which *after* underwent two parallel and partly simultaneous grammaticalisation processes, one leading to a perfect and the other to a prospective/future. This duplicity would be motivated by the "Ianus-like"

properties of the source semantics of locative *after,* in connection with different ways how time relations are conceptually mapped into the metaphorical domain of space. However, there is little or no evidence that *after,* on its own, could constitute future or prospective meaning. All the examples McCafferty quotes seem to owe their future semantics first and foremost to the presence of *will* or other elements of the grammatical context.

We are thus left with the hypothesis proposed by Bliss (1979: 302) as the most likely explanation for this curious construction. Bliss proposes that it is a borrowing from a different source preposition, the preposition *ar* 'on'. As discussed earlier in Section 2.2, the prepositions *iar*[N] 'after' and *ar* 'on' had become confusable in Irish for phonological reasons and were in a state of variability. Ó Corráin (2006), building further on Bliss' hypothesis, demonstrates that *iar*[N] had intruded into non-past environments and was being used in ways quite similar to the nonperfect *after* attestations in English. Ó Corráin points especially to the correspondence between examples such as (14a, b) and (15a, b).[8]

(14) a.   You vill be after being damn'd
      b.   *beidh   tú   ar   do   fhliuchadh*
           be.FUT you   after your making.moist
           'you will be made moist.'

(15) a.   I vill be after being absolv'd
      b.   *biaidh   mé   air   mo   ghlanadh*
           be.FUT   I   after my   cleansing
           'I will be cleansed.'

Both the seemingly non-perfect Irish *iar* constructions and the English non-perfect *after* constructions are very frequently used in passive forms, just like the original Irish *ar* 'on' construction was. Moreover, many of the uses of English *after* appear to be consistent with a reading of durativity, also corresponding to the original meaning of *ar* 'on'.[9]

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8.   An anonymous reviewer questions the formal parallel observed here (which Ó Corráin calls "patently obvious"), on the grounds of the different morphosyntactic material employed by the Irish and English constructions (in particular, *being* + passive participle on the English and possessive + verbal noun on the Irish side). The parallel, however, lies in the fact that the possessive construction – as in *mo ghlanadh* 'my cleansing' – represents the standard way Irish marks passives in periphrases of this type; thus both the English and the Irish construction ultimately consist of an element denoting futurity, an element denoting the passive, and the preposition *ar/after.*

9.   McCafferty, too, notes (2004: 138) that some examples he cannot easily classify as futuric have "connotations of past habituality with no sense of prediction" or "iterative meanings".

Somewhat more dubious as to their authenticity are a few attestations found in one early text edited and discussed in Bliss (1979: 124f., 303), a short satirical piece of mock Irish English of 1684 called *Bog Witticisms,* where a similar usage is found not with *after,* but other prepositions: three times with *for* (16) and once with *upon* (17).

(16) a.   Y <u>vill be for mauking</u> Child upon dy Body
      b.   Vee <u>vill</u> shet up Housh-kepin and <u>be for livein</u> aul togadder
      c.   Dou <u>shaut be for sending</u> Aunswer to vaat Y hauve sent dee

(17) aund Y cannot <u>be upon vaaking</u> but the Deevil take me, Y do fall upon dreaming consharning thy shweet shelfe [Bliss 1979: 124]

Bliss notes that the source is "not a text which inspires much confidence" and that the structure may well be "the result of some error or misunderstanding".[10] However, whether or not the precise usage of the two prepositions is being rendered correctly, the passage may still be of interest, at least as indirect evidence of the stereotyped outside perception of the dialect. The occurrence of as many as four tokens of this kind in a short passage of a few lines indicates that the author intended them as part of the linguistic satire, i.e. as a reference to a marked and socially stigmatised Hibernism. As such, even if the author got the precise lexical usage wrong, these examples may well attest to the existence of the overall pattern of prepositional circumlocutions.

It is not unlikely that here, too, the Irish *iar/ar* confusability may ultimately provide the explanation. As the Irish equivalents of *after* and *on* were functionally merging in these kinds of constructions, *after* could easily be replaced with *upon* in the emerging English structure. Bliss specifically explains *upon waking* as a direct calque of Irish *ar múscailt ('awake',* lit. *'after waking up'*): in this idiom, *ar* etymologically represents *(i)ar*[N] 'after', but is formally indistinguishable from *ar* 'on' in this phonological environment.

3.2   The *after* perfect

The function and history of the *after* perfect proper in Hiberno-English needs not to be discussed in great detail here, as it is sufficiently known in the literature (Filppula 1999; Hickey 2000; McCafferty 2006). In short, *be after* V-*ing* is one of the characteristic Irish perfect constructions, sometimes dubbed a "hot-news" perfect (Harris 1984) or "immediate perfect". There is general agreement in the

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10.   A similar reservation is emphasised by an anonymous reviewer, who suggests that an isolated token like (17) "may be more an example of Saussure's *parole* than of *langue.*"

literature that it derives from Irish.[11] In present-day Hiberno-English, it contrasts with a second type of perfect, the transitive so-called "medial-object perfects" *(I have my dinner eaten)*, whose development has also often been discussed in relationship with a similar construction in Irish, the passival participial perfects (Filppula 1999; Ó Sé 2004; Pietsch 2005). The semantic distinction is mainly that the *after* perfect denotes an event in the immediately recent past relative to a reference time, whereas the medial-object perfect has resultative and statal uses.

Compared with the non-perfect *after* constructions of the 17th and 18th centuries discussed in the previous section, the perfect *after* construction is relatively young. McCafferty (2004: 139) demonstrates how the younger, perfect use of *after* ousted the older non-perfect ("futuric") use in the course of a century of variable usage, between roughly 1750 and 1850 (cf. also Filppula 1999: 104). McCafferty finds the earliest true, prototypical modern perfect token recorded in 1767 (18):

(18)   Why, friend, my master is Mr. Delamour, who is just after coming from Paris, …. [1767, quoted in McCafferty 2004: 139]

In modern dialect data, Filppula (1999: 101) notes an apparently higher frequency of the *after* perfect in Dublin speech as opposed to other dialects, and an "almost total absence" from the south-west; a fact possibly linked to the dialectal variation within Irish, where the south-western dialects of Munster and Connacht display less usage of the Irish *after* perfect and a relative preference for the passival participial perfect instead; see Ó Sé (2004).

Comparable data from the *Hamburg Corpus of Irish English* is not particularly conclusive, owing to small token counts. The corpus contains only seven attestations, all of them consistent with the expected recent-past semantics. The earlier non-perfect use of *after* is not attested. With the earliest perfect token recorded in 1851, the data would seem to corroborate the findings regarding a relatively late spread of the construction. It does not, however, confirm Filppula's geographical findings, as five out of the seven tokens are indeed from Munster writers, from the dialect area that according to Filppula least favoured the construction.

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11.   *Pace* Kelly (1989), who is quoted in the literature as having advocated an origin of the construction in English dialects from outside Ireland, based on scattered evidence of some similar usages in late-19th century and 20th century dialects. Unfortunately I was unable to access this paper (which is discussed briefly in McCafferty 2004: 124). I thank an anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to it.

3.3   *For*

Just as in Irish, the semantic domain of prospective (future-oriented) constructions has given rise to several prepositional constructions in English. The first to be discussed here is one using *for*, followed by a discussion of *about*. Both of these constructions differ from the *after* perfect in that Hiberno-English has shared them with emergent Standard English at some stage.

Be for V-*ing* was used in 17th and 18th century Standard English as a verbal prospective periphrasis, with a meaning of 'plan to V', 'intend to V'. While it soon became obsolete again in Standard English, it was preserved in very much the same function as a dialectal archaism in Irish English. This usage appears to be distinct from the doubtful nonce attestation of *will be for* V-*ing* in the 17th century text discussed earlier in Section 3.1. Although the construction is solidly attested in some corpora, it has not made it into the *Oxford English Dictionary* (henceforth *OED*) or into compendia such as Visser (1963), where only a semantically related usage with a non-verbal NP complement is mentioned (*be for* X = 'intend to go to X', 'be bound for X'; e.g. Visser 1963: I, 162). A typical example of the verbal periphrasis is (19).

(19)   Mr Ashton has bought the p*i*ece of Land late M^rs. Claytons that lyes between Laffock and m^r. orrels and <u>is for opening</u> the Collery […] he <u>is</u> not <u>for seling</u> any coales unles to a particular Flat and no money to be reciveʼd. [Th Billinge, 1788, CL18CP]

A useful overview of the diachrony of the usage of *for* in British (London-based) English can be gleaned from the *Old Bailey Proceedings*. The construction is already in existence, though rare, in the earliest parts of the corpus, between 1670 and 1700. It becomes fairly frequent during the first half of the 18th century, reaching a peak at around 1750, when it occurs in the records with a frequency well above the comparable constructions *be about to* V or *be about* V-*ing* (about which see next section). After 1770, it takes a very sudden decline, and by 1800 it has become decidedly marginal. The last, isolated, tokens recorded in this corpus are from 1820 and 1826. Table 3 shows the token and frequency figures across seven sub-periods.

The *for* construction is still relatively frequent in the *CL18CP*, of the late 18th century. With 13 instances in a corpus of just over 270,000 words, its raw textual frequency is somewhat higher than in the *Proceedings* (though such a direct comparison is of limited value, as raw text frequencies are obviously dependent on conditions of subject matter, genre and register); and it is also again a good deal more frequent than either the gerundial or the infinitival *about* construction within the same texts.

Table 3. Occurrences of *be for* V-*ing* in the *Old Bailey Proceedings*

	Tokens	Tokens per million words	Word count (approx.)
1670–1699	2	1.41	1,423,000
1700–1729	30	13.09	2,292,000
1730–1759	109	13.77	7,915,000
1760–1779	74	10.50	7,049,000
1780–1799	18	1.25	14,411,000
1800–1819	9	0.67	13,462,000
1820–1834	2	0.12	16,455,000
Total	244	3.87	63,007,000

The picture is different in other corpora, however. The New York newspaper advertisements corpus, roughly contemporary with the *CL18CP,* contains not a single example. The *CONCE,* finally, has only two apparent examples, both from private letters from the first decades of the 19th century.[12]

(20) a. My brother Tom looked very unwell yesterday, and I am <u>for shipping</u> him off to Lisbon.
      b. William is <u>for trying</u> for a Cure.

We may conclude that by the end of the 18th century, the *be for* V-*ing* construction had been effectively ousted from educated written British English. As the material from the *CL18CP* comes from a time when according to the *Proceedings* the structure seems to have already been on its decline in London speech, its continued presence in this material and its absence elsewhere probably point to a longer survival in more peripheral regional varieties.

The letters from the *Hamburg Corpus of Irish English* attest to the same kind of usage of *for*, and crucially, for its preservation all through the 19th century. Again, we must be content with much smaller token counts, due to the smaller corpus size and the overall rareness of the construction. The Hamburg corpus contains five tokens, produced by four different writers – considerably fewer than the earlier British *CL18CP,* but more than the contemporary *CONCE* in terms of

text frequency (considering that the letters-only part of the *CONCE* and the two other corpora are of roughly equal word count.)

(21) a. A last request I ask is to write by this ship what you are <u>for doing</u> [McLeeJ01, 1828]
      b. They are <u>for writing</u> soon [Hammon03, 1845]
      c. As he tells me that he is <u>for writeing</u> by this mail [McCanc03, 1859]
      d. But as he told me that he was <u>for writing</u> to you by this mail [McCanc04, 1860]
      e. I would like to let my mate know what I am <u>for doing</u> [Millik01, 1884]

By the late 19th century, the construction was apparently felt to be a characteristic marker of Irish dialectal speech. In a work on Irish folklore from the early 20th century (O'Neill 1913), it is found in a passage of a folk story purportedly "translated from the Irish" (22). The nonstandard construction is evidently used here to give the language an Irish stylistic flair:

(22) "Upon my word, you're a fine music master," says the piper then; "but tell me where <u>you're for bringing</u> me." – "There's a great feast in the house of the Banshee, on the top of Croagh Patric, tonight," Says the Puca, "and <u>I'm for bringing</u> you there to play music and, take my word, you'll get the price for your trouble."[13]

Montgomery (2006:20) confirms the survival of the *for* construction in Ulster English (Ulster Scots) until the present, with attestations taken from Fenton (2000) and several literary representations of modern Ulster Scots.

(23) a. I thought you were never <u>for coming</u>.
      b. A'm <u>for startin</u> noo. [Montgomery 2006:20]

It is also possible to find occasional attestations of the construction in colloquial present-day Irish English, as in the following two entries from internet chatforums and guestbooks, both written by teenagers from Northern Ireland (24a, b).

(24) a. What are you <u>for doing</u> this weekend? Wana have another girly nite?[14]
      b. its no problem..... what are you <u>for doing</u> this weekend?[15]

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12. In identifying instances of the *be for* V-*ing* construction in written corpora, there is an empirical difficulty in telling them apart from the formally identical but pragmatically different modern *be for X* construction (meaning 'be in favour of X'). The operative difference is that the latter construction pragmatically presupposes the existence of contrastive choice, dealing with something you are *for* as opposed to a presupposed alternative you are *against.* In addition, the *be for X* construction does not entail that the subject of the clause intends to carry out the action himself. The two instances quoted from *CONCE* seem to be pragmatically consistent with the verbal periphrasis.

13. "The Piper and the Puca", Irish folk story, "translated from the Irish by Dr. Douglas Hyde", in O'Neill (1913:Ch.31). Online edition: http://billhaneman.ie/IMM/IMM-XXXI.html

14. Internet guestbook, retrieved from http://www.bebo.com/Profile.jsp?MemberId=2029812512, 29 January 2007.

15. Internet chat, retrieved from http://foxtrot.xnoc.net/~monkey/forum/viewtopic.php?p=438&sid=539a5e77918b06a127ec54007c47ac92, 29 January 2007.

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There is little evidence regarding a possible continuity between this *for* construction and the nonce attestation of the *will be for* V-*ing* use in the 1684 Hiberno-English *Bog Witticisms,* where *for* is semantically either durative or otiose. While both are attested at roughly the same time, nothing can be said about possible influences either way. However, the very fact that the anonymous author chose to use the *will be for* V-*ing* form with an apparent intent of effecting a caricature of a non-standard variety, at a time when a formally so similar *be for* V-*ing* construction already existed in more mainstream varieties of the language, would seem to indicate that he perceived of it as distinct and unrelated.

3.4   *About*

Prospective constructions with *about* + VP have been common in English for a long time. The *OED* describes *be about to V,* in essentially its modern meaning, as attested from the mid-16th century. It differs from the *be for* construction semantically in denoting temporal imminence rather than planned intention.

Its grammaticalisation history, as mirrored in earlier use types reported in the *OED,* indicates that its origin lies not so much in the preposition *about,* but rather the adverb *about,* used here originally in the sense of 'afoot', 'astir' (25).

(25)   Bisi <u>aboute</u> þei han <u>ben</u> To cacchen hit with al heore miht.
   'they have been busy about to catch it with all their might.'
   [1360; *OED* v. "about"]

The verbal complement used in the *about* construction was originally a *to*-infinitive, sometimes also a *for to* phrase. The use of an -*ing* form in its stead is a later innovation, datable only to the 18th century (26). It can be interpreted as part of a long-term trend in English for an expansion of the -*ing* form at the expense of the infinitive (cf. Fanego 2004), and, in light of the discussion of the previous section, it may have partly been due to the parallel with the somewhat earlier *for* construction (whose origin is unambiguously prepositional).

(26)   He might give a satisfactory answer respecting the Person to whom he <u>is about setting</u> the Corn Mill [*CL18CP,* 1782, John Philips]

Again, a good diachronic summary can be gleaned from the *Old Bailey Proceedings.* Summary statistics are provided in Table 4. During the first decades of the period covered (1670–1700), and indeed still in the first decade of the 18th century, we find the older, infinitival pattern exclusively. The first two recorded instances of the -*ing* form occur, isolated as yet, in 1716 and 1726 respectively.

Table 4. Occurrence of *be about* V-*ing* and *be about to* V in the "Old Bailey Proceedings"

	Gerund		Infinitive		Word count (approx.)	% Gerunds
	tokens	per million words	tokens	per million words		
1670–1699	0	0	11	7.7	1.423.000	0,0%
1700–1729	2	0.9	9	3.9	2.292.000	18,2%
1730–1759	24	3.0	76	9.6	7.915.000	24,0%
1760–1779	31	4.4	33	4.7	7.049.000	48,4%
1780–1799	19	1.3	77	5.3	14.411.000	19,8%
1800–1819	34	2.5	77	5.7	13.462.000	30,6%
1820–1834	60	3.7	193	11.7	16.455.000	23,7%

The gerund pattern then advances rapidly until it reaches a peak during the third quarter of the 18th century, when its frequency is almost on a par with that of the infinitive. After that, however, it very soon begins to decline again, and ends up at a frequency level of between 20% and 30% at the beginning of the 19th century, with a steady downward trend in terms of relative frequency as compared to the competing infinitive construction (even though in terms of absolute token counts the last two decades again seem to show an increase). In comparison, the *about* construction developed somewhat later than the *for* construction, and then went out of use later and somewhat less abruptly.

The data from two other late-18th century corpora at our disposal, the *CL18CP* and the New York newspaper corpus, fit in well with this picture. Each corpus (being much smaller in size than the Old Bailey collection) only has a handful of attestations, four in each case. Half of them have the gerundial form, which is just about the proportion to be expected on the basis of the Old Bailey data for that time period.

The picture changes radically in the *CONCE,* which covers language from a later period and, crucially, also from a range of registers closer to the literary standard. Here, the infinitival pattern is overwhelmingly in the majority. Besides 65 tokens of *be about to* V, found across all parts of the corpus, there is only a single instance of *be about* V-*ing,* dating from the 1850s. Characteristically, this instance occurs again in a trial transcript, i.e. in a portion of the corpus that represents the same kind of approximation of the spoken colloquial language as the Old Bailey collection. The witness whose speech is being recorded is a servant, presumably from the lower social ranks. Interestingly, the witness's use of the gerund echoes an immediately preceding phrase by the interrogator – but he has used the infinitive, apparently felt to be the more standard form by that time:

(27)   –   Was it when you first went into the service, or when you were
      <u>about to leave</u> it?
   –   I was just <u>about leaving</u>.

It appears, in short, that *be about* V-*ing* lived on into the mid-19th century in some varieties of the spoken language in British English, but that it was marginalised and excluded from educated standard English soon after 1800.

   We can now again proceed to the Irish English data from the Hamburg corpus, for comparison. Despite a lack of conclusiveness due to overall smallish token counts, this corpus again gives some indication that the situation in Irish English differed from Standard English: the gerundial forms are more frequent, and seem to survive longer. There are 8 tokens of the gerund as opposed to only 3 of the infinitive. The gerund forms occur in writers from all geographical areas, including some of relatively high education, and crucially, they persist even into the latest stages covered by the corpus, right into the early 20th century.

(28)   a.   a parcel of land on the Bury Estate which was then <u>about being sold</u>
      [ForreE01, 1906]
   b.   Some of the estates you are <u>about puchasing</u> [RyanJ_01, 1908]

These latter two examples are both written by Catholic smallholding farmers from the province of Munster. Both writers show strong indications of typical Hiberno-English dialect features otherwise, such as transitive perfects with medial object positions (of the type "I have the work done") or the use of the present tense instead of the perfect in sentences with *for* or *since.* Tentatively, we can take these late attestations as an indication that the *about* V-*ing* construction survived as a dialectal archaism in Irish English, probably longer than it did in Britain and elsewhere, although, unlike in the case of *for,* I currently have no data about its possible survival into the present.

3.5   *On*

Finally, the Hamburg Corpus also contains a *hapax legomenon* attestation of what may have been yet another instance of the same constructional pattern: *be on* V-*ing.* Despite its very scarce attestation, it is interesting enough to warrant a discussion in terms of a potential further member of the group under study here. The single attested example dates from 1875 (29).

(29)   Your aunt Angess McKeer <u>is on dying.</u> We dont expect she will live long.
      [1875, Brenna06] [16]

Like the constructions with *for* and *about,* (29) seems to have a prospective, future-oriented meaning. This is important because as an adverbial subordinator, temporal *on* otherwise denotes immediate relative past (completion) rather than futurity. On this basis, one might expect *be on* V-*ing* to act more like a perfect construction, just like in the case of *after.* However, the intended futuric meaning of (29) is clear from the context. It apparently carries an implication not of intentionality, but rather of an impending, causally unavoidable event. The Standard English item most akin to this in form and structure would be *be close on* V-*ing.* Similar to the case of *for* and *after,* there seems to be little or no semantic continuity between this use and the early use of *upon* in the 1684 text discussed earlier. No hints as to the existence of a *be on* V-*ing* construction were found for other varieties of English. If these isolated tokens represent actual use types and not mere one-off idiosyncrasies, we would be dealing with a situation similar to that of *after* and possibly *for:* an older, 17th-century type of the pattern modal + *be* + preposition + V-*ing,* with a semantic value that is somewhat indistinct but probably related to the Irish *ar/iar* merger; and a more recent use type lacking the collocation with the modal verb, and having a clear semantic value of temporal sequence on its own.

4   Comparison and discussion

We can now proceed to compare the English and the Irish data under historical and typological perspectives. In terms of historical sequence, it will be noted that the Irish construction pattern is generally older than the English one. Even though many of the Irish forms discussed above did not become common in writing until fairly late, the general pattern is attested from the earliest times in the case of *ag,* and at least from the Middle Ages onwards in the case of several of the others. In English, on the other hand, the preposition + V-*ing* patterns are attested only from the 17th century.

   More interesting than the mere temporal comparison is a comparison of the functional paths of development that both languages underwent. In Irish, it will be noted that virtually all the prepositions in question are spatial in origin. The

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16. From Fitzpatrick (1994: 409). The expression is actually spelled "undying" instead of "on dying" in the original. The emendation seems safe to make, since the negation marker *un-* was clearly not intended in the context.

items used for periphrases of temporal simultaneity (progressive and durative), i.e. *ag* 'at', *i*[N] 'in' and *ar* 'on', denote proximity in space. As such, they represent the universal grammaticalisation path that draws on the spatial metaphor where the boundaries of a temporal process are conceptualised as spatial entities. This path is known as a common source for progressive constructions cross-linguistically (Heine 1993). The source of *do* 'to' is similar, likewise related to local proximity, although it does not match the universal prototype for progressives quite as closely, since it denotes movement towards rather than location in a spatial entity.

In the case of the prospective constructions, the sources of *le* (< O.Ir. *fri* 'to, against') and of *chun* 'towards' are also both solidly spatial, even though in the case of *le* this semantic source has been obliterated through later developments. Both represent the common grammaticalisation path from goal-directed motion via intentionality to futurity (Bybee/Pagliuca/Perkins 1994). Even more obvious is the spatial source in the case of the modern replacement *ar tí* ('on the point of') which draws on the conceptual metaphor of the beginning of a process as the crossing of a spatial boundary.

In the case of the perfect constructions, the spatial nature is somewhat less obvious, because spatial and temporal meanings existed side by side from very early on. *Iar* 'after', although ultimately of spatial origin etymologically, had developed the temporal meaning of 'after' as one of its primary functions already by the time of Old Irish. The later replacements, *tar éis* and *i ndiaidh,* are again both spatial in origin, consisting each of locative preposition (*tar* 'across', *i* 'in') and a noun of concrete spatial meaning (*éis* 'tracks, trace'; *diaidh* < O.Ir. *déad* 'end point'). However, both had developed the purely temporal meaning of *after* as one of their functions well before they were co-opted to serve in the periphrastic perfect construction.

In English, the picture is much more mixed. The source of the standard progressive was a locative prepositional construction at least in parts (Middle English *is on huntinge* etc.), but that source had long ceased to be transparent by the time the grammaticalisation of the other, younger constructions set in. Of the two prepositional constructions that are shared marginally with Standard English, *about* and *for,* one comes from a source that is even formally quite unrelated to the *be* + prep + V-*ing* pattern. As discussed earlier, *be about* V-*ing* was a late replacement for a considerably older structure *be about to* V, where *about* was originally not a preposition but an adverb, and *to V* was a straightforward infinitive of purpose.

The other construction, *for,* is formally unambiguous as an instantiation of the *be* + prep + V-*ing* pattern. Its semantic source is one of destination and purpose; as such, it represents a similar grammaticalisation path as the *about* construction, namely that of volitive and obligative modality towards futurity.

Thus, in Standard Modern English, unlike in Irish, it seems to have been only this modality-related grammaticalisation path that has been productive – and only marginally so – in developing structures of the prepositional type. The spatial grammaticalisation path, active in Irish, was no longer productive in standard English, and reflexes of it are found only in those constructions peculiar to Hiberno-English that were undoubtedly directly borrowed.

To conclude, the question is: can we causally link the development of these different constructions together at all? Taking an agnostic approach, we might be content with stating that *after* (and possibly *on*) were borrowed from Irish, whereas *for* and *about* existed independently. But is the replication of *after* related to the fact that *for* and *about* were preserved along with it? Conclusive empirical proof of such a hypothesis is hardly possible in principle, but a plausibility argument in its favour, based on cognitive theories of grammatical organisation, can be attempted.

The constructions in question can be described as formal idioms. Even though their semantics is transparently motivated by their combinatorial make-up to some degree, their behaviour is not entirely predictable and their licensing as a grammatical unit must be an object of specific, arbitrary knowledge. According to a construction-based approach to grammatical organisation such as Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995, 2006; Croft 2001), such complex patterns are assumed to possess "unit status", that is, to be represented as holistic entities in speakers' internalised grammatical knowledge. Crucially, this holds not only for the individual constructions with specific prepositions; it may also hold for representations of the more abstract schema instantiated by each. In this way, Construction Grammar attempts to model the internalised knowledge that speakers possess about an abstract pattern's productivity and frequency: the more prominent a pattern is in terms of productivity (the type frequency of its instantiations) and in terms of their token frequency, the more strongly it will become entrenched in memory. Thus, in the present case, Construction Grammar predicts that speakers will form representations of an abstract schema such as *be* + preposition + gerund, if this is supported by sufficient number and frequency of instantiations. What I am suggesting now, additionally, is that such categorisation processes, in the bilingual speaker, can cross the two linguistic repertoires. Representations of perceived schemata such as the prepositional schema discussed here can then become objects of what Weinreich (1953) called "interlingual identification", and as such, they can become channels and carriers of analogy-driven convergence and replication (cf. Bisang 2001: 188f.).

On this basis, we can now sketch the historical process we assume to have happened in Hiberno-English, roughly as follows. In Irish, at the time of contact with English, there already existed a large range of the prepositional constructions

in question, all organised around the common cognitive schema related to the locative source semantics of the various prepositions involved. English speakers only had, at most, two such constructions (with *about* and *for*), and these were sufficiently dissimilar and isolated in the system that it is doubtful whether they would have led to the establishment of a common abstract categorisation with a separate unit status. In contact with Irish, however, bilingual speakers could perceive the similarities between these existing constructions and the Irish ones, and on this basis re-categorise and assimilate them as instantiations of a common productive schema.

At about the same time, bilinguals were creating the *after* and probably the *on* construction in English, on the model of Irish. In these instances, the transfer was evidently based on a perception of both functional and formal equivalence on the level of the individual lexical items. Whether this innovation was dependent on, or aided by, a prior strengthening effect regarding the other two constructions, or whether the sequence was rather the other way round, is a question that cannot be answered on the basis of the historical data. In any case, both the constructions that were downright borrowed on the lexical level, and those constructions that already existed in English, ultimately served as input into the same new emergent category, the *be* + preposition + V-*ing* pattern in Hiberno-English. It was ultimately this abstract categorisation that was "borrowed" from Irish into English, along with the specific instantiation of the *after* perfect, and this act of abstract replication was what caused the existing *for* and *about* constructions to become strengthened and preserved in use along with their new sibling, the *after* perfect.

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PART IV

Acquisition