THE TOCQUE FORMULA AND
NEWFOUNDLAND ENGLISH

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1. INTRODUCTION

Summer settlements had been established on the island of Newfoundland since at least the 17th century. A dominion of the British Crown, Newfoundland entered Confederation as the tenth Canadian province (Newfoundland and Labrador) in 1949. Two main groups of settlers dominated: the English from Southwest England, who arrived first, followed by a large influx of Irish from Southeast Ireland who began arriving in large numbers in the 19th century.

In the late 19th century, Philip Tocque formulated the following statement concerning a link between religion and regional origin of the inhabitants of Newfoundland: "The Roman Catholics are Irish and the descendants of Irish; the Episcopalians, Methodists and Congregationalists are English and the descendants of English and Jersey; the Presbyterians are principally Scotch and their descendants" (Philip Tocque, 1878, *Newfoundland as it was and it is in 1877*, Toronto: no publisher, p. 366; cited in Handcock 1989:145). For many parts of Newfoundland, particularly the smaller settlements, this holds true to the present day. As intermingling between the two religious groups rarely occurred in the early days, the Irish settlements (mainly on the Avalon Peninsula) and Southwest English settlements (mainly main island outports and bays) remained separated as well. This socio-cultural separation was at the same time a linguistic separation; features traditionally associated with Irish English (IrE) did not spread outside the Irish communities, and the same is true for Southwest English (SWE) features.

Today, however, Newfoundland English (NFE) shows a certain degree of mixture of SWE and IrE features, particularly in the capital, St. John's. As in other cities, formerly regional characteristics seem to be developing into sociological markers, a process known as social reallocation (see for example, Trudgill 1986: 118–119). In this paper, traditional NFE with both IrE and SWE backgrounds will be investigated as a first step in comparing traditional material with modern data.

TABLE 1

Corpus details

IrE corpus	SWE corpus
12 tales	47 tales
7 tellers	10 tellers
ca. 25,700 words	ca. 131,200 words

Moreover, changes will be identified not only in terms of presence or absence, but also in terms of the frequency of the respective feature. IrE features will serve as a starting point of the investigation; three feature categories will be considered: a) exclusively Irish features, b) features probably reinforced by IrE background, and c) features with similar distributions/without (known) regional preferences.

2. THE CORPUS

The material used for this study is taken from two volumes of Newfoundland folk-tales (Halpert and Widdowson 1996), containing about 150 tales and songs of varying length, contributed by more than 60 individuals. The tales were for the most part recorded between 1964 and 1972 and orthographically transcribed, maintaining some phonological detail. The story tellers, almost exclusively males, were born between 1877 and 1926 — prototype NORMs (see Chambers and Trudgill 1998:29). Fifty-nine tales were used for this study (see Table 1).

2.1. Investigated features

The following features[1] were investigated:

Verb phrase:

- presence/absence of verbal -*s* (*I sings; he have* etc.)
- regularized paradigms (*he sove*; *they knowed*)
- split perfect (*he had all the money spend*: Tale 035)
- *-ing* imperative (*don't be talking*: Tale 037)
- *be after -ing* perfect (*"You're after killin your brother!"*: Tale 100)
- negative concord (*She'd never said nothing* ... : Tale 002)

Dependent clauses:

- subordinating *and* (*an' there was ol' Maxim and he slavin along*: Tale 014)

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[1]Please note that a detailed description of the investigated features cannot be included here, for lack of space. The interested reader is referred to Clarke (2004), Filppula (2004), and Wagner (2004) for details.

- zero subject relatives (*"I owns all this property"* he said *"is here"*: Tale 038)

- purposive *for to* (*Jack laid down for to have a little nap*: Tale 007)

Untriggered reflexives (*herself an' Jack got married the next day*: Tale 021) and regularized reflexives (*hisself, theirself/ves*) were also part of the study. The following sections will report on the most noteworthy results of comparing the two corpora.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Clearly Irish features

Two features could be identified as clearly IrE features. While the SWE corpus contained only one example of the *after -ing* perfect, there were 34 examples in the IrE material (note that the IrE corpus contains only about a fifth of the word numbers of the SWE corpus). Also clearly Irish are untriggered reflexives, with no examples in the SWE and four in the IrE corpus. The status of subordinating *and* is more complex. Although the IrE corpus contains proportionally more examples (4 in total, 5 in the SWE corpus), there is an interesting difference in the contexts in which the construction is used. SWE speakers use subordinating *and* predominantly in combination with the *be going to* future (3 out of 5 examples). There is only one such example in the Irish material: *He said "You got to get out" he said "an' I goin to SELL this" he said " 'fore I goes"* ... (Tale 038). Also, there is only one example with an adjective, also used by a SWE teller: ... *and them all dead now* (Tale 032)

3.2. Features with (very) low frequencies

Because of very low frequencies, nothing conclusive can be said about these features. Habitual *be* occurs only once in each subcorpus, while *be +ing* imperatives are of an almost formulaic nature in both corpora. In the SWE corpus, the only type is *don't be talking*, occurring in two stories by the same teller (9 tokens); it seems possible that the story teller adopted this formulation from the original (Irish?) teller. In the IrE corpus, two speakers use *be +ing* imperatives in three stories with 3 examples which are each repeated once (overall 6 tokens). All tellers use regularized reflexives almost exclusively: 100% of SWE tellers (95 tokens of *hisself*, 4 tokens of *theirself(s)/ves*); 87.5% of IrE tellers (14 tokens of *hisself* versus 2 of *himself*, 3 examples *theirself(s)ves*).

3.3. Features possibly reinforced by IrE background

Two features were investigated which, while possible candidates for substrate influence of Irish Gaelic on English in Ireland, are also found in earlier English in England (see for example, Harris 1984, 1993; Kallen 1989, 1990), namely the so-called split perfect (for example, *Bill had some kept back*: Tale 016) and the *be*

TABLE 2

Split perfect and *be* perfect

Corpus	Absolute #	per 1,000 words
split perfect		
IrE	16	0.62
SWE	20	0.15
be perfect		
IrE	6	0.23
SWE	18	0.14

perfect (for example, *she was come* = she had come; *which way they were gone* = they had gone).

While the split perfect seems to be a good candidate for the reinforcement hypothesis (almost five times as many occurrences per 1,000 words in the IrE corpus compared with the SWE corpus), the similar figures for the *be* perfect suggest that we are dealing with the conservation of a feature from earlier stages of the language (see Table 2).

3.4. Features with different distributions

The relative frequencies for the following three features showed interesting discrepancies in the two corpora: "Weak" strong verbs[2] (examples of the type *knowed*, *catched*) are 4.7 times more frequent in SWE data (only 15 tokens of 7 types in IrE corpus, 353 tokens of 32 types in SWE corpus). The form *knowed* is the most frequent and also the only form that occurs more frequently than its standard equivalent *knew* in both corpora (IrE: 77.8% *knowed*; SWE: 91.8% *knowed*).

Negative concord is three times more frequent in the SWE corpus than in the IrE corpus, a highly significant difference (χ^2 test, $p < 0.001$). The detailed distribution of forms is similar in the two corpora (see Table 3).

TABLE 3

Negative concord

	IrE		SW	
	absolute #	% of total	absolute #	% of total
n't ... no	10	58.82	187	72.48
never ... no*	2	11.76	51	19.77
not ... no*	2	11.76	7	2.71

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[2]Definition: verbs which show (traces of) strong conjugation in their past tense and past participle forms in standard English are used with the *-ed* ending.

When discussing the presence or absence of verbal -*s* in the two corpora, the SWE corpus again contains proportionally more examples, namely 1.8 as many as the IrE corpus (750:90 forms). Generally, there are two possibilities: either -*s* occurs with all persons or the 3rd person singular form is not marked with -*s* (which however is very rare here and accounts for only about 10% of all forms). Traditionally, SWE dialects employ -*s* in all persons, while IrE dialects show a mixture of systems. However, a rule known as the Northern Subject Rule (NSR),[3] responsible for not "allowing" *they was* in traditional IrE dialects, leads to highly significant differences (χ^2 test, $p < 0.001$) in the *be* paradigm (see Table 4).

TABLE 4

Effects of the NSR

	IrE corpus	SWE corpus
they was	2	179
they were	38	24

4. CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analyses presented. The comparison of features in the two corpora shows that there is (still) a clear distinction between speakers of Irish and Southwest English background. Moreover, story tellers with an IrE background use forms that are generally closer to Standard English than those with a SWE background. Highly significant differences between the overall frequencies of occurrence were discovered that have neither been mentioned nor explained in previous studies. There is no indication (yet) of regional features being adopted by speakers of the other group. However, for some features the boundary does not seem clear-cut. A more detailed analysis with an extended corpus is a necessary next step.

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[3]Put very simply, the NSR states that concord verbs take the -*s* form with all subjects, except with the personal pronouns *I, we, you* and *they* when they are directly adjacent to the verb (cf. Pietsch 2005 for more details).

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