

## The *do be* Form in Southwest Hiberno-English and its Linguistic Enquiries

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### Abstract

The *do be* habitual (e.g. *I do be praying for you*. 'I usually pray for you.') is a well-known feature of traditional varieties of Southwest Hiberno-English (SwHE). This paper outlines my ongoing research into the *do be* form from multiple perspectives. It illustrates the usage of *do be* in play-scripts written in the 1950-70s, discusses the formation of the *do be* form in SwHE, considers the present-day speakers' awareness from a sociolinguistic perspective, and goes into the primary study of the link between Irish and New World Englishes. Some of the main findings of the paper are: the usage of '*do be* <sub>2</sub>' occurred in the relative clause (e.g. *from the table where people do be eating*); the development of the *do be* form as a grammatical innovation in SwHE; the speakers' general awareness of 'bad grammar' and some change in sociolinguistic perception; the likely possibility that the realisation of the habitual aspect into grammatical form, including *do be*, in English-oriented varieties in the Caribbean has been independently created from HE in Ireland. The *do be* form in SwHE provides useful reference points from which investigations can be made into contact-induced grammatical formation and language change.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Detecting grammatical differences among English 'dialects' has become more difficult in recent years. This is largely because dialects are getting homogenised since English is widely spoken and broadcasted in various accents and manners; dialectal characteristics have become overwhelmed by standardised forms. When describing the contemporary status of Hiberno-English (HE), we must therefore duly consider its convergence with major varieties of English. One of the salient features that may be in flux in HE is the use of habitual aspect markers. This paper focuses on Southwest Hiberno-English (SwHE); 'Kerry English' spoken in County Kerry, Ireland, in particular.

An expression of habituality can be found in Hugh Grant's first line in the opening scene of the movie *Love Actually* (2003) quoted below as (1a).

(1a) Whenever I get gloomy with the state of the world, I *think* about the arrivals gate at Heathrow Airport.

Present habitual is expressed in the unmarked present form in British Standard English. In traditional varieties of SwHE, the main clause of (1a) may be expressed as (1b).

(1b) I *do be thinking* about the arrivals gate at Heathrow Airport.

It is important to note that (1b) decodes habituality explicitly in the grammatical form of *do be V-ing*. Other variations of the habitual form such as *be~bes/do+V* are reported in other varieties of HE (e.g. Henry 1957 for Roscommon, Harris 1986 for Northern Ireland, including Belfast). My concern in this paper is restricted to the *do be* form because this is the only form attested by present speakers of SwHE. In the present varieties of SwHE, the *do+V* constituent tends to be construed as emphatic with the accented *DO*. (2) illustrates the judgement of the consultants for this study, who are middle-aged to senior native-speakers of SwHE in County Kerry.

- (2) a. We *do be praying* in our prayers (whenever we get the notion to kneel). [SIV 21, see (8)]<sup>1</sup>  
 b.\*We *be praying* for you in our prayers (whenever....). [attested]  
 c.\*We *do pray* for you in our prayers (whenever ....). [attested]  
 Expected meaning: ‘We usually/always pray for you in our prayers, whenever...’

The *do be* form in contrast to other forms in SwHE is given in (3). (3a) expresses the habitual aspect in the grammatical form, while (3b) is an unmarked present. (3c) is the present continuous form. It is noted that present-day speakers, including those with normative awareness and younger generations, employ (3b) and (3c) rather than (3a) to express habitual meaning. (3d) indicates identificational focus on the VP head.

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|--|--------------------|
| (3) a. We <i>do be praying</i> for you in our prayers. | [Habitual]         |
| b. We <i>pray</i> for you in our prayers.              | [Unmarked present] |
| c. We <i>are praying</i> for you in our prayers.       | [Continuous]       |
| d. We <i>dó pray</i> for you in our prayers.           | [VP focus marking] |

Habitual aspect in the past tense is expressed in (4c) with *used (to)*, but not (4b) where the tense is amalgamated with *do*.

- (4) a. We *do be praying* for you in our prayers.  
 b. \*We *did be praying* for you in our prayers. [attested]  
 c. We *used (to) be praying* for you in our prayers.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Section 2 and Note 4 for the text sources and the abbreviations.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Used’ and ‘used to’ are both found in SwHE. The examples include: *I used always walk where the swans were before I went away* [MYM 33]; *She used be doin’ a line with a schoolmaster’s son.* [MYM 25]; *Used you and the boys laugh at us?* [RES 40].

The *do be* form, like other verbs in SwHE, does not strictly obey the subject-verb concord. It is noted, however, *does be* is likely to occur for the third-person singular pronouns and sometimes plural nouns, as seen in (5)-(7).

- (5) ...or maybe 'tis how she *does be* tossing and tumbling all night. [CHT 21]  
 (6) ...himself *does be* mad jealous. [FLD 31]  
 (7) ...ask her *does* her toes *be* cold... [CHT 20]

This paper will outline my ongoing research into the *do be* form and some of the surrounding issues.<sup>3</sup> It will address certain aspects that can be captured in linguistic interests, including sociolinguistics and contact linguistics. Section 2 provides examples of *do be*; the main aim of the section is to pay full attention to the specific usage of *do be* (*do be*<sub>2</sub>) that prior studies have scarcely noted. Section 3 discusses the origins and the establishment of *do be* as a habitual marker in SwHE, with reference to prior research. Section 4 highlights sociolinguistic aspects vital for an understanding of the present-day status of SwHE. The relation to New World Englishes with regards to the resemblance in the realisation of the habitual aspect is another important branch that the *do be* form rises. Section 5 serves as a current note on this; it considers mainly how the common feature of the habitual realisation in grammatical forms can be explained.

## 2. TWO TYPES OF *DO BE* IN JOHN B. KEANE'S PLAYS IN 1950-70S

John B. Keane (1928-2002) is a playwright from Listowel, County Kerry.<sup>4</sup> This section will examine examples from his literature to highlight usages of the *do be* form. The *do be* form is generally described as a habitual-aspect marker. Examples from Keane's literature confirm this, however further examination of the occurring condition gives an acute understanding of the meaning of the *do be* form and its usage. Through the examination of the *do be* form, as used in Keane's play scripts and letter series written between 1950-70s, it has become obvious that there are two discrete usages of *do be* in Keane's.

(8)-(9) are examples of the *do be* form that clearly express the recurring activity of the agent of the verb.

- (8) 'Tis not aisy, a-girl, to kill you! You have the appearance of a small one, a young one. We *do be* praying for you in our prayers, whenever we get the notion to kneel. [SIV 21]  
 'We usually pray for you in prayers.'  
 (9) Why *do you be* always *singin'* that oul song? Where did you pick it up, anyway? [MYM 1]  
 'Why do you always sing that old song?'

<sup>3</sup> This paper develops my earlier research into the *do be* form which can be found in my articles on the *do be* form in flux and social connotation of the *do be* form (Shimada 2006), grammatical sketch of the *do be* form (2010a: 190-198) and a survey of speakers' awareness towards morphosyntactic forms (2010b).

<sup>4</sup> The following is a list of Keane's works cited in this paper, headed with their abbreviations: SIV *Sive* (1959), SRG *Sharon's Grave* (1960), MYM *Many Young Men of Twenty* (1961), FLD *The Field* (1966), RES *The Rain at the End of Summer* (1968), LHF *Letters of a Love-Hungry Farmer* (1974) and CHT *The Chastitute* (1981). The spellings used in the citations are those used in Keane's plays.

The most dominant pattern of *do be* appears in *do be* V-ing, as in (8) and (9). There are other forms, including *do be* AdjP in (10), *do be* (AdvP) in (11) and (12). (12) is also an example of negation.

(10) Sure, I sees the girls going to chapel every Sunday. They *do be* lovely with their long hair jumping up and down on their shoulders and their fleshy collops so daintily walking the road. [SRG 27]  
'They are (always) lovely with their long hair jumping up....'

(11) 'Tis hard to know what to make out of it all. I *do be* often at my wits' end wondering at the ways of women. There's no two of them alike [LHF 237]  
'I am often at my wits' end.'

(12) Good morning to you, Mr Flanagan. I'm afraid I *don't be* in the village very often. [FLD 9]  
'I am not in the village very often.'

This usage of expressing habituality will be referred to as '*do be* <sub>1</sub>' so that it may be distinguished from the other type that occurs in a particular clausal condition.

Besides this *do be* <sub>1</sub>, there are a significant number of examples where the *do be* form appears in a predicate phrase, expressing the inherent property of the object. This 'inherent property' use of *do be*, henceforth labelled as *do be* <sub>2</sub>, refers to a stated quality that belongs to the object by nature. *Do be* <sub>2</sub> can be distinguished from the *do be* <sub>1</sub> which predominantly refers to iterative actions and events which take place repeatedly.

(13) Will you open it or you'll drive me to Gleann na nGealt where your own equals *do be*. [SIV 39]  
'Gleann na nGealt where your own equals are (Gleann na nGealt is known to be the place where your own equals are)'

(14) 'Tis a wonder you took your backside from the table where people *do be* eating. [SIV 3]  
'the table where people eat (Table is the place where people eat)'

(15) D'you see th' oul' cock salmon that *do be* hidin' in the deep hole of the river. [SIV 25]  
'the old cock salmon that hides in the deep hole of the river (The old cock salmon is known to hide in the deep hole of the river.)'

(16) What would be in it but thoughts to disturb her young head the night before her marriage. Have you no knowledge of the way a woman *do be* the night before? [SIV 38]  
'Do you know what a woman is like the night before? (There is a way a woman would be the night before marriage.)'

Significantly, *do be* in SwHE occurs in relative clauses, often following a noun phrase+*where*, *the way* (including *how*). This kind of clause, appended to a head NP, defines an inherent property, offering a

complementation of the antecedent. In (13) a place name, *Gleann na nGealt*, is specified in the relative clause; similarly in (14) the inherent property of ‘the table’ is defined in the clause. The *do be* V-ing form appears in the relative clause of *that* in (15). (16) is an example of *do be*<sub>2</sub> occurring in a clause followed by the antecedent ‘the way’.

The usage of *do be*<sub>2</sub> has not been described in major published works while Keane’s play-scripts show an evident distribution in the subordinate relative clause. This usage is not confirmed by present-day speakers of SwHE despite a number of the *do be*<sub>2</sub> examples found in Keane’s play scripts in 1950s.<sup>5</sup> The *do be*<sub>2</sub> type has now converged with the unmarked present tense.

### 3. THE FORMATION OF *DO BE* IN SOUTHWEST HIBERNO-ENGLISH

It is generally acknowledged that the use of *do (be)* for expressing habitual meaning does not appear until after 1700, although dating of the emergence is difficult (Bliss 1979, Kallen 1986, Filppula 1999).<sup>6</sup> According to Filppula (1999: 138), the *do be* form has not been found to have occurred in letters earlier than the 1860s. The following examples are cited from letters written in the mid-nineteenth century. The letters are written by an Irish mother and the daughter, Nancy and Bridget Oldham from Rossmore, County Cork (TCD MS 10435: *Oldham Papers*, Department of Manuscripts Trinity College Dublin).

*I do be disputing* with my mother... [1857 / TCD 10435-15]<sup>7</sup>

*I do be sick* every year at this time but I was not prepared anytime until now. [1863 / TCD 10435-21]

Habitual forms in HE, especially concerning the attribution of this feature, have been abundantly described from earlier times (Joyce 1910 [1988], van Hamel 1912, Bliss 1972, Kallen 1986, Harris 1986, Dolan 1999, Filppula 1999, Hickey 2000); the formation of the habitual forms has been a target of debate in the exploration of substratal and superstratal influences (Bliss 1979, Harris 1986, Kallen 1986, Filppula 1999). I confine myself here to the southwest HE and summarise my view on the formation of *do be* in SwHE.<sup>8</sup> My view is drawn from the evidence that prior studies have reported as to the occurrence of uses of the periphrastic *do* in British English (BrE) on one hand and the *do be* form (especially in southwest Ireland) on the other, as well as from the insights given in the substratum-vs-superstratum debate by Bliss (1972), Harris (1986) and Filppula (1999) among others.

Filppula (1999: 140-2) has undertaken a thorough survey of studies about the use of periphrastic *do* in BrE. I recite some of the most cordial statements: ‘this construction [periphrastic *do* in unemphatic affirmative declarative sentences] reached its peak in the middle of the sixteenth century,

<sup>5</sup> All the examples of *do be*<sub>2</sub> are cited from *Sive* (1959). Although my search of examples is not exhaustive throughout the scripts and novels, it is noteworthy that *do be*<sub>2</sub> appears a significant number of times in this earlier play-script but not later works of the same author. Further investigation should be needed.

<sup>6</sup> There are several examples of periphrastic *do* found in earlier texts, for example in John Michelburne’s *Ireland Preserved*, which dates back to 1705 (Filppula 1999: 138). It is in most cases not easy to discern uses of *do* [i.e. *do* \*(*be*)] as a habitual marker from the other uses of periphrastic *do*.

<sup>7</sup> This example is already cited by Filppula (1999: 139).

<sup>8</sup> We must primarily consider regional variations within HE, especially of north vs. south. It is interesting to assume that this north-south division spreads a continuum from Britain to Ireland and the New World. See Section 5 for northern varieties of HE and New World Englishes.

after which it started to decline very rapidly and became quite rare by the early 1600s' (Ellgård 1953, Filppula 1999: 140). Filppula notes the credibility of Ellegard's work for a large corpus of prose texts from the period 1390-1700. A systematic research using Helsinki Corpus is conducted by Rissanen (1991), who 'notes the significant drop in frequencies of use of periphrastic *do* in the records of trials (which can be considered to be closest to the spoken mode) as early as the period 1570-1640, whereas the pattern retained a relatively high frequency of use in official letters even in the last EModE [early modern English] period, i.e. between 1640-1710' (Filppula 1999: 141). There is also a note in Wright (1900) that periphrastic *do* 'became obsolete after about 1700 (apart from archaic and poetic uses), except in the southwestern dialects, where it survives as the normal form up to the present day'.

We could suspect, based on Filppula's survey on the use of periphrastic *do* in BrE, that periphrastic *do* was relatively pervasive in primary linguistic data of English in the eighteenth century in southwest Ireland, at least to the extent that Irish-speakers came to adopt it into their accommodation of English speech. It is here annotated that there was a trade-connection and other social mobility between the southwest of England and south Ireland (Odlin 1997, Filppula 1999). It is also worth bearing in mind that the *do be* form appeared at a comparatively later time, as late as 1860s in texts of SwHE, as seen above. There is a likely possibility that the periphrastic *do* remained in the non-standard daily-spoken English vernaculars in south Ireland and the use of *do* was fortified under the linguistic conditions of Gaelic/English bilingual speakers,<sup>9</sup> even if it is assumed to be declining until the eighteenth century in south England.

It is thus feasible to explain the formation of the *do be* pattern in SwHE by the agent of the substratal language, rather than exclusively by the retention of the superstratal pattern. It is most safely assumed, in a way of reaching a consensus in prior studies and now excluding some elaborated discussion, that the formation of *do be* as a habitual marker is primarily motivated by the pre-existence of the habitual category in the Irish language. The substratal presence of the category conditions the analysis of *do be* as a habitual marker. In other words, speakers' needs of the category meets periphrastic use of *do* in primary linguistic data of the early modern English. It seems likely, as Kallen (1985) postulates, that the *do be* form results from a re-interpretation of the periphrastic *do* of the EModE, which in Hiberno-English is juxtaposed with *be*, to mark habitual, durative, or generic aspect.<sup>10</sup> The *do be* habitual is a grammatical innovation in SwHE.

Still, we could further examine this by revisiting the points where prior studies disagree with each other. I would like to consider two points, which can be tagged by (i) the occurrence of the *do be* form in BrE and (ii) the relevance of the dependent form ending in Early Modern Irish *-(e)ann* (present indicative). These two are most contrastive in the claims made by Bliss (1972, 1979) and Harris (1986) who contests Bliss's explanation. Concerning (i), in short, Harris has shown the counter-examples to Bliss's assertion that *do be* never occurred in BrE; these take the form of four examples from Oxfordshire,

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<sup>9</sup> My assertion here is bridged by Harris's insights. He notes (1986: 193): 'it can be argued that the distinctive habitual markers in both the substrate and nonstandard varieties of the superstrate had a mutually reinforcing effect on the development of a similar category in the new contact vernaculars.'

<sup>10</sup> A similar interpretation is given later by Hickey (2000). According to him, periphrastic *do* forms that were semantically empty in the input variety of English were functionalised in HE because of a habitual grammatical category in the Irish substratum. Hickey illustrates this by the term 'usurpation' (ibid: 113).

Surrey, Sussex, and Cornwall which were cited from Wright's (1900) *English Dialect Dictionary*. Filppula (1999: 143), however, questions the reliability of Harris's evidence on the use of *do be* in nonstandard dialects of BrE. According to Filppula, these examples were from non-local informants, including one writer of an Irish name.<sup>11</sup> The reliability on the occurrence of the *do be* form in BrE may thus not be demonstrated. It is important to note, however, that Harris's emphasis on non-standard dialectal variations in BrE is acknowledged and should be adopted for our investigation. It is not at all surprising that there are sociolinguistic variations in non-standardised forms of speech;<sup>12</sup> the varietal forms assume to constitute primary language data. As to the spread of the *do be* form in SwHE, given Filppula's re-examination of Harris's (1986) evidence from BrE, it is more likely that auxiliary *do* was associated with the habitual category and settled in the juxtaposition with *be* in southwest varieties rather than that earlier speakers adopted the readily-made superstratal *do be* as a habitual marker.

The relevance of the dependent form ending in Early Modern Irish is another point of controversy. In Bliss's (1972, 1979) argument, Irish speakers acquiring English associated periphrastic *do* with the Irish ending *-(e)ann* on the basis of their contextual parallels; the use of this ending, which originally functioned as a dependent form, was extended into the absolute environments in the course of the seventeenth century. '[T]he ending *-(e)ann* is found only in the consuetudinal present *bidheann*'; the auxiliary *do* 'would therefore come to be associated with a consuetudinal meaning' (Bliss 1979: 293). However, Harris (1986) points out a flaw in Bliss's account. In Harris's argument, 'the degree of fit between syntactic contexts in which the Irish dependent form and StE periphrastic *do* occur is not as great as Bliss implies (ibid: 179).' Harris explains that the dependent form in Modern Irish does occur not only after the particles *ni* (negative), *an* (interrogative), *nach* (negative-interrogative), as an expanded use in the contexts where *do*-support is required, but also in other contexts such as after the conjunctions *mura* ('unless'), *dá* ('if'), *go/gur* ('that') and the relative particle *a*.

However, it may be that this conditional discrepancy between EModE and Irish does not confer a crushing blow to the substratal account of the rise of the habitual form. If not a perfect fit, it is conceivable that contextual overlaps in a certain usage, which is most likely to occur frequently and thus be conspicuous to speakers, have taken effect to establish an extended function. It is, furthermore, interestingly noted that in SwHE there is a type of usage in which *do be* occurs in relative clauses in play-scripts in 1950s, as illustrated in Section 2 as *do be*<sub>2</sub> (See examples (13)-(16)). The condition in which *do be*<sub>2</sub> occurs exhibits a partial similarity of the dependent form in Early Modern Irish. The use of the dependent form in Irish may have been related to the occurrence of *do be* in relative clauses in SwHE. The match in the morpho-syntactic conditions of occurrence in Bliss's account needs to be carefully re-examined, but it is a safer and effective option to maintain the substratal account, whilst simultaneously accepting superstratal use of the auxiliary *do*. The account suggested by Bliss may not give a full account but provides a ladder for explication of the initial rise of the habitual forms in HE.

<sup>11</sup> Filppula's assertion is based on Klemola's note (1996: 68-9, *Non-standard periphrastic DO: A study in variation and change*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Essex).

<sup>12</sup> We may envisage the variation with the mirror of complexity in standardisation of English. Wright (2000: 6), for example, describes that 'standardisation is shown not to be a linear, unidirectional or "natural" development, but a set of processes which occur in a set of social spaces, developing at different rates in different registers in different idiolects.'

Following Bliss's account, a scenario we could envisage concerning the formation of the *do be* habitual in SwHE is that the contextual or syntactic and pragmatic parallelism prompted bilingual shifting speakers to associate the Irish dependent morpheme with English auxiliary *do*. This is, in the later stage, exclusively used in the habitual present of the substantial verb (*bidheann* in Early Modern Irish), as opposed to the punctual present form *tá*.<sup>13</sup> It may be important to consider the tendency of the Irish verbal system as a whole rather than calques and one-to-one correspondent parallels. In Irish, the opposition between permanency and temporality is primarily significant; this is most evident in the verb 'to be', namely copula and substantial verbs. Aspectual distinctions such as perfect, progressive, prospective and conditional are subsequently and periphrastically expressed by a combination of the substantial verb *bi* and a preposition with a verbal noun phrase (Stenson 1981: 137, Ó Siadhail 1989: 293-302, Russell 1995: 99). It is noteworthy that habituality is, on the other hand, morphologically expressed in an inflectional form of *bi* (i.e. *bíonn* in Modern Irish). Furthermore, by taking into account the oppositions in the Irish verbal system, we could seek the answer to the question why *do be V-ing*, not *do+V*, was innovated and has survived in SwHE, a variety of English which has been more heavily influenced by Irish. The difference between *tá* and *bíonn* is most likely to be displayed in the semantic distinction between 'I am writing a letter' (but not 'I write a letter.') and 'I do be writing a letter' in SwHE. The *do be V-ing* form is more stable than *do+V* when expressing habituality and has thus become an established part in contemporary varieties of SwHE.

#### 4. DO BE IN FLUX: PRESENT-DAY SPEAKERS' AWARENESS

While the grammatical realisation of the habitual category is one of the well-known features of HE, the use of *do be* seems to be today moving into disuse. The disuse is, in my working assumption, caused by speakers' awareness of standard norms. Second language contact, in which HE has converged with other major varieties of English, makes speakers' awareness of 'Standard' more acute. It seems that the sharp rise of normative awareness resulted from the spread of mass media, mainly television broadcasting, joining the EC, and increased access to education around the 1970s. My fieldwork observation has confirmed that present speakers of SwHE are in many cases aware of Standard patterns of speech and of linguistic characteristics that may represent Irishness.

I conducted a survey of sociolinguistic awareness of certain morphosyntactic forms and lexical items (11 feature-based categories, 26 sentential examples, N=64) in 2006 in Listowel Town, County Kerry, and Cork City.<sup>14</sup> The purpose was to examine what are marked/unmarked grammatical features in speakers' awareness and more exactly what the sociolinguistic awareness is like. Speakers' awareness of linguistic forms was evaluated in the four major indexes: use, non-use, bad grammar and Irishness. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to choose the examples that applied to the statement of each index from 26 sentences listed. For example, for the bad-grammar index, the respondents were to answer to the question: 'Which sentences do you think have "bad grammar"?' Results showed that the *do be* form is most highly conspicuous among the morphosyntactic features.

<sup>13</sup> In a concise reference, there are contrasts in the form of continuous aspect in Modern Irish: 'present' *tá*, 'habitual present' *bíonn*, 'past' *bhí*, 'imperfect' [past habitual] *bhíodh*, future *beidh*, conditional *bheadh* (Russell 1995: 99).

<sup>14</sup> See Shimada (2010b) for a report of the survey.



Two examples for the *do be* group, *I do be taking three plates from the cupboard* (*do be* V-ing) and *She does be lovely with her long hair* (*does be* AdjP), were exceedingly marked in the indexes of non-use and bad grammar. This exhibits a good contrast to another well-known tense/aspect feature, namely the *be after* hot-news perfect (e.g. *I am after being called*. ‘I have just been called’). The questionnaire contained two examples of the *be after* group: *I am after taking three plates from the cupboard* (*be after* V-ing) and *Tom is after his supper* (*be after* NP). Table 1 shows the judgement of *do be* (V-ing/AdjP) and *be after* (V-ing/NP). The number indicates the count of respondents who included the given example for the respective indexes.

Table 1: Speakers’ judgements of *do be* and *be after*

	Do be (V-ing / AdjP)	Be after ( V-ing / NP )
Use	2 ( 2/ 0)	44 ( 24/ 40)
Non-use	63 ( 32/ 31)	9 ( 6/ 3)
Bad grammar	79 ( 42/ 37)	14 ( 8/ 6)
Irishness	31 ( 13/ 18)	25 ( 13/ 12)

Furthermore, SwHE-Speakers’ awareness of the *do be* form can be outlined by the following comments given in interview sessions with speakers as part of my field-research on the *do be* form: ‘’Tis *bad grammar*.<sup>15</sup> You don’t say it.’ (Listowel, age 50s, female), ‘It’s *wrong, bad, obsolete...*’ (Listowel, 50s, male), ‘The age of the person is important. If ’tis an old person, I would smile and ’tis *condescending smile*. [...] I *feel superior*. [...] but If ’tis the things when my pupils in the *school* said to me, I would *correct them*, you know, and would say ‘no, that is *not correct*’ (50s, male, Cork), ‘People who say it mostly got very little chance to go to *school* through *poverty in the past*. Now in 2004 Ireland is a *rich* country and you will not hear it at all’ (70s, female, Listowel). These comments demonstrate an association of the use of *do be* with lack of knowledge of the normative grammar learned in school. The *do be* form has in a way served as a criterion of education and socio-economic status. A linguistic feature that was once labelled as ‘bad grammar’, and moreover, as ‘not-well-educated’ or ‘for poor people’, draws speakers’ excessive attention which may have hindered the speakers from using that “stigmatised” feature.

The *do be* form, generally speaking, thus seems declined, as illustrated by the dominant tendency in speakers’ report of “non-use” in the 2006 survey; although it is usually a case in which there is a gap between the subjective judgement and the actual use. It is true, however, that the majority of the SwHE speakers, both urban and rural, even the younger generation, have recognition or knowledge of the linguistic meaning of the *do be* form. Speakers’ linguistic knowledge is formed with reference to the Irish language: ‘The phrase “I do be...” is a direct translation from Irish. In the Irish language there are two present tenses: “I am” and “I do be...”, but in English there’s only one. But this direct translation isn’t used in all parts of the country’ (2006, Listowel, born in 1980s, female). This respondent listed only the *do be* example in her response to the question of “Irishness”, but she did not identify this form as “bad

<sup>15</sup> ‘Bad grammar’ is a common phrase by which present speakers of SwHE describe non-standard usage.

grammar”, unlike the majority of older respondents. Younger speakers today are more generous towards the *do be* form. If this is so and goes on in future generations, negative connotations of this form may be disappearing due to disuse; this is slightly but definitively indicated from the generational analysis of the results. In the 2006 survey, Listowel respondents born before 1935 and those between 1960 and 1980 and Cork respondents born after 1976 did not mark the *do be* form for “Irishness”, while “bad grammar” was often noted; the younger generations meanwhile displayed a relative absence of the “bad grammar” judgement. It can be assumed that the *do be* habitual was in active use until the 1950-1960s, but today, it has taken on unfavourable social connotations associated with its conspicuous non-standardness and is in relative decline.

## 5. THE GRAMMATICAL REALISATION OF THE HABITUAL ASPECT IN NEW WORLD ENGLISHES

The habitual marking in HE has also been examined with reference to varieties of English in the so-called New World. This is because of the striking resemblance: both HE and some World Englishes realise the habitual aspect into a grammatical form. Rickford’s term New World Black English (NWBE) is henceforth employed to describe the ‘West Atlantic English-based creoles and American Vernacular Black English’ (1986: 246). It is noted, to make it clear, that my use of this term includes English-lexifier creoles and dialects of English in the Caribbean; for example, the varieties named by Williams as ‘Anglo-Caribbean English’ (2003) or ‘Euro-Caribbean English’ (2010). Substratal languages of these varieties have habitual forms and HE, and Caribbean Englishes are considered to share more or less the same superstratal source. With this, the comparison between HE and NWBE may provide the basis for quality research not only for the substratal vs. superstratal debate but also for the theories of contact-induced language change in relation to social and demographic settings.

Before the analysis of existing studies concerning the link between HE and NWBE, I would like to refer to the examples of sentences described as habitual in NWBE. The following are the examples given by Williams (2003), who describes a variety of Anguillan Englishes, spoken in Island Harbour.

*From noon 'til three o'clock, it [dʌ bi] hot.* (ibid: 114)

*They [dʌzbi] big and big.* (ibid: 115)

*February, March corn do be comin'.* (ibid: 115)<sup>16</sup>

It seems important to note that *do be* is one of the variations in this variety of Caribbean English. William notes other forms of the ‘habitual/continuative aspect’.

*Every night she [dʌz] come for you.* (ibid: 114)

*Those rooms [dʌ] come hot.* (ibid: 114)

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<sup>16</sup> This example is described by Williams as a form of the ‘progressive aspect’, rather than ‘habitual/continuative’.

The use of *does be* can be found in another variety. Reaser (2010: 166), who addresses that *does be V-ing* occurs in the 'Basilect' of Bahamian English, as in *We does be reading play every time*. In Winford's (2001) description of Bajan which is spoken in Barbados, *does* is used to express the category of Present Habitual: '*Does* is invariant with all subjects, and always conveys the sense of Present Habitual'; '*Does* is used with all verbs, including *be*.' (ibid: 231).

In African American English, *do* is not used; this is the major difference from HE. Greene (2002) illustrates the use of 'aspectual *be*'. The aspectual *be* 'indicates habitual meaning (i.e., an event occurs over and over)' (ibid: 50).

*Bruce be running.* 'Bruce is usually running' or 'Bruce usually runs' (ibid: 47)

*I always be scary stuff.* 'I am always scary stuff' (ibid: 48)

*I be in my office by 7:30.* 'I am usually in my office by 7:30' (ibid: 48)

This habitual use of *be* can be found in northern varieties of HE, but not in southern varieties of HE, including SwHE. The followings are examples from northern varieties.

*He never be 's sick or anything.* [Belfast] (Harris 1986: 176)

*They be shooting and fishing out at the Forestry lakes.* [Roscommon] (Henry 1957: 170)

It is noted that habitual is realised in the *do be* form as well in northern varieties of HE.

*He does be late for dinner sometimes.* [Belfast] (Harris 1986: 176)

*They do be fighting among other.* [Roscommon] (Henry 1957: 170)

The discrepancies between northern and southern varieties of HE are important. Comparing these with the varietal forms in Caribbean Englishes / English-lexifier Creoles and African American English spoken in the United States may help investigate how English-derived varieties in these areas have been formed. It is interesting to note that north-south discrepancies appear to be preserved over the Atlantic Ocean.

The similarities in the realisation of the habitual aspect have developed flourishing discussion among linguists. One of the major views is that the use of (*do/does*) *be* diffused from HE to NWBE. Traugott (1972: 191-2), noting the resemblance of 'uninflected *be*' in 'Black English' to 'Northern English and Scottish forms', considers the flow of the population of the Ulster-Scots who migrated to the United States to be one of the contributing factors. Bailey (1982), in his short article, suggests the likely possibility that Irish English was the source of vernacular black English [VBE] *be*, based upon his assumption that the use of *be* 'first appeared in an area where fifty thousand Irishmen were resident' and that '*be* could have come into Caribbean Creole from Irish English before the slaves were brought to the states' (ibid: 238). Rickford (1986) rejects Bailey's hypothesis that *be* was diffused from HE to NWBE and proposes the alternative hypothesis about the emergence of *be*. Rickford points out the flaws in Bailey's argument by noting that '*be* (by itself) is not used as a habitual marker in any of the Caribbean varieties of NWBE' and that Bailey 'does not consider the role of habitual *do* in HE' (ibid: 261).

According to Rickford, in his ‘single best hypothesis’, VBE *be* emerged as a habitual marker as part of a decreolisation process of the creole *does (be)* form. He explains the emergence of VBE *be* in the light of the processes of pidginisation, creolisation, and decreolisation accompanying the acquisition of English by African and Afro-American populations in the New World. He hypothesises that the decreolisation process involves the loss of *does* and VBE *be* is a result of decreolisation from creole.

Harris (1986), when considering the same grammatical feature and the resemblance between HE and NWBE, pays due attention to the superstratal effect. He argues that the common superstratal source between HE and NWBE consists of nonstandard varieties of British English. Harris’ fundamental suggestion, while he acknowledges the role of substratal contribution, is that the superstrate model for Blacks in the New World, either British or Hibernian, employs habitual forms. In Harris’ theory, the use of habitual markers spread from British vernaculars into early HE; this theory therefore complements the British-origins hypothesis (see Section 3 for a detailed examination of his theory on HE). It is noted that both Harris and Rickford, in their conclusion and examination in the process, offer significant accounts of the language contact and contact-induced phenomena. Winford (2001) focuses on the emergence of the habitual forms in Bajan. His study concerns the sources of habitual *does* and states that ‘early HE was itself a significant part of the input to the formation of mainstream Bajan’ (ibid: 233). Winford describes Bajan as an intermediate creole variety, which developed in intense contact between speakers of the substrate and superstrate languages in seventeenth and eighteenth century Barbados. Winford suggests that a substrate influence from West Africa has resulted in the structural reanalysis and modification of a mainly southwestern English input.

Rickford (1986) is informative and thorough in his research into the demographic aspect between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. This helps further consideration of the Irish impact on the formation of NWBE, including ‘when’ and ‘how’ this impact took effect. Rickford’s study largely assists the ‘when’ question, namely when Irish population entered in the New World. He states that ‘opportunities for social contact and linguistic diffusion between Irish and African populations in British colonies were most favorable in the seventeenth century, when African slaves and native Irish servants—who would have been speakers of southern HE—worked side by side on Caribbean and American populations’ (ibid: 259). In the eighteenth century most Irish immigrants that came to America were Scots Irish, who would have spoken a northern (Ulster Scots) variety in HE. In the nineteenth century, Irish immigrants to America were mainly from southern provinces Ireland, including the Cork and Kerry counties (Wakin 1976).<sup>17</sup> It is not easy to estimate how many ‘whites’ or ‘English’, which is how the immigrants were labelled in most of the demographic records, are actually from Ireland, but the ratio of Irish would not have been small (Bailey 1982, Baker 2000, Dunn 1972). Some thousands of Irish servants and indentured workers were sent to Barbados and Montserrat in the seventeenth century (Dunn 1972, Rickford 1986). Baker (2000: 55) highlights that ‘a large population of the “English” were in fact

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<sup>17</sup> According to Wakin (1976 [2002]: 20), almost half of all Irish immigrants came from six counties located in south and west: Cork, Kerry, Tipperary, Limerick, Galway, and Mayo, all of them predominantly Catholic and feel the English yoke. Between 1850 and 1887, two-thirds of the Irish immigrants were 15 to 35 years of age; the population afterward increased partly due to the demand for Irish women as domestic servants. Wakin (ibid: 1) estimates that more than 425,000,000 Irish people emigrated to the United States between 1820 and 1920.

Irish bonded servants, and that Gaelic would have been the first language of some and perhaps many of the latter.’ It is highly noteworthy that St. Kitts is the first place in the New World that the ‘English’ immigrants, which includes many Irish people arrived; from St. Kitts the settlement went spread throughout the Caribbean (Baker 2000: 54-6, 2012: 197-8).<sup>18</sup> Baker notes that ‘English St. Kitts also contributed subsequently to the settlement of Surinam, Jamaica and what was to become the Gullah-speaking area of the USA (2000: 56).’ Thus, Irish people would have of course been included among the ‘English’ settlers to arrive in the Eastern Caribbean who then spread. In the Western Caribbean, colonists ‘directly from the British Isles (above all from Scotland and Ireland)’ arrived around 1730, along with those from the eastern British Caribbean, especially Jamaica (Bartens and Farquharson 2012: 171). Williams (2003), whose examples were previously introduced, highlights references made to a group called the “Wild Irish” coming to Anguilla from the French portion of St. Kitts, and furthermore notes that the present-day Harrigans of the village of Island Harbour are in part descended from the “Wild Irish”. It is noteworthy that ‘although this group is partly Irish in ethnicity, they are typically classified as “brown-skinned” in the local color classification scheme’ and this may be further evidence of the contact that formed the alliances between Irish servants and African slaves in the colonial Caribbean (ibid: 119).

Based on these references, it is certain that the Irish population, who were servants and indentured workers, were involved in the early formation of NWBE in the seventeenth century. However, it would be hasty to conclude that forms of HE diffused in NWBE or that the substratal English, in the contact between ‘whites’ and ‘blacks’, comprises HE. The crucial notion is the likely possibility that Irish indentured servants spoke Irish-Gaelic natively and knew little or no English when they first arrived in St. Kitts, Barbados, Anguilla and other islands in the New World in the seventeenth century. Baker (2000) notes this as cited as above. Rickford (1986) makes the preceding point concerning Irish servants and indentured workers in Barbados. When the history of immigrants in the Caribbean is taken into account, together with the history of HE, my survey could support the view of Irish population as primarily Gaelic speakers, on arrival to the Caribbean. If they had spoken some form of English, it is quite unlikely that the use of *do*, let alone *do be*, as a habitual marker would have been already established in the form of English that Irish arriving in the New World in the seventeenth century spoke; thus, the habitual marking should not be a diffusion from HE to SwHE. This remains a likely possibility until the profiles of Irish are known in detail, including the place of birth, experience in England etc. What my survey of SwHE could assume is that the use of *do* in NWBE in association with the habitual meaning has been created independently from HE in Ireland, if the Irish servants and indentured workers were from southwest counties.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed some important lines of enquiry that the *do be* form in SwHE rises. They include: illustration of the usage of *do be* in John B. Keane’s literature written in the 1950-70s, discussion of the formation of the *do be* form in SwHE, present-day speakers’ awareness from a sociolinguistic

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<sup>18</sup> Baker (2000: 56) notes: ‘Although the first English to reach Barbados came direct from Europe, two groups travelled from St. Kitts to Barbados between 1627 and 1629, forming about one third of the population on their arrival there. Islands settled directly from English St. Kitts include Nevis in 1628 and both Montserrat and Antigua in 1632.’

perspective, and the primary study of the link between Irish and New World Englishes. My survey of prior studies and some important sociohistorical facts is not exhaustive, as my investigations remain ongoing. A brief summary of my current findings and key arguments are as follows: (i) There are two types of *do be* in John B. Keane's play-scripts written during the 1950-70s: 'habituality *do be*<sub>1</sub>' and 'inherent property *do be*<sub>2</sub>' used in the relative clause (e.g. *from the table where people do be eating*). *Do be*<sub>2</sub> is not confirmed by present speakers of SwHE, while earlier work by Keane reveals an evident distribution of *do be*<sub>2</sub>. (ii) The *do be* form is a grammatical innovation in SwHE. In other words, the form and use of *do be* has been established in SwHE, but not a superstratal transfer of the existing BrE *do be*. This paper supports the view that the *do be* form originated from the use of periphrastic *do* of EModE, which was adopted by the bilingual population who spoke Irish-Gaelic natively to express the habitual aspect. Auxiliary *do* was juxtaposed with *be* as the *do be* form; this has become the established habitual marker in SwHE for its stability in the grammatical system. (iii) In a sociolinguistic awareness survey of present speakers of SwHE, *do be* V-ing/NP are highly conspicuous among morphosyntactic features of HE in terms of 'bad grammar'. The *do be* form tends to be associated with negative social meanings such as 'not-well-educated' and 'for poor people' by some middle-aged and older speakers, however this negative association is absent among young speakers. (iv) A significant number of the Irish population were involved in the early stage of formation of Caribbean varieties of English and English-lexifier creoles in the seventeenth century. However, this does not lead to a 'HE-diffusion-to-NWBE' hypothesis. The assumed rise of the habitual *do be* form in SwHE is likely to suggest that the use of *do (be)* in association with the habitual meaning in English-oriented varieties in the Caribbean has been independently created from HE in Ireland.

These four areas of enquiry should be refined in further investigation, both in the fulfilment in the respective needs and in the associations with each other. *Do be*<sub>2</sub> is itself in need of further research. The similarities in the realisation of the habitual aspect between HE and NWBE, when migrations and linguistic demographics in the historical timelines in Ireland and in the Caribbean have been duly considered, seems to lead to another phase of examination. Provided that the separate-development hypothesis between HE and NWBE proves to be feasible, a better understanding of contact-induced grammatical formation could be reached by comparing linguistic outcomes and contrasting the conditions in which they have been produced. The *do be* form also provides a useful illustration of the construction of extra-linguistic meanings and moreover the rise and fall of social meanings in a linguistic form. The *do be* form is considered to have developed elaborate usages until it came to be a part of the stable system of SwHE; however, it seems nowadays to be in decline. Speakers' normative awareness of language use has become acute since the secondary persistent contact with other varieties of English. The *do be* form, being in a state of flux, is itself a sample of grammatical change in progress. It may be that a series of explorations into the *do be* habitual form in SwHE and its surrounding issues are inherently not so far away from the attempt to observe constituents of language phenomena, including grammatical development and change, and analyse the conditions and linguistic outcomes as well as motives that are contextualised in individual phenomena.

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## アイルランド英語南西部方言 *do be* 形式からの視界

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キーワード: *do be*, 習慣相, アイルランド英語, 言語接触, 世界英語

### 要旨

アイルランド英語南西部方言にある習慣相を表す *do be* 形式 (例: *I do be praying for you*. 「いつもあなたのために祈っています。」) について、その用法、形成、現代の当該言語話者の意識、世界の英語変種との関連の諸方向からそれぞれに現時点における考察をまとめる。本稿は、これまでほとんど記述されることのなかった関係詞節内にあらわれる *do be*<sub>2</sub> の用法 (例: *from the table where people do be eating*) を 1950 年代の劇作からの文例で示すこと、文法的イノベーションとしての *do be* の形成の過程、現代の話者にみる *do be* 形式に対する「悪い文法」評価とその使用に関する「教養のない」「貧しい人の」といった社会的意味の素描を含む。さらに、カリブ地域の英語系クレオールないし英語諸方言にある習慣相を表す文法表現との関連について、それらがアイルランド英語からの拡散ではなく、カリブ地域において独立して形成された可能性を示唆する。*Do be* 形式という一つの文法形式にあっても、そこからひろがる視界は社会言語学のおよび接触言語学的関心を含み、どこかで言語変化を解くための諸要素への理解へとつながっていると思われる。

(しまだ・たまみ)