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# **He's after getting up a load of wind: a corpus-based exploration of be +after + V-ing constructions in spoken and written corpora**

**Carolina P. Amador-Moreno**

**University of Extremadura (Cáceres, Spain)**

**Anne O’Keeffe**

**Mary Immaculate College (Limerick, Ireland)**

## **1. Introduction**

A widely known way of expressing a recently completed action in Irish English is by means of the preposition *after* + *V-ing*, as illustrated in the following example: (1) *She’s after finishing her second novel*. Analyses of the Irish English (henceforth IrE) perfect construction *be* + *after* + *V-ing* have often drawn attention to how this structure differs from the Standard English (StE) perfect *have* + past participle. In previous research, the most thorough studies of this structure in the context of Irish English (henceforward IrE)<sup>1</sup> are provided by Henry, Kallen, Harris, Filppula, McCafferty, Ronan and Pietsch<sup>2</sup>. The effect of language contact and bilingualism between Irish Gaelic and English has often been summoned in order to explain the difference between this and other varieties of English. In the light of Second Language Acquisition processes, Romaine also refers to this feature and considers it as a trace of the Irish “substratum influence” evident in situations where a group of speakers has shifted into a new language<sup>3</sup>. And from a sociolinguistic perspective, Milroy cites examples of the structure in the

English of Belfast, whereas Kallen discusses social class factors governing its use in Dublin English<sup>4</sup>. Although the pragmatic value of this form has been noted in previous research (see the works by Kallen and Hickey<sup>5</sup>), little detailed analysis has been carried out in order to determine (1) the various meanings associated with the structure, (2) the reasons why this feature of IrE has survived and even become one of the signature constructions of this variety and (3) whether its use by native IrE speakers has any significance, at a pragmatic level compared with other varieties of English (but see also O’Keeffe and Amador Moreno).<sup>6</sup>

The present chapter addresses some of these issues in looking at the occurrence of this representative structure in fictional and real spoken corpora, thus exploring the notion of fictional versus real spoken discourse and the issue of authenticity. The chapter is organised as follows: section 2 discusses the work that has already been done on this particular construction. Section 3 gives details about our study, and in section 4, the findings are detailed. In section 5, a set of functions are presented and discussed. Finally, in the last section, some conclusions are drawn about the use of the *be + after + V-ing* structure in contemporary Irish English.

## **2. The *be + after + v-ing* structure: A distinctive feature of IrE**

The *after + V-ing* construction is, as we suggested above, probably the best-known IrE feature. It is variously known as the *hot news perfect* (Harris, following McCawley<sup>7</sup>), *the PI*,<sup>8</sup> *the retrospective P*, the *immediate perfective*<sup>10</sup> or the *after perfect* (AFP)<sup>11</sup>. It is also the most widely used to portray Irish characters in literature<sup>12</sup> and, as has been pointed out in early research,<sup>13</sup> it is often employed in IrE to refer to events that have taken place in the immediate or recent past (hence the label "hot-news") but the effects of which, as Filppula argues, “persist some way or other into the present moment or [...] into a secondary point of time orientation in the past,” depending on whether the copula is in the present or in the present tense.<sup>14</sup> Apart from

conveying that idea of recency which in StE is expressed by the use of the perfect *have + V-ed* plus the adverbial form *just* (e.g. *She has just finished her second novel*), in IrE this structure is employed, as Henry explains, “to report the conclusion of an action: . . . by way of reference to a state initiated by the conclusion of this action.”<sup>15</sup>

One of the first references to this structure appears as early as 1882, where the use of *after + V-ing* is regarded as incorrect:

Don't, Pat, when you have done anything, say, “I am after doing it”. The use of the preposition *after* in this manner is a glaring Irishism, and a violation of grammar to boot, and is, I am sorry to say, very prevalent throughout the length and breadth of the land. I have actually seen such an expression in a leading article in a leading Dublin newspaper! it is only with the present and imperfect tenses of the verb “to be” [...] that *after* is thus abused . . .<sup>16</sup>

Stoney's prescriptive observation is interesting, not only because it symbolizes the attitudes of some sectors of society towards IrE during the nineteenth century, but also because it vouches for the usage of this construction outside of the literary contexts in which, one could argue, the *after* construction and other features of IrE are used for caricature<sup>17</sup>. An interesting reflection on the exaggerated use of this and other features on stage is provided by Sullivan, who observes that

the depiction of the speech forms produced by the more non-standard speakers of H(iberno)-E(nglish)<sup>18</sup>, especially in earlier times, appears to have been realized through the exaggerated use of a select number of non-standard features rather than through a more complete linguistic representation. Yet the forms which were utilized in representing HE were precisely those which served to separate HE from Standard English.<sup>19</sup>

Hayden and Hartog refer to this structure too, pointing out the potential for misunderstanding that this form can give rise to, even for speakers of other varieties of English: “the form denotes a completed past, but not a remote past: English misconception treats this part of the I[rish] E[nglish] verb as if it were an abuse by excess of the SE: ‘to be after’ (= to be busy with, to be about to).”<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Joyce mentions the problems of understanding that this structure would pose to an Englishman, attributing this use to the existence of a similar structure

in Irish (with the prepositional phrases *iar* or *i n-diaigh*).<sup>21</sup> This latter observation made by Joyce (and later by van Hamel too)<sup>22</sup>, had already been put forward by Shee (1882: 365), who cited the sentence *I am after eating* (for *I have just eaten*) as an example of translation from Irish. Although not explicitly formulated in these terms, what Shee and Joyce allude to here is the weight of substratum influence.<sup>23</sup>

That the *after* + *V-ing* perfect is a calque on the Irish construction has been maintained in subsequent studies.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the constructions *Bhí (tá, beidh, etc.) + [preposition tar éis/i-ndiaidh]*<sup>25</sup> + *verbal noun or verbal adjective* are among the structures available to express the perfect tense in Irish. These constructions are illustrated in the following two sentences adapted from *The Christian Brothers Grammar*:

(1a)	<i>Tá mé</i>		<i>i ndiaidh</i>		<i>an bád</i>		<i>a dhíol.</i>
	V + S	+	Prep.	+	N (O)	+	part.- V
	Is - I		after		the boat		selling.
(1b)	<i>Tá mé</i>		<i>tar éis</i>		<i>an teach</i>		<i>a ghlanadh.</i>
	V + S	+	Prep.	+	N (O)	+	part.- V
	Is - I		after		the house		cleaning.

Given the absence of this type of perfect in English, the *be* + *after* + *V-ing* structure has been seen as a way of expressing that sense of recency that the constructions with *tar éis/i-ndiaidh* denote in Irish.

In later studies it is the future-time reference conveyed by the same structure *be* + *after* + *V-ing* that has been the focus of attention.<sup>26</sup> Examples of this category such as *If you don't hurry up, they'll be after leaving by the time you get there*, cited in Hickey (2000: 101) were noted by Bliss (1979b: 299-300) in the context of literature<sup>27</sup>. As McCafferty and others have pointed out, future uses of this structure were always dismissed as “Stage Irish,”<sup>28</sup> and yet, “future time reference is also present in the usage of writers from native I[rish]E[nglish]-speaking backgrounds, whose rendition of Irish speech are more difficult to write off as unreliable.”<sup>29</sup> To further buttress his claim, McCafferty gives the example of William Carleton

(1794-1869), “a first-generation IE speaker whose renditions of Irish peasant speech and culture are generally highly regarded [...], [Carleton] could use the construction to convey both future and perfect-tense meanings, as did many of his contemporaries.”<sup>30</sup> In a similar vein, Filppula mentions examples of this construction in a manuscript dating from around 1830, although he seems sceptical about the validity of this source: “[t]he conspicuously frequent use of other similar constructions in this particular text leads one to suspect that this could be a belated continuation of the Stage Irish tradition, with little or no basis in actual HE usage.”<sup>31</sup>

In any case, the analysis of written sources seems to have led to establishing a distinction between an “old”<sup>32</sup> *after* construction with future meanings (possibly influenced by the ambiguity caused by the English preposition *after*, as Kallen suggests<sup>33</sup>) and a new perfect-tense *after* construction originating in Irish which came to replace the old one. According to McCafferty (2003b, 2004, 2014), both constructions would have developed at the same time within the context of language contact and shift in Ireland.<sup>34</sup> As he claims, the future-tense structure occurred in Ireland as a result of interaction between native speakers of British English and Irish-speaking learners of English:

Future uses of *be after V-ing* in earlier representations of Irish English are the result of language contact between speakers of British English, who understood it as a future, and speakers of Irish acquiring English, who intended it as a calque on the equivalent perfect in Irish. As more people became bilingual in the two languages, and eventually shifted to English, perfect meanings came to dominate.<sup>35</sup>

Current literary portrayals of this structure, however, show that the perfect aspect is, indeed, the one that has survived, as can be observed in the following examples, taken from Dublin writer Roddy Doyle’s novel, *The Snapper* (1990):

**Roddy Doyle (The Snapper)**

1 you, Sharon. 130 Let go o'me. You're **after ripping** me hoodie. Wha'. Wha' di  
2 **ttin'** anny calculators. Young Sharon's **after gettin'** herself up the pole. Is  
3 Burgess. Pat Burgess said his da's **after comin'** back. I knew it, I fuckin'  
4 goin' on here? What's wrong? Are you **after upsettin'** your mammy? No. No. W  
5 Aah Jaysis. What happened? The dog's **after shittin'** in the fuckin' hall an' I  
6 Ah Veronica, stop tha' Daddy, Darren's **after hittin'** me. Jesus! Another one. I  
7 **t happened**, Doris? Veronica Rabbitte's **after givin'** poor Doris an awful clatter  
8 Pat who? Burgess. Is Georgie Burgess **after runnin'** away? Yeah- Pat said he fu  
9 carachas. Fuck yis. Pat said his da's **after runnin'** away from home. Pat who?  
10 I believe Gerry Foster's young fella's **after puttin'** some young one from Coo

Doyle's exceptional knack for capturing Dublin speech has been acclaimed by critics. His realistic portrayal of the Dublin vernacular can, in a sense, be compared to Carleton's search for linguistic authenticity.<sup>36</sup> This sort of *speech realism* is not surprising in a culture with a long tradition of story-telling where the oral is often recorded in writing. The search for linguistic authenticity is also what characterizes the work of some other contemporary Irish authors such as Joseph O'Connor, Dermot Bolger, Paul Howard, Kevin Barry, etc.

Access to examples of real speech produced by IrE speakers in the past is of course limited, but, as argued above, resorting to written sources can be revealing in that sense. Some of the sources discussed below provide examples of the *after* construction which lend themselves to comparative diachronic as well as synchronic analysis. As Hundt states, models of language change might look different if variation across speech and writing were taken into account in a more systematic way.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. This study

Our analysis of the *be + after + V-ing* structure differs from other studies in that it is conducted on a large scale using contemporary naturally-occurring spoken IrE, historical literary data and contemporary literary data. The largest source of data in statistical terms came from the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (henceforth LCIE).<sup>38</sup> This is a collection of one million words of Irish English, which involved over one hundred hours of recordings from around the Republic of Ireland. The recordings were transcribed to form a corpus. They range across age, gender, socio-economic background, and geographical location. However, LCIE does not set out to be a sociolinguistically representative corpus. Its primary aim is to represent spoken English as it is used in mostly everyday contexts in contemporary Ireland. Hence recordings took place mostly in family homes and accommodation shared by friends (these are categorised as *intimate*). There are also recordings between friends which are from social contexts such as pubs and restaurants (categorised as *socialising*). It also includes data recording in more formal settings, for example the workplace (*professional*), shops (*transactional*) and the lecture halls and university classrooms (*pedagogical*). Table 2.1 provides a percentage breakdown of these “interactional categories”, as well as examples from each category. The three spoken genre categories of information provision, collaborative task and collaborative task from McCarthy were used to complete the matrix of interactional type versus genre.<sup>39</sup>

	<b>% of data</b>	<b>Information-provision</b>	<b>Collaborative idea</b>	<b>Collaborative task</b>
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Intimate	79	A friend telling a group of friends a story	Family members chatting	Family members putting up the Christmas tree
Socialising	3	Interview informal chat	Friends discussing the football	Friends fixing a computer printer
Professional	8	Report at appraisal	Team meeting at work	Waitresses doing the dishes
Transactional	3	Tupperware presentation	Chatting with bus driver	Eye examination
Pedagogic	7	Teacher-training feedback session	Student and teacher chatting	Individual computer lesson

Table 2.1: Interactional relationship types (based on McCarthy)<sup>40</sup>

In this study, the corpus software *Wordsmith Tools* was used to automatically retrieve all instances of the *be after + V-ing* by searching for *after \*ing*.<sup>41</sup> This generated concordance lines of all the occurrences. From these, all non- *be after + V-ing* were eliminated (e.g. *After opening the door...*). The remaining concordance lines were then used for qualitative analysis. Corpus software allows the researcher to retrieve the source file of any one line from a set of concordances and this facilitated detailed functional analysis and categorisation of the form, instance by instance. For any one occurrence, the corpus database could be consulted as to the age, gender, address, educational background, setting of recording and so on.

The literary data came from the historical literary corpus the *Corpus of Irish English*.<sup>42</sup> This comprises Irish English texts from the late Middle Ages to beginning of 20th century. We



extracted five works from it to conform our computer-searchable IrE literary corpus (see Table 2.2). These were chosen on the basis that they are representative of the period from 1800's to the present. Edgeworth's and Carleton's work provide invaluable data from the period when the language shift from Irish to English was gathering pace. Thus, their IrE may represent the variety as it was emerging in the mouths of the Irish population.<sup>43</sup> Synge's plays are equally interesting from a linguistic perspective, due to his conscious use of language based on the speech of the Aran Islands<sup>44</sup>, and Behan's play is included as representative of Dublin English. *The Corpus Presenter suite* was used on the literary corpus: by entering the string *be + after + \*ing* the program is able to retrieve concordance lines which were then analysed as described above.<sup>45</sup> As a complement to the historical literary data, we then carried out a comparative qualitative analysis of our findings with examples of this structure obtained from contemporary Irish writing. This part of the study included a total of 49 works from 20 different Irish writers (see Appendix 2.1), covering the period between 1951 and 2007.<sup>46</sup> Obvious copyright limitations on the use of contemporary writing lie in the corpora available for corpus-based approaches. This means that no information is available concerning the number of words in each text. However, this is not regarded as problematic in qualitative terms. While a quantitative analysis enables us to discuss general trends in our survey, only a more qualitative approach to specific examples allows us to observe the contextual factors which affect the use of this structure. As will be discussed below, the occurrence of the *after* construction in the work of contemporary authors shows, among other things, that this structure is still perceived as characteristic of the English spoken in Ireland.

<b>Author</b>	<b>Work (including year)</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Total no. of words in corpus (actual occurrence)</b>
Edgeworth	Castle Rackrent (1801)	Novel	25,300
Carleton	Traits and Stories (1830-33)	Novel	20,350
Synge	In the Shadow of the Glen (1903)	Play	5,118
Synge	The Tinker's Wedding (1909)	Play	7,618
Behan	The Quare Fellow (1954)	Play	21,294

Table 2.2: Literary corpus

The overall frequency of the *be + after + V-ing* construction is likely to vary across these different registers. The fact that the examples come from different domains may raise the question of representativeness. However, as Stubbs argues, more often than not, “it is not possible to have a representative sample of ‘a language,’ since the population being sampled is infinite in extent and constantly changing.”<sup>47</sup> The combination spoken-written / fictional-non fictional / contemporary/historical, we believe, provides a more global view of the use of *be + after + V-ing* in IrE.

#### 4. Findings from this study

In all, we found 95 occurrences in one million words of the LCIE spoken corpus. In order to make our quantitative results comparable, we normalised the findings from Hickey’s

Corpus of Irish English (CIE) (that is, we converted them to occurrences per million words).

The normalised results are summarised in Table 2.3.

<b>Data</b>	<b>Raw result</b>	<b>Result per million words for normalised comparison</b>
LCIE	95	95
Castle Rackrent (Edgeworth, 1801)	2	80
Traits and Stories (Carleton 1830-33)	3	140
In the Shadow of the Glen (Synge 1903)	11	2149
The Tinker's Wedding (Synge 1909)	8	1050
The Quare Fellow (Behan 1954)	4	188

Table 2.3: Quantitative results for *be after* + V *-ing* in LCIE and CIE Literary Corpus

Our study gathered 447 tokens in total. A detailed analysis of both the literary and the non-literary data showed that the affirmative form was predominant. There were no instances of negative structures either in the spoken or the written data -which seems to indicate that what Kallen suggests in relation to the absence of this form in Dublin English is also true of current spoken IrE nationwide.<sup>48</sup> Interrogatives were more common in the contemporary written data than in the spoken corpus, where only four examples (one of which was reported speech) were found:

- (2a) ...she said what **what are you after doing?** I I'm after doing something I shouldn't have done at all, he said so he asked for yer man to ...[LCIE]
- (2b) [Conversation between a mother (B) and a daughter (A)]  
 B: **Are you after cooking again?**  
 A: Yes.  
 B: Ah you're a great girl. [LCIE]
- (2c) **Are they after getting** the disease like taken off the mother? [LCIE]
- (2d) **What are ye after doing?** [LCIE]

In the CIE literary corpus, only one example of interrogative is found in *The Tinker's Wedding*, whereas in the 327 tokens collected from contemporary writing between 1951 and 2007, examples such as the ones listed below are found:

- (3a) ... **Were you after falling out** or what? (Dermot Bolger, *Night shift*, 1985)
- (3b) ... **Am I after doin'** somethin' on yeh?' (Joseph O'Connor, *The salesman*, 1998)
- (3c) He went into the kitchen, but I still couldn't say anything and suddenly my mother looked at me and said: "**Are you after joining** the IRA?"... (Mike McCormack, *Getting it in the head*, 1996)
- (3d) My God, said Bimbo, dead quiet. —**Is she after doin'** somethin' to herself? (Roddy Doyle, *The van*, 1991)

The comparison of current IrE with the literary data revealed that, in relation to time reference, only present and past references were found, with the following pattern:

<b>Present reference</b>	I/ 'm/am after –ing She/he/it/this 's/is after (also tis – it +is) We/they/you 're/are after [noun] is after
<b>Past</b>	She/he was after We/they/you were after [noun] was after

Table 2.4. Patterns found in corpora

Future constructions, as pointed out above, are no longer used, as both real and fictional representations of contemporary IrE confirm. The distribution of the past and the present reference forms in the 327 examples collected from contemporary writing is shown in figure 2.1 below.

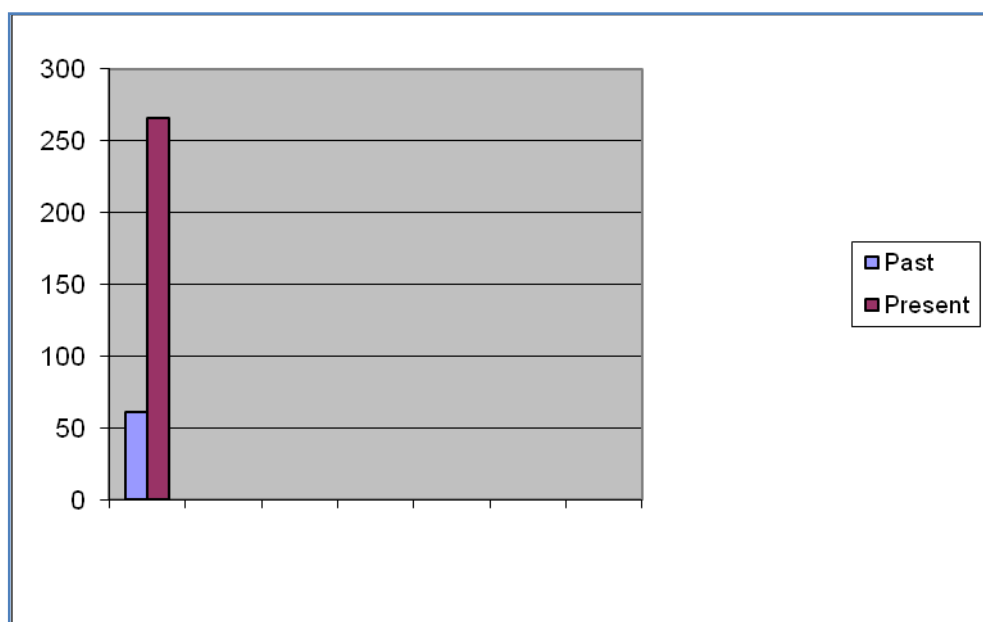


Figure 2.1. Past and Present reference forms in contemporary writing

Another observation in terms of form was that the adverbs *just*, *only*, *already*, *probably* tend to be used in preceding position of *after* to modify the structure:

- (3a) So it didn't matter if the entire remnants of the FitzSimons family **were just after booking** into Room 104. (Dermot Bolger, *Finbar's hotel*, 1997).
- (3b) A: Siobhan do you want a cup of tea.  
B: No I'm fine. I'm **only after having** my breakfast. [LCIE]
- (3c) A: My mother is like a dog at home don't know what's wrong with her. I'm **probably after doing** something wrong.  
B: Is she?  
A: Mothers are always like dogs anyways.  
B: Yeah. [LCIE]
- (3d) He was **already after meeting** Paudie on Friday [LCIE]

As examples 3a, b and d illustrate, *just*, *only* and *already* are used to intensify immediacy while in 3c *probably* is used to modalise the structure.

Indeed, as Kallen suggests, the *after* construction appears not to co-occur with remote adverbials found with other perfect forms<sup>49</sup>. However, what is interesting in relation to *only* is that, apart from acting as an intensifier, as can be seen in the following example taken from Behan's play: WARDER 1 [...] *Myself and this other man here are only after being talking about him*, this adverbial seems to co-occur with the *after* construction in a consistent manner in situations where it was used as part of the refusal/rejection of an offer made by another speaker.<sup>50</sup>

## 5. Functions of the *after* construction

The functional analysis of our data reveals that the *after* construction is used both in fictional and in real contemporary IrE with the following purposes:

### 5.1. Focus on immediate outcome/recency

The examples found in the two sub-corpora show that, as it has been argued in previous research, this structure is used to emphasize immediacy and recency:

- (4a) He's **after getting** up a load of wind [LCIE]
- (4b) Your tart is just **after falling** down your lap! [LCIE]
- (4c) MARY [calling out to her] What is it you're **after whispering** above with himself? [Synge, *The Tinker's Wedding*]

However, what has gone unnoticed so far is that the use of this structure seems to have inherent an element of modality (allowing speaker to incorporate their own attitude), so although the focus on immediate outcome/recency is evident in the examples above, it can be argued that the *after* construction is also used to mark the speakers' perspective.<sup>51</sup>

### 5.2. Past as narrative device

Our analysis of the *after* perfect in contemporary Irish English speech and writing confirms Kallen's findings in relation to its frequency in narrative situations, but it also leads us to the conclusion that it is employed for specific purposes in narrative discourse, i.e. to enable the narrator to present events as emotionally vivid and dramatic, in a similar fashion to what Williams notes in relation to current non-standard uses of the present perfect (e.g. *I have eaten*) in contemporary spoken British English; as he claims in relation to this usage of the perfect in contemporary British English, there is no syntactic device available in the standard variety which allows narrators to present certain events in the discourse sequence as particularly vivid, and which enables them to do so economically.<sup>52</sup> Williams's observation in relation to contemporary spoken British English usages of the present perfect seems to also be true of the IrE *after* construction.

As these examples show, the use of the after construction is used to present the narration (both in fictional and non-fictional contexts) as emotionally vivid, adding a dramatic element from the narrator's perspective:

- (5a) They were just **after coming up** the main road next thing they saw these legs sticking out across the road [LCIE]
- (5b) ... he said to her one day 'I am very troubled **I am after making** an awful mistake' and she said 'what what are you after doing'. 'I'm **after doing** something I shouldn't have done at all' he said so he ... [LCIE]
- (5c) The next day, about one o'clock, he and she were **after taking** another small refreshment of roast-beef and porther, and pushing on, as before, when they heard the same tramping behind them, only it was ten times louder. [Carleton, Traits and Stories]
- (5d) This was my brother Pete, newly arrived on my doorstep with a jar of synthetic estrogen and a desire from hell: he **was after telling** me that he wanted to grow a pair of tits. (Mike McCormack, *Getting it in the head*, 1996)

### 5.3. Comparing (ha)ve (just)+ pp. V after +ing

Another telling aspect of the current use of this construction is that, when compared with the present perfect form in the Standard English variety, the IrE structure features more prominently. In our corpus of one million words, there were only 21 occurrences of *(ha)ve just*, 71% of which were found in specific contexts such as media, lecture, workplace, and 29% in conversations involving friends/family. In one of the contemporary novels we considered for this study, *The Snapper*, only 2 examples of *have* + past participle were found. Although, arguably, in writing the preference for one structure or the other can often be attributed to the particular style of the author, it is evident that the recording of this structure by authors such as Joseph O'Connor, Roddy Doyle, or Dermot Bolger, whose writing displays plenty of features of the spoken mode, indicates that the construction under investigation is certainly part of the English they hear around them.



While the StE form is available to the IrE speaker as well, there is something to say about what guides speakers in choosing different formal realizations of the same function. The 95 examples found of the *after* construction in LCIE, in contrast with the lower frequency of *(ha)ve + pp.*, would suggest, first of all, that IrE speakers do not perceive the IrE form as a stigmatised feature –something that is also supported by Hickey’s *Survey of IrE Usage*, where the acceptability rate for the sentence “She’s after spilling the milk” is quite high; but we could go even further and argue that this structure may actually constitute a sign of identity, which sets the Irish apart from other speakers of English. In our analysis of the use of this structure in e-mails and advertising, we found that speakers use it to show that they are members of the same social group, thus signalling solidarity among speaker/addresser and listener/addressee, an effect that the StE perfect does not convey among IrE speakers.<sup>53</sup> Another conclusion in relation to the use of *be + after + V-ing* in e-mails was that speakers seemed to resort to it as a mitigator, rendering the information to follow less face-threatening. In the message below, the *after* construction is used as an appeal to understanding:

<p><b>From:</b> xxxxxxxxxx <b>Sent:</b> 29 August 2006 14:19 <b>To:</b> xxxxxxxxxx <b>Subject:</b> FW: SIF Agenda for Wednesday</p> <p>Hi Sarah,</p> <p><b>I’m only after seeing</b> your email. I just sent on the 2 attachments re matching funding and further details on the TTAP Strategy.</p> <p>I won’t be able to attend tomorrow’s meeting - I’m up to eyes trying to sort out the access offers and details for Registration etc. Is there anything else you need from me at this stage?</p> <p>Aileen.</p>
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Here, the structure is used to accomplish a particular pragmatic function. The addressee’s understanding for the late response is invoked by the sender, who uses “I’m only after seeing your message” as a mitigator at the beginning of the email instead of the standard

form, “I’ve only just seen your email”. The latter offers less immediacy and a greater degree of formality.

## 6. Conclusions

In this study, we have looked at the use of the after construction in the variety of English spoken in Ireland. The preceding sections have provided an insight into some of the aspects which had hitherto not been noticed in relation to this structure. Although many of the facts revealed by the study cannot justify generalizations without further inquiry, the comparison between the literary and non-literary data confirms that this is not simply a feature of fictional discourse, used to caricature the Irish, but a characteristic element of the English used in Ireland throughout time. The fact that some IrE structures such as this have survived is significant, because it indicates that these forms have a particular communicative function. In the case of the *after* construction, it seems evident that this form contains certain nuances that cannot be expressed by means of other standard constructions. In that sense, the construction under study here needs to be maintained in order for those nuances to be expressed. The analysis of both the literary and the spoken data show that, apart from indicating immediacy/recency, the use of this structure marks speakers’ perspective in that the use of this structure displays modality, allowing speakers to incorporate their own attitude.

Our study also confirms that, as pointed out in previous research, this structure is frequently found in narrative situations. However, what all the examples classified as “narrative device” have in common in this study is the dramatic component, whereby the after construction presents events as emotionally vivid in the narration.

In relation to context, our analysis of the LCIE data shows that in current spoken IrE, the *after* construction is used more frequently in certain registers (conversation between friends

& family) and not others (institutional talk, workplace), where the StE form *have + pp.* features more prominently. However, the use of the IrE construction is, as a whole, more frequently used than its StE counterpart, even in contemporary written contexts.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Beyond Ireland, this construction is also attested in Hebridean English, where it is a direct transfer from Scottish Gaelic; and in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, New Zealand and Australia, as a result of Irish immigration (see Kevin McCafferty, “‘I Think that I will be after Making Love to One of Them:’ A Revised Account of Irish English *Be* after *V-ing* and its Irish Source,” in *‘Ye whom the charms of grammar please’: studies in English language history in honour of Leiv Egil Breivik*, ed. Kari E. Haugland, Kevin McCafferty, and Kristian A. Rusten [Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014], 201-202).

<sup>2</sup> Patrick L. Henry, *An Anglo-Irish Dialect Of north Roscommon: Phonology, Accidence, Syntax* (Dublin: University College, 1957); Jeffrey Kallen, “Tense and Aspect Categories in Irish English,” *English World Wide* 10 (1989): 1-39; “The Hiberno-English Perfect: Grammaticalisation Revisited,” *Irish University Review* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 120-36; “Sociolinguistic Variation and Methodology: After as a Dublin Variable,” in *English around the World: Sociolinguistic Perspectives*, ed. Jeremy Cheshire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 61-74; John Harris, “Syntactic Variation and Dialect Divergence,” *Journal of Linguistics* 20, no. 2 (September 1984): 303-27; Markku Filppula, *The Grammar of Irish English. Language in Hibernian Style* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 99-107; Kevin McCafferty, “‘I Think that I will be;’” Patricia Ronan, “The *After-Perfect* in Irish English,” in *Dialects across Borders. Selected Papers from the 11th International Conference on Methods in Dialectology (Methods XI), Joensuu, August 2002*, ed. Markku Filppula, Juhani Klemola, Marjatta Palander, and Esa Penttilä (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005), 253-70; and Lukas Pietsch, “The Irish English ‘After Perfect’ in Context: Borrowing and Syntactic Productivity,” *Arbeiten zur Mehrsprachigkeit. Folge B*, 82 (2007): 1-32.

<sup>3</sup> Suzanne Romaine, *Bilingualism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> James Milroy, *Regional Accents of English: Belfast* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1981); and Jeffrey Kallen, “Sociolinguistic Variation and Methodology”.

<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey Kallen, “Tense and Aspect Categories”; and “Sociolinguistic Variation and Methodology”; and Raymond Hickey, “Models for Describing Aspect in Irish English,” in *The Celtic Englishes II*, ed. Hildegard Tristram (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 2000), 97-116; and *Dublin English: Evolution and Change* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005), 120-21.

<sup>6</sup> Anne O’Keffe and Carolina P. Amador-Moreno, “The Pragmatics of the *be* + *after* + *V-ing* Construction in Irish English,” *Intercultural Pragmatic* 6, no. 4 (December 2009): 517-34.

<sup>7</sup> John Harris, “Syntactic Variation”, 308; and James McCawley, “Tense and Time Reference in English,” in *Grammar and Meaning: Papers on Syntactic and Semantic Topics*, ed. James McCawley (London: Academic Press, 1976), 257-72.

<sup>8</sup> David Greene (“Perfects and Perfectives in Modern Irish,” *Ériu* 30 [1979], 122-41) refers to the *after* construction as PI and to the IrE perfective with past participle + object (I have the book read) as the PII.

<sup>9</sup> Patrick L. Henry, *An Anglo-Irish Dialect*, 177.

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<sup>10</sup> Raymond Hickey, “Models for Describing Aspect”, 98 ff.

<sup>11</sup> Markku Filppula, *The Grammar of Irish English*, 99.

<sup>12</sup> Jiro Taniguchi, *A Grammatical Analysis of Artistic Representation of Irish English* (Tokyo: Shinozaki Shorin, 1972); Alan Joseph Bliss, *Spoken English in Ireland 1600 - 1740* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1979); J. P. Sullivan, “The Genesis of Hiberno-English: A Socio-Historical Account.” Ph. D. Thesis (New York: Yeshiva University, 1979”); Terence P. Dolan, “Sean O’Casey’s Use of Hiberno-English,” in *Irland: Gesellschaft und Kultur*, ed. D. Siegmund-Schultze (Halle-Wittenberg: Martin-Luther Universität, 1985), 108-15; Kevin McCafferty, “William Carleton between Irish and English: Using Literary Dialect to Study Language Contact and Change,” *Language and Literature* 14, no. 4 (2005): 339-62; and Carolina P. Amador-Moreno, *The Use of Hiberno-English in Patrick MacGill’s Early Novels: Bilingualism and Language Shift from Irish to English in County Donegal* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen, 2006); and *An Introduction to Irish English* (London: Equinox, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> See Mary Hayden, and Marcus Hartog, “The Irish Dialect of English: Its Origins and Vocabulary,” *Fortnightly Review* New series 85 (1909): 775-85 and 933-47; A. G. van Hamel, “On Anglo-Irish Syntax,” *Englische Studien* 45 (1912): 272-92; and K. E. Younge, “Irish Idioms in English Speech,” *The Gaelic Churchman* 4-6 (1922-1927): 46-428.

<sup>14</sup> Markku Filppula, *The Grammar of Irish English*, 99. Depending on whether the copula is in the present or in the past tense (cf. Filppula’s examples: [...] *a house you’re after passing*, and [...] *he was only after getting job* [sic] . . .).

<sup>15</sup> Patrick L. Henry, *An Anglo-Irish Dialect*, 177.

<sup>16</sup> Francis Sadlier Stoney, *Don’t Pat: A Manual of Irishisms* (Dublin: McGee William, 1885), 59-60.

<sup>17</sup> The eighteenth-century distinction between polite and vulgar, as is well known, disparaged all popular, dialectal forms of English. As this comment illustrates, in some cases this attitude was perpetuated well into the nineteenth century (see Dick Leith, *A Social History of English* [London: Routledge, 1983] and Albert C. Baugh, and Thomas Cable, *A History of the English Language* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981]). Amador-Moreno and McCafferty (“[B]ut Sure It’s Only a Penny After All’: Irish English Discourse Marker *Sure*,” in *Transatlantic Perspectives in Late Modern English*, ed. Marina Dossena [Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2015], 179-98) discuss the issue of *enregisterment* (Asif Agha, “The Social Life of Cultural Value,” *Language and Communication* 23 (2003): 231-73) in the context of Irish literature. For a discussion of the linguistic portrayal of Irish characters from 1600 to 1740 see Alan Joseph Bliss, *Spoken English in Ireland*.

<sup>18</sup> *Hiberno-English* was the term used in earlier references to the variety of English spoken in Ireland. It combines the Latin term used by the Romans to refer to the island of Ireland, *Hibernia*, and the noun *English*. Nowadays, for the sake of clarity, the term *Irish English* is preferred.

<sup>19</sup> J. P. Sullivan, “The Genesis of Hiberno-English,” 81.



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<sup>20</sup> Mary Hayden, and Marcus Hartog, *The Irish Dialect of English*, 933.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Joyce, *English as We Speak It in Ireland* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1910), 85.

<sup>22</sup> A. G. van Hamel, "On Anglo-Irish Syntax."

<sup>23</sup> See Terence Odlin, *Language Transfer: Cross-Linguistic Influence in Language Learning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Suzanne Romaine, *Bilingualism*, 69-70.

<sup>24</sup> For further details see John Harris, "Syntactic Variation", 319; Markku Filppula, *The Grammar of Irish English*, 101-02; Raymond Hickey, *Irish English. History and Present-Day Forms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Kevin McCafferty, "'I Think that I will Be'."

<sup>25</sup> Whereas the form *i-ndiaidh* is favoured in the Irish of Ulster, in southern dialects the form *tar éis* is preferred. (see Loretto Todd, *The Language of Irish Literature* [Hampshire and London: MacMillan, 1989], 43).

<sup>26</sup> E.g. Jeffrey Kallen, "The Hiberno-English Perfect"; Markku Filppula, *The Grammar of Irish English*, 102-05; and Kevin McCafferty, "'I Think that I will be;'" "'I'll Bee After Telling Dee de Raison...'" *Be after V-ing as a Future Gram in Irish English, 1601-1750*, in *The Celtic Englishes II*, ed. Hildegard Tristram (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 2000), 298-317; "Innovation in Language Contact. *Be after V-ing as a Future Gram in Irish English, 1670 to the Present*," *Diachronica* 21, no. 1 (2004): 113-60; "Language Contact in Early Modern Ireland: The Case of *be after V-ing as a Future Gram*," *English Core Linguistics. Essays in Honour of D. J. Allerton*, ed. Cornelia Tschichold (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), 323-42; and "William Carleton between Irish and English: Using Literary Dialect to Study Language Contact and Change," *Language and Literature* 14, no. 4 (2005): 339-62.

<sup>27</sup> Raymond Hickey, "Models for Describing," 101; and Alan Joseph Bliss, *Spoken English in Ireland*, 299-300. Note, however, that some authors such as Canny ("Review of *Spoken English in Ireland, 1600-1740*, by Alan Bliss." *Studia Hibernica* 20 [1980]: 167-70) have been rather critical of the historical accuracy of the data presented by Bliss. Future references of the *after* construction in earlier IrE are also recorded in Ó Corráin ("On the 'After Perfect' in Irish and Hiberno-English," in *The Celtic Englishes II*, ed. Hildegard Tristram [Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 2000], 154-56). For a comparative study with other prepositional constructions see also Lukas Pietsch, "The Irish English 'After Perfect'."

<sup>28</sup> See J. O. Bartley, *Teague, Shenkin and Sawney: Being a Historical Study of the Earliest Irish, Welsh and Scottish Characters in English Plays* [Cork: Cork University Press, 1954], 39 ff.

<sup>29</sup> Kevin McCafferty, "I'll bee after Telling dee," 299.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Markku Filppula, *The Grammar of Irish English*, 104.

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<sup>32</sup> This distinction between *old* and *new* is based on the date of recording of each structure in literary works.

<sup>33</sup> Jeffrey Kallen, "The Hiberno-English Perfect." See also Mark Fryd ("Some Remarks on 'after + -ing' in Hiberno-English," in *L'Irlande et ses langues*, ed. Jean Briahult. [Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1992], 53-62), who discusses the interpretation of *after* as a marker of conation.

<sup>34</sup> Kevin McCafferty, "Language Contact;" "William Carleton;" and "I Think that I will Be."

<sup>35</sup> Kevin McCafferty, "William Carleton," 355.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Marianne Hundt, "Animacy, Agency and the Spread of the Progressive in Modern English," *English Language and Linguistics* 8, no. 1 (2004): 47-69.

<sup>38</sup> See Fiona Farr, Brona Murphy, and Anne O'Keeffe, "The Limerick Corpus of Irish English: Design, Description and Application," *Teanga* 21 (2004): 25-29.

<sup>39</sup> Michael McCarthy, *Spoken Language and Applied Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Mike Scott, *WordSmith Tools 5* (Liverpool, UK: Lexical Analysis Software, 2008).

<sup>42</sup> Raymond Hickey, *Corpus Presenter. Software for Language and Analysis* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2003).

<sup>43</sup> Barry Sloan, *The Pioneers of Anglo-Irish Fiction, 1800-1850* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1986), 173.

<sup>44</sup> The discussion of the poetic or stylistic function of his use of IrE is beyond the scope of this paper. For a discussion of this, see Alan Joseph Bliss, "Languages in Contact," 40-43; Declan Kiberd, *Synge and the Irish Language* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 203 ff; or Raymond Hickey, *Corpus Presenter*, 24-26.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> The authors are grateful to Kevin McCafferty for kindly allowing us access to these data which he compiled.

<sup>47</sup> Michael Stubbs, *Text and Corpus Analysis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 232.

<sup>48</sup> Jeffrey Kallen, "Tense and Aspect Categories."

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<sup>49</sup> He compares the sentences *France has been ruled by monarchs in the past* and *\*France is after being ruled by monarchs in the past* (Ibid., 14).

<sup>50</sup> Anne O’Keeffe, and Carolina P. Amador-Moreno, “The Pragmatics.”

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Jeffrey Kallen, “Sociolinguistic Variation and Methodology;” and Eddie Williams, “The Present Perfect in English Media Discourse in the UK,” *Vigo International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 3 (2006): 9-26.

<sup>53</sup> Anne O’Keeffe, and Carolina P. Amador-Moreno, “The Pragmatics;” and Carolina P. Amador-Moreno, and Anne O’Keeffe, “The Pragmatics of the *be + after + V-ing* Construction in Irish English: Age and Gender?” Paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> International Pragmatics Conference (Göteborg, Sweden, 8-13 July 2007).

**Appendix 1 Contemporary Irish authors**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Work (including year)</b>	<b>Total no. of occurrences of <i>be + after + V-ing</i></b>
Glenn Patterson (1961- )	<i>Fat lad</i> (1992)	2
Dermot Bolger (1959- )	<i>Night shift</i> (1985) <i>The woman's daughter</i> (1987) <i>The journey home</i> (1990) <i>Emily's shoes</i> (1992) <i>Father's music</i> (1997) <i>Finbar's hotel</i> (1997) <i>In high Germany</i> (1999) <i>The Valparaiso voyage</i> (2001)	32
Maeve Binchy, Clare Boylan, Emma Donoghue, Anne Haverty, Éilis Ní Dhuibhne, Kate O'Riordan, Deirdre Purcell	<i>Ladies' night at Finbar's Hotel</i> (1999)	1

Joseph O'Connor (1963-)	<i>The salesman</i> (1998) <i>True believers</i> (1991) <i>Desperadoes</i> (1994) <i>The secret world of the Irish male</i> (1994) <i>Red roses and petrol</i> (1995) <i>The Irish male at home and abroad</i> (1996) <i>Inishowen</i> (2000) <i>The comedian</i> (2000) <i>Star of the sea. Farewell to Old Ireland</i> (2002) <i>Redemption Falls</i> (2007)	136
Colm Tóibín (1955-)	<i>The heather blazing</i> (1992) <i>The Blackwater lightship</i> (1999)	8
Mike McCormack (1965-)	<i>Getting it in the head</i> (1996)	2
Roddy Doyle (1958-)	<i>The commitments</i> (1988) <i>Brownbread</i> (1989) <i>The snapper</i> (1990) <i>The van</i> (1991) <i>War</i> (1992) <i>Paddy Clarke ha ha ha</i> (1993) <i>The woman who walked into doors</i> (1996) <i>A star called Henry</i> (1999) <i>Not just for Christmas</i> (1999) <i>Rory &amp; Ita</i> (2003) <i>Oh, play that thing</i> (2004) <i>Paula Spencer</i> (2006)	55
15 Irish authors	<i>Yeats is dead</i> (2002)	6
Paul Muldoon (1951-)	<i>New weather</i> (1994)	1

Gina Moxley Jimmy Murphy Marina Carr (1964-)	<i>The dazzling dark</i> (1996)	16
Martin McDonagh*	<i>A skull in Connemara</i> (1997) <i>The cripple of Inishmaan</i> (1997)	4
Sebastian Barry (1955-)	<i>The whereabouts of Eneas McNulty</i> (1998)	8
Jamie O'Neill*	<i>At swim, two boys</i> (2001) <i>Kilbrack</i> (1990)	48
Maurice Leitch*	<i>Poor Lazarus</i> (1969)	1
Patrick McCabe (1955- )	<i>Emerald germs of Ireland</i> (2001)	2
Michael Collins (1964- )	<i>The meat eaters</i> (1992)	1
Niall Williams	<i>Only say the word</i> (2005)	1