

# Gender in English pronouns

## Myth and reality

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Dialectology and corpus linguistics (1)

In a number of ways this thesis is going to progress into uncharted territory. Although it will not attempt “to boldly go where no man has gone before”, the combination and definition of certain aspects and concepts may come as a surprise for some readers. What will be presented below is, in my eyes, a curious mixture of old and new, traditional and modern, both in terms of theoretical background and methodology.

In order to place this thesis within traditional and current research efforts in all fields involved, a brief overview of those fields will be provided. Where necessary, certain refinements that have been made for this thesis in particular will be pointed out. In addition, advantages and drawbacks of current approaches in both dialectology and corpus linguistics, which provide the two major frames here, will hopefully become clear.

Writing in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, a linguist interested in non-standard varieties of language is faced with at least two centuries of previous work on the subject. Although this seems like a negligible period if compared with other areas of linguistic research, where first investigations may date back two millennia instead of mere centuries, it appears as though approaches to language variation have always induced more discussion, reaction and counter-reaction than any other field of language research. Why this is the case will not be discussed here – it belongs to the field of language ideology or sociology, but not linguistics.

As for how to handle variation in language, various schools have tried numerous approaches, modified and refined them, or abandoned them again if they did not prove as fruitful as imagined. Others were, until fairly recently, completely

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<sup>1</sup> Dialectologists are aware of the fact that their discipline lacks a theoretical framework – as William Kretzschmar once said about linguistic theory, “anybody knows that dialectologists aren’t supposed to have any” (at the Eleventh Methods in Dialectology Conference held in Joensuu, Finland, from August 5 to 9, 2002). At the same time, however, they are attempting to remedy that situation – “The first thing to say about theory for dialectologists in the future is that we should claim one.” (Kretzschmar 1999: 274)

unaffected by the fact that for many speakers *There's three houses* is more natural than *There are three houses*, and have only now begun to integrate theoretical approaches to language-internal variation, be it regional, social, ethnic, etc., into their concept of language. The following paragraphs offer an attempt to summarize and explain concepts that will figure in later parts of this thesis or which influenced its general background assumptions.

### 1.2 Traditional vs. modern dialectology

Intrigued by strange words or uses of words, early researchers focussed almost exclusively on lexical differences between communities.<sup>2</sup> Usually, they investigated their home towns and neighbouring villages, and more often than not they had no linguistic training whatsoever. In addition, a person interested in peculiarities of language generally had a comparably high social status and education, but studied the language of the lower social classes. Consequently, there originated from these efforts publications with titles such as *The peasant speech of Devon* (Hewett 1892<sup>2</sup>), which, although generally not blatantly derogatory, made clear that the type of language described in the respective treatise was that of the working classes – of farmers, weavers and miners – not that of educated people.

In terms of content, the most frequent type of publication is the word book, which is usually a dictionary, listing local lexical items and “translating” them into Standard English (StE). Authors listed items which either they themselves thought of as local, or which had been pointed out to them by others. Although one cannot be certain, it seems relatively safe to assume that no systematic research has ever been carried out for such a study. Instead, impressions and hearsay of uncertain origin were compiled into publications whose intended readers remain a mystery – who was supposed to buy a book listing hundreds of words used in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Devon?

An exception to these rather unscientific endeavours are the publications of the English Dialect Society, which ultimately served as sources for the *English Dialect Dictionary* (Wright 1898-1905). However, even for these studies, we know next to nothing about their origins and sources, least of all about their authors.

None of these studies can be subsumed under the heading “dialectology” as understood today, at least not without some remarks of caution. Dialectology as a linguistic discipline has its origins in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the first systematic studies were carried out in Germany and France (*cf.* Chambers and Trudgill 1998<sup>2</sup>: 15ff). The primary tool of researchers then was the questionnaire, and to this day questionnaire-based surveys are still seen as the most feasible and economic method of data collection, at least for certain studies.

Although their primary aim was to establish lexical isoglosses, many of the early surveys also included items of phonological or even morphological interest,

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<sup>2</sup> The following are generalisations for research on varieties of British English; other practices and policies may have been used for other projects in different countries.



if to a negligible extent. The traditional dialectologist saw himself first and foremost as a historical linguist who preserved a dying type of language for future generations by recording rural speech. For this reason, traditional informants were NORMs<sup>3</sup> – non-mobile, older, rural male speakers with little education who had not been influenced by modern life's efficiencies.

The motivation for so consistent a choice of informants throughout the history of dialect geography seems clear. The informants should be nonmobile simply to guarantee that their speech is characteristic of the region in which they live. They should be older in order to reflect the speech of a bygone era [...] They should be rural presumably because urban communities involve too much mobility and flux. And they should be male because in the western nations women's speech is considered to be more self-conscious and class-conscious than men's [...]

(Chambers and Trudgill 1998<sup>2</sup>: 30)

Before the advent of tape recorders, dialectology had to rely on the fieldworker's acute ear and his capability of rendering the informants' actual utterances in some sort of phonetic script. No other means except pen and paper was available to record utterances for future reference. Thus the fieldworker is in many respects the key figure in traditional dialectological studies. Fieldworkers were usually responsible for establishing contact with and ultimately choosing the informants, and it is certainly no exaggeration to postulate a very direct link between the fieldworker's methods and the success of the survey as a whole.

Collecting data for nation-wide surveys was a laborious and time-consuming task, and to accomplish it at all, the work load had to be divided between a number of fieldworkers (e.g. *Survey of English Dialects* (SED)<sup>4</sup>, the *American Linguistic Atlas* projects). Apart from the clear advantage of saving precious time, it should be obvious that more than one fieldworker automatically meant more than one method of data elicitation (if that was flexible) and recording practice. Looking at the fieldworker notebooks on which the SED is based, one is confronted with the widely differing practices the fieldworkers used in putting down the responses and incidental material. Although they did of course receive the same guidelines and training, time and individuality cannot simply be disregarded. As Francis remarks (1983: 79), a group of fieldworkers "immediately raises the question of comparability" of their individually collected data, which, as will become clear in the following sections, is probably *the* one most debated and problematic issue of dialectology.

If no direct, but rather an indirect method is used for collecting data, the influence of the linguist as the initiator of the survey is minimized to just that – s/he will not have any say in the choice of the informants, which is usually the task of an intermediary, traditionally a person with very good access to the target population,

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Chambers and Trudgill (1998<sup>2</sup>: 29).

<sup>4</sup> More details on the SED can be found in chapter 7.

## 1. Introduction

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e.g. a member of the church or educational system in the community concerned.<sup>5</sup> Although indirect surveys also use questionnaires, those are generally distributed to the informants directly, who are then asked to perform some sort of translation task.

The major drawback of questionnaire-based surveys is inherent in the very methodology that is used – in order to conduct questionnaire-based interviews, the first order of business is to “construct” a suitable questionnaire. Such a questionnaire, however, can only be put together if it is already clear where variation is to be found or at least where it is to be expected.<sup>6</sup> If not totally impossible, it is at least impractical to devise a questionnaire containing questions that could be used by future scholars interested in issues which were not explicitly part of the original survey. Thus, while an item-centred survey of the nature of the SED is even today the perfect tool for finding out which regions in England use(d) *bairn* for StE *child*, a question like “Do people in the North use AUX contraction more frequently than NEG contraction?” (*cf.* Tagliamonte and Smith 2002) cannot be addressed at all, as it was not envisioned by Orton and his colleagues.<sup>7</sup>

While both lexical items and phonological differences can be elicited with the help of relatively short questions which result in even shorter – often just one-word – responses, morphological or even syntactic information is much more difficult to gather. As Francis, one of the SED fieldworkers, states, “[m]orphological information collected in dialect surveys is commonly limited to inflectional paradigms: noun plurals and cases, pronoun forms, verb conjugations” (1983: 56).

This has been the procedure of the SED as well. Of the 1322 “virtual questions” that constitute the questionnaire used in the interviews, 387 concern phonological issues, 730 are solely concerned with lexical differences, and only 205 questions (128 + 77 or 15.5%) directly address morphological or syntactic phenomena (*cf.* Orton 1962: 15), all of which belong to one of the categories mentioned by Francis. Analysing syntactic constructions clearly was beyond the scope of all of these studies, probably both for ideological (dialectology as a branch of historical philology) as well as practical reasons (no means of recording stretches of conversation). While a lot of things have changed for the better in the two decades since his time of writing, most of the issues that Francis addresses as problematic in syntactic investigations are at least partly still valid.

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<sup>5</sup> A more detailed description of the indirect method can be found in Francis (1983: 99ff).

<sup>6</sup> The problematic nature of compiling suitable questions is old and well-known – “the questionnaire, in order to be clearly the best, ought to be made after the survey.” (Gilléron 1915 in Mather and Speitel 1975, 10, here from Francis 1983: 52.)

<sup>7</sup> The SED *does* allow certain types of questions of a morphological nature, based on its format of publication. Other surveys which do not include complete responses but “only” maps detailing regional distribution (which took much more effort to produce in the first place) cannot be used in such a way at all.

Variation in syntax has been very little studied by dialectologists, for two reasons. In the first place, syntax as a branch of linguistics has not been given much attention until fairly recently. Secondly, *most significant syntactic variation requires larger samples of a language than it has been convenient or even possible to collect by the usual methods*. Usually a complete sentence, often a quite long one, is needed to display a variant syntactic construction. The fieldworker collecting material with notebook and pencil finds it very difficult to record long sentences without asking the informant to repeat what he has said, a procedure which is difficult and unsatisfactory for both. As a result, the syntactic material which has been collected more or less systematically is limited to those variations which can be displayed in a short sample. Among these are such matters as subject-verb agreement, the formation of negatives, pronoun reference and case, and question formation. The systematic study of larger forms of syntactic variation is only now becoming possible because of the accumulation of larger samples of speech by tape recording. This is one of the challenging areas of dialectology today.

(Francis 1983: 41; emphasis SW)

The neglect of morpho-syntax is thus partly due to the origin of dialectology as a – at its core – much more historical rather than linguistic discipline. But this still does not explain why researchers today are generally no longer interested in studies of rural communities at all – be they lexical, phonological, or morpho-syntactic in nature.

What we observe here is one of the major problems of modern dialectology. While traditional dialectology was often equated with dialect geography (and thus not recognized as a linguistic sub-discipline), its modern equivalent was (and still is) associated with sociological rather than linguistic methodology, and the grounds for the two to meet are not really getting any larger.

Traditional dialectologists had no interest in the language of urban centres, as those were correctly associated with instability, change and the mixing of people from different regions – thus totally unsuitable for a historical study. Only when social components began to play a role in studying language did researchers start to focus on cities rather than rural areas, as its very heterogeneity on a social scale was now the city's strongest point.

For unknown reasons, urban dialectology from the beginning has analysed phonological and grammatical rather than lexical features (*cf.* Chambers and Trudgill 1998<sup>2</sup>: 48), thus making it necessary to revert to exactly that type of data gathering deemed almost impossible by Francis (*cf.* above). “Urban dialect surveys [...] have [...] usually proceeded by obtaining tape-recorded stretches of quasi-conversational speech from their informants, usually by the asking of questions designed to produce large amounts of talk” (Chambers and Trudgill 1998<sup>2</sup>: 48).

From their earliest days, modern urban studies had to overcome one main obstacle: how should one best ensure that the informants' style was relaxed and in-

## 1. Introduction

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formal rather than formal and modified to accommodate the interviewer?<sup>8</sup> Today, there are a number of both sophisticated and more primitive methods to handle what Labov has labelled the Observer's Paradox (Labov 1972b: 61). On the one hand, interviewers try to make the informants forget that their speech is being investigated.<sup>9</sup> This can be done by giving non-linguistic reasons for the interview (e.g. an interest in farming methods of old<sup>10</sup>) or by introducing a topic into the conversation that is bound to produce a fairly high degree of emotional involvement so that the linguistic purpose of the interview is backgrounded. Another method involves a sort of intermediary as known from traditional studies. One possible scenario is for the researcher to make the acquaintance of one dialect speaker who knows other possible informants and who then conducts the interviews after having been tutored to some extent by the researcher.

A different method has been used, for example, for parts of the demographic sample of the *British National Corpus* (BNC): Native speakers of a respective variety were given tape recorders and instructed to record their everyday conversations over a certain period of time (cf. Burnard 1995: 19ff). The results are group conversations rather than one-on-one interviews. While the former can easily be used to analyse phonological and morpho-syntactic high-frequency phenomena, only the latter allows at least some guidance of the informant and thus influence on the content. Thus, if the researcher plans to study e.g. future forms in discourse, s/he should try to involve the informant in a topic or discussion that has a comparatively high potential for containing future time reference, for example by asking questions like "What do you plan to do once you're retired?" and similar ones.

While traditional dialectologists borrowed most of their methodology from historical or geographical sciences, their modern counterparts found their tools in the social sciences. Instead of focussing on a very restricted group of informants (NORMs), it became important to obtain a socially stratified set of data. The criteria for selecting informants usually include at least age, sex, and social status. In addition, ethnicity has always featured prominently, particularly in the United States (studies by Labov, Wolfram, etc.). With the marriage of social criteria to linguistic fieldwork, a new discipline was born – sociolinguistics.

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, such a problem never really played any significant role in traditional studies. While it was important to obtain an informant's co-operation to begin with, not much attention was paid to style or code-switching behaviour once the study had got underway. Researchers very often justified such an approach by pointing out that farmers only had one style at their disposal anyway, so that code-switching was impossible. This situation has changed considerably through the influence of mass media, increased mobility etc., and although this judgement was probably fairly accurate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is at least questionable whether it was valid in SED times.

<sup>9</sup> Although pilot studies have shown that the co-operation of the informant is not strictly necessary for modern studies (cf. Chambers and Trudgill 1998<sup>2</sup>: 48), it is a prerequisite for one-on-one interviews if one expects anything more than "yes" and "no" from the informants.

<sup>10</sup> Such material is very often collected for so-called oral history projects, which offer a largely untapped source for linguistic studies. For details on advantages and problems of using such material, see chapter 7.

### 1.3 Sociolinguistics and dialectology

If confronted with the question “What’s your occupation?”, researchers like Labov, Wolfram and others would probably respond with “linguist”. If asked to specify, they would presumably list a number of things, but it seems a fairly safe guess that none of them would say “dialectologist”. The antipathy that still exists today between the proponents of the – to this author – two “parts” of dialectology<sup>11</sup> seems to be based on the narrow-mindedness (in the eyes of the modern researchers) of the traditional approach.<sup>12</sup>

[T]he narrow choice of informants in dialect geography is probably the greatest single source of disaffection for it. Readers and researchers have questioned the relevance of what seems to be a kind of linguistic archaeology. [...] The greatest proportion of the population is mobile, younger, urban and female – in other words, the diametrical opposite of NORMs. The NORM population was always rare, and it has been dwindling for generations. The classic works of dialect geography recorded the speech of NORMs faithfully and in a sense enshrined it, but it is likely that the future of dialect studies will have to be directed towards more representative populations.

(Chambers and Trudgill 1998<sup>2</sup>: 30)

It is probably due to this (mis)conception that one would be rather ill-advised to speak of “dialects” in the presence of sociolinguists. The preferred term was (and still is, in many ways) “variety”, although there was a short period when it was perfectly fine to speak of social or ethnic dialects, then by way of backformation and/or blending, of sociolects, ethnolects, or genderlects, all based on “dialect”.

Non-linguistic criteria play a major role in modern research, as they act as factors or variables that are used in analysing language variation. It is, in fact, next to impossible to use sociolinguistic methodology with a more traditional corpus (like the one used in the present study), as the factor groups are either empty or always the same, thus not acting as an influencing variable. This incompatibility of methodology is to the present author more than unfortunate for the discipline of dialectology – and, whatever is said to prove the opposite, sociolinguistics *is* first and foremost dialectology. Both sides could very much profit from each other’s efforts and experiences, which will hopefully become clear from parts of this study, where traditional and modern methods will be combined.

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<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that Chambers supports this impression in a very recent publication (Chambers 2002b: 6).

<sup>12</sup> Note that researchers like William Kretzschmar see themselves clearly as followers of the traditional school – “as our field may be separated from the essentially structuralist approach of Labovian sociolinguistics” (Kretzschmar 1999: 273). Personally, I consider this an extreme standpoint which (over-)emphasizes the differences rather than the similarities of the two fields.

## 1.4 Dialectology and corpus linguistics (2)

Although it is almost never addressed explicitly, corpus linguistics is a kind of unacknowledged partner of modern dialectology.<sup>13</sup> In compiling their databases, researchers obey corpus-linguistic rules of representativeness in addition to sociological ones, and ultimately work with a corpus. Such a corpus may consist of a number of interviews conducted with and/or by native speakers adding up to some million words (such as parts of the BNC). Or it may consist of all the instances of the definite article in a number of interviews with speakers stratified for age in an English town, totalling some thousand tokens. Whatever the outline, almost every study conducted today under the label of sociolinguistic research is based on a corpus of some kind.

The major challenge for the researcher is to justify the compilation of his or her corpus. My contribution in this respect can be found in chapter 7, where the database used for this study will be described in detail and issues of compatibility and representativeness will be addressed.

Let me thus be brief here – when asked what type of study this is, I would probably reply “A traditional one with modern methodology.” To some, this may seem like a contradiction in terms. Let me try to explain what I mean by this.

The corpus data that will be used are traditional – most of the speakers are NORMs with some NORFs mixed in. Speakers are not stratified for any social variable. The interviews were chosen because reading through the transcripts or listening to the tapes showed that they exhibited the feature(s) to be investigated. The material is thus in no way representative in terms of overall distribution. It is, however, representative for those speakers whose language system includes the variable in question (+ speakers).

As only + speakers are investigated in the corpus study, it seems justified to compare their system(s) with the one(s) of the SED informants as exemplified in the fieldworker notebooks. The notebooks only contain positive (i.e. non-standard) occurrences of the feature, while the negative scenario (i.e. absence of the feature or standard language use) is not recorded.

No attempt will be made to use statistical methods such as variable rule analysis or similar ones.<sup>14</sup> Those methods that will be used will be applied only to parts of the data and only be compared with analyses of compatible material (e.g. no statistical analysis of corpus material will be compared with SED results), following Kretzschmar’s view that “[t]he future of dialectology should be pluralistic

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<sup>13</sup> Note, for example, Kretzschmar’s opinion: “I think that we should affiliate ourselves with the emerging area of empirical linguistics.” (Kretzschmar 1999: 276)

<sup>14</sup> Although the importance of quantitative in addition to traditional qualitative analyses has long since been acknowledged (see, e.g., Kretzschmar (1999: 282) or Biber *et al.* (1998: 4)), the type of data used often restrict or even preclude possible statistical analyses altogether. Future studies will have to put stronger emphasis on issues of comparability in order to be able to carry out sophisticated statistical tests.



in its approaches to analysis.” (Kretzschmar 1999: 282) Although a generalized, overall result will thus be impossible, the individual results will nevertheless enable cross-generalizations to certain extents and for certain phenomena.

From a very general point of view, this is a descriptive study examining the speech of various heterogeneous (but in themselves homogeneous) groups of speakers of a number of varieties of English that show a certain variability in their gender assignment rules. As I am to some degree entering uncharted territory, I feel that in a number of respects a German saying characterizes this thesis quite nicely: *Der Weg ist das Ziel*.

Chapters 2 to 7 (Part I) will establish the theoretical and practical background information for the following chapters. They will discuss descriptions of gender assignment in dialectological literature and the history of gender in English in order to set the scene for the more practically oriented chapters in Parts III and IV. In addition, the dialects chosen for this investigation will be discussed in more detail (chapters 4 to 6), including, in the case of Newfoundland English, important aspects of settlement history. Chapter 7 will provide background information on the corpora that will be used in this study.

Part II will be concerned with studies from different methodological, theoretical and regional backgrounds that touch upon certain aspects which play an important role for the overall analyses and arguments presented here. Chapter 8 contains an overview over those (noun) classes which will either not be treated here at all or to which a special status should be attributed in theories on gender assignment. Chapter 9 summarizes various studies of a non-dialectological nature dealing with gender assignment in varieties of English and attempts to establish their relationship to the present study. With syntactic priming, a relatively recent approach to identifying certain linguistic patterns is tested on parts of the corpus data of this study (chapter 10).

Detailed analyses of gender assignment in the corpora of this study will be at the core of Parts III and IV. Chapters 11 and 12 will be based on data from the *Survey of English Dialects*, while more modern oral-history interviews from Southwest England constitute the data source of chapter 13. For Newfoundland, the material stems from two sub-corpora. Chapter 14 is based on interviews stored at the *Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive*, while chapter 15 utilizes parts of the *Folktales of Newfoundland*.





## **Part I**

# **Theoretical and practical background information**



## Chapter 2

# Gender diffusion

or: *Well there's a lot of it don't make sense do it.* (TCA (FK))

Although this chapter will ultimately deserve its title, we have a long way to go before we can explain it adequately in later chapters. Nevertheless, it was chosen here to represent the core issue of this thesis: the confusing use of pronominal forms in basically all varieties of (spoken) English. Let me start by giving some examples worthy of discussion:

- (1) That is a dead teat with no milk into **en** [ən]. (38 Do 3, book III)
- (2) We call **en** [ɪ] a peeth [well]. (36 Co 6, book IV)
- (3) He used to say, Put **un** [candle] where ye can zee '**im** [candle] and I can zee '**im** [candle] as well. (TRWBM 70)
- (4) <u Int> Those flat irons interested me too because they had a handle that would come off, removable handle, why was that?  
<u Inf>  
Da's for you put one on da stove now and you put two on da stove and when dey get warm you put da handle in you take and ah ah when **he** [iron] when **he** [iron] get cold off you put **he** [iron] on you put your handle in t' udder one **he** [iron] be warm see, **he**'d [iron] be hot and you'd take **en** [iron] and you'd iron your clothes den and while one be, while one be warmin' da t' udder be coldin', time be coldin' off see. (MUNFLA 70-003: C0626)
- (5) I joined in the first hall was down dere and den they build this one is down there now and they build **he** [hall/house] in 19-, in 1921 I believe they build **it**, I joined in the other one, I joined in 1917, in the ole lodge. (MUNFLA 71-131: C1034)
- (6) ... press them like that and you'd see your thumb mark in them or any apple really when **he**'s [apple] ripe, wadn't it, but when **he**'s [apple] not ripe **he**'s [apple] hard, isn't **he** [apple], ... (SRLM 62)
- (7) *Ok, crack 'er up!* <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From the movie *Titanic* (USA 1997); the speaker is (presumably) an American male, talking about the safe being brought up from the ocean floor.

## 2. Gender diffusion

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- (8) “Where is **she**? – If **she** will give us the pleasure ... there **she** is!”<sup>2</sup>
- (9) **she’s up/down** (in reference to a share (price))<sup>3</sup>
- (10) **she’s up 30 today; she’s off \$2 today** (reference to the market (e.g. the Dow, Toronto, NASDAQ) and to an individual stock (price))<sup>4</sup>
- (11) This is another pot and saucer. A bit dusty! You see that one isn’t exactly glazed proper, burnt proper is **she** [pot]. (SRLM 224)

All of the examples in (1) to (11) share one feature: the personal pronoun forms used (in bold print) are supposedly reserved for reference to human or at least animate entities. At a first glance, the target nouns seem to have nothing in common: a cow’s teat, a well, a candle, an iron, an assembly hall, an apple, a safe, a violin, stock prices, a pot – this list could be continued, but suffice it to note for now that there seem to be more contrasts than unifying features among the referent nouns.

As varied as the target nouns are the forms of the personal pronouns employed in the examples: *en*, *un*, *’im*, *he*, *she*. While the last three forms can be readily identified as (reduced) object pronoun (masculine) and subject forms (masculine and feminine), the origin(s) of the first two forms may not be as obvious. As various realizations of the form can be found in speech, ranging from [ən] to [ɪ], there is no uniform orthography for the item in question. Most commonly, it is spelled either *en* or *un*, and is analysed as a reduced form of Old English (OE) *hine* (acc. sing. masc.)<sup>5</sup>, thus being equivalent to Present-Day English (PrDE) *him*. Unfortunately, the case syncretism of accusative *hine* and dative *him* made some scholars<sup>6</sup> believe that *en* was both masculine and neuter, based on the fact that *him* had been used for both of these genders. This seems a moot point, though, as such an assumption would mean that *hine* used to be masculine and neuter, too, which is clearly not the case – it is uncontroversial that the accusative of the neuter personal pronoun was *hit*, not *hine*. This *en* or *un* is a form typical of the Southwest, as can be seen in Figure 2.1, based on SED material.

As scholars have not (yet) found a suitable label for the phenomenon, I will continue using the one that we have used in connection with our project on British English dialect syntax at Freiburg University, namely *gender diffusion*. Although it has been argued recently that the label is “unfortunate” (Siemund 2001: 30), I hope to make clear why it has been chosen in the first place and why it is – at least for the data discussed here – (still) appropriate. Different data sets may require different labels and terminology, and as Siemund’s account on gender differs in a number of respects from the one presented here, his dissatisfaction with the term *gender diffusion* only reflects the differences in outline of the respective studies, making his criticism of the term in general unjustified.

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<sup>2</sup> From the movie “The Red Violin”; the speaker is (presumably) a Canadian male, talking as an auctioneer about the violin that is to be sold next.

<sup>3</sup> Thanks to Dr. Graham Shorrocks of the *Memorial University of Newfoundland* for providing me with his collection of Newfoundland speech samples.

<sup>4</sup> Newfoundland brokers; Graham Shorrocks, personal collection.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. e.g. OED “un<sup>1</sup>”, with (*h*)*un* being used as early as 1633.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Elworthy (1877).

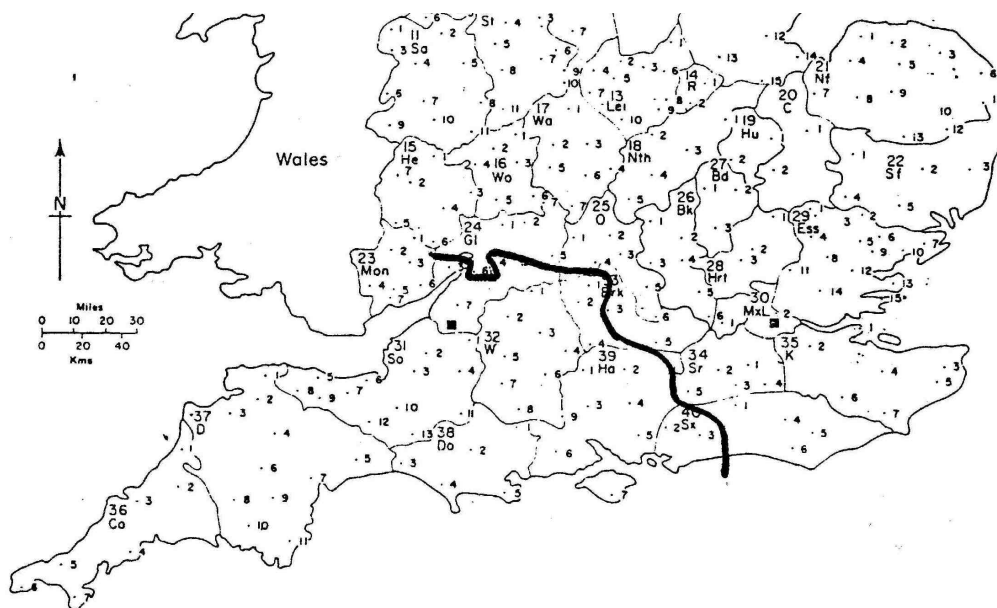


Figure 2.1: General Southwest limits of 'n "it" (after SED I.7.1, V.7.7; Wakelin 1986: 35)

Gender diffusion in itself is nothing new – it has a long tradition in dialect studies. In the heydays of dialectology, the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is mentioned in most descriptions of dialects, both regionally restricted ones as well as general accounts (e.g. Wright's *English Dialect Grammar* (1905)), as one of the few non-lexical features that found their way into descriptions largely dominated by lexical material. It seems that dialectologists were puzzled by those 'weird' pronominal forms then as much as now. Interestingly, gender diffusion never reached any considerable fame outside dialectology, and although native speakers readily offer examples when confronted with the issue, they do not seem to be aware of the extension of the phenomenon. Only few studies dealing with gender diffusion are not restricted to dialect evidence, most extensively Morris' doctoral thesis on *Gender in English* (1991), which will figure prominently in a later chapter (cf. section 9.2).

Because the evidence is scattered throughout the dialectological literature, mostly accumulating in the various publications of the *English Dialect Society*, I will try to summarize the most important passages in the following paragraphs. For the most part, only those works will be commented on in detail that contain relevant remarks on gender diffusion. Generally, chronology will be taken as a guideline, sometimes supported by links in content.

## 2.1 Gender diffusion in traditional (English) dialectology (1789 to the present)

Probably the earliest mentioning of gender diffusion can be found in William Marshall's "Provincialisms of the Vale of Gloucester", where the following is said about pronominal usage:

[T]his quarter of the island affords, among others, one striking deviation in GRAMMAR – in the use or abuse of the pronouns. The personal pronouns are seldom used in their accepted sense [...] sometimes *he* [is used] for *she*; as, 'he was bulled' – 'he calved'; and almost invariably for *it*; **all things inanimate being of the masculine gender.**

(1789: 56; emphasis original, boldface SW)

The excerpt shows the author's clearly negative attitude towards the variety of English he encountered in Gloucestershire, which may explain why he does not offer concrete examples of use nor a more detailed description of the phenomenon, but rather limits himself to over-generalizations ("all things inanimate are masculine"<sup>7</sup>) – from his point of view, *gender diffusion* would certainly have been an appropriate label.

To this day, Frederic Elworthy's work on the traditional dialect of Somerset is unsurpassed in detail and number of examples. Although their authenticity is debatable<sup>8</sup>, they offer researchers the opportunity to at least catch a glimpse of what 19<sup>th</sup>-century pronominal use could have been like in (West) Somerset (*cf.* Siemund (2001), who used Elworthy's 1886 publication as the main corpus for his analysis) – an opportunity that is not available for any of the other varieties.

In partly re-stating and summarizing his own earlier (1875) work, the author offers the most detailed description of gender diffusion to be found anywhere in the literature in his 1877 *Outline of the grammar of the dialect of West Somerset*. It is this account that has influenced all others coming after it, and the distinctions and classifications made therein have been taken as reference points ever since.

Every class or DEFINITE noun, i.e. the name of a thing or object which has a SHAPE OF ITS OWN, whether alive or dead, is either MASCULINE or feminine, but nearly always the former; indeed, the feminine pronouns may be taken as used only with respect to persons.

(Elworthy 1877: 32; small capitals SW)

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<sup>7</sup> See below for explanations.

<sup>8</sup> Although Elworthy claims that all examples given in his books are authentic utterances by native speakers (*cf.* 1886: viii), the modern reader has obviously no possibility to verify this. Thus, modern narratives in dialect seem not that far removed from Elworthy's data, particularly since all of Elworthy's examples are out-of-context utterances, generally not more than one sentence, with no detailed information on speaker background etc. Any statistical analysis of such material cannot be taken seriously, as the comparability of data sets is in no way guaranteed.

## 2.1. Gender diffusion in traditional (English) dialectology

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Examples here include a pitcher as well as the nouns “tool, book, house, coat, cat, letter etc.,” that “are all spoken of as *he*” (Elworthy 1877: 33). On the other side, “[*it*] is simply an impersonal or ABSTRACT pronoun, used to express either an ACTION or a NOUN of the UNDEFINED sort, as cloth in the quantity, water, snow, air, etc.” (Elworthy 1877: 33; small capitals SW). *Weather*, *hay*, and *beer* are used to exemplify this use (*ibid.*).

With these quotations, Elworthy established a system that could be described in modern terms as *a semantic gender system based on a mass-count distinction* in nouns, with count nouns taking feminine or masculine pronouns, while mass nouns are neuter. Elworthy himself uses similar wording in his 1886 *West Somerset Word-book*, from which the following passage (entry for *he*) is taken<sup>9</sup>:

The universal nominative pronoun to represent all things living or dead, to which the indefinite article can be prefixed. [...] *He* is used in speaking of a *cow* or a *woman*, but NOT OF corn, water, wool, salt, coal, or SUCH THINGS AS ARE NOT INDIVIDUAL, BUT IN THE MASS.

(Elworthy 1886: 328; small capitals SW)

The Dorset poet William Barnes, one of a select few who “dared” to publish poetry in what could then have been considered only rustic, rude language, also wrote a short early treatise on the grammar of his home county. His *Dissertation on the Dorset Dialect of the English Language* (1844) was originally published with his first collection of poems, *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect*. Although gender diffusion is mentioned only very briefly in this sketch, Barnes’ poems show that he was aware of the phenomenon. More than 40 years later, his *Glossary of the Dorset Dialect with a Grammar of its Word Shapening and Wording* offers much more detail on the matter. The fact that it was published in the same year (1886) as Elworthy’s *Word-book* makes it difficult to deduce any influence of one author on the other, particularly as both have demonstrated their awareness of gender diffusion in prior publications.

Under the heading “two classes of things” Barnes has the following to say about pronominal usage:

Whereas Dorset men are laughed at for what is taken as their misuse of pronouns, yet the pronouns of true Dorset, are fitted to one of the finest outplannings of speech that I have found. [There are two classes of things:]

1. Full shapen things, or things to which the Almighty or man has given a shape for an end; as a tree, or a tool: and such things may be called the **Personal Class**: as they have the pronouns that belong to man.

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<sup>9</sup> Elworthy’s own view on the phenomenon seems much more biased in his later work, where he states that “*it* is unknown to us in W. Somerset as a neuter pronoun” (1886: xxi), a gross over-generalization and/or -simplification.

## 2. Gender diffusion

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2. Unshapen quantities of stuff, or stuff not shapen up into a form fitted to an end: as water or dust: and the class of such things may be called the **Impersonal Class**, and have other pronouns and those of the personal class.

(Barnes 1886<sup>2</sup>: 17; emphasis SW)

It is not difficult to equate Barnes' class I ("personal class") with Elworthy's count nouns and Barnes' class II ("impersonal class") with Elworthy's mass. According to Barnes (*ibid.*), *he* is the pronoun of the personal class, with *en* serving as objective form. *En* is explained as deriving from the "Saxon-English accusative" (< *he-ene* > *hine* > *hin*), as Barnes calls it. The impersonal class, on the other hand, uses *it*. The author illustrates the resulting contrast with the help of examples referring to a tree (personal, thus: *he's a-cut down, John vell'd en*) and to water (impersonal, thus: *it's a-dried up*). Barnes also shows that the same noun can be classified differently according to context. That is why one has to use *en* when referring to a brick bat (*take en up*), but *it* for "a lot of brick-rubbish: *take it up*" (Barnes 1886<sup>2</sup>: 18).

Although he reports on "The Dialect of North Somerset", Perry's account follows Barnes' description almost word by word: "[o]bjects endowed by Nature or by Man with a well-recognised shape are Masculine" (1921: 24), and "[u]nshapen quantities of stuff [...] are Neuter" (1921: 25).

In yet another description of Somerset speech, this time particularly focussing on West Somerset, thus paralleling Elworthy, Etsko Kruisinga describes gender diffusion in a vein that is very reminiscent of Elworthy's work:

Words denoting persons have masc. or fem. gender (i.e. *he* or *she* is used) according to sex. [...] All other class nouns are masculine. Occasionally the masc. pronoun is even used when referring to a woman. All abstract and material nouns are neuter.

(Kruisinga 1905: 28, §§88-90)

Obviously satisfied with such rather marginal information, the author turns to emphasize another peculiarity of Southwestern dialects, namely pronoun exchange (see section 4.4.1). The examples illustrating pronoun exchange also contain some obvious traces of gender diffusion:

aal *g*it-n vAAr-i, ai *w*ul  
aai kn æb-m, kaan is?  
shl ɛr *z*een vAAr-n?  
ɛr *g*id-n t? shii

*'I'll get it for you, I will.'*<sup>10</sup>  
*'I can have it, cannot I?'*  
*'Shall I send for it?'*  
*'She gave it to her.'*

(Kruisinga 1905: 37)

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<sup>10</sup> Italics seem to symbolize sentence stress.



Obviously, the cited forms cannot be disambiguated for the lack of context. However, Kruisinga's 'translation' of [n] and [m] with *it* contradicts his table of pronominal forms, which only offers [t, ʋt] as possible neuter forms and does not mention the possibility of masculine forms being used for neuter referents at all.

The author's only comment on the form of the personal pronoun in question is the following: "The unemphatic objectives of the personal pronoun of the third person are peculiar. (ʋn) may represent OE. *hine*. It is spelled *un* in Tom Jones (Book VI Ch. X)." (1905: 113). Kruisinga's account appears to be a strange mixture of detailed knowledge of the dialect on the one hand and complete ignorance on the other.

Writing on the West of England, but with a special emphasis on Somerset, James Jennings' report from 1869 does not mention gender diffusion at all, and even in his glossary, *en* is glossed as "him". This is very surprising considering that Jennings' work includes "Two dissertations on the Anglo-Saxon pronouns" where peculiarities of the West Somerset pronominal system are commented on extensively.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to Dorset and Somerset, gender diffusion can also be found in the (neighbouring) counties of Cornwall, Devon and Wiltshire, as well as in parts of the adjacent counties of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Oxfordshire, and Worcestershire. While the latter form a transition zone for what has been dubbed "Wessex" by Thomas Hardy, the core area corresponds to the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms' borders. Few studies are available on the dialect of these areas – those that do exist are for the most part glossaries which comment only on vocabulary and other peculiarities of the lexicon of the respective region, usually without mentioning grammatical 'oddities' at all.

In one of only a few publications on Wiltshire dialect, gender diffusion is again mentioned just in passing, with the authors stating that *un* stands for "him, or it" (Dartnell and Goddard 1893: 124). The specimens include the occasional example of gender diffusion, but without much in the way of explanation. Pronoun exchange figures more prominently than gender diffusion once more. The items that are mentioned in connection with gender diffusion (or rather, the use of *un*) are *key-hole* (or *key*) = *un*, *table* = *un*, after *he*, and *bed* = *un* (*ibid*: 206).

Largely overlooked or ignored by both early and modern dialectologists<sup>12</sup>, the fifth volume of Alexander Ellis' *On early English pronunciation* provides a model for much more than phonological analysis, despite its title. Ellis' district 4, the "Southern division", constitutes the focal area of the present investigation, consisting of – speaking in terms of modern dialect areas<sup>13</sup> – the central Southwest as well as the southern part of the upper Southwest. County-wise, Somerset, parts of Dorset, Hampshire, and Gloucester form the core area.

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<sup>11</sup> Jennings mentions the use of *er* for both *he* and *she*, *thicky* as a demonstrative, *en* for *him*, which he considers "a comparatively modern introduction" (1869: 159 fn.), but not *he* for *it*.

<sup>12</sup> A noteworthy exception is Elworthy, who adopted Ellis' system of transcription in all of his publications. See Ihalainen (1994: 232ff) for a brief appreciative overview of Ellis' work; *cf.* also Shorrocks (1991a).

<sup>13</sup> See Figure 4.3(a).

## 2. Gender diffusion

In his description of special “grammatical constructions” of this district, the author makes the following comments on gender diffusion: “This (vn) is very widely spread in the S[outhern] div[ision], and is also used where *it* is said in received speech, on account of the general use of *he* applied to inanimate objects [...]” (Ellis 1889: 43). This statement seems more than insubstantial and highly unsatisfactory as an explanation. That Ellis was aware of the construction can be deduced from his specimens, one of which is full of “gendered” forms, justifying reprinting it here (Figure 2.2). The left column is written in Ellis’ “paleotype”, while the right column gives the “translation” into StE, where (unfortunately, but typical of that time) all dialect features are elided.

:lA'vERD :pAaPvEM.	Lord Popham.	152	THE WEST SOUTHERN.	[D 10.]
<p>1. <i>d'í spávuz jyj'v vERd h'e'ud</i>  <i>dhu gERT oOk'n tui' ap tu :wá:l'tun</i>  <i>:pauk :vE'd, waf dhæ jyj'z tu zee</i>  <i>:lA'vERD :pAaPvEM wvz vka'ndjvERD</i>  <i>i'nt'í ?</i></p>	<p>1. I suppose you've a-heard about  the great oaken tree up to Wellington  Park Wood, what they used to say  Lord Popham was a-conjured into?</p>	<p>7. un jyj, n'ovuz :wá:l'it'n :pauk  <i>v'uz, d'óon i, zun? á'í má'ín han</i>  <i>á'í jyj'z tu liv dhan, apum dhu</i>  <i>g'akut, dhur wvz v pléus dhéur</i>  <i>dhoo lá'rk v oov'm lá'rk.</i></p>	<p>7. And you knows Wellington Park  house, don't ye, sir? I mind when  I used to live there, up/on the  garret, there was a place there  then like a oven like.</p>	
<p>2. wEl, d'óo)un i zii, ap dhéur,  jyj, noo, zun, dhuv'z v gERT dip  há'dum gá'z dh'e'm zu dip's  dhu t'ánu, má'n stér l'é'rk  in's m'ó'd zee, s'ém)z dhu  zá'íd gveen ap d'v'R :wá:l'tun :ínL,  un dhí'zh)ur oOk'n tui, ii wá'z  v t'á'v'bl gERT tui shóovr nef, i  váz, un i g'vóv in dhu zá'íd o v'v,  un dh'ki pléus ez v'kAAL :w'ó'l'skum  baadum.</p>	<p>2. Well, don't ye see, up there,  you know, sir, there's a great deep  bottom=<i>ravine</i> goes down so deep/as  the tower, main stér=<i>steep</i> like,  even/as one may say, the same/as the  side going up over Wellington Hill,  and this/here oaken tree, he was  a terrible great tree sure enough, he  was, and he grewed in the side of him  =<i>the ravine</i>, and this place is a-called  Wilscombe bottom.</p>	<p>8. un á'í zid zum b'aks wee  reedin in)un in un, un dhée zid  dhát v'vz :lA'vERD :pAa'p'm'z b'aks  un dhée zid v'v v méun went  ap un zAAt v'strá'íd p'm dhu v'v'f  wee v há'ib'l, in)s 'ii m'ó'd'n  kaar'n v'vée'.</p>	<p>8. And I seed some books with  reading-in-them in him=<i>the oven</i>, and  they said that was Lord Popham's  books, and they said how a man went  up and sat a-stride upon the roof  with a bible, e'en-as he=<i>the devil</i>  might 'nt carry-him=<i>the roof</i> away.</p>	
<p>3. jyj, má'ín dhu púur ool  :tAm :náv'vée, d'óo)un i, zER?  dhat's dhu ool :tAm :náv'véez  faa'dhur, ju noo, zur, slp'p'v'v'v'v'v'  un ween dhée nuod)un, nif i  dh'í)un t'á'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  iis shóovr, un dhu eel o v'v  wvz v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  i há'í'l.</p>	<p>3. You mind=<i>remember</i> the poor  =<i>deceased</i> old Tom Alway, don't ye,  sir? that's the old Tom. Alway's  father, you know, sir, he's helped  to throw=<i>fell</i> him=<i>the tree</i>, and  when they throwed-him, and-if he  did'nt turn right top-on-tail=<i>head</i>  over heels=<i>yes</i> sure, and the head of  him was right down under, and there  he bidet=<i>remained</i>.</p>	<p>9. iis! un t'eez v t'á'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  noobadi dhéur noo v'v'v'v'v'v'  in)s m'ó'd zee.</p>	<p>9. Yes! un and it-is a terrible old  house-sir, but I never did'nt see  nobody there no worse-than myself,  e'en-as one might say.</p>	
<p>4. un dhée wáz AAL o'j'm v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  un dhée zid k'u in)s v'v'v'v'v'v'  noobadi k'v'd)un n'ó'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  un dhéur i há'í'l.</p>	<p>4. And they was all of-them a-  feared for to go a-nighest-him, and  they said how e'en-as he was a-  conjured nobody could'nt never drag-  him out; and there he bidet.</p>	<p>10. v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  un zee v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  gveen v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  audn)z mév'ston'd v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'</p>	<p>10. Howsoever I've a-heard  them say, how the servant chap was  going for to let out the hackney=  hack=horse, after-his master-had a-  comed home from market, and there  was a man a-stood=<i>standing</i> in the  gateway, and he could'nt open-him=  the gate.</p>	
<p>5. un tu laas, á'í went ap,  kaz dhée zid dhu A'sez)nd shóovr  tu bi kínd, wee teen AAK's'n,  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  un dhéur i há'í'l.</p>	<p>5. And to=<i>at</i> last, I went up,  because they said the horses)could  sure to be a-killed, with ten oxen,  and I hitched them up to him=<i>the</i>  tree, and the bullocks pulled-him out,  and dragged-him into the hanging  close.</p>	<p>11. un han dhée t'v'k)un tu  dyy'ín máks má'm'm'm, v'v'v'v'v'  i v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  d'óo)un i zii z'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'  v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'v'</p>	<p>11. And when they took-him to  doing=<i>took him to task</i> next-morning  for cause he had'nt a-put out the horse,  don't ye see, sir? he said, said-he,  how he could'nt put-him=<i>the horse</i>  out, because there was a man a-stood  =<i>standing</i> right in the gate way as  he could'nt open him=<i>the gate</i>,  and they always used to say how they  always considered that there was  Lord Popham.</p>	
<p>[ 1583 ]</p>				

Figure 2.2: Ellis’ paleotype (from Ellis 1889: 151f)

Examples of gender diffusion in the excerpt above include various masculine references to a tree (*he* 6x, *un* 7x, *er* 1x), to a ravine, an oven, a roof (*un*), and a gate (*en* 2x). This text also very nicely illustrates one of the major problems the researcher has to face when dealing with dialect literature or representations of non-standard speech in general: There are no conventions or rules for spelling the form that sounds like [ən], and it will be obvious to anybody familiar with the relevant literature that authors’ conventions vary widely, making it impossible to take a quick

## 2.1. Gender diffusion in traditional (English) dialectology

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look at texts written in the vernacular and find relevant forms at one glance.<sup>14</sup> One cannot simply put together a corpus of vernacular 19<sup>th</sup>-century speech and run a search for one form in order to understand what goes on in pronominal usage.

Thomas Hardy's novels were long since discovered as a relatively good source for vernacular speech, and with a comparatively large amount of material<sup>15</sup> from one single author the researcher can be quite certain that Hardy's passages in the dialect show at least some extent of homogeneity. In addition, Hardy's orthographic rendering of the dialect is, in the light of possibilities sketched above, easy to read. It is probably the latter factor that contributed to the emergence of a surprisingly large number of studies on language use in Hardy's work.

One of the most comprehensive efforts in this field is Hideo Hirooka's *Thomas Hardy's Use of Dialect*, in which the authors provides a probably close to exhaustive list of examples of gender diffusion in Hardy's novels. Hirooka claims that "[h]e is used to represent all things living or dead" (1980: 62). In the explanatory footnote, Barnes and Elworthy are quoted. The author identifies the following nouns as instances of gender diffusion (*ibid.*: 59):

beaker	(bird)	bonfire (2x)
boot	box (2x)	bucket
carol/tune (3x)	cart	(caterpillar)
chair (2x)	clock (3x)	coach
comet (3x in same passage)	crook ("his")	cross (2x in same p.)
door (2x same p.)	(frog)	fiddle
gout (2x in same p.)	hand (2x)	headstone
hogshead/cask (2x in same p.)	mixen (??)	moon
paper (news-? both <i>it</i> & <i>en</i> in same p.)	(parrot)	(pig [repeatedly])
pile (2x in same p.)	pipe	pond
skull (2x)	(slug [2x])	staff
Sunday ("his")	tree (2x)	tub
wagon	wagon	

Some selective examples can be found in (12) to (23):

- (12) "some man" (the sexton): "Oh—no money. Bless your soul, sir, why—there, I would not wish to say it everywhere, but—even this headstone, for all the flourish wrote upon **en**, is not paid for." (Tess)
- (13) "Ah, that's the secret," said Joan Durbeyfield sagely. "However, 'tis well to be kin to a coach, even if you don't ride in '**en**.'" (Tess)

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<sup>14</sup> To give the interested reader at least an idea of the range of possibilities (and the imagination of authors . . .), I include some examples in Appendix B. For a "modern" comment on the problems of transcribing non-standard speech in general, see Miethaner (2000).

<sup>15</sup> This is true although Hardy uses non-standard language only in dialogue/ direct speech.

## 2. Gender diffusion

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- (14) Fairway: “What a terrible black cross that was – thy father’s likeness in **en**! To save my soul I couldn’t help laughing when I zid **en**, though all the time I . . .  
(Return of the Native)
- (15) (referring to a bucket) “We’ve only got **en** by the edge of the hoop – steady for God’s sake!” said Fairway. (Return of the Native)
- (16) Christian(?) “Well, if you don’t mind, we’ll have the beaker, and pass ’**en** round; ’tis better than heling it out in dribbles.” (Return of the Native)
- (17) (William Worm) “That ’a is, sir. And would ye mind coming round by the back way? The front door is got stuck wi’ the wet, as **he** will do sometimes; and the Turk can’t open **en**. . . .” (A Pair of Blue Eyes)
- (18) (William Worm) “No; the chair wouldn’t do nohow. ’**A** was very well to look at; but, Lord! —’ [...] ’**A** was very well to look at, but you couldn’t sit in the chair nohow. [...] Up you took the chair, and flung **en** like fire and brimstone to t’other end of your shop . . .” (A Pair of Blue Eyes)
- (19) “John, thinking he had done striking, put his hand upon the top o’ the pile to gie **en** a pull, and see if ’**a** were firm in the ground.” (A Pair of Blue Eyes)
- (20) “The clock stopped this morning, and your mother in putting **en** right seemingly,” said his father . . . (A Pair of Blue Eyes)
- (21) “The clock’s stopped again, John,” I say to him. “Better have **en** claned,” says he. There’s five shillings. “That clock grinds again,” I say to **en**. “Better have **en** claned,” ’a says again. “That clock strikes wrong, John,” says I. “Better have **en** claned,” he goes on. (A Pair of Blue Eyes)
- (22) “If so be *he* were not so fine, we’d weigh *en* whole: but as *he* is, we’ll take a side at a time. John, you can mind my old joke, ey?” “I do so; though ’twas a good few years ago I first heard **en**.” “Yes,” said Lickpan, “that there old familiar joke have been in our family for generations, I may say My father used that joke regular at pig-killings for more than five and forty years—the time he followed the calling. And ’a told me that ’a had it from his father when he was quite a chiel, who made use o’ **en** just the same at every killing more or less; and pig-killings were pig-killings in those days.” (A Pair of Blue Eyes)
- (23) Uncle Levi made a snuffbox that should be a puzzle to his friends to open. He used to hand **en** round at wedding parties, christenings, funerals, and in other jolly company, and let ’em try their skill. This extraordinary snuff-box had a spring behind that would push in and out—a hinge where seemed to be the cover; a slide at the end, a screw in front, and knobs and queer notches everywhere. One man would try the spring, another would try the screw, another would try the slide; but try as they would, the box wouldn’t open. And they couldn’t open **en**, and they didn’t open **en**. Now what might you think was the secret of that box?  
[...]  
“Why the box wouldn’t open at all. ’**A** were made not to open, and ye might have tried till the end of Revelations, ’twould have been as naught, for the box were glued all round.” (A Pair of Blue Eyes)

## 2.1. Gender diffusion in traditional (English) dialectology

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In (22), we are confronted with one of the typical problems when analysing gender diffusion: the speaker/writer uses *en* and *it* (referent: joke) within the same passage, seemingly without a pattern. In addition, 'a, *en* and *he* are used side by side referring to one of the male characters. Both of these problems will be addressed below and in a later chapter.

Excluding the animal references<sup>16</sup> (*bird, caterpillar, frog, parrot, pig, slug*), Hirooka found 50 instances of “gendered” pronouns referring to 31 different nouns. Unfortunately, the author does not comment on the orthographic representation, which poses once more a considerable problem for the analysis. Hardy uses the form 'a or *er* in orthography to represent the typically Southwestern “r-coloured schwa” (cf. section 4.4.1), a pronominal form that is used almost universally, regardless of person, gender, or case. However, Hirooka has obviously ‘disambiguated’ the various forms of 'a, if one can believe his listing of feminine pronominal forms (*ibid.*: 62ff, 66f).

If there is indeed a difference in pronunciation between feminine and masculine 'a, which is highly unlikely, such a difference does not come out in writing, which should make it clear that the researcher has to take a closer look at Hirooka's interpretations of masculine and feminine forms respectively and re-evaluate the analysis. A closer look at Hardy's use of pronominal forms reveals that he himself obviously made no difference between the forms 'a, (*en* or *un*). All are used interchangeably for both animate (human and animal) and inanimate referents and all cases.

Although the number of publications on Hardy's English is, as already mentioned, comparatively high, that does not say anything about their quality. Just to give an example of a rather poor effort, all Ralph Elliott (1984: 94) has to say about gender diffusion in Hardy's works is the following: “The neuter pronoun, Old English *hit*, modern ‘it’, SHARES MOST OF THE MASCULINE FORMS - *he, him, 'n, 'en, un*, as well as the modern standard *it*.” (small capitals SW) It seems difficult to say *less* about the whole issue, especially considering the fact that Elliott had, as a present-day scholar, both traditional and modern descriptions of Wessex / Southwestern dialect(s) at his disposal, in addition to evidence of actual use from corpora. Unfortunately, then, Ossi Ihalainen's summary of the 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century dialect literature seems more than adequate in light of the material presented above: “Generally speaking, the picture that emerges from the early evidence is patchy, difficult to interpret and open to conjecture.” (1994: 197). We can only hope that modern researchers, with modern research tools and methods at their disposal, are able to extract more valuable results out of such a comparative wealth of material.

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<sup>16</sup> More will be said on the special status of animals in the actual analysis of examples; see chapter 8.2.

## 2.2 Gender diffusion in modern dialectological investigations – England

The work of two scholars in particular is of interest here, namely that of Ossi Ihalainen and Martyn Wakelin. As can be seen from the bibliography, both have published extensively on West Country English, and it is basically thanks to their efforts that our knowledge of these varieties is much more detailed than that of many others. Ihalainen's focus is primarily on grammar, while Wakelin's two monographs on Cornwall (1975) and the Southwest in general (1986) are mainly concerned with phonology and lexicography, but also include sections on morphology and syntax.

### 2.2.1 Ossi Ihalainen

Doing his own fieldwork, Ossi Ihalainen was one of the first “modern” researchers to acknowledge the importance of corpus linguistics in dialectological studies. He and his colleagues at Helsinki University collected a large corpus of modern (primarily) Southwestern dialect material, which should ultimately be part of the Helsinki Dialect Corpus, a task which is well under way but, for various reasons and due to unfortunate circumstances, has not been completed yet. Ihalainen's own focus has always been on Somerset, and he investigated the special use of pronouns in a number of essays.

Although Ihalainen in general agrees with the accounts of his predecessors in evaluating gender diffusion, a century of language development must have had an impact on the traditional system of attributing gender. Thus, the author qualifies Elworthy's earlier rather strict system of “mass” versus “count” referents as follows:

On the whole, the evidence suggests that Elworthy's description is basically correct. However, rather than say that *it* is used for “mass” referents and the personal forms for “thing” referents, the correct generalization today seems to be that *it* can be used for “thing” and “mass” referents, although it predominantly occurs with “mass” referents, whereas the personal forms do not occur with “mass” referents at all. (Ihalainen 1985b: 158)

This adaptation of the system is based to some extent on the observation that native speakers themselves seem to vary in their judgements of what is and what is not a “thing” (*ibid.*: 158): “informants may disagree about thingness.” Ihalainen stresses that this variation would be worth investigating, but does not intend to do so himself (*ibid.*). Relativizing one claim, Ihalainen makes another one that – at least judging from my own corpora – seems wrong or at least too strict: “in Somerset feminine pronouns do not refer to objects” (1985b: 154). My Somerset data show *she* and *her* used for all types of vehicles (as is also possible in spoken StE) as well as some other things (*cf.* chapter 13). The author's main interest lies in the analysis of two details of pronominal distribution:



## 2.2. Gender diffusion in modern dialectological investigations – England

- what is the relationship between standard *it* and non-standard *he* forms, and
- what is the distribution of subject and object forms in this context?

Although Ihalainen does not give word numbers for his samples<sup>17</sup>, his figures show interesting distributions whose relative proportions should hold for other data sets as well. As to the first question, the reader is presented with the following table which, according to the author, lists the occurrences of all pronouns corresponding to StE *it*. They are then divided into the respective categories of “thing” and “mass”.

Table 2.1: Distribution of personal forms vs. *it* for “thing” and “mass” referents (Ihalainen 1985b: 157)

	personal form		<i>it</i>	
thing	69	79%	18	21%
mass	0	0%	95	100%

Table 2.1 clearly shows that dialect forms have lost some territory to their standard equivalents over the past century. With 21% of *it* on traditional *he* turf, the traditional system seems to be losing ground. However, one should not pass premature judgement, as none of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century dialectologists presented actual figures to support their claims. It is by no means impossible that Ihalainen’s figures hold for Elworthy’s times, too.

Ihalainen uses a partly typological approach to explain the results he observed in his corpus. When looking for “gendered” pronominal forms, he noticed that their distribution across grammatical cases, i.e. basically subject and object position, was by no means identical. Ihalainen’s figures and ratios are reproduced in Table 2.2 and 2.3.

Table 2.2: Distribution of personal forms vs. *it* for “thing” referents according to syntactic context (1) (Ihalainen 1991b: 115 and 1985a: 69)

	personal form		<i>it</i>	
subject	37	88%	5	12%
object	45	70%	19	30%

In Table 2.2 the ratio of personal forms to *it* is 7.3 : 1 in subject, 2.4 : 1 in object position, the difference in distribution thus even more pronounced than for the data used in Table 2.3. Based on these figures, the author suggests that standard forms

<sup>17</sup> According to the author, he used five random samples of 30 minutes each for this investigation (1985a); for another study, he states that “some 7000 words” were used (1985a: 69), for yet another study no details at all are offered (1991b, based on a 1983 paper). It is to be assumed that the corpora were largely identical for all of these studies; at least the figures for gender diffusion are identical for the 1985b and 1991 study.

## 2. Gender diffusion

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Table 2.3: Distribution of personal forms vs. *it* for “thing” referents according to syntactic context (2) (Ihalainen 1985b: 161)

	ratio personal form : <i>it</i>
subject	5 : 1
object	3 : 1

establish themselves in the dialect system in less accessible positions in the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (subject > direct object > non-direct/indirect object > possessor/oblique; cf. Keenan and Comrie 1977; Comrie 1989: 155ff; Croft 1990: 108f) and spread from there. Thus, *it* is more frequent in object position than one might expect, at least in contexts where *he* is also possible in dialect (cf. Ihalainen 1985a: 69f). Or, in Ihalainen’s own words: “[T]he most prominent linguistic contexts are also the most favourable to dialectal forms. Interpreted diachronically, this means that the changes concerned arose in non-prominent contexts and are spreading to more salient ones” (1991b: 105). For the present investigation, this means that standard *it* forms first “invaded” the territory of personal forms in object position, later spreading to the more prominent subject contexts as well.<sup>18</sup> This is a hypothesis that seemed worth investigating and is the topic of a detailed analysis of my own corpus material in Wagner (2004). Numerous examples supporting this “accessibility hypothesis” will be cited in the analyses in chapters 13 to 15.

### 2.2.2 Martyn Wakelin

Wakelin’s three major publications (1975, 1981<sup>2</sup>, 1986) are all based on the SED or at least on SED material, which is the main drawback of the respective monographs. Although Wakelin himself is aware of the lexicological bias of earlier research on dialects (cf. e.g. 1975: 25), none of his own work really helps remedy that situation. Largely following the traditional SED vein, Wakelin (partly) shifts the focus from lexicology to phonology and also includes general background information on the variety in question, from geographical to settlement information. Helpful are the paragraphs about the historical situation of English in the respective areas, including in the case of Cornwall some remarks on the situation of Cornish in relation to English which is necessary for a full understanding of the language situation in present-day Cornwall. The merit of the 1986 monograph first and foremost must be seen in the unprecedented compilation of texts from the core counties of the Southwest, including material from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the 1970s.

As for information on morphological or syntactical peculiarities of the area, Wakelin’s work leaves much to be desired. In the monograph on Cornwall, based

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<sup>18</sup> See also Ihalainen (1991a: 114f). The link between “more accessible” and “more frequent” is established in, e.g., Keenan (1987: 49): “The frequency with which people relativise in discourse conforms to the [AH], subjects being the most frequent, then direct objects, etc.”



on his Ph.D. thesis, he introduces the chapter headed “Morphological features” as follows: “The small collection of morphological features from *SED* assembled under several headings in this chapter is intended to support the phonological material in the preceding chapter and the lexical material in that following” (1975: 175). Wakelin emphasizes that the respective *SED* material was selected to support his main hypothesis of the book, namely that Cornwall is divided into two parts. Language-wise, the East is close to its traditional Southwest neighbours, while the West is closer to StE, mainly because of the late introduction of English there (Cornish being the traditional first language until its extinction<sup>19</sup>). Probably due to this bias in the selection of the material, gender diffusion is not even mentioned among the morphological features.<sup>20</sup> One cannot help but wonder why Wakelin chose not to include it, especially considering that gender diffusion should be *very* indicative of the assumed distribution of features. We would expect the traditional system for the East, with personal forms being used for count/ “thing” nouns and *it* being used for “mass” referents, while in the West the StE system or at least something close(r) to it should be dominant. Strangely enough, Wakelin chose the other peculiarity of Southwestern pronominal systems, pronoun exchange, to make his point.

That the author is by no means unaware of the phenomenon can be deduced from his description of gender diffusion in his likewise *SED*-based monograph on English dialects:

*En* is used for *it* (object) as well as for *him* in the south-west of England, beside which the forms *he*, *him* and occasionally *she*, *her* may also be used to denote an inanimate object over a rather wider area in the west but in more scattered examples [...] The full implications of the use of *he*, *she*, *him*, *her* for inanimate objects have not yet been explored.

(Wakelin 1981<sup>2</sup>: 113)

Although showing some phonological bias as well, *The Southwest of England* (1986) is much more balanced. An eight-page section on phonological features stands against a four-page overview of grammatical features. However, even though comments on the pronominal systems make up about half of the section, gender diffusion is again only mentioned in passing. While the formal peculiarities (existence of old accusative *'n* in a number of variant realizations/spellings) are listed, the slash giving *him* and *it* equal status in the example is not commented on (*cf.* 1986: 34). It is absolutely inconceivable that an expert on Southwestern dialects like Martyn Wakelin obviously does not think it necessary (or appropriate) to men-

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<sup>19</sup> “[S]peakers of Cornish in the Modern Cornish period would learn not the ancient Wessex dialect of east Cornwall, Devon and Somerset [...], but a version of English taught them in schools and by the upper classes and better-educated (note that it was the gentry who gave up Cornish and spoke English first), an English deliberately acquired, as distinct from a regional dialect passed on from generation to generation” (1975, 100).

<sup>20</sup> Wakelin uses four features, one from the system of personal pronouns, two from verbal morphology, and one from noun phrase morphology (*cf.* Wakelin 1975: 175-179).

## 2. Gender diffusion

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tion a feature of such prominence as gender diffusion.<sup>21</sup> My own investigations on pronoun exchange, a feature that does not avail itself easily to detailed study for a number of reasons (*cf.* Wagner 2001), show that it is far less frequent than gender diffusion. Although Wakelin's procedure is more than surprising, it is not unique, as a look at some other publications shows.

Gender diffusion does not figure prominently in any of the admittedly few modern publications on West Country dialect.<sup>22</sup> Jones and Dillon (1987: 27), writing on Wiltshire dialect and also using SED material, state that “[i]n the sentence “*you’ll zee ’n comin’ back wi’ ’n*” from Whiteparish, ’*n* is used for both *him* and *it*”, but see no need for further explanations. On the other hand, they comment rather extensively on pronoun exchange. Similarly, Attwell's description of Dorset dialect states “*he = it*” (1987: 5), once more without any comment whatsoever. There are, however, many examples of gender diffusion in the author's reminiscences on language use in his (extended) family. In two publications on Devon dialect, John Downes (1986) and Clement Marten (1973) do not mention gender diffusion at all, while pronoun exchange is once again described in comparative detail. My only explanation for this “ignorance” of gender diffusion is that native speakers are obviously much more aware of “abused” cases in (personal) pronouns, as happens with pronoun exchange, but that the occasional *he* and *un* for the expected *it* goes largely unnoticed. This should tell us something about the psychological prominence of gendered forms in English – they have none, or at least it seems that way judging from native speaker accounts. Let us now take a trip across the Atlantic and see if a similar or different picture emerges from descriptions of the other variety where gender diffusion has a stronghold to this day – Newfoundland English.

### 2.3 Gender diffusion in modern dialectological investigations – Newfoundland

As with its parent dialects, two authors in particular have contributed to our better understanding of Newfoundland English (NFE). Both are natives of Newfoundland and have taught (Harold Paddock) or are still teaching (Sandra Clarke) at the Linguistics Department of the province's only university, the *Memorial University of Newfoundland* (MUN) in the capital, St. John's. While Sandra Clarke's primary research focus has not been on pronominal usage, Harold Paddock has long had an

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<sup>21</sup> Wakelin's highly eclectic methods in data selection have been previously criticized; *cf.* e.g. Klemola (1996: 28) on Wakelin's treatment of periphrastic *do*.

<sup>22</sup> This is partly due to the fact that many recent publications are based on traditional material. Examples are Gachelin (1986, 1991), whose essays merely repeat Ihalainen's, Wakelin's, Barnes' and Elworthy's observations, and Rogers (1979), which is completely based on the *English Dialect Society's* publications. Also recall the essays and books on Thomas Hardy's language use, some of which were discussed above.

### 2.3. Gender diffusion in modern dialectological investigations – Newfoundland

interest in gender diffusion and also pronoun exchange.

In the most recent publication on Newfoundland English (NFE), Sandra Clarke (forthcoming) mentions both pronoun exchange and gender diffusion (which she subsumes under the heading “system of grammatical gender”) as features that NFE inherited from Southwestern British dialects, but she neither explains the nameless phenomenon nor gives any examples, obviously largely relying on the work of her colleague, Harold Paddock.

#### **2.3.1 Harold Paddock**

From his MA thesis (1966) to the present, Harold Paddock has published extensively on NFE in general and pronominal usage in particular. As to the gender system of Carbonear, a Conception Bay village with mixed Irish and West Country settlement, he observed the following:

Nouns seem to possess a well defined but covert system of grammatical gender. We may call a noun *masculine*, *feminine* or *neuter* depending on the pronouns which it selects in the singular. Mass or non-count nouns (such as *frost*, *fog*, *water*, *love*) are called *neuter* because they select the pronoun *it*. Count nouns divide into *masculine* and *feminine*. Female humans and most female animals, as well as all types of vehicles (land, air and sea) are *feminine*, in that they select the pronouns *she*, *her*. Other count nouns are *masculine* in that they select the pronouns *he*, *'en*.

(Paddock 1981: 9)

Examples of “masculine” nouns are *hat* and *shovel*; feminine are *boat*, *aeroplane*; neuter nouns include *water*, *fog*, *weather*, and *snow*.

From a historical point of view, Paddock classifies gender diffusion as a “formerly English ethnic [i.e. West Country, SW] feature” that has now become a social feature in that it is widely regarded as “a lower class or incorrect way of speaking” (1982a: 73). Despite this statement, the author obviously counts gender diffusion among the less stigmatized dialect features that have not been completely abandoned, but changed to a more standard form<sup>23</sup>:

Because of its highly systematic, useful, and economical nature, the local grammar [of Newfoundland English, SW] seems most resistant to change. Thus I hear haves and doos being changed to has and does without any change in their grammatical functions. I also hear “Give 'en to me” being changed to “Give 'im to me” rather than to “Give it to me” when referring to an inanimate object such as a book, pencil, or shovel.

(Paddock 1982a: 80)

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<sup>23</sup> “Some items of folk grammar are abandoned more readily than others by a person who is making temporary (that is, stylistic) or permanent changes in his grammar. In the nouns, the first change seems to be that from grammatical to natural gender, so that all inanimates (except vehicles) select the pronoun it. In the pronouns, the first forms to be abandoned are the accusative 'en /ən/ [...]” (Paddock 1966: 144)

## 2. Gender diffusion

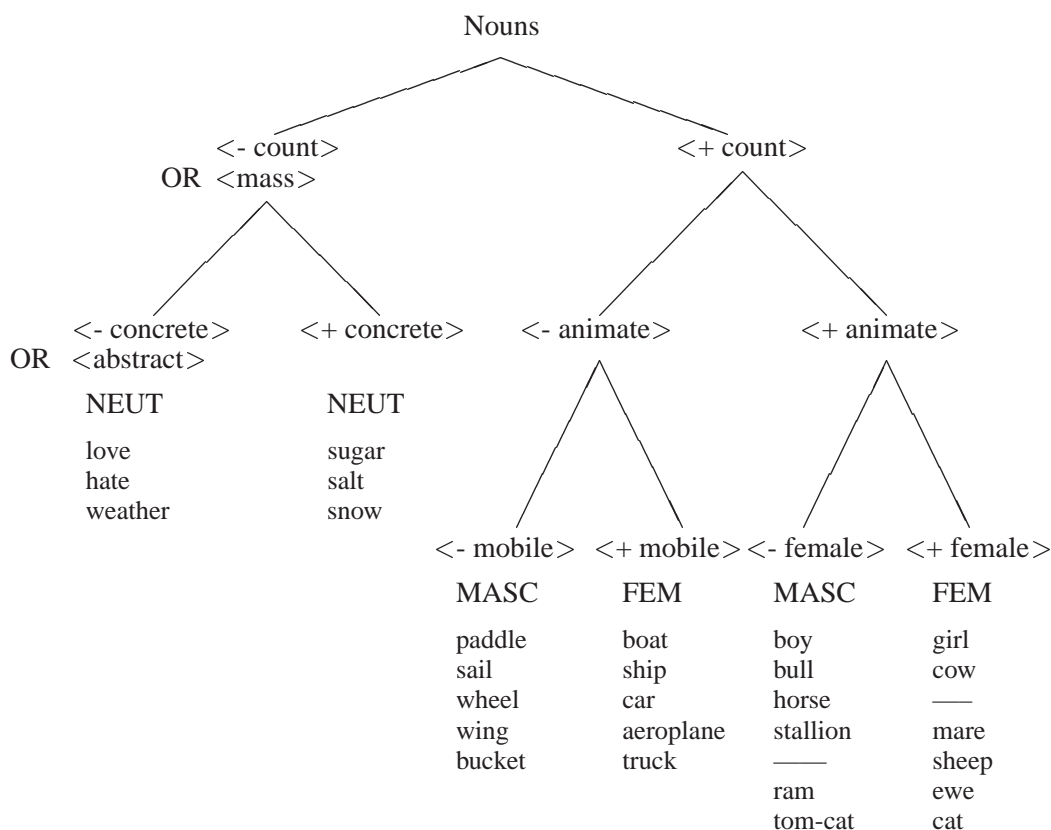


Figure 2.3: A gender hierarchy for Newfoundland Vernacular English (Paddock 1991: 33)

Over the years, Paddock has refined his theory on gender diffusion, and a culmination and summary of all his earlier work can be found in his 1991 article, which for the first time also includes a comparison with the donor dialect's<sup>24</sup> system. The two systems (NFE vs. “Wessex”) can be easily summarized with the help of two figures (Figure 2.3 and 2.4), which are adopted from the article.

Although the basic difference between the two varieties should be apparent, these figures require some explanation. Paddock assumes that a basic change took place between the parent dialect of Southwest England and NFE. In his opinion, the [ $\pm$  animate] distinction of the original system, which is still in use in Newfoundland, was reinterpreted as a [ $\pm$  human] distinction in Wessex English. Thus, masculine pronouns are the only available choice for non-human count nouns, while for [+ human] nouns, gender is assigned according to sex (1991: 34). Moreover, the author thinks that the existence of a mass-count contrast in the system of demonstrative pronouns as well as in the personal pronoun system is partly responsible

<sup>24</sup> Assuming that the Southwest was a comparatively homogeneous dialect area.

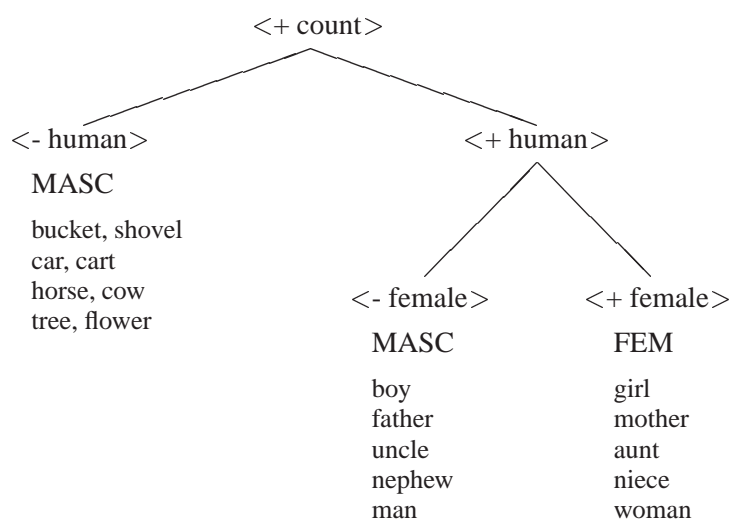


Figure 2.4: A gender hierarchy for Wessex Vernacular English (Paddock 1991: 35)

for the change. Such a distinction in the demonstratives’ paradigm strongly reinforces a neuter/non-neuter distinction, while the loss of the masculine/feminine distinction on the [- human] side was additionally supported by the fact that there is a merger of some masculine and feminine pronominal forms<sup>25</sup> in Wessex dialects (cf. Paddock 1991).

What we should be able to explain, then, is why (following Paddock) NFE still has both masculine and feminine gender assignment at its disposal for inanimate nouns, while West Country dialects can only use masculine forms. As it turns out, an explanation is easy when looking at the matter more closely. For all the examples Paddock cites, a feminine pronoun could be used not only in NFE, but also in StE. As will be discussed in chapter 3, “boat nouns” (*boat, ship*), “flying machines” (*aeroplane*) and other vehicles (*car, truck*) can take feminine pronouns in StE quite freely. Thus, it seems difficult to see a true point in Paddock’s argumentation for a feature [ $\pm$  mobile]. The only other example, *Here she comes!* (1991: 30), can also be accounted for without having to resort to the [ $\pm$  mobile] criterion. Paddock uses the example when talking about weather phenomena, a topic of conversation that many people are interested in in a region like Newfoundland, where large parts of the population are still involved in fishery and other types of outdoor work (oil rigs, lumbering). However, as many of my own examples and also other authors’ show, this type of exclamatory utterance with fronted elements also has to be considered spoken standard English. I will come back to this “non-referential *she*”, as I call it, which is often used to describe events or situations, at a later point in the analysis (see section 8.3). Suffice it to say for now that I cannot see any evidence that the pronominal systems of NFE and Wessex differ, but countless reasons why they should be considered near-identical, especially since the [ $\pm$  human] distinction is

<sup>25</sup> See the discussion of *er* or [ $\emptyset$ ] in chapter 4.

## 2. Gender diffusion

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clearly not valid, either, as the countless examples of masculine forms referring to animals in my corpora show.<sup>26</sup>

Apart from Paddock, not many researchers have ventured into the largely uncharted territory of analysing the morpho-syntax of personal pronouns in NFE. The most comprehensive work on the dialect to date is the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (DNE; Story *et al.* 1982, 1990<sup>2</sup>), which, as the title implies, follows a fairly traditional dialectological approach in focussing on lexicology. However, the authors, all linguists who have worked on NFE for most of their lives, also include peculiarities of NFE grammar. Thus, they list the most important features of NFE grammar, gender diffusion among them, in the Introduction:

Stressed *he* and *she* are often used as substitutes for count nouns, but *it* for mass and abstract nouns like *crookedness*, *fog*, *weather*: ‘But the first hour we hauled in the log, and he registered three miles. So the next hour we hauled ’im in again, and she’s got another three miles.’

(Story *et al.* 1990<sup>2</sup>: xx)<sup>27</sup>

The dictionary also has an entry for *he*, which reads as follows:

**he** pro *EDD* ~ 3 ‘of inanimate objects ... it’; his: he’s, etc D. See also UN ‘unstressed *he*.’ **1** Of count nouns, it.

1861 *Harper’s* xxii, 744 Where’s the dish-cloth? No, that beant *he*, block-head. 1895 *J A Folklore* viii, 32 Entering the court-house, I heard a witness asked to describe a cod-trap that was in dispute. He immediately replied, ‘*He* was about seventy-five fathoms long.’ 1947 TANNER 730 I left he [the rifle]; put he [the kettle] on; he’s [the wind] come right across. P 148-63 Man speaking of a killick: ‘He can be used for a small boat.’ T 1065-72 I learned he [a story] from that old man that’s up there to Sally’s Cove. C 75-135 They put a potato in the pickle and if he floats, then the pickle is good. 1977 *Nfld Qly Winter*, p. 19 But the first hour we hauled in the log, and he registered three miles.

(DNE, from online edition)

Two things are noteworthy about these comments: First, it can be seen immediately that the authors relied on such well-established dialectological sources as the

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<sup>26</sup> See section 8.2, where the status of animals is discussed in detail.

<sup>27</sup> Note that in a very strict reading of this classification, gender diffusion is much more restricted than has been assumed here, in that only stressed forms of *he* and *she* (i.e., *he* and *she*) can be used to refer to inanimates. This would mean that “true” object forms (*un*, *’im*, *him* etc.) cannot refer to inanimates – which is proven incorrect immediately in the example itself, ... *we hauled ’im in again* ..., used in reference to the log. However, this analysis would support Ihalainen’s hypothesis about standard forms entering the dialect system from a less accessible position in the NP Accessibility Hierarchy (*cf.* above): Although gender diffusion can be found in object position, subject forms are used, which basically means that the “true” object territory has been taken over by standard forms already.

### 2.3. Gender diffusion in modern dialectological investigations – Newfoundland

*English Dialect Dictionary* (Wright 1898-1905), which is largely the result of the collaboration and culmination of works published by the *English Dialect Society*, most of which relevant for this study were discussed above. The examples used in the DNE stem from a number of sources, written and spoken, and cover a time period from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present (*cf.* Story *et al.* 1990<sup>2</sup>: xii).

Second, Story, Kirwin and Widdowson cut to the heart of the matter of problems and controversies surrounding gender diffusion with a single example: both masculine and feminine forms are used in reference to the log, with no obvious reason – gender diffusion at its best. The following chapters will try to provide some explanations for this seemingly unmotivated, not to say chaotic, use of pronominal forms on the basis of corpus analyses from different varieties of spoken English.

Before we can proceed with that, however, the stage needs to be set – i.e. issues such as the status of gender in English (chapter 3), English in the Southwest (chapter 4) and Newfoundland (chapter 6), preceded by relevant aspects from its settlement history (chapter 5), need to be addressed.





## Chapter 3

# Gender in English – a short overview

This chapter attempts to give a short overview of the history of gender in English, both individually and in comparison with other languages. Questions that need to be answered in this context include the following:

1. What is gender? → typological classification
2. How do gender systems develop and change? → diachronic evidence, focus on English
3. Based on the definitions and classifications in 1. and 2., where does gender fit in English today?

These issues will be addressed from a functional-typological point of view, taking English as the focal point, and expanding to include both related and unrelated languages as dictated by the subject matter.

### 3.1 Gender in the world's languages – basic terminology and classifications

There seem to be two major, sometimes competing systems for assigning gender in the world's languages. On the one hand, there are SEMANTIC SYSTEMS, “where semantic factors are sufficient on their own to account for assignment” (Corbett 1991: 8). Various features are used as the basis for gender assignment in such systems. Systems where masculine gender is attributed to males and feminine gender to females are often called “natural gender systems” (Corbett 1991: 9). Criteria for such systems are widespread; often, the general division is one between human and non-human, and humans are divided into male and female in turn (*cf.* Corbett 1991: 11). Sometimes the dividing line is animate – inanimate instead of human – non-human. English might be an example, as animals (particularly

### 3. Gender in English – a short overview

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domestic animals) are usually masculine or feminine according to sex; however, there are other factors that may influence pronoun choice (e.g. conventions of children's stories; *cf.* Corbett 1991: 12).

A more complex system can be found in Algonquian languages: Most of these have two genders, with a basic animate – inanimate contrast. An additional factor for gender assignment is POWER: powerful and/or dangerous things (although inanimate) usually belong to the animate gender, i.e. are grammatically animate (*cf.* Corbett 1991: 20f). In Caucasian languages, a count – non-count distinction seems to play a role; for example, liquids and abstracts (non-count, non-rigid) belong to the same gender (*cf.* Corbett 1991: 24-30). Cross-linguistically, “[t]he feature animate is particularly pervasive” in semantic gender systems (Corbett 1991: 31).

On the other hand, there are FORMAL SYSTEMS, where formal criteria (usually phonological, e.g. in French, or morphological, e.g. in Russian) determine gender to a large extent (*cf.* Corbett 1991: 37ff). It is important to note that neither strict semantic nor strict formal systems seem to exist. Most of the world's languages make use of mixed systems, but even in formal systems “gender always has a basis in semantics” (Corbett 1991: 63). Thus, when conflicting rules exist, semantic considerations normally take precedence (Corbett 1991: 66). This can be illustrated with the help of a German example.

German has a relatively formal morphological gender system (*cf.* Corbett 1991: 49f) which usually assigns gender on the basis of derivations. Lexemes with the suffix *-chen* (indicating diminutives) are assigned to the neuter gender. With the lexeme *Mädchen* “girl”, there is a clash between semantics and morphology, as semantics clearly demands feminine gender rather than the neuter assigned on the basis of a formal rule. While it is ungrammatical to use a feminine article (1), feminine endings on attributive adjectives (2), or a feminine relative pronoun (3), it is perfectly fine to use *sie* “she” as anaphoric pronoun (4), although neuter *es* “it” is also possible. The Agreement Hierarchy, reproduced in (5) below, nicely predicts this possibility (*cf.* Corbett 1991: ch. 8):

- (1) *\*die Mädchen ist jung* “the<sub>fem</sub> girl is young<sub>ø</sub>”
- (2) *\*eine junge Mädchen* “a<sub>fem</sub> young<sub>fem</sub> girl”
- (3) *das Mädchen, \*die ich meine ...* “the<sub>neut</sub> girl who(m)<sub>fem</sub> I mean”
- (4) *das Mädchen ist jung; ich kenne sie/es* “the<sub>neut</sub> girl is young<sub>ø</sub>; I know her/it”
- (5) The Agreement Hierarchy  
attributive < predicate < relative pronoun < personal pronoun

As we move rightwards along the hierarchy, the likelihood of semantic agreement will increase monotonically (that is, with no intervening decrease).<sup>1</sup>

(from Corbett 1991: 226)

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<sup>1</sup> Note that German does not mark predicative agreement; thus *der Mann ist nett* “the man is nice<sub>ø</sub>” and *die Frau ist nett* “the woman is nice<sub>ø</sub>”.

It is interesting to see that the Agreement Hierarchy also works in the reverse scenario of a basically semantic system where nouns can exceptionally be assigned a category other than the expected gender. English “boat nouns” offer nice examples in this context (*cf.* Corbett 1991: 180f, 236ff):

- (6) *the QEII is a beautiful ship*
- (7) *the QEII, on \*whom I sailed recently, is a beautiful ship*
- (8) *the QEII, on which I sailed recently, is a beautiful ship*
- (9) *I sailed on the QEII recently; she/it is beautiful*

While it is impossible to use the relative pronoun *who(m)* with *ship*, the use of *she* as illustrated in (9) is possible, thus supporting the Agreement Hierarchy.<sup>2</sup> As the use of non-neuter pronouns for inanimate antecedents is the chief topic of this dissertation, much more will be said about this type of assignment throughout the following paragraphs and chapters.

Greville Corbett defines agreement as the “determining criterion of gender” (1991: 4) and adds that “[t]his is the generally accepted approach to gender.” (*ibid.*) Agreement can manifest itself to various degrees in numerous categories. Adjectives can agree with the nouns they classify, verbs with their subjects or even objects, etc. Control of anaphoric pronouns by referents is usually included as part of agreement; thus, a language like PrDE, where gender only becomes evident in personal pronouns, should be said to have gender as well (*cf.* Corbett 1991: 5). Corbett calls such a system a “pronominal gender system” (*ibid.*).

In light of the Agreement Hierarchy, it becomes clear that attributive modifiers and personal pronouns seem to be two opposite poles of a single hierarchy, i.e. “they should be treated as part of the same phenomenon” (Corbett 1991: 112). As we have seen in the above examples, personal pronouns, occupying the end of the Agreement Hierarchy, are the most likely stage at which semantic factors overrule formal ones. This could already be observed in Old English, where it was possible for a non-neuter noun to take a neuter anaphoric pronoun, especially when there was some distance between pronoun and referent (*cf.* (10)):

- (10) þæt þu þone wisdom þe þe God sealde,  
that you that wisdom which to you God gave,  
  
þær þær þu hiene befæstan mæge, befæste.  
there where you it<sub>MASC</sub> implant may, implant.

<sup>2</sup> It is debatable whether or not *she* provides better semantic agreement than *it*. Thus, it would probably be more appropriate to speak of a modified Agreement Hierarchy that can be based on numerous factors in addition to the original “likelihood of semantic agreement increases” criterion, e.g. on pragmatic or stylistic factors. Another problem is posed by the question of what exactly connects *he* and *she* with *who(m)*, while *it* is linked with *which*. Animation seems the most likely factor.

### 3. Gender in English – a short overview

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Geþenc hwelc witu            us   þa   becomon  
think   what   punishments to us then came

for þisse worulde, þa þa we hit    nohwæþer  
for this   world    when we <sub>it<sub>NEUT</sub></sub>   neither

ne   selfe        ne   lufodon, ne   eac oþrum  
NEG ourselves NEG loved    NEG also other

monnum ne   lefdon ...  
men        NEG allowed ...

(Dekeyser 1980: 101; Corbett 1991: 242f)

In the example above, the masculine *hiene* is used in the immediate vicinity of *wisdom* (masculine in OE), but the next reference, spatially removed from its antecedent, is neuter *hit*. One can thus conclude that personal pronouns seem to be “the major initiator of changes in the balance between syntactic and semantic gender” (Corbett 1991: 242). English obviously walked that path in its history, developing from a language with a fairly formal gender system comparable to that of Modern German to a language with a semantic (or even “natural”) gender system. This path will be examined in greater detail below.

## 3.2 Gender in English – the history

English inherited a formal gender system<sup>3</sup> from its Germanic parent language which, roughly between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century, was gradually replaced by the semantic “natural” or “logical” gender system that we know from PrDE, the change having been completed in early Middle English (ME) (*cf.* Kastovsky 2000: 709; Dekeyser 1980: 102). The dissolution and ultimate demise of the formal system is usually associated with phonetic changes in the syllable that ultimately led to the loss of most inflectional endings on the noun. However, it has been noted that it is probably not entirely correct to classify the OE gender system as a purely formal category. Although some derivational endings showed a clear one-to-one match of ending to gender (e.g. *-dom* masculine, *-ness* feminine), “many suffixes were affiliated to more than one gender” (Kastovsky 2000: 712). Also, for underived nouns, next to nothing could be predicted about their gender from their inflectional class, thus making it basically impossible to speak of a formal gender system in OE (*cf. ibid.*). To add to the confusion, the distribution of nouns into the three genders masculine, feminine, and neuter had an almost semantic basis in OE already in that (in West Saxon) most male nouns were masculine, most female nouns feminine,

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<sup>3</sup> As this is the viewpoint adopted by most scholars, it will be assumed here, too. However, as will become clear from the following paragraphs, this view is at least questionable, if not downright wrong.

and the majority of neuter nouns were “asexual” (Ross 1936: 321; *cf.* also Jones 1988: 35; Moore 1921: 89).<sup>4</sup>

Kastovsky (2000) illustrates how various stages and processes that took place in the inflectional morphology of the noun phrase were intimately linked to the dissolution of the formal category “gender”. It turns out that in OE already, very few combinations of an agreement-marking item (determiner, adjective) + noun were really unambiguously gender-specific (*cf.* Kastovsky 2000: 715ff). Thus, it does not come as much of a surprise that “wrong” gender assignment not only existed in OE times (*cf.* (10) above; Jones 1988: 10), but was presumably rather frequent.<sup>5</sup> In addition, semantic and/or pragmatic factors could be expected to overrule formal ones at that stage as well, particularly where formal gender and sex clashed (e.g. masculine *wifman*, neuter *mægden*; *cf.* Kastovsky 2000: 711f; Jones 1988: 36ff; Wales 1996: 137ff). Thus, it seems appropriate to look for the beginning of the end of gender in English at a much earlier time, and it is likely that Moore (1921: 91) was correct in saying that “natural gender did not *replace* grammatical gender in ME but survived it”.<sup>6</sup>

Anne Curzan (2000) adds another important factor to support this view, a factor which, judging from traditional accounts on gender in English, has largely been overlooked or at least neglected. She points to the status of English as a non-literary language when its first grammars were written, inheriting all systems and their classifications from Latin, a highly synthetic language with an elaborate grammatical gender system:

The early English grammarians were “beginners”, stumbling through English grammar with only Latin grammar and its terminology as their guide; despite the obvious inapplicability of many Latin categories for English, they often retained them in the English grammars either because they wished to adhere to tradition or because they could not conceive of other possibilities.

(Curzan 2000: 563)

Judging from the inflectional paradigm of OE nouns, feminine noun endings were generally more distinctive than either masculine or neuter ones. This could support the view that feminine gender lingered longer than the other two, and that this continued association led to the persistence of feminine pronominal reference with

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<sup>4</sup> I use “asexual” as a label for the third sexual (i.e. biological) category, i.e. male, female, asexual = sex; masculine, feminine, neuter = gender.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Baron’s (1971) summary of Moore’s (1921) work on the topic. Baron (1971: 119) states that Moore “statistically demonstrates the prevalence of natural gender in OE”. It should also be kept in mind that there were obviously huge regional differences in the gradual process of gender loss, with the North leading the way (*cf.* Kastovsky 2000: 715; Baron 1971: 127; Dekeyser 1980: 99).

<sup>6</sup> Original emphasis. Scholars like Mitchell (1985: 29ff) argue that Moore’s analysis is over-generalized, as his choice of texts is not representative of the respective periods. Still, it should be recalled that in those cases where a conflict between sex and gender is potentially possible, sex seems to overrule gender more often than not.

### 3. Gender in English – a short overview

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some nouns to the present day (*cf.* Fennell 2001: 64). This is a fact worth remembering when the predominance of feminine referents is investigated in chapter 9.

Matters were not simplified by the gradual case syncretism of dative and accusative personal pronouns. Visser (1963: 427) notes that the reason for the change from *hine* to *him* “has as yet not been satisfactorily accounted for”. Possible explanations include the extension of the dative from rather frequent verbs taking dative forms as objects after speakers were no longer aware of the case distinction(s) (*cf. ibid.*), or an economically motivated choice of the pronoun most distinct from the nominative (*cf.* Howe 1996: 114f). Although dative-accusative levelling took place in most Germanic languages, some languages lost the dative forms, while others generalized the dative and lost the accusative forms. Howe (1996: 111) thus concludes “that no theory is at present able to account fully satisfactorily for both these directions.” The concrete developments in English went as follows:

In English, as in Friesian and Dutch, this original accusative has been superseded by the dative *him*. Already before 1000, traces are found of the dative form used instead of the acc., and before 1150 *hine* was obsolete in the north and midlands. *Hine* was used in Kentish (beside *him*) in 1340, but appears rarely in literature after 1400, though still, in the reduced form *en, un, 'n* ((ə)n), the ordinary form of the accusative in s.w. dialects, as ‘we zeed 'n gwayn’, we saw him going. (OED, “hine”)

In 10th c. (as in the parallel *her, hem*), the dative appears to have begun to be used for the accus. *hine* in north-midl. dialect; by 1150 *him* had supplanted *hine* in north and midl., and before 1400 had become the general literary form, though some south-western writers of the 15th c. retained *hin, hen*, which, in the form *en, un, 'n*, is still current in southern dialect speech: see HIN. (So in late OFris. *him* took the place of *hine, hin*; and in MDu., the dat. *heme, hem, him*, intruded upon the orig. accus. *hin, hen*; and mod.Du. has only the dat.-acc. *hem*.) **But while *him* thus became both dative and accusative in the masculine, in the neuter the accusative *hit*, “it” survived, and at length superseded the dative**, as in the modern ‘give it a push’. Thus, from being originally dative masc. and neuter, *him* is now dat. and acc. masculine, having received extension in case, restriction in gender. (OED, “him”; boldface SW)

While in the masc. the original acc. *hine* was supplanted by the dative *him*, in the neuter, on the contrary, the dative *him* gradually yielded to the acc. form *hit, it*. **This was not yet complete in the beginning of the 17th c.** (OED, “it”; boldface SW)

	Goth.	OE.	ME.	16th c.	mod.E.	dial.
N.A.	hita	hit	hit, it	(hit) it	it, 't	(h)it, 't, 'd.
D.	himma	him	him	him, it	it, 't	(h)it, 't, 'd.
G.	*his	his	his	(hit)	his, its	(h)its, it.

(OED, “it”)

The only conclusion to be drawn from these observations is that there was a rather extended period of time in the history of the English language when the choice of a supposedly masculine personal pronoun (*him*) said nothing about the gender or sex of the referent. It could be masculine, male, neuter, or asexual – and every combination of those three:

gender sex	masculine	neuter
male	X	X
asexual	X	X

### 3.3 Gender in English today

At a first glance, [...] it might seem that *gender* in modern English is a relatively *straightforward category to discuss*, in comparison with the phenomenon in many other languages; indeed, in many text-books for both native and non-native speakers of English *it is barely mentioned, if at all*.

(Wales 1996: 134; emphasis SW)

Katie Wales expresses here what almost everyone, be they laymen or linguists, native or non-native speakers, would agree with without a second thought – gender is an at most marginal category of PrDE. For centuries, it has been largely equalled (and confused) with the biological category of sex, making it difficult to speak of “gender in English” at all. However, a look at modern reference grammars reveals that obviously tradition is stronger than common sense – gender has always been a category (formal or functional) of English, and no one dares (yet) to let go of it completely. In the following, I will have a look at grammarians’ views on gender in PrDE.

#### 3.3.1 Gender in modern reference grammars

As has already been indicated, modern scholars writing on PrDE are highly influenced by traditional accounts on gender in Indo-European languages. They adopt the traditional terminology that was developed for those languages, and no one seems to consider it inappropriate for describing a language like PrDE that is almost as far removed from a true “gender language” as it can possibly be. Quirk *et al.*’s *Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985) is no exception in this respect:

By GENDER is meant a grammatical classification of nouns, pronouns, or other words in the noun phrase, according to certain meaning-related distinctions, especially a distinction related to the sex of the referent. In English, unlike many other related languages, nouns, determiners and adjectives have



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no inflectionally-marked gender distinctions. Some 3rd person pronouns and *wh*-pronouns do, however, express natural gender distinctions:

<i>it, which</i> etc	[NONPERSONAL] contrasts with the following:
<i>who, whom</i> etc	[PERSONAL]
<i>he, himself</i> etc	[MASCULINE, chiefly PERSONAL]
<i>she, herself</i> etc	[FEMININE, chiefly PERSONAL]

(Quirk *et al.* 1985: 314)

This definition of gender sounds suspiciously non-specific; yes, gender is a grammatical category, but is it really a grammatical category of PrDE? The authors choose the unfortunate path of equating gender with sex in talking about meaning-related distinctions, in particular those referring to the sex of the referent. The next paragraph tries to clarify matters, but one cannot help but feel slightly confused by the varied terminology:

Gender in English nouns may be described as ‘notional’ or ‘covert’ in contrast to the ‘grammatical’ or ‘overt’ gender of nouns in languages such as French, German, and Russian; that is, nouns are classified not grammatically, but semantically, according to their coreferential relations with personal, reflexive, and *wh*-pronouns. We use the term MALE and FEMALE in reference to the ‘covert’ gender of nouns, as distinct from the ‘overt’ gender of pronouns.

(Quirk *et al.* 1985: 314)

While the previous paragraph spoke of “natural gender distinctions”, now they are “notional” or “covert”. This in itself poses no real problem, but equating the existence of gender with the existence of gender-specific pronouns does. We enter a circle of argument and counter-argument if we claim that English has gender because it has pronouns that show gender distinctions – the traditional argumentation would go the opposite way and claim that the distinctions in the pronominal systems only exist because the nominal referent carries the feature “gender”, which in turn has to be mirrored in the pronominal system(s).

What is even more unfortunate in the terminology used in the above paragraphs is the use of male, female, masculine and feminine. Quirk *et al.* equate the gender terms masculine and feminine with the “overt”, “natural gender” of pronouns, while nouns with their “covert”, “notional gender” are male or female, which are biological categories referring to the sex of the referent. This seems to be a contradiction in terms. Why should different terms – which describe essentially the same phenomenon – be used for different word classes? A personal pronoun referring to a male human has either both features, [+ male] and [+ masculine], or, if one were to accept that English gender is a purely semantic category, only [+ male]. Also, it is not clear why the authors suggest that nominal gender is an overt category in German – grammatical, yes, but the categories are only rarely expressed overtly.<sup>7</sup> As Corbett (1991: 49) summarizes, gender assignment rules

<sup>7</sup> Although some derivational endings allow certain predictions about gender assignment, the rules for underived nouns are far too complex to call them overt.



in German consist of “a complex interplay of overlapping semantic, morphological and phonological factors.” The gender system Quirk *et al.* derive from these observations must look confusing, if not wrong, to most speakers of English:

The patterns of pronoun coreference for singular nouns give us a set of nine gender classes as illustrated in Fig 5.104:

		GENDER CLASS	EXAMPLE	PRONOUN COREFERENCE
animate	personal	(a) male	<i>brother</i>	<i>who – he</i>
		(b) female	<i>sister</i>	<i>who – she</i>
		(c) dual	<i>doctor</i>	<i>who – he/she</i>
		(d) common	<i>baby</i>	<i>who – he/she/it</i> <i>which – it</i>
	non-personal	(e) collective	<i>family</i>	<i>which – it</i> <i>who – they</i>
		(f) higher male animal	<i>bull</i>	<i>which – he/it</i> <i>(who) – he</i>
		(g) higher female animal	<i>cow</i>	<i>which – she/it</i> <i>(who) – she</i>
		(h) lower animal	<i>ant</i>	<i>which – it (he/she)</i>
		(i) inanimate	<i>box</i>	<i>which – it</i>
inanimate				

Fig 5.104

Gender classes

(Quirk *et al.* 1985: 314)

According to this system, English has nine(!) gender classes<sup>8</sup> which reveal a high degree of overlap with each other. None of the sub-categories is sufficient for assigning gender to a noun. At first glance, “inanimate” seems to be, but if classification were based on pronoun coreference exclusively (as the authors claim it is), all categories that allow “*which – it*” (i.e. (d), (e), (f), (g), (h), (i)) should be in the same sub-gender. Obviously, the authors applied some sort of hierarchy to arrive at the above classification in which humanity > sex > animation > pronoun choice, but the basis of such a system, if it indeed exists, is never explained.

On the category of animals, the following can be found: “Male/female gender distinctions in animal nouns are maintained by people with a special concern (for example with pets)” (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 317). No reference is made to the fact that animals are generally *he* in spoken language.<sup>9</sup> The authors’ concern here is with “professional” language use that includes terminological differentiation, e.g. *dog – bitch* etc.

Another exceptional noun class mentioned is that of country names, which can be used with neuter (→ geographical unit) or feminine (→ political/economic units) pronouns (*cf.* Quirk *et al.* 1985: 318). Oddly enough, it is stated that in the latter

<sup>8</sup> The term “gender class” is never explained nor defined.

<sup>9</sup> This claim will be examined in greater detail in section 8.2.

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case gender is either “class (b) or (g)” (*ibid.*) – (b) is acceptable, but I sincerely doubt that a country could be classified as a “higher female animal” (class (g)) ... On the well-known use of feminine pronouns referring to ships, we find that

Inanimate entities, such as ships, towards which we have an intense and close personal relationship, may be referred to by personal pronouns, *eg*:

That’s a lovely ship. What is *she* called?

In nonstandard and Australian English, there is extension of *she* references to include those of antipathy as well as affection, *eg*:

*She’s* an absolute bastard, this truck.

(Quirk *et al.* 1985: 318, original emphasis)

With the generalized “we” in the first sentence the authors overdo things slightly. While it cannot be denied that a group of professionals (fishermen, ship crews, yacht owners, etc.) certainly have “intensive and close personal relationships” with the ships they are sailing on, such a relationship seems too much to claim for the average person. The following statement on Australian English sounds as if one of the authors heard somebody use the example sentence and decided to include it in the grammar. On the whole, the wording and inclusion itself seem a bit unreasonable and completely unfounded. Although the co-ordination of “non-standard” and “Australian English” seems awkward (and is, as will shown in a later chapter, wrong), the authors at least mention that feminine forms are the pronouns of choice in speech (*cf.* chapter 9). However, they offer neither comments nor explanations for this type of use.

A more contemporary (or updated) approach to gender in English can be found in Longman’s *Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber *et al.* 1999), incorporating, as the title suggests, considerable amounts of material from spoken language for the first time and thus complementing rather than substituting Quirk *et al.* (1985).

Gender is a less important category in English than in many other languages. It is closely tied to the sex of the referent and is chiefly reflected in co-occurrence patterns with respect to singular personal pronouns (and corresponding possessive and reflexive forms). The main gender classes are:

	example noun	pronoun
personal/human:		
masculine	<i>Tom, a boy, the man</i>	<i>he</i>
feminine	<i>Sue, a girl, the woman</i>	<i>she</i>
dual	<i>a journalist, the doctor</i>	<i>he, she</i>
non-personal/neuter:	<i>a house, a bird</i>	<i>it</i>

(Biber *et al.* 1999: 311f)

The system presented here seems much closer to reality than the one proposed by Quirk *et al.* Biber and his colleagues are well aware of the fact that gender is a problematic category in PrDE. Thus their insightful caveat about oversimplifying matters: “However, gender is not a simple reflection of reality; rather it is to some extent a matter of convention and speakers’ choice and special strategies may be used to avoid gender-specific reference at all” (Biber *et al.* 1999: 312).

After this general introduction, Biber *et al.* largely discuss pragmatic motivations for pronoun choice, such as the use of specifically gender-marked forms on the one hand or avoidance on the other (e.g. *chairman/-woman* vs. *chairperson*). They note “a continuing sex-bias in English language use and society more generally” (1999: 313) towards masculine terminology, which is not only reflected in a much higher occurrence of masculine forms in pairs like the one mentioned above, but also in the distribution of third person singular personal pronouns in general: masculine forms are more frequent in all registers, occurring 1.5 to more than 3 times as frequently as feminine forms (Biber *et al.* 1999: 333ff).

Of major relevance for the present discussion is the section about personal vs. non-personal reference (*ibid.*: 317ff). The authors state that “[p]ersonal reference expresses greater familiarity or involvement. Non-personal reference is more detached.” (*ibid.*) Items falling into the category that offers a three-way choice (personal *he, she*; non-personal *it*) are expressions for young children (*infant, baby, child*) and animals (pets in particular; *cf. ibid.*: 318). An exceptional status is once again attributed to nouns denoting countries and ships, which offer a two-way choice (personal *she*, non-personal *it*).

Although Biber *et al.*’s account comes much closer to the actual facts we can observe in the realization of gender English today, like Quirk *et al.* they fail to offer explanations for the exceptional cases, most of which they do not even mention. Why is it possible at all to use *she* when referring to a ship? Let me introduce the most recent effort in the field, Huddleston and Pullum’s *Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (2002), by way of quoting their introductory remarks on “Gender as a grammatical category”.<sup>10</sup>

[...] it is important to distinguish carefully between the grammatical terms **masculine** and **feminine** and the semantic or extralinguistic terms **male** and **female**. Until relatively recently it was usual to make a parallel distinction between **gender** (grammatical) and **sex** (extralinguistic) [...]. In the *social sciences*, however, ‘sex’ came to be used to refer to *biological attributes* and ‘gender’ to the *social construction* of sex, and *this usage has been incorporated into linguistics*. A book on ‘*language and gender*’ will therefore *not be primarily concerned with gender as a grammatical category*, but will cover such matters as differences between the speech of men and women. Our concern in this section, however, is with gender in the old, strictly grammatical sense [...]

(Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 484f; italics SW)

<sup>10</sup> Gender is treated in chapter 5 “Noun and noun phrases” by John Payne and Geoffrey Huddleston, to whom “the authors” will refer in the remainder of this section.

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For the first time, the change in terminology – and the resulting confusion – is topicalized in a grammar, which in itself points to a radical restructuring in the respective areas of research. The authors continue their introduction by justifying their decision to treat gender as a grammatical category, using an argumentation very much in Corbett’s vein (agreement as the defining criterion of gender → English *does* show agreement, though in a very restricted sense → English has gender, though it is not an inflectional category and not as strongly grammaticalized as in other languages; cf. *ibid.*: 485f). Although their use of the term “less grammaticalized” is debatable<sup>11</sup>, Payne and Huddleston take a very clear position in assessing the category, which is refreshing and helpful compared with the earlier descriptions.

Typical wording can be found in the actual distributional properties of masculine *he*, feminine *she*, and neuter *it*. *He* and *she* referring to males and females respectively, *it* referring to “entities which are neither male nor female”, are identified as the “core uses” of *he*, *she*, and *it* (cf. *ibid.*: 484). As this definition of *it* would exclude its use with both animal and human antecedents, which *do* exist, there is an extra section on these exceptional uses. In the case of animate non-human (i.e. animal<sup>12</sup>) antecedents, Payne/Huddleston state the following:

- *It* is generally used when the sex is unknown (cf. *ibid.*: 489);
- *he* and *she* are “more likely with pets, domestic animals, and creatures ranked high in the kingdom of wild animals” (*ibid.*; e.g. lions, tigers, ...);
- the use of *he* or *she* “indicates a somewhat greater degree of interest in or empathy with the referent than does *it*” (*ibid.*).

It is the third factor that is remarkable, as this is what every native speaker would say in an impressionistic account and what has been part of socio-pragmatic gender studies for a long time, but what has not been taken up in grammars so far.<sup>13</sup> As for the reverse scenario, the use of *it* with human antecedents, the authors again combine a traditional commonplace (*it* can be used for babies) with modern specifications (used in such a manner, *it* tends to suggest resentment or antipathy; *ibid.*). The other “special” section here concerns the use of *she* with non-females. We are informed that such usage is possible with two categories, namely with countries

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<sup>11</sup> As English uses to have grammatical gender, its loss would have to be classified as one of the rare cases of de-grammaticalization, as previously highly grammatical items lost their grammatical status. On the issue of unidirectionality in grammaticalization, cf. Hopper and Traugott (1993: ch.5).

<sup>12</sup> This is debatable from a biological point of view, as plants and trees are also animate and non-human.

<sup>13</sup> Biber *et al.*’s description contained a similar remark, but did not follow this path as consequently as Payne & Huddleston. Note that specialist studies such as that by Morris (1991) or Mathiot and Roberts (1979), which will figure prominently in a later chapter, have long since argued in such a manner.

(when considered as political, but not as geographical entities) and ships “and the like”<sup>14</sup> (*ibid.*: 484):

Ships represent the classical case of this extended use of *she*, but it is found with other kinds of inanimates, such as cars. **There is considerable variation among speakers as to how widely they make use of this kind of personification.** It is often found with non-anaphoric uses of *she*: *Here she is at last* (referring to a ship or bus, perhaps), *Down she comes* (with *she* referring, say, to a tree that is being felled).

*(ibid.*; boldface SW)

The (in)appropriateness of the label “personification” will be discussed in a later section (*cf.* section 8.1). However, it should be clear from the examples themselves that we cannot be dealing with personification if the pronoun is not used anaphorically – what *is* personified if we do not know the referent? An abstract idea or situation (as this is what most of these *she*’s seem to refer to)<sup>15</sup> Although it is admirable that the authors mention such uses at all, which are more widespread than generally assumed, they clearly fail to explain them. Payne and Huddleston *do* approximate the actual situation by not trying to provide a grid or table which lists genders in English, which would be inappropriate from a modern point of view, making clear that almost 20 years have passed since the days of Quirk *et al.* (1985).

All in all, the descriptions of gender in modern reference grammars are highly unsatisfactory in a number of respects. They either do not reflect actual language use, or they mix traditional with modern interpretation, which adds to the confusion rather than helps clarify it. If anything, the authors describe an idealized version of gender assignment in written StE, thus ignoring the importance of a mostly spoken reality.

### 3.3.2 Descriptions of gender in various works

As the quote from Wales (1996) introducing this chapter already indicates, gender is not a category that figures prominently in descriptions of PrDE. Usually it is listed among those categories that have been weakened over time. Thus, Leisi and Mair (1999<sup>8</sup>: 140) state that gender in English has lost much of its weight, primarily because it was a purely grammatical category without any solid basis in reality. Exceptional feminine and masculine nouns include names of countries and “machines men have a close emotional relationship with” (e.g. *motorbike*; *ibid.*, translation SW), classified as “adopted natural (psychological) gender” (*ibid.*: 141, translation SW).<sup>16</sup> Additionally, there is the “allegorical gender” of abstract nouns,

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<sup>14</sup> This is vagueness at its best – the authors could not possibly have been any *less* specific.

<sup>15</sup> A special section will be dedicated to these uses; *cf.* section 8.3.

<sup>16</sup> This category is traditionally known as “metaphorical gender”; *cf.* e.g. Kortmann (1999: 83).

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which, according to the author(s), is largely based on the gender associated with the noun in the original classical language. Thus, *love* can be masculine (< Ltn. *amor*), *peace* feminine (< Ltn. *pax*) (*ibid.*).

More recently, Brinton (2000: 105f) follows the dominating view that PrDE has “natural gender” as opposed to its earlier “grammatical gender”. She notes that “gender is generally a covert category” in nouns, while “a related category of animacy (animate/inanimate)” is not only expressed in personal, but also in interrogative and relative pronouns (*what* vs. *who*; *which* vs. *who*; cf. *ibid.*). Interesting in her classification are the postulated animacy groupings: humans and higher animals on the one, lower animals and inanimates on the other hand. Animals thus appear on both sides of the scale. Although it is not mentioned explicitly by the author, it should be clear that the cut-off point can vary on all levels of lectal variation (dia-, socio-, idiolect), depending on the situation, context, addressee, etc. etc. Figure 3.1 is an attempt to illustrate Brinton’s categories.

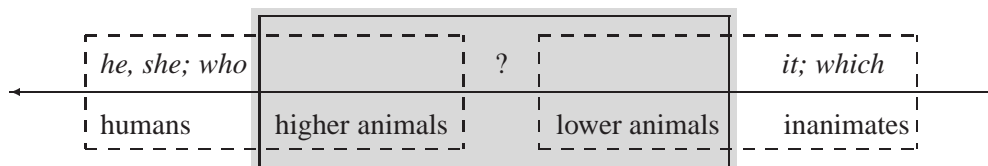


Figure 3.1: Gender categories in Brinton (2000)

It is a description in an almost forgotten grammar of English that comes up again and again in publications on the status of gender in PrDE. George Curme’s *English Grammar* was first published in 1925, and to the present author’s knowledge, it was never intended as groundbreaking work, but served as a basic college grammar.<sup>17</sup> Curme’s introductory remarks on gender read as follows: “Gender is a distinction in the form of words to indicate sex. There are two kinds of gender in English – natural gender and the gender of animation.” (1962: 209) In the following paragraphs, the author illustrates natural gender, which “rests upon the conception of sex in nature” (*ibid.*), with the help of the three strategies that English employs:

- a) use of distinctive terms (generally relational opposites such as *man-woman*, *husband-wife*),
- b) use of affixes (e.g. *-ess* vs. *-or*),
- c) use of pronouns (personal and possessive, i.e. *he-him-his* vs. *she-her-her*)

In the context of the latter, Curme notes a tendency to regard animals as masculine, although they are generally treated as neuter (cf. Curme 1962: 211).

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<sup>17</sup> This is the conclusion drawn from the fact that the umpteenth reprint (1962) was published as trade-market paperback as part of Barnes & Noble’s *College Outline Series*.

What is really noteworthy about Curme's description is his category of a "gender of animation", which he explains as a sort of remnant from OE times (and its grammatical gender) that has developed a life of its own: "The old habit of associating lifeless things with sex continued and in our playful moods with their animated feeling still has strong sway." (1962: 212) The author distances himself strongly from identification of animation with personification:

This gender does **not** – as most grammars and rhetorics falsely suppose – rest upon vivid **personification**, but is **merely an animated form to serve as a contrast** to the scientific precision of our normal expression, which treats as neuter all living and lifeless things which lack personality.

(Curme 1962: 213; emphasis SW)

Curme's main point, the contrasting function of animated pronouns, will figure prominently in later parts of this dissertation.

David Crystal is an exemplary case of a scholar who uses personification as a way out of the dilemma that exceptional pronoun usage poses. He tackles a problem that will be discussed in detail in the main section of this thesis – namely why (at least in certain varieties) feminine pronouns are much more frequently found in "neuter" contexts than their masculine counterparts:

Many nouns are given variable gender, depending on whether they are thought of in an intimate way. Vehicles and countries are often called *she* as well as *it* (*She can reach 60 in 5 seconds; France has increased her exports*). Pets are often *he* or *she*. A crying baby may become *it*.

It is not obvious why some entities are readily personified while others are not. Nor is it obvious why most entities are given female personifications. It is not simply a matter of feminine stereotypes, for *she* is used in aggressive and angry situations as well as in affectionate ones: guns, tanks and trucks which won't go remain *she*. The only consistently male trend in personification which the author has heard in recent years is in computing, where word processors and other devices are widely given male pet names and pronouns. Why this should be so is beyond him [...]

(Crystal 1995: 209)

Although it will be shown in the relevant section (see 8.1) that Crystal jumps too readily to the conclusion that all of these are cases of personification, his helplessness seems indicative of most scholars' feelings towards the issue at hand. It is hoped that the discussion presented here will help shed some light on a largely uninvestigated (and underestimated) area of PrDE personal pronoun usage.





## Chapter 4

# West Country dialects

This chapter will provide some basic information about the grammatical systems of the traditional dialects of Southwest England.<sup>1</sup> Primarily looking at 19<sup>th</sup>-century descriptions (grammars and other accounts), it is meant to serve as a frame for the following chapter(s), which will concentrate on the main issue of this thesis, gender diffusion. This chapter will not look at modern Southwestern dialects for two reasons:

1. Gender diffusion, which is investigated here, is a traditional feature, which needs to be placed and analysed in the context of traditional, not modern dialectology.<sup>2</sup>
2. Comprehensive, detailed descriptions of modern Southwestern dialect(s) simply do not exist.<sup>3</sup>

Due to the scarcity of available material, a division into counties seems not feasible here. Thus, an overall account of the peculiarities of language used in the Southwest of England will be presented. The core of what is called “Southwest” here is constituted by the counties of Cornwall<sup>4</sup>, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, and Wiltshire<sup>5</sup> (horizontal lines in Figure 4.1), while its boundaries are formed by parts of the adjoining counties of Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Worcestershire, and Herefordshire, which create a transition zone (criss-crossed sections; *cf.* Figure 4.1)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The focus on grammar seems justified in the light of the wealth of material available on basically all other areas, but on phonetics/phonology and vocabulary in particular (*cf.* 19<sup>th</sup>-century works listed in the bibliography and the Basic Material of the SED).

<sup>2</sup> On the distinction of traditional vs. modern dialectology, see chapter 1.2.

<sup>3</sup> Modern studies tend to stress social factors influencing dialects without attributing much importance to such “basic” linguistic features as morphology and/or grammar.

<sup>4</sup> Cornwall is included as a whole as this thesis’ data do not justify the exclusion of West Cornwall. *Cf.* chapters 2, 7 and 13.

<sup>5</sup> The county boundaries here follow the traditional ones as used, for example, in the SED. Somerset is taken to include Bristol and Avon.

<sup>6</sup> Hampshire and Berkshire are not included. Berkshire is not often covered in studies of the Southwest, due to its “transitional nature” (Ihalainen 1994: 211); Hampshire shows a high degree of mixture of features from the Southwest and Southeast, justifying its exclusion.

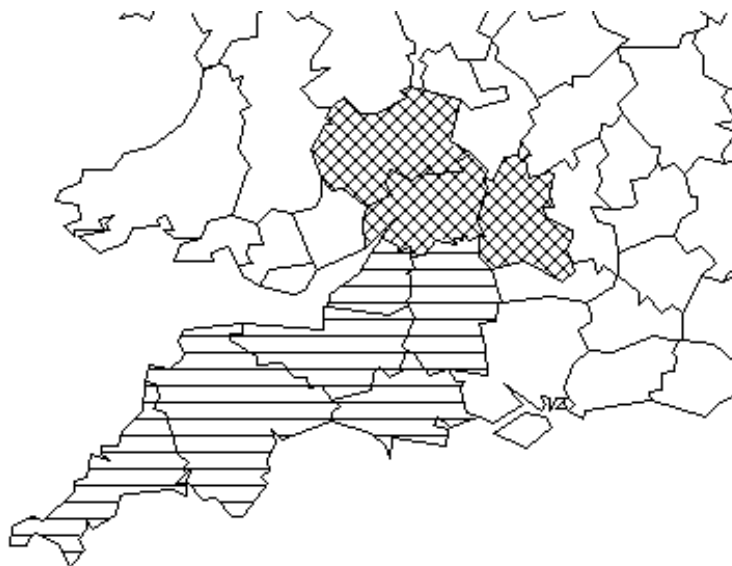


Figure 4.1: The Southwest of England

The core area presented here corresponds closely both to that of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex as well as various modern and traditional dialect areas postulated in the literature (*cf.* Figures 4.2(a), 4.2(b), 4.3(a), 4.3(b)).

The grammatical outline presented here is largely based on Rogers (1979), who collected not only historical but also modern dialectological evidence.<sup>7</sup> His *Wessex Dialect* is possibly the most comprehensive yet complete description of West Country dialect(s) to be found. Rogers demonstrates a keen eye for important and peculiar features, a remarkable effort for a non-linguist. Where necessary, additional evidence will be taken from both historical and modern accounts, to either support or supplement the information from Rogers. Also, modern examples taken from the Southwest component of FRED<sup>8</sup> (some parts of which are also used for the main section of this thesis) will be used either to exemplify the historical data or – if none could be found – to point out changes in the traditional system.<sup>9</sup>

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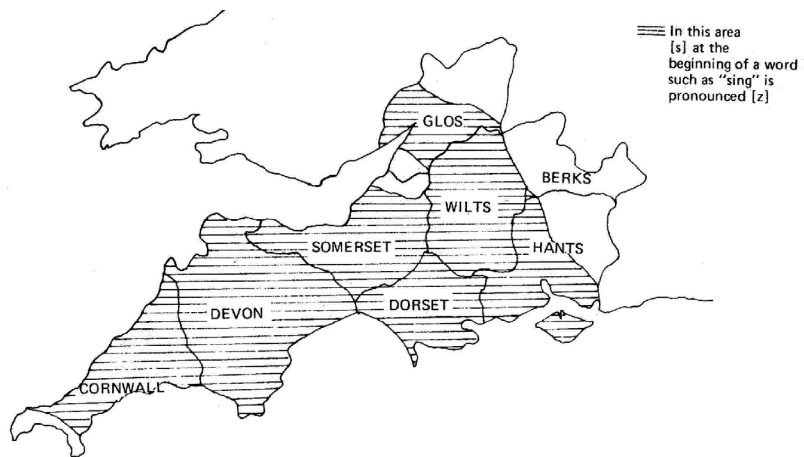
<sup>7</sup> Many of Rogers' observations clearly stem from Elworthy and/or Barnes, whose works he also lists in the bibliography.

<sup>8</sup> Freiburg English Dialect Corpus, currently being compiled at the University of Freiburg, under the supervision of Prof. Bernd Kortmann.

<sup>9</sup> Traditional features that are obsolete today due to drastic changes in the respective system(s) will not be included in the discussion below. Examples of such features are e.g. the singular/plural marking on the personal pronouns of the second person or "pro drop" in subject position, which was only possible as long as the category "person" was clearly indicated by an inflectional ending on the verb. *Cf.* e.g. Rogers (1979: 35) or Siemund's over-generalization, assuming pro drop is generally possible in subject position (2001: 27).



(a) The Anglo-Saxon kingdoms



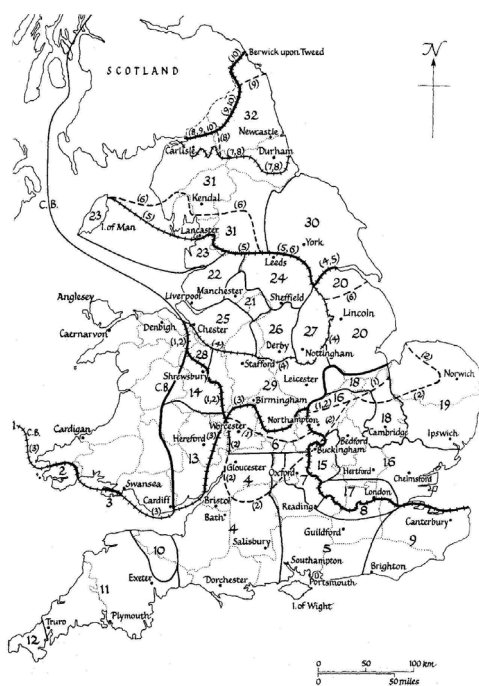
(b) Area of voiced initial fricatives

Figure 4.2: Modern and traditional dialect areas (1); 4.2(a) from Fennell (2001: 57), 4.2(b) from Rogers (1979: 25)

#### 4. West Country dialects



(a) Modern Dialect Areas



(b) Ellis' English dialect districts

Figure 4.3: Modern and traditional dialect areas (2); 4.3(a) from Trudgill (1999: 65), 4.3(b) from Ihalainen (1994: 236)

We can divide features into three basic categories, based on patterns of occurrence (*cf.* Kortmann 2002):

- exclusively Southwestern features
- features also found in other (regional) dialects
- general features of spoken (non-)standard English

The following sections will first treat features irrespective of these categories, but possible categorizations will be offered towards the end of this chapter.

## 4.1 Articles

The observed ‘over-use’ of the definite article in certain environments and/or with certain nouns in West Country dialects is a possible candidate for substrate influence from Celtic languages. While this feature has been researched in Irish English (*cf.* Filppula 1999: 56ff), there are to my knowledge no studies that link West Country dialects with other Celtic-influenced Englishes, although the connections are well-known. Non-standard uses occur for example with diseases (*the chicken pox, the arthritis*), quantifying expressions (e.g. *the both, the most*), holidays (*the Christmas*), geographical units and institutions (*the church, the county Devon*), etc.

The indefinite article, on the other hand, often occurs as *a* also before vowels, and in general in such a reduced form that the non-native might not even hear it at all – “but the intention to say it is there and if the speaker were asked to repeat slowly he would definitely include it.” (Rogers 1979: 31) Modern examples from my own corpora include the ones in (1) to (9):

- (1) [Int.: Did you take any exam? For example, did you take a scholarship exam to the County School?  
Yes, I took it two years following, and failed **the both** of them. ICS (JE)<sup>10</sup>
- (2) Well father couldn’t drive **the both** engines ... AH (RM)
- (3) Going smashed the gate to pieces, broke **the both** shafts off old Harry’s milk float.  
TRWBM (008)
- (4) ... but I stayed on until **the Christmas**. ICS (JP)
- (5) ... we had to walk a mile to **the school** and back. SRLM (302)
- (6) ... and naturally her father was **a older** man when she was a young girl, ...  
ICS (EW)
- (7) ... about three pound **a acre**. SRLM (105)
- (8) A journeyman is **a apprentice** that has served his apprenticeship ... TCA (GB)
- (9) If **a end** comes off he automatically stops, see. TRWBM (001)

<sup>10</sup> For text codes, see Appendix D.

## 4.2 Adjectives

Although the ending *-en* meaning “made of” is also found in StE, it is supposedly more productive and thus more frequent in the Southwest, yielding such phrases as *bricken bridge*, *dirten floor*, or *wheaten straw* (cf. Barnes 1844a: 130, Rogers 1979: 33). In comparison, the synthetic strategy can be found also with multisyllabic adjectives; double comparison (analytic and synthetic strategy) is also common, a feature that is frequently found in other non-standard varieties as well (cf. *ibid.*: 34; (10) to (12)). I could not find any instances of *-en* adjectives in my modern material.

- (10) I'd be **more happier** out there than what I should be haymaking. SRLM (102)
- (11) its 'fiftɪ 'tɔɪmz wɒsəɹ            it's fifty times worse            (31 So 14, book VI)
- (12) **More happier** then than what it is today I think. TRWBM (068)

## 4.3 Nouns

In plural formation, West Country dialects at one time preferred the traditional *-en* ending over the StE *-s*, but have since adopted the StE strategy (cf. Barnes 1844a: 129, Rogers 1979: 33). For some plurals, the distribution of allomorphs differs from that in StE in that dialects used [ɪz] as a means of consonant cluster simplification. Thus, one hears plural forms such as *ghostes* or *beastes* (cf. *ibid.*), a feature that settlers took with them to Newfoundland and which has been typical of Newfoundland dialect(s) ever since.<sup>11</sup> Another phenomenon widespread in most non-standard varieties of English is the absence of an overt plural marker on some measurement nouns. While a plural *-s* after such nouns as *pound*, *mile* or *year* would be the exception rather than the rule, Rogers (*ibid.*; cf. also Barnes 1886<sup>2</sup>: 20) claims that the plural usually *is* marked on certain nouns belonging to the same respective family (or semantic field), namely *acre*, *ounce*, *inch*, *yard*, *hour*, *day* and *week*, a claim that essentially seems to hold for my corpus material as well. Examples of unmarked plurals abound; some typical ones are provided in (13) to (16).

- (13) He used to have **four pound** of butter a week every week. CAVA (WJB)
- (14) If they had any money they did give you **a few pound** ... SRLM (105)
- (15) ... we were **three mile** away from Plymouth ... TCA (RA)
- (16) ... 'e was walkin' **six mile** a day to work mornin's an' **six mile** 'ome ... TRWBM (015)

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<sup>11</sup> For more information on Newfoundland English, see chapter 6.

## 4.4 Pronouns

The pronominal system of West Country dialects is generally considered its most distinctive feature, as peculiarities cluster here.<sup>12</sup> Phenomena that are unique to the Southwest can be found in the system of demonstrative and personal pronouns. It does not come as a surprise then that pronouns in general and personal pronouns in particular have drawn considerable attention over time. Nevertheless, two of the most interesting features have not yet been studied in detail, one concerning case assignment (→ pronoun exchange), the other gender assignment (→ gender diffusion). While the latter is the topic of this thesis and thus will not be commented on here, but in later sections, the former deserves a closer look, which will be presented below.

### 4.4.1 Personal pronouns

Let me introduce the first noteworthy characteristic of the Southwestern personal pronoun system with the help of examples:

- (17) ... they always called **I** 'Willie', see. SRLM (020)
- (18) ... Uncle Willy, they used to call him, you remember **he**? CAVA (WW)
- (19) ... you couldn't put **she** in a putt ... SRLM (102); ref. is a horse
- (20) I did give **she** a 'and and she did give **I** a 'and and we did 'elp one another.  
WFLS (WH)
- (21) Well, if I didn't know **they**, they knowed **I**. WFLS (FP)
- (22) ... he never interfered with **I** ... SRLM (020)
- (23) Never had no fault at all with **she**. SRLM (102)
- (24) Yea, 'twere to **they** but 'twasn' to **I**. TRWBM (049)

The generally agreed-upon label for the phenomenon in (17) to (24) is “pronoun exchange”.<sup>13</sup> Let me briefly define what is understood by this: Pronoun exchange is the use of a subject personal pronoun in an object position or all other positions that would normally require the use of an oblique (i.e. non-subject) form. The most common explanation for this type of use found in the literature is that the subject forms are used when the respective form is emphasized, while the oblique forms

<sup>12</sup> For example, Ihalainen (1994: 249f) lists four features as typical of modern Southwestern dialect (voicing of initial fricatives, *bain't*, pronoun exchange, gender diffusion), two of which can be found in the personal pronoun system (pronoun exchange, gender diffusion). Cf. also Trudgill and Chambers (1991a).

<sup>13</sup> The term is probably Ossi Ihalainen's; cf. *id.* 1991b, based on a 1983 talk, but see also Wakelin (1981<sup>2</sup>: 114).

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are used in all other contexts.<sup>14</sup> Thus, we also find utterances like the following, although more restrictions apply to this type of use<sup>15</sup>:

- (25) 'er's shakin' up seventy. "She is almost seventy." (37 D 1, book VII)  
(26) Evercreech, what did 'em call it? SRLM (105)  
(27) Us don' think naught about things like that. (37 D 1, book III)  
(28) We used to stook it off didn't us? SRLM (076)

The examples in (25) to (28) illustrate the reverse “exchange” scenario, namely oblique forms in subject contexts. The extent to which these two “rules” are applied differs from region to region.<sup>16</sup> Overall, the factors that influence pronoun exchange are extremely complex, and for practical reasons I will not go into them here. A detailed study of the phenomenon shows that different factors contribute to the creation of an intricate system that as such is probably unique in the world's Englishes.<sup>17</sup>

The second characteristic of West Country personal pronoun usage, gender diffusion, is the topic of this thesis. Abundant examples will be presented in the following chapters, which is why I will only present some typical and not-so-typical instances from the SED fieldworker notebooks<sup>18</sup> here without comment, to whet the reader's appetite.

- (29) 'bɪ də 'mɒnd 'wʌn tɒm wɛn ðeɪ dɪd 'kɔːt ɪ 'gɑːdn æɒs (38 Do 3, book V)  
I remember one time when they called it “garden house.”  
(30) 'juː θɔːd ɪ wəz 'gɔːn ə 'rɛɪn ən ɪ 'dɪdn̩. (36 Co 7, book IX)  
You thought it was going to rain and it didn't.  
(31) #That #ball won' #glance. If 'e's #split 'e #won't. <sup>19</sup> (37 D 10, book VIII)  
(32) 'ʃʊt ðɪk 'dɔːr, ðɪs 'gɒt ɪ 'dʒɑːɪn (31 So 14, book IX)  
Shut that door, thee hast got it jarring.  
(33) I #bet thee #cansn' climb #he. (32 W 9, book VIII)  
I bet you can't climb it (tree).

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<sup>14</sup> For concrete definitions, see, e.g., Barnes (1844a: 130), (1886<sup>2</sup>: 19), Elworthy (1877: 35ff), Kruisinga (1905: 35f), Rogers (1979: 34), Wright (1905: 271).

<sup>15</sup> Rogers notes that the pressure of a rigid SVO word order in English might have contributed to “a certain amount of confusion over pronouns which followed verbs” (1979: 35), resulting in subject forms being restricted to pre-verbal contexts. This is reminiscent of the change in StE from *it's I* to *it's me*, which is presumably based on the same factors.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. e.g. Rogers' (1979: 35) impression that the use of oblique forms in subject position (primarily *us* for *we* and *her* for *she*) is more restricted in Somerset, Wiltshire, Berkshire and Dorset than in Cornwall, Devon and Gloucestershire.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Wagner (2001), where problems, theories, and background literature of pronoun exchange in Southwest England and Newfoundland are investigated, and a corpus study of current usage is provided.

<sup>18</sup> For details on the notebooks, see chapter 7.

<sup>19</sup> “#” marks stress as indicated by the fieldworker.



- (34) **He** do [də] go now. **He** 'ave a-been a good watch. (31 So 11, book VII)

Matters are complicated by the fact that we find a kind of “universal” pronominal form in West Country dialects. This form, most commonly described as *r*-coloured schwa<sup>20</sup> and transcribed [ə<sup>r</sup>], can traditionally substitute all personal pronouns, regardless of person and gender, but is most frequently found in third person singular contexts.<sup>21</sup> The classification and/or interpretation of a number of pronominal forms cited in later chapters will depend on this form’s analysis. Based on the general consensus in the literature, it will therefore be taken for granted from here on that this “*r*-coloured schwa” most often represents a masculine form, particularly when the context or neighbouring forms suggest this interpretation.

#### 4.4.2 Demonstrative pronouns

The system of demonstrative pronouns parallels that of personal pronouns in that they both distinguish count from non-count forms. Based on Rogers’ description (1979: 32<sup>22</sup>), it looks as follows:

		West Country		StE
		count	mass	
close	singular	<i>theäse</i> or <i>thick (here)</i> <sup>23</sup>	<i>this (here)</i>	<i>this</i>
	plural	<i>these (here)</i>		<i>these</i>
distant	singular	<i>thick, thicky (there)</i>	<i>that (there)</i>	<i>that</i>
	plural	<i>they, them (there)</i>		<i>those</i>

Although a close-distant-remote system has been postulated for Southwestern dialects in some modern studies<sup>24</sup>, this assumption is supported neither by traditional accounts nor by data from the corpora, as examples of a threefold distinction are non-existent or at least difficult to find. Judging from the examples, the traditional system has declined, and the form *thick(y)* has all but died out, with a total of some 20 forms in the corpus. Typical use is exemplified in (35) to (41).

- (35) Well, like **thick** one what’s in there now, ehr, for killing all **they** women.  
SRLM (102)
- (36) ... they had **this here** place on the racecourse ... TCA (SC)
- (37) ... when you come to **that there** corner, that’s called Tugrushen corner.  
AH (RM)
- (38) That’s what all **them** old buildings are. CAVA (WW)

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g. Wakelin (1981<sup>2</sup>: 213) or Paddock (1994b: 256). Ihalainen (1994: 216) assumes hyper-rhoticity as the source of the form.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Elworthy (1875: 19), (1877: 33ff); Hancock (1994: 105); “The #Lord #rested the #seventh day, #din’ er [ə<sup>r</sup>]?” (32 W 4, book VII).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. also Barnes (1844a: 130), (1886<sup>2</sup>: 17f); Elworthy (1875: 23), (1877: 29).

<sup>23</sup> Added if a distinction has to be made between two or more objects.

<sup>24</sup> E.g. Trudgill (1999<sup>2</sup>: 86); Harris (1991), Trudgill and Chambers (1991a: 10).

#### 4. West Country dialects

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- (39) And a sovereign was a fortune in **they** days. CAVA (PV)  
(40) Some of **them there** stories saying how they used to bash them up ... TCA (EC)  
(41) Now when he left they had **these here** security men come with the dogs ... TCA (WC)

#### 4.4.3 Possessive pronouns

As in other areas of grammar, dialects prefer an analytic strategy in marking possession. Therefore, one would expect to find more examples of the type *the father of/on un* than *his father* (cf. Rogers 1979: 32<sup>25</sup>). Although some instances can be found in the modern material (cf. (42) and (43)), speakers do not seem to avoid using possessive pronouns consciously. What they clearly *do* avoid, though, is the neuter possessive pronoun, *its*, once more preferring the analytic *of it* (cf. (44) to (47)), even if this results in two *of*-phrases after each other as in (44).

- (42) And that was the end **of her**. TCA (GB)  
(43) ... the owner **of her** ... SRLM (083)  
(44) I had an idea of the price **of it**. ICS (EW)  
(45) ... that car had carrier on the back **of it** ... SRLM (122)  
(46) Sherford was the name **of it**, that's right ... TCA (RA)  
(47) ... you couldn' really see the colour **of it** ... TRWBM (006)

Rogers' claim (1979: 32) that *its* is substituted by the "gendered" alternatives *his* and *her* cannot be conclusively drawn from the data.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, there is no evidence in my corpora that Southwest speakers use independent possessive forms that are usually associated with the Midlands, namely *hisn*, *hern*, *ourn*, *yourn*, *theirn*.<sup>27</sup> Traditionally, it is assumed that these are formed in analogy with *mine* and *thine*. Rogers, however, analyses them as a contraction of the regular forms + *own*, which in fact seems plausible (1979: 36).

#### 4.4.4 Reflexive pronouns

As many other non-standard varieties of English, West Country dialects have regularized the irregular StE system of reflexives by forming *hissself* and *theirselves* in

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<sup>25</sup> Barnes (1844a: 129f), (1886<sup>2</sup>: 16); Elworthy (1877: 13); Hancock (1994: 105); Wakelin (1986: 38). See also section 4.5 on prepositions for the status of *of* and *on*.

<sup>26</sup> In fact, the occurrence of gender diffusion in the possessive is rather rare. A possible explanation for this could be seen in Ihalainen's "accessibility hypothesis", according to which the standard forms "invade" the dialect system from the less accessibility positions in the NP Accessibility Hierarchy. The possessive slot would be one of the first to be taken over by StE forms.

<sup>27</sup> It is likely that Rogers, as a native of Wiltshire, where possessives in *-n* are indeed found, over-generalized from that observation. The feature is unknown further west, though. See Trudgill (1999<sup>2</sup>: 90 & Map 20) for the distribution of possessives in *-n*.

analogy with the rest of the paradigm (possessive pronoun + *-self/-selves*; cf. e.g. Barnes 1886<sup>2</sup>: 20). In addition, the plural is not always marked on those reflexive pronouns whose first element clearly indicates plurality (thus: *ourself*, *theirself*, but not *yourself*, which would be singular only) – another common feature of English-based varieties. Once more, have a look at some nice examples from FRED in (48) to (51):

- |      |   |             |
|------|---|-------------|
| (48) | Yes, we made that <b>ourself</b> .                          | SRLM (075)  |
| (49) | ... they call <b>theirself</b> A-1 Builders ...             | TCA (RA)    |
| (50) | ... the sort of food that we were having <b>ourself</b> ... | ICS (MW)    |
| (51) | ... everybody enjoyed <b>themselves</b> ...                 | TRWBM (056) |

#### 4.4.5 Relative pronouns

In addition to the StE forms *who*, *which* and *that*, *what* and to a restricted extent also *as* do duty as relative pronouns in West Country speech ((52) to (56); cf. e.g. Rogers 1979: 36; Elworthy 1877: 41f). Moreover, the division of tasks between the pronouns tends to differ from that found in StE. A general observation one can make – which holds for several areas of grammar – is that dialects usually prefer uninflected and/or neutral forms that are unmarked for case and gender. For relative pronouns, this means that we have a higher percentage of *that* with personal antecedents than in StE, as speakers tend to avoid the inflected *wh*-forms *whose* and *whom*.<sup>28</sup> We can also observe a preference for co-ordination rather than subordination – (57) is a possible candidate for that tendency. The most striking difference from StE, however, is exemplified in (58) to (65).<sup>29</sup> StE only allows gapping – a zero relative marker – in non-subject positions<sup>30</sup>, which is remarkable because it goes against the possibilities predicted by the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy, which states that the subject position should be more accessible than all other positions.<sup>31</sup>

- |      |   |             |
|------|---|-------------|
| (52) | ... we had a big churn <b>what</b> 'd hold forty gallons ...          | SRLM (109)  |
| (53) | ... the pit <b>what</b> was empty was beside of that and when ...     | SRLM (224)  |
| (54) | ... (gap 'name'), you know <b>what</b> was boss ...                   | SRLM (224)  |
| (55) | ... underneath this river yere <b>what</b> run through Trowbridge ... | TRWBM (001) |

<sup>28</sup> There is in fact not a single example of *whom* and there are only eight instances of *whose* in the FRED Southwest texts (ca. 500,000 words).

<sup>29</sup> As relative clauses are not my area of expertise, the examples chosen here are ones that I came across accidentally while reading through the material and which I marked for future reference, which is why Somerset is over-represented in the selection. However, this has no influence on their illustrative value as such.

<sup>30</sup> Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1250) claim that gapping is possible in subject position in existential *there* and cleft sentences, at least in colloquial speech; to many speakers, however, such sentences are unacceptable.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. e.g. Keenan (1985: 154).

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- (56) ... my dear sister **as** is dead and gone ... TRWBM (051)  
(57) ... and there were a man in there **and he** were a dowser ... TRWBM (001)  
(58) There's a pair of blocks down there  $\emptyset$  was made when I was apprentice.  
SRLM (005b)  
(59) But we had a terrific amount of people  $\emptyset$  turned up. SRLM (055)  
(60) I know a man  $\emptyset$  'll do it for 'ee. (36 Co 4, book IX)  
(61) ... but that was the first apples  $\emptyset$  come in ... SRLM (062)  
(62) ... you had a barrow  $\emptyset$  runs from there straight across like that ... SRLM (062)  
(63) ... that's the last orchard  $\emptyset$  been done around here for years ... SRLM (066)  
(64) You know anybody  $\emptyset$  wants some, he'll sell them. SRLM (105)  
(65) You had a piece of roots  $\emptyset$  wanted hoeing ... SRLM (105)

When looking at relative clause formation, it becomes clear once more that analytic strategies take precedence over synthetic ones, a rule that seems a universal not only of dialects, but of spoken language in general.

### 4.5 Prepositions

One of the not very well explained features in the use of prepositions is exemplified in (66) to (68). Namely, Rogers cites Kjederqvist, who mentions a possible connection with Middle English where the two items in question were homophonous in certain contexts, but who rejects that explanation at the same time. Rogers comments further that “*on* occurs in places where we might have expected ‘of’, mainly in front of the unstressed pronouns ‘*en* (him), *it* and ‘*em* (them).” (1979: 41)<sup>32</sup>

- (66) A lot of things you see in life if you'd only knowed **on it** were very interesting.  
WFLS (WH)  
(67) He eat eleven **on 'em**. SRLM (317)  
(68) ... give us half **on it** ... OT (4)

Another interesting phenomenon is what Rogers calls “otiose *of*” (*ibid.*), which is used before direct objects, but only after progressive verb forms. This use seems to have been extended to gerundial forms used as nouns as well, resulting in utterances like *(the) doing of it* (“doing it”). (69) to (74) may be taken as illustrations from a total of about 60 instances in the corpora:

- (69) All tied to (gap ‘name’) old truck, you know, **pulling of 'em** up through the town.  
CAVA (PV)  
(70) I been **driving of her** for fifteen, sixteen years. AH (RM)  
(71) I can't mind the **making of them**. SRLM (023)  
(72) I don't mind **doing of it**. SRLM (066)

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<sup>32</sup> An extensive treatment of prepositional use can be found in Elworthy (1877: 89ff).

- (73) ... we were, you know, getting it out, and **spreading of it** out ...<sup>33</sup> TRWBM (008)
- (74) You couldn't afford to buy new ones so you had to keep **mending of 'em** didn't you? WFLS (FP)

Last but not least, the substitution of certain prepositions with others is distinctive of the area. Rogers notes that *up*, *down* and *over* are used where StE would use *to* or *at*, the explanation behind it being a geographical one: *over* is used “for nearby towns and villages”, while *up* and *down* follow the sun's path – East = *up*, West = *down* (cf. Rogers 1979: 41). This is a very frequent phenomenon; again, some good examples can be found in (75) to (82).

- (75) No, that was [name] **over Downby**, that was another [name] where (gap ‘indistinct’) is. SRLM (020)
- (76) Yes, there was one or two **down Zennor**. I can mind – now hold on a minute. They had one **down Zennor**, and when [name]'s brother [name] came **over Treen** to live – that's below the hotel here ... CAVA (WJB)
- (77) Well when you go **over Bridgetown** ... TCA (FK)
- (78) Well they went on **up Penzance** ... CAVA (PV)
- (79) ... they were cider people **up Pilton** here. SRLM (066)
- (80) ... he went **up Stroud district** ... TRWBM (001)
- (81) ... she lived **down Blackawton**. TCA (EA)
- (82) That's where I learnt my weaving **down Mackays**. TRWBM (048)

## 4.6 Adverbs

The absence of the StE ending *-ly* in adverb marking is another feature that can be considered almost universal in spoken English. It is therefore not surprising that West Country dialects share it. In addition, the Southwest makes (or at one time made) use of a different set of intensifiers or boosters. Rogers (1979: 37) lists *main* (“I do feel main bad.”), *terriblish* and *real*. At least the latter one should be familiar from AmE and other varieties; illustrative material is provided in (83) to (86).

- (83) .... you had to work **real hard** to survive. ICS (JP)
- (84) And we put it in a **real old** barrel here, a **real old** barrel in the cider house. SRLM (066)
- (85) Oh yeah, they, in the end they was turning out **real good** furniture. TCA (WC)
- (86) ... she were **main strict** ... TRWBM (008)

Peculiar uses of *like* are known from a number of dialects, and have probably made their way into casual speech from there. Originally, *like* was used as a qualifying

<sup>33</sup> This sequence of one “regular” direct object followed by a second introduced with *of* (or vice versa) seems typical.

adjective in West Country speech, meaning *rather*. Thus, *He walks real quiet like* would correspond to StE *He walks rather quietly* (cf. Elworthy 1875: 33; 1877: 81f; Barnes 1886<sup>2</sup>: 34). Examples (87) to (91) show this use and some others that are reminiscent of 1990s teenager speech, when *like* started to creep in as a discourse marker.

- |      |   |             |
|------|---|-------------|
| (87) | 'Course being silly <b>like</b> , I said ...                        | SRLM (023)  |
| (88) | ... he used to pick it up <b>like</b> , you know, ...               | CAVA (TC)   |
| (89) | ... just for a bit of fun <b>like</b> , ...                         | TRWBM (015) |
| (90) | You had to tie your corn behind the strappers <b>like</b> .         | SRLM (104)  |
| (91) | And so, had to go round to find which one was missing <b>like</b> . | SRLM (109)  |

## 4.7 Verbs and the verb phrase

The verbal paradigm of West Country English is, apart from the pronominal system, the sub-system where most differences from StE can be found. We should distinguish between antiquated traditional features that are no longer or only very rarely found today, and those features which may have become less frequent over the past decades, but which are alive and kicking nevertheless. I will start this survey with the first category.

### 4.7.1 Antiquated traditional features

Rogers (1979: 37)<sup>34</sup> describes an intricacy of traditional verbal morphology that has since been almost eradicated. Infinitives of transitive verbs that were used intransitively were marked by a *-y* ending.<sup>35</sup> Thus, examples (92) and (93)<sup>36</sup> below would constitute a “minimal pair”. One can still find this form in the SED field-worker notebooks (cf. (94) to (98)), but not a single example could be found in our comparatively modern corpus material. Strangely enough, there are some cases where it looks as though analogy led speakers to cut off the *-y* in verbs like *carry* and *empty* in (99) to (102).<sup>37</sup>

- |      |   |                    |
|------|---|--------------------|
| (92) | I do <b>dig_</b> the garden.                  |                    |
| (93) | Every day, I do <b>diggy</b> for three hours. |                    |
| (94) | I'm goin' up <b>datchy</b> [thatchy].         | (36 Co 4, book II) |

<sup>34</sup> Cf. also Barnes (1844a: 131); Elworthy (1875: 21); Wakelin (1984: 82).

<sup>35</sup> We are dealing with a rather complex case of functional re-interpretation and extension at the same time: the ME infinitive ending was restricted to certain verbs, while it had nothing to do with transitivity. The “modern” Southwestern *-y*, on the other hand, can be added to all verbs, functioning as a marker of intransitivity.

<sup>36</sup> From Rogers (1979: 37).

<sup>37</sup> Both *empt* and *car* are, of course, older forms, but analogical extension does not seem completely unfounded.

- (95) I'm goin' **fainty** (36 Co 3, book VI)
- (96) aɪ ɡɒt 'bɪ:ɪv lɒt 'du: jənə: 'pɪgz te:meɪt\_ən 'kæʊz tə 'mɪlki  
I've got a lot to do today, you know; pigs to mate(?) and cows to milk.  
(36 Co 4, book VIII)<sup>38</sup>
- (97) wi: də 'bɪɹɪŋ æʊt 'fɪ:p ɪn 'lambi  
We bring our sheep in (to) lamb. (36 Co 6, book I)
- (98) ðe: də 'se: ɡweɪn 'lɪnʃɪ 'lʌnʃɪ 'deɪ  
they say (I'm) going to linchy-lunch [see-saw] [to]day. (36 Co 4, book VIII)
- (99) wi: də 'kɔ:t ðeɪ 'ɹɪɡə: z və: 'meɪk ðə 'kæt 'kɑ: mɔ:t  
we call those ruggers to make the cart carry more (36 Co 5, book I)
- (100) 'pədi lɒd ə 'pi:pɪl də 'kɑ:ɹ əm 'ɪn  
a number of people carry them in (36 Co 4, book II)
- (101) 'pʊd ət ɔ:və ðə 'bʌkət ən 'ɛmp ən 'æʊt  
put it over the bucket and empty it (bucket) out (36 Co 1, book V)
- (102) 'ɛmp ət empty it (31 So 14, book VII)

Let me briefly comment on a feature already exemplified in (99), namely the use of *for to* or only *for* to introduce infinitival purpose clauses (*cf.* (103) to (109)).<sup>39</sup> While *for to* is an old StE form and is still found quite frequently in the modern data, simple dialectal *for* seems to have died out.

- (103) I've got a one, but 'tis a job **for** keep up wi' 'em. (36 Co 1, book VII)
- (104) wɒd'ɪvəɹɹ 'eɪlɪd ɪ: və: 'du ət  
whatever ailed you to do it (36 Co 1, book VIII)
- (105) ðe: 'ɪft 'ðaɪfəz və: 'seɪv ðə 'zɪndə:z  
they sift the ashes to save the cinders (36 Co 2, book V)
- (106) ɔ: 'nɪvəɹɹəd ət 'dʌn və: 'pli:z 'ɪ:  
I never had it done to please him (36 Co 3, book VI)
- (107) **For** to screw down the cover on the churn. CAVA (HJ)
- (108) Always the evenings **for** to get the men for to do it. SRLM (060)
- (109) ... they burnt them for fuel **for** to keep theirselves warm ... TCA (RA)

Another remnant of an earlier stage of English is the *a*-prefix found in present and past participles (*cf.* Barnes 1844a: 132; 1886<sup>2</sup>: 28; Elworthy 1875: 9; Rogers 1979: 38; Wakelin 1984: 83).<sup>40</sup> Traces of it can still be found in the modern material as in (110) to (112), and it is ubiquitous in the SED data ((113) to (115)).

- (110) And he were down around Brown's farm **a-haulin'** pigs. WFLS (WGP)
- (111) ... if he'd **a-been** alive. SRLM (132)

<sup>38</sup> A very illustrative example as it supports the claim (*cf.* Rogers 1979: 37) that the *-y* is dropped before a vowel.

<sup>39</sup> *Cf.* Wakelin (1986: 38); also Hancock (1994: 104).

<sup>40</sup> Note that some of the Southwest uses are unhistorical (*cf.* Wakelin 1986: 36).



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- (112) After they've **a-laid** their clutch of eggs ... SRLM (107)  
 (113) dɪ 'bet ju: 'emt ə'si:n 'ðei θri: 'pɛnɪz  
 I bet you ain't a-seen those three pennies (31 So 14, book IV)  
 (114) I've **a-#knocked** #more 'an one o' #they down. (32 W 4, book VI)  
 (115) 'e's **a-#waiting** for I (24 Gl 4, book VIII)

The forms *be* and in the plural also *am* (or *'m*) constituted the main part of the historical *be*-paradigm used in West Country speech. Thus, *I, you, he/she/it be, we'm, you'm* and *they'm* were frequently heard in traditional dialect (*cf.* e.g. Rogers 1979: 38; Wakelin 1986: 36). A study of the modern material indicates that the paradigm has since been standardized, but the standard adopted is that of modern West Country dialects, not that of StE. The examples in (116) to (119) are therefore traditional, while the ones in (120) to (124) can be considered “modern” (and are placed here for comparison only).

- (116) **we'm** happy ... SRLM (102)  
 (117) ... **you'm** gonna be hurted ... AH (RM)  
 (118) But **they'm** always giving them a bit of help ... CAVA (WJB)  
 (119) ... when **they'm** born they don't know what **they'm** going to do. TRWBM (001)  
 (120) I **were** very happy there. TRWBM (059)  
 (121) If you **was** wrong, you **was** wrong ... ICS (JE)  
 (122) ... he **were** in the Navy. SRLM (302)  
 (123) when we **was** kiddies OT (4)  
 (124) ... well when did 'em start, when they **was** three year old ... TCA (WC)

The shift in the *be*-paradigm described above is a rare example of a traditional system being substituted by another earlier standard (now non-standard) system instead of adopting the StE one.<sup>41</sup>

Another agreement feature that to this day is said to be distinctive of Newfoundland English (*cf.* chapter 6) is discussed below. True West Country dialect is said to have distinguished the main verb and auxiliary use of the primary verbs *do*, *have* and *be*. While the forms inflect as main verbs, they do not in their auxiliary function(s). Instances exemplifying this contrast are rare (see (125) to (131)), and it is probably safe to assume it dead in modern Southwestern dialect.

- (125) [Int.: It makes a messier cheese – was it now –]  
 It **do**. SRLM (060)  
 (126) ... he do love these old places, oh he **do**. WFLS (EF)  
 (127) ... he got a posh job he **have**, ... TRWBM (001)  
 (128) ... perhaps it might be a good idea if I **has** a bit of insight in case mother was taken ill ... SRLM (109)

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<sup>41</sup> For details on *-s* in the Southwest, see Godfrey and Tagliamonte (1999), who include studies of a number of varieties in their survey.



- (129) ... and they **has** these long trousers tucked up like this ... SRLM (044)
- (130) ... a mallet '**aven't** got rings on en [ən]. (32 W 9, book I)
- (131) ... and in they days the ladies didn't ride straddle like they **do's** today, they used to ride side-saddle. TRWBM (001)

Let us now turn to those traditional features that have, although sometimes modified, survived to the present day.

#### 4.7.2 “Living” traditional features

Languages have developed different strategies for dealing with irregular paradigms. If they are frequent, speakers generally have no problem in learning and using the respective forms correctly. If, however, a formerly highly irregular system is at least partly regularized, the remaining irregular cases have to fight for survival. That is exactly what can be observed in the irregular verb paradigms of basically all spoken varieties of English today. Two general tendencies occur: 1.) partial regularization of the paradigm, and 2.) complete regularization of the paradigm. For past tense and past participle formation, we are thus facing the following possibilities (*cf.* Rogers 1979: 40f; see also Barnes 1844a: 125, 188<sup>6</sup>: 26f):

1. (a) maintenance of irregular form(s), but reduction to one instead of two; for that purpose, either the simple past or the past participle form is extended to cover both these uses (e.g. *speak-spoke-spoke; break-broke-broke; do-done-done, come-come-come*; (132) to (134))
    - (b) StE strong verbs receive an extra weak (i.e. regular) ending in addition to vowel gradation (e.g. *take-tooked; steal-stoled*)
  2. (a) StE weak or mixed verbs become irregular (i.e. strong) in dialect (e.g. *creep-crope; scrape-scrope*)
    - (b) StE strong verbs are regularized (i.e. “weakened”) in dialect – probably the most frequent scenario (e.g. *know-knowned; see-seed; give-gived; blow-blowed; hurt-hurted* etc.; (135) to (137))
- (132) ... he **done** odd jobs for farmers ... ICS (EW)
- (133) I **come** here in 1915 ... SRLM (005a)
- (134) ... you had to find out which one was **broke** and thread it through again ... TRWBM (068)
- (135) So, they went off one night, went up round and **caught** her 'bout six o'clock ... SRLM (102)
- (136) ... he were **gived** the push ... TRWBM (001)
- (137) ... you **knowed** this one ... CAVA (WW)

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With double or even multiple negation, we are dealing with another feature that was “common both in Old English and in Chaucer’s day”, but which “was proclaimed taboo in the eighteenth century” (Fennell 2001: 144). It has always been pointed out that the reasoning behind this ban was based on a mathematical argument (*cf. ibid.*), so it is not really surprising that speakers were not terribly impressed by the rule and generally continued their earlier habit, often using as many negatives as possible ((138) to (141)).<sup>42</sup> The universal negator *ain’t*, standing for all negated forms of *have* and *be*, is another form that is common in most non-standard varieties of English ((142) to (143)).

- (138) ... he **wasn’t no** rogue really. CAVA (PV)  
(139) I mean you **couldn’t do nothing** about it. OT (4)  
(140) We **never** went **no** more, did we? TRWBM (048)  
(141) So anyhow they **never** had **no**, **never** had **no** glasses **nor nothing** in them days, you know. CAVA (WW)  
(142) No that **ain’t no** use now, . . . TCA (GB)  
(143) I **ain’t** doing bad am I? TRWBM (051)

The only feature we have not yet investigated is probably the most widely known (not to say famous) one. The story of periphrastic *do* in the history of English is long and well-studied. Nevertheless, its modern unemphatic uses in some dialects and particularly in the Southwest continue to intrigue researchers. Klemola (1996) offers the most comprehensive account to date, using both historical and fairly modern traditional data for his investigation. For practical purposes, I will in the following restrict myself to using Klemola’s thesis and Rogers’ summary of 19<sup>th</sup>-century analyses and support them with some examples from my corpora.

Scholars generally agree that unemphatic *do* (*do* [də], *did*) is used to express habituality, contrasting with the simple present and past tense forms (*cf. Klemola 1996: ch. 4*).<sup>43</sup> Rogers adds another form to the repertoire of what he calls “frequentative” forms, namely the *-s* ending. The distribution of the two forms is described as follows (see Figure 4.4):

The stronghold of the ‘do’ forms is Dorsetshire but they are also found in Wiltshire (especially the western half), in Somerset and in parts of Gloucestershire. Devon prefers the *-s*-form with ‘they’ but the other reappears briefly in west Cornwall.

(Rogers 1979: 39)

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<sup>42</sup> For an overview of negation in English dialects, see Anderwald (2002), who has also shown that British dialects follow the same pattern as some American varieties in having a positive/negative contrast rather than a person contrast in the *be*-paradigm. Thus we find *weren’t* used for all persons in negative contexts, and *was* for all persons in positive ones. *Cf. also* Schilling-Estes and Wolfram (1994).

<sup>43</sup> I will not go into the details of an obviously complex and still not well-understood least of all explained situation. Periphrastic *do* is treated in all works on West Country dialect, modern and traditional.

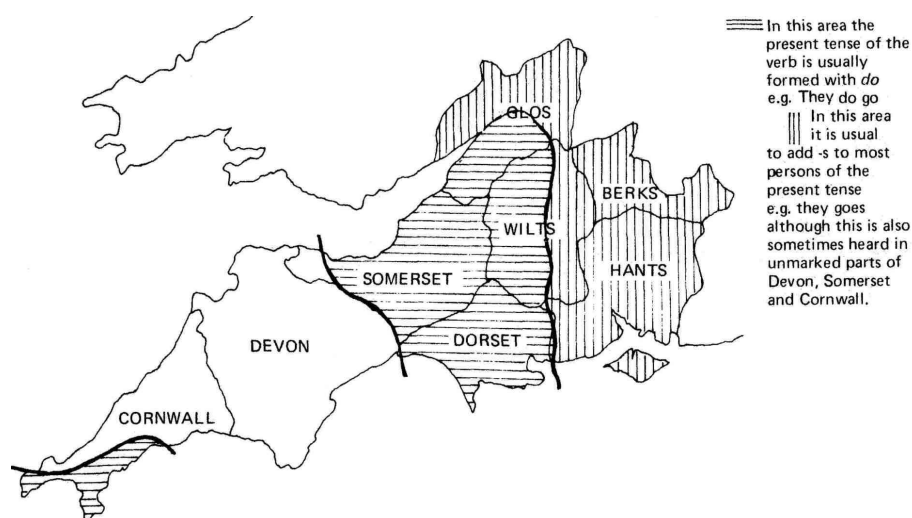


Figure 4.4: Distribution of 'do' and '-s' (Rogers 1979: 39)

Judging from my corpus data, periphrastic *do* is omnipresent with some speakers, while others do not have it in their language system at all. Note that the previously mentioned rule of auxiliaries traditionally not inflecting for person is also valid for periphrastic *do*, thus generating the forms *he/she/it do V* (cf. (146) to (149)).

- (144) As I **do** say to my niece, I say, you know, you're far better off, I said, than what we were, I said. WFLS (EF)
- (145) ... and then I **did** cut 'em off as they **did** grow, ... SRLM (066)
- (146) But it **do** get in the barrel and you **do** hear plop, plop, plop, you want to leave it alone. SRLM (317)
- (147) ... we worked in twelve-hour watches. He **did** do a twelve-hour shift this week nights, then I **did** do the twelve-hour day, ... AH (RM)
- (148) ... she **did** do a lot of needlework, ... TRWBM (049)
- (149) William, my son, **do** live down there. CAVA (WJB)
- (150) Now what we do now, we **do**, we **do** breed our own. SRLM (102)
- (151) ... we **did** belong to Totnes church ... TCA (EA)
- (152) Yes, they **do** send it out from Hayle still. ICS (JE)
- (153) But they **did** work 'til quarter to six at night, that was their normal time and as I say, the hooter **did** blow at the finish and all machines **did** shut down they were gone within about five minutes. It didn't take long to do it. They **did** sweep round the machines before they left, they always do that when the machines are running. TRWBM (054)

## 4.8 Summary

Let me summarize this chapter by pointing out which of the features listed above are unique to the Southwest and which ones can also be found in other (British) dialects or are even “universal” features of spoken English today (see Table 4.1).<sup>44</sup> The picture presented here is essentially that of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the time frame of the corpus material used.<sup>45</sup>

Table 4.1: Uniquely Southwest, regional and universal dialect features

Southwest	universal	regional (British & overseas)
➤ pronoun exchange	➤ no overt plural marking of some measurement nouns (after numerals)	➤ regularized reflexive pronouns (possessive pronoun + <i>-self/-selves</i> )
➤ gender diffusion	➤ plural demonstrative <i>them</i> (= StE <i>those</i> )	➤ irregular use (omission or insertion) of articles
➤ unemphatic periphrastic <i>do</i>	➤ no overt marking of adverbs (no <i>-ly</i> )	➤ regularized <i>be</i> -paradigm (e.g. <i>was</i> ↔ <i>weren't</i> etc.)
➤ mass/count distinction in demonstrative pronouns (?)	➤ different inventory of relative pronouns (e.g. <i>as, what</i> )	
	➤ gapping/zero relative also in subject position	
➤ otiose <i>of</i> (?)	➤ multiple negation	
	➤ <i>ain't</i> as invariant negative particle	
	➤ reduced paradigm for irregular verbs (past tense = past participle form)	

The cut-off points between the second and third column, between “universal” and “regional” features, are often fuzzy, and different scholars will have differing opinions as to what is and is not “universal”.<sup>46</sup> Although universal features by far outnumber those unique to the region, the Southwest is one of the most distinctive dialect areas to this day, with a singular combination of traditional features inherited from earlier stages of both StE and West Country dialect as well as those

<sup>44</sup> For other features that have not been mentioned explicitly here, see Cheshire *et al.* (1989: 194f; 1993: 64f); on the notion of “universal dialect feature”, cf. Kortmann 1999: 233f.; 2002.

<sup>45</sup> Of the features investigated here, Ihalainen (1994: 214) lists periphrastic *do*, pronoun exchange, gender diffusion, otiose *of*, and uninflected *do/have* as morphological Southwestern dialect markers of the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century. With four of five features still alive and kicking, one has to admit that not *that* much has changed, after all.

<sup>46</sup> For the present author, regional features are those which can still be identified with certain regions, although these may be numerous. Universal features, on the other hand, occur in distributions that make it impossible to pinpoint their regional basis.

features which after over a century of investigation still defy (easy) classification. It is to one of those features that the remainder of this thesis is dedicated – the sometimes peculiar, sometimes amusing, sometimes downright weird, but always interesting use of “gendered” personal pronouns for inanimate referents: gender diffusion.



## Chapter 5

# Newfoundland – a (historical) excursus

The island of Newfoundland is Canada's most easterly province; together with Labrador, which is part of mainland Canada, it comprises a land area of 405,720 km<sup>2</sup>. Although Labrador's share in that figure is much larger than that of Newfoundland (294,330 km<sup>2</sup> vs. 111,390 km<sup>2</sup>; cf. Figure 5.1.<sup>1</sup>), the vast majority of the population, some 538,000 people<sup>2</sup> live on the island of Newfoundland, with about 174,000 in the capital St. John's and its metropolitan area alone.<sup>3</sup>

The province of Newfoundland and Labrador (its official name) is also the youngest Canadian province, having "joined Confederation", as Newfoundlanders say, only in 1949 to become the tenth province of Canada. Before that, its status was that of a Dominion of the British Crown, which means that it was autonomous in domestic and foreign affairs.



Figure 5.1: Newfoundland and Labrador

<sup>1</sup> Map from Encyclopædia Britannica (1999); areal information from <http://www.gov.nf.ca/nfld&lab/area.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM II, table 051-0001; for more details, cf. <http://www.statcan.ca>.

<sup>3</sup> Source: <http://ceps.statcan.ca/english/profil/Details/details1.cfm?ID=1&PSGC=10&SGC=100&DataType=1&LANG=E&Province=10&PlaceName=st%2E%20John%27s&CMA=1&CSD-NAME=St%2E%20John%27s&A=&TypeNameE=Census%20Metropolitan%20Area>; the population of Labrador adds up to approximately 30,000.

Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ireland had the same legal status.<sup>4</sup> Newfoundland's history is exceptional in that the influx of immigrants can be traced in much more detail than is possible for any other "New World" region, including the United States. Thus, the linguist interested in Newfoundland English necessarily develops an interest in Newfoundland settlement history, which offers insights not only into the political and economic, but also the social factors which play a crucial role in any linguistic research, but particularly in any work on Newfoundland English. The reason for this will become obvious once the historical background of Newfoundland settlement has been investigated in this chapter.

The factors that contributed (and still contribute) to the linguistic situation in Newfoundland will be analysed in order to be able to understand the (present) distribution of the linguistic features under investigation. Modern census data as well as in-depth accounts by historians will be taken into consideration in order to explain the past and present of English in Newfoundland. First I will take the perspective of a Newfoundlander and comment on the historic developments (sections 5.1 to 5.3), then the situation will be analysed from the other side of the Atlantic, taking the position of the English (and other) emigrants (sections 5.4 and 5.5).

## 5.1 The beginnings

Although it was discovered "officially" only in 1497 by the Genovese John Cabot sailing on an English ship, Newfoundland had probably attracted ships earlier than that. The first European settlers were Norse (ca. 1000 AD) who stayed only for a few years, probably due to hostilities with native peoples (*cf.* O'Flaherty 1999: 8f). In the century that followed the discovery, the English had little interest in "the Rock", as Newfoundland is also known. The richness of the ocean and the streams flowing through and around the island was exploited by French, Portuguese and Basque fishermen, who reportedly fished there from the early 1500s onwards. By the middle of that century, both whaling and the bank fishery were established, with (primarily Basque) whaling reaching its heyday from approximately 1545–1585 (*cf. ibid.*: 12ff). It was during this period that the area started to be called "Terra Nova". When, in 1574, a Basque ship was iced in, forcing its passengers to stay the winter on the island, proof was established that the Labrador coast "could sustain a European population year-round" (*ibid.*: 15). English interests in Newfoundland were revived in the 1570s; a decade later, the Spanish and Portuguese fleets were on the decline (*cf. ibid.*: 16).

When Labrador whaling was slowing down, Basques began to settle along the West Coast of Newfoundland and started the cod fishery there (*cf. ibid.*: 19). English migratory fishery officially began shortly after the "discovery" of Newfoundland (*cf.* Hancock 1989: 24), but only in did 1610 the English make the first attempt at year-round settlement (*cf.* O'Flaherty 1999: 22ff). It would, however,

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<sup>4</sup> *Cf. Market House Books Dictionary of British History*; "dominion", at [www.xrefer.com](http://www.xrefer.com).





Figure 5.2: The island of Newfoundland and important Bays (main map from *Microsoft Encarta* (1999), bay labels mine)

take another century before settlement started to become a real option.<sup>5</sup> The season for the migratory fishery lasted from May to September; from the very start, there were differences between people who worked in the fisheries, primarily between byeboatmen (who fished on their own account and usually did not spend winters on the island) and ship merchants (who were working for a company, usually brought their families over to Newfoundland in the long run and eventually became settlers there) (*cf.* Hancock 1989: 24ff).<sup>6</sup> At that time servants were the numerically most important group of migrants; they formed the “backbone of labouring force”, and in the early days of overwintering they made up the largest group. Usually, they simply did not have enough money to pay for the trip home. “[Y]outhful males” were also the most mobile group; “[i]n brief, servitude was a prerequisite to becoming a seaman, a fisherman, and, most importantly, a boat master or planter, and to the making of an immigrant” (Hancock 1989: 28).

<sup>5</sup> “Resistance to settlement would characterize official English thinking about Newfoundland until well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed traces of it lingered into the 19<sup>th</sup>” (O’Flaherty 1999: 45). In 1671, for example, a rule was established that forbade house-building in Newfoundland (*ibid.*: 41f).

<sup>6</sup> Newfoundland society – from an economic viewpoint – thus consisted of a small higher class of merchants and a huge class of “the rest” (*cf.* Shorrocks 1997: 326).

## 5.2 Early settlement: 1610-1730

In the early days of settlement, the population was largely dependent on external resources for its survival; apart from fish, the island did not offer much in terms of food. The area around Conception Bay became the first to be settled<sup>7</sup>; the colony was to be Protestant. George Calvert was granted (parts of) what is now the Avalon peninsula in 1623, which, after Calvert's conversion to Catholicism, offered a favourable climate for Catholics<sup>8</sup> (cf. O'Flaherty 1999: 23-26). By 1620, over 300 migratory ships were fishing off the Newfoundland coasts. The migratory fishery had thus become a major source of employment in the West Country of England (cf. *ibid.*: 30). The port of Bristol is said to have initiated the seasonal fishery. From 1675-81, three main source regions and only a handful of ports were responsible for the seasonal migration: North Devon (17.5%), South Devon (62.1%), Dorset (15.1%) and Hampshire (cf. Hancock 1989: 55). The dominance of South Devon throughout the century (1570-1670) led to the establishment of one of the major migration channels; this served as an important conditioning factor of the later ethnic settlement patterns in Newfoundland (cf. *ibid.*: 59). In Dorset, Newfoundland served as an alternative source of employment throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century (cf. *ibid.*: 61). From 1675-81, St. John's was the main centre of fishery with more than 20% of migrants; however, differences in destinations can already be observed (cf. Table 5.1).

What can be seen immediately is that St. John's attracted the largest number of fishermen from South Devon; this will be important once we take a look at the dialect situation in Newfoundland in later chapters. It is also interesting to observe that North Devonians fished (and settled) along the Southern Shore exclusively – again a fact to be kept in mind language-wise.

The early 1700s were characterized by conflicts with the French. The French migratory fishery off Newfoundland grew rapidly after the 1650s (particularly around Placentia), which led to the “effort to settle and possess the island” (O'Flaherty 1999: 39). During Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), a number of battles took place on Newfoundland soil. With the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), Newfoundland and the adjacent islands “were to belong to Great Britain” (*ibid.*: 61); the French were to reside along what came to be known as the French shore, the West Coast of the island.

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<sup>7</sup> Although Hancock stresses that the “population links between the early colonies and those sites occupied a half-century later were very slight” (1989: 43), the core areas of Newfoundland were settled rather early.

<sup>8</sup> Much more will have to be said about the importance of religion in the context of studying English in Newfoundland. For now, I would like to introduce the so-called Tocque formula, which will be assumed from here on: “The Roman Catholics are Irish and the descendants of Irish; the Episcopalians, Methodists and Congregationalists are English and the descendants of English and Jersey; the Presbyterians are principally Scotch and their descendants.” (Tocque, Philip. 1878. *Newfoundland as it was and it is in 1877*. Toronto: no publisher, 366; cited in Hancock (1989: 145).)

Table 5.1: Migration on fishing vessels 1675-81 (after Hancock 1989: 66)

Men by region of origin								
Fishing District	Southern England	South Devon	Channel Islands	North Devon	Bristol	London	Other	Total
Destination								
Bonavista Bay	327	641	95	0	0	0	0	1063
Trinity Bay	1133	126	324	0	0	0	79	1662
Conception Bay	366	1654	27	0	160	137	202	2546
St. John's	25	5047	0	0	0	0	13	5085
Southern	0	1945	20	2487	0	50	24	4526
	1851	9413	466	2487	160	187	318	14882

### 5.3 Migration trends up to 1830

With the period from the mid-1700s to the 1830s we have reached a second important period in Newfoundland (settlement) history. The next century will be characterized by a “shift in emphasis from a migratory to a settler fishery” (*cf.* Hancock 1989: 73) and, although it would reach its heyday during the very same time, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the West-Country-based migratory fishery had all but disappeared (*cf.* O’Flaherty 1999: 85). With the arrival of more and more permanent settlers, territorial expansion became necessary; with an increasing population, alternative sources of employment (apart from the fishery-based activities; mainly furring, sealing, lumbering) were sought. While early immigrants and their homes were restricted mostly to St. John’s itself as well as north and south along the shores of the Avalon Peninsula, territories were soon extended north- (Notre Dame Bay), south- and westwards (Placentia and Fortune Bay). It is important to note though that these territorial expansions were NOT headed by South Devonshire men – these stayed along the Southern shore of Avalon to finally control that part of Newfoundland together with newly arrived servants from Ireland (*cf.* Hancock 1989: 78). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, three factors are remarkably different if compared to early patterns:

1. Southeastern Ireland<sup>9</sup> emerged as a source area of labour and thus as an influencing factor on settlement;
2. seasonal migrations from North Devon first declined and then stopped completely<sup>10</sup>; and

<sup>9</sup> “Over 85% of the immigrant Irish in Newfoundland came from four counties in the southeast: Kilkenny Wexford, Waterford and Tipperary.” (Mannion 1999)

<sup>10</sup> North Devon (earlier responsible for 20-30% of migratory activity) was basically out of the picture by 1770 (partly due to heavy losses in the Seven Years’ War); merchants transferred their

3. the Dorsetshire port of Poole started to play a major role as a source area of immigration (*cf.* Hancock 1989: 77).

The emergence of the bank fishery at about that time also contributed to changes in settlement patterns. This type of fishery was carried on primarily from the old core area of English settlement (the “English Shore” along the coast of the Avalon Peninsula, from Conception Bay south to Trepassey; *cf.* Map 5.2). The bank fishers themselves were South Devonshire men, who employed Irish servants<sup>11</sup> – a major factor in the conversion of the Avalon Peninsula into the homeland of Irish settlers (*cf.* Hancock 1989: 81f). By the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, southern Avalon had become the “Irish Shore”, while there were “only small and scattered Irish communities” in other districts (*cf. ibid.*: 89). Though intermarriages between English (Protestants) and Irish (Catholics) were not very common generally (*cf.* Mannion 1999; Kirwin 1993: 65), marriages between early English settlers and incoming Irish migrants (especially single females<sup>12</sup>) were probably responsible for the Irish becoming the culturally dominant group on the southern Avalon (*cf.* Hancock 1989: 89f), particularly since Roman Catholics were allowed to practise their religion from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards (*cf.* O’Flaherty 1999: 85). As Mannion (1999) notes, “[m]ore than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all passengers recorded arriving in Newfoundland between 1800-1835 were Irish”, and by 1814 half of the Newfoundland population of then ca. 70,000 were Irish (*cf.* O’Flaherty 1999: 122f). The factors responsible for the changes in recruiting labourers are too complex to be explained here; Mannion’s brief 1999 article offers a good survey of the Irish influx into Newfoundland. What is most important for our analysis is that a) St. John’s was the primary port of disembarkation for Irish passengers and that b) for a number of reasons that cannot be discussed here for lack of space, most of them stayed – “[s]easonal migration became emigration” (Mannion 1999). A number of changes can be observed in the structure of the Newfoundland population and settlements during the period from the 1790s to 1830s. A brief sketch of those may suffice here:

- The expansion of the permanent (winter) population took off after 1780; from 1785 to 1830 at an average of 12% per year (Hancock 1989: 97ff).

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headquarters to Poole; this “ended North Devon’s opportunity to contribute to Newfoundland’s inhabitant population. The small number of North Devonshire settlers in Newfoundland at the time either disappear or were absorbed into the fabric of Irish immigrants, who became the main inheritors of the settlements in which these English planters had resided, i.e., primarily the districts between Ferryland and Placentia” (Hancock 1989: 80).

<sup>11</sup> The generally low social status of Irish immigrants is commented on by all historians. They were the poorest of the poor in Newfoundland, very often unable to support themselves and thus responsible for most crimes committed, not represented in the government, etc. (*cf.* e.g. Mannion 1999; O’Flaherty 1999: 124ff, 156, 201).

<sup>12</sup> From a very early date (about 1691) Irish traders brought women to Newfoundland who were to be sold as servants; many of them married fishermen (*cf.* Mannion 1999; O’Flaherty 1999: 47).

- With permanent settlement, more and more merchants brought their wives and families to Newfoundland and also employed (female<sup>13</sup>.) servants as they would have done in England (*cf.* Hancock 1989; Mannion 1999: 95).
- By 1805, most fisheries were family/ kin group businesses (*cf.* Hancock 1989: 110), as also witnessed by the high proportion of native-born people (*ibid.*: 116). The more spacious harbours became settlement and regional centres; focal points of growth were the old(er) harbours in the mid- and outer bay areas (at least up to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century; *cf.* Hancock 1989: 116f).
- The shift towards a purely local fishing industry was completed by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, also due to the political situation (→ American Revolution & Napoleonic wars; *cf.* Hancock 1989: 137).
- “Internal seasonal migrations between summer fishing stations and winter quarters in the woods [...] evidently became a widespread phenomenon.” (Hancock 1989: 118)<sup>14</sup>

## 5.4 The English homelands

The zone between Plymouth, Bristol and Portsmouth was responsible for about 80% of English emigration (*cf.* Table 5.2); its core was “Wessex” (Dorset with extensions into the adjacent counties of Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire) with Poole as the major port of embarkation for a long period of time.<sup>15</sup>

Table 5.2: Distribution of Newfoundland Emigrants 1755-1884 by Origin (non-Irish) (after Hancock 1989: 147)

National Origins		English Regional Origins			
England	89.3	Devon	35.2	Bristol	2.5
Scotland	8.0	Dorset	29.0	London	2.8
Wales	0.5	Somerset	7.9	Liverpool	1.7
Channel Islands	2.2	Hampshire	8.2	Other	10.1
	100	Cornwall	1.3		17.1
			81.6		

<sup>13</sup> Although the influx of females slowly increased, the male-female proportion was still more than 2 : 1 in 1830 (*cf.* Hancock 1989: 91f)

<sup>14</sup> Increasing mobility thus has to be seen as a factor contributing to linguistic diffusion in the early days, at least for the male population; women, if present at all, usually stayed at home while then men went lumbering.

<sup>15</sup> “The Wessex source area was almost exclusively a migration hinterland created by the port of Poole” (Hancock 1989: 216), and “In Newfoundland as a whole, the greatest volume of Wessex emigrants settled during the first three decades of the nineteenth century” (*ibid.*: 212).



## 5. Newfoundland – a (historical) excursus

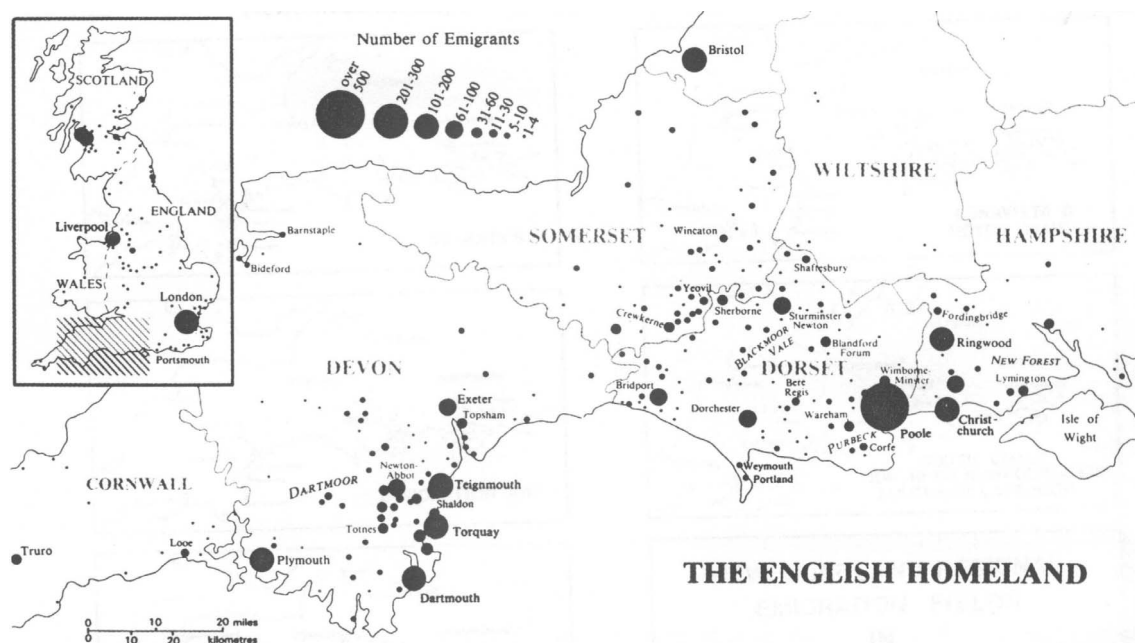


Figure 5.3: The English Homeland (Handcock 1989: 149)

Two core areas can be identified: South Devon and Dorset (*cf.* Figure 5.3 and Handcock 1989: 146f). The low numbers of emigrants from Cornwall and Wales are remarkable – and seem to be inexplicable. While Cornwall did not have any truly major ports, the same is not true for Wales.

From the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, migration from South Devon occurred mainly through the ports of Teignmouth and Dartmouth; Teignmouth ships were not only important for Devonian, but also for Irish emigration (*cf.* Handcock 1989: 154f):

From its inception this Irish migration was organized and controlled by merchants, shipowners and shipmasters in the English West Country. Each spring vessels from southwest England, en route to Newfoundland, called to ports along Ireland's south coast, primarily Waterford, to collect salt provisions for the season. Bristol and ports in the channel had long-established commercial ties with Waterford through the wool and cattle trades; the Newfoundland and West Indies provisions trade was essentially an extension of this commerce. Irish salt provisions were cheaper and superior to those in England.

(Mannion 1999)

The closeness of a port was the most important factor in the selection of a source area for emigration: usually, migration basins extended into the hinterland of ports for about 25 miles; they were relatively stable over time (*cf.* Handcock 1989: 155ff). The area around and between Dartmouth and Teignmouth

was the historical-geographical pivot, or cultural core, in South Devon that sequentially bred most of the seamen and fishermen of the ancient ship fish-

ery [...] and furnished a major share of both early and latter-day Newfoundland inhabitants.

(Handcock 1989: 166f)

Poole served as main port of embarkation from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the Seven Years' War, 35% of the total trade to Newfoundland originated there (*cf.* Handcock 1989: 219); in Poole, overseas trade was recognized as "a chief commercial enterprise" of Dorsetshire as a whole (*ibid.*: 185). The Newfoundland fishery came to be both the main source of economic support and the root of most of the county's social problems (→ fluctuating circumstances of the fishery; *cf. ibid.*: 198f). The influence of Poole/Wessex was undeniable throughout Newfoundland:

one can argue convincingly that in Notre Dame Bay 'Wessex' accounts for 92 percent of the English settlers. Wessex immigrants were also overwhelmingly dominant in almost all districts where Poole merchants controlled trade over the period 1760-1830, making up 87.5 percent of the English setting in Bonavista Bay, 86 percent in Trinity Bay, 70 percent on the south coast, and 70 percent on the west coast.

(Handcock 1989: 241)

Thus, one can claim that Newfoundland is in essence a second "West Country", with the exception of the Avalon Peninsula and the city of St. John's in particular.<sup>16</sup> From internal Newfoundland migration, it can be deduced that "emigration from Wessex [...] dominated movements in all regions of significant English settlement outside St. John's and Conception Bay" (Handcock 1989: 268). Where English and Irish settlers lived together, intermingling was unlikely due to basic religious differences.<sup>17</sup> The then exclusively denominational school system helped to further these contrasts. Even today one can be quite certain that there will not be any Catholics living in a village that has only an Anglican Church, and vice versa.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "As St. John's developed as the main commercial, political, and cultural centre of Newfoundland, its direct shipping links with Britain became more strongly focused upon such ports as Liverpool, Glasgow, and London." (Handcock 1989: 216)

<sup>17</sup> "Some intermarriage and intermingling continued to occur, but, more than in the previous century, ethnicity and religion came to characterize the culture of Newfoundland settlements. There was, of course, some movement by both groups to unsettled stretches of shore, notably in northern and western Newfoundland, and in Labrador. Even these settlements tended to be dominated by one of the two basic groups." "Ancestral properties were subdivided between heirs, and neighbouring coves were occupied, consolidating and extending existing ethnic patterns." (Mannion 1999)

<sup>18</sup> This is not the place to go into discussions about religion; however, in Newfoundland, religion and settlement patterns go hand in hand. As Handcock observes, "geographical patterns of religion [...] were strongly influenced by internal factors such as the presence or lack of early missionaries and latter-day (post-settlement) missionary efforts" (Handcock 1989: 134). This basically means that there were not many changes in religious affiliation in the early days of Newfoundland settlement, simply because the few missionaries who came to the island often stayed on Avalon or even in St. John's, or stuck to their assigned communities/parishes.

As for the handful of other ports that played a role in Newfoundland trading and settlement, a couple of facts and later developments are noteworthy:

- Cornwall never played a significant role in the settling of Newfoundland (*cf.* Hancock 1989: 147, 272).
- London trade complemented rather than competed with that of Devon and Dorset (*cf. ibid.*: 273f).
- In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “Liverpool became the main emporium of English trade, supply, and shipping in Newfoundland, and in the period 1842-63 the main embarkation port of emigrants” (*ibid.*: 275), thus ending the period of West-Country-dominated immigration.

To conclude this historic outline, let us recapitulate the major channels of emigration to Newfoundland throughout time with the help of Figure 5.4.

### 5.5 The present

Although many Newfoundlanders have left their home during the past decades to seek their fortune elsewhere, people of other nationalities made the province their new home, and others who had long ago moved to other parts of Canada returned to the home of their ancestors to raise their children in the relative peace that Newfoundland still offers. With the breakdown of the main source of income (cod fishery; moratorium in 1995) and the search for alternatives (oil rigs off the Newfoundland coast), the past decade has been characterized by an increasing degree of both im- and emigration. Regardless of such mobility, census data indicate that Newfoundland still has the highest ratio of “single-origin” inhabitants among the Atlantic provinces.<sup>19</sup> Even today, about 350,000 people claim their forefathers are of British Isles descent only, the highest proportion in all of Canada. If one takes a look at the distribution of the Canadian population by religion, the same picture emerges. In 1991, 208,900 of 563,900 inhabitants were of the Roman Catholic faith, and 344,000 were distributed among the various Protestant churches (mainly Anglican, United Church, and Pentecostal). While in the whole of Canada about  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the population belong to a different religion than Catholics nor Protestants, hardly any other religion can be found in Newfoundland.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, it is still true today to say that Newfoundland occupies a special place among the New World provinces, not only from a historic, but also and in particular from a linguistic point of view. In the next chapter we will take a closer look at the linguistic situation in Newfoundland, from both a macro- (Newfoundland English in the larger context of Canadian and North American English) and a micro-perspective (internal variation in Newfoundland English).

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<sup>19</sup> Source: Statistics Canada (<http://www.statcan.ca>), Population by ethnic origin, 1996 Census.

<sup>20</sup> Source: Statistics Canada (<http://www.statcan.ca>), Population by religion, 1991 Census; Catalogue no. 93-319-XPB.



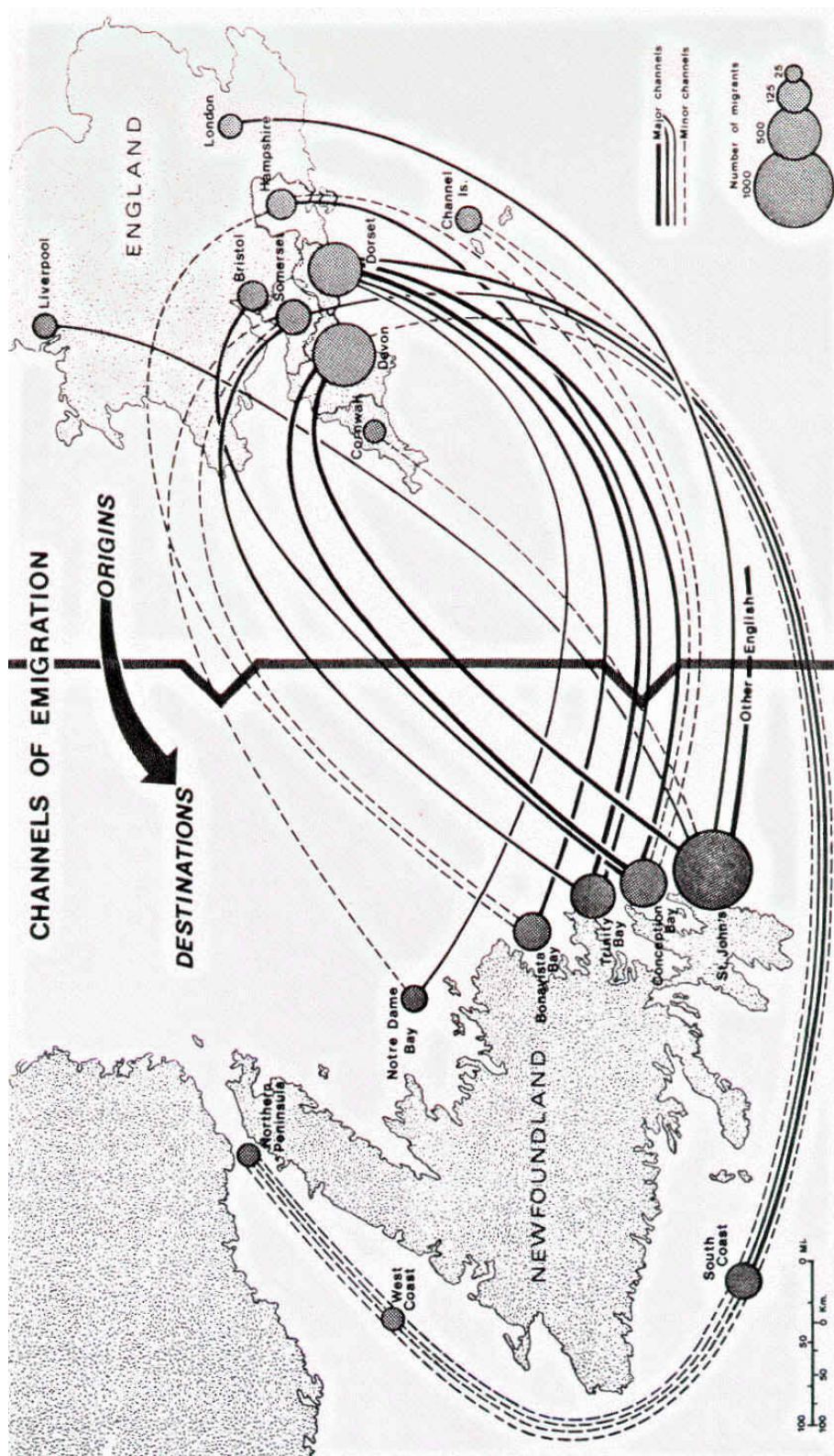


Figure 5.4: Channels of emigration (Handcock 1977: 31)



## Chapter 6

# English in Newfoundland

In books and articles on varieties of English, Canadian English has some difficulties holding its own against American English. This is due to the fact that most scholars agree that there are more similarities than differences between the two neighbouring varieties. Although nobody would deny differences in accent(s)/ pronunciation, there is nothing distinctly Canadian in the department of grammar if compared to either British or American English, and even the lexicon cannot be called uniquely Canadian.<sup>1</sup> Rather, “[w]hat is distinctly Canadian about Canadian English is not its unique linguistic features (of which there are a handful) but its combination of tendencies that are uniquely distributed” (Bailey 1982/1984: 161).

The features mentioned include the side-by-side existence of French<sup>2</sup> and English as official languages from the beginning as well as “a preoccupation with the wilderness” (McArthur 1992: “Canadian English”).<sup>3</sup> Chambers (1998: 254) remarks that unlike its mother lects, British and early (East Coast) American English, there are no regional accents in Canadian English, an observation that can be extended to the higher realms of linguistics without hesitation. However, Chambers hastens to clarify that “[t]hat is not to say that C[anadian] E[nglish] lacks variation, only that standard CE does” (*ibid.*).

Although Newfoundland English<sup>4</sup> is usually – legitimately – dealt with under the heading of Canadian English, it occupies a special place among the varieties in North America. McArthur comments as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> As everywhere else, borrowings from either indigenous languages or French (and other European languages) constitute the majority of differences.

<sup>2</sup> About 0.5% of the Newfoundland population claim French as their mother tongue (Population by mother tongue, 1996 Census; <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/Population/demo18a.htm>); however, due to the lack of contact with other French speakers, it is slowly dying out as a first language in Newfoundland.

<sup>3</sup> Chambers (1998) gives a short but comprehensive introduction to English in Canada and explains why Canadian English developed the way it did.

<sup>4</sup> By Newfoundland English, I mean the varieties of English spoken in Newfoundland. I do not distinguish between vernacular and non-vernacular speech in this context, as this dissertation deals with dialect/ vernacular language exclusively. Thus, all references to NFE are to the non-standard form of NFE.

## 6. English in Newfoundland

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In the traditional view, the English of Canada has four major regional dialects: Atlantic, covering the Maritime Provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) **and the island of Newfoundland as a distinctive sub-area**; Quebec, with Montreal and the Eastern Townships as focal areas; the Ottawa Valley, adjacent to the federal capital, Ottawa; and General Canadian, from Toronto westward to the Pacific. (McArthur 1992: "Dialect in Canada"; emphasis SW)

One should also not overlook the fact that the Maritimes (→ migrants from New England colonies) and Newfoundland were the first Canadian regions to be settled, with movement to the mainland starting only with the American Revolution (1776-1783) and making rather slow progress in early times (*cf.* McArthur 1992: "Canadian English"). As such, NFE is the oldest not only of the "Canadian", but of the North American varieties, a fact that is widely overlooked.<sup>5</sup> As outlined in detail in chapter 5, the island's settlement history<sup>6</sup> is unique in a number of respects. Let me briefly repeat those factors relevant for a linguistic study:

1. Newfoundland settlers stem from two distinct and clearly definable source areas:
  - (a) Southwest England, particularly the counties Devon and Dorset (Poole), and
  - (b) Southeast Ireland (particularly Waterford).
2. Due to religious differences (English → Protestants, Irish → Catholics), intermingling of the two groups occurred only to a rather restricted degree; the denominational school system played its part in maintaining this segregated situation up to the present.<sup>7</sup>
3. Since the heavy influx of Irish settlers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Avalon Peninsula, including the capital St. John's, is dominated by people of Irish ancestry, while the Newfoundland "mainland" is clearly Wessex-dominated. The linguistic situation parallels the socio-cultural one.

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<sup>5</sup> *Cf.* e.g. Görlach's (1987: 46) comment on AmE as the "oldest and best-documented settler variety". Obviously, politics proved once again stronger than linguistic consistency, as at the time of its 'establishment' as a variety of New World English, Newfoundland was, of course, a quasi-independent country (see ch. 5).

<sup>6</sup> Settlement history is not only used as an explanatory factor where regional variation *does* exist in Canada, but is also held accountable for the "American-ness" of Canadian Standard English, which is largely attributed to Ontario's settlement history (*cf.* McArthur 1992: "Canadian English").

<sup>7</sup> Kirwin (1993: 69; emphasis SW) notes: "From the beginning to the present day the practice of denominational education has ensured that Irish Roman Catholics have received their education in their own parish and with other Irish children, under the direction of R.C. teachers, *many of whom* until recent decades *came from Ireland to teach.*"

4. Although the male Newfoundland population exhibited a certain degree of mobility<sup>8</sup> (fishing in the summer and wood cutting in the winter), this was largely restricted to the island itself, and one can assume that the ethnic differences played a role in forming friendships, thus preventing dialect mixing between the Irish and West Country group.<sup>9</sup>
5. To the present day, Newfoundland English remains largely isolated from outside influence, one of the reasons why it is one of the most conservative varieties of English to be found anywhere in the world (*cf.* Story 1982; Clarke forthcoming):

If you fell ‘blindfolded’ by parachute on to any part of Newfoundland and you listened to the talk, you might say you were in Devonshire, in Dorset, Cornwall, or Somerset, or Yorkshire; you might say you were in Ireland or Scotland . . . But you would never say you were in Canada or the United States. (Herbert [1950] in Story 1975: 19)

The province’s population is steadily decreasing, and many of the incoming people are either returning Newfoundlanders or do not have English as their first language. Kirwin (2001: 444) notes consequently that the influence of Mainland Canada on Newfoundland English since 1949 is hard to identify, at least until fairly recently.<sup>10</sup>

In the following, I will briefly discuss and exemplify<sup>11</sup> features of Newfoundland English in all domains of language use. Particular attention will be paid to those features that (could) be of West Country origin.

## 6.1 Pronunciation

As both its donor dialects are rhotic, it is not surprising that NFE should be rhotic as well. An originally Irish feature in pronunciation that has spread throughout the whole population is the substitution of /t, d/ for /θ, ð/ as in *three of them* which comes out as *tree of dem*. Like speakers of West Country origin, Newfoundlanders sometimes voice initial fricatives, a “Wessex” feature that is also typical of William Barnes’ poetry or Thomas Hardy’s novels (e.g. *vine zummer* for *fine summer*). Other features that can also be found in varieties of English around the world are intervocalic *t*-flapping, the presence and absence of /h/ (hypercorrection/insertion in stressed syllables vs. h-dropping), simplification of (final) consonant

<sup>8</sup> Females were certainly largely restricted to “home and hearth”, particularly in outports where an often dangerous trip by boat was the only means of getting anywhere.

<sup>9</sup> Kirwin (1993: 70) supports this.

<sup>10</sup> For a different view, see Chambers (1998: 256) who thinks that “[a]s time passes, the difference of Newfoundland English will undoubtedly diminish *to some extent*.” (emphasis SW)

<sup>11</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all examples are taken from my own databases; for details on the relevant database, see chapter 7.

clusters, and variation in the vowel system (*boy=buy; port=part*; identical vowels in *speak* and *break*; cf. McArthur 1992: “Newfoundland English”; Story, Kirwin and Widdowson 1990<sup>2</sup>: xx).

## 6.2 Syntax

General features of non-standard English that can also be found in NFE with some frequency<sup>12</sup> include:

- *them* is used as the plural demonstrative pronoun (1);
- double and multiple negation (2, 3);
- usually no plural *-s* on nouns after numerals (4);
- reflexive pronouns are regularized (*hissself, theirsself/-ves*) and often used where StE requires a personal pronoun<sup>13</sup> (5);
- complete (e.g. *know-knowed-knowed*; (6)) or partial regularization of irregular verbs which usually results in a two-fold instead of a three-fold paradigm (e.g. *drive-drove-drove; take-took-took; do-done-done*; (7))

The following examples shall suffice to illustrate the features introduced above and also to mention some other characteristics in passing:

- (1) You take one of **them** old-fashioned lamps ... (MUNFLA 75-164: C2829)  
... when all **them** men was perished ... (MUNFLA 72-089: C1187)
- (2) We **never** got **no** salmon **nor never** got **nothing** dere. (MUNFLA 72-199: C1154)
- (3) ... dere **wadn't no** grades den ... (MUNFLA 75-164: C2831)
- (4) ... for two or **t'ree year** ... (MUNFLA 71-131: C1033)  
**Two pie** 1\$. (SW personal collection<sup>14</sup>)
- (5) They're a disgrace to **theirsself**. (GS personal collection<sup>15</sup>)  
It's up to **yourself**. (GS personal collection<sup>16</sup>)
- (6) I never **done** that. (MUNFLA 76-295: C2914)
- (7) ... he **throwed** the wood down ... (MUNFLA 74-039: C1521)

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<sup>12</sup> There are many more features of a rather rare character, e.g. unsplit *for to* introducing purposive infinitives.

<sup>13</sup> Note that this is obviously a traditional dialect feature that is slowly creeping into StE as well; cf. Hernández (in print).

<sup>14</sup> McDonald's add on Torbay Road, St. John's, August 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Placentia Bay Fisherman on TV, March 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Manager of Liquor Store, St. John's, 2000.



The most noteworthy traits of Newfoundland English however can be found in the verbal system, and most research has focussed on this area (e.g. Clarke 1997a,b,c, 1999). The wide range of variation in the verbal system is again the legacy of its donor dialects, which both show a number of interesting verbal patterns.

As in West Country English, the forms of *be* are often regularized to yield both *I is*, *you is*, *he/she/it is*, *we is*, *they is* and *I'm*, *you'm*, *we'm*, *they'm*. Other West Country forms are *idd(e)n'(t)/wadn'(t)* (isn't/wasn't), *bain't* (isn't/aren't), and the extension of *-s* to all persons in the present tense:

- |      |  |                        |
|------|--|------------------------|
| (8)  | ... awful forgetful <b>I is</b> ...  | (MUNFLA 70-003: C0631) |
|      | <b>they is</b> black lookin' people  | (MUNFLA 73-046: C1958) |
| (9)  | ... <b>we'm</b> goin' up dere now ...  | (MUNFLA 72-089: C1187) |
| (10) | ... they <b>wadn't</b> sure what it was ...  | (MUNFLA 76-295: C2914) |
| (11) | Yer talkin' now, <b>idden</b> ya?  | (MUNFLA 63-002: C0005) |
| (12) | <b>I puts</b> on mi coat ...   | (MUNFLA 73-046: C1958) |
|      | <b>I believes</b> that kind of stuff.  | (MUNFLA 76-295: C2913) |
| (13) | ... <b>you waters</b> your pork ...  | (MUNFLA 73-046: C1958) |
|      | ... when <b>you takes</b> off the flour ...  | (MUNFLA 76-290: C2894) |
| (14) | But da way <b>we uses</b> it, <b>we haves</b> it all beat up, <b>we calls</b> it fish and brews. | (MUNFLA 70-003: C0628) |
| (15) | ... so <b>they tells</b> me ...  | (MUNFLA 73-046: C1959) |

As traditional West Country English, NFE differentiates between main verb and auxiliary uses of the primary verbs *do*, *have* and *be*. While the main verb inflects in *-s* for all persons, the auxiliary forms are unalterable:

- |      |   |                        |
|------|---|------------------------|
| (16) | ... now <b>they haves</b> it down there ...   | (MUNFLA 73-046: C1958) |
| (17) | ... <b>you has</b> da caskets now dose days ...   | (MUNFLA 70-003: C0627) |
| (18) | <b>You does</b> what ya can fer en. <sup>17</sup>                                       | (MUNFLA 63-002: C0005) |
| (19) | You people don't belong to dis country club do ya? – Dat man <b>do</b> .                | (MUNFLA 63-002: C0005) |
| (20) | I don't s'pose it been out dis 8 or 10 year, don't t'ink <b>it have</b> , not our band. | (MUNFLA 71-131: C1034) |

What NFE is known for, however, are the special forms it uses to express differences in aspect. Their origins are hotly debated, as both Irish English and West Country English have distinct forms to express e.g. habitual aspect. For a detailed discussion see e.g. Sandra Clarke's articles (1997a; 1997b; 1997c; 1999) as well as Filppula's (1997b), Harris' (1984; 1986; 1993), Hickey's (2000; 2001) and Kallen's (1989; 1990) articles on aspectual expressions in Irish (English) and

<sup>17</sup> The form *en* is equivalent to StE *him*, supposedly a remnant from Old English times (*hine*).

## 6. English in Newfoundland

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Harris (1986) and Wakelin (1981<sup>2</sup>) on West Country parallels.<sup>18</sup> Forms under discussion include *be(e)s* and *do(e)s* to refer to a habitual/ repeated activity and the famous distinctively Irish *be after Ving* to talk about a recently completed activity, maybe the only form of Irish origin<sup>19</sup> that has spread among the English population of Newfoundland as well and can be considered a universal “Newfie-ism” today that is widely used also among young speakers:

- (21) I **be’s** asked out every Sunday for mi dinner . . . (MUNFLA 63-002: C0011)  
(22) I mostly always **does** two of them. (MUNFLA 63-002: C0011)  
(23) He said what’s da matter he said I’m **after seein’** da devil.  
= “I’ve just seen the devil.” (MUNFLA 63-002: C0010)  
(24) She’s **after growing!** = “She has grown [considerably since I last saw her].”  
(SW personal collection)<sup>20</sup>  
(25) They’re **after making** trails out there. = “They’ve just finished making trails.”  
(SW personal collection)<sup>21</sup>

Another area of syntax that shows traditional West Country features is the pronominal system, more specifically that of personal pronouns. Two peculiarities can be observed that we are already familiar with from an earlier chapter, namely pronoun exchange and gender diffusion. Let me re-introduce the two phenomena under discussion with the help of examples:

- (26) ... that man never spoke to me and I never spoke to **he**, but he knowed it was [name] . . . (MUNFLA 76-295: C2913)  
(27) And tell [name] dat we’ll help **he** providing dat he’ll come back after dinner and help **we** to git dis one down to [place name]. (MUNFLA 72-089: C1187)  
(28) I was in **she** one spring. (MUNFLA 72-089: C1187)  
(29) Jack didn’t know **she**. (Folktales 011)  
(30) He took **we** up to his house then. (MUNFLA 76-290: C2894)  
(31) . . . and he said to **we** . . . (MUNFLA 70-003: C0631)  
(32) I brought **he** [toaster] dere from da house. (MUNFLA 70-003: C0628)  
(33) ... you got to find **he** [ring]. (Folktales 007)  
(34) ... he was barned [i.e. born] in **en** [house]. (MUNFLA 70-003: C0626)

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<sup>18</sup> Curiously enough, one of the most noteworthy features of Wessex dialect, namely the use of periphrastic/ unstressed *do* as a tense carrier, did obviously not survive (long?) in Newfoundland. Unfortunately, this is not the place to discuss the reasons for that; see e.g. Clarke (1997b) for possible explanations.

<sup>19</sup> The status of Newfoundland Irish English is highly complex for a number of reasons. As mentioned in chapter 5, the majority of Irish chose St. John’s as their port of embarkation. Through later immigration via St. John’s port, the language situation there today is one of “extremely complex commingling” (Kirwin 1993: 67). Only in more remote outports one can find “a direct line of inherited features” (*ibid.*).

<sup>20</sup> Woman talking about a horse she had not seen for a while; August 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Girl in her 20s, August 2000.



- (35) But **he** [certificate] 's in St John's now, and when I got mi, when I sent for mi old age pension I had to send the certificate away again, but they'll send **en** [certificate] back after you, when you gets around 70 they'll send **en** [certificate] back again, da's what dey does. (MUNFLA 70-003: C0632)

In (26) to (33), the phenomenon “pronoun exchange” is exemplified; let me briefly repeat what is understood by this: Pronoun exchange is the use of a subject personal pronoun in an object position or all other positions that would normally require the use of an oblique (i.e. non-subject) form. The examples already indicate that there may be certain environments that favour pronoun exchange, although only very few scholars have commented on this. Story *et al.* (1990<sup>2</sup>: xx) state an explicit rule for Newfoundland English: “The stressed forms for the personal pronouns after verbs (including forms of *be*) and prepositions are *I, he, she, we, they*.”

The reverse option, the use of an object form in subject position, is also possible, at least in traditional Wessex dialect, although only to a restricted extent. This use has been discontinued in Newfoundland English.<sup>22</sup> Pronoun exchange is a complex phenomenon that has not yet been properly researched; for a detailed discussion of examples from West Country as well as Newfoundland English, problems, theories and background literature, see Wagner (2001).

Examples (32) to (35) illustrate a second phenomenon of supposedly West Country dialect origin. As in the donor dialect, Newfoundland English can assign gender to inanimate nouns that – in StE – would use *it* as anaphoric pronoun exclusively. “Gender diffusion”, as it is sometimes called, is the topic of this dissertation and will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

## 6.3 Lexicon

Newfoundland English vocabulary is known particularly for its many special expressions concerning activities, things and states that are typical of Newfoundland and thus uppermost in people's minds. These are words related to fishing, sealing, sailing, the weather, lumbering, etc. Archaic terms or terms of Gaelic<sup>23</sup> (Irish and Scottish) origin have often survived in fixed expressions based on folk etymologies that cannot easily be understood by non-Newfoundlanders. One famous example of such an expression is *hangashore* or *angishore*:

**angishore** n also **angashore, angyshore, hangashore**, etc. *EDD* angish 2: angishore ‘a poverty-stricken creature’ Ir (1894); JOYCE 211 ang-ishore; DINNEEN *aindeiseoir* ‘an unfortunate person or thing, a wretch’ for sense 1. An aspirate [h] is frequently pronounced initially in words beginning with vowels; therefore this Irish loan *angishore* is often pronounced and spelled *hangashore*, and this in turn has been reinterpreted by folk etymology.

DNE, “*angishore*”

<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, one comes across the occasional example, probably a sign of the extreme conservatism of Newfoundland English.

<sup>23</sup> As Kirwin (1993: 68) points out, Irish Gaelic had surprisingly little to no influence on English in Newfoundland apart from some lexical borrowings; the reasons for this are complex and various (*cf.* also Clarke 1998).

The DNE is a valuable source for all types of research not only on the lexicon of Newfoundland English. Its editors state their guidelines thus:

Rather than attempting to define a ‘Newfoundlandism’ our guiding principles in collecting have been to look for words which appear to have entered the language in Newfoundland or to have been recorded first, or solely, in books about Newfoundland; words which are characteristically Newfoundland by having continued in use here after they died out or declined elsewhere, or by having acquired a different form or developed a different meaning, or by having a distinctly higher or more general degree of use. Thus, among the latter are articles on such words as **cod, haul, quintal, salt water**; articles on **bawn, belay, cassock, cat, dog, grapple, lanch, room, strouter, and tilt**, for words which have been given a new form or meaning in the region; on **droke, dwy, fadge, frore, keecorn, linny, nish, still, suant**, as examples of the many survivals, or, equally common, dialectal items in use, or former use, in the British Isles; on **bawk, caplin, janny, landwash, nunny-bag, penguin, steady, sunker, ticklace** and **water-horse** among words apparently invented in Newfoundland or appearing first in books about the region. And to these are to be added a number of words which, while they are often in varying degrees part of the common English vocabulary, are nevertheless given entries in the Dictionary because they occur with important nuances in Newfoundland usage, are displayed with unusual fullness in our data, or themselves stand at the centre of semantic fields of great regional importance: **barren, bay, coast, harbour, ice, salt, ship, shore, spring, trap, water**, and so on. These take their place in the Dictionary side by side with many other words the precise regional discriminations of which have often been hard-won – subtle, but critical, terms such as **in** and **out, offer** and **outside, up** and **down**, which display a people’s exact sense of place; terms such as **bank, berth, ground, fouly, ledge, shoal**, etc. which reflect a complex system of classification of water bodies according to the types of ocean floor perceived by and significant for a coastal fishing people; names for birds and plants, especially those of economic or other importance; the seemingly endless nomenclature of seals at every stage of growth and development (**bedlamer, dotard, gun seal, jar, nog-head, ragged-jacket, turner, white-coat**, and a score of others); words for conditions of ice (**ballicatter, clumper, quarr, sish, slob**); and names for familiar operations in the woods or on the water, at work or play, in the ordinary and long-established patterns of Newfoundland and Labrador life.

(DNE *Introduction*, xii)

The DNE will be used as a work of reference throughout the remainder of this thesis. Its explanations and examples of use from earlier stages of Newfoundland English<sup>24</sup> provide a valuable framework for the analyses of the modern corpus material.

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<sup>24</sup> DNE sources “range from sixteenth-century printed books to tape recordings of contemporary Newfoundland speakers” (DNE *Introduction*, xii).

## Chapter 7

# The corpora

The data used for this study stem from two very different sources, namely (1) the basic and incidental material collected by the SED fieldworkers and (2) various collections of an oral-history type from the Southwest of England and Newfoundland. While the previous material consists of unconnected utterances of sometimes just a couple of words, the latter is in interview form, so that it is obvious from the outset that different types of questions need to be addressed to these different sets of data. This chapter will provide some basic background information on the individual sources. In addition, it will discuss problems that emerge in connection with the composition of the data (e.g. issues of comparability). For practical purposes, I will refer to both the SED and the oral history material as “corpora”, being aware of the fact that the former does not constitute a corpus in the strict (corpus linguistic) sense, although it is indeed a corpus – a collection of data providing the basis of a study – in the broad sense.

### 7.1 The Survey of English Dialects (SED)

The fieldwork for the SED, which is largely the University of Leeds’ offspring, was undertaken between 1950 and 1961 (*cf.* Orton 1962: 14). 311 localities all over England were selected “according to their geographical position isolatively and relatively to each other” (*ibid.*: 15); agricultural communities with a population of approximately 500 were preferred (*ibid.*). The informants selected are by and large of the type that would become known as *NORMs*, i.e. non-mobile, older, rural males (*cf.* Chambers and Trudgill 1998<sup>2</sup>: 29). As Orton states, informants were very rarely below the age of 60, which sets their birth dates at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or earlier (*cf.* Orton 1962: 15). Speakers who had spent a considerable amount of time away from their home community “were constantly regarded with suspicion” (if only in terms of their linguistic authenticity; *ibid.*: 16). The method chosen for data elicitation is the questionnaire-based interview, which is one of the direct methods used in data collection (*cf.* Francis 1983: 78ff). The responses

were taken down in phonetic script in the fieldworkers' notebooks. For purposes of illustration, a sample page of one such notebook is reprinted in Figure 7.1.

The sheets [of the notebooks] were divided down the middle. The left side was reserved for the informant's responses and for any remarks or explanations about them. [...] The right side of the page was intended for the fieldworker's transcriptions of any significant expressions from the informant's conversation that had relevance to problems under investigation in the Questionnaire. Relatively unconditioned by the somewhat artificial circumstances of the interview, this incidental material is particularly valuable for confirming, supplementing, amplifying or even contradicting the evidence of the responses themselves. All the fieldworkers made a point of collecting as much of this material as was feasible in the situation.

(Orton 1962: 17f)

As will be seen below, the fieldworker notebooks provide an incredible wealth of material for a study concerned with personal pronouns, a fact that may come as a surprise considering the rationale behind the SED.

Of the 1322 "virtual questions" that constituted the questionnaire used in the interviews, 387 concern phonological issues, 730 are concerned strictly with lexical differences, and only 205 questions (128 + 77 or 15.5%) directly addressed morphological or syntactic phenomena (*cf. ibid.*: 15). It may thus seem inappropriate or at least strange to use SED material for a study that is ultimately concerned with a morpho-syntactic phenomenon. However, the make-up of the SED data (both the basic and incidental material) allows a number of analyses which, although not envisioned by its makers, are of a morphological and/or syntactic nature. A prerequisite for such a study is the salience of the feature under investigation. Except for agreement phenomena, personal pronouns are probably the only class of items that can be found in a vast majority of responses. This is largely due to the fortunate circumstance the informants did usually not restrict themselves to a one-word response, but replied in complete sentences. Unfortunately, the basic material does not always reflect this. In the majority of cases, just the tokens relevant to the question are presented in the published material. Luckily though, the original responses are preserved in their entirety in the fieldworkers' notebooks, which are accessible to researchers *in situ* at the University of Leeds.

When looking through the basic material, care must be taken not to overlook possibly interesting questions/ responses due to the overall make-up of the published data. Although there *is* a section in the questionnaire that deals with morpho-syntactic items exclusively (book IX), this does not mean that all other questions are worthless for non-lexicological investigations. Just to give one example relevant to the present study, question I.11.6 has the form "How do you empty the cart the quickest way?". The expected response is "to tip". Most informants, however, did not simply say "tip" or "to tip", but used a whole sentence, generally in the form "(I/we/you) tip it (up)". Thus, the cart is taken up in the response in the

7.1. The Survey of English Dialects (SED)

Informant Mr. & Mrs. E. J. Dawson Place North Elmham, Norfolk  
 Field Worker W.N.F. Date 21-XI-56 Book V

<p>3 dɪ.ə          4 'neɪdɪt          5 'breɪd, bɔ.əd</p>	<p>ɔ: a: jɛs (Mn.)          "oh, ayɛ, yes"</p>
<p>6 ,ɪn 'ʃɪvŋ          7 bɛ:nt          8 ,t'ɪt 'hɔ:t</p>	<p>'kæmɪp, ɪvən = camp-oven          large iron pot 2-3 feet in diameter, 9" deep, used for baking bread in the cinders.          'sɛ:ɪ, pɔ:ɪ = made in special pot - pie of vegetables, meat, potatoes, pastry</p>
<p>9 lɔ:ɔf          wɔ:l'əwə, jɛ:ɪp          'tɪn, lɔ:ɔf = one made in a baking tin          breɪd = the substance itself</p>	<p>'tʃɪtlɪnz = dried cow dung used for fuel          ə 'sɔ:ɔlɪn = a beating (to a child)</p>
<p>10 slɪs          ɪəʊnd "older"          11 'bɪz ə, breɪd          'ɪəʊnd ə, breɪdŋ 'bɪzə</p>	<p>ɪjɑ:ɪ, ɪn'kɑ:mŋz = "your uncomings(?)", = a child's misbehaviors          tʃɛlp = "check", (insolence)</p>
<p>or drɪpɪnz          or 'dʒæ.m          12 'heɪvɪ</p>	<p>ɪbɔ:ɪ, ʃæs 'heɪvɪ ɪf, ʃæ?          ɪdɔn? 'ɪɪz          "bɔn that's heavy ɪf that dɪn't rɪs"</p>

Figure 7.1: Page from SED field record from North Elmham, Norfolk (Francis 1983: 98)

form of a direct object personal pronoun. For this particular question, a pronoun is present in 45 of 66 responses (68%) in the Northern Counties, while no pronoun was recorded in only 21 cases.<sup>1</sup> For the West Midlands, out of a total of 86 localities, speakers at 54 localities included a pronoun in their response (63%; no pronoun at 34 localities). In the East Midlands and East Anglia, 58% of speakers (55 out of 95 localities; no pronoun at 40 localities) used a pronominal form, and in the Southern Counties, the figure even climbs to 89% (67 of 75 localities with, eight without pronoun).

The method introduced here will be taken up in the actual analysis of examples to support certain claims or to give details of a particular observation. Used in such a manner, the basic material has more to offer in terms of morpho-syntactic content than may first meet the eye. Still, however fruitful a search for particular forms in the basic material may be, it is nothing in comparison with the unsurpassed wealth of data that the fieldworkers' notebooks provide. My own search through almost 80 notebooks from 11 counties yielded a total of almost 700 pronominal forms of interest for the present investigation. Although critics claim that studies based on the incidental material fail to take the context of the utterance into account, such criticism is unfounded in this case.<sup>2</sup> Let me briefly explain this with the help of some examples from the notebooks.

Question IX.3.2 belongs to the "irregular verbs" section, in this particular case trying to elicit the present, simple past and past participle forms of *find*. It is a so-called COMPLETING QUESTION (*cf.* Orton 1962: 48) where the fieldworker is supposed to read out the stimulus sentence and pause before the key word (in bold print below) to allow the informant to complete the sentence (*cf. ibid.*). The respective contexts are<sup>3</sup>:

He was looking for his knife but couldn't ... **find** it.  
Next day he looked for it again and this time he ... **found** it.  
He came back looking pleased and told us that he had ... **found** it.

Irrespective of the provided context, informants very often chose to reformulate their response in a variety of manners. Such a reformulation could result in a more personal format ("I found it") instead of keeping to the third-person singular context, or in a repetition of the trigger sentence, but once more in the first person

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<sup>1</sup> The figure for "no pronoun recorded" includes irrelevant responses or unanswered questions, i.e. the sum of the total of responses without a pronoun plus the total of responses with a pronoun gives the grand total.

<sup>2</sup> It has also been criticized that the interpretation of the – usually exclusively – phonetic material depends entirely on the (modern) researcher and his or her whim. I would like to point out in this context that the whole SED (i.e. the published material as well) is ultimately based on these notes – so who can tell how accurate *those* interpretations are? Having worked with the notebooks in quite some detail, I know from experience that the conventions of transcription and orthographic interpretation varied greatly between different fieldworkers, making it almost impossible to claim that one standard was used for the whole SED.

<sup>3</sup> The questions are reprinted here from the published version of the questionnaire (*cf.* Orton 1962).

(“I/we was/were looking for the knife but I/we could not find it”). No matter what the change, the fieldworkers usually put everything down that did not conform to the prescribed response 100%. Thus, I found the following responses to one question in the notebooks:

Table 7.1: Responses to question IX.3.2 in SED fieldworker notebooks

county	location	infor- mant	response <sup>4</sup>
Cornwall	St. Ewe	JJ	aɪ 'fæʊn ən I found it.
Devon	Blackawton	JW	<i>I #can' #find en.</i> [ən] I can't find it.
Devon	Kennford	JW	<i>'e #told us 'e'd a-#found en.</i> [ən] He told us he'd found it.
Devon	Swimbridge	GY	<i>'e #told I 'e'd a-#foun' en.</i> [ən] He told me he'd found it.
Somerset	Horsington	TFW	<i>He gi'd en</i> [ən] <i>to en</i> [ən]. He gave it to him.
Somerset	Montacute	EP	ʊs kən 'nevər 'vɔɪn ən We can never find it.
Somerset	Montacute	EP	ʊs 'fæʊnd ɪ weər ʊs 'pʊt ɪ 'dæʊn tu: We found it where we put it down [to].
Somerset	Pitminster	CMM	<i>'e was lookin' for en</i> [ɪ], <i>but 'e couldn' find en</i> [ɪ]. He was looking for it but he couldn't find it.
Somerset	Wedmore	WF	<i>(I) couldn'(t) see en</i> [ɪ] <i>nowhere.</i> I couldn't see it anywhere.
Wiltshire	Burbage	RH	<i>'e couldn' find en</i> [ɪ]. He couldn't find it.
Wiltshire	Burbage	RH	<i>I've found en</i> [ən]. I've found it.

For the published material, only the token actually asked for was extracted from the response, while all additional information was omitted – i.e. it has been lost to everyone who does not have access to the notebooks. The policy of inclusion or non-inclusion of a personal pronoun (usually in the direct object position) in the basic material is a mystery to me. For some questions, the heading in the basic material tells us something in the vein of “where recorded, the responses below include the personal pronoun”.

For example, all of the following questions yielded a comparatively high output of pronominal forms when the notebooks were consulted, but none of them made it into the basic material, where only the required form was reprinted<sup>5</sup>:

<sup>4</sup> The first line, if in phonetics, is transcribed letter for letter, as found in the notebooks. Italic script is my ‘translation’ of what I found in phonetic script in the notebooks. The regular script version is my “standard” translation. “#” stands for word stress as indicated by the fieldworker. Some fieldworkers provided orthographic translations while others did not.

<sup>5</sup> The underlined noun is the one that reappears in the responses in pronominal form.



## 7. The corpora

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- VI.5.11 When I have an apple, I ... **eat** it.  
VIII.5.8 What's a grave filled in with? **Earth**.  
VIII.7.3 A rubber ball that's punctured won't ... **bounce**.  
IX.1.3 A picture not hanging straight is hanging ... **askew**.  
IX.2.7 A door left like this, you say is ... **ajar**.  
IX.2.9 If a door has been made of unseasoned wood, before long it will be sure to ... **warp**.

On the other hand, pronominal forms *were* included in the following questions, which also yielded numerous pronominal forms of interest:

- VIII.7.6 A dog buries a bone because he wants to ... **hide** it.  
IX.2.6 And now [stand sideways in front of it (door, SW)] ... **in front of** it.  
IX.2.8 If the door blew open on a cold day, you'd get up at once and ... **shut** it.

The decision to include or not include items with the same referent (here e.g. questions IX.2.5-9, which all concern a door) seems to be based on the presence or absence of a pronoun in the expected response. However, this principle is not always obeyed, as question VI.5.11 shows – it *does* include a pronoun that is *not* included in the basic material.

Most of the pronominal forms from the fieldworker notebooks that are relevant for the present study are unambiguous. Although the referent of the pronoun is not always obvious at a first glance, it can usually easily be deduced from the respective question or its context. The process I went through if confronted with such a case is as follows: I came across the formulation

aɪ 'ɔːləz 'eɪdŋ 'skɪn ən 'ɔːl                      *I always ate en skin and all.*

at St. Ewe (Cornwall), in book VI. The question that was recorded closest to this remark on the left side of the notebook page is VI.5.11, which is about an apple. Considering the content of the utterance, it seems impossible for the [ŋ] to refer to anything other than an apple. Just as a precaution, I always also had a look at the immediately preceding and following questions. In this particular case, question VI.5.10 reads “... this, where the roots of the teeth are”, enquiring about **gums**, and VI.5.12 “When, in eating, we crush apples or biscuits noisily with our teeth, we say we ... **crunch them**.” There is no possibility for the [ŋ] recorded to refer to either *gums* or to have anything to do with *crunch them*, making it a 99% certain example of a “gendered” pronoun referring to an inanimate noun, namely *apple*.

Although some ambiguous or problematic cases remain unclear even with such careful scrutiny, the results from the fieldworker notebooks are overall very transparent. I will point out unclear cases in the discussion of examples, usually in connection with issues that have been debated in the respective literature. From my work with the notebooks, I would conclude that at most 10% of the examples are problematic or ambiguous. More often than not, referents are even included in the utterance, so that the possibility of misinterpretation does not even arise. Table 7.2 lists the notebooks that have been used for this study.



7.1. The Survey of English Dialects (SED)

Table 7.2: SED fieldworker notebooks used in this study

county ID in SED	county	locations
36 Co	Cornwall	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Kilkhampton</li> <li>2. Altarnum</li> <li>3. Egloshayle</li> <li>4. St. Ewe</li> <li>5. Gwinear</li> <li>6. St. Buryan</li> <li>7. Mullion</li> </ol>
37 D	Devon	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parracombe</li> <li>2. Swimbridge</li> <li>3. Weare Giffard</li> <li>4. Chawleigh</li> <li>5. Gittisham</li> <li>6. South Zeal</li> <li>7. Kennford</li> <li>8. Peter Tavy</li> <li>9. Widdicombe</li> <li>10. Cornwood</li> <li>11. Blackawton</li> </ol>
31 So	Somerset	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Weston</li> <li>2. Blagdon</li> <li>3. Wedmore</li> <li>4. Coleford</li> <li>5. Wootton Courtenay</li> <li>6. Stogursey</li> <li>7. Stogumber</li> <li>8. Withypool</li> <li>9. Brompton Regis</li> <li>10. Stoke St. Gregory</li> <li>11. Horsington</li> <li>12. Pitminster</li> <li>13. Merriott</li> <li>(14. Montacute*)</li> </ol>
38 Do	Dorset	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Handley</li> <li>2. Ansty</li> <li>3. Whitchurch Canonicorum</li> <li>4. Portesham</li> <li>5. Kingston</li> </ol>
32 W	Wiltshire	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ashton Keynes</li> <li>2. Sutton Benger</li> <li>3. Avebury</li> <li>4. Burbage</li> <li>5. Steeple Ashton</li> <li>6. Netheravon</li> <li>7. Sutton Veny</li> <li>8. Fovant</li> <li>9. Whiteparish</li> </ol>

\* For unknown reasons, Montacute was excluded from the Basic Material. The dialect may have seemed *too* conservative even for SED purposes, retaining such “ancient” features as *utch* for *I*. 99

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In addition to the notebooks from the core Southwest, the notebooks for Hampshire (6 localities<sup>6</sup>), Gloucestershire (7 localities), Herefordshire (6 + 1 localities<sup>7</sup>), Worcestershire (7 localities) and Oxfordshire (6 localities) were consulted, resulting in a total of 79 notebooks. Although I also had a look at the 5 notebooks for Berkshire, I decided not to use them. The fieldwork in the core of the Southwest was done by John T. Wright, whose style is very tidy and easy to read. Other fieldworkers only put down phonetic script without any indication of why a particular utterance was of interest, making it very difficult to read through the notebooks. Michael Barry's style is like this, and I found it too difficult to apply the methods described above to analyse the scantily recorded responses, and so decided not to use the notebooks from Berkshire. Figure 7.2 shows the exact locations of the SED localities in the Southwest (numbers correspond to those in Table 7.2).

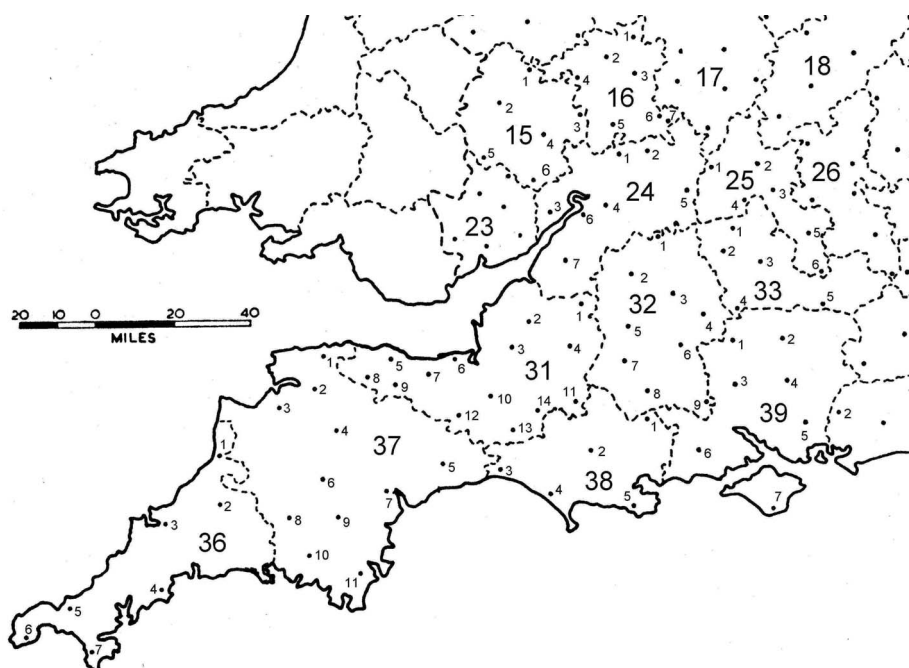


Figure 7.2: SED localities (Basic Material; from Orton 1962: 30)

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<sup>6</sup> The fieldwork in Whitewall on the Isle of Wight (location 7) was done by Michael Barry, whose style makes it difficult to compare the data with the rest of the county's material (see below). The data from this location will thus be excluded from the analysis.

<sup>7</sup> Lyonshall, only four miles from the Welsh border, was already visited by Peter Wright in 1952, but was later excluded from the Basic Material, probably because the fieldworker noted that the Welsh influence was rather strong.

## 7.2 Collected material

The second major source of material that was tapped for this thesis are interviews from various oral history projects all over the Southwest of England. For Newfoundland the major source was soon identified in the archive at Memorial University (*Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive – MUNFLA*), where interviews with natives are stored that were conducted for a range of different studies, both individual (generally students' papers and theses) and project-oriented (e.g. the Folktales collection; see below). Before describing the material used here in detail, it is necessary to explain the advantages and drawbacks of using oral history material for linguistic research in general and for this project in particular. But first a few words about earlier practices in describing non-standard varieties are in order.

One of the major problems the researcher interested in dialect syntax faces is how to find a suitable database that lends itself to a thorough analysis. In the past, this task was usually solved by collecting excerpts from books that contained some non-standard material in the form of protagonists' dialogue. The major drawback of such material is obvious: there is no way for a non-regional (not from the same dialect area) or even a non-native speaker to judge whether the material is authentic. Usually, it cannot be – even if the author is from the area s/he is writing about, and knows the local dialect or even uses it (which is not to be expected considering that writers are usually from a middle-to-upper-class background), any writings in dialect still come from a single individual. An analysis of such material would at best offer an insight into the author's ideas about his/her regional variety, at worst (if the person is a non-native) it would be nothing more than some constructed, made-up musings by a layman. The authenticity of this type of material should be considered more than questionable. While it can certainly be useful to back up results obtained from authentic material, particularly for earlier language states for which only small amounts – if anything – of authentic data are available, one should, at least in our modern times with their technological progress, refrain from basing a study on this second- or even third-hand material when so much better-suited data can be used.<sup>8</sup>

### 7.2.1 The role of oral history

As defined by the Oral History Society, “[o]ral history is the recording of people’s memories. It is the living history of everyone’s unique life experiences” (*Oral History Society* at <http://www.oralhistory.org.uk>). In their “Where you start” section, the Society suggests a number of areas that may offer fruitful topics for an interview:

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<sup>8</sup> The present study, for example, could easily be based on Barnes' poetry, Hardy's work, and the collection of examples from Elworthy's studies, which were recently used by Siemund (2001) in exactly that manner.

## 7. The corpora

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If you have not done any oral history interviewing before, think first about a focus or theme for your project. This could be your own family or street or block of flats, or it could be where you work, or your school. You might want to pick a topic to ask people about, for example memories of childhood, leisure, politics, religion or women's experience in wartime or memories of coming to Britain as a migrant. Whether you decide to work alone or as part of a group, having a theme will help you to decide who to interview.

(from <http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/advice/>)

Such a focus has certain implications concerning the content<sup>9</sup> and general circumstances of an interview. As the term “oral history” and its definition above suggest, we are primarily dealing with *history*, and most projects focus on past events or customs which in the opinion of the researcher should be preserved for future generations by recording them. Interviewees are generally pensioners in their 60s or older, and only rarely do we find projects that have as many female as male informants. As a result, most interviewees are NORMs (recall the definition in 7.1), making a sociologically representative study impossible.<sup>10</sup>

The heavy bias towards recollection of past events is one of the clear disadvantages from a linguistic point of view. If one were to investigate past tense forms in such an interview, the researcher would be in heaven, as past forms should be very frequent. But for almost all other tenses, oral history material is almost unsuitable. While present tense forms are still relatively frequent, usually we will find no or only very few items with future time reference, not to mention something as “daring” as aspectually different forms (progressives). However, it is not inconceivable to construct guiding questions that would elicit such forms in an oral-history-type interview, a path that we will take in connection with filling certain gaps in areas that have been investigated in FRED.

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<sup>9</sup> “There are some points to cover in every interview: date and place of birth, what their parents' and their own main jobs were. And whatever the topic, it usually helps to get the interviewee talking if you begin with their earlier life: family background, grandparents, parents and brothers and sisters (including topics such as discipline), then onto childhood home (housework, chores, mealtimes), leisure (street games, gangs, sport, clubs, books, weekends, holidays, festivals), politics and religion, schooling (key teachers, friends, favourite subjects), early relationships, working life (first job, a typical working day, promotion, pranks and initiation, trade unions and professional organisations), and finally later family life (marriage, divorce, children, homes, money, neighbours, social life, hopes). Most people find it easier to remember their life in chronological order, and it can sometimes take you two or three sessions to record a full life story.” (from <http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/advice/>).

<sup>10</sup> Older male speakers from rural communities who have spent their whole life there and usually did not continue education past age 14 are proportionally over-represented in oral history material. Although modern studies have also investigated more up-to-date issues such as “being an immigrants' child in a present-day British city” etc., the large majority of oral history projects is concerned with things like “cider making in the Southwest before WWII” or “the weaving industry in Wiltshire pre-WWII.”

Once the interview has been conducted, the question of whether or not to transcribe the data becomes important. If the respective individual or group is thinking about long-term work with the material, a transcript is a very good way to allow people from outside to get an impression of the content of the interview without actually having to listen to the tapes, which is a very time-consuming business. The intentions for the future use of transcripts largely determine how the interview will be transcribed, “how” here referring particularly to the (unfortunately very common) practice of standardization of the language of the interviewees. As oral history projects as a rule do not involve the employment of a professional transcriber, this is the usual course of events. Just to give one (made-up) example, consider an actual utterance (1) which could end up as (2):

- (1) That pot? Oh, I, I don’t know, I don’t remember what I made he for. I don’t collect no pots now.
- (2) I don’t remember what I made that pot for. I don’t collect pots now.

“Normalization” here has eradicated three dialect features (*he* = pot; *he* here used in an oblique context; double negation *don’t . . . no*), not to mention all the “superfluous data” (repetitions etc.) that are simply left out. Serving as a source of information for non-locals, standardized transcripts are of course much more helpful than something like the following, where one cannot even be certain what language the interviewee is using if one is unfamiliar with dialects and accents:

- (3) And me, me t’ree husbands dey went, [noise on tape] dis is me fourt’ one, and I don’t worry my dear and I don’t trouble no more about dat.<sup>11</sup>

Sometimes the collector and/or archive do not think it necessary to produce transcripts at all, so that the task of transcribing goes to whoever is interested enough to do so. For my own corpus, I tried to make use of already existing transcripts as much as possible. These were usually checked against the taped interviews to find out if there has been any “correction”. If so, the tape was re-transcribed, re-inserting all relevant features. A number of tapes were also transcribed directly from scratch, where I was fortunate enough to rely on the help of native speakers who worked in the dialect project to compile FRED. The actual transcripts are word by word; if a speaker hesitates, starting the same sentence three times, all attempts and repetitions that this entails will be in the transcript. Also, all morpho-syntactically relevant dialect features are included, and, if they were already in the original transcripts, a variety of phonological features (e.g. *h*-dropping). Certain paralinguistic features like laughter, long pauses, indistinct stretches of conversation, etc., are also included and marked in the transcripts.

For the present study, most of the disadvantages of oral history material mentioned above are negligible or even non-existent. Pronominal forms are omnipresent

<sup>11</sup> “Translation”: And my three husbands, they went . . . this is my fourth one, and I don’t worry my dear, I don’t trouble any longer about that.” From MUNFLA C0005, AccNo 63-002; collected by JDA Widdowson.

in any type of conversation<sup>12</sup>, eliminating any danger of not actually finding enough (representative) examples. The bias in terms of content even turned out to be an advantage rather than a drawback, as the investigated phenomenon tends to appear more easily in “intimate” contexts. My material contains many work-related interviews, and apparently, a cider maker has such an intense relationship to apples that he uses *he* or *him* to refer to an apple. Similarly, for warpers working in a cloth mill, the weaving machines and their parts are such an important and natural part of their everyday lives that they refer to all of these items with the help of a “gendered” personal pronoun. In the following, details of the sub-corpora of this study are described, and information about the data they contain is provided.

### 7.2.2 Somerset material

The *Somerset Rural Life Museum* (SRLM) is mentioned in the British Library’s *Directory of recorded sound resources in the United Kingdom* (Weerasinghe 1989), which we used in a first pilot study enquiring about available sound material for linguistic research. After having exchanged a number of letters with Ann Heeley, who is responsible for the Museum’s Oral Archive, I first travelled to Glastonbury in November 1999. My experience there can only be described as extremely pleasant. Looking back on it now, Mrs Heeley was one of the most helpful persons I ever met in connection with data collection. She readily agreed to let me copy the tapes and transcripts (whose existence alone was a nice surprise). The transcripts, prepared by the original interviewer or in some rare instances by another member of the “Friends of the Abbey Barn”, were of such a high quality that almost no re-editing was necessary.

The collection consists of some 350 interviews to date, recorded between approximately 1973 and the present. Recording was first undertaken with the help of a reel, but has since changed to cassette tapes. The collection is continuously expanded, and whenever someone’s interest in a certain subject is peaked, they will usually record interviews with people who know something about the matter at hand. The Museum collects old agricultural equipment, and often the original owner is interviewed to explain a tool’s or machine’s use. A number of in-depth projects were conducted for the Archive, from a “Cider Research Project” in the early 1980s to “Villages at War” in the early 1990s and “Women’s Institutes” in the late 1990s. Individual interviews are categorized by content for easier reference, some labels being e.g. “Craftsmen”, “Childhood”, “Working Man/Woman”, “Village Life”, “Agriculture” or “World War II”. Interviewers follow(ed) the guidelines of the Oral History Association, making it easy to scan through the background information about the speakers in search of suitable interviews.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Biber *et al.*’s statistics on the relative frequency of personal pronouns across different genres (1999, 334). With an average of 144,000 personal pronouns in every 1,000,000-word chunk, conversation contains far more pronominal forms than the other genres (fiction: 92,000; news: 35,000; academic writing: fewer than 20,000).

Table 7.3: SRLM material

number of interviews	31
number of speakers <sup>13</sup>	36
number of words (total)	174,500
number of words per interview (average)	5,629
number of words per interview (maximum)	17,291
number of words per interview (minimum)	1,671
interviews recorded from – to recording dates (details)	1968-1996 1960s (1x); 1970s (7x); 1980s (20x); 1990s (3x) <sup>14</sup>
informants' ages from – to informants' ages (details)	70-89 70s (10x); 80s (15x)
informants born from – to informants born (details)	1884-1918 1880s (3x); 1890s (7x); 1900s (10x); 1910s (5x)

During my first visit, I turned to recordings that sounded promising in terms of content, drawing on my linguistic background knowledge (i.e. searching for NORMs) and Mrs Heeley's familiarity with the material.

The first trip in 1999 was followed by two visits in July 2000 and June 2001, when additional material was evaluated and copied. As the first trip had proven so fruitful, I decided to go through all of the material and check it for dialect features. This usually took the form of listening to stretches of the taped interview while reading through the transcript at the same time. If features were already abundant in the transcript, I usually copied the tape without listening to it.

In addition to 30 interviews from the SRLM Oral Archive, Ann Heeley was kind enough to let me have a look at the material of her private collection, which resulted in another interview for this study. The statistics for the SRLM data used here can be found in Table 7.3 and Figure 7.3.

### 7.2.3 Wiltshire material

The *Wiltshire Folklife Society* had just been dissolved when our interest in suitable dialect material started. I was however lucky in being directed to probably the only person who knew all there was to know about the collection(s) previously held there – Norman Rogers. Unfortunately, poor health and general problems associated with moving and dissociating made it difficult for him to obtain all of the possibly relevant material. Nevertheless, he was able to send us four interviews

<sup>13</sup> In some of the interviews, a spouse or child was present during the recording and gave the occasional comment. However, there is only one main speaker in most of the interviews. The same is true for the material from the other counties.

<sup>14</sup> The discrepancies between the totals in the age and recording date column are due to the fact that this information was not always available.



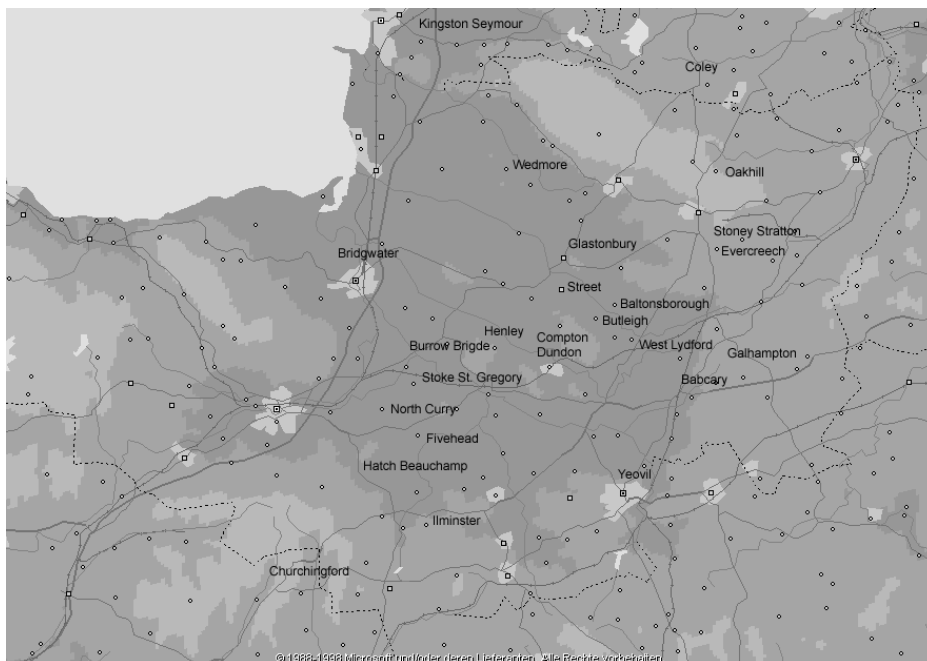


Figure 7.3: Locations of SRLM interviews (approximate only for small villages)

in very traditional<sup>15</sup> “Wilts dialect”, three of which are also used here (details in Table 7.4).

The second source represents another very positive experience. After having contacted various museums in Wiltshire as part of a second large “call for material”, I was directed to the Trowbridge Museum and its oral archive, which I visited in June 2001. Clare Lyall, the museum’s curator, was very helpful and welcoming, so that it was possible for me to make the most of a relatively short trip. The museum’s oral archive primarily holds a collection of interviews about the history of weaving, the primary industry in Trowbridge until recently. The interviewees are former workers in the weaving mills in and around Trowbridge, and this is one of only few locations for which at least some data for females (three speakers) is also available, as many of the jobs in the mills typically were women’s. The dialect is very strong in most speakers selected for this thesis; others who showed a more standard pattern of speech were disregarded. Most of the traditional features associated with Wiltshire or more general West Country speech are present in those speakers. Details for the Trowbridge material can be found in Table 7.5.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> As we did not receive copies of the tapes, this material has to be taken with a grain of salt. Although speakers seem to be typical NORMs, born around the turn of the century, they show features that were rare even in SED times, such as the use of *thic* as demonstrative pronoun. Thus, I only give raw details here, as these interviews are not taken to be as authentic as the rest of the material.

<sup>16</sup> Again, if the totals do not add up, the respective information was not available.



Table 7.4: WFLS material

number of interviews	3
number of speakers	4
number of words (total)	13,700

Table 7.5: Trowbridge material

number of interviews	6
number of speakers	10
number of words (total)	75,100
number of words per interview (average)	12,517
number of words per interview (maximum)	24,131
number of words per interview (minimum)	7,637
interviews recorded from – to	1987-1994
recording dates (details)	1987; 1992 (2x); 1994 (2x)
informants' ages from – to	66-85
informants' ages (details)	66, 71, 81, 85
informants born from – to	1907-1926
informants born (details)	1907, 1909, 1913, 1923, 1926

#### 7.2.4 Devon material

Getting access to material from Devon presented something of a challenge. Although a suitable source had been found relatively early in the Totnes Elizabethan Museum, we could not profit from it immediately. A change of curators delayed our request for material, and in addition the volunteer workers responsible for the oral history material of the Totnes Community Archive were only available at very restricted hours to select samples for us, which they obviously did only reluctantly. The new curator, Rachel Silverson, was very helpful however, and as the samples sounded very promising, I arranged for a visit in June 2001. Time restrictions on my part in combination with the very limited opening hours of these facilities (generally in the hand of volunteer workers) made the visit a very brief though relatively successful one. The collection of tapes is large (ca. 300), but as no comprehensive catalogue exists and only about 10% of the interviews are transcribed, deciding where to start was difficult. I could not do much more than start out by listening to the tapes for which transcripts existed, only to note soon that the transcripts had all been standardized. Nevertheless, they could give me a basic impression of the contents of the interview, thus providing at least an idea of whether or not I could expect a traditional dialect speaker or not. As there was no single individual responsible for the collection (and in fact nobody at all who had any idea of its contents), my success in picking “good” interviews was not much more than luck. This is definitely a source justifying closer investigation – which would, however, for the various reasons listed above, take a lot of time. For the present study, this would certainly have been unproductive. Details for the interviews, mostly recorded in and around Totnes, that have been selected for this thesis are provided in Table 7.6.

Table 7.6: Devon material

number of interviews	5
number of speakers	5
number of words (total)	51,100
number of words per interview (average)	10,020
number of words per interview (maximum)	11,320
number of words per interview (minimum)	9,550
interviews recorded from – to	1984-1985
recording dates (details)	1984; 1985 (2x)
informants' ages from – to	76-82
informants' ages (details)	76, 79, 82
informants born from – to	1902-1913
informants born (details)	1902, 1906, 1909, 1910, 1913

### 7.2.5 Cornwall material

When first researching West Country speech, it appeared that Cornwall was a negligible area in terms of traditional dialect to be found there. No accounts from the 19<sup>th</sup> century comparable to Elworthy's studies of Somerset speech exist, and secondary literature in general is scarce to non-existent. Contact with the *Institute for Cornish Studies*, now defunct, was not very encouraging<sup>17</sup>, and we decided to let the issue rest for the time being. In the wake of the second large contacting action, the successor of the *Institute*, the *Cornish Audio and Visual Archive* reacted positively to our requests. The situation I found there when I visited in May 2001 was very much the same as that encountered in Totnes. The succession from one person (and place) to another happened without a transition phase, resulting in slightly confusing (and confused) circumstances. Treve Crago, responsible for the archive which is at the moment part of Exeter University<sup>18</sup>, was very helpful, and the amount of material held at the archive was stunning. Unfortunately, almost none of it was transcribed, leaving the tedious work to us. This would turn out to be a particularly difficult enterprise, as those interviews prove that modern and traditional Cornish dialect is much better than its reputation.<sup>19</sup> It is incomprehensible how experts like Martyn Wakelin could fail to acknowledge Cornwall's value as a dialect area. It has always been claimed that Cornwall is much closer to StE, as the result of the much shorter history of English in the area. Accordingly, dialects did not have time to develop, and the area was much more influenced by school English rather than traditional West Country speech – recall Wakelin's position already quoted in chapter 2, which I repeat here for convenience's sake:

<sup>17</sup> This was only one of a number of institutions where politics got in the way of linguistic research. It was thought that we should be more concerned with "X" dialect, "X" standing for whatever part of Great Britain the respective institution was located at. Thus, the *Institute* in Cornwall wanted us to go investigate Cornish dialect, and not the English language in Cornwall. We usually filed those responses under "negative" . . .

<sup>18</sup> But only so long as Cornwall does not have its own, a fact that is about to be remedied.

<sup>19</sup> I would like to thank Allison Felmy for doing most of the Cornish transcripts with a remarkable ear for relevant details.

[S]peakers of Cornish in the Modern Cornish period would learn not the ancient Wessex dialect of east Cornwall, Devon and Somerset [...], but a version of English taught them in schools and by the upper classes and better-educated (note that it was the gentry who gave up Cornish and spoke English first), an English deliberately acquired, as distinct from a regional dialect passed on from generation to generation.

(Wakelin 1975: 100)

In reality, nothing could be further from the truth.<sup>20</sup> The material collected in Cornwall is some of the best we have, and all of it is from West Cornwall.<sup>21</sup> The archive would certainly be worth another trip. Once again, an overview of the interviews selected here is presented in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7: Cornwall material

number of interviews	4
number of speakers	4
number of words (total)	18,900
number of words per interview (average)	4,725
number of words per interview (maximum)	7,506
number of words per interview (minimum)	2,835
interviews recorded from – to	1978-1980s
recording dates (details)	1978 (2x); 1979; 1980s
informants' ages from – to	74-86
informants' ages (details)	74, late 70s, 80s, 86
informants born from – to	1892-1904
informants born (details)	1892, 1895, 1901?, 1904

### 7.2.6 No material from Dorset?

On my first trip to the Southwest, Glastonbury was not my only stop. First I went to Dorchester, where the Dorset Record Office is located. The Record Office holds a lot of material that seemed very promising on paper, judging from catalogue card copies I had received. The reality, however, was rather disappointing – the transcripts I looked at were all in StE, and none of the tapes I listened to were more than slightly dialectal. When I told my hostess, a lady in her 70s, about my work, she remarked that she would not really expect me to find anything of relevance. “You were supposed to speak the King’s English”, such was her statement on the non-existence of Dorset dialect material. Despite serious efforts to remedy the lack

<sup>20</sup> Being by now very familiar with the relevant literature, I have the distinct impression that researchers tended to over-generalize the situation they found in the lexicon, where not as many traditional dialect words were found as was expected – see, for example, Fischer’s lexicological description (1976: 298).

<sup>21</sup> Locations of interviews are Pendeen, Gurnard’s Head, Zennor, and St. Ives.

of data from Dorset<sup>22</sup>, no good source for comparatively modern or even traditional dialect material could be found. At that time, the disappointment was great. However, it is relativized to quite some extent when considering the equally small – in comparison with the other Southwest counties almost non-existent – amount of really dialectal data that the SED fieldworkers were able to gather (*cf.* the relevant sections in chapters 11 and 12).

### 7.2.7 Newfoundland material

#### 7.2.7.1 Material from the *Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive* (MUNFLA)

MUNFLA is listed as a major resource for research in Michael Linn's collection of archives (1993: 444)<sup>23</sup>, and after checking their web page and other information I could obtain, I wrote to the archivist of MUNFLA in late 1999. Philip Hiscock, a folklorist with a linguistic background, proved to be the most valuable source of my future work on Newfoundland English. I arranged a visit in April 2000 to assess the material and get an idea of what was available and could easily be used for the type of work I had in mind. A second extensive visit followed in August/September of 2000, sponsored by the German Academic Exchange Service (*DAAD*).

A number of fortunate circumstances facilitated my work greatly. First of all, the sheer amount of material at MUNFLA is amazing.<sup>24</sup> I would not even try to give numbers, but according to a list prepared by Beverly Gleeson in 2000, there are more than 2,000 transcribed interviews, collected from the early 1960s to the present day. The interviews stem from various sources, but most of them are the results of students' and staff's research for papers, theses, or other publications. The Folklore Department encourages students to deposit their tapes and papers at MUNFLA, and as it is the policy of MUN that all students, regardless of their major, should take at least one class in Folklore, the variety of material is unsurpassed. Topics range from gardening to ghost stories or a recording and description of traditional songs and music – this short list should suffice to give an impression of the wide array of tackled topics. Students usually went to their home communities to do the interviews, which is probably the greatest advantage of the MUNFLA material: The interviewers were almost always insiders, often talking to relatives or at least acquaintances. The informants were thus not as inhibited as is often the case when an outsider, least of all a non-native, intrudes on them.

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<sup>22</sup> All libraries and local museums were contacted in search of relevant material, without any result.

<sup>23</sup> The information given there is not entirely accurate, though – for example, Linn states that the tapes “have been transcribed into standard English” (1993: 444; see below for details of the collection).

<sup>24</sup> According to Linn (1993: 444), the collection holds “over 5,000 original tape recordings, several thousand photographs and slides, and a small collection of video tapes. There are approximately 6,000 informants.” When I visited MUNFLA, the number of tapes had reached 13,000, hinting at masses of material still to be catalogued in more detail.

Second, many of the interviews held in the collection are transcribed<sup>25</sup>, and although some are standardized, the transcription policies at MUNFLA have long been such that dialect features are to be presented as accurately as possible. Third, the transcripts were all done by professional transcribers, though not trained linguists. Even if an earlier version of the transcript existed (generally done by the student who had originally submitted the paper), the professional re-transcribed it. Thus, the standard of transcription is very high, and in my experience does not leave much to wish for.

Although a new archivist, Patricia Fulton, had taken over the archive by the time I first visited it, my work could proceed without any problems. Ms Fulton as well as the whole staff of the archive tried to help me in any way they could. After having discussed my project with him, Philip Hiscock directed me towards those areas where I was most likely to meet with success in search of gender diffusion. At that time, I had no background in Newfoundland settlement history, and was thus very grateful that somebody was able and willing to point me in the right direction.

In order to find relevant data, I consulted the MUNFLA catalogue for locations, extracting the accession numbers of all those interviews that were recorded in areas with a predominantly West Country settlement history.<sup>26</sup> In the next step, I had to check another index to see if there were tapes available for those interviews, as the MUNFLA index also refers to photographs and other materials. Finally then, the respective tapes and transcripts were requested from the archive room and set out for me.

As simply copying and taking the material away with me was impossible due to the strict copyright laws, I had to officially request copies of the files I found interesting. The archive then tried to contact the original collector(s) (usually via the alumni office) to ask their permission. It can easily be imagined that such a process takes time. I finally received the box with interviews and transcripts in April 2001, almost exactly a year after my first visit to the archive. Only then the general procedure of scanning or re-typing the material and cross-checking with the tapes could begin. Details for the texts used for this study can be found in the bibliography and Appendix A. Only raw numbers will be given here.

I had originally requested material from 17 collections, but as not all interviews were equally suitable for the present project, some were disregarded in the final corpus of Newfoundland English. The present corpus consists of 31 interviews with 34 speakers, totalling about 130,000 words, as detailed in Table 7.8.

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<sup>25</sup> As transcription is a time-consuming task, and the ratio of new material coming in is much higher than the production of transcripts allows, MUNFLA has to deal with an approximate 10-year backlog. Thus, the most recent interviews used here stem from the late 1980s.

<sup>26</sup> For details, see chapter 5.

Table 7.8: MUNFLA material

number of interviews	31
number of speakers	34
number of words (total)	132,000
number of words per interview (average)	4,265
number of words per interview (maximum)	10,770
number of words per interview (minimum)	1,261
interviews recorded from – to	late 1960s to early 1980s
informants' ages from – to	27-88
informants' ages (details)	27, 31, 49, 60s (5x), 70s (5x), 80s (6x)
informants born from – to	1885-1942
informants born (details)	1880s (4x), 1890s (6x), 1900s (5x), 1920, 1938, 1942

### 7.2.7.2 Folktales of Newfoundland

The collection of *Märchen* published in 1996 in the two-volume *Folktales of Newfoundland* is another valuable source for studies on Newfoundland English. It differs from the rest of the material used in this study in one important aspect: the telling of a tale constitutes a different discourse level than an oral-history-type interview. It will be interesting to see how far the genre influences the choice of language used when investigating gender diffusion in detail. Another peculiarity of the tales is that some tales are presented in various versions, sometimes by the same, sometimes by different tellers, recorded at different occasions. We will see later if repeated telling results in variation in the choice of words and dialect features that are used.

The two authors/editors, Herbert Halpert<sup>27</sup> and John Widdowson, are also the primary collectors of the more than 150 tales included in the books. While Halpert's background is in folklore, Widdowson is a linguist with a long-standing interest in dialects. The authors became interested in the oral tradition of Newfoundland, which ultimately resulted in the publication of *Folktales*. For practical purposes, they ultimately used tales that had been collected between 1964 and 1979 (*cf.* Halpert and Widdowson 1996: xxii). Although neither Halpert (born in NYC) nor Widdowson (an Oxford graduate) were natives, they were able to record the tellers without much inhibiting influence.

The reasons for people's openness lies primarily in the relative isolation of most of the communities that were visited, where easy access to mass transportation was still a couple of decades away (*cf. ibid.*). The major advantage of the tales is clearly their presentation in orthographic transcription. As the authors point out, and as should be obvious to anyone who has ever dealt with transcribing non-standard speech, the final results can only be a compromise between all possible extremes. For some issues, the folklorist's point of view was prone to clash with

<sup>27</sup> Halpert was also responsible for the establishment of MUNFLA.

the linguist's, and vice versa. But however difficult the actual production was, the published versions of the tales are a dream for anyone interested in morphology or syntax.

Despite these and other necessary compromises in our editing procedure, we have constantly borne in mind our intention to present a text as close to the original speech as is both possible and practicable, always erring on the side of accurate representation rather than on the kind of editing which, in both obvious and more subtle ways, changes the original text radically in its insistence on presenting a text more acceptable from the literary viewpoint. **We have retained the original lexis, grammar, and syntax because these are essential to the dialect**, particularly since they also reflect the regional character of the tales.

(Halpert and Widdowson 1996: lix f; emphasis SW)

An actual stretch of a tale is reprinted below:

[Int. B: Who were the best storytellers around?]

Uh ...<sup>28</sup> well I don't know who the best one ... I don't know who the BEST storyteller is. Well ol' S[mith] ... now Eli Smith \_ he's up there to Port Anson. I think he was about so good a feller – as ever I ... heard (could) tell stories – you know.

[Int. A: He used to tell these about Jack as well did he?]

Oh yes. He used to tell 'em ... (right) 'bout Jack as well.

[Int. A: An' you've picked them up when you heard people in the woods and ... elsewhere have you?]

Oh yes. When I ... whenever ... whenever I hear a story told see that I pick un up – I'd knowed un. I could tell un then ... right on – after he was finished.

(Tale No. 32, p. 342f)

The original tapes are held at MUNFLA today, and the authors are considering making them accessible for researchers (*cf. ibid.*: lv). Detailed background information is generally available on the tellers, making it easy to single out informants with a West Country family background. The storytellers are traditionally males over 60 who work(ed) in the fishery or lumber industry (*cf. ibid.*: xxxv), and thus could be termed the Newfoundland equivalent to NORMs.

My procedure for selecting tales did not differ much from that of assessing other oral history material. I read through the tales, marking features of interest, then electronically scanned the relevant tales and formatted them to be used with TACT. Statistical details for the tales corpus are provided in Table 7.9.

<sup>28</sup> Note that in the Folktales transcripts, "... " stand for pauses, not gaps in the transcript.



Table 7.9: Folktales material

number of tales	55
number of tellers	14
number of words (total)	146,000
number of words per tale (average)	2,655
number of words per tale (maximum)	7,353
number of words per tale (minimum)	401
tales recorded from – to	1964-1975
informants' ages from – to	44-89
informants born from – to	1877-1926

### 7.3 Summary

In summary, let me address some of the issues that may seem problematic due to differences in type, selection, or general make-up of the data.

First, it may be argued that the SED material (both the basic and notebook material) is not comparable to the oral-history-type material, as the SED was questionnaire-based while the oral history data are usually one-on-one interviews. It should be mentioned initially that the type of analysis pursued here does not depend on long stretches of discourse. Often enough, a single phrase and sometimes even an individual form exemplify the type of language use I am interested in. In addition, in my opinion the differences are by no means as great as is generally thought. The atmosphere of responding to the SED questionnaire could not have been that different from a more general interview. In both cases, the interviewer(s) sat face-to-face with the informant(s). The only difference is that the contributions of the interviewer(s) are pre-determined in the case of the SED, but free (conversation) in case of oral history interviews. Also, I am primarily interested in the notebooks' contents, which are usually side remarks that have nothing to do with the actual questionnaire answering. In style, these remarks come very close to an oral-history-type setting, which in my view completely justifies a comparison of these data with those extracted from oral history material.<sup>29</sup>

Second, it has been said that the time frames of the SED recordings and the oral history material differ too much for them to be comparable. As has been mentioned above, fieldwork for the SED took place between 1950 and 1961, and speakers were generally in their sixties or seventies then, setting their birth dates in the 1880s to 1900s. As will be recalled from the respective tables listing the birth dates of the oral history informants, these are identical or at least very close to those of the SED informants. Thus, we are essentially dealing with the same generation of speakers, an issue that will become important in later chapters.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. also Klemola (1996: 39), who argues in a similar vein: "The formal nature of the questionnaire interview situation probably did not encourage the use of [non-standard] features [...], whereas the incidental material contains utterances that the fieldworkers picked up from their more informal conversations with the informants."



As for the different oral history data, there is no obvious reason why they should not be comparable. Informants are generally NORMs; only rarely do we also find female speakers. The only question that needs to be considered is in how far the genre influences the presence or absence of dialect features. This concerns the Folktales material in comparison with the MUNFLA material. But as the latter is typical oral history material, this should be easy to answer by comparing the sets. The results should prove new and interesting, as a comparison between different genres is something that is usually difficult to do in a study of this type.

Table 7.10 gives an overview of the corpus material that will be used in the analyses in this thesis.

*Table 7.10: Corpora used in this study*

	area/source	number of interviews	number of words
South-west	Cornwall	4	18,900
	Devon	5	51,100
	Somerset	31	174,500
	Wiltshire	9	88,800
Newfoundland	MUNFLA	31	132,000
	Folktales	55	156,000
	total	135	621,300



## **Part II**

# **Other data sources and studies**



## Chapter 8

# Special referent classes

In the course of this study, it is mentioned repeatedly that certain nouns which may trigger “gendered” pronouns deserve a special status. In addition to those nouns, a specific use of (particularly feminine) pronouns merits a closer investigation. The two major categories to be identified in this respect are instances of personification and references to animals. The specific use is subsumed under the label non-referential *she*.

The reasons for excluding those two categories and assigning special status to the third use are manifold and complex. This chapter will provide background information for all three and explain why they are not treated here at all (personification and animals) or analysed separately (non-referential *she*).

### 8.1 Personification

By definition, personification is classified as a figure of speech which attributes human qualities to non-humans and things (animals, plants, elements of nature, and abstract ideas).<sup>1</sup> Many examples in the present study are classified as “personification” when looking at them superficially. A closer analysis shows that almost none of them really represent personification.

The entry for personification in *The New Fowler’s Modern English Usage* (Burchfield and Fowler 1998<sup>3</sup>) is interesting insofar as it links the loss of grammatical gender with the rise of personification, giving examples from the *OED*:

Personification arises partly as a natural or rhetorical phenomenon and partly as a result of the loss of grammatical gender at the end of the Anglo-Saxon period. In Old English a pronoun used in place of a masculine noun was invariably *he*, in place of a feminine noun  *heo* ( = she), and in place of a neuter noun  *hit* ( = it). When the system broke up and the old grammatical cases disappeared, the obvious result was the narrowing down of  *he*  to refer only to a male person or animal,  *she*  to a female person or animal, and  *it*  to nearly

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<sup>1</sup> For definitions of personification, see the respective entries in [www.xrefer.com](http://www.xrefer.com), for example.

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all remaining nouns. At the point of loss of grammatical gender, however, *he* began to be applied ‘illogically’ to some things personified as masculine (mountains, rivers, oak-trees, etc., as the *Oxford English Dictionary* has it), and *she* to some things personified as feminine (ships, boats, carriages, utensils, etc.). For example, the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites examples of *he* used of the world (14c.), the philosopher’s stone (14c.), a fire (15c.), an argument (15c.), the sun (16c.), etc.; and examples of *she* used of a ship (14c.), a door (14c.), a fire (16c.), a cannon (17c.), a kettle (19c.), and so on. **At the present time such personification is comparatively rare**, but examples can still be found: e.g. *Great Britain is renowned for her stiff upper lip approach to adversity; I bought that yacht last year: she rides the water beautifully; (in Australia and NZ) she’s right; she’s jake; she’s a big country*, etc. (*The New Fowler’s Modern English Usage*, “personification”; boldface SW)

We have to distinguish between personification in its own right and personification as sub-component of metaphor (as in *the mouth of the river*). It should be obvious that, while the second use occurs frequently in everyday speech, particularly in idioms and proverbs, the discussion here only concerns the first use – which is, as mentioned above, rare.<sup>2</sup>

In the corpus data used for this study, clear examples of personification are generally restricted to the telling of myths and legends, where they are typical of the genre. Borderline cases include references to the mystical weather light seen along the Newfoundland coast, which is sometimes called “Jack o’ Lantern” or “Jackie the Lantern”, but which is *it* almost as often as it is *he*.<sup>3</sup>

It is extremely unlikely that someone would claim personification as a possible explanation when *he* is used by the cider maker when referring to an apple, by the watchmaker when referring to one of his watches, or by the house mover when referring to one of his houses. These are examples of true dialect use, based on a system that has nothing to do with personification. This can also be deduced from the provenance of masculine pronouns in these domains, while personification has been associated with feminine forms, as can be seen from the following quote (which has already been used in chapter 3), and the Spoken Standard system(s) described in chapter 9.

Many nouns are given variable gender, depending on whether they are thought of in an intimate way. Vehicles and countries are often called *she* as well as *it* (*She can reach 60 in 5 seconds; France has increased her exports*). Pets are often *he* or *she*. A crying baby may become *it*.

It is not obvious why some entities are readily personified while others are not. Nor is it obvious why **most entities are given female personifications**.

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<sup>2</sup> Just as a side remark, it should be noted that it is absolutely unclear how the Australian and New Zealand uses *she’s right* etc. can be classified as personification – the personal pronoun is usually non-referential, excluding personification as an explanatory factor.

<sup>3</sup> For an example involving the light, see chapter 10.

It is not simply a matter of feminine stereotypes, for *she* is used in aggressive and angry situations as well as in affectionate ones: guns, tanks and trucks which won't go remain *she*.

(Crystal 1995: 209; boldface SW)

According to this and other sources<sup>4</sup>, the representation of ships as female is also an example of personification, probably based on the imagery of a ship as a womb-like container. However, I hesitate to classify all of the literally hundreds of examples of feminine (though not female) ships in my Newfoundland data as instances of personification. A Newfoundland fisherman would simply never use *it* to refer to his ship, and personification is not a possible explanation when used in 100% of the cases. In my opinion, other arguments are more plausible and convincing than personification. It does definitely not suffice as an explanation accounting for “gendered” pronouns in general.<sup>5</sup>

## 8.2 Animal referents

At first glance, the major (and only) reason for excluding nouns referring to animals from the discussion of “gendered” pronouns is fairly simple, though maybe not obvious: Although most grammars of modern and earlier stages of English tell us that the appropriate pronoun to use when referring to an animal is *it*, except for cases where the sex of the animal is known<sup>6</sup>, actual language use could not be further removed from this prescriptive statement. When looking at speakers' behaviour, it seems – even at a very superficial level – that forms of *he* and *she* by far outnumber instances of *it* in everyday casual speech.

In my own corpora, there is essentially not a single example of *it* referring to an animal, while literally hundreds of masculine and feminine pronouns can be found.<sup>7</sup> Though surprising at first, a more detailed investigation of additional corpus data and a number of studies dealing with the issue reveals that the observed pattern is the rule rather than the exception.

MacKay and Konishi (1980) investigated the use of what they call “human” pronouns (i.e. *he*, *him*, *she*, *her*) to refer to non-human antecedents. Though outlined as a study dealing with personification, it soon turned out that personification

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, online at [www.xrefer.com](http://www.xrefer.com); Wales 2002: 331; McArthur 1992: “personification”.

<sup>5</sup> Summarizing various researchers' work on gender marking, Wales (2002: 333) argues similarly: “‘Personification’ is obviously too general a label to cover what seem to be quite complex analogical or metaphorical hierarchies of salience according to such value(s) as occupation, local environment and climate and general relevance to human needs, as well as subtle forms of gender symbolism.”

<sup>6</sup> In those cases, the pronoun corresponding with the sex of the animal may be used alternatively.

<sup>7</sup> In the West Country corpora analysed for this study, for example, there are about 500 references to animals with a masculine or feminine pronoun, but only a handful with neuter forms.

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played only a minor or no role at all in those cases where non-standard pronouns were chosen.

The authors based their study on a database of approximately 35,000 pronouns collected from an anthology of children’s literature (*cf.* MacKay and Konishi 1980: 151). They distinguished three large classes of antecedents, namely “animals (including real, imaginary, and toy animals), fantasy creatures (including imaginary beings such as fairies, ghosts, giants, and trolls), and things (including abstractions such as thought and time)” (*ibid.*).

The first major result from these counts was highly unexpected in light of prescriptive grammarians’ eyes: Of the approximately 450 pronominal references to animals, more than 80% were masculine or feminine – *he*<sup>8</sup> occurred in 62% of cases, *she* in 20%, and *it* in only 18% of the examples (*cf. ibid.*).

Next the authors classified the pronouns according to whether or not the antecedent was personified, assuming that personification would play a significant role in triggering non-neuter pronouns. Although this was found to be true in general, the figures for the non-personified instances are striking (compare the percentage columns in Table 8.1).

*Table 8.1:* The use of *he* and *she* vs. *it* for non-personified antecedents (from MacKay and Konishi 1980: 152)

Nature of antecedent	Total	Pronoun used			
		<i>he</i> and <i>she</i>		<i>it</i>	
	N	N	%	N	%
Animals	218	150	69	68	31
Fantasy creatures	0	0	0	0	0
Things	26	6	23	20	77
Total	246	156	64	88	36

Within the class of animals, personification could be held accountable for the use of a “human” pronoun in only about half of the cases (234 of 452). In the non-personified cases (Table 8.1), a “human” pronoun was recorded in more than two thirds (69%) of the examples – a figure that clearly shows how rarely *it* is really used to refer to animals, here in only 31% (68 examples) of cases. The figures for the other two classes, on the other hand, are clearly within the expected norm. All examples of fantasy creatures being referred to by *he* or *she* are instances of personification, and in only six cases did speakers use a “gendered” pronoun to refer to things.

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<sup>8</sup> In the following, the figures for *he* include all corresponding object, possessive, and oblique forms as well (i.e. *him*, *himself*, *his*). The same holds for the feminine forms.



In another study, Marcoux (1973) investigated students' use of personal pronouns in tag questions. Among the noun classes he tested were countries, ships, animals and humans. Like MacKay and Konishi, Marcoux found surprisingly high occurrences of "human" pronouns used to refer to animals of unknown sex. Some of the sentences that were used in this study are reprinted below (1 to 4), together with the pronominal forms that were recorded in the tags.

- (1) *My dog will eat anything.* *he* 88, *it* 5, *she* 3, aberrant 12  
 (2) *That cat looks hungry.* *it* 46, *he* 43, *she* 9, *he/she* 2, aberrant 8  
 (3) *This canary sings beautifully.* *it* 69, *he* 23, *she* 7, *he/she/it* 1, aberrant 8  
 (4) *Tweety, my parakeet, is sick.* *she* 42, *he* 40, *it* 14, *he/she* 2, aberrant 10

Two conclusions can be drawn from these observations: First, "[t]he presence of a proper noun seems to encourage the use of either a masculine or a feminine pronoun rather than the neuter form" (Marcoux 1973: 104). And second, the masculine pronoun is highly favoured over the feminine one.<sup>9</sup>

A cursory analysis<sup>10</sup> of personal pronouns referring to animal antecedents in the spoken part of the BNC reveals the same pattern: In the contexts of a search for "dog" and "cat", all pronouns referring to the keyword were marked. Results can be found in Table 8.2 and 8.3.<sup>11</sup>

Table 8.2: Pronouns for antecedent "dog" in a sample from the BNC (spoken)

	N	%
masculine form	162	56.6
feminine form	23	8.0
neuter form	101	35.3
Total	286	99.9

<sup>9</sup> Morris (1991) came to similar results; see section 9.2.1. It is unclear why the results for the two birds (canary and parakeet) differ to such a large extent. We can assume that a parakeet is more pet-like than a canary, which would explain the comparatively high output of *it* for the latter. Why *she* and *he* occur with almost identical frequencies in example (4) remains unclear, though.

<sup>10</sup> A search for "dog" and "cat" was run, restricted to the spoken sub-corpus. The total figures are incidental, based on the printed output of eight pages after marking those cases where pronouns occurred in the "maximum scope" setting.

<sup>11</sup> Percentages are rounded to first decimal so that figures may not add up to 100%.

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Table 8.3: Pronouns for antecedent “cat” in a sample from the BNC (spoken)

	N	%
masculine form	88	52.7
feminine form	38	22.8
neuter form	41	24.6
Totals	167	100.1

Although slightly different from Marcoux’s results, the overall pattern that emerges is identical: Masculine pronouns are the unmarked choice when referring to a pet such as a cat or dog. While it can be assumed that most of the instances of feminine pronouns referring to dogs are used by speakers who know that the dog in question is actually female, cats are more likely to be *shes* generically, based on the biological-semantic pattern (*dog* = neuter or + male, vs. *bitch*; *cat* = neuter or + female, vs. *tom-cat*).

Pronoun switches are typical, and a number of emotive factors play a role in the choice of pronouns when referring to animals. For example, the owners of a cat (“cat people”, according to popular opinion) are very likely to refer to the dog that chased their cat as *it* rather than *he* or *she*, signifying their emotional attitude or intimacy towards their cat, but at the same time signalling distance towards the dog.<sup>12</sup> The reverse pattern naturally holds for “dog people”. Some representative examples from the BNC can be found in (5) to (9).

All of the examples in (5) to (9) highlight certain aspects of pronominal use connected with animal referents. In (5), a police officer (PS1SF) is obviously being questioned about dogs on the force. He himself has never owned such a dog, which, in addition to the rather formal situation of the discussion, should explain his four uses of *it*. Once he gets emotionally involved though, talking about a dog becoming a member of the family of the leading officer, he switches to *he* in the two final references.

- (5) ... Alright? Next question. Yes young man.  
 [PS000]: What was it like when you had your police dog?  
 [PS1SF]: I have never had a police dog. I’ve never had, never been on er the special course<sup>13</sup>. A lot of people like it ... because basically th er when you look after a police *dog it* becomes your pet as well, you take *it* home with you and you take *it* to work with you, and the u you’ll have a police dog for sort of like *its* working life of seven to eight years, so basically you’re gonna have *him* for seven to eight years and *he* becomes a fa like a family pet. I’ve never been on the course<sup>14</sup> so I’ve never had a police dog. FM7 (257)

<sup>12</sup> See also Mathiot and Roberts (1979) and their idea of up- and downgrading in section 9.1.1.

<sup>13</sup> The transcriber probably misunderstood; “force” is more likely in this context, as the police units with dogs are usually part of a special force.

<sup>14</sup> Again, the context makes “force” more likely.

In (6), a farmer (PS2VX) is talking about hunting foxes. Although reporting a rather general procedure (“One dog would go in ...”), the speaker obviously has one specific dog in mind, which explains his use of *she* in all instances.

- (6) [PS2VX]: Aye. Aye. And erm say the fox had been in the ground, and the [...] and the the young cubs, for about three or four days. And we used to hear somebody saying there was a vixen there and some and some young ones. [...] we went up there with the dogs and let them in in to the burrow. Block everywhere, let them into the burrow. One *dog* would go in, and **she**'d just shake **her** tail and come back, and you couldn't get **her** in afterwards because **she** knew that they'd cleared off.  
 [PS2VY]: I see.  
 [PS2VX]: They had moved.  
 [PS2VY]: Yeah. HER (217)

Speaker (PS555) in (7) has an obvious antipathy towards small dogs, such as a friend's Chihuahua. Both the negative feelings and the animal's size are responsible for the choice of pronouns – *it* in all but one instance, where the speaker uses a masculine pronoun, most likely referring to the true sex of the dog in question.

- (7) [PS555]: I couldn't stop laughing. The little dog's going [yelping sound] [panting] [...] This little *dog* was mad, man, did you see **it**? **It** was so ugly I would've  
 [PS55A]: Yeah.  
 [PS555]: kicked **it** if I saw **it**. Same as Chris's chihuahua. I'd, I'd love to kick **it**. I'd love to kick her dog. **He**'s so tiny! I feel so sorry for **it** you know, up at that house with all them big fat balls of, of fat. They've probably stepped on **it** enough times.  
 [PS55A]: [...]  
 [PS555]: And have you heard **it** crying at night?  
 [PS55A]: Mhm. KPG (4043)

In (8), the owner of the cat (PS1D1) uses masculine pronouns exclusively, while her friend (PS1CX) only uses neuter pronouns, a typical pattern signalling familiarity or ownership. Similarly, the speaker in (9) only uses feminine pronouns, as to him the sex of his own cat is of course not a question.

- (8) [PS1D1]: Come on puss, shh, shh, shh  
 [PS1CX]: Where's **it** gone Rebecca? Where's pussy *cat*?  
 [PS1D1]: puss, puss, puss, puss  
 [PS1CX]: [laughing] Where's **it** gone []?  
 [PS1D1]: is **he** there?  
 [PS1CX]: Can you see **him**? ... Can you see **him**?  
 [PS1D1]: Where's the cat?  
 [PS1CX]: Go on out, out cat [shooing away]  
 [PS1D1]: [laugh] where's **he** gone? KB9 (1084)

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- (9) [PS0H9]: I know, woke up this morning **she** was, **she** was obviously cold, *cat* was right under the covers, snuggled right up to me and got **her**, **her** chin on me arm like that, I was asleep ...  
KCY (438)

Clearly, pets are more likely to be *hes* than *shes* or *its* when their sex is unknown, *he* thus (still) serving as generic pronoun despite the arguments of recent feminist linguistics theories. Anecdotal evidence supporting this claim can be found in (10), a joke from Langenscheidt's *Sprachkalender*, July 13/14 2001.<sup>15</sup> The fact that the masculine pronoun is used even in such an example – which might have an influence on learner's English – shows that it is clearly the norm, not the exception.

- (10) - What kind of dog is that?  
- He's a police dog.  
- He doesn't look like one to me.  
- Of course not. He's in the secret service.

Generally, researchers agree that personal involvement seems to be the most relevant factor in pronoun choice.

[T]he use of *he* and *she* seems to signal **personal involvement or empathy for the referent** in the case of [...] an owner of an animal, someone who is emotionally attached or values the referent, [...] or someone attached to a specific animal. By the way of contrast, the use of *it* seems to signal **lack of involvement or empathy with the referent** in the case of [...] [a speaker] who is not personally attached to the referent or wishes to devalue it, an entity which is acted upon, and finally **a nonspecific animal or class of animals** with which personal involvement is out of the question.

(MacKay and Konishi 1980: 155f; boldface SW)

The cut-off point within the class of animals differs from speaker to speaker, depending on their professions, environment, or similar factors. For someone who grew up in a big city and has never lived in the countryside, it is highly probable that only pets, or even just dogs and cats, can be *he* or *she*, whereas a badger or fox (which the speaker may not ever have seen in the wild) will be an *it*. On the other hand, it is extremely likely that a farmer will refer to the animals on his farm as *he* or *she*, that a hunter will refer to the hunted animal, the fisherman to the fish in his catch as *he*.

We should thus conclude that the prescriptive rules in grammars concerning anaphoric pronouns to be selected to refer to animals are not reflected in everyday conversations. As some degree of personal involvement is usually present when speakers talk about animals, neuter pronouns are the least expected forms. Pets will be *its* only derogatorily or when talking about them in a detached manner, while the status of wild animals depends to a large extent on the speaker's "civilization"

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<sup>15</sup> Thanks to Kathrin Becker for providing me with the example.

background. Other factors that may influence pronoun choice are saliency of the animal in the discourse (“centrality” in MacKay and Konishi (1980: 155)), size (the bigger the more likely *he*; *ibid.*: 153), and various (supposed or real) character attributes (brave, wise = male; weak, passive = female etc.; *cf. ibid.*: 154 and also section 9.1.1 on Mathiot and Roberts (1979)).

### 8.3 Non-referential *she*

This category includes many examples that are mentioned elsewhere in this thesis. When investigating the use of “gendered” pronouns, examples like those in (11) to (19) occur with a regularity that warrants a closer analysis.

- (11) “Okay!” Julia yelled. “Get ready. Here **she** goes!”  
 “Timber!”  
 The post toppled slowly and as it landed on the grass with a thump, they both cheered.  
 Woman (Julia) and her daughter are removing the posts that held a rope rail; reference seems to be to the situation as a whole rather than an individual post; Nicholas Evans, 2002 (Corgi ed.), *The Smoke Jumper*, p. 401.
- (12) Watch out! Here **she** comes! (speaker is sea-sick)  
 (Svartengren 1928: ex. 139)
- (13) Here **she** comes!  
 (Paddock 1991: 30, referring to an approaching weather front)
- (14) **She**’s blowing hard out there. It almost blew over the tree.  
 (Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 38)<sup>16</sup>
- (15) Well HE done it we’ll say, th’ (other) one had to do it. He climbed up you know an’ just as he got on the top part \_away **she** goes \_ helter to skelter all over the ki ... all over the place.  
 Folktales 141; reference to situation of a pile of chairs falling
- (16) I only come down to help pull en [house]. But nevertheless I said, all right boys, straighten out, and away dey goes, my son, straightened out, we took dat house and here **she** come.  
 MUNFLA 72-089: C1187; cataphoric reference to what happens
- (17) ‘Stay the night with us?’ – ‘Ah, **she**’s right.’ “all is in order”  
 R. Stow, 1963, cited in Ramson (1988: 531)
- (18) “**She**’s fine; **she**’s cool; **she**’ll be joe.” synonyms of ‘It doesn’t matter.’  
 (Orsman 1997: 717)
- (19) Well ... it rolled in at my feet and he’d pulled t’ pin out! I got out o’ that hole faster than I went in, and up **she** went!  
 Middlesborough 027 (MidSL); explosion caused by a grenade (“it”)

<sup>16</sup> The first pronoun (*she*) most likely refers to the weather in general, while the second one (*it*) refers to the wind specifically, which the authors identified as referent in both cases.

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All of these examples have one thing in common: The referent of the personal pronoun is either difficult to identify or cannot be named at all. Very often, *she* seems to refer to the general or concrete situation (→ generally highly abstract), circumstances, or side effects of the utterance rather than to a concrete thing. Items of this type can be found in all varieties of English, pointing to the fact that this use has nothing to do with regional or social restrictions. For that reason, non-referential *she* does not fall within the framework of this thesis. Nevertheless, I will briefly outline some of the characteristics of these forms, basically because none of the other studies on pronominal gender has done so.

One of the major characteristics that most of these constructions share is the word order: More often than not, extraposition results in an output of the form X-S-V instead of standard S-V-X. “X” is usually a spatial or demonstrative adverb, most often *here* or *there*. Alternatively, the preposition of a prepositional verb is extraposed, resulting in patterns such as *up she V* or *down she V*. Judging from the relevant literature, this type of fronting seems to be rare in English. Birner and Ward (1998), who analysed pre- and postposed non-canonical word order patterns, do not mention this construction type. An analysis in terms of theme/rheme or given/new information is difficult in most cases. The fronted element, although usually containing new information, is generally not the topic of the respective utterance. Matters are further complicated by the fact that expressions such as *here/there/PP she V* seem to assume an almost idiomatic meaning, making it impossible to attribute any type of information status such as theme/rheme or topic/comment to the individual elements at all.

Moreover, the verb is always in the present tense, although the action described would generally demand a progressive form. It seems that the need for fronting/extraposition overrides any aspect requirements.

The origins of this type of use remain in the dark – flattering (or unflattering) though it would be, it is definitely not enough to claim that the situations in question show some feminine characteristics, as folk belief has it. It is probably true that most speakers who use non-referential *shes* are not aware of it. The construction seems to have found its place among all the empty *its* that are around in everyday English conversations, and be it only because *There she goes* sounds much better than *There it goes*. From the present state of affairs, we can only conclude that further investigation is needed.

## Chapter 9

# Non-dialectal studies of gender assignment

*or: As things stand, it bids fair to create a new means of expressing shades of feeling for which previously there existed no adequate linguistic instrument.*

(Svartengren 1927: 113)

### 9.1 American English

#### 9.1.1 Sociological view (M. Mathiot)

In their 1979 article, Madeleine Mathiot and her assistant Marjorie Roberts investigate the use of “referential gender” in American English. They assume that patterns of speakers’ pronoun use reveal certain sex roles as manifested in language. Their approach is a sociological or even psychological rather than a purely linguistic one, and they use attitudes and mental representations to explain language use. Data were collected for a period of 10 years, resulting in two subsets, one from the Los Angeles (years 1-3.5) and one from the Buffalo area (years 3.5-10). The examples stem from informal face-to-face conversations (*cf.* Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 5).<sup>1</sup> The authors do not specify whether they elicited their examples with the help of some priming sentences, or whether they occurred in natural discourse.

Mathiot and Roberts distinguish the standard pattern of referential gender (“normative pattern”) from the “intimate pattern”, which allows the use of *he* or *she* for an inanimate entity<sup>2</sup> or of *it* for a person. While the normative pattern predicts constant use of one pronominal form, “in the intimate pattern, the same

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<sup>1</sup> The authors themselves speak of “off and on” data collecting, meaning that systematicity was not their highest priority when undertaking their fieldwork (*cf.* Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 5).

<sup>2</sup> The primary distinction made by Mathiot and Roberts is between human and non-human, not animate vs. inanimate as assumed in the earlier chapters. However, this difference is of no consequence here. As I explained earlier (see section 8.2), animals should be treated separately anyway.

entity may be referred to with either one of the three pronominal forms by the same speaker” (Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 7).

At a very early stage, even before the actual analysis, the authors offer a generalization which they think explains the differing uses of *he*, *she* and *it* in the intimate pattern: “The choice of ‘he’, ‘she’ or ‘it’ depends on the speaker’s *general attitude* towards the entity referred to or his *feelings of the moment* towards that entity.” (Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 7; emphasis SW). Although details of Mathiot’s and Roberts’ analysis are debatable (some minor differences as well as some major contrasts in their assumptions compared to the present author’s analysis will be pointed out below), it should be mentioned here already that the general tenor of the article is very much in agreement with findings from this study.

### 9.1.1.1 The intimate pattern

As in the standard variety, the intimate pattern manifests two basic oppositions in pronominal gender: *he* and *she* vs. *it* on the one and within that opposition *he* vs. *she* on the other hand. According to Mathiot and Roberts, the first contrast can be attributed to (semantic) **upgrading** (*it* → *he*, *she*) or **downgrading** (*he*, *she* → *it*).<sup>3</sup> While I do not share the authors’ sentiment that upgrading in general corresponds to personification (*cf.* section 8.1), their association of “positive involvement on the part of the speaker” seems a good means of tackling the issue (*cf.* Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 11).<sup>4</sup> Similarly, negative involvement is said to underlie instances of downgrading, which also extends to those cases of previously upgraded items (i.e. return to the standard pattern).

Mathiot and Roberts obviously did not expect to encounter instances of the intimate pattern at such a high frequency. Their surprise at that frequency obviously made them over-generalize to some extent when they say that “[i]t seems that any nonhuman entity can be referred to as either ‘he’ or ‘she’, i.e. upgraded, *without regard to its nature.*” (Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 11; emphasis SW)

While the contrast between *it* on the one hand and *he* and *she* on the other is relatively straightforward, much more variation occurs within the intimate pattern, i.e. between *he* and *she*. The authors differentiate between men’s and women’s usage, as they assume that certain patterns of thought manifest themselves in the intimate pattern. The respective meanings of *he* and *she* for women and men can be found in Tables 9.1 and 9.2.

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<sup>3</sup> For some reason, Romaine (1997: 60) attributes these terms to Svartengren (1927), surely the result of a mix-up.

<sup>4</sup> This concept will underlie all future uses of the term *involvement* in this thesis. It should be treated separately from the more pragmatic meaning (→ ensuring collaboration between speakers; thus e.g. in Cheshire (1997)). While the latter involves inferencing, negotiating of meaning, etc., the former is purely referring to the individual speaker’s sentiments (e.g. sympathy or antipathy) without involving the addressee.



Table 9.1: Meanings manifested in men's usage of 'she' and 'he' as the intimate pattern (from Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 14)

'she'		'he'	
Men's mental image of women	Men's attitudes toward or feelings about women	Men's attitudes towards or feelings about themselves	Men's mental image of themselves
Prized possession	Appreciation	Respect	Brave, gallant
Challenge to one's manhood	Eagerness, resentment, frustration		Warm affection
Reward	Pride Sensual pleasure	Self-depreciation	
Beautiful	Admiration	Self-esteem	Competent (not emotional, intelligent, strong)
Incompetent (emotional, unintelligent, weak)	Contempt		

Light grey indicates those areas where men and women differ in their attributed meanings, while they agree in all the other attributes. As for the shared meanings, the authors state that "it is clear from even a casual knowledge of American culture that these meanings originate from men rather than from women" (Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 15). The sentiment expressed here may very well be true in western English-speaking countries in general rather than just in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

The semantic oppositions in Tables 9.1 and 9.2 are of particular interest. Mathiot and Roberts adopt a rather archaic picture of men and women and the values and ideas that are part of their heritage. Each of the sexes occupies one of the opposing ends of a continuum in each of the categories. Details can be found in Table 9.3.

Although many examples are provided to illustrate all of the categories that Mathiot and Roberts mention, their work is rather impressionistic, and it seems as if theirs is not a clear-cut system of pronominal use, but rather an interpretation of more or less incidental facts. Under different circumstances, most of the examples could be interpreted in a different way.

It should also be taken into consideration that the article discussed here was written and researched in the 1970s, and that both authors are women. At a time when "feminist linguistics" was not yet *en vogue* and had not (yet) established the status it has today, the sentiments expressed here are clearly of that category. However, this article would clearly fall under the heading of "moderate" feminist writings, as the authors only state what they think is going on, without passing judgement. Reading between the lines, one recognizes a certain dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs, though. Just take a statement like the following:

<sup>5</sup> In light of such a statement, the data the authors gathered seem rather contradictory (*cf.* next section for some figures). If the female (language) universe were largely dependent on men's conceptions, why would women use more masculine than feminine pronouns in the intimate pattern? Shouldn't they rather use the same pattern as men?

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Table 9.2: Meanings manifested in women's usage of 'she' and 'he' as the intimate pattern (from Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 16)

'she'		'he'	
Women's mental image of themselves	Women's attitudes toward or feelings about themselves	Women's attitudes toward or feelings about men	Women's mental image of men
Mature	Self-esteem	Cuddly affection Mild disparagement Pity Exasperation	'Cute little fellow' * Unconsequential * Helpless * 'A pain in the ass' *
Prized possession	Appreciation		
Challenge to one's manhood	Eagerness, resentment, frustration		
Reward	Pride Sensual pleasure		
Beautiful	Admiration	Self-depreciation	Ugly
Incompetent (emotional, unintelligent, weak)	Contempt	Self-esteem	Competent (not emotional, intelligent, strong)

\* stands for behaviour considered infantile by women

Men define themselves both independently of their relationship to women and in terms of it. Women define themselves only in terms of their relationship with men. [...] Men regard themselves as *intellectually superior* to women. Women regard themselves as *emotionally superior* to men.

(Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 27f; italics original)

Although many people may think or feel that this is essentially true, it is rather unlikely that anyone, be they male or female, would make this strong a statement in public today.<sup>6</sup>

### 9.1.1.2 Summarizing the results

It is unclear from the article how many instances of "gendered" pronouns (or of the intimate pattern) Mathiot and Roberts actually found in their data. The examples given in the analysis itself add up to approximately 130, with masculine and

<sup>6</sup> Note, however, a comparatively modern account taking the same path: Romaine (1997), obviously referring to a study by Penelope (1990), remarks the following about the uses of *she* in Standard (written) English: "The use of 'she' in English in connection with hurricanes, etc. reflects the male point of view. Hurricanes are destructive and irrational forces which 'man' needs to subdue. Similarly, cars, boats and planes, like women, are generally owned and controlled by men. [...] there are [...] metaphors at work here which are motivated [...] by cultural beliefs about women." (Romaine 1997: 58)

Table 9.3: Semantic oppositions and basic attributes of men and women (from Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 22)

Semantic oppositions corresponding to the formal opposition 'she' vs. 'he'			Basic attributes of women and men	
Beautiful	vs.	Ugly	<i>Women:</i> beautiful <i>Men:</i> ugly	
Incompetent	vs.	Competent	<i>Women:</i> incompetent <i>Men:</i> competent	Men's inherent image
Challenge or Reward	vs.	Brave	<i>Women:</i> a challenge to, or reward for men <i>Men:</i> brave	
Prized possession	vs.	Good-Natured	<i>Women:</i> men's prized possession <i>Men:</i> good-natured	
Mature	vs.	Infantile	<i>Women:</i> mature <i>Men:</i> infantile	Women's inherent image

feminine forms distributed fairly evenly. That figure itself should make us suspicious as to the overall figures, as it is highly unlikely that “gendered” pronouns are distributed evenly between male and female speakers. Taking together the relevant forms of the appendices (excluding animals), the following picture emerges: Men use *she* or *her* about 40 times to refer to an inanimate entity, while not a single use of a masculine pronoun is mentioned. Women, on the other hand, use masculine pronouns about 60 times to refer to something inanimate, but there are also approximately 10 examples of women using feminine pronouns in the same context.

The most interesting conclusion to be drawn from these data is the following: If we take the examples presented here as representative of male and female use respectively, a clear picture emerges. Pronominal use in the intimate pattern is primarily dependent on the sex of the speaker – where males prefer feminine pronouns, females will generally use masculine ones. Only very rarely will a woman use a feminine pronoun that is not an instance of personification, nor are men very likely to use masculine pronouns for any inanimate entity.<sup>7</sup>

The second conclusion to be drawn from Mathiot's study is a rather sobering one: Although there might be a certain pattern in the use of non-neuter pronouns,

<sup>7</sup> The use of *he* representing women's inherent image of men is – obviously – “entirely limited to women” (Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 41).

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this use is by no means systematic.<sup>8</sup> This must be concluded from the numerous examples where speakers switch pronouns without any observable pattern (examples from Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 34):

- (1) Do you realise how many times I have picked **him** up? **He** keeps slipping off the shelf. Next time this happens I'm going to leave **it** on the floor. See how **he** likes it! [towel]
- (2) This one has been around long enough. I say, get rid of **it!** **He** is A season [out of fashion], get rid of **it!** [bedspread]
- (3) What the hell is the matter with this thing? **It** just won't work for me! **He** usually isn't like this! [typewriter]

Mathiot and Roberts explain all of the above shifts as instances of attaching negative attributes to things that are usually upgraded (*cf.* Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 33). However, the explanative value of such an assumption is rather low. In (1), for example, the speaker is clearly annoyed – why then doesn't she use *it* in all slots? The switch back to *he* is rather unexpected.

The pattern Mathiot and Roberts observed for everyday language use in Los Angeles and Buffalo in the 1970s is by no means exceptional. The following examples are taken either from modern (American) fiction and movies or have been overheard in conversations of Newfoundlanders.

- (4) Ok, crack 'er up!  
From the movie *Titanic* (USA 1997); the speaker is an American male, talking about the *safe* being brought up from the ocean floor.
- (5) That's the way, ladies, you fill **her** up.  
Farmer talking to his cows as they are milked (ref. probably *container* or *tub* of the milking machine into which milk is pumped); Nora Roberts, 1996, *The Fall of Shane MacKade*, p. 9.
- (6) Snake 'er through.  
White American male from Seattle to his co-worker about a *wire* for an alarm system that has to be put through a hole in the wall; Susan Andersen, 1993, *Present Danger*, p. 230.
- (7) Where is **she**? – If **she** will give us the pleasure . . . there **she** is!  
Male auctioneer, presumably Canadian, talking about a *violin* that is to be auctioned; the turntable doesn't work, so the audience has to wait a bit for the violin; from the movie *The Red Violin*.

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<sup>8</sup> It is unclear how Siemund (2001) can detect a system in the pattern. It is not surprising that he concludes (Siemund 2001: 104) that the men's pattern is similar to the one he (or rather Andrew Pawley; see section 9.3) found for Tasmanian English – the Tasmanian informants are almost exclusively males. However, this nicely supports the present author's view that we are essentially dealing with a pattern of spoken English in general rather than a (regionally restricted) variety-specific pattern.

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- (8) **She** was burning good. (house) B.F., St. John's resident; n.d.  
 "Widower loses 'everything' in early morning fire." *The Evening Telegram* (GS)<sup>9</sup>
- (9) Up **she** comes (roof) picture subtitle, *The Early Shopper*, 14/10/96 (GS)
- (10) **She** backdraft. "There was a backdraft" Fireman, St. John's; n.d. (GS)
- (11) **she** (of a photograph) local picture framer; 1999 (GS)
- (12) **she** (of the exercise pulley) St. John's physiotherapist, 1999 (GS)

From these observations we can conclude that the pattern of pronominal use as observed by Mathiot and Roberts is rather prototypical of non-standard spoken English in general. It will be shown in the following sections that their study arrives at results that are very similar to those of Svartengren (1930s, fiction; section 9.1.2), Morris (1990s, Canadian English; section 9.2) and even Pawley (1970s, Tasmanian Vernacular English; section 9.3). On the other hand, a stark contrast exists between the results from these studies and those from the analyses of my West Country and Newfoundland dialect corpora (*cf.* chapters 13, 14 and 15).

## 9.1.2 Vernacular view (H. Svartengren)

### 9.1.2.1 Introduction

In three essays very similar in content (Svartengren 1927, 1928, 1954), Hilding Svartengren investigated the use of feminine pronouns used for inanimate referents. His study differs from most other studies mentioned here in that it is based on fiction, i.e. "non-natural" language use, for the most part from US writers.

Premature as it may seem, the first "conclusion" from Svartengren's studies can be drawn here already: Although obviously puzzled by the "weird" use of feminine forms for inanimate entities, Svartengren does not mention a similar phenomenon for the masculine counterparts. Two explanations for this come to mind: a highly unlikely one would be that the author considered the use of masculine forms nothing unusual, thus thinking it unnecessary to mention it. The second (much more likely) explanation is that he simply did not encounter strange masculine forms, or at least far fewer than feminine ones, which did not deserve any comment.<sup>10</sup>

The non-existence (or at least extreme rarity) of masculine pronouns referring to inanimate entities in American fiction supports one of the major claims of this thesis very strongly: For the average native speaker of English, the "gendered" pronoun of choice is feminine, while it is masculine for a speaker with a West Country dialect background. This could already be seen in the previous chapter(s) and sections, and will be supported by the studies presented in the following sections as well.

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<sup>9</sup> GS = from G. Shorrocks' personal collection.

<sup>10</sup> Svartengren indeed mentions the occasional masculine form, but their frequency is definitely negligible.

Of course, this rule is not without exception. One factor which is apparently strong enough to overrule the general system is the speaker's sex (*cf.* Mathiot and Roberts 1979), resulting in females using masculine pronouns in some situations. In addition, it should be clear that in our modern times pure dialect systems do not really exist any longer. In this particular case, the mixture of lects (true dialect vs. spoken "Standard") results in outwardly conflicting uses of pronouns, as the dialect "predicts" masculine forms where the spoken variety would rather use a feminine form. This seems to be one of the rare instances in which neither of the most likely choices in casual style corresponds to the written standard language – which might be the explanation behind scholars' puzzlement over the phenomenon.

In the following paragraphs, a brief overview of Svartengren's studies will be presented, largely based on his 1927 and 1928 papers, which are basically identical in terms of content. Because of the completely different outline and aims of Svartengren's work in comparison with the present study, evaluation and adaptation of Svartengren's observations are possible only to a very limited extent. Emphasis will thus be put on those points which either add new information to or support the assumptions made here.<sup>11</sup>

### 9.1.2.2 Svartengren's database

According to his 1928 article (Svartengren 1928: 7ff), Svartengren based most of his analysis on 79 texts of contemporary<sup>12</sup> (mostly) American authors, among them such well-known names as Jack London (with 10 texts) and Mark Twain (one text). In another 37 books "written by Americans or describing American life nothing, or nothing worth quoting, has been found" (Svartengren 1928: 8), giving the impression that this particular use of feminine pronouns may be ideolectal (i.e. restricted to some authors) rather than universal.

Another noteworthy feature (which is probably at the heart of Svartengren's explanation for the use of these feminine forms) is that almost all of the specimens stem from males, either in direct speech or some sort of internal dialogue, or simply because the author is a man. In addition, Svartengren remarks that "[m]any novels dealing with upper and middle class life have contributed very little to our collection." (Svartengren 1927: 113) – For him, the phenomenon is obviously a) not geographically restricted and b) vernacular and rural at heart, but he is aware of the bias of his database in this respect:

Examples show clearly that it is a distinct *colloquialism* at home chiefly among men familiar with the stern realities of life and whose speech is uninfluenced by literature – this practically all over the United States and Canada. Most of the material [...] hails from the fur, the timber, the mining, and the cow countries, which may, or may not, represent the actual state of things,

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<sup>11</sup> Points of disagreement are of course also mentioned where they occur. For a more detailed treatment of Svartengren's studies, see Siemund (2001).

<sup>12</sup> Most were published between 1900 and 1925.

for, we must add, works describing life in the industrial centers have been drawn upon only to a limited extent.

(Svartengren 1927: 113; emphasis SW)

The high number of disregarded books (37 out of 116; roughly 32%) also relativizes the overall frequency of the feature in the first place. As the author himself states, “[t]he two hundred and odd ex[amples] are drawn from some 175 books, chiefly novels” (Svartengren 1928: 14). We thus end up with an average of one to two examples per book<sup>13</sup> – based on my own reading experience of the past years, I can confirm that such a ratio is by no means exceptional. The reader may be referred to the preceding and following sections where some of the examples I encountered in modern popular fiction are mentioned.

### 9.1.2.3 Classes of nouns

Not very surprisingly after the prologue above, the noun classes Svartengren identifies as being capable of using feminine pronouns are largely based on research by earlier authors. Due to the diversity of referent nouns, very often real classes cannot be identified at all, but rather represent a cumulation of nouns that often share no more than one semantic feature. Svartengren himself is well aware of this (Svartengren 1927: 110): “It will be seen, then, that every attempt to confine to certain categories of nouns the instances when the feminine is to be used, must be abortive.” The major classes Svartengren lists are (*cf.* Svartengren 1927, 1928):

1. Concrete things made or worked upon by man
  - (a) Machinery, industrial plants
  - (b) Hollow things, receptables
    - i. Rooms, houses, and their uses
    - ii. Musical instruments
  - (c) Other things made, created, worked, or worked upon by man
    - i. Various small objects not tools
    - ii. Large scale undertakings
    - iii. Picture, film, newspaper
    - iv. Clothing, wooden leg
    - v. Food and drink
    - vi. Coins, money, amount of money, amount generally
    - vii. Organized bodies
    - viii. Districts

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<sup>13</sup> Siemund (2001) counted a total of 268 examples, based on Svartengren’s 1927 article.

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- ix. Road, trail, distance
  - x. Natural resources exploited by man
2. Actions, abstract ideas
- (a) Actions
    - i. Expressions containing an imperative
    - ii. Other expressions denoting actions
  - (b) Abstract ideas
    - i. Pronoun referring to substantive mentioned
    - ii. No substantival propword
3. Nature and natural objects not worked upon by man
- (a) Nature
  - (b) Celestial bodies
  - (c) Geographical appellations
  - (d) Material nouns
  - (e) Seasons, periods
  - (f) Fire, temperature, weather conditions, ice, snow
  - (g) Human body and its parts

The first category is very reminiscent of what Elworthy and Barnes described as man-made objects, and we can assume that Svartengren's categorization is at least in part based on their account and what others made of it.

It is the second category in particular that commands our interest. Svartengren is, to my knowledge, the only author among those investigating "gendered" pronouns who proposes this category, which has been labelled "non-referential *she*" earlier in this thesis (*cf.* 8.3). "Non-referential" here stands for real instances (i.e. pronouns without antecedent) as well as abstract nouns referring to situations, events, etc. Svartengren found many examples illustrating this type of use, some of which are reprinted in (13) to (17) below.

- (13) Let **her** go! Let **her** went ("I am ready") (Svartengren 1928: ex. 130)
- (14) Start **her** off (ref. to making pancakes) (Svartengren 1928: ex. 134)
- (15) Watch out! Here **she** comes! (speaker is sea-sick)  
(Svartengren 1928: ex. 139)
- (16) There **she** goes! (undertaking) (Svartengren 1928: ex. 59)
- (17) "How do you like it, Tim?" – "**She**'s alright." (Svartengren 1928: ex. 161)



One major sub-category of the “action” category is connected with the use of an imperative, again a use that is encountered with high frequency in everyday conversations (recall such uses as *Fill 'er up!* referring to refuelling a vehicle). Although not explicitly mentioned, another syntactic peculiarity of this category is its frequent use of fronting or extraposition (examples of the type *There she goes!*). Example (17) is reminiscent of the use of *she's apples, she's right, she'll be right, she's sweet*, etc. to refer to the general situation or circumstances, supposedly restricted to Australian / New Zealand English (*cf.* Ramson (1988: 14, 31, 577, 656), Orsman (1997: 717)), maybe hinting at the origins of that particular construction.

The comparatively high overall frequency of this category<sup>14</sup> is another argument supporting my claim that we are essentially dealing with two completely different, largely unrelated systems. The dialectal system(s) described in chapters 13, 14 and 15 do not “allow” the use of a “gendered” pronoun referring to something as abstract as a situation or, even more extreme, a “gendered” pronoun without any antecedent. We saw that for the traditional dialect systems the theories put forward by 19<sup>th</sup>-century scholars still hold, at least to a certain extent. Most people will agree that it is difficult to attribute a high degree of individuality or human traits (which would justify an interpretation as personification) to a situation.<sup>15</sup>

Not much needs to be said about the rest of Svartengren's categories, which include numerous items capable of triggering feminine pronouns even in the standard language (e.g. nature, celestial bodies, cities, ...). As has been pointed out before, they are not systematic in any way – a fact that the author himself acknowledges in saying that none of the restrictions proposed by previous researchers hold for his data (*cf.* Svartengren 1928: 41).<sup>16</sup>

#### 9.1.2.4 Origins and explanations

As he had earlier advocated the vernacular status of “gendered” pronouns, Svartengren turns to the influence of other vernacular varieties as one of the conceivable origins of the phenomenon after having dismissed possible influence by foreign languages. Conveniently ignoring the fact that the Southwest of England is *hetero*-territory and that large portions of settlers, particularly working-class persons, came from that area, he notes parallels between the use he observed for America and the one documented for Northern and Celtic English(es) (Svartengren 1927: 108). From the short and rather cursory statements in various reference works (the *EDD* among them) Svartengren concludes that, while it may have its origins in

<sup>14</sup> Siemund (2001) classified 57 items out of a total of 268 as belonging to this category, i.e. 21.3%.

<sup>15</sup> In fact, this raises a problem in Svartengren's study: He himself claims that the items referred to with a feminine pronoun “must be capable of assuming at least some degree of individuality” (Svartengren 1927: 110). No comment is made as to how this is achieved with his category 2. While this statement supports the theory that Siemund (2001) proposes (roughly: only highly individuated nouns can be animated), the data clearly contradict it, with more than 20% of abstract referents pointing out that Svartengren's material is of a completely different nature, illustrating a different system, than the rest of the data that Siemund analysed.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. artificial vs. natural objects; size (big vs. small), etc.

Great Britain, the phenomenon now is American at heart “and is, no doubt, rather slowly invading British English as well, aided possibly by northern dialectal influence” (Svartengren 1927: 113).

Even though thinking of “gendered” pronouns as a feature found only in the lower (working) classes, Svartengren does not automatically dismiss it as wrong or a result of poor learning. Rather, he assumes that the “emotional character is the distinguishing feature of the phenomenon” (Svartengren 1928: 51) and subsumes it under the more general label of personification, an error we can justify by recalling the sex-bias of his database and the general prejudices of that time.<sup>17</sup>

The importance of emotions in connection with the use of “gendered” pronouns is undeniably one of the deciding factors (possibly even *the* deciding factor) in triggering the phenomenon in the first place. This is pointed out implicitly or explicitly in all sections of this chapter.

## 9.2 Canadian English (L. Morris)

In her doctoral thesis (Morris 1991), Lori Morris investigated gender in modern Canadian English, drawing on both spoken and written data. However, hers is not a corpus study, but is rather based on impressionistic evidence and observations. The clear advantage of the study lies in its breadth of focus. Morris considers all possible types of referents, from humans to animals to inanimates, also including personification and other relevant sub-categories or factors that may influence pronominal usage. To my knowledge, this is the only work of this kind to date.

In the following sections, Morris’ thesis will briefly be summarized. Interesting points that are relevant to the present thesis in particular will be identified.

### 9.2.1 Animal denotata

Morris’ criteria for assigning gender are very much in agreement with the factors that were already identified as crucial in other studies and our own analyses: Animals playing a (particular) role in discourse will be referred to by *he* or *she* rather than *it*. Table 9.4 shows the categories that Morris distinguishes (*cf.* Morris 1991: 112-139).

In her data, animals are much more frequently *he* than *she*, a pattern that we expect based on our knowledge from other varieties. For animals, “examples involving variation between *she* and *it* are much more difficult to find” (Morris 1991: 124). Figure 9.1 shows the hierarchical system of assigning gender to animals according to Morris (1991: 125).

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<sup>17</sup> “[E]motional interest that is mirrored by the feminine gender” (Svartengren 1927: 110); “familiarity and the feeling of companionship between an artisan and his tools” (*ibid.*), etc. What Svartengren means seems to be some form of “personal involvement” as used by Mathiot and Roberts rather than personification in its strict sense.

Table 9.4: Gender assignment for animal denotata according to Morris (1991)

it	background, non-individual; generally “accepted” behaviour of species
he	foreground, specific; individual; behaviour different from expected norm/peculiar
she	behaviour typical of species

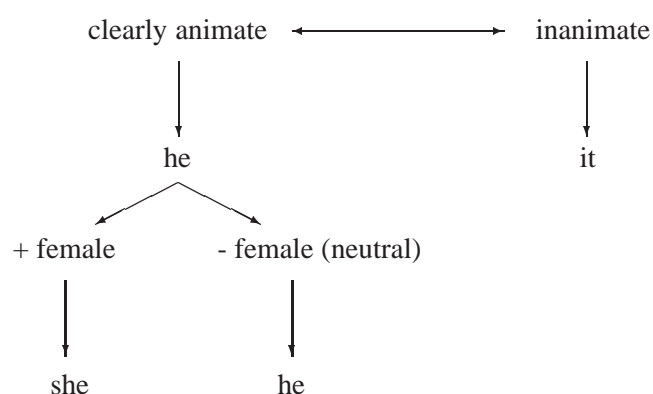


Figure 9.1: Gender assignment for animals in Morris (1991)

The contents of Table 9.4 are typical of categorizations as they occur in these types of studies. Two traits that occur again and again when investigating animal references are highlighted:

- The major division is between neuter and non-neuter, or animate and inanimate (*it* vs. *he/she*).
- The factor that is mostly responsible for a change in the assignment pattern is pragmatic rather than grammatical: an animal that is foregrounded as the topic of a conversation will very likely be animated. In addition, Morris attributes the choice between *she* and *he* to the behaviour of the animal in question, while she states at the same time that feminine pronouns referring to animals are rare in her data.

The one example that puzzles the author fits in with our explanation concerning what was termed “non-referential *she*” in an earlier section (*cf.* 8.3): *There she blows!*, uttered about a spouting whale, would usually receive a masculine anaphoric form (*cf.* Morris 1991: 135). However, the utterance (or rather the pronoun) could also be interpreted as non-referential. Many of the non-referential

examples show fronting or preposing of certain elements, which is otherwise rare – *Here she comes!* or *There she goes!* are similar in this respect. Only rarely is it possible to identify a referent; more often, the speaker seems to refer to the situation in general.

### 9.2.2 Biologically inanimate denotata

Contrasting with animal pronominalization, Morris found that for inanimate entities, *she* is favoured over *he* (cf. Morris 1991: 139). In her opinion, “speaker familiarity” is responsible for many of the *she*-pronominalizations in her data (*ibid.*: 146).

Very often, the feminine pronoun is part of a (short) imperative; if *it* were used, it would feel like a simple order; *she*, on the other hand, has an inviting, “attenuating effect” (Morris 1991: 159f; e.g. *Let 'er rip!*). Such an “attenuating effect” can easily be assumed as an explanatory factor for the occurrences of non-referential feminine forms in general. In addition, the author contrasts feminine and neuter pronominal forms with the help of a criterion that we will encounter again in Pawley’s analysis of Tasmanian Vernacular English (cf. Morris 1991: 163):

she	particular denotatum, particular impressions of a given denotatum
it	concept/norm of that type of denotatum

What plays a particular role in choosing personal pronouns is the prototypicality of the referent in question: While an “average” denotatum will generally be *it*, the speaker is bound to shift to a feminine form as soon as anything peculiar or noteworthy about the referent is to be emphasized.

Contrasting with the use Morris observed for animate denotata, and also almost diametrically opposed to the situation described for West Country and Newfoundland dialects, masculine pronouns are basically non-existent for inanimate referents: “While *masculine reference to any type of inanimate denotatum is extremely rare*, no examples at all were found in which a native English speaker used *he* to represent an intangible, difficult-to-identify type of denotatum” (Morris 1991: 164; emphasis SW).

Based on the few examples of masculine pronouns referring to inanimate entities that the author was able to collect<sup>18</sup>, she establishes the following contrasts between *she* on the one hand and *he* on the other (cf. Morris 1991: 168):

she	familiarity, well-known; predictable, foreseeable
he	maintains features of the unknown; less familiar, unpredictable, more individualistic

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<sup>18</sup> Morris’ database for this category is very small. Of the approximately 1,500 examples which constitute her overall database, only 80 instances of masculine pronominalization of biological inanimates could be found. These include 15 instances of personification and about 30 examples from other authors’ studies (cf. Morris 1991: 166).

Taking together the criteria Morris establishes for using *she*, *he* and *it*, the speaker has to make a number of choices when referring to any kind of noun. An attempt at showing all relevant relations is made in Figure 9.2. The data stem from Morris (1991: 175ff).

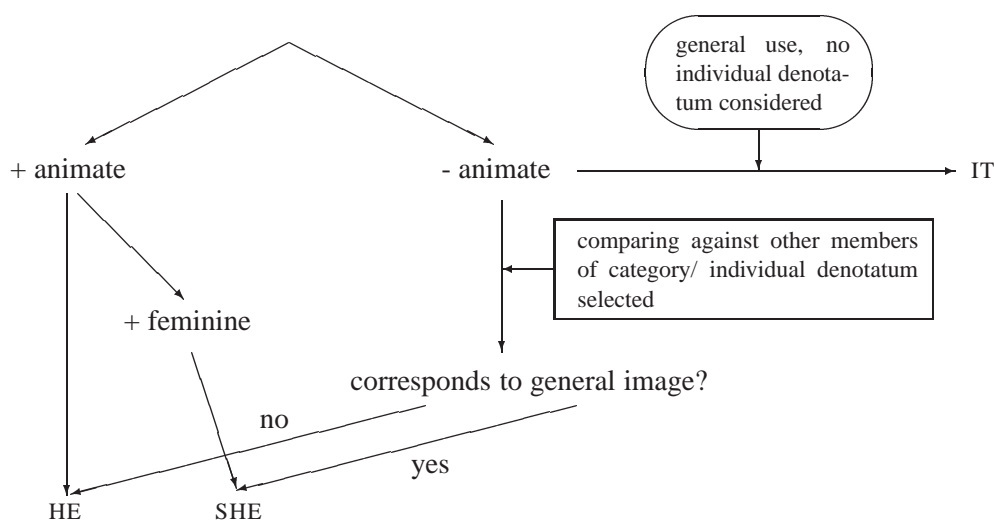


Figure 9.2: Overall system of gender assignment in Morris (1991)

According to Morris, the “primary function of pronoun gender” is “to represent and express the manner in which a speaker has formed his mental image of the denotatum” (Morris 1991: 175). Overall, pronoun choice is thus largely based on discourse-pragmatic factors, and in Morris’ system, generalizations or predictions are difficult to impossible to make, as it is predominantly the speaker’s worldview that is responsible for the choice of a pronominal form. Although some patterns influencing this choice are obvious and well-known, this is by no means as systematic a procedure as those observed for Newfoundland and West Country dialects.

### 9.3 **Tasmanian Vernacular English** (A. Pawley)

It might seem like a contradiction in terms to include a section on a regional variety – a dialect – in a chapter primarily concerned with non-dialectal studies. However, it will become clear in the following paragraphs that the observations made for Tasmanian Vernacular English are by no means as “vernacular” or even regionally restricted as its researcher believes.

Andrew Pawley conducted fieldwork in his native Tasmania in the 1970s, long before numerous linguists would become interested in the variety of English spoken on the island. Some 150 miles (240 kilometres) south of the state of Victoria on

the Australian mainland, Tasmanian English speakers employ a system of gender assignment (seemingly) different from those investigated so far.<sup>19</sup>

For Pawley himself, his interest in Tasmanian English has always been based on curiosity rather than being of a professional nature, as his focus as a linguist is on Austronesian languages. In addition to various unpublished articles and conference talks (Pawley 1995a,b), Pawley has only recently written another paper on gender assignment in Tasmanian English (Pawley 2002). As this contribution summarizes many of the points made in the earlier articles, I will mainly draw on it in the following.

### 9.3.1 Introduction

The variety of English under investigation here can be considered “Tasmanian basilect”, as it represents the most informal and relaxed style that polylectal Tasmanians are capable of speaking (*cf.* Pawley 2002: 113). In this style, the use of “gendered” pronouns is one of the common features, together with a number of other non-standard usages that are partly familiar from our discussion of West Country Dialects (*cf.* chapter 4).<sup>20</sup> Following Pawley, I will refer to the most basilectal variety as “Tasmanian Vernacular English” (TVE).

In TVE, a number of factors re-occur that were already identified as relevant in choosing a personal pronoun in other varieties discussed above. Among them are the general nature of the entity referred to – it must be referential (specific or definite; *cf.* Pawley 2002: 114) – as well as the general circumstances of the utterance – relaxed, informal contexts favour basilectal forms – and the status of the referent in the discourse – referring to the topic of discussion, “gendered” pronouns are more likely than when the referent is backgrounded.

Stressing that in his opinion, TVE is (very) different from other varieties of English for which gender diffusion has been observed/reported (*cf.* Pawley 2002: 111; 135), Pawley states that mass as well as count nouns can be animated (his term identifying a “gendered” pronoun; *cf.* Pawley 2002: 114), thus clearly contrasting TVE and traditional West Country and Newfoundland varieties, where the mass-count distinction is the basic criterion for (or against) “gendered” pronouns.<sup>21</sup>

### 9.3.2 Gender assignment in TVE

The major problem of studying gender assignment in TVE is its variability. First, one has to distinguish between two classes of referents, namely those that have

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<sup>19</sup> I would like to thank Andrew Pawley not only for allowing me to use his manuscripts dealing with Tasmanian English, but also for providing me with selected transcripts of interviews with speakers of Tasmanian English.

<sup>20</sup> Among those features are “*h*-dropping, *-in*’ instead of *ing* (as in *doin*’), *was* or *’s* for *were* with plural subjects (as *they’s late*), *them* for *those*” (Pawley 2002: 113).

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted, however, that only a minimal proportion of referents Pawley mentions in his 2002 article are, in fact, mass nouns. The overwhelming majority are count nouns.

“fixed animate gender” and those that show variable animate gender (i.e. masculine and feminine). Pawley subsumes “portable goods” under the latter label, while the class of items with fixed gender contains plants (masculine) and “almost everything else” (feminine; excluding portable goods) (Pawley 2002: 115).

The author’s conclusion summarizes the major difference between TVE and the traditional varieties of Southwest England and Newfoundland: While it is obvious that in the latter varieties masculine should be considered the unmarked gender, “it is reasonable to say that in TVE the unmarked gender for inanimates is feminine” (Pawley 2002: 116).

In trying to condense the partly contradictory evidence to a few applicable rules, Pawley describes the steps a TVE speaker has to undergo to assign gender as follows (Pawley 2002: 116):

1. Choose between animated style and more formal styles, according to social context and purpose.
2. If animated style is chosen assign animate gender to all referents that are salient in discourse, according to the following conventions:
  - (a) When referring to portable goods (other than vehicles) use *he* to express an attitude of detachment (objectivity, indifference) towards the referent, otherwise use *she*.
  - (b) Other referents can have only one gender:
    - i. For plants and animals use *he*.
    - ii. For the male genitals use *he*.
    - iii. For everything else use *she*.

A number of things are noteworthy here:

1. a non-salient item will not be animated (from 2)
2. *he* signifies detachment (or even indifference) (from 2a)

The importance of the saliency of the noun in question has largely been overlooked in earlier studies. As we will see, the rigid traditional system of count vs. non-count obviously no longer holds in modern varieties. Saliency seems a valid explanation for the fluctuating patterns of gender assignment even in the most traditional styles – “gendered” pronouns only occur when the referent in question is an essential part of the discourse.

The second generalization (2.), on the other hand, seems difficult if not impossible to maintain for West Country and Newfoundland dialects. From those data, one gets the impression that it is positive (attachment, subjectivity) rather than negative (detachment, indifference, objectivity) emotional involvement that triggers the use of a masculine form. The system of gender assignment that will



be proposed in chapter 16 will address these (seeming) contradictions and offer an attempt to integrate them into a unified theory.

Saliency is also connected to another observation of Pawley's: he witnesses a priming or clustering effect in his data that is similar to the situation described for the Newfoundland and West Country data. Once they have chosen a particular pronoun, speakers are "likely to keep to that choice in immediately following references within the same discourse unit" (Pawley 2002: 114). An analysis of priming in selected texts from this study's corpora as well as theoretical background assumptions can be found in chapter 10.

### 9.3.2.1 Masculine things

The only consistently masculine class of nouns in TVE seem to be plants, including trees, shrubs, etc., no matter if dead or alive. In addition to those "inanimate"<sup>22</sup> items, animals (of unknown sex) trigger masculine pronouns as well (see Pawley 2002: 118). One of the longest examples referring to a tree from TVE can be found in (18).<sup>23</sup> Speaker A, Chas<sup>24</sup> uses 11 masculine forms to refer to the tree in question (including two instances of secondary, quoted use), speaker B, Harv, uses three forms.<sup>25</sup>

- (18) ... he said, 'I s'pose you can 'ave 'im' but we already 'ad 'im, all bar a few pieces, cut up and loaded, 'nd Frazer said 'I s'pose you can have 'im. Yeah,' he said, 'Yeah, but don't touch that one over there.' But we'd been passing 'im with the axe and 'e was only a bit of, bloody, papery, shell, 'e wasn't —  
 'e wasn't worth it.  
 No-o, that's why we left 'im. We'd had 'im.  
 (*laughing*) You left 'im for Frazer wi' —  
 Yes.  
 with pleasure.  
 Yes.  
 Not enough of 'im.  
 No-o! 'e was —  
 Too rotten.  
 Yeah. 'e was dry enough but 'e was only about an inch or an inch and a half thick  
 ...

For the second class Pawley identified as "always masculine", namely animals of unknown sex, Table 9.5 (from Pawley 2002: 119) summarizes the pronoun use of the two main contributors to T54, Harv and Chas. In light of the general pattern in English, it is hardly surprising that the masculine form here seems to be the unmarked choice (*cf.* 8.2 on the practice of choosing pronouns referring to animals).

<sup>22</sup> In a purely biological sense, plants are, of course, as alive as animals or humans.

<sup>23</sup> The second speaker's utterances are indented; only two speakers are involved in the conversation of the excerpt, which can be found on page 10 of the original transcript of Interview No. 54. See also Pawley 2002: 117f.

<sup>24</sup> Names are pseudonyms.

<sup>25</sup> These 14 forms constitute 7/8 of the total forms referring to a tree in the respective interview.



Table 9.5: Gender assignment for animals of unknown sex in TVE (T54)

	masculine	feminine	neuter
Harv	10	0	0
Chas	24	0	0
Total	34	0	0

### 9.3.2.2 Feminine things

Of the not very surprising categories included here, that of “vehicles” is the most obvious. If animation occurs for this category in spoken English in general, we would nearly always expect a feminine pronoun there, too.<sup>26</sup> Utterances of the type *She handles like a dream* occur frequently in exchanges between car dealers and prospective buyers. Another frequent phrase is *Fill 'er up!*, referring to fuelling a car.<sup>27</sup>

The origin of the habit to use feminine pronouns to refer to vehicles in general could have started from the traditional use of *she* for ships, which is hundreds of years old.<sup>28</sup> Although the primary origin of this type of use is unclear, an extension to other types of vehicles (once those had been invented) seems only logical, resulting in the present-day situation. Table 9.6 shows the distribution of forms for T54 in TVE.

Table 9.6: Gender assignment for vehicles in TVE (T54)

	masculine	feminine	neuter
Harv	0	13	2
Chas	0	8	0
Total	0	21	2

Less expected is the second category which uses feminine pronouns exclusively when animation plays a role, namely that of “elements of the inanimate landscape” (see Pawley 2002: 120). Possible referents include wind in all degrees (*storm*,

<sup>26</sup> Slight variability can be observed between men and women in this category. Males usually give their cars female names and refer to them as *she*, while women sometimes show the reverse pattern, using male names and pronouns.

<sup>27</sup> A cursory search on the internet returns hundreds of hits, most referring to a car or any other type of vehicle or transportation device.

<sup>28</sup> The OED lists the first uses as early as the 15th century. According to the OED, *she* is “[u]sed (instead of *it*) of things to which female sex is conventionally attributed. a. Of a ship or boat. Also (now chiefly in colloquial and dialect use), often said of a carriage [...]” (“she” 2.a.)

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*breeze, ...*), waterways (*river, stream, ...*), land(scapes) (*land, mountain, ...*) and humanity's impact on them (*mine, well, ...*).

While animation *is* possible for items of this category, Pawley himself has to rely on secondary evidence from “casual observations” (Pawley 2002: 120), as examples in his TVE corpus are “scarce”.<sup>29</sup>

Feminine pronouns are also used for “buildings and other non-portable objects” (*house, road, dam, bridge, ...*), with three examples in Pawley's TVE corpus, one referring to a house and two to a road (2x within the same sentence; *cf.* Pawley 2002: 121). With such a scarcity of examples and no figures providing evidence to the contrary, we should not attribute too much relevance to these data.

Another rare category is represented by nouns referring to “body parts and bodily conditions”, where no-one will be surprised to find nouns referring to the male anatomy excluded from an otherwise feminine class.<sup>30</sup> Again, only two examples<sup>31</sup>, both not from the TVE corpus (as far as I can tell), illustrate this class.

The class of “abstract referents” is generally neuter, but when animation does occur, only a feminine pronoun can be chosen. Table 9.7 shows the distribution of pronominal forms referring to abstract nouns in T54.

Table 9.7: Gender assignment for abstract referents in TVE (T54)

	masculine	feminine	neuter
Situations	0	3	12
Time/day/era	0	1	4
Conditions of weather or terrain	0	0	2
Utterances	0	0	4
Specific actions or states	0	0	4
Total	0	4	26

Once more, it must be stressed that the pattern observed for TVE is by no means exceptional in varieties of spoken English world-wide (recall section 8.3). Judging from my own corpora, the use of a feminine pronoun to refer to a situation seems to be a rather frequent feature that is not restricted to any one variety, although it has only been mentioned explicitly for AusE and NZE (so far). Although animation

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<sup>29</sup> The only item which could with some good will be subsumed under this category is *hay*, with two feminine and two neuter references. As Pawley does not offer a single unambiguous example, one is almost forced to conclude that they may be not only scarce, but next to non-existent.

<sup>30</sup> Masculine forms are used for those.

<sup>31</sup> One refers to a knee (2x *she*), one to a wisdom tooth (1x *she*, 1x *her*); *cf.* Pawley (2002: 121).

seems to be comparatively rare in this class, occurring in only 13% of cases (four instances out of a total of 30), it clearly has its place within the system.<sup>32</sup>

### 9.3.2.3 Things with variable gender

In Pawley's TVE data, nouns referring to portable property may use either masculine or feminine pronouns when animated (Pawley 2002: 123). As no factor inherent in the nouns can be made responsible for the observed variation, Pawley concludes that it must be an external factor or, in other words, that the reasons for varying gender assignment have to be sought in the speaker(s), not intra-linguistically. In the following, the author identifies presence or absence of '(emotional) attachment' as crucial in assigning gender: While *she* symbolizes involvement (or attachment, personal interest, both positive and negative) with the referent, *he* stands for a rather neutral attitude towards the referent (or detachment, objectivity).

This result seems surprising insofar as it contradicts the observations from basically all other varieties, where researchers found that attachment in general results in the use of "gendered" pronouns, while detachment will usually yield (in the truest sense) neuter *it*.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the expression "variable" should be taken with a grain of salt: Usually, we can only observe inter-speaker variability in these cases, but only very rarely intra-speaker variability. Although Pawley rejects (folk) interpretations of men referring to cars as female viewpoints (*cf.* Pawley 2002: 123), I find this type of explanations still the most reliable ones. Why else would women give their cars male names, while they are almost invariably female for men?

Let me use two examples from modern fiction to illustrate the attachment–detachment debate:

- (19) ... before she [...] leapt on the industrial gray shell of the computer. "Mine. **It's** mine." [female (1)]  
 "Yes, sir, Lieutenant sir. *She's* all yours." [male (1) who is to install the new PC]  
 [...]  
 "I requisitioned **it** two goddamn years ago." [female (1)] "Yeah. Well." He smiled hopefully. "Here *she* is. I was just hooking *her* to the mainframe. You want I should finish?" [male (1)]  
 [...]  
 She looked over, snorted at the foot-high box. "I know how **it** works. I have this model at home." [female (1)]  
 "**It's** a good machine." [male (1)]  
 [...]

<sup>32</sup> Siemund (2001: 85) is thus more than "idealizing" when he allows only neuter pronouns for abstract referents. Siemund's problems with this category are not unexpected, as it cross-cuts the count-mass distinction which for him is essential in gender assignment. He obviously opted to ignore the problem rather than attempt to find a solution.

<sup>33</sup> See the previous sections (9.1.1, 9.1.2, 9.2) for accounts on variable gender assignment in studies on other varieties, and also compare with the results from the West Country and Newfoundland corpus studies in chapters 13, 14 and 15.

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“What happens to my old equipment?” [female (1)]  
“I can haul **it** out for you, take **it** down to recycle.” [male (1)]  
“Fine – no. No, I want **it**. I want to take **it** home.” She’d perform a ritual extermination, she decided. She hoped **it** suffered. [female (1)]  
[...]  
“Whoa.” Peabody came in, circled around. “Whoa squared. **It**’s beautiful.” [female (2)] “Yeah. **It**’s mine. Tomjohn Lewis, my new best friend, hooked **it** up for me. **It** listens to me, Peabody. **It** does what I tell **it** to do.”

from: J.D. Robb, *Witness in Death*; 2000, 98-99 [AmE]

- (20) referent is a new computer (“Track and Monitoring Unit, running on a 100,000 system”); two males talking, one the head of the company that developed the unit [1], the other one a police officer (and computer geek) who works with these units [2]:

“How would you like to test one of the prototypes for me? Put **it** through **its** paces, give me your opinion?” [1]

[...]

“I’ll give every ounce of weight that’s in me if *she* does what you say. When can I have *her*?” [2]

from: J.D. Robb, *Betrayal in Death*; 2001, 220 [AmE]

These two examples very clearly show how a layman (in this case the female author of these books) expects the system to work: In (19), a new computer is delivered to a female police officer. Her old unit had so many kinks and problems that it was more often not working than in order. Her personal involvement with the machine (and by extension computers in general) is thus fairly strong – strongly negative, that is. For her, a computer can only be *it*, fitting in with Mathiot’s idea of downgrading (see Mathiot and Roberts 1979: 11).<sup>34</sup> According to Pawley’s system, the speaker should choose a feminine pronoun in all of these instances, based on the high degree of emotional involvement.

The male colleague who is installing the new unit also shows strong personal involvement with it (and computers in general) – this time of a very positive nature. For him, such a beautiful new computer can obviously only be a *she*. When he becomes less attached, slipping back into his (more) professional self, he refers to both the new and the old unit with the help of standard (non-involved) pronouns, using *it* consistently. Here, we would expect masculine pronouns (according to Pawley’s system).

The second excerpt is very similar: The first speaker is an entrepreneur who, among many other enterprises, also develops computers in one of his subsidiary companies. He has no direct personal interest in these machines, resulting in the use of a neuter pronoun in all references to a new high-tech computer in (20). The second speaker, on the other hand, is a computer expert who shows almost worshipful appreciation for technology – or, in our terminology, strong (positive)

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<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the final few pronouns can easily be interpreted as instances of downgrading as well. The speaker clearly uses signals of personification (the unit “listens”, it “does what it is told”), which would easily justify the use of either *he* or *she*.

emotional involvement with the machine discussed. Naturally, he uses feminine pronouns.

While the pronouns of the second excerpt would fit within Pawley's framework (first speaker: no animation, thus *it*; second speaker: emotional involvement, thus *she*<sup>35</sup>), those of the first excerpt clearly would not. I think that a unified theory as will be proposed in the summary of this thesis (see chapter 16) would handle these problems much more smoothly.

Let me add some more examples supporting the theory that will be proposed later on, but contradicting Pawley's account:

Graham Shorrocks has collected numerous instances of non-standard pronominal use in Newfoundland since he took up residence there. Most of the examples in (21) to (29) are taken from this personal collection<sup>36</sup>, originating mostly in the 1990s.

- |      |   |  |
|------|---|--|
| (21) | <i>she</i> of a stock (price)<br><i>she's up/down</i> | B. <sup>37</sup> at Wood Grundy; no date<br>in reference to a share (price); MUN academic; n.d.<br>The young men working at a St. John's Brokerage will refer to the market (e.g. the Dow, Toronto, NASDAQ) as <i>she</i> , and to an individual stock (price) as <i>she</i> :<br><i>she's up 30 today; she's off \$2 today</i> ; n.d. |
| (22) | <i>She was burning good.</i> (house)                  | B.F., St. John's resident; n.d.<br>"Widower loses 'everything' in early morning fire." <i>The Evening Telegram</i>   |
| (23) | <i>Up she comes</i> (roof)                            | picture subtitle, <i>The Early Shopper</i> , 14/10/96  |
| (24) | <i>She backdraft.</i>                                 | "There was a backdraft" Fireman, St. John's; n.d.  |
| (25) | <i>she</i> (of a photograph)                          | local picture framer; 1999   |
| (26) | <i>she</i> (of the exercise pulley)                   | St. John's physiotherapist, 1999   |

In almost all of these examples, professionals talk about things strongly connected with their jobs using "gendered" pronouns: for the stock broker, indices and shares are *she* rather than *it* (or *he*), for the fireman, the fire he is fighting is *she*, etc. While it seems safe to assume strong involvement in all of the above situations, this involvement is much more likely to be of a professional – detached – rather than personal, emotional nature.

The second point to be stressed is that all of the above examples stem from either St. John's residents or people who would not generally be associated with showing strong local speech characteristics (academics, stock brokers; consider also Graham Shorrocks' comment signifying his obvious surprise at the speaker's choice of pronoun in example 21). As will be recalled from chapter 5, St. John's as

<sup>35</sup> Note that Pawley's framework offers two conflicting interpretations for these cases: while personal involvement would trigger feminine pronouns, professional associations would trigger masculine forms.

<sup>36</sup> Examples (22) to (26) were already cited in section 9.1.1 above, but are repeated here for the sake of convenience.

<sup>37</sup> Graham Shorrocks remarks: "whose speech is not especially local".

well as the whole Avalon peninsula is influenced by Irish rather than West Country dialects. It is thus not surprising that speakers will use *she* rather than *he* as their “gendered” pronoun of choice, corresponding to the image represented by spoken varieties of English world-wide in general.

Contrasting with this comparatively high frequency of *she* used for inanimates (there are approximately 20 cases altogether in Shorrocks’ collection), *he* is found only rarely. The only examples in Shorrocks’ collection stem from speakers of the community of Trouty in Trinity Bay, where Shorrocks conducted fieldwork, specifically looking for speakers with a West Country background (which most of the residents have to the present day). When visiting with one of the interviewees, I was able to convince myself of that fact. Examples (27) to (29) illustrate the use of masculine *he*.

- (27) *There is nar leaf left on he* (moose-eaten maple tree) Trouty, no speaker<sup>38</sup>  
 (28) *He’s been in there in the bushes for a couple of years now.* (a bag of sawdust) Trouty, no speaker<sup>39</sup>  
 (29) *he* of a barrel of pork L.D., Trouty; 10/09/00 in author’s presence  
*he* of a sewing machine, a watch, a brooch, a lamp, a TV set L.D., Trouty

As has already been mentioned, Shorrocks’ collection contains much less evidence of *he* than of *she* used for inanimate referents. There are only 11 examples in total, with five stemming from one speaker alone. The cases cited above nicely fit with the general dialect pattern as described in the relevant section(s) in chapter 2, supporting the count-mass hypothesis proposed by early scholars.

### 9.3.3 Summarizing the Tasmanian findings

Let me conclude this section with a remark to exercise caution when evaluating the Tasmanian data:

It must be stressed that, judging from the data that the present author was able to analyse, the frequency of gendered pronouns in TVE is rare compared with both the West Country and Newfoundland data. While one of the interviews shows gendered pronouns in abundance, they seem to be rather infrequent elsewhere. Interview No. 54, a ninety-minute conversation between two males and two females, contains ca. 120 pronominal forms of interest, including more than 40 references to animals. The interview totals approximately 10,500 words (estimation based on the average number of words from 14 out of a total of 27 pages).

The additional interviews only contain a fraction of that ratio: 12 exceptional pronouns (not including animal referents) come from an interview of 5,600 words (estimated), seven of which refer to a truck and a car; another interview of approximately 3,000 words contains only five exceptional forms. A third interview of the approximate same length (20 pages, ca. 3,100 words) contains eight pronominal

<sup>38</sup> Example collected by Clarence Dewling for G. Shorrocks.

<sup>39</sup> Example collected by Clarence Dewling for G. Shorrocks.

references of interest, but they are all to a turnip and all occur within half a page – the final one at that. In three other interviews, of 16, 25 and 30 pages respectively, there is a total of only four “gendered” pronouns, again excluding animals. Summing up, we are dealing with a total of ca. 110 pronominal forms of interest, excluding animal referents, in approximately 35,000 words. If we disregard interview No. 54, which seems unrepresentative, there are 35 forms left in approximately 25,000 words – which is not much, and definitely not more than could be expected from any average casual conversation.

It should also be mentioned that long stretches of the interviews are not transcribed at all, leading to the assumption that only those stretches containing interesting (vernacular) forms are represented, while “average” conversation was often ignored. The overall low figures make it difficult to claim that TVE uses gendered pronouns any more systematically than spoken English in general. The only difference seems to be that this feature has indeed been investigated for TVE, while no one has (yet) analysed “everyday” discourse data in search of exceptional pronominal forms. I am quite certain that we would come to similar results as those for the Tasmanian data if we were to do exactly that. The conversational data from Graham Shorrocks’ Newfoundland collection certainly point in that direction.

## 9.4 Summary

The preceding sections should have helped to clarify a number of issues. Although the varieties (and methodologies) investigated could not have been more different, the results of the studies presented here are very similar. Taken together, all of the studies mentioned in this chapter support one of the major arguments of this thesis very strongly: *she* is the “gendered” pronoun of choice for non-dialectal English.

Mathiot and Roberts (1979) investigated a variety of American English which would best be termed “social”, contrasting women’s and men’s language use with regard to their use not only of “gendered” pronouns (what they called “upgrading”), but also of the reverse phenomenon, “downgrading” (e.g. the use of *it* referring to a human being). As a major result they found that the sex of the speaker has considerable influence on pronoun choice, with men using feminine pronouns in many situations where women would prefer masculine ones.

Svartengren (1927, 1928, 1954) analysed more than 100 novels and other texts, primarily by American and Canadian authors, investigating the use of feminine pronouns referring to inanimate entities. As his main result, he identified a strong connection between the phenomenon and vernacular speech, and also proposed that we seem to be dealing with an essentially male feature, as almost all of his examples stem from men. Svartengren could not confirm any of the restrictions on noun classes that allow “gendered” pronouns which had been proposed in earlier research.

The most important result of Morris’ research on Canadian English (Morris 1991) for this study was the rareness of non-standard masculine pronouns referring



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to inanimates. While feminine forms were relatively frequent and have been explained as representing the mental image that the speaker has of the referent, masculine ones were almost non-existent.

In his analysis of Tasmanian Vernacular English, Pawley (1995a,b, 2002) obtained very similar results: The Tasmanian (Vernacular English) universe is largely feminine. Based on oral-history-type interviews, Pawley's data stem largely from men.

The conclusions to be drawn from these analyses are obvious: In everyday, casual spoken English, possibly world-wide, the pronoun of choice when referring to an inanimate noun and wishing to add extra information<sup>40</sup> is (and has been for some time<sup>41</sup>) a form of *she*.

The sex of the speaker may influence the pronominal form in so far that women are more likely to use masculine forms in a number of contexts where male speakers will use feminine ones, particularly in domains associated with gender or gender-biased behaviour (e.g. cars, tools, etc.). Although concrete nouns receive "gendered" reference more often than abstract ones, there seem to be no restrictions, semantic or otherwise, on the type of noun that can take a feminine form in anaphoric references.

An interesting category within the abstract domain is the use of *she* and *her* referring to a hard-to-identify referent, a situation or general circumstances, which is shared by male and female speakers alike. Examples are reported from basically all major varieties of English, with the Australian/ New Zealand English system(s) at an advanced point in the development.

The system outlined here stands in sharp contrast to the traditional dialect system(s) of Southwest England and Newfoundland, where *he* and the corresponding object form(s) occur in a large percentage of slots that are occupied by *she* in the "Spoken Standard" described in this chapter.

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<sup>40</sup> Mostly, this "extra" has been identified as some sort of emotional information, either positive or negative. In contrast, the pronoun signifying non-involvement or simply disinterest is *it*.

<sup>41</sup> Svartengren's data indicate that this is by no means a new development.



## Chapter 10

# Syntactic priming

Investigating dialectal phenomena, particularly in syntax, is challenging in a number of ways. Most of these challenges include a lot of laborious, usually manual, work, such as “tagging” the tokens one is interested in. Very often, different forms (i.e. no consistent orthography) exist for the item(s) in question, and a system designed to regularize or at least systematize the differences has to be devised. After a lot of harrowing investigations into the depths of programming, many linguists still end up doing the work by hand. Even though this is not very economic in the long run, the immediate results are obtained much more quickly this way.

When tagging a non-standard corpus manually, one gets the impression that identical forms cluster. Most of the corpus material for the present study I proof-read myself, and from the very beginning a certain pattern emerged: while “gendered” pronouns were omnipresent in certain paragraphs, not a single one could be found in others. Thus, it seemed suitable to put this impression under scrutiny and find out if there was any system to it, or if those clustered occurrences were mere coincidences. The framework of syntactic priming was considered an appropriate tool for this endeavour.<sup>1</sup>

### 10.1 Background and previous studies

Syntactic priming was not yet used as a label when Shana Poplack first observed clustering in her Ph.D. thesis (Poplack 1979). In her analysis of plural marking in Puerto Rican Spanish, she found that the presence or absence of a plural marker was among the most significant factors influencing the presence or absence of the

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<sup>1</sup> Nicol (1996: 675) points out that “syntactic priming” is used on two levels, namely on the word (internal) level (phonological; see, e.g., Zwitserlood 1996, or morphological; see, e.g., Drews 1996) on the one hand and the sentence level on the other. This chapter will be concerned with the latter use, for which the label “persistence phenomenon” might be considered more appropriate than “syntactic priming”. However, the forms under investigation have different syntactic functions in StE, and substituting one for the other should indeed be considered syntactic priming, although this is a very narrow definition and might not be appropriate for a language like PrDE where most native speakers are no longer aware of a syntactic category “gender”.



different understanding of the theory of least effort, not automatically equating “longer/ containing more phonemes/morphemes” and “less economic”:

Concord is redundancy, and contrary to what could be expected, redundancy results as a rule from least effort: people do not mind repeating if mental effort is thereby reduced [...]

(1962: 55; quoted in Poplack 1980: 65)

Martinet implies connections with cognitive linguistics, a discipline which was to become the major contributor to the field of syntactic priming.

Many authors here found effects similar to those observed by Poplack in their respective areas of study. Scherre and Naro (1991) also study subject-verb agreement in Brazilian Portuguese, but focussing on “the marking on verbs in sequences of adjoining clauses with the same subject” (Scherre and Naro 1991: 24). The probability that a marked verb would be preceded by another marked verb was 84%, while it was rather unlikely (35%) that an unmarked verb would be preceded by a marked verb (*cf. ibid.*):

These results show quite clearly that a parallel marking process is occurring. Although isolated or first occurrences of verbs reflect no special influences, verbs that follow other verbs tend to mimic the marking of the previous occurrence.

(Scherre and Naro 1991: 25)

Verb phrase marking is once more the topic in Poplack and Tagliamonte (1993), this time focussing on two varieties of earlier Black English, namely Samaná English and the variety of English of the Ex-Slave Recordings. The authors tested all possible combinations of factors, and “[p]erhaps the most striking result of [this] study is that no matter which way the data are configured, the same three factor effects obtain” (Poplack and Tagliamonte 1993: 171). Presence or absence of a marker on the preceding verb was one of those factors:

[W]e observe a concord effect, whereby lack of marking on a preceding reference verb leads to a greater probability of zero marking on the current verb (at .68 for Samaná English and .66 for the Ex-Slave Recordings), while overt marking leads to more marking.

(Poplack and Tagliamonte 1993: 190)

The authors also emphasize that the observed marking strategy contradicts not only functional considerations in general as already mentioned above, but also patterns posited for creole verbal marking in particular (*cf.* Poplack and Tagliamonte 1993: 197). Similar results are obtained from a study of past time markers in Nigerian Pidgin English, where parallel marking was almost to be expected: “[T]he strongest predictor that each [form, marker] will be selected, zero included, is after

a verb on which it has already occurred” (Poplack and Tagliamonte 1996: 82).

Other studies focus on the reasons for clustering, which are found in the way humans are assumed to process language. It is in this area of research, often situated within the field of psycholinguistics, that the idea of “priming” originated. In speaking, the use of one form activates that form, and it will be easier in subsequent discourse to re-activate a form that has recently been activated than to activate an alternative (new) form. Also, less effort will have to be made to re-activate a form that has been used more recently than to re-activate one used much earlier in the conversation.

Potter and Lombardi (1998) used an immediate recall task to investigate double object constructions in English. Verbs like *give* can be used with two alternative constructions containing their two necessary arguments, either an NP-NP construction (*give me the ball*) or an NP-PP construction (*give the ball to me*). The authors presented sentences to subjects that contained prime sentences involving one of these constructions, followed by a target sentence that used the alternative structure and was semantically unrelated to the primes. After a distraction task involving numbers, subjects were asked to recall the target sentence. It was assumed that the structure of the primes would influence the output of the recalled target, which was indeed the case (*cf.* Potter and Lombardi 1998: 270f).

The experiment served to prove that content and structure are apparently stored separately in memory. Recall tasks are initiated from the meaning of a sentence, while its structure will be based on recently activated compatible patterns. Thus, if a double-object construction is the last structure that has been activated before recalling a sentence containing a verb compatible with such a structure, the double object pattern will probably be re-used, even if the original sentence used a prepositional phrase (*cf.* Potter and Lombardi 1998: 267).

Fox Tree and Meijer (1999) obtained similar results in a similar study, again looking at the realization of double object constructions. In addition to an immediate recall task, they also compared structures that differed in the complexity of the phrases investigated.

In two experiments we observed that sentences with the same major constituent structure shared syntactic routines. These syntactic routines are likely to be stored in a hierarchical structure and to be activated hierarchically. That is, major constituents are activated first after which subroutines are called to build the structures with these constituents [...]

[S]yntactic priming occur[red] across conditions varying in complexity [and was] equally frequent across conditions.

(Fox Tree and Meijer 1999: 89f)

Judging from the results of these studies, syntactic priming is definitely more than just an impressionistic theory. Although the objectives differed widely, it could be

shown in all analyses mentioned above that under certain circumstances<sup>2</sup> and with other things being equal, speakers are more likely to re-use a form or construction that has been recently activated than to employ a form (or construction) that had been used in earlier discourse or even a hitherto un-used form.

As matters are slightly different for the topic under investigation here, I will briefly explain the underlying background assumptions in the next section, and will also point to certain problems and pitfalls that have been discussed in connection with syntactic priming.

## 10.2 “Primed” gendered pronouns?

### 10.2.1 Introductory background

The studies that have dealt with syntactic priming so far have usually analysed phenomena that fell within clearly definable linguistic categories: Poplack (1979, 1980) investigated the use of plural *-s* in Puerto Rican Spanish (Vernacular), Scherre and Naro (1991) noticed a priming effect in the agreement behaviour of verbal strings in Brazilian Portuguese (Vernacular), and Poplack and Tagliamonte (1993, 1996) analysed priming in past tense marking in varieties of AAVE and Nigerian Pidgin English.

All of these studies thus have one thing in common: They focus on variety-internal variation, usually on those cases where both a standard and a non-standard marker can be used. Typically, no conflict arises between standard and non-standard markers, which are often realized as zero: The non-standard marker is not identical with another standard marker of the same paradigm, nor is the standard marker identical with another non-standard marker of the same paradigm. For “gendered” pronouns, we are confronted with a slightly more complex situation.

In truly traditional dialect, be it the West Country or Newfoundland variety, variation between *it*<sup>3</sup> and *he* referring to count nouns should not exist at all. In those varieties, only a masculine form can be used to refer to count and/or concrete nouns, while *it* is restricted to mass and/or abstract nouns. Standard Written English would use *it* for both of these noun classes, while masculine forms are restricted to animate entities.

In more “modern” dialects, such as those that form the basis of the present study, the traditional dialect paradigm and the standard paradigm overlap and interact. Thus, it is possible to use *it* with reference to a count noun, but *he* can also be used (*cf.* Figure 10.1). Syntactic priming can now affect the choice between

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<sup>2</sup> It should be obvious that syntactic priming cannot be held responsible for all forms speakers produce. If that were indeed the case, we would - paradoxically - expect to find no syntactic priming at all, as the form that has been used in the first possible slot would be re-used again and again in all of the following slots, thus reducing variation to zero.

<sup>3</sup> In the following, *it* stands for the use of any neuter pronominal form, while *he* signifies the use of a masculine form (*he, 'e, un, en, n* etc.).

## 10. Syntactic priming

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a neuter or a masculine form for these referents. What is problematic about this choice is that we are basically talking about switching registers or lects (namely dialect vs. standard) rather than about an intra-lectal choice. Although none of the earlier studies involved such a switch, it seems appropriate nevertheless to use the concept of syntactic priming in this context. It has to be assumed nowadays that speakers are at least bi-lectal, i.e. have the capability to use the standard (or at least near-standard) variety of the language and at least one additional (regional, social, ethnic, ...) variety. For the speakers concerned here we can propose a regional lect in addition to a more standard one. The regional variety can use masculine pronouns for count nouns, while the standard variety cannot. Depending on the situation, speakers will switch between the codes available to them.

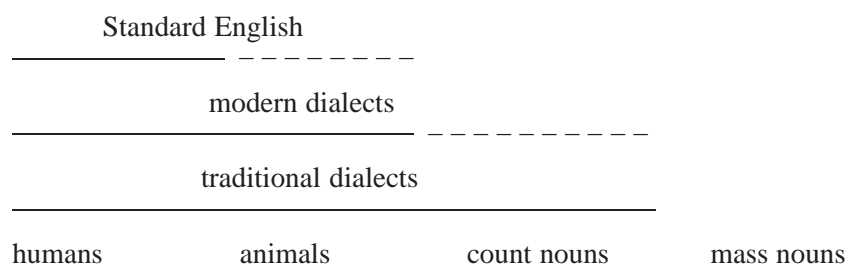


Figure 10.1: Extension of “he” across noun classes in 3 varieties of English (simplified)

### 10.2.2 Problems and pitfalls

A number of issues have to be considered when analysing possible priming effects in a corpus of spoken language:

1. Each interview has to be looked at in isolation, as priming effects obviously cannot occur across different interviews.
2. In oral-history-type interviews, the possible influence of the interviewer (if not a dialect speaker) must be checked and accounted for.
3. In interviews with more than one dialect speaker (dialogues, discussions between speakers), priming between speakers is possible and can be analysed accordingly.

The current investigation faces one problem in particular: there have to be standard forms (i.e. *its*) for an analysis to be possible at all. Thus, we can only work with those interviews (or better: speakers) that show a comparatively high influence of

the standard variety, i.e. those where *it* rather than a masculine pronoun is used at least occasionally to refer to count nouns.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the interviews have to contain a considerable number of tokens in order for statistical analyses to be possible at all. For example, an interview with 10 instances of masculine vs. two instances of neuter pronouns is of no use.

Another pitfall mentioned in connection with other studies is not applicable here, but will be mentioned for the sake of the argument. Certain constructions or forms do not occur in regular intervals throughout discourse. Tenses may be given as an example: Although in a narrative most stretches will be told in the simple past, the general narrative tense employed in English, there may also be passages that are told in past perfect or, for dramatic effect, simple present (historic present). When analysing the clustering effect of simple past forms, there will thus be stretches of speech without a single simple past form – simply based on the fact that the narrative situation is different in that passage. Similarly, when analysing future marking and possibly competing future markers (e.g. *be going to* vs. *will/shall*), we can only analyse those passages where future IS marked; all other parts are uninteresting. Consequently, priming effects can only be studied in those stretches where the forms under scrutiny occur. This may seem like hairsplitting to the reader, but should be taken into consideration in general.

However, as it is basically impossible to talk about anything without using personal pronouns that refer to both mass and count nouns, this issue is irrelevant for the present study. Although there will be certain passages where only count or only mass referents occur, the overall distribution of pronominal forms is fairly even within the texts that will be investigated below.

Keeping these restrictions and problems in mind, we should be able to study possible priming effects on pronoun choice.

### 10.3 Syntactic priming in the corpus

In order to be able to investigate syntactic priming, a number of modifications needed to be made in the corpus material. First and most importantly, all occurrences of *it* had to be disambiguated according to their referents or rather the type of noun they referred to, i.e. mass or count nouns. Moreover, the issues listed under (1) to (3) above have to be considered.

Each interview will be looked at individually, taking care of the first issue. Secondly, the interviewer influence is minimal to non-existent in the interviews selected. For the chosen Newfoundland material, the interviewers themselves are natives, so that we are only dealing with intra-speaker codeswitching. The Somerset speakers who were selected are of the very talkative kind, so that the interviewer only rarely intervenes to ask further questions, generally just making “supporting

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<sup>4</sup> For this reason, the Folktales sub-corpus cannot be employed in a study of syntactic priming, as the variety used by the tellers is a very traditional Newfoundland dialect, where *it* is only used for mass nouns.



noises” to encourage the informant to continue. As only one-on-one conversations will be analysed, the third issue is irrelevant.

Prerequisite for the selection of texts was a high overall frequency of “gendered” pronouns. After the disambiguation of all occurring *its*, I used the modified text as an input for TACT. In the next step, all relevant forms were selected in TACT’s complete word list function. Then I counted switches and non-switches, the programme allowing me to jump automatically from one selection to the next. The number of switches and non-switches produced a two-by-two table of the following kind:

	<i>it</i>	<i>he</i>
preceding <i>it</i>	A	B
preceding <i>he</i>	C	D

If no priming effect were observed, we would assume as many switches (cells B and C) as non-switches (cells A and D), the null hypothesis being that each scenario is equally likely (i.e. 25% probability for each cell).

For illustrative purposes, consider the text in Figures 10.2 and 10.3<sup>5</sup>. The interview situation has evolved around a strange light that sailors used to see fairly regularly in “olden times”. The story goes that the light issued some sort of warning, often about bad weather approaching. Table 10.1 illustrates the pronoun use in the excerpt turn by turn.

The informant uses *he* to refer to the light 16 times, while the interviewer uses *it* 11 times in the same span. In the 17<sup>th</sup> instance, the informant switches to *it*, probably influenced by the interviewer’s choice of pronouns. After another five uses of *it* by the interviewer, the informant sticks with *it* when he next refers to the light. He only switches back to *he* after he has talked about the light (using *it* five times in that stretch) without interruption by the interviewer for a comparatively long time. Interestingly, a second referent (*boat*) that the interviewer introduced towards the end of the excerpt is also taken up as *it* by the informant, although he will use the expected *she* exclusively to refer to a boat later in the interview.

The following sections present a detailed account of priming in two of my sub-corpora, namely the Somerset and the Newfoundland material.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Figures 10.2 and 10.3 are two consecutive parts of one text, which was split into two parts for convenience’s sake here. Although this is one of the Newfoundland texts that will be analysed in detail in the following section, it serves well to illustrate the background hypotheses of priming effects. Also, it is the only text from the Newfoundland material where the interviewer clearly *does* influence the informant, which is why it was chosen here in particular.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed description of the corpora in question, consult the relevant sections in chapter 7.



Table 10.1: Pronoun choice in sample text (a) + (b)

turn	speaker	sequence of pronouns
first	Informant	5x <i>he</i> – <i>he</i> *
	Interviewer	2x <i>it</i> – <i>it</i>
second	Informant	5x <i>he</i> – <i>he</i>
	Interviewer	2x <i>it</i> – <i>it</i>
third	Informant	—
	Interviewer	1x <i>it</i> – <i>it</i>
fourth	Informant	—
	Interviewer	—
fifth	Informant	—
	Interviewer	2x <i>it</i> – <i>it</i>
sixth	Informant	—
	Interviewer	—
seventh	Informant	4x <i>he</i> – <i>he</i>
	Interviewer	1x <i>it</i> – <i>it</i>
eighth	Informant	1x <i>he</i> – <i>he</i>
	Interviewer	2x <i>it</i> – <i>it</i>
ninth	Informant	1x <i>he</i> – <i>it</i> ←
	Interviewer	4x <i>it</i> – <i>it</i>
tenth	Informant	1x <i>it</i> – <i>it</i>
	Interviewer	2x <i>it</i> – <i>it</i>
eleventh	Informant	—
	Interviewer	1x <i>it</i> – <i>it</i> **
twelfth	Informant	5x <i>it</i> – <i>it</i> ref. 1; 2x <i>it</i> – <i>it</i> ref. 2 1x <i>it</i> – <i>he</i> ←
	Interviewer	—

\* I.e. a masculine form follows a masculine form five times; sequences are counted across turns, i.e. the last pronoun of turn one is the first one of turn 2. Switches are highlighted by an arrow (←). In the following text excerpts (Figures 10.2, 10.3), the informant's forms are in bold print, the interviewer's in regular print; forms referring to the light are in regular letters, those referring to the boat are in small capital letters.

\*\* The interviewer introduces the second referent (*boat*) in this turn.

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Yeah, we was in (gap 'indistinct') Harbour right till eleven o'clock in the night and looked across where I drove around I seen this light and ..... **he**  
disappeared and after that I seen ..... **en**  
in the middle of the bay and then ..... **he**  
disappeared again and next time ..... **he**  
was about fifty, sixty feet ahead of the boat so after a while ..... **he**  
disappeared and I never seen ..... **en**  
after.

<u Int> Could you describe the way that the light acted from the first time that you saw ..... it  
until the last time that you saw ..... it,  
where did ..... it  
go to and all this sort of thing?

Well, ..... **he**  
come right across the bay in the one direction (gap 'indistinct') and when ..... **he**  
vanished ..... **he**  
vanished right dere, eh, ..... **he**  
didn't go down the bay and vanish, ..... **he**  
vanished right alongside, just off the boat.

<u Int> But before ..... it  
vanished, just off from your boat, did you see ..... it  
cut back and forth across the bay?

Oh, yes, came right across from (gap 'name') Island, cross to (gap 'indistinct') Harbour.

<u Int> But did ..... it  
go back and forth the bay?

Oh, no.

<u Int> Just come on in straight direction.  
Straight direction.

<u Int> And how long did it take for ..... it  
to get from where you saw ..... it  
first up to your boat?

Close on fifteen minutes I suppose.

<u Int> Close on fifteen minutes. What colour was the light? **He**  
was like a lantern with a red chimney on ..... **en,**  
eh, then when ..... **he**  
go to fade out ..... **he**  
went a little bit darker than that (gap 'indistinct') you know.

<u Int> It wasn't like a flashlight light shinin' in directions away from ..... it,  
it was just sort of a glow, was it?

Oh, no, ..... **he**  
was like a big light, wadn't revolvin' or not'ing like that, only just come up so big,  
you know, show so big on the water.

<u Int> How far was ..... it  
above the water or was ..... it  
just sitting right on top of the water?

Figure 10.2: Syntactic priming sample text (a)

No, sometimes just up over the edge of the water, some more times .....	<b>it</b>
could be up probably two or three feet, stickin' up.	
<u Int> And what did .....	it
do, did .....	it
do anything unusual when .....	it
was there or did .....	it
just stay the same, just go under water or what?	
Just vanish from your eyes, that's all, you wouldn't know where .....	'twould
go to.	
<u Int> A couple of people that I've been talkin' to said that .....	it
turned all colours, everything, when .....	it
disappeared?	
I never seen ...	
<u Int> You didn't see anything like that. Did it seem to you that .....	it
could hurt the boat in any way if .....	it
struck .....	IT?
Well, the speed .....	<b>it</b>
was comin' I think if .....	<b>it</b>
strike a boat .....	<b>it</b>
could sink .....	<b>IT</b>
or cut .....	<b>IT</b>
off in two, you know, the speed .....	<b>it</b>
was comin' but still for all there was no water comin' from .....	<b>it,</b>
nothin' at all like that, eh, only the fast that the light used to come, you know, only	
about fifteen minutes comin', well, close on two miles, but if .....	<b>he</b>
hit at that speed I mean .....	<b>he</b>
would sink .....	<b>IT</b>
or ...	
<u Int> It definitely couldn't have been a boat, like a passenger boat.	

Figure 10.3: Syntactic priming sample text (b)

### 10.3.1 Priming in the Somerset data

Five texts from the Somerset sub-corpus were chosen for an analysis of possible priming effects. This comparatively low output of interesting texts is based on the rather low overall frequency of “gendered” pronouns in the Somerset texts, making statistical analyses difficult or even impossible in many cases.

The texts were prepared as has been described in section 10.2.2. All instances of *it* were disambiguated according to their referents. In the next step, all relevant pronominal forms (i.e. those referring to count nouns) were retrieved and switches and non-switches between masculine and neuter forms were counted. The results look as follows (Table 10.2 to 10.5):

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*Table 10.2: Syntactic priming in SRLM 23*

text code SRLM 23	neuter form		masculine form	
	n	ratios	n	ratios
preceding neuter form	31	0.70	13	0.30
preceding masculine form	13	0.30	30	<b>0.70</b>

significant at 0.02%

*Table 10.3: Syntactic priming in SRLM 44*

text code SRLM 44	neuter form		masculine form	
	n	ratios	n	ratios
preceding neuter form	6	0.75	2	0.25
preceding masculine form	2	0.18	9	<b>0.82</b>

significant at 1.3%

*Table 10.4: Syntactic priming in SRLM 62*

text code SRLM 62	neuter form		masculine form	
	n	ratios	n	ratios
preceding neuter form	32	0.86	5	0.14
preceding masculine form	4	0.27	11	<b>0.73</b>

significant at 0.002%

The tables should be interpreted in the following manner: The likelihood of switches (i.e. sequence of either neuter–masculine or masculine–neuter forms) is much lower (between 14% and 30%) than the likelihood of non-switches (i.e. sequence of either neuter–neuter or masculine–masculine forms). The bold figures show the likelihood of a masculine form following another masculine form, ranging between 64% and 82%. Although the chi-square values for the four tables above are not always as significant as we would like, we can definitely observe a tendency for priming or clustering of identical forms.<sup>7</sup> In fact, it is highly unlikely that a speaker would switch pronouns in any given passage without outside influence.

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<sup>7</sup> Klemola (1996: 237ff) tested priming effects of unstressed periphrastic *do* in his thesis. His likelihood values for identical forms to occur subsequently only range between 10.5% and 46.1%, averaging 30%.

Table 10.5: Syntactic priming in SRLM 224

text code	neuter form		masculine form	
	n	ratios	n	ratios
SRLM 224				
preceding neuter form	22	0.71	9	0.29
preceding masculine form	8	0.36	14	<b>0.64</b>

significant at 1.2%

### 10.3.2 Priming in the Newfoundland data

As the interviews from MUNLFA are more traditional in the sense that they contain more “gendered” pronouns, we expect that more texts can be investigated than in the Somerset sub-corpus. Also, the overall results should be more relevant because the speech of most of the informants was highly conservative. The results for texts that were investigated for priming effects can be found in Table 10.6 to 10.10.<sup>8</sup>

Table 10.6: Syntactic priming in C626

text code	neuter form		masculine form	
	n	ratios	n	ratios
C626				
preceding neuter form	29	0.67	14	0.33
preceding masculine form	13	0.34	25	<b>0.66</b>

significant at 0.28%

Table 10.7: Syntactic priming in C627

text code	neuter form		masculine form	
	n	ratios	n	ratios
C627				
preceding neuter form	30	0.73	11	0.27
preceding masculine form	12	0.39	19	<b>0.61</b>

significant at 0.33%

<sup>8</sup> Two additional texts were tested, with mixed results: For the first text, a tendency for priming can be observed, but the chi-test was insignificant. For the second text, the gendered forms by far outnumbered the instances of standard *it* (133 : 11), thus making a sequence of neuter–masculine almost as likely as a masculine–masculine one.

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*Table 10.8: Syntactic priming in C628*

text code	neuter form		masculine form	
	n	ratios	n	ratios
C628				
preceding neuter form	25	0.625	15	0.375
preceding masculine form	16	0.29	40	<b>0.71</b>

significant at 0.09%

*Table 10.9: Syntactic priming in C631*

text code	neuter form		masculine form	
	n	ratios	n	ratios
C631				
preceding neuter form	38	0.73	14	0.27
preceding masculine form	14	0.32	30	<b>0.69</b>

significant at 0.005%

*Table 10.10: Syntactic priming in C2914*

text code	neuter form		masculine form	
	n	ratios	n	ratios
C2914				
preceding neuter form	21	0.7	9	0.3
preceding masculine form	9	0.14	57	<b>0.86</b>

significant at <0.001%

As had been hoped, the generally higher figures of “gendered” pronouns contribute to overall more significant statistics. The five texts tested here once again show high likelihoods of sequences of identical forms (61% to 71%). Interestingly, the overall distributions look very similar for all texts, with likelihoods only showing divergences of 10%. We can assume that the traditional nature of most of the texts (or rather: their speakers) can be made responsible for such an even picture.

## 10.4 Generalizations and summary

The scattergrams in Figure 10.4 and 10.5 clearly show that priming is a factor in the tested interviews, thus nicely summarizing the results observed in the tables for the individual interviews.<sup>9</sup> Figure 10.4 plots the proportions of masculine to neuter switches against the overall proportions of neuter forms. Figure 10.5 plots the reverse option, i.e. the proportions of neuter to masculine switches against the overall proportions of masculine forms. If the null hypothesis held, we would expect as many switches as non-switches, i.e. all the dots should fall on the diagonal. The real distribution, however, shows all dots below the diagonal, which shows that identical forms in sequence are highly unlikely to switch.<sup>10</sup>

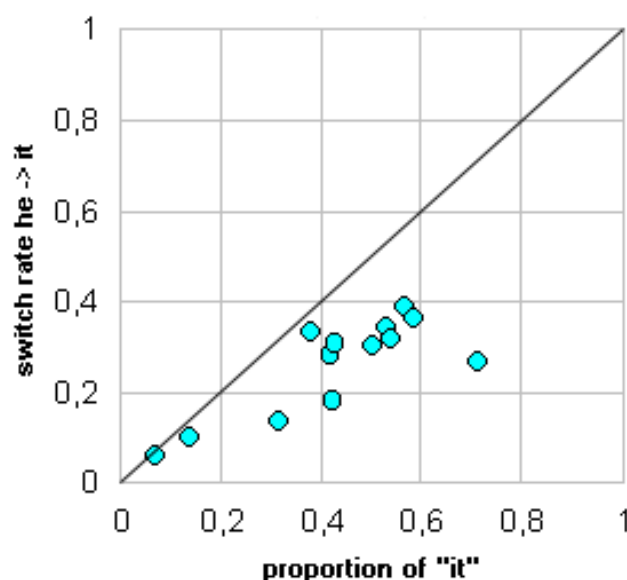


Figure 10.4: Scattergram 1: MUNFLA and SRLM texts

Note that even those interviews which were non-significant employing the chi-square test conform with the general tendency. The 13 interviews included in the scattergrams result in an overall picture that is fairly clear and rejects the null (non-priming) hypothesis.<sup>11</sup> Figure 10.6 includes all reference points plotted within the same scattergram, including the overall trend calculated from the mean values. The orange line clearly lies below the diagonal, supporting priming strongly.

<sup>9</sup> As mentioned above, the interviewer's influence is minimal in all of the chosen texts; accordingly, the scattergrams only include the informant's switches. Included here are C 626, C 627, C 628, C 631, C 751, C 1187/8, and C 2914 from the MUNFLA material, and SRLM 23, SRLM 44, SRLM 62, SRLM 83, SRLM 224 and AH from the Somerset material.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Sankoff and Laberge (1978) for the procedure/ methodology and background assumptions.

<sup>11</sup> The additional figures not included in the tables above on which the scattergrams are based can be found in Table 10.11.

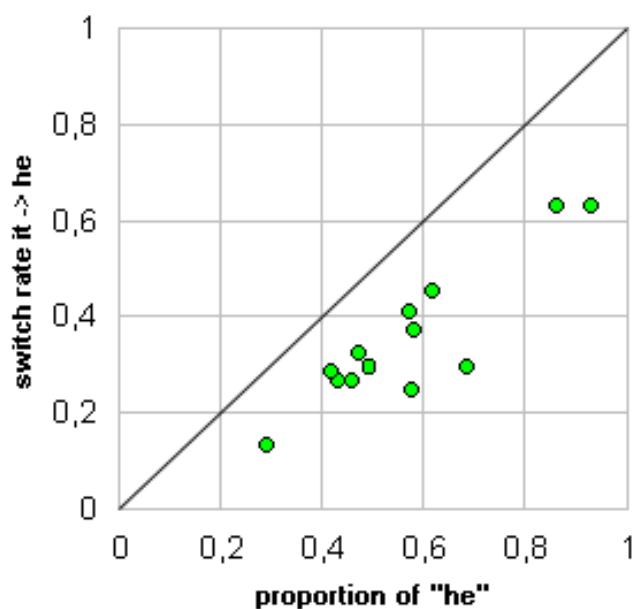


Figure 10.5: Scattergram 2: MUNFLA and SRLM texts

We can thus conclude that syntactic priming is indeed a factor in pronoun choice. Speakers' behaviour as observed for selected texts from both the Southwest of England as well as Newfoundland material confirms tendencies that have been reported for other grammatical categories: If confronted with a choice of two competing forms expressing the same category, speakers will generally prefer the already activated form over the alternative one, resulting in sequences of same forms rather than a mixture of forms A and B without a pattern.

Although without further research and more detailed studies of priming it would certainly be premature to make any far-reaching predictions concerning pronominal choice, a tendency for "conservatism" (i.e. clusters of identical forms) has been observed for the investigated texts.



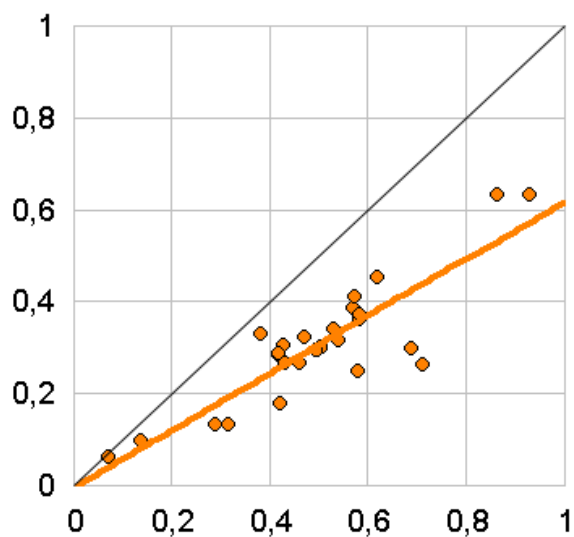


Figure 10.6: Scattergram 3: Sum of Scattergram 1 and 2

Table 10.11: Proportional distributions for scattergrams

text	it/total	switches he-it	he/total	switches it-he
C 626	0.53	0.34	0.47	0.36
C 627	0.57	0.39	0.43	0.27
C 628	0.42	0.29	0.58	0.375
C 631	0.54	0.32	0.46	0.27
C 751	0.38	0.33	0.62	0.45
C 1187/8	0.07	0.06	0.93	0.63
C 2914	0.31	0.14	0.69	0.3
SRLM 23	0.51	0.30	0.49	0.30
SRLM 44	0.42	0.18	0.58	0.25
SRLM 62	0.71	0.27	0.29	0.14
SRLM 83	0.14	0.10	0.86	0.63
SRLM 224	0.58	0.36	0.42	0.29
AH	0.43	0.31	0.57	0.41



## **Part III**

# **Data from Southwest England**



## Chapter 11

# SED - Basic Material

As mentioned in section 7.1, the Basic Material of the SED holds a lot of material that, although it may not be immediately obvious, contains information relevant for the present study.

Based on my investigations of the fieldworker notebooks, I was able to isolate certain SED questions that could evoke answers containing gender diffusion. I then went through the Basic Material publications and checked those questions, not only for the Southwest but for all locations. The following paragraphs present the results of that investigation.

Some of the problems connected with such an endeavour were already mentioned in chapter 7. First of all, the policy for recording or not recording a pronoun is totally unclear. For certain questions, the pronoun was part of the expected response, and was thus written down by the fieldworkers. In those cases it is to be expected that the pronoun will also appear in the published Basic Material. For other questions, however, where a pronoun was *not* an essential part of the response<sup>1</sup>, policies of reprinting pronouns in the Basic Material vary widely. Sometimes pronouns are included, sometimes they are not. Some of the entries in the Basic Material note that “where recorded”, the personal pronouns are included in the response.

However, it becomes clear that not all fieldworkers actually took notes of such uses, as additional pronouns are only rarely recorded for the North or East, while they are ubiquitous in the Southwest. The only alternative, but highly unlikely, explanation which would account for such a difference is that informants in the North simply use(d) fewer pronouns than their Southern counterparts. As a result of these fieldworker “preferences”, the Southwest shows by far the highest rate of “pronoun retention”, as will be seen from the data presented below. The codes that will be used in the following sections are explained in Appendix C. The questions that were considered relevant can be found in Table 11.1; the formulations are taken from Orton (1962).

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<sup>1</sup> What is considered essential is unclear in the first place, as there are no guidelines – or at least the procedures are no longer obvious or accessible to the modern researcher.

Table 11.1: SED questions possibly containing instances of gender diffusion

book	question	expected response
I.7.1	If you want to know how heavy a thing is, what do you do?	<b>To weigh it</b>
I.11.2	What do you use to prevent your cart going backwards when you stop on a hill?	<b>Prop/chock</b>
I.11.6	How do you empty a cart the quickest way?	<b>To tip</b>
VIII.7.6	A dog buries a bone because he wants to ...	<b>hide it</b>
IX.2.6	And now [stand sideways in front of it] ...	<b>in front of it</b>
IX.2.8	If the door blew open on a cold day, you'd get up at once and ...	<b>shut it</b>
IX.3.1	If there's a hole in the pocket where you keep your knife, you're almost certain to ...	<b>lose it</b>
IX.4.4	You can't have my spade today because I want it, but you can have it tomorrow, because then (I) ...	<b>(I) shan't</b> want it.
IX.8.2	Jack wants to have Tommy's ball and says to him, not: Keep it!, but [gesticulate]: ...	<b>Give it me!</b>
IX.9.3	You have something to give away and before deciding on the person to be given it, you might ask yourself: I wonder ...	<b>to whom</b> I shall give it?

One can see the different levels of pronoun inclusion immediately in the third column ("expected response"). The part that was actually sought is in boldface, and while a(n additional) pronoun was obviously expected in some questions (e.g. IX.2.6), it was not in others (e.g. I.11.2). The following sections will show detailed responses to these questions as reprinted in the respective sections of the Basic Material, following it in the order of discussion.<sup>2</sup>

## 11.1 The Northern Counties

Of the 10 questions listed in Table 11.1, the Northern Counties show exceptional pronominal usage in only one question. Responses to question I.7.1, IX.8.2 and IX.9.3 are *it* in all 75 localities; no pronouns were recorded for question I.11.2, IX.3.1, and IX.4.4. For questions VIII.7.6, IX.2.6 and IX.2.8, the recorded response either contained a form of *it* (*it*, *'t*) or no pronoun at all. Thus, the only question of interest is I.11.6.

<sup>2</sup> Questions will be identified through the number they have in the questionnaire, which can be found in the first column of Table 11.1. Not all of the 10 questions will be discussed for all regions, depending on the relevance of the recorded forms. If only standard responses were given or no pronouns were recorded at all, the respective question will not be discussed.

Table 11.2: Non-standard pronoun forms, question I.11.6, Northern Counties

county	locality	response
Y	3	tɪp ɪt ʊp, tɪp əɹ ʊp
Y	4	skɛl əɹ ʊp
Y	14	tɪp əɹ ʊp
Y	25	skɛl əɹ ʊp
Y	32	ʃu:t ɪm ʊp [ʃu:t əɹ ʊp <i>shoot her (= the load) up</i> ]
Y	33	tɪp əɹ ʊp

At 40 of the total 75 locations, standard *it* was recorded; the seven exceptional uses are listed in Table 11.2; for the other locations, no pronouns were recorded. Although all non-standard variants appear in Yorkshire, no pattern can be detected. Locations vary from the far North (loc. 3, Skelton, is on the northern coast) to the West (loc. 14, Grassington), East (loc. 25, Newbald) and extreme South (loc. 32, Ecclesfield, and loc. 33, Tickhill). Also, although the preferred non-standard form is [əɹ], [ɪm] is recorded at loc. 32, thus making it impossible to say anything about the distribution of masculine or feminine forms. It is highly unlikely that that both pronouns can be attributed to a semantic contrast between the referent nouns (*cart* vs. *load*). While an explanation for those seven exceptional forms is thus difficult (at least for the time being), it should be noted that the preference for the feminine form is to be expected.<sup>3</sup>

## 11.2 The East Midland Counties & East Anglia

Based on our knowledge about the distribution of “gendered” pronouns, we do not expect any real surprises (i.e. non-standard forms) from this area, which includes the region whose dialect has become Standard English. Interesting responses are given in Table 11.3.

Loc. 1 in Nottinghamshire is geographically close to loc. 32 and 33 in Yorkshire, where almost identical pronominal forms ([əɹ]) were recorded (*cf.* responses to question I.11.6 above). Not much can be said about the other exceptional forms. It should be noted, however, that non-standard “gendered” pronouns seem to be completely absent from East Anglia.

<sup>3</sup> Traditionally, feminine pronouns can be used to refer to vehicles, even in Standard English, at least metaphorically; *cf.* chapter 3. Also, as will be recalled from earlier chapters, feminine forms were identified as the general “unmarked” choice of “gendered” pronouns in spoken standard varieties, excluding Southwest England.

Table 11.3: Non-standard pronoun forms, East Midlands &amp; East Anglia

question	county	locality	response
I.11.6	Nt	1	tɪp əɪ up
	L	9	tʌɪp əɪ (“tipe her”)
	Lei	6	also: tʌɪp əɪ up (“tipe her up”)
IX.2.6	Nth	2	ə (“in front on er”)
IX.2.8	Nt	1	ə (“shut er”)
	Nth	2	ə (“shut er”)

### 11.3 The West Midland Counties

As most of the counties included in this region border on the traditional Southwest (Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire), we expect a higher number of non-standard pronoun tokens. Also, the frequency of masculine forms should be higher than that of feminine forms (which should approach zero). For better legibility, I will present questions in groups and comment on the distributions.

Table 11.4: Non-standard pronoun forms, West Midlands (1)

question	county	locality	response
I.7.1	Ch	1	wɛɪ ɪm
	Db	3	wɛː ɪm
	He	1	wɛɪ ɪm
		3	wɛɪ ɪm
	Wo	6	wɛɪ ɪm, ɪt
	Gl	3	wæɪ ən
4		wɑɪ ən	
I.11.2	Wo	5	jə skɑːtʃ ɪm əv ə bʌɪk əɪ stʊn
	Gl	4	skɑtʃ ɪ æ:p

As was expected, the West Midlands present a picture that is radically different from either the Northern or the Eastern region. For question I.7.1, we have reached a total of 10% of non-standard forms (63 responses *it*, seven responses some form of *he*; no pronoun in four locations), all of them masculine. Although non-standard responses to question I.11.2 are too rare to include them generally, the two examples from Worcestershire and Gloucestershire stand for the general trend (increase in masculine forms) and are thus listed here. Even more dramatic are the figures for question I.11.6, which can be found in Table 11.5.



Table 11.5: Non-standard pronoun forms, West Midlands (2)

question	county	locality	response	
I.11.6	Ch	5	tɪp əɪ ʊp	
		6	tɪp ə:ɪ ʊp	
		He	1	tɪp ɪm ʌp
			2	tɪp ɪm ʌp
			3	tɪp ɪm ʊp
			5	tɪp ɪm
	6		tɪp ɪm ʊp	
	Wo	3	tɪp ɪm ʊp	
		4	tɪp ɪm	
		5	'ʊp 'tɪp ɪm	
		6	tɪp ɪm ʊp	
		Mon	1	tɪp ɪm ʌp
			3	tʃʌk ɪm ʌp
	6		tɪp ɪm ʌp	
	Gl	1	ʊp 'tɪp ɪm	
		2	tɪp ɪm	
		3	tɪp ən œ:p	
		4	tɪp ŋ ʊp	
		6	tɪp ŋ əp	
		O	4	tɪp ɪm ʊp

For the total 74 localities, no pronouns were recorded in 33, leaving a total of 41. In 23 of these, the pronoun is standard *it*, while we find 18 instances of masculine and two cases of feminine forms (i.e. 46.5% non-standard forms).<sup>4</sup> Both feminine forms occur in comparatively northern locations (South Cheshire and Mid-Staffordshire). The distributions of the other forms show a very nice wave pattern depending on how far removed from the core Southwest they were recorded. The only standard *it* in Worcestershire occurs in the northernmost location in the county, with the greatest possible distance to the Southwest. The same holds true for the only recorded pronoun in Warwickshire (also *it*).

The two forms in Oxfordshire look like a textbook case: standard *it* was recorded in Islip on the eastern border of the county, while non-standard [ɪm] was chosen in Eynsham, close to the western border of the county. As could be seen from both traditional and modern maps for major dialect areas in Figure 4.3, the isogloss separating the Southwest from other dialect areas usually cuts vertically through the middle of Oxfordshire. Eynsham would thus be considered part of the Southwest, while Islip rather belongs to the Southeast. With five instances of mas-

<sup>4</sup> The total of standard and non-standard forms is occasionally higher than the grand total, as at some locations more than one response was recorded.

culine forms and no occurrence of *it*, Gloucestershire is, at least in the context of this question (referent = *cart*), truly Southwestern territory.

A complete picture of this wave structure will be presented below, including the Southern Counties as well. The overall frequency of masculine forms for this question is 0% in Warwickshire (one *it*), 50% in Oxfordshire (one of two forms total), 66% in Worcestershire (4 of 6), 75% in Monmouthshire (3 of 4), 83% in Herefordshire (5 of 6), and 100% in Gloucestershire (5 of 5).

Table 11.6: Non-standard pronoun forms, West Midlands (3)

question	county	locality	response	
VIII.7.6	Db	6	ã'ĩd ə	
		He	1	æɪd ɪm
			3	əɪd ɪm
			4	əɪd ɪm
			6	əɪd ən
		Wo	5	əɪd ɪm
	Gl		2	əɪd ɪm
		4	ɔɪd ɪ̥	
		7	ʌɪd ɪ̥	

Although not as pronounced as for question I.11.6, the general tendency and patterning of forms is the same for question VIII.7.6 (*cf.* Table 11.6): The only feminine form is found in the North, while standard *it* occurs frequently in border zones, be it to other dialect areas or the coast. Masculine forms, on the other hand, are the rule for all localities closest to core Southwest territory. Percentages of masculine forms range from 17% in Worcestershire (1 of 6) and 50% in Gloucestershire (3 of 6) to 66% in Herefordshire (4 of 6).

The two questions referring to *door* once again show the by now familiar pattern (*cf.* Table 11.7): The closer we get to the core Southwest, the more likely we are to find masculine forms. In both questions, no masculine forms were recorded in Warwickshire or Oxfordshire (and also Monmouthshire for IX.2.6). The ranking of the other counties goes from Monmouthshire via Worcestershire and Herefordshire (which change positions in the two questions) to Gloucestershire, which shows the highest ratios of masculine forms in both questions.<sup>5</sup> Overall, *it* is recorded in 51 localities for question IX.2.6, while a masculine form appears in five localities (8.9%). Much higher ratios can be found for question IX.2.8, where *it* occurs in 30, a masculine form in 14 localities (31.8%). Even the comparatively high 1 : 1 ratio in Shropshire fits the general pattern: the masculine form is located in the South of the county, while standard *it* appears in the North.

<sup>5</sup> Individual ratios: Monmouthshire 0-25% (1 of 4), Worcestershire 20%-40% (1 of 5; 2 of 4), Herefordshire 17%-57% (1 of 6; 4 of 7), Gloucestershire 50%-83% (3 of 6; 6 of 7).

Table 11.7: Non-standard pronoun forms, West Midlands (4)

question	county	locality	response		
IX.2.6	He	2	ɪn fɪʌnt ɒn ɪm		
	Wo	4	ɪn fɪʊnt ɒn ɪm		
	Gl	2	ɪn fɪʊnt ɒn ɪm		
		3	ɪn vɪʊnt ɪ ən		
		7	ət ðə fɪənt ən ɪm		
IX.2.8	Db	6	ʃʊt ə [=her]		
		Sa	8	gɛt ʃʊt ɒn ɪm	
			He	2	ʃʌt ɪm
				3	ʃʊt ɪm
	Wo	4	ʃʌt ɪm		
		6	ʒʊt ɪ		
		3	ʃʊt ɪm		
		5	ʃʊt ɪm		
		Mon	1	ʃʌt ɪm	
			Gl	2	ʃʊt ɪm
		3		ʒʊt ɪ	
	4	ʒʊt ɪ			
	5	ʃʌt ɪ			
	6	ʃət ɪ			
7	ʃət ɪ				
IX.3.1	Db	6	lɔ:ʊz ə [=her]		
		He	1	luz ɪm	
			4	luz ɪm	
	Wo	6	luz ən		
		3	luz ɪm		
		5	luz ɪm		
		Mon	1	lʊuz ɪm	
	Gl		3	lʊuz ɪ	
			5	luz ɪ	
		6	luz ɪ		
7		luz ɪ			
IX.8.2	Gl	3	gɪv ɪ əs		
		4	gɪv əs ɪ		
		5	gɪs ɪ		

The referent of question IX.3.1 is *knife*, which shows even higher overall masculine ratios than the previous questions. No pronouns were recorded in 42 out of 76 localities, attributing much more weight to the 10 masculine forms<sup>6</sup> in relation to the 23 neuter forms, resulting in a 32% likelihood to encounter a non-standard form (11 of 34 forms).<sup>7</sup> In question IX.8.2, which primarily investigates the order of constituents in a double object construction, the *it* refers to a ball. Non-standard pronouns were only recorded at three localities in Gloucestershire, with speakers at all other localities using standard *it*. This low frequency of non-standard forms is striking in comparison with the figures for the same question recorded in the Southern counties, as will be seen below. All of the forms discussed here can be found in Table 11.7.

### 11.4 The Southern Counties

The Basic Material of the SED does not distinguish between Southwest and Southeast, which seems surprising considering the stark contrasts between those two dialect areas. On the other hand, this offers a nice opportunity to analyse transition zones between the Southwest and the Southeast with little effort. As in the previous section, I will present the data in groups of questions, followed by brief discussions of the results.

Even when the Southeastern counties Sussex, Kent and Surrey are included, masculine forms outnumber neuter forms for question I.7.1 (38 of 73; 52%).<sup>8</sup> Without those three counties, where only standard *it* was recorded, the percentage of masculine forms climbs to 69% (38 of 55 forms).<sup>9</sup>

With such high ratios of masculine forms even for a comparatively undefined referent (*something*), it comes as no surprise that a more concrete referent (*cart* in question I.11.6) should only increase the figures for masculine pronouns. Out of 63 pronominal forms, 47 (74.6%) are masculine. Excluding the three Southeastern counties, we reach 86.8% (46 of 53 forms).<sup>10</sup>

Similar results are obtained from question VIII.7.6 (ref.: *bone*), with 46.7% (28 of 60) masculine forms including the Southeast, 59.6% (28 of 47) without it.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Once again, we find one feminine form in Derbyshire.

<sup>7</sup> Individual county ratios: 50% for Monmouthshire and Worcestershire (1 of 2; 2 of 4), 60% in Herefordshire (3 of 5), 100% in Gloucestershire (4 of 4).

<sup>8</sup> Detailed tables for this section can be found in Appendix E.

<sup>9</sup> Individual county ratios: 20% in Berkshire (1 of 5), 25% in Somerset (3 of 12), 75% in Wiltshire (6 of 8), 80% in Dorset (4 of 5), 85.7% in Hampshire (6 of 7), 100% in Cornwall and Devon (7 of 7; 11 of 11); see Table E.1.

<sup>10</sup> Individual county ratios: Berkshire 25% (1 of 4), Sussex 50% (!) (1 of 2), Somerset and Hampshire 83.3% (10 of 12; 5 of 6), Wiltshire 87.5% (7 of 8), Cornwall, Devon and Dorset 100% (7 of 7, 11 of 11, 5 of 5); see Table E.2.

<sup>11</sup> Individual county ratios: 27.3% Somerset (3 of 11), 28.6% Wiltshire (2 of 7), 77.8% Devon (7 of 9), 85.7% Cornwall (6 of 7), 100% Dorset and Hampshire (5 of 5 each); see Table E.3.

The door, referent in question IX.2.6 and IX.2.8, is [ɹ] or [əɹ] with some of the highest frequencies of all items. Overall ratios are between 46.9% (IX.2.6, incl. Southeast) and 81.4% (IX.2.8, excl. Southeast).<sup>12</sup>

Ratios of masculine pronouns as part of the responses to question IX.3.1 (ref.: *knife*) do not even go below 50%; overall totals are thus between 70.5% (31 of 44, incl. Southeast) and 79.5% (31 of 39, excl. Southeast).<sup>13</sup> Noteworthy here is the sentiment of the informant at So 5 who considers the form [ɹ] “older” than standard *it*.

Question IX.8.2 is one of the few questions where *it* is an actual keyword. It is not impossible that fieldworkers checked informants’ responses by asking them to repeat their formulations, which in certain instances might have led to a highly stylized interview situation resulting in the use of more standard language. This might be an explanation for the low to non-existent frequency of masculine pronouns in the other regions in comparison with the Southern counties.<sup>14</sup>

For the Southern counties, however, overall ratios of masculine forms as part of the response are as expected, ranging between 46.8% (36 of 77, incl. Southeast) and 61% (36 of 59, excl. Southeast).<sup>15</sup>

Not surprisingly, a number of non-standard forms occur in the Southern counties in responses to questions where pronouns were generally not recorded in the other regions – probably because the response would have been standard *it* there anyway. This includes question I.11.2 (ref.: *cart*), IX.4.4 (ref.: *spade*) and IX.9.3 (ref.: *something*). Table E.7 shows the individual responses.

## 11.5 Summary and results

The results of this chapter are noteworthy in two respects: First, the clarity of the emerging pattern of the distribution of non-standard pronominal forms is striking. Figure 11.1 summarizes the results of all analyses in this chapter, showing a clear core Southwest area with adjoining transition zones. Only some localities fall out of the picture, which is generally textbook-coherent, starting from highest frequencies of masculine pronouns in the deep Southwest and slowly petering out the fur-

<sup>12</sup> Individual ratios (first figures for question IX.2.6, second for IX.2.8): total incl. Southeast 46.9% (15 of 32), excl. Southeast 55.6% (15 of 27); Devon 37.5% (3 of 8), Wiltshire 40% (2 of 5), Hampshire 50% (3 of 6), Somerset 83.3% (5 of 6), Cornwall and Dorset 100% (1 of 1 each); total incl. Southeast 63.2% (36 of 57), excl. Southeast 81.4% (35 of 43); Sussex 20% (1 of 5), Berkshire 25% (1 of 4), Hampshire 50% (2 of 4), Wiltshire 71.4% (5 of 7), Cornwall 83.3% (5 of 6), Somerset, Devon, Dorset 100% (8 of 8, 10 of 10, 4 of 4); see Table E.4.

<sup>13</sup> Individual county ratios: Berkshire 50% (1 of 2), Dorset and Hampshire 66.7% (2 of 3, 4 of 6), Somerset 70% (7 of 10), Wiltshire 75% (3 of 4), Cornwall and Devon 100% (6 of 6, 8 of 8); see Table E.5.

<sup>14</sup> Recall that there were only three instances of masculine pronouns in the West Midlands, all in Gloucestershire; see Table 11.7.

<sup>15</sup> Individual ratios: Somerset 46.2% (6 of 13), Dorset 50% (3 of 6), Wiltshire 60% (6 of 10), Hampshire 71.4% (5 of 7), Devon 81.8% (9 of 11), Cornwall 100% (7 of 7); see Table E.6.

ther east one moves.<sup>16</sup> Although this may not look surprising, this west-east cline contains the second noteworthy aspect: It has been accepted as common knowledge that West Cornwall is not really to be considered part of the West Country dialect region. The analyses presented here, however, prove that the opposite is true. All Cornish localities show frequencies of masculine pronouns of between 80-100%, which is definitely not to be expected from the picture drawn in the literature.

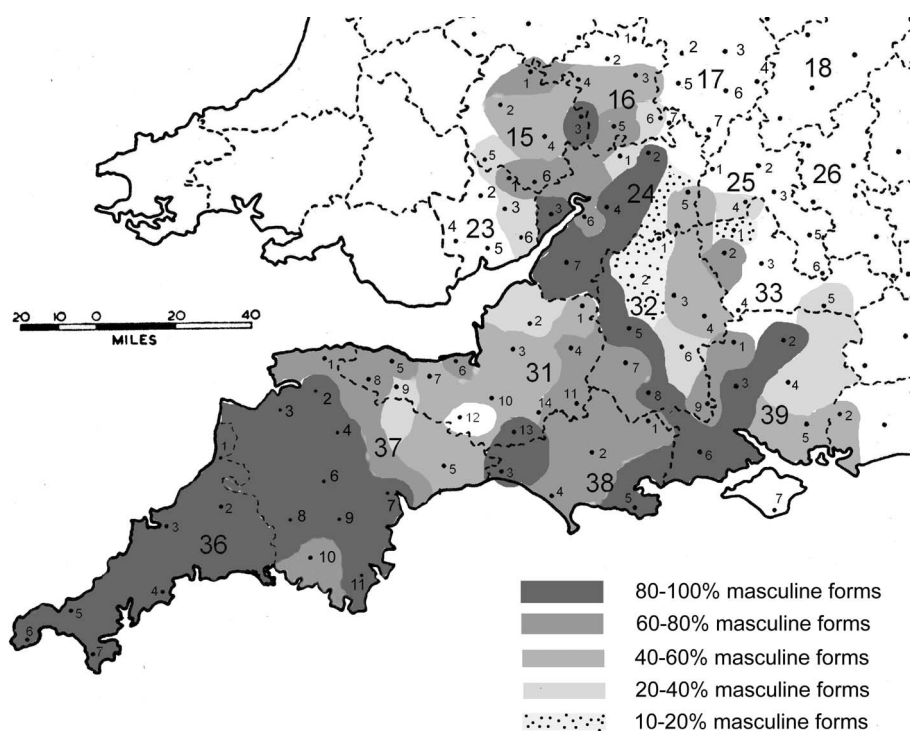


Figure 11.1: Distribution of masculine pronominal forms (SED Basic Material)

<sup>16</sup> Interesting to note is also the “belt” of generally higher frequencies close to the eastern border of the West Country. Why we have this vertical strip is unclear. One might speculate that, from the equally high frequencies for the whole area, certain localities were more influenced by the standard than others. Those localities then exercised consecutive influence on the neighbouring ones. Somerset seems to be leading in this change towards the standard.

## Chapter 12

# The SED fieldworker notebooks data

The SED fieldworker notebooks provide a yet largely untapped data source for dialectological studies. Although by no means suitable for any morphological or morpho-syntactic investigation, the notebooks contain a wealth of examples in the domain of personal pronouns. Despite the obvious problems connected with using the fieldworker notebooks for a corpus study (or any study<sup>1</sup>), it was felt that here the sheer quantity by far outweighs any problems of a qualitative nature.

This does not mean that these problems will simply be ignored – where they are of particular interest and where it seems appropriate, they will be discussed, especially since unclear transcriptions can often actually provide the key to solving the theoretical issues.

The following paragraphs will illustrate the system of pronominal gender assignment as found in traditional West Country dialects in the 1950s and 1960s. This chapter will include a comparatively large number of examples, not only to illustrate the nature of pronominal gender assignment as well as possible, but also to give an overall impression of the generally inaccessible fieldworker notebooks material.

### 12.1 Referent types

Based on the literature on gender assignment in the core Southwest, we expect to find a system that is (still) very similar to the one described by Elworthy and his colleagues in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Speakers of such a traditional variety would use *he* and *him*, *un*, *en*, *'n* etc. to refer to inanimate count nouns, while the feminine pronouns are restricted to female animates (i.e. humans and animals) exclusively.

We would not expect to find instances of masculine pronouns referring to mass nouns and neither instances of feminine pronouns referring to inanimate entities.

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<sup>1</sup> Recall section 7.1, where many of the problematic issues involving the fieldworker notebooks were discussed.

It should be clear from the beginning that the array of possible referents is heavily restricted by the design of the SED. Most examples involve one of the words asked for in the questionnaire. Thus, as most of those items are, of course, concrete count nouns, the chances of encountering personal pronouns referring to highly abstract nouns are rare from the start. The overall predictive value of this SED-based chapter will therefore be rather low. First and foremost, the results observed here are intended to serve as a reference frame for the investigations in the following chapters, where more modern material will be at the core of the analysis.

### 12.1.1 Masculine referents

As has already been pointed out, the very nature of the SED fieldworker notebooks (and, indeed, the SED itself) is responsible for a very homogeneous picture regarding the kinds of nouns that occur with “gendered” pronouns. Although the term “homogeneous” may be misleading, it is appropriate when comparing the rather restricted number of referents from the fieldworker notebooks with the wide variety of possible referents that we find in the collected corpora from Southwest England and Newfoundland.

The nouns to which the non-standard pronouns refer can be divided into three large classes (1 to 3 below); not very surprisingly (considering the nature of the SED), class 1, “man-made objects”, contains by far the largest number of entries. The following paragraphs will show typical examples of each class and its sub-categories. Also, overall frequencies of occurrence will be given for each class.

#### 1. MAN-MADE OBJECTS

- (a) buildings, their parts and contents (e.g. *chimney, furniture*)
- (b) containers (e.g. *box, cup*)
- (c) tools and instruments (e.g. farming utensils)
- (d) vehicles
- (e) “creature comforts”
  - i. clothing
  - ii. accessories of modern life (e.g. *watch, pen, photograph, toys*)
  - iii. food and drink (excluding naturally occurring things)
- (f) nature re-modelled (e.g. *mine, lane, curb stone*)

#### 2. NATURE

- (a) trees and plants
- (b) other (e.g. fruit, vegetables; *ground, hill, pond, river*)

#### 3. BODY PARTS (of animals and humans)



Although the class labels are slightly different from those proposed in earlier research, the reader will immediately discover similarities between Classes 1 to 3 and the traditional categories postulated by 19<sup>th</sup> century writers such as Elworthy or Barnes and also Svartengren's suggestions. The first class of man-made objects contrasts with the second one, which subsumes all “naturally” occurring things under it. The third class, on the other hand, could also be labelled “man and beast”, as its entries largely refer to animals or humans.

### 12.1.1.1 Man-made objects

#### BUILDINGS

This category comprises more than 40 relevant forms. Typical referents are *door*, *house* or *chimney*; representative examples can be found in (1) to (15):<sup>2</sup> Those that occur with more than two examples (see Table 12.1) are generally either key words in questions or mentioned therein and taken up in the response by the informant.

- |     |  |                                |
|-----|--|--------------------------------|
| (1) | i: ɛd ə 'tɒp wi: ə 'tɒsɫ tu: ɔn                              | (36 Co 5, book V)              |
|     | It had a top with a tassel on it.                            | ref. = bed                     |
| (2) | 'jər ŋ   | (31 So 14, book VIII)          |
|     | (Do you) hear it?  | ref. = bell (church bell)      |
| (3) | ðə 'mæw   'hi: dɪd 'gɔ: 'dæwɒn vɾɔm ðə 'bɑ:ŋ 'vlɔ:ɪ          | (32 W 6, book I)               |
|     | The mow, it went down from the barn floor                    | ref. = building (part of barn) |
| (4) | 'hi: 'dɪdŋ ɡɛt 'kli:nd 'æwɒt bʌt 'wʌns ə 'jɜ: zi:            | (32 W 6, book V)               |
|     | It was cleaned out only once a year, you see.                | ref. = chimney                 |
| (5) | wi: də 'dʒɛnli se: i:z 'a:f we: 'o:pŋ                        | (36 Co 4, book IX)             |
|     | We generally say it's half-way open.                         | ref. = door                    |
| (6) | 'ʃʊt ðɪk 'dɜ: ði:s 'ɡɒt ŋ 'dʒɑ:m                             | (31 So 14, book IX)            |
|     | Shut that door, you've got (thee hast got) it jarring.       | ref. = door                    |
| (7) | 'zwi:p 'ðə 'vlu:ɜ: ɪf jɪ: 'bɑ:n ɡwʌnə 'wɔ:ɪʃ ɔn <sup>3</sup> | (31 So 9, book V)              |
|     | Sweep the floor if you aren't going to wash it.              | ref. = floor                   |
| (8) | ðas ðə 'pu:ɛst i:z 'æŋd tu:                                  | (36 Co 7, book IV)             |
|     | That's the post it's hung on.                                | ref. = gate                    |
| (9) | ə 'hɑps ad ə 'kɾɔk tu: ɔn                                    | (32 W 9, book V)               |
|     | A hasp had a crook to it.                                    | ref. = hasp <sup>4</sup>       |

<sup>2</sup> Although great care has been taken in reproducing the examples from the hand-written notes in the fieldworker notebooks, misinterpretations and mistakes cannot be ruled out completely. However, it is hoped that those only affect the parts that are irrelevant to the present analysis. Where certain phonetic symbols were either not available to me or could not be interpreted in positions relevant for the analysis, this is generally mentioned. As the notebooks were consulted three times in as many years, certain inconsistencies and “developments” on my part cannot be excluded.

<sup>3</sup> The vowel in *wash* is almost illegible; it is also unclear where the [r] comes from, but it is definitely indicated in the transcription.

<sup>4</sup> “A contrivance for fastening a door or lid: now chiefly applied to a hinged clasp of metal which passes over a staple and is secured by a pin or padlock.” (OED, “hasp” I. 1.)

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(10)	'i: 'a:nt 'zi:d ŋ 'nʌðə: He hasn't seen it either.	(36 Co 3, book IX) ref. = house
(11)	ʌɪ nɛvə zɪd n; i: a:nt zɪd n I haven't seen it; he hasn't seen it	(24 G1 7, book IX) ref. = house
(12)	jʊ:d jɛdŋ wi: wʊd You'd heat it with wood.	(36 Co 1, book V) ref. = oven
(13)	hi: oʊn tɛk nʊw wɛt It won't let in any wetness.	(31 So 2, book II) ref. = roof
(14)	wi: 'bɪft ŋ æʔt'sɛɪz 'mi: ən ðə 'bʌɪ We built it ourselves, me and the boy.	(36 Co 7, book III) ref. = table (shearing table)
(15)	'bɪ də 'mɒɪd 'wʌŋ tɒm wɛn ðe: dɪd 'kɔ:t ŋ 'gɑ:dŋ æʊs I remember one time when they called it "garden house".	(38 Do 3, book V) ref. = WC

*Table 12.1:* Masculine pronouns referring to buildings, their parts and contents (Fieldworker notebooks)

referent	# of examples	# of speakers
bed	2	1
bell	1	1
building, house	15	14
chimney	5	4
church	1	1
door	17	14
floor	2	2
gate	2	2
lock (hasp)	1	1
oven	2	2
roof	2	1
table	1	1
WC	1	1
total	51	38

The referents are usually typical count nouns which we would expect to trigger masculine forms. *WC* may be a bit unusual, but according to the context, a sort of outhouse is discussed, which belongs in the same category as *house*. The status of *floor* may be debatable; one could argue that *floor* in the sense that it is used here (“layer on which people tread”) is a singular noun, as there is only one floor in a room. Nevertheless, it should be clear that the word is +count in general, which would justify the use of a masculine pronoun in any of its uses.

## CONTAINERS

When the different categories of noun classes were devised, a separate class was reserved for containers. The rationale behind this decision was based on the (folk) belief that containers have some features in common with women – “womb-like” is one of the terms one hears mentioned. On such a basis, we would expect at least some feminine pronouns that are used to refer to such a noun. However, the data tell a different story: Not a single feminine pronoun is found in the fieldworker notebooks’ material. Containers, like all other man-made objects, are masculine pronoun territory, just as we would expect from the traditional literature. (16) to (31) show some typical examples. Detailed distributions of all container-like nouns can be found in Table 12.2.

(16)	vægd əot æt <b>ɪ</b> tired out with it	(32 W 7, book VI) ref. = bag
(17)	wi: 'ju:zd tə 'vʌl <b>i:</b> 'ʌp wɪ 'baɪt We used to fill it up with bait. <b>i:</b> wəz 'me:ɪd bɪ 'wɪðɪz It was made by (with) withies.	(32 W 2, book III) ref. = basket (36 Co 4, book V) ref. = basket
(18)	jʏ: kən 'stænd <b>ən</b> ɒnz <sup>5</sup> 'end You can stand it on its head.	(37 D 9, book I) ref. = bin (corn bin)
(19)	ge? ə 'gʊd 'bɪg 'bɒks ,lʌk ən 'set , <b>hɪm</b> ə'tɒp ə ,sʌm 'pəʊs Get a good big box, like, and set it on top of some post. <sup>6</sup>	(21 Nf 9, book I) ref. = box
(20)	'pʊd ət ɔ:və? ðə 'bʌkət ən 'emp <b>ən</b> 'æʊt Put it over the bucket and empty it out.	(36 Co 1, book V) ref. = bucket
(21)	<b>i:</b> bi 'bæ:tʃɪd 'ɪn It is dented in.	(31 So 6, book IV) ref. = can (tin can)
(22)	ðe: 'eɪv <b>m</b> 'ʌp ən ðe: gɒt 'eɪv <b>m</b> 'bʌk geɪn They heave it up and they have got to heave it back again.	(36 Co 6, book VIII) ref. = coffin
(23)	kɔ:tʃ <b>ɪ</b> 'brɪdlɪ f jɪəm 'mʌm tu: Call it brittle if you wish to.	(36 Co 6, book IX) ref. = cup
(24)	wɪ ə 'ændəʃ tu: <b>ən</b> ... with a handle on it.	(31 So 14, book V) ref. = bowl dish
(25)	i: 'skæd ʌp ðə 'glæs ən <b>i:</b> 'brɒk tə 'pi:səz <sup>7</sup> He shattered the glass and it broke to pieces.	(36 Co 5, book IX) ref. = glass
(26)	'vʊʃ <b>ən</b> m wɪð 'e:θ Fill it (in) with earth. 'vɪʃ <b>ən</b> ɪn wɪ 'e:θ Fill it (in) with earth.	(36 Co 4, book VIII) ref. = grave (37 D 10, book VIII) ref. = grave
(27)	'fɪʃ <b>ʊm</b> ə 'wɔ:tə: Fill it with water.	(24 Gl 1, book V) ref. = kettle

<sup>5</sup> Again, given the context, this form is much more likely to be *his* than *its*.

<sup>6</sup> Instruction on how to make a pigeon locker.

<sup>7</sup> “To break in pieces, shatter.” (OED, “scat” v 3)

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(28)	'ta: n 'ʌp ən 'te:k ən dəʏn 'pu:st ɔ:fəs Tie it up and take it down (to the) post office.	(37 D 9, book VII) ref. = parcel
(29)	ðə:z 'zʌmət 'ðə:ʃ   i:z 'vʊʃ There's something there; it's full.	(36 Co 3, book VII) ref. = pocket
	ðə:z 'nɔ:ʃt 'ɪn ən There's nothing in it.	(37 D 2, book VII) ref. = pocket
(30)	i: 'brʊk ɪ 'a:v It broke in half.	(37 D 6, book IX) ref. = tumbler
	æv ə'brʊ:k ɪ I've broken it.	(31 So 9, book IX) ref. = tumbler
(31)	əʊ 'dɪdn̩ 'brʊ:k ɪ I didn't break it.	(38 Do 5, book IX) ref. = vase
	əʊ 'nevə: 'brʊ:k ɪ en [ɪ]. I didn't break it.	(32 W 6, book IX) ref. = vase

Table 12.2: Masculine pronouns referring to containers (FN)

referent	# of examples	# of speakers
bag	1	1
basket	2	2
bin	3	2
bucket, kettle, trough, tub	7	7
can	1	1
coffin	2	1
cup, bowl, glass	4	4
grave	7	7
parcel	3	2
pocket	7	7
pot	1	1
tumbler	10	9
vase	5	5
total	53	36

Example (19) from Norfolk<sup>8</sup> is noteworthy – the use of *him* referring to the box is unambiguous, but neither the fieldworker nor the editor comment on it.

Referents occurring with some frequency are *pocket* and *tumbler*, which are either key words or mentioned in the respective question, and different articles of hollow- and flatware. The items all fall within the expected norm.

<sup>8</sup> Where of interest, the occasional example from other than Southwest counties will be mentioned for illustrative purposes. Of course, those examples will not be included in the overall analysis.

## TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS

Based on the outline and purpose of the SED, we would expect this category to contain a high number of non-standard pronominal forms. Details for the actual referents found in the fieldworker notebooks are summarized in Table 12.3, and illustrative material is provided in (32) to (43). Also, as many tools are keywords in the questionnaire, the number of examples for a specific referent (e.g. *spade*) should be higher than in many of the other categories, where we often find just a single example per referent.

One such item is *knife* as part of questions IX.3.1 and IX.3.2, which are primarily concerned with the different forms of the verb *find*. These two questions include various sub-questions, which altogether yield no less than 22 references to *knife* with the help of a masculine pronoun. *Plough* (or parts thereof) is, not very surprisingly, also among the high-frequency items. Another favourite is *spade*, which once more figures prominently in one question of the grammar section (IX.4.4).

A sub-category is related to various items which can broadly be summarized as “having something to do with horses”; 11 examples belong here (*belly band*, *brush*, *clog* (end of tether), *harness*, etc.). Another subgroup consists of items from the fireplace (book V.1) such as *bellows*, *grate*, *poker* (eight examples). Moreover, there are numerous references to one tool or other, which will only be listed collectively (“various tools”) below; clearly identifiable items include *coulter*, *flail*, *rake*, or *rope-twister*.

- (32) ɒl 'ad mɪ 'bɛlts 'tu: 'klo:ɪs tə ðə 'vɒtə: ən 'bæ:ŋd ə 'ho:l ɪn ən (38 Do 3, book V)  
I had my bellows too close to the fire and burned a hole in it. ref. = bellows
- (33) wɪ: 'pɒt ŋ 'ɒn ðə 'vɒtə: (32 W 3, book V)  
We put it on the fire. ref. = fire grid
- (34) i: ɛd 'vɔ: 'ʃpɹɒŋz tɪ: ən (37 D 7, book I)  
It had four prongs to it. ref. = fork
- (35) ə 'bɒtʔl ɡɒt 'rɪŋz ɒn ən ən ə 'mɒlɪt 'aŋ? 'ɡɒt rɪŋz (32 W 9, book I)  
A beetle has got rings on it and a mallet hasn't got rings on it.  
ref. = beetle and mallet (hammer types)
- (36) əv 'jɪ: zɪd mɪ 'na:v | a:v 'tɔ:s ən | i: 'vɑ:lɪd dʒɪ: mɪ 'pɒkət (36 Co 2, book IX)  
Have you seen my knife? I've lost it; it fell through my pocket. ref. = knife
- (37) ɔs 'fæʊnd ŋ wɛə ɔs 'pɒt ŋ 'dæʊn tu: (31 So 14, book IX)  
I/We found it where I/we (had) put it (to). ref. = knife
- (38) i: də 'kɪp ðə 'lɪns<sup>9</sup> vɹəm 'vɔ:lən əʊt (38 Do 4, book I)  
It keeps the linch from falling out. ref. = linch-pin
- (39) 'ɔ:lɪtə: ðə 'wæŋ ðə: | me:k əŋ 'ɹʌn 'dɪvɹən (37 D 5, book I)  
Alter the wing there. Make it run differently. ref. = plough

<sup>9</sup> “*Linse*, obs. and dial. form of *linch*.” (OED, “*linse*”)

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- (40) i:v gɒd 'oʊd i:ns 'aʊ gɒt ŋ (37 D 5, book V)  
It has become old since I got it. ref. = poker
- (41) i: 'bɒɹɪz 'i: 'vɔ:ʃi ɔfŋ (36 Co 4, book VIII)  
He borrows it very often. ref. = shovel
- (42) ɒɪ 'ʃa:nt bɪ 'ju:zɪŋ ɒv əŋ (36 Co 3, book IX)  
I shan't be using it. ref. = spade
- (43) 'nevə: 'jə:d əŋ 'kɔ:tɪd 'nɔ:ʃt 'eɪs (36 Co 2, book I)  
(I) never heard it called anything else. ref. = agricultural tool

Table 12.3: Masculine pronouns referring to tools and instruments (FN)

referent	# of examples	# of speakers
bar	3	2
brake shoe	2	1
“The fireplace”	13	7
fork	6	4
“Horses & Co.”	12	9
knife	26	19
linch-pin	3	2
mallet, hammer	2	1
plough (or part of)	14	9
post	3	2
roller	3	2
scarecrow	1	1
screw	1	1
scythe	4	3
shovel	3	3
spade	21	20
stake	1	1
stretcher	1	1
string	1	1
various tools	25	18
whetstone	2	2
total	148	65

In line with our expectations, the category “tools and instruments” is, with almost 150 examples (or almost 25% of all “gendered” pronouns in the SED notebooks), well-represented in the data. Many instances of non-standard masculine pronouns relate directly to questions in the questionnaire in that informants pick up a noun included in the stimulus question and use a personal pronoun referring to that noun anaphorically.

## VEHICLES

If no neuter pronoun is used to refer to vehicles, the pronominal form of choice is generally feminine rather than masculine (*cf.* also chapters 3 and 9), which suffices as an argument in favour of treating vehicles as a separate category here. However, it turns out once more that the SED data are indeed very traditional – only one instance of a feminine pronoun could be found that is used to refer to a vehicle (44). The reasons for such a scarcity of feminine references are unclear. It is extremely unlikely that none of the informants used the occasional *she* or *her* to refer to a tractor etc. What is more likely is that such a use was not remarkable in the eyes of the fieldworker(s), as the use of feminine pronouns for vehicles is “sanctioned” by grammarians, if with reservations.<sup>10</sup> As a consequence, not a single *she*-tractor made it into the fieldworker notebooks. In addition, the one feminine reference to *car* does not stem from the core Southwest. It was recorded in Hatherden (Hampshire), which is in the North of the country, close to the Wiltshire and Berkshire borders.

- |      |  |                                     |
|------|--|-------------------------------------|
| (44) | wi: ad tə ʔʌn fɪ: 'o:m<br>We had to run it home.   | (39 Ha 2, book VIII)<br>ref. = car  |
| (45) | jɪ: kən 'æ: 'maɪ baɪk   aɪ 'ʃa:n wɒn? ɪ<br>You can have my bike. I shan't want it.           | (37 D 5, book IX)<br>ref. = bike    |
| (46) | ju: gɒt 'ʔɪŋ əŋ 'ʌp<br>You've got to trig/scotch it up.                                      | (36 Co 5, book I)<br>ref. = cart    |
| (47) | ðat də ki:p 'i: daʊn<br>That keeps it down.  | (31 So 14, book I)<br>ref. = cart   |
| (48) | kɔ:ɪ ən 'dɹɒg ə: 'dɹag   wɪʃ ju:m 'mam tu:<br>Call it drug or drag, which(ever) you want to. | (36 Co 5, book I)<br>ref. = sledge  |
| (49) | 'dɹe:v ən 'ɹæʃn zu: i: 'wa:n ɹʌn 'bæk<br>Drive it round so it won't run back.                | (37 D 6, book IX)<br>ref. = vehicle |

The absence of feminine pronouns from the core Southwest counties does not change the fact that masculine forms are indeed frequent. Table 12.4 shows the details for this category; examples are given in (45) to (49). Interestingly, the absolute number of dentotata is relatively small, with only five to 11 different referents.<sup>11</sup> This seems to be a clear indicator that (motorized) vehicles did not yet play the central role in SED times that they play today.

<sup>10</sup> One gets the distinct impression that only vehicles with a motor can be *she* – apart from sailing vessels, that is. At SED times, there were not that many motor vehicles around – horse-drawn cart and wagon are the norm, only occasionally do speakers refer to the advent of tractors.

<sup>11</sup> Although clearly vehicles, the actual referents in the group “vehicle” in Table 12.4 cannot be identified.

Table 12.4: “Gendered” pronouns referring to vehicles (FN)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
bike	2		2
bus	1		1
car	1	1	2
cart	34		23
sledge	1		1
vehicle	6		5
total	46	1	30

## “CREATURE COMFORTS”

With a label such as “creature comforts”, it will be clear from the beginning that this is not a homogeneous class. Rather, it is an accumulation of items belonging to three main sub-categories, namely clothing, accessories of modern life (e.g. *watch*, *pen*, *photograph*, toys), and food and drink (excluding naturally occurring items). To everyone familiar with the SED it will be obvious that these groups are inspired by frequently occurring referents in the questionnaire.

**Articles of clothing** Although few, a number of clear references to articles of clothing and a couple of questions that contain clothing items as possible referents justify the existence of this class. Detailed distributions and examples follow below (Table 12.5 and (50) to (55)). Once again, it is a question in book IX that yields the highest output of masculine forms. Although the context of IX.3.3 is plural (“... put them”), the pronominal forms that are used by the informants are clearly singular (mostly [ŋ]). Another question in book IX has *suit* as its referent, again with a comparatively high ratio of masculine forms.

- (50) ə 'gʊ:k wəz a 'sʌmə: 'bɒnət wɪ 'lɒts ə 'frɪ:lz ɒn ən (36 Co 6, book VI)  
A gook was a summer bonnet with lots of frills on it. ref. = bonnet
- (51) hi:z ə 'brʌn 'nju: ən (32 W 8, book VI)  
It's a brand-new one. ref. = boot
- (52) 'pəl ɪm ɒf (15 He 7, book VI)  
Pull it off. ref. = hat
- (53) 'wɛn ju:m 'gwaɪn ə 'mɛnd ɪn (32 W 4, book V)  
When are you going to mend it? ref. = sock
- (54) 'aɪ 'aɪn 'zi:d 'nɔ:ʃ ə ðu 'kɒlə: stʌd | wɔ:ʃ 'ði: pʌd ən (37 D 1, book IX)  
I haven't seen anything of your collar stud. Where have you put it?  
ref. = collar stud
- (55) 'y: 'meɪd ŋ (37 D 10, book IX)  
Who made it? ref. = suit



Table 12.5: Masculine pronouns referring to articles of clothing (FN)

referent	# of examples	# of speakers
bonnet, hat	6	4
boot	2	2
article of clothing	4	3
collar	1	1
sock	2	2
collar stud	12	10
suit, jacket	8	8
total	35	27

**Accessories of modern life** Here we find all those items that might be classified as tools, but which have nothing to do with everyday work on a farm. Examples are *watch* or *pen*. Moreover, things that could be classified as “fun tools” (i.e. toys) such as *ball*, are also included in this category. Table 12.6 and examples (56) to (63) provide details.

*Ball* figures prominently as it is part of a number of questions, particularly VIII.7.3 “A rubber ball that’s punctured won’t ... **bounce**” (Orton 1962: 93). Informants usually form an independent clause and use an anaphoric pronoun to refer to the ball, resulting in formulations as in (56).

Money, or rather coins and notes, are also frequently referred to with *he* or *en*, as in (62). As part of question IX.1.3 (“A picture not hanging straight is hanging ... **askew**”; Orton 1962: 95), *picture* is another frequent denotatum (see example 63).

- |      |   |                                      |
|------|---|--------------------------------------|
| (56) | <b>i:</b> want glans<br>It won’t bounce.  | (36 Co 1, book VIII)<br>ref. = ball  |
| (57) | 'ɔtʃ əɪ ɪənd <b>ən</b> tə ði<br>I will lend it to you.  | (31 So 14, book IX)<br>ref. = ball   |
| (58) | ɔɪ 'kʊdnt ɪrd <b>ɪm</b><br>I couldn’t read it.  | (16 Wo 7, book VIII)<br>ref. = book  |
| (59) | <b>i:z</b> əbʊt 'faɪv mɪnɪts 'fɑ:st<br>It’s about five minutes fast.                                    | (15 He 7, book VI)<br>ref. = clock   |
| (60) | ju: kɪ 'tɜ:n <b>ən</b> ən 'o:pən <b>ən</b> ən 'ʃʊt <b>ɪ</b><br>You can turn it and open it and shut it. | (31 So 14, book VII)<br>ref. = watch |
| (61) | ɪm dɪd 'kɑ:lɪ <b>ɪm</b> ðæt<br>He called it that.   | (15 He 5, book V)<br>ref. = lamp     |
| (62) | 'ju: 'o:lɪ <b>ən</b> gɪm ðə 'laɪt<br>You hold it against the light.                                     | (36 Co 6, book VII)<br>ref. = note   |
| (63) | <b>i:z</b> 'haɪŋɪn 'æʊt 'ɪn ə:<br>It’s hanging out (askew), isn’t it?                                   | (38 Do 3, book IX)<br>ref. = picture |

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Table 12.6: Masculine pronouns referring to accessories of modern life (FN)

referent	# of examples	# of speakers
ball	20	13
book	1	1
clock, watch	9	5
coin, note	6	4
lamp	1	1
pen(cil)	3	2
photograph	1	1
picture	10	9
plate	1	1
see-saw	1	1
song	1	1
total	54	31

**Food and drink** This category only includes countable items of food and drink – mass referents are treated in section 12.1.3.1. Also excluded are naturally grown things (such as *apple*), which are covered in section 12.1.1.3. As a result, this is a rather small class, with only 11 examples. Table 12.7 shows details; examples can be found in (64) to (68).

In (64), the speaker uses *beer* as a count noun, making masculine reference possible. In two other cases, speakers refer to *bread* or *pastry* as *he*, assuming an individual loaf of bread or pastry as the referent.<sup>12</sup>

Example (68) may not really belong in this category, but *oil* can be subsumed under “food” without any problems. In addition, the semantic make-up of the example is very similar to others in this category: A mass noun is “converted” into a count noun by using a unit of measurement that is +count. *Drop* is used here, while the *beer* example is obviously meant to include *glass* or *pint*.

- (64) i:z 'gʊzələn | i: 'dɪdn̩ 'dʒɪŋk ɪz bɪə: | i: 'gʊzəlɪd ən (36 Co 6, book VI)  
He's guzzling. He didn't drink his beer. He guzzled it. ref. = beer
- (65) ðas 'klʌtʃi ke:k | i:d bʌ 'dɔ: 'zi: (36 Co 2, book VI)  
That's clutchy cake. It'd be doughy, see. ref. = cake
- (66) 'ke:kz ə bɪt 'kʌ:s | i: 'aɪnt ʃaɪzd 'ʌp (39 Ha 2, book V)  
The cake's a bit sad. It hasn't risen (up). ref. = cake
- (67) 'ʌŋjən ən 'tædi 'pa:sti | ðə: 'ma:ɪd ə bʌn ə 'bɪd ə 'meɪt ɪn ən (37 D 6, book VII)  
Onion and potato pasty. There might have been a bit of meat in it. ref. = pasty

<sup>12</sup> Question V.6.12 reads “When your bread or pastry has not risen, you say it is ...**sad**.” (Orton 1962: 72)

- (68) 'εἶν ἄρ 'dʒɒp 'ɒtəl ən 'kɛtʃ ən 'vaɪə: (36 Co 2, book V)  
Heave up a drop of oil and catch it afire. ref. = drop of oil

Table 12.7: Masculine pronouns referring to food and drink (FN)

referent	# of examples	# of speakers
(glass of) beer	1	1
bread/pastry, cake, pasty, pie	9	9
crumb, piece, loaf of bread	6	6
drop of oil	1	1
total	17	16

## NATURE RE-MODELLED

This category represents a sort of compromise or intermediate step between the class of man-made objects and the next bigger category, “nature”. Items included here are usually natural substances or similar things which man has changed to his liking. A hedge, for example, is usually left alone to grow once it has been planted, and often not maintained in any way – but it has to be planted in the first place. Similarly, a lane may consist of gravel or mud, i.e. natural substances, but someone had to build it. The same goes for a haystack, a rick, etc. Examples are given in (69) to (78); Table 12.8 shows details of distribution.

*Field* is included here as the OED states that the use of *field* meaning “open land as opposed to woodland; a stretch of open land” is obsolete (OED, “field” 1.a.). Moreover, SED informants are generally referring to their arable fields, clearly meaning the worked land, not some untouched stretch of land. Interestingly, the semantic change took just the opposite path with *meadow*, which originally only referred to the worked land, but now also stands for grass-covered land in general.<sup>13</sup> There is just one clear masculine reference to a meadow in the SED fieldworker notebooks (example (70)), where the reference to its size shows that it is probably used for either hay production or as pasture.

*Furrow* and *ridge* are intrinsically connected in any field<sup>14</sup>, and speakers refer to both with the help of masculine pronouns as in (73), for example. *Hedge* is part of questions IV.2.3-4, and is generally taken up in the response with a masculine form, as in (74) or (75). The walls included here (see example (78)) are not parts of buildings, but are used to separate fields, fulfilling the same function as a hedge.

<sup>13</sup> “Originally a piece of land permanently covered with grass which is mown for use as hay. In later use often extended to include any piece of grass land, whether used for cropping or pasture [...]” (OED, “meadow” 1.a.)

<sup>14</sup> “A raised or rounded strip of arable land, usually one of a series (with intermediate open furrows) into which a field is divided by ploughing in a special manner.” (OED, “ridge” 5.)

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(69)	'teuk 'æot ðik 'bʌndl ə 'stɹoo ən 'brɪŋ ŋ 'o:m Take out that bundle of straw and bring it along.	(31 So 13, book II) ref. = bundle of straw
(70)	'i:z 'sɪksti e:kə:z ðat meðə It's sixty acres that meadow.	(36 Co 6, book IV) ref. = meadow
(71)	ðe: də 'bɔ:k ŋ 'plæɪ ən ən 'ti:l ŋ ə'ge:m They break it, plough it and till it again.	(36 Co 7, book II) ref. = field
(72)	'i:z 'pɪtft ʌp 'brɛ:v 'ðat wʌn ɪz That's pitched up well, that one is.	(36 Co 2, book II) ref. = ridge
(73)	'wa:tər ən bi 'nɔ:ɪt Water it by night.	(31 So 14, book IX) ref. = garden
(74)	fə:ɪ 'dɪʌfɪm ɪm 'dəʊn For trimming it.	(15 He 7, book IV) ref. = hedge
(75)	'hi:z ə:l grʊəd oʊvə: It is all grown over.	(31 So 4, book IV) ref. = hedge
(76)	'i:z 'sʌm 'næɹə 'iə: sɜ: It is very narrow here, Sir.	(36 Co 4, book IV) ref. = path, road
(77)	ju: 'kʌd ə 'jʌŋ 'ɛləm 'stɪk   i: wəd 'bæɪ dæɪn 'ansəm You cut a young elm stick, it would bow down handsomely (very well)	(36 Co 4, book II) ref. = stick
(78)	ə 'ʃi:p ɔdn 'gə: 'o:və: 'hi: A sheep wouldn't go over it.	(38 Do 1, book IV) ref. = wall

Table 12.8: Masculine pronouns referring to “nature re-modelled” (FN)

referent	# of examples	# of speakers
bundle of straw, stook	2	2
cesspit	1	1
dike/ditch	1	1
drain	1	1
field, meadow	11	8
furrow	3	3
ridge	1	1
garden	1	1
hedge	12	9
lane, path, road	4	4
rick, sheaf, stack	5	4
stick	3	3
tombstone	1	1
wall	4	3
yard	1	1
total	51	31

### 12.1.1.2 Man-made objects – summary

Summarizing the different sub-categories of man-made objects, we can conclude that the SED informants from the West Country still use a system of pronoun reference that is very close to the traditional system as described in 19<sup>th</sup>-century dialectological literature. Denotata are, almost without exception, concrete count nouns (*cf.* section 12.1.3 for non-standard referents). Table 12.9 summarizes the results from the different sub-categories (excluding the one feminine form referring to *car*). As has been pointed out at the beginning of this section, man-made objects constitute the overwhelming majority of the masculine pronoun referents in the fieldworker notebooks. With far over 400 instances, approximately two thirds of all examples belong to this category.

Table 12.9: Masculine pronouns referring to man-made objects (FN)

referent class	subclass	# of examples	# of speakers
buildings		51	38
containers		53	36
tools & instruments		148	65
vehicles		46	29
“creature comforts”			
	articles of clothing	35	27
	accessories of modern life	54	31
	food & drink	17	16
nature re-modelled		51	31
total		455	110

### 12.1.1.3 Nature

A category “nature” is postulated for the same reasons that were given for the classes of “containers” and “vehicles” respectively. Nature and naturally occurring things are often given feminine pronoun representations in StE, partly based on mythological explanations<sup>15</sup>, partly on patterns of metaphorical personification (“nature - *she*”).

Based on the make-up of the SED questionnaire and its general concern with things important in farming communities, a number of nouns one can subsume under the heading “nature” are part of the questions or even key words. In the fol-

<sup>15</sup> Latin *arbor* “tree”, for example, although belonging to the masculine *-or* declension, shows feminine agreement patterns, based on the belief that nymphs inhabit trees.

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lowing, “non-edible” denotata (basically trees and plants<sup>16</sup>) will be distinguished from others (“edible” ones such as fruit and vegetables, but also other features of nature such as *river* or *moon*). This distinction is based on categorizations in other studies (see, e.g., Siemund (2001) or Pawley (2002)). Whether or not it is justified will be discussed at the end of this section.

### TREES AND PLANTS

*Tree* or parts of a tree such as *bough* or *branch* are among the most frequent referent nouns, occurring 20 times in the context of six questions. In particular, trees are mentioned or at least implied in all questions in section IV.10 “Trees, bushes” and IV.12 “Parts of a tree”. In question VIII.7.4, *it*, referring to a tree, is part of the expected response.<sup>17</sup> Examples of this category are given in (79) to (83) and summarized in Table 12.10.

(79)	pʊt ə bɪg bæʊ ən ən ɪd bæɪn əl wɪk Put a big bough on and it would burn all week.	(16 Wo 7, book V) ref. = bough
(80)	ɪz 'feɪs ɪz 'wæɪd ə'brɔ:d Its face is wide open.	(37 D 10, book II) ref. = flower
(81)	ɪz 'brɔ:də:ɾ 'ɪn æ: It's broader, isn't it?	(32 W 8, book II) ref. = leaf
(82)	ɪ: adnʔ ɔ:ʔə ɡrəʊ ɪ It isn't supposed to grow here.	(25 O 2, book II) ref. = plant
(83)	ɪf ɪ də 'brɛ:k 'ɔ:f ɪz 'bæɪn tə li:v ðə 'stʊ:t brɑ:m <sup>18</sup> If it breaks off, it's bound to leave the stump behind.	(36 Co 4, book IV) ref. = tree

Table 12.10: Masculine pronouns referring to trees and plants (FN)

referent	# of examples	# of speakers
bush	1	1
flower	1	1
grass	1	1
leaf	2	1
plant	6	6
tree (or part of)	21	17
total	32	25

<sup>16</sup> I am aware of the fact that in other cultures this distinction may be non-existent or the cut-off points may differ. “Plant” is taken in its popular rather than scientific sense. The latter would include vegetables as a sub-category.

<sup>17</sup> “If a boy wanted to get to the top of a tree, he'd have to . . . **climb** it.” (Orton 1962: 93)

<sup>18</sup> “The stump of a tree which has been felled; also the head of the stump, from which new shoots are produced.” (OED, “stool” 13.a.)

## OTHER

Referents belonging to this category are rather heterogeneous: apples are represented, as are other naturally occurring things such as *fire*, *hill* or *river*.

Various references to the moon are interesting. Although traditionally associated with feminine rather than masculine pronouns<sup>19</sup>, dialects use masculine pronouns almost exclusively in reference to the moon (*cf.* also the examples from Newfoundland in chapter 14). Two potential explanations come to mind: for one thing, it seems possible that the traditional Germanic gender distinctions with a feminine sun and a masculine moon (as still found in Modern German) “survived” in the dialects and did not give way to the classic system of Latin/Romance languages, which has a masculine sun and a feminine moon (Lat. *sol* ‘sun’ and *luna* ‘moon’).

Alternatively or possibly reinforcing the first scenario, another folk belief took over in dialects, namely that of referring to the patches of darkness and light as a man’s face, thus “the man in the moon”.<sup>20</sup> In the latter case it looks as if we would be well-advised to classify these examples as personifications. However, the OED definition explicitly states that no personification need be involved when using a feminine pronoun – so why should we necessarily assume it for masculine ones?

Table 12.11 shows details of the referents found in this category, illustrative material is provided in (84) to (89).

(84)	at 'ɔ:təz 'eɪd ŋ 'skɪn ən 'ɔ:t I always eat/ate? it skin and all.	(36 Co 4, book VI) ref. = apple
(85)	'bæŋk ŋ ʌp Bank it.	(31 So 3, book V) ref. = fire
(86)	'i: ɡɒd ə 'wi:təl ræʊn ən It has got a wheel around it.	(38 Do 3, book VII) ref. = moon
(87)	ðat 'ʊniən ðeər ju:d 'plʌnt ɪm ju:d ɡet 'tʃɪbəlz frəm ɪm That onion there, (if) you’d plant it you’d get chibols <sup>21</sup> from it.	(25 O 4, book V) ref. = onion
(88)	'ɪdŋ no: 'dɛpθ ɪn ən   i:z 'ʃalə (There) isn’t any depth in it. It’s shallow.	(36 Co 7, book IV) ref. = pond
(89)	fliŋən ðv ən Flinging it.	(31 So 14, book VIII) ref. = stone

<sup>19</sup> “Since the disappearance of the grammatical genders of OE., in which *móna* was masc., the feminine pronoun has commonly been used in referring to the moon, even when no personification is intended (the neuter pronoun occurs, but less frequently); in poetry the moon is often personified, always as a female, and sometimes, after classical example, identified with various goddesses, as Cynthia, Diana, Phoebe.” (OED, “moon” 1.b.)

<sup>20</sup> *Cf.* “moon” OED 1.a.

<sup>21</sup> “A young or spring onion with the green stalk attached (in which stage it is much like a chibol proper). Chiefly *dial.*” (OED, “chibol” 2.). Examples from Barnes’ poems and Elworthy’s Glossary are cited.

Table 12.11: Masculine pronouns referring to other natural features (FN)

referent class	# of examples	# of speakers
fruit, vegetables etc.		
apple	6	5
berry	2	2
nut	1	1
onion	3	2
potato	2	2
egg	2	2
forms of water		
pond	4	3
puddle	2	1
river, stream	8	8
well	1	1
ford	1	1
other		
fire	8	7
hill	2	1
stone	5	5
moon	7	5
thunder	1	1
total	56	42

A by now familiar picture emerges when summarizing the results from the two sub-categories that constitute the superordinate category “nature”: Once more, we do not find a single feminine pronoun. No matter if the denotata in question are big or small (e.g. *tree* vs. *bush*), dangerous as a fire or completely innocent, edible or inedible, moving or unmoving (e.g. *river* vs. *pond*), the non-standard pronouns that are chosen by the SED informants are without exception masculine.

#### 12.1.1.4 Body parts

Various questions in the SED refer to body parts, both of humans and animals. Occasionally, one could expect a metaphorical link in the form of a part-whole relationship that would justify the use of gendered pronouns even in StE. Individual cases will have to be put under scrutiny to see if such a condition applies. This is the only category dealing with animates (human beings and animals) – all others discussed so far strictly concerned inanimate entities. Relevant referents are divided into two groups (human – animal) in Table 12.12, with representative examples in (90) to (93).



*Bone* is one of the most frequently recorded referents, owing to one question in particular in which *it* is part of the expected response.<sup>22</sup> The decision to include the one reference to *disease* under “human body parts” may be debatable, but seems justified as the question is part of the general section on the human body in the questionnaire and because diseases befall human (and animal) bodies.

As far as one can tell from the short excerpts in the fieldworker notebooks, all of the 57 examples of masculine pronouns used for body parts are true instances of gendered pronouns, without any personification or metaphor involved. Referents are generally typical count nouns, and the use of a masculine pronoun would be expected according to the traditional system of gender assignment in West Country dialects.

Table 12.12: Masculine pronouns referring to body parts (FN)

referent class	# of examples	# of speakers
human body parts		
ankle	4	4
belly	2	2
blister, boil, bump, swelling, wound	15	11
disease	1	1
ear (& parts)	4	4
finger, nail, part of hand	5	4
head	3	3
tongue	1	1
tooth	4	3
animal body parts		
bone	15	13
hoof	3	3
pelt	2	1
skin (of bacon)	1	1
teat	5	4
total	65	39

- (90) av 'bɪn 'tɪkt̪ ɪ (36 Co 4, book VI)  
I've been (and) ricked<sup>23</sup> it. ref. = ankle
- (91) 'dɪɪmə'ðɪɪ 'kli:nɪm ɪm ʌət wɪð ə 'pɪn (15 He 7, book VI)  
Drum of the ear, cleaning it out with a pin. (drum of the) ear

<sup>22</sup> VIII.7.6 “A dog buries a bone because he wants to ... **hide it**.” (Orton 1962: 93)

<sup>23</sup> “To sprain, twist, or wrench (any limb or joint).” (OED, “rick”, v. 2 *trans.*)

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- (92) ʃɪ 'tɔər ən 'ɔf (31 So 14, book III)  
 She tore it off. ref. = hoof
- (93) 'ðat 'ɪz ə 'dɔd 'tɛt wɪð 'no: 'mɪlk ɪn tu: ən (38 Do 4, book III)  
 That is a dead teat with no milk in it. ref. = teat

### 12.1.1.5 “Over-generalized” cases – masculine female animals

It is assumed in the traditional literature<sup>24</sup> that West Country speakers from time to time seem to over-generalize their masculine pronouns. As a result, a cow may become a *he*, a reference that is usually too remarkable to go unnoticed by the SED fieldworker. It is unclear how far such uses are really instances of over-generalization, but it seems as good an explanation as any.

Table 12.13 lists the animals that receive masculine reference by SED informants. Unsurprisingly, *cow* is the most frequent denotatum (*cf.* (94) to (96)). As pronominal reference to animals is outside the scope of this study (*cf.* 8.2), these cases are only mentioned here for their own sake and will not play any role henceforth.

- (94) tɪl i:v bɪn 'mɪkt (37 D 7, book III)  
 Till it has been milked. ref. = cow
- (95) 'ðat 'kæɪz ɪkɪn 'pə:ɔ:ɔ: 'ðɔ:ɔ: 'ɪdnt i: (37 D 8, book VII)  
 That cow is looking pretty thin, isn't it? ref. = cow
- (96) 'ðɪk 'kəʊz 'ɪɹf l ɔ:ə? ə 'tʃɪl əbəʊt ən (32 W 5, book VI)  
 That cow is wet; it's got a chill. ref. = cow

Table 12.13: Masculine pronouns referring to female animals (FN)

referent	# of examples	# of speakers
cow	12	9
ewe-cat	1	1
hen	1	1
total	14	11

### 12.1.2 Feminine referents

Not unexpectedly, feminine pronouns are only rarely used to refer to inanimate nouns in the fieldworker notebooks. In fact, “rarely” is much too tame an expression to describe the situation: Among the almost 700 interesting examples, there are only three, with two from the same speaker, which are clearly feminine. They can be found in (97) and (98).

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<sup>24</sup> Recall e.g. Elworthy (1877: 33).

- (97) #Lot o' #copper in #she. When #she went in was #bad #thing.  
 Lot of copper in it. When it was liquidated ...” (36 Co 6, book IV)
- (98) 'ʃi ˌtɛɪk ˌsʌm ˈpʊlm It takes some pulling. (21 NF 6, book VI)

The first reference is to a copper mine, the second to pulling out an eye tooth. The first example contains the only feminine references to an inanimate entity in the Southwestern notebooks. It is unclear why the speaker chooses this form here, although mines are traditionally among the entities which can take feminine pronouns. Also, it should be noted that St. Buryan, the locality in question, is at the westernmost tip of Cornwall, which is supposedly not as strongly influenced by West Country dialect as the more easterly parts. Any of these would suffice as an explanation.

The second example stems from Norfolk, which is location-wise of course neither part of the West Country nor example-wise really relevant to the discussion. However, it shows the basic west-east chasm, as three West Country speakers used a masculine pronoun in the same context in four instances (referring to an eye tooth; see Table 12.12).

### 12.1.3 Problematic cases

This section discusses those cases where the referent is unclear or impossible to identify as well as those which “should not exist” in the traditional system, that is, masculine forms referring to abstract nouns, mass nouns, etc.

It has already been mentioned that the fieldworkers’ transcriptions are not always consistent and thus not reliable. Most of the unclear and problematic cases are classified as such based on an inconsistency in the notes or comments of some sort or both. Although these “exceptions” will not be given any real value in the discussion, it is felt that they are interesting in their own right.

#### 12.1.3.1 Non-count referents

The count-mass distinction is traditionally assumed to be at the heart of the principle of gender assignment in West Country dialects, with count nouns taking forms of *he* (and *she*), while all other nouns take *it* exclusively. The problem about this paradigm is its interaction and partial overlap with that of abstract vs. concrete nouns. At its most extreme, the system predicts that only concrete count nouns employ masculine forms, while all other nouns can only use neuter forms as anaphoric pronouns.<sup>25</sup>

It will be seen below that the count-mass cline is a much better indicator than the concrete-abstract scale when it comes to “allowing” gendered pronouns, particularly in traditional Newfoundland English (*cf.* 15.1.4). The following exam-

<sup>25</sup> Recall Elworthy’s criterion for “gendered” pronouns: the noun in question has to be a “definite noun, i.e. the name of a thing or object which has a shape of its own”, which would exclude abstracta (Elworthy 1877: 32).

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ples illustrate the wide array of “unexpected” referents found in the SED fieldworker notebooks. It should be mentioned here already that exceptional referents are amazingly rare – with about 60 examples, they do not even amount to 10% of the total of the almost 700 non-standard pronominal forms in the fieldworker notebooks.

Example (99) refers to “the best way to drink nasty medicine” (Orton 1962: 78; question VI.6.2), with “nasty medicine” as the referent for the speaker’s two masculine forms. *Medicine* should be subsumed under the heading “mass” here, as it is clear from the question’s use of *drink* that a liquid is the intended referent.

- (99) 'bo:ftən oθ ən | 'fɛt ŋ gɔ: 'stɾaɪt ɔ:n 'dæən (38 Do 1, book VI)  
Bolting of it. Let it go straight down.

An item that comes up repeatedly in the questionnaire is *milk*, another liquid and as such clearly a mass noun. Nevertheless, as many as six examples from four speakers include masculine pronouns referring to *milk*; they are given in (100) to (103). *Tea* is also referred to with masculine forms by two speakers in examples (104) and (105).

Staying with LIQUID FOOD AND DRINK, example (106) refers to *broth*. The speaker here uses a masculine and a zero form (*what’s*), which might be interpreted as *it*, within the same utterance. Responding to the question what you do if your gravy is too thin, the speaker of (107) uses *en* to refer to gravy. Another type of “semi-liquid” food, *porridge*, is discussed in (108). Also a liquid, though never thought of as a drink, is the most likely referent in (109) – urine.

- (100) i: gɒt 'kʁɔdz ɪ ən | ɪz 'gɔ:n 'bæd (36 Co 6, book V)  
It has got curds in it. It’s gone bad.<sup>26</sup>
- (101) i: 'gɒtəpt ən 'dæʃn (36 Co 6, book VI)  
He swallowed it down (quickly).
- (102) 'ðæt ðeə 'mɪlks 'gɒn, i: 'went tʊ ə 'krɔʊd  
That there milk’s gone, he (it<sup>27</sup>) went to a crud. (31 So 14, book V)
- (103) 'gɪts 'ɔ:n ən 'gɪt ŋ fɾəm 'dæ:ɹi (36 Co 7, book V)  
Get on and get it from the dairy.
- (104) 'ɛnt ŋ out the #teapot. (36 Co 7, book V)  
Pour it out of the teapot.
- (105) 'pʊt ən tə 'dɹɔ: (36 Co 6, book V)  
Put it to brew.

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<sup>26</sup> Although the form [ɪz] could also be interpreted as a simple *is*, this seems unlikely. If we were to assume *is*, this would mean that the speaker uses a *be*-perfect (*is gone bad* instead of *has gone bad*), which does not occur anywhere else. Also, the fieldworker indeed uses [ɪz] to transcribe this speaker’s *he’s* elsewhere, and thirdly, the first two pronouns clearly are masculine, making it highly probable that the third is masculine as well.

<sup>27</sup> Original “translation” with parantheses by fieldworker.

- (106) 'tɛ:st **ŋ** ən 'si: wɒts 'fak (36 Co 4, book V)  
Taste it and see what it's like.
- (107) 'θɪkŋ **ən** 'ʌp ə bɪt (36 Co 7, book V)  
Thicken it up a bit.
- (108) wi: 'jɪɔs kɔ:l **ŋ** ə 'be:sŋ 'u:tmi:l (36 Co 7, book V)  
We used to call it (a) basin (of) oatmeal.
- (109) #Let **en** [ŋ] #drain a#way. (38 Do 3, book I)

Also belonging to the domain of food and drink is the referent of examples (110) and (111), *bacon*, both from the same speaker. The next example (112) has a similar referent, *fat*.

Returning to milk products, *butter* is *he* or *en* (or similar) in examples (113) to (115), which were uttered by three different speakers. Remembering his mother kneading the dough, the speaker produces example (116). While the sought referent of example (117) is non-count (*bread*), the actual referent in the speaker's mind seems to be +count (*bar*).

- (110) i: 'ɪdŋ pɒt və: 'ʃmɒk (36 Co 6, book III)  
It isn't put to smoke.
- (111) 'pɒt **ŋ** m ðe 'bɔsə (36 Co 6, book III)  
Put it in the salter.
- (112) 'ʃafə: fat 'ðas 'i: (32 W 9, book V)  
Rasher fat, that's it.
- (113) #I've a-#churned **en** [ən] #many a time. (38 Do 3, book V)
- (114) 'əɪv əd ə 'tʃə:ŋ **ɪn**<sup>28</sup> (32 W 5, book V)  
I've had to churn it.
- (115) 'gɔ: ən 'tʃə:ɪm **ɪn** (32 W 2, book V)  
Go and churn it.
- (116) 'mɔ:ðə də 'mʌnɪŋ **ən** ʊp ən 'dæʊn. (36 Co 5, book V)  
Mother kneads it up and down.
- (117) wi: 'jɪɔs kɔ:l **ŋ** 'ʃi:ki bə: (36 Co 7, book V)  
We used to call it treacle-bread.

Leaving the domain of food and drink behind, we also find a number of “proper” mass nouns among the referents of masculine forms. (118) is the informant's response to question II.9.16<sup>29</sup>, with the pronoun clearly referring to *hay*. The same noun is also the referent in examples (119) and (120), responding to “Where do you store your hay, if you have it inside?” (I.3.18; Orton 1962: 50). *Rubbish* is the intended key word in the next example ((121), “... any worthless stuff that you throw away?”, V.1.15; Orton 1962: 70); however, the [ɪm] could also refer to the room or area that is being cleaned.

<sup>28</sup> This seems to be the standard realization of *en* in Wiltshire, which is still very close to the original OE *hine*.

<sup>29</sup> “If hay is stacked too green, what do you say it does in the stack? – **To heat.**” (Orton 1962: 57)

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- (118) **i:z** 'etən 'væ:st (36 Co 5, book II)  
It's heating fast.<sup>30</sup>
- (119) 'pʏd **ən** ɔ:və:ɾ un 'fɪpʊn tətət (37 D 2, book I)  
Put it over in the barn's loft.
- (120) 'kɑ:rt **ɪ** ðə 'sɑ:ɪd ə ðə 'ʃeɪd (39 Ha 4, book I)  
Cart it to the side of the shed.
- (121) jə 'kle:ɪnd **ɪm** 'eɪ:t (16 Wo 6, book V)  
You cleaned it out.

A very peculiar case is example (122), cited here as “anecdotal evidence”. First, it is from Norfolk, which is obviously not in the Southwest. Second, the form is not commented on, neither by the fieldworker nor the editor, which is rare indeed. The referent seems to be *earth*.

Staying with earth, two informants use a masculine pronoun to refer to *ground* in (123) and (124), and a third informant's 'e refers to a type of gravel (*rab*, in his words; (125)). Another “natural resource” is discussed in (126) – wood.

- (122) 'ɪv.ɪ.θɪŋ ɪz 'äθ 'emʔtən (21 Nf 9, book IV)  
Everything is earth, isn't it?
- (123) juə: me:kən 'sʌm 'ɾʌts un **ən** (36 Co 7, book IV)  
You are making plenty of ruts in it.
- (124) ðas 'grævɪn bɪ 'təf 'stændɪn fə: 'jə: [u: | 'kɑdʔ ɾɪnd ɔ:və: **ən** (36 Co 6, book II)  
That's ground (that has) been left standing for a year or two; cattle ran over it.
- (125) **i:z** 'jeʔə 'ɾab (36 Co 6, book VIII)  
It's yellow rab.
- (126) 'kɪft ʊd, jə 'spɪɪt **ɪ** ən 'tɔ:ɪt ðə 'fɔ:ɪə. (31 So 14, book V)  
Cleft wood, you split it and light the fire.

Another class where we encounter non-standard pronouns is that of weather and related phenomena. Although some of the examples are unclear, the interpretation of the pronominal form in question as masculine is in all cases less controversial than an alternative scenario.

The subject slot in (127) is one of the standard cases exemplifying “empty” *it*. We find sentences like *it's raining* (or German *es regnet*) in many languages; obviously, there is no “it” that is responsible for the rain. Rather, the subject slot cannot be left empty and is thus filled with the semantically empty *it*. In all of these examples, we could theoretically interpret the use of a masculine form as referring to a specific cloud or a specific storm, which could then be classified as instances of personification (*cf.* also (128) and (129)).

- (127) **i:** 'dɪdɪ ɾe:n | **i:** 'sɔ:kt dævɪn<sup>31</sup> (36 Co 6, book VI)  
It didn't rain, it soaked down.

<sup>30</sup> The first “translation” by the fieldworker was *he's* rather than his final *it is*.

<sup>31</sup> The fieldworker underlined the *it* in his “translation”, so he obviously analysed the form as *he*, too.

- (128) 'ju: θɔ:d i: wəz 'gɔ:n ə 'ɾɛm ən i: 'didn  
 You thought it was going to rain and it didn't. (36 Co 7, book IX)

The situation is slightly more difficult with those cases where the masculine pronoun seems to refer to *day* or *weather* in general as in (130) to (135). It is interesting to note that we are almost exclusively confronted with bad weather – the negative feelings and implications might be responsible for the gender choice. The importance of emotive factors in gender assignment were already mentioned in chapter 9.

- (129) ɪf i: 'ɪdn 'ɾɛmən (36 Co 5, book VII)  
 if it isn't raining
- (130) i:z 'pɪɹəm wɛðə: tə'dɛɪ (36 Co 5, book I)  
 It's damp weather today.
- (131) i:z 'mɹkən 'de: (36 Co 6, book IX)  
 It is a dirty day.
- (132) ɒðɪ 'dɒɪ 'dɛɪ tə'dɛɪ | i: 'ɪdn vɛɾɪ 'brɹaɪt tə'dɛɪ 'ɪz ə (36 Co 7, VII)  
 Old dull day today. It isn't very bright, is it?
- (133) i: wəz 'wɛt bɹɹd ə 'kɪə:d 'ɹp æ:də: 'dɪnə: (36 Co 6, book VI)  
 It was wet but it cleared up after dinner.
- (134) i: wəz 'pɹɒpə:ɪ 'dɔ:mənt (36 Co 4, book VII)  
 It was very dull (dormant).
- (135) 'mɹs bɪ ðə 'nəɪt ɪf i: 'kɹɹm 'da:ɹk (36 Co 6, book VII)  
 (It) must be the night if it (be)came dark.

Debatable though some of these examples may admittedly be, no linguist consulted was able to name a variety that realizes *it* as [i:], making it extremely unlikely that any of the forms above are neuter personal pronouns.

Much less controversial is example (136); for this speaker, *fog* is obviously a count noun (“a fog”), thus the *en*. *Snow* is the referent in (137); a similar explanation may underlie this example. The same speaker uses [i:] to refer to the wind in example (138).

- (136) 'ðats ə 'maɪn 'vɒg | ɪ gɒt 'lɔ:st ɪn ɪn (32 W 2, book VII)  
 That's a heavy fog. I got lost in it.
- (137) ɪ kən 'mɒɪn 'tɒɪn wi: ju:s taɪm 'ɹp 'ni:z (36 Co 5, book VII)  
 I can remember a time (when) we used to have it up to our knees.
- (138) ɪf ðə: 'wɒdn nɔ: 'wɪn aɪd 'sæt dæ:ɪn tɪl i: 'sta:ɹt 'blɔ: (36 Co 5, book VII)  
 If there wasn't any wind, I'd sit down till it started to blow

The remainder of the referents addressed in this section belong to different categories. However, another small subgroup is made up of a number of abstracta such as *idea* etc. In the early days of the SED, the fieldworkers also noted down peculiarities in the free conversation that they recorded after the questionnaire proper had been completed. Unfortunately, that policy seems to have been discontinued,

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probably because it was too difficult to scribble down phonetic notes during the conversation.

- (139) ɒv ədʌn hi: I've done that. (31 So 4, conversation)  
 (140) ɒv ə'meɪd hi: I've made that. (31 So 4, conversation)  
 (141) nəvə: jə:d əv i: Never heard of that. (31 So 1, conversation)

The examples in (139) to (141) have one thing in common: The fieldworker uses *that* rather than *it* to “translate” the informant’s use of *he*, pointing out that the fieldworker and editor already had problems to identify a “proper” referent. In all cases, the referents seem to be actions rather than objects.

The same is true for examples (142) and (143), which are replies to question IX.3.7.<sup>32</sup> The referent is *chance* or *chance to go to college*.

Three different speakers refer to *job* with the help of masculine forms in (144) to (146), mostly in response to question IX.4.11.<sup>33</sup> Discussing the merits of an idea, the speaker of (147) uses *'e* to refer to the idea in question.

When they finally reach the end of the questionnaire, the informant from Burbage, Wiltshire, utters (148), referring to the final question. The only example referring to a concrete rather than abstract mass noun is (149); the referent is *mail*.

- (142) i: 'nɛvə: 'tɒk ŋ He didn't take it. (36 Co 7, book IX)  
 (143) 'ʃi:d ə 'tɒk ŋ She'd have taken it. (39 Ha 3, book IX)  
 (144) i: 'idŋ ə 'bæd dʒɒb It isn't a bad job. (36 Co 5, book VI)  
 (145) jɪ: mʌs 'gʊd ŋ dʌn tə'mɔ:ɾə You must get it done tomorrow. (37 D 8, book IX)  
 (146) ɪf 'kæsn 'du: ən tə'deɪ hɒm 'gɒt tə bɪ 'dʌn tə'mɔ:ɾə If you can't do it today, it's got to be done tomorrow. (31 So 13, book IX)  
 (147) They didn't like 'e [i:]. (31 So 1, conversation)  
 (148) 'kʌm 'dʒʌs 'ɾəɪt ə: 'dɪd (It) came just right it did. (32 W 4, book IX)  
 (149) wi: 'dɪdn jɪ:s tə 'gʊd ŋ tɪl 'fɛbŋ We didn't use to get it till 11 o'clock. (37 D 11, book VII)  
 ref. = mail

It is interesting to note that most of the “exceptions” mentioned above clearly fall into three major categories: a) food and drink (generally responses to questions in book V), b) weather phenomena and c) abstracta. As each of these categories contains numerous other members which are count nouns, we can conclude that

<sup>32</sup> The question’s main purpose is to elicit all forms of the verb *take*, embedded in a scenario that uses the formulation “taking a chance” (cf. Orton 1962: 96).

<sup>33</sup> “You needn’t do that job today if you don’t want to, but tomorrow you really ... **must** do it.” (Orton 1962: 97)



the masculine forms in the examples above were most likely used on the basis of analogical extension. Also, it should be obvious that we cannot really tell in many cases what the exact referent of the pronoun is. It might as well be a count noun expressing the same concept – just to give one example often used to illustrate this: *bread* is -count (i.e. *it*) while *loaf* (of bread) is +count, thus *he*.

Table 12.14 summarizes the examples given in this section. Three speakers contribute more than two examples (three, four and eight respectively), while 14 speakers only add one example each. Two examples each are contributed by the remaining seven speakers. As the categories “noun class” and “number of speakers” overlap (one speaker can contribute to more than one class), the individual figures in the last column differ from the total.

Table 12.14: Summary of “problematic referents” (SED fieldworker notebooks)

noun class	# of references	# of speakers
liquids, food	21	11
weather phenomena	15	7
abstracta	11	8
(other) mass nouns	9	9
total	56	26

We also observe that Cornwall figures rather prominently in this section. Eleven instances of “unexpected” masculine pronouns stem from St. Buryan and Mullion, and seven from Gwinear. Taking a look at the map of the individual SED locations (Map 7.2), we find out that all three localities are situated in West Cornwall. It will be recalled from chapters 2 and 7 that it is generally assumed that West Cornwall is less dialectal than the more easterly regions. This assumption is based on the theory that the existence of Cornish and, following that, the relatively late introduction of English to the area are responsible for the comparatively standard dialect (of English) in West Cornwall.

However, the data presented here (and in chapter 11 on the SED Basic Material) make another scenario more likely: The Cornish people either seem to have done very well in adopting the West Country system of pronominal gender assignment in a rather short period of time – viewed in this light, the “misuses” we observe in the SED data are clear cases of over-generalization. Or, a more likely explanation, speakers were well aware of the system from the start and did not have to “learn” it at all, as it was part of their English competence from their early childhood.

## 12.1.3.2 Unclear cases

The following examples can be interpreted as instances of gendered pronouns only with some good will, mostly because the context does not give the reader sufficient information for a clear analysis. Nevertheless, it was felt that many of these “weird” cases may contribute to the overall picture of gender assignment in the SED fieldworker notebooks. Altogether, 30 instances of masculine pronouns found in the notebooks should be classified as “unclear”.

Example (150) is taken from section VI.11. in the questionnaire, which discusses various words related to “the skin”. We can conclude from the question itself that the speaker is obviously talking about one of the expected items (*warts, callouses, blisters, boils*) and emphasizing that he does not have them.

In (151), the speaker is talking about throwing something – we can only hope that he is referring to something inanimate. The form [i:z] is once more the centre of attention in (152). Admittedly, the interpretation *it is* (with the first element not realized) seems much more likely than *he is*. The masculine pronoun would not really have a referent – *iron* is the only one available. Nevertheless, the realization of *is* as [i:z] is at least as debatable (and unlikely) as the alternative suggested here.

This discussion can be repeated for example (153). In addition to the realization of the questionable item, these examples share another feature: the fieldworker’s “translation” of the form is *there*, not *it*. This would point to the fact that some speakers either have less strict rules regarding possible referents of *he* or have extended gendered pronouns to all uses of *it*, including the non-referential, empty ones.

- (150) au 'avɪŋ 'gɒt 'i: (37 D 3, book VI)  
I haven't got that.
- (151) jə 'θɪæθ ɪm (15 He 5, book II)  
you throw it
- (152) i:z 'bɪ:ɪv bɪt 'aɪə:n m 'ðe: mænz (36 Co 6, book IV)  
There's a lot of iron in those mines.
- (153) i:z 'sʌm 'dɹæ:ft kʌmən ɪə: (36 Co 6, book V)  
There is some draught coming here.

The remaining examples in this section are unclear only insofar as the referent of the respective pronoun cannot be pinned down exactly. However, in many cases the options are rather limited, with the context narrowing down the choices to only a couple of nouns. The most likely referents are given in each example (*cf.* (154) to (166)).

- (154) wi: 'nɪvə: ju:s tə 'kɑ: ɪ (36 Co 5, book III)  
We never used to carry it. possible referent: basket with feed
- (155) i: 'ɪz ə 'kʊə: kʌm ɒn əm 'tu: (36 Co 7, book VI)  
There/It is a core (that) comes on them (boils), too. poss. ref.: centre (of a boil)

- (156) ðe: 'kɔ:ɪŋ 'iɔmæ:ɹ<sup>34</sup> (36 Co 6, book V)  
They call it humour. referent unclear; quest. section “The fire”
- (157) ðæɪ də kɑ:t ɪ ... (24 Gl 3, book I)  
They call it ... poss. ref.: curb stone
- (158) ə 'gɒt ən (24 Gl 3, book I)  
I got it. poss. ref.: disease
- (159) kɹɔk ɪ ɔ': ɡʊd ɪn ðə dɪtʃ ən ʃʌvɪ ət ʌp (31 So 10, book IV)  
Crook it (i.e. cut grass with crook) ... poss. ref.: ditch
- (160) 'e slipped an' fell. (16 Wo 7, book V)  
It slipped and fell. poss. ref.: a “kitchen utensil” (quest. section)
- (161) ðə 'li:f kʌmz frɔm ðə 'stʌmæk dɔʊn ɪ: (15 He 7, book III)  
The leaf comes from the stomach, doesn't it? referent: leaf <sup>35</sup>
- (162) 'hɒd ə 'hɑ:ɹ:d ɪn ən (37 D 8, book III)  
(There's a) lot of lard in it. ref. either pig or fat (meat)
- (163) ʃi: 'ʃi:əs tə 'vɒl ən wɪ 'ʃtɹɔ: ən 'pɒt ɪ ɪn ʌndə: əɹ 'e:pə:ŋ (36 Co 4, book V)  
She used to fill it with straw and put it in under her apron. poss. ref.: piece of clothing
- (164) ɪ:z ə 'ɡræʔdɜ: pɪt | ðæs wɒt ðe: də kɔ:t 'ɡræʔdɜ: vɔ' 'kɪɪn 'te:bɪ (36 Co 5, book V)  
It's a growder<sup>36</sup> pit. That's what they call growder to clean the table.
- (165) ɪ: əd ə 'bɑ' aɪə: 'dʒu:v 'ɹæ:t 'dʒu: ən (36 Co 1, book II)  
It had a bar of iron driven right through it.  
referent unclear; quest. section “Stacks, thatching”
- (166) hɛm wə:ŋ nɔ: ɡu:d (31 So 13, book III)  
It wasn't any good. poss. ref.: shearing table

Another handful of examples has abstract referents which occur in the questions themselves as *thing* or *something*. Two questions are primarily relevant, namely IX.9.4<sup>37</sup>, once more from the grammar section, and I.7.1.<sup>38</sup> Ten examples by nine speakers fall under this category; a couple can be found in (167) and (168).

- (167) 'u: ʃəɪ a: 'gi: ən tʊ (36 Co 1, book IX)  
Who(m) shall I give it to? ref. = “something”
- (168) 'ði:z 'ɡʊtə 'weɪ ɪn (15 He 1, book I)  
You've got to weigh it. ref. = “heavy thing”

<sup>34</sup> Fieldworker “translates” as follows: *They call it red hot-cinders.*

<sup>35</sup> “The layer of fat round the kidneys of a pig.” (OED, “leaf” 9.)

<sup>36</sup> “Growder = fine sand used for scrubbing” (fieldworker’s note).

<sup>37</sup> “You have something to give away and before deciding on the person to be given it, you might ask yourself: I wonder ... **to whom** I shall give it?” (Orton 1962: 100)

<sup>38</sup> “If you want to know how heavy a thing is, what do you do? **To weigh it.**” (Orton 1962: 51)

## 12.2 Summary and results

### 12.2.1 Types of referents

At the beginning of this chapter we were interested in two issues in particular. First, we were curious to investigate the relationship between the fieldworker notebooks data and the Basic SED Material. Second, various claims made in the traditional dialectological literature as to the nature of the referents that allow “gendered” pronouns were to be tested.

In chapter 11 we already learned that Cornwall is leading in the use of “gendered” pronouns. Devon, Wiltshire and Dorset follow, but Somerset, which is generally considered “core Southwest”, falls far behind – for unknown reasons, we have to admit. It is interesting to note in this respect that Montacute, the Somerset location not included in the Basic Material, shows figures and uses very close to those of Cornwall, resulting in a stark contrast between this location and the other 13 which constitute the Basic Material data for Somerset. It cannot be ruled out that Somerset speakers are less traditional than their Cornish counterparts, already having started the shift towards StE. This will have to be investigated more closely when comparing the modern corpus material for the two counties (*cf.* 13.4.1 and 13.4.3).

**The dialect found in Cornwall in the SED period is of a very traditional Southwestern nature** – this fact as such is probably the most important single result to be obtained from both the Basic Material and the fieldworker notebooks. Speakers from the two most westerly locations, St. Buryan and Mullion, use almost twice as many masculine pronouns referring to inanimate entities as their colleagues at the other Cornish locations. Based on experts’ views in the relevant literature, we would have expected to find the exact opposite in West Cornwall, namely a variety closer to the standard.

When investigating which type(s) of noun(s) can be referred to with a masculine (or feminine) pronoun in the fieldworker notebooks, a surprisingly clear picture emerges. From a semantic point of view, almost 87% of denotata fall into three basic categories: (1) Man-made objects, (2) nature, and (3) body parts. Only 13% of the examples are referring to (in dialect terms) non-standard, difficult-to-classify or unclear referents. Non-standard feminine pronouns are so rare that the label “non-existent” seems justified. For the sake of convenience, Table 12.15 summarizes the figures from the individual tables given in this chapter.

**The SED fieldworker notebooks data show a variety of English that is (still) surprisingly close to the traditional West Country vernacular described by Barnes, Elworthy and other 19<sup>th</sup>-century authors.** Critics may say that the material used here is atypical for a corpus study because only one of two possible values is used. Fieldworkers only noted *non-standard* language use, resulting in many exceptional masculine pronoun forms in the notebooks. We have no way of knowing how many *standard* forms speakers may have used. However, this is in-

Table 12.15: Summary of masculine pronouns referring to inanimate entities (SED fieldworker notebooks)

referent class	subclass	# of examples
MAN-MADE OBJECTS		
	buildings	51
	containers	53
	tools & instruments	148
	vehicles	46
	“creature comforts”	106
	nature re-modelled	51
NATURE		
	trees and plants	32
	other	56
BODY PARTS		
	human body parts	39
	animal body parts	26
subtotal		608
feminine referents		2
problematic referents		56
unclear referents		30
<b>total</b>		<b>696</b>

consequential here – we do not want to compare the system of gender assignment in SED times with that of other periods. Thus, if we were to play devil’s advocate, it is possible that SED speakers used *it* to refer to a door, one of the “standardly masculine” referents in dialect, in two or even three out of four cases, resulting in a frequency of non-standard forms as low as 25%-50%. As stated, this may well be possible – but it does not influence or change the results presented here.

Some possible tendencies towards a less rigid system of gender assignment were witnessed in the unclear and exceptional referents. Concluding *ex negativo*, these uses of masculine forms referring to “unacceptable” denotata (from a traditionalist’s point of view) may point to the diffusion and ultimate dissolution of the traditional system. Most of the problematic examples seem to be over-generalizations, where masculine pronouns are used to refer to a noun that may be close in meaning to another “acceptable” one, but whose semantics do not allow a masculine anaphoric pronoun in traditional West Country dialect.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> An example would be the “correct” use of *he* to refer to a *loaf* of bread, contrasting with the “incorrect” use of *he* to refer to *bread* as such. Most “mistakes” concern the count-mass distinction.

### 12.2.2 Differences between counties

The distribution of noteworthy pronominal forms among the investigated counties is by no means equal. Although differences were expected, they turned out to be much more extreme than had been assumed. Table 12.16 summarizes the figures for the individual counties, including all localities of the core Southwest counties (i.e. also those not used in the Basic Material) and all clear examples of masculine pronouns as presented in Tables 12.1 to 12.12.<sup>40</sup>

*Table 12.16:* Frequency of “gendered” pronouns per county and location (SED fieldworker notebooks)

county	# of examples	# of locations	examples per location	# of speakers	examples per speaker
Cornwall	163	7	23.3	20	8.2
Dorset	40	5	8	8	5.0
Devon	126	11	11.5	26	4.8
Wiltshire	70	9	7.8	15	4.7
Somerset	88	13+1	6.3	28	3.1
Total	487	46	10.6	97	5.0

Columns 4 and 6 are of particular interest in Table 12.16. Even on a very superficial level, the picture emerging could not be any clearer: Speakers from Cornwall produce most of the gendered pronouns by far and are responsible for almost exactly a third (163 out of 487; 33.5%) of all examples. Speakers from Dorset, Devon and Wiltshire are close to the average of five forms per speaker, while Somerset lags behind – once again, we have to say.<sup>41</sup>

This overall picture does not change when looking at detailed distributions per location and per individual speaker. The order of counties is slightly different for examples per location – Devon and Dorset change places (see column 4). Examples per location range from two to 45. All but one of the Cornish locations are above the average of 10.6 examples per location, as are five out of nine in Wiltshire, six out of 11 in Devon, two out of five locations in Dorset, but only one out of 14 in Somerset (Montacute is not included in the Basic Material). The order of counties stays the same when looking at who actually contributes masculine forms. In Cornwall and Devon, all informants do, while this is not so in the remaining counties. One of the nine Dorset informants (i.e. 11.1%) does not contribute, while this percentage climbs to 25% in Wiltshire (five of 20 speakers) and to 33.3% in Somerset (12 of 36 speakers, excluding Montacute).

<sup>40</sup> Figures in the fourth and sixth columns are rounded to the first decimal.

<sup>41</sup> Recall Figure 11.1 based on the Basic Material, where Somerset was not part of the “core” Southwest either.

Although the order of counties in the detailed distribution list changes to a certain extent<sup>42</sup>, we cannot identify individual informants who might distort these figures. Contributions range between one and 24 per speaker, with an average of five. 70 speakers are below that average or conform to it, while 27 contribute more than their share. Those 27 (or 27.8% of speakers) contribute 295 forms, i.e. 60.6% of the total of 487.

Thus, we are once more faced with a now familiar picture: (West) Cornwall is much more dialectal than has generally been assumed, at least when it comes to the use of non-standard personal pronouns. Why earlier researchers thought of Cornwall as a region where a rather standard variety of English is spoken remains an open question. Data from the SED material, both the Basic Material and the fieldworker notebooks, as well as more modern oral history material suggest that the opposite is the case.

Somerset in the 1950s, on the other hand, does not seem to have much in common with the Somerset of Elworthy's times. While the gender system described in his studies can be considered the epitome of West Country dialect, the SED data show a system that is much closer to StE than to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century one. Although it is possible in theory that the variety changed so drastically in only one or two generations, we can immediately dismiss such a theory based on the data from the surrounding counties. Devon, Dorset, Cornwall and Wiltshire have only changed minutely in comparison with Somerset. It almost seems as if the Somerset informants' language was not as dialectal as that of the rest of the West Country informants to start with – maybe better informants were simply not available at that time. It is very unlikely that Somerset was influenced by StE to a greater extent than its neighbouring counties.<sup>43</sup> It will be interesting to see how the individual counties developed since SED times – an issue which will be investigated in the next chapter.

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<sup>42</sup> Even though percentage-wise similar at 55.6% and 54.5% of higher-than-average example-per-location ratios, Wiltshire and Devon do not share the same fate: Wiltshire's remaining four locations are far below the 10.6 figure (ranging from two to four), only adding up to a total of 7.8 forms per location. The reverse scenario is at work in Devon, where those five locations below the average are actually at least approximating it at four, seven, eight, ten, and ten examples per location respectively, thus resulting in a higher-than-average total.

<sup>43</sup> To the West, yes, possibly, but not to the East – recall that we found numerous localities east of Somerset that were more dialectal than any of the Somerset locations.





## Chapter 13

# Southwest England oral history material

The material on which this chapter is based can be described very generally as oral history material.<sup>1</sup> Although comparable in many respects, it is different from the SED fieldworker notebooks data in very important ways: The major difference between the two main sources for the Southwest certainly has to be seen in the fact that the notebooks only offer clauses, phrases or sometimes single words with minimal or even without any context at all. The oral history material, on the other hand, consists of complete interviews, generally in the form of a dialogue where the interviewer contributes only minimally in terms of quantity. While the former material does not allow quantitative or statistical analyses of any kind, the latter does.

Moreover, the context enables us to analyse not only the non-standard masculine and feminine forms, but also to investigate the relationship between dialectal forms and standard *it* in the modern material. This will only be done selectively for those texts where variation between dialectal and standard forms can clearly be observed. It is of no use to disambiguate all *its* according to their semantics (primarily mass–count distinction), as we cannot know whether or not a speaker would use a masculine pronoun at all for a referent that is exclusively neuter in all occurrences in the interview. This means that only those interviews where a speaker uses both standard neuter and non-standard gendered pronouns for one and the same referent will be investigated in detail.

In terms of content and types of referents, however, the SED and oral history material are very similar, maybe surprisingly so. These similarities are mainly caused by some of the oral history collectors' interest in agricultural or related topics, such as cider making, cheese making, or farming in old times. Thus, it will be possible to compare the data from a qualitative (mainly semantic) point of view, and, where relevant, to trace changes in use.

The data from the different counties will be analysed as a unit when discussing types of denotata. In a second step, however, counties will be looked at individually, partly in order to be able to point to differences between them, partly to

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<sup>1</sup> Details on the respective corpora can be found in chapter 7.

illustrate peculiarities of a certain region better, and also to identify possible intra-county contrasts. The outline of this chapter will parallel that of chapter 12 wherever possible to make cross-referencing and comparisons easier.

## 13.1 Referent types

As in chapter 12, semantically similar referents will be discussed together in groups. The same three basic classes that were already postulated in that chapter will also be used here and in the following chapters. To repeat the basic outline very briefly, most denotata are expected to belong to class (1) of “man-made objects”. Class (2) is constituted by items referring to natural features, while class (3) referents are body parts; for sub-divisions and details, see page 186.

Problems of classification are bound to occur when a framework constructed for one data set is used on a different one. We expect such problems here as well, since it is almost impossible that all referents found in the West Country material will neatly fit into one of the categories postulated for the SED fieldworker notebooks. Where they occur, these problems will be discussed and the decisions for putting an example into one or the other category will be justified wherever necessary and possible.

Contrasting with the previous chapter, the semantic categorization of denotata here will be primary, while the grammatical classification (masculine vs. feminine referents) will be taken as secondary. As a result, tables will be divided accordingly where necessary.

### 13.1.1 Man-made objects

#### 13.1.1.1 Buildings

References to buildings, their parts and contents are distributed fairly evenly throughout the Southwest corpora. All counties are represented; seven examples stem from Cornwall, 10 from Devon, 10 from Somerset and two from Wiltshire. Most speakers contribute more than one example, as can be seen in (1) to (4) below. Details for this class can be found in Table 13.1; feminine examples could not be found.

- (1) 'Twas a tall chimney, you, see and I think they tried to bomb that chimney, thinking perhaps when **he** fell, you know, **he**'d do quite a bit of damage. TCA (WH)
- (2) That old house there, I did hear a great-uncle of mine say that he could mind somebody living in **en**. CAVA (WJB)
- (3) [talking about a roof] That hasn't been on very many years, I said “**He**'s been on more than sixty years”, he said “How did you know?” I said “I can mind when **he** was (gap ‘indistinct’) it was all thatched then.” SRLM (044)
- (4) (gap ‘name’) Lovely church that is if you've never seen '**im**. **He**'s worth looking at. Oh, father and mother's buried there. SRLM (173)

Table 13.1: “Gendered” pronouns referring to buildings, their parts and contents (Southwest corpora)

referent	# of examples	# of speakers
building, house	12	6
bridge	1	1
chimney	2	1
oven, stove	4	2
roof	2	1
shed	3	2
stable	1	1
table	3	1
wall	1	1
total	29	13

### 13.1.1.2 Containers

This class is well-represented, partly as a result of the topics of the interviews that constitute the Southwest corpus. Tubs, barrels and similar items are used in cider and cheese making, as well as in mining ( $\rightarrow$  *coal tub*). The informant of SRLM (224) is a potter, so it comes as no surprise that he should make numerous references to pots when relating the story of his life. Interestingly, there is one instance of *she* referring to a pot among those 21 masculine references, in a non-significant position (neither at the beginning nor at the end of the interview). What motivated this form is unclear.

Only ten of the total of 81 forms are not from Somerset; eight are used by speakers from Cornwall and two by Devonians. While the comparative ratio of number of words to number of examples is as expected for Cornwall<sup>2</sup>, it is too low for Devon. Also, it is unclear why there is not a single example of a masculine pronoun referring to a container in the Wiltshire data.

Example (7) very nicely illustrates and supports Ihalainen’s theory that standard forms (i.e. the *it* here) are first used in the less accessible positions of the noun phrase accessibility hierarchy. The speaker has *it* in the prepositional object slot, while he (still) uses dialectal *he* in the more prominent subject position.

- (5) But the best corn would come this side and when that chute did fill up his bag there so as you could tie **un** nicely, he would switch over, turn the chute over in that bag and while that bag was filling he would pull **him** back and tie **him** and put **him** back in a nice row and hang up another empty one there. SRLM (108)
- (6) You think the barrel is round, admitted **he** is, . . . SRLM (062)
- (7) So, therefore, if they had to use a stone jar they used to get the basket maker to put some wicker around *it*, so if **he** had a bump **he** wouldn’t break. SRLM (055)

<sup>2</sup> Somerset - ca. 175,000 words - ca. 70 examples; Cornwall – ca. 20,000 words - eight forms.

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- (8) Not fully, well **he** been fully, what I think **he** was glazed with a dark glaze, like that other one I think, only **he** hasn't been fully burnt yes. **He** would have been back one side, you know and the fire didn't actually get to **him** and made enough. So they gave **him** away I think ... SRLM (224)
- (9) She'd have her washing tub, fill **him** half full of flour, she knew exactly what to put in there ... SRLM (108)

Table 13.2: "Gendered" pronouns referring to containers (SW)

referent	# of masculine ex.s	# of feminine ex.s	# of speakers
bag	4		1
barrel	11		8
basket	1		1
box	2		1
bucket	2		1
jar	6		3
mug	1		1
pail	4		2
pitcher	1		1
pot	21	1	1
cauldron	1		1
ton	3		1
tub	24		3
total	81	1	17

#### 13.1.1.3 Tools and instruments

Based on the topics of most of the interviews, we expect once more a relatively large number of examples for this class. One of the Somerset interviews is concerned with sailing, boats and their parts in particular. The sub-class "ship parts" contains references to *anchor*, *boom*, *flag*, *gaff*, *sail*, *rope*, etc.; one example is given in (13). Only those referents are included in this class that do not occur elsewhere. A second sub-class is concerned with items used in cloth making, the topic of many of the Wiltshire interviews. "Various tools" subsumes denotata such as *fork*, *knife* or *shovel* under its heading. Table 13.3 summarizes the details for this class. Once more, we do not find a single feminine pronoun used anaphorically to refer to a tool or instrument.

Another example in support of Ihalainen's "accessibility hypothesis" is (15): the speaker uses a standard form in object position, but dialectal *he* in subject position.

- (10) Then one of them let the bar fall. As **he** felled, he said, **he** hit both mi hands, for I had hold of a rope, and bounced off the ground, come on mi two feet.  
SRLM (083)
- (11) I've got a barley fork out there and I've had **him** there for years. I used to have **him** when I thatched the ricks - push **him** in the rick to keep the bottom reeds from slipping.  
SRLM (044)
- (12) I'll tell you what I found - one of our old hay knives. I got **him** out and cleaned **him** up and put a new handle on **him**; **he** looks alright too.  
SRLM (076)
- (13) We let go our second anchor. We snapped **he** off like a damn carrot! SRLM (083)
- (14) I drove into a lamp post. (v 'giggling') There's the, the pavement, see and your lamp post was right here on the curb. This was a great big one and **he** got sort of battens all the way around **en** you know, this, one of the anchored posts this was.  
TCA (RA)
- (15) ... when I saw the plough nobody valued *it*, if **he** had been kept dry **he** would have been good now.  
SRLM (003a)

Table 13.3: "Gendered" pronouns referring to tools and instruments (SW)

referent	# of masculine ex.s	# of speakers
bar	10	4
belt	2	1
board	1	1
cane	2	1
churn	1	1
cider press (or parts)	3	2
gin	1	1
handle, pulley	2	2
kiln	1	1
ladder	1	1
machines (or parts)	5	4
plough	10	4
post	2	1
shaft	3	1
spike	1	1
wheel	7	3
"ship parts"	22	1
"weaving"	12	2
"various tools"	21	8
total	107	29

As was expected, examples are numerous for this class. Somerset speakers once again contribute more than their share with 78 relevant forms, while all other counties are underrepresented: 21 examples stem from Wiltshire, three from Devon, five from Cornwall.

#### 13.1.1.4 Vehicles

It may be recalled that we were comparatively surprised that the SED fieldworker notebooks data did not contain many references to vehicles at all. In the more modern material, on the other hand, we find numerous references to all types of farming machines, particularly to tractors (often referred to as *engine* in the corpora). This category interacts with the previous one because many farming machines are vehicles but also tools (e.g. *thrashing machine*). It was thus decided to establish a new category “farming machines” for these referents, which will follow after this class. As a consequence, only non-farming vehicles will be covered here.

Ships, boats and other water vehicles are included here, and it is not surprising that reference to them is made with the help of feminine pronouns in an overwhelming majority of cases. There are some unclear masculine references to a tug boat and a steamer in SRLM (083)<sup>3</sup>, which we could explain in reference to size and strength.<sup>4</sup> As these references occur in the same interview where the speaker uses more than 100 feminine pronouns referring to various boats and ships, including *tug* and *steamer*, masculine reference seems not very likely. Thus, we could also interpret these masculine pronouns as references to the captain(s) of the vessels rather than to the vessel itself. In the concrete examples as in (16), however, contrasts between masculine and feminine pronouns seem to reflect emotional attitudes, supporting an interpretation in favour of semantic contrasts between *he* and *she*. *He* stands for large size or negative emotions, while *she* is smaller and/or positively connotated.<sup>5</sup>

In (17) and (18), we find two more examples supporting Ihalainen’s hypothesis. The speakers use *he* in subject position to refer to the lorry and the train, but a neuter pronoun in (prepositional) object position.

Judging from Table 13.4, masculine forms seem to be the pronouns of choice when referring to a “non-water” vehicle. From today’s perspective, we would have

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<sup>3</sup> “’Twas an American steamer in camouflage. **He** went by *her* **he** turned, come back by *her* again, didn’t know ’twas a trick on.” The steamer (“he”) is passing by a small boat with survivors from a sunken ship (“she”).

<sup>4</sup> More details on the relevance of such extralinguistic features can be found below, particularly in example (38).

<sup>5</sup> This theory is supported by data from other regions. The following excerpt stems from Suffolk, again revolving around a situation in WWII (from FRED; text ed1suffolk, speaker SuffEF):

I don’t know if you’re heard o’ the P-boats what used t’ be based at Lowestoft? Fast submarine chasin’ things. There was one o’ them comin’ out t’ meets us. An’ I can picture that thing now. Cor, **she** was a-steamin’! You know, frothin’ at the bows as they used t’ say. An’ anyhow, when they got near enough, the captain I suppose he was, he spoke from the bridge through this megaphone you used t’ have then. ‘Where’s the submarine, Skipper?’ Crispy say, ‘Oh, we’re sank *him*.’ – ‘Sank *him*, have you?’ – ‘Yes.’

And some time later, referring to the sub that sank them:

Yes, the next time we come up we met our Waterloo; *he* was too much for us.

The speaker here clearly uses feminine pronouns when referring to ships of the Allies, while German ships are masculine.

expected more feminine pronouns. However, there are not enough examples to make any far-reaching claims about the general situation in West Country dialects. It should be mentioned though that seven of the 14 masculine pronouns not referring to boats stem from women or very traditional dialect speakers. In other words, these speakers behave as expected. Included are all references to *car*, which is more frequently feminine these days, and three references to *coach* (two examples) and *train* (one example).

- (16) That's why you had, you know why you had a pilot, but there was no need to because you'm following the damn tug. Because **he** had to keep there, **he** had to keep behind **un** in any case. SRLM (083)
- (17) Oh I had a, I had a - I drove a lorry that was the same age as miself, 1926 Dennis and drove *it* for years and **he** never broke down on me all that time, and to start it you had to crank the handle ... TRWBM (054)
- (18) ... if they would change the time of the train so that the, we could travel on *it* and get to work at uh, eight o'clock, you see I think **he** runned a bit later, to go, I don't think they in Totnes started until nine in the milk factory. TCA (WC)

Table 13.4: "Gendered" pronouns referring to vehicles (SW)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
bike		1	1
boat	18	141	6
car	4		1
cart	2		1
coach	6		2
lorry	1		1
train	1		1
total	32	142	12

#### 13.1.1.5 Farming machines

This section will discuss all types of farming machines, regardless of whether they are vehicles such as *tractor* or rather tools such as *swath turner*. The examples are nicely distributed across the counties, obviously based on the farming bias in many of the interviews. At first glance, gender assignment seems to be highly variable for this category. While farming machines are consistently masculine for some speakers, they are exclusively feminine for others. Both "exclusive" uses are easily explained, as the traditional dialect requires masculine forms while the StE system allows feminine ones. Only one speaker uses both "non-neuter" genders for the same referent, probably as a result of the traditional system competing with the

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(spoken) standard one.<sup>6</sup> Emotional involvement can be used as an explanation for shifts from standard *it* to dialectal masculine forms as in (21). Although feminine pronouns do occur, only three speakers actually use them. With the one exception mentioned above, intra-speaker variation occurs only between feminine and neuter or masculine and neuter pronouns, but not between masculine and feminine forms. The traditional system thus seems to be fairly intact for this category, for which details are shown in Table 13.5. Under closer scrutiny, the surface variability turned out to be quite systematic.

Table 13.5: “Gendered” pronouns referring to farming machines (SW)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
engine	9	21	3
machine	8		6
reaper	1		1
swath turner	4		1
thrashing machine	5		2
tractor	38	2	12
total	65	23	21

- (19) Soon as the engine come over the main Bristol road, of course, down hill like that **she** dropped **her** nose and **she** begin to pick up speed and run. He couldn't handle **her**, he couldn't stop **her**. He jumped out of **her**, let **her** run away, and **she** crashed through the wall, and dropped down about sixty feet in this ravine, and smashed **herself** all to pieces. AH (RM)
- (20) Ah, well now the swath turner was a marvellous machine because you see **he**'d turn it over on, turn it over on dry ground, **he** wouldn't put it all together, **he**'d turn two swaths, one there and one there. SRLM (005b)
- (21) ... you can work a tractor and *it* don't get tired like horses. When you finish you can put *it* in the garage or in the shed, 'n' all you got to do is give 'm a drop of water 'n' fill **un** up wi' diesel ... HDC (Devon)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Size, though a factor in the relevant examples, is not identified with either gender consistently enough to claim that it is responsible for the choice of pronouns. Based on frequency of use (three masculine, 22 feminine forms), feminine pronouns seem to be this speaker's “first choice”, implying that his system is closer to StE than to the dialect for this category.

<sup>7</sup> This is an example from the pre-final version of the *Helsinki Dialect Corpus*. I would like to thank Kirsti Peitsara for granting us access to the material *in situ* at Helsinki University.



## 13.1.1.6 “Creature comforts”

**Articles of clothing** Considering that many of the Wiltshire conversations are concerned with work in cloth mills, it is strange that this class, with only nine masculine examples, is very underrepresented. It seems that for this class the traditional gender assignment system has already given way to the standard for many speakers, as can also be witnessed in (23), where the neuter form seems to be in free variation with two instances of traditional *he*.

- (22) ... that were all splattered, she set<sup>8</sup> **he** [riding habit] to the cleaners ...  
TRWBM (001)
- (23) You know what the length of the cloth is before *it* goes in the machine, say 65 and the designer says, I want that 60 yards long, see, well you can calculate how much **he** was shrinking by measuring the yard up, see what I mean, **he** went in 61 inch, see what I mean, that’s, how many yards is that?  
TRWBM (001)

Table 13.6: “Gendered” pronouns referring to articles of clothing (SW)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of speakers
articles of clothing	2	2
button	1	1
collar	1	1
piece of cloth	5	1
total	9	4

**Accessories of modern life** Based on the fact that the oral history material investigated here is more modern than the SED data, we would expect more references to this class than in the older material. Referents include a wide array of things, from *coin* to *computer*, from *painting* to *paper*.

Example (26) nicely illustrates the importance of emotions in gender assignment. The speaker talks about an oil lamp that is difficult to light, using *it* three times before shifting to *he* in the last reference, where he is clearly annoyed. This explanation is more likely than another case of Ihalainen’s “accessibility hypothesis”, which would only account for the two object forms and the masculine subject form, but would not be valid for the neuter form in subject position.

Although neuter references occur regularly for this class, not a single feminine example could be found. This is noteworthy in comparison with the observations that other researchers and also this author have made. In modern fiction and everyday conversations, modern technological appliances such as computers are *shes* rather than *hes* (if not *its*; cf. also section 9.3.2.3). We should thus conclude that

<sup>8</sup> I.e. “send”.

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the traditional system of gender assignment has been substituted by the StE system in the Southwest, at least for nouns referring to accessories of modern life.

- (24) ... you used to get these Litmus papers, you know what I mean to say. These what do change the colour, and if **he** did show green, see, **he** [cloth] were alright, see, but know up to you got to a certain point **he** might be red, purple, blue and all of a sudden **he** goes green. As soon as **he** goes to green you know **he**'s [cloth] alright ... TRWBM (001)
- (25) Now, oh, you ain't got **en** [tape recorder] on, have ye? WFLS (WGP)
- (26) Little oil-lamp, I had to get a match and light *it* and as I was coming home *it* blew out, and there was I by there trying to light *it* and I, **he** wouldn't light with nearly a whole box of matches. TRWBM (070)
- (27) I never used to use the bunk, used to have like one of these here big quilts, that women used to make with patchwork, you know. Pulled **he** out, **he** was about that wide, put **un** on the locker, used to put a sea-bag there as a pillow, so I used to sleep on the locker. SRLM (083)

Table 13.7: "Gendered" pronouns referring to accessories of modern life (SW)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of speakers
accordion	1	1
candle	3	1
cinematograph	1	1
(strip of) paper	4	1
clock	2	1
coin	5	2
computer	3	1
gun	3	1
lamp	3	2
letter	1	1
light	1	1
newspaper	1	1
painting	3	1
pram	1	1
purse	1	1
quilt	3	1
tape recorder	1	1
total	37	14

**Food and drink** This section features a number of "irregular" referents belonging to the class of liquids, with *cider* as the expectedly most common one. It may be recalled that the SED fieldworker notebooks contained a number of references

to non-count nouns of this class as well. In general, however, the number of entries for this class is, as expected, small. Most nouns referring to items of food and drink are non-count nouns, which should receive neuter reference, and obviously do so in most instances. “Non-dialectal” references in the Southwest corpora are few; denotata include *butter*, *cider*, *milk* and a type of cow feed (details in Table 13.8).

Table 13.8: “Gendered” pronouns referring to food and drink (SW)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of speakers
butter	5	1
cake	1	1
cider	13	8
(cider) cheese	19	5
feed	4	1
loaf (of bread)	5	2
milk	1	1
peppermint	1	1
total	49	14

In (29), the informant describes the process of cheese making. While the first references are still to *milk* and consequently neuter, the change from milk to cheese is paralleled in the change from *it* to masculine forms. A period of indecisiveness as to the status of the milk-to-become-cheese mixture is obvious in the use of both forms in the middle of the passage. *Cheese*, both in its milk-based and apple-based<sup>9</sup> variants, is a frequently occurring referent. The classification of *cheese* is problematic in some respects (*cf.* also section 13.1.2). *Cider* and *cheese* are by far the most common and most evenly distributed referents in the Southwest material.

- (28) ... you just simply make the butter and put your hand in the salt and put so much on **en**, like. CAVA (WJB)
- (29) And tip *it* back in when you had *it* the right temperature. Well, she knowed she'd got electric steamers, boilers and the cheese stuff was all heating, you see. (gap 'indistinct') Like when you'd finished she used to have to lift *it* out to help *it* on, lift *it* out then cut *it* up in chunks and take *it* out and then keep *it* so long wrapped up because *it* was warm. Well then you had to grind *it*, salt *it*, put *it* in these vats, put *it* in the press. Next day you'd take **un** out, turn *it* over, put a fresh cloth around *it*, turn *it* over, press **un** again and then the day after that you would take **un** out and you'd sew, put a cloth over the top again and a canvas around the side. Sew it up and pin it through. And then you'd put **un** back in the press for the next morning and that press was tight. Well then you'd take **un** out, put **un** in the cheese room on a tray, and you would turn 'em every day. SRLM (317)

<sup>9</sup> The crushed apples are put in a round press. The material that is left after the juice has been extracted has the form of a cake or cheese, thus “cider cheese” or “cider cake”.

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- (30) They used to put potatoes in the, the loaf of bread, you know, and when you cut **un**, you cut half, half a potato and half a bread. SRLM (083)
- (31) [Int.: ... what did you do with the milk?]  
Oh, separated **en**. CAVA (WJB)

#### 13.1.1.7 Nature re-modelled

Once more based on the agricultural bias of many of the interviews, we expect to find numerous examples illustrating this class. References to ricks and other forms of bundling cereal plants (*sheaf, bundle*) as in (33) and (34) are particularly frequent.

The distribution of referents across counties is fairly even, with 30 examples from Somerset, six from Devon and three from Cornwall. Wiltshire speakers only contribute one example, probably based on the fact that agricultural topics are not discussed as often as in the other counties. Table 13.9 summarizes the details for “re-modelled natural items”. There are no feminine forms referring to nouns denoting items belonging to this class.

- (32) And when you’d dig a ditch, if you hadn’t done **him** right for the water to run, that wasn’t right. SRLM (317)
- (33) Oh, I’ve thatched a rick, built a rick and thatched **him**. SRLM (044)
- (34) ’Course if one sheaf was a little bit out or anything I’d patch **him** and **he**’d go right up. SRLM (044)
- (35) ... when I got over the vein I felt the stick jump, so I thought ‘Well, that’s funny.’ I stepped over the other side, whilst I walked on **he** stopped. I turned round come back in when I got on that spot **he** jumped again ... SRLM (104)

Table 13.9: “Gendered” pronouns referring to “nature re-modelled” (SW)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of speakers
ditch	1	1
farm	2	2
field	1	1
hedge	1	1
lane	1	1
pit	1	1
pole	2	2
bundle, rick, sheaf	19	4
spar	2	1
stack	2	1
stick, piece of wood	8	3
total	40	17

### 13.1.1.8 Man-made objects - summary

The most noteworthy conclusion to be drawn from the data presented in this section is the following: Although examples of both standard pronouns (neuter *it*) and “spoken standard” forms (generally *she*) do occur in the modern oral history material, the traditional dialect system of gender assignment is alive and well. Masculine pronouns are frequently used anaphorically in reference to count nouns associated with man-made objects. The sheer quantity of examples is also an indicator for this. When comparing the SED fieldworker notebooks data with the modern Southwest material, we would have expected fewer examples for the latter, based simply on the amount of material and number of speakers. It seems that the questionnaire style of the SED did indeed inhibit speakers from using their local lect, resulting in a variety much closer to the standard than it would have been in free conversation.

Moreover, we were able to observe in many examples that Ihalainen’s “accessibility hypothesis” seems to be a very good explanation to account for the presence of both neuter and masculine forms referring to the same entity in a single utterance. While the subject form *he* still defends its territory, positions further down (to the right) in the accessibility hierarchy are losing ground. Thus, even though masculine forms are still very frequent in comparison with other traditional dialect phenomena, we have to assume that the dialect system is slowly giving way to the system of StE. The relationship between neuter and masculine forms will be investigated in more detail below (section 13.3). Table 13.10 summarizes the results from the tables presented above.

Table 13.10: “Gendered” pronouns referring to man-made objects (SW)

referent class	sub-class	# masc. ex.s	# fem. ex.s	# of sp.
buildings		29		13
containers		81	1	17
tools & instruments		107		29
vehicles		32	142	12
farming machines		65	23	21
“creature comforts”				
	articles of clothing	9		4
	accessories of modern life	37		14
	food & drink	49		14
nature re-modelled		40		17
total		449	166	68

### 13.1.2 Nature

A considerable amount of the Somerset material stems from a project on cider making. It is thus not surprising that *apple* is one of the most frequently occurring referents. All examples stem from Somerset, two of which can be found in (36) and (37). Example (36) shows yet again the variability of the system, with instances of both *it* and *he* referring to the apple. It should be noted that this example again conforms with Ihalainen's hypothesis concerning the stages of change from dialect to standard.

Classification is difficult for *cheese*, which occurs as *cider cheese* and "regular" cheese made from milk. Both cheeses are ultimately man-made and serve as food (the cider cheese is often used as pig feed), and it was thus decided to include *cheese* in the food and drink section (see above).

- (36) [talking about the right time to pick apples]  
Well, like if you picked one an' cooked *it* early **he** isn't same as when **he's** been picked and kept, is **he**? SRLM (317)
- (37) ...but the black withy is crips.<sup>10</sup> Brittle. Well **he's** crips, **he** ain't no good, break **him** up like that. SRLM (044)

Trees and plants are not treated as a sub-class here, although nouns referring to these are grouped together in Table 13.11.

Table 13.11: "Gendered" pronouns referring to natural features (SW)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of speakers
apple	22	5
potato	1	1
swede	2	1
moon	1	1
hill, incline	3	2
stone etc.	3	3
tide	2	1
pond	1	1
plant	10	5
tree (or parts)	17	5
timber	1	1
total	63	19

A closer look at example (38) gives some interesting input for the discussion on the division of tasks between "gendered" and standard pronouns. The topic of the conversation is a walnut tree that the speaker has known for his whole life. He

<sup>10</sup> "Crips, obs. and dial. form of *crisp*." (OED, "crips")

remembers its being planted and relates his emotions when he saw it being felled. It seems that two or even three systems interact in producing the personal pronouns of this passage.

- (38) Oh, I remember when that were planted that tree, they cut *it* down just before they built the house. I went one day wi' the car, they'd cut *it* down, they had roots and all out, and I remember when *it* were a little one about as big as mi little finger, I think *it* were planted about the turn of the century there, but when they cut *it* down **he** were about that big round, yes. I didn't know how big *it* was not 'til after I come down round there with the car, and I saw they were cutting the Walnut tree down, but when we were kids *it* was about as big as mi thumb and **he** were up about six or seven foot probably, hadn't been planted very long, when they cut *it* down then I should think **he** were about that big round, 'cause they had a timber carriage and that there to load **'im** up on, and that's how big *it* got in sixty or seventy years. TRWBM (008)

The first five references are *it*, three in direct object and two in subject position. We can explain all *its* most easily by claiming that the speaker is using StE here. However, staying within the dialect framework, another explanation is possible. Ihalainen's hypothesis can be held responsible for the three instances in object position.<sup>11</sup> For the two examples in subject slots, we can come back to a factor that was thought relevant in much of the literature on this topic – size. Although studies could not establish a direct link between size and gender assignment, folk belief uses size frequently as an explanatory factor, for example with animal referents – a tiger is much more likely a *he* or *she* than an ant, which will probably be *it*.<sup>12</sup>

The speaker recalls how small the tree was when it was planted. As soon as he refers to the grown tree that is being felled, he shifts to *he* in the sixth reference, either because of its size or because of the subject position (or both). The next two references are neuter once more, again based on small size<sup>13</sup> or for the first example possibly also on the atypical syntactic context (subject complement). The next reference is to the young tree in subject position, resulting in a masculine form. The following *it* is again in object position, referring to the grown tree, as is the masculine pronoun in subject position after that. Following this is the only masculine form in object position, obviously a remnant of an earlier stage of the speaker's dialect. Finally, the speaker uses another neuter pronoun in non-subject position.

This excerpt nicely illustrates the factors that are “competing” for gender assignment. Although it may seem unsystematic at first glance, the gender assignment here is very systematic, if highly complex.

<sup>11</sup> Recall that *it* is more likely to occur in less accessible positions of the NP Accessibility Hierarchy, infiltrating the dialect system from the least accessible position and spreading from there. Here, it has not yet reached the subject slot, which seems to be the most typical stage we find in the corpora.

<sup>12</sup> Size as a possible factor in gender assignment is also discussed in Mathiot and Roberts (1979).

<sup>13</sup> The actual size of the tree is not yet clear in the first reference (“how big”), requiring *it*.

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With 49 examples, Somerset speakers are once more the most prominent contributors to this class. Nine examples stem from interviews from Wiltshire, three from Devon and two from Cornwall. It is also obvious from the numerous examples that natural features are either neuter or masculine in the Southwest, but never feminine.<sup>14</sup>

#### 13.1.3 Body parts

Denotata of this class are rare, which seems surprising insofar as various aches and ailments are expected to feature prominently in conversations with elderly people. A closer investigation of the contrasts between neuter and masculine forms (*cf.* 13.3 below) may reveal that West Country speakers abandoned the traditional system and have adopted the StE one for this category, although this does not seem very likely. Table 13.12 illustrates the details for this class.

- (39) I can't clench that hand see for one thing, **he** won't go back no more than that.  
SRLM (005a)
- (40) [what to do when you had a toothache in the "old days"]  
You did go into the doctor and he did get hold of **un** and drag **un** out with a pair of pinchers<sup>15</sup> or something, you see. SRLM (105)

Table 13.12: "Gendered" pronouns referring to body parts (SW)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of speakers
arm	2	1
eye	1	1
fleece	2	1
hand	1	1
tooth	4	2
vein	1	1
total	11	6

## 13.2 Problematic cases

The referents for a handful of "gendered" pronouns occurring in the Southwest material cannot be clearly identified. In one of the speakers from Cornwall, we

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<sup>14</sup> Recall that Pawley found the same for his Tasmanian data – only trees and plants were consistently masculine there; see 9.3.2.1.

<sup>15</sup> "An instrument for pinching or grasping something; in pl. *pinchers* often = PINCERS (for which it is widely used in the dialects)." (OED, "pincher" 3.)



again encounter a non-neuter pronoun referring to a situation, idea, general circumstances or entire topic of the sentence. But contrasting with what we know from modern spoken English, he employs masculine forms. The informant uses a semi-fixed phrase of the type *put en this/that way*, corresponding to StE “to put it that way”, three times in the interview. (41) illustrates this use, while the speaker in (42) uses the “expected” variant to refer to a situation, namely *she*. Although the interpretation of the feminine form in (42) is debatable, it is surrounded by masculine forms referring to various inanimate count nouns, which makes it basically impossible to argue for an inanimate count noun as denotatum. The same speaker uses the phrase *and up she goes* only a couple of utterances later, again without an obvious referent, and also with numerous instances of *en* in the co-text, supporting the interpretation of both examples as non-referential. It should also be noted that both feminine examples conform with the typology of non-referential *she* that was established in 8.3, most noteworthy in word order and choice of lexemes.

- (41) No, I don't think so. I don't know, that – I don't think so. I've never heard tell of it, let's put **en** that way. CAVA (WJB)
- (42) And there's a special spike I have, or most thatchers had, where you can drive it into the rick to put the bundle of straw behind un [spike] for not for it to fall down. Well, when you cut the string off you always aim to put it up a certain way, where you untie the string, if the bundles, when they're, the thatch is laid up, made out right, you take, with a loop you just catch hold of string and out **she** comes, (gap 'indistinct') best pull out a pocket knife and cut en [string] off it, and I used to save that string often times. That's the bond as I went round the rick you see, instead of using a bond I'd just have this string to keep the heads down if they didn't lie down well enough. SRLM (109)

*Day* seems to be the referent in (43) – or rather, the semantically empty *it* that is often mandatory in phrases involving *wait for NP to*.<sup>16</sup> The sense of the utterance would not be any different if the speaker had said *waiting for daylight*.

(44) refers to a shortcut at sea, a gap that only local fishermen would use because it was not charted on maps. A place name is the most likely referent of (45). The context of (46) suggests *war* as the referent fairly clearly.

Two interviews contain various references to *plane*, but it is unclear whether the plane itself is the denotatum, or rather its pilot (who was very likely male in WWI and II). (47) and (48) illustrate this use. The one instance of *it* in (48) shows that the suggested interpretation is very likely. The speaker himself does not seem to be consistent in his use of pronouns, pointing to the possibility that both the plane and its pilot could be meant.<sup>17</sup> However, although rare, it is by no means impossible that *plane* should be masculine for this speaker; the last reference in example (48) certainly suggests this.

<sup>16</sup> A detailed analysis of *for/to* constructions, including a special section on *wait for*, can be found in Wagner (2000a).

<sup>17</sup> As the interview progresses, the same speaker uses two additional masculine pronouns referring to the plane, which can also be interpreted as references to the pilot.

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- (43) And they went and they got married and went to bed. (gap 'name') went and painted the windows black outside (v 'laughter'). They was there till twelve o'clock (unclear)nearly(/unclear) the next day, waiting for **en** to come daylight. (v 'laughter') CAVA (PV)
- (44) Well, we go through the gap, of course we gained on you, the others wouldn't chance it, **he** idn' charred ... SRLM (083)
- (45) Llanybydder. I don't know how (emph)they(/emph) pronounce **en** but that's in the top end of Carmarthen. CAVA (WJB)
- (46) No. 'Twas between the wars, 1918, the first one finished didn't 'e? TCA (FP)
- (47) ... we did have a German plane go across here all afire, but where they hit **him** from I don't know and **he** landed out over the hill. We went – it was on the, 'twas Saturday night **he** crossed over. All ablaze ... TCA (WH)
- (48) ... an Aircraft came over Picket Hill and went over the trees. Oh, well **he**'d come down, and we didn't know over Picket Hill and over the Valley many of the trees disappeared, **he**'d landed. 'Course we all runned away from school, went over in the Grant's Farm looking for '**im**, see, but they'd not seen *it*. We didn't know, we'd never seed an aeroplane before, see, and we thought we'd go and 'ave a look at '**e**, so we ... TRWBM (008)

### 13.3 Traditional vs. modern uses of pronouns

For obvious reasons, primarily time constraints, it is impossible to disambiguate every single occurrence of *it* according to the status of its denotatum (count or mass noun, etc.). Even though possibly interesting, such an effort is also not necessary for describing the present situation concerning the distribution of traditional masculine and standard neuter forms. Our major focus should be on those passages in the interviews where speakers use both masculine and neuter forms in reference to the same noun. Only those examples are relevant, as it is impossible to draw any conclusions from the exclusive use of either *it* or *he*. This section will illustrate patterns of variation between neuter and masculine forms that can be found in the Southwest corpus material and attempt explanations for this variation.

In (49) to (54), Ihalainen's "accessibility hypothesis" seems to be the best explanation. In all examples, the speakers use a masculine pronoun to refer to an inanimate count noun in subject position (and direct object position), but in all positions further to the right in the accessibility hierarchy (i.e. (in)direct object, prepositional object, other oblique cases), a neuter pronoun is used. The prominence and frequency of forms in the subject slot have prevented it from being "taken over" by the standard neuter forms – at least until now. Also recall examples (7), (15), (17), (18), (36) and (38) from earlier sections which also support such an assumption.

- (49) I don't know who used to drive then, but I've had this engine under steam as I tell you, for times grinding the apples, he had *it* over in his cellar, had *it* jacked up then as I told you, this iron wheel oil here, **he** was jacked up, and put *it* in road gear, 'course this wheel had to go round. AH (RM)
- (50) [Int.: How much did a butt hold?]  
Oh **he** would take fifty pounds.  
[Int.: When did you use the butt basket?]  
When we was making the cider in the cellar. You used to tip the apples from the bag into the butt and two of us, one each side, would put *it* on the mill. SRLM (061)
- (51) ...so anyway Father come home, looked down, "What's that?" – "Sewing machine." – "You'd better take **he** back where you had **him** from then." [...] Ooh I've still got the machine down home today; what can I do with *it*? SRLM (102)
- (52) ... and he'd tie up a bundle, oh a decent bundle with two strings round *it*, and the thing, when **he** was such a weight he had the tipper there, he'd go round and throw out the sheaves. And then there was a man had to pick up that bundle and take **him** back wherever the man was building a stack, a straw stack. SRLM (108)
- (53) And then, when I used to turn them up in the cheese room I had a bandage, well one of these bandages what they put on, and I used to, well, make it like a rope, put it halfways and pull **en**, and take **en** right over. Never let the cheese go on an edge.  
[Int.: Well you would obviously damage *it*, wouldn't you?]  
Yeah. The weight of **it**, yeah. SRLM (122)
- (54) But **he's**, that one is still growing.  
[Int.: Oh gosh. Really. Yes, it's amazing, isn't it, how these trees go on.]  
But there's one out at the end of the road. I expect you can see *it* from your place. You know where you have a fire?  
[Int.: Yes]  
Well, in that corner over there our side, there's this walnut tree.  
[Int.: Oh I'll go and have a look at that.]  
I expect a rook planted *it*.  
[Int.: Really? Do you think so?]  
I reckon he dropped it, grew *it*. Because, well, there's generally some nuts now on *it* but the squirrels do have 'em. SRLM (317)

The examples in (55) and (56) illustrate two other aspects that may influence gender assignment and pronoun choice. In (55) and possibly also (53), it seems obvious that the interviewer's choice of *it* influenced the speaker, who returns to his "natural" *he* only after having used the StE form. We can assume that another neuter form would have followed if the interviewer's second question had involved *it*.<sup>18</sup> A similar interpretation is possible for (52), which was cited above as it also supports Ihalainen's hypothesis.

The basic distinction of mass vs. count nouns is at the heart of the contrasting pronouns in (56). While the first two references are to a milk pail (+ count), the final *it* refers to the contents of the pail, i.e. *milk* (- count). All further references

<sup>18</sup> For possible priming effects influencing pronoun choice, see chapter 10.

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to *milk* in the remainder of the interview are neuter as well. The first *it* can be explained as non-concrete reference, where the concrete denotatum, the milk pail, has only then been established.

- (55) [Int.: You were telling me that it wasn't very deep down here, it wasn't a very deep pit?]  
Well, *it* was 300 feet. Rock Pit's down 600 and that one up here, Strap Pit, is down 600 feet.  
[Int.: What about Mills?]  
**He** was only down about 200. You could go down to the bottom of Mills Pit and hear the engines and that up on the top and you could hear the hooter down at the bottom of the pit. SRLM (020)
- (56) A milk pail we used to call *it*. Had a handle on and you've seen 'em.  
[Int.: Is that just a handle on the side?]  
Just one handle to hold on to. When you, when you'd filled **un** up you'd stick **un** up on your head and walk to the churn and tip *it* out. SRLM (105)

Despite the fact that many switches between non-standard and standard pronouns in the Southwest material can be explained by drawing on one theory or another, many examples remain where none of these explanations works. The most frequent "unaccountable" scenario is one where speakers use standard pronouns in something like 90% of cases, but then all of a sudden and seemingly without any (external) motivation use a masculine pronoun to refer to the denotatum that was neuter only two seconds before. For these cases, we have to rely on extralinguistic explanations of the type mentioned in chapter 9, and it seems obvious that emotional factors should be primarily responsible for these sudden shifts. It is difficult or even impossible to gauge the emotional atmosphere of the interview situation by just looking at the transcript and listening to the tapes. They may tell us some things, but they will never provide sufficient information to be able to account for all the shifts in gender assignment that we observe in the material.

Although we are thus left with many inexplicable instances of "gendered" pronouns, the vast majority of examples does indeed have a fairly reasonable explanation. Judging from the sheer quantity of examples in the corpus material, it does not look as though the use of masculine pronouns referring to inanimate count nouns is in real danger of dying out any time in the near future.

#### 13.4 Individual counties

As laid out at the beginning of this chapter, we will now change our viewpoint from a macro- to a microperspective. Although the material constituting the Southwest corpus stems from comparable sources, we cannot assume unquestioningly that they are equal. Numerous factors can influence the type of variety that is found in an oral history interview situation. Without having access to all the relevant background information, however, we can only make certain assumptions about these factors based on the general degree of "non-standardness" that we observe in

the interviews. As many of these factors are connected with the behaviour of the interviewer, and as many of the interviews in the Southwest corpus were conducted by only a handful of interviewers per county, a closer look at the individual counties might help to identify such “disturbing” factors.

Moreover, the comparison of the counties is interesting from a statistical point of view. Based on the total word number and total of “gendered” pronouns, combined with the overall frequency of pronominal forms, it should be possible to make claims about the degree of “genderedness” of certain counties (and/or speakers). Some speakers may use an over-proportional number of non-standard pronouns, while others rank far below the average. A comparison of the four main counties under investigation could also help to pinpoint certain changes that may have occurred since SED times. Table 13.13 summarizes the figures the following sections will be based on, showing only those examples that stem from one of the core Southwest corpus texts.<sup>19</sup> One of the Somerset texts will be excluded from the calculations most of the time, as its unusually high frequency of gendered pronouns (179 in an interview of ca. 13,500 words, largely owing to more than 100 references to boats and 25 references to coal tubs) distorts the overall impression in this group of texts. Figures in brackets refer to the totals when this text is excluded.

Table 13.13: Summary of “gendered” pronouns in the Southwest corpora

referent class	# of masc. ex.s		# of fem. ex.s		# of speakers	
buildings	22	(18)	0		10	(9)
containers	78	(53)	1		14	(13)
tools	93	(69)	0		24	(23)
vehicles	32	(27)	109	(1)	9	(8)
farming machines	36		23		14	
“creature comforts”	72	(62)	0		22	(21)
nature re-modelled	32		0		11	
nature	59	(56)	0		16	(15)
body parts	6		0		4	
total	430	(359)	133	(25)	50	(49)

### 13.4.1 Cornwall

Speakers from the main Cornwall corpus contribute 42 examples out of the total of 384, i.e. 10.9%. This is almost exactly twice as many as we would have expected based on the percentage of total words for this county (18,900 of 319,800, i.e. 5.9%). Based on our observations in the previous chapter, we can thus say that

<sup>19</sup> All of the following sections on the distribution of non-standard pronouns in the individual counties will be based only on the core corpus material presented in chapter 7. The figures presented in the tables above, however, also include examples from other sources, such as the *Helsinki Dialect Corpus* and additional oral history material from FRED.

English in Cornwall and West Cornwall in particular is much more West Country like than researchers would have us believe.

One speaker is responsible for more than half of the examples (23), which are spread fairly evenly across the different semantic domains. This informant shows the most traditional lect of all Cornish speakers, using many typically Southwestern (*cf.* chapter 4) and also specifically Cornish dialect features.<sup>20</sup> It is this speaker as well who uses the striking *let's put en this/tha way* when talking about a situation or general circumstances.

A second speaker contributes eight examples, the third six and the fourth speaker five “gendered” pronouns. All speakers contribute to the domains containers and “creature comforts”, two speakers to those of buildings, tools and nature re-modelled respectively, and one speaker each to the categories vehicles and nature. No speaker uses a masculine or feminine form to refer to a body part in the Cornish interviews. An additional text that is not part of the main corpus provides the four remaining examples, adding up to a grand total of 46.

#### 13.4.2 Devon

Although they contribute 16% of the words constituting the Southwest corpus (51,100), speakers from Devon use only 16 non-standard (masculine) pronouns (or 4.2% of the total). The material from Devon is relatively standard in comparison with that from Cornwall or Somerset, which may explain this ratio. It should also be mentioned in this context that the Devon interviews are not primarily concerned with agricultural matters, thus contrasting thematically as well with the data for Cornwall and Somerset.<sup>21</sup> Although universal non-standard features such as non-standard agreement, regularized irregular verbs and reflexive pronouns, non-standard use of relative and demonstrative pronouns, etc. are frequently found in the interviews, typically Southwest patterns are rare.

The distribution of non-standard forms between the five speakers is relatively even. One speaker contributes five, one four, two three and one speaker one example. The denotata can be categorized as buildings, tools, vehicles, farming machines or “creature comforts”. No examples belong to the domains of containers, nature re-modelled, nature, or body parts.

34 additional examples stem from four interviews that were not included in the main corpus. Three of the four speakers use 33 feminine pronouns to refer to boats (22, eight and three examples respectively), one speaker uses a masculine pronoun referring to a building. Supplementing the 50 examples from the Totnes mate-

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<sup>20</sup> Among the features that occur in the interview are the Cornish habitual *belong* (see Hancock (1994)), periphrastic *do*, purposive *for to*, pronoun exchange, non-standard use of prepositions (*on for of*, “directional” prepositions), non-standard use of relative pronouns, agreement features, regularized verb paradigms, present tense used in the extended-now sense usually (in StE) expressed by the present perfect (*he's dead years*).

<sup>21</sup> Speakers are NO(R)Ms in that the factor “rural” is only true insofar as informants do not live in cities. Most do not work in agriculture, however.



rial are 54 instances of “gendered” pronouns from 13 interviews from the Devon section of the *Helsinki Dialect Corpus*. Although this material, recorded between 1975 and 1976, has to be considered more traditional than the other corpus material used here, we find fewer<sup>22</sup> “gendered” pronouns in it. Also, when analysing the examples in more detail, it turns out that the vast majority of examples stems from speakers who were aged 60 and over at the time of the interview. In fact, only one example stems from a speaker who, at 46, is considerably younger than that.

In light of these findings, it is by no means unlikely that the oral history material from Devon is not so atypical, after all. Judging from the Helsinki material, we also have to consider the possibility that the Devonian dialect has already advanced further on the path towards StE than some of its neighbouring dialects since SED times.

### 13.4.3 Somerset

The 30 interviews from Somerset constitute almost exactly half of the total material from the Southwest in terms of word number (161,000 of 319,800, i.e. 50.3%). Based on the almost standard SED data for this county, we would expect a much lower percentage of non-standard pronouns. Just the opposite is true, however. With 258 examples, Somerset speakers provide more than two thirds (67.2%) of all examples – a result that comes as a surprise after the disappointing figures we were confronted with in the SED data.

Given the numerous examples, a relatively even distribution across semantic domains is to be expected. Table 13.14 shows the absolute and relative frequencies of denotata for the Somerset material. Only in three domains, namely buildings, vehicles and “creature comforts”, do Somerset speakers contribute fewer than expected forms. In all other categories, they come either close to the overall ratio of 67.2% as for tools, or even surpass it with ratios of around 80% for the remaining categories.

Contributions per speaker range from one to 45 examples, with eleven speakers above and 19 below the mean of 8.6 examples per Somerset speaker. Those eleven speakers use a total of 186 non-standard pronouns between them (72% of the total), but only 37.9% (61,000) of the Somerset word total.<sup>23</sup> Only four speakers, among them the three with the most forms (41, 2x 25), use significantly more<sup>24</sup> forms than their “colleagues”.<sup>25</sup> Even when we exclude these four texts from the calculations, Somerset speakers still use more “gendered” pronouns than expected.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The total word number for the Helsinki material adds up to ca. 70,000; with a total of 54 forms, the ratio is lower than for the modern material.

<sup>23</sup> Two speakers contribute one example each, four speakers two, three three, four four, two five, two six, one seven, one eight, one nine, three ten, one 12, one 14, two 15, two 25, one 41.

<sup>24</sup> All other speakers are within the expected frequencies.

<sup>25</sup> Text AH: 15.9% of examples, 6.3% of words; significant at <0.001%-level (chi-square); SRLM 44: 5.4% of examples, 1.6% of words; significant at <0.001%-level; SRLM 224: 9.7% of examples, 4.1% of words; significant at 0.002%; SRLM 108: 9.7% of examples, 4.7% of words; significant at <0.05%-level.

<sup>26</sup> 153 examples (59.3%) in 134,100 (42%) words.

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Table 13.14: Distribution of “gendered” pronouns across semantic domains (modern Somerset material)

referent class	# of examples Somerset	# of examples total	% Somerset data of total
buildings	6	18	33.3
containers	46	54	85.2
tools	43	69	62.3
vehicles	10	28	35.7
farming machines	48	59	81.4
“creature comforts”	26	62	41.9
nature re-modelled	28	32	87.5
nature	46	56	82.1
body parts	5	6	83.3
total	258	384	67.2

Based on these figures, we can rule out any ‘distorting’ influence of individual speakers. Explanations for the unexpectedly high frequency of non-standard pronouns in the Somerset material thus have to be sought elsewhere.

The informants of the modern corpus material are approximately one generation younger, aged 70-80 in the 1980s, than the SED informants, who had reached the same age in the 1950s. Although the modern material does not cover all of Somerset as evenly as the SED did, locations are more numerous and more widely spread than for any other area, and a certain representativeness should be guaranteed.

We are thus forced to fall back on the same conclusion as in chapter 12, namely that the Somerset speakers selected for the SED are **not** representative of the county’s dialect. The only alternative analysis would be that, judging from the modern corpus material, Somerset in the 1980s is more dialectal than in the 1950s – an extremely unlikely scenario given what we know about mobility, social and historical developments, and dialectology in general.

#### 13.4.4 Wiltshire

As has already been emphasized in chapter 4, the modern corpus material for Wiltshire stems from two different sources. While background information is available for the material from Trowbridge, we know next to nothing about the informants, recording details, etc. of the *Wiltshire Folk Life Society* data. It can be assumed, however, that the WFLS material was recorded in the 1970s or early 1980s, while most of the recording dates of the Trowbridge material are in the 1990s. In addition, the Trowbridge material is concerned with the history of cloth weaving, the primary industry of the region until recently, and not with farming, as is most of



the Somerset and Cornwall material. In this respect, the Trowbridge and Devon material are comparable. Furthermore, many of the Trowbridge informants live in towns rather than villages.

Much of what has been said about the material from Devon above also holds for the Trowbridge material: Although universal non-standard features are frequently encountered in the data, and some typically Southwestern features (unemphatic *do* in particular) are also ubiquitous, the dialect in most of the interviews is much closer to StE than that of the Cornwall and Somerset data. This is consequently also reflected in the figures concerning “gendered” pronouns: The Trowbridge material constitutes almost a quarter of the corpus material (75,100 words, i.e. 23.5%), but only 47 examples (or 12.2%) of non-standard pronouns are found in these data.

Contributions per speaker range from one to 13<sup>27</sup>, with a heavy bias towards tools as the favoured semantic domain, represented by 19 examples from four speakers. Other domains where Trowbridge speakers use masculine pronouns to refer to inanimate entities are buildings (two examples), vehicles (one example), “creature comforts” (18 examples), and nature (seven examples).

Only in the data from the *Wiltshire Folk Life Society* do total word number and number of examples nearly match (13,700 words, i.e. 4.3% of the total, and 21 examples, i.e. 5.5%). Judging from certain features in the speakers’ dialect (e.g. demonstrative *thick(y)*, relative particle *as*), the WFLS material is very traditional in nature. One speaker uses two, two three each, and one speaker 13 exceptional pronominal forms. With 10 examples, denotata stem most frequently from the domain of farming machines, to which all but one speaker contribute. Another four pronouns refer to *car*, leaving only one or two occurrences each for the domain of tools (one example), “creature comforts” (two examples), nature re-modelled (one example), nature (two examples) and body parts (one example).

When we compare the results from the two Wiltshire sub-corpora, it looks as if we are witnessing an apparent or real time change. Informants of the WFLS material use a variety of English that is (still) very close to that recorded by the SED fieldworkers. Trowbridge informants, on the other hand, still use many universal dialect features, but their inventory of Southwest features seems already reduced in comparison with traditional accounts and also the SED data. The development thus seems to be one towards StE, which we would expect based on the location of Wiltshire on the (present-day) border of the West Country.

### 13.5 Summary – developments and changes

The detailed analysis of modern corpus material from the four core Southwest counties in this chapter has helped to clarify a number of issues that were raised earlier. But as usual in such investigations, new problems emerged at the same time.

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<sup>27</sup> More exactly, one, five, 2x nine, 10 and 13; none of these differences is statistically significant.

### 13. Southwest England oral history material

The first result from the corpus analyses is striking in its clarity. When comparing ratios of word numbers and numbers of examples of non-standard pronouns, the following picture emerges: The ratio of pronouns to word numbers forms a **West-East continuum**, with Cornwall at the top, followed by Somerset. Both counties lie above the expected average ratio ( $> 1$ ), while Wiltshire and Devon fall below it. Details can be found in Table 13.15. Even when the WFLS material is excluded, Wiltshire is still third on the list, with a ratio of 0.52.

Table 13.15: Ratio of word numbers to number of examples (modern corpora)

county	% of examples	% of words	ratio ex.s to words
Cornwall	10.94	5.90	1.85
Somerset	67.19	50.34	1.33
Wiltshire	17.70	27.77	0.64
Devon	4.17	15.98	0.26
total	100	99.99	1.00



Figure 13.1: The gravitational pull of London and the South (base map from [www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com))

In other words: The further westwards we move, the more non-standard pronouns we encounter. The status of Devon does not seem to fit into this image, but when we consider a second continuum, namely North-South, new possibilities emerge. As the Devon data come from South Devon exclusively (Totnes and surroundings), it cannot be ruled out that data from the North would be closer to the Cornwall and Somerset data.

Whether this **North-South continuum** has developed recently, i.e. over the past few decades, or has simply become stronger since SED times is impossible to say. But one can clearly observe the gravitational pull of StE or London, which is ultimately responsible for both continua. Figure 13.1 is an attempt at visualizing

the trends that we could observe in the corpora. It also includes the main access route to the West Country, A303/A30, as mobility is certainly a factor to be taken into consideration in our modern times. Dotted lines indicate county boundaries, Totnes and Trowbridge, the focal areas of recordings from Devon and Wiltshire respectively, are also highlighted.

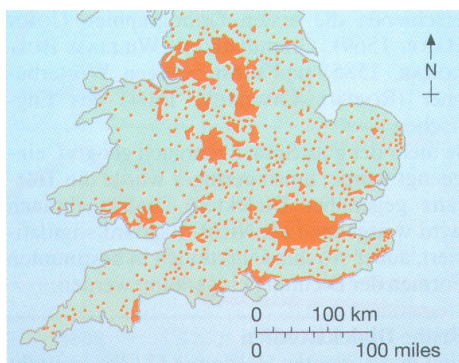


Figure 13.2: Urbanized areas in England (1951); from Viereck *et al.* (2002: 78)

It will be noticed immediately that almost all locations with a high percentage of “gendered” pronouns are located north of the access route.<sup>28</sup> In addition, Trowbridge is at the Wiltshire-Somerset border, as far west as one can move in the county. Totnes, on the other hand, is almost as far south as possible in Devon.

These observations are supported by evidence from other areas of (linguistic) research. Figure 13.2 shows urbanized areas in England around 1950 (> 400 people/sqm). It is obvious from this map that the region around and particularly South of Exeter was urbanized in the

1950s already, while North Devon, Cornwall and most of Somerset (except Bristol) remained essentially rural in character.

Although dealing with a completely different phenomenon, namely absence of third person singular *-s*, Figure 13.3 is telling in its clarity. South Devon behaves heterogeneously, shifting from complete absence to 100% presence and back to complete absence of *-s* forms, and in Cornwall, including West Cornwall, we find zero forms very homogeneously. This map should be compared with Figure 11.1, which looks almost identical, supporting the arguments of chapter 11.

Moreover, a quantitative study of lexical contrasts based on SED data shows that bundles of heteroglosses separate the Central Southwest (more or less at the border of Dorset) from the Eastern Southwest more strongly than the Southeast is separated from the Southwest – a result that once more ties in with our observations. Figure 13.4 also shows that the contrasts between Devon and East Cornwall are more pronounced than those between East and West Cornwall, pointing towards the homogeneity rather than heterogeneity of English in Cornwall.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Although A30 extends into Cornwall to terminate (in its two-lane form) in Penzance, the far West of the county is only accessible with some difficulty, as everyone who has travelled there will certainly confirm. If we consider Penzance, also the terminus of long-distance trains from London, as the reference point, our North-South continuum holds even for Cornwall, as all recording locations of our Cornish material are located north of Penzance.

<sup>29</sup> Strangely enough, the authors seem to ignore their own maps: Elsewhere in the book, Viereck *et al.* (2002: 105) repeat the cliché we are used to from other authors, namely that a “southern dialect type” is used in East Cornwall, while West Cornwall is “visibly close to StE”.

### 13. Southwest England oral history material

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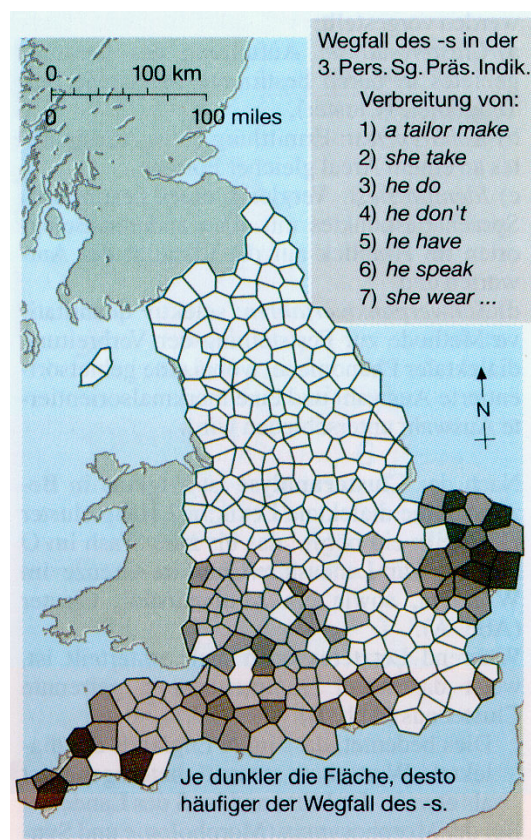


Figure 13.3: Selective dialectometry for third person singular -s; from Viereck *et al.* (2002: 98)

In comparison with the analyses in the previous chapter, the following similarities emerge: **(West) Cornwall should be considered “core Southwest territory”** in all respects, as the investigations of both the SED data and the modern oral history data have shown. Judging from the modern corpus material for Somerset, the suspicion we had in the preceding chapter is confirmed: **The SED informants for Somerset are not representative of the dialect of the time and area.** The situation for Devon and Wiltshire is not as straightforward. While most of Devon clearly belonged to the core Southwest at SED times, the modern situation is unclear. Our data indicate that the county is moving towards StE much faster than its neighbours, but we cannot dismiss the claim that our Devon material may not be representative of the county as a whole. As our data for Wiltshire largely stem from the western part of the county, it could be argued that the overall results pointing towards Southwest status of the county could be equally skewed. However, when comparing the modern data with the SED data for Wiltshire, it should by no means be considered impossible that the material used here describes the present situation fairly well.



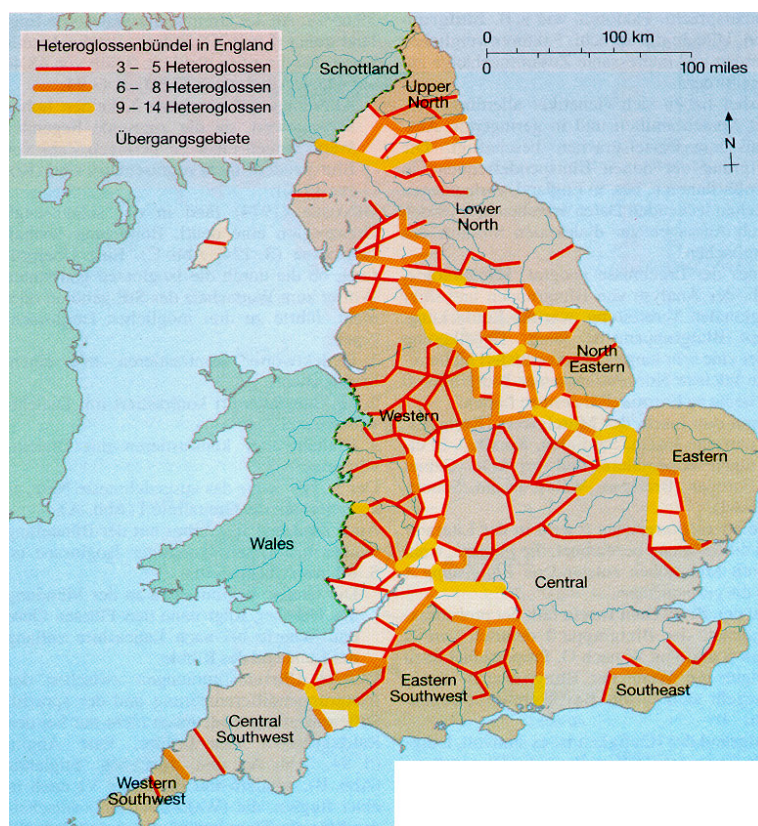


Figure 13.4: Bundles of heteroglosses in England (traditional dialects); from Viereck *et al.* (2002: 94)

Apart from these noteworthy facts, another fact must be acknowledged as remarkable, namely the stability of semantic domains to which “gendered” pronouns generally refer. Even though nothing can be said about general frequencies due to basic differences in the make-up of the two data pools, most denotata of non-standard pronouns were and are tools and instruments. It seems that Elworthy’s and Barnes’ class of man-made objects is still very relevant in gender assignment.

The corpus analyses have also shown that feminine pronouns are (still) quite rare in West Country dialect. The only entities which are frequently feminine in anaphoric references are vehicles, a use that has most certainly been taken over from StE. In light of the facts from modern studies on spoken English in general and scholars’ general opinion as presented in grammars of PrDE, we would have expected a much higher frequency of feminine forms than we actually encountered. Based on all of these aspects, we can conclude that **the traditional West Country system of gender assignment has remained largely intact to the present day**, at least in elderly (rural) speakers. It will be interesting to see how far the “New World” and its dialects have influenced this system. An answer to this question will be attempted in the following chapters, where corpora of Newfoundland English will be analysed.



## **Part IV**

# **Data from Newfoundland**





## Chapter 14

# MUNFLA material

Although the origins and recording purposes of the material from the *Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive* (MUNFLA) vary greatly, ranging from data collections for linguistic purposes, through preservation of folk beliefs and stories, to term paper work, all (or at least the majority) of the tapes are ultimately of an oral-history type. Researchers or students approached locals in order to talk to them about certain topics, developing an (often one-on-one) interview situation where the informant was responsible for most of the conversation, interrupted only by the occasional question or remark by the fieldworker.

Based on the nature of the MUNFLA data selected here, we can thus expect a certain compatibility of and parallels between these data and the oral history material from Southwest England, which was analysed in chapter 13.<sup>1</sup> Detailed information on the sub-corpus this chapter will be based on can be found in section 7.2.7.1.

The general outline of this chapter will once more parallel that of the preceding chapters, commenting on semantic referent classes first. In a second step, the results from the Southwest corpora will be compared with those from Newfoundland, and differences as well as similarities will be pointed out and explained wherever possible.

### 14.1 Referent types

The by now familiar semantic sub-categories or classes that were already used in the two preceding chapters will be used here as well. Although problems of classification are bound to occur, it was once more decided to see the compatibility of the results thus achieved as primary to the suitability of the postulated semantic classes.

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<sup>1</sup> The Folktales tapes, which will form the basis for analysis in chapter 15, are also stored at MUNFLA, but are part of a separate collection, and are of course not included in this chapter's data.

### 14.1.1 Man-made objects

#### 14.1.1.1 Buildings

References to buildings, their parts and contents are to be expected in any interview, no matter where or when it was conducted. The MUNFLA material contains more of these references than most of the other texts, as one of the informants is a professional house mover.<sup>2</sup> It is thus not surprising that more than 120 of the 138 references to *house* stem from him.

Although a camp is not a building in a strict sense, it nevertheless offers a “roof over one’s head”, and thus fits into this category. In example (1) we already witness what will become the mantra of the analysis of the Newfoundland data: Gender assignment is highly variable in Newfoundland, with the traditional system at war with the modern (spoken and written StE) one. Here, the speaker uses *en* in direct object position to refer to the camp, then, phrasing it almost like self-correction, uses standard *it* in the same position. In two references to the camp in subject position, traditional *he* is used. If we consider the first *en* a sort of “slip of the tongue”, this speaker would once more support Ihalainen’s accessibility hypothesis: all positions but subject are “taken over” by the StE (i.e. neuter) forms. In another interview, a speaker uses four instances of *en* in direct object and twice uses *he* in subject position in reference to *house*, accompanied by two *its*, also in direct object position, at the very end of the passage (see example (2)). What causes this change is unclear. A possible explanation is the introduction of a human referent in the last sentence of the quoted passage. In order to avoid confusion between the different (human and non-human) *hes* and *ens*, the speaker reverts to the StE system before the human referent becomes relevant.

- (1) He said dat was, dat was true, he said, their camp’d be down every, made no difference how dey put **en** up, how strong dey put *it* up **he**’d be down flat when dey come back. So dey, his uncle said we considered dere must be something, dere must be, must be a grave dey was sot on you know, so dey shift and **he** never come down no more. (MUNFLA 70-003: C0633)
- (2) ... what want **en** for stockin’ for just for da for da, ’cause **he**’s da oldest house in da community and dey want **en** and dey want **en** to try to get **en** for to turn *it* into a museum just for da sake of a place for da name of da place. Dat fellow dere sold *it* to en, my son, da’s my son, he sold en da house ... (MUNFLA 70-003: C0626)
- (3) And when they took **en**, my son<sup>3</sup>, **he** went in de water oh right to the top parts of **hes** winders, da’s the under winders yer, ice and water, and the men, they had to come, hold de lines, I said now hold dare line and day hold de lines, and **he** never stopped till dey put **en** up over de road. **He** stuck right in end, when **he** went up over de road I runned along under de sleepers, under the (gap ‘indistinct’) where **he** stuck in end, **he** went up and pitched on de road good enough. Now we had to

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<sup>2</sup> This term has to be taken literally: Newfoundland houses were “mobile homes” probably long before anyone thought of the term. Houses were put on logs and pulled across the ice in winter.

<sup>3</sup> Addressing the interviewer.

tow **en** out a little bit to do nordeast out de road, went up through de garden. And six o'clock we had **en** lodged in **hes** own place.

[Int.: That was the second house?]

Yes da's the second one, the other one is not finished yet mind, **he**'s only over to (gap 'place name') Cove. But **he**'s in safety see, **he**'s cross de ice in de arm and **he** got land now, see, (gap 'name'), from (gap 'place name') Cove down French Beach han't **he**? Dey can pull **he** tomarrow or any time.

(MUNFLA 72-089: C1187)

The passage in (3) nicely illustrates what a typical day in the house mover's life involved. References to the house that is being moved at that moment are made exclusively with masculine pronouns, supporting the "emotional involvement theory": For the informant, houses are his life – his interest in them is much too personal to use a semantically empty *it* to refer to them.

In (4), we witness a nice interaction between gender assignment and another traditional West Country and Newfoundland dialect feature, namely pronoun exchange. The speaker obviously wants to emphasize the first pronoun referring to the community hall, while the second reference is unemphatic. As *it* does not have an emphatic (i.e. different subject) form, the speaker obviously resorts to using the "alternative" subject form, i.e. *he*.

- (4) I joined in the first hall was down dere and den they build this one is down there now and they build **he** in 19-, in 1921 I believe they build *it*, I joined in the other one, I joined in 1917, in the ole lodge. (MUNFLA 71-131: C1034)

Table 14.1: "Gendered" pronouns referring to buildings, their parts and contents (MUNFLA)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
building, house	139		6
camp	3		1
lodge		2	1
church	1		1
chair	3		1
cradle	3		1
table	1		1
cellar	4		2
mill	1	1	2
room	3		1
wharf	2		1
total	160	3	14

Feminine references to buildings are rare in the MUNFLA material, as can be seen in Table 14.1. The two speakers who *do* use feminine forms do so in variation with standard *it*, not traditional masculine forms. We can thus conclude that these speakers have shifted to the StE system, which, as we saw in chapter 9, allows feminine pronouns in reference to inanimate nouns, especially when the situation is characterized by some sort of emotional involvement.

#### 14.1.1.2 Containers

Examples (5) and (6) are nice illustrations of Ihalainen’s accessibility theory: While the speaker uses *he* in subject position when referring to the box in (5), standard *it* is employed elsewhere. The bean jar, denotatum in (6), is *he* in emphatic object position, but *it* in the unemphatic prepositional object slot. Overall, references to containers are rare in the MUNFLA material.

The interpretation of (7) as feminine is debatable, particularly since the same speaker uses another five masculine forms to refer to *coffin* after this one ambiguous form. Although a form similar to the traditional West Country non-personal, “non-gendered” [ə̃] (“r-coloured schwa”) has supposedly never existed in Newfoundland English, exactly such a form would be the most convincing explanation in this context, as the informant otherwise uses masculine forms exclusively to refer to inanimate entities.

- (5) Yea, well **he** was made, you could have *it* for a bank one time and dey turned into a work box. **He** was made for a money bank, ya know perhaps dey shoffed deir coppers down *it*. (MUNFLA 70-003: C0627)
- (6) [Int.: A bane<sup>4</sup> jar, and what would you use that for?]  
Oh dey have **he** to put banes into *it*. (MUNFLA 70-003: C0627)
- (7) Yes sir, you’d make da coffin you’d put da trimmin’s on ’**er** den, you’d put more down dis way, see ... (MUNFLA 70-003: C0627)

Table 14.2: “Gendered” pronouns referring to containers (MUNFLA)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
barrel, tub	8		6
box	7		3
bottle	4		1
bucket	1		1
chest	2		1
coffin	5	1	1
can, jar, pot	6		4
total	33	1	12

<sup>4</sup> I.e. “bean”.

## 14.1.1.3 Tools and instruments

As boats and their parts are an intrinsic part of every-day life in Newfoundland, it is not surprising that we should find numerous references to these entities. The sub-class “ship parts” in Table 14.3 contains references to such items as *anchor*, *boom*, *flag*, or *mast*. Other items that constitute the working tools of a fisherman such as *net* and (*lobster*) *trap* are also frequent and evenly distributed among speakers.

In (12), we find another example supporting Ihalainen’s accessibility hypothesis. The informant uses standard *it* two times in prepositional object position to refer to the lock, but shifts to dialectal *he* in emphatic direct object position.

The gender status of *saw* is unclear in the material. While some speakers seem to use feminine pronouns in variation with standard neuter ones, others use masculine and neuter forms. One speaker obviously uses both masculine and feminine forms (14). The only explanation one could think of here is that the form is masculine because it is emphatic. An interaction between gender assignment and pronoun exchange has not yet been claimed, but seems possible.

- (8) We got out there one trip off about thirty mile off the coast and our engine, we had a little engine aboard of her, see, 40 horsepower, and **he** give out . . .  
(MUNFLA 76-290: C2894)
- (9) Well then they got the mouth foghorns, with a mouthpiece on, a foghorn with a mouthpiece on, blow in **he**, that was the dory horns they used to call ‘em.  
(MUNFLA 75-164: C2829)
- (10) Oh dose are, have proper ‘alf in it da’s all, just a wooden ‘alf in **en** [hammer] and dey, you take **he** and you hit your sprigs, it’s mostly drive sprigs with **he** . . .  
(MUNFLA 70-003: C0628)
- (11) You had a tin cup to drink out of, a tin plate to eat out of, a tin spoon, the fark was tin, the knife wuddn tin ‘cause if **he** was **he**’d cut, **he** didn’ cut, **he** wuddn tin (v ‘laughter’), not one bit o’ fresh meat. (MUNFLA 72-089: C1187)
- (12) . . . you had a flap roll around *it*, ‘round the lock, keep **he** dry, perhaps you had a muskrat’s fur, rabbit’s fur ‘round *it* for the water, hold the water . . .  
(MUNFLA 75-164: C2829)
- (13) And another day we took one net one day and we carried **en** up, further up in de bay, and we sot **en** and when we went in de marning, de net was pretty well all, you know, dere was nar drop o’ water dere –  
[Int.: The tide went out.]  
And we had de best haul o’ salmon we had fer the summer, I think we had seven salmon into **en**, yeah, huggin’ up in **en** and the tide was all gone, you know, **he** was almost dry.  
(MUNFLA 72-199: C1154)
- (14) Da man on top would be steering **her** [pit saw] and da fellow dat was down under would be sawin’. You had dat line, you had dat stick lined now, **she** had to go faster den dat line to get your board fair see. Yes sir.  
[. . .]  
Dat was to be coiled buck saws was made, what we calls buck saw now, and den we had a cross cut. Dat was for sawin’ off wood again. Two hands would use **he** see, but one hand could use a frame saw, yes. (MUNFLA 70-003: C0628)

## 14. MUNFLA material

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- (15) You know, say you, say you got a twelve eh, ten fathom trap and your trap's in twelve fathom water, well **he** got be two fathom under the water haven't **he**? If **he**'s a nine fathom trap **he** got be three, sometimes lotsa cases **he** do be three fathom under water.<sup>5</sup> (MUNFLA 72-199: C1155)

Table 14.3: “Gendered” pronouns referring to tools and instruments (MUNFLA)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
“ship parts”	38	1	9
broom (or parts)	5		1
foghorn	1		1
hammer	7		1
iron	8		2
iron last	4		1
knife	4		1
lock	1		1
line	5		1
needle	4		1
net	18		3
writing utensils	4		1
peg	5		1
saw	4	3	3
tool	1		1
trap	7		3
total	116	4	18

As in the Southwest data, references to tools and instruments are masculine in the overwhelming majority of cases. Only one denotatum, *saw*, receives feminine as well as masculine reference, but no tool is exclusively feminine in the MUNFLA data. Once again it looks as though the traditional Southwest system of gender assignment is still fairly intact. However, we were able to observe that Newfoundland speakers, like their Southwestern counterparts, show varying degrees of variation between *it* and masculine forms. More will have to be said on that variation below (see section 14.3).

### 14.1.1.4 Vehicles

Newfoundland was and to a large extent still is a seafaring nation. Cars and roads were a foreign concept to most Newfoundlanders until the 1960s, when outports

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<sup>5</sup> The *do* in this example could be one of the rare instances of periphrastic *do* in Newfoundland English. See section 6.2 for details.

were either abandoned or linked to the “outside world” by road. Although all communities are accessible by road today, the days when they could be reached only by boat, and only when the weather conditions allowed it, are not so long ago. Because of the special status that “water transport” has in Newfoundland, boats, ships etc. are not included in this section, but form a section of their own (14.1.1.5).

Based on this historical background, we expected comparatively few referents to vehicles from the outset. It was not envisioned, however, that vehicle denotata would be almost non-existent. There is one clear reference to *car* in the data, the pronoun chosen here being feminine (16). The same gender is chosen by an informant who uses *she* to refer to a plane five times. The same speaker also produced example (17), where the masculine pronoun refers to *helicopter*.<sup>6</sup> Although generalizations cannot be based on only seven examples, it looks as though Newfoundland speakers may have completed the shift from the traditional to the modern “spoken standard” system of gender assignment, at least for the sub-class of vehicles. Another possible interpretation would be that the traditionally feminine gender of “boat nouns” has been extended to all vehicles, which was already mentioned as an explanation in chapter 3.

- (16) Yeah, but he don’t go down to no school, he’s not allowed he’s not allowed to take **her** [car] on da road, because he haven’t got his licence, you knows dat.  
(MUNFLA 63-002: C0005)
- (17) Oh, I don’t know what time, helicopter landed here, **he** come dere, that was in, after Second World War, I don’t know what date, around 1950 I suppose, ’55.  
(MUNFLA 75-164: C2829)

#### 14.1.1.5 “Water transportation devices”

As mentioned above, ships and boats served as the basic mode of transportation in Newfoundland for centuries. In addition, many of the informants of the MUNFLA material are (retired) fishermen. Since it is thus almost impossible not to have a strong connection with the sea as a native Newfoundlander, ships and boats of all sizes are bound to play an important role in any interview, almost regardless of the topic.

There are more than 300 references to boats in the main corpus, distributed fairly evenly among approximately 20 speakers. As expected, a large majority of speakers use feminine pronouns exclusively to refer to these denotata. Details of distribution can be found in Table 14.4. Only one masculine form seems to have crept in among the feminine ones. The referent in (18) is a steamer named *Kyle*, a rare case of a male name for a boat that may have triggered the pronoun in question. Much more typical is a passage like that in (19) – boats are feminine in traditional Newfoundland dialect, neuter references are equally rare as masculine ones.

<sup>6</sup> Recall similar examples from chapter 13, where it was more likely for the *he* to refer to the pilot of the aircraft rather than the craft itself.

#### 14. MUNFLA material

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- (18) We'd go down in the, years ago when we'd be goin' to the Labrador you'd go down on the steamer, **he**'d carry down the fishermen, the Kyle and mostly I used to go back and forth on when I was goin' on the Labrador, the ole Kyle.  
(MUNFLA 71-131: C1033)
- (19) And when he'd come in in the evenings he'd never ask anyone to pull up his boat fer en, he'd always go, and wherever he was goin' to take **her**, take **her** up, take **her** hold bi the gunnels and take *her* ashore, turn **her** up. 'Tis no odds how heavy **she** was, he never need anyone.  
(MUNFLA 74-039: C1520)

Table 14.4: “Gendered” pronouns referring to “water vehicles” (MUNFLA)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
boat, ship, etc.	1	322	24

##### 14.1.1.6 “Creature comforts”

**Articles of clothing** Non-standard references to articles of clothing are almost absent from the MUNFLA material. *Shoe* is the only denotatum to which two speakers refer with the help of masculine pronouns with some frequency, adding up to nine masculine references to *shoe*. One speaker uses both *it* and *him* in direct object position without any obvious cause. We can only suspect that this speaker’s traditional system of gender assignment has largely been substituted by the StE system, with only some lingering traces that creep in rather arbitrarily from time to time. Three other speakers use *en* to refer to a cap, a tie and a (piece of) cloth. *Coat* is the denotatum of two additional masculine forms, resulting in 14 non-standard pronouns in total that refer to such items (*cf.* Table 14.5).

- (20) One said to the other take **en** and put **en** out. Dey took the shoe, they carried **en** out and put **en** out 'gin the door.  
(MUNFLA 74-039: C1520)

Table 14.5: “Gendered” pronouns referring to articles of clothing (MUNFLA)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
cap	1		1
cloth	1		1
coat	2		1
shoe	9		2
tie	1		1
total	14		5



A cursory search for nouns denoting other articles of clothing in the corpus (e.g. *dress, jacket, suit, pants, shirt*) revealed that Newfoundland speakers generally use neuter pronouns to refer to these. It thus seems as if clothes are no longer a class that triggers masculine forms, but has been taken over by standard pronominal forms.

**Accessories of modern life** Hunting, like fishing, was (and to some extent still is) an essential part of Newfoundland culture. Not very surprisingly then, we find numerous references to guns in the corpus. Illustrative examples are provided in (21) and (22), showing that *gun* is usually feminine (if not neuter). Guns are included in the list of items that can utilize feminine pronouns in StE as well.

- (21) ... that's smallest one shot, put a wad on top of that an' **she**'d [gun] kick, get up (gap 'indistinct') that one when you touch off that one, **she**'d probably knock you ass over head probably, back in the snow. (MUNFLA 75-164: C2829)
- (22) The difference in the price of guns. I bought a nice britch loader dem days for \$5.90 at Thompson's in Glace Bay, just imagine, five dollars and ninety, and **she** was a good gun I used **her** for years, got a lot of ducks with **her**. (MUNFLA 73-046: C1959)

Following the practice used in the previous chapters, all 'printed matter' such as books, newspapers, etc., is included in this section. One of the MUNFLA interviews contains a discussion about a birth certificate, which is generally masculine. But as with other items, speakers vary between StE *it* and traditional masculine forms, as in (23). Unfortunately, it is not always possible to explain all switches between traditional and modern forms (and back again as in this example). We can only assume that for this speaker, there is no real difference between *en* and *it*, at least not in object position. Eight instances of standard *it*, all in non-subject position, stand against the same number of *ens*, six *hes* in subject position and one emphatic *he* in a direct object slot. The emphatic pronoun is once more masculine, a scenario that we encountered repeatedly in the MUNFLA data.<sup>7</sup>

- (23) Oh yes **he** [certificate] had to go in wid it [application for old age pension] see, **he** had to go in wid en [application?], now **he** won't be, come back no more 'fore I gets 70, if I lives till dat. Dey'll send *it* back den, dey don't want *it*. Dey sent back mi mother's, my mother's, they sent back **he** when she got in her 70's, and said, we don't need **en** no longer, you know. (MUNFLA 70-003: C0632)

Another denotatum to be included here is *light* or *lantern* (24). There is a legendary background to this "token": A strange light is seen by fishermen throughout Newfoundland and is usually interpreted as a warning (of bad weather). From the sea, never from the land, one can see it moving to and fro over the water, vanishing after some time. A long passage involving the light and numerous pronominal

<sup>7</sup> Thalainen's accessibility theory would hold for this speaker if we assumed that his traditional system of gender assignment was still intact in subject position, but slowly giving way in all non-subject slots, a process not yet completed.

references to it can be found in Table 10.2, where it serves to illustrate important points connected with syntactic priming. Although some of the masculine forms could be interpreted as instances of personification<sup>8</sup>, many of the stories about the light do not name the light at all, making personification unlikely. Five speakers tell longer stories of the light and are thus responsible for almost all of the ca. 100 masculine forms referring to it.<sup>9</sup>

(25) is another nice illustration of Ihalainen's accessibility hypothesis: The speaker uses *he* exclusively to refer to the light in subject and emphatic object position, but reverts to standard *it* in (unemphatic) direct object slots.

- (24) **He** was like a lantern with a red chimney on **en**, eh, then when **he** go to fade out **he** went a little bit darker than that (gap 'indistinct') you know.  
(MUNFLA 76-295: C2914)
- (25) I've seen what dey call da, what dey call da light, Jack O' Lantern dey use to call *it*, yeah, Jack o' da lantern, I've seen **he** out in da reach. A big light, just go down and **he** blaze up like a man's hand and den **he'd** go down again, but some call *it* the wedder light.  
(MUNFLA 70-003: C0629)

References to the reel that served as the recording device in most of the early interviews or the more modern tape recorder are also rather frequent in the corpus. Modern feminine forms as in (26) are as frequent as traditional masculine forms as in (27). Very often, the first thing recorded in a session is the informant's question after the status of the recorder in the form *is he/she on yet?* Example (28) obviously stems from a passionate smoker who comments on his favourite pastime – smoking his clay pipe.

- (26) K.(gap 'name'), K. (gap 'name'). Now **she's** pickin' up everything now is **she**?  
[Int.: Oh yeah.]  
Oh God K. (gap 'name'), don't be, don't be sayin' stuff now because **she's** pickin' it all up. Well dat will come out on it now. (MUNFLA 72-184: C1228)
- (27) **He's** on now is **he**?  
[Int.: Yeah.]  
What is it you wants to hear about? (MUNFLA 74-039: C1520)
- (28) So ya'd pick up yer clay pipe and ya'd full **en** tobacco, smoke **en**, go back 'n' full **en** again, an' full **en** as often as ya like. (MUNFLA 78-426 ms)

Together with the previous class of "water vehicles", accessories of modern life are among the most evenly distributed denotata in the corpus. Even without the references to the weather light, almost 80 examples bear witness to the importance of such a category. What is also quite obvious from Table 14.6 is the following: While traditional masculine pronouns were dominant in all of the semantic categories<sup>10</sup> investigated so far, we find almost 30% feminine forms in this class. Three

<sup>8</sup> The light is often called "Jack(ie) the Lantern".

<sup>9</sup> The speaker also quoted in chapter 10 uses approximately half of the forms.

<sup>10</sup> Excluding the class of water vehicles, which has obviously never received dominating masculine references.

denotata (*gun, radio, recorder*) show inter-speaker variability between masculine and feminine pronouns. The data seem to point towards an ongoing change in the system, namely from the traditional (→ masculine forms) to the “spoken standard” system of gender assignment (→ feminine forms).<sup>11</sup>

Table 14.6: “Gendered” pronouns referring to accessories of modern life (MUNFLA)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
book	6		2
canon		6	1
certificate	15		1
gun	2	25	7
lantern, light	101		8
mask	3		1
mat	1		1
newspaper	2		1
pipe	5		2
radio	1	4	2
recorder	6	6	4
sewing machine	1		1
tape	1		1
total	144	41	24

**Food and drink** Non-standard pronouns referring to food and drink are rare, not to say almost non-existent, in the MUNFLA data. In (29), the speaker describes how she prepares a traditional Christmas cake – the seven masculine forms constitute more than half of all masculine forms denoting items of food or drink that could be found. Three other speakers use one masculine form each, one also referring to *cake*, one to *pudding* and one to *bread*. Three additional forms can be found in (30), where the informant describes how a dish called “dog belly” is prepared; the cooked dish is masculine, while the raw ingredients are neuter.

Apart from the fact that references to food are generally rare in the corpus, standard *it* seems to be the pronoun of choice. Where denotata are indeed count nouns, which, as mentioned in earlier chapters, is usually not the case for this class, pronouns are masculine rather than neuter. All in all, speakers’ behaviour is rather standard, although far-reaching conclusions cannot be drawn for lack of examples.

<sup>11</sup> This is nicely supported by the classification of *gun* which the *OED* specifically mentions as a possible recipient of feminine pronouns: “*she* 2a. Of a ship or boat. Also (now chiefly in colloquial and dialect use), often said of a carriage, a cannon or gun, a tool or utensil of any kind; occas. of other things.” (my emphasis) As we can disregard dialect use (→ masculine forms), the feminine forms here are clearly colloquial.

#### 14. MUNFLA material

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- (29) Mix up wit' a spoon, a large spoon ya know. Ya puts da soda in da molasses in da water, molasses water, two cups of molasses and you puts da, makes da soda, two teaspoonsful of soda and cherries yes cherries a pack of cherries and den when these, ya bakes **en** about two hours den ya takes it<sup>12</sup> out, when **he**'s cold den you ices **en**, ice **en** over with icing sugar, white does **en** all over wit' white and den ya decorates **en** puts ah Merry Christmas across wit' different little machine ya know, and ya puts Merry Christmas on **en** and den ya puts all kinds of candy over around dat, den ya, ya, ya sticks a holly in da middle, Christmas, ya know.  
(MUNFLA 63-002: C0011)
- (30) Dog bellies now, you stir it all up together, the fat and the scrunchions and all you have it all in and stir it up and tip it back into the same pan what you fried it out in and take the knife and cut in squares and put in the oven and when **he** come out Mr Man I can tell ya **he**'s worth eatin'.  
[Int.: Good eh?]  
And that's what **he** is. (MUNFLA 73-046: C1958)

##### 14.1.1.7 Nature re-modelled

In comparison with the corpora analysed so far, denotata belonging to this class are not very wide-spread. Typical referents are *spar* or *stick*; examples can be found in (31) to (33). A reason for the scarcity of such referents may be sought in differences of occupation: While informants from farming communities have to deal with items belonging to this class every day, we can assume that they are rather rare in communities where most people make their living with fishing. Feminine pronouns referring to items of this class were not encountered (*cf.* Table 14.7).

Table 14.7: "Gendered" pronouns referring to "nature re-modelled" (MUNFLA)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
brick	1		1
spar	3		1
sprig	2		1
stave	1		1
stick, hoop	19		3
total	26		4

- (31) ... and he shinned the spar, got up to the top, the spar was broke he said with a spall, you know, on **en**, **he** didn' break right off square **he** broke wit' a spall, where you can see anything break. (MUNFLA 70-003: C0632)
- (32) You go in da woods and you cut a little stick and you make a hoop and you shaves **he** den in da hole see and den you put four strings on **him** and you tie in **he**, and **he** go into a bow and den da's where your lobster crawl in through see.  
(MUNFLA 70-003: C0628)

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<sup>12</sup> Unclear reference; could be the cake as well as the pan or baking tray.

- (33) Da hoop wouldn't break, **he**'s sure not to break. You could make **him** out of birch or you could make **him** out of cherry tree or you could make **him** out of dogwood, see. (MUNFLA 70-003: C0628)

#### 14.1.1.8 Man-made objects – summary

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the observations made in the preceding sections. First, the traditional (West Country) system of gender assignment seems to have survived fairly intact in Newfoundland. In comparison of total word numbers and total number of “gendered” pronouns for the Southwest and MUNFLA corpora, the Newfoundland data lead by far close to 900 forms in 132,000 words.<sup>13</sup>

Second, however, in comparison with the Southwest England material, it looks as though feminine forms are slowly invading the system. In some semantic domains (in particular accessories of modern life), these forms already constitute almost 30% of the total number of forms.<sup>14</sup> More will have to be said about these changes below (14.3). Table 14.8 summarizes the individual figures of forms referring to man-made objects in the MUNFLA material.

Table 14.8: “Gendered” pronouns referring to man-made objects (MUNFLA)

referent class	sub-class	# masc. ex.s	# fem. ex.s	# of sp.
buildings		160	3	14
containers		33	1	12
tools & instruments		116	4	18
vehicles		1	6	3
water vehicles		1	322	24
“creature comforts”				
	articles of clothing	14		5
	accessories of modern life	144	41	24
	food & drink	13		5
nature re-modelled		26		4
total		508	377	38

<sup>13</sup> 615 forms in ca. 320,000 words by 68 speakers in the Southwest England corpus, 885 forms in ca. 132,000 words by 34 speakers in the MUNFLA corpus. Even when excluding the 300 or so *boat* references, the MUNFLA material contains proportionally more “gendered” pronouns than the Southwest corpus. Table 14.8 does not include the 20 or so examples that stem from interviews which do not belong to the core corpus as described in chapter 7.

<sup>14</sup> The domain of “water vehicles” obviously has always been and still is (almost) exclusively feminine.

### 14.1.2 Nature

Probably because Newfoundlanders traditionally have a strong connection with nature and natural things, references to nouns belonging to this class are relatively frequent in the corpus. Except for three (or possibly four) denotata, referents can be subsumed under four sub-categories: trees and plants, stars, localities/places, and water phenomena.

One speaker refers to a disease (*gout*) by using masculine forms (34). Although non-count in a strict sense, the reference here is to manifestations of the disease (→ infection of individual limbs) rather than the disease itself, justifying the inclusion of these examples in this section.

Various references to vegetables and trees are also found; an example is provided in (35). Another natural feature that is traditionally used to predict the weather is the ring around the moon. Weather conditions are predicted from where it opens, as illustrated in (36). The moon itself also receives masculine reference. Although the star in question is personified as female (“The Maid in vain” with long hair), the speaker of (37) uses masculine pronouns to refer to it. This supports the argument of section 8.1, where personification alone was dismissed as insufficient to explain the use of “gendered” pronouns. In addition, this example also supports Ihalainen’s accessibility theory, as the speaker uses *it* in non-subject and *he* in subject position.

- (34) I had de gout in mi toe last year and the doctor come here to me you know and I said I never heard talk o’ de gout only when the mummers used to be gettin’ around Christmas and I said they used to say well **he**’s [toe] the devil’s hand and if the gout is in en [toe] the devil’ll root **en** [gout] out. (v ‘laughter’) If the devil is in, if the gout is in your toe the devil’ll root **en** [gout] out.

(MUNFLA 70-003: C633)

- (35) I took hold da potato and **he**’d crack off just like ya know crack all to pieces . . .

(MUNFLA 73-046: C1959)

- (36) . . . when you sees de ring around de moon night time, well you’ll say we’re goin’ to have ah go out and see which way **he** opens, de ring will open somehow see. Perhaps to de south-east or north-east, well whichever way **he** opens, da’s how de wind will be. Den we have de weather. If **he** open to de nar-west down, if **he** opens down, we might have de ah if **he** opens up, up de wind will come nar-west we would have de weather, but **he** opens out eastern or dis way, you’ll have de weather see.

(MUNFLA 70-003: C0631)

- (37) . . . da’s de marks we use to have, and you’d see a star what we used to call de Maid in vain one time in de sky, well you ah in de night we’d be out to see how **he** looked, whichever way **he** laid, da’s de ways de wind would be.

[Int.: This was a, what did you call that?]

De Maid in vain in de sky.

[Int.: The maid in–]

De star, yes. De star, we used to call *it*, dis Maid, dis big long t’ing used to come down, dey used to call *it*, de Maid in vain in de star. Well whichever way **he** laid, da’s de way de wind would be, sir.

(MUNFLA 70-003: C631)

Table 14.9: “Gendered” pronouns referring to natural features (MUNFLA)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
conch, shell	3		2
flint(stone)	2		1
gout	2		1
Newfoundland		1	1
island	2	2	2
village	2	2	2
moon	3		1
ring around the moon	6		1
star	3		1
carrot	2		1
potato	1		1
tree	2		1
turnip	7		1
pond	2		1
wave	1		1
well	1		1
batch of snow, pan of ice	4		2
storm	1		1
total	44	5	14

The pronoun in (38) refers to Newfoundland, a use that is also possible in StE. The speaker producing (39) jokes about not being able to find a snowed-in village, which he refers to with masculine pronouns. Interestingly, all feminine references encountered in this class occur in the sub-category of places/ localities. The influence of StE, which allows *she* in reference to counties and islands, is the most plausible explanation.

(40) once more exemplifies and supports Ihalainen’s accessibility hypothesis. In prepositional object position, the speaker uses standard *it*, while the referent, *wave*, is *he* in subject position. Alternatively, and just as logically, the referent of the neuter form could be *water*, which, as a mass noun, contrasts with *wave* (+ count).

(38) Yeah, eh yes, after **she** [Newfoundland] went in confederation.  
(MUNFLA 70-003: C630)

(39) ... dey had a little trail about 18 inches wide, well I walked across dere wid a snowshoes, snowshoe in each hand, and all I used to tell 'em I was afraid of I was goin to miss Twillingate see, walk right over **en**, **he** was snowed in (v 'laughter')  
(MUNFLA 72-089: C1187)

(40) ... when the great wave used to come rolling, we'd run as fast as we could to get up out of *it* before **he**'d get us.  
(MUNFLA 78-006: C3321)

Surprisingly, in comparison with the Southwest corpus material, references to natural features are less frequent in the MUNFLA data. The absolute figures have to be put into perspective, though, as contributions to individual referent classes in the Southwest corpora are based on a subject bias in the interviews (particularly cider making → references to *apple*). Overall, the generally non-agricultural content of the MUNFLA interviews has probably resulted in comparatively fewer references to nouns belonging to this class (*cf.* Table 14.9).

### 14.1.3 Body parts

Referents belonging to this section are more than rare in the MUNFLA material. There are two references to *arm* and one to *leg* by one speaker; also recall example (34) above, where an informant uses masculine forms two times in reference to *toe*. One speaker uses *en* referring to *tongue*. With four instances by one speaker, *tooth* is the most frequently encountered referent of this class.

Taken together, three speakers use nine instances of masculine pronouns to refer to body parts. Feminine forms were not encountered in this class.

## 14.2 Problematic cases – abstract referents

The purpose of this section is slightly different from that in the preceding chapters. On the one hand, a separate section on problematic cases seems superfluous as there are only very few pronominal forms for which referents are difficult to identify. On the other hand, it provides an opportunity to discuss a class that was much more prevalent in the MUNFLA material and which was either not at all or only marginally encountered in the corpora analysed so far – abstract referents.

The label “abstract referents” is used here to refer to pronouns denoting abstract count nouns such as *story* or *song*. In addition to these denotata, we also find a handful of pronouns of the non-referential type described in section 8.3. Examples (41) to (43) illustrate the first, (44) and (45) the second of these uses. Sentence (43) contains another example supporting Ihalainen’s hypothesis. The speaker of (44) describes how dynamite was used to make a passageway for a boat through ice. Although the feminine pronoun could refer to the boat or the stick of dynamite, an interpretation as non-referential is equally likely, particularly since the structure of the elements involved resembles the one identified as prototypical in such cases (X-S-V). The same structure is also used in (45), where the feminine pronoun seems to be cataphoric, referring to the following events, rather than anaphoric.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Though *house* seems to be the most likely referent when analysing this example superficially, it may be recalled that this is the speaker who uses more than 100 masculine forms referring to houses in the remainder of the interview. It is thus extremely unlikely that he should here use a lone feminine.



### 14.3. Past and future of gender assignment in Newfoundland English

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- (41) Oh **he**'s the hell of a long story. (MUNFLA 70-003: C631)
- (42) I learned, if I hear a song, we'll say somebody sings all night and if I mind to know **en**, (gap 'indistinct') I could sing **en** today. (MUNFLA 70-037: C751)
- (43) And **he**'s [song] all there but there's different words in *it* you know. (MUNFLA 70-037: C751)
- (44) ... he used to put the dynamite down by the side of the ship to loosen up the ice fer to get back and forth see, and they used dynamite at that time and they used to heat up the poker and heave out the red hot poker to put to the fuse and when they would touch the fuse it would be as long as that and the powder used to go right thru the cap and fling **she**'d go, and so (gap 'name') he had two men killed with the dynamite ... (MUNFLA 73-046: C1958)
- (45) ... I only come down to help pull en [house]. But nevertheless I said, all right boys, straighten out, and away dey goes, my son, straightened out, we took dat house and here **she** come. (MUNFLA 72-089: C1187)

Five speakers use 17 masculine forms to refer to abstract referents (*poem*, one example; *song*, 15 examples; *story*, one example), while five instances of non-referential *she* are used by three speakers.

The class of abstract count nouns will play an important role in the next chapter, where the collection of *Folktales of Newfoundland* will serve as the corpus for analysis.

### 14.3 Traditional versus modern uses of pronouns – the past and future of gender assignment in Newfoundland English

The analysis of the MUNFLA material presented in this chapter allows us to make two basic conclusions: First, **Newfoundland speakers adhere to the traditional West Country system of gender assignment more strongly than their fellow speakers in the mother country.** This result is based on the comparison of the relative frequencies of “gendered” pronouns in the two corpora, where a higher frequency of non-standard pronominal forms was observed in the Newfoundland data. Southwest speakers, on the other hand, use proportionally fewer “gendered” pronouns. Or, in other words, more Southwest English speakers have adopted the StE system.

Second, the Newfoundland data show a tendency that we could not observe in the Southwest material. While British speakers seem to be shifting (or have already shifted) from the traditional dialect system (→ masculine forms) towards the (written) standard system (→ neuter forms), Newfoundland speakers seem to prefer the spoken standard system (→ feminine forms) rather than the StE (neuter) system. This can be concluded from the higher frequency and more even distribution of

feminine pronouns in the MUNFLA corpus. **While feminine pronouns occurred in only three of the nine semantic categories in the Southwest material, the MUNFLA material contains feminine forms referring to all but two of the categories.**<sup>16</sup> Feminine forms constitute only about 5% of all examples (25 forms out of over 500, excluding references to boats<sup>17</sup>) in the Southwest corpora, but they make up approximately 10% of all “gendered” pronouns in the MUNFLA data (60 forms out of 621, excluding references to boats).

Based on what we know about Newfoundland settlement history<sup>18</sup>, the present state of gender assignment in West Country Newfoundland dialect(s) can be explained as follows: Settlers brought with them the (strict) system that has been described in 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature on (English) West Country dialects. Although contact between them and other settler groups was relatively restricted, it must have existed to a certain extent. None of the varieties the West Country settlers came into contact with used masculine forms in the same manner as their mother lect. Where the pronominal system *did* offer a choice, it was between neuter and feminine rather than neuter and masculine forms.

In some domains of usage, contact with speakers of other dialects as well as with standard speakers resulted in a (or possibly two) shift(s) in the traditional paradigm: Neuter forms became the “unmarked” choice in some domains, and only when a special need for emphasis was felt to play a role (→ discourse-pragmatic factors), non-neuter forms were selected (→ approaching StE). For some semantic domains, feminine forms as they were used in other dialects and were also possible in some instances in StE, began to compete with the traditional masculine forms. As a result, Newfoundlanders today use standard *it* alongside dialectal *she* and West Country *he*. All these factors come together to form a unique system that is conservative in some aspects and modern in others.

Where the change from the traditional to the StE system is in progress, it seems to follow the path outlined by Ossi Ihalainen: The standard form (*it*) is first used in non-subject positions. The form *he*, which may also be used in emphatic object position (→ pronoun exchange), is the only remnant of the traditional system in many ideolects. This theory is supported by evidence from individual utterances (*cf.* examples (1), (5), (6), (12), (23), (25), (37), (40) and (43) in this chapter) as well as more general observations from whole interviews (*cf.* Wagner (2004)).

If we were to make any predictions about the future of gender assignment in Newfoundland English, it would be wise not to underestimate the strength of the traditional West Country system in claiming that a change towards StE is already dawning on the horizon. In comparison with Southwest England, Newfoundland

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<sup>16</sup> Those categories, nature re-modelled and body parts, were represented with only very few examples, however, thus possibly precluding the occurrence of feminine forms simply for lack of examples.

<sup>17</sup> *Cf.* Tables 13.10, 13.11 and 13.12. Feminine pronouns were used in the classes containers (one example), vehicles (142 examples; all but one referring to boats), and farming machines (23 examples).

<sup>18</sup> Recall chapter 5.

### *14.3. Past and future of gender assignment in Newfoundland English*

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English is much more conservative and successful in preserving and sometimes re-introducing or spreading features that have long since died out in the mother country.



## Chapter 15

# Data from the *Folktales of Newfoundland*

The database of this chapter is made up of a selection of folktales published in Halpert and Widdowson (1996). The relevant criterion for the inclusion of a tale in this analysis was the speaker's background (West Country, not Irish speech pattern). Moreover, tales with few or no instances of "gendered" pronouns were discarded. The pattern of selection is thus not representative in any way. Rather, the process was based on the purely subjective criterion of "high frequency of interesting pronominal forms". Detailed information on the sub-corpus that will serve as the basis of analysis for this chapter can be found in section 7.2.7.2.

The Folktales material differs in one major respect from all other sources used so far. A tale is an oral genre that follows its own characteristics and rules. Tales show specific structural patterns, and certain rules have to be obeyed in the presentation (= telling) of a tale. All or any of these factors may have an impact on gender assignment. As they are clearly beyond the scope of this study, genre-specific analyses or comments will be restricted to a minimum and will only be used where they are of explanatory value.<sup>1</sup>

Despite (or possibly because of) the "unconventional" selection process and genre differences, an analysis of the Folktales data seems promising in a number of respects. First, the tales offer the unique possibility to compare speakers' idiolects, as some tales are told twice or even more often, not only by different speakers, but also by one speaker at different occasions (→ real time change). Second, the tales are monologues rather than dialogues. The influence of the interviewer (or rather observer) is thus minimal to non-existent, eliminating or minimizing the risk of encountering many "primed" standard forms (*cf.* chapter 10 on syntactic priming). Third, the telling of a tale is an occasion of very high social value in the

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<sup>1</sup> Endless discussions could be held about the classification of "Folktale" alone. Is it a spoken genre, written-to-be-spoken, written? Depending on the setting (degree of literacy → orality–literacy continuum; traditions in society, ...), all three are possible and probably do indeed exist.

Newfoundland villages where the tales were collected. When the teller (very often the eldest male of the family) tells the tale, the whole family gathers in the room and listens. We thus have a one-way speaker-listener relationship that is different from the oral history interview situations that characterized the corpora analysed so far.

We will see below in how far any of these differences play a role in the system of gender assignment that the story-tellers use. The outline of this chapter will once more follow the by now familiar pattern.

## 15.1 Referent types

In order to make comparisons between the different data sources possible, the classification of referents that was established and used in the preceding chapters will be applied here once more. However, we expect certain biases and problems due to the nature of the material. It should be obvious that the topics touched upon in folktales will be very different from those generally discussed in oral-history-type material. Certain noun classes may be over-represented, while others may not occur at all. It may become necessary to postulate different or new classes in order to present the whole picture of gender assignment. Despite these (possible) pitfalls, it would make no sense to do without these major semantic classes here, as the basic concepts will certainly play an important role in any non-technical, non-topic-specific conversation, which is why they are used here.

### 15.1.1 Man-made objects

#### 15.1.1.1 Buildings

References to buildings and their contents occur with the expected frequency in the Folktales corpus. Most evenly distributed are references to *barn*, which figures prominently in one of the repeatedly told stories. Examples for this class can be found in (1) to (3), details in Table 15.1. By now it is no longer surprising that feminine references are not found for this class.

- (1) He said “Now” he said uh ... “Jack” he said “there’s a barn out there.” He said “**He** ant been cleaned out” he said “for two year.” He said “An’ we lost a needle into **un**.” (Tale 008)
- (2) ...he knocked to the door, nobody never come to open **un**. (Tale 096)
- (3) ...“on mi way goin” - he said “I seen [a] little uh ... little camp.” He said “An’ I went up to **un**” he said “an’ when I went up to **un**” he said “there was ... three men” he said “lied down.” (Tale 063)

Table 15.1: Masculine pronouns referring to buildings, their parts and contents (Folktales)

referent	# of examples	# of speakers
bank	2	1
barn	6	4
building	3	2
camp	2	1
door	4	3
house	7	1
palace	3	1
furniture	2	1
workshop	1	1
total	30	13

### 15.1.1.2 Containers

With over 50 instances, containers are well-represented in the Folktales material. One of the more interesting examples for this class is (4). Although at first glance it looks as though the speaker refers to *bottle* with both a masculine and a feminine form, this interpretation should be reconsidered in light of example (5). That example not only stems from a recording of the same speaker two years later, but it is also uttered at the exact same point in the story where the speaker used *her* and *he* before. The most likely interpretation for the seemingly feminine form in (4) is that we actually encounter one of the rare instances of r-coloured schwa in Newfoundland English.<sup>2</sup>

A story that is told three times altogether by two speakers (brothers) involves a chest, which appears rather frequently as a consequence (see examples (6) and (7)). Table 15.2 shows the distributional details for the class of containers. There is only one clearly feminine reference to a container, uttered by a speaker whose background is Irish rather than West Country, but who otherwise uses masculine forms frequently to refer to inanimate objects. Based on this utterance, his system of pronominal gender assignment seems to be mixed, allowing both masculine (→ West Country) and feminine (→ Irish) forms.

- (4) ... a bottle of wine if you took a drink out of **her he** was just as full as ever ...  
(Tale 029)
- (5) “Well” Jack said “I got a bottle o’ wine here, the more you drinks out of **he, he’s**  
just as full as ever. (Tale 030)
- (6) ... now he put his mother in this big chest, **he** was a big high chest. (Tale 096)

<sup>2</sup> This form will not be included in the statistics of this chapter.

## 15. Data from the *Folktales of Newfoundland*

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- (7) Put the cover an the chest again an' ... locked **un** up - screwed **un** up, however they had done with **un**. (Tale 098)
- (8) He [the giant] fulfilled the puncheon up - pretty well full o' water. Put **un** 'longside Jack's room door. Went down an' he went to bed. (Tale 114)

Table 15.2: "Gendered" pronouns referring to containers (Folktales)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
bag	4		3
basket	2		2
bottle	8	1	4
chest	28		2
kettle	5		1
pot	2		1
puncheon	4		1
suitcase	1		1
total	54	1	10

### 15.1.1.3 Tools and instruments

Here the genre difference between this and the other corpora used so far plays a role for the first time: Although tools are naturally mentioned in some of the tales that are told, they are by no means as frequent as in oral history interviews where speakers are often asked to explain the workings of certain instruments. Thus, only about 50 references to tools and instruments are made in the Folktales corpus – a figure that is far lower than the ones encountered in the other corpora. On the other hand, the figure is close to those for the other sub-categories of “man-made instruments”. Examples are given in (9) to (11), Table 15.3 lists individual items belonging to the category.

- (9) Jack went out. He [the giant] picked up this big maul. Course Jack couldn't lift the handle of **un** - not talkin [about] the maul. Huh! [laughs] Picked up the maul. “Now” he said “Jack” he said “how far can you fire **he**?” “I don't know” Jack said “how far can you fire **un**?” “Oh” he said “I can fire **un** a good ways.” So he took up the maul an' he thr[ew] ... he had a big field there an' he fired **un** away in an' across his field see. “Now” he said “Jack” he said “go down an' get **un**.” (Tale 114)
- (10) I asked **un** what he was lookin for. He said he sot a lobster trap nine year ago - an' he'd have so good a fresh lobster into **un** - as ever I seen.” (Tale 036)
- (11) “Here” she said “take this gold shovel. Heave **un** over /your/ shoulder” she said “in the devil's name - turn around an' pick up the ring.” Well that's what he done. (Tale 012)



Table 15.3: Masculine pronouns referring to tools and instruments (Folktales)

referent	# of masculine examples	# of speakers
anchor	4	1
axe	1	1
hammer	1	1
iron	3	1
knife	1	1
maul	17	1
needle	2	1
poker	2	2
rope	1	1
scythe	2	1
shovel	2	2
spoon	1	1
trap	7	3
wheelbarrow	5	1
total	49	7

It would be unwise to conclude *ex negativo* from this figure that the tellers use standard *it* to refer to instruments (or other man-made objects) – in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. The Folktales sub-corpus contains by far the lowest number of standard *its* referring to objects of all the corpora consulted for this study.

In order to obtain more information about this, let us take a closer look at a group of 15 stories which together amount to a total of some 60,000 words, i.e. constituting approximately 40% of the total corpus, but containing almost 70% of all “gendered” pronouns (314 of 449).<sup>3</sup> These stories were chosen because they contain a comparatively large number of “gendered” pronouns as well as *its* referring to count nouns. It should be noted that the variety of English spoken by most of the story-tellers is so traditional that the latter forms are absent from the majority of the tales in the corpus.

When analysing the ratio of non-standard (i.e. masculine) to standard (neuter) forms in this sub-corpus, the following results are obtained: Percentages for the traditional forms range between 44% to 93.75%, averaging 75.5%. In other words, with the mere quantity of “gendered” pronouns it seems extremely unlikely that the lack of masculine references to tools and instruments is caused by a shift towards the StE gender assignment system at the expense of the traditional one. We should thus return to our initial solution and attribute the lack of examples for this class to the difference in genres (folktale vs. oral history).

<sup>3</sup> These figures only relate to denotata other than boats.

**15.1.1.4 Vehicles and ships**

The Folktales sub-corpus does not contain any references to vehicles. This can very likely be attributed to genre differences once more. The usual means of transport in the tales is either by ship or – as a concession to the European roots of storytelling – by horse, and as most of the tales are set some centuries ago, references to cars are out of the question. The generally non-agricultural surroundings make references to carts and wagons unlikely, too.

References to ships and boats, on the other hand, are, as was expected, comparatively frequent, occurring in many tales. The corpus contains 77 feminine references to boats and ships, distributed among 16 tales and eight speakers. As in the MUNFLA data, neuter references to this class do not occur.

**15.1.1.5 “Creature comforts”**

**Articles of clothing** Articles of clothing play a central role in the tales only rarely. As a result, references to items denoting clothes are rare in the corpus. Illustrative material is provided in (12) and (13); Table 15.4 lists the individual denotata. Once more, we only find masculine references to nouns belonging to this class.

- (12) An’ they uh ... an’ Jack went down to the weddin an’ when they was havin dancin now she had ... she made a ... a cap or ... coat or something for Jack an’ put a name into **un**. (Tale 022)
- (13) ... she ... got up an’ - took out a big nightdress out of a chest of drawers an’ - she was standin right awards me” he said. “An’ when she p[ut] ... went to put **un** on - I ... here I spies a mole” he said ... (Tale 045)

Table 15.4: Masculine pronouns referring to articles of clothing (Folktales)

referent	# of masculine examples	# of speakers
cap	2	1
coat	2	1
hat	1	1
nightdress	1	1
(piece of) satin	1	1
article of clothing	1	1
total	8	6

**Accessories of modern life** As in the MUNFLA corpus, non-standard references to items belonging to this class are quite frequent in the Folktales corpus as well. The tales contain a wide array of nouns which can be subsumed under the heading “accessories of modern life”, ranging from “printed matter” such as *book* and

*newspaper* via references to coins to the only feminine item in this class, *gun*. Examples can be found in (14) to (17), the overall distribution in Table 15.5.

Table 15.5: “Gendered” pronouns referring to accessories of modern life (Folktales)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
ball	21		2
book	2		2
newspaper	7		1
letter, note, parcel	10		2
certificate	3		2
coin	2		1
feather bed	1		1
gun		3	2
handkerchief	2		1
light	8		2
pipe	2		1
purse	1		1
ring	11		2
sign	2		1
tablecloth	1		1
total	73	3	7

- (14) Th’ ol’ woman called un up. She give him a red ball. “Now” she said “Jack. Wherever you goes or wants to go you chuck that red ball an’ wherever **he** goes you folly **un**.” (Tale 002)
- (15) “I wants the highest penny I can get.” Took a penny out of his pocket an’ he fired **un** up. (Tale 101)
- (16) An’ he went down an’ he got down - in the valley, well he ... he lost the light he couldn’t find **un**. Tuh ... he decided he have to come back on the little hill again an’ uh ... see could he see **un**. He come back again an’ he seen the light AGAIN. He started again, he got down in the valley an’ he STILL couldn’t find the light. Well he said he ’d go back on the hill THIS time, he’d find **un** THIS time. (Tale 004)
- (17) “Here’s a ... parcel policeman send over” an’ she [the damsel] grabbed the parcel you know an’ get ... banged *it* back again the wall an’ when **he** did **he** split in two. (Tale 141)

(17) contains one of the – for the Folktales – rare cases of a standard *it* co-occurring with dialectal *he*. The example supports Ihalainen’s accessibility hypothesis, as the StE form occurs in direct object position, while the teller uses traditional *he* in subject position.

**Food and drink** With only three different denotata, non-standard references to items denoting food and drink are equally rare in the Folktales corpus as they were in the MUNFLA data. A cursory search through the corpus reveals that anaphoric pronominal references to food and drink are rare in general. More often than not, tellers repeat the noun rather than substituting it by a pronoun. In addition, it should be mentioned again that “gendered” pronouns are expected to be rare in this class, which mostly consists of mass rather than count nouns. The absence of feminine forms is no longer surprising.

A talking cake is a “protagonist” in one of the stories, usually receiving masculine reference. However, personification is a likely explanation in only three of 12 instances of masculine forms. When the cake is being tasted and actually eaten as in (18), it can be assumed that the cake is no longer “personified”, but has returned to its object status.

- (18) An’ he see this big man comin an’ he hold his cake out arm’s length to un. He’s come an’ he’s looked at **un** an’ he broke **un** an’ - taste **un**, smelled **un**. (Tale 008)
- (19) Anyway Jack said “I got a loaf here ... the more you cuts off **him he**’s just as big as ever” ... (Tale 030)

Table 15.6: Masculine pronouns referring to food and drink (Folktales)

referent	# of masculine examples	# of speakers
bread (loaf)	3	1
cake	17	3
meal	2	1
total	22	4

#### 15.1.1.6 Nature re-modelled

Probably once more due to genre differences<sup>4</sup>, non-standard references to this class are almost non-existent in the Folktales corpus. One teller refers to *cane* with masculine forms two times, and also uses such a form when speaking about a pole<sup>5</sup>. Another speaker also uses a masculine form denoting *pole*, but standard *it* occurs in the same utterance and same syntactic slot (20). This “free variation” cannot be accounted for by any of the proposed theories. From such utterances we cannot help but conclude that for some speakers the traditional and modern systems of gender assignment seem to co-exist without any systematic division of tasks. Yet

<sup>4</sup> A direct link between the discussion of agricultural activities and the frequency of nouns belonging to this class is more than likely.

<sup>5</sup> Although the pole in question is made of glass rather than wood, a pole is traditionally wooden and thus belongs to this class.

a third speaker completes the total of five masculine forms denoting items of this class by using *un* referring to the keel of a boat.

- (20) ... “there’s a glassen pole out there” he said “An’ there’s a ring” he said “right on the top of *it*.” He said “An’ if you can get up **un**” he said “an’ get that ring” \_he said uh ... “I’ll save your life.” (Tale 008)

### 15.1.1.7 Man-made objects – summary

Although not as well represented as in the corpora analysed so far, non-standard pronominal references to man-made objects constitute the majority of “gendered” pronouns in the Folktales corpus as well. As was expected, the traditional nature of the variety of English used for the telling of tales is reflected in the data. Masculine pronouns are generally employed to refer to man-made objects. Only one sub-class contains more than impressionistic evidence of feminine forms (→ accessories), the use of which conforms with StE rules (*gun* = *she*). As in the MUNFLA data, ships and boats are exclusively feminine for Newfoundland speakers, regardless of genre.

Table 15.7: “Gendered” pronouns referring to man-made objects (Folktales)

referent class	sub-class	# masc. ex.s	# fem. ex.s	# of sp.
buildings		30		13
containers		54	1	10
tools & instruments		49		7
ships and boats			77	8
“creature comforts”				
	articles of clothing	8		6
	accessories of modern life	73	3	7
	food & drink	22		4
nature re-modelled		5		3
total		241	81	13

### 15.1.2 Nature

One of the stories contains a peculiar passage about an egg (21). In the almost ritualistic repetition of key moments and phrases that is common in story-telling, the teller refers to the egg with *it*, *her* and *un*. There is no pattern to his switches, and we can only wonder what may have caused them. In addition, the use of pronouns in this passage contradicts Ihalainen’s accessibility hypothesis for the first

time in this thesis. The speaker uses *it* in subject position, and the only masculine reference occurs in an object slot.

As a side benefit, the passage also contains a nice example illustrating gender assignment to animals (see section 8.2): Although the bird must be (biologically) female in order to drop an egg, the pronoun chosen is generally *he*.

- (21) “Now” he said “there was a bird flew over his head - an’ dropped an egg on the middle o’ the street. An’ ’twas in everybody’s way - they had to get crowbars an’ hand spikes an’ pickaxes to roll **it** an’ **it** bursted an’ **it** drowned half the street. So he went back that evenin with the ... news to Mickel. So – he said “I’ll go to the king’s palace tomorrow” he says “an’ I’m goina tell him” he said “the lie.” An’ whoever tell now ... the biggest lie - was supposed to get the king’s daughter in marriage. “But” he said “you’ll have to come” he says uh ... “a short while after” he said “to confirm the lie for me.” “Well alright” says Mickel “I’ll confirm the lie for ya.” So this young fella started, JACK was his name - the next morning and he went to the king’s palace an’ he rapped on the door. So the king c ... come out. An’ he said “Well mi boy” he said “what’s the news of you this morning?” “POOR news - your honour” says ... Jack. “Comin along this morning” he said “there was a bird flew over mi head” he said “an’ he dropped an egg on the middle o’ the street. An’ ’twas in everybody’s way” he said “we had to get crowbars an’ hand spikes an’ pickaxes to roll **her** an’ bursted **it** an’ drowned half the street.” “Clap that man in irons” says the king “he’s tellin me a lie.” So begob he was clapped in irons. He wasn’t long clapped in irons when along come Mickel. Mickel went up to the door an’ he - raps an’ the king come out. “Well mi man” he says “what’s ... your request this morning?” “I have poor news this morning - your honour” says - Mickel. “Comin along meself - this mornin, meself an’ a little boy” he said - “there was a bird flew over our heads on the middle o’ the street” he said “he dropped an egg. An’ ’twas in EVERYBODY’S way, we had to get crowbars an’ hand spikes an’ pickaxes to roll **un**” he says “an’ **it** drowned half the street.”

(Tale 040)

(22), on the other hand, very nicely supports one of the claims made about gender assignment in the respective literature and also in this thesis: The teller talks about “an armful” of wood shavings, which is first *un*, but then the speaker corrects himself and uses *it* when talking about setting the shavings on fire.

- (22) Jack goes in an’ he scabbled up a big armful o’ shavins (big) armful so much as could scabble up an’ he brought ’em (over) an’ he chucked ’em down in the middle o’ th’ house an’ he took a match an’ he sot **un** afire ... sot *it* afire.

(Tale 068)

While the *armful* seems to be a count reference for the speaker, justifying a masculine form, the material that is actually set afire is in the mass, allowing only neuter reference.

A form that has already figured prominently in (21) and also occurs in (23) deserves some comment. The contracted forms *’twas*, *’twould* occur frequently, not only in the Folktales corpus, but in all of the oral history corpora as well.<sup>6</sup> When

<sup>6</sup> The forms themselves seem to be remnants of earlier stages of English which have survived in the traditional dialect(s) of Southwest England and Newfoundland. Cf. e.g. Peitsara (2002).

analysing gender assignment, the form presents a problem. One gets the impression that the “need for contraction” is stronger than the factors that would call for a non-standard pronominal form. Thus, one encounters *'twas* where in traditional dialect *he was* is expected. The cases where the two patterns stand in conflict are rare, but they occur often enough to become curious about the exact relationship and interaction between the two “rules”. Unfortunately, such an investigation is beyond the scope of the present study, and the contracted forms were not included here.

- (23) An' he went down an' he got to a pond. Well a ... (an') *'twas* a big pond **he** was six mile long an' four mile wide. (Tale 023)

Table 15.8: “Gendered” pronouns referring to natural features (Folktales)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
apple	1		1
orange	6		1
cabbage	1		1
egg	2	1	1
tree	9		3
forest	1		1
firebrand	4		1
wood pile	1		1
pond	1		1
river	1		1
rock	9		2
moon	1		1
storm	3		1
settlement	3		1
total	43	1	6

Denotata referring to natural features are encountered frequently in many of the tales, which probably accounts for the overall high frequency of “gendered” pronouns for this class. Many tales involve contests of some sort (throwing of a stone, climbing of a tree, etc.) that involve a “natural” referent. Details of distribution can be found in Table 15.8, some “regular” examples in (24) to (26). Except for the one debatable instance of *her* in (21), feminine pronouns denoting natural features were not encountered.

- (24) “Alright” Jack said. Away they goes in the woods an' they cut down a ... a big spruce. Oh **he** was about two foot across the stump. An' **he** falled down an' he was goina cart **un** limbs an' all. (Tale 114)

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- (25) Jack come across a big river. An' Jack said "By jeez there's no way o' gettin across **he** ..." (Tale 025)
- (26) Well once upon a time \_ in olden times - there was a ... a little settlement uh ... well **he** was smaller than this, there ... there might have been only ... seven or eight families into **un**. (Tale 096)

### 15.1.3 Body parts

Although not very frequent, references to body parts are quite evenly distributed among the tales. One of the repeatedly told stories involves a cut-off finger that is used as a means of identifying the future spouse, accounting for the "gendered" pronouns. Illustrative material is provided in (27) to (28), Table 15.9 contains details about the individual denotata.

- (27) He stuck 'em on ... up till it come to her little finger see. An' he stuck **he** on crooked. (Tale 012)
- (28) But anyhow when she went to put on this big nightgown - here is a big mole - about a inch from her left breast. An uh ... he see **un**. (Tale 045)

Table 15.9: Masculine pronouns referring to body parts (Folktales)

referent	# of masculine examples	# of speakers
beard	1	1
bladder	4	2
body part	2	1
eye	1	1
finger	5	3
mole	1	1
skin	1	1
toe	1	1
total	16	8

### 15.1.4 Abstract referents

While "gendered" pronouns referring to man-made objects are very frequent in those varieties which employ them, they become less and less frequent the further one moves away from the concrete towards the abstract denotata. The traditional system of gender assignment as described in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature does not "allow" such uses at all. We already encountered some instances of speakers using masculine forms to refer to abstract denotata in the MUNFLA corpus. The figures from the Folktales corpus, however, are even more striking.



Part of the “ritual” of story-telling is the fieldworker’s question about the origin of the tale (i.e. when and from whom the teller first heard it). When relating the tale’s history, the teller usually refers to the tale repeatedly. The pronoun that is used in those contexts is generally masculine (*he* or *un*), resulting in some 90 masculine references to *story*. Some illustrative examples can be found in (29) to (34).

- (29) “Head Card Player o’ the World.” Uh? You [i.e., Int. B.] heard **un**. [recorder off]  
Now this uh ... I just as well tell **un**. I think I ... I think I can manage to tell **un**  
alright. (Tale 012)
- (30) [Int: Where did you get THAT one Mr. Snook?]  
Hey? That’s one I got from Uncle John Martin. Fella is dead now.  
[Int: Where was he? Here in...]  
He belonged Harbour Breton an’ I got **he**<sup>7</sup> up erm ... in Connaigre Bay. I only  
wants to hear **un** once an’ that settled - an’ I’ll get **un**. Now ... song I got to have  
**un** wrote off, I got to look **un** over **he** ’bout twenty-five times. (Tale 007)
- (31) [aside:] will I finish the story? Heh! [laughs] **He**’s a long one! (Tale 036)

In (30), the teller uses masculine pronouns to refer to *song* as well as to *story*. (32) contains neuter alongside masculine forms. The context makes it likely that the neuter (non-dialectal) forms are triggered by the fieldworker’s use of *it*. As soon as some distance to the neuter forms has been established, the teller switches (back) to his usual masculine forms.

- (32) [Int: How many times did you hear *it*?]  
Only heard **it** once.  
[Int: An’ you ... an’ you ’ve been tellin *it* ... ]  
Yes. Only hear ... only hear **it** once, I only want to hear a story once an’ I knowed  
**un** all then.  
[Int: Mm-hm. When did you first start to tell *it*?]  
When did I first start [to] tell **un**? Oh uh ... oh a long spell ago uh .. (I started) ...  
first start to tell **un**. Long spell ago, must be thirty-five year ago I say ... start to  
tell **un**. Now I’ve aknowed that story ever since I was about ... about forty year  
old. An’ I can still remember **un**. (Tale 038)
- (33) ... I was workin in the woods one time about \_twenty-five years ago an’ \_and ah \_  
we was over to Grand Lake \_ workin and \_this night this feller told this story. So  
I ... [laughs] I learned **her**. Huh! [laughs] **He** [i.e., it]<sup>8</sup> was hard to pick **it** up from  
him ’cause he talked so queer. (Tale 062)

(33) seems like a parody on (supposedly) systematic gender assignment – the teller uses pronouns of all three genders, without any obvious triggering factors. The neuter form is best interpreted as a resumptive pronoun, which might also explain its “standardness” – the “genderedness” only has to be expressed once, and as

<sup>7</sup> Reference could be to the man as well as to *story*.

<sup>8</sup> Thus in the published tales.

another masculine form is present, that suffices.<sup>9</sup> The feminine form, on the other hand, is highly dubious – the easiest way out of the dilemma would be to claim that we are once more faced with one of the (rare) r-coloured schwas in Newfoundland (which isn't *that* unlikely).<sup>10</sup>

- (34) [Teller's wife]: (Now be) he 's goina have **her** all fooled up.  
 [aside:] I got **un** mixed up. I ... yes I got **un** all fooled up now. I got **un** all fooled  
 up now. [recorder off] (Tale 005)

(34) is noteworthy as it supports one of the (by now) commonplaces of sociolinguistic research: Women tend to use a variety closer to the standard, while men will use the regional / vernacular variety (longer) (cf. e.g. Labov 1972a: 243). The teller's wife uses a feminine pronoun, that is the "spoken standard" form, to refer to the story, while her husband uses traditional (regional) masculine forms.

Another abstract denotatum found in the Folktales corpus is *bet*, around which one of the stories evolves. As already mentioned, one speaker refers to *song* with masculine pronouns. Yet another story involves mathematics: One of the protagonists is tested by having to solve a sum, which is frequently, but, as example (35) shows, not always masculine.

- (35) "Oh" she said "I've got a sum here" she said "the teacher gi' me to do" she said  
 "an' I can't do *it*." She said "I can't do that sum" she said "'tis too hard for me."  
 He said "Let me have a look at **un**."  
 "Hah!" she said "What's the good to show **un** to you" she said "Hard Head?" She  
 said "No good to show **un** to you" /she/ said "you knows YOU can't do **un**."  
 "Well" he said "there's no harm for me to lo[ok] ... SEE **un** I don't suppose."  
 (Tale 037)

In addition to these repeatedly occurring denotata, one speaker uses *un* to refer to a trip (36), and in (37) and (38), we encounter a by now familiar use of *she* – non-referential. In (37), *she* is used to refer to the event of the pile of chairs falling down. Although identical in wording, the interpretation of (38) is less obvious, but a non-referential interpretation or an unspecified reference seems most likely. Details for all abstract referents can be found in Table 15.10.

- (36) "Well" he said "Jack you're goina finish your trip?"  
 "Yes" Jack said. "I'm goina finish **un**." (Tale 010)
- (37) ... was in the kitchen preparin ... a meal for us. I was a devil-may-care an' mi  
 father didn't care what I do. I piled all the chairs one an top o' the other. Well they  
 were right to the loft. An' I said to the sailor \_ "Now \_ if you can't climb up one  
 side an' come an the other \_ you're no kind of a sailor. Well up goes one of 'em

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<sup>9</sup> Though justifiable economically, this explanation is insufficient insofar as the speaker of (30) uses two masculine pronouns, one of which is also used resumptively.

<sup>10</sup> Although researchers seem to agree that a form like the Southwestern r-coloured schwa never played any significant role in NFE, it is by no means impossible that it *did* exist, and that traces of it linger in some speaker's idiolects.

you know an' he come down alright \_an th' other side. Well HE done it we'll say, th' (other) one had to do it. He climbed up you know an' just as he got an the top part \_ away **she** goes \_ helter to skelter all over the ki ... all over the place.

(Tale 141)

- (38) "Now" he said "that's all you're gettin. An' now don't think you're goin to serve me like you served the ... like ... [laughing tone] Bill" he said "because you're not." Uh ... uh ... th' old man said "That's what you thinks." Huh! [laughs] An' he jumped up. An' when he did Jack jumped up too an' he picked up the hot wa[ter] ... the boil water, he dumped **un** down over his head an' away **she** goes. [laughs] Cap \_ hair \_ the whole lot down on the floor. [laughs] An' th' ol' man took off \_ an' Jack after un. Very good. (Tale 003)

Table 15.10: "Gendered" pronouns referring to abstract referents (Folktales)

referent	# of masc. ex.s	# of fem. ex.s	# of speakers
bet	2		1
story	90	2	8
song	3		1
sum	46		4
situation		2	2
total	141	4	10

### 15.1.5 Summary

The distribution of "gendered" pronouns among the different semantic categories in the Folktales generally does not differ drastically from those observed for the other corpora so far. While the category of tools and instruments held the highest proportion of non-standard forms in the Southwest corpora, masculine (or feminine) forms referring to those denotata are comparatively rare in both Newfoundland corpora. When excluding vehicles from the calculations, tools and instruments reach 24.7% in the SED fieldworker notebooks and 23% in the modern material of all gendered pronouns in the Southwest corpora, followed by non-standard forms referring to natural features (15.9% and 16.6% respectively).

In the Newfoundland corpora, on the other hand, the category of accessories contains most instances of non-standard pronouns (29.1% in the MUNFLA corpus, 24.9% in the Folktales data). The next four places on this frequency list are occupied by the same categories in both corpora, with tools ranking third, natural features fourth, and buildings and containers ranking second and fifth respectively.<sup>11</sup>

The close parallels between the corpora from the same area are surprising and rather unexpected in their clarity. The different "priorities" are very likely based on the contrasts in the major occupations of the informants. While most of the Southwest speakers are farmers, the Newfoundlanders are fishermen.

<sup>11</sup> The second place of buildings in the MUNFLA material is probably caused by the house mover's frequent reference to houses, which slightly skews the picture.

In one domain, however, the Folktales corpus deviates greatly from the other corpora: With over 140 examples, abstract denotata constitute more than a quarter of all non-standard pronominal references in the corpus (145 out of 527, i.e. 27.5%). Although it is possible that the Folktales simply contain more instances of anaphoric references to abstract nouns, another explanation is more likely. Story-telling is a very traditional genre, which includes the use of certain formulaic expressions as well as the use of a very traditional (conservative) language variety. Even though the use of masculine forms referring to abstract nouns is not really a traditional feature, the use of “gendered” pronouns as such certainly should be classified so. How and why this extension (from only count nouns to abstract nouns) occurred is unclear.

## 15.2 The re-telling of tales – an example of real-time linguistic change?

In addition to the collecting itself, the collectors of the Folktales were interested in seeing how far stories (or rather their telling) would change over time. For that purpose, a number of the tellers were re-visited and asked to tell certain stories again. One teller was recorded in 1966 and 1971, another one in 1966 and 1975.

*Table 15.11: Side-by-side versions of a re-told story*

<p>And _ he said uh ... Hard Head he said “What’s wrong?” “Oh” she said “I’ve got a sum here” she said “the teacher gi’ me to do” she said “an’ I can’t do it.” She said “I can’t do that sum” she said “’tis too hard for me.”</p> <p>He said “Let me have a look at un.” “Hah!” she said “What’s the good to show un to you” she said “Hard Head?” She said “No good to show un to you” /she/ said “you knows YOU can’t do un.”</p> <p>“Well” he said “there’s no harm for me to lo[ok] ... SEE un I don’t suppose.” “Oh no” she said “I can show un to ya” (she) said “but that’s no good” she said “for YOU to look at un.”</p> <p>Tale 037 (1966)</p>	<p>An’ he said - “What’s wrong?” “Oh” she said “I got a sum” she said “the teacher gi’ me” she said “to do” she said - “an’ I can’t do it” she said “I’ll never get un done.”</p> <p>An’ uh ... now the king ... they ... they ... they named un over, Hard Head see. An’ uh ... she said “’Tis no (real) g ... good to give un to you” she said “Hard Head.” She said “You knows” she said “you ... you don’t know.”</p> <p>“Oh well” he said “’tis no harm” he said “for me to have a look at un I don’t suppose.” An’ she said “Oh no” she said “you can look at un” she said “but you knows YOU can’t do it” she said “when you don’t know a A from the B.”</p> <p>Tale 038 (1971)</p>
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During a time span of five and nine years, respectively, it would have been possible for the pronominal system of the tellers to have undergone some changes. However, a detailed comparison of three re-told tales shows first and foremost that the tales as a genre are probably closer to poems than to simple stories. They seem to be memorized in a very fixed framework, and it is surprising how little they actually vary.

Table 15.11 contains a brief passage from one of the re-told tales side by side with its second version. Although not word-for-word repetitions, the phrasing is very similar indeed. The use of “gendered” pronouns in three stories with two versions each was compared; the results are summarized in Table 15.12.

Table 15.12: “Gendered” pronouns in three re-told stories

Tale #	pronominal forms									
012 (1966)	no pro	<i>he</i>	no pro	<i>An’ he stuck he [finger] on crooked.</i>			<i>un</i>	no pro		
013 (1975)	<i>he</i>	no pro	<i>un</i>	<i>An’ he stuck he [finger] on crooked.</i>			no pro	<i>un</i>		
023 (1966)	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	no pro	<i>it</i>	no pro	no pro				
024 (1975)	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>it</i>	<i>it</i>				
037 (1966)	<i>it</i>	no pro	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>
038 (1971)	<i>it</i>	<i>un</i>	no pro	no pro	<i>un</i>	no pro	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>it</i>	<i>un</i>
037 (c’ed)	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>			
038 (c’ed)	no pro	no pro	<i>he</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>it</i>	no pro			

The first thing we have to note is that there is not that much to say – the differences between the texts are minimal. Although we can legitimately only compare instances of actually present pronouns with each other, we will also use those instances where a pronominal form was recorded in only one of the tellings (“no pro” in the second telling), as the overlaps would be insufficient otherwise.

When re-telling the tale, the teller of Tale 013 uses even more masculine pronouns than in the original version (012). However, these differences are not significant. The ratio of masculine to neuter forms is exactly the same for Tales 023 and 024 (2 : 1 and 4 : 2) – although the speaker actually uses more pronouns in the second version.

The only really interesting comparison is that between two versions of the tale about “Hard Head”. The teller uses one neuter and fifteen masculine forms in his first telling, and no pronoun in one instance where he later used a masculine form in his second version. That version contains three neuter and only eight masculine forms, while no pronoun is used in six slots which were all masculine in the first version. The ratio between masculine and neuter forms is 15 : 1 in the first version, but only 8 : 3 (2.6 : 1) in the second version. It is by no means impossible that the

teller's idiolect has been influenced by other varieties of English, which led to a reduction of the traditional masculine forms.

However, it is much more likely that the observed variation is accidental rather than systematic. Both speakers were already in their sixties when first recorded, and it would contradict most findings from sociolinguistic studies to assume a change in their idiolect – towards the standard at that – at such a late age. In addition, given the fixed framework and structure of story-telling, it is to be expected that the traditional tales will contain traces of features from traditional NFE long after those have died out in everyday speech. Traditional story-telling certainly has a preserving effect on the variety, and it will be interesting to see how far traditional NFE will become an archaic variety that is only “alive” in tales, in many ways similar to the status that EModE has assumed through Shakespeare's plays. For the sake of the traditional variety, we can only hope that the story-telling tradition will “live long and prosper”.

## Chapter 16

# Overall summary

or: *There's never two people speaks the same ...*  
(16 He, Lyonshall, book VI)

The analysis of gender assignment in a number of different varieties of (present-day) English proved to be enlightening beyond the expected aspects of the investigated features. The results from these analyses can be divided into different categories, depending on the type of variety, the region, and/or the genre being analysed – or combinations of these factors.

The results we obtained from our analyses of gender assignment primarily concern the following varieties of English:

- traditional varieties of Southwest England
- traditional varieties of “West Country Newfoundland” (= those parts of Newfoundland that were primarily settled by people of West Country origin and that were only marginally influenced by other varieties of English or other languages)
- “spoken standard English” (= modern varieties of English in countries with English as a first language and only minimal input from other languages; primarily Great Britain, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand)

As this thesis only dealt with varieties of spoken English, not much will be said about Standard English, a variety that, judging from other studies and the analyses presented here, presently only exists (or rather: manages to survive) in writing. As far as the practise of assigning gender in StE is concerned, the myths still presented in grammars should be relativized from what we know about actual speech behaviour. What follows is a brief list of “dos and don'ts” in gender assignment, where the “don'ts” generally result from deduction from the “dos”.

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Dos (according to grammars)	Don'ts ( <i>ibid.</i> )
Use <i>he</i> and <i>she</i> when referring to human beings; <i>it</i> may only be used when the sex of a very young child is unclear	Don't use <i>he</i> and <i>she</i> to refer to animals in general
Use <i>it</i> when referring to animals; <i>he</i> and <i>she</i> may be used to refer to pets or animals the speaker has a close relationship with	
Refer to all things with <i>it</i>	Don't use <i>he</i> or <i>she</i> to refer to an inanimate object
Use <i>it</i> to refer to abstract denotata	Don't use <i>he</i> or <i>she</i> for purposes of "emotional emphasis"

Based on the evidence presented in the preceding chapters, it will be obvious to the reader that speakers either obey these rules only to a certain extent or not at all. Rather than the clear-cut division of tasks that StE postulates for the gendered personal pronoun forms, different varieties use different cut-off points along a continuum that ranges from (concrete) count nouns via mass nouns to abstract ideas and situations. Figure 16.1 is an attempt at illustrating these cut-off points for the different varieties of English that were analysed in this thesis. Letters only stand for the principal availability of the gender for that category in the variety in question, not for overall frequencies of occurrence.

	humans	animals	count nouns (concrete)	mass nouns	abstract nouns
StE	m	f	N	N	N
spoken standard	m	f	N	N	N
trad. West Country	m	f	N	N	N
mod. West Country	m	f	N	N	N
trad. West C. NF	m	f	N	N	N
modern West C. NF	m	f	N	N	N

m = masculine forms  
 f = feminine forms  
 N = neuter forms

Figure 16.1: Gender assignment in varieties of English (based on data from this thesis)

Certain difficulties emerge when it comes to categorizing the referent types. The major problem is posed by the interaction of the continua *count – mass* and *concrete – abstract*. Count nouns can be both concrete and abstract, resulting in a



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three-dimensional rather than two-dimensional model. However, for reasons of practicality and based on the observations made in the corpora, it was decided to reduce these categories to those which actually play a role in gender assignment. Thus, when count nouns are mentioned below, only concrete count nouns are meant, while abstract nouns are generally abstract count nouns.

Although necessarily very simplified, the most important contrasts between the varieties are nicely illustrated in Figure 16.1. Let me comment on the details and background assumptions implied:

**Standard English** (as presented in grammars)

humans	masculine or feminine (according to sex)
animals	supposedly neuter, but also masculine and feminine (not always according to sex)
count nouns	boats, countries, etc. can also be feminine (→ metaphorical gender)
mass nouns	neuter; if anything else, then feminine
abstract nouns	neuter; regionally also feminine (→ AusE)

**Spoken Standard** (based on studies presented in this thesis)

humans	masculine or feminine (according to sex)
animals	generally not neuter, but masculine and feminine (not always according to sex)
count nouns	can be masculine and feminine, although feminine forms seem to be more frequent ( <i>cf.</i> studies by Svartengren, Mathiot/Roberts and Pawley)
mass nouns	can be feminine, masculine and neuter, but are predominantly neuter
abstract nouns	although generally neuter, often feminine in special constructions (→ non-referential <i>she</i> etc.)

**Traditional West Country dialects (19<sup>th</sup> century)**

humans	masculine or feminine (according to sex)
animals	generally masculine (often even when female → cows in SED)
count nouns	masculine
mass nouns	neuter
abstract nouns	

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<b>Modern West Country dialects (oral history)</b>	generally a mixture of the traditional West Country and the Spoken Standard system
humans	masculine or feminine (according to sex)
animals	generally masculine, but also feminine and occasionally neuter
count nouns	still predominantly masculine, but also neuter and occasionally feminine
mass nouns	diffusion of traditional system into mass nouns → can be, though rarely, masculine (and feminine → Spoken Standard) as well as neuter
abstract nouns	see mass nouns, although to an even lesser extent
<b>Traditional West Country Newfoundland dialect (Folktales)</b>	in general, the system is almost identical to that of the traditional West Country; all cut-off points diffuse to the right
humans	masculine or feminine (according to sex)
animals	generally masculine, but also feminine and occasionally neuter
count nouns	can also be feminine (rare) in addition to masculine and neuter
mass nouns	can also be masculine (in addition to neuter)
abstract nouns	can also be masculine (probably also by extension from concrete (count) nouns)
<b>modern West Country Newfoundland dialect (oral history)</b>	generally close to traditional Newfoundland dialect, with neuter forms diffusing left
humans	masculine or feminine (according to sex)
animals	generally masculine, but also feminine and occasionally neuter
count nouns	masculine and neuter, but also feminine
mass nouns	generally neuter, but also masculine and
abstract nouns	occasionally feminine

In light of the findings presented here and in the preceding chapters, it seems appropriate to return to the term “gender diffusion”, which was used as a label for what was later called “gendered” pronouns, “non-standard pronominal forms”, etc.

The comparisons of the modern data with the more traditional material revealed certain tendencies both in Southwest England and Newfoundland: Yes, the traditional system is slowly dying out, witnessed by fewer and fewer masculine forms in those domains which at one time were their exclusive territory. The formerly obligatory system has developed into an optional system. But on the other

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hand it seems as if gendered pronouns spread to domains they were formerly not used in (→ abstract referents, particularly in the Folktales corpus). Although such uses will probably not be continued, the current stage seems to be a mixture of one, two or all three of the following systems:

1. traditional West Country system

- masculine forms for all count nouns;
- mass and abstract nouns = neuter;
- females (humans, rarely also animals) = feminine

2. Spoken (Standard) system

- feminine forms for everything that deserves closer attention, no matter what its (semantic/biological) status;
- animals generally masculine; in addition,
- non-referential *she* to refer to situations;
- masculine forms in reference to inanimate objects are rare to non-existent

3. Standard English – although not really used by anyone, it serves as the reference frame people have in mind; “gendered” references to nouns also acceptable in StE (e.g. feminine forms for boats, guns, cars) are more easily/readily accepted in spoken language than those non-standard pronouns that are “out” according to prescriptivists’ views.

System (1) is the most endangered one, as it is under pressure from both system (2) and (3). The co-existence of both feminine and masculine forms denoting the same (inanimate) referent(s) leads to mixed – diffused – systems. The Spoken Standard and the StE system slowly invade the lects of those speakers who only would have known their regional dialect some decades ago, but who now cannot help but be influenced by the supraregional standard(s).

Those features found in the non-regional (weaker) but not in the regional (stronger) system may also lead to the extension of the stronger forms to cover all areas of use (e.g. employing masculine forms to refer to abstract referents). Alternatively, speakers may simply employ forms from different systems to cover the whole semantic spectrum (e.g. masculine forms for count nouns, feminine forms for non-referential “situation-type” uses).

Not very surprisingly, the Spoken Standard system in Southwest England seems much closer to StE than the English spoken in Newfoundland. As a result, West Country speakers are losing their traditional system of gender assignment more rapidly than their Newfoundland counterparts. The West Country system is being substituted by the StE one (this can be deduced from the differences between the SED material and the modern West Country oral history data), without the intermediate “Spoken Standard” step that is obviously employed in Canada, which

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leads to an overall slower demise of the traditional system there (and a higher frequency of “gendered” pronouns).

The one feature that has accompanied us throughout this study is that native speakers of English are obviously not very happy about the ubiquitous status that *it* has assumed in their mother tongue. Although we can only make educated guesses about the exact reasons behind the individual phenomena, all speakers choose to employ personal pronouns other than “neuter”, non-distinct, semantically empty *it* if they want to add “feeling” to an utterance, no matter if the emotion to be conveyed is positive or negative. The “natural gender system” of StE thus seems to be on its way to becoming a “pragmatic gender system” in the Spoken Standard, where forms marked for gender are used according to the different requirements, emotionality and general circumstances of the situation.

In certain domains of use, the gender chosen by speakers of modern “Spoken Standard” varieties depends on extralinguistic factors such as the sex of the speaker (→ particularly cars, etc.), professional background (→ “gendered” pronouns = non-professional), emotional attitude (generally, neuter forms = disinterest, negative attitude), etc. The traditional systems, on the other hand, are based on intralinguistic gender assignment rules (→ semantic domains of nouns). As both systems can be employed at the same time, a diffusion is not only likely, but expected. As a result of the preference of traditional dialects for masculine and that of modern dialects for feminine forms, the mixture of systems looks like free variation to an outsider.

The factors that determine pronoun choice in modern dialects of Southwest England and Newfoundland, and probably in native varieties of English worldwide, are manifold and complex.<sup>1</sup> Although only some questions concerning these factors could be addressed in a thesis of this type, it is hoped that some clarity has been achieved in the areas that were addressed. Let me conclude with two quotes from the SED fieldworker notebooks – the first speaker’s [*en*] refers to an agricultural tool, and even cows are masculine for the second speaker.

nɛvə: 'jə:d ən kɔ:tɪd 'nɔ:lɪ 'ɛɪs      never heard it called anything else  
(36 Co 2, book I)

ə 'kæv də 'gi: nɔ: 'mɪlk wi: 'kɔ:l i: 'bɑ:ɾən  
a cow that gives no milk – we call he barren      (36 Co 6, book III)

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the nature of the data chosen for the analysis, questions of a sociological nature such as influences of age, sex, education, urban vs. rural, etc. could not be addressed at all. Moreover, sophisticated statistical analyses are often not possible due to small sample size. To remedy this situation, future studies would have to be based on material collected to fit these requirements. As basically no other studies on the phenomenon were available at the time of writing, the present author chose to tackle the basic issues first. A follow-up study could investigate those areas that turned out to be a promising field for future work.

## **Part V**

# **Appendices and Bibliography**



## Appendix A

### (Additional) corpus material

- The British National Corpus (BNC)
- The Freiburg English Dialect Corpus (FRED)
- The Helsinki English Dialect Corpus (HDC)
- Electronic editions (Gutenberg) of the following of Thomas Hardy's novels:
  - *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*
  - *Return of the Native*
  - *A Pair of Blue Eyes*
- Parts of (\*) and complete transcripts of MUNFLA Tapes by the following collectors<sup>1</sup>:
  - Burton (1982)
  - Churchill *et al.* (1978)
  - Du Pree (1969)
  - Feener (1983)
  - Fudge (1969)
  - Hynes (1977)
  - Ivany (1974?)\*
  - Lake (1977)
  - Lehr (1977?)
  - Mifflin (1972)\*
  - Powell (1976)

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<sup>1</sup> The relevant partial passages were noted down *in situ* at the archive. Details can be found under the respective collector's name in the Bibliography.

- Quinton (1972)\*
- Ryan (1985)
- Ryan (1978)
- Simms (1975)
- Squires (1978)
- Welsh (1971)\*
- Widdowson (1963)\*
- Wiseman (1976)
- Wood (1971)
- Yother (1971)



## Appendix B

# Some examples of dialect representation (from dialect literature and fiction)

### B.1 Cornwall

“– Yer brown-ti-tes troublan’ av tha laast ebemen’, Mister Bill, wos aw, ’en?”

“Noa Thoph’lus, aw noa, a-ha–h’m; –’t laist not fust gwain’ off, ’e wadn’.”

“Thoft I ’eard tha caughan’ braa’ ’n’ loosty when I went indooars, thass oall.”

“Iss. ’Mse, I wor a bit troobled wed’n fer a braa spur. Aur oul’ chimley gote kind o’ chuck’d like – back kitchan wan.”

“Aw! – aow’s that, ’en, wender? – Aurs dedn’t an’ aurs ’n’ yours d’ oallus b’long t’ smooder t’gethar! – Wdan’t no wes’ly wind nuther, laas’ night – wos aw?”

“Noa – aw noa, nar aw warn’t, Thoph’lus.”

“Strange, Mister Bill! – Caan’t be fer want av clanen’; fer aw wadn’ but laas’ week you sot fir to ’n – was aw?”

(Newall, Thomas [1935] “A Braa’ Quate Boay”; lines 155-169;  
reprinted in Hancock 1994: 107-114)

## B.2 Devon

Thomasin      Lock! Wilmot, vor why vor ded'st roily zo upon ma up to Chal-lacomb Rowl? — Ees dedent thenk tha had'st a be' zich a Labb o' tha Tongue. — What a Vengance! wart betwatled, or wart tha baggaged; — or had'st tha took a Shord, or a paddled?

Wilmot          I roily upon tha, ya gurt, thonging, banging, muxy Drwbreech? — Non, 'twas thee roil'st upon me up to Daraty Vogwill's Up-zitting, whan tha vung'st to (and be hang'd to tha!) to Rabbin. — 'Shou'd zem tha wart zeck arter Me-at and Me-al. — And zo tha merst, by ort es know, wey guttering; as gutter tha wutt whan tha com'st to good Tackling. — But zome zed “Shoor and shoor that ded'st bet make wise, to zee nif tha young Josy Heaff-field wou'd come to zlack thy Boddize, and whare a wou'd be O vore no.” — Bet 'twas thy old Disyease, Chun.

(“An Exmoor Scolding” [ca. 1746], lines 1-14, from Elworthy's 1879 ed.)

“Yü'll 'a' both forrels off thickee büke ef yü mal'th en about so.”

(Hewett 1892<sup>2</sup>: 56)

“Missis, I've abin awver tü Mr. Broom's, an' 'ad out my tüthe, an' 'e hagged tü 'n zo I thort 'e'd abroked my jaw.”

(Hewett 1892<sup>2</sup>: 86)

## B.3 Dorset

*Vellèn o' the Tree*

William Barnes

Aye, the girt elem tree out in little hwome groun'  
Wer a-stannèn this mornèn, an' now's a-cut down.  
Aye, the girt elem tree, so big roun' an' so high,  
Where the mowers did goo to their drink, an' did lie  
In the sheäde ov his head, when the zun at his heighth  
Had a-drove em vrom mowèn, wi' het an' wi' drith,  
Where the häy-meäkers put all their picks an' their reäkes,  
An' did quot down to snabble their cheese an' their ceäkes,  
An' did vill vrom their flaggons their cups wi' their eäle,  
An' did meäke their zelves merry wi' joke an' wi' teäle.  
Ees, we took up a rwope an' we tied en all round  
At the top o'n, wi' woone end a-hangèn to ground,  
An' we cut, near the ground, his girt stem a'most drough,  
An' we bent the wold head o'n wi' woone tug or two;  
An' he swäy'd all his limbs, an' he nodded his head,  
Till he vell away down like a pillar o' lead:

An' as we did run vrom en, there, clwose at our backs,  
 Oh! his boughs come to groun' wi' sich whizzes an' cracks;  
 An' his top wer so lofty that, now he is down,  
 The stem o'n do reach a'most over the groun'.  
 Zoo the girt elem tree out in little hwome groun'  
 Wer a-stannèn this mornèn, an' now's a-cut down. (1844)

## B.4 Gloucestershire

Now tha observetion as I got to meek about that ther is as this here, when a pet dog  
 or amost any other sort a pet a dun anything a roguery he knows on it un'll cut  
 away from e but a pig on't — he'll stand un grunt un snort un squeak at e like  
 a bear un bully e out on't.

But a got sa mischievious at last as I coodn't kip un no longer; a did offend so many  
 a our customers, un so I sowld un to a man at SanTERS fur amost nothin at all jest  
 ta get rid on in — but I had ard work ta get the missis to part with un thauw.

Pon me life, tha partin artwixt thay 2 was quite cuttin, un a got out a is sty un cum  
 un see us once or twice ater that. I dwont know what he fed un on ater a left  
 we but a'd a got sa chaice then as a'd ardlly yet anything but bred un butter. The  
 last I yeared the poor creTUR was as a'd died a very oertty pig a about a fourteen  
 score.

Now thens what I considers very interesting hannygotes of a dimestic pig but them  
 ther ducks was 2 sech ducks as you don't see evry de, barring as 1 on um was a  
 dreek.

(Robertson 1890: 208f.)

## B.5 Somerset

ɛ'u t)eez in)s :djæn aa)n ɛgAA'ət noo de'utinz láik.  
 How it is even as John has not got no doubtings like.

wɛl, faarmɐr :ɛrtjɛt, ái tɛ)le aat t)eez.  
 Well<sup>1</sup>, farmer Richard I tell thee what it is.

jyɪ ɛn ii, búɛdh o)i, mɪd laafi be'ut dhiɛzh)jɪr stóɔɐr ɐ máin.  
 You and he, both of ye, may laughy about this here story of mine.

yy dɐ kíɐr vɛr that? t)ɛd)'n no ɔdz nɛdhɐr wan wee nɛr t)ɛdhɐr.  
 Who does care for that? It is not no odds neither one way nor that other.

(Ellis 1889: 148, based on Elworthy's dictation)

<sup>1</sup> The vowel is represented as a small capital “e” in Ellis' original system that is turned 180 degrees, which I couldn't reproduce.

## B.6 Wiltshire

It's oondervul to me how thengs do move about whenever a body's got a drap o' zummut in's yead. Last harrest, a'ter zupper, at th' house yander, I walked whoam by myzelf, and zeed the moon and the zeven stars dancin' away like vengeance. Then they girt elmen trees in the close was a dancin' away like Bill Iles and his mates at a morris. 'My zarvice to 'e,' zays I; 'I haups you won't tread on my twoes;' zo I went drough a sheard in th' hedge, instead o' goin' drough th' geat. Well, when I got whoam, I managed to vind the kay-hole o' th' doower – but 'twas a lang time afore I could get un to bide still enough, - and got up stayers. Massy upon us! the leetle table (I zeed un very plain by the light o' th' moon) was runnin' round th' room like mad, and there was th' two owld chayers runnin' a'ter he, and by and by, round comes the bed a'ter they two. 'Ha! ha!' zays I, 'that's very vine; but how be I to lay down while you cuts zich capers?' Well, the bed comed round dree times, and the vowerth time I drowed myzelf flump atop ov un; but in th' marnin' I vound myzelf laying on the vloor, wi' ael me duds on! I never could make out this!

(Dartnell and Goddard 1893: 206)

## Appendix C

### SED location details

county name	county code	SED	no. of locations	region
Northumberland	1	Nb	9	North
Cumbria	2	Cu	6	North
Durham	3	Du	6	North
Weare	4	We	4	North
Lancashire	5	La	14	North
Yorkshire	6	Y	34	North
Isle of Man	6a	Man	2	North
Cheshire	7	Ch	6	West Midlands
Derbyshire	8	Db	7	West Midlands
Nottinghamshire	9	Nt	4	East Midlands <sup>1</sup>
Lincolnshire	10	L	15	East Midlands
Shropshire	11	Sa	11	West Midlands
Staffordshire	12	St	11	West Midlands
Leicestershire	13	Lei	10	East Midlands
Rutland	14	R	2	East Midlands
Herefordshire	15	He	7 <sup>2</sup>	West Midlands
Worcestershire	16	Wo	7	West Midlands
Warwickshire	17	Wa	7	West Midlands
Northamptonshire	18	Nth	5	East Midlands
Humberside	19	Hu	2	East Midlands
Cambridgeshire	20	C	2	East Midlands
Norfolk	21	Nf	13	East Midlands
Suffolk	22	Sf	5	East Midlands
Monmouthshire	23	Mon	7 <sup>3</sup>	West Midlands
Gloucestershire	24	Gl	7	West Midlands
Oxfordshire	25	O	6	West Midlands

<sup>1</sup> “East Midlands” stands, for the sake of brevity, for “East Midlands and East Anglia”.

<sup>2</sup> There are only six localities listed in the Introduction, but sometimes the Basic Material actually has data for seven!

<sup>3</sup> Again, there are only six localities listed in the Introduction, but occasionally, seven responses are recorded in the Basic Material.

county name	county code SED		no. of locations	region
Buckinghamshire	26	Bk	6	East Midlands
Bedfordshire	27	Beds	3	East Midlands
Hertfordshire	28	Herts	3	East Midlands
Essex	29	Ess	15	East Midlands
Middlesex and London	30	Mx & London	2	no region
Somerset	31	So	13	South
Wiltshire	32	W	9	South
Berkshire	33	Berks	5	South
Surrey	34	Sr	5	South
Kent	35	K	7	South
Cornwall	36	Co	7	South
Devon	37	D	11	South
Dorset	38	Do	5	South
Hampshire	39	Ha	7	South
Sussex	40	Sx	6	South

*Table C.1: SED locations*

## Appendix D

### Text codes and abbreviations

#### D.1 The Southwest of England

- |                               |  |                         |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 1.) Cornwall                  | a) Institute for Cornish Studies                 | ICS + speaker initials  |
|                               | b) Cornish Audio Visual Archive                  | CAVA + speaker initials |
| 2.) Devon                     | Totnes Community Archive                         | TCA + speaker initials  |
| 3.) Somerset                  | a) Somerset Rural Life Museum Oral Archive       | SRLM + text number      |
|                               | b) private recordings of Ann Heeley              | AH + speaker initials   |
| 4.) Wiltshire                 | a) Wiltshire Folklore Society Recordings         | WFLS + speaker initials |
|                               | b) Trowbridge Oral Archive                       | TRWBM + text number     |
| 5.) Oxfordshire               | Centre for Oxfordshire Studies                   | OT + text number        |
| 6.) SED fieldworker notebooks | county number + county letter-code + book number |                         |

#### D.2 Newfoundland

- |  |             |
|--|-------------|
| 1.) Texts from the <i>Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive</i> (MUNFLA) | text ID     |
| 2.) Texts from the <i>Folktales of Newfoundland</i> (Halpert/Widdowson 1996)                         | text number |





## Appendix E

# SED Basic Material from the Southern Counties

*Table E.1: Non-standard pronoun forms, Southern Counties (1)*

Question I.7.1 “If you want to know how heavy a thing is, what do you do?” –

**To weigh it.**

question	county	locality	response	question	county	locality	response
I.7.1	So	1	it, ɪ, ʌn, ɪ	I.7.1	Do	1	ən
		5	ən			2	ən
		13	ɪ			3	ən
	W	2	ən			4	ən
		3	ən			5	ən
		5	ɪ			Ha	1
		6	ən		2		ən
	7	it, ɪ	3		ən		
	9	ɪ	4		ɪ		
	5	ɪm	5		ɪ		
	Berks Co	1	ən		6	ən	
		2	ən		D	1	ɪ
		3	ən			2	ɪ
4		ɪ	3	ən			
5		ɪ	4	ɪ			
6		n	5	ən			
7		ən	6	ən			
			7	ən			
			8	ən			
			9	ən			
			10	ən			
			11	ən			

Table E.2: Non-standard pronoun forms, Southern Counties (2)

Question I.11.6 “How do you empty a cart the quickest way?” – **To tip.**

question	county	locality	response	question	county	locality	response				
I.11.6	So	1	ɪ	I.11.6	W	1	ɪ				
		2	ɪ			3	əɪ				
		3	ɪ			4	əɪ				
		5	ɪ			5	ɪ				
		6	ɪ			7	ɪ				
		7	ɪ			8	ɪ				
		8	ɪ			9	ɪ				
		10	ɪ								
		11	ɪ								
		13	əɪ*								
			Berks			1	ɪɪ				
			Co			1	ɪ		Do	1	ɪ
						2	ɪ	2		əɪ	
	3	ɪ		3	ɪ						
	4	ɪ		4	ɪ						
	5	ɪ		5	ɪ						
	6	ɪ									
	7	ɪ									
	D	1	ɪ								
		2	ɪ								
		3	ɪ								
		4	ɪ								
		5	ɪ								
		6	ɪ								
		7	ɪ								
		8	ɪ								
		9	ɪ								
		10	ɪ								
		11	ɪ								
	Ha	1	əɪ								
		2	ɪ								
		3	ɪ								
		4	əɪ								
		6	ɪ								
	Sx	2	ɪ								
		3	əʔɪ								

\*Although this and the following identical forms could also be plural forms, such an interpretation is not very likely given the general context of the question.

Table E.3: Non-standard pronoun forms, Southern Counties (3)

Question VIII.7.6 “A dog buries a bone because he wants to . . .” – **hide it.**

question	county	locality	response
VIII.7.6	So	3	ŋ
		8	ŋ
		13	ŋ
	W	5	ŋ
		8	ŋ
	Co	2	ŋ
		3	ŋ
		4	ŋ
		5	ŋ
		6	ŋ
		7	ŋ
		D	1
	2		ŋ
	4		ŋ
	5		ŋ
	6		ŋ
	10		ən
	11		ən
			ən
	Do	1	ŋ
		2	ŋ
		3	ŋ
		4	ŋ
		5	ŋ
	Ha	1	ən
		2	ŋ
		3	ŋ
5		ŋ	
6		ən	

Table E.4: Non-standard pronoun forms, Southern Counties (4)

Questions IX.2.6 and IX.2.8 both referring to *door*: expected responses:  
**in front of it**                      and                      **shut it**

question	county	locality	response	question	county	locality	response	
IX.2.6	So	5	ən	IX.2.8	So	3	ŋ	
		7	i:			4	ŋ	
		8	n			6	ŋ	
		10	ən			8	ŋ	
		11	ŋ			9	ŋ	
	W	8	ən			10	ŋ	
		9	ən			11	ŋ	
	Co	5	ən			13	ŋ	
						W	4	ŋ
							5	ŋ
							6	ŋ
							8	ŋ
	D	2	n			9	ŋ	
					Berks	2	ŋ	
						Co	1	ŋ
2				ŋ				
3				ŋ				
4	ŋ							
Do	2	ən	5	ŋ				
			D	1	ŋ			
				2	ŋ			
				3	ŋ			
				4	ən			
Ha	2	m	5	ŋ				
			Do	6	ŋ			
				7	ŋ			
Ha	3	n	8	ŋ				
			Do	10	ən			
				11	ŋ			
Ha	6	ən	Do	1	ŋ			
				2	ŋ			
			Ha	1	n	2	ŋ	
Do	3	ŋ						
	Ha	2	n	4	ŋ			
Do				1	ŋ			
	Ha	3	n	2	ŋ			
Do				3	ŋ			
	Ha	6	ən	4	ŋ			
Do				4	ŋ			

Table E.5: Non-standard pronoun forms, Southern Counties (5)

Question IX.3.1 “If there’s a hole in the pocket where you keep your knife, you’re sure to . . .” – **Lose** it.

question	county	locality	response	
IX.3.1	So	4	ən	
		5	it; ɪ (“older”) (!!)	
		6	ɪ	
		7	ɪ	
		8	ɪ	
		11	ɪ	
		13	ɪ	
		W	4	ɪ
			5	ɪ
			6	ɪ
	Berks Co	2	ɪ	
		1	ɪ	
	D	2	ɪ	
		3	ɪ	
		4	ɪ	
		6	ɪ	
		7	ɪ	
		8	ən	
		10	ən	
		Do	2	ɪ
3			ən	
Ha		1	ən	
	2	ɪ		
	3	ɪ		
	5	ən		

Table E.6: Non-standard pronoun forms, Southern Counties (6)

Question IX.8.2; expected response: **Give it me!** (*it* referring to a ball)

question	county	locality	response	
IX.8.2	So	5	ən	
		6	ən	
		7	it, ən	
		8	ən	
		10	ɱ	
		13	ən	
		W	3	ɱ
			4	't, n
			5	n
			7	ɱ
			8	ən
			9	ən
		Co	1	ɱ
	2		ɱ	
	3		ɱ	
	4		ɱ	
	5		ɱ	
	6		ɱ	
	7		ɱ	
	D	1	ən	
		2	ɱ	
		3	əm*	
		4	ən	
		6	ɱ	
		7	ɱ	
		8	n	
9		ɱ		
11		əm		
Do		1	n	
		2	it, n	
	3	ɱ		
Ha	1	ɱ		
	2	n		
	3	ən		
	5	n		
	6	ən		

\*Once more, this could also be a plural form, but this is unlikely in the context of the given question.

Table E.7: Non-standard pronominal forms in questions I.11.2 (**To tip**; ref. = *cart*), IX.4.4 (**(I) shan't** want it; ref. = *spade*) and IX.9.3 (**to whom** I shall give it; ref. = “*something*”)

question	county	locality	response
I.11.2	So	8	trug en [ɪ] up
		9	pick up a stone and trig en [ən] up
	Co	5	trig en [əɪ] up
		7	trig en [ɪ] up wi' bit stone
	D	7	go an' scotch en [ən] up wi' a stone
		8	put a stone be'ind en [ən]
		9	you'd 'ave put a stone be'ind en [ən]
		11	trig en [ɪ] up
	Do	1	trig er [əːɾ] up (“viz. the wheel”)*
		2	un'atch en [ən] an' put en [ɪ] in under
		3	trig en [əɪ] up wi' a stone
		5	scotch en [ən] up wi' a stone; trig en [ɪ] up
	Ha	3	scotch en [ən] up wi' a roller
IX.4.4	So	6	ɪ
		8	ən
	W	4	on m
		5	ɪ
	Berks	2	on ɪ
	Co	7	ɪ
	D	5	ɪ
		6	ɪ
		7	ən
		9	ən
	Do	1	ən
		2	i:
		3	ən
		4	ən
5		ən	
Ha	2	on [ɪn]	
	3	ən	
IX.9.3	Co	1	ən
		2	ɪ
		6	ɪ
	D	6	n
		7	ən
8	n		

\* Note that this is probably an r-coloured schwa rather than a feminine form; see section 4.4.1.





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## Abbreviations

StE	Standard English
OE	Old English
ME	Middle English
EModE	Early Modern English
PrDE	Present-Day English
AusE	Australian English
TVE	Tasmanian Vernacular English
NZE	New Zealand English
AmE	American English
AAVE	African-American Vernacular English
CanE	Canadian English
NFE	Newfoundland English
MUN	Memorial University of Newfoundland
MUNFLA	Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive
DNE	Dictionary of Newfoundland English
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
EDD	English Dialect Dictionary
SED	Survey of English Dialects
SRLM	Somerset Rural Life Museum
BNC	British National Corpus
NORM	non-mobile old rural male (speaker)
NORF	non-mobile old rural female (speaker)

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