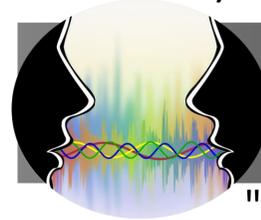


# Belong(ing)



"múin Béarla do na leanbháin"  
"Teach the Children English"

## The Effects of Migration and Attitude on the Acquisition of Northern Irish English

Jennifer Thorburn & Karen P. Corrigan (Newcastle University, UK)

### Introduction

- The acquisition of local variants by migrants in England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland has received increasing scholarly attention in the wake of the unparalleled in-migration from "A8" countries since the 2004 EU expansion, e.g. Schlee et al. (2011), Drummond (2012), Migge (2012) and Nestor et al. (2012). The *Múin Béarla* project expands this discussion to migrant populations in Northern Ireland, which has also experienced high rates of in-migration in the past decade (McDermott 2008, Caldwell et al. 2012). This poster examines the use of (ing) in the speech of young migrants from Poland and Lithuania and compares their usage with that of their locally born peers.

### The Variable

- The "most uniform of all variables of English" (Labov 2001: 86), (ing) provides an excellent baseline for our research. In Northern Irish English, speakers typically realize (ing) as [ɪn], in keeping with many other English dialects (Hickey 2007; Hughes et al. 2005). In some communities, the realization is a syllabic [n], a variant conditioned by both social and linguistic factors (see e.g. Kingsmore's (1995) study of Coleraine, NI).
- Importantly, (ing) has recently been examined in the speech of other migrant Polish communities in the United Kingdom (Schlee et al. 2011, Drummond 2012), as well as studies of second language acquisition in other migrant populations (e.g. Adamson & Regan 1991, Verma et al. 1992, Major 2004, Jia & Fuse 2007).
- Variants:** [ɪŋ] (e.g. running) [ɪn] (e.g. runnin')  
[ɪŋk]/[ɪŋg] (e.g. runningk) → 'velar nasal plus' (Wells 1982)

### Results

- Every instance of (ing) was extracted after the first, to a maximum of 50 tokens per speaker. Following Schlee et al. (2011), among others, unclear tokens of (ing) were excluded, e.g. cases of speaker overlap or phonetically reduced forms such as *going to* realized as *gonna*, *trying to* realized as *tryna*, etc. Tokens in quoted speech were also excluded.

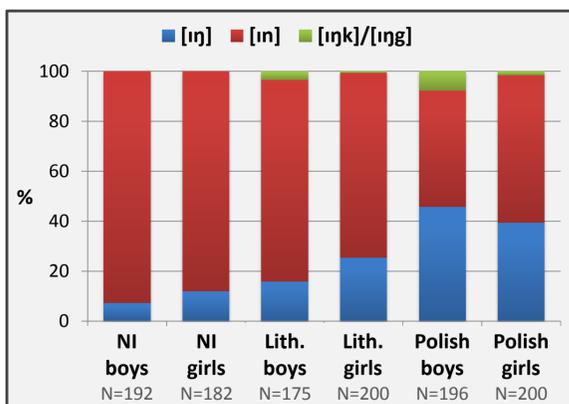


Figure 1: Distribution of variants according to speaker L1 and sex (Total N=1146)

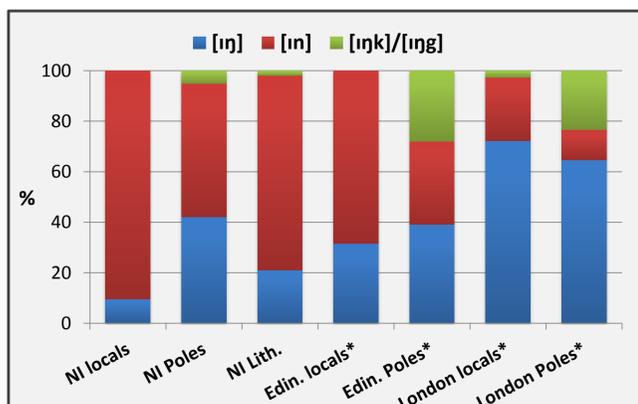


Figure 2: Comparison between Northern Ireland data and Schlee et al.'s (2011) work in Edinburgh and London (\*)

- Variables that emerged as significant for each participant group in Rbrul analysis, are listed in order of significance (with favouring factors underlined):**
  - Northern Irish participants:** number of syllables (2 > 3 > 1); age [continuous; [ɪn] favoured with increasing age]
  - Polish participants:** grammatical category (progressive > participle > discourse (-thing) > pronoun (-thing) > gerund > adjective > noun); preceding variant ([ɪn] > [ɪŋk]/[ɪŋg] > [ɪŋ]); length of residence [continuous, [ɪn] favoured with increasing length of residence]; preceding phonological environment (velar > other > apical)
  - Lithuanian participants:** sex (male > female); grammatical category (participle > progressive > adjective > gerund > pronoun (-thing) > discourse (-thing) > noun); age of arrival [continuous; [ɪn] favoured with increasing age of arrival]; preceding variant ([ɪn] > [ɪŋ])

### The Project

An investigation of the linguistic and socio-cultural impact on Northern Ireland (NI) of its changing population, from the perspective of both historical emigration and contemporary immigration.

### Research Questions

- How can a cross-disciplinary approach to migration and language contribute to our knowledge of the ways in which socially meaningful spaces are constructed?
- How do speakers make use of linguistic variation to express local belonging and / or dissonance, therefore developing and displaying to each other 'a sense of place' (Convery, Corsane & Davis 2012)?
- Do diverse social groups in Northern Ireland hold similar or different attitudes towards minority and regional languages and their speakers?
- To what extent are the migratory experiences of the Irish Diaspora and immigrants to NI similar?
- Can historical records of emigration by the majority groups be used to promote tolerance towards ethnic minority communities now living in Northern Ireland?

### The Sample

Located about 40 miles southwest of Belfast, Armagh is the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland. The population (15,020) is evenly divided in terms of religion; data collection for this project is restricted to Catholic schools only, using traditional sociolinguistic interviews (2012-2014).

- Stratified according to first language and sex, the sample is drawn from 2 post-primary schools located in in Armagh: "St. Celine's" (girls) and "St. Benedict's" (boys):



	Northern Irish English	Polish	Lithuanian
<b>Male</b> (St. Benedict's)	4 (ages 14-16)	4 (ages 9-13)	4 (ages 11-13)
<b>Female</b> (St. Celine's)	4 (ages 14-18)	4 (ages 13-19)	4 (ages 14-17)

### Historical Examples

*Corpus of Irish English Correspondence (CORIECOR)*. Carolina P. Amador-Moreno (University of Extremadura) and Kevin McCafferty (University of Bergen).

Dear Cousin,  
I take the pleasure of **writing** you a few line[s] to let you know that we are in good health [...]  
I remain your **lovin** Cousin, Matilda Gilkison

M. Gilkison (Omagh) to J. A. Smyth (Ontario), May 1894

Dear Sister etc:  
[...] I am **leaving** here for Essex [New York] tomorrow and that ends my trip, so I have had a good **outing** and seen a good deal [...] of course you know the Irish Guards Band, of your own country is here **playin** for the Exposition.

J. A. Smyth (Ontario) to M. Smyth (Omagh), August 1905



Partners:



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[www.gael-linn.ie](http://www.gael-linn.ie)

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