Variation and Morphosyntactic Change: 
The case of the stative possession in English

Sali A. Tagliamonte 
University of Toronto, Canada

Table 1: Communities under investigation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Geographic location</th>
<th>Acronym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buckie</td>
<td>Northern Scotland</td>
<td>BCK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumnock</td>
<td>Southeast Scotland</td>
<td>CMK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cullybackie</td>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>CLB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portavogie</td>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>PVG</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryport</td>
<td>Northeast England</td>
<td>MPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheatley Hill</td>
<td>Northwest England</td>
<td>WL</td>
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<tr>
<td>York</td>
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<td>YRK</td>
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<td>Wincanton</td>
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Variation and Morphosyntactic Change: The case of stative possession in English

Sali. A. Tagliamonte
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Stative Possession
Contemporary British Dialects

- I ’ve got two granddaughters … Joyce and I just have the one daughter. (PVC/e)
- We always have an advance-party, each troop has about three or four …. It ’s got its advantages, that. (MPT/n)
- I ’ve got a cousin in New Cummock that has it and she gets it every month (CMK/I)
- They got a lovely family bible, you know .. Thomas has it. (CLB/q)

Historical Development: have

Nu we sind blame habbe we nan þing to etanne buton Manna.
‘Now we are lean, haven’t we no thing to eat except Manna.’ (Ælfric c. 970-1000, Num. 11.9)

Bot he haf wit to steir his stede.
‘Unless he has wit to steer his steed.’ (Barbour c. 1375, Bruce VI, 334)

He that had lyttle to spende, hath not much to lose.
(Lyly 1580, Euphues and His England 243)

Historical Development: have got

16th century:
What a beard hast thou got; thou hast got more haire on they chin, then Dobbin my philhorse has on his taile.
(Shakespeare 1596, Merchant of Venice ii. 99)

Hodge, what a delicious shop you have got!
(Dekker 1600, Shoemaker’s Holiday IV, ii, 51)

Ye have got a humour there Does not become a man.
(Shakespeare, 1607 Timon I. ii. 26)

Prescriptive Commentary have got

1855: This form of speech should never be used to express possession. … (Gwynne 1855)

1870: “… use of the word got ..[for ‘have’ is] not only wrong, but if right, superfluous. (White [1870] 1927)

1907: Wrong: Have you got a knife with you:
Right: Have you a knife with you? (Wooley 1907)

Proportion of stative have got
British English 1850-1935
(from Noble 1985, extrapolated from Kroch 1989: 209)
Explanations

- **Syntactic**
  - Changing grammatical status of *have*
  - Auxiliary verb -> lexical verb

- **Prosodic**
  - A result of weakening, contraction and insertion

- **Semantic**
  - Reanalysis from active verb, “acquire” with past tense cognate *got*

**Increase of have got across communities**

(Tagliamonte 2004:548 Figure 6)

**Increase of have got in apparent time**

(Tagliamonte 2004:548 Figure 6)

**Overall Distribution**

**Negation**

There are “a very wide range of options for negating lexical *have*”

- Nelson 2004:300

The range of options is “bewildering”

- Biber et al. 1999:160
Negation
(Nelson 2004: 300)

Pattern 1: I don't have (any) money.
Pattern 2: I haven’t any money.
Pattern 3: I haven’t got any money.
Pattern 4: I have no money.
Pattern 5: I ‘ve got no money.

Negation

- Scotland
  - They do na have assistant managers. They ‘ve got a manager. (BCK/s)
- Northeast England
  - I haven’t far to go anyhow. (MPT/f)
- Northern Ireland
  - He hasn’t time lyke. (CLB/n)
  - Hae you friends in America yet? (PVG/h)

Question formation
Questions

- **Scotland**
  - *Have* you any sugar eh, Jennifer? (BCK/g)

- **Northern Ireland**
  - *Have* you an orchard probably, *have* you? (CLB/n)
  - Well how *have* you such nice skin? (PVG/d)

Contraction of *have*

- She’s only one daughter and her two grandsons. (CMK/m)
- He’s a beautiful head of hair. (CMK/v)
- He’s a lot of customers. (CMK/n)
- He’s a farm. (PVG/g)

Insertion of *got*

- He’s *got* three daughters and a son. (CMK/h)
- We’ve *got* a church. (CMK/d)
- I’ve *got* this car. (PVG/h)
- You’ve *got* Scotch blood in you. (PVG/@)

Contraction

- [Graph showing contraction patterns across different regions (NE, BCK, CMK, MPT, WHL, YRK, TIV, WIN, SSS)]

Phases of development

- 1st *have* used for all contexts
- 2nd Contraction of *have* (‘s/’ve) with pronouns
- 3rd *Got* added to pronoun contexts to get ‘ve *got’/’s *got
- 4th *Got* added to noun phrase contexts

Type of Subject

Pronoun subjects:
- I’ve *got* a phone number. (CMK/!)
- You’ve *got* Scotch blood in you. (MPT/!)
- Be better than that bloody great big angel they’ve *got* at Newcastle. (MPT/f)

Noun phrase subjects:
- The turbines *has* a habit of sticking sometimes. (PVG/g)
- Raynor Fletcher *has* his house down on the quayside. (MPT/s)
- Every area *has* different words for things. (PVG/d)
Elision of contracted *have* leaving *got*

- *I* got a job now.  (CLB/b)
- They *got* meat, eggs and different provisions.  (MPT/b)
- We *got* friends in America.  (PVG/h)

Historical Development: *got*

19th century:
Their *got no* principles. They *got no* platform to stand onto.  
(1849 Knickerbocker XXXIV. 12)

What you *got* there, grandma?  
(1887, M. E. Wilkins Jumble Romance 370)

I *got* a right to know what she said.  
(Booth Tarkington 1913, The Flirt 36)

We *got* some mail.  
(Shaw 1948, The Young Lions 450)

Overall Distribution

Phases of development

5th ‘v’s *got* — criticizes to a preceding pronouns … elide leaving *got* alone
**Got in the south**

- I got three cars.
- He got cows and sheep…

**Phases of development**

- Original lexical meaning of get, 'to acquire'
  - I got a car from the dealership
  - Acquired by some means
- Have got enters the stative possessive system for physical, concrete things
  - I've got a car
  - Possession
- Generalization to other types of complements
  - I've got an idea
  - Abstract qualities, relationship, health etc.

**Type of complement**

Concrete:
- She has got near two-thousand pound with her. (CLB/b)
- They've got a very big boat, like. (PVG/c)

Abstract:
- You have these memories lass. (CMK/q)
- I've a notion to go to the trip. (CLB/k)

**Effect of Type of Complement**

*British Plays*

(Kroch 1989:209; Noble 1985)

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**Type of Complement**

*York***

- Abstract
- Concrete

---

**Type of Complement**

*Buckie***

- Abstract
- Concrete

---

**Type of Complement**

*Wheatley Hill***

- Abstract
- Concrete
### Contextual Effects on *incoming have got*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF COMPLEMENT</th>
<th>TYPE OF SUBJECT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>Pronoun</td>
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### Probability of *have got*

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<tr>
<td><strong>Depr.</strong></td>
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### Observations

- Morphosyntactic change influenced by multidimensional constraints operating at different levels of grammar
- Contrast between constant changes and differential changes
- Contextual constraints propel change forward in different ways at different phases in the evolution of a system
- Synchrony mirrors diachrony

### Thanks to...

- The Economic and Social Research Council of the United Kingdom (ESRC) for research grants:

### Selected References