

Some characteristics of Southeast English preposition dropping

Laura R. Bailey

L.R.Bailey@kent.ac.uk

University of Kent

Abstract: Preposition-dropping is widespread in British English varieties, but the construction found in Southeast England differs from the descriptions of Northwest Englishes, patterning more closely with Greek and Romance varieties. The determiner is obligatorily absent, the argument must be a directional Goal, the verb must be semantically weak *come* or *go*, and the location must be familiar, anaphoric or a place name. These characteristics are explained if the noun undergoes N-to-D movement to gain a definite interpretation, requiring omission of the determiner and lack of modification, and the null directional preposition *to* conflates with *v* for licensing, removing the possibility of manner-of-motion verbs.

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1. Introduction

Some varieties of non-standard British English¹ permit nouns to appear without an overt preposition or determiner when they are a directional complement:²

¹ My data are drawn from what I term ‘Southeast English’. I use this deliberately vague term because the precise boundaries of the construction are not yet clear. It is found in the home counties generally but also across the UK: Manchester and Kent look very similar in this regard, despite the location of Manchester in Northwest England very close to Liverpool and Ormskirk, discussed in this section. In some English varieties, however, preposition drop is not possible at all. It does not seem to be recorded for any variety of American English, for example, and it is





- (1) I haven't been (to) Shoreditch in ages.
- (2) I don't think I'm going to come (to the) library after this.

On the face of it this is comparable with the 'adverbial NPs' *home* and *there* (*I haven't been home in ages*), but unlike those restricted items, this is a productive construction and any noun that fits a specific set of criteria is permissible, including proper nouns as in (1).

Preposition drop (or 'P-drop', after Ioannidou & Den Dikken 2006) has been discussed quite extensively in Greek and to some extent in other languages (see section 2). In English, it has been noted in the sociolinguistics literature as part of a constellation of omission properties in contact-influenced varieties such as Multicultural London English³ but described in the syntax literature only recently, and just for varieties of Northwest British English: that of Ormskirk and Liverpool (Myler 2013; Biggs 2014; see also Haddican 2010 for Manchester⁴). In fact, these Northwest varieties exhibit certain differences from the Southeast English type, which has striking similarities to the construction in other European languages. In what follows, I first set out the facts and note these similarities and differences between varieties. I then argue for an analysis of the Southeast English type in which the full DP and PP structure is present, and a process of head movement of the noun to D along with incorporation of P into the verb derives preposition drop.

2. P-drop in English and other languages

P-drop has been described in Greek (Gehrke & Lekakou 2012; Ioannidou & Den Dikken 2006; Terzi 2010), in Italian dialects (Longobardi 2001; Cattaneo 2009) and in English for either some words such as *home* (Caponigro & Pearl 2008; Collins 2007; Emonds 1985) or for some varieties (Myler 2013; Biggs 2014;

not permissible in Geordie (spoken in Newcastle Upon Tyne) or other dialects of Northeast England. Data for this article comes mainly from speakers in Kent.

² Where examples are given without citation, they are taken from my own recorded data.

³ I suspect there are two 'types' of preposition drop in London: as well as the relatively new MLE type, an earlier type common to white working class speakers is probably the root of the one in the southeast English varieties and spread outwards some decades ago (elderly speakers in Kent typically do not allow preposition drop).

⁴ But see footnote 1.





Haddican & Holmberg 2012). It has also been noted in contact varieties such as Multicultural London English and the Berlin variety of German Kiezdeutsch (Weise 2009) and of course, is known to be a feature of many creole varieties.

In the particular variety under consideration, the following facts generally hold and are all illustrated by (2) above:

- (3) *Properties of Southeast English P-drop*
- (i) The determiner is also obligatorily absent.
 - (ii) The verb must be directional *go* or *come*.
 - (iii) The noun must be interpreted as a directional Goal.
 - (iv) The noun must denote a familiar or anaphoric location (compare *home* in standard English) or an institution.

These properties broadly hold for the other varieties with P-drop, but with some specific differences, illustrated below.

2.1 The determiner is obligatorily absent

In Southeast English, the determiner must be omitted along with the preposition. The same is true for Greek: the omission is exclusively of the preposition *se* 'to/at', the most semantically bleached preposition (Zwarts 2008; 2010), and which can occur in a preposition+determiner combined form. If the preposition is absent, so too must the determiner be. Omitting the determiner gives rise to an indefinite reading, and omitting only the preposition is ungrammatical:

- (4) Pame (stin) paralia?
 go.1PL at.the beach.ACC
 'Shall we go to the beach?'
- (5) Pame se paralia?
 go.1PL at beach.ACC
 'Shall we go to a beach?'
- (6) *Pame tin paralia?
 go.1PL the beach

(Gehrke & Lekakou 2014: 92)

In the Northwest English varieties, however, the determiner is present:





(7) John came the pub with me.

(Myler 2013: 189)

Hijazi Arabic appears to show a mixture of the two options: where in Standard Arabic a preposition and determiner is required (8), in Hijazi Arabic (Saudi Arabia) a reduced preposition with no determiner (9) or a determiner with no preposition (10) may be present:⁵

(8) ana thahiba ela almadrassa

1SG going to the.school

(9) rayha lil madrasa

going.1SG.FEM prep school

(10) rayha almadrassa

going.1SG.FEM the.school

'I am going to school.'

(Enas Filimban, p.c.)

2.2 The verb must be directional *go* or *come*

In Southeast English, the verb is nearly always *go* or *come*, with other verbs permitted if they are semantically fairly weak:

(11) This train calls Sittingbourne, Rainham...

Manner of motion verbs are sharply ungrammatical, while in Northwest English they are acceptable in Ormskirk provided they are allative and in Liverpool (13 miles from Ormskirk) even if they are not:

(12) Joe plodded the pub.

(13) Swim the end and back.

(Biggs 2013: 53)

Other varieties pattern like Southeast English, so that in Bellinzonese (a dialect of Italian spoken in Switzerland), for example, P-drop is not possible

⁵ I am grateful to Baraah Al Ababneh for bringing this to my attention.





with *laùra* ‘work’ (Cattaneo 2009) while the equivalent is entirely grammatical in Liverpool.

2.3 The noun must be interpreted as a directional Goal

This is the usual interpretation for all the varieties with P-drop (e.g. Terzi 2010 for Greek).

(14) Off park now cus it’ll be horrible to waste such a sunny day.

(15) You’ve never been Benidorm?⁶

In Liverpool (but not Ormskirk) statives are also possible, quite unlike in Southeast English:⁷

(16) He’s his dad’s this weekend.

(Biggs 2013: 54)

Kouneli (2014) notes that in Greek the argument can be locative provided that it is temporary:

(17) I Maria ine (stin) Agglia
 the.NOM Maria.NOM is.3SG se.the.ACC England.ACC
 ‘Maria is in England.’

(18) To Londino ine *(stin) Agglia
 the.NOM London.NOM is.3SG se.the.ACC England.ACC

‘London is in England.’

(Kouneli 2014: 5)

⁶ This example is from a Manchester speaker. Despite the location of this city in the Northwest of England, it has P-drop that appears to be the same as the Southeast variety, adding further weight to the claim that this is not geographical spread of a feature.

⁷ I have in fact collected one example of a stative from Southeast English:

i. *Jackie was staying B&B that year.*

The speaker is from Sussex, living in Kent. He appears to be an outlier, though, with speakers generally rating such sentences as ungrammatical.



The omitted preposition is nearly always TO, although in Liverpool *at* is dropped in the statives, and in Greek the same preposition is equivalent to both *to* and *at*. This restriction to TO is related to the argument/adjunct asymmetry and the restriction to directional Goal arguments. A richer preposition like *from* or *under* cannot be omitted in any of the varieties discussed here.⁸

2.4 The noun must denote a familiar or anaphoric location or an institution

In Aromanian (a romance language spoken in northern Greece, Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Serbia), the argument in a P-drop construction must be the name of a place. The preposition is omitted just when the place name is in frequent usage, but used when it is a less frequently-used place:

- (19) S-neadzim Skopia
SUBJ-go.1PL Skopje
'Let's go to Skopje.'
- (20) Bănedz Ohărdă
live.1SG Ohrid
'I live in Ohrid.'
- (21) S-neadzim ăn Sărună
SUBJ-go.1PL in Thessaloniki
'Let's go to Thessaloniki.'
- (22) Bănedzăm ăm Pole
live.1SG in Istanbul
'I live in Istanbul.'

(Tomic 2006: 185-6)

In standard German, the restriction is even narrower: P-drop is only possible with the names of public transport stops.

⁸ Biggs (2013) finds that *in* is relatively less ungrammatical to her informants, with Michelle Sheehan providing a grammatical example from Bedfordshire:

- ii. How long have you lived Bedford?

My own data includes a comparable example:

- iii. I lived Nottingham nearly all my life.





- (23) da fahren Sie bis (zur) Friedrichstraße.
 PART go you.2RP until (to.the) Friedrich.street
 'You have to go to Friedrichstraße, then.'

(Wiese 2009: 792)

Other varieties allow more flexibility with the range of locations. Institutions such as *church* are frequently found in this construction, as in dialectal Macedonian:

- (24) Odat crkov
 go.3PL church
 'They are going to church.'

(Tomic 2006: 12)

In Bellinzone, Cattaneo (2009: 287) likewise notes that P-drop can occur with some city names and other common nouns: *scòla*, *ginastica*, *teatru*, *militar*, and *mesa* (mass). Penello (2003: 233) notes an implicational tendency: if the preposition is omitted with 'school', so it will be with 'house' or 'home'.

Gehrke & Lekakou (2012: 96) further characterise the location in Greek as being 'stereotypical': 'an institutionalized location, namely ... a location that is moved to or spent time at on a regular basis, in order to perform some institutionalized activity there'.

This is also the case for Southeast English. The argument is often a place name, as in (25):

- (25) I've been Tenerife before.

Where the location is not a place name it is familiar, stereotypical or anaphoric. (26), for instance, can only mean going to one's own university, or the only university in one's city, and not something like *I went to a university to give a talk about linguistics* (Fillmore 1992; Jackendoff, Maling & Zaenen 1993).

- (26) I went university.

This is the 'activity-naming predicate' reading that Stvan (2009) provides as one of three meanings for PPs with Bare Singular Count Nouns:

- (27) He's going to the prison (full DP) = He's travelling to the prison (to visit)
 (28) He's going to prison (BSCN) = He's going to serve a prison sentence





- (29) He's going prison (P-drop) = He's going to serve a prison sentence

The location is therefore usually interpreted as a specific one. This in turn means that *I'm going mosque* is grammatical for some speakers but not others, dependent on their faith or the salience of the local mosque in their lives (Christian Ilbury, p.c.). Similarly, most people would not find (30) felicitous but it was uttered by a South London speaker.

- (30) Went chiropodist and omg how do you women stand getting your nails done for fun?

Finally, the 'location' need not be a place as such: (31) was uttered by a father to a child.

- (31) Come Daddy just for a minute.

2.5 Summary

The four properties set out for Southeast English P-drop in (3) hold also for Greek with the exception of the availability of temporary stative complements (perhaps because of the availability of null AT). They contrast, however, with the Northwest varieties.⁹ We are therefore presented with a

⁹ MLE patterns exactly like the general Southeast English P-drop. One reason to say that it may not be simply an instance of Southeast English P-drop (even though London is within the Southeast of England) is that MLE is a contact-influenced variety, and a fairly recent one, while P-drop appears to be well-established in the Southeast. Contact-influenced languages typically display many omitted elements, such as articles and conjunctions in serial verb constructions:

iv. I got (a) telly.

v. I go out (and) buy clothes.

(Speaker from Bermondsey, C900/05078; British Library, Jonnie Robinson, p.c.)

Such omission is known to be a feature of creole languages, many of which also have P-drop, as in this example from Haitian Creole French:

vi. Timoun yo al Mache Pòspyewo

Children DEF.PL go Market Post-Pierrot

'The children have gone to the Post-Pierrot Market.' (DeGraff 2007: 122)

A variety of German spoken in Berlin, Kiezdeutsch, allows P-drop:





situation in which varieties of English exhibit less similarity in this respect than Southeast English has with Greek.

There are essentially two possibilities:¹⁰ either there is unpronounced DP and PP structure, or the full structure is truncated. I argue for an analysis of the

-
- vii. Morgen ich geh arbeitsamt
 tomorrow I go jobcentre
 'Tomorrow I will go to the job centre.' (Wiese 2009: 787)

Meanwhile, the variety spoken in parts of Bavaria allows prepositions to be omitted in the same set of circumstances as Greek and Southeast English (Steffen Heidinger, p.c.). In this sense, German is like English: it has an urban variety with very free omission of functional elements, like contact languages in general (see also creole languages), and it has 'traditional' varieties with little history of immigration where there is a more restricted version of preposition omission. Whether these in fact have precisely the same syntactic analysis I leave for future work.

¹⁰ Ioannidou & Den Dikken (2006) indicate four potential ways of explaining the lack of prepositions:

- I. Headline/telegraphese
- II. PF ellipsis of the preposition (and determiner)
- III. Lack of PP structure
- IV. Null-headed PP

They quickly dispense with (I) and (II) because of the non-availability of particle verbs with null prepositions outside the headline register.

- viii. *ana-dhythike epifania epitelous
 ix. PRT-emerge.3SG.PAST surface finally
 x. = 'It finally emerged on the surface.' (available in headline only)
- (Ioannidou & Den Dikken 2006: 3)

This difference between headline registers and conversational Greek indicates that they can be attributed to different processes. Furthermore, if (II) were correct and P-drop was due to PF-ellipsis, we would expect the same syntax for these two contexts.

English does not allow P-drop with particle verbs in either headline xi or speech registers xii:

- xi. *Sunken treasure floats up surface.
- xii. *It floated up surface.





construction in which the full PP and DP structure is present, contra Gehrke & Lekakou (2012) for Greek and Hall (2018) for Multicultural London English, both of whom argue that a bare noun undergoes pseudo-incorporation. My analysis builds on the work of Ioannidou & Den Dikken (2006), Myler (2013) and Biggs (2014) and draws together several aspects of the construction to provide a coherent explanation for the lack of P, lack of D, the prohibition of manner of motion verbs, and the restriction on possible nouns.

3. Arguments for DP and PP

In this section I present arguments that there is both full DP and PP structure present in the syntax of P-drop.

3.1 Arguments against pseudo-incorporation

If the full structure of DP and PP is lacking, the alternative is that the noun undergoes incorporation or pseudo-incorporation. Gehrke & Lekakou (2012), making the case for Greek P-drop being pseudo-incorporation, note that the more permissive nature of pseudo-incorporation versus incorporation proper holds for the Greek construction, in that strict adjacency is not required and topic and focus fronting are permitted. Strict adjacency is similarly not necessary for English: (32) illustrates question fronting and (33) a relative clause extraction with P-dropping.

(32) What pub are you going (to)?

(33) ...the youth group he goes (to) every night.

However, the tests for pseudo-incorporation are not convincing for Southeast English either. These include obligatory narrow scope of the incorporated nominal, number neutrality, reference to an institutionalised

However, in general, while determiners are often omitted in headlines, prepositions are not:

xiii. Sunken treasure floats up to (the) surface.

xiv. Princess Charlotte goes *(to) (the) beach.

I therefore follow Ioannidou & Den Dikken in rejecting (I) and (II).





activity,¹¹ the impossibility of intersective adjectival modification, and an inability to license pronominal discourse anaphora (Dayal 2011).

3.1.1 Narrow scope of N

Gehrke & Lekakou invoke the narrow scope of the noun in support of their pseudo-incorporation argument for Greek. In Southeast English, (34) does indeed mean that she didn't go to any beach, with the negation taking wide scope, although this can just as easily be a result of the interpretation being that there is a particular local beach that she might have gone to. (35) does allow for the interpretation that each person has gone to a different beach, with the quantifier taking wide scope, but it also allows for the other N>Q interpretation.

(34) She didn't go beach.
= It is not the case that she went to the/a beach.

(35) They've all gone beach.
= They have all gone to different beaches.
= They have all gone to a particular beach.

It is not actually clear from Gehrke & Lekakou's work that their own example doesn't exhibit exactly the same alternation (paraphrases mine); all they say is that it 'allows' for the interpretation where the noun has narrow scope:

(36) Exun oli pai paralia.
have.3PL all.PL gone beach.ACC
'They have all gone to the beach.'
= They have all gone to different beaches.
= They have all gone to a particular beach. (Gehrke & Lekakou 2012: 95)

This diagnostic is inconclusive then, at least for Southeast English.

3.1.2 Number neutrality

The noun in a pseudo-incorporation construction should be number neutral and plural morphology should be absent. The vast majority of instances

¹¹ Mithun (1984: 856) refers to this as the incorporated nominal 'no longer refer[ring] to a specific entity; instead, it simply narrows the scope of the V'.





of P-drop does occur with singular nouns, and plural nouns are very uncommon in this construction. In (37), one of the very few instances of plural morphology acceptable with a null preposition, *shops* must refer to a single location with a set of shops (a shopping precinct, for instance) rather than meaning that she went to a variety of separate shops in different parts of town. It should be noted that (38) is degraded in any case because *school* in this construction is interpreted as one's own school, and this is generally true for this diagnostic in Southeast English: the location tends to be interpreted as specific, and therefore singular and not number-neutral. Compare these with the Hindi examples in (39) and (40), in which the number-neutral interpretation is only available with the bare singular noun when it is incorporated (40).

(37) She went shops.

= She went to one location with shops in it.

(38) *She went schools.

(39) puure din kamre meN cuuhaa ghustaa r ahaa
whole day room in mouse enter-IMP PROG

'The whole day the mouse/a mouse (the same one) kept entering the room.'

(40) anu puure din cuuhaa pakaRtii rahii
Anu whole day mouse catch-IMP PROG

'Anu kept catching mice (different ones) the whole day.'

(Dayal 2011: 131)

Once again, it is not clear that the noun is truly number-neutral.

3.1.3 No adjective modification

Adjectives are not acceptable in constructions with no prepositions in Greek, as in (41) (Gehrke & Lekakou 2012: 96), or in English, as in (42), consistent with the pseudo-incorporation analysis:

(41) *Pigame kondini paralia
went.1PL nearby beach

'We went to a nearby beach.'

(42) *We went nearby beach.





Conversely, (43) is grammatical with a type/kind modifier (Gehrke & Lekakou 2012: 96) and while (44) is slightly unusual due to the perceived mismatch of register, it seems to be acceptable and is certainly considerably better than (42).

(43) Ichame pai arxeolojiko musio
 had.1PL gone archaeological museum.ACC
 'We had gone to the archaeological museum.'

(44) We went archaeological museum.

A further point for consideration is that adjectival modification is odd with the semantic restriction to anaphoric or familiar specific locations in any case.

3.1.4 No discourse referent

Incorporation is unable to license pronominal discourse anaphora. Gehrke & Lekakou (2012: 95) provide the following judgement, although they note that Ioannidou & Den Dikken (2006) report that it is felicitous (for them, the noun is simply interpreted as definite), and the English version also appears to be acceptable, although judgements are variable, indicating that P-drop in English can license discourse anaphora.

(45) Pao paralia. #Tin episkeptome sixna.
 go.1SG beach.ACC her.CL visit.1SG often
 'I am going to the beach. #I visit it often.'

(46) I'm going beach. I visit it daily.

It is therefore unclear whether the facts that Gehrke & Lekakou (2012) use to argue for pseudo-incorporation in Greek hold for Southeast English, and it is also not obvious why the pseudo-incorporation should be restricted to locations rather than the more familiar direct object (inanimate) noun incorporation. I reject pseudo-incorporation of a bare noun.

A reason to argue *for* the presence of DP structure is that determiners can, in fact, occur, particularly where it is contrastive, as in (47):

(47) Shall I go these services?





Furthermore, the nouns in P-drop contexts are very often place names, which are typically thought of as DPs, and are generally interpreted as specific locations (which is the reason for the possibility of discourse anaphora).

3.2 Evidence for PP structure

The majority of those who have discussed P-drop have argued that there is a null prepositional head that is unpronounced for one reason or another (Ioannidou & Den Dikken 2006; Collins 2007; Terzi 2010; Myler 2013; Biggs 2014). Collins (2007) and Terzi (2010) argue that the nominal complement moves over this null preposition into a specifier, while Ioannidou & Den Dikken (2006), Myler (2013) and Biggs (2014) all postulate a null preposition that must be incorporated into the verb in order to be licensed, as argued by Den Dikken (2010). I address both of these analyses in this section.

Collins (2007) specifically discusses the case of *home*. In Standard English and in many non-standard varieties, P-drop is only possible with *home*. Many researchers (e.g. Caponigro & Pearl 2008) have noted the similarity to NP adverbials of space, time and manner:

(48) You can put the boxes (over) *there*.

(49) She will arrive (on) *Sunday*.

(50) I learnt to do it (in) *that way*.

While Larson (1985) suggested that such nouns have the lexical property of being able to self-assign case and thus appear without a case-assigning preposition, others (Emonds 1985; McCawley 1988) analyse the structure as being that of a silent P with a NP/DP complement to allow for normal case assignment by P. Collins (2007) associates directional *home*, a 'light noun', with place/PLACE as argued for *somewhere* and *there* (following Katz & Postal 1964; Kayne 2005). For him, it is an NP lacking the functional structure of the DP, explaining the impossibility of plurals, determiners, possession and adjectival modification:

(51) *They went homes.

(52) *I went my home.

(53) *I went cosy home.





This light NP *home* raises to the specifier of the preposition TO/AT, and the Doubly-Filled Comp Filter requires that if *home* is overt, the preposition is not. Terzi (2010: 182) argues the same movement occurs in Greek and specifies that it is Locative P that hosts the raised noun:

- (54) V [_{PP_{Loc}} spiti/grafio/etc. [_{PLoc} 0 [_{DP/NP} spiti/grafio/etc.]]]
 home/office

Collins leaves the light noun where it is in Spec,PP for directional *home*, but for locative *home* he assumes that the light PP *home TO* moves to Spec, PredP, effectively incorporating into the verb. Terzi invokes this movement for the Greek nouns in general. I take it that Collins (2007) and Terzi (2010) would label the phenomenon pseudo-incorporation, as discussed above. Collins argues that the D is null because *home* is a light noun, and Terzi remains agnostic about this.

For Biggs (2014), discussing the Liverpool variety, this null preposition is *k*. For Ioannidou & Den Dikken (2006) and Myler (2013), however, the null element is a null version of directional *to*. As Biggs notes, lexical P assigns a thematic role, which *k* does not do in Liverpool English, but in Ormskirk (and in Southeast English) a Goal role is assigned. Ioannidou & Den Dikken (2006) similarly have this concern, arguing that PP structure cannot be entirely lacking if the thematic role is to be assigned. The alternative would be to allow motion verbs to become transitive, and this is not what we see: they do not passivise, for instance.

- (55) *The pub was gone by me.

These authors all argue that the null P incorporates into the verb, based largely on arguments by Den Dikken (2010). Den Dikken argues for the structure [_{P_{dir}} [_{P_{loc}} ...]] (comparable to [Path [Place...]]), where either preposition can be overt or null. If the lower preposition *P_{loc}* is null, it is licensed by the overt higher *P_{dir}*. If the higher one is null, however, it must be licensed by either a particle (not relevant in this case) or by incorporation into the event-structural operator, realised by the lexical verb. This is not possible with manner-of-motion verbs: they have a manner head adjoined to *v*, blocking the possibility of incorporation of P. I return to this point below.

Myler offers arguments from (non-)adjacency in support of the incorporation rather than deletion of P under adjacency with the verb. He notes





that in ditransitives, adjacency of the verb and the Goal is not required for omission of P:

(56) Me nan sent me the shops. (Myler 2013: 201)

This example is not actually particularly felicitous in Southeast English because of the presence of the determiner and the regional expression *me nan*. However, other ditransitives in which the verb and bare noun Goal argument are non-adjacent are acceptable:

(57) It's going to get to the point soon where I can start taking the boys
football.

A further argument in favour of incorporation of the P into the verb is the lack of *right/straight* modification. Emonds (1985) demonstrates that this is diagnostic of prepositions, as in (58). (59), however, is not possible in Southeast English, indicating that the preposition is not available.

(58) Let's go straight to school.

(59) *Let's go straight school.

The possibility of *straight* modification in the Liverpool variety and impossibility of it in Ormskirk leads Biggs (2014) to argue that there is a null *k* in the former but not the latter, and that there is incorporation of a lexical P in Ormskirk. In the next section, I argue that this is also true in Southeast English, but in order to explain the lack of determiners in this variety, more is required. I argue that N undergoes head movement to D. P_{dir} incorporates into *v*, giving an explanation for the impossibility of manner of motion verbs.

4. Deriving P-drop in Southeast English

The nominal element of a P-drop construction is frequently a proper noun, and most place names seem to be felicitous in this context. I follow the general consensus that proper names are full DPs, and definite descriptions. To satisfy the semantics (i.e. to achieve a definite, specific interpretation) N⁰ raises to D⁰ (e.g. Longobardi 1994). Matushansky (2006) specifically links proper names to the Bare Singular Count Nouns of Stvan (2009). Although she rejects Longobardi's claim that N raises to D on the grounds that modification of the





noun blocks the omission of the determiner, she instead posits merger of N with D just in the presence of [+proper]. I suggest that this extends to bare singulars due to their status as ‘activity-naming predicates’, which gives them a definite interpretation and creates the anaphoric restriction to one’s own school, home, etc. The determiner is then blocked from lexicalising. This point is perhaps the most significant difference between the Ormskirk variety and the Southeast English type: Ormskirk retains its determiners.

A plausible alternative is that the noun raises not to D, but to a DP-internal topic as proposed by Aboh (2004) and Campbell (1996) in order to check a specificity feature. Aboh offers evidence from Gungbe that there is a nominal Topic and Focus position, independently of the clausal Topic and Focus, in between D (which he equates to Force) and Num (which he equates to Fin):

(60) D > Top > Foc > Num > N

Aboh associates specificity (which in Gungbe is indicated with a specificity marker to the right of the NP) with the notion of ‘assumed familiarity’ (Prince 1981) and topicality. The rice in 0 is therefore some particular rice known to the participants and occurs to the left of a specificity marker:

(61) Sétù nò xò [lɛ̀sì Gúkómé̀ tòn lɔ̀]
 Setu hab buy rice Gukome poss det_[+spec, +def]

‘Setu habitually buys the aforementioned rice from Gukome.’

(Aboh 2004: 2)

The specificity marker is located in Topic, and the nominal (a predicate, in Aboh’s account) raises to Spec,TopP to check the [specificity] feature. The process is independent of clausal topicalisation, which can take place following the nominal topicalisation:

(62) [lɛ̀sì Gúkómé̀ tòn lɔ̀] yà é nò víví gbáú
 rice Gukome poss det_[+spec, +def] top 3sg hab sweet very

‘As for the aforementioned rice from Gukome, it is very sweet.’

(Aboh 2004: 2)

In the P-drop constructions, then, the noun is part of an NP that is a Topic in the sense of assumed familiarity, consistent with the restriction to





‘stereotypical location’ for Greek (Gehrke & Lekakou (2012: 92) and ‘the automaticity/stererotypy of the inference required in generating a Givenness status’ (Ariel 2001: 32). Baldwin et al (2006: 166) note that the class referring to institutions are ‘semi-productive’. This set of bare singular nouns referring to institutionalised activities, plus place names and pronouns *here* and *there* are precisely those that occur with *to*, and that make up the majority of common nouns that also appear with P-drop in English. On this analysis, movement to the TopP checks [specificity] and prevents the determiner from appearing overtly to lexicalise this feature.

If the topicalised element is an NP, this does not explain the degraded acceptability of sentences with an NP modifier (**I’m going local shops*). These examples can be ruled out on two grounds. One is that pre-modifying adjectives are typically incompatible with the relevant context-induced salience anyway. In context, there can only be one set of shops intended, else by definition it cannot be a context-induced topic. Secondly, if the nominal is an activity-naming predicate rather than an entity (Aboh 2004; Stvan 2009: 321), adjectival modification is ruled out in any case.

It is not clear that there is a way to determine whether the P-drop constructions in English are an instance of Longobardi/Matushansky-style N-to-D or Aboh-style noun-topicalisation. Given that there is little independent evidence of the existence of DP-internal TopP in English, it seems prudent to assume N-to-D head movement.¹² This also straightforwardly rules out the possibility of nominal modification as well as omission of the determiner, giving the restriction to bare nouns without needing to suggest that the DP structure is lacking.

I have explained the absence of determiners in constructions with such topicalised nouns. Now I turn to the reason for the PP being a directional Goal. At a superficial level, this is because only *to* can be null in English, licensing only directional Goals. Note that English and Greek differ on the availability of locative arguments with P-drop just because the preposition *se* in Greek means

¹² Korean provides further evidence of the link between topicalisation and bare nouns, however. Kwon & Zribi-Hertz (2006) point out that the lack of *-leul* topic-marking causes a bare object (often a proper noun) to be incorporated, giving rise to a ‘name-worthy activity’ (2006: 15).





both 'to' and 'at', while English has separate prepositions for these two meanings and only *to* can be null. But there is a more principled explanation available, and it is the same thing that requires the verb to be semantically weak *go* or *come*: the conflation of Path into the verb, as in verb-framed languages such as Greek and Italian.

Talmy (1985 *et seq.*) classified languages as either verb-framed, like Italian, or satellite-framed, like English. In the former, Path or directionality is conflated into the verb, and manner of motion must be expressed as an adjunct:

- (63) La botella entró a la cueva flotando
 the bottle moved.in to the cave floating
 'The bottle floated into the cave.'

(Talmy 1985: 69)

In satellite-framed languages, the manner of motion may be expressed on the verb, as Path is not conflated and is expressed in a 'satellite' adjunct (e.g. *into the cave* in (63) above).

This has the effect that in verb-framed languages, manner-of-motion verbs cannot express directionality. Such verbs can express only location rather than direction:

- (64) The boat floated under the bridge.
 = The boat floated from somewhere else to under the bridge.
 = The boat, stationary, floated while under the bridge.
- (65) La barca galleggiò sotto il ponte.
 the boat floated under the bridge
 = The boat, stationary, floated while under the bridge.

(Folli and Ramchand 2005: 82, my paraphrases)

Compare (66), which is not grammatical at all, but if it meant anything it would be location, rather than direction.

- (66) *The bottle floated bridge.

Gehrke & Lekakou (2012) claim that prepositions can only be omitted in v-framed languages. While English is a satellite-framed language, and can therefore use manner-of-motion verbs with a directionality adjunct, the same





effect as seen for the verb-framed languages obtains when Path is incorporated into the verb. This incorporation happens just when P is null, in order to license the null P, as argued by Den Dikken (2010).

(67) I [went+TO [P_{dir} TO [P_{loc} [DP D university [NP N university]]]]]

5. Conclusion

The non-standard Southeast English construction referred to here as P-drop is the result of several interacting syntactic processes, all independently motivated. The noun, a proper name or bare singular count noun with a directional Goal interpretation, incorporates into D to check specificity and thereby prevents the occurrence of a determiner and nominal modification. Meanwhile, the preposition can be null just in the case that it is directional *to* and incorporated into the verb for licensing, which gives it the concomitant requirement of being a pure motion verb and not a manner-of-motion verb. This combination of properties differs from other English dialects so far examined, namely the Northwest Englishes of Ormskirk and Liverpool. The construction resembles very closely the equivalent Greek P-drop, and differences in the nature of English and Greek shed light on the details of the syntactic analysis required.

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Laura R. Bailey

e-mail: L.R.Bailey@kent.ac.uk

University of Kent

