Let’s Go Sussex
Null Prepositions in Southeast English

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University of Kent

University of Sussex, 14 Feb 2018
(Some) prepositions are omitted **all** the time in non-standard varieties of English all over the world.

Let me introduce the phenomenon, offer my analysis of the syntax, and then you tell me if it’s found in the local Sussex variety!
Outline

1. Data
2. Description
3. Analysis
4. Conclusion
‘Normal’ P-drop
(We all do this)

‘Home’

(1) Let’s go home

Compare:

(2) I’m at home
(3) I’ve bought a new home
Overheard in Kent

(4) Does this train go Canterbury West? [Train passenger]
(5) I’m not sure if I’m going to come library after this. [Student]
(6) So we went coffee and then came here. [James C.]
(7) Not been Shoreditch in ages. [Tom L.]
A global phenomenon (eWAVE)
Spotted in the wild in the UK

1. London (MLE)
2. Kent: Canterbury, Faversham, Medway, Margate, etc.
3. Manchester
4. Leicester
5. Reports from correspondents in Essex, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Birmingham, Stoke, S. Yorks, Kettering, Cornwall, Glasgow, Cardiff
6. And NOT in West Sussex
Spotted in the wild in the UK

Figure: Bermondsey; photo Laura Bailey
Outline

1. Data
2. Description
3. Analysis
4. Conclusion
Restrictions

Locations

(4) Does this train go Canterbury West? [Train passenger]
(5) I’m not sure if I’m going to come library after this. [Student]

But:

(6) So we went coffee and then came here. [James C.]
(8) Come Daddy just for a minute. [Pip I.]
(9) They go holiday. [Mark O.]
Restrictions

Familiar or anaphoric

(7)  Not been Shoreditch in ages.  

But:

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

Semantically weak verbs

(7) Not been Shoreditch in ages.  [Tom L.]
(5) I’m not sure if I’m going to come library after this.  [Student]

But:

(11) This train calls Rainham, Sittingbourne...  [Train announcer]
(12) It smelt coffee.  [Man in the pub]
Restrictions

Directional ‘to’

(4) Does this train go Canterbury West? [Train passenger]
(5) I’m not sure if I’m going to come library after this. [Student]

Other functional prepositions

(11) This train calls Rainham, Sittingbourne... [Train announcer]
(9) They go holiday. [Mark O.]
Restrictions

Lack of determiner

(5) I’m not sure if I’m going to come library after this. [Student]

But:

(13) Should I go these services? [Lucy D.]
(14) Have you been the surface of the moon lately? [Maxine Peake, Kinder Surprise TV advert]
More facts

In questions

(15) What pub are you going? [Jayne H.]

No adverbs

(16) * Come with me quickly Dalston. [David H.]
More facts

Other languages

(17) pao (ston) kinimatografo.
    I.go (to.the.ACC) cinema.ACC
    ‘I am going to the movies.’
    (Greek; Ioannidou & den Dikken 2006: 1)

(18) morgen ich geh arbeitsamt.
    tomorrow I go job.centre
    ‘Tomorrow, I will go to the job centre.’
    (Kiezdeutsch; Wiese 2009: 787 ex(4c))
Creoles generally

(19) timoun yo al Mache Pòspyewo
children DEF.PL go Market Post-Pierrot

‘The children have gone to the Post-Pierrot Market’

(Haitian Creole French, DeGraff 2007: 122)

(20) He been Miami, but he never been Alabama

(Bahamian Creole, eWAVE example 1449)

And as with the British English varieties, ‘to’ is omitted but ‘from’ is usually required.
Speaker awareness

‘Students... are surprised to be corrected on it, as if they didn’t know it was an error.’

‘Wow, do people really speak like that?’

‘That’s how the chavs at [nearby school] talk.’
Speaker awareness

Christian Ilbury @ChristianIlbury · Jan 30
Yeah, I had an inkling MLE speakers use it for institutions that user has some closeness with (lol, Nandos). So, one spkr says 'go club' (the youth group he goes every night) but 'go to mosque' (he's not Muslim'). But just an idea!

Laura Bailey @linguistlaura · Jan 30
"the youth group he goes (to) every night"...?!?

Christian Ilbury @ChristianIlbury
Replies to @linguistlaura @drswissmiss

Apparently even in my variety I use null prepositions...
6:04 AM · 30 Jan 2018

Hannah you are completely right of course!! Thinking back to when I lived in North Staffs this is clear. It happens in Wolverhampton in areas that are white and really have almost zero multicultural influence so the question of its origin remains....
# A first survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>No. out of 7</th>
<th>Rating out of 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Go+familiar+bareN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m going school</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m going library</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COME+familiar+bareN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He’s coming school with us next year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come (the) pub with me</td>
<td>5 (the)</td>
<td>(2.74), 3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other motion verb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I nipped the shops quickly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I jogged work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Online pilot study, Margate paper survey (Lizzy Aumonier, 2016)
A first survey

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjunct</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m staying library</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-directional</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This belongs Sam</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This road goes town</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ditransitive</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My nan sent me the shops</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table: Online pilot study, Margate paper survey (Lizzy Aumonier, 2016)*
The noun *work* raises to D, preventing the occurrence of a determiner.

(Or: Collins (2007) analyses *home* as lacking DP structure, explaining the impossibility of plurals and predicting a lack of case in languages with morphological case.)
Moving on

From the edge of DP, it can raise through KP and PlaceP to PathP, where it incorporates Case and locative/directional features.

(e.g. Collins 2007)
Some predictions

- Possessive determiners and adverbs preceding the PP (cf. (16)) should both be bad (David Hall, p.c.).

- See also Collins (2007), who contrasts *My trip (*to) home* with *My trip *(to) John’s house*, and posits a null *go* in the former (as he argues that the noun incorporates into the verb).

- How do speakers who have null Ps judge possessive determiners and adverbs?
Some predictions

7 point scale, online survey, filtered out those who didn’t accept the construction at all (first question asked about *I’m going school*, uncontroversially grammatical for those with P-drop).

- **Bare nouns** (*The cat’s going vets*) 3.29
- **Adverbs** (*They’re quickly going shops*) 2.41
- **Adjective preceding noun** (*She’s going new Tesco*) 2.82

But...

- **Possessive determiners** (*I’m going headmaster’s office*) 3.70
  
  (Data from online respondents, Jasmine Bradbrook, ongoing)

  cf. David Hall’s students (p.c.) 5 out of 7

  (6.6 for normal P-drop)
Accounting for the variation

This ‘roll-up’ analysis explains the ungrammaticality of *I danced work* and other verbs of movement.

cf. verb-framed vs. satellite-framed languages (Talmy 1991):

(21) The bottle entered the cave floating. (Romance languages)
(22) The bottle floated into the cave. (English)

**Conflation** (Acedo-Matellán & Mateu 2013):

- **v-framed** PATH conflates with v, yielding a directional verb plus manner adjunct (*enter floating*)
- **s-framed** PATH and v do not conflate, yielding a manner verb plus PATH (*float into*)

**Null Ps:**

PATH conflates with v, yielding a directional verb and not a manner verb (*contra* the ‘Ormskirk type’ (Biggs 2015, Myler 2013): *I nipped shops*)
### A typology of null Ps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent-type</td>
<td>Restricted to ‘go/come to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anaphoric restriction on nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cf. Italian and Greek varieties, Manchester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ormskirk-type</td>
<td>Wider set of nouns and verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restriction to goal arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cf. Liverpool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Localised feature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLE-type</td>
<td>Behaves like Kent-type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many other functional words affected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cf. Kiezdeutsch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contact-induced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outline

1 Data

2 Description

3 Analysis

4 Conclusion
Null Ps are typologically widespread. Their presence or absence can be contact-induced but need not be. Their syntax (in the Kent type) is the result of already-existing processes (conflation) applying to an extended class of *home*-type light nouns. The class of nouns varies by language but must be salient, anaphoric, and is semantically determined.


Cattaneo, Andrea. 2009. *It Is All About Clitics: The Case of a Northern Italian Dialect Like Bellinzonese*. PhD thesis. NYU.


Thanks

My students, Lizzy Aumonier and Jasmine Bradbrook
David Hall, for discussion
Many twitter linguists for information and data