TURUN YLIOPISTO

“Here’s herself”

An Analysis of Nonstandard Hiberno-English Grammatical Features in *Normal People: The Scripts*

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March 2026

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Number of pages: 22 pages, 1 appendix

The role of sociolinguistics in dialectological studies is of increasing interest and importance in contemporary research. Due to its historical development and role, Hiberno-English as the primary variety in Ireland offers copious opportunities to inspect its features and their sociolinguistic implications. This thesis explores the nonstandard Hiberno-English grammatical features evident in *Normal People: The Scripts* and the social patterns in which they occur. Through close reading selected features are identified in the material and noted along with the speakers of those features. Standard English is utilised as a reference grammar to interpret the marked features. An analysis on the social factors of the speakers enables the search for social patterns in the language use. The results of this thesis include an overview of the frequency and nature of three nonstandard Hiberno-English grammatical features in the data as well as their association with two social factors. The strongest social pattern emerges between gender and the nonstandard features. The results of this study reveal that contemporary literature contains significant instances of dialectal vernacular and that certain social factors correlate with that language use. Simultaneously, the results also highlight the multilayered and complex nature of sociolinguistic research.

Key words: dialectology, Hiberno-English, grammar, nonstandard, sociolinguistics, linguistic variable, social pattern

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1 Introduction

The vast background of a person manifests itself noticeably in a person's use of language, more specifically in the use of a native tongue. In a widespread language such as English, a notable indication of somebody's background, geographically above all, can often be the use of a certain dialect. A customer at a restaurant ordering "chips" as a side for their meal rather than "fries" usually suggests a British upbringing over an American upbringing. Additionally, requesting a jug of "water" either with the /r/ sound pronounced or not pronounced can also uncover possibilities of linguistic roots. In like manner, the grammar of language use is not insignificant. For example, the modal verb (such as *may* or *could*) employed in the phrasing of a request may be more common in one dialect than another and therefore favour a specific background. Dialects are thus forms of language that differ from one another not only based on vocabulary and pronunciation but also grammar. However, within the branches of dialectological and sociolinguistic studies, dialect grammar has been of a majorly lesser interest to researchers in the past, compared to phonology and terminology (Filppula 1999, 1). Nevertheless, that does not imply that the syntactic differences between English varieties are not compelling enough to warrant research. In recent decades, many researchers have conducted thorough analyses into the grammatical characteristics of various dialects (ibid.).

One group of dialects in particular that has been under study is Hiberno-English, alternatively Irish English, spoken widely throughout Ireland (Filppula 1999, 1). What causes Hiberno-English to be exceptionally fruitful in terms of syntactical deviations are its roots that stem from the longtime language contact between Irish and English (ibid.). This coexistence of two distinct languages with their independent structures and systems has resulted in numerous unique characteristics, which can still be perceived today in many aspects of the variety, including its grammatical patterns.

This thesis examines some of the nonstandard grammatical features of Hiberno-English that appear in *Normal People: The Scripts* (2020) as well as the social factors which potentially influence the dialect usage in the material. The appearance of Hiberno-English grammar in literature has been studied in the past, such as in the works of James Joyce (Conde-Parilla 2018). However, there appears a noticeable gap in existing research regarding more recent Irish prose. Additionally, the previously mentioned prior disfavour of dialect grammar further broadens the gap. There are two main research questions the current study seeks to answer:

1) How can nonstandard Hiberno-English grammatical features be identified in *Normal People: The Scripts*?

2) What kind of social patterns can be found in the characters' use of nonstandard grammatical features in the script book?

Dialects are due to change, and the variation and evolution of Hiberno-English provides many opportunities for further research.

This thesis begins by presenting the relevant theoretical framework and existing research, followed by sections on the material and methods respectively. Following that, an analysis is carried out on the nonstandard Hiberno-English features in the material as well as on the social factors and patterns considered in relation to those features. Finally, this thesis concludes with a discussion of the findings and a final conclusion.

2 Theory and background

This section outlines the theoretical framework of the study. Section 2.1 presents the theory of Hiberno-English grammar, section 2.2 considers the nature of linguistic variables and section 2.3 gives an overview of social factors as an influence on language variation.

2.1 Hiberno-English grammar

As mentioned previously, Hiberno-English (henceforth HE) is a vernacular spoken with varying degrees throughout Ireland. Though many features of HE are largely shared by the population across regional boundaries, the linguistic outcomes of the Irish–English language contact may be regarded as more significant in certain areas over others. Filppula (1999) has conducted a thorough corpus-based analysis into the grammatical features of HE. His data for the research consists primarily of southern HE dialects, but the author notes that the features are to a large degree apparent in all varieties of the vernacular (Filppula 1999, 2). In this thesis, HE is regarded as a general entity, and its different varieties are not acknowledged. Filppula presents a descriptive and contact linguistic overview of HE grammar (1999). Namely, his perspective on the grammar concerns the history of the dialect and, therefore, the features that are considered to potentially be a result of the language contact between Irish and English (Filppula 1999, 3).

The grammar of HE has also been examined by Harris (1993), whose focus, contrary to Filppula's, is specifically on the more noticeably nonstandard grammatical features. Nonstandard, in this context, refers to the fact that such features are not, for example, included in grammar books or dictionaries as standard forms are (Harris 1993, 139). It does not, therefore, refer to any inferiority compared to common norms (ibid.). Additionally, Harris notes that though these characteristics are considered nonstandard, it also does not imply that they are any less systematic than standard language or, for example, simply incidental individual deviations from it (ibid.).

Both Filppula and Harris consider their respective characteristics of interest in a descriptive manner in independent sections that focus on one major aspect of English grammar at a time. The sections consider units such as the noun phrase and the verb phrase, and they are provided with examples to illustrate the observations. Similar categorisation is transferred to this thesis. The discipline the research of Filppula and Harris falls under is named dialectology, the study of dialects, which is a field with its autonomous methods and goals

(Chambers and Trudgill 1998, 32). However, dialectal research often overlaps with various other branches of linguistic study as the perspective on dialectology shifts (ibid.).

2.2 Linguistic variables and their markedness

Whereas traditional dialectology focuses on the geography of language and its spatial differentiation, urban dialectology is often more concerned with the relationships between language and its many social factors (Chambers and Trudgill 1998, 57). This connection establishes the relevance of sociolinguistics regarding the study of a dialect. Variationist sociolinguistics is a branch of sociolinguistics which concentrates on language variation and change (Tagliamonte 2012, 1). Language does not only vary from location to location, but also from individual to individual in the same location. Noticeable distinctions exist, for instance, in the language use between generations where conventions have evolved throughout time. Furthermore, variation also exists within speakers as they make choices while speaking and alternate among them. For example, the dynamic formality of a situation often requires fluctuating vernacular. As this study focuses on certain grammatical features, the notion that they are options among many that a speaker chooses is valuable to recognise. All of the variability of language also correlates with separate factors which leads to certain variants being more apparent in one situation than another (Chambers and Trudgill 1998, 70).

These mentioned variants may also be called linguistic variables, referring to the different possible ways the same thing can be said (Tagliamonte 2012, 4). Linguistic variables can simply refer to the existing synonyms of the same word or to near synonyms, which are lexemes that share a fundamental portion of their sense (ibid.). Yet, when focusing on the variability of grammatical features, strict synonyms and near synonyms are of lesser relevance. Nonetheless, the concept transfers to syntactic structures. In grammar, there are also corresponding ways to relay the same information. For example, as the word order and word classes of English are flexible and comprehensive, numerous alternate constructions of the same information are achievable. Moreover, the variability of language, and grammatical characteristics, is especially viable to discern in forms that may be considered nonstandard or dialectal and therefore stand out (ibid.).

The nonstandard variables in language may alternatively be titled “marked” forms. The term marked belongs to the study of markedness which delves into the relations between linguistic features, constructions and rules (Battistella 1996, 7). In simple terms, these relations can be

explained by the terms marked and unmarked. There are several approaches that can be taken regarding the concept of markedness (Elsik and Matras 2006, 7–15). However, in the context of this study, the understanding that some linguistic variables are unmarked and some marked is sufficient. An unmarked variable refers to a component that is more usual, frequent or expected among the alternatives. On the other hand, the term marked signifies a component that is more unexpected, less usual or less frequent. As the focus of this study is on the nonstandard grammatical features of HE, the marked forms bear the importance. However, as the atypical features may only be understood when juxtapositioned to their unmarked forms (Tagliamonte 2012, 3), the standard forms must also not be ignored.

2.3 Social factors influencing language variation

In connection with variability, as mentioned before, there are factors which inevitably influence the frequency of a variant, or a linguistic variable. In sociolinguistics, the relevant factors are the many social factors that may correlate with a certain feature. These factors include agents such as social class, gender, ethnicity and age. When social factors are taken into consideration in the study of linguistic variables, these variants are often transformed into sociolinguistic variables. A sociolinguistic variable is a linguistic variable which correlates with a non-linguistic variable belonging to the social context (Labov 1972, 237). The non-linguistic variable may concern, for example, the speaker, the setting or the addressee (ibid.)

Furthermore, sociolinguistic research concerning variables and social factors can lead to the discovery of social patterns. For example, early sociolinguistic research has found that some variables are used at a higher frequency by high status classes, at a lower frequency by low status classes and at an intermediary frequency by the classes that fall in between (Fasold 1990, 224). This reoccurring tendency refers to a social pattern and when the same behaviour is found across several studies, it indicates a causal link between class and a variable (Tagliamonte 2012, 26). The wide selection of existing linguistic variables and social factors create numerous opportunities to explore and establish social patterns in language. As the focus of this study is on the nonstandard grammatical features of HE, these are the linguistic variables that this thesis is interested in in terms of correlation with social factors and the encounter of potential social patterns. The strength of social patterns often vary, and possibly some variables lack a pattern altogether.

3 Material and methods

In this section, the grounds for the analysis are underlaid through presentation of the material and methods of the study. Section 3.1. introduces and discusses the data used in this research, while section 3.2. outlines the methods.

3.1 *Normal People:* the screenplay

Normal People (2018) by Sally Rooney is a critically acclaimed contemporary novel centred around the dynamic relationship between two Irish teenagers, Marianne and Connell, and their journey into adulthood. Both characters come from the town of Sligo in Ireland where their story begins. Later on, Marianne and Connell reconnect in the capital city of Dublin, which is another major setting for the events of the narrative. Throughout the progression of the plot, many characters are introduced, both from their shared hometown as well as their common place of study, Trinity College Dublin. Most of the characters involved in the story are Irish and, therefore, speak in an Irish dialect. This provides an extensive array of language to examine HE characteristics, while observing the turns of events of Marianne and Connell's intertwined lives.

A couple of years after the release of the novel, Marianne and Connell's story was also adapted for the screen in the mini television series *Normal People* (2020). Shortly after, the complete screenplays of the drama were released to the public in the form of *Normal People: The Scripts* (2020). Although each mode of storytelling tells the same story of Marianne and Connell, minor disparities between the adaptations exist. However, this thesis only considers the script book and its language when analysing the material to avoid superfluity and repetition. This decision was motivated by the fact that the dialogue of the novel has most likely been intentionally modified for the series to accurately resemble natural real-life vernacular as it is orally performed by actors. Additionally, the script book provides the language in a clearer manner than the novel. The lines of the characters are easy to spot whereas the original novel does not, for instance, use apostrophes. Furthermore, the only part examined in this study is the dialogue as the aim is to analyse the characters' speech. Therefore, scene description, among other text, is ignored for reasons of relevance.

3.2 Methods

The approach to examining nonstandard HE grammatical features in the material began with choosing the features to be inspected. This thesis considers three separate nonstandard features of HE grammar: the unbound reflexive, the *after* perfect and the speech-unit final *like*. To ensure adequate coverage, as only a limited number of HE features could be analysed in the material, the chosen features each represent a different area of grammar. The three domains are the noun phrase, the verb phrase and other grammatical devices. Close reading was utilised as the method to locate the selected features in the data. As access to the script book was solely physical, no search tools were applied. Once all the occasions of the features appearing had been identified, they were documented along with the character who used the specific feature: the speaker.

Furthermore, a critical tool for the analysis, and a needed extension for definite results, was the use of a reference grammar. As mentioned previously, nonstandard features are not coded in dictionaries or grammar books, and they may only be fully understood when in comparison to their standard counterparts (Tagliamonte 2012, 3). Therefore, HE and its grammatical features are paralleled to Standard English (StE) and its characteristics. The grammar utilised as a reference grammar in this study is the Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English (SGSWE) as it states that it is suitable to be used as a frame of reference (Biber, Conrad and Leech 2002, 2). SGSWE also declares that their description of grammar remains within the bounds of StE, if not specifically presented as otherwise (Biber, Conrad and Leech 2002, 6).

After the chosen features had been established as being external from standard language use, the social aspects connected to them were analysed and potential social patterns were tested. There are three characters that are considered in detail concerning their social backgrounds: Eric, Connell and Ger. These characters are examined as they are the speakers of the selected nonstandard features. There is one additional speaker, Rob, but focus on him is minor as he produces only one example of a frequent feature. Furthermore, this study concentrates on two major components when considering the social factors which may influence dialect usage: gender and social class. These factors were chosen as they are significant and well-researched in the field of sociolinguistics as well as relevant and prominent issues in the context of the material. This study applies a binary division in its analysis of social class: middle-class and working-class, as only objective indicators were regarded when establishing the social status of a character and as further categorisation would

be challenging and unnecessary. Objective indicators are elements, such as education or income, that are not tied to a specific person's view of someone's status (c.f. subjective indicators) (Labov [1990] 1991, 220). These indicators were relied on as they are most clearly presented in the material. Lastly, in the case of gender, there are also only two categories, female and male, as the material does not include representation of further genders. This study is qualitative in nature and, therefore, the analysis as well as the results of both the grammatical features and the social factors reflect this aspect.

4 Analysis

In what follows, the analysis of this study is carried out. Section 4.1 examines the chosen grammatical features in the material, while section 4.2. evaluates the social factors at interest concerning the speakers of those features.

4.1 Nonstandard HE grammatical features

This section provides an overview of the three nonstandard grammatical features analysed in the material. Each feature is described and explained through similar StE constructions and an example of the feature in the material is presented. Section 4.1.1 considers the grammatical feature representing the noun phrase, section 4.1.2 looks at the verb phrase, and the feature analysed in section 4.1.3 is a discourse particle. In each of the examples in this section, the relevant feature has been emphasised.

4.1.1 The unbound reflexive

The first nonstandard grammatical feature characteristic to HE grammar examined in the material is the use of the unbound reflexive (UR). Generally, reflexive pronouns (ending in *-self* or *-selves*) in their reflexive use require a noun phrase within the same clause to which they refer to. Examples of this standard use of the reflexive pronoun exist in the material as well, for example: “everyone […] is asking themselves the same questions” (Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 288). Here the reflexive pronoun “themselves” stands in a coreferential relation with the compound pronoun “everyone”. In contrast, a reflexive pronoun is unbound when it lacks an antecedent, i.e. a noun phrase the pronoun refers back to. In these cases, the reference is implicit as the immediate linguistic context does not mention the unit the UR alludes to.

The material features two instances of characters using the UR in their vernacular. The first example includes two occurrences of the UR within a single utterance. In the example, a character, Eric, converses with another character, Connell. The speaker, Eric, elaborates on his previous statement: “What was going on there?”, when asked to do so: “What d’you mean?”. Eric clarifies by using the UR that he wishes to know what is going on with a female character, “herself”, and Connell, “yourself”:

(1) “With *herself* and *yourself*” (Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 92)

Example (1), although not a fully grammatical sentence, conveys meaning but requires adequate context to provide full comprehension. As the two reflexives applied by the speaker are not construed with a noun or a pronoun within the same sentence, they are both unbound. However, the missing antecedents can be deduced from the proximal context. “Yourself”, as established, refers to Connell, whom Eric is currently in dialogue with. Furthermore, “herself” refers to a character mentioned by the speaker in his previous turn to speak: Marianne. In StE, the reflexive pronouns would not be used without explicit referents that connect them to Connell and Marianne. Rather, the URs would be replaced by the accusative personal pronouns “her” and “you” as they are used when pronouns are the complement of a preposition, the preposition being “with” in this case. The use of accusative personal pronouns would not require antecedents.

Another instance of the UR in the material also appears in a slightly different purpose. The speaker is once again Eric in dialogue with Connell. They are discussing a female character, Marianne, when suddenly she enters the conversation, which Eric explicitly states:

(2) “Here’s *herself*” (Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 292)

In (2), while the sentence appears fully grammatical, the reflexive pronoun “herself” once again lacks an antecedent. There is no other noun or pronoun within the bounds of the statement to which the reflexive could refer to. It is, therefore, unbound. The surrounding linguistic context, however, once more reveals Marianne as the referent. She is referred to by name three statements earlier by Eric and by the pronoun “she” leading up to (2) by both Eric and Connell. In this example, the use of an UR is again nonstandard and marked, as StE would replace the reflexive pronoun with the nominative personal pronoun “she” since the pronoun functions as the subject of the sentence. The two instances of the UR in the material demonstrate that despite the nonstandard nature of the feature, the unbound reflexive can be used in multiple ways in HE.

4.1.2 The *after* perfect

When looking at the verb phrase in HE, there is one feature which is inherently Irish, and that is the *after* perfect (AFP). The AFP equates more or less to the present perfect in StE, which is also accounted for in the material, for example: "I've just finished mopping" (Rooney, Birch and O'Rowe 2020, 28). The present perfect is formed with the auxiliary *has* or *have* and the past participle of a verb, the *-ed* form, and it refers to an action in the past that affects the present. The AFP also refers to an activity or event in the past which similarly influences the present moment.

The material of this study contains only one occasion of the AFP being used. It appears when a character, Ger, calls another character, Alan, to request a ride since he has just missed his bus, which he declares:

(3) "I*'m after missing* the bus" (Rooney, Birch and O'Rowe 2020, 20)

In (3), the structure of the AFP becomes evident. It is constructed with the conjugated form of the verb *be*, followed by *after*, and ending in a verb in its *-ing* form, i.e. the present participle. In StE, as mentioned previously, the AFP would likely be replaced by the present perfect, and it would convey roughly the same meaning: "I have missed the bus". However, no existing form of StE carries quite the same sense of recency or immediacy as the AFP, as it recounts an event that took place directly before the statement, whereas the present perfect can be used relatively loosely in the future. The AFP is a one-of-a-kind syntactical structure in the English context and in its exclusivity represents HE suitably.

4.1.3 The speech-unit final *like*

The final HE feature considered in the material is a single-word grammatical device, the speech-unit final *like* (SUF *like*). The SUF *like* has been studied widely, and its function has been questioned and contemplated depending on the research. However, in this study, the SUF *like* is only considered as a discourse-pragmatic *like* that differs from other variants of *like* with a discourse-pragmatic function and other similar words with alike functions. The other *like* variants are the speech-unit medial *like* and the speech-unit initial *like*, which both

take scope over the following constituents of a statement, whereas the scope of the SUF *like* reaches backwards to the previous constituents. An example of a forward-reaching speech-unit medial *like* can also be found in the material: “I can’t see myself like in a tie” (Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 55). Here, the *like* variant does not conclude the sentence but is instead located midway and takes scope over the words that follow: “in a tie”.

Out of the features examined in the material, the SUF *like* is the most prominent, appearing six times in total (see Appendix 1). However, its grammatical function remains the same through each individual example. The example presented here is spoken by Connell who expresses his thoughts in a conversation with Marianne:

(4) “I barely know what to say half the time *like*” (Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 153)

As is the nature of the SUF *like*, in (4) it can be found at the very end of the utterance. Though it is not necessary for the grammaticality of the sentence, the SUF *like* is a linguistic marker that causes the sentence to have an unmarked quality. *Like* as a discourse particle in general is not in a straightforward manner a part of a certain word group. However, it can be stated that it is not a discourse connective, such as a conjunction or an adverbial, but rather similar to words such as *well* and *um* (Siegel 2002, 37–38). *Well*, for example, can be deemed a type of insert, a discourse marker, which in StE tends to appear at the beginning of an utterance (Biber, Conrad and Leech 2002, 450). When the SUF *like* is considered a similar linguistic marker, its nonstandard nature is highlighted in the fact that its position is sentence-final as opposed to occurring at the start of a turn. Similarly, the SUF *like* differs from the more common positions of the speech-medial and speech-initial *likes*, which do not end an utterance but rather start it or occur in the middle. Therefore, were the discourse particle to occur in StE, it would likely feature in the following ways: “*Like* I barely know what to say half the time” or “I barely know what to *like* say half the time”. As the SUF *like* is the most frequent in the material among the chosen features, it implicates an established status as part of HE grammar.

To conclude, as mentioned previously, the characters examined in this study are Connell, Eric and Ger. The presented examples (1) and (2) on the UR were spoken by Eric. The single

example of the AFP, (3), was uttered by Ger and the example on the SUF *like*, (4), was produced by Connell. All instances of the UR and AFP in the material were demonstrated in the analysis. The instances of the SUF *like* not presented as examples previously but that appear in the material can be found in Appendix 1. The table reveals that Connell speaks three out of the five remaining examples on the SUF *like*. Additionally, Eric also produces one SUF *like* and Rob, a character not analysed in this study, is the last to include the feature in his vernacular. All in all, altogether nine instances of nonstandard HE grammar were located in the material.

4.2 Social factors

This section considers the social factors of the characters who were found to implement the chosen nonstandard grammatical features in their speech. The aim is to determine whether any social patterns can be detected when analysing the speakers of the examples presented in the previous section, 4.1. Subsection 4.2.1. focuses on gender as a social factor that affects language use, while 4.2.2. examines the social class of the characters.

4.2.1 Gender

As the speakers of the linguistic variables were documented, an immediate trend arose that united all speakers of the nonstandard HE features in the material. Each speaker of each feature is male. That includes Connell, Eric and Ger as well as Rob who is not a main focus of the analysis. None of the selected three features are compatible with female characters of the material. Therefore, the marked variants of HE grammar demonstrate a strong association with male speakers. This indicates a social pattern between the AFP, the UR and the SUF *like* and the male gender. However, the pattern is stronger where the feature is more frequent. Thus, the SUF *like* as the most prominent feature has the strongest association with the male gender, whereas the AFP as the rarest feature shows the weakest correlation. Furthermore, although only the nonstandard features are thoroughly analysed, it can also be observed that two of the three examples of the parallel StE features drawn from the material are, in contrast, by female speakers. The presented standard use of the reflexive pronoun in 4.1.1. is uttered by Connell's female therapist whereas the example on the present perfect in 4.1.2. is produced by Connell's mother. The example of the speech-medial *like,* however, is spoken by Connell. The standard language use of the material is not analysed and any social patterns in connection to it are not explored. However, the previous observation further supports the

finding that male characters use the nonstandard features to a larger degree than female characters in the data.

4.2.2 Social class

Social class is a significant theme in the material of this study. The main characters, Marianne and Connell, belong to different levels in social hierarchy and the issue of differing social classes is one factor which influences the relationship between the two. Out of the three characters taken into consideration in this study, Connell's social class becomes the most evident. For instance, one indicator of his status being working-class is the fact that Connell's mother works as a housecleaner for Marianne's middle-class family. It is also acknowledged in the work that Marianne's family does not pay Connell's mother well which reaffirms the fact that the income Connell's family receives is lower. Later, Connell's working-class status is further reinforced when at Trinity College he has a hard time fitting in whereas Marianne finds her place easily among the many other wealthy students at the school. Though Connell only uses one of the nonstandard features examined in the material, the SUF *like*, he uses it the most out of all characters (see Appendix 1) and unmistakably middle-class characters, such as Marianne, are not found to use it. The two other characters who apply the SUF *like* are Eric and Rob who belong to Connell's friend group. Overall, there appears a small pattern between the SUF *like* and working-class. The data point in this direction, although, the evidence is weak.

Eric is another character who uses the SUF *like* and the sole speaker of the UR in the material. He is a close friend of Connell and appears in the work regularly. Despite his strong presence, Eric's social class is more challenging to judge as it is not made explicit in the material. However, the fact that Eric belongs to the same friend group as working-class Connell may allude to him being of similar background. Especially as Eric is known for often making jokes at Marianne's expense with his friends and these jokes may be influenced by the privilege they see Marianne to have. Additionally, it is a reasonable assumption that he may be working-class since he attends a public school as does Connell. However, this expectation is challenged by the fact that middle-class Marianne also attends the same institution even though her family could afford private education. In conclusion, only Eric using the UR could imply that it may be more likely used by working-class characters. However, the results are not conclusive, and Eric cannot be placed as definitely as Connell within the working-class category.

Lastly, Ger is the only character in the material who uses the AFP. Ger is a friend of Alan, Marianne's brother, and only appears in the book to a very limited extent. Therefore, information of his social class is even more restricted than that of Eric's. It could be speculated that Ger's social class mirrors Alan's since the book has a subtle theme of people from one class associating themselves with their own class more than another. Additionally, Alan comes across as extremely class-conscious which could suggest that he monitors who he associates with. On the other hand, social class in modern society, where *Normal People* takes place, does not determine relationships to a degree it might have previously and class differences do not positively regulate friendships. Therefore, due to limited instances of the AFP appearing and Ger's unknown status, a pattern cannot be determined between the AFP and a social class.

Overall, considering the relationship between the linguistic variables, their speakers and gender and class as social factors, a few patterns were detected. The strongest social pattern appears between the SUF *like* and the male gender. The other two nonstandard features also correlate with the male gender. Additionally, the SUF *like* demonstrates a slight pattern with working-class. The other two features do not plainly associate with a certain social class. Finally, it should also be noted that some found patterns might reflect character portrayal more than clear sociolinguistic trends. This is the result of the complexity of language variation and its, at times, unclear link to social factors.

5 Discussion

The aim of this study is to identify grammatical features in *Normal People: The Scripts* that are both nonstandard as well as considered a part of HE grammar. Additionally, this study explores the social factors of the characters who use the nonstandard HE grammatical features with the intention of detecting potential social patterns. The findings of this thesis, which include varying use of the chosen three HE features and indications of social patterns in that language use, provide answers to the research questions presented in the beginning of this study. The first established research question concerns the appearance of HE grammar by asking how nonstandard HE grammatical features can be identified in the material. Firstly, the cultural and linguistic settings of a literary work do not guarantee that notable instances of exclusive features of those contexts appear in the material. However, *Normal People: The Scripts*, despite its universality, was found to considerably credit its Irish framework when it comes to grammar. This study looked at three nonstandard grammatical HE features and their representation in the material: the UR, the AFP and the SUF *like.*

The UR, although it only appears twice in the material, is a significant nonstandard feature of HE. Studies have shown that its anaphoric use (referring to or replacing a word mentioned earlier) is more prevailing in HE than any other dialect of English (Kim and Song 2024, 620). Additionally, this study also found that the UR can be used in multiple ways as it exhibited two distinct grammatical roles. Earlier research has also noted the flexible nature of the UR: "[t]hey can occur, for example, in subject position, in object position, or as a prepositional complement" (Filppula 1999, 78). Furthermore, the AFP is another feature identified in the material. Although it is the least frequent out of the three, its status as a part of HE grammar cannot be argued as the structure only exists in HE (O'Keeffe and Moreno 2009, 518). This is because it descends directly from an Irish grammar structure (Filppula 1999, 101). Especially notable in the use of the AFP is the immediacy with which it occurs. It is used to recount an event that took place directly before the moment of speaking. Previous research often stresses this feature of the structure as O'Keeffe and Moreno (2009, 524) describe the "immediacy function" of the AFP and Harris (1993, 160) alternatively calls the AFP "hot-news". Lastly, the SUF *like* is the third HE feature that is recognised in the material. This study found that the SUF *like* contains the most representation in the material, which corresponds with Schweinberger's observation that it remains to this day a frequent feature of HE (2020, 89). The SUF *like* is a somewhat complex grammatical feature to examine since its function is

fairly abstract and obscure. However, it does fulfil the qualities of a discourse particle as it does not have a defined grammatical role, and its meaning is tied to the speaker's relation to the contents of an utterance (Siegel 2002, 38).

In relation to the second research question, concerning the role of social factors, the results suggest that the linguistic variables considered correlate with different social factors to varying degrees. The strongest social pattern was found between the SUF *like* and the male gender. However, the UR and the AFP also show an association with the male gender. These findings compare to the known correlation between the male gender and nonstandard language use that has earned labels such as the sociolinguistic "gender pattern" (Fasold 1990, 115–116). Additionally, in the context of this study, Labov's following statement is valid: [a]mong the clearest and most consistent results of sociolinguistic research [. . .] are the findings concerning the linguistic differentiation of men and women" ([1990] 1991, 205). Although this study addresses nonstandard HE language in a restricted manner, it appears that women indeed refrain from using nonstandard forms (Tagliamonte 2012, 32).

The second social factor examined was social class, which is a significant factor as the correlation between language use and social class is what first began the exploration into language variation and change. However, in this study, due to many limitations, solid social patterns between class and the features could not be established. Nonetheless, the study provides possible indications of social patterns. The pattern between the SUF *like* and working-class appears the most plausible. A pattern between the UR and working-class is also possible but not as supported by the evidence. Regardless, these potential patterns align with the findings that in Ireland the vernacular of a lower-class speaker is more enriched in dialecticism (Conde-Parrilla 2018, 313). Additionally, these findings relatively compare to the general observation that where social classes remain relevant, correlation prevails between classes and linguistic variables (Tagliamonte 2012, 26). However, the complexity of social identities, the poorness of indicators in the material and the richness of variability in linguistic behaviour among other factors cause the patterns regarding class to only be hypothetical.

6 Conclusion

Normal People: The Scripts due to its ample portrayal of the Irish provides significant opportunities to examine a unique dialect. The dialectal language enables a distinct syntactical perspective and the intricate characters with their convoluted relationships allow for the observation of numerous social aspects. Drawing on three nonstandard grammatical features, three speakers and two social factors, this study demonstrates the HE nature of the material and delves into the social choices and implications behind the characters' use of the dialect. Within the field of dialectology, this thesis supplies a perspective fixated directly on the least favoured aspect of the branch, dialect grammar, with a focus on culturally significant contemporary literature. In accordance with urban dialectology, this study also focuses on the source of influence on language that is of great interest to researchers within the study of a dialect today, the social context (Chambers and Trudgill 1998, 57). These two intertwined theoretical perspectives merged together inspect the language from a restricted but immense viewpoint.

This study also has its limitations. The narrowing of features to be examined leads to fewer instances of grammatical characteristics to consider. This in turn influences the speakers taken into consideration and, consequently, the social patterns which may be recognised. Additionally, the social factors considered in the analysis need to be treated with caution which causes challenges in establishing strong social patterns. However, the study points to various recommendations for future research. The number of features, speakers and social factors taken into consideration can be increased as well as the dataset expanded. Additionally, the role of standard features as a counterpart could be further emphasised in a more comparative study. Sociolinguistics offers endless possibilities of studying linguistic variables and the social patterns in which they occur. The addition of a dialectal perspective allows for the research to be focused and intimate as the evolution and preservation of a variety is not only linguistically but also culturally and, to many, personally significant.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 All HE-feature instances in the data

Example	Grammatical feature	Speaker	Source
“With herself and yourself”	The unbound reflexive	Eric	(Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 92)
“Here’s herself”	The unbound reflexive	Eric	(Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 292)
“I’m after missing the bus”	The *after* perfect	Ger	(Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 20)
“Look that was just a bit of fun like”	The speech-unit final *like*	Eric	(Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 72)
“She’s pretty easy-going with that stuff like”	The speech-unit final *like*	Connell	(Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 74)
“When she lets her hair down like”	The speech-unit final *like*	Rob	(Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 92)
“It’s not like history hasn’t heard a fair bit from his kind already like”	The speech-unit final *like*	Connell	(Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 111)
“I barely know what to say half the time like”	The speech-unit final *like*	Connell	(Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 153)
“What provoked it like”	The speech-unit final *like*	Connell	(Rooney, Birch and O’Rowe 2020, 255)