



Are the times *a*-changin’?
Origin and Evolution of *a*-Prefix in English

Marta Ponciano Lázaro

Degree in English Studies

Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana y de Traducción e Interpretación

Área de Filología Inglesa

Supervisor: Miren Alazne Landa

Academic Year: 2017/2018

Abstract

Among the many grammatical phenomena that can be observed in different dialects of the United States, one that has garnered linguistic attention is the so-called *a*-prefixing, which is a morpheme that appears attached to progressive verbal forms (*a-going*, *a-fishing*) as a means of emphasizing the on-going nature of the action. Although it is relatively ubiquitous in the English-speaking world, this construction has been mostly examined and attested in the Southern United States traditional varieties of English, particularly, in Appalachian English.

This paper aims to provide an in-depth characterization of *a*-prefixing. In particular, this paper focuses on the geographical distribution and origin of the construction—as very different hypotheses have been posited throughout the years—as well as the linguistic restrictions operating on it which enable us to figure out the contexts in which *a*-prefixing is possible and most likely to occur. Indeed, this paper argues how it is the interplay between linguistic constraints and social factors what mostly determines its use. First, the analysis presented here shows that the underlying source of the *a*-prefix is a vestigial Old English preposition (*on* or *at*). More specifically, I assess possible historical sources, arguing that it was originated in the English spoken in Southern Britain. Secondly, I discuss some frequency effects, that is, with what verb type it is more likely to occur and, consequently, I show its variable nature. Put differently, I exhibit how its use is not categorical but varies with its non-prefixed counterpart, thus claiming that idiolectal preferences are at play in this construction. Thirdly, the paper reveals that there are specific morphological, syntactic and phonological constraints that condition its variable realization and that *a*-prefixing mainly conveys progressive meaning, although more proposals have been posited which have not received much scholarly attention. Finally, this paper shows that this prominent feature is mostly an oral phenomenon that appears in many nursery rhymes, songs, dialogues of characters in novels and informal letters. But most importantly, despite the preponderance of statements reporting its unequivocal demise, *a*-prefixing has pulled through, and it is still found in Appalachia. It has apparently become a vernacular identity marker.

I conclude by stating that there are still many aspects of *a*-prefixing to be researched and verified. Future research could investigate whether the morphological, semantic and syntactic restrictions proposed above still uphold over time and, given dialects' unpredictable nature, whether *a*-prefixing will stay in the speech of many speakers or contrariwise, it will fade away as most previous studies announced.

Key words: A-prefixing, dialectal prefix, Appalachian English, community identity, oral phenomenon.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express many thanks to my supervisor, Miren Alazne Landa Arevalillo, Ph.D., for her valuable advice, guidance, and great support; all comments and suggestions were constructive, helpful and very much appreciated. Discussions during the spring semester helped to clarify and resolve many of the issues presented here. My thanks also go to Raymond Hickey for cordially providing me with a section of his book and for giving me his point of view. I would also like to express immense appreciation to Donna Christian for her valuable input and interesting suggestions which helped me do my research. Although the above-mentioned individuals have contributed to the shaping of this paper, any mistakes of fact or interpretation are, of course, my own.

Index

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgments.....	iii
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Geographical distribution: <i>a</i> -prefixing in US English dialects.....	2
3. The historical origin of <i>a</i> -prefixing.....	5
4. Factors implicated in <i>a</i> -prefixing.....	9
4.1. Excursus on variability and frequency effects in <i>a</i> -prefixing.....	10
4.2. Social factors: <i>a</i> -prefixing as a vernacular source of identity.....	11
4.3. Lexico-semantic, morphological, and syntactic constraints	13
4.4. Phonological constraints.....	19
4.5. A note on the semantics of the construction.....	21
5. <i>a</i> -Prefixing in (popular) culture	22
6. Conclusion.....	25
References.....	27

1. Introduction

The title of this paper originates from a song by the singer-songwriter Bob Dylan illustrated in (1) below:

- (1) The times they are *a-changin'*.¹

This song lends its title to an album released in 1964. This title exemplifies the so-called “*a*-prefixing”, a construction that is considered a stigmatized obsolete feature in a great part of the literature on the topic. The term “*a*-prefixing” refers to the grammatical phenomenon that can be seen in *a-changin'*, that is, the prefix *a*- attached to a verbal form inflected with *-ing*, as in (1) above.

This linguistic phenomenon widely referred to as “*a*-prefixing” constitutes the object of study of this paper. This non-mainstream construction can be typically found in traditional American dialects, such as Appalachian English and the English variety spoken in the Ozarks—both being “traditional” varieties—, yet it is not confined to these dialects. However, this paper focuses exclusively on the English spoken in the Appalachian region (USA) as it is considered a hallmark trait of Appalachian speech. This construction has been the focus of many linguistic investigations as they have tried to provide a descriptive understanding of the form. The main concern for scholars has been to determine the factors that license, condition or constrain the variable realization of the *a*-prefix, yet not many have been the studies that have tackled those issues. What is more, linguists have more than anything else tried to identify its semantic properties and, thus, a potential meaning for the construction and, yet, no consensus has been reached as they characterize its meaning as a semantic tendency rather than as an invariable denotation. Additionally, although the historical development of the form has received almost no attention, several linguists have thrown some light on its potential convoluted genesis. One aspect that remains clear and on which most scholars agree is that it is the interplay between social and linguistic factors that determine the variable production of the *a*-prefix.

¹ Notice that in examples containing *a*-prefixing, we frequently find the use of the final alveolar /n/ in *-ing* progressive suffixes as an additional marker of the vernacular nature of the form (Matyiku, 2011; Frazer, 1990).

Hence, there are a number of questions that can be posed, and we will be a-looking at, if we want to find out more about this phenomenon: Who uses this construction? Where does the *a*-prefix come from? What are its semantic, syntactic and phonological properties? Does its use depend on the speaker's socio-economic background?

To this end, this paper aims at providing an answer for these questions as well as offering a broad characterization of the construction with some reference to its origin. I hope that the results obtained here will help to develop a further understanding of how this construction works, why (if so) it has maintained its essence, and what the future holds for this grammatical item.

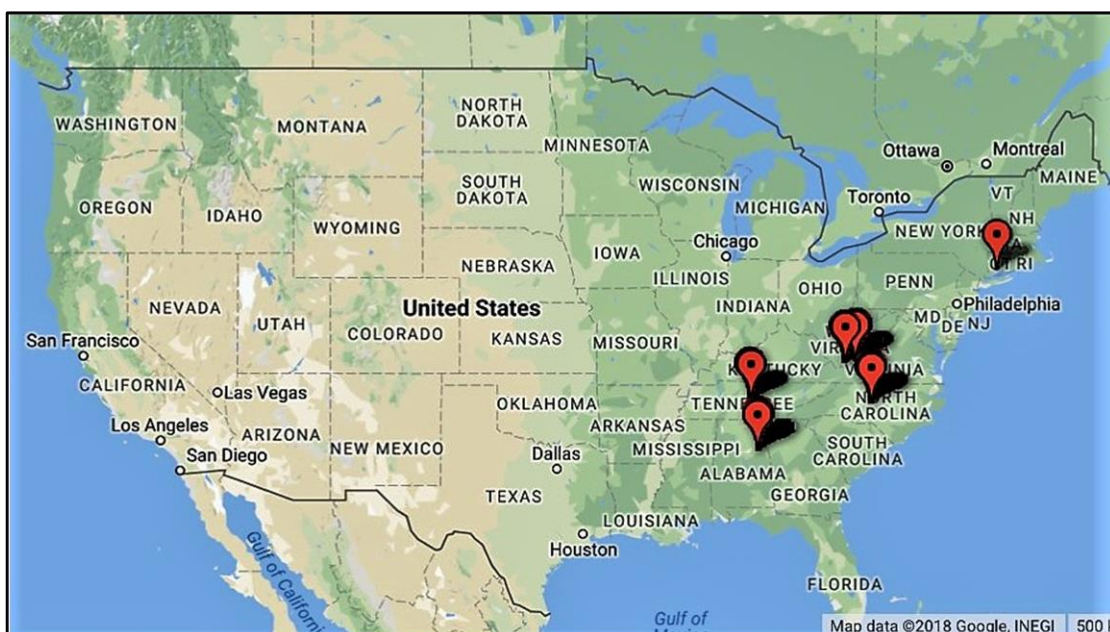
2. Geographical distribution: *a*-prefixing in US English dialects

There are records of *a*-prefixing in many different varieties of English around the English-speaking world. Wright (1898) locates this vernacular form in various dialects of Scotland, Ireland and traditional dialects of southwest England, and additionally, Wentworth (1944) reports the occurrence of the form in many regional American dialects — we do find first attestations in New England as early as 1846—. However, this section focuses solely on American English varieties.

The difficulty of delimiting its geographical spread lies in the fact that this phenomenon occurs all along the United States, in both Northern and Southern dialects of American English. Yet, little attention has *a*-prefixing received so far in Northern American English dialects (Antieau, 2001).

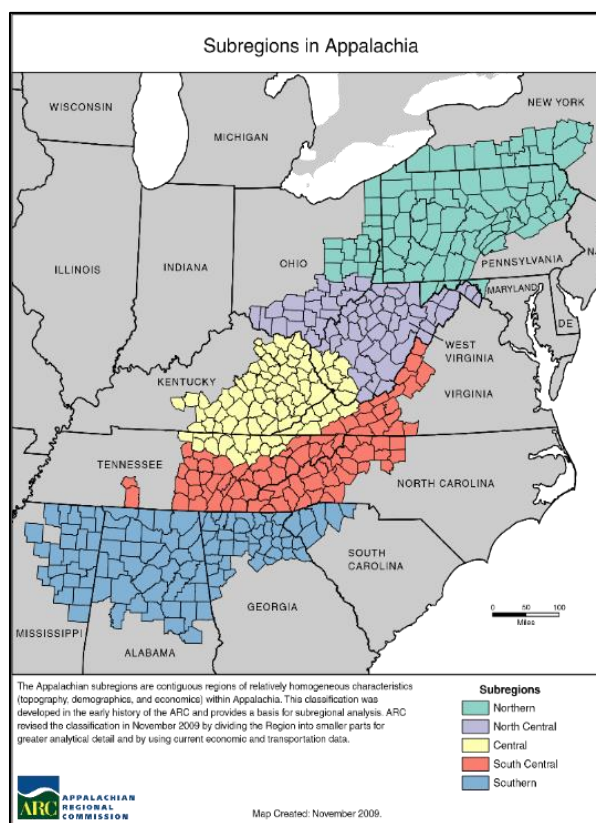
Montgomery (2009:6) references the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (DARE, 1985) which explicitly posits that *a*-prefixing appears “throughout United States, but especially frequent in Midland, Southwest; less frequent South, New England” (this is also fully discussed by Atwood (1953)). Therefore, even though this feature certainly occurs scattered all over the United States, it is widely recorded and seems to be most productive in the areas adjacent to the Appalachian Mountain range, namely, the Appalachian and Ozark regions (Christian et al., 1984), most specifically in Alabama, West Virginia and East Tennessee (Steward, 1967; Hackenberg, 1972; Wolfram and Christian, 1975; Feagin, 1979).

Truth be told, most recent studies of *a*-prefixing have specifically targeted varieties of Southern American English, and it must be clear by now that even though *a*-prefixing is not restricted to the South, it is typically considered a Southern speech trait (Christian et al., 1984). Indeed, *a*-prefixing is a phenomenon most frequently associated with the English of Appalachia inasmuch as it is considered a hallmark trait of Appalachian speech (Montgomery, 2009), as we can see in Map 1 in which some places appear pinpointed to indicate where the prefix has been attested and accepted. To make this point clear let us take a quick look over the region of Appalachia.



Map 1: Places where *a*-prefixing is attested and more likely to be accepted by speakers (from Matyiku, 2011).

According to the Appalachian Regional Commission (n.d.: para. 1-3), the large territory known as Appalachia “follows the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi” which is illustrated in Map 2 below. It encompasses West Virginia and parts of other 12 states: Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North and South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Indeed, West Virginia is the only state that lies entirely within this region. The Region covers 205,000 square miles, including 420 counties in 13 states, with a population of more than 25 million.



Map 2: The Appalachian Region: Delimitation (ARC, 2009).

Although detailed discussion of a general characterization of the speech in Appalachia is beyond the scope of this review, a brief excursus on unwarranted cultural beliefs and myths is necessary. The persistent and pervasive idea that in the Appalachians people still preserve “Elizabethan” or “Shakespearean” speech is, for at least two reasons, just groundless.² First, never was Elizabethan English spoken in Appalachia during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I

² See Montgomery’s (1998) article for an elaboration on this issue.

(1558-1603) and, secondly, no living language remains unchanged. While the construction under discussion here was used by Shakespeare³ in many of his plays, the Elizabethan characterization of Appalachian speech is wrong and, thus, must be discarded (Montgomery, 1998; Hazen and Fluharty, 2004).

Only in the English of Appalachia has this non-standard grammatical form received a chiefly descriptive account and has been examined both qualitatively and quantitatively. For this reason, a potentially more promising line of inquiry lies in exploring internal linguistic and social constraints that govern the construction in this particular region of the Anglosphere. Consequently, for space restrictions, this paper will exclusively examine *a*-prefixing as occurs in the English spoken in the Appalachian region where most scholars have closely and extensively studied this construction.

3. The historical origin of *a*-prefixing

In this section, we trace the genesis and development of this non-mainstream grammatical form. Where does this *a*-prefix construction come from? There is one clear answer to this question. The underlying source of the *a*-prefix is a vestigial preposition (Montgomery, 2009). In other words, this construction is virtually derived from a preposition *on* or *at* in Old English. However, *a*-prefixing poses special problems when it comes to defining which dialect this phenomenon comes from because there are various hypotheses open to debate. Given its occurrence in the United States, three possible transatlantic sources are suggested in the literature: (i) Gaelic speaking areas, both Irish Gaelic and Scottish Gaelic, (ii) England, and (iii) Ulster (northeastern Ireland) (Montgomery, 2009). Each of these proposals offers an interesting account of the possible provenience of the form, however, only the second one is historically maintainable.

Let us begin with the first hypothesis according to which *a*-prefixing may have its roots in Scottish Gaelic. Dietrich (1981) contends that the prevalent construction in Scottish Gaelic is one which combines a finite verb (marked for tense), a preposition, and a verbal noun. This

³ Resort to Crystal and Crystal (2008) for a detailed taxonomy of the uses of the *a*-prefix in Shakespearean texts.

salient verbal noun construction in Scottish Gaelic is unusual in English outside the Appalachian Speech (Dietrich, 1981:314):

- (2) Tha e a' briseadh chlach(an)
He is at breaking of stones
'He is breaking stones'

Dietrich (1981) further adds that the surface similarity between *a*-prefixing in Appalachian English and verbal noun constructions in Scottish Gaelic comes as no surprise because of the Scotch-Irish ancestry of the Appalachian people. However, for various reasons that will not be discussed further here, this hypothesis seems to be an erroneous belief. Hickey (2007:151) claims that “[s]uch structures look deceptively Irish” referring to *a*-prefixed constructions, but *a*-prefixing is not attested and does not seem to occur in Modern Irish English. Thus, he concurs with Montgomery (2009) by being rather dubious about its possible Celtic origin. I am aware that the form could have disappeared from Irish during its historical development while being maintained in the traditional dialects of the US, but the truth of the matter is that other explanations seem to be more plausible.

As for the second hypothesis mentioned above, the preponderance of evidence suggests that *a*-prefixing comes from the English spoken in Southern England. Specifically, it seems to derive from Old English (OE) prepositional phrase constructions *on/at X-ing* (McQuaid, 2017). Additionally, Wright (1898) indicates that the *a*-prefix prevails in the South and Midlands of England.⁴

Bolinger (1971:246) mentions that, historically, the verb *be* in combination with a prepositional phrase (*be* + PP) represented the progressive aspect (in Middle English) and, consequently, the dialectal prefix *a-* has remained as a remnant of that preposition, a hypothesis that I illustrate in (3):⁵

⁴ In his dictionary, Wright (1898) also mentions that the prefix can be found in Ireland and Scotland, yet provides one single instance from Ireland and none from Scotland.

⁵ Additionally, Bolinger (1971) states that the surviving trace of the preposition is still present also in the dialectal use of *after*, as in (i) and in the temporal *on*, as in (ii) below:

- (i) He is *after* telling her.
(ii) *On* assuming command he ordered a general amnesty.

(3) He is *on / at working* > He is *a-working*

Additionally, Bolinger (1971:246-250) further adds that the progressive suffix *-ing* could represent what he refers to as an adverbial nominal construction, i.e. a prepositional phrase with an adverbial interpretation (e.g. locative) from which the preposition is eliminated, as in (4). All the evidence that he provides points to the *-ing* as an underlying nominal construction. He suggests that what he calls adverbial nominals (illustrated in (5)) parallel the *-ing* of the progressive verb forms because they are constructions that denote “position in or motion through space and time” (Bolinger, 1971:247), as the progressive does. He also points out that the pronominalization of an action requires the preposition *at* in Standard English, as illustrated in (6):

(4) a. He is *at work*. He is *working*.
b. They are *at breakfast*. They are *breakfasting*.
c. They kept *at their quarrelling* all day. They kept *quarrelling* all day.

(5) a. He is (at) home.
b. I was there (for) an hour.
c. They walked (for) ten miles.

(6) He was working an hour ago and I guess he’s still *at it*.

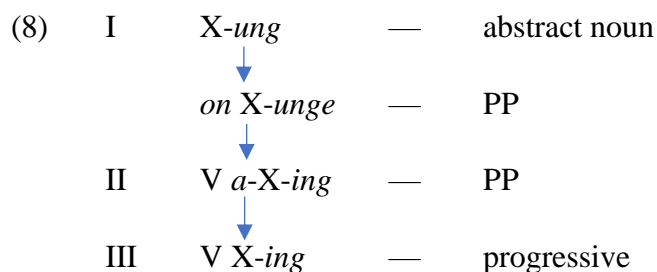
Traugott (1972:143)⁶ endorses Bolinger’s former assertion and claims that in earlier forms of English, progressive constructions contained a locative preposition *on* and a nominalized form of the verb conveying manner. Later, this preposition lost eventually its final nasal consonant through a phonological change and the vowel was reduced to [ə] resulting into the current *a*-prefix. I illustrate and summarize this development in (7) below:

(7) We will go *on hunting* > We will go *a-hunting*.

In a similar vein, Nagucka (1984:363) asserts that “*a-X-ing* is not a relic of the OE gerund”, but the dialectal prefix *a-* is a trace that still survives from an OE prepositional phrase construction. To make this point clear, one may say that *a-X-ing* construction

⁶ Traugott (1972) also indicates that the origin of the progressive *-ing* is fraught with controversy. For a further discussion on this issue see Traugott (1972).

originates from the OE abstract *-ung* noun (with fully-fledged inflectional endings) which derives from a verb and, thus, is closely associated with it. The abstract *-ung* noun, in its pertinent form, could be used with the preposition *on* to form a prepositional phrase *on + X-ung*. Much later, OE-*ung* nouns became verbal nouns, i.e. gerunds, yet a few ones preserved their original nominal status as in *a-X-ing*. The preposition *on* eventually weakened and gave rise to *a-* which is basically its reduced form. Once *a-X-ing* was reduced to *X-ing* with the verb *be*, the nominal status of *X-ing* disappeared. The *be X-ing* ceased to be used and either it was gradually replaced by the “progressive” *X-ing* with its verbal traits or it became *be being X-ed* (Nagucka, 1984). To simplify the explanation, consider the historical development of the structure in stages, as illustrated in (8) (adapted from Nagucka, 1984:378):



With all of this in mind, it seems reasonable to say then that settlers from Southern England moved to the United States and almost certainly scattered over the whole country the *a*-prefix construction that was pervasive in their speech at the time of their arrival to the New World (Montgomery, 2009).

Nowadays, as Montgomery (2009:6) pinpoints, the *a*-prefix is observable in alternations such as *afire* versus *on fire* and *aboard* versus *on board*, as well as *a-Sunday* versus *on Sunday* and *a-horseback* versus *on horseback*. Feagin (1979:105) also mentions that the *a*-prefix is present in Standard English in words such as *abed*, *astern*, *adrift*, *arise*, *abide*, *anew*, and *afresh*.

Finally, the third hypothesis about the origin of the *a*-prefix in the US varieties of English suggests that the construction was brought from Ulster. The Ulster claim is not supportable given its historic rarity and its prevalence to appear on passive participles. To make this point clear let us take a quick look at the *a*-prefix on passive participles. Traugott (1972:144) asserts that “when the Agent is absent in a [...] sentence with progressive *be + PrP* [i.e.

present participle] and an action verb like *make, do, commit, bring, prepare*, a passive interpretation is often given to the sentence”. Montgomery (2009:12) finds such cases in the journal of an immigrant from Ulster, even with an explicit *by*-phrase:

- (9) I did not know till today that there are in the second cabin some families of English people *a-sending* out to America *by* the parishes to which they belonged there for the purpose of getting rid of them.

Unconventional though these constructions may seem, Todd (1989) and Fenton (1995) note that the *a*-prefix is observed (albeit infrequently) only on passive verbs in present-day Ulster speech (as cited in Montgomery, 2009:12):⁷

- (10) The door was *a-shuttin'* when I left.
'The door was closing [i.e. being shut] when I cut out'.

Thus, the transatlantic influence from Ulster seems unwarranted. What is more, never in American Speech has a passive interpretation been given to *a*-prefixing (Montgomery, 2009). Therefore, the Southern British dialect seems to be the vehicle by means of which this phenomenon became part of the Appalachian English(es), in particular, and of many traditional American Dialects, in general.

4. Factors implicated in *a*-prefixing

This section offers an overview of the different socio-linguistic factors that systematically constrain, and condition *a*-prefixing. Both extralinguistic or social variables and independent linguistic variables are at play in this construction (Christian et al., 1984) and, what is more, all contribute to the realization of the *a*-prefix. It is precisely this interplay of social and linguistic factors that makes *a*-prefixing a phenomenon worth investigating. What follows is first a brief outline of the notion of variability and the frequency effects that *a*-prefixing exhibits.

⁷ I am aware that many authors refer to these constructions as examples of the middle voice (Kemmer, 1993). Here I simply follow Montgomery (2009) as the distinction between passives and middles falls outside the scope of this paper.

4.1. Excursus on variability and frequency effects in *a*-prefixing

The majority of the linguistic features discussed in the literature for Appalachian English in general are “variable rather than categorical” (Wolfram and Christian, 1976:3), and *a*-prefixing is not an exception. Wolfram (1980:121) maintains that “*a*-prefixing is a variable phenomenon”; that is, not every time that the form is likely to occur will it occur or will it be used. A speaker who produces this form will fluctuate between its presence and absence (non-*a*-prefixed counterpart) (Wolfram, 1980), even in the same conversation.⁸

The variable parameter, together with the restrictions operating on *a*-prefixing mentioned below, as they constitute potential environments where it might occur, determine its usage to a great extent (Wolfram, 1980). This is referred to as “structured variability” (Wolfram and Christian, 1976:3). Although it is almost impossible to predict with exactitude when it might occur, we can dispute the likelihood of occurrence, that is, its frequency effects. While not thoroughly investigated, *a*-prefixing seems to show effects of frequency. Montgomery (2009) studied the different variable syntactic patterns in which *a*-prefixing occurs together with its frequency (e.g. causative constructions, verbs of movement and so on). Although no clear quantitative patterns of use were obtained, the occurrence of *a*-prefixing is noticeably higher in certain contexts: after perception verbs (e.g. *see*, and *hear*) (McQuaid, 2012; Montgomery, 2009), with causative verbs (e.g. *have*) (Montgomery, 2009), with inchoatives (e.g. *start*, and *begin*) (Montgomery, 2009), and verbs of continuing (e.g. *keep*) (Montgomery, 2009; Wolfram and Christian, 1976; Feagin, 1979). So, certain constructions favor its realization. McQuaid (2017) proposes that those constructions occur with a higher frequency in discourse that fosters the appearance of the *a*-prefix, for instance storytelling.

As for lexical frequency effects, research has found that certain lexical items are *a*-prefixed with a higher frequency than others. *A*-prefixing was found more often with active verbs (e.g. *going*, *coming*, *moving*, and *hunting*) than with process (e.g. *shining*, *running*, *living*, and *dying*) or with stative (e.g. *being*) verbs (Feagin, 1979). Also, “verb type exhibits a strong effect in conditioning the variable realization of the *a*-prefix” (McQuaid, 2012:143):

⁸ This is a typical situation in all varieties of all languages. For instance, the speakers of “leista” dialects of Spanish do not categorically use *le(s)* in all contexts in which those clitics can be used in their varieties. I thank A. Landa for this observation.

it seems to occur more with intransitive verbs (e.g. *rain*, and *go*) than either transitive (e.g. *put*, and *give*) or CP-complement verbs (e.g. *think*, and *believe*).

All in all, *a*-prefixing is a variable phenomenon since speakers producing this form will not use it every instance they may produce it, but will instead alternate between an *a*-prefixed variant and a non-prefixed variant. Thus, its appearance is not categorical, but variable instead, meaning that idiolectal preferences are at play. There are certain factors favoring its appearance and others that certainly block its occurrence. With this in mind, let us now review the actual factors.

4.2. Social factors: *a*-prefixing as a vernacular source of identity

Among the social variables that could affect the occurrence of *a*-prefixing, the most significant ones are age and sex. Indeed, there are significant observations regarding generational differences in frequency. Wolfram and Christian (1975, 1976) found that none of the 13 Appalachian English speakers whose speech they investigated produced the form with a frequency level higher than 50 % (it falls between 10% and 40%). The eight speakers who produced the form most frequently were all aged 50 or older. Only three speakers were under age 30. These young speakers all showed *a*-prefixing levels under 20%. Christian et al. (1984) report similar findings.

Feagin (1979) reports that in rural Anniston, Alabama, it was old working-class female speakers that used the form most frequently. Out of a sample of 222 *a*-prefixed forms in the study, there were only two instances of the form produced by an old upper-class man. Among the working-class people, women over 60 produced the highest rates (180/222, 82.4%) from both rural and urban areas. Conversely, males produced *a*-prefixing at a low rate (39/222, 17.6%). Additionally, there were only four instances of the form among working-class teenagers, and no attestations among upper-class teenagers. McQuaid (2012) correspondingly finds that female speakers produce more instances of *a*-prefixing (131/425, 30.8%) than males (88/422, 20.9%).

Apart from the clear-cut discrepancies observed in the literature between age groups⁹ and sex, several studies in Jefferson, North Carolina, have shown how speakers use *a*-prefixing to accomplish “social work”, that is, to forge an identity (Burkette, 2007, 2013).

Burkette’s (2007) case study investigates the use of *a*-prefixing among three old Jefferson women in narrative versus nonnarrative contexts. No statistically significant differences were obtained, as the use of this form is part of their speech, i.e. this is simply how they talk no matter the type of context. However, of particular interest is the speech of younger Jefferson speakers. Observing the linguistic behavior of three generations of speakers belonging to the same family, we encounter that the youngest use the form exclusively for narration. This interesting pattern suggests that young generations use the form as a vernacular source to identify themselves with the community, especially with older generations.

Burkette (2013) looks at how *a*-prefixing plays a role in the enactment of speaker stance. The study examines two *ad-lib* versions of the same story in separate sociolinguistic interviews of a mother (Ruth, age 84) and a daughter (Linda, age 62). Linda’s use of the prefix is statistically much less frequent (6/34, 17. 6%) than that of her mother (33/73, 45. 2%). Two of the six incidences of the form in Linda’s speech occur in speech attributed to Ruth in the story and to a certain extent, Linda uses the form to construct her identity as a more modern “mother”, whilst characterizing Ruth as more “traditional”. But most importantly, Linda also uses *a*-prefixing to index the traditional values of older generations.

Based on those observations regarding the generational differences in frequency of use and the general low rates of incidence among young speakers (Wolfram and Christian 1975, 1976; Christian et al., 1984), many sociolinguists and dialectologists alerted us to the imminence of the demise of *a*-prefixing. Not few have been the studies that affirm that *a*-prefixing is a phenomenon that is a-dying (out) in Appalachian Speech (Wolfram and Christian, 1976; Frazer, 1990; Hazen, 2006; Siemund, 2013; Hazen, Flesher and Simmons, 2013 even indicate that this form has been vanishing since the 1960s). A plethora of other

⁹ On the contrary, Burkette (2001) reports no differences in the use of *a*-prefixing among age groups in the speech of 13 informants from a small town in Western North Carolina. Conversely, education level proved to have a negative correlation with *a*-prefixing.

studies have claimed that it is an archaism, a relic or an obsolete form (Christian et al., 1984; Krapp, 1925; Jespersen, 1933; Feagin, 1979).

Interestingly enough, “*a*-prefixing has proven to be resilient” (McQuaid, 2017:4). Recent linguistic studies have shown that the form has undergone a change in how it is used and has acquired a status very different from its original stigmatized character. Wolfram (1988) first pinpointed that the form was enduring a transformation as it was taking on specialized uses. Such a transformation establishes the cause of the construction’s preservation. Younger speakers, as suggested by Burkette (2007), use the form to integrate themselves into the community and to show solidarity especially with old generations. Much like younger speakers in the well-known Martha’s Vineyard study by Labov (1963) that adopted the vowel centralization as a linguistic symbol to identify themselves with old traditional Vineyarders (as cited in Burkette, 2013) and to distance themselves from newcomers and tourists, young speakers have adopted *a*-prefixing to forge an identity in the community. The adaptation described by Labov is the same adaptation that *a*-prefixing has undergone. If this is so, and contrarily to the doom and gloom predictions on the future of the construction, *a*-prefixing is here to stay, especially if its acceptability is reinforced by its occurrence in different forms of cultural expression, as we will defend in section 5. What can be stated with a certain amount of confidence is then that the times are *a*-changing, or rather, they have already changed. Next, we will review the linguistic constraints that operate on *a*-prefixing.

4.3. Lexico-semantic, morphological and syntactic constraints

Krapp (1925:268) is just one of the many scholars who have accounted for the realization of this form and notes:

A very frequent syntactic form of contemporary popular speech is that which puts an *a* before every present participle, especially after *go*, as in to *go a-fishing*, *bye baby bunting*, *daddy's gone a-hunting*, etc. [...] Starting with these phrases, however, the *a*- has been prefixed to genuine present participles, after forms of *to be* and other verbs, with the result that in popular speech almost every word ending in *-ing* has a sort of prefix, *a*-.

Yet, it is not the case that *a*-prefix can be attached to “almost every word ending in *-ing*” as Krapp (1925) claims. Such a broad and simplistic claim is a groundless overgeneralization

- b. (...) and I turned around and I seen that old snake *a-layin'* there all coiled up, his mouth was open like this, getting ready to bite me.

Another lexico-semantic context in which *a*-prefixing is likely to be found is with movement verbs, for instance, *come*, *go* and *take off*. Additionally, *a*-prefixed forms can occur with verbs of continuing and starting, mainly *keep*, but also occasionally *start*, *stay*, *get to* and so on. In both cases, the participial *-ing* form behaves as a different type of modifier to the corresponding verb. Examples of both types are found in (14) and (15) (Wolfram, 1980: 111-112):

- (14) All of a sudden a bear come *a-runnin'*, and it come *a-runnin'* towards him, and he shot it between the eyes.
- (15) He just kep' *a-beggin'* and *a-cryin'* and *a-wantin'* to go out.

In (14) *a-runnin'* has some sort of adverbial function as it indicates the way in which the bear approached the speaker or the type of movement the animal embarked on, while the function of the *a*-prefixed forms in (15) depends on the analysis one wants to give to these forms: they could be considered complements of *kept* or main verbs if *kept* is analysed as some sort of light verb (like a copula).

A further context in which *a*-prefixed forms are favored is that of other types of adverbial constructions, where the construction is not modifying movement verbs or verbs of starting and continuing, as illustrated by the sentences in (16) (Wolfram 1980:111). In these examples the *a*-prefixed forms function as adjuncts:

- (16) a. (...) you was pretty weak by the tenth day, *a-layin'* in there in bed.
b. (...) say Chuck would come by and want to spend an hour *a-talkin'*, I always figure I'm not too busy to stop.

Wolfram (1980:110) further adds that along with its frequent occurrence with progressives in which the auxiliary *be* appears overtly realized, we can observe *a*-prefixing with forms that have undergone *WHIZ* deletion. Put differently, *a*-prefixing may be found in embedded contexts that have had both the *wh*-relative pronoun and verb *be* deleted:

- (17) I had twelve children and I got two dead and ten *a-livin'*.

That is, in (17) *ten a-livin'* is interpreted as deriving from the deletion of *who are* (= *WHIZ*) in *ten who are a-living*.

Thus far, we have reviewed the morphological, semantic and syntactic structures in which *a*-prefixing is permissible with *-ing* verbal forms. The structures in which *a*-prefixed forms are not found also contribute to showing the systematic nature of its properties.

Firstly, *a*-prefixing is not observed with nominals or nominalized constructions. Most obviously, this involves nominals preceded by determiners or possessives, but it also holds true with other nominalized *-ing* verbal forms, where the *-ing* participial form functions as a noun, also known as the gerund or gerundive constructions. Illustrations of this type are found in (18) and (19) (Wolfram, 1976:49):

(18) *He saw the *a-shootin'*.

(19) **A-sailin'* is fun.

Similarly, we do not observe *a*-prefixing with the *-ing* participial form functioning as an adjective, whether the form occurs as an adjectival predicate or has undergone modifier preposing (Wolfram, 1976:49):

(20) *The movie was *a-shockin'*.

(21) *The hunters shot the *a-runnin'* bear.

What these restrictions are telling us is that whatever the categorical status of *a*-prefix could be, it is not a nominal or an adjectival marker. Then, what else could it be?

An additional constraint on the permissibility of *a*-prefixing involves prepositions. We do not obtain *a*-prefixed forms in a position immediately following an overtly realized preposition. Perhaps most intriguing is that such sentences with *a*-forms in the same adverbial function, but without the overt realization of the preposition, are permissible, as we can observe in (22) and (23) (Wolfram, 1976:49):

(22) *He got sick **from** *a-workin'* so hard.

(23) He got sick *a-workin'* so hard.

Such sentences indicate that it is the overt realization of the preposition that prevents *a*-prefixing from occurring. Let us remind the reader that it is a basic procedure of syntax to take the impossibility of co-occurrence of two elements as evidence that they are trying to occupy the same position (or else that they have the same function).¹⁰ In (22) *a*-prefix cannot co-occur with a preposition, that is, they both have a prepositional function in exactly the same position. This prepositional restriction is consistent with the fact that *a*-prefixing is derived from an underlying vestigial preposition *on* or *at*, which obviously would be in competition with other prepositions, such as *from*, *by*, *for* and so on. Notice that we must not confuse prepositions with verb particles, such as *on* and *by* in (24) below. Those are particles associated with a particular verb and are likely to occur with *a*-prefixed forms because they occupy different positions and have different functions (Christian et al., 1984:103).

- (24) a. He kept **on** *a-jabberin* ' about the work.
 b. He ran **by** *a-screamin* ' and *a-hollerin* '.

In (24a) *on* is part of the phrasal verb *keep on* and in (24b) *by* is part of *run by*. These particles have the same sort of adverbial function and are not prepositions, and that is why they can co-occur with (preposition-like) *a*-prefix.

Finally, Christian et al. (1984:103) affirm that in English, we can get prepositional phrases gapped with coordinate constituents. Similarly, *a*-prefixing is compatible with gapping on the coordinate constituent. Sentences like (25) and (26) are both permissible:

- (25) He makes money **by** restorin' houses and *a-buildin* ' houses.

(26) He got sick **from** workin' and *a-tryin* ' too hard.

Only constituents of the same type can be coordinated, so examples (25) and (26) can be taken as evidence that probably the *a*-prefix is a preposition since the first constituents in

¹⁰ Notice, for instance, that this theoretical stance can explain the ungrammaticality of (i) below:

- (i) *Mary read the comic the magazine.

The fact that (i) is ungrammatical can be taken as evidence that both DPs *the comic* and *the magazine* are trying to occupy the complement position of the verb *read*.

those ordinary coordinations are prepositional phrases introduced by the preposition *by* in (25) and *from* in (26), respectively.

Finally, there is a coordinate variable constraint. Participles that are conjoined by a coordinating conjunction tend to include *a*-prefixing on both *-ing* forms. By the same token, if *a*-prefixing is going to occur in one of the conjuncts, it will appear on the second rather than on the first one. Intuitional evidence from dialect speakers supports the fact that coordinate structures with *a*-prefixing on both conjuncts are favored over those with an *a*-form on the last form which, incidentally, are preferred over the contrary (“*a*-prefix on only the first one” constructions), thus yielding examples like (27) (Wolfram, 1976:52):

- (27) a. I heard her barking and *a-barkin'* and *a-barkin'*.
 b. ? I heard her *a-barkin'* and barking and barking.

Additionally, Christian et. al. (1984:114) confirm that questions and negatives are eligible to occur with *a*-prefixing, not only assertive statements. Therefore, there is not a unique context for *a*-prefixing to appear, as exemplified below:

- (28) John wasn't *a-talkin'* loud enough to hear.

(29) Was she *a-goin'* to the show?

The discussion thus far certainly points to the prepositional nature of *a*-prefixing. We can conclude that *a*-prefixed forms occur with progressive verbal forms in order to emphasize the on-going nature of the action referred to by the lexical verb and which is, in turn, also conveyed by the progressive form on that verb.¹¹ We have also observed some phonological restrictions that we tackle next in section 4.4.

¹¹Although rarely, the *a*-prefix appears not only with progressive forms, but also with participial *-ed* forms (e.g. *a-haunted* and *a-gone*) and with certain non-participial adjectival and adverbial constructions (e.g. *a-wrong*, *a-many* and *a-way*) (Wolfram and Christian, 1975). However, researchers do focus on *a*-prefixed progressive verbs because they are more frequent since other forms are rare and less productive.

4.4. Phonological constraints

In addition to the aforementioned syntactic privileges, Wolfram (1976) and Wolfram and Christian (1975, 1976) also postulate some phonological restrictions that seem to interact with the syntactic constraints dealt with in section 4.3. Below I discuss and illustrate this interaction between syntactic factors and competing phonological restrictions operating on *a*-prefixing. It is essential to point out, however, that phonological constraints operate on syntactically eligible forms by blocking the *a*-prefix to surface through the phonological filter (Wolfram, 1976).

First, *a*-prefixing may occur if the verb base has initial-syllable stress as in (30) below. Absence of *a*-prefixed forms with verbs lacking initial stress is not unexpected, but rather a more general word-stress pattern in English which prohibits contiguous unstressed syllables initially. So, forms like (31) below are not permitted (Wolfram, 1976:50):

(30) She was just standin' quietly *a-hollerin'*.

(31) *He was *a-discoverin'* a bear in the woods.

Observe that in (30) the *a*-prefix appears with the verb *holler* which bears initial stress, whereas the impossibility of (31) can be taken as evidence that the *a*-prefix does not appear before a verb like *discover* which lacks initial stress, but instead it has stress on the second syllable.

Another constraint on *a*-prefixing concerns the canonical form of the verb. *A*-prefixing is not licensed if followed by vowel-initial verbs. To account for the favouring deletion of the *a*-prefix, Wolfram (1976:51) appeals to the general tendency disallowing vowel clusters word-initially:

(32) *John was *a-eatin'* his food.

(33) *He kep' *a-askin'* him the questions.

Notice how forms like those in (32) and (33) above are syntactically permissible since none of them violates any syntactic constraint, yet the phonological restriction that precludes adjacent vowels blocks their occurrence. However, categorical as they may seem, a few counterexamples have been pinpointed because problematic data needs to be accounted for.

To begin with, Montgomery (2009:16), in his extensive corpus, encounters three apparent instances in which *a*-prefixation appears before a participle with an initial unstressed syllable, thus violating the stress constraint posited earlier:

- (34) There must be, you know, a reason, I mean, for ‘em *a-believing* in the signs [of the zodiac].
- (35) I can remember Dad *a-relating* the fire to me.
- (36) They didn’t think they was enough that they could function as a church, so I told ‘em they could, got ‘em *a-believing* they could.

Montgomery (2009) observes that previous research did not find such examples because of the small size of the corpora they handled. Yet, McQuaid (2012) offers another available explanation for the absence of *a*-prefixation in the relevant cases. On the one hand, based on studies of pre-tonic schwa elision in English casual speech, the initial unstressed syllable in *believe* can target schwa elision so it can be produced as [bə'liv]> ['bliv]. On the other hand, the verb *relate* could also evidence schwa deletion, but nonetheless, there is another alternative explanation. The verb *relating* can be pronounced with either initial secondary stress [ˌɪ'letɪn], or with deletion of the initial syllable ['letɪn]. In summation, plausible explanations have been posited so as to confirm that examples (34), (35) and (36) above do not necessarily constitute counterevidence for the stress constraint.

Still to be dealt with, however, is the apparent constraint that posits that *a*-prefixation cannot occur with vowel-initial bases. There are several exceptions to this reported in the literature on the topic that seem to undermine this constraint, as shown in (37) (from Feagin (1979:115)¹² and (38) (from Montgomery (2009:17)) below:

- (37) What time I ain’t *a-sewin*’, I’m *a-ironin*’, or somethin’ like that.
- (38) a. Johnny run down the hill *a-aiming* to go to his uncle’s.
b. I noticed two older girls *a-eating* something out of a little syrup bucket.
c. I went on up and was *a-aiming* to get around above the tree and shoot.

¹² Feagin (1979), in her study of a speech community in Alabama, only encountered one example that contradicts what was previously proposed by Wolfram and Christian (1976).

Christian et al. (1984) report clear evidence for a strong disfavor for the occurrence of *a*-prefixation with vowel-initial forms. McQuaid (2012) proposes a reformulation of Wolfram and Christian's (1976) constraint. She notices that there are no examples in which the base verb contains a word-initial lax vowel. Given that the *a*-prefix is a tense vowel [ə-], and all base verbs begin with a tense vowel, it is plausible to contend that this phonological constraint appears to be an anti-identity constraint disallowing *a*-prefixation with lax-vowel-initial verbs.

A further constraint affects *a*-forms variably rather than semi-categorically. Their occurrence is more plausible when the preceding word ends in a consonant (C#__) than in a vowel (V#__). We thus are more prone to get sentences like (39) than (40), although both are permissible (Wolfram, 1976:51):

(39) He was just standin' at the post *a-hollerin'*. [More likely]

(40) He was just standin' quietly *a-hollerin'*. [Less likely]

Subsequent literature (Christian et al. 1984; Montgomery, 2009) does not find supportive evidence regarding this constraint, first proposed by Wolfram (1976). In addition, Montgomery (2009) admits that the type of preceding—and even following, except for vowels—phonological environment does not have an influence on the appearance of the *a*-prefix.

The occurrence of *a*-prefixing is, therefore, constrained by the intricate intersection of syntactic and phonological factors. Neither constraint is satisfactory nor sufficient by itself, but together they determine the occurrence of this form (Wolfram, 1976). Additionally, these constraints seem to show no changes with time and uphold without substantial regional differences across Southern Appalachia (McQuaid, 2017).

4.5. A note on the semantics of the construction

We have said earlier that *a*-prefixing occurs mainly with progressive verb forms and that its prepositional origin and possibly current function seem to emphasize the meaning of on-going event also conveyed by the progressive aspect morphology on the verb. However, it

must be noted, even if in passing, that its meaning has always been fraught with controversy as each researcher has proposed a different meaning. Steward (1967:121) proposes that the *a*-prefix conveys “indefiniteness” in space or time; Hackenberg (1972:132-135) hypothesizes that it marks “intermittent activity” or “duration”; and Feagin (1979:114) suggests that the *a*-prefix indicates “intensified action” or “immediate or dramatic vividness.” Wolfram (1976:55) assesses those proposals tentatively concluding that his study “has discovered no formal evidence for a distinct semantic category of *a*-prefixing”. A decade later, Wolfram (1988:249) reconsiders the matter and concedes that it is either a form that “favors intensity” or marks a “rural vernacular style”. Montgomery (2009) affirms that native speakers do have a “feel” for what the *a*-prefix may convey, yet they are unable to articulate exactly what it is. Whatever its meaning is, one thing remains clear, i.e. “it has acquired a property of vernacularity for some speakers” (Montgomery, 2009:10). Further discussion of this issue lies beyond the scope of the present paper as it involves dealing with the subjectivity of both users and non-users. Although I do want to hypothesize that the “feel” speakers seem to have may be related to the users’ identification with a specific community and its values. Let us now consider how *a*-prefixing stands the test of time in various forms outside the speech of users.

5. *a*-Prefixing in (popular) culture

Interestingly, this *a*-prefix has been attested outside the speech of Southerners which suggests that the construction is not an innovation of Appalachian speakers of English. As a matter of fact, *a*-prefixing can be found as part of different types of artistic expressions all over the English-speaking world and in different historical periods.

As it is mostly an oral phenomenon, besides natural speech its most typical medium of occurrence is music, both traditional and contemporary. Most, if not all, children in the English-speaking world are knowledgeable about “The Frog He Would a-Wooing go” nursery rhyme. This song contains the *a*-prefix, it has countless variations and its first appearance was in Wedderburn’s *Complaynt of Scotland* (1549) (American Antiquarian Society, n.d.). Following with nursery rhymes that contain *a*-prefixing, the American singer-songwriter Natalie Merchant back in 2010 recorded a children’s poetry-inspired album in

which we come across the widely known “I saw a ship a-Sailing” (Merchant, 2017). Australia’s current unofficial national anthem “Waltzing Matilda” with lyrics by Andrew Barton (Banjo) Paterson (1895) also encompasses this *a*-prefix (Waltzing Matilda, n.d.; NFSA, n.d.). It is also present not only in the country music icon and artist Loretta Lynn’s (1967) song, “Don’t Come Home a -Drinking” (A&E, n.d.), but also in Bob Dylan’s (1964) influential “anthem of change” with which we started this paper: “The times they are a-changin’ ” which evokes 18th and 19th century Irish and Scottish ballads (Principia, n.d.). The reason for Bob Dylan’s use of the *a*-prefix could be either to get the metrical pattern right or else to imitate the speech of country people. However, this still remains cloaked in mystery. What is clear is that all of these seem to be influenced by the folk tradition.

When we find the construction in poems and song lyrics it is difficult to ascertain whether the *a*- is in a given position as a poetic strategy to add a syllable or intentionally to use a traditional type of language. For instance, it can be found in a poem by the English Romantic poet Lord Byron which is called “So we’ll go no more a-roving” (1817) (Poetry Foundation, n.d.). The prefix appears in the title and at the end of some of the verses and the poem is plausibly based on a traditional Scottish song¹³ (“The Jolly Beggar”, featured in Herd’s (1776) *Scots Songs*) (Representative Poetry Online, n.d.). However uncertain the purpose of the use of the *a*-prefix in those songs and poems might be, what is clear is that the construction is not an American (let alone Appalachian) innovation but it was brought to the country by speakers of older forms of English.

Because *a*-prefixing is mostly an oral phenomenon (I say “mostly” because I have also found it in people’s comments on the internet and in online magazines) when it is used in novels it appears exclusively in dialogues. For instance, it has been attested in Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), a novel in which it is used to provide the main characters with some realistic vernacular language. Antieau (2001) has done an in-depth

¹³“(…) And he took up his quarters into a land’art town,
And we’ll gang nae mair *a roving*
Sae late into the night,
And we’ll gang nae mair *a roving*, boys,
Let the moon shine ne’er sae bright.
And we’ll gang nae mair *a roving*. (...) (Herd, 1776:26).

analysis of the use of *a*-prefixing in this novel and finds that the construction's use confirms research on the topic as Twain's characters produce it as expected, with the exception of coordinate constructions.

It is with respect to coordinate constructions that the occurrence of *a*-prefixing differs radically from previous descriptions (Wolfram and Christian, 1976). In *Huckleberry Finn*, the *a*-prefix is liable to appear only on one of the verb forms of the coordination and, if so, it never appears attached to the last verb, as we can observe in the following examples (Antieau, 2001:152):

- (41) a. They swarmed uptowards Sherburn's house, *a- whooping* and *_ raging*
like Injuns...
- b. So we went *a-quaking* and *_shaking* down the stardboard side...

A potential explanation for this difference could be a grammaticalization process by means of which the *a*-prefix has wide scope over the entire coordinate construction, as in (41) (Antieau, 2001).

The fact that *a*-prefixing is mostly an oral phenomenon makes it prone to appear in informal letters. As a matter of fact, several authors, including Dylewsky (2013) have studied the use of the construction in Civil War letters penned in the dialect(s) of South Carolina. Soldiers who took part in the American Civil War (1861-1865) had little or no education at all as they were often farmers or craftsmen. It is in their correspondence then that they, due to their illiteracy, showed vernacularity and, thus, elements of the spoken speech arose, for instance, *a*-prefixing.

The soldiers apparently did not use this construction as expected by previous research as some non-permissive contexts emerge. On the one hand, there is an isolated instance of *a*-prefixing with a passive interpretation in the letters which clearly undermines Montgomery's (2009) proposal to discard the Ulster-Scots origin of the construction (Dylewsky, 2013:440):

- (42) I wont you to let me no how much thins is *a selling* about home.

On the other hand, the letters offer an instance of *a*-prefixing occurring on a verb with unstressed word-initial syllable, contradicting Wolfram's phonological constraint (Dylewsky, 2013: 440):

- (43) I have saw a grate many prisnors that our troops have captured within the las week. Fighting Joe [Hooker] ar *a-retreating* and Gen Ewel have captured Millroals hole force.

Above all, this indicates that *a*-prefixing is essentially an oral speech phenomenon as it is present in many songs, poems, dialogues of characters in novels and informal letters. Therefore, supposing most scholars' warnings become true in the near future in spite of the current shift the construction has undergone, still, *a*-prefixing will prevail because it is observed in many different artistic expressions, some of which are very much rooted in popular culture. That is the case of Bob Dylan's song.

6. Conclusion

The examination of the *a*-prefixing has allowed us to reach the following conclusions. This construction is a specific feature associated with Appalachian English, but it is also present in many varieties of the English-speaking world, although most predominantly in Southern vernacular varieties of English in the United States. First, I have shown its prepositional nature, and I have assessed its possible transatlantic sources, confirming that Southern British English is the most plausible one. Secondly, I have revealed that *a*-prefixing is a variable phenomenon and I have shown the verb types with which it most frequently occurs. Thirdly, this paper has shown and illustrated the factors that determine the occurrence of the construction, that seem to have a double nature, namely, both linguistic and extralinguistic. More precisely, the linguistic factors have been thoroughly examined to ascertain that very roughly speaking, *a*-prefixing appears mainly with progressive verbal forms which have syllable initial stress and are consonant-initial verbs. As for the meaning of the construction itself, we only have confirmation that it reinforces the on-going interpretation of the event referred to by the lexical verb and which is also conveyed by the progressive form on that verb. Finally, this paper has ascertained the presence of this traditional construction in many nursery rhymes, songs, dialogues of characters in novels and

informal letters, arguing that *a*-prefixing is mostly an oral phenomenon. Perhaps what has been most intriguing is the fact that in spite of its stigmatized status, this construction has acquired a totally different character. It has become a means by which youngsters in certain Appalachian communities integrate themselves into the community which has been something totally unexpected as many scholars predicted that *a*-prefixing would fall into oblivion sooner or later. As it has undergone a change, it would be interesting to carry out a longitudinal study to show how, if it is the case, its use may change and if the lexico-semantic, morphological, and syntactic restrictions operating on it would change too. So far, the linguistic constraints governing the form have demonstrated stability over the course of time. Additionally, further tracking of the prefix in Northern dialects of American English will perhaps bring us the means to compare it with its use in Southern dialects. Overall, *a*-prefixing is still a phenomenon under study by many linguists as many questions remain unanswered and many more yet to be raised. What is clear is that this form has not gone out of usage and, who knows, what the future might hold for this particular construction. Still, we will have to wait a long period of time to see whether it stays or contrariwise, it vanishes forever from speech, yet, it will always remain in songs, nursery rhymes and so on.

References

- American Antiquarian Society (n.d.). "The Frog and mouse, or The frog he would a wooing go," *Isaiah Thomas Broadside Ballads Project*. Retrieved April 7, 2018, from <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/thomasballads/items/show/111>.
- Antieau, L. (2001). 'I'm a-going to see what's going on here': a-prefixing in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. *Language and Literature*, 10(2), 145–157.
- Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) (n.d.). The Appalachian Region. Retrieved March 30, 2018, from https://www.arc.gov/appalachian_region/TheAppalachianRegion.asp.
- Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). (2009). Subregions in Appalachia. Retrieved March 30, 2018, from https://www.arc.gov/research/MapsofAppalachia.asp?MAP_ID=31.
- Atwood, E. B. (1953). *A survey of verb forms in the Eastern United States*. Ann Harbour, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- A&E Television Networks. (n.d.). Loretta Lynn. *Biography*. Retrieved April 7, 2018, from <https://www.biography.com/people/loretta-lynn-9389831>.
- Bolinger, D. (1971). The Nominal in the Progressive. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 2, 246-250.
- Burkette, A. (2001). *An examination of language variation in a small Blue Ridge community*. (Doctoral dissertation). The University of Georgia, Athens, GA. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database.
- Burkette, A. (2007). Constructing identity: Grammatical variables and the creation of a community voice. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 11(2), 286-296.
- Burkette, A. (2013). Constructing the (m)other: A-prefixing, stance and the lessons of motherhood. *Language in society*, 42(3), 239-258.
- Christian, D., Wolfram, W. and Dubé. N. (1984). *Variation and change in geographically isolated communities: Appalachian English and Ozark English*. Tuscaloosa, AL: American Dialect Society.
- Crystal, D. and Crystal, B. (2008). A- as a particle. Retrieved January 9, 2018, from www.shakespearewords.com/a-as-a-particle.
- DARE. (1985). *a prep*. In F. G. Cassidy (Ed.) *Dictionary of American Regional English*. Vol. 1, A–C. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Dietrich, J.C. (1981). The Gaelic Roots of a-prefixing in Appalachian English. *American Speech*, 56, 314.
- Dylewski, R. (2013). A-prefixing in civil war letters from southwestern South Carolina: Constraints, individual and community grammars. *Póznán Studies in Contemporary Linguistics PSiCL*, 49, 429-453.
- Feagin, C. (1979). *Variation and change in Alabama English: A sociolinguistic study of the White community*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

- Fenton, J. (1995). *The Hamely Tongue: A Personal Record of Ulster-Scots in County Antrim*. Newtownards: Ulster-Scots Academic Press.
- Frazer, T. C. (1990). More on the semantics of a-prefixing. *American Speech*, 65 (1), 89-93.
- Hackenberg, R. (1972). *A sociolinguistic description of Appalachian English*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database.
- Hazen, K. (2006). The final days of Appalachian Heritage Language. In T.E. Murray and B.L. Simon (Eds.), *Language Variation and Change in the American Midland. A New Look at 'Heartland' English*. (pp. 129- 150). Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing.
- Hazen, K., Flesher, J., and Simmons, E. (2013). The Appalachian range: The limits of language variation in West Virginia. In A. Clark and N. Hayward (Eds.), *Talking Appalachian: Voice, identity and community* (pp. 54-69). University Press of Kentucky.
- Hazen, K. and Fluharty. E. (2004) Defining Appalachian English. In M. Bender (Ed.), *Linguistic Diversity in the South, Changing Codes, Practices and Ideology*. (pp. 50-65). Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press.
- Herd, D. (1776). *Ancient and Modern Scottish songs, heroic ballads, etc: Collected from memory, tradition, and ancient authors* (2nd ed.). Edinburgh: Oxford University, from <https://archive.org/details/ancientandmoder01unkngoog>
- Hickey, R. (2007). *Irish English, History and Present-Day Forms*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Jespersen, O. (1933). *Essentials of English grammar*. University, Al: University of Alabama Press.
- Kemmer, S. (1993). *The Middle Voice*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Krapp, G. P. (1925). *The English Language in America*, 2. New York: Frederic Ungar Publishing Company.
- Labov, W. (1963). The social motivation of a sound change. *Word*, 19, 273-309.
- Matyiku, S. (2011). A-prefixing. Yale Grammatical Diversity Project: English in North America. Yale University. Retrieved March 20, 2018, from <https://ygdproject.yale.edu/phenomena/a-prefixing>.
- McQuaid, G. A. (2012). *Variation at the morphology-phonology interface in Appalachian English*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database.
- McQuaid, G. A. (2017). A comprehensive survey of a-prefixing in Southern Appalachia. *Language & Linguistics Compass*, 11 (5), 1-23.
- Merchant, N. (2017). Leave Your Sleep. Retrieved April 7, 2018, from <http://www.nataliemerchant.com/albums/leave-your-sleep/>.

- Montgomery, M. (1998). In the Appalachians They Speak like Shakespeare. In L. Bauer and P. Trudgill (Eds.), *Language myths* (pp. 66-67), London: Penguin Books.
- Montgomery, M. (2009). Historical and comparative perspectives on A-prefixing in the English of Appalachia. *American Speech*, 84(1), 5-26.
- Nagucka, R. (1984). Explorations into syntactic obsolescence: English *a-X-ing* and *X-ing*. In J. Fisiak (Ed.), *Historical syntax* (pp. 363-382). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Company.
- National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA). (n.d.). Waltzing Matilda Song Sheet. Retrieved April 7, 2018, from <http://dl.nfsa.gov.au/module/1644/>.
- Poetry Foundation. (n.d.) So We'll Go No More a Roving: By Lord Byron (George Gordon). Retrieved May 10, 2018, from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43845/so-well-go-no-more-a-roving>.
- Principia, M. (n. d.). The Times They Are a-Changin' – Bob Dylan: The archetypal protest song and an ageless anthem for frustrated youth. *Words in the Bucket: Rethinking World Thinking*. Retrieved April 7, 2018, from <https://www.wordsinthebucket.com/times-changin-bob-dylan>.
- Representative Poetry Online. (n.d.). So We'll Go no More a Roving ,Byron, George Gordon Lord (1788 - 1824). University of Toronto Libraries. Retrieved May 5, 2018, from <https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/so-well-go-no-more-roving>.
- Siemund, P. (2013). *Varieties of English. A typological approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Steward, W. A. (1967). *Language and Communication problems in Southern Appalachia*. Washington D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Todd, L. (1989). *The Language of Irish Literature*. New York: St. Martin's.
- Traugott, E. C. (1972). *A History of English Syntax: A Transformational Approach to the History of English Sentence Structure*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Waltzing Matilda. (n.d.). *Oxford Living Dictionaries*. Retrieved April 7, 2018, from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/waltzing_matilda.
- Wentworth, H. (1944). *American Dialect Dictionary*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.
- Wolfram, W. (1976). Toward a description of a-prefixing in Appalachian English. *American Speech*, 51 (1-2), 45-56.
- Wolfram, W. (1980). "A"-prefixing in Appalachian English. In W. Labov (Ed.), *Locating language in time and space* (pp. 107-142). New York: Academic Press.
- Wolfram, W. (1988). Reconsidering the semantics of a-prefixing. *American Speech*, 63(3), 247-253.
- Wolfram, W., and Christian, D. (1975). *Sociolinguistic variables in Appalachian dialects*. Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Wolfram, W., and Christian, D. (1976). *Appalachian Speech*. Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Wright, J. (1898). *English Dialect Dictionary*, Vol. 1. London: Frowde.