The phonology of Irish English

Raymond Hickey
Essen University

1 Introduction

The English language was introduced to Ireland with the coming of the Anglo-Normans from West Wales in the late 12th century. Among the settlers were English speakers who coexisted with the Norman French in Ireland, settling down in the towns of the east coast of Ireland and providing the cells out of which the English-speaking population of Ireland was later to emerge. Since the late 12th century the fate of English has been closely linked with that of the Irish language which it came largely to replace in the late modern period. In addition, the interaction of existing forms of English with the Scots imported in the early 17th century in the north of the country led to the linguistic separation of Ulster, the most northerly province, from the rest of the country. This state of affairs provides the rationale for the division of English in Ireland into two broad groups as reflected by divisions in the current chapter. For the many varieties of English on the island of Ireland there are different designations.

Anglo-Irish is an established term in literature to refer to works written in English by authors born in Ireland and is also used in politics. The difficulty with the term is its occurrence in these other spheres. Within the context of other varieties — Canadian English, for instance — the term is still used to refer to English in Ireland.

Hiberno-English is a learned term which is derived from the Latin term *Hibernia* 'Ireland'. The term enjoyed a certain currency in the 1970s and 1980s but in the 1990s many authors ceased to employ it, as it often needs explanation to a non-Irish audience or readership. However, not all authors share this opinion, however, see Dolan (1998) who uses the term 'Hiberno-English'.

Irish English is the simplest and most convenient term. It has the advantage that it is parallel to the designations for other varieties, e.g. American, Australian, Welsh English and can be further differentiated where necessary. Throughout the present chapter this term will be used.

In the north of the country terms are used which reflect historical origins, e.g. *Ulster Scots* for the English stemming from the initial Lowland Scots settlers, *Mid-Ulster English* for geographically central varieties which are largely of northern English provenance. There is much discussion on the status of Ulster Scots as a possible separate language and similarly the status of Scots is debated. A discussion of this issue is, however, well beyond the brief of the current chapter.

Contact English is found occasionally to refer globally to varieties spoken in areas where Irish is also spoken (in Donegal, Connemara and Kerry, see map accompanying this chapter).

1.1 Historical background

The most cursory glance at the history of Irish English reveals that it is divided into two periods. The first period starts in the late 12th century with the arrival of the first English-speaking settlers and finishes around 1600 when the second period opens. The main event which justifies this periodisation is the renewed and vigorous planting of English in Ireland at the beginning of the 17th century. One must first understand that during the first period the Old English — as this group is called in the Irish context — came increasingly under the influence of the Irish. The Anglo-Normans who were the military leaders during the initial settlement had been completely absorbed by the Irish by the end of the 15th century. The progressive Gaelicisation led the English to attempt planting the Irish countryside in order to reinforce the English presence there. This was by and large a failure and it was only with James I that successful planting of (Lowland Scottish and English) settlers in the north of the country tipped the linguistic balance in favour of English in the north. During the seventeenth century (after the Cromwellian campaigns at the middle of the century) new forms of English were brought to Ireland, Scots in the north and West/North Midland varieties in the south (where there had been a predominantly West Midland and South-West input in the first period). Although there was renewed Anglicisation, on the east coast, in Dublin and other locations down to Waterford in the south-east, there is a definite continuation of south-west English features which stem from the imported varieties of the first period. This fact underlies a distinctive east coast dialect area.

1.1.1 The medieval period

The documentary record of medieval Irish English is confined for all intents and purposes to the collection of 16 poems of Irish provenance in BM Harley 913 which are known collectively as the *Kildare Poems* (Heuser 1904) after one of the poems in which the author identifies himself as from the county of Kildare to the south-west of Dublin. The collection probably dates from the early 14th century. The language of these poems is of a general west Midland to southern English character. Many of the idiosyncratic features can be traced to Irish influence (see discussion in Hickey 1993). It is a moot point whether the *Kildare Poems* were written by native speakers of Irish using English as a H-language in a diglossic situation and whether indeed the set was written by one or more individuals. Apart from the *Kildare Poems* medieval Irish English is attested in a number of verse fragments and in city records from Dublin and Waterford, comments on which can be found in Henry (1958).

1.1.2 The early and late modern period

At the end of the 16th century attestations of Irish English begin to appear which are deliberate representations of the variety of the time. These are frequently in the guise of literary parody of the Irish by English authors (Bliss 1979). The value of these written representations of Irish English for reconstructing the language of the time has been much questioned and it is true that little if any detail can be extracted from these sources. In addition most of the satirical pieces were written by Englishmen so that one is dealing with an external perception of Irish English at the time. Satirical writings are not the only source of Irish English, however. There are some writers, especially in the 19th century, who seriously attempt to indicate vernacular speech of their time, such as Maria Edgeworth in her novel *Castle Rackrent* (1801).

1.2 Language shift in early modern Ireland

Literary parodies do not reveal anything about the then relationship of Irish to English, the spread of English and the regional input from England. There were no censuses before 1851 which gave data on speakers of Irish and English. Adams (1965) is a useful attempt to nonetheless produce a linguistic cartography of Ireland at the beginning of the early modern period. The upshot of this situation is that there is no reliable data on the language shift which began in earnest in the early 17th century and which had been all but completed by the late 19th century.

It is clear that the Irish learned English from other Irish who already new some, perhaps through contact with those urban Irish who were English speakers, especially on the east coast and through contact with the English planters and their employees. This fact had consequences for the nature of Irish English. Bliss (1977) pointed out that this fact is responsible for both the common malapropisms and the unconventional word stress found in Irish English. However, the stress pattern in verbs with final long vowels, e.g. *distribute* [dɪstrɪˈbjuːt], *educate* [ɛdjuˈkeːt], can also be due to English input, particularly as late stress is a feature of southern Irish, not of the west and north, and so influence due to contact with Irish could only be posited for the south of Ireland.

Another point concerning the language shift in Ireland is that it was relatively long, spanning at least three centuries from 1600 to 1900 for most of the country. The scenario for language shift is one where lexical transfer into English is unlikely, or at least unlikely to become established in any nascent supraregional variety of English in Ireland. Such dictionaries as Ó Muirithe (1996) and to a lesser extent Dolan (1998) seem to reveal a large number of Irish loans in present-day Irish English. But the question of currency is the key issue here: there is a great difference between the vocabulary of an older agricultural generation (which is frequently reflected in the entries in these dictionaries) and a younger urban one.

In phonology and syntax the matter is quite different. Speakers who learn a language as adults retain the pronunciation of their native language and have difficulty with segments which are unknown to them. A simple case of this would be the substitution of English dental fricatives by stops (dental or sometimes alveolar, depending on region) in Irish English. A more subtle case would be the lenition of stops in Irish English, e.g. *cat* [kæt̞], which while systemically completely different from lenition in Irish could be the result of a phonological directive applied by the Irish learning English to lenite elements in positions of maximal sonority.

1.2.1 Contact Irish English

In present-day Ireland there are only a few small remaining enclaves scattered along the western seaboard where Irish is still spoken as a native language in a situation of unbroken historical continuity. Apart from this there is an increasing number of language enthusiasts who speak Irish as a second language and attempt to keep the language alive by using it as much as they can, frequently in an urban environment which is completely English-speaking. In principle the rural setting just mentioned should be the one in which the language shift scenario of previous centuries (Hickey 1995) is replicated, thus enabling linguists to view the process of language contact and transfer *in vivo*. Despite this fact there are few studies of contact Irish English today although the Irish language in contact areas has repeatedly been the subject of investigation, e.g. Stenson (1991). This study was carried out on seven informants from the north west of Ireland (Co. Donegal)

to see what kind of /l/ sounds they showed in English. To this end their Irish was investigated. This variety of Irish shows three types of *l*-sound: a velarised [ɫ], a palatalised [ʎ] and a (lenited) neutral [l]. It turned out that the speakers used the last sound as the realisation of English /l/ in all positions (bar before /j/ as in *million* /mɪljən/ = [mɪʎən]) which tallies with the realisation of /l/ in the rest of the country where this was decided a century or two ago.

1.3 Supraregionalisation

It is obvious from English loanwords in Irish that early Irish English had not progressed through the major long vowel shift in England, e.g. Irish *bacús* 'bakehouse' shows unshifted /aː/ and /uː/. The play *Captain Thomas Stukeley* (1596/1605), the first widespread representation of Irish English in literary parody, consistently uses *<oo>* for words with /au/ from Middle English /uː/, e.g. *toon* for *town*. Furthermore, comments from Thomas Sheridan in the late 18th century (Sheridan 1781) show that Middle English /aː/, as in *patron,* still had not shifted, nor had Middle English /ɛː/ as in *meat*. But present-day Irish English shows little or no trace of these unshifted vowels. The reason is not that the shift took place in Irish English some time in the 19th century but that the unshifted forms were replaced by mainstream English pronunciations due to a process which I have labelled *supraregionalisation*. The essence of this process is the replacement of salient features of a variety by more standard ones, frequently from an extranational norm, as with southern British English vis à vis Irish English. The motivation for this move is to render a variety less locally bound, more acceptable to a wider community, hence the term 'supraregionalisation'.

1.4 Vernacularisation

The story of supraregionalisation does not end with the disappearance of strongly local features. There is another pathway which such features can take. This is the relegation to vernacular varieties. Take the instance of Middle English /ɛː/ as in *beat* /bɛːt/. This pronunciation is now confined to strongly local varieties where supraregionalisation has not taken place. Furthermore, non-local speakers can style-shift downwards to achieve a vernacular effect. Another example of this would be the use of *youse* or *yez* for the second person plural (also found in other Anglophone areas such as Tyneside). This is shunned by non-local speakers but can be employed when deliberately switching to a vernacular mode.

      The process of vernacularisation has in some instances led to a lexical split. Consider the reflex of velarised [ɫ] before [d] in Irish English: this led to the diphthong [au] as in the words *old* [aul] and *bold* [baul] with the common post-sonorant stop deletion. These forms are available alongside /oːld/ and /boːld/ to non-local speakers but the meanings are somewhat different as the original forms with [au] have gained additional meaning components: [aul] 'old + affectionate attachment', e.g. *His* [aul] *car has finally given up the ghost,* [baul] 'daring + sneaking admiration', e.g. *The* [baul] *Charlie is back on top again.*

2 Varieties of Southern Irish English

It is obvious that linguistically, as well as politically, Ireland is divided into two broad sections, the north and the south. The former consists of the six counties presently within the state of Northern Ireland and of the large county of Donegal which is part of the Republic of Ireland. The north has a complex linguistic landscape of its own with at least two major historical varieties, Ulster Scots, the speech of those directly derived from the original Lowland Scots settlers, and Mid-Ulster English, the speech of those descendants of English settlers to central parts of Ulster. In addition there is the sociolinguistically complex capital, Belfast. Co. Donegal by and large goes with the rest of Ulster in sharing key features of English in the province and also in the varieties of Irish used there.

The north of the country is quite distinct from the south, accents of northerners being immediately recognisable to southerners. A dividing line can be drawn roughly between Sligo, just south of Co. Donegal to Dundalk on the east coast immediately below the border with Northern Ireland (Ó Baoill 1991). North of this line the accents are distinctly Ulster-like. South of this line the northern features rapidly give way to southern values. The term 'line' here might imply a clearly delimited boundary, perhaps 'zone' might be more accurate as border counties such as Monaghan, Cavan or Louth show mixed accents which have adopted features from both northern and southern types.

The transition can be seen clearly moving down the east coast: Dundalk has a northern flavour to its speech but this is more of less lost by the time one reaches Drogheda travelling southwards. However, the recordings of *A Sound Atlas of Irish English* show that key features of northern Irish English, such as mid front vowel breaking, as in *save* [seːəv], and *u*-fronting, as in *boot* [bʉt], extend quite far down the east coast, indeed in the case of the latter almost to the border of Co. Dublin.

Table 1 *Northern features which occur in the transition zone from south to north*

Use of interdental fricatives for dental stops in the south
Use of a fronted allophone of /uː/ and /u/, i.e. [ʉ(ː)]
A reduction in the vowel length distinctions
Use of a retroflex [ɻ] in syllable-final position
Greater pitch range between stressed and unstressed syllables
Greater allophony of /æ/, e.g. raised variants in a velar environment *bag* [bɛg] and a retracted realisation in a nasal environment *family* [ˈfɑmli]
Recessive occurrence of glides after velars and before front vowels as in *Cavan* [ˈkjævən] (a border county)

2.1 The East Coast

The east of the country stretches from the town of Drogheda somewhat north of Dublin down to Waterford in the south-east and includes such towns as Carlow, Kilkenny, New Ross, Wexford. This is the area which was first settled by the English from the late 12th century onwards and it is roughly coterminous with that which was encompassed by the

Pale, the region of English influence in the late medieval ages, at its greatest extension. The original input from South-West England did in fact survive in altered form until the beginning of the 19th century in the archaic dialect of Forth and Bargy which was recorded by a few glossary compilers before it finally ceased to exist.

Table 2 *East band features from Dundalk down to Waterford (including Dublin)*

Fortition of dental fricatives to alveolar stops (also south), e.g. *think* [tɪŋk]
Lack of low vowel lengthening before voiceless fricatives (not Dublin), e.g. *path* [pat]
Front onset of /au/, e.g. *town* [tæʊn], [tɛʊn]
Centralised onset of /ai/ (also south), e.g. *quite* [kwəɪt]
Breaking of long high vowels (especially Dublin), e.g. *clean* [klijən]
Fortition of alveolar sibilants in pre-nasal position, e.g. *isnt* [ɪdn̩t]
No lowering of early modern /u/ (only Dublin), e.g. *done* [dʊn]
Glottalisation of lenited /t/, e.g. *foot* [fʊt] ➔ [fʊt̞] ➔ [fʊʔ] ➔ [fʊh].

2.2 The South and West

This is a large region, from Co. Cork up to Co. Mayo, and was that in which Irish survived longest. As rule of thumb one can say that Irish receded from east to west. Furthermore, in this western and southern half of the country there is no survival of English from the first period with the possible exception of very small pockets in the major cities Cork, Limerick and Galway. Hence the English which developed here was that of the early modern period which arose through uncontrolled adult second language acquisition on the part of the rural inhabitants who represented the vast majority of speakers. Furthermore, the regional English input of the early modern period was of a largely West Midlands character.

The south and the west can also be distinguished from each other, at least on phonological grounds. The major segmental feature is the raising of /ɛ/ ➔ /ɪ/ before nasals in the south and southwest. This phenomenon is not spectacular in itself and is found in many varieties of English, most notably in the Lower South of the United States. But a consideration of the history of Irish English shows that this raising was of a more general type previously. If one looks at the many literary satires which contain Irish English — for instance in the collection by Alan Bliss (1979) or in *A Corpus of Irish English* (Hickey 2003) — then one sees that formerly the raising occurred in non-nasal environments as well, e.g. 'divil', 'togithir', (from Dion Boucicault's play *Arragh na Pogue*, 1864). What would appear to have happened in late 19th century, early 20th century Irish English is that the raising came to be restricted to environments in which it was phonetically natural, i.e. before nasals as these often trigger vowel raising due to their formant structure. This would mean that the situation in the south and south-west of Ireland (roughly the counties of Cork and Kerry) is a remnant of a much wider occurrence of /ɛ/ ➔ /ɪ/ raising.

A suprasegmental feature of the south, especially of the city of Cork is the large intonational range characterised by a noticeable drop in pitch on stressed syllables. This

intonational pattern is shared by Cork Irish, in the remnants which are still extant, so that this prosodic feature can be viewed as an areal feature of the south/south-west. The city of Cork also has a very open realisation of the vowels in the LOT and THOUGHT lexical sets which is seen in (often stereotypical) pronunciations of the city's name, [kaɹk].

A distinctive feature of the west is the use of dental stops in the THINK / THIS lexical sets. In vernacular varieties in the east and south, alveolar stops are employed here. In the history of Irish English one can assume that Irish speakers switching to English would have used the nearest equivalent to English /θ, ð/, i.e. the coronal stops of Irish. These stops were alveolar in the east and south, but dental in the west so that speakers used /t̪, d̪/ as equivalents to the English dental fricatives in their second language English. This dental pronunciation of the west has become that of the supraregional variety of Irish English, itself deriving from usage in Dublin and spreading then throughout the country. But in vernacular Dublin English the realisation of dental fricatives has been as alveolar stops so it is not clear how vernacular speakers in Dublin came to use dental stops. One view is that they picked this articulation up from the many immigrants into Dublin in the latter half of the 19th century, because it (i) allowed them to dissociate themselves phonetically from vernacular speakers in the city and (ii) permitted a reversal of homophony in the words *thinker* and *tinker*.

2.3   The Midlands

The centre of Ireland is a flat expanse bordered by the hills and mountains which occupy the coastal regions of the country. In general the term 'Midlands' is used in Ireland to describe an area west of Co. Dublin as far as the Shannon and including its western shore linking up with east Clare, Galway and Mayo and on a north-south axis delimited by the border with Northern Ireland in the north and to the south by a line running roughly from Limerick across to Dublin. In this sense the Midlands actually refers to the north-central part of Ireland. Its extension to the south is limited and does not stretch far down into Co. Tipperary. The counties which are regarded as typically part of the Midlands are Westmeath, Longford, Offaly, Laois along with west Kildare and Meath, south Roscommon and north Tipperary. The main town in the Midlands is Athlone, situated on the Shannon about half way on its north-south course.

To the north, the Midlands show the transitional features of the north-south divide (Ó Baoill 1991) such as *u*-fronting, the use of dental fricatives for stops in the THINK / THIS lexical set or a retroflex [ɻ] for the more general, traditional velarised [ɫ] of the south. The single most obvious feature of the Midlands is the shift of /tj/ to /k/ in intervocalic position as in *fortune* ['fɔrkuːn], already mentioned in the 19th century. Other features are shared by adjoining varieties.

Table 3 *Phonological features of the South, West and Midlands of Ireland*

South and west from Cork through Limerick up to Galway and Sligo
/ɛ/ → /ɪ/ before nasals
Tense, raised articulation of /æ/ (also east)
Considerable intonational range (only south, south-west)

West
Dental stop realisation in THINK, THIS lexical sets
Low central onset for /ai/ and /au/, e.g. *quite* [kwaɪt], *town* [taʊn]
Midlands
Shift of /tj/ to /k/ in word-internal position, e.g. *fortune* [ˈfɒrkuːn]

3 Varieties of Northern Irish English

Any treatment of English in Ireland must take special account of the situation in Ulster. The reason for this lies in the settlement history of this province which led to the introduction of Scots and forms of northern English which were, and still definitely are, distinctive from all varieties of English in the south of the country. There has also been, as in the south, interaction between forms of English and Irish which has added a further dimension to the linguistic complexity in the north. A common means of alluding to the northern part of the island of Ireland is by the historical name 'Ulster' which covers the entire north of Ireland.

3.1 Terminology

Similarly to the south, any discussion of English in the north must begin with a consideration of terminology as there are many and frequently contradictory usages found in treatments of language in Ulster.

Ulster English 1) A cover term for various forms of English used in Northern Ireland. 2) A specific reference to English brought to Ulster from the north-west Midlands of England (Adams 1958: 61) and separate from the Scots element in the province. Because Ulster Scots (see next entry) is found in the peripheral counties of Ulster (Donegal, Derry, Antrim and Down) the label 'Mid-Ulster English' (Harris 1984) is sometimes used to refer to general forms of English in Northern Ireland which are not derived from Scots.

Ulster Scots This refers to a continuation of the Scots language brought to Ireland chiefly in the 17th century onwards. Some tens of thousands of Scots arrived in the first half of this century and were mainly from the West-Mid and South-West Lowlands. Ulster Scots today still shows many features typical for the most characteristic form of English in Scotland, Scots.

Northern Irish English subsumes all kinds of English in the north of the country, i.e. in all the nine countries of the province of Ulster and is used in the present chapter.

3.2 Ulster Scots

Of all the varieties of English taken to Ireland since the 17th century, Ulster Scots is the only one which has retained a distinct profile and which can be unambiguously linked to the present-day varieties to which it is immediately related, Scots in western Scotland. Undoubtedly Ulster Scots — especially in its rural forms — is quite separate from other varieties of English in the north of Ireland, let alone the south. Its highly divergent nature has meant that much debate has taken place concerning its status as a language or 'simply' a dialect (see the contributions in Kirk and Ó Baoill (eds) 2000).

The regions where Ulster Scots is spoken are nowadays no longer contiguous. This would seem to imply a reduction of the previous geographical distribution. The areas where it is still found do, however, represent historical regions of settlement. There are three of these located on the northern periphery from north-west to north-east, hence the term 'Coastal Crescent' or 'Northern Crescent' (see map at the end of this chapter).

3.2.1 Delimiting Ulster Scots

A treatment of Ulster Scots must start with differentiating between conservative Ulster Scots — 'braid', i.e. broad, Ulster Scots — which has its base in rural areas of Ulster and more standard forms which are spoken chiefly in urban centres, parallel to the established distinction in Scotland between, Lowland Scots and Scottish Standard English (Harris 1984: 119). An essential feature of standard Ulster Scots is that most words with non-standard Scots vowel values have re-allocated values which are nearer to those in general Ulster English. The following list illustrates vowel values and some consonantal features which are indicative of conservative Ulster Scots; the yardstick of reference is Older Scots (OS), up to 1700, i.e. before the emigration to Ulster began.

Table 4 *Features of conservative Ulster Scots*

Retention of OS *ū* (not shifted to /au/) *cow* /kʉː/, *hoos* /hʉs/
A low, unrounded back vowel for OS *o*, *soft* /sɑːft/, *top* /tɑːp/
OS *ei* merges with /i/ and not /ai/ [əɪ, ɑe], *die* /diː/
OS *ō* has a fronted, unrounded reflex, *blood* /blɪd/
Fronting and raising of Old English *ā*, *home* /heːm/
Little raising of above vowel after labio-velars, *two* /twɔː/
Lowering of /ɪ/ to /ɛ/, *thick* /θɛk/
No raising of Middle English /ɛː/ to /iː/, *beat* /bet/, *meat* /met/
Raising of OS /a/ especially before /r/, *farm* /fɛːrm/
Distinct open and close mid back vowels, *horse* /hɔːrs/, *hoarse* /hoːrs/
Distinction between short vowels before /r/, *term* /tɛrm/, *burn* /bʌrn/
No rounding of /a/ after /w/, *swan* /swan/
Retention of distinction between /w/ and /ʍ/, *whale* /ʍeːl/, *wale* /weːl/
Retention of syllable-final /x/, *bought* /bɔːxt/
Vocalisation of word-final /l/ [ɫ], *full* /fʉː/, *wall* /wɔː/

The shifts of vowel values in Ulster Scots when compared to southern British English have led to a re-alignment of vowel space. This can best be indicated diagrammatically as follows. The first shift one should note is that of Middle English /oː/ to a front vowel, with or without rounding, i.e. Older Scots /ɪ, ø/. In Ulster Scots this vowel appears as /ɪ/.

Table 5 *Ulster Scots vowel shifts*

/ɪ/	←	/oː/	*loom* /lɪm/
/æ/	←	/ɪ/	*limb* /læm/
/ɑː/	←	/æ/	*lamb* /lɑːm/

3.3 Contrasting northern and southern Irish English

In the following sections those features in which varieties in Ulster (both Ulster Scots and general Ulster English) differ from those south of the province will be discussed. In a number of instances it is necessary to distinguish the two main groups within Ulster. The yardstick for the south is the supraregional standard which ultimately is derived from middle-class Dublin English of the early and mid 20th century.

  Equivalents of dental fricatives In the entire area of Ulster the THIN and THIS lexical sets show fricatives. The only exception to this are areas of contact with Irish (in County Donegal) where one finds [t̪] and [d̪] because of the transfer from Irish of the realisations of /t/ and /d/ in the latter language.

Table 6 *The THIN and THIS lexical sets*

	Ulster	Supraregional Southern
thick	[θɛk]	[t̪ɪk]
that	[ðat]	[d̪æt̪]
lather	[lɑː(ð)əɹ]	[laːd̪əɹ]
brother	[brʌər]	[brʌd̪əɹ]

Dentalisation of alveolar stops before /r/ This is a phonetic process whereby an alveolar stop — typically /t/ — is shifted forward to a dental point of articulation when it is followed by an unstressed rhotic schwa. The /r/ is realised as a tap or slight trill due to the position of the tongue parallel to the escaping airstream (Bernoulli effect) and it frequently voiceless.

Table 7 *Dentalisation of alveolar stops before /r/*

	Ulster and Conservative Vernacular Southern
water	[wɑːt̪ər]
better	[bɛt̪ər]

Allophones of alveolar plosives The fricativisation of /t/ and often /d/ intervocalically and word-finally before a pause is not generally to be found in the north — nor in other varieties of English, bar the Irish section of Newfoundland — and thus gains the status of a defining feature of southern Irish English.

Table 8 *Allophones of alveolar plosives*

	Ulster	Supraregional Southern
bat	[bat]	[bæt̪]
bead	[bid]	[bid̪]

The palatalisation of velar plosives A conspicuous feature of generalised Ulster English is the palatalisation of /g/ and /k/ to /kj/ and /gj/ respectively. This palatalisation is only to be found before low vowels. It would appear to be an English and not a Scots feature and is attested in 18th century mainland English although it was later lost.

Table 9 *The palatalisation of velar plosives*

	Ulster	Supraregional Southern
cat	[kjat]	[kæt̪]
gap	[gjap]	[gæp]

Off-glides When mid front vowels occur in stressed position then they tend to develop offglides. This is particularly clear before a following consonant.

Table 10 *Off-glides*

	Ulster	Supraregional Southern
save	[seːəv]	[seːv]
bait	[beːət]	[beːt̪]

Unstressed vowels In unstressed positions southern Irish English frequently has the high vowel [i], i.e. without any centralisation to [ɪ], so-called HAPPY-tensing. Ulster English tends to lower an unstressed /i/ to a value approaching /e/.

Table 11 *Unstressed vowels*

	Ulster	Supraregional Southern
tricky	[trĕke]	[trɪki]
happy	[hɑpe]	[hæpi]

Vowel quantity In Ulster, in strong contradistinction to the South, vowel quantity is often non-distinctive. High and mid vowels, which are elsewhere either long or short, appear phonetically half-long.

Table 12 *Vowel quantity*

	Ulster	*Supraregional Southern*
full	[fʉl]	[fʊl]
fool	[fʉl]	[fuːl]

4 Interpreting features of Irish English

In the history of Irish English studies the pendulum of opinion concerning the role of contact in the genesis of these forms of English has swung back and forth. Initially writers like Joyce, P. L. Henry and, to a lesser extent, Hogan assumed that every feature which had a parallel in Irish was of Irish origin. This stance has been labelled the *substratist* position and came under heavy fire in the mid 1980's most noticeably in John Harris' influential article, Harris (1984). The *retentionist* standpoint which saw the input varieties of English in early modern Ireland as the source of features hitherto accounted for by contact came into vogue and was represented by various scholars. But in the 1990's the pendulum moved more to the centre with the gradual acceptance of contact as a source of specific features in Irish English (Hickey 1995), not for ideological reasons, as often previously, but from a better understanding of the mechanisms of language transfer and language shift, not least due to authors on Irish English, such as Markku Filppula, taking on board the ideas of other linguists examining contact in general, expressed most clearly in the seminal monograph, Thomason and Kaufman (1988). Convergence became the new standard wisdom with contact and retention occupying places of equal standing in the history of Irish English. The following table offers suggestions for sources of key phonological features of Irish English.

Table 13 *Phonological features and their possible sources*

Phonological feature	*Possible source*
Dental/alveolar stops for fricatives	Transfer of nearest Irish equivalent, coronal stops
Intervocalic and pre-pausal lenition of /t/	Lenition as a phonological directive from Irish
Alveolar /l/ in all positions	Use of non-velar, non-palatal [l] from Irish
Retention of [ʍ] for <*wh*>	Convergence of input with Irish /f/ [ɸ]
Retention of syllable-final /r/	Convergence of English input and Irish
Distinction of short vowels before /r/, e.g. *term* [tɛɹm] and *turn* [tʌɹn]	Convergence of English input and Irish
Epenthesis in heavy clusters in syllables codas, *film* [fɪləm]	Areal feature of both Irish and English in Ireland
U-fronting in the north, e.g. *boot* [bʉt]	Areal feature of both Irish and English in Ulster

Lowering of short front vowels, e.g. *bit* [bet]	Input to Ulster from Scotland
Use of retroflex *r* in Ulster	Input to Ulster from Scotland

4.1 Ireland as a linguistic area

The above table contains features which are traits of vernacular varieties throughout the entire island. When treating features of Irish English a holistic view can be useful, that is, rather than stress differences, one could examine the features common to most or all varieties and indeed go a step further and compare these to parallel structures in Irish. This approach is largely typological and sees Ireland (north and south) as a linguistic area. Not all of these are strongly diagnostic of Ireland as a linguistic area as they are also found in forms English in England, quite apart from Anglophone varieties overseas. One should also mention that the non-existence of features across the entire country has led to negative definers for Irish English arising. For instance *r*-lessness and/or *h*-dropping are definite signs that a speaker is not Irish.

5 Urban English in Ireland

5.1 English in Dublin

The English language has been spoken in Dublin since the late 12th century. English never died out in the capital and there are some features of vernacular Dublin English which can be traced to the first period. The records of Dublin English are slight and consist before 1600 mainly of municipal records which here and there betray the kind of English which must have been spoken in the city (Henry 1958). For an historical background to present-day speech one must look to the elocutionist Thomas Sheridan (the father of the playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan) who in 1781 published *A Rhetorical Grammar of the English Language* with an appendix in which he commented on the English used by middle class Dubliners, the 'gentlemen of Ireland' in his words, which he regarded as worthy of censure on his part. When discussing consonants Sheridan remarks on 'the thickening (of) the sounds of *d* and *t* in certain situations'. Here he is probably referring to the realisation of dental fricatives as alveolar plosives as found in vernacular forms of Dublin English today. There is no hint in Sheridan of anything like a distinction between dental and alveolar plosive realisations, which is an essential marker of local versus non-local speech today.

Table 14 *Dental versus alveolar stops in Dublin English*

Local Dublin	Non-local Dublin
thank, tank [tæŋk]	*thank* [t̪æŋk], *tank* [tæŋk]

5.1.2 Varieties of Dublin English

Any discussion of English in Dublin necessitates a few basic divisions into types. For the present contribution a twofold division, with a further subdivision, is employed. The first group consists of those who use the inherited popular form of English in the capital. The

term 'local' is intended to capture this and to emphasise that these speakers are those who show strongest identification with traditional conservative Dublin life of which the popular accent is very much a part. The reverse of this is 'non-local' which refers to sections of the metropolitan population who do not wish a narrow, restrictive identification with popular Dublin culture. This group then subdivides into a larger, more general section, 'mainstream', and a currently smaller group which vigorously rejects a confining association with low-prestige Dublin. For want of a better term, this group is labelled 'fashionable'.

Table 15 *Varieties of Dublin English*

Forms of English in present-day Dublin
1) *local* Dublin English
2) *non-local* Dublin English — a) *mainstream* Dublin English b) *fashionable* Dublin English

A central issue in contemporary Dublin English is the set of vowel shifts which represent the most recent phonological innovation in Irish English (see below for details). This is not surprising as Dublin is a typical location for language change given the following features. 1) The city has expanded greatly in population in the last three or four decades. The increase in population has been due both to internal growth and migration into the city from the rest of the country. 2) It has undergone an economic boom in the last 15 years or so, reflected in its position as an important financial centre and a location for many computer firms which run their European operations from Dublin. The increase in wealth and international position has meant that many young people aspire to an urban sophistication which is divorced from strongly local Dublin life. For this reason the developments in fashionable Dublin English diverge from those in local Dublin English, indeed can be interpreted as a reaction to it. This type of linguistic behaviour can be termed *local dissociation* as it is motivated by the desire of speakers to hive themselves off from vernacular forms of a variety spoken in their immediate surroundings.

5.1.3 Features of local Dublin English

Vowel breaking Long high vowels are realised as two syllables with a hiatus between the two when they occur in closed syllables. The hiatus element is [j] with front vowels and [w] with back vowels, *clean* [klijən], *fool* [fuwəl]. The disyllabification of long high vowels extends to diphthongs which have a high ending point as can be seen in the following realisations: *time* [təjəm], *pound* [pɛwən]. Among the further prominent vocalic characteristics of Dublin English are the following: (1) Fronting of /au/, e.g. *down* [dɛʊn] - [deʊn], (2) Lengthening of historically short vowels before /r/, e.g. *circle* [sɛːkl̩], *first* [fʊːs(t)], (3) Retention of early modern English short /ʊ/, e.g. *Dublin* [dʊblən].

   Cluster simplification Stops after fricatives or sonorants are liable to deletion. Intermediate registers may have a glottal stop as a trace of the stop in question: *pound* [peʊn(ʔ)], *last* [læːs(ʔ)].

   Fortition of dental fricatives It is safe to assume that the realisation of the first sound in the THOUGHT lexical set in popular Dublin English as an alveolar plosive [t]

is not a recent phenomenon. Hogan (1927: 71-72) notes that it is found in the seventeenth century plays (assuming that *t, d* represent [t, d]) and furthermore in the Dublin City Records (from the first period, i.e. before the 17th century, see above) where the third person singular ending *-th* appears as *-t*.

T-*lenition* The clearest phonetic feature of southern Irish English is the realisation of /t/ as a fricative with identical characteristics of the stop, i.e. an apico-alveolar fricative in weak positions. Extensions include the lenition of /t/ in a weak position beyond the initial stage of apico-alveolar fricative to /r/ then to /h/ with final deletion as in the following instance.

Table 16 T-*lenition*

Cline of *t*-lenition in Dublin English						
/t/	[t̺]	→ [ɹ]	→ [h]	→ ø		
water	[wɑːt̺ɚ]	[wɑːɹɚ]	[wɑːhɚ]	[wɑːɚ]		

As mentioned above, the THIN and THIS lexical sets show alveolar stops rather than the dental stops of supraregional Irish English.

5.1.4 Recent developments

As mentioned in section 5.1.2 above, the major instance of language change in present-day Ireland is undoubtedly the shift in pronunciation of Dublin English. To understand the workings of this shift one must realise that in the course of the 1980s and 1990s the city of Dublin, as the capital of the Republic of Ireland, underwent an unprecedented expansion in population size and in relative prosperity with a great increase in international connections to and from the metropolis. The inmigrants to the city, who arrived there chiefly to avail of the job opportunities resulting from the economic boom formed a group of socially mobile, weak-tie speakers and their section of the city's population has been a key locus for language change. The change which arose in the last two decades of the 20th century was reactive in nature: fashionable speakers began to move away in their speech from their perception of popular Dublin English, a classic case of dissociation in an urban setting.

The variable (ai) in Irish English A conservative pronunciation of (ai) in Dublin is maintained in lower-class speech as [əɪ] whereas the supraregional variety of the south has for (ai) a diphthong which has a low mid or low front starting point, i.e., either [aɪ] or [æi]. For fashionable Dubliners the [aɪ, æɪ] pronunciations sufficiently delimit them from local Dublin English. But increasingly a back starting-point came to be used with this diphthong. This retracted starting-point is particularly noticeable before /r/ so that the name of the country is realised as [ɑɪɹlənd] rather than [aɪɹlənd].

General shift of low vowels The vowel shift in Dublin English is not just confined to the realisation of (ai). Other vowels in the area of this diphthong are affected, particularly the diphthong in the CHOICE lexical set and the low and mid vowels in the LOT and THOUGHT sets which usually have a lower realisation than in Britain (or unrounded in the case of the LOT vowel), *boy* /ɔɪ/ → [bɒɪ], *pot* /ɒ/ → [pɒt̺] - [pɑt̺], *law* /ɔː/ → [lɒː]. These realisations show that the change has the characteristics of a chain shift, that is, it affects several segments by a process of retraction and raising in

phonological vowel space. This can be seen from the following tables which summarise the various vowel developments.

Table 17 *Summary of the present-day Dublin Vowel Shift*

Retraction of diphthongs with a low or back starting point
time [taɪm] → [tɑɪm]
toy [tɒɪ] → [tɔɪ], [toɪ]

Raising of low back vowels
cot [kɒt̪] → [kɔt̪]
caught [kɒːt̪] → [kɔːt̪], [koːt̪]

Raising		ɔɪ		oː
		↑		↑
		ɔɪ	ɔ	ɔː
		↑	↑	↑
		ɒɪ	ɒ	ɒː
Retraction	aɪ	→	ɑɪ	

5.1.5 The spread of the fashionable Dublin speech

Because of the status of Dublin, non-vernacular speech of the capital acts as a *de facto* standard for the rest of the south when speakers, outside of Dublin, are seeking a non-local, generally acceptable form of Irish English. This has also meant, for instance, that the retroflex [ɻ] used by fashionable speakers in Dublin is spreading out of the capital, especially with younger urbanites from different parts of the country. Various features of fashionable Dublin English, both vocalic and consonantal are spreading rapidly, especially among the younger female population. For the following discussion, this speech is a labelled the New Pronunciation, the capital letters deliberately suggesting a bundle of features which are adopted as a group by innovative speakers.

Apart from vowels, the New Pronunciation of southern Irish English involves above all the realisation of liquids /l/ and /r/. Other segments do not seem to be affected by the shift in pronunciation. Specifically, the complex area of coronal segments has not been altered to any significant extent. In addition to */ai/-retraction* and *back vowel raising*, discussed above, one can note the following features.

/au/-fronting In Dublin English, and indeed in traditional east-coast varieties of Irish English in general, the vowel in the MOUTH lexical set has a front starting point, either [æ] or [ɛ]. A realisation as [au] is more conservative in Dublin and in rural areas it is traditionally typical of the south-west and west of Ireland, but is being replaced by the fronted realisation in the speech of the younger generation.

SOFT-lengthening Here one is again dealing with a traditional feature of Dublin English. The vowel of the LOT lexical set, when it occurs before a voiceless fricative, is lengthened. This in its turn is in keeping with the general Early Modern English

lengthening of /aː/ before such fricatives and is seen in words like *staff, pass, path* in southern British English (Wells 1982: 203-6). In conservative mainstream Irish English SOFT-lengthening (to use a cover term with a typical word involving this lengthening) is not found, but again because it is present in fashionable Dublin English, it is spreading to the rest of the country.

/r/-*retroflexion* Traditionally, the realisation of /r/ in southern Irish English is as a velarised alveolar continuant, a pronunciation found in western and south-western varieties of Irish to this day and so it can be assumed that this type of /r/ resulted in Irish English from transfer of the Irish realisation of the same phoneme. In Northern Ireland, a retroflex /r/ is to be found, a parallel with Scotland, which may well have been the source for this realisation. In current fashionable Dublin English a retroflex /r/ is also to be found, though definitely independently of the occurrence in Northern Ireland as varieties of English there have played no role in the shaping of the speech of fashionable urbanites in Dublin. Dissociation from the traditional velarised realisation is most likely the reason for the retroflex [ɻ] which has become so widespread throughout Ireland among younger female speakers. A slightly raised /aː/ ([æː], [ɛː]) co-occurs with the retroflexion of the /r/ so that one has pronunciations like card [kæːɻd] for *card*.

/l/-*velarisation* Traditionally, Irish English has an alveolar [l] in all syllable positions. However, the recordings for young female speakers in *A Sound Atlas of Irish English* (see below) overwhelmingly show a definite velarisation of /l/ in this position, e.g. *field* [fiːəɫd]. The development of [ɫ], or its adoption from other accents of English, could be seen as a reaction to the traditional alveolar [l] so long a prominent feature of Irish accents.

Apart from the above six features there are others which play a minor role in the sound profile of the New Pronunciation. One obvious feature of local Dublin English which has avoided stigma and hence is found in fashionable speech in the city is the loss of /hw/ [ʍ] in words like *whale, while* and which leads to mergers of pairs like *which* and *witch*. Traditionally, the occurrence of [ʍ] in all words beginning with *wh* is a prominent feature of Irish English, but if the New Pronunciation establishes itself in the next generation as the new supraregional form of English then this will no longer be the case.

5.2 English in Belfast

The area of contemporary Belfast is characterised by a conurbation which stretches along the north shore of Belfast Lough at least to Newtownabbey in County Antrim and on the south shore at least to Holywood in County Down. Along the Lagan Valley the city stretches to the south-west at least to Lisburn with a motorway to the triad of towns Lurgan, Craigavon, Portadown to the south of Lough Neagh. The Lagan Valley is the hinterland of Belfast and there is a similarity between accents in the city and those in its hinterland to the south-west. In general one can say that Lagan Valley speech is similar to the accents in West Belfast. The east of the city shows greater similarity with accents from rural North Down, an originally Scots area of settlement as opposed to Lagan Valley which was settled largely by people from England.

5.2.1 Sources of Belfast English

The English spoken in Belfast is an amalgam of features which come from the two main English communities in Ulster with independent traits only found in the capital city. The

following is a list of features which can be clearly attributed to one of the two main English-language sources in Ulster (J. Milroy 1981: 25-26).

Table 18   *Ulster Anglo-Irish features in Belfast English (after Milroy 1981)*

Palatalisation of /k,g/ before /a/, /kjat/ for *cat*
Dentalisation of /t,d/ before /r/, /bɛt̯ə/ for *better*
Lowering and unrounding of /ɒ/, /pɑt/ for *pot*
ME /ɛː/ realised as a mid-vowel, /bɛːt/ for *beat* /ʊ/ for /ʌ/ in *but, luck,* etc.
Lowering of /ɛ/ to /æ/, *set* /sæt/
The use of /au/ before /l/ in monosyllables, /aul/ for *old* also a feature of Lowland Scots.
Raising of /æ/ to /ɛ/ before velars, /bɛk, bɛg/ for *back, bag*
Raising of /æ/ to /ɛ/ after /k/ and (residually) /g/ /kɛp, kɛsl̩/ for *cap, castle*
Short realisations of high vowels, /bit, bʉt/ for *beet, boot*
Lowering and sometimes centralisation of /ɪ/, /bɛt, sɛns/ or /bʌt, sʌns/ for *bit, sense*

The sociolinguistic developments in Belfast English, which were described in ground-breaking studies by James and Lesley Milroy in terms of social networks in the 1970s and early 1980s, are outside the scope of the present study, for appropriate references, consult the relevant section of Hickey (2002).

Mention should also be made of the distinct intonational patterns in northern Irish English. In her study Rahilly (1997) notes a general predominance of rises in intonation in Belfast which contrast explicitly with falls in the south of Britain. Indeed the high numbers of rising nuclei and level tails in tone sequences are regarded as typical of 'the Anglo-Irish group of dialects' rather than the 'British group'. Rahilly concludes that the primary cue to prominence in Belfast is a high pitch, but with much less movement than with nuclei in Received Pronunciation.

5.3 English in Derry

The city of Derry has a population of over 95,000 (1991 census) and is ethnically over 70% Catholic as opposed to Belfast which has a majority Protestant population. The designation 'Londonderry' is a variant preferred by both Ulster Protestants and British commentators and goes back to a renaming of the city when London companies were commissioned with the task of transporting English settlers there at the beginning of the 17th century. The city's name is an Anglicisation of Irish *doire* 'oak-grove', a common name, or element of name, in the north and south of the country.

There is a large degree of segregation in terms of residence for the two communities: east of the River Foyle, which divides the city, are found Protestants and west of the river is almost exclusively Catholic. The segregation increased greatly in the last 30 years because of the sectarian violence.

The only research on the English of Derry city is that of McCafferty (see McCafferty 2001 as a representative example of his work), apart from one study of intonation in Derry. The city has a special status within Northern Ireland as it is on the one hand the second largest and on the other the only major city with a Catholic majority. It is understandable that it would receive innovations which arise in Belfast but also that the Catholic majority in the city might well show an inherent resistance to these. A number of changes are recorded for Derry which are listed in the following.

Table 19 *Four major linguistic changes in Derry English*

1) A gradual replacement of [ʌ] with [ʉ] (standard NIE) which has been ongoing in Ulster and Scotland for some time.
2) A widespread vernacular innovation originating in the east of Northern Ireland which sees older [ɪ] replaced by [iə] in the face class and both of these alternating with standard [e].
3) A vernacular innovation that appears to have originated in the east in the last hundred years by which intervocalic [ð] is dropped giving a null variant.
4) A localised Derry English vernacular innovation which realises the same intervocalic [ð] as a lateral [l].

Variable	Standard NIE	Older General DE	Recent Local DE	Lexical set
(ʌ)	[ʉ]	[ʌ]	[ʉ]	PULL
(e)	[e]	[ɪ]	[iə]	FACE
(ð)	[ð]	0	[l]	MOTHER

Changes according to ethnicity McCafferty (2001) maintains that there is a tendency for the SQUARE and NURSE lexical sets to merge, a feature spreading from the east of Northern Ireland and typical of the Protestant middle class. For this group a lack of quantity distinction with the NORTH and FORCE lexical set is also found. The shift of older [ɪ] to [iə] in the FACE class is taken to be characteristic of younger Protestants. Protestant changes are in general incoming innovations which are spreading from eastern Northern Ireland, i.e. from the Belfast conurbation. In this case the changes for the Protestants in Derry have arisen through a process of supraregionalisation of Belfast innovations. The only *leading* change among the Catholics in Derry is the shift of intervocalic [ð] to a lateral [l]. The Protestants in Derry have no vernacular innovations of their own.

Table 20 *Changes in Derry English according to ethnicity*

Ethnic group				Source
Protestants	[oːr]	→	[ɔːr]	Eastern Northern Ireland
	[ɛr]	→	[əːr]	---
	[e, ɪ]	→	[iə]	---
Catholics	[- ð -]	→	[- l -]	Local to Derry city

6 Lexical sets for the phonological description of Irish English

The following tables use the lexical sets as originally introduced by John Wells in the early 1980s. Certain adaptions and extensions of Wells' original set are necessary for the correct description of Irish English, for instance the PRICE vowel can have a different realisation before voiceless and voiced consonants. In addition the NORTH and FORCE sets must be kept separate, though increasingly with supraregional speakers in the south, a distinction is not made between the vowels in each of these words.

   The five columns in each table correspond to the five sound samples which accompany this chapter.

6.1 Vocalic sets

Table 21 *Lexical sets and representative values in Irish English (vowels)*

Lexical set	Rural Northern	Popular Dublin	Fashionable Dublin	Rural South-West/West	Supraregional Southern
KIT	e	ɪ	ɪ	ɪ	ɪ
DRESS	ɛ̝	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ
TRAP	a	æ	æ	æ	æ
LOT	ɒ	a	ɔ	a	ɑ
STRUT	ʌ	ʊ	ʌ̈	ʌ̈	ʌ̈
FOOT	ʉ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ
FLEECE	iː	ɪʲə	iː	iː	iː
FACE	eːə	eː	eː	eː	eː
BATH	ɑ(ː)	æː	aː	aː	aː
THOUGHT	ɔ(ː)	aː	ɔː, oː	ɑː	ɒː
SOFT	ɔ(ː)	aː	ɔː	ɑ	ɒ

GOOSE	ʉ(ː)	uʲə	uː	uː	uː
PRICE	ɛɪ	əɪ	ɑɪ	æɪ	aɪ
PRIDE	ɛɪ, aɪ	əɪ	ɑɪ	æɪ	ɑɪ
MOUTH	ɛʉ	ɛʊ	ɛʊ	aʊ	aʊ
CHOICE	ɔɪ	aɪ	ɔɪ, oɪ	ɑɪ	ɒɪ
GOAT	ɔʊ, oː	ʌɔ	ʊə	oː	əʊ, oʊ
NEAR	i(ː)ɻ	iː (ɰ)	iːɻ	iːɰ	iːɰ
SQUARE	ə(ː)ɻ	ɛː (ɰ)	eːɻ, øːɻ	eːɰ	eːɰ
START	ɑ(ː)ɻ	æː (ɰ)	ɑːɻ	aːɰ	ɑːɰ
NORTH	ɔ(ː)ɻ	aː (ɰ)	ɒːɻ, ɔːɻ	ɑːɰ	ɒːɰ
FORCE	o(ː)ɻ	ɒː (ɰ)	ɔːɻ, oːɻ	ɔːɰ	oːɰ
CURE	u(ː)ɻ	uʲə (ɰ)	uːɻ	uːɰ	uːɰ
NURSE	ə(ː)ɻ	ʊː (ɰ)	ɚːɻ, øːɻ	ɚːɰ	ɚːɰ
COMMA	ə	ə, ɐ	ə	ə	ə
LETTER	əɻ	ə (ɰ)	əɻ	əɰ	əɰ
HAPPY	ɪ, e	i	i	i	i
DANCE	æ, ɑ	æː	aː, (ɑː)	æː, aː	aː
PATH	ɑ	æː	aː, (ɑː)	æː, aː	aː

Remarks

1) The vowel values which are associated with the now unfashionable 'Dublin 4' accent are not shared entirely by younger fashionable Dublin English speakers. In particular the retraction of /aː/, and raising of the rhotacised version /ɑːɻ/, is avoided so that the earlier pronunciation of *Dart* as [dɔːɻt / doːɻt] is regarded as 'uncool'.

2) The vowel transcribed as [ʌ̈] is a variant which is somewhat more centralised than the corresponding [ʌ] vowel found in supraregional varieties.

3) The realisation [øːɻ] in the SQUARE lexical set can be interpreted to the very open, unrounded realisation of population Dublin English, [e:(ɰ)].

4) Popular Dublin English is weakly rhotic and early conservative forms of this form are often entirely nonrhotic.

5)   There is a complex distribution of low vowels in northern Irish English. Basically one can say that a front and raised vowel is found before velars and a retracted variant before labials and nasals, giving pronunciations like *bag* [bɛ˕g] and *family* [ˈfɑmlɪ].

6.2 Consonantal sets

Wells' lexical sets were designed to deal with the vowel distinctions found in Received Pronunciation. They do not handle consonants. For that reason new sets are necessary for the current discussion. A number of key words have been chosen and the consonant which is at issue in each case is underlined as can be seen from the following table.

Table 22 *Lexical sets and representative values in Irish English (consonants)*

Lexical set	Rural Northern	Popular Dublin	Fashionable Dublin	Rural South-West/ West	Supraregional Southern
THIN	θ	t	t̪	t	t̪
BREATHE	ð	d	d̪	d	d̪
TWO	t	t	t, tˢ	t	t
WATER	ɾ, ʔ, Ø	ʔ, h	ɾ, t̪	t̞	ɾ, t̞
GET	tˠ, ʔ	h, Ø	t̞	t̞	t̞
FEEL	Ø	l, ɫ	ɫ	l	l, ɫ
SORE	ɻ	ɹ, Ø	ɻ	ɹ	ɹ, ɻ
WET	w	w	w	w	w
WHICH	w	ʍ	w	ʍ	ʍ, w

Remarks

1)   The distinction between dental and alveolar stops is sociolinguistically significant in Ireland. All speakers can hear this difference clearly and the use of alveolar for dental stops in the THIN and THIS lexical sets is highly stigmatised.

2)   Fashionable Dublin English speakers may have a slight affication of syllable-initial /t-/ as in *two* [tˢuː].

3)   The allophony of syllable-coda and intersyllabic /t/ is quite complicated. With conservative supraregional speakers the apico-alveolar fricative [t̞] is found. With younger supraregional speakers a flap occurs. In popular Dublin English the lenition of /t/ continues through a glottal stop to /h/ and frequently to zero, especially in word-final position. In many forms of northern Irish English, final alveolar stops may be unreleased.

4)   The merger of [w] and [ʍ] is increasingly frequent with supraregional speakers so that word pairs like *which* and *witch* now consists of homophones.

5)   It is merely a coincidence that fashionable Dublin English shares a flap and a retroflex *r* with northern Irish English.

7 Data sources for Irish English phonology

In the recent history of Irish English studies there have been two incomplete survey of English in Ireland. The first was initiated by P. L. Henry and preliminary findings were published in 1958, see Henry (1958). Nothing more was heard of the project, but the material presented is of value for the study of Irish English up to that date.

The second survey is called *The Tape-Recorded Survey of Hiberno-English Speech* and was supervised by Michael Barry, then of the English Department at Queen's University, Belfast. A large amount of material was collected, particularly for the north and approximately 50% of this material, which by a fortunate circumstance was given to the present author in the mid 1980s, has been digitised and is available as two CDs from the present author. The material which comes with a software interface to examine the data of the survey which in this form consists of some 80 files (approximately 22 hours of recording). The survey includes both wordlists and free speech.

The Irish English Resource Centre is a website dedicated to all matters pertaining to academic research into Irish English. It is maintained by the present author at the following address: `http://www.uni-essen.de/IERC`. The resource centre as it stands contains much information on past and current research on Irish English, an online history and overview of Irish English, summaries of issues in the field, biosketches of scholars, details of various corpora and data collections, links to related sites, etc. Importantly, it contains much bibliographical information of use to interested scholars and students. The website is updated regularly with new information as this becomes available and it is conceived as a primary source for up-to-date data on topical research into Irish English which can be used liberally by scholars and students alike.

A Sound Atlas of Irish English is a set of over 1,500 recordings of Irish English from the entire country covering urban and rural informants with an age spread from under 10 to over 80 (both genders). A supplied software interface allows end-users to view the recordings in a tree divided by province and county and then listen to individual recordings. The recordings can also be sorted by county, age, gender and rural versus urban speakers.

Five of these recordings are available with this chapter on the associated website and will be later on the CD-ROM. Each speaker reads a section of free text (the second of two tasks, the first was to read aloud a set of 55 small phrases containing sounds of relevance to Irish English). This text is given in the following.

Getting ready for their holidays

Michael and Maura had been planning to go to Italy for a long time now. First they were thinking of going in July but decided that it would be too hot. They also realised that there're too many tourists around then. Instead they thought they'd travel at a quieter time, like early spring, so they booked their flight for March. The travel agency was able to fix up a nice apartment for them to stay in. This meant they could drive around during the day and not be tied to mealtimes in a hotel. The plane was to fly from Dublin to Rome and the idea was that someone on the other side was to pick them up and take them to the

apartment. Maura wanted to go for a whole month, but Michael thought a fortnight was enough. After all, he said, they could always come again if they liked it. Maura was thinking she might learn some Italian. It was a soft language she said, it sounded like music, and she worked out that she could do an hour every morning, listening to tapes and that would help her get used to the sound of Italian. When Michael asked why she bought the book and the tapes she explained: "You can't expect all the locals to speak English and anyway a bit of the language always comes in handy when you're trying to read road signs or make sense of a menu or looking at the label on a bottle of wine". Michael agreed it was a good idea and said he might try and pick up a word or two himself.

8 Exercises

1) What historical demographical movements led to distinctive forms of English arising in the north and the south of Ireland. In this context discuss the role of language contact and language shift in the genesis of English in Ireland.

2) List the main distinctions between forms of English in the North and in the South of Ireland. Describe the main differences between vowel and consonants and mention some processes which are operative in both areas.
(compare the first three sound files with each other)

3) Describe the main changes which are occurring in Southern Irish English at the present. What shifts can one observe? Do they form a pattern in phonological space? If you think there is a sociolinguistic motivation for these, then outline them briefly.
(contrast sound files three and four)

4) What is meant by supraregional speech in the Irish context. Describe some of the main features to be found in this speech in the south of Ireland.
(consult sound file five)

5) What do you understand by a shibboleth and mention a few of these which you can discern for forms of English in both the north and the south of Ireland.

6) What is lenition and what phonological framework can best be employed to describe it adequately? Given examples from southern Irish English.
(consults sound files three and four for audio examples)

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Map of chief dialectal divisions in Ireland
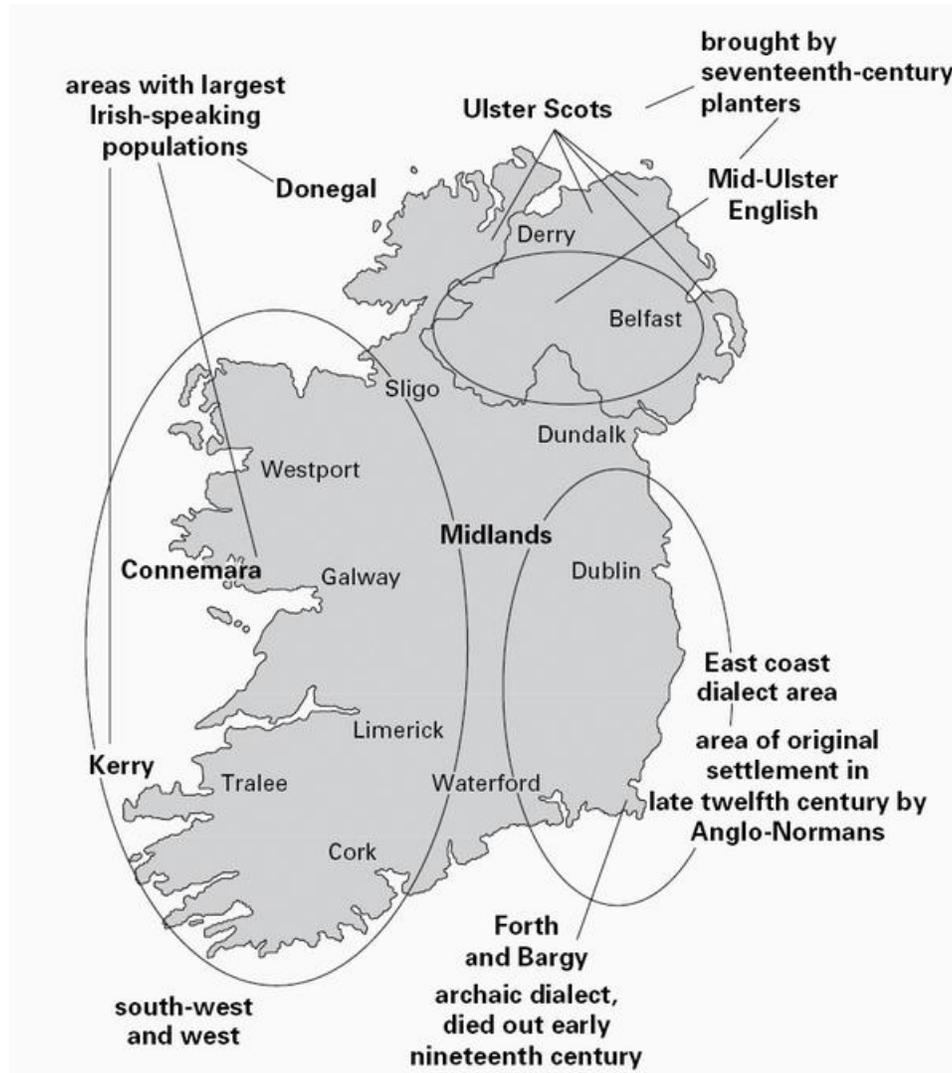
Comments The south of Ireland can be divided into two broad dialect regions. The first and oldest is the east coast dialect area which stretches from Waterford up to beyond Dublin, probably as far as Dundalk in its original extension before 1600.

The second area is that of the south-west and west and is the part of the country which was latest to engage in the language shift from Irish to English. Indeed for a few small pockets on the western seaboard, in Kerry, Connemara and Donegal, the Irish language has not died out yet.

In the centre and north-central part of the country there is a diffuse and dialectally indeterminate Midlands region which extends from southern Offaly and Laois up to Cavan and south Leitrim.

Between Sligo in the west and Dundalk in the east there is a broad transitional band which shows a mixture of southern and northern features (see discussions above).

The north of Ireland consists of the counties of Ulster and can be divided into a large central region, that of Mid-Ulster English, and a 'Coastal Crescent' running from Co. Down, south-east of Belfast, up to Antrim in the extreme north-east, through Co. Derry and across to the north-east of Donegal (but excluding the city of Derry). This area

is that of strongest Scottish settlement and hence it represents Ulster Scots in its most original form (there are also some other smaller areas, such as north Co. Armagh). In the west of Donegal, contact forms of Ulster English are spoken.

Map of provinces and counties in Ireland
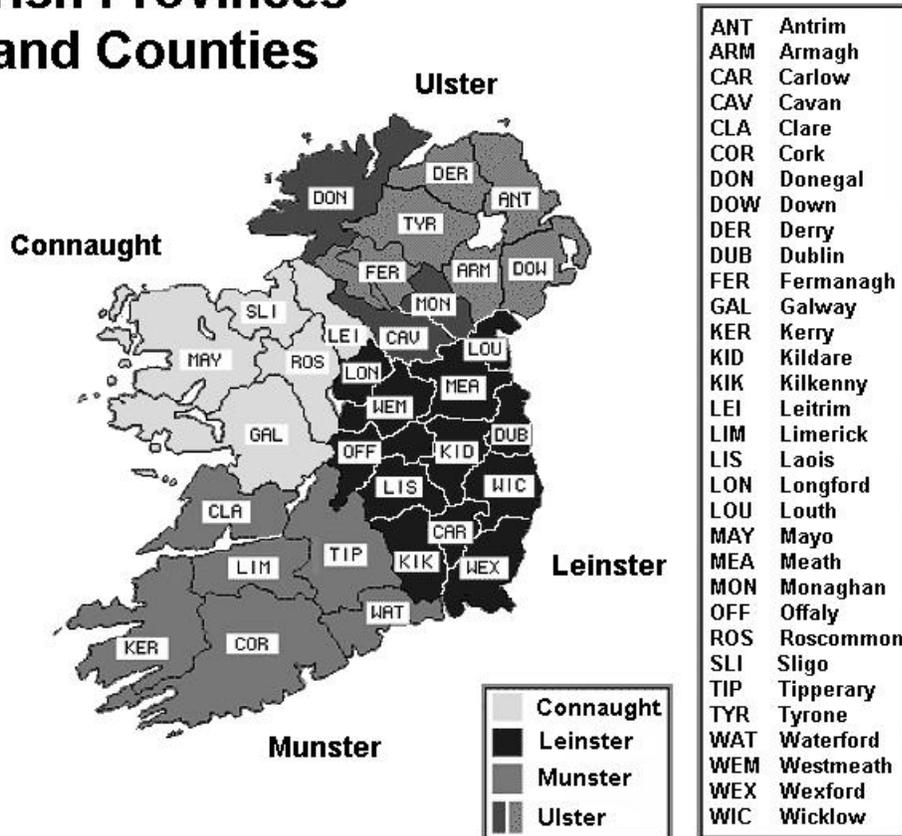
There are thirty two counties in present-day Ireland distributed in somewhat uneven fashion across four provinces. The counties vary in size, Cork and Galway being the largest, Louth and Carlow the smallest. The population of counties depends on whether they contain large towns or cities. Some counties, like Leitrim and Clare do not, while other have an associated town or city, e.g. Limerick, Cork, Wexford, etc.

The province of Ulster contains nine counties, six of which are within the borders of Northern Ireland, the statelet formed on the partition of Ireland in 1921. There is a limited presence of Ulster Scots speech outside of Northern Ireland, in the Lagan district of north-west Donegal. Features of northern speech spread much further southwards than previously thought as attested by *A Sound Atlas of Irish English* (see remarks above).

Sound files representing accents of Irish English

Sample of Scots-derived rural northern accent (male speaker, approx. 60)
    `IRL_Ulster_Scots.wav` (length: 1m 16s)

Sample of south-west rural accent from Co. Cork (male speaker, approx. 50)
    `IRL_Cork_Rural.wav` (length: 1m 33s)

Sample of colloquial Dublin English (male speaker, approx. 20)
    `IRL_Dublin_Popular.wav` (length: 1m 23s)

Sample of 'D4' Dublin accent (Dartspeak) (female speaker, approx. 35)
    `IRL_Dublin_D4.wav` (length: 1m 10s)

Sample of supraregional speaker from Dublin (female speaker, approx. 20)
    `IRL_Young_Southern_Supraregional.wav` (length: 1m 11s)

Total time: 6m 33s

Technical note

These sound files have been compressed using the original Frauenhofer Institut MPEG 'Layer-3' compression technique. The files are encoded as Stereo 8 bit / 44,100 kHz / 112 kbps.

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For the mainland English this can be due to experience of Irish speakers in England, for instance in the Merseyside area or parts of London such as Kilburn. They are usually from the South so that specifically southern features may play a role in the identification of Irish English. Additionally the media may be another source of dialect exposure, if only indirect, for the English. To investigate the phonetic features of Irish English we should know about the division of Ireland. A basic distinction can be made between northern and southern Irish English which roughly correlates with the political division of the country.