

Irish English for the non-Irish

The sections of this text have been extracted largely from Raymond Hickey 2014. *A Dictionary of Varieties of English*. Malden, MA: Wiley- Blackwell, xxviii + 456 pages with some additions from the research website *Variation and Change in Dublin English*. The sections consist of (i) all definitions concerning Ireland, (ii) those involving Dublin, (iii) those involving Ulster / Northern Ireland and (iv) various entries for specific features which are particularly prevalent in Ireland.

Ireland

An island in north-west Europe, west of England, which consists politically of (i) the Republic of Ireland and (ii) Northern Ireland, a constituent part of the United Kingdom. The island has an area of 84,000 sq km and a total population of just under 6.5m. Geographically, the country consists of a flat central area, the Midlands, and a mountainous, jagged western seaboard and a flatter east coast with Dublin, the largest city, in the centre of the east and Belfast, the main city of Northern Ireland, in the north-east. The main ethnic groups are Irish and Ulster Scots. There speakers of Ulster English in Northern Ireland but they do not constitute a recognisable ethnic group today. TRAVELLERS are a sub-group in Irish society but do not constitute a separate ethnicity.

Before the arrival of Norman and English settlers in the late twelfth century Ireland was entirely Irish-speaking. In subsequent centuries both French and English established themselves, the latter concentrated in towns on the east coast. The linguistic legacy of this is an archaic dialect area from Dublin down to Waterford. English subsequently declined and it was not until the seventeenth century that it became the dominant language in the entire island, due to increased settlement of English in the centre and south and the movement of tens of thousands of Lowland Scots to ULSTER. These facts justify a division of the history of English in Ireland into two periods: (i) 1200-1600 and (ii) 1600 onwards. The documents for the first period are scant, see *KILDARE POEMS*, a collection of 16 medieval poems contained in the Harley 913 manuscript in the British Library. These were written in eastern Ireland in the early fourteenth century (the reference in the title is to the county of Kildare with which the poems have traditionally been associated). They are the main documents of medieval Irish English. See Hickey (2007b, 2007b).

After 1600 the language shift to English gained momentum and was to continue unabated to the present with the Great Famine (1845-8) resulting in a great reduction in the number of Irish native speakers through death or emigration to Britain and North America. The lack of regular schooling for the native Catholic Irish before the 1830s meant that the language shift occurred in a non-prescriptive environment for adults, leading to much syntactic and phonological transfer.

Ireland, Northern

Since 1922 Northern Ireland has been a constituent part of the United Kingdom. It consists of six of the nine counties of the province of Ulster and was created as an option for the Protestant majority in the north-east of Ireland, descended from original Scottish and English settlers, who wished to remain within the British union after independence for the rest of Ireland. See ULSTER and Corrigan (2010).

Ireland, Republic of

A state occupying about five sixths of the island of Ireland (the remainder constitutes

Northern Ireland). It resulted from the partition of Ireland in 1922 after which six counties of ULSTER remained within the United Kingdom. The country has an area of 70,000 sq km and a population of over 4.5m of which approx. 1.8m live in the larger metropolitan area of Dublin. Irish and English are official languages, English is now spoken natively by over 99% of the Irish-born population. Contemporary Ireland includes a considerable number of immigrants from eastern Europe, mainly from Poland, who came for work after accession to the European Union in 2004.

Travellers

These are ethnic Irish (not of Roma origin), numbering not more than 20,000 in present-day Ireland, who do not have permanent residence and who change location regularly. ‘Travellers’ is a neutral term for this group, ‘gypsies’ and ‘tinkers’ are derogatory, ‘itinerants’ is now outdated. In Irish they are called *locht siúil*, lit. ‘walking people’, the term ‘pavee(s)’ is sometimes used by travellers themselves but not by outsiders. Travellers have a long history in Ireland and are assumed to have developed the jargon SHELTA consisting of Irish words, often metathesised, which they used in dealings with non-Travellers. Because of the closed nature of the communities it is difficult to determine the extent to which Shelta is used today. There are probably about 40,000 Travellers in both parts of Ireland. Irish Travellers are also found in England and the United States.

Shelta is an argot supposedly used by travellers in Ireland (and to some extent in Britain). It is largely derived from Irish and English with much systematic alteration of words from both languages to ensure its incomprehensibility to outsiders, e.g. by employing metathesis as in *gop* from Irish *póg* ‘kiss’. It is difficult to determine to what extent Shelta was used, or might be used today. The English word *bloke* ‘fellow’ is from Shelta.

Irish English

A cover term for varieties of English spoken in Ireland. There are a sufficient number of shared features on all levels of language across the forms of English throughout the entire island to justify a single term on a top level (see Hickey 2012b for a discussion of such areal features in Ireland). On the next level below this, a distinction can be made between English in Ulster (both Ulster English and Ulster Scots) and varieties in the south. The latter can in turn be subdivided into (i) an east-coast dialect area, from Dublin to the south-east corner, reflecting the period of earliest English settlement, and (ii) the south-west, west and north-west which are areas in which the Irish language survived longest and where varieties are spoken which show many features deriving from the historical shift from Irish to English. In the following a presentation of consensus features for most varieties in Ireland is given with regional distinctions mentioned where necessary; see also the comments on northern Irish English in the following entry.

Pronunciation

1) TH-stopping, usually as dental stops, though alveolar stops are common in the rural south, e.g. *thin* [t̪n/t̪n], *this* [d̪s/d̪s], and are generally stigmatised. The dental stops may well be a transfer from Irish where the realisations of /t, d/ are dental; fricative realisations are more common in the north (see following entry) though they are found in final position in reading styles in the south. 2) T-lenition normally results in an apico-alveolar fricative [t̪] in intervocalic and post-vocalic, prepausal position, e.g. *city* [sɪt̪i], *cut* [kʌt̪]. The apical [t̪] is distinct from the laminal [s] so that *kit* and *kiss* are not homophones. Lenition extends

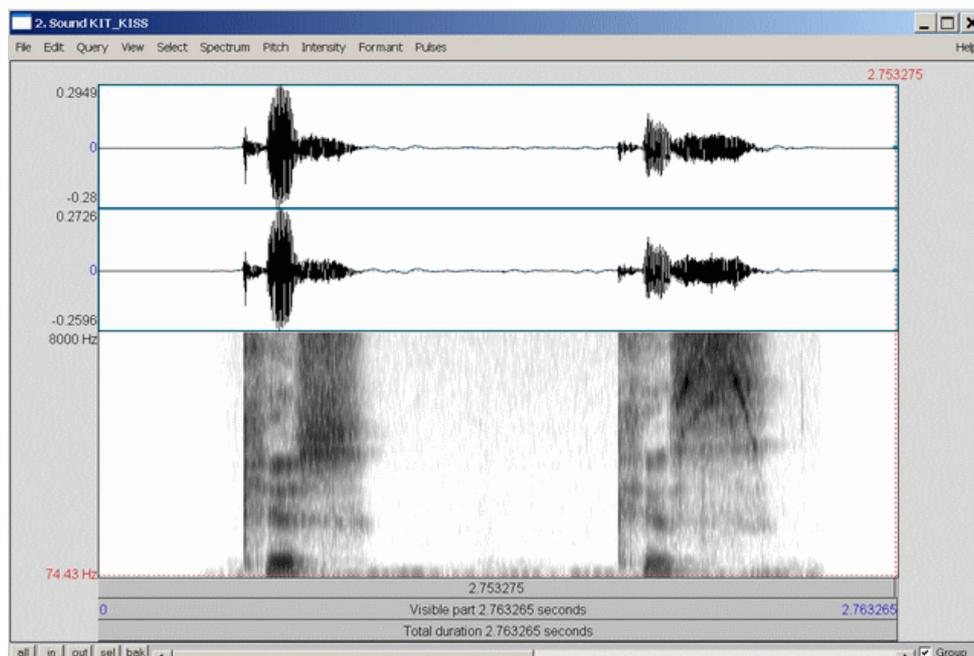
to [ʔ, h, r] or zero in local DUBLIN ENGLISH. 3) Rural vernaculars still distinguish between [ɱ] (voiceless) and [w] (voiced) so that *which* and *witch* would not be homophones. 4) Again conservative varieties have an alveolar [l], including older supraregional speech, but more recent varieties show velarisation or pharyngealisation of syllable-final /l/. 5) /r/ is now retroflex [ɻ] in young supraregional speech but used to be a bunched, velarised variant [ɹ]. 6) Vowels generally show less diphthongisation than in southern English English, but in young female speech the GOAT-vowel can be [əʊ]. 7) The TRAP and BATH sets are distinguished more by length than quality and a retracted [ɑ:] in the latter set is not used: [tʰɹæp/tʰɹap], [bæ:t̚/ba:t̚]. 8) The STRUT vowel is retracted and maybe slightly rounded, i.e. [st.ɪ.ɹ̠t̚/st.ɪ.ɹ̠t̚]. 9) /æ/ tensing in pre-liquid contexts is a feature of traditional rural dialects in the south of Ireland which show tensing before /r/ and (former) /l/, e.g. *calf* [kæ:f], *car* [kæ:r] (both without an inglide). This tensing does not apply in pre-nasal position, contrast this with the situation in many varieties of American English.

‘slit’ t

A reference to the pronunciation of /t/ as an apico-alveolar fricative in weak positions (intervocally or word-finally after a vowel and before a pause). This articulation shares all features with the stop /t/ but is a continuant. The symbol introduced by the present author (Hickey 1984) for the sound is [t̟] where the subscript caret iconically indicates the lack of closure by the tongue apex. This realisation of /t/ is ubiquitous in the south of Ireland and common in the north as well. It is also found, as a transferred feature, in the speech of the Irish-derived community in Newfoundland.

KIT-KISS distinction

In Irish English the /-t/ in KIT is lenited after a vowel and before a pause so that it is realised as an apico-alveolar fricative (with the tip of the tongue): [kɪt̟]. The /-s/ in KISS is realised as a lamino-alveolar fricative (with the blade of the tongue). The two sounds are distinct and never collapsed in Irish English. The apico-alveolar fricative [t̟] has friction at a lower frequency beginning at about 3,200 Hz and the lamino-alveolar fricative [s] has a frequency concentration starting a good 1,000 Hz higher. In addition the duration of the friction in KISS is slightly longer.



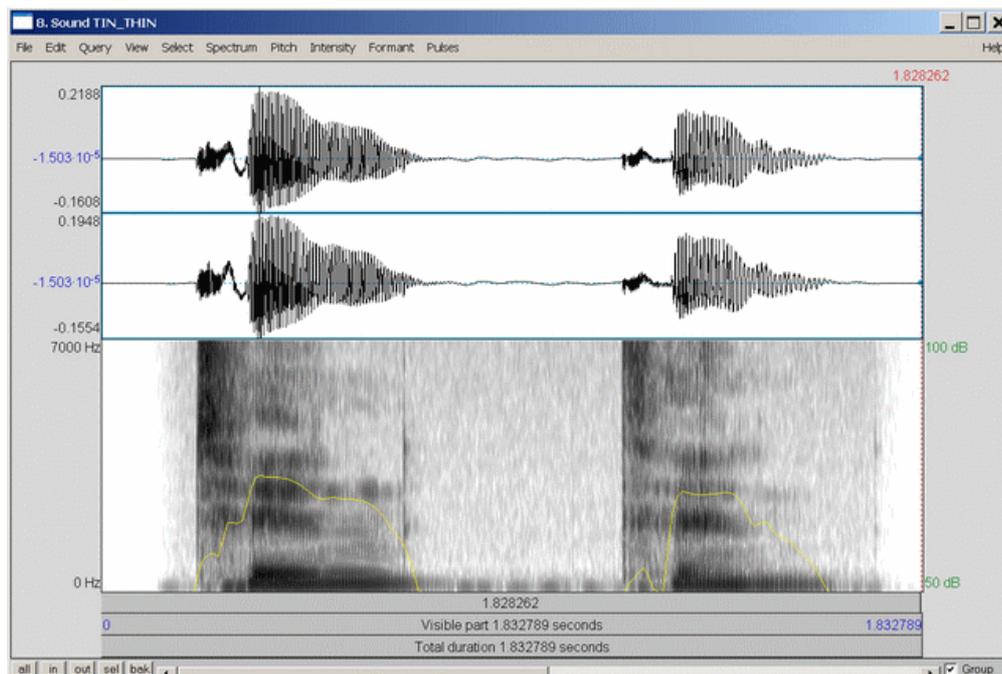
The transcription introduced in Hickey (1984) and used since by this author is a [t̪] with a caret placed under it pointing to the fact that the tongue does not make contact with the alveolar ridge for this realisation of /t/, i.e.: t̪

This transcription importantly shows that this sound is an allophone of /t/, the voiceless alveolar stop of English. The IPA transcription, favoured by Pandeli, Eska, Ball and Rahilly (1997), shows a voiceless interdental fricative [θ̪] with a subscript line beneath it indicating retraction of the point of articulation (see IPA chart [revised to 2005] > diacritics, > retracted). The linguistic objection to this transcription is that it implies the slit *t* of Irish English is an allophone of /θ/ which is wrong. In fact, the dental fricative of many other varieties of English, which is phonologically /θ/, is a dental stop in Irish English, i.e. the THIN and THIS lexical sets are generally realised with an initial [t̪-] and [d̪-] respectively.

Dental-alveolar distinction

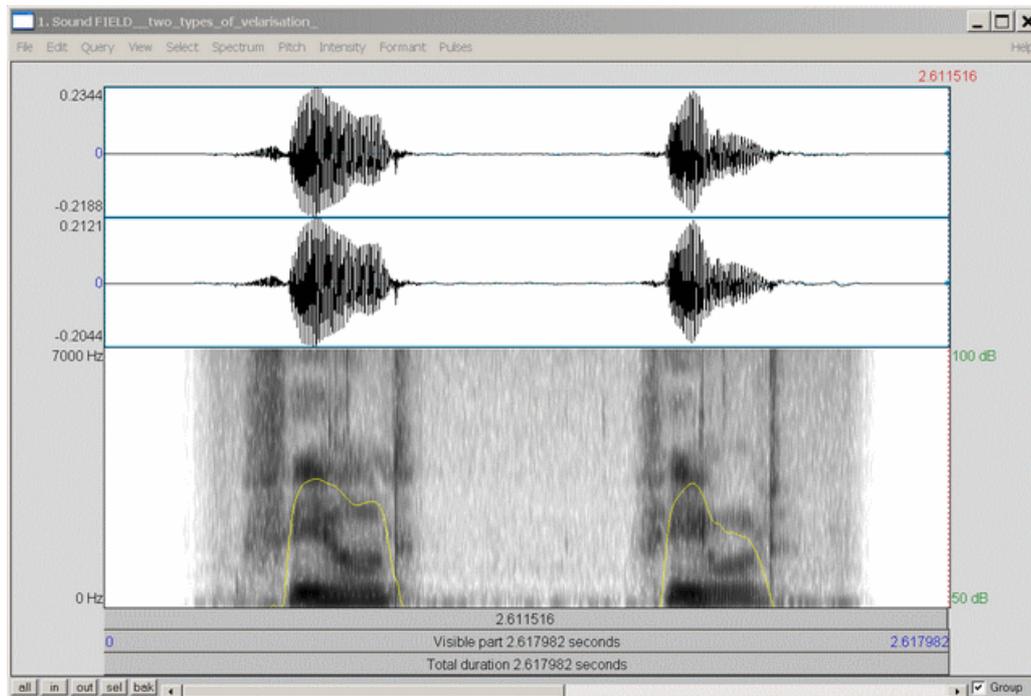
The distinction between a dental and an alveolar point of articulation for coronal stops (both voiceless and voiced). Thus for all non-local speakers of Irish English, and local speakers in the west and north of the country, the initial sounds in THIN and TIN are distinguished, e.g. the words are pronounced as [t̪ɪn] and [tɪn] respectively. Some acrolectal speakers use [θ̪] and [ð̪] for [t̪] and [d̪] when using a reading style. But even then the fricatives are usually confined to syllable-final, pre-pausal position as in *bath* [ba:θ̪] for [bat̪].

In the spectrograms below you can notice the more forceful release of [t̪] (beginning of the first word in each case) and the weaker release and comparative lack of intensity of [t̪] (beginning of second word in each case). This is the acoustic basis for impressionistic statements that the alveolar [t] is ‘hard’ and the dental [t̪] is ‘soft’.



L-velarisation

The pronunciation of laterals in syllable-final position shows secondary velarisation in Dublin English. This is a traditional feature of Dublin English and is present in non-local forms of metropolitan speech. However, a clear L has always been typical of accents outside of the capital and of mainstream Dublin English before the 1990s. But with the rise of a new pronunciation in that decade, the velarised [ɫ] of local Dublin English was adopted into advanced forms of English in the capital although most of the other features of the new pronunciation were motivated by dissociation from vernacular Dublin English. With the spread of the new pronunciation beyond Dublin to the rest of the country, velarised [ɫ] became a feature of non-local speech of all young people growing up from the 1990s onwards. Note that the velarised [ɫ] of Irish English is preceded by a low offglide [ɐ] rather than the back offglide [ʊ] found before [ɫ] in British English, e.g. field [fi:ʔɫd]. The difference can be recognised in the spectrogram below where the offglide to the [ɫ] in the second word shows a formant structure typical of [ʊ].



MERRY-MARY merger

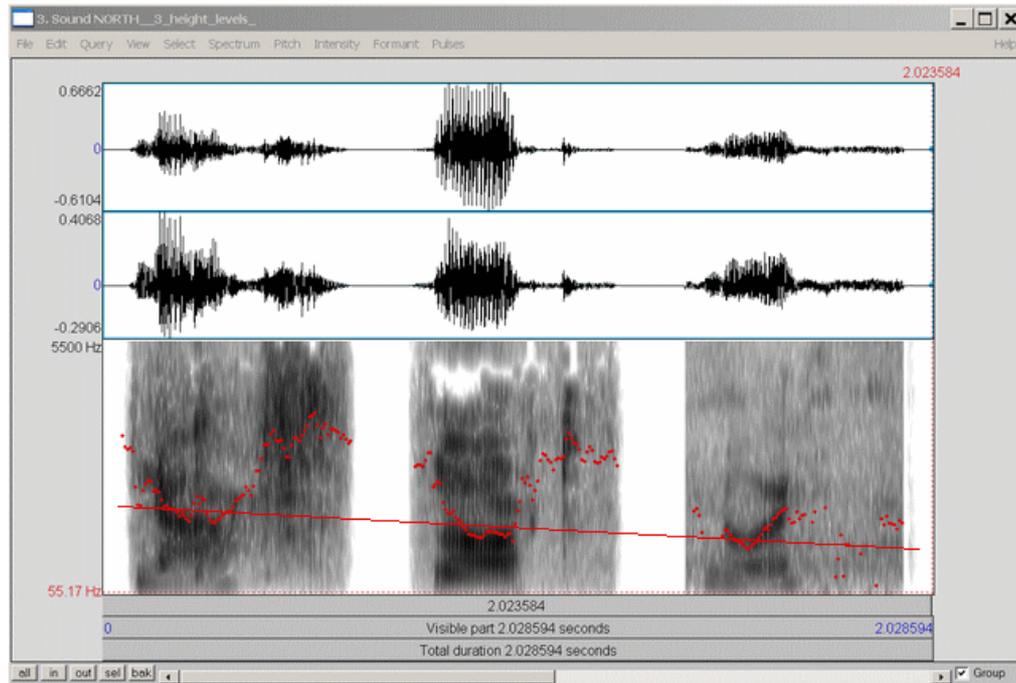
A merger in local Dublin English whereby the vowels in these two words show no length distinction. This means in effect that the DRESS and FACE lexical sets merge in pre-rhotic position.

MOUTH-fronting

A feature of non-vernacular Dublin English which has its origin in local Dublin English and which despite the operation of dissociation was adopted into the new pronunciation of the 1990s. It is a scalar feature, that is it shows different degrees, e.g. [æʊ, ɛʊ, eʊ], the stronger forms correlating with other features of non-vernacular Dublin English such as R-retroflexion or GOAT-diphthongisation.

NORTH-raising

The vowel in this lexical set was raised as part of the original Dublin Vowel Shift of the 1990s and has remained raised since then. The raising is in direct contrast with the open vowel of local forms of Dublin English and varieties of English outside Dublin, on the east coast of Ireland.

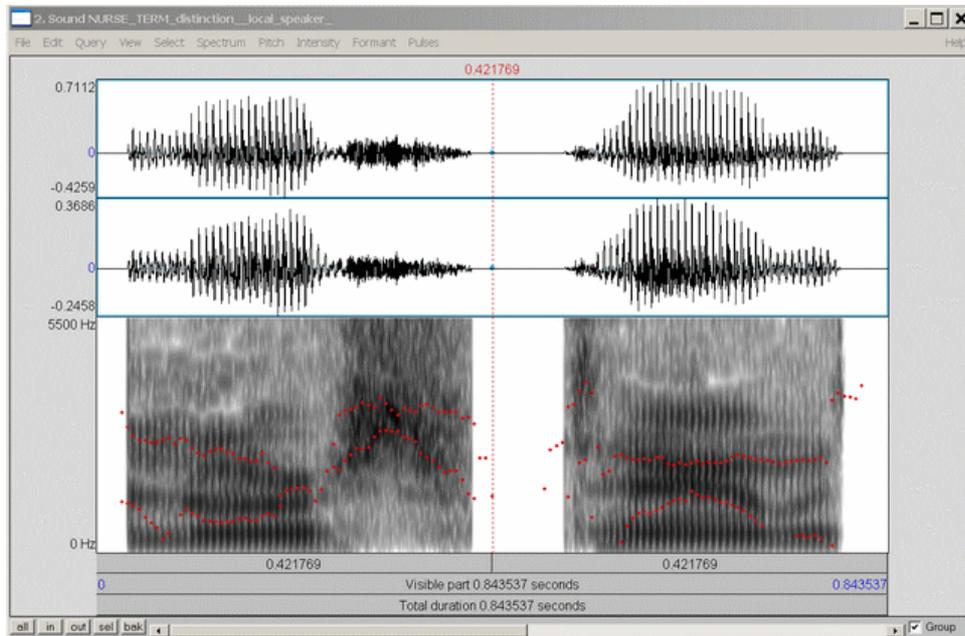


The above spectrogram shows three realisations of NORTH, one from each of the sound files just listed, i.e. a very open one, a mid one and a raised one typical of a young non-local Dublin speaker. The red dots show F1 in each of the pronunciations of NORTH. The continuous red line drawn horizontally through the spectrogram shows a falling tendency for F1 from left to right indicating an increasingly raised value for the vowel in NORTH.

The raising of the NORTH vowel means that it is now homophonous with the vowel in the lexical set FORCE. This is an innovation in Dublin English of the 1990s which has been continued since then and which spread to young, non-local speech throughout the rest of the Republic of Ireland in the last decade or so. Older conservative Dublin speakers and others from outside the capital still maintain the distinction between the vowels of NORTH and FORCE. In vernacular varieties both within and outside Dublin, the NORTH-vowel is very open. The openness of the vowel does not, however, affect the realisation of the FORCE-vowel as can be seen from the following sound file where an older Kilkenny speaker has a very open realisation for NORTH but and [o:] for the FORCE-vowel.

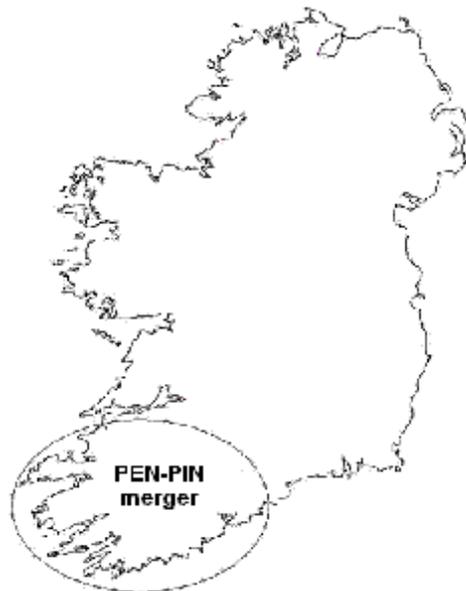
NURSE-TERM distinction

Local Dublin English, along with rural vernaculars around Ireland, has retained a distinction between a back and a front vowel before historical /r/ within a stressed syllable. The /r/ was lost at some stage (a chronology cannot unfortunately be established for this) but the distinction was retained so that in present-day vernacular Dublin English the contrast is between a back [u:]-vowel and a front [ɛ:]-vowel.



PEN-PIN merger

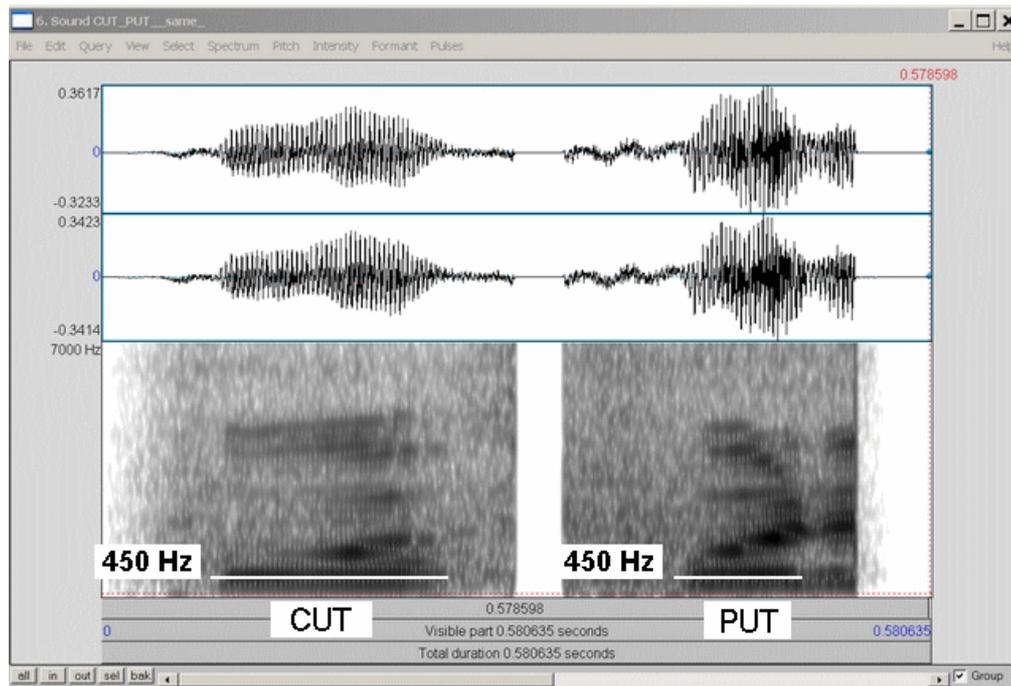
A merger in the south-west of Ireland which occurs due to the raising of the mid vowel in PEN to the high vowel in PIN, i.e. *pen* and *pin* are both [pɪn]. The merger only occurs before nasals. It is geographically confined to the region shown in the following map and is not present in forms of Dublin English, vernacular or otherwise.



PUT-CUT split, absence of the

In local Dublin English the lowering of Early Modern English [ʊ], which occurred in 17th century southern British English, did not take place. For that reason words like *cut*, *run*, *done*, *love* are all pronounced with an [ʊ] as are words like *put*, *push*, *pull* (as in standard English). In the lexical sets devised by J. C. Wells and laid out in his three volume work on *Accents of English* (Cambridge University Press, 1982) the keyword illustrating Early Modern English [ʊ] is STRUT. This is not a common word and was not used when

collecting speech samples in Dublin. Instead the sound was tested for using the short phrase *He cut the piece of twine*. The phrase *He put his foot in it* was used to test for the words which in standard English still show Early Modern English [ʊ]. The recordings then provided pronunciation which showed whether speakers had the CUT-PUT split or not.



R-retroflexion

The pronunciation of post-vocalic /r/ as a retroflex approximant [ɻ]. This is an innovation which appeared in the early 1990s in Dublin English. It is similar, but unrelated, to the retroflex [ɻ] found in supraregional varieties of American English. There is also a retroflex [ɻ] in rural forms of Ulster Scots in the extreme north of the island of Ireland, but again, this can hardly be posited as an influence on the new pronunciation of Dublin English of the 1990s as the contact between advanced speakers in the Irish metropolis and the rural varieties of Scots-derived English in Northern Ireland can be considered non-existent.

There is a far more cogent explanation of the rise of R-retroflexion in advanced Dublin English. Consider that local varieties of Dublin English show little if no rhoticity. Given that dissociation was one of the chief motivations for the rise of the new pronunciation, then the appearance of R-retroflexion increased the phonetic distance between emerging rhotic varieties and local non-rhotic forms of speech in Dublin. Support for this interpretation is offered by the fact that R-retroflexion, like other features such as GOAT-diphthongisation, is a scalar feature. Those speakers who had moved furthest along the various trajectories of the new pronunciation showed greatest degrees of R-retroflexion, that is, strong retroflexion correlated with strong GOAT-diphthongisation, strong MOUTH-fronting and CHOICE-, NORTH- and THOUGHT-raising.

SOFT lengthening

A feature of Dublin English whereby the LOT vowel occurs long before a voiceless fricative as in the word *soft* [sɑ:ft] (local pronunciation) or [sɔ:ft] (non-local pronunciation). This would appear to a retention of nineteenth-century southern British

English which also had this lengthening but which was later reversed in English, i.e. in Dublin English it is an instance of colonial lag.

LOT unrounding in Ireland

In supraregional Irish English the LOT vowel is clearly rounded as in the THOUGHT vowel. In more recent non-vernacular Dublin English this rounding, especially for the THOUGHT vowel, has increased considerably (reason: dissociation from the Dublin vernacular which has clearly unrounded realisations).

Irish people in general are sensitive to degree of rounding as unrounded variants of these vowels are indicative of vernacular forms of Irish English, not just in Dublin but around the country as well (see sound files on the website *Variation and Change in Dublin English* and the more general website *Irish English Resource Centre*).

Historically, the situation was doubtlessly different. The millions of people who left Ireland for North America in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (the first group were largely Protestant Ulster Scots and the second vernacular Catholic speakers from the south of Ireland) had, more likely than not, unrounded variants of both LOT and THOUGHT and these continue in local accents in Ireland to this day. This means that the Irish immigrants to North America could have provided input to, or at least support for, the unrounding of LOT. Unfortunately, there is no orthoepic or other textual evidence for LOT unrounding in the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries, but the earliest recordings of Irish English speakers from the early twentieth century show a relatively unrounded vowel (and these recordings are of non-vernacular speakers).

Morphology

1) A distinction between second person pronouns is normal either by using *ye* [ji] (non-vernacular) or *youse* [juz], *yez* [jiz] (vernacular) for the plural; singular *you* is reduced to [jə] colloquially. 2) Verbal *-s* is common in the third person plural: *The boys always gets up late* (see iterative habitual below) and categorical with existential *there* in nearly all speech styles: *There's lots of cars outside*. 4) *Them* is used as a demonstrative: *Them cars are really fast*. 3) *Amn't* is widespread as contracted *am not*, e.g. *Amn't I great now?*

Syntax Many aspectual distinctions exist: (i) the *after*-perfective reports a recent action of high informational value: *He's after smashing the window*. (ii) the resultative perfective reports that a planned action has been completed and avails of the word order Object + Part Participle: *She has the soup made* 'She has finished making the soup'. (iii) the durative habitual is expressed in southern Irish English via *do* + *V-ing*: *She does be worrying about the children* (in the north via *bees*, see next entry), the iterative habitual is expressed via verbal *-s*: *They calls this place City Square*. The use of these habituals is generally confined to vernacular varieties or a vernacular mode with supraregional speakers. (iv) subordinating *and* has a concessive or restrictive meaning: *We went out walking and it raining*. (v) Clefting by fronting a sentence element, introduced by *It's*, is widespread: *It's to Dublin he's gone today*. *It's her brother who rang up this morning*. The sources of these structures have been the subject of much scholarly debate: (i) and (iv) are calques on Irish structures, (ii) may also be, given the same word order and meaning in Irish, (iii) may have received support from the category of habitual in Irish the exponence of which is very different, however, (v) in its range was probably influenced by Irish where clefting is very common.

Vocabulary

Irish English lexis can derive from English dialect input, e.g. *mitch* 'truant', *chisler* 'child', *hames* 'mess' (of Dutch origin) or from archaic pronunciation, e.g. [baul] (admiringly) for

bold and [aul] (affectionately) for *old*, *eejit* /i:dzət/ for *idiot*. Word pairs with complementary meanings are often confused: *ditch* is used for *dyke*; *bring* for *take*, *rent* for *let*; *learn* can be used for *teach* colloquially (*That'll learn ya*). Older usages are also found, e.g. *mad* for 'angry with', *sick* for 'ill', *bold* for 'misbehaved'. Phrasal verbs can have meanings not found elsewhere, e.g. *give out* 'complain'. Words can stem from Irish, e.g. *cog* (< Irish *cogair* 'whisper'), *twig* (< Irish *tuigim* 'understand'), *brogue* 'country accent', *gob* 'mouth', *smithereens* 'broken pieces', *blarney* (placename) 'flattery, sweet talk'. Many Irish words are used directly, e.g. *ciúineas* 'silence', *piseog* 'superstition' (Anglicised as *pishogue*), *sláinte* 'health' or *plámás* 'flattery' (the practice of interspersing one's speech with the odd Irish word is known as using the *cúpla focal*, Irish 'couple of words'). Specific uses of English would include *crack* (< Irish *craic*, itself a borrowing from English) 'social enjoyment', *yoke* 'thing, device'. Some Irish words appeared in American English in the nineteenth century, e.g. *slew* (< Irish *slua* 'crowd'). The phrase *so long!* may be from Irish *slán* 'goodbye' with the velarised [t̪] suggesting an initial unstressed syllable: [s^əlɑ:n]; *phoney* might be related to Irish *fáinne* [fə:n̪ə] 'ring' and originally be a reference to fake jewellery. *Galore* 'plentiful' (only used predicatively) < *go leor* 'enough' and *whisk(e)y* < *uisce beatha* 'water of life' could be from Irish or Scottish Gaelic.

Pragmatics

Agreement and ease of exchange are highly valued in Irish discourse and a number of pragmatic markers are frequently used to realise these features. (i) *sure* (reassurance), e.g. *Sure, it won't take you that long*. (ii) sentence-final *then* (tacit agreement), e.g. *I suppose it might be safe, then*. (iii) *grand* (reassurance, agreement), e.g. *You're grand the way you are. That was a grand cup of coffee*. (iv) *just* (mild disagreement), e.g. *Just, he wasn't go to pay for it after all*. (v) *now* (hedging device), e.g. *Okay, I have to go, goodbye now*. There is also a widespread use of focuser *like*, e.g. *They'd go into the houses, like, to play the cards*.

Summary of features of Irish English with their sociolinguistic values

Phonetic markers

- 1) Alveolar stops in THIS and THINK lexical sets
- 2) Lenition of /t/ beyond [t] to [h,ʔ,Ø]
- 3) Post-sonorant stop deletion
- 4) Distinction of short vowels before historic /r/
- 5) Unrounded LOT, THOUGHT and CHOICE vowels
- 6) Diphthong with low back starting point for GOAT vowel
- 7) Centralisation of diphthong in PRICE and PRIDE sets

Grammatical markers

- 1) Suffixal second person plural pronoun forms
youse < *you* + {S} 'you'-PL; *yees* < *ye* + {S} 'you'-PL
- 2) Habitual with *do be*
She does be worrying about the kids all the time.
- 3) Overuse of definite article, particularly with *both*
the both of youse
- 4) Negative concord *He didn't do nothing wrong*
- 5) Use of /mi/ for *my* (possessive pronoun) and /bi/ for *by*.
- 6) Reduction of principle parts of verbs from three to two
I seen it, I done it, He hasn't went there

Features that are not markers, i.e. which are present in more mainstream varieties:

- 1) *t*-lenition as in *city* [sɪt̪i] (but not further to [h,ʔ,Ø])
- 2) merger of the low-vowels in the TRAP and BATH lexical sets
- 3) *after* immediate perfective
They're after crashing the car.
- 4) *on* plus personal pronoun for relevance
She's ruined the dinner on me.
- 5) *ye* as second person plural pronoun

Irish English, Northern

English as spoken in the north of Ireland, both within NORTHERN IRELAND and ULSTER as a whole. English in this region has four main sources: (1) settlement before 1600 which survives in the speech of people in the west of the province and which has been influenced by Irish, (2) Ulster Scots which is a distinct variety stemming from Scots brought from Lowland and Western Scotland from the seventeenth century onwards, (3) general northern English which came with the English settlement, especially in the centre of the province, again from the seventeenth century onwards and (4) varieties of English in Donegal in the west of Ulster which show many contact features due to the historical shift from Irish to English.

Northern Irish English can be distinguished from southern Irish English by its intonation, a fall-rise in pitch with stressed syllables and a high-rising terminal in declarative sentences, especially in Belfast. Segmental features include (i) /u/ fronting to a mid high vowel [ʊ], e.g. *soon* [sʊn], and as the endpoint of the MOUTH diphthong, i.e. [mæʊθ], (ii) an ingliding diphthong in the FACE lexical set, e.g. *save* [seəv], (iii) a lack of vowel length in ULSTER SCOTS which has spread to other varieties, e.g. *fool* and *full*, both [fʊl], a feature related to the SCOTTISH VOWEL LENGTH RULE in Scots; (iv) the lowering of short front vowels, e.g. *hid* [hɛd], *head* [hæd], (v) the tendency to lengthen short low vowels, with retraction before nasals and raising before velars: *family* [fɑ:mli], *bag* [bæ:g], (vi) a high starting point for the PRICE vowel, e.g. *fly* [flɛɪ], (vii) the occurrence of [θ] and [ð] in the THIN and THIS lexical sets (only found sporadically in the south of Ireland in syllable codas and often just in a reading style). Note that the northern retroflex [ɻ] is no longer a delimiting feature as this realisation of /r/ has arisen (independently) in the south in the past few decades. A specifically syntactic feature of the north is the use of inflected *be* for the habitual: *The lads bees out a lot*. See McCafferty (2007).

Irish

A Celtic language spoken natively by about 30,000 people in Ireland where it is an official language. It is attested from at least 600 CE onwards in an unbroken tradition (there is also an earlier rune-like form known as Ogam). The present-day language exists in three main dialects, north, west and south which diverge considerably.

Dublin English

A reference to varieties of English spoken in Dublin, the capital of Ireland. The English language was taken to Dublin in the late twelfth century by English speakers who came during the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland. Although Irish was spoken throughout Ireland then, and in the ensuing centuries, English maintained a firm foothold in the city. From at least the eighteenth century onwards there were vernacular and non-vernacular varieties in the city, the latter providing the basis for supraregional IRISH ENGLISH, given that Dublin was and is by far the largest city in Ireland and the cultural and political centre of the country.

Salient features of mainstream Dublin English

dental stops for fricatives	<i>this</i> [dɪs], <i>think</i> [tɪŋk]
<i>t</i> -lenition	<i>night</i> [naɪt], <i>fight</i> [faɪt]
yod-dropping	<i>news</i> [nu:z], <i>neuter</i> ['nu:tə]
slight /au/-fronting	<i>house</i> [hæʊs]
/v/ ~ /o:/-merger	<i>horse, hoarse</i> [hɔ:rs] (variable)
/v/-lengthening	<i>lost</i> [lɔ:st]
low-central /a:/	<i>bland, glance</i> [bland]
rhotic pronunciation	<i>for</i> [fɔ:ɹ] ~ [fɔ:ɹ]

Salient features of local Dublin English

Centralisation of /ai/	<i>time</i> [təɪm]
Fronting of /au/	<i>down</i> [dəʊn]
Over-long vowels	<i>school</i> [sku:l] – [sku:əl] – [sku:wəl] <i>mean</i> [mi:n] – [mi:ən] – [mi:jən]
Short vowels before /r/	<i>circle</i> [sɛ:k], <i>first</i> [fɜ:s(t)]
Retention of short /ʊ/	<i>Dublin</i> [dublən]

Local Dublin English features in new pronunciation

- 1) AU-fronting, e.g. *house* [hæʊs]
- 2) low-central /a:/, *bland, glance* [bland]
- 3) SOFT-lengthening, e.g. *soft* [sɔ:ft]
- 4) L-velarisation, e.g. *meal* [mi:əl]
- 5) WHICH-voicing, e.g. *when* [wen]

The pronunciation of vernacular Dublin English shows many archaic features, e.g. the retention of /ʊ/ in the STRUT lexical set, cf. *Dublin* [dublən], and a velarised [ɫ] in syllable-final position, cf. *field* [fi:ɫd], and continues the diphthongisation before this sound

in words like *bold* [bau̯], *old* [au̯]. It also retains the original distinction of short vowels before historical /r/, i.e. the NURSE and TERM lexical sets are different, i.e. [nʊ:s] and [tɛ:m] respectively. There is a complex system of /t/ LENITION which involves the use of /h/, /ʔ/, /l/ or Ø, e.g. *put* [poh], [pʊʔ], [pʊ]; *letter* [lɛhv̩], [lɛfv̩]. Other prominent features are: 1) non-rhoticity or low rhoticity, e.g. *car* [kæ:], *card* [kæ:d] but [-r-] occurs in SANDHI, e.g. *get up!* [gɛrɒp], 2) centralisation of the /ai/ diphthong, e.g. *fly* [flɪ], 3) fronting of the onset for the /au/ diphthong, e.g. *house* [hɛʊs], 4) the breaking of long high vowels, *clean* [klijən], *school* [skuwəl]. The grammar of Dublin English is not essentially different from rural vernaculars in Ireland. There is much distinctive vocabulary, including a wide range of bawdy items, which are part of local culture.

Dublin Vowel Shift

During the 1990s major changes took place in non-vernacular Dublin English, essentially making this more different from traditional colloquial speech in the city. The new pronunciation quickly spread throughout the Republic of Ireland and is now (2014) the supraregional form of Irish English used by most males and all females under about 35. The essence of the shift is a raising of low back vowels and diphthong onsets, something which contrasts clearly with the traditionally open realisation of such vowels, e.g. *north* [nɔ:ɹ̥t̪], [no:ɹ̥t̪], *choice* [tʃɔ:ɪs], [tʃɔ:ɪs]. A HORSE- HOARSE merger also occurred, i.e. [ho:fs] is the present pronunciation for both these words which contrasts with the traditional distinction of [hɒ:rs] and [ho:rs]. The vowel raising probably triggered the (further) diphthongisation of the GOAT vowel, especially in the speech of females: *home* [ho:m] > [hoʊm] > [həʊm]. These developments can be interpreted as DISSOCIATION from vernacular varieties which have very open realisations of back vowels. In addition the new non-vernacular pronunciation of the 1990s has a retroflex [ɹ̥] which is in marked contrast to the low rhoticity or non-rhoticity of local Dublin English, compare *sore* [so:ɹ̥] with vernacular [sɒ:(r)]. The external motivation for these changes may well lie in the unprecedented economic boom of the 1990s which engendered a new generation of young Irish people who did not wish to be associated with a seemingly backward vernacular culture in the city. See Hickey (2005) for further details.

	Speakers over 35	Under 35	Comment
<i>Consonants</i>			
WHICH	[wɪtʃ]	[wɪtʃ]	lack of [w] # [ɹ̥] distinction
MEAL	[mi:l]	[mi:t̪]	use of syllable-final [t̪]
SORE	[so:ɹ̥]	[so:ɹ̥]	use of syllable-final retroflex [ɹ̥]
<i>Vowels</i>			
NORTH	[nɔ:ɹ̥t̪]	[no:ɹ̥t̪]	considerable raising of vowel
MOUTH	[maʊt̪]	[mɛʊt̪]	fronting of diphthong onset
GOAT	[gou̯t̪]	[gəʊt̪]	centralisation of diphthong onset, (mostly confined to females)
GOOSE	[gu:s]	[gɜ:s, gy:s]	greatest degree of fronting found with young females
HORSE	[hɒ:ɹ̥s]	[ho:ɹ̥s]	merger of HORSE-HOARSE sets

Despite these changes a southern Irish English accent can still be easily recognised. Dental stops are used for interdental fricatives, especially in syllable onsets, e.g. *think* [t̪ɪŋk]. The

STRUT vowel is quite far back, a slightly centralised version of cardinal vowel [ʌ], i.e. [ɫ], and may be somewhat rounded for some speakers, i.e. [ɔ̞]. Intervocalic and word-final/pre-pausal /t/ is realised as [t̪], e.g. *cut* [kʌt̪]. NB: [t̪] is an apico-alveolar voiceless fricative and not laminal so that *kit* [kɪt̪] and *kiss* [kɪs] are not homophones, see below.

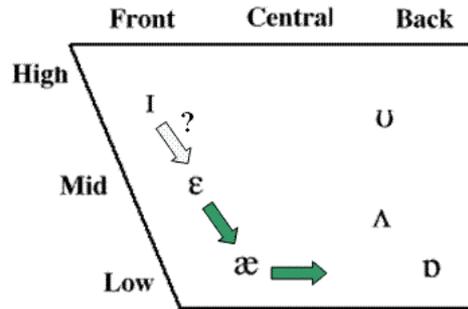
There are several negative diagnostics of Irish English: TH-fronting does not occur anywhere and the use of a glottal stop for /-t-/ or /-tʰ/ is only found in local Dublin English. The vowels in TRAP and BATH show the same quality and only differ in length: [træp] and [bæ:t̪]. A retracted [ɑ:] in the BATH set is regarded as posh English English and is never used.

<i>Mainstream Dublin English</i>	<i>New Dublin English, 'Dartspeak'</i>
velarised /r/	retroflex /r/
alveolar /l/	velarised /l/
central onset in MOUTH set	fronted onset in MOUTH set
retracted /a/ before /r/	fronted /a/ before /r/
no T-flapping	some T-flapping
no FOR/FOUR-merger	FOR/FOUR-merger

Short Front Vowel Lowering (SFVL)

A process whereby the vowels in the KIT, DRESS and TRAP lexical sets show lowered variants. The exact manifestation of this lowering depends on variety. For instance, in Canadian English (see CANADIAN SHIFT), according to boberg (2005) looking at Montreal, the lowering is accompanied by centralisation. Not all vowels are affected, e.g. in recent non-vernacular Dublin English the KIT vowel shows little or no lowering but the DRESS and TRAP vowels show much more. Furthermore, the TRAP vowel is often retracted to [ɑ] or even [ɑ̠]. The lowering may be conditional, e.g. by being favoured in the environment of liquids as in *lid* [led], *rid* [red]. Short front vowel lowering is also part of the (northern) Californian vowel shift as described by Penelope Eckert. It is also in keeping with Labov's principles of vowel shifts whereby lax (short) vowels move downwards in vowel space and tense (long) vowels move upwards, see Labov (1994-2010).

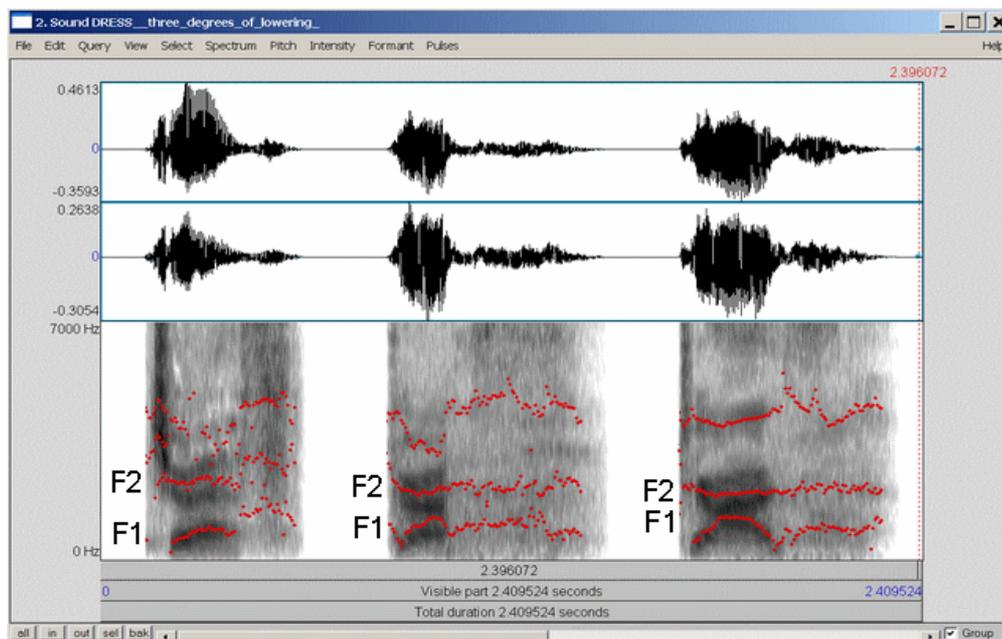
In recent years young female speakers of non-vernacular Dublin English have been showing a lowered vowel realisation, near [æ], in the DRESS lexical set and a centralised [a] in the TRAP set. The KIT vowel is rarely lowered and only in the environment of /r-/, e.g. *rid* [red]. The LOT and STRUT vowels are, as yet, unaffected by SFVL. Note that there is no *Don* ~ *dawn* merger in Irish English.



DRESS = [drɛ·s] ~ [dræs]

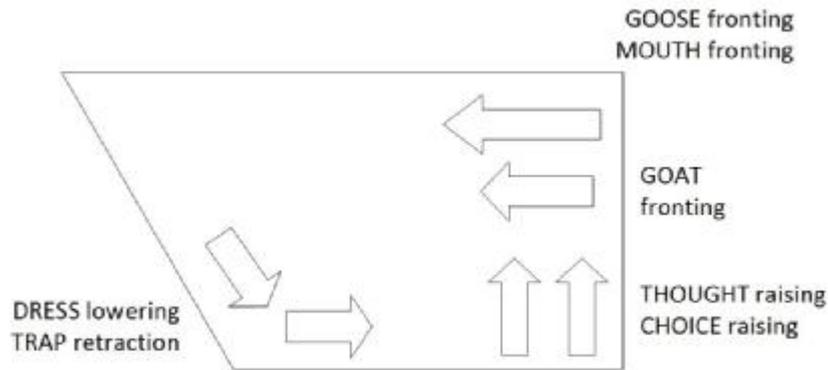
TRAP = [trap] ~ [trap]

The spectrogram below shows the word DRESS spoken by three young females with increasing degrees of lowering from left to right (slight, moderate and extreme respectively). F1 and F2 are progressively closer to each other in this direction due to the raising of F1; this is a clear indication of increased lowering of the DRESS vowel from left to right.



Possible reasons for SFVL

- 1) Internal argument: SFVL is favoured in the environment of liquids, i.e. post-/r/ and pre-/l/. /r/ would depress the third formant and hence favour vowel lowering, cf. *breakfast* [brækfəst]. In non-vernacular Dublin English syllable-final /l/ is pharyngealised and so would have a lowering effect on the preceding vowel, e.g. *hotel* [həute·æɪ].
- 2) A further internal argument would appeal to the rotation of vowels in phonological space. In recent Dublin English low back vowels have been raised and high back vowels have been fronted, perhaps inducing the lowering and retraction of the DRESS and TRAP vowels as a consequence.



- 3) External argument: Exposure in the media to young female speakers with SFVL. In Ireland young female broadcasters, weather forecasters and continuity announcers on Irish national radio and television do have SFVL. And it is also true that on local radio channels throughout the country young female broadcasters are now showing SFVL. But this suggestion would still leave the unanswered question: how did people in the media pick up SFVL to begin with? Did some young female speakers go to Canada / California and pick up the rudiments of SFVL there and then plant the seed of this shift back in Dublin with the shift then spreading throughout the city?

COT-CAUGHT merger

The lack of a phonetic distinction between the vowels in these two words, either in length and/or quality. Generally, the outcome is a half-long open vowel [ɒ̃], e.g. [kɒ̃t] for both *cot* and *caught*. The unrounding and lowering of /ɔ/ is common in United States English, especially in the West, ('Three dialects of English'; Labov 1991; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2013: 162-163) and is general in Canadian English. The phonetic realisation varies, however. It is generally a back vowel and with different degrees of rounding: in eastern New England the vowel is clearly rounded and close to [ɔ], while in western Pennsylvania and across Canada it is usually more a low rounded vowel, [ɒ]. In the West, e.g. California, the realisation is unrounded but still back, i.e. [ɑ]. Traditionally, the COT-CAUGHT merger is a feature of western Pennsylvania (and BOSTON ENGLISH) which had considerable Ulster Scots settlement (Montgomery 2001: 141-142), though as Lass (1987: 286) notes that the merger is to a back vowel in Lowland Scots/Ulster Scots but to a more central vowel in American English. The unrounding of /ɒ/ is common in the far north of England as well (Trudgill 1990: 19), cf. *lang* for *long*. The COT-CAUGHT merger is furthermore regarded as responsible for front vowel lowering by exercising a drag on the TRAP vowel, see CALIFORNIA VOWEL SHIFT and CANADIAN SHIFT.

California Vowel Shift

A series of vowel shifts which are typical of young speakers, especially females in California, apparently more in the north of the state. In this shift short front vowels are lowered, e.g. DRESS [dræs], KIT [ket] (but not before [ŋ]), TRAP [trap] with raising of the ASH-vowel when in pre-nasal position (a supraregional feature of many varieties of American English), e.g. *and* [end]. In addition there is fronting of high back vowels in the GOOSE and GOAT lexical sets as well as the STRUT vowel while the PRICE diphthong shows a centralised onset much like in Canadian English. The COT-CAUGHT MERGER is often thought to have triggered front vowel lowering by exercising a drag on the TRAP

vowel with DRESS and KIT following. The same reasoning has been advanced for the CANADIAN SHIFT. See Kennedy & Grama (2012).

Canadian Shift

A shift of front short vowels, apparently triggered by the retraction of the vowel in the TRAP lexical set from [æ] to [a]. The remaining vowels, in the KIT and DRESS lexical sets, are lowered and perhaps centralised in the process. The shift was first described in Clarke, Elms and Youssef (1995) and later in somewhat more detail by Boberg (2005, 2010).

Ulster

Historically, one of the four provinces of Ireland, the remaining three being Connacht in the west, Munster in the south and Leinster in the east. ‘Ulster’ is often used synonymously with Northern Ireland, a constituent part of the United Kingdom which came into existence in 1922 with independence for the rest of Ireland. However, Northern Ireland only encompasses six of the nine counties of the province (the other 26 counties form the Republic of Ireland). The remaining three counties of Ulster – Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan – are linguistically part of the north which can be divided into three main linguistic areas with Belfast both an amalgam of different strands and an area of its own (Milroy 1981). The two main linguistic divisions in Ulster are (i) ULSTER SCOTS and (ii) Ulster English which is derived from speakers largely from the north of England. There is also a transition zone along the southern border of Ulster with the Republic of Ireland.

Ulster Scots

The language of the descendants of seventeenth-century Scottish settlers in the coastal regions of north and north-east Ulster. Much assimilation and mixing has taken place in the past few centuries, especially in cities like Belfast. Hence, it can be difficult to delimit Ulster Scots from other varieties of English spoken in the province. There are some obvious Ulster Scots traits, e.g. retroflex /r/, vocalised syllable-final /l/, the deletion of intervocalic /-ð-/ (as in *Northern* [nɔːɹn] *Ireland*), a lack of phonemic vowel length (see SCOTTISH VOWEL LENGTH RULE), a high central vowel /ɨ/, much variation in the TRAP lexical set. These features are taken to stem from the speech of the original Lowland Scots who, along with northern English settlers, moved to the province in the seventeenth century. However, they have spread to other varieties spoken outside the Ulster Scots core areas. Even such a typical feature as *-nae* for modal verbal negation is frequent in other areas, for example in Derry, cf. *cannae* ‘cannot’.

Ulster Scots was transported to North America in the eighteenth century when up to a quarter of a million people emigrated to the inland regions of the east coast of the later United States, providing linguistic input to emerging varieties, especially APPALACHIAN ENGLISH. See Montgomery & Gregg (1997), Montgomery (2001).

Scots-Irish (also Scotch-Irish)

A reference in the United States to the settlers from Scotland and/or Ulster who moved to North America in large numbers (about a quarter of a million) in the eighteenth century. This movement of Ulster Scots across the Atlantic led to the rise APPALACHIAN ENGLISH. The Appalachians, which cover parts of Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee and both the

Virginias, is relatively isolated and hence APPALACHIAN ENGLISH has kept a clear linguistic profile, largely unaffected by other forms of English in the United States.

References

- Algeo, John (ed.) 2001. *English in North America. The Cambridge History of the English Language*. Vol. 6. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boberg, Charles 2010. *The English Language in Canada*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boberg, Charles 2005. 'The Canadian shift in Montreal', *Language Variation and Change* 17.2: 133-154.
- Britain, David (ed.) *Language in the British Isles*. Second edition. Cambridge: University Press.
- Clarke, Sandra, Ford Elms & Amani Youssef 1995. 'The third dialect of English: Some Canadian evidence', *Language Variation and Change* 7: 209-228.
- Corrigan, Karen P. 2010. *Irish English, Vol. 1: Northern Ireland*. Edinburgh: University Press.
- Eckert, Penelope (ed.) 1991. *New Ways of Analyzing Sound Change*. New York: Academic Press.
- Hickey, Raymond 1984. 'Coronal segments in Irish English', *Journal of Linguistics* 20: 233-251.
- Hickey, Raymond 1999. 'Dublin English: Current changes and their motivation', in: Paul Foulkes and Gerry Docherty (eds) *Urban voices*. London: Edward Arnold, pp. 265-281.
- Hickey, Raymond 2003. 'What's cool in Irish English? Linguistic change in contemporary Ireland', in: Hildegard L. C. Tristram (ed.) *Celtic Englishes III*. Heidelberg: Winter, pp. 357-373.
- Hickey, Raymond 2005. *Dublin English. Evolution and Change*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins (with CD-ROM).
- Hickey, Raymond 2004. *A Sound Atlas of Irish English*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter (with DVD).
- Hickey, Raymond 2004. 'The phonology of Irish English', in: Kortmann, Bernd et al. (ed.) *Handbook of Varieties of English. Volume 1: Phonology*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 68-97.
- Hickey, Raymond 2007a. 'Southern Irish English', in: Britain (ed.), pp. 135-151.
- Hickey, Raymond 2007b. *Irish English. History and present-day forms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hickey, Raymond 2012. 'Standard Irish English', in: Raymond Hickey (ed.) *Standards of English. Codified Varieties Around the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 96-116.
- Hickey, Raymond 2012b. 'English in Ireland', in: Raymond Hickey (ed.) *Areal Features of the Anglophone World*. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton, pp. 79-105.
- Jones, Charles (ed.) 1997. *The Edinburgh History of the Scots Language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Kennedy, Robert and James Grama 2012. 'Chain shifting and centralization in California vowels: an acoustic analysis', *American Speech* 87.1: 39-56.
- Labov, William 1991. 'The three dialects of English', in: Eckert (ed.), pp. 1-44.
- Labov, William 1994, 2001, 2010. *Principles of Linguistic Change. Vol. 1: Internal Factors, Vol. 2: Social Factors, Vol. 3: Cognitive and Cultural Factors*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

- Lass, Roger 1987. *The Shape of English. Structure and History*. London: Dent.
- McCafferty, Kevin 2007. 'Northern Irish English', in: [2.1] Britain (ed.), pp. 122-134.
- Milroy, James 1981. *Regional Accents of English: Belfast*. Belfast: Blackstaff.
- Montgomery, Michael 2001. 'British and Irish antecedents', in: Algeo (ed.), pp. 86-153.
- Montgomery, Michael & Robert Gregg 1997. 'The Scots language in Ulster', in: Jones (ed.), pp. 569-622.
- Pandeli, Helen, Joseph Eska, Martin Ball and Joan Rahilly 1997. 'Problems of phonetic transcription: the case of the Hiberno-English slit-t', *Journal of the International Phonetics Association* 27: 65-75.
- Trudgill, Peter 1990. *The Dialects of England*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wolfram, Walt & Natalie Schilling-Estes 2013. *American English. Dialects and Variation*. Third edition. Oxford: Blackwell.

Research website: *Variation and Change in Dublin English* accessible at: <http://www.uni-due.de/VCDE>. See the glossary in particular.