Development and change in Dublin English

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1 Introduction

At the very latest since the seminal work of Labov in the sixties the standard wisdom on the locus for language change is that it is to be found in the lower classes, specifically in the lower middle classes (Labov, 1972:122ff.). While it is true that the possibility of change from above (from the more prestigious middle classes) is not excluded a priori it is not given much attention and usually regarded as being due to the influence of a standard variety on a vernacular.

The intention of the present article is to look at a complex of changes from above which in the opinion of the present author is of general relevance in its motivation and in the light it throws on metropolitan language use. It also challenges the view that changes from above ‘are introduced by the dominant social class, often with full public awareness’ and that ‘normally, they represent borrowings from other speech communities that have high prestige in the view of the dominant class’ (Labov, 1994:78). The case in point here is the English of the capital of the Republic of Ireland, Dublin. Here a number of changes have taken place in the past and a major one is occurring at the present which quite clearly originate in the speech of the educated classes of Dublin. This change does not enjoy the public awareness which is predicated of change from above and it does not have its origin in borrowings from another speech community. To anticipate the conclusion, the present author maintains that the changes in the past and that in contemporary educated Dublin English serve the function of increasing the distance between popular and middle class speech in Dublin. The linguistic behaviour which results in this distancing can be labelled local dissociation and constitutes a specific type of language change. It is socially plausible as distancing oneself from the lower classes of one’s native city is something which happens in non-linguistic spheres. The reason why Dublin English is particularly suited in establishing this tendency is that the changes which it has undergone and is undergoing in the educated sector of the city do not represent an approximation to any form of standard (British) English. Hence the conclusions drawn from the data analysed below cannot be dismissed on the grounds of a putative standardisation of Dublin English. To begin the present discussion allow me to sketch in brief the development of English in the capital.1

2 An historical outline of English in Dublin

The history of English in the south of Ireland can be divided into two periods. This is justified on both language internal and external historical grounds. The first period dates from the late 12th century to 1600 and the second from the latter date to the present-day. The division between the two periods rests on the external events at the end of the 16th
century when the Irish forces were defeated by the English with the disintegration of the old Irish social order after the decisive battle of Kinsale in 1601 and the ensuing voluntary exile (1607) of a large part of the Irish aristocracy known somewhat romantically as the Flight of the Earls (Moody and Martin, 1966:189ff; Foster, 1988:44).

FIRST PERIOD English was first introduced to Ireland in the late Middle Ages, to be precise in 1169, when a group of adventurers from Britain came to Ireland to assist a local prince and who then conquered large parts of the south-east of the country where they settled permanently. Of these newcomers from Britain only a percentage were English-speaking. The leaders were Anglo-Norman lords from Pembrokeshire with English speakers in their retinue (Curtis, 1919: 235ff.; Cahill, 1938:160f.). This group formed the seed of English in Ireland. Within three years of the initial invasion the Normans had taken Dublin and established a presence there which was never to cease. As with the first invaders the settlers in Dublin included speakers of English.

The centuries after the coming of the Normans were characterised by Gaelic resurgence which led to the demise of English (and Anglo-Norman) in the entire country by the 15th century with the exception of Dublin and its immediate surroundings, known as the Pale from the fortifications which separated it from the rest of the country under the control of the native Irish.

The upshot of these developments is that Dublin English today is the only substantial variety of English in Ireland which can claim continuity from the time of the original settlers. This fact is of no socio-linguistic relevance today but it is responsible for certain features of Dublin English which are not found in the rest of the country such as the lengthening of certain vowels and the breaking of long syllables. In this respect Dublin English shows an affinity with the archaic dialect of the south-east corner of Ireland, that of the baronies of Forth and Bargy in county Wexford, which died out at the beginning of the 19th century and which is only documented in a glossary and a few text pieces (Dolan and Ó Muirithe, 1979; Hickey, 1988).

The connection with Forth and Bargy should not be over-stressed. For instance while the latter has stress on the second of two syllables with loan-words (an Anglo-Norman feature according to O’Rahilly, also present in Munster Irish where it is sensitive to quantity, O’Rahilly, 1932:86ff.), Dublin English does not have this. Nor does it show the voicing of initial fricatives which is such a prominent characteristic of Forth and Bargy.

SECOND PERIOD. The seventeenth century in Ireland is characterised chiefly by the re-introduction of English on a large-scale. This happened in the north of the country with the steady influx of immigrants from the Scottish Lowlands who came to form the base of the Ulster Protestant community. In the south the new English settlers came as a result of plantations and land confiscations, above all that of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) which was undertaken to renumerate mercenaries who had fought on the side of the Cromwellian forces in the years of strife during the Civil War (1642-1649) and immediately afterwards.

PLANTER ENGLISH. The planters who came to settle in large parts of the east, south-east and south of Ireland in the latter half of the 17th century were dialect speakers from the west and north-west of England mainly. When in Ireland their contact with speakers of south-eastern mainland English was negligible whereas that with their Irish servants and tenants was considerable, something which would suggest an influence of the speech of the latter on the former. One indirect piece of evidence of this is the fact
that no bundles of dialect features corresponding to established features of mainland English dialects are to be found in Ireland. This would seem to point to an adoption of Irish speech habits and a levelling of dialect differences after settlement in Ireland. This fact means that it is not possible in present-day Ireland to distinguish between a group descended from original Irish speakers and a group which stems from the first English settlers though in the north of the country there is this distinction because of the clarity of the forms of Ulster Scots characteristic of the initial settlers from Scotland.  

3 Documentation of Dublin English

The documentation of Dublin English is unfortunately quite scanty. What little material there is can be found in documents such as city records. These offer a glimpse of some archaic features of Dublin English, for instance the deletion of post-sonorants stops as in /pound/ with a glottal stop at most as a trace of the former alveolar plosive (still a feature of popular Dublin English). The Dublin Records from the 15th century show this deletion in words like stone ‘stand’, strone ‘strand’. Forth and Bargy also show this phenomenon as in sthroane for ‘strand’. The deletion is regular in Forth (Hogan, 1927:72) which would indicate that it was a feature of the earliest forms of English taken to Ireland.

Apart from non-fictional prose documents there is the language of authors from Dublin. However this is not necessarily Dublin English. Certainly for authors of the early modern period (after 1600) one cannot assume that their language was in any manner or means a reflection of the popular speech of the capital. Authors like Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) or Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816) wrote in standard English. Nonetheless there are glimpses of what Irish English, if not Dublin English, can have been like in previous centuries. Swift wrote two small pieces which purport to represent the English of the native Irish and the English planters of the early 18th century (Irish Eloquence and Dialogue in the Hipernian Stile, Bliss, 1976:557). Quite a number of dramatists of the Restoration period (after the return of Charles II to the throne in 1660) parodied Irish figures (and their speech) in their plays and this casts some light on Irish English of the late 17th century. In addition the father of the playwright R.B. Sheridan, Thomas Sheridan (1719-1788), was something of an authority on language matters in the late 18th century and also a well-known elocutionist who travelled widely. Sheridan is the author of A Rhetorical Grammar of the English Language (1781) which includes an appendix on the language of educated Dubliners which he examines and corrects (laying out a series of rules to be observed by the Irish in order to speak English properly). This brief treatment is a valuable source of information on the state of upper class Dublin English two centuries ago. The following is a list of the features noticed and commented on by Sheridan.

1) The pronunciation of a is /a:/ and not /ei/ in words like patron, matron.

2) A pronunciation of English /ai/ from ME /i:/ as /ei/ is found, though it is uncertain whether Sheridan means this or perhaps /ai/ which would tally better with what is known from present-day Dublin English.

3) There was a realisation of ME /e:/ as /e:/ (perhaps more accurately as [e:] which would be in agreement with present-day popular Dublin English usage) seen in
words like *tea*, *sea*, *please*. Of these, the first is still found as a caricature of a by-gone Irish pronunciation of English. Hogan noted in 1927 (1927:65) that this was rapidly receding at that time. Today it is somewhat artificial.

4) A realisation of */æ:/ before former liquids as */ɔ:/ as in *psalm*, *balm* appears to have been current. This pronunciation is unknown nowadays though the back vowel before velarised */l/* has a parallel in the pronunciations */baul/* and */aul/* found for *bold* and *old* colloquially.

With regard to (1) observe that ME short */a/* is retained in Irish English with a slight shift to */æ/*. ME long */a:/ is generally fronted in the Early Modern period and various attempts are made to describe the */æ:/ which resulted. Sheridan remarks that the Irish pronounce the sound in words like *patron* with a vowel like in English *hat*, but lengthened. This pronunciation was in all likelihood replaced by a more standard English one rather than a shift from */æ:/ to */e:/ having taken place in the 19th century.

With regard to consonants Sheridan remarks on ‘the thickening (of) the sounds of *d* and *t* in certain situations’. By this one can assume that he is referring to the realisation of dental fricatives as alveolar plosives as found in colloquial forms today. There is no hint in Sheridan of anything like a distinction between dental and alveolar plosive realisations.

One should note here that Sheridan (1781:69) is reporting on the speech of the ‘gentlemen of Ireland’ which in late eighteenth century terms would be more or less equivalent to educated male Dubliners. Interestingly he observes that the Irish show hypercorrect forms when they attempt to speak correct English: ‘instead of *great* they say *greet*, for *occasion*, *occceesion*, *days* *dees*, &c.’ a characteristic not attested for contemporary Irish English.

Clues about what popular Dublin English was like formerly are difficult to come by. The features which are parodied in the Restoration comedies with Irish figures (see Bliss 1979 for a detailed discussion) cannot be reliably attributed to the vernacular of the capital, particularly as they are also characteristic of later contact varieties of English in Ireland, for instance the use of [ʃ] for [s] pre-consonantly. One must wait for the dramatist Sean O’Casey, writing at the beginning of the present century, to find any literary representation of the common speech of the capital. O’Casey avails of a number of features which are known to be found or have been found in Dublin English, indeed the title of his play *Juno and the Paycock* derives its second meaning from the use of */ɛ:/ for */i:/.

In contemporary writing popular Dublin English is reflected by some authors, for example the novelist Roddy Doyle. He uses certain devices which indicate roughly what pronunciation he is intending. Common usage is an apostrophe to indicate the deletion of alveolar plosives (with a trace as glottal stop) and the shift from velar to alveolar position with the (ng) variable. The frequent reduction of *you* */ju(:)/ to */jə/* is indicated in Doyle’s writings as *yeh*.

4 Divisions in Dublin city

Like any other modern city Dublin shows areas of high and low social prestige. The city lies at the mouth of the river Liffey in the centre of the east coast, and spreads along the
shores of the horseshoe shape of Dublin bay. The suburbs, which have increased dramatically since the sixties, reach down to Bray and beyond into Co.Wicklow in the south, to the West in the direction of Maynooth and to the north at least to Swords, the airport and beyond. The Dublin conurbation now encompasses about a third of the population of the Republic of Ireland.

Within Dublin there is a clear divide between the north and the south side of the city. The latter is regarded as more residentially desirable (with the exception of Howth and its surroundings on the peninsula which forms the north side of Dublin bay). Within the south there is a cline in prestige with the area around Ballsbridge and Donnybrook enjoying highest status. This is the area of certain key complexes like the Royal Dublin Society (the most important exhibition and event centre in the capital) and the national television studios RTE (Radio Telefís Éireann, ‘Irish Radio and Television’) and of the national university (University College Dublin) in Belfield. This entire area is known by its postal number, Dublin 4. Indeed this number has given the name to a sub-accent within Dublin English known as the ‘Dublin 4 Accent’ (more on which presently). The less prestigious parts of the city are known by their district names such as the Liberties in the centre of the city, immediately north of the river Liffey and Ballymun, the only suburb in Ireland with high-rise flats and which is associated with adverse social conditions.

5 Misconceptions about Irish English

Before looking at different types of Dublin English it would appear appropriate to clear up some misconceptions about Irish English which unfortunately are found not just with non-linguists. Only phonetic matters are discussed in detail here. The aspectual distinctions in Irish English, which are often misinterpreted, are not treated as they are not relevant to the matter at hand. These are dealt with in the order of the seriousness of the misconceptions for the understanding of present-day Irish English.

1) **Alveolar plosives are dentalised.** Despite the many statements to the contrary by non-Irish and northern Irish scholars there is no variety of southern Irish English with global dentalisation nor is there any variety with free variation with dental and alveolar stop articulations (Hickey, 1984a). These kinds of statement are unfortunately typical of the over-general, underdifferentiated analyses of southern Irish English which more often than not have been perpetuated by a given writer copying from a previous one. A laudable exception in this respect is Wells (1982:429) who is accurate in his description.

A variety can have a distinction between dentals and alveolars (the supra-regional standard, cf. *through* [tru:] and *true* [tru:] with /t/ ≠ /d/) or can have dental retraction (many rural varieties of the south and south-west). A shift from alveolar to dental place of articulation is only found (recessively in the south) before /-r/ as in *butter* [bətr] (with a trilled [r] instead of the usual [ɾ], Hickey, 1989a). This is an archaic feature of Irish English and reflected in spellings like *thrue* for *true*, *wather* for *water*, etc.

Unconditional alveolarisation is an entirely different matter. There are varieties which show this, above all popular Dublin English. Here there is a collapse of English /θ, ð/ with /t, d/ as [t, d] whereas in the supra-regional varieties of the south and in local western varieties the dental fricatives appear as dental stops [t, d].
The Southern Irish are very sensitive to the distinction between a dental and alveolar articulation of stops. They can detect a shift to the alveolar ridge and stigmatise this immediately. However this does not apply to conditioned shifts, for instance the assimilation of dental [t] to alveolar /l/ or /n/ goes unnoticed by speakers of the supra-regional variety of the south as in [ætlɪ:t] for athlete, [mɑːnts] for months, i.e. not with [tl] or [tn] respectively.

2) The result of t-lenition [t] is an affricate or flap. The apico-alveolar fricative which results from weakening /t/ intervocally and word-finally in Irish English is not found in other varieties of English (with the exception of Newfoundland English where it is a feature imported by Irish settlers, Kirwin, 1993:74; Clarke, 1986:68). For this reason it has been partially confused with other realisations of /t/ in roughly similar environments in other forms of English such as [ɾ] or [ʔ]. It should be mentioned that in popular Dublin English some speakers have a slow release of /t/ in non-leniting positions, such as after a consonant, e.g. bent [bɛnt]. This is not to be confused with the realisations of /t/ in a leniting environment.

3) /ɔ/ is typical of Irish English. This is an archaic feature of Dublin English most probably deriving from the first period (see above) and is definitely not found in the supra-regional variety of the south. While it is known that the settlers of the second period (as of mid 17th century) were from the west and north-west of England it is difficult, given the nature of English orthography, to determine to what extent they carried [ɔ] to Ireland with them. If this were the case then there are two possible sources for the unrounded (but back) variant of the English /ʌ/ vowel which is found in the south of Ireland today. The first would be more standard varieties of English from the south of Britain latterly influencing the English spoken in the south. This is unlikely as there is no general linguistic influence from England on Ireland apart from the settlers who came to the country. The number of speakers who would have come to the country later on and who would have had /ʌ/ is slight and can be neglected. The second source is Irish which has a similar unrounding and lowering of both its original /u/ and /o/ vowels. Indeed the vowel quality of /ʌ/ in the south of Ireland today is identical with that of Irish (western and south-western varieties) namely [ʌ] a somewhat centralised version of the unrounded cardinal back vowel [A].

4) Syllable-final /r/ is retroflex. The realisation of /r/ in this position shows considerable velarisation, i.e. [ɾ]. A retroflex [ɾ] occurs only in the north, indeed the different allophones of syllable-final /r/ provide a good diagnostic for distinguishing between varieties north and south of the border, compare north [nɔːtʰ] (Northern Ireland) and [nɔːtʰ] (Republic).

5.1 Negative diagnostics

Particularly when compared to urban varieties of British English one notices that there are some features which can be used as negative diagnostics of Irish English. First and foremost of these is h-dropping which is ubiquitous in English cities but not found anywhere is the south of Ireland, hence there is no hypercorrection of the ‘hobvious’
type. T-glottaling is very rare in the south with the noticeable exception of working class varieties on the east coast (Dublin down to Waterford).

There are further negative diagnostics from other linguistic levels. The form ain’t is not Irish, nor is do with use, e.g. He didn’t use to live in London would be He usen’t to live in London. There are of course corresponding positive diagnostics, such as the use of epistemic must in the negative (He musn’t be Scottish). These do not have any function as markers for Dublin or the rest of the south and will be ignored here.

6 What constitutes a standard in Ireland?

6.1 Supra-regional variety of English

To begin with one should note that in the Republic of Ireland, that is excluding the north which because of its different demographical history is quite separate from the rest of the country, there is something like a supra-regional standard which is characterised by the speech of middle-class urbanites. This can be classified into different sub-varieties on the basis of features which are found in one and not the other. For instance the urban speech of Cork may show a tendency to raise /e/ before nasals and that of Dublin may raise and lengthen /o/ before voiceless fricatives. Nonetheless there is a core of common features which can be taken as characteristic of general middle-class speech of the south and it is these which non-Irish use as clues for identifying an Irish accent, e.g. rhoticism (with a velarised [r]), dental stops for dental fricatives, fricativisation of /t,d/ in open position (intervocally and word-finally before a pause), monophthong equivalents to the RP diphthongs /ei/ and /ɔː/ and the lack of any significant lexical distribution of long and short vowels in the DANCE, CANCEL lexical sets (as the length and quality difference in these vowels is so slight) to mention just some of the more prominent examples.

6.2 The status of Received Pronunciation

For an anglophone country like Ireland the relationship to other larger English-speaking countries plays a significant role, one which naturally has a linguistic dimension as well. In this connection the question arises whether the less regionally bound varieties of any of these larger countries act in any sense as a standard for the Irish. In practice the only two countries which are involved here are the United States and Britain. There is considerable exposure to forms of English from America in the media, above all through films, but whatever accents may be represented here have no effect on language behaviour in Ireland with the exception of some lexical items which may be adopted, as with the many technical buzz-words in the area of data processing or the extended use of certain adjectives like ‘gross’ in the language of the younger generation.12

The situation with Britain is different given the close economic and cultural ties which it has with Ireland. This is a complicated issue as the history of Ireland often dictates a sceptical and critical attitude to Britain while contemporary social conditions in Ireland are such that there is much contact with Britain due to Irish working there and the general orientation towards this country, though there has been a certain re-orientation as a result of membership in the European Union in the past decade or so. However, linguistically Britain is and will remain Ireland’s powerful and dominant
next-door-neighbour. Hence the valid question concerning the status of standard forms of
British English in Ireland needs to be posed.

It is true to say that speakers from the Republic do not emulate Received
Pronunciation. Instead the supra-regional standard of Dublin origin provides an
orientation for the southern middle-class Irish. Certain characteristics of this speech,
such as rhoticism, alveolar /l/ in all positions, monophthong long mid vowels,
centralised /a:/, plosive equivalents to /θ, δ/ and the retention of /ɔ/ (Hickey, 1984b) are
so obvious that no possibility of confusion with the southern British standard is possible.
And yet it is obvious to any observer of Irish English in the south that there are speakers,
however few, with accents very close to Received Pronunciation. The following are
some generalisations which would appear to hold for such individuals.

Those who show accents similar to RP are middle class urban individuals. Particularly in Dublin there are cases of people with such accents who have leanings to
and connections with England and who would be generally classified by the less
Anglicised Irish as ‘West Brit’ (a derogatory term). Whether or not this epithet is used,
the attitude is that those who use RP or anything like it are regarded as linguistically
un-Irish. With pro-English speakers there is a scale of features which are retained longest
despite the approximation to RP which can be represented as follows (in decreasing
order of retention).

(1)
a) t-lenition
b) syllable final /-r/
c) monophthong long mid vowels
d) centralised /a:/
e) plosive equivalents to /θ, δ/

The last feature tends to be retained in initial position more than in medial and final
positions, probably due to the inherent sonority values of these syllable loci.

The second reason for the lack of influence of RP on the supra-regional standard
of the south is the attitude of the population to England and English society. It would not
befit any nationalist minded Irishman to imitate an English accent. Although the vast
majority of Irish speak English as their native language, using an English accent
approaching RP is regarded as snobbish if not to say unpatriotic and usually evokes
derision from one’s fellow countrymen. It is this which is scorned as a grand [grænd]13
or posh or lah-di-dah accent, an outward manifestation of pretentiousness and social
condescension.

7 Different forms of Dublin English

Although English has been present in Dublin for upwards of 800 years the degree of
consciousness of the language of the city has not led to a term for it developing. Here it
contrasts with London, with Cockney, (or Liverpool for that matter, with Scouse) in not
having a designation for the indigeneous variety of English in the city. This lack of
consciousness is paralleled by a dearth of documents attesting the city’s vernacular.

The scant historical evidence for Dublin English is particularly unfortunate as the
capital of Ireland is characterised by a definite cleavage between the language of the
lower-classes and that of the more educated sector. Furthermore this cleavage is one
which would appear to be maintained by the educated speakers of the city. For the
remainder of this paper the concern will be with the extent to which the latter group have induced changes to hive themselves off from the lower-classes of their native city.

8 Popular Dublin English

In the present context the term ‘Popular Dublin English’ refers to the language of the lower-classes in Dublin city. The term has a certain amount of currency (Bertz, 1975:51ff.;1987:38) and is taken as a cover term for the sub-varieties used by Dubliners who have not enjoyed more than secondary education and little professional training. Popular Dublin English shows a number of features which distinguish it quite clearly from varieties located above it on a social scale. The following features are of relevance for the present discussion.

1) Popular Dublin English tends not to be rhotic or only weakly so

The loss of /r/ is clearest in word-final position, as pronunciations like [pəʊtə] for *porter* testify. Theallophonicsofvowelsderivingfromaformersequenceofshortvowelplus /r/ is quite complicated because of rounding which occurs after labials in this position and a general lengthening resulting from mora compensation on the loss of /r/. The labial rounding can be accompanied by retraction giving a vowel continuum from low front rounded to back mid to high rounded.

(2) a circles [səːklz] 
b first [fəːst] ~ [fuːst]

Now the speech of the middle classes in Dublin has one remarkable feature and that is its rhoticism (Wells, 1982:418). The fact that syllable-final /r/ should be maintained so consistently in educated Dublin English is deserving of comment. If there was a tendency for this variety to approximate to more standard forms of (British) English then one would expect rhoticism to decline. However this would create a similarity with popular Dublin English which would work against the aim of increasing the distance between low and high prestige varieties of English in the capital. In this respect Dublin is similar to New York. In both cities rhoticism is prestigious as lower class speech lacks syllable-final /r/. But within the context of English in the British Isles the maintainence of rhoticism cannot be interpreted as a shift towards standardisation.

2) Alveolar stops correspond to English dental fricatives /θ, ð/ 

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 (1927:71f.) 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) where the third person singular ending -th appears as -t. According to Hogan alveolar realisations are common in rural varieties in the south and south-west of Ireland. Here they are probably a contact phenomenon deriving ultimately from the realisation of non-palatal /t,d/ in Irish. Hogan incidentally also remarks on the dental stops which are found in present-day Irish English (loc.cit.). The acoustic sensitivity of the Irish to the shift from dental to alveolar derives not least from the merger which results from it as
indicated by such homophonic pairs as *thinker* and *tinker*, both [tɪŋkə] and *third* or *turd*, both [tɜːd].

3) Fricativised /t/ is further reduced to [h], [r] or zero

The clearest feature of southern Irish English is the weakening of /t/ to a fricative with characteristics identical to the stop, i.e. an apico-alveolar fricative in positions of weakness. This cannot be indicated in English orthography of course but vacillation between *t* and *th* for /t/ is found already in the *Kildare Poems* (Hickey, 1993:220f.) and would suggest that it was a feature of English in Ireland in the first period.

The lenition of /t/ (phonetically [t]) intervocically or at the end of a word is not continued in educated Dublin English beyond the initial stage with the exception of one or two lexicalised items such as *Saturday* ['sʰærde]. However it is precisely the extension beyond the apico-alveolar fricative which is characteristic of popular Dublin English. The sequence is usually as follows:

(3) /t/ [t] → [ɪ] → [h] → 0

*motorway* [mətɔɾˈwe] [məʊɾwe] [mɔːwe] [moːwe]

The r-realisation has an occasional flap variant in intervocalic position much as varieties of American English have, e.g. *better* [bɛrə].

4) Long high vowels and rising diphthongs are disyllabified

By this is meant that high long vowels are realised as two syllables with a hiatus between the two when they occur pre-consonantally. This is [j] with front vowels and [w] with back vowels.

(4) a clean [klɪʃən] but: be [biː]
b fool [fuɻəl] who [huː]

The disyllabification of long high vowels extends to diphthongs which have a high ending point as can be seen in the following realisations.

(5) a time [tæjəm] but: fly [fləi]
b pound [pʰwpən] how [həu]

If one recognises a cline with popular Dublin English then this disyllabification is definitely at the lower end. For instance the front onset of the vowel in the HOUSE lexical set is quite common in more colloquial varieties of educated Dublin English but without either the hiatus [w] or the deletion of the post-sonorant nasal. The vowel complex in such cases tends to be nasalised in immediately pre-nasal position.

To understand the framework for vowel realisations such as those just mentioned it is appropriate to juxtapose the long vowel systems of the two main variety groups in Dublin, along with the /ʌ/ vowel and the realisation of shwa before /t/.
5) Post-sonorant stop deletion

This feature is unique to Dublin English. In other varieties in the Republic the tendency is not to delete the stop in this position but to retain it and if voiced to devoice it, e.g. *bend* [bənt]. The Dublin phenomenon is confined to post-/n/ and post-/l/ positions.

6) Vowel epenthesis

This is a very widespread phenomenon in Irish English. Taking Irish into account one can see that it is really an areal feature of Ireland (and Scotland for that matter). The maximal extent of epenthesis is to be found in the Irish dialects of Munster where it helps to break up clusters which are phonotactically unacceptable.

The transfer of epenthesis into English would appear to be a consequence of the long period in which the population of Ireland switched over from Irish to English (between the 17th and 19th centuries). Its present-day distribution is not the same for the differing varieties of Irish English. It is universal in /lm,ln/ clusters (liquid and sonorant) e.g. *film*, *helm* [fɪlm], [hel:əm]; *kiln* [kɪln], it is common in clusters of /r/ and sonorant *worm*, *burn* [wɜːm], [ɜːrn] but is quite stigmatised in double liquid clusters, *girl* [ɡɜːl].

In popular Dublin English the position of epenthesis is similar to educated Dublin English but with one essential difference: because of the non-rhotic nature of low-prestige forms of Dublin English double liquid clusters do not occur, e.g. the word for *girl* is pronounced [ɡe:l].
7) The (ng) variable

The realisation of the final nasal of the present participle is one of the most common variables in all varieties of English. In this respect Dublin English is no exception with the low-prestige varieties preferring /n/ over /ŋ/.

8) Morphological and syntactical features

The concern of the present paper is primarily with the pronunciation of different forms of Dublin English. Nonetheless no description of popular Dublin English would be complete without at least passing reference to salient characteristics from other linguistic levels. Among those found are the following.

( 10 )

a) *yous* for *ye* ‘you’-PL
b) habitual with *do be*
c) *for to* plus infinitive
d) overuse of definite article, particularly with both, e.g. *the both of yous/yez, the pair of yous/yez* [juz, jez/jtz]
e) double negation (*he didn’t do nothing wrong*)
f) use of */mi:/ for *my* (possessive pronoun). This also affects the pronunciation of *by /biz/*. However one cannot speak of a general unshifted */i:/.
g) past participle as preterite: *I seen it, I done it*.

9 Markers in Dublin English

9.1 Phonetic

It is only to be expected that educated speakers in Dublin would avoid the salient features of the popular variety of English in their own city. Such phenomena as post-sonorant deletion simply do not occur anywhere in the speech of the middle-classes upwards.

But the matter goes further than this. There is not only active avoidance of stigmatised features but also an imperviousness to common phenomena in British English and furthermore change which produces a scissors like effect in Dublin English.

To illustrate this consider the example of *t*-glottaling which has been examined in some detail for present-day Britain by Milroy et al., (1994). This is regarded as a change from below which has its origins in ‘non-prestige’ accents of English as the authors suggest is possible for those changes in English which have appeared since about 1550 such as the loss of post-vocalic */r/.

Milroy et al. do not seem to regard the various stages of glottalisation: pre-glottalisation and glottal replacement (stop then fricative), as points on a lenition hierarchy and do not discuss the notion of a continuum of vernacularisation as Labov suggests for New York. However this does apply to Dublin English as there is a distinct movement on a scale of vernacularity which has at least the following loci: [t - ð̊ - h,θ̊ - ø]. Speakers may wish to regard two points on a continuum as discrete. This does not mean that the continuum is invalid but merely says something
about how speakers manipulate it in view of the social interpretation of different points of the continuum (i.e. whether these are stigmatised or not). For educated Dublin English lenition up to [t] and the use of [h] in lexicalised examples is quite acceptable but general glottalisation (as a fricative or stop) is stigmatised. Given this state of affairs a spread of glottalisation as a colloquial feature to Ireland via Dublin is quite unlikely.

Another example of imperviousness to characteristics of supra-regional varieties of British English is the persistent rhoticism of Irish English commented on above.

9.2 Morphological

From the area of morphology there is one very clear example of a marker in Dublin English. Consider for a moment the fact that in practically all varieties of Irish English (both in the north and south of the country) the pronominal distinction between second person singular and plural is maintained. In educated southern speech this is realised as you (singular) vs. ye (plural). Phonetically the difference is that between [ju] and [ji]. The vowels in these forms are short and can only be lengthened with the first form, i.e. the realisation [ji:] would be unexpected in Irish English. Furthermore in careful speech styles the plural [ji] merges with the then uniform [ju]. Now in popular Dublin English the singular # plural distinction is realised differently. Here the plural marker /-s/ is suffixed to the singular form you which results phonetically in [ju:s]. Irish English speakers are sensitive to this form and stigmatise it as it is characteristic of lower-class Dublin speech although functionally it is equivalent to the supra-regional [ji] of the south.18

9.3 Syntactic

The status of non-standard syntactic features in Dublin English shows quite clearly the internal ordering of features which has been determined by the distribution across the classes without any external reference to other varieties of English. For instance the use of after with the present participle19 to express an immediate perfective, as in She is after drinking her tea, is ubiquitous in all varieties of southern Irish English. On the other hand the expression of an habitual aspect by means of do plus be as in He does be in his office every morning20 is immediately classified as sub-standard by middle-class Irish.

By and large syntactic features do not have a prominent role to play as markers in southern Irish English. Clefting which in its scope is an inherited feature from Irish is quite acceptable if not overdone, e.g. It’s to Germany he’s gone for his holidays. The same applies to specifically Irish characteristics such as the negated epistemic modal remarked on above (cf. He mustn’t be interested in politics).

Finally one should mention that some features enjoy a high degree of consciousness and are used jocularly for local flavour but not stigmatised as they are stereotypes rather than genuine low-prestige usage, for instance the use of a reflexive pronoun as subject21 as in Himself is sick today ‘The boss/the head/the main person is sick today’.
10 Educated Dublin English

10.1 The variables (th) and (t)

BACKGROUND. It has been seen above that the dental fricatives of British English correspond in the main to dental stops in Irish English. There is general consensus in the relevant literature on why this is the case. The standard wisdom on the subject runs as follows. The Irish who were first confronted with English at the beginning of the early Modern English period (mid 17th century onwards) used for the fricatives of English the nearest equivalents which they had in Irish. These were the dental allophones of the non-palatal stops of Irish (Bliss, 1979:232, Hogan, 1927:71ff.). These are termed ‘fan’ stops in the older literature because the area of contact immediately behind the teeth is relatively large (the contact is laminal rather than apical) and there is a traditional convention of transcribing them with small capitals, e.g. thin [Tm] and this [Dm].

Recall that in Irish, like most of the Slavic languages, above all Russian, there is a systematic distinction between palatal and non-palatal articulation for all consonants (bar /h/ which has a special status). Among the early generations of bilinguals in Ireland an equivalence was established between English dental fricatives and Irish non-palatal stops, the palatal ones being quite distinct in their articulation and their acoustic properties. The alveolar plosives of English were equated with the palatal stops of Irish and in the course of time, with increasing distance from Irish, these were de-palatalised in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/t, d/</td>
<td>[t, d]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tʰ, dʰ/</td>
<td>[t, d]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(no alteration)  
(depalatalisation)

It should be mentioned that the question of equivalence is quite a complex one with many different aspects to it. For the area of coronal stops the explanation just given will suffice.

The realisation of Irish coronal stops as dentals holds for the west and north. In the south-west and south the situation is different as alveolar realisations are found here (Hogan, 1927:72). The alveolar allophones are found too for Deise Irish, roughly coterminal with Co. Waterford in the south-east. The attestations for Irish on the east coast are very poor indeed (O’Rahilly, 1932:260). There are obviously no indigenous Irish-speaking areas on the east (Wagner, 1958:xxvii). What one does have however is a continuous band of dialects which stretch from Waterford in the south-east up to Dublin, an area which corresponds to the original settlement area of the first Normans in the late 12th century and the only area in Ireland which can raise any claim to maintaining an unbroken tradition of English from the first period.

In the east-band dialects dental fricatives correspond to alveolar stops, both in urban and in rural varieties and the latter type have alveolars in an area which stretches across the south to Kerry and perhaps up as far as Limerick.

The importance of these considerations is to establish the likelihood that the alveolarisation which is found in popular Dublin English is an archaic feature which is present in conservative varieties of English outside of Dublin to the east and south.
PRESENT-DAY SITUATION. Turning now to educated Dublin English one is forced to find an explanation for the appearance of dental stop correspondences to /θ, ð/ from English. Assuming that the original situation was one with only alveolar stops in the coronal area one must conclude that at some stage in the development of educated Dublin English the initial sounds of the THOUGHT and THIS lexical sets were substituted by dental stops.

There is a plausible source for this which can be found in the history of Dublin in the 19th century. As a result of overpopulation and attendant agricultural depletion at the beginning of the last century a general exodus from the countryside set in which was to reach its climax at the middle of the century with the Great Famine of 1845-1848 (Bertz, 1975:41ff.). Some Irish counties lost up to one quarter of their population. This was due to emigration and, of course during the major famine and the minor ones which preceded it, to death by malnutrition and starvation (de Fríne, 1966). The emigration was chiefly to England or America, in the latter case frequently via England. The main port of departure for England was Dublin. A consequence of the influx of rural inhabitants, above all from the poorer counties of the west was that at a time when all counties lost population, Dublin actually increased by some 9% (Dudley-Edwards, 1981:217ff.). Now allowing for some emigration by Dubliners themselves the increase in population, fed from the rural hinterland was probably in excess of 10%.

The curious fact here is that the incomers from western regions (those hardest hit by depletion of resources) would have been those who had, among other features of their speech, dental stops (the fan stops described by Hogan and Bliss and still found in Western Irish, de Bhaldraithe, 1945:25ff.). The speculative conclusion which one could draw from this is that the educated speakers of Dublin adopted the dental pronunciation from incoming migrants from the west. This re-introduced a distinction between words only graphically separated up until then, such as through and true, formerly both [tru:] but, after the introduction of the dental # alveolar distinction, [truː] and [truː] respectively. It should be stressed that if one does not accept a contact origin for the appearance of the dental # alveolar distinction in Dublin English one must provide some other satisfactory explanation for it.

THE SCOPE OF A MERGER The re-emergence of a distinction between dental and dealing with a genuine case of a reversal of a merger. In the history of English there have been similar instances such as the distinction between point and pint, boil and bile, etc. which now exists for most dialects of English but did not always do so. In the latter case the usual assumption is that those varieties which had the merger reversed it by adopting the distinction between /oI/ and /ai/ from other varieties. The parallel in Dublin English would be the adoption of the distinction within the area of coronal stops from the western migrants in Dublin.

However the matter is more complicated in Irish English than with the low and back diphthongs of English. If one considers both popular Dublin English and rural varieties of the south-west in contemporary Ireland for a moment one notices that the allophony of coronal stops differs even where there is merger. Recall that r-lenition weakens the articulation a stop in a weak position, i.e. intervocally and word-finally before a pause.

(12) a faith [feːt] b fate [feːt] ~ [feːh]
c tin [tn] c thin [tn]
Here one can see that in syllable-initial position all coronal stops are alveolar but that in weak coda positions the allophone of the sound from the BEAT lexical set is reduced to a fricative but that from the THOUGHT lexical set is not. The conclusion here is that the merger is allophonically incomplete. In such instances the reversal of the partial merger would be easier than in cases where the merger is total and this makes the adoption of a general dental allophone for the THOUGHT lexical set by a socially superior class in Dublin from an inferior one of rural migrants more credible.

10.2 The Dublin Vowel Shift

10.2.1 The diphthong /ai/

EARLY MODERN DEVELOPMENT OF ME /iː/: In his historical treatment of the vowels of Irish English Hogan (1927:67f.) notes that ME /iː/ has resulted in a sound in the south of Ireland which is different from English. He is not as accurate as he usually is and fails to describe the starting-point for the resulting diphthong as [ə]. But this can be assumed as it is both the stage-Irish pronunciation and the popular Dublin English realisation of /ai/. The variant [ai] would seem to have been typical of Irish English for at least two centuries. There is an early attestation by the author of An Essay on the Ancient and Modern State of Ireland (Dublin, 1760) in which the author states that he is unable to understand ‘how our neighbours came to call us waild Ayrish’. The use of ai, ay in writing would seem to indicate /ai/ as an interpretation seeing as how /ei/ is most unlikely given the present-day varieties of Irish English which show no front-vowel as a starting-point for this diphthong.

There is another orthographical representation of (ai) in Irish English, namely as oi. This is found frequently in older literary caricatures, for instance Rudyard Kipling in Soldiers Three (1890) remarks at one point that ‘Those are the Black Oirish and ’tis they that bring dishgrace upon the name av Oirland’. Here one can recognise (i) oi as an orthographic representation of [ai] and (ii) the use of sh to indicate the Irish substitution of /s/ by /ʃ/ (a genuine feature, albeit a contact phenomenon from Irish, Hickey, 1986a). What is likely is that the English perceived the shwa in /ai/ as /ɔ/ as this is acoustically closest to the approximate starting-point of the diphthong which the English know from such words as point, boil, etc.

The upshot of these considerations is that from at least the 18th century onwards popular Dublin English has had a realisation [ai] for the vowel in the TIME lexical set. In very low prestige forms this diphthong may be furthermore disyllabified as [ajə] in pre-consonantal position as in time [tajə].

Now the supraregional variety of the south has for (ai) a diphthong which has a low mid or low front starting point, i.e. either [ai] or [æi]. This realisation taffies with that in many varieties of Irish, with the exception again of West Munster (Ó Cuív, 1944:24ff.) and perhaps north Connaught (Mhac an Fhailigh, 1968:21ff.) which show [ai]. However the position in Irish is not too relevant. What is significant here is that a non-central starting point is the commonest one for non-regional varieties of Irish English.

If one now considers popular Dublin English one finds that its realisation for (ai) is quite stigmatised in Dublin, indeed in the entire south and is incidentally one of the features frequently used by the non-Irish to imitate an Irish accent. For educated Dublin
English the [ai, äi] pronunciations sufficiently delimit them from popular Dublin English. But increasingly a back starting-point is being used with this diphthong, i.e. for a word like style the pronunciation is not [stail] but rather [stail]. The back starting-point is particularly noticeable before /r/ so that the name of the country is realised as [arlænd]. Of course one could immediately suggest that this pronunciation is an influence of forms of British English, transmitted to Ireland by the English media.

However the matter is by no means that simple. If British influence was making itself felt, then one would expect other features to be adopted, such as /æ:/ for long a. But this is out of the question. Words of the CLASS lexical set have [æ:], i.e. [klæs]. Indeed as noted above the low back realisation is used by the Irish to ridicule a plummy British accent by referring to someone as having ‘a [gæːnd] accent’. The normal Irish pronunciation is [ɡæːnd] with a low central vowel. Furthermore there is no tendency in Irish English to drop syllable-final /r/. If British English influence were operative then one would expect non-rhoticism to be spreading into Dublin speech.

10.2.2 Scope of the vowel shift

RAISING OF LOW AND MID BACK VOWELS. The retraction of /ai/ to [ai] is only part of the Dublin Vowel Shift. The remaining vowels in the low and mid back region are also affected. In effect this means that the vowels in the STOP, THOUGHT and POINT lexical sets are undergoing the shift as well.

To begin an examination of these segments consider the position in conservative forms of urban Irish English. These show a low vowel with very little rounding as an equivalent to the /ɔ:/ of British English.

(13) a thought [tɔːt] [θɔːt]
b law [lɔː] [lɔː]

This openness of the mid back vowel also applies to the diphthong /ɔi/ although it is not acoustically salient given the fact that the tongue movement away from the starting point is swift.

(14) a boil [bɔːil]

The situation in rural varieties of Irish English is somewhat different. Here the realisation of the mid back vowels is low and the low vowels are centralised.

(15) a bought [bɔːt]
b stop [stap]

Such pronunciations are especially typical of the south and south-west of Ireland where they also occur in low prestige urban dialects and are reflected in such stereotypical pronunciations as [kark] for the city Cork.

Turning to the situation in educated Dublin English one finds that low and mid back vowels are raised, that is the shift is moving in the opposite direction to the tendency in rural varieties.
This shift not only strengthens the rural-urban linguistic divide but also the internal urban one in the capital. The picture with the low and mid back vowels with popular Dublin English is similar to that with rural varieties. Note furthermore that the fronting of low vowels is even greater in the capital particularly before historical /-t/ which has now been lost.

(17) a bought [bɔːt] ~ [bɔːh]
b morning [mɔːnin]

BACK VOWEL MERGER In common with other peripheral varieties of English which ultimately derive from transported forms of Early Modern English, Irish English distinguishes the vowels in the FORCE and NORTH lexical sets (Wells, 1982:159ff.). The distribution of /ɔː/ and /ʊ:/ is lexically determined much as that of /æ/ and /ɑː:/ is in RP.27

Because of the raising of low and mid back vowels in educated Dublin English homophony has arisen with the type of word-pairs alluded to in the preceding paragraph. The merger is always to the /ʊ:/ realisation, e.g. born [bɔːm].

LENGTHENING OF LOW BACK VOCALS Finally one should remark that there are aspects of both popular and educated Dublin English which separate both of them from other urban varieties in the Republic of Ireland. The most prominent of these is the lengthening of low back vowels before voiceless fricatives.

In general Irish English does not show the vowel lengthening of /a/ before voiceless fricatives which resulted in words like path becoming /paθ/ and later /pəθ/ in more standard forms of southern British English. Hence a word like that just quoted would be [paθt] in rural areas and in the eastern band dialect region (like Waterford) which has a longer tradition of English than the other parts of the country. For Dublin English, however, there is a general tendency to lengthen all low and mid back vowels. Some of these lengthenings would appear to be recent extensions as they are not present in the supra-regional standard which does, however, have lengthening of the older kind of /a/ before /f, s, θ/ [f, s, t].28

10.2.3 Motivation for the Dublin Vowel Shift

Any consideration of historical and regional variation among vowels in Ireland shows
that there has been and still is considerable fluctuation in the realisation of low and mid vowels. There is both an historical raising and regional lowering both of which probably contributed to the present situation in educated Dublin speech.

ORIGINAL VOWEL RAISING It would appear that in the east band dialects there was an unconditional raising of /a/. ²⁹ Hogan (1927:63) mentions that ME /a/ is represented in early modern Irish English by /o/ and that this is responsible for the exaggerated pronunciations such as *picket* for *packet* used by the figure of Mrs. Diggerty in *The true-born Irishman* by Charles Macklin (1697-1797?). This back pronunciation would seem to be behind spellings like *bhlock* for ‘black’ in the Forth and Bargy glossaries. This is a tenuous ascertainment as the evidence is slight. But it might have been the case that the lowering and fronting typical of popular Dublin English today was itself a reaction against an earlier raising tendency.

If there was raising formerly then it only affected /a/. For ME /o/ the situation in all of the literary evidence is quite clear: this was lowered and unrounded to [a]. The lowering and unrounding was shared by ME /ɔ:/ (→ [œː] → [αː]) and is attested in non-fictional prose from the 17th century and in many instances from the Forth and Bargy glossaries, e.g. *shad* ‘shod’, *nat* ‘not’ (Hogan, 1927:67). ME /ɔ:/ does not partake in this downward shift but is raised to /u:/ in regular fashion; later shortenings found in British English are not necessarily present in Irish English, hence *cook* [kuːk] and even *book* [buk].

The lowering had a widespread affect on previously low vowels with fronting (and raising) of original /æ/ to /ɛ/ː/. This is found today in Dublin and in rural varieties of the south-west (which do not share the tendency to lengthen low vowels found in the capital) the raising may be carried further, e.g. *passage* [pesidʒ].

MOVING AWAY FROM STIGMATISED PRONUNCIATIONS The most obvious characteristic of the Dublin Vowel Shift is that it is moving in a direction opposite to that of the historically attested unrounding and lowering. Low back vowels are present in the supra-regional variety in the south but unrounding a vowel like that in *thought* and certainly combining it with other low-prestige features such as dental retraction leads to quite stigmatised pronunciations like [tʊʃ] for [tʊʃ].

PUSHING THE VOWEL SHIFT The vowel shift in the capital has gained a certain momentum and is moving beyond height values which are found in southern British English for corresponding vowels. This is particularly clear with the diphthong /ɔi/.

( 19 ) /ɔi/ → /ɔi/ → /oi/ boys /boiz/ noise /noiz/

An important point in this connection is that the shift at this level *overshoots* its goal so to speak. This can be seen in fact with the shift of the diphthong /ai/ discussed above. The general urban realisation [ai] in the south would be enough to distinguish the speech of educated Dubliners from working class speakers as their realisation is [ai]. But the acoustic distinction is carried further, retracting the diphthong onset to [ɑː] to increase the distinction between it and that in low-prestige forms of Dublin English.

There would appear to be a certain awareness of changes in contemporary Dublin English as a term has emerged in recent years for a kind of exaggerated accent which is putatively typical of one of the more prestigious areas of Dublin (see remarks above),
what is called a ‘Dublin 4 accent’. The varieties which cluster around this area have the vowel shift to the greatest extent and their pronunciation is frequently ridiculed by speakers of more mainstream varieties of Dublin English in set phrases like *a glass of Harp in the bar* [ə gləs əv hərp ɪn də bɔər] where each stressed word has undergone the vowel shift. This attitudinal situation can be compared with that of RP: a mild form of the accent is desirable but overdoing it can easily provoke derision. What is significant is that the pronunciations found among those who participate most fully in the vowel shift become, by virtue of their use, possible realisations for other groups of speakers if the latter no longer come to regard the speech of this small minority as unduly exaggerated.

**DOWNWARD PERCOLATION** A change rarely remains restricted to one layer in a society. For the Dublin Vowel Shift a phenomenon can be observed, albeit embryonically, among colloquial varieties of Dublin English. This is what I term ‘downward percolation’; it denotes the adoption of the shift, at least for keywords like *Ireland* (see below), by speakers who would not normally show it as they have come to realise that it is typical of more prestigious speech in the city. If this happens on a broad scale, the ultimate fate of the shift is then uncertain. What has started as a feature unique to educated speakers in Dublin may well spread vertically in the city (as it has regionally for many younger generation urbanites) and lose the significance it has at the moment as a delimiting factor vis … vis the lower classes in the capital.

10.3 How is the Dublin Vowel Shift taking place?

The manner in which a linguistic change takes place has been the object of much investigation in the past century or so. The Neogrammarian model of phonetically gradual and lexically universal change has been seriously challenged by other conceptions of change, the most significant of which is the lexical diffusion model. Essentially this claims that the change starts with some words and spreads to others, encompassing the entire vocabulary of a language given the important proviso that the change does not lose momentum. With the lexical diffusion model, a question arises which is not of relevance with the Neogrammarian model, i.e. what words are affected and is there is any generalisation which can be made as to those which first undergo the change.

The answer to this question, at least for Irish English, can be best approached by considering those varieties which are only beginning to be affected by the change. For this the author examined a group of speakers from Waterford, a middle-sized Irish town on the south-east coast well beyond a distance from Dublin which could be affected by geographical contact with Dubliners. Here the first word to show the Dublin Vowel Shift is *Ireland* and its derivative *Irish*. This is almost a test case for those speakers who are beginning to participate in the shift. Note that the word does not belong to the core vocabulary of the language like parts of the body or verbs denoting basic activities or whatever. But in the context of Irish English it stands to reason that the name of the country and its people, as it has a vowel which is a potential input to the Dublin Vowel Shift, is something of a keyword for the adoption of the change.

Lexical diffusion can be seen to operate according to the status of the words which form a possible input to a change. There is another factor which needs to be considered here too. This is phonetic susceptibility to the change. Consider a standard English example to see what is intended here. The early Modern English shift of /u/ to /ʌ/ does not occur (in most varieties of English, certain forms of Ulster English are a notable exception) before [j] and [I] as the roundedness of these segments excercised a
prohibiting effect and the change lost momentum before it could encompass these recalcitrant examples and later shortenings of /u/ to /o/ such as *took, cook* simply came too late for the change.

Now even in those varieties of Dublin English which show the vowel shift in its currently most advanced state there is a set of segments which block the shift. These are voiceless obstruents. Consider the following examples.

(20) a prize /praiz/ [praɪz]
b price /prais/ [praɪs]
c tide /taid/ [tɑɪd]
d tight /tait/ [tɑɪt]

There is a ‘natural’ phonetic explanation for this. Assuming a rest position for the tongue somewhere above [a], in the region of a retracted [ɛ], then the amount of movement needed for the production of [ɑɪ] is greater than for [aɪ]. Now it is a well-known fact of English phonetics that vowels before voiced segments are phonetically long, preceding vowel length providing the acoustic cue for the phonemic voice of word-final obstruents, cf *back : bag* [baek] : [bæɡ]. With regard to the Dublin Vowel Shift, the longer the vowel the greater the distance which the tongue can travel away from a rest position so that the retracted vowel only occurs before voiced segments.31

The stage at which the Dublin Vowel Shift is presently at shows characteristic phonetic conditioning. After all the shift is not more than 20 years old. Of course it might petrify at this level or it might carry through to affect all low and back vowels irrespective of what segments they precede. A useful parallel in grasping the phonetic nature of the shift is provided by what is known in the relevant literature as Canadian Raising.32 This is a feature of most varieties of Canadian English and concerns the realisation of the diphthongs /ai/ and /au/. The situation is basically as follows (after Chambers, 1973). Before voiceless segments these diphthongs have a centralised onset and before voiced ones a lower and more retracted starting point. This can lead to cases of morphophonemic alternation as in the examples c and d below.

(21) a prize /praiz/ [praɪz]
b price /prais/ [praɪs]
c house /haus/ [hɑʊs]
d houses /hauzɪz/ [hauzɪz]

For Canadian Raising there is a phonetic explanation which is similar to that for the Dublin Vowel Shift: voiced sounds are longer and laxer so that the tongue falls to a lower, more back position during articulation hence the low back vowels before [z] in the above examples. The two situations are not exactly parallel. There are two major differences despite the similarity in principle. The first is that the starting point for /aɪ/ before voiceless sounds is higher and more central in Canadian English and the second is that the diphthong /au/ is not effected by the Dublin Vowel Shift as it has a fairly front starting point in Dublin English.

(22) a house /haus/ [hæʊs], PDE: [hɛʊs]
b cloud /klɔːd/ [klœud], PDE: [klœud]

The Dublin realisation of /au/ as [ɛu], e.g. in pound [pʌnd] is unique in southern Ireland and may be a relic of early Irish English which could have derived from south-west varieties of English taken to Ireland in the first place.  

11 Conclusion

From the above consideration of both the development and present-day situation of Dublin English one can recognise that a number of changes have taken place in the speech of educated Dubliners which, if they share a common direction, have as their goal the widening of the gap between the speech of the lower classes and that of the socially higher classes in the capital.

Summary of changes/retentions in Dublin English

HISTORICAL

1) Dental stops replace alveolar stops in THINK lexical set
2) Syllable-final -r/ is retained
3) Long vowels are not diphthongised
4) /ɛː/ replaced by /iː/ in the LEAVE lexical set
5) Lenition of r beyond [t] is resisted
6) /ʊ/ is replaced by general [ʌ]

CONTEMPORARY

1) Retraction of /ai/
2) Raising of /ɒ/ and /ɒi/ to /ɔː/ and /ɔi/

Each of the above items of change for educated Dubliners can be shown to run contrary to a feature of popular Dublin English. Nor can the attested changes (or retentions) be explained by postulating an approximation to more standard forms of British English. The clearest example of this is the retention of rhoticism both against popular Dublin English and southern British English.

The question which remains to be answered is whether the motivation for the changes registered for Dublin English is one which might be found in other urban centres or whether there is such a phenomenon as metropolitan language use which is sui generis. The matter would seem to involve the status of the capital city and its relative size. A capital is expected to be the vanguard of linguistic norms in a country, not least because of its social and political prestige, and its sheer size lends momentum to any change which it might initiate (conversely both the smaller size and lesser importance of secondary urban centres would militate against their putting through a change on a national level). The expectation of leadership from a capital can thus be seen to spill over to the area of language resulting in innovations which collectively contribute to the continuing evolution of a national variety.
Notes


2 Certain other features such as the shift of dental fricatives to alveolar stops and word-final devoicing are all features of medieval Irish English as attested, albeit imperfectly, in the Kildare Poems (Heuser, 1904) and later in the glossaries for the baronies of Forth and Bargo.

3 There is also a relic area immediately north of Dublin, known as Fingal, which preserved a similarly archaic form of English from the initial period of settlement. There is practically no documentation for this dialect, however, see Bliss (1979: 320f. + 326) and Hogan (1927: 39ff.).

4 Swift in his Irish Eloquence satirises the language of the planters which, two generations after the Cromwellian settlement, had come very much under the influence of Irish.

5 This has led Loreto Todd (1992: 67f. + 469) to distinguish terminologically between the two groups, Anglo-Irish (settler English) and Hiberno-English (Irish-influenced English) a distinction which cannot be substantiated for the south.

6 There is a little material available in the non-linguistic descriptions found in Ua Bróin (1944), Clery (1921) and Trench (1934).

7 Possibly a phonotactic restraint adopted from Irish at a very early stage as here there have been no instances of final /-nd/ or /-ld/ since Old Irish).

8 Cf. Todd (1992: 325f.) who claims that dentalisation is found in Dublin English without specifying any conditions: ‘The realisation of /t, d, n/ is more dental than alveolar’.

9 Lass (1987: 262-271) in his otherwise accurate description of Irish English misrepresents this sound; Wells (1982: 429) correctly recognises it as a fricative but does not deal with the distribution.

10 As seen in words like fliuch ‘wet’ [fl\æx] and bos ‘palm of hand’ [b\æs].

11 Again see Todd (loc. cit.) who claims that /r/ is retroflex in Dublin English.

12 The lack of influence of American English on Irish English is inkeeping with Trudgill’s view (1986: 40) that only direct speaker contact leads to change.

13 This is a curious instance of misrepresentation. The vowel in this word is in fact short in RP, i.e. [grænd] but the Irish assume that it is long and pronounce it with a back allophone for imitation purposes. The acoustic allusion is of course to such back vowel pronunciations as [k\æns] where Irish English would have a central vowel, i.e. [k\æns].
14 For both his 1975 dissertation and the 1987 article Bertz distinguishes three main layers of English in Dublin which he labels ‘Popular Dublin English’, ‘General Dublin English’ and ‘Educated Dublin English’.

15 For other urban varieties and for many rural forms short vowels before /r/ show realisations which reflect their historical inputs. At most there is a two-way distinction (from a former three-way one), i.e. *stir* [stɪr], *germ* [gɜrm] versus *burn* [bɜrn] (Hickey, 1989b).

16 Possibly influenced by Irish *Satharn* [səhərn] ‘Saturday’.

17 Milroy et al. see glottal reinforcement (preglottalisation) as something quite separate from *t*-glottaling (1994:5).

18 The situation in Northern Ireland is somewhat different. Here the form *ye + s* [jɪz] is common, for instance in popular Belfast English. This form also occurs in the south including Dublin, again in lower class speech, though with less frequency than the form [juːz].

19 This is originally a calque of an Irish construction but within Dublin English it has shifted somewhat, see Kallen (1989).

20 This represents a restructuring of English, albeit with models from English dialects and earlier English. Supportive *do* was an obvious candidate as its use in affirmative declarative sentences represented a gap in English.

21 Another calque from Irish, *Tá sé féin tinn inniu* (lit.: ‘is he himself sick today’).

22 South of a line from Bundoran to Dundalk, a slightly diagonal line which cuts off the region of Ulster (the state of Northern Ireland and County Donegal, which belongs to the Republic, from the south of the island). Above this line the dental fricatives of English occur as just that.

23 Unfortunately this non-IPA practice is never explained so that non-Irish scholars are frequently at a loss to know what is meant articulatorily.

24 In Irish by this stage there were no dental fricatives although these had survived as lenited forms of dental stops until the end of the Middle Irish period (13th century, O’Rahilly, 1932:65).

25 According to O’Baoill the use of alveolar stops is found in a widespread area throughout Munster and South Leinster where he assumes that the pronunciation of Irish /t, d/ as [t, d] in these areas is responsible. He also points out that the alveolar stops are found in Dublin city (1990:159f.).

26 Joyce (1910:2f.) in his subjective and impressionistic manner comments on the use of alveolar for dental stops and remarks that this is an older and stigmatised pronunciation which should be avoided.
There are some generalisations possible here. As a rule the /ɔː/ pronunciation is found before /r/. However, some exceptions can be found as in Norse, Morse, gorse, this yielding the contrast hoarse [hoːɹs] # horse [hɔːɹs] in Irish English. The majority of words with /ɔːr/ are Anglo-Norman loan-words such as source, force, forge, fort, port, court. As these show there may be a phonotactic generalisation here, namely that /r/ before an obstruent induces /ɔː/. Certainly it is true that the native words with /-rn/ nearly always have /ɔː/: scorn, corn, born (exceptions: forlorn /-oːrn/, torn /toːrn/). Native words have /-ɔr/ word-finally as in score /skɔːr/, fore /foːr/, sore /soːr/.

It is interesting that lengthening occurs before the dental stop as this does not provide the phonetic environment which one has in words like staff, pass and the like. But assuming that earlier forms of Dublin English supplied the input to the supra-regional standard of the south, the general low vowel lengthening of the capital would account for the long vowel in *path*, dental stop notwithstanding.

Not just raising before nasals alone although this is also attested.

The start of a lexical process as the spread of a change from a few central words should be distinguished carefully from the lexicalised pronunciation of a word. Hence there is a tendency to use [oʊ] for [ɔː] in the pronunciation of hello (with slightly rising rather than level intonation) in Dublin English particularly as a greeting on the telephone. This use is lexicalised and confined to a certain register, i.e. that of official usage, such as with company telephonists. It is an adopted Anglicisation and has no source within Irish English. Of course lexical diffusion could arise from such isolated lexicalised examples but that is quite different from the kind of change one is confronted with in the Dublin Vowel Shift.

Long low vowels are nearly always further back than short ones (or at least at the same point on a front-back axis, the only exceptions among the European language are Dutch and Hungarian, Hickey, 1986b). The generalisation here is that when a segment is longer (phonemically with long vowels or sub-phonemically with short ones before voiced segments) then the tongue has more time to travel and moves down and back. This offers a principled phonetic explanation of both Canadian Raising (see below) and the differential diphthongal shift in Dublin English.

The term is something of a misnomer as there is no raising involved but rather a lowering before voiced segments.

A view postulated for various pronunciations in Forth and Bargy by the editor of the original dialect material, the Dorset poet William Barnes, see Dolan and Ó Muirithe (1979:10ff).

Of course capitals tend to be considerably larger than other urban centres at least in centrally governed states. In countries like Holland or Germany formerly the nominal capital is or was of no significance in linguistic role-modelling.
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