The South-East of Ireland

A neglected region in dialect study

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1 Introduction

The south-east of Ireland is an area which is of considerable significance in the history of Irish English, although it has not been accorded the attention from scholars which it deserves. The reasons for this neglect lie in the interests of the chief scholars working in the field of Irish English studies since the beginning of the 20th century. Those who were concerned with the English of a specific region — like P. L. Henry (see Henry 1957) — oriented themselves towards areas quite far away from the south-east, in Henry’s case the north-west of the Republic of Ireland. Other scholars, concerned with regional differences, have concentrated on the divide between the north and south of the country. While it is true that this is the major Anglophone division in Ireland it has tended to overshadow the remaining regions and hence the neglect of subdivisions within the Republic of Ireland. However, the main subdivision in the south of the country is — in the opinion of the present author — that between the east coast and the rest of the country. The reasons for this have their roots in the history of Anglophone settlement in Ireland. The south-east corner of Ireland was that first occupied by Anglo-Norman and English settlers in the late 12th century (Cahill 1938, Curtis 1919) and the area from approximately Drogheda, north of Dublin, down to Waterford on the east coast formed the fortified region known in the late Middle Ages as the Pale. The area beyond this section of the country was entirely Gaelic until well into the early modern period and its separateness from the English settlements of the east coast is reflected in the expression “beyond the pale” which embodies an attitude of the early settlers to the native Irish.

In traditional studies of Irish English, such as the many items by Alan Bliss (see, for instance, Bliss 1984: 135), the general view is propagated that the revival of English in the early modern period does not show any connection with the English spoken before the increasing Gaelicisation of the country during the 15th and 16th centuries set in and which ended at the beginning of the 17th century with the renewed and vigorous plantation leading ultimately to the domination of English over Irish in both the south and the north of the country. The “discontinuity” view, which this stance could be dubbed, is quite mistaken and there are many features, especially phonological, which can be demonstrated to have their sources in the English spoken in the earliest stage of settlement on the east coast. A detailed discussion of these would go beyond the brief of the present article, suffice it to mention such prominent features as the fortition of dental stops, the use of [ʃ] for /s/, the lost of nasals in the environment of homorganic voiced stops (a significant feature of popular Dublin English to this day), epenthesis and metathesis, all of which are attested in the Kildare Poems (Heuser 1904, Lucas 1995),
the major attestation of late medieval Irish English from the early 14th century (Hickey 1993).

Any discussion of the south-east of Ireland must make reference to the unique dialect of English spoken there until the early 19th century and which is known from the two baronies of Co. Wexford in which it was chiefly to be found: Forth and Bargy (Vallancey 1788, Barnes 1867, Dolan and Ó Muirithe 1996). Now while there are no reflexes of this dialect in present-day varieties of south-east Irish English the Sprachinsel is of interest for any discussion of the origins and possible connections of English in this part of Ireland. A linguistic analysis of the Forth and Bargy glossaries (virtually the only material available for this dialect) shows that it had a definite south-west English character (Hickey 1988) in such prominent features as the initial fricative voicing, front realisations of /u/ and a front onset for /au/ as well as indications of an archaic morphology as in ich ‘I’. The south-west English flavour of south-east Irish English is still present as will be obvious from the discussion below and this, while much toned down compared with Forth and Bargy, is evidence of the link with the pre-1600 period of English in Ireland because south-west English input to Ireland did not play any significant role from of the early modern period onwards.

A linguistic investigation of the south-east of Ireland can throw light on early Anglophone development in the country but there is a further important reason to undertake such a task. In the history of the transportation of English the island of Newfoundland in eastern Canada occupies a unique position (Clarke 2002). Among the reasons for this status is the fact that the English input to this isolated area of North American is geographically confined to south-west England and south-east Ireland and so it should be quite easy to locate the source of features found on Newfoundland. Another reason is that the English-speaking communities there are fairly well separated showing different settlement patterns during the last two centuries. With the exception of the capital St. John’s and the Burin peninsula (Clarke 2002), there is a fairly clear division between Irish and English communities on Newfoundland. The essential task when considering the sources of dialects features of this area of eastern Canada is to decide on what features which are found there and in Ireland could be of Irish provenance only. Given that the input to the south-east of Ireland was originally from the south-west Britain, many features of the Irish-derived communities on Newfoundland could well be of south-west English origin, but via the south-east of Ireland (Hickey forthcoming).

For the current study, the south-east of Ireland is interpreted as the area covering the counties of Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny, and east Waterford. The medieval Pale covered a larger area (Dudley-Edwards 1973: 91) including, of course, the city and county of Dublin and the adjoining counties of Meath (to the north-west), Kildare (to the south-west) and Wicklow (to the south). The data for the present discussion stems from investigations of speech in the area of Waterford, both county and city (near where the first landing by the medieval English took place, Duffy (ed.) 1997: 36f) and consists of recordings made over the past two decades, particularly for the city of Waterford; the sample sentences given in the sections on morphology and syntax below all stem from this database of recordings.

Urban Waterford English shows an eastern flavour, while the county, especially further to the west, merges into the dialects of the south-west of Ireland which have a different character and where the linguistic results of the language shift from Irish to English are more in evidence. Below the concentration will be on data from the city of Waterford and which is representative of the south-east as a whole. It should be stressed here that there is a notable distinction between urban and rural varieties of English, here as elsewhere. The reasons for this lie in the complementary facts that the Irish language
survived for a much longer period in the countryside and that English settlement was first and foremost in the towns where, in the medieval period, the English were a trading and artisan population. The aristocratic and military Anglo-Normans occupied key positions in the countryside and their language had a much greater influence on the language of the native Irish with whom the Anglo-Normans interfaced intensively during this period (Hickey 1997a).

> Maps about here! <

2 External history

The city of Waterford can be traced back at least to the Vikings who in the 9th century gave it its name Vaderfjord ‘inlet of the wethers, i.e. castrated rams’ referring to the shipping of these animals from this region (Room 1988: 126). The English rendering with the element ‘water’ is a folk etymology and the Irish term for the city Port Láirge, lit. ‘river bank of the haunch’ is probably a topographical reference to the low-lying hills which reach down on both sides to the embankment of the river. Like so many of the Viking urban settlements the city is situated at the estuary of a river, in this case the river Suir, where it has easy access to both the hinterland and the open sea.

Waterford has played a central role in the Anglicisation of Ireland. The Normans landed nearby in 1169 (under Robert Fitzstephen at Bannow Bay in Co. Wexford in May of that year) in response to a request from an Irish lord (Dermot MacMurrough) who needed military assistance in quarrels he was having with his Irish peers. A year later the city of Waterford was besieged and taken by Raymond le Gros after which the main figure of the 12th century Norman invasion, Strongbow, entered the city. Waterford and Dublin became Royal Cities and were thus firmly under the control of the English crown, then represented by the Angevin king Henry II who feared that Strongbow might lay claim to more than he was entitled to by his marriage with Aoife, daughter of Dermot MacMurrough. In 1204 John gave its citizens the right to hold a fair; coins were minted in John’s reign with the imprint Civitas Waterford.

Trade quickly developed in Waterford, despite the severe fires of 1252 and 1280, seeing as it was the nearest port to Wales where English expeditions to Ireland departed from in the Norman period. Henry III gave a special concession to the city by issuing a charter to Waterford in 1232 which allowed it to import wine and only pay half the tax normally levied. This is the first indication we have of the mutual trade the city was engaged in with Britain. It exported wool and hides and in return imported wine (from France via England). So vigorous was the trade that in 1275 Edward I introduced a tax on wool and hides which Waterford exported to Bristol. This did not represent a serious setback though and English merchants continued to settle in and trade with the city. Waterford and its nearby smaller rival New Ross accounted for 50% of the trade and Waterford was the most important port in medieval Ireland.

As hinted above, the main city in the west of England to engage in trade with Waterford was Bristol and in 1393 Bristol had an Irish mayor. Again indirect evidence shows that there was both emigration to and from Ireland. In 1394, Richard II demanded that those of Irish birth living in England return home (in 1410 this directive was reinforced by the Irish Parliament). In the same year he came to Ireland to halt the advance of the native Irish, especially of the Macmurrough-Kavanaghs who lived in rural Leinster made frequent attacks on Dublin, New Ross and Wexford.

This movement in both directions is of importance. The English speakers of Irish birth began to emigrate in the 14th and early 15th century and in 1428 the Archbishop of
Armagh said that more people loyal to the king had left Ireland than had remained in it. This group can be taken to be English speaking as the Anglo-Normans had been largely assimilated to the Irish by then.

The position of the English in the city was not, however, one of continued strength. It is true that the original contingent of English speakers who came in the retinue of the Normans were able to establish themselves in the town as traders and craftsmen. However, there were considerable setbacks such as the Black Death which hit in 1349 (chronicled by Friar Clyn of Kilkenny) and eradicated about one third of the Anglo-Norman and English speaking population (the rural section was not so affected, as the rat and flea problem was no so acute in the countryside). Waterford like other towns was also subject to attacks from the Gaelic inhabitants surrounding it and indeed there is evidence that it saw itself as a stronghold of English against the native Irish. For instance the earliest legislation in Ireland, recorded in English (and not in Latin or French), stems from Waterford in 1361 and is the oldest use of English for official purposes (the Great Parchment Book from 1356-1649 records laws passed by the municipality of Waterford). In the period of increasing Gaelicisation during the 14th and 15th centuries the city maintained its contacts with England and royal charters, usually issued in the reign of each monarch, recited and confirmed the rights and privileges hitherto enjoyed by the city, chiefly those involving commercial activities such as trade with England.

It should be remembered that in the early period of English settlement in Ireland there was a considerable intermingling of English and French linguistic elements. This is still evident in names stemming from the period, e.g. with placenames such as Gracedew (Grace Dieu) near Waterford city or the barony of Gaultier which bounds on the city to the south-east and in the many Normans surnames, such as Power (de Paor), one of the most common in the city and county of Waterford. Furthermore, the position of the English in urban Waterford was not always peaceful. In 1368 the city was attacked by the Powers, an Anglo-Norman family from Co. Waterford and the Gaelic O’Driscoll’s from Baltimore in Co. Cork. But it is perhaps because of this frequently beleaguered position that English managed to survive in Waterford in an unbroken fashion since the first English settlers arrived there in the late 12th century.

3 Phonology

When dealing with the phonology of a variety of Irish English one must continually be aware of the possibility of characteristics being remnants of the varieties which were originally brought to the country. These retentions are to be kept strictly apart from independent developments which could be used as evidence for a situation pertaining to Ireland alone. Take for instance, certain stages of the historical shift of English long vowels. In general for Waterford English one can say that ME /e:/ was shifted to /i:/ but it remains unshifted in remnants such as leave, beat which are retained in sayings like He beat [be:] the life out of me; Leave [le:] me alone. From this one can conclude that certain key stages of the vowel shift were not implemented in the east coast of Ireland (and many other parts as well, see Milroy and Harris 1980). Due to the later superimposition of more standard forms of English an /i:/ pronunciation was adopted. A similar situation is found with EME short /a/ before voiceless fricatives. The pronunciations of words like path and bath contain short vowels, but with increasing distance from vernacular forms of speech a long vowel tends to be used.
3.1 Consonants

The coronal complex Like other varieties of Irish English, the area of phonology with most distinctions is the coronal complex (Hickey 1984). The chief concern here is with the non-sibilant obstruents of this area, i.e. the sounds in the THINK / THIS and the TEN / DEN lexical sets as well as with their allophonic distribution.

The first point to note is that there is a general lack of dental fricatives, i.e. the fricatives /θ, ð/ of British English are realised as the corresponding stops [t, d]: think [tnk]; this [ds]. Here Waterford English is different from the supraregional forms of southern Irish English and vernacular forms in the west all of which show [t, d] in the THINK / THIS lexical set. This means that there has been a loss of dental obstruents in this variety of English through a merger to an alveolar realisation.

From an historical point of view this is an interesting development. Earlier comments on, and literary representations of Irish English point to a fortition of the English dental fricatives. But it is difficult to discern in non-linguistic accounts whether the fortition was to a dental or an alveolar point of articulation. The evidence from the entire east coast of southern Ireland would point to a merger to an alveolar articulation. The dental articulation can be accounted for as a transfer phenomenon from Irish. The route this took is somewhat roundabout, however. In western forms of Irish coronal stops have a dental realisation, i.e. /t, d/ are pronounced as [t, d], tuí ‘straw’ [ti], doras [daras] ‘door’. Now for those speakers who shifted from Irish to English in the early modern period a dental realisation in the THINK / THIS lexical sets would have been the rule, due to low-level phonetic transfer from Irish. In the course of the 19th century a large number of western Irish moved to Dublin, either en route to the New World (usually via Liverpool) or to stay in Dublin in search of work and nutrition as a consequence of the agricultural depression following the Famine of the late 1840’s. Now while these speakers would have had low prestige in the Dublin of the time, their realisations in the THINK / THIS lexical sets would have provided a different pronunciation from that in local Dublin English which non-local speakers would have sought to attain. Furthermore, the rural speakers brought with their speech a variety in which the homophony of words like thank and tank, which held for Dublin English did not exist, providing an added incentive for non-local speakers in Dublin to adopt their dental pronunciation in the THINK / THIS lexical sets. It is difficult to find clinching evidence for this account of the change in Dublin English, especially as English orthography does not distinguish between dental and alveolar realisations and hence written remarks on English of the 19th century are generally not helpful in this respect. But the scenario outlined here would offer a principled account of how dental realisations came to be typical of non-local speech in Dublin and then, by virtue of the status of the capital, into general supra-regional forms of Irish English in general.

Phonetic identity and phonological difference The merger of dental and alveolar articulations in south-east Irish English has an interesting theoretical consequence. Here, as in Irish English in general, the stops of the TEN / DEN lexical sets show lenition in positions of high sonority, chiefly intervocically and in word-final position when not followed by another segment (see following section). Hence a word like boat is realised as [bot]. But given the homophony of the TEN / DEN and THINK / THIS lexical sets, one should expect the realisation [bot] for both. However, this does not occur. The only way of explaining this is to posit that despite the phonetic identity of thinker and tinker for the south-east, these words contain elements which are phonologically different and
this difference accounts for the lack of lenition when words of the thinker type, i.e. of the THINK lexical set, occur with the relevant segment in a position of high sonority as just outlined.

**Lenition of /t, d/ in weak position** For Irish English in general a weak position is one of high sonority, i.e. intervocally and finally before a pause when the segment is not part of a cluster. The result of the lenition is usually [t̪, d̪] as in city [sɪt̪i], mad [mæd̪] but the process can be continued further in vernacular Waterford English.

**Glottalisation** It is fair to say that in supraregional forms of Irish English a glottal stop does not occur. However, in vernacular speech on the entire east coast, glottal stops occur as an advanced stage of alveolar stop lenition, e.g. foot [fʊt̪] → [fʊt̪] → [fʊʔ] → [fʊh]. In Waterford English the use of the glottal stop is almost categorical for vernacular speech: what [wəʔ], why is that? [wəi iz dæʔ], whatever [wəʔevəʔ]. The glottal stop can further be reduced to [h] before disappearing. The [h] realisation in found in one lexicalised pronunciation in supraregional Irish English, Saturday ['sæhərde], possibly due to the Irish form for this day of the week Sathairn ['sahər:n].

**Dentalisation of /t, d/ before /r/** There is a further twist to the coronal complex, in Waterford English as in many vernacular forms of Irish English (and historically in mainland English, Hickey 1989). Immediately preceding /r/ an alveolar stop is dentalised as in babysitter [bæːbɪstər], brother [brəðər]. This is recessive but common in strongly localised forms of Waterford English. Here as elsewhere, the dentalisation does not apply across a lexical boundary bathroom ['bæðəm].

**Realisation of /r/** Waterford English, like all varieties of Irish English, except some conservative forms of popular Dublin English (see section 6. below), is rhotic. Phonetically, a velarised [χ] is found, e.g. bore [boː]. But the r-lessness of older popular Dublin English may well be an indication of a general phenomenon in eastern Irish English before the present.

There is a relatively confined area in west Waterford and southern Tipperary where a uvular r [ʁ] is found, much as it used be in Northumberland. This is a highly recessive rural feature which is of no relevance to urban Waterford English today.

**The realisation of /l/** As in virtually all varieties of Irish English (the only exceptions are contact varieties where a velar [f] from Irish can be found), the /l/ in Waterford English does not show any significant allophony and is always alveolar.

**Alveolarisation of velar nasals** This very widespread feature is found here as elsewhere in Ireland, e.g. How are you gettin’ on? with [ŋ] → [n]. This is found not only with verb forms, but also with nouns: meetin’, buildin’, heatin’.

**The pronunciation of <w> and <wh>** All words which show this orthographic distinction are kept apart phonetically as well, as can be seen from words like wail [wæːl] and whale [wæːl] which are not homophones. See Section 6. below for further comments.

### 3.2 Vowels
For a discussion of the vowel system of Waterford English it is useful to set the vowel values in relation to the supraregional variety of the east of the country which is the general form of English used in this area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supraregional (east coast)</th>
<th>Waterford city</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short vowels</td>
<td>i, e, æ, ə, ʌ, ʊ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long vowels</td>
<td>i:, e:, æ:, ə:, ʊ:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diphthongs</td>
<td>aɪ, əɪ, aʊ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A quick glance at the above columns shows that the short vowel systems are identical and that the only differences among the long vowels are (i) the unrounded low back vowel (the vowel in the THOUGHT lexical set; this unrounded vowel is also used as a starting point for the diphthong in the CHOICE lexical set) and (ii) the raised variant of the vowel in the PALM lexical set. This raising is also found before /r/, indeed it seems to be increased somewhat in this position, e.g. *harm* [haːm], *car* [keːr]. This renders the raising even more salient as supraregional forms of Irish English show a retraction of /a:/ before /r/: [kær].

What is not indicated in the above columns is the prosodic pattern whereby long vowels have an increase in stress at the onset and a decrease in stress towards the end. This can lead to overlength with the phonemically long vowels *I know /ai noː;/.

The diphthongs in Waterford English are noticeable in that the starting points for all of them are different from the supraregional form of English where the same value characterises the starting point of the diphthongs in the PRICE and MOUTH lexical sets.

**Diphthong shift compared to supraregional realisations**

- Centralisation of onset with /ai/ to [ɔi], e.g. [kwɔɪt] *quiet*
- Fronting of onset with /au/ to [œu], e.g. [tœun] *town*
- Unrounding of onset with /ɑi/ to [aɪ], e.g. [bɑɪz] *boys*

Note that because Waterford English is rhotic there are no ingliding diphthongs like those in Received Pronunciation in words like *poor, beer, bear*. Furthermore, the unique RP vowel [ɔː] does not exist anywhere in Irish English: a stressed schwa is simply rhotacised, e.g. *nurse* [nɔːs]. There is also no diphthongisation of /eː/ and /oː/ in the FACE and GOAT lexical sets respectively.

**The horse/hoarse distinction** In terms of global varieties of English it is a sign of conservatism if a variety maintains a distinction in the pronunciation of *horse* and *hoarse, mourning* and *morning*, etc. — Wells’ NORTH / FORCE distinction (Wells 1982) — because there has frequently been a raising and merger of the NORTH vowel with the FORCE vowel. The two lexical sets are generally kept apart in southern Irish English and also in Waterford English.

**The pen/pin distinction** Waterford English maintains the distinction between /e/ and /ɪ/ in all environments, i.e. *pen* and *pin* are pronounced differently. This merger is, however, still common in the south-west of the country.
The term/turn distinction As a general conservative trait, Waterford English maintains a distinction of short vowels before tautosyllabic /r/, i.e. between /ɛ/ and /æ/ before /r/, e.g. term [tɛrm] and turn [tɜrn]. In supra-regional varieties of southern Irish English these two vowels has been merged to a central rhotacised vowel [σ].

Unstressed i In the HAPPY lexical set a short vowel is used in many non-local forms of British English. For Ireland in general and Waterford English in particular a non-centralised vowel is used for unstressed i in this word-final position, i.e. happy is [hæpi] and not [hæpi].

3.3 Processes

Reduction of post-stress syllables This is a general process which can have various results. In general it leads to a full vowel being reduced to schwa. If the post-stress syllable also contains a glide before the vowel, this is dropped as well, e.g. continue [kʌntɪn]. The vowel which is reduced is often mid back, leading to typical pronunciations like window [wɪndəʊ], fellow [fɛləʊ]. The latter example is interesting as the reduced pronunciation, which is also typical of Dublin English, has become lexicalised in colloquial Irish English with the meaning ‘boyfriend’.

Epenthesis In phonological terms vowel epenthesis is triggered in Waterford English by the occurrence of a heavy cluster in a syllable coda. This interpretation sees vowel epenthesis as a phonological process whereby a cluster is redistributed across two syllables. For instance the sequence of two sonorants /lm/ is not permissible in Waterford English and so an epenthetic vowel is inserted between the two elements, i.e. film is pronounced [fɪlm]. This type of epenthesis applies generally in Irish English but while supraregional varieties have epenthesis in /lm/ clusters only, Waterford English, along with many other vernaculars, has epenthesis in sonorant clusters where the first element is /r/: arm [aːrm], girls [ɡɜrlz], harm [hɛrəm].

Metathesis In unstressed syllables involving schwa and /r/, metathesis is especially common in Irish English with the /r/ shifting its position to before the vowel, e.g. pattern [pætən], modern [mədən]. A phonological interpretation of this metathesis would give the same reason as for the epenthesis, i.e. to break up a heavy sonorant cluster in a syllable coda. But there are other instances where this explanation does not necessarily apply, e.g. secretary [səkətrɪ]. Furthermore, in strongly vernacular forms of Waterford English metathesis is found with obstruents across syllables as in hospital [hɒstɪpəl]. The metathesis of /sk/ as in /ɛks/ for ask is recorded for conservative rural Waterford English but not attested today. It should be remarked here that epenthesis and metathesis are areal phenomena in Ireland (Hickey 1986) and occur with great frequency in dialects of Irish (for west Waterford, see Breatnach 1947).

Lexically determined realisations There are a few words which show differing realisations depending on the speech register being employed. Apart from the example of fellow [fɛləʊ] just quoted, the most significant instance is probably yes which in vernacular speech shows a pronunciation /jɛ(ː)/ or /jæː/, the vowel being lengthened and lowered with increasing vernacularity or for specific effect.
Post-sonorant deletion in stressed syllables This is such a common feature of so many varieties of English that it need only be said that it occurs in Waterford English as well, e.g. week-end ['wi:kэн].

Post-sonorant devoicing in unstressed syllables Here one is dealing with a related phenomenon. In both this case and the previous one a stop after a sonorant (in effect a nasal or a lateral, /r/ is not affected here) is altered. In the first case it is deleted, in the second it is devoiced as in Raymond ['re:mənt], beyond [bi'yaŋt], killed [kɨl].

Yod-deletion In Irish English in general there is deletion of /j/ only after sonorants and only in stressed syllables, e.g. after /n/ and /l/ in news and lute. The deletion does not occur after stops (stew, duke). In some cases the yod may be deleted due to the process of reduction of post-stress syllables, e.g. continue [kan'tɪn] (see above).

Stop assimilation before sonorants This is a phonological process which is characteristic of the south-east of Ireland. The assimilation is found with auxiliary verb forms as in [wɒdnt ] wasn’t it or [ɪdnt hi gre:t ] isn’t he great. In lexical words the assimilation is not normally found, i.e. business is not pronounced [bɪdəns]. Related to this is the lack of release with stops between two nasals, e.g. Anthony [ænə] which has no release of /t/ but a syllabic nasal instead.

This assimilation may well be a remnant of the original south-west English input to the region. Note that it is also found extensively in the southern United States (Troike 1986).

4 Morphology

Personal pronouns The distinction between singular and plural for the second person is maintained in all forms of Irish English with personal pronouns (most likely a feature from input varieties with support from Irish). In Waterford English the forms are (1) you and (2) ye but the spelling does not indicate their phonetic realisation sufficiently. Typical of colloquial Waterford is the phonetic reduction of these forms. You always reduces to [jø] or to an even more open [jʌ], ye is realised as [jɪ], but not [jɔ], so that the distinction between the two forms is that between /j/ followed by a short central-to-low vowel and /j/ followed by a centralised high vowel. Occasionally plural forms with an inflectional -s appended are found, e.g. youse [jʊz] or yez [jɪz] but these are more characteristic of Dublin English.

(1)  you [jø] # ye [jɪ]; youse [jʊz], yez [jɪz]

Plural marking If a numeral precedes a noun then the plural is not marked. This applies to other quantifiers as well but not necessarily to all.

(2)  a That’s five year ago now.
     b I got a few bottle of beer to bring home.
     c There some fine cars on that street.
**Demonstratives** The standard demonstratives *these* and *those* are regularly replaced by *them* as an all-purpose demonstrative. To indicate distance an adverbial phrase is added for deitic purposes, though if the contrast between near and far is irrelevant, then this is not formally expressed.

(3)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td><em>Them ones over there aren’t nice, try them here.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td><em>I ask her to take them glasses off the table.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td><em>How am I going to walk up them steps into that plane.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td><em>And I had it all them years.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5 Syntax**

**5.1 Lack of verbal inflection**

*Inflection and the present tense in England* Zero endings are characteristic of south-west England and East Anglia. There is a view, propounded by Peter Trudgill, that Low Countries immigrants (Dutch and Flemish speakers) are responsible for zero endings in East Anglia. The phenomenon in south-west England is obviously not due to external influence, though they could be a possible influence from Cornish which did not have an inflectional fricative in the present tense.

William Humphrey Marshall’s *Rural economy of Glocestershire* (1789) has a section entitled ‘Provincialisms of the Vale of Glocester’ in which he lists certain features of English there. The most noticeable from the point of view of Irish English is the use of uninflected auxiliary and copula verb forms, i.e. *be* for *is*, *do* for *does* and *have* for *has*. These features were still attested by the *Survey of English Dialects* in the late 20th century. Ihalainen (1994: 226) states that from his own observations of south-western English inflection applies to *do* only when it is a full verb. The auxiliary has a non-inflected, phonetically reduced form *da* [da].

*Inflection in eastern varieties of Irish English* To begin with one can note that the three verbs *be*, *do* and *have* do not show any inflection in the present when they function as auxiliaries. As lexical verbs the first two (*be*, *do*) take inflections but *have* does not. P. W. Joyce (1910: 91) also noted this lack of inflection: ‘In Waterford and South Wexford people are supposed to use *do* and *have* without inflections for the present. *Has he the old white horse now? He have*. Joyce quotes a source of his — William Burke, the authors of some popular articles on Irish English — who found the uninflected *have* for the third person singular in the Waterford Bye-Laws (pre-17th century) which would make this a feature of English from the first period.

(4)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| a      | Habitual *do* (non-lexical use)  
*I do be worrying about Máire some times.*  
*He do be in the television of a Saturday.*  
*I do be trying to slim.* |
| b      | *Do* as lexical verb  
*So what he does is he stays with me over the weekend.* |
| c      | Non-auxiliary use of *be*  
*He’s up to no good now I can tell you that.* |
(5)  
   a  Uninflected *have* as auxiliary  
      *She’ve taken time off for her baby.*
   b  Uninflected *have* as lexical verb  
      *She’ve a grand job at the glass (factory).*  
      *Cause you see, she have no babysitter.*

Realisation of the past tense The non-standard forms of the past tense in eastern band dialects show either zero inflection or the use of the past participle for the past tense (the latter applies particularly to *see* and *do* and is found in many varieties of Irish English, north and south). The uniformity of *done* for all past references concerning *do*, which is found in many varieties of English, including those forms transported from both northern and southern Ireland to the New World, could have provoked its separation and later use as a pre-verbal marker of perfectivity.

(6)  
   a  *Ya, that’s the cloth I use last time.*
   b  *She come up to see her aunt when she was dyin’.*

(7)  
   a  *I wonder why he done that.*
   b  *I seen him this morning.*

Such unmarked forms as the above should be seen as in keeping with the reduced number of inflections for verb forms in Irish English in general. This could be due to the backgrounding of inflections parallel to the foregrounding of aspectual distinctions of which many more are present in Irish English than in more standard forms of English. Confirmation of this is offered by such cases as the following where the suppletive past tense is used as a past participle, reducing the forms of the past from two to one.

(8)  
      *He’s went abroad for a couple of weeks.*

5.2 Deletion of verb forms

Perhaps the most salient syntactic feature of Waterford English is the deletion of forms of the verb *be* and *have*. For statements of a general nature the deletion of the copula is known from other varieties of English, notably African American Vernacular English, and of course from older languages such as Russian. In Waterford English the deletion has a greater scope than just sentences used for generic statements as the examples under (iii) and (iv) below illustrate.

(i)  
Copula deletion

(9)  
   a  *She Ø a teacher in the tech.*
   b  *Mi eldest daughter Ø not married yet.*

(ii)  
Existential sentences

(10)  
   a  *There Ø no hurry on you.*
   b  *There Ø no trouble with her.*
(iii) Deletion of lexical and auxiliary have

(11) a You Ø time enough.
b They Ø not even started the building yet.

(iv) Deletion of forms of be

(12) a I Ø not saying they’re doing great, but they’re okay.
b They Ø only living in with David’s brother.
c He used do that when I (was -> Ø) up here
d That Ø only fit for someone starting a family.
e The other woman, Mrs... what Ø her name?
f I Ø not able to swim at all.

5.3 Aspectual distinctions

The habitual Two main aspectual distinctions can be recognised for Waterford English, an habitual and a perfective. The habitual contrasts with a punctual use of verbs much as in more standard varieties of English; this type is characterised, for the first and second person, by the generalisation of the inflectional -s of the third person singular.

(13) a When I gets my self-pity mood.
b I looks after the little one then.
c When I thinks about my marriage I gets all upset.
d I’m sure you remembers the time we had.

An inflectional -s is also used for a narrative present so that it is important to distinguish this usage from that above.

(14) a They comes back from the pub and finds the house wrecked.
b Then they knocks on the neighbours to get them to ring the gardaí.

For the third person singular an enclitic /dɒ/ — derived from does — is to be found in unstressed position immediately before be.

(15) a We do be sitting up half the night chatting.
    [‘wi: də′bi: ...]  
b They do be nearly all the same.
    [‘de: də′bi: ...]  
c He do be off real early these days.
    [‘hi: də′bi: ...]

The immediate perfective The means of realising the perfective are those which are well known from other descriptions of Irish English (Kallen 1989; Harris 1984). There are two essential types, one which stresses the immediacy of the action completed and one which denotes the completion of a premeditated action. The former makes use of the preposition after along with the present participle and the latter avails of the contrast in word order achieved by placing the direct object before the past participle (Filppula 1999).
(16)  a  They’re after leaving off more than 20 workers.
    b  They’re after selling nearly all the land the college had.

In the terminology employed by the present author, the above type of perfective is labelled ‘immediate’ as it is used to report on something which has happened recently and has high informational value.

The resultative perfective The second type is termed ‘resultative’ as it is used in those cases where the action of the verb was planned and the result is being reported on by the speaker.

(17)  a  Have you your breakfast eaten?
    b  I’ve the room hoovered.

Both the above types of perfective occur in supraregional Irish English but they have greater scope in vernacular Waterford English. For instance, the immediate perfective is allowed with be which is stigmatised in the supra-regional variety.

(18)  I’m after being over to Kent to see my sister.

The resultative perfective also has a greater range as it applies to animate objects as well. To mainstream speakers of English the following sentence looks like a causative construction. However, in Waterford English this would be realised by get, i.e. They got their children reared.

(19)  The other women on this road have their children reared too.

5.4 Negative concord

What is frequently referred to as multiple negation is more accurately termed negative concord as in essence it is a construction which has negation of an auxiliary verb and then of all indefinite determiners in the remainder of a clause. There are varieties of English in which negative concord can span two clauses but there are no instances in the recordings of Waterford English.

(20)  a  He don’t bother with no girls at all.
    b  She didn’t lose no time now.
    c  I wouldn’t recommend a gas heater to nobody.
    d  The Waterford corporation can’t give no loans.

5.5 Other syntactic features

Use of be as auxiliary There are remnants of be in auxiliary function. This has been regularised to have in supraregional Irish English. The verbs affected would appear to be semantically constrained, viz. they refer to movement or a change of state.

(21)  They’re not even started yet, boy.
Inversion in embedded questions In mainstream forms of English embedded questions are introduced by if or whether. A noticeable feature of many varieties of Irish English including Waterford English is simple inversion without a conditional adverb. The source for this may well be Irish where the syntax of embedding questions is similar (Filppula 1999).

(22) She asked him would he paint the house for her.

‘Now’ as intensifier Irish English has a variety of means for rhematising sentence elements. The most obvious one is clefting which is very common in all varieties of English in Ireland. The present case refers to a sentence-final use of now which highlights the entire information of the sentence. In this respect it is different from clefting where one sentence element is topicalised by fronting, e.g. It’s to Galway he went yesterday.

(23) a She had three children in five year now.
   b It was very important to her now.

Watermeyer (1996: 112) notes that this use of now is characteristic of Afrikaans English and has become a feature of South African English in general, but not it seems in final position, her example is He’s now really stupid.

Overuse of article For all varieties of Irish English the overuse of the definite article has been noted (see Filppula 1999 for a detailed discussion). Suffice it to say, that Waterford English also participates in this extended use of the definite article, considerably beyond the range of mainstream varieties of English.

(24) a ‘Tis he have to be the twenty-one.’ He has to be twenty-one years of age.’
   b And he never changed a bit. He’s the one Desmond.

6 Relationship to Dublin English

Any consideration of a variety of English in the Republic of Ireland must of necessity touch on the relationship with that of Dublin, the capital of the county. In the case of south-east Irish English this is even more important as both this area and the capital are within the former region of the Pale and in present-day terms are part of a continuum which covers the east coast of the Republic of Ireland.

There are striking differences between Dublin English and that of Waterford city as a representative of the south-east. For the capital one can see that the early modern English lowering of short /u/ did not take place. The use of [u] is a stereotype of Dublin English and used both in the local vernacular and by non-local speakers for a vernacularisation effect, especially by pronouncing the city’s name as [dublin].

Waterford does have this lowering of short /u/, albeit with a somewhat retracted and frequently rounded pronunciation, often indicated by ə in traditional literature, and more accurately transcribed as [x]. There are two explanations for the disappearance of [u] from Waterford English. The first is the general supraregionalisation which affected Irish English in the 19th and early 20th century and which led to speakers dropping the high back rounded vowel. Now while supraregionalisation effects are to be observed for
non-vernacular forms of Irish English, the strongly local forms of language did not always undergo this change to anything like the same extent, compare in this context Dublin English which retains [u]. The second reason may be more plausible given the doubts concerning the first. This sees the vowel realisation in the STRUT lexical set as deriving from the pronunciation of a similar vowel in Irish. The short vowel /u/ in Irish generally has a lowered realisation which is similar to [ɔ] as in (go) muc [mɔk] ‘early’. By and large varieties of Irish English show the same realisation for /u/ which is found in Irish of the same area. For instance in the north of the country where there is a mid-front rounded realisation of /u/, i.e. [u], this is to be found for /u/ in Irish and Irish English, cf. Donegal Irish cuma [kumɔ] ‘care’ and Donegal Irish English come [kum].

A further difference between Dublin and Waterford is that vernacular speech in the latter is definitely rhotic. For Dublin, the situation is more complex. There are remnants of non-rhotic pronunciations for conservative speakers of popular Dublin English, though rhoticity has become typical of all Dubliners nowadays. It is difficult to say whether the vestiges of non-rhoticity in Dublin represent an historical continuity of a general r-lessness of early Irish English or whether this was an independent development in the capital.

The breaking of long high vowels in Dublin English is not present or only weakly so in Waterford English. Nor does the vowel of the GOAT lexical set show the diphthongisation found in the capital. Here there is a low starting point for the vowel with only a slight rise, e.g. know [nɔɔ], so that this realisation sounds much like the supraregional pronunciation of /au/, e.g. now [nɔ], this, however, being [neu] in popular Dublin English (Hickey 1999). The realisation of the GOAT vowel in Waterford English is interesting as it, and other mid and high long vowels, show a prosodic pattern which could in time lead to breaking. There is a slight stress on the beginning of the long vowel with a noticeable slackening towards the end. The stress is realised by a slight lowering of frequency and increase in loudness. This could have been the original long vowel realisation on the east coast with Dublin English innovating further by moving from a prosodic pattern of greater initial stress on long vowels to a segmental pattern with lowering of the vowel value, hence the [ɔɔ] realisation today for the vowel of the GOAT lexical set.

In the area of back vowels there is another difference between the two main urban varieties of the east coast. In Waterford English there is no lengthening of vowels before voiceless fricatives. In Dublin on the other hand there is a general lengthening of /æ:/ irrespective of the following segment. But there is also a lengthening and raising of the vowel in the OFF lexical set (not one of Wells’ original items). This lexical set comprises those words which in mainland English show [ɔ] before a voiceless fricative. In Dublin English an [ɔ:] realisation is found here, e.g. off [ɔf], cross [kɔːs], cloth [kloːt], [klɔːt].

Another phonological difference between Waterford and Dublin English concerns words written with <wh>. Generally in Irish English such words are pronounced with a voiceless glide, i.e. [ʍ]. But in vernacular forms of Dublin English the distinction between [w] and [ʍ] is very weak, if it indeed exists at all. Given the general conservatism of east coast English and the fact that historically earlier forms of English had a distinction in voice for labio-velar glides, it can be assumed that originally Dublin English had the [w] ≠ [ʍ] distinction but lost it at some stage. There is no question of an influence of mainland English in this case as supraregional forms of Irish English, which
did adopt certain features from English in Britain, such as shifted values for long vowels, all have the [w] ≠ [ʍ] distinction.

The last feature which is deserving of comment is the realisation of the habitual in both urban dialects. In Waterford English an enclitic form of *do* along with *be* is found (see 5.3 Aspectual distinctions above). In Dublin English, both unstressed *do(es)* plus *be* and an inflected *bees* are used for the habitual, an instance of the latter would be *He bees out late on Saturday night*. However, inflected *bees* is a realisation which is associated primarily with the north of Ireland where it is generally considered to derive from an habitual usage in Scots which in turn goes back to the verb *beon* expressing habitual aspect in the Anglian dialect of Old English spoken in the lowlands of Scotland which formed the initial stage of what was later to become Scots. This is at least the view proposed by Traugott (1972: 177ff.) but which has been challenged recently by Montgomery and Kirk (1996) who believe that inflected *bees* is a 19th century development. However, older commentators on southern Irish English, such as Joyce (1910: 86f.), regard the use of inflected *be* (as opposed to *do be*) as a feature of the east coast. If this is true (or rather was true at the end of the 19th century) then two conclusions flow from this observation. The first is that the *do be* form was more characteristic of the language of contact speakers in the west. This would support the view that the preverbal marker *do* arose in a contact situation as a result of adult second language acquisition and has parallels to the use of preverbal *do* in established creoles (Hickey 1997b). The second conclusion is that inflected *bees* is much older than the 19th century. If it was typical of the east coast at the time Joyce was writing and appears in 19th century documents for northern Irish English, then it would seem to be an older feature for both early forms of Irish English in the north and the south. The only other explanations are (1) the unlikely situation where the north and south developed inflected *bees* separately during the 19th century or (2) the equally improbable one that one of the two regions developed inflected *bees* in the 19th century and it quickly spread to the opposite region. Given the general impermeability of the linguistic divide between the north and south of Ireland the latter suggestion does seem likely.

### 7 Conclusion

The above discussion of both the history of the south-east of Ireland since the late Middle Ages and the linguistic features of the Anglophone varieties spoken there show that the region is a clearly recognisable subdivision of the linguistic landscape of the Republic of Ireland. Many of the features to be found within the counties of Waterford, Kilkenny, Carlow and Wexford are also shared by other regions in Ireland, both north and south. Nonetheless, there are characteristics of both phonology and grammar which do not occur outside of the south-east, and certainly not in the combination which is to be found in that region. In sum, one can list the following unique features of the area.

(25) **Phonology**

1) Lack of low vowel lengthening before voiceless fricatives
2) Front onset of /au/
3) Breaking of long high vowels
4) Fortition of alveolar sibilants in pre-nasal position

**Grammar**

1) Uninflected auxiliaries *do* and *have*
2) Verb deletion in a range of contexts
3) Cliticisation of *do* on *be* — as [daˈbi] — for the habitual aspect

Some of these features are also shared by varieties across the entire east coast, e.g. the breaking of high vowels is characteristic of popular Dublin English, indeed to an even greater degree than in the south-east, as is the front onset for the diphthong of the MOUTH lexical set. When looking for an explanation of the unique features of the south-east which do not have congeners in Irish, e.g. the lack of inflection on auxiliary verbs, then one must turn to the south-west of England which provided the initial input to English in the region, indeed to Ireland as a whole, and which can still be traced in vernacular speech of the south-east of Ireland despite the many centuries which have passed since the first settlers moved across the Celtic Sea introducing their variety of English as they did so.

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