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Standard Irish English

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1 Introduction

The English language in Ireland has a long history, going back some 800 years since the first English settlers arrived in the late twelfth century. During these many centuries the native population gradually shifted from Irish to English. The shift was by no means uniform and unilinear: there were times when English receded, e.g. during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In the early modern period, from approximately 1600 onwards, more speakers in the east of the country shifted to English than did in the west and south. Furthermore, the language shift did not proceed at a constant rate across the centuries. The majority of the population shifted in the nineteenth century. The movement in this century is connected with a number of factors which have played a role in the genesis of modern Irish English. Two important factors were the rapid shift by the Irish-speaking population to English after the Great Famine (1845-8), a shift which was additionally motivated by the necessity for the emigrating Irish to be able to speak English on arrival in the overseas colonies. The second main factor has to do with the spread of general education for the native Catholic population after the introduction of primary schooling for the Irish in the 1830s. In the course of the nineteenth century a broad native middle-class arose in Ireland which had been through what was essentially an English educational system in their own country. Like its counterpart in Britain, the Irish middle class saw its use of language as a means of delimiting itself from the poorer, uneducated classes in Ireland. The members of the latter were for the most part speakers of shift varieties of English. Those who only spoke Irish were increasingly confined to the western seaboard of Ireland which was entirely rural and so outside the orbit of the burgeoning Catholic middle class.

Given this social situation what appears to have happened in the nineteenth century is that Irish English, as spoken by the educated middle classes, was purged of many vernacular features which were obviously stigmatised at the time. The question of stigma is a central issue in this chapter: it is regarded as the trigger for the removal of several hitherto widespread features in Irish English. In this context, the source of the features is not a determining factor, i.e. whether features resulted from transfer from Irish during the language shift process or whether they were retentions of earlier English dialect input to Ireland. The process by which stigmatised features are removed from educated public usage in a country or region is termed 'supraregionalisation' (Hickey 2003a; in press, a) and will be discussed below (see section 2).

1.1 The official status of English

The shift from English to Irish resulted in the vast majority of Irish people becoming native speakers of English by the end of the nineteenth century. By the end of the twentieth century the numbers of remaining native speakers of Irish was below one percent of the population. However, this statistic does not reveal the status of Irish in contemporary Ireland. Paradoxical as it may seem, for many English native speakers the Irish language is seen as the carrier of Irish native culture and this in part explains the status accorded to the language in public life in Ireland.

When the south of Ireland achieved independence in 1922 it was the declared aim of politicians to support the language where possible and indeed to pursue a policy which would ultimately lead to the restoration of Irish as the native language of the population of (southern) Ireland (Hickey in press, b). This goal was never realistic and many public figures were insincere in their declared support for it. However, the official stance on the language was, and has been since, that Irish was the first language of the newly independent nation and everything had to be done to support it. This could be seen in the country's name *Éire* (the somewhat longer form *Saorstát Éireann* 'Irish Free State' was used from 1922 to 1937; the label *Poblacht na hÉireann* 'Republic of Ireland' has been in use since 1949 when the country was declared a republic).

According to Article 8 of the Constitution of Ireland (Irish: *Bunreacht na hÉireann*) of 1937 Irish is the first language of the country, with English – in theory – enjoying a supplementary function.

Article 8 of the Constitution of Ireland

1. Ós í an Ghaeilge an teanga náisiúnta is í an phríomhtheanga oifigiúil í. 2. Glactar leis an Sacs-Bhéarla mar theanga oifigiúil eile. ('1. Because Irish is the national language, it is the primary official language. 2. English is accepted as another official language', translation RH).

Despite this official support, English is in effect the language of public life. This means that there a clear contrast between the constitutional position of English as an auxiliary language and its de facto status as the first language of virtually the entire Irish-born population of present-day Ireland.

1.2 English in contemporary Irish society

The Irish language looms large in the minds of the Irish as the bearer of their cultural heritage, given that it was formerly the native language of the majority of the population. Many people claim that Irish is their 'native language' even though their knowledge of the language may be poor. But there can be no doubt that the linguistic identity of most Irish people today is manifest in the kind of English they speak: it is the Irish accent of English which allows people to identify each other and to show that they belong to the ethnic group of the Irish.

Accents of Irish English exists along a continuum from the most vernacular to the least vernacular and the latter can be heard in public settings in Ireland. This continuum is linked to social and educational continua with the educated middle

classes speaking the least vernacular form. While this is readily comprehensible to non-Irish speakers of English it is not by any means identical with general forms of English found in either Britain or America. By maintaining a number of key phonetic features as well as general voice settings and speech delivery, along with pragmatic features obvious in discourse, there is no danger of confusing speakers of Irish English with others. The unambiguous linguistic identity of Irish people, previously manifest in the Irish language, is now embodied in the forms of English they speak.

Table 1 *Prominent features of non-vernacular Irish English*

Plosivisation of dental fricatives The initial sounds in the THIN and THIS lexical sets are realised as dental stops, i.e. [t̪] and [d̪] respectively. The plosivisation of these fricatives applies to all but a few vernacular varieties, e.g. in the south and south-west, which may have alveolar for dental stops. In some reading styles dental fricatives may be found as spelling pronunciations in syllable-final position.

Lenition of /t/ In weak positions the voiceless alveolar stop is reduced to a fricative. The sound thus produced is an apico-alveolar fricative. The fricativisation of alveolar stops does not apply to dental stops in the THIN and THIS lexical sets so that the contrast of word final, pre-pausal (and intervocalic) /θ/ versus /t/ in standard English is realised in Irish English as [t̪] # [t̪̥] as in *both* [bou̪t̪] versus *boat* [bou̪t̪̥].

Vowel quality with rhoticity An aspect of Irish English, intuitively recognised by non-Irish, is vowel quality. Two general statements are valid here: (i) where expected, vowels are rhotic, i.e. /r/ is pronounced where it is found in writing, e.g. in words like *bird*, *where*, *torn* (ii) Irish vowels have a more monophthongal quality than those of RP-like varieties of British English, e.g. FACE [fɛ:s], FLEECE [fli:s]. The vowel in the GOAT lexical set shows greater variation with slight diphthongisation typical of mainstream varieties, i.e. [gou̪t̪], and greater diphthongisation indicative of more advanced varieties among younger speakers, especially females, i.e. [gəu̪t̪]. A retracted monophthong in this set, i.e. [go:-t̪] indicates a traditional rural accent.

The STRUT vowel In this lexical set, Irish English (across all varieties except local Dublin English with [ʊ]) shows a more retracted vowel than in mainstream forms of British English, i.e. *cup* is generally [kʌp̠].

Epenthesis An unstressed central vowel is inserted in /lm/ clusters, e.g. *film* [ˈfɪləm], *helm* [ˈhɛləm]. More vernacular varieties extend epenthesis to /rm/ clusters, e.g. *arm* [ˈæɹəm] and possibly /rn/, e.g. *iron* [ˈaɪrən].

The non-vernacular form of Irish English in its public function is the equivalent to standard spoken English in Britain, i.e. to Received Pronunciation (Upton, this volume). Like the latter, it exists in certain variants, one of which is a more recent form which arose in Dublin in the 1990s and spread rapidly throughout the Republic of Ireland (see section 4. below) and which shows certain parallels to Estuary English

(Hickey 2006) although the motivation for its rise is different.

Apart from phonetics, there are a number of syntactic features which are found in non-vernacular spoken Irish English and which distinguish it from other varieties of English outside Ireland (see section 3. below). What is significant in the context of the present volume is that neither the phonetics nor the syntax of non-vernacular spoken Irish English is codified. Apart from a few linguistic studies, such as Hickey (2007), Filppula (1999) or Amador-Moreno (2010), all of which have been published in England, there is no general literature which describes Irish English. Knowledge of written standard English in Ireland is acquired through using books, e.g. dictionaries and grammars, occasionally style manuals, published in England. This is not something which is a cause for comment in Ireland: written formal Irish English, e.g. in newspaper editorials and in official documents of various kinds, is virtually identical to written formal British English and there are practically no differences in orthography, morphology or syntax. Informal writing in Ireland is a somewhat different matter as here some non-standard syntactic structures do indeed appear, as a carryover from their occurrence in spoken Irish English.

While there are no differences in grammar and spelling between formal usage in Ireland and England, there are specifically Irish lexical items. These appear more and more with increasingly informal registers. Such words are listed in popular works like Dolan (2004 [1998]) and Share (2003 [1998]) which basically include all words which occur in any vernacular form of Irish English, urban or rural. These books, and others in a similar vein, lay their emphasis on what makes Irish English vocabulary different from other forms of English, but without a discussion of register or of the question of currency, a major issue for the lexical items they contain.

1.3 Irish Standard English versus Standard Irish English

There are two ways to refer to the topic of this chapter and these are reflected in the title of this section. A number of authors favour the label ‘Irish Standard English’, in particular John Kirk and Jeffrey Kallen who have used it in the titles of several publications, see Kirk and Kallen (2006), for instance. ‘Irish Standard English’ would seem to imply that there is an external entity ‘Standard English’ of which there is an Irish variety. The label emphasises the *exonormative* nature of the variety.

Table 2 *Features absent in non-vernacular Irish English*

1) Features of Irish English lost in the nineteenth century

ASK-metathesis The pronunciation [æks] was common in non-vernacular varieties of Irish English well into the nineteenth century but was then gradually removed and nowadays this metathesis is not found.

SERVE-lowering A formerly widespread feature was the realisation of stressed /e/ as /a/ before /r/, the same phenomenon as is found in English county names such as *Derby*. This feature died out entirely in the later nineteenth century.

Unraised long E The vowel in MEAT was formerly /ɛ:/ and this value was retained in Ireland much longer than in England. In many vernaculars the unraised long vowel is

still found. In supraregional Irish English the lower vowel is confined to lexical instances found in sayings and fixed expressions.

Unraised long A and undiphthongised I Both these features are much older in Irish English and had died out by the early nineteenth century. Evidence of the previous values are found in spellings such as *dree* [dri:] for *dry* [drai] or *plaaace* [pla:s] for *place* [ple:s]. These and other similar spellings were found up to the late eighteenth century.

2) Features present only in Irish English vernaculars

T-glottaling Although supraregional Irish English has a fricative realisation of /t/ in positions of high sonority (intervocally and word-finally before a pause) it does not show a glottal stop for /t/. This is confined to local Dublin English where it is a feature of considerable vintage, e.g. *butter* [buʔv̪].

Final cluster reduction Sequences of a sonorant plus voiced stop are reduced to the sonorant in local Dublin English whereas in rural vernacular varieties the stop may be rendered voiceless, e.g. *beyond* [bɪʲjan] or [bɪʲjant].

SOFT-lengthening Before voiceless fricatives Dublin English shows a long mid back vowel, either [ɔ:] or [o:]. This is probably a legacy of adopting the long vowel from British English which had it in the nineteenth century but not generally today. A long vowel in the SOFT lexical set is not normally found in mainstream varieties outside Dublin.

Over the past few centuries a specific set of vernacular varieties emerged which can be collectively referred to as ‘Irish English’. In the course of the past century and a half a fairly focussed subset of these began to lose their most salient and vernacular Irish features. This subset was rendered less regional by the adoption of general English realisations for certain variants, e.g. /i:/ in words like *meat* which hitherto had /ɛ:/, but remained firmly anchored in the Irish context. For this reason the term ‘Standard Irish English’ is preferred as it emphasises the result of standardising Irish English rather than adopting Standard English from outside Ireland. ‘Standard Irish English’ is hence *endonormative* in orientation: it implies that there are varieties of Irish English and that a small subset of these, used by the educated middle classes, represents the (spoken) standard in Ireland.

1.3.1 The standardisation process

Among early works dealing with issues of standardisation is Einar Haugen’s study from 1964, see introduction to this volume. Here he discusses four processes which he regards as central.

Table 3 *Haugen’s criteria for standard languages*

Form

Function

<i>Society</i>	Selection	Acceptance	
<i>Language</i>	Codification	Elaboration	(Haugen 2003 [1964]: 421)

These processes do not apply in Ireland in the manner in which Haugen seems to have envisaged them. It would be inaccurate to say that Irish society selected an existing variety to use as standard, e.g. in the manner in which the speech of capital cities was selected as standard in countries like France and England. Rather Standard Irish English – in its spoken form – arose through local varieties being purged of their most prominent vernacular features in the second half of the nineteenth century. Certainly this variety was accepted by the early twentieth century as the standard of English in independent Ireland. But this was a largely unconscious process and defined more by what vernacular features were excluded from this non-local form of Irish English. Specifically, the variety did not undergo any overt codification or elaboration. Haugen’s codification refers in the main to an orthographical and grammatical standard used for writing. In Ireland this was, and still is, standard British English. A particularly Irish elaboration of supraregional Irish English did not take place either.

1.3.2 *Spoken and written Irish English*

Any discussion of standards must distinguish between spoken and written forms. There is much less variation in written standard language. Even languages, such as English or Spanish, which are found in many different varieties distributed across wide areas, show fewer variants on this level. Where formal registers are concerned, standards show least variation, indeed they can be virtually indistinguishable from each other. For instance, the differences between scientific texts written by British, American or Australian authors are small compared to the phonetic differences of varieties spoken in these countries.

The distinction between spoken and written forms needs to be reflected in terms used in the current chapter. For this reason, the following terminological distinction will be observed here.

Table 4 *Terms for written and spoken forms of non-vernacular Irish English*

1) *Standard Irish English*. A reference to the formal written usage of English in Ireland. At maximal degrees of formality it is indistinguishable from British English. With increasing informality it shows some, if not all, of the syntactic features which are found in educated spoken Irish English as well.

2) *Supraregional Irish English*. That type of spoken Irish English which is widely used in public and which is not stigmatised and not the object of censorious comments by others. Spoken Irish English is much more fluid than written Irish English and shows many vernacular traits under certain pragmatic conditions, e.g. when wishing to increase the informality of an exchange. Furthermore, phonetic changes in non-local Dublin English during the 1990s (Hickey 2003, 2005; see section 4. also) have become so widespread in recent years as to be part of the new mainstream Irish English found among younger speakers.

2 The rise of supraregional Irish English

Supraregionalisation is achieved by the complementary processes of *suppression* and *selection*. Although one could say that with standardisation there is passive suppression (by the avoidance of local features), during supraregionalisation suppression is an active process and may consist of additional sub-processes such as the deliberate relegation of local features to vernacular modes to which supraregional speakers may switch by conscious decision. This can be seen, for example, with the suppression of the [ɛ:] in of the MEAT set (see Table 2 above).

The net effect of suppression and selection in Ireland has been the ironing out of non-standard vowel features among earlier forms of Irish English, e.g. the replacement of /u:/ by /au/ in words like *down*, *crown*, *about*, etc. That is the appearance of /au/ in the MOUTH lexical set is not the result of internal change in Irish English. Rather it is due to the adoption of a pronunciation from British English, i.e. to the selection of an external pronunciation variant.

Supraregionalisation must be carefully distinguished from dialect levelling or the formation of compromise forms. For instance, in late medieval Irish English there is some evidence that a middle way was chosen among competing morphological forms from different dialect inputs of British origin: the quantifier *euch(e)* ‘each’ was seen by Samuels (1972: 108) as a hybrid between *ech(e)* and *uch(e)*, both of which were probably represented in the initial input to Irish English.

2.1 Reduced variation in supraregional varieties

Because a supraregional variety is not locally bound it can never serve the identity function which the vernacular fulfils for members of close-knit social networks (L. Milroy 1976; J. Milroy 1991). For that reason supraregional varieties tend not to show the degree of phonological differentiation present in the vernaculars to which they are related. For instance, in local forms of Irish English, both urban and rural, there is a distinction between short vowels before historic /r/, i.e. the vowels in *term* and *turn* are distinguished: *term* [tɛɪm] versus *turn* [tʌɪn]. In the supraregional variety, however, a rhotacised schwa vowel is found in both cases: *term*, *turn* [tɔ̃n].

Another feature, which shows that supraregional varieties are less differentiated than their related vernaculars, is *t*-lenition (Hickey 1996). In supraregional Irish English *t*-lenition is nearly always realised by the apico-alveolar fricative [t̪]. But in local Dublin English, there is a range of realisations, from [t̪] through [ɹ, h ?] to zero (Hickey 2009a).

Furthermore, there is evidence from England that stop lenition in Irish English previously encompassed velars as well, e.g. [bax] for *back* in Merseyside. This is also recorded in Carlisle (Wright 1979: 54) which would point to velar stop lenition as a feature of mid nineteenth century vernacular Irish English which was carried by emigrants to England but which was reduced by supraregionalisation in Ireland to the premier point of articulation for stop lenition, the alveolar ridge (Hickey 2009a).

2.2 Source of features in supraregional Irish English

Scholarship on Irish English has been centrally concerned with the source of features and the debate has been dominated by considerations of retention and contact as the two main sources. However, when considering supraregional Irish English the question of source is irrelevant. While it is true that in vernacular varieties of Irish English there are more features which may have a source in transfer from Irish during the language shift process of the previous centuries this fact does not determine their exclusion from supraregional Irish English. The determining factor is whether such features are found in the language of less educated speakers with a strictly local linguistic orientation.

2.3 How supraregionalisation is triggered

In Ireland, and presumably in other European countries, the main trigger for supraregionalisation in the late modern period was the introduction of general schooling and the rise of a native middle class during the nineteenth century. The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 was passed as a result of political agitation by Daniel O’Connell and his followers (Connolly (ed.) 1998: 75 + 399f.). Shortly afterwards, in the 1830s, so-called ‘national schools’, i.e. primary schools (Dowling 1971: 116-8), were introduced and schooling for Catholic children in Ireland became compulsory and universal. General education for following generations increased their position in Irish society (Daly 1990). A native middle class came into existence with all that this meant in terms of linguistic prejudice towards vernacular varieties of Irish English. It is thus no coincidence that the disappearance of certain features of Irish English is located in the mid to late 19th century (Hickey 2008). These features were largely replaced by the corresponding mainland British pronunciations. An instance is provided by unshifted Middle English /a:/ which was a prominent feature of Irish English up to the eighteenth century. For instance, George Farquhar in his play *The Beaux’ Stratagem* (1707) has many of the stereotypes of Irish pronunciation, including this one: *Fat sort of plaace (= [pla:s]) is dat saam (= [sa:m]) Ireland?* ‘What sort of place is that same Ireland?’ Somewhat later, Jonathan Swift used end-rhymes which indicate that for him words like *placed* and *last* rhymed. At the end of the century, Thomas Sheridan (Hickey 2009b) criticised the Irish use of /a:/ in *matron*, *patron*, etc. But by the mid nineteenth century there are no more references to this. Dion Boucicault (1820-1890), who deliberately used vernacular phonetic features in his dramas, does not indicate unshifted ME /a:/ when writing some eighty years after Sheridan. This kind of development can be shown to have applied to a number of features. For instance, SERVE-lowering (see Table 2 above) appears to have died out during the nineteenth century and by the beginning of the twentieth century the feature had all but disappeared. The same is true of ASK-metathesis which is attested in many representations of vernacular Irish English in the nineteenth century.

3 Investigating standardness in Irish English

Given that supraregionalisation set in during the second half of the nineteenth century, varieties of English before this time should show many features which are now strictly vernacular in present-day Irish English. In order to investigate this a number of sources of Irish English have been considered here. The first consists of a set of letters from the mid-nineteenth century which represent local Irish English at the time. These are the *Irish Emigrant Letters*, housed at the National Library of Ireland and consisting of several batches of letters written by emigrants – mostly in the New World – back to their relatives in Ireland. The tone of these letters is colloquial as would be expected among family members. The letters represent an edited source of southern Irish English from the period just after the Great Famine (1845-8) and have been used by scholars investigating Irish English, e.g. by Filppula (1999) and Hickey (2005), given the non-prescriptive context of this personal correspondence. This set has been complemented by data collected by the present author from Dublin and Waterford, labelled DER ‘Dublin English Recordings’ and WER ‘Waterford English Recordings’ below. Data was also gleaned from further collections of vernacular Irish English, notably the *Tape Recorded Survey of Irish English* (TRS).

For issues of contemporary standardness the Irish component of the *International Corpus of English* (ICE-Ireland), assembled by Jeffrey Kallen, John Kirk and their associates and published in 2008 (see Kallen and Kirk 2008), has been consulted. The Irish component of this corpus – *ICE-Ireland* – consists of two halves, devoted to the two political halves of the island of Ireland. Kallen and Kirk (2008: 101) maintain that ‘ICE-Ireland tries to provide an answer to the question of what results when educated speakers of English in Ireland generate texts of the same type as those generated by educated speakers of English in other English-speaking countries’. Originally, little difference was expected between the national components of ICE. However, Kallen and Kirk (2008: 99) claim that *ICE-Ireland* ‘provides resources for “for comparative studies”’ and that it ‘allows for the possibility that standard English by the ICE definition is not thoroughly standardised, and that significant linguistic variation can be found within and across ICE corpora.’

The investigation here has also availed of the author’s *A Survey of Irish English Usage*. This survey covers the areas of morphology and syntax within Irish English and was conducted during the mid-2000s (see Hickey 2007: Chapter 4 for further details). The survey was based on a questionnaire of some 57 sample sentences, each of which contained a structure which is known to occur in some form of Irish English. The majority of the respondents were under 30 so that the survey represents a snapshot of acceptability views on Irish English with the younger generation at the beginning of the twenty first century. Over 1,000 valid questionnaires were returned by individuals in both the north and the south of Ireland. In the following, percentage statistics, organised by county, are offered. These indicate the acceptability of key grammatical structures on a cline of vernacularity versus standardness. The higher the figures, the greater readiness there was to accept the structures in question.

3.1 The *do*-habitual

The expression of an habitual aspect is a well-known and well-researched feature of vernacular Irish English, both north and south (Filppula 1999: 130-149; Hickey: 2007: 213-233). In the north of Ireland and formerly in the extreme south-east the habitual is expressed by an inflected form of *be* as in *The neighbours bees building extensions*

all the time. In the remainder of the country a form of *do* is used with *be* and a continuous verb form for the same purpose as in *They do be drinking a lot at the weekend*.

The *do*-habitual is amply represented in the *Irish Emigrant Letters*, especially among the correspondents from Cork in the south-west of Ireland. The following table offers a representative cross-section of examples.

Table 5 Do(es) be *habitual* in emigrant letters

I do be disputing with my mother sometimes that I'll go to America and my mother gets angry with me for saying that I would go for she says she would feel too lonesome. (IEL, 1857, Rossmore, Co. Cork)

My Dear son when I do get your letter, all the neighbours do run to see what account does be in it, except Dick Robert. (IEL, 1861, Rossmore, Co. Cork)

... I do not be empty any time, I do have it from time to time always but the others do send me a little ... (IEL, 1859, Rossmore, Co. Cork)

My Dear son I am unwell in my health this length of time if I do be one day up I do be two days lying down and I never wrote that to any of ye. (IEL, 1861, Rossmore, Co. Cork)

I do be sick every year at this time but I was not prepared any time untill now. (IEL, 1861, Rossmore, Co. Cork)

A ship getting loaded with frosen meat it would open their eyes, they do be loading meat on it from eight in the morning till ten at night. (IEL, New Zealand)

In *A Survey of Irish English Usage* the sentence *She does be worrying about the children* was given as an example of the habitual. It is noteworthy that the 21 counties with a value of 25% and more were all outside Northern Ireland, indeed Donegal with 29% is the only one within Ulster. Significantly, the two counties with the strongest Ulster Scots populations showed very low acceptance rates: Down (5%) and Antrim (7%) – these counties would have inflected *be* for the habitual.

The low acceptance figures for the *do*-habitual in the south-west (Kerry: 13% and Cork: 6%) might seem surprising. However, this can be explained by the widespread occurrence of this structure in vernacular varieties in Cork and Kerry. It would seem that acquaintance with the structure and an awareness that it is strongly vernacular led to its rejection by supraregional speakers from the south-west of Ireland.

Table 6 Acceptance figures in *A Survey of Irish English Usage* for the test sentence *She does be worrying about the children*.

County	Score	N	Total	County	Score	N	Total
Louth	53%	17	32	Mayo	27%	10	37
Sligo	41%	9	22	Tipperary	26%	11	42
Galway	41%	22	54	Belfast	25%	8	32

Westmeath	36%	9	25	Kildare	20%	5	25
Meath	35%	13	37	Clare	19%	3	16
Wexford	34%	10	29	Dublin	18%	37	205
Kilkenny	33%	8	24	Derry	17%	3	18
Armagh	32%	6	19	Kerry	13%	3	24
Cavan	29%	5	17	Antrim	7%	3	41
Donegal	29%	12	42	Cork	6%	5	84
Waterford	29%	15	51	Wicklow	5%	1	21
Limerick	27%	7	26	Down	5%	2	38

The *do*-habitual is one of the most salient indicators of vernacularity in Irish English. This claim is supported by evidence from *ICE-Ireland* which only has one instance of the feature: ‘... that buck that does be on the television’ (text: S1A-087). It stems from a ‘face-to-face conversation’ text (transcribed speech), the type where its occurrence would be most likely and yet there is just one occurrence in the entire corpus.

3.2 Verbal concord

Non-standard *s*-inflection in present-tense verb forms is a frequently occurring feature across vernaculars in Britain and Ireland. In Ireland verbal *-s* is found in the third person plural as the following attestations illustrate.

Table 7 *Contexts for non-standard verbal concord*

- 1) Single noun subject
But Ray, the years flies, don't they? (WER, F85+)
- 2) Noun phrase subject
Me worrying days about me figure is over. (WER, F80+)
- 3) Deleted co-referential subject in second verb phrase
After I do me work, I go out and rickles me turf. (TRS-D, U41, F)
- 4) Third person plural pronoun
And they calls them small, sure what can you do? (WER, F45+)
- 5) Series of verbs
Glory be to God, that's when children grows up and leaves home and goes off.
(WER, F85+)
- 6) In relative clauses
There're big people now that has a lot of money. (TRS-D, C41, M)
Lodgers that comes around, that goes out fishing ... (TRS-D, C41, M)

In *A Survey of Irish English Usage* three sentences were included to test acceptance levels for non-standard verbal concord among supraregional speakers. The first contained a plural nominal subject, the second a compound nominal subject and the third showed existential *there* with a plural reference.

Table 8 *Acceptance figures for non-standard verbal concord in A Survey of Irish English Usage*

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- 1) *Some farmers has little or no cattle.*
Mean acceptance rate: 16%. Belfast and the Ulster counties Antrim, Donegal, Derry and Louth (in north Leinster) showed rates of over 30%.
 - 2) *John and his wife plays bingo at the weekend.*
Mean acceptance rate: 39%. This is probably due to the fact there is a single noun immediately before the inflected verb (despite the fact that it is a compound subject).
 - 3) *There was two men on the road.*
Mean acceptance rate: 51%. The much higher acceptance rates confirm the widespread use of *there* with a singular verb form across the majority of varieties of Irish English.
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The lowest acceptance rate for a plural noun followed by a verb form inflected for the singular (1 above) shows that this is a vernacular feature of Irish English. But the difference between vernacular and supraregional Irish English is not black and white. The scalar nature of the distinction is seen in the much greater acceptance for singular inflection after *there* with a plural subject. In the least vernacular forms of Irish English this verbal use is not found, but it is widespread in colloquial speech even among supraregional speakers.

3.3 Range of present tense

Supraregional Irish English shows a number of non-standard features (from an external perspective) of which speakers show little if no awareness. One of these is the extended present tense (Hickey 2007: 196f.) which is used in contexts in which other standard forms of English would show the present perfect. To elicit acceptance values for this the sentence *I know her for five years now* was presented to speakers for assessment. For 13 of the 32 counties of the north and south of Ireland rates of over 80% were returned.

Table 9 *Acceptance figures in A Survey of Irish English Usage for the test sentence I know her for five years now*

<i>County</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Total</i>
Wexford	97%	28	29	Clare	81%	13	16
Tipperary	90%	38	42	Sligo	77%	17	22
Westmeath	88%	22	25	Donegal	76%	32	42
Limerick	88%	23	26	Dublin	75%	154	205
Louth	88%	28	32	Galway	74%	40	54
Mayo	86%	32	37	Meath	73%	27	37
Waterford	84%	43	51	Wicklow	71%	15	21
Derry	83%	15	18	Antrim	71%	29	41
Kerry	83%	20	24	Belfast	66%	21	32

Kilkenny	83%	20	24	Kildare	64%	16	25
Cavan	82%	14	17	Armagh	58%	11	19
Cork	82%	69	84	Down	53%	20	38

3.4 The *after*-perfective

The structure which is the topic of the present section consists of a compound verb phrase comprising *be* + *after* + continuous verb form and is used to express an immediate perfective with high informational value in a discourse. In contemporary Irish English it only has past reference, though it can occur in the future perfect on occasions (see last example in table below). Attestations from the author's data collections include the following.

Table 10 *Immediate perfective in present-day Irish English*

I don't know how many pairs of shoes her mammy is after buying her. (WER, F55+)
He's after having a lot of setbacks. (DER, F40+)
They're after finishing the M50 motorway recently. (DER, M60+)
They're after building lots and lots of new houses. (WER, M50+)
Some of the boys working with A... are after getting the loan. (DER, M35+)
By the time you get there he'll be after drinking the beer. (WER, M30+)

Although to linguists the *after*-perfective is one of the most salient grammatical features of Irish English (see the discussion in Hickey 2007: 197-208), for the informants of *A Survey of Irish English Usage* there was little if any awareness that the structure was non-standard. The mean acceptance rate of the test sentence *She's after spilling the milk* was 88% in the 24 locations with more than 15 respondents. However, the 13 counties which had a score of over 90% were all outside of Ulster. In fact the three lowest rates were to be found in east Ulster, the area of greatest Ulster Scots settlement historically.

Table 11 *Acceptance figures in A Survey of Irish English Usage for the test sentence She's after spilling the milk.*

County	Score	N	Total	County	Score	N	Total
Sligo	100%	22	22	Louth	91%	29	32
Kilkenny	100%	24	24	Mayo	89%	33	37
Wexford	100%	29	29	Donegal	88%	37	42
Kerry	96%	23	24	Dublin	87%	179	205
Westmeath	96%	24	25	Armagh	84%	16	19
Wicklow	95%	20	21	Derry	83%	15	18
Clare	94%	15	16	Waterford	82%	42	51
Cavan	94%	16	17	Meath	81%	30	37
Tipperary	93%	39	42	Galway	80%	43	54
Cork	93%	78	84	Antrim	78%	32	41
Kildare	92%	23	25	Belfast	66%	21	32

Limerick 92% 24 26 Down 58% 22 38

Given that both the *do*-habitual and the *after*-perfective are non-standard vernacular features of Irish English it is legitimate to ask why the latter does not show similar stigma to the former. The reason may lie in the fact the *after*-perfective established itself in Irish English much earlier than the *do*-habitual (although it earlier had a different time reference in both Irish and English, see McCafferty 2004). When supraregionalisation set in during the nineteenth century the *after*-perfective was so widespread that it was not associated solely with vernacular varieties of English in Ireland, whereas this was the case for the more recent *do*-habitual.

The non-stigmatised character of the *after*-perfective is confirmed by its frequent occurrence among supraregional speakers in *ICE-Ireland* (contrast this with the lack of the *do*-habitual in this corpus), including formal discourse contexts such as that in (6) in the following table.

Table 12 *Immediate perfectives in ICE-Ireland*

- 1) <S1B-017\$D> ... <[> I'm after booking one </[>
- 2) <S1A-046\$A> ... A new fella is after taking over
- 3) <S1A-046\$A> ... And he's after coming back from England
- 4) <S2A-012\$A> but he's after running into a couple of hard ones here
- 5) <S1A-067\$D> <#> The wife and children are after going off there the other day
- 6) <S1A-055\$E> They thought he was after going into a coma with diabetes.

3.5 The resultative perfective

The present structure is characterised by the past participle following the object in compound perfect tenses. It is used to convey that an action which was planned has now been completed, hence the label 'resultative perfective' (see the discussion in Hickey 2007: 208-213). It does not have the causative interpretation found in other varieties of English, e.g. *He had the house painted*. Examples of the Irish English structure can be seen in the following table.

Table 12 *Resultative perfective in present-day Irish English*

She had the soup made when the kids came home. (WER, F55+)
The youngest hasn't her Leaving (final school exam - RH) taken yet. (DER, M60+)
I've got the vegetable plot at the back planted now. (Ross Lake, Galway, F55+)
Bhí sé ag iarraidh a fháil amach - ah - if the vet had the sheep examined. (Corpus of Contact English, Kerry, M65+) [was he at trying COMP find-VN out ...]

The non-salient nature of the resultative perfective for supraregional speakers of Irish English was confirmed by the acceptance ratings for the structure in A Survey of Irish

English where 24 counties showed 85% or more, indeed 12 returned a 96% acceptance rate.

Table 13 *Acceptance figures in A Survey of Irish English Usage for the test sentence She has the housework done.*

<i>County</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Total</i>
Sligo	100%	22	22	Cavan	94%	16	17
Westmeath	100%	25	25	Tipperary	93%	39	42
Donegal	98%	41	42	Dublin	93%	191	205
Wexford	97%	28	29	Kildare	92%	23	25
Belfast	97%	31	32	Louth	91%	29	32
Mayo	97%	36	37	Derry	89%	16	18
Kerry	96%	23	24	Armagh	89%	17	19
Kilkenny	96%	23	24	Meath	89%	33	37
Limerick	96%	25	26	Down	89%	34	38
Waterford	96%	49	51	Cork	89%	75	84
Antrim	95%	39	41	Wicklown	86%	18	21
Clare	94%	15	16	Galway	85%	46	54

3.6 Second person plural pronouns

The question of stigma in Irish English concerns not just the presence or absence of grammatical categories but the realisations of such categories as well. This can be seen clearly with second person plural pronouns. Irish English shows a number of options to fill the gap in the personal pronoun paradigm of modern English: (i) a retained historical form *ye*, (ii) a productive plural suffix on the singular *you*, i.e. *yous(e)*. A combined form of (i) and (ii) is also found, pronounced /ji:z/ which can be found in writing as *yez*, *yeez*, *yees* or *yeese*.

The historically inherited form *ye* show no stigma as the very high acceptance rates in the following table show. The highest acceptance is in the south of Ireland where *ye* is most widespread.

Table 14 *Highest acceptance figures (90% +) in A Survey of Irish English Usage for the test sentence Are ye going out tonight?*

<i>County</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Total</i>
Clare	100%	16	16	Kerry	96%	23	24
Limerick	100%	26	26	Kilkenny	96%	23	24
Westmeath	100%	25	25	Sligo	95%	21	22
Waterford	98%	50	51	Tipperary	95%	40	42
Mayo	97%	36	37	Galway	93%	50	54
Wexford	97%	28	29	Kildare	92%	23	25
Cork	96%	81	84	Louth	91%	29	32

In vernacular varieties the productive plural form *youse* is prevalent and achieved

high acceptance rates in *A Survey of Irish English Usage* as can be seen in the following table. Supraregional speakers are aware of *youse* as an alternative for *ye* and resort to this quite frequently as a means of vernacularising discourse. Such behaviour is common when a context shows increased informality, e.g. among friends, family and in general in situations in which speakers do not feel their speech is being assessed. Indeed vernacular forms such as *youse* can be deliberately used to render a discourse increasingly informal, e.g. *Look it, youse can help yourselves to drinks in the fridge, okay?*

Table 15 *Highest acceptance figures (70% +) in A Survey of Irish English Usage for the test sentence What are youse up to?*

<i>County</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Total</i>
Antrim	98%	40	41	Dublin	78%	160	205
Down	95%	36	38	Monaghan	78%	7	9
Cavan	94%	16	17	Kildare	76%	19	25
Donegal	93%	39	42	Wicklow	76%	16	21
Meath	92%	34	37	Carlow	75%	6	8
Belfast	91%	29	32	Fermanagh	75%	3	4
Derry	89%	16	18	Louth	72%	23	32
Tyrone	86%	6	7	Wexford	72%	21	29
Armagh	79%	15	19	Longford	70%	7	10

The slightly higher acceptance rate for *ye* over *youse* is reflected in the occurrences of both forms in *ICE-Ireland*. The corpus contains 18 instances of *youse* in 249 texts all of which are from the spoken category. However, there are 51 instances of *ye* in the same number of texts, i.e. nearly three times as many which clearly shows the greater occurrence of *ye* in supraregional speech.

3.7 Implicational scale for Irish English

From the above discussion it is obvious that the non-standard features of Irish English show varying rates of acceptance among supraregional speakers. These features can be organised on a scale which shows the implications of their occurrence. For instance, any speaker who has the *do*-habitual will also have the immediate perfective and the resultative perfective but not vice versa. Furthermore, the immediate perfective implies the presence of the resultative perfective for speakers.

The statements about scaling refer to whole groups of speakers as shown in the statistics from *A Survey of Irish English Usage*. However, the scale in the following table most likely holds for individuals as well. For instance, the present author has never met a speaker who had the *do*-habitual but not the immediate perfective.

Table 16 *Implicational scale for aspectual structures in Irish English*

1	habitual (<i>do(es) be</i>) >
2	immediate perfective (<i>after V-ing</i>) >

3 resultative perfective (O + PP word order)

The majority of non-standard features can be arranged on a similar scale whose two poles are most standard and most vernacular speech respectively. Several more syntactic features are given in the following table than those already discussed; for reasons of space the discussion above has been limited to a small number. Phonetic features show a similar scaling to grammatical features, though for reasons of space a discussion of these is not possible here.

Table 17 *Implicational scales for grammar and pronunciation in Irish English*

<i>Syntax</i>	
standard	resultative perfective (Object + Past Participle word order)
↓	immediate perfective (<i>after</i> + V-ing)
	use of present in present perfect contexts
	<i>mustn't</i> as negative epistemic modal
	inversion with embedded questions
	lack of <i>do</i> in <i>have</i> -questions
	punctual use of <i>never</i>
	lack of <i>to</i> with infinitives after <i>ask, help, allow, use</i>
	fronting for topicalisation purposes
	<i>be</i> as auxiliary with verbs like <i>go, finish</i>
	use of definite article with seasons, relatives, institutions, study subjects, languages, etc.
	<i>for to</i> with infinitives of purpose
	subordinating <i>and</i>
	unmarked plurals after numerals
	zero subject relative pronoun
	non-standard verbal concord
↑	habitual (<i>do(es) be</i>)
vernacular	negative concord
<i>Morphology</i>	
standard	<i>ye</i> as second person plural pronoun
↓	<i>them</i> as demonstrative
	<i>youse, yeez</i> (rather than <i>ye</i>)
↑	<i>seen</i> and <i>done</i> as preterites
vernacular	<i>learn</i> for <i>teach</i> , <i>went</i> as past participle
<i>Phonology</i>	
standard	<i>t</i> -lenition to apico-alveolar fricative [t̪]
↓	dental stops for ambidental fricatives
	vowel epenthesis in <i>film, helm</i>
	fronted [æ:] in BATH lexical set
	monophthongs in FACE and GOAT lexical sets
↑	alveolar stops for ambidental fricatives
vernacular	<i>t</i> -lenition beyond [t̪], to [ʔ, h] or zero

4 Change in supraregional Irish English

The spoken supraregional variety of any country or region is not static. In the case of Ireland one can observe major changes in pronunciation which began in the early to mid 1990s as a result of similarly major change in Irish society, triggered by a rapid increase in economic prosperity but also by altered attitudes to authority (in church and state) and a further opening of Ireland on an international level. These developments have had considerable implications for the development of the English language in Ireland. A new pronunciation established itself, first among the young (Hickey 2003b), and now among virtually all adults under forty. For non-vernacular speakers in their thirties and younger it is already the case that they do not generally show the features in the following table. This means that features traditionally associated with (southern) Irish English will become increasingly rare and eventually disappear as the percentage of speakers with the conservative mainstream pronunciation decreases steadily.

Table 18 *Recessive features in supraregional Irish English*

-
-
- | | |
|----|--|
| 1) | syllable-final alveolar /l/ (now velarised [ɫ]) |
| 2) | syllable-final velarised /r/ (now retroflex [ɻ]) |
| 3) | monophthong or slight diphthong in GOAT ([go:t̚] ~ [gou̚t̚], now [gəu̚t̚, gəu̚t̚]) |
| 4) | open back vowel in THOUGHT ([t̚ɒ:t̚], now [t̚ɔ:t̚]) |
| 5) | low starting point for diphthong in CHOICE ([t̚ʃɔɪs], now [t̚ʃɔɪs]) |
| 6) | central starting point for diphthong in MOUTH ([mau̚t̚], now fronted [mæu̚t̚, mɛu̚t̚]) |
-
-

The vowel changes indicated in the above table are part of a comprehensive shift in values for low and back vowels. There has been a coordinated raising of back vowels accompanied by shift with the diphthongs of the PRICE, MOUTH and CHOICE lexical sets. The latter set shows a raised onset in keeping with the raised pronunciation of the vowel in the LOT lexical set. The PRICE vowel, in the initial stages of the shift, showed a retracted starting point especially before voiced consonants, e.g. *time* [t̚aim] → [t̚ɔim], but this has since been reversed so that the supraregional pronunciation has remained the same, i.e. [praɪs], [t̚ɔim], etc. Furthermore, the raised vowel of LOT is now recognised as a salient feature of the affluent south-side of Dublin and is often ridiculed in the word ‘Dortspeak’ for ‘Dartspeak’, a reference to the altered pronunciation of English in the south of Dublin (Hickey 2007a).

As the present century proceeds, supraregional Irish English will cease to show features from the twentieth century because of the rapid spread of new Dublin English pronunciation among young people throughout the Republic of Ireland (Hickey 2005). Because of the status of Dublin, non-vernacular speech of the capital acts as a *de facto* standard or at least guideline for the rest of the country when others, outside of Dublin,

are seeking a non-local, generally acceptable form of Irish English. In concrete terms this has meant that the raised back vowels, the retroflex [ɻ] and the velarised [ɫ] are now typical of young people's speech throughout the Republic of Ireland.

5 Conclusion

The grammar and pronunciation phenomena discussed above are all endonormative developments in Irish English. This fact deserves to be highlighted because no matter what linguistic changes take place in Ireland the distance to England is always maintained. The specific forms of English in Ireland are carriers of Irish linguistic identity and despite the differences between these forms, there is none which could be mistaken for a form of British English. While this fact is obvious when considering the most vernacular varieties of Irish English it is also true of supraregional, non-stigmatised forms of English in Ireland, those forms which represent the norm of public usage in Ireland, that is a specifically Irish standard of English.

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