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# Southern Irish English*

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## 1 Introduction

The English language was taken to Ireland with the settlers[1] from Britain who arrived in the late 12th century. Since then the fate of English has been closely linked with that of the Irish language which it came largely to replace in the late modern period. In addition the interaction of existing forms of English with the Scots imported in the early 17th century in the north of the country led to a linguistic division arising between Ulster, the most northerly province, on the one hand and the rest of the country to the south on the other. This state of affairs provides the rationale for two chapters on Ireland within the current volume.

For the many varieties of English on the island of Ireland there are different designations. In the north of the country terms are used which reflect historical origins, e.g. *Ulster Scots* for the English[2] stemming from the initial Lowland Scots settlers, *Mid-Ulster English* for geographically central varieties which are largely of northern English provenance. *Contact English* is found occasionally to refer globally to varieties spoken in areas where Irish is also spoken. In general treatments of English in the south of Ireland three main terms are to be found.

1) *Anglo-Irish* is an established term in literature to refer to works written in English by authors born in Ireland. The difficulty with the term is its occurrence in other spheres and the fact that it strictly speaking implies an English variety of Irish and not vice versa. Within the context of other varieties — Canadian English, for instance — the term is still used to refer to English in Ireland.

2) *Hiberno-English* is a learned term which is derived from the Latin term *Hibernia* 'Ireland'. The term enjoyed a certain currency in the 1970s and 1980s but in the 1990s many authors ceased to employ it, as it contributes nothing in semantic terms and is unnecessarily obscure, often requiring explanation to a non-Irish audience or readership.[3]

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

A non-linguistic term with a considerable history is *brogue* meaning a clearly recognisable Irish accent, frequently of rural origin. The term comes either from the Irish word for 'shoe' (Murphy 1943) or possibly from an expression meaning something like

'a lump in one's tongue' (Bergin 1943). It is often used in a loose sense to mean the Irish pronunciation of English (Walsh 1926) and the term is also found outside Ireland, e.g. in Ocracoke Brogue on the islands off the coast of North Carolina.

In the current context it is appropriate to mention that *Irish* refers to the Celtic language still spoken on parts of the western seaboard of Ireland. *Gaelic* is a cover term for the Celtic languages in Ireland and Scotland (the latter historically derives from the former); taken together with Manx they form the Q-Celtic languages, the P-Celtic languages comprising Welsh, Cornish and Breton..

Because the interface between Irish and English has been a permanent feature in the history of Irish English the weighting of contact in its genesis is the single most controversial issue in this field. Older authors accorded considerable weight to the contact factor (Bliss 1972) but studies in the 1980s attached much more importance to the retention of archaic or regional features. In recent years the pendulum has swung back somewhat with contact and retention accorded approximately equal weight. An additional third factor, the rise of features typical of the sociolinguistic situation in which the Irish learned English historically — much like that which gives rise to 'foreigner talk' — has been added to the sources put forward to account for the non-standard features of Irish English.

## 2 History

*Periodisation of Irish English* The most cursory glance at the history of Irish English reveals that it is divided into two periods. The first period starts in the late 12th century with the arrival of the first English-speaking settlers and finishes around 1600 when the second period opens. The main event which justifies this periodisation is the renewed and vigorous planting of English in Ireland at the beginning of the 17th century. One must understand that during the first period the Old English — as this group is called in the Irish context — came increasingly under the influence of the Irish. The Anglo-Normans who were the military leaders during the initial settlement had been completely absorbed by the Irish by the end of the 15th century. The progressive Gaelicisation led the English to attempt planting the Irish countryside in order to reinforce the English presence there (Palmer 2000). This was by and large a failure and it was only with James I that successful planting of (Lowland Scottish and English) settlers in the north of the country tipped the linguistic balance in favour of English in the north. The south of the country was subject to further plantations along with the banishment of the native Irish to the west during the Cromwellian period so that by the end of the 17th century Irish was in a weak position from which it was never to recover. During the seventeenth century new forms of English were brought to Ireland, Scots in the north and West/North Midland varieties in the south (where there had been a predominantly West Midland and South-West input in the first period). The renewed Anglicisation in the 17th century led to the view, held above all by Alan Bliss (see Bliss 1977, 1984), that the forms of English from the first period were completely supplanted by the varieties introduced at the beginning of the modern period. However, this is not true. On the east coast, in Dublin and other locations down to Waterford in the south-east, there is a definite continuation of south-west English features which stem from the imported varieties of the first period (Hickey 2001).

*The medieval period* The documentary record of medieval Irish English is confined for all intents and purposes to the collection of 16 poems of Irish provenance in BM Harley 913 which are known collectively as the *Kildare Poems* (Heuser 1904, Lucas 1995) after one of the poems in which the author identifies himself as from the county of

Kildare to the south-west of Dublin. The collection probably dates from the early 14th century. The language of these poems is of a general west midland to southern character. There are many features which can be traced to the influence of Irish phonology (Hickey 1993). Note that it is a moot point whether the *Kildare Poems* were written by native speakers of Irish using English as a H-language in a diglossic situation and whether indeed the set was written by one or more individuals.

*The early modern period* Apart from the *Kildare Poems* and other minor pieces of verse (see McIntosh and Samuels 1968 for a detailed list) there are attestations of English in the first period among the municipal records of various towns in Ireland (Kallen 1994: 150-6), especially along the east coast from Waterford through Dublin and up as far as Carrickfergus in the north. But such documents are not linguistically revealing. However, at the end of the 16th century attestations of Irish English begin to appear which are deliberate representations of the variety of the time. These are frequently in the guise of literary parody of the Irish by English authors. The anonymous play *Captain Thomas Stukeley* (1596/1605) is the first in a long line of plays in which the Irish are parodied. Later a figure of fun — the stage Irishman — was to be added, establishing a tradition of literary parody that lasted well into the 20th century (Bliss 1976, 1979; Sullivan 1980). The value of these written representations of Irish English for reconstructing the language of the time has been much questioned and it is true that little if any detail can be extracted from these sources. In addition most of the satirical pieces were written by Englishmen so that one is dealing with an external perception of Irish English at the time. Nonetheless, this material can be useful in determining what features at the beginning of the early modern period were salient and hence picked up by non-Irish writers.

Satirical writings are not the only source of Irish English, however. There are some writers, especially in the 19th century, who seriously attempt to indicate colloquial speech of their time. The first of these is probably Maria Edgeworth whose novel *Castle Rackrent* (1801) is generally regarded as the first regional novel in English and much admired by Sir Walter Scott. Other writers one could mention in this context are William Carlton and the Banim brothers (see the collection and discussion in Hickey 2003a).

## 3 The language shift

Literary parodies do not reveal anything about the then relationship of Irish to English or the spread of English and the regional input from England. No censuses before 1851 gave data on speakers of Irish and English (after that date one can draw a reasonably accurate picture of the decline of Irish). Adams (1965) is a useful attempt to nonetheless produce a linguistic cartography of Ireland at the beginning of the early modern period. The upshot of this situation is that there is no reliable data on the language shift which began in earnest in the early 17th century and which had been all but completed by the late 19th century. This has meant that statements about the shift have been about what one assumes must have happened rather than on the facts revealed in historical documents. Nonetheless, the external history of this shift shows what the overall conditions were and allows some general statements in this respect. The first point to note about the shift from Irish to English is that in rural areas there was little or no education for the native Irish, the romanticised hedge schools (Dowling 1968 [1935]) notwithstanding. So it is clear that the Irish learned English from other Irish who already knew some, perhaps through contact with those urban Irish who were English speakers, especially on the east coast and through contact with the English planters and their employees. This latter group plays

no recognisable role in the development of Irish English, i.e. there is no planter Irish English, probably because this group was numerically insignificant, despite their importance as a trigger in the language shift process. What one can assume for the 17th and 18th centuries in rural Ireland is a functional bilingualism in which the Irish learned some English as adults from their dealings with English speakers. By the early 19th century (Daly 1990) the importance of English for advancement in social life was being pointed out repeatedly, by no less a figure than Daniel O'Connell, the most important political leader before Charles Parnell.

The fact that the majority of the Irish acquired English in an unguided manner as adults had consequences for the nature of Irish English. Bliss (1977) pointed out that this fact is responsible for both the common malapropisms and the unconventional word stress found in Irish English. However, the stress pattern in verbs with final long vowels, e.g. *distribute* [dɪstrɪˈbjuːt], *educate* [ɛdjuˈkeːt], can also be due to English input, particularly as non-initial stress is only a feature of southern Irish and so influence due to contact with Irish could only be posited for the south of Ireland.

Another point concerning the language shift in Ireland is that it was relatively long, spanning at least three centuries from 1600 to 1900 for most of the country. The scenario for language shift is one where lexical transfer into English is unlikely, or at least unlikely to become established in any nascent supraregional variety of English in Ireland. After all, English was the prestige language and the use of Irish words would not have been desirable, given the high awareness of the lexicon as an open-class. This statement refers to Irish lexical elements in present-day English in Ireland. In some written works, and historically in varieties close to Irish, there were more Irish words and idioms, on the latter, see Odlin (1991).

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

In syntax there are many features which either have a single source in Irish or at least have converged with English regional input to produce stable structures in later Irish English. To begin with one must bear in mind that adult speakers learning a second language, especially in an unguided situation, search for equivalents to the grammatical categories they know from their native language. The less they know and use the second language, the more obvious this search is. A case in point would involve the habitual in Irish. This is a prominent aspectual category in the language and generally available by using a special form of the verb 'be' and a non-finite form of the lexical verb in question *Bíonn sí ag léamh (gach maidin)* [is she at reading (every morning)]. There is no one-to-one correspondence to this in English, formally and semantically, so what appears to have happened (Hickey 1995, 1997) is that the Irish availed of the afunctional *do* of declarative sentences which was still present in English at the time of renewed plantation in the early 17th century (especially if one considers that the input was largely from the West Midlands) to produce an equivalent to the habitual in Irish. This use of an English structure in a language contact situation to reach an equivalent to an existing grammatical category in Irish depends crucially on a distinction between the existence of a category and its exponence. The difference in exponence (the actual form used) between the habitual in Irish and Irish English has often led scholars to either dismiss Irish as a

source for this in Irish English or to produce unlikely equations to link up the category in both languages formally. But if one separates the presence of a category in a grammar from its exponence then one can recognise more clearly the search for equivalence which the Irish must have undertaken in acquiring English and can understand the process of availing of means in English, present but afunctional, i.e. declarative *do*, to realise an existing category in their native language. This habitual category in Irish English, usually expressed by *do* + *be* + V-*ing*, may well have been carried to the anglophone Caribbean by Irish deportees and indentured labourers in the 17th century, see the arguments for and against this in Hickey (2004b, c).

*Supraregionalisation* It is obvious from English loanwords in Irish that early Irish English had not progressed through the so-called Great Vowel Shift, e.g. Irish *bacús* 'bakehouse' shows unshifted /aː/ and /uː/. The play *Captain Thomas Stukeley*, referred to above, consistently uses <*oo*> for words with /au/ from /uː/ in English, e.g. *toon* for *town*. Furthermore, comments from Thomas Sheridan in the late 18th century (Sheridan 1781) show that Middle English /aː/, as in *patron,* still had not shifted, nor had Middle English /ɛː/ as in *meat*. But present-day Irish English shows little trace of these unshifted vowels. The reason is not that the shift took place in Irish English some time in the 19th century but that the unshifted forms were replaced by mainstream English pronunciations due to a process which I have labelled *supraregionalisation*. The essence of this process is the replacement of salient features of a variety (Hickey 2003b) by more standard ones, frequently from an extranational norm, as with southern British English vis à vis Irish English. The motivation for this move is to render a variety less locally bound, more acceptable to a non-vernacular community, hence the term 'supraregionalisation' (similar to the label 'supralocal'). The process is particularly obvious in Irish English because there are records of features before it set in. In Ireland, and probably in other anglophone countries, supraregionalisation is bound up to education and the formation of a middle class and so it is a process which can be largely located in the 19th and early 20th centuries. For Irish English this has meant that certain features disappeared in the course of the 19th century. For instance, the lowering of /e/ before /r/ (historically attested in England in words like *dark, barn* and in county names like *Hertfordshire*) was very widespread in Ireland and is recorded at the beginning of the 19th century in pronunciations like *serve* /saːrv/. This lowering has been lost entirely in Irish English, significantly the only instances which remain are those which are part of mainstream English.

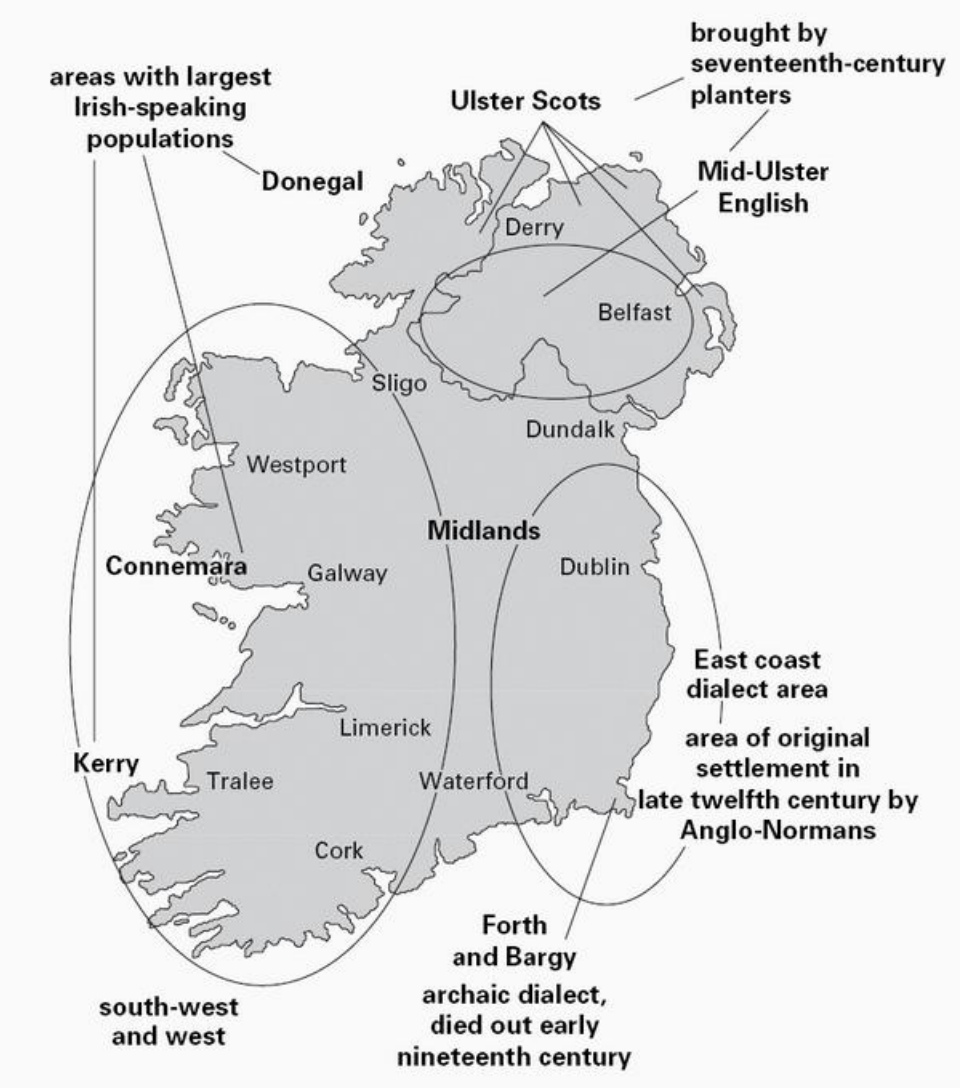
*Vernacularisation* The story of supraregionalisation does not end with the disappearance of strongly local features. There is another pathway which such features can take. This is the relegation to vernacular varieties. Take the instance of Middle English /ɛː/ as in *beat* /bɛːt, beːt/. This pronunciation is now confined to strongly local varieties where supraregionalisation has not taken place. Furthermore, non-local speakers can style-shift downwards to achieve a vernacular effect. It is part of the competence of all speakers of Irish English that they know what features can be donned to impart a popular touch to their speech. Another example of this would be the use of *youse* or *yez* for the second person plural (see Hickey 2003c for a full treatment). This is shunned by non-local speakers but can be employed when deliberately switching to a vernacular mode.

The process of vernacularisation has in some instances resulted in a lexical split. Consider the reflex of velarised [ɬ] before [d] in Irish English: this led to the diphthong [au] as in the words *old* [aul] and *bold* [baul] with post-sonorant stop deletion. These

forms are available alongside /o:ld/ and /bo:ld/ to non-local speakers but the meanings are somewhat different as the original forms with [au] have gained additional meaning components: [aul] 'old + affectionate attachment', e.g. *His* [aul] *car has finally given up the ghost*, [baul] 'daring + sneaking admiration', e.g. *The* [baul] *Charlie is back on top again.*

## 4 Varieties within the south of Ireland

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



The north of the country is quite distinct from the south, accents of northerners being immediately recognisable to southerners. A dividing line can be drawn roughly from Bundoran in south Co. Donegal to Dundalk on the east coast just below the border with Northern Ireland (Ó Baoill 1991, Barry 1981). North of this line the accents are distinctly Ulster-like. South of this line the northern features rapidly give way to southern values. The term 'line' here might imply a clearly delimited boundary, perhaps 'zone' might be more accurate as border counties such as Monaghan, Cavan or Louth show mixed accents which have adopted features from both northern and southern types.

The transition can be seen clearly moving down the east coast: Dundalk has a northern flavour to its speech but this is lost by the time one reaches Drogheda travelling southwards. Below is a list of features which are typical of the north. These will not be commented on further as the north is not the subject of this chapter.

*Northern features of the transition (from south to north)*

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1) Use of interdental fricatives for dental stops in the south (these can be lost or alternate with laterals, especially in Derry, see McCafferty 2000 for details)
2) Use of a fronted allophone of /uː/ and /u/, i.e. [ʉ(ː)], as opposed to [u(ː)] in the south
3) A reduction in the vowel length distinctions found in the south
4) Use of a retroflex [ɻ] in syllable-final position (also found in new pronunciations in the south, see below)
5) Greater pitch range between syllables in stressed + unstressed pairs
6) Greater allophony of /æ/ with raised variants in a velar environment *bag* [bɛg] and a retracted realisation in a nasal environment *family* [ˈfɑmli] (these are east Ulster features, for Derry, see McCafferty 1999)
7) Recessive occurrence of glides after velars and before front vowels, often used as a stereotype of a northern pronunciation as in *Cavan* [ˈkjævən] (a border county)

There has long been the view that the south of Ireland shows little or no regional differentiation. Compared to the north it shows less variation and there are no identifiable separate input groups such as Scots and English in Ulster. However, to imagine that there is no regional variation in the south is quite mistaken.

The south can be divided into two large areas, the east coast, which includes Dublin, and the south and west. There are historical reasons for this division: the east coast is the area of initial settlement by the English in the late Middle Ages and English there (from Dublin down to Waterford) shows traces of the south-west input to the region (Hickey 2001). The south and west on the other hand are the parts of the country where Irish survived longest and where its influence was greatest.

*East band features from Dundalk down to Waterford (including the capital Dublin)*

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*Phonology*

1) Fortition of dental fricatives to alveolar stops (also in south), e.g. *think* [tɪŋk]
2) Lack of low vowel lengthening before voiceless fricatives (not in Dublin), e.g. *path* [pat]
3) Front onset of /au/, e.g. *town* [tæʊn], [tɛʊn]

4) Centralised onset of /ai/, e.g. *quite* [kwəɪt]
5) Breaking of long high vowels (especially in Dublin), e.g. *clean* [klijən]
6) Fortition of alveolar sibilants in pre-nasal position, e.g. *isnt* [ɪdn̩t] (south-east)
7) No lowering of early modern /u/ (only in Dublin), e.g. *done* [dʊn]
8) Glottalisation of lenited /t/, e.g. *foot* [fʊt] → [fʊt̰] → [fʊʔ] → [fʊh] (especially Dublin)

*Syntax*
1) Uninflected auxiliaries *do, be* and *have*
2) Verb deletion in a range of contexts (as copula, in existential sentences, etc.)
*She Ø a teacher in the tech. There Ø no hurry on you.*
3) Cliticisation of *do* on *be* — as *He* [dəˈbi] *working late on Fridays* — for habitual aspect
4) Variable use of suffixal *-s* in the present tense (depending on type of subject, number and person), especially with third person plural: *My parents knows the Keenans*.

*The south and west from Cork through Limerick up to Galway and Sligo (transition to north)*

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*Phonology*
1) /ɛ/ → /ɪ/ before nasals
2) Tense, raised articulation of /æ/ (also in east)
3) Considerable intonational range (only south, south-west)
4) Dental stop realisation in THINK, THIS lexical sets (especially in west)
5) Low central onset for /ai/ and /au/, e.g. *quite* [kwaɪt], *town* [taʊn]
6) Shift of /tj/ to /k/ in word-internal position, e.g. *fortune* [ˈfɒrkuːn] (Midlands feature)

*Syntax*
1) Preference for *do* + *be* in habitual aspect constructions

## 5 Ireland as a linguistic area

The above lists do not contain features which readers may think are typical of Irish English, e.g. the epenthesis in words like *film, girl, arm* or the distinction of short vowels before /r/, e.g. *term* [tɛɹm] and *turn* [tʌɹn]. The reason is simply that these are traits of vernacular varieties throughout the entire island. So when treating features of Irish English a holistic view can be useful, that is, rather than stress differences, one could examine the features common to most or all varieties and indeed go a step further and compare these to parallel structures in Irish. This approach is largely typological and sees Ireland (north and south) as a linguistic area (Hickey 1999a). It has actually quite a distinguished pedigree and antedates the recent interest in Irish English of the past three decades. In 1959 Heinrich Wagner published a monograph in which he attempted to link up the common structures among the languages of the British Isles. While one can be critical of Wagner's method, his main thesis, that these commonalities (especially in the

verbal area: aspectual distinctions and the existence of continuous forms) are not the product of chance but of prolonged contact, has received support from recent areal studies (Vennemann 2000). For the south of Ireland (and in many instances for the north also) one can note the following features shared by all vernacular varieties (not all of these are diagnostic of Ireland as a linguistic area as they are also found in forms English in Britain). Furthermore, non-existent features can be used as negative definers for Irish English. For instance, *r*-lessness and/or *h*-dropping are definite signs that a speaker is not Irish.

*Shared features in vernacular varieties of (southern) Irish English*

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*Phonology*

1) Lenition of alveolar stops in positions of high sonority, e.g. *city* [sɪt̬i]
2) Use of clear [l] in all positions in a word (only in conservative varieties)
3) Retention of syllable-final /r/
4) Distinction of short vowels before /r/ (only in conservative varieties)
5) Retention of the distinction between /ʍ/ and /w/

*Morphology*

1) Distinction between second singular and plural personal pronouns
2) Epistemic negative *must*, e.g. *He musn't be Scottish.*
3) *Them* as demonstrative, e.g. *Them shoes in the hall.*

*Syntax*

1) Perfective aspect with two sub-types:
   a) Immediate perfective, e.g. *She is after spilling the milk* 'She has just spilled the milk'.
   b) Resultative perfective, e.g. *She has the housework done.* 'She has finished the housework' (OV word order)
2) Habitual aspect, expressed by *do* + *be* or *bees* or inflectional *-s* in the first person singular
   a) *She does be reading books.*
   b) *The boys bees up late at night.*
   c) *I gets awful anxious about the kids when they're away.*
3) Reduced number of verb forms, e.g. *seen* and *done* as preterite, *went* as past participle
4) Negative concord, e.g. *He's not interested in no cars.*
5) Clefting for topicalisation purposes, e.g. *It's to Glasgow he's going.*
6) Greater range of the present tense, e.g. *I know him for more than six years now.*
7) *Be* as auxiliary, e.g. *They're finished the work now.*
8) *Till* in the sense of 'in order that', e.g. *Come here till I tell you.*
9) Singular time reference for *never*, e.g. *She never rang yesterday evening.*
10) *For to* infinitives of purpose, e.g. *He went to Dublin for to buy a car.*
11) Subordinating *and* (frequently concessive), e.g. *We went for a walk and it raining.*
12) Preference for *that* as relative pronoun *This is the book that I read.*

# 6 Interpreting features of Irish English

In the history of Irish English studies the pendulum of opinion concerning the role of contact in the genesis of these forms of English has swung back and forth. Writers up to the mid-20th centuy assumed that every feature which had a parallel in Irish was of Irish origin. This stance has been labelled the *substratist* position and came under heavy fire in the mid 1980s most noticeably in John Harris' influential article, see (Harris 1984). The *retentionist* standpoint saw the input varieties of English in early modern Ireland as the source of features hitherto accounted for by contact. This position has been represented by various scholars, notably Roger Lass, e.g. (Lass 1990). But in the 1990s the pendulum moved more to the centre with the gradual acceptance of contact as a source of specific features in Irish English (Hickey 1995), not for ideological reasons, as often previously, but from a better understanding of the mechanisms of language transfer and language shift. This was due, not least, to authors on Irish English, such as Markku Filppula, taking on board the ideas of other linguists examining contact in general, expressed most clearly in the seminal monograph, Thomason and Kaufman (1988). Convergence became the new standard wisdom with contact and retention occupying places of equal standing in the history of Irish English. The consideration of other scenarios in the development of English led to a third force entering the discussion, namely pidginisation/creolisation as a possibility during the formative stages of Irish English. Two long articles — Corrigan (1993) and Hickey (1997) — consider the issue but, while rejecting it because there was no break in linguistic continuity in Ireland, maintain that the uncontrolled adult second language acquisition which characterised the language shift in Ireland in the early modern period was the historical setting closest to the restructuring of English seen in anglophone creoles, e.g. in the Caribbean. This time it was not due to the creativity of generations without full linguistic antecedents but to substrate interference and the grammatical simplification typical of adult L2 learning during language shift.

Apart from the putative source of specifically Irish English features there have been various suggestions concerning the linguistic models to use in interpreting such features. For instance, in the area of aspect there have been attempts to use grammaticalisation models (Kallen 1989, 1990) and prototype theory (Hickey 2000a) to arrive at a satisfactory description of the linguistic facts. Greene (1979) and Ó Sé (1992, 2004) are influential articles describing the verbal systems of Irish.

*Suggestions for sources of key features of southern Irish English*

| *Phonological features* | *Possible source* |
|---|---|
| Dental/alveolar stops for fricatives | Transfer of nearest Irish equivalent, coronal stops |
| Intervocalic and pre-pausal lenition of /t/ | Lenition as a phonological directive from Irish |
| Alveolar /l/ in all positions | Use of non-velar, non-palatal [l] from Irish as well as English input |
| Retention of [ʍ] for <*wh*> | Convergence of input with Irish /f/ [ɸ] |

| | |
|---|---|
| Retention of syllable-final /r/ | Convergence of English input and Irish |
| Distinction of short vowels before /r/ | Convergence of English input and Irish |
| *Morphological features* | |
| Distinct pronominal forms for second person singular and plural | Convergence of English input and Irish |
| Epistemic negative *must* | Generalisation made by Irish based on positive use |
| *Them* as demonstrative | English input only |
| *Syntactic features* | |
| Habitual aspect | Convergence with English input in south, possibly with influence from Scots via Ulster; otherwise transfer of category from Irish |
| Immediate perfective aspect with *after* | Transfer from Irish |
| Resultative perfective with OV word order | Possible convergence, primarily from Irish |
| Subordinating *and* | Transfer from Irish |
| Variant use of suffixal *-s* in present | English input, particularly on east coast |
| Clefting for topicalisation purposes | Transfer from Irish, with some possible convergence |
| Greater range of the present tense | Transfer from Irish, with some possible convergence |
| Negative concord | Convergence of English input and Irish |
| *For to* infinitives indicating purpose | Convergence of English input and Irish |
| Reduced number of verb forms | English input only |
| *Be* as auxiliary | English input only |
| Single time reference for *never* | Transfer from Irish, English input |

*The lexicon of Irish English* The linguistic level which has been given greatest attention by non-linguists is certainly the lexicon. The tradition of gathering word-lists goes back at least two centuries if one considers the glossaries gathered by Vallancey for the archaic dialect of Forth and Bargy in the south-east corner of Ireland (Vallancey 1788).

Some Irish English words represent archaic or regional usage which has survived in Ireland. For instance, the adjectives *mad* and *bold* retain earlier meanings of ‘keen on’ and ‘misbehaved’ respectively. In some cases the words are a mixture of archaism and

regionalism, e.g. *cog* 'cheat', *chisler* 'child', *mitch* 'play truant'. There are also semantic extensions and shifts which have taken place in Ireland as with *yoke* with the general meaning of a thing/device or *hames* 'complete mess' (from 'collar on a horse'). An additional feature is the merger of items which are complementary in meaning: *ditch* is used for *dyke*; *bring* and *take*, *rent* and *let*, *borrow* and *lend* are often interchanged and *learn* is used colloquially to mean 'teach' (archaic English usage) as in *That will learn you!*

Although Irish today is spoken natively by less than one percent of the population and although the knowledge of Irish among the majority is, in general, very poor indeed, there is a curious habit of flavouring one's speech by adding a few words from Irish, sometimes condescendingly called using the *cúpla focal* (lit. 'couple of words'). Such words are always alternatives to readily available English terms, e.g. *ciúineas* 'silence', *piseog* 'superstition', *sláinte* 'health' or *plámás* 'flattery'. Such incursions into the lexicon of Irish are brief and superficial. Borrowings can go both ways, e.g. the common term *craic* for 'social enjoyment' is a loan from Irish, itself originally a borrowing from English.

The difficulty with the lexicon of Irish English lies not in finding words which come from Irish or from regional/archaic English but in determining whether these are current in present-day Irish English and, if so, for what sections of the population. There is a great difference in the lexical items available to and used by, say, older rural inhabitants and young urbanites.

Lexicographically, the north of Ireland is well served by Fenton (2001), Macafee (1996), Todd (1990) and the south in recent years has experienced a number of publications in this sphere (with varying degrees of linguistic analysis), Ó Muirithe (1996), Share (2003 [1997]), Dolan (2005 [1998]). Traynor (1953) and Moylan (1996) are regional lexical studies. For more detailed discussions of the Irish English lexicon, see Hickey (2007). Kallen (1996) provides a linguistically interesting examination of the structure of the present-day lexicon. There also exist studies of the vocabulary of individual literary authors, especially James Joyce, e.g. Dent (1994), O'Hehir (1967). Wall (1995) is a general lexicon of literary works.

## 7 Sociolinguistic developments

In present-day Ireland the major instance of language change is undoubtedly the shift in pronunciation of Dublin English. To understand the workings of this shift one must realise that in the late 1980s and 1990s the city of Dublin, as the capital of the Republic of Ireland, underwent an unprecedented expansion in population size and in relative prosperity with a great increase in international connections to and from the metropolis. The in-migrants to the city, who arrived there chiefly to avail of the job opportunities resulting from the economic boom formed a group of socially mobile, weak-tie speakers and their section of the city's population has been a key locus for language change. The change which arose in the last two decades of the 20th century was reactive in nature: fashionable speakers began to move away in their speech from their perception of popular Dublin English, a classic case of dissociation in an urban setting (Hickey 2000b). This dissociation was realised phonetically by a reversal of the unrounding and lowering of vowels typical of Dublin English hitherto. The reversal was systematic in nature with a raising and rounding of low back vowels and the retraction of the /ai/ diphthong and the raising of the /ɒi/ diphthong representing the most salient elements of the change (Hickey 1999b). These changes are displayed in tabular form below.

*Summary of the present-day Dublin Vowel Shift*

a) retraction of diphthongs with a low or back starting point

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *time* | [taɪm] | → | [tɑɪm] |
| *toy* | [tɒɪ] | → | [tɔɪ], [toɪ] |

b) raising of low back vowels

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *cot* | [kɒt̰] | → | [kɔt̰] |
| *caught* | [kɒːt̰] | → | [kɔːt̰], [koːt̰] |

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

These changes are progressing by a slow and gradual process which affects all the elements which are potential candidates for the change. In this respect the change is by Neogrammarian advance, i.e. every possible input is affected. But because Dublin is the capital city the change is spreading rapidly throughout the Republic of Ireland (see the many recordings in Hickey 2004d). For some older speakers the spread is by lexical diffusion (Wang 1969) because speakers outside of Dublin adopt the change through particularly frequent words they hear with the new Dublin pronunciation and not because of any motivation to dissociate themselves from any group of low-prestige speakers in their surroundings which is the internal motivation in Dublin (Hickey 1999b).

Non-vernacular speech of the capital acts as a de facto standard when people outside Dublin, are seeking a non-local, i.e. supraregional, form of Irish English (Received Pronunciation is obviously not a model in the Irish context). This has meant that the retroflex [ɻ] used by fashionable speakers in Dublin (probably as a reaction to the low-rhoticity of vernacular Dublin English) has spread outside of the capital, especially with younger urbanites. Five other features, which are part of what one could call the *New Pronunciation* of Irish English (Hickey 2003d), can be mentioned here: (i) a velarised, syllable-final [ɬ], e.g. *meal* [miːᵊɬ], (ii) a fronted-onset for the diphthong in the MOUTH lexical set, i.e. [mæu̟t] / [mɛu̟t], (iii) a fronting (and shortening) of /aː/ before /r/, e.g. *part* [pæɻt] (probably a reaction to the dated and snobbish Dublin 4 accent which had retraction here: *part* [pɒːɹt]), (iv) GOAT-diphthongisation as in *home* [həʊm] and (v) T-flapping as in *water* [ˈwɒɾɚ].

## 8 Conclusion

The history of English in the south of Ireland has provided food for linguistic discussion, and continues to do so, due to the long-term interaction between Irish and English and due to the different types of regional input. It is a measure of the maturity of the field that recently all subareas have been covered by significant publications and that the arguments for various standpoints, especially the relative weight accorded to contact versus retention, are based on strictly linguistic arguments and show a balanced consideration of both sources. Avenues which remain to be explored do exist, most noticeably contemporary urban Irish English and non-native varieties used by immigrants, the most likely locus of linguistic change in years to come.

* I would like to thank various colleagues who have taken time and trouble to comment on previous drafts of this chapter, especially Karen Corrigan, Kevin McCafferty, Michael Montgomery and David Britain. Needless to say none of these are to be associated with the shortcomings of the chapter.

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*Notes*

1 This group was actually quite heterogenous. The Anglo-Normans were the military leaders and the English largely artisans and tradespeople who settled in the towns of the east coast. There may well have been a few Welsh and Flemings among these settlers.

2 There is much discussion of Ulster Scots as a possible separate language and similarly the status of Scots is debated. A discussion of this issue is, however, well beyond the brief of the current chapter. For further references, see the comprehensive bibliography in Hickey (2002).

3 Not all authors share this opinion, however, see Dolan (2005 [1998]) who uses the term 'Hiberno-English'.