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## Supraregionalisation and dissociation

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This chapter is concerned with two processes which are central to language variation and change. The processes are related but separate and usually do not coincide temporally. The first of these, dissociation, can occur at any time, given appropriate external triggers whereas the second, supraregionalisation, is an historical process which normally happens once, at a particular time in the development of a country.

The data for the present study stem from Ireland and were collected by the author between the early 1990s and the time of writing (2011). It is important to stress that Ireland does not have any privileged position vis à vis dissociation and supraregionalisation – these processes can occur anywhere. However, they are clearly attested in Ireland in its recent history and hence well documented. There is another reason why these two processes can be well illustrated by examples from English in Ireland: this is a country which does not have an overtly codified standard of English and in which standard British English is not a model which is accepted publicly in Ireland. So whatever changes in Irish English take place, or have taken place, the results are never an approximation to standard British English.

### 1 Supraregionalisation

Supraregionalisation is an historical process whereby varieties of a language lose specifically local features and become less regionally bound. The upper limits of supraregionalisation depend on a number of external factors, such as the country in which the set of varieties is spoken. If this country was historically a colony of another, then there may be an (unconscious) wish within this country to maintain some linguistic distinctiveness vis à vis the varieties of the former colonising country (Hickey 2007a: 309–315). Such ‘exonormative’ or ‘extranational’ forms of a language are significant in a country although they stem from outside its borders. In a way they act as a brake on supraregionalisation because structural distance must be maintained to them, above all in pronunciation as this is immediately available for assessment by others and so is a primary instrument for realising linguistic identity. Common examples of extranational varieties of languages in Europe would be German for the Austrians, French for the Walloons and Dutch for the Flemings.

A region within a state may also show supraregionalisation, often a region which has a geographical and cultural identity of which speakers are aware. The north of England (Wales 2006: 20–24) is just such a case. There is clearly a northern type of accent in England and this arose through a set of local features being used across the subregions of the north and maintained by non-local speakers for identification purposes vis à vis the south of England. The two most prominent of these features are probably the [ʊ] in the STRUT lexical set and the [a]-vowel in the BATH lexical set

(Wells 1982: I.349-353).

Apart from features which are found across a region there may well be features which are confined to either a subregion within a larger one or which are associated with strong vernaculars across the entire region and hence not part of a supraregional variety. In the case of north England, the unshifted long vowel – /u:/ – in the MOUTH lexical set would be one such example. It is furthermore typical of supraregional varieties that they tolerate vernacular features in lexically confined instances, for example the unshifted vowel in *the town* [tu:n] as a local reference to the city of Newcastle with supraregional speakers who otherwise have /au/ in the MOUTH lexical set.

1.1 Suppression of vernacular features

Supraregionalisation is characterised by the suppression of features found in vernaculars present in the country/region undergoing supraregionalisation. When comparing a supraregional variety with vernaculars today one can ask if there any principles which appear to have been operative in feature suppression. This question will be returned to in section 2.6 below. Another question worth asking is whether supraregionalisation involves suppression and selection of features. When one considers the related process of standardisation then one can see that selection is indeed part of this process, consider the well-known model by Einar Haugen.

Table 1 *Criteria for standard languages*

	<i>Form</i>	<i>Function</i>
<i>Society</i>	Selection	Acceptance
<i>Language</i>	Codification	Elaboration

(Haugen 2003 [1964]: 421)

But by selection Haugen understood the preference for a particular variety, say that of the middle classes in the capital city of a country. In the process of supraregionalisation the steps involved are more subtle and fine grained. Speakers do not adopt an existing variety en bloc, but rather suppress a range of vernacular features to render their speech less regionally bound, i.e. supraregional. The inherent advantage to this, in a social sense, is that the new supraregional variety is devoid of stigma. It is only in the speech of a specific locality, urban or rural, which is stigmatised. This fact was recognised in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England when people involved in education pushed for a lack of regional rootedness, cf. the following well-known quote: ‘It is the business of educated people to speak so that no-one may be able to tell in what county their childhood was passed’ (Burrell 1891: 24).

The connection between standardisation and supraregionalisation should not be overstressed. The essential difference is that with supraregionalisation there is no explicit codification, because the supraregional variety does not generally have a codified written form used for official purposes, indeed supraregional varieties are essentially spoken forms of language. However, one could maintain that there is covert codification, that is that supraregional speakers are aware of what features do and do not belong to their variety. A clear example of this is the absence of *t*-glottalisation in

supraregional Irish English, although /t/ in open position (intervocally and finally before a pause) is general realised as a fricative, cf. *sit* [sɪ̞] and *city* ['sɪ̞t̪i]. The reason why *t*-lenition does not continue from a fricative to a glottal realisation is that the latter is typical of local Dublin English, *city* = ['sɪ̞ʔi], a much stigmatised accent in Ireland.

Furthermore, supraregional speakers are generally aware of the scalar nature of varieties in their country / region. To consider northern British English again: /ʊ/ in STRUT and /a/ in BATH are supraregional features, but low monophthongs in the FACE and GOAT lexical sets, i.e. [fɛ:s] and [gɔ:t] respectively, are far more indicative of vernaculars.

The suppression of vernacular features in supraregional varieties might be thought to be one side of a coin the other being the selection of features for the new supraregional variety. However, as avoidance of an all-too-local association would seem to be the driving force for supraregionalisation, the removal of features would seem to have priority. Certainly there can be no question of a conscious choice among speakers of which features to retain.

In the following sections a detailed discussion of supraregionalisation in Irish English is offered to illustrate what sub-processes are involved here and the trajectories they take. These may well be, or have been, replicated by similar processes in varieties of English across the anglophone world.

## 1.2 The process of supraregionalisation

A consideration of the history of English in Ireland shows that there was not only influence from Irish during the long period of language shift from the seventeenth through to the nineteenth century (Hickey 2007a: Chapter 4) but also a large degree of superimposition or adoption of more standard forms of English due to exposure to forms of British English. This superimposition has led to layering in Irish English where remnants of former distributions have become confined to certain registers and/or are indicative of strongly localised varieties. This is true of unshifted Middle English /ɛ:/ in the MEAT lexical set or /ʊ/ in the STRUT lexical set (in local Dublin English).

Superimposition of more standard forms has led in its turn to the process of supraregionalisation. Part of this process is, for instance, 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. It is important to grasp that 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. it is due to the superimposition of a pronunciation variant from outside the country (supraregionalisation must be carefully distinguished from dialect levelling or the formation of compromise forms).

## 1.3 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 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* [tɛ.ɹm] versus *turn* [tʌ.ɹn]. In the supraregional variety, however, a single vowel is found in both cases, namely schwa [ə].

Another feature, which shows that supraregional varieties are less differentiated than their related vernaculars, is so-called *t*-lenition (Hickey 2007a: 322–325). 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 ʔ] to zero (Hickey 2009).

(1)	<i>No lenition</i> syllable-initial pre-consonantal	<i>Lenition</i> post-vocalic+pre-pausal intervocalic						
	t	t̪	>	h	~	ʔ	>	Ø
	<i>tea, lightning</i>	<i>but</i>		<i>water</i>		<i>water</i>		<i>what</i>

#### 1.4 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 after political agitation under the leadership of Daniel O’Connell (Connolly 1998: 75; 399–400). Shortly afterwards, in the 1830s, so-called ‘national schools’, i.e. primary schools (Dowling 1971: 116–118), were introduced and schooling for Catholic children in Ireland became compulsory and universal. The experience of general education for the generation after this increased their acceptance in the higher classes of 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 English. It is thus no coincidence that the disappearance of certain features of Irish English is located in the mid to late nineteenth 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 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 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 does not shy away from showing phonetic peculiarities 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 – the realisation /sa:rv/ rather than /sɜ:rv/ – 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 but is hardly found in Ireland today.

### 1.5 How supraregionalisation proceeds

Supraregionalisation is a type of language change. It too is subject to the phases of actuation, propagation and conclusion (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968). Actuation is probably triggered by a consciousness of the provinciality of speakers' speech and the presence of more mainstream varieties, be these extranational or not.

For the propagation phase there are two competing views of how the process takes place. The elimination of local features may be lexically abrupt with the substitution of local feature X by supraregional feature Y in all words in which it occurs. This corresponds to the Neogrammarian view of change. But equally a scenario is conceivable in which a local feature is replaced by a supraregional feature, if not word by word, at least not across the entire lexicon at once. Lexical replacement of this kind would correspond to lexical diffusion as conceived of in studies like Wang (1969).

An example of this would be the following: in the south of Ireland remnants of the previously widespread diphthongisation of former /o:/ before velar [ɫ] + /d/ are found with *old* [auld] and *bold* [bauld]. But historically, this pronunciation is recorded for many other words, like *cold*, *hold*, *sold*. The pronunciation would seem to have applied previously to all words which matched the phonetic environment. The replacement of [-aulC] by [o:lC] would appear to have proceeded by a process of lexical diffusion. The same would seem to have applied in the north of Ireland to Belfast (J. Milroy 1981: 28f). Furthermore, the words with the /au/ pronunciation (with deleted final /-d/) have retreated into more colloquial forms of speech so that now there is a lexical split between *old* /aul/, /o:ld/ and *bold* /baul/, /bo:ld/: the form /aul/ for *old* implies a degree of affection and /baul/ for *bold* a sneaking admiration as in *Nothing beats the /aul/ pint*; *The /baul/ Charlie is some crook* (the adjectives in these senses only occur attributively).

The conclusion of supraregionalisation is somewhat difficult to pinpoint. In the case of Ireland it cannot be the complete adoption of English pronunciation norms. Indeed, differential linguistic features vis à vis extranational varieties of English are maintained, not just in Ireland, consider Scotland and its supraregional variety Scottish Standard English (Abercrombie 1979; Stuart-Smith 2008) which, for instance, shows a clear non-prevocalic /-r/ in strong contrast to southern British English.

Speakers would seem to be unconsciously aware of supraregional varieties, that is there is an unconscious consensus about what features are characteristic of them. An essential part of being a native speaker lies in knowing what features are part of the supraregional variety and what are not (see remarks on *t*-lenition above). A case from grammar would be the *after*-perfective, as in *He's after breaking the glass* 'He has just broken the glass', which is acceptable in the supraregional variety, whereas the *do(es) be* habitual, as in *He does be mending cars in his spare time* 'He is always mending cars in his spare time', is not.

### 1.6 The paths taken by supraregionalisation

Apart from the question of actuation, propagation and conclusion, the paths which supraregionalisation can take are of linguistic interest. In the Irish English context the following paths are attested:

#### A. Entire replacement of vernacular features

A number of archaic pronunciations are to be found in early modern documents of Irish English. For instance, the word for *gold* still had a pronunciation with /u:/ (as did *Rome*) in late eighteenth century Ireland: *goolld* /gu:ld/, a pronunciation criticised by the prescriptivist John Walker (1791). The word *onion* /ʌnjən/ had /ɪnjən/, an older pronunciation mentioned by P. W. Joyce at the beginning of the twentieth century (Joyce 1979 [1910]: 99). This was recorded by the lexicographer Nathan Bailey in 1726 (*Universal Etymological English Dictionary*) but was not typical of mainstream pronunciations as Walker notes at the end of the eighteenth century.

Vowels before /r/ provide further instances where Irish English was out of step with developments in England. *R*-lowering did not occur in words like *door* /du:r/, *floor* /flu:r/, *source* /su:rs/, *course* /ku:rs/, *court* /ku:rt/ which, according to the Appendix to Thomas Sheridan's *Rhetorical Grammar* (1781: 137-155), were typical Irish pronunciations. This means that the southern mainland English lowering of back high vowels before /r/ had not occurred in Ireland by the late eighteenth century but was introduced in the following century by lexically replacing those pronunciations which conflicted with mainland British usage.

#### B. Restriction to a specific phonetic environment

When a local feature is being removed from a supraregional variety then there may be a phase in which the feature goes from being unconditional to conditional. This is recognisable if the conditional realisation is still attested. Consider the case of 'short E'-raising in Irish English. This is recorded in many environments in historical documents but later texts show a restriction to pre-nasal environments (as found nowadays in south-west and mid-west varieties). Another instance is the metathesis of a vowel and /r/. In the nineteenth century and earlier it is attested in stressed syllables but later only in unstressed ones.

Table 2      Restriction of vernacular features in the twentieth century

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Pre-twentieth century</i>	<i>twentieth century and later</i>
1) /ɛ/ to /ɪ/ raising	unconditional <i>together, yis, git</i>	only before nasals (south-west) <i>pen</i> [pɪn], <i>ten</i> [tɪn]
2) metathesis	in stressed syllables <i>purty</i> ['pɜ:ɪti] 'pretty'	only in unstressed syllables <i>modern</i> ['mɒdrən]

One explanation for the survival of features as conditional variants is that these are less salient (Hickey 2000a; Kerswill and Williams 2002) than unconditional ones. If a feature like 'short E'-raising is restricted to a pre-nasal position, a phonetically preferred environment for this raising given the formant structure of nasals, then it is automatic (for the variety which has this raising) and so less salient for speakers. Similarly, if metathesis is confined to unstressed syllables then it is less acoustically prominent and again less salient and hence less likely to be removed by supraregionalisation.

#### C. Relegation to colloquial registers

Although the supraregional form of English is the native style of many speakers in

Ireland, they may deliberately manipulate salient features and adopt a vernacular pronunciation, for example for the purpose of caricature or when style-shifting downwards (Labov 2001). Simple instances of this are the replacement of *you* by *youse*, the use of [lɛp] for *leap* [li:p] or the high vowel in *get* as in *Get* [ɡɪt̪] *out of here!*, all typical of colloquial registers of Irish English.

In the course of its development, Irish English has evolved a technique for attaining local flavouring. This consists of maintaining two forms of a single lexeme, one a standard one, adopted during supraregionalisation, and another an archaic or regional pronunciation which differs in connotation from the first (see also the discussion of *old* and *bold* above). The second usage is always found on a more colloquial level and plays an important role in establishing the profile of vernacular Irish English. The following are some typical examples to illustrate this phenomenon: *Eejit* ['i:dʒət̪] for *idiot* (Dolan 2004: 83-84) has adopted the sense of a bungling individual rather than an imbecile. *Cratur* ['kre:təɹ] shows a survival of the older pronunciation and denotes an object of pity or commiseration. Indeed for the supraregional variety of the south, unraised ME /e:, ɛ:/ automatically implies a vernacular register. Other words which, colloquially, still show the mid vowel are *Jesus*, *decent*, *tea* (represented orthographically as *Jaysus*, *daycent*, *tay*). In these cases the replacement of an older pronunciation by a more mainstream one has led to the retreat of the former into a marked style, here one of local Irishness. *Fellow* has final /ou, o:/ in the supraregional standard. But a reduction of the final vowel to /ə/ is historically attested in Irish English as in *yellow* [jələ]. There is now a lexical split with the first word such that the pronunciation [fələ] means something like 'young man, boyfriend' in colloquial Irish English.

### 1.7 Further issues in supraregionalisation

*Mergers:* sociolinguistic research on vernacular forms of English in Belfast (see J. Milroy 1981) has shown that non-standard phonology is more complex than standard phonology and that mergers are more common in standard and koiné varieties. At first sight this might seem to hold for southern Irish English as well. For instance, there is no distinction between historically different short vowels before /r/. Hence one has a single rhotacised vowel [ɜ̥] in the supraregional variety but in vernacular forms /ɛ/ and /ʌ/ are kept distinct before /r/ as in *girl* [ɡɛrəl] and *burn* [bʌrən].

There is an apparent contradiction here because with dental stops in the THIN and THIS lexical sets, a shift to an alveolar articulation is found in many vernacular varieties. This leads to a merger with the alveolar stops in the TWO and DO lexical sets (cf. *thinker* and *tinker*, both ['tɪŋkəɹ]) which is stigmatised in Irish English. However, stigma or acceptance of mergers in vernacular varieties depends crucially on whether the merger is unconditional or not. With the single rhotacised vowel [ɜ̥] one is dealing with a merger in a specific phonological environment, namely before tautosyllabic /r/. With dental vs. alveolar stops on the other hand one finds that it is the unconditional merger, leading to noticeable homophony, which is stigmatised.

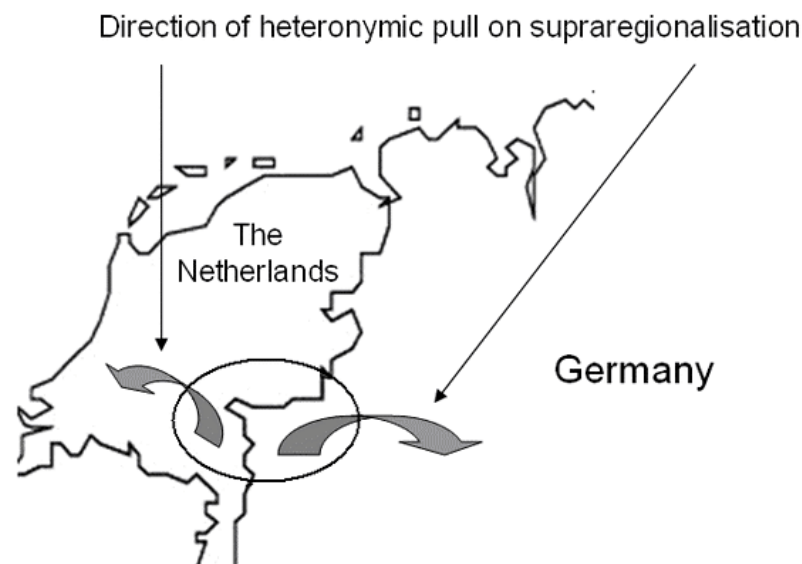
*Hypercorrection:* In the Ireland of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when many of the pronunciations discussed above were not confined to specific styles, hypercorrection was common. Both Sheridan (1781) and Walker (1791) remark on the fact that the Irish frequently say *greet* 'great', *beer* 'bear', *sweer* 'swear', unaware of

the fact that these words had /e:/ rather than /i:/, although by the eighteenth century the majority of words in the MEAT lexical class already showed the /i:/ vowel. However, before tautosyllabic /-r/ and in a few lexicalised cases like *great*, *break*, *steak*, the shift to /i:/ had not taken and was not to take place. This fact was not recognised by speakers shifting from their native mid front vowel to the presumed universal /i:/ in the MEAT lexical class, hence the instances of hypercorrection just quoted.

Hypercorrection would appear to die away with supraregionalisation. This stands to reason: if local features are replaced by more standard ones then later generations master the correct distribution of sounds immediately.

### 1.8 Supraregionalisation and heteronymy

The notion of heteronymy has been employed by linguists (Chambers and Trudgill 1999: 10–14) to refer to the fact that similar dialects in a geographical area can often be related to different standard languages, especially when a national border runs through the area in question. A good instance of this is the German-Dutch border. Rather than just specifying the relationship of a dialect to a standard, one can express the relationship as one between a dialect and a supraregional variety. This captures the insight that speakers can shift away from their dialect by the adoption of less regionally bound features without necessarily switching to the codified standard of a country. Supraregionalisation would then exercise a pull in two opposite directions depending on what the heteronymic relation is in the dialects of an area as show in the following map.



Lower Rhenish area at the border of Germany and the southern Netherlands

Figure 1. Direction of heteronymy on the German-Dutch border

Another example of diverging heteronymic pull can be found in south-east Ulster, an area which straddles the divide between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and which consists of counties Monaghan (Republic of Ireland), Armagh and south Down (the latter two in Northern Ireland). For speakers north of the border, the



supraregional variety they gravitate towards is Northern Irish English whereas for those south of the border their guideline supraregional variety is that of the south of Ireland.

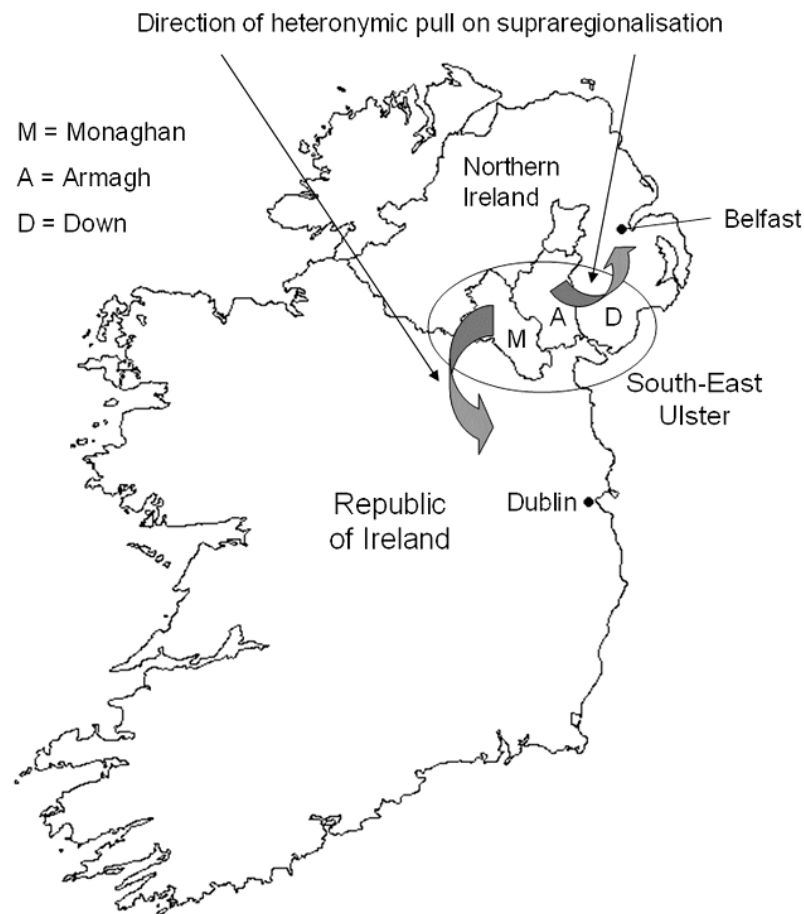


Figure 2. Direction of heteronymy on the North-South Irish border

Local varieties of English in south-east Ulster share certain features, for instance an off-glide after the vowel in the FACE lexical set and the use of a dental stop and front [æ:] in the BATH lexical set. Speakers of the supraregional variety north of the border retain the offglide in their speech because this is part of northern supraregional speech. Those south of the border drop the offglide as supraregional Irish English does not have this. In the BATH lexical set, supraregional speakers south of the border retain the [bæ:t̪] pronunciation whereas those north of the border use a more central vowel followed by an (inter)dental fricative.

Table 4 South-east Ulster local and supraregional pronunciations

South-east Ulster local pronunciations

FACE lexical set:	[fɛ:əs]
BATH lexical set:	[bæ:t̪]

Southern supraregional variety

FACE lexical set:	[fɛ:s]	(without off-glide)
BATH lexical set:	[bæ:t̪]	(front vowel + dental stop)

Northern supraregional variety

FACE lexical set:	[fe:əs]	(with off-glide)
BATH lexical set:	[ba:θ]	(mid vowel + dental fricative)

## 2 Dissociation

The second section of this chapter examines to what extent dissociation is a significant and quantifiable factor in language change. Dissociation is the opposite of the linguistic bonding typical of closely knit social networks. It is reactive in nature, i.e. it implies that there is a variety with features intuitively recognisable to others in contact with it and that these other speakers develop strategies to distance themselves linguistically from the group showing these distinctive features. Dissociation is a dynamic process, i.e. it does not consist solely of the avoidance of some salient features of a particular variety.

Dissociation is the opposite of accommodation, the approximation of individuals to the speech of their interlocutors. The latter is taken to be – and have been – a powerful force in dialect differentiation as often pointed out, above all by Peter Trudgill, see the discussions in Trudgill (1986: 1-38). With both accommodation and dissociation one is dealing with an alteration in the speech of a community in contact with another; the issue which separates them is that of direction. If the alteration can move in one direction, i.e. towards the second community (with accommodation) then it is likely that it can go in the opposite direction, away from the second community, unless there is some objection in principle to this occurring. There would not appear to be any predisposition towards unidirectionality as there is with language internal developments such as grammaticalisation. Furthermore, dissociation is generally attested socially, for instance in dress, food, leisure time activities, area of residence, just to mention a few typical parameters of social variation. If one assumes that sociolinguistic behaviour correlates with non-linguistic social behaviour then the existence of dissociation in other social spheres outside of language gives support to the assumption of its existence on a linguistic level.

The linguistic means for achieving dissociation consist – on the sound level – of choosing realisations which are maximally distinct from those in the variety from which speakers are dissociating themselves. These realisations may well display an internal systematicity of their own, thus constituting a case of a principled sound change as is the case in the shift in vowels observed in Dublin during the 1990s (Hickey 1999, 2005). But this systematicity is probably not a characteristic of dissociation in its very initial stages. Nonetheless, there may be linguistic conditioning on the manifestations of dissociation as will be obvious the discussion below.

Because the reasons for dissociation lie in the (linguistic) reaction of one group to another it is obvious that it has an external trigger. From the present-day example of Dublin English one can probably conclude that initially dissociation took place in a weak-tie, non-focussed group reacting to another with strong ties and a clear linguistic focus. Clarity of linguistic profile would seem to be a pre-condition for another group to begin the process of dissociation in the first place. It is this clarity which renders the other group clearly identifiable and then leads to a desire on the part of others not to be associated with the group so easily recognisable in its speech. Despite its obvious motivation, dissociation would appear to be an unconscious process. There have been

no comments by non-linguists on this process (at the very least within the context of Dublin English) and nonetheless it is proceeded with a high degree of regularity. In fact the very unconscious nature of dissociation promotes regularity. After all, if a process is conscious then speakers can make decisions about whether to partake in it or not and non-linguistic pre-conceptions and attitudes can interfere with the operation of the process.

## 2.1 The background to Dublin English

Vernacular Dublin English is the historical continuation of the English taken to the east of Ireland in the late twelfth century and which has developed quite independently from English in England since. The speakers of local Dublin English typically have low social and economic status. Next there is a broad base of speakers who belong to different sub-divisions of the middle class and whose English is more or less identical to the supraregional variety of English in the Republic of Ireland (see discussion above). This latter variety developed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and as the speech of the metropolitan middle class and had a beacon function for other urbanites throughout the south of Ireland. The third identifiable group is that of younger, socially conscious speakers striving upwards and partaking – or, significantly, wishing to partake – in the then new-found wealth of the capital (during the 1990s and early 2000s). It is this group which reacts most obviously to the more traditional working-class forms of Dublin life, not just language, by dissociating themselves from the section of the community which embodies these traditional values and behavioural norms. In the linguistic dimension, dissociation is particularly marked with respect to those features of the low-status variety which are stigmatised. The question of stigmatisation is a complicated one and it is difficult to find simple criteria for determining how and when a feature becomes stigmatised. On the phonological level there are characteristics of stigmatised sounds which can be recognised. For instance, sounds which represents a merger with another is liable to become the object of sociolinguistic censure if the merger does not apply to higher-status varieties in the same society. In Dublin English the merger of dental and alveolar stops to alveolar positions, as in pairs like *thank* and *tank*, both with initial /t-/, is highly stigmatised; an example of a vocalic merger concerns the non-local vowel /ʌ/ which is realised in popular Dublin English as /ʊ/ with homophony in word pairs like *put* and *putt*. A feature might be salient because it stands in sharp contrast the supraregional variety. For example, local Dublin English has [əɪ], as in *time* [təɪm], for the [aɪ] of supraregional Irish English, including more conservative middle-class accents in Dublin itself.

The dissociating social group is typically diffuse, one is dealing with a reaction by a non-local group to a strongly local one. The cohesion of the latter is not matched by any comparable social bonding on the part of the dissociating group. Of course, the diffuseness of the reacting group may change. If the means chosen to achieve dissociation form a clear pattern of (sound) shift then this clarity may in turn bestow a new and distinct profile on the reacting group.

There is an individual and collective aspect to dissociation. Dissociation occurs on an individual level, as a natural process between generations. It has been reported that members of one generation show realisations of sounds which are opposed to those of the preceding generation, especially that of their parents (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 2004). This type of reaction does not necessarily lead to a community-wide



(3) *Salient features of local Dublin English*

- 1) low / open realisation of back vowels: *bought* [bɑːʔ], *boy* [bɑɪ], *stop* [stap]
  - 2) very low rhoticity: *bar* [bæː], *bark* [bæːk]
- 
- 3) distinction of /ɛ/ and /ʊ/ before /r/. *germ* [dʒɛːm], *nurse* [nʊːs]
  - 4) retention of Early Modern English [ʊ]: *sun* [sʊn]
  - 5) *t*-lenition: fricative to glottal stop/zero: *cat* [kæɾ] > [kæʔ] / [kæ]
  - 6) alveolarisation of dental stops: *bath* [baːɾ] > [baːt]
  - 7) breaking of long high vowels: *clean* [klijən], *school* [skuwəl]

2.2.1 *Back vowel raising and retroflex /r/*

The first two features above are the most important because they occur most frequently in speech: low/open realisations affect several common vowels and low rhoticity is obvious in every word with non-prevocalic /r/. Furthermore, low/open realisations are typical of all vernaculars of Irish English, urban and rural alike, while low rhoticity is specific to local Dublin English.

If dissociation is a movement away from the speech of others then the raising of low back vowels in advanced Dublin English in the 1990s is just such a movement. Originally, the vowel in *time* was also retracted but this was not adopted by broader sections of the metropolitan population as were the other changes. In fact one can say that raising is the key movement for the Dublin vowel shift of the 1990s and retraction was a secondary occurrence which did not establish itself.

## (4) Summary of the Dublin vowel shift of the 1990s

- a) retraction/raising of diphthongs with a low or back starting point

*time* [tɑɪm] → [tɑɪm]  
*toy* [tɔɪ] → [tɔɪ], [toɪ]

- b) raising of low back vowels

*cot* [kɒɾ] → [kɔɾ]  
*caught* [kɒːɾ] → [kɔːɾ], [koːɾ]

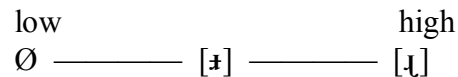
		oɪ		oː
		↑		↑
Raising		ɔɪ	ɔ	ɔː
		↑	↑	↑
		ɒɪ	ɒ	ɒː
Retraction	aɪ	→	aɪ	

In mainstream Irish English up to the 1990s the realisation of /r/ was a velarised alveolar continuant [ɾ], a pronunciation found in western and south-western varieties of Irish to this day and so it can be assumed that this type of /r/ originally resulted in Irish English from transfer of the Irish realisation of the same phoneme (Hickey 1986).

In the 1990s a retroflex [ɻ] appeared in advanced Dublin English at the same time as the vowel raising began. But why a retroflex [ɻ] when there was a velarised

alveolar continuant [ɹ̥] already in supraregional Irish English? The answer lies in the degree of rhoticity these segments show. If one draws a scale for rhoticity with zero on the left then the maximum on the right is a strongly retroflex [ɻ] which is acoustically very prominent. The velarised alveolar continuant [ɹ̠] is an intermediate segment, in acoustic terms. This means that the maximum degree of dissociation from local Dublin English was achieved by the retroflex realisation of /r/.

(5) Rhoticity scale for Dublin English



### 2.2.2 Further items of dissociation

Features three to seven in (3) above are slightly different from back vowel raising and /r/-retroflexion. This is because they already had very different realisations in supraregional Irish English before the 1990s and so new realisations did not arise. However, there were, and still are, occasional realisations in advanced Dublin English which can be interpreted as dissociation. Consider that local Dublin English has a very open, unrounded vowel in words like *germ* and *girl*, i.e. [dʒɛ:(<sup>1</sup>)m] and [gɛ:(<sup>1</sup>)l] respectively. Because this open front realisation is so typical of local Dublin English, there has been a migration in advanced Dublin English of historically front *long* vowels to the central rhotic type as seen in words from the SQUARE lexical set like *carefully* [kæ:fəli] and *daring* [dɑ:ɪŋ]. This realisation has no precedent in the history of Irish English. Connected with this feature is the strict avoidance of schwa retraction before /r/ in words such as *third* [tɜ:d], *purse* [pɜ:s], not [tu:(<sup>1</sup>)d] and [pu:(<sup>1</sup>)s]. Furthermore, the /u/- vowel in the STRUT lexical set can be realised by an unrounded front vowel which is almost /ɪ/, as in *Sunday* [sɪ-nde].

From the above considerations it is clear that the vowel shift is not simply an approximation to mainstream British pronunciations of English, after all syllable-final /r/, the lack of /ɑ:/ in words of the BATH and DANCE lexical sets and *t*-lenition all point to the independence of Irish English from English in England. Furthermore, there is an imperviousness in Ireland to many spreading features of British urban speech, for instance, initial H-deletion, as in *hurry* [ʌɹɪ], or TH-fronting, as in *think* [fɪŋk] (see the discussion in Hickey 2007b).

### 2.2.3 Re-alignment of supraregional Irish English

The new pronunciation of non-local Dublin English became quickly established in the late 1990s and early 2000s and its features rapidly spread from the capital city to the rest of the Republic of Ireland. It became a pronunciation model for young people without a strong local orientation, that is with a new generation of supraregional speakers, with females leading the way.<sup>3</sup> Because of this, the supraregional variety of

<sup>3</sup> There are some gender differences in the new pronunciation of Irish English, e.g. the use of a diphthong with a schwa starting point in the GOAT lexical set, e.g. [həʊm] for *home*. This

Irish English has become re-aligned with low back vowel raising and /r/-retroflexion now clear characteristic along with other features stemming from Dublin English, such as a syllable-final velarised [ɫ], as in *field* [fi:ɫd], and a front starting point for the diphthong in the MOUTH lexical set, e.g. *house* [hæʊs] / [hɛʊs].

#### 4 Conclusion

The two externally motivated processes considered in this chapter are characterised by a movement away from vernacular speech by a group of speakers. The first, supraregionalisation, is seen when a variety emerges in which features indicative of a specific location or vernacular have been removed. This variety then occupies the domain of a standard, even though it is not explicitly codified like the latter. It is nonetheless a non-stigmatised, publicly used variety. Historically, the rise of this variety is triggered by such factors as general education and the appearance of a middle class. A supraregional variety is largely defined in phonological terms and there may be an exonormative standard applying for written forms. In general, a supraregional variety shows reduced variation vis à vis vernaculars, the latter maintaining phonological complexity as a linguistic correlate of intricate social networks (Milroy 1987).

The second process considered here, dissociation, can occur at any time when the necessary trigger is present. This can be seen with the Dublin vowel shift which was clearly not motivated by any external influence on Dublin English, such as that of British English or American English (for details see Hickey 2003, 2007b). Furthermore, it is not internally motivated as in analogical change such as morphological regularisation. The only remaining conclusion is that it is motivated by social factors within Dublin. Dissociation in Dublin English led to the establishment of a new, non-vernacular pronunciation in the metropolis which then spread to the rest of the country. This in turn led to a re-alignment of the hitherto prevailing supraregional variety (see remarks in previous section). Such a development shows that a supraregional variety is not static and can alter if a new, non-vernacular variety encroaches on its domain, i.e. becomes recognised by broad sections of the population as a non-stigmatised form of language acceptable in public usage.

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diphthongisation is viewed in Ireland as effeminate when used by males, see the discussion in Hickey (2005: 88–91).

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