Areal features of English in Ireland

Raymond Hickey
University of Duisburg and Essen

1. Introduction

The notion of linguistic area (from German *Sprachbund*, lit. 'language federation') is one which is often invoked when dealing with languages which share features and are found in a geographically contiguous area. Some of these areas have gained general acceptance in linguistic literature as the evidence for them is quite convincing. These include the Pacific North-West, Meso-America, the Balkans, the Baltic area, Arnhem Land in Northern Australia, Southern India (with Indic / Dravidian languages) to mention just some of the better known instances. Scholars concerned with linguistic areas, vary considerably in their approach and following Campbell (1998: 300) one can distinguish at least two basic orientations in the field: 1) *circumstantianlist* where authors are content with listing the various features of a putative area and 2) *historicist* where authors attempt to show that the shared features diffused historically through the languages of an area. The second approach is necessary to avoid the pitfall of raising features which may have arisen by chance to the level of defining characteristics of an area. Furthermore, it is essential to accord relative weight to features under consideration. Those which are typologically unspectacular cannot be appealed to when defining an area. For instance any set of languages or varieties which show a palatalisation of velars – and just that – could hardly be regarded as forming a linguistic area as this is a very general feature. On the other hand languages in an enclosed area which develop phonemic tone would be good candidates for a linguistic area. These simple examples highlight one feature of the entire discussion about linguistic areas which is often not rendered explicit by scholars in the field: the discussion is about relatively unusual features. Again an example illustrates this clearly: if a voice distinction among stops was sufficient as a defining feature, then the continent of Europe (perhaps excluding Finland) would be a linguistic area. But this is plainly not the case. On the other hand, front rounded vowels are relatively unusual and going on their occurrence one can recognize a loose area from France across to Hungary and northwards into Scandinavia.

   Apart from the typological status of features, their quantity is also important, so that one can establish a density index for areas which helps in

labelling them as strong or weak. Furthermore, the linguistic levels on which the commonalities are found is of relevance. Closed-class levels such as morphology or syntax have a high indexical value. The lexical level – as an open class – is virtually irrelevant in the discussion as borrowing to and fro across languages is so common. The only exception to this would be clearly defined structural principles of lexical organisation which are shared between languages and independent of individual words.

With the diffusion of features there is a reverse side to the coin, the common maintenance of features which have been inherited from different inputs. In Ireland an example of this is the retention of a distinction between short vowels before /r/ which is found in all vernacular forms of English in the north (including Ulster Scots) and the south of the island as well as in Irish. Here due consideration must be given to the phenomenon of supraregionalisation (Hickey 2000) whereby vernacular features may be replaced by those from an extranational standard. For instance, the use of a single short central vowel before /r/ has replaced the distinction between /ɛ/ and /ʊ/ in the supraregional standard of English in the south of Ireland.

The desire to group languages into linguistic areas arose from the insight that shared features can occur in a confined geographical area among languages which are not genetically related. This is, however, an incidental issue. There may be more than one language family represented in an area, as with Indo-European and Turkic in the Balkans or Indo-European and Dravidian in southern India or Indo-European and Finno-Ugric in the Baltic area. The affiliation to different language families is not a defining feature of a linguistic area. At most the presence of two (rarely more) families serves to heighten the awareness for the convergence which has taken place historically. In the case of Ireland all languages and varieties belong to Indo-European, albeit different sub-groupings (Q-Celtic for Irish and West Germanic for forms of English respectively).

Linguistic areas are by nature fuzzy concepts. If there has been a high degree of multilateral influence within the area in history then isomorphism in grammatical structure is likely (Thomason and Kaufman 1998: 96) but of the features found in the area, only some are area-wide. It is more common to find localised bilateral diffusions, i.e. regions with higher and lower density within the area in question. Equally, one does not find that isoglosses bundle at the boundaries. Rather the outer boundaries of a putative area are as a rule defined geographically – at least approximately, for instance in the Balkans it is the large peninsula between the Black Sea and the Adriatic.

The convergence which has given rise to an area in the first place may show periods of greater or lesser activity and the synchronic picture may be one of a dormant area if the mutual influence has receded for whatever external reasons.

In addition, one must distinguish carefully between the diffusion of a

structural feature in an area and the spread of the exponence of this feature. A good example of this is offered by lenition in Irish and southern Irish English. A central feature in Irish phonology is the systematic weakening of segments (stops to fricatives usually). The actual changes are not reflected in English in Ireland, e.g. there is no shift of /k/ to /x/ but there is a general weakening of alveolar stops, as with the fricativisation of /t/ in environments of high sonority (Hickey 1996). Here one can observe the feature of lenition although the manifestation in Irish English is not that found in Irish.

In this connection one should mention that a feature may be present in adjoining languages or varieties although its realisation may not be the same in all cases. A good instance of this is rhotacism – the presence of syllable-final /r/ – which is all but universal on the island of Ireland (the only exception is a conservative form of popular Dublin English) and which has two major realisations, a retroflex /r/ in the north and a velarised /r/ in the south. An example of this phenomenon from morphology would be the second person plural personal pronouns found in Ireland. While the south tends to favour the morphologically transparent form *youse* < *you* + {S}, the north shows a greater occurrence of *yez* < *ye* + {S}. In the supraregional variety of the south, the uninflected form *ye* (the historical input) is found. The contrast between category and realisation is also found with the habitual aspect which is realised by *bees* in the north and *does be* in the south, excluding some vernacular forms on the east coast.

Another consideration in this context concerns the presence of a feature at different points within a putative area and where the occurrences are not related to each other. An instance of this is provided by glottalisation of stops and/or the replacement of supra-glottal stops by a glottal stop. This is found in both forms of Ulster Scots and of popular Dublin English but there is no question of there being an historical connection between the two varieties.

Finally, the absence of a category or distinction can be listed as a defining characteristic of a linguistic area, although the indexical value of absent features is usually weak. In this connection one must also distinguish between the actual lack and the quantitative underrepresentation of a feature. An instance of what is meant here is provided from the verbal area. In all colloquial forms of English in Ireland, there is a noticeable under-representation of the present perfect[1], e.g. *I know him for years* would be more common than *I have known him for years*. In Irish there is no present perfect category and the neglect of this in English is a likely consequence of the language shift which occurred historically in Ireland.

The avoidance of a category may be due to the fact that its exponent is used for a certain function thus precluding its use elsewhere. Take the use of *do*

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[1] This is commonly referred to as 'extended now' in the literature on Irish English, see Filppula (1997).

as an instance of this. To realise habitual aspect a finite form of *do* plus *be* or – less commonly – a lexical verb is used, especially in southern Irish English. One can also observe that *do* is not found when negating *use* or *tend* so that a sentence like *She didn't use to visit them at home* would not be found in Irish English.

Mention should also be made here of the fact that the degree of integration of a diffused feature would appear to depend on how it fits into the receiving language. In the case of the habitual in Irish English, this is a category which matches the other aspectual distinctions – such as the progressive and the iterative – which were already present in English. Furthermore, the likelihood that an habitual was inherited from the input forms of English in Ireland is quite high, certainly for the north and the east with the habitual marker *bees*.

2. Divisions within Ireland

2.1. The north-south split

The separation of the north of Ireland from the south has a long history which reaches back much further in time than the establishment of the state of Northern Ireland with the Government of Ireland Act in 1920. It has been seen as a general cultural divide since at least the early seventeenth century when official plantations of Scots settlers were undertaken (Adams 1965). But the contacts with Scotland go back to the early centuries AD with the spread of Irish up to Scotland and the linguistic and religious bonds between the northern province of Ireland and that part of Britain justifies the assumption that Ulster-Scotland formed a cultural area to which in a practical sense the remainder of Ireland did not belong (Adamson 1994).

The border between Ulster and the south is a much less tangible matter. References to the Black Pig's Dyke, a series of Iron Age earthwork fortifications along the southern rim of Ulster from c. 500 BC, smack of an ahistorical attempt to find justification retrospectively for the 'otherness' of Ulster vis à vis the rest of the country.

Linguists concerned with the border of north and south assume that there is a band which can be illustrated by drawing a line from Bundoran (north-west) to Dundalk (east) and one between Sligo (north-west, south of Bundoran) and Drogheda (east, south of Dundalk) (Adams 1977: 56). North of this border the distinction between dental fricatives and alveolar stops as in *thin/tin* and *then/den* is maintained. For the varieties south of this transitional band there is a stop realisation for /θ/ and /ð/ so that the distinction is one of place of articulation: [t̪] versus [t] and [d̪] versus [d] retrospectively (Ó Baoill 1991). This distinction can be reasonably traced to the presence of /θ/ and /ð/ in the input forms of both Scots and regional English in Ulster, whereas the

plosivisation of the ambi-dental fricatives is a long-attested phenomenon of the south (Hickey 1993). Accepting this reason for the phonological differences between north and south implies that the differences in varieties of English are not older than the seventeenth century.
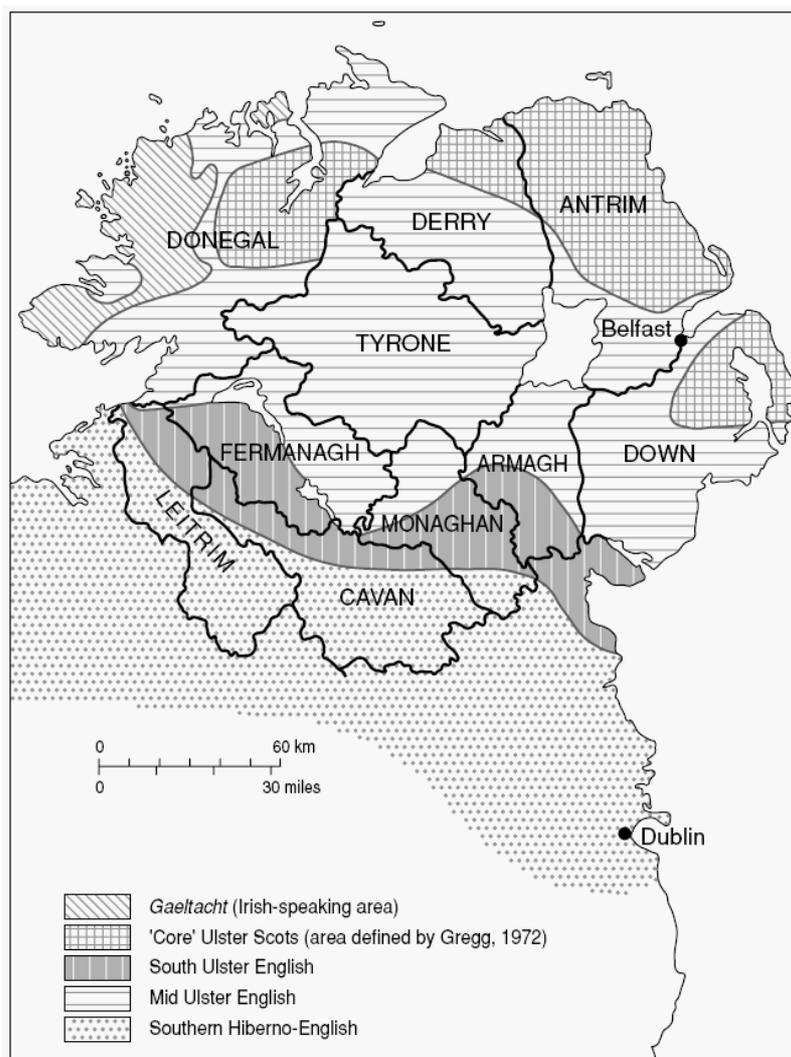
For dialects of Irish the view that the north-south distinction among the dialects is older than 1600 is widely supported (O'Rahilly [1976] 1932: 123f.; Ó Baoill 1990), given the influence of Scottish Gaelic and the many instances of convergence in phonology and morphology between the latter and Ulster Irish.

The relationship between Irish in Ulster and forms of English in that region is not always clear-cut. Thus there are commonalities and differences between the two languages. A prominent shared feature is the high mid realisation of the vowel in the FOOL lexical set, i.e. [fʉl], found in Ulster Irish as well. But the lack of phonemic vowel length, which occurs especially in Ulster Scots, is not found in Irish, e.g. *bíonn* 'is'-habitual has a long /iː/.

With the province of Ulster it is usual to distinguish at least two major varieties of English. The first is what has been called *Ulster English*, the forms of English spoken by those inhabitants of Ulster who stem from originally English settlers. This term is the equivalent of *Mid-Ulster English* (Harris 1984) and of *Ulster Anglo-Irish* (J. Milroy 1981).

The second major form is *Ulster Scots*, the English traditionally spoken by the descendants of the Scottish emigrants to Ulster in the seventeenth century (Adams ed. 1964, Montgomery 1997). The regions where Ulster Scots is spoken are nowadays no longer contiguous. This would seem to imply a reduction of the previous geographical distribution. The areas where it is still found do, however, represent historical regions of settlement. There are three of these located on the northern periphery from the north-west to the north-east, hence the term 'Coastal Crescent' or 'Northern Crescent'.

Figure 1 *Scots settlement areas in Ulster after Gregg (1972)*

Map legend:
- *Gaeltacht* (Irish-speaking area)
- 'Core' Ulster Scots (area defined by Gregg, 1972)
- South Ulster English
- Mid Ulster English
- Southern Hiberno-English

1) A broad band including most of County Antrim (except the south approaching Belfast and the north-east corner) and the north-east corner of County Derry.
2) North County Down, most of the Ards peninsula and a section of the mainland on the west bank of Strangford Lough.
3) An area flanked on the east by the River Foyle and extending in the north central part of County Donegal.

Ulster Scots is now related to Ulster English as superordinate language and not to Scots. While in its most conservative form it has many phonological and lexical connections with Scots, it occupies a position on a variety scale whose

other pole is formed by Ulster English. The present-day relationship of Ulster Scots to Ulster English is a cline from conservative rural to more standard urban speech. The main obstacle to understanding Ulster Scots is the density of specific lexical items (Montgomery and Gregg 1997: 570) .

The areas of Ulster settled by English planters are characterised by very heterogenous origins. A south-east input can be assumed for the region to the east and south of Derry city, including the city itself, because it is known that London undertaker companies were commissioned to settle the area with English people and the assumption is reasonable that these companies solicited settlers from the region of England in which they were located. It is also known that West Country English from Devonshire and west Somerset settled in the region of Belfast, south Antrim and south east Tyrone. Even more settlers came from the southern section of the West Midlands area (Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire) and settled again in south Antrim as well as in north-west Down, north Armagh and central and south Tyrone and in east Fermanagh. Lastly, one should mention the north-west Midlands area (Lancashire, Cheshire, south-west Yorkshire) which was the source for settlers in the Lagan valley, the hinterland of Belfast (Adams 1977: 62f.).

In addition to the above forms of English some authors give separate status to *Contact Ulster English* the forms spoken by people within or adjoining on Irish-speaking areas in Donegal and which are assumed to have been influenced by Irish in their development. This label may apply historically to former regions with Irish such as mid County Tyrone or north-east County Antrim and Rathlin Island.

Occasionally it may be opportune to have a cover term for all forms of English in the province of Ulster (the state of Northern Ireland, Donegal and the adjoining counties of Sligo, Monaghan, Cavan and Louth immediately south of the border with the Republic of Ireland). For this, the label *Northern Irish English* can be used. Finally there is *Ulster Irish* the forms of Irish still spoken along the west coast and in small parts of central County Donegal.

Internal differentiation among regional varieties of English of Ireland is greatest in Ulster English as this is demographically the most diverse. Furthermore, the distinction between urban and rural varieties of this group is considerable. There are no large-scale differences between regionally diverse forms of Ulster Scots. The major division, as just mentioned, is between rural and urban speech.[2]

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[2] Nonetheless the main area of Ulster Scots, in north County Antrim and stretching across to the north-east of County Derry, shows one difference in front vowel realisation compared to the remaining areas in County Down and County Donegal respectively. An /ɛ/ in the former area corresponds to an /ɪ/ in the latter areas so that, for instance, there is a contrast between Antrim/Derry /ʃɛn/ 'soon', /əˈbɛn/ 'above' and Down/Donegal /ʃɪŋ/ 'soon', /əˈbɪn/ 'above' (Montgomery and Gregg 1997: 616).

3.   Divisions within the south of Ireland

The distribution of varieties of English in the south of Ireland has not been researched to anything like to the degree in the north. But even a cursory glance at forms of English in the Republic reveals quite clearly that there are different varieties within the south, speakers being able to recognize others roughly by the part of the country they come from.

Figure 2 *Main dialect divisions in Ireland*
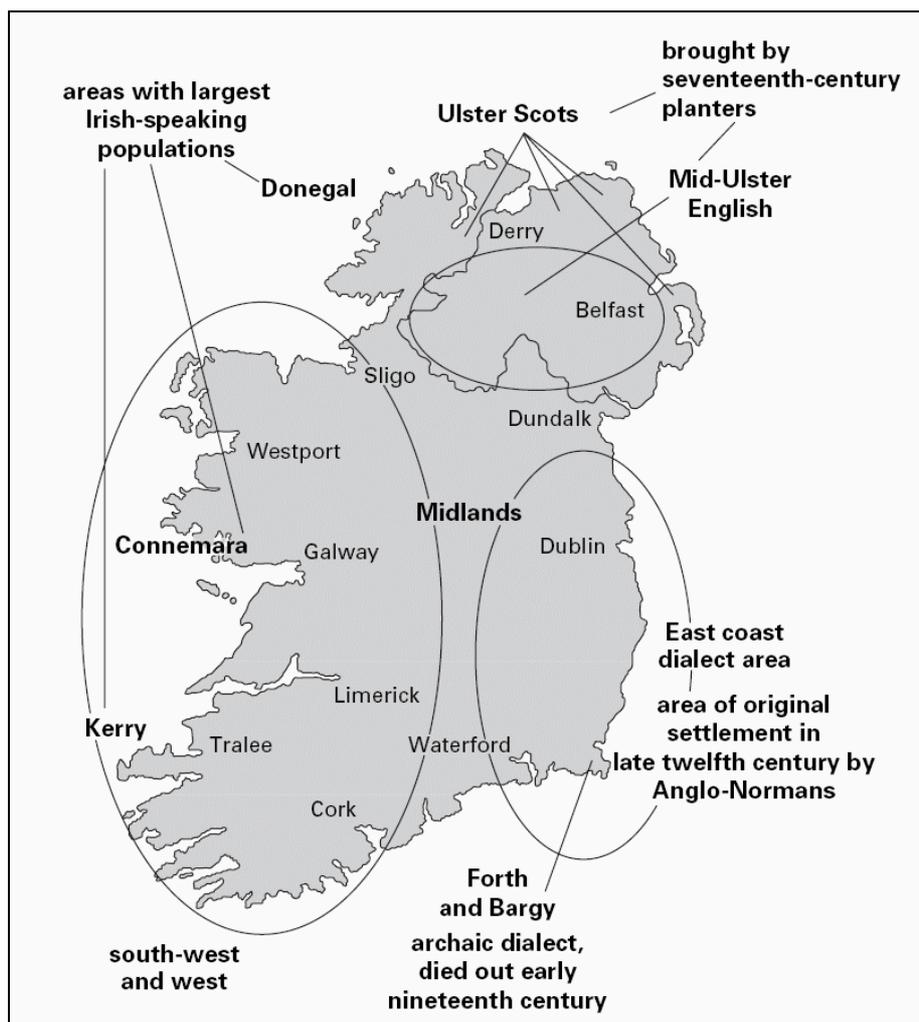
The major division within the south is between the east/south-east and the rest of the country. The settlement pattern of English in the late Middle Ages is still observable to this day in the varieties of English spoken in a band from north of Dublin down the east and south-east coast to Waterford. English in the capital Dublin is more complex given the size of the city, the historically unique position of the capital and recent changes which are independent of traditional forms of English on the east coast (Hickey 1998).

Prominent features of east coast varieties

1)   Lack of lengthening of /a/ before voiceless fricatives (not in evidence in Dublin English, given general lengthening of low vowels).

2)   Fronting of /au/ to [æʊ], [ɛʊ]
3)   Centralisation of /ai/ to [əɪ]
4)   Overlong realisations of long vowels (with disyllabification in Dublin English)
5)   Retention of short vowel distinctions before tautosyllabic /r/
6)   Lack of an alveolar / dental distinction in the THANK and TANK lexical sets.
7)   Stop deletion after nasals, e.g. *pound* [pɛʊn]

The above features are not exclusive to the east coast, for instance the merger of dental and alveolar stops is a prominent characteristic of south-west forms of Irish English (but not of the west of the country, north of Limerick approximately) as is the centralisation of /ai/ and the retention of the short vowel distinction before /r/ as in *term* [tɛɹm] and *turn* [tʌɹn]. A shared feature of the east and the north comes from syntax. Both have habitual aspect expressed by the forms *bees* (deriving ultimately from an historical input form) whereas the rest of the country favours the use of *does be*. Nonetheless, the combination of features given above is unique to the east coast.

4.   Contact and the history of English in Ireland

Plainly there has been continual contact between English and Irish in Ireland since the former language was first taken to Ireland in the late twelfth century. The quantitative relationship of the two languages shifted in favour of English at the latest by the mid nineteenth century as a consequence of the Great Famine. The considerable influence of Irish on English is not in evidence before the seventeenth century as the documents do not reveal vernacular forms of speech.[3] In the opposite direction the influence has been largely lexical with loanwords appearing in Irish which stem from Middle English as the lack of the major English vowel shift shows, e.g. *faoitín* /fiːtʃiːnʲ/ 'whiting', *bácús* /baːkuːs/ 'bakehouse'.

   The contact between the two languages is characterised historically by the language shift which occurred in favour of English. The scenario of shift is somewhat different from that of convergence which is usually a characteristic of a linguistic area, at least in its early stages. The language shift was implemented through uncontrolled adult second language acquisition on the part of those Irish speakers who wished to switch over to English for reasons of social advancement. There are many historical attestations of the attitude of the Irish towards their own native language. This had shifted by the early

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[3] Though see Hickey (1993) for some phonological features in the *Kildare Poems* (early fourteenth century) which are likely to have an Irish source.

nineteenth century at the latest to one which saw the Irish language as an obstruction to the improvement of one's social lot as the well-known statements to this effect by Daniel O'Connell testify.

The historical language shift in Ireland did not involve any formal instruction in English for those involved. To put it simply, the Irish learned English from those Irish who already had a better knowledge of the language or from the few English they might have come in contact with. The shift was characteristic of adults – at least in a rural setting where Irish would still have been the language of the home. The linguistic consequence of this is that interference from Irish into the newly acquired language English would have been considerable. Grammatical transfer from Irish is an established feature of Irish English and is historically attested for all stages of English in Ireland for which there are written records.

While convergence implies the structural approximation of two or more languages in an area, a language shift scenario such as that for Irish to English would see the similarities in the two languages as resulting from the transfer of key features from the former to the latter during the shift process. Ultimately the result may be the same. But in the case of shift, there is a quantitative imbalance between the two languages involved as the original language is all but lost, traces of its grammatical structure remaining in the interference forms now contained in the target language, at least for a period immediately after the shift, until possible standardisation removes these non-standard features at a later date. A further distinction between convergence and shift is seen in the questions of directionality: for shift the transfer is from source to target language, at least when there is no significant amount of bilateral bilingualism, which can be assumed not to have been the case historically for the contact between Irish and English as of the beginning of the modern period at the early seventeenth century.

As always, the situation in Ulster has been more complex and shows facets not present in the south of the country. When considering language shift in the north of the country one must bear in mind that Irish was spoken throughout the province at the time of the initial immigration from Scotland and this carries with it the implication that there was considerable contact, if not bilingualism, between Scots settlers and Irish speakers from the seventeenth century until such time as Irish ceased to be spoken in English-dominated parts of the province (Gregg 1959). Historically, there was contact between Irish speakers and the Ulster Scots in north-east County Donegal, in the low-lying area known as the Laggan to the south-west of the city of Derry, though whether this is a contemporary scenario today can be doubted (*pace* Montgomery and Gregg 1997: 583). What is true, however, is that up to the beginning of the present century there was seasonal migration by Donegal Irish speakers to the Lowlands of Scottish in search of work (Adams 1977: 59; J. Milroy 1982).

5.   Linguistic levels

5.1. Phonology

The features of the sound systems of Irish and of different varieties of English in Ireland need to be grouped before assessing their value as possible defining features for a linguistic area. At the very least one needs a distinction between those features which are retentions and those which represent innovations. Furthermore, the retentions are frequently confined to colloquial registers of the language, an aspect of usage which for reasons of space cannot be dealt with in any detail here. Suffice it to say that retentions of older pronunciations, such as [baul] and [aul] for *bold* and *old* respectively or the dentalisation of stops before /r/ as in *water* [wɑːt̪əɹ] and *better* [bɛt̪əɹ], are distinguished along a vernacular – formal axis in both northern and southern Irish English and have additional collocations which are exploited deliberately by speakers when style-shifting downwards.

When searching for phonological features which are island-wide one can list at least four which are uncontroversial, taking the colloquial forms of English just mentioned as a yardstick.

1)   Use of clear [l] in all positions in a word (J. Milroy 1982)
2)   Retention of syllable-final /r/
3)   Distinction of short vowels before /r/
4)   Retention of the distinction between /ʍ/ and /w/

These features appear interesting in the light of the sound system of Irish. To begin with one can note that Irish has both /l/ and /lʲ/ in keeping with the general pairing of consonants as non-palatal and palatal in Irish phonology. The Irish would appear to have equated the /l/ of English with the palatal /l/ of Irish as the non-palatal /l/ tends to be phonetically velarised (in all word positions) and hence quite different from the English sound. Only very occasionally in contact Irish English (in Donegal, Connemara or on the Dingle peninsula) does one find a velarised /l/ as in *like* [ɫaɪk].

Syllable-final /r/ is always present in Irish and so there was support for its retention in English from this quarter. The same holds for the contuining distinction between two types of short vowel before /r/. The vowels in Irish are dependent on whether the following consonant(s) are palatal (with /e/) or non-palatal (with /u/). Lastly, the retention of a distinction between /w/ and /w/ is supported by the presence in Irish of similar sounds to both of these. [ʍ] exists as a realisation of /v/ in open positions in western and northern Irish. [ɸ] is the realisation of /f/ in these varieties in similar positions and is phonetically

similar to [ʍ]. The historically practised equivalence [ɸ] and [ʍ] can be seen in the rendering of the Irish surname *Ó Faoláin* as *Wheelan* [ʍiːlən] in English.

Apart from the above features there are many more which show an uneven distribution across the island.

1) Alveolarisation of velar nasals as in *making* [meːkn̩]. This is a feature which is very widespread in the Anglophone world. Within the Irish context one can observe that it is somewhat more common in the north than the south, the stigmatisation being slightly greater in the latter part of the country.

2) Glottalisation. This is a feature in Ulster Scots (pre-consonantally) and popular Dublin English (as a stage of alveolar lenition). These occurrences are independent developments.

3) Lack of length with historically short /a/ before voiceless fricatives as in *bath* [bæt̠]. This feature is not always in evidence as many varieties have a general lengthening of low vowels so that historical /a/ always appears as [æː/aː]. However, the feature is evident in areas such as the south-east of Ireland.

4) Raising of /a/ especially before /r/. This is an established east coast feature probably deriving from English before the seventeenth century and is seen in pronunciations like [pɛːɹt] for *part*.

5) Incomplete raising of Middle English /eː/ to /iː/. Again a retention which is found in both the east coast of the south and in parts of the north (Milroy and Harris 1980) in vernacular varieties.

6) Lack of rounding of /a/ after /w/ is a feature which occurs occasionally with an irregular distribution. On the one hand it can represent a retention from earlier English input and on the other it can be a transfer phenomenon from Irish which does not have this retraction.

7) Distinction between open and close mid back vowels as in *horse – hoarse*. In the Anglophone world this distinction is now quite uncommon. Generally, a raised vowel is used both in those varieties where the /r/ has disappeared, as in southern British English and varieties in the southern hemisphere which are historically closely linked to this, and in those which show a rhotacised vowel here, as in most varieties of American and Canadian English. Especially in the south of Ireland the distinction between both vowels is made consistently so that words such as *morning* [mɔːɹnɪŋ] and *mourning* [moːɹnɪŋ] are phonetically distinguished.

8) Retention of /u/. This is not so prominent in Ulster, indeed, if anything, an overgeneralisation of /ʌ/ is to be found. The presence of /ʌ/ in the north is

in keeping with its presence in Scotland which shows the early modern shift from /u/ although the north of England (to the south of Scotland) retains all instances of the high back short vowel.

Lenition as an areal feature

The most striking aspect of the phonology of Irish is the weakening of consonants (usually from stop to fricative) in pre-defined environments to express grammatical categories such as number, case, person or tense. Now while the morphological functions of lenition are obviously not present in Irish English, the phenomenon has been transferred as a phonological directive to weaken segments in positions of maximal sonority – intervocalically or post-vocalically / pre-pausally which was the historically original trigger for lenition in Irish. The main manifestation of lenition in Irish English is the weakening of alveolar stops which is particularly frequent in the south of the country (Hickey 1996) but is also found in the north and seen in pronunciations like *cat* [kæṭ], *pity* [pɪṭɪ]. The areal presence of lenition in Ireland can be compared to other phonetic phenomena with an areal distribution such as retroflexion (in India), clicks in South Africa (in Bantu from Xhosa), glottalisation (in Ossetic, Eastern Armenian, etc.) or pre-aspiration in northern Scottish Gaelic and forms of North Germanic such as Faroese.

Specifically Ulster features

In keeping with the special linguistic status of Ulster there are features which occur there and not in the south of the country as the following list shows.

1) Development of [ʉ] as in *tool* [tʉl]. This is a shared feature with forms of Scottish English and Ulster Irish.

2) Lowering of short front vowels /ɪ/ to /ɛ/ as in *stick* [stɛk].

3) Lack of vowel length, especially in Ulster Scots, e.g. [mʉn] for *moon* /muːn/.

4) Intervocalic /ð/ before /r/ tends to be variably lost as in *mother*, *brother*, *gather*, increasing with the degree of informality of speech.

5) In-gliding mid vowels are seen in pronunciations like *save* [seəv], *toes* [toəz].

6) 'Tapping' of alveolar plosives. Intervocalically a realisation of /t/ as a tap [ɾ] is to be found, e.g. *pity* [pɛɾɪ].

7) Intonation: Final rise on declaratives. Again this is a prominent feature of English in Ulster and a clear demarcating element vis à vis English in the

Republic of Ireland.

Recessive features

1) Palatalisation of velar plosives. While this feature is commonly understood as stereotypical of an Ulster accent, e.g. *cap* [kjæp], *gap* [gjæp] it is not something emulated by urbanites and can be compared to features such as /u/ in Dublin English of which speakers are conscious but which is not part of the fashionable speech of the younger generation.

2) Retention of syllable-final /x/. This is a feature of Ulster Scots (inherited from the original Scots input) and is found in conservative forms of this variety, e.g. *enough* [əˈnʌx].

3) Differential realisation of diphthongs. There is a difference in quality between the realisation of /ai/ before voiceless and voiced consonants respectively (J. Milroy 1981: 78). In a word like *pipe* /pɛɪp/ the starting point is higher and the length of the diphthong shorter than in *five* /faɪv/. A similar type of distribution of diphthong allophones is found in central Canada. On the possible relationship between the two phenomena, see Gregg (1973).

5.1.   Morphology

1) Island-wide there is a consistent distinction between second person singular and plural for pronouns. The actual realisation varies between the north and south and between colloquial and more formal varieties with *ye* the accepted form in the supra-regional south, *youse* that in popular Dublin English and throughout the south with *yez* the form found occasionally in the south and the generalised form in the north.

2) Epistemic negative *must*. In all likelihood the use of *must* in the negative to express non-existence or non-applicability derives from an extension from the positive by Irish speakers of English during the language shift, i.e. the form *can't* in this sense never established itself in Irish English. *He musn't be Scottish* is the Irish equivalent of *He can't be Scottish* in British English.

3) Demonstratives as personal pronouns as in *Them are the ones you need*. This is only of slight diagnostic value as it occurs very frequently in dialects of English.

5.2.   Syntax

In very general terms the features of syntax which show an island-wide

distribution are given in the following list. Under the headings below some minor matters are mentioned which occur in geographically restricted areas as with forms of the negative in Ulster Scots.

1) Aspectual distinctions   2) Tenses and verb forms
3) Non-standard subject concord   4) Negative concord
5) Clefting for topicalisation   6) Clause structure
7) Adverbials

Aspectual distinctions

a) HABITUAL This is the clearest case of a grammatical category which is present in all forms of language in Ireland but where the realisation varies from case to case. It is a feature which has frequently been remarked upon as a special characteristic of languages in Ireland and indeed of the British Isles. In this latter, broader context the most comprehensive, if now somewhat dated treatment is Wagner (1959). In Irish the habitual is lexicalised, much as in the Slavic languages, with separate verb forms of *be* for the habitual and non-habitual. In northern Irish English the inherited form *bees*, stemming ultimately from Old English *beon*, is used to formally mark the habitual. In the south (apart from some varieties on the east coast) a refunctionalised unstressed *do* is employed for the habitual (see the discussion of the Irish verb in Wagner 1959: 20-60).

(1)   a.   *Bíonn sí ag léamh leabhair.*
           [be-habitual she at reading books]
        b.   *She does be reading books.*
        c.   *She bees reading books.*
           'She is continually reading books.'

b) PERFECTIVE ASPECT There are two sub-types here. The first is the immediate perfective which is expressed both north and south by *after* plus an *ing* form of the verb; this is clearly a transfer phenomenon from Irish.

(2)   a.   *Tá sí tar éis an gloine a briseadh.*
           [is she after the glass breaking]
        b.   *She is after breaking the glass.*
           'She has just broken the glass.'

The second sub-type is the resultative which expresses that an action was in some way planned and then carried out. Contact with Irish can probably be invoked as a source for the English form, if not as a sole explanation, then at least as a secondary source. The word order OV-non-finite which is used to

express a resultative perfective is the regular word order of Irish and may well have been present in early input forms of English.

(3) a. *Tá an leabhar léite aici.*
        [is the book read at-her]
     b. *She has the book read.*
        'She has finished reading the book.'

Tenses and verb forms

a) RANGE OF THE PRESENT TENSE A feature found to varying degrees in the whole of Ireland is the use of the present-tense to cover the terrain of the perfect in standard English. This is frequently referred to as the 'extended *now'* and is simply a matter of the range of a tense and is not a type of aspect.

(4) a. *I know him for more than six years now.*
     b. *She is here since early this morning.*

The greater scope of the present in all of Ireland may be due to the fact that in the language switch-over bilingual speakers preferred aspect over tense distinctions. This would account for both the promotion of aspect and the backgrounding of tense distinctions (Hickey 1997: 1000f.).

b) *Be* AS AUXILIARY Again both retention and transfer from Irish could account for the continuing use of forms of *be*, especially with verbs like *finish*: *She is finished the work.*

c) PARTS OF VERBS A situation common in so many dialects of English is that the number of parts of strong verbs is reduced. The reduction usually consists of using the past participle for the preterite as in *I done it* or *I seen him*.

d) INTERROGATIVES The lack of *do* in questions can be regarded as a pan-Irish feature (possibly connected in the south with its increased functionalisation for the habitual aspect). Sentences of the type *Have you the pencil*? are more common than *Do you have the pencil*? in the entire country. A mirror-image phenomenon, so to speak, is the avoidance of the perfect tense with *yet*.

(5) a. *Did you have your breakfast yet?* for
     b. *Have you had your breakfast yet?*

e) DOUBLE MODALS The use of two modals in a single verb phrase (Fennell

and Butters 1997) is a well-known feature of (non-African) English in the southern United States. There are remnants of this in Scotland. However, the phenomenon plays no significant role in English in Ulster and can be neglected in the present context.

Non-standard subject concord rules

What is being referred to here is whether an *-s* is placed on a present-tense verb form or not. This is a complex issue with the precise nature of the subject as well as the person and number of the verb determining whether an *-s* inflection in used on the verb in question. In general one can say that a personal pronoun as subject is least likely to trigger *s*-inflection as the pronoun has the function of a verbal clitic. The more independent the subject and the greater the distance between it and the verb form the more probable the occurrence of *s*-inflection becomes. The following are two examples from emigrant letters of Ulster Scots which have been analysed in detail by Montgomery (1995).

(6)   *All the young men that* has *come here lately would be glad they had not come. Your letters* comes *on without delay.*
        There's *girls that would work for a few quid an hour just to have a job.*

This is a phenomenon which shows a considerable distribution throughout Ireland and is by no means an exclusively Ulster feature. Especially in the east coast dialects, variable subject concord is present. It is a feature which has a considerable vintage and goes back to the late Middle English period when a refunctionalisation of the moribund verb inflections in the present tense took place. It is also recorded for south-east American English which has strong connections with Ulster English of the eighteenth century.

Observe further that an inflectional *-s*, especially for the first person singular, has the force of a narrative present (see the discussion of 'The historic present' in Henry 1997: 97f.). This usage has been recorded for at least the past two centuries in literary works which attempt parodies of Irish English.

(7)   *So I comes home and finds the back door wide open and I goes in and sees the mess.*

Negative concord

The occurrence of more than one negative element in a sentence is forbidden in standard English and this prohibition is assumed to derive from misguided notions that language should be strictly logical and not allow two negators as these would in sum result in a positive statement. Understandably, those varieties of English which became established before eighteenth century

prescriptivism could wield it power over English retain many structures which the prescriptivists frowned on.

In northern Irish English and in many colloquial varieties of the south, particularly the older ones on the east coast including Dublin, two negative elements do not cancel each other out.

(8) a. *She never did nothing.*
     b. *They didn't go nowhere.*

There are constraints on the combinations of negatives as Henry has pointed out in her treatment of the syntax of Belfast English (Henry 1997: 103f.). The negators like *nothing*, *nobody*, *nowhere* are 'negative polarity items' which correspond to *anything*, *anybody*, *anywhere* in standard English and which can occur in subject position with a positive verb or in object position with a negated verb or in both subject and object position but not in other combinations as can be seen from the following sentences. Note that the *no-*words are the precise equivalents of the *any-* words in standard English.

(9) a. *Nobody left the room.* (subject position + positive verb)
     b. *We didn't touch nothing.* (negated verb + object position)
     c. *Nobody touched nothing.* (subject + object position)
     d. **Nobody didn't leave then.* (subject position + negated verb)
     e. **Anybody didn't ask for more.* (subject position + negated verb)

d) FORMS OF THE NEGATIVE A salient respect in which Ulster Scots differs from more general forms of Ulster English is that concerning forms of the negative. For instance the use of *no* as a verbal negator as in *She'll no be in time at this rate* and the clitic form *-nae/ny* as in *A didnae come home last night*. *He canny leave now* is also common in Scotland. This latter usage in Ulster Scots has been highlighted by Montgomery and Gregg (1997: 616) as one of the most salient grammatical aspects of the dialect vis à vis Ulster English.

Clefting for topicalisation purposes

The range of clefting structures is much greater in Irish English than elsewhere and can in all probability be traced back to the great flexibility of such constructions in Irish. An example would be the fronting of a prepositional phrase by means of clefting which is normal in Irish English though quite unusual elsewhere.

(10) a. *Is go Gaillimhe atá siad ag dul.*
          [is to Galway that-are they going]

b.   *It's to Galway they're going.*

Clause structure

a) SUBORDINATING *and* Another feature can be mentioned here which is clearly of Irish origin (Filppula and Klemola 1992) and which has diffused into forms of English in various parts of Ireland. This involves clause parataxis where the meaning is concessive or temporal and where in more standard forms of English one would expect an adverb like *although* or *while*.

(11)   a.   *They went out for a walk and it raining.*
        b.   *Chuaigh siad amach agus é ag cur báistí.*
                [went they out and it at putting rain]
                'They went out for a walk although/while it raining.'

b) *for to* PLUS INFINITIVE When expressing purpose infinitives are preceded by *for to* rather than just *to* in vernacular forms of English in both the south and the north (this is something which has been noted for Belfast by various scholars, e.g. J. Milroy (1981: 2) and Henry (1997: 98f.)).

(12)   a.   *I went to the shop for to get bread.*
        b.   *They read the leaflet for to find out.*

c) *Till* IN THE SENSE OF 'SO THAT' The adverb *till* is derived from *until* with the original meaning of 'up to a certain point in time' which it still retains in standard English. For Irish English the shortened form has the additional meaning of 'in order to' as in *Come here till I see you.*

Possessive constructions

A significant areal feature which applies to both English and Irish as well as to the remaining Celtic languages in the British Isles concerns the means of expressing possession. The common method in conservative Germanic languages such as German is to indicate the possessor by means of a pronoun in the dative case. This applies especially to instances of so-called inalienable possession, e.g. concerning parts of the body: *Sie wäscht sich die Haare* 'She is washing her hair'. In both Irish and English a possessive pronoun is used, even though the reference is by default to the possessor, e.g. *Tá sí ag ní a gruaig* "She is washing her hair". In the most recent discussion of the matter (Vennemann 1999) this feature is traced to Celtic influence on the forms of West Germanic brought to the British Isles. This assumption has gained credence from a large-scale investigation of possessive constructions in Europe: Haspelmath (1998) only found two areas with the so-called internal

possessor construction (the use of a possessive pronoun for inalienable possession) in Europe: the British Isles and and the south-east of the continent (in Turkish and Lezgian, a Caucasian language).

Adverbials

a) *Never* WITH SINGULAR TIME REFERENCE *Never* is found with reference to a clearly delimited stretch of time as opposed to referring to a longer period, e.g. *She never called us* does not have the meaning 'She did not call us on any occasion' but refers to a particular occasion which is obvious if a specification of time is added (optionally): *She never called us that evening*.

b) THE USE OF POSITIVE *anymore* One prominent feature of English in Ulster – formerly as it is now quite recessive – is what is termed 'positive *anymore'* by which is meant a use of the temporal adverb in positive declarative sentences in which it has the approximate meaning of 'nowadays'.

(13)   a.   *This is the way they do the work anymore.*
       b.   *Something which is true anymore.*

In present-day Irish English this is chiefly found in West Donegal but used to be common throughout the entire north previously. It is probably a transfer phenomenon from Irish (J. Milroy 1981: 4; Crozier 1984: 318), arising as a calque on the Irish adverb *riamh* which can have various tense references: past, present or future.

(14)   a.   *Sin an slí a déanann siad an obair riamh.*
            [this the way that do they the work 'anymore']
       b.   *Rud a bhfuil fíor riamh.*
            [something which is true 'anymore']

This construction has travelled well: Positive *anymore* is particularly common in mid-American English (Labov 1991). It must have been an established feature of English in Ulster (including Ulster Scots) at the latest by the early eighteenth century as it was carried by Ulster Scots emigrants to the New World and became a regular feature of Scots-derived English in the United States where it is still found.

c) *Whenever* IN THE SENSE OF 'WHEN' This adverb has a punctual sense as opposed to the iterative use typical of standard English, i.e. a sentence like *Whenever I came she was waiting with the supper* would refer to a single event and occurs especially frequently in the north of Ireland.

d) *From* IN THE SENSE OF 'SINCE' The use of this adverb to mean 'from a certain point of time onwards' may well be a reduced form of that phrase or something similar: *She's living here from she was married*, i.e. 'from the time she was married' (another usage found particularly in the north, Harris 1984: 132).

e) *Never* WITH SINGULAR TIME REFERENCE Similar to the previous usage, *never* is found with reference to a clearly delimited stretch of time as opposed to referring to a longer period, e.g. *She never called us* does not have the meaning 'She did not call us on any occasion' but refers to a particular occasion which is obvious if a specification of time is added (optionally): *She never called us that evening*.

f) CONCESSIVE USE OF *but* In sentence-final position *but* in the sense of *though* is common (Harris 1984), but only in the north of Ireland, as in *I never seen him*, *but*.

6. Conclusion

This brief overview of features of language in Ireland indicates that the island of Ireland shows areal concentrations, at least in the commonalities of varieties of English spoken on the island. If a subdivision within the island is to be made, then this would be along the traditional lines of the north-south split which is supported by features exclusive to forms of English in the province of Ulster which has a more complex demographic and linguistic composition seen in both historical and present-day terms.

(15)   a.   *Areality enhancing developments in Ireland*

> Language shift with the survival of contact-induced items of language change
> Survival of historical archaic/dialectal input into Ireland

      b.   *Areality diminishing developments in Ireland*

> Dissociation from Irish English vernaculars, especially local Dublin English with subsequent migration of a new variety to supraregional speech.

The linguistic analysis here has shown that it is necessary to distinguish between a linguistic category and its exponence, recall the presence of lenition in both Irish and (southern) Irish English but the differing realisation of this in both these languages. In the present context it is furthermore imperative to accord differing relative weight to features depending on whether they are

historical retentions or innovations. This would exclude such unspectacular features as the lowering of /ɛ/ to /a/ before /r/. This was much more widespread in both the north and south of Ireland, e.g. the words *serve*, *merchant*, *Derry*, for example, all formerly had /ar/. At the other end of this scale one has features which did not diffuse at all, for instance the verb-initial word order of Irish, in general terms the post-specification which is central to the typological profile of this language. There is no trace of this anywhere in English in Ireland. The reason probably lies in the relative unusualness of this word-order. Adopting this into English would have amounted to a typological re-alignment of the language. The scenario of slow language shift would not have produced the extreme external circumstances which might have provided the impetus for such a re-alignment of English in Ireland. The appeal to relative typological unusualness gains support when one looks at varieties of English outside of Ireland but related to those within the country. For instance, in Newfoundland the immediate perfective expressed by *after* and a continuous form of the verb – as in *They're after sinking the boat* – is found in both the English and the Irish derived communities on the island (Clarke 1997). The historical diffusion from the latter into the former is probably due to the transparency of the structure which shows a metaphorical extension of a temporal expression to an aspectual distinction.

The upshot of these considerations is that the value of linguistic features in the present discussion depends crucially on their degree of typological unusualness, the higher the index here, the more such features can be viewed as indicators of significant areal concentration.

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