

R in Irish English

In Ireland the realisations of /r/ vary quite considerably. Note the following conditions for and types of realisations.

In prevocalic positions /r/ is a post-alveolar continuant [ɹ] much as in most forms of British English, e.g. *red* [ɹɛd].

When after /t, d/ there can be slight assibilation of these stops given that /r/ is a post-alveolar continuant. Again, this is similar to the situation in most forms of British English.

In traditional rural varieties north of a line from Sligo to Dundalk it is normal for words like *trap* to have a dental *t* [t̪] followed by a trilled [r] (a result of the Bernoulli effect), i.e. [t̪ræp]. This type of pronunciation used to be very widespread in the whole of Ireland but has receded greatly in the south due to its social stigmatisation.

Non-prevocalic /r/ shows two main realisations. The first is a post-alveolar continuant with varying degrees of velarisation, e.g. *born* [bɔːɹn]. However, for all non-vernacular speakers under 35 today the normal realisation is as a strongly retroflex [ɹ̠] so that a word like *born* is pronounced [boːɹ̠n] (with an [oː] due to the recent merger of the NORTH and FORCE lexical sets to the high vowel).

The local dialect of Dublin is weakly rhotic, or indeed non-rhotic, and the rise of the retroflex [ɹ̠] may well be part of the set of phonetic changes which occurred at that time due to the dissociation from local vernaculars undertaken by non-vernacular lower middle class speakers (above all females) in the 1990s. See Raymond Hickey 2003. 'What's cool in Irish English? Linguistic change in contemporary Ireland', in: Hildegard L. C. Tristram (ed.) *Celtic Englishes III*. Heidelberg: Winter, pp. 357-373, for more details.

Traditionally, rural varieties of Irish English often showed a uvular *r* and there are several references to this in non-linguistic literature and in anecdotal remarks by lay speakers. There are also speakers of Irish who have this uvular /r/ (see Raymond Hickey 2011. *The Dialects of Irish. Study of a Changing Landscape*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter for more details). At present the uvular *r* only occurs as a stable feature of a speech community in coastal North Leinster, with its centre in the town of Drogheda. Instances of this would be words like *drop* [dʁɒp] or *beer* [biːɾ].

There are examples of all these kinds of *r* on the DVD accompanying Raymond Hickey 2004. *A Sound Atlas of Irish English*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.