

Dublin English

# Varieties of English Around the World

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## General Series

### Volume G35

Dublin English: Evolution and change  
by Raymond Hickey

# Dublin English

Evolution and change

Raymond Hickey

Essen University

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John Benjamins Publishing Company

Amsterdam/Philadelphia



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#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Raymond Hickey

Dublin English : Evolution and change / Raymond Hickey.

p. cm. (Varieties of English Around the World, ISSN 0172-7362 ; v. g35)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. English language--Ireland--Dublin. 2. English language--Dialects--Ireland--Dublin. 3. English language--Variation--Ireland--Dublin. 4. Dublin (Ireland)--Languages. I. Title. II. Varieties of English around the world. General series ; v. 35.

PE2476.H53 2005

427'.941835--dc22

2005050258

ISBN 90 272 4895 8 (Hb; alk. paper)

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John Benjamins Publishing Co. · P.O. Box 36224 · 1020 ME Amsterdam · The Netherlands  
John Benjamins North America · P.O. Box 27519 · Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 · USA

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## *Preface*

The intention of the present book is to describe the English language as spoken by different groups in Dublin, the capital of the Republic of Ireland, and to outline the history of English in that city since its first arrival several hundred years ago.

There are many reasons for wishing to describe English in Dublin. The most obvious is that there is no published book on the subject to date and so the present work can hopefully fill a gap in the literature on modern varieties of urban English. Another reason is that a major change in the pronunciation of non-local Dublin English has taken place recently, and by extension in other parts of Ireland influenced by this speech. Such change can throw light on the mechanisms of language change in general, particularly because the socio-linguistic situation of Dublin is similar, but by no means identical, to that in many other English-speaking capitals around the world.

This book is divided into two broad sections, one on present-day Dublin English (II) and one on the history of English in the capital (III), with an initial section (I) on the methods used for collecting data. The core of the book is section II. Section III connects to it and tries to trace historical English in Dublin in reverse chronological order. Here historical material has been examined which consists in the main of emigrant letters or local letters by Dubliners and literary attestations of Irish English by Dublin writers as well as prescriptive comments on language in the capital by various authors such as the elocutionist Thomas Sheridan.

The section on modern Dublin English deals with the current changes in pronunciation which have characterised the development of Dublin English in the past decade or two. To this end the data from a broad-based survey of Dublin English is presented and analysed. There are also chapters dedicated to the grammar and vocabulary of Dublin English.

A CD-ROM accompanies this book and contains a suite of flexible programmes with all the recordings of Dublin English used for the current study. The data consists of over 300 sound files, over 200 survey questionnaires and informants' maps and over 100 spoken assessment tests. By means of the supplied software users can examine the original data on their PC (see section IV *Guide to the CD-ROM* for technical information). The programmes offer an easy gateway to the data in the form of a tour of Dublin English, a subset of the data files and much background information on English in Dublin as well as overview information on the English language in the rest of Ireland. The CD-ROM also contains a Java version of the software with which all the data and additional information can be viewed on virtually any computer,

including an Apple *Macintosh*. This can be done without installing any software or copying sound files to the hard disk of a computer.

By offering the data on which this study is based it is hoped to reach new levels of accountability for a sociolinguistic investigation of this nature. Because the data on the CD-ROM is central, there are references to individual sound files throughout the book which allow users to hear directly the phenomena which are being discussed at the particular point in the text. These sound files can be accessed by clicking on the items in the tables under the tree node *Sound files referred to in book* (in the *Java* version) or by clicking on the menu option with the same name in the *Windows* software version, called *Discover Dublin English* (both on the accompanying CD-ROM).

In the genesis of this book the author has received much support from many informants in Dublin, who for reasons of anonymity, cannot be mentioned by name. Suffice it to say that this project was only made possible by the willing help given over the years by many individuals, speakers of different forms of Dublin English, who in many conversations provided attestations of the English language in their city. Beyond this smaller group is a much a larger one, consisting of those who cooperated in the large-scale surveys *A Sound Atlas of Irish English* and *A Survey of Irish English Usage* (see Hickey 2004d for details) and who helped in their recordings to back up, or in some cases, refute assumptions about Dublin English.

My thanks also go to Prof. Edgar Schneider for his advice and constructive criticism on this book at earlier stages and for his readiness to accept it into the series *Varieties of English Around the World*. Finally my thanks go to Kees Vaes at John Benjamins who was a friendly and competent editor providing valuable assistance during the production phase of the book.

Raymond Hickey  
Essen, April 2005

# **I Investigating Dublin English**

## **1 Introduction**

As an English-speaking metropolis Dublin enjoys a unique status. It is the capital city of the oldest English colony outside of Britain (Aalen and Whelan eds 1992; Brady and Simms eds 2001; Clarke, Dent and Johnson 2002; Cosgrove ed. 1988; Ossory-Fitzpatrick 1977). For more than 800 years the English language has existed in the city where it has evolved in a manner largely independent of other varieties of English. It is true that during the centuries of its history, Dublin English has experienced the superimposition of more standard varieties of English. But on a vernacular level, English has continued a more or less unbroken development for centuries, a fact which has led to a unique mixture of features. There are other reasons for regarding Dublin English as *sui generis*. It has developed an implicit standard and has gone through internal stages of standardisation and variety separation without the external influence of a national standard of English as in Britain.

As long as there have been records of Dublin English there has been evidence of sub-varieties within the city (see section 1.3 *Classifying Dublin English* below). The vintage of Dublin English has meant that the colloquial forms have evolved a distinct phonetic profile over the many hundreds of years during which these developed. The speech of the better-off inhabitants of the city would seem from early on to have been in a double-bind: on the one hand this section of the population sought means to distinguish itself from the socially lower-placed members of the city's population (dissociation) and on the other hand there was no ready-made standard which they could adopt (any norms were extra-national). The reason for the latter is that in Ireland, more or less from the very beginning of the English involvement in the country, the option of simply emulating the linguistic norms of England was open to the population as this would have meant accepting the preferred form of language in a country which was regarded by many as having imposed its language on Ireland.

Another reason why the evolution of Dublin English is of general interest is that it offers insights into historical processes which are assumed to have taken place in the history of English, but where the time depth is difficult to determine. For instance, the lack of rhoticity: in conservative vernacular Dublin English would appear to be a phenomenon of considerable age as would the use of glottal stops for /t/ in intervocalic and final, open positions.

All of the issues just hinted at here are the subject of dedicated sections in this book. Readers should bear in mind that, for contemporary Dublin English, all the statements made in print can be corroborated by listening to the sound files on the accompanying CD-ROM where the features in question can be heard clearly. Bear in mind also that there is much general information on Irish English (with maps and sound files) on the CD-ROM along with all the Dublin questionnaires from *A Survey of Irish English Usage* (over 200 in all).

### 1.1 *Matters of terminology*

Any discussion of Irish English, and by extension of Dublin English, demands that questions of terminology be clarified, as far as possible, at the outset. The general term *Irish English* in this book is intended as a cover term and not as a reference to a specific variety of English on the island of Ireland. The most common term used for English in Ireland in the past has been ‘Anglo-Irish’. This term is also applied to the literature written in English by authors born in Ireland and it is found as a reference to politics involving Ireland and England. Strictly speaking, the term refers to a variety of Irish, if one interprets the modifier ‘Anglo-’ as qualifying the head ‘Irish’. But even disregarding this technical matter, the term is not very suitable because of its use – with different meanings and connotations – in other spheres of study. General dissatisfaction with the term led in the past few decades to the use of ‘Hiberno-English’ as a label. This derives from *Hibernia*, the Latin word for Ireland, which takes on a form with final *-o* as a qualifier in the new compound. This term enjoyed brief popularity in the 1970s and 1980s, especially since the pioneering works of Alan Bliss gave currency to the label. It has been used by many authors since, notably Filppula and Kallen. This has in turn led to many non-Irish writers – such as Lass (1990) – adopting the term, assuming that one should follow local usage in terminology. In recent years, the term has fallen somewhat into disuse, not least because of its overly Latinate form (but see Dolan 1998 who continues the term). The attempts by some authors, such as Henry (1977) and Todd (1992), to introduce and establish a clear difference in usage between ‘Hiberno-English’ and ‘Anglo-Irish’ have not resulted in general acceptance among the scholars in the field, not least because these two authors define the terms in diametrically opposing fashions.

The upshot of this situation is that many, if not most, authors (see Kallen 1994, 1997) have reverted to the simpler ‘Irish English’, quietly distancing themselves from ‘Hiberno-English’ and definitely from ‘Anglo-Irish’. The label ‘Irish English’ has many inherent advantages: it is parallel to ‘Australian English’, ‘Canadian English’, etc. and is readily understandable to

scholars outside the field. Further subdivisions can then be introduced much as with American English, which is further differentiated in individual studies.

The above remarks demonstrate clearly that the labels for English in Ireland are by no means fixed. This fact should also be seen in a broader non-linguistic context: there is no popular term for English in Ireland, let alone for Dublin English. For example, no equivalent to Cockney, Scouse or Geordie is found either in the north or south of the country. The term 'brogue' is a special case as it refers (historically) to a salient Irish pronunciation of English and is quite restricted nowadays, being generally negative and disparaging (in an Irish context, but elsewhere, e.g. in the Ocracoke context, North Carolina, this is not necessarily the case, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1997).

The lack of a local label can be linked to the fact that English in Ireland has never received popular recognition as the language of Irish cultural heritage, although it has been the native language of the majority of the Irish population since at least the mid-19th century. This distinction is reserved for the Irish language, a branch of Celtic which has been on the retreat for several centuries but which still enjoys a cherished position in the affections of the Irish from the south and those from the north of a nationalist persuasion.

The status of the Irish language has meant that nothing like Henry L. Mencken's *The American Language* could ever have been written on the English of Ireland, let alone popularly accepted. The Irish are somewhat uncomfortable about their acknowledgement of a specific variety of English because the popular conception of language as the property of a nation would imply undue acceptance of the role of England in the genesis of such a variety. A corollary of this attitude, which has been of importance in the development of a supraregional standard in the Republic of Ireland, is that standard British accents of English are not emulated in the south. Instead a non-localised variety has arisen, roughly based on the speech of middle-class Dublin, but without too many specifically Dublin features. One could perhaps use a term like 'Irish Standard English', in analogy to 'Scottish Standard English' which would refer to varieties spoken with the grammar of standard British English but with an Irish accent to a greater or lesser degree, see Abercrombie (1979), Stuart-Smith (1999: 202) on Scottish Standard English. However, no such label has ever been proposed and it is uncertain whether it would be accepted given the lack of identification which the Irish show with varieties of standard English, no matter how much they may use forms approximating to these themselves.

The clear division between Irish and English in Ireland has meant that no attempt was ever made to regard Irish English as an embodiment of Irishness. There are no ethnical reminiscences or ideologies concerning English in Ireland, unlike the situation in the United States with African American English which is generally seen as a carrier of African American culture (Rickford and Rickford 2000).

The above remarks apply most clearly to the Republic of Ireland. The north of the country is in a different situation, given that, as the state of Northern Ireland, it is part of the United Kingdom and given that it has a significantly different history determined mainly by the settlement in the early modern period of large numbers of speakers from Scotland and northern England. The immediate descendants of this group spoke, and to a much reduced extent, still speak what is termed 'Ulster Scots', the variety of Scots taken to Ulster and which has developed there over the course of the last three centuries or so. As a summary one can list the various terms found in Ireland which relate to language, geography and ethnic affiliation.

Table 1.1 *Linguistic and geographical terms in Ireland*

<i>Irish English</i>	Cover term for English in Ireland which can be more closely specified when needed.
<i>Hiberno-English</i>	Latinate term for English in Ireland; similar to above.
<i>Anglo-Irish</i>	Older term for English in Ireland. Still found overseas as a linguistic term, e.g. in Canadian usage. Also a term in literature and politics.
<i>Southern</i>	A qualifier used to refer to that part of Ireland which excludes the province of Ulster.
<i>Northern</i>	A reference to the north, north-east of the country, intended frequently to be co-extensive with the province of Ulster and/or the state of Northern Ireland (which does not contain the north-west county of Donegal).
<i>Ulster</i>	One of the four provinces of present-day Ireland (along with Connaught, Leinster and Munster) located in the north of the country. It now comprises nine counties, six of which form the state of Northern Ireland, the remaining three being Donegal (north-west Ulster), Cavan and Monaghan (south Ulster).

<i>Ulster English</i>	1) A cover term for various forms of English used in Northern Ireland. 2) A specific reference to English brought to Ulster from the north of England and separate from the Scots element in the province.
<i>Ulster Scots</i>	A continuation of the varieties of (western lowlands) Scots brought to Ireland chiefly in the 17th century.
<i>East-coast</i>	A reference to the area from Dundalk – Drogheda (north of Dublin), including the capital, and down to Waterford on the south-east which was the original area of settlement by English speakers in the late Middle Ages. English in this region shows features not found in the rest of the country.

A few other terms should be mentioned here as they may be found in the body of this book. The label 'Irish' refers to the native inhabitants of Ireland and to the language spoken by the majority in the country before the arrival of the English. In Ireland it is not normal to refer to the Irish language as 'Gaelic' as many foreigners do. The label 'Ireland' is used to refer to the entire island which politically consists of two states, The Republic of Ireland (from 1949) and Northern Ireland (part of the United Kingdom from 1921 onwards). *Éire* is the official name of the southern state, in the Irish language, as specified by the constitution of 1937.

## 1.2 *The city of Dublin*

Dublin has the official Irish name *Baile Átha Cliath* 'the town at the ford of hurdles'. There is a second Irish name *Dubh Linn* 'dark pool' which was the source for the anglicised form *Dublin*. It is the capital of the Republic of Ireland and seat of government along with all major Irish administrative organisations, three universities and various colleges of higher education (Bennett 1991, 1994, Boran 2000, Kelleher 1972, McCormack 2000, Moore 1965).

Dublin is located in the centre of the east coast facing the Irish Sea in a county of the same name bounded by the flat counties of Meath and Kildare which form its hinterland to the north and west and by the mountainous county of Wicklow to the south. Co. Dublin has an area of 920 sq km (355 sq mi) and a population of 1,058,300 (1996). The main topographical feature is Dublin Bay into which the River Liffey flows. On the southern border in Wicklow are the Dublin Mountains. The county boundary runs through the southern

suburbs. The town of Bray is strictly speaking in Co. Wicklow but now it is virtually a suburb of Dublin and served by the city's railway network. To the north, Dublin extends at least to the airport near Swords and on the north coast beyond Howth though the indented coastline means that it does not continue along the coast in the same manner as on the southside. To the west the city has extended considerably in the past 20 years or so. Parts of north-east Co. Kildare are now suburbs of Dublin with the extensive settlement of the Liffey valley westwards in the direction of Lucan, Leixlip and Dunboyne.

The population of the city is some 481,600 (1996) but a truer figure is that of 953,000 (1996) for Greater Dublin which consists of seamless suburbs fanning out from the centre around the mouth of the Liffey in the centre of Dublin Bay. The population figures are by now (2004) already an underestimate, particularly because of the influx of young, professional workers in the 1990s participating in the economic boom which gave rise to the epithet 'Celtic Tiger' for Ireland. During the 1900s much of the city was restored, for example the Temple Bar district between Dame Street and the Liffey. The International Finance Centre beyond the Customs House on the north bank of the Liffey estuary expanded considerably on the derelict grounds of the former docklands.

There is an appendix to this book in which a number of maps can be found which show the location of Dublin and its wider setting. These maps are also on the accompanying CD-ROM.

### *1.3 Classifying Dublin English*

In the introduction above reference was made to sub-varieties of English within Dublin. As might be expected of any capital city, different varieties can be recognised and in this section reasons for the labelling followed in this book are given.

When describing different kinds of Dublin English one can choose from a variety of parameters to delimit the various groups of speakers in the city. One could start with traditional terms which refer to class. Class definitions typically involve education, occupation and relative wealth. The middle class – with professionals like doctors, lawyers, teachers – would have all these attributes to a positive degree and one could say that it is the group which sees itself as separate from members of the working class.

However, the matter is not that simple. For instance, air hostesses, bank clerks, company secretaries, people from the world of film and fashion are not necessarily regarded as belonging to the middle class but they certainly come from a section of the population which does not want to be identified with all



## I INVESTIGATING DUBLIN ENGLISH

too localised forms of Dublin English. One could say that it is the group of those aspiring upwards – the socially ambitious – which is the motor behind the changes in Dublin English which are to be dealt with in this book. Certainly this group belongs to those partaking in the changes. However, social movement is not necessarily the only or indeed the defining factor for the group. One can recognise their wish to dissociate themselves from the low prestige and linguistically salient sections of the capital city (this can be seen in features of their speech). The two issues, upward social movement and dissociation from groups below (in the vertical social sense), may well go hand in hand, though this is not always recognised in treatments of socially motivated language change, e.g. Labov (1994, 2001), Guy (1990).

A common means of referring to middle class speakers is as ‘educated’. Again this term is not accurate enough for the current study. The determining factor for active participation in change in Dublin English is the extent to which speakers espouse urban sophistication. This can be seen as a rejection of an all too local identification with Dublin and a conception of self as a player on a (fictional) international stage. Such an understanding of the motivation explains why the changes in Dublin English have been found among groups which may not have enjoyed tertiary education and who are not necessarily among the more prosperous – air hostesses, company secretaries, up-market shop assistants. It furthermore accounts for why many established professionals – genuinely educated speakers in any sense of the term – such as doctors, teachers, lecturers, do not necessarily show the recent changes in Dublin English. Indeed if such speakers have a strong sense of local identity they may show features of popular Dublin English in their speech.

For the discussion of English in Dublin a twofold division, with further subdivision, can be used. The first group consists of those who use the inherited popular form of English in the capital. The term ‘local’, as used already, is intended to capture this and to emphasise that these speakers are those who show strongest identification with traditional conservative Dublin life of which the popular accent is very much a part. The reverse of this is ‘non-local’ which refers to sections of the metropolitan population who do not wish a narrow, restrictive identification with popular Dublin culture. This group then subdivides into a larger, more general section labelled ‘mainstream’ and a second, burgeoning group which rejects an association with local Dublin. In previous publications, the author has used the label ‘fashionable’ to describe the speech of the latter group. In the context of Dublin English in the 1990s the term was justified. The original group to show the changes, which have taken place in the speech of the capital, especially in the area of vowels, was a relatively small one which was clearly aware of fashions and trends in Dublin

1998 and 1999a as examples) the changes were most apparent in sections of the population, mostly female, which regarded themselves as part of new Dublin, however vague this term may be, and which wanted to hive themselves off from traditional local culture in the capital. It was only in the late 1990s and into the 2000s that the changes in mainstream Dublin English spread rapidly and became typical of large sections of the city's population and of young people, especially females, throughout the Republic of Ireland in general. Given this situation, the speech of this group is, for want of a better term, simply labelled 'new'.

Table 1.2 *Divisions of Dublin English*

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1) <i>local</i> Dublin English	
2) <i>non-local</i> Dublin English –	a) <i>mainstream</i> Dublin English
	b) <i>new</i> Dublin English

## 2 Collecting data

The present section offers background information on surveys carried out by the author on English in Ireland and on Dublin English in particular. It furthermore discusses and attempts to assess the methods employed in these surveys. There have been two projects within which all the data on Dublin English for this book was collected and which is contained on the accompanying CD-ROM.

- (1) a. *Change in Dublin English* (1994-1998)
- b. *A Sound Atlas of Irish English* (2000-2002)

The results from the first project were published in a series of articles in the late 1990s (Hickey 1998, 1999a, 2000c) and those from the second are available in Hickey (2004d). The first project was initiated after observations on changes in pronunciation in Dublin were made by the author from the late 1980s onwards. The appropriateness of such a project was confirmed with each passing year in which the new pronunciation in Dublin became ever more widespread. Because of the status of Dublin as capital of the Republic of Ireland, the new pronunciation disseminated from here to the rest of the country. The desire to record this spread was one of the main reasons for the second, larger project which followed after 2000.

The main purpose of the sound atlas project was to record, in as comprehensive a form as possible, the different varieties, both urban and rural,

of English spoken throughout the entire island of Ireland at present. Naturally given the size and status of Dublin, several hundred of the over 1,500 recordings for the entire country were actually from the capital. The project did not set out to confirm any specific theory about Irish English, i.e. there was no 'theoretical hunch' (Johnson 2000: 88f.) which the author wished to prove or disprove although the recording of current changes in English, particularly in the Republic of Ireland, disseminating from the capital Dublin, was a primary objective.

### *2.1 Change in Dublin English: Collecting the data*

The observations concerning vowel shifts in Dublin English (see section 2.5 *Details of the vowel shift* below) go back to the 1980s when the author noticed a significant retraction of the onset for the diphthong /ai/ and a raising of the vowel in the THOUGHT lexical set among certain sectors of the population. The normal realisation of the /ai/ vowel is [əɪ] in vernacular varieties of Dublin English and [aɪ] in middle class Dublin English, including the supraregional variety of English in the Republic of Ireland which is derived from non-vernacular usage in the capital in the 20th century.

Moving on from single instances of the vowel shift, the author attempted to narrow down the groups within Dublin which showed the vowel shift most clearly. From this resulted the interpretation of its motivation which, in the opinion of the author, lies in a deliberate reaction to the vernacular of the city, a movement away from local vowel realisations beyond the supraregional standard to a new variety of Dublin English which cannot be seen as either dialect levelling (Williams and Kerswill 1999) or an incipient approximation to any British standard.

A clear example of this is seen in the following case. Most female members of the ground staff, under approximately 30, at Dublin Airport show the vowel shift as do the majority of the (female) flight attendants with the national airline Aer Lingus. The shift is quite evident in the numbers of flights which frequently contain the numerals 'five' or 'nine' or in such sentences as 'Would you like an isle seat?' where the pronunciations [faɪv], [naɪn], [aɪl] are regular.

In order to quantify intuitions about the vowel shift, systematic data was collected over a four-year period from 1994 to 1998. The first stage of the collection consisted of examining unconscious answers of shop assistants to various questions from the present author. The method employed was essentially similar to that used by Labov for his classic investigation of New

York City English (Labov 1966). An interview was carried out which enabled the collection of data without the awareness of the interviewee that he/she was being observed linguistically.

The two variables which were of primary interest for the investigation are (ai) and (ɔi), the former having played a somewhat more important role as the vowel shift would seem from the earliest observations to have been a push shift initiated by onset retraction with (ai).

## *2.2 Initial methods used*

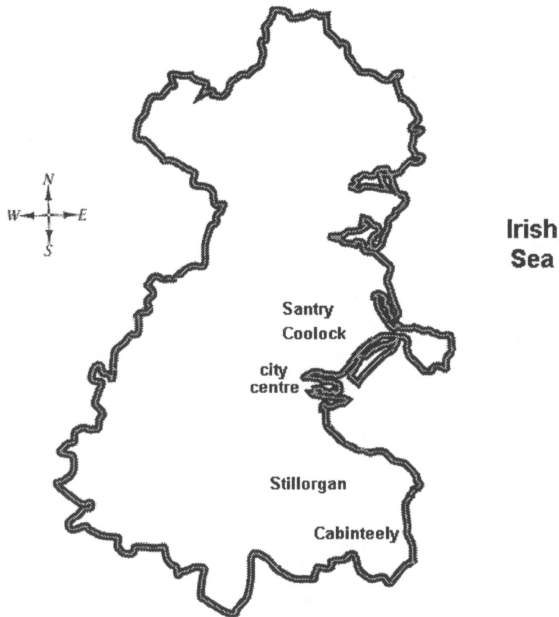
The collection of sociolinguistic data obviously requires a considerable degree of planning in advance. It also, by its very nature, implies that a few methods were tested until the final means of recording was chosen. This is indeed the case. The author began recording in the mid 1990s using a variant of the 'rapid anonymous interview' (Labov 1966). There are two types of anonymous interviews. The first is where the informant does not know that an interview is taking place. The second is where he/she does, but the name of the informant is not known to the author.

The purpose of rapid anonymous interviews in the Dublin context was to obtain attestations for the diphthong in the PRICE lexical set, i.e. (ai), and in addition for the diphthong in the CHOICE lexical set, i.e. (ɔi).

A selection of locations in Dublin were chosen which were taken to be representative of both halves of the city. On the north side, two shopping centres were chosen in less residentially desirable areas: 1) the Northside Shopping Centre, close to the motorway and an industrial estate in Coolock and 2) the Omnipark Shopping Centre in Santry, near Ballymun, which contains Ireland's only group of high rise flats. These two locations were assumed (as it turned out, quite rightly) not to be areas in which would-be sophisticated urbanites would alter their speech to hivel themselves off from the vernacular-speaking local population.

For the purposes of comparison two outlying shopping centres on the south side were also examined: 1) Stillorgan and 2) Cabinteely, both of which are several miles from the city centre, further from this than are Santry and Coolock as can be seen from the following map.

### Locations of Dublin suburbs



The south side of the city begins on the south bank of the Liffey and for this reason the area around Grafton Street can be taken as representative of the south side commercially. Grafton Street is about half a mile south of the Liffey and runs approximately in a north south direction. At its north end it is bounded by Trinity College and on the south by St. Stephens Green. It is the centre of Dublin's main shopping precinct, bounded on the west by some minor streets and on the east by the parallel Dawson Street. At the north end, parallel to one side of Trinity is Nassau Street which runs in a west to east direction and which contains some up-market shops including those in the Setanta Centre.



Grafton Street is now completely pedestrianised and houses a variety of different shops which are in the upper range of the market. Two types of shop figure prominently on Grafton Street: 1) clothes shops and 2) jewellery shops. Of the former the most prestigious is probably Brown and Thomas, Arnotts and Laura Ashley all of which carry a range of fairly expensive clothes and accoutrements such as ladies' perfumes and jewellery. In the meantime, some of these shops have ceased to exist but have been replaced by others of a similar category.

The river Liffey is a dividing line and when one crosses it moving northwards one enters a different type of urban setting. The continuation of O'Connell Bridge across the Liffey is O'Connell Street which runs about half a mile northwards to the south-east corner of Parnell Square. There are many shops on this street, mixed in types, and generally in the mid range in terms of price. For instance, the book shop Eason's is a general store with a large supply of popular literature, school books, and print media. The more prestigious and academically oriented book shops are to be found on Dawson and Nassau Street on the south side of the city. Equally the general store Clerys covers a wide range of goods at normal, middle of the road prices. This is true of the shops in streets to the left and right of O'Connell Street and to the ILAC shopping centre, west of O'Connell Street, about half way down. It is probably fair to say that there are virtually no exclusive, up-market shops in this entire shopping area; all of these are located in the region of Grafton Street.

North of O'Connell Street a pattern is evident which is typical of modern suburb settlements, not just in Ireland: there are corner shops which provide for small needs, typically newsagents, tobacconists, grocery stores, often combined into one. Beyond that there are large shopping centres for one-stop shopping. These contain as their focus one or two large department stores with many smaller shops around them. Frequently the shops in such centres are part of chains of stores, found also in other shopping centres in other cities, apart from Dublin.

### *2.3 Conducting the interviews*

For the interviews of the first project, *Change in Dublin English* (1994-1998), the author entered a particular shop and searched for an item on sale, preferably one which cost £5.99 (or with the later project, the equivalent in Euro currency) or indeed any price which ended in 99 pence/cent (practically all do and hence price tags show this figure). Furthermore, he tried to ensure that the

item was made in Ireland. He then approached an assistant and, feigning short-sightedness, asked what sum was on the tag. Reading out the price provided a spontaneous pronunciation of the /ai/ diphthong before a voiced consonant, in *five* and in *nine* respectively. This environment was that in which the vowel shift, if present for a particular speaker, would have been noticeable. The question was then repeated, which gave a more careful pronunciation of the same words.

Table 2.1 *Structure of rapid anonymous interview, variant 1*

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Question 1:

Hello, I'm afraid I don't have my glasses with me, could you tell me the price of this item?

Answer 1:

Five ninety nine [spontaneous style]

Question 2:

I beg your pardon?

Answer 2:

\*Five ninety nine\* [more careful style]

For the vowel shift of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the pronunciation of the two key words *Ireland* and *Irish* was important. These words are obviously common and have high iconic value so that for many speakers the shift was particularly obvious in their phonetic realisation of these words. To elicit a pronunciation of these items, the following question was added to the above in each interview.

Table 2.2 *Structure of rapid anonymous interview, variant 2*

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Question 3:

I wonder could you tell me where this item [garment, etc.] was made?

Answer 3:

In Ireland.

Question 4:

You mean it's not English?

Answer 4:

No, it's Irish.

The answers to questions 3 and 4 were not always predictable. The answers indicated above were given about half the time, but they varied from some other sentences like 'It's home-produced', 'It was made here alright' or just



‘No’ for question 4. This meant that the amount of data here was much lower than for variant 1 of the interview.

Recording the pronunciation of the vowel /ai/ was done immediately after the brief interview. In this situation, the author had to remember the pronunciation as accurately as possible and for this reason only three variants were recognised although phonetically the range was much greater.

- (2)
- |    |      |   |      |              |
|----|------|---|------|--------------|
| a. | /ai/ | → | [əɪ] | (local)      |
| b. | /ai/ | → | [aɪ] | (mainstream) |
| c. | /ai/ | → | [ɑɪ] | (new)        |

The vowel shift, in its initial form, would seem to have been a push shift with the retraction of /ai/ providing the impetus for the change. This meant that the /ɔi/ vowel which normally has a lowered and somewhat unrounded realisation in Irish English was realised close to [ɔɪ] in those varieties which showed the vowel shift.

(3)	/ai/		/ɔi/
Local DE	[əɪ]	–	[ɑɪ]
Mainstream DE	[aɪ]	–	[ɒɪ]
New DE	[ɑɪ]	–	[ɔɪ]

Testing for the (ɔi) variable within the first investigation was done in the following manner. The author ascertained whether the store in question had a department for children’s toys.

Table 2.3 *Structure of rapid anonymous interview, variant 3*

Question 1:

I’m looking for something for my 8-year old nephew for his birthday, do you know where I might look?

Answer 1:

Yeah, in the toy department. [spontaneous style]

Question 2:

I beg your pardon?

Answer 2:

Why don’t you try the \*toy\* department. [more careful style]

The name of the department was offered in over 80% of cases. Sometimes an answer like ‘In the kids’/children’s department’ was given which was not

useful in the present context where the pronunciation of the (ɔi) variable was the object of interest. As with (ai), all realisations were assigned to one of three variants as follows.

- |     |    |      |   |      |              |
|-----|----|------|---|------|--------------|
| (4) | a. | /ɔi/ | → | [ɑɪ] | (local)      |
|     | b. | /ɔi/ | → | [ɒɪ] | (mainstream) |
|     | c. | /ɔi/ | → | [ɔɪ] | (new)        |

An important result in this connection is that those speakers with the raised realisation of (ɔi) also had a retracted realisation of (ai) which would suggest that the former was caused by the retraction evident in the latter.

#### *2.4 Results of the data collection*

The method used for data collection in the initial Dublin survey turned out to be quite satisfactory. There were of course certain restrictions imposed by the method used. The most important was that the interviews were all very short and put a high demand on the author's memory. The realisations which informants used had to be memorised and written down very soon afterwards, in effect the moment the author left the shop in question. The amount of data which can be recorded in this manner is quite limited but this is outweighed by the genuineness of the data and the certainty that informants are not influenced by prior knowledge of the investigation.

The data collected showed that an area in Dublin where the vowel shift was clearly represented was the up-market shopping area of Grafton Street and its neighbouring streets. A closer examination in a number of selected shops was carried out after these initial results had been obtained. One reason for a taking a more detailed look at vowel realisations was that the initial results seemed to deliver an unexpected picture. The number of attestations of the vowel shift was not quite as high as expected, despite the previous uncoordinated observations made at these locations before the quantifying of data began in 1994.

Somewhat low ratings for the vowel shift were obtained in the Grafton Street area and it was suspected that this could have been the result of the data collection method. However, there was no obvious reason why a method which worked in one part of the city should not do so in another part. Rather the ratings would seem to have had the following cause. Retraction of (ai) arises from a relaxation of muscular tension for the onset of the diphthong. This is the articulatory directive for speakers wishing to distance themselves phonetically

from the local [əɪ] realisation. But during the anonymous interview, when presented with a question from a customer who claimed short-sightedness, a tenser and clearer articulation was used, even the first time round, which militated against the relaxation which is a precondition for (ai) retraction. That such a relaxation is the essential articulatory element with [aɪ] is supported by the fact that before voiceless consonants, which inherently involve a tenser articulation, the vowel shift was not attested to anything like the same degree as before voiced consonants.

In order to test the possible correctness of this analysis a further interview was designed and data was collected in 1996 and 1997 in the Grafton Street area. In this case, only jewellery shops were chosen. The reason for this is that this type of shop caters for better off sections of society, however, the employees are usually younger women who frequently come from lower middle-class backgrounds. This is a scenario in which one finds the employees adapting their behaviour, linguistic and otherwise, to that of their clientele. This leads, of course, to hyperadaptation. Indeed it soon became obvious, that this group – young, lower middle-class females – was very active in the vowel shift, if not in fact the prime motor in this development.

To ensure that a maximally relaxed interview could be conducted, a longer time was taken for each. Furthermore, a time of day was chosen when the assistants were likely to be on their own, or at maximum with one or two other customers in the shop. So the interviews were typically conducted early in the morning or during lunchtime, when business was slightly slacker. The strategy employed was the following: the author entered the shop with the obvious intention of buying some jewellery. Approached by a shop assistant, he then asked for earrings with a Celtic design. This ensured that the word *design* occurred several times in the ensuing conversation. The phonotactic environment – /ai/ + voiced consonant – was that in which the vowel shift would be expected to turn up, if the interviewee had it. There was one slight disadvantage of this approach compared to the earlier type of interview based on feigned short-sightedness. Here the author had to place a request for a particular type of earring and hence may have, in one or two situations, provoked his type of pronunciation with assistants who showed a high degree of phonetic accommodation (Trudgill 1986). However, the use of the word *design* could be put to good use in this context. By employing a popular Dublin pronunciation – *design* [də'zəɪn] – the author was able to provoke the use of the shifted vowel, i.e. *design* [də'zəɪn]. The reason for this lies in the motivation of the shift as a form of dissociation of the upwardly mobile group from local, working-class sections of the Dublin population.

Table 2.4 *Structure of longer anonymous interview*

## Introductory question:

Hello, I'm looking for earrings for my wife. She's German and she'd like to have some with a Celtic design.

## Typical initial response:

Right, we've actually got quite a range with a Celtic design. Would you like to come over to the showcase and have a look . . .

After this opening a conversation of anything between 3 and 10 minutes ensued in which the author paid particular attention to tokens of the /ai/ diphthong.

The interpretation of the Dublin vowel shift as motivated by the desire to dissociate oneself in language from locals was clearly confirmed one time during data collection when the author was in a Grafton Street jewellery shop early one morning. There was no-one in the shop apart from him and a single shop assistant. After engaging in conversation on the matter of earrings for a few moments, he was presented with a few pairs which were prohibitively expensive. The assistant obviously noted the expression of surprise and dismay on his face and, as if to apologise for the pricing policy of her employers, immediately fell back into her native pronunciation, a clear local Dublin accent, and commented profusely on the cost of living and inflation in present-day Ireland. In this particular case it was plain that the young woman had adopted a new pronunciation which she felt was expected in her work environment, a pronunciation quite different from her own vernacular, that of lower-class north Dublin.

## 2.5 *Data and figures*

Below tables are offered to show the data obtained in the *Change in Dublin English* project. As /ai/ – in a retracted realisation – was suspected of having been the diphthong which initiated the vowel shift, this received most attention. Two phonetic environments were examined, word-final and pre-consonantal position, indicated below by (ai#) and (aiC) and found in the keywords TRY and DESIGN respectively. The other vowel of interest was that of the CHOICE lexical set. However, the design of the investigation (see interview questions discussed above) meant that attestations of this diphthong in word-final position only were collected so that one can talk here of the TOY lexical set.

As detailed above, four areas of the city were chosen as representative of the north and south. The areas labelled 'Northside' and 'Southside'