To What Extent Do Irish Fluency and Gender Affect Prevalence of Irish-influenced Phonological Features in Irish English?

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Abstract

This thesis presents research into the variety of Irish English spoken in the Múscraí area of County Cork, Republic of Ireland. The focus of the research is to examine phonological features of Irish English which may have been influenced by Irish and how these interact with speakers' levels of Irish fluency and to a lesser extent, to their gender. The use of dental stops [t̪ d̪] as realisations of /θ/ and /ð/ in THINK/THIS lexical sets are considered, as they are seen as a hallmark feature of West Irish Englishes (Hickey, 2004). In addition to th-stopping, levels of rhoticity and vowel epenthesis (both classed as supraregional features of Irish English by Hickey (2004)) are also examined. All data was collected by means of questionnaires and interviews with participants living or working in the West Cork Gaeltacht (Irish speaking area). Analysis consisted of examination of questionnaire results and transcription of all interviews, followed by comparison of use of the focus variables between interviews and questionnaires. Distinct trends noted in this work were that fluency and gender did not necessarily correlate positively with use of the focus variants as predicted. Fluent Irish speakers were more likely to use [d̪] stops in place of /ð/ than non-fluent speakers in interviews, but this finding was reversed in the reading tasks, with non-fluent participants using [d̪] more frequently. Men generally used dental stops more frequently than women. However, it was female speakers who took the lead in r-dropping. Both male and fluent Irish speakers reported using epenthetic variants more often than non-epenthetic variants during the sound file segment of the study, but only two examples of epenthesis could be found across all interviews and reading tasks. This indicates a more complex sociolinguistic situation in Múscraí English than might be expected.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

IRISH PHONOLOGICAL FEATURES IN IRISH ENGLISH

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

In the most recent census for the Republic of Ireland (2016), it is reported that of 1,761,420 people over the age of three who claimed they could speak Irish, nearly a quarter of them stated that they never spoke it (Central Statistics Office, 2017). However, it is interesting to note that the census merely asked whether or not the person spoke Irish with options for “Yes” or “No” - there was no option to indicate what level of ability the speaker had. The results of the 2016 census add to a body of evidence documenting the decline of the Irish language, which in no small part is due to the prevalence of English in the Republic (Hickey, 2004). However, a shift in public perception of the Irish-English language contact situation could indeed play some small role in halting this decline. The traditional narrative put forth in literature has at times cast English as being an unstoppable force that has the minority Irish speakers at its mercy - Bliss (1981) presents this view. Governmental policy has passed legislation within this vein, providing protections to Irish within the educational sphere and legal world. The necessity of such actions is justified by lawmakers as protecting Irish as a central part of the Irish cultural identity. Despite centuries of native use across the island of Ireland, the English language is not afforded this same role. While legislation protecting minority languages is generally to be celebrated, research has shown that in some cases, such efforts have had unintended consequences for the Irish fluency of people living in first language (L1) Irish communities (Ó hIfearnáin, 2007).

Ó hIfearnáin (2007) interviewed inhabitants of the Cork Gaeltacht who had sent their children to schools with Irish as the language of instruction. He found that often parents had felt worried that their children would not achieve an equal level of English fluency with Irish being the language of instruction, so had sought to remedy this by speaking more English at home. This had in turn led to a decline in Irish fluency as the children grew, something that the parents had grown to regret with hindsight. Ó hIfearnáin describes a need for Irish-speaking parents to be better informed about the contact situation between Irish and English, so that they might make choices that would encourage more equal bilingualism in their communities. Chief amongst this information would be a reassurance that knowledge of one language need not necessarily mean a poverty in the other, a concern found amongst parents in the Gaeltacht in the past and at present

(Ó Giollagáin, 2014).

Like many languages in close contact situations, Irish and Irish English have both left their mark on each other phonologically. This research focuses on Irish English and several phonological features of note from Irish that have become adopted into the English speech of those living in Irish language communities.

More specifically, this study examines to what degree Irish fluency plays a part in this phenomenon, especially since increasingly fewer people are speaking Irish on a regular basis. The aim is that this research is relevant to how we understand the role of Irish in the development of Irish varieties of English, as well as examining language trends and attitudes in Gaeltacht areas.

1.2. Aim and Objectives

The research undertaken contributes to the relatively small body of knowledge about the sociolinguistic environment of Múscraí, Country Cork. A linguistic survey of the Irish spoken in the area was done in the early 20th century by Brian Ó Cuív (1944), whereas a comprehensive study of Ballyvourney English was undertaken in 1981 by Anthony Lunny (1981). Since then, only individual features of the area's speech have been examined, for example levels of lenition of /t/ (Panek, Ferragne, and Zumstein, 2015). In addition, the aim of this study is to determine the nature of the relationship between Irish and the English spoken in the region.

The research will contribute in a meaningful way to the field of knowledge of Irish English generally. This work also draws attention to the importance of examining the effect of Irish on English, in the context of a minority language's features being adopted into a local variety of the dominant language, in this case English. With the decline of Irish being presented as a foregone conclusion frequently in popular media and academia (Ó Giollagáin, 2014), it is easy to take a pessimistic view of Irish and English language contact - that English is a barrier to Irish language development and growth. However, such viewpoints do not account for the enriching effects that the close language contact between Irish and English has had on both languages (Gansterer, 2016).

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There is evidence that during its period of contact with English, features from Irish have been transferred to Irish English. These features range from individual lexical items to phonological and syntactic variants. The relationship between Irish and English need not necessarily be combative, especially since so many new speakers of Irish are first language English speakers (Walsh, O'Rourke and Rowland, 2015). Therefore, research into the effects of Irish on Irish Englishes can only be beneficial for our collective understanding of the contemporary language situation in the Republic of Ireland.

1.3. Research questions

In this study, the aim is to answer the following research question:

To what extent does Irish fluency affect the prevalence of "Irish-influenced" phonological features in Irish English?

More specifically, this research question can be broken down into the following sub-questions:

Are the dental stops [t̪ d̪] more likely to be realisations of English /θ/ and /ð/ in Irish English speakers who report higher levels of Irish fluency? If so, to what extent?

Are less fluent Irish speakers more likely to be non-rhotic in their Irish English speech than those with a greater degree of Irish fluency?

Can higher levels of epenthesis ([fɪlɪm] for "film") be found in the Irish English speech of more fluent Irish speakers than their less Irish-fluent counterparts?

Does the gender of a speaker affect the level of Irish-influenced features found in Irish English?

This research project was undertaken with the hypothesis in mind that higher levels of Irish fluency would correlate with an increase in th-stopping, epenthesis and rhoticity. It was also expected that if gender interacted with these features, it would be insofar that female speakers

would be less likely to abandon them than males. Each of the focus features are considered to be either characteristic of the dialect spoken in the area or are supraregional features of Irish English more generally, so a female-led use of the features would align with the more traditional view of women adhering to linguistic standards. (Labov, 1990).

2. Background

2.1. Historical overview

Like any language contact situation involving conquest, the relationship between English and Irish has been complicated from the beginning. Despite the colonisation of Ireland by the Normans and then by the English, Middle English did not overtake Irish in the Medieval period. In fact, Irish flourished alongside the new languages introduced by the new nobility, French and English. Some French borrowings in Irish from this time can still be observed today, predominantly in place names and family surnames, e.g. Fitzwilliam, De Róiste (MacLysaght, 1972). Various scholars have attributed the endurance of Irish during this time to the willingness of the Norman invaders to adopt Gaelic language and cultural practices (Kennedy, 2015). Hickey claims that by the end of 15th century, the Anglo-Norman ruling class in Ireland had been absorbed culturally and linguistically into their new home. However, some areas remained relatively unscathed by conquest - Ballyvourney shows no sign of Anglo-Norman settlement (Lunny, 1981).

In the 17th century, English began to overtake Irish in terms of everyday use in some areas. Filppula (1999) describes the social changes that took place in Ireland during the 1650s as being some of the most influential on the decline of Irish. Agricultural workers from all over England and Scotland were sent to join the workforce in Ireland, in order to reinforce English presence there (Hickey, 2006). As a result of this influx of British immigrants, Irish speakers began to be exposed to various regional British varieties of English - Scots in the North and Midlands dialects in the Southern counties.

In the 18th century, academics began to document features of certain varieties of Irish English. These early forays into Irish English study regularly took the form of glossaries, cataloguing

lexical items of interest from regional varieties. The noted elocutionist Thomas Sheridan wrote one of the first descriptions of colloquial Irish English in his work "A Rhetorical Grammar of the English Language" in 1780. Focusing on the speech of middle-class Dubliners, he took a rather prescriptivist view (Hickey, 2005). Principally, Sheridan described a maintenance of Middle English /ɛ:/ in place of the /i:/ found elsewhere in Britain post the Great Vowel Shift, as well as /ai/ being produced as /ei/. In addition to these distinctive vowel variants, he described a "thickening (of) the sounds of *d* and *t* in certain situations" (Sheridan, 1780). While a description of the realisation of /t/ and /d/ more generally is likely, Hickey (1999) suggested that Sheridan was describing some realisation of dental fricatives as alveolar plosives. This would certainly align with modern pronunciations of Dublin English.

Education played a crucial role in the decline of Irish, but also in the development of Irish Englishes. Primary education was not widely available to the general population until the introduction of the National School system in 1831 (Donnelly, 2011). State schools were required to give their students a basic grounding in arithmetic, literacy and often religious education, with some tutelage in various vocational skills. However, Irish was not always part of the curriculum. Teachers and village priests were regularly recruited from more affluent, English-speaking areas and even at the time, it was noted that these figures often did not teach or speak Irish with much enthusiasm (Kennedy, 2015). In the same year as the National School system being introduced, the Irish language was removed from the national curriculum. Sean Beecher (1993) describes this as being one of the most damaging acts for the language to date. He explains that this decision on the part of the National System of Education affected Irish people of all ages, contributing not only to the language's decline amongst the young but also affecting the varieties of Irish English that were still developing across Ireland. Filppula (1999) too acknowledges that the establishment of National Schools in 1831 played a major role in prioritising English over Irish for many young people.

A different view of 19th century education in Ireland is put forth by Bliss (1977), who focuses not on the Irish ability of school teachers in this period but on the variety of English that they spoke. He describes many school teachers as being Irish English speakers themselves and *not* British English speakers, lending evidence to the argument that Irish English developed indigenously with heavy input from Irish. The perspective of Irish English not being acquired mainly through

education (and therefore Standard British English) is shared by Odlin (1997).

Regardless of the variety of English that they acquired, children had little choice but to learn English as a means of getting an education, which was being taken increasingly more seriously as the nineteenth century progressed. Parents who previously had run their homes monolingually with Irish as the first language encouraged their children in their English studies, as it proved to provide better employment prospects both in Ireland and abroad (Lunny, 1981). Throughout the 19th century, the belief that speaking a Standard British form of English proficiently was beneficial for those wishing to move up in society became increasingly accepted (Kennedy, 2015). A proponent of this idea was politician Daniel O'Connell, who recommended that the Irish learn English in order to have a respectable voice in society and to advance themselves socially (Lunny, 1981). This belief endured well into the twentieth century and as English overtook Irish as the most widely spoken language in Ireland, it became more common to prioritise English language learning over Irish nationwide.

Despite opportunities for Irish use in the public sphere decreasing, many people still continued to natively speak Irish as their first language, especially in rural areas. However, as a result of English replacing Irish as the language of instruction in most schools, the vast majority of written sources from Ireland in the 19th century were produced in English (Bliss, 1981). This has resulted in a drought of evidence for the colloquial Irish spoken in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

It took many years and major political upheaval for Irish to be added back to the national school curriculum, but by the time it was, great damage had been done. There were no censuses taken in Ireland gathering data on bilingual Irish people until after 1851, so the academic community can only make estimates at the rate of the language's decline in this time period (Hickey, 2004). Garret FitzGerald (1984, 2003) worked extensively on works that aimed to estimate the decline of Irish across the country from the 18th century until the early 20th century, using the early censuses as a source of population data. FitzGerald (2003) states that in the 1851 census, 21% of Irish speakers were monoglots; however, by 1881, this number had dropped to 6.75% of the Irish-speaking population. In his earlier work on the minimum levels of Irish being spoken from the 18th century onwards, FitzGerald (1984) emphasized the importance of monolingual Irish

speakers in maintaining Irish fluency in language communities. The effects of monolingual Irish preservation during this period are still being felt today: areas where over half of the 1851 population were Irish monoglots correspond geographically to modern Gaeltachts almost without exception.

During the 19th century, Irish was declining at such a rate that it was noticeable to contemporary Irish scholars. This awareness is evidenced by the formation of myriad different bodies and organisations dedicated to the protection and preservation of the threatened Irish language and culture during this period. Some notable examples include the Gaelic Athletic Association (1884), the Irish Archaeological Society (1840), the Gaelic League (1893) and numerous Irish colleges (Beecher, 1993). Members of these groups understood the powerful role of language in a community, so they organised Irish language classes open to all across the country (Ní Chumhaill, 2016). These bodies placed Irish in context as a means of keeping culture alive and encouraged its use as a tool of political defiance.

In the 21st century, both Irish and English enjoy equal status as official languages in the Republic of Ireland. However, Irish is today only spoken natively in a handful of areas roughly situated along the West coast of the Republic. These areas collectively are known in Ireland as the Gaeltacht - literally “Irish-speaking area”. According to the 2011 census, the Gaeltacht has a population of only around 100,716 people, spread across an area of around 4300km squared. It is fastidiously maintained and preserved by a specialist body known as Údarás na Gaeltachta. Údarás na Gaeltachta (“Gaeltacht authority”) was founded in 1980 after the Irish government passed the Údarás na Gaeltachta Act in 1979 (Údarás na Gaeltachta, c2019). Today it functions as a regionally-run authority funded by the Irish government, tasked with the development and safeguarding of the Gaeltacht. It concerns itself with the economic, social, educational and geographical interests of the Gaeltacht and its inhabitants. This can range from funding businesses that champion the use of Irish in the workplace, to organising festivals celebrating traditional Irish music, poetry and art.

The Irish revival movement can be observed nationwide and even abroad. Movements in Northern Ireland to promote Irish have garnered success - the Northern Irish Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure launched a scheme named Líofa (meaning “sharpened” or “fluent”) in

September of 2011. The initiative provides free Irish language classes with the initial aim that by 2015, 1,000 people in Northern Ireland would have enrolled. The success of the initiative exceeded expectations, with over 13,000 speakers having signed up to take part by the fourth anniversary of its launch (BBC News, 2015). The positive reception of this scheme and others launched in the Republic hint at a brighter future for Irish, but this amelioration of public opinion is not reflected everywhere. It was reported in 2019 that the Irish national broadcaster RTÉ had been delivering only 0.7% of their programming in Irish (Conradh na Gaeilge, 2019). This is in spite of the Broadcasting Act of 2009, which was passed specifically by the Irish government to legally obligate the Irish media to provide a wide variety of material through Irish. This demonstrates that the outcome of laws and measures designed to protect and promote Irish are not always as effective as intended by their proponents.

Many bodies invested in the preservation and study of the Irish language do not do so to the exclusion of English. Recently, An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta "the council on Gaeltacht education and Irish-medium schooling" (cogg.ie) funded research examining Irish and English bilingualism in Ireland and the effects it can have on proficiency in spoken Irish amongst the young living in Gaeltacht areas (Péterváry, Ó Curnáin, Sheahan and Ó Giollagáin, 2014). This was the first major comparative study of its kind into bilingualism in Irish and English (Ó Giollagáin, 2014).

The findings of Péterváry et al (2014) indicated a clear disadvantage to Irish speakers, with even the highest linguistic competency scores in Irish being only comparable in level to the lowest scores in English. The researchers described the effect of bilingualism in the Gaeltacht as subtractive, with early exposure to English being linked to lower proficiency in Irish. Péterváry et al (2014) ascribed this damaging effect to the social role of Irish (even in Gaeltacht areas) being lower and less common than English, as well as the status of Irish as a minority language. There are fewer opportunities to socialise through Irish in public, with businesses and events operating through English first and foremost.

Péterváry et al (2014) drew attention to the subtractive nature of this particular kind of bilingual environment by collecting data from children in Cois Fharraige and South Conamara in the Galway Gaeltacht. This area is described by the researchers as the strongest Irish-speaking area

left and they deemed it to be representative of other Irish and English bilingual communities within Ireland. They found that the language competency of children who are L2 Irish speakers (such as Gaeilscoileanna students from English-speaking homes) do not show the same deficiency in their L1 as seen in L1 Irish speakers. Their Irish knowledge does not detract from their L1 English, instead it contributes to an additive form of bilingualism. Their L2 ability in Irish enhances the social and future career prospects of these children, while not damaging their L1 English. Péterváry et al (2014) suggest that the key difference in these scenarios is that English is far better represented in media and society, as the majority language in Ireland. This increases opportunity and variety of use for speakers, leading to L1 English staying more robust when threatened with the addition of a minority L2 such as Irish.

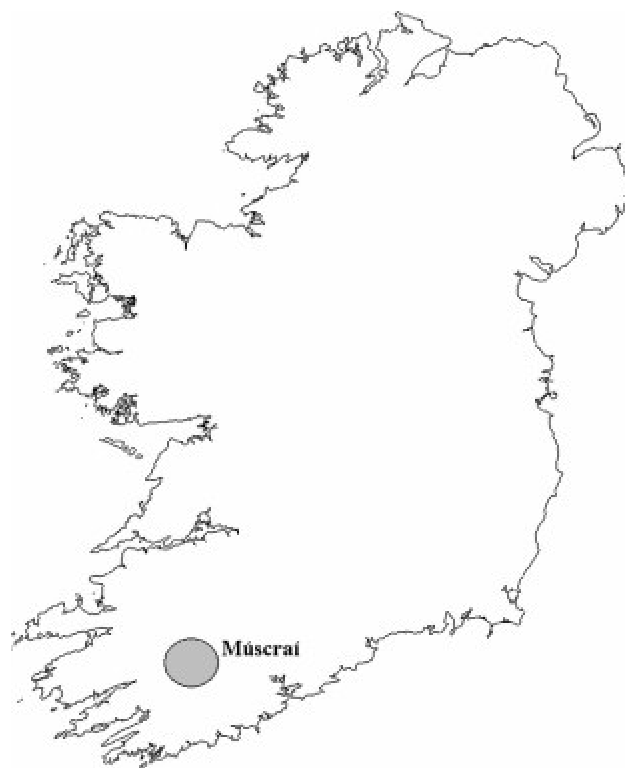
Indeed, research in this field often focuses both on the language of the youth and also on the influence that English has on Irish. As a result of English being the dominant language in this particular contact situation, it is understandable that much of the efforts of the community focus on how Irish is being changed or limited by its proximity to English (Bliss, 1981). It is less common that studies into Irish Englishes describe change as a result of Irish influence - Hickey (1986) justifies this by explaining that while the most Irish influence can be seen in areas where Irish is still spoken natively, there are almost no areas left in the Republic of Ireland where exclusively Irish is spoken. English is spoken in every Gaeltacht, so even these areas are not exempt from English contact.

2.2.1. Context of study

This study focuses on the inhabitants of the Múscraí Gaeltacht, known in English as Muskerry or the Cork Gaeltacht. The area is the smallest Gaeltacht in the country, making up only 262 square kilometres, or 6% of the total Gaeltacht area. It is situated in the south-west of Ireland, around 36 miles away from Cork City itself. Like most other Gaeltacht areas, Múscraí is rural. The main settlements in the area are the twin villages of Ballyvourney (Baile Bhuirne) and Ballymakeera (Baile Mhic Íre) and the nearby town of Ballingeary (Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh). It has a population of just under 4,000 people, making up 4% of the overall Gaeltacht population nationwide (Údarás na Gaeltachta, c2019b).
Múscraí holds a place of note in the world of Irish folk music and dance, with a popular dance

set originating in Múscraí being known as the Ballyvourney set, named for the village. The area has been the home of several famous Irish musicians, most notably the traditional musician and songwriter Seán Ó Riada and his family (Biletz, 2013). Locals of Múscraí continue to promote local culture and the villages are proud to host regular concerts and recitals in Irish. The regional office for Údarás na Gaeltachta (henceforth *an t-Údarás* "the authority") in Múscraí is situated centrally and its staff strive to maintain a relevant role for Irish in the area through numerous initiatives and schemes. It is not uncommon in the town centre to see shop frontage and signage in Irish, in addition to posters encouraging customers to interact with staff in Irish.

Figure 1: The location of the Múscraí Gaeltacht in Ireland (Ó hIfearnáin, 2007. p. 513).



A common initiative promoting Irish in Múscraí is the cooperation with local industry by Údarás na Gaeltachta. As laid out in the Gaeltacht Act of 2012, businesses in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas are eligible for extensive support and advice in formulating language plans from an t-Údarás staff (Údarás na Gaeltachta, c2019c). Such language plans are formulated on a community level, holistically developing strategies that will not impede day-to-day business and taking the wishes of nearby residents into account. Aiming not only to encourage the use of Irish

in business, another objective of an t-Údarás' efforts is to ensure that Gaeltacht businesses guarantee reliable employment in the area for years to come. Sustainability and relevance are crucial to industry in Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas, in order to maintain population growth and therefore the development of natural Irish language communities. It is for this reason that the Muscraí branch of an t-Údarás has supported firms in the communications and technology fields, as well as computing and electronics among others. These fields have brought international investment into Múscraí and as of 2011, 633 people were employed full-time by an t-Údarás client companies (Údarás na Gaeltachta, c2019b).

2.2.2. Focus variables

As with other regional dialects, the dialect of both Irish and English spoken in Múscraí are distinctive. Due to the area's challenging rural landscape, the inhabitants of Múscraí have remained isolated and have retained several salient features from centuries of ebbing language contact with outside Englishes. This view is taken by Lunny (1981), who described Ballyvourney English as being a “type of seventeeth century English” that developed from L1 Irish speakers using their native phonemic system. Hickey (2004) classifies the majority of the English input in the area during the Early Modern period as from the West Midlands of England.

The choice to examine the modern language contact situation in this region was simple, as a result of the uniqueness of the varieties spoken there. Due to the small geographical size of the area and integral role of Irish in the area's identity, Múscraí made for a research zone that was both manageable and suitable.

Th-stopping

Hickey (2004) describes the use of stops in place of the dental fricatives in THIS/THINK lexical sets as being a distinctive feature of Southern Irish English. In the West of Ireland, these stops are dental in nature, whereas in the East and the South they are alveolar. Múscraí is situated in the South West of Ireland and th-stopping involves dental stops in their variety of Irish English. Lunny (1981) describes the feature in his study of Ballyvourney English, claiming an Irish origin for the dental stop /t/ used in place of English fricative /θ/ in words such as “thick” [**t̪ɪk**] and

”thin” [**t̪ɪn**]. Like Hickey (2004), Lunny argues for a direct transfer of the dental stops from Irish.

As mentioned previously, Hickey identified th-stopping as being a key feature of Southern varieties of Irish English, as well as rhoticity and epenthesis being supraregional features found across the country. He described th-stopping as being a feature likely to have origins in the dialects of Irish spoken in the South. But with the effects of migration and decline in use of Irish, to what extent is th-stopping still characteristic of Southern Irish varieties of English?

One study undertaken in 2015 set out to review the use of stops in a community in County Cork (Panek, Ferragne, and Zumstein, 2015). Alongside lenition of /t/, Panek et al catalogued the levels of dental stops in place of the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ in the speech of sixteen inhabitants of Midleton, a settlement near Cork City. Data was gathered by means of a short passage read by those taking part and recorded. The passage contained nine words containing <th> in varying word positions - 3 with <th> appearing word-initially (think, throats, throw), 3 word-medially (leather, neither, rather), and 3 with a word-final <th> (smith, teeth, truth). Six of the words have the digraph <th> representing a Standard British English pronunciation of /θ/, whereas the three appearing word-medially would all generally represent a /ð/. Their findings showed a clear preference for the use of stops amongst those surveyed, with the stopped variant being used 94% of the time word-initially and 73% word-medially. In word-final context, speakers were only slightly more inclined to use a stop than a more fricative (56%). There also appeared to be a difference in speaking habits between the genders in the study, with male participants opting to use a plosive in 90% of cases overall, whereas their female counterparts used them only 64% of the time (Panek, Ferragne, and Zumstein, 2015. p.1). This study indicates that there might be some gendered difference in perception of stops. If indeed female speakers in Midleton associate th-stopping with some negative social connotations, then their lesser use of the feature when compared to their male counterparts would support the traditional view that female speakers adhere to more standard forms of language where possible, in order to maintain social status (Gordon, 1997).

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Rhoticity

Hickey (2004) describes rhoticity as being a supraregional feature of both Irish and Irish English, with the notable exception of Dublin English. Dublin English is only weakly rhotic and more recent studies have shown evidence of non-rhoticity becoming increasingly more common (Hickey, 2005). Though rhoticity is a common feature across many different varieties of Irish English (and indeed in other world Englishes, notably American Englishes), the origin of this feature in Irish English is debated.

Irish is rhotic and so it might seem reasonable to ascribe Irish English rhoticity to historical contact with Irish itself. In Irish English, /r/ continues to be used in all cases where it appears orthographically (Hickey, 1985). However, some argue for a more retentionist view - that rhoticity in Irish English has its origins in the Englishes spoken by English settlers in early modern Ireland (Hickey, 2004).

In his appraisal of Dublin English, Raymond Hickey (2005) looked into patterns of rhoticity and noted an interesting trend regarding the gender of those advancing linguistic change. In his work, he stresses that it is important to clearly make a distinction between several different Englishes cohabiting in Dublin, as each develop independently and have differing key features. The regional variety he calls “local Dublin English” can be defined as the variety spoken by people natively from the city and who use a more conservative, traditional Dublin English to show their origin. De-rhoticisation is a common characteristic of local Dublin English, whereas more recent varieties that Hickey describes as “non-local” are definitively rhotic. It is suggested that these more recent Dublin English varieties are more associated with younger speakers who wish to distinguish themselves linguistically as both cosmopolitan and modern, therefore not adopting the forms used frequently by traditional Dubliners (Hickey, 2005).

When identifying emerging trends in non-local Dublin Englishes, one can see more than just de-rhoticisation - the realisation of /r/ as retroflex [ɻ] has also been observed. Notably, Hickey (2005) explains that female participants were shown to definitely favour the new retroflex pronunciation of target phrases by quite some margin, whereas the males were more split with a slight preference for the form with no r-retroflexion. This lends evidence to the theory that

female speakers are indeed more likely to adopt new linguistic trends, especially if there is a socially advantageous reason to do so (i.e. to style yourself as belonging to a certain generation or class in society) (Labov, 1990). These results also show that while rhoticity is a traditional feature of most Irish Englishes, it is a feature that can be phased in and out of use as socio-political circumstances change in an area.

Though the origin of rhoticity as a feature cannot be confirmed, it is interesting nonetheless to examine levels of rhoticity in rural Múscraí with the context of the de-rhoticisation of Dublin English in mind during this study. Since rhoticity is a supraregional, standard feature of Irish English, it is reasonable for one to expect rhoticity to remain robust in all participants. However, if there is any deviation from this norm, it could go two ways. If the speakers of Ballyvourney English follow traditional trends for gender, female speakers will be less likely than males to use non-rhotic forms. Yet if Hickey's (2005) example of the adoption of retroflex [ɻ] by young female Dubliners demonstrates anything, it may suggest that linguistic norms are not concrete and may well be challenged by women, even if the feature in question is not socially prestigious at first.

Epenthesis

Another supragregional feature present in Múscraí English is vowel epenthesis. Epenthesis occurs naturally in Irish and can be described as the insertion of a schwa vowel (/ə/) between two consonants that cannot be combined monosyllabically into a cluster (Hickey, 1986). The traditionally accepted view is of a clear Irish transfer for Irish English epenthesis.

Table 1: Examples of vowel epenthesis in Irish words (Ní Chiosáin, 1999).

Irish word	IPA Transcription	English translation
borb	/ˈbˠɔɾˠəbˠ/	“abrupt”
gorm	/ˈɡɔɾˠəmˠ/	“blue”
dearmad	/ˈdʲaɾˠəmˠəd̪ˠ/	“mistake”
dearfa	/ˈdʲaɾˠəfˠə/	“certain”

IRISH PHONOLOGICAL FEATURES IN IRISH ENGLISH

In Irish English, epenthesis occurs similarly to in Irish, yet it is limited to appearing only between sonorants. Common examples are “burn” [bʌɹən], “film” [fɪləm] and “arm” [æɹəm]. Hickey (1986) explains that while some features of Irish English cannot conclusively be said to have Irish origins, vowel epenthesis most definitely is as a result of Irish language contact. Evidence of epenthesis occuring in Irish English has early beginnings - de Rijke (2018) was able to identify myriad examples in a collection of historical emigrant letters from Irish English speakers in the Corpus of Irish English Correspondence or “CORIECOR”, spanning in date 200 years. These examples were indicated orthographically by non-standard spellings that suggest epenthetic pronunciation in the Irish English speech of the author. Examples ranged from words in which epenthesis can still be observed today ([ˈfarəm] “farm”) to environments where it is seen less frequently (/wn/, /dr/, /ŋr/, /fl/, /rl/, /tr/ and /nr/). Perhaps surprisingly, de Rijke found examples of epenthesis far less frequently in consonant clusters where it would more commonly be found today, for example /ɹn/ and /lm/. This could indicate several things - the writers of these sources lived in a different era and their contact with different varieties of English was likely not as varied as the average Irish person today, without the advent of radio and the internet. Could it be that frequency of epenthesis in one's speech might decrease when exposed to more varied forms of English that do not use epenthesis? We cannot say, but the examples found in CORIECOR do show robust evidence of epenthesis in varieties of Irish English going back several centuries (de Rijke, 2018).

As noted prior, epenthesis in Irish English is generally accepted to have originated as a direct transfer from Irish. However, this is not accepted by all. Maguire (2018) challenged this view, arguing that the diversity in Irish English dialects and the unique environments in which each developed makes a direct transfer unlikely. In his 2018 study, comparisons were made between examples of epenthesis from Mid-Ulster English and those taken from Irish, English and Scots. By providing examples of epenthesis that occur naturally in other languages and dialects that came into contact with English historically, he argues that Irish is not necessarily the source of epenthesis in modern Irish English.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data collection process

All responses were solicited from participants of 18 years of age and above. This study focuses only on the language of adult speakers. The aim was to collect data from 20 participants in total, with that number being split between two separate research trips, both in the same area of Ballyvourney. The fieldwork took place between the 13-15th of November 2017 and 5-9th of February 2018, in sessions during usual business hours and evenings. It was important to attempt to recruit equal numbers of female and male participants to take part, in order to make any gender comparisons as fair as possible. Age was also a factor to be considered, so where necessary, participants were recruited specifically in order to balance out the age range of data.

For example, most of the participants recruited during the first data collection period were over the age of 40. According to an t-Údarás, one third of the population in the area are under the age of 25 (Údarás na Gaeltachta, c2019b). Methods taken to remedy this in the second period of data collection included narrowing recruitment to establishments frequented by younger patrons (i.e. community centres, local businesses that employ a younger workforce). This proved successful, as well as specifically asking participants for recommendations of younger people who might take part. Level of fluency in Irish was also controlled - whilst fluency was self-reported, the aim was for half of the contributors to the study to be fluent Irish speakers, with the others all reporting varying lower levels of ability in the language. Where necessary, participants were sourced according to their degree of Irish fluency, in order to provide balance to the participant base.

All participants were native English speakers, with all participants saying they possessed at least some level of Irish also. All participants self-reported at least a Level 3 “Some basic phrases” or above on the provided fluency scale, based on the model used by Darmody and Daly (2015). All speakers taking part in the study either lived in the Múscraí Gaeltacht or spent much of their time working in the area, living nearby. Participants were all asked to recommend friends or colleagues that they thought would be willing to participate also, following the Friend of a Friend method. Fortunately, most of the local people in the Cork Gaeltacht were very

enthusiastic about taking part in the study and the community was fairly close-knit - participants often knew each other. Therefore, it was possible for me to recruit several suitable interviewees in a relatively short period of time, most of whom were happy to suggest other relevant places or people of interest.

When first searching for speakers, I sought out local authority figures, such as the village priest, various pub landlords, members of staff at the Údarás na Gaeltachta office, as well as other people well known in the village. This proved to be a useful tactic, as most of these people cared deeply about the Irish language and therefore knew well who else would be willing to contribute to my research. Due to the very nature of Gaeltacht areas, it was not difficult to find local people who had distinct opinions on the importance of the Irish language being preserved, which resulted in some interesting perspectives on the topic.

Table 2: A fieldwork sample table for data collection.

Fieldwork date	N = total study participants	N = male participants	N = female participants	N = fluent Irish speakers	N = non-fluent Irish speakers
13-15th November 2017	12	6 (1 fluent, 5 non-fluent)	6 (3 fluent, 3 non-fluent)	4 (3 female, 1 male)	8 (3 female, 5 male)
5-9th February 2018	8	3 (2 fluent, 1 non-fluent)	5 (4 fluent, 1 non-fluent)	6 (4 female, 2 male)	2 (1 female, 1 male)

It was made clear to all participants that there was no financial incentive in return for taking part; that they would be kept anonymous and their data confidential and that they could revoke their consent to take part at any time. All participants signed consent forms acknowledging that they understood this, prior to taking part. In addition, each participant received a full written explanation of the data collection process. After giving some preliminary background information (i.e. gender, home town, level of Irish fluency etc.), they would begin by listening to a series of short sound files, consisting of an Irish English speaker saying an English focus word twice. They would then take part in a simple attitudinal questionnaire about Irish culture and

language, then asked to read two short reading passages out loud. This was recorded and followed by a brief interview where they would be asked to discuss their perceptions and opinions of Irish culture. These recordings would then later be transcribed. All interviewees gave their full consent and were informed of what their contributions would be used for.

However, it was found quickly that how the study was initially introduced to a potential participant played a large part in successfully recruiting local people. Originally, various potential contributors to the study refused to take part once they learned that it involved discussion of Irish. Most of these people declined quickly on the basis that they did not speak Irish well and did not enjoy speaking it - any attempts to persuade them that their opinions on the topic would still be valuable unfortunately did not move them. This was not overly surprising, as even in Gaeltacht areas, many speakers' feelings towards Irish can be conflicted - not all Gaeltacht residents are fluent Irish speakers and they may feel shame or pressure regarding this. Once the study began to be framed as focusing on the English spoken in the Gaeltacht and the participants' opinions on culture and language, local people were a lot more receptive to giving their time, even those who spoke Irish proudly and natively.

Each person heard thirteen short sound files and were assured that they could hear them as many times as they liked. The sound files consisted of recorded English words being produced in two different and distinct ways each by native Irish-speaking participants. Recordings from two different speakers (one male in his early fifties, one a younger woman in her late teens) were deliberately chosen, with participants alternately hearing sound files from both speakers. This was in an attempt to combat any bias that listeners might experience as a result of personally held convictions regarding the focus phonological features and speaker gender (for example, if a participant predominantly associated epenthesis with older male speakers). In the sound files, the focus variants are split evenly as possible between the two speakers (7 words voiced by the male speaker and 6 by the female speaker) - participants heard files containing rhoticity, epenthesis and th-stopping from both speakers. A list of which words were voiced by each speaker can be seen in Table 3.

Both of the recorded speakers used in the sound files grew up in the south of Ireland and speak English and Irish. They self-reported their levels of Irish fluency as being Intermediate and

described both the Irish and Irish English dialects they speak as being Southern in nature, with a specific focus on Cork city. While the city of Cork is just outside the Múscraí Gaeltacht area, the varieties of Irish English spoken in the two areas are extremely close and include the supraregional phonological features examined in this study, as well as the characteristically Southern use of dental stops [t̪ d̪] in place of the fricatives [θ] and [ð]. In addition to this, it added another layer of analysis: using two speakers allowed me to question whether or not there seemed to be a correlation between age or gender of the participant and reporting use of certain features.

Table 3: The focus words used in the sound file segment.

Focus feature	English word	IPA of first production (without focus feature)	IPA of second production (with focus feature)	Speaker heard by participants
Th-stopping ([t̪] in place of /θ/)	Thing	[θɪŋ]	[t̪ɪŋ]	Female
	Earth	[əːɹθ]	[əːɹt̪]	Female
	Thirst	[θəːɹst]	[t̪əːɹst]	Male
Th-stopping ([d̪] in place of /ð/)	There	[ðɛːɹ]	[d̪ɛːɹ]	Female
	They	[ðeɪ]	[d̪eɪ]	Male
	That	[ðat]	[d̪at̪]	Male
Epenthesis	Burn	[bəːɹn]	[bəːɹən]	Male
	Arm	[æɹm]	[æɹəm]	Female
	Film	[fɪlm]	[fɪləm]	Male
Rhoticity	Card	[kɑːd]	[kɑːɹd]	Female
	Harp	[hɑːp]	[hɑːɹp]	Female
	Park	[pɑːk]	[pɑːɹk]	Male
	Bar	[bɑː]	[bɑːɹ]	Male

After listening to each sound file, the participants individually then had to indicate which one of

the two words in the sound bite sounded more like the way they thought they themselves would produce it. They did this by putting a tick or some other mark in the boxes provided on the question sheet. In several cases, listeners recorded having heard no difference between the two productions on a recording: in these cases, I instructed them to listen to them once more and that if they still heard no difference, to simply make an asterisk next to the word on the form. The next section of the data collection process (Section 2) was the attitudinal section, which in some cases (i.e. where the participant had very little time to give) was recorded in place of the interview and the participant was encouraged to discuss their reasons out loud for their answers after each question. This did not cause any problems whatsoever, as almost every person who took part began to discuss them with me naturally anyway. From time to time, gentle encouragement that there would be a designated recorded time for their viewpoints and stories had to be given. This section was made up of a series of statements relating to participant opinions on Ireland, Irish life, culture and language. The participant's task was to indicate their own perception of these issues by means of a five point Likert scale, depending on how true or applicable they felt that statement was to them. They would tick or cross the box underneath the scale next to each statement, with headings ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Somewhat Agree”, all the way to “Strongly Disagree”.

Table 4: An example of the statements given in the attitudinal section of the questionnaire, with a 5 point Likert scale, inspired by the scale used by Darmody and Daly (2015).

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Somewhat Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Somewhat Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
I like living in Ireland.					

Most participants reported having little trouble understanding the questionnaires; however, there were often conditions for their answers (for example, they might agree that all school lessons in Ireland should be presented in Irish, but not feel that it would be feasible) - they were instructed to note these down on their question sheets where possible. Following the attitudinal section, the production section (or interview, labeled as Section 3) was recorded. The participants were

instructed that a relaxed interview was to follow in order to discuss some of the topics raised in the questionnaire. The conversation usually began by letting the participant know that we were being recorded from now on and then asking them about one or two of their particularly strong responses to a statement on the attitudinal section.

Wherever possible, the speakers were left to speak uninterrupted, with agreement and encouragement from the researcher where necessary. The aim of this segment was to inspire natural speech, so in several cases, the conversation was permitted to wander into tangents and develop organically. This atmosphere ensured that the interview did not seem forced or too formal, therefore resulting in a more relaxed speaker. It was also for this reason that on one occasion, three elderly speakers were allowed to participate and be recorded together in a group. They had taken their questionnaires separately and individually, yet all felt nervous and uncomfortable about being interviewed and recorded in isolation. Deciding that it was better to receive mixed audio than none at all, this seemed to be a scenario that would be reasonable to accommodate and all three speakers felt much more at ease as a result.

In addition to ensuring the comfort of my participants, I tried my best to use certain words that would elicit the production of the target phonological features of this project. In particular, epenthesis is classed in literature as a distinctive and strong supraregional feature of Irish English - yet there was a possibility that it could manifest infrequently or not at all in such a short passage of conversation. Not wishing to rely on chance, I often chose to include the word “film” in questions to my speakers. This was easy enough to insert into conversation without detection, as one of the statements in Section 2 was relating to Irish film and television. This gave participants the chance to discuss their views on the topic while influencing them to produce a word which was a suitable and common environment for epenthesis to take place.

Overall, all speakers contributing to the study were asked for only five minutes of their time each for Section 3. This was done in order to maximise the number of responses. Fortunately, most contributors were more than happy to talk for longer than this - the average conversation length was 12 minutes and 30 seconds. While longer interviews would of course have been preferable, participants were often limited for time - once all the necessary paperwork and questionnaires had been completed, ten minutes could easily have elapsed. Once the

conversation reached a natural conclusion or the speaker wished to finish, participants were informed that the recording was about to stop and that now was the time for any further remaining questions they might have. The recording was then stopped and their sound files were saved whilst making all the necessary last checks to paperwork and consent forms.

In the second fieldwork trip, an extra section was added to the data collection process to increase the number of tokens gathered. This section was made up of two brief reading passages to be read aloud by the participants, prior to the interview. The two passages chosen were “The North Wind and The Sun” from Aesop's Fables (International Phonetic Association, 1999) and “Comma Gets a Cure” by Jill McCullough & Barbara Somerville (2000). Both of these texts contain all the phonemic contrasts of English and are recommended by the International Phonetic Association for use in dialect research. These reading passages provided more tokens and allowed for a natural conversation point at the beginning of each interview. Each participant was informed that they were being recorded and was asked to read the two passages aloud. They then were asked to re-tell the story of “The North Wind and The Sun” in their own words. This ensured further recorded material and more natural speech.

During the first fieldwork session, all interviews were captured using the simple microphone facilities and recording software available on my laptop with Windows 10. This proved to be a most convenient solution whilst travelling, as travel limitations did not provide the room for more extensive recording equipment. Several participants reported that they preferred this method of recording their interviews, as they found it easier to forget that they were taking part in a study and speak more naturally without a large microphone in their face. Of course, this was desirable in order to elicit the most natural speech from the speakers. A drawback of using a generic laptop microphone in favour of using a more complex separate device was an increase in background noise. This was an issue due to some of the interviews taking place in public areas, such as cafes and community centres. While recording in these areas was both convenient and set participants at ease, some interference and mild noise pollution was unavoidable.

However, the sound issues present on recordings from the first data collection session were easily remedied with the sound editing software Audacity. Some simple editing significantly improved the quality of the more noisy public recordings and allowed for better and more

accurate judgements in transcribing the audio.

During the second data collection session, all recordings were captured using an Olympus VN-540PC portable dictophone. This solved previous issues with background noise and recording clarity, as the model used is equipped with specific noise-cancelling modes for designed for recordings in the field. It was also found to be convenient for transport between interviews, due to its relatively small size. This method produced recordings superior in quality than those gathered on the first data collection period, though some additional editing of those interviews was needed at times for purposes of clarity.

When making transcriptions of participant conversation, the word processor Microsoft Word was used. If this study were to be replicated in the future, the use of said dictophone would be encouraged. This format of recording is suitable as it strikes a balance between upkeep of auditory quality and integrity, whilst also fostering a comfortable, un-intrusive atmosphere for all participants. In addition to the recording technology used in the study, additional logistical measures could further improve the data collection process. For example, prior organisation of a research-specific environment (e.g. a quiet back room of a local bar or church hall) in the area could ensure less noise-polluted samples and fewer distractions for study participants.

3.2. Methods of analysis

Data analysis was undertaken after the completion of both fieldwork trips. Prior to analysis, responses to each questionnaire were noted and organised individually in a word processor. Participants were grouped by demographic for ease of analysis, with self-reported level of Irish fluency and gender being the focus variables. When processing the recordings of participant interviews and the additional reading passages, all utterances were transcribed manually with all environments for the focus phonological features being highlighted. The recordings were then played back and the number of tokens for each per speaker was counted and noted. It was sufficient for analysis to be auditory in nature, as the focus variants were relatively easy to distinguish from each other. Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel were the programs used to process the raw data and conduct all statistical testing.

All descriptive statistics were done manually, but the responses to the questionnaires and interviews had to be analysed for statistical significance using Fisher's Exact Test. This was used in favour of a Chi Squared Test, as some of the token sizes were low in numerical value, especially the results of the sound file section.

4. Results

In initial questionnaires, half of all participants described themselves as being a fluent speaker of Irish, with the remaining participants reporting lesser degrees of fluency. All participants taking part in the study reported some knowledge of Irish, ranging from “3. Some basic phrases” to “6. Fluent, Native Speaker”. The fluent Irish speakers consisted of three males and seven females, whereas the less fluent speakers were more evenly split by gender, being made up of six males and four females. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 70 years of age.

As part of the personal information sheet included in the questionnaire, participants were asked to give their social class. No options were included on the form, only a space for the participant to note down their own response. Only one participant would answer this question seriously, with every other participant either refusing to answer or indicating that they did not recognise social class (for example, writing “no class” or “human”). These responses (or lack thereof) indicate a trend amongst those interviewed of viewing Irish society as largely “classless”. This may or may not be the case (Irish Post, 2013), but it does prevent observations from being made between social class and the levels of the focus features being studied.

4.1. Participant attitudes and perceptions

In the attitudinal section of the questionnaire, results were remarkably similar across all groups. All statements (see Appendix) focused on the role of the Irish language in national identity; traditional culture and in daily life, as well as the participants' perspective of their own identity and culture. Responses to the questionnaire indicated a firm sense of Irish identity in those surveyed, with 100% of respondents saying that they strongly agreed with the statement “I feel strongly Irish” and 95% of respondents strongly agreeing with the statement “I like living in Ireland”. Positive views could also be observed regarding the role of Irish in traditional cultural

activities: 85% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement “I feel that the Irish language is central to traditional Irish culture (traditional dance, music, etc)”.

With the 5 point Likert scale used, a lower score indicates a generally positive view of Irish and the efforts used to keep it relevant in Irish society. Opinions given by participants were more or less homogeneous, with very little variation. The statements that did elicit more difference in opinion referred to speaking English (“I am proud to speak English”, with only 55% agreeing to some degree and 40% of respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing), the representation of Irish in daily life (“I wish I had more opportunity to speak Irish in the home”, with 40% of participants neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement) and making the use of Irish mandatory in education (“I feel that all school lessons should be taught in Irish throughout Ireland.”, with 15% somewhat disagreeing with this statement and a further 15% strongly disagreeing). The statement “I feel that it is important to speak Irish well in order to get ahead in the workplace in Ireland” was also extremely polarising, with 35% of participants strongly agreeing and 30% strongly disagreeing.

For each statement, the average scores were calculated for both genders and fluent vs non-fluent Irish speakers. Using Fisher's Exact test, no significant trends could be observed between the attitudes of either gender, nor between fluent and non-fluent speakers.

Due to lack of variation in speaker attitudes on Irish language and culture, it was not possible to categorise participants according to their views in this study. A reasonable explanation for these results could be simply that by living and working in a Gaeltacht area, an inhabitant might demonstrate a sympathy for Irish language conservation and traditional culture. In future research, greater diversity in speaker perceptions could perhaps be found by focusing on communities in the border region of a larger Gaeltacht. This might lend more opportunities to survey members of different language communities in the area, therefore increasing the likelihood of more diversity in Irish language attitudes.

While no evidence could be found of a relationship between positive attitudes towards Irish and language fluency, valuable information can be gleaned from the attitudinal questions nonetheless. By identifying the subjects of statements that inspired disagreement amongst

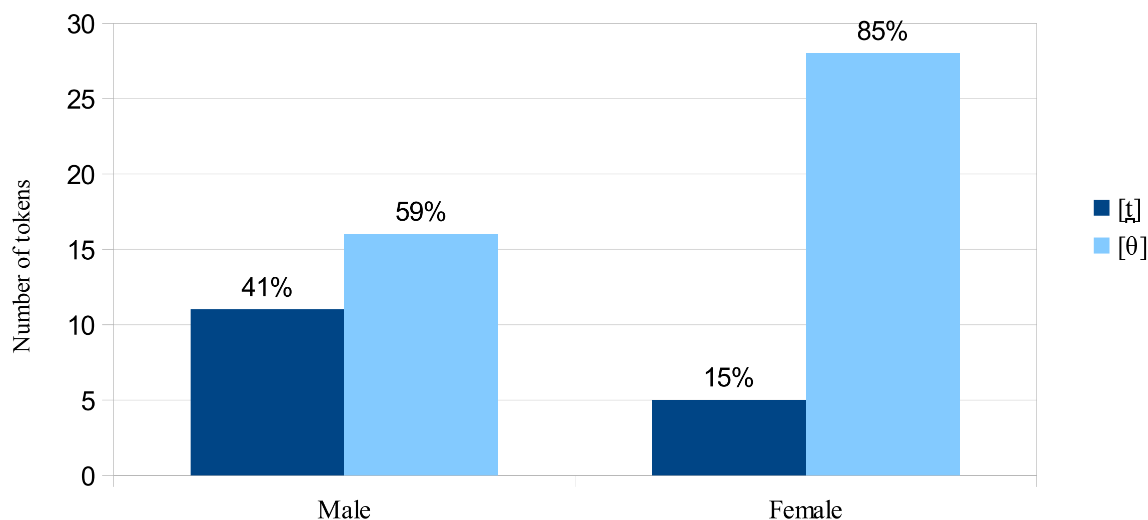
participants, some suggestions could be made for topics to be included in future attitudinal research in the area. Disagreement over mandatory use of Irish in the media and in schooling shows that there is nuance in the participants' individual experiences of the Irish language, as well as the need for careful discussion of the effectiveness of language conservation efforts in minority language communities.

4.2. Th-stopping

Sound files

When listening to the sound files containing words with th-stopping, both genders reported that they were more likely to use the unstopped form [θ] than [t̪] (respondents indicated use of [θ] in 73% of cases, N = 44). However, the difference in how frequently men and women reported use of the stopped variant was found to be statistically significant when using Fisher's Exact test (p = 0.0396). Female speakers were even less likely to report that they would use the stopped form [t̪] than male speakers, reporting that they would do so in only 15% of examples (N = 5). No significant relationship between the native fluent speakers and non-native speakers could be observed in the responses to the sound files.

Figure 2 - : The use of [t̪] stops by gender in sound files.



All participants generally favoured the [ð] variant in sound files, reporting that they would use the word containing [ð] 80% of the time (N = 48) versus using [d̪] in only 20% of cases (N = 12). No significant difference could be observed in perception of the [d̪] between fluent-non-fluent groups or male-female groups when tested using Fisher's Exact test.

Interviews

In interviews, male speakers were found to be far more likely to use a [t̪] stop than an unstopped variant, opting for [t̪] stops on 68% of occasions (N = 149). Their female counterparts were the opposite, using [t̪] only 14% of the time (N = 28). When using Fisher's Exact test, the differences between male and female use of [t̪] in the interview was found to be significant (p = <0.00001). However, using the same statistical test, no significant relationship between level of fluency and frequency of use of the [t̪] stop could be observed in these responses.

Figure 3 - : Use of [t̪] stops by gender in interviews.

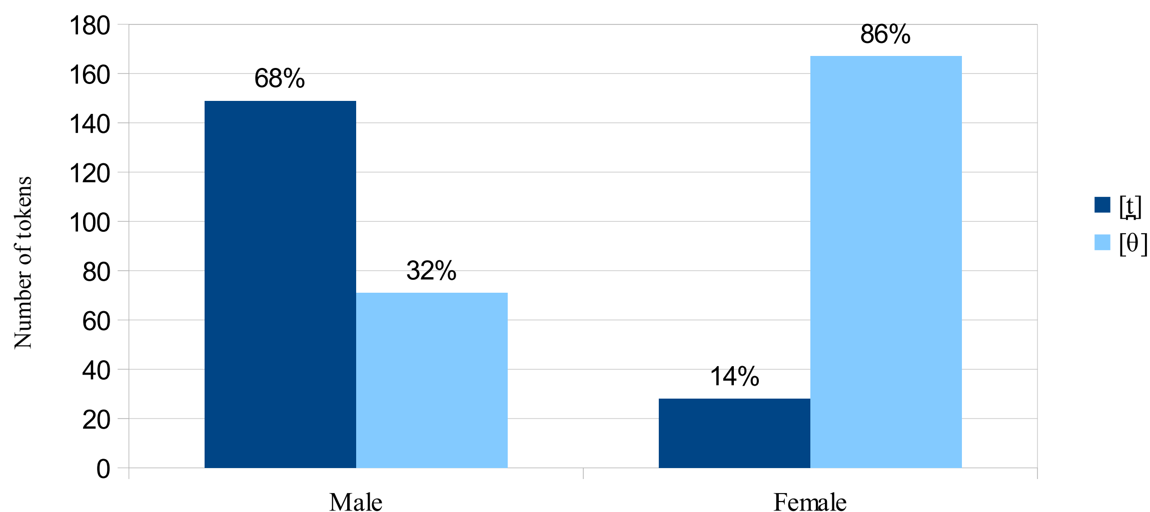
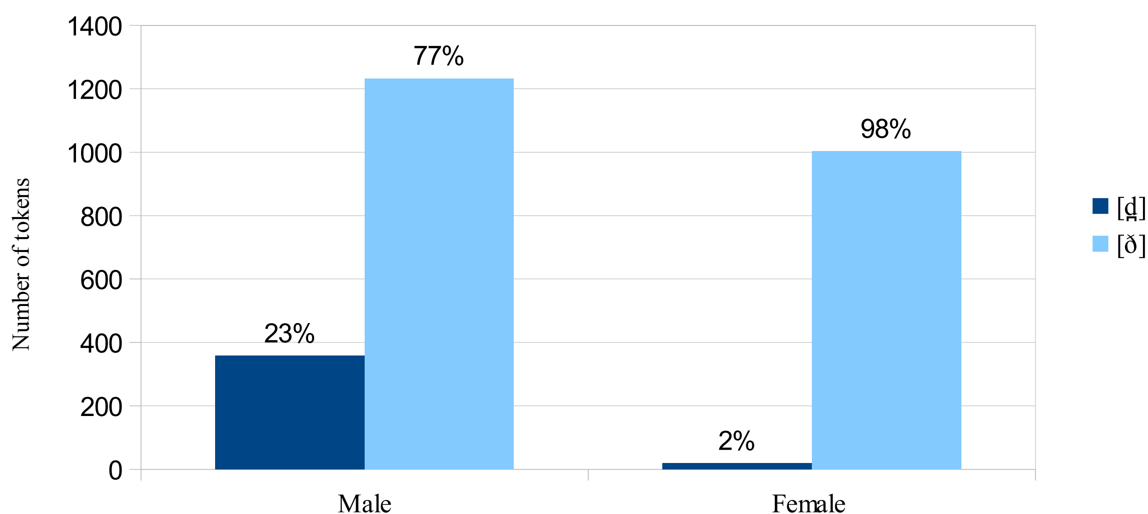


Figure 4 - : Use of [d̪] stops by gender in interviews.

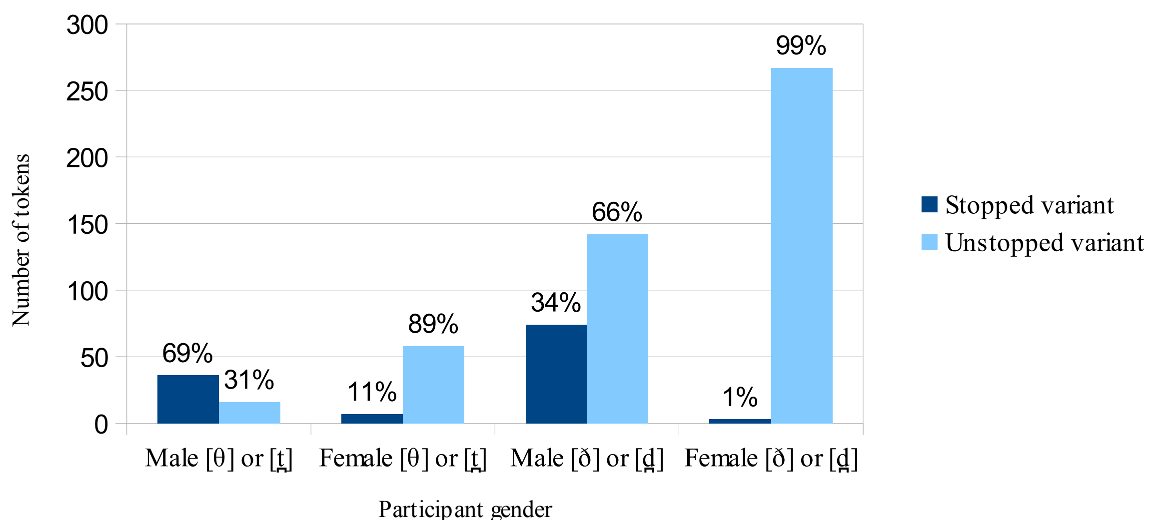


Concerning the use of [d̪] stops in the interviews, both male and female participants were more likely to use [ð] than [d̪] when speaking (on 86% of occasions, N = 2236). However, males used the [d̪] stopped form more frequently than female speakers, with men using [d̪] in 23% of cases (N = 358) compared to only 2% of the time by women (N = 19). This relationship was found to be statistically significant using Fisher's Exact test, with a p value of <0.00001. Fluent Irish speakers were slightly more likely to use a [d̪] stopped variant (in 16% of cases, N = 255) than the non-native speakers (in 12% of cases, N = 122); however, both groups still were more likely

to use no stop ([ð] was used in 86% of cases across all participants, N = 2236). Though the difference in use was small, it was found to be significant using Fisher's Exact test (p = 0.0007).

From the responses of those who also took part in the reading tasks, several significant results were found. Firstly, female speakers were observed to use both [t̪] and [d̪] stops less frequently (overall female use of stopped variants was 3%, N = 10) than male speakers reading the same texts (overall male use of both stops was 41%, N = 110). Not only were the male participants more likely to use both stopped varieties more often than females, they used the [t̪] stop more frequently than [θ] in the reading tasks (males used [t̪] in 69% of instances, N = 36). The relationships between participant gender and use of both the [t̪] stop and the [d̪] stop were found

Figure 5 - : Use of [t̪] and [d̪] stops by gender in reading tasks.



to be significant using Fisher's Exact test, with both p values being <0.00001.

There also appeared to be a strong association between Irish fluency and use of the [d̪] stop in the reading passages. While both fluent and non-fluent participants were more likely to use a non-stopped variant in the reading tasks ([θ] and [ð] were used 80% of the time across all participants, N = 483), the fluent native speakers favoured non-stopped variants even more than their non-fluent fellows. Fluent speakers used non-stopped variants in 85% of cases (N = 341), compared to the 71% used by non-fluent Irish speakers (N = 142). The p value of this data was 0.0003 when using Fisher's Exact test, indicating a significant connection between speaker

fluency and use of the [d̪] stop in the reading tasks.

4.3. Rhoticity

Rhoticity is a supraregional feature of almost all Irish Englishes that is free from social stigma. Hickey (2004) even described its absence (along with h-dropping) in Irish English contexts as being a sure-fire sign of that the speaker is not Irish. With Irish being chiefly rhotic also, it could be reasonably expected that the speech of the people of Múscraí would be predominantly rhotic, regardless of if the Irish spoken in the area has any influence over this feature. A weakening of rhoticity in Múscraí English would be interesting, as it could indicate that outside speech communities are influencing language change in the area.

Sound files

No significant connection could be observed between gender of the participant and rhoticity in the responses to the sound files, when tested using Fisher's Exact test. Female speakers reported use of the rhotic variant 91% of the time (N = 40) and males that they would use the rhotic variant in 78% of examples (N = 28).

When split according to Irish fluency, it was found that fluent Irish speakers and non-fluent speakers showed the exact same results regarding rhoticity. Both groups perceived that their speech would be rhotic predominantly, reporting use of the rhotic variant 85% of the time (Rhotic variant N = 34, non-rhotic variant N = 6). Fisher's Exact test did not find this to be significant.

Interviews

In interviews too, all participants were chiefly rhotic: non-rhotic forms occurred in only 0.56% of occasions (N = 27). However, an association could be seen between gender and rhoticity in the interviews, with female speakers using non-rhotic forms more frequently than the males. Female participants used non-rhotic forms 1% of the time (N = 24), compared to male speakers reporting use of non-rhotic forms in only 0.1% of cases (N = 3). This association was seen to be

significant, with a p value of <0.00001 when tested using Fisher's Exact test.

Natively fluent Irish speakers too were discovered to be more likely to use non-rhotic realisations than their non-fluent counterparts. Surprisingly, the speech of fluent Irish speakers was found to be non-rhotic in 0.8% of cases (N = 23), compared to non-fluent use amounting to only 0.2% (N = 4). Though occurring in less than 1% of environments for potential rhoticity, the relationship between speaker fluency and non-rhoticity was found to be significant (p = 0.0028) when using Fisher's Exact test.

Using the same statistical test, no significant trends could be observed in rhoticity levels in the reading passages - only 3 tokens of non-rhoticity were observed, all by fluent Irish-speaking male speakers (accounting for 0.2% of all occasions for rhoticity in the reading tasks).

4.4. Epenthesis

Sound files

When listening to the sound file section of the questionnaire, male participants reported that they would be more likely to use the epenthetic form of the focus words (accounting for 63% of the sound files, N = 17) than the version not containing epenthesis, e.g. [æɹəm] for “arm”. Female participants were more evenly split, being almost equally as likely to report use of the epenthetic form as the non-epenthetic version (use of the epenthetic variant was reported in 48% of cases, N =16). However, the differences between the genders in the use of the feature was not found to be statistically significant when using Fisher's Exact test.

Level of Irish fluency too showed no significant relationship to frequency of epenthesis in the sound file section. Fluent speakers stated that they would use the version of the word containing epenthesis twice as often as they chose the ones without (epenthetic variants were chosen 67% of the time, N = 20), whereas non-fluent participants were more likely to opt for the non-epenthetic variants of the focus words (making up 43% of their sound file responses, N = 13). However, this was again not seen to be statistically significant when tested with Fisher's Exact test.

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Interviews

The interview section of the questionnaire yielded very little evidence of epenthesis - only two examples could be found across all the conversations. Both examples were epenthetic forms of the same word - “girl” [gɛɹəl] - spoken once each by two participants. One speaker was female and a non-fluent Irish speaker, while the other was a natively fluent male. The only feature the two speakers shared was age, as both were aged in their early sixties. The relationship between these instances and any demographic the speakers belonged to was observed to be not significant, due to the tiny sample size and the lack of any shared demographic between the two speakers of these tokens.

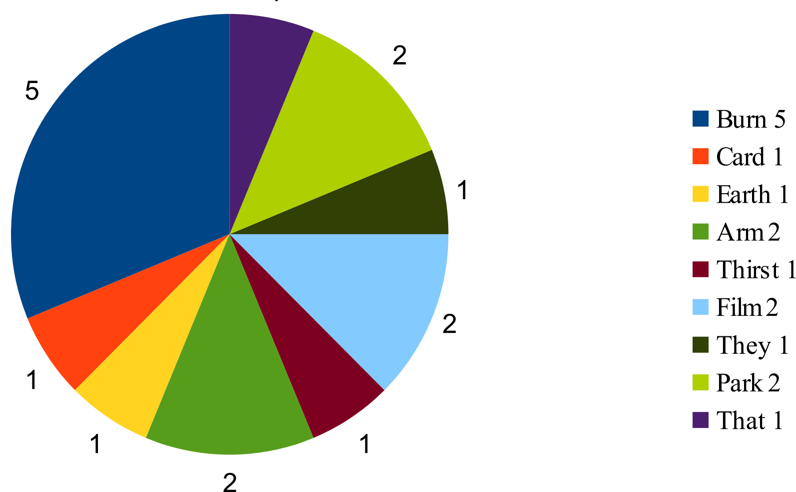
Reading tasks

No instances of epenthesis manifested during the reading task section of the study, despite ample opportunities being presented in both “The North Wind and The Sun” and “Comma Gets a Cure”.

4.5. Participant comprehension issues during sound-files

During the sound file segment of the questionnaire, an unexpected problem occurred. Nine of the thirteen audio files used in the study yielded at least one instance of a participant struggling to hear a difference between the two versions of the focus word - two containing rhoticity, four containing th-stopping and all three examples of epenthesis. Most files resulted in only one instance of difficulty, which was remedied quickly by repeating the recording a second time. This was not the case however for the three files containing epenthesis. All three examples yielded multiple requests for the audio file to be repeated with the participants still not being able to discern any difference. The word “burn” seemed troublesome in particular, with five participants struggling to hear a difference between [bəːɹn] VS [bəːɹən].

Figure 6 - : Number of occurrences of participant comprehension difficulties per focus word.



Of sixteen such instances in total, 87.5% of the speakers reporting comprehension issues identified themselves as fluent Irish speakers. However, when all responses to the listening tasks are grouped according to reported fluency of the speakers (tagged as fluent or non-fluent), no patterns can be observed. This is the case across all thirteen of the audio files with no observed trends between the three focus phenomena. When examining if there was a significant link between degree of Irish fluency and difficulty in distinguishing epenthetic forms, no significant relationship was found using the Fisher's Exact test. The same can be said for participant gender, as the same difficulties were experienced equally by male and female participants.

5. Discussion

5.1. Revisiting research questions

After viewing the results given in the previous chapter, it is prudent to revisit the research questions posed in the Introduction of this thesis. The aim of this study was to explore the following question:

To what extent does Irish fluency affect the prevalence of "Irish-flavoured" phonological

features in Irish English?

In addition to the above main research question, the following questions were also explored in the course of this study.

Are the dental stops [t̪ d̪] more likely to replace English /θ/ and /ð/ in Irish English speakers who report higher levels of Irish fluency? If so, to what extent?

Are less fluent Irish speakers more likely to be non-rhotic in their Irish English speech than those with a greater degree of Irish fluency?

Can higher levels of epenthesis be found in the English speech of more fluent Irish speakers than their less Irish-fluent counterparts?

Does the gender of a speaker affect the level of Irish-influenced features found in Irish English?

When relating these questions to the results of this research, the following can be observed: both level of Irish fluency and speaker gender do indeed seem to affect the use of certain Irish-influenced phonological features chosen in this study.

5.2. Use of dental stops [t̪ d̪] *in place of* **[θ]** *and* **[ð]**

In interviews, speakers of all backgrounds were usually more likely to use fricatives [θ] and [ð] than the stops [t̪ d̪] (fricatives were used in 82% of cases, N = 2474). This would support the idea that th-stopping is declining in Múscraí. When stops were used however, there was a clear pattern in gendered use. The dental stop [t̪] was actually produced by male speakers more frequently than [θ] (stops used on 68% of occasions, N = 149), which indicates that the male speakers surveyed were comfortable with using the more distinctly Irish form. However, female speakers showed the opposite results, producing the standard fricative [θ] more often than a plosive (stops only accounted for 14% of female results, N = 28). The relationship between gender and use of the dental stop [t̪] was found to be significant, with a p value <0.00001 when using Fisher's Exact test. When examining [d̪] stops, both genders also showed a preference for

the unstopped form [ð] ([ð] was used on 86% of occasions, N = 2236). However, in the instances where these [d̪] stops were used, male participants were seen to be significantly more likely to be responsible than their female counterparts (with men using [d̪] in 23% of cases, N = 358, compared to only 2% of the time by women, N = 19). The relationship between use of [d̪] stops and gender in interviews was also found to be significant, with a p value of <0.00001.

These same gendered trends can be seen in the results of the reading tasks undertaken by participants in the second fieldwork period. Males used both [t̪] and [d̪] more often than female speakers to a significant degree (males used stopped variants 41% of the time, N = 110, versus women using stops only 3% of the time, N = 10) and even used [t̪] more frequently than [θ] (males used [t̪] in 69% of instances, N = 36). The relationships between participant gender and use of both the [t̪] stop and the [d̪] stop were found to be significant using Fisher's Exact test, with both p values being <0.00001. This corroborates the findings in the listening and interview sections of the paper, indicating a consistent tendency towards th-stopping in the males of Múscraí, a behaviour not shared by the women who took part.

Similar results were found by Panek et al (2015) in their study into lenition of /t/ and use of dental stops in Midleton, near Cork. They found that male participants used stopped variants in 90% of cases overall, whereas their female informants used them only 64% of the time. The findings by Panek et al provide further evidence for a male-led preference for dental stopping in the wider Cork area.

Similar observations can be made when analysing the data according to degree of Irish fluency. In interviews, fluent Irish speakers were slightly more likely to use a [d̪] stopped variant (in 16% of cases, N = 255) when compared with the non-fluent speakers (who used [d̪] in 12% of cases, N = 122). Both groups still were more likely to use no stop ([ð] was used in 86% of cases across all participants, N = 2236). The relationship between Irish fluency and use of [d̪] stops was found to be significant using Fisher's Exact test (p = 0.0007). This would support the hypothesis that native Irish speakers would be more likely to use phonological features in English that have their origins in Irish.However, the results of the interviews conflict with those found in the reading tasks. While both native and non-native speakers still preferred to use forms with no stop, non-fluent Irish speakers were more likely to use [d̪] stops in reading tasks than their

natively fluent counterparts, to a significant degree (non-fluent speakers used [d̪] in 29% of cases (N = 40), compared to only 15% of the time by fluent Irish speakers (N = 37)). The p value of this data was 0.0003 when using Fisher's Exact test. This defies expectations and gives evidence against the hypothesis that Irish fluency correlates positively with higher use of Irish-influenced features in English.

It could be suggested that the disparity between speaker performance in the reading tasks and in interviews are as a result of conscious effort. The fluent native speakers of Irish might perceive th-stopping in Irish English to be more stigmatised than their non-fluent neighbours, leading to them being hyper-aware of its use and taking greater efforts to avoid stops in their own English speech. This could be a pattern of linguistic behaviour that took root in childhood, with bilingualism in Irish and English requiring additional processing time when using their L2, English. This could have led to a learned avoidance of th-stopping into adulthood, as they associate the stops with negative rural stereotypes - as mentioned, in interviews several participants expressed negative opinions of speakers who use th-stopping. Such performative efforts would be more likely to be forgotten in the interview section as time went on, as the interviews were casual in nature in order to elicit more natural speech from the participants. The less formal atmosphere of the interviews could account for the rise in use of dental stops of both kinds.

Another suggestion is that it is the non-fluent Irish speakers who are altering their speech in the reading tasks. A non-fluent Irish speaker might feel the need to try and make up for their lack of ability in Irish by using Irish English forms they perceive as being distinctly Irish in character. This could account for the higher use of [d̪] stops by non-fluent Irish speakers during the reading passages. As said previously, such performative efforts would be gradually forgotten as the speaker relaxes and focuses on conversation during the interview section instead. This would lead to an increase in use of [d̪] by non-fluent speakers during the reading passages, then a drop in its use once the interviews have begun.

5.3. Loss of rhoticity

While all speakers were chiefly rhotic throughout, two interesting associations could be

observed: both female speakers and fluent Irish speakers were found to lead in using non-rhotic variants in the interview section of the study. Female participants used non-rhotic forms 1% of the time (N = 24), compared to only 0.1% of male speech being non-rhotic (N = 3). This relationship was found to be significant, with a p value of <0.00001 when tested using Fisher's Exact test.

The speech of fluent Irish speakers was found to be non-rhotic in 0.8% of cases in interviews (N = 23), compared to non-fluent use amounting to only 0.2% (N = 4). Though occurring in less than 1% of environments for potential rhoticity and the token size being small, the relationship between speaker fluency and non-rhoticity was found to be significant (p = 0.0028) when using Fisher's Exact test.

These patterns of rhoticity also give evidence against two of this study's hypotheses. Firstly, that a higher degree of Irish fluency would correlate with increased use of Irish English speech features that originate in Irish. Secondly, that female speakers will adhere to local linguistic standards and avoid features that deviate from the norm. Hickey (2004) describes rhoticity as a supraregional feature of Irish English and while de-rhoticisation is not always stigmatised (for example, some forms of Dublin English are traditionally weakly rhotic in nature), non-rhotic forms are not standard in most Irish Englishes.

Historically, it has been expected that female speakers will avoid deviation from whatever prestigious standard form is spoken, especially if these deviations are perceived to carry a social stigma (Labov, 1990). Paradoxically however, it is often found that women are the first to support language change by adopting new forms. Hickey (2005) drew attention to such a scenario when he focused on a burgeoning linguistic situation in Dublin. Surprisingly, he found that young females took the lead in using a retroflex /r/ in place of the more standard /r/ in their rhotic dialect of Dublin English. The women who used this feature were predominantly young and spoke a dialect of Dublin English that came to be associated with a more modern, cosmopolitan Dubliner. This dialect (Hickey terms it “non-local Dublin English”, in contrast to the more traditional “local Dublin English”) formed partly to distance its speakers from the older generation of Dubliners. The flexibility shown by the women of this speech community in adopting retroflex /r/ gives evidence to show that language change in Irish English can be

female-led. When put in the context of Hickey's research on retroflex /r/ in Dublin English, the results of this study support the theory that female speakers will not always avoid the adoption of non-standard forms.

5.4. Epenthesis

Regarding epenthesis in the speech of those surveyed, unfortunately no patterns could be found whatsoever. This is because there simply was not enough data made available during the study (only 2 examples across all speaker interviews and reading passages) to form any solid conclusions about the interaction between fluency in Irish and the level of epenthesis in their English speech. One could argue that perhaps epenthesis alone is on the decline in English speech generally, as some forms of vowel epenthesis in Irish English are seen stigmatised and so might be avoided (Hickey, 1986). Indeed, epenthesis in /rn/ and /rl/ clusters (such as “girl” and “barn”) are seen as particularly linked to an ignorant, rural West and South West language stereotype. A gradual decline in epenthesis could be inferred when considering research by de Rijke (2018), who argued that various non-standard spellings of words in historical letters were evidence of epenthesis in the speech of the writer. De Rijke found examples of schwa inserted into a large number of different consonant clusters, many of which are not commonly used today even in epenthetic versions of English (for example, /fl/, /rl/, /tr/ and /nr/). This might indicate not only a general decline in the feature but also a narrowing of the consonantal environments it now manifests in.

What can be conclusively stated is that in the sound file section of this study, some respondents did report that they would use the epenthetic versions of the target words and indeed, these speakers often could not discern a difference between words containing an additional vowel or not. The example words used in the sound files were “arm”, “burn” and “film”. “Burn” proved to be the most troublesome word for participants, with 25% of all participants reporting difficulty in discerning the difference between [bəːɹn] and [bəːɹən] (5 participants in total). We may not be able to make any solid judgements regarding the levels of the feature in their natural speech, but their difficulty in identifying the feature might indicate that the speakers themselves do not regard or perceive epenthesis as negatively. This would contrast with Hickey's (1986) claim that some forms of vowel epenthesis carry a stigma. If true, this could suggest not a

decline in levels of epenthesis, but a change in sociolinguistic attitudes in Irish society and an amelioration of some formerly stigmatised forms.

Another suggestion is that the audio files used for the words containing epenthesis had issues in their production. All were produced by two native speakers of Irish who understood the aim of the study, therefore ensuring correct, distinct productions of the focus words with and without the additional epenthetic schwa. There is however the possibility that other qualities of the speakers' voices contributed to participant confusion in hearing the additional vowels. These qualities could range from voice pitch, clarity or intonation. For example, a slight deviation in the speaker's intonation when producing one form of the focus words might lead a participant to be confused as to what feature they are listening for. Efforts were taken to lessen the effect of such confounding factors, yet variation cannot be avoided completely when using live speakers.

5.5. Unexpected findings

Unexpected findings from this study must include the very low level of epenthesis in the interviews and reading task sections of the questionnaire. Though not in significant levels, participants did report that they would use some of the epenthetic forms of the words in the sound files over the version without epenthesis. This was not reflected, however, in their general speech, aside from in two small instances and both occurring in the same word (“girl”). Discussion was led by the researcher deliberately in order to elicit examples of the feature, for example by discussing media in Ireland and the film industry (with the intention being to elicit an example in the word [filəm]). However, this did not encourage any examples further than the two previously mentioned. This could well be as a result of the variety of English spoken by the researcher, which is definitively non-epenthetic. A lack of epenthesis in the utterances of the researcher may have interfered with the natural speech of the participants, in that their attention was consciously drawn to production of epenthesis. It is also possible that participants shifted their speech to be less epenthetic in order to accommodate the interviewer. Gallois, Ogay & Giles (2005) suggested in their Communication Accommodation Theory that speakers may converge their speech to be more similar to that of their interlocutor (in this case, the researcher), in order to build rapport and maintain a positive social status. In the context of these interviews, the aim of such convergence may be an earnest attempt to give the researcher what the speaker

believes they are looking for or a more subconscious adherence to a perceived prestige form of Irish English.

Although efforts had been taken in every way to encourage a less formal and more comfortable atmosphere for those taking part, the general interview scenario may also have contributed to more guarded and Standard British English type of speech, i.e. without vowel epenthesis. Of course, it is also possible that epenthesis is indeed in decline in Irish English or simply that the number of participants was not great enough to provide ample opportunities for it to manifest.

Also surprising was the seemingly contrasting results gleaned from certain participants during different sections of the study. For example, natively fluent Irish speakers were significantly more likely to use a [d̪] stop (16% of cases, N = 255) than non-fluent Irish speakers (who used [d̪] in 12% of cases, N = 122) during the interview segment (p = 0.0007, tested using Fisher's Exact test). This would indicate that natively fluent speakers are indeed more comfortable using the phonological features marked as being Irish in origin, supporting the main hypothesis. However, this is in conflict with the responses found in recordings of the reading passages, where indeed it was the non-fluent speakers of Irish who used [d̪] stops more frequently (non-fluent speakers used [d̪] in 29% of cases (N = 40), compared to only 15% of the time by fluent Irish speakers (N = 37), p = 0.0003). As suggested in the previous section, this could be due to the non-fluent speakers purposefully increasing their use of th-stopping, in order to make up for their lack of ability in Irish. If the speaker has high opinions of Irish culture and language, they might wish to associate themselves with it more closely by adopting forms that they judge to be more distinctly Irish.

Another explanation that could account for this disparity in results is that during the reading tasks, natively fluent Irish speakers took more care to avoid speech features that they perceived as stigmatised. This would result in these features being produced less frequently in their reading tasks, only for their number to increase in the interview segment as the participants become more relaxed and less guarded in their speech. This explanation is supported by comments made in multiple participant interviews - it was common that participants expressed distaste at the idea of using certain features, primarily the use of [d̪] stops in place of [ð]. The reasoning given by participants for this distaste was almost exclusively that they associated the feature in Irish

English with a lack of education on the part of the speaker. Native Irish speakers might wish to further distance their Irish English speech from their Irish and take additional measures to avoid th-stopping in English, if they associate the feature with such negative social stereotypes. Such conscious perceptions could account for this difference in stop production between the interview segment and reading tasks.

5.6. Speaker attitudes and perceptions

The attitudinal data gathered in this study showed no particular lean towards any speaker demographic - non-fluent speakers of Irish were just as likely to hold positive views as their natively fluent counterparts. Across the board, all participants showed very positive views towards the Irish language and culture. However, as mentioned in the Results section, some statements garnered more division in opinions than others. The results were not seen to be significant when comparing responses to certain demographics (gender, degree of Irish fluency), but a trend can be observed in the type of statements that showed less participant consensus.

When examining these more controversial statements, the participant interviews provided valuable insight. The participants who did disagree with certain statements in the questionnaire explained that they generally did so not due to a lack of passion or interest in Irish and Irish culture, but with a mindset of what is realistic. It was common for participants to express a wish for an "ideal world" in which more Irish was spoken, however; they acknowledged the status of English as the majority language and therefore did not feel they could agree with certain statements. A good example of this type of statement is "I feel that it is important to speak Irish well in order to get ahead in the workplace in Ireland". It was extremely polarising, with 35% of participants strongly agreeing and 30% strongly disagreeing.

Statements focusing on English garnered slightly less enthusiasm than those stating pride in Irish ability. For example, "I am proud to speak English", with only 55% agreeing to some degree and 40% of respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Many participants elaborated on their reasoning for this in the interview section, stating that they felt pride for their bilingualism, not for speaking English in particular. Many felt that with the majority status of English in the Republic of Ireland being as it is, they had had no choice but to speak English natively.

Therefore, they felt no pride in their English fluency, as they perceived it as necessary and easy in a way that Irish was not. This pride in bilingualism as opposed to English fluency has been found in other research, such as Péterváry et al (2014) and Ó hIfearnáin (2007). Both sets of research focused on bilingualism of the youth in Ireland and it was found that parents consistently felt concern over the subtractive nature of the bilingualism their children were acquiring. The ideal was a balanced bilingualism, with English enhancing the prospects of the speaker while not encroaching on their ability in Irish. However, this was found to be seldom the case, with even L1 Irish speakers educated in Irish experiencing a deficit in their exposure to Irish when compared to English use, leading to a loss of Irish fluency. It is for this reason that some respondents expressed greater pride in Irish fluency than in English, as it is perceived as being more difficult to acquire and maintain.

The findings of Péterváry et al (2014) and Ó hIfearnáin (2007) can be related to other more controversial statements in the attitudinal stage of this research. The mandatory use of Irish as a language of instruction in statements such as “I feel that all school lessons should be taught in Irish throughout Ireland.” had 15% of participants somewhat disagreeing and a further 15% strongly disagreeing. However, this disagreement was not indicative of a dislike for Irish, rather than a worry about feasibility. Several participants cited issues with Irish-language education - from lack of Irish fluency in teaching staff to the difficulties in teaching different dialects of Irish. These responses also provided insight into how the participants viewed the linguistic landscape of modern Ireland and the needs of its people. A common reason given for participant reluctance for mandatory Irish instruction in schools was concern for immigrant communities in Ireland - they worried that children from outside Ireland would be left at a disadvantage in their education if forced to conduct it in Irish. Ó hIfearnáin (2007) observed similar reservations when interviewing residents of Múscraí, with many local advocates and native speakers of the Irish language having mixed feelings about enforcing a mandatory Irish education in all subjects. These views were often as a result of ignorance as to how equal bilingualism is maintained and a concern for the greater practicalities of English nationwide.

Another statement that inspired less agreement amongst participants examined the role of Irish in a domestic setting. Several participants had difficulty with the statement, “I wish I had more opportunity to speak Irish in the home” (with 40% of participants neither agreeing nor

disagreeing with the statement), as they admitted that they had as much opportunity as they wished. However, they did not wish to say that they “Strongly” disagreed with this statement, as they were in favour of Irish use in the home. This was remedied by participants answering “Neither Agree nor Disagree” on the scale provided and making an asterix or note next to the statement on their questionnaire. No significant relationship could be found between speaker fluency and response to this statement when using Fisher's Exact test, with home Irish speakers and non-fluent speakers alike expressing contentment with their opportunity to use Irish with their families. Similar problems were found with the same statement but focusing on Irish use in the workplace, but to a lesser extent.

5.7. Limitations of the work

Despite the numerous significant results found in the course of this research, the inferences we can make are limited somewhat by several practicalities of the study. Primarily, the sample size of participants (N = 20) was smaller than initially planned. This does reduce the relevancy of assumptions that can be made about the wider speech community of Múscraí. However, it was important for any sample size used in this study to be feasible for a lone researcher to manage whilst in the field. In this case, twenty participants split between two short data collection sessions proved suitable and achievable.

Another factor that limited the conclusions of the researcher was the lack of diversity of responses in the Attitudinal section of the questionnaire. It was the intention of this study to not only observe the relationship between fluency and gender with the focus phonological features, but also any links between these Irish-influenced features and speaker attitudes. Perceptions of Irish culture and language in Múscraí proved to be extremely positive across all demographics. The results of the attitudinal statements inform our view of current attitudes in Múscraí, but do not allow comparisons to be made between the speech habits of those more or less invested in Irish language and culture. This is in some ways unsurprising, as Gaeltacht areas are by their very nature supportive and encouraging of Irish and traditional culture. The residents of such areas could be viewed as sympathetic to the Irish language merely by virtue of living and working in the region.

An unavoidable obstacle encountered during this study came as a result of the previous factor. After the first fieldwork session, it was decided that an additional task should be added to the questionnaire in order to elicit more participant speech. The reading tasks "The North Wind and The Sun" and "Comma Gets a Cure" were chosen for this. The decision to add this extra step turned out to be valuable, as the supplementary data sourced from the reading tasks permitted a further level of comparison to be made between them and the interviews. All participants interviewed in the second fieldwork trip took part in the reading tasks. However, it proved difficult and in some cases impossible for participants from the first data collection session to attend and take part in the supplementary reading task. This resulted in just under half of all participants having taken part in the reading task. While this limited the extent of inferences made using this data, the reading task did increase the overall number of opportunities for production of th-stopping, rhoticity and vowel epenthesis.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Final statements

The aim of this dissertation has been to take stock of the language contact situation present in Múscraí and how the contact affects phonological transfer between the languages spoken there. The work undertaken in this paper has shown that at least in the Gaeltacht inhabitants surveyed, the relationship between their familiarity with Irish and how much Irish influence is present in their English varies widely based on several factors. Based on quantitative analysis of the data collected from the inhabitants of Múscraí, it can be concluded that both Irish fluency and gender are important factors to consider when examining Irish English speech. The findings of this study indicate that male speakers in Múscraí were far more likely than females to use [t̪] dental stops in place of [θ] and in some scenarios, they were more likely to use [t̪] than [θ] generally. This supports the hypothesis that men are more likely to adopt distinctly Irish English linguistic features than their female counterparts. Fluent Irish speakers too used th-stopping more frequently than non-fluent speakers, with fluent speakers being more likely to use a [d̪] stop in place of [ð] than non-fluent participants. This also supports the hypothesis that native Irish speakers will include more Irish-influenced features in their English speech.

More surprising were the results that did not support the predicted trends. Fluent Irish speakers were more likely to use [d̪] stops than non-fluent speakers in interviews; however, the opposite was found to be true in the reading tasks. Rhoticity is considered to be a standard feature across most Irish Englishes, yet this study found that it was female speakers and fluent Irish speakers who were more likely to drop /r/ in their utterances. This was at odds with the expectation that these two groups would be less likely to deviate from using the Irish-influenced features that were considered standard for Múscraí English. It was difficult to make any judgements on interactions between epenthesis and speaker demographic, as production proved to be limited in interviews. In addition to this, no links with any particular demographic were found to be significant. While this might limit the capability to link epenthesis in this study to fluency or gender, it demonstrates a need for further specialised research into the contemporary status of the focus variables in Múscraí. What can be taken from this work is an insight into the evolving nature of the English spoken in Múscraí and an indication of what specific changes might occur in the area in the future (e.g. further loss of rhoticity, the maintenance of dental stops [t̪] and [d̪] by fluent Irish speakers).

6.2. Implications for future research

Although the data collected in this study does provide some insight into the levels of certain features in Múscraí English, further research on a wider scale would reveal more about the speaking habits of those living and working in the Cork Gaeltacht.

Discussing local attitudes about Irish culture and language with those with more diverse opinions on those topics could be particularly valuable, as it would shed light onto the linguistic practises of those who are disenfranchised with the Irish language. The views of such Gaeltacht residents proved difficult to gather in this study. Further study in this area would also allow for an additional layer of analysis, as levels of the focus phonological variables could be compared with speaker attitudes as intended. One might imagine that speakers disinterested in promoting Irish might consciously avoid features in English that they associate with native Irish speakers, but as we see in the results of this study, the effects of Irish fluency on English speech are not that simple. Therefore, future researchers in this area would be encouraged to specifically seek out those in the area who do not hold positive views on the Irish language.

Expanding and improving upon the methods used in this study could benefit further linguistic research in the region, by means of deepening current understanding of the status of Irish in the Cork Gaeltacht and its surrounding area. Leading on from this, sociolinguistic examinations of the language in the area might allow language conservation bodies to better predict language trends and change in the future. This would allow such bodies to plan and formulate more informed language conservation plans tailored to the region, which may increase the likelihood of their success. In addition to this, examination of the current interactions between Irish and English in Múscraí might draw attention to the ways in which Múscraí English can be celebrated and used in conjunction with Irish in the community. Any contribution to the shared knowledge surrounding language attitudes in Gaeltacht areas could be valuable to educators and promoters of traditional culture in these same areas, by means of making the Irish language less intimidating and more accessible through English. As mentioned in the Introduction, the narrative of a combative relationship between Irish and English is not always helpful in furthering Irish use in the community.

A logical next step for researchers interested in future research in this area would be to look into funding in order to provide an incentive for further participants. This would allow for a larger participant base in consequent studies and potentially, further ease in recruitment. Another important step that would be crucial to gathering more diverse responses to the attitudinal aspect of this study would be to control recruitment to include those less invested in Irish language and culture in the community. Since the Irish language is so tied in with many local institutions and bodies within Múscraí, it could be prudent perhaps to approach those in some of the surrounding border areas, designated by Údarás na Gaeltachta as Gaeltacht service towns.

Generally, the area will have had to agree to participate in certain schemes aimed at Irish promotion in order to qualify as a Gaeltacht service town. Yet, they are not bound by limitations and requirements quite as strict as those found within Gaeltacht areas (Údarás na Gaeltachta, c2019d). These settlements are predominantly situated on the borders of the Gaeltacht regions and have a significant overspill of native Gaeltacht inhabitants seeking work and education within the service towns, as well as service town citizens seeking the same within the Gaeltacht. This geographical and cultural proximity to the Gaeltacht could provide study participants that speak a very closely-related dialect to the people of Múscraí, while being perhaps less invested

in the Irish language. Such individuals could be found by similar methods to those sourced within the Gaeltacht (i.e. within public houses, local shops and businesses), but also by employing different tactics. Businesses and hobby groups that do not focus on traditional Irish activities might attract customers and employees alike who do not consider being Irish to be as central to their identity as those who frequent more traditional past-times (i.e. Irish dance, poetry, sean-nós singing). It would therefore be recommended that groups like these be approached in Gaeltacht service towns in order to recruit more diverse participants in future research.

Another consideration that could prove useful (if feasible) in future research is for the interview process to be undertaken by a researcher with a native Irish accent, preferably one from the South of Ireland. It is impossible to know to what extent exactly the accent of the researcher might have had on the results of this current research. However, it is a factor that could be controlled in further research in this area. The author of this paper speaks English with a Northern English accent with no rhoticity, no epenthesis and no th-stopping. It is possible that speaking to a researcher with an accent not containing the focus phonological features may have consciously or subconsciously influenced the participants, so that they may have down-played these features in their own speech in order to accommodate the researcher, as described by Gallois et al (2005). If the accent of the researcher does indeed have an effect on the participant responses to the survey, this might be reflected in data collected by such a locally-recruited researcher. Leading on from this idea, a researcher who can be audibly identified as Irish by participants might further put them at ease, eliciting more natural speech during interviews and reading tasks. Unconscious bias on the part of participants may never be entirely avoided, but the recommendation of using an Irish English-speaking person for data collection could help to combat it.

Additional research into the variation and change of Múscraí English (and Gaeltacht Englishes generally) could contribute somewhat to fighting stereotypes held about the speakers of rural Ireland. It has long been the aim of Údarás na Gaeltachta and charities concerned with preserving native Irish that Gaeltachts be seen as modern regions with potential for growth in the future. A more informed perception of these areas in the public sphere could be very useful in encouraging increased migration into these areas, which in turn could influence their future. Migration and growth is extremely important in Gaeltacht regions, for Irish relies on new

speakers adopting the language for daily use as well as those native L1 Irish speakers.

6.3. Projected trends for the future

While the scope of this study is not large, some inferences can be made about possible developments in the future of Múscraí English and the varieties spoken nearby. This research found that for the most part, the dental fricatives [θ] and [ð] are used more commonly than the dental stops [t̪] and [d̪]. However, th-stopping may endure in the area still, as it is has remained a common feature of Dublin English. (Hickey, 2005). With increased access to the media, travel and more diversity in accents being portrayed in television and radio (Moriarty, 2018), it is easier than ever for new language trends to be shared and transferred between dialects. Indeed, the major national television network, RTÉ, is based in Dublin and takes great efforts to ensure that their presenters speak up-to-date, modern Irish Englishes in order to stay relevant (Hickey, 2003).

This study has found that currently, the inhabitants of the Múscraí Gaeltacht are predominantly rhotic. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that rhoticity will remain in Múscraí as a constant supraregional feature of Irish English. De-rhoticisation spreading further to more rural areas could increase amongst the youth and amongst women as a minority non-standard feature, following the example of r-retroflexion being adopted by young women in Dublin (Hickey, 2005). Epenthesis may be observed less frequently in the future of Irish English or even fall out of use eventually. This is of course if historical references to epenthesis are to be relied upon. It has been suggested that the more varied environments in which epenthesis was potentially recorded in the past indicate a general narrowing of use of the feature. If this is the case, epenthesis might continue to decline in use as time goes on, surviving only in isolated instances, for example in “film”.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Full questionnaire used in data collection

Question Sheet

Please fill in the following personal information. When a question provides answers, circle the answer that you feel most applies to you. If for some reason you do not feel comfortable answering a given question, please put a cross in the answer space instead of answering.
I am collecting this information purely for organisational purposes of your data and it will be kept securely and privately by myself. You will remain anonymous in any publication of my thesis.

Age: _____

Gender: Male / Female / Rather Not Say

Occupation: ____________

Social class: ____________

Home town (If this is outside of Ireland, please indicate this by also including the country, e.g. "York, UK" or "Berlin, Germany") : ____________

- Is your home town within a Gaeltacht area? Yes/No

Current place of residence:

Do you speak any Irish: Yes / No

If yes, how much Irish would say you speak? Indicate using the scale below:

1. None
2. A few words
3. Some basic phrases
4. Intermediate, can hold more than a basic conversation
5. Advanced but non-native
6. Fluent, Native Speaker

Level of Irish: ____________

Was Irish one of your home languages? If yes, please indicate if it was your main language at home and which other languages (if any) were spoken. Yes / No
Other languages spoken in the home: ____________________

In which situations do you use Irish the most? Please choose all that apply, with the most common being picked first. (If only some apply, leave the other spaces blank.)

At work, At school/university, At home, Out in town, Other (Please describe the situation if Other).

1. ____________
2. ____________
3. ____________
4. ____________
5. ____________

Section 1: Sound files

Using the computer and headphones provided, please listen to the short sound files carefully. You will hear an English word being said twice. You can listen to them as many times as you like. Once you have listened to a file, please indicate which version of the word sounds most like

the way you would say it - either "first" or "second". The word does NOT have to match exactly with how you would say it, I am merely interested in which production of the word is the most similar to how you yourself would say it. Once you are finished with this section, you will no longer need the computer or headphones.

	First	Second
Thing:		
Burn:		
Card:		
Earth:		
Arm:		
Thirst:		
Harp:		
There:		
Film:		
They:		
Park:		
Bar:		
That:		

Section 2: Opinions

For this section, you will only need your pen and this question sheet. Read through the series of statements below and indicate on the scales below each one to what extent you personally agree. Where possible, avoid giving a "neutral" score.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Somewhat Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Somewhat Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
I like living in					

Ireland.					
I feel strongly Irish.					
I enjoy speaking Irish.					
I enjoy speaking English.					
I would like it if Irish were spoken more in the workplace.					
I would like it if Irish were spoken more in the home.					
I am proud to speak Irish.					
I am proud to speak English.					
I speak English with an Irish accent.					
I wish I had more opportunity to speak Irish in the home.					
I wish I had more opportunity to speak Irish in					

the workplace					
I think all children in Ireland should learn Irish at school.					
I feel that all school lessons should be taught in Irish throughout Ireland.					
I believe that the Gaeltacht should be preserved.					
I feel that the Irish language is central to Irish identity.					
I feel that it is important to speak Irish well in order to get ahead in the workplace in Ireland.					
Children should be encouraged to speak Irish in the home.					

I feel that popular media (TV and radio) should be presented in Irish in Ireland.					
I feel that the Irish language is central to traditional Irish culture (traditional dance, music, etc).					

Section 3: Discussion

In this section, you will be asked to read two short texts aloud. After a minute or so, I will ask you to retell the first text to me in your own words. Then we will have a brief, relaxed talk where we'll discuss your answers in Section 2 in more detail. This will be recorded, but will only be available to myself and you will remain anonymous. If you have any questions about my research, this project or Irish English sociolinguistics generally, I will try my best to answer those questions at the end of this conversation! Once we are done, this is the end of our session. Thank you very much for your time!

Appendix B

“The North Wind and the Sun” reading passage

The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger, when a traveller came along wrapped in a warm cloak. They agreed that the one who first succeeded in making the traveller take his cloak off should be considered stronger than the other. Then the North Wind blew as hard as he could, but the more he blew the more closely did the traveller fold his cloak around him, and at last the North Wind gave up the attempt. Then the Sun shone out warmly, and immediately the traveller took off his cloak. And so the North Wind was obliged to confess that the Sun was the stronger of the two.

Appendix C

Comma Gets a Cure. A Diagnostic Passage for Accent Study (Draft September 7, 2000) by Jill McCullough & Barbara Somerville Edited by Douglas N. Honorof.

Comma Gets a Cure and derivative works may be used freely for any purpose without special permission provided the present sentence and the following copyright notification accompany the passage in print, if reproduced in print, and in audio format in the case of a sound recording: Copyright 2000 Douglas N. Honorof, Jill McCullough & Barbara Somerville. All rights reserved.

Well, here's a story for you: Sarah Perry was a veterinary nurse who had been working daily at an old zoo in a deserted district of the territory, so she was very happy to start a new job at a superb private practice in north square near the Duke Street Tower. That area was much nearer for her and more to her liking. Even so, on her first morning, she felt stressed. She ate a bowl of porridge, checked herself in the mirror and washed her face in a hurry. Then she put on a plain yellow dress and a fleece jacket, picked up her kit and headed for work. When she got there, there was a woman with a goose waiting for her. The woman gave Sarah an official letter from the vet. The letter implied that the animal could be suffering from a rare form of foot and mouth disease, which was surprising, because normally you would only expect to see it in a dog or a goat. Sarah was sentimental, so this made her feel sorry for the beautiful bird. Before long, that itchy goose began to strut around the office like a lunatic, which made an unsanitary mess. The goose's owner, Mary Harrison, kept calling, "Comma, Comma," which Sarah thought was an odd choice for a name. Comma was strong and huge, so it would take some force to trap her, but Sarah had a different idea. First she tried gently stroking the goose's lower back with her palm, then singing a tune to her. Finally, she administered ether. Her efforts were not futile. In no time, the goose began to tire, so Sarah was able to hold onto Comma and give her a relaxing bath. Once Sarah had managed to bathe the goose, she wiped her off with a cloth and laid her on her right side. Then Sarah confirmed the vet’s diagnosis. Almost immediately, she remembered an effective treatment that required her to measure out a lot of medicine. Sarah warned that this course of treatment might be expensive—either five or six times the cost of penicillin. I can’t imagine paying so much, but Mrs. Harrison—a millionaire lawyer—thought it was a fair price

for a cure.