

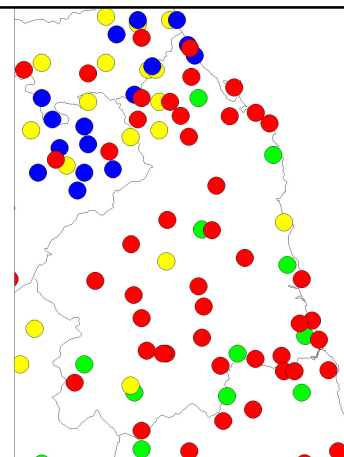
The Dialect of Southwest Tyrone

Building a corpus and investigating the phonology of traditional Southwest Tyrone English

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Traditional dialect research on English & Scots in Britain

- Orton Corpus (1930s):
- 18 major locations across Northumberland, Tyneside, north Durham
 - > 1000 phonetic transcriptions
- SED (1950s):
- 311 locations across England, Monmouthshire, Isle of Man
 - > 2000 phonetic transcriptions
- LSS (1950s):
- 188 locations across Lowland Scotland, Berwick, east Ulster
 - c. 1000 phonetic transcriptions



Traditional phonological data for Tyrone

Staples (1896)

- c. 500 (not altogether trustworthy) phonetic transcriptions of uncertain location, described as pertaining to both Belfast and to Lissan on the Tyrone/(London)Derry border

A Linguistic Survey of Ireland (Henry 1958)

- 121 published phonetic transcriptions from Glenhull/Glenelly
- Unpublished data?

Other?

- *Tape-recorded Survey* (Barry 1981) data
- Not specifically a traditional dialect survey
- The data for the older speakers doesn't necessarily constitute a record of the most traditional forms current at the time
- Only small amount of data from scattered locations across Tyrone

More recent studies of Tyrone English

Todd (1984) – east Tyrone

- Very interesting hypothesis, but almost no data or analysis published

Hickey (2004)

- Lots of data from Tyrone, but all read speech and mostly from young, urban speakers

Cunningham (2008, 2011)

- Only some data published, analysis focusses on speech of younger people

Corrigan (2010)

- Small number of recordings of speakers from across Tyrone, but mostly not traditional speech

Connolly (2013)

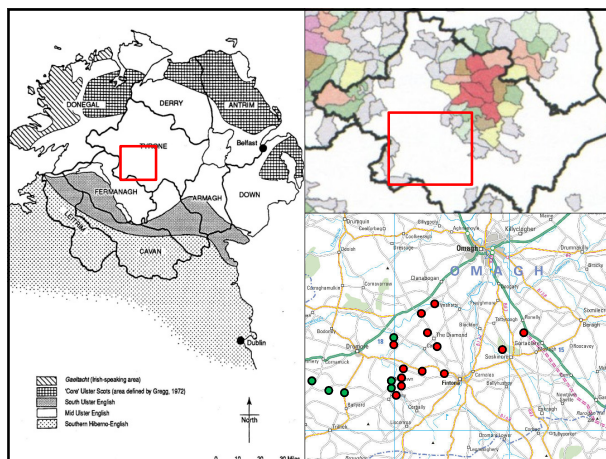
- Analysis of some phonological features in TRS data, plus new data from a range of speakers in north Tyrone, most of whom are younger, educated and urban (but two farmers with minimal education from Castledearg)

Questions about Tyrone English phonology

Questions:

- What are/were the most traditional forms of Tyrone English like?
- What particular phonological features characterise traditional Tyrone English, and what is their nature?
- To what extent do they still survive?
- What are the phonological origins of Tyrone English?
- What input did English (including regional dialects), Scots and Irish have on its development?
- Are there differences between the traditional speech of Catholics and Protestants in Tyrone and, if so, is any of this ascribable to different (proportions of the) linguistic inputs to their speech (as per Todd)?

Only with detailed records of the most old-fashioned forms of Tyrone English can we hope to begin answering these questions



SwTE corpus – 28.5 hrs of audio recordings (so far)

- Legacy recordings from the late 1980s and early 1990s of a number of old speakers in the community born in the early 20th century (2 hrs 50 mins)
- One-to-one interviews (typically involving discussion of local life and history, farming practices, and superstitions) with 17 current residents of the area born in the early and mid 20th century, made between 2003 and 2015 (18 hrs 45 mins)
- Answers to the *Survey of English Dialects* questionnaire by two speakers (CM39 and PM43, neighbours), made between 2004 and 2015 (5 hrs 30 mins)
- Range of wordlist and reading tasks designed to investigate various aspects of the phonology of the dialect, especially the MEAT-MATE (near-merger) (1 hr 25 mins)

Speaker	Occupation	Speaker	Occupation
PM00	†farmer	PM42*	farmer
PF14	†housewife	PM43	farmer, salesman
PF19	†farmer, housewife	CM44	farmer, labourer
PM23*	†farmer	PM45	unemployed
PM24	†farmer	CM47	farmer, digger-man
PM26*	†farmer	PF49	office worker
PM29	farmer	PF50	caterer
PM38*	farmer	PM50	farmer, postman
CM39*	farmer	PM54*	farmer
PF40*	domestic worker	PM55*	unemployed
PF41*	farmer	PM75*	farmer

Examples

See transcriptions on the handout

PM00

- Remembering news of the hanging of Joe Moan, the ‘Trillick Murderer’, in 1904

CM39

- Talking about threshing and wapping straw

PM43

- Answering SED questions IV.4.1, IV.4.2, IV.4.4 (*lice/louse, nits, fleas*)

PF50

- MEAT-MATE minimal pairs

Features currently under investigation

Pre-R Dentalisation (English, Scots, ?Irish)

Epenthesis in liquid + nasal clusters (English, Scots, Irish)

- *film* [ˈfələm], *farm* [ˈfajəm]

Velar palatalisation (English, Irish, ?Scots)

- *car* [cä:ɹ], *cat* [cət], *get* [jet], *give* [jəv] (cf. *calm* [kä:m], *calf* [kä:v])

Palatal velarisation (Irish, ?Scots)

- *Christian* [ˈkʲæscən], *furniture* [ˈfʲɯnəcəɹ], *idiot* [ˈiʲəɹ]/[ˈiʲəɹ], *Indian* [ˈiʲnʲən], *question* [ˈkwɛscən]/[ˈkwɛskən], *stupid* [ˈsʲɛpʲət]

The MEAT lexical set (and its relationship with MATE)

The MEAT lexical set

The MEAT lexical set has well known (again stereotyped) MATE-like pronunciations in Irish English (including SwTE)

- e.g. *beak, beat, cheap, concrete, decent, easy, eat, flea, Jesus, meat, peas, speak, tea, teacher, weak*

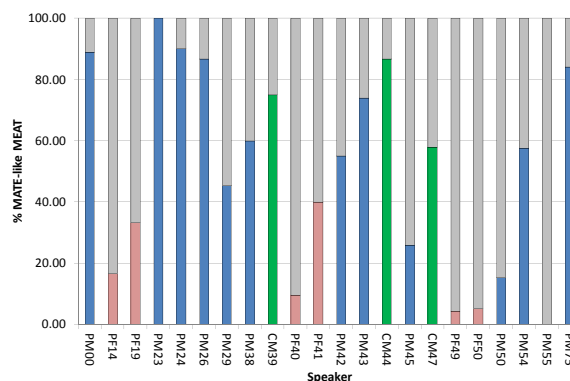
Milroy and Harris (1980) and Harris (1985) showed that in Belfast Vernacular English MEAT and MATE are in a situation of near merger

- they are pronounced almost the same, with near-complete overlap in realisation, but their pronunciations are statistically different
- [iə] preferred in MATE, [e] in MEAT

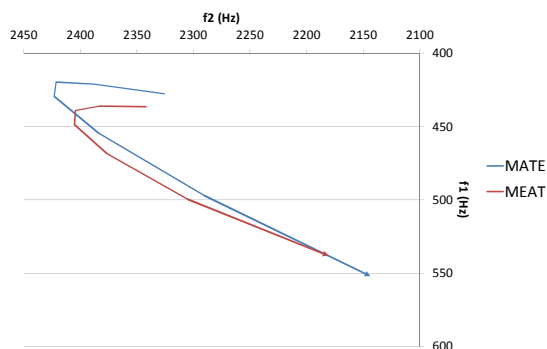
BUT: Milroy and Harris’s study was based on a small number of tokens, not analysed acoustically

The SwTE corpus affords us an excellent opportunity to investigate the MEAT vowel in a Mid-Ulster English dialect in much more detail, since the feature survives well in the speech of traditional SwTE speakers

MEAT-like pronunciations of MEAT



The MEAT-MATE (near-)merger



Pre-R Dentalisation

A well known, indeed stereotyped feature of Irish English, including SwTE (Harris 1985, Maguire 2012)

The realisation of /t/ and /d/ (and sometimes /n/) as [t̪], [d̪] ([ɲ]) before /r/ and /ər/

- *try* [t̪r̪ə-e], *dry* [d̪r̪ə-e], *better* 'more good' ['bɛt̪əʃ], *wonder* ['wɔ̃nɔ̃d̪əʃ], *hunder* 'hundred' ['hʉ̃nɔ̃d̪əʃ]
- R-Realisation Effect: /r/ pronounced as tap after dentals (cf. *cry* [k̪r̪ə-e])
- Morpheme Boundary Constraint: PreRD blocked by 'Class 2' morpheme boundaries (cf. *better* 'one who bets' ['bet̪əʃ], *spreader* ['sp̪r̪ɛr̪əʃ])

Origin in (dialects of) English and Scots (Maguire 2012, in preparation), both of which have/had PreRD, the RRE and the MBC

- uncertain role for Irish; PreRD was at least compatible with aspects of Irish phonology (dental vs. non-dental opposition; *trá* [t̪r̪r̪ä:], *trí* [t̪r̪i:], with similar effect to the RRE)

Further complications revealed by the SwTE corpus

- PreRD can apply across stressed vowels (*start* [s̪t̪aʃt], *turn* [t̪ʉ̃n]) (cf. spellings such as *thurn* in the dialect poems of W. F. Marshall, 'Bard of Tyrone')
- PreRD does not operate across word boundaries, but the RRE can (*better at that* ['bɛt̪ər at ðat], *down the road* [d̪əʃn ðə roʉ̃d] vs. *go to Rome* [gɔ̃ tə roʉ̃m])
- The RRE doesn't always apply (*try* [t̪r̪ä-e]), and sometimes /r/ is elided with the dentalisation remaining (*try* [t̪ä-e])
- There is a degree of non-rhoticity in unstressed syllables in SwTE, and this does not block PreRD (cf. the similar situation in northern England, Maguire 2012), e.g. *better than that* ['bɛt̪ə ðən ðat]
- There are low levels of dentalisation, especially of /t/, in other positions (mostly word-finally), e.g. *out* [əʉ̃t], especially in the speech of CM39

The future

More recordings

- Continuing fieldwork, particularly to record more Catholic speakers

Corpus construction

- Aligned orthographic transcriptions (ongoing)
- Transcriptions will be made available to other users

Analyses

- General description of the phonology of the dialect
- Detailed synchronic and diachronic analysis of particular phonological features of the dialect

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