# ‘[S]ince we came across the Atalantic’

An empirical diachronic study of Northern Irish English phonology

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I remean your humble sarvent,
Persijn M. de Rijke
Bergen, July 2015

# Contents

# List of Figures

# List of Tables

# List of Maps

# List of abbreviations and symbols

| | |
|---|---|
| AAVE | African American Vernacular English |
| AmE | American English |
| BrE | British English |
| C | consonant |
| CEEC | *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* |
| CEECE | *Corpus of Early English Correspondence Extension* |
| CIE | *Corpus of Irish English* |
| CORIECOR | *Corpus of Irish English Correspondence* |
| EngE | English English |
| EModE | Early Modern English |
| GA | General American |
| IPA | The International Phonetic Alphabet |
| IrE | Irish English |
| Lat. | Latin |
| LModE | Late Modern English |
| ME | Middle English |
| MUE | Mid Ulster English |
| n | number |
| NDA | no data available |
| NIrE | Northern Irish English |
| OE | Old English |
| OSc | Older Scots |
| RP | Received Pronunciation |
| ScE | Scottish English |
| SIrE | Southern Irish English |
| SUE | South Ulster English |
| USc | Ulster Scots |
| V | vowel |
| / / | phonological representation |
| [ ] | phonetic representation |
| ⟨ ⟩ | orthographic representation |
| ~ | alternates with |
| < | from / input of change |
| > | becomes / output of change |

A subscript caret [t̡] is used to denote T/D-fricativisation (also known as slit fricative). Apart from this, the standard IPA symbols are used for phonological and phonetic transcription.

# Chapter 1

# Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

In October 1849 Thomas Armstrong wrote a letter to his brother Christopher in America:

> *I think that Devid woad be kind a nof*
> *to him and he wood alow me to go to america and I think of I*
> *was ther that I cood do beter for him and miy self than I cood*
> *do ate home for I am onely losen miy time a bouth Ballinamallard*
> (Thomas Armstrong, Ballinamallard, Co. Fermanagh to Christopher Armstrong, USA, 28.10.1849)

This is a small excerpt of one of thousands of letters in the *Corpus of Irish English Correspondence* (CORIECOR). There is only one from Thomas Armstrong, and what we know about him can only be inferred from the letter itself. Thus, we know that the recipient, Christopher, has previously emigrated from Ballinamallard, Co. Fermanagh to an unknown location in the USA where he has begun a farm. In the letter, Thomas passes along some family news, informs Christopher about the death of a friend, current market prices for meal (flour) and potatoes, and also expresses a wish to join Christopher in America provided that his brother David takes care of his sickly father.

But this is not all that we can learn from Thomas' writing. The passage above shows that he was not very familiar with putting words on paper, so that many words are spelt in a non-standard manner. Because of this, Thomas has inadvertently left clues about the way he pronounced some of those words, such as ⟨Devid⟩ 'David,' which suggests [e:] in the first syllable. The dropped ⟨g⟩ in ⟨losen⟩ 'losing' means that he probably, as many speakers of English, often used [-ɪn] instead of [-ɪŋ] in gerunds – and the spelling ⟨a bouth⟩ 'about' perhaps even provides evidence for a 'typical' Southern Irish English fricative /t/, which would not be unexpected in the speech of someone from Co. Fermanagh. This is precisely the kind of evidence that is investigated in this study.

### 1.1.1 Aim

The aim of the present thesis is to use the nearly complete CORIECOR to document diachronic phonological changes in Northern Irish English (NIrE), i.e. the English dialects of Ulster, by examining phonetic representation in a total of 4,850 letters written by Irish

emigrants between 1700 and 1940.[1] It will thus attempt to chart the phonological development of a wide range of features of NIrE over more than 200 years, and in effect provide a comprehensive overview of the range of phonological features that are to be found in the corpus.

As demonstrated in the passage at the start of this chapter, spelling variation in these letters can in many cases show phonological features of the speech of their writers. Given this high degree of orality, CORIECOR can be used to document phonetic representation over time. Letters were very much regarded as 'substitute speech' in the past, so they potentially offer the most realistic source for charting historical phonological change of any written material excepting perhaps contemporary linguistic commentary or the comparative method.

This study aims to contribute to a clearer, more comprehensive picture of the history of NIrE phonology and add to the current knowledge of historical phonetic developments and our fragmentary knowledge of the evolution of NIrE.

### 1.1.2 Research questions

Being an empirical qualitative study, research questions were chosen instead of hypotheses in order to provide a clearer basis from which to approach the data. This was considered especially useful in this case because the present study is the first to chart the occurrence of phonological features in CORIECOR, which means that the first order of business must be to document said features, and consequently to interpret them in light of a select few sociolinguistic variables. The variables chosen for this study are geographical, social rank, and gender. Thus, the following two research questions were formulated for the present thesis:

1. Which phonological features of NIrE are phonetically represented in CORIECOR?
2. How are these phonological features distributed diachronically, geographically, and socially?

Originally, variables such as age and religion were also considered, but eventually rejected because too little information was available.

Research question (1) will be addressed by including as many phonetically represented features found in CORIECOR as possible. This will mean that even features with only a handful (in some cases fewer) attestations will be included. In such cases, an in-depth analysis may not possible, but it does at least provide evidence for the existence of the features in question. Research question (2) will be answered as fully as possible. In some cases this will be depend on the number of tokens available and also on the availability of information about the letter writer in question. The findings of this study will add to the overall results of the CONVAR project.

[1] Given that CORIECOR was still being constructed at the time of data collection, this figure may not coincide with the contents of the corpus that have appeared in other publications.

## 1.2 CONVAR

This thesis, and the corpus on which it builds, are part of the project *Contact, variation and change: Towards an empirical history of Irish English. Diachronic studies of the evolution of an early New English* (CONVAR).[2] CONVAR aims to:

> contribute to research in the field of World Englishes, in particular historical study of regional Englishes and the evolution of new varieties that emerged as a result of settlement expansion involving dialect and language contact. (McCafferty and Amador-Moreno 2012b: 1)

In addition, CONVAR will focus on finalising the compilation of CORIECOR, the corpus that forms the basis for the project's studies. The project's comparative historical (socio)linguistic studies will concentrate on:

- the emergence of IrE through dialect contact between varieties of settler BrE, language contact between English and Irish, and language shift from about 1750 to 1900;
- the putative influence of IrE on other (post-)colonial varieties – especially the Englishes of the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand – to which IrE has contributed as a result of mass emigration;
- regional dialectal divergence in Ireland, in particular between areas that became English-speaking as a result of settlement from Britain and those that became English-speaking as a result of language shift; and
- a historical pragmatic study of IrE discourse markers in a contact perspective. (McCafferty and Amador-Moreno 2012b: 1–2)

Answering these questions will fill gaps in our knowledge of not only IrE, but World Englishes in general, especially when it comes to the dynamics surrounding the formation of a new variety in a language contact situation. Through doing so, CONVAR will contribute to the body of work on one of the first 'new Englishes' and address the scarcity of empirical diachronic studies of IrE.

## 1.3 Clarification of terms

The variety of English spoken in Ireland has been referred to in a variety of ways, the most common of which are *Anglo-Irish*, *Hiberno-English*, and *Irish English*. *Anglo-Irish* is a term often encountered in older works and is used for both the land-owning class of English settlers from the seventeenth-century onwards and for the English language as spoken in Ireland. Literally, however, it means 'English variety of Irish' (Hickey 2007: 3), in the same sense as, e.g. *Anglo-Saxon*, which is decidedly wrong as Irish (*Gaeilge*) is a Celtic language. *Anglo-Irish* is still used outside of Ireland and in literary and historical studies, but Adams et al. (1985: 67) note that it was decided that *Hiberno-English* was a more accurate term

[2] Funded in 2008–9 with a grant of NOK 300,000 from the University of Bergen's Meltzer Foundation (Grant No. 9334), and by the Research Council of Norway for the period from August 2012 to December 2015 (Grant No. 213245).

at the first Annual Colloquium on the English Language in Ireland at the New University of Ulster in 1972. Consequently, *Hiberno-English* is found as the predominant denominator for English in Ireland from the 1970s (the 1960s according to Henry 1985: 157), and is still a common term today, also with Irish authors and linguists. However, this label has an unnecessarily complex prefix which, without prior knowledge, is not easily understood (Lat. *Hibernia* 'Ireland'). This diminishes its usefulness somewhat. *Hiberno-English* is used particularly in Ireland, but is not necessarily understood outside of Ireland, which has contributed to many authors abandoning the term. Still, many in the field of Irish literature, as well as Irish poets and novelists and also those with an amateur interest in language tend to still use the term. The present thesis uses *Irish English* (IrE) to refer to English in Ireland in general and *Northern Irish English* (NIrE) and *Southern Irish English* (SIrE) in reference to the Englishes spoken in most of Ulster and in the rest of Ireland, respectively. The label *IrE* has seen frequent use by linguists in recent years (e.g. Amador-Moreno, Corrigan, Hickey, Kallen, McCafferty), and is preferable in that it is equal to all classifications of the English language, such as *British English*, *American English*, *Australian English*, *Indian English*, etc. It also does not suffer from the use of a hyphen, which, as in *Anglo-Irish* and *Hiberno-English*, suggests that the variety is some kind of sub-species, rather than a variety of its own.

NIrE is further sub-divided into *Mid Ulster English* (MUE), *South Ulster English* (SUE), and *Ulster Scots* (USc). Some may question the decision to include USc as a variety of NIrE because Scots, after all, is not the same as English. *USc* (in the past also called *Scotch-Irish* and *Scots Irish*; Hickey 2007: 5) refers to a variety descended from Scottish settlers who came to Ulster during the seventeenth century. Today, the term *Ullans* (cf. *Lallans* for Lowland Scots) is used by some to refer to (written) USc (Hickey 2007: 6), but this is a question of politics and identity and will not be touched upon here. It is clear that Scots has a different cultural background than the English Englishes (EngE; i.e. varieties of English from England) imported to Ireland, but seeing as:

1. USc is (mostly) mutually intelligible with other varieties of English in Ulster (Corrigan 2010: 17);

2. There has been extensive mutual influence between these varieties since their introduction in the seventeenth century, and;

3. USc can arguably be classified as a type of English spoken in Ireland;

I have opted to include USc when using the term *NIrE*. Thus, the catch-all term NIrE is used in the present thesis when talking about varieties of English/Scots in Ulster, and USc, MUE, and SUE are used only where the distinction is relevant. This also makes sense because differences between these varieties more often than not rely on vowel quantity, whereas it is vowel quality that is usually most clearly inferred from phonetic representation in non-standard spellings. It therefore often makes more sense in this study to differentiate between NIrE and SIrE, than between USc, MUE, and SUE, though distinctions are made where apparent or useful. The term also includes areas like Donegal and parts of Monaghan, which are politically part of the Republic of Ireland, but are geographically part of Ulster, and, given the linguistic geography of Ireland, share a lot of NIrE features.

A final note concerns the linguistic situation in Ireland and the term *Gaeltacht* (pl. *Gaeltachtaí*). The original definition of a *Gaeltacht* by the Coimisiún na Gaeltachta in 1926

denoted an area with at least 80 per cent native Irish-speakers, though this definition has varied somewhat since. Knowledge of the location of such areas can shed light on the geographical pattern of certain linguistic features of (N)IrE as they may have originated as a result of contact with the Irish language. According to the 1996 Census, only 14 of the 154 district electoral divisions would qualify for this, due to the gradual decline of Irish as a daily spoken language.[3] In this study, *Gaeltacht* areas are based on figures and maps in Fitzgerald (1984, 2003) and Harris (1985) (see section 4.3.3 for details).

Lastly, a comment on the usage of *Ireland* and *Ulster* in the present thesis is necessary. CORIECOR largely predates partition (1920), by which the island of Ireland was split into Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State (now the Republic of Ireland). Because of this, the term *Ireland* is often used in this thesis when referring to the whole island, i.e. both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This term is generally more useful in discussions surrounding the numerous historical occurrences that underly the formation of the various dialects of IrE.

Ulster is one of the four (initially five) historical provinces of Ireland (see section 2.2.1 for historical details). Depending on political and religious background, *Ulster* is used in different ways. The Unionist/loyalist community, Northern Irish organisations, and some British newspapers frequently use *Ulster* for Northern Ireland. The Nationalist/Republican community in turn sometimes refers to Northern Ireland as *the Six Counties* and the Republic of Ireland as *the Twenty-Six Counties*, emphasizing the link between the two countries. Thus, for some, the word *Ulster* is closely linked to Northern Ireland, even though three counties in the Republic are also part of the geographical province of Ulster.

In this thesis, Ulster is strictly used in reference to the historical province consisting of counties Antrim, Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Down, Fermanagh, (London)Derry, Monaghan, and Tyrone.[4] Again, because CORIECOR for the most part predates partition, this was deemed the most useful term for the geographical area covered by the present study.

## 1.4 Structure of thesis

Being a historical sociolinguistic study, it is necessary to provide a historical framework from which to approach the subject of this thesis. Chapter 2: *Historical background* provides this by giving an account of the history of the English language in Ireland, from the Anglo-Norman Invasion (1167) until 1900, by which time the shift from Irish to English was almost complete. This covers the relevant events before and during the time periods in CORIECOR.

In addition to the historical background, the theoretical basis for the present thesis is given in chapter 3: *Theoretical background*. Here, previous research on historical IrE phonology is covered. This chapter also provides the theoretical justifications for using the written

[3] An Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta / Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (n.d.): *Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta*, p. 10.

[4] Present-day Co. (London)Derry was initially called Co. Coleraine/Culraine, then Derry, and later Londonderry. Londonderry is also still the official postal address, though most refer to both city and county as Derry, and in writing sometimes as Derry/Londonderry or Derry-Londonderry in order to achieve neutrality. Because some today prefer Derry and others Londonderry, and also because it is more economical than combining both with stroke or hyphen, I use (London)Derry for both city and county (following e.g. McCafferty 2001; Corrigan 2010, though they use Derry for the county name) throughout the present thesis.

word as evidence for the spoken word. A variety of genres are covered, including personal correspondence.

A description of the corpus and the methods used for data extraction and analysis are found in chapter 4: *Corpus and methodology*. The chapter gives a break-down of the appearance and structure of the letters and an introduction to the letter writers, including gender, social rank, geographical location, and other factors. The description of methodology focuses on search methods, data management, and map creation, but also on decisions on which features or tokens to include or not.

The results of the study are presented and discussed in chapters 5–8. Each chapter ends with a brief summary of the findings. Chapter 5: *[ðiː] for* they explores the most frequently occurring case of phonetic representation, the non-standard spelling ⟨the⟩ for *they*. The singular wealth of tokens for this feature allows for a deeper analysis than other instances of phonetic representation, such as examining the impact of education on the non-standard spelling for *they*. Chapter 6: *Vowels* presents evidence for the quality of various vowel features in CORIECOR, including the FACE monophthong, CATCH-raising, unraised long E, short E-lowering, open fronted (*m*)*any*, short E-raising, KIT-centering, unrounded short O, and vowels before /r/. A number of more infrequent occurrences in the corpus are discussed towards the end of the chapter. Chapter 7: *Consonants* discusses evidence for consonant features. The token count per feature is rather low here compared to the vowel chapter, which means that the analyses are not as detailed. Features investigated in this chapter include TH-fortition, intervocalic tap, T/D-dentalisation, T/D-fricativisation, S-palatalisation, [ʃ] for /tʃ/, yod-dropping, and devoiced /v/. As in chapter 6, a few infrequent occurrences are included at the end of the chapter. Chapter 8: *Phonological processes* looks at features that are not easily classifiable as either vowel or consonant. These include schwa-epenthesis, metathesis, cluster reduction, post-sonorant devoicing, and [n] for /ŋ/. Schwa-epenthesis is the more detailed section as it builds on an earlier, individual study. Two unexpected features (for NIrE), non-rhoticity and H-dropping, are briefly discussed towards the end of the chapter.

Finally, the conclusions of the present thesis, its broader impact, its limitations, and ways forward are presented in chapter 9: *Conclusions*.

# Chapter 2

# Historical background

## 2.1 Introduction

Given the historical sociolinguistic nature of this thesis, both the historical and the linguistic background of Northern Irish English (NIrE) form natural starting points for the discussion of historical NIrE phonology as witnessed from emigrant letters. This chapter places the present project in such a background. Firstly, in section 2.2, the history of the English language in Ireland – from the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman conquest to the Ulster Plantation and beyond – is described. Secondly, in section 2.3, a short overview over the current English dialect situation in Ulster is given, including dialect boundaries and features of phonology. Further details are given in the individual discussions of relevant linguistic features in chapters 5–8.

## 2.2 Historical background

The 800 years that English has been present in Ireland can be divided into three phases. The first starts in the late twelfth century with the arrival of the first English-speaking settlers, the second around 1600 with the extensive planting of English and Scots (the latter a majority of the settlers), and the third phase (the Irish-to-English language shift) from the mid-eighteenth to the start of the twentieth century. Thus, while English has been spoken in Ireland for nearly a millennium, it is only during the last two or three centuries of this time that English has become the vernacular of most Irish people. As this thesis is a diachronic study of NIrE phonology, an overview over these phases will be a useful platform for the overall theme of the project. So as not to deviate from the main issues of this thesis I will concern myself only with the history of Ireland where the English language comes into play and predominantly with the northern province of Ulster.

It is debatable whether the twelfth century and its earliest large-scale contact between English-speaking and native Irish people is a good starting point for a discussion about the influence of the English language in Ireland. Being Anglo-Norman, the earliest settlers from England introduced a considerable number of Anglo-Norman loan words into the Irish language, but very few 'pure' English loans. Also, many of those of Norman stock were Norman-French speaking, while many of the other mercenaries in the invading forces were Welsh or Flemish. Nevertheless, the Anglo-Normans, or at least their ancestors, were mostly Gaelicised and even opposed English colonisation centuries later (Kenny 2004: 6).

Only in Dublin, Fingal (north of Dublin, in the Pale), and the barony of Forth and Bargy in Co. Wexford did English more or less take hold (Hickey 2007: 66, 82). Some features of vernacular Dublin English may be traced at least back to the fourteenth century (Hickey 2002b). Filppula (1999: 30) also acknowledges that late-medieval 'Old English' may have survived especially in towns and must thus be at least partly an ingredient of modern IrE. Still, a common viewpoint is that the introductory phases of English – at least concerning matters of phonology (see e.g. Bliss 1984: 135; Harris 1984: 115) – can be divided into two separate parts, with the second and most significant phase being the late sixteenth- and mid-seventeenth-century plantations (see Figure 2.1).

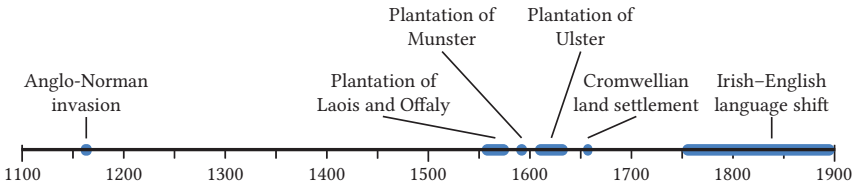



**Figure 2.1**: Timeline of major events concerning the English language in Ireland

The crucial events in the history of Ireland concerning the formation of IrE are the Anglo-Norman invasion, the King's County and Queen's County plantations (and a few others, like the plantations of Leitrim, Longford, and Wicklow), the Munster and Ulster plantations, and the Cromwellian Land Settlement, culminating in the Irish-to-English language shift.[1] Each will be discussed in turn below.

### 2.2.1 The Anglo-Norman invasion (1167)

Even before the Anglo-Normans set foot on Irish soil, contact with Britain was already very old. According to seventh-century Pope Honorius I, Ireland was 'isolated at the uttermost ends of the Earth' (Lydon 1998: 41). It was certainly spared the Roman Empire's campaigns in the British Isles between 43 and 84 AD and was thus never made a Roman province as Roman Britain was from 43 to 409. This also means that modern innovations such as a common judicial system, improved road networks, and military advances did not appear in Ireland as they did in England, Wales, and the south of Scotland. Following the fifth-century Roman withdrawal, parts of Scotland, Wales, and Northern England were colonised by Irish people. The eventual advent of the Roman Church shortly after the Roman armies abandoned Britain caused a 'golden age of Christianity and monasticism' as the Irish Church developed along different paths than its European counterpart, fusing successfully with Gaelic culture (Kee 1995: 27; Cronin 2001: 4). In the centuries that followed, Irish missionaries founded or strengthened monasteries throughout Europe, and Northern Britain was Christianised from Ireland by missionaries such as Saint Columba and Saint

[1] Present-day counties Offaly and Laois were called King's County and Queens County, after King Philip and Queen Mary, until the early twentieth century.

Aidan. Early English churchmen also trained in Ireland and Irish scholars attended King Æthelstan's court in England in the first half of the tenth century (Lydon 1998: 41). The labours of scholars and churchmen in Ireland resulted in important works like the *Book of Durrow* and the *Book of Kells*, both transcriptions of the Gospels (Kee 1995: 27). Compared to the rest of Europe, the religious situation in Ireland was somewhat of a special case. Instead of following the diocesan model common in much of Europe at the time, which involved territorially determined centres of church power, the Irish Church was based on the Celtic system of local kingdoms run by influential families, and thus monastic in shape (Cronin 2001: 5; Killeen 2003: 16). And while the Church in European regions went through a series of reforms in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Irish Church resisted such changes, much to the dismay of both Rome and its own bishops (Cronin 2001: 10).

The organisation of the Irish Church reflected the monarchical traditions of Gaelic society. The monarchical system of Gaelic Ireland consisted of:

> around a hundred small kingdoms. The small kingdoms were arranged into five bigger groupings, which form the basis of Ireland's modern provinces: Ulaid (Ulster), Midhe (Meath), Laigin (Leinster), Muma (Munster) and Connacht. At the head of this system was a single High King (Ard Rí), who would rule a province of his own, but would also exert his supremacy over the other provinces. (Cronin 2001: 2–3)

Unfortunately, the 'tanistry' system was not based on direct succession so that any (male) member of the king's family could be elected as his successor, which made for a highly unstable and violent society without a central government (Cronin 2001: 3). The inherent weakness of this system of disjointed, competing political groups ensured that the eventual invaders were not only free from the threat of a unified Irish defensive push, but also that they could enlist the help of natives in conquering other parts of the island (Frame 2012: 7). The unconventional organisation of the Irish Church and the weak monarchical system may very well have been combining factors which at least provided some sort of excuse for the English Crown's interest in Ireland.

The first group of 'Englishmen' to come to Ireland were not strictly speaking English, nor did they leave a strong linguistic impression on the island. They were a mixture of Normans, Welsh, and Flemings, hired from the Marcher Lords of Wales by former king of Leinster Dermot MacMurrough. Between 1151 and 1166, MacMurrough had provoked the ire of High King Rory O'Connor of Connacht by betraying, and blinding, previous High King MacLochlainn, and provoked O'Rourke, king of Breffny, by stealing his wife. The resulting battle against O'Rourke, who was backed by Leinster chieftains and Ostmen (the old Viking community of Dublin), left MacMurrough defeated and he fled to England. This prompted him to seek the approval of Henry II of England to raise troops from his kingdom, which is how Dermot ended up amongst the Marcher Lords. Thus the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland started with a small group of Flemings in Wexford in 1167 with the goal of returning the throne of Leinster to MacMurrough (Lydon 1998: 58). It gathered momentum in 1169 with the arrival of larger bands of Anglo-Normans led by Robert FitzStephen and Maurice de Prendergast, and came to full fruition in 1170. At this point even more mercenaries arrived in Ireland, commanded by MacMurrough's closest ally Richard 'Strongbow' de Clare, Earl of Pembroke, and Raymond 'le Gros' FitzGerald (Cronin 2001: 10–12).

An invasion of Ireland had been discussed ever since the reign of William the Conqueror and, to Henry II, must certainly have seemed justifiable. After all, the English pope Adrian IV had granted the English Crown the right to rule Ireland (via his papal bull *Laudabiliter*, issued in 1155) when the see of Dublin asserted itself as an Irish archbishopric, which provoked the archbishop of Canterbury (Simms 1993: 56).[2] Lydon (1998: 56–57) points out that the person who suggested to MacMurrough to seek King Henry II's aid had not a few favours to collect from the king, but also suggests *Laudabiliter* and previous discussion of an invasion as possible causes for MacMurrough's decision to enlist the Angevin king's help. It is important to note that while Strongbow was gathering his troops during the summer of 1170, he was essentially forbidden to set sail for Ireland by Henry II, who was afraid that Strongbow would turn into a powerful rival once he had established himself in Ireland (Cronin 2001: 12). This adds a third incentive to the English Crown's involvement in Ireland. But MacMurrough was not content with merely reclaiming his throne, and together with Strongbow (who had married the former's daughter Aoife and therefore was heir to Leinster) set his sights on much larger parts of Ireland.[3] The Anglo-Norman combination of mounted knights and longbow archers was more formidable than any Irish army at the time.[4] Thus, Wexford, Dublin, and Wicklow fell in rapid succession and after that Ossory, Meath, and Breffny, with the invaders controlling all land in between.

When MacMurrough died the following year and Strongbow succeeded him, Henry II decided to carry out his plan which, as Lydon (1998: 59) points out, must have been well prepared considering the substantial time frame and massive scale of the 4,000 or so assembled troops, equipment and ships. Lydon also suggests that the scandal involving Thomas à Becket's assassination in 1170 may have influenced the king's decision to leave England for a while and that a visit to Ireland to assert his power over his conquering subjects and to act on his rights as granted by *Laudabiliter* came at an opportune time. The arrival of King Henry's massive army, which quickly made him 'feudal lord of Ireland,' was perhaps the true invasion (Lydon 1998: 61).

Many historians claim that ultimately, most of the invaders adopted Irish ways of life and were eventually assimilated into the native population. This is not unexpected, for while Henry's presence in Ireland could have meant the start of a, for England, beneficial colony, history would have it otherwise. Henry was soon forced to return to England to deal with his rebellious son, leaving the Irish High King Rory O'Connor in charge in his stead. Unfortunately, O'Connor did not enjoy enough respect from either his fellow Irish kings, or remaining lords such as Strongbow. After this, haphazard attention from English monarchs effectively reduced English influence to a small region around Dublin called 'the (English) Pale.' Still, over half of Ireland was under colonial control around the middle of the thirteenth century (Frame 2012: 57), though always ruled by lords, dukes or deputies with highly individual interests. Gaelicised descendants of the invaders paid little attention to the English Throne in the centuries that followed and, in the words of an anonymous sixteenth-century scribe, 'liveth only by the sword and obeyeth unto no other temporal person' (Kee 1995: 30). Cronin (2001) explains that even just a hundred years earlier, the unattractiveness of this unstable and violent society meant that probably only some 2,500

[2] There has been some debate over whether *Laudabiliter* was a genuine papal bull or a hoax in order to justify an invasion.

[3] Given the tradition of tanistry, Strongbow was nevertheless only *potentially* heir to Leinster.

[4] Strongbow's forces alone exceeded 1,000 men, which included 200 knights (Lydon 1998: 58).

Englishmen were living in Ireland at the time, which again increased the need to intermarry and form local alliances. By the end of the fourteenth century, Irish culture, as well as its language, dominated again in rural Ireland (Cronin 2001: 22, 31).

Hickey (2007) maintains that, as English settlers from the west and south-west of England predominantly established themselves in the east of Ireland (unlike the Normans), their position was weak overall, but strong and widespread, not only in urban centres but also in some rural areas on the east coast. This is exemplified by the baronies of Forth and Bargy in Co. Wexford and the Fingal area, north of Dublin, which retained the English language and some older features for some time (Hickey 2007: 52). The east coast variety of English eventually gave way to Irish. Hindley (1990: 4) states that it was the small number of Anglo-Normans, eventual intermarriage, weak links to the home country, and the small impact of the government language (English, and to some extent Anglo-Norman French) on everyday life that prevented English taking hold during medieval times. Textual evidence from the late fifteenth century and leading up to the sixteenth-century plantations in Munster point to a steady decline in the use of English, even in Dublin (Bliss 1979: 13). Hickey (2002a) nevertheless traces certain lexical and phonological features of vernacular Dublin English back to pre-seventeenth century times.

Some understanding of the status of the English language in Ireland can be gleaned from the *Statutes of Kilkenny* of 1367 (original ironically in Norman French):

> Whereas at the conquest of the land of Ireland, and for a long time after, the English of the said land used the English language, mode of riding and apparel, […] but now many English of the said land, *forsaking the English language*, manners, mode of riding, laws and usages, live and govern themselves according to the manners, fashion, and *language of the Irish enemies*; […] whereby the said land, and the liege people thereof, the English language, the allegiance due to our lord the king, and the English laws there, are put in subjection and decayed […]. (Anon. 1367; my emphasis PMdR)

As well as ordering Englishmen to use the English language, article III also states that 'Irish living amongst the English, [who] use the Irish language amongst themselves, […] shall come to one of the places of our lord the king, and find sufficient surety to adopt and use the English language' on pain of detainment and of losing their land and possessions. The Statutes of Kilkenny were passed in an attempt to keep English settlers separate from the native population and thereby make it easier for the Crown to re-establish its influence and lost lands, but were on the whole 'unenforceable' (Cronin 2001: 31). Similar laws were enacted several more times, well into the sixteenth century (see e.g. Crowley 2000: §§ 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.3).

While it is important to draw linguistic lines back to the Anglo-Norman invasion, this thesis is concerned with developments in NIrE between 1700 and 1940. Consequently, the rest of this historical overview will focus predominantly on the various phases of plantation in order to better understand which English varieties played an important role in the formation of (N)IrE, as well as political developments within Ireland that could have had an impact on the language.

### 2.2.2 The Munster Plantation (1586)

As we near the end of the first period of English influence in Ireland (and thus the start of the large-scale impact of English varieties on IrE ) the English Crown's involvement with the country intensified rapidly. It was Henry VIII who, in Cronin's (2001: 38) words, 'acted to complete the Norman invasion of Ireland,' though this process was to take until the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Henry showed a renewed interest in Ireland, which was followed by Queen Mary's initial (and perhaps experimental) King's and Queen's Counties Plantations. Mary's reign was short, and, after the accession of Queen Elizabeth, intensive plantation policies were put in motion, finally culminating in the Reformation plans of James I.

Throughout the first half of the sixteenth century, there were increasing initiatives from England to suppress the Irish, who were steadily encroaching on 'English' territory in Ireland. The largest problem seemed to be the many religious sites bordering on the Pale that could provide support for Irishmen and were considered a serious threat to the communities of Old English (i.e. the descendants of the earliest English settlers), and also the many tenants who fled the Pale to outlying areas (Lydon 1998). Another indicator of the problems faced by the English in dealing with the native Irish was the reaffirmation of the Statutes of Kilkenny in the *English Order, Habit and Language* laws of 1536 which, amongst other things, forbade the Irish language (O'Beirne Ranelagh 2012: 57). Also, the *Book of Common Prayer* was made widely available (in English) from 1551 by way of the new printing press, although this – and the Church services, which now had to be conducted in English – was fairly useless to the Irish-speaking population considering that the 'overwhelming majority' of Irish Church members did not speak English (Lydon 1998: 140; Cronin 2001: 50; O'Beirne Ranelagh 2012: 57). But considering that services would have been conducted in Latin until this point anyway, the impact was probably minimal at first.

There had been attempts to promote and encourage the English language: a 1538 act advocated building schools in every parish (though mainly Catholic); Dublin University was established in 1592 to dissuade Irishmen from studying abroad; and several colleges were founded towards the end of the sixteenth century (Cronin 2001: 141; O'Beirne Ranelagh 2012: 58). But as the English Crown was to experience time and again, a million people spread over a road-less island 'half covered with bog and scrub' were difficult to get to do your bidding (Kee 1995: 35).

King Henry VIII, at first with little time to spare for Irish matters, was made all the more aware of the seriousness of the situation in Ireland through the Kildare rebellion of 1534/35. Lord Offaly, known as Silken Thomas, felt forced to move against the English Crown when his imprisoned father Gearóid Óg was (falsely) assumed to have been executed. Gearóid, the king's deputy in charge of the Pale, had attracted the attention of the Tudor king by seeming to possess too much power over the Pale. He was taken to the Tower of London and Silken Thomas made deputy in his place. Although the rebels managed to take the Pale and seriously diminish English authority, the murder of a fleeing Dublin bishop and unsuccessful requests for aid from Emperor Charles V, James V of Scotland, and many Irish kings meant that the rebellion quickly got out of hand, leading to the capture and subsequent execution of Thomas (Cronin 2001). This marked the start of a new era of more vigorous English control, stricter application of the law, and the presence of an English army in Ireland at all times (Lydon 1998: 127).

Alongside matters of rebellion it is also worth considering, as Kenny (2004) points out, that Ireland had to be colonised to protect Britain from continental Europe. After Henry VIII's break with the Pope over matters of faith, many of England's enemies shared at least one thing with Ireland: Catholicism. Ireland would therefore provide the perfect springboard for, e.g. Spain and France to launch invasions from.[5]

While the plantations started tentatively with Henry VIII, they did not gain momentum until the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary in 1553, and even then they did not fully prosper. A policy of plantation was first advocated by the Earl of Surrey in 1521, then the King's Lieutenant. When in 1541 Henry was proclaimed King of Ireland instead of the traditional Lord of Ireland, the Irish population went in theory from being 'Irish enemies' to being the King's subjects (Lydon 1998: 137–138). Naturally, this did not mean that relations with the Gaelic Irish, or the Old English for that matter, would improve. A *surrender and regrant* policy was therefore initiated. The Irish would surrender their land to the Crown and subsequently get it back along with titles, as was customary in England, thus introducing an entirely new concept of ownership. This would ensure that the Gaelic link was broken. For the Old English this was no trouble at all, as it only reaffirmed their link to the Crown while at the same time putting them more firmly under the King's protection. It did pose problems for the Irish, however. Not only because they resented losing their old customs of land ownership and Brehon laws, but also because many did not fully understand the implications. Some would embrace it, using the protection it offered to fight other Irish for spoils and lands, not realising that their new feuds and alliances would put them up against the Crown (which would make them traitors). Another problem was that if some family branches accepted the English way of succession (primogeniture) while other branches stuck to the old Gaelic system of election, bloody 'power vacuums' would follow (Cronin 2001: 44–46).

When Edmund Belling was named Deputy on Henry's death in 1547, he soon advocated military occupation along with new settlers in some of the more troubled areas of Ireland. This strategy of 'conquest, garrisoning and plantation' only led to more repression and unrest (Lydon 1998: 131), and likewise in Edward VI's time shortly thereafter, when the Queen's and King's Counties were to be settled in 1556 by loyal English colonists in order to protect the Pale, they too found too much Irish resistance there (O'Beirne Ranelagh 2012). The 1550's plantations in Laois and Offaly are often seen as the starting point for the plantation system in Ireland.[6]

Under Mary's rule (the reign of adolescent king Edward VI only lasted for six years, although Mary's was also to be nearly equally short) a plantation policy was again advised, this time by the Archbishop of Armagh, but planting began in earnest around 1586, during Queen Elizabeth's time after the Desmond rebellion. The Munster FitzGeralds, Earls of Desmond, had been conducting guerrilla warfare against the English between 1566 and 1583. After their defeat, 500,000 acres were re-granted to undertakers and signalled the start of a new form of plantation (O'Beirne Ranelagh 2012: 58–59). Instead of ruling over native tenants, the local population were replaced by English settlers. The plan was now to plant enough settlers to outnumber the natives.

Less than a decade later a new threat quietly grew. This originated with the seemingly English-siding Earl of Tyrone, Hugh O'Neill, who was granted permission to train 600 men

[5] As indeed they attempted in 1579, 1601, 1690, and 1798 (O'Beirne Ranelagh 2012).
[6] Laois = Queen's Co. and Offaly = King's Co.

each year in the use of modern weaponry to aid in the protection of English interests in Ireland (which he did up to a certain point). Cunningly, he trained a different batch of men each year so that by 1593 he had a potential fighting force of 15,000 men in addition to his cousin Red Hugh O'Donnell's troops, Scottish connections, and aid from Philip of Spain. Despite the ensuing fully-fledged rebellion, he was not successful in dislodging English troops from Ulster or Ireland in general and the Nine Years War ended in 1603, a mere day before the reign of Elizabeth herself ended.

The removal of English troops from Ireland probably would not have had much of an impact on the presence of the English language at this point as English was already an established language in urban areas and in the households of many settler families. But the linguistic situation at the end of the Tudor period was did not only involve Irish and English. Latin was the 'High language' for elite members of society of Old English and Gaelic descent, while Norman-French and literary Irish functioned as alternative High languages. English and spoken Irish were Low forms and English and Norman-French were essential languages for business and trade in urban centres (Corrigan 2010: 113–114).

### 2.2.3 The Ulster Plantation (1609)

The repercussions of the rebellion were quite dramatic for the old Gaelic traditions. Ancient customs such as chieftainship were abolished, leading to Brehon laws and other traditions slipping into oblivion. Only the Gaelic language and the Catholic faith survived. To quote O'Beirne Ranelagh (2012: 61): this was the 'beginning of the end of Gaelic Ireland.' A contemporary Irish poet lamented: *Mo thruaigh mar táid Gaoidhil* 'Pitiful are the Gaeil' (Lydon 1998: 161–162). Ulster, the last unconquered province of Ireland, was subjected to English rule. Perhaps as a way to prove himself after the 1605 Gunpowder Plot, the new king, James I (James VI of Scotland), ended the fragile religious tolerance in Ireland and appointed a new deputy who wasted no time in using the surrender and re-grant system to divide the O'Neill and O'Donnell land holdings and repopulate them with loyal tenants (O'Beirne Ranelagh 2012: 61). Given the heavy toll the rebellion, as well as a recent famine, had taken on young men in Ulster, this was doable, and made it easier for England to enact legislation (Cronin 2001: 55). The re-grant policy in turn led to further instability as it provoked both English *servitors* (servants of the Crown/state), who expected more from the Crown, as well as Gaelic chiefs, who lost substantial areas of land. The unrest led to the Ulster earls of Tyrone (O'Neill) and of Tyrconnell (O'Donnell), and also CuConnacht Maguire of Fermanagh fleeing for mainland Europe in 1607 along with about a hundred followers in the face of increasingly lower income, loss of land, and rumoured charges of treason. The *Flight of the Earls* further solidified the 'final collapse of the Gaelic order in Ulster' (Robinson 1994: 37–38).

The rebellions had shown that the remaining Catholic lords held too much power. It was therefore decided that English law should be applicable all over the country and that all lands held by Catholics should befall the Crown, and further plantations were set up in counties Wexford, Leitrim, Longford, six of the nine counties in Ulster as well as some other areas (Canny 1993: 132). Developments such as this, along with the destruction and massacres wrought by English troops, brought the Irish and Old English population, who already shared much by way of culture, even closer together (Cronin 2001: 55). The terrible conditions the locals had to endure in these times are perhaps best described by this often-

quoted piece, written by the poet Edmund Spenser, who described the situation after 'those late warrs in Mounster' (the Desmond rebellion):

> Out of everye corner of the woode and glenns they came creepinge forth upon theire handes, for theire legges could not beare them; they looked Anatomies [of] death, they spake like ghostes, crying out of theire graves; they did eate of the carrions, happye wheare they could find them, yea, and one another soone after, in soe much as the verye carcasses they spared not to scrape out of theire graves; and if they found a plott of water-cresses or shamrockes, theyr they flocked as to a feast for the time, yett not able long to contynewe therewithall; that in a shorte space there were none almost left, and a most populous and plentyfull countrye suddenly lefte voyde of man or beast: yett sure in all that warr, there perished not manye by the sworde, but all by the extreamytie of famyne which they themselves hadd wrought. (Spenser 1596)

While a common feature of Europe at the time, the monstrosities conducted in Ireland did nothing to soften the relationship between native and foreigner. To the English the Irish were 'more uncivil, more uncleanly, more barbarous in their customs and demeanours than in any part of the world that is known,' wrote a contemporary (Kee 1995: 32). This view of the 'wilde Irish' as mere beasts may go a little way towards explaining the unfortunate behaviour of English soldiers, settlers, and dignitaries.

Having learned from the previous plantation of Munster, the Ulster plantation was a much larger venture with a special group of functionaries responsible for the process, including the *Irish Society* who were involved with Co. (London)Derry (Kee 1995: 40). New and inexperienced grantees were required to settle ten British Protestant families per unit of 1,000 acres and also to protect their holdings (Canny 1993: 133). The problem, however, was attracting enough settlers to protect the lands from resentful Irishmen. This was only partially successful, but many former Irish landowners found themselves forced to move back to their old lands as labourers due to hardship. Only counties Antrim, Down, and Monaghan were excluded from the plantation scheme as they had already previously or unofficially been re-granted or planted, as well as land claimed by Protestant bishops (Robinson 1994: 67).

We can divide the settlers of the Ulster Plantation into three main groups (Robinson 1994: 63–77): English and Scottish men who 'undertook' to plant the land granted to them, English crown servitors, and native Irish freeholders. English and Scottish undertakers held the main responsibility for the plantation scheme. Seven baronies were set aside for the English (81,500 acres) and nine for the Scottish (81,000 acres), all in the five previously unplanted counties of Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Fermanagh, and Tyrone (see Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1**: Baronies set aside for English and Scottish (after Robinson 1994: 77, 79).

| County | English baronies (7) | Scottish baronies (9) |
|---|---|---|
| Armagh | Oneilland | The Fews |
| Cavan | Loughtee | Clankee, Tullyhunco |
| Donegal | Lifford (most of Raphoe) | Boylagh and Banagh, Portlough |
| Fermanagh | Clankelly, Lurg and Coolemakernan | Knockninny, Magherabov |
| Tyrone | Clogher, Omagh | Mountjoy, Strabane |

Servitors were English crown servants in the form of councillors of state, captains or lieutenants who held military commands in Ulster, and English freeholders who already held estates, and were given land close to Irish grantees to oversee them (54,632 acres in total). Native Irish freeholders were only given a quarter of the escheated land (altogether 94,013 acres). Co. (London)Derry was granted to the Honourable Irish Society (38,520 acres), which was and still is a consortium of the London Companies.[7] In addition, land was granted to the Church, colleges, schools, and forts. All in all, the plantation grants of the Plantation of Ulster amounted to 459,110 acres.[8] Figure 2.2 provides an overview of the parts of Ulster that were made available for settlement during the Ulster plantation.

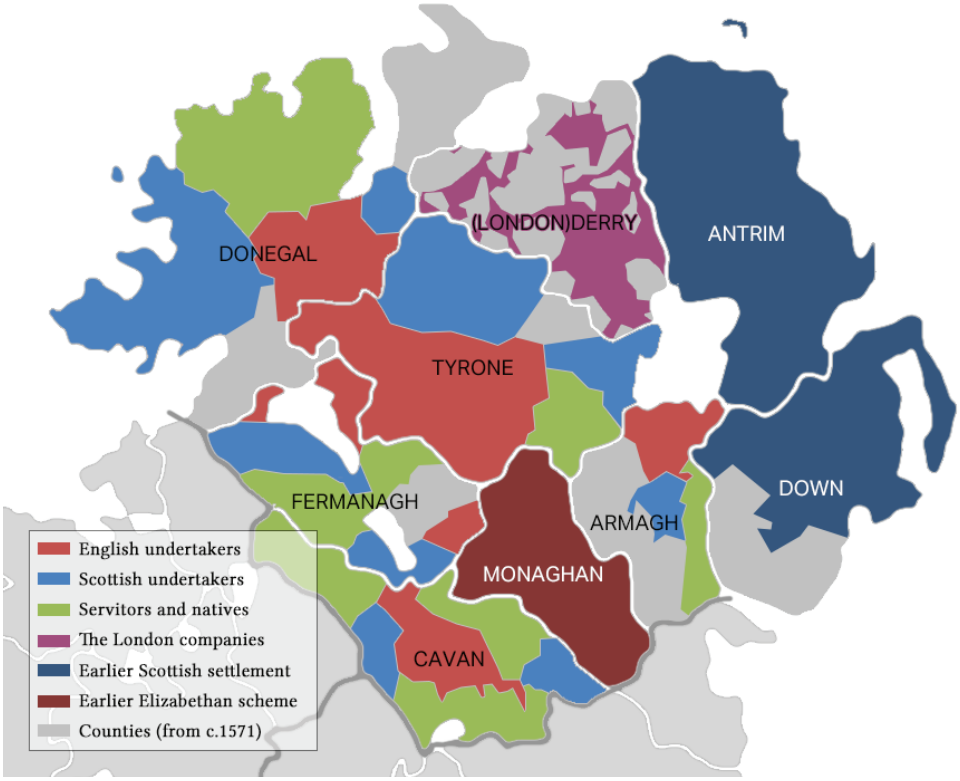



**Figure 2.2**: Approximate areas of settlement during the Ulster plantation (after Gregory et al. 2013)

By 1613 the first English and Scottish settlers had arrived. In the early 1620s their numbers had swollen to at least 20,000 (O'Beirne Ranelagh 2012: 63). For English planters, Chester was the main port of embarkation, and most came from Cheshire itself or its hin-

[7] During this time Co. (London)Derry was still Co. Coleraine/Culraine, then Derry, and later Londonderry.

[8] The present-day land area of Ulster is approximately 5,325,615 acres. The plantation grants thus made up only about 8.6 per cent of Ulster. The discrepancy between the amount of land granted and the real area of Ulster is due to the fact that they had no idea how much land there was – there were no reliable maps drawn to scale and no reliable way of measuring the area of any given landholding. This in turn was the reason why many Irish remained where they were – sometimes their land had been missed by the plantation scheme.

terland and the north and west Midlands (Gregg 1972: 113). Scottish settlers came predominantly from Ayrshire, Galloway, and surrounding areas and spoke south-western Scottish dialects (Gregg 1972: 112). They outnumbered the English six-to-one and mostly settled in north Down, east Antrim, north (London)Derry, and north-east Donegal (Ó hÚrdail 1997: 182). Kingsmore (1995: 12–13) attributes three main factors to the greater success of the 'hardy Scots:' 1) they were already used to a hard life in Scotland and had little to lose by trying their luck in Ulster; 2) Scotland is similar in climate and closer geographically to Ulster so that contacts, reinforcements, and family ties are more easily maintained; and 3) the Scottish Presbyterian Kirk was highly supportive and strongly present in the settlements, contributing to their social stability. A contributing factor may also have been that farming prospects in Ireland looked more appealing to the Scots than to Englishmen used to easier and more bountiful farmland (Hindley 1990: 5).

Population censuses earlier than the nineteenth century are rare, but based on poll tax figures from c.1658 it becomes clear that the Irish population were still in a majority in the mid-seventeenth century, albeit only marginally so in counties Antrim, Cavan, Down, (London)Derry, and Tyrone (see Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2:** Population in Ulster c.1658 (after Hardinge 1873 in Braidwood 1964: 6).

| County | English and Scottish (%) | Irish | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Antrim | 7,074 (44) | 8,965 | 16,039 |
| Armagh | 2,393 (35) | 4,355 | 6,748 |
| Cavan | 6,485 (44) | 8,218 | 14,703 |
| Donegal | 3,412 (28) | 8,589 | 12,001 |
| Down | 6,540 (43) | 8,643 | 15,183 |
| Fermanagh | 1,800 (25) | 5,302 | 7,102 |
| (London)Derry | 4,428 (45) | 5,036 | 9,734 |
| Monaghan | 434 (11) | 3,649 | 4,083 |
| Tyrone | 8,085 (44) | 10,245 | 18,330 |
| Total | 40,651 (39) | 63,272 | 103,923 |

The numbers are ambiguous and should only be taken as a rough guide. They do not represent the total population, but rather list all adult males and usually married women or widows too. Children below the age of fourteen and unmarried women were left out. Robinson (1994: 105–106) points out that we have too little knowledge about 'colonial family size and household structure' to use the numbers as a basis for a reliable population count, but it gives some idea of the relative proportions.

There are few English surnames on tax rolls for zones with marginal farm-lands, such as mid-Ulster, Rathlin Island, the mountains of north-east Antrim, the southernmost part of Co. Fermanagh, and the *Oirghialla* district of south Armagh/Down). This shows that these less-desirable areas were populated more by native Irish than by English settlers. Corrigan (2010: 120) concludes from this that the present-day SUE dialect was becoming established at his time. At the end of the Stuart era 'stable Irish-English bilingualism prevails' in rural areas near the new British-established market towns with a less stable bilingual situation and decreasing numbers of Gaelic speakers in urban areas overall Corrigan (2010: 121). An amalgamation of different BrE-speakers developed in the present-day MUE area while

the majority of Scottish-speakers in Antrim and north-east Down had little contact with English settlers (Corrigan 2010: 121). Kallen (2013: 236) also argues that early IrE attested in textual evidence shows a language that does not have features pointing to any one EngE or Scottish English (ScE) dialect – which is expected if British settlers in the MUE dialect area come from different places in England – although it does show more features common in the southwest and North Midlands areas of England than other areas .

### 2.2.4 The Cromwellian Land Settlement (1652)

Bliss (1979: 18) devotes only one sentence to the development of the Plantation of Ulster and instead views the Cromwellian Land Settlement as the most crucial plantation for the English language in Ireland. The background to the Cromwellian Land Settlement lies predominantly in the Irish Rebellion of 1641, which developed as a result of an increasing feeling among the Ulster Irish that nothing was to be gained from the Ulster Plantation for the native people of the northern province (Robinson 1994: 190). In a short amount of time, most of the British strongholds in mid-Ulster were cleared, eventually resulting in the 'almost total destruction of plantation structures' throughout the province (Robinson 1994: 190–191). For the remainder of the 1640s, skirmishes and conflicts between the Irish Catholic Confederation and pockets of Protestant settlers were common. Many Protestants lost their lands, property, and lives. But when Parliamentarian forces led by Oliver Cromwell seized control of Britain, the Catholic rebels and remaining English royalist troops in Ireland received new attention.

Cromwell, after executing Charles I in 1649, sailed to Ireland 'at the head of a force of 3,000 Ironsides' and laid waste to Drogheda, Co. Louth before concentrating on undoing the damage done by the rebellion (Bliss 1979: 18). Because land leases and grants still existed, the situation in Ulster was quickly restored to its pre-rebellion state (Robinson 1994: 191). As part of this process, a land survey was carried out, which not only charted the aforementioned pre-1641 plantation structure, but also brought to light parts of the region that belonged to Irish grantees and Catholic-owned land in Antrim and Down which was now incorporated by the Commonwealth (Robinson 1994: 192), and in short finalised the British colonisation of Ireland. During 1654–58 many Irish landowners were forcibly moved from Leinster and Munster to the province of Connacht in the west (the poorest area of the island at this time) and from the north to southern parts. Vacated land was repopulated by English settlers. The repercussions (at least for Leinster, Munster, and Connacht) are summed up by Bliss:

> [The Cromwellian Land Settlement] completed the work begun by the Ulster Plantations under James I: in three of the four provinces the landowners were now Protestant and English-speaking, owing allegiance to the English Crown, different in culture, religion and language from their tenants and servants. It seems unlikely that the diffusion of the English language formed any part of Cromwell's conscious purpose, but no more efficacious means of achieving this end could have been devised. (Bliss 1979: 19)

The events during Cromwell's time provided new and widespread linguistic input in which, Bliss (1979: 20) claims, lies the source of modern IrE. But the historians that Bliss relies on are probably overstating the consequences of the Cromwellian Land Settlement. While thousands were forced to relocate, exemptions and corruption nevertheless allowed

many Irish to retain their lands. Also, most Cromwellian adventurers and soldiers sold their newly granted lands to already established English and Scottish landowners, and the expected influx of Protestant settlers did not occur (Ó Siochrú 2009: 239). In sum, the Cromwellian settlement was not the total population replacement that the older historians assumed it to be.

As regards the linguistic situation in Ulster at the end of the seventeenth century, it is the Scottish who have left the strongest mark, not least because of a series of crop failures in Scotland which led to a fresh influx of Scottish settlers. Hickey (2007: 40) identifies the possible diffusion of Scottish features to English planters and remaining Irish tenants on Scottish lands as the most probable factors that altered the linguistic landscape.

### 2.2.5 Irish-to-English language shift (1750–1900)

The historical events leading up to the eighteenth century set the scene for the language shift from Irish to English in the period 1750–1900, which moved roughly from the eastern to the western part of the island and from urban to rural areas. There is no single cause which led to the 'long slow death of Irish' in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland (Hindley 1990: 11). Rather, Hindley (1990) attributes this to a more general setting where English as a second language was advantageous and where Irish thus eventually acquired the status of a superfluous language for bilingual speakers. A contributing factor is the exclusion of Irish from education. de Fréine (1977: 84) mentions that, eventually, the people had no interest in keeping up the Irish language because 'even to speak it was a positive hindrance to progress.' The removal of many native Irish in eastern and southern parts of the island and the subsequent influx of English settlers, reinforcement by new (predominantly) Scottish settlers in Ulster, and the exclusion of Catholics from higher positions facilitated the spread of English at the expense of the Irish language. In addition, a command of English was necessary in many eastern parts of the island, especially surrounding the larger market towns, but also for Irish tenants in order to communicate with landlords. The largest contributing causes of the shift were perhaps the Irish educational situation, the mass-emigrations of the nineteenth century, economic motives, and the famines (Barry 1984: 92).

Siemund and Beal (2011: 246) describe IrE as a 'typical shift variety' because English was adopted as a second language by almost the entire population of Ireland within a few centuries. They further point out that substrate influence from Irish on the phonological and morpho-syntactic level is a typical outcome of 'untutored second language acquisition' (Siemund and Beal 2011: 246–247). This untutored acquisition may have its background in the lack of schools for Irish Catholics until 1831 due to Protestant oppression. As indicated above, in 1695, during the reign of William III, penal laws were passed which forbade amongst other things the Catholic Irish to hold office, bear arms, and own horses fit for military activity. They also prohibited foreign education, and in addition specified that no 'persons of the popish religion' were allowed to teach in or go to school (Dowling 1968: 23). In fact, according to Akenson (1970: 40), the main purpose of the laws was to eradicate Catholicism in Ireland. According to McGrath (1996), who has studied the background of the penal laws, it was the fear of Catholic Europe and the need to protect Protestant

interests that spurred the passing of the acts.[9]

As a reaction to the prohibition on education, so-called hedge schools began to appear throughout Ireland (Akenson 1970: 45). These were secret schools, often in secluded, rural areas (hence 'hedge'), where travelling teachers taught, e.g. reading, writing, arithmetic, English, and perhaps even scientific subjects if the teacher was qualified (Hickey 2002a: 15; Dowling 1968: 47, 53). Dowling (1968) has written extensively on hedge schools and describes the schoolmasters as former poets, usually receiving food and lodging for free from grateful communities eager for their knowledge.[10] Daly (1979: 151) questions the often overly romanticised view of the hedge schools, though they were certainly an important factor in the later development of the National School system. Dowling claims that 'English as a medium of instruction' started to become the norm in the early nineteenth century, and that many teachers were bilingual (Dowling 1968: 43). Some scholars (e.g. Bliss 1977: 17–18) argue that because English was a second language for the teachers, some features of IrE such as stress patterns and malapropisms have their origin in the hedge school tradition.[11] Hickey (2007: 45) finds no evidence for this but does maintain that occasional IrE spelling pronunciation for words like *data* and *status* with [a:] for ⟨a⟩ where BrE has [eɪ] can be traced back to hedge school teachers whose first language was Irish. In 1782 a new act repealed some of the harsh conditions imposed by the Penal laws, but teaching Catholic children was still severely restricted.

Meanwhile, the eighteenth century also saw improved communication and infrastructure, which in turn led to more language contact. The rapid development of the linen industry brought planters and natives together, frequently in urban areas, in the same line of work. The result was a 'diffusion of English and Scots' in the present-day MUE zone, as well as an influx of English-speakers into the predominantly Scots-speaking Belfast area through work migration (Corrigan 2010: 123–124). Consequently, in Barry's words, '*all* Ulster English is a mixture of English and Scots' (Barry 1981: 59).

In the early nineteenth century, privately owned Catholic 'pay schools' started appearing (though they were also often a synonym for hedge schools (Akenson 1970: 46)), but no public education system for Catholics existed until after Catholic emancipation in 1829, after which the founding of the National Schools in 1831 was inevitable (Akenson 1970: 107). This is nevertheless quite early for a national education system. The National Schools greatly increased access to education, and were in many cases established in places which had previously been devoid of schools (Daly 1979: 159). The schools taught classes in English, further contributing to the language-shift, but also combating the widespread illiteracy of the Irish population (Hickey 2007: 46). Akenson (1970) gives the percentage of illiterate persons five years and older between 1841 and 1901, based on the 1901 Census of Ireland (see Table 2.3). The considerable increase in literacy after the founding of the National Schools is clearly seen in the table.

Hedge and pay schools were slowly disappearing after 1831 because, as Dowling (1968: 122) points out, parents would rather send their children to the schools of the National

[9] William III was at war with Louis XIV of France at the time. As also mentioned in section 2.2.2, there were concerns that foreign Catholic forces might use Ireland as a springboard for invasions of England.

[10] Hickey (2002a: 15) points out that is difficult to say much about these mythologised teachers, but they often appear to have been poets or scholars who had lost patronage after the decline of Irish aristocracy in the seventeenth century.

[11] Stress patterns in words with several syllables (e.g. *exagge'rate*) are in IrE often different from southern BrE patterns (Hickey 2007: 45).

**Table 2.3**: Illiterate persons five years and older (%), 1841–1901 (after Akenson 1970: 376)

| | 1841 | 1851 | 1861 | 1871 | 1881 | 1891 | 1901 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ireland | 53 | 47 | 39 | 33 | 25 | 18 | 14 |
| Leinster | 44 | 39 | 31 | 27 | 20 | 15 | 11 |
| Munster | 61 | 55 | 46 | 39 | 28 | 20 | 14 |
| Ulster | 40 | 35 | 30 | 27 | 20 | 15 | 12 |
| Connaught | 72 | 66 | 57 | 49 | 38 | 27 | 21 |

Board of Education (which had smaller fees) and hedge school teachers would rather have posts in these schools for a regular, if smaller, salary.

A contributing cause to the language shift were the nineteenth-century 'mass' emigrations. Times were hard already before the Great Famine. As Fitzgerald and Lambkin (2008: 159) remark: 'It is a measure of the scale of the disaster that was still to come in the 1840s that this famine [1799 and 1801] and the ones that followed it in 1817–19, 1822 and 1831, took place in a period that we persist nevertheless in referring to as "pre-Famine."' In 1845 the fungus-like *Phytophthora infestans*, known as the potato blight, spread through the Irish potato crop, resulting in the Great Famine of 1845–1852. Ireland was heavily dependent on the potato as a staple food source and losses were staggering. Approximately one million people died of starvation, malnutrition or disease and another million saw themselves forced to emigrate to other parts of the world. The result was a decline of about a quarter of the population (Hickey 2007: 47). The Great Famine is thus seen as the beginning of the mass emigrations of the nineteenth century, although emigration to North America and Great Britain was already well underway in 1825 (Fitzgerald and Lambkin 2008: 126). Not only was the Irish language heavily affected by the loss of so many native speakers, but the famine also added momentum to the language-shift. Görlach (1997: 35) argues that 'the rapid language shift to English in the mid-nineteenth century was caused by the Great Famine from 1845–1849, which made people realize that emigration was the only escape and that English was necessary to survive abroad.' In addition to living in a country dominated by English-speakers (even when these were a minority of the population), the awareness that emigrating to a country populated predominantly with English-speakers (many Irish left for North America, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as Great Britain) must have been an incentive for many Irish to learn English.

Based on the 1911 census, Corrigan (2010: 126–127) reveals that there must have been four remaining *Gaeltachtaí* in Ulster in the early twentieth century: the Donegal *Gaeltacht* (including the Fanad and Inishowen *Gaeltachtaí* in north Donegal), the Corgary *Gaeltacht* of west Tyrone, the mid-Ulster *Gaeltacht* of north Tyrone and south (London)Derry (the Sperrin Mountains), and the Glens of Antrim and Rathlin Island *Gaeltachtaí* of north Antrim. These areas became increasingly smaller and more isolated from each other in the linguistic landscape of Ulster. Irish now rapidly lost ground to English. Eventually it became associated with backwardness, bad luck, and poverty. In 1901, at the end of the language shift, 85 per cent of the population of Ireland spoke almost exclusively English (de Fréine 1977: 86).

A telling image of the completion of the language shift is the opinion of one of the major Catholic leaders of the first half of the nineteenth century, Daniel O'Connell, who had no love of Irish and preferred the use of English throughout the country (Hickey 2007: 20).

Nonetheless, already in the early twentieth century a slow resurgence of interest in Irish was developing. Even though it was listed as the national language in the new constitution of the Republic of Ireland in 1922, this was more an 'aspiration or a historic assertion than reality' (Hindley 1990: 37). Its status has since changed dramatically, and the latest census figures from 2011 reported that 41.4 percent of the population of the Republic claim competence in Irish (An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh / Central Statistics Office 2012: 40). Still, few actively use Irish today. The latest reports stress the real crisis in the *Gaeltacht* areas and assume that Irish will survive as a L2, but perhaps not as a living L1.

The historical events described above have resulted in the current linguistic situation in Ulster. These varieties of NIrE will be briefly outlined below, at least where relevant to the present thesis.

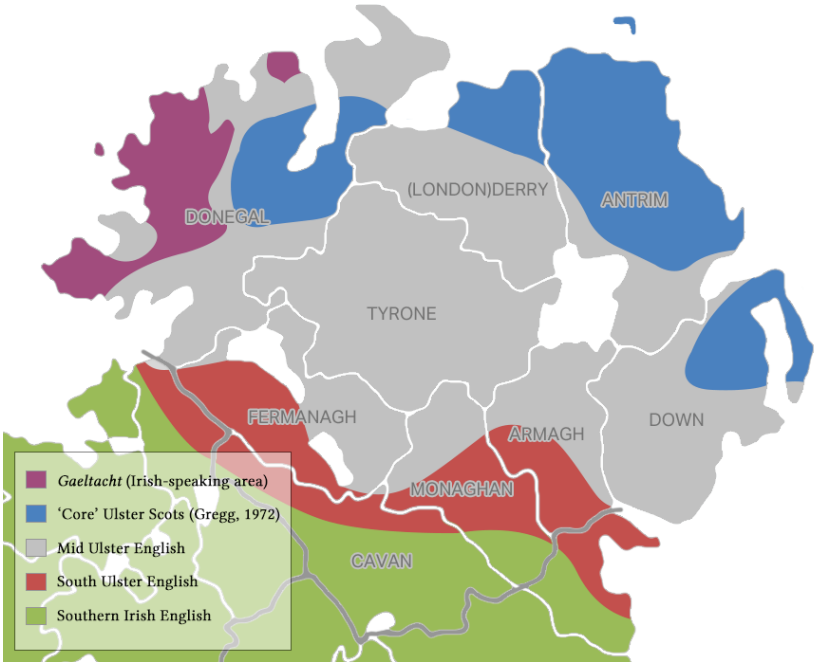
## 2.3 Outline of Northern Irish English phonology

Hickey (2007) is of the opinion that the role of planters in the creation of *S*IrE was minimal. He acknowledges that planter varieties of English often were the only kind of English available to the Irish, but maintains that for many it was the English that had existed since the earlier, pre-plantation period of settlement (i.e. on the east coast and in larger towns) that was the main influence (Hickey 2007: 38). Hickey further states that it cannot be known if the settler accents were 'homogeneous enough' to have been used as a consistent model for English-learners. This position is strengthened, he claims, by the fact that SIrE phonology is based on the Irish sound system (Hickey 2007: 38). In Ulster, the situation is different however, and planter varieties have certainly played a role in the formation of NIrE dialects. The historical settlement patterns described above have resulted in dialects with Scots and English features, with varying degrees of Irish substrate influence. The following sections give a brief overview over the current dialects in Ulster.

### 2.3.1 Ulster dialect boundaries and shared features

While some southern parts of Ulster (the extreme south of Co. Monaghan and much of Co. Cavan) today lie within the SIrE dialect zone, the rest of Ulster is divided into four linguistic zones: the Donegal *Gaeltacht*, and the Ulster Scots (USc), Mid Ulster English (MUE), and South Ulster English (SUE) dialect areas. Map 2.1, based on Harris' (1985) Ulster dialect boundary maps, shows the distribution of these areas.

Harris (1985) identifies major typological differences between Ulster dialects of English on the basis of vowel quantity (see also McCafferty 2007: 125). Harris advocates classification 'from the point of view of historical reconstruction' based on vowel length to discern differences between English and Scots influence, thus enabling one to categorise them on a 'more English'/'more Scots' continuum (Harris 1985: 14). According to Ó hÚrdail (1997: 183) Ulster dialect features include a 'general lowering tendency particularly in the case of front vowels, the fronting and unrounding of high back vowels, and variation in vowel length.' Evidence of these lowering tendencies is certainly present in the CORIECOR corpus (see chapter 6). The diphthongisation of the pure vowel phonemes /e:/ and /o:/ in e.g. *pay*, *day*, *take* and in *goat*, *hope*, *slow* that occurred in early nineteenth-century England has not happened in most of NIrE (nor in SIrE) and thus /e:/ and /o:/ are retained – as they are




**Map 2.1**: Ulster dialect zones, based on Harris (1985: 16)

in large parts of the north of England and Scotland. The major vowel quality distinctions between Conservative USc, MUE (Belfast), SUE, and SIrE are given in Table 2.4.

**Table 2.4**: Vowel quality distinctions between Conservative USc, MUE (Belfast), SUE, and SIrE (after McCafferty 2007: 124)

| | **Conservative USc** | **MUE** | **SUE** | **SIrE** (after Wells 1982: 419) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| KIT | [æ̈] | [ɛ̈] | [ɪ̈] | [ɪ] |
| FOOT | [ɪ̈] | [ʌ – ʉ] | [ʉ] | [ɪ] |
| GOAT | [o:] (e.g. *foal*)<br>[e:] (e.g. *home*)<br>[ɔ:] (e.g. *snow*) | [o] | [o:] | [o:] |
| MOUTH | [ʉ] | [əʉ] | [əʉ] | [aʊ] |

As for vowel quantity, USc, being of Lowland Scots descent, is subject to the Scottish Vowel Length rule (SVLR), MUE has a modified version of SVLR, whereas SUE (with its northern vowels) is a transitional dialect between the USc and MUE dialects on the one hand and SIrE on the other: SUE has phonemic vowel length, but NIrE vowel quality (McCafferty 2007: 124). Vowel quantity is not as easily inferred from spelling as vowel quality (though see, e.g. section 6.2.3 for short ɪ in e.g. *face*), however, so that it will not be explored further here.

### 2.3.2 Ulster Scots vowels

USc can be said to be a dialect of Lowland Scots (Harris 1985: 15). It is difficult to define its starting point because of the extensive contact between Ulster and Lowland Scotland during the seventeenth century, but it is still spoken in areas historically settled by Scottish people (Montgomery 1991: 52, 52n).

Clear overviews of USc phonology are Harris (1985: 18–32) and the more recent Kingsmore (1995). Harris, following Gregg (1964, 1972), distinguishes between Conservative USc, being the result of uninterrupted development from OSc, and Standardised USc, found in towns such as Larne, Ballymena, and Coleraine. Features of Conservative USc (since lost in Standardised USc) are:

- undiphthongised reflex of OSc /u:/ (e.g. [kʉ̟ː] *cow*; see section 6.11.3);
- lowered and unrounded reflex of OSc /o/ before labials (e.g. [tɑːp] *top*; see section 6.9);
- merger of OSc word-final /ei/ (from earlier /e/ + palatal or velar consonant) with present-day /i/ (e.g. [di] *die*);
- front unrounded reflex of OSc /øː/ from earlier /oː/ (e.g. [blïd] *blood*);
- preservation of early front-raising of OSc /a/ in certain environments (e.g. [fɛːrm] *farm*; see section 6.10.4); and
- front raised reflex of OSc /aː/ from OE /ɑː/ (e.g. [hɛːm] *home*) except in labio-velar environments where /ɑː/ or /ɔː/ occurs (e.g. [twɔː] *two*) (Harris 1985: 18–20).

Kingsmore (1995: 25), on the other hand, lists an unrounded reflex of OE /aː/ before and after /w/, with retention of /w/ (e.g. [twaː] *two*). USc further retains /i/ where standard speech now has short /ɛ/, (e.g. [hid] *head*), and has lost the distinction between /a/ and /ɛ/ in environments with velar consonants, so-called CATCH-raising (e.g. [pɛk] *pack*; see section 6.3) (Kingsmore 1995: 25). Most of the features outlined here are discussed in chapter 6 due to their presence in CORIECOR.

### 2.3.3 Mid Ulster English vowels

MUE is the dominant and most widespread Ulster dialect in terms of number of speakers. It is the dialect of Belfast and can be said to be a regional standard (Harris 1985: 15). The origins of MUE lie in settler-BrE from various parts of western England, the north-western Midlands, southern Lancashire, Cheshire, north-western Derbyshire, as well as south-western areas of England such as Gloucestershire, Somerset, and Devon (Kingsmore 1995: 26).

MUE has a very open /ɒ/, bordering on /a/ (e.g. [kɒt] *cot*), in sharp contrast with USc /ɔ/. /ʊ/ is either fronted to [ʉ] or lowered to [ʌ]. The more progressive (urban) USc and SUE vowel systems overlap with MUE (McCafferty 2007). In rural Lagan Valley speech (west of Belfast, originally likely from northern and Midlands dialects) /ɛ/ is a shortened reflex of ME /aː/ before /k/ (e.g. [mɛk] *make*) (Harris 1985: 44). The Belfast vernacular is the most widely spoken of all NIrE varieties and also the most researched, and its phoneme distribution resembles that of SUE and Standardised USc more than Conservative USc (Harris 1985: 41, 43).

Adams (1948: 22), in what he terms 'Broad Belfast' gives examples of the general lowering and retracting of vowels that is a salient feature of NIrE, as we will see in the discussion of the results from this study. /ɪ/ is lowered to [ɛ] or even [æ] (e.g. [sæŋ] *sing*) and is short even before sounds which normally lengthen NIrE /ɛ/ and /a/, unless it is retracted to [ʌ] (e.g. [bʌtəɹ] *bitter*). /ɒ/ (and /ɔ/ before /-lt, -ls/) is realised as [ɑ] (e.g. [tɑp] *top*, *tap* and [ɹɑt] *rat*, *rot*, but [blɑk] *block* and [blak] *black*).

### 2.3.4 South Ulster English vowels

SUE is spoken in north Leitrim, Fermanagh south of Lower and Upper Loch Erne, north Cavan, mid-Monaghan, south Armagh, and north Co. Louth. It is a transitional dialect between NIrE and SIrE, 'combining a typically southern vowel quantity pattern with some characteristically northern quality features' (Harris 1985: 34). The main differences from SIrE are, according to Harris (1985: 40), the northern quality of /ʉ/ (in particular) and /əʉ/, which are more fronted, the lowering of /ɪ/, and a slightly raised /oː/ (used by Barry (1981) for his boundary definition). ME /oː/ (when not shortened) is raised in all environments, giving [ʉ] in e.g. *door*, *floor*, *board*, *whore* and also in some undiphthongised reflexes of ME /uː/ before /r/ in e.g. *coarse*, *course* (Harris 1985: 40).

### 2.3.5 NIrE consonants

All IrE dialects are rhotic (with the exception of working-class Dublin) and have an alveolar approximant [ɹ] similar to North American /r/, probably derived from Elizabethan and Jacobean English (Gregg 1972: 110; Kingsmore 1995: 25). Sometimes, post-vocalic /r/ can be realised as a retroflex [ɻ] or give a retroflex quality to the vowel. Dental taps [ɾ̪] may occur after dental consonants. /h/ is pronounced in all positions (McCafferty 2007: 126). As we will see, there are spellings which seem to suggest non-rhoticity and ʜ-dropping in the corpus (see sections 8.7.1 and 8.7.2).

Realisations of /t, d, n, l/ can be dental in varieties of MUE and SUE, but are a stereotype in Belfast (Harris 1985: 58). They are characteristic of older males in conservative Belfast and Lurgan vernaculars (Pitts 1985: 207–208). Dental realisations are attributed to Irish (Adams 1986: 107–108), but also to Scottish influence (Ó Baoill 1991; McCafferty 2007: 126). Intervocalic /t/ can be found as a voiced tap in NIrE, e.g. [ˈpɪɾɪ] *pity* (Harris 1985: 58), or as voiced plosives (Kingsmore 1995: 140–141), e.g. [ˈbʌdɟɪ] *butter*). It is a SUE feature that has been transported into Belfast (Harris 1985), as well as into (London)Derry (McCafferty 1999: 249), Lurgan (Pitts 1982), and Coleraine (Kingsmore 1995: 138–139). Stop-deletion may occur in final fricative and stop combinations (e.g. [bɛs] *best*), and in conservative speech also in stop-stop and sonorant-stop combinations (e.g. [kɛp] *kept*) (Harris 1985: 59). Cluster simplification is frequent in USc, usually word-finally, but also medially in some USc varieties. Historical simplification of /lamb/ > /lam/, /sɪŋg/ > /sɪŋ/ is carried through to /d/ (e.g. /hand/ > /han/), and also in medial position (e.g. /ˈkandəl/ > /ˈkanəl/) (Harris 1985: 58–59). Also, [ʃ] for /s/, or s-palatalisation, occurs before /t, l, n, k/ in e.g. *stop*, *snow*, *slow* (Ó hÚrdail 1997: 185). All of these features are found in the corpus material (see sections 7.3.1, 7.3.2, 7.4, and 8.4.1).

NIrE does not share ᴛʜ-fortition (e.g. [tɪk] *thick*) (Harris 1985: 57) or the postvocalic, intervocalic or final lenition of /t/, also known as ᴛ/ᴅ-fricativisation, (e.g. [weːt̪] *wait*)

with SIrE.[12] The fact that NIrE fricatives are 'un-stopped' is attributed to Scots influence. Traces of TH-fortition and T/D-fricativisation are nevertheless present in letters from NIrE-speakers in CORIECOR (see sections 7.2 and 7.3.3).

A number of consonant features cannot be represented in a sufficiently clear way through orthography to reflect their quality. For example, clear /l/ is the norm in IrE, most likely originating from the Gaelic substratum (Gregg 1972: 110). But [ɬ] is observed in Belfast (especially with Catholics) (Adams 1986: 109) and (London)Derry (McCafferty 1999: 250). It is also found in Coleraine with working-class males, while [l] is found with women, middle class people, and in tight-knit rural networks (Kingsmore 1995: 135–136). The same is true for the velar fricative /x/ (e.g. [bɔːxt] *bought*), historically realised in spelling as ⟨gh⟩ or ⟨ch⟩. This is now no longer found in Standardised USc, though it was the norm in Conservative USc – and other NIrE dialects (Corrigan 2010: 42). In MUE, / x/ is today only found in proper names and some dialectal words. But, as it is virtually impossible to know if ⟨gh⟩ or ⟨ch⟩ in words like *bought*, *loch* in the corpus material reflects [x] or [k] (though see section 7.8.2), these few comments will suffice.

Other consonantal realisations found in NIrE include velarised /f/, [w – ʍ] distinction, and palatal glides. In *Gaeltacht* and recent-*Gaeltacht* areas, though sometimes found outside of these areas as well, the velarised Irish /f/, [ɸ], can be found for /hw/ in e.g. *white*, *whale*. USc preserves the distinction between /w/ and /ʍ/ (Kingsmore 1995: 25), thus creating such minimal pairs as [wɪtʃ] *witch* and [ʍɪtʃ] *which*. Palatal glides occur between consonants and /a/, also sometimes /ɛ/ (e.g. [kjɑːɹ] *car*) (Harris 1985: 52). Palatalised /k, g, n/ are also common in SUE. While these features can be reflected in spelling, no evidence was found in CORIECOR, thus no further elaboration will be given here.

### 2.3.6 Religion and dialect

This chapter will be concluded with a few notes on the relationship between religion and dialect in Ulster, though the religion variable is not used in this study. There has been considerable ethnic unrest between Roman Catholic and Protestant factions in Ulster. Despite the assumption that this would be reflected linguistically, Catholics are no more oriented towards SIrE than Protestants are towards (vernacular) BrE (McCafferty 1999: 251). This subject is not yet extensively studied, but see McCafferty (e.g. 1999, 2001), where changes are shown to be affected by the Catholic/Protestant divide. Religious differences are instead tied to regional differences stemming from settlement patterns, so that an USc speaker is assumed to be Protestant, while a SUE speaker is assumed to be Catholic (Kingsmore 1995: 34). Kingsmore (1995: 35) does note that many claim to know the difference between a Catholic and a Protestant on the basis of vocabulary. Such people identify the pronunciation of H as [eɪtʃ] by Protestants but [heɪtʃ] by Catholics as being a clear linguistic shibboleth.

For some of the letter writers in CORIECOR, it is quite clear through in-letter comments which faith he or she belongs to. Many are Protestant or Catholic, but we also find Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Quakers. No doubt some emigrants were forced to seek out the church closest to their own religious preference in those cases where their own community was too small to contain ministers, pastors or priests of the same faith.

[12] The voiceless alveolar 'slit' fricative resulting from /t/-lenition has been transcribed in various ways by different authors. For instance, Wells (1982: 429) uses [t̠], while Hickey (2007: 12) uses [t̪]. Hickey's convention is used in this thesis.

Unfortunately, this sort of information proved too scarce, and research into the correlation between linguistic features and religion in CORIECOR must be saved for a later date.

# Chapter 3

# Theoretical background

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents previous research that is relevant to the present study. Due to its socio-historical linguistic nature, a short introduction to research on language history is included in section 3.2 below, after which studies on IrE, previous work on historical IrE in general, and on historical NIrE in particular is presented in sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.

The methods and justification of language research using historical documents is explored in section 3.3, which begins with reflections on the relationship between writing systems and speech sounds (section 3.3.1) and continues with linguistic commentary, end-rhymes, literary dialect, and the basis for this dissertation, personal correspondence (sections 3.3.2–3.3.5). Conclusions on phonetic representation in personal correspondence are presented in section 3.3.6.

## 3.2 Previous research

For most of the twentieth century, research on language history saw its subject as 'a long march toward a uniform standard' (Vandenbussche and Elspaß 2007: 147). Traditionally, the study of language was based on literary writing, with early philologists taking the view that if anything written was non-standard or in any way 'corrupted' it should be discounted. Where correspondence was used as a basis for such studies, it usually focused on letters from well-known persons – writings that had often been preserved precisely because their writers were famous and therefore deemed worthy of preservation. Another reason why such material still exists is because such people had perhaps more cause or opportunity to write and therefore produced more. While this correspondence is useful on many levels, it often tells us little or nothing about vernacular language or the language of 'common people.' Members of elite groups in society were often educated to some degree and therefore accustomed to writing and did not necessarily speak the same variety or sociolect as people from lower ranks. In other words, the letters that are the most likely to have been preserved are from only a small, elitist proportion of the people and therefore not representative of the language spoken by the great majority.

Starting in the late 1970s, German scholars developed an interest in the 'Arbeitersprache' found in nineteenth-century handwritten documents from the German lower and working classes (see e.g. Vandenbussche 2006), in what Vandenbussche and Elspaß (2007: 147) call

the 'German sociohistorical tradition.' These first tentative steps later became historical sociolinguistics, a linguistic sub-discipline applying sociolinguistic methods and ideas of the influence of class and gender on language change to material predating recorded speech (Romaine 1982). Interest in people other than the higher classes culminated in the approach of 'history from below,' a term first used by historian Hobsbawm (1997) (in a non-linguistic manner) and, more recently, by historical linguist Elspaß (2005) as 'language history from below.' This type of approach offers a 'worm's eye view' as opposed to a 'bird's eye view.' A common-interest group, the *Historical Sociolinguistics Network* (HiSoN), has even been established in recent years to provide like-minded scholars the opportunity to share ideas and to provide training for early-career academics and interested students.

Socio-historical work on letters has recently been done in connection with the project *Letters as Loot* on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch 'sailing letters' captured during the Anglo-Dutch wars (see e.g. van der Wal et al. 2012; Rutten and van der Wal 2014; and PhD dissertations Nobels 2013; Simons 2013). For the English language, a number of studies have been done based on the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (CEEC) (e.g. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1996). A collection of articles on LModE correspondence can be found in Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2008).

It is clear that the 'language history from below' approach and historical sociolinguistic methods have been used with great success on egodocuments. The theoretical and methodological foundations for such studies as they relate to the present study are discussed in detail in section 3.3.

### 3.2.1 Irish English studies

The following overview of important studies and related material on IrE is largely based on the comprehensive list in Hickey (2007: 423–425) and supplemented where appropriate.

While not scholarly material, early attestations and examples of literary dialect can nevertheless reveal important information about past varieties of IrE, or at least contemporary perceptions of its salient features. The early fourteenth-century *Kildare poems* and a few similar texts are written in an Irish dialect of ME. The municipal records of Dublin and Waterford from the fifteenth century reveal features of English in use along the east coast. In 1589, the play 'Captain Thomas Stukely' satirises English as used by Irishmen, such as s-palatalisation ([ʃ] for /s/), WH/w-approximation ([ɸ] for /w, ʍ/), and TH-fortition ([d, t] for /ð, θ/) in *Cresh blesh vs, fo ish tat ishe coughes* 'Christ bless us, who is that [who] coughes?' (Bliss 1979: 77). Jonathan Swift's *Dialogue in Hibernian stile between A & B* (1735) likewise satirises rural planter and urban dweller speech. A more modern example is Maria Edgworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1801), seen as the first regional English novel, which features literary IrE dialect throughout. Such pieces assist in shedding light on periods where knowledge of historical IrE is sparse.

Information from non-fiction sources can be found in grammars and commentary on language use (often prescriptive in nature) and in dictionaries of local varieties. The first such description of IrE is the *Treatise containing a plaine and perfect description of Ireland* in the historical work *Holinshed's chronicles* (1577) by Richard Stanihurst. In 1781 *A rhetorical grammar of the English language* by Thomas Sheridan (1781) appeared, with remarks on 'incorrect' usage of English. A similar work is *The provincialisms of Belfast pointed out and corrected* (Patterson 1860). John Donovan's *Grammar of Irish* (1845) is a description of

Irish, but has translations and glosses giving evidence of IrE. Important early dictionaries include a *Glossary of Forth and Bargy dialect words* (Charles Vallancey 1788; updated by Jacob Poole 1807), and *Poole's glossary* (1867, with introductory notes by William Barnes). Modern dictionaries are *A concise Ulster dictionary* (Macafee 1996), *Slanguage – a dictionary of slang and colloquial English in Ireland* (Share 2008), and *A dictionary of Hiberno-English* (Dolan 2012). The usefulness of prescriptive commentary for socio-historical linguistics is discussed in section 3.3.2.

The first full-length monograph on (S)IrE is Joyce (1910). Other early scholarly contributions are Hogan's (1970) and O'Rahilly's (1932) descriptions of English in Ireland. Renewed interest in the study of IrE came after the mid-twentieth century (e.g. Henry 1957, 1958; Bliss 1977, 1979). Some of Bliss' work is especially significant for diachronic study of IrE. Further studies of IrE that focus on the language as a whole are Barry (1981), Dolan (1990), Kallen (1994), Kallen (1997), Filppula (1999), and Hickey (2007). A special issue of *English today*, edited by Hickey (2011a), is also devoted to the study of IrE. An overview of NIrE is Corrigan (2010); its counterpart for SIrE is Kallen (2013).

For an overview, excellent works on Ulster dialects are Adams (1948) and Harris (1985). Studies on the location of the USc dialect are, e.g. Gregg (1972, 1985), while rural USc is discussed in Gregg (1958) and Douglas-Cowie (1978). Urban treatises on the other hand include e.g. Gregg (1964) for Larne and Kingsmore (1995) for Coleraine. Studies on urban MUE are J. Milroy (1981, 1992) and L. Milroy (1987) for Belfast, McCafferty (1998a,b, 1999, 2001) for (London)Derry and Pitts (1985, 1986, 1989) for Lurgan. Todd (1984, 1989) investigates rural MUE.

### 3.2.2 Previous research on historical Irish English

If we agree that Ireland was the first overseas expansion of the British empire and therefore its first colony, then IrE must be the first 'New English' to have developed outside Great Britain. Nevertheless, it has not seen the wide diachronic study that one could expect for such an early 'colonial dialect.' Varieties of, for instance, American, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand English have had far more attention from historical linguists. In fact – perhaps due to English being viewed as the invading language – there is far more research on IrE done outside of Ireland than in its own universities (Hickey 2007: 24–26). To date, IrE lacks a broad, diachronic, and empirical investigation, simply because the available material has been limited.

A few larger bodies of work on the evolution of IrE have been published (e.g. Filppula 1999; Hickey 2007; Amador-Moreno 2010b; Corrigan 2010; Kallen 2013), but none have had the advantage of a large, diachronic corpus such as CORIECOR, which provides the material for this study. There are certainly sections devoted to IrE in overviews of the development of varieties of English (e.g. Burchfield 1994; Crystal 2003; Melchers and Shaw 2003) or of English as a whole (e.g. Fennell 2001; Barber et al. 2012; Baugh and Cable 2013).

There have been a number of case studies on different aspects of IrE that are historically oriented to varying degrees. Some investigate the usage of IrE features in different authors (e.g. Kirk 1997, 1999; McCafferty 2005b, 2008, 2009, 2010; Amador-Moreno 2005, 2006, 2007; Pritchard 2007); others survey literary uses of IrE (e.g. Taniguchi 1956; Bliss 1979; Sullivan 1976; Todd 1989; Hickey 2003, 2002b). Some studies look at certain areas of the Republic and Northern Ireland (Kallen 2000; McCafferty 2001, 2003) or specific periods

based on historical documents, personal letters, and folklore material (e.g. Robinson 1989; Corrigan 1993; Montgomery 1997; Kirk 2000; McCafferty 2005a; Hickey 2005, 2010). Evaluations of the extent to which present-day IrE is derived from Irish or EModE are presented in e.g. (Bliss 1979, 1984; Harris 1984; Filppula 1999; Filppula et al. 2008).

It is apparent that empirical investigations of IrE that take the long view are limited. The present study aims to add to the body of work outlined above by providing evidence of historical NIrE phonology from 200 years of Irish emigrant letters.

## 3.3 Phonological evidence in writing

The first thing to consider regarding phonological evidence in letters is the nature of this evidence – the relationship between the original spoken utterances lost in time and their remnants on paper. There exists no absolute boundary between writing and speech. Written texts can contain elements of spoken utterances and vice versa. While they often differ in form, there is undeniable overlap between spoken and written texts (Biber 1988: 160). Schneider (2002: 73) suggests a 'continuum of increasing distance between an original speech event and its written record' along which to place various kinds of texts: recorded – recalled – imagined – observed – invented, where *recorded* is closest to a speech event and *invented* is furthest removed from it. The *recorded* category includes, e.g. interview transcripts or trial records. *Recalled* is where we find, e.g. slave narratives or travellers' accounts. Letters, along with diaries, are grouped in the *imagined* category, because the writer is in an imaginary conversation with someone. *Observed* texts comprise linguistic commentary and, finally, *invented* is where literary dialect is categorised. The following sections will explore the most relevant of these types of text for evaluating historical phonology.

### 3.3.1 Writing systems and speech sounds

Before turning to phonetic representation in different genres, a brief digression concerning orthography and graphemes – the very basis of writing – will be useful. Maintaining a direct correlation between a language's writing system and its speech sounds is for all intents and purposes impossible. As Aronoff (1978) points out:

> [S]ince the spelling system changes more slowly than the language, and since synchronic and diachronic phonology are so similar, it follows that the spelling system at a given point in time will represent a more abstract form of an utterance than the phonological surface. (Aronoff 1978: 300)

This is certainly true for the orthography of English (and even more so for Irish!).

Jespersen (1909: 1–3) pinpoints the main reasons why English pronunciation can be so different from its spelling: Firstly, there is no convenient system in the Roman alphabet that accurately correlates sounds to letters. One letter may stand for a cluster of sounds (e.g. ⟨x⟩ for [ks]), or, vice versa, one sound must be written with several letters (e.g. [ʃ] as ⟨sh⟩). The alphabet is therefore partly insufficient and simultaneously partly redundant. Its ability to show similarity between sounds is also practically non-existent. For instance, while the graphemes ⟨p, b⟩ show resemblance, ⟨k, g⟩ do not, even though phonetically the

only difference in the two pairs is whether or not vibration of the vocal cords occurs. There can even be very different visual representations of the same letter. Consider for instance blackletter (Fraktur) ⟨𝔨⟩ and its more familiar counterpart ⟨k⟩, or compare the script ⟨𝓏⟩ and sans serif ⟨z⟩ variants of ⟨z⟩. Variation even occurs within the same typeface, as seen for instance in the very different glyphs for A: ⟨A, a, *a*⟩ (Jespersen 1909: 1).

Secondly, poor writing by early scholars, subsequent inheritance of these mistakes by later generations, and the power of tradition have left their mark on English spelling, as well as influence from foreign scribes or the spelling habits of other languages such as Greek, Latin, and the Dutch of many early printers (Jespersen 1909: 1–2). Thus, English orthography appears to be quite abstract. This is nevertheless both a blessing and a curse. It may be very inconvenient for a foreign learner and seem rather arbitrary from a linguist's point of view, but from the historical linguist's perspective it is fortunate that English, as Jones (2005: 349) points out, broadly speaking retains sixteenth-century spelling conventions. This is perhaps due to, above all, the work of the grammarians and prescriptivists of the late Modern period (see discussion in section 3.3.2).

A useful supplement to the relation between orthography and phonology are some thoughts on the abstractness of phonology. While a phonetician might transcribe a spoken utterance on paper as a string of phonetic symbols by, e.g. using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), the result is still an abstract form of the original utterance, though to a much lesser degree than when written down using the letters of the alphabet. The phrase 'listening without hearing,' might for instance be broadly transcribed as /ˈlɪsənɪŋ wɪðˈaʊt ˈhɪərɪŋ/, showing in this case the phrase as having been spoken with a general English accent, perhaps Received Pronunciation (RP). It shows that ⟨t⟩ in *listen*(*ing*) is not usually pronounced in English, and a diphthongised vowel in the first syllable of *hearing*, thus suggesting RP rather than, say, General American (GA). A very narrow transcription of the phrase might in turn be something like [ˈlɪsn̩ɪŋ wᵊd̪ˈaʊt ˈfiɪ˞ɪŋ]. Repetitions of the phrase or transcriptions by different linguists would most likely give different results. These symbols merely stand for 'the occurrence of phonetic intentions' (Bromberger and Halle 2000: 25) in that each symbol represents a certain configuration of articulators in the mouth and larynx which could produce a (meaningful) noise.

Thus, in addition to acknowledging the short-comings of the alphabet in conveying speech sounds, it is also important to bear in mind that phonetic annotation itself is an inexact 'science,' being both annotator- and context-specific. The point here is that a writing system will always be an abstraction of the spoken language, but that orthography is still used to transfer the sounds of a spoken language to paper. Finally, it is important to remember that in addition to the above considerations the researcher must be aware of his or her own linguistic interpretations of (in this case) the spelling 'errors' of past letter writers and to which extent they can be used as evidence for the description of earlier NIrE phonology.

### 3.3.2 Linguistic commentary

Some of the earliest comments on English spoken in Ireland are from Sir William Petty, a scientist and philosopher who served in Ireland under Oliver Cromwell and after. Bliss (1979) quotes a 'tantalisingly vague' comment by Sir William:

> The Language of *Ireland* is like that of the *North of Scotland*, in many things like the *Welch* and *Manques*; but in *Ireland* the *Fingallians* speak neither *English*, *Irish* nor *Welch*; and the People about *Wexford*, tho they agree in a Language different from *English*, *Welch*, and *Irish*, yet 'tis not the same with that of the *Fingalians* (sic, PMdR) near *Dublin*. (Sir William Petty 1691: 106, in Bliss 1979: 26; original emphasis)

Marginally more useful is a comment in 1682 by Colonel Solomon Richards to Sir William where the former states that '[w]hoever hath read old Chaucer, and is at all acquainted therewith, will better understand the barony of Forth dialect than either an English or Irishman, that never read him, though otherwise a good linguist' (Bliss 1979: 22). Some actual representations of local dialects are also found, such as one given by John Dunton in 1698 where he quotes an Irishman from Fingall (now part of Co. Dublin): 'My soul me Lord Meier, ee never knew me faace was a Looking glass before' (Bliss 1979: 28). Here at least is evidence of unshifted ME /i:/ in ⟨ee⟩ 'I' (see e.g. Bliss 1979: 207), retention of ME /a:/ in ⟨faace⟩ *face* (see e.g. Hickey 2007: 73), and possibly /ɛ:/ in ⟨meier⟩ *mayor* which, according to Bliss (1979: 209) was the pronunciation reflected in spellings such as ⟨ei, ey, ai, ay⟩ in the seventeenth century.

One reason why more explicit commentary on the pronunciation of IrE exists from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is the notion that provincial dialects were inferior to a written or spoken standard (Mugglestone 2003: 7). This concept of a national standard began in earnest in the seventeenth century and led to an era when the importance of speaking 'proper' gained momentum. Prescriptivists, elocutionists, and grammarians instructed people on how to use the 'right' accent, the pitfalls of dropping H's and G's, and correct vowel pronunciation. For the historical linguist, contemporary commentary of this kind has the benefit of having been written by an interested observer and, in addition to advice on 'proper' speech, often points out 'faults' (i.e. non-standardness) in language-use and pronunciation. Thus, as Sundby et al. (1991: 1) note, '[p]rescriptive grammar virtually becomes a grammar of errors.' Commentary of the prescriptive kind is well-known from, e.g. the works of Samuel Johnson, Jonathan Swift, and Thomas Sheridan, who all published this kind of material in the second half of the eighteenth century. These provide us with a substantial amount of insight into the pronunciation of English at the time – or at least its suggested 'correct' pronunciation. But the prescriptions of these grammarians must not be seen as research or commentary of the kind we would associate with the work of a modern linguist. Mugglestone (2003) describes these people as

> ordinary speakers who recorded their own attitudes and evaluations in ways which, as we have seen, are far removed from the comments of professional linguists today. […] Schoolmasters, actors, vicars, and a whole range of ordinary individuals all ventured to write on accent over this time. (Mugglestone 2003: 77)

Sometimes, the authors of these textbooks expressed debts of gratitude to fellow grammarians, but equally often sought to improve the work of others, criticising what they deemed to be incorrect advice (Sundby et al. 1991: 12). Nevertheless, Chapman (2008: 35) argues that the best of the eighteenth-century grammarians can well be seen as language experts. Hickey (2005, 2008) in relation to his work on IrE and Dublin English, has studied Sheridan's *Rhetorical grammar of the English language* (1781) and found it to 'provide a useful glimpse of what pronunciation must have been like at the time' (2005: 187).

Sheridan, Irish-born actor, writer, and elocutionist, compiled an extensive appendix in his *Rhetorical grammar* with notes on, amongst others, (Dublin) IrE in his own system of phonetic notation, using numbers as diacritics over vowels to indicate their quality. He claims for instance that

> [t]he chief miſtakes made by the Iriſh in pronouncing Engliſh, lie for the moſt part in the founds of the two firſt vowels, *a* and *e*, the former being generally founded a̍ by the Iriſh, as in the word ba̍r, in moſt words where it is pronounced a̎, in day, by the Engliſh.[1] (Sheridan 1781: 140)[2]

While Hickey (2008: 392–394) finds Sheridan quite accurate in his descriptions regarding vowel quality, his comments on consonants are very sparse.

Sheridan's observations of IrE vowel quality in the late eighteenth century are useful as a comparison for the results of the present study, as his observations come from the middle of the period covered by the corpus. An overview of Sheridan's vowel qualities is presented in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1:** Late eighteenth-century (Dublin) IrE vowel quality, including conditioned realisations (after Sheridan 1781: 140–146; Hickey 2008: 398–403)

| Example | Sheridan's transcription | Vowel | Condition |
|---|---|---|---|
| *search* | sa̍rch | /a/ | lowering of /e/ before /r/ |
| *gape* | ga̎pe | /æː, ɛː/ | |
| *calf* | ca̋lf | /ɔː, ɒː/ | |
| *catch* | ka̍tch | /ɛ/ | raising of /æ/ after velars |
| *therefore* | tha̎refore | /ɛː/ | |
| *cheerful* | cha̋rful | /eː/ | |
| *onion* | a̍nion | /ɪ/ | |
| *mischievous*[a] | mischi̎evous | /ai/ | |
| *Michael*[b] | Mi̋kil | /iː/ | |
| *coffer* | co̍ffer | /ɒ/ | |
| *rode* | ro̎de | /oː/ | |
| *door* | dőor | /uː/ | |
| *cold* | cowld | /aul/ | diphthongisation before /l/+C |
| *bull* | bu̍ll | /ʌ/ | |

[a] Note that 'mis'chievous' is stressed on the second syllable.

[b] Sheridan has few references to IrE /iː/ for ⟨i⟩. He gives 'Mi̎kel' [maikəl] for the BrE pronunciation of *Michael*. His IrE transcription may reflect a transfer from the Irish vowel value in *Mícheál* ['mʲiːhɑːl] (Hickey 2008: 400), rather than being an accurate description of the vowel quality.

Sheridan identifies several conditioned realisations of vowels in certain environments. He gives 'ka̍tch' [kɛtʃ] for *catch*. This raising of /æ/ after velars (referred to as CATCH-raising in this thesis) was common in conservative RP until the mid-1900s and also in the speech of the Old English land-owning class in Ireland (Hickey 2007: 304). Sheridan also provides evidence for the lowering of /e/ before /r/ in e.g. 'sa̍rch' [sartʃ] *search*. This feature has its

[1] a̍ = [a, æ]; a̎ = [eɪ].

[2] The copy of Sheridan's *Rhetorical grammar* cited here is a facsimile of the original 1781 publication.

origins in settler BrE and is well-attested for IrE until the nineteenth century (Hickey 2008: 402). Vocalisation of /l/ before a consonant can be traced back to ME, but happened in IrE probably during the Irish–English language shift (Hickey 2008: 401).

Sheridan also points out the dentalised realisation of stops that is still common in IrE (referred to as T/D-dentalisation in this thesis). Regarding /t, d/, 'the Iriſh and other provincials thicken the ſound,' giving e.g. 'betther' ['bɛt̪ər] *better*, through 'the protruding of the tongue ſo as to touch the teeth' (Sheridan 1781: 35). In addition, while he does not specifically discuss cluster simplification, the transcription of IrE 'str$\grave{\text{e}}^{1}$nth' [strɛnθ] *strength* (Sheridan 1781: 145) shows that Sheridan was aware of this feature. There are nevertheless a few features which, for whatever reason, Sheridan does not appear to have noticed or deemed important enough to comment on.

John Walker's *A critical pronouncing dictionary and expositor of the English language* (1791) is a well-known grammar of late eighteenth-century English. On English as pronounced in Ireland, Walker largely relies on Sheridan, quoting liberally from the latter's *Rhetorical grammar*. An interesting observation of IrE phonology not covered by Sheridan is nevertheless raised, namely schwa-epenthesis. Walker gives the examples 'staw-rum' *storm* and 'fa-rum' *farm* for epenthesis in the cluster /rm/, and 'hel-um' *helm* and 'real-um' *realm* for the cluster /lm/ (Walker 1791: xi). Both clusters are often given as examples of this feature today (especially in *farm* and *film*).

A smaller publication, seeking to improve the English language as spoken around Belfast, is David Patterson's *Provincialisms of Belfast and the surrounding districts pointed out and corrected* (1860). Patterson was a teacher and 'a resident of Belfast for the last forty years' (Patterson 1860: Title page). He states that many sounds uttered by people in Belfast and neighbouring areas are 'very different from that recommended by English orthœpists' and that 'mistakes are made in the use of almost every elementary sound in the language' (Patterson 1860: 5). The most relevant parts of the pamphlet consist of double columns where one row of words is compared to Patterson's transcriptions of the 'incorrectly' pronounced versions of those words. Thus, we find e.g. 'yis' for *yes*, 'laft' for *loft*, and 'goold' for *gold* – indicating short E-raising, [ɑ] for /ɒ/, and [uː] in words like *gold*, *old*, respectively. In other places, the lemma and then both the 'correct' BrE and 'incorrect' IrE pronunciations are given, e.g. *measles*/*meezels*/*mayzels* – which provides evidence of [eː] for FACE-vowels, a salient feature of IrE. Like Sheridan, Patterson also gives examples of T/D-dentalisation, such as 'bitther' as the vernacular pronunciation of *bitter*.

Additional commentary on the English spoken in Belfast and surrounding areas is found in *Our Ulster accent and Ulster provincialisms* (1897) where F. J. Biggar, under the pseudonym *One Who Listens*, points out 'a few things which need correction' (Biggar 1897: 3).[3] Linguistically, the usefulness of the commentary is due to the author explicitly pointing out pronunciations which, in his view, need correcting. Thus, we are informed that 'an uneducated Irishman says *tay*, *retrait*, *paiz*, *plaiz*, &c., for 'tea,' 'retreat,' 'peas,' 'please,' &c.' (Biggar 1897: 6). The vowel in *pin* is described as being somewhere between 'short U' (e.g. *pun*) and 'short A' (e.g. *pan*), but is reported as sounding in some districts more like *pen*.

[3] The pseudonym is variously ascribed to Rev. R. McMordie (Corrigan 1990: 92), W. McMordie (Hansson 2008: 59), J. J. Biggar (Hickey 2002a: 288), and F. J. Biggar (Amador-Moreno, personal correspondence). *F. J.* seems the more widely used, though both *Bigger* and *Biggar* are found (see e.g. Bigger, F. J. 1892. 'The Spanish armada in Ulster and Connacht,' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 2, 99–105; but Biggar, F. J. 1904. 'The dialect of Ulster,' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 10, 66-68. *Biggar, F. J.* is used in the present thesis.

'Gev hem sexpence' and 'gimme saxpence' are given as examples of this.

Biggar's vivid descriptions of IrE phonology frequently border on sarcasm. On what must be T/D-fricativisation or some kind of aspiration, he states that T is followed by 'a peculiar sound' which makes it difficult for the hearer to make out the following vowel and sounds like 'the softened down, half-suppressed, hoarse cough of a calf' (Biggar 1897: 10). Other features mentioned in the pamphlet include CATCH-raising (e.g. 'thenk' *thank*, 'plenk' *plank*), front open vowel in (*m*)*any* (e.g. 'mannyfest' *manifest*), vowel off-glides (e.g. 'hawirse' *horse*), and palatalisation of velars before /ɑ/ (e.g. 'kyar' *car*, 'gyarden' *garden*). The uncertainty of the meaning behind the calf-cough description above shows how difficult it can be to interpret linguistic commentary by people without linguistic training.

### 3.3.3 End-rhymes

Just as written commentary by, e.g. orthoepists can inform us about the phonology of past varieties of a language, so can the written word in poetry. End-rhymes have frequently been used to provide evidence for earlier spoken English. The evidence lies in the fact that if two words or syllables are placed in such a way that the vowels should rhyme, but, when read in modern pronunciation, do not, then there is a good chance that either of the vowels was pronounced differently in the past.

A glance at, e.g. Shakespeare's sonnets quickly shows us that while words like *fire*/*desire* do indeed rhyme, others, such as *by*/*remedy*, fail to do so when read in modern pronunciation. Crystal (2011) does not attribute this to a supposed lack of poetical skills on the part of Shakespeare or an intentional use of eye-rhymes, but to the fact that EModE has undergone sound change so that some of the words no longer rhyme in present-day English.[4] If read in Original Pronunciation the rhyme *by*/*remedy* suddenly makes sense: [bəɪ]/['rɛmədəɪ]. The idea that the development of the English vowel system can be traced quite accurately by looking at end-rhymes in works by Shakespeare, Pope, and other early modern poets has been text book material since Kökeritz (1953). But not everyone agrees. Hanson (2002) argues that the use of eye-rhymes may have been far more common than previously assumed, so that not all of, e.g. Shakespeare's rhymes can have been full rhymes. While agreeing that end-rhymes are useful for historical phonology, she asks if such vowel variation is not simply 'a matter of the poet's individual linguistic competence' (i.e. awareness) (Hanson 2002: 209).

While helpful, end-rhymes are only of limited use. They are (usually) only found in verse and 'can tell us no more than that two sounds were pronounced in the same way,' and they tell us nothing about their quality (Bliss 1979: 188). A related case is the use of puns, which present the same problem. In other words, the fact that two words were pronounced the same does not tell us how they were pronounced.

### 3.3.4 Literary dialect

The first use of IrE as a literary dialect was perhaps in drama dialogue. In drama, stereotypical or 'stock' characters are regular occurrences. One such is the Stage Irishman, who first appeared in the Elizabethan era (see e.g. Bartley 1954). Their IrE dialect is often readily apparent in the manuscript dialogues of, e.g. Shakespeare as a guide to the actor:

[4] Eye-rhymes share similarities in spelling (e.g. *tough*/*bough*), but are not full rhymes.

> Irish: By Chrish Law tish ill done: the Worke ish giue ouer, the Trompet sound the Retreat.[5] (*The Life of Henry V*, William Shakespeare (1623))

The manner of spelling found in this passage from *Henry V* (1599/1623) to denote dialectal or accent features is sometimes also called *eye dialect*, a term coined in 1925 by George P. Krapp in *The English Language in America* (Bowdre 1964: 2).[6]

Eventually, the Stage Irishman changed from being an exotic character to fulfilling the part of comic relief, thus turning into a stereotypical character (Amador-Moreno 2010a: 90, 93). Bliss (1979: 312) voices the possibility that stage-Irish might not be entirely the same as IrE spoken at the time the plays were written. As he notes, 'its characteristic is that its features are repeated by a succession of writers without further reference to the real thing,' suggesting therefore that care must be taken in studying stage-Irish in plays (Bliss 1979: 312). Since modern-day accent handbooks for the stage are rife with misrepresentations, clichés, inaccuracies, and generalisations, at least when it comes to IrE (Walshe 2009: 250–269), we can perhaps assume that stage accents in the past suffered from the same problems.

Early works on literary dialect as a device include, e.g. Bowdre (1971) and Ives (1971). A more recent example is Foulkes and Docherty (2000) who demonstrate the value of literary dialect in an article on the labiodental [ʋ] realisation of /r/ and its origin in London and southeast England, showing its use in, e.g. Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*. For IrE, some of the first serious phonological treatments of literary dialect are Taniguchi (1956) and Bliss (1979). Bliss looks at 27 texts, mostly plays, and also mentions three earlier works on IrE of this kind (Hogan 1970; Bartley 1954; Sullivan 1976), but, according to him, 'their treatment of it is superficial' (Bliss 1979: 5). He devotes a chapter to a discussion on phonology 'based very largely on the evidence of non-standard spellings in the texts' included in his own anthology (Bliss 1979: 188). Bliss finds 'historically and linguistically predictable features' to occur regularly in the texts and judges the representations therefore by and large as faithful (1979: 314). Amador-Moreno (2006) has looked at Donegal literary dialect in Patrick MacGill's autobiographical novel *Children of the dead end* (1904) and its sequel *The rat pit* (1905) and in the memoir *The last of the name* (1986) by Charles McGlinchey (Amador-Moreno 2010b). Her work, though not dealing with phonetic representation, shows the validity of literary dialect for the study of (historical) IrE. Phonetic representation of IrE in literature is evaluated in, e.g. McCafferty (2009) where vernacular forms in *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1830) by William Carleton are assessed. Carleton, despite reducing examples of orality by excluding Scottish features of Ulster English, had a very oral writing style (McCafferty 2009: 71) and several instances of phonetic representation are found, including NIrE features such as FOOT-vowels with [ʌ] (e.g. ⟨wud⟩ *would*) and final stop voicing (e.g. ⟨bud⟩ *but*). Hickey (2012) investigates IrE features represented in literary works such as Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1801), nineteenth-century authors like Dion Boucicault, John Millington Synge, and Sean O'Casey, amongst others.

[5] The spellings ⟨Chrish⟩ *Christ* and ⟨tish⟩ *'tis* indicate [ʃ] for /s/. Hickey (2007: 124) also finds evidence for [β] for /v/ in e.g. ⟨giue⟩ *give* and ⟨ouer⟩ *over*, because, he claims, ⟨u⟩ for ⟨v⟩ are not found in the rest of Henry V. But ⟨u⟩ and ⟨v⟩ have been treated as variants of the same letter – ⟨v⟩ word-initially and ⟨u⟩ in other positions, e.g. ⟨vpon⟩ *upon*, ⟨haue⟩ *have* – until at least the seventeenth century (Upward and Davidson 2011: 189–190; Barber et al. 2012: 35) and are indeed found throughout *Henry V* in this manner.

[6] Originally, *eye dialect* was used for literary dialect which merely gave a notion of non-standardness, but without suggesting a difference in pronunciation (e.g. ⟨waz⟩ *was*, ⟨tuff⟩ *tough*).

Bliss (1979: 189) has some orthographical considerations for IrE literary dialect connected to how authors unfamiliar with IrE phonology may perceive certain features and represent these in spelling. For instance, Irish (Gaelic) has no dental fricatives [θ, ð], but it does have dental stops [t̪, d̪] for /t, d/ and palatal stops [c, ɟ] for certain English loan words (e.g. *tae* [t̪eː] 'tea') (Hickey 2011b: 211), giving (in SIrE) e.g. [θɪn] *thin* and [tɪn] *tin*. An English-speaking author with no knowledge of this would, using literary dialect, probably render both words in writing as ⟨tin⟩. A reader can therefore not know if the spelling used in fact corresponds to the actual speech sounds that the author was trying to convey. This may be nit-picking, however, as without training in phonetics/phonology, many native IrE-speakers might not detect a difference between the dental and alveolar stops either. It is also clear, in this instance, that a stop rather than, say, a fricative is intended. For most purposes this kind of broad representation of a dialect will suffice. Still, it is useful to be aware of the potential inconsistency between a spoken dialect and a written representation of it. The same basic problem holds naturally for phonetic representation in personal correspondence.

Even though literary dialect has been used extensively for linguistic studies, it is difficult to interpret because of its stereotypical nature. In some ways, literary dialect is useful precisely because of how it conveys what people (authors) find most striking about a dialect. Ives (1971: 158–159) notes, however, that just as a writer of fiction creates characters based on the traits of real-life persons so does he convey a literary dialect based on different speakers of that dialect. In other words, the literary dialect does not have a one-to-one correlation to the dialect it is supposed to imitate, because a dialect has numerous individual speakers. The author must choose features, often exaggerating some to create the desired effect. In such a way, traits like personality, gender, age, education, geographical location, and social rank can shine through a competent author's dialogues (Walpole 1974: 191) The speech style represents something the fictional character might have produced under exactly the circumstances portrayed, and so 'literary language is an artefact, created by conscious selection' (Kirk 1997: 202). Still, the reader has no choice but to accept the author's second-hand and, quite possibly, unfaithful representation of a certain character's speech (Short et al. 2002: 335). It is generally found by those who have studied the use of literary dialect that authors 'tend to exaggerate certain features,' resulting in 'linguistically overdone' representations (Maynor 1987: 110), although, e.g. Yaeger-Dror et al. (2002) find that notable similarities can certainly be found between literary dialect and real speech transcripts. The literary dialect must, however, always be interpreted in light of the author's dialect, because only when we take into account the author's own phonetic associations (i.e. their own dialect) will we know what they mean by a particular phonetic representation (Ives 1971: 159).

### 3.3.5 Personal correspondence

As with linguistic commentary, end-rhymes, and literary dialect, there are obvious challenges with using personal correspondence as a way of saying something about pronunciation in the past. First and foremost, as Montgomery (1995: 30) points out: 'They are clearly NOT transcripts.' Similar to the written sources discussed above, there are a number of precautions one must take and pitfalls to be aware of. These will be discussed in the following.

Written historical documents such as letters, diaries, and memoirs can not only pro-

vide tremendous insight into the daily life of the past but also provide invaluable linguistic evidence about the language use of the people who lived those lives. Such personal documents, termed *egodocuments* by Dutch linguist Jacques Presser (1958), are frequently very oral and thus come closer to speech than other non-fictional historical texts (van der Wal and Rutten 2013a: 1). These traits are especially present in letters written to family members. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003: 192) also find that linguistic innovations are seen earlier in private than in official correspondence. Montgomery, who has used Irish emigrant letters in his research on Ulster English, argues that 'no other type of document, be it dialect poetry, folk tales, or any other, reveals the speech patterns of earlier days nearly so well or as fully as family letters' (Montgomery 1995: 28). In fact, for centuries, advocates of written correspondence have encouraged letter writers to model their communication after their own speech, the letter simply serving as a 'substitute for speech made necessary by separation' (Fitzpatrick 2006: 102).

Often, such egodocuments have survived purely 'by chance and due to specific historical events' (van der Wal and Rutten 2013a: 15). Mass migration in the nineteenth century as well as the two world wars encouraged many lower- to middle-class writers to stay in touch with friends and family through written correspondence (Elspaß 2012: 159). This has left a substantial body of documents that can fill gaps left by more traditional research on formal and literary texts (van der Wal and Rutten 2013a: 1). But Milroy (1992: 45) points out that such material 'tends to be message-oriented and is deprived of the social and situational contexts in which speech events occur.' Because their preservation is accidental they are not necessarily very representative of past versions of a language (Milroy 1992: 45).[7] They are nevertheless of great value as one of several pieces of the puzzle available to the historical linguist.

Millions of letters must have been sent back home from European emigrants settling in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and other countries. The number of letters available to researchers today shows that only a fraction of these letters survive. This raises the question of representativeness (Helbich and Kamphoefner 2006). How representative can language use be in these letters if we only have access to a small percentage of the written material? Helbich and Kamphoefner (2006: 29) suggest that around a quarter of the total number of adult immigrants never wrote letters.[8] In their study on German emigrant letters they conclude that:

> every letter-writer is representative or unrepresentative in so many different ways by age, place of origin, social background, education, occupation, financial circumstances, residence, personality, marital and family status, religion, politics and so on that the issue of representation depends heavily on what aspect is being researched. (Helbich and Kamphoefner 2006: 50)

Representativeness should therefore be judged on a case-by-case basis, depending on the goal of the research.

[7] But there is also a sense in which this applies equally to many of the other text types on which linguistic history has traditionally been based – especially OE and ME manuscripts are often preserved by pure chance, so too are many of the texts produced after the invention of printing. Later, as print runs became even more massive, the notion evolved of having copyright libraries where everything would be deposited and preserved for posterity – and even then, we cannot be entirely sure that everything is preserved.

[8] Illiteracy, early deaths, no relatives to write to, and disinterest in keeping contact must have been some of the reasons behind not writing (Helbich and Kamphoefner 2006: 29).

Schneider (2002: 71) puts forth four basic requirements texts should meet for them to be 'useful for a variationist analysis:' They should be as close to speech and vernacular styles as possible (this largely excludes formal and literary writing); they should come from different origins (social classes, age groups, genders, stylistic levels); they should display variability of the feature in question; and the corpus must be large enough to allow quantification.

Closeness to speech is often easily observable in letters, especially when the writer is uneducated, semi-literate or unaccustomed to putting words on paper. Elliott et al. (2006: 3–4) describe the letter-writing of such people as 'an exercise that taxed their abilities to the limit.' Montgomery (1995: 31) points out a lack of punctuation or paragraphing, unpredictable capitalisation, and variable spelling in letters as evidence for approximation to speech. These, he argues, make it difficult to discern 'sentence boundaries,' which tells us that the writers did not rely on taught orthographical practices and written models but on oral conventions. Further proof of this is the use of formulaic expressions (e.g. 'I remain your humble servant' in letter closings) with variation in spelling, suggesting that the writer relies more on their aural rather than visual recollection of such phrases.

Phrases and choice of words by the writers themselves frequently also point to the orality of letters, sometimes very explicitly referring to the correspondence as a form of conversation. Examples of this idea are frequently found in letters, as shown in example (1), below, from a study on the composition of Irish emigrant letters by Fitzpatrick (1994):

(1) *I fancy I am speaking to you verbaly while I am writing this scroll to you.*
(Michael Normile, No 11h; Fitzpatrick 1994: 89)

Another indicator of orality is the repetition of information, similar to what happens in informal conversation, as seen in (2) from CORIECOR:

(2) *I don't Intend to sleep a night*
*in Sixtowns I will visit 3 Houses*
*in Sixtowns regular but I will*
*make my home in Cookstown Hotel*
*you mea know the reason I have*
*for not stopping in Sixtown Margaret*
*I gesss you doe but I tell you*
*before I go I will not stop*
*in Sixtowns.*
(John S. Sinclair, California to Margaret Graham, Co (London)Derry, 17.08.1889)

Many misspellings are trivial or show the 'common, everyday pronunciation of all English speakers' (Montgomery 1995: 32), such as ⟨sitty⟩ *city*. But at the very least they show us that a certain pronunciation was similar to that used today, and they are also evidence of the fact that the writers were so unaccustomed to writing that even common words show phonetic representations. This is very apparent in the spelling ⟨the⟩ [ði:] *they*, which is one of the most frequently found variant spellings in the letters studied for the present thesis (see chapter 5 and de Rijke 2014).

Letters easily comply with Schneider's requirement of a text having to come from different origins. Even though letters from well-known people are more likely to be preserved and many illiterate people never sent letters, the threshold for at least attempting to communicate with distant relatives or friends was apparently low. As discussed in section 4.2.2,

people from all walks of life are represented in CORIECOR. With such varied writers, it follows that the letters will also show stylistic variation. Both sexes are represented, as well as different age groups. There is geographical variation as well, although there are markedly more letters in the corpus from the north and northeast of Ireland than elsewhere.

In addition to variability of origin, a text should show variability of the feature under investigation. In other words, the feature investigated must be a functionally equivalent variant of a linguistic variable (Schneider 2002: 71). Many variant spellings are found throughout the letters in CORIECOR, often several of the same word. *Would* is for instance found as ⟨wood⟩, ⟨woad⟩, and ⟨wod⟩ in a single letter.[9]

For a phonological study such as this, there is an obvious problem with the requirement of quantification. Given the limited size of CORIECOR, there will be a number of instances where an interesting feature or possible phonetic representation in spelling occurs in such a small amount that it cannot be studied quantitatively. For this reason a more qualitative approach might be favourable so that interesting cases can still be documented. Consider, e.g. the following from CORIECOR:

(3) *she is taughing of goying into a cloak store*
(John S. Sinclair, California, USA to Margaret Graham, (London)Derry, 15.01.1885)

The spelling ⟨gh⟩ in ⟨taughing⟩ *talking* may well be evidence of lenition from a velar stop [k] to a velar fricative [x], such as one might find in the Scouse dialect of Liverpool (see section 7.8.2 for discussion). It is the only instance of this feature in CORIECOR and thus does not allow quantification, yet dismissing it for that reason would be a shame. After all, there is a possibility that it is precisely influence from IrE which introduced lenition to Liverpool. Schneider (2002: 71) does stress that there is no fixed size requirement and that a text 'should (though need not) allow quantitative analyses of several phenomena.'

Montgomery (1999: 22–27) addresses four possible problem areas in the phonological study of letters written by semi-literates. The first regards that of authorship. In many cases people must have been too illiterate to be able to write on their own and would have needed help. In such a case we must take care in analysing the evidence, for even though the letter may show non-standard features, the actual writer (the person who put pen to paper) may not have the same linguistic background as the sender, so that the data will be 'contaminated' with irrelevant non-standard features. There are four examples from CORIECOR where, on closer inspection, the writer turns out to be someone other than the signee, writing on behalf of the latter, as in, e.g. (4):

(4) *I hope you will excuse me for not writing*
*before this time but owing to me not being able to write my self*
*makes all the Delay*
(Edward [McKenny] (on behalf of William Gracey), Philadelphia to James Gracey, Co Down, 04.07.1847)

Comparison of handwriting is sometimes employed to see if the signature matches the body of the letter (see e.g. Nobels 2013), but in an electronic corpus such as CORIECOR, this is not an option. In other cases, writers have turned out to come from Scotland or the US, not Ireland (and are thus excluded from the study). But if we assume that by far the greater number of writers did their own writing then quantification of the data should minimise

[9] Thomas Armstrong, Ballinamallard, Co. Fermanagh to Christopher Armstrong, 28.10.1849.

the impact of this problem. This does mean that extra care should be taken with features that appear too seldom for quantification (e.g. ⟨taughing⟩). Further features distinctive to the variety under investigation will help in this case.

The second problem area concerns the use of models. The use of opening and closing formulae and rhetorical conventions (e.g. 'I take this opportunity of writing you' or 'I remain your faithful husband') seem far removed from 'live' speech. However, as shown above, and voiced by Montgomery (1999: 24), punctuation, spelling, etc., even in many of these formulaic elements, show that if the writers relied on a guide, it was an oral one, not a written one. In any case, the letter-writing conventions found in textbook models were not much used in Irish correspondence anyway; in fact, people often did exactly what the guides told them NOT to do (Fitzpatrick 2006: 104).

Thirdly, Montgomery points out that for many writers it must have been taxing to write, so that any observable errors may be too inconsistent to be of use. He explains, however, that orthographical and syntactic errors are not so random as to present a problem (Montgomery 1999: 24–25). They appear in predictable patterns. Thus, even though the letter writers may have had little skill in writing, instances of phonetic representation are still predictable enough for study.

Lastly, there is the problem of representativeness (briefly mentioned earlier). One could argue that the skill of reading and writing set the writers of letters so far apart from the rest of the community that they are no longer representative of that community. According to Montgomery (1999: 24–25), however, not all writers were 'members of an elite or a distinct social group.' Many people from the lower rungs of society produced letters, though not everyone agrees how representative this is of their actual spoken language-use. For instance, it is the view of Millar (2012) that the language-use in his study of nineteenth-century letters does not accurately reflect the spoken use of the letter-writers because their semi-literacy reflects Standard English in writing rather than their local dialect (Millar 2012: 176). In other words, Millar supposes that they were aware of a social stigmatism connected to use of local dialects and that written English should conform to a standard language. However, his research is based on only 39 letters to/from two Lancashire working-class men. In another study, McWhorter (2005) laments the 'degradation' of present-day written language based on examples from nineteenth-century American letters. He claims that despite limited schooling, ordinary Civil War soldiers 'casually wrote prose like Edward Everett's orations' (McWhorter 2005: 122–123).[10] He probably underestimates his sources, though – one is a Confederate surgeon, another a clerk with 'less than ten years of formal education' (McWhorter 2005: 123), hardly a small feat in a small American town in the 1830s. He ascribes a much higher writing-proficiency to lower-class people when his sources are, in fact, people with considerable education for their time. It is thus important to be aware of the social background of the letter writers. But there is little reason to believe that the writing skills of the emigrants in CORIECOR and their family and friends sets them so far apart from other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century speakers of NIrE that they are not representative of their respective communities.

[10] Edward Everett was an American politician and orator during the antebellum and Civil War eras.

### 3.3.6 Conclusions on phonetic representation in personal correspondence

While it is true that both the English alphabet and phonetic annotation have their limits, in many cases phonetic representation in letters is quite clear-cut. Spellings such as ⟨sarvent⟩ and ⟨Atalantic⟩ leave little doubt, in an IrE context, that the writer pronounced *servant* with [ɑ ~ a] and *Atlantic* with an epenthetic schwa. So for historical phonological purposes, letters seem to be an excellent source of data – in many cases better than, e.g. literary dialect or linguistic commentary. It must be stressed, however, that no single type of source should take precedence before the others in this case. They may all provide useful data for linguistic study, because 'if evidence provided by the best available data sets confirms findings based on less speech-like data, then we can have confidence in the evidence of the latter too' (McCafferty 2010: 144–145).

The unfortunate truth is that we can never know how representative or not any given set of texts is. But if it makes sense in relation to existing features of reliably, linguistically described varieties of English spoken and written in Ireland today or in the past, then we can have some confidence in the representativity of the data that is described. The disadvantages we encounter while working with letters can be overcome by relating features to both modern and past descriptions of dialects where literary dialect and linguistic commentary are indispensable as reference material. Evidence from letters at different points in time, as well as literary data, and attestations from commentators like Thomas Sheridan along with those of modern linguists are all part of the puzzle. Literary dialect, end-rhymes, and contemporary commentary all have their merits. Ideally of course, all of these sources, in addition to personal correspondence, should be (and are) applied in diachronic linguistic research. Thus, triangulation of all these kinds of sources places the letter evidence on solid ground and documents the features of, in this case IrE, until sometime in the twentieth century.

# Chapter 4

# Corpus and methodology

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the material used for the present study and the methods with which the data was collected. Firstly, in section 4.2, the background, composition, and contents of CORIECOR are presented. This section also gives a description of the letters and the letter writers in the corpus. Secondly, the manner of locating, extracting, and interpreting the relevant features are explained in section 4.3.

## 4.2 The *Corpus of Irish English Correspondence*

The historical letters on which this study is based come from the CORIECOR corpus (McCafferty and Amador-Moreno in preparation). The core of CORIECOR is comprised of the *Irish Emigration Database* (IED), with approximately 4,800 letters.[1] The corpus is still growing and contains at the time of writing about 6,500 letters and 3.5 million words, dating from the late 1600s to the 1940s. At this moment it is probably the 'largest corpus of its kind for IrE available anywhere' (McCafferty forthcoming: 3). CORIECOR is still biased towards the northern province of Ulster and the east coast of Leinster. This is partly due to the origin of the IED material (see footnote 1) and partly because it was mainly in the aforementioned areas that English was in use before 1800 (McCafferty 2014: 334n). As discussed in chapter 1, it is for this reason that this study is concerned with Ulster and not the island as a whole.

Most of the material dates from the mid-1800s onward, especially due to mass emigration during this time, but also because, on the whole, levels of literacy rose during this period of migration, especially for women emigrants (Fitzgerald and Lambkin 2008: 194–195). Collections are still being added to the corpus, which will balance out the material both in terms of geographical spread, but also serve to fill gaps in the time-span of CORIECOR. At the moment, coverage is good for 1770–1930 with at least 20,000 words per decade. Ideally, CORIECOR will have at least 200,000 words per sub-period (McCafferty and Amador-Moreno 2012a). Several collections, private or otherwise, have been added to the

[1] The IED includes material from Irish emigrants and their families. It originates from the Centre for Migration Studies at the Ulster-American Folk Park in Omagh, Co. Tyrone. The corpus is biased towards the province of Ulster due to its initial focus on local material, but since 1988 incorporates material from all Irish counties. It is available at `www.dippam.ac.uk` or `www.qub.ac.uk/cms/collection/IED.htm`.

corpus at the time of writing. These include, for instance, family letters from Argentina; Canadian-Irish letters included in *Irish emigration and Canadian settlement* by Houston and Smyth (1990); a number of family letters from Australia and New Zealand, including the collection in *Oceans of consolation* by Fitzpatrick (1994); and also correspondence from the US and Great Britain. The present study does not necessarily include all of the previously mentioned collections. Because CORIECOR is still being added to, the corpus as of 14 October 2013 is used for this study, which is when data collection commenced (see Table 4.1 for figures). This includes the IED, the Murphy and Pettit collections (Argentina), the MacArthur collection (US), the Carlow Coogan collection (US), letters from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the New Brunswick collections (Canada). Thus, any mention of CORIECOR or the data used, discussed or presented in this thesis is in reference to the corpus as it appeared on 14 October 2013.

**Table 4.1**: Numbers of letters and words in CORIECOR (14 October 2013) used for the present thesis

| Period | letters (n) | words (n) |
|---|---|---|
| 1600s | 3 | 4,264 |
| 1701–1720 | NDA | NDA |
| 1721–1740 | 3 | 2,751 |
| 1741–1760 | 18 | 17,124 |
| 1761–1780 | 120 | 57,362 |
| 1781–1800 | 199 | 105,304 |
| 1801–1820 | 236 | 198,124 |
| 1821–1840 | 404 | 303,135 |
| 1841–1860 | 988 | 675,746 |
| 1861–1880 | 898 | 569,659 |
| 1881–1900 | 1,384 | 750,456 |
| 1901–1920 | 526 | 324,670 |
| 1921–1940 | 71 | 51,677 |
| Total | 4,850 | 3,060,366 |

In its final stage CORIECOR will possibly be annotated and equipped with an interface which will allow the user to perform detailed searches within the corpus for any relevant features, years, places of origin, writers etc. Due to its incomplete state at the moment of writing, research has been carried out using the corpus' temporary .doc and .docx documents. Details on how this was done are found below, in section 4.3.

### 4.2.1 The letters

The letters in CORIECOR contain communication between first-generation Irish emigrants (to e.g. the US, Canada, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand) and family, friends, associates, etc. (in Ireland or abroad). Fitzpatrick (2006: 98–102) gives an account of the typical vernacular letter structure of the kind found in the corpus. These normally include up to five common elements: introductory phrases, references to correspondence, references to health, affirmations of religious faith, and personal messages. Salutations to seniors include a title (see e.g. *My dear Mamma* in example (6)), while juniors are usually greeted with *my dear*. Letter openings are often rather formal, such as the very common opening phrase in (5):

(5) *Der Brother*
*I take op miy pen to rite*
*A few lins to you hoping to finde you in good helth*
*as this leves me and us all in the perusent*
*thankes be to god for all his mies [= mercy] to*
*us*
(Thomas Armstrong, Ballinamallard, Co. Fermanagh to Christopher Armstrong, 28.10.1849)

Yet after such formalities, letters usually continue in a far more conversational tone. Neither the formulaic elements nor the conversational character of such letters are restricted to Irish correspondence but are also found in similar correspondence from other countries (Fitzpatrick 2006: 101–102).

In CORIECOR, and especially where the letters are part of correspondence between a recent emigrant and his or her family in Ireland, themes usually include an account of the (sometimes perilous) voyage, descriptions of the new country, the search for employment, and encounters with fellow countrymen or previously emigrated family:

(6) *My dear Mamma*
*At last we have got to our destination and I am so*
*thankful. We reached New York on Monday evening but did not*
*land until Tuesday morning. Willie Patterson was there to*
*meet us*
(Maggie Black, Chicago to her mother, 16.05.1890)

Most letters reveal glimpses of the lives of more established Irish in their adopted countries. These letters contain information of a more mundane kind: the prices of livestock and other foodstuffs, the status and acreage of farms, reports of the harvest, updates on births, marriages, and deaths, etc. Letters frequently contain greetings, apologies or reprimands for long silences (7), the odd excuse for bad 'grammar,' i.e. syntax or even handwriting (8), and requests for swift answers.

(7) *I recivd aletor [a letter] from*
*you about 18 years agow and I never got any acount*
*of yous since till I got this letor*
*But thanks be to god that yous ar still alive*
*and well we are all well also Dear Brother I live in my Fathers*
*house and has the farm he held*
(John Clarke, Co. Fermanagh to his brother, [USA?], 14.12.1868)

(8) *Hoping to hear from you*
*soon I remain your*
*Ever Sincerely Cousin Lizzie*
*Wright Soon Isabella to Lizzie*
*[…]*
*Please excuse poor writing*
*and all my mistakes*
*Dont let no one see this*
*Isabella*
(Lizzie Lucas, Michigan to her cousin Isabella, 22.05.1886)

Naturally, the above characteristics are not specific to family letters. Correspondence between friends, business associates, letters to social superiors (e.g. clergymen, lawyers or sponsors), and a few letters to newspaper editors are also found in CORIECOR.

The language encountered in the corpus is as varied as its authors. Broadly speaking, we can divide the texts into *more standard* and *more non-standard*. Some texts are very well written, i.e. showing a good command of the standard orthography of English at the time of writing, with full punctuation and predictable capitalisation. Other letters are rife with, for lack of a better word, 'errors' in spelling, punctuation, syntax etc. (cf. the writing proficiencies of the authors of (5) and (6), above). It is precisely the non-standard spellings in these letters that are useful for historical sociolinguistic research on IrE phonology such as the present study. Regarding the language-use of writers with limited experience in putting words on paper, Fairman (2007: 171) remarks that it 'has to be called "non-standard." But to call it that is as biased as to call humanity male, but there are non-male humans.' Hence the use of scare quotes in, e.g. *spelling 'error.'* Calling the non-standard spellings of people with limited or no access to schooling and little occasion to write 'errors' (i.e. implying that the spelling is somehow wrong) is problematic. Thus, the term *non-standard* is used here, though it too may be imperfect.

Examples and quotes from CORIECOR are numbered and set off from the main body of text. Relevant features under discussion are marked in bold for clarity. Corrections of non-standard spelling by transcribers are not included except where a word needs clarification. Original line breaks, punctuation, and capitalisation are retained. Every excerpt is marked with sender name/location, receiver name/location, and date.

### 4.2.2 The letter writers

#### Gender

In CORIECOR, both genders are represented, although most letters are written by men. The letters cover a broad spectrum of rank and occupation, ranging from farmers, labourers, and soldiers to clergymen, merchants, gentry, and aristocracy. Religious affiliation is not always clear, but both Protestant and Roman Catholic authors – as well as several other faiths such as Quakers, Presbyterians, etc. – are present in the corpus. Many parts of Ireland are represented, though most documents by far are sent to or from Ulster. The present thesis concentrates on those from Ulster exclusively.

The gender of the writers is the easiest factor to determine, simply because of the signed name.[2] For some writers gender is unknown because the signature or other clues are lacking, and a few others are co-written with a spouse, sibling or parent. In calculating results related to gender, only letter writers whose gender is known are counted. For co-written letters, this means that only letters with clear demarcations between sections written by male and female authors are included, effectively splitting the letter into multiple parts,

[2] In the present thesis the terms *gender*, *men/women*, and *male/female* are used interchangeably, though they are not necessarily the same. As Eckert (1989: 247) notes, 'sex is generally a readily observable binary variable, and inasmuch as sex can be said to be a rough statistical indication of gender, it has been reasonable to substitute the biological category for the social in sampling.' Thus, sex has here been used to determine gender on the basis of the letter writers' names, in turn because the categories *men/women*, *male/female* serve as the basis for societal roles and expectations (Eckert 1989: 246–247), even more so during the periods covered by CORIECOR than today.

with each part counted as a separate letter for the purpose of allocating gender.[3] The gender distribution in CORIECOR is presented in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1, which show that there are nearly three times more male than female writers in the corpus.

**Table 4.2:** Gender of letter writers in CORIECOR

| Gender | Writers (n) | Writers (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 1,095 | 64 |
| Female | 396 | 23 |
| Unknown | 216 | 13 |
| Total | 1,707 | 100 |

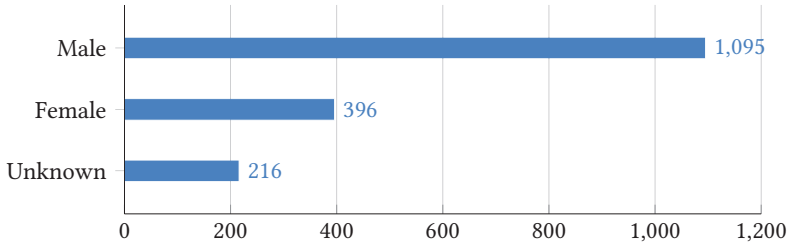



**Figure 4.1:** Gender of letter writers in CORIECOR

### Social rank

The time frame of CORIECOR encompasses the development of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the middle class. Given the social make-up of the corpus (mainly the middle to lower end of society) it would be interesting to present the data according to occupation, or at least social rank. The challenge is then to apply a single model of social class or rank stratification. The earliest letter with phonetic representation in CORIECOR (c.1700) was written when there was no real middle class to speak of and James Watt's improvement of the Newcomen steam engine was still 80 years away – the last relevant letter to the present study (1937) was written in a decade that saw both the Great Depression and the first intercontinental commercial airline flights. A further difficulty is which society to use as a basis: the letter writer's new country of residence or Ireland? Instead of a lower/middle/upper class division, which would feel unnatural for a substantial part of the corpus, I will here use a model adapted from the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (CEEC) whose models are for Tudor and Stuart England (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 58), and the CEEC *Extension* (CEECE), which goes up to 1800, overlapping with much of CORIECOR (see Table 4.3).

Thus, even though English society cannot be directly compared to Irish society, the CEECE model, with some additions, will at least give some idea of the social ranks of the

[3] The splitting of letters depending on the gender of the author(s) was only done with relevant letters, i.e. those with phonetic representation. The numbers in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1 must therefore be taken as rough indicators.

**Table 4.3**: CEECE social rank model

| |
|---|
| Royalty |
| Nobility |
| Gentry |
| Clergy |
| Professionals |
| Merchants |
| Other non-gentry |

letter writers relevant to this study. Table 4.4 presents an overview of the social ranks used in this thesis.

**Table 4.4**: CORIECOR social rank model

| |
|---|
| Gentry |
| Clergy |
| Ship's captain / army officer |
| Professional |
| Merchant |
| Farmer |
| Clerk / shop assistant |
| Craftsman |
| Soldier/sailor |
| Manual labourer |
| Servant |
| Unknown |

CEECE's upper two ranks, *royalty* and *nobility*, have been left out as they do not apply for this study, even though a few lords are present in other parts of CORIECOR. Though *gentry* is the highest rank in this system, so few tokens were found for this rank that it was only included in the discussion of relevant features, making *clergy* the top rank in all but a few cases. CEECE's lowest rank, *other non-gentry*, has been further subdivided into *farmer*, *clerk / shop assistant*, *craftsman*, *manual worker*, and *servant* to better reflect eighteenth- and nineteenth-century society and because most of the writers belong in the lower part of the spectrum. Separate ranks for *ship's captain / army officer* and *soldier/sailer* have been included. The 11 levels (excluding *unknown*) more than comply with Labov's observation that at least three or four social class divisions are preferable for sociolinguistic research (Labov 2001: 31n), though the model is strictly speaking concerned with social rank, not class.

The occupations held by the writers are not always easy to discern. Some emigrant letters do indeed notify the family back home what sort of arrangement the writer has managed to secure for him- or herself, but often this information is apparently already known or is unimportant to the sender or receiver and therefore not given.

Many writers, perhaps most, mention work associated with farming. But whether they own a large and successful farm, a small farm, only own it but do not work on it themselves, or are only farmhands is often difficult to make out from the letters. A few give evidence

of large holdings and wealth, such as a well-off farmer or a plantation owner, but usually no details are given. Ideally, farmers would be further subdivided into, e.g. *proprietor*, *tenant/subtenant*, and *farm labourer*, but in nearly all cases it is not known at what level the writer was involved in agriculture. Thus, farmers of any kind have been grouped together while farm labourers are filed under *manual worker*. In most cases, especially concerning those who write to Ireland from a newly established farm in, for instance, North America, one gets the impression upon reading the letter that the farms in question are small, family-run farms (though in the US and Canada possibly with large tracts of farmland due to the settlement policies of the time). Therefore, even though we may not be able to pinpoint the exact holdings or wealth of the farmers, in most cases grouping them together will be justifiable.

Most letters are written by people with what we today consider working class or lower middle class occupations, such as labourer, soldier, sailor, clerk, mould maker, craftsman, weaver, etc. Some middle class professions such as merchant, businessman, teacher, and minister are represented as well. In some cases there are enough letters that we are able to follow an entire life, sometimes even allowing us to witness social mobility. James Alexander Smyth from rural Co. Tyrone, for instance, came to Canada in the late 1800s and worked his way up from a farmhand to the principal of a small public school in little over a decade (see section 5.7). For many writers we simply do not know. For the women it is particularly difficult to tell. We can perhaps consider many to be housewives or farmers' wives, doing work in the household or on the farm. As per the standards of the times, they are considered of the same social standing as their husband or, when unmarried, their father.

Most of the letters that form the basis for the present study were written to or from the US and Canada. Considering the development of North America at the time these letters were written (cheap land, the ever-advancing frontier, an inherent lack of a ruling class) we may assume that many of the letter writers started as farmhands, small farm owners or tenants and worked their way up. Also, store assistants, clerks, and the like may have transitioned to their own businesses as their knowledge of the trade and personal savings increased. And many who write of employment as labourers might only have done this initially, moving on to their preferred learned trades after making enough money or establishing the required contacts, as in (9):

(9) *Andrew*
*got into a grocery store after he arrived and was very fortunate in*
*getting a respectable establishement the money is not much at present*
*he has a Nine Dollar per month funds, James has finished*
*his apprenticeship and is engaged at ten dollars per week without*
*boards. With respect myself I purpose staying here*
*until a better offer which may be some time the work is not hard but*
*close attention required*
(Archibald Carson, Philadelphia to his mother, 29.04.1856)

**Geographical location**

For determining the geographical location of the letter writers and thus the origin of their spoken variety, information in the letters themselves is used. In most cases, the letter head tells us where the author was when it was written, as seen in the letter opening of (10):

(10) *Augusta September 15 1852*
*My Dear Sir*
(Isabella Nicholl, USA to W.J.C. Allen, 15.09.1852)

While this need not mean that the writer speaks the local dialect, it is assumed that this is the case for people writing from a location in Ireland, unless information in the letter itself provides evidence to the contrary.

Because CORIECOR is a corpus of correspondence between emigrants and their families, friends, and other associates, a substantial portion will come from letter writers living in other countries. Information about where in Ireland they originate from is not always readily available. To solve this, family ties are used to determine place of origin. If an emigrant writes to a member of their nuclear family (i.e. parents, siblings, spouse or children) in Ireland, the writer is assumed to hail from the same approximate location. An emigrant writing to a member of their extended family (i.e. grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, nephews, etc.) is grouped under 'unknown location' unless further information in the letter presents itself. The same goes for emigrants writing to friends, business associates or other, non-related people.

Letters written by writers for whom a place of origin is unknown do pose a potential problem: By far the largest part of CORIECOR originates from Ulster, which, for this precise reason, is the area of focus in the present thesis. This means that, amongst those of 'unknown origin,' the majority are from Ulster, but a very few might be from elsewhere in Ireland. Still, seeing as sometimes up to a fourth of the tokens for a single feature are from people of unknown origin, it would be a shame to exclude these. Thus, by including tokens from letter writers from unknown locations in Ireland, some of these tokens will be from areas outside of Ulster. The approach taken here, then, is that the very few tokens that we know definitely come from outside of Ulster are not included in the numbers, tables, and figures presenting the data, while tokens from writers of unknown locations in Ireland are included, based on the assumption that the majority of these come from Ulster (given the make-up of the corpus). Still, tokens from people hailing from outside of Ulster may be mentioned in the discussion as it might be interesting to note the occurrence of a particular feature beyond the borders of Ulster as well.

**Religion, age, and education**

Gender, social class, and geographical location were quite straightforward as variables in examining the data for the present study. Not so when it comes to religion, age, and education – all of which would make interesting variables in a sociolinguistic study.

The religious affiliation of the letter writers was initially considered as a variable in this study, but had to be abandoned. In the centuries covered by CORIECOR, literacy tended to be greater amongst the Protestant population than amongst the Catholic part of Ireland. This was a consequence of a higher concentration of Protestants in the north and north-east due to plantation policies, and the development of the language shift. The religious denomination of the letter writers is usually uncertain. Often, especially in letters written by semi-literate people in which formulaic language is common, the letter opening has a so-called *Christian-ritual function* in that it places the sender and/or receiver under 'divine protection' (van der Wal and Rutten 2013b: 52). As discussed in section 4.2.1, this was also very common in Irish correspondence (Fitzpatrick 2006: 100). Example (11) contains

this function, but all it does is show that William McClurg is following the letter-writing conventions of his time:

(11) *Dear parents I take the present opportunity of*
*informing you that I am well, thanks unto God for his mercies*
*manifested towards me in a strange land hoping these lines will find*
*you my relations and friends enjoying the same benediction*
(William McClurg, West Salem Township to David McClurg, Templemoyle, (London)Derry, 18.03.1831)

Occasionally, mention of a church or particular denomination is made, as in (12) below, but this is a rarity.

(12) *you will think it*
*strange when I inform you that I have not been to*
*Church in four years I mean a Presbyterian Church I*
*take my family and go occasionally to the Baptist and*
*Methodist the latter is the most prevailing sect of*
*Christians, we have got no Unitarians in this part of*
*the Country*
(Mary Blair, Georgia to Mrs Jane Allen, Belfast, 25.09.1847)

It is an accepted truth in Ireland that, generally, religious affiliation can be established on the basis of one's surname. People with surnames starting with *O*, *Mac* or *Mc* and followed by an Irish name (e.g. *O'Neill*) are likely to be Roman Catholic. Scottish surnames and English surnames are more likely to belong to Protestants. However, this is rather simplified. Early Scottish settlers from the Highlands and Scottish islands emigrating to the north-east of Co. Antrim were Roman Catholic and thus complicate such religious assumptions. Intermarriage throughout the ages has also resulted in surnames that do not necessarily comply with this. Anglicisation of Irish names can also confuse matters. *McCarter*, which at first sight appears English, is more likely to be an anglicised version of *Mac Artair* ('Arthur') than the English word *carter*. It will be apparent from several leading political figures in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland today that religious affiliation on the basis of one's surname is not always correct and that, in fact, the opposite is sometimes the case. Due to the lack of information on personal religion in the letters and the unreliability of determining this from surnames, religious affiliation is not included as a variable in this study.

It was early on established that age would be a difficult variable to use. All ages are represented in the corpus, not least because some letter collections span many years. Some emigrants were young, seeking to establish a new life in other, more promising places than that of their parents. In other cases, a father might have emigrated first in order to make a start so that the rest of the family could follow at a more opportune time. Some families came over together. Nevertheless, for the present thesis, age is known in only a handful of cases. Here or there, a letter writer might mention being, for instance, in his eighty-fourth year of age or a family member mentions the recipient of a letter turning twenty-two, but usually age can only be determined indirectly. A writer mentioning small children will probably be younger than one with grown-up children. People writing about grandchildren will be amongst the oldest letter writers, while young, unmarried people still living at home will be amongst the youngest. In the vast majority of the letters containing

phonetic representation, age was not possible to determine, and so it will not be a factor in this study.

When it comes to the matter of education, it was again quickly apparent that available information for this variable was too limited. In most letters, no mention is made of schooling or education at all, and for many collections the number of documents is too small to track individual letter writers' educational progress, if any. The only information about the letter writers in CORIECOR in terms of their schooling must come from historical information about the educational system in Ireland at the time. Fortunately, in one case, education can be taken into account. This is discussed in chapter 5, where the impact of education is investigated on the basis of the Smyth family collection in relation to the phonetic representation of *they* as ⟨the⟩ [ðiː].

## 4.3 Methodology

The original intention of this project was to document a certain number of features of IrE phonology as witnessed in the instances of phonetic representation in CORIECOR. It was expected that this would enable tracing of phonological developments between the late 1600s and the 1940s and comment on, e.g. koinéisation and substrate Irish influence.[4] However, after two pilot studies (de Rijke 2014; de Rijke forthcoming – see also chapter 5 and section 8.2), it was found that there were on the whole too few occurrences of phonological features for a quantitative analysis as a basis for saying something about koinéisation, and there was too little material from Leinster, Munster, and Connacht. It was thus decided that a more qualitative approach was necessary, registering the amount of phonetic representation in the corpus in letter writers from Ulster and analysing it in terms of social and geographical distribution along the temporal axis.

The manner of data collection was rather straight-forward, but, given CORIECOR's incomplete state at the moment of collection, it bears going through in some detail nonetheless.

### 4.3.1 Search method

Seeing as CORIECOR is still at an early stage – as previously explained, no dedicated corpus interface exists as of yet – it was necessary to read each individual letter in order to extract data. Going through each and every letter sounds more time-consuming than it is. First and foremost, in the material from the IED (i.e. most of CORIECOR) deviations from standard spelling are followed by the present-day English standard spelling in square brackets followed by a question mark, added by transcribers:

(13) *This town is as full*
*of hors [horse?] and foot as it can hold and expreses*
*[expresses?] every day amply allarmed [alarmed?] but I*
*trust in God it will turn out nothing as the last allarm*
*[alarm?] did. I see in a paper a short time ago Johns*

[4] Koinéisation is a process whereby contact between varieties of the same language results in a common dialect. Thus, in the case of Ireland, the mixing of various settler BrE varieties have contributed to the development of the various IrE varieties.

*Commishin [Commission?] filled up by another I sepose*
*[suppose?] he has sold*
(Sarah Gaylard, Kinsale to Hellen Lawrence, Coleraine, 13.09.1781)

Using the *Find* function in Microsoft Word 2010 and typing in a right- or left-facing square bracket all bracketed words in the IED material are highlighted. This way, the corrections made by transcribers, which are always located to the right of potential spellings with phonetic representation, are easily spotted.

Sometimes, spelling deviations have been missed by the transcriber, such as ⟨inclosed⟩ *enclosed* in (14):

(14) ***Inclosed*** *you*
*have a sketch of the triumphal arch and its ornaments*
(Unknown author, Philadelphia, 02.03.1784)

or interpreted wrongly as in (15) where ⟨poth⟩ has been interpreted as *putt* instead of *put*:[5]

(15) *and he* ***poth [putt?]*** *it oer [over?] him with greate*
*[great?] Deficuelty [difficulty?]*
(Thomas Armstrong, Ballinamallard to Christopher Armstrong 28.10.1849)

Overlooked spelling variations were not uncommon while misinterpreted cases were found to be rare. Microsoft Word 2010's built-in spell-checker was helpful in spotting many of the overlooked instances. But, in some cases, spelling variation takes the form of an existing word and will not be identified by a spell-check. For these reasons a manual read-through was chosen over an automated script-search.

It would have been possible to convert the .doc and .docx files to .txt files and use a specially written script to search for bracketed words *and* the preceding word and organising these in lists. This was attempted, but not found useful enough.[6] Another option would have been to use VARD 2, a corpus linguistics tool which uses spell checking software techniques to identify variant spellings of words, so that all (or nearly all) standard and non-standard spellings of the same words can be found (Baron and Rayson 2008). However, because a large part of the relevant letters contain a high number of non-standard spellings anyway,

[5] *Putt* for ⟨poth⟩ could admittedly also be interpreted as the transcriber's lack of a phonetic difference between 'put' and 'putt.'

[6] The author is grateful for the assistance of prof. Koenraad De Smedt. De Smedt generously wrote a script which recursively traverses the directory hierarchy, detects .doc and .docx files (the two MS-word formats in use in CORIECOR) and converts these into plain .txt files. The actual text extraction was achieved with two additional programs. For the extraction from .docx, a slightly modified version of the perl script 'docx2txt.pl' by Sandeep Kumar (licensed under GPL3, 2008–2012) was used. For the extraction from .doc, a program 'doctotext' by Silvercoders (version 0.14.0, 2013, freeware) was used. De Smedt defined a regular expression (regexp) describing a pattern that includes annotations and the preceding word on the line. Using the standard Unix tool 'grep' with this regexp, a search was performed in all text files, recursively traversing the directory hierarchy. It must however be kept in mind that patterns across line breaks are not found, since 'grep' is a utility which searches each line separately. Therefore an additional search was performed of all annotations occurring at the beginning of a line (optionally preceded by space). It was found that only human interpretation can determine if an annotation refers to the preceding word only, if it refers to a string of several preceding words, or in some cases even replaces a word. Thus it is not possible to automatically separate the annotations from the original text, or to make a list of annotations with the precise strings they refer to. This contribution by De Smedt was performed in the context of the CLARINO project, which aims at making language resources more accessible to researchers.

and only a few of these show evidence of phonetic representation, a manual reading was still favoured – with the added benefit of gathering information about the writers during reading.

It will be apparent that determining which words show phonetic representation and which do not is a matter of reasoning on the part of the observer, and I hold no illusions that my interpretations will appear sound to everyone. With so many different writers and so many letters with non-standard spellings (I estimate that approximately one-third of the documents in CORIECOR contain spelling-variation that renders pronunciation), an accurate mechanism for determining the validity of all supposed cases of phonetic variation might be impossible. However, because all 4,850 letters that form the base for the present thesis were read manually, this qualitative treatment of the material should compensate for any misgivings.

### 4.3.2 What to count and what not to count

As discussed in section 3.3.5, spellings by semi-literates or those unaccustomed to writing can reveal phonological features of the letter writers' language. Identification of relevant features includes therefore judging the writing proficiency of the writer and finding orthographic choices which render pronunciation. Writing proficiency is determined by qualitative assessment. If there are few non-standard spellings and little non-standard punctuation, capitalisation, paragraphing, etc., then variant spellings are usually attributed to mistakes or inaccuracies by the writer. In letters with high orality, spellings are always checked for possible traces of phonetic representation. Only spellings which reveal the quality of vowels and consonants or the presence of phonological processes are relevant here. Thus, while morphosyntactic features (e.g. *yous*(*e*) pl. 'you') or dialectal words (e.g. *praties* 'potatoes') are also reflected in spelling, they are not part of this study, unless they contain phonetic representation. However, we must always bear in mind that, for any given variant spelling, the author may have simply believed this to be the correct spelling for any number of reasons, and that it, by chance, resembles an expected form of phonetic representation. Sometimes orthographically challenging words may have provided the writer with such a difficult task that the end-product does not resemble the 'standard' spelling, e.g. ⟨cathkalate⟩ *Catholic* (William Shanks, Chicago, to 'Dear Mother,' unknown location, 29.071881), but this need not have any phonetic significance.

A number of transcriber entries were deemed too unclear to use. Some of the transcribers of the letters in CORIECOR seem, for instance, to have inserted missing letters rather than to rewrite words :

(16) *in to work he **go[t?]** into the old system he used to*
*be at home going about telling what he was and what*
*he had and **final[l?]y** commented on Charlotte because she*
*advised James to get a trade which he thought would not*
*answer him as he likes I see to have all **the[y?]** can earn*
(William Graham, Watertown, New York to James McBride, Co. Antrim, 21.10.1848)

In other cases, a stroke is inserted in a word, e.g. ⟨the[-]⟩. It is not possible to determine what is meant here. Does it signify an illegible letter or a missing letter?

In a very few cases, a non-standard spelling in square brackets appears without a preceding 'correctable' word as in (17):

(17) *for Michael Armstrong purchased the [fiel] before John*
(Laurance (sic) Hughes, 17.02.1848)

The entry *[fiel]* seems to suggest that the transcriber has placed the 'misspelt' word in brackets as the writer wrote it instead of following the word up with a standard spelling as is usual for the IED corpus. Such cases are not counted as initially there was doubt over the validity of non-standard spellings appearing in square brackets, especially because the rest of the letter usually has spelling corrections in the manner described in (13). Disregarding instances like (17) does not matter as such cases are very rare. Still, in this particular case ⟨fiel⟩ for *field* would indicate final consonant cluster simplification, which is a feature of some varieties of IrE.

Formal rules for when to include non-standard spellings could have been created – a certain number of non-standard spellings per letter, for instance. But many tokens would have been excluded this way, as sometimes only a few are present in a single document. A more flexible version of such a rule is used, in that the occasional non-standard spelling in an otherwise well-written letter (i.e. containing standard spelling and syntax, paragraphs, consistent punctuation) is usually attributed to a slip of the pen. Thus, relevant tokens are determined on a case-by-case scenario, and as many as possible are included. This means that some phonological features occur relatively seldom in the corpus, and do not provide much to base an analysis on. Those with few (or in some cases only one) occurrences are still briefly discussed at the end of each results chapter.

### 4.3.3 Data management

During data collection, all necessary information about the letter writer whose letter is being analysed is noted alongside any instance of phonetic representation. This includes author name, geographical origin of author (as per the system described in section 4.2.2), year, and document number (to facilitate rechecking later). In the case of letters originating from the IED, such information is found at the top of the document, e.g.:

(18)
```
Title: Robert Craig, Birmingham, U.S.A. to James McBride, Lisburn.
Source: T 2613/4: Copied by Permission of Mrs Emily McLister, Mosside
Cottage, Dunmurry, County Antrim.
Archive: The Public Record Office, Northern Ireland.
Doc.No.: 9007098
Date: 30/12/1820
Partial Date: [NA]
Doc. Type: EMG
Log: Document added by JM 06:09:1993.
```

In addition, any information about the author's religion and line of work (social rank), as well as further clues to strengthen the assumption of the author origin, are retrieved from the body of the letter itself. This often requires reading multiple letters from the same person in order to get as clear a picture as possible.

#### Presentation

In chapters 5–8, every presentation of a particular phonological feature begins with an excerpt from CORIECOR to show an example of the phonetic representation of that feature

in writing. After this, the relevant linguistic history and its status in NIrE is presented. A table with examples of words containing the feature as found in the corpus is also given. For features with only a few dozen words of occurrence, all words are presented – for features with an abundance of tokens, only ten are given by way of example. I have resisted the temptation to transcribe such words using IPA symbols as it is difficult to find a common phonological basis from which to decide on the quality and quantity of the phonemes considering the, in many cases, 200-year range of the corpus and the high number of Ulster-locations in which the tokens were found.

In naming the various features, I have tried to be as clear in meaning as possible – usually by complying with already-existing terminology. Often, the standard lexical sets introduced by Wells (1982) along with a descriptor have been used (e.g. KIT-centering), but these are not always sufficient in relation to (historical) IrE. They are therefore sometimes modified to more accurately reflect a quality that would not be found in the standard lexical set, as is employed by, e.g. Hickey (2007). For instance, lowering of [ɜː] does not occur in NURSE in IrE, so that the term SERVE-lowering is used instead. In some cases this is not useful either and thus IPA vowel symbols are substituted (e.g. [ɪ]–[ʌ]-interchange), or the relevant phonetic environment (e.g. OL-diphthongisation) or a word of occurrence is used (e.g. open fronted (*m*)*any*).

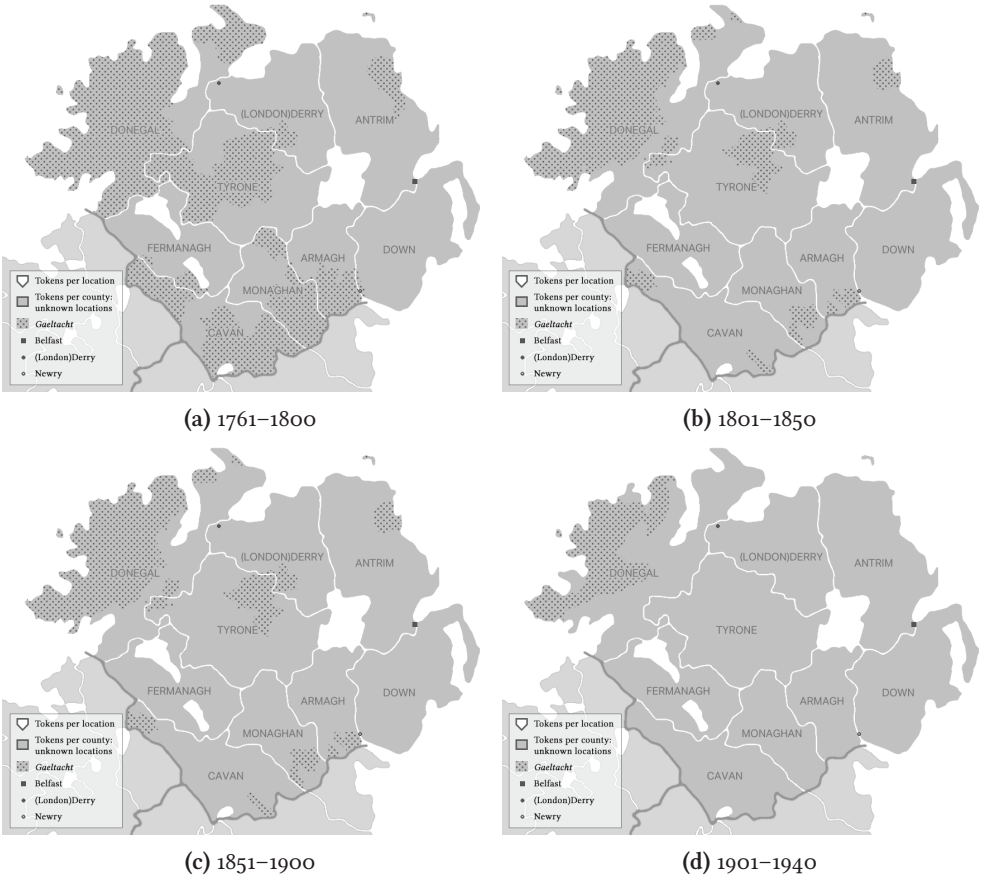
Relevant tokens of phonetic representation are grouped both by period and feature and scrutinised using the independent variables outlined in section 4.2.2, i.e. gender, social rank, and geographical location. Comparisons of non-standard and standard spelling occurrences in CORIECOR of a particular word are carried out using WordSmith Tools (Scott 2012: version 6.0.0176) where applicable.

In the discussion of the data (chapters 5–8), the tokens are presented in 20- or 40/50-year subperiods, depending on the variable under discussion. The chronological distribution of tokens and their normalised frequencies are shown in 20-year subperiods, to more clearly show increase or decrease over time. The presentation of the geographical diffusion of feature tokens on maps as well as the social rank and gender figures are shown in 40/50-year subperiods, meaning that the period covered by CORIECOR is split into four nearly equal parts: 1761–1800, 1801–1850, 1851–1900, and 1901–1940. The corpus period with most coverage is the nineteenth century, which can be neatly divided into two 50-year subperiods, but, because no relevant tokens exist earlier than 1761 or later than 1940, the first and last part of the corpus make up 40 years each. It would have been impractical to present geographical and social rank and gender tokens in smaller subperiods both due to the extra space this would take up and because it would make comparison and interpretation of the feature developments difficult.

**Maps**

Custom maps of Ulster have been created to plot tokens geographically. The maps show all nine counties as well as Belfast, (London)Derry, and Newry, as these were the largest urban areas throughout the period covered by CORIECOR. In order to make sense of the geographical data along the temporal axis, *Gaeltacht* areas are included on the maps. It has been taken into account that these areas have gradually diminished over time. Figure 4.2 shows the maps used in the present thesis.

Deciding on the boundaries of the *Gaeltachtaí* for four different periods is a challenge,




**(a)** 1761–1800 **(b)** 1801–1850

**(c)** 1851–1900 **(d)** 1901–1940

**Figure 4.2:** Ulster maps, including *Gaeltachtaí*, used in the present thesis

not least because of their rapid decline during the Irish-to-English language shift. There are several studies which chart Irish-speaking in Ireland based on past censuses, such as Fitzgerald (1984, 2003) and publications by the *Comisiún na Gaeltachta*. Others have created dialect maps for NIrE which also happen to include *Gaeltachtaí* (e.g. Adams 1948; Harris 1985. For the present thesis, Fitzgerald's (1984; 2003) data and maps and Harris' (1985) maps have been used.

Tracing the boundaries of the *Gaeltacht* areas was not unproblematic, however. Fitzgerald's maps are based on different data sets – his 1984 maps show Irish-speakers per barony (because no other data from nineteenth-century censuses is available) and are mainly based on the 1881 census, while his 2003 maps are based on DEDs and the 1911 census.[7] The discrepancy between areas of measurement (baronies v. DEDs) means that *Gaeltacht* areas in the same maps in Fitzgerald (1984, 2003) are different (larger in the latter publication) even where they reflect roughly the same time.[8]

[7] DEDs: District Electoral Divisions.

[8] See Fitzgerald (1984: 119) for a discussion on the division of areas by way of barony v. Dispensary District and DEDs, which explains why *Gaeltacht* areas may look different depending on the source material.

Thus, because there is no straightforward way to use a base map for the two maps in this study that cover the nineteenth century, there is no differentiation between *Gaeltachtaí* in the present thesis' 1801–1850 and 1851–1900 maps. Fitzgerald's earliest map (1984: map 1, 1771-81) forms the basis for the present thesis' earliest map, showing eighteenth-century *Gaeltachtaí* (see Figure 4.2a). Fitzgerald (2003: map 2) is used for both the first and second half of the nineteenth century. His *map 2* shows speakers over 60 years of age from the 1911 census, thus those born in the pre-famine, mid-nineteenth century, which therefore works for both subperiods (see Figures 4.2b and 4.2c). In tracing the boundaries of the *Gaeltacht* areas for Figures 4.2a–4.2c, baronies/DEDs with at least 30 per cent Irish-speakers were included. The twentieth-century subperiod, showing only the Donegal *Gaeltacht*, is based on Harris's (1985) map of the boundaries of NIrE dialects (see Figure 4.2d).

# Chapter 5

# [ðiː] for *they*[1]

## 5.1 Introduction

A surprisingly large amount of all phonetic representations in CORIECOR is accounted for by the spelling ⟨the⟩ for the personal pronoun *they*. In fact, [ðiː] for *they* is the most frequently found example of phonetic representation in CORIECOR (2,007 tokens), and deserves, for this reason alone, a separate chapter.[2] Moreover, investigating a feature with such a clear-cut dichotomy – ⟨the⟩ v. ⟨they⟩ – allows closer investigation on a number of levels, such as how often does the non-standard spelling appear in the corpus as opposed to the standard spelling. Such questions cannot be answered for the other features discussed in this thesis because in all other cases phonetic representation of a particular feature is found in a multitude of ways and in numerous different words.

An example of evidence for [ðiː] for *they* is given in (19) (note also that the definite article *the* occurs alongside the personal pronoun):

(19) *I will now tell*
*you how* ***the*** *plant the corn the*
*ground is ploud and harrowed* ***the***
*then mark it of 4 feet apart* ***the***
*then turn and mark it across the*
*same distance* ***the*** *then get children*
*to go up and down and drop 4 or 5*
*grains on every crossing*
(John Gorman, Newgarden, Indiana, USA to Philip Gorman, Ireland, 06.01.1866)

Personal communication with several native speakers of (N)IrE verifies that a pronunciation of *they* similar to that of the definite article *the*, i.e. [ðə] or [ðiː] in most varieties of English, is not unusual in NIrE. A young female speaker of NIrE (Co. Armagh) gave the example [əɪ θɛŋk **ðiː** wɛnt tə ðə ˈmaːɻkət] 'I think **they** went to the market' as being a possible realisation of *they* in her area, although not common. According to this speaker a long vowel [iː] is less likely, while others report [ə], [i] or [iː], depending on stress. Likewise, Hickey's (2004) recordings of speakers of IrE show many informants reading passages in

[1] I am grateful to the audience of the Seventh Biennial IVACS Conference (19–21 June 2014) in Newcastle where the pilot study that forms the basis for this chapter was first presented (de Rijke 2014).

[2] To compare, the next most frequently occurring feature is a monophthong in the FACE vowel with 287 tokens (see section 6.2)

connected speech with [ðiː] for *they*. Despite this, there is no mention of the feature in glossaries and dictionaries such as *The English dialect of Donegal* (Traynor 1953), *A concise Ulster dictionary* (Macafee 1996) or *A dictionary of Hiberno-English* (Dolan 2012). Neither does it appear in other works on IrE, historical or otherwise, to my knowledge. There is one mention of the feature in the *Ulster-Scots grammar* where Robinson (2007) states that

> 'they', the personal pronoun, is *the*, or *the'* in Ulster-Scots. Most writers include an apostrophe (*the'*), to avoid confusion with the definite article. (Robinson 2007: 62)

It must be added, however, that Robinson is not a linguist and, in a review by Kallen, Robinson's chapter on spelling and pronunciation is described as '[doing] justice to neither' (Kallen 1999: 158).

It seems therefore that [ðiː] for *they*, which in writing might be rendered ⟨the⟩, is a feature that is widespread, but not perceived as a salient feature of NIrE by its speakers.

Before continuing, it is important to stress that in casual (rapid) speech, a function word like *they* is very likely to end up as a weak form (e.g. [ðiː] or [ðe]). This is perhaps especially true when the following sound is a consonant which would require a less defined vowel sound than if *they* was followed by yet another vowel. It is well-known that in casual speech a restructuring of the '"ideal" phonetic representation of a word […] and a narrow phonetic transcription of its form in context' occurs (Browman and Goldstein 1990: 16). The sheer number of tokens (2,007) for the feature under discussion, the absence of similar processes in other function words, and the fact that *they* is also often found as ⟨the⟩ in stressed position (e.g. 'the then mark it of 4 feet apart' in (19)) nevertheless invites a closer look.

As this chapter is concerned with the phonetic spelling ⟨the⟩ for *they*, *they* is counted any time the letter writer intended to write the word *they* in whichever spelling was used, including in combination with contractions such as *they'll*, *they'd*, *they're*, etc. This also includes, for instance, the Scots form *they are* 'there is.' However, spellings such as ⟨there⟩, ⟨thier⟩, ⟨their⟩, etc. for *they're* are not counted as showing phonetic representation as it is not possible to determine the pronunciation from these spellings. In most varieties of English, *they're*, *their*, and *there* are homophones (and also today very prone to misspelling).

On six occasions, *they* is found with the spelling ⟨thay⟩ and 27 times as ⟨thy⟩. However, as this study is concerned with pronunciation, and not spelling per se, the former are counted as ⟨they⟩ and the latter as ⟨the⟩.[3] This is justifiable because of their small number compared to the rest of the tokens and because they reflect the pronunciations [ðeɪ] and [ðiː], respectively – although a case could possibly be made that ⟨thy⟩ is simply ⟨they⟩ with an elided ⟨e⟩. All instances of ⟨thay⟩ come from the same writer, with no other variant spellings of the word, while ⟨thy⟩ occurs in letters by writers who also use ⟨they⟩ and ⟨the⟩ for *they*. Further, 38 letters which contain non-standard ⟨the⟩ are excluded from the results. The writers of these letters do not appear to be Irish and are thus not relevant here.

Closer inspection of some of the relevant letters reveals that a number of letters are co-written, either with two or more signatures at the bottom of the letter (e.g. 'John & Jane Chambers') and thus no discernable writer or with clear demarcations within the letter body, making it effectively a group of letters. While this has no bearing on the question of

[3] As seen in the following example from CORIECOR, ⟨thay⟩ does not in any of these cases reflect Scots *thae* 'those:' '[T]he children were not very well when **thay** came Here but **thay** are getting along nicely now' (George Moore, Malden, Massachussetts, USA to 'Dear John,' 30.07.1884).

origin (in all cases all writers are Irish), it does complicate the gender variable. Thus, letters with multiple signatures are excluded from the discussion in section 5.5 of ⟨the⟩ for *they* in light of gender distribution. In the case of groups of letters within the same letter where it is clear whether the writer is male or female, the letters have been split in two. This is done for 20 of the letters, all of which are from the Smyth family collection. Thus, while the relevant feature is found in 731 of CORIECOR's letters, the splitting of letters co-written by both men and women increases this number to 751 for the purposes of this chapter.

The Smyth family collection makes up a substantial part of the corpus between 1890 and 1910, and nearly all tokens relevant to this chapter from those years come from their correspondence. This is potentially an obstacle in corpus linguistics, as it may skew the available data for a given period. However, it also provides a unique opportunity to take a more in-depth look at ⟨the⟩ for *they*, especially because one of the people in question shows evidence of upward mobility – progressing from farmer's son to public school principal – all documented in the Smyth family letters. This chapter concludes therefore with a closer investigation of the influence of education and social climbing on [ðiː] for *they* in correspondence between James A. Smyth and his father, John J. Smyth.

## 5.2 Results

The total number of ⟨the⟩ for *they* in the corpus is 2,007. A total of 751 of CORIECOR's 4,850 letters (15.5 per cent) contain the non-standard spelling, the earliest of which is in a letter from c.1700 by an unknown writer (the exact year is unknown).

In more than half of these, the standard spelling also occurs, as shown in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1:** Letters containing non-standard ⟨the⟩ for *they* only v. letters containing both ⟨the⟩ and ⟨they⟩

| Spelling of THEY[a] | Letters (n) | Letters (%) |
|---|---|---|
| ⟨the⟩ | 317 | 42.2 |
| ⟨the⟩ and ⟨they⟩ | 434 | 57.8 |
| Total | 751 | 100 |

[a] When referring to the personal pronoun itself, italics (*they*) are used in running text, but, for clarity, small caps (THEY) are used in tables and figures.

It is thus slightly more common for a writer to vary between both spellings in the same letter. The use of both the standard and non-standard spelling frequently occurs even within the same sentence, as in (20).

(20) *ignorant people will*
*[not believe] this but when* ***they*** *come here* ***the*** *will experience*
*it and would [advise] everyone to [content] themselves at home*
(John Taylor, Cumberland Co. to 'Dear Mother Brother and Sister,' 27.11.1820)

It may first be interesting to see how often *they* is used in CORIECOR in general. To do this, I have counted the occurrences by subperiods and computed normalised frequencies per 10,000 words. This allows us to see the distribution of *they* in spite of varying word

counts per sub-period. Apart from very low figures in 1681–1700 (23.5 per 10,000 words) and spikes in 1741–1760 (78.8) and 1881–1920 (58.6, 62.6), it occurs at a rate of approximately 35–45 per 10,000 words through much of the corpus (see Table 5.2 and Figure 5.1). The low rate in the late 1600s (23.5) might be explained by the low word count (4,264), however, the next period for which CORIECOR has material (1721–1740) has a rate of 50.9 per 10,000, which is within the overall rate of *they*. The personal pronoun is perhaps most often used when reporting on other people or more generically when referring to third parties. Its occurrence in the corpus may therefore be heavily influenced by personal writing styles and the level of orality in the letters.

**Table 5.2:** Occurrence (n) and rate per 10,000 words of personal pronoun *they* and its non-standard spelling ⟨the⟩ in CORIECOR

| | | THEY | | ⟨the⟩ | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Period** | **Words** | **(n)** | **Pr/10k** | **(n)** | **Pr/10k** |
| 1681–1700 | 4,264 | 10 | 23.5 | 1 | 2.3 |
| 1701–1720 | NDA[a] | NDA | NDA | NDA | NDA |
| 1721–1740 | 2,751 | 14 | 50.9 | – | – |
| 1741–1760 | 17,124 | 135 | 78.8 | – | – |
| 1761–1780 | 57,362 | 260 | 45.3 | 11 | 1.9 |
| 1781–1800 | 105,304 | 405 | 38.5 | 24 | 2.3 |
| 1801–1820 | 198,124 | 690 | 34.8 | 89 | 4.5 |
| 1821–1840 | 303,135 | 1,192 | 39.3 | 160 | 5.3 |
| 1841–1860 | 675,746 | 2,814 | 41.6 | 556 | 8.2 |
| 1861–1880 | 569,659 | 2,517 | 44.2 | 394 | 6.9 |
| 1881–1900 | 750,456 | 4,397 | 58.6 | 611 | 8.1 |
| 1901–1920 | 324,670 | 2,031 | 62.6 | 156 | 4.8 |
| 1921–1940 | 51,677 | 223 | 43.2 | 5 | 1.0 |
| CORIECOR total[b] | 3,060,366 | 14,688 | 48.0 | 2,007 | 6.6 |

[a] NDA = no data available.
[b] *CORIECOR total* gives the complete word count for the whole corpus, i.e. 1641–1940.

Figure 5.1 shows the percentage of the standard and non-standard spellings of *they* per 10,000 words in CORIECOR. Non-standard ⟨the⟩ rises slowly until 1841–1860 after which it drops again. The converging, and later diverging, of the two lines between 1761 and 1920 show that the non-standard spelling makes up an increasingly larger part of *they* until the mid-1800s after which it declines again. Higher availability of education (likely due to the emerging National School system after 1831) and a stronger focus on a written standard may be responsible for the gradual decline of non-standard ⟨the⟩ after 1860.

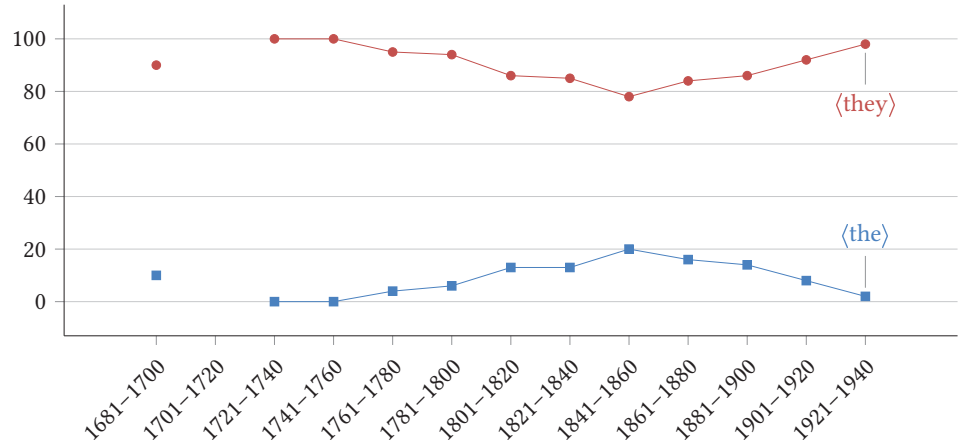



**Figure 5.1**: Percentage of non-standard ⟨the⟩ (—■—) and standard ⟨they⟩ (—●—) spellings for *they* (1701–1720 = NDA)

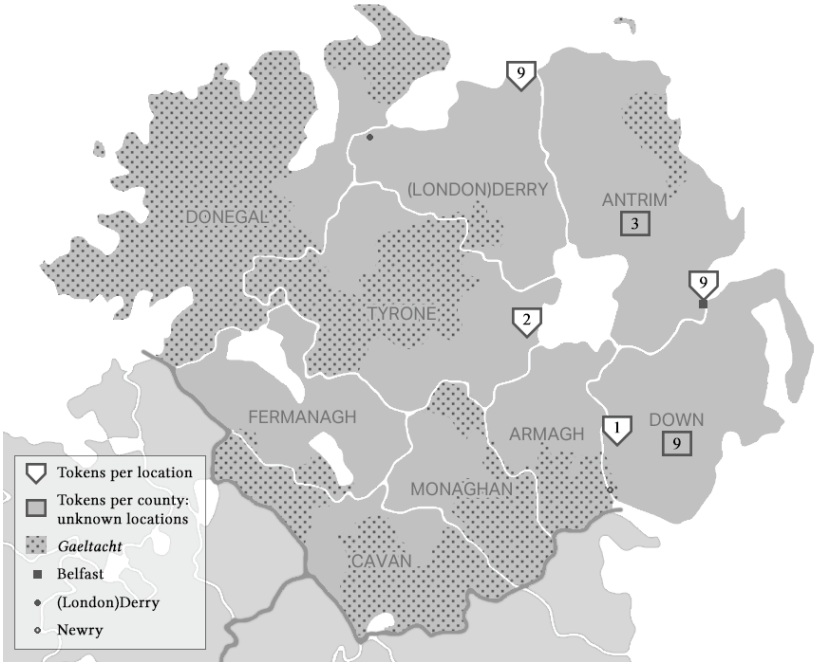
## 5.3 Geographical origin

For the sake of convenience, geographical data is presented in larger sub-periods than the 20-year sub-periods above. CORIECOR gives best coverage for the nineteenth century, which is split in two halves, 1801–1850 and 1851–1900. This is supplemented by the pre- and post-nineteenth century sub-periods 1761–1800 and 1901–1940.

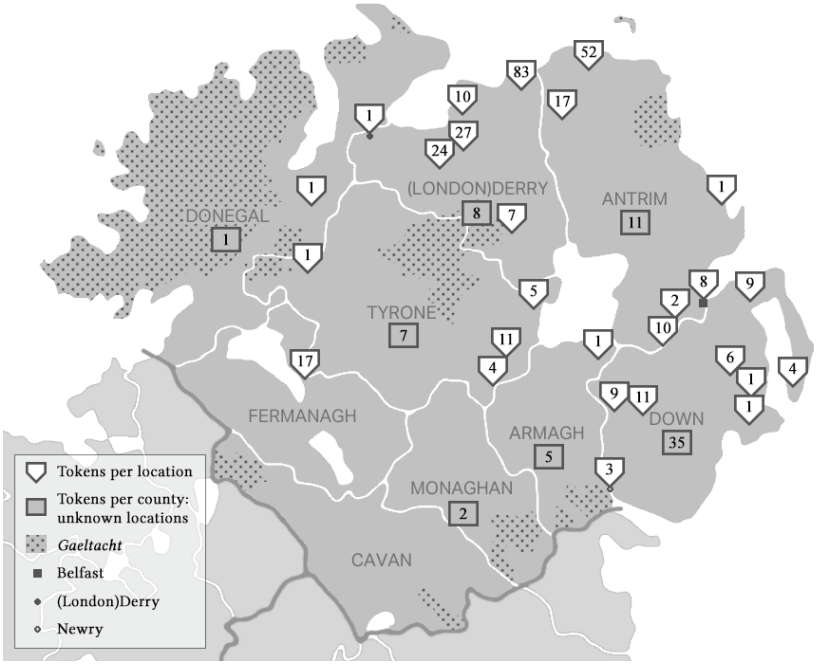
It is possible to determine the region of origin of the writers in the majority of cases, but for approximately one-fourth of the letters with ⟨the⟩ for *they* this is impossible due to lack of information. Thus, some 438 tokens are left out of the geographical data as they are not attributable to specific locations in Ulster. In other cases, tokens come from the same letter writers, so that figures for one single location may only give tokens for one or a few people. Almost all tokens for Co. Tyrone, for instance, come from the Smyth collection. While many letter writers are certainly traceable to specific locations in Ulster, sometimes only the county is known. Figures for these unknown locations are nevertheless included on the maps (see map legend) because they can still broadly tell us in which parts of Ulster the feature occurred according to the textual evidence. The majority of letter writers seem to be most closely connected to rural areas and small towns (e.g. Ederny, Co. Fermanagh or Ballymoney, Co. Antrim), but three major urban areas, Belfast, (London)Derry, and Newry, are also represented.

The geographical data is presented on four maps (Maps 5.1–5.4), plotting tokens for 1761–1800, 1801–1850, 1851–1900, and 1901–1940 respectively. This allows for a slightly more detailed diachronic analysis, or at least it allows us to compare different periods covered by CORIECOR.

Map 5.1 shows only 33 tokens of ⟨the⟩ for *they* in total, and of these, 21 are traceable to specific locations. Eight of the nine tokens in north-eastern Co. (London)Derry (Coleraine) are from an army officer's wife, while the nine tokens in Belfast come from three different men (one house painter and two merchants).



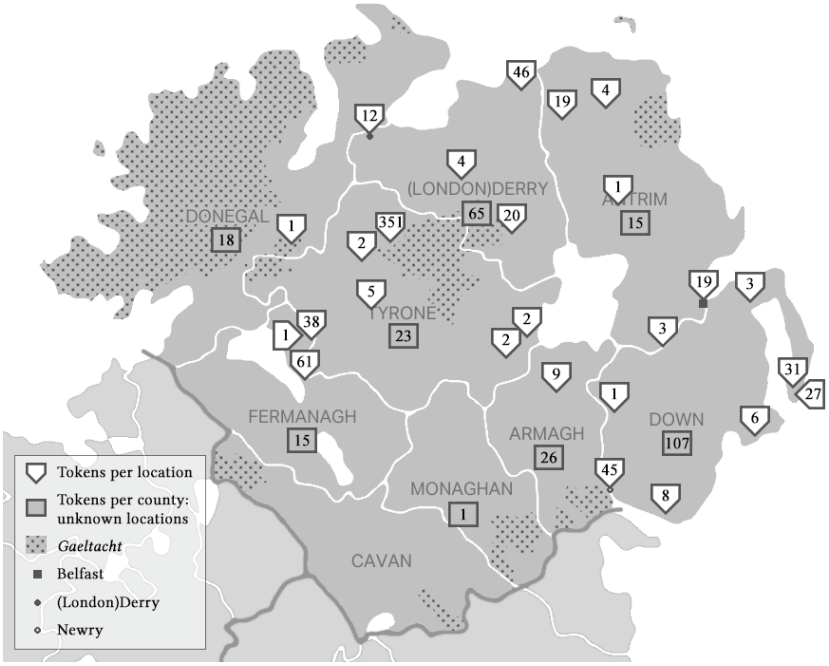

**Map 5.1**: 1761–1800: Geographical distribution (n) of ⟨the⟩ for *they*




**Map 5.2**: 1801–1850: Geographical distribution (n) of ⟨the⟩ for *they*

Usually, when there are large figures for single locations, the explanation is that these come from one individual or a family network with a small group of letter writers. This is the case for the high numbers in the north of Map 5.2. In north-eastern Co. (London)Derry (Coleraine), 83 tokens are largely due to the Wray brothers (both teachers in New York and Pennsylvania) and the Anderson brothers (farmers in Ohio), while the 52 tokens in northern Co. Antrim (Moycraig) come from three letter writers of the same family (Smith/Smyth; no relation to the Smyth family discussed later in this chapter).

Map 5.3 shows several more places with high token numbers. North-eastern Co. (London)Derry (Coleraine) again, with 46 tokens, though here only originating from the Anderson brothers' letters – one of which contains 30 tokens. Northern Fermanagh's (Edenclaw) tokens (38) all come from the letters of Isabella Weir, an asylum attendant in Michigan, and later in California. Slightly to the south, in north-eastern Fermanagh (Farnaght), 61 tokens are from the Carrothers brothers who both farm in Canada, showing quite high numbers of ⟨the⟩ for *they* per letter. The 45 tokens from south-western Co. Down / south-eastern Co. Armagh (Newry) are from the Porter brothers, farmers in Illinois. Finally, the surprisingly high figures in northern Co. Tyrone (Castledamph) come from the large collection of letters from the Smyth family, some of whom are detailed towards the end of this chapter.




**Map 5.3**: 1851–1900: Geographical distribution (n) of ⟨the⟩ for *they*

As in Map 5.3, Map 5.4 shows an overwhelming number of tokens from the Smyth family. At this point, most of the tokens come from women (sisters of James A. Smyth; see section 5.7), all part of a farming household.

Maps 5.1 and 5.4 only cover the first and last 40 years of CORIECOR and can perhaps not tell us very much. But Maps 5.2 and 5.3, covering the entire nineteenth century, certainly

demonstrate that [ðiː] for *they* was quite widespread. It is attested in all counties except Co. Cavan, but occurs most frequently in what is today Northern Ireland, which is to be expected as most material in the corpus comes from these counties. Nevertheless, it does not appear to have been a geographically restricted feature.


**Map 5.4**: 1901–1940: Geographical distribution (n) of ⟨the⟩ for *they*

## 5.4 Social rank

As with the geographical data, social rank and gender data is divided into the periods 1801–1850 and 1851–1900, supplemented by the pre- and post-nineteenth century sub-periods 1761–1800 and 1901–1940.

Of the 751 letters containing ⟨the⟩ for *they*, nearly 400 are written by people who mention work or life styles associated with farming, but only two of these give evidence of large holdings and wealth: a well-off farmer and a plantation owner. Most letters are written by lower rank occupations, such as labourer, soldier, sailor, clerk, mould maker, craftsman, and weaver, though some 'middle class' professions such as merchant, businessman, teacher, and minister are also represented, as well as a a ship's captain and a public school principal (James A. Smyth – detailed in section 5.7). For approximately 200 writers there is not enough information to form an idea of their social rank.

Amongst the women it is usually impossible to tell as they give few clues of this nature. For many it must be assumed that they are housewives, in which case their husband's social rank is used for them as well (as was customary in the periods covered by CORIECOR) Examples of the occupation of women for whom information does exist include an asylum

attendant as well as a few servants, nannies, and maids.

Figures 5.2 and 5.3 show how the non-standard spelling is distributed amongst the various social ranks found in CORIECOR. As with the geographical data, the tokens are divided into four periods, 1761–1800, 1801–1850, 1851–1900, and 1901–1940, to more clearly show developments and differences between periods.

The data shows that most of the tokens come from farmers' letters, which is clearly seen in both figures. Most male and female tokens for *farmer* come from the large Smyth family collection. In the 1890s, for instance, 300 out of 420 tokens (184 male and 116 female tokens) come from members of the Smyth farmer household. There are few tokens from women in general, but most of them are found in the *unknown* category. As mentioned earlier, the social status of women was derived from that of their husband. Together with much less material from women and mention of work being more prevalent in men's letters, this results in large blanks concerning the social ranks of CORIECOR's female writers.

Merchants, craftsmen, and manual labourers provide a good deal of the tokens in the nineteenth century. People in the *professional* category (predominantly teachers) also, interestingly, show much evidence of [ðiː] for *they* in the first half of the nineteenth century. During the latter half of the 1900s, however, clerks and shop assistants become more visible in the data, also among women. One explanation for this might be that such work became more widespread following the growth of towns and cities, thus providing more job opportunities for people with basic book-keeping and writing skills.

In a handful of cases, people move between categories. In the case of James A. Smyth, for instance, before 1895, 30 of his tokens are registered in the *labourer* category, reflecting his early years as a railroad worker, farmhand, and mill worker, but from 1895, 24 tokens are filed under *clerk / shop assistant* during his years as a student. After 1900, when he becomes a teacher and later school principal, ⟨the⟩ for *they* tokens in his letters belong to the *professional* category. In this way, one person may contribute to several social ranks, representing upward, sometimes downward, mobility. Most letter writers, however, are restricted to one category.

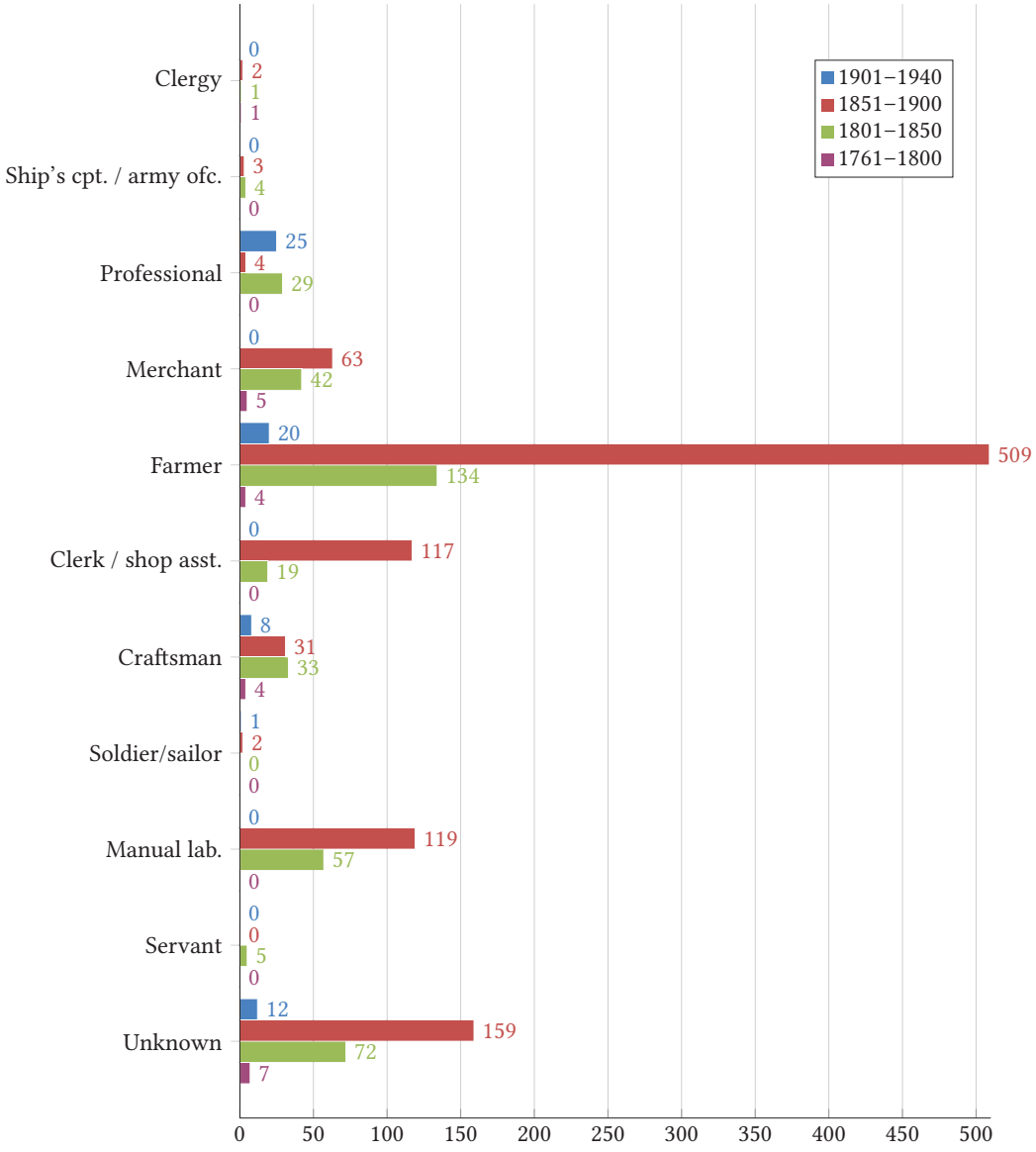



**Figure 5.2:** Men: tokens (n) of ⟨the⟩ for *they* by social rank

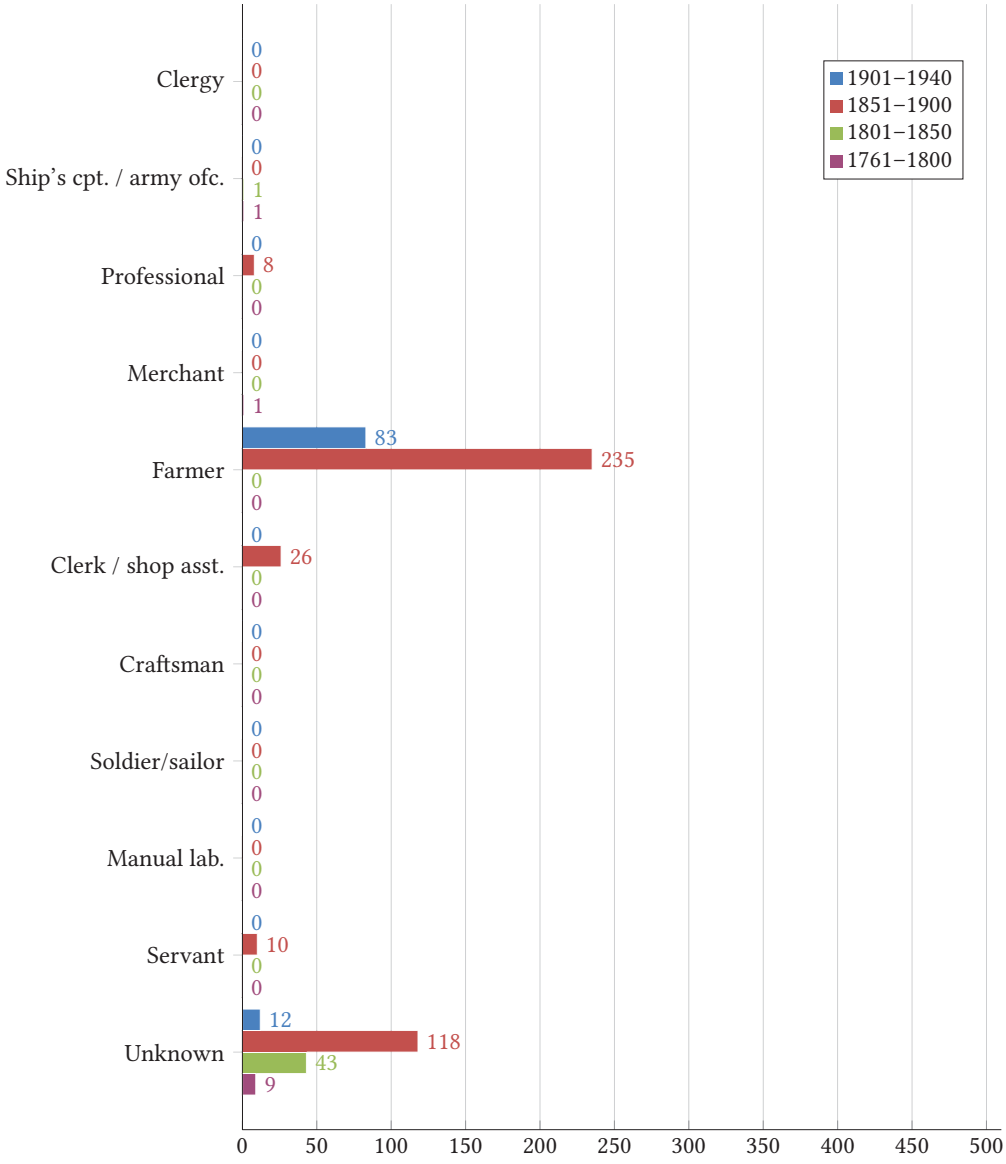



**Figure 5.3:** Women: tokens (n) of ⟨the⟩ for *they* by social rank

## 5.5 Gender

Of the three variables, gender is the easiest factor to determine, simply because of the writer's signature. Women have written 212 of the letters with non-standard ⟨the⟩ for *they*, while 524 bear the signature of a man. For 15 letters the writer's gender is unknown because of a lacking signature or because they have been co-written with a spouse, sibling or parent.

Table 5.3 shows the occurrences of the pronoun *they* and how frequently it is realised as ⟨the⟩ by male and female letter writers. Note that the figures for *they* are only for letters where it occurs spelt as or in combination with the non-standard spelling ⟨the⟩ (the latter being quite common, as shown earlier in Table 5.1). This chapter is focused on informants who show variation of the feature in question. Thus, the occurrence of *they* throughout the corpus as detailed in Table 5.2 is not considered in light of gender distribution.

The 15 letters from writers of unknown gender contain 62 counts of *they* of which 52 are spelt ⟨the⟩. They also include the only letter in which the feature occurs before the 1760s (partial date, c.1700). These figures have not been included in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3:** Gender distribution of ⟨the⟩ for *they* in letters containing ⟨the⟩ only or both ⟨the⟩ and ⟨they⟩

| | Men | | | Women | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Period** | **THEY (n)** | **⟨the⟩ (n)** | **⟨the⟩ (%)** | **THEY (n)** | **⟨the⟩ (n)** | **⟨the⟩ (%)** |
| 1761–1780 | 4 | 2 | 50.0 | 12 | 9 | 75.0 |
| 1781–1800 | 27 | 19 | 70.4 | 7 | 2 | 28.6 |
| 1801–1820 | 180 | 80 | 44.4 | 10 | 6 | 60.0 |
| 1821–1840 | 320 | 150 | 46.9 | 3 | 2 | 66.7 |
| 1841–1860 | 674 | 471 | 69.9 | 84 | 70 | 83.3 |
| 1861–1880 | 421 | 306 | 72.7 | 86 | 69 | 80.2 |
| 1881–1900 | 1,105 | 411 | 37.2 | 782 | 197 | 25.2 |
| 1901–1920 | 194 | 58 | 29.9 | 462 | 98 | 21.2 |
| 1921–1940 | 13 | 4 | 30.8 | 1 | 1 | 100 |
| Total | 2,938 | 1,501 | 51.5 | 1,447 | 454 | 31.4 |

In total, the non-standard spelling occurs 1,501 times (51 per cent of *they*) in letters written by men and 454 times (31.4 per cent of *they*) in letters written by women. As mentioned above, these are found in 524 and 212 CORIECOR letters, respectively. Men seem to have written more than twice as many letters containing ⟨the⟩ for *they* as women have, but this is expected because most of the material in the corpus is written by men. In Table 5.3, it appears that, in total, women more often use standard ⟨they⟩ than ⟨the⟩. Although, for 1761–1780, 1801–1880, and 1921–1940 (six out of nine sub-periods), women are more likely than men to use the non-standard spelling. Normalising the frequencies per 10,000 words takes care of the small numbers of tokens for women and shows more accurately which gender uses non-standard ⟨the⟩ more often. Thus, when we look at Figure 5.4 it is clear that ⟨the⟩ for *they* is overwhelmingly produced by men.

Table 5.3 and Figure 5.4 show that men are nearly twice as likely to use the non-standard spelling. It is generally held that women use fewer non-standard linguistic forms than men (Chambers 2002: 116–117), which appears to reflected in the data. Still, for both genders,

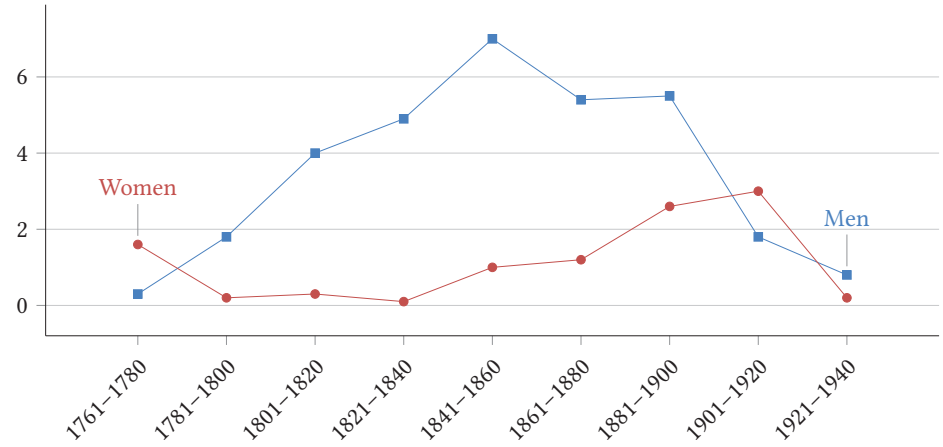



**Figure 5.4**: Normalised frequencies of ⟨the⟩ for *they*: men (—■—) and women (—●—) per 10,000 words

numbers are high enough to assume that there was no difference in the pronunciation of *they* as [ðiː] for men and women.

The peak for women's use of ⟨the⟩ in 1901–1920 is an exception. Many of the tokens (171 of 272) for 1881–1920 for women come from female members of the Smyth family who, despite both basic and in a few cases some higher education, all show the phonetic representation ⟨the⟩ for *they* in their writing.

## 5.6 Hyper-correction: ⟨they⟩ for *the*

In addition to ⟨the⟩ for *they*, the spelling ⟨they⟩ for *the* is also found in CORIECOR, which in this case we may call hyper-correction. While occurring less frequently than ⟨the⟩ for *they*, (286 v. 2,007) it is nevertheless an interesting observation as it strengthens the assumption of *the* and *they* being homophonous. Example (21) shows the spelling ⟨they⟩ for the definite article *the* alongside the standard spelling for the personal pronoun *they*.

(21) *I am*
*now doubly anxious to hear on the account of* ***they***
*Generall Allarm of the french fleet*
*landing in either* ***they*** *north or this part of*
*Ireland I think my dear if they should make an assent*
*on any part of it this place or Cork is most*
*likely to be their object*
(Sarah Gaylard, Kinsale to Hellen Lawrence, Coleraine, 13.09.1781)

Some writers show no discrimination between the standard spelling ⟨they⟩ for *they*, non-standard ⟨the⟩ for *they*, standard ⟨the⟩ for *the*, and hyper-correct ⟨they⟩ for *the*, using up to all four 'combinations' for the same two words in the same letter. In some cases such use of ⟨they⟩ may appear as if the writer intended a demonstrative. But, as demonstrated in (22), 'they Lowerys' is unlikely to mean, for instance, 'them Lowerys' or 'those Lowerys' (as in Scots *thae*).

(22) *take my kind love to*
*[W] Nelson and her family and let her know when* ***they*** *Lowerys*
*were in Philadelphia* ***the*** *saw an Irishmans funeral and*
*was told afterwards that it was a John Nelson from between Dromore and*
*Rathfryland*
(John Taylor, Cumberland Co. to 'Dear Mother Brother and Sister,' 27.11.1820)

Table 5.4 presents the instances of hyper-correction of ⟨they⟩ for *the* in CORIECOR, and Figure 5.5 compares the normalised frequencies of the non-standard spelling with the hyper-correct spelling. Tokens for hyper-correct ⟨they⟩ for *they* show an increase around the end of the nineteenth century, with a peak in 1901–1920 followed by a decline. Nearly all tokens between 1881 and 1940 come from the Smyth family letters.

**Table 5.4**: Hyper-correct spelling ⟨they⟩ (n) for *the*

| Period | ⟨they⟩ (n) |
|---|---|
| 1761–1780 | 2 |
| 1781–1800 | 6 |
| 1801–1820 | 4 |
| 1821–1840 | 12 |
| 1841–1860 | 27 |
| 1861–1880 | 40 |
| 1881–1900 | 125 |
| 1901–1920 | 69 |
| 1921–1940 | 1 |
| Total | 286 |

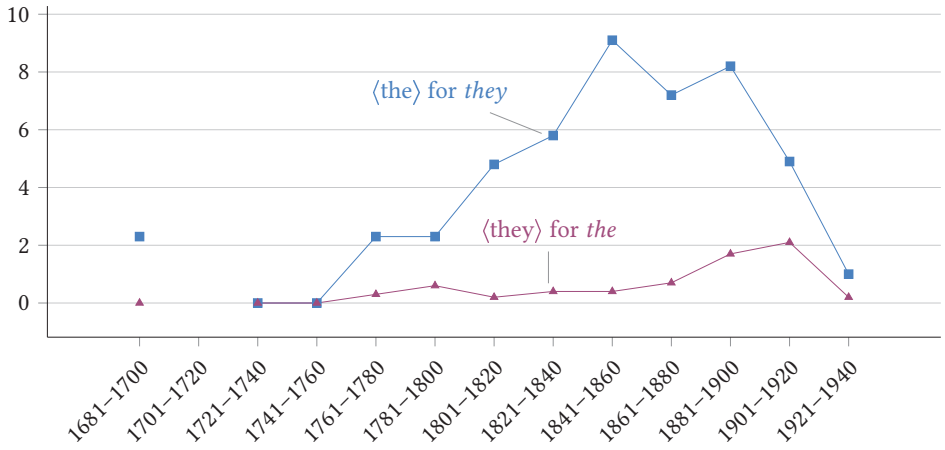



**Figure 5.5**: Normalised frequencies of non-standard spelling ⟨the⟩ (—■—) for *they* and hyper-correct spelling ⟨they⟩ for *the* (—▲—) per 10,000 words (1701–1720 = NDA)

After having presented the results for CORIECOR as a whole, I will now turn to two members of the Smyth family (mentioned several times above) in an effort to explore the possible role of education in the non-standard spelling of *they*.

## 5.7 James A. and John J. Smyth: the impact of education on ⟨the⟩ for *they*

Cases where a large number of letters have been written by the same writer do exist in CORIECOR, but usually only one or a handful of letters survive, and often only texts from one side of the correspondence have been retained. This makes sense, because the odds are slim that both sides of the exchange have carefully kept all letters. Slimmer still when we consider that both collections would have had to be discovered by interested parties later (family or otherwise) in order to form a complete archive of correspondence. A few networks do exist in CORIECOR. In light of this chapter, the correspondence between members of the Smyth family is particularly interesting because it also contains many instances of the non-standard spelling of *they*.

The Smyths were based in Castledamph in rural Co. Tyrone, halfway between (London)Derry City and the town of Omagh. In the mid-1800s, a William Smyth emigrated to Ontario, Canada. A few decades later, his nephew James Alexander Smyth followed. Most of the Smyth letters are between James A. Smyth and his parents, sisters, and brother in Castledamph. I will here present data from the letters from James to his family and those from his father, John James Smyth, to James in order to conduct a more detailed investigation of non-standard ⟨the⟩ for *they*.

### 5.7.1 The writing skills of James A. and John J. Smyth

CORIECOR contains 236 letters written by James A. Smyth and 72 written by John J. Smyth.[4] James emigrated to Ontario in 1891 at the age of seventeen and lived with his uncle William's family, helping out on the farm. After a few years, he attended school when he was not working on his uncle's farm, at a saw mill or as a railroad worker. Not being content with farm life ('I dont like farming it is too cold in winter and there is not much money [in] it.' 22.11.1892), he went on to high school in 1895. In 1899, James passed his high school exams with honours, and, after a semester at a 'model school' (teacher training), secured a post as a public school teacher in Essex, Ontario in 1900. Two years later, he was elected principal. It is difficult to determine how long he held this post, but he worked as a liquor license inspector (1905–1910), insurance salesman, and immigration agent (1910–1912) for periods of time as well, either in addition to or after his career as teacher and principal (McElhinney 1997: 24). During this time, he also intermittently studied for a BA degree at Queens University, Ontario. James moved back to the family house in Co. Tyrone in 1926 or 1927, well into his fifties.

James A. Smyth's letters reveal a man who is not content to follow the trade of his farmer family, but yearns for education, better economic prospects, and higher social circles, much of which he accomplishes. He increasingly shows a talent for debating and spends much of his time involved in politics. In contrast, the letters from his father contain mostly information about marriages, births and deaths, the annual Plumbridge fair, and the status of the farm. While James' writing skills improve drastically, his father's remain more or less the same. Even though the younger Smyth's letters span a greater length of

[4] As mentioned in section 5.5, many of the letters filed under John J. Smyth were actually co-written with other members of the household. In these cases, only data from those parts which were written by John himself is collected.

time (34 years) and also reveal that he had gone to school prior to emigrating to Canada (nothing is known of his father's education), it is clear that James' years in school had a great impact on his writing style, spelling, and command of orthography. Compare the following passages from James A. Smyth's very first (23) and very last (24) letters in CORIECOR (non-standardness in bold).

(23) *Dear Father Mother Sisters*
*& brothers*
*I received your*
*letters on July 10th and*
*I was astonished to*
*hear of* ***Gorge*** *Barkleys*
*death I was thinking*
*long for letters but* ***they***
***were*** *not much good news*
*in this one I suppose*
***yous*** *and* ***Aunt Tilda***
***[ones]*** *dont speak to*
***other*** *now I dont know which*
*side to blame It is quite*
*different from this country*
*for here there is*
*hardly a day but* ***their is*** *some*
*visitors in and* ***stays***
*days and weeks*
(James A. Smyth, Woodslee, Ontario to 'Father Mother Brothers & Sisters,' 20.07.1891)

(24) *Dear Sister,*
*Your letter of Sept, 14th to hand and I*
*note the number of deaths recorded in*
*that community. Well to tell you the*
*truth such events pass unnoticed with*
*us. If you take particular notice of*
*the Border Cities Star you will scarcely*
*see a day passed without some one*
*being killed with a motor car or shot*
*or otherwise. So your three events*
*mentioned give your community an*
*ordinary 1925 rating or in other words*
*it gets Plumbridge into the newspaper*
*column.*
(James A. Smyth, Windsor, Ontario to 'Dear Sister,' 04.10.1925)

James A. Smyth's spelling was never 'bad,' but earlier letters do contain a number of deviations from standard spelling, such as ⟨Gorge⟩ *George* and ⟨their⟩ *there* in (23). We also see him using existential *they* in *they were* 'there was' (Montgomery 2006) (called a 'Scots form' by Macafee 1996), as well as plural *yous* (Amador-Moreno forthcoming) and *-s* with plural notional subject in *their is* 'there is.' *Aunt Tilda ones* shows zero genitive; he uses *other* for 'one another' / 'each other;' and nonstandard agreement (NSR; McCafferty (2003)) is found in *some visitors* […] *stays*. In addition, there are a number of missing apostrophes

and a lack of punctuation. His writing improves quickly after starting school, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, is best shortly before upcoming exams. Still, in (24), *Your letter of Sept, 14th Ø to hand* may indicate possible *be*-deletion.

In contrast, see John J. Smyth's first (25) and last (26) letters in CORIECOR (non-standardness in bold).

(25) *this is **gortin** fair Day but none of us*
*__is__ going to it __the__ are no grass cut in*
*this __contery__ yet we are finishing up*
*heads and foots of field and will be ready*
*to __cutt__ the grass as soon as the weather*
*fits I __supose__ By the time this reaches*
*__yous Casie__ will be home I hope the*
*country is not __to__ hot for you and Sarah Ann*
*I am __shure yous__ will think it strange*
*Besides at home one week hot and the next*
*raining*
(John J. Smyth, Castledamph to James A. Smyth, Ontario, 01.07.1891)

(26) *My dear James*
*Its so long __cince__*
*I wrote to you you must*
*think it __strang__ that I*
*did not __Write oftener__ Elisa*
*I think __Give__ you all*
*the news that I could __Give__*
*I __supose__ she told you*
*something about the money I was*
*going to write before Mary __come__*
*But I had not time*
(John J. Smyth, Castledamph to James A. Smyth, Ontario, 01.09.1904 )

Thirteen years' worth of letters written by John are found in CORIECOR, but there is no significant development in his writing skills such as witnessed in his son's letters.[5] Examples (25) and (26) show various cases of non-standard spelling, one of which renders pronunciation (insertion of schwa epenthesis in ⟨contery⟩ *country*). Plural *youse* and possible *be*-deletion in *one week Ø hot and the next raining* are found in (25) while *Eliza […] I think give you all the news* and *before Mary come* (26) show simplified/levelled verb conjugation (past tense in both cases). Punctuation and capitalisation are haphazard, e.g. ⟨gortin fair Day⟩ *Gortin fair day* in (25) and ⟨Write⟩ and ⟨Give⟩ (twice) in (26).

Interestingly, James expressed awareness of the difficulty in distinguishing between *the* and *they* on one occasion, as demonstrated in (27).

(27) *John says he has stopped*
*going to school well his*
*writing or composing does*

[5] There are large gaps in the Smyth collection between 1905 and 1925, and John J. Smyth may have passed away in this period. This must have been after 1910 however, as a letter from James is addressed to 'dear parents' early that year.

*not indicate that he is*
*entitled to graduate He*
*should be a little more*
*careful in writing and in*
*grammar get to understand*
*the difference "the"*
*and "they" article &*
*pronoun" us and we*
*look up when to use one*
*and when to use the other*
(James A. Smyth, Ontario to John J. Smyth, Castledamph, 09.05.1897 )

The lack of punctuation and irregular use of quotation marks make the passage a little hard to read, but we may perhaps understand it as:

> He should be a little more careful in writing, and in grammar get to understand the difference [between] 'the' and 'they,' [which are] article & pronoun, and 'us' and 'we.' Look up when to use one and when to use the other.

James was studying for a teacher's certificate when he wrote the passage in (27) and his own non-standard spelling of *they* is in fact greatly diminished from that year on, though it does not disappear completely. This is an interesting observation. James demonstrates through his use of meta-vocabulary that he knows there is an issue of correctness here, and he knows what to do about it – look up the rules for making the difference – but either he does not or he cannot learn the rule and apply it (not even in writing). And so, despite this knowledge, James still makes 'mistakes' throughout his letters. There are parallels here with prescriptivists and grammarians who do exactly what they tell others not to do.

Then again, on other occasions James comforts family members with less schooling that in his opinion correct spelling or grammar are not that important, as shown in (28).

(28) *I am not particular*
*whether letters are grammatically correct*
*or contain any metaphorical features*
(James A. Smyth, Ontario to Bella M. Smyth, Co. Tyrone, 21.02.1899)

The confession in (29) demonstrates that he even sometimes ends his letters without looking them over to correct any mistakes.

(29) *P.S. I do not know what my letters sound like*
*or what is [in them] I never read one over after writing it,*
*It goes down as I think*
(James A. Smyth, Ontario to Eliza C. Smyth, Castledamph, 28.08.1904)

Thus, even though his spelling was 'good,' there was still a good chance that the non-standard spelling of *they* crept in, perhaps further helped by the fact that both *the* and *they* are frequently occurring function words.

### 5.7.2 ⟨The⟩ for *they* in a family network

The regularity and number of letters sent within the Smyth family provides an opportunity to take a more in-depth look at the distribution of ⟨the⟩ for *they*. Because James A. Smyth was not interested in settling as a farmer like the rest of his family, it is interesting to juxtapose the occurrence of the variant spelling with James' education and career.

Of 237 letters written by James, 70 contain the non-standard spelling ⟨the⟩ – in John's case, 59 out of 72 contain ⟨the⟩.[6] A comparison of the occurrence of ⟨the⟩ for *they* per letter for James and John is given in Table 5.5, which gives the percentage of total letters written per five-year period with at least one instance of the non-standard spelling.

**Table 5.5:** Total letters and letters containing ⟨the⟩ for *they*, James A. Smyth

| | James A. Smyth | | | John J. Smyth | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Period** | **Letters** | **Cont. ⟨the⟩** | **Cont. ⟨the⟩ (%)** | **Letters** | **Cont. ⟨the⟩** | **Cont. ⟨the⟩ (%)** |
| 1891–1895 | 45 | 30 | 66.7 | 30 | 26 | 86.7 |
| 1896–1900 | 99 | 20 | 20.2 | 38 | 29 | 76.3 |
| 1901–1905 | 69 | 16 | 23.2 | 4 | 4 | 100 |
| 1906–1910 | 17 | 3 | 17.6 | NDA | NDA | NDA |
| 1911–1915 | 1 | – | – | NDA | NDA | NDA |
| 1916–1920 | 5 | 1 | 20.0 | NDA | NDA | NDA |
| 1921–1925 | 1 | – | – | NDA | NDA | NDA |
| Total | 237 | 70 | 29.5 | 72 | 59 | 89.9 |

We see that the occurrence of ⟨the⟩ for *they* per letter is high and stays fairly constant in John's writing whereas the occurrence in James' letters drops after a few years of schooling, but still crops up every now and then.

**Table 5.6:** Percentage of *they* with non-standard spelling ⟨the⟩, James A. Smyth

| | James A. Smyth | | | John J. Smyth | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Period** | **THEY (n)** | **⟨the⟩ (n)** | **⟨the⟩ (%)** | **THEY (n)** | **⟨the⟩ (n)** | **⟨the⟩ (%)** |
| 1891–1895 | 173 | 33 | 19.1 | 169 | 63 | 37.3 |
| 1896–1900 | 476 | 22 | 4.6 | 229 | 76 | 33.2 |
| 1901–1905 | 405 | 22 | 5.4 | 26 | 11 | 42.3 |
| 1906–1910 | 68 | 2 | 2.9 | NDA | NDA | NDA |
| 1911–1915 | 9 | – | – | NDA | NDA | NDA |
| 1916–1920 | 9 | 1 | 11.1 | NDA | NDA | NDA |
| 1921–1925 | 15 | – | – | NDA | NDA | NDA |
| Total | 1,155 | 80 | 6.9 | 424 | 150 | 35.4 |

Almost all of John's letters and about a third of James' letters contain at least one non-standard spelling of *they*. In Table 5.6 we see the percentage of the non-standard spelling

[6] In one of James' and four of John's letters *they* is realised as ⟨thy⟩. For reasons of clarity and because they are most likely phonetically the same, I have included these with the other numbers.

versus the standard spelling, and the development of James' usage compared with his father's becomes even clearer.

Comparing the normalised frequencies of the figures for James and John in Table 5.7, we see that while James' non-standard spelling of *they* varies quite a lot, John has a fairly high rate (compared to the overall results in CORIECOR) for all years. Closer scrutiny of James' letters reveals that use of non-standard ⟨the⟩ is lowest in letters written shortly before upcoming exams, suggesting that periods of intense study made him more aware of his spelling, and his language use in general.

**Table 5.7:** Normalised frequencies of ⟨the⟩ for *they*, James A. Smyth and John J. Smyth

| | James A. Smyth | | | John J. Smyth | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Period** | **Words** | **⟨the⟩** | **Pr. 10k** | **Words** | **⟨the⟩** | **Pr. 10k** |
| 1891–1895 | 24,662 | 33 | 13.4 | 23,495 | 63 | 26.8 |
| 1896–1900 | 85,495 | 22 | 2.6 | 25,466 | 76 | 29.8 |
| 1901–1905 | 70,138 | 22 | 3.1 | 3,602 | 11 | 30.5 |
| 1906–1910 | 13,163 | 2 | 1.5 | NDA | NDA | NDA |
| 1911–1915 | 527 | – | – | NDA | NDA | NDA |
| 1916–1920 | 2,691 | 1 | 3.7 | NDA | NDA | NDA |
| 1921–1925 | 1,189 | – | – | NDA | NDA | NDA |
| Total | 197,865 | 80 | 4.0 | 52,563 | 150 | 28.5 |

Lastly, the hyper-correct spelling ⟨they⟩ for *the* (see section 5.6) is also present in the letters of James and John, occurring 47 and 23 times in their writings, respectively, as seen in Table 5.8. This shows that even with James' education, the fact that he most likely pronounced *the* and *they* the same caused him to make hyper-correct errors as well, substituting ⟨they⟩ for ⟨the⟩.

**Table 5.8:** Occurrence of hyper-correct ⟨they⟩ for *the* (n), James A. and John J. Smyth

| **Period** | **James A. Smyth** | **John J. Smyth** |
|---|---|---|
| 1891–1895 | 22 | 15 |
| 1896–1900 | 11 | 7 |
| 1901–1905 | 8 | 1 |
| 1906–1910 | 5 | NDA |
| 1911–1915 | – | NDA |
| 1916–1920 | 1 | NDA |
| 1921–1925 | – | NDA |
| Total | 47 | 23 |

### 5.7.3 Summing up the Smyths

There is no reason to believe that James A. Smyth's pronunciation of *they* as [ðiː] disappeared during his 35 years in Ontario, as phonetic representation of it is found in his letters throughout his years in Canada.

A few off-hand comments about the Irish dialect may suggest that James' own variety levelled out or that he tried to approach the speech of those he deemed his peers and superiors (most of whom were probably born in the US or Canada). Shortly after arriving in Canada, perhaps from personal experience, he writes of the Irish that 'they have to stop their Irish words when they come here or else [they] make fun of every word you say.'[7] Years later, while his sister is sailing back to Ireland after a prolonged stay in Ontario, he writes to his father (30):

(30) *I wonder how she likes the Irish brogue*
*If the peoples voices sound as loud and*
*course to her as they did to me when*
*I went back she will think it funny.*
(James A. Smyth, Ontario to John J. Smyth, Co. Tyrone, 23.07.1900)

And the following year: 'The man Rev. Hamilton was originally from Co Down. He is a fairly aged man, but he might get a call. He has a fairly good brogue.'[8]

Such comments on the Irish 'brogue' (a colloquial term for English spoken with a strong Irish accent) demonstrate the importance James places on language while moving in the higher circles of society in Essex, Ontario, especially during his final years of high school education and throughout his career as a teacher and principal. The decline in ⟨the⟩-usage over the years shows this levelling for this particular feature, which is likely to have been influenced by other (non-Irish-)English-speakers with whom he was surrounded in his daily life. Additionally, his education and work as a teacher must have affected his command of English orthography to such a degree that he was more likely to use standard spelling as time went on.

It is interesting to note that the non-standard spelling of *they* never disappears even though James' letters on the whole contain relatively few variant spellings. This leads me to conclude that, to him, *they* and *the* were homophones (i.e. both [ðiː]) and that his native IrE dialect, however much it may have been 'watered down,' never lost this particular feature of (N)IrE, which, as demonstrated in Figures 5.1–5.4, was quite widespread.

## 5.8 Conclusion

For many of the letter writers in CORIECOR the definite article *the* and the personal pronoun *they* were homophones, and consequently often homographs. Occasional hyper-correct spelling of ⟨they⟩ for *the* further strengthens this and shows, again, that for many writers *the* and *they* sounded the same.

It perhaps makes sense that phonetic representation of [ðiː] in the non-standard spelling ⟨the⟩ for *they* should be one of the most frequently occurring phonological features in letters from NIrE-speaking letter writers. Compare the present-day proliferation of spelling confusion between words such as *their*, *there*, and *they're* or *your* and *you're*, easily observed on the Internet in, e.g. blogs and comment sections. This occurs even amongst people whose native language is English and who are clearly literate, with probably more years of schooling than the letter writers in CORIECOR. These words are as different in meaning

[7] James A. Smyth, incomplete letter, 22.11.1891.
[8] James A. Smyth, Ontario to Liza Smyth, Co. Tyrone, 24.05.1904.

as *the* and *they*, yet are still often confused because they are homophones to their writers. Seeing as *they* is still pronounced [ðiː] in parts of Ulster, it is safe to assume that the spelling *the* thus reflects this pronunciation in the corpus.

The phonetic spelling ⟨the⟩ for *they* in letters from NIrE-speaking letter writers traces the still-occurring pronunciation [ðiː] back to at least 1700. The feature was found in most parts of Ulster and seems to have been widespread. When it comes to social rank, farmers were heavily represented, though this is in part due to the large amount of data from the Smyth family and from farmers in general. Lower ranks such as labourers were well-attested, though servants and soldiers/sailors were not found in large numbers. At the middle of the social scale, craftsmen, clerks / shop assistants, and merchants featured frequently, professionals to a smaller degree. While a few occurrences were found among ship's captains / army officers and members of the clergy, no evidence of [ðiː] for *they* was found amongst the gentry. The feature is thus most commonly found in the letters of lower and middle social ranks, though it must be remembered that it is precisely these ranks that are most common in CORIECOR.

In spite of increased literacy throughout the period covered by the corpus, the occurrence of [ðiː] is amply attested. A closer look at some of the Smyth letters showed that education did have an impact on spelling, but did not remove all occurrences of the phonetic representation of *they*.

# Chapter 6

# Vowels

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses evidence of certain NIrE vowel qualities. In essence, it provides an exhaustive overview of all cases of phonetic representation of vowels present in CORIECOR (as of October 2013). Those features that occur most frequently, or that are considered salient in NIrE, are most closely examined. In each case, the characteristics of the feature in question are presented, after which its distribution in the corpus is explored in light of chronology, regional variation, social status, and gender. These include the FACE monophthong, CATCH-raising, unraised long E, short E-lowering, short E-raising, open fronted (*m*)*any*, KIT-centering, and unrounded short O, presented in sections 6.2–6.9. Some of the features discussed below will be too limited in token numbers to discuss at length, but are interesting nonetheless. Such features include certain vowels before /r/ and a number of more infrequent occurrences in the corpus, discussed in sections 6.10 and 6.11.

## 6.2 FACE monophthong

> *I am **afred** that you had a **gret** Deal of*
> *trubel and expence on your journey to Unenin towen*
> (John McArthur, Carrowreagh, Co. Donegal to Robert McArthur, Uniontown, Pennsylvania, USA, 20.06.1798)

The FACE vowel has a monophthongal quality in IrE – usually [e] in NIrE and SIrE, though the latter may have [e:] in certain areas (Melchers and Shaw 2003: 75).[1] According to Hickey (2007: 328) a 'rising diphthong [eɪ] is not found but the whole vowel may be lowered in vernacular varieties,' e.g. [fɛ:s]. A short I variant (e.g. [fɪs]) is found especially amongst Catholic speakers in (London)Derry (McCafferty 1999: 248; see also section 6.2.3 below), and was more wide-spread earlier. Several allophones of the vowel exist in Belfast, including [e], [eə], [ɛ], [ɛə], and [iə] (Corrigan 2010: 34).

The FACE vowel, which in present-day (southern) BrE is pronounced [eɪ], was in ME [a:] and had in, e.g. Sheridan's time progressed to [æ: ~ ɛ:] (Hickey 2008: 395). Bliss (1979:

[1] It is difficult to determine the length of /e/ in the examples of phonetic representation in CORIECOR that form the basis for this section. Even though [e] is perhaps most frequent in NIrE today (as opposed to [e:]), most instances of phonetic representation of a monophthong in the FACE vowel have ⟨ea⟩, which may suggest a long vowel. Thus [e:] is used to refer to its quality here. For the short I variant, see section 6.2.3.

212) also places this development in the eighteenth century, but gives the value as [e:]. In Patterson's (1860: 5) mid-nineteenth-century comments on 'vulgarisms' in the Belfast area, the pronunciation *ee* for *ay*, e.g. *steeple* 'staple' and *plet* 'plait' are mentioned, but whether these suggest [e:] in FACE words or the short I variant [ɛ̈ ~ ӕ] is not very clear (see section 6.2.3). There is often some degree of centralisation or lowering in this realisation in NIrE. Likewise, in a pamphlet by Biggar (1897: 17), the author gives *pent* for 'paint.' This spelling may seem to denote a short vowel (similar to Patterson's *plet*, above), but perhaps the limitations of English orthography in describing [e:] are at play here. Nevertheless, spellings such as ⟨ea⟩, ⟨ee⟩, ⟨eCe⟩ clearly represent [e:] (for the short-I variant / ⟨i⟩ see section 6.2.3), and tokens for this feature are the most numerous of all vowel features discussed in this thesis.

Tokens of phonetic representation of [e:] for FACE vowels in CORIECOR number 287 in total. Some examples are given in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1**: Examples of phonetic representation of [e:] in FACE (total n = 287)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨breek⟩ | break |
| ⟨corncreak⟩ | corn crake[a] |
| ⟨Deavid⟩ | David |
| ⟨eable⟩ | able |
| ⟨majistreat⟩ | magistrate |
| ⟨missteak⟩ | mistake |
| ⟨neabers⟩ | neighbours |
| ⟨prevele⟩ | prevail |
| ⟨tread⟩ | trade |
| ⟨Weals⟩ | Wales |

[a] A bird in the rail family.

In most cases only one or a few tokens are found per letter, but some writers display the feature quite frequently. One letter even has 19 instances of [e:] for FACE vowels, all of them orthographically as ⟨ea⟩, as demonstrated in (31):

(31) *Imployers prices here is Very*
*Good In* ***Peanting*** *and* ***Gleazing*** *but Long*
*Trust* ***Gleazing*** *is Done here by the* ***pean***
(Samuel Brown, Philadelphia to David Brown, Belfast, 23.12.1793)

Chronologically, the tokens are distributed with peaks during the middle and end of the nineteenth century (see Figure 6.1). The late eighteenth-century peak is largely caused by tokens from the letter writer who provided example (31).

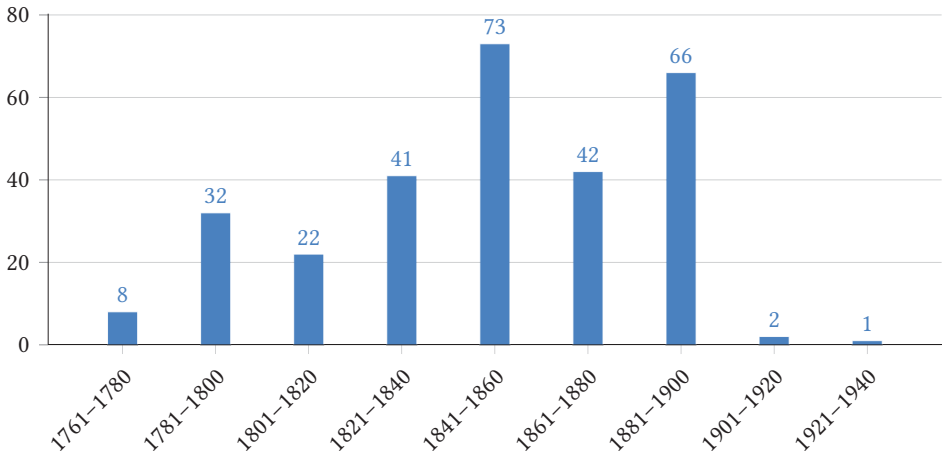



**Figure 6.1:** Chronological distribution (n) of [e:] in FACE (n = 287)

Due to the uneven coverage in CORIECOR, the data is presented with normalised frequencies per 10,000 words in Table 6.2 and Figure 6.2. Here, we see that the realisation of FACE vowels with [e:] appears to decrease towards the twentieth century. However, despite normalisation of the data, it is probably the case that the single letter writer from 1793 with 19 tokens is again responsible for the early peak. In addition, because we know that the feature still exists in Ulster today, the decrease between 1900 and 1940 is likely due to the increasing availability of education, impacting on the standardisation of the written language (see section 2.2.5).

**Table 6.2:** Occurrence (n) and rate per 10,000 words of [e:] in FACE

| Period | Words | Tokens | Pr. 10k |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1761–1780 | 57,362 | 8 | 1.4 |
| 1781–1800 | 105,304 | 32 | 3.0 |
| 1801–1820 | 198,124 | 22 | 1.1 |
| 1821–1840 | 303,135 | 41 | 1.4 |
| 1841–1860 | 675,746 | 73 | 1.1 |
| 1861–1880 | 569,659 | 42 | 0.7 |
| 1881–1900 | 750,456 | 66 | 0.9 |
| 1901–1920 | 324,670 | 2 | 0.1 |
| 1921–1940 | 51,677 | 1 | 0.2 |
| CORIECOR total[a] | 3,060,366 | 287 | 0.9 |

[a] *CORIECOR total* gives the complete word count for the whole corpus, i.e. 1641–1940.

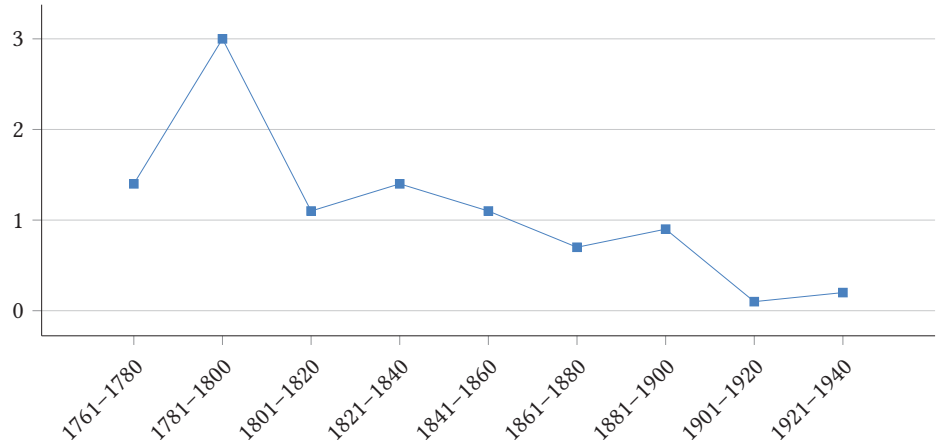
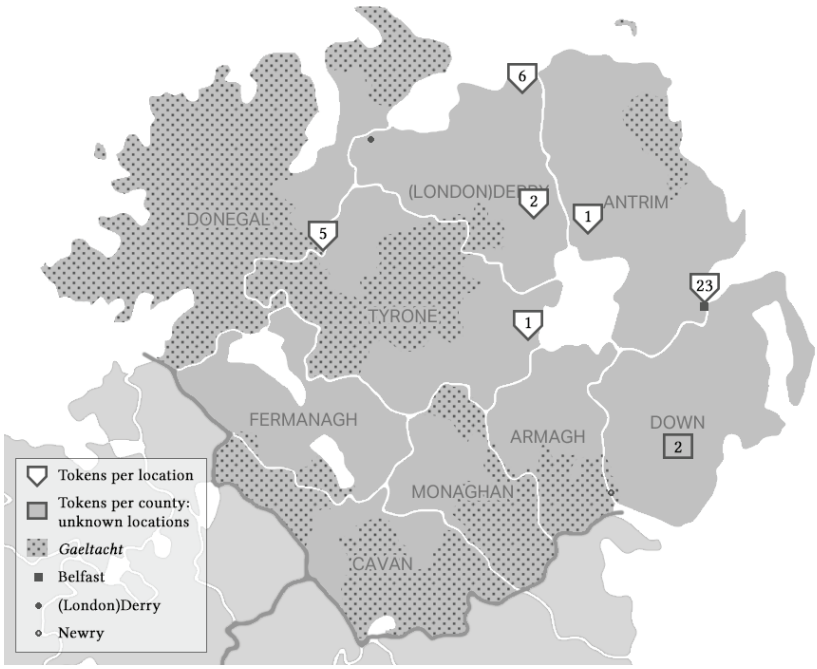


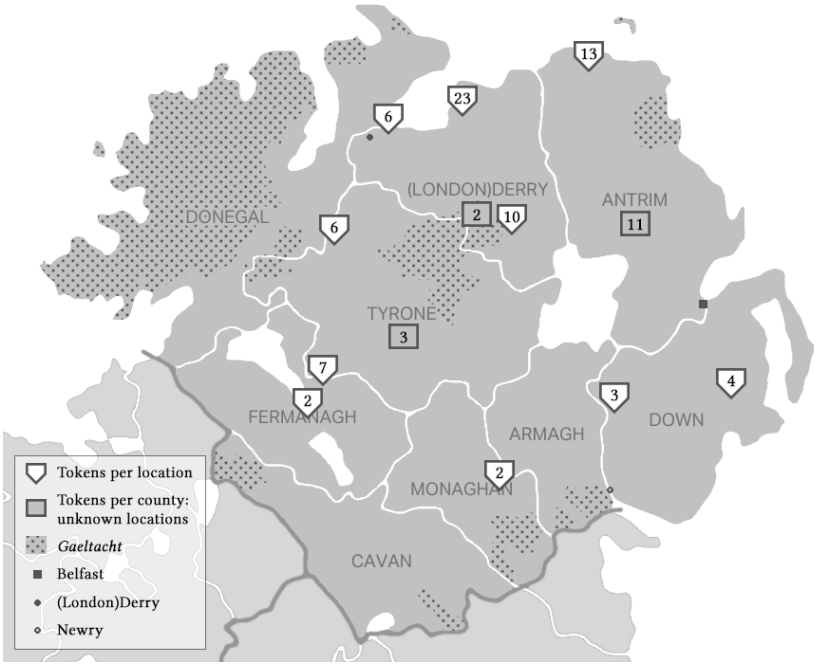

**Figure 6.2**: Normalised frequencies of [e:] in FACE per 10,000 words

### 6.2.1 Geographical location

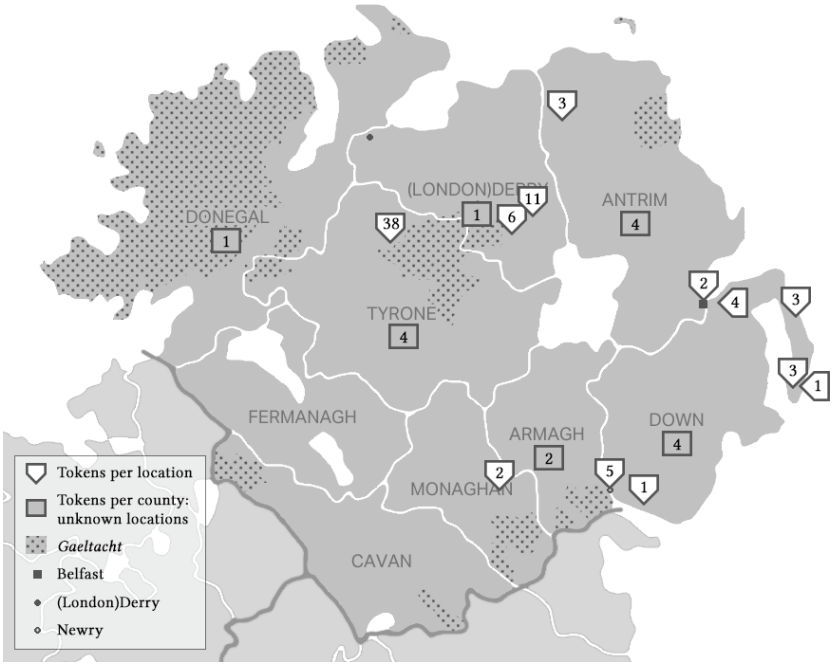
Geographically, there is a good spread of the feature across Ulster. In addition to the relevant tokens for Ulster, seven were found to hail from other locations and counties: ⟨rean⟩ *rain*, ⟨feal⟩ *fail*, and ⟨affread⟩ *afraid* from Dublin; ⟨meat⟩ *mate* from Co. Sligo; ⟨lea⟩ *lay* and ⟨neket⟩ *naked* from Co. Kilkenny; and ⟨over leden⟩ *overladen* from Co. Wexford.




**Map 6.1**: 1761–1800: Geographical distribution (n) of [e:] in FACE




**Map 6.2:** 1801–1850: Geographical distribution (n) of [e:] in FACE




**Map 6.3:** 1851–1900: Geographical distribution (n) of [e:] in FACE


**Map 6.4:** 1901–1940: Geographical distribution (n) of [e:] in FACE

A fair number of tokens (34) cannot be placed more specifically than the county of origin, and a further 50 cannot be placed geographically at all.

### 6.2.2 Social rank and gender

Phonetic representation of [e:] in the FACE lexical set is found primarily in non-standard spellings by male farmers (Figure 6.3), especially during the latter half of the nineteenth century (68 tokens), during which time also manual labourers most frequently contributed to the data (18). In the earliest periods of CORIECOR, craftsmen dominate with 21 tokens, but nine tokens each for male and female craftsmen (Figure 6.4) are found for the first half of the nineteenth century.

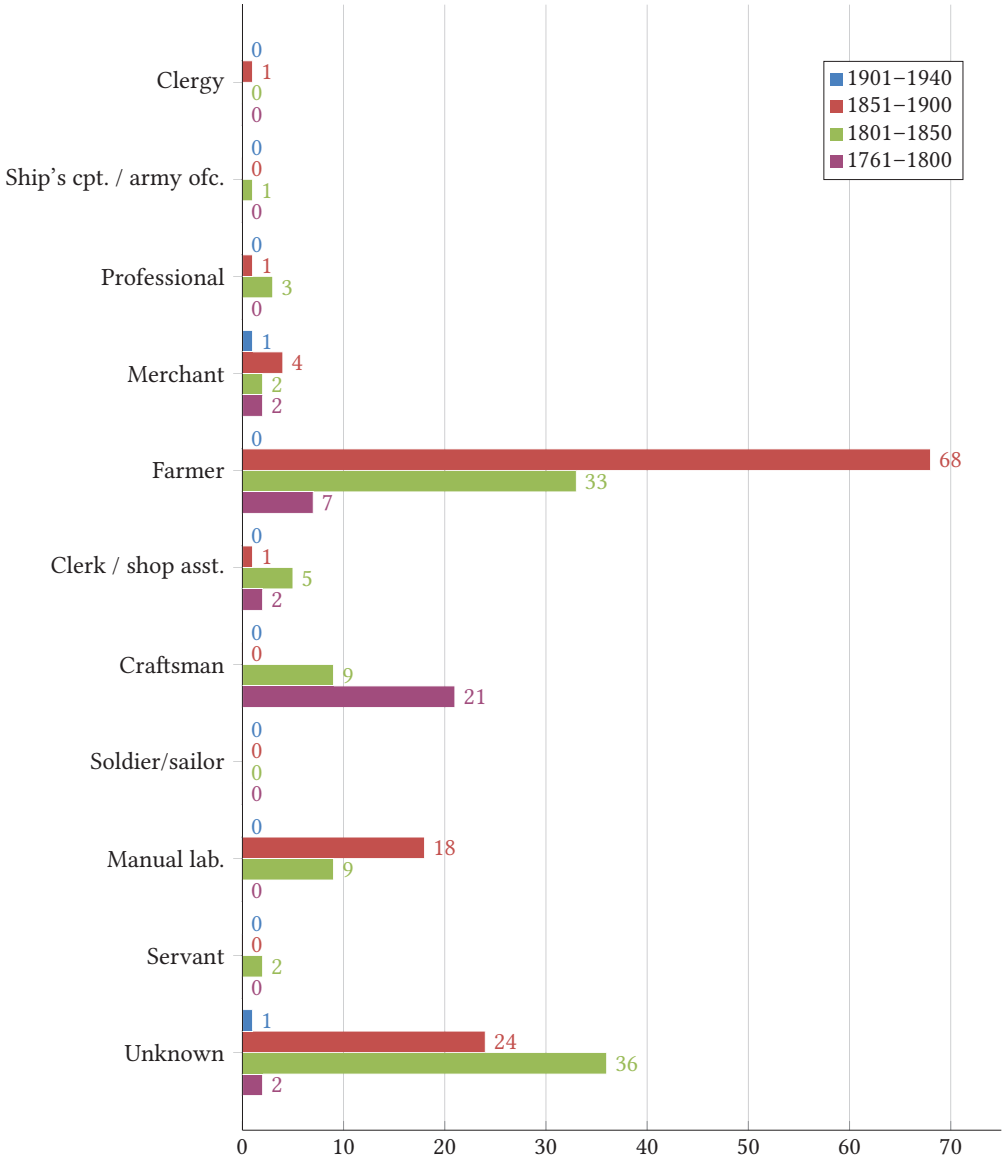



**Figure 6.3:** Men: tokens (n) of [e:] in FACE by social rank

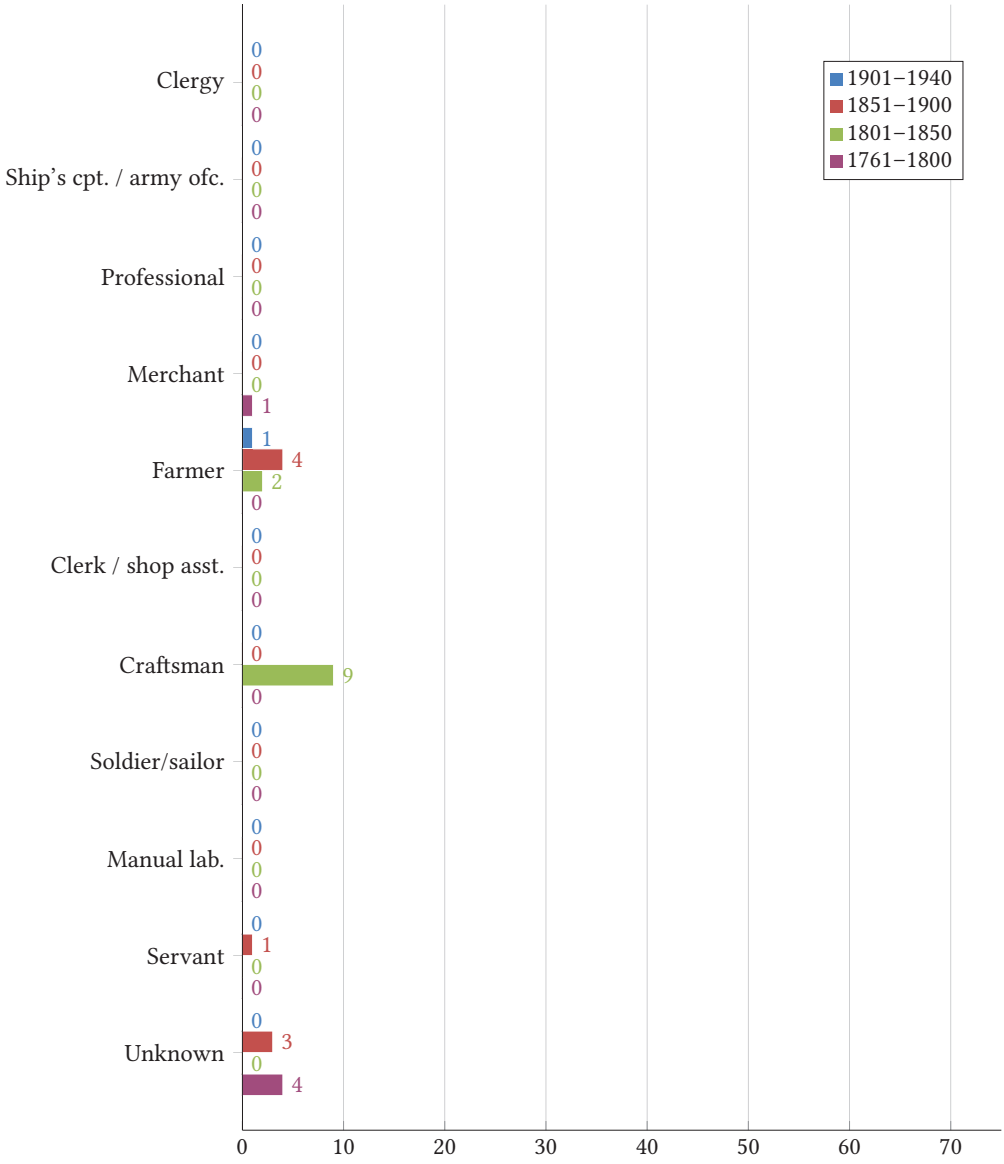



**Figure 6.4**: Women: tokens (n) of [e:] in FACE by social rank

### 6.2.3 Short I variant

Thirteen spellings of FACE words were found with evidence of short I, i.e. [fɪs] or [fɛ̈s] (see Table 6.3). This realisation is today found in (London)Derry amongst Catholics especially (McCafferty 1999: 248). In CORIECOR, these realisations were found throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century in counties Down, Antrim, Tyrone, and Fermanagh (though not (London)Derry), which shows that this kind of pronunciation was probably quite widespread geographically in the past.

**Table 6.3:** Short I variant of FACE (n = 13)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨Austrilea⟩ | Australia |
| ⟨Austrilia⟩ (2) | Australia |
| ⟨Austrillia⟩ | Australia |
| ⟨give⟩ | gave |
| ⟨grin⟩ | grain |
| ⟨grit⟩ | great |
| ⟨kim⟩ | came |
| ⟨mik⟩ | make |
| ⟨prise⟩ (2) | praise |
| ⟨remins⟩ | remains |
| ⟨siviour⟩ | saviour |

## 6.3 Catch-raising

> *you want to*
> *know a little of his mode of labour and what kind of* ***kettle***
> *he has 103 acres about 6 acres of wood land becides*
> *a mill for grinding wheat oats and Indian corn*
> (John Donnan, Pennsylvania, USA to his parents, 11.09.1848)

Catch-raising refers to a closer realisation of the vowel in, e.g. *catch* for TRAP, BATH, PALM, and START vowels (the latter is treated separately in section 6.10.4). This is similar to a process observed in the early twentieth century where RP /a/, realised as [æ], moved closer to [ɛ] in 'refined RP,' before opening again (Bauer 1994: 120). Hickey (2007: 305) argues that it seems to also have been a feature among the 'Anglo-Irish land-owning class' until the early twentieth century. Returning to the comments of F. J. Biggar on 'Ulster provincialisms,' it is clear that the orthoepist considers it non-standard: 'How common it is to hear […] ketch for catch […] Such vulgarisms as this should, of course, be carefully avoided' (Biggar 1897: 17). This comment seems strange as this kind of raising was 'commoner in the standard in earlier times' according to Lass (2001: 85), who has found evidence of [ɛ] for [æ] in commentary by English philologist Robert Nares. Indeed, in *Elements of orthoepy*, Nares advises his readers that in a few cases A is pronounced '*like* E *ſhort*':

> The inſtances of this are very few : *catch*, *gather*, *January*, *jaſmin*, *many*, *radiſh*, *thank* ; and of theſe ſome are diſputable, or certainly confined to colloquial uſe, as *gather* and *thank*. (Nares 1784: 10)

Patterson (1860: 7) also lists a number of words with [ɛ] for /æ/ and Joyce (1910: 97) remarks that *catch* is everywhere pronounced *ketch*.

Regardless of the status of this feature in earlier NIrE, it certainly existed already in the 1760s. Sixty-one tokens are found in CORIECOR (see Table 6.4). The vowel quality seems to be represented most often by ⟨e⟩, but both ⟨i⟩ and, occasionally, ⟨ea⟩ are used. The word from where this feature gets its name, *catch*, was not found, the closest being ⟨kettle⟩ *cattle*. Only one of the tokens discussed here belongs to the PALM set, realised as ⟨besket⟩ *basket*. Today,

**Table 6.4**: Examples of phonetic representation of CATCH-raising (total n = 61)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨blick⟩ | black |
| ⟨fleashy⟩ | flashy |
| ⟨flex⟩ | flax |
| ⟨henkerchifs⟩ | handkerchiefs |
| ⟨ingered⟩ | angered |
| ⟨insenity⟩ | insanity |
| ⟨kettle⟩ | cattle |
| ⟨mecenniks⟩ | mechanics |
| ⟨reddishes⟩ | radishes |
| ⟨setesfy⟩ | satisfy |

[ɛ] for /æ/ in TRAP/BATH/PALM/START occurs in some Belfast and USc varieties (Corrigan 2010: 36) and in (London)Derry 'only among the oldest speakers' (McCafferty 1999: 248). Middle-class Belfast speech is for example sometimes referred to as 'Cherryvelley-speech,' named after the local pronunciation of *valley* in the Cherryvalley residential area.

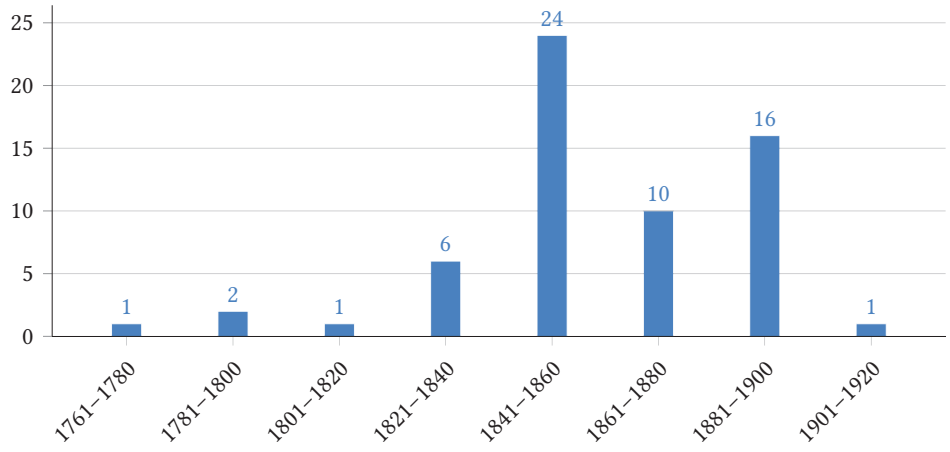



**Figure 6.5**: Chronological distribution (n) of CATCH-raising (total n = 61)

Figure 6.5 shows the chronological distribution of CATCH-raising. The first tokens are found during the time when Robert Nares wrote that this vowel quality occurred in selected English words (1784), though none of the three first tokens include his examples quoted above.

Table 6.5 and Figure 6.6 show a stable distribution of CATCH-raising until the latter part of the eighteenth century, a drop around 1800 and a steep rise in the mid-1800s before decreasing towards the beginning of the twentieth century. The steep rise after 1821–1840 may be due to an increase in literacy due to the founding of the National Schools in Ireland. This would have lowered the threshold for people to write letters, even though their grasp of English orthography may have still been limited. Reversal of the line after 1841–1860 indicates that the level of orthographic competence rose as a result of newer generations'

access to schooling from a young age.

**Table 6.5**: Occurrence (n) and rate per 10,000 words of CATCH-raising

| Period | Words | Tokens | Pr. 10k |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1761–1780 | 57,362 | 1 | 0.2 |
| 1781–1800 | 105,304 | 2 | 0.2 |
| 1801–1820 | 198,124 | 1 | 0.1 |
| 1821–1840 | 303,135 | 6 | 0.2 |
| 1841–1860 | 675,746 | 24 | 0.4 |
| 1861–1880 | 569,659 | 10 | 0.2 |
| 1881–1900 | 750,456 | 16 | 0.2 |
| 1901–1920 | 324,670 | 1 | – |
| Total | 3,060,366 | 61 | 0.2 |

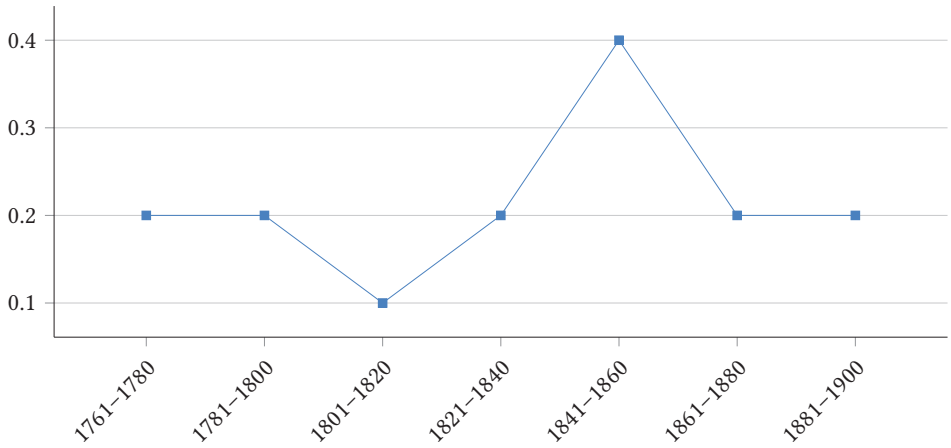



**Figure 6.6**: Normalised frequencies of CATCH-raising per 10,000 words

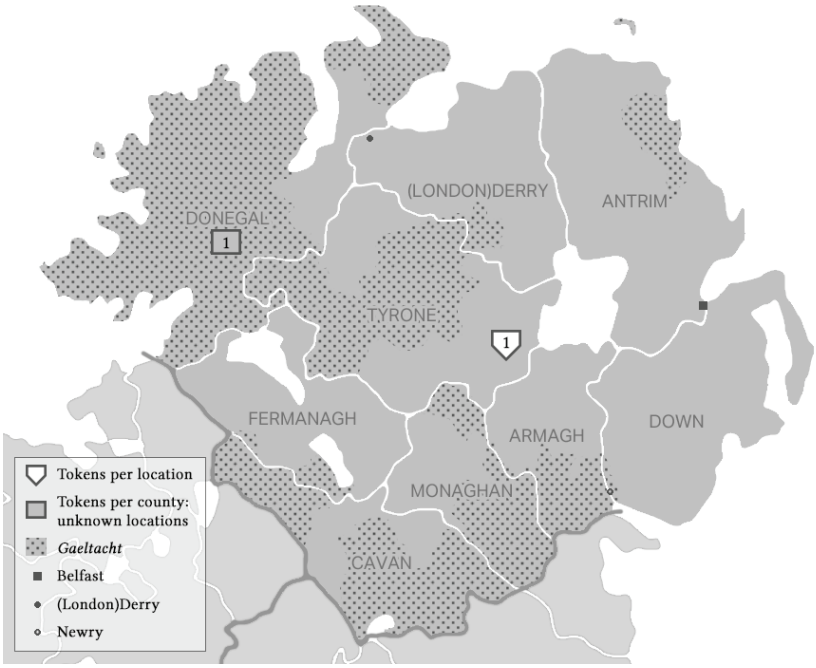
Four of the 61 tokens of CATCH-raising are found in ⟨hinging⟩ *hanging* and ⟨hings⟩ *hangs*. Here, more may be going on. *Hanging* is often pronounced with a centralised vowel in NIrE (McCafferty, personal communication), i.e. [ˈhǽŋən], and a spelling with ⟨i⟩ may represent such a centralised and lowered vowel.[2] It might make more sense to call this CATCH-centering, but evidence is only found for the four cases mentioned above. ⟨Ingered⟩ may appear to show the same phenomenon, but, despite the similarities, *anger* is not usually pronounced with a centralised vowel.

### 6.3.1 Geographical location

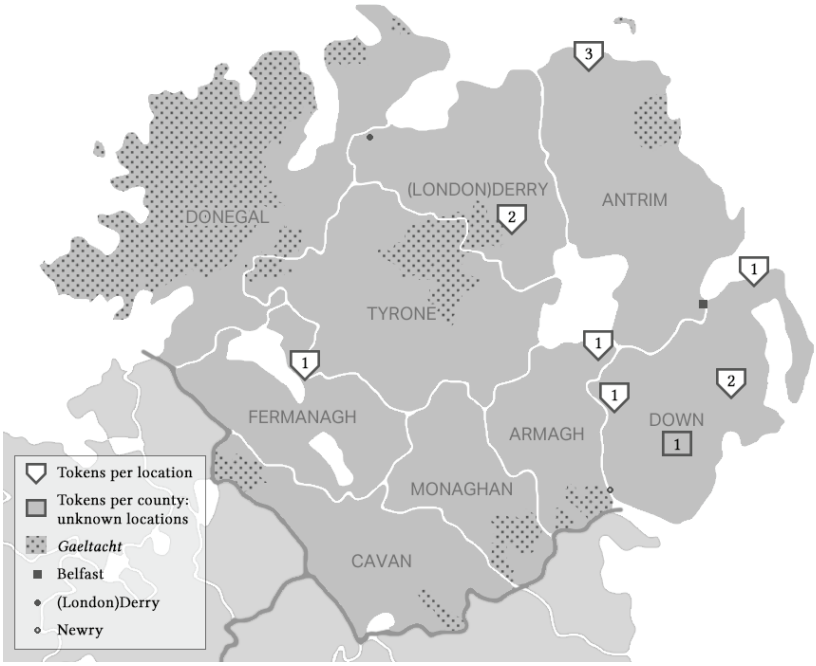
As mentioned earlier, today this feature occurs in (London)Derry, Belfast, and in USc areas. There are indeed a number of tokens which can be traced to the 'core' USc area (as defined

[2] [æ] is used by Gregg (1985) to represent the vowel quality in, e.g. *hanging*, though he does not mention this particular word himself.

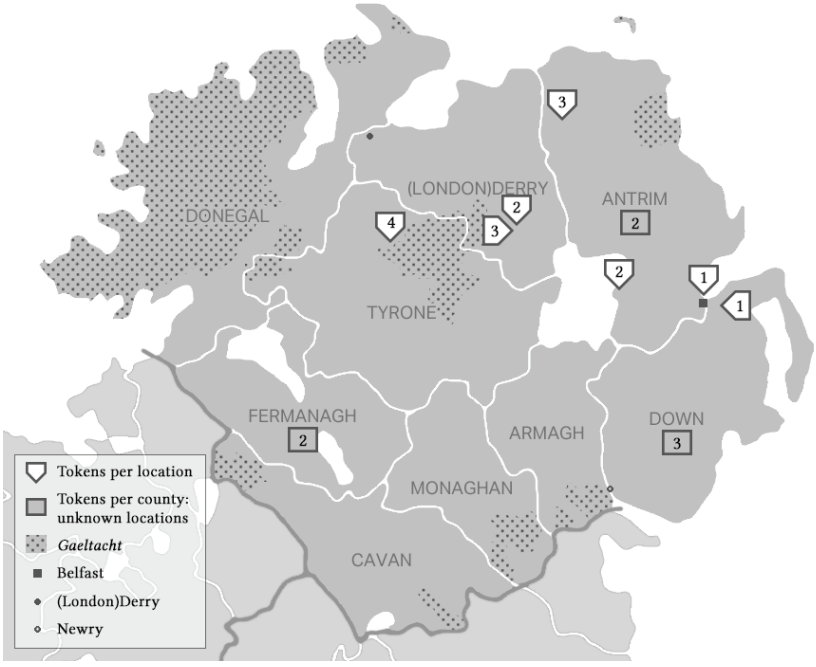
by Gregg 1972; see also Harris 1985). For the period 1801–1850 there are six tokens within this area; for 1851–1900 there are three (see Maps 6.6 and 6.7). Six are also found more or less along the same latitude in counties Fermanagh, Armagh, and Down in the first half of the nineteenth century. In addition, a number of tokens (mostly from the latter half of the nineteenth century) border on the mid-Ulster *Gaeltacht*. One token is found in northern Co. Tyrone in the early twentieth century. As this is the only token for this period, no map is shown.




**Map 6.5:** 1761–1800: Geographical distribution (n) of CATCH-raising




**Map 6.6**: 1801–1850: Geographical distribution (n) of catch-raising




**Map 6.7**: 1851–1900: Geographical distribution (n) of catch-raising

### 6.3.2 Social rank and gender

Figures 6.7 and 6.8 show tokens of CATCH-raising in light of social rank and gender. There are very few tokens from women (15), mostly divided amongst farmers and those of unknown social rank. Male farmers and manual labourers are most heavily represented, especially during 1851–1900 – but clerks are also responsible for four tokens in this period.

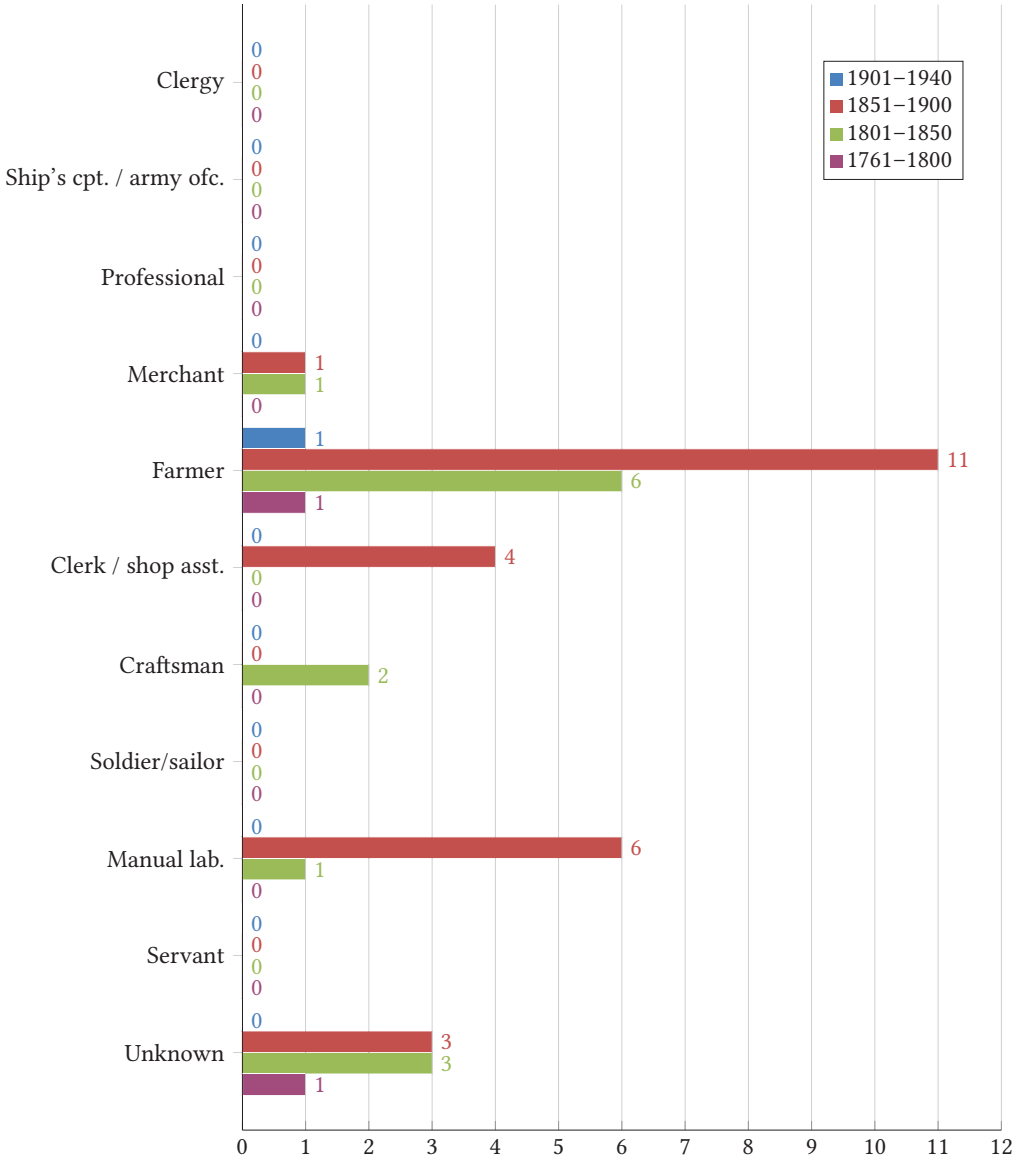



**Figure 6.7**: Men: tokens (n) of CATCH-raising by social rank

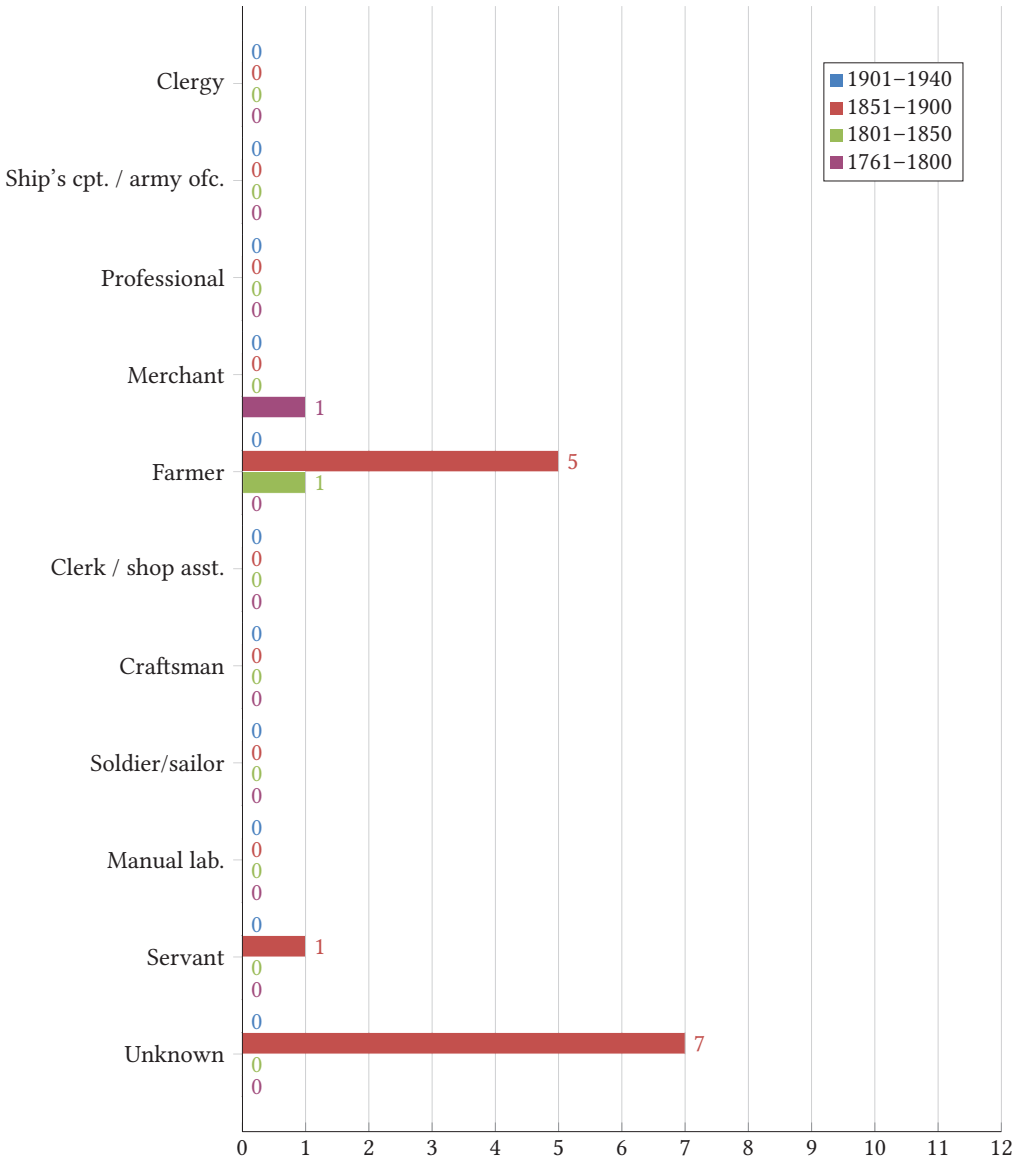



**Figure 6.8**: Women: tokens (n) of catch-raising by social rank

## 6.4 Unraised long E

*Watson is doing a grate **dale***
*Business and [accummulating] [torn] [—perty]*
*fast*
(A. McElheran, Ireland to A. McElheran, Upper Canada, 24.02.1834)

One of the most stereotypical features of IrE is unraised long E. Today, it is recessive, but still found in some vernacular varieties (Hickey 2007: 305). Unraised long E refers to a retention of ME /e:/ in ⟨-ea-⟩ words. During LModE, /e:/ in ⟨ea⟩ shifted to [i:] in southern BrE, but this long vowel change did not occur in IrE. A well-known example demonstrating the quality of this vowel in eighteenth-century BrE is found in the following rhyme from Alexander Pope's *The rape of the lock* from 1712/1714:

Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take – and sometimes tea.
(Pope, *The rape of the lock*, canto 3)

In fact, ⟨tay⟩ *tea* is often given as an example of this vowel quality in IrE literary dialect or for purposes of caricature, as well as ⟨Jaysus⟩ *Jesus* (Hickey 2007: 314).

A few examples of unraised long E can be seen in the rhymes *stream*/*name*, *complete*/*fate*, and *place*/*peace* in a late eighteenth-century poem by Ellen Taylor, a Co. Kilkenny maid (Carpenter 1998: 473–474). Bliss (1979: 209) finds evidence for [e:] in spellings with ⟨a⟩ in place of ⟨ea⟩. This is also the case in CORIECOR, where most cases of phonetic representation of unraised long E are found in spellings such as ⟨lave⟩ *leave* or ⟨pace⟩ *peace*, although occasionally ⟨ai⟩ (e.g. ⟨dail⟩ *deal*) is also found (see Table 6.6), presumably because for these writers, words with ⟨ai⟩ (e.g. *hail*) were also pronounced [e:] (see section 6.2). In total, 148 tokens for unraised long E were found in CORIECOR, some examples of which are presented in Table 6.6.

Chronologically, most tokens are found in the latter half of the nineteenth century (see Figure 6.9), with the highest total of 40 tokens per 20-year sub-period for 1861–1880.

**Table 6.6:** Examples of phonetic representation of unraised long E (total n = 148)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨dail⟩ | deal |
| ⟨decase⟩ | decease |
| ⟨favour⟩ | fever |
| ⟨Jasus⟩ | Jesus |
| ⟨lave⟩ | leave |
| ⟨onasy⟩ | uneasy |
| ⟨pace⟩ | peace |
| ⟨Rockmacraney⟩ | Rockmacreeny |
| ⟨spaking⟩ | speaking |
| ⟨trakel⟩ | treacle |

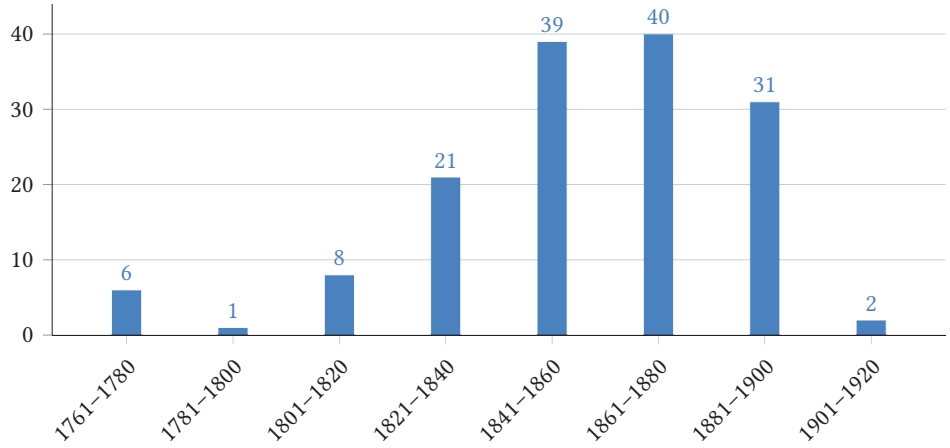



**Figure 6.9**: Chronological distribution (n) of unraised long ɛ (n = 148)

Normalised frequencies for the data (see Table 6.7 and Figure 6.10) show a peak in the mid-1800s and a steady decline towards 1940. There are only seven tokens before 1800, but the material in CORIECOR is also quite limited, which explains the sharp peak in 1761–1780 in Figure 6.10. It appears as though the occurrence of tokens levels out for about 40 years after 1821–1840. This may be due to the founding of the National Schools in Ireland in 1831, which, as was discussed above, would have given more people the opportunity to become literate.

**Table 6.7**: Occurrence (n) and rate per 10,000 words of unraised long ɛ

| Period | Words | Tokens | Pr. 10k |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1761–1780 | 57,362 | 6 | 1.0 |
| 1781–1800 | 105,304 | 1 | 0.1 |
| 1801–1820 | 198,124 | 8 | 0.4 |
| 1821–1840 | 303,135 | 21 | 0.7 |
| 1841–1860 | 675,746 | 39 | 0.6 |
| 1861–1880 | 569,659 | 40 | 0.7 |
| 1881–1900 | 750,456 | 31 | 0.4 |
| 1901–1920 | 324,670 | 2 | 0.1 |
| Total | 3,060,366 | 148 | 0.5 |

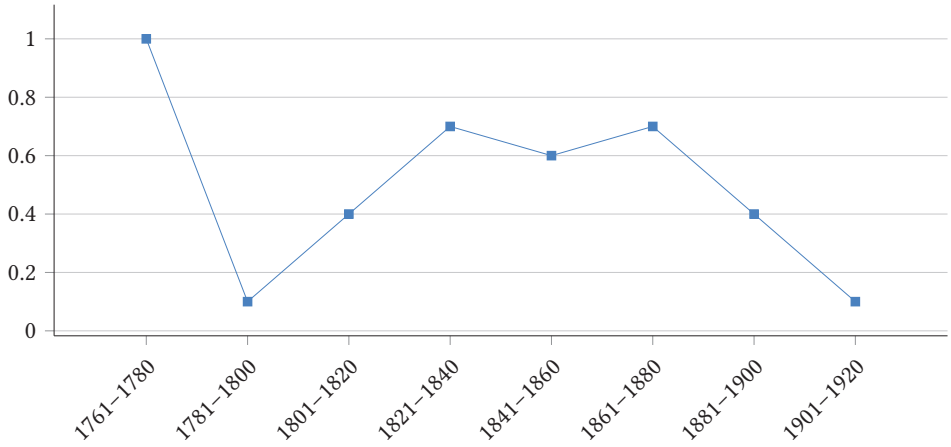
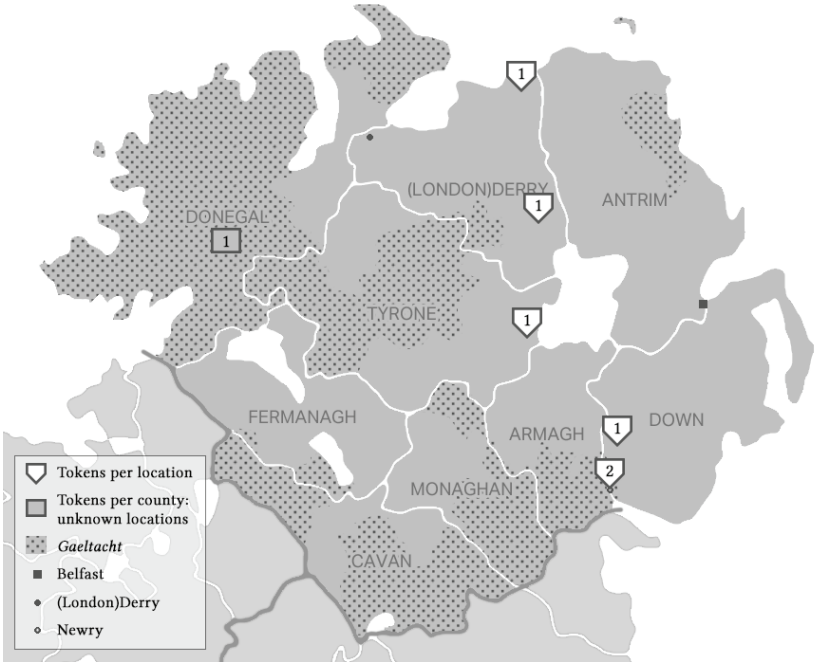


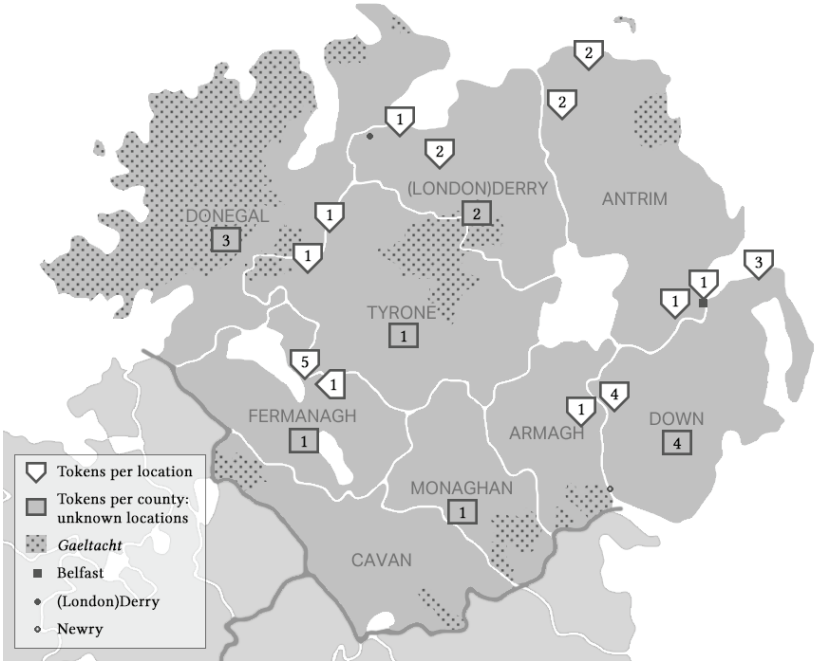

**Figure 6.10**: Normalised frequencies of unraised long E per 10,000 words

### 6.4.1 Geographical location

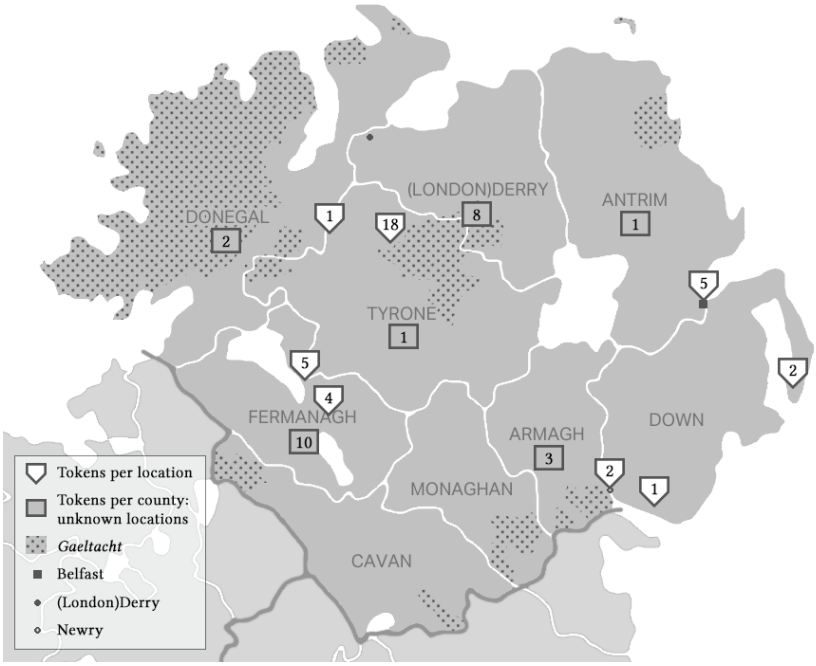
Unraised long E is one of the most widespread features found in CORIECOR, as shown in Maps 6.8–6.10. It is also one of the few features where a useful number of tokens exist for 1761–1800. Looking especially at 1801–1850, it is clear that the feature is truly representative of NIrE as a whole, and has been for at least 200 years. The many tokens for unknown locations during the nineteenth century further strengthen this conclusion, as the spread is probably even greater than the location tokens suggest.




**Map 6.8**: 1761–1800: Geographical distribution (n) of unraised long E




**Map 6.9**: 1801–1850: Geographical distribution (n) of unraised long E




**Map 6.10**: 1851–1900: Geographical distribution (n) of unraised long E

For the early twentieth century, the only token comes from northern Co. Tyrone. As this is the only token for this period, no map is shown.

### 6.4.2 Social rank and gender

Most tokens of unraised long E were found in letters written by farmers. For men, this number is 61 in total, 47 of which are from 1851–1900 (see Figure 6.11). For women, the number of tokens is as usual much lower, with nine tokens from farmers, six of which are from 1801–1850 (see Figure 6.12). Nearly half of all tokens come from writers with unknown professions or of indeterminable social status; 46 from men and 12 from women. Four of the tokens have been left out of Figures 6.11 and 6.12 because it is not possible to determine the writer's gender.

### 6.4.3 Hyper-correction

Twenty tokens which at first glance might indicate an unraised long E are more likely displaying hyper-correction. Non-standard spellings such as ⟨countay⟩ *county*, ⟨energay⟩ *energy*, ⟨Billay⟩, *Billy* and ⟨lonlay⟩ *lonely* suggest that their writers expect [e:] in words where speakers of 'standard' English (or at least those perceived to use a prestigious variety) use [i:] and therefore assumed that /i/ in ⟨-y⟩ endings also calls for [e:] in their own variety, which in turn is reflected in their spelling.

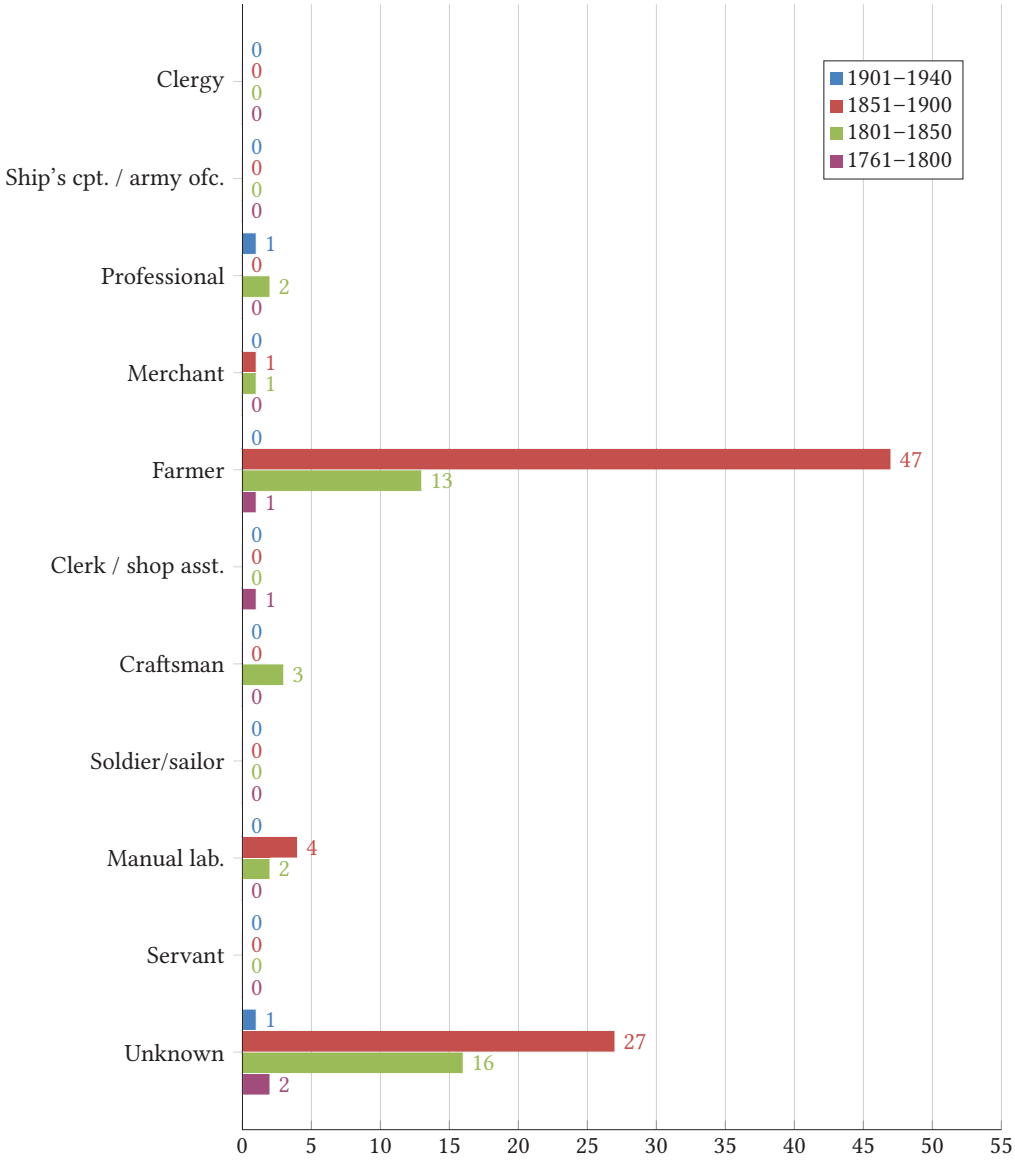



**Figure 6.11**: Men: tokens (n) of unraised long E by social rank

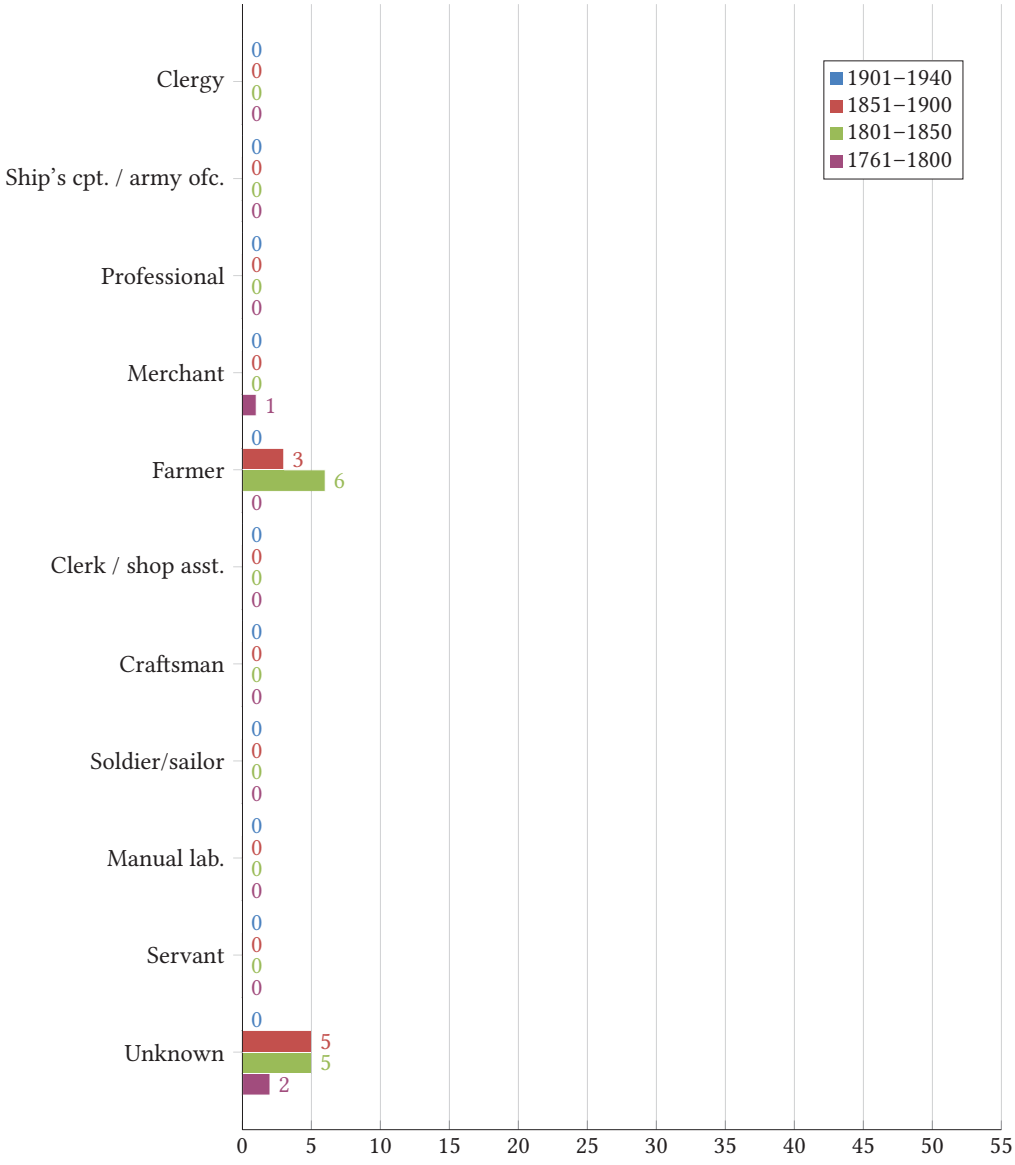



**Figure 6.12:** Women: tokens (n) of unraised long ɛ by social rank

## 6.5 Short E-lowering

*sock [=stock]* ***gats*** *fat in summer if a man is not able to buy this land*
*he can go on and improve on it till he is able to pay fur it*
*with out any* ***rant*** *or lase*
*and a man can* ***gat*** *3 bushels ov corn fur*
*a days work*
(Wm & Robt Mann, Iowa to Joseph Brown, Saintfield, 19.07.1849)

Regarding SIrE, Kallen (2013: 74) notes that the DRESS set has two subgroups – one where the vowel is raised to [ɪ] (discussed in section 6.7) and one where the vowel is lowered to [a]. Kallen further gives *any*, *many*, *anyone*, *anyway*, and *anything* as examples of the latter. These examples seem to be the expected words where the feature occurs today, also in parts of Ulster. The lowering of [ɛ] in *any*, *many* etc. (here referred to as open fronted (*m*)*any*) is certainly found in CORIECOR and discussed in section 6.6, below. However, it seems that there is more to it than the standard examples given above, so that it makes sense to treat the whole phenomenon as short E-lowering (for its counterpart, short E-raising, see section 6.7).

The feature is related to SERVE-lowering (see section 6.10.1), both being lowered forms of ME /e/. Bliss (1979: 204) notes *togadder* 'together' and *Darry* 'Derry' as examples. These are also found in the data from CORIECOR, where 174 tokens of short E-lowering were found (see Table 6.8).

**Table 6.8**: Examples of phonetic representation of short E-lowering (total n = 174)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨altogather⟩ | altogether |
| ⟨anny⟩ | any |
| ⟨chack⟩ | cheque |
| ⟨Darry⟩ | Derry |
| ⟨dath⟩ | death |
| ⟨halth⟩ | health |
| ⟨madicens⟩ | medicines |
| ⟨ractor⟩ | rector |
| ⟨respactable⟩ | respectable |
| ⟨thrash⟩ | thresh |

Interesting in this respect is that half of the tokens (87) come from 1841–1860, as seen in Figure 6.13. This peak is partly due to the examples produced by a farmer from an unknown location with 24 tokens.

The normalised frequencies in Table 6.9 and Figure 6.14 again seem to imply the impact of the National Schools system after 1831. The number of tokens per 10,000 words rises steeply in the decades following the founding of the schools, probably due to an increase in overall writing skills (though not necessarily in standard English orthography). Eventually, as literacy becomes more widespread, the trend drops again.

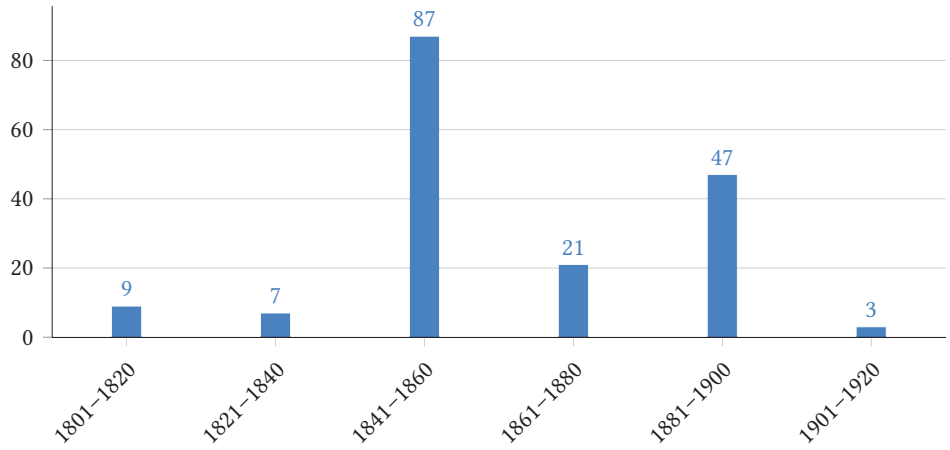



**Figure 6.13:** Chronological distribution (n) of short ɛ-lowering (total n = 174)

**Table 6.9:** Occurrence (n) and rate per 10,000 words of short ɛ-lowering

| Period | Words | Tokens | Pr. 10k |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1801–1820 | 198,124 | 9 | 0.5 |
| 1821–1840 | 303,135 | 7 | 0.2 |
| 1841–1860 | 675,746 | 87 | 1.3 |
| 1861–1880 | 569,659 | 21 | 0.4 |
| 1881–1900 | 750,456 | 47 | 0.6 |
| 1901–1920 | 324,670 | 3 | 0.1 |
| Total | 3,060,366 | 174 | 0.6 |

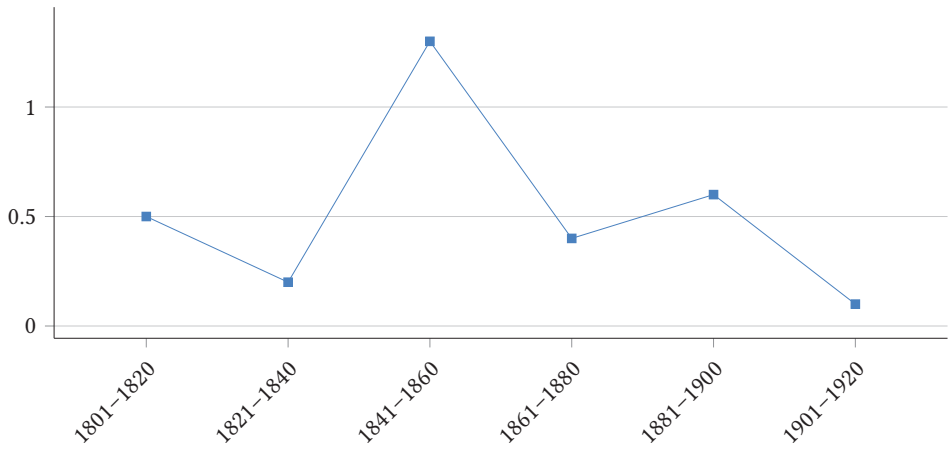
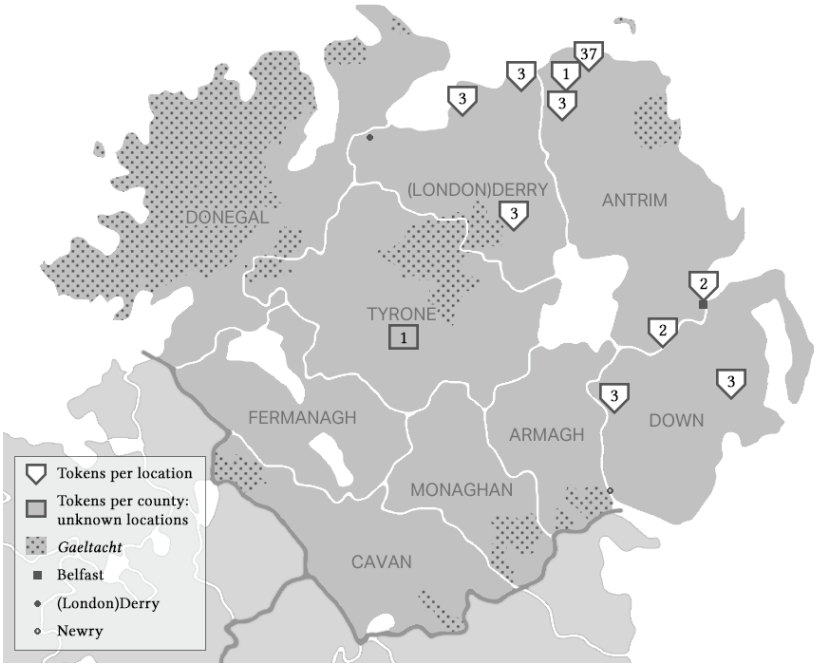


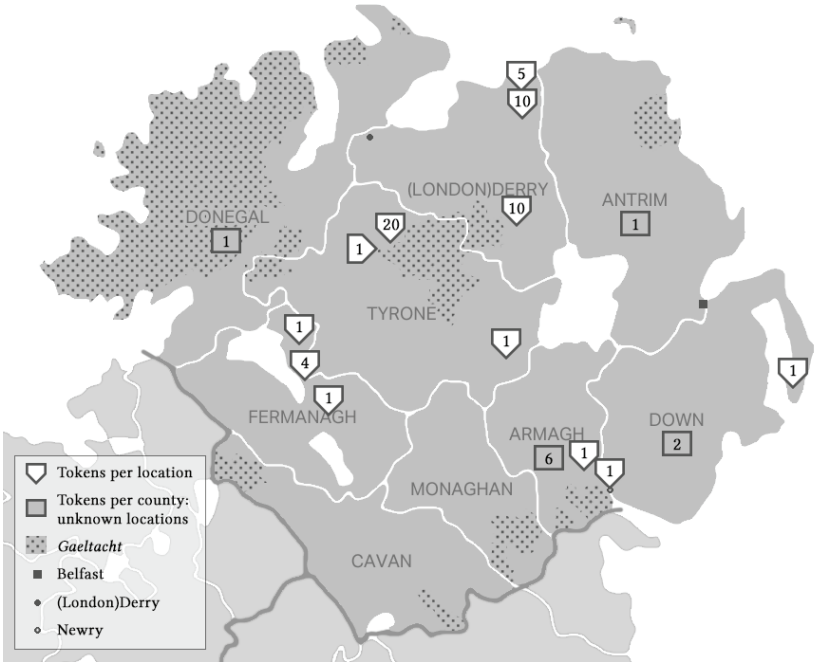

**Figure 6.14:** Normalised frequencies of short ɛ-lowering per 10,000 words

### 6.5.1 Geographical location

Maps 6.11 and 6.12 seem to suggest a south-western spread of short E-lowering during the nineteenth century. Initially, there are clusters in typical USc areas in northern Co. (London)Derry and Co. Antrim, as well as between the Ards Peninsula and Lough Neagh. A few generations later, the feature can be found bordering the mid-Ulster *Gaeltacht*, in southern Co. Armagh, and as far west as Co. Fermanagh's Lower Lough Erne. There is only one token for the early twentieth century (northern Co. Tyrone), therefore this map is not shown.




**Map 6.11**: 1801–1850: Geographical distribution (n) of short E-lowering




**Map 6.12**: 1851–1900: Geographical distribution (n) of short ɛ-lowering

## 6.5.2 Social rank and gender

Socially, the feature is overwhelmingly found in letters by farmers (during the 1800s) and craftsmen (almost exclusively in the first half of the 1800s; see Figures 6.15 and 6.16). Although the feature was also found in nearly all other social ranks, these numbers are extremely low compared to farmers and craftsmen. One of the farmers' letters contained 24 tokens, while most of the tokens for craftsmen (37) come from just two brothers.

Female tokens were mainly found in the second half of the nineteenth century, including five from farmers and two from servants. The remainder were of indeterminable social rank.

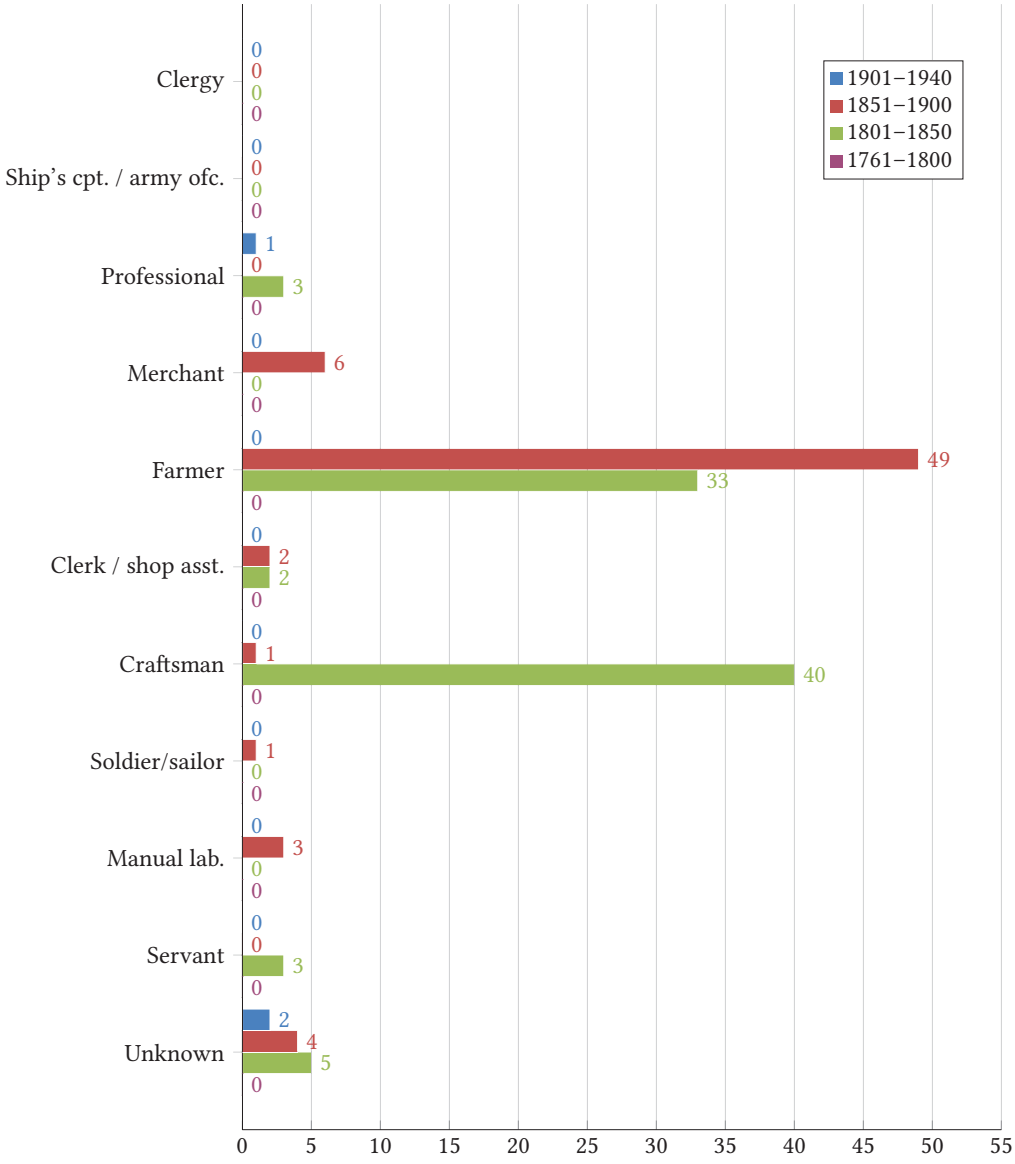



**Figure 6.15**: Men: tokens (n) of short E-lowering by social rank

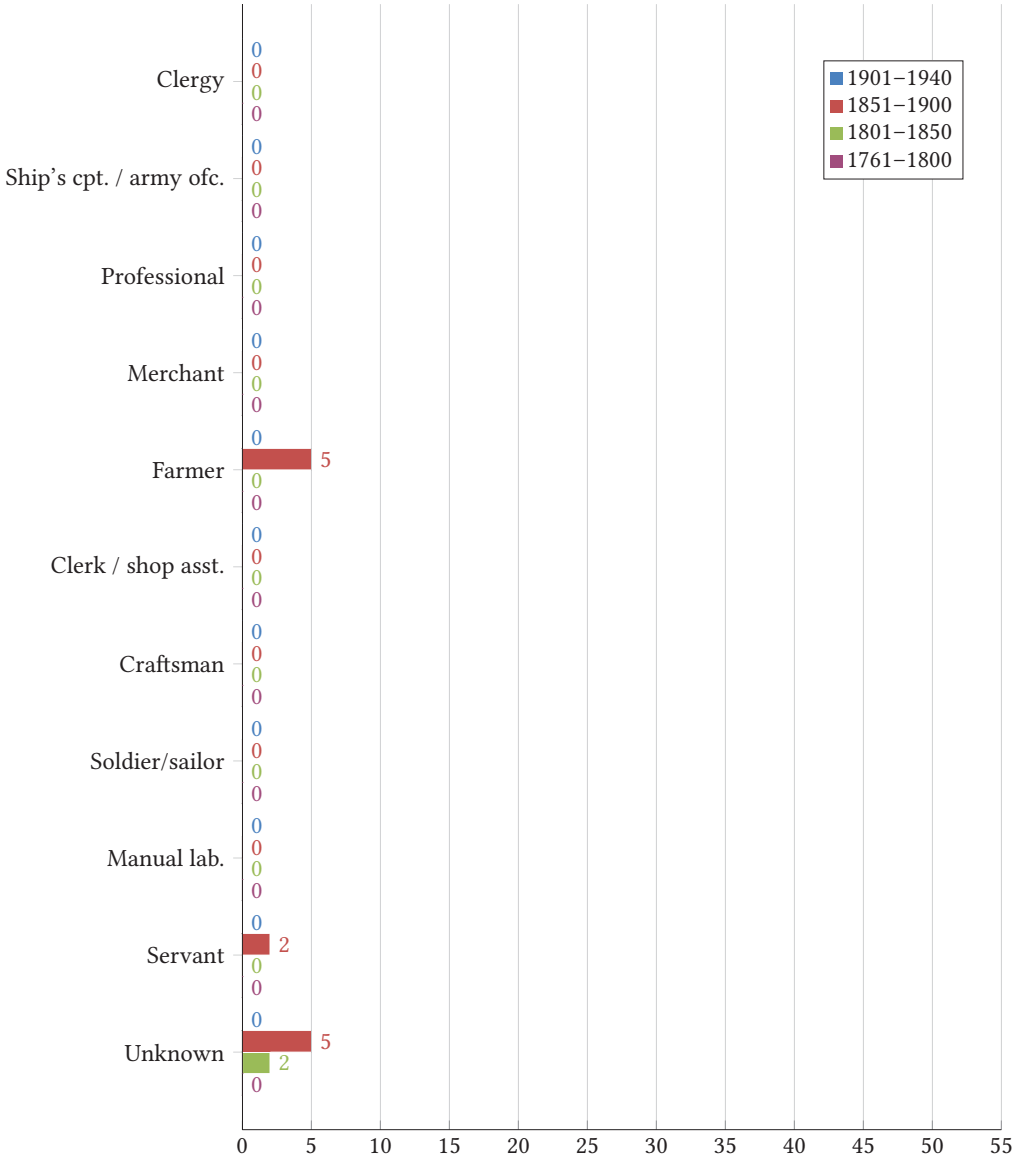



**Figure 6.16**: Women: tokens (n) of short ɛ-lowering by social rank

## 6.6 Open fronted (*m*)*any*

> *I still*
> *yet remember your last look and grip on leaving at*
> *Townhill there has* ***manny*** *things transpired and*
> ***manny*** *has gone to their long home Since that time*
> (Samuel & Ann Nimks, USA to the Anderson Family, Northern Ireland, 04.02.1861)

A number of non-standard spellings of *any* and *many* with double ⟨nn⟩ were found in CORIECOR. This may represent a very common Irish pronunciation of these words with an open fronted vowel [æ ~ a] rather than [ɛ]. Open fronted (*m*)*any* is quite widespread in North and South Ireland and is found even in the speech of Irish TV and radio presenters, with apparently no stigmatisation (McCafferty, personal communication). A recent example of awareness of the feature comes from Irish novelist Roddy Doyle who uses Dublin working class literary dialect extensively in his dialogues. The following piece of dialogue is from a recent series of Facebook posts by Doyle, also published in the *Irish Times*:[3]

> –Yeah – earlier. I was watchin' Game o' Thrones, so me head was full o' swords an' tits –.
> –We live in a golden age o' television drama.
> –We fuckin' do. **Annyway**. There's a woman there – at the door, like – an' she's talkin'. But I'm still thinkin', like, I wouldn't mind bein' a dwarf. So it's a while before I notice the 'No' sticker on her jacket – and her leaflets. (Doyle 2015)

In addition to other phonetic representations, such as [n] for /ŋ/ (or G-dropping) and dropped consonants in *and* and *of*, the use of ⟨annyway⟩ is clearly meant to convey an open fronted vowel in the Dubliner's speech. Kallen (2013: 74), while discussing the DRESS set, argues that for SIrE it might make more sense to assign 'words such as *any*, *many*, *anyone*, *anyway*, and *anything* where [a] is used instead of [ɛ]' to the TRAP set, as the relevant words are rather few in number. Hickey (2007: 317) also notes that in SIrE, '[c]onservative speakers may have [æ] for [ɛ] in *many* and *any*.

It is thus clear that open fronted (*m*)*any* is a common feature of SIrE, but it occurs also in NIrE, though not in USc.[4] In the *English dialect of Donegal: a glossary*, Traynor (1953: 6–7, 180) transcribes *any* as [a:ni], [o:ni] and *many* as [maa:ni], [mo:ni]. Co. Donegal has both MUE and USc dialect areas (as well as a significant *Gaeltacht* area), so [a:] and [o:] versions of the pronunciation of A in these words make sense. Gregg's (1985) study of the Scotch-Irish dialect boundaries in Ulster reveals a similar pattern. His geographical data shows that *any* and *many* in general have [ʌ ~ ɔ(:) ~ ö] in counties Down, (London)Derry, Antrim, and Donegal, with some occurrences of [ɛ] in Co. Down (Gregg 1985: part 2, 122–136). Sporadically however, [a] is registered in mid-Co. Down in the MUE area, and [ɑ] in mid- and north Co. Down on the border between the MUE and USc areas. [ɑ] is also found along the shores of Lough Neagh in southern Co. Antrim in Gregg's survey.

Tokens for this feature do not appear until 1816, and as seen in Figure 6.17 occur with great variation in number until the early twentieth century.

[3] Doyle's posts are commentaries in support of a Yes vote in the marriage equality referendum in Ireland in the style of his *Two pints* (2012) and *Two more pints* (2014), which are collections of short dialogues featuring two men chewing the fat in a Dublin pub.

[4] Robinson (2007: 270, 278) gives, for instance, *onie* and *monie* for *any*, *many* in his *Ulster-Scots grammar*.

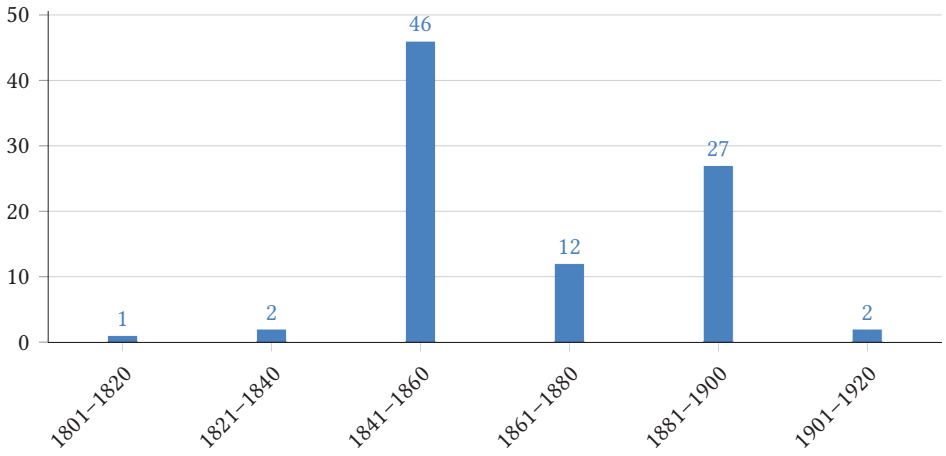



**Figure 6.17:** Chronological distribution (n) of open fronted (*m*)*any* (total n = 90)

Writers who display open fronted (*m*)*any* either consistently use the spellings ⟨anney⟩ and ⟨manney⟩ or ⟨anny⟩ and ⟨manny⟩, though some also occasionally use the standard spelling alongside the non-standard. Interestingly, most of the tokens (67) come from a rather small group of writers who either show the feature in multiple letters or who are part of a family network who all show phonetic representation of the feature in their writing. Table 6.10 shows that the non-standard spellings were typical of some recurring writers or within groups of family members.

**Table 6.10:** Open fronted (*m*)*any* in family networks / multiple letters from the same writer (n = 67)

| Writer | Letters | Tokens (n) | Location | Time span |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Benjamin Neely | 2 | ⟨anny⟩ (1), ⟨manny⟩ (1) | Burnally, Co. (L.)Derry | 1816–1835 |
| Jonathan W. Smith | 8 | ⟨anney⟩ (32), ⟨manny⟩ (4) | Moycraig, Co. Antrim | 1845–1848 |
| Robert Smith | 1 | ⟨anney⟩ (1) | | 1846 |
| Samuel Nimicks | 3 | ⟨anny⟩ (4) | Aghadowey, Co. (L.)Derry | 1859 |
| Ann Nimicks | 1 | ⟨anny⟩ (1), ⟨manny⟩ (3) | | 1861 |
| (Anon.) Nimicks | 1 | ⟨anny⟩ (1), ⟨manny⟩ (1) | | 1861 |
| John Moon | 2 | ⟨anny⟩ (2) | (Unknown location) | 1875–1881 |
| John S. Sinclair | 6 | ⟨anny⟩ (5), ⟨manny⟩ (1) | Draperstown, Co. (L.)Derry | 1881–1889 |
| Ann Jane Sinclair | 1 | ⟨manny⟩ (2) | | 1881 |
| Margaret Sinclair | 1 | ⟨anny⟩ (1) | | 1888 |
| Lytle Black | 3 | ⟨anny⟩ (3), ⟨manny⟩ (1) | Co. Armagh | 1889 |
| John J. Smyth | 3 | ⟨manny⟩ (4) | Castledamph, Co. Tyrone | 1893–1895 |
| William Smyth | 3 | ⟨anny⟩ (6) | | 1891–1896 |
| Neal Rogers | 2 | ⟨manny⟩ (2) | (Unknown location) | 1911–1913 |

**Geographical location**

The distribution of tokens for open fronted (*m*)*any* means that normalised frequencies or social rank charts would serve no purpose. When it comes to social rank, especially farmers and craftsmen are represented: 31 tokens are produced by farmers and 37 by the Smith brothers, who worked as distillers.[5] Jonathan Smith did the writing, it seems, as most letters are written by him, also on behalf of his brother Robert, with 11 tokens in one letter. The remaining 22 tokens are distributed as follows: five from a merchant, three from a carriage driver, two each from a tailor's assistant, a teacher, and a labourer, and one from a nanny.

Tokens for open fronted (*m*)*any* were mainly found in counties London(Derry), Antrim, and Tyrone, suggesting that the feature – today much more common in SIrE and also associated with Co. Donegal – was found also in at least central and north-east Ulster in earlier NIrE.

## 6.7 Short E-raising

> *New Orleans has been*
> *visited most severely with the colory, and the*
> ***epidimmick** has not seast yet*
> (George Anderson, New York to James Anderson, Co. Tyrone, 28.06.1833)

The raising of ME /e/ to [ɪ] is a feature of present-day SIrE. It is here referred to as short E-raising, as in e.g. [jɪt] *yet*. The feature was probably imported through southern English varieties during the seventeenth century. Lass (2001: 88) notes that words like *string*, *mingle* were originally [strɛŋ], ['mɛŋgᵊl], thus traces of the raising of ME /e/ can be found in respellings with ⟨i⟩, and also in the word *English* which retains original ⟨e⟩. Evidence that short E-raising was common in some words in southern BrE in the late eighteenth century is found in Nares (1784: 21), who advises readers that E is pronounced [ɪ] in *English*, *spermaceti* (though he does not say in which syllable), *pretty*, *yes*, and *yesterday*.

Table 6.11 shows examples of words in CORIECOR with evidence of short E-raising.

[5] I have included these brothers (who have contributed to several features in the present thesis) in the social rank category *craftsmen*. It is debatable whether a distiller belongs here or in, e.g. *manual labourer*. However, they also seem to have been partly in charge of bartending, which might tip them over into *merchant*. Creating liquor takes some skill, and, combined with their other duties, I have opted for *craftsmen* as an appropriate social rank for the Smith brothers.

**Table 6.11:** Examples of phonetic representation of short E-raising (total n = 228)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨diriction⟩ | direction |
| ⟨Gifgut⟩ | Geffcott |
| ⟨niver⟩ | never |
| ⟨Pinnsilvennia⟩ | Pennsylvania |
| ⟨plinty⟩ | plenty |
| ⟨thin⟩ | then |
| ⟨trinch⟩ | trench |
| ⟨whin⟩ | when |
| ⟨whither⟩ | whether[a] |
| ⟨will⟩ | well |

[a] Bliss (1979: 203) does not include *whither* (in his case ⟨fither⟩) as evidence for short E-raising because 'the word has *i*-forms from an early age.' The OED verifies this. However, I believe that ⟨whither⟩ still renders pronunciation and have opted to leave it in.

In Ireland, short E-raising is common in south-western and mid-western rural SIrE (Hickey 2007: 305) or in 'traditional dialects' (Kallen 1999: 79), usually only pre-nasally, though exceptions occur, as in *yet*, *get*. According to Kallen (1999: 79), the feature is rare in Ulster. The feature is found in a wide variety of following consonants in CORIECOR, with nasals only making up a small portion.

Figure 6.18 shows an interesting development. The number of tokens gradually increases from 1761 to 1860, after which it drops to pre-1800 values, but then suddenly peaks in the final decades of the 1800s. The reason for this peak is a large number of tokens from the same network – the Smyth family letters (38) and George R. Wood (19) – which together make up about half of the tokens for 1881–1900. Unfortunately, Wood is not placeable geographically, but the Smyth tokens are from northern Co. Tyrone (see Map 6.15 in section 6.7.1).

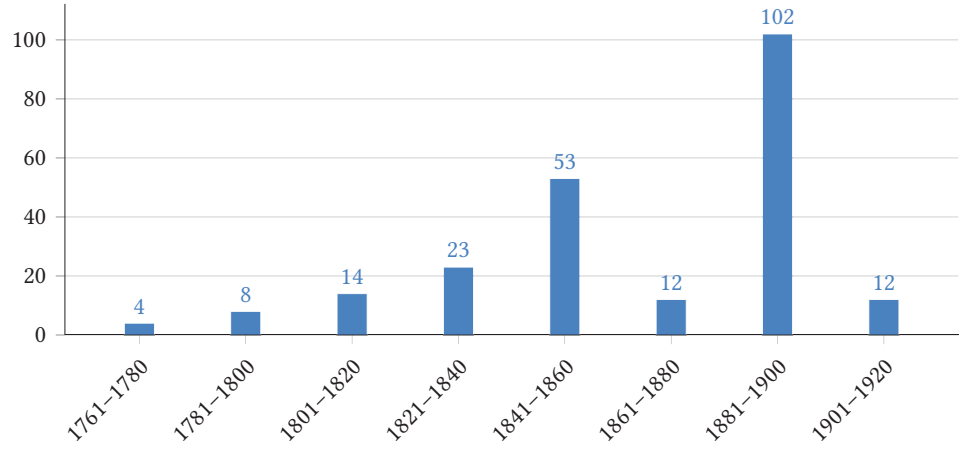



**Figure 6.18:** Chronological distribution (n) of short E-raising (n = 228)

Normalised frequencies for the data reveal nonetheless that the peak in the late 1800s is not as sharp as it first appears. It is certainly slightly higher than the rest of the corpus, especially due to the sudden decrease in 1861–1880, but Figure 6.19 shows that the presence of short E-raising tokens before this is rather stable.

**Table 6.12:** Occurrence (n) and rate per 10,000 words of short E-raising

| Period | Words | Tokens | Pr. 10k |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1761–1780 | 57,362 | 4 | 0.7 |
| 1781–1800 | 105,304 | 8 | 0.8 |
| 1801–1820 | 198,124 | 14 | 0.7 |
| 1821–1840 | 303,135 | 23 | 0.8 |
| 1841–1860 | 675,746 | 53 | 0.8 |
| 1861–1880 | 569,659 | 12 | 0.2 |
| 1881–1900 | 750,456 | 102 | 1.4 |
| 1901–1920 | 324,670 | 12 | 0.4 |
| Total | 3,060,366 | 228 | 0.7 |

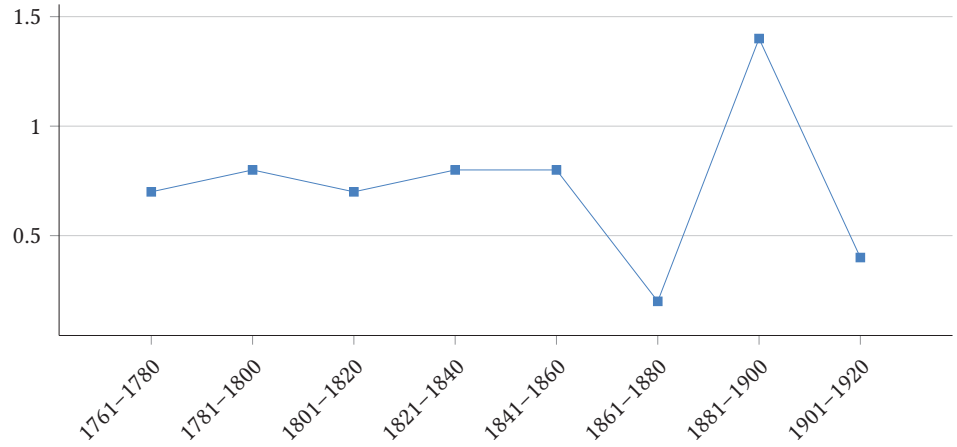
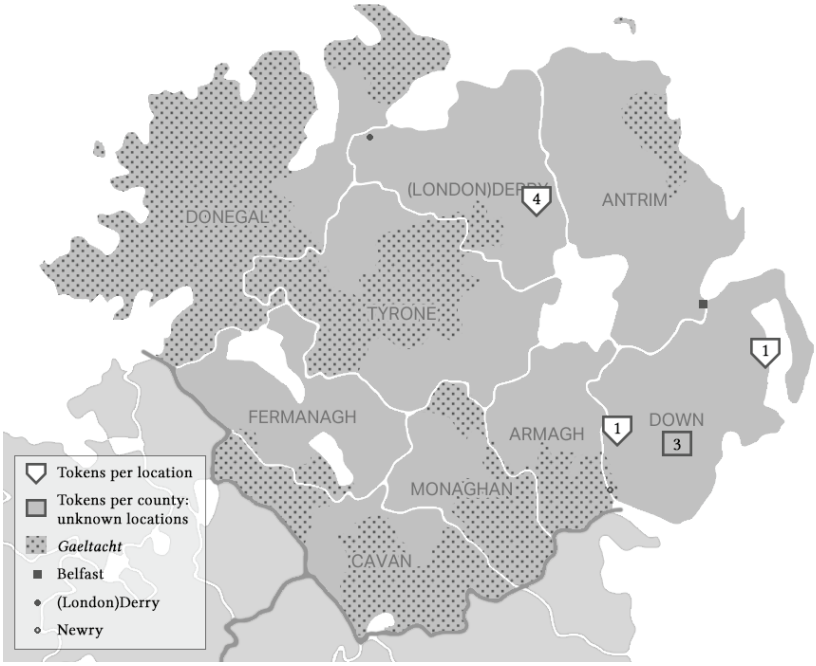


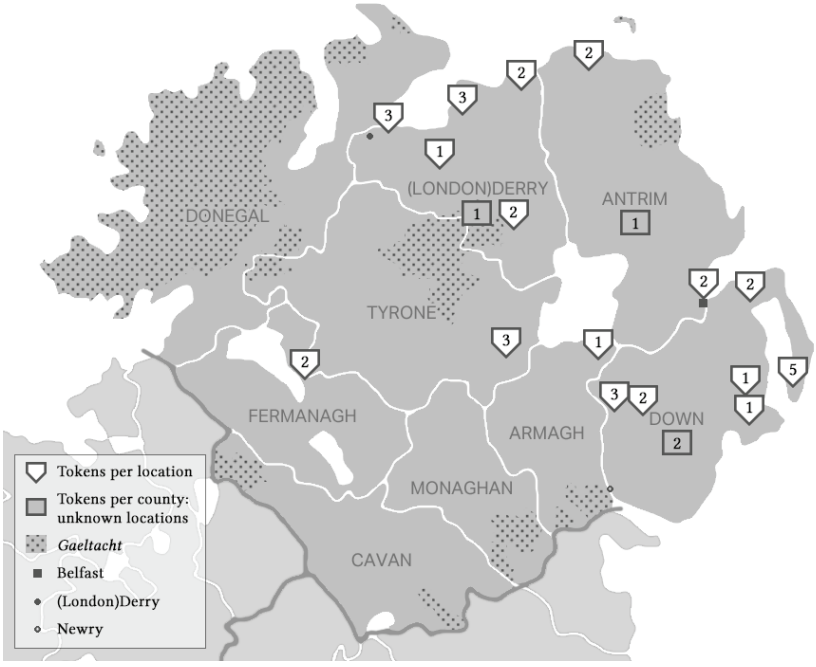

**Figure 6.19:** Normalised frequencies of short E-raising per 10,000 words

## 6.7.1 Geographical location

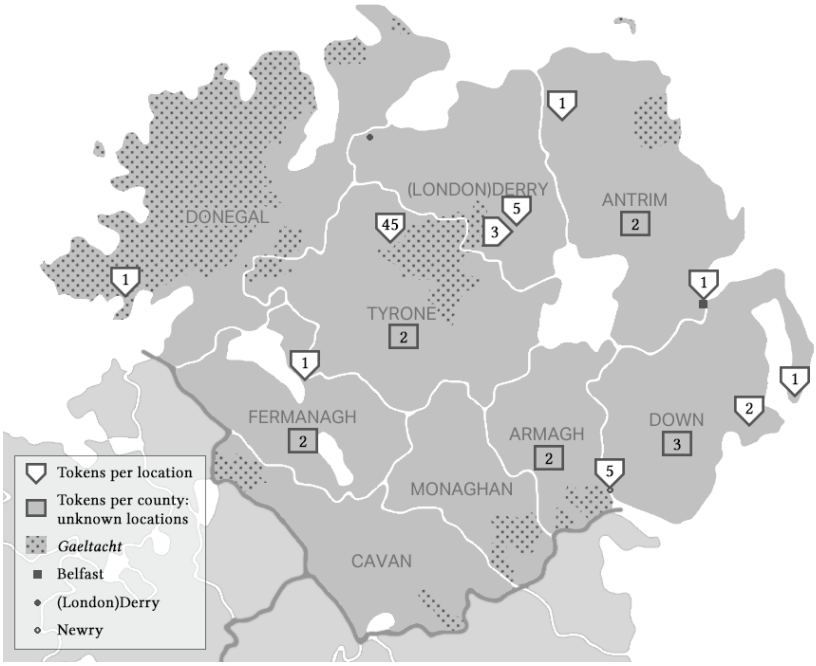
While short E-raising is considered a south-western feature of SIrE today, there is much evidence of it having been common in earlier NIrE. While there are few tokens before 1800 (Map 6.13), in Map 6.14, tokens are plentiful in much of counties (London)Derry and Down. Map 6.15 shows an even greater spread across Ulster. The 12 tokens in Map 6.16 all come from the Smyths.




**Map 6.13**: 1761–1800: Geographical distribution (n) of short E-raising




**Map 6.14**: 1801–1850: Geographical distribution (n) of short E-raising




**Map 6.15**: 1851–1900: Geographical distribution (n) of short E-raising


**Map 6.16**: 1901–1940: Geographical distribution (n) of short E-raising

### 6.7.2 Social rank and gender

Short E-raising is different from many other features discussed here in light of social rank in that it seems to occur in nearly all layers of society, from servants to the clergy (most clearly seen in Figure 6.20). It is possible that the feature was found acceptable among orthoepists and grammarians (see the remarks of Nares (1784), cited above) and thus not actively commented on. Female tokens are scarce as usual (see Figure 6.21), but seem not to be restricted to any sub-period. Hence, it cannot be known what part they played in the spread of the feature. As would be expected, male tokens are certainly most common for farmers, especially during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

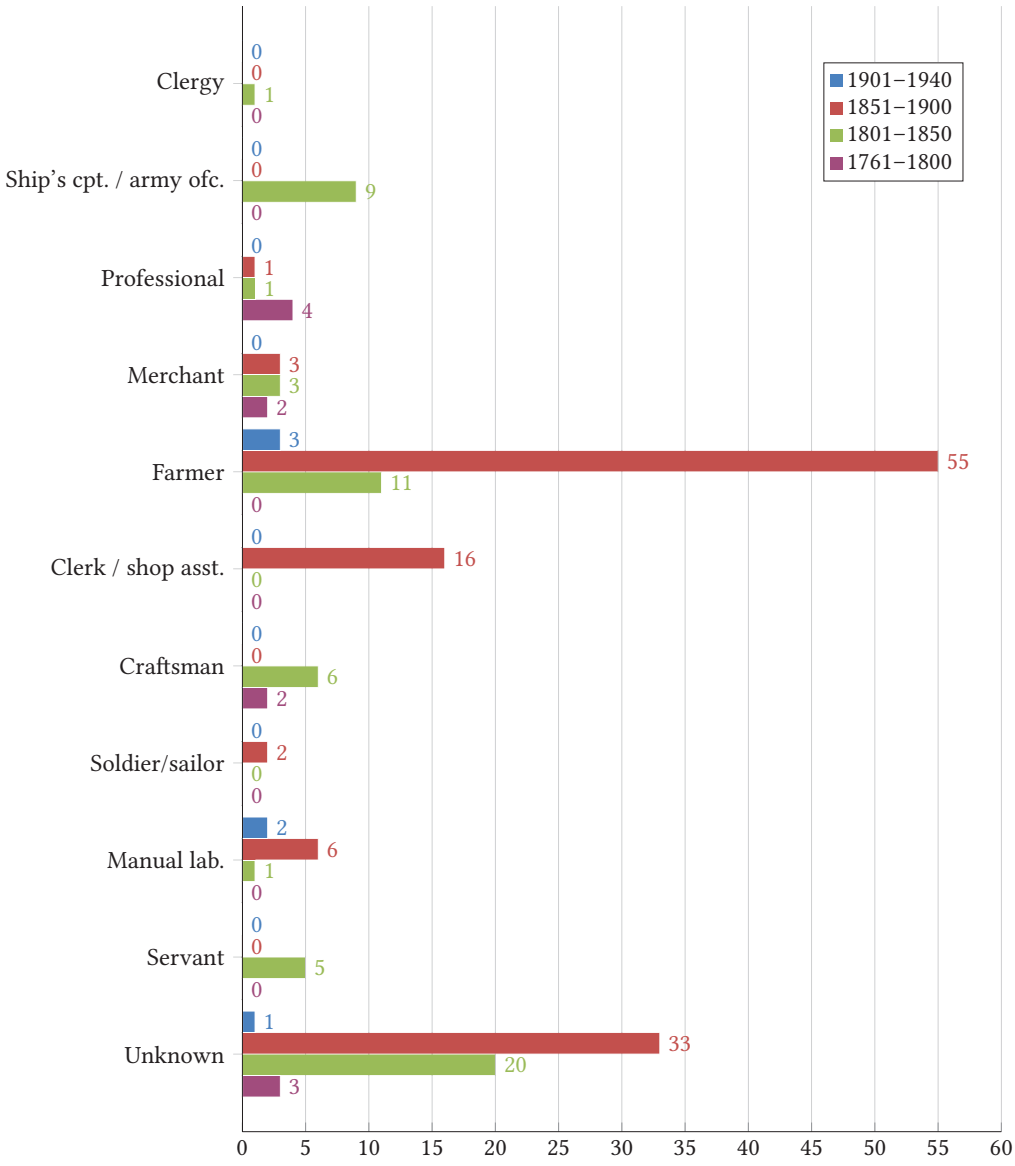



**Figure 6.20**: Men: tokens (n) of short E-raising by social rank

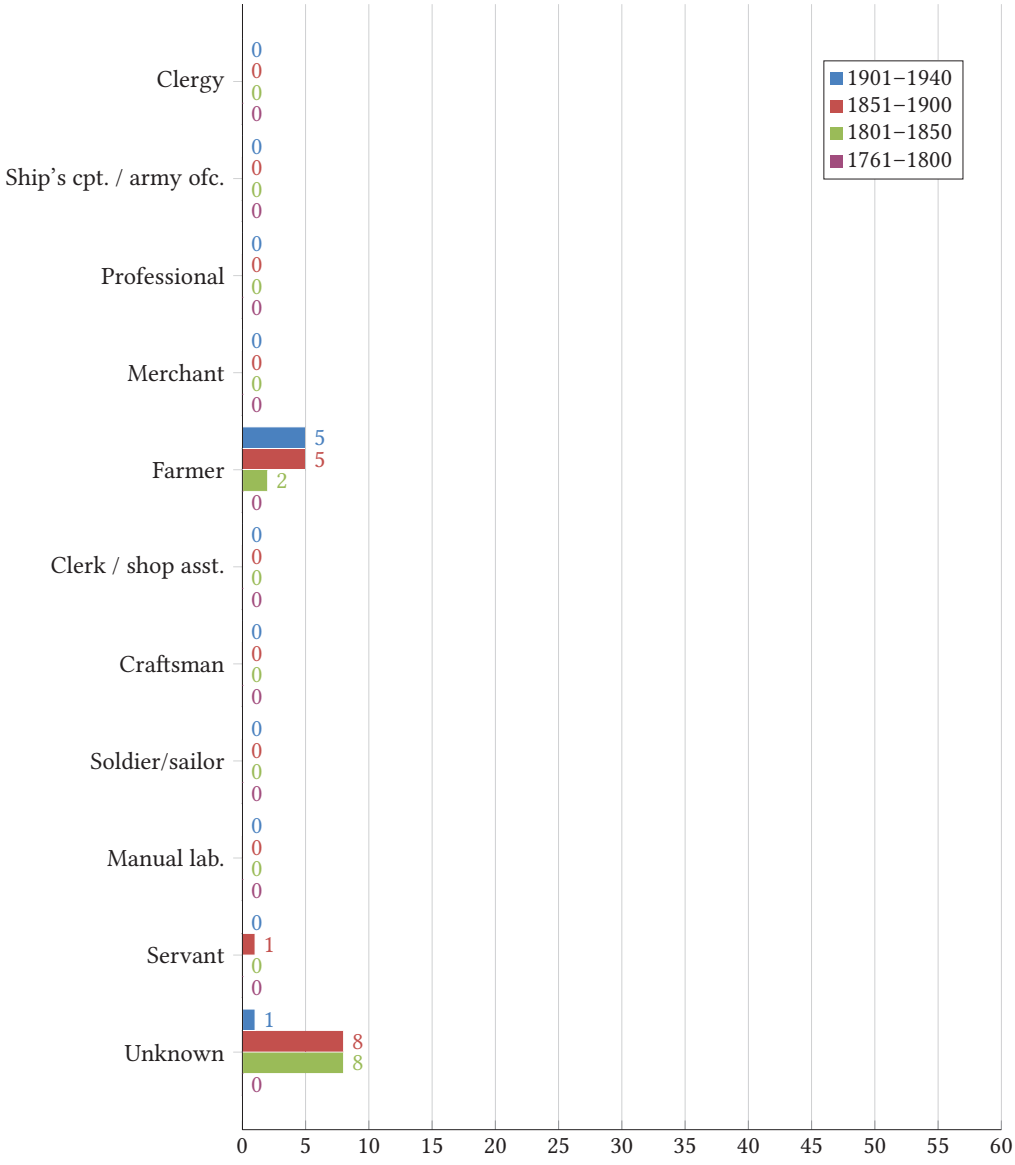
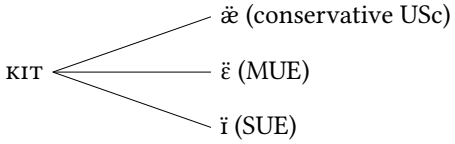



**Figure 6.21:** Women: tokens (n) of short ɛ-raising by social rank

## 6.8 KIT-centering

*We can farnish*
***safeshent** Proof Regarding*
*Relashingship if nesesary*
(C. J. McCann, USA to J. Peel, Armagh, 01.11.1894)

Bliss (1979: 202) notes that most non-standard spellings in historical IrE texts suggest a lowering of ME ⟨i⟩, e.g. ⟨hest⟩, *hist* (exclamation, 'to urge on'), ⟨drenk⟩, *drink*. According to Ó hÚrdail (1997: 183), Ulster dialect features include a 'general lowering tendency particularly in the case of front vowels,' though centralising is certainly part of it as well. A centered realisation of the KIT vowel was for instance found by Corrigan (2010: 36) in 'traditional' speakers of USc who varied between [æ̈] and [ë], but similar behaviour is found in all of the major Ulster dialects:[6]




The feature is also mentioned in the appendix to a mid-nineteenth century letter in CORIECOR, where a Pennsylvanian schoolmaster (though born in Co. Antrim) instructs his nephew on the 'wrong' pronunciation of English by the Irish:

*Now for the second sound of* i*, as heard in* pin*,* tin *etc, you sound as if written* pen*, or* pan *or something like it. It is pronounced nearly right in Belfast, but then they squeezed it a little to* (sic, PMdR) *much into* e.
('Appendix 2,' John Kerr, Pennsylvania, USA to a nephew, Ireland, n.d. (1840s))

KIT-centering was found 88 times in CORIECOR. See Table 6.13 below for examples of the representation of KIT-centering.

**Table 6.13**: Examples of phonetic representation of KIT-centering (total n = 88)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨defickilty⟩ | difficulty |
| ⟨enteresting⟩ | interesting |
| ⟨feguratively⟩ | figuratively |
| ⟨Jemmy⟩ | Jimmy |
| ⟨numbleness⟩ | nimbleness |
| ⟨postcrept⟩ | postscript |
| ⟨prasoners⟩ | prisoners |
| ⟨Quen⟩ | Quinn |
| ⟨red⟩ | rid |
| ⟨vesit⟩ | visit |

In present-day spoken NIrE, centralised [ɪ] often occurs before /l/ and velars in NIrE (Corrigan 2010: 36), though this is the case for only 17 of the 88 tokens from CORIECOR (e.g.

[6] Vowel quality distinctions after McCafferty (2007: 124)

⟨cheldrin⟩ *children*, ⟨well⟩ *will*, ⟨Gelean⟩ *Gillian*). The remaining tokens were found before a range of different consonants so that no pattern emerges. As seen in Table 6.13, in most cases ⟨e⟩ is used to denote the centralised KIT vowel, but ⟨a⟩ appears 11 times in the data and ⟨u⟩ four times (see Table 6.13 for examples).

Figure 6.22 shows that most tokens are from the mid and late nineteenth century (31 and 23 tokens, respectively). However, normalised frequencies for the data reveal that the feature actually fluctuates while declining from 0.7 occurrences per 10,000 words in 1761–1780 to 0.1 in 1901–1920 (see Table 6.14 and Figure 6.23).

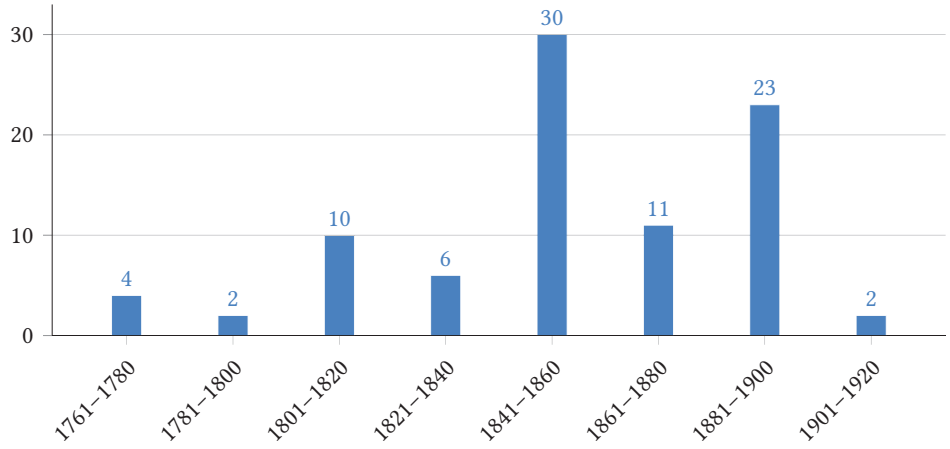



**Figure 6.22:** Chronological distribution (n) of KIT-centering (n = 88)

**Table 6.14:** Occurrence (n) and rate per 10,000 words of KIT-centering

| Period | Words | Tokens | Pr. 10k |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1761–1780 | 57,362 | 4 | 0.7 |
| 1781–1800 | 105,304 | 2 | 0.2 |
| 1801–1820 | 198,124 | 10 | 0.5 |
| 1821–1840 | 303,135 | 6 | 0.2 |
| 1841–1860 | 675,746 | 30 | 0.4 |
| 1861–1880 | 569,659 | 11 | 0.2 |
| 1881–1900 | 750,456 | 23 | 0.3 |
| 1901–1920 | 324,670 | 2 | 0.1 |
| Total | 3,060,366 | 88 | 0.3 |

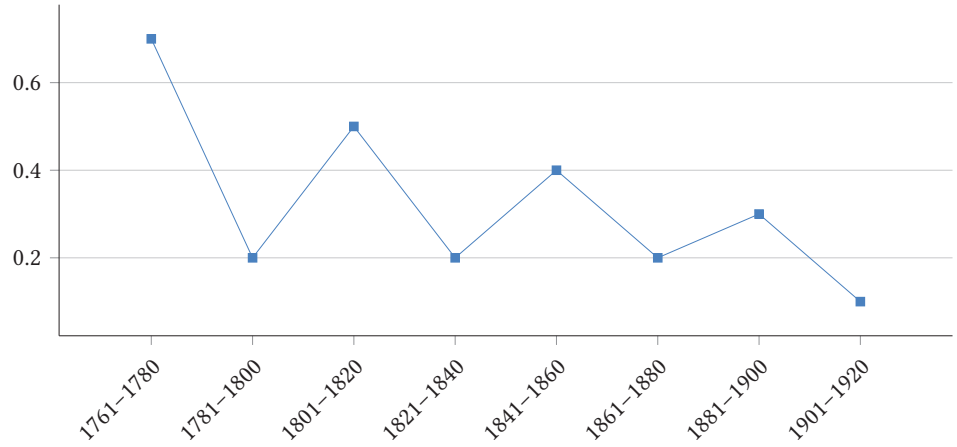
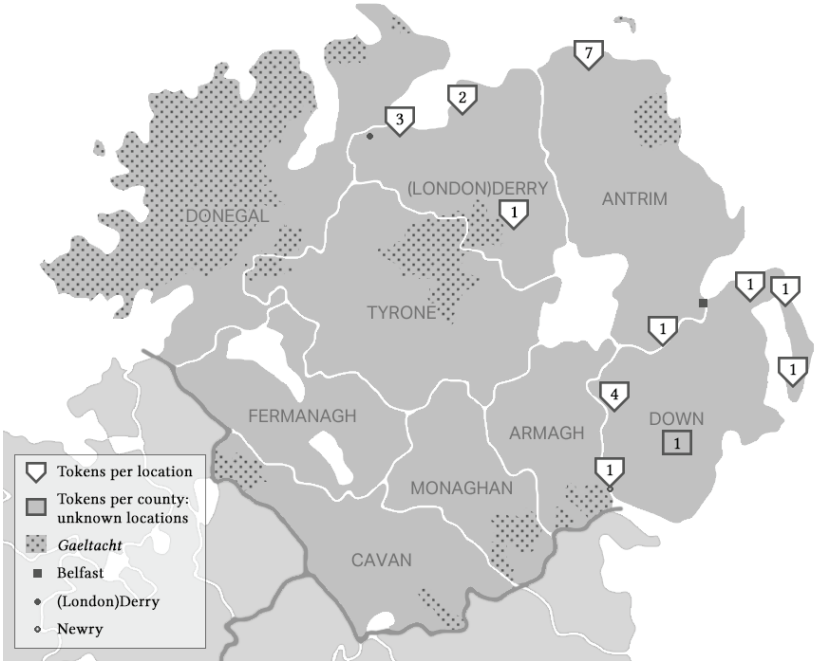



**Figure 6.23:** Normalised frequencies of KIT-centering per 10,000 words

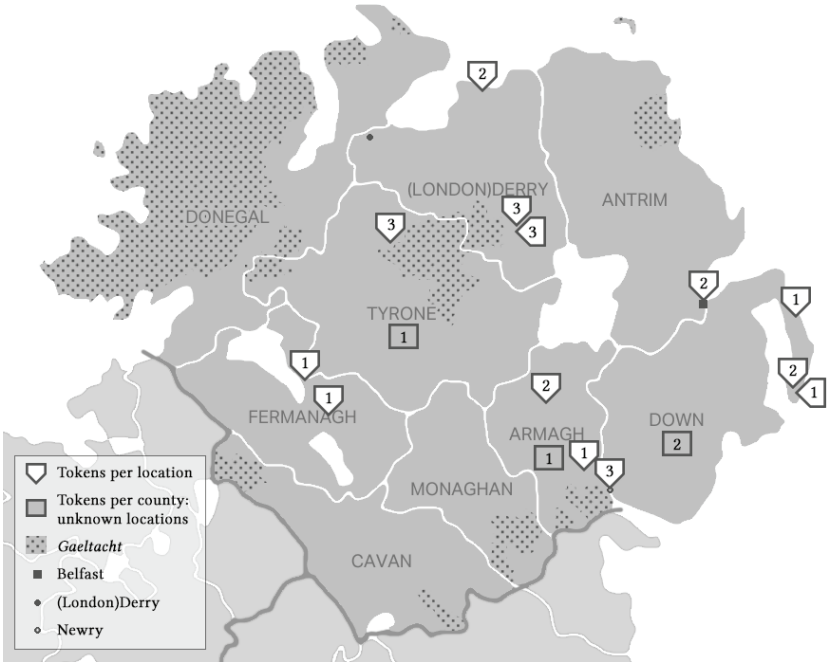
### 6.8.1 Geographical location

KIT-centering is today most closely associated with (London)Derry and Belfast working class speech and (conservative) USc (Corrigan 2010: 36). Yet the data from CORIECOR, while certainly having tokens in USc areas and near both cities, shows a rather widespread pattern (see especially Map 6.19). It would seem that the geographical distribution of the feature has contracted northwards after 1900, if we assume Corrigan's observations to be accurate.


**Map 6.17**: 1761–1800: Geographical distribution (n) of KIT-centering




**Map 6.18**: 1801–1850: Geographical distribution (n) of KIT-centering




**Map 6.19**: 1851–1900: Geographical distribution (n) of kit-centering


**Map 6.20**: 1901–1940: Geographical distribution (n) of kit-centering

### 6.8.2 Social rank and gender

The association with present-day working class speech in (London)Derry and Belfast appears to be visible already in the nineteenth century. Female tokens are unclear when it comes to social rank (see Figure 6.25), but the male data clearly shows that KIT-centering was common amongst farmers, craftsmen, and merchants in the early 1800s, and moved to encompass social ranks further down the ladder during the latter half of the nineteenth century (see Figure 6.24).

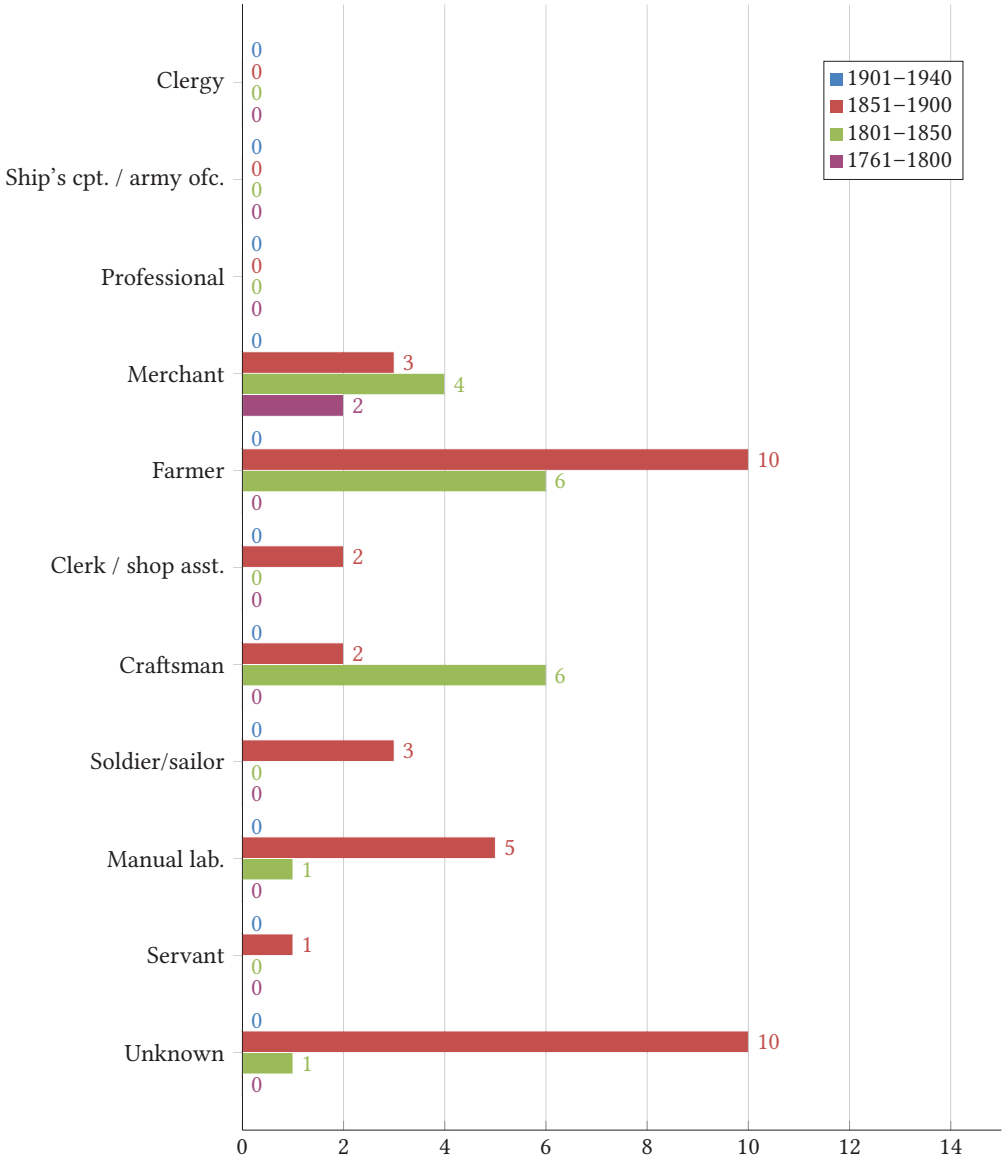



**Figure 6.24**: Men: tokens (n) of KIT-centering by social rank

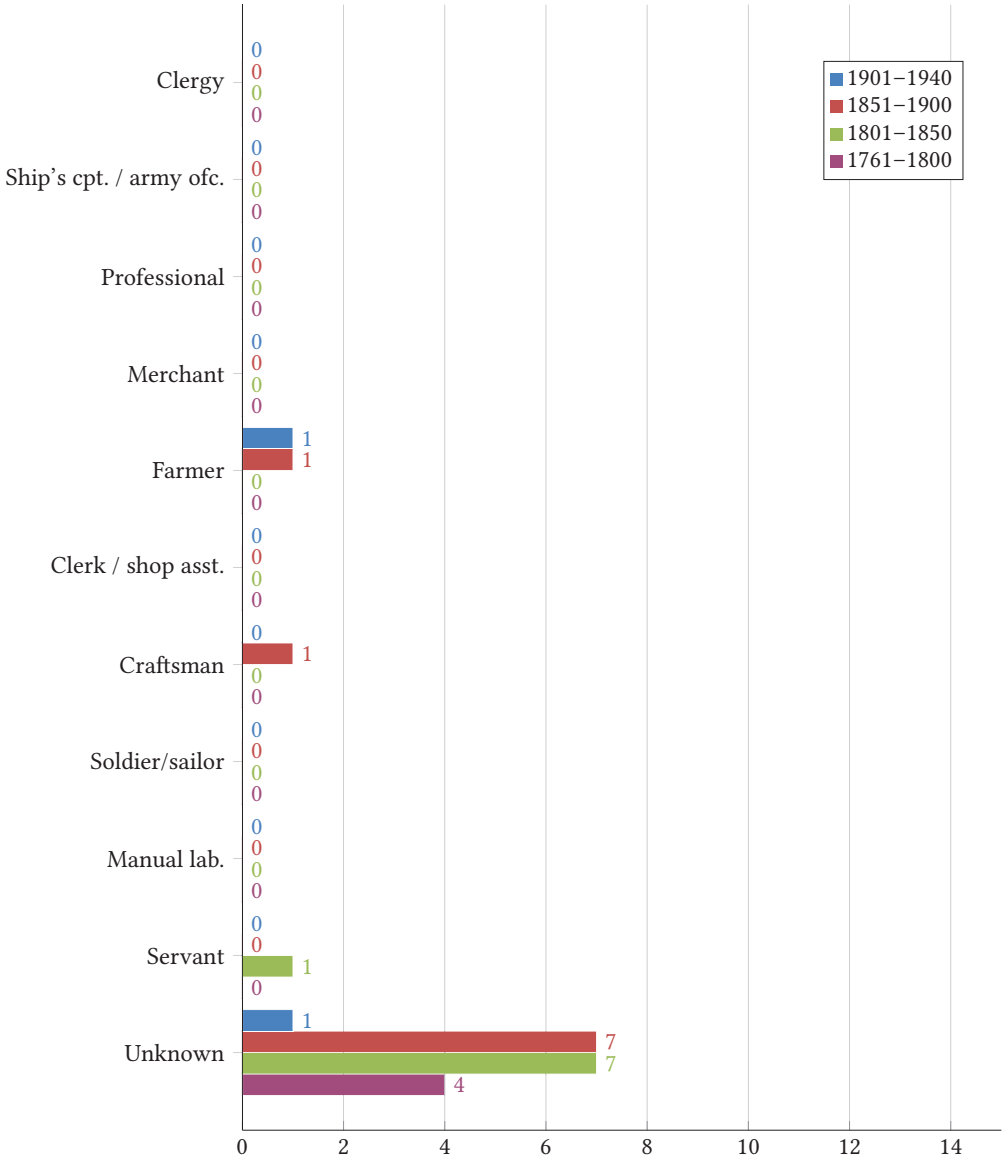



**Figure 6.25**: Women: tokens (n) of KIT-centering by social rank

## 6.9 Unrounded short o

*I hope you will write the first* ***appertunity*** *and*
*let me know how things are with you [and] your Brother*
(C. Martin, USA to Ebenezer Martin, Banbridge, Co. Down, 13.12.1812)

The quality of o in the letter transcript quoted above is today well-known as a salient feature of most varieties of AmE, including the South, Midland, and New England varieties

(Melchers and Shaw 2003: 86), no doubt at least partly due to the significant influx of Scots-Irish immigrants (such as many of the letter writers in CORIECOR) to America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In Ulster, Conservative USc has a low, unrounded (and lengthened) back vowel for OSc /o/, e.g. [tɑ:p] *top*, [sɑ:ft] *soft* (Harris 1985: 19; Hickey 2007: 104), and is 'definitely a characteristic of northern speech' (Hickey 2004: 32). It is also found in several dialects of SIrE, such as 'popular Dublin' speech, (south-)western rural areas, and the supraregional southern variety (Hickey 2004).

If we go back to the sixteenth century, parallel developments in Scotland and in south-west England produce an unrounded vowel in COT words (Johnston 1997: 87), though today, unrounded [ɑ] is still found in Norfolk amongst older speakers Trudgill (2001: 3). Seventeenth-century spellings such as ⟨crass⟩ *cross*, as well as the (ultimately) hyper-correct spellings of Dutch loanwords such as ⟨dollar⟩ *daler* and ⟨boss⟩ *baas* further indicate the EModE vowel quality of late ME /ɔ/ (Minkova 2014: 242–243). Unrounded short O in late-eighteenth century USc is evident in the following stanza from a Co. Antrim 'weaver poet' (note *saft* 'soft' and *aft* 'often'):[7]

> Fok tell how thou, sae far frae daft,
> Whar wind fa'n fruit lie scatter'd saft,
> Will row thysel', wi' cunning craft,
> An' bear awa
> Upon thy back, what sairs thee aft
> A day or twa.
> (*To a Hedge-hog*, Samuel Thomson 1793; in Carpenter 1998: 483)

All instances of phonetic representation of unrounded short O in CORIECOR are presented in Table 6.15.

**Table 6.15**: Phonetic representation of unrounded short O (n = 23)

| Representation | Standard spelling | Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|---|---|
| ⟨apertunity⟩ (2) | opportunity | ⟨hat⟩ | hot |
| ⟨appertunity⟩ (4) | opportunity | ⟨laft⟩ | loft |
| ⟨appertunitys⟩ | opportunities | ⟨Marton⟩ | Morton |
| ⟨Ballygaskin⟩ | Ballygoskin | ⟨mas⟩ | moss |
| ⟨Caravally⟩ | Corvally | ⟨mase⟩ | moss |
| ⟨drapt⟩ | dropped | ⟨sary⟩ | sorry |
| ⟨fram⟩ (4) | from | ⟨scalars⟩ | scholars |
| ⟨gat⟩ | got | ⟨Toranto⟩ | Toronto |

Table 6.15 presents all tokens for unrounded short O in CORIECOR. Most of the non-standard spellings seem clear candidates for unrounded short O, such as ⟨appertunity⟩ *opportunity* and ⟨hat⟩ *hot*. ⟨Marton⟩ *Morton* and ⟨Caravally⟩ *Corvally* are perhaps less clear examples.

[7] Weaver poets were late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century USc poets, often employed in the linen industry. They identified themselves as both Irish and Scottish (*The concise Oxford companion to English literature* 2013).

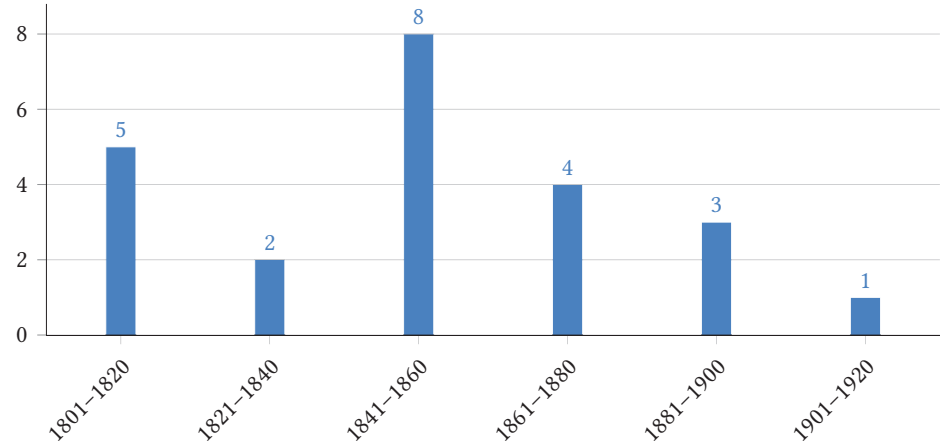
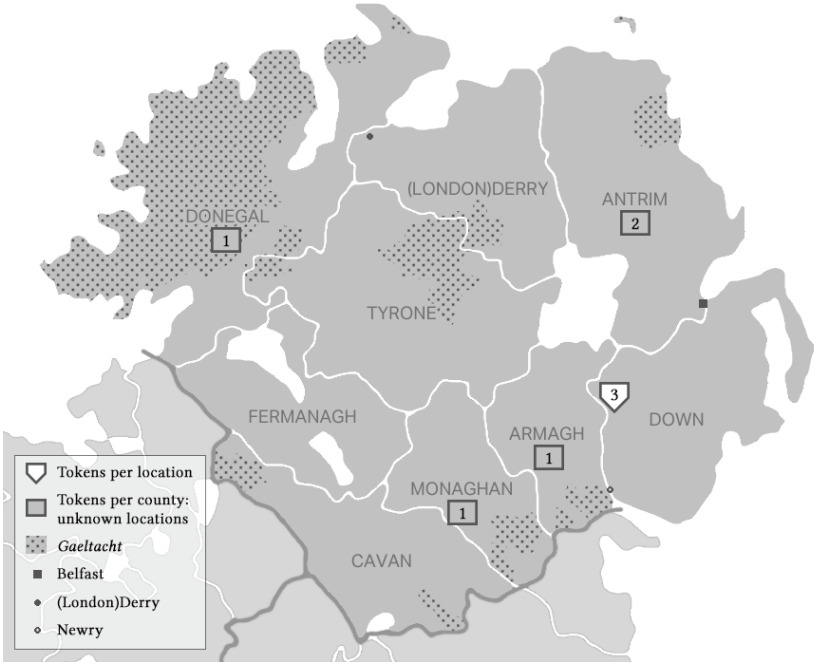



**Figure 6.26**: Chronological distribution (n) of unrounded short o (n = 23)

### 6.9.1 Geographical location

There are nearly too few tokens to justify plotting the results on a map, and many of the tokens are not placeable. Still, the few tokens in Maps 6.21 and 6.22 at least show how very widespread this feature must have been, with tokens as far apart as mid-Fermanagh and eastern Co. Down. For the early twentieth century, there is again only one token for northern Co. Tyrone (this map not shown).

There are too few tokens to plot them on a social rank and gender chart. Most of the writers for whom we know their social rank are farmers (11 tokens). In addition, two tokens come from a merchant, and for 10 writers, rank is unknown. Only three tokens are from women – one from a farmer, two of unknown occupation.




**Map 6.21:** 1801–1850: Geographical distribution (n) of unrounded short o


**Map 6.22:** 1851–1900: Geographical distribution (n) of unrounded short o

## 6.10 Vowels before /r/

NIrE has several vowels which behave in a certain way before /r/. Four conditioned realisations of vowels before /r/ were found in CORIECOR: lowering of ME /e/, [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩, raised ME /a/, and unrounded /o/. These are presented in sections 6.10.1–6.10.6. Because lowering of ME /e/ and [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩ may describe developments within the same shift, their diachronic and geographic distributions are discussed together in section 6.10.3. Due to the relatively low number of tokens for raised ME /a/ and unrounded /o/, the diachronic and geographic occurrence of these features are also discussed jointly in section 6.10.6. In addition to the four features described in this section, one token of a centered SQUARE vowel was found in ⟨fur⟩ *fair* (1893, Castledamph, Co. Tyrone), this again in the Smyth letters.

### 6.10.1 Lowering of ME /e/ before /r/

> *I hope none of you will Neglect writing to me as soon as oppertunity* ***sarves****.*
> (James Horner, Philadelphia to Thomas Horner, Co. (London)Derry, 07.12.1802)

In 1878, nearly two decades before the last occurrence of this feature in CORIECOR, the Scots-Irish priest Abraham Hume writes:

> Thus while the Irishman speaks of *sarvent* and *marchant*, he can quote a similar use in writers not a century old ; he can point to the English *clerk* and *serjeant*, as well as to the French *marchand* ; he can turn on the map to the counties of *Derby* and *Hertford*, and the castle of *Berkely*,—in all of which "er" has the sound of *ar* […] (Hume 1878: 104)

The sequence ⟨ar⟩ for ⟨er⟩ in the quote and letter excerpt from CORIECOR above is known from stereotypical examples of 'old' IrE (and BrE) in phrases such as 'I remain your humble sarvent' in letter endings. For this reason it is sometimes referred to as SERVE-lowering (e.g. Hickey 2007). While the phrase above is not found in the corpus, evidence for lowering of /e/ before /r/ is clear in a number of cases, including in *serve*.

During the fourteenth century, ⟨er⟩ [ɛr] became ⟨ar⟩ [ar] – thus OE *steorra* 'star' > early ME *sterre* [stɛr(ə)] > late ME *star*(*re*) [star] (Minkova 2014: 275). This shift is responsible for discrepancies such as those mentioned by Hume above: BrE [klɑːk] and AmE [klɝːk] for *clerk*, and also [ɑː] in *Berkshire* and *sergeant*. In EModE, [ɛr] (and later [ɜr]/[ɜː]) was largely reintroduced through spelling influence (Minkova 2014: 276). Hickey (2008: 401) regards the feature as originating from English settlers because the shift has no relation to Irish, and notes that it is well-attested for IrE in literary sources up to the nineteenth century. The feature can thus be regarded as a retention of ME lowering of the sequence ⟨er⟩ /ɛr/ to /ɑr/.

Lowering of /e/ before /r/ occurs throughout CORIECOR with a total of 38 tokens. Table 6.16 shows the various spellings which give evidence of the feature. As mentioned, several of them (e.g. ⟨sarve⟩, but also ⟨marcy⟩) are archetypal examples often found in descriptions of the feature or in pronouncing guides by prescriptivists like Sheridan (1781) and Patterson (1860).

Regarding ⟨Darvock⟩, ⟨Farmanagh⟩, and ⟨McKarnan⟩, the spelling of proper nouns is not necessarily useful as a basis for phonetic representation because, without prior knowledge of the name in question, it is not always possible to judge the relation between spelling

**Table 6.16**: Phonetic representation of lowering of ME /e/ before /r/ (total = 38)

| Representation | Standard spelling | Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|---|---|
| ⟨arly⟩ | early | ⟨McKarnan⟩ (2) | McKernan |
| ⟨consarning⟩ | concerning | ⟨obsarve⟩ | observe |
| ⟨Darvock⟩ (2) | Dervock | ⟨obsarved⟩ | observed |
| ⟨Farmanagh⟩ | Fermanagh | ⟨par fict⟩ | perfect |
| (⟨farnish⟩ | furnish) | ⟨parfict⟩ | perfect |
| ⟨har⟩ | her | ⟨parficted⟩ (2) | perfected |
| ⟨hard⟩ | heard | ⟨parsed⟩ [a] | person |
| ⟨hoarses⟩ | hearses [b] | ⟨sarch⟩ | search |
| ⟨larn⟩ | learn | ⟨sarched⟩ (2) | searched |
| ⟨larnd⟩ | learned | ⟨sarching⟩ | searching |
| ⟨larning⟩ (3) | learning | ⟨sarve⟩ | serve |
| ⟨marces⟩ | mercies | ⟨starling⟩ (2) | sterling |
| ⟨marcey⟩ | mercy | ⟨tarms⟩ | terms |
| ⟨marcies⟩ | mercies | ⟨vartures⟩ [c] | virtues |
| ⟨marcy⟩ | mercy | (⟨wark⟩ | work) |

[a] The final ⟨d⟩ is here regarded as a slip of the pen.

[b] As in: 'We have no carrying of Corps [=corpses] in this Country now, there is two **Hoarses** in this neighbourhood,' (Thomas Taylor, Ballygoskin to Robert Taylor, Pennsylvania, 20.05.1826).

[c] The second ⟨r⟩ probably a mistake as the letter 'was done in a hurry,' (John Smith, Philadelphia to James Weir, Stewartstown, 01.01.1810).

and pronunciation. While the family name *McKarnan* does exist, it is much rarer than *McKernan*, thus the spelling ⟨McKarnan⟩ is in this case taken to render the pronunciation of the name with [ɑːr]. The place names *Dervock* and *Fermanagh* have [ɑːr] in present-day IrE, and so the spellings ⟨Darvock⟩ and ⟨Farmanagh⟩ can be taken as confirmation of this.[8]

Most cases of phonetic representation of lowering of /e/ before /r/ have ⟨er⟩ or ⟨ear⟩. However, it appears that words which are today pronounced [ɜːr] (like e.g. *nurse*) can follow the same pattern – thus [ɑːr] is also found in a few words with historical ⟨u⟩ or ⟨o⟩ in CORIECOR. *Furnish* (ME *furnisshe*) with evidence of [ɑːr], ⟨farnish⟩, is therefore included in Table 6.16, as is (Scots) ⟨wark⟩ for *work*, although this may be a slightly more complicated case. *Work* is derived from the same Germanic base as, e.g. Old Frisian *werk*, *wirk*, Old Saxon *werk*, and Old Swedish *värk*.[9] In various OE dialects the vowel was realised as ⟨eor⟩ which gradually smoothed to ⟨er⟩ in Anglian dialects and was in late ME lowered to ⟨ar⟩ (though sometimes in confusion with the cognate *wark* 'ache').

Nearly all tokens come from farmers, and one from a teacher. The remainder are from people of unknown social rank. Only two of the 38 tokens originate from women. The latest occurrence of lowering of /e/ before /r/ in CORIECOR is from 1896 (in ⟨sarching⟩) which confirms Hickey's (2007: 304) observation that 'SERVE-lowering' is attested until the late nineteenth century.

[8] The online *Dictionary and language library*, developed by Foras na Gaeilge in parallel with the *New English-Irish dictionary* project (`http://breis.focloir.ie/en/fuaim` – Pronunciation database) has been used to check pronunciations for the place names.

[9] S.v. 'work, n.'. OED Online. June 2015. Oxford University Press. `http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/230216` (accessed 29 January, 2015).

### 6.10.2 [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩

> *as fine a morning as ever i saw in sight of land*
> ***airly** this morning, reached New York at 12 Oclock*
> (James Knox, New York to John Knox, Ballygowan, Co. Antrim, 23.04.1840)

The SERVE vowel is not only found in a low-back position in CORIECOR, but also fronted to /ɛ/. There is not much evidence of [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩/⟨ear⟩ in the literature apart from perhaps Patterson (1860: 7) who gives the examples *jerk* and *kernel* which he reports are 'erroneously' pronounced as if they were spelt ⟨jirk⟩ and ⟨kirnel⟩ in the Belfast area. It is hard to make sense of his comments in this case – it could very well mean an IrE pronunciation of [dʒɪrk] and ['kɪrnᵊl] where Patterson would prefer [ɜːr] or [ɛːr] – but, on the other hand, it may describe IrE SQUARE-centralisation to [ɜːr]. On ME 'ĕr' (i.e. short [ɛr]), Hogan (1970: 65) remarks that no lowered vowel as in BrE has developed, but that /r/ is retained and the vowel is 'the same as in other positions.' What these other positions are is not that clear, but 'ĕ' is described in a preceding section as 'somewhat raised […] towards high-front-slack' (Hogan 1970: 65), thus [ɪ] (see section 6.2.3), which may tie in with Patterson's comments but still does not describe what is observed in CORIECOR.

There are only seven tokens of the feature in the corpus, illustrated in Table 6.17.

**Table 6.17**: Phonetic representation of [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩ (total = 7)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨airly⟩ | early |
| ⟨entared⟩ | interred |
| ⟨erend⟩ | earned |
| ⟨erly⟩ | early |
| ⟨nearvousness⟩ | nervousness |
| ⟨searvises⟩ | services |
| ⟨serched⟩ | searched |

In addition to the non-standard spellings in Table 6.17, the words *return* and *hurting* are found as ⟨retern⟩ and ⟨heartin⟩, which at first glance would mark them as evidence of [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩ too. However, the pronunciation [ɛːr] for these words is highly unlikely in NIrE (Kevin McCafferty, personal correspondence, 21.10.2014). A possible explanation for ⟨e⟩ or ⟨ea⟩ for ⟨u⟩ in this case is that the authors (both male, one a farmer from Co. (London)Derry, the other from Co. Down and of unknown occupation) had observed that the sequence ⟨er⟩ normally was used for /ʌr/ or /ɜr/ which consequently dictated their spelling of such sounds. One of the authors writes, however, ⟨turned⟩ and ⟨hurt⟩ (i.e. standard spelling) just a few lines before ⟨retern⟩.

The latest occurrence of [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩ in CORIECOR is from 1897, realised as ⟨nearvousness⟩.

### 6.10.3 Tracing ⟨er⟩: from /ɑːr/ to /ɛːr/?

Sections 6.10.1–6.10.2 are both concerned with the sequence ⟨er⟩. The amount of evidence available in CORIECOR is unfortunately limited, but there is a sense in which the data may

describe the contours of a shift in SERVE words from /ɑ:r/ to /ɛ:r/ (later /ɜ:r/). In this case, a possible explanation for *return* and *hurting* with [ɛ:r] (see section 6.10.2) could be that these are remnants of this very shift.

Figure 6.27 shows the distribution of the relevant tokens over time. Lowering of /e/ before /r/ is found in the final decades of the eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century, while tokens of [ɛ:r] for ⟨er⟩, though few, occur from the 1820s towards the end of the century.

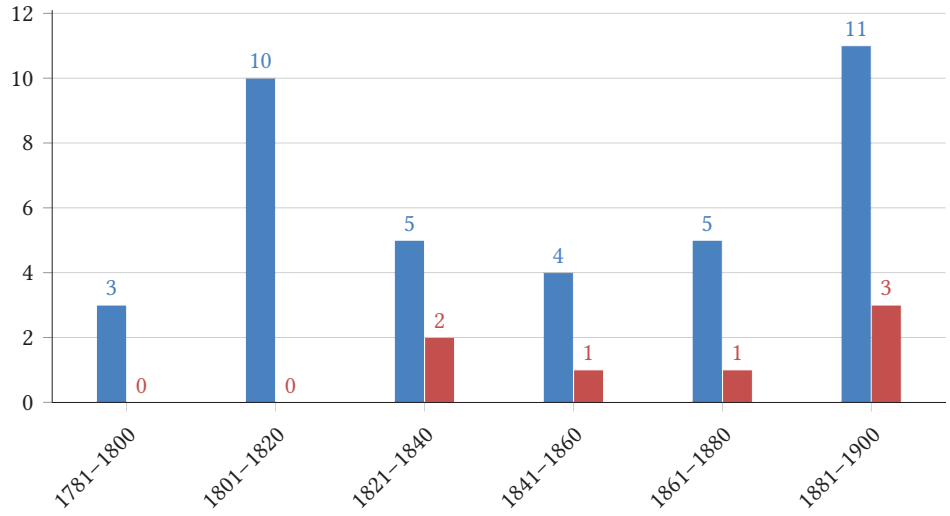
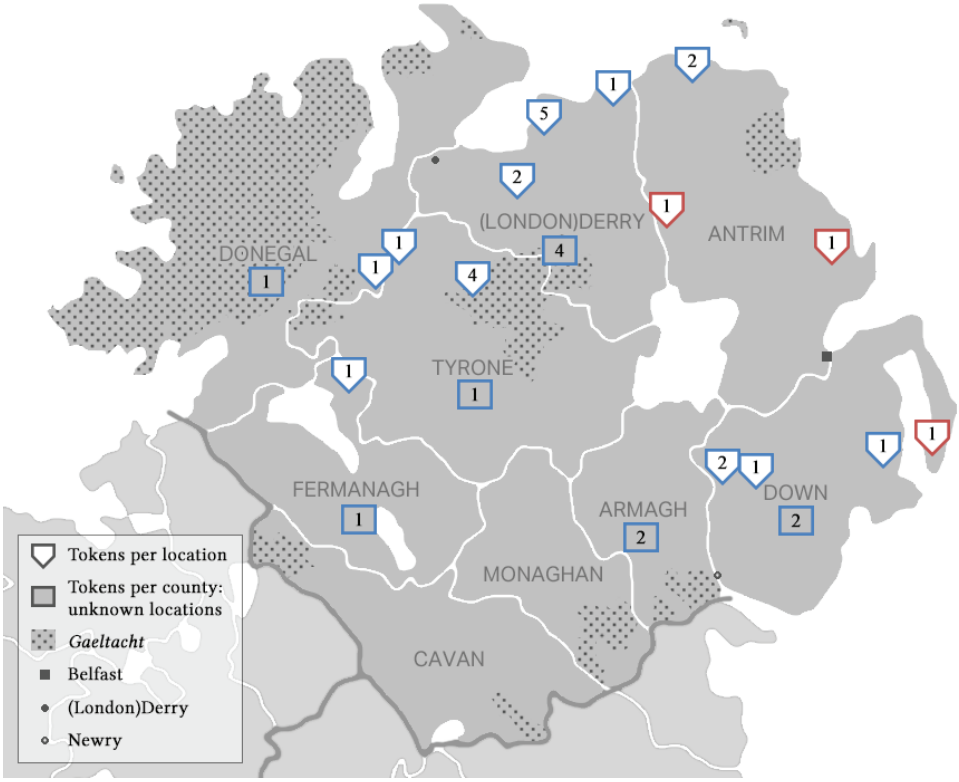



**Figure 6.27**: Distribution (n) of lowering of /e/ before /r/ (■) and [ɛ:r] for ⟨er⟩ (■) (n = 45)

Geographically (see Map 6.23; due to limited tokens not divided into sub-period maps), evidence for lowering of /e/ before /r/ occurs mostly along the north-western border of what is today Northern Ireland, with a few tokens in Co. Down and the occasional occurrences in unspecified county locations. Unfortunately, most of the [ɛ:r] for ⟨er⟩ tokens are not possible to place geographically as information is lacking, but those that are traceable are located in the east of Ulster.

If we are indeed witnessing a shift from [ɑ:r] to [ɜ:r] in SERVE words, then it must be the reintroduction of EModE [ɛr] that is observed in CORIECOR, possibly as a result of spelling. Because if the late ME shift was /ɛr/ > /ar/, which in EModE shifted back to /ɛr/ (Minkova 2014: 275–276) – and CORIECOR tokens occur between 1700 and 1900 – then it makes sense to understand the data as showing both remnants of late ME [ɑ:r] and the EModE return to [ɛ:r]. After all, English settlers brought [ɑ:r] for ⟨er⟩ to Ireland (Hickey 2008: 401), and it is likely that EModE [ɛ:r] was introduced into IrE in the same way, or in combination with the gradual influence from education, and perhaps even from orthoepists and grammarians.

The data in Figure 6.27 suggests that the first stage, [ɑ:r], co-existed with the reintroduced stage, [ɛ:r], for some time during the nineteenth century. An EModE reintroduction would explain the early [ɛ:r] for ⟨er⟩ token in 1721–1740. The continuation of tokens for lowering of ME /e/ before /r/ to [ɑ:r] despite the return of [ɛ:r] makes sense because it became a 'general feature' of IrE (Hickey 2008: 401). Eventually [ɜ:r] became the norm, but [ɛ:r] in SERVE is still found in, e.g. (London)Derry and other western parts of Ireland today,



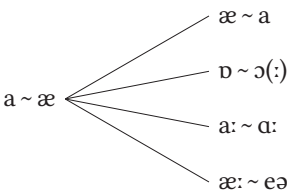

**Map 6.23**: Geographical distribution (n) of lowering of ME /e/ (□) and [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩ (□)

although it is declining in younger generations.

### 6.10.4 Raised ME /a/

> *you Say you had a damp* ***hervist***
> *I am Glad you had the Chance to Get yours safe Gather'd in*
> (David Anderson, Lawrenceville to 'Dear Sir,' 09.02.1854)

ME /a ~ æ/ gave in EModE rise to several reflexes in present-day English, (Minkova 2014: 238):




In many varieties of present-day English, ⟨ar⟩ is rendered [ɑːr], so also in SIrE (in e.g. Hickey's (2007) 'rural north' and 'supraregional southern' varieties). Beal (1999: 107–109) notes that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century orthoepists mostly describe the 'Italian *a*'

(i.e. [ɑ]) as vulgar, only allowing it in a few words (e.g. *father*, *master*), and elsewhere suggesting short [æ]. However, in her work on orthoepist Thomas Spence's *Grand repository of the English language*, she finds that [ɑː] is predominantly used before /r/ in the examples given by Spencer (Beal 1999: 110). Still, one of the reasons for the development /a ~ æ/ > [ɑː] was 'compensatory lengthening' due to the loss of word final and pre-consonantal /r/ (Minkova 2014: 278; Beal 1999: 112). Considering that this loss of /r/ was not completed during the period of influx of BrE-speakers (as well as rhotic ScE-speakers) to Ireland, it makes sense to use /a ~ æ/ as a basis from which to judge phonetic representation of the feature.

Hogan (1970: 63) finds evidence for the feature in the seventeenth-century historical work *Aphorismical discovery of treasonable faction* in ⟨heard⟩ *hard*, which 'no doubt means *hærd*.' Regarding present-day IrE, some south-western and vernacular varieties of (S)IrE have a raised realisation of /æ/ before /r/, e.g. [pɛːrt] *part*; (Hickey 2008: 402). It is also identified as a feature of Conservative USc, being a preservation of early front-raising of OSc /a/ (Harris 1985: 20). Mention of [ɛːr] for ⟨ar⟩ in present-day Ulster varieties is found in USc glossaries and grammars by Fenton (2006) for Co. Antrim (e.g. ⟨pairty⟩ *party*, ⟨cairt⟩ *to transport by cart*) and Robinson (2007) for USc in general (e.g. ⟨hairt⟩ *heart*, ⟨yaird⟩ *yard*). On his USc dialect maps, [kɛːrt] *cart* and [fɛːrm]/[fɛrəm] *farm* are attested by Gregg (1985) along the western border of Co. Antrim and in north-eastern Co. Down, but, as he did not have any informants in the places where raised ME /a/ is found in CORIECOR, it is not possible to verify if the feature was more widespread in earlier centuries.

Raised ME /a/ before /r/ shares similarities with CATCH-raising (discussed in section 6.3) in that a reflex of ME /a ~ æ/ is raised to [ɛ] (i.e. [kɛtʃ] *catch*, realised as e.g. ⟨ketch⟩ in CORIECOR). But evidence for CATCH-raising is much more wide-spread in the corpus than [ɛːr] for ⟨ar⟩.

There are 16 occurrences of phonetic representation of a raised ME /a/ before /r/ in CORIECOR, nearly half of them for ⟨air⟩ *are* (see Table 6.18).

**Table 6.18**: Phonetic representation of raised ME /a/ before /r/ (total = 16)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨air⟩ (8) | are |
| ⟨heard⟩ | hard |
| ⟨Hervey⟩ | Harvey |
| ⟨hervist⟩ (2) | harvest |
| ⟨Mearten⟩ | Martin |
| ⟨pertner⟩ | partner |
| ⟨yeard⟩ | yard |
| ⟨yerds⟩ | yards |

### 6.10.5 Unrounded /o/

*sertonley*
*if John was here our combined **bard** and*
*lodging would keep us all nicely*
(Lytle Black, Chicago to Thomas Hall, Co Armagh, 16.12.1889)

FORCE/NORTH words are either distinct [o:r] and [ɔ:r] in NIrE or have merged in [o:r]. Phonetic representation of an unrounded vowel [ɑ:r] for ⟨or⟩ was only found in FORCE words in CORIECOR. There are only four tokens giving evidence of an unrounded FORCE vowel, as presented in Table 6.19.

**Table 6.19**: Phonetic representation of unrounded /o/ (total = 4)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨bard⟩ (2) | board |
| ⟨separt⟩ | support |
| ⟨supart⟩ | support |

While Patterson (1860) lists many examples of [ɑ:] for ⟨o⟩ (e.g. ⟨jab⟩ *job*, ⟨saft⟩ *soft*), he unfortunately only provides one example for the sequence ⟨-or⟩: ⟨fur⟩ for *for*. However, it is difficult to discern whether the vowel is meant to represent [ə], as in unstressed *for*, or [ʌ], as Patterson lists dozens of words with initial *un-* which according to him are pronounced in the Belfast area as if written ⟨on-⟩.

[ɑ:r] for [ɔ:r] is today found in present-day Belfast speech. A NORTH-START merger, somewhat similar to the observations in Table 6.19, exists for some BrE varieties (in e.g. rural Wessex; (Wells 1982)) as well as some earlier AmE, including around the lower Mississippi valley, Indiana, Texas, Newfoundland, and Utah (Minkova 2014: 244).

### 6.10.6 Diachronic and geographic distribution of raised ME /a/ and unrounded /o/ before /r/

It is challenging to say anything about the distribution of raised ME /a/ and unrounded /o/ presented in sections 6.10.4 and 6.10.5 as tokens are few. Figure 6.28 shows that, diachronically, raised ME /a/ is present especially around the turn of the nineteenth century in CORIECOR. Evidence for unrounded /o/ is only found sporadically in the nineteenth century.

Unrounded /o/ appears for the first time in 1814 – but then, there are only four tokens in total. Raised ME /a/ is attested early in the corpus (in 1736; as it happens in the same letter as the first appearance of [ɛ:r] for ⟨er⟩), but apart from one token in 1773, is not found again until the early nineteenth century.

Map 6.24 shows the geographical distribution of the vowels before /r/. Due to the limited numbers of tokens they are not divided into separate feature and sub-period maps.

Evidence of raised ME /a/ before /r/ is limited to Co. Antrim (where it is found today as well) and (London)Derry, where most of the tokens are found. This means that the feature, which today is found predominantly in the USc area, may have been slightly more

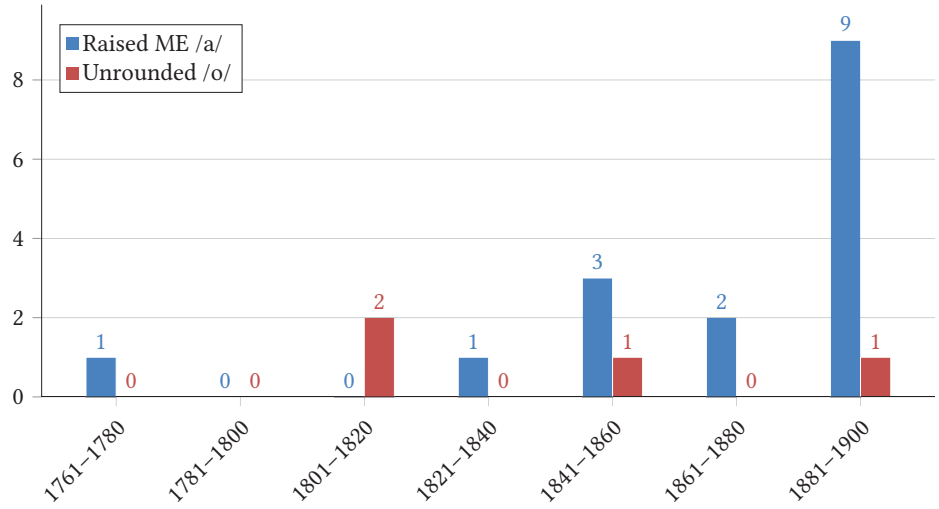
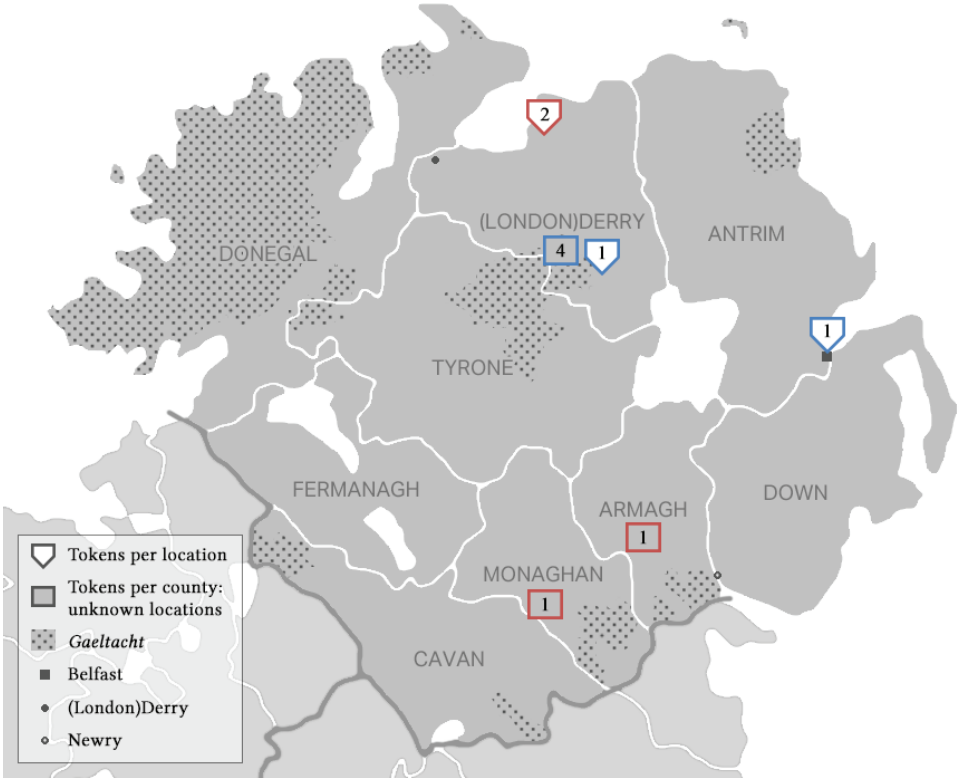



**Figure 6.28**: Distribution (n) of raised ME /a/ and unrounded /o/ before /r/ (n = 20)

widespread geographically: in Map 6.24 the tokens are found outside the edges of Gregg's (1972) 'core' USc language area. Only six of the 17 tokens could be placed geographically.

Unrounded /o/ has only four tokens and it is therefore nearly impossible to explore in a meaningful way other than to document its occurrence, however limited, in CORIECOR. Map 6.24 shows two tokens in Co. Monaghan and Armagh which cannot be localised in more detail. The remaining two are from the same letter writer in Burnally, Co. (London)Derry.




**Map 6.24:** Geographical distribution (n) of raised ME /a/ (□) and unrounded /o/ (□)

## 6.11 Infrequent occurrences

This section presents and discusses some of the more infrequently encountered features which nevertheless (based on other sources) may provide evidence for features of historical NIrE, though with rather too few tokens (i.e. fewer than ten). Also included in this section are features where many of the non-standard spellings are rather ambiguous, thus making large parts of the already scarce data inconclusive.

### 6.11.1 [ɪ]–[ʌ]-interchange

*the [all]*
*is* ***jist*** *up to sea the nise pistures*
(Annie Gass, Attica, Indiana to Miss Mary Gass, Co Armagh, 08.01.1872)

A number of words with /ʌ/ appear to have [ɪ] in the vernacular of their writers. Such phonetic representation is only found in nine instances, mostly where standard English has ⟨u⟩, but in one case ⟨o⟩ (⟨winder⟩ *wonder*). One of these spellings is ⟨jist⟩ – precisely the representation Hickey (2007: 304–305) uses in his list of historical features of IrE pronunciation. He further reports the use of [ɪ] for [ʌ] today (otherwise obsolete) for 'local flavour'

**Table 6.20:** Phonetic representation of [ɪ]-[ʌ]-interchange (n = 9)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨gribbing⟩ | grubbing |
| ⟨jist⟩ | just |
| ⟨mich⟩ (2) | much |
| ⟨milch⟩ | mulch |
| ⟨mist⟩ | must |
| ⟨mitch⟩ | much |
| ⟨winder⟩ (2) | wonder |

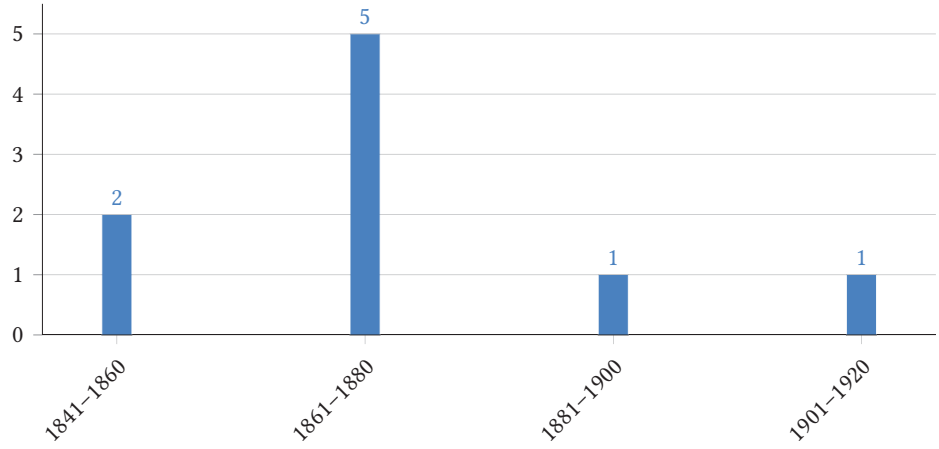



**Figure 6.29:** Chronological distribution (n) of [ɪ]–[ʌ]-interchange (n = 9)

by supraregional speakers, as in ['ɪnənz] *onions* (Hickey 2007: 305).[10] Patterson (1860: 5) also notes *jist* 'just' as a non-standard feature around Belfast in the mid-1800s. Table 6.20 lists all nine occurrences of the feature found in CORIECOR.

Hickey calls [ɪ]–[ʌ]-interchange a 'basilectal' (i.e. non-standard or highly informal) USc feature found predominantly in parts of Ulster initially settled by Scots. Only one of the tokens from CORIECOR comes from such a location (Moycraig, Co. Antrim), although the remainder certainly come from areas of mixed settlement (e.g. Lisnamuck, Co. (London)Derry or Castledamph, Co. Tyrone).[11]

According to Hickey (2007: 304), the feature is attested until the early twentieth century, which is verified by the data from CORIECOR (see Figure 6.29).

With so few tokens, it is difficult to take the nine tokens as definitive evidence of [ɪ]–[ʌ]-interchange. There is a possibility that at least some of the tokens instead show hypercorrection – that is, if the letter writer has a centered KIT vowel (see section 6.8), but knows that a perceived standard pronunciation (e.g. southern BrE) does not have a centered KIT vowel, then he/she may have assumed that words with a central vowel (e.g. *much*) are also supposed to be pronounced with [ɪ], thus spelling them as such without necessarily pro-

[10] Hickey gives ['ɪnənz], though this is possibly supposed to be ['ɪŋənz].
[11] Based on Robinson (2006: 17, Fig. 11).

**Table 6.21**: Phonetic representation of OL-diphthongisation (n = 6)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨could⟩ | cold |
| ⟨ould⟩ (4) | old |
| ⟨tould⟩ | told |

nouncing them that way. This explanation is supported by ⟨winder⟩ *wonder* as /ɪ/ after /w/ often becomes [ʌ] in NIrE/Usc, as in [wʌn] *win*. Another explanation could be that the centered KIT vowel described in section 6.8 is perceived as being so close to /ʌ/ that some writers 'merge' them. Then again, only four out of the nine writers with [ɪ]–[ʌ]-interchange are also found in the KIT centering data. In addition, every single one of the nine writers has multiple spellings with ⟨u⟩ for /ʌ/.

The conclusion must be that the above spellings indeed show evidence of an [ɪ]–[ʌ]-interchange, though tokens are few.

### 6.11.2 OL-diphthongisation

*Eliza has been waring a bonnet 3*
*years and this winter was obliged to git it dyed*
*Black as no other colour wold suit so* ***ould*** *a*
*Bonnett*
('Aunt Mary Miles,' Baltimore to 'My Dear Mary,' 01.01.1840)

Words like *ould* have a long history of being used as archaic or poetic spellings in IrE. The spelling reflects [au], or [ɛʉ ~ øy] in the North, which is still found in *old* and *bold* in parts of Ireland today (Hickey 2007: 306). Patterson (1860: 5, 8) lists at least 13 words (e.g. *oul* 'old,' *poul*, 'pole,' *moul* 'mole,' *boult* 'bolt' etc.) where he has noticed this feature. Only six tokens of the feature were found in CORIECOR (see Table 6.21).[12] Intentional use as a set phrase has not been included.

The tokens occur throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century (1840–1889) and all six come from female writers. Half of the tokens come from one woman (Ann Nimicks). She is also the only writer with enough information to place geographically (Aghadowey, Co. (London)Derry).

### 6.11.3 Stories of ⟨u⟩

The letter ⟨u⟩ is a difficult glyph when it comes to phonetic representation as it is used for a variety of sounds in English orthography, often dependent on dialect, such as split or unsplit FOOT–STRUT and different qualities in NURSE.[13] Likewise, /u(:)/ can be represented

[12] Interestingly, exactly the same number of tokens were found for OL-diphthongisation used in a deliberate way. The phrases *ould counthry* (1845; note also deliberate representation of T/D-dentalisation, see section 7.3.2), *ould Ireland* (c.1830, 1862, 1865), *cauld staney gran* (1872; multiple features of Scots), and *auld* (1898) have all been used to invoke a certain sense of nostalgia (based on the language-use in the rest of the letters).

[13] Part of this history is also the substitution of ⟨o⟩ for ⟨u⟩ introduced by Norman scribes in clusters like ⟨um⟩, ⟨un⟩, ⟨uv⟩, and ⟨uw⟩ in order to differentiate the vowel from the consonant in the mass of vertical

by a number of glyphs (e.g. *loose*, *tune*, *tour*). It is therefore challenging to determine what pronunciation must underlie various non-standard spellings involving ⟨u⟩ in CORIECOR.

Three features involving ⟨u⟩ are dealt with in this section, GOOSE-fronting, unsplit FOOT–STRUT, and [u:] in *gold*.

### Goose-fronting

> *I seen*
> *samu [=Samuel] [Watson] last satturday and he*
> *taches* ***schull*** *in [Schenaildy]*
> (Thomas Shipboy, Albany to Robert Shipboy, Merchant, Coleraine, 09.11.1774)

Hickey (2004: 74) argues that Scotland and Northern Ireland can be seen as a linguistic area when it comes to GOOSE-fronting (also found in Irish and Scottish Gaelic) and that it is 'a prominent feature of English in the north of Ireland.' Montgomery and Gregg (1997: 612), for instance, report [ü] in closed syllables, e.g. [hüs] *house* (note ⟨huse⟩ in Table 6.22) in rural USc (Glenroe, east Antrim), while Harris (1985: 18) defines it as a feature of Conservative USc – a result of uninterrupted development from OSc. The source is a retention of OSc /ū/ which has not shifted to /au/ (Hickey 2007: 104).

In describing the vowel distinction [u/ʉ] in Scotland and the north of England, the isoglosses *spune*/*spoon* are frequently used to make the distinction (see e.g. Johnston 1997: 68), which to a certain degree justifies identification of the feature on the basis of ⟨uCe⟩ or ⟨uC⟩.

Nine tokens of [ʉ] for /u:/ (from ME /o:/) were found in CORIECOR, listed in Table 6.22. Five of the tokens (⟨chuse⟩ (three times), ⟨sute⟩, and ⟨sutes⟩) come from one writer whose letter contains many non-standard spellings, although few of them render pronunciation.[14] One could argue that ⟨chuse⟩ and ⟨sute(s)⟩ are not clearly showing phonetic representation – after all, the relation between the glyph ⟨u⟩ and the phoneme /u:/ is complicated. Nevertheless, given that the usual quality of /u:/ in NIrE is [ʉ] today, introduced by Scottish settlers (and already present in Irish), we may assume that GOOSE-fronting has been widespread among NIrE-speakers for a few centuries at least – whether it is frequently represented in non-standard spellings or not.

**Table 6.22:** Phonetic representation of GOOSE-fronting (n = 9)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨chuse⟩ (3) | choose |
| ⟨cuil⟩ | cool |
| ⟨ful⟩ | fool |
| ⟨huse⟩ | house |
| ⟨schull⟩ | school |
| ⟨sute⟩ | suite |
| ⟨sutes⟩ | suites |

One of the non-standard spellings, ⟨cuil⟩, is likely to be influenced by Scots spelling. Scribal practices of northern (BrE) ME dialects often used ⟨ui⟩ for [y:], as in, e.g. ⟨bluid⟩

strokes in these sequences (Upward and Davidson 2011: 176; Minkova 2014: 189).

[14] William Faris, Cape Fear to Arthur Dobbs, Carrickfergus, 18.02.1749.

*blood* (Minkova 2014: 190), which offers the possibility that ⟨cuil⟩ is really a representation of [ky:l]. Unfortunately, only one letter from this writer exists in the corpus, and the writer's geographical origin is unknown.

#### Unsplit FOOT–STRUT

During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, ME /u/ underwent a shift, causing the vowels in FOOT and STRUT to part ways in southern BrE, though the split has not yet occurred in northern BrE.[15] The details of the shift are complex as phonetic descriptions of its early phase are lacking and its development is further complicated by ME /o:/, both sharing the reflexes /ʊ/ (*foot*, *book*) and /ʌ/ (*blood*, *glove*) (Lass 2001: 89–90). The end result is thus /ʊ/ in both FOOT and STRUT sets in northern EngE dialects, but not in southern BrE and Scots after c.1700. Thus, unsplit FOOT–STRUT is not generally found in NIrE, though it does occur in, e.g. working class or 'popular' Dublin (Hickey 2004).

Still, three tokens for the feature were found in CORIECOR: ⟨unlooky⟩ *unlucky*, ⟨roob⟩ *rub*, and ⟨goon⟩ *gun*. ⟨Unlooky⟩, however, comes from a cattle breeder in Haysland, Co. Wexford (1862) and is therefore not relevant here as Wexford lies outside of Ulster. The other two tokens are from Portaferry, Co. Down (1875) and Castledamph, Co. Tyrone (1899). It would be tempting to claim influence from northern BrE as the reason for ⟨roob⟩ and ⟨goon⟩, but with only two tokens there is little to base this on.

#### [u:] for ME /ɔ:/

According to Hickey (2007: 312) (though in relation to supraregional SIrE), 'archaic' pronunciations such as [gu:ld] and [ru:m] for *gold* and *Rome* were still found in eighteenth-century Ireland. Indeed, Patterson (1860: 5) also lists *gold* being pronounced *goold* in and around Belfast, suggesting that in NIrE [u:] was found even in the mid-nineteenth century. The pronunciation [u:] is unexpected as the Great Vowel Shift should have resulted in [o:] in such words, though Bliss (1979: 212) also reports finding several non-standard spellings that suggest similar tendencies, e.g. ⟨doos⟩ *those*.

Unfortunately, only two tokens were found in CORIECOR: ⟨oold⟩ *old* and ⟨booth⟩ *both*. The first from a farmer in Burnally, Co. (London)Derry (1829); the latter comes from a woman from Ballyfounder, Co. Down (1875), living in Illinois. The farmer later on spells *old* as ⟨oald⟩, suggesting [o:] or [oʊ]. There is thus a very real possibility that ⟨oo⟩ does not reflect the feature mentioned by Hickey, but is a result of the writer's orthographic insecurity.

## 6.12 Conclusions

The number of tokens for many of the vowel features exceed those for consonants (see chapter 7) by a factor of 10–20 and allows investigation of their distributions in more detail. This is especially the case for sections 6.2–6.9, where there were enough relevant tokens to explore the geographical and social distributions in a visual manner.

[15] In historical terms it may be more accurate to speak of a PUT–CUT split as *foot* was [fo:t] in ME and *strut* was [strut]. The lexical sets introduced by Wells (1982) were not meant to take diachronic developments into account.

In terms of continuity of the features, the results presented in this chapter in general show a rise-fall tendency (after normalising the data) where occurrences seem to increase towards the mid-1800s, followed by a decline. This is seen in CATCH-raising, unraised long E, and short E-lowering. A likely interpretation for this correlation is the introduction of the National School system in 1831, so that the increased literacy among the population first lowered the bar for attempting to write – though not without many instances of non-standard spellings – and then rose sufficiently to reduce tokens of phonetic representation in the corpus. The FACE monophthong and KIT-centering features, however, show a gradual decrease, while short E-raising instead appears to be fairly stable. Unrounded short O had too few tokens for normalised frequencies.

The geographical data shows that many of the vowel features seem to have been quite widespread in Ulster. Only CATCH-raising and short E-lowering show different behaviour; the former having been found mostly in USc areas while the latter describes a marked north-east to south-west spread, though the related open fronted (*m*)*any* was mostly found in the north-east of Ulster only.

The social distribution of the features is overwhelmingly in favour of farmers for all vowels, though CATCH-raising also features to a certain extent among labourers. Short E-lowering is in addition often found in letters from craftsmen. The most interesting in this regard are short E-raising, where tokens were found in nearly all ranks, except the gentry; and KIT-centering, where the feature seems to move down the social ladder during the nineteenth century.

In addition, several infrequently occurring features were presented, but mostly just to document their presence in the corpus as tokens are few.

This chapter has also presented evidence for phonetic representation of lowering of ME /e/, [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩, raised ME /a/, and unrounded /o/ before /r/ in CORIECOR. Much of the data is limited due to relatively few occurrences, ranging from just four to 38 tokens per feature. The data for lowering of ME /e/ before /r/ provides the best basis for analysis. It was found that the feature was mainly present in letters written by farmers, and overwhelmingly by men. It is certainly the best-known of the four features, and its larger presence in CORIECOR is perhaps no surprise if we accept that the scarcity of data for the other vowels before /r/ means that they were much less widespread than the lowering of ME /e/. Tokens for raised ME /a/ and unrounded /o/ are too few to investigate in detail, though evidence of raised ME /a/ before /r/ is found beyond the expected area of present-day USc.

The most interesting findings are the possibility that the data for lowering of /e/ before /r/ and [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩ is describing the shift from ME /ɑːr/ to present-day /ɜːr/ in SERVE words. The reintroduction (due to spelling influence) of EModE /ɛr/, after the fourteenth-century shift from /ɛr/ to /ar/, is thus observed in CORIECOR. [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩ was nonetheless found to be rare compared to [ɑːr].

# Chapter 7

# Consonants

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents various realisations of consonants as found in CORIECOR. For a great many consonants nothing can be said, as evidenced by comparing the length of this chapter to that devoted to vowels. For instance, the various IrE realisations of /r/ – e.g. alveolar approximant [ɹ], retroflex approximant [ɻ], trill [r] or even uvular trill [ʀ] – cannot be judged on the basis of spelling. Nor can it be determined whether ⟨l⟩ is the 'typical Irish' clear [l] or dark [ɫ], or whether ⟨which⟩ is pronounced [ʍɪtʃ] or [wɪtʃ], because it is still spelt with ⟨h⟩ today, even though two pronunciations exist and have done for a long time.[1] On top of this, while SIrE has a few typical consonantal features – e.g. slit fricative [t̪] and dental stops [t̪, d̪] – NIrE, and especially USc, have consonants which in many cases are pronounced just as one would expect from the 'English' alphabet. And when a word is spelt in a 'standard' manner, it becomes difficult to judge the pronunciation its writer would have had for that particular word. Still, a number of interesting distributions and occurrences were found in the corpus.

TH-fortition, normally associated with SIrE, is presented in section 7.2. Section 7.3 discusses various realisations of /t, d/ found in CORIECOR, including intervocalic tap, T/D-dentalisation, and T/D-fricativisation – the latter also usually associated with SIrE. S-palatalisation, [ʃ] for /tʃ/, YOD-dropping, and devoiced /v/ are presented in sections 7.4–7.7. Two features with only a single token each, TH-fronting and [x] for /k/, in section 7.8, are interesting observations despite only occurring once in the corpus each, as evidence for these features in older IrE is extremely rare or non-existent.

## 7.2 TH-fortition

> *it is 24 miles up the mountan*
> *and the same distance down it the largest mountan*
> *in* ***nort*** *america*
> (Robert Smith, Philadelphia to James Smith Snr, Co. Antrim, 25.03.1844)

Dental fricatives [θ, ð] for ⟨th⟩ are generally considered to be one of the salient features of NIrE and are attributed to Scots and English influence (Harris 1985; Corrigan 2010). In

[1] Though ⟨wich⟩ for *which* would be interesting, precisely because it might indicate initial [w], not [ʍ].

SIrE, these are realised as dental [t̪, d̪] or alveolar [t, d] stops. Dental fricatives are today found north of the SUE transitional zone, while dental/alveolar stops are found south of that zone (Hickey 2007: 114), so that TH-fortition certainly can be found in Ulster in much of Co. Cavan and southern Co. Monaghan, both of which lie partly in the SIrE dialect zone (Harris 1985). *The tape recorded survey of Hiberno-English speech* shows, for instance, TH-fortition only in data from Co. Cavan (Hickey 2004).

**Table 7.1**: Phonetic representation of TH-fortition (n = 35)

| Representation | Standard spelling | Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|---|---|
| ⟨altough⟩ | although | ⟨nort⟩ | north |
| ⟨bert⟩ | berth | ⟨noting⟩ | nothing |
| ⟨bodder⟩ | bother | ⟨pad⟩ | path |
| ⟨Catren⟩ | Catherine | ⟨sixt⟩ | sixth |
| ⟨Caty⟩ | Cathy | ⟨someting⟩ | something |
| ⟨Catys⟩ | Cathy's | ⟨tat⟩ (2) | that |
| ⟨deat⟩ | death | ⟨tick⟩ | thick |
| ⟨eight⟩ | eighth | ⟨trash⟩ (2) | thresh |
| ⟨farder⟩ | farther | ⟨trashed⟩ | threshed |
| ⟨fardest⟩ | farthest | ⟨trashes⟩ | threshes |
| ⟨furder⟩ | further | ⟨treashed⟩ | threshed |
| ⟨healt⟩ | health | ⟨treatning⟩ | threatening |
| ⟨Kattie⟩ | Cathy | ⟨trough⟩ (4) | through |
| ⟨monts⟩ | months | ⟨whiter⟩ | whether |
| ⟨mount⟩ | month | ⟨wort⟩ | worth |

There are 35 tokens of TH-fortition in CORIECOR, as shown in Table 7.1. TH-fortition of /ð/ in initial position is only found in ⟨tat⟩ *that* (two tokens). Medially, it occurs in ⟨altough⟩ *although* (note ⟨t⟩ where ⟨d⟩ might be expected), ⟨bodder⟩ *bother*, ⟨farder⟩ *farther*, ⟨fardest⟩ *farthest*, ⟨furder⟩ *further*, and ⟨whiter⟩ *whether*.[2] It is not found in final position.

Fortition of /θ/ is more numerous. In initial position we find ⟨someting⟩ *something*, ⟨tick⟩ *thick*, ⟨trash⟩ *thresh* (two tokens), ⟨trashed⟩ *threshed*, ⟨trashes⟩ *threshes*, ⟨treashed⟩ *threshed*, ⟨treatning⟩ *threatening*, and ⟨trough⟩ *through* (four tokens). Five tokens are found medially in ⟨Catren⟩ *Catherine*, ⟨Caty⟩ *Cathy*, ⟨Catys⟩ *Cathy's*, ⟨Kattie⟩ *Cathy*, and ⟨noting⟩ *nothing*. Fortition of /θ/ occurs most frequently in final position: ⟨bert⟩ *berth*, ⟨deat⟩ *death*, ⟨eight⟩ *eighth*, ⟨healt⟩ *health*, ⟨mount⟩ *month* (and also ⟨monts⟩ *months*), ⟨nort⟩ *north*, ⟨pad⟩ *path*, ⟨sixt⟩ *sixth*, and ⟨wort⟩ *worth*.

Two words with evidence of TH-fortition stand out by occurring more frequently than others: *Catherine* and its shortened form *Cathy* (four tokens) and *thresh* with various conjugated forms (five tokens). Being a personal name, and, we may assume, quite a normal name to have during the periods covered by CORIECOR, it is perhaps not surprising to find /θ/ realised as [t̪] or [t] in *Catherine*/*Cathy* as the number of tokens for TH-fortition (35) is not insignificant. When it comes to *thresh*(*-ed*/*-es*/*-ing*), the explanation is probably found in the fact that most of the tokens of TH-fortition (21) come from farmers. Most letters in the corpus are also written by men, and men's letters frequently contain descriptions of work,

[2] ⟨Whiter⟩ *whether* also shows short E-raising; see section 6.7.

which for farmers during harvest includes the threshing of grain. The ⟨trash-⟩ examples also contain evidence of short E-raising (see section 6.7).

Only four of the tokens come from women, while 29 tokens are provided by men. For two tokens, gender is unknown. For ten tokens, the social class is unknown. Remaining tokens come from labourers (two) and clerks (two).

It is important to point out that the tokens in 1841–1860 (10) and 1881–1900 (13) in Figure 7.1 mostly come from different people. The highest number of tokens from a single letter writer is five. In other words, this feature occurs sporadically in the writings of many different people in CORIECOR.

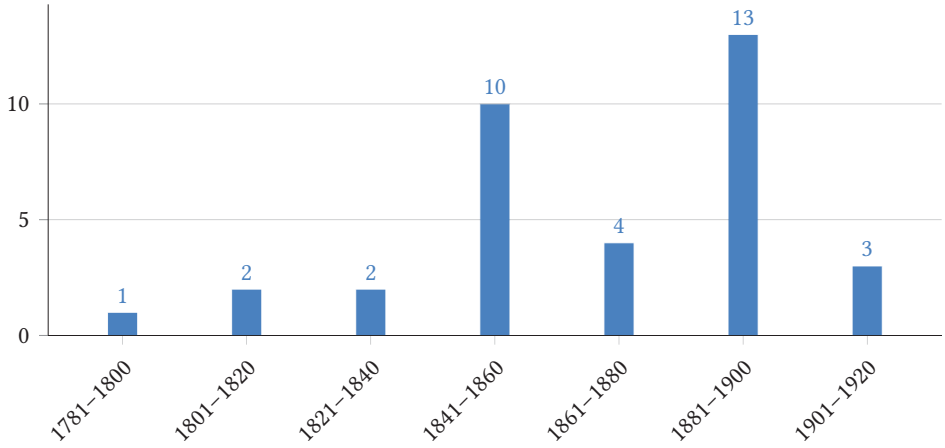
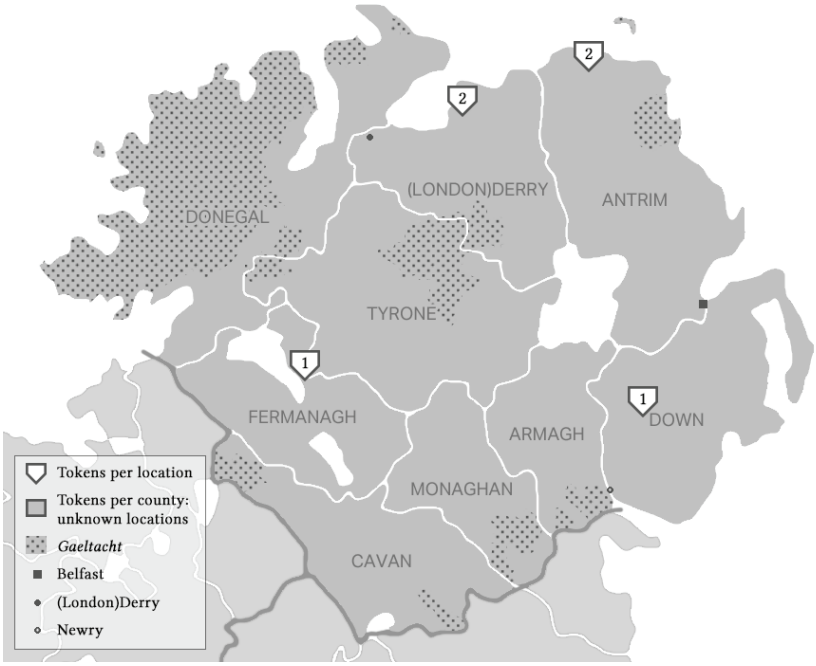


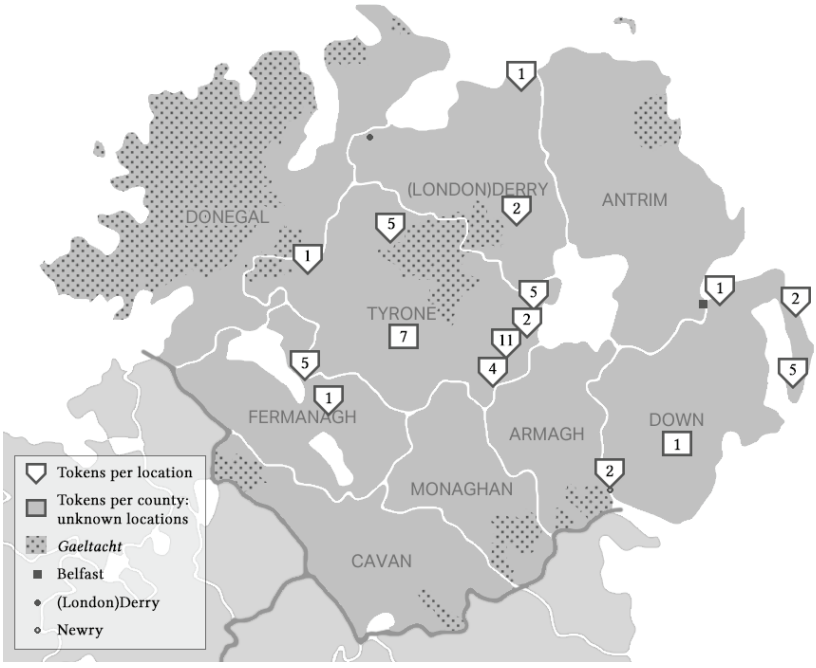

**Figure 7.1**: Chronological distribution (n) of TH-fortition (n = 35)

Especially interesting is the fact that, for a feature that is regarded as a salient feature of SIrE, it is found in CORIECOR in areas quite far from the SUE boundary where we would expect SIrE features to make an appearance (see Maps 7.1–7.3). Only seven tokens from Co. Fermanagh (one in Map 7.1 and six in Map 7.2) and two from Co. Down (Map 7.2) are near the present-day SUE boundary. The remaining tokens are found not only in the MUE zone, but also to some extent in USc areas in northern Co. (London)Derry and around the Ards peninsula in Co. Down. One explanation may be that many of the tokens come from areas bordering *Gaeltachtaí*, as seen in Map 7.2, especially around the mid Ulster *Gaeltacht*, but also near remnants of the Donegal and southern Ulster *Gaeltachtaí*. This may point to Irish influence on the pronunciation of TH.

Five tokens are from unknown locations in Ulster. In addition, one token was found from Dublin and one from Co. Wicklow, but these are not included in the data as they are from outside of Ulster.




**Map 7.1**: 1801–1850: Geographical distribution (n) of TH-fortition




**Map 7.2**: 1851–1900: Geographical distribution (n) of TH-fortition


**Map 7.3**: 1901–1940: Geographical distribution (n) of TH-fortition

## 7.3 Realisations of /t, d/

Several realisations of /t, d/ are found in the letters in CORIECOR: intervocalic tap, T/D-dentalisation, and T/D-fricativisation. These are not necessarily allophones – it would be hard to imagine free variation of the /t, d/ realisations in one variety. Intervocalically, a word such as *matter* may, for instance, be realised with either a tap [ˈmæɾər], a dental T [ˈmæt̪ər] or a fricative T [ˈmæt̪ər]. However, T/D-dentalisation also occurs in initial position, while T/D-fricativisation occurs most frequently in final position. These three realisations of /t, d/ are treated in order below.

### 7.3.1 Intervocalic tap

*all catholicks*
*here is Democrats or for slavery and all*
*Republicans is* ***prodistants*** *or not*
*for slavery but it is not known yet which will*
*beat the Irish the most furious of all*
(William Porter, Chicago, USA to 'Dear Brother,' Co. Down, 06.03.1860)

The intervocalic tap [ɾ] is common in many varieties of English, especially AmE. According to Corrigan (2010: 43), in Ulster it originates from SUE and has now spread to Belfast and (London)Derry urban areas as well as northern towns like Coleraine. Harris (1985: 58) notes

that NIrE, except USc, shares the intervocalic tap with SIrE varieties. Ten tokens of the feature are found in CORIECOR, listed in Table 7.2.

**Table 7.2:** Phonetic representation of intervocalic tap (n = 10)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨geding⟩ | getting |
| ⟨oppertuniry⟩ | opportunity |
| ⟨potedos⟩ | potatoes |
| ⟨Prodestant⟩ | Protestant |
| ⟨Prodestants⟩ | Protestants |
| ⟨sadisfaction⟩ | satisfaction |
| ⟨wriding⟩ | writing |
| ⟨yesdarday⟩ | yesterday |
| ⟨yesdardy⟩ (2) | yesterday |

Because the flapping of intervocalic /t/ merges with /d/ in similar position (e.g. ['larər] *latter*, *ladder*), ⟨d⟩ in intervocalic position in place of ⟨t⟩ quite clearly marks the words in Table 7.2 as showing evidence of the feature. In one instance, ⟨oppertuniry⟩, ⟨r⟩ is substituted for ⟨t⟩, showing the close relationship between a tap [ɾ] and realisations of /r/ – which coincidentally may also mean that this writer (a Co. Antrim craftsman, 1847) may have had a trilled /r/.

Tokens for the intervocalic tap are only found between 1837 and 1899 (see Map 7.2). One of these is not geographically placeable whereas the remaining nine are scattered throughout Ulster (see Map 7.4). Two tokens come from Moycraig, northern Co. Antrim, which lies within the 'core' USc dialect zone (see Harris 1985), where according to Harris (1985: 58), the intervocalic tap does not occur. However, it is also close to a *Gaeltacht* area, as are the tokens in counties Tyrone, (London)Derry, and Armagh/Down (Newry), which may explain the presence of this feature.

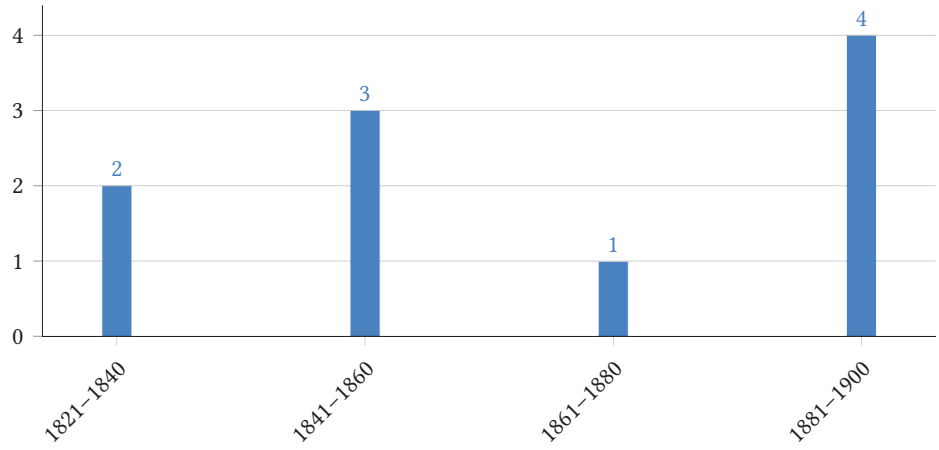



**Figure 7.2:** Chronological distribution (n) of intervocalic tap (n = 10)


**Map 7.4**: Geographical distribution (n) of intervocalic tap

Five tokens come from farmers' letters, two from craftsmen, one from a merchant, and for one we do not know. All tokens are from men.

## 7.3.2 T/D-dentalisation

*if you can never*
*let him under gow the hardships of a sailor any-*
*thing is better than that thou i will always*
*respect one now* ***mather*** *where i see them*
(Catherine A. Hutchinson, Philadelphia to 'my dearest mother,' (London)Derry, 13.08.1855)

T/D-dentalisation, i.e. a dentalised [t̪, d̪] realisation of /t, d/, is found in present-day MUE and SUE (Corrigan 2010: 42). In IrE the feature occurs before /r/ or a rhotacised vowel [ɚ] (Hickey 2007: 306). In CORIECOR, 11 instances were found that provide evidence of T/D-dentalisation (see Table 7.3).

Due to the fact that phonetic representation of T/D-dentalisation seems to rely on the substitution of ⟨th⟩ for ⟨t⟩ (Bliss 1979: 233), it is sometimes difficult to judge the validity of some of the tokens. ⟨Theathers⟩ may for instance be a result of confusion – the writer knows that ⟨h⟩ belongs together with ⟨t⟩ somewhere in this word and therefore ends up including it twice. In addition, a number of words with ⟨th⟩ for ⟨t⟩ do not qualify for the feature because the relevant sequence does not occur before /r/ or [ɚ] (thus not included in Table 7.3): ⟨thake⟩ *take* (three times), ⟨thime⟩ *time*, ⟨Thimothy⟩ *Timothy*, ⟨forthnight⟩ *fortnight*, and ⟨Christhmas⟩ *Christmas*. ⟨Thake⟩ and ⟨thime⟩ may instead render aspiration

**Table 7.3**: Phonetic representation of T/D-dentalisation (n = 11)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨alther⟩ | alter |
| ⟨beather⟩ | better |
| ⟨bether⟩ | better |
| ⟨dather⟩ (2) | daughter |
| ⟨feathers⟩ | features |
| ⟨mather⟩ | matter |
| ⟨theathers⟩ | theaters |
| ⟨thransports⟩ | transports |
| ⟨threated⟩ (2) | treated |

of /t/, e.g. [tʰeːk], which is a possible realisation of /t/ in initial position for IrE (Hickey 1984: 234). ⟨Thimothy⟩ may have a similar explanation as ⟨theathers⟩, except that, due to the absence of /r/, there is also no reason to classify the token as T/D-dentalisation. In ⟨forthnight⟩, the writer may have confused the first syllable of *fortnight* with *fourth* or *fourteenth* (instead of identifying *fort-* as a contraction of *fourteen*), hence the ⟨th⟩-sequence. ⟨Christhmas⟩ is more problematic – it may be a result of spelling confusion or show T/D-fricativisation (see section 7.3.3), but these must remain guesses for now.

In addition to the 11 tokens of T/D-dentalisation realised as ⟨th⟩, 31 instances of *water*(*-s/-ed*) spelled as ⟨watter⟩ were found. It is difficult to judge what is going on here, but there is a possibility that ⟨tt⟩ is evidence of a pronunciation like [waṭər]. These tokens are found between 1793 and 1913, with 17 coming from the Smyth family in the late nineteenth century.

For five of the tokens it is not possible to determine the social class to which their writers belong. Interestingly, for those that are determinable, three belong in the upper end of the social class hierarchy as they are produced by a ship's captain, while another three come from a maid.

Women are responsible for seven tokens, men for four, making T/D-dentalisation the only consonant feature dominated by female writers. In fact, all tokens after 1850 are produced by women (see Figure 7.3). It is difficult to interpret this, however, since there are very few geographically placeable tokens. One token comes from Co. Down, three from Co. (London)Derry (all from women), and for seven location is unknown. Because so few are placeable, no geographical map of token occurrences is presented.

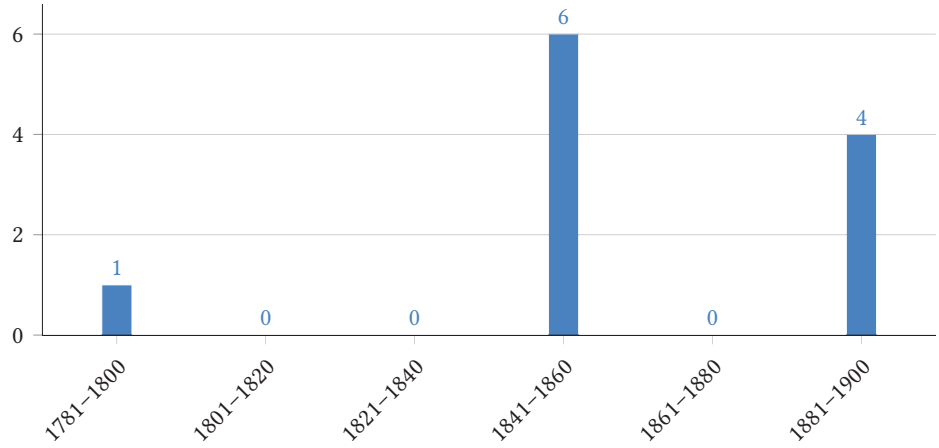



**Figure 7.3:** Chronological distribution (n) of T/D-dentalisation (n = 11)

### 7.3.3 T/D-fricativisation

*the worst of them all was the Deth of our der frend*
*Margret Armstrong as we* ***mith*** *say the*
*mother of us all we regretet the Deth of John*
*Lidy ver much* ***buth*** *it was nothing to her Deth*
(Thomas Armstrong, Ballinamallard to Christopher Armstrong, 28.10.1849)

T/D-fricativisation is the pronunciation of post- and intervocalic /t/, and also often /d/, as a 'voiceless alveolar "slit" fricative' (Corrigan 2010: 43). According to Hickey (2007: 114), the slit fricative does not normally appear outside of SIrE, and Wells (1982: 429) even uses it to distinguish between NIrE and SIrE.

The feature is transcribed in various ways by different authors. Wells (1982: 429), for instance, uses an ogonek [t̨], Melchers and Shaw (2003: 74) describe it as 'almost like [tʃ] or [ts],' while Hickey (1984: 234) adopts a subscript caret [t̯]. The latter is used in this thesis.

**Table 7.4:** Phonetic representation of T/D-fricativisation (n= 13)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨a bouth⟩ | about |
| ⟨Beathie⟩ | Beattie |
| ⟨buth⟩ | but |
| ⟨drouth⟩ | drought |
| ⟨mith⟩ | might |
| ⟨outh⟩ (4) | out |
| ⟨poth⟩ | put |
| ⟨pottathoes⟩ | potatoes |
| ⟨wenth⟩ | went |
| ⟨writhing⟩ | writing |

As presented in Table 7.4, evidence for the feature is found on 13 occasions in CORIECOR. Similar to section 7.3.2, the ambiguity of ⟨th⟩ makes identification of tokens for T/D-fricativisation a challenge. Like ⟨th⟩ for [t̪], there is no perfect manner of orthographically visualising [t̪], except (most likely) with the same sequence ⟨th⟩. Hickey (2007: 56, 77) interprets post- and intervocalic ⟨th⟩ in the mid-fourteenth-century *Kildare poems* and writings in the Forth and Bargy dialect as evidence for T/D-fricativisation.[3] Bliss (1979), though he discusses linguistic features in the 'Captain Thomas Stukeley' play, is silent on the matter of T/D-fricativisation.

One word which is not included in Table 7.4 is ⟨sweps⟩ *swept*. If [t̪] can be described as sounding like [tʃ] or [ts] (Melchers and Shaw 2003: 74), then the rendering of the feature as ⟨s⟩ does not seem far-fetched. It is the only occurrence of its type in CORIECOR, but singular occurrences can still reveal interesting features (see section 7.8). However, looking at the word in context in example (32), below, a more likely explanation in this case is that the writer did not intend the past tense, but elided an ⟨e⟩ in present tense *sweeps*; the rest of the passage is written in the present as well.

(32) *and A great flood*
*comes at night and the sewer gets*
*chocked up above Hugh Scots and*
*the flood* ***sweps*** *farms and every*
*thing it meets until it comes betwen*
*your hill and John Grahams*
(M. Murphy, USA to Hugh Donnan, Ireland, 15.08.1874)

Three tokens are produced by women, two of unknown social rank, one a servant. The remaining nine, then, are from men, but seven of these come from one letter, written by Thomas Armstrong (1849, see Figure 7.4), hailing from Ballinamallard, Co. Fermanagh.[4] One other token is found in a letter by a brother of Thomas, thus also from Co. Fermanagh. The only other placeable token is traced to Castledamph, Co. Tyrone (⟨Beathie⟩ *Beattie*). Still, of the tokens in Table 7.4, ⟨Beathie⟩ and ⟨pottathoes⟩ are perhaps less likely to represent T/D-fricativisation than the other words. Thus, those tokens that are placeable geographically, and also the most likely to represent the feature come from precisely the area where we still find T/D-fricativisation today, in the SUE area (as defined by Harris (1985)), which forms an intermediary dialectal band between SIrE (where T/D-fricativisation is common) and NIrE. These locations are also in or around *Gaeltacht* areas at the time or close to regions that until recently were Irish-speaking.

[3] The Forth and Bargy dialect, which died out around 1850 (Poole et al. 1996: 7), is preserved in the sixteenth-century play 'The famous historye of the life and death of Captain Thomas Stukeley' and in nineteenth-century glossaries.

[4] Due to the limited number of tokens for T/D-fricativisation, no geographical map is presented.

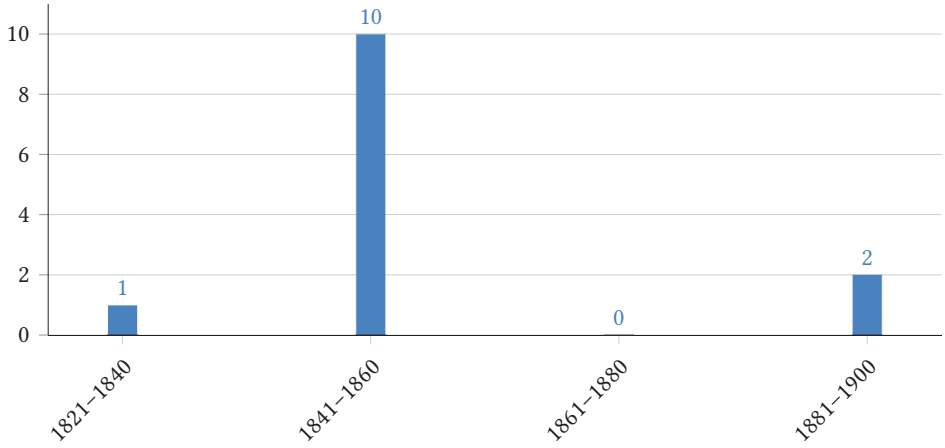



**Figure 7.4:** Chronological distribution (n) of T/D-fricativisation (n = 13)

## 7.4 S-palatalisation

*three fine*
*boys all working away at the trade and in good health The rest is at*
*school all you kno* ***Shusan*** *and John is in America the*
*are both well* ***Shusan*** *sent you their address*
(John Killen, Greenhill, Co. Donegal to Mrs Corbitt, Canada, 01.01.1897)

In Ireland, [ʃ] for /s/ occurs in present-day contact English – that is, in areas where IrE historically has been influenced by substrate Irish (Hickey 2007: 59). Thus, S-palatalisation is found in *Gaeltacht* and recent *Gaeltacht* areas (Ó hÚrdail 1997: 185), which for nineteenth- and twentieth-century Ulster means the west-coast in Co. Donegal, roughly from Ballyness Bay in the north to the Braes in the south, the Glens in north-eastern Antrim, south Armagh and parts of Monaghan, and the Mid Ulster *Gaeltacht*. There are certain constraints, however: it only occurs immediately before or after plosives and after /r/, though Hickey does give ⟨shelf⟩ [ʃɛlf] *self* as an example of the historical feature, arguing that through the process of supraregionalisation, [ʃ] has since been restricted to its present-day contexts (Hickey 2007: 59, 304, 313). Bliss (1979: 234–235) divides evidence of the feature in his research on historical IrE texts into two main groups: ⟨sh⟩-spellings 'in the neighbourhood' of a front vowel (in which he includes ME *a* and *ā*) and those for which this rule does not apply – the latter contain cases near a back vowel and those near a consonant, especially for the clusters /st/ and /rs/. Bliss finds tokens occurring before a front vowel to be the most numerous.

Fifteen tokens of S-palatalisation were found in CORIECOR (see Table 7.5). Of the tokens, three were found in positions near a front vowel (⟨bushyness⟩ *business*, ⟨deshent⟩ *descent*, and ⟨McAlessh⟩ *McAleese*) and only one in the cluster /st/ (⟨ashtonishment⟩). The other 11 are seemingly located near a back vowel: ⟨shoot⟩ *suit* (two tokens), ⟨shuch⟩ *such*, ⟨Shusan⟩ *Susan* (four), ⟨Shusanna⟩ *Susanna* (three), and ⟨Sushana⟩, however, /ʊ/ has been fronted to /ʉ/ in NIrE for quite some time. Thus, of these remaining 11 tokens, ten are in fronted (i.e. central) position (⟨shoot⟩ (two tokens), ⟨Shusan⟩ (four), ⟨Shusanna⟩ (three), and ⟨Sushana⟩),

**Table 7.5:** Phonetic representation of s-palatalisation (n = 15)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨ashtonishment⟩ | astonishment |
| ⟨bushyness⟩ | business |
| ⟨deshent⟩ | descent |
| ⟨McAlessh⟩ | McAleese |
| ⟨shoot⟩ (2) | suit |
| ⟨shuch⟩ | such |
| ⟨Shusan⟩ (4) | Susan |
| ⟨Shusanna⟩ (3) | Susanna |
| ⟨Sushana⟩ | Susanna |

and only one is truly found before a back vowel (⟨shuch⟩), though this might also be a centralised /ʌ/. These results are contrary to Bliss' (1979: 234–235) findings of s-palatalisation before a front vowel in historical texts, because even though most of the tokens are fronted, they are nevertheless still in central position.

Eight, over half of the tokens for s-palatalisation, are found in the name *Susan(na)*. It is true that the name exists as *Shoshannah* (from Hebrew שׁוֹשַׁנָּה [ʃoːʃaˈnaː]), but there is no reason to believe that this version was widespread, or at all in use, in Ireland at the time. *Susan* (from French *Susanne*) was introduced by the Anglo-Normans (Norman 2003: 310).[5] Thus, ⟨Shusan⟩, ⟨Shusanna⟩, and ⟨Sushana⟩ must be interpreted as showing evidence of /ʃ/ for /s/.

S-palatalisation is found throughout the nineteenth century, as seen in Figure 7.5, although a single token is found in the mid-1700s as well.

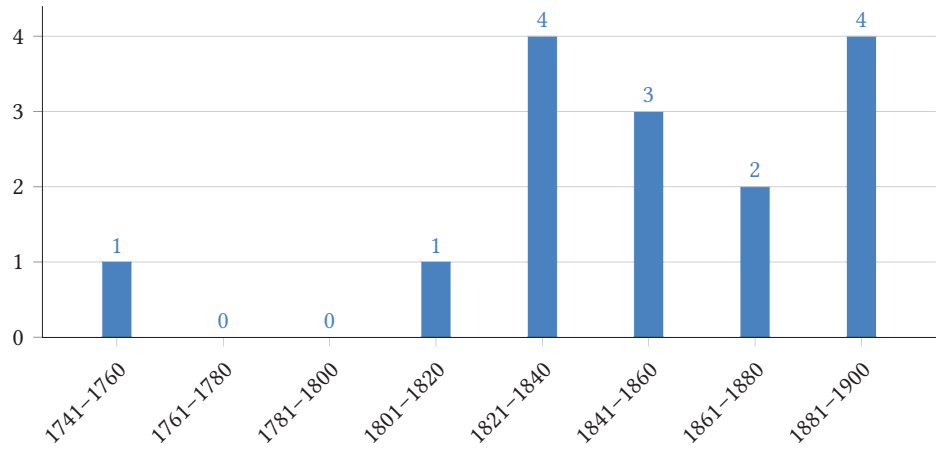
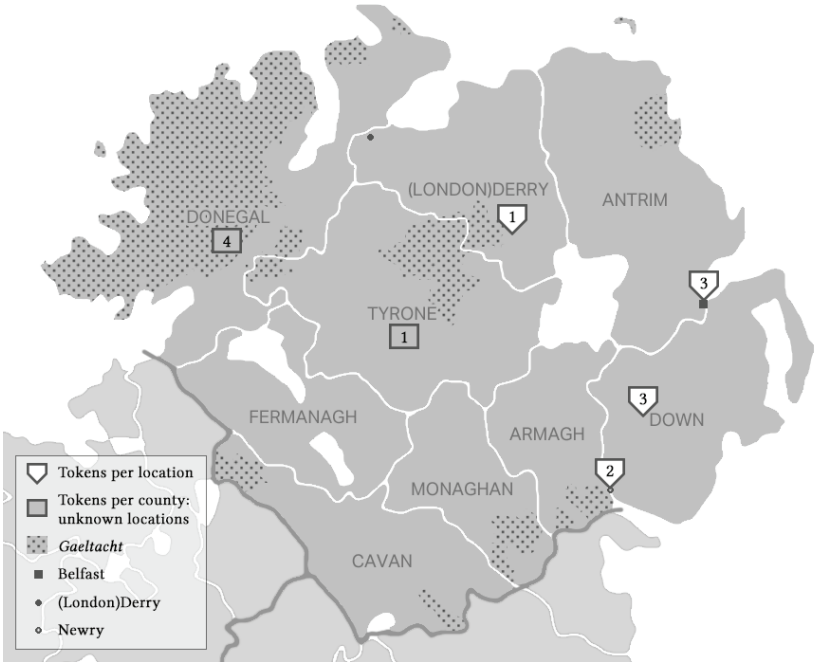



**Figure 7.5:** Chronological distribution (n) of s-palatalisation (n = 15)

Map 7.5 shows the geographical distribution of s-palatalisation. As mentioned above, the feature may be expected in *Gaeltacht* areas. Thus, while the four tokens in Co. Donegal

[5] Though there are certainly Irish names with initial ⟨sh⟩: e.g. *Shauna*, *Sheena*, *Sheila*, *Shelley*, *Shona*; or /ʃ/: e.g. *Séarlait*, *Seósaimhthín*, *Síle*, *Síne*, *Siobhán*.




**Map 7.5**: Geographical distribution (n) of s-palatalisation

do not allow more localised identification, most of this county was *Gaeltacht* in the nineteenth century anyway. The tokens from counties Armagh/Down and (London)Derry are also bordering a *Gaeltacht* area, which is a possibility for the one in Co. Tyrone as well. The remaining geographically placeable tokens are mostly found in the eastern part of Ulster, including three in Belfast.

## 7.5 [ʃ] for /tʃ/

> *I should prefer a carpenters trade to*
> *100£ I know their is some* ***shanses***
> *but it is difficult for a stranger to meet with them.*
> (George Anderson, New York to James Anderson, Co. Tyrone, 28.06.1833)

Irish originally had no affricate /tʃ/, so that Norman French and ME loanwords with /tʃ/ were instead pronounced with [ʃ] or, intervocalically, underwent metathesis to [ʃt] (Bliss 1979: 240). Like s-palatalisation (section 7.4), the feature is common in *Gaeltacht* and recent *Gaeltacht* areas (Ó hÚrdail 1997: 185). The sequence *ch* as ⟨sh⟩ is found 'regularly' in the texts investigated by Bliss (1979: 240). In CORIECOR, 12 tokens for the lenition of the /tʃ/ affricate are found, as shown in Table 7.6.

⟨Scosh⟩ may perhaps be interpreted as cluster reduction due to the missing ⟨t⟩, but the pronunciation of ⟨ch⟩ and ⟨tch⟩ is, in most cases and in most varieties of English, the same: [tʃ]. The five tokens for *much* come from three different writers, all farmers. But as in many of the features discussed, most tokens (12) come from farmers anyway. Of the remainder,

two are produced by manual labourers, and one each by a craftsman and a member of the gentry. The latter is James Du Pré Alexander, Lord Caledon, and the future third Earl of Caledon, who at this point was serving as an army officer in Quebec, Canada.

Attestations of [ʃ] for /tʃ/ are only found between the 1820s and 1900, and the diachronic distribution shows a very gradual decline (see Figure 7.6).

**Table 7.6:** Phonetic representation of [ʃ] for /tʃ/ (n = 12)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨eash⟩ | each |
| ⟨eashother⟩ | each other |
| ⟨mush⟩ (5) | much |
| ⟨Scosh⟩ | Scotch |
| ⟨shaeper⟩ | cheaper |
| ⟨shanses⟩ | chances |
| ⟨shatting⟩ | chatting |
| ⟨whish⟩ | which |

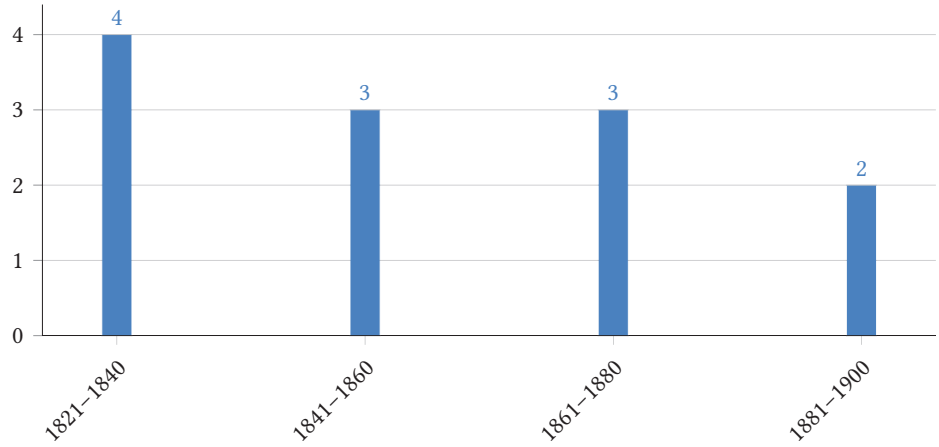



**Figure 7.6:** Chronological distribution (n) of [ʃ] for /tʃ/ (n = 12)

Unlike s-palatalisation (section 7.4) where some of the tokens may originate from the *Gaeltacht* area in Co. Donegal (here, according to Ó hÚrdail (1997: 185), both s-palatalisation and [ʃ] for /tʃ/ are common), no tokens of [ʃ] for /tʃ/ can be identified as originating in Co. Donegal (see Map 7.6). Half of the tokens are from Co. (London)Derry, three others occur in singular attestation in counties Fermanagh, Antrim, and Tyrone (all on the edges of *Gaeltachtaí*) and the last three are unknown.


**Map 7.6**: Geographical distribution (n) of [ʃ] for /tʃ/

## 7.6 Yod-dropping

> *Well James I wood like you wood rite and tell me all the latest* ***nuse****.*
> (T. Smyth, Liverpool to J.A. Smyth, Castledamph, 04.04.1929)

The elision of /j/ before /u:/ is common in several varieties of English. In IrE, yod-dropping occurs in the cluster /nj-/ in many rural varieties (e.g. *news*); also in /-njər/ in e.g. *junior*, and in /tju:-, dju:-/ as in *Tuesday* or *during* (Ó hÚrdail 1997: 186). Phonetic representation for the feature (11 tokens) in coriecor is presented in Table 7.7.

**Table 7.7**: Phonetic representation of yod-dropping (n = 11)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨cored⟩ | cured |
| ⟨Christen⟩ | Christian |
| ⟨failor⟩ | failure |
| ⟨falour⟩ | failure |
| ⟨industrous⟩ | industrious |
| ⟨jouvel⟩ | jovial |
| ⟨nous⟩ (2) | news |
| ⟨nuse⟩ | news |
| ⟨savours⟩ | saviours |
| ⟨searous⟩ | serious |

The clearest cases are ⟨nous⟩ and ⟨nuse⟩ for *news* as here elision of /j/ occurs in the cluster /nj-/, which is expected in IrE (and also in e.g. AmE). ⟨Cored⟩ *cured* is also straightforward with /kj-/ before /u:/. And if YOD-dropping occurs in /-njər/ (*junior*), then ⟨failor⟩, ⟨falour⟩ *failure* and ⟨savours⟩ *saviours* may show the same process, though with /-ljər/ and /-vjər/. ⟨Christen⟩, *Christian* and ⟨jouvel⟩ *jovial* also likely show YOD-dropping. ⟨Industrous⟩ *industrious* and ⟨searous⟩ *serious* are perhaps less certain because they may show not elision of /j/ in /-(t)rjəs/, but rather elision of /i/ in a syllable break [-(t)ri.əs]. Several other words where it appeared that some form of YOD-dropping was occurring were not included because they occurred in quite different environments or configurations: ⟨Californa⟩ *California*, ⟨Philadelpha⟩ *Philadelphia*, and ⟨Austrila⟩ *Australia*.

Figure 7.7 shows the distribution of YOD-dropping in CORIECOR over time.

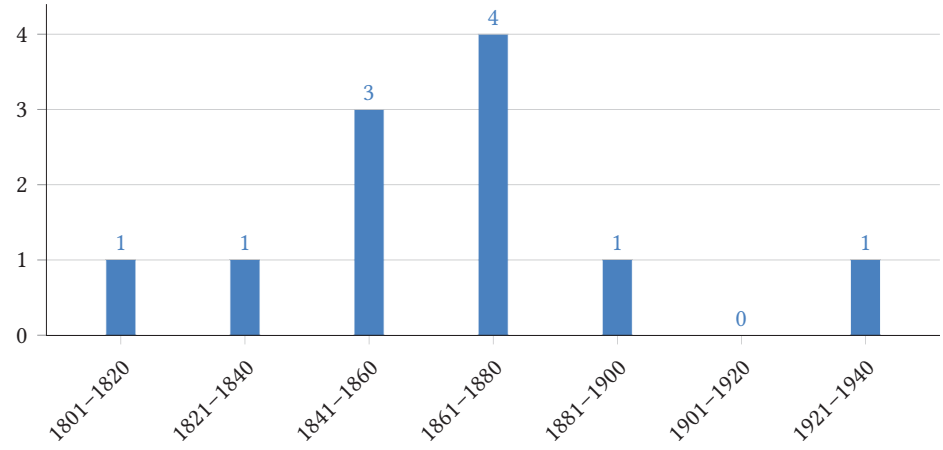



**Figure 7.7**: Chronological distribution (n) of YOD-dropping (n = 11)

Tokens for YOD-dropping are quite widespread geographically, though small clusters were found in counties Fermanagh and Down/Antrim (see Map 7.7). One token was found near the Mid Ulster *Gaeltacht*.

One token of YOD-dropping in CORIECOR was found for Dublin: ⟨Asserance⟩ *assurance* with YOD-dropping in /əʃ-/ (or /əs-, ɜs-/) before /u:/. As the origin of this token lies outside of Ulster, it is not included in the discussion here.

In addition to the occurrences of YOD-dropping detailed above, a handful of words with possible evidence of the opposite, YOD-insertion – or perhaps rather palatalisation – were found: ⟨milions⟩ (two tokens) *melons* (also contains short E-raising, see section 6.7), ⟨jealious⟩ *jealous*, and ⟨tremendious⟩ *tremendous*. Palatalisation in *tremendous* is still typical of many speakers in present-day NIrE.


**Map** 7.7: Geographical distribution (n) of YOD-dropping

## 7.7 Devoiced /v/

*this vessel is going*
*to derry and the other to* ***Lifferpool***
(James Horner, Philadelphia to Thomas Horner, Co. (London)Derry, 24.08.1801)

Only very few instances of the devoicing of /v/ were attested in CORIECOR. While ⟨f⟩ for ⟨w(h)⟩ certainly has been observed for older IrE in, e.g. ⟨fen⟩/⟨phen⟩ *when* with Irish bilabial fricative [ɸ] (Hickey 2007: 304, 306), ⟨f⟩ for ⟨v⟩ is almost only seen word-initially. Bliss (1979) has only found word-initial /f/ for /v/ in *very*. He further states that 'devoicing of medial and final /v/ cannot be explained in terms of the phonology of Irish' (Bliss 1979: 245). The few examples he has found of devoiced /v/ in medial position (for which two tokens were found in CORIECOR, out of a total of five, see Table 7.8) 'remain inexplicable' (Bliss 1979: 245). Except for a few loanwords (e.g. *violin*), the letter ⟨v⟩ does not exist in Irish, but the sound [v] does.[6] It could therefore be the case that Irish-speakers replaced [v] with Irish [f] while learning English when they saw the letter ⟨v⟩, because they did not necessarily associate ⟨v⟩ with [v]. This may also be the case for some of the tokens of devoiced /v/ in CORIECOR in Table 7.8.

Devoiced /v/ is only found in the nineteenth century (see Figure 7.8). Two of the tokens are from Co. (London)Derry, counties Down and Fermanagh each have one, and the final

[6] In Irish, [v] is spelt ⟨bh⟩ or ⟨mh⟩ today (⟨ḃ⟩ or ⟨ṁ⟩ traditionally) and is usually a sign of lenition, which has grammatical functions in Irish: *bean* [ban] 'woman,' *an bhean* [ən van] 'the woman' (McCafferty, personal communication).

token is not placeable at all.

No women are found with evidence of this feature. Among the men, two tokens come from letters by farmers, one is produced by a teacher, and one by a clerk. Again, for the final token, nothing is known except that the writer is male.

**Table 7.8:** Phonetic representation of devoiced /v/ (n = 5)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨leaf⟩ | leave |
| ⟨Lifferpool⟩ | Liverpool |
| ⟨Olifer⟩ | Oliver |
| ⟨safe⟩ | save |
| ⟨serf⟩ | serve |

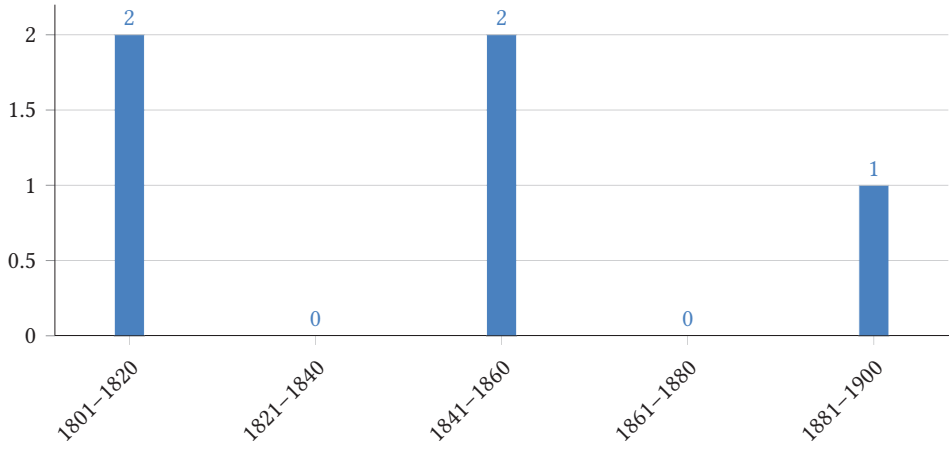



**Figure 7.8:** Chronological distribution (n) of devoiced /v/ (n = 5)

## 7.8 Singular occurrences: ⟨Mafew⟩ and ⟨taughing⟩

The results discussed in this and other chapters of the present thesis have in common not only that multiple tokens are found per feature, but that it is possible to triangulate said features with other historical sources, such as orthoepists' grammars and works of fiction, to verify their credibility as evidence for historical NIrE phonology. The singular occurrences discussed below are, however, only found once each, and evidence for them in other genres is indirect at best. ⟨Mafew⟩ *Matthew* inevitably hints at TH-fronting while ⟨taughing⟩ *talking* seems to imply the velar fricative we would expect in *loch*, except it takes the place of /k/. Naturally, these single tokens need some discussion, even though they could hardly be used as concrete evidence without additional data.

### 7.8.1 TH-fronting

A possible token for TH-fronting is found in CORIECOR in the spelling ⟨Mafew⟩ *Matthew*.

(33) *The first man I knew going into the Dock was Mr.* ***Mafew***
*R. Douglas's Son in Law*
(William Williamson, New York to Hugh Williamson, Richhill, 22.05.1843)

TH-fronting is the substitution of [f, v] for /θ, ð/ as in e.g. [ˈbrʌvə] *brother*. It is a salient feature of the Cockney accent (Wells 1982: 328) and AAVE (Bailey and Thomas 1998: 87); it is increasingly observed in Estuary English (Altendorf 1999); and attested even in Glasgow (Stuart-Smith and Timmins 2006) and New Zealand English (Wood 2003). While TH-fronting is not found in Ireland today (Hickey 2007: 12, 361), there is evidence for it in the historical Forth and Bargy dialect. Hickey (2007: 77) sees ⟨brover⟩ and ⟨brower⟩ *brother* and also ⟨aulaveer⟩ *altogether* as evidence. He adds that this must have been before the (S)IrE shift of /ð/ to [d, d̪].

It is possible that the letter writer who produced (33), William Williamson, a farmer from Co. Armagh, was referring to a person who was actually called *Mafew*, though this name is rather unlikely. Overall, Williamson seems quite competent as a writer. Punctuation and capitalisation are for the most part standard, although a number of inconsistencies remain. There are a handful of non-standard spellings (e.g. ⟨tugd⟩ *tugged*, ⟨begining⟩ *beginning*), and, in addition to example (33), two instances of phonetic representation: ⟨calim⟩ *calm* and ⟨McLain⟩ *McLean*. ⟨Calim⟩ shows schwa epenthesis (see section 8.2) and ⟨McLain⟩ shows evidence of unraised long E (see section 6.5). There are many variants of the name, however (e.g. *McLean*, *McClean*, *McClain*, *MacLaine*, *MacLane*, *McLane*), and the surname that is spelt ⟨McLean⟩ is found pronounced both as [məˈkleɪn] and [məˈkliːn], but as the transcriber of Williamson's letter has interpreted ⟨McLain⟩ as *McLean*, not *McLane*, I am assuming that there are good reasons to do so. The non-standard spelling of *McLean* is therefore interesting in this regard, as it shows that Williamson either a) maps his own IrE sound system onto personal names (see *Henry* with epenthesis in section 8.2), which would be expected, or b) spells names the way their owners pronounce them (the person called Matthew might come from the south of England and use TH-fronting himself). From personal experience, b) is not unlikely for an unconventional name, but *Matthew* and *McLean* are quite common.

A final consideration: the glyph ⟨f⟩ resembles a mirrored up-side-down ⟨t⟩, but Williamson's level of orthographic proficiency does not warrant the assumption that he left out ⟨th⟩ and wrote a flipped and rotated ⟨t⟩ in *Matthew*. In other words, the most likely explanation is that ⟨Mafew⟩ shows phonetic representation of TH-fronting. Still, there are plenty of words with intervocalic ⟨th⟩ in the six letters from Williamson that are present in CORIECOR (e.g. *anything*, *mother*) and TH-fronting is found nowhere else.

### 7.8.2 [x] for /k/

One single token for a velar fricative [x] for /k/ is found in the corpus.

(34) *she is* ***taughing*** *of*
*goying into a cloak store.*
(John S. Sinclair, California, USA to Margaret Graham, (London)Derry, 15.01.1885)

It is reasonable to assume that ⟨gh⟩ in this instance (as it does in e.g. IrE *lough*) represents [x], which means that John S. Sinclair probably pronounced *talking* as [ˈtɔːxɪŋ].

In OE, words with present-day ⟨-gh⟩ had [ç] (e.g. *niht night*) or [x] (e.g. *sohte sought*) in final position (Minkova 2014: 103).[7] [x] in the sequence ⟨gh⟩ was in Standard English replaced by [f] or [Ø] (e.g. *tough*, *through*) during the fourteenth century (Upward and Davidson 2011: 183). A velar fricative [x] for orthographic ⟨-gh⟩ occurs in Ulster, though more frequently in USc than other NIrE varieties. It is most common in dialectal words and proper nouns, most of which originate from Irish or Scots (Harris 1997: 210), for instance *lough* (*loch* in Irish).

It is impossible to determine whether ⟨gh⟩-endings in CORIECOR represent [x], [f] or [Ø], because there are no variant spellings to suggest different qualities than in present-day English. However, the spelling ⟨taughing⟩ *talking* in (34) does suggest a velar fricative instead of /k/.

To my knowledge, [x] for /k/ is not documented for older IrE. It is not mentioned in the works of historical orthoepists considered for the present thesis, nor mentioned in diachronic works such as Bliss (1979) or Hickey (2007). Neither is it possible to find *talk* in the manner given by Sinclair in (34) in USc grammars – Robinson (2007: 284) gives *taak* while Fenton (2006: 208) gives *tak* – neither of which suggests a fricative. But it is perhaps possible to draw lines to the Scouse dialect of Liverpool, which was heavily influenced by IrE-speaking immigrants in the past.

In his in-depth study of the Scouse dialect, Knowles (1973) argues that the dialect formed after massive IrE input in the nineteenth century. Trade routes between Ireland and the Liverpool area have probably existed since the Bronze Age, but especially following the potato famines of 1845–1852 more than 500,000 Irish emigrants settled or temporarily stayed in Liverpool. In 1861, 24.5 per cent of the population were first-generation Irish immigrants (Knowles 1973: 23). Eventually, IrE became the 'non-prestige form' and mixed with the other immigrant and local north-western varieties so that '[t]he vowels and consonants used by the middle classes, together with suprasegmental features of rhythm and intonation, are largely Anglo-Irish in origin' (Knowles 1973: 23–24).

Knowles (1973: 252) describes Scouse /p, t, k/ as aspirated affricates, e.g. [k$^{xh}$at] *cat*, sometimes with no velar closure at all, e.g. [buχ] *book*. Crucial to an explanation of Sinclair's ['tɔ:xɪŋ] *talking* in (34) is that Knowles (1973: 252) gives the example [woxt] for *walked* in Scouse, which contains the same rhyme as *talking*. Thus, it is entirely possible that the unvoiced velar stop realisations described by Knowles, which are 'more like Southern Anglo-Irish,' i.e. SIrE (Knowles 1973: 246), mean that ['tɔ:xɪŋ] (orthographically realised as ⟨taughing⟩ by Sinclair in 1885) was a feasible pronunciation in the north of Ulster at the time as well. Also, while (London)Derry may seem too far north compared to Knowles' remarks that Scouse is influenced by SIrE. There was extensive contact between northern ports, such as (London)Derry, Belfast, Larne, and Warrenpoint/Newry, the rest of Ireland, and Liverpool. Also, medial [x] (though for ⟨gh⟩, not for ⟨k⟩) is found in some IrE varieties, 'including SUE and MUE in west Ulster,' e.g. ['dɑnəxe] 'Donaghy' (Harris 1985: 59). There are numerous place names with ⟨gh⟩ where the pronunciation is [x], e.g. Bellaghy, Finaghy, and Aghadowey.

[7] Present-day ⟨gh⟩ in initial position does not represent OE [x]. The ⟨h⟩ in e.g. *ghost* (OE *gāst*) was an introduction by fifteenth-century printer Caxton who was probably influenced by (earlier) Flemish ⟨gheest⟩ *ghost*, *spirit* (Upward and Davidson 2011: 45). See also 'ghost, n.. OED Online. June 2015. Oxford University Press. `http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/78064` (accessed 3 March, 2015).

## 7.9 Conclusions

Most of the consonants discussed in this chapter are only found with between 10 and 16 tokens each in CORIECOR (sections 7.3.1–7.5), and in one case as few as five tokens (section 7.6). For many of these, a substantial number of the tokens remain simply numbers, as sometimes nothing is known about the social class to which a token's writer belonged, or it is not known from which part of Ulster (or Ireland) he or she originated. In some cases, attestations by other historical linguists, discussions by grammarians of the past, or the presence of a feature in a certain dialect add meat to the observation of a certain rendering of a consonant in CORIECOR. T/D-fricativisation is for instance common in SIrE, while s-palatalisation could be expected in writers from Co. Donegal's *Gaeltacht* area. For two of the features discussed here, TH-fronting and [x] for /k/ (sections 7.8.1 and 7.8.2), only one single attestation exists for the entire corpus. The common theme here is that, while there may be too few tokens to base a thorough investigation of a certain feature on, the fact that they are present in CORIECOR and are from areas close to recent/present *Gaeltachtaí* in the nineteenth century is very interesting in and of itself.

It is worth dwelling on the idea that for a feature to appear in a letter, its distribution in the spoken language must have been even greater. We are not always so lucky that the orthographic knowledge of a letter writer was such that features of his or her spoken language are preserved in what they put down on paper.

Still, one of the consonantal features found CORIECOR, TH-fortition (section 7.2), occurred to a larger degree than the others (35 tokens), most of which were found in letters written by farmers. It seems that TH-fortition has been much more widespread geographically in the past.

# Chapter 8

# Phonological processes

## 8.1 Introduction

This chapter explores evidence of phonological processes, by which is meant certain configurations or clusters of features which involve several consonants and/or vowels. These are therefore discussed in a chapter of their own, rather than including them in one of the preceding chapters. Such a division is largely inspired by Hickey (2007), where some historical features of IrE are treated in a similar fashion.

Section 8.2 on schwa-epenthesis is based on an earlier study (de Rijke forthcoming), which is reflected in its level of detail and scope compared to the other features discussed in this chapter. Evidence of metathesis in CORIECOR is explored in section 8.3, cluster reduction and post-sonorant stop deletion are discussed in section 8.4, and [n] for /ŋ/, along with some notes on *lenth* and *strenth*, are found in section 8.6. Section 8.7 explores the unexpected occurrences of phonetic representations of non-rhoticity and H-dropping.

## 8.2 Schwa-epenthesis[1]

> *I went to Mr.*
> *John Robeson Merchant who is Joined in Merchandise*
> *with* ***henery*** *gore of greenack*
> (Patt McGowan, St. John's, New Brunswick to 'Brother Roger,' 25.12.1847)

Schwa-epenthesis (hereafter *epenthesis*) is common in Irish (Ní Chiosáin 1999; Hickey 2004: 82; Sell 2012: 50; Kallen 2013: 82) and has consequently spread to IrE (Hickey 2007: 80). The feature occurs in several varieties of English, as well as in foreign-language varieties where an epenthetic vowel may be inserted to break up consonant clusters not found in the speaker's first language, such as Punjabi English [səku:l] *school*, but also where English is a second language as demonstrated by the loanword [suturaɪku] *strike* in Japanese (Melchers and Shaw 2003: 19). Among first-language varieties of English it is perhaps especially known as a feature of IrE.

[1] I am grateful to the audience of the Twelfth International AEDEI Conference, *Voice and discourse in the Irish context*, in Cáceres, Spain, where the pilot study that forms the basis for this section was first presented. An article (de Rijke forthcoming) on which this section is based is to appear in Villanueva Romero et al. (forthcoming).

According to Hickey (2004: 83), epenthesis occurs in IrE due to 'a prohibition on heavy clusters.' The insertion of an unstressed central vowel /ə/ in a cluster of certain consonants is used to divide the word into several syllables, thereby avoiding heavy clusters. For instance, ['filəm] *film* is heard across Ireland, and is not connected to any social or regional stereotype (Bliss 1984: 139; Hickey 2007: 27; Sell 2012: 49). However, while epenthesis in /lm/, as in *film*, and to some extent /rm/ as in ['farəm] *farm*, is found across the country, epenthesis in other clusters, e.g. ['dʌbəlɪn] *Dublin*, is most often found in vernacular varieties (Hickey 2004: 83; 2007: 307–308). Clusters with /r/ as initial consonant are, according to Hickey (2007: 13), usually found in rural forms of SIrE.

On the whole, it is generally agreed that epenthesis in IrE usually occurs between a liquid and a nasal consonant. Henry (1957: 69) claims that it is found '[b]etween r, l, and m.' Kallen (2013: 67) likewise argues that IrE 'has a pattern in which a sequence of /l/ or /r/ followed by another consonant (especially a nasal) in the syllable coda will be broken up by the insertion of a [ə].' According to Walshe (2009: 231), schwa-epenthesis occurs in environments between a plosive, liquid or nasal and a liquid or nasal consonant; thus usually in the clusters /bl/, /lm/, /ln/, /rl/, /rn/, /rm/, /t̪l/, and /tl/. However, the /t̪l/ and /tl/ contexts are probably interpretable as syllabic /l/, but a spelling like ⟨tel⟩ for these clusters shows the influence of the spoken word on orthography anyway. Hickey (2007: 13) finds that epenthesis occurs in 'heavy syllable-final clusters' which are comprised of non-homorganic sonorants, though he mentions ['aɪɹən] *iron* as a counterexample.[2] Medial epenthesis in plosive + sonorant clusters can be found in vernacular varieties (Hickey 2007: 307).

Recent studies on present-day IrE show examples of epenthesis in /lm/, /rm/, and /rn/ as being the most common clusters. In Hickey's (2004) *Sound atlas of Irish English*, epenthesis can be heard in the speech of informants from e.g. counties Kerry and Limerick in *film* and *farm* respectively, Co. Carlow in *modern*, and in speakers of 'fashionable' Dublin English in *film*. Walshe (2009: 231–233) has noted several occurrences of epenthesis in films that are either set in Ireland or contain spoken IrE. He lists a number of examples with epenthesis (words containing epenthesis marked in bold):

- 'Oh, it'll be like that **film** *The boys in their hoods*.' (*Irish jam*, 2006)
- 'Where are you, you mongrel **worm**?' (*Rat*, 2000)
- '**Turn** Tír na nÓg! **Turn**!' (*Into the West*, 1992)

Even though some of the actors are not Irish or speakers of IrE themselves, epenthesis is apparently still deemed a salient enough feature of IrE that it occurs frequently in the films Walshe has analysed. He notes, however, that many modern-day accent handbooks for the stage contain numerous misrepresentations, generalisations, IrE clichés, and plain inaccuracies (Walshe 2009: 250–269). Sell (2012) has examined schwa-epenthesis in Galway, where she found epenthesis in *film* to be the most common by far, making up 77 per cent of the tokens. Most of the remaining tokens are for /rm/.

[2] Homorganic consonants are those which have the same place of articulation, e.g. [t] and [s], or [ɹ] and [n] in the *iron* counterexample.

### 8.2.1 Challenges concerning schwa-epenthesis

The greatest difficulty in collecting the epenthesis data was determining whether a non-standard spelling indeed shows evidence of schwa-epenthesis. The clearest indicator of epenthesis in writing is the insertion of a vowel (most frequently ⟨e⟩, but others are also found) between two consonants. In words such as ⟨worald⟩ *world* or ⟨currels⟩ *curls*, this is relatively straightforward, though it is always worth remembering that any non-standard spelling may simply have been a slip of the pen and does not show phonetic representation at all. In some cases, identifying epenthesis can be a challenge. Consider for instance ⟨whilest⟩ *whilst* and ⟨dowery⟩ *dowry*.[3] Either could be a candidate for evidence of epenthesis, but because *whilst* is an alternate form of *while*, the writer may have assumed *whilst* to be spelt ⟨while⟩ + ⟨st⟩. In the case of ⟨dowery⟩, one could certainly argue that for a semi-literate person, the root DOW may sound like it might be orthographically represented as ⟨dowe⟩, but then again, words like e.g. *how* or *cow* do not.[4] In this example, both ⟨dowery⟩ and ⟨whilest⟩ are counted as showing epenthesis because David Anderson's letter contains many non-standard spellings, including 14 with evidence of epenthesis. One other occurrence of ⟨whilest⟩ in the corpus, however, is not counted as the letter is not sufficiently oral. There are a number of cases where this approach is used.

A different challenge was encountered with one of the most common words with an indication of epenthesis. The name *Henry* is sometimes found with the spelling ⟨Hennery⟩ or variations thereof, indicating epenthesis. Sometimes, it is even found in both standard and non-standard forms in the same letter, as in (35):

(35) *Dear* ***Henry***
*my Father had an opportunity of Seeing Alexander on Thirsday and he asked him if he would go down to See you on Tuesday […]*
*Dear* ***Henery*** *I was informed that they have made there way into the house and has taken some of the articles out I intend to get the doore Secured untill you come home.*
(Jane Johnson, Antrim to Henry Johnson, Carrickfergus Jail, 26.05.1848)

However, *Hennery* as first name or surname co-exists alongside *Henry*, though it is less common. This might therefore also be the case in the corpus whenever a spelling such as ⟨Hennery⟩, ⟨Henery⟩, etc. is encountered. Historically, *Hennery* might itself be a result of phonetic spelling showing epenthesis, although it could also be a shortened form of e.g. *McEnery* or *McInerney*, just as the surname *Henry* often is a shortened form of *McHenry* or *Fitzhenry* in Ireland. Nevertheless, due to the presence of other non-standard spellings in relevant letters, spelling variation in the use of *Henry* itself (see (35), above) or other evidence of orality, ⟨Hennery⟩ was found to show epenthesis in all cases. In other words, there was no evidence of the name *Hennery* in the corpus; only of epenthesis-bearing *Henry*.

[3] Both from David Anderson, Lawrenceville to 'Dear Sir,' 09.02.1854.

[4] In fact, only a very few words in English end in *-owe*. With the exception of *owe*, all of them are archaic (e.g. *yowe* 'ewe,' 'thou') or regional (e.g. Sc., northern Eng. *lowe* 'a fire,' *howe* 'hill'). Only *lowe*, *howe* share the vowel sound with *how*, *cow*.

### 8.2.2 Schwa-epenthesis in CORIECOR

In CORIECOR, evidence of schwa-epenthesis is often found with ⟨e⟩ for the epenthesis-bearing syllable, though other vowel graphemes also occur, such as ⟨y⟩ in ⟨Brokylin⟩ *Brooklyn*, ⟨a⟩ in ⟨Chrishames⟩ *Christmas*, and ⟨i⟩ in ⟨helamis man⟩ *helmsman* (note: two tokens, also ⟨a⟩). A total of 261 tokens of epenthesis were found, culled from 173 letters written by 117 different individuals. Figure 8.1 shows the actual occurrences of epenthesis in CORIECOR, while Table 8.1 and Figure 8.2 show normalised frequencies of the feature to give a more realistic view of the tokens as they relate to the body of letters in the corpus.

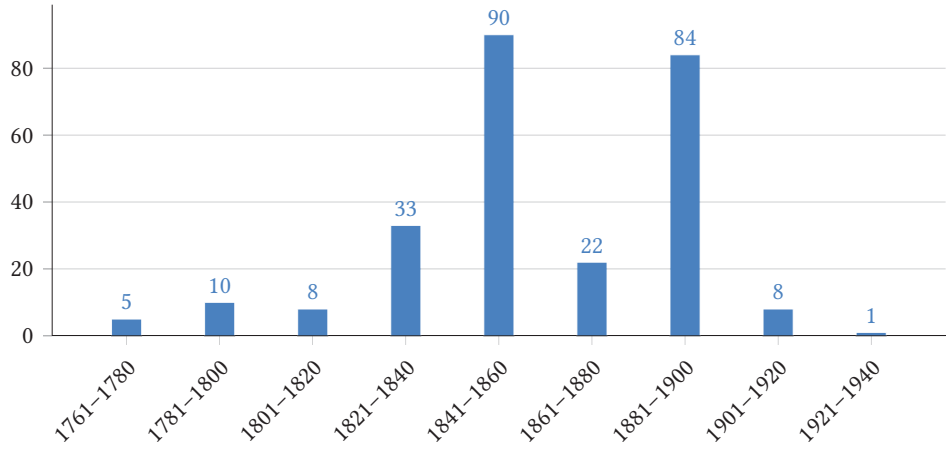



**Figure 8.1**: Chronological distribution (n) of schwa-epenthesis (n = 261)

The two peaks in Figure 8.1 are at least partly caused by multiple tokens originating from the same individual. This is especially the case for 1881–1900, where 24 of 58 letters with epenthesis come from the hand of John J. Smyth, a farmer in Co. Tyrone, but also in 1841–1860 we find a number of letters with epenthesis from just two or three writers, as well as one individual with no less than 14 tokens in one letter.

**Table 8.1**: Occurrence (n) and rate per 10,000 words of schwa-epenthesis

| Period | Words | Tokens | Pr. 10k |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1761–1780 | 57,362 | 5 | 0.9 |
| 1781–1800 | 105,304 | 10 | 0.9 |
| 1801–1820 | 198,124 | 8 | 0.4 |
| 1821–1840 | 303,135 | 33 | 1.1 |
| 1841–1860 | 675,746 | 90 | 1.3 |
| 1861–1880 | 569,659 | 22 | 0.4 |
| 1881–1900 | 750,456 | 84 | 1.1 |
| 1901–1920 | 324,670 | 8 | 0.2 |
| 1921–1940 | 51,677 | 1 | 0.2 |
| CORIECOR total[a] | 3,060,366 | 261 | 0.9 |

[a] *CORIECOR total* gives the complete word count for the whole corpus, i.e. 1641–1940.

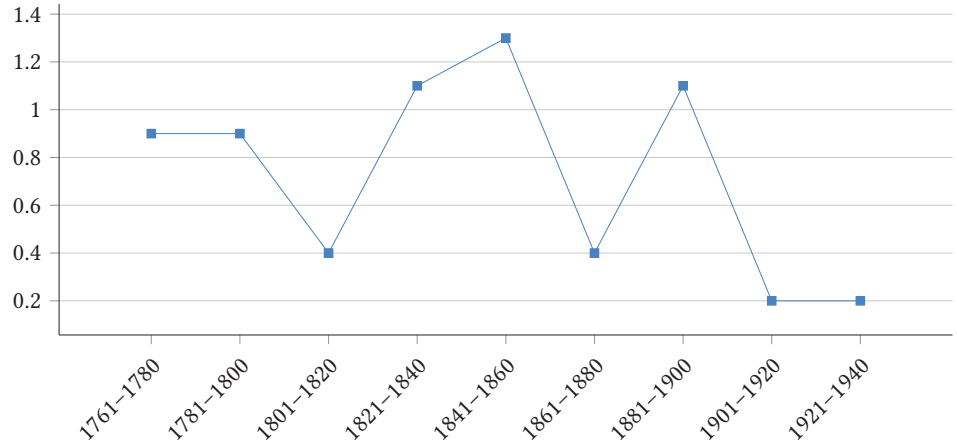



**Figure 8.2**: Normalised frequencies of schwa-epenthesis per 10,000 words

However, when examining Figure 8.2, the trend seems to be a rather uniform presence of epenthesis, with the exception of the drop in 1801–1820 and 1861–1880 (the low number or absence of tokens in 1721–1760 and 1901–1940 may be disregarded because of the low word count in these periods; see Table 8.1). Conversely, it is also possible that the drop in the rate of epenthesis shows that letters from these periods are less vernacular, while during periods with approximately one token per 10,000 words (see Figure 8.2) they are more vernacular.

Table 8.2 presents some examples of words with evidence of epenthesis in CORIECOR.

**Table 8.2**: Examples of phonetic representation of schwa-epenthesis (total n = 261)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨angery⟩ | angry |
| ⟨Atalantic⟩ | Atlantic |
| ⟨comorade⟩ | comrade |
| ⟨contery⟩ | country |
| ⟨drawen⟩ | drawn |
| ⟨geirels⟩ | girls |
| ⟨Henery⟩ | Henry |
| ⟨middeling⟩ | middling |
| ⟨welefare⟩ | welfare |
| ⟨worald⟩ | world |

Phonetic representations of epenthesis in *country* (76 tokens) and *Henry* (54 tokens) dwarf all other cases – together, they are responsible for exactly 50 per cent of the tokens of epenthesis in the corpus and are found with various non-standard spellings.[5] Due

[5] *Country* (*-ies*): ⟨contary, contery, conterys, contrary, countary, countery, counterys, cuntery⟩. *Henry* (-'s): ⟨Henarey, Henary, Hendery, Henerey, Henerry, Henery, Henerys, Henery's, Hennary, Hennery, Henerys⟩. Note also the intruding /r/ in ⟨contrary⟩ and the reinforcement of epenthesis with a preceding /d/ in ⟨Hendery⟩.

to the extraordinary number of occurrences of epenthesis in these words, a search using WordSmith Tools for *country* and *Henry* without epenthesis was conducted to investigate the proportion of the feature in these particular words. For *country*, alternative spellings such as ⟨contry⟩ were included in order to find as many occurrences as possible despite non-standard spellings. These findings are presented in Table 8.3.

**Table 8.3**: Distribution of schwa-epenthesis in *country* and *Henry*

| | Total | No epenthesis (n) | Epenthesis (n) | Epenthesis (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| country | 4,299 | 4,223 | 76 | 1.8 |
| Henry | 751 | 697 | 54 | 7.2 |

With 7.2 per cent, the percentage of epenthesis for *Henry* is higher than for *country* with only 1.8 per cent. One contributing factor might be (as mentioned earlier) that some of these might actually be the *Hennery* variant of the name. More likely, perhaps, is that the pronunciation of a personal name is more predisposed to be reflected in semi-literate people's writing because it is perceived as somehow 'different' than other words: who can argue with what someone calls him- or herself? This raises the question: how would a more literate person spell a name pronounced as [ˈhɛnəɹi]? Still, example (35) showed that semi-literate writers often varied the spelling of similar words, even personal names, in the same passage of text due to uncertainty.

That *country* and *Henry* are predisposed to epenthesis because /r/ is more sonorous than other consonants (Henry 1957: 69) is an unsatisfactory explanation. /r/ is found in many other epenthesis-bearing clusters which only occur once or twice in the corpus (see Table 8.4, below). We can thus rule out a particular realisation of /r/ as a reason for the high number of epenthesis tokens in *country* and *Henry* as, if this were the case, other epenthesis-bearing clusters with /r/ as the second element should have been present in much higher numbers.

In addition to *country* and *Henry*, a corpus search for *film* was conducted. *Film* with epenthesis did not show up in the corpus (which was to be expected), but the regularity with which this word is pronounced with epenthesis in present-day IrE (Hickey 2007; Sell 2012) warranted closer investigation. The likelihood of this particular word being present in a corpus largely predating the invention of motion pictures was slim, although it may still have been used in the sense of 'layer' or 'coating.' Not a single occurrence of *film* was, however, found in CORIECOR. In fact, only two tokens of epenthesis in /lm/ were found: ⟨helamis man⟩ *helmsman* and ⟨overwhelemed⟩ *overwhelmed*.[6] There are eight other occurrences of *helm* in the corpus, none with epenthesis. The first name *Colm* (sometimes spelt *Colum* or *Columb*) is also often heard with epenthesis today, as evident from the alternative spellings, but the name was not found in the corpus.

## 8.2.3 Clusters and environments

In IrE, epenthesis usually occurs between a liquid and a nasal. But only six tokens with this configuration were found in CORIECOR. However, building on the assumption that it may be

[6] ⟨Helamis⟩ also contains epenthesis in /ms/. The final ⟨-med⟩ in ⟨overwhelemed⟩ probably does not show epenthesis.

found in environments between a plosive, liquid or nasal and a liquid or nasal consonant (Walshe 2009: 231), it can more generously be said to occur in the phonological clusters /bl/, /lm/, /ln/, /rl/, /rn/, /rm/, /t̪l/, and /tl/. Only five of these – /lm/, /ln/, /rl/, /rn/, and /tl/, with a total of 20 tokens – were found with epenthesis in the corpus. Table 8.4 shows these (shaded) as well as all other clusters which were found to contain epenthesis.

**Table 8.4**: Clusters with schwa-epenthesis in CORIECOR (total clusters = 45; expected IrE clusters shaded; homorganic clusters marked with *)

| Cluster | (n) | Cluster | (n) | Cluster | (n) | Cluster | (n) | Cluster | (n) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| /tr/* | 95 | /gr/ | 4 | /wr/ | 3 | /ds/* | 1 | /pt/ | 1 |
| /nr/* | 54 | /tn/* | 4 | /kn/ | 2 | /kr/ | 1 | /rt/* | 1 |
| /rl/* | 11 | /ðr/* | 3 | /lm/ | 2 | /ld/* | 1 | /rv/ | 1 |
| /dl/* | 8 | /fl/ | 3 | /lr/* | 2 | /ll/* | 1 | /sk/ | 1 |
| /wn/ | 7 | /gn/ | 3 | /ns/* | 2 | /ln/* | 1 | /sl/* | 1 |
| /lf/ | 6 | /kl/ | 3 | /pl/ | 2 | /ls/ | 1 | /ʃm/ | 1 |
| /pr/ | 6 | /ŋs/ | 3 | /rs/* | 2 | /mz/ | 1 | /vl/ | 1 |
| /mr/ | 5 | /rn/* | 3 | /tm/ | 2 | /vr/ | 1 | /zl/* | 1 |
| /dr/* | 4 | /tl/* | 3 | /br/ | 1 | /nm/ | 1 | /zl/* | 1 |

Over half (149) of the total tokens (261) were found in the clusters /tr/ and /nr/. Seventy-six of the 95 tokens for /tr/ are for *country* while all 54 tokens for /nr/ are for *Henry*.

Twenty-one of the 45 clusters in Table 8.4, including the four most frequently occurring, violate Hickey's (2007: 13) observation that epenthesis usually does not occur in homorganic clusters (marked with an asterisk in the table).

One of the most frequently quoted examples of epenthesis in IrE is ['faɹəm] *farm*. This has not been found in CORIECOR in spite of the words *farm*, *farmhouse* or *farmland* (with various forms and spellings) occurring 931 times. In fact, the cluster /rm/ with epenthesis was not found at all in the corpus.

It is interesting that the expected, present-day IrE clusters are so sparsely represented. If we remove *country* and *Henry* from the equation, /nr/ is not present at all while /tr/ only occurs 19 times. This is still nearly twice as often as the next most frequent cluster, /rl/, which is also found in present-day IrE (e.g. ['gɛɹəl] *girl*). A few of the cases of /tr/ may be the result of the writer thinking that there should be an ⟨e⟩ in such positions in English (⟨illusterated⟩ *illustrated* is for instance found) and is thus perhaps not evidence of epenthesis after all. Still, this is impossible to judge except in cases where the rest of the letter is so well-written that one token of possible epenthesis is more likely to be a slip of the pen. In the case of /rl/, which we find in words such as ⟨dearely⟩ *dearly* and ⟨nearily⟩ *nearly*, the level of orality in the source letters suggests that these render pronunciation.

The cluster /wn/ presents an interesting case. Maclagan and Gordon (1998) have shown that a disyllabic variant of past participles ending in *-own*, [oʊən], exists in New Zealand English. This is found in all nine /oʊ + n/ past participles: *blown*, *flown*, *grown*, *known*, *mown*, *sewn*, *shown*, *sown*, and *thrown*. They trace this back to at least the 1940s (Maclagan and Gordon 1998: 7). Epenthesis in /wn/ occurs eight times in CORIECOR, six times in words with *-own* (though only three times in past participles): ⟨growen⟩ *grown*, ⟨knowen, nowen⟩ *known*, ⟨owener⟩ *owner*, ⟨oweners⟩ *owners*, and ⟨owens⟩ *owns*. The earliest of these dates from 1869.

Even though epenthesis was only sparsely represented in the usual (present-day) phonological clusters for IrE, it did feature more extensively in the expected phonetic environments, i.e. between a plosive, liquid or nasal, and a liquid or nasal consonant (see section 8.2), in which case the possible phonetic environments must be:

- plosive_liquid
- plosive_nasal
- liquid_liquid
- liquid_nasal
- nasal_liquid
- nasal_nasal

These environments, and the occurrence of epenthesis in them, are presented in Table 8.5.[7]

**Table 8.5**: Distribution of schwa-epenthesis in expected environments (total = 218)

| Environment | (n) | Example |
|---|---|---|
| plosive_liquid | 127 | ⟨angory⟩ *angry*, ⟨contery⟩ *country*, ⟨deraw⟩ *draw* |
| nasal_liquid | 59 | ⟨comorade⟩ *comrade*, ⟨Henery⟩ *Henry* |
| liquid_liquid | 14 | ⟨cavilary⟩ *cavalry*, ⟨chileren⟩ *children* |
| plosive_nasal | 11 | ⟨Christimess⟩ *Christmas*, ⟨parteners⟩ *partners* |
| liquid_nasal | 6 | ⟨erend⟩ *earned*, ⟨taveren⟩ *tavern* |
| nasal_nasal | 1 | ⟨confiniment⟩ *confinement* |
| (other) | (43) | (see Table 8.6) |

As mentioned, most of the tokens for plosive_liquid (127) and nasal_liquid (59) were found in *country* and *Henry*, respectively. Other examples of epenthesis in the plosive_liquid environment are e.g. ⟨angory⟩ *angry*, ⟨Atalantic⟩ *Atlantic*, ⟨centeral⟩ *central*, or ⟨deraw⟩ *draw*, while only ⟨comorade⟩ *comrade* and ⟨Henery⟩ *Henry* were found for nasal_liquid. Further environments are liquid_liquid (14 tokens), e.g. ⟨cavilary⟩ *cavalry*; plosive_nasal (11), e.g. ⟨parteners⟩ *partners*; liquid_nasal (six), e.g. ⟨taveren⟩ *tavern*; and nasal_nasal (one), only found in ⟨confiniment⟩ *confinement*.[8]

Surprisingly, 43 tokens (16.5 per cent) fall outside the expected phonetic environments altogether. These are grouped under 'other' in Table 8.5 and are detailed in Table 8.6.

When compared to the expected environments for epenthesis in IrE in Table 8.5, the number of tokens in some of the unexpected environments (Table 8.6) is not that much greater. Seven of the unexpected phonetic environments occur infrequently (fewer than four tokens), while the remaining four environments have up to ten tokens, which is not that much different than some of the expected environment distributions in Table 8.5.

The two groups that stand out from all the environments are plosive_liquid (127 tokens) and nasal_liquid (59 tokens) as they occur very frequently. But then, *country* (76 tokens) and *Henry* (54 tokens) account for 60 and 92 per cent of these, respectively. If, as in the discussion of Table 8.4, we remove these words from the data, we are left with 51 tokens of plosive_liquid and 5 tokens of nasal_liquid. The latter is well within the range of many

[7] An underscore between the labels for phonetic environments is used to indicate the position of epenthesis, e.g. 'plosive_liquid.'

[8] *Cavalry* has forms with ⟨-ery⟩ (here non-standard ⟨-ary⟩) until sometime during the seventeenth century (Upward and Davidson 2011: 115). For ⟨confiniment⟩, epenthesis has been identified on the basis that the 'silent' (or etymological) ⟨e⟩ has been substituted by ⟨i⟩. Such syllable-final ⟨e⟩s of Franco-Latin origin were in most cases lost before the sixteenth century, though those indicating the quality of the preceding vowel (as in *confinement*) usually remained (Upward and Davidson 2011: 112).

**Table 8.6:** Distribution of schwa-epenthesis in unexpected environments (total = 43)

| Environment | (n) | Example |
|---|---|---|
| liquid_fricative | 10 | ⟨hearevest⟩ *harvest* |
| fricative_liquid | 9 | ⟨bretheren⟩ *brethren*[a] |
| approximant_nasal | 7 | ⟨drawen⟩ *drawn* |
| nasal_fricative | 6 | ⟨helamis man⟩ *helmsman* |
| approximant_liquid | 3 | ⟨dowery⟩ *dowry* |
| liquid_plosive | 2 | ⟨eleder⟩ *elder* |
| plosive_plosive | 2 | ⟨escapit⟩ *escaped* |
| fricative_nasal | 1 | ⟨Crishames⟩ *Christmas* |
| fricative_plosive | 1 | ⟨Susequhana⟩ *Susquehanna* |
| nasal_plosive | 1 | ⟨drenad⟩ *drained* |
| plosive_fricative | 1 | ⟨midest⟩ *midst* |

[a] ⟨th⟩ is here interpreted as [ð] as this is the expected pronunciation in most NIrE dialects, as opposed to SIrE [d] or [d̪]

of the environments in Table 8.5 and Table 8.6. Plosive_liquid is, then, the odd one out as, even without *country* tokens, it is four times more likely to contain schwa-epenthesis than the next most frequent environment, liquid_liquid (in Table 8.5).

According to Sell (2012: 48), epenthesis cannot be inserted before a plosive in present-day IrE. Table 8.6 shows, however, six occurrences of schwa-epenthesis before a plosive in words such as ⟨eleder⟩ *elder*, ⟨escapit⟩ *escaped*, ⟨Susequhana⟩ *Susquehanna*, and ⟨drenad⟩ *drained*. There is, however, always the danger of taking the evidence on paper too literally. Consider, for instance, ⟨drawen⟩ *drawn*, which at first sight seems no different from ⟨growen⟩ *grown*, discussed above. But the vowel qualities in *drawn* and *grown* are such that epenthesis is perhaps more likely after *-ow*, which may have a clear [w] (though it can also be realised without /w/), than *-aw*, which is more clearly a vowel. In that case, ⟨drawen⟩ could also be interpreted as having a diphthong or off-glide ['dɹɔən], though then the question becomes, is it still schwa-epenthesis if the schwa is inserted between a vowel and a consonant? In this way, several of the words, especially in Table 8.6, might be problematic. Furthermore, was the writer of ⟨Susequhana⟩ simply unsure of the order of the sequence ⟨que⟩? Does ⟨midest⟩ only signal an assumption made by its writer that the escape of air from the plosive /d/ before /s/ should be reflected in writing? But then, schwa-epenthesis is triggered precisely by such heavy, syllable-final clusters.

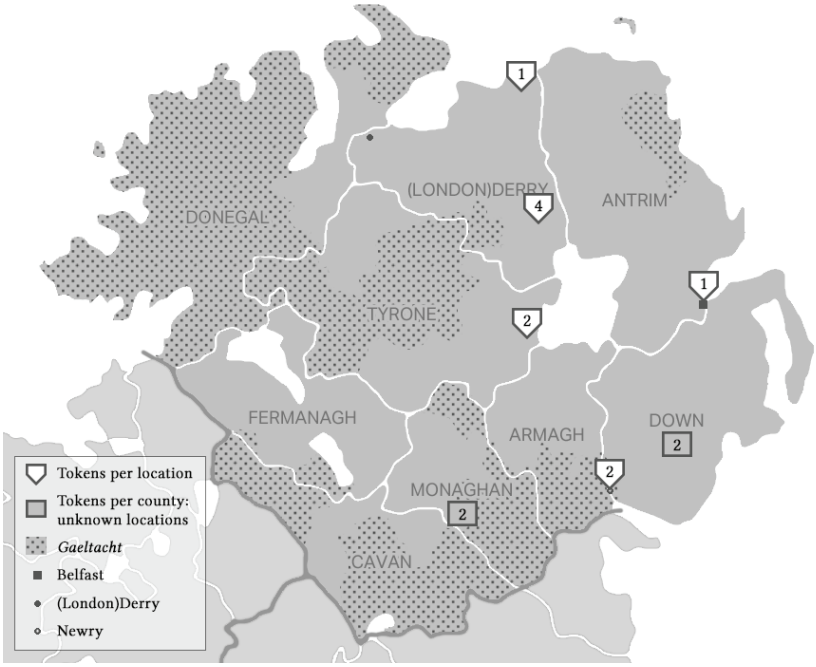
Several instances of supposed epenthesis have been disregarded, usually because the writer showed very little non-standard orthography or because the surrounding phonetic environment suggested a slip of the pen, a supposed etymological vowel or other disqualifying explanations. Thus, the remainder, including the examples in the tables above, are strongly suspected to show evidence of schwa-epenthesis.

### 8.2.4 Geographical location

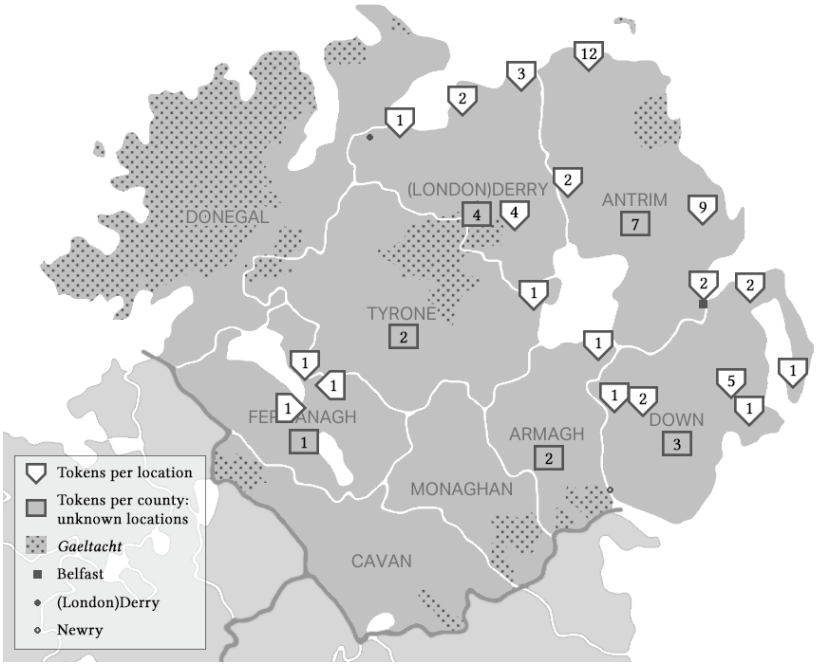
Schwa-epenthesis in *film* is common in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland today (Sell 2012: 49), and is thus one of the more salient features of IrE, occurring in both NIrE and, especially, rural SIrE (Hickey 2007: 13). The feature certainly appears to have been

widespread in Ulster in the nineteenth century (see Maps 8.2 and 8.3), but even in Map 8.1 the few pre-1800 tokens are spread over a large area. Map 8.4 only shows five tokens in Castledamph, Co. Tyrone – most material in the early 1900s comes from here – and one unspecified location in Co. Armagh, the reason being low word counts in CORIECOR after 1900.

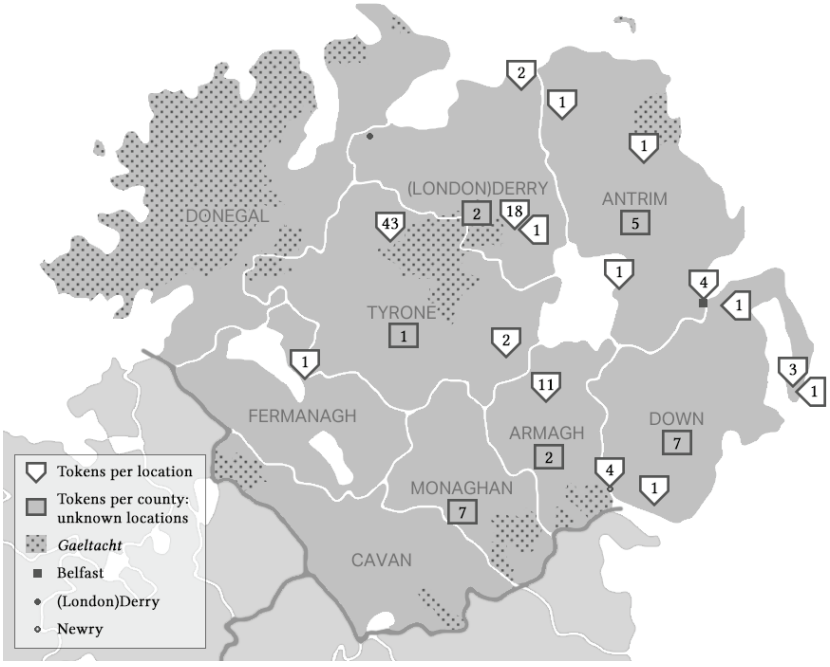
The geographical locations of 46 of the epenthesis tokens could not be determined and are absent from Maps 8.1–8.4. In addition, six cases of epenthesis were found from locations outside of Ulster (several from Dublin, as well as counties Carlow, Kilkenny, and Sligo). These are not included on the maps or in the data in general.




**Map 8.1**: 1761–1800: Geographical distribution (n) of schwa-epenthesis




**Map 8.2:** 1801–1850: Geographical distribution (n) of schwa-epenthesis




**Map 8.3:** 1851–1900: Geographical distribution (n) of schwa-epenthesis


**Map 8.4**: 1901–1940: Geographical distribution (n) of schwa-epenthesis

## 8.2.5 Social rank and gender

If we look at the social rank distribution of epenthesis, especially for male tokens in Figure 8.3, we see that it occurs most in letters written by farmers. Even though most of the letter writers *were* farmers, the number of tokens is still higher here compared to the other occupations. Male and female merchants (hereunder also traders and businessmen) and male craftsmen provided the second-highest number of tokens, closely followed by male clerks and shop assistants. Most female tokens come from those with unknown occupations. For male writers, this figure is lower than that for farmers. In other words, farmers (of which there are 33 in the data) produced more epenthesis than those with unknown occupations (49) even though the latter outnumber the former in terms of individuals.

This is one of two features that were found in a letter written by a member of the gentry (see also [ʃ] for /tʃ/, section 7.5), which is why this rank has been included in Figure 8.3. James Du Pré Alexander, Lord Caledon, and future third Earl of Caledon, was at the time of writing serving as an army officer in Quebec, Canada. His letters do not contain many instances of non-standard spellings, but the few that do occur seem clear. Still, his non-standard ⟨nerely⟩ for *nearly*, could also be interpreted as showing two syllables, i.e. ⟨nere-⟩ and ⟨-ly⟩ where the second ⟨e⟩ in ⟨nere-⟩ is silent.

Five of the epenthesis tokens have not been included in Figures 8.3 and 8.4 because it was not possible to determine the gender of the writer, either because the letter was co-written, or because it lacked a signature.

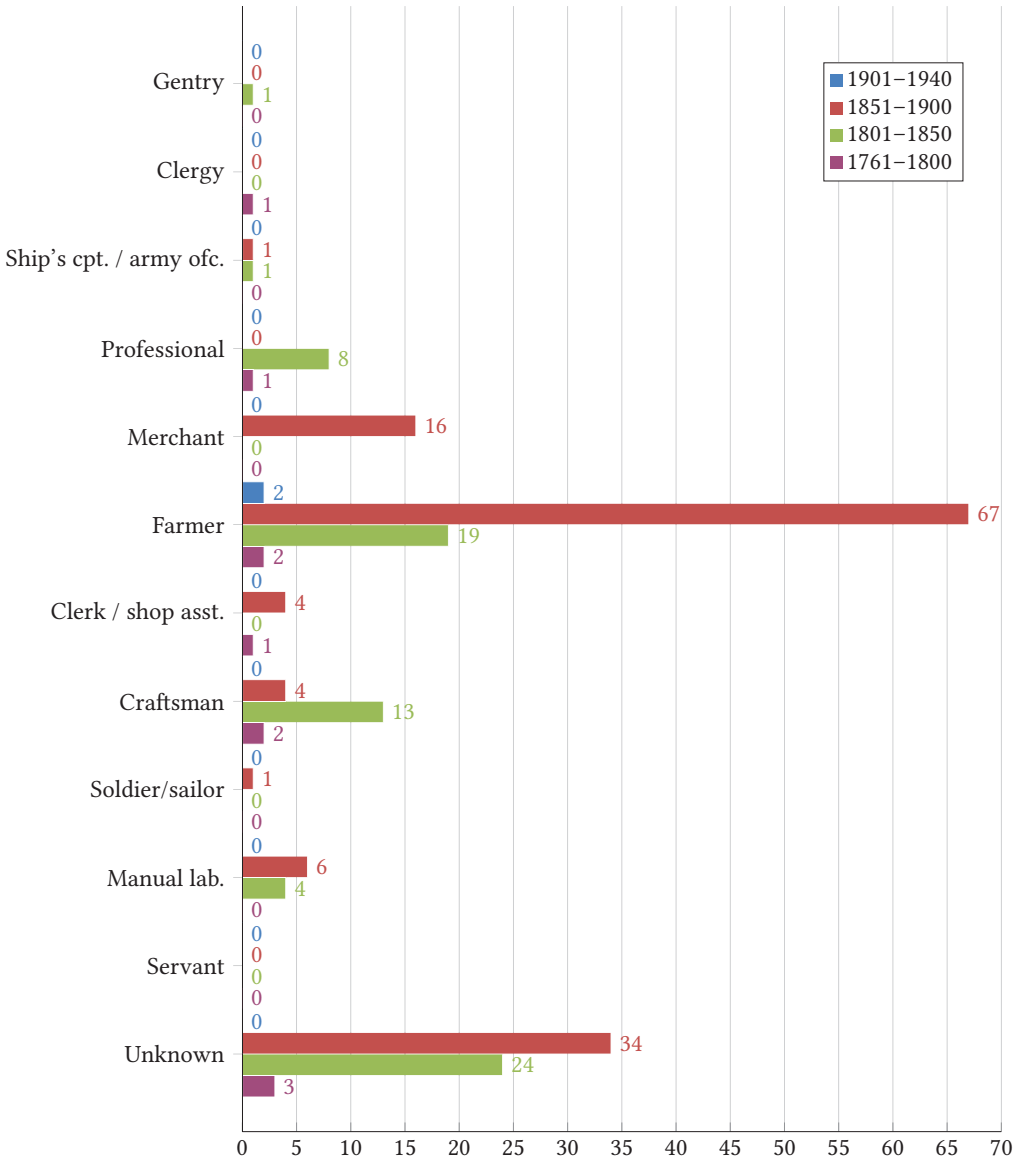



**Figure 8.3**: Men: tokens (n) of schwa-epenthesis by social rank

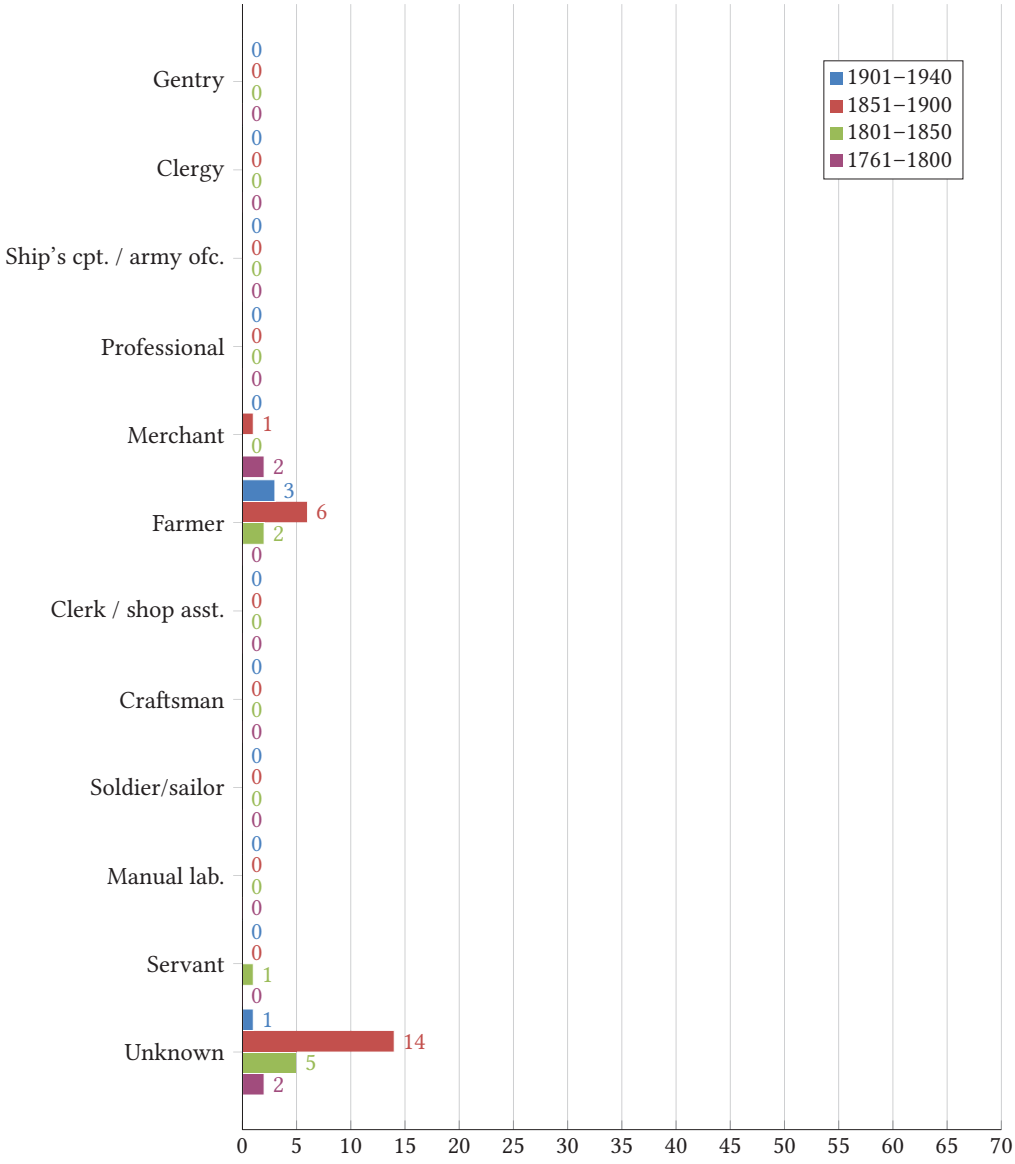



**Figure 8.4**: Women: tokens (n) of schwa-epenthesis by social rank

## 8.3 Metathesis

*I have*
*Purchased one* ***hundard*** *and ten acers of land it is of a*
*Good qualitey and well watered and has a good improvement*
*on it*
(Joseph & Mary McClorg, USA to David McClorg, Templemoyle, 28.08.1822)

Metathesis is a relatively rare occurrence in English whereby a sequence of two sounds is rearranged, while still preserving the original place and manner of articulation (Schreier 2005: 39–40). A well-known example is [a:ks] for *asks*, common in OE and now also in e.g. AAVE. When it occurs, metathesis in English is often found where /r/ is followed by short vowel, due to the high sonority of /r/ – thus *bright*, *burn*, and *dirt* are all evidence of previously metathesised clusters (Minkova 2014: 119–120).

Hickey (2007: 14) sees the occurrence of metathesis in IrE as possibly being due to the fact that it is common in Irish, though he acknowledges that it may very well have been 'imported with the original settlers,' i.e. from Britain (2007: 60). Hickey (2007: 303, 306) lists both ASK-metathesis and R-vowel-metathesis as historical features of IrE, but shows that they are still found as 'areal features' today, though only in unstressed position (2007: 308).

Table 8.7 lists some of the words which were found with evidence of metathesis in CORIECOR.

**Table 8.7**: Examples of phonetic representation of metathesis (total n = 63)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨agerculture⟩ | agriculture |
| ⟨brethern⟩ | brethren |
| ⟨cavlery⟩ | cavalry |
| ⟨childern⟩ | children |
| ⟨Nechloson⟩ | Nicholson |
| ⟨persent⟩ | present |
| ⟨persume⟩ | presume |
| ⟨pirty⟩ | pretty |
| ⟨purposed⟩ | proposed |
| ⟨westren⟩ | western |

As was noted above, metathesis is most common in sequences involving /r/ + vowel. This was also found to be the case in CORIECOR with 60 of the 63 tokens. The three remaining instances of metathesis are ⟨cavlery⟩ *cavalry*, ⟨Nechloson⟩ *Nicholson*, and ⟨sickens⟩ *sickness*, though the latter may be a trivial spelling error. According to Hickey (2007: 60), metathesis of two sonorants is one of three types where metathesis occurs in Irish (in addition to /s/ + plosive and /r/ + (short) vowel), though he has found no evidence of it in historical IrE. ⟨Cavlery⟩ and ⟨Nechloson⟩, showing metathesis of two sonorants (/l/ + /ə/), are therefore interesting in that they may show influence from Irish. The fact that these come from letters written in 1839 (Farnaght, Co. Fermanagh) and 1847 (unknown location), respectively, may further strengthen this assumption as such a late appearance in the corpus may be due to second-language acquisition following the western spread of English in Ireland.

Among /r/ + vowel clusters, metathesis is most common in ⟨purpose⟩ (also ⟨perpose⟩) *propose* (ten tokens), ⟨childern⟩ *children* (nine), and ⟨hundard⟩ (or ⟨hundert⟩) *hundred* (nine). ⟨Pirty⟩ (also ⟨purty⟩, ⟨porty⟩) *pretty* (five) and ⟨brethern⟩ *brethren* (four) are also found to some extent. Metathesis in stressed syllables was only found in *pretty*, *agriculture*, and *forwardness*.

In addition, ⟨form⟩ *from* (two tokens) and ⟨strom⟩ *storm* may indicate metathesis as well. ⟨Forst⟩ *frost* is for instance found in the *Kildare poems* (Hickey 2007: 60). But the CORIECOR tokens are from 1849 (from different writers) and may be too recent for this type of metathesis. They are therefore not included in the data.

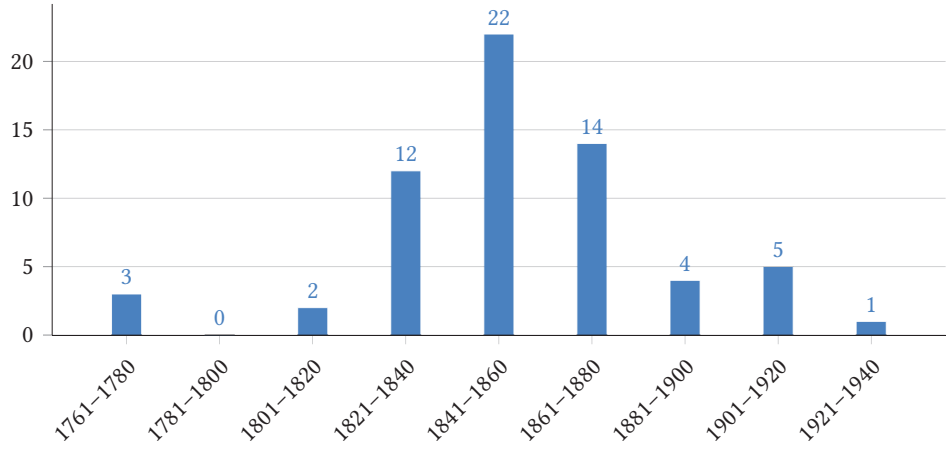



**Figure 8.5**: Chronological distribution (n) of metathesis (n = 63)

Chronologically, Figure 8.5 shows a peak in the mid-1800s, which is broadly confirmed by the normalised frequencies in Table 8.8 and Figure 8.6. Figure 8.6 reveals, however, that the peak actually occurs slightly earlier, with a decrease towards the early 1900s, though the rate appears to continue in a rather stable fashion. The decrease might be explained by the founding of the National Schools in 1831 (see section 2.2.5), which is the period when occurrences of metathesis start to drop in Figure 8.6. The early peak in 1761–1780 must be attributed to the small word count in these decades.

**Table 8.8**: Occurrence (n) and rate per 10,000 words of metathesis

| Period | Words | Tokens | Pr. 10k |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1761–1780 | 57,362 | 3 | 0.5 |
| 1781–1800 | 105,304 | – | – |
| 1801–1820 | 198,124 | 2 | 0.1 |
| 1821–1840 | 303,135 | 12 | 0.4 |
| 1841–1860 | 675,746 | 22 | 0.3 |
| 1861–1880 | 569,659 | 14 | 0.2 |
| 1881–1900 | 750,456 | 4 | 0.1 |
| 1901–1920 | 324,670 | 5 | 0.2 |
| 1921–1940 | 51,677 | 1 | 0.2 |
| Coriecor total | 3,060,366 | 63 | 0.2 |

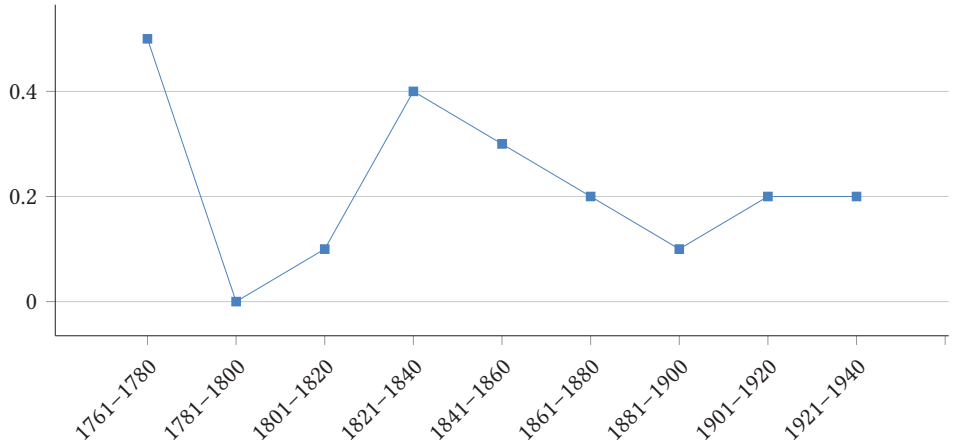
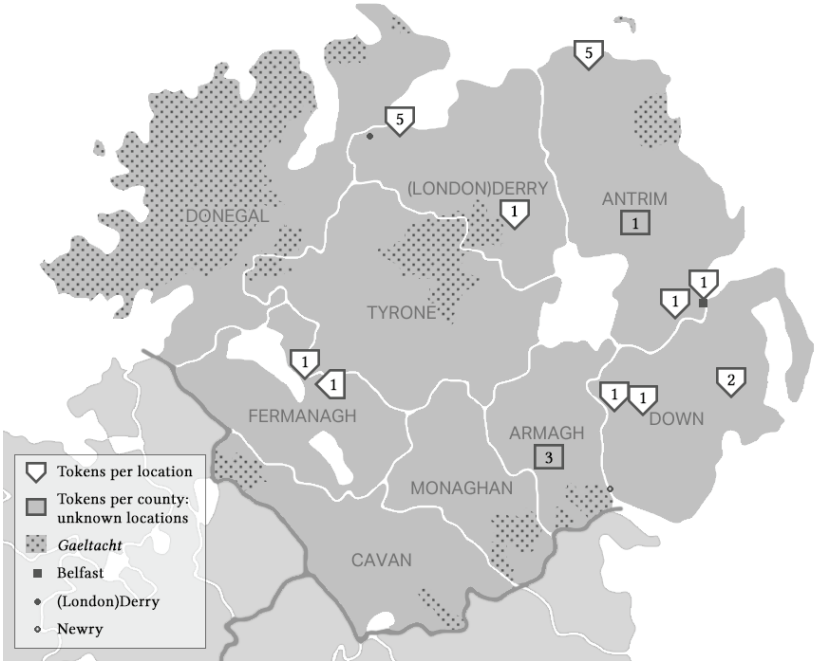



**Figure 8.6**: Normalised frequencies of metathesis per 10,000 words

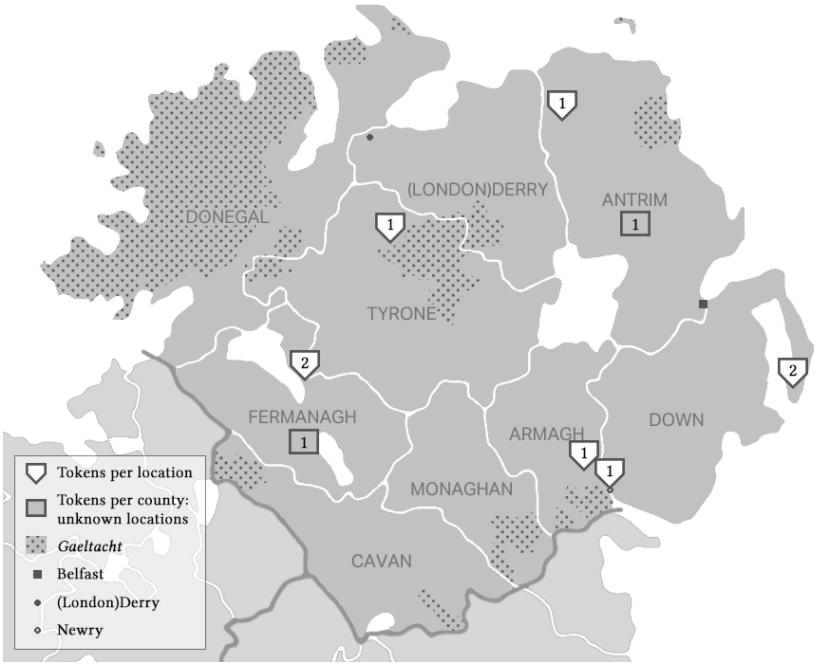
### 8.3.1 Geographical location

Maps 8.5–8.8 show that metathesis was quite widespread, at least during the nineteenth century. Twenty-one tokens (approximately one-third) could not be localised on the maps due to lack of information.


**Map 8.5**: 1761–1800: Geographical distribution (n) of metathesis




**Map 8.6**: 1801–1850: Geographical distribution (n) of metathesis




**Map 8.7**: 1851–1900: Geographical distribution (n) of metathesis


**Map 8.8**: 1901–1940: Geographical distribution (n) of metathesis

### 8.3.2 Social rank and gender

There are relatively few tokens of metathesis. Thus, it is interesting to see that male tokens are distributed quite evenly across the social ranks (though none are from the ship's captain or clergy ranks, which are rare in CORIECOR), as seen in Figure 8.7. The only ranks that really stand out are servants, with no tokens, and early nineteenth-century farmers with 12 tokens. Very little metathesis was found in letters from women, but where it does appear, farmers dominate here too (see Figure 8.8).

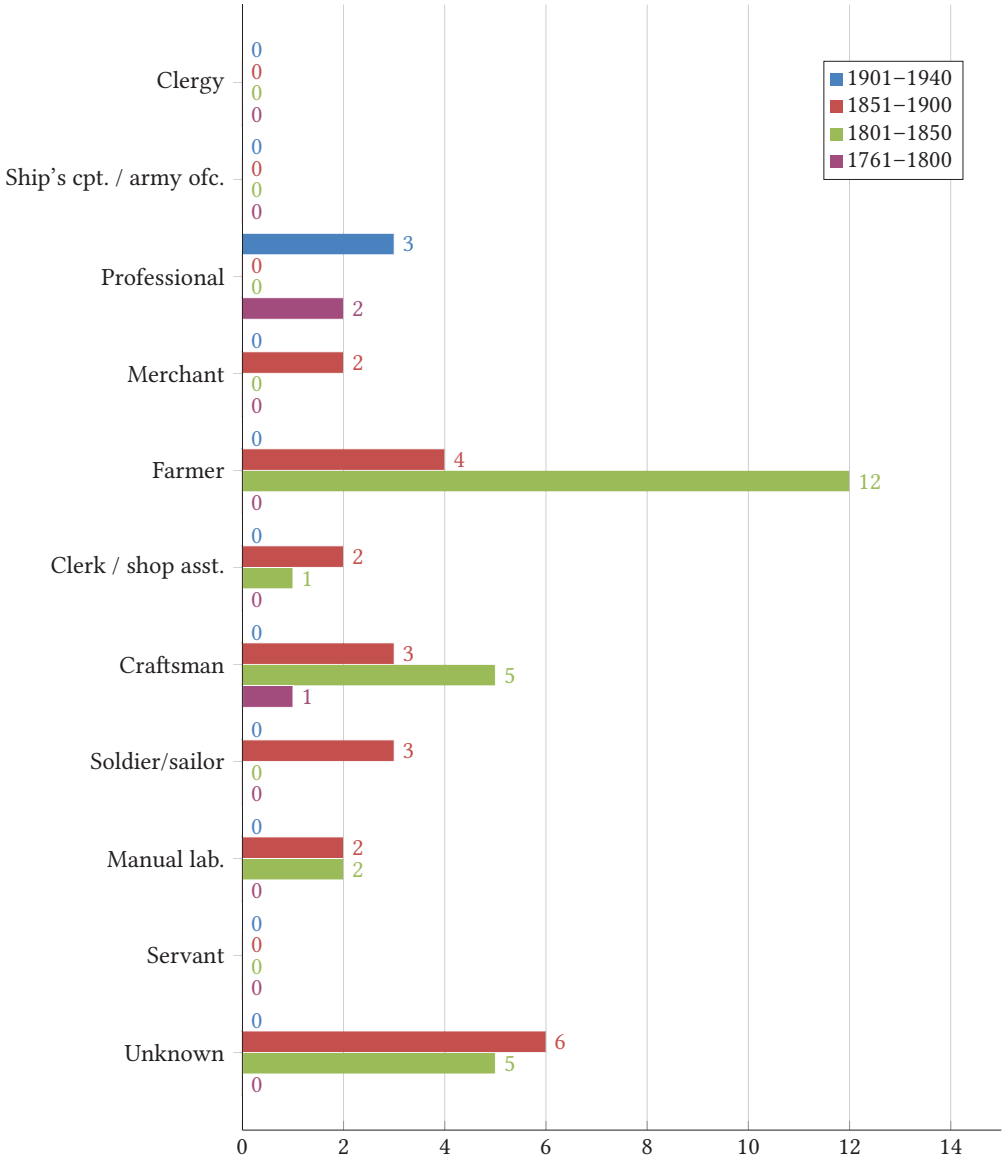



**Figure 8.7:** Men: tokens (n) of metathesis by social rank

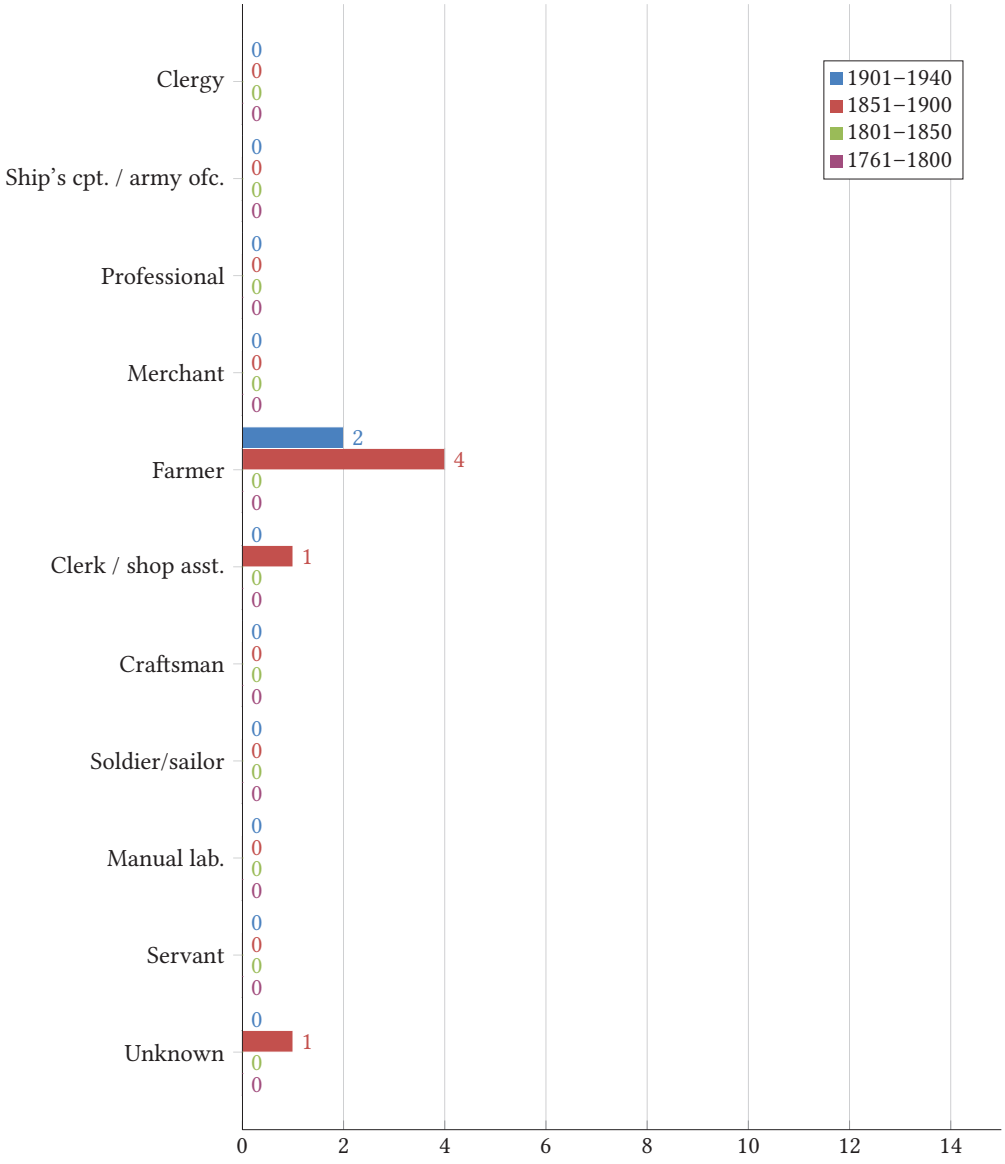



**Figure 8.8:** Women: tokens (n) of metathesis by social rank

## 8.4 Cluster reduction

*you seem to* ***Reflack*** *on me not Giving a full Acct*
*of this Co-ntry*
(Andrew Martin, Philadelphia to John Martin, Co. Down, 10.08.1785)

A number of words in CORIECOR show evidence of the reduction of consonant clusters. There are numerous examples of cluster reduction in the English language which occur in various positions with both vowels and consonants: initial, e.g. OE [knixt] > present-day English [nɑɪt] *knight* (still reflected in spelling); medial, e.g. ME *corúne* > present-day English *crown*; and final, e.g. [sɪŋg] > [sɪŋ] (Minkova 2014: 49).

Cluster reduction was found in medial and final position in CORIECOR (see Table 8.9), especially as loss of final /t, d/ – a common feature in seventeenth-century English (Bliss 1979: 249). Nearly half of the tokens for cluster reduction in CORIECOR show deletion of stops after sonorants. Post-sibilant and post-stop stop deletion are other examples of clusters which have undergone reduction or simplification. Thus, there are several ways one could group these or make distinctions across the features. As post-sonorant stop deletion is especially described by Hickey (2007) as a feature of (historical) IrE and also makes up a large part of the data, cluster reduction will first be presented as a whole, after which deletion of stops after sonorants is examined in more detail in section 8.4.1.

The cluster reduction feature described here takes only simplification of consonant sequences into account, though sporadic attestations of vowel syncope such as ⟨famly⟩ *family* (common in all varieties of English) are also present in CORIECOR.

**Table 8.9**: Examples of phonetic representation of cluster reduction (total n = 143)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨Belfas⟩ | Belfast |
| ⟨chile⟩ | child |
| ⟨close⟩ | clothes |
| ⟨districk⟩ | district |
| ⟨expetation⟩ | expectation |
| ⟨fity⟩ | fifty |
| ⟨Irelan⟩ | Ireland |
| ⟨nex⟩ | next |
| ⟨rown⟩ | round |
| ⟨wordly⟩ | worldly |

Bliss (1979: 249) finds traces of loss of /t, d/ after /s, k, n/ (which he notes was already common in medieval IrE), and after /r/ in historical IrE texts, e.g. ⟨trush⟩ *trust*, ⟨supjack⟩ *subject*, ⟨fyne⟩ *find*, and ⟨alarbor⟩ to *larboard* (synonym of *starboard*, now obsolete). Other reductions he notes are loss of /w/ after /s/, /ð/ in *clothes*, and loss of /k/ in the sequence /ks/, (⟨x⟩ in spelling), e.g. ⟨posh⟩ *pox* (Bliss 1979: 235, 250). All of these are found in CORIECOR (see Table 8.9).

Out of a total of 143 tokens for cluster reduction, 79 (55 per cent) are cases of final /t, d/-deletion. Sixty-nine of the total tokens must be characterised as post-sonorant stop deletion, e.g. ⟨harly⟩ *hardly*, ⟨worl⟩ *world*, and ⟨pouns⟩ *pounds*, and many of the cases of final /t,

d/-deletion belong here (see section 8.4.1). The consonant found to be most frequently lost from a cluster (medially or finally) is /t/ (67 tokens), followed by /d/ (41). Table 8.10 gives a full overview of deleted consonants due to cluster reduction in CORIECOR.

**Table 8.10**: Cluster reduction: deleted consonants (C) (n = 143)

| C | (n) | C | (n) |
|---|---|---|---|
| /t/ | 67 | /n/ | 2 |
| /d/ | 41 | /m/ | 2 |
| /ð/ | 9 | /θ/ | 1 |
| /k/ | 8 | /b/ | 1 |
| /l/ | 6 | /p/ | 1 |
| /f/ | 5 | | |

Chronologically, most tokens are found in the periods 1841–1860 and 1881–1900 (see Figure 8.9), and normalised frequencies verify this (see Table 8.11 and Figure 8.10). Again, the rise in tokens towards the mid-1800s might be related to the increased availability of education. Like many other features discussed in the present thesis, the founding of the National School system in 1831 may have encouraged more people to write, even with insufficient knowledge of standard English orthography, leading to instances of phonetic representation. In the following decades, spelling proficiency increased, resulting in fewer cases of non-standard spellings, which is reflected in Figure 8.10 at the 1861–1880 mark. The sudden increase in 1881–1900 must be attributed to high token numbers in the Smyth letters.

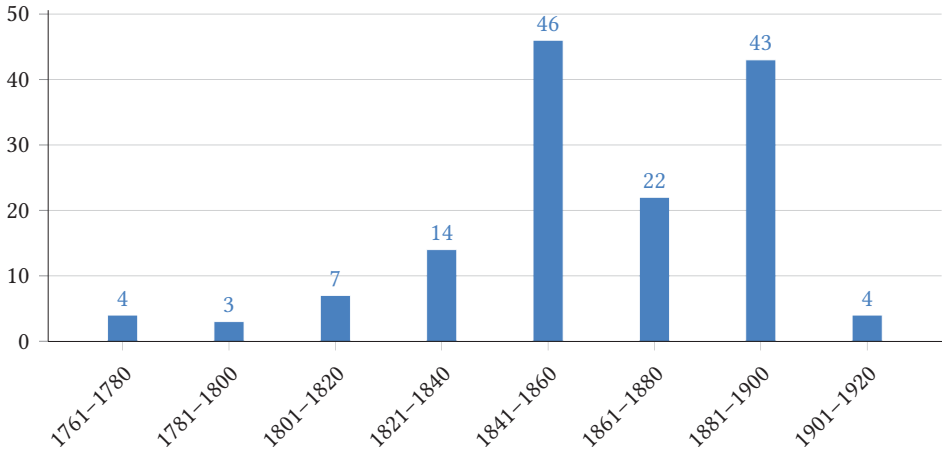



**Figure 8.9**: Chronological distribution (n) of cluster reduction (n = 143)

**Table 8.11:** Occurrence (n) and rate per 10,000 words of cluster reduction

| Period | Words | Tokens | Pr. 10k |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1761–1780 | 57,362 | 4 | 0.7 |
| 1781–1800 | 105,304 | 3 | 0.3 |
| 1801–1820 | 198,124 | 7 | 0.4 |
| 1821–1840 | 303,135 | 14 | 0.5 |
| 1841–1860 | 675,746 | 46 | 0.7 |
| 1861–1880 | 569,659 | 22 | 0.4 |
| 1881–1900 | 750,456 | 43 | 0.6 |
| 1901–1920 | 324,670 | 4 | 0.1 |
| Total | 3,060,366 | 143 | 0.5 |

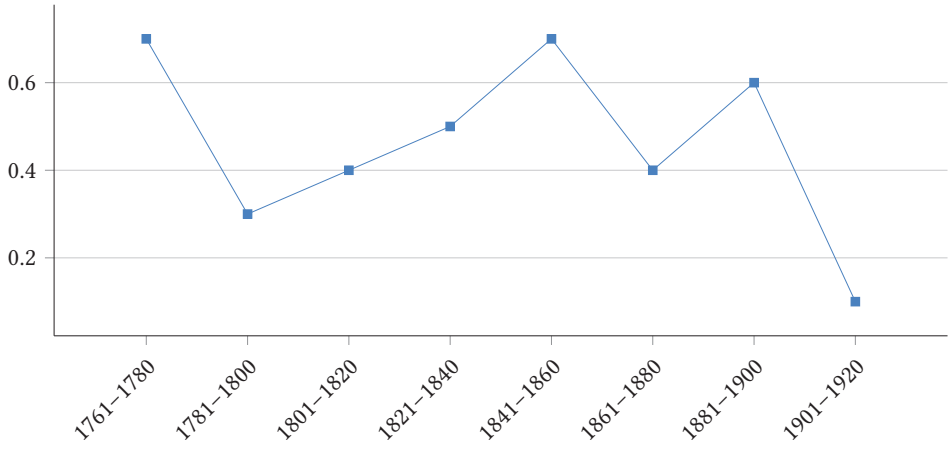



**Figure 8.10:** Normalised frequencies of cluster reduction per 10,000 words

### 8.4.1 Post-sonorant stop deletion

What Hickey (2007: 306) refers to as post-sonorant stop deletion describes instances such as [paʊn] for *pound*, which is common in 'urban vernaculars of the east coast' and terms it the 'mirror image' of post-sonorant stop devoicing (see section 8.5).

Sixty-nine tokens of cluster reduction may more narrowly be described as post-sonorant stop deletion. Of these, deletion after /n/ is most common with 37 tokens (54 per cent), where especially *mind* (five tokens), *find* (three), and *hand* (three) have lost the final stop. A few words have lost medial stops after /n/ as well: ⟨Mongomery⟩ *Montgomery* (though [mənˈgʌməɹi] is not an unusual pronunciation of the name), ⟨granfather⟩ *grandfather*, ⟨Enien⟩ *Indian*, and ⟨Protestanism⟩ *Protestantism*. Post-sonorant stop deletion after a vowel accounts for 12 of the tokens, e.g. ⟨nigh⟩ *night*, ⟨chile⟩ *child*, ⟨chileren⟩ *childeren*, and ⟨expetation⟩ *expectation*.[9] Stop deletion after /l/ and /r/ occurs eight times each (e.g. ⟨Oswal⟩

[9] ⟨Nigh⟩ *night*, ⟨abou⟩ *about*, ⟨goo⟩ *good*, and ⟨go⟩ *got* may be evidence for T-glottaling, e.g. [nɑɪʔ]. These are not completely unexpected findings in CORIECOR as glottal stops are common in several varieties of

*Oswald*, ⟨harley⟩ *hardly*), while deletion after /m/ has three tokens (e.g. ⟨rememer⟩ *remember*).

Given the supposed saliency of post-sonorant stop deletion in (especially historical) IrE, Figure 8.11 compares the rate per 10,000 words of cluster reduction for post-sonorant stop deletion with other forms of cluster reduction. The graph shows that cluster reduction of stops in post-sonorant position occurs less frequently before 1820, but is more common in the mid-1800s. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, post-sonorant stop deletion and other forms of cluster reduction occur in near equal distribution, though no tokens were found for other forms of cluster reduction after 1900.

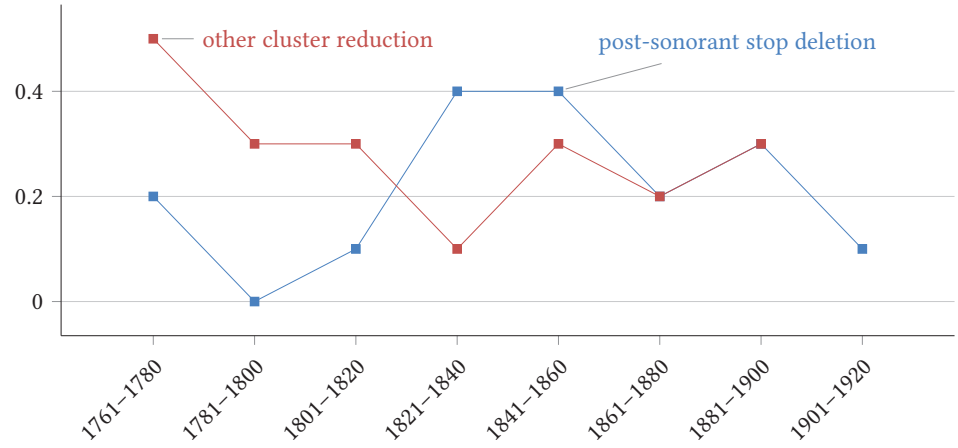
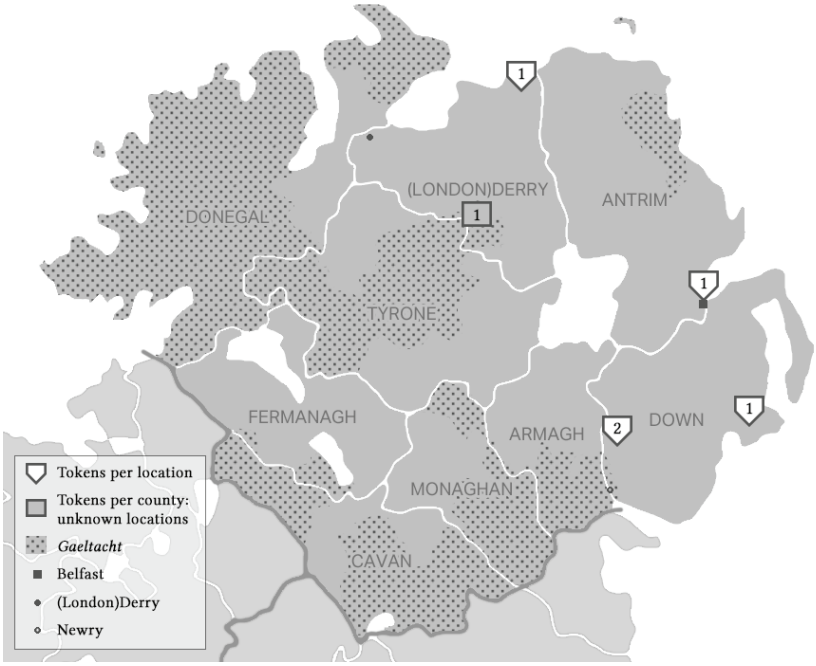



**Figure 8.11:** Normalised frequencies of post-sonorant stop deletion (—■—) and other forms of cluster reduction (—■—) per 10,000 words

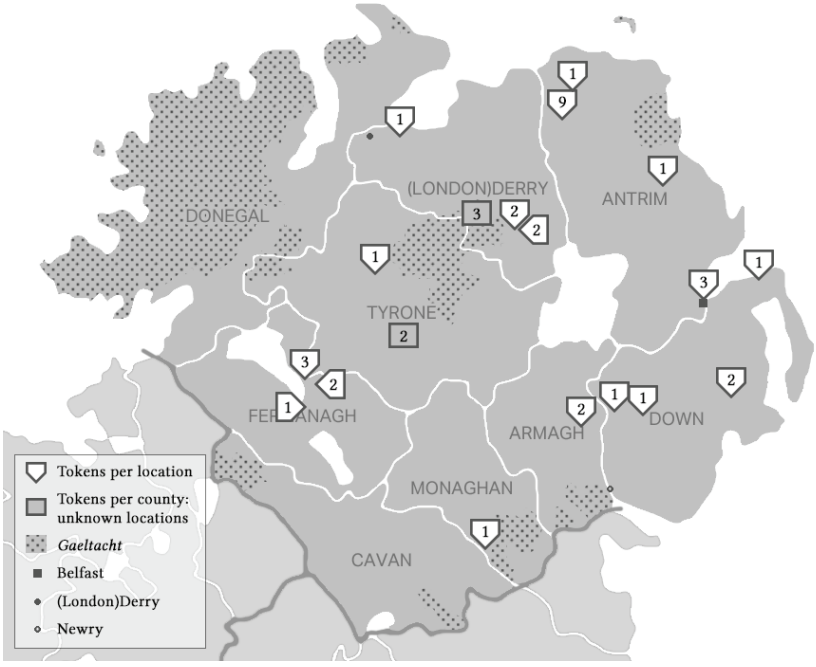
## 8.4.2 Geographical location

The geographical distribution for cluster reduction in Maps 8.9–8.12 show tokens spread over large parts of Ulster. It does not seem to have been regionally restricted at any time. Post-sonorant stop deletion is included in these maps as their distribution did not differ in any marked way from that of cluster reduction in general. For forty-five tokens there was not enough information about the writers to place them on the maps. Two tokens were found from outside of Ulster, both in Dublin.

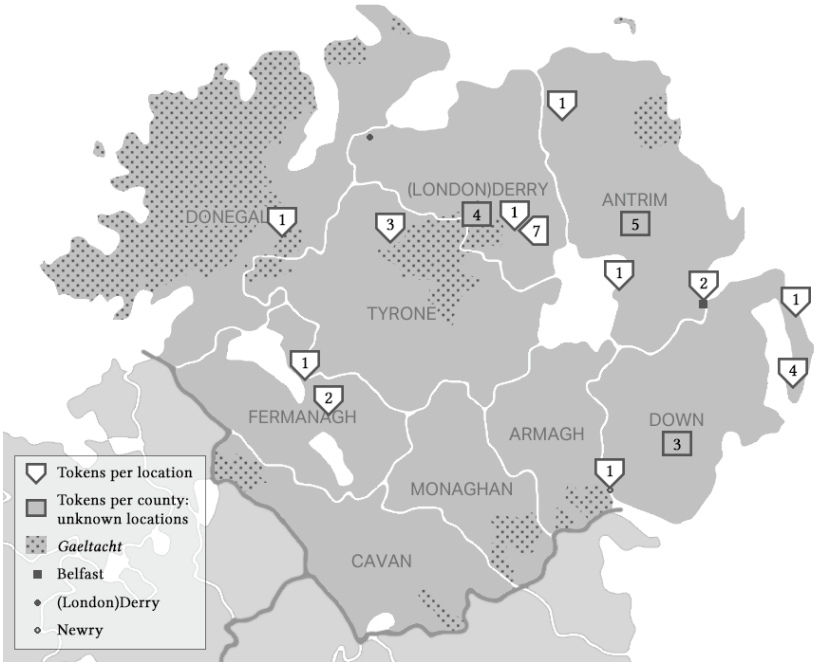
USc (Corrigan 2010: 43). Some of the post-vowel deletions may also be due to occurrence in unstressed positions.




**Map 8.9:** 1761–1800: Geographical distribution (n) of cluster reduction




**Map 8.10:** 1801–1850: Geographical distribution (n) of cluster reduction




**Map 8.11**: 1851–1900: Geographical distribution (n) of cluster reduction


**Map 8.12**: 1901–1940: Geographical distribution (n) of cluster reduction

### 8.4.3 Social rank and gender

For a rather large number of letter writers, information on social rank was difficult to obtain. Hence, 33 male tokens and 13 female tokens are of unknown rank (see Figure 8.12 and Figure 8.13). Very few of the tokens come from female writers; the remaining tokens for women are five farmers and one servant. Male tokens are mostly found in farmer's letters, followed by clerks / shop assistants, and manual labourers. Most of these come from the latter half of the nineteenth century.

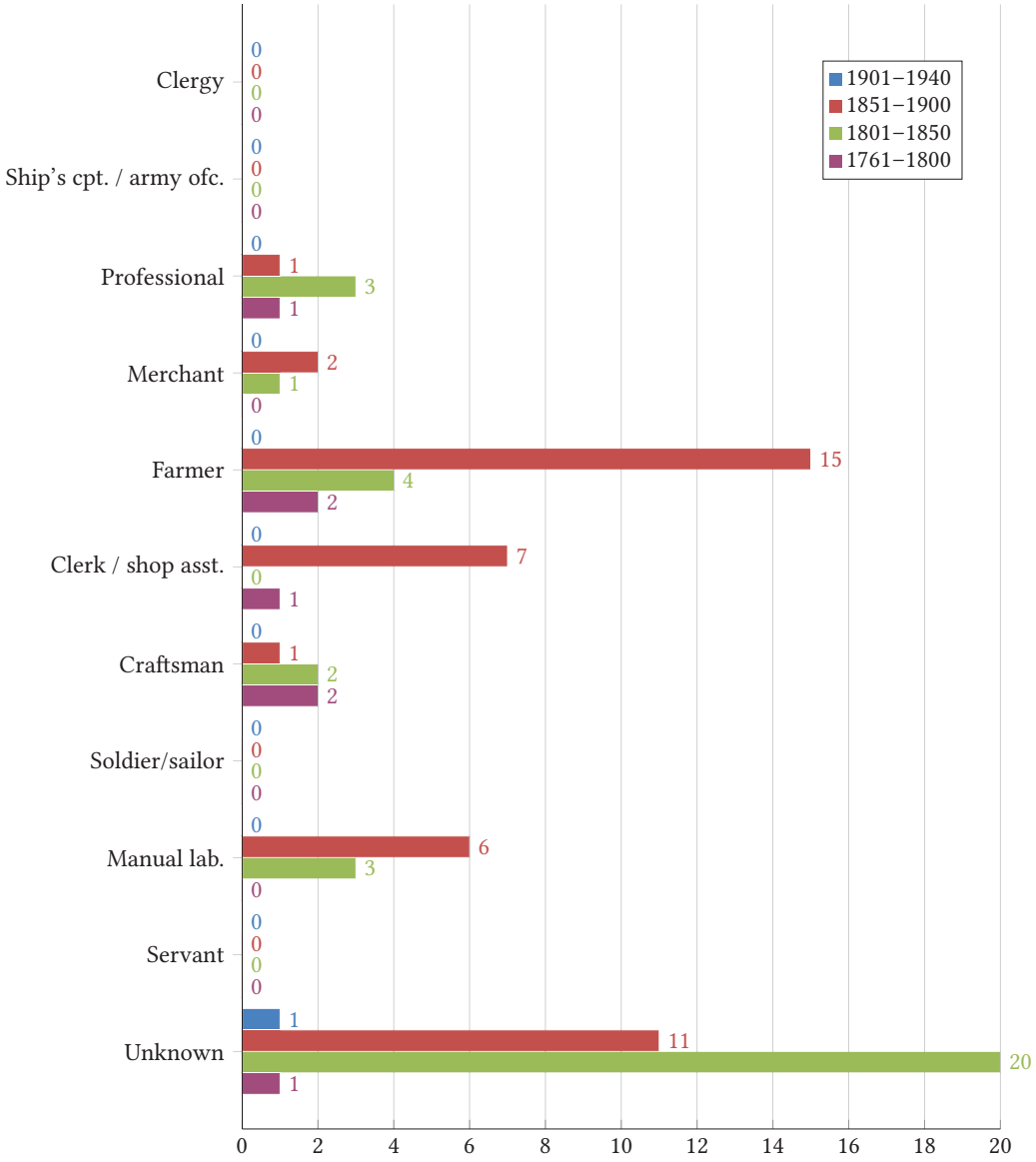



**Figure 8.12:** Men: tokens (n) of cluster reduction by social rank

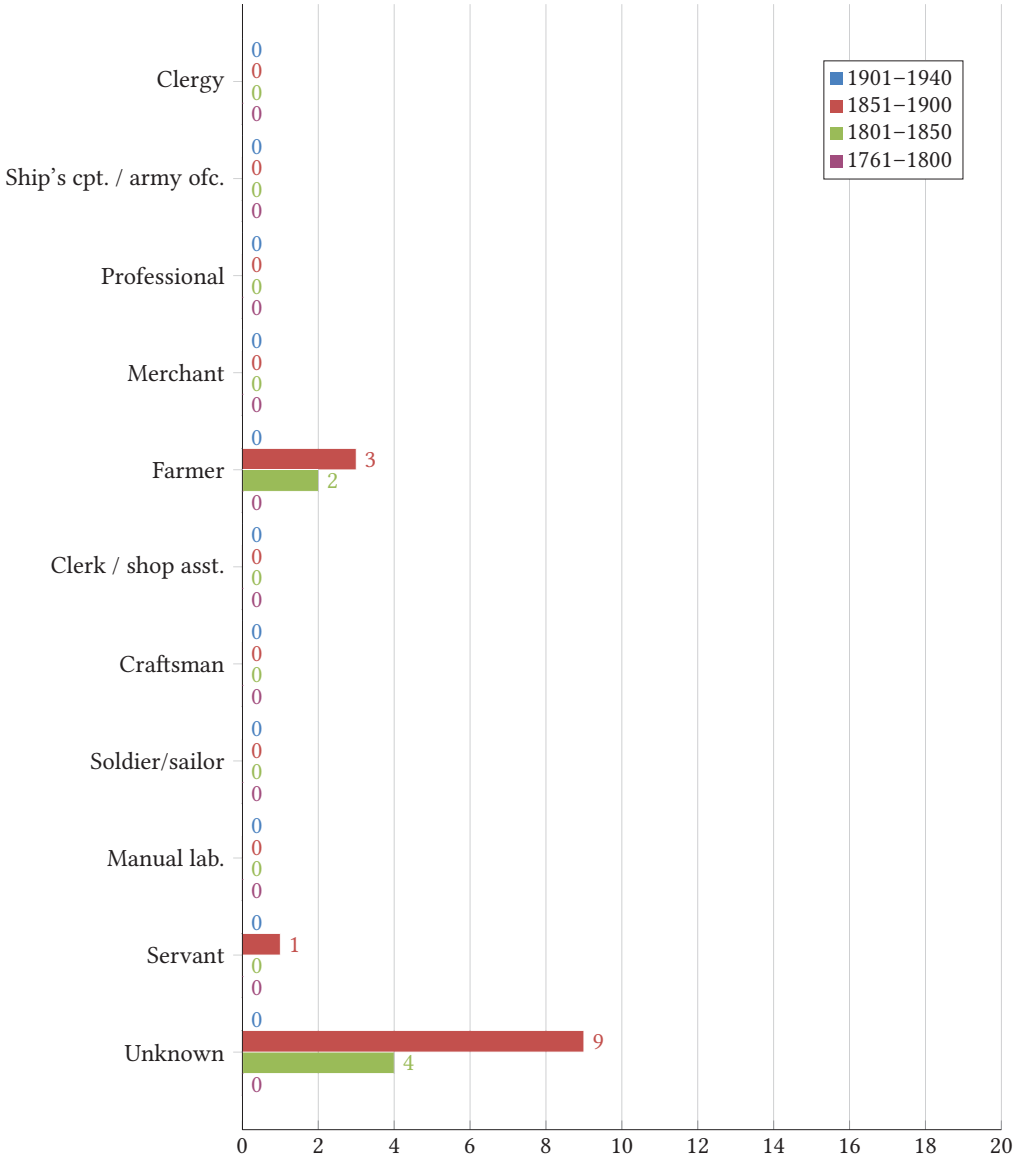



**Figure 8.13:** Women: tokens (n) of cluster reduction by social rank

## 8.5 Post-sonorant devoicing

*the roomer is the will*
*pay twenty five cents on the Doller, and there is* ***thousants***
*of people in the some fram twenty* ***thousant***
*down to one hundred Dollers*
([?] Williamson, California to his mother, location unknown, 06.05.1855)

Devoiced final /d/ is frequently encountered in historical IrE texts (Bliss 1979: 244). According to Hickey (2007: 61), '[i]n a position immediately after a sonorant, above all after /n/, a plosive in medieval Irish English shows a tendency to be voiceless.' He further notes that this is 'well attested' in IrE today, especially in contact English, i.e. in *Gaeltachtaí* and rural areas, (Hickey 2007: 62, 306).

Forty tokens of post-sonorant devoicing were found in CORIECOR, 24 of which occur after /n/, nine after a vowel, and seven after /r/. Especially *thousand*(*s*) (nine) and *husband* (eight) were found with final devoicing.

**Table 8.12**: Phonetic representation of post-sonorant devoicing (n = 40)

| Representation | Standard spelling | Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|---|---|
| ⟨beyont⟩ | beyond | ⟨pounts⟩ | pounds |
| ⟨Davet⟩ (2) | David | ⟨remembert⟩ | remembered |
| ⟨glat⟩ | glad | ⟨secont⟩ | second |
| ⟨hart⟩ | hard | ⟨sent⟩ (2) | send |
| ⟨hundert⟩ (3) | hundred | ⟨spent⟩ | spend |
| ⟨husbant⟩ (8) | husband | ⟨splendit⟩ | splendid |
| ⟨loadit⟩ | loaded | ⟨standert⟩ | standard |
| ⟨mairret⟩ (3) | married | ⟨thousant⟩ (6) | thousand |
| ⟨marriet⟩ | married | ⟨thousants⟩ (3) | thousands |
| ⟨orphant⟩ | orphaned | ⟨towarts⟩ | towards |

The earliest token is found in 1839, which is quite late (see Figure 8.14). There is a possibility that the partial devoicing of final consonants that is common in Irish registered as voicelessness to second-language learners of English (Bliss 1979: 244), which, together with the fact that the feature is common in contact English, suggests that post-sonorant devoicing is a result of Irish influence. The chronological distribution in Figure 8.14 fits with previous observations of increased frequencies of attested features after the National School system started.

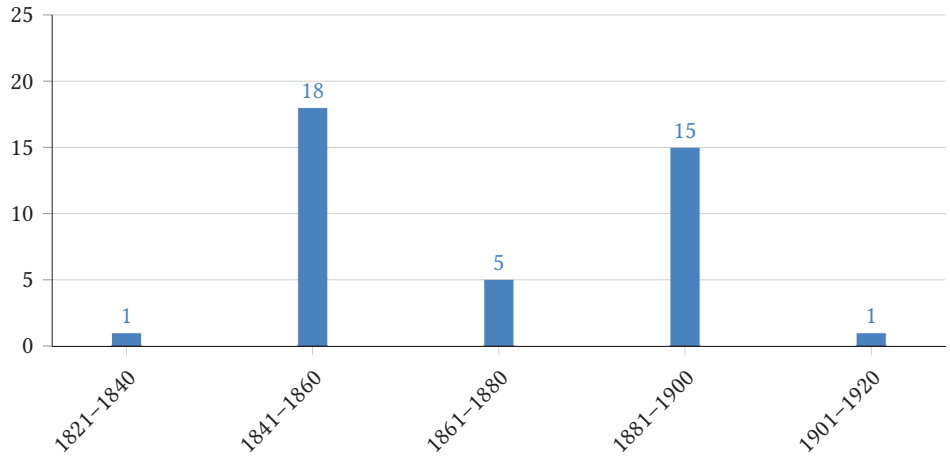
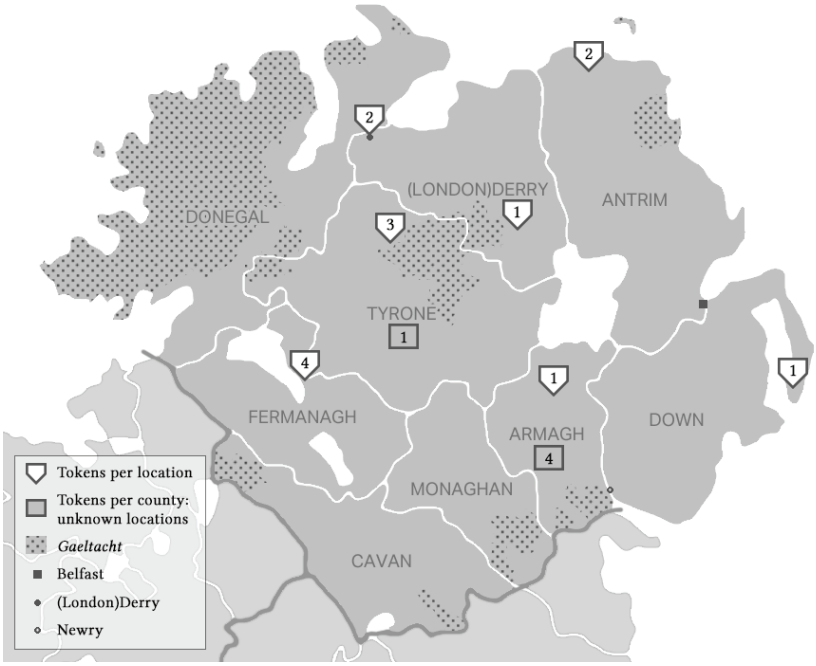



**Figure 8.14**: Chronological distribution (n) of post-sonorant devoicing (n = 40)

### 8.5.1 Geographical location

All but eight tokens are from 1851–1900. This, combined with the low number of 40 tokens, necessitates a single map to show the geographical distribution of post-sonorant devoicing in CORIECOR. Nineteenth-century *Gaeltachtaí* are used in Map 8.13. The map shows no particular areas of higher occurrence, which means that post-sonorant devoicing seems to have been widespread in the nineteenth century.

Twenty-one tokens are from unknown locations and not present on the map, while one token from Co. Kilkenny has been left out of the data, being outside of Ulster.




**Map 8.13**: Geographical distribution (n) of post-sonorant devoicing

### 8.5.2 Social rank and gender

There are not enough tokens of post-sonorant devoicing for a meaningful social rank and gender chart. However, the main results are that there are 15 male tokens from farmers, especially in the latter half of the 1800s. The social ranks of craftsman, labourer, and servant are found with between two and four tokens. Only five male tokens are of indeterminable rank. Female tokens include only one token each from a farmer and a servant, in addition to eight of unknown social rank.

## 8.6 [n] for /ŋ/

> *I supose you will*
> *be* ***expecten*** *us home by this time but we*
> *got dauted of* ***startin*** *in the winter time*
> (James Moore, Coleman Valley, California to his father, Co Antrim, 02.12.1883)

[n] for /ŋ/, often referred to as G-dropping, is a process where unstressed *-ing* [ɪŋ] in gerunds or the progressive becomes [ɪn] or [ɳ].[10] For this reason, Labov (2001) finds [n]

[10] In phonetic terms, *G-dropping* is an unsatisfactory description as it might be confused with loss of [g] in, e.g. [sɪŋ] < [sɪŋg]. It is also inaccurate because, phonetically, nothing is 'dropped' – one phone [ŋ] is substituted by another [n]. As the underlying theme here is phonetic representation in non-standard spelling, *G-dropping* accurately describes the written evidence. However, *[n] for /ŋ/* is used in the present thesis to avoid confusion.

for /ŋ/ more morphological than phonological in nature. It is a very common feature in most, if not all, varieties of English and is, according to Abramowicz (2007: 29–30) 'one of the best studied variables;' it has been in 'stable variation for at least 50 years.' In IrE, the feature is more stigmatised in the south than the north, and is found in both verbs and nouns with the *-ing* suffix (Hickey 2007: 116). A detailed investigation of [n] for /ŋ/ in Coleraine is Kingsmore (1995: 100–110), who found it to occur more amongst women than men. Overall, women used the non-standard 10 per cent more often than men, challenging the view, she claims, that women tend to use more prestigious linguistics forms than men Kingsmore (1995: 80, 110). Furthermore, Kingsmore found the [n] variable to occur much more frequently in conversational style than in word-list style.

The pronunciation [ɪn] for [ɪŋ] is well-attested in the history of English. Queen Elizabeth writes, for instance, ⟨besichen⟩ *beseeching* in the sixteenth century, and hyper-correct usage such as ⟨birthing⟩ *burden* shows that confusion about the suffix existed already in the fourteenth century (Minkova 2014: 137). This variable was also dealt with by orthoepists. Patterson (1860) has dozens of entries on [n] for /ŋ/, condemning its occurrence in the Belfast dialect.

It is interesting that there is relatively little evidence of [n] for /ŋ/ in CORIECOR. Only 166 tokens were found, which, when compared to the number of tokens for other features, is not much when it is taken into account that this is such a common process in English, including IrE. Table 8.13 shows examples of [n] for /ŋ/ in CORIECOR, with both verbs and nouns.

**Table 8.13**: Examples of phonetic representation of [n] for /ŋ/ (total n = 166)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨been⟩ | being |
| ⟨blisson⟩ | blessing |
| ⟨cutten⟩ | cutting |
| ⟨flowin⟩ | flowing |
| ⟨herren⟩ | herring |
| ⟨Livanston⟩ | Livingston |
| ⟨login⟩ | logging |
| ⟨nothin⟩ | nothing |
| ⟨Thanksgiven⟩ | Thanksgiving |
| ⟨welton⟩ | welting |

While [n] for /ŋ/ was mostly found in verbs, it was also found in nouns, e.g. ⟨blisson⟩ *blessing*, ⟨darlin⟩ *darling*, ⟨herren⟩ *herring*, ⟨shilens⟩ *shillings*, and ⟨midlin⟩ *middling* (as in commodities or a grain milling by-product), and also in the proper nouns ⟨Livanston⟩ *Livingston* and ⟨Thanksgiven⟩ *Thanksgiving*. Proper nouns are normally not subject to such alveolarisation (Abramowicz 2007: 30). It was also found in ⟨nothin⟩ *nothing* (two tokens) and ⟨somthin⟩ *something*. Trisyllabic words like *everything* and *anything* are usually expected not to undergo alveolarisation of /ŋ/, but their bisyllabic cousins *nothing* and *something* frequently do (Abramowicz 2007: 30), and are often heard with [n] for /ŋ/ in (N)IrE. Additionally, a few cases of hyper-correction were attested, especially in ⟨childring⟩ *children*. These are not included in the data, as they are not cases of [n] for /ŋ/, but they do provide evidence that the variation exists for these writers.

In one case, ⟨replyin'⟩, the apostrophe clearly shows intentional use of [n] for /ŋ/:

(36) *I have delayed partly from **replyin'** to your letter long before this, awaiting your promised likeness, as you said in a few weeks you would send it but perhaps you were waiting my reply to your letter*
(J. M. Skellern, New York, to 'Dear Brother,' unknown location, 28.11.1864)

The letter in (36) is very 'well-written' and has no other cases of phonetic representation, but because the elided ⟨g⟩ is clearly intentional and not a case of the writer quoting someone else, it has been included in the data. J. M. Skellern is obviously aware of the variation that exists and actively chooses to use the variant that, presumably, is part of his speech, even though, e.g. *waiting* is spelt with ⟨-ng⟩.

Figure 8.15 shows that the greatest number of tokens is found in the mid and late 1800s. While this is expected due to the wealth of material in CORIECOR for these periods, normalised frequencies of the chronological distribution of [n] for /ŋ/ in Table 8.14 and Figure 8.16 confirm this to a large extent.

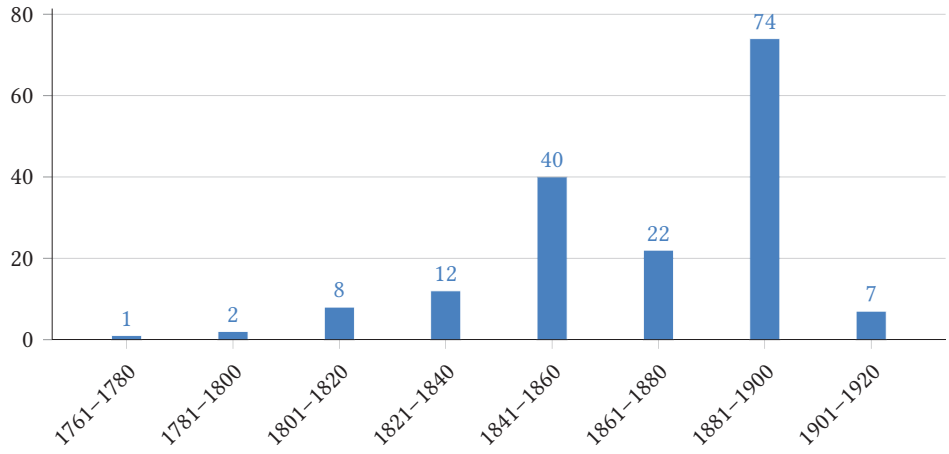



**Figure 8.15:** Chronological distribution (n) of [n] for /ŋ/ (n = 166)

The slight peak in 1841–1860 may show the effects of the National School system of 1831, because the increase in frequency of [n] for /ŋ/ may be explained by an increase in the numbers of semi-literate people. In other words, there were more people after 1831 who could put words on paper, even though their command of English orthography may have been limited. Then, after a few decades with nation-wide schooling, tokens decrease. A small number of writers in the late nineteenth century, however, show multiple tokens (in one case nine) in a single letter, which raises the number of overall tokens for this period disproportionately.

**Table 8.14**: Occurrence (n) and rate per 10,000 words of [n] for /ŋ/

| Period | Words | Tokens | Pr. 10k |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1761–1780 | 57,362 | 1 | 0.2 |
| 1781–1800 | 105,304 | 2 | 0.2 |
| 1801–1820 | 198,124 | 8 | 0.4 |
| 1821–1840 | 303,135 | 12 | 0.4 |
| 1841–1860 | 675,746 | 40 | 0.6 |
| 1861–1880 | 569,659 | 22 | 0.4 |
| 1881–1900 | 750,456 | 74 | 1.0 |
| 1901–1920 | 324,670 | 7 | 0.2 |
| CORIECOR total | 3,060,366 | 166 | 0.5 |

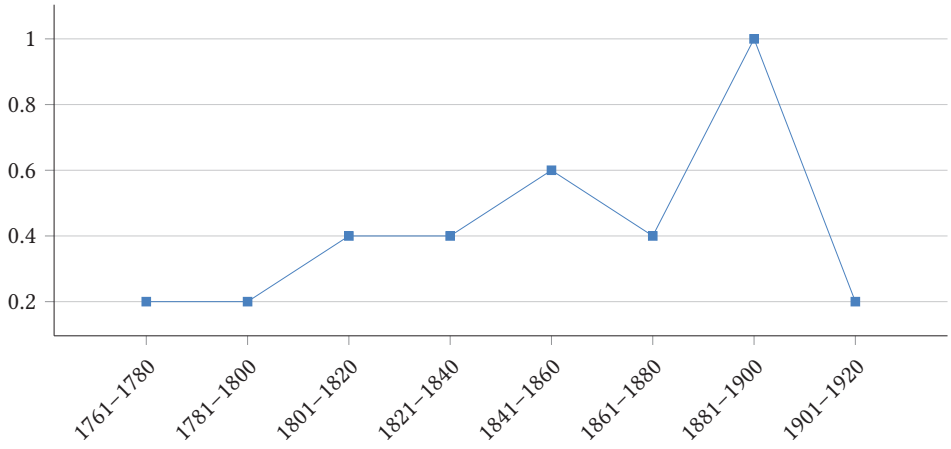


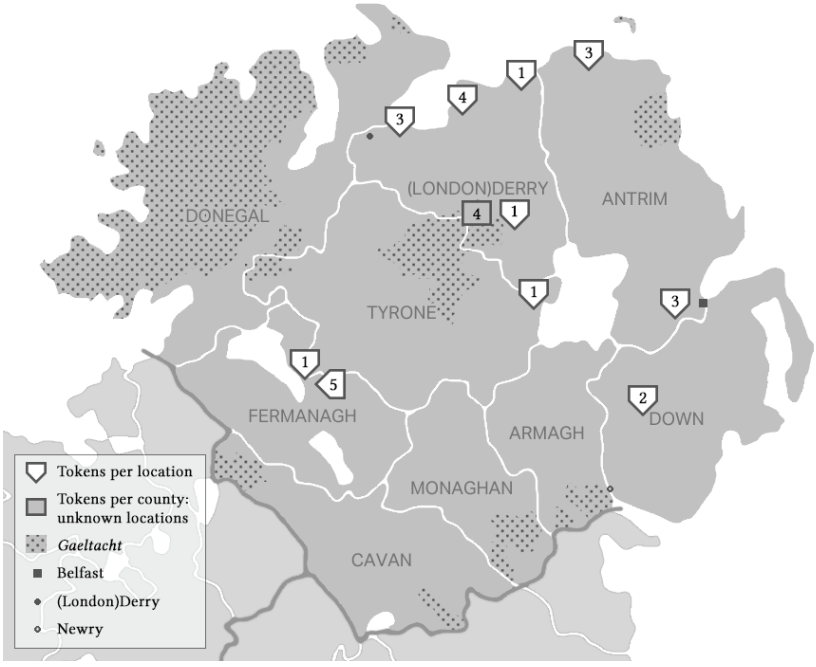

**Figure 8.16**: Normalised frequencies of [n] for /ŋ/ per 10,000 words

## 8.6.1 Geographical location

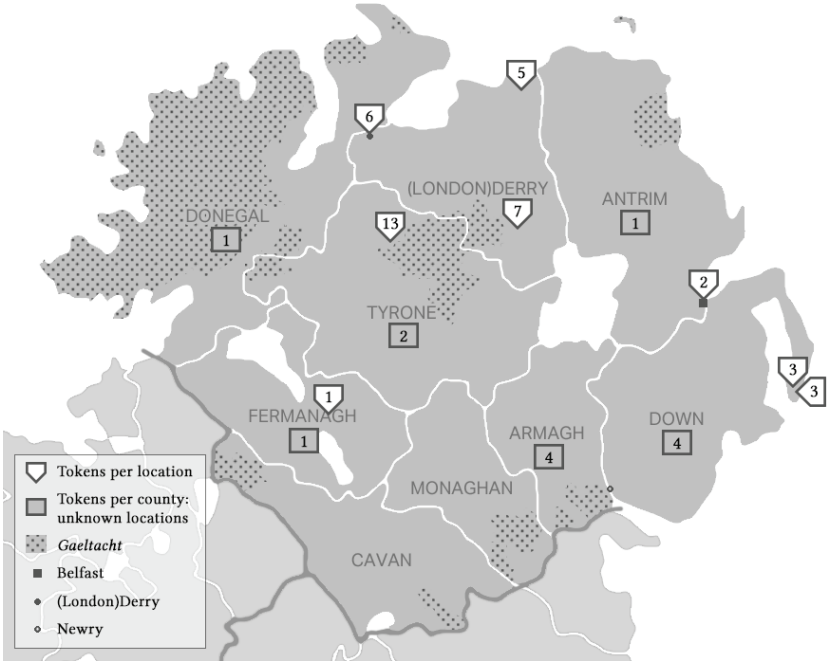
It is not surprising that Maps 8.14–8.17 show a widespread distribution of [n] for /ŋ/ tokens in Ulster. As noted above, it is a common phonological process in NIrE. A testament to this is that the only keyword with *-ing* in Gregg's (1985) Scots–Irish maps, *going*, is shown exclusively with [n] for /ŋ/: [gɑːn], [gʲɑːn], [gaːn], and ['goːən].

Two additional tokens were found for counties Kilkenny and Wicklow, but, being outside of Ulster, these are not included in the data in this section.


**Map 8.14**: 1761–1800: Geographical distribution (n) of [n] for /ŋ/




**Map 8.15**: 1801–1850: Geographical distribution (n) of [n] for /ŋ/




**Map 8.16**: 1851–1900: Geographical distribution (n) of [n] for /ŋ/


**Map 8.17**: 1901–1940: Geographical distribution (n) of [n] for /ŋ/

### 8.6.2 Social rank and gender

A surprisingly large number of letter writers who display [n] for /ŋ/ are difficult to place socially (67 male and 11 female tokens). The main reason for this is that the feature occurs in the letters of many individuals with only one or very few documents in CORIECOR, which makes it harder to find clues about social rank.

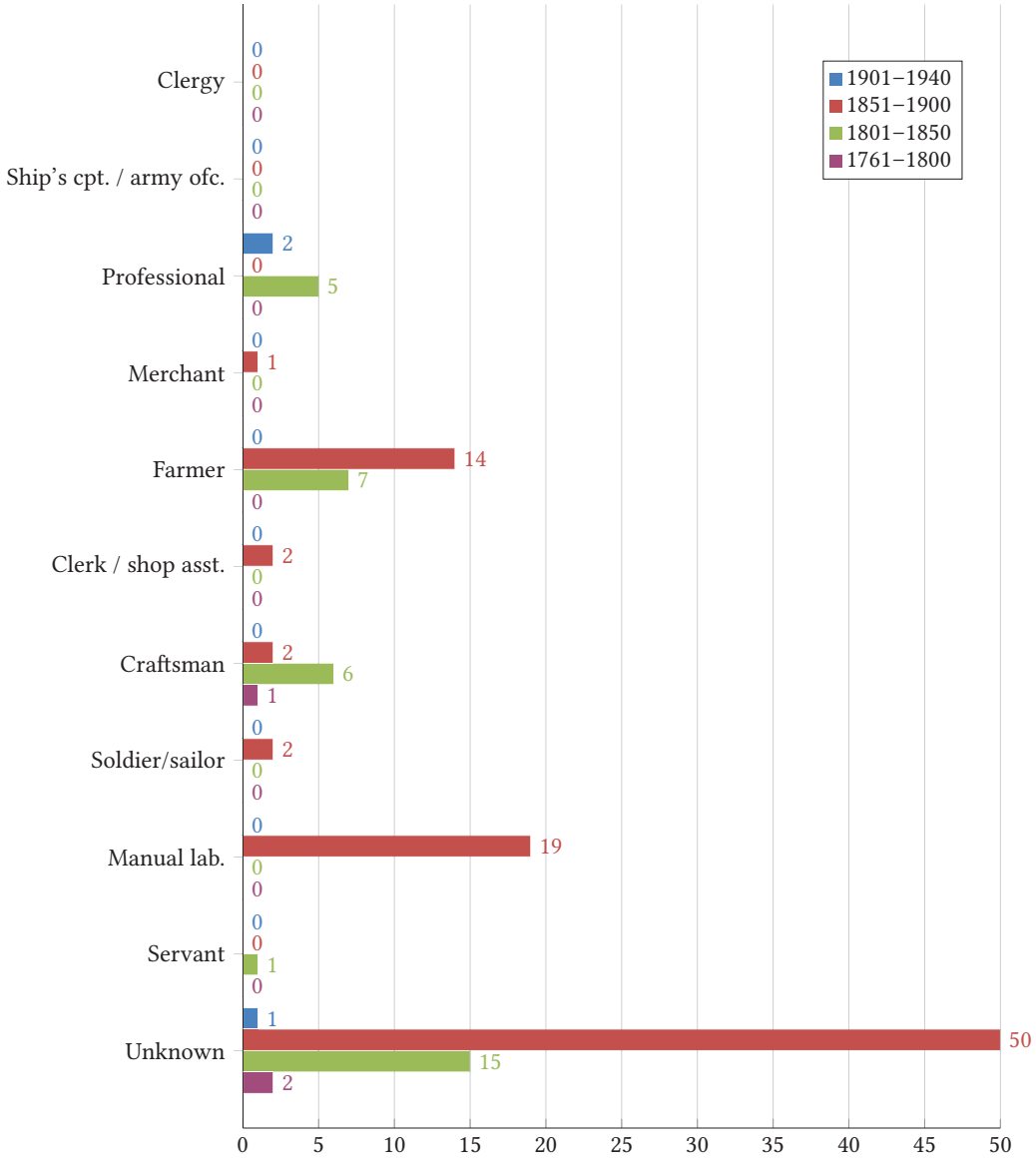



**Figure 8.17:** Men: tokens (n) of G-dropping by social rank

Especially female tokens were few in number (see Figure 8.18), contrary to findings by Kingsmore (1995) of present-day NIrE in Coleraine which showed that women were more

likely to 'drop their Gs.' The male tokens show a rather high number for manual labourers (19 tokens) in the latter half of the nineteenth century, although farmers (21) had slightly more overall (see Figure 8.17). There were also seven tokens from the letters of teachers (under *professional*), even in the early twentieth century.

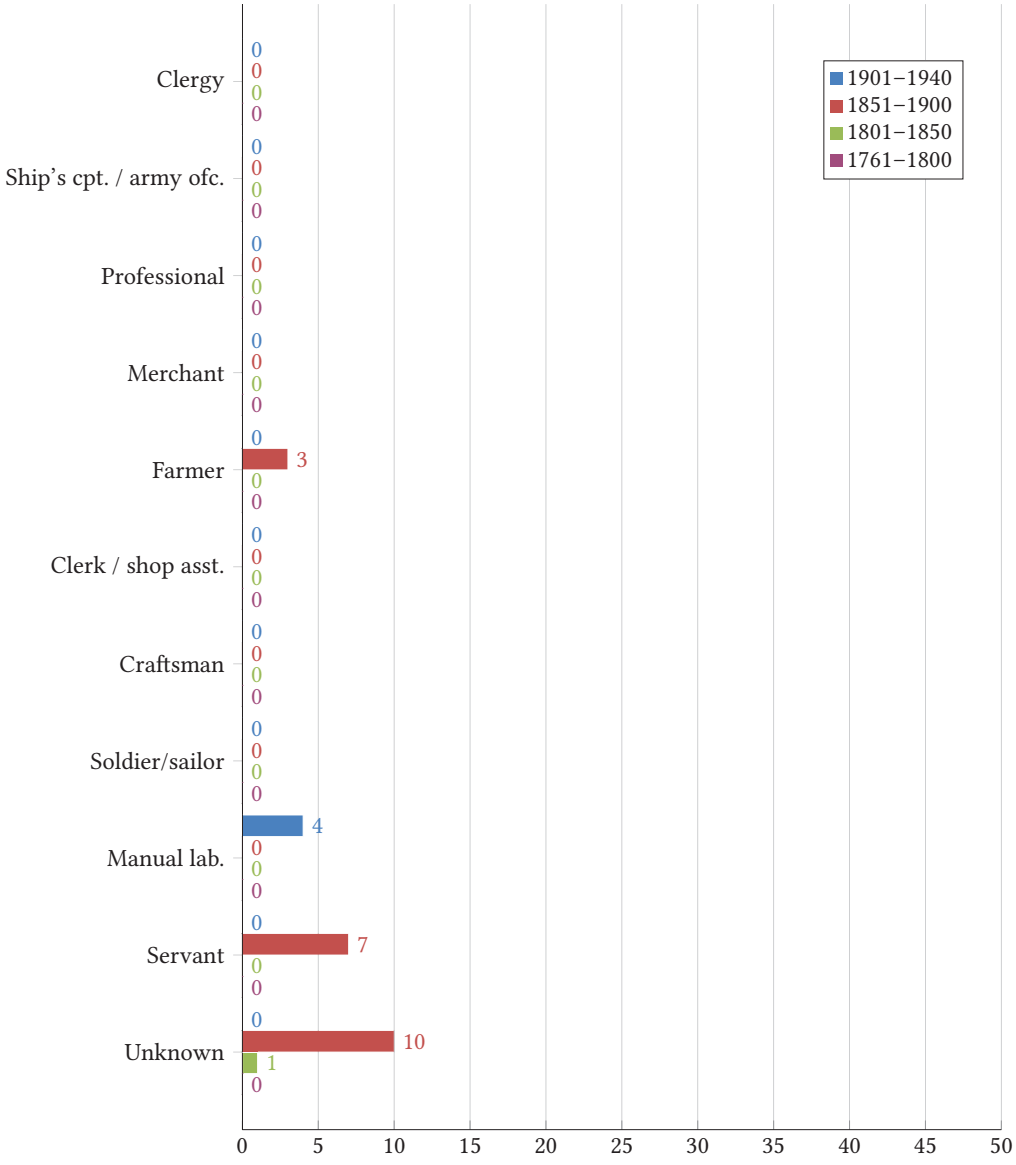



**Figure 8.18**: Women: tokens (n) of G-dropping by social rank

### 8.6.3 *Lenth* and *strenth*

Even though [n] for /ŋ/ usually only occurs in unstressed syllables (Abramowicz 2007: 30), the words *length* and *strength* are still today sometimes pronounced [lɛnθ] and [stɹɛnθ] in areas of Ulster:

(37) *I pray often*
*for you to keep and guide you in all your ways*
*and preserve you in helth and* ***strenth***
*in a Distant land*
(John J. Smyth, Co. Tyrone to J. A. Smyth, Ontario, 06.06.1894)

[n] for /ŋ/ in ⟨-ngth⟩-clusters is found with 22 tokens in CORIECOR (see Table 8.15). Mention of these two words with [n] for /ŋ/ in historical NIrE is described by Sheridan (1781) and ⟨lenth⟩ is pointed out by Patterson (1860). But also Fenton (2006) and Robinson (2007) for USc and Traynor (1953) for the Donegal dialect list *lenth* and *strenth*, suggesting its wide distribution in Ulster.

**Table 8.15**: [n] for /ŋ/ in ⟨-ngth⟩-clusters (total = 22)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨leanth⟩ | length |
| ⟨lenth⟩ (11) | length |
| ⟨lenthed⟩ | lengthened |
| ⟨lenths⟩ | lengths |
| ⟨strenth⟩ (6) | strength |
| ⟨strenthion⟩ | strengthen |
| ⟨strention⟩ | strengthen |

The tokens in Table 8.15 come from counties Down, (London)Derry, Fermanagh, and Tyrone as well as a few unspecified locations in Ireland, i.e. quite a wide distribution.

## 8.7 Unexpected occurrences

This section will briefly discuss two features which do not occur in NIrE (or SIrE), namely non-rhoticity and H-dropping. Finding phonetic representation of these processes is unexpected and the nature of the evidence does not challenge the assumption that the features did not occur in historical NIrE. Still, representation of them was found to such a degree that a few comments must be made.

### 8.7.1 Non-rhoticity

IrE is rhotic – this is true for both SIrE and NIrE. The combination of rhotic native Irish with seventeenth-century linguistic input from Scots and a (to a large degree) still-rhotic EngE means that Ireland belongs in the same group as Scotland, South-West England, and nearly all of North America when it comes to rhotic English. According to Hickey (2007: 359), there is no tendency at all in IrE to become non-rhotic. In fact, he notes that 'speakers who attempt to approach something like RP retain rhoticity longest,' and also that speaking

with a marked English accent would be viewed as 'pretentious,' which may be a possible reason for the retained syllable-final /r/ (Hickey 2007: 15, 22).

Southern EngE lost syllable-final /r/ during the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Minkova 2014: 126), and indeed there is not much information to be gained from the usual orthoepists regarding /r/ in IrE. Sheridan (1781: 34) remarks that /r/ always sounds the same, 'and is never filent,' while no comment on it is found at all in, e.g. Patterson (1860). It is therefore somewhat surprising that 87 tokens of non-rhoticity are found in CORIECOR.[11] Table 8.16 lists some examples of the feature.

**Table 8.16:** Examples of phonetic representation of non-rhoticity (total n = 87)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨Arthu⟩ | Arthur |
| ⟨Bamba⟩ | Bamber |
| ⟨makets⟩ | markets |
| ⟨moden⟩ | modern |
| ⟨mothe⟩ | mother |
| ⟨neely⟩ | nearly |
| ⟨simila⟩ | similar |
| ⟨slapie⟩ | sloppier |
| ⟨souce⟩ | source |
| ⟨thefore⟩ | therefore |

None of the 87 tokens occur before a following word with initial ⟨r-⟩, which might have been an explanation for deletion of final ⟨-r⟩ in writing. Some of the words, however, appear to be genuine examples of what one might expect phonetic representation of /r/-loss to look like. See, for instance, words like ⟨moden⟩ *modern*, ⟨mothe⟩ *mother*, or ⟨souce⟩ *source* in Table 8.16. But then, there are plenty of counter examples such as ⟨Arthu⟩ *Arthur* or ⟨thefore⟩ *therefore*, with loss of only one of two syllable-final Rs.

Figure 8.19 gives the chronological distribution of non-rhoticity, showing tokens of the feature during the period where loss of syllable-final /r/ was still an ongoing process in southern EngE. The 40 tokens in 1881–1900 come for the main part from the Smyth family in rural Co. Tyrone (13 tokens) and from George R. Wood (12), of whom not much else is known. All but one of Wood's tokens are found in the spelling ⟨cause⟩ for *course*, suggesting confusion between the two words.

The conclusion must be that these tokens are not evidence of non-rhoticity in historical IrE. An alternative explanation may very well be that we are witnessing semi-literate letter writers' attempts to convey the tendency of IrE to rhotacise schwa before /r/ (Hickey 2007: 317). Thus, some writers may have interpreted the /r/ as being part of the vowel, and deemed the vowel glyph sufficient in writing. Forty-five of the 87 tokens are indeed found in such a position; the rest may be ascribed to orthographic insecurity in general or simply to slips of the pen.

[11] This even excludes more than 100 instances of ⟨you⟩ *your*, *you're*, ⟨ye⟩ *your*, ⟨they⟩ *their*, *they're* etc., as these usually unstressed words were considered too inconclusive.

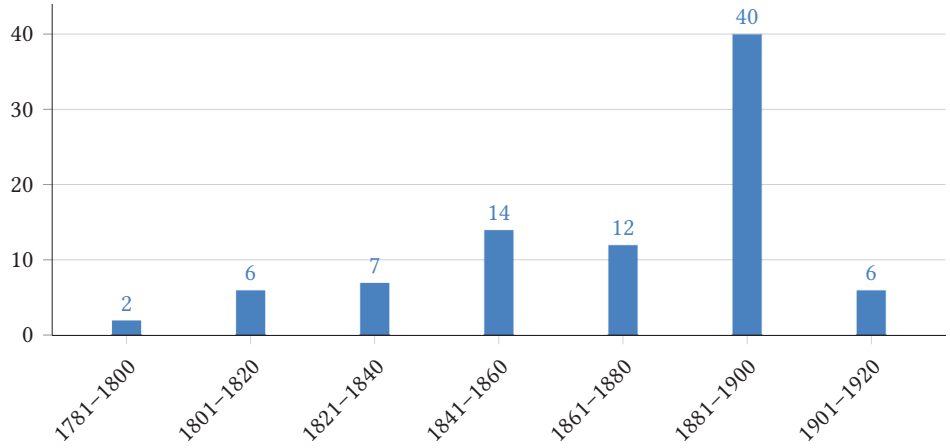



**Figure 8.19**: Chronological distribution (n) of non-rhoticity (n = 87)

### 8.7.2 H-dropping

The second set of unexpected occurrences are instances of phonetic representation of H-dropping. H is always pronounced in Ireland and H-dropping is not found in any 'regional or social dialect' of NIrE (Corrigan 2010: 40) – even the glyph itself is pronounced with an H by many: [heːtʃ]. In Co. Donegal, Traynor (1953: xxiv) reports that H may be inserted in emphatic use of *it* and *us*, i.e. [hɪt] and [hʌs]. *Hit* is also still heard in (London)Derry City today, though the feature was not found in CORIECOR. Ten tokens of H-dropping were found in the corpus (see Table 8.17).

**Table 8.17**: Examples of phonetic representation of H-dropping (n = 10)

| Representation | Standard spelling |
|---|---|
| ⟨as⟩ (5) | has |
| ⟨ere⟩ | here |
| ⟨is⟩ | his |
| ⟨obituially⟩ | habitually |
| ⟨ospital⟩ | hospital |
| ⟨peraps⟩ | perhaps |

Most of the tokens are function words (e.g. ⟨as⟩ *has*, ⟨ere⟩ *here*) which are often unstressed and thus lose [h] in IrE (and in English generally) when occurring before a stressed syllable (Adams 1948: 11) – a lack of ⟨h⟩ in writing in such items is therefore inconclusive. But the other tokens are also found in positions likely to be unstressed, as in ⟨obituialley⟩ *habitually* (38), though ⟨ospital⟩ *hospital* (39) is a more uncertain case:

(38) *I was strongly advised to hold on to it & believing a good deal in* ***obituialley*** *maintaining one position until events & time bring out a good result.*
(Edward King, New York to Rowland Redmond, London, 13.03.1866)

(39) *we had to go to qarrenteen*
*Isilan to* ***Ospital*** *and*
*I was given up by the doctor*
(Patt M'Gowan, St. John's New Brunswick to 'Brother Roger,' location unknown, 25.12.1847)

Two tokens which were disregarded completely are ⟨hogsits⟩ *hogsheads* and ⟨umble⟩ *humble*, both of which were common in earlier English without [h].[12]

Because H-dropping does not occur in (N)IrE, and ten tokens are not nearly enough to base anything on, there is no reason to believe that CORIECOR shows evidence of H-dropping being more common in historical NIrE.

## 8.8 Conclusions

The first half of this chapter, section 8.2, focused on schwa-epenthesis. The current view of epenthesis in IrE has it occurring frequently and across the island in words such as *farm*, *Colm*, and, especially, *film*. The accepted consonant clusters in which it appears regularly are /lm/ and /rm/, or between a liquid and nasal consonant, sometimes with additional clusters given. Interestingly, epenthesis was found only sparingly in the clusters /lm/ and /rm/ in CORIECOR. It was, however, found to a large extent in other, though not unusual, consonant clusters (between a plosive, liquid or nasal and a liquid or nasal consonant), as well as, to a lesser extent, in completely unexpected phonetic environments. It would appear that schwa-epenthesis occurred in a greater range of phonetic environments in earlier NIrE than it does today. Based on the present thesis, it seems that it has become rarer, or at least become restricted to liquid_nasal environments (as in the aforementioned *film* and *farm*). The fact that no epenthesis was found in *farm* (despite 931 occurrences of *farm*, *farmhouse* etc. in CORIECOR) in a corpus where farmers are heavily represented, or even in the cluster /rm/ suggests that this might be a newer development, though given the wealth of different clusters in which epenthesis was found to appear (44 in total), this may be unlikely. *Country* and *Henry* seem to have been especially prone to schwa-insertion in the past, occurring much more frequently than any other words with epenthesis. *Country* does occur quite a lot in the corpus, as one might expect from emigrant letters describing a new country; and *Henry* is a common name in English. Still, the rate with which epenthesis occurs in *country* and *Henry* can perhaps be compared to its present-day occurrence in *film* and *farm*. The results show epenthesis to be particularly prominent in the north-east of Ulster (though this is where most of the corpus material comes from), especially amongst farmers.

The remaining phonological processes – metathesis, cluster reduction, post-sonorant devoicing, and [n] for /ŋ/ (sections 8.3–8.6) – all share the fact that they seem to have been widespread in earlier NIrE. For all features it is also true that interpretation of social patterns reveals very little about women, which is expected considering the small amount of material from female writers. Female tokens are often of unknown social origin, but where determinable mostly come from farmers. Male tokens are most frequently found

[12] As demonstrated by, e.g. Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield* (Charles Dickens, 1850), who is 'so very umble.' For *hogshead*, see, e.g. 'hogshead, n.'. OED Online. June 2015. Oxford University Press. `http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/87629` accessed 29 May, 2015); especially *hoggart*, *hoggat* (1700s), and *hogget* (1800s) for NIrE.

from farmers – also expected for this corpus – and lower ranks such as craftsmen and labourers. Cluster reduction and [n] for /ŋ/ tokens stand out in this respect as they contain a much higher number of male tokens of unknown social rank than other features, though there is probably no particular reason why this should be so.

For metathesis and [n] for /ŋ/ it appears as if the impact of education plays a role in the chronological distribution of tokens. The National Schools (from 1831) may have contributed, first, to a rise in tokens as people started to write more readily, and then a fall after they became more proficient at orthography.

Two features were subdivided further: post-sonorant stop-deletion in cluster reduction and *lenth*/*strenth* in [n] for /ŋ/. According to Hickey (2007: 306), post-sonorant devoicing is mainly a rural feature, while post-sonorant stop-deletion is typical of urban areas and the east coast. This dichotomy was not found to be reflected in the data from CORIECOR, which means that Hickey's division may be a more recent development. The spellings ⟨lenth⟩ and ⟨strenth⟩ were found from widespread locations in Ulster and [n] for /ŋ/ in such words must have been common.

# Chapter 9

# Conclusions

This chapter presents the conclusions of the present thesis. In section 9.1, it first answers the research questions described in chapter 1. It does so by reviewing the chapter conclusions from chapters 5–8. Following this, the broader conclusions drawn from the above are laid out, including a short section on features that were expected but not attested. The limitations of the thesis are described in section 9.2. Finally, suggestions for further research are presented in section 9.3.

## 9.1 Contributions of this thesis

The following research questions were formulated in chapter 1:

1. Which phonological features of NIrE are phonetically represented in CORIECOR?
2. How are these phonological features distributed diachronically, geographically, and socially?

Research question (1) is summarised in Table 9.1, along with the year of the features' first and last attestations in CORIECOR, though it does not include features with very limited attestations – i.e. [ɪ]–[ʌ]-interchange, OL-diphthongisation, GOOSE-fronting, unsplit FOOT–STRUT, [u:] for ME /ɔ:/ (section 6.11), TH-fronting, and [x] for /k/ (section 7.8). As the table shows, most of the features studied are found throughout the period from the eighteenth century (almost) into the twentieth.

The nature of research question (2) does not allow for short answers, but the diachronic, geographic, and social distribution of the features have been investigated thoroughly in chapters 5–8, the conclusions of which are recapitulated below.

### 9.1.1 Conclusions from CORIECOR

**[ðiː] for *they***

Phonetic representation of [ðiː] for *they* in the non-standard spelling ⟨the⟩ is the most frequently occurring phonological feature in letters from NIrE-speaking letter writers. This shows that for many of the letter writers in CORIECOR the definite article *the* and the personal pronoun *they* were homophones, and consequently often homographs. This is

strengthened by the occasional hyper-correct spelling of ⟨they⟩ for *the*. *They* is still pronounced [ðiː] in parts of Ulster, which makes it clear that the spelling ⟨the⟩ reflects this pronunciation in the corpus.

**Table 9.1:** First and last attestations of features of NIrE in CORIECOR

| Feature | Example | First attest. | Last attest. |
|---|---|---|---|
| [ðiː] for *they* | ⟨the⟩ *they* | 1700 | 1923 |
| *Vowels* | | | |
| FACE monophthong | ⟨afred⟩ *afraid* | 1766 | 1923 |
| CATCH-raising | ⟨kettle⟩ *cattle* | 1766 | 1903 |
| unraised long E | ⟨dale⟩ *deal* | 1766 | 1908 |
| short E-lowering | ⟨gats⟩ *gets* | 1812 | 1910 |
| open fronted (*m*)*any* | ⟨manny⟩ *many* | 1816 | 1913 |
| short E-raising | ⟨epidimmick⟩ *epidemic* | 1767 | 1911 |
| KIT-centering | ⟨safeshent⟩ *sufficient* | 1773 | 1904 |
| unrounded short O | ⟨appertunity⟩ *opportunity* | 1804 | 1903 |
| lowering of ME /e/ before /r/ | ⟨sarves⟩ *serves* | 1787 | 1896 |
| [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩ | ⟨airly⟩ *early* | 1736 | 1897 |
| raised ME /a/ | ⟨hervist⟩ *harvest* | 1736 | 1891 |
| unrounded /o/ | ⟨bard⟩ *board* | 1814 | 1889 |
| *Consonants* | | | |
| TH-fortition | ⟨nort⟩ *north* | 1798 | 1907 |
| intervocalic tap | ⟨Prodistants⟩ *Protestants* | 1840 | 1899 |
| T/D-dentalisation | ⟨mather⟩ *matter* | 1799 | 1891 |
| T/D-fricativisation | ⟨buth⟩ *but* | 1828 | 1893 |
| S-palatalisation | ⟨Shusan⟩ *Susan* | 1751 | 1897 |
| [ʃ] for /tʃ/ | ⟨shanses⟩ *chances* | 1833 | 1888 |
| YOD-dropping | ⟨nuse⟩ *news* | 1816 | 1929 |
| unvoiced /v/ | ⟨Lifferpool⟩ *Liverpool* | 1801 | 1889 |
| *Phonological processes* | | | |
| schwa-epenthesis | ⟨Henery⟩ *Henry* | 1767 | 1930 |
| metathesis | ⟨hundard⟩ *hundred* | 1767 | 1930 |
| cluster reduction | ⟨reflack⟩ *reflect* | 1767 | 1903 |
| post-sonorant devoicing | ⟨thousant⟩ *thousand* | 1839 | 1911 |
| [n] for /ŋ/ | ⟨startin⟩ *starting* | 1770 | 1907 |
| [n] for /ŋ/ in ⟨-ngth⟩ | ⟨lenth⟩ *length* | 1823 | 1900 |

The phonetic spelling ⟨the⟩ for *they* in letters from NIrE-speaking letter writers traces the still-occurring pronunciation [ðiː] back to at least 1700. Tokens are found in most parts of Ulster and seem to have been widespread. Farmers are heavily represented, though this is in part due to the large amount of data from the Smyth family in the late nineteenth century. Tokens from lower ranks such as labourers are well-attested, though servants and soldiers/sailors are not found in large numbers. At the middle of the social scale, craftsmen, clerks / shop assistants, and merchants feature frequently, but professionals to a smaller

degree. While a few occurrences are found among ships' captains / army officers and members of the clergy, no evidence of [ðiː] for *they* is found amongst the gentry. This is not unexpected, however, as these social ranks are very much in the minority in CORIECOR compared to middle and lower social ranks.

In spite of increased literacy throughout the period covered by the corpus, [ðiː] is amply attested. A closer look at some of the Smyth family letters shows that education did have an impact on spelling, but did not remove all occurrences of the phonetic representation of *they*.

**Vowels**

In terms of continuity of the features, the vowel results in general show a rise-fall tendency (after normalising the data) where occurrences seem to increase towards the mid-1800s, followed by a decline. This is especially visible in CATCH-raising, unraised long E, and short E-lowering. The FACE monophthong and KIT-centering, however, show a gradual decrease, while short E-raising appears to be fairly stable. The reason for this is most likely the founding of the National School system (1831), which gradually improved overall knowledge of English orthography, thus reducing non-standard spellings which render pronunciation.

Geographical data shows that most of the vowel features seem to have been quite widespread in Ulster. Only CATCH-raising and short E-lowering show different behaviour; the former having been found mostly in USc areas while the latter describes a marked north-east to south-west spread, though the related open fronted (*m*)*any* was mostly found in the north-east of Ulster.

The social distribution of the features is overwhelmingly in favour of farmers for all vowels, though CATCH-raising is also found to a certain extent among labourers. Short E-lowering is in addition often found in letters from craftsmen. The most interesting in this regard is evidence of short E-raising, where tokens were found in nearly all ranks, except the gentry; and KIT-centering, where the feature seems to move down the social ladder during the nineteenth century.

Evidence for phonetic representation of lowering of ME /e/, [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩, raised ME /a/, and unrounded /o/ before /r/ in CORIECOR was limited compared to most of the other vowel features. The data for lowering of ME /e/ before /r/ provides the best basis for analysis, and shows that the feature was mainly present in letters written by farmers, and overwhelmingly by men. Evidence of raised ME /a/ before /r/ is found beyond the expected area of present-day USc.

One of the most interesting findings is the possibility that the data for lowering of /e/ before /r/ and [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩ may be describing the shift from ME /ɑːr/ to present-day /ɜːr/ in SERVE words. The reintroduction (due to spelling influence) of EModE /ɛr/, after the fourteenth-century shift from /ɛːr/ to /aːr/, is thus observed in CORIECOR (i.e. [ɛːr] > [ɑːr] > [ɛːr] > [ɜːr]). [ɛːr] for ⟨er⟩ was nonetheless found to be rare compared to [ɑːr] for ⟨er⟩.

**Consonants**

Most of the distinctly NIrE consonants are represented to a much smaller degree in CORIECOR than vowels and phonological processes. In addition, for many of these nothing is known about the social ranks of certain writers, nor is it known from which part of Ulster they originated. In some cases, attestations by other historical linguists, discussions

by grammarians of the past or the presence of a feature in a present-day variety of IrE adds meat to the observation of a certain rendition of a consonant in CORIECOR. T/D-fricativisation is for instance common in SIrE, while s-palatalisation could be expected in writers from Co. Donegal's *Gaeltacht* area. For two of the features, TH-fronting and [x] for /k/, only one single attestation exists for the entire corpus. Still, while there may be too few tokens to base a thorough investigation of certain features on, the fact that they are present in CORIECOR, and come from areas close to recent or present *Gaeltachtaí* in the nineteenth century is very interesting in and of itself, because it points to language contact, and feature transfer, between Irish and English.

One of the consonantal features found in CORIECOR, TH-fortition, occurred to a larger degree than the others. It is interesting to find this particular feature to be the most frequently-occurring of all the discussed consonants in Ulster as it is regarded as a salient feature of SIrE, and only occurs in the southernmost parts of Ulster today. TH-fortition seems to have been much more widespread geographically and further north than in present-day IrE, and was found most frequently in letters written by farmers.

**Phonological processes**

The chapter on phonological processes focused a great deal on schwa-epenthesis. The current view of epenthesis in IrE has it occurring frequently and across the island in words such as *farm*, *Colm*, and, especially, *film*. The accepted consonant clusters in which it appears regularly are /lm/ and /rm/ or between a liquid and nasal consonant, sometimes with additional clusters given. Interestingly, epenthesis is found only sparingly in the clusters /lm/ and /rm/ in CORIECOR. It is, however, found to a large extent in other, though not unusual, consonant clusters (between a plosive, liquid or nasal and a liquid or nasal consonant), as well as, to a lesser extent, in completely unexpected phonetic environments. It appears that epenthesis occurred in a greater range of phonetic environments in earlier (N)IrE than it does today. Based on the present thesis, it seems that it has become rarer, or at least become restricted to liquid_nasal environments (as in the aforementioned *film* and *farm*). The fact that no epenthesis is found in the word *farm* in a corpus where farmers are heavily represented, or even in the cluster /rm/, suggests that this might be a newer development, though given the wealth of different clusters in which epenthesis appears (44 in total), this would be unlikely. *Country* and *Henry* seem to have been especially prone to schwa-insertion in the past, occurring much more frequently with epenthesis than any other words. *Country* does occur quite a lot in the corpus, as one might expect from emigrant letters describing a new country; and *Henry* is a common name in English. Still, the rate with which epenthesis in *country* and *Henry* occurs can perhaps be compared to its present-day occurrence in *film* and *farm*. The results show epenthesis to be particularly prominent in the north-east of Ulster (though this is where most of the corpus material comes from), especially amongst farmers.

The remaining phonological processes – metathesis, cluster reduction, post-sonorant devoicing, and [n] for /ŋ/ – all share the characteristic that they seem to have been quite widespread in earlier NIrE.

Tokens are most frequently found from farmers – also expected for this corpus – and lower ranks such as craftsmen and labourers. Cluster reduction and [n] for /ŋ/ tokens stand out as they contain a much higher number of male tokens of unknown social rank than

other features, though there is probably no particular reason why this should be so as it is pure chance that no information about their social ranks is known. Still, men are more likely to use long-established, stable non-standard features, and this may account at least partly for the large number of male, unknown social rank tokens.

For metathesis and [n] for /ŋ/ it appears as if the impact of education plays a role in the chronological distribution of tokens. The National Schools (from 1831) may have contributed to first a rise in tokens as people started to write more readily, and then a fall after they became more proficient at orthography.

Two features were subdivided further: post-sonorant stop-deletion in cluster reduction and *lenth/strenth* in [n] for /ŋ/. According to Hickey (2007: 306), post-sonorant devoicing is mainly a rural feature, while post-sonorant stop-deletion is typical of urban areas and the east coast. This dichotomy was not found to be reflected in the data from CORIECOR, which means that Hickey's division may be a more recent development. The spellings ⟨lenth⟩ and ⟨strenth⟩ were also found from widespread locations in Ulster so that [n] for /ŋ/ in such words must have been common, as it still is.

### 9.1.2 Broadening the horizon

The present thesis is an exhaustive empirical investigation of those phonological features of NIrE that are present in the CORIECOR corpus (as of October 2013). As a logical extension of this, it also contributes to what we know of historical NIrE phonology by supplementing existing knowledge with empirical data for nearly 30 phonological features. In addition to charting the development and occurrence of these features, the most interesting observations in this study are:

- [ðiː] for *they* (not investigated before) was common and widespread in all of Ulster.
- All vowel features except CATCH-raising and short E-lowering (FACE monophthong, unraised long E, open fronted (*m*)*any*, short E-raising, KIT-centering, and unrounded short O) were found in most Ulster counties, suggesting that vowel qualities were quite uniform in NIrE during the period covered by CORIECOR (c.1700–c.1930).
- The shift from ME [ɑːr] > EModE [ɛːr] > present-day [ɜːr] in SERVE words is observed.
- What we would describe today as SIrE consonants ([t, d] for [θ, ð] and fricative [t̠] in post- and intervocalic position) occurred much further north before the early twentieth century, especially around (recent) *Gaeltacht* areas.
- Schwa-epenthesis occurred in a much greater range of phonetic environments – not mainly in /lm, rm/ as today – and was especially frequently observed in the name *Henry* and the word *country*.

For all features, interpretation of social patterns reveals very little about differences between women and men. This is not unexpected, however, considering the small amount of material from female writers – too small to make meaningful observations. In turn, female tokens often have to be categorised as being of unknown social origin, meaning that little can be deduced from their social standing. Still, where determinable, female tokens mostly come from farmers. While it is often said that women tend to lead sound change,

this is an over-generalisation and such patterns are usually more complex (Eckert 1989: 248). It is therefore unfortunate that there is such a large discrepancy between the number of male v. female tokens; otherwise more might have been discovered.

Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1 in chapter 4 revealed that 23 per cent of all letter writers in CORIECOR are female, while 64 per cent are male (13 per cent are indeterminable). If there are nearly three times as many male writers than female writers, but male tokens more than dwarf female tokens, we must conclude that these women were much more proficient at standard English orthography than the male writers throughout the time period covered by CORIECOR. It is possible that, while learning to write was more or less common for boys (who were expected to eventually lead a household), this was less common for girls. This could in turn entail that when a girl *did* have the opportunity to develop writing skills (e.g. because her parents thought it important or because of personal goals), she was more likely to become good at it compared to the droves of boys who were simply expected to learn just enough for practical purposes.

In some of the features (⟨the⟩ for *they*, [e:] in FACE, CATCH-raising, unraised long E, E-lowering, schwa-epenthesis, metathesis, and cluster reduction) it is observed that the founding of the National School system (1831) may have influenced the writing skills of the letter writers in CORIECOR. These features typically display a pattern where the number of tokens increases after 1821–1840 – presumably because the threshold for putting words on paper is lowered through schooling though does not necessarily lead to orthographic proficiency – and then eventually decreases as knowledge of standard English spelling grows. In other cases ([e:] in FACE, unraised long E, and metathesis), the number of tokens drops immediately after the introduction of the school system. However, as shown in Figure 9.1 (which combines all normalised frequency graphs in this thesis, excepting ⟨the⟩ for *they* due to off-the-chart numbers of occurrences), this is not a universal truth. Some features occur in smaller, but then greater amounts, without discernible pattern.

### 9.1.3 Features expected but not attested

While nearly 30 features of NIrE phonology are represented in CORIECOR, a few have not been attested. Hickey (2007) includes, for instance, A-back raising (e.g. ⟨mauke⟩ *make*), ER-retraction (e.g. ⟨wor⟩ *were*), final-O-fronting (e.g. ⟨folly⟩ *follow*), and WH/W-approximation (e.g. ⟨fen⟩/⟨phen⟩ *when*, i.e. [ɸ] for /ʍ, w/) as historical features of IrE, all of which have been attested in other sources during the period covered by CORIECOR. However, no trace of these features is found in the corpus. It must be remembered, though, that Hickey's historical comments are based largely on literary sources (the *Corpus of Irish English*, CIE), so that his documentation of these features shows the value of literary representations for historical phonology. Some or all of the features Hickey (2007) mentions that are not attested in CORIECOR may not easily be subject to phonetic representation in personal correspondence. It may also be the case that these features do not appear in the corpus because they were more common in parts of Ireland not covered by the present study or had begun to disappear during the eighteenth century.

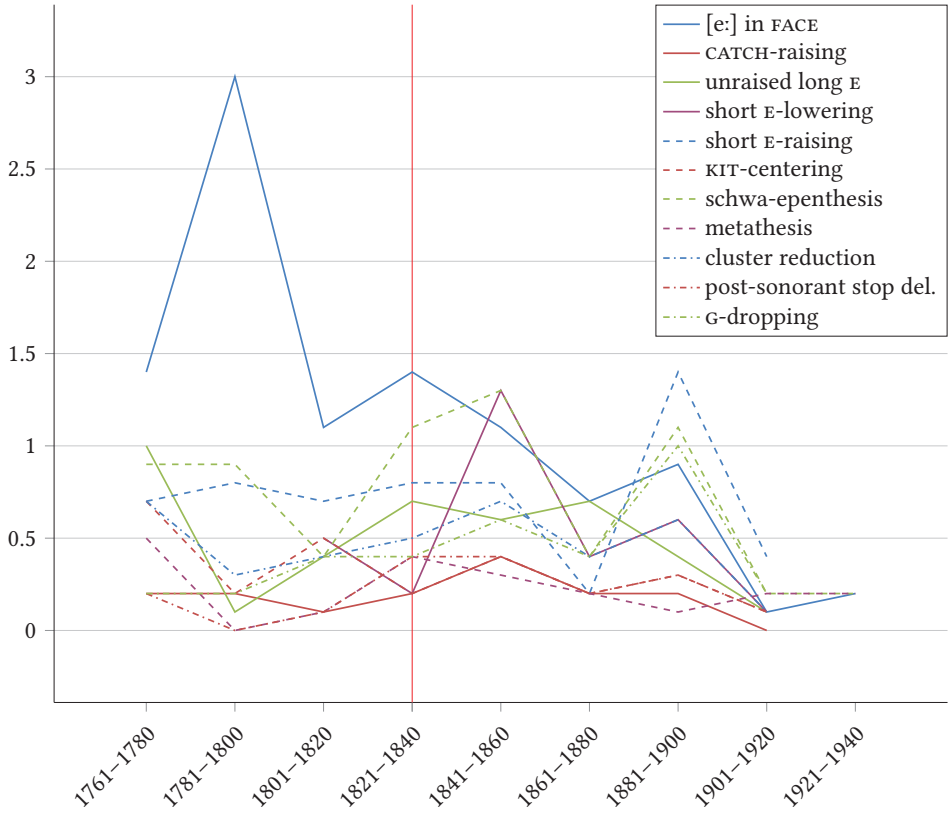



**Figure 9.1:** Combined normalised frequencies of 11 phonological features investigated in the present thesis. The vertical red line ( | ) indicates the founding of the National Schools in Ireland (1831).

## 9.2 Limitations of this thesis

The thesis is predominantly limited by the fact that, at the time of data collection and analysis, no meta data of the corpus was available, though work on this has come a long way since. In other words, there existed no information about the social and geographical make-up of the letter writers in CORIECOR, nor of how much of the material was written by men and how much by women. Because the goal of this study was to extract as much phonological information from the corpus as possible, it would have been too momentous a task to do this myself, except in the case of gender. Thus, social rank and place of origin could only be determined for those writers who, through their display of phonetic representation, became part of this study. This unfortunately makes it impossible to compare the results to the overall social and geographical information in CORIECOR. Nevertheless, though no strict numbers exist, the manual read-through of the corpus that forms the background for the data collection (see section 4.3 for details), has verified that the social rank divisions described in many of the result chapters (especially for the vowels) indeed reflect the general make-up of the corpus, in that most letters are written by male farmers. To a large extent, this lessens the impact of not knowing the complete social configuration of

CORIECOR.

Again, due to time constraints, the present thesis does not show possible areas of transportation of NIrE features. This would easily be possible as the corpus is mostly comprised of emigrant letters. Especially Canada and the US feature heavily in the version of the corpus used for this study, and data from areas of settlement by Irish emigrants could have contributed to existing knowledge of the spread of IrE features of phonology.

A final point to consider is the fact that that some of the letters may not have actually been written by the apparent letter writer, but 'dictated' by the signee to another person. This is not so much a limitation of the present thesis as it is a problem in historical sociolinguistics in general. The issue of authorship is one of the problems discussed by Montgomery (1999), as discussed in section 3.3.5, and is challenging to resolve. It is difficult to judge the extent of the role that amanuenses have played in the writing of CORIECOR's letters. But based on a) the fact that only four of the 4,850 letters examined for the present thesis have direct evidence of dictation, and b) the increase in literacy in Ulster from 60 per cent in 1841 to 88 per cent in 1901 (see Table 2.3), the problem of authorship is not so severe that it compromises CORIECOR's usefulness.

## 9.3 Ways forward

A good starting point for future research on the topic of historical NIrE phonology, especially involving CORIECOR, would be the limitations of the present study, described above. Even though this thesis has made it a rule to include as much material from the corpus as possible, it would certainly make sense to limit the material to the nineteenth century only (which is the best covered in terms of word count), or even smaller periods within this century. This way, one could find the time to record social information on all letter writers, thereby making it possible to more accurately compare those with traces of phonetic representations to those who use more standard spellings. The same is true for geographic origin and areas of transportation of the linguistic features of NIrE.

As CORIECOR grows in size, it will hopefully also grow in geographical coverage. At the moment, in addition to the wealth of correspondence from Ulster, there is also some material from Leinster, especially Co. Carlow, but also from various other counties, e.g. Sligo, Leitrim, and Cork. With enough coverage, a similar study as this could be done for SIrE, supplementing existing knowledge and tracking the Irish–English language shift between 1750 and 1900 in the rest of Ireland.

### 9.3.1 Accessing CORIECOR

At the time of writing (July 2015), CORIECOR is still being supplemented with various letter collections. Some of these are pending, while others have been added after data collection for the present study was concluded (October 2013). It is possible that the corpus, along with a handbook and project publications, will be made available on a dedicated CONVAR website at a future time, but no date has been set for this yet.

The texts are currently available in plain text and as Text Encoding Initiative (TEI)-conformant XML documents, in accordance with the current internationally recognised 'gold standard' for linguistic corpora as recommended by the British Arts and Humani-

ties Data Service. Tools such as Corpus Presenter 14.0 (Hickey 2003), Wordsmith Tools 6.0 (Scott 2012), and Goldvarb X (Sankoff and Smith 2005) may be used to extract and analyse CORIECOR data, though projects of a phonological character such as this thesis rely more on manual observation due to the nature of phonetic representations in non-standard spelling.

The best way to gain access to CORIECOR at this point is to contact the CONVAR project manager Prof. Kevin McCafferty or CONVAR's main international partner Dr. Carolina P. Amador-Moreno.[1]

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