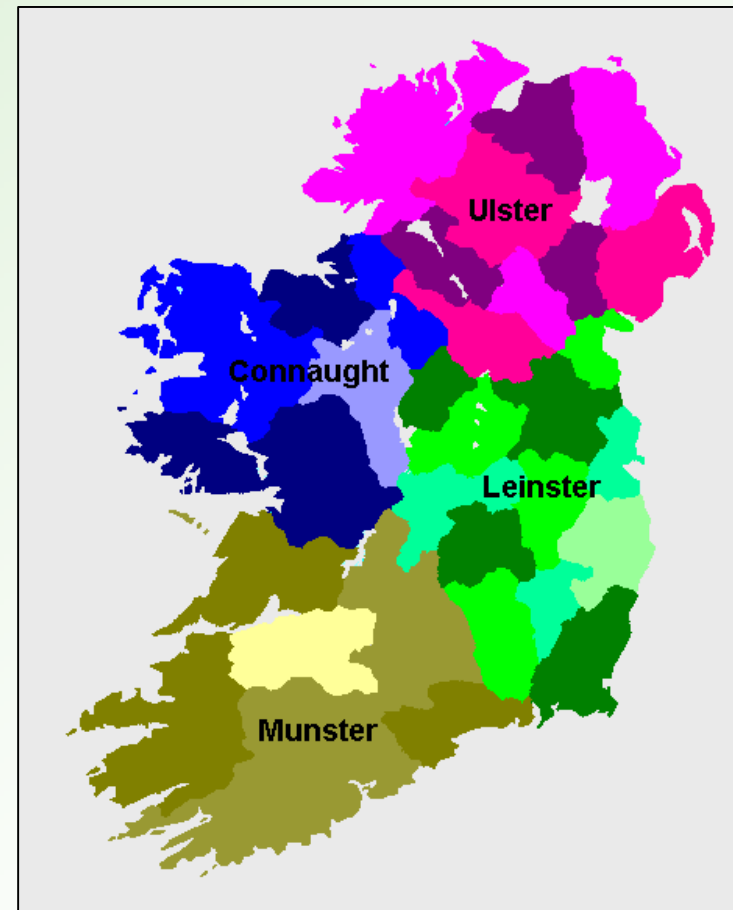
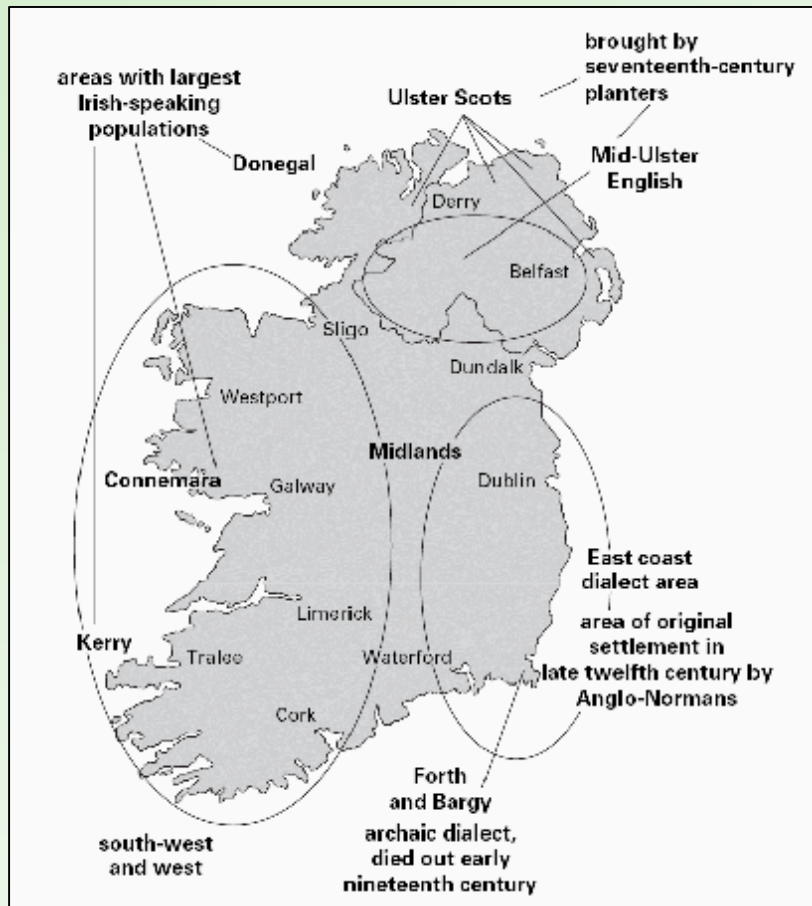
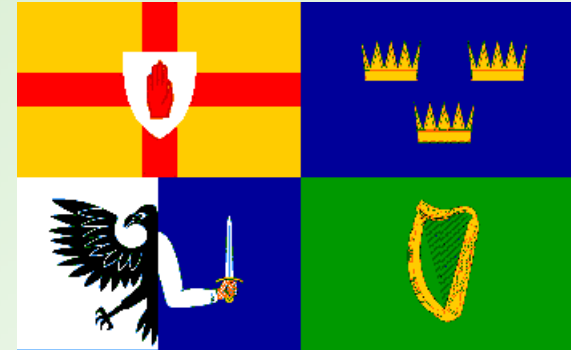



The History of Irish English – a (very) brief summary



Languages during the history of Ireland

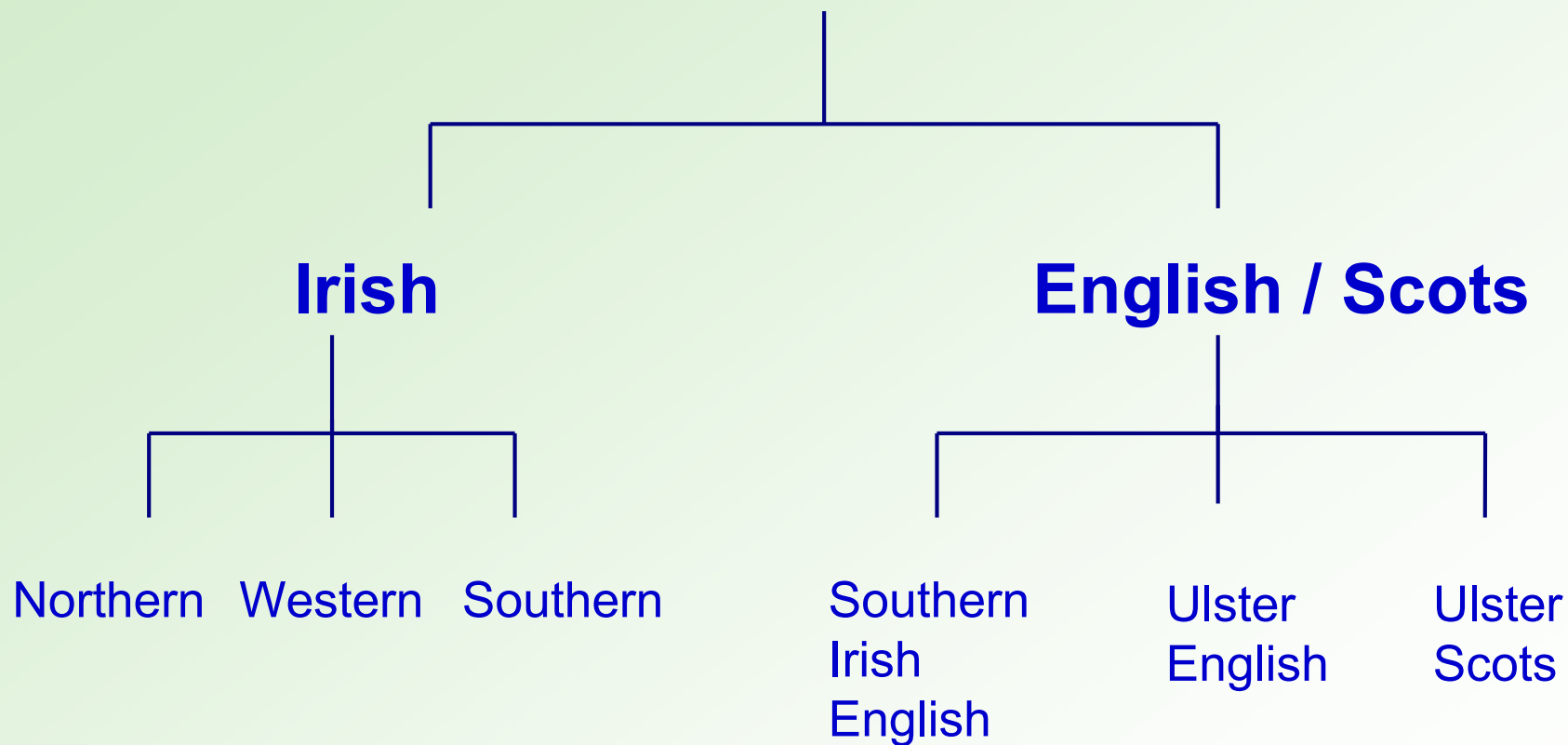


pre-Celtic	Celtic	Latin	Scandinavian	Anglo-Norman	English
	3-5c	5-6c->	8-10c	12-14c	12c ->
	BCE	CE ->			





Language varieties in present-day Ireland



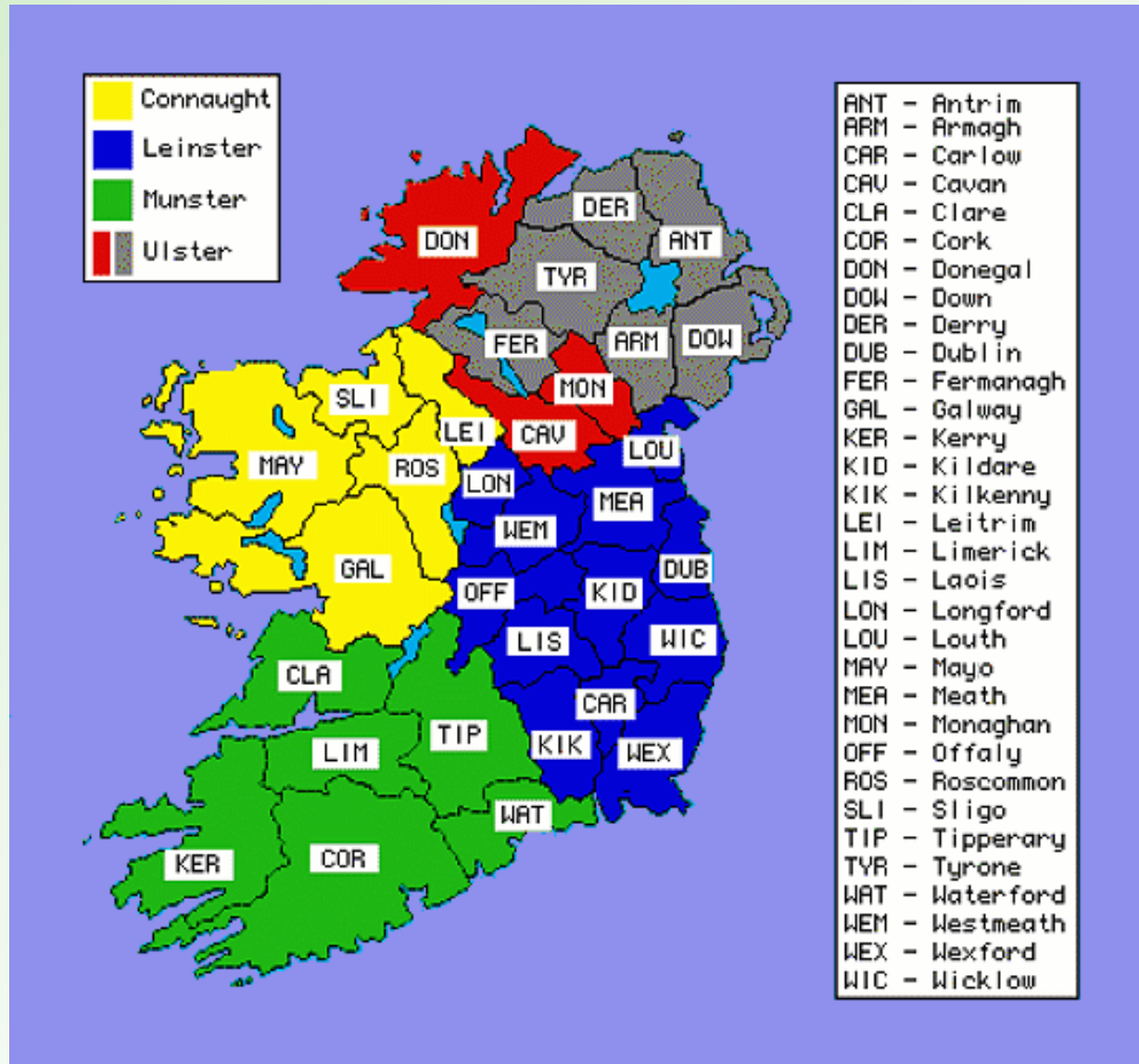
The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (UK)

Northern Ireland
(grey counties in
Ulster) is part of the
United Kingdom.
Population: c. 1.5m.

Majority: Protestant

The remainder of the
country is the
Republic of Ireland,
population over 4 m.

Majority: Catholic



Cities in present-day Ireland

Dublin: over 1m; Belfast c. 400,000; other cities, e.g. Derry and Cork, are much smaller





When did the English language come to Ireland ?



Initial settlement of south-eastern Ireland by Anglo-Normans from Wales as of the late 12th century

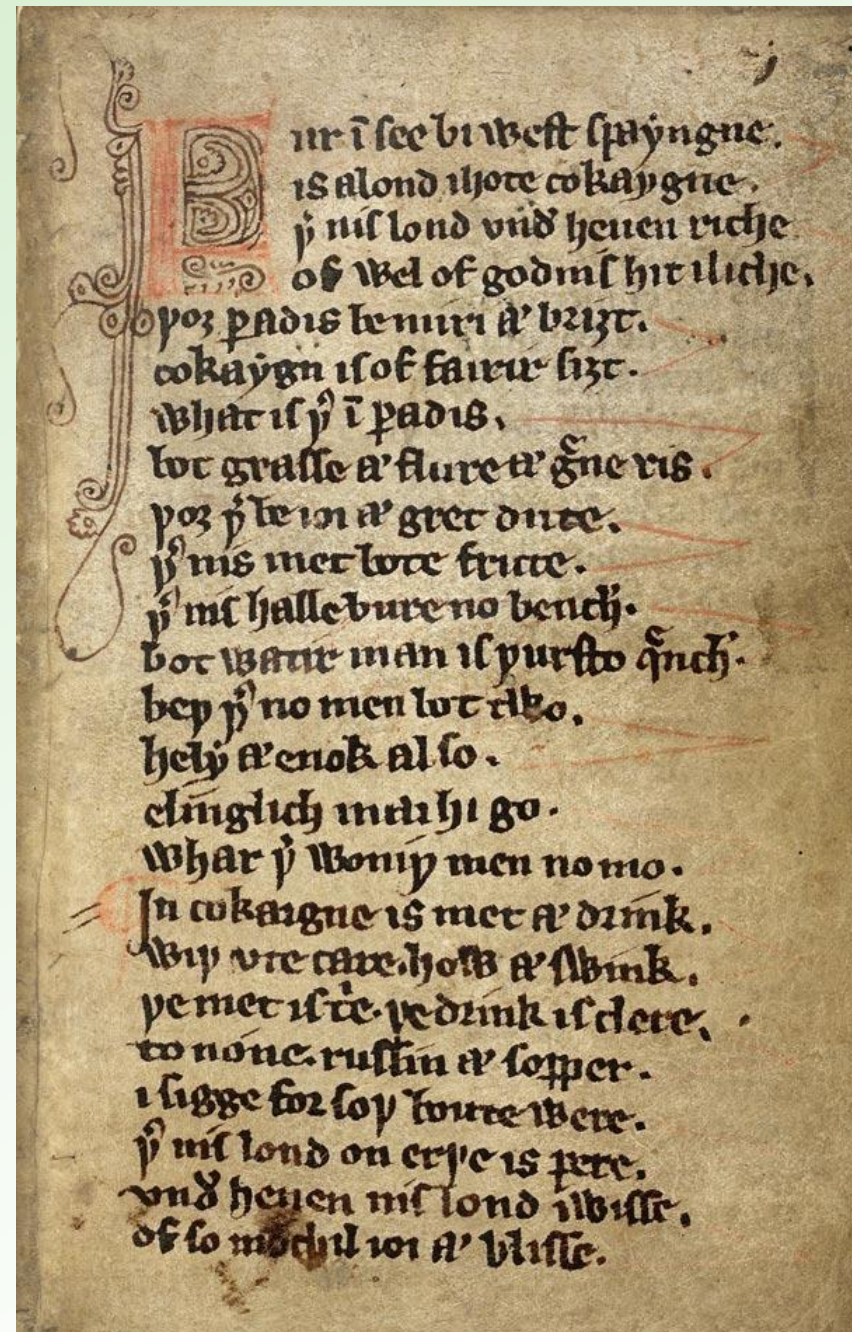


The *Kildare Poems*

16 pieces of verse
of Irish origin in the
Harley 913

manuscript in the
British Library

Early 14th century



Dur i see bi west spayngne,
 is alond i hote cokaygne,
 þi nil lond vnd heuen riche
 of wel of godmi hit iliche,
 þoz padis tenuri a' bryt.
 cokaygn is of fairer lize.
 What is þi i padis,
 bot grasse a' flure a' sne vis.
 þoz þi te in a' gret dize.
 þi mis met wote fruce.
 þi mi hallebure no bench.
 bot wate man is þurto anch.
 þep þi no men bot also,
 hely a' enok al so.
 elinglich ma hi go.
 What þi wony men no mo.
 In cokaigne is met a' drink,
 wip vte care, hof a' swink.
 þe met is te, þe drink is clere,
 to none, rustin a' sopper.
 i sigge for soy wote were.
 þi nil lond on erpe is þere,
 vnd heuen mi lond i wille,
 of so mochi wi a' blisse.



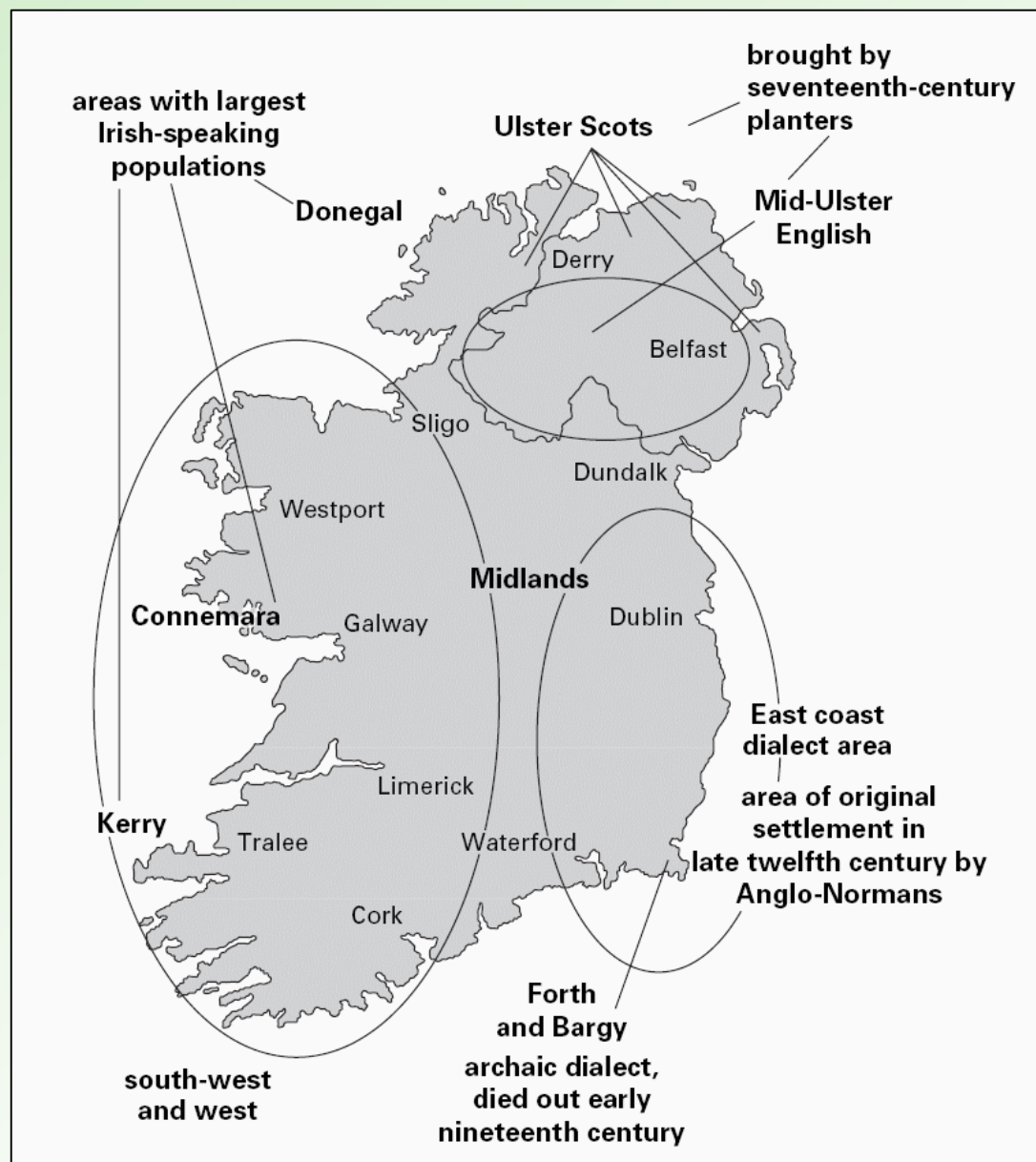
Who wrote the *Kildare Poems* ?

Most probably one or more monks at one of the Franciscan or Cistercian monasteries in the east of Ireland. Such individuals would have been Irish and English bilinguals given the proportion of English to Irish speakers in 14th century Ireland.



A south-west English feature which still survives in the south-east of Ireland is the fortition of sibilants in pre-nasal position:

isn't [ɪdnt̪],
wasn't [wɒdnt̪],
doesn't [dʌdnt̪]





Periods in the development of Irish English

1) **First period** *Late 12th century to 1600*

Establishment of English on the east coast in a band from Dublin down to Waterford. English is above all present in the towns; Anglo-Norman — and of course Irish — in the countryside. Increasing Gaelicisation in the centuries after the initial invasion led to the demise of English outside the major towns. The low point for English is reached in the 16th century with Irish in a correspondingly strong position.

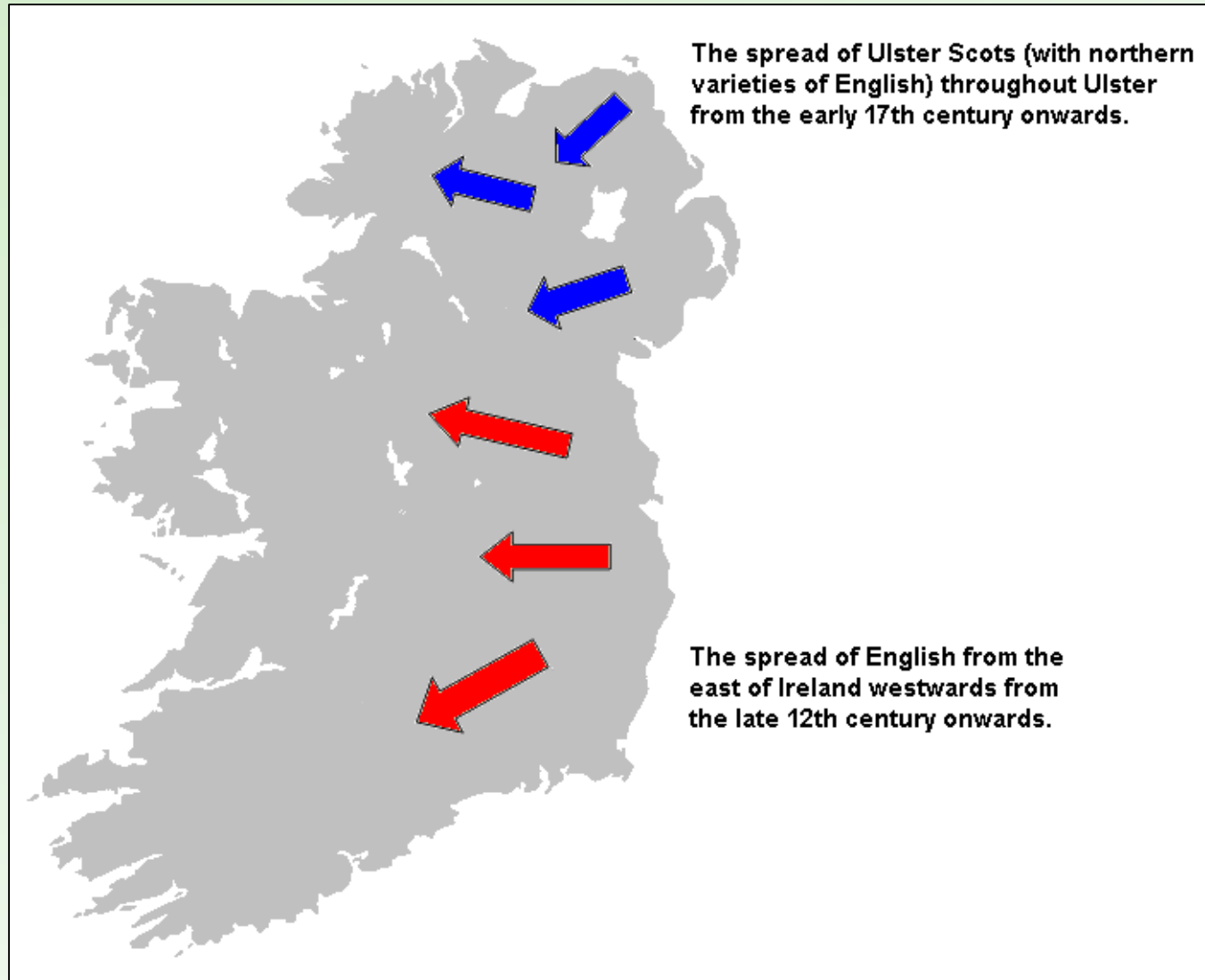
2) **Second period** *1600 to present-day*

This begins with a decisive military defeat for the Irish. The north of the country is particularly affected with settlers from Lowland Scotland moving to Ulster and establishing a firm presence there. Later on in the 17th century there are vigorous plantations of the south of the country (under Cromwell). By the end of the 17th century, the position of English is unassailable and the general decline of Irish sets in with events like the Great Famine in the late 1840s and the ensuing mass emigration dealing a final blow to the language.

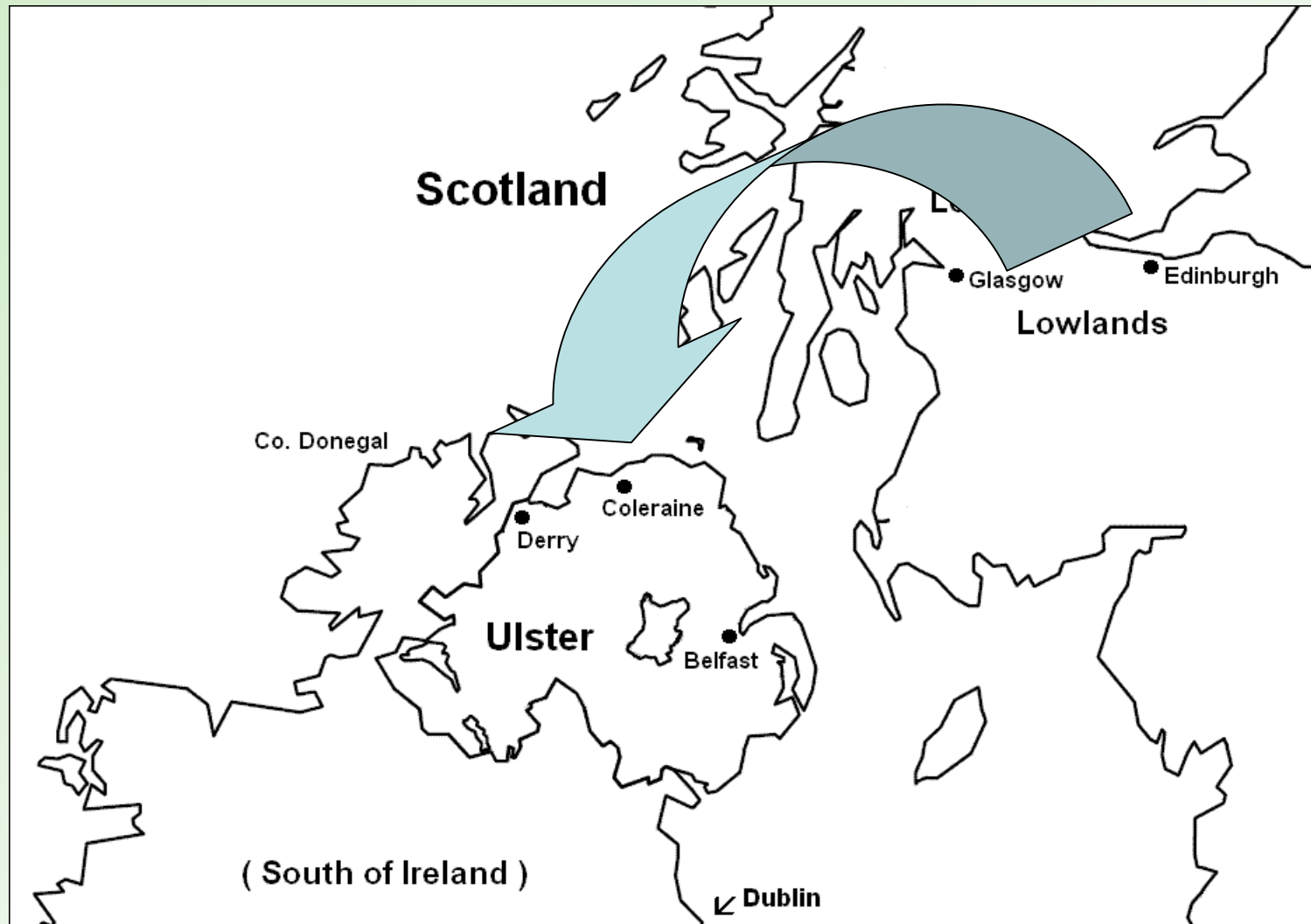


The Seventeenth Century: Large-scale Anglicisation of Ireland

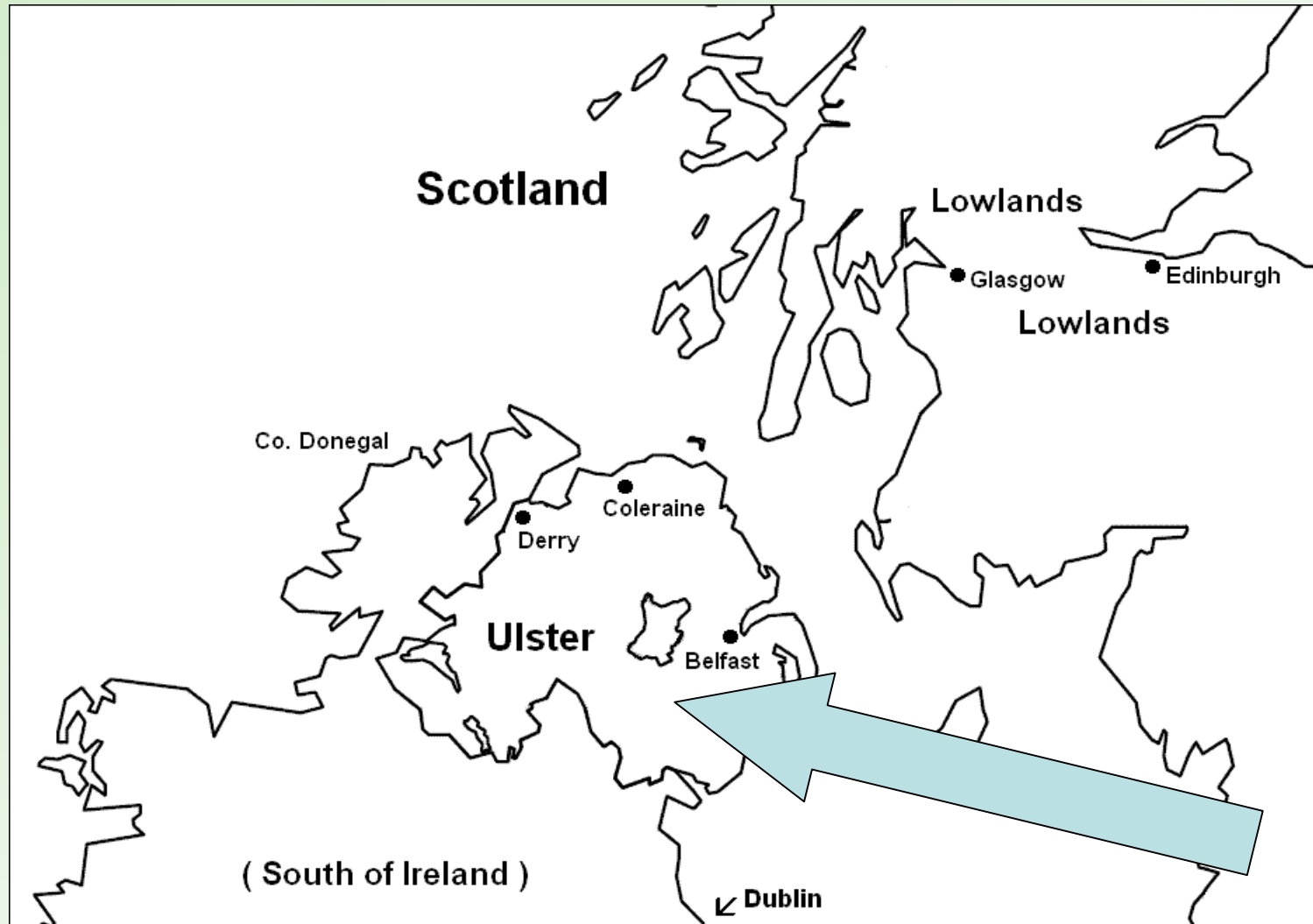
Spread of English in Ireland



Migration of Lowland Scots to Ulster in the 17th century

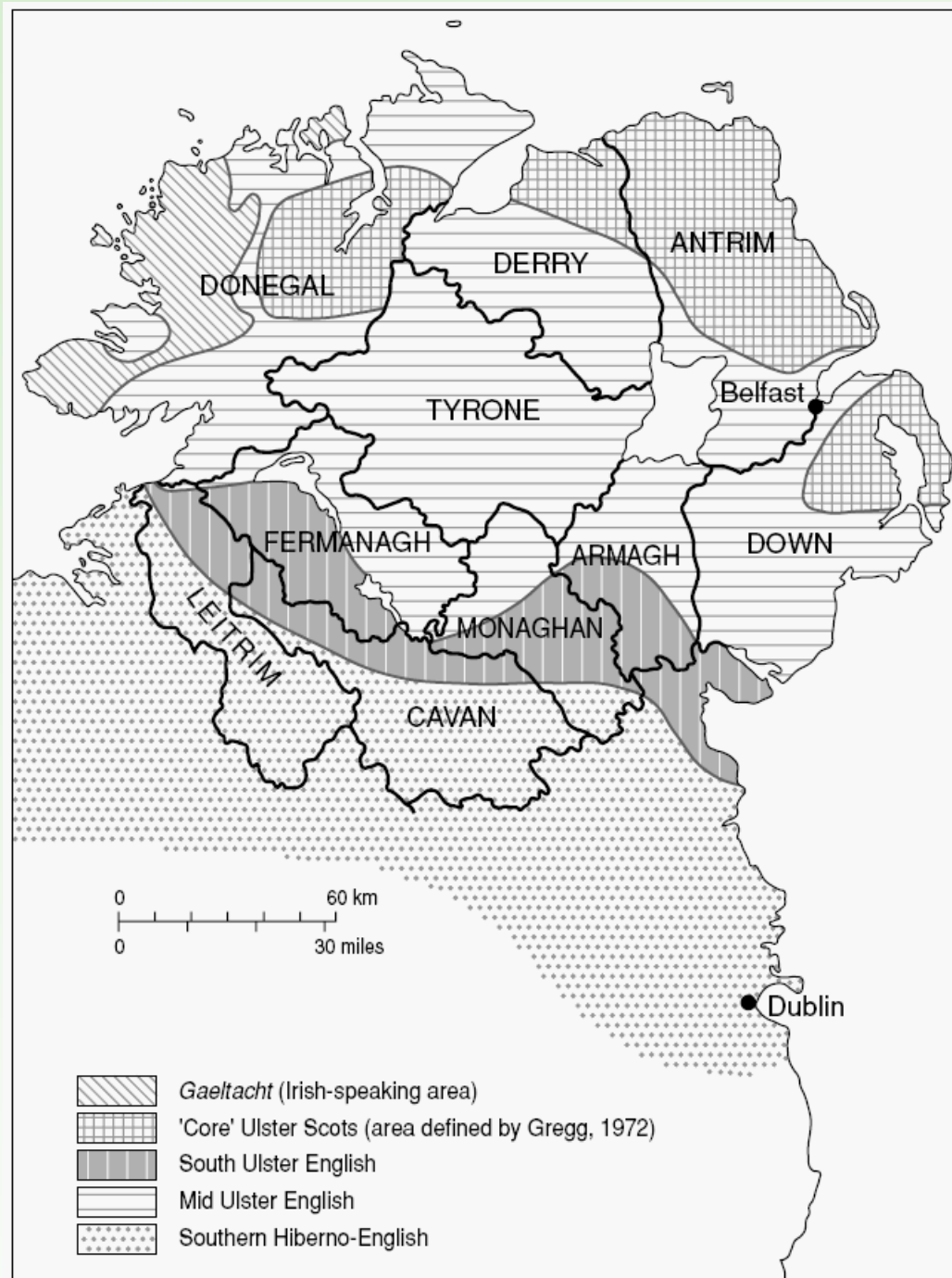
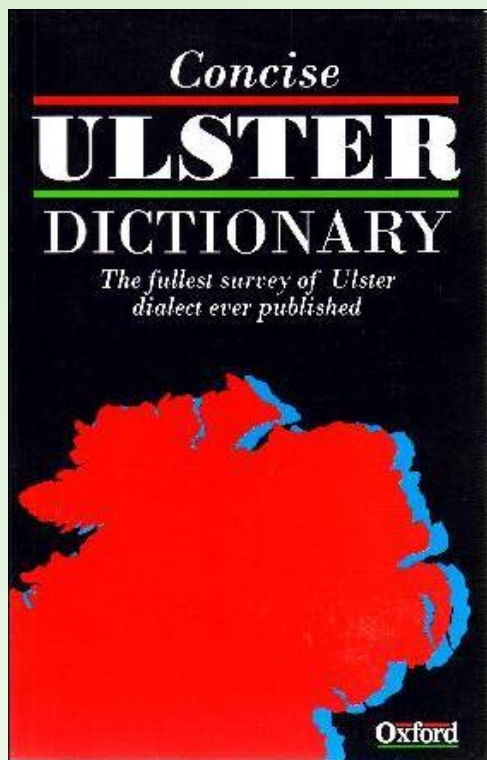


Migration of northern English to mid-Ulster in the 17th century





Present-day dialect divisions in Ulster



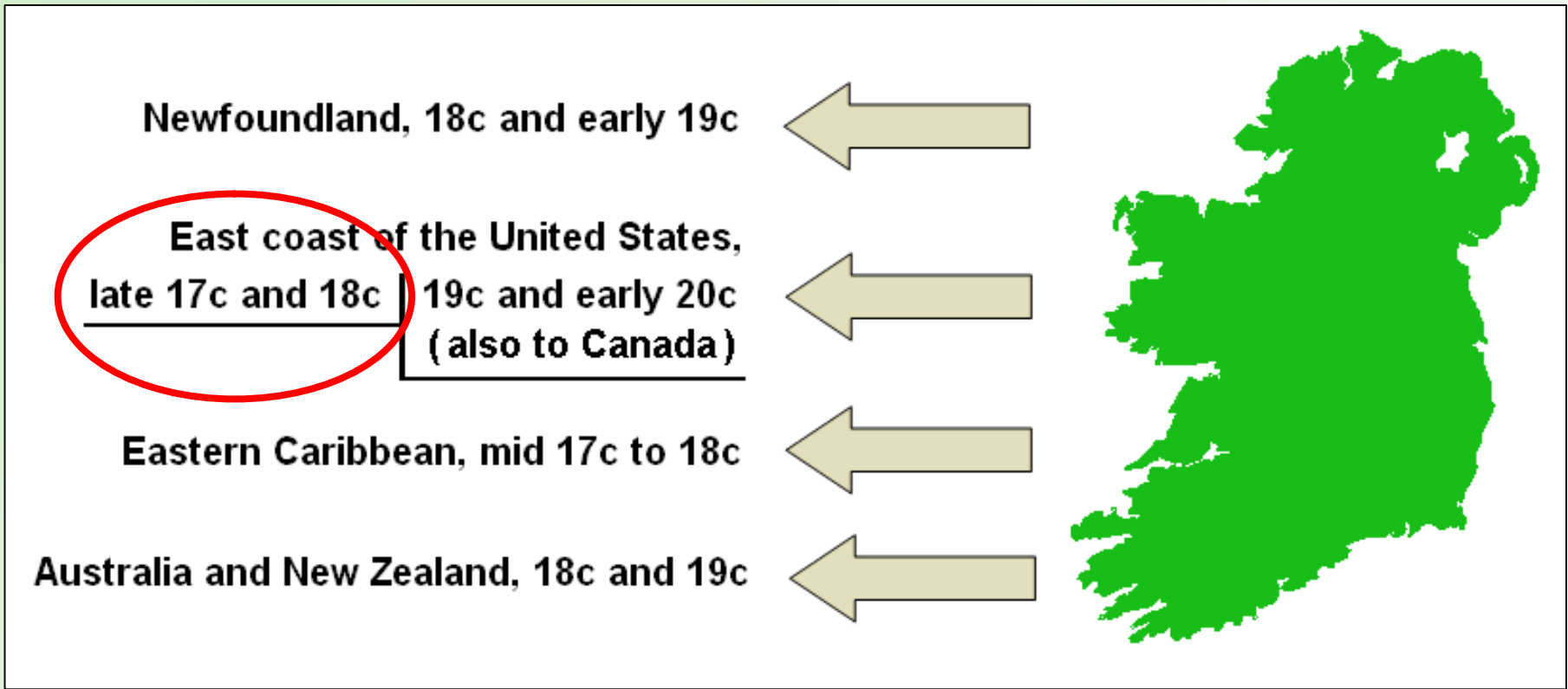


The Eighteenth Century: The Long Peace



The 18th century was a time of relative peace in Ireland. However, there were periods of famine and continued emigration, especially from Ulster, to North America (in all, about 250,000 people left).

English continued to expand its position in Irish society with the rise of the Ascendancy (a Protestant propertied class with an English orientation). The disenfranchisement of the native population continued unabated.





East Coast of United States (roughly from Pennsylvania down to South Carolina). Destination of many Ulster Scots emigrants in the 18th century (up to 250,000)

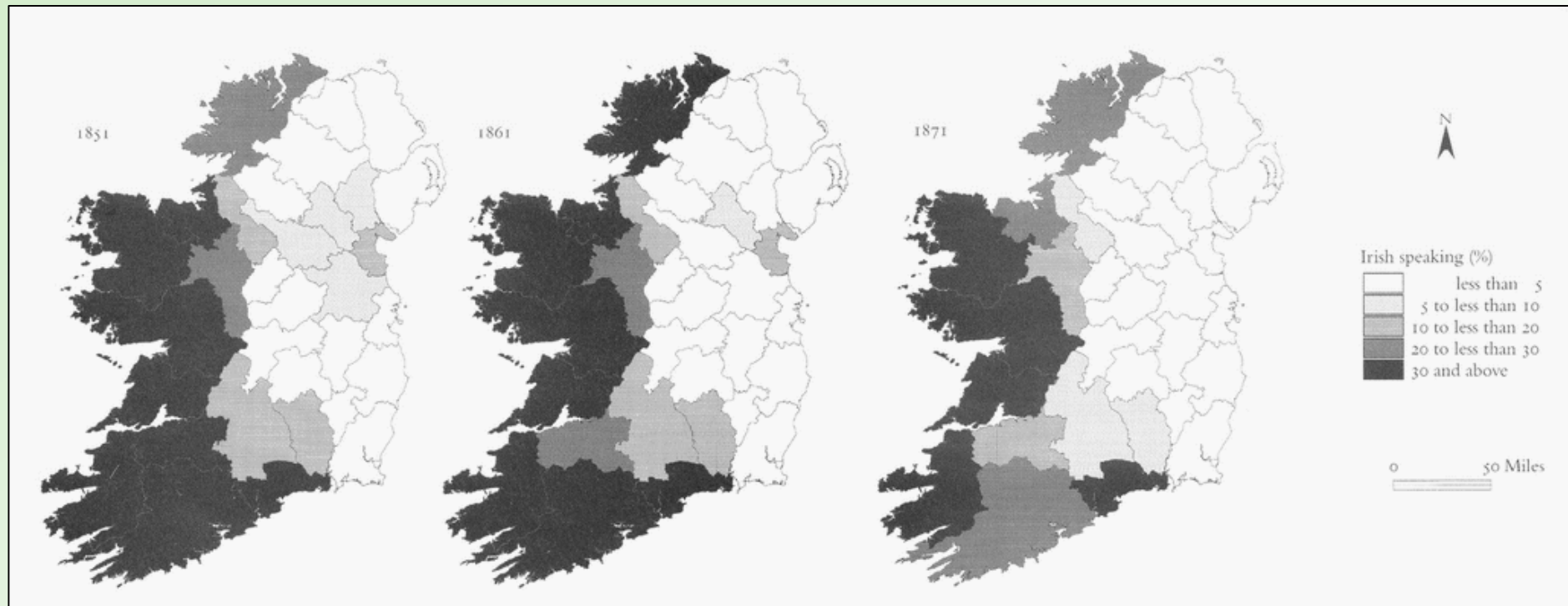




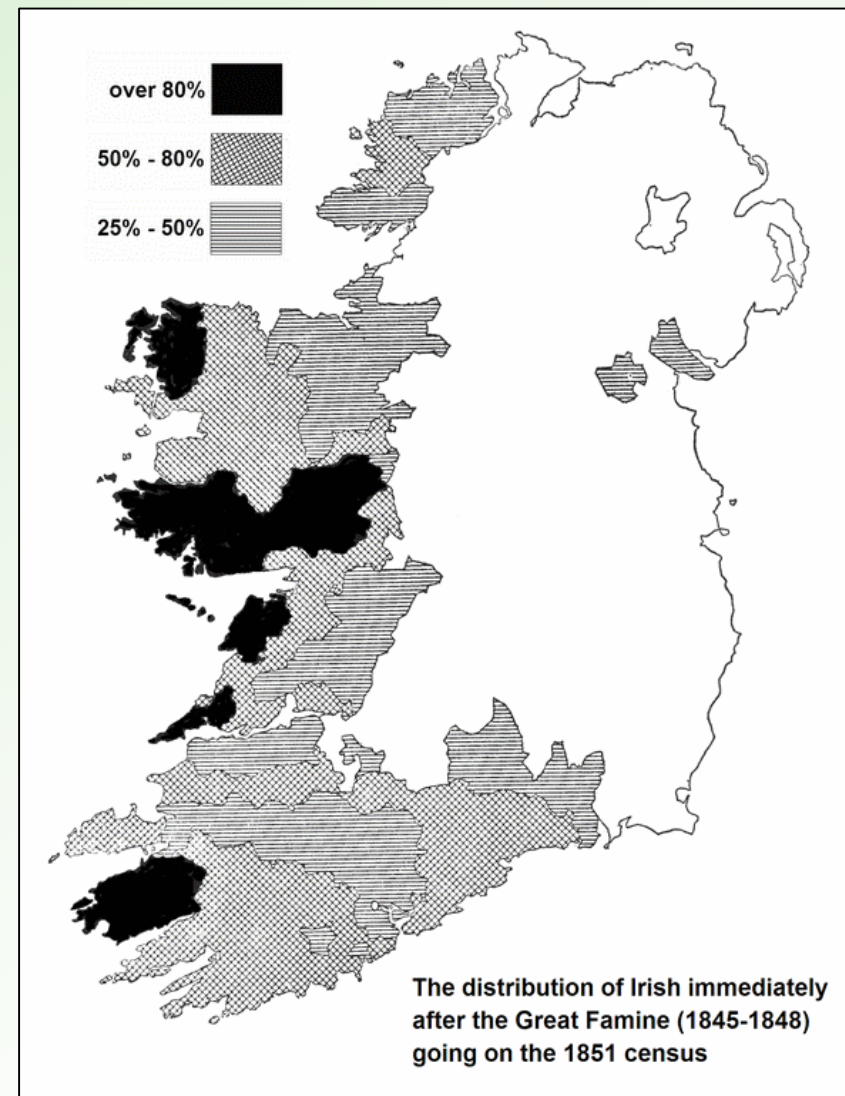
The Nineteenth Century: The Final Shift to English

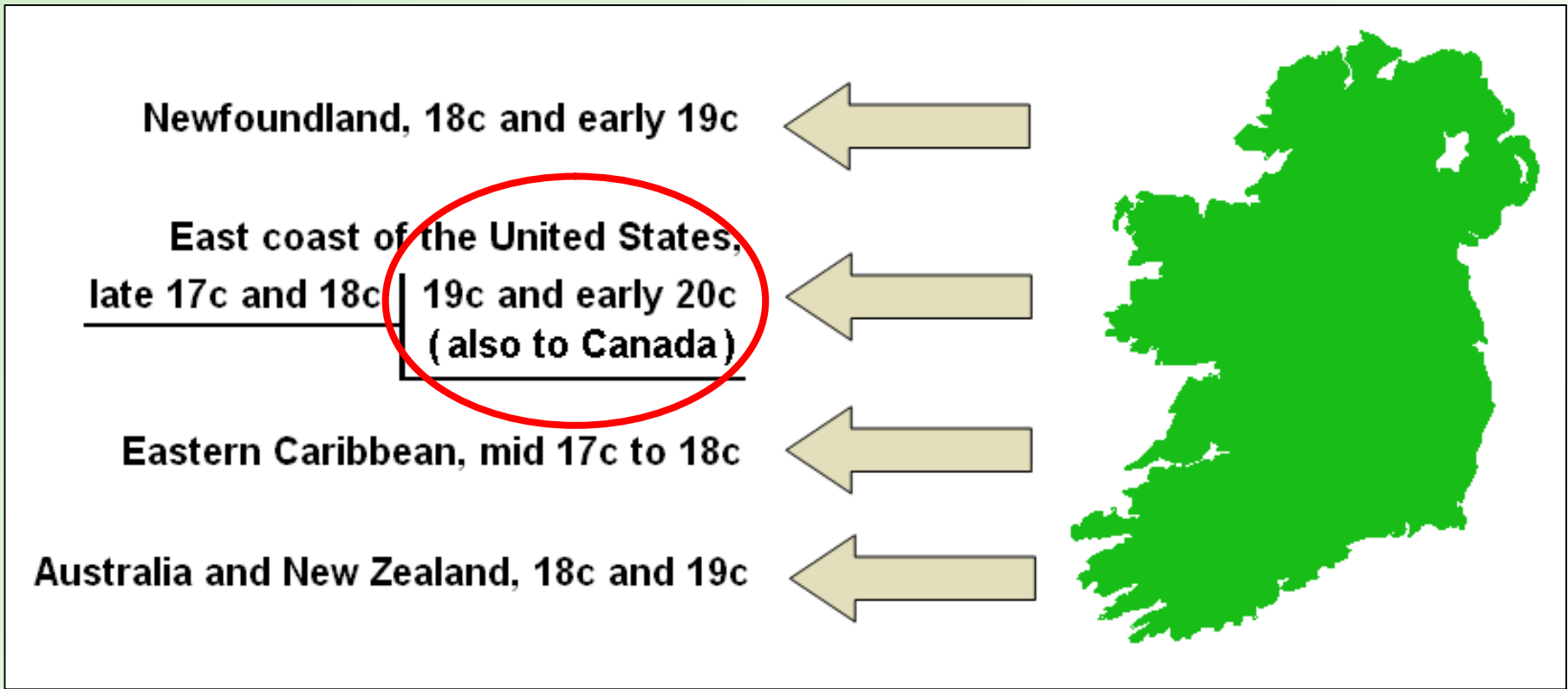


Retreat of Irish westwards

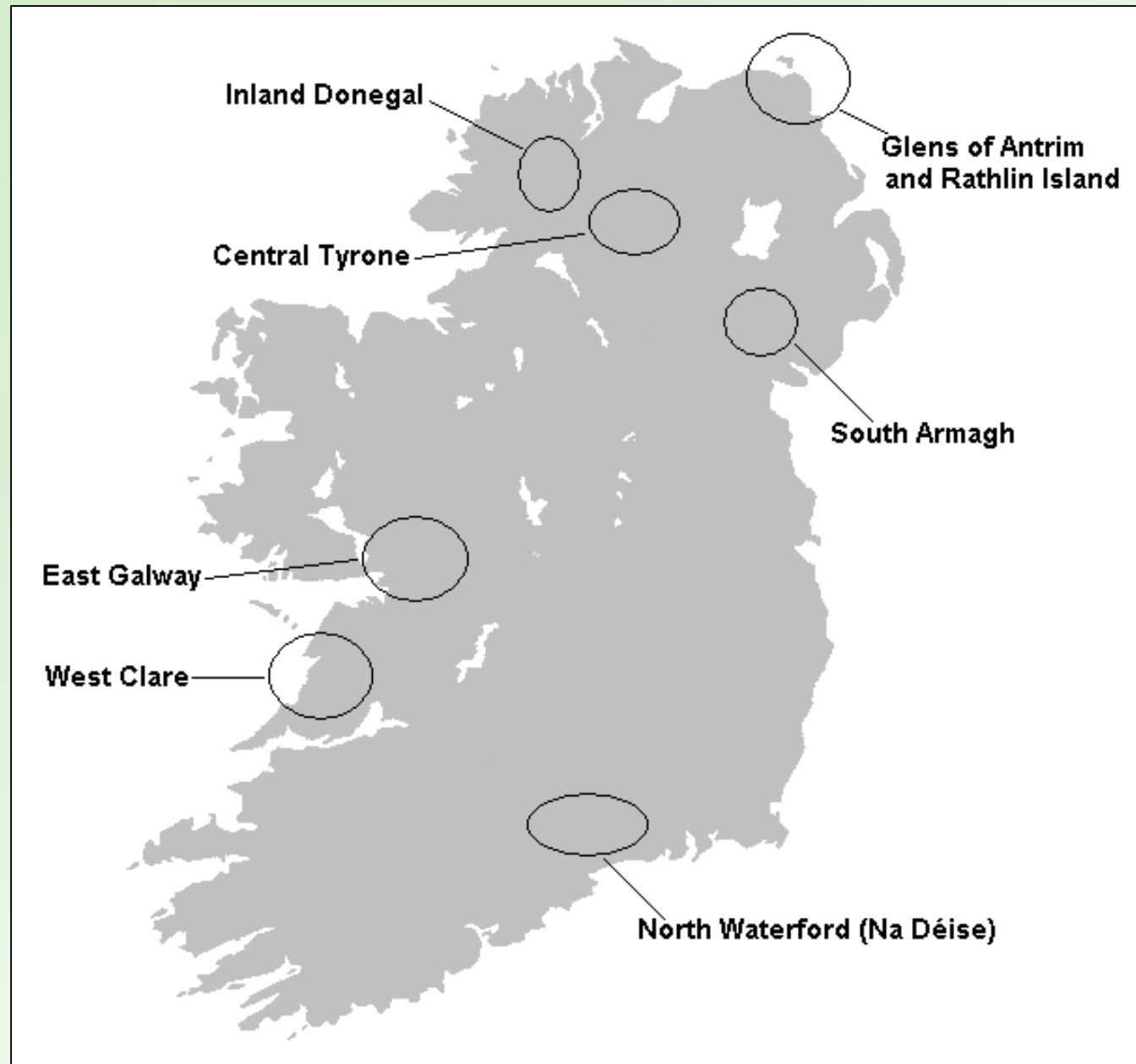


The Great Famine (1845-8)



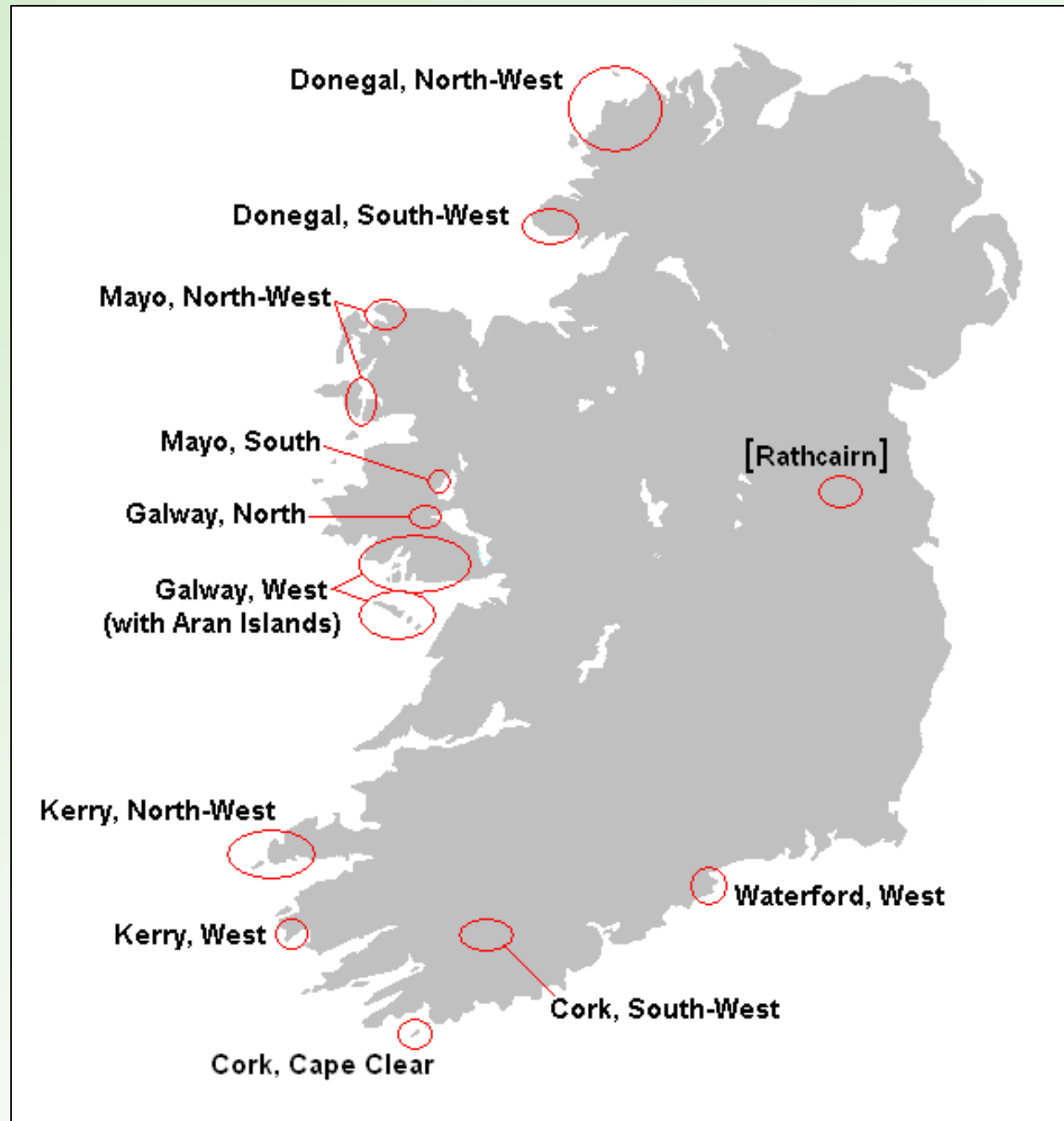


Areas where Irish was still spoken in the early 20th century

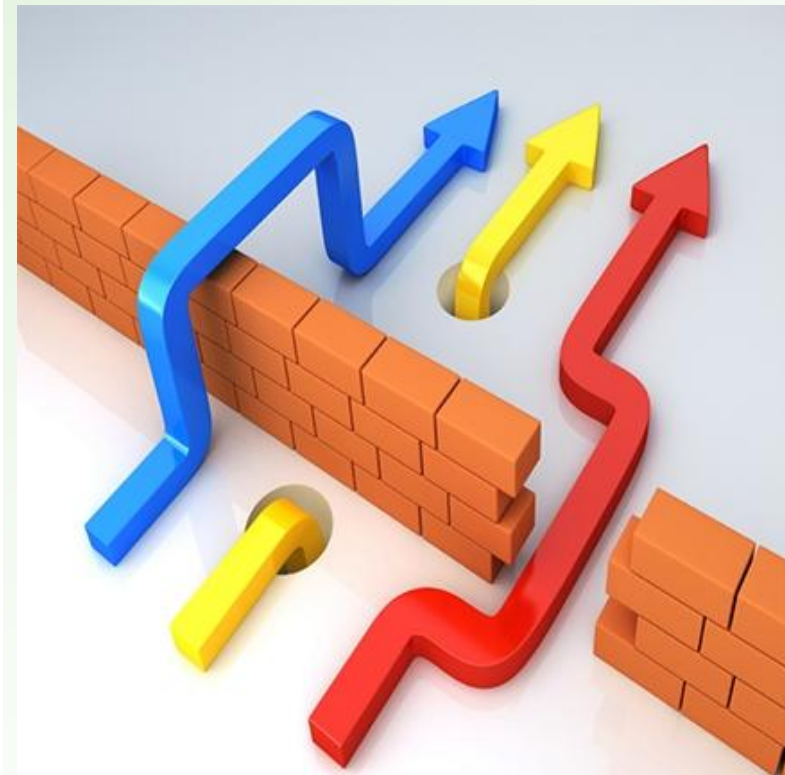




Areas where Irish is spoken in present-day Ireland



Modern Irish English: What are the pathways of language change?





Colonial lag in Irish English



Early modern English experienced a lengthening of Middle English /a/ before voiceless fricatives and this is a major distinction between the north and south of England.

Originally the lengthening also applied to the LOT vowel but this was later reversed so the words like *cloth* and *scone* are generally pronounced with the LOT rather than the THOUGHT or GOAT vowel in British English.

But in Irish English long vowels are found in these words, [kɫɔ:t̪] and [sko:n] respectively. Furthermore, in Dublin English the lengthening before /s/ and /f/ is an established feature of all varieties there, e.g. *cross*, *frost*, *soft*, all with long vowels.



Other retentions

- 1) A distinction between WHICH and WITCH (now recessive and confined to rural varieties or older urban speakers).
- 2) A distinction between MORNING and MOURNING (Wells NORTH/FORCE distinction). Again recessive and only with rural and older urban speakers).
- 3) The retention of non-prevocalic /r/ as in *car* /ka:r/ and *card* /ka:rd/.



Features which have disappeared

- 1) General lowering of /e/ to /a/ before /r/ in words of the SERVE type, e.g. *service, search, certain*. Relics of this are found in English, e.g. *barn, dark*, formerly with /e/ and in placenames such as *Derby, Berkshire*.
- 2) S to SH shift, e.g. *shoul* for *soul*, *wesht* for *west*. Found recessively in rural varieties in the west of Ireland (in syllable-final position).



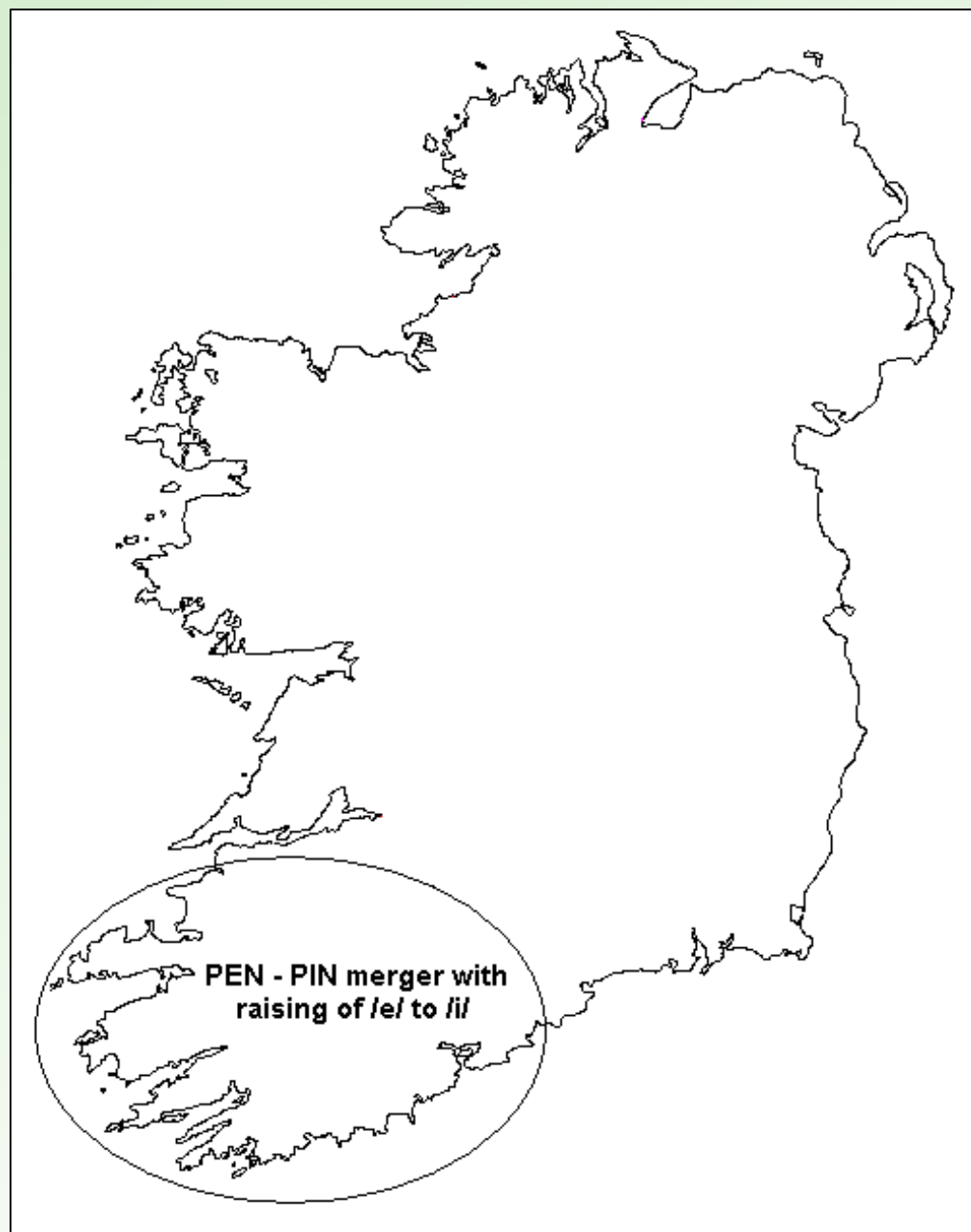
Features which have disappeared

- 3) Metathesis in stressed position, e.g. *purty* for *pretty*.
Now only found (recessively) in unstressed syllables, e.g. *modern* ['mɒdrən] .

- 4) Raising of the DRESS vowel to the KIT position, e.g. *together* 'together', *ilegent* 'elegant' (dialect literature spellings). This is now confined to pre-nasal position and only found in the south-west and partly in the west of Ireland, e.g. *pen* [pɪn], *men* [mɪn].



PEN – PIN
merger in
south-west
Ireland with
the raising
of /e/ to /i/





Long vowel realisations

(MEAT / MEET)

One prominent phonological feature which is shared by many conservative varieties of Irish English is the unraised vowel [ɛ:] in words of the MEAT class, i.e. [mɛ:t̪], which is separate from the MEET class which shows a fully raised [i:], i.e. [mi:t̪].

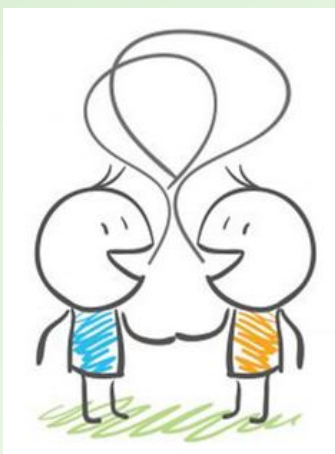
These realisations clearly represent the survival of earlier forms of English, in this case, the early stage of the Great Vowel Shift by which Middle English /ɛ:/ was raised through /e:/ and further to /i:/ in most varieties in England but not in many local varieties in Ireland.



Pragmatics analyses the use of language in interpersonal communication

Varieties of a single language vary greatly in their pragmatics. This variation is a key aspect of a community's linguistic identity.

Irish English has very specific pragmatics which differs notably from British English in this respect.



How do Ireland and England compare in this respect?



|| ?





Perhaps the key element of Irish English pragmatics is that it is based on agreement between people when talking.

It is very difficult in Irish English to disagree with someone you are talking to. Any disagreement must be well-padded, couched in soft terms to minimise face loss for your interlocutor.

There are elements for emphasizing agreement and for putting your interlocutor at their ease, above all the word *grand* which I am sure you use (if you're Irish) or have heard hundreds of times a day (if you're not Irish).

Because of the primacy of agreement, refusing an offer or an invitation can be difficult in Irish English because it theoretically involves a major loss of face for the person making the offer.

This can also lead to the overuse of *sorry*: potential intrusion on another's private space (avoid imposing on someone).



Another aspect of Irish English pragmatics concerns narration, i.e. How you tell someone something, something which happened to you, a piece of news, something of common interest.

Of course, when narrating you have to gain and maintain the attention of the hearer: *'Mhere till I tell ya.* (= let me tell you).

Irish English has a battery of stance-taking adverbs *wicked, fierce, loathsome*, etc.: *the craic was wicked, the game was fierce, the drink was loathsome.*

And importantly, the hearer must also use strategies to show they are interested during narration: *Ah, go away (outta that)! Ah, stop!*

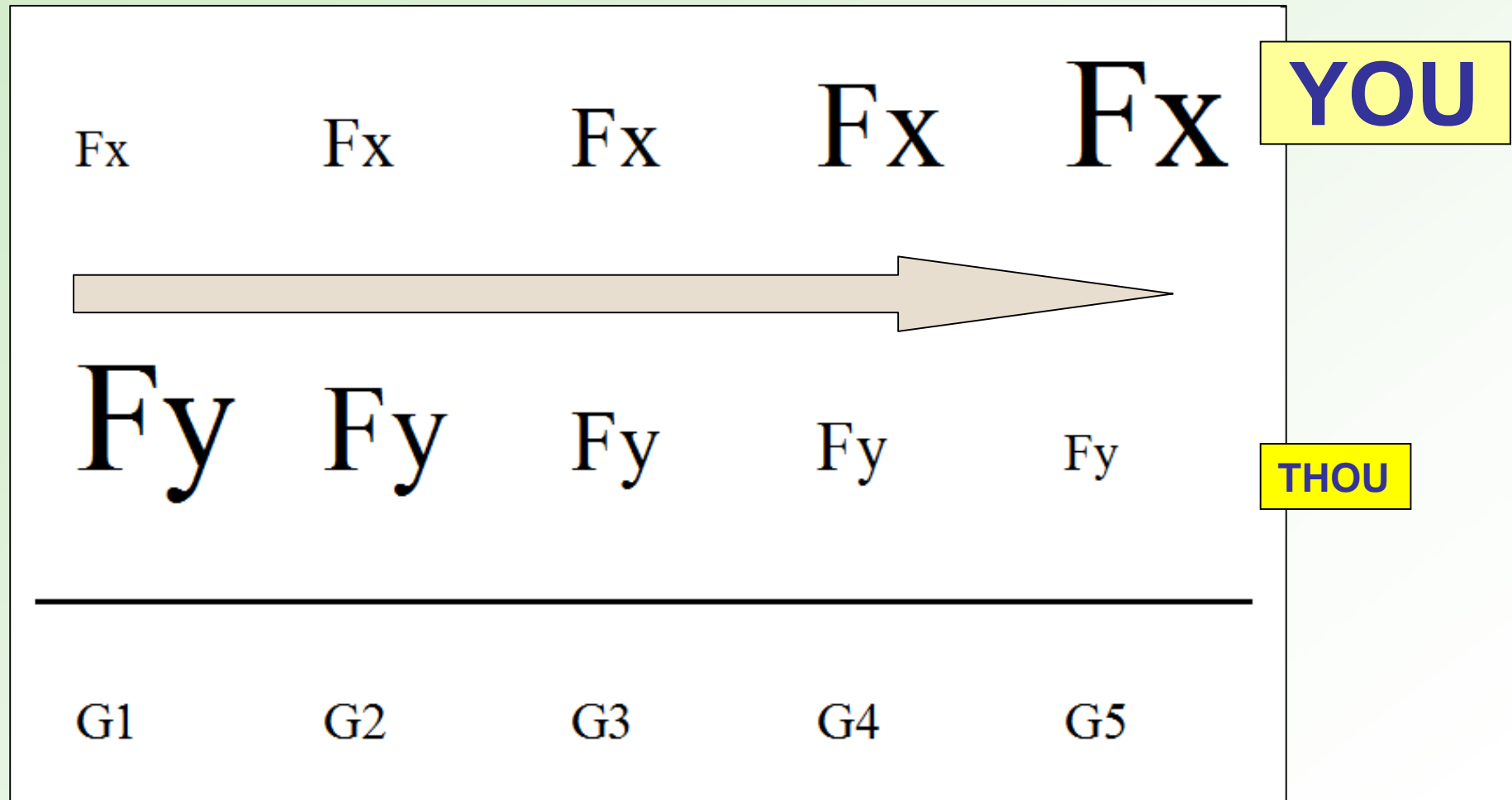
In Irish English you also have means to express that something is inevitable and there is no point in worrying, e.g. *But sure look it, what can we do. Now there we are. There you have it.* (*there* is also commonly used in greetings *Hello there*, alongside the ubiquitous *How are you?* [haejə]).



**And how about addressing people, i.e.
more than one person?**



Handling variation across time: The transgenerational demise of *thou* in the eighteenth century





Filling a gap

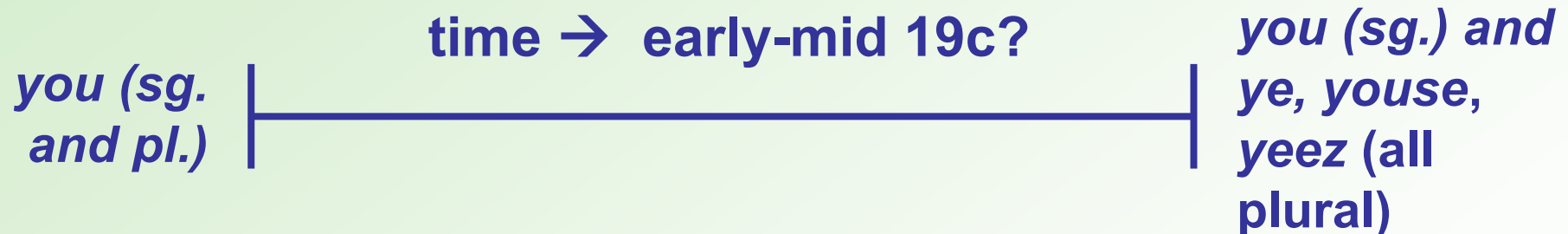
Because standard English does not have a specific second person plural form, most vernacular varieties of English have developed some means of realising this grammatical category explicitly.





Transition to non-standard formal marking of second person plural

early-mid 18c: *thou* > \emptyset , but *ye* (pl.) also disappears from standard English with *you* surviving for both singular and plural.



Ye continued as the supraregional form for the plural, already attested in late medieval Irish English.

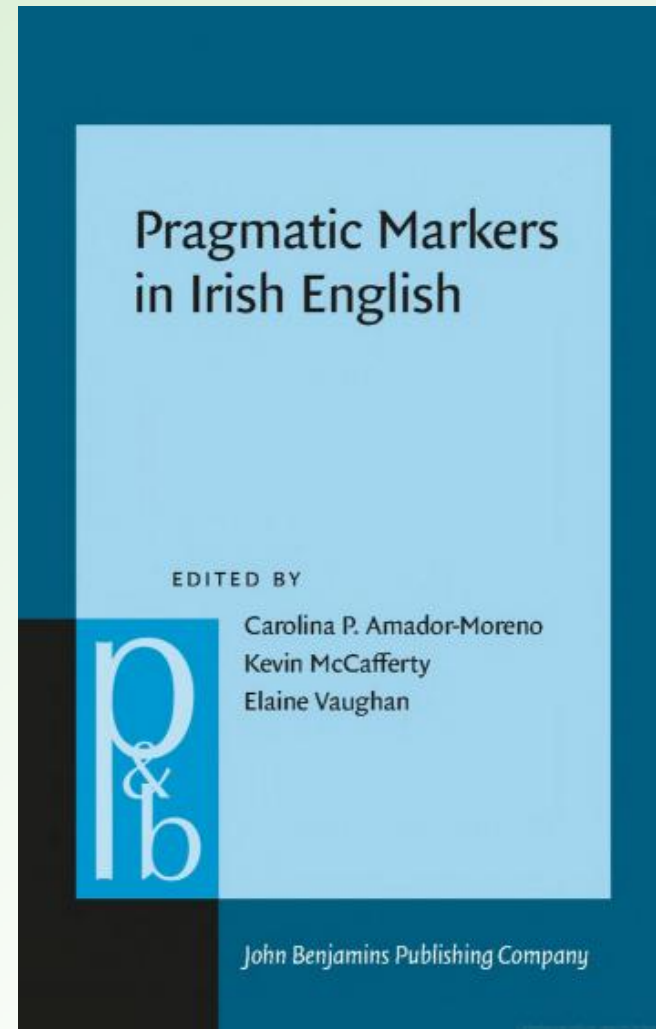
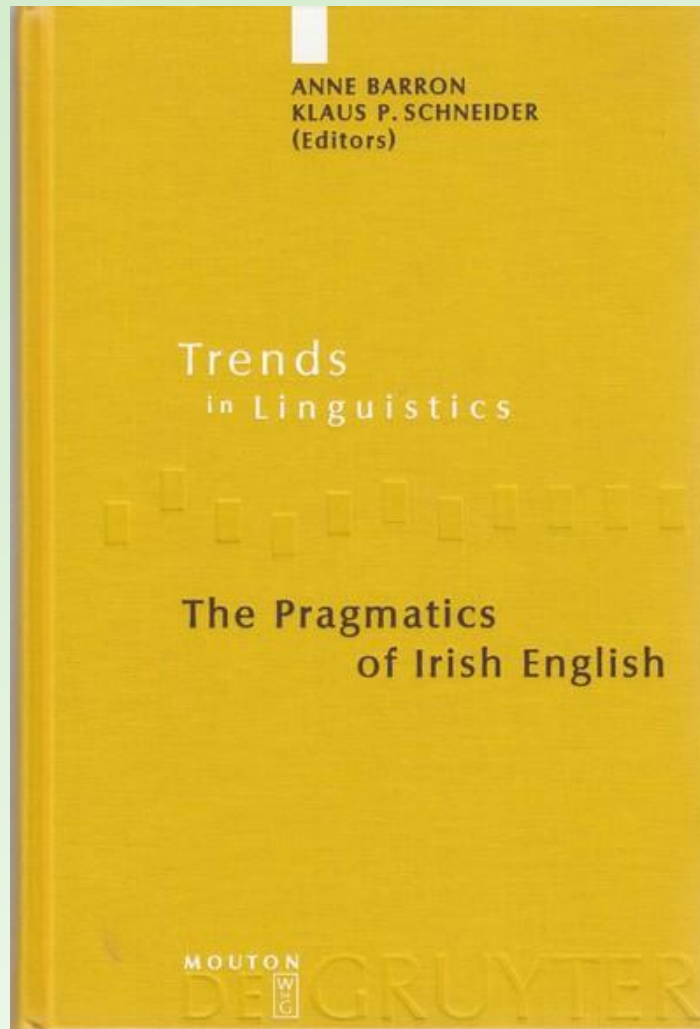
For the plural second person, there are three options, with *youse* and *yeez* being distinctly vernacular.



Second person pronouns in varieties of English

	Singular	Plural
English	you, [<i>thou</i> (N), <i>thee</i> (W, SW)]	<i>you, you guys</i>
Irish English	<i>you</i>	<i>ye, youse, yeez</i>
Scottish English	<i>you</i>	<i>yous, yous yins</i>
Newfoundland English	<i>you</i>	<i>ye</i>
Southern American English	<i>you</i>	<i>y'all, y'uns</i>
African American English	<i>you</i>	<i>you, y'all</i>
Caribbean English	<i>you</i>	<i>unu, wuna, yina, etc.</i>
South African English	<i>you</i>	<i>youse, y'all</i>
Australian English	<i>you</i>	<i>youse</i>
New Zealand English	<i>you</i>	<i>youse</i>
Pacific Creole English	<i>yu</i>	<i>yupela</i>

The pragmatics of Irish English



Urban studies from the south of Ireland



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the website 'Variation and Change in Dublin English'. The browser's address bar shows the URL 'https://www.uni-due.de/VCDE/'. The website has a dark blue header with the title 'Variation and Change in Dublin English' and navigation buttons for 'back', 'forward', and 'themes'. A left-hand navigation menu lists various topics such as 'Introduction', 'Terminology', 'Themes', 'Dialect divisions', 'Dialect perception', 'Misconceptions', 'Irish English phonology', 'Lexicon in Irish English', 'Relevance of Irish English', 'English in Dublin', 'Overview', 'Profiling Dublin English', 'Sound shifts of the 1990s', 'Gender issues', 'Dislocation', 'Supra-regionalisation', 'British and American English', 'English in Ulster', 'Implicational scales', 'Most recent changes', 'The edge and the centre', 'Language and the media', 'Recording Dublin English', 'Pronotations', 'Short Front Vowel Lowering', 'Other cities', 'Belfast English', 'Derry English', 'Dublin and London', 'Information', and 'References'. The main content area features a section titled 'Sound shifts of the 1990s' with a sub-section 'Most recent changes'. The text discusses the initial impetus to examine Dublin English, the changes in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and the process of supra-regionalisation. It mentions that the changes of the 1990s were at first innovations leading to change which then established itself as the new mainstream form of Irish English. The ongoing investigation into Dublin English is being done within the framework of the sociolinguistic paradigm known as 'Language Variation and Change'.

Variation and Change in Dublin English:
www.uni-due.de/VCDE

Varieties of English Around the World G35



Dublin English

Evolution and change

Raymond Hickey

John Benjamins Publishing Company



More general information on the English language in Ireland is available at the Irish English Resource Centre:

www.uni-due.de/IERC


Desktop [D] - +

Irish English Resource Centre, (c) F. X. +

www.raymondhickey.com/index_IERC.html

Irish English Resource Centre

< back forward > theme list theme map



Irish English Resource Centre

This website is intended to make material on the historical and regional diversity of Irish English, in the north and south of the country, and information on the sociolinguistics of present-day varieties, available to the interested public. It addresses both students and scholars who, for whatever reason, have an interest in Irish English or a temporary need for information on the subject. The tree on the left is divided into sections, each represented by branches whose contents can be summarised roughly as follows.


Click on this link for [An Historical Overview of Irish English Studies](#)

For the latest publications on all aspects of Irish English, go to the [Source Book update](#)

Introduction	General information on Irish English with an outline of its history and present-day dialects. In this section there is also a list of themes dealt with in the website. The theme maps allows access to summaries of various themes.
Research	This section attempts to draw a picture of the type of research which has been done on Irish English and which is currently in progress as well as point to the directions in which studies are likely to be continued.
Overview	An outline of the external history and development as well as a survey of the main linguistic levels and their specific features in Irish English.
Ulster	Information on the development and present-day distribution of varieties of English in the north of Ireland is offered here. It includes a section on Ulster-Scots.
Urban varieties	An overview of urban varieties of English in the two northern cities, Belfast and Derry, as well as Dublin, the capital of Ireland. The emphasis is on sociolinguistic developments in these cities.
Transportation	The historical connections between Ireland and various overseas locations are traced in this section. Links with Britain and North America as well as possible connections with the Southern Hemisphere are discussed.
Surveys / Data collections	Here summaries are offered of the author's <i>A Sound Atlas of Irish English</i> and <i>A Survey of Irish English Usage</i> . For the latter a series of heatmaps can be viewed which show the areal distribution across Ireland. A selection of recordings from the sound atlas is available for listening. In addition, information is given on the digital version of <i>A Tape Recorded Survey of Hiberno-English Speech</i> . Information on other available corpora of Irish English is presented here and the addresses of relevant websites are given. Other related corpora are also mentioned.

Last update: November 2023

Internet resources for Irish English studies



The header image features a vibrant, abstract design with swirling patterns in shades of green, yellow, and orange, set against a black background. The patterns include Celtic-style knotwork and organic, leaf-like shapes.

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The Irish English Network (IrEN)

The Irish English Network is a space for scholars of Irish English, interested in the linguistic analysis of the English spoken on the Island of Ireland. Specifically, it aims to provide a platform to share current research and perspectives and to disseminate information on publications, courses of study, open scholarships, corpora of Irish English and useful resources. It also aims to facilitate exchange between colleagues and so promote the formation of new research collaborations. Finally, the network provides a platform for the promotion of linguistic research on Irish English within Irish English, within Irish Studies, and within the broader field of research on the varieties of English.

This site provides a list of scholars associated with the network. This list can be searched by surname, country, institution and research interests within Irish English. It also provides a database of publications on Irish English, searchable by keyword, year of publication, author and publication type. Information is also included on the New Perspectives of Irish English (NPIE) conference series and links given to related events, useful resources, including corpora of Irish English.

Scholars in Irish English are invited to join the network internet presence and to add their publications to the list of publications. All interested parties are invited to sign up for the Irish English Network newsletter and to use the contact address supplied to let us know of new publications, events or resources of interest.

search for ... 🔍

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Biannual conference for Irish English studies



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New Perspectives on Irish English 8

The logo of the Center of Irish Studies in Cáceres, featuring a circular emblem with a tree and a building, surrounded by the text 'CENTER OF IRISH STUDIES CÁCERES' and 'EX' at the bottom.

Cáceres, Spain 16-18 May 2024



Thank you for your attention.
Any questions?

Raymond Hickey
University of Limerick

Email: raymond.hickey@uni-due.de

