A Sociolinguistic Guide to Varieties of English in the British Isles

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Although the English language originally started on the British Isles lying north-west to the European continent, the standard variety employed on these islands is being increasingly eclipsed by the rise of American English as the model for a global lingua franca. Nevertheless, standard British (English) English still carries prestige and its influence extends far beyond to other native English speaking areas such as Australia, New Zealand and the Caribbean as well as certain ex-colonies of Asia and Africa, where it frequently serves as a model in education. Furthermore, the extensive artistic literature of the British Isles continues to be read and performed throughout the world, contributing to the promotion and support of its characteristic linguistic patterns.
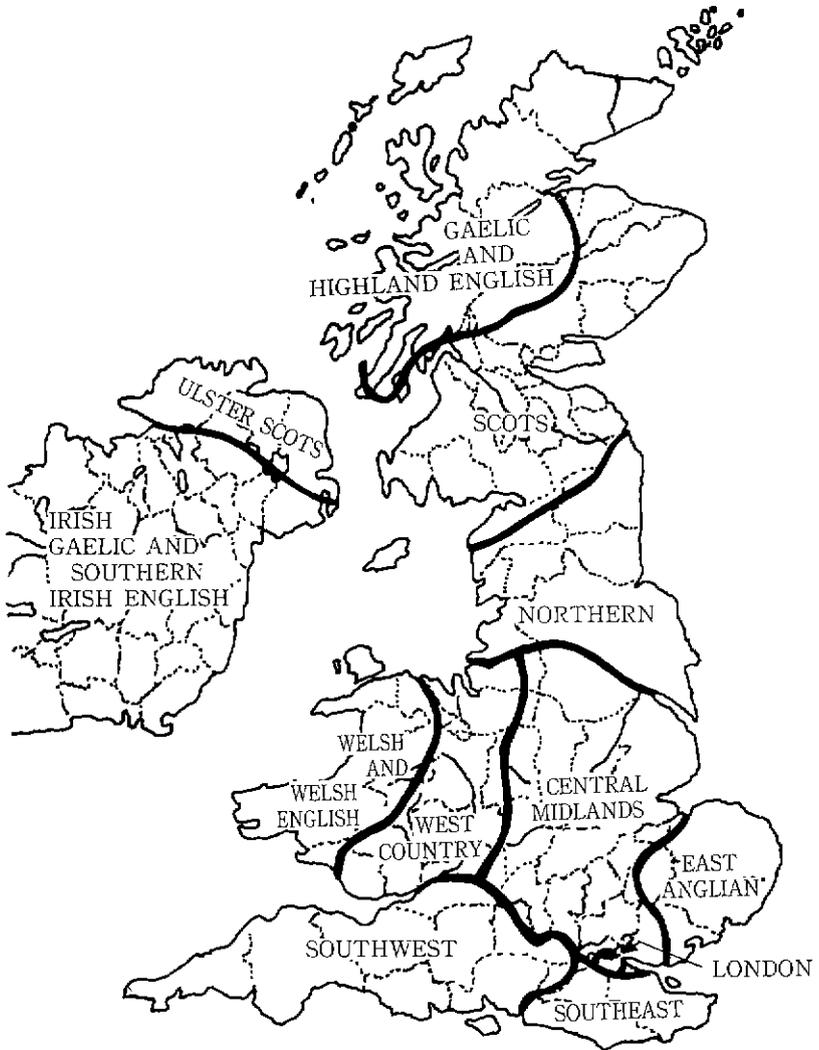
The following survey examines the diversity of English in the British Isles today under the two major classifications of standard and non-standard varieties. In order to gain a proper understanding of the sociolinguistic situation of English, however, other languages such as those of the Celtic peoples and new immigrant minorities will also have to be considered.

1. STANDARD VARIETIES

The term *British English* is often taken as referring to a national standard variety and, as such, it is taught in schools and universities across Europe and in many parts of the Commonwealth. The other major national standard variety is North American English of the USA and Canada, which provides the model for the contemporary Japanese education system. However, it is only in its written from i. e. with respect to grammar and vocabulary as used by 'educated' members of society in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland as well as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, that the term *British English* can be understood as equivalent to *Standard English*. This is because there exists great variation in the pronunciation of standard British English according to different regions and social groups and because non-standard regional and social varieties found on the islands are also included in the category of British English. In fact, the principal characteristics which distinguish a national standard from regional standard and non-standard varieties include its codification in dictionaries and grammar books, its favourable evaluation in terms of prestige and 'correctness' by the community, its use by the national elite, governmental institutions and mass media, its literary tradition and its symbolic value to represent the country.

1. 1. *ENGLISH ENGLISH* (=*the English employed in England*)

Because of the historically dominant power of England, standard English English has, in fact, served as a national model for centuries. Due to England's power centre being located in the city of London

GAELIC
AND
HIGHLAND ENGLISH

ULSTER SCOTS

SCOTS

IRISH
GAELIC AND
SOUTHERN
IRISH ENGLISH

NORTHERN

WELSH
AND
WELSH
ENGLISH

CENTRAL
MIDLANDS

WEST
COUNTRY

EAST
ANGLIAN

SOUTHWEST

LONDON

SOUTHEAST

MAP 1.   REGIONAL VARIETIES OF ENGLISH IN THE
         BRITISH ISLES

after the Norman Conquest in the 11th century, the dialect of the capital emerged over time as the most socially superior, since it was employed by the Court and the aristocracy, the bureaucracy, the neighbouring universities of Oxford and Cambridge, literary artists such as Chaucer and Shakespeare, printers such as Caxton and so on. However, the link between the common dialect of Londoners and the standard language is believed to have been broken by the 18th century.

The standard pronunciation of English English, technically known as *Received Pronunciation,* has various popular names such as the Queen's or King's English, BBC English, Oxford English and so on. The ancestral form of RP developed in the late Middle Ages in London and the south-east, as the accent of the court and upper classes. During the 19th century, RP became the accent of public schools such as Eton and Winchester and thereby spread through the Civil Service of the British Empire and the armed forces, becoming the voice of authority and power. The public schools uniformally moulded the accents of their aristocratic pupils from all over the country into very distinctive phonological patterns, particularly with regard to the vowel system cf. Gimson (1980) for a description. This pronunciation came to symbolize and identify upper class membership without connecting it to any particular region. Its value was further affirmed in its selection as the appropriate accent for formal broadcasting by the BBC at least until the 1970's.

Among the most outstanding basic differences from General American English is that in RP :

i. there is no post-vocalic /r/ e.g. curl is pronounced /kəːl/

ii. a long /aː/ vowel is used before /θ/, /f/, /s/, /nt/, /ns/, /nč/, /nd/ and /mp/ e. g. *class* and *dance* (instead of /æ/)

iii. the vowel in *hot* is rounded as /ɒ/ instead of [ɑ]

iv. very front realizations of /ou/ such as RP [øʉ] are not found in most varieties of North American English where it is usually pronounced as [oʊ].

However, since the Second World War, because of its association with the values of the Establishment, negative attitudes towards *conservative RP* cf. (Gimson, 1980) or *upper-crust RP* (Wells, 1982) have intensified with changing political, social and economic processes working towards democraticization and egalitarianism, so that upper-crust RP today tends to be regarded as too 'snobbish' and often constitutes an object of derision. Consequently, it tends to be restricted to older members of the British elite, while younger members of privileged groups are beginning to reveal downmarket features in what has been termed *advanced RP* by Gimson (1980) e. g. the t-glottalization of Prince Edward and the Princess of Wales, deriving from non-standard London speech (Honey, 1989 : 91—2). An expression of anti-RP attitudes among younger native-speakers of RP is the "mock Cockney accent" of upper-class undergraduates at Oxford in the mid-1980's (ibid. p. 85). None the less, RP continues to be the most widely used accent in the Court, Parliament, the Church of England, the legal profession and other national institutions in England today and is likely to remain so, admittedly incorporating some phonological 'flattening out' and a broader range of variability within it.

In fact, only 3% of the British population is estimated to speak

the conservative RP version.   However, an upper middle-class *main-stream* or *neutral* RP also exists with only a limited amount of regional flavouring. Additionally, a more strongly, regionally accented northern and southern *near-RP* has also been identified, which is more middle than upper middle-class cf. Diagram 1. showing the hierarchical relationship between accent and class.

Furthermore, there is another group of speakers, who due to social and professional advancement, have succeeded in artificially acquiring what is called *adoptive RP*, which may result in an unnatural, hypercorrect version or, more frequently, an accent which still contains small marks of social or local origin.   It is especially difficult for non-native RP speakers to imitate the informal and allegro features of elision, assimilation and intrusive /r/, as shown in Table 1 below. For example, in younger and mainstream RP sandhi /r/, particularly the kind that does not correspond to spelling, is freely employed but speech-conscious, hypercorrect, adoptive RP speakers shun it as "lazy" and incompatible with their "perfect" accent.

Table 1.   /r/ sandhi in RP varieties (Wells, 1982 : 285)

	MAINSTREAM (NATIVE) RP	ADOPTIVE (HYPERCORRECT) RP
more and more	'mɔɪr əm 'mɔɪ	mɔɪ ən(d) 'mɔɪ
Christina	krɪs'tiːnər	krɪs'tiːnə
Onassis	ə'næsɪs	əʊnæsɪs

It is important to emphasize that most speakers who adopt RP today prefer to retain some of their regional accent, aiming at a *modified RP*, which has become acceptable due to the positive reassessment of regional accents, in contrast to late Victorian times when

they were heavily stigmatized.

From this it should be clear that RP variation is not uniform and shows variation according to the speaker's age and social background. Finally, it must be recognized that RP is changing, as can be seen from Table 2 below.

Table 2.   RP VARIABILITY (Russ, 1982 : 29)

	UPPER-CRUST/ HYPER-CORRECT OLDER SPEAKERS	MAINSTREAM/ NEUTRAL	←	INNOVATIVE/ ADVANCED YOUNGER
home	ou	əu	←	ɜɪu
white	hw	w		w
poor	uə	uɜ	←	ɔː

Thus, in *home* the onset of the diphthong is becoming centralized, lowered and lengthened.   Preaspirated initial [hw] in such words as *white* and *which* is ceding to unaspirated [w].   The vowel of *poor* is being monophthongized and lowered so that *poor* and *pour, sure* and *shore* tend to become homophones.   For a clear phonological summary of the innovations taking place see Trudgill & Hannah (1982 : 9—15).

Unlike RP, standard English English grammar and vocabulary is not limited to a particular social group and has attained a special status as a variety used in education, writing and formal speech throughout the British Isles, with some very minor regional differences. The vocabulary of standard English English is described in the great lexicographies such as the *Oxford English Dictionary*.   Its grammar has been described in works such as Quirk et al. (1972) and is more uniform than the lexis.   Both reveal some age-group, sex and regional differences cf.   Table 3.

Table 3. REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN STANDARD
ENGLISH ENGLISH GRAMMAR
(Source : Trudgill, 1984 : 33 & Russ, 1982 : 31)

South England	North England
I haven't done it	I've not done it
I won't do it	I'll not do it
He can't be at home	He mustn't be at home
I want it washed	It needs washing
He gave it to him	He gave him it
Do you have any mony ?	Have you any money ?

The simplest way to gain an understanding of standard English English (EngEng) grammar is to contrast it with that of standard North American English (NAmEng) or with that of non-standard English English cf. sections 2.1. and 2.2. below. For example, certain verbs require different past tense and participle forms from those employed in the USA :

Table 4. SIMPLE PAST (sp) & PARTICIPLE (pp)
DIFFERENCES IN STANDARD ENGLISHES

FEATURES	EngEng	NAmEng
VOICING	burnt smelt learnt	burned smelled learned
+VOWEL CHANGE : $/\varepsilon/ \rightarrow /i/$	dreamt knelt leant	dreamed kneeled leaned
REGULARIZATION	dived (sp/pp) fitted (sp/pp) sneaked (sp/pp) got (sp/pp)	dove (sp) dived (pp) fit (sp) fitted (pp) snuck (sp&pp) got (sp) gotten (pp)

There are also differences in the employment of auxiliaries, verb phrases, noun classes, articles, prepositions, spelling and punctuation cf. Trudgill and Hannah (1982 : 41—73).

Vocabulary differences within standard English English tend to be a function of age (e. g. older people may say *gramophone* while younger ones *record player*), occupation, education and social beckground. There is supposed to be a distinction between upper-class (*U*) and *non-U* usage inside England cf. Ross (1956), which involve standard words such as *rich* (U) / *wealthy* (non-U); *bus / coach*; *sick / ill*; *table napkin / serviette*, but these contrasts do not seem to have much social validity today. Of course, there exist thousands of lexical differences between the standard English of Great Britain and the United States and this point has been widely discussed cf. Trudgill and Hannah (1982 : 73—79).

The grammar and spelling of the standard English of Britain, based on English English, has not undergone radical change since the 18 century due to the stabilizing forces of the grammar book and dictionary, which first began to appear at that time. These codifying works together with later institutional support have helped to keep the variety under control, guaranteeing linguistic security and further strengthening the orthodox status of the variety. Of course, the area of standard vocabulary has seen explosive growth in recent times as a response to the needs of the ever changing, modern world.

1. 2. SCOTTISH ENGLISH

Only a very brief outline of the other regional standard varieties of the British Isles can be given here, starting with English in Scotland. The Anglo-Saxon tribes who invaded Britain in the 5 th

century also invaded and occupied the south-east of Scotland, leading to a distinctive variety of Old English called the Northumbrian dialect. During the Old English period (600—1100 AD), however, most of Scotland was still Celtic-speaking (Gaelic) but the number of English speakers in the southern part of the country increased considerably as aristocratic English refugees fled north directly after the Norman Conquest. In the 12 th century more English speakers settled in the area so that English spread and became established through the whole southern and eastern part of Scotland (called the lowlands), while Gaelic remained in the mountainous Highland region and surrounding islands. The English in the lowlands developed differently from that used in England and its prestige form, known as *SCOTS*, was used at the Scottish court and in literature up to the Reformation (16 th c.). The revolutionary appearance of the English translation of the Bible (1539) and the later King James Version (1611) had a great influence on the further anglicization of Scotland and strengthened contact with standard English English; no Scots translation ever appeared. However, the main factor for the decay of Scots literary language from the 17 th century onwards was the uniting of the crowns of Scotland and England in 1603, when the Scottish King James VI moved to London to become James I, promoting southern English speech norms among the Scottish nobility. Thus, over time, Scots was replaced by Standard English English among the upper and educated classes, with Scots relegated to the status of a non-standard dialect spoken mainly in rural areas. Nevertheless, certain nationalistic writers and poets, the best known of which are Burns (1759—1796) and Walter Scott (1771—1832), employed

Scots in their work. In the 20 th century a strong revival movement of *LALLANS*, a mixture of old and modern Scots, has taken place but it has been restricted to literary art.

Today there are four main regional types of Scottish English : Southern Scots, Northeast Scots and Highland English cf. Romaine (1982). Of course, there exists variation within these Scottish varieties of English according to social class, age and sex. *Highland English* comes closest to Scottish Standard English because English was initially learned only in school as a second language, so there is no Scots substratum. However, today Gaelic is a dying language, spoken only in the Hebrides Islands where most of the population is already bilingual.

As for standard Scottish English, it is only different from the standard pronunciation in southern English in the fact that it is spoken with a wide range of Scottish accents, contains a few grammatical differences and varying amounts of regional vocabulary and idioms. Trudgill and Hannah (1982 : 81—88) base their description of this

Table 5. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STANDARD SCOTTISH ENGLISH AND ENGLISH ENGLISH

PRONUNCIATION			GRAMMAR	
	ScotEng	RP	ScotEng	EngEng
port	(rhotic) /pɔrt/	/pɔːt/	He'll not...	He won't...
bad	(no æ) /bad/	/bæd/	Did you not...	Didn't you...
put	(no ʊ) /puːt/	/pʊt/	He'd a good time	He had a good...
boat	(no ou) /bot/	/bout/	They took off	They took their
pot	(no ɒ) /pɔt/	/pɒt/	their coats.	coats off.
	velar fricative	—	My hair needs	My hair needs
loch	↓ /lɔx/	/lok/	cut.	to be cut.

variety on the linguistic patterns of the educated, urban middle-class from which the data in Table 5 is taken.

For further information on Scottish English refer to Wells (1982 : 393—417), Aitken (1984) and Shuken (1984).

1. 3. WELSH ENGLISH

The Welsh are the descendarts of the Celtic Britons who were driven into the rough, mountainous western region of the island by the invading Anglo-Saxon tribes. Initially made up of several kingdoms, Wales reached a degree of unity in the 12 th century but was absorbed into the Tudor realm through the Acts of Union of 1536 and 1542 which established English as the official language of law, education and trade. However, during the reign of Elizabeth I the Bible was translated into Welsh, which helped to standardize and give a literary status to the language. In fact, until the beginning of the 19 century, apart from the nobility who were bilingual, the majority of the population was still overwhelmingly Welsh-speaking, partly because the economy was agricultural and self-supporting ie. there were few towns and communication networks were not very developed, and also because the region presented no political threat to the central control of the English. However, due to industrialization, urbanization, mass education and mass media together with the immigration of English speakers and subsequent intermarriage, the decline of Welsh has accelerated to such an extent that by 1981 only 1 % of the population were totally Welsh-speaking and only 18% Welsh-English bilinguals cf. Price (1984). Nevertheless, since the Second World War, there has been a Welsh revival; in 1953 the Education Ministry permitted Welsh as a medium of school instruc-

tion and BBC television regularly broadcasts programmes in Welsh;
in 1967 the Welsh Language Act gave Welsh official and legal
equality with English. However, today there are serious fears for
the survival of this most vital of the Celtic tongues, the future of
which depends on its continued employment by future bilingual
generations.

Today, the majority of people in Wales are native speakers of
English and, at the level of educated speech and writing, there is
little difference between this variety and that of England except in
pronunciation. Typical Welsh words and grammatical patterns do
exist but Welsh Standard English is not dramatically different from
English English. One of its most widely remarked upon features is
the so-called 'sing-song' or 'lilting' intonation due to influences from
the Welsh language. The vowel quality of Welsh English also
evidences fewer diphthongs but the relationship between regional
accent and social structure in Wales is very similar to that found in
England, where a closer approximation to RP usually signals higher
class membership. On the other hand, Welsh English has some
sounds not found in RP such as the voiceless lateral /ɬ/ (spelled 11)
which appears in place names such as *Llywelyn* and the voiceless
velar fricative /x/, which appears in a few Welsh loanwords e.g.
/baɪx/, a term of endearment. For full descriptions of Welsh English
cf. Trudgill and Hannah (1982 : 27—30), Wells (1982 : 377—393) and
Thomas (1984).

1. 4. IRISH ENGLISH

Long before the Act of Union (1803) made Ireland a part of the
United Kingdom, the English language was known and used on the

Gaelic-speaking island. Its introduction dates back to the late 12 th century when the country was invaded by Anglo-Norman knights who brought it under the rule of English Kings.   The colonizers brought English law and created a new social order but their area of control (around the south-east coast) was still rather small until the 16 th century, when the Tudor monarchy succeeded in establishing English power throughout the country.   As a result, English settlers were encouraged to manage plantations in the south while a large number of Scots English-speaking Scottish Protestants from the Lowlands moved to the north for the same purpose.   This led to the spread of English and the steady erosion of Gaelic, except among the poor and illiterate who maintained it well into the 19 th century.   Among the factors which led to the decline and eventual collapse of Gaelic was the anglicizing influence of 'National' schools, established throughout Ireland from 1831 onwards, and more significantly, the Famine of 1845, which led to the death of one and a half million and encouraged the emigration of a further million predominantly Gaelic-speaking people.

In the beginning of the 20 th century, resistance to English control culminated in the Anglo-Irish war (1919—21) which ended in the partitioning of the island into the independent Irish Free State (which became the Irish Republic in 1949) in the south, while the northern area called Ulster remained an integral part of the United Kingdom. Consequently, the north has determinedly maintained a British and Protestant identity, but the south has fostered a strongly Irish one, especially through the incorporation of Catholic values into the constitution and the promotion of the Gaelic language which formally

takes precedence over English.   However, Gaelic plays little more
than a nominal role outside the rural, western areas where it is
spoken as a first language, and less than 5% of the population
actually use Irish as their first or main language.   Inspite of the
state's official bilingual policies, the motivation for speaking Irish
has been deeply undermined by modernization, mobilization, mass
media, a more internationally-oriented élite and intermarriage with
non-Irish speakers.   The extinction of Irish Gaelic seems likely unless
younger generations make a serious effort to use it outside classroom.

As for English in Ireland, its main characteristics derive from the
17 th century colonists, and not the earlier Normans who eventually
adopted Gaelic.   The English spoken by the 'planters' who settled in
the south was mainly based on the regional variety of the southwest
and west Midlands of England, while that spoken in the north had
its roots in Scots. Trudgill and Hannah (1982 : 89) classify these two
varieties as Southern Irish English (SIrEng) and Northern Irish
English (NIrEng) respectively, but they point out that the distinction
does not correspond exactly to the present-day geo-political divisions,
as there are certain areas, particularly along the border, where the
opposite variety is employed.

The pronunciation and intonation of Northern Irish English in
Ulster is basically very similar to that of Scots English and is known
as *ULSTER SCOTS*.   Milroy (1980) has conducted in-depth socio-
linguistic research into the speech of different Belfast working-class
communities and analysed certain vowel sounds e. g. [ai], [ɪ] and [ʌ]
as key symbols to special Protestant and Catholic identities which
relate to social networks and employment patterns.   English RP only

exerts influence on the Ulster speech of the middle-class and upper
strata.   Most of the grammatical and lexical features of NIrEng are
also found in Scots English and / or SIrEng cf. Trudgill and Hannah
(1982 : 89—90) for examples.

Southern Irish English, on the other hand, particularly in certain
vowels and consonants of older and rural speakers, reveals a small
Gaelic influence e. g. [Φ] at the start of *white*; [ß] for/v/ in river
cf. Barry (1982).   Furthermore, certain archaic features found in
Middle English are also found in SIrEng, surviving as a result of
isolation from later developments in English e. g. retroflexion of /r/
after vowels and the vowels shown in Table 6 below.

In fact, the RP centring dipthongs such as /ɪə/, /ɛə/ and /uə/ are
absent in SIrEng and are realized as /iː/, /ei/ and /uː/ respectively;
the RP sound /ɜː/ is either /ʊr/ or /ʌr/.   The only type of SIrEng
accents to show any RP influence is that of educated Dubliners cf.
Wells' (1982 : 421) classification of basically three social accents in
ascending order : (i) typical southern Irish provincial, (ii) typical
Dublin and (iii) smart Dublin.

Table 6.   THE ARCHAIC CHARACTER OF SOME SIrEng VOWELS

EXAMPLES IN SPELLING	PRE-1650 PRONUNCIATION IN ENGLAND	SOUTHERN IRISH ENGLISH TODAY	RP
late	lɛːt	leɪt	leɪt
load	loːd	loːd	loud
light	liːt	ləɪt	lait
reason	reɪzən	reɪzn	riːzn

Today, the educated Dublin accent seems to be gaining widespread
prestige and appeal through media dissemination and a significant

population shift toward the greater Dublin area. Nevertheless, because Ireland is still basically a rural island with only two cities of over half a million inhabitants there is a greater support for local ways of speaking and less inhibition about using dialect speech.

Most characteristic SIrEng grammatical forms are restricted to colloquial speech e. g.

—the use of the progressive with stative verbs : 'I'm seeing it very well'.

—aspectual distinction between habitual and non-habitual actions and states signalled by *do* : 'He does be writing' versus 'He is writing'.

—a loan-translation from Gaelic involving the use of the adverb *after* with a progressive : 'I'm after seeing him'=I have just seen him.

The vocabulary of SIrEng is generally close to English English, but it also includes words resembling Scots English, archaic words and borrowings from Gaelic.

In the future it is likely that the division between northern and southern forms of Irish English will persist because of the sharp identity boundaries historically based on religious affiliation. Today, the Protestants of the North continue to maintain links with Scotland through the Presbyterian Church, old family ties and by studying at Scottish universities, while the opposite holds for the minority Catholics of the North who look to Dublin and the Republic as their model.

Finally, it is important to remember that great Anglo-Irish writers of international standing have emerged during this century such as George Bernard Shaw, William Butler Yeats and James Joyce; these literary artists preserved their Irish pronunciation, though in their works they used characteristic Irish grammar and vocabulary only when

portraying Irish people.

2.   NON-STANDARD VARIETIES OF ENGLAND

In the second section of this survey, the regional, social and ethnic aspects of British English will be briefly considered.   Of course, non-standard varieties of English are also found among the less educated and privileged social groups of Wales, Ireland and Scotland but these will not be touched upon here; they employ much stronger local features in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary than in the standard versions mentioned above.

2.   1.   REGIONAL & CLASS-LINKED VARIETIES OF ENGLAND

There are four basic dialect areas in contemporary England : NOR-THERN, MIDLAND, SOUTHWESTERN and SOUTHEASTERN but a finer distinction can be made with MIDLAND divided into the West Country and Central Midlands and SOUTHEASTERN split into three sub-groups : East Anglian, London and the Southeast. Extensive re-search into rural English dialects has been conducted and published in the *Linguistic Atlas of England* (Orton, Sanderson & Widdowson, 1978).   In fact, there are many isoglosses which run from the River Severn on the west coast to the Wash on the east, which fundamen-tally separate the southern dialects from the midland and northern dialects (see Map 2).   It is impossible to present the individual features of all these varieties here, so only some general points will be noted; for further information see Russ (1982 : 34—50).

Although this section is entitled *regional* varieties, these linguistic forms obviously also carry *social* meaning and identities.   Unlike in Japan, it is usually the case in England that there is a direct, hiera-

rchical relationship between the amount of non-standard characteristics, particularly in the area of grammar and vocabulary, and the social position of the speaker.   The basic pattern is as follows :

(i)   those belonging to the upper echelons of society employ RP+ STANDARD GRAMMAR+STANDARD VOCABULARY

(ii)   the middle classes employ varying degrees of REGIONAL ACCENT (with the upwardly mobile showing greater RP orientation)+STANDARD GRAMMAR+STANDARD VOCABULARY

(iii)   the working classes use varying degrees of regional accent (the lower, the stronger)+NON-STANDARD GRAMMAR+NON-STANDARD VOCABULARY
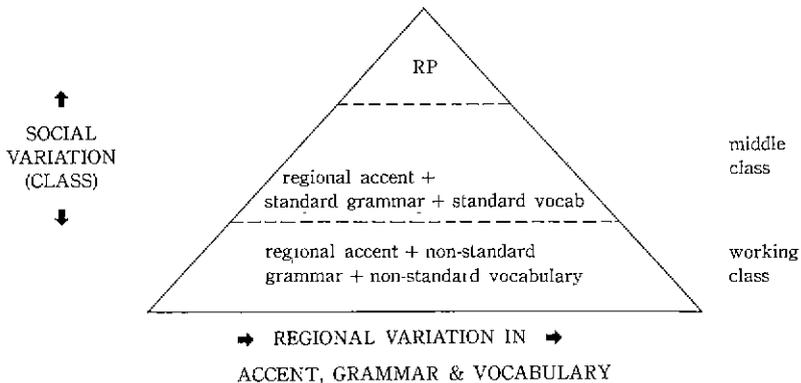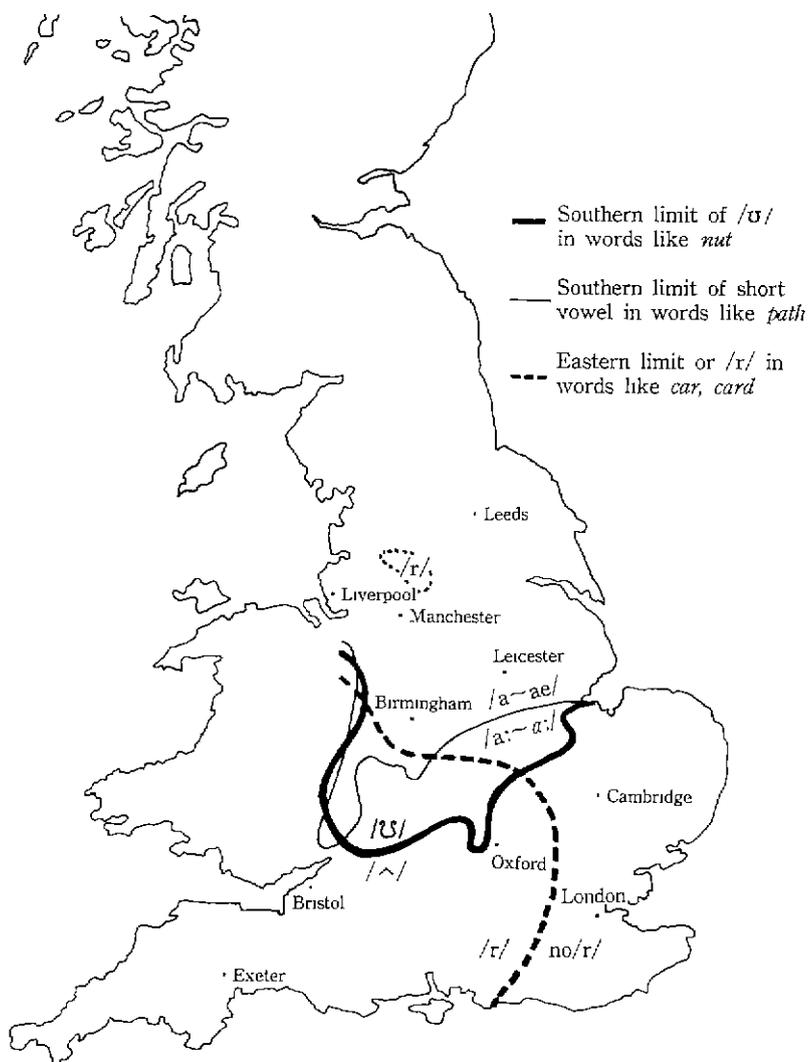

DIAGRAM 1.   THE HIERARCHICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACCENT AND CLASS.

When referring to regional varieties, it is important to understand that these include both urban and rural communities.   Although traditional dialectologists studied geographical variation in terms of the

Map 2.   Major isoglosses relating to the basic dialect divisions between North,
         South & East. (Source : Crystal, 1988)

elderly and uneducated speakers who never left the countryside, modern researchers also include the social background of urban speakers, taking account of their socioeconomic status by using indicators such as occupation, income or education. Trudgill's (1974) pioneering research into the social variation of the speech of the inhabitants of Norwich is probably the best known among this new sociolinguistically oriented *urban dialectology.*

As for regional pronunciation, the only English dialect to use the postvocalic /r/ is the southwest. In many dialects of the north and south the absence of /h/ is common, so that *art* and *heart* may not be distinctive. However, the amount of h-dropping varies according to social class and region.

Table. 7 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REGIONAL ACCENT
AND CLASS ILLUSTRATED WITH H-DROPPING

CLASS	BROADFORD CITY (Northern)	NORWICH CITY (East Anglian)
Middle middle	12%	6%
Lower middle	28%	14%
Upper working	67%	40%
Middle working	89%	60%
Lower working	93%	60%

(Source : Chambers & Trudgill, 1980)

The pronunciation of certain vowel sounds also separates Northerners (and Midlanders) from Southerners e. g. the RP vowel [ʌ] is replaced by [ʊ] in the north, so the distinction between *look* and *luck* is not audible. Another fundamental difference in the North and Midlands is the short length of the vowel in *dance* as [æ] instead of RP [aː], which is similar to standard American pronunciation. For further

details cf. Wakelin (1984) and Wells (1982 : 301—376).

As for the non-standard grammar of rural and urban working classes, the following characteristics are widespread :

—the regularization of verb endings is realized in various ways such as the absence of 3 rd person sing. marker for the simple present tense ie. 'he go' OR the presence of -s for all persons e. g. 'I likes'. The regularization of simple past tense forms is also common e. g. 'I seen'; 'I done'; 'I drawed'.

—negativization of *be* and *have* as *ain't* e. g. 'I ain't coming'; 'I ain't got it.'

—multiple negation e. g. 'I don't eat none of that'; 'I ain't seen no man'.

—the use of *which* or *what* as a relative pronoun referring to humans e. g. 'That is the man what done it'.

—adverbialization with the same form as the adjective e. g. 'He ran slow'; 'she spoke very clever'.

Research shows that there exist considerable local differences in items of vocabulary throughout Britain, but this will not be discussed here cf. Wakelin (1984); Hughes and Trudgill (1979) for further information. Such regionalisms, typically restricted to the speech of elderly, rural folk, generally refer to natural phenomena and are rapidly disappearing under the influence of urbanization and mass media standardization. On the other hand, one of the most interesting aspects of London (Cockney) working-class vocabulary is the humorous and vivid construction of rhyming slang e. g.

Cain and Abel=table

rabbit and pork=talk

Of course, the non-standard nature of slang in general plays an

important role as a means of marking a particular social identity and is extensively developed among criminals, soldiers and in the modern pop and drug scene.   However fashionable the slang of a particular moment appears, it is important to remember that it is essentially temporary, although a small amount may eventually be adopted into standard English.   Additionally, linguistic taboos such as the so-called 'four-letter' words often work as symbols of social protest and are thus favoured by those who feel oppressed by society or those wishing to share solidarity with the underprivileged.

During the 1970's a controversial debate in England centered around Bernstein's (1971 and 1973) description of the different abilities displayed by different social classes in their use of language. The employment of the standard language according to certain principles was termed the *elaborated code*. This allowed the speaker to be individually creative and was characterized by complex linguistic constructions where the meaning was not context-dependent. In contrast, the *restricted code*, mainly associated with working-class communication patterns, stressed group membership, relied considerably on context for meaningfullness, lacked stylistic range and included features such as tag questions and accompanying gesticulation.   Bernstein believed that the different linguistic behaviour explained the poor performance of working class children in English schools but this question of "linguistic deficiency" has not yet been firmly proven.

Finally, it should be pointed out that many upwardly mobile speakers of regional varieties are *bidialectal*, which means that they can successfully employ the standard patterns of grammar and vocabulary together with varying degrees of RP orientation, in addition

to their local dialect.

2. 2. IMMIGRANT AND ETHNIC VARIETIES

Although the employment of an Irish, Scottish or Welsh variety of English indisputably constitutes a symbol of ethnic identity, speakers of Celtic backgrounds are totally 'British'. For citizens from the Republic of Ireland, however, the association with this identity may be more problematic. On the other hand, there are other British groups who have backgrounds that originate outside the United Kingdom. Although immigrants and their children make up only about 10% of the total British population, they do form significant settlements in the major cities of the country where most of them have settled and certain of their members have made considerable contributions to British industry, government, education, media and art.

The extent of bilingualism and language shift among immigrant minorities varies radically according to each group's internal cohesiveness and its cultural and/or racial closeness to the indigenous majority. First generation members of these groups speak a wide range of L2 varieties of English, from absolutely minimal to fluent, with their offspring, if British-born, usually possessing native proficiency in a regional, urban variety. Apart from some minor borrowing into English of certain specialized words, often connected to culinary vocabulary e. g. *poppadom*, the immigrant varieties seem to have had little influence so far beyond the field of pop music and youth culture, notably through the popularity of West Indian reggae.

Most linguistic minorities arrived during the period between 1940 and 1975 and can be divided into two types : those with a European background who have experienced smoother integration and those

from Britain's ex-colonies in Asia and the Caribbean.   However, the most conspicuous and demographically important are the latter who arrived mainly during the period between 1960—1975 in response to UK labour shortages.   Today, 2 million British people are either of West Indian or Asian origin and over 50% of them were born in the UK. The official policy has changed from being assimilationist to one encouraging minority communities to continue speaking their own languages (Watson, 1988).   Immigrants' educational problems receive special consideration and in certain state schools instruction in ethnic languages is provided.   Furthermore, state-supported media regularly broadcasts specific programmes in minority languages mainly for the South Asian communities.

The most distinctive immigrant communities in Britain today are the following (the demographic statistics given below try to include those born in Britain and are based on Stubbs' (1985) estimates) :

(1) Second World War political and religious refugees, who predominantly came from Eastern Europe such as POLES of around 150,000 (cf. Patterson, 1977) and UKRAINIANS (over 30,000), represent a shrinking, ageing community that has achieved total language shift by the second generation.   A smaller Jewish community of a Central European background shares a similar sociolinguistic history cf. Kosmin et. al. (1976).

(2) ITALIANS (140,000) who settled mainly from the 1950's onwards; this bilingual community has been extensively studied by Tosi (1984).   Other South Europeans include PORTUGUESE and SPANISH from the 1960's, who like the Italians, emigrated principally for economic reasons.

(3)   GREEK and TURKISH Cypriots (170, 000) who came between 1960 and 1975 from the ex-colony of Cyprus (cf. Alkan et. al. 1982).

(4)   The majority of EAST ASIANS are of Chinese origin and number 150, 000.   A small number of Malays and Indo-Chinese also live in Britain.   The Chinese presence dates back to the beginning of this century but most of the immigrants arrived after the 1960's from areas such as Hong Kong and Macao (see Watson, 1985). Between 1979 and 1980 12, 000 Vietnamese Chinese 'boat people' entered Britain and a further influx of Hong Kong Chinese is expected before the colony is dissolved in 1997. Chinese children reveal the highest levels of dominance and literacy in their ethnic language among all minority groups (see Rosen, 1980; Martin-Jones, 1984).

(5)   The substantial WEST INDIAN community, who arrived from the 1960's onwards, employs a wide range of varieties from a predominantly Jamaican creole to West Indian or British Standard English.   Sutcliffe (1982 & 1984) has described the continuum of *British Black English* where speakers merge local, white forms of English with distinctive creole features such as selected vowel sounds, zero-marking of past tense and creole-derived vocabulary e. g. *dunseye* 'money'.   In the following example of *British Jamaican Creole*, the predicate adjective *blak* (black) functions as a type of active verb without requiring the copula; its iteration expresses intensity :

"Im blak im black im kyaan don !

(SUTCLIFFE, 1984 : 220)

He's as black as he can be lit. he black he black he can't finish. In fact, most speakers are bidialectal in creole, which they restrict to in-group members, and some form of British English, which among most younger speakers tends to be the local, non-standard, urban variety. They may add to this local variety varying degrees of creole, depending on the context to create *minimal British Black English* :

"Then he come(?) back, and he *seh* : shutcha face you !"

(SUTCLIFFE, 1984 : 232)

The only identifiably West Indian feature here is the zero-marking for the past tense of *say*. The form *come* is also zero-marked but this is the same as the regularization of the past-form in the local non-standard (here : Cockney); the idiom *"shut your face"* (be quiet) is Cockney. Furthermore, an increasing number of white British working-class children are experimenting with the creole they hear spoken by their black friends (Hewitt, 1982).

(6)   SOUTH ASIANS who came from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh from 1950 to 1970 and from East Africa in the 1960's present a wide range of linguistic backgrounds. They are predominantly speakers of Panjabi, Gujerati, Bengali and Hindi / Urdu. The Asian community is comparatively cohesive and this is reflected in the high level of ethnic language maintenance. Table 8. shows the appropriate choices (code-switching) required by a Pakistani in Britain arranged according to domains or social fields of activity. Unlike the trilingualism in the chart, it must be pointed out that most minorities are only bilingual or bidialectal. Nevertheless, the linguistic picture set out below is typical of immigrant

enclaves if the Arabic component is left out. The Punjabi in the example requires Arabic in order to understand the Koran, so it is a language reserved for formal religious activity. His choice between Punjabi and English depends on a host of factors, including whether he is talking to a younger or older member of his community and what the topic of conversation is i.e. if it refers to Punjabi or British culture. The shopping and work environment provide continuing support for the language in addition to home and friends.

Table 8.   THE LANGUAGE SITUATION OF
A PUNJABI MUSLIM IN BRITAIN.
E=English/P=Punjabi/A=Arabic
(Source : Bell, 1976 : 131)

DOMAIN	LANGUAGE
FAMILY	P
FRIENDSHIP	P
RELIGION	A/P
SHOPPING	E/P
WORK	E/P
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES	E

For many younger Asian immigrants a growing identity conflict linked to greater social assimilation is evident. This is illustrated in the study of Mercer et. al. (1979 : 23) where competing loyalties are expressed in opposed language attitudes :

(A) : "If I didn't speak Gujarati, I would feel drowned in a bucket of water. I would suffocate if I didn't speak Gujatati. If an Indian tries to speak to me in English I always ask 'Can't you speak Gujarati ?' If he can't, I feel distant from him".

(B) : "I was at a polytechnic in London and a year passed before I spoke any Gujarati. Even when I met a Gujarati from Leicester we got to know each other in English and wouldn't dream of speaking anything else."

The persistence of immigrant and ethnic varieties of British English depends on the degree of assimilation and social acceptance of their speakers.   Unfortunately for some non-European groups, such as the West Indians, a high level of integration is not foreseeable in the near future.

CONCLUSION

From this survey it should be clear that the term British English covers an immensely diverse set of linguistic patterns, including standard and non-standard, rural and urban, ethnically English and ethnically non-English varieties.   This richness of language phenomena in the British Isles is a consequence of a long history of division and coexistence between many different ethnic, social and cultural groups, who today are at least united in their common employment of the heterogeneous language called English.

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