Remember: **In addition to RP and GA**, you must choose and study **ONE OTHER English accent**. **You can select one from the options presented here; if not, move on to UNIT 3**! ✋

Unit 2_THEORY (II): English Accents in the British Isles

This second document explores some of the main standard accents found in the British Isles, specifically **Welsh English, Scottish English,** and **Southern Irish English**.

It describes their key pronunciation features, including both **segmental** and **suprasegmental** (prosodic) aspects that distinguish them from RP. The document also provides a brief overview of certain **phonotactic** or **lexical distribution** patterns.

It is important to note that the segmental descriptions include both **systemic** (phonological) and **phonetic** information. However, only systemic features should be reflected in phonemic transcriptions unless explicitly indicated. ✋

Finally, the document includes an introductory section on the **historical and social contexts** in which these accents developed. This section is optional and intended for those who wish to explore the topic further.

2. WELSH ENGLISH

2.1. Historical and Social Context (non-compulsory, for reading only ✋)

The presence of English in Wales began during the Norman conquest in the 12th century, but it intensified after the **Laws in Wales Acts (1535–1542)**, which established English as the dominant language. This shift, combined with the closure of monasteries—formerly centres of Welsh education—led to a significant decline in the use of Welsh.

The **Industrial Revolution** further reinforced the dominance of English, since key industries were often controlled by Anglophone leaders. In the modern era, the rise of English in Wales has coincided with a steady decline in the number of Welsh speakers.

However, while English accents have influenced Welsh English, the influence has not been unidirectional. In many border towns, the local accent is perceived as distinctly Welsh by other English speakers.

2.2. Pronunciation in Welsh English

Welsh English includes the varieties of English spoken in Wales. It can be broadly divided into two sub-varieties: **Northern Welsh English** and **Southern Welsh English**. Northern Welsh English shows the greatest Welsh influence, as English was introduced to this region later.

Southern Welsh English, in turn, can be divided into two main dialects: Eastern and Western. These broadly reflect a contrast between urban (Eastern) and rural (Western) speech patterns. Eastern Southern Welsh English aligns more closely with RP and shows fewer Welsh influences.

Standard Welsh English, spoken by educated individuals, is largely similar to RP and differs only in a few distinctive features described below.

2.2.1. *Vowels & vocalic sequences*

The main **PHONOLOGICAL distinction** between RP and Welsh English VOWELS lies in the **merger of /ʌ/ and /ə/** in Welsh English. Both vowels are pronounced as a mid, unrounded, central vowel, similar in quality to /ə/.

With regard to DIPHTHONGS, Welsh English generally aligns phonologically with RP, with the notable exception of the **absence of centring diphthongs** in several Welsh English varieties, where they are often replaced by vowel sequences.

Welsh English also displays **other systemic contrasts**, such as **/ei/ vs. /ɛi/** (commonly found in words spelt *ai* or *ay*) and **/ou/ vs. /ɔu/** (found in words spelt *ow* or *ough*). These and other contrasts are discussed in more detail below (p. 7).

Table 4 lists the symbols used for **Welsh English phonemes** for transcription practice, alongside their **RP equivalents**. The table excludes the additional systemic contrasts mentioned above, as they do not have direct equivalents in RP. It also provides key **PHONETIC information** to highlight the differences and similarities between these accents:

Welsh English phonemes	***RP counterpart***	***KEY PHONETIC INFORMATION***
/iː/	/iː/	**Same symbol**: No significant phonetic differences between Welsh English (WE) and RP.
/ɪ/	/ɪ/	**Same symbol**: No significant phonetic differences between Welsh English (WE) and RP.
/ɛ/	/e/	**Opener and lower**: The WE vowel is more open and lower than in RP.
/a/	/æ/	**Opener, lower, and more central**: The WE vowel is noticeably more open, lower, and central compared to RP.
/ə/	/ʌ/	**No STRUT vowel**: WE lacks the STRUT vowel (especially in southern areas), replaced by *schwa* (see *Phonotactic/Lexical Distribution* section).
/aː/	/ɑː/	**Fronted vowel**: The WE vowel is more advanced, with tongue fronting, compared to RP.
/ɒ/	/ɒ/	**Same symbol but closer vowel**: The WE vowel is closer and of higher quality than in RP.
/ɔː/	/ɔː/	**Same symbol**: No significant phonetic differences between Welsh English (WE) and RP.
/ʊ/	/ʊ/	**Same symbol**: No significant phonetic differences between Welsh English (WE) and RP.

/uː/	/uː/	**Same symbol**: No significant phonetic differences between Welsh English (WE) and RP.
/ɜː/	/ɜː/	**Same symbol but advanced and rounded**: The WE vowel is more advanced and has lip rounding compared to RP.
/ə/	/ə/	**Same symbol**: No significant phonetic differences between Welsh English (WE) and RP.
/ai/	/aɪ/	**Mid starting point**: The WE diphthong begins with a mid (not open) central position.
/ei/	/eɪ/	**Monophthongisation**: The WE diphthong is often pronounced as a long monophthong ([eː]). See *Phonotactic/Lexical Distribution* section.
/ɔi/	/ɔɪ/	**Closer second element**: The WE diphthong's second element is slightly closer than in RP.
/au/	/aʊ/	**Mid starting point**: The WE diphthong begins with a mid (not open) central position.
/ou/	/əʊ/	**Monophthongisation**: The WE diphthong is often pronounced as a long monophthong ([oː]). See *Phonotactic/Lexical Distribution* section.
/iːə/	/ɪə/	**No diphthong**: Replaced by a vocalic sequence in WE.
/ɛː/	/eə/	**Long monophthong**: The WE diphthong tends to be replaced by a very long monophthong.
/uːə/	/ʊə/	**No diphthong**: Replaced by a vocalic sequence in WE.

Table 4. Welsh English versus RP: vowels

Referring to table 4, Welsh English can be seen to have a larger number of monophthongs and fewer diphthongs than most English accents. Additionally, the five Welsh English diphthongs are typically narrow, with only a relatively short degree of movement.

It is also noteworthy that Welsh English frequently displays sequences of closing diphthongs followed by *schwa* (TRIPHTHONGS), separated by a linking /j/ or /w/. This gives rise to pronunciations such as *fire* /ˈfaijə/ or *sour* /ˈsauwə/. In other words, the second element is strengthened by the addition of a semivowel, which contrasts with the *smoothing* process. This phenomenon should be represented in transcription exercises.

2.2.2. *Consonants*

The **presence of phonemes such as /ɬ/** (voiceless alveolar lateral fricative) **and /x/** (voiceless velar fricative) distinguished Welsh English apart **PHONOLOGICALLY** from RP. These phonemes appear in loanwords borrowed from Welsh and in place names, as in *loch*.

In Welsh English **PHONETICS**, four key features are noteworthy:

a) **Lengthening of consonants:** Voiceless consonants are often lengthened intervocalically (ˈV_V) when the preceding vowel is a stressed monophthong, as in *letter* [tː]. This lengthening is accompanied by a shortening of the stressed vowel.
b) **Strong aspiration:** Voiceless plosives typically show marked aspiration. In final position, they are audibly released without glottalization, as in ***tick*** [kʰ].
c) **Variable /ɹ/ realisation:** The pronunciation of /ɹ/ varies significantly. It may be pronounced as a trill (or roll) [r], as an alveolar tap (or flap) [ɾ] —especially intervocalically after a stressed vowel, as in *ferry*—or as an approximant [ɹ] as in RP. Regional differences account for much of this variation, although the tap is increasingly common.
d) **Consistently clear /l/:** The /l/ is pronounced as a clear [l] in all phonetic environments, as in ***loyal*** [l].

e) **Other features:** The consonants /t, d, n/ are frequently dental ([t̪], [d̪]) rather than alveolar in many Welsh English varieties.

Remember that these phonetic details are <u>not</u> reflected in phonemic transcriptions! ✋

2.2.3. *Prosody*

One of the most distinctive suprasegmental features of Welsh English is its **sing-song or lilting intonation**, strongly influenced by Welsh—even among native English speakers. This pattern typically involves rise–fall tones at the end of statements, in contrast to the falling tones characteristic of RP. As a result, a syllable following the nucleus (or tonic syllable) may sound unexpectedly prominent.

Additionally, **rising tones** indicating incomplete information are noticeably higher in Welsh English, producing a high-rise tone rather than the low-rise typical of RP.

The **rhythmic pattern** in Welsh English is also distinctive: it tends to be more syllable-timed than the stress-timed rhythm of most other English accents. This contributes to the reduced use of weak forms in unstressed syllables and reinforces consonant lengthening, as noted earlier.

Finally, **word stress** in Welsh English differs significantly from RP. Primary lexical stress involves a longer vowel duration in the stressed syllable, often combined with a shortened vowel and a lengthened consonant in the following syllable, as previously discussed (Webb, 2011).

2.2.4. *Phonotactic/lexical distribution features*

Most Welsh English varieties share the following phonotactic and lexical distribution features, which are relevant when transcribing Welsh English:

a) **Rhoticity**: Welsh English is predominantly **non-rhotic**, meaning /ɹ/ is typically

absent in pre-consonantal and word-final positions. As a result, **R-liaison** frequently appears in connected speech.

b) **Word-final /iː/**: In **unstressed word-final** positions, **/iː/ (phonetically [iˑ])** often replaces *schwa* in words ending in '-y,' '-ee,' '-ie,' or '-ey' after one or more consonants (e.g., *bab**y**, committ**ee**, Ann**ie**, eas**y***). This also occurs in compounds, inflected forms, or stems ending in consonants (e.g., *bell**y**button, happ**i**er*, *eas**i**est, news**i**ness*, *stud**i**ed, Lesl**ey**'s, cook**ie**s*) (Source: JC Wells).

c) **RP /ɑː/ vs. /a/**: Words containing **/ɑː/ in RP before voiceless fricatives /θ, f, s/ or clusters of a nasal plus another consonant** (e.g., *laugh, path, d**a**nce*, *pl**a**nt, c**a**n't*) typically have **/a/** (pronounced [aː]) in **Welsh English**. However, sociolinguistic and regional variation means that some speakers use /aː/ or even /ɑː/ in these contexts.

d) **Full vowels in unstressed syllables**:
   - In **final checked** (closed) syllables (e.g., *mom**e**nt*), **unstressed orthographic *e*** often appears as /ɛ/ rather than schwa. The full vowel /ɛ/ may **also** occur in suffixes such as ***–ed*** and ***–est*** (e.g., *front**e**d* or *small**e**st*). This change applies to content words only!
   - **Unstressed orthographic *a* and *o*** often shift to full vowels instead of schwa, e.g., ***a**bove* /a/ and *c**o**llect* /ɒ/. Again, this applies specifically to content words.

e) **/ɛi/ vs. /ei/**: Words spelled with *ai* or *ay* (e.g., *m**ai**d*, *d**ay***) typically use the diphthong /ɛi/. In contrast, words with *a, ey, ei,* and *ea* (like *f**a**ce, h**ey**, **ei**ght, br**ea**k*) feature /ei/.

f) **/ɪu/ instead of /juː/**: Words spelled with *u, ue, eu,* or *ew* (e.g., *t**u**ne, **u**sed, c**ue**, d**eu**ce*, *n**ew**s*) often have /ɪu/ rather than /juː/. This substitution also occurs after /l/ and /r/ (e.g., *r**u**de*, *bl**ew***), where RP typically uses /uː/.

g) **/ɔʊ/ vs. /oʊ/**: Words spelled with *ow* or *ough* (e.g., *bl**ow**, th**ough***) are often pronounced with /ɔʊ/ (instead of /oʊ/) in Welsh English.

h) **H-dropping**: Initial H-dropping in content words is common in casual speech, leading to homophones like *arm* and *harm*. Avoid this feature in transcription exercises unless specifically replicating casual speech. ✋

i) **Yod-dropping and Yod-coalescence**: Welsh English generally follows RP in these processes, with no significant differences.

Remember to include all these phonotactic and lexical distribution features when transcribing Welsh English! ✋

Further details are available in *Trudgill & Hannah* (pp. 36–38; sections 2.3.1 [subsections 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 9] and 2.3.3), recommended for optional reading.

3. SCOTTISH ENGLISH

3.1. Historical and Social Context (non-compulsory, for reading only✋)

The history of the English language in Scotland is particularly complex. Before the 18th-century Highland Clearances, Gaelic was the dominant language in the Highlands. Although it has gradually retreated since then, Scottish Gaelic remains in use today, though spoken by an increasingly smaller number of people, especially in the Hebrides.

In the Lowlands, while Gaelic was once spoken in certain areas, a Germanic language took precedence from the seventh century when the Anglo-Saxons took control of Edinburgh. This northern dialect of Old English gradually became dominant, evolving into what was known as *Scottis* by the time of James VI of Scotland, later James I of England, in the 17th century. The Union of the Crowns in 1603 marked the beginning of the decline of *Scottis*, which eventually evolved into *Scots* but remained a vernacular language.

In the 18th century, following the Union of Parliaments in 1707, a distinct form of English began to emerge in Scotland, influenced by both Scots and the southern dialects of England. This diverse linguistic blend gave rise to what we recognize as Scottish English today, exhibiting variations in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. At times, it mirrors standard English from England, but in other instances, it retains closer ties to Scots.

Since 1970, there has been a revival of national identity, which has fostered greater recognition of both Scottish Gaelic and Scots within literary and cultural circles.

3.2. Pronunciation in Scottish English

Scottish English refers to the varieties of English spoken across Scotland, as described earlier. For non-native speakers familiar with RP or GA, the pronunciation of Standard Scottish English may pose certain challenges.

3.2.1. *Vowels & vocalic sequences*

The VOWEL system in Scottish English differs notably from that of other English accents, particularly RP. A key **PHONOLOGICAL** distinction between RP and Standard Scottish English is **the absence of systematic durational differences** between long and short vowels. As a result, contrasts like /ɑː/ and /æ/, /uː/ and /ʊ/, and /ɔː/ and /ɒ/ are all pronounced as /a/, /u/ and /ɔ/, respectively, in Scottish English. Consequently, pairs like *Pam* and *palm*, *pull* and *pool*, or *cot* and *caught* are homophones in this accent. Because of this, duration will not be marked in transcription exercises.

Vowel duration in Scottish English varies significantly depending on the phonetic context. With the exception of /ɪ/ and /ʌ/ (which are always short), other vowels tend to be longer before voiced fricatives (/v/, /ð/ and /z/), before /r/, and in word-final position (even when followed by suffixes, as in *agr**ee**d*). This follows the Scottish Vowel Length Rule (see Trudgill & Hannah, p. 97, for further details).

Another notable systemic difference is the absence of non-prevocalic /r/ weakening, which in RP led to the development of the central vowel /ɜː/ and the centring diphthongs / ɪə, eə, ʊə /. In Scottish English, this shift did not occur, and **the central vowel /ɜː/ is replaced by various vowels followed by /r/**. Words such as *girl, term* (or *heard*), *word* (or *fur*) are typically pronounced with /ɪr/, /ɛr/ and /ʌr/, respectively.

Furthermore, in Scottish English, the RP **centring DIPHTHONGS /ɪə/, /eə/ and /ʊə/ are realised by vowel-plus-/r/ sequences** (/ir/, /er/ and /ur/, respectively). There is also a common tendency towards phonological **monophthongisation** in this variety. For instance, the RP diphthongs /eɪ/ and /əʊ/ in words like *bay* and *go* are monophthongs in Scottish English, pronounced as /e/ and /o/, respectively. As a result, **Scottish English has only three diphthongs**: /ʌi/ (or (/ae/ depending on the context), /ʌu/ and /ɔi/.

Table 5 lists the symbols used for **Scottish English phonemes** for transcription practice, alongside their **RP equivalents**. It also provides key **PHONETIC information** to highlight the differences and similarities between these accents:

Scottish English Phonemes	***RP counterpart***	***KEY PHONETIC INFORMATION***
/i/	/iː/	**Same symbol:** No significant phonetic differences between Scottish English (SE) and RP.
/ɪ/	/ɪ/	**Same symbol,** but **considerably opener and/or more retracted** in SE (very [ə]-like or even [ʌ]-like)
/ɛ/	/e/	**Opener and lower:** The SE vowel is more open and lower than in RP. In some words (from the lexical set *kit*), it is less open and more centralized /ë/), as in *b**u**ry, d**e**vil, cl**e**ver, el**e**ven, h**ea**ven, n**e**xt, sh**e**pherd, tw**e**nty,*
/ə/	/ə/	**Same symbol:** No significant phonetic differences between SE and RP.
/ʌ/	/ʌ/	**Same symbol, but slightly further back** in Scottish English.
/a/	/æ/ and /ɑː/	**Opener, lower, and more central:** The SE vowel is noticeably more open, lower, and centralized compared to RP.
/ɔ/	/ɒ/ and /ɔː/	**Back and between mid-close and mid-open:** The SE vowel is similar in quality to RP [ɔː], with medium lip rounding.
/u/	/ʊ/ and /uː/	**Close:** The SE vowel is similar in quality to RP [uː], but more advanced or centralized ([ʉ]).
/ɪ/(+/r/), /ɛ/(+/r/) or /ʌ/(+/r/)	/ɜː/	**No central vowel:** In SE, it is replaced by sequences of short vowels plus /r/.
/ʌi/ or /ae/	/aɪ/	**Closer**: The SE diphthong is usually closer (and sometimes more central) than in RP, with considerable variability ([ɛɪ] ~ [ɐɪ]). Refer to *Phonotactic/Lexical distribution* for further

		details about when to use /ʌi/ or /ae/ in SE. ,
/e/	/eɪ/	**Monophthongisation**: The SE diphthong is often pronounced as a long monophthong ([eː]).
/ɔi/	/ɔɪ/	**Closer:** The SE diphthong is usually slightly closer than in RP, sometimes transcribed as /ɒi/ with a different first element.
/ʌu/	/aʊ/	**Raised and centralised:** The SE diphthong is often raised to [ʌu] or even centralised to [ɜʉ], with considerable sociolinguistic variability.
/o/	/əʊ/	**Monophthongisation**: The SE diphthong is often pronounced as a long monophthong ([oː])
/i/ (+/r/)	/ɪə/	**No diphthong:** In SE, it is replaced by a vowel plus /r/ (pronounced [iːr]). For words without an orthographic 'r', use /i/.
/e/ (+/r/)	/eə/	**No diphthong:** In SE, it is replaced by a vowel plus /r/ (pronounced [eːr]).
/u/ (+/r/)	/ʊə/	**No diphthong:** In SE, it is replaced by a vowel plus /r/ (pronounced [uːr]). For words without an orthographic 'r', use /u/.

Table 5. Scottish English versus RP: vowels

In Scottish English, the <u>three</u> diphthongs are notably narrow, characterised by very short movements (see table 5 for details).

Regarding TRIPHTHONGS (<u>closing diphthongs plus *schwa*</u>), the usual pattern in SE involves the absence of the final *schwa* found in RP. Instead, /r/ is added, resulting in sequences like /aer/, /ʌur/ and /ɔir/, as in words like *tyre, hour* and *coir*. This pattern will be reflected in the transcription exercises. For words without an orthographic 'r', the schwa is retained, as in *clients* /ˈklaeənts/.

3.2.2. *Consonants*

PHONOLOGICALLY, the Scottish English consonantal system is highly conservative. It retains two distinct phonemes absent in most varieties of English: **the voiceless velar fricative /x/** (found in word-final positions, as in *lo**ch***), and **the voiceless labial-velar fricative /ʍ/** (replacing /w/ in words beginning with *wh-* (e.g. ***wh**ich, **wh**at*, or ***wh**ine*). This distinction creates a **new phonological contrast between /w/ and /ʍ/** for many speakers, as in *were* vs. *where*. However, when *wh-* is followed by /u/, /ɔ/, or /o/, /h/ is pronounced instead, as in ***wh**ose, **wh**ore,* or ***wh**ole*.

The **/t/** sound is frequently **replaced by a glottal stop** (/ʔ/) in **non-initial positions**. For example:

- In intervocalic positions following a stressed vowel: *bu**tt**er* /ˈbʌʔɪr/.
- Before unstressed vowels or word boundaries: *mili**t**an**t*** /ˈmɪlə?ənʔ/.

This phenomenon, known as ***T-glottalling***, is an optional feature of Standard Scottish English that occurs during the release stage of the oral plosive. Therefore, it is not compulsory to include it in our transcription exercises.

Additionally, a **glottal stop** (/ʔ/) may precede the oral closure of voiceless plosives in **word-final and syllable-final positions**, a process known as ***glottal reinforcement*** (or ***glottalization***). For instance, *lot* may be pronounced /lɔʔt/. This feature is more common in stressed syllables and during the approaching phase of the oral plosive. As it is not used by all speakers, it is not obligatory to include it in our phonemic transcriptions.

In Scottish English **PHONETICS,** five notable features are relevant for transcription purposes:

a) **Unaspirated voiceless plosives:** Voiceless plosives are typically unaspirated in stressed initial positions, as in ***p**ie* [p⁼].

b) **Variable /ɹ/ realisation:** The pronunciation of /ɹ/ in Scottish English varies considerably. It may be pronounced as:
   - A **post-alveolar approximant** [ɹ], as in *lo<u>r</u>d*
   - An **alveolar flap** [ɾ], especially in intervocalic positions (ˈV_V), as in *ca<u>rr</u>y*
   - Less commonly, a **retroflex approximant** [ɻ] or a **trill** [r]

c) **Predominantly dark /l/:** The /l/ is usually pronounced **dark [ɫ]** in most phonetic contexts, as in ***<u>l</u>il<u>l</u>y*** [ɫ], [ɫ]. However, some northern and southwestern varieties may use a clear [l].

d) **Other features: Dental /t/ and /d/:** The consonants /t/ and /d/ are often realised as **dental** ([t̪] and [d̪]) rather than alveolar in several Scottish English varieties.

3.2.3. *Prosody*

Although Trudgill and Hannah do not explore prosodic features, two significant aspects of Scottish English prosody can be highlighted based on Wells (1982) and additional research (Scobbie et al., 2006; Stuart-Smith, 2008).

First, **intonation** varies considerably across regions. Edinburgh English often resembles RP, whereas Glasgow English displays a distinctive pattern in which syllables are stressed with a fall in intonation rather than a rise. This dipping or rise–fall pattern, marked by a series of falls or rise–falls on accented syllables, can occur in statements, yes/no questions, and *wh*-questions. Overall, Scottish English tends to operate within a <u>narrower pitch range than RP</u>.

Second, **rhythm** in Scottish English shows a strong <u>preference for open syllables</u>. For example, syllabification in *weekend* may be realised as *wee kend*, and *Saint Andrews* may shift to *Sain tandrews*.

Lastly, **accentuation** in Scottish English occasionally diverges from RP. Words ending in *–ize* and, to a lesser extent, *–ate* often carry stress on the syllable containing the suffix, as seen in *organize* rather than *organize*.

3.2.4. *Phonotactic/lexical distribution differences*

There are several key phonotactic and lexical distribution differences between RP and Scottish English:

a) **Rhoticity:** Scottish English is **rhotic**, meaning /ɹ/ is pronounced in various phonetic contexts, including pre-consonantal and word-final positions. As a result, R-liaison (covering both intrusive and linking /ɹ/) does not occur in connected speech in this variety.

b) **Final /e/ instead of /i/:** In Scottish English, the vowel /e/ typically replaces /i/ in word-final unstressed positions for words ending in *-y*, *-ee*, *-ie*, or *-ey* following one or more consonant letters, as in *bab**y**, committ**ee**, Ann**ie*** or *eas**y***. This pattern also applies at the end of compound words, stems, or inflected forms containing an extra final consonant sound, as seen in *bell**y**button, happ**i**er*, *eas**i**est, news**i**ness*, *stud**i**ed, Lesl**ey**'s* or *cook**ie**s*.

c) **RP /ɑː/ vs. /a/**: Words featuring /**ɑː**/ **in RP before voiceless fricatives /θ, f, s/ or nasal-plus-consonant clusters** (e.g., *laugh, path, d**a**nce*, *pl**a**nt, c**a**n't*) are typically pronounced with **/a/** in **Scottish English**. This reflects the lack of a phonemic distinction between /ɑː/ and /æ/ in this variety.

d) **Variation in /aɪ/:** The RP diphthong /aɪ/ has two maiin realisations in Scottish English:

- **/ae/ occurs in the following contexts:**
    i. in word-final positions (*b**uy***),
    ii. before endings or suffixes (*tr**ie**d*, *sh**y**ness, h**igh**er, l**ie**s*) and
    iii. before a voiced tautosyllabic (belonging to the same syllable) fricative or /ɹ/ (*pr**i**ze*, *f**i**re*).

- **/ʌi/ is used in other contexts**, namely, before a tautosyllabic consonant that is not a voiced fricative or /r/, as in *w**i**pe* or ***i**ce*.

e) **Unstressed vowels:** The treatment of unstressed vowels in Scottish English is complex. In many Scottish accents (excluding Edinburgh speech), the *schwa* vowel is often replaced by /ɪ/ in checked unstressed syllables following a stressed syllable, as in *pil**o**t*, *lett**e**r* or *cent**re***. Although the literature is not explicit about the exact structural conditions, examples from Wells and from Trudgill & Hannah suggest that this substitution is consistent in this environment in content words. Only this context will require substitution in transcription exercises.
Additionally, when an **unstressed orthographic *a*** appears in word-final position, it is often pronounced with a more open vowel /ʌ/ rather than *schwa*, as in *extr**a*** or *sof**a***.

f) **Yod-dropping:** This feature is typical after /l/ followed by /ju/ and, for many speakers also after /s/, as in *lure* /lur/ or *suit* /sut/. In transcription exercises, yod-dropping will be applied only in these two contexts. Elsewhere, this conservative variety of Scottish English generally preserves the yod.

g) **Yod-coalescence:** While yod-coalescence is much less frequent in Scottish English than in many other accents, occasional instances may be found among some speakers, often due to dialect contact or stylistic variation.

h) **H-dropping:** Initial H-dropping is not generally observed in Scottish English, except in auxiliaries and unstressed pronouns, following a pattern found in other English varieties.

.

Remember to incorporate all these phonotactic and lexical distribution features when transcribing Scottish English!

Further details can be found in Trudgill & Hannah (p. 97, sections 5.1.1.7 and 5.1.3), recommended for optional reading, except the voiceless fricatives (rather than voiced sounds) in *with* and *though*, which you are expected to know.

4. SOUTHERN IRISH ENGLISH

4.1. Historical and Social Context (non-compulsory, for reading only)

The arrival of English speakers in Ireland dates back to 1169, marked by Henry II's landing of Anglo-Norman troops. Initially, English held limited prestige and was soon Gaelicised by the Irish population. By the sixteenth century, Catholic opposition to the Reformation had reinforced Irish Gaelic as a symbol of Catholic Ireland, while English became associated with the Protestant community. This connection led to a decline in the use of English until the seventeenth century, when Cromwell introduced English settlers as part of efforts to counter Catholic influence.

This settlement gave rise to 'Hiberno-English,' or 'Southern Hiberno-English,' distinct from the language of Ulster settlers, which became known as 'Ulster-Scots.' Ulster underwent colonisation primarily through plantation schemes under James I, with significant numbers of Scots settlers. The language spoken by these settlers became recognised as 'Ulster-Scots,' and its speakers were known as the 'Scots-Irish.' Although the Scots settlers were more numerous and their language had a lasting influence on their English-speaking counterparts, Northern Hiberno-English persisted in areas that remained predominantly English-speaking, maintaining a distinct identity from Ulster-Scots.

By the eighteenth century, English began to grow in prominence in Irish towns and gradually became the dominant language, even among the Irish ruling classes. The Act of Union in 1801, which integrated Ireland into the United Kingdom, significantly amplified the influence of English at the expense of the Irish language. Despite efforts to revive Irish Gaelic as part of Ireland's national identity since 1916, English continued to solidify its position.

Present-day Irish English is shaped by three primary sources: (i) English, predominantly introduced from the west of England (commonly referred to as Anglo-Irish); (ii) the Scots language (considered by some to be a dialect), which was brought to Northern Ireland by Scottish settlers (often referred to as Scotch-Irish); and (iii) Irish Gaelic, the native language of Celtic origin.

Irish English remains a notably conservative variety, showing minimal influence from RP or other dominant British and American accents. It preserves features that set it apart from modern innovations in other English varieties.

4.2. Pronunciation in Southern Irish English

Southern Irish English refers to the British-origin varieties spoken in the southern regions of Ireland. Although it displays less regional variation than northern varieties, its historical development allows it to be divided into two main areas: the eastern coastal zone, centred around Dublin and showing traces of south-west English influence dating back to the late Middle Ages, and the southern and western regions, where Irish remained in use for longer and exerted a stronger influence (Hickey, 2001).

This is a relatively conservative variety, retaining several phonemic distinctions that have merged in other accents of English, as outlined in the sections below.

4.2.1. *Vowels & vocalic sequences*

PHONOLOGICALLY, the vowel system in Southern Irish English (SIE) contains **fewer phonemes** than RP, mainly due to the presence of non-prevocalic /ɹ/. As a result, the RP phoneme **/ɜː/** is **typically replaced by /ʌɹ/** in SIE. In less prestigious accents, short vowels followed by /ɹ/ may display additional variation, such as:

- Orthographic *e(a)r(r)* pronounced as /ɛɹ/ (e.g. *h<u>ear</u>d, p<u>er</u>*).
- *ur(r)* pronounced as /ʌɹ/, although /əɹ/ or /ʊɹ/ may also occur (e.g., *n<u>ur</u>se*).
- *yr* and *ir* pronounced as /ɪɹ/ (e.g. *g<u>ir</u>l, m<u>yrr</u>h*).

The use of non-prevocalic /ɹ/ also **eliminates the centring diphthongs** (**/ɪə/, /eə/, /ʊə/**) found in RP. In SIE, these are **realised as long vowel followed by /ɹ/**: **/iːɹ/, /eːɹ/ and /uːɹ/** in words such as *n<u>ear</u>*, *squ<u>are</u>* and *p<u>oor</u>*.

SIE **does not include the diphthongs /eɪ/ and /əʊ/**, which are replaced by the monophthongs /eː/ and /oː/, respectively. Furthermore, in some non-stardard varieties, the contrast between /aɪ/ and /ɔɪ/ may be neutralised due to centralisation of the initial elements.

Table 6 lists the transcription symbols used for **Southern Irish English phonemes**, alongside their **RP equivalents**. It also provides key **PHONETIC information** to highlight the differences and similarities between these accents:

SOUTHERN IRISH ENGLISH	***RP***	***KEY PHONETIC INFORMATION***
/iː/	/iː/	**Same symbol**: No relevant phonetic differences between Southern Irish English (SIE) and RP.
/ɪ/	/ɪ/	**Same symbol**: No relevant phonetic differences between SIE and RP.
/ɛ/	/e/	**Opener and lower**: The SIE vowel is slightly more open and lower than in RP.
/æ/	/æ/	**Same symbol, but opener**: The SIE vowel is slightly opener and lower than in RP. (it sounds like an [a])
/ʌ/	/ʌ/	**Same symbol, but more retracted**: The SIE vowel is a mid central back (produced further back) somewhat rounded vowel ([ɔ̟ʱ]).
/aː/	/ɑː/	**More advanced**: The SIE vowel is usually more centralised than its RP counterpart ([aː])
/ɒ/	/ɒ/	**Same symbol, but unrounded**: The SIE vowels tends to be unrounded ([ɑ]).
/ɔː/	/ɔː/	**Same symbol, but unrounded**: The SIE vowel tends to be unrounded ([ɑː]).
/ʊ/	/ʊ/	**Same symbol**: No relevant phonetic differences between SIE and RP.
/uː/	/uː/	**Same symbol, but more advanced**: The SIE vowel is more advanced/centralised ([ʉː]).
/ʌ/(+/r/)	/ɜː/	**No central vowel:** In SIE, it is typically replaced by /ʌr/. See above for further details.
/ə/	/ə/	**Same symbol**: No relevant phonetic differences between SIE and RP.

/aɪ/	/aɪ/	**Same symbol, but more centralised**: The SIE vowel is more central than in RP, especially the starting element ([ɜɪ]).
/eː/	/eɪ/	**Monophthongisation**: The SIE diphthong tends to be a long monophthong.
/ɔɪ/	/ɔɪ/	**Same phonemic symbol,** but in popular varieties of SIE, it can have a more open starting point ([ɒɪ] or even [ʌɪ]) compared to RP.
/aʊ/	/aʊ/	**Same symbol, but centralised:** The SIE diphthong is usually centralized ([ɜʉ]), with a fair range of phonetic variation.
/oː/	/əʊ/	**Monophthongisation**: The SIE diphthong tends to be a long monophthong.
/iː/ (+/r/)	/ɪə/	**Monophthongisation**: The SIE diphthong tends to be a long monophthong followed by /r/. When there is no orthographic r, it is pronounced as a long vowel /iː/
/eː/ (+/r/)	/eə/	**Monophthongisation**: The SIE diphthong tends to be a long monophthong followed by /r/.
/uː/ (+/r/)	/ʊə/	**Monophthongisation**: The SIE diphthong tends to be a long monophthong followed by /r/. When there is no orthographic r, it is pronounced as a long vowel /uː/

Table 6. Southern Irish English versus RP: vowels

- Note that Southern Irish English has only <u>three phonemic diphthongs</u>, as most RP diphthongs are realised as long monophthongs or as sequences of a long monophthong plus /r/.

- In Southern Irish English, the formation of <u>closing diphthongs plus *schwa*</u> (**TRIPHTHONGS**) follows a pattern typical in rhotic accents: the final *schwa* is omitted and replaced by /r/, producing /aɪr/, /aʊr/ and /ɔɪr/ (e.g. *fire, our* and *coir*,) or /eːr/ and /oːr/ (e.g. *payer* and *mower*). However, in the absence of an orthographic 'r', the schwa is preserved, as in *dial* /ˈdaɪəl/.

4.2.2. *Consonants*

When analysing the consonant system of Southern Irish English (SIE), which is clearly influenced by Irish phonetics and phonology, two key **PHONOLOGICAL** characteristics stand out.

Firstly, as in Scottish English, SIE preserves the voiceless labial-velar fricative **/ʍ/** in words beginning with *wh-,* creating a **contrast with /w/** (e.g., *which* vs. *witch*). However, this distinction is usually lost when *wh-* is followed by /uː/, /ɔː/ or /oː/, as in *whose, whore,* or *whole*.

Secondly, many varieties of SIE neutralise the **contrasts between /t/-/θ/ and /d/-/ð/**. In many cases, the fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ are replaced by their corresponding plosives /t/ and /d/, often realised as [t̪] and [d̪], with dental articulation. This substitution is particularly evident before /r/ and may result in homophony in words like *through* and *true*. This pattern, which is more noticeable in urban varieties, is discussed further in Trudgill & Hannah (p. 106). In transcription exercises, this neutralisation will be represented after /r/, as in ***thr****ee* (/triː/).

Lastly, **voiceless plosives** in SIE are produced **without glottal reinforcement** (or *glottalisation*). That is, a glottal stop ([ʔ]) is not inserted before the oral closure of these plosives in either word-final or syllable-final position.

In Southern Irish English **PHONETICS,** four notable features stand out:

a) **Released final voiceless plosives:** Final voiceless plosives are typically released and aspirated, as in *lip* [pʰ].

b) **/t/ and /d/ clusters:** When followed by /r/, these clusters are typically realised as a dental plosive followed by a tap: [t̪ɾ] and [d̪ɾ], as in *trap* [t̪ɾæpʰ].

c) **Variable /ɹ/ realisation:** The /ɹ/ sound has a **strongly dark resonance**, and may vary between:
   - A post-alveolar approximant [ɹ], similar to RP, before stressed vowels, as in *red*.
   - A retroflex approximant [ɻ], similar to GA, in other contexts, as in *sorry*.

d) **Clear /l/:** The /l/ sound is consistently pronounced as a clear lateral approximant [l], as in *loyal* [l], [l].

e) **Other features:**
   - T-Slit: /t/ may be reduced to an apico-alveolar fricative [t̪], where the tongue tip does not make full contact with the alveolar ridge. This occurs in intervocalic positions and word-finally before a pause (e.g., *pity* or *root*), but not in *button* (before a syllabic nasal) or in *hit three* (before another consonant).
   - Affrication: In some Dublin varieties, final voiceless plosives may be affricated, as in *tap* [tæpɸ].

4.2.3. *Prosody*

The textbook (Trudgill & Hannah, p. 106, section 5.2.5) provides only limited information. Regarding **WORD STRESS**, Southern Irish English displays greater flexibility than RP. Words such as *recognize*, *discipline, architecture,* and *orchestra* may carry primary stress on syllables that do not correspond to the initial-stress pattern typically associated with RP.

Based on Wells (1982), the **INTONATION** of Southern Irish English is generally similar to that of RP. However, a distinguishing feature concerns yes/no questions, which often show a mild low-fall nuclear tone, in contrast to the low-rise pattern characteristic of RP.

4.2.4. *Phonotactic/lexical distribution differences*

Southern Irish English (SIE) displays a range of phonotactic and lexical distribution features that set it apart it from RP:

a) **Rhoticity**: SIE is a **rhotic** accent, meaning that /ɹ/ is pronounced in all phonetic contexts, including pre-consonantal and word-final positions. Consequently, *r*-liaison (linking and intrusive /ɹ/) is absent in connected speech.

b) **Word-final unstressed /iː/**: In SIE, words ending in *-y*, *-ee*, *-ie*, or *-ey* after one or more consonants are pronounced with **/iː/ (realised as [iˑ])**, as in *bab**y**, committ**ee**, Ann**ie*** or *eas**y***. This pattern also applies to compound words, stems, and inflected forms, such as *bell**y**button, happ**i**er*, *eas**i**est, news**i**ness*, *stud**i**ed, Lesl**ey**'s* or *cook**ie**s* (Source: JC Wells).

c) **/ɑː/ vs. /æ/**: In SIE, **RP words with /ɑː/ before voiceless fricatives** (e.g., *laugh*, *path*) or **nasal-consonant clusters** (e.g., *dance*, *plant*) are typically realised as /æ/ ([a]). In other contexts, the vowel generally corresponds to /aː/

d) **Weak Vowel Merger**: A merger between *schwa* (/ə/) and unstressed /ɪ/ occurs in **checked weak syllables in content words**, as in *bus**e**s, rabb**i**t*, *mak**i**ng* or *want**e**d*. In these contexts, /ə/ replaces /ɪ/. This development is becoming increasingly common and is also observed in Southern Hemisphere Englishes, as discussed in *UNIT 4_Theory.*

e) In Southern Irish English, **many content words spelled with *o*** and pronounced with /ɒ/ in RP **are realised with /ɔː/**, particularly **before voiceless fricatives and before /ŋ/**, as in *cl**o**th* or *l**o**ng*. This pattern also extends to words such as *j**o**b, d**o**g*, ***o**range* or *g**o**ne*.
In other phonetic environments, the realisation of these back vowels may vary, with alternation between /ɒ/ and /ɔː/. For the sake of consistency, the symbol /ɒ/ will be used in the transcription exercises in such cases.

f) **Yod-dropping**: In unstressed syllables it is particularly frequent, as in *ed**u**cation* /ˌɛduˈkeːʃn̩/. In the case of /n/ + /j/, yod-dropping appears more often than yod-coalescence even in stressed syllables, as in *n**u**de* (/nuːd/).

g) **Yod-coalescence:** In some varieties of SIE, particularly in the Dublin area, yod-coalescence is common in stressed syllables: The sequences /d/ + /j/ and /t/+ /j/ merge into /ʤ/ and /ʧ/, respectively, as in *dew* /ʤuː/ and *tune* /ʧuː/.

h) **Initial H-dropping**: Although **generally absent** in SIE, initial H-dropping may occur in auxiliaries and unstressed pronouns, following patterns found in other English varieties.

i) **Notable vowel variations**:

- *nurse, turn*: /ʊ/ instead of /ʌ/
- *book, cook*: /uː/ instead of /ʊ/
- *h**oa**rse, m**ou**rning*: /ɔː/ instead of /oː/
- ***a**ny, m**a**ny*: /æ/ instead of /ɛ/

Remember to include all these phonotactic and lexical distribution features when transcribing Southern Irish English!

Further details can be found in *Trudgill & Hannah* (pp. 105, section 5.2.3), recommended for optional reading.

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