

Week 18 (ii). Northern Ireland

1. The Plantation of Ulster, 1609: Scottish and English (Protestant) settlers were introduced amid a native population (Catholic) that spoke Irish Gaelic. The settlers spoke Scots dialect (“Scotch–Irish”) and English (“Ulster Hiberno–English”). Thereafter for some time English in Ulster remained cut off from English in southern Ireland (e.g. Dublin).

2. General characteristics.

- As in Scotland, no opposition between FOOT and GOOSE — merged in /u/.
- Vowel length follows the SVLR or developments from it.
- The dental fricatives /θ, ð/ are not plosive (compare southern Ireland). However,
 - (a) /t, d/ are sometimes dental before /r/;
 - (b) /ð/ is sometimes elided, or (Derry) replaced by (?realized as) [l].
- Fully rhotic; /l/ usually clear.
- Intonation is strikingly different from RP/southern Irish norms.
- Belfast and other urban speech represent an amalgam of Scots and Hiberno–English, with no sharp Catholic/Protestant distinctions.

3. **System.** FOOT–GOOSE merged as /u/; TRAP–PALM merged as /a/; LOT–THOUGHT merged as /ɔ/. But FOOT words may have variants with /ʌ/.

<i>Vowel length in monosyllables</i>	i, u, o	ɪ, ʌ	e, ε, a, ɔ
before p, t, tʃ, k	short	short	short
before f, θ, s, ʃ, b, d, dʒ, g, m, n, ŋ, l	short	short	long
before v, ð, z, r, #	long	short	long

polysyllables: *tenor* [ɛ] vs. *tenner* [ɛ:]

4. Vowel quality.

- In most of Ulster, /e/ (FACE) is [e(:)]. But in Belfast it has allophones [ɛ:] in open syllables, [iə] etc. in closed syllables. Hence *days* [dɛ:z] ≠ *daze* [diəz].
- /u/ may have little lip–rounding; lax when short, tense when long, always centralized, and still fronter after /j/; opener before /r/.
- /ɪ/ ranges to almost open, [æ̃].
- /ε, a/ often neutralized before or after a velar.
- /ε, a, ɔ/ may (almost) overlap in popular Belfast: *pet*, *pat*, *pot* may sound identical.
- MOUTH may be [əʊ] or (Belfast) [aʊ, aɪ].