Facultade de Filoloxía

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesa

Traballo de Fin de Grao

A study of Irish English and its characterisation in the TV series *Normal People*

Autora: Lucía Sabarís Pazos

Titora: Susana María Doval Suárez

Liña temática: Variedades do inglés (World Englishes)

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Título: A study of Irish English and its characterisation in the TV series *Normal People*.

Resumo

This work seeks to provide a description of the sociolinguistic situation and a linguistic characterization of English in Ireland, focusing on Irish English (IrE) or Hiberno-English. The aim is to combine a theoretical approach with an analysis of how the variety is represented in *Normal People*, a TV mini-series adapted from Sally Rooney's novel. This study is motivated by the depiction of Hiberno-English identity and its subvarieties.

The dissertation will be divided into two sections: the first section will address the theoretical aspects, concentrating on the sociolinguistic context and linguistic characteristics of the variety and subvarieties. Moreover, this part includes an analysis of the variety based on an examination of the various theoretical frameworks for describing World Englishes such as Kachru (1985) or Schneider (2007). It will then examine the linguistic features of Hiberno-English within the context of Ireland, exploring its potential connections with the two main reference varieties and its relationship with other World Englishes.

The second part of the dissertation will include an analysis of the characterization of the variety in the TV series *Normal People*. This description will encompass various linguistic levels, including phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical aspects. Moreover, it will explore the language choices made in the series, focussing on how they align with or diverge from the actual linguistic diversity within Ireland, particularly in relation to Hiberno-English subvarieties and the broader spectrum of World Englishes.

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SRA. PRESIDENTA DA COMISIÓN DO TRABALLO DE FIN DE GRAO

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Un estudo do inglés irlandés e a súa caracterización na serie de televisión *Normal People*

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A study of Irish English and its characterisation in the TV series *Normal People*

Abstract

This work seeks to provide a description of the sociolinguistic situation and a linguistic characterisation of English in Ireland, focusing on Irish English (IrE) or Hiberno-English. The aim is to combine a theoretical approach with an analysis of how the variety is represented in Normal People (2020), a TV mini-series adapted from Sally Rooney's novel (2018). This study is motivated by the depiction of Hiberno-English identity and its subvarieties. The dissertation will be divided into two sections: the first section will address the theoretical aspects, concentrating on the sociolinguistic context and linguistic characteristics of the variety and subvarieties. Moreover, this part includes an analysis of the variety based on an examination of the various theoretical frameworks for describing World Englishes, such as Kachru (1985) or Schneider (2007). It will then examine the linguistic features of Hiberno-English within the context of Ireland, exploring its potential connections with the two main reference varieties and its relationship with other World Englishes. The second part of the dissertation will include an analysis of the characterisation of the variety in the TV series Normal People (2020). This description will encompass various linguistic levels, including phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical aspects. Moreover, it will explore the language choices made in the series, focusing on how they align with or diverge from the actual linguistic diversity within Ireland, particularly concerning Hiberno-English subvarieties and the broader spectrum of World Englishes.

Keywords: Irish English, Hiberno-English, World Englishes, sociolinguistics, *Normal People*.

List of Abbreviations

BrE	British English
CSO	Central Statistics Office
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ENL	English as a Native Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
EWave	Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English
GA	General American
IrE	Irish English
IPA	International Phonemic Alphabet
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MIrE	Middle Irish English
ModIrE	Modern Irish English
NIrE	Northern Irish English
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
PDIrE	Present Day Irish English
WEs	World Englishes

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1. Introduction

The objective of this dissertation is to provide an analysis of the variety of Irish English (IrE) in the series *Normal People* (2020), studying the different characters and paying attention to how gender, age and social class affect language. Although English is currently the first language (L1) spoken in Ireland, this has not always been the case. IrE has evolved into a distinctive variety of English spoken throughout the country. The development reflects centuries of linguistic history, largely shaped by British colonisation and legal measures such as the Penal Laws, which encouraged a language shift (Hickey, 2007a, p. 37).

The IrE variety, as every variety, reflects the identity of its speakers: phonological patterns, syntactic structures, and lexical choices reveal much about an individual's regional background and social class. In postcolonial Ireland, using IrE can also serve as a form of resistance to the British standard norm. Exploring these linguistic features provides a clearer understanding of the people living in Ireland and the social forces that shape their speech.

Moreover, this variety of English is highly relevant to study the importance of the spread of English, as many inhabitants of Ireland were deported to former colonies. For this reason, Ireland is regarded as one of the starting points from which English speakers spread across the world (Cambria, 2014, p. 20). The English spoken in Ireland contributed to the development of certain features in many other English varieties abroad. Consequently, it has played a crucial role in the global diffusion of English (Hickey, 2007a, p.1). This highlights how IrE is not only relevant as a national variety but its study can be used to explore other World Englishes (WEs).

This variety of English has been studied by multiple authors (Filppula, 2004; Hickey, 2004a, 2007a; Kallen, 2013; Van Hattum, 2012), who focus on terminology issues, features, history or subvarieties of IrE. However, the aim of this dissertation is to offer a representation of these characteristics in a TV series that targets a younger generation. To this end, the

dissertation is divided into two main parts: the literature review in section 2 and the study in section 3.

The first part of the literature review (section 2.1) will address the issue of terminology in IrE, as various terms are commonly used to refer to this variety. Adopting a neutral and inclusive terminology is essential for this dissertation, which aims to encompass all forms of English spoken in Ireland and acknowledge the full range of linguistic expressions across the country.

The subsequent section (2.2) presents a classification following the different models of English. Over the past decades, linguists (including Quirk (1985), Kachru (1985) Görlach (1990), McArthur (1987) and Schneider (2007)) have aimed to categorise English varieties to better understand the global development of English.

Section 2.3 provides a historical background to examine how IrE has developed through various influential factors: language contact, British colonisation, and the legal measures affecting its evolution. This general overview situates the study within an essential context for understanding the features that will be discussed in later sections.

The literature review includes a section (2.4) discussing the key features of phonology, grammar, syntax, and lexicon. This offers a general framework for the subsequent analysis of the characteristics of the variety represented in the series. The last section explores the different sub-varieties within Ireland (section 2.5).

Finally, the second part of the dissertation (section 3) presents the study, based on the analysis of the twelve episodes that make up the series *Normal People* (2020). The analysis involves the systematic identification of relevant linguistic features categorised into three broad groups: phonological, grammatical and lexical features and relating them to sociolinguistic factors such as age, class or gender.

2. Review of the literature

2.1. Terminological issues

While developing a dissertation on IrE, many issues regarding terminology arise, and this issue has been debated in previous studies, particularly Hickey's (2004b, 2005, 2007a). There is no widely accepted designation for the variety of English spoken in Ireland and scholars have not reached a consensus on a single term for it (Hickey, 2007a, p. 3). Various terms, such as *Anglo-Irish*, *Hiberno-English* and *Irish English* have been proposed, each of them carrying specific implications.

Authors like Hickey (2007a, p. 3; 2007b, p. 1) or Van Hattum (2012, p. 23) argue that the term *Anglo-Irish* to refer to this variety of English in Ireland is not linguistically appropriate. This term originally refers to people of English origin or descent living in Ireland (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), making it tied to a particular historical context. As a result, it excludes many speakers by restricting their identity to that specific group. Moreover, it can also be argued that it suggests an English variety of Irish rather than an Irish-influenced variety (Hickey, 2007a, p. 3; 2005, p. 20), thereby failing to adequately reflect the linguistic variation and external influences present in the country.

Hiberno-English derives from the word *Hibernian*, the Latin name for Ireland. It began to gain wider usage and more significance in the mid-1970s (Hickey, 2007a, p. 4). However, this term is not the most accurate label for the variety of English spoken in Ireland, as it does not clearly indicate the location where the variety is spoken.Nevertheless, Irish authors and scholars like Kiberd (1995) have used this term, which implies a certain degree of acceptance within the Irish community.

Irish English (IrE) is generally regarded as the most accurate term to refer to the variety of English spoken within the community. It parallels the designations used for other

varieties and it is easy to differentiate from other terms (Hickey, 2004b, p. 68). As it provides a neutral framework, this term will be used throughout this dissertation.

2.2. Classification following the models of W*orld Englishes* (WEs)

In this section of the dissertation, I will classify IrE based on various models that emerged in linguistic studies during the 1980s. By understanding the position of English varieties, one can grasp how scholars and speakers perceive them, which is crucial for examining the linguistic situation in the country. This section outlines how the work should approach an in-depth analysis of IrE in relation to other global varieties.

2.2.1. Quirk's (1985) model

The first model for the classification of WEs that I will consider was introduced by Quirk (1985), and it is based on a third-party distinction discussed earlier by Strang (1970). According to this division, ENL (English as a Native Language) countries are those where English is spoken as a native language; ESL (English as a Second Language) countries are those in which English serves as a medium of communication and coexists with other languages; and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) countries are those where English is primarily restricted to international communication (Quirk, 1985, pp. 1-2).

Based on this information, it can be concluded that IrE belongs to the first group, as nowadays it is the native language of the country, and it is spoken by the majority of the population. It should be noted that IrE can be considered a variety of English spoken natively in Ireland, and that it differs from other standard varieties such as British English (BrE) in terms of grammar, phonetics or lexicon. Therefore, it could be argued that this classification does not specifically account for IrE.

2.2.2. Kachru's (1985) model

Kachru (1985, pp. 12-14) introduced a sociolinguistic classification based on three concentric circles. The inner circle refers to the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English, the

outer circle represents the institutionalised non-native varieties in regions that experienced extended periods of colonisation, and the expanding circle includes regions where English is used as a foreign language (EFL).

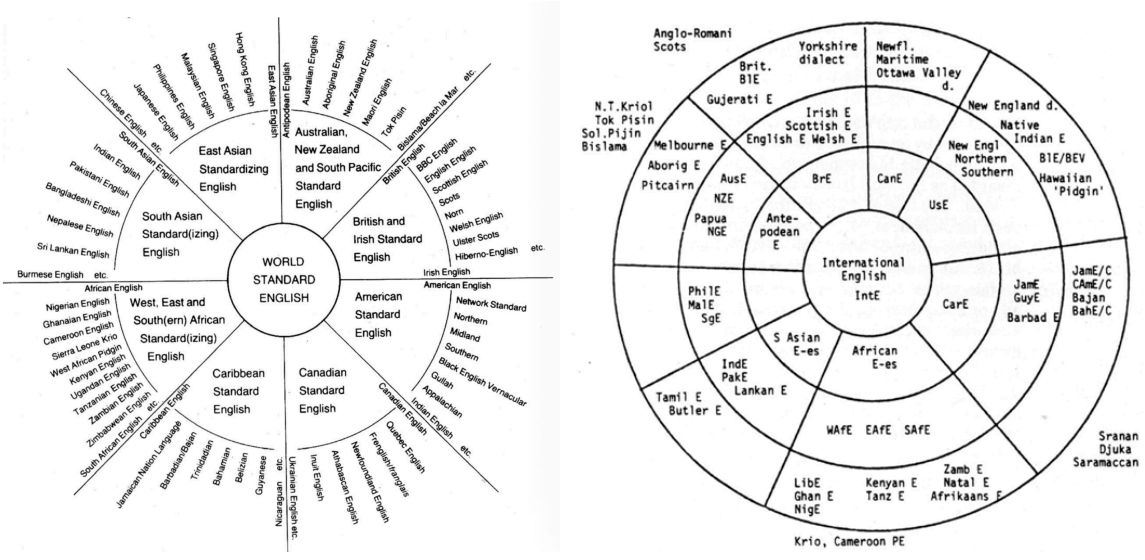
IrE could be included in the inner circle; however, this inclusion requires a historical explanation. Typically, Kachru (1985) includes only native varieties of English in this circle (e.g., British or American English), leading to the same problem as in Quirk's (1985) model. For this reason, it should be noted that this inclusion may be because the spread of IrE over the decades and its institutionalisation (see section 2.3.) suggest that English is embedded in the structures of the country, thus allowing us to consider IrE as an inner circle variety.

2.2.3. Two visual models: Görlach (1990) and McArthur (1987)

Görlach's (1990) and McArthur's (1987) models are similar as they represent a circle divided into different sections. Figure 1 effectively describes these two models of the classification of IrE within the paradigm of WEs.

Figure 1

McArthur's (1987) and Görlach's (1990) model (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008, pp. 28-29)



Görlach's model (1990) describes IrE as a variety within BrE, basing his classification on historical factors related to the development of IrE through British colonisation. However, McArthur (1987) previously placed BrE alongside IrE at the same level.

The contrast between these two models reflects the two main factors that authors consider when describing how IrE is perceived worldwide. Authors like Görlach (1990) include IrE within BrE, classifying it as a regional variety. Both varieties share a common ancestry and appear to form part of a dialect continuum, a term used to describe a chain of dialects spoken across a region, also known as a 'dialect chain' (Crystal, 2008, p. 144). Conversely, other scholars (McArthur, 1987) treat IrE as a distinct variety because they focus on the grammatical, phonological and lexical features. These academics emphasise the significant impact that IrE has had on the development of a new English variety.

2.2.4. Schneider's Dynamic Model (2007)

Schneider (2007) proposed a model to explore how different WEs evolve in former colonies, differentiating five phases: *imposition*, *exonormative stabilization*, *nativization*, *endonormative stabilization* and *differentiation*. However, the classification of IrE applying Schneider's model presents difficulties.

Remm (2023) and Cambria (2014) explore the complex positioning of IrE within this model. Ireland represents a unique case, as it was colonised earlier than any other British territory, which makes the classification of its linguistic development particularly challenging (Remm, 2023, p. 2). It is unclear whether the colonial process followed in Ireland was one of displacement or domination, and the resulting colonial legacy is particularly profound in the country (Cambria, 2014, p. 20). Moreover, the Dynamic Model does not account for the importance of the indigenous language strand after the nativisation stage (Remm, 2023, p. 2); in other words, it fails to address the fate of the Irish language and its role in shaping identity.

2.2.5. The EWave atlas

The EWave (Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English) classifies IrE as a high-contact L1 of the British Isles. The varieties in this category are defined by significant interaction either among different English dialects or between English and other languages (Kortmann et al., 2020). EWave distinguishes three types of high-contact L1 English varieties, categorising IrE as a *language-shift* English. In such varieties, English has replaced the native language and is spoken by L1 and L2 speakers. Currently, IrE is notably grown in the country, with very few remaining L2 speakers (see section 2.3.1.3).

2.3. Historical background

This section provides a broad overview of IrE, focusing on how historical influences contributed to the emergence of a distinct variety. Although the introduction of English to Ireland and the contact between the two languages are not the central focus of this dissertation, it is essential to contextualise the environment in which IrE developed. Analysing the features of IrE would not be possible without considering its historical background, which accounts for several linguistic features that can be found in the variety today. Moreover, it is important to note that not all the influential events can be addressed in this dissertation, as its scope is to provide a general overview.

2.3.1. Chronology

The chronological development of IrE follows a distinct classification compared to the periods used to categorise other languages such as Irish or English. Irish was the dominant language spoken by most of the population in Ireland when the English arrived, maintaining this position until the mid-nineteenth century (Van Hattum, 2012, p. 36). This indicates that there is a key turning point in English as a variety in Ireland. For this reason, many linguists have stated that IrE can be divided into two main periods: the first beginning in the late 12th

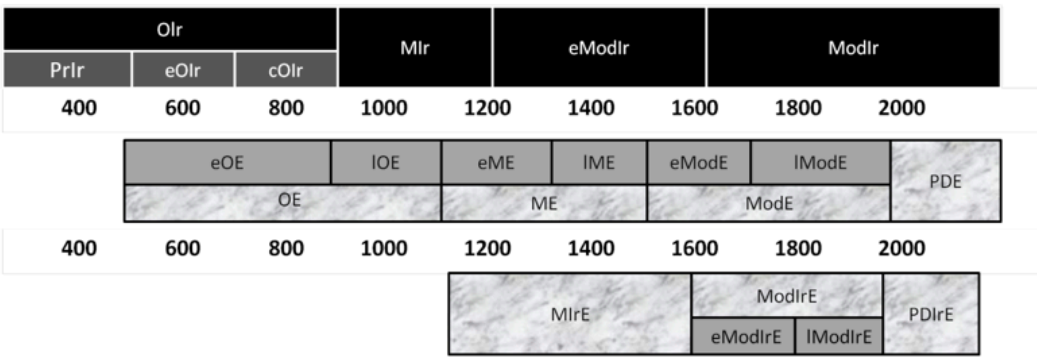
century and the second beginning around 1600, following the renewal of English in Ireland after the Battle of Kinsale in 1601 (Hickey, n.d.).

Van Hattum (2012, p. 24) divided the chronology of Irish into four approximate periods: Old Irish (ca. 600-900 AD), Middle Irish (ca. 900-1200 AD), Early-Modern Irish (ca. 1200-1650 AD) and Modern Irish (1650-present); while English is typically categorised into Old English (ca. 450-1066 AD), Middle English (ca. 1066-1500 AD), Modern English (ca. 1500-1650 AD) and Present-Day English (ca. 1650-present).

The division of IrE, however, is still being discussed. Van Hattum (2012, p. 25) challenges the periodisation proposed by Hickey, who divides IrE into two main periods. He argues that Hickey does not account for the developments of IrE since the 17th century and proposes different labels: Medieval Irish English (ca. 1169-1600), Early Modern Irish English (ca. 1600-1850), Late Modern Irish English (ca. 1850-1990) and Present-day Irish English (from 1990 onwards). Given that the labels proposed by Van Hattum (2012) provide a basic framework, I chose to use them as a guide in this dissertation, fusing early Modern Irish English and Late Modern Irish English into one broad section called 'Modern Irish English'.

Figure 2

Chronologies proposed by Van Hattum (2012, p. 25)



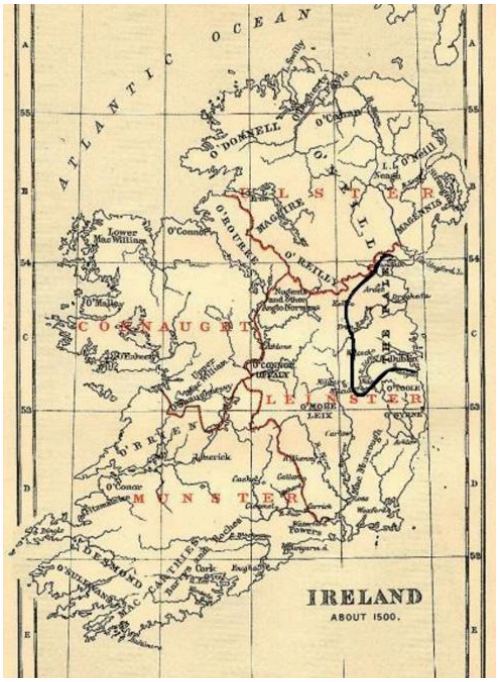
2.3.1.1. Medieval Irish English (MIrE)

English was first introduced to Ireland in the late 12th century when the Anglo-Normans arrived at the island. Ireland was characterised by the coexistence of four distinct languages: Latin, English, Irish, and Norman-French (Hickey, 2007a, p. 345). The Irish language spoken by the indigenous population held a strong status, making the imposition of the English language a difficult task: Irish was the language of prestige in literature, politics, and everyday conversations (Van Hattum, 2012, p. 36). The imposition was hindered by several economic and political difficulties in the Anglo-Norman colony, leading to the Gaelicisation of the population in the 14th and 15th centuries (Filppula, 1999, p. 4; Hickey, 2007a, p. 32), the process by which the Anglo-Normans adopted the language and culture of the native Irish population (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.-a). Gaelicisation alarmed the authorities, and as a result, the Statute of Kilkenny (1366) was imposed, a law sought to dominate the Irish language by imposing severe penalties on those who spoke it (Trask, 1995). Despite these measures, Irish remained the language of the majority of the population (Van Hattum, 2012, p. 39).

In this context, the area where English had the most prominence was known as *The Pale*. This term refers to a region stretching approximately from Dalkey to Dundalk (see Figure 3) that was under the direct control of the British during the Late Middle Ages. As a result, The Pale was one of the only areas where English was spoken (Kallen, 2013, p. 18). Moreover, English was acutely felt in this area since there was more political control (Hickey, 2007a, p. 32). The Pale varied in size and was not delimited in absolute terms but remained as the epicentre of the English Language in Ireland, ensuring a connection with England (Kallen, 2013, p. 18). It can also be said that it served as a frontier, functioning as a liminal space in between Ireland and England.

Figure 3

The Pale (Van Hattum 2012, p. 39)



During this period, the spread of English reached its lowest point in the first half of the sixteenth century (Hickey, 2007a, p. 33), with English continuing to be predominantly resilient in the Pale. The revival of Gaelic culture in the sixteenth century also contributed to a decline of the English influence. As Hickey (2011, p. 4) stated, stable bilingualism was not an attainable scenario for the Irish population, showing the cultural resistance to English language.

The earlier attestations of IrE from the Medieval period can be found in the Kildare Poems, which probably dates from the 14th century (Hickey, 2004b, p. 69; Hickey, n.d.). In this collection of poems, an intermediate language is found, created by blending all the dialects spoken by the different early English settlers.

2.3.1.2. Modern Irish English (ModIrE)

The ModIrE period, spanning from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, was marked by an extensive period of language contact between Irish and English, with bilingualism gradually extending throughout this period (Van Hattum, 2012, p. 26). ModIrE period begins with the English victory in the Battle of Kinsale (1601), where they defeated the Irish rebels and lords. This solidified English control over the territory, leading to a more direct rule and the extension of English culture and laws. Eight years later, a major colonisation effort began: the Plantation of Ulster (Hickey, n.d.). These Plantations involved the confiscation of land by the English, followed by the colonisation of this land with settlers. The plantations paved the way for the spread of the English language, and written English began to be used for official matters by the English, the Anglo-Irish and the Irish (Van Hattum, 2012, p. 44). The settlements can be considered as one of the major factors for the development of English in the isle; they had "the greatest consequences in terms of anglicisation" (Hickey, 2007a, p. 35).

The eModIrE period is marked by the imposition of the Penal Laws in the eighteenth century, when Ireland saw a gradual decline of Irish. These laws were a set of regulations designed to limit Catholic political involvement and land ownership, as well as to restrict the activities of the Catholic Church, including education (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.-b). The regulations contributed to the destabilisation of Gaelic society, which allowed for the advancement of the English language in Ireland (Kallen, 2013, p. 28).

The nineteenth century started with the political union of Ireland and England (1801), which had no instant linguistic impact in the country (Hickey, 2007a, p. 45). It was during the Great Famine (1845- 1852), however, that the language shift towards English became more pronounced as observed by Hickey (2007a, p. 46). The famine resulted in the loss of

approximately two million native speakers of Irish (a quarter of the population) primarily due to starvation or emigration (Hickey, 2007a, p. 47).

2.3.1.3. Present-Day Irish English (PDIrE) and the future of the variety

Nowadays, the predominant language in Ireland is IrE. In 2022, Irish was spoken by 1.873.997 people, but only 10 percent of those spoke Irish very well (Central Statistics Office, 2023). Despite this, Irish is limited to educational settings, with few people using it as their first language, even though Irish is recognized as the country's first language in the constitution. However, as Hickey (2012, p. 98) points out, many individuals still claim that Irish is their native language even if their command of it is quite poor.

The future of IrE is uncertain, although several scholars have identified distinctive features that may continue to spread. Hickey (2007b, p. 12) argues that IrE will not retain features of earlier varieties, since Dublin English pronunciation is becoming widespread among young people. Emigration and large-scale immigration could contribute to the disappearance of features associated with IrE. Estimates for the number of non-Irish currently living in Ireland vary, but it is believed that nearly 632,000 foreign citizens reside in the country (Gilmartin & Murphy, 2024).

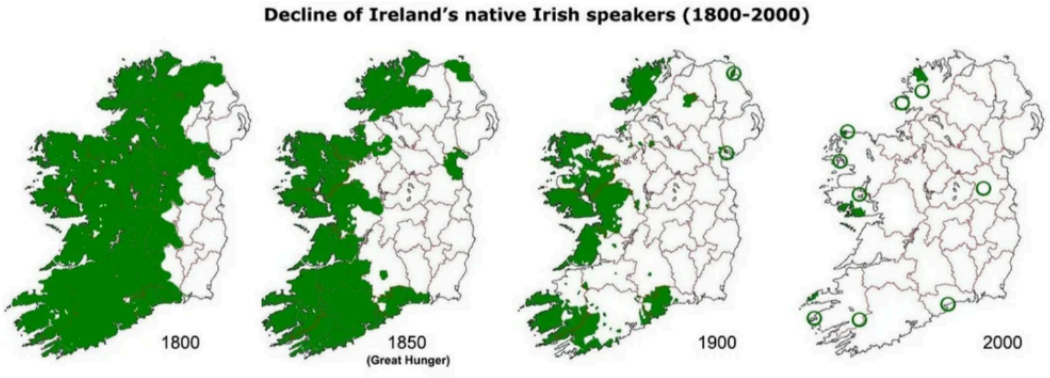
2.3.2. Influence of English and The Language Shift

As already mentioned, the introduction of the English language in Ireland led to the slow suppression of the Irish language. English grew as the language of power, which forced many Irish speakers to finally adopt English. Ó Cuív (1951, as cited in Filppula, 1999, p. 10) stated that widespread bilingualism was a transitional phase that first relegated Irish to a secondary role and eventually caused a complete replacement by English. He illustrated the stages were as follows: Irish only, Irish and English, English and Irish, and finally, English (cf. Figure 4). Over time, Irish was integrated into the English lexicon, structure and pronunciation. The

language contact between Irish and English has shaped the characteristics of IrE, as will be explored in section 2.4.

Figure 4

Decline of IrE from the 19th century onwards



Note. Retrieved from Reddit (2025) https://shorturl.at/ssrAm

The mechanism by which English became the dominant language to the detriment of Irish is called 'language shift', which can be defined as a process by which a community replaces one language by another (Grenoble, 2021). The linguistic shift in Ireland was a prolonged period that historians state could have lasted almost three centuries, from the 17th century to the 20th century approximately. Based on this timeline, it can be inferred that the shift occurred relatively fast (Filppula, 1999, p. 15), with English and Irish coexisting in a bilingual environment for an extended period. This process led to distinctive features in IrE which emphasise the uniqueness of the language, symbolising the persistence of Irish heritage in nowadays culture. Since the independence of Ireland in 1922 Irish is restricted to an area called the Gaeltacht, including Ulster, Connacht and Munster (Kearns, 1974, p. 82).

2.4. Features of the variety

2.4.1. Phonology

This section provides a general overview of the most relevant phonetic aspects of IrE. Its phonology is largely continuous with other Englishes (Kallen, 2013, p. 47), but it is highly influenced by Irish. Bliss (1984, p .135) discusses how, during the language shift, Irish speakers reproduced vowel sounds based on their phonemic system. The situation was further shaped by influences from English, Scots and Scottish (Wells, 1982, p. 417). There is not a standard pronunciation of IrE, and it encompasses a wide range of regional and social varieties. For this reason, it is essential to understand that this section will establish a general frame-work and specific characteristics will be explored when examining the selected TV series.

2.4.1.1. Vowels

Wells (1982) systematized the lexical sets of English vowels to establish a common reference that facilitates the classification of vowels across different accents (cf. Figure 5). The differences of IrE vowels are primarily attributed to the conservative character of IrE (Hickey, 2007a, p. 316).

Figure 5

System of lexical sets (Wells, 1982, p. 120)

KIT	ɪ	FLEECE	iː	NEAR	ɪə
DRESS	e	FACE	eɪ	SQUARE	ɛə
TRAP	æ	PALM	ɑː	START	ɑː
LOT	ɒ	THOUGHT	ɔː	NORTH	ɔː
STRUT	ʌ	GOAT	əʊ	FORCE	ɔː
FOOT	ʊ	GOOSE	uː	CURE	ʊə
BATH	ɑː	PRICE	aɪ	*happ*Y	ɪ
CLOTH	ɒ	CHOICE	ɔɪ	*lett*ER	ə
NURSE	ɜː	MOUTH	aʊ	*comm*A	ə

IrE is considered a rhotic accent since the /r/ is pronounced in all positions. In other accents, such as RP, non-rhoticity resulted in the appearance of centering diphthongs like /ɪə/, /eə/ and /ʊə/, but IrE does not exhibit them. Moreover, the rhoticity in Ireland has had unique consequences in this accent, as IrE preserves almost the complete range of vowel oppositions before /r/ (Hickey, 1989, p. 45): IrE maintains contrasts between vowels in contexts where other dialects might merge them. For instance, the lack of the *horse-hoarse* merger, since Ireland shows differentiation between /ɔːr/ and /oʊr/ and preserving the distinction between /ɛr/ and /ʊr/ as in *earn* /ɛrn/ and *urn* /ʊrn/ (Hickey, 2007a, p. 317). Therefore, many words that are homophones in other dialects could be minimal pairs in IrE. Other features that can be noted regarding vowels are illustrated in Table 1, which can be compared to the vowels presented by Wells in 1982 (Figure 5).

Table 1

Characteristics of IrE vowels, adapted from (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, chap. 5)

Feature	Example
/æ/ vs /a:/ distinction	*bad* [æ], *path* [a:]
/ú/ vs /ä/ distinction	*foot* [ú], *strut* [ä]
Pot and *paw* vowels	*pot* [ɒ], *paw* [ɔ:]
Hoarse, *mourning* pronunciation	*hoarse* [ɔ:], *mourning* [ɔ:]
Nurse pronunciation	*nurse* [nʊrs]
Pair pronunciation	*pair* [pʌr]
Book, *cook*, *rook* vowels	*book* [u:], *cook* [u:]
Many, *any* pronunciation	*many* [mæni:], *any* [mæni:]
/ɒ/ vs /ɔ:/ distinction	*dog* [ɔ:], *doll* [ɔ:], *wrong* [ɔ:]

2.4.1.2. Consonants

a. Rhoticity

As previously noted, IrE is a rhotic accent in which the /r/ is pronounced in initial, medial and final positions. This implies that there is no linking or intrusive /r/ since these features are typical of non-rhotic varieties of English.

b. The coronal group

One of the most relevant features that distinguishes IrE from other varieties is the production of certain coronal consonants that are articulated using the tip and blade of the tongue, including /θ, ð, t, d, s, z/ (Kallen, 2013, p. 50). However, other coronal consonants, such as /n, r, l, ʧ, ʤ/ show little variation (Hickey, 1984, p. 234).

The first pair of consonants /θ, ð/ are rarely used in IrE. One possible phonemic realisation of these phonemes is as stops, known as th-stopping. It involves the realisation of the dental fricatives as stops (either dental or alveolar). One possible explanation for this characteristic is the contact with Irish, as dental stops are also found in the language (Hickey, 2007a, p. 318).

The phoneme /t/ presents several realisations that vary in different environments. IrE speakers may make use of a glottal stop [ʔ] (e.g., butter as [bʌʔə]) (Kallen, 2013, p. 52). Other IrE speakers make use of a voiced tap [ɾ] (Hickey, 2004b, p. 84), for instance, *better* pronounced as [ˈbɛɾə˞][1]. However, one of the most distinctive features of IrE is the realisation of /t/ as a fricative (slit fricative) in words like *matter* [ˈmaṭə˞], represented by the allophone [ṭ]. Finally, the pair /s/ and /z/ are often palatalised into /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ as an influence of Irish (Kallen, 2013, p. 58).

c. Yod-dropping and yod-coalescence

IrE presents both yod-coalescence (Wells, 1982) and yod-dropping (Kallen, 2013, p. 47). On the one hand, yod-dropping refers to the elision of the phoneme /j/, particularly when it follows certain consonants such as /n/, /l/ and /s/ (*new* /nu:/). On the other hand, yod-coalescence is the phonological process by which two different segments occurring in sequence within a single linguistic form combine into a single segment (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.-c). Yod-coalescence implies the fusing of the clusters /dj, tj, sj and zj/ into the sibilants [dʒ, tʃ, ʃ, ʒ]. As stated by Hickey (2007a, p. 361) this happens particularly with the phonemes /t/ and /d/ (*shoulder* /ˈsoʊldʒər/).

d. Lack of H-dropping

H-dropping is not present in the north and south of Ireland (Hickey, 2007a, p. 322). This feature refers to the omission of the /h/ sound in the initial position. It sometimes happens in IrE, even when in the standard /h/ is not pronounced (*him* /ɪm/).

e. Alveolar /l/

[1] Studies show that these pronunciations can vary due to extra-linguistic factors such as gender or style. For instance, men use the voiced tap more often in informal contexts and women use glottal stops in casual speech (Kallen, 2013, p. 52).

Generally, in IrE, the velarised /l/ also called dark [ɬ] cannot be found, which is found across many WE varieties. This phoneme is realised as a clear /l/ in all positions: initial, final and medial position (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, chap. 5). The source of this feature connects with the fact that the English introduced in Ireland did not present the dark [ɬ] (Ó Baoill, 1991, p. 585).

f. Distinction between /ʍ/ and /w/

In IrE, the sound /ʍ/ is retained, also known as a voiceless labiovelar approximant in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). With that, some words are pronounced like a voiced labiovelar approximant [w] and others as voiceless [ʍ] (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, chap. 5).

2.4.2. Grammar, morphology and syntax

In this section the key grammatical and morphological features of IrE will be discussed, focusing on how they differ from standard varieties such as BrE. The analysis will be supported by resources such as eWave and scholarly research. It is important to note that the morphology and syntax of IrE follow the patterns found in other Englishes of the British Isles (Filppula, 2004, p. 73), but some features do not correspond to the standards of English.

2.4.2.1. Pronouns and relativisation

One of the most salient features regarding pronouns is the morphological distinction made in the second person pronouns, in contrast to the standard use of *you* for the singular and plural. Some examples of special forms are the use of *youse*, *yous*, *y'all* or *you guys* for the plural and *ye* for the singular (Kortmann et al., 2020). In IrE, the pronoun *them* can be found as a demonstrative or determinative (Filppula 2004, p. 92) while in standard BrE *them* has the function of object.

(1) *One of **them** things* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

(2) ***Them** was cornstacks* (Filppula, 2004, p. 92)

Speakers tend to use reflexive pronouns without the need of presenting a referent in the clause.

(3) ***Himself*** *is gone to Dublin* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

(4) *If* ***himself*** *wouldn't make him laugh* (Filppula, 2004, p. 93)

Moreover, in IrE, distinctive forms of reflexive and possessive pronouns exist. For instance, object pronouns often serve as the basis for reflexives, such as *meself* for *myself* (Kortmann et al., 2020). Additionally, in some cases, object pronouns (e.g., *me*, *us*) may substitute possessive pronouns (e.g., *my*, *our*).

(5) *I've lost* ***me*** *bike* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

Finally, the frequent omission of relative pronouns can be highlighted (Brinton & Arnovick 2017 p. 484)

2.5.2.2. Negation

IrE exhibits particular characteristics concerning negation. In the first place, some examples of the use of *never* as a preverbal past tense negator are found.

(6) *He* ***never*** *went there* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

(7) *I* ***never*** *went till it yet* (Filppula, 2004, p. 75)

IrE presents negative concord as most of the non-standard varieties of English. This feature refers to the presence of two or more negative items in the same clause but conveying one single negation.

(8) *He won't do* ***no*** *harm* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

(10) *You've* ***not*** *heard of that nothing* (Filppula, 2004, p. 82)

Moreover, Filppula (2004, p. 82) states that IrE exhibits a 'failure of negative attraction'. This phenomenon happens in standard English when negation moves to non-assertive pronouns like *everyone* or *anyone* as seen in constructions like *anyone doesn't go* instead of *no one*

goes. In such cases, indefinite subjects incorporate sentence negation (Hickey, 2007a, p. 271). However, this process does not always take place in IrE.

Special forms of negation that are uncommon in standard varieties of English such as the use of (-)*nae* as a negating particle are also found (Filppula, 2004, p. 83).

(11) *There were **nae** motors, or…* (Filppula, 2004, p. 83)

Finally, there are examples of the negative must in contexts where Standard English would mark negation with the modal *can*. An IrE speaker would use the negative form of *must* for the same purpose (Brinton & Arnovick 2017, p. 484).

2.4.2.3. Relativisation

In terms of relativisation, IrE does not differ significantly from other varieties of English: it presents the *wh*- relative pronouns, the zero relative construction, *that*-clauses and the conjunction and as a relative or quasi-relative (Filppula, 2004, p. 84).

(12)*There is the man **and** he stole my bike.*

Another important feature of IrE is the use of resumption pronouns, which are elements that appear at the end of the relative clause, especially where Standard English would use locative or possessive prepositions (Kortmann et al., 2020).

(13) *They have a house in Dublin that I don't think I could ever afford to live in **it***

(Kortmann et al., 2020).

2.4.2.4. The verb

In IrE, the form *was* is often used in place of the conditional were (Kortmann et al., 2020). This feature is found in various non-standard varieties of English, as it is often regarded as an error in standard English.

It is habitual to find *do + V* constructions for habitual actions (see Examples 14, 15) and this variety also showcases the use of the progressive form with stative verbs (see Example 16).

(14) *He **does sing*** (Brinton & Arnovick 2017, p. 484)

(15) *Don't* be guessing *or don't be doubting* (Filppula, 2004, p. 80)

(16) *She **is** liking chocolate* (Brinton & Arnovick 2017, p. 484)

The perfective aspect presents interesting features that distinguish IrE from other varieties. In the first place, the use of the after-perfect (Kortmann et al., 2020), construction that consists of a form of *be*, followed by the preposition *after* and a verb in the *-ing* form. The after-perfect is the most stereotypical form and is often avoided in more formal contexts (Filppula, 2004, p. 76).

(17) *I'm **after seeing** him* (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017 chap. 5)

(18) *You're **after ruinin'** me* (Filppula, 2004, p. 75)

In addition, the levelling of the distinction between the present perfect and the simple past is noted, leading to the use of the simple past in contexts where standard English would typically use the present perfect (Kortmann et al., 2020).

(19) *How long are you here?* (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017 chap. 5)

(20) *If I saw her, he would not have done it.* (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017 chap. 5)

Finally, in continuative constructions, the perfect form is often replaced by the simple present highlighting the tendency to avoid perfect constructions (Kortmann et al., 2020).

(21) *I live in this city since 2010.* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

Regarding the use of auxiliary verbs, IrE presents differences compared to other varieties. First, the verb be *can* function as an auxiliary verb instead of the auxiliary *have* (Hickey, 2007a).

(22) *He **can** gone to town.*

Another notable feature is the use of the verb have without the auxiliary *got* (Filppula, 2004, p. 81). Additionally, the auxiliary *shall* is largely absent in IrE, with *would* being used more frequently instead (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017 chap. 5). Finally, *ought to* is often avoided and replaced by other modal verbs (Filppula, 2004, p. 81).

2.4.2.5. The article

In IrE there are different uses of the definite article. First, the use of the definite article in contexts where Standard English would typically use an indefinite article, even without prior reference.

(23) *I went to the store* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

In the second place, the use of the definite article where in Standard English the absence of the article or zero article is favored.

(24) *The children love music* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

Demonstratives are also different in IrE, as the demonstrative determiner *those* is sometimes replaced by the object pronoun them, a feature common in other WEs.

(25) *I love them shoes* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

2.4.2.6. Agreement and complementation

Kortmann et al. (2020) state that, regarding the grammatical correspondence between pairs, the most salient feature of IrE is the use of an existential or presentational *there* with a singular verb *to be* when referring to plural subjects despite being quite common in other varieties of English.

(26) *There's two pencils in this table* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

Instead of using the-*ing* form of a verb after for when expressing purpose, in unsplit constructions, *for* is followed by the to-infinitive (Kortmann et al., 2020).

(27) *We always had gutters in the winter time for to drain the water away.* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

Moreover, the use of as what/that in comparative clauses must be highlighted. In StE the expected structure is *than + subject + verb* but in IrE some speakers use as *what* or *than what*.

(28) *It's harder* ***than what*** *you think it is.* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

2.4.2.7. Word order and information structure

IrE dialects are known for the tendency to use inverted word order in indirect questions (Filppula, 2004, p. 94) also known as embedded inversion.

(29) *Wait till I see how long would it be?* (Filppula, 2004, p. 94)

Moreover, the omission of the auxiliary verb in *yes/no* questions is a characteristic feature of IrE. In standard English, an auxiliary verb is expected to precede the subject in such questions (Kortmann et al., 2020).

(30) *(Do) You get the point?* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

Furthermore, yes/no questions showcase a preference for elliptical responses instead of *yes* or *no* answers (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, chap. 5).

(31) *Did he come?* ***He did not*** (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, chap. 5)

Another important characteristic of word order and structure of information in IrE is related to focusing devices. IrE makes use of *like* as a focusing device (see Example 32), but also as a quotative particle (see Example 33) (Kortmann et al., 2020).

(32) *How did you get away with that* ***like****?* (Kortmann et al., 2020)

(33) *And she was* ***like*** (Kortmann et al., 2020)

As Brinton & Arnovick (2017, p. 484) illustrate, IrE also presents the fronting of predicative constructions, placing elements such as the verb in initial position (see Example 34), clefting

without intended emphasis (see Example 35), and reversing of the order subject-auxiliary in indirect questions (see Example 36):

(34) ***Coming home late,*** *are you?* (Brinton & Arnovick, 2017, p. 484)

(35) *Is it* ***happy*** *that you are?* (Brinton & Arnovick, 2017, p. 484)

(36) *I asked when it was due.* (Brinton & Arnovick, 2017, p. 484)

2.4.2.8. Conjunctions

Regarding conjunctions, examples of the use of *and* as a subordinating conjunction are found.

(37) *I was happy* ***and*** *I left* (Brinton & Arnovick 2017, p. 484)

(38) *It only struck me* ***and*** *you going out of the door* (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, chap. 5)

2.4.3. Lexis

Vocabulary in IrE can be studied from multiple perspectives, including etymological, geographical or examining its productivity (Kallen, 2013, p. 127). While the vocabulary of IrE resembles that of English spoken in England and Scotland, it also includes borrowings from the Irish language and preserves archaic forms (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017 chap. 5). Scholars have noted a distinction between lexical items that are retention from the English brought to Ireland and borrowings from Irish (Hickey, 2007a, p. 362).

Beyond the similarities to other varieties of English, IrE presents distinctive vocabulary. Some words of IrE have even shifted meanings or developed unique usages, acquiring new connotations in IrE. Additionally, certain words maintain two forms of the same lexeme (one standard and one archaic) which contributes to the local character of IrE (Hickey, 2007a, p. 362).

Semantic extensions in which an item acquires a new meaning can also be found — for example, *yoke* used to mean *thing.* (Hickey, 2007a, p. 363). Overall, IrE includes several

words that deviate from the standard BrE or GA lexicon. The table below illustrates some of the lexical features alongside their corresponding definitions.

Table 2

Salient lexis of IrE

Term	Meaning
naughty	to cog (to cheat)
delph	crockery
evening	afternoon and evening
foostering	fuss
yoke	gadget, thing
back	westwards, in the West
below	northwards, in the North
over	eastwards, in the East
up above	southwards, in the South

Note. Adapted from Trudgill & Hannah (2017, chap. 5).

As a conclusion, it should be noted that certain lexical choices in IrE seem to serve as identity markers and may also vary depending on the speaker's region. For that reason, an analysis of the words used can reveal information about the origin of certain characters, which could be useful for further analysis.

2.5. Dialectal areas

This section aims to provide a general overview of the IrE varieties to highlight the linguistic diversity. Since the series showcases a general depiction of different IrE accents, it is important to briefly discuss the different subvarieties found across Ireland. Linguistically and politically, Ireland is divided into two main regions: the North and the South. The southern region can be further subdivided into subsections as illustrated in Figure 6. The linguistic distinction between the North and the South is clear, since the North has been influenced by

the Scots language and Ulster Irish (Hickey, 2007b, p. 6). For this reason, it showcases very differentiating features.

Figure 6

Map representation of the varieties of IrE (Hickey, 2007b, p. 6)

The north has two main historical varieties: Ulster-Scots and Mid-Ulster English (Hickey, 2004a, p. 30). Some of the most distinguishing characteristics include the differences in consonant pronunciation, with the North presenting the dental fricatives /θ, ð/ and the South presenting them as stops [t̪, d̪]. Additionally, one of the most characteristic features of Northern Ireland English (henceforth, NIrE) is the distinct vowel sounds as illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Vowels in NIrE (Wells, 1982, p. 438)

KIT	ɪ	FLEECE	i[1]	NEAR	ir
DRESS	ɛ	FACE	e	SQUARE	ɛr[1]
TRAP	a	PALM	a	START	ar
LOT	ɒ, ɔ	THOUGHT	ɔ	NORTH	ɔr
STRUT	ʌ	GOAT	o	FORCE	or
FOOT	u[1]	GOOSE	u	CURE	ur
BATH	a	PRICE	aɪ	*happy*	e, ɪ
CLOTH	ɔ	CHOICE	ɔɪ	*lett*ER	ər = [ɚ
NURSE	ʌr[1]	MOUTH	au	*comma*	ə

As previously stated, southern varieties of Irish can be divided into different subsections as outlined by Hickey (2004a, p. 30): the east coast and the southwest and west. Moreover, urban varieties can also be distinguished. The east coast was the first area to be settled by the Anglo-Normans and it extends from the south of Dundalk to Waterford (Hickey, 2007a, 439). Some of the most notable features of this area are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Features of the East of Ireland (Hickey, 2004a, p. 31)

Fortition of dental fricatives to alveolar stops (also south), e.g. *think* [tɪŋk]
Lack of low vowel lengthening before voiceless fricatives (not Dublin), e.g. *path* [pat]
Front onset of /au/, e.g. *town* [tæʊn], [tɛʊn]
Centralised onset of /ai/ (also south), e.g. *quite* [kwəɪt]
Breaking of long high vowels (especially Dublin), e.g. *clean* [klijən]
Fortition of alveolar sibilants in pre-nasal position, e.g. *isnt* [ɪdn̪t]
No lowering of early modern /u/ (only Dublin), e.g. *done* [dʊn]
Glottalisation of lenited /t/, e.g. *foot* [fʊt] → [fʊt̪] → [fʊʔ] → [fʊh].

On the other hand, the south-west area extends from Cork to Mayo approximately, making it the largest linguistic area in the country. Hickey (2004a, p. 32) notes that English there dates

back to the Early Modern English (eModIrE) period, developed as adults passed the language on to younger generations. As previously stated, this area can be further divided into smaller areas, and Hickey (2004a, pp. 34-35) illustrates the linguistic differences with Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

Features in the South-west and west of Ireland. (Hickey, 2004a, pp. 34-35)

South and west from Cork through Limerick up to Galway and Sligo
/ɛ/ → /ɪ/ before nasals
Tense, raised articulation of /æ/ (also east)
Considerable intonational range (only south, south-west)

Table 5

Features in the West of Ireland (Hickey, 2004a, pp. 34-35)

West
Dental stop realisation in THINK, THIS lexical sets
Low central onset for /ai/ and /au/, e.g. *quite* [kwaɪt], *town* [taʊn]

Urban varieties of Ireland exhibit distinct features influenced by the cultural mix in urban centers. A key example of this is Dublin English. The variety in Dublin has evolved due to population growth, an economic boom and increased wealth and social status (Hickey, 2004b). Some of the most notable features of Dublin English are included in Table 6.

Table 6

General features of Dublin English

Post-vocalic /ɹ/	Pronunciation of /ɒ/	/a/ in *any* and *anyone*
Absence of RP vowels /ɪə/, /ɛə/, /ʊə/	Pronunciation of /a/ in diphthongs	Pronunciation of /θ/ and /ð/
Distinct /a/ and /ɑː/	Monophthongs or narrow diphthongs	Pronunciation of /t/ and /d/ before /ɹ/
Non-distinction of /a/ and /ɑː/	Pronunciation of /ʊ/ and /ʌ/	Absence of /ɜː/

Note. Adapted from Hughes, Trudgill, & Watt, (2013, pp. 141-142)

3. The Study

3.1. Objectives

Normal People (Abrahamson et al., 2020) is a TV series adaptation of the Irish novelist Sally Rooney (2018). The series represents the lives of two teenagers who come from contrasting backgrounds: Marianne and Connell. They meet through Connell's mother, who works as a cleaner at Marianne's wealthy household. At the beginning of the series, both characters attend school in Sligo (northwest of Ireland). They later moved to Dublin (east coast of Ireland) to attend university.

The protagonists allow the study to explore two different backgrounds. Marianne is deeply affected by her environment: her brother Alan abuses her physically and verbally, and she stands out as a social outcast at school. In contrast, Connell is modest, gets along well with people at school, and often feels constrained by his mother's working-class background. Their situations shape their language, providing differences in the use of IrE as a vernacular language. This dissertation aims to analyse the linguistic features of IrE as it is represented in *Normal People* (2020) and to relate them to sociolinguistic variables like class, gender, and age.

3.2. Methodology

This section of the dissertation focuses on identifying the main linguistic features portrayed in the TV series. The analysis will centre on the main characters, exploring how the features are conveyed in relation to the sociolinguistic context. It is essential to link some features to aspects that emerge from social differences, gender and specific situations of Marianne and Connell. Additionally, the analysis will include recurring characters such as Marianne's brother (Alan), Connell's mother (Lorraine) and other secondary characters such as college friends (Niall, Sophie, Peggy or Rob).

To carry out this study, the series was first watched and salient linguistic features were noted, with a list of characters and concrete examples of their speech being compiled. All episodes were analysed, as a key turning point in language use occurs when the protagonists move from Sligo to Dublin. This shift allows for an exploration of interactions between characters from different social and linguistic backgrounds, such as Peggy. Once the notetaking was completed, the features were identified and grouped according to linguistic domains: phonology, grammar and lexis. The features were then selected with the aim of including different characters who illustrate varying patterns of speech, with special attention given to the protagonists: Connell and Marianne. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on a sociolinguistic analysis of the data, taking into account how language reflects factors such as class, age and gender.

3.3. Analysis: features reflected on the series

3.3.1 Phonetics and phonology

The accents of the main characters in *Normal People* (2020), especially Marianne's and Connell's, reflect features associated specifically with the variety of the West of Ireland where the story takes place: Sligo. This analysis focuses on key phonetic aspects of IrE,

including rhoticity, consonant and vowel realisations and other broader phonological patterns like intonation or syllable timing.

IrE is often characterised by its distinctive intonation, which tends to have a lilting quality: rising and falling in a rhythmic way (Cambridge University Press, n.d.), with a rising inflection at the end of sentences, even in statements that are not questions. Nearly every character displays the feature, which could be considered as the most notorious phonetic feature of IrE in this series. This characteristic intonation is necessarily accompanied by what is known as syllable-timing. While standard varieties of English are usually stress-timed (TeachingEnglish, n.d.-a) — meaning the rhythm is based on the regular timing between stressed syllables — IrE tends to follow a syllable-timed rhythm, similar to languages such as Spanish. In this case, each syllable has a similar duration, resulting in an even pace of speech (TeachingEnglish, n.d.-b).

As stated in the literature review, IrE is a rhotic variety. Characters in the series pronounce /r/ in every position, including word-final (see Example 1) and medial positions (see Example 2). This feature applies to Marianne, Connell, and other characters who are not from Sligo, such as one of Marianne's friends from Dublin (see Example 3). This feature brings IrE closer to GA, rather than maintaining the non-rhotic pronunciation typical of its neighbouring variety BrE.

(1) Marianne: **Are** you bragging?

[əɹ ju ˈbɹægɪŋ]

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:03:32)

(2) Connell: You're **sma<u>r</u>ter** than me

[juɹ ˈsmɑɹtə˞ ðən miː]

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:03:40)

(3) Peggy: Bo<u>r</u>de<u>r</u>

[ˈbɔɾdɚ]

(*Normal People*, S1E7, 00:16:29)

It needs to be considered that in casual speech, characters tend to drop post-vocalic /r/ in unstressed syllables. However, this is not entirely consistent throughout the series and may reflect some kind of personal and pragmatic variation. Example (4) represents a family formal reunion, while Example (5) is a discussion between Alan and Marianne.

(4) Relative of Marianne: Your **father** would be so proud of you

[jʊɹ ˈfɑːðə wʊd bi soʊ ˈpɹaʊd ʌv ju]

(*Normal People*, S1E6, 00:15:40)

(5) Alan: Do you think you're **smarter** than me

[dʊ ju ˈθɪŋk jʊər ˈsmɑːɚ ðən mi]

(*Normal People*, S1E6, 00:16:52)

In the show, the phoneme /r/ is often realised as a flap [ɾ] in multiple environments. This allophone is a distinctive feature of some varieties of English, such as GA, characterized by a single tap of the tongue against the alveolar ridge. The flap [ɾ] typically occurs when /r/ appears between two vowel sounds. For example, in words like *butter* or *ladder*, the flap [ɾ] replaces the pronunciation of /t/ and /d/, respectively, which would be used in BrE. As discussed in section 2, the flap [ɾ] is frequently used by men in informal contexts (Kallen, 2013, p. 52), as illustrated by Connell in Example (7).

(6) Peggy: Ci**t**y

[sɪɾi]

(*Normal People*, S1E7, 00:16:32)

(7) Connell: Toge**th**er

[təˈgɛɾəɹ]

(*Normal People*, S1E8, 00:23:00)

Sometimes the /r/ is also pronounced as an alveolar trilled [r], which is closer to the Spanish /r/ than to the English approximant /ɹ/.

(8) Niall: and you **dr̲ink**

[ænd ju drɪnk]

(*Normal People*, S1E8, 00:11:50)

As for the /t/ phoneme, examples of t-dropping in consonant clusters are found. The /t/ is sometimes omitted or not pronounced, particularly when the characters speak quickly.

(9) Marianne: hones**t̲l**y

[ˈɒnɪsɪ]

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:11:37)

Glottal stops can also be found, a phonetic characteristic in which the vocal cords are completely closed, particularly happening with intervocalic /t/.

(10) Connell: No**t̲h**ing

[ˈnʌʔɪn]

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:05:40)

(11) Niall: Did you come here when you were **li****t̲t****le**?

[dɪd juː kʌm hɪə wɛn juː wɜː ˈlɪʔəl]

(*Normal People*, S1E8, 00:12:00)

(12) Connell: Wha**t̲**

[wɒʔ]

(*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:09:17)

Focusing now on consonantal aspects, th-stopping (see section 2) appears as a frequent trait in IrE. Marianne does not show this feature as much (see Example 17), but sometimes she does (see Examples 13, 14). This may relate to social background, as the feature is often associated with lower social status (Weldon, 2021, p.131). Being from a working-class

background, Connell uses it consistently (see Example 15). Alan, Marianne's brother, also uses it more than she does (see Example 16), possibly because he is outspoken and socially dominant.

(13) Marianne: I just kept **thinking**

[aɪ dʒʌst kɛpt tɪŋkɪŋ]

(*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:11:44)

(14) Marianne: They are not interested in the world around **them**

[ðeɪ ɑːr nɒt ˈɪntrəstəd ɪn ðə wɜːld əˈraʊnd dɛm]

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:19:05)

Table 7 compares the use of *th*-stopping in the same word across different characters, highlighting the difference in use across gender and class. Alan (Example 16) belongs to the upper class, yet he uses *th*-stopping, which may be related to his informal speech style (he spends most of his time outside) and possibly influenced by gender.

Table 7

Th-stopping of the word pathetic in Normal people (2020)

Th-stopping	Absence of th-stopping
(15) Connell: Pathetic [pəˈt̪ɛtɪk] (*Normal People*, S1E7, 00:21:41) (16) Alan: Pathetic [pəˈt̪ɛtɪk] (*Normal People*, S1E11, 00:02:30)	(17) Marianne: Pathetic [pəˈθ̪ɛtɪk] (*Normal People*, S1E7, 00:21:44)

Examples of yod-dropping and yod-coalescence can be found in the series. Both upper-class (Marianne) and lower-class (Connell) characters produce yod-dropping: they omit the sound /j/ when preceded by certain consonants, especially /n/, /t/, or /d/ (see section 2).

(18) Connell: new

[nuː]

(*Normal People*, S1E12, 00:07:35)

(19) Marianne & Connell: knew

[nuː]

(*Normal People*, S1E05, 00:15:36)

Yod-coalescence is also present, especially with the phonemes /t/ and /d/ as discussed in section 2 (Hickey, 2007a, p. 361). Instances of merging to /d͡ʒ/ occur among characters of different classes and backgrounds (see Examples 21 and 22).

(20) Everyone in unison: **y**ear

[d͡ʒɪəɹ]

(*Normal People*, S1E10, 00:01:09)

(21) Marianne: seducing **you**

[səˈduːsɪŋ d͡ʒuː]

(*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:04:43)

(22) Connell: what **you** mean

[wɒt d͡ʒuː miːn]

(*Normal People*, S1E11, 00:08:30)

Some characters, particularly Connell, tend to palatalise the initial <s>, resulting in the pronunciation of the phoneme /s/ closer to /ʃ/. This feature is attributed to the influence of Irish in IrE (Kallen, 2013, p. 58). Connell's and Lorraine's use of this feature reflects its

association with working-class speech, since palatalisation is regarded as a rural feature of some varieties of English such as Ulster English (Hickey, 2007a, p. 337).

(23) Connell: st**u**pid

[ˈʃtuːpɪd]

(*Normal People*, S1E11, 00:23:00)

(24) Lorraine: st**u**dent

[ˈʃʊdʒənt]

(*Normal People*, S1E4, 00:13:09)

(25) Connell: s**m**art

[ʃmɑːt]

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:03:36; S1E10, 00:17:36)

Finally, it is noticeable that some characters exhibit specific features. For example, Marianne tends to drop the /h/ in the initial position. This contradicts Hickey's claim that IrE does not present h-dropping (Hickey, 2007a, p. 17) as seen in section 2. Therefore, this may reflect the actress's failure to accurately represent the variety.

(26) Marianne: what about **h**im

[wɒt əˈbaʊt ɪm]

(*Normal People*, S1E8, 00:06:10)

Furthermore, a typical feature in IrE is the raising and fronting of diphthongs, such as /aɪ/ and /aʊ/, which may sound more like [əi] and [əʊ], respectively (section 2). This feature is found all across the series, particularly with the diphthong /aʊ/, with is more fronted and raised [aʊ], [æʊ] and [ɛʊ].

(27) Marianne: Ab**ou**t

[əˈb**əʊ**t]

(*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:17:30)

(28) Niall: It **d<u>o</u>wn**

[ɪt d**ɛʊ**n]

(*Normal People*, S1E8, 00:11:50)

(29) Sophie: Pr<u>ou</u>der

[ˈpɹ**ɛʊ**.dəɹ]

(*Normal People*, S1E12, 00:08:41)

Moreover, the onset of /aɪ/ seems to be centralised. Instead of starting with a fully fronted [a], the diphthong begins closer to a central vowel like [ə] or [ɐ].

(30) Marianne: So you'll be going back to **Sl<u>i</u>go**

[səʊ juːl bi ˈgoʊɪŋ ˈbak tə ˈsl**əɪ**goʊ ðɛn]

(*Normal People*, S1E7, 00:02:20)

In several instances throughout the series, diphthongs are simplified into monophthongs. This reduction of the glide occurs in two different cases: /aʊ/ is simplified to /ʊ/ (see Examples 31 and 32) and /eɪ/ is simplified to /ɛ/ (see Example 33).

(31) Alan: You could shut up **ab<u>ou</u>t** it

[ju kʊd ʃʊt ʌp əˈbʊt ɪt]

(*Normal People*, S1E6, 00:16:47)

(32) Marianne: I'm going **<u>ou</u>t**

[aɪm ˈgoːɪn ʊt]

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:00:55)

(33) Rob: M<u>a</u>te

[mɛt]

(*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:22:04)

Regarding vowels, clear examples of the lack of *foot-strut* split can be found. The absence of this split leads to no distinction between the vowels /ʊ/ and /ʌ/. In the series, this feature

appears in almost all characters, regardless of social class or gender. Examples are found in Marianne (see Example 34), Connell (see Example 35) and other friends (see Examples 36 and 37).

Table 8

Foot-strut split depending on gender and class

Gender and class	Examples
Female, high class	(34) Marianne: It's the only **s<u>u</u>bject** you really enjoy [ɪts ðiˈəʊnliˈsʊbdʒɪkt jəˈɹiːliɪnˈdʒɔɪ] (*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:18:18)
Male, working class	(35)Connell: that m<u>u</u>ch [ðət mʊt͡ʃ] (*Normal People*, S1E10, 00:19:00)
Male, working class	(36) Jamie: the **f<u>u</u>ck** [ðə fʊk] (*Normal People*, S1E8, 00:19:00)
Female, working class	(37) Friend of Marianne: st<u>u</u>died [ˈstʊdid] (*Normal People*, S1E7, 00:17:09)

A non-standard realisation of /æ/ is also observed, particularly in Connell's speech. This involves varying realisations of the phoneme: words typically pronounced with /æ/ in standard varieties are realised as /ɑː/, and vice versa, as seen in Table 5 (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, chap. 5). This variation may be attributed to the irregularities present in IrE, which

exhibits both regional and social variation. Since Connell uses this feature when speaking to Marianne, who belongs to a higher social class, her status may influence his pronunciation choices. The seriousness of the context may also play a role in these choices.

(38) Connell: But I think I **understand** it

[bʌt aɪ ˈθɪŋk aɪ ˌʌndəˈstɑːnd ɪt]

(*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:12:23)

(39) Connell: Can't

[kænt]

(*Normal People*, S1E10, 00:21:20)

3.3.2 Grammar and morphology

3.3.2.1. Verbs

In *Normal People* (2020), instances of zero copula are observed, a linguistic trait that involves the omission of the verb *to be* (see section 2). The copula is omitted in various contexts including declarative sentences (see Example 40), and in some cases, this also results in the omission of the subject (see Example 41).

(40) Marianne: She (is) pretty.

(*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:17:08)

(41) Connell: (I'm) supposed to be starting college.

(*Normal People*, S1E4, 00:01:05)

However, omission of the auxiliary *be* (see Example 42) or *do* (see Example 43) can also be found in questions. In some instances, it is accompanied by the elision of the subject as well (see Example 44).

(42) Connell: (Are) you alright?

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:19:38)

(43) Connell: (Do) you mean the way I treated you.

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:14:38)

(44) Rob: (Are you) not enjoying the job?

(*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:12:23)

It could be argued that this feature appears in informal speech, where characters prioritise linguistic economy and ease of pronunciation over grammatical correctness. However, this phenomenon extends beyond informal contexts, as seen in Example (45), where a teacher in a formal classroom setting omits the auxiliary in a question. This usage can also be observed in older speakers, suggesting that the feature is spread across different age groups (see Example 46).

(45) Teacher: (Are you) Enjoying your book there, Marianne?

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:05:40)

(46) Lorraine (EP01, 00:08:32) (Are) You out this evening

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:08:32)

Another distinctive grammatical feature of IrE reflected in the series is the use of the after perfect construction. This structure expresses a recently completed action and follows the pattern to *be* + *after* + *verb-ing*, often found in conversational or intimate contexts (Kallen, 2013, p. 13) and avoided in formal contexts (Filppula, 2004, p. 76). For this reason, its presence aligns with the informal tone of the series and the relationships portrayed.

(47) Ger: I'm **after** missing the bus.

(*Normal People*, S1E6, 00:19:00)

Regarding modal verbs, some peculiarities in the use of *must* are observed. This modal presents uses that differ from the original use of obligation or necessity. One use of *must* is to express assessment towards a statement: in Example (48) *must* conveys a sense of personal evaluation, implying a judgement made by Marianne towards another person.

(48) Marianne: She **must** find training really interesting.

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:12:20)

Another common use of *must* is epistemic modality, which expresses conclusions based on the context. In Example (49), Marianne uses *must* to make a deduction. Similarly, in Example (50), *must* indicates an assumption about someone's needs.

(49) Marianne: She **must** be proud of you.

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:06:45)

(50) Niall: You **must** really need somewhere to live.

(*Normal People*, S1E4, 00:01:02)

As for the use of *would*, it presents distinctive patterns, particularly in its use to mark negation in questions as in Example (51). This form is used to introduce a suggestion or a surprise, emphasizing the negation. The varied uses of *must* and *would* illustrate the flexibility of modal verbs in this variety of English, especially in non-standard informal contexts and younger generations.

(51) Connell: Would you not…?

(*Normal People*, S1E8, 00:22:25)

In IrE, there is a marked preference for the simple past tense over the present perfect, as explained in the review of literature. This feature appears across characters of different social classes and ages and is consistently present throughout the series. Both protagonists showcase a preference for the form (Examples 52, 53, 54).

(52) Connell: **Did** you ever **think** of trying that technique yourself, Rob, no?

(*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:15:24)

(53) Marianne: **Did** you **sleep** with her?

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:07:26)

(54) Connell: **Did** he ever **hit** you?

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:08:55)

Moreover, an extended use of progressive forms to indicate future actions is observed, offering a simpler and more direct way of expressing future time. This suggests that speakers may prioritise clarity and immediacy by using a more economical language in informal contexts.

(55) Alan: I'm **going** down to the pub.

(*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:20:55)

(56) Connell: I'm **driving**, I can give you a lift if you want.

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:05:20)

The series also showcases the widespread use of auxiliary verbs as emphasizers in IrE. This feature is usually done with the verb *to do*, which causes a focus on the action performed by the subject.

(57) Connell: She **did** do a little bit of that, all right

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:03:50)

(58) Alan: You **do** think you're smarter

(*Normal People*, S1E6, 00:17:05)

Finally, there are some examples of uninflected verbs, which use the base form of the verb without losing their lexical meaning. This feature is very colloquial and informal and can be attributed to the age of the protagonists, as Marianne and Connell are the only characters who exhibit this feature in the series.

(59) Connell: The film **get** ya.

(*Normal People*, S1E6, 00:20:26)

(60) Marianne: **Be** nice if you guys could actually be civil.

(*Normal People*, S1E7, 00:10:19)

3.3.2.2. Question tags

Throughout the series, question tags appear in various contexts and serve different purposes, often displaying distinctive functions compared to other varieties of English. Standard question tags are frequently used, though this is not necessarily a unique feature of this variety. However, it is notable that question tags often follow questions that lack the copula *be*. In these cases, the question tag plays a significant role in confirming the statement made, compensating for the absence of the copula and providing clarity.

(61) Alan: You at the house, <u>are you?</u>

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:09:00)

(62) Marianne: You went with Rachel, <u>did you?</u>

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:07:17)

One notable example is the use of the tag *no?*, which replaces standard forms such as *aren't you?* or *isn't it?*. This tag is especially common in informal speech, as seen when Connell uses it in conversations with Marianne, with whom he has a close connection. Connell, coming from a working-class background, may be influenced by social or regional factors in his use of this particular tag. He uses it thoroughly, particularly in negative sentences, and the two negatives tend to neutralise each other or even reinforce the meaning (Example 65).

(63) Connell: You're not heading home, **no**?

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:11:42)

(64) Connell: You're not busy or anything, **no**?

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:25:31)

(65) Connell: Nothing's happened, **no**?

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:02:00)

In other cases, the question tag accompanies positive questions. The use of the tag in example (66) serves to confirm the question, adding a layer of irony or emphasis. It does not negate the sentence, but rather replaces a standard tag like *have you?*

(66) Connell: Did you ever think of trying that technique yourself, Rob, **no?**

(*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:15:24)

Eh? is commonly used as a question tagin the series. It serves a similar function to other question tags but carries a more conversational and informal tone. This tag is often used to seek confirmation from the listener, making sure that they are following what the speaker is saying. Its function is similar to the question tag *right*?

(67) Rob: When she lets her hair down, **eh?**

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:27:48)

(68) Jamie: Thank fuck for scholarships, **eh?**

(*Normal People*, S1E8, 00:14:33)

3.3.2.3 The particle like

The particle *like* is commonly used in a variety of contexts, serving different functions in a lot of varieties of English. In this case, *Normal People* (2020) shows examples of the use of *like* as a discourse marker, a focusing device, a quotative particle, or even as a filler word. This widespread use has to do with sociolinguistic aspects that are linked with the series: most conversations take place between adolescents in a friendly and informal setting.

Like is used as a focusing device or marker to draw attention to the following statement. In the series, it engages the listener and serves to emphasize Connell's opinion on certain topics.

(69) Connell: **Like**, I doubt he really cares.

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:06:36)

(70) Connell: It wouldn't be that kind of thing were **like**… feelings would be involved.

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:07:36)

(71) Connell: **Like**, like they don't have to go around and pretend.

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:12:56)

It could also be argued that *like* can be interpreted as a discourse marker: the particle is used as a filler so that the person has time to think about what he will say next. It is used by all the characters despite their background or tendencies of speech.

(72) Marianne's boyfriend: Is he **like**, smart?

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:08:50)

(73) Connell's friend in class: You got that unprecedented, **like**, mark on it.

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:10:25)

(74) Connell: Like, **like** they don't have to go around and pretend.

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:12:56)

(75) Marianne: **Like**, I want to be there.

(Normal *People*, S1E10, 00:12:28)

Like is also used to introduce reported speech or thoughts as a quotative *like* (See Example 76). Finally, *like* is sometimes used as an emphasizer, adding a certain intensity to other adjectives or pronouns (see Example 77).

(76) Marianne: It would be nice to **like**, emmm, having you in it again.

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:01:38)

(77) Marianne's boyfriend: You are literally **like** a completely different person.

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:18:11)

3.3.2.4. Pronouns

A recurring feature in *Normal People* (2020) is the omission of the pronoun that functions as a subject, again influenced by the informality of the contexts. There are some contexts that do not require the presence of a personal pronoun, and they can be dropped when the meaning

remains clear from the context. This feature occurs especially at the beginning of utterances. Marianne reflects emotional distance from her mother in E1 (see Examples 78 and 79) by making use of this feature. It reinforces the idea of the distant nature of the relationship, also showing a casual interaction. It can also be inferred that she is downplaying her own importance in the household.

(78) Marianne: (I) made some salad

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:07:30)

(79) Marianne: (I) got some results

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:08:12)

Connell also makes use of this feature while talking to his friend when they are discussing a topic he clearly wants to avoid (see Example 80). By omitting the subject pronoun, his response becomes less direct, possibly even defensive or aggressive, as a way to distance himself emotionally. Similarly, Marianne uses this structure when opening up to Connell and expressing her feelings (see Example 81). The absence of a pronoun in her case may reflect discomfort or vulnerability, allowing her to share something personal while maintaining a degree of emotional distance. Finally, Connell's friend Kiernan omits the pronoun when talking about a friend who committed suicide (see Example 82). By doing so, he distances himself from the emotional weight of the topic, avoiding direct involvement in such a delicate subject. This feature makes us realize how language is influenced not only by gender, age, and region, but also by feelings and emotions.

(80) Connell: (I) don't know what you're talking about.

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:28:59)

(81) Marianne: (I) didn't have to play any games with you it was real

(*Normal People*, S1E7, 00:12:55)

(82) Kiernan: (He) never wanted to go home.

(*Normal People*, S1E10, 00:04:31)

Reflexive pronouns such as *yourself* or *himself* are sometimes used in place of personal pronouns such as *you* or *him* in IrE. This construction is often used for emphasis. In Rob's case, this reflects his Cork background, a region in southern Ireland where such usage is typical.

(83) Rob: With **yourself** and **herself**

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:28:58)

Niall uses a non-standard form of the reflexive pronoun *meself*. This usage is closely linked to his regional background, as such forms are typical in areas of Northern Ireland, reflecting both local pronunciation and also informal speech patterns.

(84) Niall: I'm back Monday **meself**

(*Normal People*, S1E4, 00:01:08)

There can be seen special forms of plural pronouns, often created to distinguish between singular and plural. In other standard varieties, there is no way to distinguish between the persons since there are no inflections. Characters in the series make use of other forms such as *you + all* (see Example 85) and *you + girls* (see Example 86).

(85) Teacher: And while I have **you all** here, I should make you aware of the…

(*Normal People*, S1E4, 00:02:47)

(86) Gerald, relative of Marianne: **You girls** lived there when you were at Trinity

(*Normal People*, S1E6, 00:14:43)

3.3.2.5. Negation

In the series, multiple forms of negation appear through the dialogue. In the first place, several abbreviations of certain forms of negations are found (see Example 87) reflecting characteristics of spontaneous conversations, especially among young speakers (see section 2).

(87) Connell: I **dunno**

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:12:50)

Special forms of negation such as *ain't* can also be found in the series. This particle is a non-standard contraction that can stand for several negative verb forms, replacing sequences such as *am* + *not* or *has* + *not*. Its use has to do with casual speech but also regional identity: Marianne uses it with his close friend Connell, replacing the combination of *have* + *not*. (see Example 88).

(88) Marianne: but you **ain't** promised Teresa a lift?

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:18:40)

One representative characteristic of negation in IrE is the use of *never* as a negator. As I have already presented in the literature review, *never*, which usually means at no time, replaces the meaning of *didn't* or *haven't*. Connell uses never more frequently, which is possibly related to his working-class background and his use of this feature in informal spoken English.

(89) Connell: **Never** have any idea

(*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:02:29)

(90) Connell: You **never** said any of this to me

(*Normal People*, S1E7, 00:12:41)

(91) Connell: I **never** even replied

(*Normal People*, S1E10, 00:03:47)

The 'failure of negative attraction' refers to a phenomenon where a negative particle would trigger a change in other elements to adjust to the negative concord rule: two negatives cannot appear in the same phrase (Filppula, 2004, p. 82). Example (92) exemplifies how Niall uses the form nothing when previously noticing a negative particle (*will not*). This would be avoided in formal contexts because of redundancy but serves to intensify negation.

(92) Niall: He **won't** tell you **nothing**

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:09:40)

3.3.2.6. Prepositions

Throughout the series, the use of prepositions could serve as an example of the different tendencies among IrE speakers, concretely the younger generations or working-class characters. In the first place,the phenomenon called 'preposition stranding' can be observed (see Example 93), which entails leaving a preposition at the end of a clause instead of fronting it (placing it at the beginning of the sentence) as previously explained in section 2 (Brinton & Arnovick, 2017, p. 484). This feature is very common in the series since it sounds more natural in casual speech and it is widely accepted in standard varieties.

(93) Connell: What are you laughing **for**?

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:21:17)

(94) Alan: Any chance of a lift **in**?

(*Normal People*, S1E1, 00:09:00)

Examples of omission of the prepositions are also found for the same reason: Marianne speaks to Connell informally, which also shows the close bond between their relationship.

(95) Marianne: (For) fuck's sake

(*Normal People*, S1E5, 00:15:30)

It is common to find contractions of certain prepositions, as it is typical in teenage language and informal contexts (see section 2).

(96) Connell (EP4, 00:07:13) Least you fucked off **outta** here.

(*Normal People*, S1E4, 00:07:13)

Finally, marked use of prepositions can be seen, such as *above* as replacing *at* or *up in* and *till* instead of *until*.

(97) Marianne: Exams don't start **till** May

(*Normal People*, S1E4, 00:14:30)

(98) Connell: I heard you're doing great things **above** Trinity

(*Normal People*, S1E10, 00:14:30)

3.3.2.7. Subject-verb agreement

As for agreement, the series showcases lack of agreement in sentences in concrete environments. In most standard varieties of English, the subject and the verb agree in number (singular or plural) and person. However, this rule is not strictly followed in IrE, as seen in Examples (99) and (100). This feature may be used to facilitate pronunciation and faster speech.

(99) Connell: How'**s** things?

(*Normal People*, S1E4, 00:00:36)

(100) Gareth: There **is** some people I want you to meet.

(*Normal People*, S1E4, 00:15:37)

3.3.2.8. Contractions

The use of contractions is also linked with sociolinguistic factors in the series. Alan and Marianne use the contraction *gonna* instead of *going to* and Joanna uses *wanna* instead of *want to*. This reflects the conversational style and relaxation exhibited by the characters.

(101) Alan: You **gonna** find some way to humiliate me?

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:01:04)

(102) Marianne: Is Lorraine not **gonna** be there?

(*Normal People*, S1E3, 00:06:24)

(103) Joanna: Sure you don't **wanna** come?

(*Normal People*, S1E4, 00:28:48)

3.3.2.9. Deviations in sentence structure

The series also presents different ways of packing information in sentences. Examples of 'topic fronting' are found, a phenomenon that moves a noun phrase to the beginning of the sentence (see Example 104). Moreover, there are also examples of left detachment where the topic is moved and placed at the beginning with a reference pronoun (see Example 105)

(104) Connell: **Your essays were good**, your mom was saying

(*Normal People*, S1E6, 00:14:35)

(105) Marianne: I don't find it obvious **what you want.**

(*Normal People*, S1E11, 00:13:05)

3.3.3. Lexis

As previously presented in the dissertation, IrE makes a distinctive use of lexis, incorporating unique expressions and vocabulary influenced by the Irish language, sociolinguistic factors (age, gender or class) and linguistic habits (Hickey, 2007a; Trudgill & Hannah, 2017).

Table 9

Lexicon in the series and definitions

Examples	Definitions
(106) Connell: Yeah, it was **class**. (*Normal People*, S1E2, 00:11:20)	Yeah, it was **great**.
(107) Connell: Sound. (*Normal People*, S1E4, 00:00:33)	Alright/okey/good.
(108) Connell: Just for the **craic**. (*Normal People*, S1E4, 00:09:47)	Just for the **laugh**.

(109) Alan: **Knacker** (*Normal People*, S1E11, 00:21:00)	'A rough person'

They also make use of various familiarisers through the series, which reflects the close relations between characters. However, it should be noted that they are not exclusive of IrE, as they can be found in other varieties such as BrE: familiarisers like *mate* are more common in this variety, being rare in IrE (Hickey, 2007a, p. 17). However, it is used in the series (Example 110).

(110) Niall: I suppose I'll move **man**

(*Normal People*, S1E4, 00:01:13)

(111) Jamie: Mate

(*Normal People*, S1E7, 00:20:20)

4. Conclusion

The main purpose of this dissertation was to explore the various linguistic features present in *Normal People* (Abrahamson et al., 2020), paying attention to how these features are differently represented across characters based on class, gender, and age. Several of the features previously identified in the literature review are represented in the series. Among them are phonetic traits such as rhoticity, palatalisation and yod-coalescence; grammatical features like the use of the after-perfect and the preference for the present perfect tense; as well as lexical variation as compared to other varieties of English.

However, many expected features were not observed, possibly due to the limited size of the sample analysed, as the series consists of only twelve episodes. This absence may be also attributed to a constrained portrayal of Irish society, focusing almost exclusively on young characters. Furthermore, the series chosen centres primarily on specific types of relations such as love, friendship and family, leaving broader social contexts behind. It is

possible that analysing other interpersonal dynamics would have revealed additional features. It has to be noted that certain features that were not contemplated in the literature review appeared thoroughly including copula deletion, different phonemic realisations or lexicon.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, it is observed how social class, gender and context influence certain choices. Connell's use of the working class features or seen as inferior — such as th-stopping (Weldon, 2021, p. 131) — contrasts with Marianne's more neutral and standardised speech. This contrast is also evident in features like palatalisation, which is used by both Connell and her mother (who belong to the working-class), while it is absent in other characters. Another example is Connell's use of the simple question tag *no?* instead of the more common *V + S* structure. These divergences illustrate how characters' linguistic choices reflect sociocultural backgrounds.

One important observation is that Connell adapts his speech, employing more marked features in a familiar environment. He modifies his language according to the level of formality (for instance, non-standard realisation of /æ/ as /ɑː/). Features serve not only as linguistic tools but also reveal how language varies according to social contexts and personal relationships.

Notably, some of the features identified in the series appear to belong to broader patterns found in other non-standard varieties of English worldwide. This can suggest that certain IrE features are not exclusive or unique and can be attributed to general non-standard tendencies within WEs. For this reason, exploring potential connections between IrE and other postcolonial Englishes could be of particular interest, especially considering the significant migrations of Irish people to other colonies as stated in section 1 (Hickey, 2007a, p. 1).

However, the study presents certain constraints that affect the extent to which the findings can be generalised, so the results should be interpreted with caution. In the first

place, the scope of analysis is narrow since it is restricted to a single television series, written by a certain person and set in a specific context. Therefore, the conclusions cannot be assumed to reflect wider linguistic realities. Additionally, relying on scripted dialogue poses challenges, since, while the language may resemble natural speech, it is a constructed and edited text rather than spontaneous conversation. For this reason, further research employing a corpus-based approach could be conducted to support the findings. Finally, due to time and space constraints, the study does not include an in-depth comparison with other WEs, which could have enriched the analysis.

Further research might explore how IrE is represented in other contemporary television series, which could provide a broader perspective on how this variety is portrayed depending on the choices of director, actors and aims. Additionally, investigating how different generations perceive the variety of IrE could offer valuable insights, as language attitudes often reflect broader perspectives on Irish identity. Moreover, the influence of gender in specific linguistic patterns could be analysed as this area has not been widely examined. Lastly, the analysis of teenage language in television, series and other multimodal representations can offer valuable insights. Adolescents often play a key role in driving linguistic change, since, as members of the emerging generations, they are frequently the innovators of language (Tagliamonte, 2016, p. 14).

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