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Fiorenzo Fantaccini

"Is it English what we speak?"
Irish English and Postcolonial Identity

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Abstract:

This paper explores the case of Ireland as an *ante-litteram* postcolonial context. Within this context, a main concern is that of the relationship between language and identity. Irish English (the variety of English spoken in Ireland) enjoys a unique position within the constellation of world-wide English varieties. Various factors led to the emergence of Irish English, it may well have developed as a resistance to the (contrasting) forces of colonialism and has been perceived as a different vehicle for communication when compared to received colonial English. Scholars now generally believe that Irish people, at a certain moment in time, decided to use a language which offered better possibilities for work. Via the analysis of some postcolonial issues, such as the linguistic crisis of the colonial subject, the paper will first illustrate the circumstances that led to the emergence of Irish English and then list the main features of this variety.

Keywords: contact variety, identity, Irish English, postcolonial studies, world Englishes

1. *Introduction*

Language-related issues played a crucial role in the construction and development of the British Empire, colonized peoples were often obliged to use English and many 'forced' unions were created in contexts of this type. These unions were different from the original languages and in many cases gave birth to the multifaceted realities of world Englishes (Kachru 1992; Kachru *et al.* 2009; Jenkins 2009; Melchers and Shaw 2011). But forced passages from one language to another often cause cultural suffering as people try to deal with problems of identity, often a "fractured" identity (Kiberd 1996) which has deep repercussions in daily lives. In the relationship between colonized and colonizer, language (and its use) embodies a series of contradictions to the point that it becomes: "[...] a fundamental site of struggle for postcolonial discourse because the colonial process itself begins in language"(Ashcroft *et al.* 2006 [1995], 282). A native language is controlled and mastered by im-

perialistic powers in several ways: by the creation of a new national language or by imposing the language of the Empire (English, in the case of Ireland) in the colony or even by banning the native language. In each case, this type of supremacy is an extremely powerful and pervasive means for cultural control.

The contemporary and fragmented landscape of what are usually referred to as 'world Englishes' was thus strictly interwoven with English colonial policies. Historically, it embodies the results of what are usually referred to as the two migratory phases or diasporas of the English language. The first initially involved the migration of mother-tongue English speakers from England, Scotland and Ireland predominantly to North America, Australia and New Zealand resulting in new mother-tongue varieties of English. The second, involving the colonization of Asia and Africa mainly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, led to the development of a number of second language varieties, often referred to as 'New Englishes'. It is important to remember that whereas the first diaspora mainly caused the displacement of the aboriginal population, the second provoked the subjection of the population living in the colonies. The two different kinds of colonization brought about different linguistic effects.

Within the constellation of British colonies, Ireland represents a case in point. Ireland was the first British colony and in the historical spread of English during the colonial period, Irish English played a central role alongside forms of Scottish English and British English (Hickey 2004; McCafferty 2011). It is probably the place where the colonial legacy is the strongest as English has been present in the island for over 800 years, but its position and positioning within the Empire is often controversial. Ireland is not included in the phases of the diasporas, as a matter of fact it is considered one of the places from which English people moved to conquer the world. In addition, it is not clear if its mechanisms of colonization were of subjection or displacement, still English is the native language in the Emerald Isle and it is a fact that Irish people tried to get rid of the English conquerors for many centuries. Moreover, even though the process of colonization on the part of England did not bring about a complete displacement of the original population, the Flight of the Earls in 1607 for instance, represented *de facto* the end of the Gaelic world in Ireland.

When analyzing such diasporas at a global level, Ireland is often regarded as the place from which people left to colonize other parts of the world and not as the first place subjected to colonialism and its practices. This attitude also accounts for the conventional exclusion of Ireland in a postcolonial framework. Explanations for this exclusion were often justified by considerations such as the following: "Colonized nations themselves, they [Irish people] were also often ambiguously and intricately implicated in the colonial enterprise, many of their inhabitants going on to take part in the establishment and maintenance of the British Empire" (Bery, Murray 2000, 4). This attitude has motivated a

sort of reluctance in accepting Ireland within the framework of the postcolonial paradigm. As a matter of fact, Ireland found itself in a controversial, still for some reasons 'privileged', position because over the centuries it was both the colonized land and the land from which some English left either to migrate or to expand the Empire. Thanks to this position within the British Empire, the Irish context can be considered a thought-provoking observation point for issues concerning English colonial and language policies.

For the reasons mentioned above, it is therefore necessary to take into account issues concerning colonialism and postcolonialism and those assumptions that the postcolonial studies frame of mind brought into being when investigating the birth and development of Irish English and, more generally, the Irish context. Ireland appears to be a sort of battlefield where British colonial practices were experimented before exporting them overseas. Language, in particular, is the battlefield where the fight for identity is most fought, the development of world Englishes and, in the case of Ireland of Irish English, is only one of the outcomes of this fight.

The starting point of this paper is that Irish English, the variety of English spoken in Ireland (in the past and today) is the result of many linguistic mechanisms and embodies a precursory example of the colonial practices adopted by the British Empire in the colonies. As such, an analysis of the language cannot be separated from an analysis of the mechanism of representation that created Irish people as different from English in a postcolonial context.

This article will first discuss English language policy in Ireland by illustrating some examples of the representation of Irishness by the English in order to make it clear how postcolonial issues fit in the Irish context. It will then very briefly explain some of the reasons behind the so called 'language shift', the mechanism through which Irish people shifted to English and, finally, it will illustrate some features of Irish English which exemplify the reasons why it may be considered as an *ante litteram* variety of Englishes whose identity is the result of a typical contact situation. In line with Hickey (2004, 83), the term used in this article for the English spoken in Ireland is "Irish English", since it parallels established labels such as Welsh English or Scottish English. The label "Hiberno-English" is considered as an unnecessary Latinate coinage, whereas "Anglo-Irish" is considered inappropriate as it has a political and literary connotation which is rejected here and, on a strictly morphological level, it refers to a specific variety of Irish (Gaelic), not English.

2. *Ireland and the Construction of a Postcolonial Identity*

Even though there could be some reasons for excluding Ireland from the postcolonial framework (many Irish people fought in the British army during the conquest of India), such an approach does not take into account the crucial need to examine the hierarchical relationships within the British

Empire, together with the coercive recruitment which took place. The inclusion of Ireland in the postcolonial canon puts into question some of the basic assumptions regarding postcolonial theory, e.g. skin colour. Although sharing the same skin colour with the English, for example, the Irish were, in fact, represented using exactly the same stereotypes employed to describe the "red savages" of America (see Cambria 2012). The representation of the colonized 'others' was often carried out in terms of a lack of whiteness, but skin colour was obviously not the only issue at stake in the representation/control of the other (Bonnett 2004; Ramone 2011). The representation of identity is thus a key issue in this type of environment and one which is often questioned when discussing language issues.

Identity is never straightforward, clear or unproblematic, it is often renegotiated or the result of negotiation. This is particularly the case in postcolonial contexts where the identity of the colonized was often constructed as being the opposite to that of the colonizer. In those contexts, the colonized (or the subaltern) have not right to access the word, they "cannot speak" and so are often described and represented (Spivak 1994). The description of the 'other' is never neutral, but always involves a place of enunciation locked within a specific context: to express one's opinion is by its very nature to speak from a precise position placed in context. As Stuart Hall argues: "though we speak, so to say 'in our name' of ourselves and from our experience, nevertheless who speaks and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place" (1990, 222).

Colonialism was neither a natural nor a neutral process, but one which involved displacement, coercion and violence, strongly effecting the lives of the colonized. Two related effects of colonialism were the downplay of colonized peoples and their loss of identity, in many cases related to language loss. One major legacy of the two diasporas of English was the assumption of the inferiority of the indigenous language, culture and in some cases character of the colonised, together with the assumption of the superiority of the colonisers and their language. This was partly shown in the representation of the colonized as 'barbaric', 'primitive' or 'wild'. Analyses of various colonial contexts has shown that a colonial discourse was built up to include structures of knowledge, modes of representation and strategies of power, laws and discipline used in the construction/representation of the colonial subject. Like Foucault (1980 [1969]), Said (1993) insists on the central role of ideology, which underpins the formation of all discourses. Colonialism is driven by strategic enforcement and the construction of an ideology that leads the Empire into a position of supremacy over the other that has to be conquered. A series of strategies aimed at educating the colonized and enforcing social control is a necessary step for colonisation to be effective. Within this framework, a major role is played by issues related to the representation of the colonized which are often described from a centralizing awareness which, in the case of England during the colonization of Ireland, was modelled on commonly accepted generalizations created through beliefs and stereotypes which considered Irish people as wild and

barbaric. England had also understood that in order to control the people, it was necessary to control the mind and the language. The following quotation taken from Article III of the *Statutes of Kilkenny* issued in 1366, is a clear example of just how aware the English were of the power of language as a form of opposition and resistance. For this reason, they tried to prevent English people from using the language and the culture of the colonized:

III. Also, it is ordained and established, that every Englishman do use the English language, and be named by an English name, leaving off entirely the manner of naming used by the Irish; and that every Englishman use the English custom, fashion, mode of riding and apparel, according to his estate; and if any English, or Irish living amongst the English, use the Irish language amongst themselves, contrary to the ordinance, and therof be attainted, his lands and tenements, if he have any, shall be seized into the hands of his immediate lord, until he shall come to one of the places of our lord the king, and find sufficient surety to adopt and use the English language, and then he shall have restitution of his said lands or tenements, his body shall be taken by any of the officers of our lord the king, and commited to the next gaol, there to remain until he, or some other in his name, shall find sufficient surety in the manner aforesaid: And that no Englishman who shall have the value of one hundred pounds of land or of rent by the year, shall ride otherwise than on a saddle in the English fashion; and he that shall do to the contrary, and shall be thereof attainted, his horse shall be forfeited to our lord the king, and his body shall be committed to prison, until he pay a fine according to the king's pleasure for the contempt aforesaid; and also, that beneficed persons of holy Church, living amongst the English, shall have the issues of their benefices until they use the English language in the manner aforesaid; and they shall have respite in order to learn the English language, and to provide saddles, between this and the feast of Saint Michael next coming. (Source <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T300001-001>, 03/2014)

The Statutes were issued to clearly control and prevent the English from falling into temptation with the Irish and so to avoid any sort of contamination of the English culture. With the Statutes things such as using the Irish language, or marrying an Irish woman were made illegal for the English in Ireland. Despite their prescriptive tone, the Statutes were ineffectual to the point that two centuries later Edmund Spenser, in his *View of the Present State of Ireland* written in 1596, ironically described and condemned the fact that the English had become "more Irish than the Irish themselves". A brief quotation from the dialogue between Irenius and Euxodus helps to strengthen this point:

EUDOXUS
What is that you say, of so many as remayne English of them? Why are, not they that were once English, abydinge Englishe still?
IRENIUS
No, for the most parte of them are degenerated and growen almost meare Irishe, yea, and more malicious to the Englishe then the very Irishe them selves.

EUDOXUS
What heare I? And is it possyble that an Englishman, brought up naturally in such
sweet civilitie as England affordes, could fynd such lyking in that barberous rudenes,
that he should forgett his owne nature, and foregoe his owne nacon? how may this be?
or what I pray you may be the cause thereof?
IRENIUS
Surely, nothinge but that first evill ordinance and Institucon of that Common Wealthe.
But thereof now is their no fitt place to speake, least, by the occation thereof offer-
ing matter of longe Discourse, we might be drawen from this that we have in hand,
namely, the handleinge of abuses in the Customes of Ireland. (Spenser 2003 [1894],
4; emphasis added)

In Spenser's time, England was busy creating the ideological basis for the
Empire and Ireland did not have the chance to escape the plan. Ireland repre-
sented a sort of *alter ego* for England and needed to be in control. This was the
same period when the idea of a national language was flourishing in England, a
national language that was to help the construction of the nation, an imagined
community (Anderson 2006 [1983]) of people called England which would
be ready to conquer the world. Even in their deep diversity, the two quotations
share the same (unconscious?) idea that using the language of the barbaric con-
taminates the purity of the English people, thus it had to be avoided. Spenser's
text, in particular, is a sarcastic comment on those Anglo-Normans who went
to Ireland as colonizers and were colonized, becoming "more Irish than the
Irish themselves". The attempt to contain the process of becoming barbaric
combines with a language policy that wants to stop any sort of contamination.
The stereotypes that emerge in the two quotations substantiate an *adagio* which
will be repeated over and over the 800 years of English colonization of Ireland.

Linguistically and politically, the description of the postcolonial subject
is very often the result of a self-reflection where all the characteristics which
cannot be typical of a certain context apply directly to the other. The colonized
appear as passive subjects and fail to react against the presence of the colonizer.
Identity is thus defined by a series of interrelationships, following an interplay
of power relations. Bhabha (1990, 1994) argues that territorial and economic
domination produce a divided subjectivity in which identity is the result of a
process of mixing with the other, negotiating one's identity, following a pre-
established notion pre-determined by the colonizer. The colonized becomes a
subaltern, excluded from the logocentric power and thus silenced.

England soon understood that in order to stop the 'contagious virus' of
Irishness which had struck the Anglo-Normans, they had to send new people to
Ireland, people who could take hold of the situation. The seventeenth century
was characterized by several separatist movements in Ireland that caused, on one
hand, the final defeat of the Gaelic clans causing the Flight of the Earls, and,
on the other, a severe repressive policy on the part of the English who could

not bear the fact that the situation in Ireland was so out of control. A change in the political scenario in Ireland led, almost automatically, to a change in the attitude towards the English language.

3. *A Battlefield of Identities: the Language Shift*

Irish people have always had an ambivalent attitude towards English. The fortune of English in Ireland has gone through several stages: from a mainly Irish speaking country in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the population in Ireland shifted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to English (or better Irish English) for a plethora of reasons. When the English arrived in Ireland and during the first centuries of their colonization, they had to deal with problems which were not only political but also linguistic. As seen, the political colonization of the territory did not parallel with a cultural one and, in 1394 when Richard II received the visit of the Irish kings in Dublin, the second Earl of Ormond had to translate the King's speech into Irish. The Gaelization of the Anglo-Normans partly explains the decline of English in Ireland in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. At the time, English was represented by different varieties due to the diverse regional origins of the early English settlers. It is more than likely that an intermediate variety arose in the fourteenth century, a sort of compromise between the different linguistic varieties of the speakers. This is attested by the major literary document of medieval Irish English, the *Kildare Poems*. The Reformation accelerated the decline of English as it created a sort of alliance between old-English colonizers and the native Irish against the new English Protestants.

This linguistic situation was so widespread that in 1541 during a parliamentary session: "the Earl of Ormond was the only one who had sufficient knowledge of English to understand the Bill proclaiming Henry the VII King of Ireland" (Bliss 1979, 14) and he had to translate it to the nobility attending the ceremony. The seventeenth century marks the emergence in Ireland of a new system of patronage. The English victory at the battle of Kinsale in 1601 had caused the Flight of the Earls and created a political vacuum filled by the English and in particular, by Cromwell's policy. These factors led to the decline of the Gaelic culture. After the military subjugation of the Irish one of the preferred solutions to remunerate the army was the donation of land to the faithful and the banishment of those landowners who had not shown continued allegiance to the Crown. The Plantation created fertile soil for the spread of English. Cultural and political elements both played a crucial role in the language transformation. Cronin (2011) argues that at least four things led to this change of attitude during the period of Cromwell: the enormous land transfers of the seventeenth century which led to the emergence of a new aristocracy, the Ascendancy, who were, as said, almost exclusively English-speaking; the establishment in 1592 of Trinity College, Ireland's first University; the fact that many settlers in the Plantation

spoke English and there was no incentive to change their linguistic habits; and finally, the language of the established Church was English.

As said, the establishment of the first University in Dublin was an important indication of the need to reinforce and empower English in Ireland. Although it provided some teaching in Irish, Trinity College was predominantly English-speaking. A look at the TCD home page (specifically the link to "history": <http://www.tcd.ie/about/history/>, 03/2014) helps to throw some light on the colonial ideology which brought about the creation of Trinity College.

> Trinity College Dublin was created by royal charter in 1592, at which point Dublin Corporation provided a suitable site, the former Priory of All Hallows. Its foundation came at a time when many universities were being established across western Europe in the belief that they would give prestige to the state in which they were located and that their graduates, clergy for the most part, would perform a vital service as civil administrators. By the 1590s England had two long established universities, each with an expanding group of colleges, and Scotland four. *The idea of a university college for Ireland emerged at a time when the English state was strengthening its control over the kingdom and when Dublin was beginning to function as a capital city.* The group of citizens, lay and clerical, who were main promoters of the scheme believed that the establishment of a university *was an essential step in bringing Ireland into the mainstream of European learning and in strengthening the Protestant Reformation within the country.* The organisational design of the new institution was influenced by Oxford, Cambridge and continental precursors […] Many of its early graduates, well grounded in philosophy and theology, proceeded to clerical ordination in the state church, the Anglican Church of Ireland. (Emphasis added)

Trinity was thus funded to reinforce control over Ireland and to spread the Reformation. It is not a coincidence that in this period the Irish language became identified with Catholicism. Politically, after the restoration of the English Crown under Charles II, the distribution of land was carried out according to religious belief and Catholics were not given back their lands. Expropriation and other social elements fuelled the use of English to the point that during the eighteenth century about two-thirds of the population used Irish, while towards the end of the century the numbers decreased to only half the population (Ó Cuív 1951). The linguistic picture was not so clear-cut as there were also some sociolinguistic divisions. It was more than likely, for example, that nobles, country-aristocrats and country gentlemen were anglicized (Hindley 1990; Hickey 2010). It is also very likely that in the eighteenth century English was mainly used in Ireland by the Irish at first only as a second language. The acquisition of English and the development of Irish English was characterized by the fact that it was learnt in a context of adult unguided second language acquisition and this has deeply affected its development. Various factors led to a general language shift in favour of English in the first half of the nineteenth century, among these were the severe

punishments imposed on those who used Irish and the Potato Famine which caused waves of emigration towards the United States. Hickey argues:

> The most remarkable fact in the linguistic history of Ireland since the seventeenth century marks the abandonment of the Irish language by successive generations, to such an extent that the remaining Irish-speaking areas today are only a fraction of the size of the country and containing not much more that 1 per cent of the population. Bilingualism did not establish itself in Ireland, though it characterized the transition from Irish to English. No matter how long this bilingualism lasted, the goal of the shift was obvious and those who shifted to English ultimately abandoned Irish, even though this took many generations. The remaining bilinguals today are mostly native speakers of Irish in the Irish-speaking districts, all of whom speak English. There was never any functional distribution of Irish and English, either in the towns or in the countryside, so that stable diglossia could not have developed. (2007, 121)

The English that the Irish people shifted to, however, was not a standard one but already Irish English, a variety born out of the contact between several input varieties spoken by people who lived in Ireland, and Irish. It was a language that already had the features of the contact between the two identities, those of the colonizers and those of the colonized. Scholars agree that the linguistic context where the shift took place, the prestige and the possibility that English seemed to offer in a period when Ireland was devastated by the Famine may have played a decisive role in accelerating the passage from one language to the other. Also, the shift may have involved considerable bilingualism over the centuries, the native language of the majority of the population was Irish and their recourse to it seems to have been a good option. English (Irish English) was used in contact with administrators, bailiffs and other authorities who spoke only English but a stable diglossia, the co-presence of the two languages used in different fields, was not an option. The difference in the use of English depended on geographical distribution and on sociolinguistic factors. At a certain moment in time, Irish people decided to use a language which offered better possibilities for work. The prestige of the second language may well have been also responsible for the shift. Hoffmann (1992) quotes the decline of the Celtic languages as an instance of this attitude.

As a result, from the beginning of the nineteenth century Irish was no longer used in parliament, law courts or in the administration of local municipalities (McDermott 2011). Irish people had shifted to Irish English and now used the language of the imperial power a language though which owned the traces of a negotiated identity and bore the taste of 'contaminated' identities.

4. *Identities in Contact: Irish English*

As said, the English that Irish people shifted to was not Standard British English, but a language which was the result of the contact between Irish

people and successive colonizations of Ireland by speakers of English and Scots dialects that had begun in the Middle Ages and reached its peak during the Plantation. The context where the language was learned, and the several dialects which contributed to its creation definitely account for the linguistic features of what can be considered a Standard Irish English (Kirk 2011). The intense waves of colonization favoured the birth and the possibility of a contact variety which following Corrigan was characterized by: "(i) innovative forms; (ii) the incorporation of features drawn from Irish, the indigenous language prior to colonization, and (iii) other characteristics caused by the mixing of Irish with the regional Scots and English vernaculars of the new settlers" (2011, 39). Modern varieties of Irish English still retain these mixed features.

In studies on Irish English the initial "substratist" position (Henry 1977; Joyce 1979 [1910]) where a strong Irish substratum and considerable weight was accorded to the transfer from Irish, gave way to the "retentionist" standpoint (Harris 1984, 1985; Lass 1990) where considerable weight was accorded to regional English input to Ireland. In the 1990s, scholars found some answers in the gradual acceptance of contact as a source of some specific features of Irish English. Markku Filppula (1990, 1993, 1999) and Raymond Hickey (1995) took into account the seminal work on contact by Thomason and Kaufman (1988) and convergence became a possible scenario, a scenario where retention and contact occupy places of equal standing. This position was supported by several studies (Clyne 2003; Holm 2004; Winford 2005). There are many possible situations of contact which generate different linguistic outputs. The intensity and duration of contact between speakers of different languages naturally determine the effects that they have on each other. Irish and English are typologically very different, Hickey, for example, defines the contact scenario which applies to the genesis of Irish English one in which "speech habits of outset [were] transferred to target, grammatical interference found in non-prescriptive environments" (2007, 129). Hickey argues that this is a type of contact which involves the speakers of one language shifting to another over time and where the duration of bilingualism constitutes an important factor. Such a situation would perfectly fit Irish English.

Creolisation was also considered but subsequently dismissed because there was no break in linguistic continuity in Ireland where the scenario historically, had been unguided adult second language acquisition (Corrigan 1993; Hickey 1997). Several problems arise when considering creolisation as there is no conclusive evidence that Irish English may have been a creole at some early stage. Moreover, language shift is not a scenario which involves creolisation (Winford 2003, 304-358) and there are no records in Irish English of the use of any forms of pidgin, for instance the use of restricted codes when dealing with English officials in Ireland. Hickey concludes that if "these registers did exist, they died out with the completion of the language shift and the rise of later generations of native speakers of English in former Irish-speaking areas" (2007, 285).

What all these studies show is that there are several sources for the features of contemporary Irish English: transfer from Irish, dialect and archaic forms of English, features from context in which English was learned and some features which have no identifiable source and can thus be generated as independent developments (Vaughan, Clancy 2011). There is no space in here to discuss in details the features of Irish English and their possible sources, Table 1 and 2 derive from Hickey (2011, 7-8) and summarize some shared features in Irish English with possible sources.

Phonology

1) Lenition of alveolar stops to fricatives in positions of high sonority, e.g., city [siti̞]
2) Use of clear [l] in all positions in a word (now recessive), e.g., field [fi:ld]
3) Retention of syllable-final /r/, e.g., board [bo:rd]
4) Distinction of short vowels before /r/ (now recessive), e.g., tern [tern] versus turn [tʌrn]
5) Retention of the distinction between /ʍ/ and /w/ (now recessive), e.g., which [ʍitʃ] and witch [witʃ]

Morphology

1) Distinction between second singular and plural personal pronouns, e.g., you [ju] versus youse [juz] / ye [ji] / yeez [jiz].
2) Epistemic negative must, e.g., He mustn't be Scottish.
3) Them as demonstrative, e.g., Them shoes in the hall.

Syntax

1) Perfective aspect with two subtypes:
a) Immediate perfective, e.g., She's after spilling the milk.
b) Resultative perfective, e.g., She's the housework done (OV word order).
2) Habitual aspect, expressed by do + be or bees or inflectional -s in the first person singular
a) She does be reading books.
b) They bees up late at night.
c) I gets awful anxious about the kids when they're away.
3) Reduced number of verb forms, e.g., seen and done as preterite, went as past participle.
4) Negative concord, e.g., He's not interested in no cars.
5) Clefting for topicalisation purposes, e.g., It's to Glasgow he's going.
6) Greater range of the present tense, e.g., I know him for more than six years now.
7) Lack of do in questions, e.g., Have you had your breakfast yet?
8) Be as auxiliary, e.g., They're finished the work now.
9) Till in the sense of 'in order that', e.g., Come here till I tell you.
10) Singular time reference for never, e.g., She never rang yesterday evening.
11) For to infinitives of purpose, e.g., He went to Dublin for to buy a car.
12) Subordinating and (frequently concessive), e.g., We went for a walk and it raining.

Table 1: Shared features in vernacular varieties of Irish English (source: Hickey 2011, 7)

Phonological features	Possible source
Dental/alveolar stops for fricatives	Transfer of nearest Irish equivalent, dental/alveolar stops
Intervocalic and pre-pausal lenition of /t/	Lenition as a phonological directive from Irish
Alveolar /l/ in all positions	Use of non-velar, non-palatal [l] from Irish
Retention of [ʍ] for <wh>	Convergence of input with the realisation of Irish /f/ [φ]
Retention of syllable-final /r/	Convergence of English input and Irish
Distinction of short vowels before /r/	Convergence of English input and Irish
Morphological features	Possible source
Distinct pronominal forms 2 p. sg. + pl.	Convergence of English input and Irish
Epistemic negative *must*	Generalisation made by Irish based on positive use
Them as demonstrative	English input only
Syntactic features	Possible source
Habitual aspect	Convergence with South-West English input on east coast, possibly with influence from Scots via Ulster Otherwise transfer of category from Irish
Immediate perfective aspect with *after*	Transfer from Irish
Resultative perfective with OV word order Subordinating *and*	Possible convergence, primarily from Irish Transfer from Irish
Variant use of suffixal -*s* in present	South-west input in first period on east coast
Clefting for topicalisation	Transfer from Irish, with some possible convergence
Greater range of the present tense	Transfer from Irish, with some possible convergence
Negative concord	Convergence of English input and Irish
For to infinitives indicating purpose	Convergence of English input and Irish
Reduced number of verb forms	English input only
Be as auxiliary	English input only
Single time reference for never	Transfer from Irish, English input

Table 2: Suggestions for sources of key features of Southern Irish English (source: Hickey 2011, 8)

This very brief summary on the possible sources of the main features of Irish English clearly shows that, not only metaphorically, Irish English seems to summarize the clash/union between the two languages. Features such as "negative concord" are the result of "transfer from Irish" and "English input". At the same time, there are some elements such as some aspects of relativization (see Corrigan 2011) which embody some 'universals' created in contact situations which were later to be recreated in other colonial contexts within the Empire.

5. *Conclusion*

Irish English shows how, especially in colonial and postcolonial contexts, we can see language as a battlefield of identity. The struggle may end up creating new identities characterized by fractures but also by encounters or

may result in the complete defeat of one or the other. There are several attitudes adopted by the colonized in answering and opposing the imperialistic language in the decolonization process two of which are the most widespread: refusal and subversion (Quayson 2000). In the first case (refusal), the language of the empire is rejected *tout court* and the colonized restore their mother tongue and use the language they feel is more appropriate to their own identity. In the second case (subversion), the imperialist language (i.e. English), is used because it represents a source of self-interest, but is re-written and re-appropriated through forms deviating from the so-called 'standard' by questioning and challenging its authority. Irish English seems to be a case of subversion. Irish English embodies the prolonged contact between colonizer and colonized. A contact which has created a variety which, as Synge argued, is "English that is perfectly Irish in its essence, yet has sureness and purity of form" (1981 [1907], 45).

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