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TESIS DOCTORAL

English in *Norn Iron*: A Study of the Perception of Portrayals of Northern Irish English Accent(s) in Telecinematic and Literary Fiction

El inglés en Irlanda del Norte: Un estudio de la percepción de representaciones de acentos norirlandeses en ficción telecinemática y literaria

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my late aunt, Ana Isabel Díaz Guisado, who always believed in me and celebrated my accomplishments as if they were her own. I wish you were here to celebrate this thesis with me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

RESUMEN

Esta tesis analiza cómo un número de encuestados de Irlanda del Norte (representado fonéticamente como *Norn Iron*) perciben y evalúan representaciones de acentos norirlandeses en ficción telecinemática y literaria. De este modo, abarca estudios de sociolingüística, actitudes lingüísticas, lingüística popular (conocida en inglés como *folk linguistics*) y de representación de dialecto en ficción. Este estudio tiene dos objetivos principales. El primer objetivo consiste en explorar cómo los informantes norirlandeses evalúan las diferentes interpretaciones de acentos norirlandeses en cuanto a autenticidad y a las dos dimensiones tradicionales de prestigio y amabilidad, en base a las cuales se miden las actitudes lingüísticas. El segundo propósito de esta tesis radica en determinar si las variables sociales de género, edad, clase social, identidad étnica y ciudad/pueblo de procedencia tienen alguna influencia en esas evaluaciones. Para recoger y medir dichas evaluaciones se diseñó un cuestionario del tipo utilizado en estudios de actitudes lingüísticas que se distribuyó posteriormente entre informantes de Irlanda del Norte. Este cuestionario mostraba ejemplos de representaciones ficticias, tanto escritas como habladas, de acentos norirlandeses que los encuestados tuvieron que evaluar usando escalas de medida. El análisis estadístico de los resultados de las escalas sugiere que las puntuaciones en autenticidad, prestigio y amabilidad varía significativamente dependiendo del género, la edad y la ciudad/pueblo de procedencia de los informantes. Este resultado coincide con investigaciones previas sobre producción lingüística en Irlanda del Norte (McCafferty, 1999, 2001; Milroy, 1987; Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Pitts, 1985). Además, se observa una tendencia basada en el género y que afecta a las puntuaciones de autenticidad, prestigio y amabilidad. Dicha tendencia confirma el descubrimiento de Coupland y Bishop (2007) sobre la relación entre el género y las actitudes hacia acentos regionales. Aparte de analizar información cuantitativa, esta tesis también examina respuestas cualitativas que proporcionan información útil sobre (1) la saliencia (o falta de saliencia) de ciertos rasgos de pronunciación que caracterizan a acentos norirlandeses, (2) la habilidad de los encuestados para identificar los acentos representados, así como la identidad étnica de los hablantes que producen esos acentos y (3) sus reacciones a la representación de acentos en ficción telecinemática y literaria.

Palabras clave: acentos norirlandeses, percepción, representaciones ficticias, actitudes lingüísticas y cuestionarios.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyses the perceptions and evaluations of telecinematic and literary portrayals of Northern Irish English accents by lay people in Northern Ireland (phonetically represented as *Norn Iron*). In doing so, it encompasses various fields of study, namely sociolinguistics, language attitudes, folk linguistics and the representation of dialect in fictional performances. The two main aims of this thesis are (1) to explore how informants from Northern Ireland evaluate performed Northern Irish accents in terms of authenticity and of the traditional attitudinal dimensions of prestige and pleasantness and (2) to ascertain whether the social variables of gender, age, social class, ethnicity and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown influence the evaluations. To collect and measure those evaluations, a questionnaire similar to the ones used in language attitude studies has been designed and distributed among Northern Irish lay people. This questionnaire presents respondents with spoken and written samples of fictional representations of Northern Irish accents which they have to rate using measurement scales. Statistical analyses carried out on the scale ratings suggest that evaluations of authenticity, prestige and pleasantness vary more significantly according to the social factors of gender, age and hometown. This finding is in line with previous research on language production in NI (McCafferty, 1999, 2001; Milroy, 1987; Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Pitts, 1985). Furthermore, a gender-based trend identified in the ratings on the authentic, prestigious and pleasant scales corroborate Coupland & Bishop's (2007) finding in relation to gender and attitudes towards regional accents. In addition to quantitative data, this dissertation also gathers qualitative responses which provide useful information about (1) the salience (or lack of salience) of Northern Irish English pronunciation features, (2) the ability of respondents to recognise the performed accents as well as the ethnic background of the speakers and (3) their reactions to the portrayal of the accents in telecinematic and literary fiction.

Keywords: Northern Irish English accents, perception, fictional portrayals, language attitudes, questionnaires.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

BE	Belfast English
DE	Derry English
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IrE	Irish English
LCIE	Limerick Corpus of Irish English
MUE	Mid Ulster English
NI	Northern Ireland
NIrE	Northern Irish English
ROI	The Republic of Ireland
SSBE	Standard Southern British English
SIrE	Southern Irish English
SUE	South Ulster English
SVLR	Scottish Vowel Length Rule
USc	Ulster Scots
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
/ /	Phonological representation
[ ]	Phonetic representation
~	ranges from … to

1. Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Rationale for this dissertation

The title for this dissertation contains the label *Norn Iron*, a written representation of the way *Northern Ireland* is pronounced by people in that region. *Norn Iron* seemed therefore worth including in the title of a thesis that deals with fictional representations of Northern Irish accents. Moreover, this label is employed by two of the informants who filled in the questionnaire used in the present study (the questionnaire will be described in Chapter 5). *Norn Iron* is also recorded in the *Urban Dictionary* (JNK, 2005) and in the *Wiktionary* ("Norn Iron," 2021) and used as the name for a website that sells T-shirts (Norn Iron Tees, n.d.) with common Northern Irish dialectal phrases printed on them.

There has been a traditional debate on the validity of fictional representations of dialects in writing (Amador-Moreno & Nunes, 2009; Hodson, 2014; Krapp, 1971; Page, 1988), which is particularly based on whether those representations can be considered authentic or not (Section 4.2.3. offers a discussion of the concept of authenticity in the field of dialect writing). Notwithstanding this debate, the representation of Irish English varieties in literature has been subject to scholarly scrutiny (see Amador-Moreno, 2002, 2012; Cesiri, 2012; Connell, 2014; Corrigan, 1996; Dolan, 1984; Lynch, 2006; McCafferty, 2005; Sullivan, 1980; Taniguchi, 1972; Terrazas-Calero, 2022). In addition to analysing Irish English (henceforth IrE) in literary works, more recent scholarship has turned its attention to representations of Irish varieties of the English language in telecinematic fiction (see Murphy & Palma-Fahey, 2018; Palma-Fahey, 2015; Vaughan & Moriarty, 2018, 2020; Walshe, 2009, 2011, 2016, 2017). Unlike all the aforementioned studies, the present dissertation deals with representations of Irish English and, more particularly, Northern Irish English (henceforth NIrE) accents, both in literary and telecinematic fiction. While literature and television/cinema are different modes of communication –the former is written and the latter is audiovisual–, they are similar in the sense that the language used in literary works and in TV programs and films are examples of performed language, that is, language that is carefully designed and different from natural, spontaneous speech (as further discussed in Section 4.2.). This similarity makes it worthwhile to study them together.

Apart from exploring literary as well as telecinematic portrayals, this study differs from most previous research in one other fundamental aspect: it explores Northern Irish people's perceptions of the representation of NIrE accents in literary and telecinematic

fiction rather than concentrating on the representation in itself. This is not to say, however, that the way Northern Irish English accents are portrayed is disregarded since perceptions cannot be understood without a proper analysis of the object that is being evaluated, i.e., the representations (a thorough description of the portrayals is offered in Section 5.3.3.1.).

Focusing on perception, this dissertation examines how representations of Northern Irish English are perceived by a Northern Irish audience in terms of authenticity. As mentioned above, the concept of authenticity is a key topic in the field of fictional representations of dialect and researchers have been usually concerned with measuring the authenticity of representations (see Amador-Moreno & McCafferty, 2011; Cohen Minnick, 2007; Hodson, 2014; Ives, 1971). Nevertheless, most scholars analyse authenticity by considering whether the representation of a dialect in fiction is accurate from a linguistic point of view. In other words, they compare the linguistic features represented in the fictional performance of a dialect with the features of that dialect in real life. On the basis of this comparison, the portrayal of a particular dialect will be classified as authentic if the represented features are similar to those found in real-life speech (this will be referred as *produced authenticity* in this thesis). This approach to authenticity only takes into account the linguist's assessment, thereby overlooking the role of the readers/audience. People who watch telecinematic fiction (audience) and people who read literary fiction (readers) are usually lay people, that is, individuals that are not experts in linguistics, but that does not mean that their perceptions do not deserve attention. Preston (1982a, 1989, 1993, 1999b, 2002) is among the first scholars who placed value on lay people's beliefs about language. In so doing, he has greatly contributed to the development of the field of folk linguistics, and more particularly, perceptual dialectology (see Section 4.3.2. for a review of the literature on these fields). This dissertation contributes to filling the gap that exists in the field of fictional portrayal of dialect when it comes to the role of the readers/audience.

A questionnaire is used as a means of gathering the responses of Northern Irish informants to representations of NIrE accents in telecinematic and literary fiction. This questionnaire measures how respondents rate those representations in terms of authenticity, prestige and pleasantness. Whereas, as explained above, authenticity is explored in studies of dialect representation in fiction, prestige and pleasantness are two

of the three traditional evaluative dimensions examined in research on language attitudes[1] (see Coupland & Bishop, 2007; Garrett, 2010; Ryan & Giles, 1982; Ryan & Sebastian, 1980; Sharma et al., 2022; Zahn & Hopper, 1985 inter alia). Scholars in the field of language attitudes have found out that lay people usually evaluate dialects in terms of how prestigious and pleasant they are. The rationale behind the idea of measuring the perceived prestige and pleasantness of performed accents has to do with the fact that people seem to evaluate language in performance in a manner similar to how they assess natural speech. This is probably due to the link that exists between natural and performed language (as will be discussed in Sections 4.2.3. and 4.3.5.).

Drawing on studies of language attitudes, the questionnaire designed for this dissertation presents informants with voice samples that they have to rate on several scales. This probably reminds the reader of Lambert et al.'s (1960, 1965) indirect method known as the matched-guise technique, which has been widely used by scholars interested in attitudes to language (for a description of this technique, see Section 4.3.1.1.). However, the questionnaire used in this study differs from Lambert et al.'s in a number of ways. Firstly, Lambert et al.'s voice samples are recordings of a single speaker using a variety of accents. On the contrary, the samples of my questionnaire are not only recordings but also clips taken from different TV shows and films and therefore there is a different speaker in each sample. Furthermore, since the vocal stimuli I use comes from existing performances (films and TV shows produced in NI), it is different from Lambert et al.'s samples which are specifically created for the purpose of researching language attitudes. One last difference lies in the fact that, as opposed to the questionnaire used for this study that states its purpose clearly from the outset, Lambert et al.'s informants do not know what the real aim of the questionnaire is. As a result, my respondents are aware that they are rating accents whereas participants in Lambert et al.'s survey do not know that they are evaluating language.

1.2. Research questions

As mentioned above, the present study is primarily concerned with exploring how people in Northern Ireland perceive representations of Northern Irish English accents in telecinematic and literary fiction (see Section 4.2. for an explanation of what I will be

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[1] The prestige and pleasantness attitudinal dimensions are also referred to as the 'superiority' and 'attractiveness' dimensions (Zahn & Hopper, 1985) or as the 'status' and 'aesthetic' dimensions (Giles, 1970).

referring to as 'telecinematic' and 'literary' fiction). Thus, the research questions that this dissertation sets out to answer are the following:

1. How do Northern Irish informants evaluate fictional portrayals of Northern Irish English accents in telecinematic and literary fiction in terms of authenticity and of the traditional attitudinal dimensions of prestige and pleasantness?
2. How do the social variables of gender, age, social class, ethnicity and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown influence those evaluations if at all?

While these are the two main research questions, this study also aims at shedding some light on some other aspects related to language perception. One of those aspects has to do with the concept of **salience** (discussed in Sections 4.2.2. and 4.2.4.) and, more particularly, with what NIrE pronunciation features of those represented in the telecinematic and literary portrayals seem to be perceptually salient for Northern Irish respondents. Apart from that, this dissertation also investigates whether those respondents are able to **identify the region/hometown and ethnic background** of the speakers in the telecinematic and literary stimuli.

In addition to exploring language perception, the present study analyses representations of Northern Irish English accents in some examples of telecinematic and literary fiction from the point of view of **authenticity**. In doing so, it seeks to determine what will be referred to as the *produced authenticity* of the accent portrayals. This term can be defined as the authenticity –or inauthenticity– of fictional representations of accents/dialects that depends on two things: the linguistic features that the author/producer of a given performance chooses to represent; and the (in)accuracy with which those features are (re)produced by the actors in the performed event (see Section 5.3.3.1.). It is important to bear in mind that the second aspect only applies to telecinematic performances since there are no actors involved in literary performances. Examining the degree to which the fictional representations of Northern Irish accents are authentic in terms of production makes it possible to see if there is correspondence between *produced authenticity* and *perceived authenticity*. Perceived authenticity refers to Northern Irish respondents' ratings on a scale that measures authenticity of the accent portrayals from the point of view of perception (Section 5.3.4.1.2. offers a description of the authenticity scale). Thus, perceived authenticity is based on results from the research question 1 that is formulated above.

Answers to the research questions formulated here are discussed in Chapter 6 and will be outlined in Section 7.1.

1.3. Locating the study

The present dissertation is an interdisciplinary study that combines the representation of dialect in fictional performances, language attitudes, folk linguistics and, finally, sociolinguistics. It views performed language as a useful source of information on language production and, more particularly, perception and as a tool through which indexical relationships between linguistic and social variables can be created, reinforced and/or challenged (indexicality, together with enregisterment, will be explained in detail in Section 4.2.2.2.) . In so doing, this thesis falls within the third wave of variation studies identified by Eckert (2012). The focus of this third wave is on seeing speakers "not as passive and stable carriers of dialect, but as stylistic agents, tailoring linguistic styles in ongoing and lifelong projects of self-construction and differentiation" (ibid., pp. 97-98). Performing language in literary and telecinematic fiction constitutes one of those "projects of self-construction and differentiation". It is also important to point out that falling within the third wave does not mean that this study is a complete departure from first and second wave research. The first wave was mainly concerned with how language changed depending on the social variables of sex, social class, education and occupation (Tagliamonte, 2015, p. 151). Thus, this study is influenced by the first wave since it explores whether language attitudes vary according to the factors of sex and social class. Regarding the second wave, scholars who belonged to it explored linguistic variation in local communities. As a result, the second wave seems to go back to dialectology, a field that flourished in the 1950s and whose main interest was regional variation. The present dissertation also investigates the relationship between region and language, thereby contributing to the first wave of variation research. Furthermore, its main object of study is phonetics and phonology, the branch of linguistics that had been paid most attention by dialectologists up until the 1970s (Rickford, 1975; Sankoff, 1973). However, pronunciation has not been as frequently explored as grammar, discourse and lexis in recent studies on the representation of IrE in fictional performances (those studies are reviewed in Sections 4.2.4 and 4.2.5.). The present study will therefore contribute to filling this gap.

1.4. Clarification of terms

Different labels have been employed by different researchers at different points in time to refer to the variety of English spoken in Northern Ireland so that it seems necessary, before I proceed any further, to make clear what terms are going to be used and why. When writing about this variety, most scholars have favoured either the term *Ulster English* or *Northern Irish English*. However, *Ulster* and *Northern Ireland* do not refer to the same geographical area. The former is the name given to one of the historical provinces of Ireland and comprises nine counties, namely Antrim, Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Down, Fermanagh, (London)Derry, Monaghan and Tyrone, while the latter is the political term that designates one of the constituent countries of the United Kingdom which encompasses only six of the aforementioned counties (Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, (London)Derry and Tyrone). Despite the difference between *Ulster* and *Northern Ireland*, the terms *Ulster English* and *Northern Irish English* are analogous from a linguistic point of view. Amador-Moreno (2010) describes them as "umbrella terms for the various types of English that can be found in the northern part of the island" (p. 13). Nonetheless, it seems that *Ulster English* was mainly favoured in the past (Adams, 1964, 1971, 1977, 1986; Kirk, 1997c; Wells, 1982) and that most scholars in the field have used *Northern Irish English* more recently (Amador-Moreno, 2010; Corrigan, 2010, 2020; Hickey, 2007; McCafferty, 2001; de Rijke, 2015). Some of the reasons why the latter term has been preferred over *Ulster English* are probably its easy understandability outside Ireland and the fact that it allows for an easy differentiation from *Southern Irish English,* the term employed here to refer to the variety of English spoken in most of the Republic of Ireland (henceforth ROI). The drawback of this term is that it can be misunderstood as referring only to the English spoken in the country of Northern Ireland (henceforth NI) and not to the entire northern part of the isle as is the case. Nonetheless, given that the present study is specifically concerned with NI rather than with the north of Ireland, the use of *Northern Irish English* should not present a problem here. Considering all of the above, this term seems the most suitable for use in this thesis.

It should be noted, however, that *Northern Irish English* (NIrE) is used as a general term that comprehends *Mid Ulster English* (MUE) and *South Ulster English* (SUE). The MUE- and SUE-speaking regions are the two English-speaking dialect areas identified by Harris (1984) in the north of Ireland (see Map 2.1.). A clear distinction shall be made between MUE and SUE when necessary. Apart from these two, Harris distinguished two other areas which are the *Gaeltacht*, that is, the area where Irish is spoken, and the *Ulster Scots* (USc) zone. Irish is a Celtic language, whereas USc is a

West Germanic variety whose origin is Scots, the dialect spoken by the Scottish people who settled in the north of the isle in the 17th century. Unlike Irish, which is completely different from English, USc is "mutually intelligible" with the English varieties in NI, i.e., MUE and SUE (Corrigan, 2010, p. 17). The issue of intelligibility, together with the strong influence those varieties have had on each other, has led some linguists such as Corrigan (2010) and de Rijke (2015) to classify USc as a dialect of NIrE. Notwithstanding these linguists' decision, there is a recent debate about the status of Ulster Scots which rests on "whether it is to be defined as a 'language' or a 'dialect'" (Corrigan, 2010, p. 16). Some scholars consider it a dialect while some others believe it is a language in its own right (see Carruthers & Ó Mainnín, 2018; Kallen, 1999; Maguire, 2020; McDermott, 2018; Montgomery, 1999). Whatever its status, USc diverges from English not only linguistically, but also in terms of culture and history. It has its own literary tradition to which some writers like Philip Robinson and James Fenton have made a significant contribution (for a full list of USc authors go to the Ulster Scots Academy). Although this study is neither about USc nor about Irish, the situation of language contact between these two languages and English makes it impossible not to refer to USc and Irish influence when describing NIrE.

Map 2.1.

Main dialect areas in the north of Ireland (adapted from Harris, 1984)

Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking area)
'Core' Ulster Scots (area defined by Gregg, 1972)
South Ulster English
Mid Ulster English
Southern Irish English
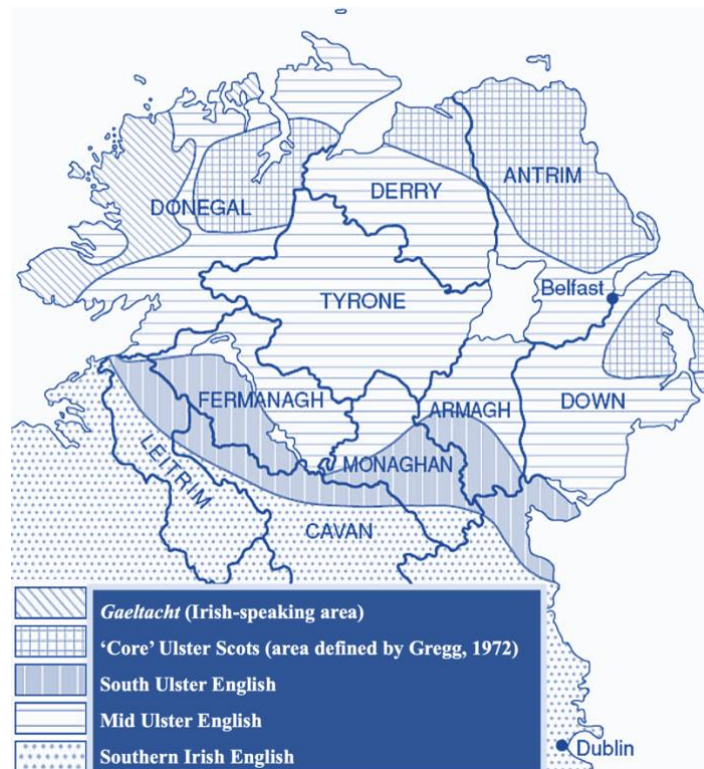
Note. Reproduced with permission from the author.

MUE, which is the most widely spoken variety in the north of Ireland, encompasses two urban vernaculars, *Belfast English* (BE) and *Derry English* (DE), which will be paid special attention to . The label *Urban Vernacular* is defined by Hickey (2007) as "a group of varieties spoken chiefly by inhabitants of large urban centres on a lower social level" (p. 6). The importance of urban vernaculars in the fact that language change emanates from one urban centre and progressively spreads into other large centres and, ultimately, into rural areas. This is acknowledged by Chambers and Trudgill (1980), among many others, who see linguistic innovations as "jumping […] from one large town to another, and from these to smaller towns, and so on" (p. 192). Belfast and Derry are the two largest and most populated cities in NI and therefore, in line with Chambers and Trudgill (ibid.), linguistic innovations can be expected to originate in these urban centres and spread from here to smaller, more rural communities. Thus, DE and, above all, BE play a significant role in the linguistic landscape of NI. Furthermore, these urban dialects take on added importance in this thesis inasmuch as they are more often represented in films and literature than more rural varieties of NIrE.

Regarding the terms employed to designate the English of Ireland in a general sense, the most frequently used are *Anglo-Irish*, *Hiberno-English* and *Irish English*. *Anglo-Irish* is the oldest of these three and was originally used with reference to the

English people who settled on the island from the 17th century onwards and their descendants. Nonetheless, its use as a linguistic term poses some problems. First of all, the literal meaning of the term *Anglo-Irish* is "an English form of the Irish language" (Hickey, 2007, p. 3) so that it can be misleading. Another disadvantage has to do with the non-linguistic connotations that it carries since this is a term closely related to the domains of politics and religion (Amador-Moreno, 2010, p. 8).

In 1972, *Hiberno-English* emerged as a more appropriate alternative at the first Annual Colloquium on the English Language in Ireland that was held at the University of Ulster (Adams, 1985, p. 67) and was widely used after that. Nevertheless, this term is not without shortcomings. On the one hand, it is likely that the word 'Hibernia', the Latin name for 'Ireland', is difficult to understand for many people outside Ireland (Hickey, 2007, p. 5). On the other hand, as observed by Amador-Moreno (2010), *Hiberno-English* frequently appears in academic research about the representation of this form of English in fiction, which could mislead people to believe that the "English spoken in Ireland is simply a fictional construct" (p. 8). These drawbacks have probably caused many scholars in the field of linguistics to stop using that term. However, it is still employed today by researchers interested in the literature produced in Ireland, Irish literary writers and amateur linguists (de Rijke, 2015, p. 4).

Hiberno-English was superseded by *Irish English* (IrE), a more neutral term that gained currency in the 90s and is the most commonly used in recent years. This label differs from *Hiberno-English* and *Anglo-Irish* in that it has no hyphen. Using a hyphen in the term can make the dialect seem "some kind of sub-species, rather than a variety of its own" (de Rijke, 2015, p. 4). Thus, a label without a hyphen, as is the case with IrE, is preferred. Apart from that, *Irish English* follows the same pattern as the terms used to designate other world Englishes (e.g. *South-African English* and *Caribbean English*), thereby facilitating its comparison with them. For these reasons, IrE is employed in the present thesis when referring to the English spoken in the island of Ireland.

1.5. Structure of the dissertation

In this section I describe the layout of this thesis. Chapter 1 presents the rationale and justification for this study, the research questions, location of the study and a discussion of the terms used for varieties of English in Ireland by different scholars. Moreover, it emphasises the interdisciplinary nature of the dissertation, which encompasses the fields of fictional portrayals of dialect in telecinematic and literary fiction, language attitudes,

folk linguistics and sociolinguistics.

Chapter 2 outlines the history of Northern Ireland, and of Ireland more generally, highlighting how different social and political events have influenced language in this area. Even though this is not a historical study, reviewing the Irish history is necessary to a proper understanding of the features occurring in different varieties of Irish English, as well as of the attitudes to those varieties and the relationship between them. Special attention is paid in this chapter to the main waves of English influence in Ireland, since this study is concerned with English dialects, and to the situation following the partition of the isle in 1921, which resulted in the establishment of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

A description of the pronunciation features of Northern Irish English accents, including general Northern Irish, Belfast, Derry and Ulster Scots-influenced accents, is provided in Chapter 3. Here, I concentrate not only on how NIrE accents converge to or diverge from Southern Irish English pronunciation, but also on acknowledging the origin(s) of Northern Irish features and their (lack of) variation in geographical and social terms. This linguistic information comes from previous research on the phonology and phonetics of Northern Irish English varieties and will be particularly useful when determining the produced authenticity of the questionnaire stimuli in Section 5.3.3.1.

Chapter 4 surveys the scholarly literature on performances of dialect in telecinematic and literary fiction and on language perception, the theoretical frameworks which form the basis of this dissertation. The literature review of the study of fictional representations of dialect (Section 4.2.) starts by defining some key terms and summarising the main functions of the use of language in fictional performances. Then, it focuses on two concepts that are relevant for the study of performed dialect, namely salience and authenticity. Finally, existing research on the representation of Irish English varieties (both southern and northern) in literature and TV shows and films is discussed. The review of previous studies reveals that there are two main gaps that need to be filled. One of them has to do with the fact that Northern Irish English seems to have received less attention than Southern Irish varieties. On the other hand, a lack of research on perceptions of performed dialect constitutes the second knowledge gap. This thesis addresses those two gaps.

In Chapter 5, I offer a detailed account of the design and distribution of the questionnaire. Here, the different versions of the survey are reviewed, and the reasons behind the changes and decisions made when creating the questionnaire are explained.

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Furthermore, this chapter also describes how the quantitative and qualitative data were processed and analysed.

Chapter 6 presents and discusses the questionnaire results. It is divided into two sections, the quantitative and the qualitative findings sections (Sections 6.2. and 6.3. respectively). The first of these sections outlines the main findings regarding Northern Irish informants' evaluations of the performed accents in terms of authenticity, prestige and pleasantness. In addition, participants' assessments of the perceived comic quality, intelligibility and broadness of the accents are also examined (the reasons behind the inclusion of these three scales are detailed in Section 5.3.4.1.3.). Finally, Section 6.2. explores whether respondents' ratings are subject to sociolinguistic variation and tests whether variation is statistically significant. As for Section 6.3., it analyses responses to the open-ended, that is, qualitative questions of the survey. This analysis facilitates the identification of some significant trends in the responses of Northern Irish lay people to representations of Northern Irish accents in literary and telecinematic fiction.

Chapter 7 reviews the contributions of the present study to the advancements of the fields mentioned above and outlines its main findings. Moreover, the limitations of this dissertation are acknowledged and ways to solve them offered. Finally, this chapter elaborates on future research possibilities.

2. Chapter 2: The historical background of Northern Irish English

2.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to review the historical foundations of the NIrE variety. The social, political and linguistic history of Ireland, and more particularly, of Northern Ireland is crucial to understanding the development of the NIrE varieties and how they have come to take the form that they have today. Thus, this section deals with the main social and political events that have taken place in Ireland and NI from the arrival of Celtic people and up to the present times, paying special attention to the impact they have had on the linguistic landscape of the island. This section is subdivided into six parts, each of which corresponds with one main linguistic event in the Irish history.

2.2. The Celtic substratum

The first known settlers of Ireland were the Celts who arrived in the British Isles in the second half of the first millennium BC (Hickey, 2014). Archeological evidence suggests that these Celtic people came from mainland Europe, from a Celtic civilisation known as 'La Tène culture', which had its origins in Switzerland (Hickey, 2014; Kallen, 2013).

The arrival of the Celts to the island of Ireland led to the introduction of a Celtic language that would later be known as *Irish* or *Irish Gaelic* although the term *Gaelic* is hardly ever used in the island and *Irish* has become internationally established. The Irish language derives from the Celtic branch of the Proto-Indo-European family of languages and within that branch, it is part of the Goidelic family to which *Scottish Gaelic* and *Manx* also belong (Russell, 2005, p. 420). Irish constitutes the earliest known language in Ireland and despite being introduced into the island after 500 BC, the earliest written records date from the 4th century. They are short stone inscriptions made using *ogam*, a form of writing "based on a system of lines and notches made along a central axis" (Kallen, 2013, p. 5). However, the oldest examples of longer Irish texts seem to have been written in the last decades of the 6th century (Morley, 2016, p. 321). The role of Irish is crucial in Ireland where it has survived to this day notwithstanding its coexistence with many languages such as Norse, French and, specially, English, which were brought to the isle as a result of different invasions that are described below.

2.3. Latin influence

Although the Roman Empire never invaded Ireland as it did with Britain in the first century AD, Christianity reached the isle in the 5th century. Irish monasteries became

important cultural institutions that received many visitors from England who went there to learn (Kallen, 2013, p. 6). The success of monasteries seems partly due to the adaptation of the Christian church to the Celtic system of government (Cronin, 2001, p. 4). Moreover, with the fall of the Roman Empire, Ireland established itself as the centre of Christianity in Europe and many religious orders moved there (ibid.).

The linguistic outcome of the arrival of Christianity to the isle was the introduction of Latin. This brought about a diglossic society where Latin, together with literary Old Irish, became the H(igh) languages, i.e., the languages used in formal settings, while Old Irish was people's everyday language, that is, the L(ow) variety (Corrigan, 2020; Kallen, 1997, 2013). The linguistic situation of Ireland from the 5th century onwards was one of "extended diglossia" without bilingualism (see Fasold, 1984; Fishman, 2000). This means that, even though Latin and Irish were both used in the isle, most individuals were not bilingual and only spoke Irish (Corrigan, 2020; Russell, 2005). The situation of diglossia without bilingualism is recurrent in the history of Ireland (Kallen, 2013, p. 2). Despite the lack of bilingual speakers, language contact between Latin and Irish resulted in the borrowing of Latin words into Irish and in the compilation of Hiberno-Latin texts (Kallen, 1997, p. 7; Ó Cróinín, 2005; Bisagni, 2014).

2.4. Norse influence

The Vikings invaded Ireland at the end of the 8th century and their "presence lasted from the ninth to the early seventeenth century" (Amador-Moreno, 2010, p. 17). They went there for the purpose of plundering the monasteries which were very prosperous at the time. The Vikings plundered monasteries both in Ulster and in the territory that today belongs to the ROI (Corrigan, 2020, p. 24). Nevertheless, the settlements of the Scandinavian people in the former region were not as significant as in the latter (ibid.). In fact, there is evidence to suggest that Old Norse was spoken in places like Dublin, Limerick and Waterford (Russell, 2005, p. 409), all of which are located in the ROI. Furthermore, Scandinavian languages had considerable influence on the Irish used in those places. That influence was mainly lexical and took the form of Old Norse loanwords and placenames (Hickey, 2007, p. 33; Kallen, 2013, p. 8). The influence of Norse on the Irish of Ulster, however, was more limited as can be inferred from the fact that Norse placenames are less frequent in this region than in the rest of Ireland (see Byrne, 2005).

2.5. First wave of English influence

As Kinealy (2008) claims, "Irish history cannot be understood without reference to British history, just as British history is diminished without reference to developments in Ireland" (p. 1). However, it was not until the 12th century that Ireland and England became inextricably linked due to the Anglo-Norman invasion that, according to Lydon (1998), began in 1167 when a small troop of Flemings arrived in Wexford. This group of soldiers was commanded by Dermot MacMurrough, the Irish king of Leinster, who having been defeated by the king of Connacht, travelled to England in exile and asked king Henry II for help to regain control of his kingdom. In 1169, a larger military contingent, described by Curtis (1919) as "a very motley crew" (p. 235), arrived in Ireland and, a year later, the invasion reached its peak when Strongbow gained control of the town of Waterford. Strongbow was a nobleman who had sided with Stephen, king Henry II's rival, in the race for the English throne and hence was not trusted by Henry. Thus, when Strongbow became king of Leinster, king Henry II felt threatened and decided to travel to Ireland in order to ensure the invaders' loyalty to the English crown. In the years to come, the Anglo-Norman invaders who had first settled in the east coast of Ireland, primarily in the kingdom of Leinster, would gradually spread inland and put down roots in parts of Munster and even Ulster. In the northern province only the counties of Antrim and Down were settled by Anglo-Normans to any significant extent (Corrigan, 2020, p. 25; Maguire, 2020, p. 14).

The linguistic situation that resulted from the Anglo-Norman invasion was the coexistence of four main languages: Irish, Latin, English and French. The invasion entailed the merging of "[t]wo diglossic societies" (Kallen, 1997, pp. 9-10; Kallen, 2013, p. 13), the Irish society, in which Latin was the (H)igh variety and Irish was the language spoken on a daily basis by most of the population; and the English community, where French as well as Latin were the languages employed in formal contexts and English constituted the (L)ow variety. French or, more precisely, Norman French was spoken in Ireland and, as Crowley (2000) notes, "retained for almost two centuries after the conquest as the medium (with Latin) of officialdom" (p. 12). Despite that, the use of French soon decreased in favour of the rise of the English language which would eventually replace the former as the high variety by the end of the 15th century (Kallen, 2013, p. 14). The decline of the use of English in Ireland was fostered by the weakening of the Anglo-Norman settlements which, at the same time, fostered the assimilation of the English into the Irish culture. Assimilation was part of the *Gaelic recovery*, a period lasting from the second half of the 13th century until the early 16th century during which

the Irish language and culture blossomed (Crowley, 2000, p.13).

2.6. Second wave of English influence

The Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland and its subsequent occupation were left incomplete, and it was only completed under the Tudors' rule (Bartlett, 2010, p. 44). According to Cronin (2001), it was king Henry VIII that "acted to complete the Norman invasion of Ireland" (p. 38). Nevertheless, Kinealy (2008) defends that "[t]he Tudor 'conquest' […] initially appeared as incomplete as earlier attempts to control Ireland. In reality it was piecemeal, achieved over a number of disparate reigns, and only ultimately accomplished by force" (p. 64). In fact, it took from Henry VIII's reign to king James I, the first Stuart king, to conclude the colonisation. The English ultimately gained control over the whole island thanks to the success of a policy known as *Plantations* that involved the expropriation of lands from Irish tenants and the reallocation of them to British settlers who swore loyalty to the English Crown.

Although several plantations were carried out, the three that had a greater impact on the Irish society were the Munster Plantation, the Ulster Plantation and Cromwell's Plantation, which is usually referred to as the 'Cromwellian Land Settlement'. None of these plantations were undertaken under the reign of Henry VIII but he laid the foundations for the subsequent success in Ireland and played a key role in the history of the British-Irish tug-of-war. Henry became the first English king of Ireland in 1541, thus ensuring his power over the Irish people. What would mark a milestone in the history of the island, however, was Henry's break away from the Roman Catholic church that resulted in his becoming the 'Supreme Head of the Church of England' and in the British adoption of Protestantism. This brought about a willingness to impose the Protestant faith on the Irish population.

The Munster Plantation started in the year 1586 under the rule of Queen Elizabeth I, but was not very successful since not many English settlers came to Ireland and many of those accommodated to the native Irish society. However, the main reason why the Munster plantation failed was the Irish uprising of 1598 that was part of what was to be known as the Nine Years War (1593-1603).

The second major plantation was the Ulster Plantation, which began in 1609 while the Stuart king James I of England and VI of Scotland ruled over the British Isles. Unlike the Munster Plantation, this had a far greater impact on Ireland and, most notably, on Ulster. On the one hand, the departure of leading figures in the Irish society of the north

of Ireland such as Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone and Rory O'Donnell, Earl of Tyrconnell due to their decreasing power in what would be known as the 'Flight of the Earls' contributed to the success of the Ulster Plantation (Corrigan, 2020, p. 36). These aristocrats were declared traitors to the English crown and their lands were confiscated. The 'Flight of the Earls' led to what Robinson (1994) called "the final collapse of the Gaelic order in Ulster" (pp. 37-38) and consequently, Ulster, which had always been "a stronghold of Gaelic, Catholic Ireland" (Kinealy, 2008, p. 82), fell to the English crown by the end of the 16th century (Maguire, 2020, pp. 15-16). The Ulster Plantation meant the escheating of estates in counties Donegal, Tyrone, Derry, Fermanagh, Armagh and Cavan. The remaining three counties of the Ulster province, i.e., Antrim, Down and Monaghan, had already been planted with English and, mainly, Scottish settlers from the southwest of Scotland.

There were three types of planters involved in the Plantation of Ulster, namely, *undertakers*, *servitors* and *deserving Irish*. Most of the land, and the larger and best parcels too, was granted to the undertakers who were either English or Scottish settlers whose purpose was to "set up self-sufficient colonies, peopled entirely with British Protestants" (Bartlett, 2010, p. 100) and to "remove the Irish from their estates" (Maguire, 2020, p. 18). The number of Scottish undertakers surpassed that of English settlers by six to one according to Barry (1981, p. 59). Kingsmore (1995) acknowledges three main reasons for the high number of Scottish compared to the English. The first and most obvious reason has to do with Scotland's proximity to Ulster. Secondly, due to hardships already suffered in their country, Scottish planters did not fear emigrating to Ireland (pp. 12-13). A further cause concerns the involvement of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland in the settlements, which brought about confidence. Regarding the areas the migrants came from, most of the English settlers were from the West and North Midlands and from southern England. Meanwhile, Scottish undertakers came from the southwest of the Scottish Lowlands, mainly from Ayrshire and the Galloway region which comprises the counties of Wigtown and Kirkcudbright. There were some areas in NI where one group of settlers predominated, and some other regions which were planted with English and Scottish undertakers in equal measure. Examples of the former include Coleraine in Co. Derry, the northeast Antrim coast and the Ardglass Peninsula, all of which were settled by a majority of Scottish planters (Corrigan, 2020, p. 44). Conversely, the northern areas of counties Armagh and (London)Derry, as well as the Fermanagh Loughs region, had similar numbers of English and Scottish settlers (ibid.).

The second category of planters, that of the so-called servitors, was made up of former royal soldiers that were in charge of protecting the colonies and preventing any revolts. Part of these servitors were English landlords that were allocated estates close to Irish natives in order to monitor them. The last type of grantees and those who received the smallest plot of lands (54,632 acres out of a total of 459,110) were the deserving Irish, that is, the Irish who were loyal to the English Crown. The areas populated by the Irish natives were mid-Ulster, Rathlin Island, highland regions of northeast Antrim and the southern parts of Fermanagh and Armagh (ibid.).

In terms of language, the English and Scottish migrants brought with them different varieties of the English language which were incorporated into Ireland's linguistic landscape where Irish had played the main role for a long time. As Maguire (2020) points out, settlers from England "would have spoken a wide variety of Early Modern East Anglian, southern, Midland and north-west English dialects, whilst early forms of Standard English and supra regional varieties of English must also have been spoken by landowners and settlers" (p. 19). Scottish undertakers, on the other hand, spoke different dialects of Early Modern Scots (ibid., p. 20). Language contact between the English and Scots varieties occurred in the newly-planted regions (Corrigan, 2020, p. 48). However, in Antrim and Down, which had been settled before the Ulster Plantation, there was a lower degree of language contact because the Scottish planters did not interact with English undertakers frequently (ibid.). In spite of the increasing anglicisation of the northern fringe of Ireland, "the overall pattern for the native Irish at the close of the Stuart era appears to be one of maintaining Gaelic rather than shifting to varieties of English or Scots" (ibid., p. 47). This is the case of some isolated rural areas such as the Glens of Antrim, the Sperrins and Slieve Gullion. The pattern in other areas was different, though, and a situation of "stable Irish-English bilingualism" can be found in rural regions that were close to towns (ibid., p. 48). Meanwhile, the degree of Irish-English bilingualism in towns and cities was low since the use of Irish was becoming less and less common there. Besides, it is important to note that, as argued by Maguire (2020), most bilingual speakers seem to have been Irish natives since the settlers did not usually learn Gaelic (p. 24).

The Ulster Plantation eventually led to the rising of the Irish natives in 1641. They were the most disadvantaged part of the population, having been given "marginal lands" (Kinealy, 2008, p. 90) and seeing how Protestantism was progressively gaining ground. The 1641 revolt put the English colonisation at risk, culminating in the "almost total destruction of plantation structures" (Robinson, 1994, pp. 190-191). Nonetheless, Oliver

Cromwell ended up quelling the rebellion and restoring order in Ireland. He implemented a new plantation policy, known as the Cromwellian Land Settlement, intended mainly to 'transplant' those landlords who were not loyal to the English government to the province of Connacht, the most impoverished of all provinces of the island. These disloyal landowners were either Irish or Old English[2] and both professed the Catholic religion. Apart from transplantation, Cromwell also enforced a policy of transportation which consisted in deporting people who were considered "undesirable" (Hickey, 2007, p. 39). Transplantation and transportation resulted in the arrival of many new English and Scottish settlers who were given the lands of 'transplanted' and 'transported' Irish landowners which contributed to Ireland becoming more Anglo and, accordingly, more Protestant.

The arrival of large numbers of Scottish settlers to the northern province of Ulster during the plantations prompted the still extant discrimination between NIrE, a more Scottish-influenced variety, and SIrE, which was shaped after Early Modern English dialects. In addition, the plantations triggered the formation of the previously mentioned four main speech areas identified and labelled by Harris (1984), namely the *Gaeltacht*, USc, MUE and SUE dialect regions (Section 1.3.). In each of those regions one of the three languages coexisting in Ulster in the 17th century prevailed. English was the principal language in the SUE- and MUE-speaking areas; Scots was predominant in the Ulster Scots zone; and Irish in the so-called *Gaeltacht*. The configuration of these speech areas was the result of ethnic distribution and their consolidation was possible due to "internal migration" (Hickey, 2007, p. 90). Regions with a high density of English population usually attracted new English migrants and the same happened with the other two ethnic groups, that is, Scottish and Irish. It does not follow, however, that each area was inhabited by only one of the three ethnic groups and the fact is that, as Gregory et al. (2013) points out, "each area contained all groups in varying proportions" (p. 16).

2.7. Language shift from Irish to English

In the two centuries following the plantations, i.e., the 18th and 19th centuries, the English settlers secured their power in Ireland to the detriment of Irish natives who were more oppressed than ever. The Williamite Wars (1688-1691), which resulted in the defeat of

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[2] The term *Old English* has been employed to refer to the English settlers who arrived in Ireland during the Norman invasion and most of whom assimilated into the Irish culture.

the Catholic side under Catholic king James II's direction by the army of the Protestant prince William of Orange, "put the seal on an era which had seen Catholic Gaelic Ireland utterly defeated, and ushered in a century of repression" (Crowley, 2000, p. 55). Once the war was over, a body of laws, known as the Penal Laws, was passed to further repress the Catholic and prevent any possible uprisings. The Penal Laws were conceived to grant all the power to a minority Protestant elite while taking away from Catholics the little economic and political power they had as well as their civil rights. One of these laws was the 'Act to Restrain Foreign Education' "which prohibited the education of Catholics abroad and forbade Catholics from teaching or organising schools in Ireland" (ibid., p. 83). As a consequence of this prohibition, 'hedge schools' appeared (see Dowling, 1968 for a detailed description of 'hedge schools'). This educational system consisted in natives being taught different subjects by private and "wandering schoolmasters" (Hickey, 2007, p. 44). Moreover, as its name suggests, instruction in this system usually took place outdoors, behind hedges, as a way of hiding from the authorities.

Apart from the Penal Laws and its effects, the 18th and 19th centuries saw the population of Ireland hugely depleted due to several famines. The most severe was that known as the Great Famine, lasting from 1845 to 1852. Its cause was a failure in the potato crops due to a blight and its results were diseases, starvation, deaths and emigration. Emigration from Ireland had been taking place for several centuries, but it was not until the first half of the 19th century that "Ireland became truly a country of mass emigration" (a comprehensive study of Irish migration can be found in Fitzgerald & Lambkin, 2008). The reasons for leaving the island during the years of the Great Famine were either starvation, the reason prevailing among the lower classes, or fear of the negative impact that the famine could have on their businesses which was shared by the more affluent sections of the population. Large numbers of people emigrated from Ireland in the 19th century either before, during or after the famine. In the pre-famine period, Irish emigrants amounted to about 1 million (Miller, 1985, p. 193). This number almost doubled during the famine years and in the period between 1856 and 1921 a total of nearly 4.5 million people departed from the isle (ibid., pp. 280, 346). Ulster was the second province from which more people emigrated (Akenson, 1992). Nonetheless, although a considerable number of Ulster inhabitants left, the population numbers in the northern province experienced less decline than in the rest of the isle (see Map 2.2.). This probably has to do with the fact that the Great Hunger did not cause as many deaths in Ulster. Moreover, the Belfast area even increased its population by 40% approximately and there

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was an important demographic growth in most of county Armagh.

Map 2.2.

Percentage of population change at the barony level between 1841 and 1861 (Gregory et al., 2013, p. 40)
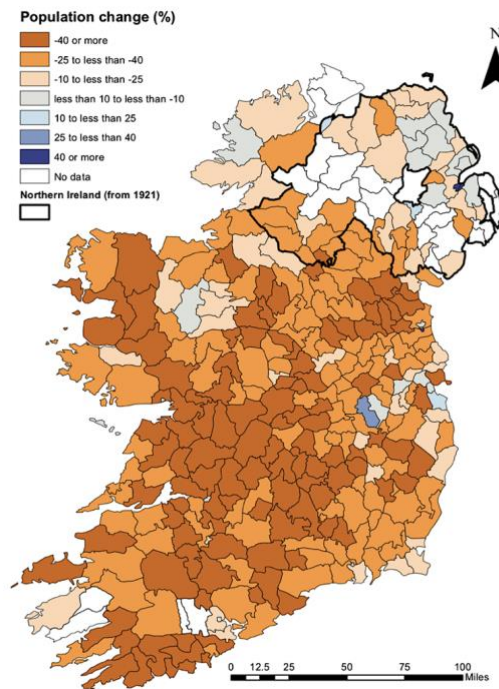
All the circumstances explained above led to one of the most important events in the history of Ireland, the shift from Irish to English between 1750 and 1900. Mass emigration and, especially, the Great Famine had detrimental effects on the Irish language since they mostly struck the poor and rural areas of the island where most Irish speakers lived. This meant not only the loss of around two million Irish speakers (Hickey, 2007, p. 123), but also that Irish began to be associated with "poverty and backwardness" (Crowley, 2000, p. 135). Meanwhile, English was gradually tilting the balance in its favour. Irish natives were becoming aware of how necessary it was to speak English if they were to emigrate and therefore started to learn the language. But necessity was not the only reason for language shift. People were beginning to regard English as "the language of prestige and power" (Amador-Moreno, 2010, p. 22) so that they were using it increasingly often because they knew it would be beneficial for their advancement and prosperity. A proof of the growing interest in the English language is its use even in hedge schools (Daly, 1990) where subjects were usually taught in Irish. Another driving force for the shift to English was the improvement of the railway networks which facilitated language contact.

Finally, the National Schools, established in 1831 and where the language of instruction was English, also contributed to the language shift and, besides, reduced the illiteracy rate in Ireland (Hickey, 2007, p. 46). The magnitude of the language shift was such that, according to de Fréine (1977), 85 per cent of people in Ireland spoke English most of the time by 1901.

In the context of Ulster, the emergence of the linen industry mainly in the cities also led to an increased contact between Irish natives and English and Scottish settlers due to more internal migration (Corrigan, 2020; Maguire, 2020). Many of the former group who had been living in rural areas were at this time moving to urban centres and working hand in hand with planters. Thus, using English was in the interest of the Irish people because, as Corrigan (2020) claims, "there were tangible incentives for urban and rural Catholic alike to conform and assimilate to the sociocultural and linguistic norms of the linen capitals" (p. 60). All this, in combination with the betterment of communications, made it possible for English and Scots to spread into the MUE zone (ibid.). As a result, many Irish people had become bilingual by the beginning of the 20th century in this area. The situation in the SUE-speaking zone, however, was somewhat different. In this area, Irish natives were less willing to adopt English and conform to English rules and therefore most of them did not become bilinguals (ibid.).

The end of the 19th century saw a renewed interest in the Irish language and a subsequent increase in the number of Irish speakers. This became known as the *Gaelic Revival*, which was fuelled by the Gaelic League (*Conradh na Gaeilge*), an organisation founded in 1893 whose aim was to "revive Irish as a living language, and by the publication of Irish-language learning materials, novels and periodicals" (Amador-Moreno, 2010, p. 25). Despite the revival, the census figures do not show a rising number of Irish speakers but quite the opposite. The 1851 census (first census in Ireland to include a language question) returned a 23.3 per cent of Irish speakers whereas sixty years later, in the census of 1911, the percentage had fallen to 13.3.

Moreover, Corrigan (2010, 2020) infers from the latter census that four Irish-speaking areas survived into the early 20th century in NI: "the Corgary *Gaeltacht* of west Tyrone and the Mid-Ulster *Gaeltacht* of the Sperrins (north Tyrone and south (London)Derry)" and the "Glens of Antrim and Rathlin Island Gaeltachtaí" (pp. 126-127; p. 75). She finds further evidence pointing to the existence of those four areas in research by Adams (1964), Corrigan (2003), Fitzgerald (2003), Hickey (2007), Holmer (1940), Ó Dochartaig (1987) and Sweeney (1988). Apart from the Irish-speaking regions mentioned

by Corrigan, Hickey (2014) identifies an additional area on the border, that of South Armagh and the Cooley Peninsula (see Map 2.3.).

Map 2.3.

Remaining Gaeltachtaí in the early 20th century (adapted from Hickey, 2014, p. 10)
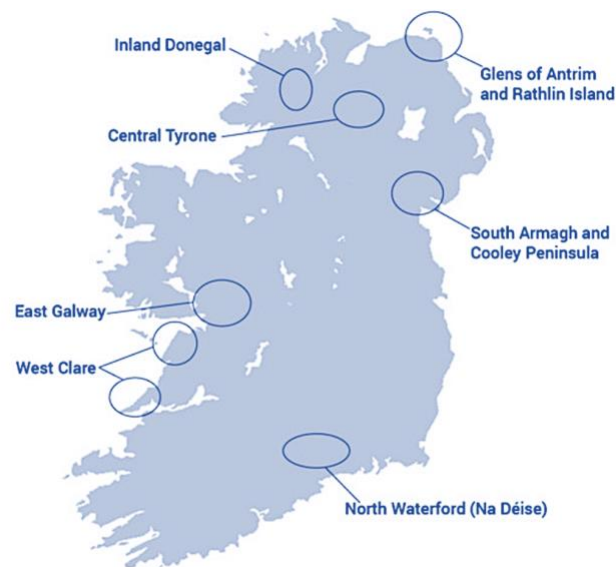
The division between the north and south of Ireland due to differences in "economic, political, ethnonational, and religious aspects" (Gregory et al., 2013, p. 60) grew bigger from 1850 onwards and, finally, partition took place in 1921 when the 'Anglo-Irish Treaty' was signed. This document marked the end of the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921) and declared that twenty-six counties of Ireland, that is, all except six counties in the northern part which would become Northern Ireland, were to constitute the 'Irish Free State'. The reason why NI did not incorporate Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan, all of which were part of the Ulster province, was because the largest proportion of the population in those counties were Catholics. As a result, their addition to NI meant having a higher number of Catholics than of Protestants in this newly-formed northern district. This was not in the interest of the Northern Irish Unionist[3] government, which was ultimately under British rule and which wanted to "secure a Protestant majority" (Garner & Gilligan, 2015, p. 515). Thus, it was decided that the three aforementioned

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[3] Unionists are people in Northern Ireland who want to remain a part of the United Kingdom, while Nationalists are the segment of the Northern Irish population who believe that Northern Ireland belongs to Ireland, an independent country.

counties would be left out of NI.

It was hoped that partition would put an end to conflict, but it did not. Instead, as Kinealy (2008) indicates, it "created fresh divisions and new problems within Ireland. […] Both states were born in violence and their creation was followed by a prolonged period of anarchy, lawlessness and civil war" (p. 216). In what was to become the ROI in 1949, partition was followed by the Irish Civil War (1922-1923). Meanwhile, although not engaged in a civil war, turmoil and violence were commonplace in NI because of (Irish) Nationalists' and (British) Unionists' irreconcilable views. Tension between these two ethnic groups reached a peak in the late 1960s when a civil rights movement against the discrimination suffered by the Catholic population gave rise to a violent protest organised by the Protestant Orange Order[4] in (London)Derry. This was the starting point of the period known as *The Troubles*, which can be defined as an ethnonational conflict between the Catholic Nationalist part of the population and the Protestant Unionists. Each of these ethnic groups had its paramilitary organisations that were the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), respectively, which fought each other in what has been considered a guerrilla war (Garner & Gilligan, 2015, p. 518). The Northern Irish economy soured during this period and would only recover after 1998. The economic decline was partly due to a change from a deeply-industrial economy to one based on the services sector (Gregory et al., 2013, p. 170). Apart from the economic repercussions, the Troubles had a significant impact on migration. According to Garner and Gilligan (2015), between 8,000 and 15,000 families, most of which had a Catholic background, left their Belfast homes in the 1969-1973 period (pp. 517-518).

The Good Friday Agreement, which was signed in 1998, put an end to years of sectarian violence. However, in spite of the countless efforts towards integration, ethnic segregation between Catholics and Protestants has continued well into the 21st century.

At the time of the Troubles, the situation in the ROI was very different. Not only did the economy experience growth but there was also a demographic increase. The level of prosperity was such that "by the end of the century the Republic was both the fastest-growing economy and the fourth-richest country in the world" (Gregory et al., 2013, p. 156). This economic expansion lasted from the 1990s to the last years of the 2000s and this period became known as the *Celtic Tiger*.

In the constitution of the Irish Free State, enacted in 1922, Irish was recognised as

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[4] The Orange Order is a brotherhood founded in 1795 which looks after the interests of Protestants in Northern Ireland.

the national language. However, it would take time for the Irish language to recover from the long decline and to regain its previous status. In NI, the Good Friday Agreement favoured the revival of not only Irish but also of Ulster Scots and other minority languages:

> All participants recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland. (The Northern Ireland Peace Agreement, 1998, p. 21)

Another step towards the recovery of its status was the recognition of Irish as an official language by the European Union in 2007 (Hickey, 2014, p. 11). At present, even though the Gaelic language enjoys considerable social prestige, it does not hold the position it once did. Based on the 2016 census of the ROI, 39.8 per cent of the population are able to speak Irish but only 4.2 per cent use it on a daily basis. Most of those who can speak the language employ it at school since Irish has been very much promoted in the academic institutions.

In NI, as Dunbar (2002/2003) argues, "[d]ue to its association with Irish nationalism, Irish was treated with hostility by the government of Northern Ireland" from 1921, the year of partition, to 1972 (p. 28/32). The government began supporting the Irish language in the 1980s decade, only after the Westminster parliament had taken control of NI (ibid.). Since then, policies in favour of Gaelic have been implemented. This probably explains why the percentage of people who have some knowledge of Irish has increased steadily from 1991 until 2021. Evidence for this can be found in the four censuses carried out between those years. With regard to the minority language of Ulster Scot, it has not received as much attention as Irish in language policies (McMonagle & McDermott, 2014, p. 247), which may be attributed to one or several of the following factors. One of them has to do with the fact that USc does not seem to "arouse the depth of feeling that Irish has" (ibid.). Moreover, USc is not favoured by every Protestant Unionist the way that most Irish natives support the Gaelic tongue. A third factor might be related to the ongoing debate about the status of USc as a language or a dialect (Corrigan, 2010, pp. 15-16). The limited attention paid to this minority language/dialect is reflected in the lack of a question on USc in the several censuses carried out in NI. It was only in the 2011

census that this question was included. Census data reveals that the percentage of respondents who claim some ability in USc has increased from 8.08 per cent in 2011 to 10.4 in 2021. This 2 per cent increase is similar to that experienced in the number of informants with some knowledge of the Irish language. This could suggest that efforts are being made to revitalise USc and, more importantly, that these efforts are paying off. Regardless of the higher percentages of both Irish and USc speakers, the fact remains that English is still the language spoken by the large majority of the population in NI, a 95.4% as gathered from the 2021 census returns.

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the sociopolitical and linguistic history of Ireland from Celtic times to the present day, placing special emphasis on Northern Ireland. Such a survey is essential to understand not only the features of the different NIrE varieties, which are described in the following chapter (Chapter 3), but also the attitudes of people in NI to those varieties, which the present study explores. Section 4.3. and Chapter 6 will discuss trends identified in language attitudes research.

3. Chapter 3: Northern Irish English accent(s)

3.1. Introduction

The following sections contain a description of the main pronunciation features of NIrE varieties, including not only those that are unique to NI, but also features that these dialects share with SIrE. Moreover, the source of the features is discussed whenever possible. NIrE is the result of language contact between Irish, Scots and different varieties of English spoken by the British planters and therefore tracing the origins of NIrE variables has aroused interest among scholars (see Hickey, 2004, 2007; Maguire, 2018, 2020). Apart from discussing the source of the features, I also point out whether, according to existing research, they are subject to geographical and/or social variation.

3.2. Pronunciation features shared by Northern and Southern Irish Englishes

3.2.1. Rhoticity

Varieties of English around the world have been traditionally classified into non-rhotic and rhotic. IrE belongs to the latter group with syllable-final /r/ being pronounced not only in SIrE and NIrE but also in the southern and northern urban vernaculars of Dublin and Belfast, respectively. The only dialect of IrE that is traditionally non-rhotic is "conservative popular Dublin English" (Hickey, 2004, p. 77). Rhoticity is therefore one of the IrE features indispensable to sounding Irish. In spite of being shared by the southern and northern dialects, syllable-final /r/ has different realisations in these regions. SIrE has the velarised alveolar approximant [ɹ] while a retroflex approximant [ɻ] is the common allophone in NI (ibid., p. 49).

The source of IrE rhoticity, it is attributed to a "convergence of English input and Irish" (Hickey, 2004, p. 41). Even though, nowadays, most varieties of English in England are characteristically non-rhotic, this has not always been like this. In fact, the English settlers who came to Ireland during the plantations had rhotic accents. According to orthoepists, it was not until the mid-late 18th century that the loss of /r/ in syllable-coda positions became established in southern English varieties (Lass, 1990, p. 145). Similar to pre-18th century southern English, the Irish language is also rhotic and seems to have played a part in the emergence of IrE as a rhotic variety. Besides the substratum and the English influences, there is one further source of input, 17th-century Scots, a language spoken in Scotland which was brought to the north of Ireland during the Ulster Plantation. Scots seems responsible for the retroflex quality of /r/ in NIrE which is described by Hickey (2007) as "an areal feature of the whole of Ulster" (p. 115). It is also

worth mentioning that a retroflex /r/ has also become common in the southern part of the island from the 1990s onwards (Hickey, 2014, p. 97). It started as an innovation in Dublin English and from there it spread to other areas of southern Ireland where it has substituted the traditional velarised allophone [ɹ]. This innovation does, nevertheless, not result from contact with NIrE (Hickey, 2007, p. 321).

3.2.2. Retention of /ʍ/

Another IrE feature is the retention of the voiceless labiovelar fricative /ʍ/ in words that contain the <wh> grapheme. The contrast between /w/ and /ʍ/ occurs both in SIrE and NIrE but has been mostly lost in the urban vernaculars of Dublin and Belfast (Amador-Moreno, 2010, p. 77). This loss is confirmed by Corrigan (2010) who finds out that all her female informants from Belfast, both young and older, produce /w/ instead of /ʍ/ in words spelt with <wh> (p. 46). The sources responsible for this contrast are, as is the case for rhoticity, the Irish substratum and early English influence (Hickey, 2007, p. 282). Furthermore, Kingsmore (1995) comments that the /w/-/ʍ/ contrast is present in Ulster Scots (p. 25).

3.2.3. Unraising of /eː/

IrE has retained the Middle English /eː/ in MEAT, a feature of particular relevance in this study. During the Middle English period, MEAT was pronounced as /mɛːt/. However, this long vowel /ɛː/ was raised to /iː/ in the Late Modern English period due to what is known as the Great Vowel Shift[5]. In IrE, though, the raising did not take place. It was not until the 19th century that /iː/ entered the supraregional variety of IrE (Hickey, 2007, p. 304). As a consequence, SIrE and NIrE have one supraregional variant /iː/ and a vernacular variant /e/ for the MEAT lexical set which is now recessive (Harris, 1985, pp. 149-150; Hickey, 2007, p. 304; Kallen, 2013, p. 63; Maguire, 2020, p. 102).

3.2.4. Raising of /æ/ in pre-R environments

The raising of /æ/ to /ɛː/ before /r/ is another IrE feature attested by Hickey (2007, p. 293). Raised /æ/ is a vernacular variant which has been found in south-western and northern parts of Ireland. The occurrence of this feature in the north seems to be the result of the influence of Ulster Scots (Harris, 1985, p. 20). The raising of /æ/ is, nevertheless, not very

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[5] The Great Vowel Shift was a phonological change in the pronunciation of long vowels that started in the 15th century. This change consisted in the raising of all long vowels except for /i/ and /u/.

frequent.

3.2.5. Distinction between NORTH and FORCE

IrE is also characterised by the NORTH-FORCE distinction. These two lexical sets, which have the exact same sound in Standard Southern British English[6] (SSBE), are pronounced differently in IrE. NORTH has a realisation with an open back rounded vowel [ɒː], while a close mid back vowel is produced in FORCE [oː]. This contrast, however, has been lost in some areas. In Dublin educated speakers usually make no distinction between NORTH and FORCE (Wells, 1982, p. 421). In the urban vernaculars of Belfast and (London)Derry, NORTH has merged into FORCE (Maguire, 2020; McCafferty, 1998b). McCafferty shows that the NORTH-FORCE merger is spreading from the north-east to the north-west and, more especially, from Belfast to (London)Derry. Besides, he adds that this change is being led by middle-class Protestants (pp. 104-106). Speakers who live in more rural regions outside the two northern cities, though, have been found to distinguish between [ɒː] and [oː] both in more formal (reading) and informal (interview) activities (Corrigan, 2010, p. 39).

3.2.6. Retention of short vowels in pre-R environments

One last feature that occurs both in the southern and northern vernacular varieties is the preservation of the historical distinction between short vowels followed by /r/ (Hickey, 2004, 2007). The lexical sets NURSE and TERM, which are now both pronounced with /ɜː/ in SSBE, originally had a realisation with [ʌ] and [ɛ] respectively which has been retained in vernacular IrE. The source of this distinction is ascribed to English and also to the Irish language (Hickey, 2004, p. 41; Hickey, 2007, p. 282). The supraregional form, however, does not distinguish between NURSE and TERM and uses a rhotacised schwa [ɚ] in these two lexical sets.

3.3. Northern Irish English consonants

This section deals with consonantal features that distinguish NIrE from SIrE. One of those

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[6] The label *Standard Southern British English* is used in this dissertation to refer to *Received Pronunciation* (RP), the traditional term for a highly prestigious accent spoken by an educated minority in southern England. RP has established itself as Britain's standard accent, thereby becoming the main pronunciation form taught to learners of English as a second language. Despite being widely used in language research, as pointed out by Hughes et al. (2012), the term RP "has acquired a rather dated –even negative– flavour in contemporary British society" (p. 3). Thus, the "less evaluative" label SSBE has been recently favoured by many scholars.

features is the alveolar tap, that is, the realisation of intervocalic /t/ as [ɾ], as in "city" [ˈsɪɾi]. Tapping occurs word-finally, favoured by older speakers, and word-internally, prevalent among young speakers (Maguire, 2020, p. 64). Corrigan (2010) suggests that the tap seems to have its origin in SUE but has been adopted in (London)Derry, Belfast and other "smaller towns in the far north like Coleraine" (p. 43). Apart from becoming a tap, /t/ has two other realisations in NIrE which are worthy of comment. One of them is the dentalisation of /t/ before /r/ or rhoticised schwa [ɚ] (Corrigan, 2010, p. 42; Hickey, 2007, p. 115) which has been associated with Catholic speech (Kirk, 1997a). The other realisation is a glottal [ʔ] or pre-consonantal glottal stop [ʔt]. The former allophone is most frequent word-finally. The glottalisation of the plosives /p, t, k/ is pervasive in NIrE, especially in areas where Ulster Scots is or was spoken (Kingsmore, 1995), since this is an USc feature (Harris, 1984, p. 130).

Another NIrE consonantal feature that deserves some attention has to do with the dropping of interdental fricatives when they occur intervocalically. The elision of the voiced fricative /ð/ (as in "mother" [mʌər]) seems to be most frequent in the speech of men both in Belfast (Milroy, 1976) and in Coleraine (Kingsmore, 1983). Apart from elision, the voiceless fricative /θ/ is often replaced by [h] at the beginning or middle of words (as in "nothing" [nʌhɪŋ]), a feature that is mainly favoured by males, younger speakers, and the working class (McCafferty, 2001, p. 135). Corrigan (2010) finds examples of the [h] allophone and of dropping in some interviews (p. 41).

An alveolar realisation of the velar nasal /ŋ/, a feature present in many other dialects of English, is also common in the northern variety of IrE. This alveolar variant occurs when there is an ING ending (Hughes et al., 2005, p. 112). Unlike in SIrE, where this variant is also widespread, the alveolar realisation is not as stigmatised in NIrE (Hickey, 2007, p. 116). Kingsmore (1995) identifies a third allophone for the standard /ɪŋ/, a syllabic nasal [n̩]. She classifies the three variants along a continuum where [n̩] is the most vernacular form, alveolar [n] is in a middle position and the velar allophone represents the standard end (pp. 100-110). Besides, she reports that the syllabic nasal is more frequent in female speech in Coleraine.

In NIrE, both the palatalised (clear) form of /l/ and the velarised (dark) variant [ɫ] are found. Even though Harris (1984) asserts that clear [l] is the prevailing form in the north and is not subject to social or regional variation, other scholars show that the velarised allophone occurs in Belfast and rural areas of the north and west (Wells, 1982, p. 446), Coleraine (Kingsmore, 2006, p. 49), (London)Derry (McCafferty, 1999, p. 250;

McCafferty, 2007, p. 126), and Tyrone (Maguire, 2020; Todd, 1984). The occurrence of dark [ɫ] depends on both linguistic and extralinguistic factors (Wells, 1982, p. 446). Linguistically, [ɫ] can be found intervocalically, in initial position before back vowels and word-finally when preceded by a central vowel or a centring diphthong. As regards extralinguistic factors, speakers who want to sound more standard use clear [l] together with a less vernacular vowel.

The dropping and/or vocalisation of postvocalic /l/ also takes place in the north of Ireland. This is a feature of USc and that explains why it is restricted to areas where Ulster Scots is spoken (Gregg, 1985). Corrigan (2010) reports on the presence of this feature in the speech of people from US areas, thus confirming its restriction to those zones (p. 45).

The palatalisation of the velar plosives /k/ and /g/ before front vowels (as in "cat" [kjæt]) is also one of those features that are widespread in NIrE. Palatalised variants were attested in Biggar's (1987) pamphlet on the Ulster accent as early as 1897. This feature has been found in urban and rural areas of the SUE and MUE zones (Corrigan, 2010, pp. 46-47). In Belfast, however, it does not appear as common as in other cities and towns. Milroy (1992, p. 56) observes that palatalised velars were already recessive by the time of the first Belfast surveys. Evidence of the recessive nature of this feature is provided by Corrigan (2010) who reports that none of her female informants from Belfast show palatal realisations (pp. 46-47).

There is some controversy over the source of palatalised velars. On the one hand, Adams (1986) and Ó Baoill (1997) advocate for the influence of the substratum, i.e., the Irish language, probably because, as Kallen (2013) explains, there is a "phonemic division in Irish between palatalised and velarised consonants" (p. 58). On the other hand, some researchers such as Harris (1987, 1997) and Hickey (2004) attribute the source of palatalisation to the superstratum. They claim that this feature comes from the early modern English spoken in Britain where it disappeared after the 18th century (Hickey, 2004, p. 39).

The palatalisation of /k/ and /g/ is described by Hickey (2007) as a "stereotypical" and "conspicuous" feature of NIrE (pp. 335, 115). Because of its stereotypical nature, Northern Irish people eventually started to avoid using this feature. Further proof of the high salience of palatalised velar plosives is found in a recording called *Fillum Star* that is part of a project by the BBC called *Voices*. The audio file is a conversation between some people from Armagh who discuss some pronunciation features, among which palatalisation of velars is included (see Amador-Moreno, 2010, p. 85). The fact that these

Armagh speakers talk about this feature demonstrates that they are conscious of it.

Another recessive feature of NIrE is the retention of the voiceless velar fricative /x/ (as in "lough" [lɒx]) (Hickey, 2007, p. 293). This consonant is found in MUE and, most of all, in USc. Furthermore, it mainly occurs in proper names and dialect words of Scottish or Irish origin (Harris, 1997, p. 210). Everywhere else, /x/ is usually replaced by [h] and [k] in medial positions and by [k] at the end of words (Milroy, 1981). The velar fricative is a sound of "northern dialects of Irish" (Corrigan, 2010, p. 42), Older (Hickey, 2007, p. 104) and Modern Scots, Ulster Scots and Middle English. The presence of /x/ in all these languages and dialects makes it difficult to determine the source of this feature for NIrE. Hickey (2007) argues that the occurrence of the voiceless velar fricative in NIrE derives from the superstratum, that is, the influence of earlier forms of English. The reason why he opts for this source is because it accounts for "its occurrence in Ulster Scots and in some forms of mid Ulster English, but also its absence elsewhere" (p. 143).

3.4. Northern Irish English vowels

The distinctiveness of NIrE is partly due to the influence of the Scottish vowel length rule (SVLR) by which the length of a vowel depends on its phonetic environment. The SVLR differs from the system of phonemic vowel length of English where the distinction between long and short vowels involves a change of meaning. In NIrE, the combination of these two systems takes place. The MUE variety integrates "a mixed system that has a modified SVLR pattern" while SUE adheres to the English phonemic vowel length for the most part (Corrigan, 2010, p. 31). The SVLR came to the north of Ireland through Scots which lost the Germanic phonemic vowel length circa the 15th and 16th centuries (Hickey, 2007, p. 105). As a result, USc is subject to SVLR.

Because of the influence of SVLR, Wells (1982) does not use the symbol for vowel length [ː] in any of the lexical sets for NIrE (p. 438). In the northern variety vowel length is generally as follows:

- There is lengthening before /v, ð, z, ʒ, r/ except for the vowels /ɪ/ and /ʌ/ (Corrigan, 2010, p. 31; McCafferty, 2001, p. 133; Wells, 1982, p. 439).
- When followed by /p, t, tʃ, k/ or in word-final position vowels are usually short (Wells, 1982, p. 439).
- The vowels /e, ɛ, a, ɔ/ are long in monosyllabic words whose final consonant is not /p, t, tʃ, k/. This is referred by Wells (1982) as "Ulster lengthening" because it has been developed there (p. 439)

- Corrigan (2010) pays attention to the differences between the USc, MUE and SUE areas in relation to the vowels /ɛ, e, i/ (pp. 31-32). As regards the first of these vowels, whereas /ɛ/ is always long in USc and short in SUE, in MUE, being a mixture of the other two, it is short in some environments and long in others. /e/, on the other hand, is always short in both US and SUE but is sometimes long in MUE, for example, when followed by /s/ and /t/. Finally, /i/, which is always short in SUE, can be long or short in US and MUE.

Apart from the SVLR, one of the most characteristic features of NIrE is the fronting of /u/ to a mid-high rounded vowel [ʉ]. This feature is found in Irish and Scottish Gaelic, hence its occurrence both in NI and Scotland (Hickey, 2004, p. 74; Hickey, 2012, p. 89). The centralised [ʉ] is the frequent realisation of the GOOSE and FOOT lexical sets in the north and also applies to the MOUTH diphthong which becomes [aʉ]. In addition to being a defining feature of NIrE, U-fronting is found in the supraregional variety of the north of Ireland (Hickey, 2004, p. 32; Kingsmore, 1995, p. 29; Milroy, 1992, p. 109).

NIrE is also characterised by a "general lowering tendency particularly in the case of front vowels" (Ó hÚrdail, 1997, p. 183). This lowering tendency is manifest in the KIT vowel that is realised along the continuum [ɪ]-[ï]-[ë]-[æ̈] in NIrE (Corrigan, 2010, p. 35). The [ë] allophone is produced in "more standard varieties" of NIrE, whereas the more lowered variant [æ̈] is frequent in US (Hickey, 2007, p. 117). Lowering also affects the DRESS lexical set when the vowel is followed by a velar. Nevertheless, the most common realisation of DRESS in the north is [ɛ] (Corrigan, 2010, p. 36). In USc [ɛ] usually develops an offglide before velar and palatal consonants (Kingsmore, 2006).

The realisation of the STRUT vowel varies geographically. In the MUE and SUE dialect zones a centralised slightly rounded variant [ɔ̈], which is characteristic of SIrE, is found. Meanwhile, the open-mid back unrounded vowel [ʌ] is used in the USc areas (Wells, 1982, p. 442).

Another feature that distinguishes NIrE from SSBE is the pronunciation of the lexical sets TRAP, BATH and PALM. The vowel sound in those three sets is [æ] if followed by /p/ or /t/ (McCafferty, 2001, p. 133) and [a] in all other phonetic contexts. According to Corrigan (2010), this vowel shows "minor variation" in most of NI (p. 36). Moreover, this feature seems to be characteristic of the entire island since Kallen (2013) also records it in SIrE. In some Ulster Scots areas, though, [a] can be raised and fronted to [ɛ]. This raising was frequent in earlier NIrE as recorded by Patterson (1860, p. 7) and "is found only rarely amongst the oldest speakers" (McCafferty, 2001, p. 133).

There is regional variation in how the LOT, THOUGHT and CLOTH lexical sets are realised in NIrE. The main difference is between USc and MUE/SUE areas. In the former, the less open allophone [ɔ] is commonplace and LOT merges into THOUGHT (Wells, 1982, p. 443). MUE and SUE, on the contrary, have the open back rounded vowel [ɒ]. Furthermore, the LOT-THOUGHT merger does not occur in these varieties. In addition to [ɔ] and [ɒ], the low unrounded [ɑ] typical of Older Scots and USc (Hickey, 2007, p. 104) might also be found in some parts of NI.

The vowel sound in PRICE also varies depending on the region. In areas where USc is spoken, there are two possible realisations. One is [əi(ː)], which is usually produced before voiceless consonants, and the other is [a(ː)e] (Gregg, 1975). This allophone occurs when followed by another vowel sound. Nonetheless, the phonetic environment is not always determining so that [əi(ː)] and [a(ː)e] sometimes form minimal pairs (Wells, 1982, p. 443). In the rest of NI, the phoneme for PRICE is /æi/ and its realisation "ranges from [æˑɪ] to [eɪ]". Apart from these diphthongal pronunciations, this lexical set, as is the case with MOUTH, becomes a monophthong before /r/ (ibid., p. 444).

The NURSE-NORTH and the SQUARE-NURSE mergers are also widespread features of NIrE. The former is reported to be "characteristic of dialects outside the US zone" (Wells, 1982, p. 444). Respellings which suggest merging are recorded in Macafee (1996). In rural areas, however, merging does not take place so that NURSE is pronounced as [nʌɪs]. As for the latter, SQUARE has a monophthongal realisation similar to that of NURSE in most of the north Ireland (Wells, 1982, p. 444).

3.5. Belfast English

The role of Belfast English (BE) within NIrE is pivotal since, following Trudgill's (1974a, 1983) *gravity model* (Section 5.2.1.4.5. will provide a more detailed explanation of this model), linguistic innovations tend to spread from Belfast to other parts of NI (see McCafferty, 1998a, 2001). That is why BE needs to be considered separately from general NIrE. Over 50 years ago, Adams (1971) offered a description of BE that still holds:

> Belfast is a melting-pot of dialects that differ from one social level to another, as is usual in conurbations of this kind. This is what might be expected of a centre situated in an originally English-settled corridor between two areas of dense Scottish settlements and a remoter native Irish hinterland, all of which have poured later migrants to it. (p. 102)

In a similar vein, Hickey (2007) states that BE is "an amalgam of features which come from the two main forms of English in Ulster, along with some independent traits only found in the city" (p. 333). In this section, the particularities of the English spoken in Belfast are going to be explained.

As Milroy (1981) observes, many distinctions that are typical of rural areas are neutralised in BE (p. 32). Some of them are the NORTH-FORCE, NURSE-NORTH, SQUARE-NURSE mergers (Corrigan, 2010; Milroy, 1981; Wells, 1982). The contrast between DRESS-TRAP and that between LOT-TRAP are also neutralised in BE where all these sets are pronounced with [a] (Milroy, 1976). Apart from the loss of vowel distinctions, as mentioned above, there is a merging of the voiceless labiovelar fricative /ʍ/ and its voiced counterpart /w/ in Belfast.

Other features of BE show social variation that is not found in more rural regions. The MOUTH diphthong, for instance, is pronounced differently by working and middle-class speakers in the city. Speakers of the former group use the fronter allophone [ɛ̈], whereas middle-class realisations vary along the continuum [a-ɑ-ɔ] (Corrigan, 2010, p. 37; Wells, 1982, p. 443). Furthermore, in working-class speech the words *now* and *how* have "an open first element [a ~ ɑ] and a second element ranging over [i ~ ʉ], a retroflex approximant [ɻ], and zero" (Wells, 1982, p. 443). Another characteristic feature of Belfast working-class speech is the realisation of the FOOT lexical set as [fʌt], which, according to Maclaran (1976), is found "inconsistently" and "sporadically" in young-people speech. The pronunciation of the lateral consonant /l/ also varies socially but its variation does not involve social class but ethnicity. Catholics in Belfast favour the velar allophone [ɫ] in formal contexts. On the contrary, Protestants use clear [l] in formal register (McCafferty, 2007, p. 126).

Social variation has been attested in the loss of /ð/ in initial and medial positions. Milroy (1976) notes gender differentiation, with male speakers deleting /ð/ more than women.

The FACE lexical set, which shows "wide allophonic variation" (Harris, 1984, p. 129) in Belfast, is also subject to sociolinguistic variation. The different FACE variants that occur in BE are [e], [eə] and [iə]. The monophthongal allophone is the prevalent realisation in the north as well as in the south of Ireland, whereas the diphthongs are characteristic of BE (Barry, 1981, p. 122; Corrigan, 2010, p. 34). In their research on English in Belfast Milroy et al. (1982) find variation between [e] and [iə]. The use of one

or the other depends on area of the city and social class, which is closely related to area. The diphthong is reported to be more commonly found in inner-city areas, which are at the same time of a lower working-class status than other areas which are further away from the centre. Similarly, Longley (1994) states that when he was a child, he used both the diphthong and the monophthong. The latter was the allophone chosen when he was at home with his middle-class family. However, he favoured [iə] at school where a working-class accent was commonplace (p. 25).

BE is also characterised by a "tendency towards diphthongization of the lengthened allophones of /ɛ, a, ɔ/" (Wells, 1982, p. 442). As a result, as Adams (1964) indicates, words such as *mail* and *bad* are pronounced as "meeal" and "bawad" (p. 3). Two last particularities of Belfast speech are, on the one hand, a more central and unrounded realisation of STRUT, and, on the other, the occurrence of a lowered variant [æ̈] in the KIT lexical set when it precedes /l/ (Wells, 1982, pp. 441-442).

3.6. Derry English

(London)Derry is the second largest city in NI and is located in the north-eastern corner of the country. The variety of English spoken in (London)Derry belongs to NIrE and is, at the same time, one of the urban vernaculars within NIrE together with BE. The main research study on DE is that carried out by McCafferty (2001) which is therefore used here as a reference work.

The city of (London)Derry is, just like Belfast, located in between two Ulster-Scots areas. The difference between the two cities has traditionally consisted in the existence of a majority of Catholics in (London)Derry as opposed to a Protestant majority in Belfast. The relevance of (London)Derry from the point of view of language change is that it is the direct recipient of the Belfast innovations and acts as an intermediary between the Northern Irish capital and smaller urban centres and more rural areas. It is, nevertheless, important to point out that, as Hickey (2007) suggests, "the Catholic majority in the city [(London)Derry] might well show an inherent resistance" to innovations coming from Belfast (p. 343). In the following description of DE, attention will be drawn to how features from the capital have spread into (London)Derry.

DE shares some features with BE which does not mean that each of them derives from the transportation of Belfast innovations to (London)Derry. The occurrence of some features in both of these cities might instead derive from their presence in Ulster Scots. One feature whose origin has been debated is the NORTH-FORCE merger. Wells (1982)

argues that the loss of the NORTH-FORCE distinction has its origins in Belfast. Conversely, Gregg (1985) attributes the origin to Ulster Scots. Despite this controversy, McCafferty (2001) claims that what is clear is that this merger has spread from east to west (pp. 138-139).

Apart from the NORTH-FORCE merger, McCafferty identifies two other features which have spread from the east, and more particularly, Belfast, to (London)Derry. They are the variant [iə] in the FACE lexical set and the SQUARE-NURSE merger. With regard to the former, [iə] has entered (London)Derry due to influence of the capital. This Belfast innovation has been mainly adopted by Protestants (McCafferty, 1999, pp. 258-260; 2001, p. 134). Catholics, though, appear more reluctant to embrace a Protestant vernacular variant and prefer a pronunciation with [ɪ]. Thus, as McCafferty (2001) asserts, the realisation of FACE is conditioned by ethnicity. Nonetheless, FACE's social variation is not limited to ethnic background and is also influenced by the factors of social class and age. Moreover, it shows stylistic variation as well. The allophone [iə] is frequent among young middle-class Protestants in informal contexts. Meanwhile, [ɪ] is typically found in the vernacular speech of working-class Catholics even though this variant has been reported to be recessive (Gregg, 1958; Kingsmore, 1983).

The third feature that has been transported from Belfast to (London)Derry is the merging of SQUARE and NURSE. The place where this merger first arose is not known but its occurrence in (London)Derry stems from Belfast influence. The spread of [ɔ̈] to (London)Derry, similarly to the [iə] variant, is said to be led by young middle-class Protestants. The study of the SQUARE-NURSE merger allows McCafferty (1998b) to devise a pattern of language change in the north of Ireland which is based on the diffusion of innovations from middle-class Protestants to Protestant working-class speakers and from them to middle-class Catholics and, eventually, to the Catholic working class (pp. 109-110).

The following features of DE are worthy of discussion not because they are Belfast innovations but because they show sociolinguistic variation that is not found in other parts of the north. One of these features is the replacement of the interdental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ with [h] and [l], respectively. The former substitution is characteristic of speakers with a Catholic background and of working-class speech (McCafferty, 2001, p. 135). The latter is also typical of working-class speakers and, additionally, of males and young people.

There are two realisations in the speech of older and working-class people in

(London)Derry which deserve attention. One of them is the use of an open-mid back rounded allophone [ɔ] where other speakers produce the more open [ɒ] variant. (McCafferty, 2001, p. 133) The second realisation has to do with the palatalisation of the velar consonants /k, g/ if followed by a front vowel (p. 135).

Finally, I want to mention one feature of DE which is neither socially variable nor innovative and that is the rounding of the MOUTH diphthong to [ɔ̈y].

Some of the features that have been outlined in this chapter are discussed more in depth in Section 5.3.3.1.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter has described in detail the pronunciation features of NIrE and of the two main urban vernaculars in NI, namely Belfast English and Derry English. It also includes a discussion of the historical origins of some of those features, which shows evidence of the influence that the languages spoken by the Irish natives and by the Scots and English settlers have had on the formation of NIrE varieties. In addition, this chapter has explored whether NIrE features vary according to the geographical location, gender, age, social class and ethnicity of the speaker. All this sociolinguistic data is necessary to assess the produced authenticity of the fictional portrayals of NIrE accents (the produced authenticity of the stimuli is analysed in Section 5.3.3.1.). Having discussed the phonetics and phonology of NIrE, I now move on to provide the theoretical and methodological bases for this dissertation as well as to review previous research that informs those bases.

4. Chapter 4: Theoretical framework and literature review

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: (1) to establish the theoretical and methodological frameworks for the present dissertation and (2) to outline previous academic research on performed language in literary and telecinematic fiction (Sections 4.2.4. and 4.2.5.) and on language perception (Sections 4.3.3., 4.3.4. and 4.3.5.). The chapter begins with a discussion of four theoretical concepts which are performed language, literary dialect, salience and authenticity. These are key concepts in the field of dialect representation in fictional literary and telecinematic performances, the field that informs the theoretical basis for the present study. Sections 4.2.4. and 4.2.5. provide an overview of scholarly work on portrayals of IrE and NIrE in literature and in TV shows/films while identifying research gaps that are addressed in this thesis.

  The second main section of this chapter (Section 4.3.) focuses on language perception, which constitutes the methodological framework of this dissertation. Language perception encompasses the areas of language attitudes (Section 4.3.1.) and perceptual dialectology (Section 4.3.2.). Both of these fields investigate how people perceive and respond to language varieties, and therefore are different from language production. However, the former concerns itself with people's evaluations of dialects in terms of prestige and pleasantness, whereas the latter delves into the geographical distribution of dialects, as perceived by non-linguists. Apart from their different objects of study, these fields also differ from each other in terms of methodology. The methods and techniques employed in each field are also discussed in this chapter. Finally, the available literature on language attitudes and perceptual dialectology in Ireland and Northern Ireland is reviewed in Sections 4.3.3., 4.3.4. and 4.3.5.

4.2. Performed language in fiction

The label *performed language* is going to be used here in the sense of the language employed in "high performance events" (Coupland, 2007, p. 147). High performance events, also referred to as *staged performance* (Bell & Gibson, 2011) or simply as *performance* (Bauman, 2000), are carefully designed performances that take place at a specific time and venue and have an audience. The significant role of the audience is underlined by Bauman (2000) who defines performance as:

   a special mode of situated communicative practice, resting on the assumption of

accountability to an audience for a display of communicative skills and efficacy. In this sense of performance, the act of expression is put on display, objectified, marked out to a degree from its discursive surroundings and opened up to interpretive scrutiny and evaluation by an audience. (p. 1)

High performance events can be divided into two types, face-to-face and mass-mediated events (Coupland, 2007, p. 171). Face-to-face performances are those where performers and audience are physically present in the same venue and at the same time. Examples of this class are stage plays, stand-up comedy, concerts and drag shows. In mass-mediated events, however, audience and performers do not share the same physical space and there is usually the barrier of a camera. Some of the most frequent mass-mediated performances are TV shows, radio talk and films. Another difference between face-to-face and mass-mediated events is that the latter can offer more flexibility. For films and TV shows that are available on the Internet, members of the audience can decide when they want to watch them, if they are going to watch them alone or with other people and they can also watch them as many times as they wish. All these conditions make viewers experience performances in different ways. In addition, Bell and Gibson (2011) point out that "mass-mediated performances are so generally accessible that they find their way not just to their core audience, but also to non-targeted audiences" (p. 563). Its far-reaching nature results in a varied range of interpretations that is not so diverse in the case of face-to-face events.

Whether face-to-face or mass-mediated, all types of high performance share a set of features. Performances are a form of communication characterised by "a priority to entertain and to interest, not just to communicate a message" (Bell & Gibson, 2011, p. 557). Moreover, in performed language, the focus is not only on the content of the message but also on its form. Coupland (2007) refers to this as the "form focusing" dimension of high performance which entails that "[t]he poetic and metalinguistic functions of language comes [*sic*] to the fore and considerations of 'style' in its most commonplace sense become particularly salient" (p. 14). The language employed in performances is carefully designed; there is always a reason behind every linguistic choice. This is because performed language is subject to the audience's evaluation and scrutiny. Performances invite spectators to reflect on culture, society and language (Bauman, 2000, p. 4). They trigger reflexivity, or in Bell and Gibson's words, a "heightened reflexivity" (2011, p. 558), and are themselves reflexive in nature. As

Bauman (2000) formulates, performances are "linguistic forms about language", "cultural forms about culture" and "social forms about society" (p. 4). Performances are experienced more intensely than real-life events and this intensity is responsible for their reflexive character. The intensity of high performance is achieved largely through the stylisation of language. *Stylisation* is defined by Bakhtin (1981) as "an artistic representation of another's linguistic style, an artistic image of another's language" (p. 362). Performers usually have to adapt their language to the linguistic style of the character they are going to represent; they need to stylise their utterances. It is important to point out that stylisation does not consist in reproducing someone's speech as accurately, or authentically, as possible. In fact, Coupland (2007) even refers to stylisation as "strategic inauthenticity" (p. 154). Stylised language involves stereotyping and hyperbole (see Coupland 2001, 2007 for a list of the defining criteria of stylisation) and is therefore different from naturally occurring speech.

One further feature of high performance is their potential to create, reinforce or challenge indexical relationships between linguistic and social variables (see Bell & Gibson, 2011; Gibson, 2011). The theories of indexicality (Silverstein, 2003) and enregisterment (Agha, 2003) constitute, as Johnstone (2011) explains, "a framework that helps us see how 'social meanings' and linguistic choices can come to be linked and how sets of linguistic choices can come to be understood as varieties" (p. 660). Because of their reflexivity and intensity, performances are the perfect arena for the study of indexicality and enregisterment (Section 4.2.2.2. offers a more detailed explanation of enregisterment). The way characters use linguistic resources in performances is indexical and worthy of analysis.

Apart from their potential to establish and question indexical links, some scholars (Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Bell & Gibson, 2011; O'Sullivan & Kelly-Holmes, 2017; Schilling-Estes, 1998; Stuart-Smith et al., 2013) claim that performances are capable of causing language change. The representation of language in performances has an influence on language attitudes which are largely responsible for language change. Thus, a feature that is constantly portrayed in a negative light may fall out of use eventually. Conversely, a feature whose representation has positive connotations attached can be increasingly adopted by speakers. Moreover, audience members who strongly identify themselves with a character in a performance might start using some of the features or phrases that they employ.

Finally, high performance events are usually fictional narratives. This dissertation

investigates how the NIrE accent is represented in two types of fictional narratives, namely *literary fiction* and *telecinematic fiction*. Literary fiction refers to literary writing whose story is imaginary. Literary writing was the first object of study for scholars interested in fictional portrayals of dialect. The language represented in those writings came to be known as *literary dialect* and was defined by Ives (1971) as the written representation of "a speech that is restricted regionally, socially, or both" (p. 146). With the advent of new technologies, researchers have also become interested in audiovisual portrayals of dialect (Hodson, 2014; Piazza et al., 2011; Planchenault, 2012; Walshe, 2009). Furthermore, Hodson (2014) and Walshe (2009) have claimed that dialect in films can be considered a new type of literary dialect. The present study endorses this claim and examines representations of NIrE accents in written and audiovisual fiction alike.

As for the term *telecinematic fiction*, it is a slight modification of *telecinematic discourse*, a label first used by Piazza et al. (2011) to refer to the language of fictional television and cinema narratives. These researchers coined this term because they saw a need to consider television and film together due to the many similarities between these two media (p. 1). The rationale behind the substitution of "discourse" with "fiction" has to do with its analogy with literary fiction. The present study considers telecinematic and literary fiction together because they have a lot in common. One scholar who underscores the relevance of the similarities between telecinematic and literary fiction is Messerli (2017) who states the following:

> any work of fiction will be based on some form of creative process that leads to the production of a fictional artefact, and that this artefact will be received in some way by one or several recipients. Moreover, these processes will lead to a form of mediated communication between creators and recipients, in which meaning-making and understanding processes are anchored on the cultural artefact. (p. 26)

Messerli (2017) looks at the similarities from the point of view of the participation framework of fiction. Nevertheless, the focus of this dissertation is on the use of language, and more precisely dialect, in telecinematic and literary fiction. Thus, the work of Hodson (2014) is more relevant here. She deals with literature and film together and analyses the use of dialect in some examples of these two types of fictional narrative. Hodson argues that "approaching literature and film together makes for a richer and more rewarding experience than treating the topics separately" (p. 16). The main commonality between

telecinematic and literary fiction in terms of language is that the language employed in them is different from natural speech; it is carefully designed, self-conscious and performed.

The artificiality of performed language and its divergence from natural speech made linguists consider it unworthy of study. This is particularly the case for performed language in writing since, in line with Saussure (1967, p. 45) who declared that language is primarily a spoken system, researchers in different fields of linguistics have usually favoured spoken over written language. They consider that spontaneous speech is the most natural, authentic, unconstrained, unconscious and unmediated form of language and should therefore be the object of study. Despite this, due to the lack of spoken data, written texts have sometimes been used in linguistic research. Their validity, however, has been assessed in terms of closeness to spontaneous spoken language so that the closer they are to speech, the worthier of study they are. In fact, there are models that classify written texts according to how close they are to spoken language. One of those models is that developed by Jucker (1998) who distinguishes between two types of texts, namely "genuinely written data" and "written representations of spoken language" (p. 5). The former encompasses texts that are designed to be read while the latter are texts which aim to represent speech in writing. The latter category is subdivided into "retrospective", "fictional" and "prospective". The "fictional" subcategory comprises the type of texts I am interested in, i.e., literary fiction that contains representation of dialect.

Another scholar who proposes a model for the categorisation of written text types is Schneider (2002). He measures the proximity of written texts to spoken language using three criteria which are the reality of the speech that is being represented, "the relationship between the speaker and the person who wrote the utterance down" and "the temporal distance between the speech event and the time of the recording" (p. 60). Taking these criteria into account, he classifies texts into five different categories that are "recorded", "recalled", "imagined", "observed" and "invented". The first of these is the closest to speech whereas the "invented" category is the furthest away from it. Dialect in literary fiction belongs to the "invented" type of texts.

Culpeper and Kytö (2000, 2010) have also explored the distance between some written texts and speech. The model they propose establishes that there are four types of written texts: writing-based and purposed, speech-like, speech-based and speech-purposed. Nonetheless, this does not mean that a text can only belong to one category. Some texts are a mixture of two categories. In Culpeper and Kytö (2000), they use corpus

linguistics to analyse four types of texts (trial proceedings, witness depositions, drama and prose fiction) and determine which are closer to spoken language. They conclude that the closest to speech are trial proceedings and drama followed by prose fiction and witness depositions. One interesting thing about this study is that Culpeper and Kytö differentiate between plays and prose fiction, something which neither Schneider (2002) nor Jucker (1998) do. They rate plays as more accurate in their representation of speech, which seems justified by the fact that they contain more dialogue and are intended to be performed. The models described above show that researchers agree that literary fiction does not resemble spoken language closely.

Performed language in telecinematic fiction has also been rejected on the basis of its distance from spontaneous speech. Even though the spoken mode is used in films and television, language in these media is still very different from real spoken language. It is planned, rehearsed, self-conscious, constrained and mediated; the opposite of what spontaneous language has been assumed to be. Some scholars in the field of sociolinguistics, among whom Labov is the most well-known, took for granted that "self-conscious speech is of little value in obtaining a picture of the linguistic system of a given community" (Schilling-Estes, 1998, p. 62). However, many researchers (Amador-Moreno & McCafferty, 2011; Androutsopoulos, 2012; Bednarek, 2011, 2018; Bell & Gibson, 2011; Cohen Minnick, 2007; Gibson, 2011; Piazza et al., 2011; Planchenault, 2012; Walshe, 2009) have started to acknowledge that performed language, whether in literature, telecinematic fiction or any other kind of performance, deserves linguistic analysis. Language in performance cannot only offer insights into the sociolinguistics of society but also challenge already-established sociolinguistic structures. Additionally, it is a good source of information about language attitudes (see Cohen Minnick, 2007) since it is shaped by and has a role in establishing, reinforcing and challenging them. With regard to the influence of performed language on language change, while some sociolinguists such as Trudgill (1986) deny it, Stuart-Smith et al. (2013) find out that engagement with the TV show *EastEnders* is one of the factors influencing the adoption of TH-fronting and L-vocalisation, two Cockney features, in Glasgow. The study of language in performance can be therefore approached from many different paradigms.

4.2.1. Functions of performed language in fiction

Having provided a revised theoretical framework for the study of performed language, I now proceed to review what functions scholars have identified in the use of dialect in

performance. In the context of telecinematic fiction, Bednarek (2017), drawing greatly from Kozloff (2000), distinguishes three functions of dialogue: characterisation, realism and humour (p. 144). Although she does not deal with dialect in particular but with the more general concept of dialogue, those three functions are certainly found in performances of dialect as shown by Ives (1971) and Planchenault (2017). The former establishes that dialect in literary fiction serves one of two purposes which are humour and realism. The use of dialect in literature for comic purposes has a long tradition whose origins, according to "some Chaucerians", go back to Chaucer's *The Reeve's Tale* "in which northerners are depicted as provincial clowns for the amusement of a more sophisticated urban audience" (Blank, 1996, p. 172). Blake (1999, p. 136) agrees that Chaucer uses dialect to achieve a comic effect but notes that dialect speakers should not be seen as inferior in intelligence and education to other characters. He finds no evidence to suggest that Chaucer has a negative attitude towards the northern dialect which he portrays. In a similar vein, Blank points out that "[w]hile Chaucer demonstrates an awareness of dialect differences, there is no positive evidence that he considered some regional forms more "correct" or more prestigious than others" (p. 172). This is most likely related to the fact that, as Blake (1999) upholds, the notions of "correctness" and "standard" had not yet emerged (p. 144). Because of this lack of the notion of a standard language, medieval authors appear to have written in the dialects they knew (Blank, 1996, p. 3).

The use of dialect for comedy is fully developed during the Renaissance when the dialect spoken in London starts to establish itself as the standard variety of the country (Blake, 1981, pp. 46-47). Lay people gain linguistic awareness and dialects are relegated to low-class, rural, uneducated characters which are usually represented in plays. The first dialect employed for comic purposes was a "rustic dialect" modelled after a southern variety (ibid., p. 17).

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the rise of prescriptivism resulted in a major concern for the correct form of the English language. Regional and social varieties during this period are deemed vulgar, inappropriate and unacceptable so that literary writers tend to avoid them in their works. However, Cockney, an urban dialect of east London, is employed in some 18th-century literature and continues to be used in the 19th century when it replaces the rustic dialect and becomes the "new comic dialect" (ibid., p. 18).

The 19th century marked a change of direction for the representation of dialect in literature. Regional varieties gained more acceptability and therefore writers started using

dialect for more serious purposes. The Romantic movement and its assertion of the value of regional aspects of life had an influence on this attitude change. The romantic novelist Sir Walter Scott shows how dialect can be used for "heroic and even tragic" purposes (Page, 1988, p. 60). Furthermore, Hodson and Broadhead (2013) claim the following:

> By the Victorian period a much broader range of dialect-speaking characters have emerged who are afforded more serious roles and whose dialects are represented more consistently and in more detail, as can be seen in the novels of Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot. (p. 316)

Thus, 19th-century literature is characterised by larger amounts of dialect, the use of dialect for purposes other than comedy and better representations of dialect. In addition to this, upper-class characters are sometimes depicted speaking some form of dialect. According to Chapman (1994), it was not until the 19th century that upper-class dialects were portrayed, and frequently parodied. The non-standard which had been only employed in connection with rural and working-class characters started to be used for characters of the high society. From this century onwards, dialect in literature has not only been used for comic purposes although comedy remains one of the main functions of performed dialect.

On the other hand, Planchenault (2017) does not mention realism and humour but pinpoints characterisation as one of the functions of performed dialect. Apart from this function, which she refers to as "informative", she distinguishes two other, namely "contrastive" and "indexical" (p. 266). The first one has to do with how dialect in performance stands out in contrast with the standard variety. Characters who speak dialect stand out from the rest and capture readers' attention. Then, those readers feel the need to devote some time to making sense of the contrast. As for the "indexical" function, it makes reference to the aforesaid ability of performed dialects to establish connections between linguistic variants and social identities. A well-established association is that between speaking dialect and being rural, lower class and/or foolish (Blake, 1981; Preston, 1982b; Taavitsainen et al., 1999) although there are many other associations which are more fine-grained.

4.2.2. Salience

For the purpose of the present study, I must also comment on the notion of sociolinguistic

salience since, as will be detailed in section 4.2.2.2., it seems to have an influence on the fictional representation of dialect. Although salience has been dealt with in linguistics more broadly, I am interested in how this concept has been theorised in the field of Sociolinguistics. The concept of *salience* remains elusive and there is not an established definition of the term. Different scholars have different definitions for salience. Kerswill and Williams (2002), for instance, define salience as "a property of a linguistic item or feature that makes it in some way perceptually and cognitively prominent" (p. 81). Meanwhile, for Hickey (2000) salience is "a reference to the degree to which speakers are aware of some linguistic feature" (p. 57). Though slightly different, these two definitions evince that salience involves linguistic awareness. Thus, a feature is salient for speakers when they are aware of it. Despite the lack of agreement on how to define salience, most scholars agree upon "the explanatory potential of salience as a motivating factor in language change" (Llamas et al., 2016, p. 2).

Within sociolinguistics, Rácz (2013) identifies two approaches to salience. On the one hand, some scholars see salience as the result of "social dynamics" and therefore concentrate on the ability of a linguistic feature to establish a link with a social attribute or identity. Viewed in these terms, a linguistic form is salient when it carries social meaning and people are conscious of that sociolinguistic correlation. The main proponent of this approach is Labov (1972) who classifies variables according to their salience and distinguishes between indicator, marker and stereotype. The main difference between the former and the other two is that indicators are not salient while markers and stereotypes are. Indicators are variables that index social identities which speakers are not conscious of. Awareness comes into play when those variables start showing stylistic variation, thereby becoming markers. Markers are salient inasmuch as speakers become aware of the social meaning attached to them and use them in stylistically significant ways. With regard to stereotypes, they go beyond awareness and come to be "the overt topic of social comment" (Johnstone et al., 2006, p. 82).

The other approach to salience places emphasis on ascertaining which extralinguistic factors, if any, are essential for salience. Some of the researchers who adhere to this view are Trudgill (1986), Auer et al. (1998), Kerswill and Williams (2002) and Rácz (2013). Trudgill (1986) identifies four factors that contribute to the salience of markers. According to him, a linguistic variable becomes salient if it is stigmatised, "involved in linguistic change", its variants are "phonetically different" and maintains a "phonological contrast" (ibid., p. 11). The last two factors are language-intrinsic but the

first two are extralinguistic. He is one of the first researchers to acknowledge that language-extrinsic factors contribute to salience. Auer et al. (1998) make a distinction between "objective" and "subjective" factors. Their objective factors have to do with the phonemic and phonetic qualities of the feature and are "articulatory distance", "areal distribution", "phonemicity", "continuous vs. dichotomous" and "lexicalization" (p. 167). On the other hand, subjective parameters refer to speakers' perception of salience and include "perceptual distance", code-switching, portrayal in literature, "stereotyping" and "comprehensibility" (ibid.). The most important aspect of Auer et al.'s study is that they examine the relationship between objective and subjective factors and reach two main conclusions. The first one is that "subjective and objective salience clearly do not always coincide" (ibid., p. 183). Secondly, it becomes clear that subjective parameters account for salience better than objective ones in some cases.

Similarly, Kerswill and Williams (2002) distinguish between "language-internal factors" and "extra-linguistic factors" and suggest that it is the latter type of parameters that explain why certain features are salient while others are not. Those extra-linguistic factors encompass "cognitive, pragmatic, interactional, social psychological, and sociodemographic factors" (p. 105). Furthermore, as revealed by their aforementioned definition of salience, two main factors that determine whether a feature is salient or not are perception and cognition. Rácz (2013) also highlights the role of cognition in salience and compares sociolinguistic and cognitive salience because a comparison like this, he believes, can make it easier to define sociolinguistic salience and can provide more information about "the general properties of salience in perception" (p. 31).

When dealing with the notion of salience, it seems necessary to discuss its relationship with frequency. Some academics such as Bardovi-Harlig (1987) and Honeybone and Watson (2013) postulate that high frequency of occurrence prompts high salience. In fact, Bardovi-Harlig (1987) holds the view that high frequency is the only factor on which salience depends. In contrast, Podesva (2006) claims that it is features that are infrequent those which are usually salient.

On the other hand, other researchers (Kerswill & Williams, 2002; Rácz, 2013) reject the idea that high frequency necessarily leads to salience. Rácz (2013) also shares this view since he believes that "a phonetic feature which is salient in its environment will remain so irrespective of its frequency in a given chunk of speech" (p. 26). Moreover, he uses Labov et al.'s (2006) findings to support his assertion. The results from Labov at al.'s study reveal that once a variant is identified as stigmatised, it will have an influence

on the listeners' reaction to speech regardless of its frequency. Apart from that, they show that the salient variant has the greatest impact on the listeners' responses the first time they notice the variant. This finding confirms their hypothesis that there is an "attenuation of responses to the marked variant with increasing exposure" (Labov et al., 2006, p. 128). This seems to endorse Rácz's claim that high frequency does not make a feature more salient.

The debate about what factors are necessary and most determining for salience has been going on for a while but no consensus has been reached yet. A possible solution to this debate might be Kerswill & Williams' (2002) suggestion that:

> there are no necessary and sufficient conditions which must be met in order for a linguistic feature to be salient –barring the obvious one that differences between its presence and absence must be noticeable in a psychoacoustic sense. (p. 105)

4.2.2.1. Methods to operationalise salience

Researchers have been concerned with devising possible ways to operationalize the perceptual salience of linguistic variables (Blumenthal-Dramé et al., 2017, p. 1). It is a difficult task to measure salience but some scholars (Jaeger & Weatherholtz, 2016; Llamas et al., 2016; Rácz, 2013) have implemented quantitative methods. Jaeger and Weatherholtz (2016) propose that computational psycholinguistics can be used to measure sociolinguistic salience quantitatively. They argue that measuring "surprisal" (see Hale, 2001 for more detail) makes it possible to determine a variant's "initial salience", that is, the perceived salience of a feature when it is first encountered.

Llamas et al. (2016), adopting a more sociolinguistic perspective, quantify the strength of associations between linguistic and social variables. In order to do that, they calculate "the speed with which the association is made" and "the degree to which members of a speech community appear to share the association" (p. 1). They use what they have called the *Social Category Association Test*, a modified version of the widely used *Implicit Association Test*. The results from their study show that there is arbitrariness in the selection of features which end up being salient (p. 16).

Another academic who has measured salience is Rácz (2013). He relies on "transitional probabilities" as an indicator of a feature's surprisal and subsequent salience. Surprisal, or unexpectedness, is an element of cognitive salience and, according to Rácz, is necessary for sociolinguistic salience. His approach, which he calls an "usage-based

functionalist approach to sociolinguistic salience" (p. 155), consists in using corpora as a sample of natural speech and in computing the transitional probabilities of linguistic variables.

4.2.2.2. Salience in performed language

The relevance of salience for this dissertation resides in the role it plays in the representation of dialect in performance. Walshe (2011), for example, acknowledges that salience is a "key factor in literary dialect representations of speech" since he finds out that it is salient features that are more frequently represented (p. 127). When a dialect is represented in performance, the author/producer needs to decide which features to portray since, as will be explained in Section 4.2.3. below, incorporating every single feature of a dialect is impossible, unnecessary and undesirable. Salience influences authors/producers' selection and exclusion of features. They can only incorporate features they are aware of, that is, that are salient to them, and out of those features, they choose a few. Which features are selected usually depends on how salient they are to authors/producers, with highly salient features being included in the representation more often than less salient ones. However, the selection of features is also influenced by the audience inasmuch as writers of performed dialect always have the audience/readers in mind and consider how they will respond to the performance. Thus, creators frequently pick features which they know are salient for viewers/readers and which index some social identity. Bell and Gibson (2011) briefly note how salience can affect the selection of features (p. 568).

The suitability of performed language for the study of salience is undeniable since, as Schilling-Estes (1998) observes, "through examining performance speech, we can gain insight into which aspects of linguistic production are most salient to the performer" (p. 64). In telecinematic fiction, though, it is usually the producers rather than the performers who decide which features are going to be incorporated. Despite that, performers may make some changes to the script in order to feel more comfortable with it, but those adjustments need the producer's approval. The implications that the difference between producer and performer may have for the study of salience in performance is that it can be difficult sometimes to know which features are salient to whom. Nonetheless, the telecinematic fiction that is analysed in the present study comes from films and TV shows that have Northern Irish producers and performers. Accordingly, it is most likely that they agree on which features are salient.

It is also important to notice that, in addition to providing useful information about language production in terms of salience, performed speech also contributes to enhancing the salience of features. Thus, the presence of a feature in performance is one of the indicators of salience that is considered here.

The adjective *salient* has been widely used when referring to features that are represented in performance (Gibson & Bell, 2010; Johnstone, 2011; Planchenault, 2012; Vaughan & Moriarty, 2018). However, these researchers do not explain what leads them to believe that a particular feature is salient. They simply label some features as salient probably basing their assumption on previous research on those features. When determining the degree of salience of a feature, these indicators should be considered:

- Stylistic and social variation. As mentioned above, Labov (1972) establishes that features that vary socially and stylistically are salient. They are what he calls "markers".

- Supraregionalisation. Hickey (2003) suggests that salience plays a role in supraregionalisation, which he defines as "a historical process whereby varieties of a language lose specifically local features and becomes less regionally bound" (p. 351). He notes that some features do not survive supraregionalisation because of their high salience as vernacular forms of a dialect. However, there are also salient features which are not removed from the supraregional variety. The explanation for this is that the supraregional does not only "avoid the unwanted association of being too regionally bound" but also "serve[s] the function of delimiting a group or community from another much larger one" (Hickey, 2003, p. 362). Hence, while the absence of a local feature in the supraregional variety is most likely indicative of high salience, its presence does not necessarily imply lack of salience.

- Overt comments posted on blogs, online newspapers, YouTube and social media by non-linguists. If lay people can talk about a certain feature, it means that they are extremely conscious of it. In other words, the feature has reached the highest degree of salience. Using Labov's (1972) terminology, features that are subject to overt comment are "stereotypes".

- Representation in performance. It is usually salient features that are incorporated in performed language. In literary fiction, the representation of dialectal pronunciation is done through the use of non-standard spellings. Honeybone and Watson (2013) analyse quantitatively which features of the Liverpool English

accent are portrayed in a specific literary genre and claim that this method can help find out how sociolinguistically salient the features of a variety are. Besides, they propose that "if orthography is seen as a social practice which represents writers' meaningful decisions, then it follows that the performance of dialect in writing can provide a window through which we can identify the features in a variety that have local meaning" (p. 334). The link between linguistic forms and local meaning comes to be established through *enregisterment*, defined by Agha (2003) as "processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognised register of forms" (p. 321). The representation of dialect in performance does not only serve as evidence of the enregisterment of some linguistic forms but also contributes to enregistering them. This has been shown to be true in written representations of dialect (Honeybone & Watson, 2013), comic performances (Johnstone, 2011; Vaughan & Moriarty, 2018), musical performances (Beal, 2009; Gibson, 2011), animated cartoons (Vaughan & Moriarty, 2020), radio advertising (O'Sullivan, 2020) and commodities such as T-shirts (Johnstone, 2009).

Performances contribute to the enregisterment of dialects in three main ways: "they put local speech on display" (Johnstone, 2011, p. 157); they establish or reinforce links between linguistic forms and social meanings; and their metalinguistic and reflexive nature makes audiences gain more linguistic awareness. The process through which linguistic forms are enregistered can be explained using Silverstein's (2003) orders of indexicality. Nevertheless, I use Johnstone et al.'s (2006) terminology because it is less abstract and more straightforward. The first step towards enregisterment consists in the existence of a correlation between a linguistic variable and some social variable such as gender, age, region, social class, etc. This constitutes what Johnstone et al. refer to as "first-order indexicality" (ibid., p. 82) and must be understood as potential indexicality since it is not until lay people become aware of the correlation that they can use it to index some aspect of identity. Awareness is what characterises "second-order indexicality", the second stage of enregisterment. A linguistic form reaches this stage when people develop a certain attitude towards that form, usually in terms of class and correctness, and start using it in stylistically meaningful ways. Finally, some of those features that are second-order indexicals attain "third-order indexicality" by being associated with a specific social identity

or "characterological figure" (Agha, 2003, p. 243) which is defined by one or more factors such as locality, social class and occupation. It is at this stage that features become enregistered. In their paper on the enregisterment of a dialect known as *Pittsburghese*, Johnstone et al. (2006) show how some linguistic forms used in the city of Pittsburgh which were once an index of social class have come to be linked to locality, as the label *Pittsburghese* suggests. They also explain that the move from second-order indexicality to third-order indexicality "occurred through metapragmatic practices that selected a subset of the forms that can do second-order indexical work, linking this subset to a more stabilized social identity and making these forms available for self-conscious, performed identity work" (ibid., p. 93). These "metapragmatic practices" can be explicit or implicit. Explicit metapragmatic practices involve people openly commenting on and evaluating linguistic forms. Agha (2003) identifies some of these practices, or "genres of metadiscourse" as he calls it, which are early prescriptivist works, popular handbooks on pronunciation, elocution and grammar, literary works and penny weeklies, a type of periodical (pp. 249-259). While in most of these genres there is talk about talk, in literary works the enregisterment of features is usually done more implicitly by means of a foregrounding of "selected correlations between speech and social identity through devices such as narrated dialogue and dependent tropes of personification" (p. 255). Other types of performances such as telecinematic fiction are also fertile ground for implicit metapragmatic practice.

Whether implicit or explicit, all these practices contribute to making linguistic forms more salient. The relationship between salience and enregisterment is worthy of attention. Salience seems to be a prerequisite for enregisterment since, for features to reach third-order indexicality, lay people must be aware of them and be able to use them when they want to index some social identity. Moreover, some practices such as the representation of features in performance are both source and proof of salience and enregisterment. While enregisterment depends on salience to a large extent, it cannot be said to be a precondition for salience. According to Johnstone (2009, p. 160), a linguistic form is not noticed if it is not associated with one or more social factors. This association, as stated above, is necessary but not enough for forms to be enregistered.

The indicators of salience presented above have been commonly used for assessing salience, but they present one main drawback. As Watson and Clark (2013) indicate, they "suffer from the philosophical problem that the lack of evidence is not evidence of absence" (p. 302). As a result, a feature that is not found to be subject to stylistic variation, supraregionalisation, representation in performance and overt comment does not necessarily lack salience. Furthermore, not every indicator is needed for salience. A feature that is only subject to stylistic variation can be as salient as one which shows all the four indicators. The assessment of salience is no easy task and that is why the above indicators must be carefully considered before deciding whether a given feature can be regarded as salient.

The present dissertation sheds some light on the perceived salience of NIrE pronunciation features portrayed in fiction, that is, the degree to which they are noticed and recognised as NIrE features by people in NI. For a feature to be considered perceptually salient, the word where it occurs must be cited by a significant number of respondents. Thus, the more a word is cited, the more perceptually salient the pronunciation feature occurring in that word will probably be. The assessment of perceived salience is explained in detail in Section 6.3.1.

4.2.3. Authenticity of performed language

Apart from salience, the notion of *authenticity* also deserves attention. Authenticity has been a recurrent topic in studies on the use of dialect in literary fiction (known as *literary dialect*) but not as frequent in research on telecinematic fiction. However, what has been said about the authenticity of dialect in literary fiction can be applied to telecinematic fiction since, as already argued in Section 4.2., these two can be seen as types of performance. Consequently, I will more generally refer here to the authenticity of performed language.

Before proceeding any further, it is necessary to clarify that authenticity is discussed here in the sense of closeness of performed language to natural speech. One of the main debates concerning authenticity has to do with "the question of whether or not authenticity is an appropriate yardstick by which to judge literary dialects" (Hodson, 2014, p. 220). Notwithstanding this debate, the validity of dialect in literary fiction has been usually measured in terms of similarity to natural speech. Ives (1971), an advocate of this approach, devises a procedure by which the authenticity of dialect in literary fiction can be assessed. His procedure consists of four steps that Hodson (2014) describes in a

clear and simple way:

> The steps include: ascertaining the dialect that the author spoke; analysing the respellings in the text; verifying the existence of the individual features so identified; determining whether the combination of features present in the literary dialect corresponds with a geographical region where this combination occurs. (p. 222)

Ives' procedure, which, Hodson (2014) argues, can also be used for the analysis of dialect in films, is followed in this dissertation to determine the produced authenticity of performances, i.e., the authenticity that the author/producer confers on the performance in terms of the specific features he decides to incorporate (see Section 1.2.). Although this approach to dialect in performance is, as discussed below, somewhat outdated, it allows me to explore if there is any correspondence between produced authenticity and perceived authenticity, the last of which has to do with how readers/audience perceive performed language from the point of view of authenticity (see Díaz-Sierra, 2022 on the produced and perceived authenticity of a recording taken from the sitcom *Derry Girls*). In Chapter 5, I explain in detail the method I have employed to measure the perceived authenticity of the performances.

The view that authenticity is necessary for literary dialect to be valid is inherited from traditional dialectology, which is concerned with authentic speech and the *authentic speaker*. For dialectologists the authentic speakers were the NORMs, that is, non-mobile, old, rural males (Chambers & Trudgill, 1980). They were the speakers worthy of study because, according to dialectologists, their speech had not been corrupted and was the closest to the first form of the language.

The traditional and long-established idea that literary dialect can only be authentic if it closely resembles the real-world dialect that it aims to represent can no longer be sustained. This is due to the fact that, as some researchers have observed (see, for example, Blake, 1981; Hodson, 2014; Toolan, 1992), it is impossible to make an accurate representation of natural speech in writing. The same is true for telecinematic fiction regardless of their audiovisual modality that may lead some people to the false belief that dialect in television and cinema is closer to natural speech[7] than dialect in literary fiction.

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[7] Sontag (1996) points out that cinema "is cast as the art of the authentic" (p. 26).

Whether written or spoken, dialect in performance is artificial by nature. In his discussion of literary dialect, Page (1988) emphasises that "there is an inevitable gap–wider or narrower at different times, but never disappearing entirely– between speech […] and even the most "realistic" dialogue in a world of literature" (p. 7). It is always important to remember that performed dialect is essentially different from dialects in the real world and therefore calls for a different kind of analysis that is not restricted to an investigation of what features of a particular dialect are represented in a given performance.

In addition to being impossible, authors/producers' do not intend to reproduce natural speech as accurately as possible since they are not linguists but artists (Cohen Minnick, 2007; Hodson, 2014; Ives, 1971; Krapp, 1971; Walshe, 2009). Even if they have a detailed knowledge of the dialect they are going to portray, their purpose is to create a piece of art, and not necessarily to be scientifically accurate (Ives, 1971, p. 147). In the field of film dialogue, Walshe (2009) endorses this idea and applies it to actors concluding that "an actor's work, like the drama of which it is a part, is […] interpretive rather than scientific" (p. 202). Authors/producers are mainly interested in achieving a realistic effect, an illusion of reality. Thus, their use of dialect can be said to serve a symbolic function more than a mimetic one. Mimesis is subordinated to symbolism although some mimesis is usually necessary for symbolism to be possible.

Besides not being the writers' purpose, representing a dialect accurately can work to the authors/producers' disadvantage. If they reflected the spontaneity of natural speech, with all its interruptions, false starts, hesitations and repetitions, their performed dialect would end up being incomprehensible to the readers/audience and that would be counterproductive (Hodson, 2014; Kozloff, 2000). This differs from Kirk's (1999) perspective. He contends that, in order for dialect in literary fiction to be "fully realistic", writers need to incorporate not only dialectal features, which he terms "code features", but also "mode features", that is, features that occur in any type of spoken language and that include, inter alia, interruptions and repetitions (p. 60). While he may have a point, the fact is that mode features are not frequent in literary fiction. Moreover, somewhat contradicting Kirk, Short (1996) maintains that listener's "feedback", i.e., the use of gestures or noises that acknowledge that a character is paying attention to what other character is saying, does not and should not take place in staged plays. The reason for this is that feedback would end up diverting the audience's attention and making them believe that those features are there for purposes other than creating a realistic effect (Short, 1996, pp. 178-179).

For most authors/producers, intelligibility is a priority. Accordingly, they tend to represent only a few dialectal features in the performances they design and, for the most part, refuse to incorporate "mode features". Creators of performed dialect do not intend to represent each and every feature of the dialect they want to portray and that is why they need to select those that they consider most suitable for their purpose (Ives, 1971; Krapp, 1971). In line with this, Azevedo (2002) points out that "literary dialect does not seek to replicate speech but rather to emulate it through a strategy of foregrounding specific features" (p. 510). As has been already mentioned in Section 4.2.2.2., when it comes to deciding which features to choose, authors/producers normally opt for those that they believe are salient for their target audience (Bell & Gibson, 2011; Gibson & Bell, 2010; Schilling-Estes, 1998; Walshe, 2011, 2020). The rationale behind the selection of salient features has to do with their potential to construct characters quickly and effectively. They allow members of the audience to easily recognise where the character is from and provide clues to the speaker's social class, age, religion and other social factors. This is possible because salient features index social meaning (Agha, 2003; Johnstone et al., 2006; Labov, 1972). Furthermore, authors/producers frequently choose a specific combination of salient features that has come to be understood as representative of the dialect that they are trying to portray. In other words, they tend to select an enregistered set of features, that is, one that has been used by many other creators before and, as a result, has established itself as a variety in its own right. For a detailed explanation of enregisterment, see Section 4.2.2.2.

There is no denying that using sets of salient features help to delineate characters' identities very quickly (Amador-Moreno, 2010; Hodson, 2014; Kozloff, 2000; Lippi-Green, 2012). However, their use poses one main problem. Those sets of features are usually linguistic stereotypes that have been employed time and again and carry negative connotations. Although linguistic stereotypes, and stereotypes more generally, may not be inherently negative, they end up being so by virtue of their long-standing association with characters that are portrayed as unintelligent, immoral or low class. The origins of this association go back to the Renaissance (Section 4.2.1.) and, more specifically, to Elizabethan theatre. Plays written during the Elizabethan period started to establish links between dialectal features and rural, uneducated characters, thus contributing to the creation of linguistic stereotypes. One such stereotype that emerged at that time is the "brogue" or "Irish brogue" which needs to be seen in connection with the "Stage Irishman", a character stereotype constructed by English playwrights (Amador-Moreno,

2010, pp. 90-91). Irish characters in Elizabethan drama were portrayed as irascible, uncivilized, eloquent but unreliable, and aggressive (see Bartley, 1942, 1954; Bliss, 1979; Duggan, 1937; Hickey 2007, 2010; Truninger, 1976 for more attributes of the Stage Irishman). These are all negative traits that served to present the Irish as inferior to the British characters who played the major roles. Moreover, their use of a non-standard variety contributed to reinforcing their inferiority and created a comic effect. The "brogue" that the Stage Irishman spoke was characterised by a few pronunciation features that Elizabethan audiences quickly recognised as Irish. The most common features were the fortition of the dental fricatives /θ, ð/ to alveolar plosives /t, d/; the substitution of /s/ by /ʃ/; the retention of the long Middle English vowel /ɛ:/ in words of the MEAT lexical set; monophthongal realisations of /eɪ/ and /əʊ/; the realisation of the diphthong /aʊ/ as /ʊ/ or /u:/; and the substitution of /ɔɪ/ for /aɪ/ (Amador-Moreno, 2010; Bartley, 1942; Hickey, 2007).

The representation of pronunciation features in writing involves using non-standard spellings which trigger a negative response from the readers (Preston 1982b, 1985). Regardless of the features writers attempt to represent and the accuracy with which they do it, non-standard spellings "have as their primary effect on the reader a demotion of opinion of the speaker represented" (Preston, 1982b, p. 323). In many cases, readers do not have a negative attitude towards the feature that is portrayed but to its respelling (Preston, 1985, p. 334). To avoid those negative associations, from the late 18th century onwards, writers started to represent syntactic rather than pronunciation features (Sullivan, 1980). This made it possible for some playwrights such as Yeats, Gregory and Synge "to circumvent the negative associations of respelling while still allowing themselves to utilize accents in production" (Connell, 2014, p. 175).

The development of the Stage Irishman can be divided, according to Bartley (1942), into three phases: "the realistic, the indifferent and the false" (p. 438). In the first phase the construction of the character from real features takes place. The second phase involves writers adopting the character that has been already designed without discussion or modification. The real-world character on which the fictional character is based might have changed but the latter stays the same. Writers are no longer concerned about realism. Finally, by the third phase, a "conventional framework" has been established and new features are only included if they conform to that framework. Some aspects of the framework have probably become outdated and, therefore, false. The creation process of the Stage Irishman and the Irish brogue helps to understand how character and linguistic

stereotypes are developed. Two more recent linguist stereotypes are "Hollywood Injun English" (Meek, 2006) and "White Hollywood African American English" (Bucholtz, 2011). The former is a set of linguistic features typically used to represent the speech of American Indians in telecinematic and literary fiction, while the latter refers to the linguistic style of the "wigger", a white male who likes the hip-hop culture and appropriates an African American lifestyle. What these two stereotypes together with the Irish brogue have in common is that they are portrayals of minority groups (Irish, wigger and American Indian) done by individuals who belong to a larger and more powerful group (British and White American). Consequently, these stereotypes are often associated with linguistic and social features that mark characters out as inferior, uncivilized or lacking masculinity as in the case of wiggers. Furthermore, the two Hollywood stereotypes mentioned above show how films have continued the literary tradition of creating and perpetuating negative stereotypes (see Kozloff, 2000).

Apart from these negative connotations, the use of stereotypes in literary and telecinematic fiction is frequently criticised for giving rise to inauthentic representations. Hodson (2014), for example, describes linguistic stereotypes as "the inaccurate rendering of a particular dialect based upon a small number of linguistic features" (p. 115). Insofar as stereotypes entail the exaggeration of some features and the exclusion of others, their representation of reality is always inaccurate to some degree. They offer a simplified version of real language use where there are lots of variables and countless possible combinations of those variables. Dialects are reduced to a handful of features that become categorical. Many of those features are usually stigmatised and even outdated, that is, no longer found in the real-world dialect. The simplification, stigmatisation and the sometimes outdated nature of stereotypes lead linguists to consider them inauthentic representations. Thus, some researchers of performed language tend to value portrayals that move away from the rigid categorization of stereotypes and incorporate less salient features, i.e., indicators, since they add subtlety to the representation. One of those researchers is Poussa (1999) who analyses dialect in Dickens' *David Copperfield* and praises its "extremely subtle deployment of dialect indicators" (p. 42).

In spite of being inaccurate from a linguistic point of view, stereotypes are "useful for laymen" (Kristiansen, 2001, p. 132) and "unavoidable if dialect representation is to be effective for readers" (Hodson, 2016, p. 31). Lay people feel an urgent need for categorization so that they group other individuals into broad categories to know what to expect from them. In the context of language, people form images of how different social

groups speak and when they meet someone from a particular group, they look for evidence that confirms their expectations. Hewstone and Giles (1997) show how this applies to the more general category of social stereotypes. Additionally, they state that people's desire to confirm their hypothesis is so strong that they may believe that certain features occur even if they do not (p. 276). This relates to *accent hallucination* which, Walshe points out, is defined by Fought (2006) as a phenomenon where "prejudice on the part of the hearer lead[s] to the perception of stigmatised forms (even when in reality these do not exist)" (Walshe, 2009, p. 266). Readers/audience of performed language usually want their stereotypes to be confirmed in the performance. Thus, creators use them so that readers/audience can easily make sense of the representation. Hodson (2016) proposes than the use of stereotypes must be seen within the context of the performance rather than in terms of its linguistic accuracy. Moreover, she stresses the importance of fictional representations of dialect as a source of information about folklinguistic beliefs.

Stereotypes exist in the real world and their disappearance seems unlikely. As a result, Hewstone and Giles (1997) propound that "it would seem a more realistic aim to replace negative with positive stereotypes, rather than eradicate group images altogether" (p. 280). Besides, it is important to note that performed language does not only serve to perpetuate negative stereotypes but can also challenge them and even create new ones. This is due to the aforementioned potential of performances to establish indexical relationships between linguistic forms and social meanings (see Bell & Gibson, 2011; Gibson, 2011: Johnstone, 2011). Apart from this, although negative stereotypes have been frequently condemned by linguists, they can be useful for some purposes such as achieving a comic effect. What is important for creators of performed language is that they know exactly the purpose of their representations so that they can use (or not use) stereotypes accordingly.

Whether incorporating stereotypes or not, language in fictional performances and language in real life are inextricably linked. As Amador-Moreno and Terrazas-Calero (2017) argue, "while fictional dialects do not operate in the same way as real world dialects, the former need to be seen in relation to the latter in order to convey meaning to the reader" (p. 256). The former is rooted in the latter and therefore readers/audience interpret a given performed dialect in relation to what they know about the dialect in the real world, its associations with social factors and existing attitudes towards it. This is the reason why performed language has been typically analysed according to its similarity to natural speech. Nonetheless, this is not the only possible approach to authenticity in the

context of performed language and some researchers have now moved beyond the view that authenticity must mean closeness to real speech. This is not to say that the former approach has been or must be abandoned. In fact, Hodson (2014) notes that "there clearly is space for approaches which attempt to assess how close specific literary or filmic representations are to 'real world' dialects" but, at the same time, contends that it is necessary to "abandon the idea that such judgements can ever be absolute, as well as the idea that representations which lay claim to some real-world 'authenticity' are inherently 'better'" (p. 235). Thus, she suggests that the traditional approach has to be complemented with an analysis of "how authenticity is being constructed in particular instances" and "who gets to decide what is authentic and what is not" (ibid., pp. 235-236). The idea that authenticity is constructed, rather than an objective or inherent quality as dialectologists had presumed, is advanced by sociolinguists (Bucholtz, 2003; Coupland, 2003; Eckert, 2003). They start drawing attention to the process by which language comes to be seen as authentic, which Bucholtz (2003) refers to as "authentication" (p. 408), and to exploring who the legitimate judges of authenticity are. According to Coupland (2003) and Van Leeuwen (2001), those judges are usually some kind of authority or expert who have the power to grant authenticity. When the authenticity of language is being evaluated, it is the linguist who is considered the legitimate judge. There exists the traditional ideology of "the linguist as arbiter of authenticity" (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 407). It is the linguists' perception that counts although, as Bucholtz (2003) explains, linguists are often influenced by how speakers and listeners perceive language in terms of authenticity. However, she also recognises that "language users and their audiences" bestow authenticity. In the study of performed language, not only linguists but also audiences validate the authenticity (or inauthenticity) of the performance simply because authenticity is, as Coupland (2003) declares, "a quality of experience that we actively seek out, in most domains of life, material and social" (p. 417). The audiences' perceptions of authenticity deserve study since they are as valuable as those of the linguists, or even more so because lay people influence language in a way that linguists cannot. Changes in language use or in language attitudes are most often led by non-linguists than by experts in language. This supports the need for more research on the perception of authenticity by readers/audiences, an approach that has been frequently disregarded in research on dialect representation in fiction.

The present study aims at filling that gap which exists in the study of authenticity via an experiment where Northern Irish people are asked to rate how authentic different

performances of the Northern Irish accent are (see Chapter 5 for a full description of the experiment). Pickles (2018) is one of the few academics who underlines that readers are key elements for the study of literary representations of dialect. Looking at literary dialect from the perspective of literary criticism, she uses real readers to explore what they think about characters who use dialect. Regarding authenticity, Pickles adopts a "post-authenticity" approach and proposes that:

> dialect representation is an important component part of realism, although, as with realism in general, it is not, and cannot be, a simple act of mimesis; it is the acceptance of the version of reality on offer that leads to the success of the realist text. (pp. 187-188)

Taking into account that dialect in performance is inevitably always an incomplete picture of the real-world variety, its authenticity depends on acceptance. As a result, performed dialect is conferred authenticity, and success, if readers/audience/linguists accept it as authentic even when they know that it is not authentic in any strict sense of the word. In line with this, Leech and Short (2007) argue that there must be a "contract of good faith" between writer and reader where they both agree to accept that the representation of dialect is authentic (p. 127). Authenticity is negotiated between writer and reader.

Another scholar who advocates for a post-authenticity approach is Leigh (2011). He contends that, from the mid-19th century onwards, authenticity has been constructed through "extratextual transactions between writers and readers", each of whom relies on the other (p. 41). Confidence seems therefore necessary for literary dialect to be considered authentic. Nevertheless, he believes that authenticity cannot be dependent on confidence and needs to be measured empirically and objectively. In order to do this, Leigh uses computer scripts to analyse quantitatively the non-standard language employed in different examples of literary dialect.

In the present dissertation, the authenticity of several literary and telecinematic performances of NIrE accents is examined from two different points of view. One perspective is that of the sociolinguist, and the other is the readers/audience's standpoint. While, as mentioned above, analysis of the authenticity of performed language has traditionally concentrated on the point of view of the linguist, who is seen as the most legitimate and reliable judge, it seems necessary to acknowledge that the readers/audience are also legitimate critics. For this reason, an experiment has been designed for collecting

information on how authentic people in NI think performed NIrE accents are. This perceived authenticity is then compared to my assessment of the authenticity of the accent performances or, produced authenticity, which is done using Ives' (1971) procedure (the produced authenticity of the representations is discussed in Section 5.3.3.1.). This comparison makes it possible to know the extent to which linguist and readers/audience agree on how authentic the performances of the NIrE accent are. Finally, it must be noted that, even though the produced authenticity of performed dialect is evaluated in terms of whether the features that are included are found in the real-world variety, following therefore the traditional method, the ratings on perceived authenticity that are presented in this dissertation are subjective and can be questioned.

4.2.4. Studies of performed Irish English in literary English

Most research on the representation of Irish English in literary fiction has been concerned with assessing the validity of the literary dialect on the basis of authenticity. Sullivan (1980) uses evidence from plays written between 1600 and 1950 to claim that literary dialect can provide valuable insight into real-world varieties. He shows how a meticulous analysis of the representation of IrE in drama enables the reconstruction of Irish English and the study of its development over time. More precisely, Sullivan finds out that the Irish language seems to have had more influence on IrE lexis and phonology at the start of the bilingual period in Ireland and on IrE syntax at a later stage. Two other scholars who explore the written portrayal of IrE are Dolan (1984) and McCafferty (2005, 2009). Dolan (1984) concentrates on two plays by a single author, namely Samuel Beckett. He shows that Beckett is able to accurately represent IrE by using syntactical and lexical features. Meanwhile, McCafferty (2005) reviews the work of William Carleton and examines two grammatical features that are the *plural verbal -s* and the *be after -ING* construction. Moreover, in order to prove the validity of literary dialect for the study of language contact and change, McCafferty carries out a quantitative comparison of Carleton's literary dialect with letters written by a man from Carleton's same area and of the same social class. He concludes by arguing that comparing literary dialect with other written records where dialect might have been represented is "the only reliable way to measure the validity of literary dialect" (p. 354). In a similar vein to McCafferty, Amador-Moreno (2002) validates Patrick MacGill's representation of Donegal English in his novels. However, she does not compare McGill's literary dialect with letters from the same period and instead, relies on scholarly research done on the dialect spoken in

Donegal. Amador-Moreno (2002) and McCafferty (2005, 2009) are the first to thoroughly analyse the performance of NIrE in literary fiction even though other researchers have done a little too (see Cesiri, 2012; Corrigan, 1996; Taniguchi, 1972). Kirk (1997b) is conscious that there is a dearth of research on this topic and suggests the compilation of a corpus of literary texts that contain representations of NIrE. While the present study does not involve compiling a corpus, it nevertheless seeks to contribute to filling that existing knowledge gap in research on the NIrE dialect.

Apart from her doctoral dissertation on MacGill, Amador-Moreno (2012, 2015) has also examined the representation of IrE in novels by the Irish writer Paul Howard. Her analysis of Howard's use of the discourse markers *like* (2012, 2015) and *roysh* (2015) and of the constructions *be like*, *go* and *be there* (2015) demonstrates that literary dialect can yield useful information about the pragmatics of IrE. Continuing with the study of Howard's writings, Amador-Moreno and Terrazas-Calero (2017) explore how Howard employs some discourse markers such as *yeah no* and the intensifying *so* in three novels. They find out that the former is a new feature which Howard parodies. With regard to the latter, they notice that the use of intensifying *so* is preferred by characters who are female, young and, above all, Southside Dubliners. It is important to mention, though, that, as Amador-Moreno and Terrazas-Calero constantly highlight, the existence of this variation in real-life Dublin English needs to be confirmed through comparison of Howard's literary dialect with spoken IrE. What is most interesting about Amador-Moreno's research is that she applies corpus linguistics tools to the study of dialect in literary fiction. One of the first scholars to implement this method is Cohen Minnick (2001, 2007) who advocates that a proper approach to literary dialect should combine linguistic methodology and literary criticism. She reacts against criticism of literary dialect which, she observes, frequently hinges on "impressionistic reactions to how the representations of speech look on the page" (p. xiii), and conducts an empirical, quantitative analysis of some instances of African American literary dialect that is then complemented with some qualitative literary interpretations. Furthermore, according to Cohen Minnick, the use of corpus linguistics tools makes it possible to ascertain if the representation of the dialect is authentic. Even though she is not exclusively concerned with authenticity, she understands that this issue cannot be disregarded and states that "[t]he best practitioners of literary dialect create effects that are linguistically and artistically believable" (p. 33).

While, as noted above, authenticity has been a key topic within the field of literary dialect, and of performed dialect more generally, a few studies of IrE in literary fiction

have tried to move beyond the idea that literary dialect must be analysed in relation to its real-world counterpart. Taniguchi (1972), for example, went some way towards dismissing authenticity by postulating that literary dialect not only is but also must be different from dialects in real life. Connell (2014) goes one step further claiming that literary dialect must be seen as a "discrete language variety" and that "only by analizing literary dialect outside its relationship to real-life linguistic varieties can a more thorough understanding of the form and function of literary dialect be gained" (p. 45). Using corpus linguistics Connell investigates the representation of IrE in 20th-century Abbey theatre plays. Her findings support the claim that those plays share, to a greater or lesser extent, a linguistic style that is characterised by the presence of many IrE phonological and syntactic features.

4.2.5. Studies of performed Irish English in telecinematic fiction

Recent research has turned its attention to performed IrE in audiovisual media. Despite the change of medium, research on the portrayal of IrE in telecinematic fiction resembles the aforementioned studies on IrE literary dialect since most scholars use corpus linguistics tools and consider the notion of authenticity. The most prolific researcher in this field is Walshe who has investigated the representation of IrE in films (2009, 2016, 2017) and in a TV show (2011). He is a strong advocate of the validity of performed dialect as a source of information on naturally-occurring dialect. In his research on Irish cinema (2009, 2016, 2017), he records the IrE features that appear in a corpus of Irish films and compares his findings with data from the spoken component of ICE*: Ireland* [8] and from academic literature on IrE. When comparing performed IrE in films with IrE in the real world, he identifies similarities in terms of the occurrence of dialectal features and their regional distribution. These similarities allow him to validate the study of performed dialect for linguistic research. In his paper on the Irish sitcom *Father Ted* (2011), Walshe uses the same corpus linguistics methodology to examine which grammatical, lexical and discourse features of IrE are portrayed in the TV show. The conclusion at which he arrives is that salient features are the most frequently represented. This prompts Walshe to point out that, as indicated in Section 4.2.4., salience is a factor that influences the representation of dialect in fiction (ibid., p. 127). In addition to this,

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[8] *ICE* stands for *International Corpus of English*, a corpus that comprises a set of subcorpora, each of which consists of a collection of spoken and written language samples of a World English variety. *ICE-Ireland* is one of those subcorpora and it contains many written and spoken samples of Irish English.

there is the finding that different types of features serve different functions. While features of grammar and discourse contribute to endowing the sitcom with realism, the dialectal lexicon produces a comic effect (ibid., p. 139). Finally, he argues against those who have criticised the sitcom for containing lots of Stage Irish features and contends that the language in *Father Ted* mirrors some aspects of IrE.

Walshe's research is characterised by a focus on the representation of grammatical, lexical and discourse features of SIrE in telecinematic fiction. The present dissertation builds on his work and complements it since I deal with pronunciation, which has been paid less attention by Walshe than grammar and lexis, and with NIrE, a dialect he has not analysed as much as the southern variety. Moreover, this study also differs from Walshe's work in that it is concerned not only with dialectal features that are represented in fiction but also, and especially, with the perception of and reaction to fictional portrayals of NIrE. Thus, rather than compiling a corpus, I have selected a few examples of performed NIrE which have been incorporated into a questionnaire designed to gather information on how people in NI perceive fictional representations of their accents.

Apart from Walshe, there are other researchers who have also analysed the use of IrE in telecinematic fiction. One of them is Palma-Fahey (2015) who, drawing on Walshe, endorses the validity of performed dialect as a source of linguistic information. She delves into the use of the pragmatic markers *well* and *you know* in *Fair City*, an Irish soap opera. In order to do this, Palma-Fahey builds her own corpus with episodes from the soap opera and then compares the results from her corpus with two corpora of IrE, namely the *Limerick Corpus of Irish English* (*LCIE*) and the *Corpus of Fictional Irish English* (*CoFIE*), a corpus made up of five soap operas. This comparison shows parallels between Palma-Fahey's corpus of performed IrE and *LCIE*, a corpus of naturally-occurring spoken IrE. She discovers that the markers *well* and *you know* have a similar frequency in both corpora, a finding that "lends weight to the argument for looking at media fiction in order to capture patterns of spoken language representation of specific language varieties" (p. 356). In addition to her study of *Fair City,* she has a paper together with Bróna Murphy (Murphy & Palma-Fahey, 2018) on the portrayal of the stereotype of the "Irish Mammy" in the TV show *Mrs Brown's Boys*. Using corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, they find out that the traditional image of the Irish mum is both reinforced and challenged in the show.

Even more relevant to the present study are the two studies by Vaughan and

Moriarty (2018, 2020). Their importance lies in the fact that they examine not only the performances but also the audience's responses to them. In Vaughan and Moriarty (2018), they collect audience responses to the comedy of the *Rubberbandits*[9] found in newspaper and online articles, YouTube comments and Facebook posts (p. 22). Their analysis of those responses shows that viewers validate the *Rubberbandits*' performances through their reiteration of words and catchphrases that the duo uses. Furthermore, this study concludes that the way this artistic couple uses language serves to index the stereotype of the "knacker"[10], while at the same time parodying the link that exists between an inner-city Limerick voice and the "knacker". In Vaughan and Moriarty (2020), the performance of IrE and, more particularly, Cork Irish English, in the YouTube cartoons known as *Martin's Life* is the object of research. Here, they compile a corpus of audience's responses in the form of YouTube comments. Looking at this corpus, Vaughan and Moriarty notice that two main types of comment can be identified. One of them consists in "declarations of authenticity and/or familiarity, with some explicit comments relating to the 'Irishness' of the identities on display" (ibid., p. 211). As for the second type of comments, it shows evidence of how members of the audience use some of the features portrayed in *Martin's Life*. Examples of this evidence are "direct quotation or reference to performance" and "creative re-stylisation" (ibid.). Thus, members of the audience are able to perceive how the language employed in the cartoon indexes the personae of the "Irish Mammy" and the "Returned Immigrant". In the same vein as Vaughan and Moriarty's studies, audiences' responses are explored in the present study. However, I use fieldwork to gather responses rather than analysing comments posted on social media.

Some scholars (Kelly-Holmes, 2005; O'Sullivan & Kelly-Holmes, 2017; O'Sullivan, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020) have paid attention to portrayals of IrE in a different form of mass media fiction, radio advertising. Kelly-Holmes (2005) analyses five advertisements of *Brennan's Bread*, a well-known brand in Ireland, and shows how their intertextuality, literary references, use of IrE features and the topics they deal with all contribute to creating a shared cultural context that Irish audiences are familiar with and that guarantees successful communication. In a different paper, O'Sullivan and Kelly-

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[9] The *Rubberbandits* are a comedy duo from the city of Limerick in the mid-west of Ireland. They have created hip-hop songs, sketches and even a mockumentary called *The Rubberbandits Guide to Everything* (2016).

[10] The derogatory term *knacker* is the Irish equivalent of the American *white trash* and the British *chav* (Vaughan & Moriarty, 2018, p. 35). A knacker is a young individual from a lower-class neighbourhood where violence is rife. They are associated with specific clothes, behaviour and accents.

Holmes (2017) use a corpus of 160 radio adverts broadcast in 1977, 1987, 1997 and 2007 to investigate the extent to which vernacular IrE has been represented in radio advertisement over the course of this 30-year period. Their results indicate that vernacular Irish English has been used increasingly since 1977. Moreover, they observe that, even though the representation of vernacular Irish forms in the media can easily result in the stigmatisation of those forms, its portrayal in the analysed ads serves three purposes: to promote metalinguistic reflexivity, to place value on vernacular IrE and to challenge the standard language ideology. The aforementioned corpus of radio ads provides the basis for further research carried out by O'Sullivan (2015, 2016, 2018, 2020). In the first of these publications (O'Sullivan, 2015), she explores some pragmatic markers characteristic of IrE. Her findings suggest that the use of those markers in radio advertising is similar to their use in real-life Irish English speech and that they index Irishness. The rest of her research (2016, 2018, 2020) concentrates on Advanced Dublin English, a standard variety of IrE that, as O'Sullivan reveals, has recently become the most widely represented variety in her corpus of radio ads. Furthermore, she points out that Advanced Dublin English has substituted Standard Southern British English as the language of authority and power due to the fact that people in Ireland do not identify with the latter variety. With regard to identity construction, Advanced Dublin English indexes sophistication, modernity and cosmopolitanism (O'Sullivan, 2018, p. 77) and "represents a more hybrid identity" which combines a local Irish with a global identity (O'Sullivan, 2020, p. 247).

4.3. Language perception

4.3.1. Language attitudes

Preston (1999b) designs a diagram shaped like a triangle to explain that the study of language can be approached from three different perspectives (see Figure 4.1.). While most research has concentrated on the *a* vertex, that is, on how language is produced, Preston, following Hoenigswald (1966), claims that attention must also be paid to language perception, which encompasses vertexes *b* and *c*. The analysis of "how people react to what is said" is the task of language attitude research, a field that emerged in the 1970s when sociolinguists, especially Labov, began to understand that attitudes to language could help to explain language variation and change. Vertex *c*, on the other hand, is the concern of folk linguistics, a field that is explained in Section 4.3.2.

Figure 4.1.

Three approaches to language data (adapted from Preston, 1999b, p. xxiii)
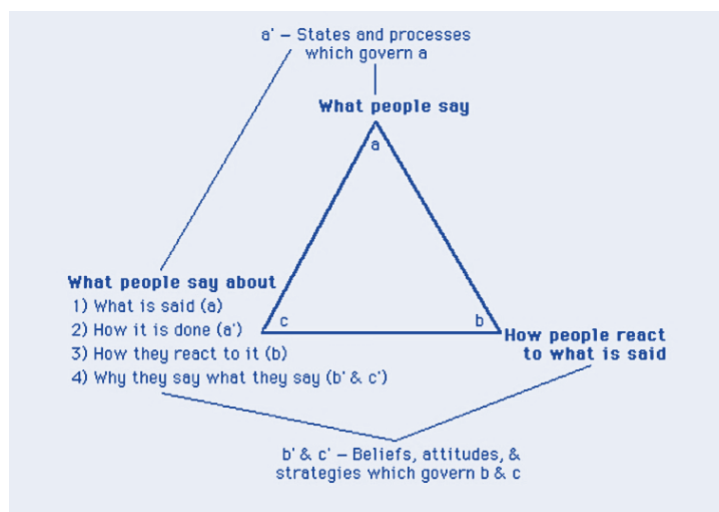
The field of language attitudes has many possible objects of study (see Baker, 1992, p. 29 for a list) but this dissertation concentrates on attitudes towards dialectal variation and, more specifically, towards fictional representations of NIrE varieties. In so doing, it brings forward a new approach inasmuch as research on attitudes to dialects has usually employed dialect samples which resemble the real-life variety as closely as possible, rather than fragments of performed dialect which is the type of stimuli used in this study (the stimuli are described in Section 5.3.3.).

Regarding the methods employed in language attitude research, Garrett (2010) distinguishes three main approaches: the "societal treatment", the "indirect" and the "direct" approach (p. 37). As Ryan et al. (1988) point out, the former comprises "[a]ll techniques which do not involve explicitly asking respondents for theirs views or reactions" (p. 1068). One of those techniques is ethnographic observation (some studies of linguistic ethnography are Pietikäinen et al., 2016; and Kircher & Zipp, 2022), which typically consists in the researcher's immersion into and/or participation in the everyday life of the speech community that is going to be examined. By observing how individuals behave and by taking part in social practices such as daily conversations, scholars can gather useful data about beliefs related to language that are shared by members of a community. Another social treatment technique is discourse or text analysis (some studies that implement this technique are Fishman's (1966) examination of policies governing language use in the United States; Schmied's (1991) work on language attitudes discourse in the African press; and Kramer's (1974) analysis of the representation of male and

female speech in magazines). This technique involves analysing written and/or spoken texts. Although many studies have adopted a societal treatment approach, they have been frequently ignored in favour of direct and indirect methods (Garrett et al., 2003; Kircher & Zipp, 2022; Ryan & Giles, 1982). The reason for this may have to do with the fact that societal treatment research is seen as "too informal" and as "a preliminary for more rigorous sociolinguistic and social psychological studies" (Garrett et al., 2003, pp. 15-16). On the contrary, the indirect and direct approaches are considered more scientifically rigorous, mainly because they are quantitative, and have therefore received more attention.

4.3.1.1. Indirect methods

The quintessential indirect method in language attitudes research is the *matched-guise technique* devised by Lambert et al. (1960, 1965). The stimuli used in this method are usually recordings of a speaker reading the same text in a number of accents or "guises" as Lambert et al. (ibid.) call them. The indirect nature of the matched-guise technique is based on the fact that respondents are told that the stimuli record the voices of different speakers with different accents, when the truth is that there is only one speaker using a variety of accents. Moreover, participants are unaware that the researchers are measuring language attitudes. One of the advantages of this technique is that, according to Lambert and his fellow researchers, it makes it possible to gain access to informants' "private attitudes". These more "private" or "uncensored" attitudes (Lambert et al., 1965, p. 90) are more implicit beliefs that individuals might not be conscious of or that they are not willing to disclose. This type of attitudes, Lambert et al. (ibid.) suggest, cannot be obtained by the use of a direct method which is more likely to result in informants saying what they think the researcher wants to hear.

One of the first studies to implement the matched-guise technique was Lambert et al. (1960). They explored the reactions of 18-year-old students in Montreal to the English and French languages. Half of those students had English as their first language, whereas the other half spoke French. All these informants listened to 10 recordings, 5 in French and 5 in English, which they had to rate in terms of 14 personality traits using 6-point scales. The researchers deceived informants into believing that each of the 10 voices belonged to a different speaker. However, some of the recordings were produced by the same speaker. Lambert et al. selected 4 English-French bilinguals, each of whom was recorded twice, one reading a text in English and a second time reading the same text in

French. The two remaining recordings were filler voices. Their findings showed that both English-speaking and French-speaking informants had a more favourable attitude towards English speakers.

A similar study was carried out a few years later in Tel-Aviv (Lambert et al., 1965). Two main languages are spoken in this Israeli city, namely Hebrew and Arabic, and Lambert and his colleagues investigated the attitudes of Jewish and Arab teenagers towards the Arabic language and two varieties of Hebrew. For the stimuli, two types of bilinguals were employed: Hebrew-Arabic bilinguals and speakers of the two dialects of Hebrew. Those stimuli were then evaluated by the informants in terms of the speaker's personality. One of the main trends observed in this study was the following:

> the Jewish and Arab subjects responded to representatives of one another's group in mutually antagonistic manners in the sense that both samples of subjects saw their own group as more honest, friendly, good-hearted, and more desirable as relatives through marriage. (ibid., p. 87)

Apart from the matched-guise technique, these scholars used attitude scales of the kind employed in studies that have adopted a direct approach. The reason why they added this type of scales is because they sought to ascertain whether the results yielded by the direct method matched those obtained from the matched-guise technique. Correlation analyses revealed that findings from the direct and indirect methods did not usually coincide. Thus, thinking carefully about the type of method that is going to be implemented in language attitudes research seems essential. Lambert opts for the matched-guise technique since it can provide insight into private attitudes which he implicitly considers to be more valuable than explicitly-stated beliefs.

Although Lambert et al. (1960, 1965) stress the benefits of the matched-guise technique, this indirect method is not without its disadvantages. One of the weaknesses mentioned by Garrett et al. (2003) is the lack of authenticity of the recorded voices, which can be inauthentic in a number of ways. Their inauthenticity might be due to the highly controlled nature of the voices which must be distinguished from each other only by the accent. Researchers who use this method are usually interested in how respondents rate different accents on several personality traits. Other differences that might exist between the voices such as intonation, speech rate and voice quality are removed so that they do not influence informants' ratings. Even though the elimination of those features of speech

may achieve the researcher's intended effect on the informants by getting them to focus on the accent, it produces somewhat artificial voices. This presents a problem as it raises the question of whether the attitudes to these unnatural voices correspond to attitudes to real-world accents.

A further issue with regard to the authenticity of the voices has to do with "mimicking" (Garrett, 2010; Garrett et al., 2003). The use of a single speaker to produce several accents in matched-guise studies jeopardises their authenticity. In research where bilinguals are employed to read a text in two different languages, the risk of sounding inauthentic is low since bilingual speakers have a native-like command of two languages. Nonetheless, when a single speaker is asked to simulate a considerable number of accents, chances are that some of the imitations will be defective. This is particularly problematic if participants perceive accents which are being mimicked to be fake. Despite that, inaccurate representations can be authentic enough for some informants.

Another shortcoming of the matched-guise technique is that it does not provide information as to whether informants "identify each voice as representing the area that the researchers themselves believe it to represent" (Garrett, 2010, p. 58). Preston (1989) becomes aware of this and proposes that studies about accent varieties should include a question aimed at finding out where the respondents believe the speakers come from. Taking Preston's reflections on board, the questionnaire used for the present study contains the question "Where in Northern Ireland would you say that the speaker is from?" (Chapter 5).

Furthermore, the texts used in research that implements the indirect method can also pose a problem. Even though scholars try to use passages that are as "factually neutral" (Garrett et al., 2003, p. 60) as possible, there are growing doubts as to whether such a type of text exists. Whatever text a researcher chooses, its interpretation will vary depending on the informants' social factors. Moreover, it is most likely that the passage will carry some kind of connotation. This drawback and the other three mentioned above are explained at length in Garrett et al. (2003) and Garrett (2010) together with some further disadvantages.

The matched-guise technique has also been criticised for overlooking code-switching and style-shifting (Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970; Soukup, 2013) even if switching from a formal style to a more casual code, or from one dialect or language to another, is a common practice among speakers. Depending on the context (place, interlocutors, topic, etc.), individuals use a specific code, dialect or language. However, the recorded speech

employed in the matched-guise method is devoid of context and features a single style, dialect or language. This decontextualization impedes studying the social significance of code-switching.

As a result of all this criticism, many scholars decided to modify the technique and adapt it according to their needs. Some of them made changes to the stimuli, while some others adjusted the attitudinal measures (see Garrett et al., 2003). Modifications made by scholars within the former group include using several speakers for the voice recordings rather than just one (this is known as the *verbal-guise technique*), asking speakers to produce spontaneous speech instead of the traditional reading of a text (Huygens & Vaughan, 1983), presenting the stimuli as face-to-face interaction as a substitute of audio recordings made in a phonetics laboratory (Bourhis & Giles, 1976; Giles & Farrar, 1979), and having speakers who show accommodation towards or diversion from their interlocutors' style (Ball et al., 1984). As for the modified measures, some researchers (for example, Bourhis et al., 1973; Paltridge & Giles, 1984) have carried out a preliminary study aimed at eliciting adjectives that are then used in the semantic differential scales, a measurement instrument introduced by Osgood et al. (1957) which consists in bipolar adjective scales. These authors refuse to use adjectives that have been commonly employed in previous attitude research on the basis that they might not be "meaningful and salient" (Garrett et al., 2003, p. 56) to a particular group of informants. The elicitation method allows them to ensure that informants find the adjective scales significant. Other researchers, however, have preferred to implement behavioural measures rather than to use attitudinal scales (e.g., Giles & Farrar, 1979; Kristiansen, 1997).

4.3.1.2. Direct methods

The other main approach to the study of language attitudes is the direct method. Unlike the matched-guise technique, the direct approach does not involve any type of deception. Respondents are aware that they are evaluating language. That is the reason why this approach has been said to tap into respondents' public or explicit attitudes, that is, attitudes that individuals report or show having when in the company of other people. Thus, this type of attitudes can be defined as socially desirable attitudes, which are based on the belief that people have a tendency to accommodate to their interlocutors and say what they think is expected of them. Explicit or overt attitudes are distinguished from implicit or covert attitudes. Although some studies have found correlation between

explicit and implicit attitudes (see for example Giles, 1970; Labov, 1972), scholars such as Pharao and Kristiansen (2019) maintain that whereas the former are governed by "a controlled (deliberative)" cognitive process, implicit attitudes are automatically activated (pp. 1-2). Furthermore, they place value on the latter because they claim that implicit attitudes are responsible for sociolinguistic change.

Regarding the data collection techniques used in direct-approach studies, questionnaires and interviews are the most frequent. Questionnaires are commonly made up of attitude-rating scales which can be Bogardus, Guttman, Thurstone, Likert, semantic-differential scales or any combination of these five (Oppenheim, 1992 provides a detailed description of semantic differentials). I will concentrate here on Likert and semantic-differential scales and explain their advantages and disadvantages.

Likert scales consist of statements which respondents have to rate on a scale that goes from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Some of those statements are positive and some others, negative but all of them outline attitudes. The number of points of a Likert scale has always been a matter of debate. The first Likert scale (Likert, 1932) had five points which were *strongly agree*, *agree*, *uncertain*, *disagree* and *strongly disagree*. In subsequent research, though, a 7-point scale has frequently been favoured (see, for example, Coupland & Bishop, 2007; and Giles, 1970). The reason why some scholars prefer seven points is because they allow for "increased variance" (Garret et al. 2003, p. 41). 5-point and 7-point scales seem to be the most popular in language attitudes studies, but some researchers have opted for even-numbered scales (4-6-8-point scales) in order to avoid the ambiguity of the mid-point. Even though the mid-point is intended for informants who are neutral towards a given statement, its interpretation is not as simple as it may seem. Apart from indicating neutrality, choosing the mid-point of a scale can be a sign that informants have no interest in whatever topic is suggested by a statement or that they know nothing about the topic so that they have not yet formed an attitude towards it. A further interpretation of the mid-point is, as explained by Oppenheim (1992), "the presence of both strongly positive and strongly negative responses which would more or less balance each other" (p. 200). In spite of the difficulty of ascertaining its meaning, a mid-point is often used in attitude scales. When there is no middle point, respondents have no choice but to take a stance even if they are neutral. Many scholars refuse to force respondents to choose a side of the scale and prefer to employ odd-numbered scales.

The ambiguous interpretation of the mid-point is one of the disadvantages of the

Likert scale but there are some others. As Llamas and Watt (2014) point out, this type of attitude measurement can be influenced by the "central tendency" bias (p. 612), meaning that informants tend to lean towards the central part of the scale while rejecting the ends because they consider them to be too radical. Another drawback is the fact that Likert scales are ordinal and the intervals between the response categories *strongly agree*, *agree*, *uncertain*, *disagree* and *strongly disagree* cannot be measured (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 200). Finally, the Likert scale has also been criticised for the arbitrariness involved in deciding the number of points or distinct categories it will consist of. Whatever the number of categories, informants can feel that the scale does not allow them to convey their attitudes as accurately as they could (Llamas & Watt, 2014, p. 612).

It is not all disadvantages, nonetheless, and it is now time to move on to the strengths of the Likert scale. First of all, as compared to other types of scale, creating a Likert scale is easy. The researcher only has to think about statements that reveal the attitudes they want to investigate and to decide how many points their scales will have. A second advantage is the reliability and internal consistency of Likert scales. They are reliable because they provide informants with a variety of answer choices which results in more precise responses (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 200). As for their internal consistency, the use of more than one statement for each attitude makes it possible to compare the answers for all the statements that correspond to one single attitude and to check that they are consistent with one another (Baker, 1992, p. 17). Moreover, statements which do not establish a direct link with an attitude and may therefore be difficult to interpret can be useful in "enabling subtler and deeper ramifications of an attitude to be explored" (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 200).

In the 1950s, Osgood and his fellow researchers devised a new attitude measurement instrument called the *semantic differential*, a 7-point bipolar scale (Osgood et al., 1957). In contrast with the Likert scale, the semantic differential uses concepts rather than statements. Those concepts are evaluated using bipolar scales where one pole is labelled with one adjective or noun and the other pole, with its opposite. The rationale behind the use of concepts rests on their generality and simplicity. As Agheyisi and Fishman (1970) set forth, Osgood et al. resolved to employ concepts arguing that:

a special generality is captured in the measures that focus directly on the unqualified objects, because it is clear that the focal object or concept stimulated the scored response, rather than any other object or concept introduced through

the question or statement. (p. 148)

As opposed to statements whose wording might bias informants' responses, concepts do not create confusion as to how to interpret their answers. In addition, their generality makes them suitable for use with respondents from different regions and cultures, which allows researchers to compare findings from studies carried out in different parts of the world. This is not to say that the very same concepts and scales can be employed with informants of every culture. Concepts can vary but, as long as they are semantically similar, comparison between them is possible according to Osgood and his colleagues. As regards scales, some scholars elicit adjectives from a pilot group, thus gathering a pool of concepts from which they choose the ones that will be included in their final survey. This guarantees that the scales that they use are meaningful to their groups of subjects.

Apart from their generality and comparability, the simplicity of semantic differential scales is a further advantage. This type of scales is easy to fill in and can also be completed more quickly than Likert scales since they have less text, and the use of bipolar adjectives/nouns makes them very intuitive. Fast completion is usually sought after when it comes to scales because social psychology and language research tends to favour attitudes that are offered subconsciously. If informants take a lot of time to consider their response, it is more likely that they will become aware of what they are being asked for and subsequently influenced by the social desirability bias (Cargile, 2002). This bias refers to respondents' tendency to provide an answer that they think the researcher will approve of. Furthermore, Henerson et al. (1987) suggest that the semantic differential is good for gathering "respondents' general impression about the attitude object" (p. 89).

Notwithstanding its benefits, the semantic differential, like any other measurement technique, also has limitations. On the one hand, choosing the adjectives or nouns that are going to be employed in the construction of the bipolar scales can be difficult since the adjectives/nouns need to be gradable and to have an opposite (Garrett et al., 2003; Oppenheim, 1992). Adjectives and nouns that do not meet these requirements cannot be used in the semantic differential even though they might yield relevant information. To complicate the task of selecting adjectives/nouns further, the scales that the researcher chooses must be the same for all the concepts that they want to study. This poses problems of "relevance" and "applicability" (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 239) because an adjective/noun that is relevant and applicable to a concept may not be so to others. On the

other hand, although Osgood et al. (1957) seem to assert that the adjectives/nouns employed in semantic differential scales mean the same to everyone in every context, there is evidence to suggest that this should not be assumed. That is why care must be taken when deciding to use scales employed in previous research. Scholars who want to do that should make sure that the scales are appropriate for their sample of respondents and for the purpose of their research. A good way to guarantee the relevance and appropriateness of the scales is to carry out a preliminary study where adjectives/nouns are elicited from a group of respondents with similar characteristics to the final sample. One last disadvantage, and one that is closely related to the previous one, is the fact that "the over-reliance on […] scales and dimensions from previously published work may restrict the evaluative picture that emerges from language attitudes research" (Garrett et al., 2003, p. 66). Using the same techniques will lead to the same old results in most cases. It is only by implementing new methods or combining old ones that research will move forward.

Apart from the Likert and semantic differential scales, the *Visual Analog scale* (VAS) also deserves some attention since this is one of the types of data elicitation techniques that I have used in my questionnaire together with semantic differentials (Chapter 5). The VAS is a horizontal or vertical line or bar whose two extremes are labelled with a word, phrase or some visual element (see Figure 4.2.). The scale is preceded by a statement or concept that respondents have to rate by placing a mark wherever they want on the line.

Figure 4.2.

Example of a Visual Analog Scale (adapted from Llamas & Watt, 2014, p. 614)

If the questionnaire is online, a slider that informants can move to a point in the line can be employed. The VAS is very similar to the semantic differential in that they consist of two extremes which are labelled with opposing words or phrases. However, there is one main difference between the two: whereas the latter is made up of a number of points or boxes, the former consists of a continuous line. The lack of a fixed number of response answer options in VAS translates into "greater freedom of expression" which allows for

"fine-grained measurement of the evaluation of the attitude object" (Llamas & Watt, 2014, p. 612). This is the main reason why Visual Analog scales are incorporated to the questionnaire used for the present study (see Appendix 4). Moreover, the use of a continuous line results in ratio or interval data which can be subjected to more varied and more powerful statistical tests than ordinal data, that is, the type of data produced by Likert and semantic differential scales. Regarding reliability, Aitken (1969) notes the similarity between the results of different studies where the VAS is employed, therefore proving that this scale is reliable.

Notwithstanding its advantages, the VAS has been rarely used in sociolinguistic research. Two of the few sociolinguists who have implemented this scale are Llamas and Watt (2014). They employ two variations of the VAS in their research project *Accent and Identity on the Scottish/English Border* (*AISEB*). One of them is the *Attitudinal Analog Scale* (AAS) and the other, the *Relational Analog Scale* (RAS). The AAS is used with statements which informants have to rate in terms of agreement/disagreement. The line for those statements is anchored by *disagree* and *agree* at the left and right ends respectively. Meanwhile, the RAS is a least important/most important continuum on which respondents have to place several identity labels (Scottish, English, Borderer, European and Berwicker). Using the same scale for all those labels enables to compare the ratings for each of them. Llamas and Watt (ibid.) show the benefits of using the VAS and, in so doing, encourage scholars working in the field of language attitudes to implement this technique.

4.3.2. Perceptual dialectology

The overarching field of language perception encompasses language attitudes research (vertex *b* of Preston's triangle reproduced in Figure 4.1.), which is outlined above, and folk linguistics studies (vertex *c* in Figure 4.1.), which are surveyed in this section. Folk linguistics is concerned with what non-linguists, usually referred to as the "folk", think about languages, dialects and their speakers (for more information, see Long & Preston, 2002; Niedzielsky & Preston, 2000; and Preston, 1989). Many scholars interested in folk's perceptions have carried out perceptual dialectological studies (Inoue, 1999; Lucek & Garnett, 2020; Montgomery, 2007, 2016; Williams et al., 1996). Perceptual dialectology is defined by Preston (1999b) as sub-branch of folk linguistics (p. xxiv). However, more recent researchers classify it as a quantitative and direct method (see Garrett et al., 2003: Garrett, 2010; Montgomery, 2007; Kircher & Zipp, 2022). Following

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the latter scholars' view, this thesis reviews the most common techniques as used in research on perceptual dialectology.

The first studies to explore folk beliefs were carried out in the Netherlands and Japan. The Dutch scholars (Weijnen, 1946; Rensink, 1955; Daan, 1970; Kremer, 1984) use what is known as the *little arrow method* to find out about the perceptual dialect boundaries identified by people in the Netherlands. This method consists in asking respondents to indicate in which towns or areas a dialect similar to their own is spoken. Similarity between towns is shown through the drawing of arrows. On the other hand, the Japanese approach concentrates on difference rather than similarity. Thus, researchers request informants from a particular area to classify the dialects spoken in other neighbouring towns as *not different*, *a little different*, *quite different* or *mostly incomprehensible* (Preston, 1999b, p. xxx). Two scholars who implemented this technique were Sibata (1959) and Grootaers (1959) but, on seeing that there was little correspondence between dialect boundaries established on the basis of language production and dialect boundaries as perceived by Japanese non-linguists, they resolved that perceptual dialect boundaries had no linguistic value. They failed to understand that folk beliefs are valuable in themselves even if they do not coincide with linguistic findings.

Although the work of the Dutch and Japanese precursors paved the way for the development of this area of research, it was Preston (1982a, 1986, 1999b, 2002) who established perceptual dialectology as a field in its own right. In his *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology Vol. 1* he lays the foundations for the field and starts by justifying why folk beliefs are worth investigating. He provides three reasons, the first of which is that those beliefs "are a part of the folklore, ethnography, and cultural anthropology of groups" (Preston, 1999b, p. xxiv) and therefore deserve study. This justification applies not only to folk beliefs about language but to all types of non-expert knowledge. Secondly, Preston refers to the relationship between folk beliefs and expert knowledge and emphasises the influence that the beliefs of non-linguists can have on language attitudes. Finally, there is a practical reason why it is useful to know about folk beliefs. Researchers who work with lay people must be aware of those beliefs "if they plan to intervene successfully" (ibid.).

Preston (1988, 1999b) devises five data-collection procedures which are *draw-a-map*, *degree of difference*, *correct and pleasant*, *dialect identification* and *qualitative data* (Preston, 1999b, p. xxxiv). The *draw-a-map* technique, which Preston borrowed from

scholars in the field of cultural geography (Ladd, 1970; Orleans, 1973), entails giving informants a blank or slightly detailed map of a country or region where they have to draw all the dialect areas they can identify. The hand-drawn maps collected are then computerised and a composite map is created. A composite map results from overlaying the hand-drawn maps of all respondents and makes it possible to summarise the general findings and to draw "perceptual isoglosses" (Preston, 1999b, p. 361). For the second task, i.e., *degree of difference*, informants have to rate the dialects of different regions according to how much they differ from their home variety. A 4-point scale including the labels *same*, *a little different*, *different* and *unintelligibly different* is used in this technique which reminds of the Japanese approach to perceptual dialectology explained above. The third technique, referred to as *correct and pleasant* and inherited from Gould and White (1986), is also a rating scale which respondents use to indicate the degree of correctness and pleasantness that they ascribe to different regional varieties.

As for *dialect identification*, Preston (1982a, 1986, 1988) sees the need to introduce this task because he believes that it is important to know not only if non-linguists are able to perceive linguistic variation, but also how they perceive it. Moreover, he criticises language attitude research for not including this technique. Lacking the question "where do you think the speaker is from" in voice-rating tasks of the type used in language attitude studies makes it difficult to interpret the informants' responses. Imagine, for example, that a speaker the researcher assumes to have a Yorkshire accent is perceived to sound Geordie by participants. Unless they mention something about the location of the dialect they have listened to, the researcher has no way of knowing if their respondents are rating what they want them to rate. This entails the danger of obtaining invalid data which may lead to wrong conclusions. In order to prevent this from happening, it is important not to take for granted that informants' perceptions will always coincide with the researcher's. Preston (1993) incorporates the dialect identification task for the first time in a study aimed at exploring perceived variation between Southern and Northern dialects in the United States. His respondents are speakers from Indiana and Michigan, and they are given a map with nine locations marked on it, each of which is assigned a letter. The nine locales are Saginaw (Michigan), Coldwater (Michigan), South Bend (Indiana), Muncie (Indiana), New Albany (Indiana), Bowling Green (Kentucky), Nashville (Tennessee), Florence (Alabama) and Dothan (Alabama). Once informants have the maps, they have to listen to nine male speakers and try to identify the area where each of them is from. This identification task shows that Indiana informants distinguish

two major boundaries in the South (one between Kentucky and Tennessee and the other between the latter state and Alabama). Meanwhile, Michigan participants only recognise one major boundary which divides the country into a Southern area that starts in Kentucky and a northern area that stretches from Indiana to Michigan. However, respondents from Michigan place a minor boundary between Muncie and New Albany, two cities in the state of Indiana, one in the northern part and the other further to the south. Thus, as summarised by Preston (1993), whereas "[t]he Indiana respondents have internal southern divisions", "the Michigan respondents have internal northern ones" (p. 46). One possible explanation for this is that the closer people are to a region, the more differences they are able to perceive. With regard to Indiana participants' responses, Preston suggests that the fact that they place no boundary within the northern area but several in the south may be due to linguistic insecurity. This insecurity stems from their need to distinguish themselves from the stigmatised south. Besides, this study allowed Preston to analyse the correspondence between dialect identification and the three other techniques described above. He finds out that results from the different tasks coincide at times but not always and concludes by saying that:

> It is tempting to note, simply, that the identification task shows that respondents hear more differences in areas which are closer to home. […] The other taxonomies, however, reveal that the areas where speech differences are heard as most distinctive do not necessarily correspond to the templates the same respondents have for the localization of such facts as dialect distribution and distinctiveness and for such judgmental considerations as the correctness and pleasantness of varieties. (Preston, 1993, p. 46)

The fifth and last technique proposed by Preston, i.e., *qualitative data*, usually involves informal interviews although participant observation is another possible alternative. Interviews are conducted after respondents have completed the other tasks and they include questions about the tasks and about topics related to them. This technique enables the gathering of qualitative data and can provide information about language production if the researcher records the interviews. Having examined the data obtained from his interviews, Preston (1999b) identifies three trends. One of them is that people seem to become familiar with dialects through face-to-face interaction more than through cultural practices and products or conventional wisdom. Secondly, the folk have difficulty in

pinpointing what features make a dialect different from other varieties. Nonetheless, they are able to effectively mimic some dialects even though their imitations are not necessarily accurate. Finally, the third trend shows that correctness is the most frequently discussed topic in interviews.

Following the thread of research focusing on the folk's perceptions of language (e.g., Leach et al., 2016; Lucek & Garnett, 2020; Montgomery, 2007; Cramer & Montgomery, 2016), this study employs two of Preston's techniques, namely *correct and pleasant* and *dialect identification*, for investigating the perceptions of fictional speech by the Northern Irish folk. These two tasks will be described in detail in Chapter 5.

4.3.3. Studies of language attitudes and perceptual dialectology in Ireland

Having reviewed the general literature on the two main fields of language perception, i.e., language attitudes and perceptual dialectology, which provide a framework for the present study, I shall now concentrate on studies of language perception carried out in Ireland. I first start with research done in the ROI and then move on to NI.

The field of language perception in the Irish context is still in its infancy. Only a few scholars (Edwards, 1977a; Hickey, 2005; Lonergan, 2016; Lucek & Garnett, 2020; Walshe, 2010; White, 2006) have explored language attitudes in Ireland and most of them have chosen Dublin or Dubliners as their object of study. One of the earliest researchers is Edwards (1977a) who, on seeing that many teachers in Dublin schools came from towns and regions outside the capital and therefore had different regional accents, decided to investigate the attitudes of secondary school students from Dublin towards five Irish regional accents: Donegal, Dublin, Cork, Cavan and Galway. He recruited participants from 4 different schools (one working-class, one middle-class and two upper middle-class private schools) in order to find out whether social class, a factor shown to have an influence on language production in Dublin, also shaped responses to different regional varieties. The method Edwards used was the matched-guise technique whereby an actor was recorded performing the five previously mentioned accents. Each of these accents was then evaluated in terms of the attitudinal dimensions of status and attractiveness through the use of 7-point semantic scales. Edwards' findings revealed similar ratings across his four groups of subjects. Thus, the differences found between the dialects produced by these groups did not seem to affect their perception. All informants agreed that the Donegal accent was more *important*, *ambitious*, *industrious* and *intelligent* than the other four accents. The Dublin accent, by contrast, was consistently rated as the least

prestigious of all. Donegal's high status was partly attributed to the industrial revolution and its stronger influence on the north of Ireland than on more southern areas (Edwards, 1977a, p. 284). Finally, Edwards advocated that students' attitudes towards regional accents were worth exploring because of its relevance to teacher-pupil dynamics.

In addition to this study, Edwards has also done research on teachers' perceptions of disadvantaged students' speech in an educational Irish context (Edwards, 1977b, 1979). The concept *disadvantaged students* in Edward's work refers to children from lower-class families and "whose home background and early socialization are such as to make the transition from home to school difficult" (Edwards, 1979, p. 22). Edwards tape recorded the speech of some disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children from several Irish schools and asked some teachers to evaluate them in terms of language competence (including vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, etc.), voice quality, intelligence and of the more personal issue of family's social class. The results of the experiment proved that, as previous research on the topic had found out, disadvantaged students were rated more negatively than non-disadvantaged children. This is despite the fact that teachers seemed to be increasingly aware of the difficulties faced by those students and, most importantly, of the mismatch between disadvantage and lower intelligence. Two other significant findings were that teachers gave more favourable ratings to schoolgirls and that male teachers were less negative in their ratings of disadvantaged students than women.

Drawing on Edwards (1979), Masterson et al. (1983) conducted an experiment aimed at testing whether the accent of the informants and their amount of linguistic experience had any influence on their rating of three Irish dialects, Dublin, rural and standard. The method employed was the verbal-guise technique so that a different speaker was used for each of the twelve recorded stimuli that respondents had to evaluate. Respondents were divided into groups according to the accent they had and the amount of linguistic training they had received. They were requested to rate the stimuli using fifteen 5-point semantic differential scales which incorporated some of the traits (those related to language competence) employed in Edwards' (1977b, 1979) scales as well as some other features such as education, social class, ambition and friendliness. The fifteen scales were subjected to principal components analysis which revealed the existence of two main components that Masterson and his colleagues called *prestige* and *solidarity* and that correspond to Zahn and Hopper's (1985) *superiority* and *attractiveness*. The prestige dimension encompasses not only the scales that have to do with status and educational background as is common in language attitudes studies, but also those that

measure language competence. The reason for this may be that "linguistic skills are seen as leading to social success or alternatively those judged to have high social status (i.e. people considered "educated," "successful," etc.) are automatically assumed to possess such skills" (Masterson et al., 1983, pp. 228-229). The scores for each of the three Irish accents (Dublin, rural and standard) on the prestige and solidarity dimensions showed that while the standard accent was considered the most prestigious, its score on solidarity was the lowest. This is in line with more research on the field of attitudes to accents (see for example Giles, 1971; Hickey, 2005; Sharma et al., 2022). The accent with the highest score on solidarity was the rural accent and Dublin was in between standard and rural on both dimensions (Masterson et al., 1983, p. 225). Regarding the effects of informant's accent and linguistic training on ratings, they were not statistically significant. However, ratings seemed to indicate that people who had received linguistic training had a more favourable attitude towards speech that was perceived as disadvantaged, that is, of a lower social status, as far as prestige was concerned.

Another scholar who has made a significant contribution in more recent years to the advancement of language perception in Ireland is Hickey (2005, 2007), who is well known for his extensive research on IrE. In Hickey (2005), he makes clear his intention to "try and put attitudes about accents in the south of Ireland on a firmer footing" (p. 93). He carries out two surveys: one of the type used in language attitudes research and the other following Preston's perceptual dialectology model. The purpose of the former is to see how people from Dublin (city or county) and from the rest of Ireland rate six different accents and to explore whether any response pattern can be observed. Respondents have to rate four Irish accents (Ulster Scots, Dublin 4[11], Local Dublin and Rural South-West) and two non-Irish accents (General American and Received Pronunciation) on three 3-point scales. The first two scales are labelled *important, intelligent* and *pleasant, friendly* and are representative of the prestige and pleasantness evaluative dimensions respectively. The third scale measures the speaker's education. Apart from filling out these scales, informants are asked to indicate their gender, age, home county and whether they are from Dublin, other city, town or from the countryside. Findings from Hickey's survey reveal one main trend: the SSBE accent obtains the highest score for *important, intelligent* and *education* but is among the three least pleasant. This is a trend that, as

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[11] The accent known as Dublin 4 was the accent of people living in the southern part of Dublin, a well-to-do neighbourhood whose postcode was Dublin 4 or D4, hence the name given to the accent.

pointed out above, has been observed in many language attitudes studies. With regard to Ulster Scots, the only northern accent included in this survey, and therefore the most relevant to the present dissertation, it has low ratings for prestige, that is, for the scales *important, intelligent* and *education* but is, nevertheless, considered the second most pleasant only after the Rural South-West accent. This high rating on pleasantness was not expected and, according to Hickey, "gives the lie somewhat to the notion among southerners that northern accents are harsh and grating" (Hickey, 2005, p. 99). A Northern Irish accent is also rated by UK participants as quite socially attractive in the *Voices* survey (Coupland & Bishop, 2007), an online survey completed by 5010 respondents and designed to find out about their reactions to 34 accents of English. In terms of prestige, the northern Irish accent has a slightly lower score, but still occupies a mid-table position. However, UK informants have a more positive attitude to a Southern Irish English accent which translates into higher scores on both social attractiveness and prestige. Furthermore, the SIrE accent is rated as the third most attractive accent, surpassed only by Standard English and "accent identical to own".

For his perceptual dialectology study, Hickey (2005) borrows Preston's draw-a-map technique. An analysis of all the hand-drawn maps shows that six main dialect divisions are identified. Many informants, especially those from Dublin, draw a boundary which divides the Irish capital into north and south. Three other dialect areas that were frequently recognised are the midlands, the west/southwest coast and the east/south-east region (ibid., p. 104). The remaining two boundaries are those drawn around Co. Cork and Co. Donegal, both of which are identified as a separate dialect area by more than half of the respondents. The reason why Donegal is distinguished within the north is due to its being part of the ROI politically but belonging to the northern province of Ulster from geographical and linguistic points of view (ibid., pp. 104-105). Moreover, Hickey ascertains that informants who are from outside Dublin distinguish a Donegal accent to a greater extent than Dubliners.

In addition to drawing boundaries, participants also provide labels for the dialect areas they have identified, and those labels are then grouped into some broad categories. A common characteristic of most labels is that they are of a prescriptive nature. Nevertheless, Hickey notices a difference between Dubliners and non-Dubliners, with the latter being less prescriptive (ibid., p. 106). Another salient trend is the predominance of a "dismissive attitude towards rural accents" for which the labels "culchie", "bogger" and "mucker" are used (ibid.). The two Dublin accents, north and south, are for the most part

described in a negative way. The labels ascribed to the northern accent are summarised in four adjectives: "strong", "drawl", "normal" and "difficult to understand" (ibid., p. 105). All these adjectives carry negative connotations except for "normal", a rather neutral word. The accent of the southern part of the city, an area that enjoys a high social status, is described as "posh", "snobbish", "news reader accent" and "clear" (ibid.). The penultimate label can have either positive or negative connotations but, in any case, hints at the prestige that is associated with the southern Dublin accent or D4 accent, as is usually referred to. Respondents also make some interesting remarks on the northern Irish accent (Figure 4.3.). One of them is that it is a "high-pitched" accent. This high-pitched quality is due to the pervasiveness of the rising tone in NIrE (Corrigan, 2010; Wells, 1982), a feature that differentiates this variety from SIrE where the falling tone is the usual tone in statements. Some other adjectives used to characterise the northern accent are "difficult to understand", "harsh", "unpleasant", "soft" and "pleasant" (Hickey, 2005, p. 106). There seems to be an ambivalent attitude towards this accent since some informants describe it as unpleasant, while others say the opposite. Figure 4.3. shows that non-Dubliners appear to have a more positive attitude towards the northern Irish accent than respondents from Dublin. Dubliners are divided into those who think that the accent is unattractive and others who consider that it is attractive.

Figure 4.3.

Labels used to describe a Northern Irish accent by informants from the ROI (adapted from Hickey, 2005, p. 106)

5) Remarks on northern accent	Dublin M	F	non-Dublin F	M
high-pitched	2		2	2
strong, distinctive	4	5		2
difficult to understand	2	2		
harsh, unpleasant	2	1		
soft, pleasant	1	4	4	4

White (2006) conducts a small study to investigate the attitudes of Irish people towards Standard Irish English. She designs a questionnaire that is filled out by forty-three teachers of English in the ROI. The questionnaire consists of two parts, the first of which is the open-ended question "Which variety of English do you think you draw on when

you correct students' errors, or give them rules about language use?" (p. 227). The second part is made up of a series of grammatical structures and lexical items characteristic of Irish English that teachers have to classify as acceptable or unacceptable in speaking and in writing. Although the large majority of educators claim that they use Standard British English when correcting or explaining something to students, they nonetheless consider some IrE structures and phrases to be acceptable both in speaking and writing. This is somewhat surprising because, if standard British English is taken as the rule, one would expect IrE features to be seen as incorrect. The fact that many teachers have no problem with some examples of IrE grammar and lexis, as far as acceptability is concerned, serves as evidence that a standard variety of Irish English is becoming established and gaining prestige. Apart from proving the existence of this variety, White asserts that it plays an important role in expressing an Irish national identity.

More recent research carried out by Lonergan (2016) focuses on varieties of Dublin English from the points of view of perception and production. For his perceptual study, he uses the draw-a-map task and a questionnaire which are completed by people living in Dublin. More specifically, his informants are either undergraduate students at University College Dublin or staff members at Dublin City University (p. 236). The questionnaire includes the questions "What does this accent sound like?" and "What kind of people speak with this accent?", which respondents have to answer for each of the accents they have identified in their hand-drawn maps. Besides, they also have to rate the accents on two 5-point scales labelled *pleasant* and *good English*. Results from the draw-a-map activity reveal that the four most frequently marked dialect areas are "north, inner-city, southwest and a long band along the southeast coast" (ibid., p. 238). Informants are particularly aware of the difference between the northern and southern parts of Dublin. However, this perceived difference is not so clear when it comes to language production. Lonergan (2013, 2016) acoustically analyses the speech produced by some respondents during interviews and concludes that the northside and southside accents are more similar to each other than suggested by informants' perceptions and that the inner-city accent is the most divergent. This is further proof of the common mismatch between language production and perception which Preston (1999b) describes as "one of the most important basic facts about language" and "one of the most important findings of modern empirical linguistics" (p. xvii). The perception that northside and southside accents differ widely is very likely related to the difference in social status existing between speakers of each of these two varieties. As already mentioned, North Dublin is mainly a working-class area,

whereas the southern district is more middle-class. In spite of the prestige associated with the southside variety, the adjectives used by informants when referring to it evince an ambivalent attitude towards this accent (Lonergan, 2016, p. 242). Some of the adjectives such as "clear", "pleasant" and "soft" are unequivocally positive, some are negative ("unpleasant" and "posh"), and a few others ("American", "neutral") are difficult to classify. This is in line with Hickey's (2005) findings discussed above.

Two other scholars who implement perceptual dialectology methods in Ireland are Lucek and Garnett (2020). They recruit participants at a public linguistics event held in Dublin and ask them to draw dialectal boundaries on a blank map of Ireland. Once participants have marked as many dialect areas as they can recognise, they have to provide labels for the accents spoken in those areas and mention some features that are characteristic of those accents and of their speakers. They are also required to indicate where they are from to explore whether this social variable has any influence on how accents are perceived. An analysis of the hand-drawn maps shows that a majority of respondents identify Dublin, Cork and Northern Ireland as areas with distinctive accents. In the case of Dublin, while some informants consider the city's accent as a whole, most of them draw boundaries between different parts of the city. The five dialect areas identified within the capital of the ROI are North Dublin South Dublin, Dublin 4, Inner City Dublin and West Dublin, among which the first two, in keeping with previous studies (Hickey, 2005; Lonergan, 2016), are most often recognised. With regard to the characteristics attributed to the northern Dublin accent, the labels employed by respondents show that this accent is perceived negatively. Interestingly, an Italian informant uses the word "knacker", a term for people of low social status that has negative connotations (see Section 4.2.5. for a more detailed explanation of "knacker"). The fact that an outsider knows this word "quite confidently indicates that the perception of North Dubliners […] as 'knackers' is highly salient" within Dublin (Lucek & Garnett, 2020, p. 117). Meanwhile, the southside accent is described in terms of "otherness" and "fakeness", two rather negative qualities. South Dublin speech is perceived as different from all the other varieties spoken in Ireland. This sense of otherness and fakeness is expressed through comments like "Mid-Atlantic Twang", "sounds a bit British" and "fake accent" (ibid., p. 120).

Although Lucek and Garnett (2020) mainly concentrate on Dublin, the perceptions of the Northern Irish accent are more relevant for the present study. The draw-a-map task reveals that nineteen out of a total of twenty-three participants draw a

boundary around Northern Ireland, which suggests that the accent in this part of the island is perceived to be distinctive by a considerable number of people. As for the labels used to describe the Northern Irish accent and its speakers, both positive and negative features are provided, a trend already observed in Hickey (2005). Some of the negative labels are "hard", "harsh" and "traitor", the last one having political connotations and probably showing that the wounds inflicted by the troubles following partition in 1921 are still fresh for some people. On the other hand, the Northern Irish accent is also said to sound "sing-songy" and "sexy". Even though many informants usually opt for either a positive description or a negative one, two individuals show contradictory attitudes, as conveyed through their use of the phrases "sexy traitors" and "friendly, but ready for a fight" (Lucek & Garnett, 2020, pp. 125-126). In addition to these paralinguistic and personality features, some respondents mention phonological aspects as well. A few features have to do with vowel sounds and refer to the shorter length of vowels and their little rounding. One participant points out that Northern Irish speech is "quick" (ibid., p. 126), a belief that may be worth exploring to see whether it is widespread. If one assumes that the informants who provide some phonological features are not language experts, it is possible to propose that those features are salient.

4.3.4. Studies of language attitudes and perceptual dialectology in Northern Ireland

Although some of the studies detailed above gather attitudes towards the northern variety of IrE, they deal with Dublin English and Dubliners' perceptions for the most part. This section covers the little research done on language attitudes in Northern Ireland to date. The studies here discussed involve Northern Irish participants and perceptions of Northern Irish varieties of English.

Two of the earliest scholars to contribute to this field of research in NI are Milroy and McClenaghan (1977). As reported in Preston (1999a, p. 360), they recorded four speakers of four different accents (Ulster, Scottish, Southern Irish and SSBE) and asked fifteen Belfast undergraduates to rate them on the evaluative dimensions of competence, attractiveness and personal integrity. As expected, the highest score on competence belonged to SSBE, which did not fare as well on the other two dimensions. The Ulster and Scottish accents were evaluated more negatively than SSBE and Southern Irish on competence but received higher ratings on attractiveness and personal integrity. On these two dimensions, Southern Irish was the accent rated most unfavourably. The rationale

behind this low score was the fact that thirteen of their fifteen informants were Protestants who differed from a majority of Catholics in the ROI in their political and religious views. Furthermore, it must be pointed out that the Ulster and Scottish were evaluated in a similar way, something hardly surprising given the historical and linguistic ties that bound Ulster and Scotland together. Finally, informants' ratings of the four accents on the three dimensions were found to be consistent, irrespective of whether respondents could recognise the accent. Preston (1999a) suggests that this prompted Milroy and McClenaghan to hypothesise that "accents with which people are familiar may *directly* evoke stereotyped responses without the listener first consciously assigning the speaker to a particular reference group" (p. 360). If this hypothesis is correct, the inclusion of a dialect identification task in language attitudes questionnaires might not be as necessary as Preston (1982a, 1986, 1988) had claimed. In view of this, Preston (1999a) grants that the lack of this type of task does not necessarily invalidate the results of a study (p. 360).

Todd (1984, 1989) and Millar (1987) also carried out some experimental work on language perception in NI. Their studies, however, were not concerned with language attitudes but with ascertaining whether a speaker's accent in NI revealed their ethnicity, a widespread belief within the Northern Irish community (Millar, 1987; Todd, 1984). This belief is closely linked to the traditional debate about the role of ethnicity as a sociolinguistic factor in NI (Kingsmore, 1995; McCafferty, 2001; Millar, 1987; Milroy, 1981; Todd, 1984, 1989). Todd (1984, 1989) was a strong advocate of the influence of ethnic background on language in the northern country. She analysed features of phonology, vocabulary, syntax and semantics and, while admitting that there was a great deal of overlap, she came to the conclusion that the speech of Catholics was significantly different from Protestants' speech. Todd (1989) even went as far as to claim that language "distinguishes some Catholics from some Protestants as clearly as colour distinguishes an Afrikaner from a Zulu" (p. 337). Moreover, she supported her claim with results from a perceptual experiment she performed. The experiment consisted in playing the recorded speech of four Catholics and two Protestants from Tyrone and asking four Tyrone respondents (2 Catholics and 2 Protestants) to identify the ethnic background of each speaker. All four informants were successful in pinpointing which speakers were Catholic and which ones, Protestant. This evidence is used by Todd to further illustrate her point. Nonetheless, she conceded that the fact that both informants and speakers were from the same county might have facilitated the ethnicity identification task (1984, p. 176). Lastly, it is important to note that the author of the study here described analysed working-class

speech. As regards the speech of the middle-class, Todd believed that Catholic-Protestant differences were fewer and less pronounced among more educated speakers (1989, p. 354).

Unlike Todd, Millar (1987) maintained that more evidence was required to assert that Catholics and Protestants in NI differed significantly from a linguistic point of view. She refuted many of the claims made by Todd with respect to phonological, syntactic and semantic differences occurring in the language of people from these two ethnic backgrounds. One of those claims was that Catholic speech was characterised by Gaelic influence, whereas that of Protestants owed its essence to Scots and Early Modern English. Millar discredited Todd's assertion on the basis that, as research on the Northern Irish and Irish varieties of English had long proved, Gaelic, Scots and Early Modern English had all influenced these varieties to a lesser or greater degree. What is more, she referred to the lack of academic evidence that confirmed "any differential influence of Irish on the speech of Catholics rather than Protestants" (ibid., p. 202). Apart from discussing ethnicity in terms of language production, she also presented the results of a perceptual study, as part of which eighty informants from Belfast had to decide whether two Northern Irish speakers, one Belfast vernacular speaker and a speaker of standard Ulster, were Catholics or Protestants. Those eighty informants were divided into two groups: forty Protestant and forty Catholic schoolgirls, all from the Northern Irish capital. 55.3% of the first group of respondents classified the standard Ulster speaker (a Protestant from Co. Tyrone) as Catholic and the remaining 44.7%, as Protestant. The percentages for the Catholic girls were very similar to their Protestant counterparts. As for the categorisations of the Belfast vernacular voice (from a South Belfast Protestant speaker), a large majority of the protestant schoolgirls (80.1%) indicated that the speaker was a Protestant. Meanwhile, only half of the Catholic informants identified it as Protestant. The90ce90acts rate for the identification of the Belfast voice among Protestant girls might suggest that Protestant speech in the capital had some distinctive features. However, the fact that Catholic girls showed a significantly lower success rate did not tally with that suggestion. In light of all this, Millar stated that the correct identification of a speaker's ethnic background was not better than chance. Her perceptual study consisted of more than just an ethnicity identification task but, for the purposes of comparison with Todd (1984), it is this task which provides the most relevant data. That is why findings derived from this task and not from others are reported here. The results from her perceptual experiment, together with findings from language production studies, led her to conclude

that evidence collected until the time of her writing did not substantiate the existence of Catholic and Protestant Englishes.

The present dissertation is not exclusively concerned with the relationship between ethnicity and language in NI as Todd's (1984) and Millar's (1987) studies. Notwithstanding, it sheds some further light on the issue of the presumed ability of people in NI to identify the ethnicity of a speaker as soon as they open their mouths. In order to do that, as part of my perceptual study, I ask informants, all of whom are from NI, to indicate the 'religion' of four voices, which are presented as audio recordings. As further discussed in Section 6.3.3., results of this task cannot prove that participants are able to guess the speakers' ethnic background. Whereas most respondents who identify the ethnicity of the recorded voices are right, that is, provide the correct ethnic background, there is not enough evidence to rule out the possibility that location rather than ethnicity is responsible for the correct identification. There are chances that, as Millar (1987) proposed, respondents are able to guess the speakers' religion "because of the residential patterns in Northern Ireland, where there may be concentration of one ethnic group in specific areas" (p. 206).

In addition to Todd (1984) and Millar (1987), there are other researchers that have also approached the study of language and ethnicity in NI from the perspective of production. Two of them are Lesley and James Milroy (Milroy J., 1978, 1981; Milroy L., 1980), whose work on the city of Belfast is well known. After analysing the interplay between language in Northern Ireland and a number of social variables such as gender, age, social networks, geographical location and ethnicity, they determine that "there is as yet no persuasive evidence to show that the two ethnic groups in Belfast (and Ulster) can be clearly identified by differences in accent. The differences that do exist are mainly regional" (Milroy J., 1981, p. 44). Millar (1987) cites the Milroy and Milroy as evidence that language does not vary according to ethnicity but to age, gender, region, social network and style (p. 204). This view is also shared by Kingsmore (1983, 1995) who explored pronunciation variables in Coleraine by analysing the speech of younger and older members of five working-class families. McCafferty (2001), by contrast, rejects the idea that ethnic differences in NI are not reflected in language, a view that he refers to as the "non-sectarian principle" (p. 2). He uses this term in a wider sense, including not only linguistics but also other aspects of society. McCafferty advocates that ethnicity plays a role in sociolinguistic variation and, to support his claim, refers to some previous studies (see Gunn, 1994; O'Neill, 1987; Pitts, 1982). Moreover, he carries out fieldwork in the

form of participant observation and recorded interviews with people from (London)Derry. His sample, which is a mixture of a convenience and a snowball sample (for more on sampling methods, see Section 5.4.), consists of 187 informants recruited in 1994 and 1995. The quantitative and qualitative analyses of his data reveal that ethnicity has an effect on language variation and change in (London)Derry and, more generally, in NI. The main ethnolinguistic difference between Protestants and Catholics in (London)Derry is that the former adopt Belfast linguistic innovations sooner than the other group which "tend[s] to preserve older – 'rural'– forms longer" (McCafferty, 2001, p. 212). Another significant finding, and one that contradicts popular belief as well as Todd (1984), is that the middle-class shows more variation along ethnic lines than working-class speakers as has been traditionally believed (McCafferty, 2001, pp. 212-213).

Another study on language attitudes in Northern Ireland is that by Zwickl (2002). Compared to Todd (1984) and Millar (1987), Zwickl's is a more comprehensive survey that examines the effect of ethnicity and the border, which divides the island of Ireland into the ROI and NI, on language attitudes towards local speech, Standard English and Irish. As such, this study deserves special attention. By local speech the author refers to the varieties of English spoken in Armagh and Monaghan, the two cities where she recruits her participants. Even though Armagh belongs politically to NI and Monaghan, to the ROI, they are both part of a transitional area where a mixture of SIrE and NIrE is spoken. The method used by Zwickl for her study is a long oral questionnaire made up of four sections. The first three contain personal questions about age, hometown, family, work, life in Armagh/Monaghan and some aspects of identity. On the other hand, the fourth section incorporates open-ended questions and semantic differential scales that provide information about respondents' language attitudes and perceptions. Her 71 respondents are classified into four subgroups: Armagh Catholics, Armagh Protestants, Monaghan Catholics and Monaghan Protestants. This classification is made to explore if there is variation in terms of ethnicity and location, the two social factors Zwickl is more interested in.

The first question of the language attitudes Section in Zwickl's study is "What do you call local speech?" for which the most frequents labels provided by informants are *Northern Irish English* (23.9% of the respondents), *Ulster English/Irish* (21.1%), *Irish English* (16.9), *Armagh/Monaghan English* (14.1%) and *broken/bog English* (9.9%). Three social variables show a statistically significant effect on the terms chosen for local

speech. They are location, age and the interaction between location and religion. One observed difference between Armagh and Monaghan participants is that, while the former group prefers the label *Northern Irish English*, the latter favours *Ulster English/Irish*. Regarding age, the three age cohorts (<25, 25 to 55 and >55) differ in their answers. The most common label among the younger group is the more general *Irish English*, although many of them use the loaded term *broken/bog English*. As for the interplay between location and religion, results reveal that *Northern Irish English* is the preferred option for Catholics from Armagh. Monaghan Catholics, on the other hand, opt for *Ulster English/Irish*. Most Protestants from Armagh and Monaghan employ the labels *Armagh English* and *Irish English* respectively. However, for the latter group *Ulster English* and *broken/bog English* were quite frequent. All these findings contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of language attitudes, but Zwickl's investigation lacks explanation of the possible reasons for these results.

A second question included in her oral questionnaire is "How do people speak in town?". This item aims to provide an insight into informants' perceptions of their local speech. All the different answers are grouped under three main categories: *Northern*, *Southern* and *different from both*. The only social factor found to be statistically significant for this question is location. Thus, people from Monaghan, whether Catholics or Protestants, seem more likely to describe their speech as *Northern* even though a considerable number of Armagh informants also do so. The opposite description, that is, *Southern*, is most frequent among Protestants from Monaghan. This is surprising since, based on Kirk's (1997a) research, it is Armagh Catholics who are expected to classify their speech as *Southern* more often (Zwickl, 2002, p. 107).

The answers to these two questions and all the others (ibid., pp. 260-265) allow Zwickl to conclude that the Irish border does not have a significant influence on language attitudes since "the respondents in the two localities [Armagh and Monaghan] were quite similar in their response patterns" (ibid., p. 201). However, ethnicity is shown to be responsible for some statistically significant differences. One of them is that Protestants rate Standard English as more important than Catholics. Furthermore, ethnicity interacts with location revealing some significant patterns of response. Taking these results into account, this dissertation also explores the attitudes of Catholics and Protestants towards Standard English (see Section 6.2.2.5.4.) and possible interaction effects between the factors of ethnicity and location (Section 6.2.1.4.4.).

4.3.5. Attitudes towards the representation of dialect in fiction

While being a language attitudes study, this thesis involves a shift in perspective with regard to most of the research reviewed so far. The change consists in using performed language rather than language produced by natural speakers (or someone who is able to imitate a variety of accents accurately) and recorded by a fieldworker which is the type of stimulus most commonly employed in research on language attitudes. Although traditional dialectologists would argue that performed language is not worthy of study because it lacks spontaneity and naturalness, fictional representations of language are based on and offer reflections on the real world. The analysis of linguistic performances has proved a useful source of information about sociolinguistics, language change and also language attitudes (see Section 4.2.). Nonetheless, it is important to note that the relationship between performance and language attitudes is not only interesting from the point of view of how attitudes are (or are not) represented. Linguistic performances also prompt particular reactions from the audience which deserve analysis. Despite the relevance of those reactions, not many scholars have paid attention to non-linguists' attitudes towards language in performance. Some of those who have are Preston (1982b, 1985), Toolan (1992), Jaffe and Walton (2000) and Pickles (2018). All of them except Toolan explore attitudes to dialect in literary fiction by carrying out perceptual experiments where they use non-linguists.

Preston (1982b, 1985) criticises the use of non-standard spellings on the grounds that, whatever the purpose of the writer who uses them, they bring about negative reactions on the part of the reader. These negative reactions entail a perception of the character who speaks with a non-standard accent as a low-class, illiterate, rude, aggressive individual. In Preston (1982b) the author analyses texts of American verbal folklore that include non-standard spellings. His analysis highlights one important trend. It becomes clear that respellings are used to represent speech that is considered to be different from that of the writer of the text and/or from the notion of standard English. The speech represented usually belongs to groups that have been negatively stereotyped. Evidence of that fact is Preston's finding that the speakers who are most often portrayed through respellings are "Blacks, South Midlanders, Southerners, non-native speakers of English and speakers of other non-US varieties of English" (ibid., p. 305). In addition to providing proof of how non-standard spellings are used by folklorists, he proposes a list of rules aimed at helping writers to determine when respellings are necessary. He notices that modifying the standard spelling involves the risk of downgrading the speaker's social

status and that is the reason why unnecessary respellings are to be avoided.

In a later study, Preston (1985) designs a questionnaire to gather non-linguists' responses to non-standard spellings. The questionnaire consists of a short conversation that informants have to read. Four speakers take part in the dialogue and respondents are told to decide which social class each speaker belongs to. The speech of each participant differs from the rest in number of non-standard grammatical features and respellings employed. The type of respellings that Preston incorporates in the conversation is what he calls *allegro speech*, i.e., respellings that represent informal speech (e.g. *gonna*, *wanna*). He distinguishes between *allegro speech*, *dialect respellings* and *eye dialect* (ibid., p. 328). *Dialect respellings* are spellings modified to suggest regional or social pronunciations. These are the type of forms that the present study is mainly concerned with. Finally, *eye dialect* is defined by Hodson (2014) as spelling that "gives the impression of being dialectal when the reader looks at it, but […] does not convey any information about the pronunciation when the reader sounds it out" (p. 95). This type of non-standard spelling has been particularly associated with negative evaluations of the speaker (see also Adamson, 1998). However, results from Preston's questionnaire show that allegro speech, which he describes as "apparently innocent respellings" (1985, p. 329), has the same effect than eye dialect in that it triggers social class downgrading. Moreover, he observes that non-standard grammar contributes significantly to this demotion.

Preston's finding that lay people establish a direct link between non-standard spellings and socially disadvantaged speakers is corroborated by Jaffe and Walton (2000). These two scholars carry out an experiment to investigate how respellings index social identities. They select two textual fragments from an oral history interview with a man from Mississippi and create three different versions of each of the texts. The versions vary in number of respellings and are labelled "Standard", "Light" and "Heavy" accordingly. These texts are then presented to twelve university students who have to read them aloud. Each student reads three texts: an excerpt from a history book, the "light" version of one of the fragments from the interview and the "heavy" version of the other fragment. Finally, the readings are transcribed for analysis. The method used by Jaffe and Walton (2000) deviates from the traditional matched-guise technique and is innovative inasmuch as the participants' readings constitute performances from which the researchers infer attitudes.

This study demonstrates that non-standard spellings can bring to the readers'

minds the voice and image of a particular social group. In the case of the respellings used in the texts selected by the two authors, they make participants think of a voice from the southern region of the United States. In addition, the use of non-standard orthography to represent some phonological features of an accent does not only lead readers to perform those features, but also to modify some other aspects of their speech (e.g. volume, speed, pitch, stress). Sometimes they even perform features of phonology that are not represented in spelling but that they identify as salient or stereotypical variants of a given dialect (see *da* in Section 6.3.1.1. for an example of how a dialectal feature is imagined by my informants). These salient features are part of the "prepackaged sociolinguistic personae" that orthographic respellings bring into "palpable existence" (Jaffe & Walton, 2000, p. 580). Jaffe and Walton's experiment also allows them to make two claims that help to gain further understanding of the relationship that exists between language attitudes and non-standard orthography. The first one, in keeping with Preston (1985), is that non-linguists "interpret variation in the graphic representation of language in the same way they interpret spoken variation" (Jaffe & Walton, 2000, p. 562). The second claim has to do with a finding that reveals that the more respellings the writer employs, the higher the degree of stigmatisation that is attributed to the speaker of the text. This is in line with sociolinguistic research, which has shown that lay people are sensitive to quantitative differences in spoken linguistic variation (Labov et al., 2006, 2011; Levon & Fox, 2014). As a result, there is evidence to suggest that non-linguists evaluate spoken and written language variation in like manner. Labov and Levon and Fox find out that their respondents rate speakers who produce more instances of a non-standard feature as less professional than others with fewer instances of that variable. It is nevertheless important to point out that frequency of occurrence of a feature influences people's evaluation if that feature is salient enough to be noticed (Levon & Fox, 2014).

Drawing on the work of Jaffe and Walton (2000), though adopting a more literary perspective, Pickles (2018) uses non-linguists to see the effect non-standard spellings have on the reading of a novel. Thus, one main difference between this scholar and Jaffe and Walton (2000) and Preston (1985) is that the texts she gives to her informants are literary fragments. She divides her perceptual experiment into two tasks. In task one she asks some students to read an excerpt from a novel and evaluate the character in terms of level of education, social class and morality. The excerpt that some of the participants are given contains respellings and non-standard features, while some other respondents receive the same excerpt written in Standard English. The difference between the standard

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and non-standard texts results in different responses from the readers. As expected, most respondents who read the non-standard excerpt rate the character as uneducated and working-class. As regards ratings on morality, no clear pattern emerges. Task two, on the other hand, consists in reading the non-standard version of the text aloud. The accent represented in the text is Cockney, but the readers do not perform a Cockney accent even though they use more non-standard speech. This differs from Jaffe and Walton's findings since their informants perform the Southern accent suggested by the text. The most likely reason for this divergence is that whereas Jaffe and Walton's participants are from the region whose accent is represented in writing, Pickles' respondents are from Derbyshire, a county that is far from London where Cockney is spoken. In spite of the fact that readers do not use a Cockney accent, they add some non-standard pronunciations that are not represented orthographically in the literary text, a finding that is consistent with Jaffe and Walton's results.

As with literary fiction, empirical studies of attitudes towards the representation of dialect in telecinematic fiction are scarce. Although quite a few researchers deal with audience from a theoretical point of view or briefly consider its role in telecinematic fiction (Androutsopoulos, 2012; Bell & Gibson, 2011; Dynel, 2011; Hodson, 2014), as Planchenault (2017) acknowledges, "little has been systematically said on the audience's perception of dialects in fiction" (p. 273). In fact, Planchenault (2012) is one of the few who does that. She analyses some articles written by expert reviewers and some young spectators' comments about a French film with the aim of investigating their perceptions of performed dialect. It is observed that both experts and lay spectators agree that the dialect of youngsters in the film sounds violent and stereotyped even though this does not seem to be the purpose of the director. This finding supports the well-established link between dialectal variation and audience's negative evaluation. Apart from that, it must be noted that one of the expert reviewers also describes the film's speech as spontaneous and realistic. This is interpreted by Planchenault as evidence that "a flattening of indexical orders" takes place when audiences see the performance of dialects in films (Planchenault, 2012, p. 256). In other words, dialectal features that are subject to stigmatisation in the real world are released from that negative association (second-order indexicality) and become a marker of region or ethnicity (first-order indexicality) in cinematic discourse.

Two other studies that examine the response of the audience to performed language are Vaughan and Moriarty (2018, 2020). They carry out their research in an

Irish context and gather data from online articles, YouTube comments and Facebook posts. Their analysis of comments written by members of the audience reveals that particular sociolinguist personae are embodied in the use of language in two examples of audiovisual performances (for more information on these two studies, see Section 4.2.5.).

This dissertation will contribute to filling the research gap the exists in the study of non-linguists' attitudes towards the representation of dialect in fiction, both literary and telecinematic.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has started by revisiting the concepts of performed language, literary dialect, salience and authenticity, all of which provide the theoretical framework for the present study (Sections 4.2., 4.2.1., 4.2.2. and 4.2.3.). The discussion of those concepts illustrates three key points: (1) that the representation of dialects in fictional telecinematic and fictional discourse deserves scholarly research; (2) that lay audiences' assessment of authenticity needs to be considered when evaluating how authentic dialect portrayals are; (3) and that salience influences the representation of dialects in fiction. Once the theoretical foundations were established, this chapter has reviewed scholarly literature on portrayals of IrE, and of NIrE, in literary and telecinematic fictional performances (Sections 4.2.4 and 4.2.5.).

In addition to surveying research on performed language, this chapter has also dealt with language perception (Section 4.3.), a field of study that is central to this dissertation. Within language perception, I distinguished between language attitudes (Section 4.3.1.) and perceptual dialectology (Section 4.3.2.) because they use different methodologies. Despite their differences, both language attitudes and perceptual dialectology establish the methodological framework for this thesis, which has been key to the design of the questionnaire that is described in the next chapter, that is, in Chapter 5. Apart from laying out the methodological basis, this chapter includes a literature review of language perception studies carried out in NI and in Ireland more generally (Sections 4.3.3. and 4.3.4.). This review has made it possible to identify some attitudinal trends, some of which will be compared to the trends observed in this study (see Chapter 6).

5. Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1. Introduction

The present study was conducted in three stages: questionnaire design, questionnaire distribution and data management and analysis, all of which are described in this chapter. In Section 5.3., the process of creation of the questionnaire, from piloting through validation by experts to final survey, is detailed. This involves explaining the criteria used for the selection of social factors, stimuli and questionnaire items. The data collection stage, that is, the questionnaire distribution process, is surveyed in Section 5.4. where details about the dissemination channels used and the people who have participated in the study are provided. Finally, Section 5.5. presents an overview of the different procedures followed when managing and analysing the quantitative and qualitative data. These procedures include the regrouping and exclusion of some social variables, data coding and data entry into software for statistical analysis.

5.2. Questions guiding the design of the questionnaire

In order to design a clear and comprehensive questionnaire, it is essential to first decide exactly what research questions the study sets out to answer (Krug & Sell, 2013). Following Sunderland's advice on the importance of research questions, which she claims, "are the key to any good empirical research project" (2010, p. 9), in steering the processes of data collection and analysis, it seems necessary to start by laying out the questions that this study seeks to answer. The questions that guided the questionnaire design process (listed below) were the two main research questions that this dissertation endeavours to answer (see Section 1.2.) together with some other narrower, yet relevant, questions.

1. How do Northern Irish informants evaluate fictional portrayals of Northern Irish English accents in telecinematic and literary fiction in terms of authenticity and of the traditional attitudinal dimensions of prestige and pleasantness?

2. How do the social variables of gender, age, social class, ethnicity and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown influence those evaluations if at all?

3. Which Northern Irish English features are perceptually salient?

4. Can Northern Irish respondents locate the different Northern Irish accents represented in the stimuli?

5. Can they recognise the speakers' ethnic background?

6. Do they like written literary portrayals of Northern Irish English accents?

7. Do they associate some accents with specific social identities or groups?

Answers to the two major questions (1 and 2) are based on items 2 and 3 of the survey (Sections 5.3.4.1.2. and 5.3.4.2.3. below). As will be seen in this chapter, these two items are the only ones used in the three main parts of the questionnaire, i.e., Part 1 Audios, Part 2 Videos and Part 3 Literature. As a result, there is more evidence on which assumptions can be made for these two questions than for the other items.

5.3. Questionnaire design

The process of designing the questionnaire can be divided into three phases: pilot study, validation by experts and final questionnaire design. The first phase was the creation of a pilot questionnaire (Appendix 1) following the ethical guidelines provided by the Bioethics Committee at the University of Extremadura. Those guidelines led to the preparation of a consent form (Appendix 7) which informed participants about the reason for the study and which ensured their anonymity. The consent form had to be read and signed by every informant.

The pilot questionnaire was aimed at testing the effectiveness of different stimuli and items and was filled out by ten participants in 2018 in the city of Belfast. The responses they provided together with the comments and suggestions they made during short conversations that followed survey completion helped design the final draft. Thus, after the pilot study, some stimuli and items were discarded and some new ones added (see Sections 5.3.1., 5.3.2. and 5.3.3. for a discussion of the modifications made to the pilot questionnaire). Piloting resulted in a second draft which was subjected to validation by experts. The second version of the questionnaire was very similar to the final survey. This, along with space constraints, are the reasons why the second draft is not described any further. The search for experts, i.e., linguists who could evaluate my survey, was carried out through the LINGUIST List where I published a call for experts (Appendix 9). Three experts volunteered: a retired linguist, a researcher of the CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) and an assistant professor at University College Dublin with wide experience in Irish English. They were requested to look at the survey and answer some questions about it (see Appendix 3 for the validation questionnaire the experts had to fill in). Those questions covered many different aspects related to the creation of the questionnaire such as layout, organization, suitability of the stimuli,

pertinence of the questions and points of the scales. After considering the experts' recommendations, a few last minor changes were made to the questionnaire. The final questionnaire resulting from those modifications was divided into five parts: Welcome, Personal Information, Audios, Videos, Literature and General Questions (Appendix 4), which are described in the following sections.

Once participants had completed those five parts, they were invited to take part in an interview with the researcher. A total of 41 respondents accepted the invitation, but only 8 of them were eventually interviewed. The other 33 informants either did not respond to the email I sent them to set the date, time and place for the interviews (Appendix 5), or could not attend the interview because they were living outside of NI. The interviews of the 8 respondents took place in February 2020 in two buildings that belonged to Queen's University Belfast, namely the Graduate School and the Students' Union. Some of the 8 participants were interviewed in pairs and some others individually. Before starting the interview, they were given a consent form that they had to read and sign (Appendix 6). The interviews amount to 7 hours of recorded material which cannot be analysed in the present dissertation due to time and space constraints but will be discussed in future publications.

5.3.1. Welcome

The Welcome section corresponds to the Instructions section of the pilot questionnaire even though the former was added some more details. This section contained information about the researcher and the research project, that is, the present study, together with some instructions that respondents had to follow when completing the questionnaire. The instructions, or recommendations as they were called in the survey, were four. The first two advised informants to respond quickly to the questions and to avoid reconsidering their answers. The rationale behind these recommendations had to do with an interest in participants' "general impressions" of the accent performances rather than in "well thought out opinions" (Henerson et al., 1987, p. 89). They encouraged informants to "say-the-first-thing-that-comes-to-your-mind" (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 212). This is an indirect approach "based on the assumption that a fast response to a stimulus word, picture or question will be less 'guarded' and therefore more revealing of underlying attitudes and motives" (p. 212). The longer respondents take to answer a question, the more likely they are to be influenced by the social desirability bias, a tendency to provide socially desirable answers, that is, answers that informants think will please the researcher or society more

generally (for more information, see Cargile, 2002; Garrett et al., 2003; Krug & Sell, 2013). An attempt to minimize the effects of the social desirability bias lies behind the third instruction, which is more of a reminder that the questionnaire was not a test with right and wrong answers. I wanted to make clear that the researcher did not prefer one answer over the rest, thereby encouraging informants to feel free to express their views.

In the last set of instructions, informants were told to play the recording and videos just once. This was intended to prevent respondents from listening to the stimuli several times to analyse them thoroughly since this was not the point of the questionnaire. This instruction is closely linked to the first two explained above.

Moreover, in order to meet the ethical standards laid down by the Bioethics Committee at the University of Extremadura, participants were guaranteed the anonymity of their responses and provided with the researcher's email address in case they had any questions. The most important part in the Welcome, however, was the sentence used to inform students that "clicking on Next", that is, starting the survey, meant that they were granting consent to the researcher to use their responses in publications. This sentence was the final questionnaire substitute for a full consent form that pilot participants had to read and sign before filling out the survey (Appendix 7).

In addition to the Welcome section, there were three introductory paragraphs, one for each of three main sections, that is, Part 1 Audios, Part 2 Videos and Part 3 Literature. These paragraphs, which were the same in the pilot and final questionnaires, were written to guide informants through the survey. They started by informing participants that the stimuli had been taken from Northern Irish fiction (whether films, TV shows or literary works) and that the point of the questionnaire had nothing to do with guessing where the stimuli came from. In these introductory texts, informants were also asked to concentrate on the speakers' pronunciation of words. Thus, they knew what the researcher was interested in right from the outset. Moreover, the survey questions were direct and therefore there was no deception as in indirect approaches to language attitudes (see Lambert's matched guise technique in Section 4.3.1.1.).

5.3.2. Social variables

The personal details section was placed at the beginning of the questionnaire and not at the end as some scholars recommend. According to Holmes and Hazen (2013), many academics favour saving personal information items for the end because their view is that "[r]espondents usually find them off-putting and an intrusion into their private lives" (p.

50). While this probably holds some truth, if the biographical information appears at the end, researchers run the risk of informants not bothering to complete the section either because they have grown tired or bored by then or because, having finished the body of the questionnaire, think that this part is not relevant. Due to the fact that the pilot survey was quite long –it took between 20 and 30 minutes to complete it–, the risk of this happening seemed high and, therefore, it was decided that the personal information section would be located at the start of the questionnaire.

The demographic data requested was age, gender, nationality, religion, place where they grew up and occupation. These social variables have been shown to influence the production of linguistic variables in Northern Ireland (Milroy & Milroy, 1985; McCafferty, 2001; Kirk, 1997a) and the reason why they were incorporated in the questionnaire was to find out whether they affect perception and language attitudes as well as language production. While age, gender and occupation are widely used in sociolinguistic surveys, the other variables are not as frequent. In the context of Northern Ireland, however, nationality and religion are particularly relevant. The historical division in NI between the Protestant-British and the Catholic-Irish sectors of the population which goes back to the period of the Plantations (a period described in detail in Section 2.6.), has played a significant role in all spheres of the Northern Irish society. This division highlights the close link between nationality and religion that has long existed in this country but is not only a matter of politico-religious differences. The divide feeds on cultural, historical and linguistic issues even more than on religion or politics, and that is why, the division has come to be seen as relying on an ethnic conflict instead of a religious or political one. Despite this, the two ethnic groups have been always referred to as *Catholics* and *Protestants*. These labels may seem to suggest that the difference is exclusively a religious one but nothing could be further from the truth. O'Dowd (1989) clarifies the implications of these labels:

> To many from outside Northern Ireland religion is a small part of the secular world having to do with personal beliefs and worship. In Northern Ireland, it is a badge, very important in its own right for many people, but more generally a badge recognized by all as standing for particular traditions and historical realities. These have fused experiences of settlement and colonization, and of class, political power, violence and attitudes to the state. (p. 8)

Religion affects many areas of daily life in NI such as the geographical distribution of people in NI, which is largely determined by the ethnic East-West divide. The increase in the level of sectarian violence during the Troubles (for a definition of the Troubles, see Section 2.7.) propelled population movements away from the more dangerous mixed Catholic-Protestant neighbourhood into segregated areas, that is, only-Catholics or only-Protestants areas. In Belfast, the most segregated areas are West Belfast and East Belfast which are referred to as the "Catholic heartland" and the "Protestant heartland" by Doherty and Poole (1997, pp. 528, 531). Apart from Belfast, the two ethnic groups are spatially segregated in (London)Derry and NI more generally, where the rivers Foyle and Bann respectively act as ethnic barriers. In (London)Derry, the majority of the Catholic population lives west of the River Foyle, whereas Protestants concentrate on the east bank. Regarding NI, the area to the east of the Bann is mainly Protestant. Meanwhile, Catholics predominate in the western part of the country. Apart from place of residence, ethnicity in NI also has an influence on education (Protestants and Catholics generally go to different schools) and culture (the two ethnic groups tend to play different sports, celebrate holidays differently, support different sports teams, etc.). Thus, for example, while Catholics usually consider themselves Irish in terms of nationality, live in west or north Belfast and play Gaelic football and hurling, Protestants are generally British, reside in east Belfast and play football. This does not, of course, mean that this is always the case. In fact, the introduction of new policies that foster rapprochement between the two ethnic groups and the increasing ethnic diversity in the country are expected to bring about some changes and even blur the lines of the divide. Nonetheless, research is needed to prove if and to what extent those policies are having the desired effect. The questionnaire data will somewhat contribute to this research by showing if there is a clear distinction between the attitudes Catholics and Protestants have towards representations of the Northern Irish accent in fiction or if, on the contrary, the two groups are similar in their answers.

With regard to occupation, it serves as a parameter of social class in the same way education, income or type of housing (Krug & Schlüter, 2013, p. 74) are used in other surveys. Different scholars have preferred different parameters for their research based merely on the importance they confer to each of them. In Milroy and Gordon's (2003) view, "this arbitrariness appears to be a consequence of the very diffuse range of cultural and social phenomena […] encompassed in the popular notion of social class" (p. 43). There have been many attempts to define the notion of social class and all of them are

legitimate because they are accurate to a certain degree. A reasonably precise definition is that by Milroy and Gordon (2003) who state that "[a]s a global category, social class thus encompasses distinctions in life-style, attitude, and belief, as well as differential access to wealth, power, and prestige" (p. 98).

The reason why occupation was chosen as an indicator of social class in this study is because it seemed less face threatening than income or type of housing, for instance. This means that respondents would probably feel more comfortable mentioning their occupation than revealing their income. Furthermore, Labov (1990) and Macaulay (1977) also selected occupation as a class indicator believing that "this factor correlates best with linguistic variation" (Milroy & Gordon, 2003, p. 47). Even though occupation is a justifiable parameter, it seems risky to rely exclusively on it. As a result, education was incorporated to the final questionnaire in the form of a closed question. The set of possible answers to choose from were "Primary Education", "Secondary Education", "A Levels", "BA", "MA", "PhD" and "Any vocational qualification". These correspond to the main stages of education in the UK. Knowing both the occupation and the educational level of informants would help to make a more accurate guess at respondents' social class.

Occupation and education are effective indicators of "objective class position", yet they are of no help when it comes to "subjective class identity". These two "types", or rather "sides", of social class roughly correspond to Weber's "class" and "status" (1968). Individuals' class or objective class position depends on their income, whereas their status or subjective class identity has to do with evaluation, ideology and sense of belonging. Class and status regularly coincide but mismatches between the two are possible. Mismatches have become more frequent due to a change in the British social structure which, among other things, has led to increased social mobility. Social mobility allows working-class people to move up the social ladder, which means that they can secure a better class position. However, this change is not necessarily accompanied by a change in people's class identity and mismatches often occur. Clark (2019) finds evidence of this in performers and members of the audience who "self-reported as having both a working- and middle-class affiliation" (p. 29). In order to know if there was a mismatch between an informant's class and status, the following question was included in the final questionnaire: "What social class do you feel more identified with?". The three possible answers for this question were "Upper class", "Middle class" and "Working class". This item which aims at revealing informants' class identity seemed convenient for two main reasons. On the one hand, in the context of language attitudes, issues of identity are even

more significant than economic aspects. On the other hand, class-status mismatches might influence language perception and attitudes in a particular way which may be worth exploring.

Another social variable used in the questionnaire was hometown and the wording employed for the pilot was "Where did you grow up?". This question was changed to "What town/city and county of Northern Ireland did you grow up in?" for the final questionnaire because it was clearer and more complete. Although it might seem unnecessary to ask for the county, it was added because it would make data analysis faster and easier. It saved the effort of having to search for the county to which each city belonged. Region is one of the main sociolinguistic variables in the field of linguistics and has been shown to influence language production in many places, including NI (Milroy & Milroy, 1985; McCafferty, 2001). However, its impact on language perception in NI, if any, is under-researched. This study will contribute to filling that gap.

The last two social factors to be discussed are age and gender. Age has been a key factor in sociolinguistic research because it acts as an indicator of language change, and the study of linguistic change has been the ultimate goal of sociolinguistics. The advantage of age as compared to other social variables is that it can be easily measured and therefore grouping respondents (according to age) turns out to be very simple (Milroy & Gordon, 2003, p. 38). Despite that apparent advantage, as pointed out by Milroy & Gordon, the challenge when it comes to age-related factors "lies in determining meaningful ways of grouping and comparing subjects" (ibid., p. 39). What is really important when age is factored in is that it gives information about the stage of life a respondent is at. Thus, as reported in Milroy & Gordon (ibid.), Eckert advocates for the use of the age factor as an indicator of the life stage a person is at. Age is relevant insofar as the social circumstances that are attached to it are taken into consideration. In view of this, I decided to categorise respondents into three age groups, each corresponding to a well-defined life stage. The three cohorts were "18-30", "31-55" and "Over 55". The age group 18-30 encompasses both teenagers and young adults. Some of the social circumstances surrounding this life stage are university, boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, the maturing process and job search. The second cohort is the one representing adulthood. People in their thirties, forties and fifties usually have an independent and stable life: they have stable jobs and homes. The last one was devised for a life stage that commonly involves retirement, grandchildren and personal fulfilment.

As regards gender, even though it took some time before sociolinguists became

interested in this social variable, Trudgill (1983) found gender variation to be "the single most consistent finding to emerge from sociolinguistic studies" (p. 162). Thus, a study like the one that is being described in this dissertation would not be complete without gender. Male and female are the two traditional genders that sociolinguists have generally used in the past. However, the opposition female-male is a simplification of the social construct of gender that is rooted in the binary variable of sex. Moreover, as Eckert (1997) points out, "[a]though differences in patterns of variation between men and women are a function of gender and only indirectly a function of sex […], we have been examining the interaction between gender and variation by correlating variables with sex rather than gender differences" (p. 213). While sex is a biological category that can be seen as a "binary variable", gender is a complex social construction of sex that should not always be seen in terms of opposition but as a continuum (ibid.). Understanding gender as a continuum means acknowledging that gender identity is fluid rather than rigid as has been traditionally assumed. The acceptance of the fluidity of gender is a prerequisite for the recognition of non-binary gender identities. This recognition seems imperative within the context of a society where the social construction of gender is being constantly challenged and transformed. The de- and re-construction of gender influences language use (Angouri & Baxter, 2021 discuss the relationship between language and gender in detail) and therefore it seems reasonable to include the category "non-binary" as one of the possible answers for the social variable of gender in a study dealing with language perception.

Despite the importance of considering non-binary gender identities in contemporary linguistic research, in the pilot questionnaire gender was presented as the traditional binary variable. It was only after one participant in the pilot study suggested that some people might identify as neither male nor female that non-binary gender was considered and added as one of the possible answers for the gender item.

5.3.3. Stimuli

There are three types of stimuli: audios, videos and literary fragments. As mentioned previously, the auditory (audios) and audiovisual (videos) stimuli are voice samples taken from Northern Irish TV shows and films. For a film or TV show to be selected, the following requirements were to be met:

- TV show/film had to be set in NI.
- TV show/film had to be written and/or directed by Northern Irish

scriptwriters/film-makers.

- TV show/film released not earlier than 1998.
- The leading roles had to be played by actors from NI.

Once a film/TV show was chosen, I searched for a voice sample that contained features of NIrE accents and that could be considered authentic from the point of view of production (an analysis of the produced authenticity of the stimuli used in the final questionnaire can be found in Section 5.3.3.1.).

Eight voice samples were selected for the pilot questionnaire: four audios and four videos. The reason why half of the samples were presented in the form of auditory stimuli and the other half, as audiovisual stimuli had to do with an interest in investigating whether seeing the speaker had any effect on respondents' ratings on authenticity, prestige and pleasantness. The four audios used in the pilot study were taken from *Pulling Moves* (2003), a comedy about four friends from West Belfast who engage in fraudulent activities to earn some extra money; *Divorcing Jack* (1998), a film based on a novel of the same name written by Colin Bateman that follows the misadventures of the reporter Dan Starkey, who accidentally finds himself involved in a politically motivated murder; *An Everlasting Piece* (2000), a comedy film that centres around two men, one Catholic and one Protestant, who decide to start a business selling wigs and get entangled in a bombing as a result of selling a wig to an IRA member; and *A Belfast Story* (2013), a film where an old detective tries to hunt down those responsible for the murders of men who once belonged to the IRA.

As for the videos, the sources of the audiovisual stimuli were *Derry Girls* (2018-present), a sitcom that follows the everyday lives of five teenagers in (London)Derry back in the 90s, a time when the armed conflict was still a problem; *Titanic Town* (1998), a film about a Belfast mother who, after the IRA shoots her best friend dead by mistake, resolves to speak out against the acts of violence committed by both the Irish and British paramilitary forces; *Mickybo and Me* (2004), a film based on Owen McCafferty's play *Mojo Mickybo* (1998) that tells the story of Mickybo, the son of a Catholic family, and Jonjo, the only child of a Protestant household, who become friends and go on an adventure; and *Good Vibrations* (2013), a comedy drama about the life of Terri Hooley, a punk enthusiast who opened a record shop in Belfast and who contributed greatly to the punk scene in that city.

The voice samples extracted from the films/TV shows ranged in length from 26

seconds, the shortest sample, to 46 seconds, the longest one. The desired length was between 20 and 40 seconds because this seemed long enough for informants to get a first impression of the accent and also because it allowed for the speakers' production of several distinctive NIrE features. However, a few voice samples, especially among those used for the final questionnaire, were slightly longer or shorter. There was only one sample that exceeded 40 seconds, the *Pulling Moves* audio, and this resulted from an unwillingness to cut the speaker's explanation short because the last seconds contained significant pronunciation features that were worth including. The samples that were less than 20 seconds long were those taken from fast-paced comedies where characters speak for a few seconds before they are interrupted by a different character or before a new scene begins altogether. This is one aspect of some TV shows/films, particularly comedies, that helps to create dynamism. While this is usually positive from the point of view of filmmaking, dynamism makes it difficult to find a voice sample that is suitable for this study, that is, one where a single character speaks for at least 20 seconds. In fact, in most of the stimuli used in the pilot questionnaire there was a second speaker who uttered some words. Moreover, the extracts from *An Everlasting Piece* and *Titanic Town* were a short conversation between two characters.

During the informal conversations I had with each of the pilot participants once they had filled out the pilot questionnaire, I asked them whether they had any doubts, suggestions or comments regarding the survey. One of the remarks some of them made had to do with not knowing which speaker they had to rate in the stimuli with two speakers. This posed a problem for proper completion of the questionnaire so that it was decided that the voice samples with two speakers had to be replaced. As a consequence, all the stimuli, except for the *Pulling Moves* recording, were substituted by others in the final questionnaire. This substitution was also prompted by the fact that most of the pilot stimuli presented voices that belonged to working-class Belfast males. There were only two samples of female voices, namely *Derry Girls* and *Titanic Town* and even those had a working-class Belfast accent.

The need to incorporate a wider variety of accents in terms of gender, region and social class led to the selection of new stimuli for the final survey. Whereas the *Pulling Moves* voice sample (Audio 2 in the final questionnaire) seemed worth keeping because it was a good representation of working-class middle-aged Belfast male speech, three new audios were used in the final study. Audio 1 contained the speech of a middle-aged female with a more rural accent and was taken from *Ups and Downs*, a film shown on BBC One

Northern Ireland about two siblings, a sister and a brother with Down's syndrome, who decide to go to a concert taking place in Belfast without their mum's consent. *Derry Girls* was the source of Audio 3 but, unlike the extract taken from this TV show for the pilot study, the new voice sample only presented the speech of one character, Ma Mary. She is a middle-aged female that, despite playing a (London)Derry mum in the sitcom, has a Belfast accent. The last auditory stimulus, that is, Audio 4, was produced by a middle-aged man from rural Antrim who played the role of a boxing coach in a short film called *Counter Punch* (2019). This short was produced and directed by a film student at Queen's University Belfast and therefore it probably reached only a small audience. Although *Counter Punch* differs from the other films/TV shows in that it is produced by an inexperienced film-maker and has a much smaller audience, it is as good an example of the fictional representation of accent as the other stimuli. This is because, whether a low-budget amateur film or a professional film, the actors have to speak in front of a camera and follow stage directions. Moreover, even if the director does not give any explicit instruction on the accent/dialect that performers need to use, the mere presence of a camera influences, to a greater or lesser extent, actors' speech. This influence that frequently results in softening or exaggerating the accent/dialect makes the two aforementioned types of films equally worthy of study. This is not to deny that differences exist between amateur and professional films. One difference, and one which can affect the representation of accents/dialects, has to do with the fact that the latter type often targets an international audience. The effect that this may have on accent representation is the need to make accents more intelligible for viewers from different countries. Nevertheless, since the professional films/TV shows used as stimuli for the present study are mainly aimed at a national audience, no such effect occurs.

Part 2 Videos in the final questionnaire was also made up of four clips but, unlike in the pilot survey, one of those clips was a control item (Video 2). Control items or questions are used in quantitative research for the purpose of comparison, just like control groups. The control item in my questionnaire was a video clip of an actress with a Standard Southern British English accent. This actress was Gillian Anderson playing the role of Detective Superintendent Stella Gibson in the TV series *The Fall* (2013-2016). This control item is similar to the other stimuli (it is a short extract taken from a TV show) except for the accent that is represented. This difference makes it possible to compare the attitudes of my Northern Irish respondents towards NIrE accents with their attitudes towards the Standard Southern British English accent. SSBE has been commonly used as

the yardstick against which dialects/accents are evaluated in terms of prestige and pleasantness and that is why this variety was chosen for the control stimulus. In addition to enabling a comparison that makes the interpretation of the results easier, the control stimulus also served to identify those respondents who have not properly filled out the questionnaire due to lack of understanding, boredom or fatigue. Once identified, their replies were deleted to guarantee reliable results.

The first audiovisual stimulus (Video 1) was a clip from *Soft Border Patrol* (2018-present), a comedy mockumentary about a security agency whose mission is to safeguard the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The speaker in this video is Laurence Lyle, a young male character played by Shane Todd, a famous comedian and actor from Holywood, a town that is part of the Belfast metropolitan area. As for Video 3, it contained the speech of a middle-aged rural man. This clip was taken from the locally produced film *Bad Day for the Cut* (2017) and the speaker was the Tyrone actor Nigel O'Neill. The last video (Video 4) to be incorporated in the final questionnaire showed a young Belfast female, the protagonist of a short film called *Incoming Call* (2017).

Apart from the four auditory and four audiovisual stimuli described above, there were three literary stimuli, or fragments, that made up the third and last main section of the questionnaire, Part 3 Literature. All these three extracts contained non-standard spellings through which the authors attempted to represent Northern Irish accents in writing, the long-standing practice known as literary dialect (see Sections 4.1. and 4.2.3. for more on literary dialect). Furthermore, they were all excerpted from literary works written by Northern Irish authors.

The first fragment was taken from *Speech*, a poem by Ballycastle author Elaine Gaston where she portrays a North Antrim accent. The second excerpt belonged to *No Mate for the Magpie* (1995). This is a semi-autobiographical novel written by Frances Molloy, the pseudonym used by Ann McGill, a novelist who grew up in a working-class family from Dungiven, a rural town in County (London)Derry. The chosen extract is a good example of her representation of a rural (London)Derry dialect throughout the novel. The last literary fragment to be included in the questionnaire was excerpted from Martin Lynch's play *Dockers* (1981). This playwright was born in Belfast and writes about the lives of working-class people. Finally, it must be noted that, with the exception of the poem, the literary stimuli were the same for the pilot and final questionnaires.

5.3.3.1. Produced authenticity of the stimuli

The prerequisite that voice samples had to meet in order to be selected as stimuli for the questionnaire was that they had to contain some NIrE pronunciation features of those recorded in the academic literature. Although the focus of the present dissertation is accent, most of the samples also include grammatical and/or lexical features that are characteristic of Northern Irish English dialects. This is due to the nature of the films/TV shows which are the source of the stimuli. Since they are set in NI, written and/or directed by Northern Irish authors and since many of their characters are from NI, the use of dialectal words and structures is rather frequent. This hindered the search for speech samples that were free from grammatical and lexical features and, at the same time, met the other requirements (appropriate length and only one speaker per sample). Thus, it seemed reasonable to select stimuli on the basis of pronunciation and irrespective of whether or not they contained grammatical and/or lexical features. While the presence of dialectal vocabulary and grammar was not taken into account in the selection process, its influence on respondents' perceptions could not be overlooked (Chapter 6). This influence somewhat compromises the effectiveness of the questionnaire for providing information about how Northern Irish informants evaluate fictional representations of NIrE accents. This does not mean, however, that the survey results are not valid from the point of view of accent perception. In fact, they provide valuable insights into the perceptual salience of some pronunciation features (Section 6.3.1) and into the evaluations of different NIrE accents.

In this section I am going to determine if the representation of NIrE accents in the stimuli can be considered authentic. Following Ives' (1971) procedure (described in Section 4.2.3.), to decide if a representation is authentic, the first step is to find out the dialect spoken by the author of the representation. This makes sense for the literary representations since Ives used this procedure to assess literary dialect. In the case of audiovisual representations, however, it is necessary to ascertain the variety that the actor speaks and see whether it matches the variety that the character played by that actor is supposed to speak. In order to obtain that information, I sometimes had to contact the directors/writers of the films/TV shows via Facebook. After completing this step, I identify the dialectal features that are produced in the speech sample and verify their existence by reviewing the scholarly literature on Northern Irish accents. Thirdly, and finally, I determine whether the combination of features used in the stimulus are characteristic of a specific area or town in NI. If this is the case, it will be possible to say

that the representation is authentic.

5.3.3.1.1. Audios

The speaker in the first auditory stimulus is Susan Lynch, an actress who was born in Corrinshego, a town in the south of Co. Armagh that is close to the border between NI and the ROI. As a result, her accent can be considered a rural one although it might have flattened out due to mobility into an urban area like Belfast. Regarding the accent that she was told to do for *Ups and Downs*, through personal communication with Eoin Cleland, the writer and director of the film, I found out that Susan Lynch had been asked to use her own accent. Because of this, her accent would be expected to sound natural and authentic.

The letters highlighted in blue in Figure 5.1. below indicate where a NIrE pronunciation feature is being produced. The most repeated feature is the rhotic pronunciation of postvocalic /r/, an essential element of any NIrE accent. As for the realisation of the FACE diphthong in *great*, *change*, *nature* and *way*, it ranges from the more standard [eɪ] in the first two words to [iə] in the third lexical item and to [e] in *way*. These three allophones occur in NIrE (see Chapter 3 for a detailed description of the phonology of NIrE). Another feature found in Audio 1 and that is reported as characteristically Northern Irish by linguists is the fronting of /u/ to [ʉ] in *room*. Similarly, the pronunciation of [ʌ] in *other* as the more rounded vowel [ɔ̈] is typical of NI and, more particularly, of the MUE and SUE dialect areas (Maguire, 2020, pp. 103-106). Finally, there are two instances of /t/-lenition in word-final position (*it* and *that*) where /t/ becomes [t̞]. Although the lenition of stops mainly occurs in SIrE (Kallen, 2013), lenited variants of the voiceless alveolar plosive have been also found by Corrigan (2010) in the SUE zone. The fact Susan Lynch is from Corrinshego, a town that belongs to the SUE area, together with the fact that his father is Irish are likely to be responsible for the occurrence of lenited /t/. The presence of all the Northern Irish features described above including lenition which is only attested in the area where Lynch grew up make the representation in Audio 1 authentic.

Figure 5.1.

Audio 1 (transcript)

(https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CkM9RMO5V9dLxsCxQXVuF3Wmnk_puEAU/view
?usp=share_link)

> Speaker: Yeah, well. I'm, I'm not gr**ea**t at i**t**. But you**r** dad was. You**r** dad was something that happened to you, he was a fo**r**ce of n**atur**e, he could ch**ange** the temperatu**r**e of a r**oo**m and you have that. And sometimes it's a nightma**r**e but I wouldn't have you any othe**r** w**ay**.

The second auditory stimulus (Figure 5.2.) presents informants with the voice of the Belfast actor Lalor Roddy. In this speech sample, he is playing the role of a scammer from Belfast. Thus, the real accent of the actor is the same as the accent he is supposed to perform. There is, therefore, a good chance that the representation is authentic.

Figure 5.2.

Audio 2 (transcript) (https://youtu.be/kYHa1pbp7Ww)

> Speaker: Now, listen. At a definite t**i**me in the d**ay**, which you'll be t**o**ld la**t**er, I'll be g**o**ing **u**p a certain road. The **craic** is your car will be at a kn**ow**n accident black sp**o**t. All you have to d**o** is but it's the most important part because it r**e**quires spl**i**t-second coordination. By th**i**s stage, **youse** will know the number and the destination of the bus. **Youse** give the go ahead on the m**o**bile to **wh**oever is in the car. As the bus approaches here, the car p**u**lls out in front of me and I, ever so gently, **goes** into the back of **youse**.

This speech sample is full of Northern Irish features. Moreover, it contains not only pronunciation (highlighted in blue), but also lexical and grammatical features (highlighted in green). As regards pronunciation features, the following are produced in Audio 2. They are ordered in terms of frequency of occurrence, from most to least frequent.

1. Monophthongal realisation of GOAT in *told*, *going*, *known* and *mobile*.

2. Lowering of the KIT vowel sound to [ɛ̆] in the words *requires*, *split* and *this*.

3. U-fronting in *do* and *pulls*.

4. Monophthongal realisation of the FACE lexical set in *day* which is pronounced as [dɛː].

5. Alveolar tap in *later*.

6. Slight rounding of the STRUT vowel in *up*.

7. Neutralisation of the LOT-TRAP distinction in *spot*.

All these seven phonetic realisations are recorded in the academic literature on Northern Irish accents (Chapter 3) and their occurrence is attested in Belfast. Furthermore, the last feature is distinctively Belfast. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that the accent used by Lalor Roddy in the above extract from *Pulling Moves* is authentic.

Having discussed pronunciation, it is now time to see whether the lexical and grammatical features present in Audio 2 occur in NIrE dialects. *Craic* is a loanword adopted from Irish into IrE and whose meaning is "fun, good time, enjoyment on a social occasion" (Hickey, 2007, p. 364). It is typically employed in phrases like "What's the craic?" and "How's the craic?" which serve as conversational openers (Corrigan, 2010, p. 79). As for the second-person plural pronoun *youse* (also *yous*), the singular/plural distinction, which once existed in British English (*thou*/*you*), was developed in Ireland as a result of the influence of the Irish language, which has the singular *tú* and the plural *sibh* (Dolan, 2004, p. 292). Whereas the singular/plural contrast is the rule in the whole island, different forms are used in different regions and dialects. The Early Modern English *ye* is favoured in the supraregional variety of the south (Hickey, 1983, 2007). Meanwhile, *yez* and *youse* are vernacular variants. The latter, which is attested in texts later than *yez*, is more widespread in the north, the city of Dublin and the east coast. Furthermore, Hickey's findings of his *Survey of Irish English Usage* reveal that informants from Northern Irish counties consider *youse* to be more acceptable than respondents from the Republic (Hickey, 2007, p. 239). *Ye*, on the other hand, is shown to be most approved by people from counties in the west and *yez*, by informants from NI and the eastern region. Thus, the two second-person plurals commonly used in NIrE are *youse* and *yez*. Corrigan (2010) provides evidence that they occur "in the speech of younger and middle-aged females" in the Belfast metropolitan area as well as in that of men and women of various age groups that live in MUE areas (pp. 53-54).

The last grammatical feature found in Audio 2 is the use of the third-person singular form of *go*, i.e. *goes*, after the first-person singular pronoun *I*. From the point of view of standard grammar, this is ungrammatical. However, this feature, which has been referred variously as the "singular concord" (Finlay, 1987; Henry, 1995; Milroy, 1981), the "Northern present-tense rule" (Montgomery, 1994; Robinson, 1997) and the "Northern Subject Rule" (NSR) (McCafferty, 2003), is commonplace in many non-Standard English dialects around the world, including IrE. It is so widespread that Corrigan (2010, p. 51) classifies it as a *vernacular primitive*[12].

The adding of the -s ending when there is a plural subject is constrained by two factors: subject type and proximity to subject. These factors determine that verbs can take -s if their subject is a noun phrase or a personal pronoun that is separated from the verb by a phrase or word. Moreover, some studies demonstrate that -s is mainly found after third-person plurals, especially after plural noun phrases (Fitzpatrick, 1994; McCafferty, 2003). Occurrence of the -s inflection with the first-person singular pronoun, as is the case in Audio 2, seems to be infrequent, judging by the evidence found in the literature available on this topic. Hickey (2007) suggests that "[t]he rarity of verbal -s on the first person may well have had an influence on its development as a habitual" (p. 184). The habitual aspect serves to mark the repetition of an action or the continuity of a state of affairs and is also formed by adding an -s ending to the verb.

The NRS seems to have originated in Scotland and Northern England (McCafferty, 2003) and from there it spread into the north of Ireland during the Plantations. There has always been the debate between scholars interested in the development of the NRS in NI about whether this feature was brought to the north by Scottish men or Englishmen. An analysis of NSR in 19th-century Ulster-Australian emigrant letters leads McCafferty (2003) to conclude that this feature was present in the dialects of both Scottish and English settlers by the time they landed in NI. Thus, they are both responsible for the spread and subsequent consolidation of the feature in this region.

Taking the evidence provided above into account, the occurrence of the lexical item *craic*, the second-person plural pronoun *youse/yous* and the NSR (*goes*) in NI can be confirmed. This means that, by using them, Lalor Roddy is probably conferring authenticity to his performed accent. However, there is always a risk that the use of many instances of non-standard grammar and lexis, as well as pronunciation, in so short a

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[12] *Vernacular primitives*, or as Chambers (2003) calls them, *primitives of vernacular dialects* are linguistic variables that "recur ubiquitously all over the world" (p. 242).

recording may lead to the perception that the accent is being overdone, that is, exaggerated. In any case, the occurrence of a high number of dialectal features in Audio 2 makes sense considering that this extract is part of an informal and private conversation between a group of working-class men.

The actress responsible for the third speech sample (Figure 5.3.) is Tara Lynne O'Neill. Despite being from Belfast, she plays a (London)Derry mum, Ma Mary, in the TV show *Derry Girls*. The mismatch between the actress' and the character's accents, the former Belfast and the latter (London)Derry, is somewhat problematic when it comes to evaluating the authenticity of the representation. As will be shown below, Ma Mary does not have a (London)Derry but a Belfast accent. Given that she is supposed to be a mum from the city of (London)Derry, strictly speaking, her accent performance cannot be seen as authentic. Nevertheless, the fact that her accent on the show is an authentic Belfast one and since the questionnaire is about Northern Irish accents, it was deemed appropriate to use it as one of the stimuli. Moreover, responses to Audio 3 demonstrate that informants who recognise the TV show, and therefore know that it portrays the lives of (London)Derry people, believe that Ma Mary's accent is (London)Derry (Section 6.3.2.) and rate it as very authentic.

Figure 5.3.

Audio 3 (transcript) (https://youtu.be/PsJYcvpxBps)

> Speaker: D**i**p into your trust fund? Of course, no b**o**ther at all. Pass us in the phone, I just need to ring the bank. Seven, six, five, four, three, tw**o**, one, that's the acc**ou**nt number and the password. What is it again? What was it n**ow**? Oh, **aye**. **Catch yourself on**. **Da**, **for God's sake**, will you turn that d**ow**n?

There are five Northern Irish pronunciation features in Audio 3 that are worth mentioning, three of which are also found in Audio 2. They are the realisation of KIT as the lowered variant [ë] in *dip*, the LOT-TRAP merger in *bother* and the fronting of /u/ in *two*. Of the remaining two features, one has to do with the MOUTH lexical set. The pronunciation of the diphthong /au/ in NI is distinguished from other accents by a more raised first vowel and the fronting of the second element [əʉ]. This Northern Irish variant occurs in the

words *account* and *down*. Meanwhile, *now* sounds almost like the diphthong in PRICE [ai]. This pronunciation is characteristic of Belfast (Wells, 1982, p. 443) and so is the NURSE-NORTH merger occurring in the word *turn*, which is the last feature in this speech sample.

Apart from the NIrE phonetic realisations described above which contribute to the authenticity of Audio 3, the actress uses four lexical items that, research suggests, are common in the speech of many people in NI and the ROI. They are the phrases *catch yourself on* and *for God's sake* and the words *aye* and *da*. According to the *Urban Dictionary*[13], the first phrase is used to tell someone "to stop being so ridiculous and to come back down to earth" (Noholdenback, 2018). It has a similar meaning to one other Irish expression, namely *wise up*. Share (2005) also provides a definition for *catch yourself on*: "come to a realisation of something, adopt a normal view" (p. 52). Moreover, Walshe (2017) claims that this lexical item is typical of NIrE on the basis of his finding that the item only appears in Northern Irish films but is absent from Southern Irish ones.

As for the affirmative interjection *aye*, it is found in Ireland and represented in Irish telecinematic fiction (Walshe, 2012, 2016). Its occurrence is, nevertheless, noticeably higher in NI than in the southern part. Walshe (2016, p. 332) finds evidence of this both in his corpus of Irish films and in *SPICE-Ireland*[14], a corpus of spoken language that comprises text types that range from formal to informal, scripted to unscripted and public to private (see Kallen & Kirk, 2012). *Aye* appears in 38 Northern Irish films, but only in 3 films from the ROI. In *SPICE-Ireland*, there are 426 examples of *aye* in texts from NI, as opposed to the 25 instances found in the ROI component of the corpus.

Although the etymology of *aye* is not clear (see different suggestions of its origin in the *Oxford English Dictionary*), its use is common in Gaelic-influenced varieties of English, i.e., Scottish, Irish and Welsh English. This is due to the absence of the particles *yes* and *no* in Gaelic (Smith-Christmas, 2016, p. 66). Consequently, as seen in Audio 3, *aye* usually functions as the adverb expressing affirmation or agreement.

Although the use of *for God's sake* is not limited to Ireland, its significance lies in the high salience of religious expressions in the IrE dialect (Walshe, 2011, pp. 137-

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[13] The *Urban Dictionary* is an online dictionary of slang where anyone can write a definition of a term or, as Smith (2011) describes it, "an online democratic dictionary shaped by the masses" (p. 45). In spite of being a non-academic source, it can provide useful information about lay people's perceptions of language since the definitions found in the Urban Dictionary are frequently subjective. Moreover, it can be used as source of evidence about enregisterment (Vaughan & Moriarty, 2018, p. 17).

[14] *SPICE-Ireland* is the spoken component of the *ICE-Ireland* mentioned in Section 4.2.5.

138). Irish people use a greater variety of religious references and to a greater degree than speakers of other English varieties (Amador-Moreno, 2010; O'Keeffee & Adolphs, 2008) and that is why those references have come to be "ubiquitously acceptable" (Farr & Murphy, 2009). In their corpus-based study, Farr and Murphy (2009) ascertain that religious expressions, which were once taboo, have lost their religious tones and are now used as pragmatic markers that convey feelings of surprise, excitement, impatience, pity and, as is the case in Audio 3, anger and annoyance.

Walshe finds instances of *da* (*dad*) in 24 out of the 50 Irish films that make up his corpus (2009, p. 141). In addition to films, *da* also appears in Irish joke books published in Ireland between 1968 and 2016 (Walshe, 2020, p. 184). The representation of this lexical item in Irish films and joke books serves as proof that its use is widespread in Ireland, including both the Republic and NI.

As a conclusion, it can be said that the combination of Northern Irish pronunciation and lexical features in Ma Mary's accent in the *Derry Girls* TV show seem to lend authentic Irishness to it. It would also be interesting to analyse the accents of other characters such as Erin and Michelle, two of the "Derry girls" that are played by two (London)Derry actresses, in future studies. This analysis would make it possible to determine whether the accents represented in the show are as authentic as Northern Irish audiences have claimed (see McDonald, 2018).

In the fourth auditory stimuli (Figure 5.4.) respondents listen to a Ballymena actor who, according to the director of *Counter Punch*, was told to use his native Ballymena accent in the film. Thus, the actor's accent matches that of his character, and this results in what seems to be a rather authentic representation.

Figure 5.4.

Audio 4 (transcript) (https://youtu.be/QgXCWxEOSeI)

Speaker: … the last figh**t** and drun**k** the way he was and embarrassed y**ou** like that but that was tw**o** years ago. You're a talented **lad**, you shouldn't throw that away. That was a long **t**ime ago, son. Don't make the s**a**me mistakes that I did and let o**th**er things get in your way. Get back in the ring!

The first pronunciation feature to be encountered in Audio 4 is the glottalisation of word-

final plosives in *fight* and *drunk*. As already pointed out in Section 3.3., this is an USc feature and, as such, marks the speaker out as someone from an USc-influenced area like Ballymena.

Two other Northern Irish features found in the speech sample above are U-fronting, which occurs in *you* and *two*, and the dropping of /ð/ in the word *other*. Researchers have recorded the occurrence of TH-dropping in different parts of NI, including Coleraine (Kingsmore, 1983), a town located within the boundaries of the same USc area to which Ballymena belongs. This probably means that, despite not being attested in scholarly publications, the dropping of TH can also be found in Ballymena. This is consistent with McCafferty's (2001, pp. 149-157) hypothesis that this feature is a twentieth-century urban innovation that has spread from Belfast to smaller urban centres like (London)Derry, Coleraine, and most likely, also Ballymena.

The realisations of the PRICE and FACE diphthongs in *time* and *same* also sound Northern Irish.

In addition to the pronunciation features just described above, there is a lexical item that appears to lend authenticity to the speech sample. That item is *lad*, a word used to refer to a young man or as an affectionate term for a male of any age (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). This word is not exclusive to Ireland but is particularly frequent in IrE (see Tully, 2021; Walshe, 2011). Walshe reports on the occurrence of *lad* in Irish films (Walshe, 2009), in an Irish TV show (Walshe, 2011) and even in comics (Walshe, 2012). Apart from that, he also explains that the use of *lad* as a vocative, which is the most common function found in the fiction he analyses, has "Stage Irish connotations" (Walshe, 2012, p. 273). This means that *lad* has been overused in fictional representations of IrE, causing it to be perceived as a stereotyped and stigmatised feature. Nevertheless, these stereotypical connotations do not apply to the phrase *good lad* (Walshe, 2009, p. 141). In Audio 4, *lad* does not function as a vocative either. Instead, it is part of the phrase *talented lad* (Tully, 2021 discusses collocations with *lad* in her *Corpus of Contemporary Male Irish Writers*).

5.3.3.1.2. Videos

Shane Todd, the speaker in the first clip, plays the role of Laurence Lyle, the Head of Public Relations within the fictional security agency *Soft Border Patrol*. He works from his office in the headquarters of the agency which are based in Belfast. Even though working in Belfast does not necessarily mean that the character is from the Northern Irish

capital, the fact that the actor is from the nearby town of Holywood may have helped to make him a good fit for the character. Whatever the reasons for choosing Todd, there are no substantial grounds for believing that his accent should sound inauthentic in the context of the comedy. The only obstacle to authenticity might be the comic nature of *Soft Border Patrol*, which frequently leads actors to exaggerate their accent/dialect and use stereotypical features. This may be the case for Todd's accent performance since, as will be shown in Section 6.2.1.2., it is considered to be the second most inauthentic stimulus, only outranked by the poem.

As can be seen in Figure 5.5. below, Video 1 is full of dialectal features, both phonetic and lexical, which reveal straightaway that the speaker is from NI. From the point of view of pronunciation, one of the most prominent features is the realisation of the FACE diphthong as the monophthong [ɛː]. This takes place in several words throughout the clip, namely *way*, *days* and *playing*.

Figure 5.5.

Video 1 (transcript) (https://youtu.be/wMV7xQPXSWw)

> Speaker: Then, it **sort of** went the other w**ay** and it was all l**i**ght, it was all l**o**vely, you know it's like Van M**o**rrison 'D**ay**s like Th**i**s' pl**a**ying, **wee lads** making friends on the beach. L**o**vely. But the t**i**me is r**i**ght for a new song, a new anthem.

A second distinctive Northern Irish pronunciation found in this video is the raising of PRICE in *light*, *time* and *right*. In the first word, the fully raised allophone [eɪ] is produced, while in the other two there is slight raising. Another word that sounds Northern Irish is *lovely*, where /ʌ/ undergoes some rounding. As regards the realisations of /i/ in *this*, it is representative of the lowered realisation of the KIT lexical set. Finally, the pronunciation of the surname of Scottish origin *Morrison* stands out. Whereas this surname is pronounced /ˈmɒr.ɪ.sən/ in Standard Southern British English, Todd substitutes the LOT vowel for the open back unrounded vowel [ɑ] which is long in terms of vowel quantity because it is followed by /r/. *Morrison* therefore shows two Northern Irish features: the LOT-TRAP merger and the lengthening of vowels in SVLR environments (the SVLR is explained in Section 3.4.).

As for vocabulary, the speaker uses the phrase *wee lads*, a usual combination of two words that are part of the NIrE lexicon (see the explanation for *lad* above). *Wee*, which derives from Old English *wǣge* meaning *weight*, is defined by Kirkpatrick (2006) as "one of Scotland's major linguistic contributions to the English language where it is quite common" (p. 148). Thus, this lexical item was taken to NI by Scottish settlers (Schneider, 2013, p. 143). It has been typically used as an adjective meaning "very small or little". Nonetheless, its use is so widespread in the northern region that it does not always retain that meaning. In offers and invitations, as in "Would you like a wee cup of tea?", *wee* does not necessarily imply that the cup will be small. It is used as a means of showing politeness. As for the geographical distribution of this adjective, it seems to be a characteristically Northern Irish feature. In Walshe's corpus of Irish films (both northern and southern), *wee* occurs almost exclusively in Northern Irish movies (Walshe, 2016, p. 338).

Apart from the phrase *wee lads*, one can also find the discourse marker *sort of* which, despite not being unique to NIrE, is common in NI and contrasts with its Southern Irish equivalent *kind of*. Analyses carried out by Kallen and Kirk (2012) and Kirk (2015) reveal that 80% of all *sort-of* cases are found in the northern component of *SPICE-Ireland* while *kind of* represents 75% of the overall number of cases in the southern subcorpus. Even if neither of these two markers is restricted to one side of the Irish border, Kirk (2015) asserts that "the distribution of *kind-of/sort-of* splits significantly along political lines in confirmation of what Kallen and Kirk have called "the political hypothesis", whereby the main linguistic divisions are ascribable to the two geopolitical zones on the island" (p. 110). Furthermore, the Northern Irish preference for *sort of* seems to be a way of expressing affiliation with Britain where the use of this marker is also favoured.

Considering that the features just described are all attested in NI, there are reasons to believe that the representation of the accent in Video 1 is authentic. The following stimulus whose authenticity needs verification is Video 3 since Video 2 is the control item and contains a SSBE accent (https://youtu.be/yvFnEvPLGQ0), which is not the focus of the present study.

The third audiovisual stimulus (Figure 5.6.) contains the voice of the Tyrone actor Nigel O'Neill. Information about his hometown was nowhere to be found, hence the need to contact Chris Baugh, the director of the film, who informed that O'Neill is from County Tyrone. Being from this county, he probably has a more rural Northern Irish accent which may be one of the reasons why he was offered the lead role as a farmer in *Bad Day for*

the Cut. There is no reference to places in the film, so it is likely that the director was not interested in any specific rural accent and that O'Neill's accent seemed appropriate.

Figure 5.6.

Video 3 (transcript)(https://youtu.be/LIudb3-C_NM)

> Speaker: I saw a man leaving the h**ou**se. Clean sh**a**ven, l**i**ght h**ai**r, fancy loo**k**ing **sort of** b**oy**. (Interruption: You were outside?) I was sleeping in the sh**e**d. I heard noises, I went to loo**k** and saw two men leaving the h**ou**se

The analysis of the different accent/dialectal features produced by O'Neill will help determine if his accent in Video 3 is authentically rural. The first feature that deserves attention is the realisation of the MOUTH lexical set in *house* as [əʉ], one of the most widespread allophones in NI which is also recorded in Tyrone (Maguire, 2020, pp. 110-111). *Shaven* is representative of the NIrE pronunciation of the FACE diphthong as [ɪˑə]. This allophone, which has been mainly attested in the urban centres of Belfast (Harris, 1985) and (London)Derry (McCafferty, 2001), is also found in the southwest of Co. Tyrone (Maguire, 2020, p. 112). Another Northern Irish feature produced by the speaker is the raising of the PRICE diphthong in *light* which sounds like [lɵit]. While the three diphthongs discussed above are realised as diphthongs in NI, the same is not true for the SQUARE diphthong in *hair*. The SSBE phoneme /eə/ has a monophthongal pronunciation with [ɛ], the common allophone in Northern Irish accents. As for CHOICE in the word *boy*, it remains a diphthong but with some changes in quality. The way *boy* is pronounced can be transcribed as [bɔˑe]. Maguire (2020) finds evidence of this allophone in southwest Tyrone English (p. 102). The last vowel sound in clip 3 whose pronunciation diverges from SSBE is the DRESS vowel in *shed*. The /e/ vowel is lowered to [ɛ], the open-mid front cardinal vowel. Moreover, since the vowel in *shed* is followed by a final voiced consonant (see "Voicing Effect" in Maguire, 2020, pp. 115-116), it is long and develops an [ə] offglide, thereby resulting in the allophone [ɛːˑ] which is recorded in Belfast (Harris, 1985) as well as in southwest Tyrone (Maguire, 2020).

Regarding consonants, there seems to be some glottal reinforcement of the velar /k/ both intervocalically (*looking*) and in final position (*look*). As seen in Section 3.3, glottalisation is typical of USc or places close to USc-speaking areas such as Belfast

(Harris, 1984) and (London)Derry (McCafferty, 2001, p. 134). Its occurrence in the speech of a Tyrone speaker like O'Neill may indicate that glottalisation is spreading from the cities of Belfast and (London)Derry to rural areas further south, following the process of the *gravity model*, which, as further discussed in Section 6.2.1.4.5., entails that linguistic innovations travel from larger to smaller urban centres and from there to more rural towns (Trudgill, 1974a; Chambers & Trudgill, 1980).

Most of the pronunciation features present in Video 3 are shown to occur in Co. Tyrone. Thus, it appears to be the case that the Tyrone accent represented in this stimulus is authentic. In addition, the use of the aforementioned discourse marker *sort of* further contributes to the authenticity of the speech sample.

Video 4 (Figure 5.7.) differs from the previous ones in that it is a conversation between two people. However, the fact that the two speakers are the same person makes Video 4 suitable for this study. The speaker in this clip is the Belfast actress Naseen Morgan who plays the role of Kerri, a young woman who wants to be a singer. The setting of *Incoming Call* is not relevant, but a few Belfast landmarks can be recognised in the film. As a result, a Belfast accent seems appropriate for it.

Figure 5.7.

Video 4 (transcript)(https://youtu.be/kkHGf3Qxe9k)

Speaker 1: Kerry: Hello?

Speaker 2: Hello

Speaker 1: Hello?

Speaker 2: Don't go on stage, you hear me? **Don't be going** on

Speaker 1: What? Who is this?

Speaker 2: Really? Really?

Speaker 1: I don't understand, how are you able to

Speaker 2: It's me am… **For God's sake**. Look, I don't know how long I have, just **don't be going** on stage, ok?

Speaker 1: Why? Why? What's wrong? What you mean?

Speaker 2: I have managed to mess everything in my life up right now and I think this is a second chance, so you need to take this seriously

The speech sample above contains many of the features that have already been found in other stimuli. Those are:

1. Monophthongal realisation of GOAT in *don't* and *going*.
2. U-fronting in *who* and *to* as well as in the MOUTH lexical set in the words *how* and *now*.
3. Raising of the PRICE diphthong in *why* and *life*.
4. Slight rounding of the STRUT vowel in *up*

However, there is also a difference between the realisation of the FACE lexical set in this clip and its realisation in other voice samples. This set has the Belfast vernacular diphthong [ɪə] in *stage* rather than the monophthong [ɛː] as reported in Audio 2 and Video 1. This difference, though, is not related to regional variation but to the different phonological environment surrounding the vowel sound. The allophone [ɪə] is produced in *stage* because the vowel is followed by a consonant sound. Meanwhile, words like *way, day* and *playing* (found in Audio 2 and Video 1) where the FACE vowel is in final position or before a morpheme boundary are realised as [ɛː] (Harris, 1985, pp. 48-49; Maguire, 2020, p. 112; Wells, 1982, pp. 440-441).

Apart from these pronunciation features, there are two features that stick out from the speech fragment in Video 4, one lexical and one grammatical. The lexical item is the religious expression *for God's sake* and the grammatical feature is the negative imperative *don't be going*. This non-standard structure seems to be a transfer from Irish that became commonplace in IrE by the end of the 18th century (Hickey, 2007, pp. 222-223). Its use is recorded in nineteenth-century literature (ibid.), telecinematic fiction (Walshe, 2009, 2011, 2016) and in Terrazas-Calero's (2022) *Corpus of Fictionalised Irish English* (CoFIrE), a corpus of Irish literary fiction published in the ROI between 1993-2014. While the negative imperative can be found all across Ireland, Walshe (2016) postulates that it is slightly more frequent in the north. In support of his claim, he presents the finding that this structure is used in 45% of the Northern Irish films he analyses, as opposed to a 40% in southern movies (p. 329). More interesting, though, is that Walshe's data shows that there is a difference in the way northern and southern people use the negative imperative. People in NI, according to Walshe (ibid.), often prefer to include an overt subject between *don't* and *be* (as in *don't you be*), whereas speakers in the south do not usually add the subject.
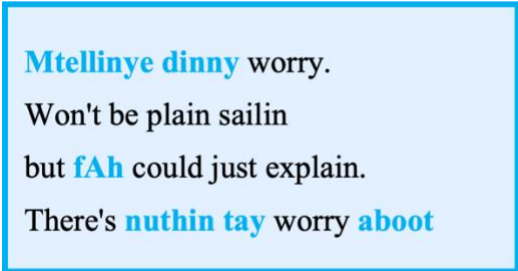
The use of the non-standard negative imperative does not mean that the standard form, that is, *don't* + verb, is not employed in NI. In Video 4, for example, the *don't be going* is preceded by *don't go*. The giving of this command, first, in the standard, and second, in the non-standard form may suggest that using the latter entails placing greater emphasis on the urgency of the command. Although this example does not prove anything, it might be worth studying whether the choice of one or other form depends on some factor such as context or whether the two forms are used interchangeably.

The combination of pronunciation, lexical and grammatical features whose occurrence in NI, and more precisely Belfast, has been proven in scholarly publications seems reason enough to say that the Belfast accent represented in clip 4 is authentic.

5.3.3.1.3. Literature

Figure 5.8.
Poem

> Mtellinye dinny worry.
> Won't be plain sailin
> but fAh could just explain.
> There's nuthin tay worry aboot

Given that the author of this text is from the area whose accent she is trying to represent, there are chances to believe in the authenticity of this example of literary dialect. Nonetheless, in order to decide whether the representation of an USc-influenced North Antrim accent in this fragment is authentic, it is necessary to examine whether the respellings employed convey pronunciations that are characteristic of that area. In doing so, a distinction needs to be made between the three types of respellings distinguished by Preston (1985), namely allegro speech, eye dialect and dialect respellings (for further information on respellings, go to Section 4.3.5.). In the poem there are two instances of allegro speech: *mtellinye* and *fAh*. The former stands for *I am telling you* and the latter, for *If I*. These respellings are the result of an attempt to represent connected speech so that the poem sounds like casual speech. From the point of view of authenticity, allegro speech forms do not usually provide information about the specific dialect of the character

and are therefore of little use for measuring whether the representation is authentic. However, not only are the two forms mentioned above examples of allegro speech, but they also contain dialectal forms which are useful for assessing authenticity. In the case of *mtellinye*, the poet uses *ye* that is the USc word for the second-person pronoun *you* (Robinson, 2012). As for *fAh*, *Ah* is the USc first-person pronoun although its most common form is *A*. Even though the English form *I* is sometimes used, *A/Ah* is usually favoured since it is a quasi-phonetic spelling that represents the USc pronunciation of the pronoun. That is probably the reason why many writers who render Scots in their literary works use it. Two of those authors are Irvine Welsh and Janet Paisley.

In addition to allegro speech, the writer respells the words *don't*, *to* and *nothing* as *dinny*, *tay* and *nuthin* respectively. The USc equivalents all contain the digraph *ae* (*dinnae*, *tae* and *naethin*) which is characteristic of this dialect/language. The poet could have used the USc spellings but opts not to do it because her aim is not representing USc but portraying an USc-influenced accent in writing. As a result, she uses different spellings to convey an USc pronunciation. In *dinny* she replaces the USc *ae* with the letter *y* which suggests a pronunciation with short [i]. Both *ae* and *y* are realised as [i] but the latter is an English version of the USc word that is easier to interpret by English-speaking readers, who are most likely the poet's target audience. The word *to* is spelled *tay* since *ay* suggests that the vowel sound is [eɪ], the diphthong produced in the USc form *tae* (Herbinson et al., 2012). The respelling *nuthin* is different from the other two since the vowel letter *u* would never be pronounced as [eɪ], the USc realisation, by an English speaker. According to the English sound-spelling correspondences, the pronunciation probably suggested by letter *u* in a word like *nuthin* is [ʌ]. If the writer's intention were to convey a realisation with [ʌ], *nuthin* would then be an example of eye dialect since it does not represent a dialectal pronunciation but the SSBE realisation of *nothing* /ˈnʌθɪŋ/. This seems the most plausible hypothesis.

The last respelling to be discussed is *aboot* which stands for *about*. Even though *aboot* is the USc word for the English preposition (Robinson, 2012), the likely explanation for its use in the poem is that substituting *ou* for *oo* allows the author to suggest how the SSBE phoneme /aʊ/ is realised as the fronted variant [ʉ] in the USc-influenced dialect of North Antrim.

The fact that the features portrayed are attested in USc means that the literary dialect in this poem can be considered authentic.

The prose extract (Figure 5.9. below) is full of respellings which can be classified

into three groups: allegro speech forms, USc-influenced forms and English-influenced forms. The first group encompasses instances of an alveolar realisation of the ING suffix in *havin'*, *makin'*, *somethin'* and *sittin'* and of final-D-dropping in *an'*. Both of these features are geographically widespread and are characteristic of informal speech. As a result, they do not provide dialectal information. Molloy, the novelist, uses these respellings to endow the text with informality which fits the spontaneity and vividness of her storytelling. Meanwhile, the USc-influenced and English-influenced forms suggest specific pronunciation features that occur in NI.

Figure 5.9.

Novel

Me ma's people were great at havin' family reunions. When a was a wee wain a was always took te them. A don't know why they had these doos because they always ended in ructions. They would start aff paseably enough way me granny [...], makin' wile big feeds of goose or turkey or somethin' like that an' iverybody sittin' down thegether to ate it on a Sunday.

USc influence can be seen in the following respellings: *a*, *te*, *iverybody*, *thegether* and *way*. As shown above, *A*, sometimes *Ah*, is the first-person singular pronoun in USc. With regard to *te*, while it could be a respelling suggesting that the conjunction *to* is pronounced as [tə], the weak form of the word that is common in spoken language, there seems to be a more plausible explanation. *Te* reminds of *tae*, the USc form of the conjunction which rhymes with FACE (Herbinson et al., 2012, p. 15). The pronunciation recorded for the FACE lexical set in 20th-century Scots, as well as in English, is [e:] (Maguire, 2020, p. 111), a realisation that can be suggested by the non-standard spelling *te*. Thus, Molloy's use of *te* seems due to an attempt to represent the USc form of *to* while avoiding the USc spelling. As for *iverybody* and *thegether*, they are halfway between the English spelling (*everybody* and *together* respectively) and the USc forms (*iverie* and *thegither*). However, their suggested pronunciation seems closer to USc. In fact, the respellings *iverybody* and *thegether* display two USc features. The first one is the raising of short /e/ to [ɪ] in *every*. Even though this feature is also attested by Hickey (2007), who claims that it is a historical IrE feature that "is common today, but only in south-western and mid-western rural Irish

English and only in pre-nasal position" (p. 305), it seems more reasonable that the raising represented in this prose extract is due to USc influence given that Molloy's hometown, that is, Dungiven, is just a few kilometres away from the Antrim USc area. The second feature is lexical, but it affects pronunciation. In USc, the word *together* is made up of *the*, an abbreviation of *this* (Herbinson et al., 2012, p. 28), plus *gather* rather than of the preposition *to* plus *gather*. This means that the first sound to be produced in *thegether* is the dental fricative /ð/. As regards *way*, it suggests the lowering and realisation of the KIT vowel in the preposition *with*, a feature of Scots origin that is widespread in MUE (Maguire, 2020, pp. 103-106), the variety spoken in Dungiven. Furthermore, this respelling also indicates that the final consonant /ð/ is dropped. The rationale behind this dropping has to do with the fact that the USc form of *with* is *wi* (Robinson, 2012, p. 34). This is not to say that the dropping of the voiced dental fricative in final position is common in USc. Whereas TH is frequently dropped in medial position in Scots (Macafee, 1983; Stuart-Smith, 1999) and in NIrE (McCafferty, 2001), examples of final TH-dropping have not been found in those varieties and therefore the word *with* appears to be a special case. The last USc-influenced respelling to be discussed is *doos*, a modified spelling of the noun *do* whose meaning is "a social event such as a party" (Macmillan English Dictionary, n.d.). The use of double *oo* which suggests a pronunciation with long /u/ does not appear to make sense at first since the word *do* already has /u:/ in SSBE. Nevertheless, the *oo* respelling reminds of the USc spelling of English *ou* (*about* is *aboot* in USc) which is realised as the fronted variant [ʉ]. Thus, it seems likely that the writer is suggesting a fronted realisation of /u/ by the use of *doos*.

The non-standard spellings that are representative of English-influenced pronunciations in NI are *me* and *aff*. The former stands for *my* and is an instance of long I-retention, a historical feature of IrE whose source is English according to Hickey (2007, p. 243). Moreover, as Walshe (2020) points out, the realisation of *my* /maɪ/ as [mi:] "has become so entrenched" that it has been lexicalised in the form of *me* (p. 184). Its lexicalisation is likely to be the cause and effect of the use of *me* in Irish written and audiovisual fiction (Walshe, 2009, 2020). The latter respelling, i.e., *aff*, indicates that the LOT vowel is lowered and unrounded. This feature is recorded in the MUE area including Belfast (Harris, 1985; Wells, 1982) and "has its origin in the seventeenth-century English input to Ulster" (Maguire, 2020, p. 110).

As for the respellings *paseably* and *ate*, they represent the occurrence of unraised long E. The [e:] realisation of the FACE lexical set is not only found in NIrE but also in

SIrE and USc (Hickey, 2007, pp. 304-305; Maguire, 2020, pp. 111-113). This makes it difficult to know whether the presence of this feature in NI is due to the influence of English, Scots or both.

In addition to pronunciation features, Molloy also incorporates Northern Irish vocabulary and grammar. She uses lexical items such as *wee*, *ma*, *wain* and *wile*. Of these four, three, namely *wee*, *wain* and *wile*, were taken to NI by Scottish settlers. *Wain,* also spelled *wean*, means child and originates from the blending of *wee* and *ane*, the Scots word for *one* (Fenton, 1995, p. 226). This dialectal word is not only recorded in dictionaries (Dolan, 1998; Patterson, 1880; Robinson, 1999), but also in online glossaries about Northern Irish vocabulary (see for example Nelson, 2018). On the other hand, *wile* is the Scots spelling of *wild* which can function as an adjective or as an adverb meaning "very" or "extremely" (Fenton, 1995, p. 235), as is the case in the prose extract. *Wile* can also be found in online dictionaries such as the *Urban Dictionary* and *The Online Slang Dictionary* where it is described as a Northern Irish word.

The word *took* is highlighted in green because it is representative of a grammatical feature that is common in NI: "the tendency not to differentiate between the past tense and the past participle forms of verbs" (Todd, 1984, p. 169). However, it must be noticed that this feature is not exclusive to NI and has been attested in IrE more generally, in USc and in other dialects (Edwards & Weltens, 1985, pp. 109-110; Hickey, 2004, p. 125; Hickey, 2007, p. 108). In the sentence "I was always *took* te them", *took* is an example of the use of the past tense form for the past participle. This non-standard feature might result from the influence of USc which has two rather than three verb forms as in NIrE. The verb *take*, for instance, has *tuk* for both the past tense and the past participle (Robinson, 2012, p. 40).

The novel presents readers with many USc-influenced features. This could be expected given that the literary dialect the author uses aims to portray the variety spoken in Dungiven, a town near the border of the USc area of North Antrim. Thus, the selection of those features confers linguistic authenticity on the text.

In his representation of Belfast working-class speech in the fragment taken from the play *Dockers* (Figure 5.10.), Lynch uses some of the features that have been found in the other stimuli. There is alveolarisation of the ING suffix in *askin'*, *something'* and *pushin'*; lack of raising of long E in *spake* and *Jasus*; and fronting to [i] of the second element of the MOUTH diphthong in *nigh*, a respelling of *now*. In addition to these, he also represents allegro speech by merging *should* and *have* into *shoulda* and incorporates the

lexical item *lad*.

Figure 5.10.

Play

Leg: Did you hear Henry to me? J**a**sus, you'd think I was aski**n'** for somethi**n'** I'm not entitled to. A man should be able to sp**ake** his mind even if he wanted twenty sons into the union.

Buckets: I thought you had a son in, Leg.

Leg: The eldest **lad**, Hughie, he should**a** been in. The union books closed two days before he left school and he's pushi**n'** thirty n**igh**.

All the respellings used by Lynch contribute to evoking a Belfast accent even though, as will be seen in Chapter 6, *Jasus* seems to sound Dublin for two informants. It is likely that this respelling recalls the lexicalised religious exclamation *Jaysus* (Hickey, 2007, p. 305). This lexicalised pronunciation is used in Irish films and jokes (Walshe, 2009, 2020) and has come to be associated with vernacular Dublin English (Hickey, 2005, p. 204). The association between *Jaysus* and Dublin English, which is even recorded in the *Urban Dictionary* (Desigol, 2004), may compromise the authenticity of the representation even if Lynch has changed the spelling to *Jasus*. That is why it might have been better to avoid the use of this respelling. Notwithstanding this, and since an unraised long E is also common in NI, the portrayal of the Belfast accent in the play can be considered authentic.

5.3.4. Items

Once the informants had listened to or read one stimulus, they were asked to answer some questions or items. The questions used in the pilot study underwent some modifications aimed at making the questionnaire more reliable, informative, homogeneous and easy to fill out. Those changes, which are explained in the remainder of this chapter, involved deleting some items, replacing others and adding some new ones.

5.3.4.1. Part 1: Audios and Part 2: Videos

5.3.4.1.1. Item 1: Salience

The first question that informants needed to answer read as follows: "The pronunciation

of which words make the speaker sound Northern Irish?". The three possible answers for this item were "The speaker does not sound Northern Irish", "Cannot tell which words" and a text box to write the words participants believed to sound Northern Irish. This question, which was only added to the final questionnaire, aimed to investigate whether informants were able to notice some Northern Irish features present in the pronunciation of some words. As will be explained in Sections 6.3.1. and 6.3.1.1., responses to Item 1 shed some light on language awareness and on the salience of some of the features represented in the stimuli.

5.3.4.1.2. Item 2: Authenticity

The first question that respondents were presented with after listening to an auditory or audiovisual stimulus in the pilot study was the following: "How many people speak with that accent in Northern Ireland?". To answer this question, informants had to choose from a 6-point Likert scale where 1 was *Everyone*, 2 *Most*, 3 *Many*, 4 *Some*, 5 *Few* and 6 *No-one*. This item was used to measure the authenticity of the performed accents. Consequently, circling *Everyone* or *Most* was taken to mean that informants considered the accent represented to be easily found in real-life Northern Irish speech and therefore authentic. Conversely, if they chose *Few* or *No-one*, that was supposed to suggest that the accent portrayed was inauthentic since it did not match any or few Northern Irish accents.

The pilot study revealed that this item did not adequately measure authenticity. A male informant from Co. Armagh circled *Some* for all audios and videos and when inquired about the reason for this, he argued that there were many Northern Irish accents, and therefore speakers of one specific accent are just "some" in the whole of NI. Similarly, it is impossible that "everyone" in NI has the same accent as one of the speakers in the stimuli. In fact, *Everyone* was selected for none of the stimuli.

Moreover, during the short conversation that followed the questionnaire, the Armagh respondent pointed out that most of the accents represented in the stimuli were Belfast and suggested that I should include some examples of rural Northern Irish accents. This recommendation, which, as can be seen in Section 5.3.3., was taken into account for the final draft of the questionnaire, seems to denote a desire for seeing the representation of a wider variety of Northern Irish accents on screen.

Due to the unsuitability of the above question to provide information on the perceived authenticity of accents, it was replaced by a new and more straightforward item: a Visual Analog Scale (VAS) where informants had to indicate the degree of authenticity

of the representation. The ends of the scale were *Very authentic* and *Very inauthentic* and respondents had to move a slider to a point in the scale that fit their perception (see Appendix 4). The advantages of using a VAS, which are explained in Section 4.3.1.2., prompted its use in the final questionnaire.

5.3.4.1.3. Item 3: Attitudinal dimensions

The third item to be found after each stimulus was a group of seven 6-point semantic differential scales preceded by the question "How would you describe the accent of the speaker? Put a cross on the line where you would put the accent on these scales". The semantic differentials were bipolar adjective scales of the type first used by Osgood et al. (1957). Four of the scales measured perceived prestige, one of the traditional attitudinal dimensions found in research on language attitudes (Zahn & Hopper, 1985). These were *Acceptable-Unacceptable*, *Educated-Uneducated*, *Standard-Non-standard* and *Correct-Incorrect*. The adjectives used to measure the pleasantness dimension were *Gentle-Tough* and *Pleasant-Unpleasant*. The reason why these scales were chosen was either because they had been employed in previous perceptual studies (Preston, 1999b; Ryan & Giles, 1982) or because they seemed clear enough to be easily interpreted by respondents. Apart from these scales, I incorporated one more pair of adjectives that did not fall within the prestige or pleasantness dimensions. That pair was *Comic-Neutral*, a scale that has not been used in language attitudes research but that is relevant for the present study. Its relevance stems from the fact that, as already mentioned, there is a long-standing tradition of representing dialects in fiction to achieve a comic effect (see Section 4.2.1. for more detail on the use of literary dialect for comic purposes). This tradition has been further reinforced by the use of dialects mainly in comedy. As a result of this, people's minds have come to correlate dialect representation with humour. Adding a scale measuring comic quality will make it possible to investigate the strength of that correlation for each of the representations and see the factors that have an influence on it.

For the creation of the final questionnaire, two main changes were made to the pilot semantic differentials. The first of them consisted in reducing the number of points of the scales from 6 to 4. While an even number of points was still used in order to avoid the ambiguity of the mid-point, having 4 points seemed to be a better alternative since the lower the number of points, the easier it is for informants to discriminate between the points. Moreover, since participants have fewer options to choose from, a 4-point scale probably allows for a faster completion, which, at the same time, may increase the

likelihood that the scale ratings are guided by informants' free from bias subconscious attitudes.

The second modification had to do with the pair of adjectives used. One of them was removed, some remained the same, others were slightly modified and, finally, some new ones were included. The deleted pair of adjectives was *Correct-Incorrect* which, in spite of being widely used by scholars interested in the field of language perception, caused confusion among several of the pilot participants when rating the accents on this scale. Regarding the pairs that remained unchanged, they were *Acceptable-Unacceptable*, *Educated-Uneducated*, *Gentle-Tough*, *Standard-Non-standard* and *Pleasant-Unpleasant*. Meanwhile, in the scale *Comic-Neutral*, the latter adjective was replaced by *Not comic*. The rationale behind this modification was the fuzzy meaning of *Neutral*, together with the fact that this adjective was not the opposite of *Comic*. *Comic* is one of those words that has no exact opposite. In view of this, the best option was to make comic a negative adjective by adding the adverb "not" (Garrett et al., 2003, p. 65; Oppenheim, 1992, p. 239).

Apart from these changes, four new scales were incorporated to the list of semantic differentials: *Friendly-Unfriendly*, *Rural-Urban*, *Intelligible-Unintelligible* and *Mild-Broad*. The reason for the addition of the first scale was to have the same number of Pleasantness as of Prestige scales. There were already three Prestige scales, namely *Acceptable-Unacceptable*, *Educated-Uneducated* and *Standard-Non-standard*, but only two Pleasantness scales, *Gentle-Tough* and *Pleasant-Unpleasant*. *Friendly-Unfriendly* seemed a suitable pair of adjectives to be used as the third Pleasantness scale since it was easy to interpret and had been used in previous research on language attitudes (for example, Lambert et al., 1965; Ryan & Sebastian, 1980; Zahn & Hopper, 1985). As for the *Rural-Urban* scale, it was used as a way of checking whether informants were able to identify which accents were rural and which, urban. Overall, respondents proved successful in the identification of rural and urban accents and that is why the results for the *Rural-Urban* scale are not further discussed in this dissertation.

At this point, it is important to note that respondents in my questionnaire were asked to rate the accents represented in the stimuli rather than the speakers of the stimuli, as is the case of most language attitude studies (see the question that introduces the semantic differentials in Appendix 4). Considering this, the *Intelligible-Unintelligible* and *Mild-Broad* scales were worth including, inasmuch as they are frequently used to describe accents by lay people.

The semantic differential scales that I employed in the final version of the questionnaire are a combination of the more traditional Prestige and Pleasantness scales and some new scales that are relevant in the context of the present study.

There is one last aspect that needs to be considered and that is the order of the pairs of adjectives. The only concern when ordering the scales was to avoid having all the adjectives representative of the same dimension together. Apart from that, the distribution of the polarised adjectives in the two columns was such that, even though most of the positive adjectives were on the left, two of them, namely *Mild* and *Gentle*, were placed on the right column. Putting all the positive adjectives in the same column, as was done in the pilot study, might result in what Oppenheim refers to as the "halo effect" (1992):

> A different form of the halo effect expresses itself in a response set. if the rating scales are arranged one underneath the other and always with the 'good' (socially desirable) end on the left-hand side and the 'bad' end on the right, the respondents -having once made up their minds that they are favourably disposed toward the object of the ratings- may run down the page always checking the position on the left, or vice versa, without actually reading the items or giving each of them separate thought. To counteract this, we try to randomize the direction of the scales, so that the socially most desirable end falls sometimes on the left and sometimes on the right. (pp. 231-232)

Thus, two positive adjectives were placed on the left rather than on the right column to prevent the halo effect and to identify participants who might have been influenced by it[15]. It could be argued that more positive adjectives should have been located on the right end of the scale. Nonetheless, this was not done because too much randomising might cause confusion among informants.

5.3.4.1.4. Item 4 (Audios): Sociolinguistic stereotypes

The third question for audios was "How would you imagine the person that is speaking? In terms of physical appearance, clothing, age, occupation, personality, religion and

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[15] Two of the three validation experts recommended that I should put all the positive adjectives in the same column. However, I finally decided not to do this because the risk of being influenced by the halo effect seemed greater than the risk of being confused by the distribution of the scale adjectives.

neighbourhood". This item was included to obtain data about possible cognitive connections between Northern Irish accents and certain social features and about the formation and/or existence of sociolinguistic stereotypes. It was used in both the pilot and final questionnaire but some changes were made to the social categories (physical appearance, clothing, age, etc.). After analysing the answers provided by the pilot informants for each of the categories it became clear that "physical appearance" and "clothing" frequently overlapped. This means that the answers for those two categories were often the same. Moreover, taking into account that "physical appearance" can encompass not only physical traits but also attire, "clothing" was deleted in the final survey. A second modification involved removing the "age" category on the grounds that it was not possible to find out whether accent had had any effect on the guessing of the speakers' age. In fact, it seemed more reasonable to think that the factors which influenced the guesses had to do with the quality and pitch of the voices represented. The last change consisted in substituting "occupation" and "neighbourhood" for "social class" and "place of residence". The former two categories were too specific and therefore sometimes difficult to answer. Apart from that, "neighbourhood" referred to "area in Belfast" and was included in the pilot survey because all the accents represented there were Belfast. Nevertheless, the incorporation of stimuli which portrayed more rural accents in addition to Belfast accents in the final study made it necessary to replace neighbourhood with a more general category. As a result, the two more general categories social class and place of residence were finally used.

5.3.4.1.5. Item 4 (Videos): Dialect identification

Item 4 was different for audios and videos because in the latter participants could see the speakers, hence they did not have to imagine them. Thus, the fourth item in the Videos Section was the following yes/no question:

> "Do you recognise this pronunciation as typical of a particular group of people in Northern Ireland? (Think about this in terms of geography, age, gender, social class, occupation, religion or any other you might want to add) If so, please indicate which group is that".

Most pilot respondents answered this question by providing the region or town where they believed the speaker in the clip was from. Some of them were very specific when

locating a Belfast accent and provided not only the area (south, north, east or west), but also the street (e.g. Ormeau Road, Newtownards Road, Falls Road). Since region was the most widely identified, and also because several of the informants experienced difficulties in responding to this question, it was decided that a simplification of Item 4 was needed. Consequently, the new question to be used in the final draft of the questionnaire was "Where in Northern Ireland would you say that the speaker is from?". This is similar to Preston's dialect identification task (1982a, 1986, 1988) which, as observed in Section 4.3.2., no study using voice-rating tasks of the type used in language attitude research should fail to include.

5.3.4.1.6. Item 5: Recognition

The last item of the Audios and Videos section, and one which was not included in the pilot study, was a yes/no question intended to find out whether informants recognised the TV show or film where the recording or clip had been taken from. Recognising the show or movie is likely to have an influence on informants' perception of accents insofar as they have already formed an opinion on the show/film on the basis of a wide range of possible factors. Some of those factors might be related to liking or disliking the actors and/or topic of the production, having read reviews and being from the place where the show/film is set among many others.

It must, however, be pointed out that saying that they have identified the show/film does not always mean that participants are right in their guessing. While qualitative data proves that some participants have undoubtedly recognised the show/film, it is not clear whether other respondents have. In any case, the mere belief that they know the show/film is probably enough to influence their ratings. Thus, it is likely that informants who have a good opinion of the production will rate the stimulus taken from it high on authenticity (see Section 6.1.1.). Whatever the influence of recognition on ratings, future studies would benefit from including a follow-up question that provides evidence of whether informants have truly identified the show/film. An example of such a question could be 'What is the name of that show/film?'.

5.3.4.2. Part 3: Literature

There were three questions for each of the literary extracts in the pilot study. One of them was "From your point of view, how accurate is the representation of the Northern Irish accent in this poem/novel/play?". To answer this question, respondents had to choose

from a 4-point scale that went from *Very accurate* to *Very inaccurate* (see Appendix 1). It was used to assess the perceived authenticity of the literary representations of Northern Irish accents. Nonetheless, this question was replaced by Item 2, that is, the authenticity VAS (Section 5.3.4.1.2. above), in the final questionnaire. The reason why this change was implemented is twofold. On the one hand, although "accurate" is similar in meaning to "authentic", the latter is more appropriate in the context of fictional representations of accent. On the other hand, using the same authenticity question for both audiovisual and literary portrayals allows for a comparison between them while contributing to the questionnaire's homogeneity.

Another question included in the pilot survey was "On a scale from 1 to 6, how much do you like the poem/novel/play is written? Circle your answer". The use of this question posed two main problems, which finally led to its rephrasing. First of all, the wording did not make it clear whether choosing 1 was liking the literary representation a lot or whether, by contrast, it meant not liking it at all. Secondly, formulating this item as a closed-ended question turned out to be a mistake since the information it provided was little useful and very similar to the aforementioned accuracy question. Consequently, this question was rephrased as "Do you like the way the poem/novel/play is written? Why?" in the final questionnaire. This open-ended item was suitable for encouraging participants to briefly explain the reasons why they liked or did not like the written portrayals of Northern Irish accents, thereby providing useful qualitative data.

The last of the three questions that made up the pilot literature section was the yes/no question "Do you find the representation of the accent in any way peculiar?", which was followed by the open-ended "Why?". Informants' answers to this question were very varied. Some respondents referred to the author's ability to make them picture the speaker by representing accent in writing. Meanwhile, others said something about the geographical origin of the accent, the content of the literary fragment or about some lexical items. The diversity of the answers proved the vagueness of the word "peculiar". Furthermore, the fact that some informants did not provide an answer while some others pointed out some aspect that had nothing to do with the representation of the accent, revealed that the question was difficult to interpret, and even to answer. Thus, I finally decided to delete this item.

In addition to the authenticity and liking questions, Item 3, i.e., the attitudinal dimensions, and Item 4 (Video), that is, the dialect identification question, were also added to the literature section in the final questionnaire. The order of appearance of the

items after each of the literary stimuli was the following: Authenticity, Attitudinal dimensions, Dialect Identification and Liking.

5.3.4.3. Part 4: General questions

Once participants had completed Parts 1 (Audios), 2 (Videos) and 3 (Literature), they found two general questions about all the fictional portrayals of accents that had been shown throughout the questionnaire. These questions, which were optional unlike most of those used in the survey, were the following:

- "How do these representations of the Northern Irish accent make you feel? Is there anything in these representations that you particularly like or dislike? Why?"
- "Would you say that the accents are overacted or softened? Why?"

These qualitative questions were incorporated in the final draft of the questionnaire because they enabled participants to summarise their perceptions and reactions using their own words. Apart from being a good source of qualitative information, they could be useful for the design of surveys in future language perception studies in NI since they help to understand the criteria according to which Northern Irish lay people from the Northern Irish speech community evaluate representations of NIrE accents.

5.4. Questionnaire distribution

The distribution process differed from the pilot to the final study. This was mainly due to two reasons. On the one hand, the pilot questionnaire was paper-based, whereas in the final study an online survey was used. On the other hand, the required number of pilot participants was considerably lower, as compared to the number of participants for the final study.

The pilot questionnaire was printed and distributed during the months of October, November and December 2018 in Belfast. The search for participants was carried out at Queen's University Belfast and in two Belfast community centres, namely the Donegal Pass Community Centre and the Southcity Resource and Development Centre. The only requirement for participation was that informants had to be born and raised in NI. Ten people of different ages, gender and hometowns filled out the pilot questionnaire once they had read and signed a consent form showing that they agreed on the use of their data in research and publications (Appendix 7). These ten informants were all volunteers, and

they were not paid. After completing the survey, I had short conversations with each of them about their thoughts on the questionnaire which helped to design the final draft.

For the final study, an online questionnaire was created since online distribution would make it possible and easier to reach more potential informants. The online tool used for its creation was SurveyHero (https://www.surveyhero.com), which was chosen because it has a wide variety of question types available and enables the embedding of audios and videos. Once the design phase had been completed, an invitation to take part in the study was sent through Twitter (see Appendix 8), Facebook, the LINGUIST list (Appendix 9) and some Queen's University Belfast mailing lists. Additionally, some invitations were distributed in the form of flyers at different locations in Belfast: Queen's Students' Union, The McClay Library, Shaftesbury Community and Recreation Centre and the Crescent Arts Centre. A prize draw of a £50 Amazon gift card was advertised in the invitations. This was an incentive to encourage respondents to fill out the questionnaire. While the recruiting process was slow at first, the number of participants skyrocketed after I tweeted a call for participants on 10 February 2020 which got many retweets in a few hours' time.

5.4.1. Participants

The total number of participants was 537 but only 149 of these completed the questionnaire. Some people could not finish it because they encountered technical problems and could not play the audios and/or videos. Meanwhile, other possible motives for leaving it unfinished were fatigue and boredom since the questionnaire was quite long. Of those 149 participants, 11 were filtered out. 9 of them were excluded from the tally because they did not provide the expected answer for the control item (Video 2), that is, they did not recognise that this accent was not NIrE. The other two were filtered out because they were the only informants who identified as non-binary so that they could not be a representative sample of the whole non-binary population in NI. Thus, the responses of 138 participants were analysed in the end.

As regards the characteristics of the sample, most informants were female —83 women participated in the study— and the rest —55 participants— were men. In terms of age, the largest group was the 31-55 cohort, with a total of 70 informants. Out of the remaining 68 participants, 57 belonged to the 18-30 group and 11 were over 55 years old. The low number of older informants was related to two factors: firstly, the questionnaire was mainly distributed among students at Queen's University Belfast. And secondly, the

fact that older people are less familiar with the social networks that were used as distribution channels, as well as with online resources more generally, seems to have made it harder for the online survey to reach older respondents.

Regarding nationality, more than half of the people who took part in the study, 73 to be precise, reported themselves as Irish. Informants who felt identified with a British nationality were 34, and 22 other respondents considered themselves Northern Irish. The remaining participants identified as either Northern Irish and British or as Irish and British. This shows that, as can be seen in Figure 5.11., the three main national identities in NI are Irish, British and Northern Irish. As for the variable of religion, 51 informants were Roman Catholic; 35 were Protestant —this includes 17 Presbyterians, 15 Church of Ireland and 3 Methodist Church in Ireland—; and 44 participants professed no religion.

Figure 5.11.

Percentage distribution of respondents in NI by national identity

Table population: All usual residents

Area	All usual residents	Percentage of all usual residents with national identity:							
		British only	Irish only	Northern Irish only	British and Irish only	British and Northern Irish only	Irish and Northern Irish only	British, Irish and Northern Irish only	Other
Northern Ireland	1,810,863	39.89	25.26	20.94	0.66	6.17	1.06	1.02	5.00

Note. Retrieved from the Northern Irish Statistics and Research Agency (https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/2011-census-results-key-statistics-summary-report.pdf)

The majority of the informants, 39, were from Belfast but there were also considerable numbers whose home county was Antrim (23), Tyrone (20) or Down (16). Meanwhile, from the other three Northern Irish counties, namely Armagh, Fermanagh and (London)Derry, there were fewer respondents. In terms of occupation, participants were classified into two main groups: working-class occupation and middle-class occupation. These groups correspond with the "intermediate occupations" and the "routine and manual occupations" classes of the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC, n.d.) used in the UK (see the three-class version of the NS-SEC in Table 5.1.). This classification includes a third, or first, class called "managerial and professional occupations" which is not considered in this study because the vast majority of informants' occupations could be classified into one of the two groups mentioned above.

Once the sorting process was completed, there were 22 and 104 participants in the working-class occupation and middle-class occupation groups respectively. The rest of the informants (12) could not be allocated to any of the two groups because they were either retired or unemployed. In spite of the large number of people with a middle-class occupation, when asked what social class they felt more identified with, many of them selected *working-class*. Thus, the difference between the number of working-class and of middle-class informants when it came to subjective social class was not as big as in occupation. In fact, 73 participants regarded themselves as belonging to the working class while 65 considered that they were part of the middle class.

Table 5.1.

Eight-, five- and three-class versions of the NS-SEC

eight classes	five classes	three classes
1. Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations		
1.1 Large employers and higher managerial and administrative occupations	1. Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations	1. Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations
1.2 Higher professional occupations		
2. Lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations		
3. Intermediate occupations	2. Intermediate occupations	
4. Small employers and own account workers	3. Small employers and own account workers	2. Intermediate occupations
5. Lower supervisory and technical occupations	4. Lower supervisory and technical occupations	
6. Semi-routine occupations	5. Semi-routine and routine occupations	3. Routine and manual occupations
7. Routine occupations		
8. Never worked and long-term unemployed	*Never worked and long-term unemployed	*Never worked and long-term unemployed

Note. Retrieved from the UK Office for National Statistics (https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenatio nalstatisticssocioeconomicclassificationnssecrebasedonsoc2010)

As regards the educational level of the respondents, most of them had one or several university degrees —53 informants had a BA, 26 had an MA and 25 held a PhD—. Out of the other 34 informants, 7 had completed secondary education, 21 had an A levels certificate and 6 had received some vocational training.

In summary then, the 138-informant sample consists of highly educated, middle-

class people for the most part. This brings me to the issue of representativeness, which can be seen as the holy grail of quantitative linguistics. A representative sample is a subgroup of people whose characteristics reflect those of a larger group. Drawing a representative sample from a whole population can be done through "probability sampling" or "non-probability sampling" (Zipp, 2022). The first sampling technique encompasses simple random sampling and other types of random sampling (ibid., p. 152). Probability sampling means that all individuals in a population stand the same chance of being selected for the study. This is the common sampling technique in quantitative research because a random sample lends itself to statistical analysis. On the other hand, the non-probability (or judgement) sampling method is "statistically clearly inferior" *(ibid.)* but this does not mean that this type of sample cannot be statistically analysed. Zipp (2022) distinguishes between three different non-probability techniques: "quota sampling" (see Oppenheim, 1992, pp. 41-42), "purposive sampling" and "convenience sampling". One main disadvantage of these techniques is the fact that the selection process is not random but controlled by researchers who choose the informants they deem convenient.

The type of sampling used for the present dissertation was convenience sampling which consists in selecting "the sample from cases that are conveniently available, based on practical criteria such as accessibility or the willingness to volunteer" (Zipp, 2022, p. 153). Furthermore, the subtype of convenience sampling employed was web-based sampling since the questionnaire was an online survey and therefore the internet was the main distribution channel. My convenience, web-based sample can never be representative of the general Northern Irish population due to "self-selection bias" and "coverage error" *(ibid.).* Self-selection bias arises when researchers depend on volunteers for their study. These volunteers usually share some characteristics which skew the results. In this study, for instance, many of the individuals who self-selected as respondents were, as shown above, middle-class, highly educated people. Thus, my sample is mainly representative of that subset of the Northern Irish population. Regarding "coverage error", this has to do with the fact that participation in an online questionnaire necessarily depends on whether individuals have access to the Internet. Since a considerable number of people in any population do not have access to the Internet or do not feel comfortable enough to use it, an online survey will never reach all potential informants. It is likely that this will change in the future, as more and more people are learning to use the Internet and, most importantly, as children are given access to online

content at increasingly earlier ages. Despite the lack of representativeness and coverage of a convenience, wed-based sample, this seemed the most appropriate and feasible sampling technique for this study due to the following reasons: first of all, being an outsider in Belfast and in NI more generally meant that I had limited contacts, which made the recruitment of participants more difficult. Secondly, I had to depend on volunteers since my research funding was insufficient to pay respondents for taking part in the survey. Finally, time constraints prevented me from filling quotas as is done in the quoting sampling method (for further information about this method, see De Vaus, 2002, p. 90; Oppenheim, 1992, p. 41; Zipp, 2022, pp. 152-153). Notwithstanding these drawbacks, I did my best "to obtain as wide a spread of individuals as possible", as indicated by Oppenheim (1992, p. 43). Moreover, even though my sample is not representative in terms of size, it is larger and more diverse than any of the samples used in the language attitudes studies carried out to date in NI (Millar, 1987; Milroy & McClenaghan, 1977; Todd, 1984; Zwickl, 2002).

5.5. Data processing and analysis

5.5.1. Quantitative data processing and analysis

The first step in the data processing stage was the regrouping, renaming and exclusion of some social variables. The only three variables that remained the same were gender, age and subjective social class. As for the occupation and education factors, even though they were both conceived as indicators of an informant's objective social class, education was finally excluded because it proved to be of little use when it came to classifying participants into the working-class or middle-class groups. As a result, occupation alone served as an objective social class indicator so that someone who had a working-class occupation was considered to have a working-class status.

In addition to objective and subjective social class, a further variable referred to as "combined social class" was created. This new variable resulted from the combination of objective and subjective social class and consisted of four categories: WC-WC, WC-MC, MC-MC, MC-WC. The former, that is, WC-WC, stands for working-class-occupation people who identify with the working class. Thus, the first two letters of the category indicate the objective social class of the respondents, whereas the last two refer to their subjective social class. When going through the objective and subjective variables for each of the informants, I realised that many of them who belonged to the middle class objectively speaking, felt, nevertheless, identified with the working class. In view of this,

it was deemed necessary to differentiate between participants who belonged to a particular social class but saw themselves as members of the other class and those whose social class was the same in both objective and subjective terms. That is the reason why the combined social class variable was incorporated.

Religion and nationality were merged to form a variable called "ethnicity". This merging makes sense in the context of NI because, as observed in Section 5.3.2., the differences between the Irish Catholic and the British Protestant populations transcend religious and nationality issues and have an influence on many spheres of society, thereby becoming a matter of ethnicity. The two ethnic categories into which participants were divided were Catholic and Protestant. The Catholic category was made up of informants who described themselves as Roman Catholic and Irish. It did not include respondents who selected *none* for religion even if they considered themselves Irish. Although it seemed likely that those respondents had been brought up in a Catholic background, I decided not to take that for granted and filtered them out. Similarly, a Protestant ethnicity was only attributed to informants who had a British nationality and belonged to the Presbyterian Church, the Church of Ireland or the Methodist Church.

Finally, respondents were grouped into two categories according to their hometown. Those categories were urban hometown and rural hometown. The urban (Belfast)/rural hometown variable resulted from the simplification of the responses to the hometown question where informants had to provide the town/city and county where they had grown up in. Urban participants only included Belfast respondents since there were only a few participants from the second largest city in NI, i.e., (London)Derry. Meanwhile, the rural informants came from smaller cities and towns in any of the six Northern Irish counties. In a country like NI, where rural areas abound and the largest city is, by far, Belfast, it seems appropriate to explore how the urban (Belfast)/rural division influences the perceptions and language attitudes of people there.

The second step in processing the data consisted in coding the questionnaire responses to the close-ended items, that is, the authenticity and the semantic differential scales, by transforming every response category into a number. In order to do that, I created a coding guide, similar to Oppenheim's (1992) "variable allocation document" which, as he explains, is basically "a list that tells us what variable numbers have been allocated to each question or item" (p. 263). Thus, in my coding guide each of the response categories of a variable or question was next to its numerical value. For example, the gender categories appeared in the guide as "Female=1" and "Male=2". Allocating

numbers to the social variable categories did not pose any difficulty. However, turning the answers to the semantic differential scales into numbers entailed one main problem. This had to do with the fact that, as already noted in Section 5.3.4.1.3., some positive adjectives were placed on the left column, while some others were at the right-hand end of the scale. This meant that 1 was the most favourable rating for some scales, but the most unfavourable for others. For purposes of clarity and consistency, the evaluations for the *Broad-Mild* and the *Tough-Gentle* scales whose negative adjective was on the left column unlike the rest of the scales, were transformed so that 1 would mean very mild and gentle and 4, very broad and tough. The transformation of those ratings facilitated comparison between the scales since the numerical value 1 always corresponded with the most favourable evaluation, while the least favourable rating was represented by 4. It is important to notice that this was true for all the scales except for the *Rural-Urban* and the *Comic-Not-comic* scales. This is because it is difficult to view those four adjectives as either innately positive or negative. Instead, they can be considered a positive or a negative quality depending on the context.

Apart from coding all the answer categories, a "shortened labelling system" was devised for the questions or items of the questionnaire following Oppenheim's (1992) recommendation. The labels were made up of numbers and letters (see Figure 5.12.). Furthermore, they consisted of two codes: the question code and the stimulus code. The former served to identify the question or item and was created using the first letter of the keyword(s) of each question. For instance, the code assigned to the authenticity scale was "A". As for the code for the semantic differential scales, they were made up of the letter "S", which stands for "scale", and the first letter of each of the two bipolar adjectives. Thus, the code for the *Acceptable-Unacceptable* scale was "SAU". On the other hand, the stimulus code served to identify the speech and literary samples, which was crucial to distinguishing between variables since many items are the same for the three types of stimuli, that is, Audios, Videos and Literature. The codes for Audio 1, Video 1 and Poem were "A1", "V1" and "P" respectively. Considering the labelling system just explained, the label "SFUV3" refers to the ratings on the *Friendly-Unfriendly* scale for the third video.

Figure 5.12.

Screenshot of one of the SPSS spreadsheets used for this dissertation

Age&Gender.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

	GEN	AGE	AA1	SRUA1	SAUA1	SIUA1	SBMA1	SPUA1	SCNA1	SSNA1	STGA1	SEUA1	SFUA1	RECA1	AA2	SRUA2	SAUA2
1	1	1	31	4	3	3	1	4	2	4	1	4	4	2	30	4	3
2	1	1	0	4	4	3	3	3	4	2	1	4	4	2	0	4	1
3	1	2	23	1	1	2	1	2	4	2	2	3	2	2	20	3	2
4	2	2	0	4	1	1	1	1	4	4	1	1	1	2	0	4	1
5	2	2	20	4	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	22	1	2
6	2	3	3	4	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	3	3	2	7	4	1
7	1	2	97	4	1	1	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	66	4	2
8	2	2	4	4	1	1	2	3	4	4	1	3	3	2	46	3	1
9	1	2	12	3	1	1	2	1	3	4	3	2	2	2	80	3	3
10	1	1	33	3	2	1	1	3	4	2	1	2	3	2	25	4	2
11	2	2	0	4	2	2	3	3	4	2	1	3	3	2	0	4	3
12	1	1	50	3	2	1	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	28	3	2
13	1	1	0	4	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	2	0	4	2
14	2	2	16	4	1	1	1	3	4	3	2	3	3	2	14	3	1

Once the response categories had been coded and the questionnaire items labelled, the data entry stage began. The questionnaire data was first entered into Excel spreadsheets and from there it was exported to SPSS, the statistical software used for the analysis of the data (see Eddington, 2016 for a comprehensive guide on how to use SPSS in language research; and Colman & Pulford, 2006 for a more general introduction to SPSS). Before entering the data into SPSS, however, the Excel files were double-checked to ensure that all the unsuitable participants had been removed and that there were no coding mistakes or missing data. After having cleaned the data, the general dataset, that is, the one containing all the questionnaire responses, was divided into six different subsets: Audios, Videos, Telecinematic, Literary, Belfast and Rural. The first two include the responses for the auditory and the audiovisual stimuli respectively. As regards the Telecinematic dataset, it is made up of the data for the telecinematic stimuli, i.e., for audios and videos. Meanwhile, the responses to the literary fragments constitute the Literary subset. Finally, the Belfast dataset comprises the evaluations of those telecinematic stimuli that portray a Belfast accent, namely Audios 2 and 3 and Videos 1 and 4, while the Rural subset encompasses responses to Audios 1 and 4 and Video 3, all of which represent a rural Northern Irish accent. The rationale behind the division of the general dataset into the Belfast and Rural subsets has to do with the fact that the Belfast urban vernacular has been shown to be significantly different from rural varieties of NIrE (Chapter 3). Differences in perception between Belfast and rural accents are therefore worth exploring.

The general dataset as well as the six subsets were statistically analysed using the SPSS software. The first type of analysis to be conducted was univariate analysis which

helps to understand the dataset by providing information about the distribution of "one variable at a time" (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 281). Univariate analyses were mainly used in this study to calculate the measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode). I also carried out bivariate analyses to investigate the relationship between two variables. The analysed relationships were usually those between a social, also referred to as independent, variable (gender, age, social class, ethnicity, urban (Belfast)/rural hometown) and the ratings on any of the scales (authenticity, pleasantness, etc.), which are the dependent variable. In order to find out whether relationships were statistically significant, the method of statistical hypothesis testing, also known as "null hypothesis (significance) testing", was employed (see Eddington, 2016; Vasish & Nicenboim, 2016). The first stage of this method is the formulation of the null and the alternative hypotheses. The null hypothesis is the statement that there exists no relationship between two variables, whereas the alternative hypothesis proposes that the two variables are related (Eddington, 2016; Winter, 2020). An example of one of the null hypotheses put forward when analysing the questionnaire data of the present study was "Age has no effect on authenticity ratings", whose alternative hypothesis was the statement that age influences ratings on the authenticity scale. Once the null and alternative hypotheses had been formulated, it was necessary to check whether the data met the three common statistical assumptions, i.e., independence of observation, homogeneity of variance and normality of data (Field, 2018; Scholfield, 1991; Vasishth & Nicenboim, 2016; Winter, 2020 offer a thorough explanation of these three assumptions). The independence assumption means that the responses of one participant is not influenced by those of other informants. Regarding homogeneity of variance or homoscedasticity, this means that different groups of respondents have equal or similar variances. In other words, the spread of outliers, i.e., participants who differ significantly from most other informants, is similar for those groups. Finally, the third assumption has to do with a normal distribution of the data. When representing normally distributed data in a graph, a bell-shaped curve appears (see Figure 5.13.). This shape is due to the fact that, as mathematicians have shown, "most people or things tend to fall in the middle [of the bell] when measuring something" (Eddington, 2016, p. 15). Thus, if the authenticity ratings of all of my respondents were represented in a graph and the curve showed the shape of a bell, it would be reasonable to assume that my data follows a normal distribution.

Figure 5.13.

The bell curve representative of a normal distribution
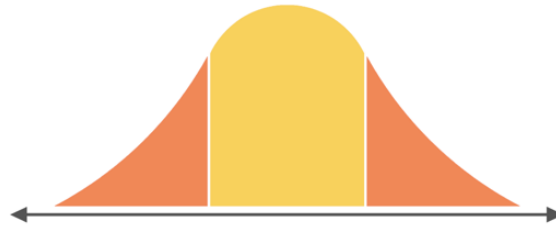
After testing the assumptions briefly outlined above, a statistical test was chosen. Selection depended on whether the assumptions had been satisfied or, on the contrary, violated. If the former was the case, a parametric test was selected. Meanwhile, if the data did not meet the three assumptions, a non-parametric test was used. The main difference between these two test types is that parametric tests have greater statistical power and therefore provide more robust results (for a description of different non-parametric and parametric tests, see Field, 2018). However, it is important to remember that, as Field (ibid.) observes, this is only true if the data meets the three statistical assumptions (pp. 389-390). Whether a parametric or a non-parametric test was chosen, the next step consisted in interpreting the resulting *p*-value. The *p*-value "provides a measure of the evidence against the null hypothesis" (Eddington, 2016, p. 353). Moreover, as Winter (2020) states, "[t]he scientific community has converged on a rule where only *p*-values below the threshold of 0.05 are treated as good enough evidence against the null hypothesis" (p. 168). Thus, it was only when the *p*-value (Asymp. Sig. in Figure 5.14.) was lower than 0.05 that the null hypothesis was rejected. Figure 5.14. shows the *p*-value for the interaction between the factor of age and three dependent variables, MAA (Mean Authenticity Audios), MAV (Mean Authenticity Videos) and MAAV (Mean Authenticity Audios and Videos). According to the results presented in this figure, statistical significance is only found in the interaction between age and MAAV (*p*= 0.047).

Figure 5.14.

Output from a Kruskal Wallis test which shows the p-value for three different variables, i.e. MAAV, MAV and MAAV

Test Statistics[a,b]

	MAA	MAV	MAAV
Kruskal–Wallis H	4,368	5,352	6,097
df	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	,113	,069	,047

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: AGE

My data did not meet the normality assumption for the most part, i.e., it did not show normal distribution, so that non-parametric tests such as the Kruskal-Wallis and the Mann-Whitney tests were usually conducted. This probably had to do with the small sample size since the smaller the sample, the more difficult it is to check the normality of the data. A normal distribution is more attainable in studies with samples of several hundreds of informants such as those carried out in the fields of medicine and in the social sciences. Samples in language research usually rely on a lower number of respondents. Nonetheless, this should not discourage linguists from applying scientific methods to their studies since there is much to be gained from conducting empirical research (see Eddington, 2008 for a discussion of the importance of the scientific method in language studies; and Drager, 2014, 2018; and Wray & Bloomer, 2013 for ideas on experimental designs in language research).

While the *p*-value that statistical tests yield is useful insofar as it allows the researcher to know if the interaction effect between two variables is statistically significant, it does not provide information about the size of that effect. To measure the effect size, it is necessary to carry out tests such as the chi-square, the T-test or the one-way ANOVA (a detailed discussion of how to calculate the effect size is provided in Eddington, 2016).

5.5.2. Qualitative data processing and analysis

The qualitative data of the present study are the respondents' answers to the open-ended items of the questionnaire (Item 1, Item 4 (Audios), Item 4 (Videos), the liking question for the literary fragments and the two general questions). The processing of the qualitative

data involved simplifying and summarising some responses to make them easier to classify into groups. However, the answers provided by some informants could not be classified and were dealt with individually. In addition to the grouping of responses, the analysis of the qualitative data entailed creating tables (see Section 6.3.) and counting the number of occurrences of response types to calculate percentages.

5.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained in detail the criteria used for questionnaire construction and the rationale behind the decisions made when creating the different items of the survey. These criteria and rationale were informed by the methodological approaches used in studies of language attitudes and perceptual dialectology which are discussed in Section 4.3.

The chapter has begun by laying out the questions that the survey sets out to answer. Then, the questionnaire design process has been thoroughly described, including the structure, the instructions for the participants (Section 5.3.1.), the selection of the social variables (Section 5.3.2.) and of the stimuli (Section 5.3.3.), the wording of the different items and the construction of the rating scales (Section 5.3.4.). In addition to the design process, the stages of questionnaire distribution (Section 5.4.) and data management and analysis (Section 5.5.) have also been explained at length in this chapter. I shall now proceed to discuss the survey results, both quantitative and qualitative. The main aim of Chapter 6 is to provide an answer to the research questions formulated in Section 1.2.. For that purpose, I will ascertain whether the social factors of gender, age, social class, ethnicity and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown have any significant influence on respondents' authenticity and attitudinal ratings.

6. Chapter 6: Results and discussion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the most significant quantitative (Section 6.2.) and qualitative findings (Section 6.3.) of the questionnaire described throughout Chapter 5. In Section 6.2. the ratings on perceived authenticity (Section 6.2.1.) and on the different attitudinal dimensions (Section 6.2.2.) for each of the datasets explained in Section 5.5.1. are examined. Furthermore, Section 6.2. analyses the relationship (or lack of) between ratings on the scales and the social factors of gender, age, social class, ethnicity and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown (see Sections 5.3.2. and 5.5.1. for a detailed discussion of the social variables used in this study). The differences in rating between the different datasets and between different social groups, as well as potential interactions between social factors, undergo statistical analysis (see Section 5.5.1.), which is aimed at testing whether those differences and interaction effects are statistically significant. As regards the qualitative results (Section 6.3.), this section concentrates on exploring five aspects of the representation of NIrE accents in Northern Irish fiction. One of them consists in determining the perceived salience of the NIrE features portrayed in the stimuli on the basis of which words are more frequently mentioned by informants (Section 6.3.1.). The second and third aspects, which are considered in Section 6.3.2. and Section 6.3.3. respectively, have to do with the ability of the Northern Irish participants to identify, on the one hand, the place of origin of the speakers in the stimuli and, on the other hand, their ethnic background. Section 6.3.4. discusses comments made by the survey participants about the portrayals of Northern Irish accents in literary writing. These comments provide an insight into lay people's attitudes towards those representations. Finally, answers to the two general questions at the end of the questionnaire (Section 5.3.4.3.) are summarised in Section 6.3.5.

6.2. Quantitative results

This section presents and discusses data obtained from the two items of the questionnaire that incorporate rating scales and can therefore be statistically analysed. One of them is the visual analog scale (described in Section 5.3.4.1.2) that informants use to indicate how authentic they perceive the representation of NIrE accents in each stimulus to be. The second item is the set of ten 4-point semantic differential scales (see Section 5.3.4.1.3.). Those two items are completed for all three types of stimuli, i.e., audios, videos and literary fragments. This makes it possible to compare perceptions of Northern

Irish accents in telecinematic fiction (audios and videos) and in literary fiction (literary fragments). Furthermore, to address research question 2 (formulated in Section 1.2.) I examine whether the social variables have any influence on the ratings on the visual analog scale and on the semantic differentials (Sections 6.2.1.3. and 6.2.2.5.). Finally, the responses to the telecinematic stimuli are compared to the ratings of Video 2, the control item that presents informants with a SSBE accent, which differs greatly from the NIrE accents of all other audios and videos used in the experiment.

6.2.1. Perceived authenticity

In order to answer research question 1 (outlined in Section 1.2.), the overall ratings for each of the different datasets must be analysed and, when appropriate, compared to one another. Figure 6.1. illustrates that while there is a difference of 8 points between Telecinematic and Literary and between Rural and Belfast, the means for Audios and Videos barely differ from each other. Videos are rated as slightly less authentic than audios but this trend is not true for all audios and videos. For example, the first and four recordings have a higher rating than most of the videos. In view of the lack of a clear response pattern, it can be assumed that informants are not influenced by whether the accent is presented to them audiovisually or auditorily. That is why the differences and similarities in ratings between audios and videos are not further explored in the present dissertation. In addition to the small difference between audios and videos, two other trends can be observed in Figure 6.1. One of them is the fact that the rural and the literary stimuli are considered less authentic than the Belfast and the telecinematic speech samples. Secondly, it becomes apparent that the Belfast accents are deemed the most authentically portrayed, whereas the opposite is the case for the literary representations. These trends are explained in more detail in the following sections.

Figure 6.1.

Authenticity ratings for the six datasets
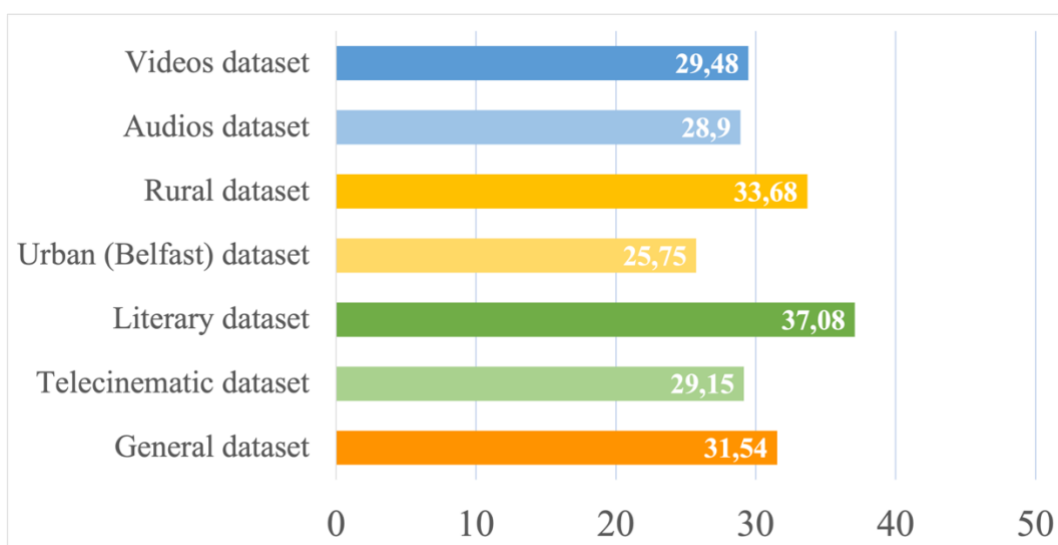
6.2.1.1. Telecinematic and literary datasets

The mean rating for telecinematic fiction is 29.15, which shows that Northern Irish respondents judge the representations of the NIrE accent in films and TV shows to be rather authentic. This may be partly due to the fact that, as already pointed out in Section 5.3.3., the telecinematic stimuli used for the survey have been taken from films/TV shows set and produced in NI and with a cast of performers, many of whom were from the northern region. In addition, all the voices that informants hear in the recordings belong to Northern Irish actors. Even though being Northern Irish does not necessarily guarantee that the actors will produce an authentic NIrE accent, it is reasonable to believe that an authentic performance of NIrE will be easier for them than for non-Northern Irish actors. With regard to perceived authenticity, if respondents know that the performer is from NI, as is sometimes the case with some of the stimuli, they might be prompted to rate their accent as authentically Northern Irish even if it is not. This is an example of *accent hallucination*, a term that Walshe (2009, p. 266) applies to the sometimes-mistaken perception that the performance of the IrE accent by non-Irish actors is not authentic simply because they are not from Ireland. It is therefore worth considering whether recognising the TV show or film has any influence on informants' ratings for authenticity. In order to do that, the two stimuli for which there is a substantial number of participants who claim to identify the TV show/film are analysed. One of them is Audio 3, i.e., the sound recording taken from *Derry Girls* and that contains the speech of Ma Mary.

Informants who answer "yes" to the question "Did you recognise the TV show/film?" have an average rating of 15.88, while the mean for those who tick "no" is 29.03. The difference in authenticity rating between these two groups is statistically significant ($p=$ 0.002) and reveals that recognising the TV show/film results in a more positive rating on the authenticity scale. This means that respondents who believe that they have identified where the stimulus has been taken from rate the NIrE accent as more authentic than the other group.

The other stimulus is Video 1, a short clip from the mockumentary TV show *Soft Border Patrol* where informants can see the Northern Irish actor Shane Todd playing the character of Laurence Lyle, a public relations officer. The mean rating for respondents who say they know the show is 39.06. Meanwhile, participants that do not recognise it have an average rating of 40. This confirms the trend observed in Audio 3, but the difference between the two groups in their ratings of Video 1 is smaller and non-significant from a statistical point of view.

As for the literary fiction dataset, the average authenticity rating for the three literary fragments is 37.08. This mean rating indicates that most informants think that the literary representation of the NIrE accent is more authentic than inauthentic. However, if compared with the average score for the telecinematic dataset, it becomes clear that the NIrE accent is ascribed more authenticity when presented in audiovisual rather than in written fiction. This result could be predicted since accent pertains to the realm of speech not writing. Accent is not seen but heard and therefore its representation in telecinematic fiction is, by definition, easier and, if done well, less artificial than in writing. This is not to say, though, that the portrayal of accent in films or TV shows is without constraints. One of those constraints has to do with the fact that, as observed in Section 4.2.3., the main purpose of creators of performed dialect is not to be accurate from a linguistic point of view but to achieve a realistic effect. Furthermore, this realistic effect must be compatible with two key principles of cinema and TV which are the need to be entertaining and understandable for as wide an audience as possible. To comply with these principles, creators usually select just a few salient features because incorporating too many features would likely hinder intelligibility and end up discouraging members of the audience. Regardless of this, written representations of accent still present more difficulties than audiovisual portrayals. The constraints of the alphabet make it impossible to represent some pronunciation features in writing, whereas in telecinematic fiction every single allophone can be reproduced. What is more, readers may struggle to interpret

some respellings and can therefore fail to recognise the writer's intention.

While the overall mean rating for the literary datasets allows one to compare literature to telecinematic fiction, the individual characteristics of each of the three literary extracts call for a separate analysis of each one. As illustrated in Figure 6.2., the extract to receive the most favourable rating for authenticity is the novel followed by the play and the poem. The novel contains not only pronunciation features but also examples of Northern Irish grammar and lexis (see Section 5.3.3.1. for a detailed description of the features). The quantity and variety of features represented in the novel are probably responsible for the high rating on authenticity. The two other literary fragments do not incorporate as many features as the novel and that might be the reason why they are not considered as authentic. Notwithstanding whether that is the case or not, it is necessary to be careful not to automatically correlate more features with a higher degree of authenticity. Quantity is of no use if the features employed are not representative of the accent or dialect that is being portrayed. Additionally, literary writing where a large number of non-standard variants are included runs the risk of annoying the reader by making the text too difficult to follow. However, the lack of features can also be a problem since a few features may not be enough to evoke a given dialect.

Figure 6.2.

Authenticity ratings for each of the three literary extracts
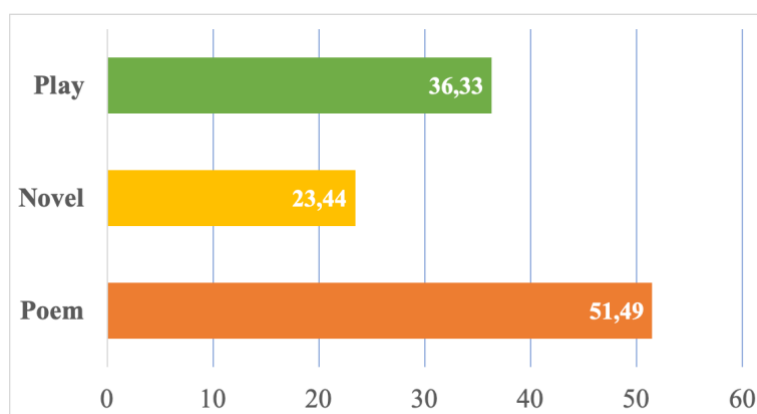
Answers to the item "Do you like the way the poem/novel/play is written? Why?", which are further examined in Section 6.3.4., can help understand the rationale behind the authenticity ratings for the literary fragments. Even though liking the way an extract is written does not necessarily mean considering that it authentically represents an accent,

it is likely that there is some correspondence between them since authenticity is a positive quality. Proof of this is informants' repeated use of the adjective "authentic" when they answer the aforementioned question. In order to further confirm the correspondence between authenticity and liking, the average authenticity ratings for respondents who like how the fragments are written and for those who do not have been calculated. As shown in Figure 6.3., the mean for the like group is always lower than the average rating for informants who do not like the extracts. A lower rating on the authenticity scale proves that participants who rate the literary fragments as quite authentic usually like them.

Figure 6.3.

Authenticity ratings for the three literary extracts depending on whether informants like them or not
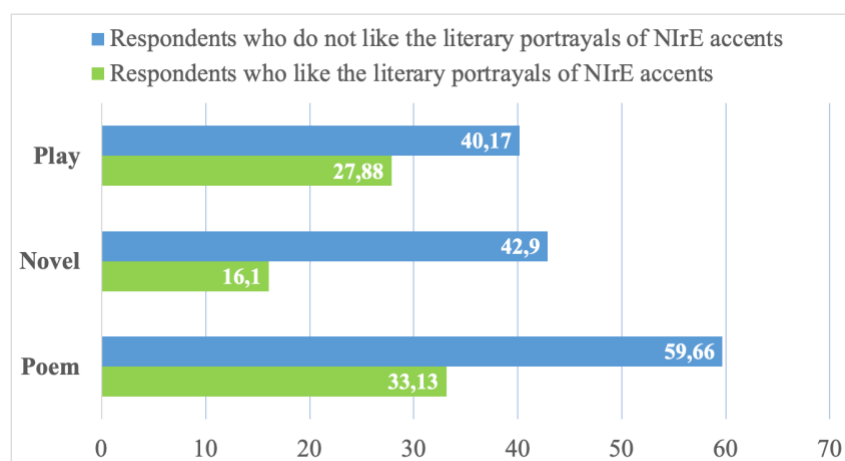
The least liked extract is the poem and the explanation that many informants provide is that it is "hard to understand" or "unintelligible". A word that describes very well that sense of struggling to understand the text, and one that is actually used by two respondents, is "decipher". Informants' difficulty in understanding the poem seems to be at least partly related to the nature of the respellings. The respellings *Mtellinye* and *fAh*, which, as previously mentioned, stand for *I'm telling you*, and *if I* respectively, can be particularly hard to interpret because of its combination of two and three words in one. This is an unusual type of spelling which aims at representing connected speech in writing.

While it might be reasonable to say that many informants probably rate the poem as inauthentic on the basis of unintelligibility, this does not apply to all respondents. Some

other reasons for not liking and for rating the poem as less authentic have to do with considering that it sounds "fake", "forced", "offensive" and "mocking". Moreover, a few other informants criticise the verses for not being representative of NIrE but of Scottish or Ulster Scots accents.

As regards the novel, most respondents like it and judge its accent portrayal to be quite authentic. In fact, many of them use expressions like "accurate", "authentic", "genuine representation" and "it's how many people talk in daily life" when they explain why they like the fragment. Besides, it is sometimes pointed out that, unlike the poem, the novel is easy to read and understand and does not mock the accent that is being represented. Other comments highlight that the representation allows the accent to be heard without becoming stereotyped or exaggerated. Two such comments are "reads like we speak without going overblown" and "it is not excessive in how it treats the accent which implies a more natural voice".

The play is between the poem and the novel in terms of authenticity and liking. Answers to the like question in this case reveal disagreement between the like and dislike groups as to whether the amount of dialect used in the play is enough or not. Informants who belong to the first group think that there is enough dialect for the representation to sound authentic. However, the view shared by many respondents of the dislike group is that more dialect is necessary. They say things such as "accent does not come through", "lazy use of the word nigh to make them sound authentic" and "feels like it's been half done. Not enough dialect to make it authentic". A consequence of the lack of dialect markers is not being able to place the accent. For some other informants, the problem is not so much the insufficient amount of dialect but the fact that different accents are suggested by the different respelling employed. Two respondents complain that while *Jasus* represents a Southern Irish, or more specifically Dublin, pronunciation, *nigh* occurs in Belfast speech. For one other informant, the representation is inconsistent inasmuch as *nigh* is Belfast, whereas *spake* sounds rural.

Once the responses to the item "Do you like the way the poem/novel/play is written?" have been examined, it is possible to draw some conclusions. It seems safe to infer that the use of non-standard orthography for the representation of accent poses the risk of making a text unintelligible. To reduce this risk, it is very important to carefully consider how many and which respellings should be used. The writer needs to strike a balance between evoking the sound of a particular accent and being intelligible to readers. The novelist seems mostly successful in striking that balance, while the poet and the

playwright are not as successful in doing that. Moreover, it must be noted that there is a fine line between sounding authentic and becoming a stereotyped representation. That line is so thin that, as can be seen in the answers to the like question, what is authentic for some readers is stereotyped or forced for others. This serves to confirm that there is no consensus among non-linguists as to what an authentic representation of an accent is. Perceived authenticity varies depending on linguistic as well as extralinguistic factors.

6.2.1.2. Urban (Belfast) and rural datasets

The average authenticity ratings for the Belfast and the Rural datasets are 25.75 and 33.68 respectively, meaning that the Belfast accents are rated as more authentic than rural speech. This trend can be explained by the large number of informants who are from Belfast, which makes up almost one third of the sample. In addition, as will be shown in Section 6.2.1.4.5., there is a statistically significant difference in the rating of the Belfast accents between Belfast respondents and participants from more rural areas.

One of the stimuli from the Belfast dataset has a considerably less favourable rating on authenticity than the other three Belfast stimuli. That stimulus is the clip taken from the TV show *Soft Border Patrol*, which has a mean authenticity rating of 39.65. The most likely explanation for this higher rating is that many informants perceive the accent to be overacted. One participant, for instance, remarks that the accent is "painfully over-exaggerated". Nonetheless, the speaker of the *Derry Girls* stimulus is also often said to be overacting the accent for comic effect, yet she is not rated as negatively on authenticity as the actor in the mockumentary. As suggested above, this may be due to Northern Irish informants liking the (London)Derry sitcom more than *Soft Border Patrol.* It might be worth investigating whether the preference for the sitcom derives partly from the authenticity of its accents or if the positive rating on the authenticity scale stems from liking the TV show.

In the Rural dataset there is also one stimulus whose rating differs significantly from the rest and that is Video 3, which is evaluated more favourably on authenticity than the other two rural stimuli. This audiovisual stimulus contains the speech of a Northern Irish actor that plays the character of a middle-aged farmer. Evidence from the open-ended questions hints that the accent in Video 3 sounds softer but this is a quality that the other two rural stimuli also seem to share. Further proof is therefore needed to understand the reason why Video 3 is judged to be more authentic.

6.2.1.3. Social factors

6.2.1.3.1. Gender

Gender analyses reveal that females rate the general dataset as slightly more authentic than males. The former have an average rating of 29.31, while the latter's mean is 34.87. Although this difference might seem small, it is significant from a statistical point of view ($p= 0.013$). This trend is also observed for the Telecinematic, Literary, Belfast and Rural datasets (see Figure 6.4.) and gender variation is statistically significant for the telecinematic ($p= 0.015$) and Belfast stimuli ($p= 0.001$).

Figure 6.4.

Authenticity ratings by gender
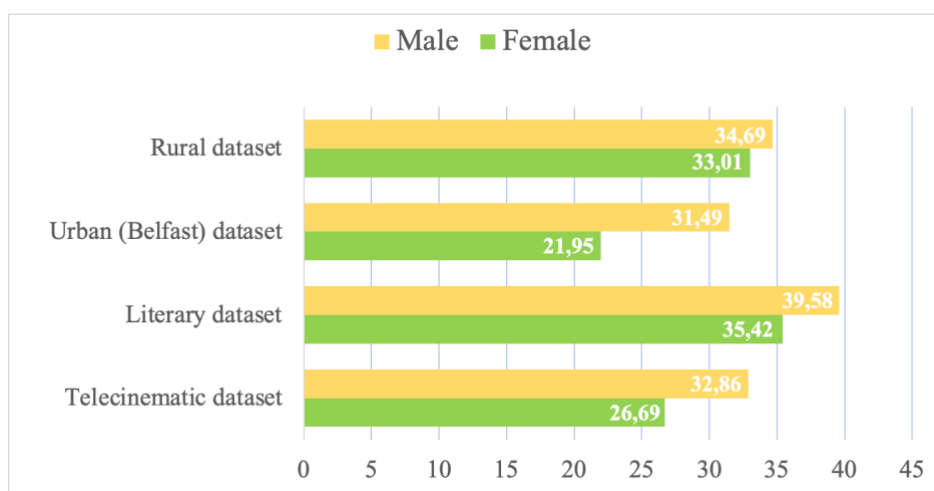
Note. Higher scores indicate less authenticity.

Offering a possible explanation for this instance of significant gender differences is no easy task, given that the authenticity of performed dialect has never been explored from the point of view of non-linguists' perception. The lack of previous research on the perceived authenticity of accent in fiction, either telecinematic or literary, leaves no option but to compare the finding that women have a more favourable attitude towards fictional representations of NIrE accents than men with gender-related findings from general research on language production and language attitudes. Many studies of language production and change concur with the view that female speech is closer to standard language than the speech of men (Chambers & Trudgill, 1980: Fischer, 1958; Labov, 1966, 1990; Macaulay, 1976; Milroy, 1987; Trudgill, 1972). This inclination towards standard forms has been commonly attributed to women's lower status than men in society, which results in a constant need to gain social acceptance. Females' linguistic

behaviour is usually governed by *overt prestige*, as opposed to *covert prestige* that prevails among men (Trudgill, 1972). Both overt and covert prestige are values that are attached to linguistic forms. The former is associated with variants that people perceive as prestigious on the basis that they are used by upper-class individuals. These variants are usually part of the standard language. *Covert prestige*, on the other hand, is secretly or privately attached to forms that, despite being non-standard or regional, are positively evaluated by members of a particular social group. Thus, women favour overt prestige due to its connection with the standard variety, while men, being often proud of their regional or social dialect, are more influenced by covert prestige. Trudgill *(*ibid.*)* provides proof of this by revealing that results from a Self-Evaluation Test completed by some of his Norwich participants show that female informants claim that they use more standard variants than they do. Conversely, males report employing fewer standard forms than they actually use.

Women's preference for the standard often leads them to rate regional accents as less prestigious and pleasant than their male equivalents. Demirci and Kleiner's (1999) findings are in line with this. Their study of the perceptions of Turkish regional varieties show that Turkish men rate those varieties more favourably on both the prestige and pleasantness dimensions. However, there are also studies that find evidence of the opposite trend. One of them is Coupland and Bishop (2007) which explores the attitudes of British informants towards 34 different accents of English. The ratings of female respondents evince more positive evaluations of most regional accents both in terms of prestige and pleasantness, a pattern that the authors point out "has not been demonstrated robustly in earlier language attitudes research" (p. 81). The contrast between the two studies mentioned here probably suggests that the relationship between gender and the evaluation of regional accents is far from straightforward and that it can be influenced by a variety of factors such as region and culture. Taking into account the effect those factors might have on gender and language perception is necessary in order to gain a better understanding of their relationship.

The finding that Northern Irish female respondents judge literary and telecinematic representations of NIrE accents to be more authentic than males is similar to the trend identified by Coupland and Bishop (ibid.) and by Bishop et al. (2005) in the sense that both of them reveal that women evaluate regional accents more favourably than men. It is nevertheless important to remember that while Coupland and Bishop investigate ratings on the traditional evaluative dimensions of prestige and pleasantness, this section

examines responses to a different dimension that is authenticity. Even though prestige, pleasantness and authenticity are all positive features, the quality of being an authentic representation is very different from the other two features. Thus, there seems to be no ground for expecting correlation between authenticity and any of the other dimensions. However, further research is required before any definitive conclusions can be drawn.

Most studies of language perception carried out in the island of Ireland (see Sections 4.3.3. and 4.3.4. for a review) do not examine variation in terms of gender even though most of them have both male and female informants (Edwards, 1977a; White, 2006). The only two studies that examine how gender affects the perception of IrE varieties are Hickey (2005) and Zwickl (2002). Hickey's draw-a-map task reveals that male informants, whether from Dublin or outside the city, identify more dialect areas than females, which leads the author to conclude that men in Ireland are more aware of dialect (2005, p. 103). On the other hand, despite being mainly concerned with ethnicity and location, Zwickl pays some attention to gender variation in language attitudes. One of the trends she notes is males' tendency to place less value on the vernacular speech of the cities of Armagh and Monaghan. Women, however, support the use of the vernacular more than men. This does not mean, though, that they do not favour Standard English. In fact, they do and, as one could expect, most of those female respondents belong to the middle or upper classes. The finding that vernacular speech is promoted by a higher percentage of women than of men challenges the validity of the widely-held generalisation that females have a less positive attitude towards vernaculars than males. Nevertheless, it might be that the reason why men show less support for local dialects has to do with covert prestige. They may not be willing to disclose their real feelings and choose to conform to the rule of overt prestige.

While gender is a social factor that deserves analysis, as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999) maintain, there is no point in testing gender effects separately. Gender does not exist in isolation but in constant interaction with other social factors such as age and social class (Eckert, 1989b, 1997). That is why examining the interplay between gender and other social variables can prove fruitful. Milroy (1987), for example, finds out significant interaction between gender and age and between gender and area in the production of a few Belfast vernacular variants. This is only one of the many studies of language production that provide evidence of complex relationship between gender and other different factors.

6.2.1.3.2. Age

Several analyses were carried out to explore whether the social factor of age has any influence on informants' authenticity ratings. It is clear from those analyses that younger respondents give the most favourable rating on the authenticity scale, whereas the older cohort rates the representations of the NIrE accent most negatively. Meanwhile, the middle-aged group's ratings are in between the younger and older cohorts. This response pattern can be observed in all datasets (Figure 6.5.). The general dataset reveals a statistically significant difference between the 18-30 and the over-55 age groups ($p=$ 0.039), a difference that is also found to be significant for the Telecinematic ($p=$ 0.027), Literary ($p=$ 0.025) and Urban (Belfast) ($p=$ 0.000) data subgroups. In addition, the 18-30 and 31-55 cohorts also differ significantly in their ratings of the telecinematic ($p=$ 0.048) and urban (Belfast) ($p=$ 0.000) stimuli. The results here presented, especially those that involve the older age group, must be approached with caution, since the number of over-55 informants is much lower than that of middle-aged and younger participants[16]. Thus, a possible direction for future studies would be to gather responses from a larger number of older participants (this will be discussed in Section 7.7., when dealing with future directions).

Figure 6.5.

Authenticity ratings by age
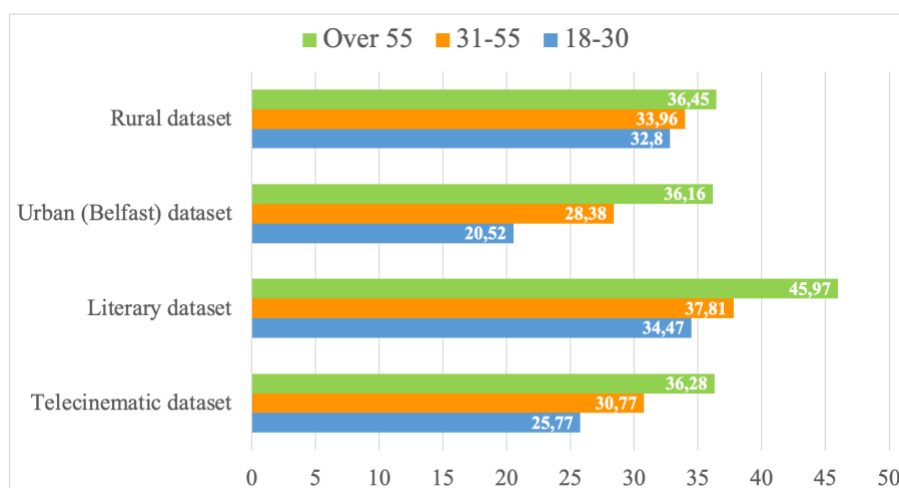
Note. Higher scores indicate less authenticity.

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[16] While there are 70 and 57 respondents in the middle-aged and younger age cohorts respectively, the older group is made up of 11 informants.

Whereas gender effects on sociolinguistic variation have been investigated to a considerable degree, age "is perhaps the least examined and the least understood [variable] in sociolinguistic terms" (Llamas, 2006, p. 69). The scarcity of research that considers the influence of age as a social factor makes it increasingly difficult to develop a hypothesis as to why informants of the younger cohort rate the fictional representations of the NIrE accents as more authentic than the other two age groups.

Research on age has shown that standard forms are generally favoured by middle-aged speakers (Labov, 1966; Macaulay, 1978; Williams & Kerswill, 1999; Wolfram, 1969). Conversely, the younger and older age groups use more vernacular features. This finding is ratified by Trudgill's findings in his study of English in Norwich (1972, 1974b). He explains the variation in linguistic behaviour between age cohorts as follows:

> We can probably account for this [age differences] by supposing that for younger speakers the most important social pressures come from the peer group, and that linguistically they are more strongly influenced by their friends than anybody else. Influence from the standard language is relatively weak. Then, as speakers get older and begin working, they move into wider and less cohesive social networks […], and are more influenced by mainstream societal values and perhaps, by the need to impress, succeed, and make social and economic progress. They are also, consequently, more influenced linguistically by the standard language. For older, retired people, on the other hand, social pressures are again less, success has already been achieved (or not, as the case may be), and social networks may again be narrower. (Chambers & Trudgill, 1980, p. 92).

The tendency of younger speakers to produce more vernacular variants than the middle-aged cohort is also substantiated by Milroy and Milroy research on Belfast (Milroy, 1987; Milroy, 1992; Milroy & Milroy, 1985). Although they mainly concentrate on the extralinguistic variables of social class and social network, age is analysed with regard to its interaction with other factors such as sex and area. They examine the distribution of five vernacular features (TH-dropping, STRUT-rounding to /ʌ/, A-backing, short E-raising and the palatalisation of velar plosives) and note that four of those features are most frequent among young speakers. TH-dropping, STRUT-rounding to /ʌ/ and A-backing are prevalent in the speech of young males, while E-raising is strongly associated with young women. The only vernacular feature that is more often employed by middle-aged

speakers is the palatalisation of /k/ and /g/, but that is because this is a recessive feature (Harris, 1985, p. 214). The evidence provided by Milroy and Milroy corroborates the observation made in previous studies that vernacular forms are preferred by younger people. However, their analysis can neither confirm nor refute the claim that older speakers also have a preference for the vernacular because they only gather data from 18-25 and 40-55 age groups. Thus, future research should aim to explore how older people in Belfast, or in NI more generally, behave linguistically.

In the same vein, McCafferty's (2001) analysis of five phonological features in (London)Derry also proves that younger speakers are more likely to use vernacular forms. Most importantly, the younger age group is the first to adopt innovations, both local and those spreading out from Belfast. A (London)Derry local innovation that informants in their youth are embracing more quickly than adults is the realisation of TH as [l] in intervocalic and final positions. Apart from this, the younger cohort uses the NORTH-FORCE and the SQUARE-NURSE mergers, two Belfast innovations, more widely. These data seem to indicate that younger informants are leading language change in (London)Derry. This theory conforms to previous research on sociolinguistics and language change where younger speakers, and very often adolescents, are found to be the leaders of change (Chambers, 2003; Cheshire, 1982; Eckert, 1998; Llamas, 2001).

On the basis of the data collected in language production studies, there are reasons to formulate the following hypothesis: Northern Irish younger informants have a more favourable attitude towards the representation of the NIrE accent in telecinematic and literary fiction than older respondents. Results for the authenticity scale listed above support this hypothesis by showing how informants belonging to the 18-30 cohort lean more towards the *very authentic* end of the scale than any of the older groups. It remains to be seen whether the younger group also rates the representations more positively on the attitudinal scales (Section 6.2.2.5.2.).

6.2.1.3.3. Social class

Social class is a well-researched factor which has been shown to correlate with linguistic variation on numerous occasions. One of the first scholars to demonstrate this correlation is Labov (1972, 1997) who undertook fieldwork in three New York department stores, each of which was associated with a different social stratum. This allowed Labov to explore the influence of social class on the realisation of final and preconsonantal /r/. His speech data revealed that the people he encountered in the highest-status store produced

/r/ in postvocalic position, a feature associated with prestige in New York, more regularly than informants from the other two department stores, who had more ʀ-less pronunciations. In spite of the social stratification of the /r/ variable, Labov discovered that there was similarity between the three stores since style shifting ocurred in all of them. However, respondents from the middle-ranking store showed more stylistic variation than any of the other two groups. This finding was used as evidence for Labov's assertion that language change arises in the speech of the lower-middle class (see Labov, 1980 for more information on the origins of language change). In a later study carried out in Philadelphia, Labov (1980, 1990) noticed that the upper-working class also seemed to be leading change and therefore concluded that "systematic sound changes generally arise in centrally located social groups" (1980, p. 260). Furthermore, the data gathered from interviews and participant observation allowed him to investigate the interaction, or lack of, between social class and gender. The statistical analyses he conducted illustrated that a gender by social class effect was absent from the initial stages of language change but appeared at more advanced stages of the change (Labov, 1990). Labov's results differ from those obtained in the context of Detroit high schools by Eckert (1989a) who found out that linguistic change was initially governed by social class but ended up being gender-related as change developed further.

Trudgill's well-known research in Norwich (Chambers & Trudgill, 1980; Trudgill, 1972, 1974b, 1997) demonstrated the fundamental role of social class in language variation and change. The distribution of several linguistic variables in Norwich is shown to abide by the rules of social stratification. In fact, most of the non-standard and less prestigious variants that Trudgill examined were most common in working-class speech (Trudgill, 1972, p. 182). He grouped his Norwich informants into five social classes, namely lower-working, middle-working, upper-working, lower-middle and middle-middle; and ascertained that, contrary to his expectations, the social classes that opted for innovative linguistic forms the most were the lower-middle and upper-working groups. Chambers and Trudgill (1980) attributed the innovative behaviour of speakers who belonged to these two social classes to their greater mobility and their eagerness to climb up the social ladder (p. 167). This greater geographical mobility was also followed by greater linguistic mobility, that is, style shifting. Lower-middle and upper-working individuals showed more stylistic variation than speakers of other classes. According to Chambers and Trudgill (ibid.), style shifting is directly correlated with linguistic insecurity. As a result, the more linguistically insecure a speaker is, the more their speech

will vary from formal to casual styles. This linguistic insecurity stems from their fear of being classified as working-class and a desire to improve their social status.

Two other studies that provide proof of the interplay between social class and language are Macaulay's (1976) and Cheshire et al.'s (2005) research on the social distribution of pronunciation variables in Glasgow and in two English cities respectively. These scholars substantiate the finding that working-class speech is the locus of most non-standard and less prestigious forms of a language. In Northern Ireland, it is Milroy and Milroy (1985) as well as McCafferty (1999, 2001) who have significantly investigated the impact of social stratification on language. Even though James and Lesley Milroy were not initially concerned with social class, the comparison between the interview data they gathered from the working-class inner-Belfast areas of Ballymacarrett, the Clonard and the Hammer and the data collected in the lower middle-class outer-Belfast neighbourhoods of Andersonstown and the Braniel revealed some relevant tendencies. As foreseen in studies of urban speech, the working-class Belfast communities favoured vernacular forms, while speakers in the outer-city areas preferred the more prestigious and closer to the standard variants. This is clearly shown through the analysis of A-backing and short E-raising in Milroy and Milroy (1985).

A backed realisation of /a/ in the context of fricatives and voiced consonants occurred more frequently in Belfast working-class speech than in that of middle-class outer-city informants who tended to produce a fronted variant [a]. Additionally, Milroy and Milroy (ibid.) pointed out that A-backing was an innovation spearheaded by the working class and, more specifically, by working-class young males from East Belfast. This innovative realisation seemed to spread from the Protestant east to the west and Catholic side of the city. This pattern of linguistic diffusion is in line with the theory that the inner-city East Belfast Protestant community of Ballymacarrett "provides the model for working-class speech in the city" (ibid., p. 358). At the same time, this is probably related to the fact that Protestants in NI enjoy more prestige than their Catholic counterparts (Boal, 1969; Pitts, 1985).

The raising of the mid front vowel /e/ was also an innovation in Belfast but its leaders were not working-class men but middle-class women (Milroy, 1992). Thus, unlike A-backing that had covert prestige, short E-raising was associated with overt prestige, the type of prestige that seems to dictate the linguistic behaviour of not only females but also of middle-class speakers. Accordingly, the higher scores for raising belonged to women and to informants from the lower middle-class areas of

Andersonstown and the Braniel (Milroy & Milroy, 1985). In the inner-city, a lowered variant [a ~ æ] was often found among working-class males when followed by a voiceless plosive. Pitts' study of Lurgan (1985), a town located 24 miles away from Belfast, presented evidence that short E-raising was also favoured by females there, and most importantly, that it was more frequent in formal styles. This indicates that Lurgan speakers also considered this feature to be prestigious.

Milroy and Milroy demonstrated that the working-class can also lead linguistic change. The difference between innovations led by lower-status individuals and those driven by the middle class is that, whereas the former are more prone to moving in the direction of the vernacular, the latter diverge from vernacular forms in an attempt to approach the standard norm.

As has been already explained, McCafferty (1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2001) carried out his research in the city of (London)Derry, thereby complementing the Milroy and Milroy Belfast study. His sample of informants includes members of both the working class and the middle class. In contrast to Milroy and Milroy, he tests the statistical significance of social class as a factor that influences language production. He concentrates on five features of Derry English which are experiencing change: the NORTH-FORCE merger, the SQUARE-NURSE merger, [ʉ] for FOOT, [ɪə] for FACE and the realisations of TH as [∅] and as [l]. Results from Varbrul analyses indicate that social class is the most or the second most significant extralinguistic variable for the above features. The first four features are characteristic of middle-class speech and the TH vernacular variants, of the working class. Furthermore, the realisation of TH as a lateral approximant [l] in intervocalic and final positions is an innovation led by working-class Catholic young speakers in (London)Derry (McCafferty, 2001, p. 186). This corroborates Milroy and Milroy's aforesaid finding that language change is sometimes driven by the working class. With regard to the four middle-class features, it is worth noting that all of them are Belfast innovations that were being adopted in (London)Derry at the time of McCafferty's writing. The investigation into ongoing changes allows McCafferty to discern the diffusion pattern of Belfast innovations according to which the first to embrace forms coming from the eastern city are middle-class Protestants who are followed by the Protestant working class, the Catholic middle class and working-class Catholics. Furthermore, middle-class Protestants incorporate innovative Belfast variants into their speech, no matter whether they are "associated with inner-city Belfast vernacular or the higher-prestige suburban variety" (ibid., p. 201). In fact, McCafferty gives one example

of each. The centralised vowel [ʉ] is part of the Northern Irish local standard and therefore enjoys overt prestige. Meanwhile, the realisation of the FACE class as [ɪə] is typical of the Belfast working-class vernacular. Despite their difference in status, these two variants are commonly identified as Protestant features and that seems to be reason why Protestants in more western parts of NI, such as (London)Derry, adopt them regardless of their prestige or lack of it. This suggests that, as McCafferty finds out, ethnicity influences language production and, more importantly, that it prevails over social class in the adoption of Belfast innovations by speakers in (London)Derry.

Considering the results described above, one would expect to see that working-class informants rate the stimuli as more authentic than the middle class. This is because the majority of the stimuli display working-class vernacular accents which deviate substantially from a more standard variety which middle-class speakers tend to favour. Thus, the stimuli might be expected to trigger a more favourable reaction from working-class respondents. However, no clear tendency can be observed throughout the datasets (see Figure 6.6.). Sometimes it is the working-class informants who rate stimuli as more authentic and some other times, it is the middle-class. Moreover, statistical analyses show no significance in the difference between the working and the middle classes. This is true for all social class subgroups, that is, the objective, subjective and combined social class subgroups, and for all datasets.

Figure 6.6.

Authenticity ratings by social class

Note. Higher scores indicate less authenticity.

Notwithstanding the lack of statistically significant differences, some trends can be observed in the data. One of them is that, as illustrated in Figure 6.6., while the objective and subjective middle-class participants judge the telecinematic dataset to be more authentic, the literary extracts receive a more favourable rating from the objective and subjective working class. The middle-class informants' more negative score for the authenticity of the written representations may be related to the importance they place on standard language, not only on its spoken but also on its written form. As Jaffe and Walton (2000) explain, "orthography is one of the key sites where the very notion of 'standard language' is policed" (p. 562). Consequently, nowhere is language as fixed and as standard as in writing and therefore deviation from the standard orthography might be expected to be more negatively evaluated than divergence from the standard spoken language. Preston (1982b, 1985) and Jaffe and Walton (2000) provide evidence of negative evaluations by readers who tend to link non-standard spellings with low social status, lack of education and roughness. The authority ascribed to standard orthography is what may have influenced middle-class respondents to rate literary fiction as less authentic than working-class individuals who are likely to be less concerned with the symbolic power of the written norm. It is also interesting to see that, in line with this explanation, when the middle class is arranged into MC-MC and MC-WC, the latter subgroup gives a more positive rating for authenticity.

Another trend that emerges from the data shows that the WC-WC subgroup is responsible for the least favourable authenticity ratings in all but one dataset. This is somewhat surprising given that, as mentioned earlier, most stimuli are working-class accents which are expected to arouse a positive feeling of solidarity among working-class informants. While it is not possible to demonstrate whether or not they felt that, what seems clear is that their response is slightly more negative than that of their middle-class counterparts. The reason for this is far from obvious but two hypotheses can be put forward. Covert prestige could lie behind this trend. Even though prestige and authenticity are two different concepts, covert prestige might lead the working class to rate the stimuli as less authentic than they actually think they are. A more plausible explanation, though, is that working-class respondents are harder to please because they know precisely how a Northern Irish working-class accent is supposed to sound. However, more information is needed in order to know if any of these reasons can help explain the questionnaire results.

The Rural dataset also reveals a pattern that is worthy of comment: the middle-class evaluates the representations of rural accents slightly more favourably than the lower status group. This applies to both the objective and subjective social class and also to the WC-WC and MC-MC subgroups. This tendency might be due to rural accents being softer or, at least, not as working-class as the Belfast accent which, as many other British urban varieties, is highly stigmatised (Bishop et al., 2005; Coupland & Bishop, 2007). In cities, especially in those that are industrialised like Belfast, class differences are sharper than in the rural hinterland. Moreover, industrial workers have been shown to develop an accent that comes to be strongly associated with the working class of the city. Whereas working-class people value this accent, the middle class is more likely to favour softer rural accents. In spite of this, if the middle-class ratings for the Rural dataset are compared to its ratings for the Belfast accents, a more positive evaluation of the Belfast dataset can be noted. Taking into account that two of the four Belfast accents are markedly working-class, this response could not be anticipated. However, it is important to remember that what informants are assessing here is not prestige or pleasantness but authenticity. The reason why middle-class respondents judge Belfast accents to be more authentic than the rural ones probably has to do with the number and type of features that the Belfast and the Rural datasets contain. The former includes three stimuli that are abundant in pronunciation as well as lexical features. Conversely, the three speech samples that constitute the Rural dataset contain less phonological and lexical variants. Although from an expert's perspective more features do not necessarily mean a more authentic portrayal, non-linguists' perceptions of authenticity may be influenced by quantity. This is particularly the case if there is a good number of vernacular lexical items of which lay people are more conscious of (evidence supporting this claim is provided in Section 6.3.1.1.).

The fact that the Belfast accents are rated as more authentic than rural speech by all social class groups can be related to the considerable number of Belfast informants whose ratings might obscure those by respondents from rural areas. That is why the ratings given by Belfast and rural participants need to be examined separately. Figure 6.7. displays the mean authenticity scores for each of the four subgroups that result from the interaction between objective social class and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown. The most extreme ratings belong to the two middle-class groups. Belfast middle-class informants have the most favourable attitude, whereas the rural middle class is the most negative. The difference between these two groups might lie in the spatial distance between them.

It may be the case that knowing the accent due to geographical proximity makes Belfast informants feel confident to say that the representations are authentic. On the contrary, people from rural areas are probably not so sure how authentic they are. Whatever the reason, the test of between-subjects effects returns no significant interaction effect ($p=$ 0.792) between the variables of objective social class and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown.

Figure 6.7.

Authenticity ratings by objective social class and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown
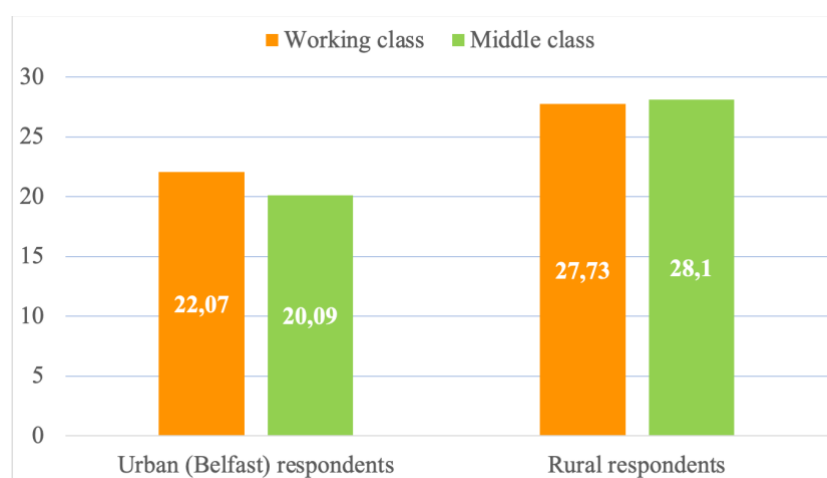
Note. Higher scores indicate less authenticity.

6.2.1.3.4. Ethnicity

The ubiquity of the ethnic divide in many aspects of life in NI (Section 5.3.2. offers an explanation of how ethnicity affects geographical distribution, education and culture) has led some researchers to explore whether it also affects language. As already mentioned in Section 4.3.4., some of these scholars claim that there are ethnolinguistic differences between the speech of Catholics and Protestants in NI (Cairns & Duriez, 1976; Gunn, 1994; Kirk, 1997a; McCafferty, 1998b, 2001; Pitts, 1985; Todd, 1984). However, the reverse is true for other linguists who find that there is not enough evidence to believe that ethnic differences are echoed in language (Millar, 1987; Milroy, 1981, 1992; Rahilly, 2003, 2006; Zwickl, 2002). All the studies just cited consider the role of ethnicity but it must be noted that, while some of them approach the subject from the point of view of language production (Gunn, 1994; Kirk, 1997a; McCafferty, 1998b, 2001; Milroy, 1981, 1992; Pitts, 1985), some others do it from a perceptual standpoint (Cairns & Duriez, 1976; Millar, 1987; Todd, 1984; Zwickl, 2002). Yet Rahilly's (2006) research on the

pronunciation of the name of the letter H in NI includes production and perception analyses. The present dissertation will supplement previous studies on the relationship between ethnicity and language attitudes in NI and will advance knowledge on how fictional representations of NIrE accents are perceived by the Catholic and Protestant ethnic groups.

McCafferty is a strong advocate of the view that ethnolinguistic variation occurs in NI and criticises Milroy and Milroy for, what he considers is, ignoring ethnicity (see Section 4.3.4. for a more detailed explanation of the ethnolinguistic debate). This makes no sense for him given the overarching influence of ethnic background in NI. Furthermore, this scholar does not understand why they discount the role of ethnicity after finding proof of ethnolinguistic variation (McCafferty, 1998b, pp. 101-102). The reason Milroy and Milroy give for not considering the ethnic divide is that their pilot study shows that the main linguistic differences existing in Belfast are those between the east and the west sides of the city rather than those between Catholics and Protestants (Milroy & Gordon, 2003). Thus, area is said to overrule ethnicity. This finding contrasts with McCafferty's (2001) statistical analyses which reveal that ethnicity is the factor that better accounts for language variation and change in (London)Derry. Whatever the case may be, ethnicity and area are closely intertwined in the Northern Irish context due to a high degree of residential segregation by ethnic background. Studies of language in NI should therefore consider these two factors, both separately and in interaction.

In addition to area, ethnicity also seems to correlate with social class. As Milroy and Gordon (2003) propose, "[g]iven its place in structures of inequality, ethnicity often needs to be understood in relation to social class" (p. 109). In NI the differences between Catholics and Protestants extend beyond religion and develop into social class distinctions (McCafferty, 2001; Pitts, 1985). As a result, whatever position Protestants occupy in the social ladder, they usually have a higher status than their Catholic counterparts. Despite the fact that Catholics and Protestants exist in similar proportions in NI[17] and, even though in many localities the Catholic ethnic group outnumbers the Protestant section of the population, Catholics still appear to have a minority status.

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[17] Results from the 2021 census show that Catholics constitute 45.7 per cent of the population while Protestants (which encompasses the Presbyterian Church, the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church and Other Christian) amount to 43.5 per cent. These results show that there are similar numbers of Catholics and Protestants. However, they have been widely reported in the media (see Carroll, 2022; Cooley, 2022; McClements, 2022) since they reveal a reversal of trend in the proportion of these two ethnic groups in NI. All the censuses prior to the 2021 census had recorded a larger number of Protestants (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, n.d.).

According to Garner and Gilligan (2015), the British Protestant government in the northern country has often tended to favour Protestants, especially when it comes to public housing, civil service and schooling (pp. 515-516) This favourable treatment has worked to the disadvantage of Catholics who seem to have had a less privileged position in the Northern Irish society. In line with these societal trends, McCafferty (1998b, 2001) finds examples of the interaction between ethnic background and social class in his (London)Derry data. The variables NORTH-FORCE, SQUARE-NURSE, [ɪə] for FACE and [ʉ] for FOOT occur more frequently in the speech of the Protestant middle and working classes than in the language of their Catholic equivalents. Moreover, Protestant middle-class speakers are the leaders of linguistic change since they are the first to incorporate three of these Belfast variants into their speech. The diphthongal realisation of the FACE lexical set, though, is slightly more common among working-class Protestants (see Figure 5 in McCafferty, 1998b, p. 113), which is probably due to the working-class status of the [ɪə] allophone. The detailed examination of the above variants also allows McCafferty to identify an unexpected pattern. He discovers that "the most pronounced ethnic differentiation is found in the middle class" (2001, p. 213) instead of in working-class speech as is traditionally believed. The strong segregation between the two ethnicities in working-class areas, especially in Belfast, is thought to bring about more acute differences as compared to middle-class neighbourhoods where members of the two communities are less segregated. However, (London)Derry seems to deviate from this, a deviation that McCafferty ascribes to Protestants being a minority in a mostly-Catholic city and to their frequent travelling outside (London)Derry and the consequent establishment of relationships with people from eastern parts of the country (ibid.).

Before proceeding to discuss the ethnicity results for perceived authenticity, it is worth listing some ethnolinguistic trends in language attitudes that have been observed in NI. While some of these trends have already been mentioned in Section 4.3.4., their relevance for this subsection makes their repetition necessary.

I will start with some of the trends emerging from Zwickl's (2002) questionnaire data. One of them is that, perhaps unexpectedly, Protestant respondents show a more positive attitude towards SSBE than Catholics. For Catholics, though, SSBE seems to be a language standard that they are not willing to imitate, an attitude also shared by Catholics in the ROI (Hickey, 1999). Apart from that, the fact that Northern Irish Catholics usually classify themselves as Irish cultivates the perception that their speech is somewhat similar to SIrE. This perception is corroborated by Kirk (1997a) who

maintains that Northern Irish Catholics are more inclined to think that they sound Southern. However, Zwickl contradicts Kirk's finding by noticing that a large number of their Catholic informants, whether from the ROI (County Monaghan) or NI (County Armagh), label their speech as "Northern" rather than as "Southern". Protestants from Armagh, nonetheless, conform to the belief described a few lines above and perceive "Catholic speech as having more Southern features and Protestant speech as having more Northern ones" (Zwickl, 2002, p. 110). Further support for the Catholic-SIrE and Protestant-NIrE associations can be found in Milroy and McClenaghan (1977). As already observed in Section 4.3.4., these scholars demonstrate that their sample of Protestant Belfast university students rate the Southern Irish accent more negatively on the scales of attractiveness and personal integrity than any of the three other accents namely SSBE, Ulster and Scottish. When listening to SIrE Northern Irish Protestants seem to establish an immediate connection between this accent and a Catholic identity, which elicits an unfavourable response towards the speaker. In spite of that, it is important to remark that the ratings on competence for the SIrE accent are more positive, being perceived as the second most competent, after SSBE.

Rahilly (2003) also casts some light on how SIrE and NIrE are evaluated by Northern Irish respondents. She investigates whether responses to radio and television advertisements vary depending on the accent (a SIrE or a NIrE accent) in which they are delivered. Informants are required to assess the speakers of the ads in terms of likeability, trustworthiness, competence and persuasiveness. The overall ratings illustrate that, regardless of their ethnicity, Northern Irish listeners react more favourably towards speakers of NIrE than towards SIrE accents, which are generally downgraded. What is more, the most positively evaluated advertisement is one with a speaker whose accent can be neither recognised nor classified as northern or southern. This leads Rahilly to conclude that "NI listeners prefer broadcasting accents which are relatively neutral, insofar as they are neither marked examples of SIrE or NIrE, as long as they contain some NIrE features" (p. 26). In addition to the four aforementioned evaluative dimensions, this researcher also asks her informants to answer the question "Do you find the speaker's accent realistic?" (p. 20). Speech realism is closely related to authenticity and that is why this part of Rahilly's study deserves special attention. Although the concept of realism is not discussed in her paper as widely as in other previously cited academic publications, her study is worthy of comment, inasmuch as she, as far as I am concerned, is the first scholar to explore how audiences perceive performed accents in terms of realism. Rahilly

indicates that respondents' assessment of the realism of performed accents appears to be based on consistency in some cases. The advertisement that fares worst of all in realism is a conversation between three children who have different accents. The lack of consistency between the accents is what seems to prompt informants to judge the ad to be unrealistic. More important than this finding, however, is Rahilly's warning that the word "realistic", or "realism'", is open to many different interpretations and therefore responses to perceived realism must be carefully considered. This recommendation is kept in mind when dealing with the questionnaire results for perceived authenticity (see Section 6.2.1.)

In a later study, Rahilly (2006) provides evidence that the pronunciation of the name of the letter H in NI is not "a clear marker of ethnicity" (p. 61), as opposed to what conventional wisdom suggests. Her production experiment reveals that the traditionally Catholic-related realisation [hetʃ], while most frequent among this ethnic group, is also produced by one Protestant speaker. Similarly, the Protestant variant [etʃ], far from being exclusive to this section of the Northern Irish society, is used by most of Rahilly's Catholic respondents. Apart from her production study, she also carries out a perceptual experiment that confirms that the pronunciation of H does not pattern along clear ethnic lines. When played some advertisements with some [hetʃ] occurrences and some others where the allophone [etʃ] is produced, Northern Irish participants are able to notice the different realisations. However, they cannot associate the variants with a specific ethnic identity; they are not sure of the social meaning of the H variable. Thus, Rahilly goes some way towards debunking the ethnolinguistic myth that H is pronounced differently by Catholics and Protestants.

In a similar vein, Pitts (1985) rejects the popular belief among Catholics that Protestant speech is more polite, which she believes arises from "an 'us versus them' mentality in which 'polite' speech is scorned as belonging to 'them' [Protestants], the group socially removed and higher in social status than are the Catholics" (p. 81). The notion of politeness is therefore intimately linked with standardness and prestige. With regard to standardness, Pitts' Protestant group also seems to favour Northern Irish supralocal standard forms more than Catholics who tend to opt for conservative regional variants.

Having listed some ethnolinguistic trends and beliefs identified in research on language attitudes in NI, the authenticity ratings for each of the two ethnic groups are now going to be described and, when possible, compared to previous findings discussed

above. Ethnic differentiation is not statistically significant in my perceptual data, which may indicate that differences between Catholics and Protestants in terms of language production and perception are not as clear-cut as lay people often think. Even though the differences are not significant, the general trend shows that Protestants rate all the different datasets, with the only exception of the Belfast one, as more authentic than Catholics (see Figure 6.8.). This does not mean, nonetheless, that every single stimulus receives a more favourable rating from Protestant informants. In fact, there are three speech samples, namely Audio 1, Audio 3 and Video 4, in which the general trend is reversed. What these stimuli have in common is that all of them contain the speech of actresses raised in a Catholic ethnic background. It does not seem surprising then that Catholics are more positive about these representations. Protestants' more unfavourable rating on authenticity for those three stimuli is influenced by the mean rating for Protestant males, which is significantly higher than the average rating corresponding to Protestant females. In other words, Protestant male participants judge those three speech samples to be considerably more inauthentic. Protestant males differ from Catholic women in ethnicity and gender and these differences might be the reason for their negative rating of Catholic female speech. Male Catholics also have a more negative attitude towards those three stimuli than their female counterparts but the difference is small, as compared to that between Protestant males and females.

Figure 6.8.

Authenticity ratings by ethnicity
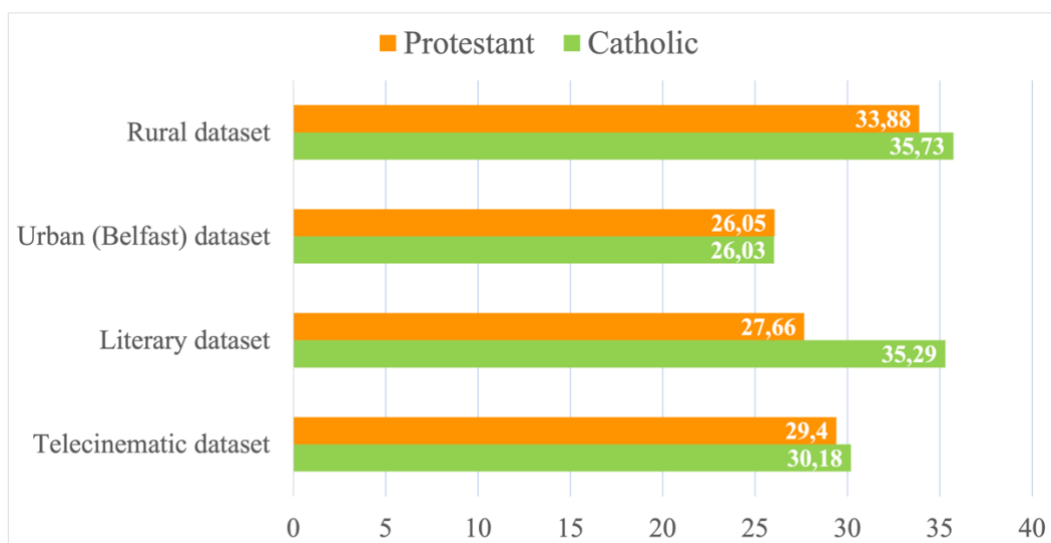
Note. Higher scores indicate less authenticity.

As regards the other four speech samples (Audio 2, Audio 4, Video 1 and Video 3), all of which contain male speech, Protestant women are responsible for the most favourable ratings for three of them. Conversely, their Catholic equivalents are the ones giving the most unfavourable ratings for two of the stimuli. These results show that while Catholic and Protestant females are quite similar in their evaluations of female speech, their ratings differ considerably when listening to men's voices.

Despite the aforementioned tendencies, interaction between the factors of ethnicity and gender does not prove statistically significant for the telecinematic dataset (p= 0.069). However, significant interaction effects are found for the literary data subgroup (p= 0.031). As evidenced in Figure 6.9. below, the two groups with less favourable ratings on authenticity are male Protestants and female Catholics which seems to evince that perceived authenticity does not vary along clear gender or ethnic lines. On the other hand, the most positive evaluation belongs to Protestant women, a trend observed in all datasets. It is surprising that this group of respondents consider the novel, which represents a (London)Derry Catholic accent, to be more authentic than Catholic females who are supposed to be more emotionally attached to this accent.

Figure 6.9.

Authenticity ratings for the literary fiction dataset by ethnicity and gender
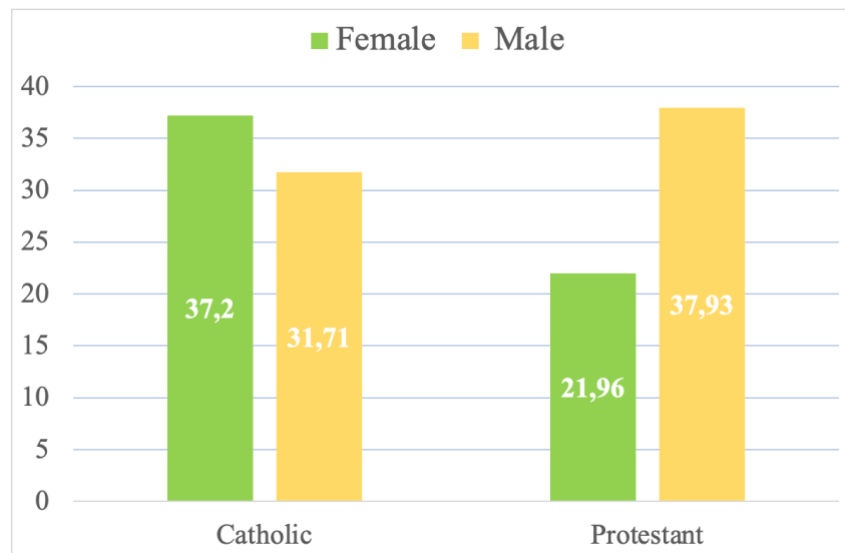
Note. Higher scores indicate less authenticity.

Apart from gender, the interplay between ethnicity and the variables of objective social class and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown is also subject to statistical analysis. Statistical

significance is found neither in the interaction between ethnicity and social class ($p=$ 0.868) nor in that between ethnicity and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown ($p=$ 0.300). Notwithstanding, two trends can be distinguished that deserve comment. One of them is that both the Catholic and Protestant middle classes are slightly more negative in terms of perceived authenticity than the working classes (Figure 6.10.). This is in line with the expectations given that most stimuli contain working-class speech. Yet, greater differences were expected. The second trend is identified when analysing the interaction between ethnicity and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown. Belfast Protestants rate the stimuli higher on authenticity than any other group (see Figure 6.11. below), which is probably due to the fact that many stimuli present Belfast accents. It is surprising, though, that Belfast Catholic informants have less favourably ratings even if three of the stimuli are produced by Belfast Catholic performers.

Figure 6.10.

Authenticity ratings by ethnicity and objective social class
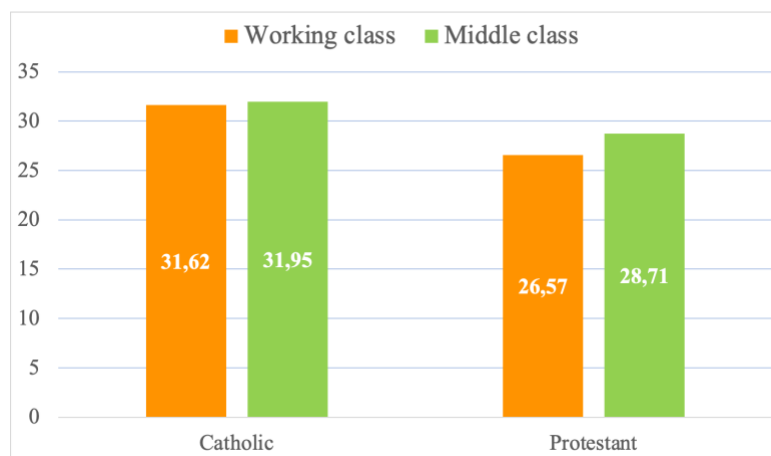
Note. Higher scores indicate less authenticity.

Figure 6.11.

Authenticity ratings by ethnicity and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown
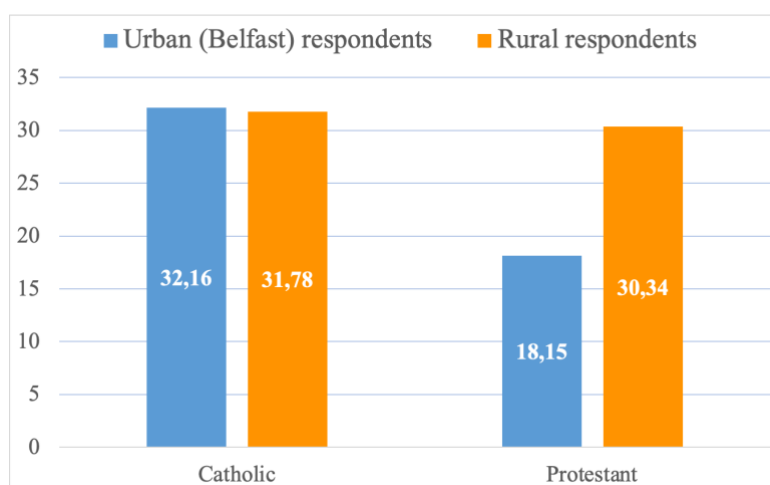
Note. Higher scores indicate less authenticity.

The evidence presented here seems to suggest that ethnic differentiation is not clear when it comes to assessing the authenticity of fictional representations of NIrE accents. Moreover, the fact that Protestants rate even those stimuli produced by actors with a Catholic background more favourably than Catholics may support Millar's (1987) claim that people in NI cannot tell the difference between Catholic and Protestant speakers.

6.2.1.3.5. Urban (Belfast)/rural hometown

Region is probably the first extralinguistic variable to be investigated by linguists and its study has gone through different stages. The field of traditional dialectology was concerned with rural speech and, more precisely, with the speech of the NORMs, i.e., non-mobile, old, rural males (Chambers & Trudgill, 1980). Special value was attached to this type of speech which was seen as closer to the original form of the language than the dialects spoken in urban centres, which had been "contaminated" by coming into contact with other varieties and/or languages. However, with the advent of urban dialectology, the focus shifted from rural to urban speech. Two of the first scholars to concentrate on urban dialects were Labov and Trudgill who carried out research in the cities of New York and Norwick, respectively. The study of language in the city led Trudgill (1974a, 1983) to propose that the geographical diffusion of linguistic variants follows a *gravity model*. The *gravity model*, which he borrowed from the geographer Hägerstrand (1952), establishes that urban features usually travel from large urban centres to smaller cities,

and from there to more rural areas. This diffusion model has been found to materialise in many places like Glasgow (Macafee, 1983), Oklahoma (Bailey et al., 1993), Chicago (Callary, 1975), and also in Northern Ireland (McCafferty, 2001; Pitts, 1985). The acceptance of the gravity model results in the assumption that there is a unidirectional relationship between urban and rural speech where the former influences the latter, but not the other way round. Nevertheless, Evans (2016) rejects this assumption and argues that "rural and urban communities are interdependent with mutual flows of people, information, technology and commodities" (p. 55). It must be noted that the immigration of people from the rural hinterland to industrialised cities in search of work brings about changes in urban speech. Pitts (1985) provides examples of rural features that were transported to Belfast by rural immigrants, and eventually became characteristic of the urban vernacular. One such rural feature is A-backing, which ended up being associated with Belfast working-class speech. Furthermore, while the backed realisation only occurred before /n/ in rural speech, people in the capital began to use it in other phonological environments as well. Apart from that, Pitts reflects on the outward diffusion of linguistic innovations from large cities to smaller population centres:

> urban dialects are not monolithic varieties exerting homogenous influence on surrounding towns and rural areas. The influence of the large urban center is complex, related to extralinguistic factors such as sex, age, speaking style, and the competing values of vernacular loyalty versus upward mobility. (p. 83)

This means that urban innovations are adopted to a greater or lesser extent and more rapidly or more slowly depending on the characteristics of the inhabitants of the smaller town or village. Thus, and in line with McCafferty's (2001) findings, a town where the majority of the population are middle-class Protestants might be expected to adopt Belfast innovations more quickly and to a greater degree than one mainly populated by working-class Catholics. Nonetheless, this is only a supposition that serves to explain Pitts' statement, which highlights the need to consider the interaction between area and other factors such as the ones mentioned above.

The dichotomy between urban and rural speech has been frequently investigated from the point of view of language production but has received little attention from the perspective of language perception. Cramer (2016) and Evans (2016) identify this research gap and contribute to its filling. The former investigates speech production and

perception in Louisville, the largest city in the state of Kentucky. She ascertains that people in that city dissociate themselves from the rural speech which seems to define Kentucky. This distancing is shown through both production and perception practices. On the other hand, Evans proves that, even though some scholars have called into question the distinction between urban and rural speech, the urban-rural dichotomy exists for lay people. In order to do that, she explores how people in Washington state perceive the rural and urban varieties spoken there.

By including the variable urban (Belfast)/rural hometown in the questionnaire and by using speech samples containing both urban and rural accents, my aim is to enlarge knowledge about lay people's perceptions of the difference between urban and rural speech. Whereas the urban-rural dichotomy has been validated in production studies of language in NI (see for example Douglas-Cowie, 1978; Gregg, 1958; Kingsmore, 1995; Milroy, 1981; Pitts, 1982, 1985), there is a dearth of research on how Northern Irish people perceive this dichotomy.

Figure 6.12. illustrates how urban and rural informants rate the different datasets on the authenticity scale. As explained in Section 5.5.1., the urban informants for the present study are people from Belfast and therefore I have been referring to them as "urban (Belfast) respondents" in some of the figures above to avoid confusion. The trend that stands out more clearly shows that Belfast respondents have more favourable authenticity ratings than informants from rural locations for most data subgroups. However, the differences between the urban (Belfast) and rural groups are only statistically significant for the Belfast dataset ($p= 0.018$). As could be expected, Belfast informants rate representations of Belfast accents significantly higher on authenticity than rural participants. One possible reason for this is that, as pointed out in some research on advertising (Aaker et al., 1992; O'Mahony & Meenaghan, 1998), members of the audience tend to react more positively to performers they perceive as similar to them. Additionally, some studies within the field of perceptual dialectology provide evidence that lay people usually consider the dialect of their hometown to be more pleasant than varieties spoken in other places (for example Demirci & Kleiner, 1999; Hartley, 1999; Long, 1999; Preston, 1989). Nevertheless, being exposed to performances of an accent which is familiar to the audience can be a double-edged sword. The audience's familiarity with the accent allows them to be more critical in their evaluation of the performance's authenticity. If the performance is accurate, as seems to be the case with the Belfast stimuli (the authenticity of the stimuli is analysed in Section 5.3.3.1.), viewers will

probably feel proud. By contrast, an inaccurate representation would most likely result in a negative reaction on the part of the audience.

Figure 6.12.

Authenticity ratings by urban (Belfast)/rural hometown
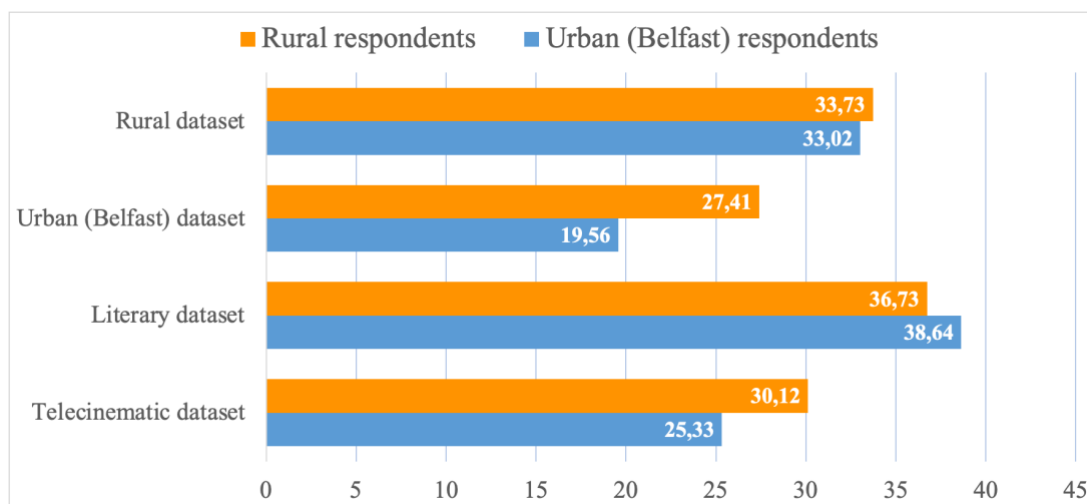
Note. Higher scores indicate less authenticity.

While Belfast respondents show a more positive attitude towards Belfast speech, participants from more rural areas do not evaluate rural speech, with which they are supposed to feel more identified, as more authentic. This might be influenced by the fact that the rural informants are from many different rural areas in NI and only three rural accents are represented. Moreover, the qualitative data presented in Section 6.3. shows several informants complaining that most of the accents represented are Belfast and that there should be more representation of a variety of rural accents.

Not only do rural informants not rate the rural stimuli more favourably than people from Belfast, but they also judge the urban (Belfast) stimuli to be more authentic than the rural dataset. Media representations of NIrE accents usually centres around Belfast accents so that Northern Irish audiences, even those that live in the countryside, are likely to be more familiar with those accents than with more rural ones. This familiarity might be the cause for the positive authenticity rating of the Belfast dataset by rural respondents. Nonetheless, this finding is difficult to account for in the present dissertation and more research on the notion of authenticity is required to discover the reasons behind it, if any.

For the literary fiction data subgroup, an inversion of the general trend can be

observed in Figure 6.12. above, with the rural group being more positive than urban (Belfast) participants about the authenticity of the literary fragments. This does not seem surprising since two of the three extracts, namely the poem and the novel, portray rural accents.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that statistical tests were carried out to see if there was any significant interaction effect between urban-rural hometown and the factors of gender, age, social class and ethnicity. However, no statistically significant interaction was found.

6.2.2. Attitudinal dimensions

6.2.2.1. Perceived prestige

As explained in Section 5.3.4.1.3., the three 4-point semantic differential scales that measure prestige are *Acceptable-Unacceptable*, *Standard-Non-standard* and *Educated-Uneducated* and their overall mean ratings are 1.99, 2.32 and 2.65 respectively. This means that informants rate the representations of Northern Irish accents as more acceptable than either standard or educated, where they are more negative. This trend is observed not only in the general dataset, but also in each of the four different data subgroups, that is, telecinematic fiction, literary fiction, urban (Belfast) and rural (see Figure 6.13. below). Moreover, the ratings for the literary dataset on the three prestige scales differ considerably from the ratings for the other three data subgroups, which are similarly evaluated. The accents represented in writing are rated less favourably on the prestige dimension. This is especially true for the poem, which receives the most negative rating on the three prestige scales. The large number of non-standard spellings in so short a text together with the nature of those spellings, some of which merge two or three words into one, are probably responsible for the negative evaluations in terms of prestige. Apart from that, the fact that the written representations of NIrE accents are seen as considerably less prestigious than the spoken stimuli seems to further support the claim discussed in Section 6.2.1.4.3. that deviation from the standard form is more strongly condemned in writing than in speech.

Figure 6.13.

Ratings on the prestige scales for the four datasets
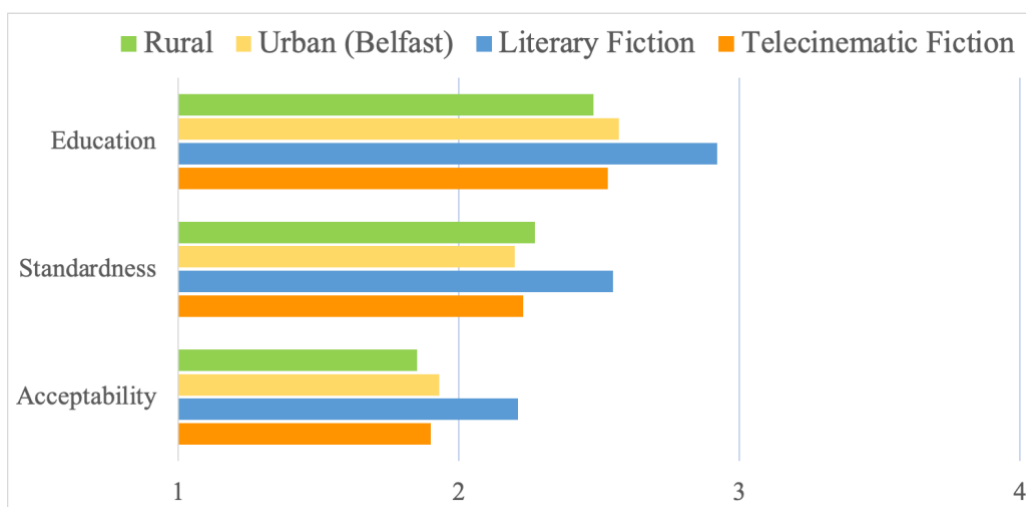
Note. Higher scores indicate that the ratings are closer to the negative poles of the scales.

Analyses of each individual stimulus reveal that the telecinematic speech sample with the less positive score on acceptability and standardness is Video 1, which is also rated as the least authentic of all telecinematic stimuli. As will be further discussed in Section 6.3., some informants perceive the accent in Video 1 to be quite overacted and that may be the reason behind the more negative attitude towards it. Despite that, the accent in the *Soft Border Patrol* clip is not among the most uneducated stimuli, which is very likely due to the context surrounding the speech. The speaker, Laurence Lyle, is in an office sitting on a designer swivel chair and wearing a white shirt with a jumper on top. He holds a position of authority and seems to be discussing an important matter. The context and Lyle's looks are therefore quite formal, which may lead participants to rate his accent not so negatively on education. The least educated telecinematic stimulus is Audio 2, although it must be noted that the difference between this and Video 1 is small (0.4 points). This finding is hardly surprising, as the speaker in that auditory stimulus is a broadly-accented criminal who is explaining how to deliberately cause a car accident to obtain compensation for damages.

On the other hand, the stimulus most favourably assessed when it comes to prestige is Video 4. The female speaker in that clip has a milder middle-class Belfast accent and therefore it makes sense that she is perceived as more prestigious than other speakers who have broader, more working-class accents. Notice as well that two of the

three samples of rural speech, namely Audio 1 and Video 3, are rated the second and third most acceptable stimuli while the other rural sample, that is, Audio 4, receives the second most positive rating on the *Educated-Uneducated* scale. Thus, the rural accents are evaluated slightly more favourably on acceptability and education than the Belfast accents. This might suggest that the accents of people from country areas are seen by Northern Irish informants as somewhat more prestigious than Belfast accents, especially those associated with the working class. This is consistent with the claim that there is a stigma attached to urban accents which seems to result in lower ratings on the prestige dimension. The lack of studies on attitudes towards urban versus rural speech in Northern Ireland makes it difficult to know if that trend exists or if it is due to chance or to results being biased. In the ROI, though, two studies carried out using Irish respondents (Hickey, 2005; and Masterson et al., 1983) show that Dublin dialects are rated as less prestigious than rural Irish speech, thus confirming the stigmatisation of urban vernaculars in Ireland. However, the so-called Dublin 4 accent receives a higher score on the prestige dimension than rural speech and its rating is almost as high as that awarded to SSBE (Hickey, 2005, p. 97). Being associated with upper-class individuals, it comes as no surprise that the Dublin 4 accent fares high on prestige. Even though the evidence presented here seems to indicate that urban vernaculars in Ireland, especially those spoken in Dublin and Belfast, are perceived as less prestigious than accents used in more rural localities, further investigations are needed to gain a clearer picture of Northern Irish lay people's perceptions of rural and urban speech.

Figure 6.14. compares the prestige mean ratings for the Northern Irish English stimuli and the average scores for Video 2, a clip that, as seen in Section 5.3.3., contains a SSBE accent. Contrary to what might have been predicted, informants judge the standard stimulus to be less acceptable and standard than most of the Northern Irish speech samples (only Video 1 and the poem are rated more unfavourably than Video 2 on acceptability and standardness). These results call for consideration of how the scales *Acceptable-Unacceptable* and *Standard-Non-standard* were interpreted by the Northern Irish respondents. It seems reasonable to believe that they did not understand those two scales in the way they were intended to, that is, as indicators of prestige. Since informants are asked to evaluate fictional representations of NIrE accents, they might have interpreted the adjective "acceptable" as "acceptable as a representation of the NIrE accent". This would explain why the SSBE accent receives a less positive rating on acceptability than the NIrE accents. As regards standardness, one thing seems clear:

participants did not understand "standard" in the sense of "close to a standard form of the language" as they were supposed to do. One possible meaning attributed to standard might be "typical" or "usual" but this is just a hypothesis that would need to be tested. Standardness is quite an abstract quality, and this might have prompted a variety of interpretations. These misinterpretations seem to evince that people in NI find it difficult to evaluate performed accents along the dimensions of acceptability and standardness. As a consequence, it might be better not to include them in future studies of this kind. Moreover, in order to avoid misinterpretations such as the ones mentioned above, running a pilot study aimed at eliciting adjectives used to describe accents in fictional performances from potential respondents is recommended.

Figure 6.14.

Comparison between the prestige ratings for the Northern Irish English stimuli and the Standard Southern British English stimulus
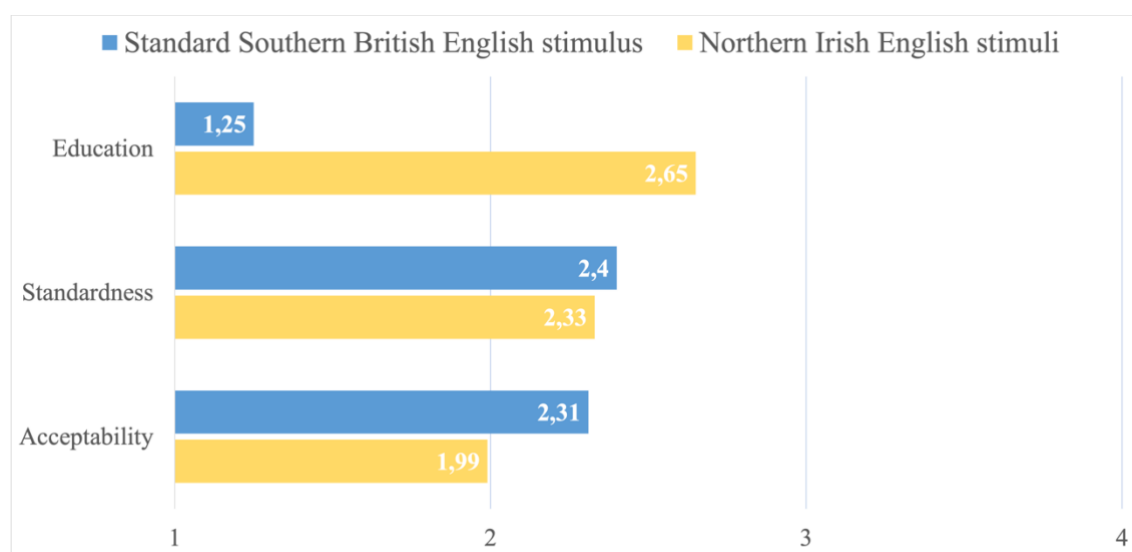
Note. Higher scores indicate that the ratings are closer to the negative poles of the scales.

The unexpectedness of the ratings on acceptability and standardness for Video 2 leads one to think that those scales have been interpreted in a way different from what is customary in language attitudes research. Nonetheless, this different interpretation may not apply to the ratings of all other speech samples. If so, that could mean that the Northern Irish informants think that the NIrE accents they have listened to are moderately acceptable and moderately close to a standard form of English, which is highly unlikely. Scores on the *Educated-Uneducated scale* differ significantly from ratings on the two previous prestige scales (Figure 6.14. above). The NIrE stimuli is perceived as

considerably less educated than the SSBE clip, which receives a highly favourable score on this scale. This is in line with findings from earlier studies on the perception of English accents reviewed in Section 4.3. and suggests that there is a strong connection between SSBE and good education. Thus, someone who speaks the standard variety is quickly classified as educated in the minds of non-linguists. Apart from that, the fact that more divergence is found between the SSBE and the NIrE accents on the education scale than on acceptability or standardness makes it clear that lay people can easily rate accents according to education.

6.2.2.2. Perceived pleasantness

The evaluative dimension of pleasantness is measured using three different bipolar scales: *Pleasant-Unpleasant*, *Friendly-Unfriendly* and *Gentle-Tough*. The overall average scores for each of them are 2.40, 2.31 and 2.47 respectively and are therefore quite similar to the means for the prestige scales. When rating NIrE accents on the dimensions of prestige and pleasantness, informants tend to opt for a middle position between the positive and negative poles of the scales. They seem to be influenced by what is known as the central tendency bias (for more information, see Sims, 2002). This bias can be the result of three different situations. The rater might feel either indifferent to the subject or uncertain about how to evaluate. A third possible scenario is the case of judges who avoid leaning towards any end of the scale for fear of the impression they might make on the fieldworker. This is also probably related to another bias that frequently affects survey informants, the social desirability bias (already mentioned in Section 4.3.1.2.). Moderation is usually praised by society, as opposed to extremism, and that can explain why many respondents choose the midpoint of a scale.

The presence of the central tendency bias along with the reduced number of points in the semantic differentials, which are most often made up of six or seven points, may contribute to obscuring the identification of clear tendencies. This is the reason why slight deviations from the middle point of the scale (2.5) are considered significant for the present study.

Answering research question 1 laid out in Section 1.2., evaluators are more positive when it comes to assessing how friendly the speaker's accent is than when rating the accents in terms of pleasantness and gentleness (as shown in Figure 6.15 below). Furthermore, the friendliness scale has a lower standard deviation (0.32 as compared to 0.36 for each of the other two scales), which means that respondents are more consistent

in their rating of this scale. At the same time, a higher degree of consistency is likely to be indicative of more ease of interpretation. This would make sense given that friendly is a common adjective that people normally use when they talk about individuals. It is also worth noting here that friendliness together with education are the scales with the lowest standard deviations.

Figure 6.15.

Ratings on the pleasantness scales for the four datasets
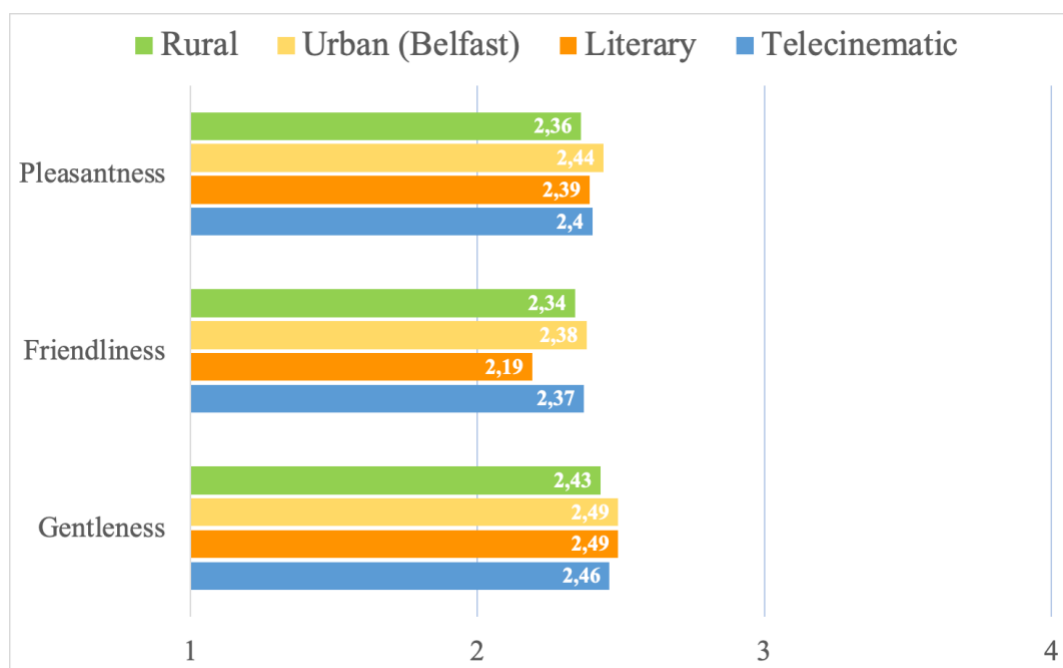
Note. Higher scores indicate that the ratings are closer to the negative poles of the scales.

An analysis of the differences between each of the NIrE stimuli reveals some interesting results. The novel is awarded the most favourable scores on pleasantness and friendliness, whereas informants judge the poem to be the least pleasant. The way in which the prose fragment is written and its subject matter are likely to evoke feelings of warmth, intimacy and nostalgia which seem to translate into a positive rating on the pleasantness dimension. This is relevant inasmuch as it proves how the use of non-standard spellings in writing does not always have negative effects, such as the downgrading of the speaker, but can also help to create a pleasant atmosphere. The poem, however, contains respellings that are difficult to decode. The struggle to understand those spellings ends up causing an "unpleasant" feeling which leads to a more unfavourable rating on the *Pleasant-Unpleasant* scale.

Audio 2 does not fare well on any of the three pleasantness scales, but this does not appear to be exclusively due to the presence of NIrE pronunciation features. The content of the speech sample, that is, what is said, has probably influenced the ratings since the male speaker is talking about engaging in illegal activity.

Meanwhile, Audio 4 is among the most pleasant and friendly and seen as the gentlest. In spite of being an example of male speech as Audio 2 and taking into account that men's voices tend to be generally thought of as less pleasant than women's, the male speaker in Audio 4 is rated more favourably on pleasantness than the performer in the second audio. Moreover, the difference between these two auditory stimuli is especially pronounced in the *Gentle-Tough* scale where the mean ratings for Audio 2 and 4 are 3.30 and 1.86 respectively. The perceived gentleness of the speaker in Audio 4 may lie in the soft tone of his voice and his words of support and encouragement.

Figure 6.16. depicts the comparison between the pleasantness ratings for the NIrE accents and the SSBE accent. Video 2 is evaluated more positively than the NIrE stimuli in two of the three pleasantness scales, namely gentle and pleasant. This finding runs counter to expectations based on previous language attitude research, which provides evidence of how SSBE is judged less pleasant than many dialectal varieties (for scholars who have proved this see Section 4.3.3.). The Northern Irish respondents who took part in the study that is being described in the present dissertation were expected to show a more positive attitude towards the NIrE accents than to the SSBE speech sample. That is the case for the *Friendly-Unfriendly* scale although the variation in rating between the NIrE and SSBE data subgroups is small. A possible reason why the NIrE dataset has less favourable scores on gentleness and pleasantness than the SSBE accent could be that informants are influenced not only by the pronunciation, but also, and even more so, by the content and the speaker's tone and type of voice. In terms of content, Video 2 is a close-up shot of a middle-aged woman at a desk giving commands to a younger man and thinking out loud. Even though she is telling a subordinate to do something for her, she sounds gentle and polite. In light of this, it seems reasonable that respondents evaluate her more positively on the *Gentle-Tough* and *Pleasant-Unpleasant* scales than some of the NIrE speakers. Besides, the fact that the stimuli are presented as "representations" of the NIrE accent may have also played a role in the absence of a more positive reaction towards the NIrE dataset. Using the word "representation" in the context of accents in fiction, especially telecinematic fiction, and asking about the authenticity of those representations might have aroused distrust among respondents. That is to say, this word

might have led them to believe that the actors in the stimuli are not from NI and, consequently, to rate them less favourably on the pleasantness dimension. It would be interesting to see what would happen if participants were assured that the people behind the voices were Northern Irish, but such further investigation was beyond the scope of this thesis.

Figure 6.16.

Comparison between the pleasantness ratings for the Northern Irish English stimuli and the Standard Southern British English stimulus
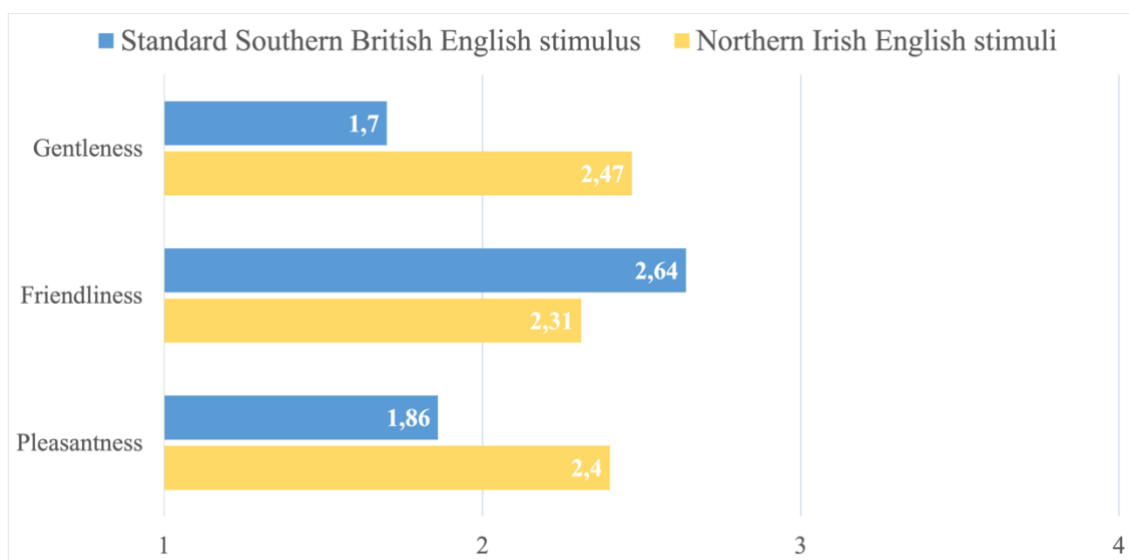
Note. Higher scores indicate that the ratings are closer to the negative poles of the scales.

6.2.2.3. Perceived intelligibility and mildness

In addition to evaluating accents on the traditional dimensions of prestige and pleasantness, informants are required to rate them on two scales that represent two qualities directly related to accents. These two scales are *Intelligible-Unintelligible* and *Mild-Broad*. Results from the analysis of the scores on intelligibility and mildness for the four data subgroups, i.e., Belfast, Rural, Telecinematic and Literary, reveal significant differences between the first two and between the last two. The Belfast dataset is considered to be more intelligible but broader than the Rural subgroup (Figure 6.17.). A higher rating on broadness for the Belfast accents is in line with lay people's tendency to associate urban accents with thickness. However, the expectation that "the broader an accent, the less intelligible" is not met. While this correlation may be true in other

contexts, the fact that the participants are from NI and are therefore familiar with Belfast accents can explain why those accents are judged to be quite intelligible despite their high degree of perceived broadness. Apart from this, there are two other factors that have probably had an influence on the unexpected rating of the Belfast accents as fairly intelligible. One of them is the considerable number of respondents who are from Belfast themselves, whereas the other factor has to do with the fact that Northern Irish audiences are used to finding Belfast accents represented in telecinematic fiction, as opposed to more rural accents that are not as frequently performed.

Figure 6.17.

Ratings on intelligibility and mildness for the Urban (Belfast) and Rural datasets
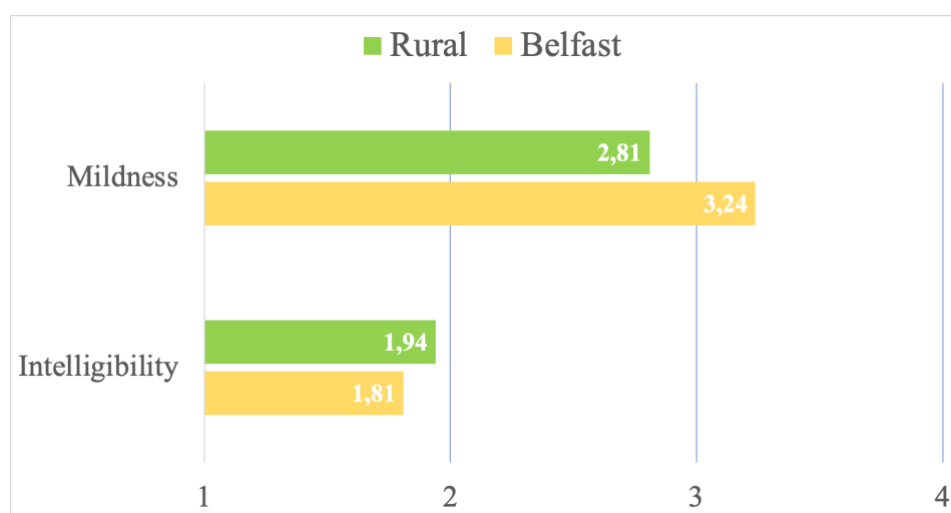
Note. Higher scores indicate that the ratings are closer to the negative poles of the scales.

Regarding the Telecinematic and Literary datasets, the former is awarded a more positive rating on intelligibility than the latter (Figure 6.18. below). This is far from surprising because, as mentioned earlier, the representation of speech through writing requires a greater effort on the part of the reader to understand the pronunciation suggested by non-standard spellings. On the *Mild-Broad* scale, the literary data subgroup scores higher than the telecinematic stimuli, which means that the accents in the written fragments are considered broader than the accents represented in telecinematic fiction. The most likely explanation for these results is that non-linguists condemn non-standardness more strongly when found in writing than in oral speech. Accordingly, a non-standard pronunciation feature is probably rated higher on broadness when represented through spelling than when orally produced. Nevertheless, more evidence is required to prove

this. One experiment that might offer interesting insights into this issue would consist in presenting some lay people with the written and spoken versions of a text that contains non-standard pronunciation features.

Figure 6.18.

Ratings on intelligibility and mildness for the telecinematic and literary datasets
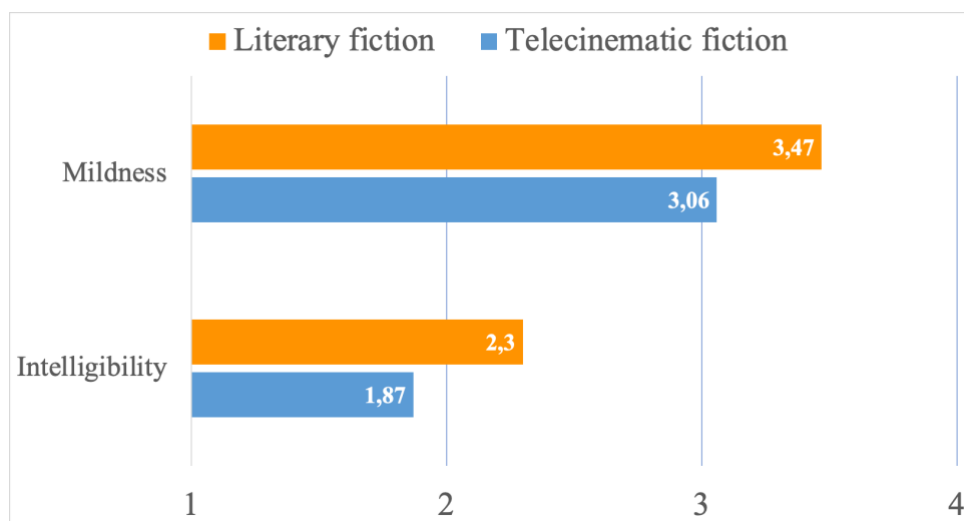
Note. Higher scores indicate that the ratings are closer to the negative poles of the scales.

It is also important to point out that the poem is perceived as broader than the novel and the novel as broader than the play. Variation in the degree of perceived broadness between the three literary fragments seems to indicate that the more non-standard spellings, the broader the written representation of an accent is perceived.

The comparison of ratings of the NIrE stimuli on the intelligibility and mildness scales with the scores for the SSBE speech sample yields the expected results. The Northern Irish informants rate the accent as more intelligible and milder than any of the NIrE stimuli. The difference between the SSBE and the NIrE accents is particularly pronounced on the *Mild-Broad* scale, with the former scoring 1.31 and the latter, 3.18. In fact, mildness is the scale where SSBE and NIrE most differ. Whereas, as discussed above, respondents usually opt for a rating that is close to the middle of the scales, they lean more towards the ends when evaluating the mildness/broadness of the accents. This change in rating behaviour could be attributed to a direct link between this scale and accents, which are frequently described as mild or broad by non-linguists. Furthermore, this link makes it easier for informants to interpret the scale, which probably results in no

need to choose a somewhat neutral middle point as may be the case for other scales.

6.2.2.4. Perceived comic quality

The rating on comic quality is influenced by the content and context of the stimuli, which is why Audio 3 and Video 1 are evaluated as considerably more comic than the rest of the NIrE stimuli. The content of the former is funnier than that of Video 1, but there is a comic quality in how the actors of both stimuli speak. It must also be noted that recognising the TV show affects how informants rate Audio 3 and Video 1 on the *Comic-Not-comic* scale. Those who identify the TV shows where these two speech samples have been taken from award more comic quality to them than respondents who do not recognise the show. The reason for this is that those who are familiar with the shows know that they are comedies.

The other telecinematic stimuli have an average score of 3.33, meaning that they are perceived to be little comic. Meanwhile, the rating for the literary dataset is 2.71. Thus, the written representations of accent, while still being considered little comic, are rated as slightly more comic than the spoken performances. This is despite the fact that both the written and the spoken stimuli lack comical value. Even though it is always possible that chance is behind this difference, it may be that the use of respellings to suggest non-standard pronunciations adds a hint of comic quality to the text. The association between comic quality and dialect in writing was established by means of a long tradition of incorporating dialectal features into literary works for comic purposes (Section 4.2.1.). The rating of the literary fragments as more comic might be an indication of the impact that this tradition still has. The comic quality and informality commonly attributed to non-standard respellings has likely resulted in difficulty in taking dialectal speakers seriously, or at least as seriously as standard speakers, even when they are dealing with important issues.

The most comic literary extract is the poem, followed closely by the novel and the play, the latter being the least comic. There is nothing in the four verses that evokes humour. However, the poem happens to be the fragment with the highest density of respellings, some of which are very hard to decode, and this might be the reason for its rating. In future research, it would be a good idea to explore if the correlation "the more respellings, the more comic" holds true for other examples of written representations of accent.

The average rating on comic quality for the SSBE stimulus does not differ greatly

from the mean scores for the NIrE accents (3.86 and 3.33, respectively). Nonetheless, respondents judge the SSBE accent to be the least comic of all stimuli, even though it is not more serious in tone than some of the other speech samples. This appears to suggest that lay people regard standard forms of a language as more serious than non-standard varieties, which makes sense given that positions of power are usually occupied by speakers of the standard form. This belief is reinforced in telecinematic fiction where actors with standard accents typically play the role of authority figures. In *The Fall*, the TV crime drama where Video 2 is taken from, a SSBE speaker, Gillian Anderson, is the police officer that supervises the investigation of a serial killer. She is sent to Belfast to aid the police service of Northern Ireland in solving the case. Thus, she works with local officers that have less standard Northern Irish English accents and are her inferiors. This is an example of a TV show that, in spite of being set in NI and having many local actors in it, bolsters the standard language ideology.

6.2.2.5. Social factors
6.2.2.5.1. Gender

Although there is not much gender variation, some observed trends and statistically significant differences deserve attention. As illustrated in Figure 6.19., one of those trends is found in the ratings on the prestige dimension where women evaluate the performed NIrE accents as more standard and educated. With regard to pleasantness, female informants perceive the stimuli to be more pleasant, gentle and friendly than their male counterparts. Moreover, the difference between men and women in their ratings on friendliness proves to be statistically significant (p= 0.033). The two trends mentioned above are in line with Coupland and Bishop (2007), who find evidence that females have more favourable attitudes towards British regional accents both in terms of prestige and pleasantness. Those trends can be observed in all data subgroups, except in the literary dataset. While the prestige ratings for the written representations of accent do not show any clear trend, the overall gender pattern is reversed for the pleasantness dimension so that women rate the literary fragments more negatively on the pleasant and gentle scales than men.

Figure 6.19.

Scale ratings by gender for the general dataset
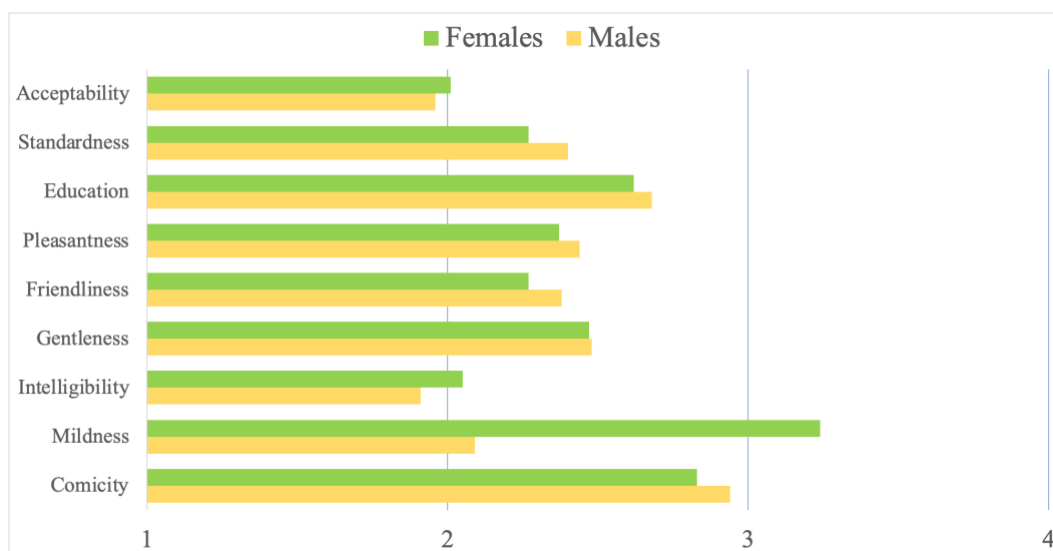
Note. Higher scores indicate that the ratings are closer to the negative poles of the scales.

On mildness and intelligibility male respondents give more positive scores, that is, they evaluate the NIrE speech samples as milder and more intelligible than females. Furthermore, the men-women difference in the former scale reaches statistical significance (*p*= 0.018). As for the *Comic-Not-comic* scale, the stimuli are rated as more comic by female informants, a trend found in the four data subsets, i.e., Belfast, Rural, Telecinematic and Literary.

An analysis of gender ratings for the SSBE stimulus reveals that women are less positive than males on both the prestige and pleasantness dimensions as well as on intelligibility and mildness. This does not mean, though, that they perceive the SSBE accent more unfavourably than the NIrE accents on all those scales. In fact, females award the former accent more positive ratings in all but three scales, which are acceptability, standardness and friendliness.

6.2.2.5.2. Age

The only clear age trends are observed in the scales *Intelligible-Unintelligible*, *Mild-Broad* and *Comic-Not-comic*. As can be seen in Figure 6.20., on the intelligibility and

mildness scales, the younger cohort has the most negative ratings, that is, younger respondents perceive the NIrE stimuli to be less intelligible and less mild that the two other age groups. This trend is found in all the data subgroups except for the rural dataset where the older cohort is responsible for the most unfavourable ratings. Nevertheless, the difference between groups is small and does not prove to be statistically significant.

Figure 6.20.

Scale ratings by age for the general dataset
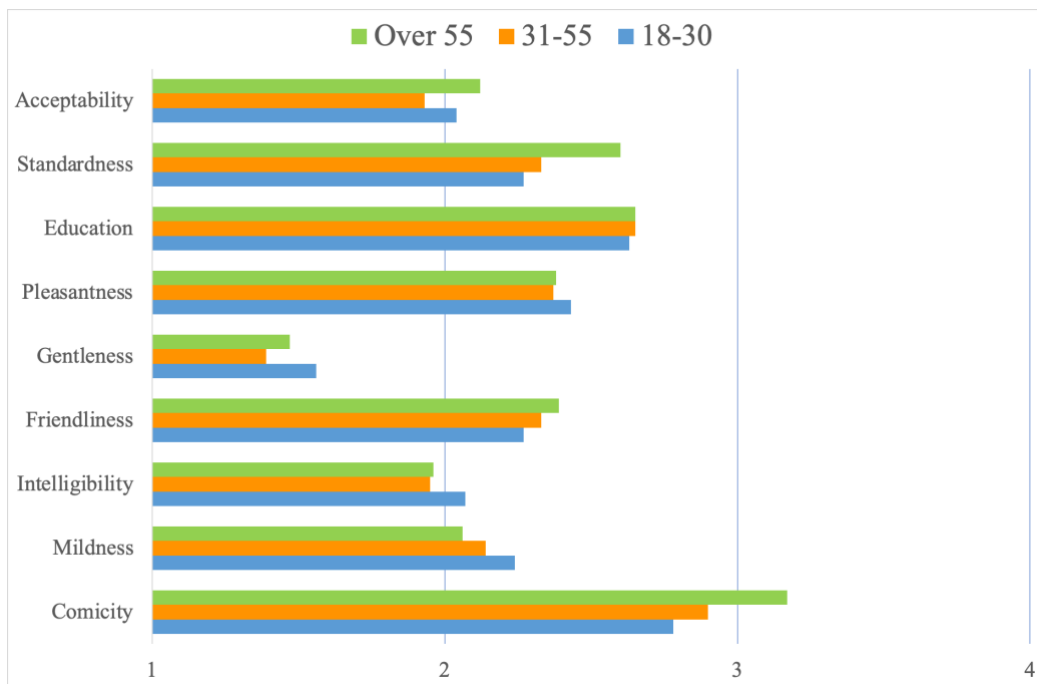
Note. Higher scores indicate that the ratings are closer to the negative poles of the scales.

Another trend that can be clearly identified in Figure 6.20. shows that younger informants judge the NIrE accents to be more comic than people in the 31-55 and over-55 cohorts. As opposed to intelligibility and mildness, intergroup variation on comic quality is significant ($p= 0.014$). In addition to this scale, statistical analyses of the general dataset reveal that the influence of age on ratings on the *Gentle-Tough* scale is also significant. More precisely, variation is meaningful between the younger and the middle-aged informants ($p= 0.005$). The former rate the NIrE accents more negatively on gentleness than the other group.

Ratings on the prestige and pleasantness dimensions do not seem to follow any age pattern. Nonetheless, while this is the case for most of the scales within the two above dimensions, the younger age group is consistently the most positive on friendliness. This

group's mean rating on this scale contrasts with the scores on both the *Pleasant-Unpleasant* and *Gentle-Tough* scales, which are the most negative of all cohorts.

Taking into consideration all the aforementioned trends, it seems reasonable to say that younger respondents tend to have more extreme reactions than the two older cohorts. Notwithstanding, for the rural dataset, it is the older informants who award more extreme ratings. In fact, the over-55 group rates the rural accents as less acceptable, standard, educated, gentle, friendly, intelligible and mild than the 18-30 and 31-55 cohorts.

Apart from the rural dataset, the SSBE stimulus also receives the most positive and most negative scores on the part of the older respondents. They evaluate the standard accent less favourably in terms of acceptability and education than any of the two other cohorts. However, this trend is reversed when it comes to the pleasantness dimension since the over-55 informants rate Video 2 most positively on the three pleasant scales. Meanwhile, the younger age group is the most negative on pleasantness and friendliness, a trend that contributes to confirming the already explained theory that younger speakers dissociate themselves from the standard language ideology (see Section 6.2.1.4.2.). As for mildness and intelligibility, the SSBE stimulus is seen as the mildest and the least intelligible by the older cohort. This seems contradictory since there is usually a direct correlation between these two scales, meaning that the more intelligible, the milder and vice versa.

6.2.2.5.3. Social class

No statistically significant differences are found between the working-class and middle-class informants in their ratings of NIrE accents. In spite of that, it is worth describing some trends and divergences. With regard to the dimension of prestige, it can be noticed that the middle class tends to rate the NIrE stimuli slightly more negatively on the prestige scales (see Figure 6.21.). This trend is observed for both the objective and subjective social class groups although the subjective middle-class respondents do not perceive the Northern Irish stimuli as less educated than the subjective working class.

Figure 6.21.

Ratings on the prestige scales by objective and subjective social class for the general dataset

Note. Higher scores indicate that the ratings are closer to the negative poles of the scales.

On the pleasantness scales, the objective and subjective groups differ in their evaluations (Figure 6.22). The objective middle class rate the NIrE accents slightly more favourably on the *Pleasant-Unpleasant* and *Gentle-Tough* scales than their working-class equivalents. However, when informants are grouped according to subjective social class, the trend is reversed so that the least positive ratings on two of the pleasantness scales, namely pleasant and friendly, are awarded by the middle class. This result is more in line with what one would expect. People who belong to the middle class have been frequently found to show a preference for more standard forms, thus disdaining dialectal variants. That is why it seems surprising that the objective middle class has a more positive attitude towards the NIrE stimuli when it comes to pleasantness.

Figure 6.22.

Ratings on the pleasantness scales by objective and subjective social class for the general dataset

Note. Higher scores indicate that the ratings are closer to the negative poles of the scales.

As with the representations of Northern Irish accents, there is little difference, and in no case statistically significant, between the working-class and the middle-class groups, whether objective or subjective, in their judgments of the SSBE stimulus. There is, nevertheless, a scale where they most differ and that is intelligibility. Subjective middle-class respondents consider the standard accent to be more intelligible than their objective counterparts. Meanwhile, for the working class the opposite is true, that is, the subjective group is more negative on intelligibility. This may be related to the fact that the subjective working-class group includes a considerable number of informants who have middle-class occupations but identify themselves with the working class probably because they were raised in a working-class environment. The linguistic attitudes of those informants are therefore most likely influenced by the working-class language ideology, an ideology that advocates for dialectal forms of the language, thereby detaching itself from the standard variety (a discussion of the relationship between language and social class can be found in Section 6.2.1.4.3.). Even though favouring regional over standard variants does not necessarily imply that working-class individuals find it harder to understand the standard form of the language, their negative stance to it may lead them to distance themselves from the standard by, for example, limiting their exposure to standard forms. A reduced contact with the standard could finally result in difficulty understanding standard speakers. This could account for subjective working-class respondents' less

positive rating on the *Intelligible-Unintelligible* scale. Nonetheless, this is not the only possible explanation for this finding. There is also some chance that, being influenced by their downgrading of the standard variety, working-class informants get annoyed when hearing standard speakers and, consequently, make no effort to understand them.

Whereas social class has been often shown to influence language production (see for instance Chambers & Trudgill, 1980; Cheshire et al., 2005; Milroy & Milroy, 1985), there seems to be a lack of studies that investigate whether the social class of the raters has any effect on accent or dialect evaluation. Meanwhile, some scholars in language attitudes research have proved that the perceived social status of speakers who are used as stimuli affects ratings on the prestige and pleasantness dimensions (Ryan & Sebastian, 1980). Consequently, there is reason to believe that the raters' social class may affect their reactions to accents or dialects. However, results from the present study suggest that there is no significant difference between working-class and middle-class raters in their evaluations. This finding is consistent with Demirci and Kleiner (1999) and with Kuiper (1999), two of the few researchers who have examined the influence of the raters' social class on language attitudes, a factor that deserves attention in future studies.

6.2.2.5.4. Ethnicity

Statistical analyses reveal no significant ethnicity-based variation, but they point to some noteworthy tendencies that can be observed in Figure 6.23. Protestant informants rate the NIrE stimuli less favourably on two of the prestige scales, namely standardness and education, and on two of the pleasantness scales, namely gentleness and friendliness, than Catholics. This could be due to the fact that most speech samples are produced by Catholic speakers. However, the comparison of how Protestants and Catholics evaluate Protestant and Catholic speech shows no clear pattern, except when it comes to the poem. As explained in Section 5.3.3.1.3., the poem represents an USc-influenced accent that is closely linked to a Protestant background and, as a result, Protestant respondents rate it higher on the prestige and pleasant scales. Remarkably, though, Catholics, rather than Protestants, judge the verses to be slightly more educated. Apart from that, it is also important to note that Protestants react more positively in terms of pleasantness not only to the poem, but also to the novel and play.

Figure 6.23.

Scale ratings by ethnicity for the general dataset
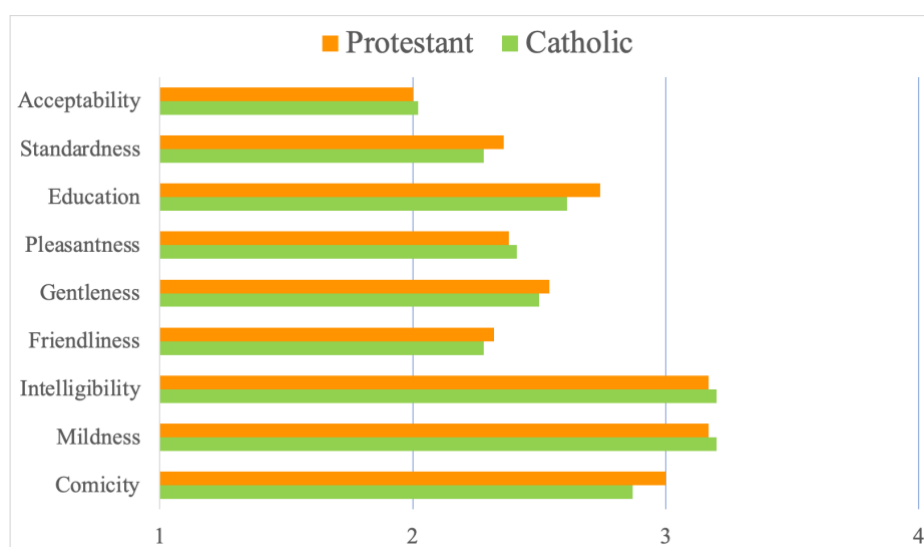
Note. Higher scores indicate that the ratings are closer to the negative poles of the scales.

In Figure 6.24. below, which illustrates the two ethnic groups' scores for the SSBE stimulus, a clear trend can be distinguished. Unlike the NIrE stimuli, the Standard accent is awarded more positive scores on prestige and pleasantness by Protestants than by Catholics. This is in line with the trend identified by Zwickl (2002) and according to which Protestants have a more positive attitude towards SSBE than the Catholic ethnic group. Such a finding could be anticipated given Protestants' pride in being part of the United Kingdom. Moreover, the fact that Protestants in Northern Ireland coexist with Catholics, the other majority ethnic group with opposing views on major issues such as politics and religion, prompts a constant need to reaffirm their British identity of which SSBE is an essential part. Their coexistence with Catholics and the physical separation of NI from the rest of the UK can also make Protestants feel like they are second-class British. Thus, their support for the Standard British variety could be explained by a feeling of inferiority and a need to gain status as fully-fledged British citizens. If this is the case for Protestants in NI, they can be expected to approach the standard more than Catholics and, most importantly, more than other British speakers from mainland Britain. Pitts (1985) provides proof that a variant close to Standard Southern British English is more likely to be found in the speech of Protestants in Lurgan than in Catholic speech (p. 78). However, she ascribes this difference between the two ethnic groups more to social class than to ethnicity. As already observed in Section 6.2.1.4.4., Northern Irish Protestants seem to enjoy a higher position on the social ladder than Catholics and therefore it is no

surprise that they favour more standard forms. Despite this, there is no strong evidence that the way Protestants in NI speak is more similar to SSBE than the speech of Catholics and of other British speakers. This is a gap that needs to be filled.

Figure 6.24.

Scale ratings by ethnicity for Video 2
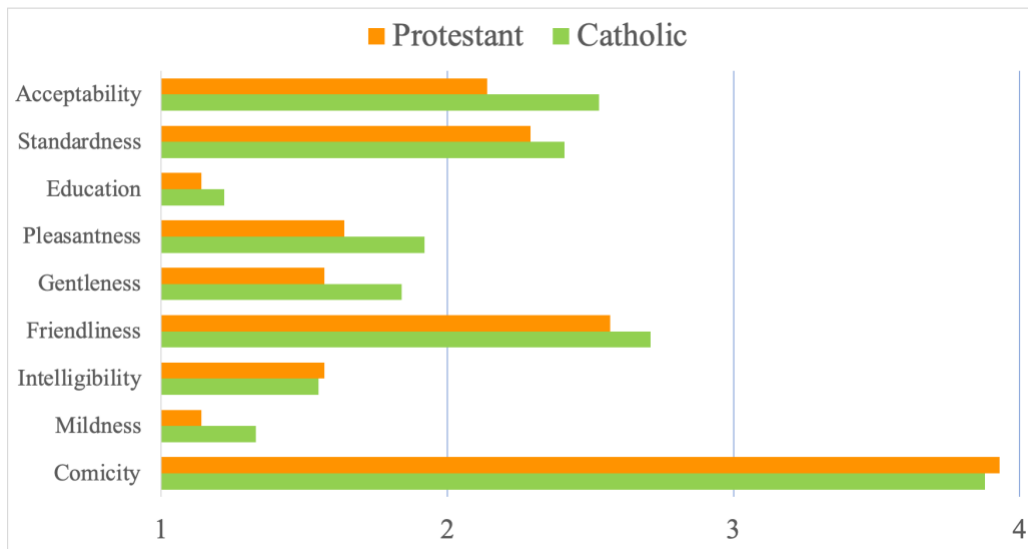
Note. Higher scores indicate that the ratings are closer to the negative poles of the scales.

6.2.2.5.5.   Urban (Belfast)/rural hometown

Despite there being little variation along the urban (Belfast)/rural divide, as shown in Figure 6.25., a trend emerges from the questionnaire data. Informants from rural areas seem to have a more negative attitude towards the NIrE stimuli than the urban (Belfast) participants. They have less favourable ratings on most of the scales. One exception is the *Friendly-Unfriendly* scale where rural informants are consistently more positive throughout all the different datasets.

Figure 6.25.

Scale ratings by Urban (Belfast)/Rural hometown for the general dataset
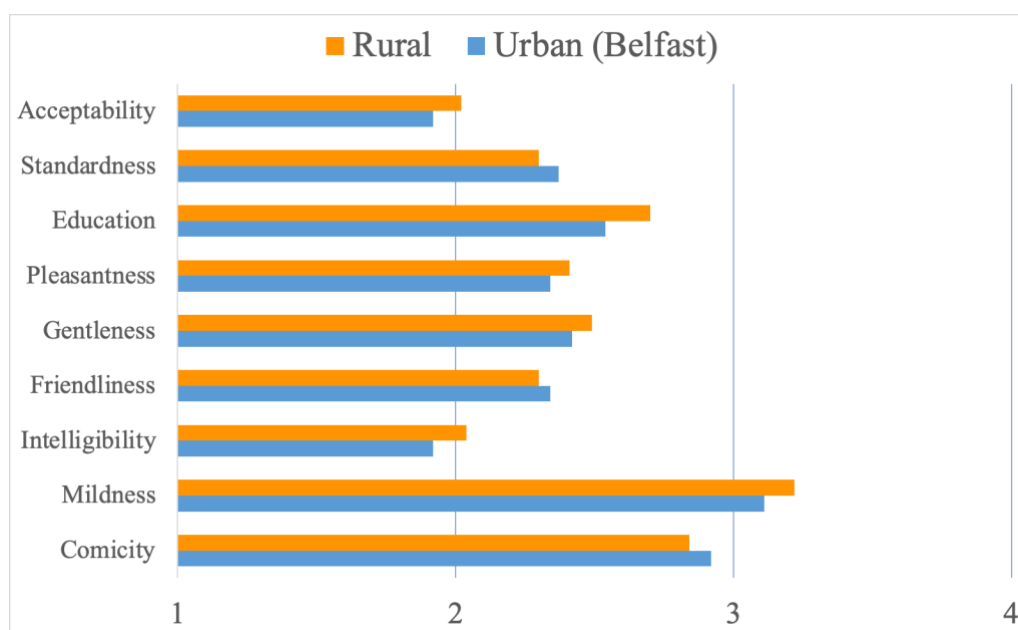
Note. Higher scores indicate that the ratings are closer to the negative poles of the scales.

Statistically significant variation is only found in two scales, i.e., *Educated-Uneducated* and *Mild-Broad*. However, this is not to say that the urban (Belfast)/rural ratings on these scales differ significantly in all data subgroups. The difference between urban (Belfast) and rural informants in their scores on education is statistically significant only for the telecinematic dataset ($p= 0.027$) which, following the pattern of the general dataset shown in Figure 6.25., is rated more favourably on the *Educated-Uneducated* scale by the urban (Belfast) respondents. On the other hand, variation in the *Mild-Broad* scale proves to be significant when the rural dataset is tested ($p= 0.035$). Urban (Belfast) informants rate the rural stimuli as milder than rural informants. This deviates from the expectation that participants from rural locations would attribute more mildness to rural accents.

As with the NIrE accents, rural and urban (Belfast) informants do not differ significantly in their evaluations of the SSBE accent. Regardless of that, a clear response pattern can be observed, according to which informants from the city of Belfast award the SSBE stimuli more unfavourable ratings on all scales except for the education and intelligibility scales. The overall more positive attitude of the rural participants towards the Standard accent might be due to their aspirations for upward mobility. The rural Northern Irish folk often have a lower standard of living than the Belfast urbanites and

aim to leave their country towns and find a job in the city, where the supraregional standard constitutes one of the main varieties. There seems to exist an association in rural people's minds between upward mobility, the city and a more standard variety. Upward mobility and its connection with a standard form of the language coexists with an opposing force known as vernacular loyalty (see Pitts, 1985, p. 83). As a result, while some rural inhabitants may place more value on the standard variety, and even accommodate to it, because of its association with climbing up the social ladder; some others hold their vernacular variety in high regard and are loyal to it. The latter will probably have a more negative attitude towards the standard. However, this division is not necessarily absolute, and it is likely that rural people's perceptions are sometimes influenced by upward mobility and by vernacular loyalty on other occasions.

6.3. Qualitative results

6.3.1. Northern Irish informants' awareness of accent

In this section, the answers to the questionnaire item "The pronunciation of which words make the speaker sound Northern Irish?" are examined. As already pointed out in Chapter 5, this question is aimed at ascertaining whether Northern Irish respondents are aware of specific pronunciation features that characterise NIrE. Moreover, responses to this item can also reveal the salience of particular features or words.

As discussed in detail in Section 4.2.2, the notion of salience has been investigated by psycholinguists, cognitive linguists and sociolinguists who are interested in the process by which a linguistic variable becomes salient and, consequently, assess the influence different cognitive and/or social factors have on the salience of a feature (Auer et al., 1998; Jaeger & Weatherholtz, 2016; Kerswill & Williams, 2002; Rácz, 2013; Schmid & Günther, 2016). *Salience* is defined by Kerswill and Williams (2002) as a "property of a linguistic item or feature that makes it in some way perceptually or cognitively prominent" (p. 81). In other words, salience is about language awareness and therefore a linguistic variable is salient if lay people are conscious of it. As already pointed out in Section 4.2.2.2., the present dissertation focuses on the role salience plays in the fictional representation of dialect and in the perception of those representations. A scholar who adopts this perspective is Walshe (2011). He finds out that salient features are also the ones that are more frequently portrayed in the Irish TV show *Father Ted*, which leads him to affirm that salience is "a key factor in literary dialect representations of speech" (p. 127). The writing of performed language involves a selection of features

(Gibson & Bell, 2010), since incorporating every single feature of the variety that is going to be represented is, as pointed out above, impossible, unnecessary and undesirable. Salience influences the selection process, with writers often choosing features they are aware of and that are associated with some social identity. As shown in Section 4.2.2., these features correspond to Labov's (1972) markers and stereotypes, which are frequently used in dialect performance.

The analysis of answers to the aforementioned question reveals eight response types. The most common type is that where informants cite isolated words or phrases, which is what they were supposed to do. Some participants, however, simply say that most or all words sound Northern Irish. There can be various reasons why they do this. One possibility is that respondents are unable to cite specific words so that they resort to claiming that every word within the recording is realised with a Northern Irish accent. For some informants, however, it may have to do with a lack of willingness to cite words rather than with inability. An alternative explanation may be that the Northern Irish intonation leads respondents to conclude that all the words in the recordings sound Northern Irish. Intonation is a suprasegmental, or prosodic feature, that characterises units of speech larger than the phoneme. Intonation can be clearly perceived in sentences but is difficult to pinpoint in individual words.

The third response type is similar to the previous one since it groups together all those informants who cite most of the stimulus. A different, less numerous, group of respondents venture to give some phonetic detail by pointing out, for instance, that the pronunciation of "o sounds", "all words with a vowel" and "words with prominent r's" is distinctively Northern Irish. The fifth type of response involves general evaluative comments such as "strong Belfast accent" and the last kind is some mixture of two or more of the types referred to above. Apart from these six response types, it is also worth paying some attention to the use of non-standard spellings by some participants (see Table 6.1. below). While all the respellings attempt to represent how some words are pronounced in the stimuli, most of them do not provide any information as to how those words are realised in NI. They merely show the informal pronunciation of words which are part of English slang. Nevertheless, there are a few respellings that represent distinctive features of NIrE, namely *nai*, *bord*, *ats*, *git* and *bai*. *Nai* is a respelling of *now* that represents the Northern Irish fronted realisation of the second element of the diphthong /au/. The use of this non-standard spelling seems to be widespread in NI so the fact that one informant uses it when being asked about NIrE accents is unsurprising (for

further information about *nai*, see Section 3.3.). What is surprising, however, is that this respondent includes this respelling as part of a list of words he gives for Audio 2. The middle-aged male speaker in this auditory stimulus utters the word *now* at the very beginning of his speech fragment (see Figure 5.2.) so that it can hardly be heard. Furthermore, there does not seem to be much fronting of the second element in Audio 2 speaker's production of this instance of the MOUTH diphthong. Despite this, *now* is not only said to sound Northern Irish by the informant who uses *nai*, but by thirteen other participants.

Table 6.1.

Respellings used in response to the questionnaire item "The pronunciation of which words make the speaker sound Northern Irish?"

AUDIO 2	AUDIO 3	AUDIO 4
nai (now)	**yerself** (yourself)	**git** (get)
backa (back of)	**o' course** (of course)	
haveta (have to)	**acourse** (of course)	
	fer (for)	
	bord (bother)	
	ats (that's)	
VIDEO 1	VIDEO 3	VIDEO 4
yano (you know)	**sorta** (sort of)	**dunno** (don't know)
	sleepin' (sleeping)	
	bai (boy)	

As regards *bord* and *ats*, they stand for *bother* and *that's*, respectively, and both display a dropping of /ð/. As mentioned in Sections 3.3. and 3.6, the dental fricative is often dropped in initial (Wells, 1982; McCafferty, 2007) and, even more commonly, medial positions in NIrE (Harris, 1984; Hickey, 2007). This feature has been represented in written fiction –the respelling *anor* for *another* is used in *Dockers*, a play by Martin Lynch–. Additionally, the respelling *ats* can be found in commodities such as cards, T-shirts and even face masks as part of the phrase *ats us nai*, i.e., *that's us now* (Norn Iron Tees, n.d.). The printing of *ats* and other non-standard spellings on commodities is an

indicator of enregisterment and, at the same time, contributes to the enregisterment of the NIrE dialect (see Section 4.2.2.2. for a detailed discussion of enregisterment). According to the *Urban Dictionary*, *ats us nai* is a Belfast phrase "used primarily after something has been accomplished" (FunkyMouseMan, 2019).

While /ð/-dropping is frequent in NI, it does not occur in the words *bother* and *that's* as produced by the female actress in Audio 3. The reason, then, why the respellings *bord* and *ats* are used might be related to informants' predisposition to find this feature in NIrE speech. This predisposition may cause them to believe that the actress drops the dental fricative in those two words.

The non-standard spelling *git*, which is only provided by a Northern Irish young female respondent suggests that some short E-raising is perceived. A few other respondents also cite *get* as one of the words with a Northern Irish pronunciation although some of them include it as part of the longer phrases *get in your way* and *get back in the ring*. Be that as it may, the speaker in Audio 4 does not raise /e/ to /i/. In addition, existing literature on the phonetics and phonology of IrE observes that the raising of the short vowel /e/ is a characteristic feature of SIrE, not of NIrE (see Henry, 1958; Ó Baoill, 1990). Hickey (2007, p. 305) states that it is only frequent in rural areas to the south-west and mid-west of Ireland.

Bai is a non-standard spelling of *boy* that indicates an opening of the first element of the diphthong. Whereas McCafferty (2001) acknowledges the possibility of a more open /ɔ/ in the CHOICE lexical set, the realisation of /ɔɪ/ as /ɑɪ/ seems to be most typical of the ROI. Wells (1982) reports on the use of /ɑɪ/ in southern and rural areas, as well as in informal Dublin English (p. 426). Moreover, he explains that this feature results from the fact that there is no diphthong similar to /ɔɪ/ in the Irish language. As a consequence, when the Irish people learnt English, they produced /ɑɪ/ in CHOICE words. This feature is recessive nowadays.

Even though the opening of the onset in /ɔɪ/ characterises SIrE mainly, the *Urban Dictionary* contains an entry for *bai* where it is claimed that *bai* is a "slang substitution for "boy" used in the countryside around Northern Ireland" (Whu Flung Dung, 2010). This entry suggests that a more open /ɔ/ may also be found in rural Northern Irish speech. Nonetheless, there is not enough evidence to support this in the scholarly literature.

It is also important to note that, apart from the respondent who writes *bai*, sixty-one other informants, nearly half of the total sample, single the word *boy* out too. Since *boy* is made up of only one consonant sound and a diphthong and the pronunciation of /b/

shows no variation in NI, it is very likely that informants have heard a distinctive pronunciation of /ɔɪ/. A detailed analysis of Video 3 (see Section 5.3.3.1.) shows that the first element of the diphthong is more open so that the interpretation by these participants is accurate. The speaker in this stimulus is a male from Co. Tyrone, a more rural area, and the fact that he produces something close to /ɑɪ/ supports the claim made in the previous paragraph.

6.3.1.1. Perceptually salient words

Tables 6.2. and 6.3. display all the different words mentioned by informants for each stimulus and are ordered according to the number of respondents who cite them. In this section, however, not every single word or phrase is discussed. I will concentrate on some of the most frequent and/or significant words and will comment on some trends at the end of this section.

The pronunciation feature that leads a word to be chosen by an informant is impossible to determine with absolute certainty by relying solely on the writing of a word. The selection of a word might depend on the realisation of vowels or consonants, but also on intonation or rhythm. In order to deduce what specific feature or features determine word selection, it is necessary to analyse the pronunciation of the words in light of all the characteristics of the NIrE accent recorded in academic publications. The results from this analysis are presented below. A more effective method to identify the individual features that are perceived to sound Northern Irish could be Montgomery and Moore's (2008) capturing of listeners' real-time reactions to voice samples. This method could not be implemented in this study due to time constraints and technical shortcomings but is worth considering in future research (see Section 7.6.).

As illustrated in Table 6.2. below, quite a few participants cite *nature* and *room* after listening to Audio 1. The realisation of the main vowel sounds in these two words, namely /eɪ/ and /u/, is distinctively Northern Irish (a detailed description of the pronunciation of those words can be found in Section 5.3.3.1.) so that this is probably what motivated respondents to select them. The only other feature in *nature* that is also characteristically Northern Irish is rhoticity but, since many English accents are rhotic, it is less likely that informants pick this word out because of the production of the final /r/. Whatever their reason(s) is for choosing *nature* and *room*, selection is justified on the basis of the presence of Northern Irish features in Audio 1 speaker's speech fragment.

Table 6.2.

Words cited for each auditory stimulus

AUDIO 1	AUDIO 2	AUDIO 3	AUDIO 4
Nature (57)	Yous/youse (56+41=97)	Yourself/yerself (60+19=79)	Other (29)
Room (39)	Car (67)	Catch yourself/yerself on (45+11=56)	Lad (28)
Nightmare (28)	Craic/crack (54+10=64)		Ago (25)
great (22)	Blackspot/spot (46)	Bother (55)	Drunk (22)
Dad/da (16+5=21)	Day (44)	Aye (43)	Away (21)
Temperature (16)	Later (32)	Da (42)	Fight (20)
Force (16)	Mobile (26)	Down (33)	Son (19)
Way (14)	Goes (23)	Password (24)	Mistakes (17)
Change (8)	Requires (20)	Bank (17)	You (15)
	Coordination (20)	Trust (16)	Time (13)
	Pulls (17)	Fund (13)	Talented (10)
	Now (14)	Account (12)	Way (10)
	Second (13)	Again (12)	Embarrass (9)
	Destination (12)	For God's sake (10)	Two (9)
	Listen (12)	Dip (10)	Ring (8)
	Told (9)	Now (9)	Get (7)
		Phone (6)	Same (5)
		Turn (6)	Things (5)
			Make (4)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of times a word is cited.

In addition to *nature*, some respondents also mention other words that contain /eɪ/ such as *great*, *way* and *change*. Nevertheless, the realisation of the diphthong in these three items is different from its realisation in *nature*. While /eɪ/ in *nature* sounds like [ɪə], its pronunciation is closer to [eɪ] in *great* and *change* and more like [e] in *way*. This makes sense since, as explained in Section 3.5., the FACE lexical set has three different realisations in NI, namely [eɪ], [ɪə] and [e].

Another lexical item that deserves attention is *dad*. There is nothing in the way *dad* is pronounced that reminds of the NIrE accent and therefore its selection seems unjustified. The reasoning behind participants' decision to cite this word may have to do with its similarity to *da*, a word that is part of the Northern Irish vocabulary (for more information on the use of *da* in Ireland see Section 5.3.3.1.). In fact, a few informants write *da* instead of *dad*, which is probably due to *accent hallucination* (Section 4.2.3. provides a definition of this concept). Even though the actress in Audio 1 produces *dad*, the overall Northern Irish accent of her speech might have led them to believe that *da* is

used.

The most frequently mentioned word for Audio 2 is the second-person plural pronoun, either in the form of *yous* or *youse* (Table 6.2.). These two forms are equivalents and their pronunciation is /juːz/. Respondents who pick this pronoun do so, not because of the way it is pronounced, but because the second-person plural is a distinguishing feature of NIrE grammar, and of IrE more generally (Section 5.3.3.1.). In addition to *yous/youse*, some informants also cite *goes*, a word that is representative of a grammatical feature known as the Northern Subject Rule (see Section 5.3.3.1. for an explanation of the NSR). The highlighting of *goes* by some respondents is understandable given that this feature commonly occurs in NI. Nevertheless, the selection of *goes* has nothing to do with its pronunciation.

The second most selected item after *yous/youse* is *car*. The only feature that is markedly Northern Irish in this word and that may be responsible for its choosing is rhoticity. However, given that not all words in which a post-vocalic /r/ is pronounced are cited, there are reasons to believe that some other factor may have also contributed to the selection of *car*. The most likely factor is the repetition of this word three times in Audio 2's speech. But it could also be related to informants' belief or *hallucination* (see *accent hallucination* in Section 4.2.3.) that the speaker palatalises /k/ although he does not. What might bring this mistaken belief into being is the highly stereotypical and salient nature of the palatalisation of velars in NI as was discussed in Section 3.3.

Craic (or *crack*) is also mentioned by a substantial number of respondents. While, as explained in Section 5.3.3.1., this word is part of the NIrE lexicon, it does not contain any Northern Irish pronunciation feature so its citation was not expected.

Some other words that are often cited and that, unlike *craic* and *yous/youse*, are realised with a NIrE accent are *blackspot*, *day*, *later* and *pulls*. In the former, the speaker produces the unrounded variant [ɑ] rather than the standard /ɒ/. The Northern Irish features that occur in *day* and *later* are the use of the monophthong /e/ in the FACE lexical set and the alveolar tap, respectively. Finally, *pulls* is an instance of U-fronting. In spite of these NIrE realisations, it is important to remember that there is no guarantee that those pronunciations are what leads participants to choose the above words.

Following the trend observed in the stimuli already discussed, several of the items cited for Audio 3 are singled out not because they have a characteristically Northern Irish pronunciation but because of their lexical or grammatical value. Those items are *catch yourself on*, *aye*, *da* and *for God's sake* (for a description of each of these four items, see

Section 5.3.3.1.). The fact that ten informants pick *for God's sake* seems to confirm Walshe's claim that religious expressions are very salient (2011, pp. 137-138).

Among the words whose selection seems to depend on their pronunciation rather than on their being part of the NIrE dialectal vocabulary and grammar are *bother*, *down*, *now*, *dip* and *phone*. All these items contain Northern Irish phonetic realisations (see Section 5.3.3.1.) so that their selection is justified. *Down* and *now* are instances of one of the most characteristic and salient features of NIrE, that is, the pronunciation of the MOUTH lexical set. Despite its high salience, only 23.9% of the respondents cite *down* and the percentage drops to 6.5% for the word *now*. It is also somewhat surprising that *down* is mentioned by more participants than *now*, especially when, as shown in Section 3.5., the pronunciation of the latter is salient to a greater degree. This might have something to do with the position of the words in the speech fragment. The occurrence of *down* at the end of the fragment could have made it more noticeable than *now*, which occurs in the middle.

The word cited by the highest number of informants for Audio 4 is *other* (Table 6.2. above), which, as has been already observed in Section 5.3.3.1., presents an example of TH-dropping in intervocalic position. This NIrE feature "stands in contrast to virtually all other varieties of English" (McCafferty, 2001, p. 151) and therefore there are good reasons for saying that *other* makes the speaker sound Northern Irish. In addition, it is interesting to note that two respondents mistake *other* for *our*, suggesting that the dropping of /ð/ results in the former sounding very similar to the latter. The similarity between these two words is possible thanks to the monophthongal pronunciation of the diphthong /aʊ/ when followed by /r/ in NI (Milroy, 1981; Wells, 1982, p. 444). Many people in NI pronounce words like *our*, *flower* and *power* as /ɑːər/, /flɑːər/ and /pɑːər/.

Lad is the second most frequent word only after *other* and its relevance derives from its lexical value. *Lad* is used to refer to a young man or as an affectionate term for a male of any age (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). This word is not exclusive to Ireland but, according to Walshe (2011), its frequency in IrE is "particularly high" (p. 142). He reports on the occurrence of *lad* in Irish films (Walshe, 2009), in an Irish TV show (Walshe, 2011) and even in comics (Walshe, 2012). Apart from that, he also explains that the use of *lad* as a vocative, which is the most common function in the fiction he analyses, has "Stage Irish connotations" (Walshe, 2012, p. 273). This means that *lad* has been overused in fictional representations of IrE, causing it to be perceived as a stereotyped and stigmatised feature. Nevertheless, these stereotypical connotations do not apply to

the phrase "good lad" (Walshe, 2009, p. 141). In Audio 4, *lad* does not function as a vocative. Instead, it is part of the phrase "talented lad".

A word that is similar to *lad* and that can also be used as a vocative is *son*, which is highlighted by 19 participants. As defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.), *son* is "an affectionate form of address to a man or boy by an unrelated older person, or by a person of higher professional or social status". In this stimulus, the speaker, who is a boxing coach, uses this vocative to refer to his young trainee and encourage him to keep on boxing. The difference between *lad* and *son* is that the latter is more geographically widespread and less specific to IrE than the former. The answer to the question 'Why have some informants chosen this word?' is not straightforward. They might have been driven by some aspect of pronunciation or intonation or, more likely, by the drawing of a parallel between *lad* and *son*, which could lead respondents to think that the latter is as distinctively Irish as the latter. However, it could also be that the vocative *son* is more common in Ireland than in other English-speaking parts of the world. This is something that may be worth investigating in future research.

One pronunciation feature that characterises Audio 4 speaker's accent is the NIrE glottalisation of plosives in word-final position. Two clear instances of this glottal realisation are found in *drunk* and *fight* (Section 5.3.3.1.). These two words capture the attention of some respondents, which seems to suggest that the use of glottal stops in place of plosive consonants is perceptually salient to some extent. Further proof of its salience is the following remark made by a participant: "Clipped intonation. Sounds like Co. Antrim accent". The adjective "clipped" probably alludes to the glottal stops that give the impression that the speaker has not finished pronouncing a word. Apart from that, this participant is right in noting that Audio 4 features a Co. Antrim accent since this county is strongly influenced by Ulster Scots and as evidenced in Section 3.3., the glottalisation of plosives is an USc feature.

Several other words that are cited by some respondents contain the diphthong /eɪ/, whose pronunciation in NI differs greatly from SSBE. Those words are *away*, *way*, *same*, *mistakes* and *make*. They all have different realisations, but the fact that they are all singled out seems to indicate that at least some people in NI are aware that there is something distinctively Northern Irish in the way /eɪ/ is pronounced.

As can be seen in Table 6.3., the phrase that stands out the most in Video 1 is *wee lads*, a combination of two words that, as already explained in Section. 5.3.3.1., are part of the NIrE lexicon. Right below *wee lads, lovely,* the second most frequently mentioned

word, can be found. Whereas the realisation of this lexical item seems to show some /ʌ/-rounding, its salience more likely stems from other factors. One of them is the marked Northern Irish intonation with which *lovely* is uttered and another possible determinant is the repetition of the item twice in the video. In addition to this, there is room for one more interpretation. It might be that, even though *lovely* can be found in all English-speaking areas, its use and/or its frequency of occurrence in NI make it distinctively Northern Irish. More research is needed to ascertain which interpretation accounts for the salience of *lovely* more successfully, if any.

Table 6.3.

Words cited for each audiovisual stimulus

VIDEO 1	VIDEO 3	VIDEO 4
Wee lads (47)	House (73)	Stage (75)
Lovely (29)	Boy (62)	Seriously (41)
Song (21)	Shed (55)	Really (33)
Time (19)	Looking (53)	Life (31)
New (15)	Look (38)	Hello (26)
Way (15)	Leaving (36)	How (25)
Beach (12)	Fancy (33)	Managed (24)
Right (12)	Shaven (18)	Now (24)
Days (12)	Sort of (16)	For God's sake (20)
Anthem (8)	Heard (10)	Why (18)
Other (6)	Light (10)	Don't be (going) (15)
Playing (6)	Noises (10)	Who (15)
Morrison (6)	Sleeping (8)	Wrong (15)
Friends (5)	Man (7)	Understand (12)
Light (4)	Clean (7)	Chance (9)
Days like this (4)		What (8)
Sort of (2)		Second (8)
		This (8)
		Everything (7)
		Look (6)
		Mess (6)
		Hear (5)
		Take (4)
		Mean (4)
		Able (2)
		Up (1)
		Know (1)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of times a word is cited.

Some other words that deserve comment are *way*, *days* and *playing*. The reason behind their selection seems to lie in the realisation of the /eɪ/ diphthong as a monophthong (see Section 5.3.3.1.). Similarly, some informants also notice the distinctive quality of /aɪ/ in *time*, *right* and *light*. The pronunciation of the PRICE diphthong ranges from [æˑɪ] in the first two words to an allophone very close to [eɪ] in *light*, which sounds very much like *late*. Considering that the pronunciation of *light* deviates from SSBE more than those of *time* and *right*, one would expect the former to be more salient than the other two. However, the opposite is the case.

In Video 3, the words that are cited by a majority of the respondents are *house*, *boy* and *shed* (see Table 6.3. above). Many informants mention not just one or two, but all these three items, which lends further support to the theory that some of their pronunciation features can be recognised as Northern Irish. This theory is confirmed in Section 5.3.3.1.. Moreover, it is also interesting to see how a participant mistakes *shed* for *shade* as a result of a pronunciation with [ɛi] rather than with the standard /e/.

In the list of words selected from Video 3, one can also find the discourse marker *sort of*, whose salience is lexical rather than phonetic. Although, as pointed out in Section 5.3.3.1. the use of this discourse marker is not limited to the Northern Irish region, it is often employed there. Moreover, the fact that *sort of* calls the attention of 16 informants might suggest that its occurrence in the third clip contributes to making it sound Northern Irish.

Stage is by far the most frequently chosen word in Video 4. What makes the pronunciation of this item characteristically northern is the realisation of /eɪ/ as [iə]. Since there is no other NIrE feature in *stage*, it seems safe to assume that the /eɪ/ diphthong prompted respondents to single this word out. It is nevertheless important to point out that the occurrence of this word twice could have also reinforced its perceptual salience. Apart from *stage*, some informants select items that are also highlighted in other stimuli, namely *how*, *now* and *for God's sake*. This serves as evidence that the MOUTH lexical set and religious expressions are salient for a Northern Irish audience. Also salient are the dialectal realisation of /aɪ/ in *life* and *why*, a feature that has been noticed in several videos and audios; and the negative imperative *Don't be going* (Section 5.3.3.1. offers a detailed discussion of this grammatical feature).

Of all words of all stimuli, the one cited by the largest percentage of respondents (70%) is *yous/youse*. The fact that it is this word, and no other, illustrates two points. On

the one hand, it endorses Hickey's claim that lay people are more aware of lexical than of pronunciation differences (2000, p. 58). In other words, dialectal lexis seems to be more salient than dialectal pronunciation. In addition to *yous/youse*, this section has discussed many other words and phrases that have attracted the attention of a considerable number of informants. On the other hand, the selection of *yous/youse* shows how repetition contributes significantly to perceptual salience since the second-person plural pronoun is repeated three times in Audio 2.

Although vernacular vocabulary and grammar seem to capture respondents' attention easily, there are some pronunciation features that are highlighted consistently throughout most of the stimuli. They are the NIrE realisations of the diphthongs /eɪ/ (in words like *nature*, *great*, *day*, *mistakes*, *stage* and *away*), /aɪ/ (as in *fight*, *time*, *light* and *life*) and /aʊ/ (as in *down*, *now*, *how* and *house*); and of the single vowel sound /u/ (in words like *room*, *pulls*, *new* and *look*). All these realisations involve vowels, which is unsurprising given that NIrE differs from SSBE as well as from other varieties mainly in terms of vowel sounds.

6.3.2. Locating Northern Irish accents

In a geographical area as small as NI, one might think that accent does not vary substantially from town to town and, stemming from this, that Northern Irish people have no trouble locating different NIrE accents. While the former belief proves to be erroneous according to academic research (as evidenced in Chapter 3), little is known about the capacity of Northern Irish people to recognise where different NIrE accents are from. This dissertation will contribute to filling that gap by asking respondents to identify the geographical location of the accents represented in the different audiovisual and written stimuli. It is important to note that, due to the fact that the stimuli contain examples of performed language rather than of natural speech, the identification task may pose some extra difficulties. The exaggeration, misrealisation, downplaying and exclusion of features when language is performed (an overview of the features of performed language can be found in Section 4.2.5) may cause confusion among informants. This is not to say that using natural speech as stimuli would necessarily guarantee higher success rates in the identification task. Moreover, it is also possible that, far from complicating recognition, the processes of exaggeration and exclusion of some features make it easier for respondents to locate accents. After all, these two processes involve the simplification of a more complex reality.

The questionnaire item aimed at gathering information about the perceived geographical location of NIrE accents is slightly different for Audios (Section 5.3.4.1.4.) and for Videos and Literature (Section 5.3.4.1.5.). However, they are the same for all practical purposes and therefore no distinction is made here between their results. The analysis of the data obtained from the identification task provides answers to the following questions:

- Which accent(s) is identified by a larger number of informants?
- Which accent(s) is identified by a smaller number of informants?
- Do those informants who succeed in locating an accent live close to the area/town/city where that accent is from?
- Is it easier to identify an accent when represented audiovisually or when represented in writing?

As regards the first question, results show that the Belfast accents are the most widely recognised. The accent of the Belfast male actor in Audio 2 is identified by 96 informants, almost 70% of the sample. Similarly, 81 and 80 respondents are able to locate the Belfast accents in Video 1 and Video 4, respectively. However, the Belfast accent of the middle-aged woman in Audio 3 is only recognised by 30 informants. This low success rate results from the assumption made by many informants that the accent is Derry simply because they know that the stimulus has been taken from a TV show set in that city. In fact, of those 30 informants, 21 state that they do not recognise the TV show where Audio 3 is taken from. Meanwhile, the 9 remaining respondents are aware that the recording belongs to *Derry Girls* but, unlike most participants, resist the temptation to take for granted that the actress has a Derry accent merely on the basis that she acts the role of a mum from (London)Derry. Of those 9 participants, two are from Belfast, other two from Co. Antrim, one from Co. (London)Derry and the other four from Co. Fermanagh, Co. Tyrone, Co. Armagh and Newry. Although there are 14 participants from (London)Derry, either the city or the county, who recognise the TV show, only one of them is able to see that the accent is Belfast, not Derry. The three (London)Derry informants who do not know the source of Audio 3, by contrast, answer that the speaker is from Belfast. This seems to prove that what is commonly referred to as the *suspension of disbelief*[18] can also apply to

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[18] The *suspension of disbelief* refers to the willingness of readers/audience to accept that the story they are reading/watching is real. Rossi (2011) reflects on how the suspension of disbelief is part of a compromise

accents. The *Derry Girls'* audience seem happy to accept that Ma Mary is from (London)Derry and this is probably because they like the TV show and also because several of the actors are natives from (London)Derry. Whereas liking the show does not necessarily entail a willingness to approve of an inaccurate representation of an accent, it is likely to have an influence on it. However, this will also depend on the degree of inaccuracy and on the differences between the actor's native variety and the performed variety. The Belfast and Derry accents, despite some differences, share many features of the NIrE variety and therefore hearing the former in place of the latter does not make a large difference, especially for a general audience whose main interest is not the accents of a film or TV show. This does not mean that audiences are always willing to be deceived. If, as with Brad Pitt's Northern Irish accent in *The Devil's Own*, the actor's imitation of the accent is poor and, in addition, he is not a native of the accent, there is a good chance that viewers will engage in strong criticism. Native audiences tend to be suspicious of non-native performers who have to copy their accent even if their performances are good. Thus, it may be possible that, if told to judge the authenticity of a fairly accurate imitation of an accent by a non-native and of a less accurate one by a native speaker, the native audience would rate the latter as more authentic. Nevertheless, this is just a hypothesis that would need to be tested. Furthermore, investigating the extent to which audiences, whether native or non-native, care about accents, as compared to other aspects of films and TV shows, would also be worthwhile. This would provide answers to questions like "How much influence can a bad/good representation of an accent have on the overall rating of a film/TV Show?" and "Can a film/TV show be extremely successful if accent performance is utterly poor?".

The accent identified by fewer participants is Audio 1, whose speaker is from Co. Armagh (see Section 5.3.3.1. for further information about this stimulus). Not one single informant is able to locate this accent accurately but 57 people classify it as Belfast, 13 of whom are from Belfast and 4, from Co. Armagh. The fact that 40% of the respondents agree that Audio 1 represents a Belfast accent may be the result of two things. It could be that, despite not being as characteristically Belfast as other accents, there is something in Susan Lynch's pronunciation that reminds of that urban vernacular. One possible explanation for this is that her accent flattened out as a consequence of moving into

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between the creators of telecinematic fiction and the audience: "[t]he reproduction of reality is always a compromise: authors pretend to offer the audience a piece of reality with an "illusion of spontaneity", which the audience feigns to believe, thanks to the "suspension of disbelief", necessary to collaborate in this fiction" (Kozloff 2000: 16, 47)" (p. 45).

Belfast. Many people who are born and raised in more rural areas go to live to the city in search of a job. This is particularly true for actors and other people who work in the film-making industry since film production companies usually have their headquarters in big cities. Moving to the city normally translates into linguistic accommodation to the urban accent. Geographical mobility is therefore responsible for giving rise to accents that are halfway between sounding urban and sounding rural and that are likely to create confusion when it comes to locating them. This might be the case for Susan Lynch.

As regards the second alternative that may explain why a significant percentage of participants consider Audio 1 to contain a Belfast accent, it could be that informants who are at a loss to identify the accent resort to saying that the speech sounds Belfast. This might be done on the grounds that Belfast accents are more widely represented in telecinematic fiction than any other Northern Irish pronunciation. Thus, some participants may have been predisposed to hear Belfast accents in the stimuli.

In addition to Audio 1, the other two rural stimuli, i.e., Audio 4 and Video 3, are among the least recognised. They are identified by 18 and 15 respondents respectively. In spite of the low identification rate, most informants are able to recognise that those two accents are rural. The answers they provide, however, are very varied. All the different Northern Irish counties can be found among the answers for both stimuli. From this, it might be deduced that differences between rural accents are not as marked as those between rural and Belfast accents. Does this mean though that any two rural accents share more similarities than a rural and a Belfast accents? Previous research seems to suggest that the answer to this question is "no". This is because of the influence that Belfast English has on rural communities (Douglas-Cowie, 1978; Pitts, 1985; McCafferty, 1998b). The influence of the urban vernacular on more rural areas varies depending on factors like "size of the two communities, their proximity, and the similarity of their speech" (Pitts, 1985, p. 59). Thus, the accent in towns that are closer to Belfast is likely to be more similar to the Belfast urban vernacular than the accents of towns that are further away from the city. At the same time, this means that some rural accents probably share more features with the BE accent than with other rural varieties. Moreover, as Pitts argues, "the old dichotomy of 'city slicker' and 'country bumpkin'" is becoming more and more blurry owing to the spread of urban influence (ibid.). Nonetheless, the Belfast influence does not affect every town or village in NI in equal degree. The adoption of BE features depends not only on proximity and the other aforementioned factors, but also on social variables like gender, age and, according to Pitts (1985) and McCafferty (1998a),

also ethnicity. Gaining knowledge of the extent of urban influence on rural areas across NI would require taking into account all those variables and collecting data from a variety of towns. The sample should aim to encompass rural locations from all over NI, including the more western counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh which have garnered little scholarly attention[19]. However, this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Although a small number of informants correctly guess the accents in Audio 4 and Video 3, the responses by other participants, some of whom are quite accurate, provide useful information on lay people's perceptual mapping of NIrE accents. In Audio 4, some informants cannot decide whether the speaker is from Ballymena, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Portrush, Ballycastle or Ballyclare. While towns like Coleraine and Portrush are only a few miles apart, there is greater distance between some of those locations. Regardless of the distance, all the above towns belong to the largest Ulster Scots area of NI (see the USc dialect zones identified by Harris (1984) in Map 2.1.) so that they share some features of USc influence. This is an example of how production sometimes corresponds with perception, an issue that has been subject of study in the field of perceptual dialectology.

One respondent locates the accent represented in Audio 4 in "south-east Derry/north Tyrone/south-west Antrim". This refers to areas that surround the north-western part of Lough Neagh. This answer is relevant inasmuch as it reveals that some non-linguists at least are aware that borders, either those who separate counties or those who separate larger political entities, do not usually make the linguistic variety spoken on one side completely different from the one used on the other side. In her perceptual study, Zwickl (2002) finds out that the Irish border has little effect on the language attitudes of people from the two border counties of Armagh and Monaghan (Section 4.3.4. provides further detail about Zwickl's research).

The most often repeated locations for Video 3 are Tyrone, which is the correct answer, Fermanagh, (London)Derry and Armagh. Tyrone is bordered by (London)Derry to the north, Fermanagh to the south and Armagh to the east. For this reason, it is to be expected that the accents in these four counties sound similar. This is further confirmed by the fact that quite a few participants cannot opt for one of the four counties and, consequently, give two or more as the answer. Moreover, as shown in Map 2.1., the dialect spoken in all of Co. Tyrone and in large areas of Fermanagh, (London)Derry and

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[19] Maguire (2020) is one of the few who have explored English in Co. Tyrone.

Armagh is Mid-Ulster English (for an examination of MUE, see Maguire, 2020). Finally, it is worth pointing out that, even though there can be little doubt that the accents in these four counties share some features, some differences probably exist between them. However, many informants are incapable of telling the difference between some of them. This inability to distinguish rural accents is, in all likelihood, due to a lack of familiarity with them, which, in turn, seems to derive, at least partially, from the under-representation of rural speech in telecinematic fiction.

Answering the question "Do those informants who succeed in locating an accent live close to the area/town/city where that accent is from?" can yield valuable insights into Northern Irish lay people's language awareness. Table 6.4. displays the figures for both the telecinematic and the literary stimuli. The middle column of the table contains the total number of informants who are able to guess the county or town where the speaker in each stimulus is from. Meanwhile, the right column represents only those participants who have located the accent and who, at the same time, are from the place where the performer is from.

Table 6.4.

Total number of informants who locate the accent together with the number of those
who locate the accent and are from the same place as the actor/actress

	How many informants locate the accent?	How many of those are from the city/town where the accent is from?
AUDIO 1 (Corringshego, Armagh)	0	
AUDIO 2 (Belfast)	96	26
AUDIO 3 (Belfast)	30	8
AUDIO 4 (Ballymena, Antrim)	18	1
VIDEO 1 (Holywood, BMUA)	81	26
VIDEO 3 (Co. Tyrone)	15	3
VIDEO 4 (Belfast)	80	29
POEM (Coleraine, Ulster Scots)	2	0
NOVEL (Rural Derry)	47	5
PLAY (Belfast)	67	19

The analysis of the Belfast stimuli[20] shows a clear pattern: while a considerable number of Belfast respondents identify the Belfast accent, some of them fail to locate it.

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[20] This includes all the stimuli that contain Belfast accents except for Audio 3. The reason for the exclusion of Audio 3 here is that, as explained earlier in the thesis, a considerable number of participants recognise the TV show where this recording has been taken from. Thus, most of them locate the accent in (London)Derry because that is the city where the show is set.

Moreover, it is interesting to observe how a few Belfast informants believe that the accents in Video 1, Video 4 and the Play are Derry. They are not the only ones, however, for there are other participants from places outside Belfast who consider that the speakers in those three stimuli are from (London)Derry. This could lend support to the idea that the difference between Belfast and (London)Derry is not as clear as one might think, at least from the point of view of perception.

Unlike the other Belfast stimuli, Audio 2 is never mistaken for a Derry accent. This, coupled with the fact that Audio 2 shows the highest identification rate of all the stimuli, seems to evince that there is something in that recording that makes it more distinctively Belfast than any of the other speech fragments. In addition, 24 respondents venture to specify the part of Belfast where the speaker may be from. There can be various reasons why the accent of the actor in Audio 2 is easily located. In terms of language production, his speech exhibits many of the characteristics of BE and NIrE, including not only pronunciation, but also grammatical and lexical features (Section 5.3.3.1.1.). Furthermore, his intonation is very telling, and this has probably contributed to the easy recognition of the accent to a considerable extent. Apart from these linguistic factors, there is one extralinguistic determinant that has most likely influenced identification. This determinant has to do with the acquaintance of the Northern Irish audience with telecinematic representations of the speech of middle-aged Belfast males. Proof of this can be found in Walshe (2017) where the author gives a list of 40 Northern Irish films, most of which star middle-aged Belfast men. Familiarity with the speech, and accent, of this type of character results in high identification rates. The continued performance of the middle-aged Belfast male may have led to the emergence of a linguistic stereotype. Although further research is required before making this claim, the fact that most respondents recognise the accent can be seen as evidence of it.

7 informants of the total sample are from Ballymena, but only one of them discerns that the speaker in Audio 4 is from their town. Some of the remaining six respondents, however, make quite accurate guesses. They locate the accent in Co. Antrim or in the north-east of NI. As regards the 17 participants who, in spite of not being from Ballymena, identify the accent, they are from many different places such as Belfast, (London)Derry, Co. Down, Co. Armagh and Co. Fermanagh. Moreover, most of the informants who do not say Ballymena locate the accent in a place that is close to this town. This suggests that there are some people all around NI who can distinguish a rural Antrim accent.

The Tyrone accent of the actor in Video 3 is identified by a total of 15 informants, 3 of whom are from Co. Tyrone. There are 17 more respondents from this county in my sample, but they place the accent in Fermanagh, Armagh or some unspecified rural area. The other thirteen informants who recognise the accent are from Belfast (5), Armagh (3), Down (2), Fermanagh (2) and Antrim (1). Finally, the guesses of many of the people who are unable to identify the accent are quite accurate.

Based on the data for the rural accents in Audio 4 and Video 3, two conclusions can be drawn. On the one hand, Northern Irish people seem able to distinguish a rural Antrim accent from a rural western accent (Tyrone), even if most of them cannot pinpoint their exact location. On the other hand, the data reveals that informants are, more often than not, unable to recognise their town's accent as represented in Audio 4 and Video 3. The reason for this inability may have to do with the wide range of linguistic variation that exists even within a single town. The accent of a middle-aged woman in Coleraine is not the same as that of a male teenager. Similarly, the speech of a middle-aged Coleraine woman differs from formal to informal contexts. In addition to natural variation, the type of variation involved in the fictional representation of language must also be taken into account given that the speech fragments used in my questionnaire are examples of performed language. The performance of language varieties can be constrained by factors like target audience, and directors' and actors' prejudices. Unless the director orders otherwise, actors and actresses from more rural areas tend to modify their accents to make them more intelligible for the audience, even if they are not conscious of it. Thus, the actors from Ballymena and Co. Tyrone might have toned down their rural accents, thereby making them less easily recognisable.

The accents represented using literary dialect in the novel and the play have higher identification rates than the rural accents in telecinematic fiction. This underlines that success in evoking a particular accent does not seem to depend on whether the representation is written or audiovisual but on the characteristics of the accent and on the skills of the people who represent it. The accents in the novel and in the play are a Derry and a Belfast accent respectively, the two main cities in NI. Consequently, it seems reasonable that more people identify those accents than the less familiar rural accents. If a more rural accent is represented in writing, as is the case with the poem, the number of participants who locate the accent is considerably lower. Regardless of the success rate in the identification task, it is important to note that both written and audiovisual representations of accent are valid and can succeed in evoking an accent.

Another possible reason why some literary portrayals of NIrE accents are accurately located more often than some telecinematic representations might be that some of the pronunciation features rendered in the literary fragments are highly stereotyped, thereby leaving little room for doubt as to the location of the accent. For instance, the use of the respelling *nigh*, which suggests the stereotypical pronunciation of *now* as [naɪ], in the play reveals that the portrayed accent is Belfast straightaway. Using stereotyped features is a common resource for fictional representations of dialect, whether literary or telecinematic (a detailed review of stereotyping is undertaken in Section 4.2.3.). Notwithstanding, it seems likely that written portrayals are more prone to stereotyping than audiovisual renderings. This would make sense given the limitations of a formal nature encountered when trying to represent orality in writing (see Section 4.2.3.). Moreover, much literary dialect is probably still influenced by a long tradition of portraying dialect in literature for comic purposes.

6.3.3. Guessing speakers' ethnicity on the basis of accent

As shown in Section 4.3.4., the question of whether ethnicity shapes the linguistic landscape in NI has been addressed by scholars interested in language production (Kingsmore, 1995; McCafferty, 2001; Milroy, 1981) and by those concerned with the perception of language (Millar, 1987; Todd, 1984, 1989; Zwickl, 2002). Because of the relevance of the ethnic debate, an ethnicity-identification item is included in the questionnaire. That item is the question "How would you imagine the speaker? In terms of religion", which, as observed in Section 5.3.4.1.4., is only found in Part 1 Audios (see Appendix 4). Responses to this item are discussed below.

The analysis of responses yields some valuable results. The most significant finding is that religion has a lower response rate than all the other categories included in Item 4 (Audios), namely physical appearance, social class, personality and place of residence. Religion has a 55% response rate, as compared to the 89% response rate for social class. This seems to indicate that the link between accent and ethnicity is not as straightforward as that between accent and social class in NI. In fact, the influence of ethnicity on language has been subject to debate (Cairns & Duriez, 1976; Gunn, 1994; Kirk, 1997a; McCafferty, 1998b, 2001; Millar, 1987; Milroy, 1981, 1992; Pitts, 1985; Rahilly, 2003, 2006; Todd, 1984; Zwickl, 2002), unlike the variable of social class, whose impact on language has been widely demonstrated (McCafferty, 1999, 2001; Milroy, 1992; Milroy & Milroy, 1985). The answers of those who make an attempt at guessing

the speakers' religion might shed some more light on the relationship between ethnic background and linguistic variation in NI.

The results show that 65% of the informants recognise that the speaker in Audio 1 is a Catholic. This is a somewhat unexpected finding since the accent in Audio 1 was not accurately located by any of the respondents. As previously discussed in Section 5.3.2., there is a direct connection between ethnicity and place of residence in NI due to ethnic segregation. Thus, the correct identification of the location can give a clue as to the ethnic background of the speaker. However, as stated in Section 6.3.2., many informants locate the accent in Audio 1 in Belfast. While in other cities and towns there is a majority of Catholics or Protestants, the percentage of Catholic population is similar to that of the Protestant population in Belfast. That is why it would seem reasonable to assume that guessing the ethnicity of a Belfast speaker is more difficult than guessing the ethnic identity of someone who is from a place where the number of Catholics/Protestants is substantially higher. Nonetheless, as will be seen below, some respondents seem able to distinguish the ethnicity of Belfast speakers. In the case of Audio 1, though, the fact that the actress is a Catholic from Armagh, where there is larger proportion of Catholics, rather than from Belfast, as many informants believe, has probably made the identification of ethnic background easier.

The identification rate for Audio 2 amounts to 57%. A total of 30 informants out of 52 who provide an answer for ethnicity recognise that the actor is a Catholic. However, 35% of them say that he comes from a Protestant background. These percentages neither confirm nor deny whether people in NI can tell a speaker's ethnicity on the basis of accent alone. Furthermore, it must be observed that the majority of the total sample of respondents leave the field of religion blank. While some of those informants do not fill in the fields for any of the other categories (i.e., physical appearance, social class, personality and place of residence), most of them complete some of them but provide no answer for religion. This probably means that many participants are at a loss as to how to guess the speaker's ethnic identity based simply on a short recording. What can be inferred from all this is that, as mentioned above, the link between accent and ethnicity is not clear and that, if differences between Catholic and Protestant accents exist and can be perceived by some Northern Irish people, they are very subtle and therefore not easily identifiable.

For Audio 3, only the responses of the 15 informants who do not recognise the TV show and who fill in the field of religion are considered here. Of these, 13 guess

correctly that the actress has a Catholic identity and only one respondent classifies the speaker as Protestant. Moreover, most of these 13 informants locate the accent in Belfast. This might imply that those participants identify something Catholic in the speech of the actress. However, these results are not conclusive because the sample size is very small.

The Protestant background of the speaker in Audio 4 is identified by 63% of the informants who fill in the ethnicity field. Most of them are also quite accurate when it comes to placing the accent. This could be proof that there exists a connection between ethnicity and geographical area in the minds of lay people. County Antrim is populated by a majority of Protestants (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2022), and this could lead Northern Irish people to think of a Protestant when they hear an Antrim accent. Moreover, Co. Antrim is an area largely influenced by Ulster Scots, a dialect that is associated with a Protestant background. Despite all this, 27% of the respondents consider that the actor is a Catholic.

While informants who recognise the speakers' ethnicity outnumber those who opt for the wrong ethnic background in all audios, the difference is not very significant. In addition, the number of respondents who do not provide an answer for the field of religion is always larger than the number of participants who are successful in the ethnicity identification task. Apart from that, the correct identification of ethnicity does not necessarily mean that informants' can perceive something Catholic/Protestant in someone's speech. In fact, there are reasons to believe that the accurate guessing of speakers' ethnic background is due to the location of their accents in a place in NI that informants know has a majority of Protestants or Catholics.

Questionnaire results prove that guessing a Northern Irish speaker's ethnicity on the basis of accent is not as easy as popular belief has suggested (Millar, 1987, p. 207). Even though some informants can identify the ethnic background of the speaker, there is not enough evidence to claim that lay people in NI can, as Todd (1984) advocates, "determine a person's religious affiliations the moment he opens his mouth" (p. 159).

6.3.4. Attitudes towards written representations of NIrE accents

In order to know more about informants' feelings about the use of non-standard spellings in writing to evoke a particular accent, they are asked whether they like the way the three literary extracts (poem, novel and play) used in the questionnaire are written (the literary fragments are described in Section 5.3.3.1.3.). Answers to this question reveal that while most respondents like the way the novel is written, the poem and the play are only enjoyed

by some of them. The reasons given by participants who like the novel have to do with its "authentic/accurate" representation of the accent, which is neither "excessive" nor "offensive". Another reason why they like it is because, as compared to the poem, which is the first literary fragment that respondents read, the novel is easier to understand. Intelligibility is highly valued when reading so that if the text is difficult to understand, it is likely that readers will not like it. Many participants do not like the poem on the basis of unintelligibility. There are many non-standard spellings in such a short text, which makes it harder for respondents to decode them because they have little context. Moreover, the merging of several words into one in the respellings *fAh* and *mtellinye* has probably contributed further to the poem's unintelligibility. Whereas the novel also contains quite a few non-standard spellings, they seem easier to understand due to two reasons. The first one is that the respellings are part of a longer text, which gives informants more context than can help them decipher the non-standard spellings. Secondly, there is no merging of words as in the poem.

It is also worth pointing out that two informants do not like the poem because, as pointed out by one informant, "(it) is closer to Ulster Scots than it is Northern Irish" and because "it doesn't represent a Northern Irish way of speaking". This proves that for some of the Northern Irish respondents, USc is completely different from NIrE even though, as the scholarly literature reviewed in Chapter 3 shows, some features are shared by USc and NIrE. Furthermore, there is one Catholic respondent who believes that USc is "utter nonsense". Such a negative attitude towards USc might partly derive from its uncertain status as a language or dialect (see Section 1.3.) and from its association with a British Protestant background. Nonetheless, the questionnaire results show that many Catholic informants like the USc representation. Apart from that, most participants are able to guess that the accent portrayed in the poem is USc regardless of their ethnicity. This means that, no matter whether it should be considered a dialect of English or a language in its own right, USc can be easily distinguished from a NIrE accent.

Another reason why some respondents do not like the representation in the poem can be summarised using an informant's words: "writing a poem as it might be spoken with an accent seems illogical in my opinion, the beauty of an accent is that people will pronounce the words as they can, writing it verbose seems somewhat unnecessary". This quote reflects that those respondents do not see the point of representing accent in writing.

The play has less respellings than both the poem and the novel so one might think that it is the extract that respondents like the most given that, as seen above, non-standard

spellings usually hinder an adequate understanding of a text. However, this is not the case, and many participants criticise the representation of the NIrE accent in the play for being "inconsistent" and "half-done". The reason for pointing out that the portrayal in the play is inconsistent seems to be related to the fact that, as two informants write, *nigh* sounds Belfast while *Jasus* sounds Dublin. Meanwhile, the description "half-done" is representative of informants who think that more non-standard spellings should have been used to make the representation authentic.

How many respellings are then necessary to achieve authenticity? While too many would probably be considered excessive, too few may be not be enough. Nonetheless, there is no exact number that will guarantee authenticity. The use of a few respellings can sometimes be enough to evoke an accent, but it can also hinder the identification of the accent that is being represented, as is the case for the play. The informants' difficulty in recognising the accent results in a negative evaluation of the representation. The author seems therefore to have failed in his attempt to portray the Belfast accent.

The success of accent representation in literature, in terms of authenticity, depends not only on the number of respellings, but also on the appropriateness and accuracy of those. Appropriateness refers to using non-standard spellings in the speech of characters who can be believed to speak a non-standard variety. It also has to do with using them in suitable places and contexts within the text so that the representation sounds natural. Although appropriateness and accuracy are closely related, the latter mainly depends on the existence of the feature that is represented in the real-life accent that is being portrayed.

In addition to the formal characteristics of each of the fragments, their content, that is, what they are about, is also likely to have influenced the attitude of respondents towards the representation. This appears to be especially true for the novel, which is not only participants' favourite accent portrayal, but also the most positively evaluated extract in terms of pleasantness (Section 6.2.2.2.). The narrator of the novel is telling the readers about her childhood memories. Remembering childhood experiences usually awakens feelings of nostalgia and happiness. These positive emotions might be one of the possible reasons that lead respondents to rate the representation more favourably.

6.3.5. Perceptions of NIrE as represented in telecinematic and literary fiction

This section presents the answers to the last three questions in the questionnaire which are the following: "How do these representations of the Northern Irish accent make you

feel?"; "Is there anything in these representations that you particularly like or dislike? Why?"; and "Would you say that the accents are overacted or softened? Why?" (Appendix 4). As regards the first question, the representations arouse positive as well as negative feelings. They make some participants feel nostalgic, amused, proud of their Northern Irish identity or pleased to see NIrE accents represented in the media. Nonetheless, some other informants describe the portrayals as embarrassing, annoying and cringey.

Embarrassment arises in most cases from the perception that the Northern Irish accents sound too harsh. One female respondent has mixed feelings since she reports being "partly embarrassed" and "partly proud". Moreover, there is a participant who reflects on how his attitude towards the Northern Irish accent has changed over the years: "As a young man I was quite embarrassed by the Northern Irish accent however as I've grown older I've grown to appreciate its richness and its unique properties". This change is in line with the effect that age has been shown to have on language production. As indicated in Section 6.2.1.4.2., accent loyalty becomes stronger as people get older. Although the results from my survey do not provide evidence of this, the literature dealing with how age affects language has so far concluded that there seems to be a "go back to the roots" tendency among older people which results in a preference for the local accent.

It is also important to notice that the representations make some respondents acknowledge the value of the NIrE accent. Thus, it seems that being represented in the media contributes to validating non-standard accents, that is, showing the audience that these accents exist and are acceptable. The media has traditionally been the locus of the standard variety of English but is now starting to introduce the use of non-standard dialects. The idea that Standard English is the only variety worthy of attention and representation has become outdated. Allowing non-standard varieties to appear in the media tries to convey the message that dialects different from the standard are to be respected. This does not mean, however, that lay people do no longer ascribe negative connotations to non-standard varieties. There is still a long way to go until the associations between non-standardness and incorrectness (to say one of a long list of negative attributes correlated with non-standard dialects) are erased from people's minds. And yet, it remains to be seen whether this will ever be achieved.

Although most respondents are either positive or negative towards the accent portrayals used in the questionnaire, a few of them say they feel neutral about those representations.

When asked whether there is anything that they particularly like or dislike about the stimuli, several informants complain about the lack of a wider variety of accents. They refer to the fact the Northern Irish accents presented are not representative of the whole country, which they claim to be very diverse in terms of accents/dialects. They point out that most accents are from Belfast and the north-east of NI, which is true, and suggest that rural, South Ulster and middle-class accents should also be represented. While this suggestion must be taken into account for future research, the fact is that, as one respondent rightly points out, "media representations of the NIrE accents are fundamentally Belfast-centric". This makes it difficult to find examples of the accents mentioned above. Another complaint has to do with the broadness of the accents represented. A few informants describe them as "extreme accents" and express the wish for milder accents to be shown in the media. Nonetheless, according to one participant, "a lot of modern TV shows aren't going for very broad accents and are keeping more on the milder side" even though she believes that strong accents are still favoured by creators of media content.

Whereas the representation of broad Northern Irish accents is criticised by many respondents, the opposite is true for a young female informant. She is pleased to "see strong rural and urban accents represented" since the accent that Northern Irish people most frequently find in the media is a "neutral, upper to middle class accent that all news readers adopt".

By contrast, informants who like the portrayals praise their authenticity. One respondent, for instance, writes "I also liked how a lot of the examples seemed like authentic conversations that could be had in everyday life". It is, nevertheless, important to observe that most of those informants do not consider all the representations to be authentic even though they do not specify which are the least authentic. However, the authenticity ratings represented in Figure 6.26. reveal that the stimuli considered to be the most inauthentic are Audio 1, which is perceived by some to sound Southern Irish, Audio 4, Video 1 and the poem. Meanwhile, the most authentic are Ma Mary in *Derry Girls* (Audio 3) and the Belfast middle-aged man (Audio 2).

Figure 6.26.

Authenticity mean ratings for each stimulus
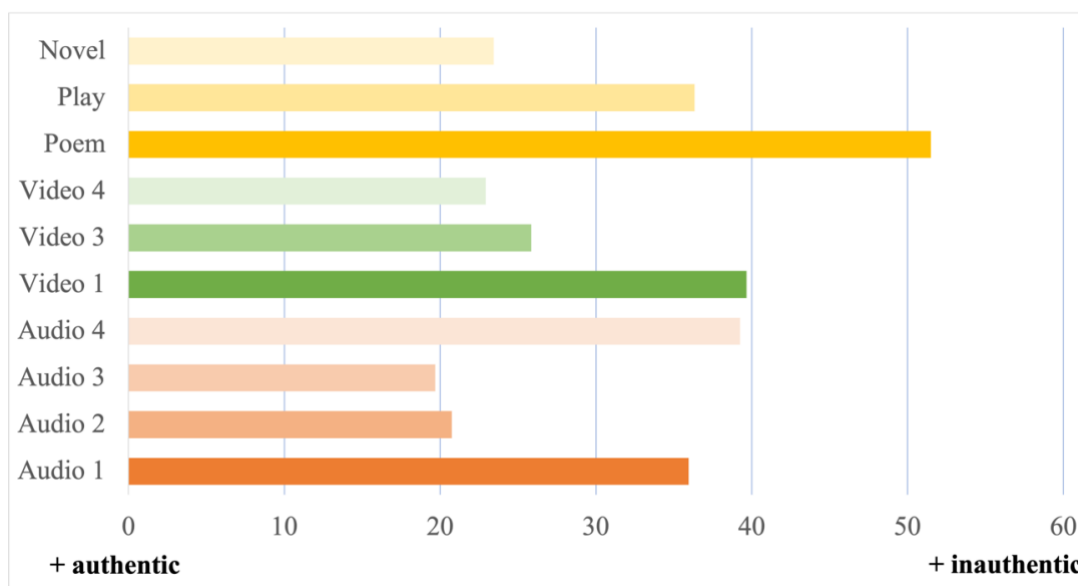
Two respondents comment on the difference between the spoken and the written extracts. They agree that the former convey the accent more accurately than the latter. Moreover, they both take quite a negative view of the literary representations. One of them says that "written mediums tend to overact the accent to a farcical degree", while the other describes the literary extracts as "just approximations seen through an Anglocentric lens as an aberration of Standard English, which is offensive". A negative attitude towards the use of respellings to evoke accents/dialects has been shown to be widespread among non-linguists (for more detail on lay people's evaluation of non-standard spellings, see Preston, 1982b, 1985).

Answers to the first two questions mentioned at the beginning of this section also provide useful information about sociolinguistic stereotypes that have been commonly used in audiovisual fiction. One of those stereotypes, and probably the one most frequently found in films and TV shows, is the aggressive, alcoholic man who is often a paramilitary and who speaks with a tough Belfast accent. A similar stereotype is what one informant refers to as "the inner Belfast "Give My Head Peace" type". *Give My Head Peace* is a comedy released in 1995 about the absurdity of the ethnopolitical divide in NI. The main characters in the series are an Irish Catholic father and his family who live on the Falls Road, the traditional Catholic neighbourhood in the city of Belfast, and two British Protestants who are uncle and nephew. These characters, including the wife and daughter of the Catholic father, all have a broad Belfast accent that is exaggerated for

comic effect. Furthermore, the wife is representative of the "ma" stereotype mentioned by one participant and reminds of Ma Mary in *Derry Girls*. In the context of Dublin, this stereotype and its use in the TV series *Mrs Brown's Boys* is investigated by Murphy and Palma-Fahey (2018). They describe the traditional Irish mum as "the matriarch of the household" (p. 305) who cares for her family and wants to have everything under control. Ma Mary fits the description of the Irish mum. Nonetheless, she is also "a foul-mouthed matriarch, who is harsh, insensitive and sarcastic" (ibid., p. 312), all of which are features that, according to Murphy and Palma-Fahey, break the stereotype of the traditional Irish mother. This may serve as evidence of how traditional stereotypes are being reshaped in Northern Irish fiction.

Apart from the Irish ma, the same informant identifies another female stereotype: the "silly wee girl". She is very likely thinking of the teenage girls from *Derry Girls*. While the silly wee girl type is portrayed in comedies, this stereotype does not seem to be as well-established as that of the aggressive Belfast paramilitary, mainly because Northern Irish audiovisual fiction, particularly films, has centred around dramas about The Troubles and whose main characters are frequently men (Walshe, 2017). Moreover, the extent to which this latter stereotype is entrenched in the collective imagination is such that, as one respondent notices, its use is "an acquired taste" in the American media which, he suggests, has its roots in "a legacy of Gerry Adams[21]", who used to appear on TV many times during the 80s and 90s. Hollywood has produced several films that feature American actors as Northern Irish IRA paramilitaries. The imitation of the NIrE accent by those actors has been subject to criticism from people in NI. In fact, there are online articles where the Hollywood portrayals of the Northern Irish, and Irish, accents are condemned and usually mocked (see, for example, McGoran, 2020 and O'Neill, 2022). Meanwhile, Americans have often complained about the unintelligibility of Northern Irish accents played by actors from NI and called for subtitles. This is the case for accents in McGee's *Derry Girls* and Branagh's *Belfast* (2021). The call for subtitles by the American audience results in "indignation and eye-rolling in NI" (Carroll, 2021).

In addition to the specific stereotypes illustrated above, some participants point out and disapprove of typical mental associations between characters with a NIrE accent and a working-class background, "backward" views, ignorance and a tendency towards quarrelling and violence. All the associations except for the last one are commonly found

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[21] Gerry Adams is an Irish politician who was the leader of Sinn Féin, an Irish republican political party, between 1983 to 2018.

when a speaker has either a working-class urban or a rural accent so that they are not limited to Northern Irish accents. However, the aggressive behaviour is characteristically attributed to people in NI due to the fact that this region's history of hostility and violence between the Catholic and Protestant sections of the population (Section 2.7. provides a historical account of the tensions between Catholics and Protestants in NI). One informant rejects this association and claims that, contrary to popular belief, "NI people are a lot more laid back and light-hearted about situations".

When it comes to deciding whether the accents represented in the stimuli are overacted or softened, a considerable number of respondents believe that there is overacting. Nevertheless, not all accents are perceived to be exaggerated to the same extent. The most overacted stimuli according to many informants are Audio 2, Audio 3, Video 1, Video 4 and the poem. While exaggeration is supposed to entail the loss of authenticity, some of the most overacted accents, namely Audios 2 and 3, are also rated the most authentic. This may indicate that overacting does not necessarily mean that the representation is inauthentic. In fact, one of the participants considers that the mum's accent in the *Derry Girls* audio is an overacted ("loud" and "over-annunciated") but nevertheless authentic representation. Furthermore, respondents do not always seem to have a negative attitude towards exaggeration. They point out that overacted speech is typically used for comic effect. Even though the link between comedy and exaggerated accents has usually carried negative connotations, this does not seem to be the case for many Northern Irish informants who seem to approve of overacting accents in comedies. A female participant even observes that by exaggerating word stresses, the speaker in *Soft Border Patrol* "achieves an authentic camp Northern Irish accent". Apart from its comic value, overacting is also said to be the result of trying "to sound intelligible to an external audience". However, a few respondents state that intelligibility is attained by softening the accents. While it seems clear that a softer accent is more easily understood than a broader accent, the relationship between overacting and intelligibility may not be as straightforward. When the portrayal of an accent is overdone, it usually sounds stronger than its real-life version. Overacting involves quantitative as well as qualitative overshoot of a few stereotyped features (Gibson & Bell, 2010, pp. 236-237). In doing so, overshooting does lead to broader-sounding accents but, at the same time, it enables the audience to identify the accent more quickly and easily, which is the ultimate goal of the creator of the representation. Some participants seem aware of this since they say that the purpose of overacting is sounding more "northern" or "Norn Irish".

It is important to note that overacting is sometimes associated with non-native actors trying to imitate a Northern Irish accent. Moreover, some informants' comments suggest that there is a bias against representations of NIrE accents by non-native performers. This would mean that some Northern Irish viewers automatically label representations as overacted if they know that the actor is not from NI. The source of this negative bias could be attributed to failed attempts of foreign performers, most of whom are American, at imitating Northern Irish accents. Although those misrepresentations irritate Northern Irish audiences, it might be that they also get some satisfaction from actors' inability to reproduce a NIrE accent. If Northern Irish people think of their accent(s) as one that is inimitable, a very positive feature that means that something is so good and unique that it cannot be replicated, they are likely to feel somewhat proud when they witness non-native failed representations. However, if they believe that being unable to imitate their accent is due to extreme deviation from the norm or to the lack of knowledge about its features in places outside NI, they will most likely not feel satisfied or proud, but embarrassed, annoyed and/or angry. In any case, further research is required to investigate how people in NI feel when they see a failed imitation of Northern Irish accents by a foreigner. In order to do this, clips that contain speech by non-native actors who play a Northern Irish character would need to be used.

Whereas overacting is mentioned by a lot of informants, some respondents draw attention to the softening of, at least, some of the accents that are portrayed. The accents most frequently described as softened are the rural accent in Video 3 and the Belfast accent represented in the play. The latter is said to be softened because, as already pointed out in Section 5.3.3.1.3. , it is represented through just a few respellings. Meanwhile, the reason why Video 3 sounds softer is more difficult to determine but it might have to do with the slow pace of the actor's speech. Two informants say that some accents are slowed down but they do not indicate which. The slowing down seems to result in less authentic accents because, according to those two respondents, people in NI usually speak very fast.

Among the reasons given for the softening of accents, some informants remark that softer accents help foreign audiences understand Northern Irish speech, while one participant suggests that softening derives from the fact that non-native actors are used in some stimuli. Apart from that, it is also interesting to see how one informant writes that the accents are "softened because they are easy to understand". The Northern Irish accents shown in the stimuli are therefore expected to be unintelligible by this individual. This

appears to highlight the connection that exists between unintelligibility and Northern Irish speech in lay people's minds.

Furthermore, some responses provide evidence of the link between softer accents and audiovisual content of a more serious nature. The rationale behind the softening of accents in dramas may be born out of the need for audience members to take the characters seriously. Softening can prevent dramas from falling "into that comedic territory of overacting non-standard English dialects", one participant notes. Comedy and non-standard language have been closely intertwined for a long time and therefore, care must be taken when using the latter in non-comic performances. The negative connotations ascribed to non-standard speech has probably led many creators to avoid dialect altogether.

Overacting and softening can be defined as two different strategies frequently employed in performed speech, both of which can result in the perception of the accent represented as inauthentic. However, whereas many of the questionnaire respondents perceive the stimuli as overacted or softened, they do not usually describe it as inauthentic. The adjective "authentic", by contrast, is used on several occasions. This is indicative of a prevailing positive attitude towards the Northern Irish accents presented in the survey. Most informants are either pleased to see representations of their accents, which are generally under-represented, or satisfied because those portrayals are accurate enough. Nonetheless, not all the comments made by participants are positive. As discussed above, there are complaints about the lack of representation of accents other than the Belfast accent; about the broadness, and sometimes cringeworthy nature, of the speech samples; and about some portrayals being stereotypical.

In addition to these, there is one more complaint that has not yet been mentioned and is worthy of attention. Two informants reject the use of the term "Northern Irish accent", which is used in the question "How do these representations of the Northern Irish accent make you feel?", arguing that a "definitive or general Northern Irish accent" does not exist. The fact that two respondents disagree with the term "Northern Irish accent" suggests that they interpret its use as a denial and/or dismissal of the wide variety of accents spoken in NI, even though this was not the intention. Northern Irish people seem to be proud of this variety since this is something that some participants point out using phrases like "there is such a diversity of accents in such a small country". Thus, the non-recognition of such diversity implied by the aforementioned term can prompt criticism. Furthermore, denying the existence of a general Northern Irish accent may prove that the

idea of a supraregional variety does not exist for, at least, some people in NI. Given the interpretation of the term "Northern Irish accent", it seems advisable to use "accents" rather than the singular form in the wording of questionnaires about language in NI.

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter has identified a number of attitudinal trends and, when possible, has discussed them in light of findings from previous research. In doing so, it has answered the research questions laid out in Section 1.2. The results presented in this chapter are divided into quantitative and qualitative results. The former are obtained from the statistical analysis of the questionnaire data, whereas the latter result from a thorough analysis of participants' individual responses to the qualitative items of the survey described in Section 5.4.1.

The quantitative analysis of the data illustrates that the two social variables that have a more significant effect on the authenticity, prestige and pleasantness ratings are gender and age, two factors that have been widely investigated in sociolinguistics. The main gender-related trend observed in this chapter shows that females evaluate NIrE more favourably on all three dimensions, namely, authenticity, prestige and pleasantness, than males. As regards age-related variation, results cannot be easily summarised in a few sentences so that variation according to age will be overviewed in Chapter 7, together with social-class-, ethnicity- and hometown-related variation.

The qualitative examination of informants' answers shows that while individual responses are very varied, some tendencies can be identified. One of them has to do with the fact that it becomes clear that lexical and grammatical features are more salient than pronunciation. Secondly, when it comes to guessing the location and ethnicity of the speaker, a considerable number of responses are not accurate. This suggests that the links between accent and region and accent and ethnicity are weaker than that between accent and social class. Finally, answers to the general questions included at the end of the questionnaire reveal that, despite describing some accents as overacted or softened, most participants seem to like most of the accent portrayals and to rate them as quite authentic. The next chapter highlights the main quantitative and qualitative results and how they provide answers to the research questions addressed in the present study.

7. Chapter 7: Concluding remarks

7.1. Introduction

This chapter begins with a review of the research questions laid out in Chapter 1 (Section 7.2.) and then moves on to outline how this thesis has contributed to fill in some knowledge gaps found in several fields of scholarly studies (Section 7.3.). Sections 7.4. and 7.5. present a summary of the main quantitative and qualitative findings of this dissertation and, when possible, compares them to the results of previous research. The limitations of the present study, most of which have to do with methodology, are identified in Section 7.5. Finally, Section 7.6. is devoted to suggestions for further research.

7.2. Review of research questions

Before outlining the contributions of the present study to the fields of performed dialect in fiction, language perception and sociolinguistics, it is necessary to remind the reader of the research questions that were formulated in Chapter 1:

1. How do Northern Irish informants evaluate fictional portrayals of Northern Irish English accents in telecinematic and literary fiction in terms of authenticity and of the traditional attitudinal dimensions of prestige and pleasantness?
2. How do the social variables of gender, age, social class, ethnicity and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown influence those evaluations if at all?

Apart from providing answers to these two questions, the main findings with regard to some other narrower, but also relevant, questions with which this thesis was concerned (in relation to **salience** and **identification of the speaker's region/hometown and ethnic background**, see Section 1.2.) are also summarised in this chapter. Those questions were the following:

- Which features of the Northern Irish English accents presented in the telecinematic stimuli are perceptually salient for Northern Irish informants?
- Are Northern Irish respondents able to locate the Northern Irish accents of the speakers in the audiovisual and written stimuli?
- Can they identify the speakers' ethnic background?

- What are the attitudes of informants towards the literary and telecinematic representations of Northern Irish English accents?

The two main research questions as well as the narrower questions above have explored the perception of language by lay people in NI, which is the focus of this dissertation. Nonetheless, language production has also been investigated to some extent inasmuch as the accent portrayals used in the questionnaire were analysed from the point of view of produced authenticity (in Section 5.3.3.1.).

7.3. Contributions of this study

As discussed in Section 1.3., this dissertation makes an significant contribution to the first, second, and, more particularly, third wave of variation studies by investigating (1) the relationships between language and social and geographical variables and (2) how those relationships are created, reinforced and/or challenged in fictional performances of NIrE accents.

The review of existing research on the use of dialect in fictional performances and on language perception offered in Chapter 4 revealed three main knowledge gaps which this dissertation has addressed. One of them is the lack of research on audiences' perceptions of dialect portrayals both in telecinematic (Planchenault, 2017, p. 273) and literary fiction. Most scholars interested in fictional representations of dialect have concentrated on analysing what features are incorporated in the portrayals and on ascertaining whether those portrayals resemble real-life dialects, that is, are authentic from the point of view of linguistics (see Sections 4.2.3., 4.2.4. and 4.2.5.). This thesis has proposed an innovative approach to the study of performed dialect that consists in delving into audiences' responses to linguistic performances. Another innovative contribution of this study is the fact that the dialect representations have been analysed not only in terms of the traditional concept of authenticity, but also in terms of the evaluative dimensions of prestige and pleasantness. As mentioned in Section 1.1., prestige and pleasantness are the dimensions according to which people evaluate language. Thus, by measuring how informants rate performed accents on scales of prestige and pleasantness, this dissertation contributes to widening the scope of research on language attitudes, a field that has not paid much attention to lay people's perceptions of performed language.

A second research gap lies in the fact that the representation of Northern Irish

English dialects in fictional performances is an under-researched area. Most studies of IrE in fiction have explored portrayals of SIrE dialects (those studies are overviewed in Sections 4.2.4. and 4.2.5.). Moreover, the lack of research on the representation of northern dialects is particularly true for telecinematic fiction. There is only one scholar who investigates how NIrE varieties are portrayed in telecinematic performances and that is Walshe (2017). He investigates what features of NIrE are shown in a corpus of Northern Irish films. Despite dealing with SIrE in most of his scholarly work, he has greatly contributed to the field of performed IrE, not only in telecinematic but also in written fiction (for a study of IrE in Marvel Comics, see Walshe, 2012; and for an analysis of IrE in Irish joke books, see Walshe, 2020). The present dissertation draws on and supplements research carried out by Walshe. One of the ways in which this study supplements Walshe's, and one that has not been discussed yet, is by investigating pronunciation. Although Walshe's comprehensive account of the representation of SIrE in films set in the Republic of Ireland (Walshe, 2009) covers features of pronunciation, together with grammar, discourse and lexicon, his more recent studies concentrate on the latter aspects rather than on phonology/phonetics. A focus on grammatical, discourse and lexical features is not only found in Walshe's research (Walshe, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2017, 2020), but also in most academic work on portrayals of IrE in fictional performances (Amador-Moreno, 2005, 2012, 2015, *forthcoming*; Amador-Moreno & Terrazas-Calero, 2017, 2022; Dolan, 1984; McCafferty, 2005, 2009; Murphy & Palma-Fahey, 2018; O'Sullivan, 2015; Palma-Fahey, 2015; Taniguchi, 1972; Terrazas, 2022). As a result, there is a dearth of studies on the representation of IrE accents in fiction. This constitutes the third gap addressed by this thesis.

7.4. Summary of quantitative findings

7.4.1. Research question 1

To answer the first research question, the overall mean ratings on perceived authenticity, prestige and pleasantness for each of the five datasets (general, telecinematic, literary, urban (Belfast) and rural) were calculated (the mean ratings on perceived authenticity are analysed in Sections 6.2.1.1. and 6.2.1.2. and the average scores on the prestige and pleasantness scales in Sections 6.2.2.1. and 6.2.2.2.).

7.4.1.1. Authenticity

The average rating on authenticity for the general dataset was 31.54, which means that

the Northern Irish respondents judged the fictional performances of NIrE accents to be fairly authentic[22]. This is in keeping with the nature of the stimuli which were performed by Northern Irish actors and shown to be reasonably authentic from the point of view of produced authenticity (see Section 5.3.3.1.).

Whereas there was no major difference in authenticity ratings between the general and the other four datasets, the two subgroups that deviated the most from the general dataset were the literary and urban (Belfast) groups. As regards the former, it was rated as the least authentic dataset. This may be due to the difficulties inherent in portraying accent in writing. Authors of literary dialect represent pronunciation features by modifying spellings in ways that make sense to them. However, interpreting those respellings requires an effort that readers may not be willing to make. Besides, some people may still find the modified spellings unintelligible despite trying to understand them. In fact, as responses to the questionnaire item "Do you like the way the poem/novel/play is written?" prove (see Section 6.2.1.1.), unintelligibility seems to be the reason why many informants do not like the literary extracts. This is particularly the case for the poem which contains many and difficult to interpret respellings. Moreover, the poem is considered to be the least authentic stimulus, which is probably due to its representation of an Ulster Scots, rather than a Northern Irish, accent although its unintelligibility may have also contributed to its negative score on authenticity. As for the novel and the play, respondents rate the former more favourably on authenticity than the latter. The novel is similar to the poem in that it contains many non-standard spellings, and they are both different from the play which includes only a few respellings. Nevertheless, the novel is evaluated more positively on authenticity than the poem and is even described as an authentic representation by many informants. Meanwhile, the play has a more favourable rating than the poem but is sometimes criticised on the basis of its lack of more respellings.

The authenticity ratings for the three literary fragments do not show a clear relationship between authenticity and the number of features represented. However, it is likely that, as pointed out in Section 6.3.4., rating written portrayals of accent as more or less authentic depends on a set of factors that encompasses formal features, such as number, accuracy and appropriateness of the features portrayed, as well as the content and tone of the speech.

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[22] A rating of 31.54 is closer to 0, the *very authentic* end of the scale, than to 100, the *very inauthentic* end. Thus, "fairly authentic" seems an appropriate interpretation of the rating.

It is important to note that if leaving aside the ratings of the poem, the mean score for the novel and play is very similar to that for the telecinematic dataset (29.89 as compared to 29.15). This means that the novel and play are judged to be only slightly less authentic than the telecinematic stimuli. Furthermore, the difference between the means for these two groups is not statistically significant (p= 0.581), which suggests that Northern Irish respondents do not consistently rate the audiovisual stimuli as more authentic than the two literary extracts. Thus, differences in the average ratings do not seem to hinge on whether the accents are represented in written or in telecinematic fiction. Different means are likely to result from the differences between individual stimuli. A further proof of this is the fact that the novel and play are rated as more authentic that some of the telecinematic stimuli.

The urban (Belfast) dataset is perceived as the most authentic of all data subgroups and, more importantly, statistical analyses reveal that this perception is shared by all the different social groups which the participants in this study have been classified into. Those groups include male, female, 18-30, 31-55, over-55, working-class, middle-class, urban (Belfast), rural, Catholic and Protestant individuals. It is therefore reasonable to say that there is consistency in the authenticity ratings of the Belfast accents by Northern Irish respondents. Consistency across the sample of informants suggests that there is something in the Belfast dataset that leads most participants to rate it as more authentic than the other three data subgroups. A review of Section 5.3.3.1. shows that the Belfast stimuli, that is, Audio 2, Audio 3, Video 1 and Video 4, contain more Northern Irish features than the rural voice samples. This includes not only pronunciation, but also grammar and/or lexical features which, as will be restated below, are easily identified as typically Northern Irish by listeners. Considering this, it is possible to hypothesise that a higher number of dialectal features in the Belfast stimuli is responsible for a more positive rating on the authenticity scale. However, there is one other factor that may have also had an influence. That factor is the higher recognition rate of the Belfast dataset. As demonstrated in Section 6.3.2., the number of informants who can locate the Belfast accents is considerably larger than the number of participants who recognise the rural accents. While the existence of a link between the ability to locate an accent and authenticity ratings remains to be proved, it seems likely that being unable to identify an accent results in uncertainty when deciding how authentic it is. Besides, when listening to an accent that they cannot locate, informants may tend to evaluate it as less authentic because of a lack of correspondence with any accent that they know.

7.4.1.2. Prestige

As explained in Section 5.3.4.1.3., the scales used to assess the prestige of the accent portrayals were *Acceptable-Unacceptable*, *Standard-Non-standard* and *Educated-Uneducated*. Although they are representative of the same evaluative dimension, the ratings on these three scales show some differences. The stimuli are evaluated more unfavourably on education than on acceptability and standardness, a trend that can be observed across all datasets. Moreover, as shown in Section 6.2.2.1., a comparison of the ratings on the *Educated-Uneducated* scale for the Northern Irish stimuli and for Video 2, that is, the SSBE accent clip, reveals that the former are perceived as considerably less educated than the latter. In fact, education is the second scale where the difference in rating between the NIrE and SSBE stimuli is more marked, surpassed only by the *Mild-Broad* scale. This finding is far from surprising and corroborates previous research which has shown that lay people see SSBE as more educated and prestigious than regional accents (Coupland & Bishop, 2007; Giles, 1970, 1971; Hickey, 2005; Masterson et al., 1983; Milroy & McClenaghan, 1977; Sharma et al., 2022).

It is also important to point out that the *Educated-Uneducated* scale together with the *Friendly-Unfriendly* scale have the lowest standard deviations, which indicates that informants are more consistent when assessing accents on this scale than in others. A higher degree of consistency probably suggests two things: first, that Northern Irish respondents have a clear idea of what they are evaluating and second, that they know how they want to rate it. The standard deviations for acceptability and standardness, however, are higher which means that there is wider variation in participants' scores. This, along with the fact that the ratings on the *Acceptable-Unacceptable* and *Standard-Non-standard* scales are significantly different from what was expected, seem to be a hint that respondents did not interpret the scales in the way they were supposed to do.

7.4.1.3. Pleasantness

The bipolar scales aimed at measuring perceived pleasantness were *Pleasant-Unpleasant*, *Friendly-Unfriendly* and *Gentle-Tough*. The results discussed in Section 6.2.2.2. reveal that there are no substantial differences in rating between those three scales. The same applies to the different datasets whose mean ratings on pleasantness, friendliness and gentleness are very similar. In spite of this lack of significant variation, there are three response patterns that deserve attention.

One of those patterns is identified when examining the mean ratings on the pleasantness scales for the urban (Belfast) data subgroup. It shows that Northern Irish participants rate the Belfast accents slightly more unfavourably than the other datasets. Even though the difference is small, this trend lends support to findings drawn from previous studies (Coupland & Bishop, 2007; Giles, 1970) which provide evidence that urban accents are systematically evaluated more negatively on pleasantness than other regional accents. One such study is Coupland and Bishop's (2007) which reveals that the Belfast accent is rated as less pleasant than a general Northern Irish accent.

An analysis of the individual ratings for each stimuli highlights another significant trend: the SSBE accent is considered more pleasant and gentler than all the Northern Irish accents. This seems to contradict the trend identified in previous research according to which SSBE, or standard accents more generally, are attributed less pleasantness than regional accents (Edwards, 1977a; Garrett et al., 2003; Giles, 1971; Giles & Billings, 2004; Giles & Powesland, 1975; Hickey, 2005; Masterson et al., 1983; Milroy & McClenaghan, 1977; Sharma et al., 2022). However, when it comes to friendliness, respondents rate SSBE as the second least friendly accent. The difference between scores on the pleasant and gentle scales on the one hand, and on *Friendly-Unfriendly* on the other, appears to suggest that Northern Irish respondents interpret these scales differently. Preston (1999a) finds a similar difference between ratings on friendliness and on pleasantness in his study on the perception of regional varieties in the United States by young university students from Michigan. One possible reason that he proposes may account for this difference has to do with the fact that "the global label "pleasantness"" may not "as subtly (or perhaps as covertly) elicit the attitudes along this dimension [pleasantness]" (ibid., p. 369). This means that pleasantness may elicit more overt or explicit attitudes from informants that other scales such as friendliness (the difference between overt and covert attitudes is discussed in Section 4.3.1.2.). If this were the case for the present study, informants would rate SSBE higher on pleasantness than Northern Irish accents based on the belief that this is the socially desirable attitude. Meanwhile, their more implicit attitudes would be revealed when evaluating the accents in terms of friendliness. This would mean that Northern Irish respondents think that NIrE accents are more pleasant than SSBE, even if subconsciously. Another potential explanation for the difference between the ratings of the SSBE and the NIrE accents on the friendly and the pleasant and gentle scales is that the content of the stimuli and the speaker's tone or type of voice have biased the ratings. Whatever the reason(s), further research is needed to

better understand this difference.

7.4.2. Research question 2

This section provides an overview of the main findings discussed in Sections 6.2.1.3. and 6.2.2.5. regarding the influence (or lack of) of the social variables of gender, age, social class, ethnicity and urban (Belfast)/rural hometown on Northern Irish informants' evaluations of NIrE accents on the authenticity, prestige and pleasantness dimensions. In addition, statistically significant differences between groups of informants are pointed out.

7.4.2.1. Authenticity

The first social factor analysed for statistical significance was gender. Results from the analysis of the relationship between gender and ratings on the authenticity scale reveal that females rate the five datasets as more authentic than males (Section 6.2.1.3.1.). Notwithstanding, as illustrated in Table 7.1. below, gender variation is only statistically significant for the general, telecinematic and urban (Belfast) datasets. Women's more favourable attitude towards NIrE accents is to be expected given that findings from scholarly work on language attitudes provide evidence of this trend (Coupland & Bishop, 2007).

Table 7.1.

Summary of statistically significant differences in authenticity ratings

	GENDER	AGE	SOCIAL CLASS	ETHNICITY	HOMETOWN
GENERAL DATASET	*p*=0.013	**p*=0.039	—	—	—
TELECINEMATIC DATASET	*p*=0.015	**p*=0.027 ***p*=0.048	—	—	—
LITERARY DATASET	—	**p*=0.025	—	—	—
URBAN (BELFAST) DATASET	*p*=0.001	**p*=0.000 ***p*=0.000	—	—	*p*=0.018
RURAL DATASET	—	—	—	—	—

*Differences between the 18-30 and Over 55 cohorts

**Differences between the 18-30 and 31-55 cohorts

As regards the social factor of age, a clear trend emerging from the data shows that younger Northern Irish informants rate the NIrE stimuli more favourably on authenticity than the middle-aged and older cohorts. The age differences that are found to be statistically significant are those between the younger and the older respondents in their ratings of all the datasets except for the rural stimuli, and the differences between the younger and middle-aged age groups when assessing the telecinematic and urban (Belfast) datasets. As discussed in Section 6.2.1.3.2., the fact that young Northern Irish participants are the most positive on the authenticity scale could be related to the trend identified in studies about language production and according to which younger speakers use more dialectal features than older members of a speech community.

The working- and middle-class groups of respondents do not show statistically significant variation in their evaluations of the different datasets. In addition to the lack

of statistical significance, the hypothesis that working-class individuals would consider the Northern Irish accent portrayals to be more authentic than middle-class informants is not confirmed. What is more important, though, is that no clear trend can be identified in the authenticity ratings by the two social groups. This finding is surprising since the relationship between social class and language has been long established (see Section 6.2.1.3.3. for scholars who have explored this link). The lack of a trend might be due to uncertainty as to how to rate representations of NIrE accents in terms of authenticity.

As with social class, scores on the *Very authentic-Very inauthentic* scale do not vary significantly depending on the ethnic background of the informant (Section 6.2.1.3.4.). In spite of that, one response pattern seems worthy of comment: Protestants judge all the different datasets except for the Belfast one as more authentic than Catholics. Nevertheless, there are three stimuli, namely Audio 1, Audio 3 and Video 4, which Catholic respondents rate as more authentic. This could have been expected given that the speakers in those stimuli are actresses raised in a Catholic background. It is also important to observe that the speech samples that Protestants rate as significantly more authentic than Catholics are Audio 4 and the poem, the two stimuli portraying USc-influenced accents. These results seem to indicate that Catholics and Protestants react more favourably towards accents they associate with speakers of their same ethnic background.

As evidenced in Section 6.2.1.3.5., the urban (Belfast)/rural hometown social variable has a statistically significant effect on the ratings of the urban (Belfast)/rural dataset (see Table 7.1. above). The result of this effect is that informants from the city of Belfast consider the Belfast accent portrayals to be significantly more authentic than respondents from rural areas. This finding was to be expected since, according to research on advertising (Aaker et al., 1992; O'Mahony & Meenaghan, 1998), audiences usually have more positive attitudes towards performers with whom they share some similarities.

7.4.2.2. Prestige

The only difference that proves to be statistically significant when analysing the influence of social variables on the prestige ratings is that found between urban (Belfast) and rural informants' scores on the *Educated-Uneducated* scale for the telecinematic dataset (*p*= 0.027). Informants from Belfast evaluate the telecinematic stimuli as more educated than participants from more rural areas. The reasons behind this difference are far from clear but it could be hypothesised that covert prestige may have something to do with it. Urban

(Belfast) respondents might rate the telecinematic dataset higher on education because they are more influenced by covert prestige than rural informants (see Trudgill, 1972 for an explanation of overt and covert prestige). Furthermore, a desire for upward mobility could lie behind rural participants' lower rating on the *Educated-Uneducated* scale. This desire would lead them to evaluate vernacular speech more negatively on the prestige dimension.

Variation according to gender, age, social class and ethnicity do not show statistical significance. However, test results highlight some interesting trends for some of these social factors. With regard to gender, ratings reveal that Northern Irish women perceive the NIrE accents to be more educated than male informants. This seems to contradict the finding in language production studies that females use fewer regional variants than their male counterparts (see Labov, 1972; Trudgill, 1972). Taking this finding into account, a more negative rating on prestige on the part of women could have been expected. However, when considering research on language perception, the trend identified in the present dissertation appears to be in line with Coupland and Bishop (2007) and Bishop et al. (2005), who provide evidence of females' more positive rating of British regional accents on prestige than males. As for age, the responses by the different cohorts show no clear pattern.

The analysis of the prestige ratings by the working-class and middle-class groups of informants in Section 6.2.2.5.3. evinces that the former group has a more favourable attitude towards the NIrE accents represented in the stimuli than the latter. This is likely due to the influence of covert prestige on the working class, and of overt prestige on the middle class.

When testing the relationship between ethnicity and the perception of performed Northern Irish accents (Section 6.2.2.5.4.), one response pattern emerges: Protestant respondents' evaluations of the accents in terms of standardness and education are less favourable than Catholics' ratings. The rationale behind the tendency among Protestants to judge NIrE as less prestigious might be related to overt prestige. This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the fact that Protestants attribute more prestige to the SSBE stimulus than Catholics, a difference which Zwickl (2002) finds to be statistically significant (see Section 4.3.4. for more information about Zwickl's study).

7.4.2.3. Pleasantness

The effect of gender on evaluations of the NIrE stimuli on the *Friendly-Unfriendly* scale

shows statistical significance (p= 0.033). As pointed out in Section 6.2.2.5.1., female respondents rate the Northern Irish accents more positively on friendliness than males. While this trend is only statistically significant for the friendly scale, it is mirrored in the pleasantness and gentleness scales. This gender trend corroborates Coupland and Bishop (2007) and Bishop et al. (2005), who prove that women consider regional accents to be more pleasant.

Even though it is difficult to identify any clear age-based trends, results reveal that younger informants are the most positive of the three age groups when it comes to friendliness. Despite that, the younger cohort rates the NIrE stimuli more negatively on pleasantness and gentleness than the middle-aged and the older groups. This is another example of the lack of correspondence between scores on the pleasant and gentle scales on the one hand, and ratings on the friendly scale on the other (see Section 7.4.1.3. above). Regarding the evaluation of the SSBE speech sample by the younger Northern Irish respondents, they see the standard accent portrayal as less pleasant and friendly than the other cohorts. This is in line with Coupland and Bishop's claim that "younger people […] seem to be less embedded in the conservative ideology of positively evaluating 'standard' accents" (2007, p. 83). Moreover, this claim makes sense given that language production studies have long demonstrated that younger age groups favour vernacular over standard features (see, for example, Trudgill, 1972, 1974b).

Ratings on the pleasantness dimension reveal a difference between the objective and subjective social classes. While the objective middle-class awards the NIrE accents more pleasantness and gentleness than objective working-class informants, the opposite is the case for the subjective social class groups. The higher rating on pleasantness attributed to the stimuli by the subjective working class is to be expected given the tendency of working-class individuals to use dialectal forms.

The most significant trend with regards to ethnicity-based variation shows that informants with a Protestant background rate the stimuli as less gentle and friendly than Catholic participants (as discussed in Section 6.2.2.5.4.). Meanwhile, Protestants are more positive than Catholics on all pleasantness scales when assessing the SSBE stimulus. This lends support to the claim that Protestants have a more favourable attitude towards SSBE because of the historical relationship between Northern Irish Protestantism and Britain (see Chapter 2 for a better understanding of that relationship).

Results from the analysis of the influence of urban (Belfast)/rural hometown on pleasantness ratings do not reveal any statistically significant effect. Notwithstanding,

two trends are worthy of comment. Firstly, rural respondents evaluate the NIrE stimuli as friendlier than the Belfast informants. Secondly, their ratings of the SSBE accent are more favourable on the three pleasantness scales as compared to the ratings by urban respondents. The explanation for the second trend might have to do with an aspiration for upward mobility which, as already seen, is common among people from more rural areas.

7.5. Summary of qualitative findings

The qualitative investigation reveals some interesting patterns that are overviewed here. With regard to perceived salience (examined in Section 6.3.1.), an analysis of the frequency with which a word occurring in the stimuli is highlighted by the survey informants shows that the lexical and grammatical features of a regional variety are more perceptually salient that pronunciation traits, a trend already acknowledged by Hickey (2000, p. 58). Nonetheless, some pronunciation features, most of which involve vowel sounds, also seem salient. The fact that most of those features have to do with the pronunciation of vowels supports the claim that the most distinctive feature of NIrE accents is their vowel system. Whereas the type of feature (whether grammatical, lexical, etc.) seems to influence its salience, perceiving a feature as salient also depends on factors such as repetition, the position of the feature in the text or word, stress and intonation. The influence of these factors on salience is worth exploring in future investigations.

As evidenced in the qualitative analysis of informants' ability to locate the accents represented in the stimuli, Belfast accents are more easily located than rural speech (Section 6.3.2.). This suggests that respondents are more familiar with Belfast accents, which is not surprising given that Belfast is the capital city of NI and therefore most people in NI have been there, whether studying, working, shopping or visiting. Besides, familiarity with Belfast accents is also probably influenced by the frequent representation of Belfast accents on TV and in films. By contrast, the lack of familiarity with some rural accents probably derives from a lack of portrayals of rural speech in telecinematic discourse. In spite of that, many Northern Irish participants are able to distinguish between a rural Antrim and a rural western accent. This means that informants have some knowledge about the rural linguistic landscape of NI.

As regards the link between ethnicity and accent in NI, results indicate that guessing a speaker's ethnic background on the basis of accent is more difficult than suggested in popular belief (Section 6.3.3.). While some respondents seem to recognise the ethnicity of some speakers, there are many informants who cannot or do not even try

to guess the speakers' ethnic background. Thus, this study's findings provide evidence that the relationship between ethnicity and language in NI, if any, is not strong, at least from the point of view of perception. Moreover, there is not enough evidence to discard the hypothesis that the correct identification of ethnicity may be simply due to the accurate location of the accent. Thus, the results here presented are not conclusive and there is a need for more research on this topic.

The main finding from the examination of the responses to the general questions dealt with in Section 6.3.5. reveals that the telecinematic and literary portrayals of NIrE accents arouse positive feelings among some informants and negative emotions among others. On the one hand, those who have a positive attitude towards the representations do one or more of the following things: feel proud to see that their accents are represented, comment on the authenticity of the portrayals and/or acknowledge the value of their accents. On the other hand, the negative reactions result from the complain that a wider variety of accents should have been represented, the perception that some accents are exaggerated or softened or the mental association that some respondents recognise exists between NIrE accents and negative traits such as working-class background, ignorance and unintelligibility.

One last qualitative finding that deserves attention is the identification of three sociolinguistic stereotypes, namely the tough Belfast man, the Irish ma and the silly wee girl. These stereotypes have gradually come into existence through their continued representation in fiction, as was the case with the stereotype of the Stage Irishman explained in Section 4.2.3. This underlines once again the role of performed language in the creation, reinforcement and challenging of stereotypes (Section 4.2. considers the potential of performances to establish or reshape indexical links).

7.6. Limitations of this dissertation

While the present study has provided valuable information about Northern Irish lay people's perceptions and attitudes towards fictional portrayals of NIrE accents, it is not without its limitations. One of the limitations is the sampling method used to recruit Northern Irish informants for the questionnaire. I used convenience sampling for the reasons pointed out in Section 5.4.1. As a result, whereas my sample of informants is larger and more diverse than many of the samples obtained in previous language attitudes research carried out either in or outside NI, the nature of convenience sampling makes it impossible to ensure a balanced sample. There is certain imbalance in terms of all the

social variables: there are considerably more females than males, more younger and middle-class respondents than older informants, more middle-class than working class individuals, more Catholics than Protestants and more participants from Belfast than from any rural area. This slight lack of balance seems to be responsible for having to implement non-parametric tests which have less statistical power than parametric tests. At the same time, the little statistical power of those tests is probably one of the reasons why only a few differences prove to be statistically significant. To overcome this limitation, it would be advisable to use random or quota sampling (Section 5.4.1.), as well as to collect a larger sample of participants.

This dissertation is also hindered by the fact that most of the portrayals of Northern Irish English accents used as stimuli do not only contain dialectal pronunciation, but also grammar and/or lexis. A study aimed at exploring perceptions of accent should avoid including grammatical and lexical features since the salience of these features, which has been demonstrated here (Section 6.3.1.1.), can lead them to influence informants' evaluations. In addition, respondents appear to be somehow biased by the content of the stimuli, i.e., what speakers say. Preventing this bias can be done by selecting more topic-neutral speech samples. However, it is important to bear in mind that finding stimuli that meets the two selection criteria that have been just highlighted, that is, being topic-neutral and free of grammatical and lexical features, apart from other criteria mentioned earlier in this thesis (Section 5.3.3.) can be a difficult and time-consuming task.

7.7. Future directions

Drawing from the limitations presented in Section 7.6. above, a good starting point for future research on Northern Irish lay people's perceptions of performed NIrE accents would be to collect a larger and more balanced sample of informants. This would make it possible to implement more powerful statistical tests and therefore to provide more robust results. Apart from that, I would also like to improve the questionnaire used in the present study by incorporating representations of a wider variety of urban and rural Northern Irish accents. This would help to draw a more comprehensive picture of language attitudes in NI. Improving the survey should also entail modifications of some measurement scales and items (Chapter 5 for suggestions about possible changes) which would contribute to making the questionnaire more reliable. One interesting modification would be, for instance, the use of Montgomery and Moore's (2008) tool for capturing listeners' real-time reactions to voice samples. This tool would enable me to better

determine the features that respondents identify as Northern Irish, as well as to assess more accurately the salience of those.

Another possibility for future research would be to replicate this study in the ROI using samples of SIrE accents or in the context of Ireland as a whole testing the attitudes of people from the Republic and from Northern Ireland towards both SIrE and NIrE accent portrayals. The latter project is more ambitious and would greatly benefit from collaborative work with scholars who have already explored language attitudes in Ireland such as Victoria Garnett, Raymond Hickey and Stephen Lucek, and with those who have contributed to research on the representations of IrE in fictional telecinematic and literary performances. Some of those researchers are Carolina P. Amador-Moreno, Helen Kelly-Holmes, Máiréad Moriarty, Bróna Murphy, Joan O'Sullivan, María Palma-Fahey, Ana M. Terrazas-Calero, Elaine Vaughan and Shane Walshe.

In addition to the proposals for future studies offered above, I shall endeavour to dig deeper into salience. My initial intention was to assess not only perceived, but also produced salience, that is, the salience features may have acquired through stylistic and social variation, supraregionalisation, overt comments posted on the internet by lay people and representation in performance (these indicators of salience are explained in detail in Section 4.2.2.2.). Nonetheless, determining produced salience turned out to be more difficult than anticipated due to the fact that there is only scant and fragmented information on salience and to the lack of a full understanding of the concept and of the factors that influence salience. To overcome this hurdle, I plan to put the concept of salience on a firmer footing by working hand in hand with psycholinguists and cognitive linguists who have already investigated salience (see Section 4.2.2.) and who would greatly benefit from integrating a sociolinguistic perspective like the one I have adopted in this dissertation into their study of the concept.

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APPENDIX 1

Pilot questionnaire

THE NORN IRON PROJECT

<u>Personal Information</u>

Gender: M   F

Age: Under 18   18-30   31-55   Over 55

Nationality:

Where did you grow up? :

Occupation (*if you are a student, please indicate your parents' occupations*):

Ethnic Self-Identification:

Religion:

<u>Instructions</u>

This questionnaire consists of three parts but do not panic, it will not take very long and, in most cases, you will only have to tick a box. Before you start, some recommendations seem necessary. Please do not spend more than a few seconds in answering a question and do not revise your answers once you have checked a box or finished a part of the questionnaire. Go by your initial feeling! Also bear in mind that there are no wrong answers and the right one is the one you have and not that of some expert. So relax, this is not an exam and your answers will remain anonymous.

PART I: AUDIOS

You are going to listen to four sound recordings taken from films or TV shows set in Northern Ireland. Please pay special attention to the pronunciation and do not try to guess the film or TV show where it has been taken from because that is not the point here. Once the recording is finished, all you have to do is to honestly answer the questions.

Recording 1

1.1. How many people speak with that accent in Northern Ireland?

    Everyone   Most   Many   Some   Few   No-one

1.2.How would you describe the accent of the speaker…? Put a cross on the line where you would put the accent on this scale.

Acceptable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unacceptable
Comic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Neutral
Educated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Uneducated
Gentle	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Tough
Standard	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Non-standard
Pleasant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unpleasant
Correct	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Incorrect

1.3.How would you imagine the person that is speaking? In terms of …

Physical appearance:

Clothing:

Age:

Occupation:

Personality:

Religion:

Neighbourhood:

Recording 2

2.1. How many people speak with that accent in Northern Ireland?

Everyone   Most   Many   Some   Few   No-one

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2.2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker…? Put a cross on the line where you would put the accent on this scale.

Acceptable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Unacceptable
Comic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Neutral
Educated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Uneducated
Gentle	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Tough
Standard	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Non-standard
Pleasant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Unpleasant
Correct	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Incorrect

2.3. How would you imagine the person that is speaking? In terms of …

Physical appearance:

Clothing:

Age:

Occupation:

Personality:

Religion:

Neighbourhood:

Recording 3

3.1. How many people speak with that accent in Northern Ireland?

Everyone   Most   Many   Some   Few   No-one

3.2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker…? Put a cross on the line where you would put the accent on this scale.

Acceptable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Unacceptable
Comic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Neutral
Educated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Uneducated
Gentle	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Tough
Standard	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Non-standard
Pleasant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Unpleasant
Correct	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Incorrect

3.3. How would you imagine the person that is speaking? In terms of …

Physical appearance:

Clothing:

Age:

Occupation:

Personality:

Religion:

Neighbourhood:

Recording 4

4.1. How many people speak with that accent in Northern Ireland?

Everyone   Most   Many   Some   Few   No-one

4.2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker…? Put a cross on the line where you would put the accent on this scale.

Acceptable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Unacceptable
Comic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Neutral
Educated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Uneducated
Gentle	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Tough
Standard	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Non-standard
Pleasant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Unpleasant
Correct	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ Incorrect

4.3. How would you imagine the person that is speaking? In terms of …

Physical appearance:

Clothing:

Age:

Occupation:

Personality:

Religion:

Neighbourhood:

PART II: VIDEOS

Now, you are going to watch four short clips also taken from films and TV shows set in Northern Ireland. Once the clip is finished, please answer the questions.

Clip 1

1.1. How many people speak with that accent in Northern Ireland?

Everyone   Most   Many   Some   Few   No-one

1.2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker…? Put a cross on the line where you would put the accent on this scale.

Acceptable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unacceptable
Comic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Neutral
Educated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Uneducated
Gentle	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Tough
Standard	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Non-standard
Pleasant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unpleasant
Correct	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Incorrect

1.3. Do you recognise this pronunciation as typical of a particular group of people in Northern Ireland? (Think about this in terms of geography, age, gender, social class, occupation, religion or any other you might want to add)

Yes   No

If so, please indicate which group is that:

…………………………………………………………………………………

Clip 2

2.1. How many people speak with that accent in Northern Ireland?

     Everyone   Most   Many   Some   Few   No-one

2.2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker…? Put a cross on the line where you would put the accent on this scale.

Acceptable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unacceptable
Comic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Neutral
Educated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Uneducated
Gentle	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Tough
Standard	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Non-standard
Pleasant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unpleasant
Correct	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Incorrect

2.3. Do you recognise this pronunciation as typical of a particular group of people in Northern Ireland? (Think about this in terms of geography, age, gender, social class, occupation, religion or any other you might want to add)

Yes   No

If so, please indicate which group is that:

……………………………………………………………………………………

Clip 3

3.1. How many people speak with that accent in Northern Ireland?

Everyone   Most   Many   Some   Few   No-one

3.2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker…? Put a cross on the line where you would put the accent on this scale.

Acceptable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unacceptable
Comic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Neutral
Educated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Uneducated
Gentle	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Tough
Standard	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Non-standard
Pleasant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unpleasant
Correct	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Incorrect

3.3. Do you recognise this pronunciation as typical of a particular group of people in Northern Ireland? (Think about this in terms of geography, age, gender, social class, occupation, religion or any other you might want to add)

Yes   No

If so, please indicate which group is that:

……………………………………………………………………………………

Clip 4

4.1. How many people speak with that accent in Northern Ireland?

Everyone   Most   Many   Some   Few   No-one

4.2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker…? Put a cross on the line where you would put the accent on this scale.

Acceptable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unacceptable
Comic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Neutral
Educated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Uneducated
Gentle	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Tough
Standard	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Non-standard
Pleasant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unpleasant
Correct	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Incorrect

4.3. Do you recognise this pronunciation as typical of a particular group of people in Northern Ireland? (Think about this in terms of geography, age, gender, social class, occupation, religion or any other you might want to add)

Yes   No

If so, please indicate which group is that:

………………………………………………………………………………

PART III: LITERATURE

Below, you have three extracts of literature written in Northern Ireland: the first one is a fragment of a poem; the second, a prose extract taken from a novel; and, the third fragment is part of a play. Please read them carefully and answer the questions.

Poem

"Ah wis havin a cracker wee dream

lass night — there wis this wet thing

in mah ear. Then ah woke an seen

it wis a rat. At least a mouse."

1.1. On a scale from 1 to 6, how much do you like the way the poem is written? Circle your answer.

         1   2   3   4   5   6

1.2. Do you find the representation of the accent in any way peculiar?

   Yes   No

If so, could you explain in a few words why?

………………………………………………………………………………..

1.3. From your point of view, how accurate is the representation of the Northern Irish accent in this poem?

Very accurate   Fairly accurate   Not very accurate   Very inaccurate

Novel

"Me ma's people were great at havin' family reunions. When a was a wee wain a was always took te them. A don't know why they had these doos because they always ended in ructions. They would start aff paseably enough way me granny […], makin' wile big feeds of goose or turkey or somethin' like that an' iverybody sittin' down thegether to ate it on a Sunday."

2.1. On a scale from 1 to 6, how much do you like the way the novel is written? Circle your answer.

         1   2   3   4   5   6

2.2. Do you find the representation of the accent in any way peculiar?

   Yes   No

If so, could you explain in a few words why?

………………………………………………………………………………..

2.3. From your point of view, how accurate is the representation of the Northern Irish accent in this **novel?**

Very accurate   Fairly accurate   Not very accurate   Very inaccurate

Play

"**Leg:** Did you hear Henry to me? Jasus, you'd think I was askin' for somethin' I'm not entitled to. A man should be able to spake his mind even if he wanted twenty sons into the union.

Buckets: I thought you had a son in, Leg.

Leg: The eldest lad, Hughie, he shoulda been in. The union books closed two days before he left school and he's pushin' thirty nigh."

3.1. On a scale from 1 to 6, how much do you like the way the play is written? Circle your answer.

      1   2   3   4   5   6

3.2. Do you find the representation of the accent in any way peculiar?

    Yes   No

If so, could you explain in a few words why?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

3.3. From your point of view, how accurate is the representation of the Northern Irish accent in this **play?**

Very accurate   Fairly accurate   Not very accurate   Very inaccurate

APPENDIX 2

Call for experts to validate the questionnaire (distributed through the LINGUIST List)

LINGUIST List 30.2873
Wed Jul 24 2019
Qs: Looking for Experts to Validate a Questionnaire

Editor for this issue: Everett Green <everett@linguistlist.org>

Date: 21-Jul-2019
From: Sara Diaz <sarads@unex.es>
Subject: Looking for Experts to Validate a Questionnaire
✉E-mail this message to a friend

Dear all,

I am looking for experts in the construction of surveys to validate a questionnaire I have created to investigate Northern Irish people's perceptions and attitudes towards fictional representations of the Northern Irish accent. Experts in the creation of questionnaires for language attitudes research or any other related fields are all welcome.

Instructions
First of all, you need to go through the questionnaire 'The Norn Iron Project' (Link 1). Bear in mind that you only have to look at it and do not have to answer the questions. Once you have done that, you have to click on the link 2 and fill in this survey evaluating the questionnaire 'The Norn Iron Project' that you have previously looked at.

The results of the questionnaire validation will help me to know if my questionnaire is appropriate for my research and what changes to make to improve its efficiency.

Links:

LINK 1
https://www.esurveycreator.com/s/51a793a

LINK 2
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeGkO6L9Pk9_s3VwY8SD93nXz9sIaARdDCggEdz0wOjK1X2kA/viewform?usp=sf_link

If you have any questions about the project, please contact me via the following address:

Sara Diaz: sarads@unex.es

Feel free to send this information to anyone that might be interested. Thank you!

Linguistic Field(s): Phonetics
                     Sociolinguistics

Subject Language(s): English (eng)

Page Updated: 24-Jul-2019

APPENDIX 3

Validation questionnaire

Questionnaire Validation by Experts

Welcome! Before you start the survey, please make sure that you have looked at the questionnaire 'The Norn Iron Project' . Thank you very much. Your help is invaluable here.

Next   Clear form

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Google Forms

Personal details of the expert

I would like to have some information about the experts. Please fill in the fields below.

Name

Your answer

Institution

Your answer

Expertise

Your answer

Back   Next   Clear form

Personal Information Section

The personal information section includes:

-Gender
-Age
-Nationality
-Town and county where you grew up
-Occupation
-Education
-Ethnic self-identification
-Religion
-Social class you feel more identified with

Would you delete any of these personal-info fields or add some more?

Your answer

Back   **Next**   **Clear form**

Layout

Evaluate the organisation of the different parts of the questionnaire. Remember that "The Norn Iron Project" questionnaire is divided into 4 different sections:

1. Personal Information
2. Part 1: Audios
3. Part 2: Videos
4. Part 3: Literature
5. Two final (and general) questions

Is the questionnaire well organised?

○ Yes

○ No

The 'Personal Information' section is at the beginning of the questionnaire. Would you place it at the end?

○ Yes

○ No

Write any other changes you suggest doing to the layout

Your answer

Back   Next   Clear form

Stimuli

The questionnaire contains a total of 9 stimuli: 3 auditory (recordings), 3 audiovisual (clips) and 3 written (literary fragments).

Indicate how suitable each stimulus is as a representation of the Northern Irish accent

Recording 1

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsuitable	○	○	○	○	○	Very suitable

Recording 2

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsuitable	○	○	○	○	○	Very suitable

Recording 3

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsuitable	○	○	○	○	○	Very suitable

Clip 1

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsuitable	○	○	○	○	○	Very suitable

Clip 2

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsuitable	○	○	○	○	○	Very suitable

Clip 3

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsuitable	○	○	○	○	○	Very suitable

Poem

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsuitable	○	○	○	○	○	Very suitable

Novel

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsuitable	○	○	○	○	○	Very suitable

Play

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsuitable	○	○	○	○	○	Very suitable

Regarding the number of stimuli, are 9 stimuli...?

○ Too many

○ Very few

○ 9 stimuli are all right

Add any further comments you might have

Your answer

Back   Next   Clear form

Questions

The questionnaire is made up of both quantitative and qualitative questions. Please pay attention to their relevance as part of research on perceptual dialectology and language attitudes and also to the wording of both questions and answers.

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

Question 1: From your point of view, how authentic is the representation of the Northern Irish accent in this recording/clip/fragment?

How relevant is question 1?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very irrelevant	○	○	○	○	○	Very relevant

Question 2 (Semantic differential scale): How would you describe the accent of the speaker? Put a tick on the line where you would put the accent on these scales.

Ten pairs of adjectives are used in the semantic differential. Are they...?

○ Too many

○ Very few

○ 10 pairs are all right

The semantic differential used is a four-point scale. Is this a good choice?

○ Yes

○ No

If your answer to the previous question was 'No', indicate how many points you would have and why

Your answer

Have a look at the layout of the scale. As you can see, not all the positive adjectives are listed on one side. Positive and negative adjectives are mixed in the two columns. Would you rather...?

○ Leave it like that

○ List all positive adjectives on one column and the negative, on the other.

Question 3 (literature): On a scale from 1 to 6, how much do you like the way the fragment is written?

How relevant is question 3 of the literature section?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very irrelevant	○	○	○	○	○	Very relevant

Add any comments you might have as regards the quantitative questions

Your answer

Back   Next   Clear form

Qualitative questions

Question 3 (audios): How would you imagine the person that is speaking? In terms of...physical appearance, clothing, age, occupation, personality, religion and neighbourhood.

How relevant is this question?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very irrelevant	○	○	○	○	○	Very relevant

5 different categories are employed (physical appearance, social class, etc.) Are they...?

○ Too many

○ 5 categories are all right

Final question 1: How do these representations of the Northern Irish accent make you feel? Are there significant differences between the stimuli?

How relevant is this question?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very irrelevant	○	○	○	○	○	Very relevant

Final question 2: Would you say that the accents are overacted or softened?

How relevant is this question?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very irrelevant	○	○	○	○	○	Very relevant

Add any comments you might have as regards these qualitative questions

Your answer

Back   Submit   Clear form

APPENDIX 4

Final questionnaire

Welcome

You are about to take part in a research project conducted by Sara Díaz Sierra, a student from the University of Extremadura (Spain), as part of her PhD on the English language in Northern Ireland. In completing this questionnaire, you are assisting specialists in learning more about how people use English in Northern Ireland.
This questionnaire consists of three parts but do not panic, IT WILL NOT TAKE VERY LONG and, in most cases, you will only have to TICK A BOX. Before you start, some recommendations seem necessary.

-PLEASE do not spend more than a few seconds in answering a question
-DO NOT REVISE your answers once you have checked a box or finished a part of the questionnaire. Go by your initial feeling!
-Bear in mind that there are no wrong answers and the right one is the one you have and not that of some expert
-PLEASE PLAY THE RECORDINGS AND VIDEOS JUST ONCE

So relax, this is not an exam and your answers will remain ANONYMOUS. By clicking on 'Next' you give consent to the use of your responses in research and scholarly publications.

Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me via email: saradisie@gmail.com

Personal Information

Gender *

- ⬭ Female
- ⬭ Male
- ⬭ Non-binary

Age *

- ⬭ 18-30
- ⬭ 31-55
- ⬭ Over 55

Nationality *

[   ]

What town/city and county of Northern Ireland did you grow up in? (E.g. Bangor, Co. Down) *

Occupation *

(If you are a university student, indicate your parents' occupations)

Education/Qualifications *

- ( ) Primary Education
- ( ) Secondary Education (GCSE)
- ( ) A Levels
- ( ) BA (University Degree)
- ( ) MA (Master's Degree)
- ( ) PhD
- ( ) Any vocational qualification (GNVQ, BTEC, Apprenticeship, etc.)

Religion *

- ( ) Roman Catholic
- ( ) Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- ( ) Church of Ireland
- ( ) Methodist Church in Ireland
- ( ) None
- ( ) Other, write in

What social class do you feel more identified with? *

- ( ) Upper class
- ( ) Middle class
- ( ) Working class

Part 1: Audios

You are going to listen to 4 SOUND RECORDINGS taken from films or TV shows set in Northern Ireland. Please pay special attention to the PRONUNCIATION of words and do not try to guess the film since that is not the point here. Once the recording is finished, all you have to do is to honestly answer the questions.

318

Recording 1

The pronunciation of which words make the speaker sound Northern Irish? *

☐ Cannot tell which words

☐ The speaker does not sound Northern Irish

☐ Words [   ]

The representation of the accent in this recording is *

Very authentic [|‖|] Very inauthentic

2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker? Put a tick on the line where you would put the accent on these scales. ⚙

Rural	◯	◯	◯	◯	Urban
Acceptable	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unacceptable
Intelligible	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unintelligible
Broad	◯	◯	◯	◯	Mild
Pleasant	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unpleasant
Comic	◯	◯	◯	◯	Not comic
Standard	◯	◯	◯	◯	Non-standard
Tough	◯	◯	◯	◯	Gentle
Educated	◯	◯	◯	◯	Uneducated
Friendly	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unfriendly

319

How would you imagine the person that is speaking? In terms of...

(You do not need to fill in all the fields, just those that seem relevant to you)

Physical appearance: [   ]

Social class: [   ]

Personality: [   ]

Religion: [   ]

Place of residence: [   ]

Did you recognise the TV show/film? *

○ yes

○ no

Recording 2

The pronunciation of which words make the speaker sound Northern Irish? *

☐ Cannot tell which words

☐ The speaker does not sound Northern Irish

☐ Words [   ]

The representation of the accent in this recording is *

Very authentic | [slider] | Very inauthentic

2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker? Put a tick on the line where you would put the accent on these scales. *

Rural	○	○	○	○	Urban
Acceptable	○	○	○	○	Unacceptable
Intelligible	○	○	○	○	Unintelligible
Broad	○	○	○	○	Mild
Pleasant	○	○	○	○	Unpleasant
Comic	○	○	○	○	Not comic
Standard	○	○	○	○	Non-standard
Tough	○	○	○	○	Gentle
Educated	○	○	○	○	Uneducated
Friendly	○	○	○	○	Unfriendly

How would you imagine the person that is speaking? In terms of...

(You do not need to fill in all the fields, just those that seem relevant to you)

Physical appearance: [   ]

Social class: [   ]

Personality: [   ]

Religion: [   ]

Place of residence: [   ]

Did you recognise the TV show/film? *

○ yes

○ no

Recording 3

The pronunciation of which words make the speaker sound Northern Irish? *

☐   Cannot tell which words

☐   The speaker does not sound Northern Irish

☐   Words [_____]

The representation of the accent in this recording is *

Very authentic [_____|_____] Very inauthentic

2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker? Put a tick on the line where you would put the accent on these scales. *

Rural	○	○	○	○	Urban
Acceptable	○	○	○	○	Unacceptable
Intelligible	○	○	○	○	Unintelligible
Broad	○	○	○	○	Mild
Pleasant	○	○	○	○	Unpleasant
Comic	○	○	○	○	Not comic
Standard	○	○	○	○	Non-standard
Tough	○	○	○	○	Gentle
Educated	○	○	○	○	Uneducated
Friendly	○	○	○	○	Unfriendly

How would you imagine the person that is speaking? In terms of...

(You do not need to fill in all the fields, just those that seem relevant to you)

Physical appearance:

Social class:

Personality:

Religion:

Place of residence:

Did you recognise the TV show/film? *

( ) yes

( ) no

Recording 4

The pronunciation of which words make the speaker sound Northern Irish? *

[ ] Cannot tell which words

[ ] The speaker does not sound Northern Irish

[ ] Words

The representation of the accent in this recording is *

Very authentic [|||] Very inauthentic

2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker? Put a tick on the line where you would put the accent on these scales. *

Rural	◯	◯	◯	◯	Urban
Acceptable	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unacceptable
Intelligible	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unintelligible
Broad	◯	◯	◯	◯	Mild
Pleasant	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unpleasant
Comic	◯	◯	◯	◯	Not comic
Standard	◯	◯	◯	◯	Non-standard
Tough	◯	◯	◯	◯	Gentle
Educated	◯	◯	◯	◯	Uneducated
Friendly	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unfriendly

How would you imagine the person that is speaking? In terms of...

(You do not need to fill in all the fields, just those that seem relevant to you)

Physical appearance: [   ]

Social class: [   ]

Personality: [   ]

Religion: [   ]

Place of residence: [   ]

Did you recognise the TV show/film? *

◯ yes

◯ no

Part 2: Videos

Now, you are going to watch 4 SHORT CLIPS also taken from films or TV shows set in Northern Ireland. Once the clip is finished, please answer the questions.

324

Clip 1

The pronunciation of which words make the speaker sound Northern Irish? *

- [ ] Cannot tell which words

- [ ] The speaker does not sound Northern Irish

- [ ] Words [_____]

The representation of the accent in this clip is *

Very authentic [_____|_____] Very inauthentic

2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker? Put a tick on the line where you would put the accent on these scales. *

Rural	○	○	○	○	Urban
Acceptable	○	○	○	○	Unacceptable
Intelligible	○	○	○	○	Unintelligible
Broad	○	○	○	○	Mild
Pleasant	○	○	○	○	Unpleasant
Comic	○	○	○	○	Not comic
Standard	○	○	○	○	Non-standard
Tough	○	○	○	○	Gentle
Educated	○	○	○	○	Uneducated
Friendly	○	○	○	○	Unfriendly

Where in Northern Ireland would you say that the speaker is from? *

[   ]

Did you recognise the TV show/film? *

○ yes

○ no

Clip 2

The pronunciation of which words make the speaker sound Northern Irish? *

☐ Cannot tell which words

☐ The speaker does not sound Northern Irish

☐ Words [   ]

The representation of the accent in this clip is *

Very authentic [▯] Very inauthentic

2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker? Put a tick on the line where you would put the accent on these scales. *

Rural	○	○	○	○	Urban
Acceptable	○	○	○	○	Unacceptable
Intelligible	○	○	○	○	Unintelligible
Broad	○	○	○	○	Mild
Pleasant	○	○	○	○	Unpleasant
Comic	○	○	○	○	Not comic
Standard	○	○	○	○	Non-standard
Tough	○	○	○	○	Gentle
Educated	○	○	○	○	Uneducated
Friendly	○	○	○	○	Unfriendly

Where in Northern Ireland would you say that the speaker is from? *

[   ]

Did you recognise the TV show/film? *

○ yes

○ no

Clip 3

The pronunciation of which words make the speaker sound Northern Irish? *

☐ Cannot tell which words

☐ The speaker does not sound Northern Irish

☐ Words [   ]

The representation of the accent in this clip is *

Very authentic [_____|_____] Very inauthentic

2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker? Put a tick on the line where you would put the accent on these scales. *

Rural	◯	◯	◯	◯	Urban
Acceptable	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unacceptable
Intelligible	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unintelligible
Broad	◯	◯	◯	◯	Mild
Pleasant	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unpleasant
Comic	◯	◯	◯	◯	Not comic
Standard	◯	◯	◯	◯	Non-standard
Tough	◯	◯	◯	◯	Gentle
Educated	◯	◯	◯	◯	Uneducated
Friendly	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unfriendly

328

Where in Northern Ireland would you say that the speaker is from? *

Did you recognise the TV show/film? *

- ○ yes
- ○ no

Clip 4

The pronunciation of which words make the speaker sound Northern Irish? *

- ☐ Cannot tell which words
- ☐ The speaker does not sound Northern Irish
- ☐ Words

The representation of the accent in this clip is *

Very authentic ⟨———————[ ]———————⟩ Very inauthentic

2. How would you describe the accent of the speaker? Put a tick on the line where you would put the accent on these scales. *

Rural	◯	◯	◯	◯	Urban
Acceptable	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unacceptable
Intelligible	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unintelligible
Broad	◯	◯	◯	◯	Mild
Pleasant	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unpleasant
Comic	◯	◯	◯	◯	Not comic
Standard	◯	◯	◯	◯	Non-standard
Tough	◯	◯	◯	◯	Gentle
Educated	◯	◯	◯	◯	Uneducated
Friendly	◯	◯	◯	◯	Unfriendly

Where in Northern Ireland would you say that the speaker is from? *

[   ]

Did you recognise the TV show/film? *

◯ yes

◯ no

Part 3: Literature

You are going to find 3 extracts of literature written in Northern Ireland: the first one is a fragment of a poem; the second, a prose extract taken from a novel; and the third is part of a play. Please read them carefully and answer the questions.

Poem

"Mtellinye dinny worry.
Won't be plain sailin
but fAh could just explain.
There's nuthin tay worry aboot."

The representation of the accent in this poem is *

Very authentic ⟨———————[ ]———————⟩ Very inauthentic

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2. Imagine the accent of the speaker of this fragment. Put a tick on the line where you would put the accent on these scales. *

Rural	○	○	○	○	Urban
Acceptable	○	○	○	○	Unacceptable
Intelligible	○	○	○	○	Unintelligible
Broad	○	○	○	○	Mild
Pleasant	○	○	○	○	Unpleasant
Comic	○	○	○	○	Not comic
Standard	○	○	○	○	Non-standard
Tough	○	○	○	○	Gentle
Educated	○	○	○	○	Uneducated
Friendly	○	○	○	○	Unfriendly

Where in Northern Ireland would you say that the speaker in this fragment is from? *

Do you like the way the poem is written? Why?

Novel

"Me ma's people were great at havin' family reunions. When a was a wee wain a was always took to them. A don't know why they had these doos because they always ended in ructions. They would start aff passably enough way me granny [...], makin' wile big feeds of goose or turkey or somethin' like that an' iverybody sittin' down thegether to ate it on a Sunday."

The representation of the accent in this novel is *

Very authentic |―――――――□―――――――| Very inauthentic

2. Imagine the accent of the speaker of this fragment. Put a tick on the line where you would put the accent on these scales. *

Rural	○	○	○	○	Urban
Acceptable	○	○	○	○	Unacceptable
Intelligible	○	○	○	○	Unintelligible
Broad	○	○	○	○	Mild
Pleasant	○	○	○	○	Unpleasant
Comic	○	○	○	○	Not comic
Standard	○	○	○	○	Non-standard
Tough	○	○	○	○	Gentle
Educated	○	○	○	○	Uneducated
Friendly	○	○	○	○	Unfriendly

Where in Northern Ireland would you say that the speaker in this fragment is from? *

Do you like the way the novel is written? Why?

Play

"Leg: Did you hear Henry to me? Jasus, you'd think I was askin' for somethin' I'm not entitled to. A man should be able to spake his mind even if he wanted twenty sons into the union.
Buckets: I thought you had a son in, Leg.
Leg: The eldest lad, Hughie, he shoulda been in. The union books closed two days before he left school and he's pushin' thirty nigh."

The representation of the accent in this play is *

Very authentic ▮ Very inauthentic

2. Imagine the accent of the speaker of this fragment. Put a tick on the line where you would put the accent on these scales. *⚙

Rural	○	○	○	○	Urban
Acceptable	○	○	○	○	Unacceptable
Intelligible	○	○	○	○	Unintelligible
Broad	○	○	○	○	Mild
Pleasant	○	○	○	○	Unpleasant
Comic	○	○	○	○	Not comic
Standard	○	○	○	○	Non-standard
Tough	○	○	○	○	Gentle
Educated	○	○	○	○	Uneducated
Friendly	○	○	○	○	Unfriendly

Where in Northern Ireland would you say that the speaker in this fragment is from? *

Do you like the way the play is written? Why?

LAST TWO QUESTIONS AND YOU ARE DONE WITH THE QUESTIONNAIRE!

Almost there

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1. How do these representations of the Northern Irish accent make you feel? Is there anything in these representations that you particularly like or dislike? Why?

[text box]

2. Would you say that the accents are overacted or softened? Why?

[text box]

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To enter the Prize drawing, please write your email below.

[text box]

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If you would like to take part in an interview with the researcher, please write your email address in the box below

[text box]

APPENDIX 5

Email sent to potential interviewees

Interview with researcher (Norn Iron Survey) Inbox ×

S **Sara Díaz Sierra** <saradisie@gmail.com>   Sun, 16 Feb 2020, 22:05
   to

Dear all,

I'm writing this email because I would like to know if you would be willing to have an interview with me to talk a little bit about the videos, audios and literary extracts that were part of the survey that you filled. I am in Belfast at the moment and would like to arrange some group interviews if possible. Interviews would preferably take place in Belfast although I can consider going to any other town in Northern Ireland. ˙ The interviews would take around 30-45 minutes. The list below contains the days that I am available to do interviews. If you are interested in taking part in this, please write your name next to the day or days you would be available. Next to your name, please write where you could do the interview. Example: Wednesday 26 February: Sara Diaz (Belfast)

Tuesday 18 February:
Wednesday 19 February:
Thursday 20 February:
Friday 21 February:
Saturday 22 February:
Monday 24 February:
Tuesday 25 February:
Wednesday 26 February:
Thursday 27 February:
Friday 28 February:
Saturday 29 February:
Monday 2 March:
Tuesday 3 March:
Wednesday 4 March:
Thursday 5 March:

Thank you very much!

Kind regards,

Sara

Consent form (interview)

Interview Consent Form

Research project title: The Norn Iron Project (funded by Fundacion Fernando Valhondo Calaff)

Research investigator: Sara Diaz Sierra

This interview is part of a research project conducted by Sara Díaz Sierra, a student from the University of Extremadura (Spain), as part of her PhD on the English language in Northern Ireland. In taking part in this interview you are assisting specialists in learning more about how people use English in Northern Ireland.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. This consent form is necessary for the investigator to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the information provided below and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- The interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced
- The transcript of the interview will be analysed by Sara Diaz as research investigator
- Any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publications or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed

By signing this form I agree that:

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project and I can stop the interview at any time
2. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and make edits I feel necessary
3. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above

4. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future

Contact details:

Name: Sara Díaz Sierra

Address: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras

Universidad de Extremadura

Av de las Letras s/n

10003 Cáceres

Spain

Email: saradisie@gmail.com

Date:

———————————————————   ———————————————————
        Researcher's signature   Participant's signature

Consent form (pilot questionnaire)

CONSENT FORM

Project information

You are about to take part in a research project conducted by Sara Díaz Sierra, a student from the University of Extremadura (Spain), as part of her PhD on the English language in Northern Ireland. In completing the questionnaire, you are assisting specialists in learning more about how people use English in Northern Ireland. You will be asked at the start of the questionnaire to provide some information about yourself as this will help the researcher to make sense of the data. All information will, of course, be treated with absolute confidentiality and your anonymity is fully guaranteed. Thank you.

Declaration

-I confirm that I have read and fully understand the 'Project information'.

-I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and that the researcher has answered any question to my satisfaction.

-I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any time.

-I understand that any data that I provide will remain confidential.

-I consent to the use of the data I provide in research, publications and sharing.

By signing below, you are agreeing that, having read and understood all the information provided above, you are willing to take part in this study voluntarily.

Participant signature: Date:

Call for participants distributed through Twitter

Sara Díaz
@Sara_DiazSierra

NORTHERN IRISH PEOPLE NEEDED to take part in an experiment on the representation of Northern Irish English in TV, films and literature. Click on the link below to participate:
esurveycreator.com/s/51a793a
@QUBelfast @QUBEngSoc @qubscreen @QUB_FilmSOC @qubquizmasters

Traducir Tweet

12:56 p. m. · 6 nov. 2019 · Twitter Web App

Ver estadísticas del Tweet

2 Retweets **1** Citar Tweet **2** Me gusta

Sara Díaz
@Sara_DiazSierra

Hi! I keep looking for Northern Irish people to take part in a survey on Northern Irish English which is part of my PhD. Survey link:

esurveycreator.com/s/51a793a

If you complete the whole survey, you will be entered into the prize draw of a 50pound AMAZON GIFT CARD!

Traducir Tweet

12:49 p. m. · 24 ene. 2020 · Twitter Web App

Ver estadísticas del Tweet

2 Retweets **2** Me gusta

APPENDIX 9

Call for participants distributed through the LINGUIST List

LINGUIST List 30.4046

Thu Oct 24 2019

Qs: Recruiting Northern Irish participants for an Online Experiment

Editor for this issue: Everett Green <everett@linguistlist.org>

Date: 23-Oct-2019
From: SARA DIAZ <sara_diaz_10@hotmail.com>
Subject: Recruiting Northern Irish participants for an Online Experiment
✉E-mail this message to a friend

Dear readers,

My name is Sara Diaz and I am doing a PhD at the University of Extremadura (Spain). As part of my PhD research on Northern Irish English, I have designed an online experiment to be completed by people from Northern Ireland (that is, people born/grown up in NI and living there). The experiment takes 20 to 30 minutes but in most cases, you will only have to tick boxes. Apart from that, it includes short clips taken from Northern Irish films so you will probably find it entertaining.

Also, the survey is strictly ANONYMOUS. Any personal information, e.g. age, gender or education level, will be collected for statistical reasons only, and no identities will be associated with any responses. The results of the experiment will be published in scholarly journals.

By following the link below you give your consent for us to use your responses in the research project. Click on the link to take part in the experiment:

https://www.esurveycreator.com/s/51a793a

Should you have further questions about the project, contact me via my email address:
Sara Diaz: sara_diaz_10@hotmail.com

Feel free to send this information to anyone who might be interested. Thank you!

Linguistic Field(s): Sociolinguistics

Subject Language(s): English (eng)