

Investigating Pleasantness and Correctness: Online Perceptual Survey of Contemporary Dublin English

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Abstract: This paper offers an overview of contemporary Dublin English through the notions of pleasantness and correctness based on an online perceptual survey inspired by perceptual dialectology. The survey aims to explore respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards the different varieties of Dublin English. First, this paper deals briefly with perceptual dialectology, then it focuses on the survey methodology. One of the tasks for the respondents was to identify groups of areas where they thought the local residents (when compared to each other) all spoke the same and to rank these areas on a 1 to 5 scale in terms of *pleasantness* and *correctness*. Respondents were also asked to describe the perceived varieties. Finally, this paper explores the results taking into account variables such as gender, age and respondent's place of residence.

Keywords: correctness; Covid-19; digital corpus; Dublin English; perceptual dialectology; pleasantness; variation.

Résumé : Cet article s'intéresse à l'anglais dublinois contemporain et, plus particulièrement, aux notions de *pleasantness* et de *correctness* par le biais d'une enquête perceptuelle en ligne, inspirée de la dialectologie perceptuelle. L'enquête s'intéresse plus largement aux perceptions des locuteurs interrogés et à leurs attitudes et représentations de différentes variétés d'anglais dublinois. La dialectologie perceptuelle et ses enjeux sont d'abord brièvement traités, suivies de la méthodologie adoptée pour mener à bien cette étude. Les répondants devaient, entre autres, repérer des variétés sur l'aire urbaine dublinoise, de classer ces variétés selon les critères de *pleasantness* et de *correctness* (sur une échelle de 1 à 5) et de décrire ces variétés. Enfin, l'article explore les résultats obtenus en croisant des variables telles que le genre, l'âge et le lieu de vie des enquêtés.

Mots-clés : anglais dublinois ; corpus numérique ; *correctness* ; Covid-19 ; dialectologie perceptuelle ; *pleasantness* ; variation.

Introduction

This paper is centred around the perceptions and representations of Southern Hiberno English, and more particularly Dublin English as it is spoken in the city of Dublin. Dublin English has been the subject of morphological, lexical, syntactic and phonological descriptions and analyses by authors such as Siegfried Bertz¹, Karen Corrigan², Raymond Hickey³ and John Loneran⁴ among others. Although some studies on language attitudes and representations of Irish English varieties have already been carried out, Lucek and Gernett remark:

While dialect has been studied within the Republic of Ireland (Hickey 2007; Filppula 1991; Farr, Murphy and O'Keefe 2002), attitudes to dialects of Irish English in Ireland have not been studied in as much detail (see White 2006) with more focus on Dublin, specifically.⁵

To the best of my knowledge, no perceptual dialectology study (on Dublin English) has ever been conducted online, and Loneran's perceptual study is the only large-scale study solely focusing on Dublin English. The lack of detailed studies on how Dubliners perceive Dublin English and other speakers of Dublin

¹ Siegfried Bertz, "Variation in Dublin English," *Teanga*, vol. 7, 1987.

² Karen P. Corrigan, Richard Edge, and John Loneran, "Is Dublin English 'Alive Alive Oh'?", in Bettina Migge and Máire Ní Chiosáin (eds.), *New Perspectives on Irish English*, p. 1-28, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2012.

³ Raymond Hickey, *Sociolinguistics in Ireland*, London, Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2016; Raymond Hickey, "The Dublin Vowel Shift and the Historical Perspective", in Jacek Fisiak and Marcin Krygier (eds.) *Advances in English Historical Linguistics*, p. 79-106, Berlin, De Gruyter Mouton, 1998; Raymond Hickey. *Dublin English: Evolution and Change*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2005.

⁴ John Loneran, "Real and Perceived Variation in Dublin English", in Jennifer Cramer and Chris Montgomery (eds.), *Cityscapes and Perceptual Dialectology: Global Perspectives on Non-Linguists' Knowledge of the Dialect Landscape*, p. 233-256, Boston, Massachusetts, Berlin, De Gruyter Mouton, 2016; John Loneran. "An Acoustic and Perceptual Study of Dublin English Phonology", PhD Thesis, University College Dublin, 2013.

⁵ Lucek, Stephen, and Victoria Garnett, "Perceptions of linguistic identity among Irish English speakers", in Raymond Hickey and Carolina P. Amador-Moreno (eds.), *Irish Identities: Sociolinguistic Perspectives*, p. 145-178, Boston, Massachusetts, Berlin, De Gruyter Mouton, 2020.

English prompted the interest for this study which can be considered as experimental in the sense that it is the first online perceptual dialectology study on Dublin English. Due to the sanitary context in the year 2020 (2021 at the time of the writing of the present paper), the methodology used had to be revised and, therefore, should not be considered as “what should be done”, but rather as a “compromise methodology” of what can be done online in perceptual dialectology within the very few options at our disposal. What is meant by “online study” is that the survey was designed and shared online. There was no *in situ* meeting with the respondents during the study. Remote studies, *i.e.* conducted *ex situ*, be they on dialects or other subjects of interest, are not new. In fact, some studies were conducted remotely before the advent of the Internet. For instance, Jack Chambers⁶ expressed interest in postal questionnaires as data-gathering tools for dialectology and more specifically for his Dialect Topography of the Golden Horseshoe project.

The aim of this paper is twofold: 1) to demonstrate the feasibility of an online perceptual study; and 2) to investigate Dubliners’ perceptions of Dublin English through pleasantness and correctness variables. The first part of this paper briefly deals with perceptual dialectology and its tenets before focusing on the survey methodology in the second part. Respondents were asked to complete a draw-a-map task and identify groups of areas where they thought people spoke the same. They were then asked to describe the perceived varieties and grade them on a scale from 1 to 5 in terms of pleasantness and correctness. The third part explores the results by taking into account variables such as gender, age and respondents’ place of residence, and more specifically the pleasantness and correctness ratings.

⁶ Jack Chambers, “Inferring Dialect from a Postal Questionnaire”, *Journal of English Linguistics*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1998, p. 222-246.

1. Perceptual Dialectology

Perceptual dialectology is a branch of Folk Linguistics interested in non-linguists'⁷ perceptions of linguistic variation. It aims to expand on traditional dialectology where variation is only considered from the linguists' point of view, and where speakers' perceptions and representations of linguistic varieties have no scientific value:

In many traditional dialectology studies, speakers' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about linguistic varieties and variation were not included. In general, many dialectologists, particularly those from the American structuralist tradition (more particularly, those heavily influenced by Bloomfield) have not been interested in the overt opinions of non-linguists⁸.

Dennis R. Preston regrets that little attention is devoted to non-linguists' points of view:

I complained (Preston 1989) that language attitude research did not determine where respondents thought regional voices were from and, worse, did not know if respondents even had a mental construct of a "place" where a voice could be from; that is, their mental maps of regional speech areas might not include one with which a sample voice could be identified⁹.

Perceptual dialectology intricately relies on speakers' subjectivity, focusing not only on language production, but also on how speakers react to language production and how they talk about language¹⁰. According to Preston¹¹, perceptual dialectologists are

⁷ Marie-Anne Paveau, "Le parler des classes dominantes, objet linguistiquement incorrect ?", *Ela. Études de linguistique appliquée*, vol. 150, n° 2, 2008.

⁸ Jennifer Cramer and Chris Montgomery, "Developing Methods in Perceptual Dialectology", in Jennifer Cramer and Chris Montgomery (eds.), *Cityscapes and Perceptual Dialectology: Global Perspectives on Non-Linguists' Knowledge of the Dialect Landscape*, p. 9-24, Boston, Massachusetts, Berlin, De Gruyter Mouton, 2016, p. 9.

⁹ Dennis R. Preston, "A Language Attitude Approach to the Perception of Regional Variety", in Dennis R. Preston (ed.), *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999, p. 359.

¹⁰ Jennifer Cramer and Chris Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹¹ Dennis R. Preston, *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999, p. xxv.

interested in what non-linguists can say about linguistic variation, in the origins of variation, in where variation is present and in how variation works. In that sense, perceptual dialectology is eminently concerned with speakers' metalinguistic perceptions¹². Marie-Anne Paveau¹³ insists on the importance of drawing parallels between “scientific data” and what she calls “folk data¹⁴”, which she considers as relevant as scientific data. Perceptual dialectology assumes that what non-linguists have to say about language is as valuable as what linguists have to say. Comparing folk and scientific data can point out differences, and these differences should be questioned by perceptual dialectology.

1.1. *Methods in Perceptual Dialectology*

Cultural geography¹⁵ has inspired methods in perceptual dialectology, especially in its use of draw-a-map tasks, which constitutes the main task of most studies in perceptual dialectology. The draw-a-map task aims to elicit dialect boundaries as they are perceived by respondents and consists in the indication of dialect areas on a blank map. The perceived areas are then labelled and the differences and similarities between the areas are discussed. Respondents are usually asked to describe the perceived varieties.

Another task often used in this type of study is the degree of difference task. It requires respondents to rank perceived areas according to how much the varieties spoken in these perceived areas are different from the variety they speak: “The task usually involves a scale of one to four, where one means the variety is the same as the respondent's and four means the variety is unintelligibly different from the respondent's¹⁶”.

The degree of pleasantness and correctness task investigates speakers' attitudes and representations towards perceived varieties

¹² Marie-Anne Paveau, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁴ From French “données folk”, *ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁵ Jennifer Cramer and Chris Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20-21.

and aims to elicit perceived stigmatised and prestige varieties among the members of the community under study. Respondents are asked to rank perceived varieties on a scale (usually from 1 to 5) in terms of how pleasant and how correct the perceived varieties sound to them. The term “pleasantness” is understood as what is perceived as friendly, pleasing to the ear. The term “correctness” evokes linguistic norms which, in turn, can be likened to the notion of standard language. In that sense, correctness is linked to overt prestige. Although the terms “pleasant” and “correct” are rather self-explanatory, respondents might have a different view of pleasantness and correctness. Consequently, they might, for instance, consider that something is correct when it is pleasant.

1.2. Works in Perceptual Dialectology on Dublin English

Works on perceptions and representations of Dublin English have been conducted by authors such as Hickey¹⁷, Lonergan¹⁸, and Lucek and Garnett¹⁹, among others. Hickey’s investigation of perceptions of Dublin English relies on national scale hand-drawn maps. His findings²⁰ point towards a distinction of at least two varieties of Dublin English in the north and south of the city. The wide scale of his study, that is to say comparing dialect regions of Ireland instead of focusing on one smaller area, does not allow for more precise identification of local differences²¹ in varieties spoken in Dublin and involves perceptions of Dublin English from the point of view of Dubliners as well as non-Dubliners.

Stephen Lucek and Victoria Garnett’s perceptual work on Irish English puts emphasis on Irish urban centres like Dublin, Cork

¹⁷ Raymond Hickey, *Dublin English...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ John Lonergan, “Real and Perceived Variation in Dublin English”, *op. cit.*; John Lonergan, “An Acoustic and Perceptual Study of Dublin English Phonology”, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Stephen Lucek, and Victoria Garnett, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Raymond Hickey, *Dublin English...*, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

²¹ John Lonergan, “Real and Perceived Variation in Dublin English”, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

and Belfast. Their study involved the completion of a draw-a-map task by 23 respondents (over 18) who were encountered at an event held in Dublin. Respondents were asked to annotate a blank map of Ireland. Once again, the national scale of such a study does not allow for a more detailed study of Dublin English. Yet, Lucek and Garnett's study reveals that respondents distinguish inner city Dublin from north and south Dublin.

Finally, Lonergan's study exclusively focused on the perceptions and representations of Dublin English and was based on data from 97 hand-drawn maps from respondents recruited in Dublin. Four areas – in the southeast, inner city, north and west – were frequently marked by the respondents on the hand-drawn maps. The degree of pleasantness and correctness task revealed that the respondents distinguished a high status D4²²/Southeast variety (deemed as the most correct) from low status inner city and northside varieties. However, ambiguities in terms of pleasantness were spotted by Lonergan, considering some negative descriptions (ex.: “fake”, “contrived”) of the southeast variety despite the high correctness ratings it received.

2. Methodology

2.1. *Why an online survey?*

As previously mentioned, methods for perceptual surveys were developed keeping in mind that linguists had unrestricted access to respondents on the field. Within the context of the present study, the methods traditionally used in perceptual dialectology could not be fully exploited considering that access to the field was not an option because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead of postponing the study, as the results of the present study were needed for further investigation on Dublin English, it was decided that the perceptual study would be adapted to the online format. This meant that the tasks completed by respondents in traditional perceptual studies had to be reconsidered, and espe-

²² D4 refers to *District 4* in Dublin. It is an area located in the southeastern part of the city.

cially so the draw-a-map task since paper is the medium used to complete it. Therefore, these tasks were revisited for obvious practical reasons, and for compatibility with the online format of the survey. Due to the lack of resources on online perceptual studies, we decided to work on the development of an alternate method, although experimental, dedicated to what could be named *digital perceptual dialectology*. While the digital format of the survey was imposed by the regulations implemented in the aftermaths of the pandemic, it nonetheless offered a new perspective on methods in perceptual dialectology and on perceptions and representations of Dublin English.

2.2. *Recruiting the respondents*

Resorting to an online survey implies that one cannot simply recruit respondents as they normally would in the field. The survey was first submitted to acquaintances for preliminary feedback before being officially released online in February 2020. The survey was shared on social networks such as Facebook and on websites such as board.ie and Reddit, thanks to which most of the respondents were recruited. The online platform Reddit allowed users to share content in different groups called *subreddits*. The subreddit names are preceded by “r/”, and in the case of the present study, the “r/ireland” and “r/dublin” groups were selected for respondent recruitment. These groups host hundreds of thousands of users, many of whom are likely to be from Ireland and more specifically from Dublin.

2.3. *Revisiting the draw-a-map task*

Respondents were asked to identify groups of areas where they believe people “speak the same” using a map provided to them. The wording of the instructions was crucial, and similarities between areas (rather than differences) were deliberately insisted upon. The reason for that is that the aim of this draw-a-map task

was to elicit broad areas from which respondents for a subsequent sociolinguistic field study could be recruited²³.

Antonius Weijnen²⁴ argues that insisting on similarities between varieties will inevitably lead respondents to deal with the differences. In fact, identifying groups of areas where respondents think people speak the same will naturally bring to the fore differences, because when respondents identify several groups, they implicitly make a distinction between them. Weijnen adds that respondents will always be able to tell the difference between their own variety and the varieties spoken around them, while they will not necessarily point out the similarities.

Following the draw-a-map task, respondents were then asked to comment on varieties spoken in the groups of areas they identified, and to rate the varieties in terms of *pleasantness* and *correctness* on a scale from 1 to 5. The rating task served as a basis for comparison between the identified areas using variables such as gender, age and place of residence. The respondents were given two maps, one reference map²⁵ (figure 1) with the names of the main suburbs and one map presenting the many districts and subdistricts of Dublin (figure 2). They were asked to identify groups of areas where they thought people speak the same, using the labels on the map (figure 2). The respondents were told they could identify as many groups as they wished as long as the groups were clearly formatted (as in the following example) to make data modelling a much easier task:

Group A = 1 24 3a 8...

Group B = 18 7 20 5 11a 11b

Group C = 16 12a 12b 24a

Group D = ...

²³ After the sanitary regulations are lifted.

²⁴ Antonius Weijnen, "On the Value of Subjective Dialect Boundaries", in Dennis Richard Preston (ed.), *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1999, p. 131-132.

²⁵ A reference map is also provided by John Loneragan, "Real and Perceived Variation in Dublin English", *op. cit.*, p. 236.

Some districts were divided into subdistricts because they were too broad for the respondents to be able to pinpoint more specific areas. The division into subdistricts took into account the city centre as a point of reference, which explains the somewhat concentric appearance of the subdivisions. The major axes were also considered (when possible) for the subdivisions, especially for the Dùn Laoghaire/Rathdown area. Additional subdivisions were considered for districts number 18, 24a, 24b, 22a, 22b, 15a and 15b. However, adding more information on an already busy map would probably have deterred potential respondents. A compromise between having enough information and providing a comfortable enough online user experience to the respondents had to be kept in mind. Adapting the *draw-a-map* task to the online format was no easy task and resorting to specific GIS software programs was not an option. Even if an interactive map had been created, it would have had to be adapted to all the potential devices respondents can use to complete the survey, namely smartphones, tablets and computers. It was thus decided to bypass this technical obstacle using the method discussed above. Although this method is not necessarily the most appropriate, data collection was not impeded, which tends to confirm that the method proved rather successful despite the many difficulties met in its implementation.

Figure 1. Reference map of Dublin²⁶

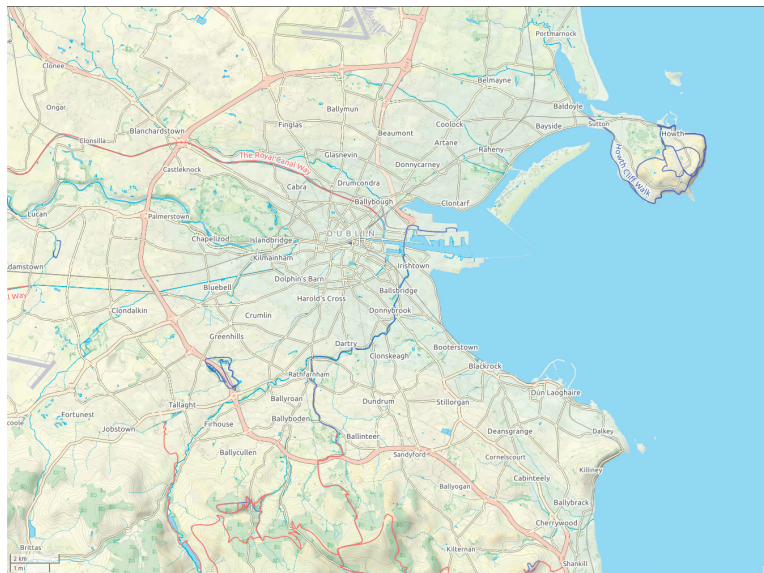
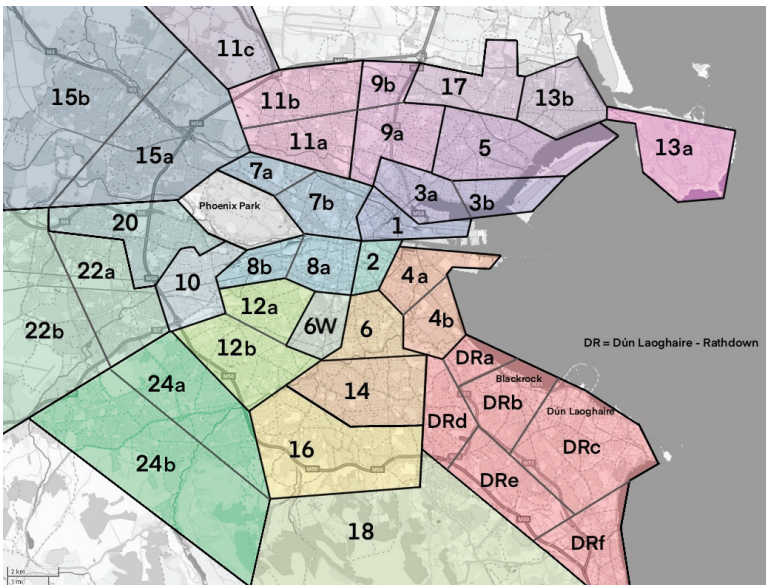


Figure 2. Map of Dublin's districts



²⁶ “UMap”, <https://umap.openstreetmap.fr/fr/>, accessed September 18, 2021.

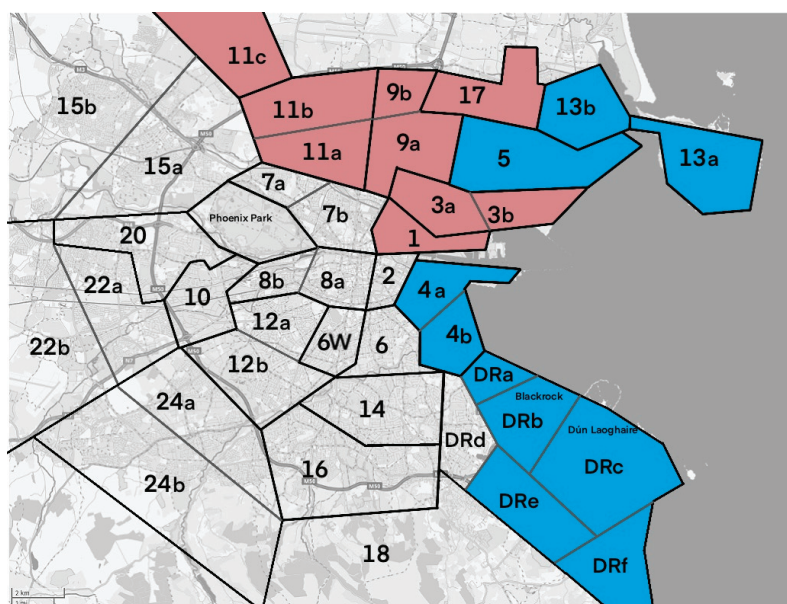
2.4. *The tools used to design the online survey*

When designing an online survey, the type of data collected has to be considered. If this data involves personal data, then the survey tool has to be designed accordingly. The survey on Dublin English involved the collection of minimal demographic information such as age, gender, place of residence and education level. Among the many survey tools available – Sphinx, Survey Monkey, Google Form to name a few – Limesurvey was the online survey tool selected for this study for ethical and scientific reasons. The data collected with Limesurvey is stored on secured European servers, meaning that the personal data collected with Limesurvey falls within the jurisdiction of GDPR²⁷. Collecting personal data in Europe requires storing it on European servers for the data to be covered by GDPR. Compliance with GDPR serves as a protection for the respondents, but also for the researcher. Limesurvey was also chosen for its intuitive interface, and for the many personalisation options it provides. Besides aesthetic considerations, Limesurvey is easily accessible. Its interface was built to adapt to the many devices respondents are likely to use for the completion of the survey, namely their smartphones, tablets and computers.

After processing the data, a digital painting software program, Procreate, was used to model the results. The main advantage of working with an online survey in perceptual dialectology lies in the semi-automation of the data collection process. Moreover, there is no need for maps to be digitized since there are no physical or virtual maps on which respondents can draw. In fact, it is up to the researcher to recreate these maps using the data collected online. The results were transposed using the map provided to the respondents (figure 2). The map below (figure 3) shows an example of a respondent's response.

²⁷ GDPR.eu. "What Is GDPR, the EU's New Data Protection Law?", <https://bit.ly/40FQGW6>, accessed November 7, 2018.

Figure 3. Respondent's response for the revisited draw-a-map task



The main advantage of this method is that it does not require the collection and the combination of hand-drawn maps to elicit the most frequently marked areas of Dublin. Instead, counting and adding the number of times each area was marked by the respondents, and transferring the results on a map is all the researcher has to do.

2.5. Organizing the data

A colour code was assigned to each identified group for distinction and visual purposes. The colour blue always corresponds to group A, the colour red to group B²⁸, etc. The respondent on figure 3 identified two main groups of areas in Dublin: Group A (blue) and Group B (red). This respondent considers one variety is spoken in the southeast and northeast areas, and another one is spoken in the northside of Dublin.

²⁸ Group A corresponds to the first group identified by a given participant, irrespective of the neighborhoods that are included. Group B corresponds to the second group, etc.

Each respondent was assigned a three-part code as follows: id_gender_age. The letters “id” correspond to the order in which the respondents completed the survey. For instance, respondent 3_F_24²⁹ is the third respondent to have completed the survey and is a 24-year-old woman. The codes help distinguish between two respondents of the same age and gender. Individual maps (such as figure 3) were then created for each respondent, and maps representing all the survey responses were created in order to investigate potential differences between areas, but also between women and men. The *pleasantness* and *correctness* results were also modelled on maps (see 3.3).

3. Data, Perceptions and Representations of Dublin English

3.1. Respondents presentation

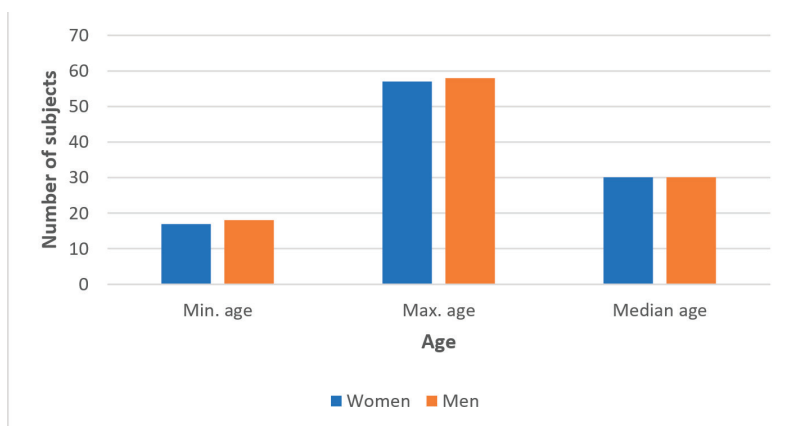
In total, 101 respondents completed the survey. Given the numerous tasks the respondents had to complete, this number of responses is satisfying. The survey was aimed at respondents who were either born and brought up in Dublin and had been living in Dublin for most of their lives, or respondents, preferably from Ireland, who had been living in Dublin for at least 2 years. Among the 101 responses, 28 responses were excluded from the survey, because some tasks were not fully completed by the respondents, which would have compromised data comparability. All in all, the gender distribution of respondents is rather balanced ($p < 0,05$) with 73 responses from 35 women and 38 men retained for the final corpus. However, age distribution is not representative as can be seen in figure 4.

The youngest respondent is 17 and the eldest is 58, the medial age is 30. No data from respondents over 60 was collected. One of the reasons that could account for the lack of data from these respondents is the fact that the online format is not adapted to this part of the population who is not necessarily as keen on using smartphones, computers and tablets as the younger generations.

²⁹ F and M stand for “Woman” and “Man”, from French *Femme* and *Homme*.

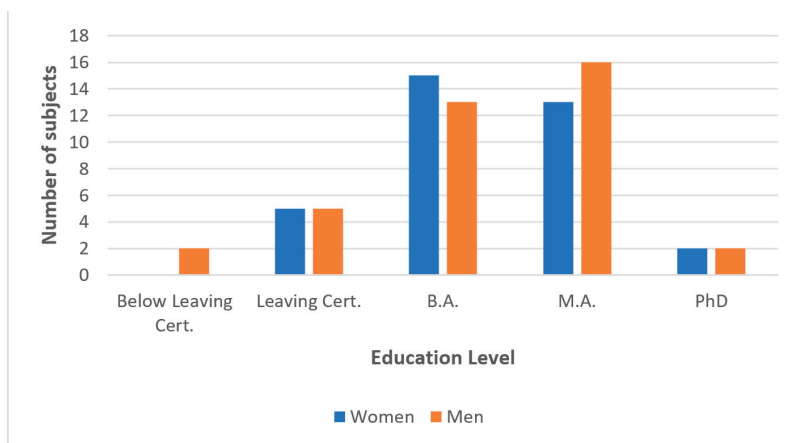
People over 60 represent only 3 % of the total Reddit users³⁰, which would explain the relative absence of data from that part of the population.

Figure 4. Respondent age distribution



The distribution of respondents according to their education level is also rather unbalanced:

Figure 5. Respondent distribution according to their education level



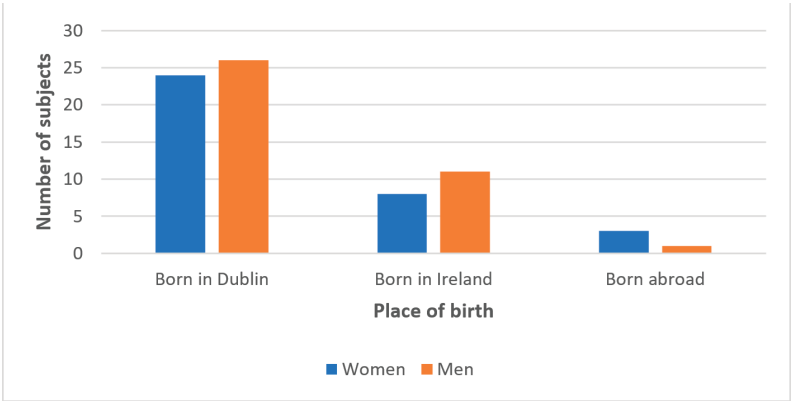
³⁰ Statista, “U.S. Reddit Reach by Age Group 2021”, <https://bit.ly/40Orixu>, accessed September 18, 2021.

Most of the respondents have a level that is equivalent to a B.A. or an M.A., and 4 respondents have a PhD while 10 respondents have an education level equivalent to the Leaving Certificate³¹. Only 2 respondents have a level that is below the Leaving Certificate. Given the highly educated respondents composing most of the corpus, it was decided not to draw any conclusions on perceptions and representations of Dublin English based on education in that all education levels are not represented here.

Most of the respondents were born in Dublin, as can be seen in figure 6.

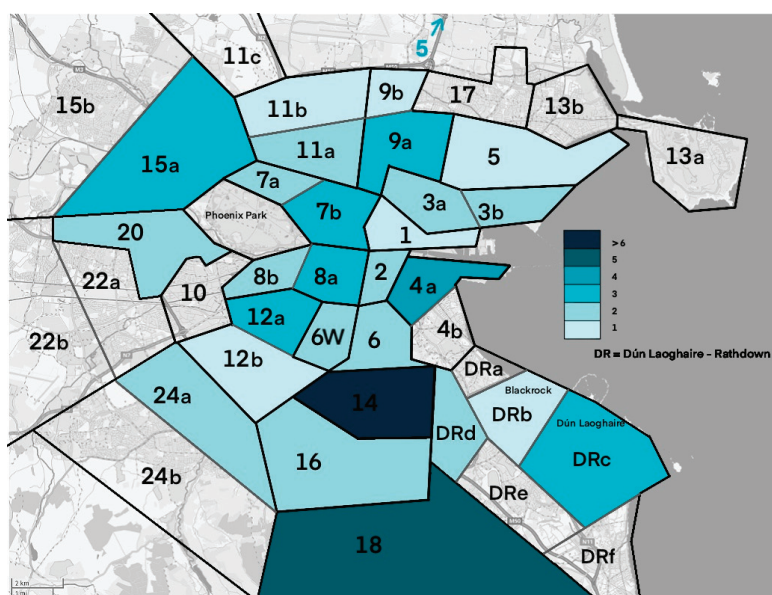
Among the 73 respondents, 19 were born in Ireland and had been living in Dublin for at least 2 years when they completed the survey. A handful of respondents were born abroad but were living in Dublin when they completed the survey.

Figure 6. Respondent distribution according to their place of birth



³¹ For more information on the Leaving Certificate in Ireland, often shortened as “Leaving Cert.”, see Citizeninformation.ie. “Leaving Certificate”, Ireland, 2021, <https://bit.ly/40Gncas>, accessed October 1st, 2021.

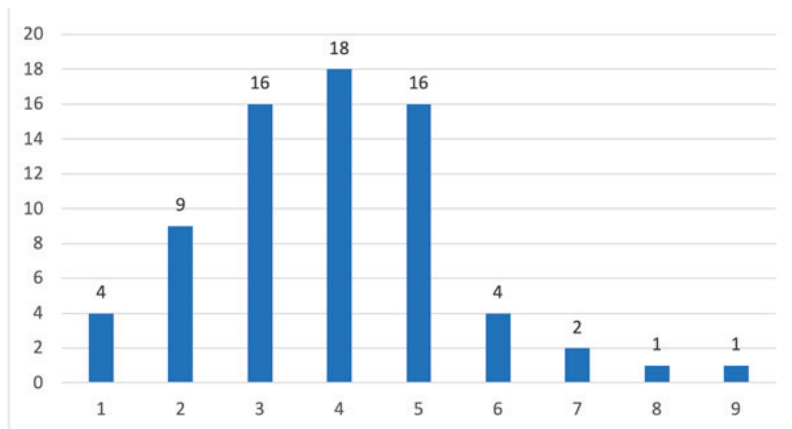
Figure 7. Respondent distribution in Dublin according to their place of birth (the darker the area, the more respondents live in that area)



Finally, figure 7 shows the place of residence of the respondents who completed the survey. Such a distribution is all the more satisfying considering that the respondents were selected randomly from the internet, and came from all over Dublin. The reason why there are more than 6 respondents in D14 who completed the survey is because I lived in this area and had people I know complete the survey. The number “5” at the top of the map indicates that 5 respondents live in an area north of Dublin that is not represented on the map.

3.2. Draw-a-map task responses

Figure 8 shows the number of varieties identified by the respondents. Most respondents identified between 3 and 5 varieties of Dublin English. The highest number of perceived varieties is 9 and the lowest is 1.

Figure 8. Perceived varieties of Dublin English

These results show that there is no clear consensus on the number of varieties spoken in Dublin³². In figure 9, the darker the area, the more frequently the area was marked by the respondents. It is no surprise that, as for Lonergan's results³³, four areas can be distinguished from the rest of the city, in the southeast, southwest, inner city and northwest. Lonergan notes:

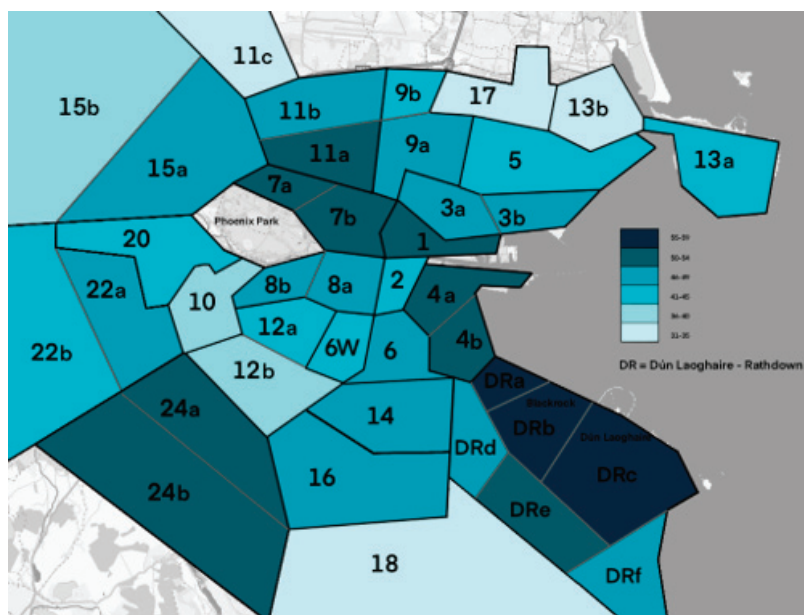
The most frequently marked areas [...] correspond closely to historically and socio-economically distinct communities. Inner city Dublin contains the city's oldest working class communities (Prunty 2001) while suburban northern and southwestern suburbs were settled by late 20th century slum clearance programmes (Horner 1992). In contrast, the city's affluent southeast was developed in the 19th century as middle-class Dubliners moved to the suburbs (Brady 2001). These population movements are reflected in the distribution of social class in modern Dublin. The city's southeast remains predominantly affluent, while serious deprivation exists in parts of its inner city and northern and western suburbs (Haase and Pratschke 2005)³⁴.

³² John Lonergan, "An Acoustic and Perceptual Study of Dublin English Phonology", *op. cit.*, p. 120.

³³ John Lonergan, "Real and Perceived Variation in Dublin English", *op. cit.*; John Lonergan, "An Acoustic and Perceptual Study of Dublin English Phonology", *op. cit.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

Figure 9. Frequency with which districts were marked by respondents (the darker the area, the higher the frequency)



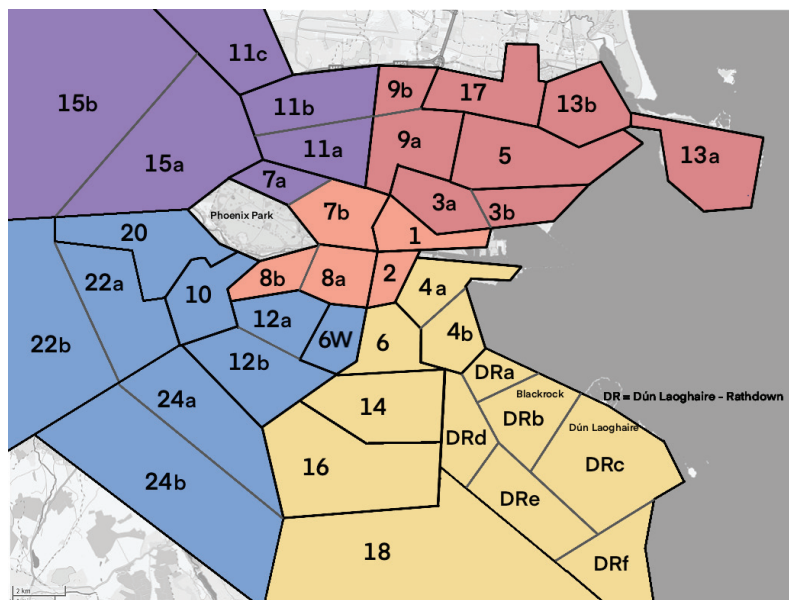
While 11a, 7a, 7b and 1 appear to be one cluster of areas, 11a and 7a (parts of Cabra closer to the northwest) are included in northwest Dublin, and 7b (parts of Cabra closer to the north inner city) and 1 are included in the inner-city area. Figure 10 shows to which broad part of the city the different districts were assigned. Yellow stands for southeast, blue for southwest, purple for northwest, orange for inner city and red for northeast³⁵. Although further subdivisions of Dublin could have been carried out, additional data from each area would have been required to maintain a data sample that was as representative as possible.

It should be noted that no statistical significance was found between variables such as gender and frequency with which each area was marked ($p > 0,05$), or place of birth and frequency with

³⁵ This subdivision was achieved with the help of data provided by “Dublin City Council Administrative Area Maps - Data.Gov.Ie”, <https://bit.ly/47nbUL2>, and by Gallagher Mainard, “Dublin City Boundaries,” <https://bit.ly/40EE1Tf>, accessed October 1st, 2021.

which each area was marked ($p > 0,05$). This is all the more interesting as the results tend to corroborate the fact that, in the case of Dublin, gender has no influence over the perceptions of varieties of Dublin English, and perceptions seems not to be tied to speakers' being born and brought up in Dublin.

Figure 10. District distribution by city area



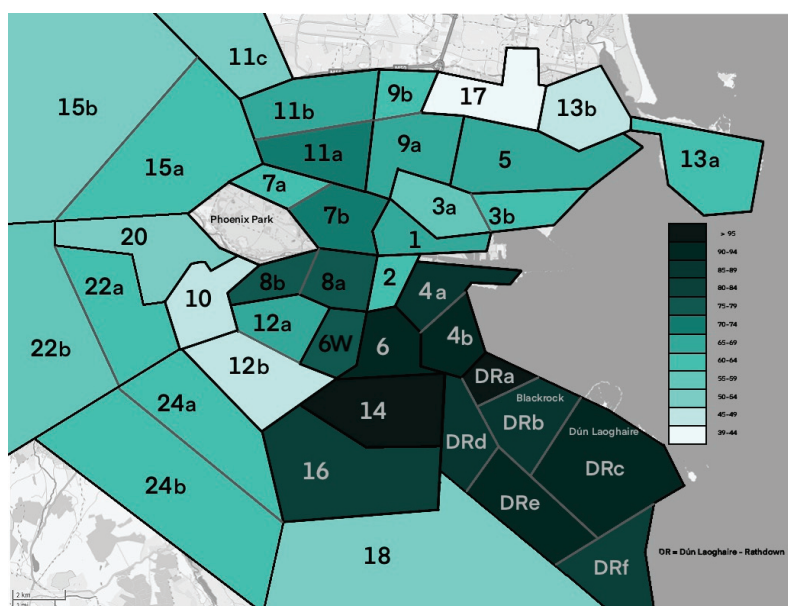
Finally, although the northeast area (especially 13a which corresponds to the Howth peninsula) was not marked as frequently as others, it was decided to add the northeast area to the already existing four marked areas (southeast, southwest, inner-city and northwest). This choice was motivated by the fact that the variety spoken in the Howth peninsula and around was frequently described as “south”/“southside” in the survey and was frequently matched to southeast areas. Is the variety spoken in Howth similar to the southeast variety? Is it different? Conducting a sociolinguistic field study could provide an answer to these questions.

3.3. Pleasantness and Correctness: Results and discussion

As previously mentioned, the results for pleasantness and correctness ratings were processed and modelled into maps. It was found that gender has an influence on the pleasantness and correctness variables ($p < 0,001$), meaning that women and men's ratings are different enough so that there exists a statistically significant difference between them. Figure 11 displays women's pleasantness ratings.

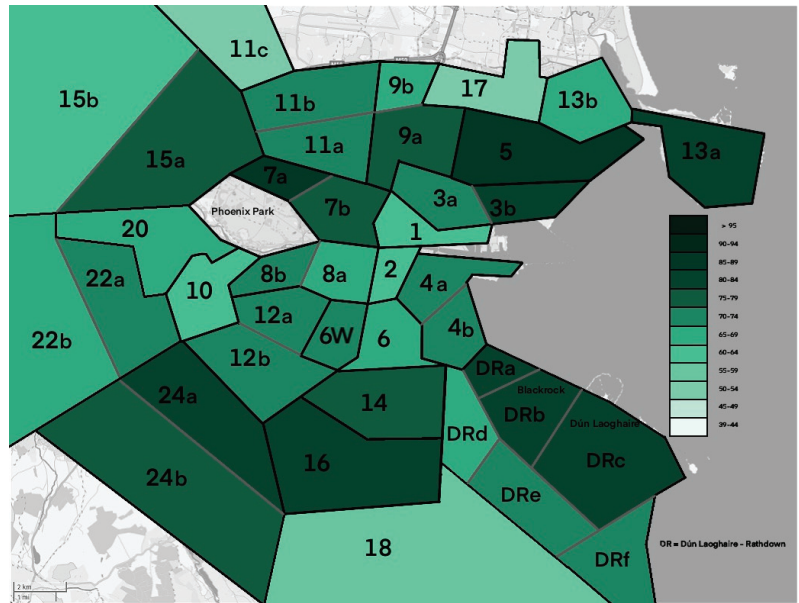
The results in figure 11 show a clear-cut difference between the southeast variety, deemed as the most pleasant by women, and the rest of the city.

Figure 11. Women's pleasantness ratings (the darker the area, the higher the ratings)



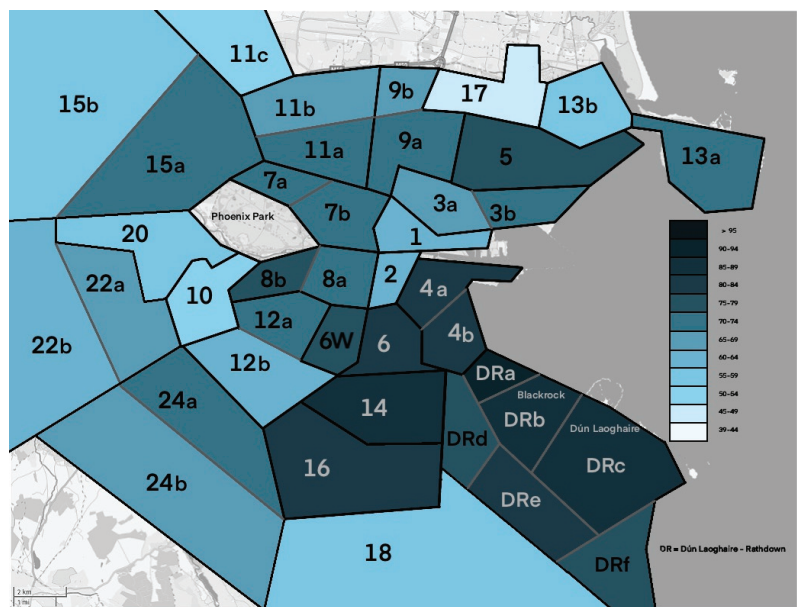
The extreme south (D18) and the western areas are considered as the least pleasant. Men’s pleasantness ratings (figure 12) are quite different from women’s.

Figure 12. Men’s pleasantness ratings (the darker the area, the higher the ratings)



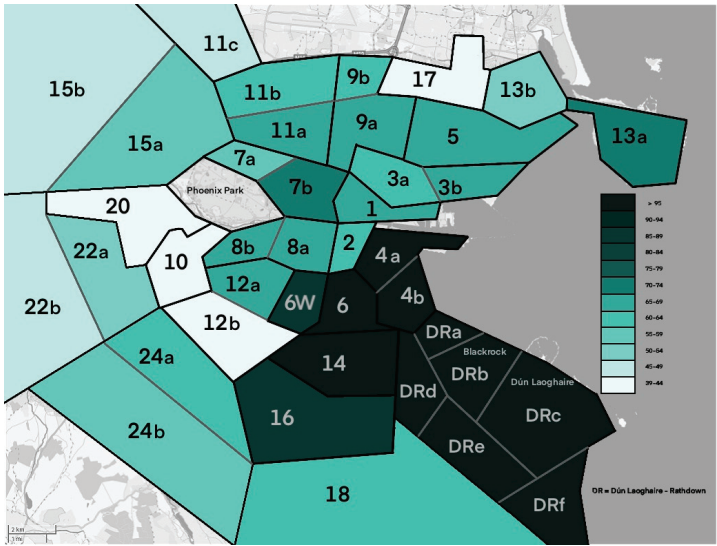
Interestingly, men do not achieve an overwhelming consensus on the southeast area in terms of pleasantness as women do. The results displayed in figure 13 reveal unclear perceptions in terms of pleasantness. However, the inner-city variety is considered as the least pleasant by men. When combining pleasantness ratings from both women and men (figure 13), the southeast area clearly stands out from the lot once again, while D18, the southwest and northwest varieties are considered as the least pleasant. Moreover, figure 13 seems to show a preference for varieties spoken in the easternmost areas of Dublin.

Figure 13. Women and men’s pleasantness ratings (the darker the area, the higher the ratings)



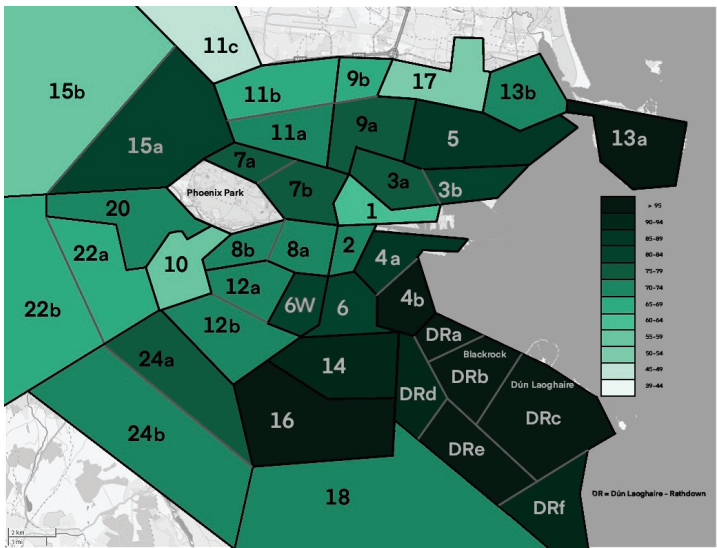
Women’s correctness ratings (figure 14) reveal that the southeast variety enjoys a relatively high prestige compared to the rest of the city.

Figure 14. Women’s correctness ratings (the darker the area, the higher the ratings)



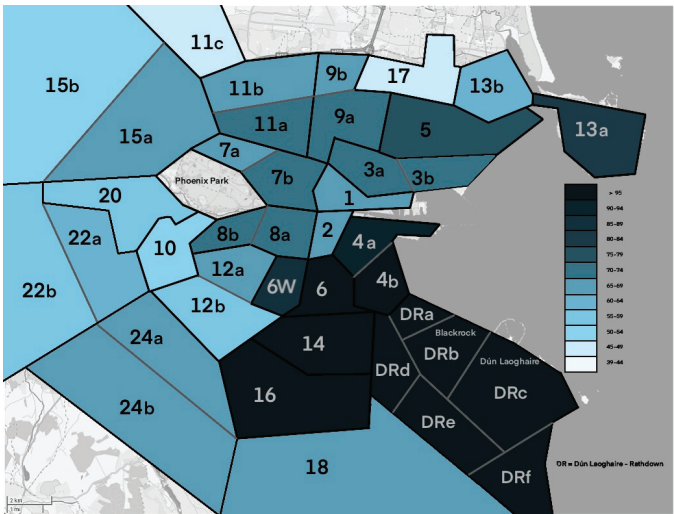
The southeast area was also rated the most correct area by men (figure 15). Areas such as 3b, 5 and 13a were also considered as correct by men. The 15a area was considered among the most correct areas by men, but no satisfactory explanation that could account for such ratings was found.

Figure 15. Men’s correctness ratings (the darker the area, the higher the ratings)



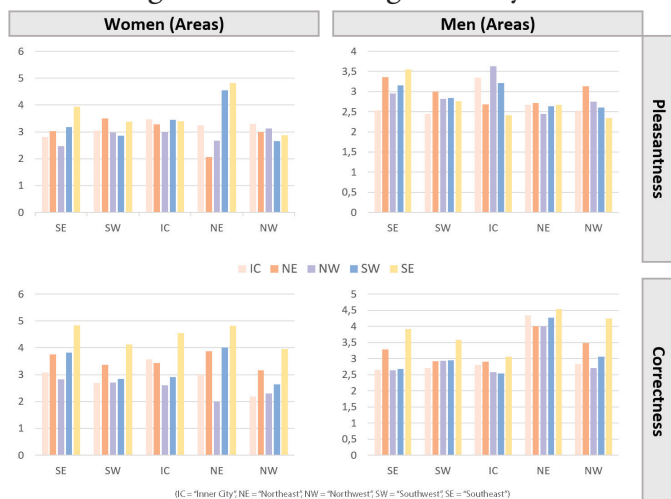
Women and men’s correctness ratings were combined on a single map (figure 16).

Figure 16. Women and men’s correctness ratings (the darker the area, the higher the ratings)



On the one hand, judging from the ratings in figure 16, the southeast variety enjoys the most prestige out of all the perceived varieties of Dublin English. This echoes the relative affluence of the southeast area³⁶. On the other hand, the westernmost varieties are assigned low status by respondents both in terms of pleasantness and correctness. This once again echoes the socioeconomic differences between the areas³⁷. The correctness ratings for the northeast variety display a rather high status nearing that of the southeast variety. Figure 17 shows that the coast area, from the southeast to the northeast, enjoys the highest status in terms of correctness.

Figure 17. Women and men's mean pleasantness and correctness ratings for each area organized by area of residence



³⁶ Overall, the southeast suburbs, and even coastal suburbs, have become increasingly affluent over the years as can be seen on the following interactive map: <https://bit.ly/3SJiZ3N>, accessed October 12, 2021. See also Marion Schulte, "Positive Evaluative Stance and /t/ Friction – a Sociophonetic Analysis of /t/ Realisations in Dublin English," in *Irish Identities: Sociolinguistic Perspectives*, p. 84-103, De Gruyter Mouton, 2020; Niamh Nestor, Caitriona Chasaide, and Vera Regan, "Discourse 'like' and Social Identity – a Case Study of Poles in Ireland," in Bettina Migge, and Máire Ní Chiosáin (eds.), *New Perspectives on Irish English*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2012, p. 348; John Loneran, "Real and Perceived Variation in Dublin English", *op. cit.*; John Loneran, "An Acoustic and Perceptual Study of Dublin English Phonology", *op. cit.*; Raymond Hickey, "The Dublin Vowel Shift and the Historical Perspective", *op. cit.*, p. 9; Stephen Lucek and Victoria Garnett, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

³⁷ John Loneran, "Real and Perceived Variation in Dublin English", *op. cit.*, p. 238.

Pleasantness and correctness ratings were also arranged according to respondent's area of residence. Figure 17 shows that, in terms of pleasantness, only women from the southeast and northeast areas consider the southeast variety as the most pleasant. Interestingly, southwest women rated their own variety as the least pleasant while they rated the northeast variety as the most pleasant. Inner city women rated their own variety as the most pleasant and so did northwest women. The southeast variety is seen as the most pleasant only by southeast men, while other varieties are favoured by men from other areas. The northeast variety is favoured by southwest, northwest, and northeast men, and the northwest varieties is favoured by inner city men.

As for correctness, the southeast variety is overwhelmingly perceived as the most correct by women and men from all areas. The results reveal that although high prestige is evidently associated to the southeast variety, the latter is not particularly seen as a “pleasant” variety. Judging from the results, it turns out that what is seen as correct is not necessarily seen as pleasant.

Lonergan's study revealed that many Dubliners reject high status varieties (that is to say varieties that received high correctness scores), especially those living outside the southeast area³⁸. He notes: “[t]hose varieties that are low in status are often found to be strongly associated with high group solidarity. Conversely, high status is associated with lower group solidarity³⁹”. Negative attitudes towards the high-status southeast variety is also noted by Amador-Moreno: “prescriptive comments such as ‘strong’ or ‘hard’ to describe the north Dublin accent, or ‘posh’, ‘snobbish’, ‘phoney’ to refer to the Southside/Dublin 4 accent, is a good barometer with which to measure non-specialists’ beliefs and attitudes towards the English spoken in Dublin⁴⁰”. Negative comments such as “fake accent” to describe the southeast variety

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁴⁰ Carolina P. Amador-Moreno, “The Language of Irish Writing in English”, in Raymond Hickey (ed.), *Sociolinguistics in Ireland*, London, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016, p. 299.

were also elicited by Lucek and Garnett's study⁴¹. This could account for the high correctness ratings and poor pleasantness ratings for the southeast variety which, although enjoying high status, is also affected by the common negative perceptions associated to high status varieties. On the other hand, the inner-city area, home to "long-established inner-city communities⁴²", enjoys higher pleasantness ratings from inner-city and northwest women, but also from inner-city, northeast, and northwest men.

Finally, the ratings were also organized according to the respondents' age⁴³ (figure 18). The southeast unanimously stands out from the lot in terms of correctness for both women and men. It is followed by the northeast variety deemed the second most correct variety by women and men from all areas. As for pleasantness, the southeast variety is favoured by 17-29 and 40-59 women, and by 40-59 men. The northeast variety enjoys high pleasantness ratings by 17-29 and 40-59 men, and by 40-59 women. The results suggest that women almost always deem the southeast variety as the most pleasant⁴⁴, while the younger men deem it the least pleasant variety.

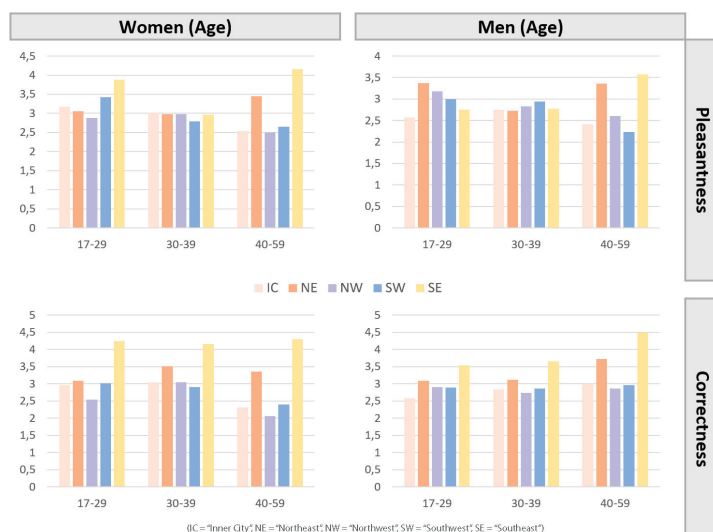
⁴¹ Stephen Lucek, and Victoria Garnett, *op. cit.*, p. 119-120.

⁴² John Lonergan, "Real and Perceived Variation in Dublin English", *op. cit.*, p. 233.

⁴³ The reason why there is a "17-29" age group is because there were three respondents aged 17, 18 and 19 who completed the survey. The other 34 respondents in this group are between 20 and 29. It was decided to group respondents between 40 and 59 together, as only 7 women and 6 men were between those ages. Eleven women and 15 men were between 30 and 39.

⁴⁴ The pleasantness ratings for 30-39 women were almost equally ranked. The lack of distinction between the five varieties could be explained by the lack of representativity of 30-39 respondents from the five broad areas of Dublin.

Figure 18. Women and men’s mean pleasantness and correctness ratings for each area by age group



3.4. Discussion

It should be noted that respondents from the five areas (IC, NE, NW, SW, SE) are not equally represented in each age group. The three age groups are also unbalanced regarding the number of respondents. Consequently, these results might only reflect a tendency but not the actual perceptions of 17-29, 30-39 and 40-60-year-old Dubliners. The same goes for representativity in terms of area of residence. It could be argued that the ratings (figure 17) according to the respondents’ area of residence reveal a “great deal of” linguistic security and insecurity. Preston remarks:

Respondents from areas with a great deal of linguistic security rate the local area as uniquely correct, but they include a larger region in the area they consider most pleasant; respondents from areas of linguistic insecurity rate the local area as most pleasant, but they rate a number of areas as most correct. Respondents from areas of high linguistic security often find the same areas to be least correct and least pleasant; respondents from areas of high linguistic insecurity often find different areas least pleasant and least correct⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ Dennis R. Preston, *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, op. cit., p. xxxiv.

The ratings (figure 17) suggest that southeast respondents ranked their own variety as the most correct and the most pleasant, which denotes linguistic security. Respondents from the other areas rated the southeast variety as the most correct, but they almost never consider it as the most pleasant (except for northeast women). Apart from southeast respondents, northeast men and inner-city women, the respondents rated a variety that is not spoken in their area of residence as most pleasant. The results seem to show that these respondents might feel linguistically insecure.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to investigate Dubliners' perceptions of Dublin English through pleasantness and correctness results and to demonstrate that conducting an online perceptual study is indeed possible. The Covid-19 pandemic gave few options to those who wanted to conduct field studies in 2020. This was the main reason behind the selection of an online format for the perceptual study presented in this paper. Nonetheless, despite the difficulties posed by the transposition of the draw-a-map task, the results found in this study corroborate Lonergan's for the most part. Four perceived varieties were identified thanks to the draw-a-map task, and it was decided to add a fifth variety, in the northeast, to the overall analysis of perceptions of Dublin English in terms of pleasantness and correctness given the frequent associations of the Howth area (and around) with the southeast area in the draw-a-map results.

The quantitative results presented in this paper suggest that the southeast variety is perceived as the most correct, but not necessarily as the most pleasant, which tends to highlight the fact that what is seen as correct is not always seen as pleasant. The results also suggest what Preston describes as linguistic security, for the southeast respondents, and linguistic insecurity, for the other respondents. At first glance, the results suggest a north/

south split. However, as Lonergan⁴⁶ notes in his study, the “perceived north/south split in Dublin English is highly misleading”. It was observed that, in terms of correctness, the main distinction made by respondents does not correspond to the stereotypical north/south split; instead, it rather hints at an east/west split. Interestingly, this east/west split not only exhibits a linguistic divide, but also a socioeconomic distinction, as the coastal part of Dublin has become increasingly affluent over the years⁴⁷.

It should be kept in mind that these results showcase what could be considered as a “tendency” among Dubliners’ perceptions in terms of pleasantness and correctness. This study would benefit from additional data from a more balanced number of respondents of various ages and from various areas.

The paper focused on the quantitative aspect of the pleasantness and correctness results gathered in the online study, and there is still much to say about respondents’ metalinguistic perceptions, but this could not be developed in the present paper for length reasons. Further research will be dedicated to respondents’ descriptions of perceived varieties to compare the present quantitative results to more qualitative results.

⁴⁶ John Lonergan, “An Acoustic and Perceptual Study of Dublin English Phonology”, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

⁴⁷ Cf “Dublin City Council Administrative Area Maps, *op. cit.*, and Gallagher Mainard, *op. cit.*

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