

Irish Dialect – Chief Characteristics

Adapted from Stern, David Alan. Acting With An Accent: Irish

For more in-depth study, see Stern's CD and booklet

GENERAL FOCUS OF TONE: Two to three inches outside of the lips; muscular speech impulse

For some audio examples from I.D.E.A.:

Galway: <http://web.ku.edu/~idea/europe/ireland/ireland6.mp3>

VOWEL SUBSTITUTIONS:

a	goes to	a	<i>father, on, hot, ark, calm, stop</i> <i>Father Charles argued for the honor of God.</i>
æ	tends towards	a	<i>man, basket castle, answer</i> <i>The soprano laughed as the glass shattered.</i>
ɔ	tends towards	a	<i>off, awful, sauce, hawk, morning</i> <i>The cat crawled across the lawn after it pawed the thorn.</i>
ɔi	tends towards	ai	<i>loin, moisture, point, coiled</i> <i>In his toil, he hoisted the soybeans from the soil.</i>
ə and ʌ	go to	ʊ	<i>blood, governor, puddle, other hunt</i> <i>The stuntman stumbles and tumbles in the mud.</i>
ai	goes to	əoi	<i>find, likely, lifetime, dry, fight</i> <i>The actor recited ironic rhymes of an ionic kind.</i>
au	goes to	əou	<i>town, house, mouse, vow, trounce, abound</i> <i>The cloud's shower doused the cow.</i>
i	goes to	ei	<i>tea, beat, receive, deal, conceive</i> <i>For tea, meat and cheese were served under the tree.</i>
ɛ	when it comes before m, n, or v goes to	ɪ	<i>ten, cents, never, devil, emblem, twenty, generation</i> <i>The twenty cemetery plots gave the gravedigger a devilish time.</i>
o	is spoken with very rounded lips	o	<i>go, home, over, solo</i> <i>Joe was going home so he could roam no more.</i>

VOWEL VARIATIONS WITHIN THE IRISH “LILT”

The following vowels and diphthongs are spoken with a downward inflection:

ei *take, baby, rainfall, stray, fateful*

oʊ *oldest, open, boat growing, over*

u *food, troupe, loosely, juicy, spoon*

θ goes to

a dentalized ʈ *think, thirty, thousand, thoughtful*

plosives t, d,

p, b are aspirated *people, tea, drink, baby*

ISOLATED CHANGES:

Sometimes (but not educated Irish speech), words that end in ɪŋ go to ɪn

DRILLS:

MY WILD IRISH ROSE

My wild Irish Rose,
the sweetest flower that grows,
You may search everywhere,
But none can compare
with my wild Irish Rose.

My wild Irish Rose,
The dearest flower that grows,
And some day for my sake,
She may let me take
A bloom from my wild Irish Rose.

MOLLY MALONE (COCKLES AND MUSSELS)

In Dublin’s fair city where girls are so pretty,
Twas there I first saw my sweet Molly Malone.
She wheeled her wheelbarrow
Through streets broad and narrow,
crying “Cockles and mussels, alive, alive-O.”

She was a fishmonger, but sure was no wonder
For so were here father and mother before.
They each wheeled a barrow
Through streets broad and narrow,
Crying "Cockles and mussels, alive, alive-o."