# CHAPTER II

# LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explains the theoretical foundations that support this research. It presents key concepts in phonetics and phonology, focusing on the phonetic features that distinguish British and Irish English Accents.

## 2.1 Theoretical Framework

To effectively examine the phonetic differences between the British and Irish members of One Direction in *This Is Us* (2013), this research requires a strong theoretical foundation. Key linguistic theories in phonetics and phonology will guide the analysis, particularly those related to regional accent variation in English.

### 2.1.1 Phonetics and Phonology in Linguistics

According to Yule (2020), Phonetics and phonology are two branches of linguistics that focus on the study of speech sounds. While phonetics deals with the physical production, transmission, and perception of speech sounds, phonology is concerned with how these sounds function within a particular language or dialect This research draws heavily on phonetic analysis, particularly auditory phonetics and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), to examine how regional accent features appear in spontaneous speech.

David Crystal’s (2003) concept of Accent and Identity in Global English is also relevant to this research. According to Crystal, accents are not merely variations in pronunciation, they serve as markers of identity, reflecting the speaker’s regional, social, and cultural background. In the context of One Direction, a globally recognized band, their accents contribute to their public identity and the way audiences perceive their personalities and origins. This theory supports the sociolinguistic significance of examining how each member’s accent reflects their regional and national identities.

In the context of this research, phonetics will be applied to analyze the pronunciation differences among the British and Irish members of One Direction, focusing on phonetic transcription rather than acoustic analysis. This approach aligns with previous studies on accent variation, such as Wells (1982), who categorized English accents based on phonological features, including vowel shifts and consonant modifications. By employing phonetic transcription, this study aims to systematically document the accent features present in *This Is Us* (2013), ensuring an objective comparison of linguistic differences.

### 2.1.2 British and Irish Accents

English accents show a wide range of variation, especially between British and Irish speakers. According to Trudgill (1999, p. 18), British English consists of several regional varieties, each with different ways of pronouncing vowels and consonants. In a similar way, Irish English, also known as Hiberno-English, has its own unique phonetic features that have developed through historical contact with the Irish language and other regional influences (Hickey, 2007, p. 26). Since each One Direction member comes from a different part of the UK or Ireland, their speech gives a great example of how these accent differences appear in real-life media.

To explain how vowel sounds differ, this study uses the lexical set framework by Wells (1982). This framework groups words with similar vowel sounds into sets such as TRAP, BATH, STRUT, and FOOT. It helps us compare how the same words are pronounced differently by speakers from different regions. For example, some British speakers may say words in the BATH set with a long /ɑː/ sound, while others use the short /æ/. Likewise, in the STRUT and FOOT sets, some accents clearly separate the two vowels while others pronounce them the same. This system makes it easier to track consistent accent patterns.

When analyzing Irish English, the research refers to Hickey’s (2007) phonological framework. Hickey describes Irish English as typically rhotic, meaning that the /r/ sound is pronounced clearly even at the end of words. He also explains that Irish English does not usually show glottalization and often has distinct vowel qualities compared to British English.

All pronunciation features are transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) for clarity and consistency. The main theoretical reference remains Wells (1982, p. 351), which gives detailed descriptions of how vowel and consonant sounds are realized in both British and Irish varieties of English.

### 2.1.3 Phonetic and Phonological Features in Regional Accents

To systematically compare the accents of One Direction members, this study focuses on specific phonetic and phonological features that are commonly used to distinguish British and Irish English.

**TRAP-BATH Split:** The difference in how words like “bath” and “dance” are pronounced, either with the short vowel /æ/ or the long vowel /ɑː/. According to Wells (1982), this feature varies across regions in the UK and Ireland. In this study, the members’ pronunciations of words from this lexical set will be examined to see which vowel they use.

**STRUT-FOOT** **Split**: The difference between /ʌ/ and /ʊ/, which varies between accents (Wells, 1982; Trudgill & Hannah, 2017). This split involves the contrast between the vowels /ʌ/ and /ʊ/, such as in “cup” and “put.” Some accents clearly separate the two sounds, while others merge them. As Wells (1982) and Trudgill & Hannah (2017) explain, the presence or absence of this distinction helps reveal the speaker’s regional background. This study observes whether members use these vowels distinctly or not.

**Glottalization**: The replacement of the /t/ sound with a glottal stop [ʔ], often heard in casual British English varieties. For example, “butter” may be pronounced as [ˈbʌʔə]. This feature, discussed by Fabricius (2000), will be identified in the members’ speech to see how frequently it occurs and in which positions.

**H-Dropping**: The omission of the /h/ sound at the beginning of words like “house” or “have.” As Wells (1982) notes, this feature is often found in regional British English accents. This research explores whether the band members tend to drop /h/ in informal speech.

**Rhoticity:** The pronunciation of /r/ as in car or for. varies significantly across English accents. British English accents, especially those influenced by Received Pronunciation (RP), are generally non-rhotic, meaning the final /r/ is silent unless followed by a vowel. In contrast, Irish English (or Hiberno-English) is typically rhotic, pronouncing /r/ in all positions (Hickey, 2007). This study pays special attention to Niall Horan’s speech to highlight how rhoticity reflects his Irish identity.

Phonetic features such as the TRAP-BATH split, STRUT-FOOT split, glottalization, and h-dropping and rhoticity are common variables that distinguish regional accents. These features are central to this research’s analysis of the speech of One Direction members.

Peter Trudgill (1999), through his Sociolinguistic Variation Theory, emphasizes how linguistic features such as glottal stops and h-dropping are shaped by social and regional factors. According to Trudgill, these features not only reflect the speaker’s regional background but also index their social class and context of formality. This theory is relevant to the analysis of One Direction’s spontaneous speech in *This Is Us* (2013), where informal interactions make these sociolinguistic markers more salient.

These phonetic and phonological characteristics will serve as the primary parameters for analyzing the speech of One Direction members in *This Is Us* (2013). Given that phonetic variation is influenced by multiple linguistic and social factors, this study will ensure that the analysis is conducted within the appropriate theoretical framework.

Table 2. 1 Phonological Features across British English and Irish English Accents

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Phonological Feature** | **British English** | **Irish English** |
| TRAP–BATH Split | Present.  BATH words use /ɑː/. Example: bath = /bɑːθ/  (Wells, 1982, p. 286) | Absent.  BATH words use /a/. Example: bath = /baθ/ (Hickey, 2007, p. 86) |
| STRUT vs FOOT | Distinct.  luck = /lʌk/, look = /lʊk/ (Wells, 1982, p. 132) | STRUT sounds closer to /ʊ/.  Example: strut = /strʊt/ (Hickey, 2007, p. 100) |
| Glottalization of /t/ | Common in informal speech.  Example: bottle = /ˈbɒʔl/ (Fabricius, 2002, p. 117) | Generally absent.  Example: little = /ˈlɪtəl/ (Hickey, 2007, p. 94) |
| H-dropping | Frequently occurs.  Example: house = /aʊs/ (Hughes et al., 2012, p. 78) | Rare. /h/ usually pronounced.  Example: house = /haʊs/ (Hickey, 2007, p. 97) |
| Rhoticity | Non-rhotic, final /r/ often silent.  Example: car = /kɑː/ (Wells, 1982, p. 234) | Rhotic. Final /r/ pronounced.  Example: car = /kɑːr/ (Hickey, 2007, p. 62) |

British and Irish English are not the same. Instead, they include a range of regional accents shaped by geography, history, and social identity. As Wells (1982) notes, these varieties can be analyzed systematically using features like vowel shifts, glottalization, h-dropping, and rhoticity. This section simplifies the focus into two broad varieties: British English and Irish English (Hiberno-English).

To give real-life support to the constructed examples in this research, this study uses phonetic data from “The Rainbow Passage,” a well-known text often used in accent analysis. The recordings come from the International Dialects of English Archive (IDEA), using the England 1 and Ireland 1 samples. Since both speakers read the same passage, their speech can be fairly compared.

The sentence chosen for this example is: “The rainbow had gold, but no one ever found it.” This sentence includes several words that clearly show the phonetic features examined in this study. These include the TRAP–BATH distinction (e.g., in the word “had”), the STRUT–FOOT distinction (e.g., “but”), how the /t/ sound is pronounced, whether the /h/ sound in “had” is dropped or not, and whether the /r/ sound is heard in words like “ever” or “rainbow.”

The table below presents a summary of these phonological features based on the recordings.

Table 2. 2 Phonological Feature in the Sentence “The rainbow had gold, but no one ever found it.”

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Accent** | **TRAP-BATH** | **STRUT-FOOT** | **Glottalization** | **H-dropping** | **Rhoticity** | **IPA**  **Transcription** |
| British English | /æ/ in had | /ʌ/ in but | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  |  |  | Glottal [ʔ] possible in “but” and “found it” | | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  |  |  |  | /h/ may be dropped | | Non-rhotic: /r/ not heard in “ever” and “rainbow” | ˈɹeɪnbəʊ hæd ɡəʊld bʌʔ nəʊ wʌn ˈɛvə faʊnd ɪʔ |
| Irish English | |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | /æ/ in had | | /ʌ/ in but | Clear [t] in “but” and “found it” | /h/ pronounced clearly | Rhotic: /r/ heard in “ever” and “rainbow” | ˈɹeɪnbəʊ hæd ɡəʊld bʌt noʊ wʌn ˈɛvɚ faʊnd ɪt |

In the British recording (England 1), the pronunciation displays classic features of Southern British English, including non-rhoticity, slight glottalization of /t/, and possible /h/ reduction. The Irish recording (Ireland 1) shows clear /t/ articulation, pronounced /r/ sounds, and no h-dropping, aligning with Hickey’s (2007) description of Hiberno-English.

By referencing authentic samples from IDEA, this subchapter supports the validity of regional phonetic distinctions discussed in the main analysis. It also shows how real speakers from Britain and Ireland naturally display the segmental features analyzed in the speech of One Direction members.

### 2.1.4 One Direction Group Background and Media Presence

One Direction is a British-Irish boy band. They were formed during the seventh season of The X Factor in July 23, 2010. The group, which includes Harry Styles, Niall Horan, Louis Tomlinson, Liam Payne, and Zayn Malik, auditioned as a solo act. Still, the judges later brought them together to make a band. Even though they didn't win the competition, they were very popular with fans, quickly leading to business success. One Direction signed a recording contract with Simon Cowell's label Syco Music soon after winning The X Factor. This was the start of their worldwide success in the pop music business.

When the band's first album, Up All Night, came out in 2011, they became famous worldwide. After that, records like Take Me Home (2012), Midnight Memories (2013), and Four (2014) were all big hits in the music business. One Direction was one of the most popular bands of the 2010s, breaking many records in the UK, the US, and other places. They were known for their lively shows and broad appeal among teens. Many of their songs were written by famous producers, and they have a wide range of fans, often called "Directioners." Their songs are a mix of upbeat pop hits and emotionally powerful ballads.

One Direction is unique in linguistics, phonetics, and phonology studies because they are well-known as individual speakers in the global media. In many musical groups, singing is more important than natural speech. However, One Direction's English speaking was emphasised in many interviews, films, and fan videos. Morgan Spurlock directed their 2013 documentary This Is Us, which included many unscripted videos of each member talking to each other. This made it possible to look at their regional accents, phonological features, and patterns of English usage.

The group's linguistic diversity is fascinating because the members come from various places. Liam Payne is from the West Midlands, Zayn Malik is from Bradford (Yorkshire), Harry Styles and Louis Tomlinson are from Cheshire and Doncaster, and Niall Horan is from Mullingar, Ireland. These regional roots create different types of English, such as Northern English, Midlands English, speech affected by the estuary, and Hiberno-English. This makes their everyday speech a rich source for studying sociophonetics. This difference shows how dialectal maintenance and identity change in media settings with much exposure.

Overall, One Direction has more of an effect on culture than just music. They show how regional accents stay the same, change, or adapt to global pop culture. The fact that they are heard on international stages, especially in documentaries, makes it possible to look closely at how phonological variation works in mediated speech. Therefore, listening to and analysing their speech provides a unique chance to explore the interconnections between language, media, and identity, which is in line with the fundamental ideas of global English and sociophonetics.

### 2.1.5 Regional Backgrounds of One Direction Members

The members of One Direction come from different linguistic backgrounds, making them ideal subjects for studying accent variation. The following outlines the linguistic origins of each member:

- Harry Styles (Cheshire, England) typically exhibits features of Northern English and Estuary English, with potential glottalization and vowel fronting.

- Liam Payne (West Midlands, England) has speech characteristics influenced by the Midlands accent, which tends to retain clear /t/ pronunciations and lacks the TRAP-BATH split.

- Louis Tomlinson (South Yorkshire, England) speaks with a Northern English accent, which commonly retains short vowels and avoids the TRAP-BATH split.

-Zayn Malik (Bradford, England) has a Yorkshire accent with noticeable phonetic traits, including the retention of clear /t/ sounds and occasional vowel shifts.

-Niall Horan (Mullingar, Ireland) represents Irish English pronunciation, particularly in vowel sounds and rhoticity.

Analyzing their speech in *This Is Us* (2013) will provide real-world data on accent variation within a popular media context, following previous linguistic research on celebrity speech (Coupland, 2007). Given that these members frequently interact in both scripted and unscripted conversations, this study will focus on naturally occurring speech patterns rather than pre-rehearsed lines.

### 2.1.6 Documentary as a Linguistic Data Source

Documentary films serve as a valuable resource in linguistic research, offering authentic and spontaneous speech data that reflect real-life language use. Unlike scripted films, documentaries capture natural interactions, making them ideal for analyzing phonetic and phonological features. As Himmelmann (1998) notes, documentary linguistics involves compiling and presenting a representative corpus of primary language data, which can be effectively sourced from documentary films.

**a. Definition and Characteristics of Documentary Films**

Documentary films are non-fictional motion pictures intended to document reality, primarily for instruction, education, or maintaining a historical record. They are characterized by their focus on real events, people, and places, often utilizing interviews, voice-over narration, and on-location recordings to convey their message. According to Nichols (2001), documentaries are distinct from other film types due to their subjects, purposes, forms, production methods, and the experiences they offer audiences. This authenticity makes them a rich source for linguistic analysis, as they present language in its natural context.

**b. Phonetic and Phonological Aspects in Documentary Films**

The unscripted nature of documentaries provides linguists with access to genuine speech patterns, essential for studying phonetic and phonological phenomena. Documentaries capture a range of linguistic features, including regional accents, offering insights into how language is used across different contexts and communities. As noted by Woodbury (2011), documentary linguistics focuses on creating lasting records of languages and their use, which can be facilitated through the analysis of documentary films. By examining these films, researchers can observe naturalistic speech, allowing for the analysis of phonemes, allophones, and other phonological and phonetic elements as they occur in everyday communication.

**c. *This Is Us* (2013) as a Phonetic Study Object**

The documentary *This Is Us* (2013) offers a unique opportunity to study the phonetic characteristics of One Direction's British and Irish members. The members' spontaneous speeches in various contexts are captured in the film, including both on-stage performances and off-stage conversations. Examining regional accents and phonetic characteristics unique to their languages can be accomplished with the help of this authentic data. Using this documentary, the researcher will investigate how each member's speech reflects their regional background. This will contribute to a more in-depth comprehension of the phonetic variance within the United Kingdom and Ireland.

In conclusion, documentaries like This Is Us are great and genuine resources for linguistic research. In contrast to scripted interviews or rehearsed dialogues, documentaries record spontaneous, unscripted speech that showcases the speaker's authentic accent, pronunciation, and linguistic diversity. The documentary style captures emotional details, casual contacts, and identity expression, essential for comprehending accents' social and phonetic roles. Linguistic studies utilising documentary materials are methodologically solid and genuinely insightful in depicting actual language use across various places, speakers, and settings.

## 2.2 Previous Study

Several previous studies have examined phonetic aspects and accent variations in English, which serve as relevant references for analyzing the phonetic differences between British and Irish accents among One Direction members in This Is Us (2013).

One relevant study is Mukminatun’s (2010) research titled “Analysis of Regional Dialects in English: Variations in Word Pronunciation by Nine Native Speakers.” This study analyzes pronunciation variations in English spoken by native speakers from different regions, including England and Ireland. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the study examines recordings of nine native speakers to identify differences in vowel and consonant pronunciation. The findings reveal significant pronunciation differences that may affect cross-dialect comprehension. This study provides empirical evidence of pronunciation differences between British and Irish accents, which is relevant for comparing the speech patterns of One Direction members through phonetic transcription using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

Additionally, the study by Anugrah, Sudana, and Wirza (2020), titled “Segmental Phonetic Analysis of English Pronunciation Intelligibility Among Non-Native English Teachers,” contributes to phonetic analysis in language learning. This study employs segmental phonetic analysis to examine the clarity of English pronunciation by non-native teachers. The findings reveal variations in the articulation of certain sounds, affecting pronunciation clarity and listener comprehension. This study provides insights into the importance of clear articulation in English pronunciation, which can be compared to the speech of One Direction members in This Is Us, particularly in identifying phonetic differences between British and Irish accents.

Another relevant study is Aziez and Sofianalianeta’s (2021) research titled “Deep in the Diphthong Problem: A Study on Indonesian EFL Learners’ Pronunciation.” This study investigates the challenges faced by English learners in pronouncing diphthongs using descriptive statistical analysis and regression analysis. The findings indicate that learners often struggle to improve their diphthong pronunciation, highlighting the need for more effective teaching methods in phonetics. Although this study focuses on English learners rather than native speakers, its findings offer valuable insights into the complexity of diphthong pronunciation, which can be applied when analyzing the distinct diphthong realizations in British and Irish accents among One Direction members.

Another relevant study is by Kamilah et al. (2024), titled “The Influence of British English Accents in Harry Potter Movies as a Learning Tool for English Language Acquisition,” explores whether exposure to British accents in films can assist students in learning English. Through qualitative analysis using student questionnaires, the study finds that most students believe British accents in films help them understand accent variations and improve their pronunciation. These findings suggest that popular media can be an effective tool for understanding accent diversity. This study is relevant to the current research, as the documentary This Is Us also serves as a form of media that showcases British and Irish accent differences, offering insights into how these accents are perceived by a global audience.

Finally, the study by Faltis et al. (2024), titled “Acquisition of the Inter-Dental Fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ in ESL/EFL and Jamaican Creole.” This study explicitly refers to Wells’s (1982) framework and explores segmental variation in the pronunciation of interdental fricatives across different varieties of English. While the main focus isn’t specifically on British or Irish accents, the study still aligns closely with the spirit of this research because it applies a similar variationist phonetic approach. Faltis et al. show that the way /θ/ and /ð/ are pronounced isn’t random, it actually follows patterns shaped by the speakers’ linguistic and geographic backgrounds. This supports the basic assumption in my study: that phonetic differences, such as those found among One Direction members, can be analyzed systematically using established linguistic theories. In that sense, their research strengthens the theoretical foundation for examining segmental features like glottalization, vowel shifts, and rhoticity as meaningful indicators of English accent variation.

The five studies above contribute to the understanding of phonetic and accent variations in English, focusing on pronunciation differences and listener perception. While no previous studies have specifically compared British and Irish accents in the context of This Is Us (2013), these studies provide a theoretical foundation for analyzing phonetic transcription data from One Direction members. Therefore, this research aims to fill the gap by providing a focused comparative analysis of British and Irish phonetic differences in popular media.

Table 2. 3 Comparison of The Studies

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Researcher** | **Research Title** | **Research**  **Objective** | **Research Method** | **Research**  **Findings** | **Differences** |
| Mukminatun (2010) | Analysis of Regional Dialects in English: Variations in Word Pronunciation by Nine Native Speakers | To analyze pronunciation variations among native English speakers from different regions, including England and Ireland. | Qualitative descriptive analysis of recorded speech from nine native speakers. | Identified significant pronunciation differences in vowels and consonants across regional accents. | Focuses on general regional dialect variations, while this research specifically compares British and Irish accents in *This Is Us (2013).* |
| Anugrah, Sudana, & Wirza (2020) | Segmental Phonetic Analysis of English Pronunciation Intelligibility Among Non-Native English Teachers | To examine pronunciation clarity among non-native English teachers using segmental phonetic analysis. | Phonetic analysis of pronunciation features affecting intelligibility. | Found articulation variations that impacted pronunciation clarity and listener comprehension. | Analyzes non-native English speakers, while this research focuses on native British and Irish speakers. |
| Aziez & Sofianalianeta (2021) | Deep in the Diphthong Problem: A Study on Indonesian EFL Learners’ Pronunciation | To investigate the challenges in pronouncing diphthongs among Indonesian EFL learners. | Descriptive statistical analysis and regression analysis. | Found that learners struggled with diphthong pronunciation, highlighting its complexity. | Focuses on EFL learners, while this research analyzes natural diphthong pronunciation among native British and Irish speakers. |
| Kamilah et al. (2024) | The Influence of British English Accents in Harry Potter Movies as a Learning Tool for English Language Acquisition | To examine how exposure to British accents in films helps students learn English. | Qualitative analysis through student questionnaires. | Found that British accents in films helped learners understand accent variations and pronunciation. | Explores media influence on language learning, while this research focuses on a phonetic comparison of British and Irish accents in *This Is Us (2013).* |
| Faltis et al. (2024) | Acquisition of the Inter-Dental Fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ in ESL/EFL and Jamaican Creole | To analyze how interdental fricatives are acquired and pronounced in different English varieties | Comparative phonetic analysis | Found consistent variation across dialects and learner backgrounds, influenced by regional norms | Focuses on /θ/ and /ð/ sounds in Jamaican Creole and ESL learners, while this research covers broader phonetic features in British/Irish native accents (glottalization, TRAP-BATH, etc.) |