Irish Accent 101:

I. Structures in the Mouth (Oral Cavity) and Throat (larynx) you should know:

Tongue:

slight changes in movement make big differences in speech sound production advancement and retraction of the tongue will help us change our accent

alveolar ridge:

ridges on hard palate right behind upper central incisors

soft palate/velum:

posterior to the hard palate (upper jaw/maxilla)

two relevant point for accent modification: when we retract the tongue to modify some sounds, we want to move the tongue body toward the velum, and certain sounds are less “nasal”, meaning that the velum stays elevated during production of those sounds

larynx: cartilage that houses the vocal chords (folds)

II. Terminology related to speech sound production that you should know:

Segmentals are phonemes: consonant and vowel sounds of any given language. Diphthongs are a certain kind of vowel – the articulators move during the

Many consonants and vowels exist in other languages that don’t exist in English and vice versa. Those who study speech production use a phonetic alphabet to represent these speech sounds.

Accents are primarily carried by the vowels, and a few consonants.

Suprasegmentals: acoustic information above the level of the phoneme.

Pitch changes, stress, and fine differences in individual production are the suprasegmentals.

Outstanding Differences in the Irish-English Accent

as Compared to the American English Accent

Consonant Production:

The phoneme /t/ is always produced as a /t/, (at the alveolar ridge) and aspirated in the final position.

The phoneme/l/ is discriminated as a “light” /l/, and can be imitated by slightly dentalizing it.

The phoneme /r/ is a strong /r/, and can be imitated by slightly retracting it toward the velum.

Voiceless “th” or /ɵ/ becomes /t/ (voiced “th”, or /ð/ does NOT become a /t/)

Vowel production:

Diphthongs become prolonged, more distinct, and retracted toward the velum. These vowels are :

/eI/ becomes /ɛI/

/aI/ becomes /ɛI/

/au/

/ɔI/

/ɑr/ becomes /ær/

one exception: diphthong /ou/ becomes monopthong /u/

Pitch change (the Irish lilt): Allow for a greater pitch range during any given utterance. Focus on the production of diphthongs.