

# IRISH

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## INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a description of Modern Irish phonology, morphology, syntax and spelling conventions. The evidence provided has been based mainly on material available through linguistic publications since 1900. These publications outline in various detail reliable linguistic descriptions covering phonetic/phonological material, morphological rules and syntactic patterns as well as semantic and sociolinguistic information relating to modern usage. Other materials referred to from time to time cover earlier periods of the language from 1200 onwards. Early Modern Classical Irish had developed and cultivated a standard form of the language for a period of approximately 450 years. This standard language has been described, interpreted and written about in great detail by Ó Cuív (1973, 1980) and McManus (1994a, 1994b) in particular. We are fortunate in having a large body of linguistic material describing all essential elements of this standard language which has survived in manuscript form. This material, termed *Irish Grammatical Tracts*, was edited and published by Osborn Bergin in a series of supplements in *Ériu* 8–10, 14, 17 (1916–55).

There is some uncertainty as to when the Modern Irish period began, as witnessed by the works of Greene (1966), McManus (1994a, 1994b) and Ó Cuív (1973, 1979 and 1980) in particular. The conservative nature of Irish writing and the conventions followed in bardic poetry compositions make it difficult to assess the quality and nature of the Irish linguistic system among the general uneducated population in the period 1200–1650. The same rigid standard was not applied to the written prose of the same period. Editing conventions have also followed conservative lines and on the whole apply older spelling conventions and rules in editing texts from the period. It would have been equally possible to adapt more ‘modern’ spellings which would convey the synchronic state of Irish among the general population during the period and provide a truer picture of the changing linguistic scene on the ground. Such conventions did emerge in editing later literary materials which were written after the breakdown of the bardic schools system in the first half of the seventeenth century.

I refer in the following pages to the work of scholars dealing with this period, which we can call Early Modern Irish, whenever it was felt appropriate to do so. As already stated, the present chapter is based on linguistic materials, books and articles which were published in the period 1900–2007. On the whole, they describe the modern synchronic state of Irish as exemplified in the spoken dialects of the twentieth century.

## PHONOLOGY AND ORTHOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION

Modern Irish orthography is the result of various efforts over time to represent diachronic developments within the language over a period of more than 1,600 years. These changes can be phonetic, phonological or morphological in nature and each plays a pivotal role in speech production and understanding and hence must be represented in writing in an unambiguous way. This has not always been an easy task and even today readers must use a combination of reading transfer skills and interpretations to translate spelling into their corresponding speech patterns. The standardization of spelling, which has been an ongoing process since the mid 1920s, culminated at the end of the 1950s in the provision of a prescriptive recommended standard written form for vocabulary and grammar (Ó Murchú 1977, Ó Baoill 1988, Ó Riain 1994). This was the first major revision of Irish orthography since the heyday of the bardic schools in 1200–1650. Its acceptance was greatly enhanced by the publication of the Department of Education's *Handbook* (1958), de Bhaldraithe's *English–Irish Dictionary* (1959) and the Christian Brothers' *Grammar* (1960), all of which were written in the revised standard spelling.

### The consonant system

Irish has two sets of consonant sounds, which are contrastive or phonemic and need to be distinguished in both writing and speech. One set of consonants can be labelled palatalized, the other velarized. This contrast arose in the prehistorical period and continued and was further developed and consolidated during the Old Irish period, 600–900. The distinction is based on various phonetic parameters – place of articulation and tongue height. The latter is the distinctive feature which differentiates each set of consonants. In the production of palatalized consonants the front part of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate, accompanied by a simultaneous co-articulation using the tip/blade/back of the tongue or lips. Velarized consonants are articulated in a similar way except that the back of the tongue is raised towards the soft palate or velum during production. This dichotomy gives the Irish consonants a specific and definite acoustic timbre, which is not easy for learners to acquire.

In this chapter we will mark only one set of these consonants, namely, the palatalized set, by using a raised */h/*, in accordance with IPA usage. The velarized set will be left unmarked. The IPA has specific symbols in certain cases to differentiate velarized and palatalized velar stops and fricatives and in these cases we follow the IPA recommendations. It is reasonably easy to find contrastive pairs where the essential difference is carried by the quality of the consonants. Thus we have contrastive pairs of the following type, where the first word has a palatalized consonant which contrasts with its velarized counterpart in the second word. Irish spelling informs the reader about the quality of each consonant in the following way. All consonants preceded or followed by *ilí* or *elé* in writing are palatalized.<sup>1</sup> When they are followed or preceded by *alá*, *oló* or *ulú*, they are velarized. In our first example *teacht* given below, the first 't' is palatalized and the last 't' is velarized. In the word *tacht*, both 't' sounds are velarized. Similarly, *c* in *cead* is palatalized and *c* in *cad?* is velarized.

<i>teacht</i> /tʰaxt/, 'coming'	:	<i>tacht</i> /taxt/, 'choke'
<i>cad?</i> /kad/, 'What?'	:	<i>cead</i> /cad/, 'permission'
<i>fuair</i> /fuəɪʰ/, 'got'	:	<i>fuar</i> /fuəɪ/, 'cold' <sup>2</sup>
<i>cáis</i> /ka:ʃ/, <sup>3</sup> 'cheese'	:	<i>cás</i> /ka:s/, 'case'

In clusters of two or more consonants, all consonants agree in quality – they are either all palatalized or all velarized e.g. *ceist* ‘a question’, *beilt* ‘a belt’, *strioc* ‘streak, stripe’ where ‘*st*’, ‘*lt*’ and ‘*str*’ are all palatalized and *olc* ‘bad’, *stróic* ‘tear’ where ‘*lc*’ and ‘*str*’ are velarized. In sequences of post vocalic ‘*rt*’ and ‘*cht*’, ‘*r*’ /*l*/ and ‘*ch*’ /*x*/ are always velarized, even where the following ‘*t*’ is palatalized. Similarly, word initially the ‘*s*’ in ‘*sp(r)*’, *sm*, *sf*’ sequences is always velarized no matter what the quality of the following consonants.

Table 6.1 illustrates by way of minimal or near minimal pairs the full set of phonemic contrasts among the consonant system of modern Irish. It should be noted that there is only one phoneme /*h*/ and the borrowed phonemes /*tʃ*/ and /*dʒ*/ do not have corresponding velarized equivalents.

Table 6.1 Velarized and palatalized contrasts in Modern Irish

Spelling	Phonemes	Examples
b	/b/ and /bʲ/	<i>buí</i> ‘yellow’, <i>bí</i> ‘be!’
c	/k/ and /c/	<i>cad?</i> ‘what?’, <i>cead</i> ‘permission’
ch	/x/ and /ç/	<i>loch</i> ‘a lake’, <i>oíche</i> ‘night’ <sup>1</sup>
d	/d/ and /dʲ/	<i>dó</i> ‘two’, <i>go deo</i> ‘forever’
dh	/ɣ/	<i>dhá</i> ‘two’
f	/f/ and /fʲ/	<i>go fóill</i> ‘yet’, <i>feoil</i> ‘meat’
g	/g/ and /ɣ/	<i>óga</i> ‘young (plural)’, <i>an óige</i> ‘youth’
h, th, sh	/h/	<i>hata</i> ‘a hat’, <i>thit</i> ‘fell’, <i>shuigh</i> ‘sat’
j	/dʒʲ/	<i>jab</i> ‘a job’, <i>jíp</i> ‘a jeep’
l	/l/ and /lʲ/	<i>biolar</i> ‘watercress’, <i>mil</i> ‘honey’
ll	/ʎ/ and /ʎʲ/	<i>lón</i> ‘lunch’, <i>leon</i> ‘a lion’ <sup>2</sup> <i>balla</i> ‘a wall’, <i>buille</i> ‘a stroke’
m	/m/ and /mʲ/	<i>maoin</i> ‘wealth’, <i>mín</i> ‘soft’
n	/n/ and /nʲ/	<i>anam</i> ‘a soul’, <i>ainm</i> ‘a name’
nn	/n̪/ and /n̪ʲ/	<i>nach</i> ‘do you not?’, <i>neach</i> ‘a being’ <sup>3</sup> <i>Anna</i> ‘Anne’, <i>bainne</i> ‘milk’
ng	/ŋ/ and /ŋʲ/	<i>long</i> ‘a ship’, <i>loingeas</i> ‘a fleet of ships’
p	/p/ and /pʲ/	<i>paca</i> ‘a packet’, <i>peaca</i> ‘a sin’
r	/r/ and /rʲ/	<i>fuar</i> ‘cold’, <i>fuair</i> ‘got’
rr	/r̪/	<i>corr</i> ‘edge’, <i>farraige</i> ‘sea’ <sup>4</sup>
s	/s/ and /sʲ/	<i>cás</i> ‘a case’, <i>cáis</i> ‘cheese’
t	/t/ and /tʲ/	<i>tacht</i> ‘choke’, <i>teacht</i> ‘coming’
v, bh, mh	/β/ and /βʲ/	<i>an-bhuí</i> ‘very yellow’, <i>bhí</i> ‘was’, <i>vóta</i> ‘a vote’ <sup>5</sup>

#### Notes

- The sound /ç/ is heard word initially in all dialects but is weakened to /h/ intervocalically except in the dialects of North Connacht and Ulster. In some dialects the historical fricative has been deleted altogether.
- Initial *l* is identical in pronunciation with intervocalic and word final *ll* in those dialects which differentiate between the pronunciation of single *l* and double *ll*. Thus the *l* in *lón* ‘lunch’ and the *l* in *líon* ‘fill’ are identical to the double *ll* of *balla* ‘a wall’ and *buille* ‘a stroke’, respectively. The initial *l* of the preposition *le* ‘with’ and its conjugated forms *liom* ‘with me’, *leat* ‘with you’ etc. is pronounced as an alveolar palatalized lateral.

- 3 The pronunciation of word initial *n* and intervocalic or word final *nm* is identical to the description for *l* and *ll* as outlined in the previous footnote.
- 4 This sound has been recorded for Donegal Irish and was probably the norm throughout Ulster when Irish was a vigorous spoken language throughout the province. It is a velarized trilled /r/ made against the back of the alveolar or teeth ridge. Initially, this sound occurs in such words as *rámha* 'an oar', *Ruairí* 'Rory' and *rí* 'a king'. A three way contrast occurs in the speech of many speakers between the r-sounds in *corr* 'edge', *cuir* 'put!' and *ag cur* 'putting'. This applies only to northern dialects as the contrast is reduced to two in the other dialects.
- 5 The written *v* before *a*, *o* or *u* can denote either a velarized bilabial /β/ consonant as found in Munster Irish and in parts of South Connacht or a /w/ similar to the English 'w' in *with*, *award* etc.

Various other consonants have appeared in recent dictionaries as a result of borrowing or transliteration of technical international vocabulary. The following consonants must now be included as part of the phonemic system of modern Irish (*An Foclóir Póca: /z/, /ʒ/, /w/ and /j/* in words such as *zú*, *puzal*, *xileafón*, *wigwam* and *yó-yó*.<sup>4</sup>

### Articulation of consonants

The three major dialects of Irish have a common core of consonant phonemes. However, some dialects have maintained more phonemic contrasts and in many cases the phonetic realization of consonants differs from one dialect to the next. Table 6.2 outlines the major contrasts for all dialects and describes the mode and place of articulation. Those consonants outside the common core are in italics. The description of the consonantal sounds that follows below is meant to give a general overview of the marked differences between the major dialects.

Table 6.2 Consonants of Irish

Mode of articulation	Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Alveo-palatal	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	b b <sup>j</sup> p p <sup>j</sup>	d t		d <sup>j</sup> t <sup>j</sup>	ʃ ç	g k	
Fricative	β β <sup>j</sup> φ φ <sup>j</sup>	s		çʃ ʃʃ	ʃ ç	ɣ x	h
Nasal	m m <sup>j</sup>	<i>n̪</i>	n n <sup>j</sup>	ɲ	ɲ <sup>j</sup>	ŋ	
Lateral		<i>l̪</i>	l l <sup>j</sup>	ʎ			
Trill			r				
Tap			r <sup>ɾ</sup>				

#### Bilabial consonants

The velarized bilabial consonants of Irish are exo-labial with protruding lips and tend to be accompanied with a strong /w/ glide. This rounding is more pronounced in Ulster and affects surrounding vowels. The palatalized counterparts tend to be endo-labial and have tensed drawn back lip position. This is more pronounced in Connacht and Munster

dialects, especially before back vowels. I have used the bilabial symbols for the fricatives as this is the most common articulation in the modern dialects. There is a tendency, however, to replace the voiceless bilabial fricatives with labiodentals under the influence of English–Irish bilingualism. This change has been avoided in Connacht and Ulster dialects in the case of the velarized [β] which is now pronounced as [w] in these dialects.

#### *Dental/alveolar consonants*

The prevailing evidence would seem to indicate that the velarized plosives /d, t/ and the fricative /s/ were originally dental consonants. They are blade articulated consonants and while the blade of the tongue touches the alveolar ridge, the front of the tongue tends to rest against the upper teeth. Recent changes in Munster dialects favour alveolar articulation (Ó Cuív 1944, Breatnach 1947, Ó Sé 2000). Among the *l*- and *n*-sounds there is great variation from one dialect to another. Mayo and Ulster dialects tend to maintain the historical four way contrast, two velarized and two palatalized consonants in each case. Southern Connacht and Clare dialects have reduced the contrast to three – two palatalized consonants and one velarized (de Bhaldraithe 1944, Wagner 1958). Munster (apart from Clare) maintains only a two-way contrast – one elarized and one palatalized for each of *l* and *n*.<sup>5</sup> The *r*-phonemes also maintained a four-way contrast originally. This was reduced to three very early in the history of the language as the trilled velarized /r/ and its palatalized counterpart /rʲ/ merged as one, namely, /r/. Since no modern dialect has maintained the four-way contrast, we can only make educated guesses about how the trilled palatalized /rʲ/ was pronounced. However, a three-way contrast has been recorded by several authors for Donegal–Sommerfelt (1922), Wagner (1959) and Ó Baoill (1996) among others. The trilled velarized /r/ is a post alveolar consonant with the tip of the tongue touching the alveolar ridge several times during its production. It is also longer in articulation than the short tapped /r/ in words such as *cár* ‘teeth’ and *orm* ‘on me’. Although short vowels are lengthened before /r/ in Donegal Irish e.g. *carr* /kɑ:r/ ‘a car’, a contrast is maintained with *cár* /ka:r/ ‘teeth’. The quality of the stressed long vowel is also coloured by the following consonant, being much further back before /r/.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Alveo-palatal consonants*

The original palatalized plosive /dʲ/ and /tʲ/ and /ʃ/ were articulated with the blade of the tongue against the alveolar ridge and the front resting against the lower teeth, which is still the case in Connacht and Ulster. Munster dialects favour a more alveolar pronunciation (Ó Sé 2000). The contrast between alveolar /n/ and /nʲ/ for example and alveo-palatal /ɲ/ and /ɲ/ has been lost in Munster dialects except for areas of County Clare.<sup>7</sup> In certain areas of North Mayo, South Donegal and Arranmore Island, there is a strong tendency for /dʲ/ and /tʲ/ to become the affricates /dʒ/ and /tʃ/ as reported by Wagner (1959, 1968) and Mac An Fhailigh (1968). All dialects use similar pronunciation in the recent English loanword, e.g. *jab* ‘a job’, *Jimí* ‘James’, *tsip* ‘a chip’. /ʃ/, while similar to English ‘sh’ in *she*, *wish*, *ash* etc., is much more strongly palatalized in Irish and gives a different acoustic impression. Irish *sí* ‘she’, *síor* ‘longlasting’ and English ‘she, sheer’ sound very differently to the ear.

#### *Palatal consonants*

Irish has a range of palatal consonants which contrast with their velar counterparts. The degree of palatalization accompanying these consonants varies slightly from one dialect to another, being more fronted in northern dialects. The IPA symbol for the palatal nasal is /ɲ/, which I have used to denote the alveo-palatal *n*-sound in *tinn* ‘sick’, *crúinn*

'round, accurate' and *cruinnigh* 'collect'. The symbol /ɲ/ has been used to denote the palatalized fronted velar nasal. The voiceless /ç/ has a tendency to be reduced to /h/ in intervocalic and postvocalic environments in almost all dialects. Furthermore, once it has been reduced to /h/, it is subject to deletion in South Connacht dialects. An example of this reduction is the Cois Fharráige realization of *oíche* /i:/ < /i:hə/ < /i:çə/ 'a night'. Its strong fricative pronunciation inter- and postvocalically is now confined to North Connacht and West Ulster dialects. In initial position when /ç/ is the result of lenition, its fricative realization is fairly uniform in all dialects. The voiced counterpart /j/ retains its fricative realization in initial consonant clusters e.g. *ghread* /j̥ɾad/ 'beat (past tense)' but its realization elsewhere has less friction and is often phonetically [j] e.g. *dhíol* [ji:ɫ] 'sold', *dhóigh* [yɔ:j] 'burnt'.<sup>8,9</sup>

### Velar consonants

The velar plosive consonants have strong secondary velarization and sound quite different from their English counterparts in *go*, *God*, *comb* and *cold*. The velar consonants are not phonetically conditioned as in English and may appear before both front and back vowels. Hence the pronunciation of the initial consonant of *Gael* 'an Irish person' and *cat* 'a cat' in Irish and the realization of the equivalent lexical items in English is very striking.<sup>10</sup> The pronunciation of the fricative /ɣ/ is found only in initial position (where it is grammatically conditioned) and at the beginning of a second or subsequent element of a compound e.g. *ghlac* 'accepted', *ollghairdeas* 'great joy', *drochdhuine* 'an evil person'. The sound /x/ has a variety of pronunciations. It is pronounced with strong friction in initial position in all dialects e.g. *chaith* 'spent', *an chuach* 'the cuckoo'. Outside of Ulster, it maintains its strong friction in all contexts. In Ulster dialects, however, it is only weakly pronounced word finally, being reduced to /h/ and tends to be deleted in many subdialects e.g. *cladach* /'kɫadax > 'kɫadah > 'kɫada/ 'the seashore'. In intervocalic position, it often maintains its strong fricative pronunciation even in Ulster (Ó Dochartaigh 1987). The velar /ŋ/ phoneme does not occur initially in the basic form of words but is lexically or grammatically conditioned e.g. *cluichí na nGael* 'the games of the Irish' and there is very little variation from one dialect to another.

### Initial consonant changes

These are generally known as lenition and eclipsis in Irish grammars and in much of the recent linguistic literature. It took scholars and linguists rather a long time to come to an agreement as to how these changes were to be represented in writing in an unambiguous fashion.

### Lenition

Lenition occurred historically in word initial position and to single consonants intervocalically. All plosive consonants, including the bilabial nasal *m*, were replaced by their corresponding fricatives in terms of place of articulation. Strongly articulated *ll*, *nn* and *rr* became lax and identical in pronunciation to single *l*, *n* and *r*.<sup>11</sup> The sibilant *s* became *h* and the bilabial fricative *f* was totally lost. These internal changes have played a significant role in altering the appearance of lexical items in the subsequent history of the language.

These changes were not shown in writing in a consistent way until the end of the twelfth century or so. Lenited sounds are now shown by adding *h* after the historical plosive from which they have been derived. In this way we get *bh*, *ch*, *dh*, *gh*, *ph* and *th*

representing the lenited forms of *b*, *c*, *d*, *g*, *p* and *t*. Similarly, *fh*, *mh* and *sh* represent the lenited forms of *f*, *m* and *s* respectively.<sup>12</sup> In intervocalic position, many of these lenited consonants have been weakened further, some have become vocalized and in some cases they have been deleted altogether. This was a long and slow process which has been ongoing from the twelfth century or perhaps earlier in many cases. Some of the processes are still not quite complete in some dialects. A series of orthographical reforms since the 1930s has succeeded in eliminating all consonants that have become silent since the thirteenth century. In this way, modern Irish spelling represents to a large degree the pronunciation current in Gaeltacht areas for some two centuries or more.

While the majority of fricatives occurring in Modern Irish have been created by initial morphophonemic changes, there are a small number of fricatives which are maintained in non-initial position. They are *bh*, *ch* and *mh* in words such as *ábhar* 'material', *cliabhán* 'a cradle', *saibhir* 'rich', *achar* 'area', *loch* 'a lake', *bocht* 'poor', *oíche* 'night', *amháin* 'one, only', *lámh* 'a hand', *an fómhar* 'the autumn' and *uimhir* 'a number'.<sup>13</sup>

We have referred above to the origins of lenition. As the historical phonetic context in which lenition took place has long been removed, the environments in which it takes place in Modern Irish are varied and complex. In reality, both native speakers and learners must not only master the morphophonemic rules of lenition but must also memorize the non-phonetic environments which trigger these changes. They include lexical items such as prepositions, the singular article *an*, the vocative particle *a*, various numerals, syntactic sequences of noun clusters, preverbal particles and relative clause markers as well as initial changes indicating various tenses and moods. The following selection will give the reader some indication of the complexity of these changes, their creative role in the syntactical and semantic structure of modern Irish, and their part in the formation of grammatical structures.

### *Prepositions*

*ar* 'on, about', *de* 'of, from', *do* 'to, for', *faoi* 'under, about' and *ó* 'from, since' e.g. *ar do Shíle* 'on/to Sheila', *de shíor* 'continuously', *faoi ghlas* 'under lock and key, locked', *ó mhaidin* 'since (this) morning'.

### *The article*

The article *an* lenites when used with feminine nouns in the nominative singular e.g. *an bhean* 'the woman' and in the genitive singular of masculine nouns e.g. *teach an bháid* 'the boathouse'.<sup>14</sup>

### *The vocative particle*

The particle *a* is used in addressing people in speech or writing and causes lenition e.g. *A Shéamais, a chara* 'Dear James'.

### *Numerals*

The numeral 1–6 preceding the singular form of the noun: *trí chat* 'three cats', *sé mhí* 'six months'.<sup>15</sup>

### *Nominal phrases*

(a) When two or more nouns or noun phrases follow consecutively, the first consonant of the second element is lenited. This is usually the case (a) when the second noun phrase qualifies the first and the first noun is feminine: *tine mhóna* 'a turf/peat fire', (b) when the second noun is definite: *carr Mháire* 'Mary's car', *seoladh Fhoras na Gaeilge* 'Foras

na Gaeilge's address' and in longer sequences *doras charr Mháire Dhónaill* 'Máire Dhónaill's car door (lit. The door of the car of Máire daughter of Dónall)'.<sup>1</sup>

(b) Adjectives are lenited after feminine nouns and in the genitive singular and nominative plural of masculine nouns e.g. *bean bhreá* 'a fine woman', *teach an fhir mhóir* 'the big man's house' and *na cait bhána* 'the white cats'.

(c) The second element in compound constructions is lenited e.g. *drochmhaidin* 'a bad morning', *an-mhaith* 'very good' *An Príomh-Bhreitheamh* 'The Chief Judge'.

#### Possessives

The singular possessives *mo* 'my', *do* 'your' and *a* 'his' lenite the initial of the following noun: *mo/do/a bhean* 'my/your/his wife'.

#### Verbal morphology

(a) The negative particles *ní*, *níor* and *char*, the conjunction *má*, the interrogative *ar* all lenite a following verb e.g. *ní chuirim* 'I don't put', *níor/char bhuail sé* 'he didn't hit', *má thugaim* 'if I give'.

(b) The past and conditional forms of the copula cause lenition on a following noun or adjective e.g. *ba mhaith leo* 'they would like'.

(c) The initial consonants of all verbs denoting past and imperfect tenses and the conditional mood are lenited e.g. *bhí sí* 'she was', *bhínn ann* 'I used to be there', *cheannóinn iad* 'I would buy them'.

(d) Lenition also follows the direct relative clause particle *a* e.g. *an bhean a phós* 'the woman who got married'.

In Table 6.3 we give examples and the pronunciation of all lenited consonants.

Table 6.3 Lenited consonants

Basic consonant	Lenited form	Examples
b /b/, /bʲ/	bh /β/, /βʲ/	<i>bhog</i> / βog/ 'moved', <i>bhí</i> /βi:/ 'was'
c /k/, /c/	ch /x/, /ç/	<i>mo chat</i> /mə xat/ 'my cat', <i>an cheist</i> /ən çesʲtʲ/ 'the question'
d /d/, /dʲ/	dh /ɣ/, /ɣʲ/	<i>mo dhán</i> /mə ɣa:n/ 'my poem', <i>dhíol</i> /j̥i:tʲ/ 'sold'
f /f/, /fʲ/	fh (deletion)	<i>an-fhuar</i> /an uəɾ/ 'very cold', <i>an fheoil</i> /ən ɔ:lʲ/ 'the meat'
g /g/, /ɟ/	gh /ɣ/, /ɣʲ/	<i>ghoid</i> /ɣi:dʲ/ 'stole', <i>mo ghé</i> /mə je:/ 'my goose'
l /l/, /lʲ/	l /ʎ/, /ʎʲ/	<i>mo lámh</i> /mə t̪a:v/ 'my hand', <i>lig</i> /ʎi:/ 'allowed, let'
m /m/, /mʲ/	mh /β/, /βʲ/	<i>an-mhór</i> /an βo:r/ 'very big', <i>mo mhéar</i> /mə βe:r/ 'my finger'
n /n/, /nʲ/	n /n/, /nʲ/	<i>A Nóra</i> /ə no:rə/ 'Norah', <i>nigh siad</i> /nʲi s̪iəd/ 'they washed'
p /p/, /pʲ/	ph /pʰ/, /pʰʲ/	<i>A Phádraig</i> /ə ɸa:dr̪əɟ/, 'Patrick', <i>an phian</i> /ən ɸiən/ 'the pain'
r /r/, /rʲ/	r /r/, /rʲ/	<i>a Ruairí</i> /ə ruəɾi:/ 'Ruairí', <i>a rí</i> /ə ɾi:/ ~ /ə:ri:/ 'king'
s /s/, /sʲ/	sh /h/, /çʲ <sup>2</sup> /	<i>mo shúil</i> /mə hu:lʲ/ 'my eye', <i>A Shéamais</i> /ə h̪e:məsʲ/ 'Séamas', <i>shíuil</i> /çu:lʲ/ 'walked'
t /t/, /tʲ/	th /h/, /çʲ <sup>3</sup> /	<i>thóg</i> /ho:g/ 'lifted', <i>thiar</i> /hiəɾ/ 'in the west, behind', <i>cúig thiúb</i> /ku:ɟ çu:b/ 'five tubes'

## Notes

- 1 These changes apply only to Donegal Irish among speakers of a certain age (50+). The change to palatalized [ɲ] is rare and occurs in very few words. A velarized *r* sound seems to be the rule word initially.
- 2 The general rule is that 'sh' is pronounced as /h/. However, historically before back vowels *ó* and *ú* and in the lenited form of the name *Seán*, palatalized 'sh' is realised as /ç/. Other proper names whose lenited first consonant is pronounced as /ç/ include *Seonaf* 'John(ny)', *Seoirse* 'George' and *Siobhán/Siuán* 'Joan'. In speech, therefore, one cannot distinguish between palatalized lenited 'ch' and the above phonetic realization of 'sh'.
- 3 The normal lenited form of 't', whether palatalized or velarized, is /h/. However, as in the case of 'sh' above, 'th' before /u/ or /u:/ is often realized as /ç/ in words such as *tiúb* 'a tube', *tiubh* 'thick, obtuse', *tiús* 'thickness', etc.

*Other lenition changes*

There are several other changes which need to be mentioned here as they occurred historically in similar environments to lenition.

The most common of these is the replacement of initial *s* by *t* in pronunciation in a lenited environment when the article *an* precedes feminine nouns e.g. *an tsíóg* /ən ʃi:ɔ:g/ 'the fairy' (< *síóg* 'a fairy'), *an tsúil* /ən tu:ɪ/ 'the eye' (< *súil* 'an eye') and *an tseanbhean* /ən ʃanʲan<sup>16</sup> 'the old woman' (< *seanbhean* 'an old woman'), *ar an tsráid* 'on the street' (< *sráid* 'a street'). The original *s* is maintained and the *t* is placed in front of it. This is similar to the way in which eclipsis is marked in Irish spelling.

This same change occurs in the genitive singular of masculine nouns e.g. *hata an tsagairt* 'the priest's hat' (< *sagart* 'a priest').

In the nominative and accusative singular of masculine nouns a similar *t*-consonant is used before nouns beginning with a vowel e.g. *an t-iasc* 'the fish', an *t-airgead* 'the money'. The letter *h* /h/ is prefixed to words beginning with a vowel in the following environments: (i) in the plural of nouns e.g. *na huaisle* 'the nobility' (< *uaisle* 'nobility'), (ii) in the genitive singular of feminine nouns e.g. *poll na heochrach* 'the key hole' (< *eochair* 'key'), (iii) after the possessive 3rd person singular feminine particle *a* e.g. *a hainm* 'her name', (iv) after the prepositions *le* 'with' and *go* 'to' e.g. *go hÉirinn* 'to Ireland', *le hÁine* 'with Áine',<sup>17</sup> (v) after the ordinal numbers except *céad* 'first' e.g. *an tríú háit* 'the third place'.

**Eclipsis**

Eclipsis, often also called nasalization, is the second type of initial consonant change. Historically, the initial plosive sounds and *f* were altered due to the influence of a preceding word ending in a nasal consonant. The voiced plosives *b*, *d* and *g* became their corresponding nasal equivalents *m*, *n* and *ng*. When words began with a vowel, the influencing nasal was retained as *n* and the voiceless plosives *c*, *p*, *t* and the fricative *f* became their corresponding voiced counterparts *b*, *d*, *g* and *v*.

In the case of eclipsis, the resulting changes are now shown by writing the new derived sound in front of the basic underlying consonant. This is why the name *urú* (eclipsis) is used to denote this change – the new consonant sound is written as if it were eclipsing the original sound<sup>18</sup> and replacing it in speech. Thus *mb*, *nd* and *ng* denotes the morpho-phonemic change and the writing indicates that the original consonant is to be ignored and replaced by the eclipsing consonant, namely *m* and *n*. In the case of *g*, it is to be replaced by the velar sound /ŋ/ indicated by the spelling *ng*.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the consonants *c*, *p*, *t* and *f* become *gc*, *bp*, *dt* and *bhf* under the same conditions and the newly derived sounds are /g/, *b*, *d* and *v*. The consonant *n*- is written before vowels.

The origin of eclipsed consonants has already been discussed. As with lenition, the original phonetic environment in which eclipsis took place has been removed and the environments in which it takes place have become varied and complex. Both native speakers and learners must not only master the morphophonemic rules of eclipsis but must also memorize the non-phonetic environments which trigger these changes. In the modern language the historical changes are now conditioned by preverbal particles, plural possessives, the complementizers *go* and *nach*, the conjunctions *dá* ‘if’ and *mura* ‘if not, unless’, the interrogative particle *an?*, the plural of the article *na* ‘the’ in the genitive plural, the preposition *i* ‘in’ and following simple prepositions plus the singular article *an*.

In Table 6.4 we give examples and the pronunciation of all eclipsed consonants as well as the eclipsing of vowels.

Table 6.4 Eclipsed consonants and vowels

Basic consonant	Eclipsed form	Examples
b /b/, /bʲ/	mb /m/, /mʲ/	<i>ár mbád</i> /a:r ma:d/ ‘our boat’, <i>i mbia</i> /ə mʲiə/ ‘in food’
c /k/, /c/	gc /g/, /gʲ/	<i>a gcótaí</i> /ə gʲo:ti/ ‘their coats’, <i>i gcéin</i> /ə gʲe:m/ ‘abroad, far away’
d /d/, /dʲ/	nd /n/, /nʲ/ ~ /nʲ/	<i>i ndán</i> /ə n̪a:n/ ‘in a poem’, <i>go ndéantar</i> /gə n̪e:ntə/ ~ /gə n̪e:ntə/¹ ‘may it be done’
f /f/, /fʲ/	bhf /β/, /βʲ/	<i>ní bhfuair</i> /nʲi: βuə/ ‘didn’t get’, <i>i bhfeabhas</i> /ə βʲaus/ ‘improved, improving’
g /g/, /gʲ/	ng /ŋ/, /ŋʲ/	<i>i ngar</i> /ə ŋa:r/ ‘nearby’, <i>seacht ngé</i> /sʲəxt ŋʲe:/ ‘seven geese’
p /p/, /pʲ/	bp /b/, /bʲ/	<i>a bpáistí</i> /ə ba:sʲtʲi:/ ‘their children’, <i>i bpian</i> /ə bʲiən/ ‘in pain’
t /t/, /tʲ/	dt /d/, /dʲ/	<i>i dtosach</i> /ə dʲosəx/ ‘at the beginning’, <i>i dteach</i> /ə dʲəx/ ‘in a house’
Basic vowels	Eclipsed form	Examples
i/í, e/é, iə	in, n- /n/ ~ /nʲ/²	<i>in Éirinn</i> /ə n̪i:e:ɾʲəp/ ‘in Ireland’, <i>go n-éaga mé</i> /gə n̪e:gə m̪e:/ ~ /gə n̪e:gə m̪e:/ ‘until I die’, <i>in iasc</i> /ə n̪i:əsk/ ~ /ə n̪i:əsk/ ‘in fish’
a/á, o/ó, u/ú, ua	in n- /n̪/ /n̪ʲ/	<i>in Albain</i> /ə na:ləbənʲ/ ~ /ə n̪ə:ləbənʲ/, <i>go n-óla tú</i> /gə n̪o:lə tu:/ ~ /gə n̪o:lə tu:/ ‘until you drink’, <i>in ualach</i> /ə nu:ləx/ ~ /ə n̪u:ləx/ ‘in a load’

#### Notes

- 1 Those dialects that differentiate three or four nasal consonants tend to have the dental and palato-alveolar sounds word initially as the eclipsed form of /d/ and /dʲ/, respectively. Munster dialects use only /nʲ/ as they generally differentiate only between one velarized and one palatalized ‘n’ sound.
- 2 The preposition *i* + the eclipsing *n* are written as one word in the standard language. The *in* tends to be unstressed and the *n* is conjoined to the next word in the spoken language. The initial vowel of the following word determines the secondary quality of *n*, that is whether it is realized as a palatalized or a velarized consonant.

## THE VOCALIC SYSTEM

### Long vowels

All dialects of Irish contrast long and short vowels. Long vowels are normally marked in writing by an acute accent over the lengthened vowel – hence we get *í* /i:/, *é* /e:/, *á* /a:/~ /a:/,<sup>20</sup> *ó* /o:/ and *ú* /u:/. Several digraphs are also used to indicate a long vowel, namely, *ae* /e:/ and *eo* /o:/.<sup>21</sup> The spelling *ao* may also indicate a long /e:/ in Munster, /i:/ in Connacht and parts of Donegal and /u:/ in most of Ulster.<sup>22</sup> Trigraphs of the type *aoi* /i:/, *aei* /e:/ and *eoi* /o:/ are pronounced as long vowels. The *i* preceding the final consonant indicates that that consonant is palatalized e.g. *caoin* ‘cry’, *Gaeil* ‘Irish people, Gaels’ and *feoil* ‘meat’. The *aoi* spelling in the vast majority of cases indicates an /i:/ pronunciation. There are, however, exceptions where this pronunciation indicates the original vowel spelled *ao* e.g. *tús an tsaoil* /tʉs ə tɛ:l/ in Munster Irish. This /e:/ pronunciation is very common in verse and song from all dialects. In Ulster ‘ao’ in general indicates an unrounded vowel /u:/ before a velarized consonant in words such as *caora* ‘a sheep’, *daor* ‘expensive’ and *maol* ‘bald’. This pronunciation is maintained before palatalized consonants whether derived e.g. *níos daoire* ‘more expensive’ < *daor* ‘expensive’, *treo na gaoithe* ‘direction of the wind’ < *gaoth* ‘wind’ or in original words e.g. *saoire* ‘holiday’, *aois* ‘age’. The spelling is always *aoi* and the *i* merely indicates that the following consonant(s) is/are palatalized as indicated by the examples given above. This shows how the palatalized/velarized contrast among consonants is used to make important semantic and grammatical distinctions e.g. singular and plural of nouns *Gael/Gaeil* ‘Irish person/Irish people’, comparative forms of the adjective *saor/níos saoire* ‘cheap/cheaper’ and between various forms of verbs e.g. *siúil* ‘walk (imp.)’, *ag siúl* ‘walking’.<sup>23</sup>

There is overall agreement among linguists about the number of long vowel phonemes which are distinguished in all dialects. There are 5/6 long vowels, depending on whether one argues for one or two low *á* vowels. The long *á* vowel can be realized as a lower fronted /a:/ or a back unrounded /ɑ:/.<sup>24</sup> The following represent extra contrasts found in certain varieties of Ulster Irish. The most important of these is the contrast between an open and closed ‘o’ type /ɔ:/ and /o:/, respectively. The following pairs illustrate this important contrast:

*tóg* /tɔ:g/ ‘lift’, *óg* /ɔ:g/ ‘young’,  
*tabhair* /tɔ:ɲ/ ‘give’, *tóir* /tɔ:ɲ/ ‘pursuit, chase’.

This historical contrast has been augmented by the diachronic change which converts the intervocalic sequence /aβə/, to /o:/ in words such as *cabhair* (also spelled *cobhair* in the earlier language) ‘help, assistance’, *leabhar* ‘a book’ and *domhain* ‘deep’. In the latter case the intervocalic historical /β/ may have been a nasalized /β̃/. Many other words having intervocalic fricatives such as *dh* and *gh* now also have a /o:/ sound in Ulster Irish e.g. *bodhar* ‘deaf’, *foghlaím* ‘learning, education’. Similarly, a contrast exists in many Ulster dialects between a rounded high back /u:/ and a high unrounded /u:/ in pairs of the following type:

*cúl* /ku:l/ ‘back’, *caol* /ku:l/ ‘thin’  
*umhail* /u:l/ ‘attention’, *aoil* /u:l/ ‘of lime (genitive case)’.<sup>25</sup>

## Short vowels

There is much disagreement about the ‘real’ number of short vowel contrasts in Modern Irish. Some commentators, following the generative grammar line, have reduced the contrast to three (Ó Siadhail and Wigger 1975, Ó Siadhail 1989). Others follow a more conservative line and offer a five-short-vowel system, corresponding to the five long vowels mentioned above /i, e, a, o and u/, plus the neutral vowel /ə/ (Ó Sé 2000).<sup>26</sup> This may not fit the Ulster Irish vowel system as in many subdialects of this region the vowel inventory has been expanded (Ó Baoill 1997).

As with the long vowels, there is a contrast between a closed /o/ and an open /ɔ/ type vowel, as shown by the following minimal or near minimal pairs:

*lofa* /ʌohə/ ‘rotten’, *cothú* /kɔhu/ ‘nourishment’  
*bothaigh* /bohí/ ‘cowsheds’, *rothaí* /rɔhí/ ‘wheels’

In a similar fashion unrounded /u/ may contrast with back /ʊ/ as in *cioth* /cuɪh/ ‘a shower’ and *tiubh* /tʰuɪ/ ‘dense, thick’.

Furthermore, some of the subdialects of Donegal have developed a contrast between a tense and lax high front vowel as in the following pairs:

*dinnéar* /dʲɪnə/ ‘a dinner’, *tinn* /tʲɪn/ ‘sick’  
*jímí* /dʲɪmʲi/ ‘James’, *d’imigh* /dʲɪmʲi/ ‘departed, left’

## Diphthongs

All dialects share a common core of four diphthongs /iə/, /uə/, /ai/ and /au/.<sup>27</sup> The first two are generally expressed in writing by ‘*ia(i)*’ and ‘*ua(i)*’ in such words as *Dia* ‘God’, *siar* ‘westward’, *rua* ‘redhaired’ and *suas* ‘upwards’. The spellings *iai* and *uai* generally express morphological changes where the postvocalic consonant is palatalized, but it may also be a non-derived form. Similarly, a palatalized consonant following *iai* or *uai* in its basic form may become velarized, in which case the spelling reverts to ‘*ia*’ or ‘*ua*’. The following examples illustrate both processes:

*cuan* /kuən/ ‘a harbour’ >> *béal an chuain* /bʲe:ɫ ə xuənʲ/ ‘the mouth of the harbour’  
*Brian* /bʲɪən/ ‘Brian’ >> *Ó Briain* /o: bʲɪənʲ/ / O’Brian/  
*bliain* /bʲɪənʲ/ ‘a year’ >> *lár na bliana* /l̪a:ɾ nə bʲɪənʲ/ ‘the middle of the year’  
*ríal* /rʲiəlʲ/ ‘a rule’ >> *buail* /buəlʲ/ ‘beat!’

The /ai/ and /au/ phonemes have for the most part been derived from a combination of a basic /a/ vowel and the vocalization of historical voiced fricatives immediately following this basic vowel.<sup>28</sup> Intervocalic fricatives were often deleted, resulting in the lengthening or diphthongization of a preceding vowel. The following fricatives were subject to these two processes at different historical periods – velarized and palatalized *dh* /ð/ and /ðʲ/, which later merged with velarized and palatalized *gh*, /ɣ/ and /ɣʲ/ respectively, towards the end of the Middle Irish period (c. 1200). This merger contributed to the development of the /ai/ phoneme in words such as *ladhar* ‘a toe, a fork’, *feidhm* ‘a need’, *aghaidh* ‘a face’ and *leigheas* ‘a cure’. The available evidence would seem to indicate that the vocalization took place after the two fricatives had merged.<sup>29</sup> The vocalization of the bilabial

fricatives, velarized and palatalized *bh* /β/ and /βʲ/ and *mh* /β̃/ and /β̃ʲ/, respectively, resulted in the creation of the /au/ phonemes.<sup>30</sup>

Table 6.5 gives a list of the vocalic phonemes which form the common core shared by all dialects of Irish.

Table 6.5 Vowels of Irish

Phonemic symbol	Spelling	Meaning
/i:r/	<i>íor</i>	a satire
/e:r/	<i>aer</i>	air
/a:r~/~a:r/	<i>ár</i>	destruction
/o:r/	<i>ór</i>	gold
/u: r/	<i>úr</i>	new, fresh
/φuəɾ/	<i>fuar</i>	cold
/iəɾ/	<i>iar</i>	ex-
/φaurə/	<i>fabhra</i>	eyelash
/l̪aɪrə/	<i>ladhra</i>	toes
/t̪iɪ/	<i>tít</i>	fall!
/t̪e/	<i>te</i>	hot
/t̪ax/	<i>teach</i>	a house
/d̪ox/	<i>deoch</i>	a drink
/t̪uβ/	<i>tiubh</i>	dense, thick
/ə/	<i>a</i>	vocative particle

## Epenthetic vowels

As with other languages, certain consonant clusters are not tolerated in Modern Irish and need to be broken up. This is done by inserting an epenthetic vowel between the two consonants involved. Except for the clusters containing *ch*, the two consonants are generally voiced. The vowel inserted is usually [ə] between clusters of velarized consonants and [ɪ] between palatalized clusters.<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that the epenthetic vowel is inserted only after stressed short vowels in a preceding syllable. When the preceding syllable has a long vowel or diphthong, an epenthetic vowel is not inserted.<sup>32</sup> Table 6.6 will give an idea of the clusters common to all dialects that allow an epenthetic vowel.

Table 6.6 Clusters allowing an epenthetic vowel

Consonant cluster <sup>1</sup>	Examples
<i>lb, lbh, lch, lg, lm, lmh, lp</i> and <i>lf</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Albain</i> 'Scotland', <i>seilbh</i> 'possession', <i>Ó Gallchóir</i> 'Gallagher', <i>bolg</i> 'the belly', <i>salm</i> 'psalm', <i>colpa</i> 'the calf of the leg'
<i>nb, nbh, nch, nm, nmh</i>	<i>leanbh</i> 'a baby/child', <i>seanchaí</i> 'a storyteller', <i>ainm</i> 'a name', <i>ainmhí</i> 'an animal'
<i>rb, rbh, rch, rf, rg, rm, rp</i>	<i>gearb</i> 'a scab', <i>garbh</i> 'rough', <i>dorcha</i> 'dark', <i>dearfa</i> < <i>dearbhtha</i> 'definitely', <i>airgead</i> 'money', <i>gorm</i> 'blue'

## Notes

1 In southern Irish dialects we find an epenthetic vowel in such words as *seachrán* 'the act of wandering', *seomra* 'a room', *carn* 'a cairn' and after *an-* 'very' in such words as *an-mhaith* 'very good', *an-chaité*

'very worn'. They are often written *seacharán*, *seomara*, *caran*, *ana-mhaith* and *ana-chaite* in non-standard spelling. Such pronunciation is often indicated in seventeenth-century Munster poetry and prose writings. Words such as *carn* 'a cairn' and *dorn* 'a fist' tend to have a long vowel or diphthong in other dialects.

- 2 In clusters such as *lp*, *lf*, *rp* and *rf* one would not expect an epenthetic vowel as the second consonant is voiceless. However, when the *p* and *f* in such clusters are derived from a historical sequence of *bth* /*bh*/, *bhth* or *mhth* /*βh*/, we can claim that the epenthetic vowel was introduced before the deletion of /*h*/. This /*h*/ had caused the devoicing of *b* and *bh* to *p* and *f*, respectively. *Th*, which was historically a voiceless fricative /*θ*/, changed to /*h*/ around the end of the twelfth century. In words such as *corp* 'a body', *alp* 'a lump' and *oirfideach* 'a musician' where the voiceless consonants *p* and *f* are original, there is no epenthetic vowel. In words such as *glórmhar* 'glorious' and *pianmhar* 'painful', no epenthetic vowel is inserted between *r/n* and *mh* because the preceding stressed vowel is long or a diphthong (which is the equivalent of a long vowel.)

## WORD STRESS

The general tendency in Modern Irish dialects as a whole is to stress the first syllable of a word. There is a small class of lexical items (no more than twenty in number) which show non-initial stress in all dialects e.g. *amháin* 'one, once', *arís* 'again', *amárach* 'tomorrow', *inniu* 'today'. However, various dialects show different treatments of non-initial long vowels. Ulster Irish tends to shorten all long vowels in non-initial syllables e.g. *bradán* > *bradan* /'bradan/ 'a salmon', *galún* > *galun* /'gatu/ 'a gallon'. Connacht Irish maintains long vowels in second and subsequent syllables e.g. *galún* /'gatu:n/ 'a gallon', *seoltóir* /'sɔ:tɔ:rʲ/ 'a sailor'. Munster Irish on the other hand often stresses long vowels in non-initial syllables. If a word contains a long vowel in its second syllable, that syllable is stressed e.g. *scadán* /skə'da:m/ 'a herring', *seoltóir* /'sɔ:tɔ:rʲ/ 'a sailor'. A long vowel in a third syllable is stressed if all preceding vowels are short e.g. *peileadóir* /pʲeɫə'do:rʲ/ 'a footballer'. Similarly, the *-ach-* sequence in a second syllable attracts stress if the preceding syllable is short e.g. *gealach* /jə'tax/ 'a moon', *mallacht* /mə'tax/ 'a curse' but not in *eolach* /'o:təx/ 'knowledgable'. O'Rahilly (1932: 86–93) claims that this change occurred due to the influence of Norman French from the twelfth century onwards. However, in the same book he admits that French influence is not sufficient to explain all such stress shifts (1932: 92–3, 109–12). Recent attempts to account for this stress shift in Munster Irish tend to trace the origin of the shift to tensions within the language system itself and the rise of long vowels in second syllables, which upset the equilibrium that existed previously (Blankenhorn 1981, Ó Dochartaigh 1987 and Ó Sé 1989).

## MORPHOLOGY

Modern Irish has a large number of morphological changes, including initial consonant mutations, associated with the following grammatical categories: nouns, adjectives, verbs, prepositions, pronouns, articles, demonstratives and following numerals. The creation of compound words is also a productive process and involves initial consonant mutations on the second or subsequent subpart of the compound. The general rule is that the gender of compound words is dictated by the gender of their final element, e.g. *seanbhad* < *sean* + *bád* 'an old boat' has masculine gender – *bád* 'a boat' being a masculine noun; similarly, *leathbhróg* 'one shoe (of a pair)' is feminine – *bróg* 'a shoe' being a feminine noun. Some compounds, however, do not follow this rule and the gender of such compounds is

different from the gender of the final component. In such cases, the compound word has a different genitive singular and nominative plural form. The second component may also show a spelling difference in the modern standard language, reflecting the new declensional change, e.g. *loch* ‘a lake’, a feminine noun, has a genitive singular *locha* ~ *loiche* and the plural forms *locha* ~ *lochanna*. This word is also the second element of *fuarlach* ‘flooding from heavy rainfall’ < *fuar* ‘cold’ + *loch* ‘a lake’. The genitive singular and nominative plural of *fuarlach* is *fuarlaigh*. The flectional system of Old and Middle Irish was largely retained almost intact in the standard language of Early Modern Irish c. 1200–1650 (Ó Cuív 1973). Various descriptions of the modern Irish dialects of the twentieth century (de Bhaldraithe 1953, Wagner 1959, Lucas 1979, Ó Sé 1995, 2000, Ó Baoill 1996, Ó Murchú 1998 and Ó Buachalla 2003) indicate that the inflectional endings of nouns have to a large extent been abandoned except for initial consonant mutations. However, it appears that the modern dialects have preserved many of the inflectional endings in fossilized idiomatic expressions, proverbs etc., for us to be able to recover most of the extant endings previously in use.

### Noun morphology

The tendency shown by modern Irish usage is to have clear plural endings, to use the initial consonant mutations to mark the following cases: the singular and plural of the vocative and genitive and the dative singular. In the standard written language and in conservative speech, many of the previous case endings are maintained.

While two types of plural endings are extant in Irish, termed weak and strong endings, the tendency is overwhelmingly in favour of the strong endings. By way of explanation, Irish grammars have divided nouns into five declensional categories. The defining criterion for admission to each category is the form of the genitive singular ending, as follows:

- 1st declension >> genitive singular ends in a palatalized consonant e.g. *capall* > *capaill*, ‘a horse’, *crann* > *crainn* ‘a tree’, *éadach* > *éadaigh* ‘clothes’
- 2nd declension >> genitive singular ends in a palatalized consonant + ‘e’ e.g. *fuinneog* > *fuinneoige* ‘a window’, *amharclann* > *amharclainne* ‘a theatre’.
- 3rd declension >> genitive singular ends in a velarized consonant + ‘a’ e.g. *dlíodóir* > *dlíodóra* ‘a lawyer’, *iasacht* > *iasachta* ‘a loan’.
- 4th declension >> genitive singular is identical to the nominative singular form e.g. *cailín* > *cailín* ‘a girl’, *ainmhí* > *ainmhí* ‘an animal’.
- 5th declension >> genitive singular ends in velarized *-ch*, *-d*, *-(n)n* and *-r* e.g. *cathair* > *cathrach* ‘a city’, *cara* > *carad* ‘a friend’, *abhainn* > *abhann* ‘a river’, *athair* > *athar* ‘father’.

The 1st declension has in the majority of cases plural endings marked by palatalizing the final consonant, while many of the nouns in the 2nd declension create plurals by adding *-a* to the singular.<sup>33</sup> Those two types of plural formation have been termed ‘weak plurals’ in Irish grammars. All other plural endings have been categorized as strong plurals. They include the following *-(e)acha*, *-(e)anna*, *-(a)í*, *-t(h)a* and *-t(h)e*.<sup>34</sup> All nouns placed in the 3rd, 4th and 5th declensions take strong plural endings.<sup>35</sup> There are a small number of irregular nouns (about ten in number) which have not been placed in any declension e.g. *dia* > gen. sg. *dé* > pl. *déithe* ‘God’, *lá* > gen. sg. *lae* > pl. *laethanta* ‘day’, *teach* > gen. sg. *tí* > pl. *tithe* ‘a house’ (*Gramadach na Gaeilge agus Litriú na Gaeilge – An Caighdeán Oifigiúil* 1958/1975: 23–4).

### Adjectival morphology

The adjective normally follows the noun it qualifies.<sup>36</sup> When used attributively, it agrees with the preceding noun in gender, number and case. There is great variation across dialects, and agreement with the literary standard language is not always one to one.<sup>37</sup> The following examples outline the various agreements and changes in the modern dialects.

<b>Nom. sg.</b>	<b>Gen. sg.</b>	<b>Nom. pl.</b>	<b>Gen. pl.</b>
<i>an fear mór</i>	<i>an fhir mhóir</i>	<i>na fir mhóra</i>	<i>na bhfear mór</i> ‘the big man’
<i>an chloch bheag</i>	<i>na cloiche bige</i>	<i>na clocha beaga</i>	<i>na gcloch beag</i> ‘the little stone’

We can see from the second example that the article *an* exercises its influence on the following feminine noun by the process of initial mutation whereby *cloth* ‘a stone’ is changed to *chloch*. The noun in turn causes the following adjective to be mutated from *beag* ‘small’ to *bheag*. No such changes apply to the masculine *fear*. The other inflected forms also agree in case and number. The eclipsis in the genitive plural applies to the initial consonant of all nouns, and lenition is always the rule after nouns ending in a palatalized consonant as in *na fir mhóra*.

The declension of adjective plus noun combinations is quite a regular exercise in classrooms up to and including University level. However, work on different corpora produced by native speakers has shown that the attributive use of adjectives is avoided in common everyday speech (Ó hUallacháin 1966). This is achieved by using the predicative form of the adjectives in different constructions. This has been remarked on by different authors in the context of trying to find natural settings and examples where adjectives are used attributively (Wagner 1959: §473, de Bhaldraithe 1953: 117–24, Ó Sé 2000: 141–7).

The three degrees of comparison of the adjectives are constructed as follows in the modern language.

#### *Equative*

The most common and productive way of creating equative forms in present day Irish is to use the following formula – *chomh* + adjective + *le* + noun, e.g. *chomh milis le mil* ‘as sweet as honey’. In such constructions *chomh* is unstressed. In the examples given in (i) below, *comh* and the following noun/adjective have equal stress.

Use of the following devices is also possible to convey similar meanings:

- (i) *Bí* + *comh* + noun/adjective, e.g. *Tá siad comhaois* ‘They are the same age’, *Bhí siad comhard comhíseal* ‘They were of equal height and width’.
- (ii) Copula + *comh* + noun, e.g. *Ba comhaoisigh iad* ‘They were the same age’.
- (iii) *Bí* + prefix *in-* + genitive of a following noun + *le*, e.g. *Tá sí incheoil leat* ‘She is as fine a musician as you are’.

#### *Comparative and superlative*

There is no difference in form between the comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives in Modern Irish, due to the falling together of the two Old Irish endings *-(i)u* and *-em* and the subsequent reduction of *-(i)u* to the neutral vowel /ə/. Irish now expresses the comparative degree by using either of the following constructions, one using the verb of existence, the other the copula:

- (i) *Tá sé níos báine ná bainne*, or  
 (ii) *Is báine é ná bainne*.  
 ‘It is whiter than milk.’<sup>38</sup>

The superlative degree can only be expressed using a copular construction as in the following:

- (iii) *Sin an rud is fearr* ‘That is the best thing’

It should be pointed out here that adjectives denoting degrees of comparison are not inflected and this has been the case during all periods of the language. They are used only predicatively and a sentence such as (iii) above could be given the literal translation ‘That is the thing that is best’.

Although adjectives used predicatively were inflected and agreed fully with their corresponding nouns in earlier periods of the language, diachronic change has brought about different replacements. First of all, the copula has been replaced by the substantive verb and verb–subject agreement has been dropped. Similarly, the predicative adjective has dropped all agreement features with the subject. We are now left with sentences of the following type in the modern language where the subject *na páistí* ‘the children’ is in the plural and the verb *tá* and the adjective *óg* in the singular:

- (iv) *Tá na páistí óg* ‘The children are young’

## NUMERALS

In defining the cardinal numerals in Irish, one must distinguish between absolute use where no noun follows the numeral and the use of numerals with accompanying nouns. In the former case, the forms of the numerals are given below. They are normally preceded by the particle *a* which prefixes *h* to vowels,<sup>39</sup> but otherwise there are no changes.

1 <i>aon</i>	2 <i>dó</i>	3 <i>trí</i>	4 <i>ceathair</i>	5 <i>cúig</i>
6 <i>sé</i>	7 <i>seacht</i>	8 <i>ocht</i>	9 <i>naoi</i>	10 <i>deich</i>

They are also used in mathematical calculations of addition, subtraction, division and multiplication: e.g. *a dó is a trí sin a cúig* ‘two and three is five’, *a dó faoina cúig sin a deich* ‘two by five is ten’, *a naoi lúide a sé sin a trí* ‘nine minus six is three’. When counting something concrete the forms for two and four change to *dhá* and *ceithre*. Numerals always precede the nouns they qualify. The standard language dictates that the noun following numerals be in the singular but all dialects use both singular and plural forms after numerals. When the singular form of a noun is used, it is lenited after 3–6 and eclipsis is the rule after 7–10. However, when the plural forms are used they are left unchanged after 3–6 and eclipsed after 7–10. The following are illustrative examples:

<i>trí chat</i> ‘three cats’, <i>seacht mbó</i> ‘seven cows’	(singular only)
<i>cúig chathaoir/cathaoireacha</i> ‘five chairs’	(singular or plural)
<i>naoi gcoinneal/gcoinnle</i> ‘nine candles’	(singular or plural)

Adjectives accompanying nouns preceded by numerals are in the plural form. If the noun is in the singular the adjective is lenited. Plural nouns leave the adjective unlenited. The following illustrate the different usages:

*trí chat dhubha* ‘three black cats’, *seacht mbó bhána* ‘seven white cows’  
*cúig clocha beaga deasa* ‘five beautiful little stones’, *deich mbliana móra fada* ‘ten extremely long years’

The numbers ranging from 11–19 are composed of a combination of the cardinal numbers given above and the word *déag*. While the cardinal number precedes the noun, *déag* is placed after the noun. *Déag* also has a lenited form *dhéag* which follows singular nouns ending in a vowel.<sup>40</sup> The rules for lenition and eclipsis are the same as for cardinal numbers. The following illustrate the various usages.

*trí chapall déag* ‘thirteen horses’, *seacht mbosca dhéag* ‘seventeen boxes’

However, when a plural form of a noun is used dialectically, whether it be a diachronic or synchronic form, there is no lenition after a noun whose plural form ends in a vowel, e.g. *ceithre lámha déag* ‘fourteen hands’, *seacht gcathaoireacha déag* ‘seventeen chairs’. This is also the case in the standard language when nouns having a historical plural form are used with numerals, e.g. *ceithre bliana déag* ‘fourteen years’, *naoi n-uaire déag* ‘nineteen times’.

Nouns following numerals ending in ‘zero’ are followed by what appears to be the nominative singular form<sup>41</sup> e.g. *fiche duine* ‘twenty people’, *daichead mála* ‘forty bags’, *céad vóta* ‘one hundred votes’, *míle saighdiúir* ‘one thousand soldiers’.

Despite the promotion of the decimal system through the use of the literary language in education, the spoken language still prefers the use of the old vigesimal system based on units of twenty. This is particularly true of numbers between 21 and 99, e.g. *duine is fiche* ‘twenty-one people’, *cúig bliana is trí fichid* ‘sixty-five years’. The influence of English is also present through the use of the loanwords *scór* ‘twenty, score’ and *péire* ‘two of something’ e.g. *ocht mbliana is ceithre scór* ‘eighty-eight years (old)’, *péire capall* ‘a pair of horses’. There is a strong tendency in the traditional dialects to use English in expressing dates and in denoting sums of money.

## Personal numbers

Since the Old Irish period, Irish has had a specific system of personal numbers which are used when counting people. This is how they appear in modern Irish:

1 <i>duine</i>	2 <i>beirt</i>	3 <i>triúr</i>	4 <i>ceathrar</i>	5 <i>cúigear</i>
6 <i>seisear</i>	7 <i>seachtar</i>	8 <i>ochtar</i>	9 <i>naonúr</i>	10 <i>deichniúr</i>
11 <i>aon duine dhéag</i> <sup>42</sup>	12 <i>dhá dhuine dhéag/dáréag</i>	13 <i>trí dhuine dhéag</i>		
17 <i>seacht nduine dhéag</i>	20 <i>fiche duine</i>			

Historically, the personal numbers 3–10 are compounds of the cardinal numbers plus *fear* ‘a man’ e.g. *seachtar* = *seacht* ‘7’ + *fear* ‘seven people’. When the initial *f* of *fear* is lenited, as it is wont to be in compounds, it disappears leaving *ear*. Modern Irish has *duine* ‘a person’ to denote ‘one person’.<sup>43</sup> Counting from 11 to 19 is similar to the situation with the cardinal numbers. As the initial numbers in 11–19 are identical to the cardinal numbers, they initiate the same processes as those we described above for the cardinals.

Lenition follows the numbers 11–16 and eclipsis 17–19, as shown by the examples given above. The use of *déag/dhéag* is as outlined for the cardinal numbers. The use of *déag* is illustrated below:

*ceithre easpag déag* ‘fourteen bishops’, *ocht n-easpag déag* ‘eighteen bishops’

## Ordinals

Ordinals in Irish precede the noun. If we ignore the first three ordinals, the rest all end in *-(i)ú* in Modern Irish. They are followed by the singular form of the noun and prefix *h* to nouns beginning with a vowel. Here are some illustrative examples:

*an ceathrú duine* ‘the fourth person’, *an cúigiú háit déag* ‘the fifteenth place’

For ordinals above twenty, the traditional formula is as follows:

*an seachtú duine is fiche* ‘the twenty-seventh person’  
*an cúigiú caibidil is seasca* ‘the sixty-fifth chapter’

For ease in mathematical teaching, a different ordering sequence is used with the central noun coming at the end, as indicated below:

*an seasca cúigiú caibidil* ‘the sixty-fifth chapter’

Ordinals 1–3 show more variation in Modern Irish and each has at least two forms. I list them below:

*an chéad/an t-aonú* ‘the first’, *an dara/an tarna/an darna* ‘the second’  
*an treas/an tríú* ‘the third’

*An chéad* is the most common way of translating English ‘first’. *Aonú* and *an t-aonú* are used to denote 11th, 21st, 31st etc., e.g. *an chéad áit* ‘the first place’, *an t-aonú háit déag* ‘the eleventh place’, *an t-aonú lá fichead* ‘the twenty-first day (of the month)’. Similarly *treas* is limited in usage and can only translate English ‘third’; it cannot be used in translating ‘thirteenth’ or ‘twenty third’. The following exemplify each usage:

*an treas áit/an tríú háit* ‘the third place’, *an tríú duine déag* ‘the thirteenth person’,  
*an dara mac* ‘the second son’, *an dara lá is fiche* ‘the twenty-second day’

## ADVERBS

In Modern Irish, adverbs are formed from adjectives by placing the particle *go* before the adjective e.g. *maith* ‘good’ > *go maith* ‘well’, *deas* ‘nice’ > *go deas* ‘nicely’. There are other adverbs with no underlying adjectival root e.g. *go dona* ‘badly’, *go minic* ‘often’. The particle *go* is often omitted especially when qualified by other modifiers, e.g. *measartha mór* ‘reasonably big’, *breá ard* ‘fine and tall’ as compared with *go measartha* ‘reasonable’ and *go breá* ‘fine’ (de Bhaldraithe 1953: §401, Ó Sé 2000: §755). All dialects of Irish often have a tendency to use adjectives on their own in an adverbial function,

e.g. *ag ól trom* ‘drinking heavily’, *ina luí socair* ‘lying quietly’, *phós siad óg* ‘they married young’, *ag caint ard* ‘talking loudly’. The comparative form of the adjective which we have already discussed above can also be used adverbially. This comparative form is preceded by a comparative particle which historically is based on the combination of the neuter pronoun *ní* plus *as* a relative form of the copula. There is a corresponding past tense/conditional form *níba*. Both *níos* and *níba* can be combined with the comparative form of adjectives and used predicatively as adverbs. This predicative use of the adverb takes place mostly with the substantive verb but may also be used with many other verbs as well e.g. *Bhí siad anseo níba luaithe* ‘They were here earlier’, *Shiúil sé níos gaiste* ‘He walked faster’. Irish is very fond of fronting words and phrases for emphasis and adverbs of degree are no exception to this tendency. They can be found with and without the particle *go* and they are followed by a direct relative clause,<sup>44</sup> e.g. *Ní (go) rómhaith a thuigim thú* ‘I don’t understand you too well’. There is and has been a great tendency in Irish to use normal adjectives for emphasis, and in these circumstances they function adverbially. These have also contributed to the colour and character of Irish English as Irish has formed a substratum from which bilingual speakers have drawn throughout the history of bilingual contact in Ireland, a period of some 400 years and still ongoing. Here are some illustrative examples:

*Tá sé iontach deacair* ‘It is extremely difficult’ – *iontach* = ‘wonderful, surprising’,  
*Bhí sí fiánta láidir* ‘She was very strong’ – *fiánta* = ‘wild, fierce’ Ir.E. She was wild strong.

Irish also has a more neutral prefix *an-* which expresses the same meaning, e.g. *Tá sé an-deacair* ‘It is very difficult’. Repetition of the prefix denotes increased emphasis, e.g. *Bhí sé an-an-mhaith* ‘It was really really good’.

### Directional and locational adverbs

There are many other features of adverbial use that could be touched upon, but as space is of the essence, perhaps we should focus on one of the most characteristic features of Irish, namely, the use of directional adverbs to convey subtle and important semantic and pragmatic differences. These usages have been common in both the written and spoken registers of Irish for more than a millennium and a half. Some of their peculiarities also form part of the intuitions of Irish English speakers in appropriate contexts. Adverbs of direction adhere to a very compact and coherent set of rules when describing movement (a) to and from set geographical locations and (b) away from and towards the location of the speaker. Similarly, a set of forms, which are syntactically and semantically related to the directional adverbs, are used in defining the location of people and objects. The proper use of these directional adverbs has been a challenge to learners and even to competent bilingual speakers.

The position of the speaker is pivotal to all usages. Movement to and from the speaker is the focus at all times – such usages can also be imagined, that is to say, that in order to be properly understood, the speaker sets the scenario where the position of all participants is fixed for the rest of the discourse. This helps the audience to understand the context in which a story is placed and related. This type of situation is very similar to the use made in sign language of preset positions to facilitate various narratives.<sup>45</sup> The creation of the particular lexical items to indicate the various directions follows a specific pattern as shown by the following:

Table 6.7 Directional adverbs

Lexical root	Direction away from speaker	Direction towards speaker	Defined position	Undefined position
<i>uas</i> 'above'	<i>suas</i>	<i>anuas</i>	<i>thuas</i>	<i>suas</i>
<i>íos</i> 'below'	<i>síos</i>	<i>aníós</i>	<i>thíos</i>	<i>síos</i>
<i>iar</i> 'to the west'	<i>siar</i>	<i>aniar</i>	<i>thiar</i>	<i>siar</i>
<i>oir</i> 'to the east'	<i>soir</i>	<i>anoir</i>	<i>thoir</i>	<i>soir</i>

The following demonstrate particular usages.

(a) When the speaker is downstairs:

*suas an staire* 'up the stairs', *anuas an staire* 'down the stairs', *thuas staire* 'upstairs'

(b) When the speaker is upstairs:

*síos an staire* 'down the stairs', *aníós an staire* 'up the stairs', *thíos staire* 'downstairs'

(c) Spatial movement to the east/west:

*Chuaigh sé siar* 'he went westwards', *tá sé thiar* 'he is in the west', *tiocfaidh sé aniar* 'He will come from the west'

(d) Undefined position:

*Tá sí thuas ansin* 'She is up there (defined place)' (The place can be seen or pointed out) *Tá sí suas ansin* 'She is up there (undefined place)' (The place cannot be seen or pointed out).<sup>46</sup>

For other geographical positions and relationships, the lexical items shown in Table 6.8 are used.

Table 6.8 Other geographical positions

Lexical root	Direction away from speaker	Direction towards speaker	Defined position	Undefined position
<i>all</i> 'beyond'	<i>sall</i> , <i>anonn</i>	<i>anall</i>	<i>thall</i> , <i>abhus</i>	<i>anonn</i>
<i>tuaidh</i> 'north'	<i>ó thuaidh</i>	<i>aduaidh</i>	<i>ó thuaidh</i>	<i>ó thuaidh</i>
<i>eas</i> 'east'	<i>ó dheas</i>	<i>aneas</i>	<i>theas</i> , <i>ó dheas</i>	<i>ó dheas</i>

*Sall/anonn* and its related forms are used when one is referring to positions removed from the speaker and on the far side of certain geographical or manmade features such as rivers, seas, hills, bridges etc., e.g. *sall/anonn go Meiriceá* 'over to America', *anall*

(*ar*) *an droichead* ‘across (on) the bridge’, *thall ag an doras* ‘over at the door (defined position)’, *abhus anseo* ‘over here (beside the speaker)’, *Tháinig siad aduaidh ar maidin* ‘They came from the north this morning’, *siar ó dheas* ‘south westwards’, *anonn ansin* ‘over there somewhere (undefined position)’. There are many other intricacies involved in the use of directional adverbs which cannot be entered into here. For further details see Ó Baoill (1975: 144–61).

## PREPOSITIONS

Modern Irish has inherited most of the prepositions of O.Ir. These simple prepositions can appear on their own, with the definite article *an/na* or with personal inflectional endings.<sup>47</sup> When not inflected, they may appear on their own or with the definite article *an/na*. Most preposition + article combinations cause lenition or eclipsis on a following singular noun, e.g. *ar an bhád/mbád* ‘on the boat’.<sup>48</sup> Plural nouns are left unchanged, e.g. *ar na báid* ‘on the boats’. In some dialects, remnants of the dative singular form of feminine nouns have been recorded, e.g. *ag an fhuinneog/bhfuinneog* ‘at the window’ < *fuinneog* ‘window’, *píosa den mhuic* ‘a piece of the pig’ < *muc* ‘a pig’.<sup>49</sup>

In the transition to Mod. Ir., many simple prepositions have been reconstructed and have been replaced by forms which correspond to the 3rd person singular masculine, e.g. O.Ir. *oc* ‘at’ > Mod. Ir. *ag* /eɣ/<sup>50</sup> from *aige* ‘at him’, O.Ir. *co* ‘to’ > Mod. Ir. *chui*g from *chuige* ‘to him’. Mod. Ir. is also very fond of creating compound prepositions, usually consisting of a preposition + noun sequence, e.g. O.Ir. *os* ‘above’ > Mod. Ir. *os cionn* ‘above’, O.Ir. *imm* ‘about, around’ > Mod. Ir. *timpeall*, O.Ir. *iar* ‘after’ > Mod. Ir. *i ndiaidh/tar éis*.

As every student of Modern Irish knows, one must master the ‘conjugated prepositions’ in order to be clearly understood and communicate effectively. The following paradigms show the various forms for *ag* ‘at’, *ar* ‘on’, *as* ‘from’ and *do* ‘to’:

Table 6.9 Conjugated prepositions

Number	<i>ag</i> ‘at’	<i>ar</i> ‘on’	<i>as</i> ‘from, out of’	<i>do</i> ‘to’
1 sg.	<i>agam</i>	<i>orm</i>	<i>asam</i>	<i>dom</i>
2 sg.	<i>agat</i>	<i>ort</i>	<i>asat</i>	<i>duit</i>
3 sg. masc.	<i>aige</i>	<i>air</i>	<i>as</i>	<i>dó</i>
fem.	<i>aici</i>	<i>uirthi</i>	<i>aisti</i>	<i>di</i>
1 pl.	<i>againn</i>	<i>orainn</i>	<i>asainn</i>	<i>dúinn</i>
2 pl.	<i>agaibh</i>	<i>oraibh</i>	<i>asaibh</i>	<i>daoibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>acu</i>	<i>orthu</i>	<i>astu</i>	<i>dóibh</i>

We have already mentioned that *gan* ‘without’ has lost all pronominal inflection. *Idir* ‘between, among’ also has an incomplete paradigm, retaining only plural forms in most cases. All dialects seem to have retained the plural endings when expressing the meaning ‘among’ e.g. *eadrainn* ‘among us’, *eadraibh* ‘among you (pl.)’, *eatarthu* ‘among them’ as in *Roinn muid eadrainn iad* ‘We divided them among ourselves’. Ulster Irish has retained the plural forms for the meaning ‘between’ where the other dialects seem to prefer to use simple pronouns after *idir*, e.g. *eadrainn agus an teach* ‘between us and the house’. Connaught usage seems to prefer *idir muid agus an teach*.

## Compound prepositions

Many Irish prepositions are made up of two constituents – a preposition plus a noun – and are generally followed by the genitive case.<sup>51</sup> These are relatively frequent and productive within the language system and play a major role in the creation of relative clauses and non finite clauses containing a verbal noun. Here are some examples that show the various usages:

*i ndiaidh* ‘after’, *i ndiaidh an turais* ‘after the journey’, *i ndiaidh imeacht chun an bhaile* ‘having returned home’ (Ir.E. after returning home), *i ndiaidh a raibh ráite leis* ‘despite all that had been said to him’, *de réir na scéalta* ‘according to the stories’, *faoi cheann seachtaine* ‘in a week’s time’.

Simple prepositions are always unstressed. However, the second element of compound prepositions, being always a noun in origin, bears stress. There are three one word prepositions that act in a similar way to compound prepositions, namely, *chun* ‘to, towards’, *timpeall* ‘around’ and *trasna* ‘across’, the last two bearing stress, e.g. *trasna an bhóthair* ‘across the road’. In Irish, many simple prepositions combine with verbs to create new meanings. In many instances such prepositions end up being used adverbally and become part of the regular lexicon. In these cases, the inflected third person singular masculine is used. The following are typical examples:

*Bhí an ghrian ag dul faoi* ‘The sun was setting’ < *faoi* ‘under’ (Note the masculine gender of *faoi* despite *grian* being feminine.)  
*Tá mé ag baint lá de* ‘I am taking it day by day’ < *de* ‘from, off’  
*Cha raibh a leithéid ann* ‘There was no such person/thing’ < *i* ‘in’  
*Chaith do shúil uait* ‘Look around you’ < *ó* ‘(away) from’

## PRONOMINAL USAGE

Table 6.10 The Modern Irish pronominal and possessive forms<sup>1</sup>

Number	Personal pronouns		Possessive forms	
	Unemphatic	Emphatic	Unemphatic	Emphatic
1 sg.	<i>mé</i>	<i>mise</i>	<i>mo</i> + lenition	<i>mo</i> + lenition + <i>-sa/-se</i>
2 sg.	<i>tú/thú</i>	<i>tusa/thusa</i>	<i>do</i> + lenition	<i>do</i> + lenition + <i>-sa/-se</i>
3 sg. masc.	<i>sé/é</i>	<i>seisean/eisean</i>	<i>a</i> + lenition	<i>a</i> + lenition + <i>-san/-sean</i>
3 sg. fem.	<i>sí/í</i>	<i>sise/eise</i>	<i>a</i> + ‘h’ before vowels	<i>a</i> + ‘h’ before vowels + <i>-sa/-se</i>
1 pl.	<i>sinn, muid</i>	<i>sinne, muidne</i>	<i>ár</i> + eclipsis	<i>ár</i> + eclipsis + <i>-na/-ne</i>
2 pl.	<i>sibh</i>	<i>sibhse</i>	<i>bhur</i> + eclipsis	<i>bhur</i> + eclipsis + <i>-sa/-se</i>
3 pl.	<i>siad/iad</i>	<i>siadsan/iadsan</i>	<i>a</i> + eclipsis	<i>a</i> + eclipsis + <i>-san/-sean</i>

Note

1 When two different forms are given separated by a comma, it means that they are legitimate variants. When two forms are separated by a solidus, the second is the accusative form. The *tú/thú* distinction is

found only in Connacht and Ulster dialects. It should be pointed out that all forms beginning with ‘s’ e.g. *sé, sí, siad* are subject forms – the forms without ‘s’ e.g. *é/í/iad* are used in all other positions.

One of the salient developments of the Irish pronominal system has been the ever increasing independent use of pronouns, where previously they had been infixed or suffixed to the verb when acting as subject or object of that verb. In Mod. Ir. personal pronouns are normally unstressed in unmarked descriptive sentences. In various types of narrative and in certain interchanges, however, they can be stressed. The importance of the distinction lies in the fact that the long vowels retain their full length and quality when stressed, and are short or half long when unstressed.<sup>52</sup> Pronouns are always stressed when they are used as predicates of the copula, e.g. *Is tú/tusa mo mhac* ‘You are my son’. In such sentences both *tú* and *tusa* carry equal stress. However, in unmarked statements pronouns whether subject or object receive only very light stress.<sup>53</sup> The following short sentences illustrate the unstressed/stressed (in bold) usage:

unstressed *Tá mé anseo* ‘I am here’, *An bhfuil tú réidh?* ‘Are you ready?’  
 stressed *An **tú** Dónall?* ‘Are you Dónall?’ , *Is **mé*** ‘Yes, I am’  
 unstressed and stressed pronoun sequence: *Ní rachaidh sí* ‘She won’t go’,  
*Rachaidh **sí*** ‘She will (don’t you worry)’

When there is a need to emphasize a pronoun in unmarked statements, the emphatic form must be used. These emphatic forms are stressed in a similar way to nouns, e.g. *D’áithin Dónall t(h)ú* ‘Dónall recognized you’ contrasts with *D’áithin Dónall t(h)usa* ‘Dónall recognized **you**’.<sup>54</sup>

O.Ir. had a third person singular neutral pronoun *ed*, which survives in modern Irish. It is now, in the revised literary standard, spelled *ea* but the older spelling *eadh* would suit many Ulster dialects better as its dialectal pronunciation is /a/ only in areas of South Donegal.<sup>55</sup> Connacht and Munster dialects have copular classification sentences of the type, e.g. *Duine breá is ea é* ‘He is a fine person’, *Múinteoir is ea í* ‘She is a teacher’<sup>56</sup> (de Bhaldraithe 1953: 88–106, Ó Sé 2000: 340–63). This type of sentence is unknown in Ulster where the substantive verb plus the preposition *i* ‘in’ in its appropriate grammatical form is used instead e.g. *Múinteoir breá atá ann* ‘He is a fine teacher’.

Ulster and Connacht also have copular sentences of the type (*Is*) *duine breá é*, which more or less corresponds in meaning to *Duine breá is ea é*. This latter sentence has a fronted or focused constituent *Duine breá* followed by a relative copular sentence.

With regard to possessives, there are different strategies to denote possession. The most common strategy is to use the possessive pronouns outlined in Table 6.10 with their various mutations and emphatic forms, e.g. *mo bhean* ‘my wife’, *mo bheansa* ‘**my** wife (emph.)’, *a dteach féin* ‘their own house’, *a dteachsan* ‘**their** house (emph.)’. Many Connacht dialects use only *a* + eclipsis for all the plural forms e.g. *An bhfuil a ndóthain airgid agaibh?* ‘Do you (pl.) have enough money?’ In order to help differentiation, a new strategy has evolved whereby nouns are qualified by the emphatic form of the personal pronoun, e.g. *a mbróga muide/sibhse/siadsan* ‘our/your (pl.)/their shoes’.

The use of *cuid* ‘part, portion, share’ with possessive pronouns and followed by the genitive of nouns, is also a major strategy for indicating possession in Mod. Ir. The use of *cuid* is on the increase as one moves from Munster northwards towards Ulster. We therefore get pairs such as the following with identical meaning:

*mo ghruag/mo chuid gruaige* ‘my hair’, *m’fhéasóg/mo chuid féasóige* ‘my beard’

There are various classes of nouns which do not allow the use of the possessive pronouns on their own and have to be accompanied by *cuid*. Some of these classes are listed below:

- (a) Food, e.g. *mo chuid bainne/tae/feola* 'my milk/tea/meat'
- (b) Wealth, e.g. *do chuid airgid/talaimh/féir* 'your money/land/hay'
- (c) Languages, e.g. *bhur gcuid Gaeilge/Béarla/Fraincise* 'your Irish/English/French'
- (d) Occupation, e.g. *ár gcuid múinteoireachalteagaisc/ceoil* 'our teaching/instruction/music'
- (e) Effort, e.g. *a cuid oibre/ama/trioblóide* 'her work/time/trouble'

This usage has been extended to other domains within Ulster Irish, e.g. *mo chuid súile/lámha/deartháireacha* 'my eyes/hands/brothers'.<sup>57</sup> A further interesting development in the Ulster dialects is the use of double genitives in expressing possession, e.g. *cuid airgid Dhónaill* 'Dónall's money', *cuid eallaigh an fhir seo* 'This man's cattle'.<sup>58</sup>

The following usages are also worthy of mention: (a) the use of the demonstratives *seo/sin* 'this/that' plus the preposition *ag* as in *an carr seo agamsa* 'this car of mine', *an teach sin agaibhse* 'that house of yours'; (b) in referring to one object of many belonging to someone, the possessed noun is indefinite and followed by *de* 'of' + *cuid* 'part, share', e.g. *carr de chuid Dhónaill* 'one of Dónall's cars'. When people are involved, use is made of the prepositions *do* 'nearness in relationship' or *le* 'belonging to', e.g. *mac leis/dó* 'a son of his', *cara leis/dó* 'a friend of his'. The use of the formula in (a) has been extended even further in Ulster Irish and is now one of the principal ways of expressing possession. In this latter usage, the phrase *seo agam(sa)* > *s'agam(sa)* where the initial *s* is always velarized /s/. This applies to all persons, e.g. *an leabhar s'agam* 'my book', *an t-airgead s'acu* 'their money', *an fear s'aici* 'her husband'. The possessive forms are also used with compound prepositions, e.g. *i ndiaidh* 'after' > *i mo dhiaidh* 'after me', *os cionn* 'above' > *os ár gcionn* 'above us', *in éadan* 'against' > *in bhur n-éadan* 'against you (pl.)'. Mod. Ir. *féin* expresses the idea of 'self' and 'own'. It follows the personal pronoun and possessive noun phrases and receives stress e.g. *tú féin* 'yourself', *do mhuintir féin* 'your own people'.

When subject pronouns became detached from their verbal complex around the eleventh century, a further development took place whereby these pronouns could also now act as objects, as shown by Mod. Ir., *brisimid iad* 'we break them'. While some of the Irish pronouns had specific accusative forms, nevertheless, the order of the constituents within an Irish sentence became fixed as verb, subject, object. This created a semantic ambiguity in sentences containing pronouns undifferentiated for nominative/accusative forms, e.g. *an fear a chonaic mé* 'the man that I saw/the man that saw me'. However, no such ambiguity arose in sentences of the following type, e.g. *an fear a chonaic sé* 'the man that he saw', *an fear a chonaic é* 'the man that saw him'. This applies in all dialects. In Ulster and Connacht a similar distinction is made between *tú/thú* 'you (sg.)', e.g. *an fear a bhuail tú* 'the man that you beat' and *an fear a bhuail thú* 'the man that beat you'.

## INTERROGATIVES

*Cé* is the form of the personal interrogative pronoun in Mod. Ir., e.g. *Cé (hé) sin?* 'Who is that (person)?' Before relative clauses it may stand alone or precede a definite noun or noun phrase, e.g. *Cé a bhí ann?* 'Who was it?', *Cén teach a raibh sé ann?* 'What house was he in?' When prepositional interrogatives are used, they are normally placed at the

head of their clause, e.g. *Cé leis a raibh tú ag caint?* 'To whom were you talking?'<sup>59</sup> The non personal forms *Cad é?*, *Céard?* stand on their own, e.g. *Cad é a rinne sé?* 'What did he do?', *Céard a dúirt siad?* 'What did they say?'

In a similar way to pronominal *Cé?*, adverbial interrogatives such as *Cé/Cá?* 'Where?' may occur on their own or they may combine with a following noun, e.g. *Cá raibh sibh?* 'Where were you?', *Cáit/Cá háit a bhfaca tú iad?* 'Where did you see them?', *Cén chaoi a bhfuil sibh?* 'How are you (pl.)?'

The positive interrogative particles in Mod.Ir. are *An?* + eclipsis, *Ar?* + lenition (Past Tense only) and the corresponding negatives are *ná*,<sup>60</sup> *nach* + eclipsis and *nár* + lenition (Past Tense/Preterite only), e.g. *An dtuigeann tú?* 'Do you understand?', *Ar chuala tú sin?* 'Did you hear that?', *Nach dtuigeann tú é?* 'Do you not understand it?', *Nár chuala tú?* 'Did you not hear?'

## DEMONSTRATIVES AND THE DEFINITE ARTICLE

Irish has a three-way deictic referential demonstrative system. *Seo* refers to proximity to the speaker, *sin* to an area removed from the speaker but within sight and *siúd/úd* to a third position removed from both *seo* and *sin*. They act as demonstrative adjectives when combined with a definite noun phrase e.g. *an doras seo* 'this door', *an chathaoir sin* 'that chair (over there)', *an leabhar úd* 'The book you mentioned'.<sup>61</sup>

The Irish definite article has only two distinct forms *an/na*. They precede the noun. *An* is the singular form and *na* is either a genitive singular feminine form or is the plural form (both genders). Irish has never had an indefinite article and unqualified nouns act as indefinites. The definite article *an* causes lenition of feminine nouns, e.g. *an chearc* 'the chicken', and of masculine nouns in the genitive singular e.g. *taobh an bháid* 'The side of the boat'. Plural *na* causes eclipsis of all genitive plural nouns and prefixes *h* to vowels in other case forms e.g. *luach na mbád* 'The price of the boats', *ar na hoileáin* 'On the islands'.

The genitive singular feminine *na* also prefixes *h* to vowels e.g. *tús na hoibre* 'The beginning of the work'.

Definite nouns, whether qualified by the article or by a possessive pronoun, cannot be preceded by another definite noun in Mod. Ir. e.g. *teach an dochtúra* 'The doctor's house', *aois do mháthar* 'Your mother's age' but not \**an teach an dochtúra*, \**an aois do mháthar*.

## THE VERBAL SYSTEM

The Modern Irish verbal system is a complex one both in its expression of semantic distinctions and in its morphology. It distinguishes three moods, indicative, imperative and subjunctive.

### Conjugation

The following paradigms illustrate the various forms of the indicative mood. Other moods are illustrated below. The recommended standard forms are given on the left and the dialectal historical forms, which have not been included in the standard, appear to the right in parentheses.

The verbal endings appearing in each tense are according to whichever conjugation the verb belongs to. All one-syllable verbs, two-syllable verbs ending in  $-(e)áil$ <sup>62</sup> and a small number of two-syllable verbs, which are not syncopated (lose their second syllable) when a third or fourth syllable is added, belong to the first conjugation. All other two-syllable verbs belong to the second conjugation.<sup>63</sup>

Table 6.11 Verbal paradigms, indicative mood

## Present

### Conjugation 1

1 sg.	<i>ólaim</i> ‘I drink’	<i>brisim</i> ‘I break’	<i>sábhálaim</i> ‘I save’
2 sg.	<i>ólann tú (ólair)</i>	<i>briseann tú (brisir)</i>	<i>sábhálann tú (sábhálair)</i>
3 sg.	<i>ólann sé/sí</i>	<i>briseann sé/sí</i>	<i>sábhálann sé/sí</i>
1 pl.	<i>ólaimid/ólann muid</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>brisimid/briseann muid</i>	<i>sábhálaimid/sábhálann muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>ólann sibh</i>	<i>briseann sibh</i>	<i>sábhálann sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>ólann siad (ólaid)</i>	<i>briseann siad (brisid)</i>	<i>sábhálann siad (sábhálaid)</i>
Aut.	<i>óltar</i>	<i>bristear</i>	<i>sábháiltear</i> <sup>2</sup>

### Conjugation 2

1 sg.	<i>ordaím</i> ‘I order’	<i>ceanglaím</i> <sup>3</sup> ‘I tie’
2 sg.	<i>ordaíonn tú (ordaír)</i>	<i>ceanglaíonn tú (ceanglaír)</i>
3 sg.	<i>ordaíonn sé/sí</i>	<i>ceanglaíodh sé/sí</i>
1 pl.	<i>ordaímid/ordaíonn muid</i>	<i>ceanglaímid/ceanglaíonn muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>ordaíonn sibh</i>	<i>ceanglaíonn sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>ordaíonn siad (ordaíd)</i>	<i>ceanglaíonn siad (ceanglaíd)</i>
Aut.	<i>ordaítear</i>	<i>ceanglaítear</i>

## Imperfect

### Conjugation 1

1 sg.	<i>d’ólainn</i>	<i>bhrisinn</i>	<i>shábhálainn</i>
2 sg.	<i>d’óltá</i>	<i>bhristeá</i>	<i>shábháilteá</i>
3 sg.	<i>d’óladh sé/sí</i>	<i>bhriseadh sé/sí</i>	<i>shábháladh sé/sí</i>
1 pl.	<i>d’ólaimis</i>	<i>bhrisimis/bhriseadh</i>	<i>shábhálaimis/shábháladh muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>d’óladh sibh</i>	<i>bhriseadh sibh</i>	<i>shábháladh sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>d’ólaidís/d’óladh siad</i>	<i>bhrisidís/bhriseadh siad</i>	<i>shábhálaidís/shábháladh siad</i>
Aut.	<i>d’óltáí</i>	<i>bhristí</i>	<i>shábháilteáí</i>

### Conjugation 2

1 sg.	<i>d’ordaínn</i>	<i>cheanglaínn</i>
2 sg.	<i>d’ordaíteá</i>	<i>cheanglaíteá</i>
3 sg.	<i>d’ordaíodh sé/sí</i>	<i>cheanglaíodh sé/sí</i>
1 pl.	<i>d’ordaímis/d’ordaíodh muid</i>	<i>cheanglaímis/cheanglaíodh muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>d’ordaíodh sibh</i>	<i>cheanglaíodh sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>d’ordaíodh siad</i>	<i>cheanglaíodh siad</i>
Aut.	<i>d’ordaíteáí</i>	<i>cheanglaíteáí</i>

**Past/preterite****Conjugation 1**

1 sg.	<i>d'ól mé (d'ólas)</i>	<i>bhris mé (bhriseas)</i>	<i>shábháil mé (shábhálas)</i>
2 sg.	<i>d'ól tú (d'ólais)</i>	<i>bhris tú (bhrisis)</i>	<i>shábháil tú (shábhálais)</i>
3 sg.	<i>d'ól sé/sí</i>	<i>bhris sé/sí</i>	<i>shábháil sé/sí</i>
1 pl.	<i>d'ólar/d'ól muid</i>	<i>bhriseamar/bhris muid</i>	<i>shábhálar/shábháil muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>d'ól sibh (d'ólabhair)</i>	<i>bhris sibh (bhriseabhair)</i>	<i>shábháil sibh (shábhálabhair)</i>
3 pl.	<i>d'ól siad (d'óladar)</i>	<i>bhris siad (bhriseadar)</i>	<i>shábháil siad (shábháladar)</i>
Aut.	<i>óladh</i>	<i>briseadh</i>	<i>sábháladh</i>

**Conjugation 2**

1 sg.	<i>d'ordaigh mé (d'ordaíos)</i>	<i>cheangail mé (cheanglaíos)</i>
2 sg.	<i>d'ordaigh tú (d'ordaís)</i>	<i>cheangail tú (cheanglaís)</i>
3 sg.	<i>d'ordaigh sé/sí</i>	<i>cheangail sé/sí</i>
1 pl.	<i>d'ordaíomar/d'ordaigh muid</i>	<i>cheanglaíomar/cheangail muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>d'ordaigh sibh (d'ordaíobhair)</i>	<i>cheangail sibh (cheanglaíobhair)</i>
3 pl.	<i>d'ordaigh siad (d'ordaíodar)</i>	<i>cheangail siad (cheanglaíodar)</i>
Aut.	<i>ordaíodh</i>	<i>cheanglaíodh</i>

**Future****Conjugation 1**

1 sg.	<i>ólfaidh mé (ólfad)</i>	<i>brisfidh mé (brisfead)</i>	<i>sábhálfaidh mé (sábhálfad)</i>
2 sg.	<i>ólfaidh tú (ólfair)</i>	<i>brisfidh tú (brisfir)</i>	<i>sábhálfaidh tú (sábhálfair)</i>
3 sg.	<i>ólfaidh sé/sí</i>	<i>brisfidh sé/sí</i>	<i>sábhálfaidh sé/sí</i>
1 pl.	<i>ólfaimid/ólfaidh muid</i> (ólfam)	<i>brisfimid/brisfidh muid</i> (brisfeam)	<i>sábhálfaimid/sábhálfaidh muid</i> (sábhálfam)
2 pl.	<i>ólfaidh sibh</i>	<i>brisfidh sibh</i>	<i>sábhálfaidh sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>ólfaidh siad (ólfaid)</i>	<i>brisfidh siad (brisfid)</i>	<i>sábhálfaidh siad (sábhálfaid)</i>
Aut.	<i>ólfar</i>	<i>brisfear</i>	<i>sábhálfar</i>

**Conjugation 2**

1 sg.	<i>ordóidh mé (ordód)</i>	<i>ceanglóidh mé (ceanglód)</i>
2 sg.	<i>ordóidh tú (ordóir)</i>	<i>ceanglóidh tú (ceanglóir)</i>
3 sg.	<i>ordóidh sé/sí</i>	<i>ceanglóidh sé/sí</i>
1 pl.	<i>ordóimid/ordóidh muid</i> (ordóm)	<i>ceanglóimid/ceanglóidh muid</i> (ceanglóm)
2 pl.	<i>ordóidh sibh</i>	<i>ceanglóidh sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>ordóidh siad (ordóid)</i>	<i>ceanglóidh siad (ceanglóid)</i>
Aut.	<i>ordófar</i>	<i>ceanglófar</i>

**Notes**

- The pronoun *sinn* 'we' can also be used as a standard form according to Ó Dónaill's 1977 dictionary. He gives the following example – *Tá sinn go léir anseo* 'We are all here.' Whenever the pronoun *muid* is used in other tenses, the reader may assume that it can be replaced by *sinn*.
- The vagaries of the spelling of each ending are due to the application of the Irish rule '*caol le caol agus leathan le leathan*' which is merely a spelling convention standardized by the poets some 800 years ago. Broad/velarized consonants (those called *leathan* above) must be preceded and followed by vowels from the group *a/á, o/ó, u/ú*. Slender/palatalized consonants (those called *caol* above) must be

preceded or followed by vowels from the group *i/í, e/é*. Thus, the endings *-(a)im/-im* and *-(e)ann/-ann*, respectively, are pronounced the same despite the spelling.

3 This verb often retains its second syllable in some dialects, e.g. *ceangalaím*, etc.

## Tense and mood

In certain respects the tense/aspectual distinctions in Irish are not unlike those found in English. Both languages seem to have a progressive/non-progressive distinction throughout the verbal systems. As Irish does not possess a verb HAVE, it has had to devise ways of dealing with and expressing semantic distinctions, which are an integral part of the English verbal system through the use of 'HAVE'. It has at times succeeded and at other times the comparison is not quite complete. Much of this has been accomplished by the use of the verb *bí* 'to be' in combination with the preposition *ag* 'at'. One must be careful of prescribed grammars and their recommendations as they tend to centralize and standardize distinctions found in dialects and across dialects. However, as we move into the study of mood in Irish much of the parallelism between Irish and English breaks down. These matters will be discussed in more detail below.

### *Habitual versus punctuality*

The Irish verb distinguishes between progressive and habitual action in the present and imperfect tenses. The habitual can also be interpreted as generic in nature and depends for its interpretation on the semantic load carried by particular verbs. The verb endings denoting habitual action in the present tense are *-(e)ann* and *-(a)íonn*.<sup>64</sup> The following examples show the distinctions made in the present tense.

- (1) *Tá Seán ag scríobh litir fhada.*  
'Seán is writing a long letter.'
- (2) *Scríobhann Seán litir fhada gach lá.*  
'Seán writes a long letter every day.'
- (3) *Itheann coiníní féar.*  
'Rabbits eat grass.'

The punctuality of sentence (1) is expressed by the form *Tá*, although part of a periphrastic formation which contains a progressive form. Sentences (2) and (3) denote repeated or habitual action and (3) also has a generic connotation. As the verb *bí* 'to be' has a static and habitual form, whether combined with the verbal noun or occurring on its own, it can differentiate between present and habitual progressive action, as in:

- (4) *Tá Dónall anseo inniu.*  
'Dónall is here today.'
- (5) *Bíonn Dónall anseo go minic.*  
'Dónall is often here.'
- (6) *Tá Seán ag caint le Síle.*  
'Seán is talking to Síle.'

- (7) *Bíonn Seán ag caint le Síle.*  
'Seán talks to Síle.'

A similar distinction is maintained in referring to past activities, between the preterite, the narrative tense which denotes a single act, and the imperfect/past habitual, which describes actions that take place habitually or intermittently over a long period of time. Thus we get the following contrasts: *bhí* 'was' / *bhíodh* 'used to be', *d'ól* 'drank' / *d'óladh* 'used to drink' as in the following:

- (8) *Bhí sé ag caint ort inné.*  
'He was talking about you yesterday.'
- (9) *Bhíodh sé ag caint ort go minic.*  
'He used to talk about you often.'

The only verbs which do not participate in this contrast are those relating to the senses, namely, verbs of seeing, speaking, hearing, etc., which in general have to express the punctual/habitual distinction by means of the habitual endings only. Here are some examples:

- (10) *Cluinim t(h)ú.*  
'I hear you (now).'
- (11) *Cluinim go minic é.*  
'I often hear it.'

However, there have been new developments within the verbal system which would indicate that sentences such as (12) below can also be interpreted as denoting habitual or continuous activity. This is in all likelihood a pragmatic interpretation arising from the innate meaning of certain verbs.

- (12) *Tá Seán ag ól go trom.*  
'Seán drinks/is drinking heavily.'<sup>65</sup>

There are also some indications that the continuity/habitual meaning is being extended to the so-called 'emotional' verbs. Here are some examples of this usage from Donegal:

- (13) *Tá mé á fheiceáil le fada.*  
'I have often seen it over the last while.' (Lit. I have been seeing it for some time)
- (14) *Níl sé mo chluinstin.*  
'He doesn't hear me.' (Lit. He is not hearing me.)

The contrast between progressive and non progressive action pervades the entire verbal system. It is found in the present, preterite, past habitual and future tenses. Each tense has its own distinctive endings and/or initial mutations. Tense formation has changed very little in its essentials over time. Verb root modification is through internal alteration or suffixation. This creates the tense-stem. Personal endings denoting person and number are added to this stem. The Mod. Ir. regular verbal stem remains in almost all essentials the

same for all tenses. Verbs beginning with a vowel or *f* + vowel prefix a *d*'<sup>66</sup> in the preterite, imperfect and conditional mood e.g. *D'imigh sí* 'She left', *D'fhoghlaim sí an dán* 'She learned a lot'.

### Perfect constructions

The perfect tends to report the speaker's comments on an action or to present a particular viewpoint. Irish has both a progressive and a non-progressive perfect. The latter can be interpreted as a stative perfective, which tends to focus on the completion of the action. This type is expressed by a periphrastic sequence of the substantive verb plus the verbal adjective,<sup>67</sup> as in the following examples:

- (15) *Tá siad briste.*  
'They are broken.'
- (16) *Tá mo dhinnéar ite agam.*  
'I have eaten my dinner.' (Lit. Is my dinner eaten by me.)

The distribution of these forms is also of interest. Ulster dialects in general do not tolerate the creation of verbal adjectives from intransitive verbs and some irregular verbs, which are so common in the other two major dialects of Connacht and Munster. Thus we do not get forms of the type e.g. *tagtha* 'arrived', *dulta* 'gone', *tabhartha* 'given', *feicthe* 'seen' in Ulster speech.<sup>68</sup>

The meaning of perfect in general linguistics has been variously defined (Comrie 1976). Such definitions may not suit particular languages but nevertheless they provide a platform for discussion. One observation about the Modern English perfect is that it is best described as referring to the continuing relevance of some previous action. Pairs of sentences can be found in Irish which also back up this interpretation as shown by 17–18 below.

- (17) *Tá mo sparán caillte agam.*  
'I have lost my purse.'
- (18) *Chaill mé mo sparán.*  
'I lost my purse.'

The implication conveyed by (17) is that the *sparán* 'purse' has not turned up, whereas (18) carries no such implication. In this way, one could argue that the true function of this type of perfect, in both Irish and English, is to form a kind of 'extended present' which unites some previous action with the time of the utterance which refers to it. Much has been written about this stative type construction in recent years (Greene 1979, Ó Sé 1992, 2004), but there is no general agreement about whether or not they should be considered 'perfectives'. The real argument about sentences such as (17) is whether their meaning is to be regarded as stative or active. If stative, a more appropriate translation might be 'I have my purse lost!', whereas, if the meaning is 'active', a better translation would be 'I have lost my purse'. However, if one were to add an adverbial phrase to (17), then its interpretation as a stative is beyond argument:

- (19) *Tá mo sparán caillte agam le mí.*  
 ‘My purse has been lost for over a month.’

It is fairly clear that the focus point in (19) is to show that the purse is in the state of being lost for a month and that it still has not been located. There is a problem associated with its translation into English. The interpretation revolves around the word *agam* ‘at/by me’ and the phrase *le mí* ‘for a month’. Different claims have been made about the role of the preposition *ag* ‘at/by’ which underlies *agam*. It has been argued by some that it marks an agent and hence they propose that we have a type of ‘perfect or stative passive’: McCloskey (1996: 159–64, 1998: 165–9). Greene (1979) has called the construction ‘perfective’. Other researchers have argued that the meaning expressed by the entire phrase is basically active (Ó Sé 1992: 39–67, 2004: 181–6). While much of the basic information has been made available, there is still a need for more in-depth analysis before any final conclusions can be reached on the matter.

### Perfect progressives

Modern Irish has a second periphrastic formation, which has also been assigned to the category of perfect. It also involves the use of the substantive verb combined with the verbal noun. This verbal noun corresponds to both the infinitive and the gerundial *-ing* of English and it is preceded by either of the phrases *i ndiaidh/tar éis* ‘after’. In a recent article Ó Sé (2004) gives a comprehensive overview of the ‘After’ perfect across the Gaelic dialects. A typical example is given in (20) below.<sup>69</sup>

- (20) *Tá mé i ndiaidh/tar éis carr a cheannacht.*  
 ‘I have (just) bought a car.’

Sentences such as (20) have been labelled ‘recent perfects’ (Greene 1979) and in studies of Irish English, which has a similar construction, they have been called ‘hot news perfect’ Harris (1985, 1991) and Odlin (1991).<sup>70</sup> All who have written on this matter agree that sentences such as (20) are indeed perfect.

As we have already mentioned, the progressive/non-progressive distinction is one of the hallmarks of the Modern Irish tense/aspect system. Combinations of the progressive and perfect forms are therefore to be expected. This is achieved by using the infinitival form of the substantive verb followed by the verbal noun, as in (21):

- (21) *Tá siad i ndiaidh a bheith ag caint leis.*  
 ‘They have (just) been talking to him.’

Past, future and conditional forms can be derived by changing the auxiliary form *Tá* to *bhí*, *beidh* and *bheadh*, respectively.<sup>71</sup>

In conclusion, one can say that standard English has had a strong influence in helping to extend the use and frequency of certain aspectual distinctions in Irish, some of which were at least until very recently rare or infrequent. This has been due mostly to the increasing bilingual status of its speakers and perhaps undue influence from standard educational forms of English. Irish English has had less of an influence, as much of what gives Irish-English its different character has been borrowed from Irish over a period of almost four centuries.

## Future projection

The future tense in Modern Irish is marked by defined suffixes, which denote future actions or intentions. While the use of the future tense marker on the verb refers to a whole action, there are parallel structures identical to those already discussed for the present and past tenses which focus on the completion of the action or on the ongoing stages of the action being performed. The contrast is shown below in (22) and (23).

- (22) *Scríobhfaidh sí an litir ar maidin.*  
‘She will write the letter in the morning.’
- (23) *Beidh sí ag scríobh na litreach ar maidin.*  
‘She will be (in the process of) writing the letter in the morning (and won’t have time to talk to us).’

Future intention can also be expressed by using (a) the construction ‘*ag gabháil a*’ plus a verbal noun or (b) the prepositions *le* ‘with’ and *chun* ‘to’ with non finite forms of the verb. Sentences (24) and (25) illustrate these usages:

- (24) *Tá sí ag gabháil a scríobh na litreach ar maidin.*  
‘She is going to write the letter in the morning.’
- (25) *Tá sí leis/chun an litir a scríobh amárach.*  
‘She intends to write the letter in the morning.’

The agent in sentence (25) has the option of changing his/her mind. However, there is a strong possibility that the intended action in (24) will be carried out. The prepositions *le/chun* in (25) are identical to the prepositional conjunctions used in purpose clauses. Irish has a further feature whereby the speaker may focus on the continuity of the predicted action rather than on its completion. In such cases the infinitival/gerundial form of the verb ‘to be’ is used, as in (26).

- (26) *Tá siad le bheith ag canadh ag an cheolchoirm amárach.*  
‘They intend to sing at the concert tomorrow.’

Such sentences are extremely common in predicting or forecasting future weather conditions. This is shown in (27).

- (27) *Tá sé le bheith ag cur sneachta tráthnóna.*  
‘It’s going to snow this evening.’ (Lit. To be snowing.)

## THE MOOD SYSTEM OF IRISH

The aim of this section is to describe the lexical, morphological and grammatical resources available in the language to indicate mood. Irish has three non-indicative moods, namely, imperative, conditional and subjunctive. Information about the morphological system and the expression of semantic distinctions, as well as possible combinations of tense and mood morphology, will also be examined.

## The imperative mood

This mood is used with commands, requests or to express incitement. There is no common imperative marker and all persons, including an impersonal marker,<sup>72, 73</sup> have a specific ending. Negation is expressed by the general particle *ná* which precedes the verb. Two different paradigms are given below, one for each of the two conjugations in Irish.

Table 6.12 Verbal paradigms, imperative mood

### Conjugation 1

1 sg. <i>ólaim</i> 'Let me drink'	<i>brisim</i> 'Let me break'	<i>sábhálaim</i> 'Let me save'
2 sg. <i>ól</i>	<i>bris</i>	<i>sábháil</i>
3 sg. <i>óladh sé/sí</i>	<i>briseadh sé/sí</i>	<i>sábháladh sé/sí</i>
1 pl. <i>ólaimis/óladh muid</i>	<i>brisimis/briseadh muid</i>	<i>sábhálaimis/sábháladh muid</i>
2 pl. <i>ólaigí<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>brisigí</i>	<i>sábhálaigí</i>
3 pl. <i>ólaidís/óladh siad</i>	<i>brisdís/briseadh siad</i>	<i>sábhálaidís/sábháladh siad</i>
Aut. <i>óltar</i>	<i>bristear</i>	<i>sábháiltear<sup>2</sup></i>

### Conjugation 2

1 sg. <i>ordaím</i> 'Let me order'	<i>ceanglaím</i> 'Let me tie'
2 sg. <i>ordaigh</i>	<i>ceangail</i>
3 sg. <i>ordaíodh sé/sí</i>	<i>ceanglaíodh sé/sí</i>
1 pl. <i>ordaímis/ordaíodh muid</i>	<i>ceanglaímis/ceanglaíodh muid</i>
2 pl. <i>ordaígí</i>	<i>ceanglaígí</i>
3 pl. <i>ordaídís/ordaíodh siad</i>	<i>ceanglaídís/ceanglaíodh siad</i>
Aut. <i>ordaítear</i>	<i>ceanglaítear</i>

#### Notes

- Various other forms are to be found in the spoken dialects e.g. *ólaig/ólaig, ceangalaig* etc. For Munster Irish see Ó Sé (2000: 150–274). In Ulster and Connacht Irish, both *-igí* and an *-í* ending exist side by side although the *-igí* ending has become the more common. This *-í* ending has developed from the historical *-(a)idh* ending of the 2nd plural. When *dh* and *gh* coalesce in the twelfth century, *-(a)igh* > *-í*. Hence we get *fanaí* and *fanaigí* as possible 2nd plural forms of *fan* 'wait!' (O'Rahilly 1932: 58–64).
- The spelling differences for the different endings are the result of Irish spelling conventions and have no consequences for pronunciation. Thus each of the pairs *-aim/-im, -adh/-eadh, -aimis/-imis, -aigí/-igí* and *-aidís/-idís* are pronounced the same. The endings beginning with *a* indicate that the preceding consonant is velarized and those beginning with *i* or *e* that the preceding consonant is palatalized. The velarized/palatalized dichotomy carries phonemic status in Irish. The 2nd singular imperative forms the root of the verb in Irish. All other moods and verbal forms are derived from it through the addition of various endings and initial consonant mutations.

## Functions of the Irish imperative

Irish, as we have seen above, has grammaticalized all persons as many other languages do (Palmer 1986: 109–11). These endings contain joint realizations of both person and mood. However, the second person singular has zero marking and is to be regarded as the unmarked directive. The use of the imperative is largely restricted to main clauses but there is evidence that it can occur in subordinate clauses particularly if preceded by

another imperative in the main clause: Ó hUiginn (2001). Here are some examples from modern Irish of the use of the imperative.

Verbs of telling and saying are often used in requests for information.

- (28) *Inis dom cá bhfuil an cruinniú.*  
‘Tell me where the meeting is taking place.’

It is reasonably expected that specific requests and orders should be carried out immediately or within a very short time-span. The Irish imperative does not grammaticalize immediate fulfilment and its interpretation is open. Any action therefore can be deferred as in the following example.

- (29) *Imigh chun an bhaile anois.*  
‘Go home now.’

Palmer (1986: 109) reports that many languages have specific 1st and 3rd person forms for exhortation as is indeed the case for Irish. What is not clear is whether or not these 1st and 3rd person forms should be accorded the same status as the unmarked 2nd person, whose directive has to be carried out by someone other than the speaker. Here are two typical examples.

- (30) *Bíodh sí anseo amárach ar a trí.*  
‘She is to be here tomorrow at three o’clock.’
- (31) *Fágaimis uainn é mar scéal.*  
‘Let’s drop the whole story.’

When the speaker wishes a certain course of action, the use of the 3rd person imperative is similar to the optative usage as found in the subjunctive.

- (32) *Duine ar bith atá ag teacht, leanadh sé Dónall.*  
‘Whoever is coming, (let him) follow Dónall.’

As we discussed earlier, a feature of Irish grammar is the use of impersonal/autonomous forms of all verbs including *bí* ‘to be’, as imperatives. These forms are used for generalized instructions where no agent is specified.

- (32) *Óltar an tae seo.*  
‘Let this tea be drunk (Someone should drink this tea).’

Note the following line from a well-known song with two different imperative forms, an impersonal form and a 3rd person singular non-specific form.

- (33) *Líontar domsa an crúiscín agus bíodh sé lán.*  
‘Let the jug be filled for me up to the brim.’

### The future as an imperative

The future tense generally has predictive emphatic force and this is certainly the case in Modern Irish. This seems also to have been the case in Old and Middle Irish (McQuillan 2002: 30–2). In terms of semantic content, the future can be considered a more marked directive than unmarked 2nd person imperatives. However, the use of the future in giving directions is quite common in the dialects of Donegal where one might have considered the imperative more appropriate. Similar usage has been reported for the Irish of Carna, Co. Galway (Ó Curnáin 2007: 886). The following example from Donegal shows a combination of future and imperative forms. As the example is rather long, I give a morpheme to morpheme translation.

- (34) *Rachaidh tú síos godtí an droichead, tiontaigh ar thaobh*  
 GO-FUT you down to the bridge turn-IMP-2 sg on side  
*do lámhe deise, leanfaidh tú cosán cúpla*  
 your hand-GEN SG. right-GEN-SG. follow-FUT you a path few  
*céad slat, tá an teach istigh sna crainn.*  
 hundred yard IS-PRES the house inside in.the tree-PL.  
 ‘Go down to the bridge, turn right, follow the path for a few hundred yards, the house is there in among the trees.’

Many adverbs and several prepositions, which may indicate direction or movement either towards or away from the speaker, are often employed in Irish with the force of imperatives.

- (35) *Amach leat.*  
 ‘Out you go.’
- (36) *Chugat an mhuc.*  
 ‘Beware of the pig.’ (Lit. Towards you (may well be coming) the pig.)

#### *Imperatives in concessive clauses*

One of the functions of imperative forms of all verbs in Irish is to introduce concessive conditional clauses. The forms used are generally in the 3rd person but the 1st person is also often found with such usages.

- (37) *Bíodh siad ann nó ná bíodh, ná labhair leo.*  
 ‘Whether they are there or not, don’t speak to them.’
- (38) *Cuireadh sé nó ná cuireadh, rachaidh mé ann.*  
 ‘Whether it rains or not, I’m going to go there.’

## THE SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD

Givon’s (1995) analysis of the subjunctive as a subset of *irrealis* in language in general seems much more attractive and promising in helping us to get a better understanding of the evolving relationship in Irish between the conditional and subjunctive moods and the strong historical tendency within the language of moving towards the conditional right up to the present day. Throughout the history of Irish there has been a coherence about the appearance of mood in a variety of different subordinating or dependent contexts.

## The verbal morphology

Before proceeding further with the various usages and functions of the subjunctive, it is better to outline briefly the various morphological features of the two subjunctives in Irish. They are conveniently referred to in Irish grammars as the present and the past subjunctive, respectively.<sup>74</sup>

Table 6.13 Verbal paradigms, subjunctive mood

### Present subjunctive

#### Conjugation 1

Default case <sup>1</sup>	<i>Go n-óla/Nár óla</i>	<i>Go mbrise/Nár bhrise</i>
1 pl.	<i>Go n-ólaimid/Nár ólaimid</i>	<i>Go mbrisimid/Nár bhrisimid</i>
Aut.	<i>Go n-óltar/Nár óltar</i>	<i>Go mbristear/Nár bhristear</i>

#### Conjugation 2

Default case	<i>Go n-ordaí/Nár ordaí</i>	<i>Go gceanglaí/Nár cheanglaí</i>
1 pl.	<i>Go n-ordaímid/Nár ordaímid</i>	<i>Go gceanglaímid/Nár cheanglaímid</i>
Aut.	<i>Go n-ordaítear/Nár ordaítear</i>	<i>Go gceanglaítear/Nár cheanglaítear</i>

### Past subjunctive

#### Conjugation 1

1 sg.	<i>Dá n-ólainn</i>	<i>Dá mbrisinn</i>
2 sg.	<i>n-óltá</i>	<i>mbristeá</i>
3 sg.	<i>n-óladh sé/sí</i>	<i>mbriseadh sé/sí</i>
1 pl.	<i>n-ólaimis/n-óladh muid</i>	<i>mbrisimis/mbriseadh muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>n-óladh sibh</i>	<i>mbriseadh sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>n-ólaidís/n-óladh siad</i>	<i>mbrísídís/mbriseadh siad</i>
Aut.	<i>n-óltáí</i>	<i>mbristí</i>

#### Conjugation 2

1 sg.	<i>Dá n-ordaínn</i>	<i>Dá gceanglaínn</i>
2 sg.	<i>n-ordaíteá</i>	<i>gceanglaíteá</i>
3 sg.	<i>n-ordaíodh sé/sí</i>	<i>gceanglaíodh sé/sí</i>
1 pl.	<i>n-ordaímis/n-ordaíodh muid</i>	<i>gceanglaímis/gceanglaíodh muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>n-ordaíodh sibh</i>	<i>gceanglaíodh sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>n-ordaídís/n-ordaíodh siad</i>	<i>gceanglaídís/gceanglaíodh siad</i>
Aut.	<i>n-ordaítí</i>	<i>gceanglaítí</i>

#### Note:

These forms can be used with any of the separate pronouns, including *muid/sinn* 'we'. The *-(i)r* ending, which we have already seen in other tenses for the 2nd singular, can also be used in the present subjunctive e.g. *go mbrisir* 'may you break'. The following example of a second conjugation verb *go gceanglaír i lár an tí* 'May you be tied down (not be able to move) in the middle of the house' is given by Ó Sé (2000: 268).

### Usage

The present subjunctive in Irish functions as an optative or 'volative' (Palmer 1986: 116) conveying hope or a realizable wish. Originally it was augmented by *ro* but now and since the ninth century by *co/go*. These usages are exemplified in the following.

- (39) *Go dtaga do ríocht.*  
'Thy kingdom come.'
- (40) *Nár laga Dia thú.*  
'More power to you!' (Lit. May God not weaken you.)

Irish is particularly fond of the mood sequence – imperative in a main clause and the present subjunctive in a following subordinate clause. This was also the case as far back as Old Irish, the subordinate clause now always introduced by *go*.

- (41) *Fan go dtaga d'athair*  
'Wait until your father comes.'

The present subjunctive is often used in subordinate clauses in Irish to denote purpose and reason. The main clause verb often takes the future tense though not exclusively so. These sentences also express a strong likelihood that the action mentioned will take place.

- (42) *Rachaidh mé chun an aonaigh go gceannaí mé bó.*  
'I will go to the fair (in order) to buy a cow.'
- (43) *Gabh síos go bhfeice tú í.*  
'Go down (in order) to see her.'

## NON-FINITE STRUCTURES

There is a strong tendency, which has been accentuated since the Old Irish period, to use non-finite verbal noun constructions in subordinate clauses. They often replace original subjunctive structures (Genee 1998: 440–52 and Ó hUiginn 1998: 136ff.).

- (44) *D'ordaigh sé an príosúnach a thabhairt chuige.*  
'He ordered that the prisoner be brought to him.'

### **Go as a temporal conjunction**

*Go* in Irish introduces time 'until' clauses. The future context is provided by the use of an imperative or of a future tense form.

- (45) *Fanfaidh mé go raibh siad réidh.*  
'I'll wait until they are ready.'

In the course of its history from Old Irish onwards, the evolution of more explicit conjunctions to express purpose and time is one of the most striking and enduring features of Irish syntax. These changes have been referred to in the literature as pragmatic strengthening (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 87–93). This overt expression of meaning is a sign of renewal and change. In the following examples the original *co/go* conjunction is strengthened by *nó* 'or' and *sa dóigh* 'in the way'. These 'new' augmented conjunctions can be interpreted as either purpose or result clauses and can be translated by 'since/because'.

- (46) *Cha dtéim ann nó go mbí/raibh an lá ann.*  
‘I won’t go there until/unless it is morning time.’
- (47) *Ólaigí an deoch sa dóigh nach dtige an aicíd oraibh.*  
‘Drink the medicine so that you are not struck by the disease.’

The dichotomy found in Old Irish between the use of the subjunctive or a verbal noun construction following certain kinds of verbs in purpose clauses (Disterheft 1985: 115) is also to be found in the modern language.<sup>75</sup> The Ulster dialect seems to maintain the use of both constructions, while the other two main dialects, Connacht and Munster, prefer the use of finite subordinate clauses introduced by augmented/unaugmented conjunctions. The following illustrate the Ulster usage.

- (48) *D’imigh siad chun an bhaile á ní féin.*  
‘They went home to wash themselves.’
- (49) *D’imigh siad chun an bhaile go níodh siad iad féin.*  
‘They went home in order to wash themselves.’

The use of the subjunctive form in (49) indicates an *irrealis* situation where there is some uncertainty about whether or not the action will be/was carried out. Such uncertainty does not apply to (48) where the speaker assumes that the action will be/has been carried out.

### The development of *ach(t) go*

The *ach(t) go* conditional conjunction is another of the augmented forms which still survive into the modern period and its history is duly outlined by Ó Buachalla (1972). It can be followed by all tenses and by both the subjunctive and conditional moods. It has a specific time reference with the meaning ‘when, as soon as’ and has been attested in all of the three main dialects.<sup>76</sup>

- (50) *Ní bhogfaidh sí ach go mbí sí cinnte.*  
‘She won’t move until she is certain.’
- (51) *Ach gurb é gur labhair tú, bhí tú buailte agam.*  
‘Had you not spoken, I would have struck you.’

### Temporal clauses in Modern Irish

In some dialects the actual number of distinctive subjunctive forms is confined to a limited set of frequently used verbs such as *bí* ‘be’, *déan* ‘do’, *faigh* ‘get’, *tar* ‘come’ and *téigh* ‘go’. It is also the case that subjunctive forms tend to be possible only when they are immediately governed by certain complementizer markers such as *go* and its negative *nach*. LASID 1958–69 is a detailed source for the distribution of subjunctive time clauses.

LASID and other sources would seem to indicate the following realizations pertaining to the living speech in Irish-speaking areas of mid-twentieth century Ireland. Donegal representing North-West Ulster speech shows a preponderance of subjunctive forms, although increasing use of the future of the verb ‘to be’ is to be found in future-projecting

*go*-clauses. The drift away from the use of the subjunctive is highest in North-East Donegal, whereas with the verb ‘to be’ there is a much wider distribution of non-subjunctive forms throughout all of Donegal. Subjunctive and non-subjunctive forms are fairly evenly distributed in Connacht dialects. However, the subjunctive of the verb ‘to be’ is more likely in North Connacht dialects, with Southern Connacht dialects tending towards the future, and this is supported and validated by Ó Curnáin (1996: 490 and 2007: 1230). Across Munster dialects the subjunctive of the verb ‘to be’ has been unattested, being replaced by the future. Other verbs show a more even distribution of the subjunctive although even here the distribution of the subjunctive and non-subjunctive forms is fairly mixed. The following examples indicate the complexity of the realizations of subjunctive and non-subjunctive forms.

- (52) *Fan go bhfagha/bhfaighidh mé mo mhála.*  
‘Wait until I get my bag.’
- (53) *Is gearr go dtaga/dtíge/dtiocfaidh sí.*  
‘She will be here shortly.’

### Conditional sentences

In examining Irish conditionals, three types can be identified on the basis of the connectives that may be chosen to mark them. When there is an *if* type relationship, modern Irish employs both *má* and *dá* to grammaticalize this conditional relationship. Both conjunctions operate across the actual and non actual (*realis* and *irrealis*) domains of reference. *Cé/Gidh go* are used in the creation of concessive conditionals and they also operate across actual and non-actual domains. Restrictive conditionals with the restrictive meaning *only if* are introduced by *ach* and *ach má*.

- (54) *Má bhí sé ann ní fhaca mise é.*  
‘If he was there I didn’t see him.’
- (55) *Dá mbíodh/mbeadh sé ann, chuirfinn ceist air.*  
‘Had he been there, I would have asked him.’

*Má* is obligatory in all variants of Irish rather than optional in some and is normally followed by the non conditional forms of the verb. The future indicative is disqualified from the condition clause where prediction is inherently impossible and is replaced by the habitual present. The verb in the main clause carries the future tense.<sup>77</sup>

- (56) *Má ólann tú an deoch, déanfaidh sí maith duit.*  
‘If you take the drink, it will do you good.’

### The conditional and new markers

The ongoing trend away from the use of the subjunctive and its replacement by the conditional continues unabated within the modern language. Therefore, the subjunctive is restricted to the use of older markers. Such new introductory phrases as *ar eagla go* ‘for

fear that/in case', *sa dóigh go* 'in order that', *chun/le go* 'so that' and many others are now almost universally followed by the conditional.

- (57) *Chuaigh mé i bhfolach ar eagla go bhfeicfeadh sé mé.*  
 'I went into hiding in case he should/would see me.'

### Negative conditionals

Irish possesses two conjunctions to introduce negative conditional main clauses. First, there is the standard form *mura* and its dialect variant *muna*, both followed by similar initial mutation alternations. Second, the forms *murach/murab é* are used in the sense of 'if it were not for . . .'. In the case of *mura/muna* they may be followed by either the subjunctive or conditional mood, or indeed by any other tense. Usage is dictated mostly by the sociolinguistic and pragmatic context in which sentences are uttered.

- (58) *Mura n-óladh sí é, bheadh tart uirthi arís.*  
 'If she didn't drink it, she would be thirsty again later.'
- (59) *Mura mbeinn tinn, rachainn ann.*  
 'If I weren't sick, I'd go there.'

The use of *murach/murab é* is illustrated in sentences (60) and (61).<sup>78</sup> The conjunctions are normally followed by the complementizer *go/gur*, except for copular sentences.

- (60) *Murab é go dtáinig siad aréir.*  
 'Unless they arrived last night.'
- (61) *Murach gur labhair mé, bhuaifí mé.*  
 'If I hadn't spoken, I would have been beaten.'

### *Realis-irrealis* continuum

Certain usages of the conditional mood can be viewed along the *realis-irrealis* axis, through the use of the conjunctions *má* and *dá*, respectively. However, the most common use of the conditional in modern Irish is non-referential in nature and indeed in many cases there is no condition attached to its usage. Two recent papers, Wigger (2005) and Eshel-Benninga (2007), have focused on this fact, based on speech and writing corpora from the Connacht (Galway) dialect of modern Irish.<sup>79</sup> The following exemplify the use of the conditional mood on its own without any perceived condition attached to its use or to be implied.

- (62) *Chomh maith díreach is dá mbeinn ag éisteacht leis.*  
 'Almost as good as if I were listening to him.'
- (63) *An mbeadh briseadh fiche punt agat?*  
 Q be-COND change twenty pound at.you  
 'Would you have twenty pounds change?'

**The conditional in indirect speech**

Reported or indirect speech, whose basic form was uttered using the future tense, is communicated through the use of the conditional. This type of communication is common and productive.

- (64) *Dúirt siad go mbeadh siad ann.*  
‘They said they would be there/present.’

**OTHER DIACHRONIC CHANGES**

Irish has shown a tendency for movement away from the use of the subjunctive in what have been called in the literature ‘indefinite concessives’ (Thompson and Longacre 1985: 198, König 1986: 231). The subjunctive has been replaced by future tense or conditional forms.<sup>80</sup> The choice has to do with whether or not *irrealis* is to be marked. If so, *irrealis* tends to be marked by the use of the conditional. I give below examples of both usages.

- (65) *Cibé duine a rachas ann, chan mise é.*  
‘Whoever goes there, it won’t be me.’
- (66) *Dá bhfaighinn duine agaibh a choimeádfadh an teach dom.*  
‘If I were to/could get one of you to take care of the house for me.’

**Conjunction and complementizer sequences**

In Modern Irish, mood harmony between sequential clauses follows fairly predictable lines. They can be summarized as follows:

<i>Protasis</i>		<i>Apodosis</i>
Past subjunctive	>>	Conditional mood
Conditional mood	>>	Conditional mood

- (67) *Dá mbíodh airgead agam, bheinn ceart go leor.*  
‘If I had money, I would have been all right.’
- (68) *Dá ndíolfá an teach, bheadh airgead agat.*  
‘If you sold/were to sell the house, you would have money.’

There is a strong tendency in the modern language to replace the finite subordinate clause with a non-finite clause containing the verbal noun construction, contrary to Old Irish usage. It parallels similar developments elsewhere in the diachronic syntax of the language.

- (69) *Dá rachfá chun cainte léi agus do scéal a mhíniú di.*  
‘If you were to talk to her and explain your story to her.’

### Impersonal/autonomous constructions

Irish has impersonal/autonomous endings for each tense, including periphrastic tenses. There has been much debate as to whether or not they should be classified as passives (McCloskey 1996, 2007, MacCana and Ó Baoill 1997, Stenson 1981: 148–9, Ó Sé 2006). The construction is labelled in various ways in Irish grammars but I propose to adhere to the term autonomous throughout the present discussion. There is general overall agreement that the Irish autonomous is not passive in the sense of such English constructions as *The mouse was caught by the cat*. The corresponding Irish sentence is ungrammatical and this is indicated by the asterisk below.

(70) \**Beireadh ar an luchóg ag an chat.*

Irish does not allow agents to co-occur with such autonomous forms when the agent is a human being or when it has the characteristic feature [+ animal].<sup>81</sup> Such sentences are fine without the agent and are fully grammatical.

(71) *Beireadh ar an luchóg.*

Irish, therefore, must revert to the active forms of the verb in order to convey the meaning expressed by (70) above.

When the object of the verb is a pronoun, it appears in the accusative form. The accusative forms are distinguished from the nominative forms only in the 3rd singular and plural in all dialects, e.g. *sé/é* ‘he/him/it’, *sí/i* ‘she/her/it’ and *siad/iad* ‘they/them’. Ulster and Connacht dialects make a similar distinction in the 2nd singular pronoun *tú* ‘you (nom.)’ and *thú* ‘you (acc.)’.

(72) *Buaileadh iad/thú.*  
‘They/you were beaten.’

It should be pointed out that when the ‘agent’ is non human or does not have the characteristic feature [+ animal], it can co-occur with verbs in the autonomous form. It is generally preceded by the preposition *le* in such contexts.

(73) *Leagadh le carr é.*  
‘He was knocked down by a car.’

The use of *le* in autonomous sentences should be compared with the instrumental use of *le* in sentences of the following type.

(74) *Ghearr sí an t-arán le scian.*  
‘She cut the bread with a knife.’

The verb of existence takes autonomous endings in all tenses and moods. Such autonomous forms may occur on their own in replies to questions or more commonly with the progressive form of the main verb.

(75) *Bítear ag caint air.*  
‘It is (being) talked about habitually.’

## THE VERBAL NOUN

The use of the verbal noun in non finite clauses in Irish has been the subject of many contributions in the last three decades using insights from modern linguistic theories. A very useful summary of the issues involved is to be had in McCloskey (2006). The verbal noun in Irish fills the role undertaken by infinitives and gerundives in other languages. Verbal nouns are formed by the addition of affixes to a basic root and these affixes have basically remained unchanged from the Old Irish period (Thurneysen 1946: §§ 721–37, *Graiméar Gaeilge na mBráithre Críostaí* 1960: 243–5). The most regular endings are *-(e)adh* and *-(i)ú*. The former is affixed to verbs of the first conjugation, while the latter is attached to verbs of the second conjugation e.g. *briseadh* < *bris* ‘to break’, *moladh* < *mol* ‘to praise’, *míniú* < *míniigh* ‘to explain’. Verbal nouns also act as nouns and are declined as such, having genitive singular and nominative plural forms, as in the following examples.

Table 6.14 Verbal nouns

Verbal noun	Genitive singular	Plural
<i>briseadh</i>	<i>briste</i>	<i>bristeacha</i>
<i>moladh</i>	<i>molta</i>	<i>moltaí</i>
<i>míniú</i>	<i>mínithe</i>	<i>mínithe</i>

The verbal noun is used in Modern Irish to differentiate a large number of semantic distinctions across a variety of contexts and pragmatic situations. They are touched on briefly below, under particular headings.

### (a) *ag* + verbal noun

This is by far the most common use of the verbal noun. In its unmarked representation, the noun immediately following the verbal noun is in the genitive case. Its initial consonant may or may not be lenited.<sup>82</sup> This construction has become part of the regular morphological development of the aspectual system of Modern Irish and helps form the periphrastic structures by combining with the verb of existence. The latter carries all the time markings and can be used with all tenses and moods.

#### (76) *Tá siad ag baint mhóna/na móna.*

‘They are cutting turf/the turf.’ (Lit. at the cutting of turf/the turf.)

### (b) *a/á* + verbal noun

In constructing relative clauses of various types, the verbal noun is preceded by *a* or *á*,<sup>83</sup> followed by the appropriate initial changes on the initial consonant of the verbal noun.<sup>84</sup> The distinction is based on an active/passive dichotomy, the long *á* being associated with passive constructions. The following illustrate the active/passive distinction.

#### (77) *Sin an teach atá sí a thógáil.*

‘That is the house she is (in the process of) building.’

#### (78) *Sin an teach atá á thógáil (aici).*

‘That is the house that is being built (by her).’

The use of *á* is not confined to relative clauses. It occurs in unmarked passive structures as seen in the next example.

- (79) *Bhí na tithe á ndíol ag Síle.*  
 ‘The houses were being sold by Síle.’

The use of *a* + verbal noun serves to denote purpose or intention in a variety of contexts.

- (80) *Chuaigh siad a chodladh go luath.*  
 ‘They went to bed early.’ (lit. with the intention of sleeping)

Northern dialects are particularly fond of this construction to indicate future intention. These normally follow verbs of action/movement as the main verb. In such constructions the *a* is replaced by *dh*’ before vowels, which is a reflection of a historical *do*.

- (81) *D’imigh siad a dh’iascaireacht.*  
 ‘They went fishing.’ (lit. with the intention of fishing)

These dialects distinguish between purpose/intention and concomitant action as indicated by the use of *ag* with the verbal noun.<sup>85</sup>

- (82) *D’imigh sé ag damhsa.*  
 ‘He was dancing as he left.’
- (83) *D’imigh sé a dhamhsa.*  
 ‘He went dancing.’ (lit. with the intention of dancing)

Ulster dialects also preserve an older construction which indicates purpose and intention through the use of *a*. This older construction tends to be replaced by the use of the prepositions *le/chun* in the other dialects. Ulster dialects use both constructions.

- (84) *Tháinig sé a cheannach na bó.*  
 ‘He came to buy the cow.’
- (85) *Tháinig sé leis/chun an bhó a cheannach.*  
 ‘He came in order to/to buy the cow.’

(c) *Non-finite clauses with verbal nouns*

Verbal nouns preceded by *ag* are usually followed by their complements in the genitive case. However, the history of the language indicates a movement away from this construction to one containing *a* (<*do*) in non finite clauses, which act as the object of the main clause. The subject of the verbal noun precedes it in all dialects and in northern dialects both the subject and object may be fronted. An exception is the indirect object construction with the preposition *do*. The following illustrate the various usages.

- (86) *Bhí sé ag ól an fhíona.*  
 ‘He was drinking the wine.’

- (87) *D'iarr siad an t-airgead a thabhairt do Sheán.*  
'They asked that the money be given to Seán.'
- (88) *Ba mhaith léi an teach a dhíol.*  
'She would like to sell the house.'
- (89) *Ba mhaith léi Seán an teach a cheannach.*  
'She would like Seán to buy the house.'<sup>86</sup>

With intransitive verbs, there is only one preposed element. They would be expected to carry the nominative case. However, one of the quirks of Modern Irish grammar is that a pronominal element such as a pronoun would seem to be marked for accusative.<sup>87</sup>

- (90) *Dúirt sé iad/na páistí fanacht.*  
'He asked that they/the children stay.'

This type of non finite construction has been the subject of intensive discussion and debate in a large number of articles by various authors: McCloskey (1984, 1987, 1996, 2007), McCloskey and Chung (1987), Noonan (1992). As already mentioned, the verbal noun is also used with such phrases as *indiaidh* and *tar éis*, both meaning 'after', to construct sentences with perfective meaning.<sup>88</sup>

- (91) *Tá siad i ndiaidh/tar éis carr úr a cheannach.*  
'They have (just recently) bought a new car.'

It should be noted also that object non finite verbal noun phrases following a verbal noun construction with *ag* are not marked for genitive. This is contrary to the situation in the earlier language.<sup>89</sup>

- (92) *Bhí sí ag iarraidh an doras a oscailt.*  
'She was trying to open the door.'

Other important prepositions/conjunctions such as *gan/ach* are used with the verbal noun to indicate negation. Research has shown that these elements indicate a syntactic boundary between the main clause and the non finite clause containing the verbal noun and furthermore that the non finite clause forms a syntactic unit: McCloskey (1984), McCloskey and Chung (1987).

- (93) *Dúradh liom gan labhairt.*  
'I was asked not to speak.'
- (94) *Iarradh orainn gan tine a lasadh.*  
'We were asked not to light a fire.'
- (95) *Ní raibh rogha againn ach labhairt (leis).*  
'We had no option but to speak to him.'
- (96) *Ní raibh rogha againn ach an teach a dhíol.*  
'We had no option but to sell the house.'

Other important prepositions/prepositional phrases used with the verbal noun to express important semantic distinctions include the following: *réidh/ullamh le, ar tí, ag . . . do, ar . . . do* and many others too numerous to mention. *Réidh/ullamh le* and *ar tí* for example indicate that an action is imminent or that there is an intention to carry out some action.

- (97) *Tá mé réidh le himeacht/ar tí imeacht.*  
‘I am about to go/leave.’

A very important role is played by the combination of the prepositions *ag + do* and *ar + do* with verbal nouns to indicate the difference between concomitant action and sequential action, respectively.<sup>90</sup> This distinction is illustrated by the following sentences.

- (98) *Ag teacht isteach dó, bhuaíl sé leis na mic léinn.*  
‘As he was coming in, he met the students.’
- (99) *Ar theacht isteach dó, labhair sé leis na mic léinn.*  
‘Having come in, he spoke to the students.’

The history of Irish shows a movement away from the use of subordinate clauses to verbal noun constructions in non main clauses. While all dialects use such constructions, it would seem that they have a more common currency in Ulster dialects. Both finite and non finite constructions are still to be found in all dialects and are optional for a wide variety of clauses (*Graiméar Gaeilge na mBráithre Críostaí* 1960: 262).

## VERBAL ADJECTIVES/PARTICIPLES

Modern Irish has a past participle construction which it has inherited from Old Irish. It is also referred to as a verbal adjective as it can function as an adjective and is so described in Irish grammars. It is formed by the addition of the suffixes *-tha/-the*. This ‘*th*’ was originally a voiceless dental fricative but became [h] around the end of the twelfth century. This ‘*th*’ was delenited after *ch*, alveolar and dental/alveodental consonants namely, *d, n, nn, l, ll, s, t* and *th*, both velarized and palatalized e.g. *crochta* ‘hanged’, *creidte* ‘believed’, *dúnta* ‘closed’, *teannta* ‘tight, tighened’, *ólta* ‘drunk’, *geallta* ‘promised’, *briste* ‘broken’, *tite* ‘fallen’ < *tit* and *ite* ‘eaten’ < *ith*. The original ‘*th*’ is maintained in writing after other consonants e.g. *scríofa* < *scríobhtha* ‘written’, *feicthe* ‘seen’, *cumtha* ‘composed’, *tógtha* ‘lifted’. As can be seen from the examples, both transitive and intransitive verbs form verbal adjectives. This process was confined to transitive verbs in Old Irish and this is the case in Ulster Irish until the present day. The verbal adjective/participle is indeclinable in Modern Irish.<sup>91</sup> It has the following usages:

- (a) as an attributive adjective e.g. *fuinneog bhriste* ‘a broken window’, *bóthar crochta* ‘a steep road’.
- (b) as a predicative adjective with the substantive verb and certain other verbs, e.g. *Tá an doras oscailte* ‘The door is open’, *Bhí an fuinneog briste* ‘The window was broken’, *Fág an doras dúnta* ‘Leave the door closed’.
- (c) combined with the substantive verb to form aspectual contrasts within the verbal system as discussed earlier. They generally portray perfective meanings, e.g. *Tá an teach tógtha* ‘The house has been/is built’.

- (d) combined with the copula to produce a passive participle of necessity. This process is no longer productive e.g. *Ní tógtha ort é* 'You are not to be blamed for it', *Ní maíte air é* 'He is not to be envied for it'.
- (e) combined with various prefixes such as *do-* 'difficult, impossible', *in-* 'possible' and *so-* 'easy, possible' e.g. *doléite* 'unreadable', *inite* 'edible', *so-athraithe* 'adjustable' to create adjectival forms e.g. *bia inite* 'edible food'. These same forms can be used predicatively with the copula or the substantive verb e.g. *Tá sé sofheicthe* 'it is visible', *Is inmolta an gníomh é* 'It is a deed to be recommended'.

## THE COPULA

The role of the copula in Modern Irish is syntactic, linking two noun phrases or a noun phrase and an adjectival phrase. It does not of itself signify any semantic function, but only predication. It does not have any personal forms, and is reduced to two tenses – present and non present. The latter can be past or conditional, both having identical forms.

The various forms of the copula are all unstressed. They perform the following semantic functions in the language: (a) to create classifier sentences, (b) to produce equative sentences, (c) to generate cleft sentences denoting emphasis or focusing on a particular word or phrase, (d) used in sentences where the predicate is an adjective, and (e) in certain idiomatic expressions with prepositional phrases.

(a) The following are examples of classifier sentences:

(100) *Is/Ní múinteoir é.*  
'He is/is not a teacher.'

(101) *Ba/Níor mhúinteoir é.*  
'He was/was not a teacher.'

(b) The following are examples of equative sentences. Both the subject and the predicate are definite noun phrases in such sentences. Notice the use of *í* in the second sentence, agreeing with the subject *Máire*. The use of such pronouns as dummy predicates is compulsory in both writing and speech.

(102) *Is/Ní tusa an múinteoir.*  
You are/are not the teacher.

(103) *Is í/Ní hí Máire an múinteoir.*  
'Máire is/is not the teacher.'

(c) The use of cleft sentences is a very common construction in the modern language. The copula introduces the cleft and is followed immediately by the element(s) to be emphasized or given focus. Almost all constituents can be emphasized or focused in this way.<sup>92</sup> Here are some examples.

(104) *Is iad a rinne é.*  
'They are the people who did it.'

(105) *Is ar maidin a tháinig sí.*

'It was in the morning time that she arrived.'

(106) *Ba liomsa a labhair sé*

'I was the one he spoke to.' (Lit. was with-me that spoke he)

(d) When the predicate is an adjective and the subject a definite noun phrase, the copula is also employed.

(107) *Is maith an scéal é.*

'It's good news.'

(108) *Ba mhór an trua.*

'It was a great pity.'

However, when the predicate is an indefinite noun phrase which is qualified by an adjective, it normally follows the subject.

(109) *Is duine deas í.*

'She is a nice person.'

(e) Finally, the copula is obligatory in certain idiomatic sentences where the predicate is a prepositional phrase, partly because there is a semantic contrast with sentences containing the verb of existence.

(110) *An leat é?*

'Is it yours?'

(111) *An bhfuil sé leat?*

'Have you got it with you?'

(112) *Is fútsa é.*

'It's up to you.'

(113) *Tá sé fútsa.*

'It's under you/You are sitting on it.'

## THE SUBSTANTIVE VERB

During the Middle Irish period and afterwards, the verb 'to be' came to replace and compete with the copula in expressing several of its functions. This is particularly true in the predication of certain adjectives e.g. *Bhí an lá tirim* 'The day was dry'.<sup>93</sup>

However, from the Middle Irish period also, the substantive verb has come to be used more extensively in classifier sentences. This has been accomplished by combining the preposition *i* 'in' with a possessive pronoun preceding the predicate. The predicate has marked agreement with the subject of the sentence.<sup>94</sup>

(114) *Tá Dónall ina mhúinteoir.*

‘Dónall is a teacher.’

(115) *Bhí siadsan ina dtiarnaí.*

‘They were the landlords.’

Such sentences occur in all varieties of Irish and Scottish Gaelic, but seem to be more prevalent in Northern dialects. It should be pointed out that sentences of this type indicate a position or state achieved by the subject. They are used particularly when the predicates involved indicate certain roles and occupations which have been acquired. They contrast with copular sentences, which indicate a more permanent inborn state, although the different types can be interchanged in many contexts. The following try to illustrate the type of contrasts that exist. The first pair are interchangeable while the second pair are not.

(116) *Is sagart é/Tá sé ina shagart.*

‘He is a priest.’

(117) *Is fear gorm é/\*Tá sé ina fhear ghorm.*

‘He is a black man.’

The first pair (116) are interchangeable because they refer to the period after which the person referred to as *é* was ordained. In the second pair (117), the feature of being ‘a black man’ is permanent or part of the individual from birth and therefore the use of *Is* is compulsory. This type of permanency cannot be expressed by the structure containing the substantive verb. This is illustrated still further by using inanimate objects in copular sentences. Such objects have been created by humans and therefore have their permanent form from the beginning e.g. *Is cóta é seo* ‘This is a coat’. It is not possible to use the construction with the substantive verb to convey the same meaning.

The structure involving the use of the substantive verb can also be used with temporal expressions indicating times of the day, unexpected weather conditions and other conditions which arise at particular times.

(118) *Tá sé ina shamhradh.*

‘Summer has arrived.’

(119) *Tá sé ina chogadh.*

‘It’s war.’

This construction also allows various inversions when there is a need to emphasize the predicate e.g. *léachtóir atá ionam* ‘I am a lecturer’ (lit. ‘A lecturer that is in me’), *Níl ann ach amadán* ‘He is only a fool’ (lit. ‘There is not (anything) in him but a foolish person’).

### Omission of the copula

In every period of the language, there has been a tendency in particular circumstances to omit the copula at the very beginning of a sentence. Omission occurs with all subjects whether they are singular or plural and in the two main types of copula constructions mentioned above e.g. *Dochtúirí an bheirt* ‘The two of them are doctors’, *Ise an príomhoide* ‘She is the principal’.

## WORD ORDER AND SYNTAX

Irish has verb–subject–object as its basic order in main and subordinate clauses. This also holds true for negative clauses and for questions. In these cases the negative and interrogative particles precede the main verb.

(120) *Ní fhaca mé iad.*  
‘I didn’t see them.’

(121) *An bhfaca tú Bríd?*  
‘Did you see Bríd?’

When interrogative pronouns are used they precede the main verb followed by a relative clause. Such clauses may be direct or indirect.<sup>95</sup>

(122) *Cé a bheas ag an damhsa?*  
‘Who will be at the dance?’

(123) *Cé a mbeidh tú ag bualadh leis?*  
‘Who will you be meeting?’

Adverbs, prepositional phrases and quantifiers such as *uile/uilig* phrases are more flexible with regard to word order but tend to be placed towards the end of a sentence.

(124) *Chonaic mé Seán ar an aonach sna Doirí Beaga inné.*  
‘I saw Seán at the fair in Derrybeg yesterday.’

The last three lexical items can be rearranged in any order and the sentence will still remain grammatical.

The quantifier *uile/uilig* has similar properties although caution is needed in order to know where it should be placed.

(125) *D’ith Seán na húlla uilig inné.*  
‘Seán ate all the apples yesterday.’

(126) *D’ith Seán na húlla a fuair sé uilig inné.*  
‘Seán ate all the apples he got yesterday.’

In copular sentences the prevailing order is copula – predicate – subject.

(127) *Is beag a gcuid airgid.*  
‘They have very little money’ (lit. ‘Is small their money’)

As already discussed, the above word order types can be disturbed and rearranged when the speaker decides to place particular focus or emphasis on any constituent within a sentence. Such rearrangements have been referred to as *cleft* sentences in linguistic publications and have been the focus of detailed research in the recent past. The constituent to be emphasized or focused is moved to the beginning of the sentence and introduced by the appropriate form of the copula. The rest of the sentence is in the form of a relative clause.

### Coordinate structures

Phrases and sentences can be linked through the use of a variety of co-ordinating conjunctions, as follows:

- (a) Using *agus* 'and' (often reduced to *is*, 's) e.g. *Seán agus Séamas* 'John and James', *mise is tusa* 'You and I'.
- (b) Using *nó* 'or' and *ach* 'but, except' in positive sentences e.g. *Anna nó Síle* 'Ann or Sheila', *An mbeidh tú ann nó nach mbeidh?* 'Will you be there or not?', *Ní raibh ann ach Seán* 'There was no one there but John.'
- (c) When two negative clauses occur within a sentence, they are linked by the conjunction *ná* 'nor' e.g. *Ní íosfaidh sé ná ní ólfaidh sé* 'He will neither eat nor drink.'

### Subordination and relativization

Irish relative clauses have been the subject of a series of studies over the past thirty years using insights from modern linguistic theory. These studies have made a substantial contribution to the development of the theory and will continue to do so in the future. The main interest lies in the way Modern Irish dialects portray the intricate relationships that can exist between main clauses and relative clauses and the further revelations arising from the study of non finite clauses, in particular McCloskey (1985), McCloskey and Sells (1988), McCloskey (1990), Noonan (1992), Duffield (1995).

In the Old Irish period there were more special relative forms than there are in Modern Irish. All dialects have direct and indirect relative forms. Direct forms refer to a nominative/accusative relationship, and indirect forms refer to accusative, dative and genitive/possessive relationships. In positive clauses, both are introduced by the particle *a*. However, in direct clauses *a* is followed by lenition but in indirect clauses eclipsis is the rule.

While all dialects have direct and indirect relative clause verbal forms, special relative forms used in direct relative clauses are preserved only in Connacht and Ulster dialects. These take the ending *-(e)as* or some form thereof.<sup>96</sup> They are used in positive clauses only, as the negative relative marker *nach* takes eclipsis without the *-(e)as* ending. The following are representative examples.

- (128) *An teach a thógfás siad.*  
'The house they will build.'
- (129) *Sin an dath a bhíos air.*  
'That is its colour.' (Lit. That the colour that is on it.)
- (130) *An t-uisce a shús sé'.*  
'The water that it absorbs.'
- (131) *An teach nach dtógfáidh siad'.*  
'The house they will not build.'

Direct relative clauses expressing nominative/accusative relationship are often ambiguous and differentiating between them depends on context alone. This has been the case since the accusative endings disappeared from the language in the Middle Irish period. If the following example is taken out of context, then it is impossible to tell the subject from

the object: e.g. *an duine a bhuail an tiománaí* ‘The person who hit the driver/The person whom the driver hit.’<sup>97</sup>

Indirect relative clauses are introduced by the particles *a* in positive sentences and *nach* in negative sentences in all tenses and moods, except the past tense. Both particles are followed by eclipsis of the verb. The forms *ar* and *nár* are used with the past tense and are followed by lenition. The following example arises from a genitival relationship.

- (132) *Sin an fear ar thug siad a mháthair abhaile.*  
‘That is the man whose mother they brought home.’

When there is a dative type relationship expressed through the use of a preposition, indirect relative clauses are used. They take two forms: (a) the basic form of the preposition precedes the relative marker at the head of the relative clause and (b) the preposition in the form of a prepositional pronoun appears at the end of the relative clause and agrees in number and gender with its antecedent noun. The former type is found in all dialects and historically is the older construction. However, in many of the modern dialects the two forms compete with each other and type (a) is in danger of being replaced by type (b).<sup>98</sup>

- (133) *An bhó ar a raibh muid ag brath/An bhó a raibh muid ag brath uirthi.*  
‘The cow we were depending on.’

Similarly, other subordinate clauses e.g. comparative, temporal, are introduced in the same way as those described above. Temporal clauses seem to allow both lenition and eclipsis, particularly in Connacht and Ulster dialects, as shown by the following examples.

- (134) *An lá a chonaic/bhfaca mé iad.*  
‘The day I saw them.’
- (135) *An tseachtain a bheidh/mbeidh sí anseo.*  
‘The week she will be here.’

Most subordinate clauses which introduce indirect speech, causal, temporal, purpose, resultative and concessive clauses are formed using the complementizer *go* and its negative counterpart *nach* followed by eclipsis of the verb. They are also often preceded by a conjunction or a preposition acting as a conjunction.

- (136) *Dúirt sé nach bhfaca sé an carr.*  
‘He said that he didn’t see the car.’
- (137) *Tháinig siad go bhfeicfeadh siad í.*  
‘They came in order to see her.’

In introducing conditional clauses, *má* and *dá* and their negative counterpart *mura/muna* (preterite *murar/munar*) are used but without the use of *go/nach*.

- (138) *Labharfainn leis dá mbeinn ann.*  
‘I would speak to him if I were there.’

*Responses*

Modern Irish does not have separate words for ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ and instead it must resort to repeating some form of the verb in its positive or negative form. The most natural responses repeat the verb without any personal markings unless they are suffixes.

(139) *An mbeidh tú ann?*

‘Will you be there?’ *Beidh* (unmarked future form) or *Bead* (1st sg.).<sup>99</sup>

*Verbless sentences*

There are many instances where sentences appear without a verb. They can be categorized as follows:

- a Copula sentences, e.g. *Sin an fear* ‘That is the man’, *Seo duit* ‘Here you are’.
- b Adverbs as commands, e.g. *Isteach libh!* ‘In you (pl.) go’, *Aníos leat* ‘Up you come (towards me)’, *Anois thú* ‘Now, it’s your turn’.
- c Prepositions in exclamatory phrases, e.g. *Chugat an mhuc* ‘Beware of the pig (lit. Towards you the pig).’, *Uait* ‘Towards the left/Away from you.’
- d Prayers, e.g. *Dia linn* ‘God bless us’, *Maigh ó inniu* ‘My goodness!’.

**LANGUAGE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

It is fair to say that the most important and far-reaching measure adopted in the past eighty years in this context has been the standardization of Irish spelling and grammar. This has been discussed by various scholars over the years including Mac Mathúna (2008), Ó Baoill (1983, 1988, 1999, 2001), Ó Glaisne (1965), Ó Murchú (1977, 1978), Williams (2002). Individuals and groups of researchers working in different institutions over the past three decades or more have published continuously on many aspects of the Irish language. They cover such issues as Irish and national identity, language in music, literature and the media, attitudes towards Irish, Irish in the Gaeltacht, the teaching and learning of Irish, the importance of place-names research, the learning of Irish as a first language, registers and their role in Irish drama and media, the importance and success of the Irish medium education programmes in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland spearheaded by Gaelscoileanna and Gaeloiliúint, who were the co-ordinating bodies for all-Irish-medium education in both jurisdictions<sup>100</sup> and the publication of various descriptions of the language and speech of the remaining Gaeltacht areas. The most recent large scale study of Irish in the contemporary Gaeltacht areas is by Ó Giollagáin et al. (2007). The government responded by setting up a Select Committee of ministers to implement and address the recommendations of this report, and to report by the end of 2008. The government has also announced that it is to prepare and hopes to implement a twenty-year language policy to expand and strengthen Irish as a community language and to increase its daily usage among those who have communicative competence in the language. A small group of national and international experts, five in all, have been recruited by Fiontar at Dublin City University to undertake this task and report to the government by the end of 2008. The publication of the report has been promised by government by the end of 2009.

Foras na Gaeilge have also announced that the work on a new English/Irish dictionary has begun and it is estimated that it will take a period of five years to complete. Some

of the contractual arrangements have been put in place, and future work will focus on the multifaceted nature of this bilingual dictionary and bring together a team of linguistic and lexicographic experts to see the work carried to a successful conclusion.

Despite various shifts in the ideological processes at work in Ireland, all recent socio-linguistic research points to the fact that national identity remains at the core of the justification for the revival of the Irish language. This is the main reason that people learn Irish and support its promotion by the state and other bodies. It is certain that the relationship which exists between the language, its culture and national identity will change and redefine itself. There are many new ethnic groups and languages spoken by thousands of new immigrants who have come to Ireland in the past decade. Irish speakers must now find new ways of addressing and approaching the many new issues about to confront them and they must explore new and more effective way to help preserve the key elements of an old and rich cultural heritage.

As we enter the third millennium, Irish is changing rapidly. It has shown very noticeable trends in its morphological and syntactical makeup and this is likely to continue. The written standard language is now well established at all levels of communication and discourse. However, it needs to be modified and continuously monitored so as to relate to the spoken language (especially a standard spoken form) in a meaningful way. New vocabulary and terminology has broken new ground and the language has reached a stage where it can express a wide range of complicated intellectual and scientific ideas. The language in the Gaeltacht has not kept pace with these rapid changes in vocabulary development but through the media of radio and television and the advent of a daily and weekly newspaper, its speakers are developing a new and dynamic competence and confidence in the use of Irish. Much of the complicated morphology of the verb and noun will be replaced in time by simpler, more regular forms with the least number of added inflections. This in turn is likely to be heavily influenced by the English language and its relatively few grammatical endings, since all Irish speakers are to one degree or another bilingual. It is estimated that 98 per cent of Irish speakers are second-language learners and they in turn initiate other changes within the language system based on their own interlanguage and fossilization of language forms. The genitive form of nouns will be eliminated and 'strong' plural forms (those that add suffixes such as *-(a)í*, *-(e)acha*, or *-(e)anna* to the singular form) will be on the increase; the subjunctive mood, the use of dependent and independent forms of the verb, and the distinction between direct and indirect relative clauses will become obsolescent. These changes are already well on their way and written convention will have to follow suit. Borrowing of English vocabulary and syntax will continue and increase. Initial morphophonemic changes, however, seem as entrenched as ever and set to hold firm for the foreseeable future. Much more levelling is likely to take place as Irish becomes a more general means of communication among the general population. Perhaps that is the price we have to pay to ensure the survival of the language. Let us hope that it will all be worthwhile.

## NOTES

- 1 There are some exceptions to this rule. Words having an 'ae' digraph have velarized consonants only e.g. *Gael* /ge:l/ 'an Irish person'. The plural of *Gael* is *Gaeil* /ge:ɪʲ/, where the 'i' indicates that the final 'l' is now palatalized. Initial 'r' in such words as *rí* 'a king', *rith* 'run' etc. is velarized.
- 2 The initial 'f' sound is often bilabial in nature and could be transcribed as /β/.

- 3 /s/ is pronounced as [ʃ], similar to 'sh' in English *she*, *dish*, etc.
- 4 It is interesting that the voiceless affricate /ts/ has not been incorporated into the orthographical system although all dialects have been reported as having such a sound in vocabulary items borrowed from English. They include such words as *tseic* 'cheque', *tsip* 'chip' and *hitseáil* 'hitching'. The problem of using a unitary /tʃ/ or /dʒ/ phoneme has been avoided by applying the historical rule which changed /dʒ/ to /ʃ/ in the proper names such as *Séamas* 'James', *Seán* 'John' and other vocabulary items, borrowed more than five centuries ago. In intervocalic position the unitary /tʃ/ becomes two sequential phonemes with metathesis /tʃi/ as in the surname *de Róiste* 'Roche' and words of the type *meaitseáil* 'match'. This leaves a gap in the phonemic system underlying the standard spelling as there is no voiceless phoneme corresponding to /dʒ/.
- 5 This reduction of contrasts among nasal and lateral phonemes is probably old – perhaps dating as far back as 1200 at least. Standard Classical Irish poetry of the period 1200–1650 divided Irish phonemes into different classes. The dental and alveo-palatal nasals and laterals belonged to one group while alveolar *l* and *n* belonged to another. However, in certain circumstances, namely, between vowels and following long vowels, the dental and alveo-palatal group could make perfect rhyme with consonants from the group to which the alveolar set belonged. This would seem to indicate that the contrast between dental and alveolar nasals and laterals had ceased to exist in the living language of the thirteenth century. Its disappearance was hastened still further because sequences of a stressed short vowel followed by dental or alveo-palatal consonants in words such as *crann* 'a tree', *caill* 'loss', *poll* 'a hole' were now being realized as long vowels or diphthongs. Thus the earlier contrast, for example, between *geall* 'promise' and *geal* 'white', which depended on the different quality of the final consonants, became a contrast between a long vowel/diphthong in the first word and a short vowel in the second. This reduced significantly the wordload being carried by the original contrast as indicated by the spelling *ll* and *l* in the minimal pair quoted above.
- 6 This /r/ pronunciation is also found in *farraige* 'sea', *tarraing* 'pull' and before dental and alveo-palatal consonants e.g. *ard* 'high', *airde* 'height', *táirne* 'a nail', *Art* 'Art (a person's name)', *Tarlach* 'Charlie'.
- 7 In certain Cork dialects historical /p/ has become palatal /pʲ/ e.g. *tinn* 'sick', *intinn* 'mind, intention', Ó Cuív (1944), Wagner (1958). In the Ballymacoda area of East Cork as reported by Ó Cuív (1951) and Wagner (1958), there is a further development whereby original long dental or alveo-palatal consonants have a /d/ or /dʲ/ inserted after them in words such as *coill* 'a wood' > *coilld*, *aifreann* 'a Mass' > *aifreannnd* etc. The application of this process probably took place before the general merging of alveolar and dental/alveo-palatal consonants in Munster Irish.
- 8 In these circumstances, it is merely following the fate of intervocalic /h/ from earlier /θ/, which is prone to deletion in many dialects e.g. *bóthar* /bo:t/ < /bo:hær/ < /bo:θær/.
- 9 It should be pointed out that in words such as *dóigh* 'burn', *léigh* 'read', final *gh* is realized as [j] in Munster dialects and is deleted in many South Connacht dialects.
- 10 This presents a difficulty for English speakers. First of all they need to learn that the fronting of velar consonants so common in English does not apply in Irish, e.g. the *g* of *guí* 'a prayer' and the *c* of *Caoimhe* ('Caoimhe', a girl's name) and of *scannán* 'a film' are not fronted. It takes a lot of practice to acquire this rule and get away from the influence of English phonotactics.
- 11 This change is now common only in Connacht and Ulster dialects. The double consonants *ll* and *nn* are dental blade articulated in those dialects that distinguish *ll* from *l* and *nn* from *n*. The single consonants *l* and *n* are alveolar articulated consonants where the tip of the tongue touches the alveolar ridge. This distinction is no longer maintained in Munster dialects. Ulster seems to have retained this distinction best where a set of four l-phonemes and four n-phonemes were retained, two palatalized and two velarized consonants in the case of each consonant (Sommerfelt 1922, Wagner 1968, Ó Baoill 1979, 1996). This four-way distinction has also been retained in the dialects of Mayo and north Connacht generally (de Búrca 1958, Wagner 1968, Mac an Fhailigh 1968). The dialects of west Galway and Cois Fharraige, in particular, seem to maintain only a three-way contrast, the distinction between velarized *llll* and *nn/n* having been lost through the merging of *l* and *n* with *ll* and *nn* respectively (de Bhaldraithe 1944).

- 12 At an earlier period of the language, lenition was shown only on voiceless plosives and this was done by adding *h* to each consonant. Lenition of *s* and *f* was indicated by placing a suprascript point above the consonant, to give *ś* and *ḥ*. Later on this suprascript was placed over all affected consonants and was in general use down to the early 1960s. It has once again been replaced by *h*, due to the use of the Roman alphabet on keyboards. However, as computer programs today can easily translate the suprascript tick or dot over letters to *h*, the earlier script may once again become fashionable in some forms of writing and personal and other communication.
- 13 These fricatives have been better preserved following long vowels and diphthongs in most dialects. Munster Irish deletes the /β/ of *lámh* 'a hand' in the plural *lámha*, giving the pronunciation /tʰa/.
- 14 The rule is blocked in certain cases, namely, when the following word begins with *t* or *d*, e.g. *an teanga* 'the language', *an duais* 'the prize' and *eochair an dorais* 'the door key'.
- 15 The numbers 3–6 are often used with the plural of nouns. In such cases there is no initial change e.g. *trí cearca* 'three hens'.
- 16 Note that the rule applies to feminine words with a prefix beginning with *s* e.g. *seanbhean* 'an old woman'. On the phonetic level, the *n* of the article *an* 'the' tends to agree in mode of articulation with the following *t*, so that both *n* and *t* are palatalized or alternatively both are velarized. The *t* is a remnant of the voiced *d* of the article written *indlint* in Old Irish. As the *s* became *h* by lenition, it devoiced this preceding *d* and thus became *t*, e.g. *int shúil*. The *t* became attached to the following word through morphophonetic fusing and is now written *an tsúil*.
- 17 This rule does not apply in all dialects although prescribed in the recommendations of An Caighdeán Oifigiúil (1958).
- 18 This is the original meaning of *urú* – the traditional term used in Irish grammars and by earlier linguists for a period of over a thousand years.
- 19 All consonants whether velarized or palatalized participate in these morphophonemic changes. In Modern Irish, both lenition and eclipsis are conditioned by preceding particles, possessives, verbal morphology, prepositions and so on.
- 20 It is generally argued that there is only one long *á* phoneme. It has front and back allophones depending on the phonetic context. Taking all the evidence from the extant dialects into account the historical long *á* seems to have been a low back unrounded vowel /a:/. Generally speaking, the vowel is fronted in the vicinity of palatalized consonants. In many parts of Ulster long *á* is a low front or mid low vowel even in the context of velarized consonants. It seems that this fronting has been a historical process which is still ongoing in various dialects of North-West Donegal in particular. In some of these dialects the long *á* vowel is /æ:/ even in such words as *ál* 'a brood', *bán* 'white', *bláth* 'a flower', *cár* 'teeth' and *cnámh* 'a bone'.
- 21 The *eo* spelling denotes a short vowel /o/ in a small number of words: *seo* 'this', *deoch* 'a drink' and *eochair* 'a key'.
- 22 The digraph *ao* represents three different pronunciations and covers all dialectal variations. That is why it has been retained in the standard spelling. Historically, *ao* represented a long retracted front mid vowel similar to /e:/. It is thus heavily influenced by the surrounding velarized consonants, which is the normal environment in which it occurs in words such as *aon* 'one', *daor* 'expensive', etc. However, the original sound has been raised to a high vowel and maintains its unrounded feature. Ulster dialects in general have an unrounded high back vowel in words such as *caol* 'slender, thin', *saor* 'cheap', etc. In South Donegal and in the Ros Goill dialect of North Donegal, there is a tendency to front this vowel to /i:/. Again it is retracted due to the influence of the surrounding velarized consonants. This is the case throughout Connacht as well although the historical /e:/ can also be heard in a limited number of words. This is particularly so in songs and poetry.
- 23 Here we have another example of a triphthong *iúi* pronounced as /u:/. The spelling convention where *i* appears on either side of *ú* indicates that the preceding and following consonants, namely *s* and *l*, are to be pronounced as palatalized consonants. The reader should check the spelling table for further examples of trigraphs indicating a single long or short vocalic pronunciation.

- 24 The phonetic variants of *á* are clearly influenced by surrounding consonants, being generally more fronted in the environment of palatalized consonants giving the phonetic realizations [a:] and [æ:] and being pronounced much further back in the environment of velarized consonants, giving [ɑ:] and [ɔ:]. See also footnote 20 above.
- 25 The exceptions are those dialects where unrounded /u:/ has been fronted and now belongs to the long /i:/ phoneme. These subdialects are found mainly in the southern half of Donegal and in Ros Goill in the north of the county.
- 26 This is what is to be understood from the various phonetic/phonemic descriptions from the modern Irish dialect monographs published by the School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS) – Ó Cuív (1944), de Bhaldraithe (1945), Breathnach (1947) and Mac An Fhailigh (1968).
- 27 The quality of the final vowel of the /iə/ and /uə/ diphthongs and of the initial vowel in the /ai/ and /au/ diphthongs may vary from one dialect to the next and indeed within dialects. The phoneme /iə/, for example, may be pronounced [iə], [iə̃] and [iæ̃]. /au/ may be realized as [au], [æu], [əu] and [əũ]. Despite this variation no new phonemic contrasts have arisen. Note, however, the reference to various developments in the dialects of Munster outlined above. Ó Sé (2000) describes a fifth phonemic contrast among the diphthongs in the Irish of West Kerry. The contrast is between the /iə/ and /ia/ phonemes. The latter is a new development in the dialect, being derived from the original long /e:/ vowel in words such as *éan* ‘a bird’, *béal* ‘a mouth’ and *féar* ‘grass’. He describes it as follows: ‘It has a beginning point somewhere between Cardinal Vowel 1 and Cardinal Vowel 2 and an end point close to Cardinal Vowel 4 in the speech of conservative speakers. It is a slightly higher vowel close to [ɐ̃] in the speech of others’ (p. 25: my translation).
- 28 It should be pointed out that /ai/ and /au/ diphthongs have arisen in many dialects in single syllable words ending in *m*, *nn*, *ll*, *rr* and *ng* and in polysyllabic words where these consonants are followed immediately by another consonant e.g. *cail* ‘to lose’, *caillfear* ‘will lose’, *coill* ‘a wood’, *coillte* ‘woods’, *poll* ‘a hole’, *poill* ‘holes’, *pollta* ‘punctured, perforated’, *cam* ‘crooked’ and *camfaidh* ‘will bend’. The change does not take place in polysyllabic words derived from the above when followed immediately by a vowel e.g. *caillim* ‘I lose’, *pollaim* ‘I puncture, perforate’, *ama* genitive of *am* ‘time’ and in basic non-derived words such as *amadán* ‘a fool’, *annamh* ‘seldom’, etc. The above changes are mainly confined to Munster and Southern Connacht dialects but the changes are not uniform throughout these dialects. The word *poll* ‘a hole’ has an /au/ diphthong in both Munster and South Connacht dialects. A contrast has been reported for West Muskerry (Ó Cuív 1944) between the diphthong /əu/ in *com* ‘a glen, a mountain recess’ as opposed to /au/ in *cam* ‘crooked’.
- 29 The dialects of Ulster generally prefer to convert the vowel + voiced fricative sequence to a long vowel. Hence the words *ladhar* ‘a toe, a fork’, *aghaidh* ‘a face’ and *feidhm* ‘a use’ tend to have a retracted long vowel [ɛ:] similar to the type found in *é* ‘him’, *cé?* ‘who?’.
- 30 The resulting diphthong in the latter case is often nasalized /äü/ and may form a contrast with /au/ at least in some of the surviving dialects.
- 31 The Irish situation is very different from that obtaining in Scottish Gaelic where the colouring of the epenthetic vowel is often a copy of the immediately preceding stressed vowel. Similar pronunciation can be heard in parts of Donegal and may be a recent introduction.
- 32 The age of this rule of epenthesis is hard to pin down owing to the conservative nature of Irish writing and the reluctance of the literary classes to admit its existence. Nevertheless, traces of the process can be seen in spellings of the following types from as early as the Old Irish period e.g. *orm/oram/* ‘on me’.
- 33 All nouns in the first declension end in a velarized consonant e.g. *capall* ‘a horse’, *bád* ‘a boat’, *coileach* ‘a rooster’ and have the following plural forms *capaill*, *báid* and *coiligh*, where the final *i* indicates a following palatalized consonant. However, certain nouns, which have been placed in the first declension prefer to take strong plural endings in agreement with the spoken language e.g. *carr* > *carranna* ‘a car’, *stad* > *stadanna* ‘stop’, *cineál* > *cineálacha* ‘a type’, *laoch* > *laochra* ‘hero’. Many nouns in the second declension also end in a velarized consonant and again the majority take the plural ending *-a* in the written language e.g. *fuinneog* >

*fuinneoga* 'a window'. As with the first declension nouns, a number prefer the strong endings in the plural: *slat* > *slatacha* 'a stick'. All other nouns in the second declension (most of which end in a palatalized consonant), take strong plural endings e.g. *ceist* > *ceisteanna* 'a question', *bainis* > *bainseacha* 'a wedding'.

- 34 These plural endings have been derived from the endings of the consonantal stems in Old Irish.
- 35 There is a great tendency in all dialects to have double plural endings in many cases, that is to say, there is an agglomeration of several endings e.g. *-(e)anna* + *-í* as in *ceisteannaí* 'questions', *-acha* + *-í* as in *barúlachaí* 'opinions'.
- 36 There are a small number of adjectives which precede the noun e.g. *ard-*, *deá-*, *droch-*, *sean-* as in *ardrí* 'a high king', *deáthuirisc* 'a good report', *drochobair* 'bad work' and *seanbhean* 'an old woman'.
- 37 Some dialects do not inflect some adjectives in the plural and this is particularly true for adjectives ending in *-(e)ach* e.g. *gníomhach*, *gaelach*. (See de Bhaldraithe 1953: §§230–34, Ó Sé 2000: 147.)
- 38 The *níos* preceding the comparative form is said to be a combination of *ní* + *is* 'a thing that is'. The comparative form has various endings depending on the basic form of the adjective e.g. *bán* 'white' > *níos báine*, *fada* 'long' > *níos faide*, *gorm* 'blue' > *níos goirme*, *eolach* 'knowledgeable' > *níos eolaí*, *cóir* 'fair, just' > *níos córa*, *breá* 'fine' > *níos breátha*. There are a small number (between 10 and 15) of irregular adjectives.
- 39 This is the rule as expressed in the standard language. However, the use of *a* is not absolute in all dialects e.g. *trí agus trí sin sé* 'three and three is six'.
- 40 The rule about the *déag/dhéag* variation, as prescribed in the standard language, is an attempt to bring together the main usages. Dialectal usage does not always adhere to the rule and *dhéag* is often heard after nouns, both masculine and feminine, e.g. *trí theach dhéag* 'thirteen houses', *cúig fhuinneog dhéag* 'fifteen houses'. As with the cardinal numbers, *dó* and *ceathair* become *dhá* and *ceithre* when used with nouns e.g. *a dó dhéag* 'twelve', but *dhá dhuine dhéag* 'twelve people'.
- 41 Certain numerals in Old Irish were followed by the genitive plural form of a noun. Since many nouns had identical forms in the nominative singular and genitive plural, this rule was applied through analogy to these nouns and hence we get the nominative singular following numerals.
- 42 The number *aon* does not lenite words beginning with *d* and *t* e.g. *aon Teachta Dála amháin* 'one member of Parliament', *aon Dia amháin* 'one God', but *aon bhean amháin* 'one woman'.
- 43 This was not the case in O.Ir. where *oenar* derived from *oen* '1' + *fer* was the form used. This word has been restricted in the modern language to the meaning 'alone' and hence had to be replaced. *Beirt* is also a new replacement for *dias* of O.Ir. The origin of *beirt* has been much debated: Ó Cuív (1957), Greene (1968), Ó Buachalla (1976). Its literal meaning was probably 'bundle'. *Dias* survived into the modern period as *dís*, which was an old dative singular form. It has been replaced everywhere in Ireland by *beirt* but survives in Scottish Gaelic.
- 44 Irish distinguishes between direct and indirect relative clauses. They will be discussed further below. Both direct and indirect clauses are introduced by the relative marker *a*. Following the direct relative the verb is lenited but it is eclipsed in indirect relative clauses.
- 45 For further discussion of the situation pertaining to sign languages the reader is referred to Ó Baoill and Matthews (1998).
- 46 One can stress both lexical items in *thuas ansin* 'defined position' or leave them unstressed. When the speaker wishes to point out the defined position, he/she will normally stress each part of the lexical phrase. If the speaker does not wish to point out the defined area, then both parts of the phrase are left unstressed. On the other hand, *suas ansin* 'undefined position' is never stressed and can never be pointed out as it is out of sight.
- 47 O.Ir. *cen* 'without', Mod.Ir. *gan*, has lost its pronominal inflection and governs independent pronouns, e.g. *gan tú* 'without you (sg.)'.
- 48 Ulster Irish prefers the rule of lenition after all prepositions while the other dialects in general prefer to use eclipsis. Historically, lenition and eclipsis denoted different states of affairs – the former denoting location, the latter movement: Irish Grammatical Tracts 1 (IGT I). At a later stage, different dialects went their separate ways, Ulster and Scottish dialects preferring lenition, Connacht and Munster applying the eclipsis rule.

- 49 In some dialects, the dative form has replaced the nominative as the basic form of the noun and hence the palatalizing rule has been made redundant. This process seems to apply to Connacht dialects more than others. The standard literary language has by and large ignored the new nominative forms and has not prescribed in its grammar the application of this process of marking feminine nouns as dative.
- 50 *Ag* is pronounced as if written *aig* [eɟ] – [ɪɟ], as the pronunciation indicates.
- 51 The compound *ar nós* ‘in the manner (of)’ according to de Bhaldraithe (1953: 229) is generally followed by the nominative of a following object pronoun, e.g. *ar nós muid féin* ‘like ourselves’. Other dialects prefer the genitive or possessive form, e.g. *ar nós an tsaoil* ‘like everyone else’, *ar mo nós féin* ‘like myself’.
- 52 When unstressed, the long vowels in *mé, tú, sé, é, sí* and *í* are shortened. They may also lose their quality, e.g. [e:] becomes [e] or [ɛ]. In many Ulster dialects it becomes [a] and a similar reduction is found in Scottish Gaelic. Likewise, *siad* [ʃiəd] ‘they’ becomes [ʃɪd] in *Tá siad anseo* ‘They are here’.
- 53 Ó Sé (1996) discusses the various forms of the personal pronouns and their usage within Gaelic dialects.
- 54 English tends to show emphasis by stressing the pronoun marked in bold. Irish does not do this as it has access to a series of emphatic forms.
- 55 *Ea* is generally pronounced [a] or [æ] in most dialects. It tends to be lengthened to [æ:] in South Galway dialects. In many Ulster dialects, it is pronounced [əu] or [eɪ(h)] through various historical processes whereby historical final *dh* was vocalized.
- 56 Munster Irish seems to have lost the normal word order copula sentences, which are common in the other dialects, e.g. (*Is dochtúir í* ‘She is a doctor’ and replaced them with the focused/fronted *is ea* type.
- 57 These exist side by side with the traditional usage without *cuid*, e.g. *mo shúile/lámha/dhear-tháireacha*. It would also seem that the form of the genitive plural following *cuid* has been abandoned in favour of a form equivalent to the nominative plural in the case of *súil/lámh*. This means that they and many other nouns have joined the strong plural class where the forms of the nominative plural and the genitive plural are identical.
- 58 This new development sits side by side with the following equivalent expressions, which are common to all dialects, e.g. *airgead Dhónaill* ‘Dónall’s money’, *eallach an fhir seo* ‘This man’s cattle’.
- 59 The prepositional pronoun (in bold italics) may also be placed at the end of the sentence, e.g. *Cé a raibh tú ag caint leis?* Dialects vary as to which option they prefer and for some prepositions there are no options. This question has been of great interest to generative linguists and those interested in Chomsky’s Extended Standard Theory (McCloskey 1985, McCloskey and Sells 1988, McCloskey 1990).
- 60 *Ná* is confined to Munster Irish. It does not change the initial of the following verb but prefixes *h* before vowels, *Ná tógfá é?* ‘Would you not lift/take it?’, *Ná hólfa deoch?* ‘Would you not have a drink?’
- 61 *Siúd/Úd* refers to a third space similar to the English word *yonder*, e.g. *Tá sí thall ansíúd* ‘She is over yonder’. *Úd* may also be used in a referential deictic role, which refers back to something or someone already mentioned in a previous narrative and it may be used with proper names e.g. *An Dónall úd* ‘That Dónall you mentioned or told us about a while ago’.
- 62 Verbs ending in *-(e)áil* have increased in number due to the intensive contact between Irish and English during the past four centuries. The vast majority of verbs borrowed from English take this ending and their conjugation is very regular.
- 63 The verbs whose imperative 2nd singular ends in *-(a)igh* are by far the most common among the second conjugation verbs.
- 64 For clarification of the spelling differences, the reader is referred to the section on conjugation.
- 65 This seems to be characteristic of Connacht and Ulster dialects at present. It may be an internal change in the language itself but the influence of English cannot be ruled out. More detailed investigation is needed before we can reach any definite conclusions on the matter.

- 66 This consonant is velarized or palatalized according to the pronunciation of the following vowel. Back vowels are preceded by a velarized /d/ e.g. *d'ól sé* 'He drank', and front vowels by a palatalized /dʲ/ e.g. *d'éistfinn* 'I would listen'. In some cases the process is applied before historical vowels which are no longer pronounced e.g. palatalized /dʲ/ in *d'iompair siad é* 'They carried him'. The *i* of *d'iompair* is no longer realized phonetically but its former realization as a front vowel or glide causes the palatalization of *d'*, /dʲ/.
- 67 This was the situation until very recently. Of late, speakers have created new verbal adjectives as they feel the need to use them. They may also be influenced by other dialects through access to radio and television through the medium of Irish, particularly Raidió na Gaeltachta and Teilifís na Gaeltachta, now TG4. More and more people are being educated in third-level institutions and universities and hence come into contact with other dialectal forms in both speech and writing. As a result of all this influence, Ulster forms such as *feiciste/feiciste* 'seen', *fáighte* 'found' and others can be heard in day to day speech.
- 68 A more detailed summary of this construction in Irish English is to be found in Filppula (1999: 99–110).
- 69 This points to a substratum heavily influenced by the Irish language during intensive periods of bilingualism in the transition from Irish to English. A typical example would be *I'm after spending a lot of money on this car and it still doesn't work*, which would be rendered in Standard English as *I have spent a lot of money on this car, and it still doesn't work*.
- 70 The conditional form of the verb in Irish is marked for 1st and 2nd singular and 1st and 3rd plural in almost all dialects. The unmarked form *bheadh* occurs elsewhere and before nouns. e.g. *Bheadh sé ann/Bheadh Dónall ann* 'He would be there /Dónall would be there'.
- 71 This, no doubt, is due to the patterns of bilingualism obtaining in Ireland at various times during the past four centuries or so. The influence seems strongest in the expansion of aspectual differences parallel to those formed in English by the use 'to have'. This is also seen very clearly in the underdifferentiation which takes place between the use of the impersonal forms and the verbal adjectives. Irish distinguishes clearly between an action (use of autonomous forms) and a state (use of verbal adjective constructions) e.g. *Dúntar an doras ar a naoi a chlog* 'The door is closed at nine o'clock' (present autonomous) versus *Bíonn an doras dúnta ar a naoi a chlog* 'The door is closed at nine o'clock' (denoting the state of being closed). As English does not distinguish grammatically/syntactically between the two types of 'closed', bilingual Irish speakers seem not to make the traditional distinction of action versus state in their translation from English to Irish, and replace the use of the autonomous with the periphrastic stative structure. This is commonplace in everyday speech and on radio and television.
- 72 These impersonal endings are identical with the impersonal endings found with the habitual present tense of both conjugations of the verb. Their semantic interpretation, however, is quite different.
- 73 Similar examples are to be found in McQuillan's discussion of the subjunctive and other moods in Old and Middle Irish: McQuillan (2002: 26–7).
- 74 It should be noted that both subjunctives are preceded by various particles and complementizers such as the negative markers *ná/nár/nára* 'may . . . not', the complementizer *go* 'may, until, so that' and the conditional marker *dá* 'if'. These are given in the conjugations in order to make the examples look more natural. Thus *Go n-óla* means 'May someone drink' and *Nár óla* 'May someone not drink'. Similarly, *Dá n-ólaim* is translated as 'Had I drunk/Were I to drink'.
- 75 The original distribution was that motion verbs governed verbal noun constructions while non-motion verbs took subjunctive clauses.
- 76 The phonetic realization of *ach(t)* *go* is normally [axə] in all dialects. However, in Ulster dialects, particularly Donegal, the *g* of *go* is often heard as in examples (50) and (51) [ax gə].
- 77 In Munster, usages such as *má bheadh* (*má* + conditional form) have been attested in speech and in written sources. As far as I am aware, they are unknown in other dialects.
- 78 *Murach* is a combination of *mura* 'if not' and the conjunction *ach* 'but', giving the meaning 'if it were not', 'had X not . . .'
- 79 Wigger's paper was delivered at a symposium in honour of Máirtín Ó Briain in Galway in October 2005. It gives a great deal of information about the use of the conditional and its frequency, based on the material in his own book *Caint Ros Muc* (2004). This in turn has been

based on the large database of colloquial speech collected by Hans Hartmann in the Ros Muc area of West Galway. The second paper was delivered at the XIII International Congress of Celtic Studies in Bonn in July 2007 by Eshel-Benninga. Her Irish materials were based on evidence from Pádraic Ó Conaire's novel *Deoraíocht*.

- 80 For more detailed discussion and examples relating to this change see McQuillan (2002: 200–23).
- 81 Historically the agent was marked by one of three prepositions *ag* 'at, by', *le* 'with/by' and *ó* 'from'. In Modern Irish all three are used to denote agents in different constructions/environments: Ó Sé (2007).
- 82 There is great variation across, and even within, dialects regarding this rule, and prescriptive grammars and dictionaries struggle to come to an agreement about this operation. A summary of the kind of variation involved is to be found in Ní Dhónaill (1970: 1–9). Note that we are talking about indefinite nouns only, those not preceded by the definite article, possessive pronouns etc.
- 83 Historically this *á* is derived from a combination of either *ag* + *a* or *do* + *a*.
- 84 The changes applying to the initial consonant of the verbal noun after *á* are regulated by the gender of its antecedent. Masculine nouns cause lenition, feminine nouns cause no change to the initial consonant but prefix *h* to verbs beginning with a vowel. Plural nouns cause the verbal noun to be eclipsed.
- 85 In other dialects this type of contrast is extremely rare or has been lost entirely.
- 86 This sentence type tends to have a finite clause introduced by the complementizer *go* in the non Ulster dialects e.g. *Ba mhaith léi go gceannódh Seán an teach*.
- 87 There is some disagreement in the literature about what the nominative/accusative forms of pronouns mean. It is true that the use of the pairs *tú/thú*, *sé/é*, *sí/í* and *siad/iad* is in complementary distribution, the nominative forms (the first in each pair) appearing immediately after the main verb, the accusative forms elsewhere. However, as McCloskey (1984) has argued persuasively, they are best thought of as being accusative. In the earlier language of Old and Middle Irish, preposed nominal phrases were similarly inflected according to the case marking required by the general syntax.
- 88 Such perfective meanings were expressed by various prefixes in Old Irish and particularly by the prefix *ro-*: Thurneysen (1946: 339–48). Since the early Modern Irish period the role of *ro-* has been taken over by *i ndiaidh/tar éis*.
- 89 One would expect *an doras* to be in the genitive form *an dorais* after *ag iarraidh*. However, the language has moved away from using the genitive in such constructions.
- 90 These phrases have a similar role to the converbs so common in the languages of South-East Asia, the Caucasian languages and others spoken in the former Soviet Union to express similar, and many other, meanings. The concomitant construction is one of those substrate elements that have been borrowed into Irish English e.g. *He was there and I coming in*.
- 91 This was not the case in Old Irish where the past participle could be inflected for different cases.
- 92 The one exception is the verbal phrase. As Irish is a verb initial language, a clash occurs between the copula in its function in cleft sentences and the appearance of the verbal phrase. Verbs are clefted by using a copular phrase followed by a direct relative clause e.g. *Is amhlaidh a thit sé* 'He actually fell (what actually happened to him was that he fell)', *Is é rud a d'imigh sé* 'He actually left'.
- 93 This may be due in part to the fact that *bhí* 'was' can be emphasized whereas *ba*, the past tense of the copula, cannot receive stress
- 94 In the two examples given, lenition and eclipsis of the first consonant of *múinteoir* and *tiarnaí* indicate that the subjects they refer to are 3rd singular masculine and 3rd plural, respectively.
- 95 The indirect clause can place prepositional pronouns either at the end of the sentence or immediately following the relative pronoun. This latter seems to be the more common word order.
- 96 Owing to the peculiarities of the Modern Irish spelling system, this *-(e)as* is reduced to *-s* following a long vowel e.g. *an té a bhrisfeas/ólfas/cheannós é* 'He who will break/drink/buy it'.
- 97 In the unmarked case, the reader will assume that the first person mentioned carried out the action but, as I have indicated, it could be interpreted in a different way.

- 98 Note that *ar* is the basic form of the preposition in the first sentence and that *uirthi* is the 3rd person singular feminine agreeing with its antecedent *bó* 'a cow'. As the substantive verb has a special dependent form *raibh* in the past tense, it is used in indirect relative clauses.
- 99 If one wishes to emphasize that one definitely intends to be present, then it is quite appropriate to use a separate pronoun with strong stress in the answer *Beidh mé* 'I certainly will.'
- 100 This role has been taken over by *Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta* (The Council for all-Irish Medium Education) which was set up in Northern Ireland in 2000 and by *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta* (The Educational Council for Gaeltacht and the Irish Medium Sector). *The International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* has recently (2007) published a special issue on Ireland under the editorship of Dr John Harris of Trinity College Dublin. It contains a series of articles by experts in the field.

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