

THE PREPOSITIONAL RELATIVE IN IRISH¹

IN IRISH, when a noun or pronoun is fronted – which in normal, unmarked statement would be qualified by a preposition – this will produce two alternative syntagms. Thus if we take the unmarked sentence *Ataam i síd már* ‘We live in a great *síd*’, this will produce two marked variants:

- A. (Copula) + predicate noun/pronoun + prepositional relative verb (or indirect relative verb + prepositional pronoun), as in the attested *Síd már i-taam*.
- B. (Copula) + preposition with noun or pronoun + verb, as in *I síd már ataam*.

One of the present writers has already discussed these alternative types (Mac Cana 1985), adopting as his *point de départ* the above type A sentence which occurs in the Old Irish tale *Echtrae Conlai: Síd már i-táam, conid de suidiu nonn-ainmnighther áess Síde* ‘We live in a great *síd* [lit. ‘It is a great *síd* that we are in’], and that is why we are called the people of the *síd*’ (ibid.:210). Other instances of A occur throughout the earlier language, e.g.

- (1) *Is sochuide día tarad deoga tondaig anocht ar dorus mBruidni* ‘It is a multitude [of men] to whom it handed out draughts of death tonight at the entrance to the *bruiden*’ (Knott 1936:46 lines 1537–9)
- (2) *Suide somna i tudchadh* ‘It is the seat of a good woman you have come into’ (Bergin and Best 1938:152 § 16)
- (3) *Trian n-ecalso, is fine frisa condlaither* ‘The church’s third, it is the kin with which it is shared’ (Breatnach 1989:16–17 § 21)
- (4) *Is hed aridlabrathar hóre is dias rodfóidi* ‘that is why he says it, because it is two persons that had sent it’ (Stokes and Strachan 1901:543, Wb 7d2)

but they are infrequent by comparison with B.

Professor Tomás de Bhaldraithe (1987) observes that syntagm A, while it is not the normal structure, is more common in Modern Irish than had been suggested in 1985, and he adduces a number of instances from modern texts to confirm this. This raises some interesting questions. Written Irish from the seventh to the seventeenth century, and later, appears to have maintained roughly the same modest proportion of A to B which was noted in Mac Cana (1985). If this ratio has in fact

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altered substantially in contemporary and near-contemporary Irish, it might be interesting to enquire where and how this is attested, given that the general assessment in Mac Cana (1985), admittedly an impressionistic one, was based upon a reasonably extensive reading of Modern Irish texts. With this in mind the present writers decided to carry out a more extensive survey of the distribution of syntagms A and B in Modern Irish, concentrating primarily on Donegal Irish, both written and oral, but incorporating some comparative material from other dialects.

Our collection and classification lays no claim to comprehensiveness or absolute precision, but we feel they are sufficiently accurate and representative to provide a *rapprochement* between the seemingly conflicting views that syntagm A is 'infrequent' in Modern Irish (Mac Cana 1985:212) and that it is 'sách coitianta' (de Bhaldraithe 1987:207).

In setting out our examples we have begun by trying to segregate the categories in which A and B preponderate respectively, though, as will be abundantly clear, there is most often a certain overlap between the two types. These are followed by categories in which the two alternate relatively freely.

Sources are given exhaustively for examples from printed literature; examples marked ÉÓT represent the spoken Irish of the Aran Islands and we are indebted for them to Éamonn Ó Tuathail; those marked T. de Bh. are from de Bhaldraithe (1987) and those without references are from the speech of the Bloody Foreland area of west Donegal.

Class A

(i) In complex sentences where a second relative clause intervenes after the fronted pronoun/noun:

- (5) Is é an streachailt a bhí air á dtarraingt leis a raibh mé ag déanamh iontais *de*
- (6) Sén grinneas a bhí ann á bhfeiceál a rabh mé a' déanamh iona *dhó* (T. de Bh.)
- (7) Is é an cóta mór a bhí air agus na sifíní a bhí crochta as a raibh na páistí ag gáire *faoithu*
- (8) Is é an damhsa a bhí aige thuas ar bharr na cruaike a raibh mise ag cur an iontais *ann*
- (9) Is í an tsíorbhéiciúch a bhíonn ar siúl acu is mó a mbíonn iontas agam *inti* (ÉÓT)

Class B also occurs, e.g.

- (10) Is é an ragairne a bhain leis an obair a bhí le déanamh a raibh an eagla orm *roimpi* / Is *roimh* an ragairne a bhain leis an obair a bhí le déanamh a bhí an faitíos orm (ÉÓT)

But A appears to be the more normal usage.

(ii) With certain periphrastic verbal expressions:

- (11) Is é Máнас nach leigfinn a dhath *leis* / *Is *le* Máнас nach leigfinn a dhath²

but also

- (12) Is *leis* nach leigfinn a dhath
 (13) Is é Máнас ar éirigh go maith *leis*

but

- (14) *? Is *le Máнас* a d'éirigh go maith

(iii) With periphrastic expressions involving a verbal noun:

- (15) Is é an teach thíos a bhfuil sé ag cur *leis* / **Leis an teach thíos* atá sé ag cur

but also

- (16) Is é an teach thíos a bhfuil sé ag cur an ghiota úr *leis* / *Leis an teach thíos* atá sé ag cur an ghiota úr

From this it would appear that the verbal noun phrase (here 'cur le') may be split to constitute syntagm B when the verbal noun is followed by a noun object, but not otherwise. Cf.

- (17) Is iad féin ar doiligh cur suas *leo* / *Is *leo féin* is doiligh cur suas

Class B

(i) Sentences which identify the medium or instrument by which an action is performed apparently resist fronting of simple noun/pronoun (without preposition):

- (18) *Le cloich* a bhuaíl sé é
 (19) *Le tóirneach* a maraíodh é
 (20) Cha rabh sé i bhfad roimhe sin nuair ba *le corráin uilig* a bhíthe ar ag baint fómhair (Mac Gabhann 1959:78)
 (21) Is *le clocha den chinéal sin* a tógadh leachta móra na h-Éigipte (Mac Giolla Cheara 1940:145)
 (22) *Lena bhróig* a bhuaíl sé an chic sa tóin air / *A bhróg ar bhuaíl sé an chic sa tóin air *léithí*
 (23) *Leis na cosa tárnochtaithe* a bhíodh siad á thrampáil / *Na cosa tárnochtaithe a mbíodh siad á thrampáil *leo*

But even in this category there appears to be some movement. Thus beside

- (24) *Le corráin círe* a bhíothar ag baint an choirce uilig an uair sin

one now hears also

²Asterisks indicate instances which are not attested and appear to be unacceptable.

- (25) Corráin círe a rabhthar ag baint an choirce uilig *leo* an uair sin
 (ii) The preposition tends to combine with the fronted element where this indicates a place or locality:

- (26) *Ag an tobar* a fuair sí an t-airgead / *Is é an tobar a bhfuair sí an t-airgead *aige*
 (27) *Ar an aonach* a fuair sí na brístí / *Is é an t-aonach a bhfuair sí na brístí *air*
 (28) *Ar chuid talaimh mhuintir Shéimí* a bhí an seanteach tógtha
 (29) *Sa roilig seo thoir* atá muintir na háite uilig curtha
 (30) *Ar an tsruthán* a thug muid ár n-aghaidh (Mac Gabhann 1959:22)
 (31) *i mbroinn na máthara* a gheibh mórán ainmhidhthe an cothughadh sin (Mac Giolla Cheara 1940:61)
 (32) *Ar Ghleann Meala . . .* i nDéise Mumhan 'seadh thugadar a n-aghaidh (Ó Cuirrín 1936:22)

Presumably it would be impossible to postpone the preposition while using medial '*seadh*.

- (33) '*na chuid tailimh* sin a bhíodar tógtha (Ó Cróinín 1985:53)
 (34) mar is *istig sa chabhlaig* atáid siad go léir curtha (ibid.:55)

- (iii) Certain combinations of preposition + noun are more or less fixed:

- (35) *Ina sheasamh i mbéal an dorais* a bhí sé nuair a thit sé
 (36) *Le drochrud / D'aon turas ort* a rinne sé é
 (37) B'fhéidir gurb *ar an ábhar sin* nach dearn muid ár saibhreas go gasta! (Mac Gabhann 1959:202)
 (38) *I mBéarla* labhairas gach aon duine le madadh (Ó Domhnaill 1953:31)
 (39) *Is ar a shon féin* a mhaireas agus a oibrigheas gach ainmhidhe agus gach éan de ghnáth (Mac Giolla Cheara 1940:149)
 (40) agus ní *faoi bhrigh na guidhe* a bhí sé ag cur na mná (Mac Giollarnáth 1939:170)
 (41) B'fhéidir gur *i n-a codladh* atá sí (Stockman 1974:296)
 (42) Do réir mar bhíos-sa ag fógairt air, is *i leisceamhlacht* a bhí sé ag dul (Sayers 1936:169)
 (43) Ní *le sainnt* chun prátaí atáim 'á dhéanamh (Ó Criomhthain 1928:150)
 (44) Chan *ar phócaí folamha* a tháinig Úna chun an bhaile as Sasain (Ó Rabhartaigh 1953:200-201)

Class A + B

(i) Emphatic or affective affirmation of total declaration; B is generally used in this function:

- (45) O, a Dhia, nach *domh* atá an buaidhreadh i ndán (Mac Grianna 1943:4)
 (46) chonaiceas daoithe gur bh'*air* a d'fhás an ghrian (ibid.:14)
 (47) Nach *dó* a bhí an cóiriú ag teacht (ibid.:14)
 (48) Ba *leis* a thiocfadh an dá mhaide droma a chur i n-úsáid (ibid.:16)
 (49) agus ba *leis* a thiocfadh an damhsa a dhéanamh (ibid.:18)
 (50) agus nárbh' *air* a bhí an bród (ibid.:34)
 (51) Is *leat féin* a thiocfadh a dhéanamh (ibid.:42)³
 (52) Tháinig an oidhche agus ba *oirthí* a bhí an deifre ag teacht, dar leis (ibid.:73)
 (53) Nach *aca* a bhéadh an droch-mheas orm (Ó Domhnaill 1953:53)
 (54) 'Fheara,' arsa mise, 'nach *astu* bhainfear a' léim nuair a rachas a' chéad loraí sa díg' (ibid.:78)
 (55) Agus nach *aca* atá ciall a' tsaoghail mar mháithreachaí (ibid.:108)
 (56) Nach *aige* a bhí an t-éadán ag tigheacht chomh fada libh (Mac Giollarnáth 1939:141)
 (57) agus is *air* a bhí an t-áthas (An Seabhac 1932:215)
 (58) is *linn* a bhí an mí-ádh agus teacht isteach annso (ibid.:218)
 (59) is *orainn* a bhí an ríméad agus an t-áthas (Sayers 1936:32)
 (60) nach *orainn* a bhí na sciatháin (ibid.:55)
 (61) Is *agam* a bhí an formad le Cáit Jim (ibid.:75)
 (62) Is *ar an mbeirt bhan* a bhí an lúghtháir bualadh le chéile arís (ibid.:93)
 (63) Is *ar mo chroidhe* a bhí an glionndar agus an t-aobhneas (ibid.:94)
 (64) is *uirthi* a bhí na sceitimíní (ibid.:151)
 (65) Ar mh'anam-sa gur *againn* a bhí an saoghal breagh nuair a bhíomair 'á n-ithe (Ó Criomhthain 1928:27)
 (66) Maidir le cuma dhorcha ná ghruama bheith uirthi is *uirthi* nach bhfuil sé (ibid.:88)
 (67) agus ní *leat* atá aenne ag cainnt ach oiread (ibid.:101)

But cf.

- (68) Is é Seán bocht [= Nach é Seán bocht] ar éirigh an drochthubaiste *dó* / Is *do* Sheán bhocht a d'éirigh an drochthubaiste⁴

³Note the fronted preposition with the periphrastic *thig le* in examples 48, 49, 51; but cf. A (iii).

⁴The former is now the more natural alternative.

- (69) Is é an fear sin thiar a bhfuil an dóigh bhreá *air* / Is *ar* an fhear sin thiar atá an dóigh bhreá
 (70) Is é Máнас nach mbeadh an eagla *air* a ghabháil ann
 (71) Is í nach mbeifeá tuirseach a choíche ag éisteacht *léithi*.
 (72) Agus sí Saile . . . nach mbeadh an drugal *uirri* scathamh damhsa a thabhairt dúinn (T. de Bh.)
 (73) ‘Bhí an sagart ‘ac Pháidín ann,’ arsa Seaghan. ‘Bhí,’ arsa mise, ‘agus is é a dtig *leis* labhairt’ (T. de Bh.)

(ii) Differentiating, contrasting or identifying function; B is commoner in this usage:

- (74) Agus ós *air* a tharraing mé an scéal (Mac Gabhann 1959:122)
 (75) agus creidim gur *as sin* a fuair sé an t-ainm (Mac Grianna 1943:27)
 (76) agus é ag sílstin gur *air* a bhí achan duine ag amharc (ibid.:31)
 (77) Tháinig spraiстеacha troma fearthanna . . . acht níor bh’*orthú* a bhí a umhail (ibid.:73)
 (78) Shaoilfeadh duine gur *duit féin* a rinneadh í (Ó Domhnaill 1953:17)
 (79) Bhí mo sháith lúthgháire orm féin nuair a chuala mé gur *againn* a bhéadh siad (ibid.:28)
 (80) agus ní *leis an choileán bheag bhocht* a bhí an fhearg orm ar chor ar bith (ibid.:31)
 (81) *Ar Chú Chulainn* a bhí Eoghainín Ó Baoighill a’ seanchas an oidhche sin (ibid.:47)
 (82) Hudhradh an paidrín agus is *air* i gcomhnaidhe a smaointighthear nuair a thig a’ t-anás (Ó Domhnaill 1940:99)
 (83) Bhain na girseacha an Lagán amach agus *orthusan* is mó a ghnóthaigh mé (ibid.:269)
 (84) Tá sé ráidhte gur *leis* a thuitfidh an scoil tar éis bháis an Mháighistir (Sayers 1936:23)
 (85) *Le bean an mhic* iseadh bhí sé ag cainnt (ibid.:39)
 (86) ach ar nós céad duine nach é, ní *hair* a bhí an briste (ibid.:157)
 (87) Ach is *agam-sa* atá sé anois (ibid.:180)

But compare

- (88) Is í Nóra ar ghlac sé nóisean *díthe* sa deireadh / *Do* Nóra a ghlac sé nóisean sa deireadh
 (89) Is é an tIrish Press a rabh sé *air* / *ar* an Irish Press a bhí sé
 (90) Deirtear go bhfaghann an t-éan luath an chuiteóg agus má gheibh, is í an chuiteóg mhall a mbeirtear *uirthí* (Mac Giolla Cheara 1940:61–2)
 (91) An tusa go raibh a’ bhó *agat* ar maidin? (Ó Cróinín 1985:75)

(iii) *Cé/cia* with prepositional pronoun.

It may combine with the prepositional pronoun:

- (92) C'*aige* a bhfuil an fhídeog? (Ó Domhnaill 1953:12)
 (93) Cé *dhó* a raibh sé chum a ghuth do thabhairt? (Ó Cuirrín 1936:52)
 (94) Cé *air* a bhfuil tú ag breathnú? (Mac Giollarnáth 1939:162)
 (95) Cé *leis* a dtig a rádh nach rabh siad i mBaile Átha Cliath (Ó Grianna 1942:85)

But the prepositional pronoun may also move to the extreme right of the sentence:

- (96) Tomhais cé *air* a bhfuil mé ag smaoineamh / Tomhais cé a bhfuil mé ag smaoineamh *air*
 (97) Cé *air* a bhfuil sé ag caint? / Cé a bhfuil sé ag caint *air*?
 (98) Cé *air* a bhfuil sé pósta? / Cé a bhfuil sé pósta *air*?
 (99) Cé *aige* a bhfuil a fhios? / Cé a bhfuil a fhios *aige*?
 (100) Cé *leis* nach mbeifeá gaibhte ag caint? / Cé nach mbeifeá gaibhte ag caint *leis*?
 (101) Cé *roimhe* a bhfuil faitíos ort? / Cé a bhfuil faitíos ort *roimhe*? (ÉÓT)
 (102) Cé *in aice leis* a raibh tú i do shuí? / Cé a raibh tú i do shuí *in aice leis*? (ÉÓT)
 (103) Cé *in aghaidh* a bhfuil sibh ag imirt? / Cé a bhfuil sibh ag imirt *in aghaidh*? (ÉÓT)

While both alternatives are used in Inis Mór (Aran Islands), B seems to be the commoner of the two.

(iv) With *Goidé?*, *Céard?*, *Cad?*

After *Goidé* in west Donegal there is a clear preference for A:

- (104) Goidé a bhfuil sé ag caint *air*? / *Goidé *air* a bhfuil sé ag caint?
 (105) Goidé a bhfuil sé ag cur thairis *fá dtaobh do*? / *Goidé *fá dtaobh do* a bhfuil sé ag cur thairis?

whereas on Inis Mór both A and B are used with *céard*, but with an apparent preference for B:

- (106) Céard *air* a bhfuil tú ag smaoineamh? / Céard a bhfuil tú ag smaoineamh *air*? (ÉÓT)
 (107) Céard *leis* a mbeifeá ag súil? / Céard a mbeifeá ag súil *leis*? (ÉÓT)

Cf.

- (108) Ca bhfios do Rip cad *dó* bhí sé ag tagairt? (Ó Cuirrín 1936:52)

(v) When the fronted noun is a verbal noun.

This is one of the most important categories for the study of our two syntagms, for it would seem to show a strong and widespread tendency

to extend the use of A as opposed to B. Thus in the Bloody Foreland area of Donegal one will find

- (109) A nglanadh amach a bhfuil an uthairt *air*
- (110) A seóáil a rabh an mhasla uilig *leis*
- (111) Déanamh na bpoll a bhfuil an trioblóid *leis*
- (112) Ag coinneáil fodair leo a bhfuil an trioblóid *leis*

These are commoner and more natural alternatives to the forms with fronted preposition:

- (113) *Ar a nglanadh amach* atá an uthairt
- (114) *Lena seóáil* a bhí an mhasla uilig
- (115) *Le déanamh na bpoll* atá an trioblóid

and in the case of § 112 the B variant is not possible:

- (116) **Le coinneáil fodair leo* atá an trioblóid

It is hard to perceive any semantic difference between the two sentences

- (117) Baint na mónadh a bhfuil an saothar *leis*
- (118) *Le baint na mónadh* atá an saothar

except that the verbal noun seems to receive a higher degree of topicalization in the former.

This tendency to use A with fronted verbal nouns is not confined to Donegal Irish and seems to be a general phenomenon; cf. from the Aran Islands:

- (119) Is é déanamh na bpoll a bhfuil an trioblóid *leis* (ÉÓT)
- (120) Is é tarraingt na n-eangachaí a mbíonn an trioblóid *leis* (ÉÓT)
- (121) Is é réabadh na cloiche a raibh an obair *leis* (ÉÓT)

Both A and B occur in this kind of sentence, as in

- (122) Is *le* cur na spiléid a bhíonn an taicsean / Is é cur na spiléid a mbíonn an taicsean *leis* (ÉÓT)

but the clear feeling of native speakers from both areas is that syntagm A is the more normal and the more natural.

(vi) Is mar sin . . . / (is) sin mar . . .

- (123) Sin *mar* bhíos, a chroí
- (124) Sin *mar* ba ghnách leo an leathach a bhaint
- (125) Sin *mar* a bhéas sé feasta creidim
- (126) Sin *mar* a chosnas Dia an t-arbhar (Mac Giolla Cheara 1940:36)
- (127) Sin *mar* éirigheas do phéist ar bith acu sin (ibid.:77)
- (128) agus is sin *mar* is annsa leis é (Ó Criomhthain 1928:176)
- (129) gur b'in é *mar* is gnáthach leis a bheith (Sayers 1936:66)

beside

- (130) Chan *mar* sin a bhí sé déanta tá eagla orm
 (131) An *mar* seo atá sé ag obair anois?
 (132) Is *mar* sin a chruipas agus a ísligheas agus a fhuaraigheas an duine le haois (Mac Giolla Cheara 1940:104)
 (133) *Mar* sin a thárlaidh domh-sa (Sayers 1936:213)
 (134) Ach ní *mar* sin do thárlaidh (ibid.:218)
 (135) Ach ní *mar* sin atá na mná atá ann anois (ibid.:231-2)
 (136) An *mar* sin é?

(vii) After *dheamhan*, *diabhal*.

These are commonly followed by the noun they govern:

- (137) Dheamhan duine a bhfuil fhios aige a dhath *fá dtaobh dó* anois
 (138) Dheamhan mórán a bhfeicfidh tú cearca anois *acu*
 (139) Dheamhan duine a rabh sé ag smaoiteamh siar *air*
 (140) Diabhal teach a dteachaigh sé isteach *ann*
 (141) Dheamhan scoil ná scoil a bhfuil siad ag gabháil *uirthi*

but may also directly govern the preposition plus noun/pronoun:

- (142) Dheamhan *ar scoil ná ar scoil* atá siad ag gabháil
 (143) Shíl muid go gcuirfeadh baicle ínteacht acu forrán orainn ach dheamhan *orthu* a lig siad go rabh muid ann (Mac Gabhann 1959:135)

The first thing that emerges clearly from this attempt to classify some of the relevant material is that syntagm A is not appreciably more common in modern literary Irish than it has been in written Irish ever since the early Old Irish period. This can be confirmed by reference to the ratio of A to B in some contemporary or near-contemporary texts:⁵

	A	B
Mac Cumhaill 1922	0	6
Mac Fhionnlaoich 1977	0	9
Mac Giolla Cheara 1940	2	27
Mac Seáin 1941	2	25
Ó Domhnaill 1940	1	10
Ó Domhnaill 1953	0	22
Ó Rabhartaigh 1953	0	19

On the other hand, it is quite evident that in this regard the language of these and other similar texts is not an accurate reflection of the spoken Irish of the Gaeltacht. There is clear evidence that the use of syntagm

⁵Our figures do not lay claim to absolute accuracy, but are accurate enough to make no significant difference.

A has undergone – and probably continues to undergo – a considerable extension in modern spoken Irish, particularly within certain lexical and grammatical contexts, whereas in the literary language this extension is inhibited by a constraint which seems to be inherent in the written register. It is possible that the growing frequency of A in the spoken language has been facilitated by analogous sentence types, for example those in which the qualified noun forms part of an interrogative adverb as in:

- (144) An bhfuil aon dochar dom fiafrú cé'n taobh a dtáinig tú *as*?
(Mac Giollarnáth 1939:109)

or is subject/predicate of an integral copula phrase:

- (145) Is iomdha cailín a rabh mé *léithe* (Ó Domhnaill 1940:200)
(146) Ba mhillteanach an géibheann a rabh Mac Cába *ann* (Mac Seáin 1941:110)

This would include sentences beginning with copular *sin, seo*:

- (147) Sin an mac ar méanar *dó* (Ó Rabhartaigh 1953:35)
(148) Bhuel sin an bhean ar mhaith liomsa bheith ag caint *léithi* (57)
(149) Shílfeá gurb shin cúirt bhreágh a bhfuil tú *innte* (Mac Giollarnáth 1939:144)
(150) Sin an fear a dtig *leis* ó!

The following responses to the last example illustrate the easy interchange of syntagms A and B in some contexts:

- (151) Mhaiste go dtig!
(152) Is *leis* a thig! (B)
(153) Is é a dtig! (A with ellipsis of *leis*)

Compare

- (154) Cha dtig brath air!
(155) Is *air* nach dtig! (B)
(156) Is é nach dtig! (A)

There may also have been influence from English in recent times, e.g.

It was a stone I hit him *with*

which is colloquially more common than

It was *with* a stone I hit him

and this might seem the more likely in view of the fact that the relative frequency of syntagms A and B seems not to have altered very substantially in written Irish from the seventh century onwards; had it altered significantly in the spoken language of the Old, Middle or Early Modern period, one might have expected some reflex of this to appear

sooner or later in the written texts (as happened for example in the case of other lexical and syntactic features round about the seventeenth century). But whatever analogical categories may have encouraged the growing use of A as opposed to B, the dominant factor seems to be the perception of contemporary native speakers that the simple fronted noun or pronoun (as in A) provides a closer focus of topicalization than does the combination of preposition and noun/pronoun (as in B).

One of the difficulties one experiences in attempting even a preliminary classification such as ours is that the data, in so far as the spoken language is concerned, is not fixed or permanent, and in many of the sub-categories the balance of usage as between A and B seems to be relatively fluid. What is abundantly clear, however, is that there is a notable disparity between the literary and the spoken registers of Modern Irish with regard to the syntax under discussion, and this raises more general questions about the relationship between the two registers. There are of course variations of register within each of these two, but the main disparity is between oral and written. In the early years of the modern Irish literary movement there was lively and often heated disagreement as to the kind of Irish which should be the normal medium of the new literature, and more than any other single person Fr Peadar Ó Laoghaire decided the issue in favour of *caint na ndaoine* 'the speech of the people' as against the quasi-classical language of Séathrún Céitinn in the seventeenth century. His victory was decisive and deeply significant, but whether it was as total and its results as conclusive as is sometimes assumed is perhaps open to question. His own standard was clear and unequivocal: 'we must write and print exactly what the people speak' (O'Leary 1929:138), but, in so far as our present topic is concerned, it is clear that, in general, Gaeltacht writers exercise a greater degree of conservatism in their writing than is evident in their day-to-day speech. We hope to return to this subject in the future and to examine the disparity between colloquial and written in connection with other syntactic features of Modern Irish.

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