English as a Contact Language
– Ireland and Scotland –

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Introduction

Among the contact scenarios in the anglophone world there is a subgroup which has involved language shift to English during their recent history. The varieties of English which arose due to language shift form a typological class in the arena of present-day forms of the language. These varieties are characterised by non-standard syntactic features but not by morphological ones, unless the forms of English which acted as a target during the language shift themselves showed non-standard morphological features. Furthermore, the phonology of language shift varieties generally bears traits of the outset language in the shift process. In this respect language shift varieties are closer to present-day contact varieties in Asia and Africa, so-called ‘New Englishes’ (Mesthrie and Bhatt 2008), and further removed from settler varieties in both the northern and southern hemispheres.

Many of the instances of language shift in the anglophone world have concerned small numbers of speakers and have not been well documented. This is generally true of native Americans in the United States and First Nations peoples from Canada as well as aborigines in Australia who have shifted to English. In some cases where speakers of the outset languages are to some extent still present the source of shift features can be recognised, as is the case with Maori English in New Zealand and in forms of South African Indian English (Mesthrie 1992), largely in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa (Hickey 2006).

The term ‘language shift’ is used when discussing those locations of the anglophone world where the majority of the population abandoned its original language and shifted to English. Among European Englishes this can be seen to have taken place above all in Ireland and Scotland though other anglophone locations, such as Gibraltar, Malta and the Channel Islands are, and have been, characterised by intensive contact with Romance languages (and Arabic in the case of Malta).

The language shift situation in Ireland and Scotland is well documented (Filppula 1999, Hickey 2007, Corrigan 2010; Sabban 1982) and both the structures of the outset languages – Irish and Scottish Gaelic respectively – are well-known. This also holds true for the varieties of English engendered by the shift which can still be largely observed today, both in a general form and in specific contact varieties in the remaining Celtic-speaking areas of Ireland and Scotland.

Although contact and shift are the major processes in the genesis of both Irish English and of Scottish English in the highlands and islands of Scotland it would be erroneous to imagine that the respective outset languages are the sole source of non-standard features in both kinds of English. The varieties of English spoken during the period and in the regions of contact were decisive here. Recent research has also
pointed to the role the acquisitional situation probably played for the Irish and the Scottish in the rise of non-standard features in Ireland and Scotland. In the following sections the case for contact will be examined, primarily with reference to Ireland but also considering Scottish parallels.

To conclude these introductory remarks it should be stated that while Irish and Scottish English are now established varieties with a language shift background and while they do not play any role in the genesis of new varieties of English in the anglophone world, the linguistic insights to be gained from examining the language contact and shift of their recent histories can help to throw light on similar processes at present in the current epicentres of newer varieties of English such as various parts of Africa, south and south-east Asia or the south Pacific.

The case for contact

In recent years the field of contact linguistics has been served well. Individual studies and collections have been published, e.g. McWhorter (ed., 2000), Thomason (2001), Myers-Scotton (2002), Migge (2003), Winford (2003), Heine and Kuteva (2004), Holm (2004), Clyne (2003), all of which consider the effect of contact between languages on their further development. These considerations have sometimes been programmatic, e.g. Heine and Kuteva (2004) which pushes the case for grammaticalisation as virtually the only valid model in contact linguistics, while other studies have had an explicit focus, e.g. Filppula, Klemola and Pitkänen (eds, 2002) which is concerned with the question of contact with Celtic in the development of English and Paulasto (2006) which is a detailed examination of the effect on English in Welsh grammar.

What all these studies have in common is the goal of putting contact explanations on a firm objective footing. Within the Irish context, such an aim is welcome as too many former accounts of non-standard features assumed transfer during language contact as their sole source, cf. studies by authors like P. L. Henry and A. J. Bliss. The reaction which set in against contact explanations in the 1980s, and which is most obvious in Harris (1984), was modified somewhat in the 1990s by detailed objective reflections on the effects of contact, e.g. by Markku Filppula (Filppula 2001), Mary O’Malley Madec (O’Malley Madec 2002), Karen Corrigan (Corrigan 2010) and the present author (e.g. Hickey 1995a). This type of approach also informs the present chapter. The different sources which may have played a role in the genesis of Irish English are listed in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Possible sources of features in Irish English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Transfer from Irish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>a. Dialect forms of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Archaic forms of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>Features deriving from the context in which English was learned</td>
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<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td>Features with no recognisable source (independent developments)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources (2a) and (2b) have been separated for this listing but, of course, they may well coincide in the input forms of English. The conservative nature of English in Ireland is particularly clear when one considers forms which go back to the early anglophone
settlement of the island and which are found chiefly on the east coast (Hickey 2002). In early English input, there were many dialect words which have continued to exist in Irish English, e.g. *chiseler* ‘young child’, *mitch* ‘play truant’. On the level of syntax one could mention the variable marking of verb forms with inflectional -s in the present tense.

The above division of sources raises a major question, namely, whether one can assign a specific feature unambiguously to a certain source. There are really only a few traits of Irish English on which there has been general agreement among scholars with regard to their Irish origin (see Harris 1984 for a classic discussion of the issue). First and foremost, this is true of the *after*-perfective, but even there the development of this construction over a few centuries has been quite intricate and is much more than a simple case of transfer from Irish to Irish English (see the detailed history offered in McCafferty 2004).

Further factors in the genesis of Irish English must also be taken into account. The specific conditions of the language shift may well have led to characteristics of unguided second language acquisition coming to the fore, source (3) above. The analogical extension of epistemic *must* and the analogical plural form *youse* mentioned above are instances of this. Other instances may be gathered under the heading ‘universals of language acquisition’ and have been considered by a number of authors recently, notably Peter Siemund and Lukas Pietsch (see Siemund 2003 and Pietsch 2004a and 2004b) for whom they have attained the status of a ‘third way’ alongside contact and retention. It is claimed here that adult speakers make certain assumptions about the structure of the language they are acquiring in a non-prescriptive environment. Siemund (2003) maintains that there are unmarked values for categories which are preferred in these situations, e.g. nominative over accusative. In individual cases, the validity of their analyses has been disputed, but the general assumption that certain unmarked, or default, characteristics of language are favoured in situations of unguided language acquisition is uncontested (Hickey 1997). These traits also surface in so-called New Englishes, where English is derived from a second language variety used in an environment of one or more indigenous languages (see the discussion in Hickey 2004 in the context of English in Africa and Asia).

Some of these characteristics are attested in Irish English, while others are not. Of those listed in the following table, the first is not found in Irish English, while 3 - 6 are. The omission of finite *be* is attested in south-east Irish English, but it is not a general feature of Irish English.

Table 2 Features of unguided adult language acquisition

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Omission of the definite article</td>
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<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>Omission of finite <em>be</em> (in equative sentences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>Reduction and/or generalisation of verbal and nominal inflections</td>
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<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td>Reduction of tense distinctions, e.g. use of present for present perfect</td>
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<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>Avoidance of subordinating conjunctions (parataxis favoured over hypotaxis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td>Various topicalisation strategies such as fronting</td>
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</table>

The above table shows features which stem from the removal of redundancy and the reduction in structural distinctions, both processes typical of unguided adult language
acquisition. It also shows, in feature (6), how pragmatic highlighting can be used to foreground information in discourse. By and large, these features can be taken to have occurred during the historical language shift in Ireland because they have clear counterparts in later forms of vernacular Irish English as will be discussed below.

Types of contact

There are many possible situations of contact which yield different linguistic outputs. In the main, it is the intensity and duration of contact between speakers of different languages which determines the effects which languages have on each other. The typological distance between languages is also important: where similarities are present, structural matches may well exist and be responsible for transfer, especially in a language shift scenario such as that for Irish English during its genesis. A further factor is whether the environment of the contact is prescriptive or not. Where the individuals involved in contact do not enjoy general schooling, transfer is not inhibited by notions of correctness and the effects of contact are considerable. There have also been many cases where language contact has been indirect, i.e. there was no speaker interaction, rather the contact was through the written medium. This situation is responsible for so-called ‘cultural borrowings’ (Campbell 1998: 57-88) and is characteristic of the influence of English on so many other languages today.

Table 3 Types of contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Effect</th>
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<tr>
<td>1) Indirect cultural contact, no speaker interface (German-English today). Contact, but little if any bilingualism (French in Middle English)</td>
<td>Only loanwords, ‘cultural borrowings’. No effect on grammar of receiving language</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Contact with approximation of one or both languages (late Old English and Old Norse). Strong speaker interaction</td>
<td>Koinésation or dialect levelling, some structural permeation with typologically similar languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Contact with language shift (Irish à English; Bhojpuri/Tamil à English [South Africa])</td>
<td>‘Speech habits’ of outset transferred to target, grammatical interference found in non-prescriptive environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Contact but restricted input, unguided acquisition (Caribbean, central and south-west Pacific), no continuity of indigenous languages</td>
<td>Pidginisation, grammatical restructuring; creolisation, if the pidgin is continued as the mother tongue of a later generation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Depending on the type of contact, different linguistic levels are affected. The lexicon is the most easily influenced, as it is an open class, and can show borrowings even where there is no speaker contact (scenario one above). The second type of contact is where the languages in question are similar in type and so structural borrowings can occur. The verb form *are* in the plural present tense of *be* is a well-known borrowing from Old
Norse into English, illustrating this phenomenon. If the languages in question become more similar structurally, then one can speak of levelling. Should one language come to be used in the area of the other as a general means of communication one can speak of koinéisation.

Neither of these scenarios applies to the genesis of Irish English as Irish and English are typologically very different. The dialect levelling view is one which needs to be scrutinised carefully as it is often posited for contact situations. For instance, a well-known view on contact specifies that ‘one of the universal constraints on change...[is] that in contact situations, mergers expand at the expense of distinctions’ (Herzog, quoted in Labov 1972: 300). If at all, this is only true of phonology. On a grammatical level such statements do not apply or at least cannot be shown to hold for contact situations such as that between Irish and English in the early modern period. Nonetheless, on a large timescale and considering all the languages of Ireland (indeed of Britain, see Wagner 1959, Vennemann 2000, 2001, 2002 and Filppula 2004) one can note that transfer due to shift has led to convergence, to the formation of a linguistic area (Hickey 1999). This is, however, the outcome of the language shift from Irish to English, it was not the outset for the shift in Ireland.

The third type of contact above involves the speakers of one language shifting to another over time. The duration of bilingualism is an important factor as is the manner in which the new language is presented to those shifting to it. A further subdivision can be made with type three above where the group which shifts is in a socially superior position. This was the case in Early Modern Irish (1200-1600) where members of the French-speaking Anglo-Norman community abandoned this language and shifted to Irish in subsequent generations. Normally, superstrate speakers do not switch to a substrate language, spoken by those in a socially lower position. But if the circumstances are right, this may happen. Among the circumstances one could list as relevant here are (i) separation of superstrate speakers from the larger community from which they stem and (ii) significant numerical inferiority vis à vis the substrate language community. Both these factors held for the Anglo-Normans in late medieval Ireland who lived in the countryside surrounded by native Irish. The type of shift involved here has been termed ‘imposition’ (Guy 1990, Ross 1991) because the superstrate speakers may in time ‘impose’ (Stewart 2004) features of their variety of the substrate language on majority forms of this language.

When delimiting types three and four above the additional distinction between transfer and restructuring is essential. The first process involves structural borrowings between two languages (in one or both directions), while the second involves a reorganisation of grammar by children given a poverty of linguistic input during first language acquisition. The latter scenario is not one which can be assumed for the early modern period in Ireland. Nonetheless, in terms of structure, Irish English does come close to many English-based creoles and the question of how close language shift and creolisation are as scenarios of language change (Hickey 1997) is worth considering.

**Generalisations concerning contact**

There would seem to be a general principle whereby the ‘deeper kernel’ of grammar of a language (Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 5) is more resistant to change because it is highly structured and acquired early by native speakers. Hence it is not surprising that inflectional morphology, along with core vocabulary, is used as a defining criterion for determining genetic relationships. For any highly structured subsystem there is a
standard wisdom that, if it travels, then this is most likely when it fits easily into the recipient language. Conversely, free-standing discourse elements also migrate easily, cf. Irish *bhuel* for English *well* or (former) Irish English *arrah* from Irish. The reason for this is probably that such elements are not integrated into the grammatical lattice of a language and are free to move without any structural consequences for either donor or recipient languages.

The resistance to structural influence is connected with the duration and extent of contact. Long-term substratum interference can lead to a typological re-orientation of a language but within a time frame of several centuries at least (Hickey 1995a). That is definitely too long for the switch from Irish to English, which was long enough for considerable grammatical influence, but not for a major typological realignment of English in Ireland.

With language contact the various linguistic levels are effected to differing degrees. The lexicon, as an open class, enjoys a higher degree of awareness among speakers. Given the fact that Irish was the substrate language in the contact scenario, then extensive transfer of lexical material was not to be expected and it did not occur. One can generalise this point and maintain that, in a language shift situation, lexical borrowing is unlikely (Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 129). Speakers orient themselves towards the target language which enjoys greater prestige for them, this is probably the reason for the shift anyway. They are not likely to take salient elements like words from the language they are shifting away from. With cultural contact, for instance, in the Middle English period with English and French, the position was quite different. Speakers were not shifting to French, so the adoption of words from the prestige code took place into English, although there may well have been a degree of imposition from the French-speaking minority who shifted to English.

In a large-scale shift scenario the phonology of the substrate language plays a significant role. When speakers are acquiring the target language in adult life, they will retain the accent of their native language. Such massive phonological influence of Irish on early Irish English is evident in the many eye dialect representations found in the early modern period. It is true that many of these are exaggerations, but the re-occurrence of so many features across different genres with different authors at different times would justify the assumption that these features were indeed characteristic of early Irish English. Once the shift variety became established, subsequent generations continued it, but there was a toning down of salient phonological features, especially as later speakers became aware of what constitutes a standard pronunciation of the target language.

What happens on contact?

Many scholars who have considered language contact, e.g. Lass and Wright (1986), emphasise that languages are self-sufficient entities with a coherent internal structure and that forces operating within are enough to explain change. Contact explanations in their view would put the burden of proof on the linguist who favours these. While this view is basically correct, if two languages are in close contact for long enough then the language-internal resistance to structural change can be overcome. Indeed if the contact scenario is one of language shift then it is not so much a question of structural permeation of one language by another, but of the transfer of features from one to the other by those individuals who speak both languages.
The language shift in Ireland lasted some centuries and in that time many sociolinguistic configurations were to be found. On the east coast, especially in the towns, there were native speakers stemming from original English settlers who came during the late Middle Ages. Elsewhere in the countryside, there were English-speaking planters, again the descendants of native speakers, but of a more recent date. When considering whether these native speakers had an influence on the emerging varieties of Irish English, one must remember that, in the centuries after the initial settlement in the late 12th century, an increasing Gaelicisation took place in Ireland. This included the original English areas of the east coast so that the English-speaking section of Irish society was reduced numerically. The planters on the other hand lived in relative isolation in the countryside. In their localities they were probably the source for the Irish learning English. Indeed the retentionist view would see them as the bearers of non-standard features of English which have been continued in vernacular varieties of Irish English. But there does not seem to have been a distinctive planter variety of English, at least none is either attested nor has any survived. Only in the north, where large numbers of planters from lowland Scotland and the north of England settled in areas which they took over from the native Irish did their varieties of English have a lasting effect on the profile of later Ulster English. The conclusion here is that the transfer features of the native Irish became fixed in the English of Ireland, at least in the south, because this group was numerically far greater than any other.

When does contact-induced change appear?

Contact-induced change (Winford 2005) is not confined to transfer by the generations directly involved in the language shift. The seed for later change may be planted during the shift, but the effect may only be apparent much later. For instance, low-level phonetic influence from one language can lead to far-reaching changes in the other over a longer time span. This type can be termed ‘delayed effect’ contact because the effect is not immediate. There is no structural upheaval in the recipient language but a gradual penetration due to prolonged exposure to another language by largely bilingual sections of a community. In such a scenario ‘speech habits’ migrate from one language to another. In time, this may even lead to typological change. Within the history of English, an example is provided by Celtic influence on Old English (see Hickey 1995b for details) where the speech habits of the British Celts – which included considerable phonetic lenition – may well have furthered, if not actually triggered, the phonetic reduction of unstressed syllables in Old English and thus contributed centrally to the demise of inflectional endings, the pre-condition for the typological shift from synthetic to analytic in the history of English. Furthermore, given that speech habits are largely unconscious for speakers, the question of the relative prestige of languages does not play an important role, i.e. they can be adopted from a language of relatively low social status.

This kind of delay in the appearance of contact-induced features may be evident in the rise of the do(es) be habitual in Irish English. This is only attested on a wide scale after the middle of the 19th century, a time when the language shift was past its peak.

What can be traced to contact?

It goes without saying that there is no proof in contact linguistics. If a structure in one
language is suspected of having arisen through contact with another, then a case can be made for contact when there is a good structural match between both languages. Take as an example the phrases at the beginning of the following sentences which have an exact equivalent in Irish.

(1) a. *More is the pity, I suppose.* (TRS-D, M42, M)\(^1\)

*Is mór an trua, is dóigh liom.*

[is big the pity, is suppose with-me]

b. *Outside of that, I don’t know.* (TRS-D, C42-2, F)

*Taobh amuigh de sin, nil a fhíos agam.*

[side out of that, not-is COMP know at-me]

c. *There’s a share of jobs alright.* (TRS-D, M7, M)

*Tá roinnt jabbana ann, ceart go leor.*

[is share jobs-GEN in-it right enough]

However, the case for contact as a source, at least as the sole source, is considerably weakened if the structure in question is attested in older forms of the language which has come to show it. Many of the features of Irish English are of this type, that is they could have a source either in older forms of English taken to Ireland or in Irish through contact. An example of this is provided by doubly marked comparatives. In Irish, comparatives are formed by placing the particle *níos* ‘more’ and inflecting the adjective as well. For instance, *déanach* ‘late’, consisting of the stem *déan-* and the stem-extending suffix -ach, changes to *déanaí* in the comparative although the comparative particle *níos* is used as well.

(2) *Beimid ag teacht níos déanaí.* ‘We will be coming later.’

[will-be-we at coming more later]

This double marking may have been transferred in the language shift situation. But such marking is also typical of earlier forms of English (Barber 1997 [1976]: 200f.) and may well have been present in input forms of English in Ireland. It is found with writers like Carleton and O’Casey, see Taniguchi 1956: 42) and is still well attested today as in the following examples.

(3) a. *He’s working more harder with the new job.* (WER, F50+)

b. *We got there more later than we thought.* (DER, M60+)

In such cases it is impossible to decide what the source is, indeed it is probably more sensible to postulate a double source, and to interpret the structure as a case of convergence.

Before broaching the details of the case for contact, it is important to consider the difference between the presence of a grammatical category in a certain language and the exponence of this category. For instance, the category ‘future’ exists in the verb systems of both English and Irish but the exponence is different, i.e. via an auxiliary *will/shall* in the first language, but via a suffix in the second language. This type of distinction is useful when comparing Irish English with Irish (Ó Sé 2001: 123-5), for instance when comparing habitual aspect in both languages, as can be seen from the following table.
Table 4  Category and exponence in Irish and Irish English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exponence in Irish English</th>
<th>Exponence in Irish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Habitual</td>
<td>1) do(es) be + V-ing</td>
<td>biónn + non-finite verb form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They do be fighting a lot.</td>
<td>Bionn siad ag troid go minic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) bees (northern)</td>
<td>[is-HABITUAL they at fighting often]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The lads bees out a lot.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) verbal -s (first person)</td>
<td>I gets tired of waiting for things to change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The search for categorial equivalence

Many scholars, who have considered the initial stages of language change, have posited that low profile sites in the syntax of a language, such as subordinate clauses or weak affirmatives, are often the loci for variables which are incoming and are being adopted by diffusion into a community (Cheshire 1996). Authors also distinguish between pronunciation, which is always available for sociolinguistic assessment, and grammar, which is linked more to situational or stylistic conditioning. These factors are mentioned because they show the major difference between change being adopted into a variety and change resulting from language contact and shift.

When switching to another language, temporarily or permanently, adults expect the same grammatical distinctions in the target which they know from their native language. To this end they search for equivalents in the target to categories they are familiar with. This process is an unconscious one and persists even with speakers who have considerable target language proficiency. If the categories of the outset language are semantically motivated then the search to find an equivalent in the target is all the more obvious. A simple example can be taken to illustrate this. In Irish there is a distinction between the second person singular and plural pronoun but not in standard English. In the genesis of Irish English, speakers would seem to have felt the need for this non-existent distinction in English and three solutions to this quandary arose.

(4) a. the use of available material, yielding you # ye (ye available from early English input)
   b. the analogical formation of a plural: you # youse < you + {S} (not attested before early to mid-nineteenth century)
   c. a combination of both (a) and (b) as in you # yez < ye + {S} (not found before mid-nineteenth century)

In all these cases the search for an equivalent category of second person plural was solved in English by the manipulation of material already in this language. At no stage does the Irish sibh [ʃɪv] ‘you-PL’ seem to have been used, in contrast, for instance, to the use of West African unu ‘you-PL’ found in Caribbean English (Hickey 2003).

Apart from restructuring elements in the target, speakers can transfer elements from their native language. This transfer of grammatical categories is favoured, if the following conditions apply.
Table 5  Factors favouring transfer of grammatical categories

1) The target language has a formal means of expressing this category
2) There is little variation in the expression of this category
3) The expression of this category is not homophonous with another one
4) The category marker in the outset language can be identified – is structurally transparent – and can be easily extracted from source contexts

In a language shift situation, transfer must first occur on an individual level, perhaps with several individuals at the same time. But for it to become established, it must be accepted by the community as a whole. If such transfer is to be successful, then it must adhere to the principle of economy: it must embody only as much change in the target as is necessary for other speakers in the community to recognise what native structure it is intended to reflect.

To illustrate how this process of transfer is imagined to have occurred in the historical Irish context, consider the example of the immediate perfective formed by the use of the prepositional phrase *tar éis* ‘after’, which is employed temporally in this case.

(5) Tá siad tar éis an obair a dhéanamh.

[is they after the work COMP do]

‘They are after doing the work.’

The pivotal elements in this construction are listed below; the complementiser *a* is of no semantic significance.

(6) a.  adverbial phrase *tar éis* ‘after’
    b.  non-finite verb form *déanamh* ‘doing’
    c.  direct object *obair* ‘work’

It would appear that the Irish constructed an equivalent to the output structure using English syntactic means. Item (a) was translated literally as ‘after’, (b) was rendered by the non-finite V-ing form yielding sentences like *They’re after doing the work*. With a translation for *tar éis* and a corresponding non-finite form the task of reaching a categorial equivalent would appear to have been completed. Importantly, the Irish word order ‘object + verb’ was not carried over into English (*They’re after the work doing*).

It betrays a basic misunderstanding of the mechanism of transfer for authors to express reservations – as Harris (1991: 205) does – because the order of non-finite verb form and object is different in Irish and English in the construction being discussed here. The aim in the contact situation was to arrive at a construction which was functionally equivalent to that in the outset language. A word order such as that in *John is after the house selling* would not only unnecessarily flout the sequence of verb and object in English (unnecessary as it would not convey additional information) but also give rise to possible confusion with the resultative perfective which in Irish English is realised by means of a past participle following its object.

In the transfer of structure during language shift, it would seem both necessary
and sufficient to achieve correlates to the key elements in the source structure. Another instance of this principle can be seen with the resultative perfective of Irish English.

(7) \[ Tá an obair déanta acu. \] ‘They have finished the work.’
    [is the work done at-them]
    IrEng: ‘They have the work done.’

Essential to the semantics of the Irish construction is the order ‘object + past participle’. Consequently, it is this order which is realised in the Irish English equivalent. The prepositional pronoun \( acu \) ‘at-them’ (or any other similar form) plays no role in the formation of the resultative perfective in Irish, but is the means to express the semantic subject of the sentence. As this is incidental to the perfective aspect expressed in the sentence, it was neglected in Irish English.

The immediate perfective with \textit{after} does not appear to have had any model in archaic or regional English (Filppula 1999: 99-107). With the resultative perfective, on the other hand, there was previously a formal equivalent, i.e. the word order ‘object + past participle’. However, even if there were instances of this word order in the input varieties of English in Ireland this does not mean that these are responsible for its continuing existence in Irish English. This word order could just as well have disappeared from Irish English as it has in forms of mainland English (van der Wurff and Foster 1997). However, the retention in Irish English and the use of this word order to express a resultative perfective can in large part be accounted for by the wish of Irish learners of English to reach an equivalent to the category of resultative perfective which they had in their native language.

The additive transfer of syntactic features to a target can be captured by the notion of imposition (Guy 1990: 49f., following work done previously by Frans van Coetsem, see Coetsem 2000 as summary of his previous work) whereby speakers in a shift situation impose categorial equivalents to structures of the outset language onto the target language.

Another issue to consider, when the question of contact has been discussed, is whether the structures which were transferred still apply in the same sense in they were used in previous centuries. It would be too simplistic to assume that the structures which historically derive from Irish by transfer have precisely the same meaning in present-day Irish English. For instance, the immediate perfective with \textit{after} has continued to develop shades of meaning not necessarily found in the Irish original as Kallen (1989) has shown in his study.

The prosody of transfer

The case for contact should be considered across all linguistic levels. However, those authors who have been examining this recently, Corrigan, Kallen, Filppula, McCafferty, to mention the more prominent among them, have not considered phonological factors in their investigations, despite the benefits for analyses from doing this (Hickey 1990: 219). If one looks at structures which could be traced to transfer from Irish, then one finds in many cases that there is a correspondence between the prosodic structures of both languages. To be precise, structures which appear to derive from transfer show the same number of feet and the stresses fall on the same major syntactic category in each language (Hickey 1990: 222). A simple example can illustrate this. Here the Irish equivalent is given which is not of course the immediate source of this actual sentence.
as the speaker was an English-speaking monolingual.

(8)  
\[
A\ldots \text{don’t like the new team} \at all \at all. (WER, M55+) \\
\text{[} , , , , \text{]} \\
Ní thaitnionn an fhoireann nua le hA\ldots \text{ar chor ar bith.} \\
\text{[} , , , , \text{]} \\
\text{[not like the team new with A... on turn on anything]}
\]

The repetition of at all at all creates a sentence-final negator which consists of two stressed feet with the prosodic structure WSWS (weak-strong weak-strong) as does the Irish structure ar chor ar bith. This feature is well-established in Irish English and can already be found in the early 19th century, e.g. in the stories of John Banim (1798-1842) written in collaboration with his brother Michael.

Consider now the stressed reflexives of Irish which are suspected by many authors (including Filppula 1999: 77-88) of being the source of the Irish English use of an unbound reflexive.

(9)  
\[
\text{‘An } \text{bhfuil } \text{,sé f'fein } \text{is'tigh } \text{in'niu? ‘Is he himself in today?’} \\
\text{[INTERROG is self in today]} \\
\text{IrEng: ‘Is } \text{him'self 'in ,to'day? ’}
\]

The strong and weak syllables of each foot are indicated in the Irish sentence and its Irish English equivalent above. From this it can be seen that the Irish reflexive is monosyllabic and, together with the personal pronoun, forms a WS foot: sé f'fein [he self]. In Irish English the equivalent to this consists of a reflexive pronoun on its own: 'himself', hence the term ‘unbound reflexive’ (Filppula 1997), as no personal pronoun is present. If both the personal and reflexive pronoun were used in English, one would have a mismatch in prosodic structure: WS in Irish and SWS ('he 'himself) in Irish English. One can thus postulate that the WS pattern of 'himself' was interpreted by speakers during language shift as the prosodic equivalent of both the personal pronoun and reflexive pronoun of Irish sé f'fein and thus used as an equivalent of this. Later a distinct semanticisation of this usage arose whereby the unbound reflexive came to refer to someone who is in charge, the head of a group or of the house, etc..

Another example of prosodic match can be seen with the well-known immediate perfective of Irish English which corresponds, in the number of stressed syllables, to its Irish equivalent.

(10)  
\[
a. \text{She’s } \text{after breaking the glass.} \\
\text{[} , , , , \text{]} \\
Tá si tréis an ghlóine a bhriseadh. \\
\text{[} , , , , \text{]} \\
b. \text{He’s } \text{after his dinner.} \\
\text{[} , , , , \text{]} \\
Tá sé tréis a dhinnéir. \\
\text{[} , , , , \text{]} \\
\text{This consists in both languages of three or two feet depending on whether the verb is}
\]
understood or explicitly mentioned (it is the number of stressed syllables which
determines the number of feet). In both languages a stressed syllable introduces the
structure and others occur for the same syntactic categories throughout the sentence.

A similar prosodic correspondence can be recognised in a further structure,
labelled ‘subordinating and’, in both Irish and Irish English.

(11) a. *He went out 'and' it 'raining*.

    ‘He went out although it was raining.’

b. *Chuaigh sé amach 'agus' é ag cur 'báisti*.

    [went he out and it at putting rain-GEN]

Again there is a correlation between stressed syllable and major syntactic category,
although the total number of syllables in the Irish structure is greater (due to the number
of weak syllables). The equivalence intonationally is reached by having the same
number of feet, i.e. stressed syllables, irrespective of the distance between them in
terms of intervening unstressed syllables. And again, it is a stressed syllable which
introduces the clause.

A prominent feature in Irish is the lack of a word for ‘yes’ and ‘no’. Questions
are replied to in the affirmative or negative by using a form of the verb *be*, in the
negative if required.

(12) *An bhfuil tú ag dul go dtí an cluiche amárach?*

    [INTERROG is you-SG go-NF to the match tomorrow]

    Tá. [taː] ∨

    Nil. [n̪iːl̪] ∨

    [is] [not-is]

The single word verb forms are frequently spoken with a fall-rise intonation (indicated
by ∨ below) and this was evident in the speech of the informants recorded for *A
Collection of Contact English*.

(13) *Are you getting support from the EU for sheep farming?* (RH)

    I am ∨ (CCE-S, M60+)

A fall pattern (without the rise in *tá* and *níl*) is found with a stressed short vowel which
occurs when negating something in the past.

(14) a. *An raibh tú riamh i Meiriceá?* Ní raibh. ∨ (CCE-S, M60+)

    [INTERROG were you ever in America] [not was]

b. *Did your brother work on the farm as well?* (RH)

    He did not. ∨ (CCE-W, M75+)

Yet another case, where prosodic equivalence can be assumed to have motivated a
non-standard feature, concerns comparative clauses. These are normally introduced in
Irish by two equally stressed words *'ná' mar ‘than like’ as in the following example.

(15) *Tá sé i bhfad níos fearr anois 'ná 'mar a bhí.*

    [is it further more better now not like COMP was]
'It's now much better than it was.'

Several speakers from Irish-speaking regions, or those which were so in the recent past, show the use of than what to introduce comparative clauses.

(16)  
a. It's far better than what it used to be. (TRS-D, C42-1, F)  
b. To go to a dance that time was far better than what it is now. (TRS-D, C42-1, F)  
c. Life is much easier than what it was. (TRS-D, C42-1, F)  
d. They could tell you more about this country than what we could. (TRS-D, M7, M)

It is true that Irish mar does not mean 'what', but what can introduce clauses in other instances and so it was probably regarded as suitable to combine with that in cases like those above. From the standpoint of prosody 'than 'what' provided a combination of two equally-stressed words which match the similar pair in equivalent Irish clauses.

The use of than what for comparatives was already established in the 19th century and is attested in many emigrants letters such as those written from Australia back to Ireland, e.g. the following letter from a Clare person written in 1854: I have more of my old Neighbours here along with me than what I thought (Fitzpatrick 1994: 69). It is also significant that the prosodically similar structure like what is attested in the east of Ireland where Irish was replaced by English earliest, e.g. There were no hand machines like what you have today. (SADIF, M85, Lusk, Co. Dublin).

Coincidental parallels

Despite the typological differences between Irish and English there are nonetheless a number of unexpected parallels which should not be misinterpreted as the result of contact. Some cases are easy, such as the homophony between Irish sí /ʃi:/ 'she' and English she (the result of the vowel shift of /æ:/ to /i:/ in early modern English), see remarks in 5.6 below. A similar homophony exists for Irish bí 'be' and English be, though again the pronunciation of the latter with /i:/ is due to the great vowel shift.

Other instances involve parallel categories, e.g. the continuous forms of verbs in both languages: Tá mé ag caint léi [is me at talk-NON_FINITE with-her] ‘I am talking to her’. Indeed the parallels among verbal distinctions may have been a trigger historically for the development of non-standard distinctions in Irish English, i.e. speakers during the language shift who found equivalents to most of the verbal categories from Irish expected to find equivalents to all of these. An example of this is habitual aspect, which is realised in Irish by the choice of a different verb form (bíonn habitual versus tá non-habitual).

(17)  
Bíonn sé ag caint léi. ‘He talks to her repeatedly.’  
[is-HABITUAL he at talking with-her]  
IrEng: ‘He does be talking to her.’

Another coincidental parallel between the two languages involves word order, despite the differences in clause alignment which both languages show. In both Irish and English prepositions may occur at the end of a clause. A prepositional pronoun is the most likely
form in Irish because it incorporates a pronoun which is missing in English.

(18) *An buachaill a raibh mé ag caint leis.*
[the boy that was I at talk-NON_FINITE with-him]
‘The boy I was talking to.’

Further parallels may be due to contact which predates the coming of English to Ireland. For example, the use of possessive pronouns in instances of inalienable possession is common to both English and Irish.

(19) *Ghortaigh sé a ghlúin.*
[injured he his knee]
‘He injured his knee.’

This may well be a feature of Insular Celtic which was adopted into English (Vennemann 2000, 2001), especially given that other Germanic languages do not necessarily use possessive pronouns in such contexts, cf. German *Er hat sich am Knie verletzt*, lit. ‘He has himself at-the knee injured’.

**What does not get transferred?**

If the expectation of categories in the target language which are present in the outset language is a guiding principle in language shift, then it is not surprising to find that grammatical distinctions which are only found in the target language tend to be neglected by speakers undergoing the shift.

The reason for this neglect is that speakers tend not to be aware of grammatical distinctions which are not present in their native language, at least this is true in situations of unguided adult learning of a second language. What is termed here ‘neglect of distinctions’ is closely related to the phenomenon of underdifferentiation which is known from second language teaching (Major 2001). This is the situation in which second language learners do not engage in categorial distinctions which are present in the target language, for instance when German speakers use the verb ‘swim’ to cover the meanings of both ‘swim’ and ‘float’ in English (*schwimmen* is the sole verb in German) or when they do not distinguish between *when* and *if* clauses (both take *wenn* in German). This neglect can be illustrated by the use of *and* as a clause co-ordinator with a qualifying or concessive meaning in Irish English.

(20) *Chuaigh sé amach agus é ag cur báistí.*
[went he out and it at putting rain-GEN]
IrEng: ‘He went out and it raining.’
‘He went out although it was raining.’

To account for the neglect of distinctions in more detail, one must introduce a distinction between features which carry semantic value and those which are of a more formal character. Word order is an example of the latter type: Irish is a consistently post-specifying language with VSO as the canonical word order along with Noun + Adjective, Noun + Genitive for nominal modifiers. There is no trace of post-specification in Irish English, either historically or in present-day contact varieties of English in Ireland. The use of the specifically Irish word order would, per se, have
had no informational value for Irish speakers of English in the language shift situation.

Another example, from a different level of language, would be the distinction between palatal and non-palatal consonants in Irish phonology. This difference in the articulation of consonants lies at the core of the sound structure of Irish. It has no equivalent in English and the grammatical categories in the nominal and verbal areas which it is used to indicate are realised quite differently in English (by word order, use of prepositions, suffixal inflections, etc.).

An awareness of the semantic versus formal distinction helps to account for other cases of non-transfer from Irish. For instance, phonemes which do not exist in English, such as /x/ and /ɣ/, have not been transferred to English, although there are words in Irish English, such as taoiseach ‘prime minister’, pronounced [ˈtʰiːʃək], with a final [-k] and not [-x], which could have provided an instance of such transfer. Although the /k/ versus /x/ distinction is semantically relevant in Irish, it would not be so in English and hence transfer would not have helped realise any semantic distinctions in the target language. A further conclusion from these considerations is that the source of a sound like /x/ in Ireland can only be retention from earlier varieties of English. This explains its occurrence in Ulster Scots and in some forms of Mid-Ulster English, but also its absence elsewhere, although it is present in all dialects of Irish.

The literature on Irish English contains remarks on the relative infrequency of the present perfect in Irish English (as early as Hume 1878, see Kallen 1990). This is a category which has no equivalent in Irish and so it is not surprising that it is underrepresented in Irish English as seen in the following examples.

\[(21)\]  
\[\begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \text{ I'm seven years home now. (TRS-D, C42-2, F)} \\
\text{b. } & \text{ She's there for six years. (TRS-D, C42-2, F)}
\end{align*}\]

Several features from Irish syntax are conspicuously absent from historical documents in Irish English. That this is not an accident of the textual record was confirmed by the material in *A Collection of Contact English*, a data collection consisting of the English of good present-day speakers of Irish. The following table lists the salient features of Irish grammar which were never transferred into English in this collection, even in discourse situations with considerable code-switching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6</th>
<th>Non-occurring features of Irish in A Collection of Contact English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Verb-initial sentences or clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Tiocfaidh mé thart ar a hocht.</em> ‘I’ll come by around eight.’, lit. ‘come-FUTURE I...’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>Pro-drop (absence of personal pronoun in present tense)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ní thuigim an dream óg.</em> ‘I don’t understand the young crowd.’, lit. ‘not understand-1ST_PERS_SG ...’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>Post-posed adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>an fear bocht</em> ‘the poor man’, lit. ‘the man poor’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td>Post-posed genitives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>teach Sheáin</em> ‘John’s house’, lit. ‘house John-GEN’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>Order prepositional object + pronominal object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Chonaic mé thuas ar an trá i.</em> ‘I saw her up on the strand.’, lit. ‘saw I up on the...’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
strand her’

6) Split demonstratives
   *an gluaiseán sin* ‘that car’, lit. ‘the car that’

7) Autonomous verb form
   *Rinneadh an obair.* ‘The work was done.’, lit. ‘done-was the work’
   *Rugadh mac di.* ‘She bore a son.’, lit. ‘born-was a son to-her’

8) Zero realisation of indefinite article
   *Chas sí le déagóir.* ‘She met a teenager.’, lit. ‘met she with teenager’

9) Initial mutation
   *Chuir [ch x < k] mé an cheist [ch x < k] chuici.*
   ‘I put the question to her.’, lit. ‘put me the question to-her’

10) WH-word plus relative pronoun
    *Cathain a tharla an timpiste?* ‘When did the accident happen?’,
        lit. ‘when that happened the accident’
    *Cad a dhéanfaidís leis?* ‘What would they do with him?’,
        lit. ‘what that do-CONDITIONAL they with-him’

11) Possessive pronoun and ‘verbal noun’
    *Bhí sé á bhagairt.* ‘He was threatening him.’ / ‘He was threatening (to do) it.’,
        lit. ‘was he at-his threatening’
    *Bhí sé á bagairt.* ‘He was threatening her.’, lit. ‘was he at-her threatening’

The argument from parameter setting

Irish is a post-specifying language (VSO, N+Gen, N+Adj) and the fact that English is
pre-specifying (SVO, Gen+N, Adj+N) is recognised quickly by language learners, and
would have been in the historical language shift as well. This recognition then blocks
(and blocked in the past) the transfer of any post-specifying strategies from Irish to
English. The view that the direction of specification is a parameter of language, which
needs to be recognised by only one setting and which is then fixed for all others, is
supported by the data in *A Collection of Contact English* and by the history of Irish
English.

The question of structural match

Initial mutation in Irish (see last item in above table) is a central device for indicating
essential grammatical categories such as tense, number, gender, case, etc. And yet it is a
structural principle which is never transferred to English. The reason probably lies in
its unique phonological character. There is no way of matching it to any grammatical
process in English and then transferring it, something which has been possible with
many syntactic structures which can be mapped reasonable well onto English syntax.

Other factors in neglect of features

The neglect of a form in the target language may in some instances be motivated not so
much by its absence in the outset language, but by some other factor. Take, for example,
the lack of \textit{do} support with negated \textit{have} in Irish English (Trudgill, Schreier, Long and Williams 2004). Here \textit{not} is criticised onto \textit{have} and not onto \textit{do} which is absent in negated sentences of this type.

(22) a. \underline{You haven’t much trouble at all with it.} (WER, M55+)
    \hspace{1cm} (cf. \textit{You don’t have} ...)

b. \underline{You haven’t to dry it or anything.} (WER, F55+)
    \hspace{1cm} (cf. \textit{You don’t have} ...)

One explanation for this is that the use of \textit{do} in habitual structures (as of the 19th century in Irish English) may well have triggered its avoidance in sentences with negated \textit{have}. Another instance of this avoidance would be the past of \textit{use to} which does not occur with \textit{do} in (southern) Irish English, e.g. \textit{He use[n’t to drive to work}, not \textit{He didn’t use to drive to work}.

\section*{Overrepresentation}

The mirror image of the neglect of distinctions is the overrepresentation of features, that is the scope of a feature in the outset is applied to the target language where this scope is usually smaller. The Irish English use of the conditional illustrates this phenomenon. It is non-standard inasmuch as it represents an overuse compared with other forms of English, e.g. as an equivalent to the imperative or in interrogatives as in the following examples.

(23) a. \textit{Would you hurry up with your tea!} (WER, M55+)

b. \textit{Would the both of youse get off out of here!} (DER, M35+)

c. \textit{Would you be able to cook if you had to?} (WER, M50+)

This overrepresentation also applied to the definite article. Curiously, the indefinite article, which does not exist in Irish, is not dropped in English. This might be expected because it is known from other languages, such as Russian, that the lack of an article (here the definite article) leads to its neglect in a target language, such as English, which has one.

\section*{Scottish parallels}

Annette Sabban, in her study of contact English in Scotland, has a section devoted to the \textit{after}-perfective (Sabban 1982: 155-68). In it she explicitly compares this to the identical construction in Irish English (1982: 163f.). All her examples are of \textit{after + V-ing} with past reference. She does, however, mention one or two examples of future and conditional reference which she found in literary works but dismisses these as ‘fehl am Platze’ (‘not appropriate’ – RH). She does not broach the question of how this structure developed historically and whether it also had future reference in earlier forms of contact English in Scotland.

The position in Gaelic is considered by Sabban (1982: 162). She notes that Gaelic has the construction as in \textit{tha e air bualadh} [is he after striking] ‘he is after striking’. This shows the form \textit{air} ‘after, behind’ (Irish \textit{iar}) which used to exist in Irish and which was later replaced by \textit{tar éis/i ndiaidh} (both meaning ‘after’), but a long time
after the transportation of Irish to Scotland. This structure is, if anything, more common in Scottish Gaelic (Watson 1994: 694) than in Irish as it is used where the latter would have the verbal adjective, compare Scottish Gaelic *tha e air briseadh* [is it after breaking] with Irish *tá sé briste* [is it broken], both meaning ‘it is broken’ (MacLennan 1979 [1925]: 7). Sabban regards the Gaelic structure as the source of the contact English construction which was transferred during language shift, much as in Ireland. Indeed the case for a contact origin is ever stronger in Scotland, given the greater range of the *air* ‘after’-structure in Scottish Gaelic, i.e. the likelihood of transfer during language shift would have been greater than with Irish.

The double use of *air* ‘after’ for both perfective and resultative aspect in Scottish Gaelic is confirmed by authors working in Celtic. Cox (1996: 85) states explicitly that ‘a perfective aspect is conveyed by *air* ‘after’: *tha mi air òl* ‘I have drunk’. MacAulay (1996: 201) confirms this and quotes two different meanings of *air* which correspond to the perfective and resultative aspect in Irish English.

\[(24) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \text{Tha Iain air a bhith ag ithe an arain.} \\
& \text{(is Iain after COMP been at eating the bread)} \\
& \text{‘Iain is after eating the bread.’} \\
\text{b. } & \text{Tha Iain air an t-aran ithe.} \\
& \text{(is Iain after the bread eating)} \\
& \text{‘Iain has the bread eaten.’}
\end{align*}\]

In her book Sabban also considers very briefly the question of possible influence from Ireland on contact English in Scotland. She notes (Sabban 1982: 164) that many Irish immigrants settled in Scotland and that they might have brought the structure with them, leading to convergence with the transfer of the same structure from Gaelic in Scotland. However, this was probably only a very minor influence on contact English in the Outer Hebrides (the region where she did her fieldwork), as opposed to further south in the region of Glasgow. (for a more general discussion of common developments in Celtic Englishes, including Irish and Scottish English, see the overview in Filppula 2006, especially pp. 520-27).

### Conclusion

The considerations in this paper hopefully show that language contact effects in a shift situation are various and complex. Transfer from the outset language can only be one source of non-standard features in shift varieties of English. Alongside the nature of the local target variety of English more general factors play a role, above all those which derive from the manner in which English is acquired. If this takes place in a non-restrictive context, that is in an unguided manner without formal instruction, then general traits of adult second-language acquisition can be observed and may become established in the later contact variety. Just what features of the actual contact situation become community-wide features and survive in the language of following generations is a further issue which requires research and can yield insights into post-shift scenarios across the anglophone world.

### Note
The sample sentences provided in this paper stem from various data collections of the author, both for Irish and for English. These are the following: CCE = A Collection of Contact English, DER = Dublin English Recordings, WER = Waterford English Recordings. In addition there are a few other abbreviations: M = male, F = female. Before a number, W = West, S = South. TRS-D stands for Tape Recorded Survey of Hibern-English Speech – Digital. This collection is based on recordings made by colleagues in the Department of English, Queen’s University, Belfast.

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