

## PARTICLES AND PROJECTIONS IN IRISH SYNTAX

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NIGEL DUFFIELD  
*Department of Linguistics,  
McGill University, Canada*

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Irish has an intrinsic significance which (naturally enough) must be unknown to those who condemn the language. It provides through its literature and dialects a great field for the pursuit of problems philological, historical and ethnological, an activity agreeable to all men of education and good-will. Moreover, the language itself is ingratiating by reason of its remoteness from European tongues and moulds of thought, its precision, elegance and capacity for the subtler literary nuances; it attracts even by its surpassing difficulty, for scarcely anybody living today can write or speak Irish correctly and exactly in the fashion of 300 years ago (and it may have been noticed that the one person qualified to attempt the feat has been too tired to try for the last two or three weeks)...

Myles na Gopaleen, *The Best of Myles*

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## PREFACE

This book is based on my 1991 USC dissertation. Since that time, there have been two major theoretical developments that bear directly on the analyses originally developed in the dissertation. These are the inception of the 'Minimalist Program' of Chomsky (1992, 1993), and the recent 'Antisymmetry' proposals presented in Kayne (1993). Taken in conjunction with the many criticisms and suggestions of reviewers, these proposals have prompted significant revisions of the earlier work. Every chapter has been substantially revised, the introductory chapter has been replaced, and Chapters 2, 3 and 5 offer completely new analyses of the original material.

The book comprises a set of theoretical studies of aspects of Modern Irish syntax. I have tried to present a coherent and consistent treatment of the Irish facts; a book in which the particulars of Irish syntax — which are in many cases quite eccentric from an English perspective — are shown to inform more general theoretical issues.

I also hope to have offered to the non-Celticist a reasonably complete overview of the major syntactic structures of Irish, with some indication and analysis of the more important dialect differences. With luck, the book will offer a starting point for further research on Irish syntax, and will generate wider interest in the language.<sup>1</sup>

The ideas presented here did not emerge from nowhere. They represent developments and departures from previous generative analyses of Irish. As is true of nearly all scientific research, this book owes a tremendous debt to the efforts of others. In particular, the present work has been guided and influenced by the work of James McCloskey. More than any other researcher, Jim has unlocked the grammar of Irish and revealed many of its mysteries. Nancy Stenson's work (Stenson 1981) also deserves special mention: in revising this text for publication, I have come to realize how many of her ideas have been re-discovered here in a different notation (or 'independently arrived at,' as the saying has it). More recently, work on Irish by Andrew Carnie, Sheila Dooley Collberg, Eithne Guilfoyle and Máire Noonan has influenced my thinking in a number of ways and helped to provide a more detailed picture of what Irish grammar is about.

I would like to thank all those whose comments and suggestions have led to improvements in the present text overall. I am indebted to Ian Roberts, Lisa Travis and an anonymous SNLLT reviewer, and, of course, to Jim McCloskey. Thanks are also due to my erstwhile committee at USC — Joseph Aoun, Jim Gee, Jean-Roger Vergnaud and Maria Luisa

Zubizarreta. Many other people have commented on various sections of this book or have provided crucial grammaticality judgements: I have tried to acknowledge their input at the beginning of the relevant chapters.

Without the outstanding editorial work of Jennifer Ormston and the word-processing skills of Jacob Brostoff, this book would have taken even longer to complete, and had it not been for the forbearance of the publishers, especially Polly Margules, it would never have happened at all. Writing this book has taken longer than I could possibly have feared, and I am truly grateful to my wife, Heather, and to my family, friends, students and colleagues for putting up with me during this time.

Finally, the issues addressed here are obviously very far removed from the everyday concerns of people in what is termed 'the real world'. Nevertheless, as an academic, this is perhaps the most direct contribution I am likely to make to that larger community. For that reason, I would like to dedicate the book to the people of that Irish province where I grew up, in the hope that such awkward phrases will soon be unnecessary,<sup>2</sup> and that a peaceful and just solution can be found for our Troubles, which have been going on far too long.

Montréal  
March 6th, 1995

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<sup>1</sup> The book is not intended as a grammar of Irish; it would be quite inadequate as such. There is a real need for such a work, for although several quite useful descriptive works are available in English, — notably Ó Huallacháin & Ó Murchú (1976), Ó Siadháil (1989), Christian Brothers (1990) — none of these addresses the kinds of questions of primary interest to researchers in syntactic theory. This study may perhaps provide the impetus for such a work.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps inevitably, almost every term standardly used to designate that part of Ireland has sectarian connotations: the terms *Northern Ireland* and '(the) *Ulster (people)*' have come to be associated for many with a Unionist perspective, while *The North (of Ireland)*' or '*the Six Counties*' have Nationalist connotations for many people. Hence the rather awkward phraseology.

## List of Principal Symbols and Abbreviations

Many examples are drawn — either directly, or in modified form — from the following sources:

ÓS	Ó Siadháil (1989)
HM	Ó Huallacháin & Ó Murchú (1976)
CB	Christian Brothers (1990)
CM	Chung & McCloskey (1987)
ÓÓ	Seamus Ó Grianna: <i>Caislean Óir</i>
NBÓ	Seamus Ó Grianna: <i>Nuair a Bhí Mé Óg</i>
McC	McCloskey (various papers)
PÓC	Pádraig Ó Conaire: <i>Scothscéalta</i>
MÓC	Máirtín Ó Cadhain: <i>An Braon Brogadh</i>

Other commonly-used abbreviations include:

Hb.	(Modern) Hebrew
HE	Hiberno-English
Ir.	(Modern) Irish
Ma.	Maltese
NI	Northern Irish
SA	Standard Arabic
SG	Scots Gaelic
SI	Southern Irish
ACC	accusative Case
AgrS	syntactic subject agreement
AgrO	syntactic object agreement
ASP	aspect morpheme
AUT	autonomous impersonal form
COM	common Case
COND	conditional
CONTR	contrastive morpheme
COP	copula
CSN	Construct State Nominal (see Chapter 5)
DAT	dative Case
DEM	demonstrative element
DET	determiner
EMPH	emphatic morpheme
FG	Free Genitive Construction
FUT	future
GEN	genitive Case
HAB	habitual
ICM	Initial Consonant Mutation

INF	infinitive form
NEG	negation morpheme
NOM	nominative Case
NUM	grammatical number
NUMRL	numeral
NPI	negative polarity item
PAST	preterite form
PL. SG.	plural, singular form
PROG	progressive morpheme
PRT	participle
PTC	(grammatical) particle
SP	strong pronoun
Ta	(mutation) target
Tr	(mutation) trigger
VN	verbal noun
WP	weak pronoun
WP	Wackernagel Phrase