

Paper IV
**A brief Comparison between some Aspects of Irish and German
Grammar and Vocabulary**

Liam SS Réamonn

20/Márta/2007

[I] Grammar in Phrase Formation

[II] Vocabulary

[III] Numerals and personal Pronouns

[IV] Use and Formation of Words

Irish and German grammar and vocabulary may readily be compared. However, such comparisons may adversely be impacted, if the two languages are not well understood. The formation of nouns and adjectives, the declension of these and the use of prefixes, for example, are some of the special points of interest.

[I] Grammar in Phrase Formation

Some twenty shared grammatical structures are shown. Such structures robustly reflect linguistic ties.



Freya Girded for War
artist unknown

(A) The Verb placed at the End of a Phrase (a Similarity long quoted in Ireland)

Irish: Chuaigh sé go Corcaigh le péire bróga, den mhéad cheart dá mháthair, *do cheannach*.

[He went to Cork *to buy* a pair of shoes of the right size for his mother.]

German: Ich sollte nicht so viel Kohl während der Pause *essen*.

[I ought not to have *eaten* so much cabbage during the break.]

Ich möchte einmal nach Hause wieder *gehen*.

[I should like *to go* home again sometime.]

(B) Special Use of the present Tense, when saying ‘since/for’

Irish: *Tá mé ag feitheamh anseo le trí uair anuas.* - *I am (have been) at waiting since three hours ago.*

German: *Er wartet seit drei Stunden auch.* - *He is waiting (has been waiting) for three hours also.*

(C) Expressing Purpose using the present Tense with the verb ‘to come’ plus the Infinitive

Irish: *Tagaim anseo le brí an dlí a mhíniú dhíbh.* - *I come (have come) here to explain the meaning of the law to you.*

German: *Er kommt euch zu warnen* - *he comes (has come) to warn you*

(D) Passive Meaning attained with the Verb ‘to be’ and le/zu plus the Infinitive

Irish: *Ní raibh duine le feiscint sa tsiopa.* - *There was nobody to be seen in the shop.*

German: *Ist meine Schwester zu sprechen?* - *May my sister be spoken to?*

(E) The Infinitive with and without a(do)/zu

Irish: **i)** *Caithfidh mé dul ann anois.* - *I must go there now.*

ii) *Ní féidir é sin a dhéanamh.* - *That can't be done.*

German: **i)** *Ich muss lachen.* - *I must laugh.*

ii) *Ich wunche nach der Stadt zu gehen.* - *I wish to go to town.*

(F) Use of the subjunctive Mood

Usage in Irish and German is sketched below. Direct overlap is now limited.

Irish

[I] Present Subjunctive in the main clause to express (i) a wish {see [V] below}; and in subordinate clauses of

- **(ii) purpose; or**

- **(iii) time; or**

- **(iv) open condition (possible outcome not revealed)**

- **(i)** *Go dté tú slán* - *go safely, now*

- **(ii)** *Imigí, go siúla mé abhaile.* - *Go away, so that I may walk home.*

- **(iii)** *Coimeád ciúin, go n-imí sé.* - *Be quiet until he goes.*

- **(iv)** *Muna dtaga tú anseo, ní rachfaidh mé ann.* - *If you don't come here, I shall not go there.*

[II] Past Subjunctive in subordinate clauses of (i) closed condition (outcome unsure) and in (ii) subordinate clauses of (a) purpose/(b) time, with the verb in the main clause in the past tense

(i) *Bheithfeá-sa sásta, dá léinn an leabhar.* - *You would be pleased, if I read the book.*

(ii)(a) *Chuaigh sé abhaile, sara bhfeictí é.* - *He went home before he would be seen. And*

(b) *Bhí siad ina suí sara ndéaradh sé focal.* - *They were up before he would say a word.*



Palu, The Cat Goddess, 1976

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German uses the Subjunctive as follows.

[III] Reported speech, where the main clause verb is in the past.

Sie sagte, dass er gehe (present subj.). - She said that he was going.

Sie sagte, dass er gegangen sei (perfect subj.). - She said that he had gone.

Sie sagte, dass er gehen werde (future subj.). - She said that he would go (subj. only for reported speech of 3rd person - otherwise the conditional tense is used).

(The 'dass' may be dropped and the normal word order used in the subordinate clause.)

[IV] In 'if' sentences, where the 'if' clause is not in the Present Tense:-

(a) *Wenn* er anriefe, führe ich heute noch (the main clause verb is strong so the subjunctive may be used over the conditional). - If he phoned, I should go today.

(b) *Wenn* er käme, wäre ich froh. - If he came, I should be glad.

(c) *Wenn* er angerufen hätte, wäre ich heute noch gefahren (both clauses are shown with the pluperfect subjunctive but the conditional perfect may be used in the main clause). - If he had telephoned, I should have gone today.

Wer das gesagt hätte, hätte gelügt. - Anyone who said that would have been lying.

[V] Third-person commands may use the subjunctive as above

Es lebe Deutschland. - Long live Germany {See F[I](a) above}.

[VI] Softening a suggestion may entail using the past subjunctive

Wäre Ihnen das recht? Would that be alright by you, then?

[VII] *als ob/wenn* – as if

Sie sah aus als ob sie nicht heilig sei. – She looked as if she weren't holy.

[VIII] To express purpose after *damit* and *(so) dass*

Sei ruhig, damit er das Bild aufhänge. – Be quiet, so he may hang the picture.

The use of the Subjunctive facilitates precision of thought. This finer aspect of language has been eroded to an extent in recent decades. In everyday parlance, the Present Subjunctive in Irish may be replaced, in subordinate clauses, by the Future Tense. The Past Subjunctive may be replaced by the Conditional Tense. In German, the Past Subjunctive can be replaced with the Present. Both forms can be avoided.

It is worthwhile to compare the circumstances when the Irish and German languages see doubt to arise and can then use the Subjunctive.

(G) Impersonal and Reflective Verbs

Impersonal verbs in both Irish and German can function as personal verbs.

Irish: Tá sé de dhíth *orm*. – I lack it. Is oth *liom*. – I regret.

German: Es fehlt *dir* an (+dat). – You lack. Es gelingt *dir*. – You succeed.

Irish: Irish has no reflective verbs. However impersonal verbs, which take personal pronouns in the dative case, perform this function:

Is cuimhin *liom*. - It is a memory *with me* (I remember).

German: There are reflective verbs to be viewed against the Irish construction, with personal pronouns in the dative or the accusative case:

Sich erinnern des Tages. To remember *to oneself* of the day (to remember the day).

Sie sehnen *sich* nach der Heimat. - You cord (stretch) *yourself* towards the homeland (you long for home).

(H) Anticipatory Object

Pronouns can be used as an anticipatory object in the main clause.

Irish: Dúirt an máistir liom gur fearr *de* thú dul ar scoil ‘chuile lá. - The master said to me that you would be better off *for it*, to go to school every day.

German: Sie hat *es* fertiggebracht, ihre Geschichte zu erzählen. - She has managed *it*, to tell her story.

(I) Schlangenwörter

German: Grammars give the following example of a long compound word:

Dampfschiffahrtsgesellschaftsdirektorstellvertretersgemahlin - Steam-navigation-company's-manager's-deputy's-wife

Irish: A concatenation of nouns is given, where these are not written together:

Bus scoile pháistí lucht labhartha teanga Éireann –

The schoolbus of the children of the people who speak an Irish language.

(J) Wortbildung

German: A root will be modified with prefixes or suffixes to form families of words, eg:

widersprechen - to contradict Gespräch – conversation Zweigespräch – dialogue

Fernsprecher – telephone Fürsprecher - intercessor

Irish: With the same process:

teacht - to arrive imeacht (imtheacht) – to leave teachta - envoy

teachaireacht – message teachtaire – messenger teachtmhar - suitable

(K) Use of the definite Article for Parts of the Body

Irish: (Occasional): D'imigh *na* cosa uaigh. – (*His*) *The* feet went from under him.

Baineadh *an* lámh ón uileann de. - (*His*) *The* arm was amputated at the elbow.

German: Ich wasche mir *die* Hände. - I wash *the* hands (for myself).

(L) Use of the Possessive Dative Case

Irish: Tá an leabhar *ag mo shean-chara*. - My old friend has the book. (Is the book *at my old friend*.)

Bhí cara *liom* ann. - A friend of mine was there. (Was a friend *with me* in it.)

German: Er schüttelte *seinem alten Freunde* die Hand. - He shook (*at*) *his old friend* the hand.

(M) Use of the verbal Noun

Both Irish and German can use the Infinitive form of the verb as a noun.

Irish: Slán gan mhoill dár *gcaoineadh* duairc. - Banished our cheerless *elegy*.

German: *Hoffen* ist ein hartes Wort. - *To hope* is a hard word (to have to have).

(N) Omission of Articles

(i) The indefinite article is not used after the verb 'to be'.

Irish: 'Mise Raftaire file...'

I am Raftery, the poet.

That this poem actually begins erroneously with 'Mise Raftaire *an* file' has led many scholars to suggest that it was not, in fact, written by the great man himself.

German: Sie ist Musikerin. – She is a musician.

(ii) The article of the first noun is omitted before a second noun in the genitive case.

Irish: Aimn an duine – The name of the person

German: Frage der Woche – The question of the week

This example shows that a particular observation may be misleading. The construction did not exist in Old Irish and so opens other questions. This Paper argues primarily on the number of similarities which stand out.

(O) Idiom How we see the world is reflected in idiom. The examples above cover some common ground, which has been kept between Irish and German. Nonetheless, structures do evolve. For example, the Irish phrase: "tá mé ag dul go dtí an chathair" is one way of saying: "I am going to the city". This literally means: "I am (at) going until the city comes". The Middle Irish 'go dtí' ('until comes') shows the introduction of a relativistic concept. Modern Irish speakers will not take cognizance of this underlying meaning.

[III] Vocabulary

The following list contains over 120 lexemes. These were sometimes inherited by both Irish and German from Indo-European, were taken from Latin or simply went from one language into the other. In all, a much greater comparable vocabulary is indicated.

It is pronunciation, not spelling, which is most important. However, old spelling forms can be a useful guide to the origin of syllables. Apart from established processes of linguistic change (please see Annex), slang usage can play a part. A common example of slang is the French word 'tête' (f, head). It derives from the Latin *testa* (f, jug).

Irish

Aingeal (m, angel - Greek ‘angelos’ messenger)
 Ainm (m, name - Greek ‘onoma’)
 Aintín (m, aunt - Latin ‘amita’)
 Angar (m, deprivation)
 as (from)
 Áit (f, place)
 a/márach (tomorrow)
 Asal (m, ass - Latin ‘asinus’)
 athair (m, father - Latin ‘pater’)
 beirt (f, both - Old Norse ‘báthir’)
 Béal (m, mouth: bh = v, mh = v)
 Bladar (m, cajolery)
 Bláth (m, flower - Old Norse ‘blóm’)
 bogadh (to move)
 Bád (m, boat)
 bBrd (m, table)
 briste (broken)
 bruite (boiled)
 buíon (f, band, troop)
 Cáis (f, cheese)
 Cancar (m, malignancy - Latin ‘cancer’ or crab)
 An Chill (f, the church)

Coinín (m, rabbit/little dog)
 Compánach (m, companion)
 comh/arbacht (m, inheritance)
 c/liste (clever)
 Clog (m, bell - mediaeval Latin ‘clocca’)
 Cling (f, tinkle)
 Coirb (f, basket)
 Craic (f, conversation)
 díreach (direct)
 Domhnach (m, church, Latin ‘domus’ or house)
 Doras (m, door, PIE root in Greek ‘thura’)
 dorcha (dark: dental exchange)
 droch- (prefix, bad)
 dúr (stupid)
 Eas (m, waterfall - PIE root in Greek ‘hudór’)

fada (long)
 fás (to grow - PIE root in Greek ‘auxanein’)
 Fead (m, whistle)
 Féile (f, feastday)
 is féidir (it is possible)
 Feis (f, festival)
 fíor (true - Latin ‘verus’)
 Fios (m, knowledge)

German

Engel (m, angel)

Name (m, name)
 Tante (f, aunt)
 Hunger (m, hunger)
 aus (from)
 Ort (n, place)
 Morgen (n, morning)
 Ezel (n, ass)
 Vater (m, father)
 Beide (both)
 Maul (n, mouth)
 blasen (to blow)
 Blume (f, flower)
 Bogen (m, curve)
 Boot (n, boat)
 Bord (m, shelf)
 brechen (to break)
 a/bruhen (scald)
 Bund (m, union)
 Kase (m, cheese)
 krank (sick)
 d’Chile {f, the church – Schwyzertütsch/Aargau (East)}
 Kaninchen (n, rabbit/little dog)
 Companie (f, company)
 Erbe (m, heir)
 list (f, cunning)
 Glocke (f, bell)
 klingen (to ring)
 Korb (m, basket)
 Krach (m, crash, noise)
 direkt (direct)
 Dom (m, cathedral)
 Tür (m, door)
 dunkel (dark)
 Drück/eberger (m, shirker)
 Tor (m, fool)
 Wasser (n, water)

Faden (m, thread)
 wachsen (to grow)
 pfeifen (to whistle)
 Feierer (f, celebration)
 fähig (able)
 Fest (n, festival)
 wahr (true)
 wissen (to know)

or

forleag (to overlay, printing term)
forordaigh (to pre-ordain)
Fuinn/eog (f, window)
gabhann sé (he goes)
Gáire (m, laugh)

Gairdín (m, garden)
géar (sharp, Gaé - spear, Old Irish)

Greim (m, grip)

íosfaidh (shall/will eat)
labhairt (to speak)
Last (load, m)

Léacht (m, lecture)
Leathar (m, leather - PIE root in Welsh 'lledr')
Léine (m, shirt)
Loch (m, lake)
Lochar (m, spoliation, Lit.)
Locht (m, fault)
Log (m, place, Lit. - Latin 'locus')
Loise (f, radiance, Lit.)
loscadh {be (utterly) consumed by fire}
Lúdramán (m, loafer)
luigh (to lie – PIE root in Latin 'lectus')
Lucht (m, people)
Maighdean (m, maiden)
Maise (m, joy)
Máistir (m, master)
Manach (m, monk)
Marg (m, silver coin in Gaelic times)
Máthair (f, mother)
Meas (m, act of measuring)
Méinn (f, mind, disposition)
mó (more)
morg (to decompose)
Muir (f, sea)
nochtadh (to bare)
Obair (f, work)
An Oíche/Oidhche (f, the night)/anocht (tonight)
Oideam (m, maxim)
Ord (m, order - Latin 'ordo')
Pás (m, pass)
Pian (f, gs péine, pain)
Péire (m, pair)
Préachán (m, crow)
Poc (m, he-goat)
Ponc (m, point)

Verlag (m, publishing firm)
verordnen (to prescribe)
Fen/ster (n, window)
gehen (to go)
lachen (to laugh – metathesis, dental exchange)
Garten (m, garden)
germanisch (spear-carrier – Latin 'germanus')
greifen (to grasp – intervocalic aspiration)
ess/en (to eat)
labern (to blab)
Last (f, load)

Lektor (m, lecturer)
Leder (n, leather)
Leines (n, linen)
Loch (n, hole)
lochen (to perforate)
sch/lecht (bad)
Lage (f, site)
los (free - Old Norse 'lauss')
löschen (to extinguish)
Luder (m, wretch)
liegt (lies)
Leute (f, people)
Madchen (n, maiden)
Musse (f, leisure)
Meister (m, master)
Monch (m, monk)
Mark (f, coin)
Mutter (f, mother)
messen (vt, to measure)
Meinung (f, mind, opinion)
mehr (more)
morsch (rotten)
Meer (n, sea)
nüchtern (clear-headed), nackt (naked)
Arbeit (f, work - metathesis)
Nacht (f, night)
Idee (f, notion)
Ordnung (f, order)
Pass (m, pass)
Pein (f, pain)
Paar (n, pair)
s/prechen (to speak)
Bock (m, he-goat)
Punkt (m, point)

rá/radh (to say)	redan (to speak)
Raiste/Rois (cainte) {m/f, burst (of speech)}	Rutsch (m, slide)
Rath (m, prosperity)	ratloss (helpless)
Riail (f, rule)	Regel (f, rule)
Ridire (m, knight)	Reiter (m, horseman)
Ríocht (m, kingdom)	Reich (n, kingdom)
	/Rechte (f, right hand)
ritheann (runs or otherwise moves)	rennen (to run)
rod (red, spirited)	rot (red)
Rothar (m, bicycle)	Rad (n, wheel), Rohr (n, pipe)
Sáith (f, sufficiency)	satt (satisfied)
screadaíl (to scream - OldNorse 'skraekja')	schreien (to cry)
scríobh (to write)	screiben (to write)
Scoil (f, school - Greek 'skholé')	Schule (f, school)
seacadadh (to send)	schicken (to send)
searbh (sharp)	scharf (sharp)
Seift (f, device)	schaffen (to manage)
siúl (to walk)	Schuh (f, shoe)
Sléacht (f, massacre)	Schlacht (f, battle)
slocach (rutted)	schlagen, schlug (to beat)
slogadh (to swallow)	schlucken (to swallow)
s/macht (m, control)	Macht (f, power)
Smig (f, chin)	schmeckt (tastes)
Sneachta (m, snow)	Schnee (m, snow)
Srón (m, nose)	schnarchen (to snore)
sona (happy)	schön (beautiful)
Sparán (m, purse)	Sparkasse (f, savings-bank)
Stad (m, stop)	Stadt (f, town)
Stráice (m, length)	Strecke (f, length)
suí/suidhe (to sit)	sitzen (to sit)
Teach (m, house)	Dach (n, roof)
Teanga (m, tongue - Latin 'lingua')	Zunge (f, tongue)
Toil (f, will)	wollen (to want)
Trácht (m, traffic)	tragen (to pull)
Uair (f, hour, occasion)	Uhr (f, clock)
umhal (humble, submissive – mh = bh = w)	übel (sick, wicked)
um (at, around)	um (at)

Germanic tribes became known as *teutonisch* (from the Celtic/Irish adjective *tuath* – *left-handed*, *northern*) and *germanisch* (from *géar*). The word *Volk* (n, people) may also have Celtic connections. With metathesis, the Gaelic word *focal* (m, word) resembles *Volk*. *Das Volk*, therefore, may have been distinctive tribes of 'Speakers'. Perhaps they were noted by the main body of Celts to be gifted in rhetoric. This recognition may date back to the differentiation between Celtic and Germanic peoples.

There are words which have an intriguing characteristic. Whilst they carry the same root in Irish and German - *they have opposite meanings*. The Irish word *freagra* (m) means *answer* but the corresponding German word *Frage* (f) means *question*. Similarly the Irish verb *gheibheann siad* means *they get* but the German verb *sie geben* means *they give*. The Irish *sníodh* means *to knit* whilst the German *schneiden* means *to cut*.

(III) Numerals and personal Pronouns

Numerals:

Irish: aon, dó, trí, ceathair, cúig, sé/seasca (60), seacht, ocht, naoi, deich

Scots Gaelic: aon, dà, trì, ceithir, còig, sia, seacht, ochd, naoch, deich

Welsh: un, dau, tri, pedwar, pump, chwech, saith, wyth, naw, deg

Breton: unan, daou (m)/div (f), tri (m)/tier (f), pevar (m)/peder (f), pemp, c'hwech'h, seizc, nav, dek

German: eins, zwo (coll.), drei, vier, fünf, sechs (metathesis), sieben (inter-vocalic 'b'), acht, neun, zen

Personal Pronouns (nominative/accusative Cases):

Irish: mé, tú, sé (sí), muid, sibh, siad

German: mich, du, er (sie), uns/mer (coll.), sie, sie

Brotherhood and a transparent system of determining one's honour (as reflected respectively by e.g. the relationship between kings and their people and the Brehon Laws) meant that, uniquely today, there is no *du/Sie* divide between the Gael. A plural *sibh* may be used only in addressing a Priest, on the understanding that he may be carrying the Sacred Host and, therefore, be not alone.

When Art MacMurrough and three other Irish Kings visited Richard II in Dublin, the English were horrified to see the royal guests sitting down to table with their minstrels and retinue. The Master of Ceremonies wrote: "They told me this was a praiseworthy custom in their country". However, democratic conduct was foreign to the feudal English and the Kings were brought to separate table. The record of the Master of Ceremonies continues: "The Kings looked at each other and refused to eat, saying I had deprived them of their old custom, in which they had been brought up."

As regards the right to respect in Gaelic times, the meanest (lowest) clansman stood on an equal footing with his chieftain. It is interesting to note the pride of the chieftains in their upbringing.

(IV) Use and Formation of Words

(A) Names of Rivers take the definite article in both Irish and German: 'an Life' – 'the Liffey', 'einmal am Rhein' – 'once by the Rhine'. So can the days of the week and the seasons. In Scots Gaelic, all the months are used with the definite article.

(B) Verbs 'to be'

Irish: Ní *raibh* mé. - I was not. *Bhíos*. - I was.

German: Ich *war* (- metathesis). - I was. *Du bist* ('bessen' root). – Thou art.

Irish: *Is* last é. - It is a load.

German: Es *ist* (ein) last. - It is a load.

(C) Prefixes common to Irish and German

German: ent-/emp- can mean 'away from' as in:

kommen (to come) *entkommen* (to escape)

Irish: teacht (to come) *imtheacht* (or *imeacht* - to go)

More striking perhaps are for-/ver-, úr-/ur-, mí-/miss-, um-/um- and a-:

Irish: *for-* (over, outer) - forshuíomh (m, superimposition)

German: *ver-* (away) - *versetzung* (f, transfer)

The prefix meanings here are close. But dictionary translations do not tell the full story:

Irish: *fortreise* (f, great strength), *fordhubhaigh* (to darken), *forlíonadh* (to complete)

German: *verstärken* (to strengthen), *verdunkeln* (to darken), *vervollständigen* (to complete)

Irish: *úr* (m, anything new) - *úrchoill* (f, greenwood), *úrscéal* (m, novel)

German: *ur-* (original) - *urauflührung* (f, first performance), *urmensch* (m, primitive man)

Irish: *mí-* (bad, dis-, mis-) - *mísheachadadh* (m, misdelivery), *míshlachtsmhar* – badly finished

German: *miss-* (mis-, dis-) - *missdeuten* (to misinterpret), *missbrauchen* (to abuse)

Irish: *um-/im-/iom/-* (circum-) - *umchasadh* (m, vertigo), *uimfhilleadh* (to fold around)

German: *um-* (around) - *umsegeln* (to sail around), *Umstände* (m pl, circumstances)

Irish: *a-* (to, Latin *ad*) - an Ghaeltacht *abú!* (Gaeldom to victory!) *athdhéanamh* (to redo, to do again/more)

German: *a-* (to) - *ade, mein Schatz!* (farewell, my dearest!)

(D) Illusion of Article and Preposition

German: *an dem* = *am* (to the), *in dem* = *im* (in the), *bei dem* = *beim*, *auf das* = *aufs*, *in das* = *ins*

Irish: *ó an* = *ón* (from the, singular), *ó na* = *óna/ósna* (from the, plural), *fá an* = *fá'n*, *fána* = *fána*, *de an* = *den*, *de na* = *dena/desna*

The 's' in 'ósna' and 'desna' is an Indo-European remnant, sometimes used.

(E) Weak, strong and mixed Declensions

German has weak nouns which add *-n* or *-en* to the nominative singular to form other cases. Strong nouns add *-s* or *-es* to form the Genitive singular. Mixed nouns are strong in the singular (*-s/-es*) but weak in the plural (*-n/en*).

Irish has weak plurals which have an 'i' before the final consonant of the nominative plural or add a terminal 'a'. All other plurals are strong.

German strong Declensions modify the root vowel of the word in the plural:

Class 1 nouns (no addition to plural): *Kloster, Klöster* (n, cloister), *Apfel, Äpfel* (m, apple).

Class 2 nouns (add 'e' to plural): *Fuss, Füße* (f, foot), *Traum, Träume* (m, dream).

Class 3 nouns (add 'er' and modify): *Amt, Ämter* (n, office).

Irish Declensions have root vowel changes, in the genitive case singular or plural nominative, such as the following:

First Declension: *fear, fir* ('*Fir*' is genitive singular and nominative plural) (m, man); *gaiscíoch, gaiscígh* (genitive singular and nominative plural) (m, hero).

Second Declension: *bruíon, bríne* (genitive singular) (f, struggle).

Third Declension: *crios, creasa* (genitive singular) (m, belt) - the reverse of the First Declension vowel change.

(F) Formation of Nouns

The doers of an action add the suffix '*-óir*' to the noun in Irish, '*-er*' in German.

German: *der Fischer* - fisherman, *der Bäker* - baker

Irish: *ealaíontóir* - artist, *intealltóir* - engineer

German diminutive suffixes are *-chen* and *-lein*. A comparable Irish suffix is *-ín*.

German: *Hamburg ist ein schönes Stätchen* - Hamburg is a beautiful little town

Sie ist ein treues Schätzelein - she is a true wee treasure

Irish: *cailín* (m, girl, little woman), *poitín* (m, an intoxicating drink, a potion) - these words begin the last syllable with an *l* sound and the German *tch* sound respectively. In Irish, *cailín* is masculine and in German *Mädchen* (girl) is neuter because of these suffixes.

Roots of different origin can be used in the declension of single noun.

Irish: bean (f, woman linked to Arabic *bint*) has a plural mná (linked to Latin *femina*)

German: Kaufmann (m, storekeeper) has the plural Kaufleute

(G) Formation of Adjectives

Irish can use a suffix to form an adjective:

‘-mhar’: luachmhar - valuable, pianmhar - painful

‘-ach’: amadach - foolish, siúlach - fleet, seachtrach – extramural

‘-is’: Spáinnis - Spanish, Rúisis - Russian

German uses similar suffixes (In Irish, mh = v and bh = v):

‘-bar’: wunderbar - wonderful, fruchtbar - fruitful

‘-ich/-ach’: herzlich - heartfelt, ehrlich – honest, scharlach - scarlet

‘-ig’: dort - dortig (of that place), hier - hiesig (of this place), fertig - ready, patzig - snappish

‘-isch’: hämisch - malicious, spanisch - Spanish, irdisch - earthly

Adjectives may lose a vowel in the syllable which is inflected.

Irish: deacair (difficult) níos deacra (more difficult)

German: Eine üble Laune (a bad mood)

Rough hints for pronunciation. In the Irish 26-letter alphabet, d and t sound as in French. Vowels sound close to the German. Consonants may be reversibly softened with an added ‘h’ (grammar!). Thus: BH = W, CH = CH, DH = J, FH = -, GH = J, MH = BH/W, PH = V, SH = H, TH = H, SA = SA, SE = SCHE, SI = SCHI

Annex: Some Tools of lexical Archaeology

Etymology determines the sources and development of words. Philology is the study of comparative and historic linguistics. This paper does not speak from either discipline, as such, but reviews very briefly some observed linguistic connections between modern Irish and German.

The study of words is called lexis. The subject is complex. Changes with languages occur all the time. The focus of investigation in the foregoing work is (i) syntax and roots which have not changed very much and (ii) root changes, which did not occur in both languages, because differentiation may have interfered with the process.

Changes such as the consonant shift from ‘p’ to ‘v’ in German are not necessarily totally completed, even within the one language. There is the German ‘Bock’ and the Irish ‘poc’, for example.

Ways to look for Comparison

Linguistic relationships have been briefly reviewed at three levels:

1) basic word structure (morphology - analytic, inflecting or agglutinating); and phrase formation (syntax and idiom), which together comprise grammar and 2) vocabulary

Having regard to the basic elements of language, useful comparisons maybe made by making reference to several paths of change. Some of these are sketched below.

Linguistic groups establish their own body of leximes (items of vocabulary with a single referant), though the physical tendency to use ‘m’ to begin the word for mother, for example, and the use of onomatopoeia affect this. Loanwords increase vocabulary too (‘asal’ in Irish and ‘ezel’ in German come from the Latin ‘asinus’).

Sometimes a new label is introduced by using a word in a different class – conversion. For example, in Proto-Celtic the verb ‘to taste’ may have been used to provide a noun for ‘chin’. Thus today ‘schmecken’ survives in German and ‘smig’ in Irish.

Semantic range identifies a set of ideas by a particular lexeme. ‘Fad’ is used to suggest length in Irish (‘fada’). In German it is used to mean something already long, eg thread (‘Faden’).

Methathesis occurs when a morpheme is turned around as in the German ‘sechs’ (ks) and the Irish ‘seasca’ (sk).

Metonymy occurs when the name of a part is used for the whole, as in the German ‘Dach’ and Irish ‘teach’. Other slippages of meaning can occur.

Derivation (Wortbildung) is another way to introduce a label. By adding a morpheme (the smallest unit of vocabulary with meaning), new words can be made. Thus ‘Mensch’ and ‘Urmensch’ (mankind and primitive man) in German and ‘scéal’ and ‘úrscéal’ (story and novel) in Irish.

‘Mensch’ above is called a base and the prefix ur/úr was added. Suffixes also modify meaning as in ‘cailín’ in Irish and ‘Mädchen’ in German.

Dental consonant exchange is common. Dentals are those consonant types included in the phrase ‘no dollars’. Thus the Irish ‘dúr’ and the German ‘Tor’

A word may lose a final part of a word (apocope) or an internal part (syncope). Again allow this to be happening in Proto-Celtic, so that today the final element of Burg (castle) in German is lost and the dental ‘r’ is exchanged for ‘l’ to give Baile (town) in Irish. The final syllables of Indo-European words are inflected (to show case and tense).

With lenition, the influence of neighbouring vowels may weaken consonants, as in the German ‘Fabel’ and the Irish ‘fabhal’. Aspiration of initial consonants, as we call this process in Irish (when speaking in English), may result in their being dropped altogether; in that way ‘p’ was lost from the Irish ‘athair’. With calques one language takes the principle of a foreign word but translates its constituent elements – rather than adopting and modifying the foreign word. Thus Irish has ‘teach spéire’ and German has ‘Wolkenkratzer’ for skyscraper. Sometimes a word may enter a language by different routes as in the Irish ‘ilstórach’ (skyscraper).

A morpheme may be any discrete syllable (German ‘gut’, Irish ‘maith’) or an initial consonant cluster (as ‘bl’ in German ‘Bläser’ and Irish ‘bladar’). Consonant clusters may be divided using an epenthetic or helping vowel. This occurs especially in Irish e.g. with the insertion of a vowel between ‘n’ and ‘m’ in the word ‘aimn’. The comparable German syllabification has been noted.

Short vowels tend to be interchangeable as in the German ‘Balg’ (shell, case, skin) and the Irish bolg (stomach). Such vowels are not written at all in Arabic.

Communities bind together with a common language, from which common ideas and concepts emerge, through syntax and idiom - as seen in phrase formation. Such communities are as large as the level of communication between groups within them. Thus, speech changes slowly as one goes a particular route from e.g. Paris to Lisbon but those in neither city will understand each other. This points to the existence of dialect continua. Linguistic change is unstoppable.

Merian Irland, 5.XXIX/C 4701 EX s. 16 “Typen mit unverkennbar individuellen Habitus und sympathisch unkonventionell.”

The Story of the Irish Race by Seumas Mac Manus - Konecky & Konecky USA, p. 337.