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ABSTRACT

A study examines the language contact phenomenon of Irish in which a native morpheme combines with a borrowed morpheme that has become, over time, fully assimilated. One variety of this blending in Gaeltacht Irish is the substitution of "-eir" for the English-bound "-er/-ar/-or," which is then combined with nativized borrowed morphemes such as "draidhbh" (from English "drive") to form "draidhbheir" ("driver"), conforming to the morphological patterns of Irish. Patterns found in the Irish of Cape Clear are explored, using a variety of examples. It is concluded that the productivity of the morphemic blending process allows the natural bilingual a form of rule-governed creativity in language contact situations, and in Gaeltacht Irish has served to continue a centuries-old process of lexical enrichment. The reader is asked to consider whether the borrowed morpheme, fully adapted to the phonology of the borrowing language, is not preferable to adoption of the unadapted morpheme. Contains 14 notes. (MSE)

A Native Bound-Morpheme Combines with Fully Nativised Borrowed Morphemes: A Highly Productive Language-Contact Feature in the Irish of Cape Clear[1].

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Historically, Irish has always acquired, nativised, and assimilated a superstratum from other languages with which it has been in contact — from Latin[2], Welsh[3], Old Norse[4], and Norman French[5] and, most of all, from Middle and Modern English. Indeed its period of contact with English is now an 800 years one. This particular language contact has enriched the Irish language, at the lexical level particularly, until the rapid decline of Irish throughout most of the country both in the last and the present century. It has enriched the language and its lexis, for borrowings were first nativised or fully adapted to the phonological and grammatical systems of the language before being adopted and assimilated into the linguistic system as a whole. This being the case, the copious accretions as they occurred historically made no serious or destabilising impact on the structure of the language as a whole, for, as I've said, they were at first adapted to the most highly structured areas of that language, to its phonology or sound system and to its grammatical system (these systems themselves, of course, underwent their own gradual change and development in the normal way as time went by.)

The language-contact of Irish and English continues to-day and is very extensive. The centuries old contact and its effects continue in

Gaeltacht areas but the new and main locus of contact is the Irish (heavily pidginised and increasingly creolised) of school-bilinguals whose L2 or target language Irish is. The incidence of transfer and of interference phenomena from L1 Hiberno-English is extremely high at the phonological and grammatical levels in the approximative intermediate linguistic systems of most learners, while simultaneously a peculiar purism at the lexical level doesn't countenance, indeed disallows almost, the centuries-old nativising of loanwords process and seems to prescribe and promote instead a profusion of calques (or loan-translations), coinages, and revivals of earlier forms many of which have lost their pristine immediacy and former richness of association. To say that the effects and impact on the structure of the Irish language in this case are enormous would be, I think, no exaggeration: phonemic under-differentiation is maximal in the speech of most learners and phonetic realisation is largely disregarded — most learners merely use their L1 phonemes of Hiberno-English and are blissfully unaware of distinctions which are crucial in Irish. The now widespread revived earlier form *todhchaí*[6] (the future) for instance becomes *'towkey' in the speech of most learners; and similarly at the grammatical level, morphological structure is often treated with abandon inglorious — the calque *frithghiniúint* (contraception) for instance being replaced as often as not by its genitive form *frithghiniúna* and heard in speech as 'friggin' Oonagh'.

Meanwhile the other (and older) contact and its effects still continue to enrich (for enrichment it is) the Irish lexis in Gaeltacht areas to-day. Just as *bosca/bocsa* (box), and *cistin* (kitchen), and *cóta* (coat), and *gúna* (gown), and *lampa*, (lamp), and *criú* (crew), and *ceaisiomar* (cashmere shawl < Kashmir), and countless others were in their day nativised, or adapted and adopted (so that they soon became *hiberniores ipsis hibernis*), and indeed, just as *seic* (cheque), and *bus* (bus), and *galf* (golf), and *sacar* (soccer), having been fully adapted in the first place, are all fine lexical items to-day when they are spoken with the phonemes of Irish, so too /b'l'ak'/ *bleaic* (a 'black') is normal in Gaeltacht speech to-day (e.g. in *phós sí bleaic*, she married a black, *phós sé bleaic mná*, he married a black woman) as also is /b'l'as'd'/ *bleaist* (blast) (e.g. in *bhí an ball go léir dóite ón/ag an mbleaist*, the

whole place was burnt from the blast) at least in Corca Dhuibhne and in Cléire.

A further refinement of this lexical borrowing is the combining of natívised and native morphemes: *bleaiceanna* — or *bleaiceannaí*, particularly in Connaught Irish (blacks), *leaideanna/-eannaí* (lads), *meaitseanna/-eannaí* (matches), *steipeanna/-eannaí* (steps) and *pinceanna/-eannaí* (Kerrs Pinks) etc. are normal in most Gaeltacht speech; other examples are *ribhití* (rivets) in Cléire, *bulaíocht* (bullying) in Corca Dhuibhne, and *béileanna agus peaicitsí* (bales and packages) in Cléire; *leaindeáil sé anuas ó Thír Chonaill* (he landed down from Donegal) and *leaindeálfaidh crabhaid ó Bhaile Átha Cliath* (a crowd will land from Dublin) are from my field-notes for Mayo and Corca Dhuibhne respectively; *an bhildeáil sin* (that building) and *na bildeálacha san* (those buildings) are from Cléire, and *lúsáltha* (loose), *rabhaineáltha* (round) and even *babhaindeáltha* (bound) are from Munster Irish generally; *bucáltha* in Munster and *bucáilte* in Connaught and Ulster (meaning booked) correspond in their formation, for instance, to *bácáltha* and *bácáilte* (baked) now long since in the language.

A particular variety of this blending of natívised and native morphemes is highly productive to this day in Gaeltacht Irish, particularly in the Irish of Cléire or Cape Clear. I shall now deal in some detail with this particular case in the remainder of this paper.

In this particular case the Irish bound-morpheme *-éir* /e:r'/ is substituted, at first, for the English bound-morpheme *-er* (sometimes *-ar*, *-or*) and it combines most productively then, as required, with a multiplicity of fully natívised borrowed morphemes in a profusion of new loan blends — the borrowed morphemes being fully adapted phonologically in the first place, and the whole blend conforming thereafter to the morphological patterns of Irish: thus *draidhbh* /drəiv'/ (< E. drive) combines with *-éir* /e:r'/ to give *draidhbhéir*, which was the normal word for a *driver* in Munster dialects and which is still normal usage in Cléire and in Corca Dhuibhne (the word *tiománaí* denoting a *drover* instead, as it still carries connotations of force or forceful persuasion);

and *draidhbhéir* then inflects grammatically just like all those other similar borrowings now long since in general usage in the language e.g. *siúinéir* (joiner/carpenter), *bácaeir* (baker), *ráipéir* (rapier), *tincéir* (tinker), and many more besides[7]; in its oblique cases *gnó an draidhbhéara* (the business of the driver) and *ar an ndraidhbhéir* (on the driver) and with its /i:/ plural morpheme as in *draidhbhéirí eile* (other drivers).

The interlingual combinatory process with which we are dealing here continues, of course, in its effect, a long established borrowing process in the growth and development of the Irish lexis. This borrowing process was readily resorted to even in Anglo-Norman times, for instance, as even surname evidence e.g. *Áirséir* (< Archer, le Archer) and *Scinéir* (< Skinner, le Skynnere) attests[8]; and numerous lexical items in all varieties of the language to-day such as those already cited, and such useful vocabulary as *grósaeir* (grocer), *péintéir* (painter), *fidiléir* (fiddler), *búistéir* (butcher), and many others, attest to its usefulness ever since.

There is a notable predilection for the *-éir* morpheme of agency (and simply for the suffix *-éir* in some cases) in the Irish of Cape Clear/Cléire (*-éir*, *-óir* and *-úir* of course carry similar semantic content, *-óir* having derived historically from Latin *-arius*, and *-éir* and *-úir*, it seems, being of Norman-French/Middle English provenance[9]); it replaces the more usual *-óir* in *feirméir* (farmer) and in *feirméireacht* for *feirmeoireacht* (farming) for instance, and in *bainistéir* for *bainisteoir* (manager); and in *bádaeir* and *bádaeireacht* (as in the Irish of Ring Co. Waterford also) for *bádóir* (boatman) and *bádóireacht* (boating) — indeed *bádaeir* and *bádaeireacht* are somewhat pejorative terms which are reserved, not for respected and worthy seamen in Cape, but for 'lucht teaspaigh' instead! Its usage is extended to *-ar* and *-or* ending English borrowings as well, in *piléir* (pillar) for instance instead of the borrowings *piolóir/piléar* elsewhere. It has long since been employed in Cape too in *laidhnéir* (liner) instead of *línéar*, though *himéar* rather than *himéir* is used instead of *casúr* (hammer), its plural *himéirí* being slang also for testicles. With the combinatory process which we are discussing it is preferred in Cléire also to the nativised complete borrowing, e.g. in *baidhléir* (boiler), rather than *baidhlear* as in Corca Dhuibhne, and in

scúnaeir (schooner) rather than *scúnar*. And there is the adaptation of syllable stress too: you will have noticed the provective stress of Southern Irish, the advancing of the primary stress to the *-éir* syllable with its long vowel, in all but one of the examples we've met (*bainistéir* /ban'is'd'e:r'/ being the exception.) This of course is of no great importance for it isn't central to the process; we can see it as a concomitant feature and one to be expected maybe, but not one which is necessary to the process, for there are quite a few examples too in which the stress is non-provective as in Connaught and Ulster Irish — *viosaitéir* /v'izit'e:r'/ (visitor), *costaiméir* /kosdim'e:r'/ (customer), and *traibhléir* /trav'l'e:r'/ (traveller) are examples, as is the at least two centuries old Cape Clear *smugléir* /smugl'e:r'/ (smuggler or smuggling ship).

As is to be expected, perhaps, the morphemic adaptation and blending borrowing process which we are discussing is highly productive in the semantic field of matters maritime in Cléire, and terms, some of them several generations old, abound: *cóstaeir*, a coaster or vessel which trades along the coast, rather than on the great oceans, and *trampaeir*, a tramper, or ocean-going vessel with no fixed route, and *cóstaeireacht* (coasting) and *trampaeireacht* (tramping) are examples, as are *fraeitéir*, a freighter or cargo-vessel, and *fraeitéireacht* (freighting), *logaeir*, a lugger or small vessel with lugsails, and *cotaeir*, a cutter or small vessel with one mast, a mainsail, a forestay sail and a jib set to bowsprit-end; and *stíméir* (steamer) and *stíméireacht* are of very high frequency of usage in Cape Clear speech ever since ocean-going steamers have been a reality, as are *trálaeir* (trawler) and *trálaeireacht* in their own case. We've already met *laidhnéir* rather than *línéar* (liner); a hooker, a 2-masted Dutch vessel, or a small fishing-smack, is *húcaeir*[10] in Cléire; *potaeir* is a lobster-pot fisher, and lobster-fishing is *potaeireacht* (rather than *gleamadóireacht/ gliomadóireacht* elsewhere, < *gliomach*, a lobster).

Further related lexical items are *druiftéir* (drifter) and *druiftéireacht* (drift-netting), *faeiléir* (whaler, whaling-ship), *faeiléireacht* (whaling, whalery), *tindéir* (a tender), *baidhléir* which we have already met, as in *baidhléir a' bháid*, the boiler of the boat, *findéir* (rather than *fiondar*) as in *findéir an árthaigh*, the fender of the vessel, *bornaeir* (burner),

buncaeir as in *buncaeirí guail*, coal bunkers, *steócaeir* (rather than *stócálaí*, stoker), *deampaeir* (damper), *steairtéir* (starter), *steapaeir* (stopper), *seoitéirí* (shutters), *vaeidéirí* (waders), *róibhéirí* in *róibhéirí an tseoil mhóir*, the rovers of the mainsail.

There is an assortment of terms too from various other categories such as occupations, trades and skills, work, machinery, fittings, implements, garments etc.: *plumaeir* rather than *pluiméir* (plumber), *digéir* (digger) and *vaiséir* (washer) are examples; both *slinneadóir* and *sléitéir* (slater) are used, as are *díonadóir* and *rúfaeir* (roofer); *deidhbhéir* (diver) corresponds to *draidhbhéir* (driver), and both *dróibhéir* and *tiománaí* (drover) are used, as are *dóirseoir* and *pórtaeir* (porter), and *rabaeirí, ropairí* and *bithiúnaigh* (robbers); *geaingéir* (ganger), *geaingstaeir* (gangster), *heaingéir* (hanger/hangar), *traeiléir* (trailer), *hocstaeir* (huckster), *sticéirí* (stickers) and *nicéirí* (knickers) are further examples, as are *clipéirí caorach* (sheep-clippers/shears), *clipéirí cinn* (hair-clippers) and *clipéirí pálach* (hedge-clippers); *vuincéirí* (winkers), *srian caoch* and *srian súlach* are interchangeable, and the workers fettler and buffer in motorcar manufacture in Cork city were *feitléir* and *bofaeir*, respectively, in Cléire; similarly shoppers, wasters and wafers are *siopaeirí, vaeistéirí* and *vaeiféirí* respectively while a speaker is *spéicéir*[11], a sniper in military parlance is *snaidhpéir*, and a striker, both in soccer parlance and in that of industrial disputes, is *straidhcéir*.[12]

There are relevant terms too for a few leisure activities : *bádaeir* and *bádaeireacht* we have already met; *strólaeirí* (strollers) and *strólaeireacht* (strolling) are further examples, as is *vácaeireacht* — as in the song 'Raghad-sa 's mo Chití a' vácaeireacht'[13] too. Some colloquial, slangy, and ephemeral terms in *-er* in English have been amenable to the process also : colloquial/slangy 'chefer' for chef and 'boser' for bosun (boatswain) have yielded *seiféir* (chef) and *seiféireacht*, and *bósaeir/babhsaeir* (bosun) for example in Cléire; a drunkard is *drúncaeir* (as well as *meisceoir*), a stinker is *stincéir*, (as well as *bréantán*), and a 'tenner' and a 'fiver' are *tinéir* and *faidhbhéir*, respectively, in Cléire. A few admirative terms too, applicable to women mainly, have been formed by the same process — *spórtaeir*, a 'sporter' e.g. in *sportaeir breá mná*, and *smeaiséir*, a 'smasher' e.g. in

smeaiséir mná/smeaiséirí ban, and *stiunaeir*, a 'stunner' e.g. in the vividly expressive *stiunaeir mná.*

Corcaíoch (a person from Cork) and *Cuan Dorach* (a person from Glandore) etc. are normal usage in Cléire as elsewhere. A 'Caper' or person from Cape Clear/Cléire however is *Céipéir*, and there are a few other examples also which accord similarly with our morphemic blending process : *Míodhrosaeir* (a person from Myros), *Luimnéir* (... from Limerick), *Dainginéir* (... from Dingle), *Meaincsaeir* (a 'Manxer'), *Bhueilséir* (a 'Welsher'), and *Deoitséirí* (Dutch).

You will have noticed, no doubt that in the formation of abstract and verbal nouns a further morpheme is added to the conjoined nativised and native morphemes. This too accords of course with Irish morphological structure in similar long-established cases : thus *cóstaeir-cóstaeireacht* accords with *foghlaeir - foghlaeireacht* for instance, *trampaeir - trampaeireacht* with *búistéir - búistéireacht*, and *potaeir - potaeireacht* with *siúinéir - siúinéireacht.*

The productivity of the morphemic blending process is such, indeed, that it allows the natural bilingual an almost Chomskyan-type rule-governed creativity even in the case of an urban popular terminology in English, so that just as a bluffer becomes *blofaeir*, for instance, so too a bouncer, in disco-speak, becomes *babhansaeir* as readily; and a stripper (not the bovine variety which is *gamhnach*, but the human one of prurience and titillation) is *struipéir*, a streaker is *struícéir*, and muggers are *mogaeirí*; and a pusher is *puiséir* so that drug-pushers, for instance, are *puiséirí drugaí.* Yes, the possibilities of the process are endless almost for the natural bilingual in language-contact situations — even in the party-political domain for instance, to take a further example, pollsters become *pólstaeirí*, and handlers *heaindléirí*, quite naturally and unselfconsciously.

Lovely blended lexemes all, you may well agree, i.e. when they are realised in speech with the phonetic values of the phonemes of Irish, when they accord with the sound system of Irish and with its grammatical system as well. *Deampaeir* /d'am'pe:r'/ (damper) and

fraeitéireacht /fre:'t'e:r'əxd/ (freighting) for instance are fine lexical items, and *drúncaeir* (drunkard), is, arguably, as good a lexeme as *meisceoir* (drunkard), and is infinitely better than it if the latter lexeme is spoken with the phonemes of English. No, I am not advocating the widespread and general adoption of the blended borrowings I have been describing[14], as things are, for *straidhcéir* then, for instance, would be 'strike air' in the speech of the great majority of learners of Irish (as *péintéir* is 'paint air') and this I couldn't contemplate with equanimity. Rather am I suggesting a change in attitude, a change in emphasis and direction instead.

As well as describing for you a particular variety of blended lexical borrowing which continues naturally and unselfconsciously in Gaeltacht speech, the continuation of a centuries-old process of lexical enrichment which continues to bestow a rich superstratum from English on the Irish language without deleterious consequences for the more structured levels of that language — the benign side, the beneficial side of Irish-English language-contact — I have also endeavoured to shed some light on the linguistic reality in the other and far larger area of language-contact to-day, the educational system and its efforts in school-bilingualism. I have mentioned heavy pidginisation and increasing creolisation, and to state it in its strong form now (though it grieves me to have to say this) what is being presided over by and large, I fear, albeit allowing for a very small number of important exceptions always, is the anglicisation of the Irish language itself, or at best, perhaps, the relexification of English towards Irish: there is the total dismantling of the sound system of Irish and the employment of that of the L1, English in its stead; and there is the dismantling too of most of the grammatical system and considerable convergence with that of English — learners often say, unthinkingly and linguistically naïvely, that Irish would be fine but for all the grammar, but so would swimming, I suppose, but for all the water; and there is the widespread preoccupation then with vocabulary and terminology, to the exclusion of the more highly structured levels of the language, as if language were merely words; *ach, mo léir, is fada ó theanga focail.*

Undue purism at the lexical level and the preoccupation with vocabulary and terminology in school-learnt Irish are carried to strange and often unnecessary extremes, even as the linguistic structure of the language as a whole is being replaced by that of English in the speech of most school bilinguals themselves. A Department of State in a newsletter in 1992, for instance, saw fit to use SEIF as a calque on the internationally known acronym AIDS. And *tomhaltóir*, for instance, which I have seen used for a consumer, in the commercial sense: though it may seem less opaque a term to the scholar of the language (who knows its *do-meil, ní tomil* genesis) than it does to the average learner, or even to the Gaeltacht native speaker of the language for that matter, nevertheless it seems to add rather unnecessarily to the linguistic load of the learners of the language. Wouldn't *cansúmaeir* perhaps be preferable provided that its borrowed morpheme is fully adapted to the sound system of Irish in the first place and provided too that the blend itself is not said as 'consume air'? After all, linguistic borrowing which enriches is possible at the lexical level and when the more highly structured levels hold firm. But should we change course, or is it too late now for that? Is it ever too late?

NOTES

[1] A lecture given at IRAAL International Conference on Language, Education and Society in a changing world, at the Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, June 1994. A somewhat altered version of this lecture has since been delivered at *Tionól 1994* of The School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

[2] e.g. in lexical items such as *arm* (L. arma), *saighead* (sagitta), *sráid* (via strata), *sagart* (sacerdos), *aifreann* (offerenda), *leabhar* (liber) etc.

[3] e.g. *bainne, carraig, liathróid* etc.

[4] e.g. *cnaipe, iarla, ridire* etc.

[5] e.g. *garsún* (<garçoun > garçon), *seomra* etc.

[6] Earlier still *todochaide*.

[7] It has been said that *-éara* instead of *-éir*, e.g. in *feilméara* instead of *feilméir* (farmer) etc. in Conamara is a substitution of the genitive form for the nominative; vide Gearóid Mac Eoin, 'Genitive Forms as Nominatives in Irish', *ZCP* 33 (1974) 58-65 (63); I am grateful to Prof.

Seán Ó Coileáin for this reference and for other valuable suggestions; cf. also de Bhaldraithe T., 1953, *Gaeilge Chois Fharraige* 248.

[8] *Scinéir*, in the sense skinner/flayer of animals, is used in Cléire instead of the more usual *feannaire/feanntóir*.

[9] McCone K., McManus D. et al. (ed.) 1994, *Stair na Gaeilge* 218, 440.

[10] *húcaeir, cotaeir, stíméir* and some others were used in the (closely related) Irish of Béarra also.

[11] Already in the 17th. cen. 'Parliament' prose literature also: *Pairlement Chloinne Tomáis*, Williams N.J.A. ed., 1981, ll. 996, 1356, 1362 etc., *Párliament na mBan*, Ó Cuív B. ed. 1970, l. 1095; (cf idem ll. 70,80 *gabhairnéir* (governor); l. 2034-5, *traibhléireacht* (travelling); cf. *tráibhléireacht, Duanaire Dháibhidh Uí Bhruadair*, ed. Mac Erlean J.C. 1917, (iii) 150.8, and *traibléir, traibhléraidhe, The Flight of the Earls* (Tadhg Ó Cianáin) ed. Walsh P. 1916, 84.21, 70.16; cf. *an Bríbhéir* (The Brewer), Cromwell, and *Beacha an Bhríbhéara*, The Cromwellian settlers, Ó Bruadair, Mac Erlean ed. op. cit., 20.8; *bríbhéireacht* (brewing) *Dánta Aodhagáin Uí Rathaille*, Dinneen P. ed., 1900, 250.4)). *Spéicéir* also denoted a matchmaker in Béarra and in Cléire; *basadaeir* (< ambassador) denoted a matchmaker in Músgraí, and *stócach* in Corca Dhuibhne.

[12] *Straigiléir* (straggler) and *straigiléireacht* are used also in Cléire; cf. '*lucht taistil cnoc is sléibhte agus straigiléirí aonair*' in The Déise song 'Na Conairigh', *Nua-Dhuanaire* (iii), 28, Tomás Ó Concheanainn ed., 1978.

[13] *Válcaeireacht* in Corca Dhuibhne; both forms were used in Béarra.

[14] I wish to record my indebtedness and gratitude to my friends Micheál Ó Dálaigh (bail ó Dhia air) and the late Diarmaid and Donnchadh Shéamais Ó Drisceoil, and to many others from Cléire.

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