

# Remarks on Standardisation in Irish English, Irish and Welsh

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## *1. Introduction*

The following remarks on the subject of standardisation have developed on foot of my response at the Colloquium to John M. Kirk and Jeffrey L. Kallen's paper "Standard Irish English: How Celticised? How Standardised?" The material collected and analysed by the authors is of great importance and raises a number of issues with regard to matters of standardisation and regional variation in general, and, more particularly, with regard to the nature and status of the varieties of English spoken in countries or regions in which a Celtic language is spoken or was spoken in the past. While the aim and basic content of the original response still stands, namely, to examine and assess some of the views expressed in the paper relating to such matters as standardisation and Celticity, it has been developed to also include remarks on standardisation and language convergence in Irish and Welsh.

## *2. Standardisation and Celticity*

In the John Kirk/Jeffrey Kallen paper, we are presented with an analysis of Standard Irish English as extrapolated from the material contained in the ICE (NI) and ICE (ROI) corpora of oral and written texts. These texts were spoken or authored by people of 18 years or over who had been educated through the medium of English to at least the end of secondary schooling.<sup>1</sup> Each corpus consists of one million words composed of two hundred texts of written language and three hundred texts of spoken language. The ICE project is not a study of variation but rather of national varieties of Standard English (StE). It emerges from this study that Standard Irish English is essentially Standard English plus

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<sup>1</sup> See the Kirk/Kallen paper in this volume for further particulars and also the ICE website for an account of the methodology associated with the ICE-corpora in general.

those features of lexis and grammar appearing across a range of spoken texts which may plausibly be assumed to be of Irish origin. It is not exactly the same as Standard British English or Received Pronunciation (RP), however, since the spoken texts are also “unmistakably celticised.” Paradoxically, despite the apparent “celticised” nature of the texts, features which are taken to be of Irish language origin appear very infrequently in the corpus. It is pointed out, for example, that many of the features of Irish English described in classical accounts of regional dialects are largely absent from the ICE-Ireland corpus. Code-switching does not exert a strong structural influence on the contemporary standard language, and words borrowed from Irish have had “relatively little structural import in themselves.” The authors therefore adopt a minimalist position, whereby the existence of one feature in a text is enough to establish its Celticity.

It is now taken to be a maxim that a standard language is a variety which contains minimum of variation in form with maximum variation in function (Haugen 1966). It develops mainly as the result of socio-political and cultural factors and is closely associated with, and maintained by, normative agencies and regulatory bodies in society, such as school, government, the media, and language academies. It is an artificial abstract entity which is pursued through the spread, acceptance and codification of the forms of a prestige dialect or through the levelling of the regional and urban dialects of the language to a common core of elements shared by many of its variants. It is created and maintained by conscious planning (Romaine 1994). Since, unlike Irish, there has been no deliberate planning of a standard form of Irish English, and since no regulatory body exists with control over its language norms, the question arises if we can speak at all about such a thing as standard Irish English. As Kallen remarks:

Applied work such as establishing an Irish Standard English, writing relevant materials for Irish students (such as phonetic or linguistic textbooks), and similar activities associated with linguistic authors in non-British varieties of English have hardly been attempted. (Kallen 1986: 127f.)<sup>2</sup>

Is educated Irish English a standard or a mainstream variety of English, or is it both of these?

The vast majority of native speakers of English around the world differ linguistically from one another relatively little, with more differentiation in their phonetics and phonology than at other linguistic levels. Most people betray their geographic origins more through their accents than through their vocabulary or grammar. The vast majority speak mainstream varieties of English, Standard and non-Standard, which resemble one another quite closely, and are all reasonably readily mutually intelligible. Grammatically in particular, these varieties are very close to Standard English. We associate mainstream dialects with upper- and middle-class speakers throughout the English-speaking world; with areas out of which Standard English as a social dialect grew historically, *ie* the south-east of England; with most urban areas; *with areas which have shifted to English only rela-*

<sup>2</sup> See, however, recent codification of the language in works such as Macafee (1996), Dolan (1998), Filppula (1999), and in other studies referred to in Tristram (1997, 2000, 2003, 2006).

tively recently, such as the Scottish Highlands and western Wales (my emphasis, SMacM); and with recently mixed colonial dialect-speaking areas, such as most of North America and Australia. (Trudgill and Chambers 1991: 2f.)

It is not clear to me why the authors did not include the speech of educated Irish English speakers along with that of speakers of the Scottish Highlands and Wales in the italicised quotation above. Do they imply that there is no such mainstream variety or have they simply not bothered to add it to the list? We know that there exists a range of Irish English regional and local dialects, some of which are quite traditional, including some urban ones, and others which are less conservative and traditional. The middle-class speakers of each of these various dialects have *a kind of* standard speech which they can avail of as appropriate and felicitous and it may be postulated that the varieties in question share a sufficient number of distinctive markers to constitute *a kind of* mainstream variety. I italicise the words *kind of* to draw attention to the vagueness and imprecision of our knowledge at present and to pinpoint the importance of the Kirk/Kallen study. Prior to this study, we did not know precisely the characteristic markers of these presumed standard/mainstream varieties. The words *kind of* are also appropriate perhaps to the relationship which holds between the centre and the periphery or, to be more precise, between the standard and the non-standard varieties. Are the regional and local dialects of Irish English to be sharply differentiated from the middle-class varieties or are we dealing with a continuum, the end point of which is this presumed standard? If we have a continuum, then there must exist a range of temporary points on it. Using the idea of the continuum, for example, it is possible to see differences between *Gaeltacht* English and other forms of Irish English, while simultaneously recognising that they are on the same line. Such an analysis has been made in respect of Island or Contact English in Scotland on the one hand and Highland English on the other. Sabban explains as follows:

Das gälische Substrat im Hochlandenglischen geht auf Interferenzerscheinungen in der Richtung vom G zum E in der Phase der Zweisprachigkeit – der Zeit des „Kontaktenglischen“ – zurück, die sich über den Zeitpunkt des Sprachwechsels hinaus gehalten haben. Dabei sind KE und Hochlandenglisch nicht als streng voneinander geschiedene Varietäten, sondern vielmehr als Endpunkte eines Kontinuums zu begreifen, zwischen denen es eine Vielzahl von Übergangsformen gibt. Entsprechendes gilt für das Verhältnis von Hochlandenglisch und (schottischem) StE. (Sabban 1982: 13f.; see also Catford 1957: 111)

‘The Gaelic substrat in Highland English goes back to interference phenomena in the direction of G to E (*ie*, Gaelic to English, SMacM) during the bilingual phase – the time of ‘Contact English’ – which have been maintained beyond the time of the language shift. CE (*ie*, Contact English, SMacM) and Highland English are therefore not strictly distinct variants, but are to be taken rather as the final stages of a continuum, between which there are many temporary forms. The same applies to the relationship between Highland English and (Scottish) StE.’

Let us assume with ICE and the authors of the paper that standard national varieties do exist. If so, in the case of standard written English in Ireland, we need to look beyond Ireland for the planning and regulatory bodies. And it is abundantly clear that, as far as the written language is concerned, the norm is that of the so-called King's or Queen's English. The conquest of Ireland by England led, amongst other things, to the acceptance of the cultural and social institutions of the coloniser, one of which was Standard English. The fact that Ireland achieved independence in 1922 did not necessarily lead to a fracture of all ties of loyalty to, and dependence upon, the former nation. It is true that, as far as language policy was concerned, there was an attempt to ensure that political liberation was accompanied by linguistic liberation, and a concerted effort was made to restore the Irish language as the first national language of the new state. The national effort was geared towards enunciating and developing plans for attaining this goal. However, since the country was already in effect an English-speaking nation, there were bound to be great difficulties associated with this strategy. A pragmatic English language strategy was therefore also pursued simultaneously. Naturally enough, the standard written variety which was accepted and enforced in the normative agencies of the new state was the one already in existence, namely, Standard British English. Hence, the ties of loyalty to the old colonial standard language remained intact and were inculcated even by those who preferred that a change of language should take place. Consider the comment by Romaine:

Every liberation not accompanied by a defeat of the linguistic superstructure is not a liberation of the people who speak the dominated language. It is instead a liberation of the social class that continues to speak the dominant language. (Romaine 1994: 94)

Standardisation is perhaps more generally associated with the written form of languages than with the spoken. As with Irish English, the standard of grammar, spelling and punctuation in other variants such as Standard Scottish English (SScE) or Standard Welsh English (SWE) is that of Standard written English as codified in works such as the Oxford English Dictionary. The position of a spoken standard is a rather different matter. The phonetics and grammar of educated speakers of English in Scotland and Wales approximate to some degree to RP, just as do the phonetics and grammar of educated speakers who come from various regions in England. Nevertheless, there is a sufficient number of distinctive features in spoken mainstream IE, SScE and SWE to make them different to RP. RP is not the desired norm in Ireland, either north or south; nor is it taught in Irish schools. In a recently liberated country, such as the Republic of Ireland, the use of RP is still associated with the colonising nation and it is not the standard to which the majority of indigenous educated people aspire. Not surprisingly, Standard written English has always been the norm adopted in the schools of Northern Ireland. For example, in her study of Belfast English, Henry remarks that education is totally based on Standard British English and that:

This is a variety of English which has little status and which is not officially recognised. Schools devote a great deal of time to the teaching of correct standard English and the ability to use standard syntax is considered a mark of education and lack of it a badge of the lack of it. (Henry 1995: 8)

Moreover, children who use dialect forms in their school work, “*with a couple of exceptions that have acquired the status of a local standard* (my emphasis, SMacM) will simply be marked wrong” (Henry 1995: 8). The quantity of Irish, Gaelic, Scots and Welsh features in the Celtic varieties depends on a number of factors, such as:

- the subject of discourse
- the point on the high-low spectrum at which a particular speech act takes place
- the background, age and class of the speakers and listeners
- the areas and communities in which they have been raised and educated
- the nature and extent of their local networks
- the interaction with central dispersal zones
- the socio-psychological factors operating in the communities, regions or countries to which they belong.

In other words, not all speakers, or perhaps no speakers at all, will conform to the ideal standard variety, nor will they conform to it in the same way. As Alan R. Thomas (1997: 76) points out, the fact that his description of Welsh features in Welsh English is couched in absolute terms does not suggest “that speakers do not universally and continually vary their usage.” Moreover, some general features of WE “are clearly recognised as being non-standard and are replaced early in the process of standardising.”

It emerges from the statistical analysis of the ICE (RI) and ICE (NI) corpora that some of the distinctive features associated with Irish English urban dialects are more likely to appear in the speech of the working class than in that of the middle class. While working class areas often have dense local networks which contribute to the maintenance of local and regional norms, the middle class tend to have more open networks and are influenced to a greater extent by standard speech (Lesley Milroy 1980; James Milroy 1991). It is not entirely surprising therefore that the putative Celtic features examined by Kirk and Kallen in their paper are very sparse. There is only one instance of the use of the *after* perfect in the NI corpus and a mere four out of seventy four in the ICE-Ireland corpus in Face to face conversations, which is where it is most likely to occur; in general, the five classes of *perfective* aspect with varying degrees of claim to an Irish language origin (Filppula 1999, ch. 6) yield an overall score of only 3.3%. As regards the use of reflexives, *subject reflexives* are much more common in ICE-Ireland in Face to face than in British Standard English and the only example of its use in ICE (NI) is in the category of social letters. Inasmuch as there is a good deal of variation between *auxiliary inversion* in embeddings with and without complementisers across a range of syntactic frames in British Standard

English, it is difficult to determine the distinctiveness of the non-complementing variant as a Celticism in the Irish corpora. There is a strong preference for inversion with *wonder* in ICE (ROI), not as strong in ICE (NI). As to the analysis of the *Progressive* aspect as not constituting a distinctive marker of ‘Celticity,’ this will no doubt be the subject of continuing research and debate.<sup>3</sup>

In Scotland, Gaelic substrate features are much more numerous in the speech of those who come from the Islands and Highlands, that is, from areas which have only recently shifted to English or which are in the process of shifting (Sabban 1982). However, many educated speakers from these areas will seek to approximate to the standard and it may be only on the basis of a small range of features that their original home can be identified.

The features of HebE (Hebridean English, SMacM) are indeed variable. Most speakers do not use a particular phenomenon all the time, but typically alternate between the HebE variant and its StE counterpart. Some speakers use HebE variants more often than others ... whereas speakers at the opposite end (‘of the scale,’ SMacM) consistently use the StE equivalent. (Sabban 1984: 25f.)

It should be emphasised then that the concept of spoken Standard Irish English only becomes meaningful when the sparsely populated features of lexis and syntax referred to in the Kirk/Kallen paper are combined with other characteristics of Irish English, such as the widespread existence and use of a number of phonetic forms which are markedly different to British English, prosodic features of accent and tone, and specific phatic and stylistic functions of the language. In other words, it is a whole package of language features, from phonology through syntax and lexis to the pragmatics of speech acts (cf. Barron and Schneider 2005), which determines the nature and peculiar characteristics of Standard Irish English. Indeed, during their interrogation of the term ‘Celticity,’ the authors specifically refer to pragmatics and style and point out that they will have more to say about these matters in future work. The final suggestion that frequency is not the only criterion which determines if a text is celticised, but rather that other factors such as accent, pronunciation and style, or the fact that a particular feature has a specially close association with Ireland, coincides roughly with my own view on the matter. The statement that “some impact of certain features may also be deepened by the accompanying accent or intonation, so that no matter what is said or how it is expressed, Celticity is implicit through the signal being heard,” suggests that they consider accent to be paramount. Otherwise we have a somewhat circular argument in that the question is begged as to what constitutes the distinctive features of the signal.

The broader definition of Celticity suggested here, and in parts of the Kirk/Kallen paper, permits of flexibility and releases researchers from the frantic hunt for Gaelic origins. In other words, the hunt for Gaelicisms is a different game to the description of Irish English as it presently exists synchronically and the two

<sup>3</sup> With regard to the position of Ulster Scots in ICE (NI), see Kirk and Kallen. Further work is required on this matter.

approaches should be properly distinguished. Essentially, to avoid fuzziness, the distinction between synchronic and diachronic descriptions needs to be borne in mind. This does not mean that it is not possible to apply a global model which draws on both diachronic and sociolinguistic/synchronic approaches permitting the games to be played in the same arena, merely that the games should only be joined up at the appropriate junctures.<sup>4</sup> For example, the fact that certain distinctive linguistic features may be restricted to the speech of particular age-groups or specific communities may be both described synchronically, say in a generative transformational approach, and explained historically on the basis of a historical contact situation. In any event, the headlong rush to find so-called Celtic features in significant quantities may induce panic and lead to false conclusions. This could easily occur if the point of departure is Standard English or mainstream Irish English.

To determine if certain features and structures in Irish English have been derived from Irish, it is necessary to examine the two languages in a range of time frames, from early Hiberno-English and Early Modern Irish to modern times. This historical contact linguistic approach, which requires a profound understanding of the two languages in both their earlier and more modern phases, is exemplified by a range of recent work, such as that of Filppula (1999), or that on the 'After Perfect' in the present volume. For example, by paying close attention to the earlier Irish source material, Ó Corráin presents strong evidence to suggest that the use of the After Perfect to denote future reference in early Irish English derives from a similar structure in Early Modern Irish and that the restriction in reference to the recent perfect in Irish and Hiberno-English has arisen due to the development of a new structure in Irish, i.e. Substantive Verb + Object + Verbal Adjective + Inflected Preposition

*tá sé déanta agam*  
is it done at me

'I have it done'

corresponding to Retrospective II (Henry 1957) or 'Medial Object' perfect (Filppula 1999) in Irish English.

Returning to terminology, to avoid misunderstandings, if reference is made to the 'Celticity' of Irish English, this should signify linguistic features which are of Irish origin, while the term Irish English would include all features which are demonstrably peculiar to the forms of English spoken in Ireland, that is, it would include not only features which have been proven to be of Irish origin, or which have a high probability of being of this origin, but also those features which may, or may not at all, be of Irish origin, including data instanced in other Englishes which are also characteristic and distinctive of Irish English. This would include possible superstrate and universal features together with characteristic stylistic forms and devices. As fuzziness and *a priori* assumptions are increasingly set aside, these are the approaches by and large being adopted by scholars of Irish English.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Kallen (1986); Corrigan (1993), (1997); Filppula (1993).

### 3. Standardisation in Irish and Other Celtic Languages

With regard to standardisation of the Celtic languages, Leith argues:

Since the imposition of English, the absence of a centre in either branch of Celtic (i.e., the Goidelic and Brythonic branches, consisting respectively of Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Manx on the one hand, and Welsh, Cornish and Breton on the other, SMacM) has precluded the cultivation of standard varieties and hastened the proliferation of regional ones. We cannot therefore speak of a regional Welsh, or a standard Scottish Gaelic, in the same way as we can speak of a standard English. (Leith 1983: 154)

Clearly, this does not apply to the *written* forms of the languages. Written Standard Irish, for example, is, in the words of Breatnach (1964), “an artificial standardized amalgam of dialects” in which grammatical irregularity has been purged in the interests of uniformity. There had been a written standard throughout the Gaelic world of Ireland and Scotland during the Bardic period, but following the dissolution of the poetic schools in the seventeenth century, texts in which there were many colloquialisms appeared in the regional dialects, unlike much of the classical writing of the earlier period. This state of affairs lasted for nearly three hundred years. Efforts to establish a standard based either on the dialects – the speech of the people (*caint na ndaoine*) – or on the old classical forms of the Bardic schools and the great prose writers of the Early Modern period, such as Geoffrey Keating, had been attempted since the time of the Gaelic Revival at the end of the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth, but they had not been successful. Despite the fact that the champions of a written standard based on *caint na ndaoine* were, as time progressed, winning the battle, there were many who refused to accept that a standard was necessary at all. The debate was often quarrelsome, and the situation remained quite anarchic for a considerable period of time. There was a reluctance to accept a variant which was so far removed from the richness and naturalness contained in the speech of the regional dialects on the one hand, and which deviated orthographically from Classical Irish on the other.

It became increasingly clear, however, that such a written grammatical and orthographic standard, based on the modern spoken dialects, was required for teaching and other formal societal domains, if the language was to survive and be developed as a national medium of written communication. Following important developments in the immediate post-war period, the process was brought to a conclusion with the publication and codification of the standard in the landmark *Gramadach na Gaeilge agus Litriú na Gaeilge: An Caighdeán Oifigiúil* (“Irish Grammar and the Orthography of Irish: The Official Standard,” 1958), and later in such works as de Bhaldraithe’s *English-Irish Dictionary* (1959), *Graiméar Gaeilge na mBráithre Criostaí* (“The Christian Brothers’ Irish Grammar,” 1960), and Ó Dónaill’s *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla* (“Irish-English Dictionary,” 1977). Although there has been a number of modifications to the written standard over the years and that it is not yet entirely satisfactory, it has served its purpose well in providing a uniform written variant which is generally accepted by users of the language (see Ó Baoill 1988).



Welsh also had a standard written language common to all regions of the country during the Bardic period which was the result of conscious and deliberate planning. The dissolution of the Bardic schools led, as in Ireland, to a relaxation of the Standard and the introduction of numerous dialect forms and colloquialisms. However, when William Morgan produced the complete Welsh Bible in 1588, he followed the policy of William Salesbury who had translated the New Testament in 1563 by availing of the old Bardic standard. William Morgan's translation was to have a profound effect on the fortunes of the language right up until the present day. The Standard, for example, was further codified in dictionaries and grammars in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and was generally accepted as the norm. It was not all plain sailing, however, and, as happened in Ireland, the question of Standard orthography led to bitter disputes and the process was only completed with the publication of *Orgraff yr Iaith Gymraeg* ("The Orthography of the Welsh Language") in 1928.

There is not yet a *spoken* Irish language Standard. The most recent planned attempt at providing a Standard available is that of Dónall Ó Baoill in *Lárchanúint don Ghaeilge* ("A Central Dialect for Irish," 1987). As was the case with the Standard *written* language, an attempt is made to establish a common core based on all the dialects. No forms are recommended which are not instanced in at least one of the main regional variants. It may take a considerable period of time before a standard of this kind is accepted, however, as many take the view that, despite the laudatory aims, it leads to a dilution of dialect forms and the loss of local identity and language richness. Nevertheless, the recommendations constitute a theory as to how things might develop as the language increasingly occupies central domains of diffusion, such as radio and television and as dialect mixing and convergence continue to take place at an increasingly quicker rate.

While Welsh has no codified model of standard pronunciation (Thomas 1987: 105), the literary standard of the Bible gave rise to a Standard 'Pulpit Welsh' which was used for oratory and public speaking. However, as the diglossic situation in the country decreased in modern times and Welsh-medium television, newspapers and education began to develop, it was considered by many that this traditional Standard was too conservative and difficult and that a compromise between the standard orthography and the dialects was required, particularly for the teaching of Welsh to learners. Hence *Cymraeg Byw* ("Living Welsh") was developed with the aim of incorporating those dialect forms which coincided with the standard orthography and excluding other correlatives (Thomas 1987: 103). It was not intended to replace any of the dialects, but it has caused controversy and was attacked by opponents as constituting an artificial fusion of Northern and Southern dialects with no basis in reality.

The comparison between regional and standard dialects also raises the question of the extent of diglossia, whereby the high variety is used as standard and the low in informal situations. The Kirk/Kallen study implies that there is a high degree of diglossia involved in the ICE corpus. Note, for example, their comment that the virtual total absence of the dialect lexicon indicates that this ele-

ment of Celticity observable in traditional dialects does not appear within the standard, thus pointing to a division rather than a continuum between these different types of language usage. (see p. 88 and 92 above) If this is indeed intended to be a comment on diglossia, then the evidence which emerges from this paper is that it applies not only at the lexical level but at most other levels also. Moreover, the nature of bilingualism and diglossia obtaining in the *Gaeltacht* of Ireland and Scotland, and in Welsh and Breton-speaking areas, some of which are in the process of language change, has proven to be particularly revealing. It is generally held that the *Gaeltacht* may be characterised as being in a state of *bilingualism without diglossia*, a typically unstable situation which often leads to language shift and language death (see Ó Murchú 1993: 485; Fasold 1984: 41; also Sabban 2000 for another view).

#### 4. Borrowing and Code-Switching

This brings us neatly to a discussion of borrowing, code-mixing and code-switching as it is presented in Kirk and Kallen's paper. In Ireland, there has been extensive contact between Irish and English over the centuries, resulting at various times in a high degree of bilingual competence. This has led to substantial and significant lexical and structural borrowing. While borrowing refers to linguistic items which have been taken from the source language and naturalised in the recipient language, code-switching refers to stretches of discourse being used in the same conversation in two languages simultaneously, both within and without the sentence. The participants may not necessarily have equal proficiency in both languages, a matter which is exploited to great comic and satiric effect in many well-known Irish literary texts, such as the seventeenth century *Pairlement Chloinne Tomás* ("The Parliament of Clan Thomas"), the writings of Tadhg and Seán Ó Neachtain who flourished in a bilingual environment in Dublin at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the humorous macaronic songs and poems of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and code-mixing and code-switching in later Revival and post-Revival works.

This long period of over three hundred years of interaction between the two languages provided Irish-language writers and authors with a creative window of opportunity during which new and exciting registers and styles of composition came into being. These works have the added value of throwing light on the intercultural forces at play in society at various times during the period in question.

Although ICE protocols normally exclude non-English material from consideration, Kirk and Kallen rightly remark that Irish terms and words such as *Aer Lingus*, *Dáil*, *Taoiseach*, *Radio Teilifís Éireann*, *féile*, *fleadh*, *craic* etc. have become embedded in the English of Ireland and are felt to be part of the language. They also give examples of code-switching. Four examples are given, one from a Radio discussion in which the speaker uses an Irish proverb, *Is ar scáth céile a*

*mhaireann na daoine*.<sup>5</sup> The speaker's literal translation of this saying, "In everybody's shadow everyone else lives," while fairly accurate, is of little assistance to the non-Irish speaker and may indicate that, while he understands the individual words which make up the expression, he may not fully understand the idiom as a whole. It actually means, 'It is by mutual help and cooperation people exist'/'No man is an island.' The speaker may simply be aware in a rather vague way that this idiom is appropriate in the context.

The second example in which the writer signs off a letter with the words *agus mise fós* is not a grammatically formed clause in Irish, and the rendering "and me also" is unacceptable to competent speakers of the language as a translation of the words as they stand. The example demonstrates an inadequate knowledge of the language on the part of the writer. The use of the emphasised form 'liomsa' in the example *An bhfuil sibh ag éisteacht liomsa* ('are you listening to me') seems also to be inappropriate and demonstrates the same point. Two of the other examples are quite interesting in that one is said for emphasis, the other as a signal for a shift in topic. Overall, however, the ability of some speakers in ICE-Ireland to switch between the two languages distinguishes this corpus from other ICE corpora.

While no comprehensive study of *Gaeltacht* English comparable to Sabban's 1982 work on Island English has yet been carried out, a number of recent studies have examined borrowing and code-switching from Irish to English and the subject is now beginning to be given the attention it deserves (see Stenson 1991; Ó Donnaille 1995; Wigger 2000). Some of the switching among younger speakers is deep and penetrative, encompassing not only lexis but also the basic syntactic structures of the language. It is indicative of language shift and language death and involves both word substitution and significant calquing. Here are some examples (mostly from Ó Donnaille 1995):

- 1) Use of interjections, tags and exclamations (adverbs, conjunctions etc): *actually, and, anyway, because, you know, I mean, okay, right, so, sorry, sure, you know, like, well*. Example: *Sweet divine Jesus, tá mo chóta imithe* ('Sweet divine Jesus, my coat is gone').
- 2) Word substitution, which occurs intra-sententially, for example: *Tá na wires briste* ('The wires are broken'); *Tá mé happyáilte* ('I am happy,' English with Irish suffix *-áilte*); *Chonaic mé féin í agus bhí sí just beautiful* ('I myself saw her and she was just beautiful'); and inter-sententially, where the switch in the final word of the first sentence below gives the cue for a full switch to English in the next sentence: *An bhfuil sibh hungry? Do ye want to go for something to eat?* ('Are you hungry?' etc.)

<sup>5</sup> In correct Irish the proverb should read, *is ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine*. The use of the word *céile* for correct *chéile* may be a transcription error or it may represent an inadequate knowledge of Irish on the part of the speaker.

- 3) Calquing in which native words acquire the meaning of those in the donor language, meanings which they would not normally have in the native language. A comic example, sometimes used by good speakers of the language to poke fun at the preponderance of calquing, is based on a mistranslation into Irish of the English word 'suit.' The sentence *Leanfaidh muid culaith* ('We will follow suit/Let's follow suit') is based on the English idiom 'to follow suit' ('to act in the same way as someone else'). The word 'suit' has the meaning of 'suit of cards' in English here, but is translated into Irish as 'a suit of clothes' (Ir. *culaith*). Hence the comic effect. There are numerous instances of calques in the language of the *Gaeltacht*, particularly among younger speakers. It is also very common among learners of the language.
- 4) English syntactic structures are often borrowed intact without substitution of native words. In the following example, the English verb has been placed initially in the sentence which, despite the fact that most of the words are English, gives the structure an Irish feel: *Chommiteáil sé suicide* ('He committed suicide,' with the English word 'commit' as first word followed by the Irish verbal suffix *-eáil*). The normal and traditional Irish syntax here is quite different: *chuir sé lámh ina bhás féin* (lit. 'put he a hand in his own death').
- 5) Consider also the following two examples: *Bíonn Irish night again every other Friday night* ('We have an Irish night' etc.); *Bhí mé flat out ag mixeáil cement* ('I was flat out mixing cement').

These examples go well beyond the use of interlingual lexemes in the two languages and bring to mind the acute observation of Ní Eochaidh, one of the informants of the ICE-corpus (see p. 91 above):

- 6) *Is dóigh liom nach raibh fios ag mórán dóibh ciaca Gaedhilge nó Béarla a bí (recte: a bhí, SMacM) á labhairt aca* ('I think that many of them did not know if they were speaking Irish or English').

The data referred to above reflect the language of a set of speakers which is being severely tested and undermined and which is probably on the road to extinction.

The extent of borrowing and calquing among certain groups of speakers of other extant Celtic languages, particularly among younger speakers, matches that outlined above for Irish (for examples from Welsh, see Jones 1998: 81-90). In the dialect examined by Wigger (2000), this is not the case. It is essentially a healthy variety in which borrowing and code-switching take place in quite a different way to that discussed above. Interlingual lexemes and word substitution in healthy varieties of this kind are not a cause for major concern and code-switching is primarily confined to direct speech quotes and to marking this speech "by frequent insertion of *adeir sé/sí* (or another quotation particle)" (Wigger 2000: 165):

- 7) “Níor chuala sibh,” adeir sé, “gur caitheadh *Joe Howley* inné ... yesterday,” adeir sé. Meastú an bhfuil aon dochar dhom a bheith dhá rá i mBéarla? “... *that it’s dangerous for ye to be here tonight*” adeir [sé]. “*Why is that?*” a d’úirt mé féin leis (Wigger 2000: 165).<sup>6</sup>
- 8) “Ere yesterday,” adeir sé, “I broke that boom” adeir sé, “when I was about ten miles” adeir sé “south of Waterford” (Wigger 2000: 165).

### 5. Conclusion

Let us return briefly by way of conclusion to the question of the traditional understanding of a Standard outlined at the beginning of the paper and the nature of Standard Irish English which can be established from the ICE-corpora on the basis of a set of texts uttered or written by educated speakers. As far as the written language is concerned, both orthographic convention and grammar demonstrate clearly that the traditional definition of what constitutes a Standard variety applies to the data in the corpora. As pointed out earlier, the written Standard is taught in the schools, so that the results are fairly predictable. The Standard tolerates very little deviance from the norm. Furthermore, when compared to the classical accounts of Irish English dialects in which large quantities of ‘Celticised’ features appear, the spoken Standard emerging from the texts studied here seems to lack regionalisms to a great extent. The immediate inclination is to call into question this lack of variation in the corpus and to question the methodology. A more nuanced and detailed social profile of respondents according to factors and variables such as origin, age, background (urban/rural etc.), education, residence, occupation, networking and mobility might have proved to be enlightening.

It should be borne in mind, on the other hand, that the authors have not examined all the distinctive Irish English structures in the corpora, the focus having been placed on the grammatical structures referred to earlier in their paper. Analyses of other Irish English structures, together with a presentation and discussion of the intonational, accentual, phonetic and stylistic data are required, before an estimate can be made of the overall distinctiveness of the mainstream variety or varieties of speech. It may very well emerge that there are various Standard regional or local dialects, all quite similar in their core elements but differing in accent, intonation and phonetics and with varying percentages of distinctive grammatical features. Be that as it may, factors such as the growth of the media and technology, greater social and geographic mobility, centralisation, and the extension of education, accelerate the processes of dialect convergence and dialect-mixing not only in the indigenous Celtic languages but also in the Celtic Englishes.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the material referred to in Wigger was recorded in 1964 (see Wigger 2000: 163, fn. 4).

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