

## ***Irish English Habitual ‘DO BE’: More on Origins and Use***

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### *1. Defining the topic of present habitual marking*

Present habitual marking [in Irish English] has been investigated and described by numerous researchers over the years. Amongst these are Henry (1957), Harris (1986), Kallen (1989), Filppula (1999), Fiess (2003) and Hickey (2007). Throughout this paper we will use aspectual terminology which follows the classification of Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca (1994: 125–75). Thus we can distinguish between verb phrases that overtly mark an ongoing or habitual internal temporal constituency, i.e. the imperfective, in the verbal category, and those that do not overtly mark imperfectives. The primary division within the imperfective paradigm according to both Bybee *et al.* and to Comrie (1976) is that of progressive, i.e. ongoing action, *versus* habitual, i.e. repeated action. Progressive events are commonly taken to be ongoing for a period of time and are typically expressed by dynamic verbs. Stative verbs may also denote events that take place over a longer period of time, but in contrast to dynamic situations, no constant input of energy is needed to keep the action going. This leads Bybee *et al.* (op.cit. 127) to use the label ‘continuous’ for ongoing states. Furthermore, states can also be viewed as generic, or gnomic, if they hold at all times, including the moment of speech. An example of this category is *dogs pant to cool off* (Bybee *et al.*, 141, 152). In addition to ongoing events, the repetition of individual events within any given period of time may be expressed. This is labeled as habitual action, and can be illustrated by *my father walked to work every morning*. A further category of Bybee *et al.*’s that is relevant for our approach is iterative aspect, which, like the habitual, expresses repetition but the actions usually take place on a single occasion. Typically the used verbs have telic semantics (op.cit. 127, 160), such as *he hammered on the door*.

Contemporary Standard British English uses overt marking for the progressive, as in *I am walking down the street (at the moment)*, but it does not use other means to mark aspect in the present. Instead Standard British English (StE) uses the morphologically unmarked present tense to express habitual and iterative senses, such as *he has dinner at six (every day)*. In addition to expressing habitual senses, the StE present can also denote generic senses as in *water boils at 100°*, even though the modal *will* can also be used in this context. Further, the present is also used to express progressive senses with stative verbs, as in *I live in Paris*, and for

instantaneous reporting, e.g. in sports, such as *Black passes the ball*, and in exclamatory and performative senses, such as *here comes the winner* and *I [hereby] apologize* (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 179–81).

Bybee *et al.* (op. cit.: 151) note that cross-linguistically, habituals tend to be more frequently marked in the past tense than in present tense. They argue that where present tense habitual marking exists in the languages investigated in their corpus, this category typically originally denoted a present tense that contained progressive senses, but then separate progressives emerged and left the unmarked present to express habitual, and related senses. To a certain extent, this scenario is also applicable to Standard British English, which developed the morphologically marked progressive after the Old English period.

By contrast, Irish English uses morphological markers to expressly mark that an action takes place habitually. For this, different markers have been observed in various studies carried out predominantly on traditional dialects of Irish English. Thus, Hickey (2007: 213–24) identifies the use of *-s* marking, *do* and *does be* and a northern form, *be(es)*, as well as a habitual progressive *does be + Ving*. He identifies *-s* marking, particularly on the east coast, as mainly denoting iterative aspect:

- (1) I goes every Wednesday. (Hickey 2007: 215)

Otherwise, the most prominent habitual markers are *do be* and *be(es)*. In Filppula's (1999) data, collected in western, south western and eastern dialects of Irish English, habitual marking by *do* plus infinitive was prominent in all dialects, e.g.

- (2) Two lorries of them [i.e. turf] now in the year we do burn (Filppula 1999: 130)

According to Filppula's survey, these forms were particularly prominent in the south western dialect area represented by Kerry, but also in the eastern area of Wicklow. Next in frequency in Filppula's data were instances of *do be* marking, which was most prominent in the eastern varieties of Wicklow and Dublin:

- (3) And err, when I do be listen' to the Irish here, I *do be* sorry now, when you're in a local having a drink, nobody seems to understand it (Filppula 1999: 130)

Hickey, however, finds habitual *do be* plus *V-ing* to be most prominent:

- (4) They *do be* always *lifting* the gates and hiding them (Hickey 2007: 216).

This structure is described by Hickey (2007: 216) as that of a durative habitual and he offers an explanation for its origin, which we will introduce below. Finally, a form that is unanimously described as being frequent in the north of the country is habitual marking by *be(es)*. Hickey (2007: 231) points out, however, that the form is not only confined to the north, but can also be found in south eastern dialects of Irish

English, were it is found to be rare and, in all probability, recessive. Hickey adduces various examples, including

- (5) May often *be's* a hard month (from *A Linguistic Survey of Ireland*, op. cit. 232)
- (6) Now they *be's* all sowed whole (from *A Linguistic Survey of Ireland*, ibid.)

Examples of habitual marking with inflected *be* adduced by Hickey all stem from south eastern dialects. This is remarkable as a dialect based on the Middle English dialect spoken in the baronies of Forth and Bargy remained in use in parts of County Wexford until the Early Modern period and might be a source of these dialectal forms (cf. Ronan 2010).

After having outlined the context of our investigation, we will now proceed to an investigation of habitual marking in contemporary Irish English. The purpose of the current study is two-fold: firstly, it seeks to specify the potential input of Celtic contact languages in the genesis of habitual marking in Irish English. Secondly, the study ascertains the frequency of habitual marking in contemporary Irish English. In order to reach this aim, we will deviate from the commonly applied path of investigating 'traditional dialects' of Irish English, which are typically recorded in the speech of elderly rural speakers, and use the recently compiled Ireland component of the International Corpus of English, which is a 1 million word corpus consisting of contemporary spoken and written data from the North and the South of Ireland.

## 2. *The history of habitual marking in Irish English*

As indicated in 1. above, the fact that a present habitual category is overtly marked in Irish English is remarkable. Though not unparalleled in other varieties of English (cf. e.g. Harris 1986, Kortmann 2004), habitual present marking does not exist in contemporary Standard British English, where the present habitual is commonly expressed by the simple present. It has been shown, however, that habitual marking by periphrastic *do* is also found in some traditional British English dialects (Ihalainen 1991, Klemola 2002), where it seems to be a retention of earlier linguistic stages. In the following, the two potential contributors to the genesis of present habitual aspect marking in Irish English, namely earlier English and Irish Gaelic, will be introduced briefly.

Overall, there is relatively broad consensus among researchers in the field that two different sources contributed the morphological material of habitual present marking in Irish English. On the one hand, habitual marking by *do* + infinitive, such as *do be* is commonly derived from the use of non-emphatic, periphrastic *do* in southern English dialects as described by Klemola (2002). These periphrastic uses of *do* may be considered retentions from earlier stages of English, when periphrastic *do* was not yet regulated (cf. e.g. Denison 1993: 455–68, Ellegård 1953). An example of periphrastic use is

- (7) She *do be* so strict with us gals. (Oxfordshire; Harris 1986: 189)

English settlers to Ireland are thought to have brought along these patterns in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, where either the meaningless periphrastic structures were adapted to use as habitual markers by first-language Irish Gaelic speakers, or they were loaned as present habitual markers because they already showed traces of this usage in their English source dialects (Harris 1986: 187–90, Filppula 1999: 144–49, Hickey 2007: 220–21).

The ultimate reason why Irish speakers should feel a need to express present habitual is unanimously seen in the aspectual system of Irish Gaelic, however. In Irish Gaelic, non-periphrastically constructed present tense verbs generally express habitual aspect, but the substantive verb 'BE', which expresses location in space and time, and has a morphological distinction between punctual and habitual aspect (cf. Harris 1986, Ronan 2010):

- (8) Tá    sí     anseo     anois. (Harris 1986: 178)  
 Be.Pres.Non-habitual    *she here now*  
 'She's here now.'
- (9) Bíonn    sí             anseo     go minic. (Harris 1986: 178)  
 Be.Pres.Habitual         *she here often*  
 'She's often here.'

Hickey (2007: 223) further makes a case for Irish language influence particularly in the use of negative imperative constructions consisting of *don't be + Ving*, as illustrated by 10. below, which he argues to mirror the pattern and intonation of the corresponding Irish Gaelic structures in 11.

- (10) *Don't be talking of punch yet a while ...* (Hickey 2007: 222)
- (11) Ná    bí    ag labhairt                     mar     sin.  
 Not    *be*.Imperative    *at talk*.Verbal noun    *like*     *that*  
 'Don't talk like this'. (loc. cit. 223)

Marking by *be/bees*, by contrast, is mainly linked to the expression of present habitual marking in northern dialects. Lately, further uses, especially durative marking and even non-durative marking have also been observed (Kallen and Millar 1998). *Be/bees* is typically taken as a survival of the Old English *beon* 'be', which, in contrast to Old English *wesan* 'be', denoted habitual or future circumstances (e.g. Tolkien 1963: 19–20, Harris 1986: 187). This form is thought to have been the source non-inflected *be* in Early Modern English (12), Older Scots (13) and Modern Scots (14), while *do* periphrasis has been shown to have entered Scots only when it was more strongly influenced by southern English varieties (Meurman-Salin 1993).

- (12) And whan they *be* dry, they laye them to-gether on heapes ...  
 (Anthony Fitzherbert, *The Book of Husbandry*, 1534, Hickey 2007: 229)
- (13) Protesting alwyls *we be* hard concerning the ancient Docteurs  
 (William Fowler, *Ane Answer Vnto the Epistle*, 1590, Hickey 2007: 230)
- (14) A *be* there whiles. 'I am there occasionally.' (Montgomery 2006: 319)

Hickey points out that several examples of non-inflected *be* with stative or generic meaning can be found in material both from Britain and Ireland. He suggests these patterns to be the source of habitual marking both in the north of Ireland and in overseas varieties of English (loc. cit. 228–30). He bolsters this claim by further citing examples of habitual *be* marking from the south-east of Ireland (loc. cit. 231–2). In further development, both *be(s)* and *do be* have now been observed to have spread to habitual and to durative, as well as semelfactive, uses (Kirk and Millar 1998). If the original introduction of habitual *be* marking can indeed be linked to earlier English dialects, the question arises, whether the now extinct late Middle English dialect of Forth and Bargoyle could have played a role in the retention of these features in the south east of Ireland.

On the other hand, the question might arise why contact with languages like Scots Gaelic should not have led to the use of 'do'-periphrasis in Hebridean English. This question seems even more pertinent as Scots Gaelic in fact employs periphrastic constructions with the verb 'do' in certain circumstances. However, in contrast to Irish English, 'do' periphrasis is used for preterite marking instead of the synthetic preterite:

- (15) Rinn            mi    suidhe  
      do.Pret.     I     sitting.Verbal noun  
      'I sat down' (ScG, Gillies 2002: 204)

In this and comparable cases, 'do' functions as a semantically low-content carrier of tense and inflection marking. A similar use of 'do'-periphrasis for preterite marking is also described for Scottish English (Kortmann 2004: 250), as well as for Welsh and Welsh English (Ronan 2010, Kortmann, *ibid.*). Since 'do'-periphrasis functions as a preterite marker in Scots Gaelic and in Scottish English, it would seem reasonable to assume that this use could block the availability of 'do' as a habitual marker (Ronan 2010). Further reasons leading to the lack of present habitual *do* periphrasis in Scots Gaelic influenced varieties of English will be discussed in 4. below.

### 3. Habitual present marking in the ICE Ireland data

Kirk (n.d.) enumerates Irish English dialectal features found in the ICE Ireland corpus (Kallen and Kirk 2007). In this context he also mentions habitual present marking by *do be* and by *be/bes*. Indeed, these features can be found in the corpus, as indicated by the following example of *do be*:

- (16) That that buck that *does be* on the television on the video (S1A-087:139:B, South)

This, however, is the only examples of *do be* that is obtained in the 1/2 million word southern part of the corpus. The attested frequency is therefore very low. Attestations of *be/bes* can also be observed. There is one example of *bes*:

(17) He just stands there and *bes* Frankenstein (S1A-032:37:A, North)

A further likely candidate of habitual marking can also be found marked with uninflected *be*:

(18) No I never *be* down about there's everything you know there's all that you want to see in fish you'll get it there (S1A-045:66:A North)

A noteworthy example is the following one:

(19) Do you ever *be* down about the harbour Jenny (S1A-045:54:A North)

While superficially it looks like an example of *do be*, this is more likely to be habitual *be* with *do* support in the question. The same speaker also contributes an example of habitual *be* in 18. above. Two apparently valid examples, however, may in fact be misleading:

(20) Cos most of the time it *be* either families you know young children to see the dinosaurs or sort of you know uhm older people who want to come and see the uhm art exhibitions and that (S1B-073:70:A North)

(21) Go in and and there *be* bullet bullet holes through the windows and all this kind of thing ? (S1A-065:3:A South)

The first example could be a case of habitual *would be*, shortened to '*d be*, where the '*d* has been phonetically deleted after *it*. Similarly, the second example could be a case of the use of habitual '*d be*, as the speaker in the continuation of the conversation repeatedly uses that construction.

Thus the corpus data provides no more than 1 example of *do be* and 3 clear examples of habitual *be/bes* within its 1 million words. These figures are very low, indeed, lower than we might have expected on the basis of descriptions of more traditional dialects, such as Filppula (1999). This observation may suggest that either this particular dialect feature is recessive. Or, alternatively, this observation may suggest that Irish English as a whole is showing signs of increasing dialect death. The scarcity of tokens of present habitual aspect markers could be a sign of increasing development towards acrolectal varieties, i.e. standard varieties, in particular Standard British English. However, a category that has not been considered here is the use of *do* plus infinitive of verbs other than *be* to mark habitual aspect. This has been done on the grounds that in the absence of intonational information it seemed difficult to exclude for certain that these examples could not also be emphatic. Nevertheless, the possibility that some habitual structures of this type should in fact have been considered in this context must be admitted.

One the other hand, innovative dialectal structures may also be emerging and there is some evidence of an alternative habitual construction in the spoken data of ICE Ireland:

- (22) And if you have soup in the house well you're absolutely never *be* stuck (S2A-057:2:A, South)
- (23) And remember whenever we were making scones I sort of said if you ever if you're ever wanting to impress give give [*sic*] your visitors the scones you make in the first cut-out because they're always *be* the re-rolls have that different look about them and it's the same with pastry (S2A-055:2:A, North)

This structure has not been described as a habitual marker elsewhere, but the adverbials *never* and *always* indicate that a present habitual context is envisaged here. The structure is that of present tense inflected form of *be* plus infinitive *be*. This is reminiscent of progressive marking by *be* plus gerund, albeit with the gerund being replaced by the infinitive. Indeed, the infinitive as a clearly non-progressive form conceptually seems to be well suited for the periphrastic marking of what may be considered the opposite pole of the progressive, namely the habitual. The incentive for the use of this form could be to mark the habitual more clearly than could be done by just using inflected *be*, which is less distinctive as an aspectual marker. As the size of the ICE corpora is small, a study of a larger data base would be desirable to confirm whether these are isolated examples.

The overall distribution of habitual aspect marking in the ICE Ireland data therefore is as follows:

Marker	Northern component Total/ (per 100.000)	Southern component Total/ (per 100.000)	Total overt markers ICE Ireland (1 mio. words)
<i>Be/be(e)s</i>	3/ (0.6)		3
<i>Do be</i>		1/ (0.2)	1
<i>Are be</i>	1/ (0.2)	1/ (0.2)	2
Total markers	4	2	6

Table 1: counts of habitual aspect marking in ICE Ireland

The above table emphasizes different observations. Firstly, total numbers of attestations are very low, even taking into account that the ICE corpora are rather restricted at 1 million words and typically provide few instances of morpho-syntactic features. The frequencies are in fact considerably lower in this corpus than in studies of even smaller corpora of traditional dialects, such as Filppula (1999: 132). And where vernacular features appear, they are found in the roughly 653,000 word-strong spoken component of the corpus (Kallen and Kirk 2008: 9) only. In Filppula's survey of present habitual aspect marking in data recorded from speakers of four traditional dialects of the South of Ireland, the author observes an average of 10 instances of habitual *do be* marking per 10,000 word (*ibid.*). The highest number of instances stems from his corpus of County Wicklow data. He further observes examples of habitual marking by *do* + infinitive and *do be* + *Ving*, both of which are

not considered in the present study. The huge discrepancy in numbers, however, is not unexpected for other reasons, as the International Corpus of English corpora mainly represent standardized, non-dialectal language use. Thus fewer dialect features would be expected to be found in them than in corpora explicitly geared towards representing vernacular speech. Further, as written language tends to be more standardized than spoken language, a larger component of written language is also more likely to lead to higher standardization, and predictably more instances are found in the spoken corpus material investigated.

What is more remarkable in the above data is the fact that, even though the counts are too low to be statistically significant, the overt present habitual markers seem no less frequent in the northern part of the corpus. This is remarkable for the reason that Northern Irish English is much influenced by linguistic contributions of speakers of Ulster Scots. If one wanted to assume that marking of present habitual aspect was caused only by the speech habits of bilingual Irish Gaelic-English speakers this would clearly be proven wrong. Finally, the figures indicate that a new marker, a present tense form of *be* plus infinitive *be* is used by at least some speakers, and that it could be on the rise as a new habitual present marker in Northern Irish English. On the other hand, if, as suggested above, vernacular features are really in danger of disappearing in the process of increased standardization, then dialectal innovations such as these may not ultimately catch on.

The above results allow some tentative conclusions: clearly, habitual present marking is rare in the ICE Ireland corpus. Where it appears, it is more prominent in spoken than in written language. This indicates that the feature is subject to standardization processes, which are stronger in written language. Overall, the rarity of habitual present marking suggests an increasing loss of this dialect feature. It must be pointed out, however, that register seems to play an important role here. ICE Ireland only shows few examples of the well-known Irish English *after* perfect, while other corpora, particularly those collected in private and personal interaction, show higher frequencies (e.g. Filppula 1999). This could indicate that these are salient dialect features with high speaker awareness and that they are consequently avoided in public discourse. The avoidance of stereotyped linguistic features, particularly morpho-syntactic ones, can be found in other local dialects (e.g. Kerswell and Williams 2000: 85–90) and may indeed lead to dialect levelling (op.cit. 90–91). The assumption that some speakers of Irish English avoid well known and possibly stigmatized dialect features could be strengthened by the examination of less salient dialect features, which are less likely to be concentrated on in attempts to standardize linguistic habits.

#### 4. Potential Celtic Influence

Regarding the influence of substrate features in the genesis of Irish English habitual present marking, Hickey (2006: 252) points out that Hebridean English, which also has come into contact with a sister language of Irish Gaelic, does not use habitual marking by *do* or *bees*. He argues that this presents a case against substrate influence in the genesis of the category. Indeed, previous research has found no evidence of



habitual presents marked by similar markers as those in Irish English discussed above. In the following we will argue, however, that far from being an argument against contact influence from the Gaelic languages, this point in fact strengthens the case for Gaelic language influence. As observed in Ronan (2010), Sabban (1982: 277–8) notes that Hebridean English may mark habituals by the use of *will + be + Ving*. Further, habituals of stative verbs, and other categories that do not normally use StE progressive forms, may be marked by using *be + Ving*, such as verbs of perception or mental activities.

(24) But we'll be seeing them [i.e. tourists, author] passing down this way going to the beach, all summer (Sabban 1982: 281).

(25) Well, drive slowly, it's the only way when you're not seeing well. (loc. cit, 277)

It has already been argued in Ronan (2010) that, rather than speaking against substrate influence from Gaelic, this pattern of marking habituals in Hebridean English in fact strengthens the case for language contact influence. In spite of being closely related, Irish Gaelic and Scots Gaelic differ in their use of habitual marking. Irish Gaelic has a synthetic present tense, which denotes habitual aspect. The so-called 'substantive verb' 'be', which is used to denote spatial and temporal location also has a non-habitual present tense form, *tá* 'be'. It further employs an analytic progressive, created from the non-habitual form of the substantive verb *tá*, the preposition *ag* 'at', and a nominal verbal form, the so-called verbal noun.

(26 (= 8)) *Bíonn sí anseo go minic.*  
*Be.Pres.Habitual she here part. often*  
 'She's often here' (Harris 1986: 178).

(27 (= 9)) *Tá sí anseo anois.*  
*Be.Pres.Non-habitual she here now.*  
 'She is here now' (ibid.)

(28) *Tá sí ag obair anois.*  
*Be.Pres.Non-habitual she at working.Verbal.Noun now*  
 'She is working now'.

Futures are typically denoted by the future tense form, in the following example this is illustrated by the use of the future tense form of the substantive verb *tá*:

(29) *Beidh sí anseo amárach.*  
*Be.Future she here tomorrow.*  
 'She will be here tomorrow'.

These examples illustrate that Irish Gaelic distinguishes between a separate non-habitual present tense form – which only exists for the substantive verb *tá* [*be.Pres.Non-habitual*] 'be', the present form which has habitual meaning, here illustrated by *bíonn* [*be.Pres.Hab*] 'is want to be', and a separate future tense form, *beidh* 'will be'. The Scots Gaelic system differs from the Irish system, however. On the one hand, there is a periphrastic progressive, which is formed similarly to Irish

Gaelic (30.). However, the simple present in Scots Gaelic, in contrast to Irish Gaelic, can express a much wider range of temporal and aspectual senses, namely habituals, iteratives and speculative (modal) futures (Calder 1972: 233–5, MacAulay 1992: 219, cf. Ronan 2010). Progressive aspect, on the other hand, is expressed by a periphrastic progressive construction similar to the Irish Gaelic.

(30) Tha Iain a' falb  
*Be.Pres.Non-habit Iain at going.away.Verbal.Noun*  
 'Iain is going away' (MacAulay 1992: 171)

(31) *bithidh Iain tinn a h-uile latha*  
*Be.Pres.Fut Iain ill every day*  
 'Iain is ill every day' (MacAulay 1992: 219)

(32) *bithidh Iain tinn am màireach*  
*Be.Pres.Fut. Iain ill tomorrow*  
 'Iain will be ill tomorrow.' (ibid.)

These examples illustrate that Scots Gaelic uses the same verbal form, the present-future, to express both habitual and future marking. In this respect both the Scots Gaelic and the Welsh, particularly the Middle Welsh, morphological present may be considered typical examples of the tendency of the morphological present to express senses that were 'left behind' when progressives received separate marking, as observed by Bybee *et al.* (see 1. above). Therefore, from a language contact perspective, if a separate form to mark present habitual were to be expected in Hebridean English, it would be a form identical with the future tense. And this is, indeed, what Sabban's research has found to be used, illustrated by example 24. above.

As can be seen, this system differs markedly from that of modern Irish Gaelic, and it is also different from the common ancestor variety, Old Irish, whose system of present tense marking was comparable to that in modern Irish Gaelic. The system used in Scots Gaelic is, however, remarkably similar to that used in contemporary Welsh, and indeed its medieval ancestor variety, Middle Welsh (ca. 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century). It has already been noted in earlier research (Wagner 1959: 84) that similarly to modern Scots Gaelic, Middle Welsh had a synthetic present which primarily had habitual uses, illustrated in example (33), but also future uses as shown in (34).

(33) Ef a wyl pawb o'r a del  
*He part. see.Pres.3sg. everyone of those who enters*  
 Y mywn ac ny-s gwyl neb efo.  
*in middle and not-him see.Pres.3sg. anyone him*  
 'He sees everyone who enters, and no one sees him.' (Evans 1989: 109, WM 156, 28–29)

(34) Y gyt y kerdwn odyma  
*together part. go.Pres.1pl from here.*  
 'Together will we go from here.' (Evans 1989: 109, PKM 19.6)

In addition to these common uses, a synthetic present was sometimes used to express a non-habitual, progressive present as illustrated by 35. below. However, a periphrastically formed progressive was common already at the Middle Welsh stage (36) (cf. Evans 1989: 108–9):

- (35) Ni a glywn utkyrn a lleuein  
*we part. hear.Pres.1pl trumpets and clamour*  
 'We hear trumpets and clamour' (Evans 1989: 108, PKM 82.13).
- (36) Ac y mae ynteu weithon  
*and part. is.Pres.Non-hab.3sg he.Emph. now*  
 y 'm digyuoethi inheu  
*part. my dispossessing.Verbal.noun me.Emph.*  
 'That he is now dispossessing me' (Evans 1989: 112, B.D. 51.5).

Even though the morphological present was frequently used in habitual senses in earlier Welsh, this use has become rare in Modern Welsh and seems to be progressively replaced by periphrastic constructions (cf. Heinecke 2003: 94, Ronan *fc.*) with either the habitual or non-habitual form of the verb 'BE'. Examples of these newer patterns are as follows:

- (37) byddaf yn mynd yno bob haf  
*is.Pres.Habitual.1sg part. going there every summer*  
 'I go there every summer'
- (38) Yr wyf yn mynd allan  
*Part. is.Present.Non-habitual.1sg part. go.Verb.Noun out*  
 yn aml  
*part. often*  
 'I often go out' (Williams 1980: 73).

The uses of the morphological present in Modern Welsh now seem to centre on expressing the future and on the expression of gnomic contexts (cf. Williams 1980: 72–4). Examples (37) and (38) above furthermore illustrate a characteristic of the Welsh verbal system which goes back to the earliest attested stages of the language. Like in the Gaelic languages, the verb 'be' has two verbal forms, illustrated by the habitual and future *byddaf* 'I am (want to), I will be' and *wyf* 'I am'. Tolkien (1963: 19–20), followed by various later scholars, has pointed to the similarity of these forms with the present tense forms of the verb 'be' in Old English. He draws attention both to the functional similarity of the Old English and early Welsh *b*-forms, which both denote the habitual and the future in opposition to a non-habitual present tense form. Tolkien further draws attention to the fact that the Old English form *bið* is phonetically irregular, while the corresponding Modern Welsh form *bydd*, and its early Welsh antecedent *bið* are regular within their paradigms. These observations lead him to conclude that the Old English *b*-forms and their distribution have been loaned from Brythonic.

Influence of Brythonic Celtic languages, the language group to which Welsh belongs, on Scots Gaelic might seem a possibility in view of the above parallels.

However, to argue for language contact, the occasion of contact must also have existed. This indeed seems equally possible. Languages of the Brythonic group, especially Cumbric, which separated from the other Brythonic dialects including Welsh, from the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards, were spoken in the north of England and in southern Scotland (Jackson 1953: 5–6) and are likely to have been extinct by about the 12<sup>th</sup> century only. Thus, it is physically possible that these languages influenced the Scots Gaelic language in Scotland, as well as the variety of Gaelic on the Isle of Man, Manx Gaelic. This possibility has already been offered in research by Pedersen (1913: 305) and Wagner (1959: 68, 83–8, 89), who noted that there are significant parallels between the Welsh and Scots Gaelic verbal systems, but it has not received sufficient attention since. As it is, this survey shows that in investigating potential contact phenomena of habitual present marking in Scottish English, we are thoroughly entitled to expect that the habitual present is coded like a future, such as the *will* future, or indeed like a progressive, such as *be* plus gerund.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has reviewed evidence for the claim that both traditional south-western British varieties and other, potentially Scots varieties may have provided the morphological components for Irish English habitual marking. It has been argued that use of the category seems to have been modeled on habitual marking in Irish Gaelic. This is supported by evidence that Irish and Scots Gaelic manners of expressing habitual tense differ fundamentally. While Irish uses separate forms, a periphrastic one for the actual present and a synthetic one for the habitual present, Scots Gaelic does not use a separate form for the habitual present. Rather, Scots Gaelic uses the originally (habitual) present tense form to denote both habitual and future senses. As this usage is mirrored in the use of habitual present marking in Hebridean English, the cause of Gaelic language contact in the development of both Irish and Scottish English varieties is strengthened.

The examination of contemporary Irish English language data from the International Corpus of English Ireland Component suggests, however, that habitual marking may be losing currency in contemporary Irish English. This is likely to be due to increasing standardization which in the worst of cases may lead to dialect death. For this reason, potentially newly emergent present habitual aspect markers, like the *are-be* marker discussed above, may disappear before they are able to take root completely.

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